

# MANUSCRIPT



2022 - 2023



*The Wilkes University Manuscript Society presents*

# Manuscript 2022 - 2023

*Cover photo:*  
“Journey” by M. Michele Geiser

## *1947 Forward*

With this issue of Manuscript a new publication is launched on the Bucknell University Campus in Wilkes-Barre. Those who have been responsible for its coming into being earnestly hope that through your efforts and the efforts of those who come after you that this magazine will develop into a college tradition of which we may all be proud.

*-- The Editors*



## *Mission Statement*

The Manuscript Society of Wilkes University has been publishing its creative writing and visual art magazine, *The Manuscript*, continuously since 1947. Currently, the student-led editorial staff publishes one issue per year, and copies are complimentary.

In preparation for a career in editing, publishing, or creative writing, any Wilkes student is welcome to submit to or work on the editorial board of the Manuscript Society. Staff members critique a variety of creative pieces from Wilkes faculty, staff, students, and alumni. This process includes creative workshopping, copy editing, and layout.

Wilkes students may elect to enroll in ENG 190B, Project in Writing: Manuscript, for one (1) credit of coursework. Meetings are held during club hours each semester. Monthly, bimonthly, or seasonal campus poetry readings are open to the Wilkes Community and greater public. The end product is a published, award-winning magazine.

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### **A sister's lament**

- Janine P. Dubik

Her grief cannot be erased  
or halved by putting  
her heaviest stones  
in my hands.

Her grief cannot become  
mine despite the sunny room  
we once shared, despite my wish  
to ease her burden.

Her grief is hers alone;  
it clings to only her and  
doesn't transfer, so I  
cannot fathom its depths.

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## **Celestial Embrace: A Cosmic Ode**

- Alisha Keshvani

In the vast expanse of space,  
Celestial bodies spin and race,  
Each one unique, with its own grace,  
A universe of wonder, a cosmic embrace.

The sun, a blazing ball of fire,  
The source of warmth and life's desire,  
A radiant king, to whom we aspire,  
A center of the solar system's empire.

The moon, a gentle glowing sphere,  
A beacon of light, both far and near,  
A celestial partner, to calm and clear,  
A satellite to our planet dear.

The planets, each with its own charm,  
From fiery Mars to icy Saturn's arm,  
A diverse family, a cosmic farm,  
A mystery to solve, a celestial swarm.

The stars, twinkling in the night,  
A million candles, a glorious sight,  
A guide to lost ships, a lover's delight,  
A canvas of art, a celestial light.

The galaxies, swirling in space,  
A cosmic dance, a majestic race,  
A home to trillions, a heavenly place,  
A reminder of beauty, a universal grace.

In the vast expanse of space,  
Celestial bodies spin and race,  
A universe of wonder, a cosmic embrace,  
Forever inspiring, with endless grace.



## The Infinite Universe Through the Local Lens

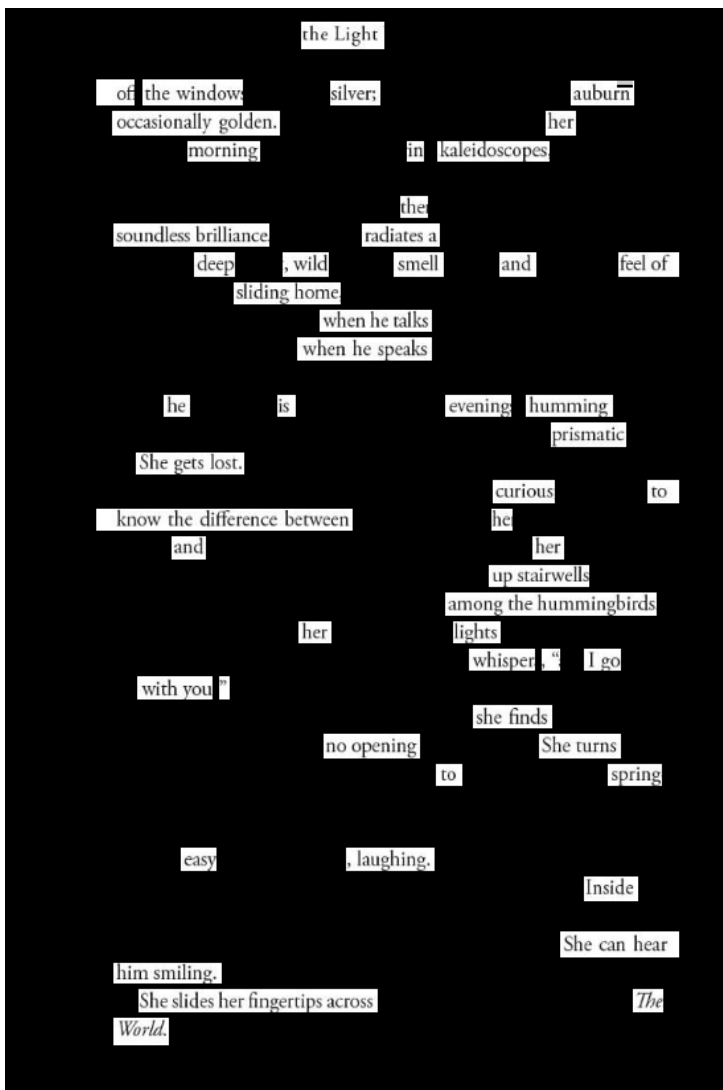
- Tyler Savitski



## The Humming Difference of the in Between

- Jess Van Orden

I.



II.

Her fingertips speak, turn, slide  
Up and opening  
Inside the silver morning Light

Hear her laughing, easy with prismatic brilliance.  
When she talks, *The World* whisper[s]  
I get lost in her.

She is the wild feel of home.  
The smell of spring *sliding* in.  
The difference between soundless and humming.

III.

Turn to the window  
Inside is soundless  
Deep, wild, humming

She is curious to know the feel of home  
When he speaks, she know[s] the difference

The silver smell of evening whispers “go”  
She slides her fingertips up stairwells, across *The World*

Lost to spring, she finds no opening  
She can hear him smiling

IV.

The hummingbirds, occasionally curious, radia[te]  
a brilliance.

Humming across *The World*.

Inside, a whisper,  
“I go with you.”

Up, in, and turn

Get lost to know the smell of home.

Hear the evening. Speak easy.

In the Light of morning, find her smiling deep.

V.

Between he and her

With she and you

I hear the stairwells slide.

No laughing.

Occasionally, the window radia[tes] golden lights.

Wild, she know[s].

He gets lost in the turns of a curious kaleidoscope

*Sliding* up, across

She, inside, fingertips amongst the hummingbirds

Light, soundless, laughing

The difference is the whisper of *The World*.

## **The Catacomb**

- Anthony L. Liuzzo

It dawned on him that his golden age had passed. He could barely climb the steps in his boarding house and exercise was nearly impossible. He had great difficulty sleeping at night and regular daytime naps had become essential.

He was retired now, after serving most of his adult life working in the pest control industry. While the financial rewards had been minimal, at least he did enjoy the work and usually felt a sense of gratitude from his clients.

He had two fellow boarders. The first was a young lad who made far too much noise and was extremely messy. He would leave dirty dishes that needed attention, and was not well-groomed. There was usually an unpleasant, malodorous odor that accompanied the fellow when he entered one of the common areas of the house. The second, a middle-aged female, was so aloof and unfriendly that she would generally not even acknowledge his existence. Fortunately, both of these individuals were out during most of the day, presumably attending to work duties. Despite these somewhat unpleasant co-renters, he remained in the home because the rent was within his means and because, at his advanced age, there was simply no other place for him to go.

His landlord and landlady were pleasant enough. Meals and general housecleaning were provided with the rental fees, and the owners tended to these responsibilities in a fairly satisfactory manner. Food tended to be plentiful and reasonably tasty, but these were served only at regular times (between-meal snacks were frowned upon). There seemed to be numerous rules for the house, not all of which were comprehensible or, in his judgment, even rational.

He did enjoy the afternoons, especially on sunny days. He would laze by the upstairs window. From this vantage point, he could observe the very desirous young female who lived directly across the street. He would peer through the sheer curtains stealthily; although he was convinced she was fully aware of his presence. When she stood up, he could get clear view of her beautiful body and his long-lost drive for sex seemed to stir, albeit only just a bit.

As he pondered his life, sleepiness began to overtake him. He closed his eyes, and suddenly felt engulfed in a most pleasant sensation.

The seventeen-year-old boy came into the room. He stared at the body on the floor and then called out to his father. "Dad! Come quick! I think there's something wrong with the cat."

## How it Felt to Love You

- Haley Katona

the still quiver of the water, the flushed birdsong of the morning  
warm white air in the pale sky,  
tangerine scented freckles lining the orange peel  
after ripening in the direct sunlight all afternoon  
the aching violet spreading over the opal blue  
soft petals that wear this exchange as the hydrangea blooms

may's cold spell after the heat wave, breaking open  
chest cavities and the hollowed bones of spring's yelp  
crackling and searing themselves in the direct flame  
as the sun crawls back closer to the earth, the dirt drying up,  
feathering itself out to the edges

watch me, here, on my knees, mercy me  
take the last grasp of the lining of my aorta, display it  
as if we were in the moma, follow me hand in hand  
while the seasons gripe over which will have the last word,  
the last kill, to be the last standing as I watch  
them, overbearing and tall, dagger in hand as they mock me  
like a small child, their grins as the sky darkens,  
clouds rumbling over one another, sparking the edge that glows  
just over the mountaintop, thunder as quiet as a whisper,  
lightning that blinks just as his gracious eyes

let the downpour echo as it spits over the rocks  
while I have risen both my hands up above,  
let the wind drag itself across my face, drudging along in its time  
eyes open, eyes up and bare in the break of light  
sky clearing up like a paintbrush wiping up the coal dust with blue  
let the sun out of its cage, let him feed the flowers to bloom



## Paradisiacal Beauty

- Aastha Shah



Aastha Shah FYBCA1

## The Curse of the Stone Couch

- Krista Harner

October 2019

“Alright, loser, we’re here.”

Camden glanced up from his Smartwatch as Blake, his 17-year-old brother, pulled off onto the grassy shoulder. “This is Eckley Road?”

“Yep, according to Google Maps.” Blake flipped his brown bangs out of his eyes. “Get going. I’ve kept Kylie waiting long enough.” He pulled his cell phone off the dashboard mount, thumbs rapidly continuing a conversation he’d begun twenty minutes earlier.

“You’re not coming with me?”

“Your assignment, not mine. I already passed middle school.”

“You could’ve at least parked closer,” Cam grumbled. Unbuckling, he slammed the car door behind him and scanned his surroundings. Eckley Road was completely deserted. On either side of the pavement was a stretch of silent, gloomy woods, lining the road like a dark corridor. Jamming his hands in his pockets, Cam hunkered down against the October chill and proceeded up the shoulder, dry leaves crunching underfoot as he walked the remaining fifteen yards to his destination.

When his seventh-grade history teacher had announced her Halloween assignment—to research a haunted place in Pennsylvania—Cam was sure most of his peers would go the Gettysburg ghost story route. It was the easy way out. But, thanks to his grandfather’s stories, Cam had had an idea as soon as he’d left class. Growing up in Hazleton, the hub of the Anthracite Coal Region, Cam had always been fascinated with mining stories, both real and imagined—tales of lost miners and cave-ins, tommyknockers and coal golems. His grandfather, a third-generation miner, had passed down local lore and legend, enthralling Cam as he grew from superstitious youngster to curious teenager.

It had taken most of the weekend and two month’s allowance to persuade Blake to drive him, but Cam had made it. He had finally arrived at the place his grandfather had spoken about but refused to ever visit.

There, before him, was the cursed Stone Couch of Buck Mountain.

\* \* \* \* \*

October 1918

The moaning from the backseat of his tin Lizzie made Patrick Dunne’s heart drop. As superintendent of the Lehigh Valley Coal Company, Patrick was fortunate enough to be financially comfortable. He owned a Ford Model T, lived in a cozy Dutch Colonial, and bought his wife, Coraline, a new fur muff every Christmas. What he had not been able to do, however, was protect her from the Spanish Flu. Originally detected in March, a second wave was currently sweeping across the nation, with alarming death rates in Pennsylvania’s coal regions.

“*300 Corpses Awaiting Burial in Luzerne County*” the newspaper headlines ran. “*Cold Storage Plants Used as Temporary Morgues*”; “*Trolley Car Manufacturer Donates 100 Packing Crates for Coffins*”.

Patrick gripped the steering wheel as another moan reached his ears. His wife had first come down



with a chill two nights ago. When a fever soon developed, coupled with muscle aches and a raw throat, a deep-rooted worry began to gnaw inside Patrick. Though large gatherings were prohibited, his deeply religious wife still insisted on attending her church sewing circle. Patrick had pleaded with her to at least wear the recommended face covering, but she'd waved him off. Her faith would protect her.

But it hadn't, and Coraline's only hope was ten miles away in the town of Weatherly...

Patrick heard the pop of the wheel seconds before the Model T lurched sideways toward the road's shoulder. Cursing, Patrick fought to steady the car, but dust from the mountain road clouded the windshield, and the Model T rammed into something huge and heavy.

"Patrick..." Coraline wheezed. The sudden jolt had slid her to the floor.

"Cora!" Patrick threw open his car door and raced to her side. Gently, he placed her back onto the seat and checked her for any injuries before surveying the car's damage. The front right wheel had popped off the axle, which, in turn, made them crash into an odd rock formation resembling a couch. Looking up and down the deserted road, Patrick prayed for a passerby, but found only the creaking trees for company.

He would have to start walking the six remaining miles to Weatherly. "Stay in the car, Cora. I'm going for help."

"So hot..." The perspiration on Coraline's brow beaded like blisters.

"No, Cora. Stay in the car." Patrick clasped her hands. "I'll be back with Dr. Unger soon."

\* \* \* \* \*

October 2019

The stone monoliths did, indeed, resemble a couch. There were two rough-hewn slabs fitted against each other at a ninety-degree angle and, on the right-hand side, an oblong rock fashioned into a sort of armrest. Moss and wildflowers grew through its fissures, providing little comfort to those who dared sit on its craggy surface.

Cam shivered violently, as if there were a locomotive humming down his spinal tracks. According to his grandfather, it was unknown if this stone couch had been natural or man-made. Only a few feet from the road, it seemed like the perfect place for a wayfarer to take a break and enjoy a moment's rest. However, Cam knew better than to fall prey to its peaceful pastoral façade.

It was a bedeviled spot, his grandfather had told him, cursed by a colliery worker who had lost his wife to a plague...

Wayfarers who dared rest there sickened and died. Disease oozed from its crevices; misfortune tainted its cracks.

The Stone Couch of Buck Mountain meant death.

\* \* \* \* \*

October 1918

They found her lying prostrate on the stone, the trees presiding over her like pallbearers.

"Cora?" Patrick whispered, but Dr. Unger confirmed what he already knew. "I'm sorry," the doctor said through his mask.

"She was hot in the car..." Patrick's fingertips caressed Cora's now-cool forehead. "She must have..." he

looked at the doctor, stricken.

Dr. Unger squeezed Patrick's shoulder. It would be dark soon. "Let's take her home."

In a daze, Patrick helped Dr. Unger wrap Coraline's body in a sheet and load it into the doctor's car. Before getting in himself, however, Patrick retrieved a crowbar from his broken-down Model T.

This stone couch had wrecked his car; it was the deathbed of his wife.

With bitter tears coursing down his cheeks, he chiseled:

Coraline Virginia Dunne

1890-1918

Then, he spat on the cursed rock.

\* \* \* \* \*

October 2019

The car horn blasted through the air with the sharpness of a nuclear missile, breaking Cam's trance on the rock. He tumbled backwards, landing on the edge of the asphalt. Throwing the impatient Blake an angry look, Cam wiped the dirt and gravel from his stinging palms. He was just about to get up when something etched into the front of the stone couch caught his eye. Cocking his head, he realized that letters had been carved into the rock, which he had missed while standing. Time and weather had eroded most of them, with only a few still recognizable.

Another blast came from Blake's direction. Snapping a picture with his phone, Cam ran back to his brother's car.

"Come on, we need to get back. Mom and Dad are gonna start to wonder where we are." Blake fastened his seatbelt and replaced his phone on the dash. "So," he continued, smirking, "was the dreaded stone couch everything you hoped it would be? Encounter any spirits? Get a glimpse of the apocalypse?"

Cam rolled his eyes and held out the picture he'd taken, pointing to the weather-beaten marks. "You tell me."

Blake zoomed in on the carvings. "I see some random letters but that's about it."

Cam grabbed a pen and wrinkled up Wendy's napkin from the glove compartment. Squinting, he said, "Yeah, I can make out a C and O..." Carefully, he copied the rest of the etching onto the ketchup-stained paper napkin and then held it up for Blake.

Blake shifted the car into drive. "C-O-V-I-D 19?"

"What do you think it means?" Cam asked.

Blake shrugged and peeled onto Eckley Road. "Beats me."

## **APPLE OF MY EYE**

- Emily Cherkauskas

pearly teeth emerge from between supple lips  
hungrily biting a dewdrop-covered apple  
freshly picked from the gala tree

pearly teeth emerge from between supple lips  
delicately biting their shaky bottom lip  
freshly kissed by their one true love

as they lie within the shadow of the gala tree

## **Bridge in the Woods**

- Tyler Savitski



## **Out of this world**

- Mady Hornack

We wait for midnight  
Where we can see our passion written in the stars  
And when the sun rises we lay together waiting for the eclipse  
So we can experience something cosmic again

We are not radiant like most lovers  
Our energy is too powerful for the daylight  
We touch and are sent into orbit  
Where our love circulates among the stardust

## **Still-Beating Heart**

- Nate Stavish

I hold your still-beating heart  
Outside our house by the dark void  
Its edges fitted with wires of barb  
Its walls made of flesh adjoined  
I can't stand this time apart

Memories flash like a fresh polaroid  
Shaking to be able to see you just right  
I can't hear the sound of your voice  
Your face is lost in the night

The dark red cavern squelches under my feet  
My torch cooks it with its light  
I keep searching for the one I need to meet  
Because of him, we may reunite

My mind screams out to your soul  
I reach and grab for the fragments  
I wish we could grow old  
Fantasy slows my fast descent

I wake up to the moaning of the walls  
Made by spirits imprisoned for eternity  
I see a man in a red shawl  
His character opposes all confraternities

He takes your heart into his left hand  
He stares at it with his empty goat eyes  
The flesh swallows me like quicksand  
I wish I had told you goodbye

## The Father & The Son

- Drew Haritos



## Grieving in the 21st Century

- Breanna Ebisch

a dead girl follows me on instagram.  
it wasn't always that way.  
in fact, i knew her once.  
on the field, in the classroom, as a friend.  
now, it's impossible for my follow count  
to ever return to zero.  
because her follow button can't be  
unclicked anymore.  
the reminder is always there.  
of someone lost.  
of someone who was.  
of someone.  
her.  
a bright soul with the kindest heart.  
a dead girl follows me on instagram.  
how weird is that?  
grieving is immortalized in the age of social media.  
how can we ever move on?



## **Guilt is God**

- Haley Katona

devoted and on fire  
here, down on my knees  
in the flames and directly facing  
the pinnacle of god, to whom I have given  
all that I can hold within me: my pain  
so breathlessly am I  
a servant to the solitude of my godliness  
and holiness which I can only make up for  
in the ash and dirt of worshiping the knife  
smearing it across my face  
down in a line, across the same  
my skin is burning but I always am  
a torch ignited me and the rest has been  
restless and unfortunate in desire to break the rib  
bone, to drink the wine of which was supposed  
to be blood- I am a fire that was set  
and I can't seem to unbind myself from a promise  
I never made and yet it will kill me  
if it is not kept



## shotgun summer

- Darren Martinez

it just keeps going

the wind picks up the few dust particles  
and tosses them with abandon  
they tink-tink-tink off my glasses,  
get caught in my hair, which is already caught on  
the sides of my mouth,  
due to the aforementioned  
wind.

some films have their logical trajectory in  
the hobo with a shotgun,  
who kills god.  
there is no usurper,  
perhaps an outer god will  
shore up ranks  
and maintain responsibility,  
but the hobo  
does not stop being  
a hobo  
just for killing god

other films, you know your protagonist, and  
everything and all that they love,  
will die.  
in a lot of ways, that's life. Might be silly to say all  
films should fully encompass life,  
though they all reflect it.  
but I find it a lot harder to relate to, and understand  
a film that doesn't end in death.

a camera cast upon death,  
viewing it, worshipping it, being consumed by it.

The shotgun bristles against my tattered flannel,  
smacks of oil.  
bag rattles of shells,  
gunpowder whips up a frenzy,  
buckshot in my smile.

## **Caramel Crown**

- Tyler Savitski



## **The Poem on Sleepin**<sup>1</sup>

- Saurabh Patel

Delighted for a moment you then move in.

When the eyes open, senses come in.

Sleeping five hours, you still wanna be in.

But reality gives you a sense to not go in.

Again you wait for the dream to come in.

Eagerly waiting for the time to come in.

When the eyes close the dream comes in.

---

1 Note to Reader: To have a better feel and understanding of this poem, imagine yourself when you feel drowsy in any class(es).



## do we should we

- Jay Guzewicz

### Grammar Handbook

Do we? Should we?

Communication is [redacted] everything [redacted]  
[redacted] chop up our  
[redacted] feelings and emotions [redacted]  
[redacted] impart a little of ourselves  
[redacted] Writing is another matter.

[redacted] stiff and formal [redacted]

[redacted] we speak [redacted]

[redacted] stretch the [redacted] rules. [redacted] could have said, *I wouldn't*  
[redacted] *We wouldn't* [redacted] Nobody would. [redacted]  
[redacted] superfluous to the point of [redacted] Some  
[redacted] understood while they would discard it [redacted]

The reason for all of this [redacted] complete sentences  
[redacted] to acknowledge that we may legitimately write sentences which seem in  
[redacted] complete from someone's point of view, and we must always be alert to  
the danger of [redacted] meaningless [redacted]

[redacted] cryptic style, you run the risk  
[redacted] a cup of coffee  
[redacted] a sheaf of papers in the desk while you are busy on the phone  
[redacted] might fly off quickly. On the desk and the way. What you don't realize  
[redacted] you turn quickly and spin it, is that the coffee, not the pile of papers,  
[redacted] left for you.

The door slammed [redacted] fell off the desk. He  
[redacted] the error of incomplete sentences, [redacted] one of assuming  
[redacted] presumptuous [redacted] assuming [redacted] the  
narrative [redacted]

**You Can't Say Wilkes-Barre Doesn't Love You**  
- Tyler Savitski



## **Life as We Know It**

- Nate Stavish

I pass corpse grey buildings  
In the back of my friend's beaten-up car  
Trying to find something fulfilling  
We travel near and far  
We never find anything worth doing  
We are the kings of boredom  
The czars of apathy  
We are cigarette smokers in mourning  
Of fun that died a junkie



**Untitled**

- Dana Reed



## Oil

- Fen Farnelli

Set the tempo to my dreams,  
Where city smoke stacks spout sweet steam,  
The stars snuffed out by docile clouds,  
And gather quick within the crowd,  
To place a tongue on tart benzine  
And cinnamon symptoms saccharine,  
Of open air stuffed tight with friends,  
A knot of forms, of hods and hens,  
Then rest, ferment, fermata there,  
Burnt scent of nectar in the air,  
Til sick the taste of company,  
Upended lungs and pageantry,  
As oil's wiped away by rain,  
And roiled thunder rolls again,  
The sky now opens, bitter and vast,  
And breaks apart our silent cast,  
And petrichor leaves parkways bright,  
Make saline that sweet slick of night,  
And dry we sit as this song ends,  
Anointed, soon, we'll be again.

# **ABSOLUTISM**

- Emily Cherkauskas



## **The Crimson Repose**

- Jackie St. Claire

*I cannot help but feel unheard, with ears that ring with noise. A gambit every word I speak, and so I speak with poise. A world aghast, I walk alone. A path I walk on pain I've known. A tongue of poison, forged of fear. A watchful eye, forged in here. A rhyme interrupted, a thought unheard. I tried to speak, but said no--*

The council calls me in again. I have been here before. The callous gazes glazed on me, I can tell they will not care. I must speak loudly, and boldly here.

The centremost one speaks. "What business have you here?" Of course I have no business. But they ask it all the same. It seems the business is theirs, and so it becomes mine. "I wish to move forward, perhaps oh high and mighty ones, you will grant me passage?"

I see them whisper, I see them peek. It is impolite to notice, so I do not. Their deliberations are equal in theory. But what the schemer thinks, the speaker says, and that thought is what is said. "No." It's simple, and it's harsh. But I will pass nonetheless. I must speak these words "Of course, my council. I will turn back now."

I sneak past their watch, their word, their law. Judge me if you will, that's your mistake to make. I cannot abide some things, I must move forward, undeterred. I must complete my *word*.



## Far Away

- Vaishnavi Kotiyan

There is a sea of limitless potential  
Existing at all times  
In the ether of the universe.

Human beings as vessels,  
Bring this potential into being.  
When not every scar made is ugly,  
Some scars of the moon give its celestial beauty.

There is a celestial mind force,  
A great sympathetic force,  
Life, of which everything is composed.

I became a comet, shooting back into the heavens,  
Burning bright; throwing sparks against the night sky,  
Forever illuminating the earth with my light.

So, when dark thoughts shroud my body spirits.  
Sweet hope! Celestial influence around me sheds,  
Having the silver pinions over my head,  
I calm my mind and gain the happiness I could not find.



## Untitled

- Savannah Hallett



## **panic attack**

- Darren Martinez

I cannot put to words the agony I've undergone  
the past few months.

What is a panic attack?

It is this feeling of duh-duhduhduh-duh  
in your heart,  
like your body is drifting a go-kart  
and everything is speeding up  
and accelerating  
faster than your brain can handle

and you're lonely  
so lonely  
it's dark  
and fast  
and time doesn't make sense  
and you just want light  
and neutrality  
finality

and your room, where you had your first panic  
attack

of recent memory

-

there were  
perhaps  
many many more in the past

-

becomes a den for  
further panic

the shadows stretch across your posters  
the stacks of books that block your floor  
and you fear your own room  
your own body

the mind races against the body  
nobody wins

and this goes on and on  
and you're worried about rent  
a job  
a love life  
your ailing body  
hatred  
pain  
fear

money  
it never  
never  
fucking  
never ends



## **hyperdontia**

- Jay Guzewicz

i want more teeth in my mouth than my jaw allows,  
want to unhinge my bones and scream  
feral and monstrous and dark.

i am the nightmare of the little girl i once was,  
my spine has been twisted like the tree branch  
she used to swing on, graceful and polite.  
there is no grace carried in my footsteps anymore,  
it has been beaten out of me,  
carved out of my back leaving my blood  
dripdripdripping onto my white shirt.

i am not who i once was, who i could've once become.

that girl who swung from tree branches has died,  
buried by skeletons of dead and rotting dogs.  
i killed her myself, with my bitterness and fear,  
with my claws that sprouted from dainty fingers  
wrapped around her delicate little throat.

it was better for her to suffocate by my hand,  
then the hand of the person who stole everything good from us.

# Spaced Out

- McKenna Dolan



## Kill Bill Vol.2/28

- Aster Rowland

laughing my ass off about how when we were dating you didn't like it when  
I said

"I thought you hated me"  
but now that we're friends  
remember, because YOU wanted to,  
I never see your ass

your favorite game is MTG  
*when's my birthday?*

what 19 year old man doesn't know who emmett till is?  
whenever I tell that story  
people think I should've broken up with you first.  
too damn old to be blaming catholic private school

your favorite color is watermelon pink  
*what's my wife's name?*

i know there was good too,  
your goofy smile  
man you were a good cuddler  
the random kisses  
and thanks for catching me up on mha

your favorite anime genre is isekai  
*what's my dream vacation spot?*

for the love of God say what's on your mind in the moment  
before my head goes through a window.

thanks for (almost) making me fall in love with the bare minimum

**Grid Painting**  
- Aracellys Pineda



## **The Little Misses of Wavering Self-esteem**

- Ylonis Grant

Little Miss doubtful, meet Little Miss insecure.

I'm Little Miss all my problems fade away when I walk through the door.

This Little Miss wants a happy ending, so she's Little Miss idealistic.

Scared of screwing up, she's Little Miss failed connections.

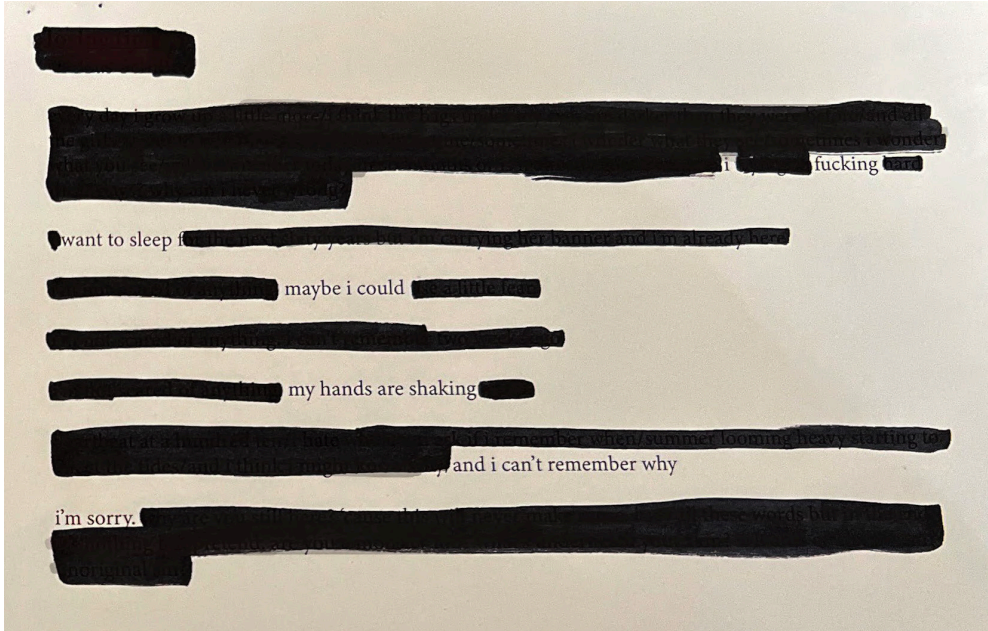
Scared of not being worthy to meet

Little Miss handing out rejections.



sleep

- Brynn Stahl



## **The Poem on Gettin' Threatened**

- Saurabh Patel

When you trying to get some work done  
You know well, soon it should be done  
Voiding sleep in order to see it done  
Then suddenly you are summoned  
Weird guy it is, asking you the question:  
Hey you, when you gonna be done?  
Zone it is yours and you the person  
Zone justly mine, reply was simple  
Tho simple, guy seemed done  
Said he thrice, "You got an attitude person?"  
As you asked twice, you felt threatened  
Lost in thoughts of completion  
Trying to explain the situation  
Left alone to achieve completion  
You the person, happy to be pardoned  
Being just, and had been threatened  
Never mind tho, as work has to be done

## **It's Mine**

- Caden Temple

A bookmark untouched. The calluses of love. The weight is enough, to imprint your hug. The marks left behind, memories set in stone. Your hand rests in mine. Your house, is my home. Your breath, I breathe. Your arm, my sleeve. Your visions, I see. Your wish, my dream. It's our Territory.



## **Ethereal**

- M. Michele Geiser



## **Introspection**

I am Enrique

- Anonymous

## **Celestial**

- Naveena Koli

From the womb of the night,  
Comes out the sun, glowing and bright  
The sky is his cradle, to dwell and grow.

White clouds, his playmates,  
Yet a longing, for someone he awaits.  
The lone lover continues to blaze in sorrow;  
Long enough, not knowing what will follow.

Then the demure moon finally arrives,  
And brazen sun softly sparkles and shines

The broken waves of the ocean  
Threading through the earth's thin air  
Her mind, embroidered with constellations.

Sun and moon in their galaxy of love  
Teaching the truth of life from the high and above

Love is timeless, everlasting and eternal  
An essence of existence that is universal.

## **Delight**

- Tyler Savitski



## **am i that much of a freak**

- Darren Martinez

I've been playing this game recently  
called Risk of Rain.

The general premise is of this huge, universe-traversing  
shipping freighter getting assaulted by a godly being,  
divined through primal strength

you play as survivors from the crew, or rescuers  
with the prime objective being  
to escape!

being that the huge freighter was demolished,  
its cargo peppers the landscape.  
said cargo is the survivors' only hope,  
as the various shipments contain items that accelerate  
beyond human capability

the game is addicting as shit.

but also, I love the game's commentary  
on our addiction to material things. I love the idea  
that the sci-fi world will still require massive shipping conglomerates.  
I love the soundtrack  
I love reading the item and enemy lore.  
and I love that nine out of ten times,  
the natural world will repel the player like the sinful, foreign object they are.  
Game over.

I've got friends that play this game with me via multiplayer.  
The gameplay loop keeps us quite engaged,  
but its fair to say we haven't touched much upon the readings I have of the game.

I'm not sure if we would share too many sentiments.  
But I'm also not sure if my English major training just doesn't let me turn my brain off.

in a similar vein, I find it hard to explain to others why I love the cyberpunk genre so much.  
I find it hard to explain to others that sometimes we live in a cyber dystopia in our waking hours.  
I don't know why I feel good when I feel melancholy.  
I finished the short anime series Cyberpunk: Edgerunners, and I knew every character I loved would die or suffer, from the very first episode. It's a beautiful story about fate, about the power of mega-corporations, the existence of free will, about labor, about so fucking much. So much.  
I'm definitely not alone in the world when I gush about it.  
But I'm pretty alone in when I look at what I'm surrounded by in Bumfuck, Pennsylvania.  
People seem to limit their mind, on purpose.

I don't think I'm all that smart  
Or a revolutionary,  
Or anything like that.  
I'm just a dumb punk kid with a head full of anime.  
But am I that much of a freak?  
Am I that much of an outlier?

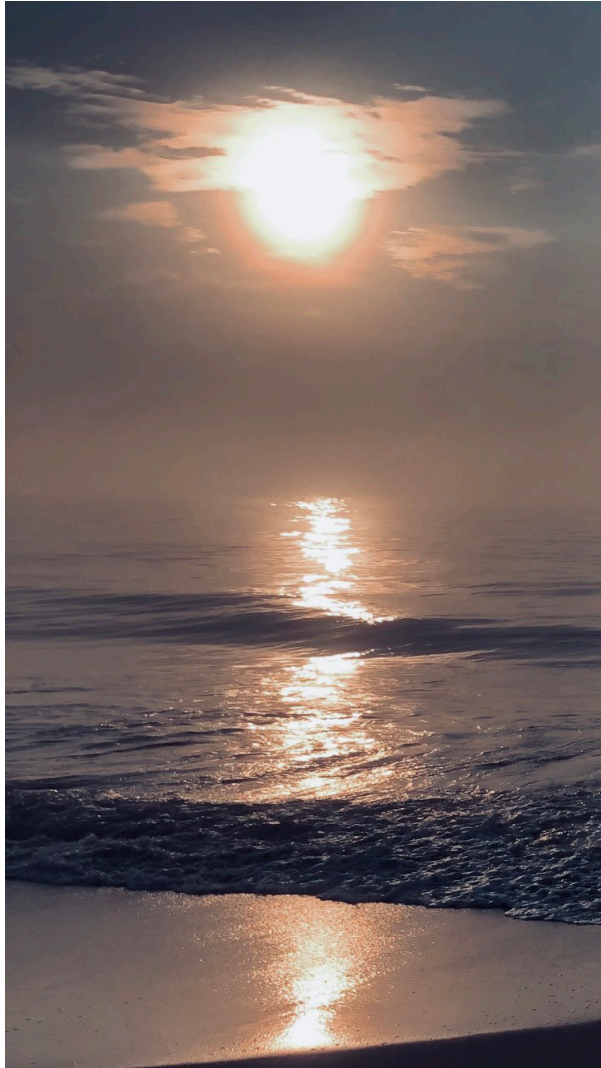
## **Sinking**

- Nate Stavish

I sink further into the blue-black sea  
I paddle and push desperately  
The darkness envelops me  
It swallows me whole  
I am met by neon red eyes  
And a tentacle  
A looming presence that grabs hold of my mind  
A hidden God that I didn't want to find  
A cavalcade of calamari sing a coda  
A beautiful hymn of my demise  
The feeling of dread lasts for an eternity  
Why won't the monsters devour me?

**CAPTURE**

- Emily Cherkauskas





## Thoughts of Otherworldly

- Mastari Shaikh

A planet,  
No eye has ever seen,  
No ear has ever heard,  
No mind can ever imagine,  
It's beyond and above everything,  
There are angels who will greet you.

A place where your persona changes,  
Hatred from your heart, all taken out,  
Nobody hurts you there,  
You'll never fall sick,  
Nobody tells you to work.

You will not experience burning sun or bitter cold,  
Natural light instead of sunlight,  
Plenty of food,  
Smells of sweat like musk.

Palaces made of pure gold,  
One brick is Gold,  
One brick silver,  
One brick Emerald,  
One brick Diamond,  
Each one is different.

Sizes of doors from earth to sky,  
One room which leads to another room,  
That leads to another room,  
Where you have new fruits, new dishes,  
Each bite will taste different,  
Everything will be new.

No need of cosmetic,  
No need of plastic surgery,  
Just desire your imaginary face,  
And your face changes.

## The Nun

- Anthony L . Liuzzo

Sister Agatha watched as Nurse Jackson tended to the tiny bedroom in the Group Home. Nurse Jackson was a short, heavy-set woman with a roundish face who seemed always to be in a good mood. “Heavens” thought the Sister, “she could be cleaning up my urine and still be smiling!” Nonetheless, she would dearly miss the caretaker, who at the end of the week would be moving out of the area in order to be closer to her grandchildren.

The retired nun was 83 years of age and extremely frail. While she had no terminal disease of which she knew, she suffered from an advanced form of arthritis that left her in extreme pain and unable to attend to several basic needs, hygienic and otherwise.

Colleen, as she was called prior to her entry to the convent, was the middle child of three girls. Her older sister, Jennifer, was beautiful beyond words, and her younger sister, Marybeth, carried a posture of pertness and impishness that the boys seemed to adore. Colleen entered the convent at the age of eighteen and became Sister Agatha.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Agatha had served as a grammar school teacher in a Catholic boys’ school. Those were the glory days, when young students learned discipline, respect for elders, and, most importantly, adherence to society’s rules of behavior. Now, at the dawn of this new millennium, it just wasn’t the same any longer.

As she reflected upon her life, the Sister recalled one incident in particular. As she had turned the corner to one of the corridors in the school, a handsome young boy named Robert Carrulo was imitating her stance, while exclaiming repeatedly “I am Aggie, the old baggie.” This was especially infuriating for two reasons. First, alluding to her as old was absurd, since at the time she was only in her late forties. And second, and far more importantly, referring to her by a shortened version of her first name violated all rules of decorum and respect. Mr. Carrulo paid the price for this transgression, by being the recipient of five whacks with the metallic ruler, and also by being required to stay after school for an entire month, spending this time cleaning several classrooms.

Nurse Jackson was now returning to the bedroom after a brief stint away. Following a few feet behind her was a handsome young man. Nurse Jackson explained that the gentleman was her replacement and introduced him as Nurse Robert Carrulo. He smiled at Sister Agatha while a glint of recognition formed in his eye. “Please,” he said, “feel free to call me Bobby.”

## **Eat, Drink, and Be Scary**

- Krista Harner

Vivienne Moyer gazed at the portrait before her. The man, in his buttoned vestment and large overcoat, gazed back. He had a broad forehead and a thick mustache perched above unsmiling lips. A coarse, puffy beard extended six inches below his chin.

“Know who that is?” came a voice behind her.

Vivienne whipped around. A girl about her own age—eleven—smiled smugly.

“The founder of Bube’s Brewery?” Vivienne had been enjoying the peace and quiet of the Brewery Gallery—its narrow corridor, antiquated brick archways, faint lighting. It was a nice break from the live band and raucous laughter of The Biergarten, the brewery’s outdoor dining area where her parents and their friends—the DiRossi’s—were enjoying an evening of dinner and entertainment.

“Yes, but I bet you don’t know his name or how to pronounce it. It’s Alois Bube,” she continued without skipping a beat. “Ala-wees Boo-bee.” Snickering, she explained, “It’s German. He was an eighteen-year-old brewing apprentice when he emigrated from Bavaria. He bought this brewery in 1876.”

When her parents first mentioned dinner with the DiRossi’s at Bube’s Brewery, Vivienne was excited. Their daughter, Adele, was her best friend. With the weather finally seasonable for April, she was looking forward to eating outside. Bube’s was a popular spot, with its Murder Mystery Dinners, theatrical feasts, brewery tours, and haunted history. While her parents were regulars, it was Vivienne’s first time, and she couldn’t wait for a night out with her best friend.

Then Adele had gotten a sinus infection. Though Vivienne had begged her parents to let her stay home, they’d insisted she still join them, and her annoyance had only increased during the twenty-minute drive from Hempfield to Mount Joy.

“You seem to know a lot about this place,” Vivienne said.

“I’m here often,” the girl answered. “My name’s Lina.”

“Vivienne.”

“So, Vivienne, what do you think of my dress?” Lina twirled around.

A blush crept up Vivienne’s neck. She’d been wondering why the girl was dressed so oddly. While Vivienne sported a t-shirt, cardigan, capris, and flip flops, Lina was wearing a flowing white dress with dark stockings and black leather lace-up ankle boots. “Sorry, but it looks like a nightgown.”

“It’s my costume!” Lina dissolved into giggles. “I’m an actress.” Dramatically, she bowed to an imaginary audience. “My parents are in the theatre troupe that performs the Murder Mystery Dinners. I get to participate sometimes. We just finished rehearsing for tomorrow’s show called ‘Witches Brew.’ It’s based on the Bube family history and their magical secret recipes.” She wiggled her eyebrows at Vivienne. “I’m playing Pauline, the granddaughter of Alois.”

“Wasn’t she schizophrenic? You know, heard voices?”

Lina became very somber. “Why do you ask that?”

“My best friend Adele read it on the website. She was looking up the menu ahead of time and found some history about this place.” Vivienne jerked her thumb back to the portrait. “Doesn’t the spirit of Alois haunt the brewery because he killed his granddaughter? Drowned her in a barrel to purify her soul?”

*A baptism gone wrong*, Adele had called it.

Lina gazed fondly at the portrait. “Not true. Alois understood Pauline and believed in her... brewing talents. Doctors wanted to institutionalize her, but Alois refused. He permitted her to live in the brewery until her death.”

“So, who actually killed her?”

Lina’s eyes darkened. “Loneliness.”

In the distance, Vivienne could hear scattered applause and the faint clinking of silverware. She had the sudden urge to return to The Biergarten, with its fried food and spicy cider, tuneful music and jovial voices. “Listen, do you want to join us for dessert? I’m sure my parents wouldn’t mind...”

“I’m not to go outside,” Lina interrupted. She skipped down the hallway, motioning for Vivienne to follow. “Why don’t you come with me? I’ll show you around and introduce you to the other theatre kids.”

Vivienne glanced in the direction of The Biergarten. Part of her knew she should rejoin her parents, but the other part of her was still angry that they made her come without Adele...

\* \* \*

“...so Alois expanded the brewery and built the Central Hotel to accommodate guests and travelers,” Lina prattled. “The hotel had the first flushing toilet in all of Mount Joy!”

While Vivienne had found Lina to be an informative tour guide, she couldn’t shake the feeling that she was drowning—not just under the depth of information being provided, but because they were physically descending deep into the bowels of the brewery.

“How far underground are we?” Vivienne hesitantly stepped off the steep lantern-lined staircase that opened into a cavernous room with limestone walls and a candle chandelier.

Lina smiled, her beady eyes crinkling in the corners. “Forty-three feet below street level. This is part of the Catacombs.”

Vivienne shivered. “Catacombs?”

“Yes—chambers initially dug for beer storage, but now a place to congregate.”

Lina’s boots tapped across the cement floor as she led Vivienne to an enormous barrel in the corner. Positioned to conceal where part of the wall had crumbled from decay, it disguised the entrance to a small alcove. Stepping through, Vivienne found herself in what seemed like a kitchen nook—a small square table sat with four wicker chairs. Chipped plates, rusted silverware, and dingy cloth napkins made up four table settings. In the middle of the table sat a bowl of sugared pastries and a ceramic pitcher full of amber-colored liquid.

“We’re here!” Lina announced.

Vivienne watched, mesmerized, as Lina made her way around the table, greeting invisible guests.

“Sorry we took so long,” Lina was saying, “but she wanted the tour first.”

Vivienne warily eyed the vacant chairs. “I should be getting back to The Biergarten...”

But Lina cut her off. “It’s rude to mention leaving when you’ve only just arrived.” She turned toward an empty chair. “Ingrid, don’t be a piggy. Pass the German dumplings.”

Vivienne looked from Lina to the empty chair to Lina again. Huffing in irritation, Lina retrieved the bowl of sugared pastries and offered them to Vivienne. Declining at first, Vivienne took one when Lina declared, “No one leaves without a taste test” and planted herself firmly between Vivienne and the alcove entrance.

Hesitantly, Vivienne bit into it, the sweetness of the cinnamon sugar and tartness of plums blending deliciously in her mouth.

“Tasty, aren’t they?” Clapping twice, Lina announced, “Annalise, the apple cider!”

Vivienne jumped at the sharp claps but took the goblet obediently when Lina—Annalise?—handed it to her. In her panic, she drained half of its contents, the warmth trickling down her throat and spreading through her insides like a carpet stain. Dizziness soon overtook her.

“Whaaaat?” Vivienne’s voice sounded foreign and warbled, her arms and legs becoming heavy and immobile.

“Granddaddy was right,” Lina said proudly. “I *do* have special brewing talents.”

Vivienne felt as if she were unraveling, each layer of her essence peeled and pulled until she was completely unwound, her entire spirit comprised of one long spiraling thread, as delicate as an apple’s peel.

And then, with a final jerk, she was looking out of different eyes, from a different body.

A body wearing a flowing white dress and black leather boots.

Still unable to move, Vivienne’s mind raced in terror. *Lina... Pauline... one and the same...*

“When the paralysis wears off, you’ll only be able to go as far as the brewery permits. No more outside.” Pauline stretched luxuriously in her new body. “Now, you said your—I mean, *my*—parents are in The Biergarten, yes? And who’s my new best friend—Adele?”

*No!* Vivienne struggled to cry out. *No!*

But Pauline Bube had already stepped back through the crumbling wall, her flip flops slapping the cement as she walked toward a new future.

Leaving Vivienne Moyer wedged in the past.

## **Celestial Soul**

- Harita Pitale

A glowing piece shining bright,  
Mystic? Pearl? Dark? Sunlight?  
Soul is me.

Deep underneath lies a land of fantasy,  
Soul's aspiration, desire, dreams and more.  
Keeping me in suspense yet joy, thrill yet bliss.

The land here is lonely, from corals to stardust,  
Waves to clouds, every presence  
Soothes and calms.

Another side of the land filled with ambition,  
Stays, lives in the present, knows reality.

All bits, a work of art,  
Forever my soul be in high spirits,  
Remembering thou,  
A dazzling celestial.

## **sometimes i wish i had an older sister**

- Breanna Ebisch

everyone knows the elementary school saying “first is the worst, second is the best.” i never thought of it as anything more than a childish chant that usually followed a loss in some game during recess. but now, i know it’s true. no one can rearrange a birth order, but being the eldest child is both a gift and a curse. it’s an added challenge to an already complicated life. and sometimes, i wish i had an older sister. someone to give me advice at different times because she’s already been through it. someone who knows how confusing it is to exist and be a pillar of support when it’s needed. don’t get me wrong, i love being the older sister myself. but sometimes, it would be nice to have a sibling, a built-in best friend, who understand the complications of being a girl, becoming a woman and balancing everything life throws at you. but it isn’t that simple, i know.

## **For Whom Grief Calls**

- Haley Kotana

I can see swans,  
snow colored and delicately posed  
melting through the space, the cello,  
between me and the silhouette of you  
I can see the embroidered roses  
the mix of cologne, sweat and my perfume

she told me I loved you  
but all I can see is purple,  
the blend between red and blue,  
how my blood will never be as red  
as you wanted to paint that room

I can feel the sheets pull and from this,  
the smell of apricots and boxed soap  
in me you saw what I never knew,  
where are you now except vanished  
like the fire blight of my fruit  
where we once sat, how you once said my name  
I can hear the sighs over the afternoon

and she told me I loved you

May erupted to grace my neck in green hue  
and the sun had never kissed me  
quite as hard as it did then

I wish I had done everything on earth with you



## NOSTALGIA

- Emily Cherkauskas



## **Poem**

- Aster Rowland

I miss you, jerks  
I miss the spontaneous trips to applebees  
and the homework parties  
and the hanging out until 3am  
talking about god knows what.

I miss your magic cards  
your LEDS  
your rock playlist  
your goofy inebriated face.

I miss your bojack rants  
your hippie-esque clothes  
your sasquatch hair  
your scrunch face.

At the same time, it  
feels like im not allowed to miss you.  
or maybe I'm crazy and we're all okay  
just 'busy' like you said

But if we aren't, I get its  
kinda  
maybe a little  
my fault

Cause I'm the one who stopped  
talking to elaine cause I thought she  
was a liar, and I also trusted  
½ a set of bozos

Maybe somehow in the  
crosshairs, I seemed  
drama filled  
and I take full responsibility

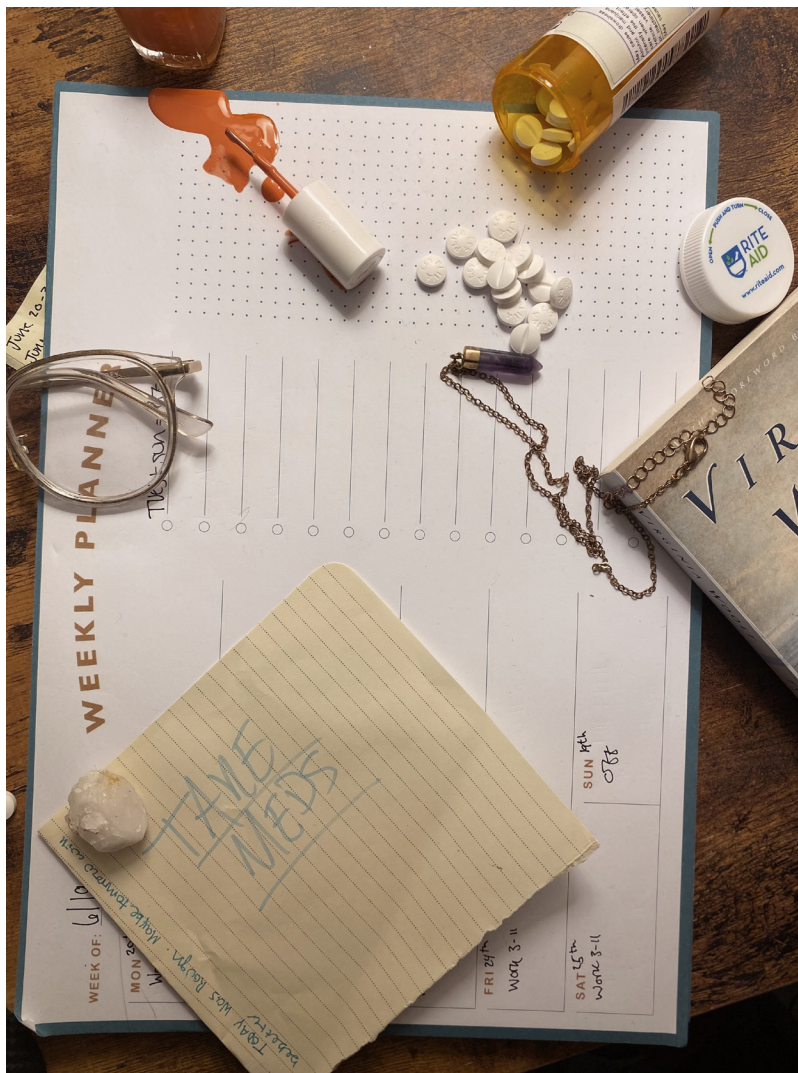
I just want-  
sorry.  
I just want it back to normal

I just want it quiet in my head again.

ps, sorry I called you jerks

**still life**

- Drew Haritos





**buried**

- Brynn Stahl



## **Surrender**

- Haley Kotana

please spare me.

I will fall down to my knees  
wrapping around your stone feet  
spiraling fast and uncontrollably  
between your legs while my nightshade  
tangles up you, tall, shooting up leaves  
and vines, ivy, thyme and rosemary  
between fingertips, letting the sun die  
green leaves browning, so tightly  
wound against your statue,  
to give up my being to fragment  
heaven, blue skies and clear lament  
body melting into vine wrapping around you,  
there in the garden, you now must be,  
and I fall down to my knees  
in my final act of devotion,  
my everlasting shattering of decree  
to wither between your palms  
just so you can simply  
never ever again leave

## A Mother's Desires

- Breanna Ebisch

“You’ll be the mom. You’ll be the dad.”

“I’ll be the sister. And you can be the babysitter.”

And just like that, a tree on the playground became a house and we were a family.

Little did I know then as a naive, six-year-old, but this would be the closest

I ever get to being a mother.

My mind would be made up for me before I even got the change to realize what was at stake.

But I know, I will not be a mother.

How could I?

Bring a child into this world, only to leave them in a darker, crueler place than I know now.

The guilt.

Maybe I’m selfish.

But risking my life isn’t worth it.

So any dream of being a mother one day

will stay just that.

A dream.

A mother’s desire so to say.

## Bees

- Jacob O'Boyle

### Bees

I awaken from a great slumber,  
my grand,  
sleep-deprived  
delusion of confidence  
fading faster  
than the rising sun.  
I sit up and I wonder:  
what have I done?  
And what have I not?

## Space Cow

- Nate Stavish

“I’m gonna be a space cow,” said a black and white cow named Reginald. “No, you’re not,” replied the cow standing next to him, named Isaac.

“Why?” asked Reginald.

“Because you’re on Earth, and you will stay on Earth,” said Isaac.

“I can feel it, man. I’m going to get chosen. My journey through space is going to happen soon,” said Reginald.

“You’re gonna get turned into ground beef,” said Isaac.

“No, that’s what you’re gonna be. I’m gonna be a space cow,” said Reginald. He thought to himself for a moment. “Wait,” he said, “what is ground beef?”

“It’s what they turn you into in there,” said Isaac as he motioned to the giant industrial building made of wood and metal just down the hill and across the field that hundreds of other cows were currently being herded into.

“That? Man, that’s the space station. Yeah, all of those guys are going to real space. Because they believe,” said Reginald.

“What do you mean, ‘real space?’” scoffed Isaac.

Reginald shook his head in frustration. “Well, I am in space because Earth is in space. In there, though, they send you into outer space. It’s where all the cool stuff is. It’s the actual appeal of space. See, we try to create all the cool stuff in space here to prepare us for the real space, the outer space.”

“But by trying to create space on Earth, you’re admitting that Earth isn’t space.” Reginald shook his head, disappointed. “You white and black cows, man, you just don’t get it.”

“Whatever,” Isaac scoffed, “I think I get it better than you.” Isaac wandered off to another part of the farm. Standing next to Reginald was going to make him more stupid by the minute. All of the cows were situated on a piece of flat land that felt like it stretched on forever. Several metallic lines and poles surrounded them as they grazed, talked, and slept. Whenever the cows tried to figure out what these lines and poles were, one of them got hurt. Isaac knew what it was. It was a fence meant to cage them in here. Isaac passed a group of cows in a semi-circle around an older, apparently wiser, cow they called Shaman.

Shaman was energetic for his age. He approached cows seemingly at random and would begin shouting mid-sentence, just to get his message across.

“Hear me, brothers and sisters of the galaxy,” said Shaman. “One of foul spirit and spoilt milk may think of this line as a line of pain and imprisonment. They are wrong. These lines GUIDE US. They guide



towards SALVATION.” Shaman moves through the crowd, parting them with every step. He looks at the industrial building, its guiding funnel is now closed. “Right there, in our HOLY TEMPLE, our SPACE STATION, we shall be guided to the beginning of our journey. The gods will choose us soon enough, brothers and sisters.”

Shaman took notice of Isaac.

“I remember you, brahman. I remember you from when you were just a calf.” Shaman spoke to the crowd, “This brahman doesn’t believe in outer space even though his mother was chosen to be with the great ones among the stars.”

“My mom didn’t go to space. She died.”

“How do you know that, boy?”

“How do you know she didn’t?”

“Because I say so, nonbeliever. What I say is truth.”

“Whatever.”

Shaman spoke to the crowd, “He will never understand, for we are black and white, and he is white and black. This is just another reason why he won’t go on his great journey.” “I look just the same as you,” Isaac said as he walked away.

Isaac found a nice corner to sit in. He watched as the other cows mingled and grazed, talking about outer space. He eventually fell asleep. The sunset and the moon rose along with the stars. Isaac was partially woken up by black and white cows mooing a hymn in the night. He tried his best to ignore it, but all of the noise snuck its way into his eardrum and kept him awake.

Isaac made his way to the herd of cows, led by Shaman, mooing the hymn. They sang by the entrance to the funnel. Within the funnel rested the closed mouth of the “space station.” The discolored rust on the metal door looked like the cosmos to many cows. To Isaac, it looked like flames. Reginald noticed Isaac walking over and quietly tried to dismiss him. “Get out of here, man,” he whispered.

Isaac pushed his way past him and parted the crowd, interrupting their hymn. Shaman looked at him as he approached.

“What are you doing here, boy?”

Isaac ignored him and looked out at the crowd.

“Can all of you, please, be quiet. I’m trying to sleep out there. It’s night. There are stars. So what? You see them all the time. There is no need to sing about it. I swear, I’ve lost more sleep because of your stupid songs than I’ve lost thinking about dying in that hellhole right behind us.”

The door in the funnel began to creak open, like a snake unhinging its jaw. Isaac turned around as a fiery orange light poured out from under the heavy metal door. Humans dressed in white hazmat

suits with black visors holding electric prods surrounded the fence. “Shit,” Isaac said to himself.

“Now is our time, fellow brahmans. The gods are here,” shouted Shaman to the crowd. “We are being chosen. Go into the light.” Shaman began to guide the herd beyond the metal door.

Isaac tried to resist the river of cows rushing past him. “Don’t go!” he shouted, “They’re going to kill you!” The black and white cows pushed through Isaac, taking him along with their current. Isaac was pressed against the side of the funnel. One of the humans shocked him with a prod. Isaac continued to push against the crowd, but his efforts were useless. The cows pushed him past the metal door and into the light. The metal door began to close. Outside, Isaac saw Reginald try to push his way through the crowd.

“I’m supposed to go! I’m supposed to be chosen! Why does he get chosen and not me?!” Reginald cried.

Isaac was met with another shock. He was forced to follow the narrow trail the other cows were on. Humans surrounded them from raised catwalks, cattle prods in hand. Each heartbeat in Isaac’s chest was an explosion. His eyes were in constant motion, examining every detail of the room. The area he was confined to was mostly white tile. Its crevices were dark and dirty. The metal catwalks the humans walked on were cold and black. The cows in front of him moved out of the way. Isaac saw a hallway with two rows of small pens. Each pen had a trail of blood leading out from it that went off to another part of this house of horror. The cow before him was placed in a pen that forced them to face the hallway.

Isaac turned to the cows behind him. “We’ve got to find a way out of here.” A human shocked him and moved him forward.

“Fear not, fellow brahmans,” said Shaman from a pen in the back. “They lock us in here, not to harm us, but to secure us for interstellar travel.”

“Stop lying to them! We’re all about to die!” shouted Isaac.

Isaac was forced into the pen next to Shaman. As the pens were filled, a human in a blue hazmat suit entered the hallway. He carried a silver object in his hand. He nodded to another human in a yellow hazmat suit with a clipboard.

“Check pressure,” said the human in yellow.

“Checking,” said the human in blue as he looked at a dial on the side of the object. He adjusted a knob and gave a thumbs up to the human in yellow. “All clear.” The human in blue pressed the silver object on the forehead of the first cow in his row. “Watch this, guys! I’m about to get chosen!” he said gleefully.

The human in blue stared down at the cow emotionlessly. He moved his finger to a rounded lever near the handle of the object. “Stand clear. Firing pneumatic weapon in three... two.. one.”

Blood exploded out from the cow's forehead. His limp body rattled the cage of the pen as it fell to the floor. The remaining cows mooed out in fear, shaking their cages, trying with every fiber of their being to escape.

"This has to be it. This has to be the way," Shaman said, shaky and unsure. He spoke up to the rest of the cows, "LISTEN, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, the GODS have CHOSEN us. FEAR NOT, for THIS is THE WAY." Shaman shrunk back into his cage after saying this. He whispered to himself, "This has to be the way. It has to be."

Shaman's words did not work. The cows continued to squirm and rattle their cages. There was so much blood in the room that the drain in the center of the floor was backed up. The cows had to stand in the essence of their dead neighbors while watching their slaughter. They were each picked off by their seemingly emotionless god as he counted down, "Three... two... one."

The thunk of the pistol reverberated throughout the room. The human moved on to his next victim, Shaman.

Shaman violently slammed himself against the walls of his pen, desperately trying to escape the inevitable.

"Please don't!" he shouted. He looked around at the dead bodies around him. "I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" he pleaded as if it would save him.

"Firing in three... two... one."

Thunk.

Isaac was the last one left. The room had gone quiet, but Isaac's eardrums were assaulted by the pounding of his heart. The human turned a knob on his pneumatic weapon and approached Isaac's cage. Isaac desperately tried to calm himself. No amount of deep breaths would slow the beat of the combustion engine inside his chest.

The human rested the pneumatic weapon on Isaac's forehead. Isaac closed his eyes and thought of his mother.

Darkness.

Nothing.

No sights.

No sounds.

Isaac couldn't tell if he was dead or not. He opened his eyes. The human lowered the pneumatic pistol. The human in a yellow hazmat suit approached the human in the blue hazmat suit.

"What are you doing?"

"I can't kill this one," said the human in the blue hazmat suit.

“Why?” asked the human in the yellow hazmat suit.

“It’s like all of the other cows are black and white. This one is white and black. You know what I mean?”

“They all look the same to me.”

“I don’t know if it’s even that. This one’s just... different.”

“Let it go then. Just stop wasting time,” said the human in the yellow hazmat suit. He walked away.

The human in the blue hazmat suit let Isaac out of the pen.

Isaac said, “Thank you,” but the human didn’t understand him.

The human led Isaac to another metal door. This one was much more thin than the one at the funnel. The human pulled it open with a chain. Isaac was met with a blinding white light. “Go,” said the human in the blue hazmat suit.

Isaac took a deep, calm breath and went through the door.

Isaac’s eyes adjusted to being outside. The cool breeze flowed through Isaac’s nostrils. His hooves clacked against the grey concrete of the parking lot. This sky was a clear blue with a sun that warmed his heart and should. He approached the wall of dark green spruce trees. He looked behind him and noticed that the slaughterhouse appeared very far away, along with the cows outside of it. It was as if all of that pain and suffering were a distant memory.

When Isaac turned around, he was face-to-face with another cow. He jolted back in fear. “Hey, what’s up, man?” said the cow.

“Who are you?” asked Isaac.

“I’m Peter.”

“Where am I?”

“You’re not there. That’s all that matters.”

Peter turned around and began walking towards a clearing in the trees. He turned back to Isaac.

“Come on. You’ve got places to see, people to meet,” he said.

Isaac followed Peter through the forest to a utopian meadow filled with lush grass. There were hundreds of cows grazing and doing whatever they wanted.

In the distance, Isaac noticed a familiar face.

**malignant**

- Drew Haritos



## Kaleidoscope

- Anonymous

Two heavenly bodies meet:

Uriel, shining resplendent, away—for only a moment—from his post at Eden’s gate, and Lucifer, his skin like glass, which can not produce light but only reflect and refract that which falls on him.

Uriel unsheaths his flaming sword, now used to encourage entry rather than forbid it, as the serpent shows its head, not yet crushed by Adam’s heel.

The two are tangled for a time, hemispheres shifting and turning over themselves, before the former finds himself aligned with the Heavens, laid atop the latter on the Earth.

Uriel’s light falls onto the fallen angel’s chest, shattering on impact against prismatic skin; from each drop, a thousand colors scatter, painting his face and torso in the myriad.

At last, the Church has reclaimed the rainbow.

Two heavenly bodies meet:

The sun, and his reflection in the sea. Two forms which may look at each other but never touch.

As I raise and turn the scope, I see the two reflect once more. The sky mirrors itself again, between the pooling tide, which turns, in turn, to find itself somewhere above the sky.

I feel, if I gaze through this glass enough, make sense of the patterns of color and light that scatter themselves about the prism, that I might one day look through your eyes: see, at a glance, the clovers pop out from the brush, their leaves the four suns, at last in physical contact.

Collide, o Scope? Perhaps.

## **AN ESCAPEE OF THE STARR'S FLESH**

- Emily Cherkauskas

I found a glass bottle, alone in the ocean.  
The glass scratched and scuffed, chewed on by beasts.  
A blood-stained tooth trapped in the cork.

When I raised it to the sky, the moon's reflection revealed an object inside.

A piece of paper folded neatly twice.  
It was an image, entirely black.  
But as the light catches the paper, I see speckles of white  
And gleamings of clouds and stars.

Beautiful stars that tell a story a human may never know.

It was a picture of you.



## Death

- M. Michele Geiser





## Courts of Justice vs Nafus

- Ashlee Harry

The Gates of Heaven shone in the eternal sunlight and gave off the holy pearly glow of bliss. One angel stood before the gleaming entrance in a luminescent white gown with wings to match. The normal flow into the blissful afterlife had a different feel today. The heat from the torturous afterlife down below billowed before the gates as the lottery allowed some to try to prove that their souls were clean and worthy. The first of the chosen hung between two winged demons before they tossed him to the ground.

“State your name,” the demon hissed at the man as he stumbled to his feet.

“John Nafus, sir,” his voice cracked as he stared at the angel. The angel surveyed the sunken remains of the man before him compared to the photograph within the file. John Nafus, before his sentence to Hell, had a full face with sharp features and coarse black hair, which hung like a curtain. His eyes that once held a spark was now a dull shade of black from eternal punishment. His prominent nose was now missing chunks and his left ear dripped blood.

“Bring him this way,” the angel floated above the clouds toward the heavenly courtroom of justice. The demons sunk their claws into Nafus’ arms before they dragged him to his table. He was haphazardly thrown into a chair before chains encased him.

Within the gleaming walls of the courtroom of justice was an audience of angels that sat in silence. Warmth and welcome washed over the room, except Nafus’ chair, as a powerful presence filled the room. At seven feet tall and wings that spread out double his height, he glowed within the sunlight as he floated to the enormous desk.

“Good morning, everyone. As you know, I am the Archangel Uriel and I will be overseeing the appeal proceedings today. We are here this morning to hold session in the court of justice for these tortured souls.” Uriel looked over at Nafus as he stared from his chains.

“Peter,” Uriel motioned to the angel that led Nafus and the demons in. “Please present our first case.”

“Before us sits John ‘Tex’ Nafus to once again try to prove his innocence from that fateful day deemed the ‘pay car murders.’ I would like you to make note that today, January 13th, 2022, is the 92nd anniversary of this horrific incident.”

“Noted,” Uriel nodded his head as Peter looked over at Nafus.

“Let me set the scene for you. We are in the quiet town of Warrior Run, Pennsylvania on the brisk January day as the locomotive train pulls a mine car. Within the mine car is the payroll for 600 coal miners that work for the Glen Alden Coal Company amounting to \$35,000.” The silent room

filled with grumbles of displeasure at Peter's words. Nafus tried to protest, but one of the demons clawed his shoulder and he remained silent.

"Now, this robbery would have been a success if not for the six men that got in the way. The goal was to have the mine car explode once it switched tracks of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad and before it hit No 20 tunnel. However, six men were in that mine car when it exploded. Four of them were killed, one lost his right leg and had his left foot amputated, while a guard suffered minor injuries."

"Peter, please tell us where John Nafus falls within this story."

"Of course. Mr. Nafus was overheard at a tavern planning the robbery. His partner stole the dynamite and purchased the wire while Nafus was the one to ignite the dynamite with the battery, which was found at the scene attached to the wires on the track."

"Murderer! Guilty!" Angels in the stands jumped to their feet and cried out before Uriel silenced them with a look.

"Nafus, do you have anything you would like to add?"

"I didn't get a fair trial." Nafus lifted his head and tears ran down his face. "I wrote to my family, maintaining my innocence until the day that I was strapped to the electric chair. I sit before you today with the same belief." The angels hissed in anger before they were silenced.

"As touching as your words are, Nafus, I believe that you already know –"

"Wait," Peter cut Uriel off as he looked down at his file. "It seems we have a new piece of information, sir."

"What do you mean?" Uriel's confusion filled the courtroom as Nafus looked at Peter.

"There seems to be a descendant of Nafus' who has discovered a vital piece of the investigation." Nafus' eyes burned bright with hope while the Angels stirred in unrest. "The girl has been researching the court cases and found conflicting eyewitness reports. One says that he was at the train tracks while another puts him in town."

"That could be a friend trying to cover for him!" An Angel in the stands shouted, but immediately went silent when he met Uriel's glare.

"Anything else, Peter?"

"Many of the court cases she has been mulling through have backed up these claims. She has enough evidence to clear Nafus' name." Peter and Uriel held each other's gaze as Nafus stared down at his hands and whispered a prayer. As the demon tightened his hand around Nafus' shoulder and pulled him to his feet, Uriel finally spoke.

"John Nafus, the courtroom of justice finds itself ready to make judgement. Due to the latest development of information, this courtroom has no choice but to rule you clear of this criminal

act. You will be rejudged the Gates of Heaven to see where you will be spending the rest of eternity.” A smile broke across Nafus’ face as the demon’s claws retracted from his shoulder. Two angels came forward and escorted him out of the courtroom. Before they slipped out the side door, Nafus stopped and looked back at Uriel and Peter.

“I know it may be too much to ask, but if you could, please send her a message of thank you for believing in me.”

## **Space**

- Mady Hornack

Space is something i've been given too much of  
life has left me with nothin but a Rocketship  
floating in the atmosphere  
I have gotten to know the milky way, so well  
too well

at night while the world is resting  
I am launched into my thoughts  
discovering how not to feel like an alien on my own planet  
perhaps i am still getting used to gravity

## **Judgement Day**

- Quinn Carden

No one could have expected this,  
these beings rising from the Earth,

they claim they are not here to harm us  
but rather to inform us of our wrongdoings.

They were not human  
but a more advanced version.

They were beautiful in a way that  
filled a person with an uneasy feeling.

The screams of terror surrounded me.  
They lied to us.

Why did they come here,  
or were they here all along?

## Staff Biographies

**Jay Guziewicz** graduated from Wilkes University in December '22, with a Bachelor of Arts in English and Psychology. In their spare time, Jay enjoys reading Batman comics, playing old Call of Duty games, and taking turns a little too fast.

**Emily Cherkauskas** is a senior in communication studies and English, with a minor in workplace writing. She'll let you know her fun fact in just a moment.

**Jackie St. Claire** is a supervillain who resides in Wilkes-Barre. Spending her nights scheming in the shadows, she works undercover at Wilkes University as a Digital Design student by day.

**Maddy Kinard** is a senior communication studies and English major with a minor in global cultures. Her (least) favorite thing to do is wait until the last possible second on assignments that, in reality, do not take that much time and are not that challenging, because she creates a false idea of them in her head and, in turn, fears them. It is not fun, but it is a fact.

**Drew Haritos** is a junior double major in psychology and English. She used to eat erasers off pencils as a child. It got so bad that her teacher made her write with crayons—she ended up eating those too.

**Dr. Michelle Anthony**, fortunate faculty advisor to The Manuscript Society, is also Associate Professor and Chair of the English Department at Wilkes University. In addition to poetry, she writes articles on eighteenth-century women writers, and has served on the editorial boards of the Midland Review (now defunct, hopefully not her fault) and Cimarron Review. Her poetry manuscript, *Vehicle On Fire*, was a finalist for the 2023 Longleaf Press book contest.

### ***Getting to know the submitters...***

***Aastha Shah*** is a first-year student in the Bachelors in Computer Applications program at Dr BMN College of Home Science, located in Mumbai, India.

***Alisha Keshvani*** is a first-year student in the Bachelors in Science program at Dr BMN College of Home Science, located in Mumbai, India.

***Anthony L. Liuzzo, J.D., MBA, Ph.D.***, is a professor emeritus of Wilkes University. While growing up in the Bronx, New York, Dr. Liuzzo was inspired by the works of Alfred Hitchcock, Rod Serling, and Roald Dahl. Although he has had ten of his law and business books published, this was his very first attempt at short story drafting.

***Aracellys Pineda*** is an international student at Wilkes, currently a sophomore psychology major with minors in neuroscience and art. At the moment, she can't think of any really fun facts that have happened to her, but some facts about her are: She laughs at everything, and even her own laugh makes her laugh more. She likes snakes and would like to have one as a pet. She loves horror movies. She likes to cook all kinds of food, make cakes and cookies. Lastly, she could go to class without breakfast, but never without makeup.

***Ashlee Harry, MA***, is a graduate student in the MFA in Creative Writing program. Ashlee fell in love with Greek mythology years ago and has jumped in head first to research and reimagine the classic tales.

***Aster Rowland*** is a sophomore criminology major with a WGS minor. Her fun fact is that she gets confused with every other Black woman under the sun on this campus, and she has no clue why.

***Breanna Ebisch*** is a 2022 alumni of the communication studies department. She has been to over 50 concerts and collects hockey pucks!

***Caden Temple*** is a first-year student in business management.

***Darren Martinez*** is an alumni of the English department and currently resides in graduation limbo. He can almost squat his body weight. Every day is a step forward!

**Fen Farnelli**, also known as the hellbender salamander, is a Wilkes alumni from the Class of 2022 and a species of aquatic giant salamander endemic to the eastern and central United States. Fen is the largest salamander in North America. A member of the family Cryptobranchidae, Fen is the only extant member of the genus Cryptobranchus. Other closely related salamanders in the same family are in the genus Andrias, which contains the Japanese and Chinese giant salamanders (From Wikipedia).

**Haley Katona** is a political science alumni, who graduated this past fall.

**Harita Pitale** is a second-year student in the Bachelors in Computer Applications program at Dr BMN College of Home Science, located in Mumbai, India.

**Janine P. Dubik** '78 MFA '19 has had her poems included in Poetry in Transit, a program of the Luzerne County Transportation Authority, since 2016. Her works have been published in Poets Live Fourth Annual Anthology; Poets Live Third Annual Anthology; The Scop; Back Channels' "The Pandemic Issue;" Word Fountain; The Electric Rail literary magazine; and Thirty-Third Wheel. She resides in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

**Jessica Van Orden** is a member of the class of 2023 with a major in English Literature. She hiked her first Colorado fourteener in Teva sandals and socks, following her camp counselor confidence that they could carry her anywhere.

**Krista Harner** received her B.S. in Secondary English Education from Millersville University (2004) and her M.A. and MFA in Creative Writing from Wilkes University (2008). She has been an English teacher for the past eighteen years. Her personal essay "Square Peg, Round Hole" was featured in Chicken Soup for the Soul: The Forgiveness Fix. Krista lives in rural Pennsylvania with her husband, three children, and fox red lab. Her obsessions include dogs, books, and ice cream.

**Mastari Shaikh** is a third-year student in the Bachelors in Computer Applications program at Dr BMN College of Home Science, located in Mumbai, India.

**McKenna Dolan** is a senior in digital design and media arts. She loves yoga and Pilates!



***M. Michele Geiser*** is a staff member in the office of Communication Studies. She is also the owner and artist of BepaStudio - Unique Art. She is such a right-brainer!

***Nate Stavish*** is a first-year English major, and is in your walls.

***Naveena Koli*** is a first-year student in the Bachelors in Computer Applications program at Dr BMN College of Home Science, located in Mumbai, India.

***Saurabh (Shiv) Patel*** is a sophomore chemistry major. He loves making new friends each day and there is a good chance he might know you or someone from your friend circle! Quick fact check: Ask in your friend circle(s) if they heard about someone named “SHIV”?

***Savannah Hallett*** is a student collections specialist at Wilkes.

***Quinn Carden*** is a first-year English major with a minor in creative writing. Quinn loves to travel, being able to learn about different cultures, try new foods, and visit historical landmarks.

***Vaishnavi Kotiyan*** is a first-year student in the Bachelors in Computer Applications program at Dr BMN College of Home Science, located in Mumbai, India.

***Ylonis Grant*** is a psychology and sociology student. Ylonis knows how to knit!

**And congratulations to the rest of our submitters!**

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