

◆ 20TH ANNIVERSARY ◆

Nota Bene 14
Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society Anthology

FROM THE FOUNDING EDITOR

One of Phi Theta Kappa's oldest traditions is to encourage, promote and reward excellence in writing; and so, it is with a great sense of pride that we present to you the 20th anniversary edition of *Nota Bene*.

In 1994 we embarked on a bold new venture to publish literary works by Phi Theta Kappa members. Our initial efforts were rewarded with a gratifying response, both from our members who flooded our mailboxes with submissions and by the audience who enthusiastically read the printed book.

After 20 years we continue to see the number of manuscripts received escalate. In a time where stories, papers and poems may be published online in the blink of an eye for the world to see, this printed literary anthology remains a great source of pride and honor for the authors published within.

Nota Bene carries its banner of literary excellence to an ever-increasing audience in more than 1,700 libraries nationwide and abroad. And we believe the writings contained herein not only showcase the talents of Phi Theta Kappa members but also affirm the commitment to academic excellence displayed by the two-year college arena.

We are also pleased to offer scholarships to outstanding *Nota Bene* authors. The Ewing Citation Scholarship Award is awarded to the top overall entry, and the authors of four other exceptional entries receive Reynolds Scholarship Awards.

Nota Bene takes its name from the Latin expression for "note well." We hope you will take note and be inspired to join us in our scholarly obligation to nourish good writing and exceptional authors.

We thank you for your continued support over the last 20 years. Without our members, chapter advisors, college presidents, librarians and friends, *Nota Bene* would not be possible. As we move forward, we encourage your continued patronage.

Sincerely,



Dr. Rod A. Risley
Executive Director and CEO, Phi Theta Kappa
Founding Editor, *Nota Bene*

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THE RELUCTANT WARRIOR



PATRICK HUGHES

*Mountain View Community College
Texas*

"What did I ever do to deserve this?" I asked myself. Leaning against the curved aluminum side of a Quonset hut, I took my helmet off and stared up at the stars in the clear California sky. The cool desert breeze blew gently against my face as if to provide me with some minor respite from my situation. Looking away from the stars as I pondered my question, my gaze fell to the ground at my feet.

The problem was that I knew exactly how I got here. In fact, so many of us got here the same way, we've made it into some kind of joke. "How did we get here? It's all in our initials...USMC. They say it stands for 'U Signed the Motherfuckin' Contract.'" And yeah, two years ago, in a youthful rush to please my parents, I did.

That was a different time. I'd just finished four years of high school in exactly the way my parents expected me to: near the top of my class. I wanted to take a break, but my father would hear none of it. He said that it was either college, trade school or the military.

I didn't like any of those choices. I just wanted to relax for maybe a year, then find what I wanted to do with my life; but how do you tell that to a self-made Vietnamese businessman who came to the United States with nothing? It's simple, you don't. And after far too little consideration, I told my father that I was going to join the army.

"Army? That's for people who can't be Marines. You should be Marine," he said. I had my doubts, but my feelings didn't seem to matter much in this equation. I understand that he just wanted me to be the best at whatever I did, but at 17 I just wanted to take some time

off. Nevertheless, I went to the recruiter the next week and signed on as a motor transport specialist — a fancy name for a mechanic.

It was a safe job, far from the front lines, with plenty of civilian applications once I got out. At least that's what I thought before the Iraq War. A year after the invasion, the civilian transport contractors realized that war was dangerous and they wanted no part of it. That's when the call went out throughout the Corps for truck drivers. My unit, 5/14, with its large number of underutilized troops, was near the top of the list.

By May 2004 we were given the Warning Order and sent to the desert for a quick weeklong truck driving class, after which we'd be sent to other units for deployment. We were separated into three platoons at the end of the first day. The first two were the combat platoons who were to deploy in three months. The third was a reserve for the injured, untrained, additional, and otherwise non-deployable Marines. Third Platoon was currently my home. It was a place of terrible anxiety, as we each wondered if we were going to be chosen to fill out one of the other platoons or be allowed to return safely home. I was —

"Hey Chu?" a voice called out in the dark, shaking me out of my thoughts. "Is that you Chu?"

"Huh? Halt, who goes there?" I challenged the figure walking towards me in the darkness.

"Just me, Espino," a familiar voice replied. "I'm here to relieve you. Head on back to the rack. You've still got three hours until reveille."

"Ok, see you in formation," I said to the Lance Corporal, handing him my radio handset and reflector vest. My boots crunched on the mix of rock and sand as I walked back to the Quonset hut that had been my world for these past two weeks. Entering the windowless dark, I counted the edges of the cots until I got to seven. My rack, the place I called home.

As I lay there, I envied Espino. He was going home. Four days earlier his seven-ton truck was rear ended by another during driver's training. I saw the whole thing, being two trucks back from the accident in the convoy. Thankfully, no one appeared to be seriously hurt, but the Corpsmen said that there was a risk that Espino's spine had been injured and that for the next six weeks he was non-deployable.

There were other lucky ones like Espino, like Lance Corporal Digert sleeping soundly in the rack to my left. Somehow, in its indefinite wisdom, the Marine Corps forgot to assign him a military specialty after boot camp, and until they did, he wasn't going anywhere. I wrapped myself in thoughts of envy and fear and somehow drifted off to sleep.

When the desert sun crept out to banish the night a few hours later, it found me standing unmoving alongside the other members of Third Platoon as we stood for morning formation. I wondered if we all dreaded this. Every day it was the same. The First Sergeant would come out with a new list of names to bolster the two combat platoons. Whenever they were short — and they always were — he would call out names from the Third Platoon, my platoon, to make up the difference.

So there we stood in perfect formation awaiting his word on our fate. Some, like Digert and Espino, stood relaxed. Others, like me, stood trembling with the fear that our name would be called.

"Third Platoon, Report!" the First Sergeant barked.

"Third Platoon all present and or accounted for sir!" the Corporal yelled back.

Then the anxiety would build as he shouted names like a roll call of the damned.

"Lee, Harper, Holt, Salinez report to first platoon following formation," the First Sergeant ordered. "Ableson, Baker, Bradford, Chu —"

I never heard anything after my name. A cold chill swept through my body as I tried to comprehend what had just happened. I don't know how long we stood there before Private First Class Baker brought me back to reality with a pat on the back, "I guess we're going out to the Sandbox together, huh?"

I nodded and said something warlike that I didn't really feel. My boots felt heavy as I walked into the Third Platoon hut for the last time. Anxiety rose within me as I slowly packed my gear one piece at a time into my oversized green canvas sea bag.

I tried to keep up a brave front and act like a Marine was supposed to act, but it was no use. I had to talk to someone, or I was going to lose it, but who? All my other friends had already been assigned to one or the other of the combat platoons. At a loss, I decided to talk to the Corporal. He was an unusual individual, about a decade older than he should have been for his rank. That wasn't his fault; he just found the Corps later in life than I did. He was into all kinds of military history and stuff; if some army used something somewhere, he knew about it. Now I had to see if he knew as much about people and their fears as he did about history. He seemed friendly enough, but now burdened with a command above his ability — the constant shuffling of personnel brought on by the deployment orders now made him hold the billet of Platoon Sergeant — I wondered if he'd have time for me.

I secured the last of my gear, and then walked down the sandy aisle separating the perfectly even rows of cots. Several of the others whose names were chosen were also busy packing their gear, oblivious to everything else, lost in their own private thoughts. Others, lucky enough not to have been chosen by that terrible lottery, laughed and chatted amongst themselves. I approached the Corporal, who was chatting with Espino while pouring over a disorganized clipboard of paper.

"Hey, uh, Corporal, can I talk with you for a minute?"

He looked up from the chaos in his hands.

"What is it Chu?" he said quietly, knowing that my name had been called earlier.

"I'd need to talk with you for a moment, if you can." I glanced around at the several faces whose attention I had garnered. "Outside."

"Yeah, of course," he said handing off his clipboard to Espino.

I followed him into the barren world washed by the unrelenting sun. A pair of helicopters flew by on their way toward the mountains in the distance. The thumping of their heavy rotors matched that of my heart as we slowly walked through the dry sand.

"They're sending you to Second Platoon from what I heard, is that right?" he began.

"Yes, Corporal."

"From what I heard, they're supposed to be heading out to the Syrian border. There's not a lot of action out there."

"I didn't know that Corporal."

He turned to me and stopped. I guess he could see the fear in my eyes. The Corporal pointed towards a pallet of crates behind one of the Quonset huts. "Have a seat Chu. Talk to me."

I halfheartedly dusted off one of the crates before doing as he asked, my cover pulled low over my head as I faced the ground.

"I, I'm afraid Corporal. I know I'm a Marine, and I'm proud to be one, but I don't want to go to war. I don't know if I'm ready."

He sat down beside me. "We're all afraid Chu. Marine or not, we're all afraid. Anyone who says they aren't is lying out their ass. You know, all those Marine heroes — Chesty Puller, Dan Daley and the rest that they told us about in Boot Camp were just as scared as you are now; they just overcame their fear when the time came. Fear is just part of being a person. There's no shame in that."

"But, Corporal, I'm only 19. I haven't even had a girlfriend."

"You want to know something; I didn't have one either at your age. There will be plenty of time for that when you get back."

"If I get back."

"Well, I'm not going to lie to you. It's war and in war people die, but they also die here at home, in car accidents, robberies, fires. Life has no guarantees. You could get hit by a bus tomorrow. It's not when you die that matters, it's what you do with your life while you're here. And besides, it's not written anywhere that you're going to get killed just because you deploy."

"Can I speak freely Corporal?" I asked.

"Sure, what's on your mind."

"That sounds all well and good from someone who's not going."

He nodded, "I was wondering when you'd bring that up, but yeah, you're right. I can say whatever I want; for now, I'm not going. Tomorrow, next week, next month that can change. When they get to my name I'll go. I'll leave my life behind for a time, and I'll go do what I signed up to do."

"And you'll probably be scared."

"Hell yeah I'll be scared. Who in their right mind wants to leave their family and get shot at? I'll be scared now, I'll be scared when I get there, and I'll be scared when the rounds start flying. I'll just put my faith in the fact that my fellow Marines will do their job and keep my ass alive, while I do the same for them. Remember, you're not alone Chu. You're not alone out there."

I thought about what he said for a moment. He was right. No matter why I joined the Marine Corps, I was one of them now. I wasn't going to war alone; I was going with a platoon of my

friends. Highly trained, well-armed, very dangerous friends who were counting on me to stand by their side as an equal when things went south.

"I think I understand Corporal," I said, even though it would probably take much longer for me to truly grasp the significance of our conversation.

"We're all here for each other. That's who you fight for when the rounds start flying. Not mom, dad, apple pie or even some shiny medal. You're fighting for the guy to your left and the guy to your right, and they're doing the same for you."

I felt a fierce pride welling up within me, a pride that helped ease, but not eliminate, my fears. I hoped it would last. Jumping off the crate I looked over at the Corporal. "Thank you for your time Corporal. You'll make a good platoon sergeant one day."

He shook his head and smiled. "One can hope."

"If you don't mind, I have to finish packing my gear and report to Second Platoon."

"I understand. Remember Chu, you're a United States Marine. That means you'll never be alone, no matter how far they send you. Just let me know where you end up so I can write, OK?"

I nodded and began the sandy trek to my gear. Walking past the other members of my former platoon, I took one long last look back across the racks at what used to be my home. With a full seabag in one hand, I hefted my pack onto one shoulder and made my way to the Second Platoon barracks.

I paused at the threshold, recounting the Corporal's words. He was right. This was my time to show what kind of person I was, to show that I could be counted on when the chips were down. Stepping into the barracks, I made my way through the crowd of busy Marines toward their leader.

"Lance Corporal Chu reporting, Staff Sergeant Radke." I said in an steady voice.

He reached out for my hand. Letting my seabag fall to the ground, I shook it.

"Well, go find a rack, secure your gear, and get comfortable. It's going to get busy real quick like."

The next day was my last day at the 'stumps. That morning we were to board buses to integrate with our parent platoons. For me it was just a short drive across the base to meet the members of 1/7 'Suicide Charlie.' For the others it would be a trip to the airport, then either Camp Pendleton for members of First Platoon, or home for those lucky bastards in Third. As I boarded the bus, I looked out its dirty window at the members of Third Platoon. There was Espino, Digert, and of course, the Corporal barking out orders to all those who were lucky enough to miss this call. I no longer envied them; they had a different course to take and were a part of a different story. As for mine, I hoped it would have a happy ending.

MAMA



CASSANDRA VAN GELDER
*College of Southern Nevada
Nevada*

She scratched out the pre-printed "homemaker" and wrote in neat schoolgirl handwriting "occupation: artist."

She would lean over my school papers and Daddy's tax returns, muttering to herself, sometimes rubbing her eraser so hard she bore a hole right through. She felt she had earned the right to the title. She taught classes on weekends at the Fine Arts Center — a wide-load mobile home, transformed after it had been turned over to the city,

With expansive, theatrical gestures, she would encourage a roomful of smock-covered students to experiment with their brushes and pens — to be brave and explore. To not only attempt what the instrument could do, but what it might do.

Being seven and too young to be left alone, I would be dragged down to the Arts Center every Saturday in the heavy heat. I would watch as the ladies in pastel polyester pants would arrive, one by one, in boat-sized Fords and Lincolns. They wrestled with the supplies in the passenger seat, pulling and tugging, all the while fighting with their overzealous, pink-bowed toy poodles to stay in the car.

Most of the women would smile as they went by, first to me then to their reflection in the front door glass, usually a touch to the teeth to remove some lipstick while the dogs yapped in the background. Mama always opened the door with a friendly, "Hey, how you doing?" letting the sweetness of her heavy Southern accent wrap around them.

Before the class would start, Mama would come out, slipping a slice of cold air with her. She would sit down beside me on the scorching concrete steps with a lemon tea, half-melted ice floating on top. She rearranged her shorts to keep from burning herself, knocking off loose gravel that collected on her exposed thighs. Time and again, she would sit beside me, brushing my hair back off my face, trying to convince me to come in the air-conditioned coolness of the fake wood rooms.

She wanted me to sit still for one of her classes instead of waiting for her outside, feeling the tiny pinpricks of heat and exhaustion of being alone — she wanted me to experiment and be brave like the others.

But I couldn't. I always said no.

She'd shake her head and go back inside, hurt, positive I just did not want to be with her. But it wasn't true. I loved Mama, but I admit I couldn't bear to be in the same room with her when she was like that, her swooping arms and graceful movements, so different from the woman I knew. A fist grabbed my insides and squeezed when I would watch her.

Brave strokes were not what she made in front of her face when he thrashed his arms at her. Her wiry arms would instead wrap around her head. She would huddle in a corner while he stood over her, screaming her name, breathing out words I was not allowed to use, waving wildly, throwing his arms at her face, her arms, her body, anywhere he could hurt her. Sometimes with fists. Sometimes not. Sometimes his hand filled itself with the nearest instrument — a pillow, a book, a wrench. Wherever he could reach, whatever was nearest.

I could not move to help her. Instead, I would lay waking in the night, listening carefully, fingering the handle of the butter knife I kept under my pillow — I was not old enough to be allowed to use the steak knives even at the dinner table.

One night, I heard her, her voice different, more fearful, more desperate. I crept out of the bed and pressed my ear against the door. I could hear nothing then, not even her breathing. I pulled at the door slowly, making sure to not go further than an inch, otherwise I would wrestle awake an oil-hungry hinge.

I could see her, her back against the wall. Her hands were still sweaty from clenching them tight over her; matted hair clumping together. Light from the kitchen bellied under the door. She breathed in deep, wiping her hand across her forehead. He had left her alone.

I could hear him in the kitchen, clanking through drawers, the suck then pop as he opened the refrigerator. He would be hungry. Exercise always had that effect.

She was trying to lift herself up with one hand when he came back around the corner, a gleaming flash of light in his hands. He pushed her back to the floor and crouched in front of her, drops of spit on his balloonish lip. He pushed his face into hers, grinding his temple against her sticky forehead. The light flashed again and then in front of her face. He held himself so close to her the barrel almost touched both of their temples.

"We'll go together, baby. Isn't that what you want? Huh? Be rid of me and you? Isn't that what you want, hmmm?"

Her arms dropped like doll parts, attached only with rubberbands, useless, at her sides. She was so quiet.

"Please...", she whispered to him. "Please."

I was standing behind the door, nightgowned and wondering what it was she was asking him to do — to stop it, or to do it?

He laughed, a crack of sound in the darkness. He reached for her head and pulled it back, looking almost as if he were cradling her in his hand. He started slowly, caressing her neck with the barrel. He let it glide languidly across her dark skin, her strong collarbone. I saw her shiver from the cold metal. He smiled to her, then drug it between her breasts while he watched her. His fluid movements stopped with the barrel pointed down, directly into her belly.

"It wouldn't take but one shot and I'd be rid of you both," he said as she stared at the luminous flash of metal. "Just one shot."

She closed her eyes, her shoulders loosened. I watched her as she breathed, carefully. Slowly, she raised her lids, trailing the barrel, his hands, arms, face, eyes; she stopped. Her filmy gaze looked past his black slits.

"Please," she said again.

He watched her eyes go wide as he drug the pistol down, between her legs, resting his other hand on her thigh. But she didn't move. She only looked forward, one hair to this side of him.

He wrapped his arm around her head and pushed at her face, holding it, pointing directly at his own. His meaty fingers were digging into her cheeks. A grin broke across his face.

Click.

A shudder went through her.

Nothing.

He let her head drop on the hardwood floor as he rose from the corner and laughed. Mama pulled herself up, her back against the wall now. Trembling, she had her eyes open, but still glazed and unfocused, still staring past him. His shadow engulfed her body as he glared down at her. With one swift movement, his foot flung out, kicking her where the gun lay between her legs. She crumpled into a ball, groaning, clutching her curving belly.

"Fat bitch," he muttered as he left the room.

.....

"Free yourself. Don't be restrained by what is expected. Go boldly and daringly into your work," she would still tell the blue-haired ladies who sat clinging to every word.

Broad strokes she would make, colorful, but without once ever leaving a piece of herself on canvas; so crippled inside and unsteady. Boldly and daringly, she told them as she heard the definitions of her life come from a man she would never leave.

HAIL MARY



KAITLYN WORMAN

Lane Community College
Oregon

It hurt just to look at it, the large building in front of me. But after about 30 minutes of standing outside and kicking imaginary pebbles with my worn sneakers, I finally worked up the nerve to go in. It felt impossibly hard to heave my petite self up the thick concrete steps, and the oak door felt far heavier than it had to be. With a huff and a yank I walked in, greedy for far more than the warmth I originally came for, if I was being honest with myself. I awkwardly glanced around to find the place entirely empty and deafeningly silent. I tugged the hem of my thin shirt down, fingering the holes in my jeans that were scattered around my thighs before I stepped forward. I dipped my fingertips cautiously into the bowl of holy water before I crossed myself with shaky precision, the motion feeling so alien after so long.

"The good Lord will always pull you through, darlin'. Always." My father muttered those words into the crown of my head, against my tangled curls, before he pulled away from me and slid out of the torn screen door while handing me a new rosary. The cold that the lack of his presence brought lasted just a moment as a blast of thick swamp air blasted me before I could fully appreciate the shiver. I rushed to the door and watched through tattered mesh as he faded away between the cypress trees; the loud hiss of the cicadas must have drowned out my pleas for him to come back, as he didn't even turn to acknowledge me.

"He's about as useful as an ashtray on a motorcycle" My mother said behind me, her bony hands grasping my shoulders. "Get your butt in gear and get ready" and with a swift slap to my rear, I raced up the stairs. My six-year-old brain wasn't sure who she thought was so useless — my father or our Father, but as I put on my clothes and swiped away furious tears, I decided it didn't really matter.

My legs took me forward, how I'm not sure, the sound of my footsteps my only companion. As I sunk down onto a hard pew, I was filled with a strange sense of comfort I can't really explain. I pulled my worn rosary from around my neck that my Dad gave me as he left so many years ago, rusty crucifix and film-covered beads, and, as my fingers clumsily swept over it, my mouth spilt quiet prayers I haven't said in years. Despite who gave it to me, the rosary always reminded me of my mother, who cried out desperate Hail Marys from blue tinted lips as her syringe shyly peeked out from her inner arm, the cold of her toxic euphoria seeped into her veins mixing with the fire of possible redemption.

"Nobody cares nothing about you. Not your daddy, not no God. Nobody" she hissed, scrubbing my skin almost raw while I sit against cold porcelain of our old tub. "I'm just lucky you got such a pretty face on you" a smirk and a pinch to my cheek before she wrings out her wash rag and continues her cleanse. Her frantic movements betray her words and I know she feels some form of guilt; I'm not sure if she's trying to wash my sins down the drain or hers. I look and survey the fresh markings: angry red welts darkening to a deep purple. I know I won't be able to walk much tomorrow. "I'm tired" I whisper, knowing better. The yelp of a palm meeting the flesh of my cheek rings out against the bathroom tile like I knew it would. "You have visitors coming in an hour" is all she says as she continues to scrub. I sing old hymns in my head that I heard when Dad and I went to church when I was younger, but it does little to comfort my 13-year-old self now.

I feel awkward the longer I sit, knowing I don't belong here. I'm not really a Catholic...hell, I'm not really an anything. Never baptized and never saved; just a wanderer and a serial believer, dabbling in a little bit of anything. I get that from my mother, who would meditate on the glorious mysteries of Mother Mary while lighting a Menorah. Whichever Band-Aid fit the cut, right? I look up at the stained glass surrounding the walls, intricate and stunning, and I'm overcome with embarrassment as my hand combs through my greasy unwashed hair. Just an hour ago I was laying in the dirt of an alley, grunts hurting more than my ears as I pulled a quickie for a little extra cash. I'd leave, but it's so cold this morning and I have nowhere else to catch a break from the wind, as most establishments can easily figure out my occupation and see to it I'm thrown out almost immediately. So I bite my tongue and stifle my feelings of inadequacy.

After a certain point you stop really thinking about what's happening, you just kind of lay there and take it. Most of the time my visitors don't really care, especially if I throw a well-timed moan or groan in for their benefit, which usually gets them there faster and ends this whole act sooner. My mother keeps my schedule of visits packed to the brim, fitting in all the depravity and disgust she can. She's always been good at managing this aspect of our lives. Most of the time we're without power or food, but she always makes sure she is able to have her kicker. After a long day of visits we sit together at the table and, as I eat cold beans with soggy bread, I watch her expertly slip her fix into her thick veins, her twisted face finally relaxing — all wrinkles and lines disintegrating as she slumps against the splintering wood of our kitchen chairs. With a heady exhale she then asks me about my day and we chat about it with a sick sense of causality, my stomach twisting at the fact that I actually enjoy this time with her, where for a brief moment she acts like a mother.

I just sit and stare ahead, my eyes falling upon the cabinet that held the Heavenly host. My stomach lets out an angry rumble and for a split second I'm tempted to claw the door open and eat every bit of bread that lays behind it, but I have a feeling it wouldn't satisfy me in any sense. Not like this at least, grungy and broken, a useless girl who contributed nothing more to this world than the infidelity of others. I used to believe what my dad said to me that day as he was leaving, that the Lord would always pull me through. But after too much pain and never a

reprieve I'm beginning to doubt that logic. Maybe I just haven't been enlightened yet, maybe one day I'll wake up and it'll all make sense, then I can come sit in this pew clean and renewed. I want that day. I want a day when I have it all figured out, when I'm not scared for the next day or the next hour. I keep waiting for God to give me that. I keep hoping, I keep praying, but I feel like I've been left out on my own and that my cries are falling on deaf ears. Maybe I just need more time, need another dose of agony, and then I'll be ready for what God has for me. I say a quick plea to St Jude, since salvation for my weary soul seems like an impossibility, sign myself and decide to continue trying...at least for today. I hear footsteps and realize I'm no longer alone: the daily mass crowd starts to fill the nearby pews. I feel eyes on me from all directions, hear some quiet whispers, and I know it's time for me to disappear again.

"Them religious folk only like other religious folk. They say they like Jesus, but Jesus would never go and call us whores, now would he? They turn their noses up, go and donate some money to feed some starving child in a third world country and then hang a damn picture of the little shit they get in the mail on their fridge like they're Mother Theresa. All the while they're treating us like mud on the bottom of their best Sunday heels. They ain't kind, they don't care, you stupid little girl. They only wanna look like they care — look like they good people. No one cares in this world. No one ever gonna care about any of us. Your soul been meant for hell since before you was born, girl." My mother lectured as she dragged me away from the chapel, the man still screaming out about brimstone and the gnashing of teeth that await me. I was stupid, stumbled into the old church my father and I went to when I was a kid, thinking I could find some peace there. All I found was harsh eyes and wagging tongues.

I stood up quickly to leave but bumped into a woman as I tried to shuffle out of my pew. Hair curled, pearls hugging a thin neck, fine clothing and a beautiful face twisted with an ugly sneer. She looked at me the way most look at me, and I felt more exposed than I ever had before. With a turn of her head she rolled her eyes at her friend accompanying her, a woman equally well kept, before she whispered "why even bother at this point? Satan's hooks are already too deep in you, child" with a cluck of her tongue. I bowed my head, pushed past her and muttered a low apology, wanting nothing more than the cold. I glanced back as I hurried down the aisle to the main doors and noticed that, while she and her friend were on the kneeler with hands clasped and heads slightly bent, their eyes nervously followed me. My cheeks heated and my stomach churned. I knew I didn't belong here. Things like this weren't meant for fucked up girls like me. Those women, with their disgust towards me rolling off them in waves, reminded me of the fact I've been fighting against too long. I am beyond hope. I'm honestly not sure why I thought any different, I guess I've just always been prone to impossible believing. I slipped out past the crowd entering the church, tears sliding down my cheeks, the cold more comforting than anything behind me. I walked down the block till I found a park, and there on a bench I noticed a pathetically alone-looking man. His whole being screamed "desperate." Desperate and money, based on his name brand clothes. Just my type. Usually I'm not one who propositioned during the day; instead I waited till nightfall to start my show, and he looked like he might be too wiggled out to even go for it, but after this morning I was in need of a distraction.

With a shake of my head and a roll of my shoulders, I sauntered over and perched myself next to him on the park bench. He side glanced me, obviously uneasy with my sudden closeness.

"Hey baby," I purred, a delicate smile weaved on my features.

"Um...uh...hi." He stuttered before turning beet red and looked down at his shoes. Meermin, easily three hundred dollars, good shoes.

"What are you doing all alone, darlin'?" I asked with a sweetness that tasted sour to my tongue while I made sure just enough of my native Southern drawl colored the sentence. City boys loved a sweet Southern girl. I played sweet well.

"I...I don't know. Just on lunch, I guess." He hesitated, nervous. He pulled on his tie as he looked away, Armani silk, another three hundred. I leaned in closer as my hand came to a rest atop his Armani covered thigh, my calloused fingertips not used to the thousand-dollar material.

"We can make your lunch more exciting," I began as I licked my lips, "discretely more exciting, of course." As I finished, I made a show of looking around the park. His face flamed and his eyes bulged, body stiffening under my hand. But when he regained composure, the look in his eyes told me that he has thought about this before, fantasized about such an offer being presented.

"Uh...really now?" He tried a desperate attempt at flirting, which fell flat, as other parts of his body stiffened at my offer now. I must admit I was mildly surprised, usually I wait for men to find me, drive up to the usual slums. I had never been so bold as to offer my services to a man not directly seeking my kind out. I liked the feeling more than I should have.

"Really, baby." I winked while my hand slid higher up his thigh. "You got a car? Or a place nearby?"

"Yeah...uh, follow me." He sprang up and grabbed my hand, his already too sweaty from his nerves, movements too jagged and rushed. This must be his first time doing this.

How sweet.

"I'm not a cheap lunch date, you know that right?" I half-heartedly teased, the underlying meaning thick, before I let him lead me away. I was almost positive he knew what this was, what I was, but assumption had gotten me into sticky wickets before and I didn't have the time or the patience for that shit again.

"Yeah, I know," he muttered, shame coating his words. I offered a small smile, I knew a part of him was disgusted with what he was about to do. But he was overwhelmed by his need to fill the void. No one does this without a need to suppress some deeper yearning, some big gaping hole in their existence. Me included. I tried to fill mine the "right" way, tried all my life, but the lesson finally sunk in today.

This was our salvation. This was our Band-Aid. Our filthy fix. I dug in my jean pocket till my hand felt beads and without a second thought I pulled my rosary out that I had for so many years and left it on that bench as I walked forward with my visitor. I don't need any more Hail Marys.

My mama was always right.

"No one cares in this world. No one ever gonna care about any of us. Your soul been meant for hell since before you was born, girl."

THE PRICE OF



DARYL WATKINS

*College of Southern Nevada
Nevada*

Intense emotions quotient kept me reeling with suspicion
 The scarlet harlot's escapade left lingering decisions
 Should I sacrifice life, liberty, and pursue things denied
 For a temptress spinning strings unsure to webs of doubt and cloth of why

Our relationship, beginning with a kiss by lips lightheaded fixed entranced by dance of
 eyes upon the souls of two loving uncontrollable
 Or loving may indeed be quite improper terms describing how encounters were inciting
 lust colliding with her tangibles

See I never spoke of love
 I never spoke at all
 I was silent for good measure but so silently was treasured

Apart, the massive moment's mood had dulled a great deal, more than wooed but
 afterward I spread my shield, beforehand still she fled
 I lay in bed before my slumber wondering if smiles were smiles from mouths that eyes
 aroused with childish hopes as deep as flesh without the confidence that common sense
 with love would manifest

In the sunset's blazing calm and hollow howling of the blowing wind whose current came
and exited my soul escaping within
But within the wind the same excitement, burning as it permeates the pores of poor and
lonely lovers suffering from sins of trust
As are Us

Rather as I, denied the honor of addiction toward a loyal sponsor charmed to meet
acquaintances but blending foreign faces with that woman and her karma

But I never spoke of love
I never spoke at all
I was silent for respect but then respectfully was left

To begin again is foolish knowing outcomes previous to bliss are grieving, sleeping either
heavy nights or extremely light
I slept within the worldly realm and delved into the mental conversation which concerned
a superficial woman's fight

I never spoke of love

My ears attentively would listen visions as musician's notes vibrations from her throat
would formulate on bars inside my field

I never spoke at all

She was doomed to consume, as I was speaking without motion in my actions, and my
actions transformed fantasy to rough and real
Cold and hardened although smartened learning that the greatest feature of hurt is that
experience is sometimes the greatest teacher

I was silent when I should have spoken
Silently ignored

SORE THUMB



DIANA SHERRARD-NICHOLS

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a removed perspective
when did it end

the emotional impact

from others' opinions
of my personhood

a moment unremarked
roaming among those
who flagrantly flaunt

assumptions long outgrown

sporting them vainly
as if avant garde

finding my internal

dialogue

so much more
stimulating

than conversation

which requires constant compensation
tailoring expressions to fit

limited perspective

a filter to sieve through

skewed views sometimes salted
with irrational outrage

indignance at
the recognition of
ignorance so carefully camouflaged

with canned information and
wholesale opinions as glances

ping around a room
scanning faces as other eyes
ping seeking what they're supposed to think

of any given situation or selection
of the lamb sacrificed
to the need to ostracize

reflection
intentional selection
let my odd hang out

avid aversion
to social submersion

a twitch flickers
at the corner of my lips
when I glimpse
placating platitudes personifying
vanilla views

I'm amused

no one fits in

unless some don't

FROM WALLPAPERS TO INSTITUTES: THE 19TH CENTURY'S RESPONSE TO MENTAL ILLNESS



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In the 1800s, the mystery of mental illness was much greater than it is today. Doctors could not find logical reasoning for it and often resorted to torturous treatments that either did nothing or made the conditions worse. "The Yellow Wallpaper" illustrates the ignorance of these doctors in the mental health field of the 1800s. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's famous short story is fictional, but much of the haunting isolation was personally experienced by Gilman herself. Anne Montgomerie wrote a review for "The Yellow Wallpaper" in which she discusses the unexpected outcome of the tale. "The initial impression the opening of the story gives is pleasant, much like any treatment, but it only ends with negative results" (Montgomerie). Montgomerie's reaction to the story is parallel to the reality countless patients suffered when their doctors prescribed isolation. Also, as the 19th Century progressed, so did the ability to care for the mentally unstable. The main treatment for mental illness was isolation of some sort; Gilman brought this issue into the light with her short story, along with her personal experience, which assisted in the improvement of mental health care.

First, isolation was a very popular form of treatment that even Gilman underwent. In her statement, "Why I Wrote 'The Yellow Wallpaper,'" she admits to suffering from depression, also known as melancholia. Her physician prescribed her with the "rest cure," which meant almost complete aloneness with only a couple of hours of mental stimulation a day. Along with the minimal amount of intellectual intake, Gilman was not permitted to raise a "pen, paintbrush, or pencil again" to keep her from being creative (Gilman, "Why I Wrote" 484). Gilman said she practically went mad with the lack of company or intellectual release — the opposite of what was supposed to happen.

The unfortunate thing is Gilman's case wasn't unique. The lecture "Treatment of Mental Illness," given by Sally Attar and Natalia Ramero, says that people with mental illnesses were almost always put into isolation, having to "stay home at all times." Even when mental hospitals became common, patients would be locked up and separated from the rest of the world (Attar et al.). The asylums were dumps for confused families that did not want to face the struggle of coping with someone different from themselves.

In her review of Gilman's short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," Montgomerie celebrated Gilman's ability to show the "[treatment] of the psychology of mental disorder." In the 1800s it was common for people to seek isolation, either independently or as prescribed by a professional, to heal mental or physical disorders. It was widely believed at the time that this isolation calmed the nerves. Montgomerie says the wallpaper isn't just wallpaper, but a "condition." Condition here being defined as "an unfortunate circumstance the narrator must deal with." The wallpaper "peers at you...with staring bulbous eyes," personifying it into the merciless character that it is (Montgomerie). Adding that description onto the "condition" of a mental disorder magnifies the backfiring result of isolating someone who needs help. In response to Gilman's work, the physician that treated her realized the turmoil patients must go through with the "rest cure" and changed the method of healing for patients with depression.

Another issue was the ignorance of the cause of mental illness, which could not be defined accurately during the 1800s. Some believed it was the result of possession or witchcraft, while others said mental illness was passed down through the family (Carlozzi et al.; Foerschner). Despite the cause, the first noted treatments in the early- to mid-1700s were simply consistent attendance to church and repenting of sins (Foerschner). Physicians in the early 1800s experimented on mental patients, treated them poorly, and/or left them to suffer in isolation because there was very little information on how to deal with an ill-minded patient (Attar et al.). These patients were treated so badly that it seemed as if the rest of society didn't see them as people but merely animals in human form. Later on it was discovered that mental illness is the result of a chemically imbalanced brain and can be caused by an injury or passed down genetically (Attar et al.).

The development of the mental institute took some time to perfect. Allison Foerschner, in her academic journal titled "The History of Mental Illness: From 'Skull Drills' to 'Happy Pills,'" explains the horrendous conditions in which mental patients lived. According to the article, the first mental hospital was built in 1796, and the owners stressed to employees the importance of compassion while working with the patients. Those morals were strongly disregarded: patients were chained, starved, forced to share a bed with up to four other people, and even sat in their own waste because they sat there forgotten for days at a time. Foerschner continues to say the people working at the institutes were not trained to work in the mental health field, magnifying the terrible situation these patients were thrown into.

Attar and Ramero introduce Dorothea Dix, an American woman who observed asylums and disapproved of the conditions. Oftentimes, along with the typical asylum, people with mental health issues were housed with criminals and beaten (Attar et al.). Dix reformed the methods of how patients were treated with her persistence for improvement, eventually getting heard in other countries as well (Carlozzi et al.). Another person Attar and Ramero discussed who assisted in the progression of care for the mentally ill was a reporter from New York named Nellie Bly. She disguised herself as a psychologically disturbed person so she could discover firsthand what the life of a patient was like. After her observations, Bly made it publicly known how these institutes "defeated the purpose of trying to give attention to those in need." Along with this, she worked to make health care for the mentally ill better (Attar et al.).

Because of the absence of information on mental illness during the 1800s, the treatments for the disturbed backfired and the conditions worsened for those patients. In the 19th Century, the biggest treatment consisted of isolation, much like what Charlotte Perkins Gilman suffered. With the help of her personal experience and her short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," Gilman made people aware of how damaging this treatment was. The movement to improve the care of mental patients elevated in the 1800s, as did the conditions provided to the mentally disturbed population. Since Gilman, along with Dorothea Dix and Nellie Bly, brought the issues of mental health care to the general public, the way people are helped in their journey to recovery and understanding progressed greatly in the 19th Century.

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WHAT LIES OVER THE OCEAN



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My Barbies were having a funeral. They all sat on my fuzzy purple rug, staring straight ahead at the shoebox I had placed on top of three Dr. Seuss books. Some days I practiced reading the words inside those books, but today they made steps. I picked up my favorite Barbie — the one with the color-change hair — and walked her slowly up the steps. She looked into the box. Inside was my second favorite Barbie — Midge, the one with reddish hair and bendy legs. Her head was lying next to her feet and her whole body was chewed like an old lollipop. Shadow did it to her.

"I hate dogs," Barbie said. I made her wave to Midge. Then she sat down next to Ken again, legs sticking out stiffly in front of her.

Which doll should go next? I remembered the funeral at church yesterday. What order did the grownups go in, then? I wasn't sure, so I reached for Ken, but my hand stopped too soon. Wait! There were flowers next to the big box on the church stage. Nobody else could go until I found some blooms to decorate Midge's box.

I looked around my room. There were several ginormous pink flowers on the wall above my bed. Mama painted them huge so I would feel like a fairy sleeping underneath the petals. She was an artist, my Mama. She worked downtown in a fancy store with pictures of twisty trees, ugly blackbirds and swirly oceans on the walls. The store always had irises and clumps of snowy leaves called baby-breaths in a vase on the high counter. Sometimes Mama brought the bouquets home. Maybe she had some flowers I could use.

I jumped up and rushed down the hall to Mama's room. I paused, peering cautiously into the gloom, then pushed open the door and slipped inside. The soft whoosh of breathing and the lump under Mama's messy covers meant she was still sleeping. I tiptoed over to her desk in the dim light that dribbled past the curtains. A pile of serious-looking envelopes — the kind that came in the mail and made Mama anxious — and some glass jars filled with pencils and paintbrushes covered the desktop. There was also a picture of Daddy next to a Kleenex box.

I forgot about flowers for a minute as I stared at Daddy. He was wearing a bright orange lifejacket and holding a scary crab the size of a Frisbee. Behind him was a boat, all mean and sharp-looking like it would cut my hand if I touched it, and a patch of stormy ocean. Daddy was grinning. He liked catching crabs. He liked eating them too, even though they were yucky and spiky like a cactus. I sighed as Daddy smiled at me from the picture frame. I missed him whenever he went to Alaska. I wasn't sure where Alaska was, but it was very far away and sometimes he stayed gone a long time — like now.

Before Daddy left a few weeks ago, Mama and I drew a picture of a big red heart for him. I drew Daddy's face inside the heart. I used green for his favorite baseball cap and lots of brown for his short, scratchy beard. Mama made pretty blue swirls around the heart with her fancy brushes. Then she wrote her name all curly near the top and I wrote E-L-L-A underneath. I gave the picture to Daddy when one of those macaroni-yellow cars came to get him. Daddy smiled. "I'll keep your heart close to mine," he said, tucking the drawing into his chest pocket.

He kissed me and Mama. My forehead, her lips. Then the car took him away.

Daddy seemed to like macaroni cars almost as much as crabs — he always came home the same way he left. I checked out the front window every day, watching for him. But then, a few days ago, Mama sat down on the couch with me and said Daddy wasn't going to come back anymore. Her voice sounded funny, like she had cotton balls stuck in her throat. But all I did was hum and swing one heel against the front of the couch. I didn't listen to her. Daddy always came back. Always.

I couldn't find any flowers, so I returned to my room and drew some with red and green markers on a piece of construction paper. I propped the paper against the shoebox. "There, doesn't that look pretty, Barbie?" I asked.

"Yes, very pretty," my favorite Barbie said.

Midge sat up in her box. I had to pick up her head and mash it down onto her neck so she could look too. "Ooh, so pretty! Flowers are my favorite things in the whole world," she said.

I laid Midge back down so she could relax while the other dolls climbed the book stairs to see her. She was embarrassed, but I couldn't make them stop. If something bad happened to a person, there had to be a funeral. It was a rule.

After everybody took a turn looking at Midge, my pink stuffed cat stood next to the box to say some words like Pastor Jim had yesterday. I picked the words I thought Midge would like the most.

"Flower, glitter, bracelet, birthday, candy, ice cream, mermaid, wedding dress, princess," the cat said. I smiled and kissed her nose, smack. Her words were much nicer than Pastor Jim's. A lot of what he said was confusing, like when he talked about a thing called the shadow of deaf. I thought he meant my dog, Shadow, since she chewed up every part of Midge, including

her ears. Then Pastor Jim said that part of Daddy was inside the big box on stage, but the rest of him had gone to heaven. How could parts of Daddy be in different places at the same time? I had wondered. Thinking about it now, I giggled. Silly Pastor Jim. If Daddy could be in two places at once, he would've stayed home with Mama and me even when he was in Alaska. Besides, the man napping in the box didn't look like Daddy — his skin was white like a marshmallow and he didn't have a beard.

I put the cat back on my bed with my other stuffed animals. What was next? Oh, songs! I looked at the Barbies sitting on the rug. There were seven, not counting Ken, so I couldn't do all their voices. "Teresa, you sing," I said.

"I want to sing, too!" my favorite Barbie said.

"Okay, you can both sing," I said. I picked up the two dolls and made them stand next to the book steps.

"What should we sing?" Barbie whispered to Teresa.

"Um... Old MacDonald?"

"No, not that one — there's a dog in it," Barbie said.

"Hey Diddle, Diddle?"

"That has a dog in it, too."

They argued for a minute before deciding on Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star. After they finished that, they sang The Ants Go Marching and the ABCs. They were very good at the ABCs, so they did that one twice. The rest of the dolls cheered, hooray, for Barbie and Teresa when they were done.

"Wait, let's do one more," I said. "How about My Bonnie?"

"I like that one," Midge said from inside her box.

I made Barbie and Teresa sway back and forth with the words, as if they were riding on the waves at the beach.

"My Bonnie lies over the ocean, my Bonnie lies over the sea," I sang. I didn't know what a Bonnie was, but I liked how the song sounded. "My Bonnie lies over the ocean, so bring back my Bonnie to me!"

"Ella, what are you doing?"

I turned around fast and saw Mama standing in the doorway. Her curly blonde hair was even messier than mine and her blue T-shirt was wrinkled like elephant skin. She looked tired and sad — I'd heard her crying in the kitchen last night and had gone to give her a hug, but she just sent me back to bed. I wished Daddy had been there. He could've made Mama feel better.

"We're having a funeral," I said.

I couldn't help glancing at the shoebox. It was too late to hide it.

Mama pressed her lips together and rubbed at her eyes with one hand. Then she knelt down on the rug next to my dolls and looked into the shoebox. She picked up poor gnawed Midge and stared at her for a long time. "Ella... didn't I tell you to throw this away?"

I watched Mama's face. Was she mad? She didn't sound mad, but her face looked pinched, as if it were made of pale play-dough that someone had squeezed between their hands.

"I want to keep her," I said, snatching Midge from Mama and clutching the damaged doll to my chest. "She'll be all right. She'll get better. She doesn't have to go in the trash." I looked down at the tooth marks in Midge's face and my eyes suddenly felt all prickly, like they were filled with sand. "Why couldn't Shadow just chew her squeaky toy? Why'd she have to hurt Midge?" My voice came out wobbly, like a bird song.

Mama scooted over next to me and pulled me against her soft, bumpy chest. A hint of sweet perfume from yesterday still floated around her. She breathed out a long sigh that ruffled my hair. I started to cry.

"I don't know," she said. "I don't know why shadows hurt the ones we love." She paused and stroked my curly hair out of my face. "It's not fair, is it?"

I shook my head and wiped my eyes on my pajama sleeve. My nose was running, so I wiped that too. When I stopped snuffling, Mama gently pulled Midge out of my hands and put her back into the shoebox. She found the lid under my bed and covered the box with it. "Midge is sleeping now," Mama whispered.

"Okay," I said, copying her whisper. I didn't want to bother Midge. "But how long will she sleep? Barbie wants to play dress-up with her."

Mama's blue eyes shimmered, like they were made of water. "A long time," she said. "She's going to sleep forev — for a long time."

I picked up my favorite Barbie and jiggled her slightly, so Mama would know it was Barbie talking, not me. "That's all right. I can play with Midge later."

Mama smiled with half of her mouth. She picked up Teresa and made her say, "That's a good idea, Barbie."

I giggled a little. Then I noticed Ken in his black suit, still sitting on the rug amidst the other Barbies like a pebble in a pond full of goldfish. Someone needed to play Ken, but I could only think of one person who knew how to do a man voice — and he wasn't here.

I suddenly felt very small.

"Mama... where's Daddy?"

Mama dropped Teresa and raised her chin toward the ceiling. She stared at it so long that I thought she didn't hear me — but after a while she tilted her head back down and looked at me with her glistening eyes. She reached out and stroked my cheek with her thumb once, twice. And then she started to sing.

"Your Daddy lies over the ocean, your Daddy lies over the sea."



DO NOT
DISTURB

—
ERE DE NE PAS DERANGER
—
BITTE NICHT STOREN
—
NO MOLESTEN
—

HOTEL ROOM

RENEE SOASEY

Clark Community College
Washington

Someone else's creamy sheets
and marshmallow pillow
absorb my ire,
hot and circling
like the coffee swirling round the
straw
in the cardboard cup
I drank alone this morning.

Someone else's day
sneaks through sheer white curtains
I hang the Do Not Disturb sign
on my heart,
unpack and repack the black
suitcase.
Its gaping mouth
shouts the same question again
and again
I zip it up.

Someone else's door
clicks shut behind me
I toss a scarf around my neck,
black and white
it flaps in the wind
streaming
like your judgments.

I raise my hand
fingers clenched
the middle one escapes.

AVIGAIL GEMMA REZNIKOFF



KANDACE KELLY
Central Arizona College
Arizona

Dedicated to my four times great-grandmother, Tennessee McFarland, who did indeed steal horses from the South to sell to the North during the Civil War.

On July 28, 1861, I rode through the steady drizzle the clouds were kind enough to release. The Civil War began with more bloodshed than I care to remember. My husband was murdered at our home in Missouri, and now on my own, I wearily made my way to Illinois, a free state. I had to be cautious, treading slowly and silently. The Bushwhackers scoured every nook and cranny of Missouri, searching for deserters, or people of what they considered to be lesser aptitude, lesser blood or lesser faith.

I led a small company of six horses, their lead ropes held tight in my hand. They each stood at different heights and were the results of different sires, but each of them a strong, willing work horse. The one horse I had been able to rescue from the raid on our home was my husband's Appaloosa stallion named Buck; so named because of his success in bucking off his riders. The old man who owned Buck as a foal said the horse was un-trainable, and when my husband stumbled upon them, the man was on the verge of putting a bullet in the horse's head. My husband became Buck's new charge, and within a year, the stallion was thoroughly trained. Now with me astride him, Buck walked proudly as the leader of his small herd.

As we neared the next town, I could hear the sound of people hollering and dogs barking. I slowed Buck and eventually brought him to a halt. I sat on the tall stallion and considered my options. Either I enter the town and encounter possible hostile Bushwhackers, or I pass it by and continue on to Illinois. I leaned over Buck's neck and stroked his mane.

"What do you think, Buck?" I began. "Should I go into the town, or should we just go around?"

He grunted and, chomping his bit, showed the whites in his eyes as he looked toward the town.

Glancing back at the other horses, I couldn't help but feel sorry for them. All of the grass in Missouri maintained their weight, and overall they looked like healthy, fit horses; but they had been with me for weeks and each of them was covered in mud, their hair matted, and in need of new shoes. So was I.

I couldn't help but daydream about a roof being over my head, a hot bath, being dressed like a civilized woman, and when did I last eat a decent meal? A check of my food and water supply made my choice for me. All I had in the way of food was four biscuits and some goat's cheese I had saved from my farm, and although it had been only a handful of weeks, it seemed like an eternity ago; the cheese could be questionable. I had to stop.

I decided to tether the horses in a group of alder trees to hide them; anyone who came across seven unclaimed horses would take them. I couldn't afford to lose Buck. He was all I had left of my husband. I walked the short distance to town, and being a woman traveling without a man, I was the object of many unfriendly stares. Despite these, I trudged over to the General Store. An older man, who was sitting out front, grimaced at me as I passed. His three yellow teeth flashed, and his smell — like he hadn't bathed in weeks — forced my nose to wrinkle up despite my best efforts.

I entered the store and saw a small, old woman with her gray hair in a bun behind the counter. She frowned at me while I gazed around at the various shelves of food and supplies. Her rude attitude made me wonder if she was the old man's wife.

I left with a handful of jerky and walked down the steps on the landing. I heard the old man, whom I had seen — and smelled — when I entered the store, chuckling. I glanced at him, but he just laughed even more.

"I have a hunch, see," he began. "First, it ain't proper fer a young, pretty lady such as yerself to be travelin' alone. Second, I seen you on a Wanted Poster. You look like the same gal, just with a differnt hair color!" he exclaimed.

I was shocked, but I hid it well. "I can assure you, mister, I am not wanted; and I'm damn surprised you can count," I said calmly.

"Then why you by yerself?" he asked.

"My husband was murdered fighting in the war," I lied.

"What side was he fightin' fer?"

"Does it matter?" I countered.

"Well, yeah it —" he was interrupted by a man that came galloping through the street. He was shouting "Tennessee McFarland has been spotted outside a town!" Suddenly, the old man jumped down the stairs.

"I'm gonna git that whore," he muttered, hobbling quickly toward the livery.

I stared at him for a moment, and then pulled my skirt up high enough to run. I ran the way I had come, and on the backside of a post hung a Wanted Poster I hadn't seen. As I neared, I realized the drawing nailed to the post was indeed me. It read,

Reward
Dead \$100 or Alive \$500
Gemma Jew
Wanted for horse thievery and murder

They called me Gemma Jew?! Just another way the people of the South expressed their Christianity. The old man was right though, the hair color was wrong; it was dark, and my hair was light.

Above that poster was another one of a woman. I didn't recognize her, but the name caught my attention.

Reward
Dead or Alive \$800
Tennessee McFarland
Wanted for murder and horse thievery

I had just heard this name! The woman was close, and I didn't know if I should be in more fear or feel a sense of camaraderie.

Gun shots echoed in the distance behind me, and I was reminded of my plight. I took off running to where I hid my horses; it was time to go. Luckily, they were exactly where I left them; I mounted Buck, grabbed the ropes of the others, and galloped into the dense forest.

We ran east for a while, until a deep, fast river halted our progress. I wasn't sure where to go next; more gunshots rang from the direction of the town. I had to make a decision, and make it fast. I had resolved myself to cross the rapid, flowing river, when a deafening gunshot sounded just to my left. The horses spooked and I almost lost my grip on their ropes, Buck slightly spun, and I jumped almost a foot out of the saddle as I turned to see who fired the shot.

An Indian woman sat on a blue-roan mare, rifle aiming at me. She wore a dark green, dusty dress — as if she had worn it for some time — and her long, black-blue hair was in two braids that hung to her waist. A dusty black cowboy hat rested on her head, and she stared fiercely at me, smelling my fear.

"What is a white woman doing alone?" she asked in a deep, husky voice.

Finding my own voice, I lied, attempting to save myself from a bullet in the head. "I'm bringing these horses into town to my husband."

"You lie," she calmly began. "I saw you run here with your horses."

"I ran because of the gunshots" I replied.

"No," she said. "You ran because of the bounty on you."

I swallowed hard; I had no idea what to say. I didn't want to be shot. I heard the men shouting; they were getting close.

"The men from the town...they're going to find you," I said.

"Then they find me," she answered. She sat completely still, waiting for my response.

Hearing galloping horses nearing, I decided to tell her; perhaps she would kill me, but I had to take the chance.

"I steal horses from the South and give them to the Yankees or abolitionists in the North. Please don't kill me, I wish to help slaves. I — " she interrupted me.

"No more talk," she commanded. "Follow me."

I thought for a moment, somewhat surprised she didn't kill me, but the sound of men shouting in excitement broke my reverie. I heard one man yell, "We'll git her this time!" I quickly followed the woman, not knowing what her plan was, but my choices were either die sooner or die later; I chose later.

We galloped north along the river almost to the town, and at that point I noticed the water was shallower; Buck jumped forward, splashing me and the other horses. Joining the woman on the other bank, we began silently making our way through the dense forest. We turned around so many trees and shrubs, that I no longer knew if I was headed for Illinois. I still possessed no inkling of whether this woman would kill me or not.

We walked through the forest for hours, and she remained quiet. Buck's neck was wet from sweat, and as I glanced at the other horses, I saw they weren't in any better shape. When the woman finally stopped, she dismounted and began removing her mare's tack.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"I am stopping for the night," she replied.

"Aren't you worried about the men finding you?"

"White Men will not find me; my mare needs to rest," she looked at Buck. "So do your horses."

I looked down at Buck. I knew he needed to rest, but I wasn't sure if I wanted to stop here. On the other hand, Indians were skilled in keeping with their direction, which I no longer had, and the prospect of getting lost, as well as the possibility of being caught, were not things I wanted to endure. I decided to stay.

After settling in, she ate some biscuits with jam, while I stuck to dried biscuits and jerky. Looking at her in the dim light — not being able to make a fire — I asked, "Why are you alone?"

"My husband was killed in the war," she began, licking the edge of a biscuit where jam was trying to escape. "Since then, I've been stealing horses from white men who make slaves of black men, selling horses to white men who don't," she replied.

"Are you an abolitionist?" I asked.

"I am not involved in White Man's ways."

"What tribe are you from?"

"I am Cherokee," she replied

"What's your name?"

"Oteka," she answered. She pronounced it O-teek-ah. "Some know me as Tennessee McFarland. What are you called?"

"My name is Avigail Gemma Reznikoff."

"Avigail..." she slowly echoed, attempting to pronounce it correctly.

"You can call me Avvey for short," I said. "My husband did. He was murdered defending our home when Bushwhackers burned it...burned it to the ground."

"Some men don't deserve the honor of being called men," she replied. And with that, we settled in to sleep. The next morning, I was still alive.

I decided to stay with Oteka, and as time passed, I grew more sure she wouldn't kill me. I think I even caught a smile from her once. As we continued northeast to Illinois, Oteka stole horses from towns near our path. She even filched a pistol from a sleeping drunkard and gave it to me. Through all the towns and many dangers we faced, we were never caught and the bounty on our heads was never claimed; though on several occasions, we were almost found, but the men either gave up, or we outran them.

RELEASED



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Nighttime rainfall
has turned the concrete driveway
dark and shiny in the gray swirling dawn.
Spring is a lush green fragrance
in the air, the scent of
wet grass, earthworms and lilacs.

She escapes outside before school,
into the wild liberation of the senses.
The longing rises up again —
to reach out with one stubby finger,
and touch the back of a songbird,
as if touching makes it real.

She steals behind the tangle
of sweet peas, sliding silently closer each time.
And each time, her hand connects
with nothing but the wake
left behind by the outburst of wings.

One day, she stops trying.
Thinks she's put that desire away
with outgrown dresses and rubber-toed
sneakers.
She fills feeders with seeds and peanuts.
Watches as they gorge themselves.

Watches them soar.
Watches...

One lemon-bright goldfinch has flipped
on his perch. Somehow he is trapped,
gripped by metal and plastic talons.
He thrashes until he is spent.
He stops trying.

She darts barefoot into the midday sun.
Blue eyes meet fear-filled deep black ones.
Gently, her hands slip around him,
folding dark wings against golden form.

She lifts him, turns his weightless body over.
One long finger strokes his smooth back,
feels his hammering heart.

He looks into her eyes, calmly and boldly now.
She opens her hands.
Yellow streaks into blue sky.

She stands looking at her hands
for a very long time.

LISTENING TO DIANA KRALL ON THE RADIO

TAMMARA LEMINEN

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"Cry me a river," she sings,
Her voice warm yet biting,
Like a shot of whiskey on a cold, rainy night.
And I picture the copious tears of her lover,
Creating a literal flood of misery —
A roiling, tempestuous rush of a river,
A tangible accomplishment that he can point to, and say:
"There. That's how much I missed you."

I imagine there would be some comfort
In the ability to cry an actual river —
How purposeful it must feel to look upon
The sheer visual evidence
Of the scope of one's suffering;
A small measure of solace in the thought
That all that crying was so productive.

Certainly, I have missed you deeply enough
That I felt as if I could cry a river;
But all my countless tears
Have only rolled down my cheeks and evaporated.
The way that tears usually do,
And at best I have only produced
a handful or so of moist Kleenex.

As profound as my loneliness has been,
It has never had the power to alter geography,
Creating a brand new waterway,
Sending boating enthusiasts and mapmakers scrambling.
In fact, my sorrow has never accomplished anything;
Even if I cry a dozen times a day,
There are always plenty of tears left for the next time,
And I never miss you any less.

So, if so much crying
Won't serve to diminish my grief whatsoever,
There ought to at least be a river to show for it —
A long and glorious blue ribbon of melancholy.
Then, on gentle summer afternoons, happier lovers
Could picnic on the grassy shores of the river I cried for you,
And perhaps kiss beneath the shade of a weeping willow tree.

A CONTRAST OF MR. DARCY'S MOTIVES AND MILL'S IDEALS IN JANE AUSTEN'S *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*



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Jane Austen grapples with right moral behavior in all of her novels, but seldom do her characters act out of anything but egoism; although the consequences may result in happiness for many, utilitarian reasoning does not motivate their actions. Altruism is rare in Austen's storylines (with the exception of her heroines caring for the sick and feeding the poor in *Emma* and *Persuasion*). Perhaps this is because Austen's novels are written from a female perspective; a woman in the early 1800s would have had the power to help her family by marrying a rich man, providing entertainment, and producing children, but would lack the power to contribute to the happiness of the community at large from her domestic sphere. In contrast, a rich gentleman would have been in a position to make altruistic choices to increase the happiness of others. However, the social constructs and inequalities of the early 1800s promote securing one's position by acting in one's own self-interest. By reviewing *Pride and Prejudice*'s plot and Mr. Darcy's choices, examining the differences between egoism and utilitarian action, and comparing John Stuart Mill's essay "The Subjection of Women" with the ideal Austen woman, one can see how Mr. Darcy's actions are motivated by egoism and not utilitarianism.

Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* is a story of courtship, society, morality, manners and unequal gender roles. The central storyline follows the second eldest daughter of the Bennet family, Elizabeth, on her journey to marrying Mr. Darcy. Although both characters were born to gentlemen, Mr. Darcy has eight times the Bennet family's wealth. Their social circles collide when Mr. Darcy's affable friend, Mr. Bingley, moves into the Bennet's neighborhood and falls in love with Elizabeth's older sister Jane. The Bennet sisters' histrionic and manipulative mother endangers Jane's health by exposing her to rain on horseback on her way to Mr. Bingley's estate; Jane becomes very ill and is nursed to health by Elizabeth. During Elizabeth's stay, she

interacts with Mr. Bingley's snobbish sisters and the hypercritical Mr. Darcy (who is increasingly impressed with Elizabeth's intelligence); she is relieved to return home. Mr. Bennet's property is entailed to their clergyman cousin, Mr. Collins. During Mr. Collins' visit to the Bennet home, he proposes to Elizabeth, she refuses, and Mr. Collins marries her best friend Charlotte. Elizabeth meets the conniving Mr. Wickham, an officer who lies that Mr. Darcy mistreated him; this leads Elizabeth to believe that Mr. Darcy is a terrible man. Mr. Darcy's affection for Elizabeth grows, but thinking that he is cruel, she refuses his first proposal. On a visit with her aunt, Elizabeth tours Mr. Darcy's magnificent estate, Pemberley, where he is gracious to her relatives. Then a scandal hits the Bennet family. Elizabeth's foolish youngest sister, Lydia, runs off to Brighton with Mr. Wickham. After Elizabeth confides this information to Mr. Darcy, he secretly hunts them down and pays Mr. Wickham's debts in exchange for his marriage to Lydia. Mr. Darcy also gives his blessing to Mr. Bingley to propose to Jane. After observing Mr. Darcy's acts of kindness to her family, Elizabeth falls in love with him. Lady Catherine de Bourgh visits Elizabeth and forbids her from considering a marriage proposal from Mr. Darcy; Elizabeth refuses to comply. When Mr. Darcy proposes a second time, Elizabeth agrees, and her family is overjoyed to have married off three of their daughters.

In order to evaluate Mr. Darcy's actions as either utilitarian or egoistic, one must first consider what qualifies as egoism and utilitarianism. Egoism is acting out of one's own self-interest; it is the opposite of altruism, and consequences to others are irrelevant (Moseley). Jeremy Bentham and James Mill developed utilitarianism during Austen's time, and John Stuart Mill clarified the philosophy after her death. According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy's* article "The History of Utilitarianism," "the morally right action is the action that produces the most good...right action is understood entirely in terms of consequences produced." Bentham and Mill associated good with pleasure and believed one should "bring about 'the greatest amount of good for the greatest number'" (Driver), a notion inspired by their predecessor Francis Hutcheson's moral sense approach. Hutcheson's caveat was that "the dignity or moral importance of persons may compensate numbers" (Driver).

In utilitarianism, every person's happiness is valued equally. In this sense, a utilitarian action is right if it meets the following criteria: the consequences of the action produce happiness for the greatest number, more happiness is created than unhappiness, and each person's happiness is valued equally. In contrast, egoistic action is right if it makes the person performing the action happy regardless of its effect on others.

The world in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is not equal: men have more rights than women, rich are superior to poor, and societal values often trump morals; it would take great strength of character for a rich man like Mr. Darcy to shift from egoism to utilitarianism to balance these disparities. Mr. Darcy is excessively rich, a pinnacle of superiority, and surrounded by sycophants. He is like Eliot's hollow man, drifting in and out of social gatherings without pleasure or purpose until he begins to covet Elizabeth. Mr. Darcy's pride and self-absorption blind him to what he could gain through pleasing others. One might consider utilitarian action in *Pride and Prejudice* to be the scant happiness created by Mr. Darcy from his appearance at social events in his community. "He was looked on with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud; to be above his company, and above being pleased...everybody hoped that he would never come there again" (Austen 10). One knows little of Mr. Darcy's life outside of his social appearances; there is no mention of his altruism or of his concern for the community at large. Mr. Darcy's words have the power to make others happy, but he almost always delivers harsh, Kantian truths that offend. When Mr. Darcy first encounters Elizabeth, he immediately passes judgment and refuses to dance with her, "She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me; I am in no humor at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men" (Austen 11).

Elizabeth's mother later describes Mr. Darcy as, "a most disagreeable, horrid man, not at all worth pleasing. So high and so conceited that there was no enduring him! He walked here, and he walked there, fancying himself so very great...I quite detest the man" (Austen 13). Mr. Darcy's best friend, Mr. Bingley, abandons the woman he loves based on Mr. Darcy's advice, "On the strength of Darcy's regard, Bingley had the firmest reliance, and of his judgment the highest opinion" (Austen 17). Since Mr. Darcy is the wealthiest and most powerful man among his peers, he is in a position to reject the prejudices of his peers and accept the Bennet family into his circle. Instead, he chooses out of self-interest to protect his status by not revealing his true opinion. "Mr. Darcy had never been so bewitched by any woman as he was by Elizabeth. He really believed, that were it not for the inferiority of her connections, he should be in some danger" (Austen 59). Mr. Darcy describes himself,

"I have faults enough, but they are not, I hope, of understanding. My temper I dare not vouch for. It is, I believe, too little yielding — certainly too little for the convenience of the world. I cannot forget the follies and vices of others so soon as I ought, nor their offenses against myself. My feelings are not puffed about with every attempt to move them. My temper would perhaps be called resentful. My good opinion once lost, is lost forever" (Austen 65).

Mr. Darcy uses "I" and "my" frequently in conversation, and he shows a general disdain for others. He places great value on his judgment of others, is unaware of his vices, and fails to consider other perspectives or how he could use his position to benefit others. He has the opportunity to make his aunt and socialite friends happy by marrying his cousin, but he refuses. The sole act that might be considered utilitarian because it results in the happiness of many is when Mr. Darcy forces Mr. Wickham to marry Lydia to prevent the Bennet family's disgrace; however, Mr. Darcy reveals that he only did this for Elizabeth. "If you will thank me, let it be for yourself alone...your family owe me nothing. Much as I respect them, I believe I thought only of you" (Austen 415). By appealing to her desires he is able to serve his own by persuading her to marry him. Other than the Bennet family and their inferior connections, no one in society expresses happiness over the match. Mr. Darcy continually fails to make the masses happy, he offends them to please himself, and he acts solely out of self-interest. For these reasons, Mr. Darcy's actions cannot be considered to be utilitarian but rather egoistic.

The inequality of the sexes in *Pride and Prejudice* is amplified by John Stuart Mill's essay "The Subjection of Women." Austen's upper-class characters, Caroline Bingley and Mr. Darcy, describe what an accomplished woman in the early 1800s should be,

"It is amazing to me," said Bingley, "how young ladies can have patience to be so very accomplished as they all are...They all paint tables, cover screens, and net purses."

(Miss Bingley) "No one can be really esteemed accomplished who does not greatly surpass what is usually met with. A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half-deserved."

"All this she must possess," added Darcy, "and to all this she must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading" (Austen 43).

These superficial accomplishments paint the Austen woman as an artful entertainer in her limited domestic sphere. Every end of a woman's actions results in beauty or diversion; many of these functions could be replaced today with an entertainment system. All of the Bennet

sisters are described as silly (with the exception of Elizabeth). Mrs. Bennet's attacks of nerves, obvious matchmaking, and indignation highlight her foolishness. The Bingley women are materialistic, judgmental, and mean; they aspire no further than reaching Austen's ideal. Mr. Darcy's aunt, Lady Catherine, has power due to her title and wealth but is limited by a fervent belief in social rules. No woman in Austen's novel expresses a desire for equality with men; however, Elizabeth's actions of arguing toe-to-toe with her superiors suggest that she is, if not Mr. Darcy's intellectual equal, able to win his admiration as more than just a beautiful object.

Austen's view of women is in sharp contrast to Mill's proposal of equality for the sexes in "The Subjection of Women." In Mill's essay, instead of showing inequalities through narrative action, he argues against them directly. Mill observes the physical power that men have and compares marriage to slavery. This is illustrated in Austen's work by Elizabeth's refusal to marry Mr. Collins; although she could have helped her family keep their estate, the thought of living with him forever was unacceptable. "You could not make me happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who could make you so" (Austen 124). Mill does not support the view that male domination is natural; he proposes that this belief is held because people are used to the status quo and one should consider an opposite model. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the opposite model is unimaginable because of the strictly adhered to gender roles and social rules. Due to women's lack of educational opportunities, a society of decorators, models and musicians would not be equipped to provide society with necessary products and services. Mill's essay postdates *Pride and Prejudice* by half a century, and it is apparent that the social constructs were not yet ready for Mill's vision of equality.

Jane Austen's Mr. Darcy lived a privileged life in which his superiority was continually reinforced. Although his actions were motivated by self-interest, and not by service to others, his character grows from being a hypercritical hollow man to one of possibility. By choosing to marry Elizabeth for her intelligence rather than her social status, he breaks from his fellow socialites' values. Mill's ideals of utilitarianism and sexual equality are not yet present in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* due to the strict adherence to societal rules and well-established gender roles. There are flashes of the rebellious, independent, modern woman when Elizabeth uses reason to challenge others above her station and thinks for herself; however, she is the exception in a sea of silly women who overvalue materialism and undervalue their potential to become equals with men. Jane Austen's amplification of the weaknesses of her characters, while humorous, shed light on the need for moral judgment based on reason and how the status quo (male property rights, inequalities and societal rules) begs for revision. The plot of *Pride and Prejudice* could not exist without these elements: if a woman could inherit property, had equal access to education and job opportunities, and did not need to conform to societal rules, her future would be secure and she would have no need for the maneuvering business of finding a husband. The modern reader can escape into Austen's world where kindness, family and intelligence are prized while materialism, insincerity and stupidity are not. For these reasons, Austen's novels remain relevant today not only as love stories but as explorations of morality.

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THE REGRET



ORIANA WOOD

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I'll begin by saying I'm sorry.

Looking back, I see so many mistakes, so I'll begin by saying I'm sorry.

For the errs I committed, I'm sorry I was so stupid.

For those you committed, I'm sorry you fell to that.

When I think of you as you were, the person I remember was sweet.

You were funny and fun-loving and even when you weren't laughing, your eyes were.

I liked that about you.

I won't say I loved that about you because we were both too young to love.

We played with each other and with our sisters, with the neighborhood kids and our pets.

Capture the flag, us on the same team, and I got tagged.

You made it into Save the Princess.

Soccer, the ball stuck in the bushes.

You made it into a scavenger hunt; whoever finds the ball wins.

Hopscotch; jump rope; tag; basketball.

Everything was a game, every joke was funny, every smile was worth what it took.

We weren't too old to play, but there came a day when you thought we were.

I'm sorry that happened so soon.

I remember the day you were talking — no, bragging — about beating up some kid at school.

"I gave him frickin two black eyes ... "

That wasn't you, wasn't the you I knew.

"Why would you do that?" I asked.

"He deserved it."

I'm sorry you thought that.

I'm sorry, even if it wasn't my fault, for whatever happened in your life to make you think that was ok.

Even more so, I'm sorry you took the marijuana when it was offered to you.

I knew exactly when you started that stuff because you became a completely different person.

Maybe I was too boring; maybe I wasn't "cool" enough.

Maybe I was too much of a good girl, didn't like the cuss words you brought home like trading cards.

I'm sorry I couldn't convince you.

I'm sorry I couldn't be right or wrong or whatever you wanted me to be.

I'm sorry for the words I said, that day when I got in your face and told you you were wrong.

I'm sorry I used the words I did instead of taking the time to find the right ones.

Maybe they were under the bush with the soccer ball.

Maybe that day you found the ball before me you also found the words I never could.

Maybe all the answers were under there too and that's why I couldn't find those either.

I'm sorry for that.

I remember the day you stumbled down the street, six months after we stopped talking, high as a Southwest jet.

I almost went to your door.

I got as far as the end of my driveway and stopped.

I'm so sorry for that.

I'm sorry I wasn't brave enough.

Years went by and you lived right across the street but you lived in another world.

I held my tongue; I said nothing.

I watched through the slats of my bedroom blinds, watched you grow up, grow taller, older. I watched you with your new friends, your "cool" friends, friends that had the same trading cards as you.

I watched you hit high school a year before me, bring girls home and go on dates.

I watched you smoke on your front porch, shameless.

I watched you get arrested.

How many times was it?

At least three.

I watched as your hair grew out and got buzzed off, countless times.

I noticed you had stopped laughing.

I'm sorry I never sought you out, even if you would've scorned me anyway.

I'm sorry I didn't try.

I noticed when your mom left and took your sister with her.

I noticed all the guys that moved in.

I noticed the late night excursions, the cigarette lighter signals, the pickup trucks, the 3 a.m. deliveries.

I noticed the little boxes.

I noticed how thin you'd become, how sick you looked, how secretive you were in public.

I noticed you dropped out of high school.

I noticed how your father scared you.

I'm sorry I did nothing.

I saw the police car, sitting, waiting; watching the street.
 I knew what was coming.
 I'm sorry I didn't say anything.

I was afraid.
 Not of your dad, heavysset and glaring.
 Not of the other men, with their tattooed necks, long-sleeve tees and laceless shoes.
 I was afraid you would say what I dreaded.
 I was afraid you would say you hated me.
 I was afraid you would say I had caused — or at the very least not prevented — your problems.
 I was afraid you would question why I'd said anything at all.
 I was afraid you would say our friendship had been nothing.
 So I said nothing.

I saw the police cars, saw the handcuffs.
 I heard your dad had been dealing heroine.
 I heard he'd been cooking meth in the garage.
 I heard everyone in the house was arrested.
 I heard someone escaped out the back.
 Was it you?
 I'm sorry you didn't get out sooner.
 I'm sorry I didn't try to help you.
 I'm sorry I didn't confront your addiction when it first began.
 I watched it develop over years, growing into something you couldn't fight.
 It was through my weakness that I failed.

I saw the dumpster, the men in HazMat suits; all your possessions thrown away.
 It was too late to stop it.

I saw your mom, a few weeks after the bust, and your sister.
 They approached me, looking for your dog, Sophie.
 Your mom said your dad had turned mean.
 She said she knew he was on something.
 That's why she left.

I can't stop my racing thoughts — if I had supported you in your struggle from the start, could you have been a different person?
 Could you have, in turn, supported her?
 Could you have lent her the strength to drive your father out?
 Would she have stayed?
 Would the dealing and the cooking and the bust never have happened?
 If I go all the way back, if I had said something that very first day I sensed a change in you...
 Could I have saved you?
 I think I could have.
 I'm sorry I didn't try.

I thought of you last week, for the first time in a while.
I logged into Facebook and searched your name.
It was easy.
Three mutual friends and the same hometown, and your face looking back at me.
I didn't add you; I just looked.
A friend was there, asked what I was doing.
"I had a crush on this kid in middle school."

"What? What the hell, Oriana, he looks like a douche."
"He wasn't always."
"What was so great about him?"
The sad thing is, I couldn't tell him.
Because I couldn't remember what was so great about you.
Maybe you never were great.
Maybe you had the potential to be, but no one around to help you break through that wall.
I'm sorry for that too.
I'm sorry I was too afraid.
I'm sorry I couldn't be there for you.
I'm sorry, I'm sorry.
Forgive me.

ONE MORE PUSH

CATHERINE MAHONY

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Come on, you can do it, just one more push.
She gently places the palm of her hand on a cloth diaper.
Her nudge assists in the first crawl.
She leans back, filled with delight.
I speed across the carpet.

Come on, you can do it, just one more push.
She abruptly releases the back of the banana-shaped seat.
Her shove assists in the first ride.
She turns away — half smiling, half crying.
I wobble back and forth but finally find my balance.

Come on, you can do it, just one more push.
He apprehensively thrusts the swing into thin air.
He tries to teach me how to pump by myself.
He watches carefully, giving me enough room to fly.
I touch the clouds with the tips of my fingers and he laughs.

Just one more push and the silver-framed box is in the hearse.
I stand in the doorway of the church, saying good-bye to her.
I watch him harden and fade away.
He sits in the pew, face like stone.
I place my hand on his shoulder.

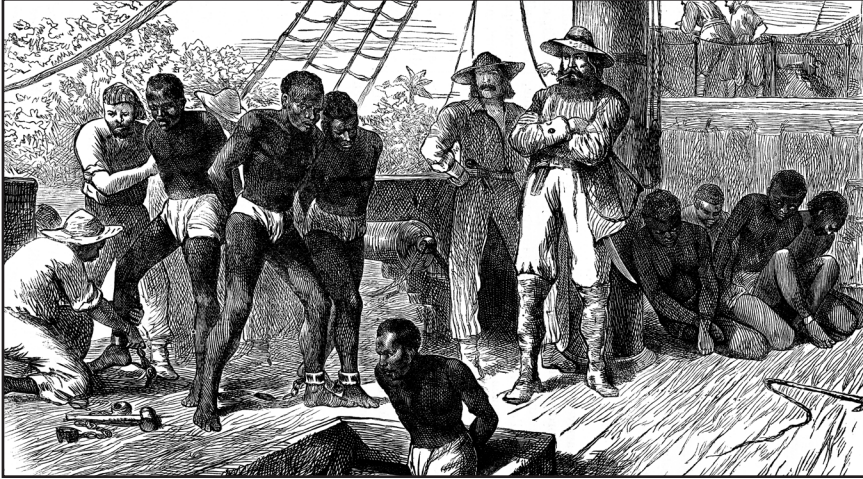
Come on, you can do it, just one more push.
I attempt to carry him up the stairs.
His frail body weighs me down as whiskey breath penetrates the air.
I sit at the kitchen table and feel nothing.
I hold my head in my hands.

Come on, you can do it, just one more push.
The unfamiliar nurse coaches my breathing.
I conjure strength from an unseen force and hear the first cry.
I lean back in exhaustion and just stare at her.
I cradle her fragile head in my hands, as she leans into me.

Come on, you must do it. You know how to push.
I push past the haunting wail of bagpipes that bade him farewell.
I push past the doubt and uncertainty of lessons half-learned.
I push her because I long to see her smile.
I push her so she can touch the highest cloud.



A LIFE OUTSIDE THE BOX



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The validity of an author's work can always be called into question, whether they are writing about themselves, about others or about fictional characters they've created for the purpose of telling the tales they wish. To know the truth of a story is to have lived the story itself, and it is by way of writing in a convincing and evocative manner that allows for a reader to consider the author's work plausible, and therefore valid.

In the case of Henry Box Brown and his autobiographical story he tells in "Narrative of Henry Box Brown, Who Escaped from Slavery Enclosed in a Box 3 Feet Long and 2 Wide," Brown recalls the harrowing ordeal of having himself nailed inside a wooden box for the purpose of being shipped from a Virginia plantation to abolitionists in Philadelphia, where he would potentially find freedom. The journey from slavery to salvation is traced in haunting detail, each movement of the box recalled by Brown as he walks us through the physical, emotional and mental torture he endured in order to escape 33 years of enslavement. Brown writes descriptively and in his own authentic voice when he states, "I started with my head downwards, although the box was directed, 'this side up with care.' ...In this dreadful position, I remained the space of an hour and a half, it seemed to me, when I began to feel of my eyes and head, and found to my dismay, that my eyes were almost swollen out of their sockets, and the veins on my temple seemed ready to burst" (Brown 60). Because of this descriptive nature, it is difficult to call into question the validity of Brown's experience; his recollections of life inside a box only three feet long by two feet wide nearly places the reader inside the box with him, fighting for air and the will to live.

Henry Box Brown was born into slavery in 1816, later in life making his name synonymous with having escaped such an existence, particularly because of his creative methods of doing so. In times when attempted escapes from plantations were halted and punished mid-mission, Brown succeeded in his plan, most likely because of how unique it was. Who would have thought to check a wooden box being thrown this way and that during a haul that lasted the course of days for a person residing inside? Brown's ingeniousness resulted in his passport to liberty when the box was eventually delivered to Philadelphia, the man and author still clinging to life inside.

Brown has a clear and authentic voice when referencing his time as a slave, prior to making his

escape. Of that, he says, "The first thing that occurred to me, after the cruel separation of my wife and children from me, and I had recovered from my senses, so as to know how to act, was, thoughts of freeing myself from slavery's iron yoke. I had suffered enough under its heavy weight, and I determined I would endure it no longer; and those reasons which often deter the slave from attempting to escape, no longer existed in reference to me, for my family were gone, and slavery now had no mitigating circumstances, to lessen the bitterness of its cup of woe" (Brown 56).

In this passage, Henry Box Brown is telling us his form of a story Americans have read of countless times when studying the history of our nation. Slavery in many forms and with many denominations of people is something that unfortunately is a part of the backbone of our collective culture, something that has bred and encouraged racist thoughts and the minds that bear them. Brown is but one example of the way in which a slave in our country was treated — by separating them from their loved ones and that which gave their life meaning — in order to do the white man's figurative dirty work by working their fingers to the bone.

Pun intended, that is just the method Brown employed when beginning his escape. In order to be permitted a respite in his daily labor, Brown resorted to taking oil of vitriol and pouring it on his finger, the result of which being that his skin and flesh was eaten clear through to the bone. It is because of this fearless and determined act that he was granted time away from his business and therefore given the time needed in order to acquire his box.

As a reader, I have no trouble imagining someone such as Henry Brown resorting to this method of escape, as I can't begin to imagine the amount of torture and torment a man like he must have faced, having his dignity stripped away from him along with his loved ones and being forced into a life of servitude as a second-class citizen. In this story of but a few days of his life, Brown depicts a tale that only echoes the sentiments of others I've read from a time before slavery was abolished country-wide.

Henry Box Brown clearly identifies with the African American race and the troubles they faced in an 18th-century United States, but the life that was imposed on him because of this racial identification is also something he nearly literally runs from. By placing himself in a box to be shipped to slavery abolitionists — the majority of which were most likely not of color themselves — Brown grants himself a freedom that other slaves did not come to find for themselves. For every Henry Box Brown, there were countless slaves who lived and died on their Masters' land, or lived long enough to attempt an escape that they were then reprimanded for. By escaping slavery and becoming a figurehead for that cause, Brown also potentially damaged the ability for others to follow in his footsteps, as the more Brown spoke and wrote about his situation, the more light he shed upon his method of escape.

Brown was born an insider to the slave trade, a poor black boy in the United States who seemed destined to live a life under the white man's thumb. Brown's intelligence and ingenuity fueled his near-silent uprising, but his tendency to vocalize this accomplishment was the downfall of others like him, after the fact, turning him into an outsider to the community he was born into.

I can't imagine what my decisions would have been had I ever lived in the conditions in which Henry Box Brown found himself, but his story is authentically his own and his actions valid, as it is by way of desperate measures that a person will resort to any means of escape. For Brown, that meant a box of three by two feet; for us, that means an unfortunate story of our cultural history that keeps us from ignoring our nation's past.

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LUNACY

JUSTIN JONES

*Georgia Highlands College
Georgia*

Sweet, sweet susurrations
slide into deadly whispers
dripping down my dry throat
like poison berries
and although I know
this mad fruit to be bitter,
likely fatal,
I also know
I will surely
dine on these words,
every time
and time again.

PANDERING



KATHLEEN SETTELS-BLACKTHORNE

*Irvine Valley College
California*

She was more alive than she had ever been
 Skin burning
As a callused finger ran down her back
 Hopes and dreams crumbling
Brown dead eyes that fed the disappointment that she slept with
 Waiting all her life to feel this way
 No more speeches
 Cash left on a bedside table

THE POWER OF DARKNESS



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Enchantments may appear in both supernatural and natural circumstances. The whispering of mystical actions brought dread to the hearts of the English during the fifth and sixth centuries. Women were viewed as having a lower status than their male counterparts, but they played a powerful role in the time period's fiction. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Sir Thomas Mallory's *Morte D'Arthur*, Morgan le Fey is feared for her powers of dark magic and seduction, irrevocably causing the ultimate downfall of Camelot.

Throughout the centuries, innocents have been burned at the stake during witch hunts of insanity. Vicars of multiple religions believed that burning on a cross would automatically damn the accused's soul to hell. According to *A Brief History of Lancaster*, witch burning became a craze in the fifth century (Lambert 1). The practice evolved and devolved over time, but terror remained. Fiction romanticized the process until it transformed into a battle of non-magical good versus magical evil. The practice of sorcery is the actuality of fantasy. In parallel to reality, the mention of magic in Arthurian legend made the bravest men cower in fear. The practice was banned in Camelot by the noble King Arthur and his father before him. The great Merlin the Wise turned away from the Pendragons as the family banished magic (Pyle 29). The refusal of acceptance promoted wide discontent and civil disobedience. Morgan le Fey refused to accept the condemning of her abilities; she yearned for power and was not hesitant to find it by any means.

Morgan le Fey, or Morgana, is depicted as a queen, a fairy, a temptress, a witch, a beautiful young maiden, and a shape-shifter, depending on which tale or legend is studied. Two facts remain: she is a woman cloaked in mystery and the eternal enemy of King Arthur. Morgana is revealed as his half-sister, and sibling rivalry has never been more intense. In every piece of documented literature, her ultimate purpose is to destroy the kingdom of Arthur Pendragon, the bane of her existence, as revenge unto Uther and Igraine. According to Pyle in *The Story of King Arthur and His Knights*,

Morgana had a vendetta with Arthur. There is no definite reasoning that is consistent in the legends as to why Morgan le Fey is in a constant battle with the king. What is known is that she becomes darker throughout the stories: "and in my manor lives the mighty Morgan le Fey, so adept and adroit in the dark arts" (Greenblatt 186). Morgan le Fey's battle with Arthur begins after her magical abilities emerge. Being the elder of siblings, she asininely believes she has an inherent right to the throne though male children immediately gain the kingdom. Morgana's need for power drains her of any humanity she once held.

Morgana reaps benefits of every advantage she possesses. She attains her knowledge of sorcery from the classic wizarding idol Merlin in most legends. Morgan le Fey "who learned magic from Merlin — the master of mystery" beguiles the powerful magician with her innocence and beauty, and the sorcerer apprentices her until the point when he realizes she is no longer using her powers for good (Greenblatt 187). At a young age, Morgana feels darkness within her; she chooses to abuse her powers for the purpose of revenge. She plots the possible downfall of Arthur in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Morgan le Fey believes the king's powers will fade without his bravest knight fighting valiantly by his side. "She imagined this mischief would muddle your minds and that grieving Guinevere would go to her grave at the sight of a specter making ghostly speeches with his head in his hands before the high table" (Greenblatt 187). She hopes to frighten Guinevere into an early death with the untimely doom of Sir Gawain, henceforth throwing Arthur into a bout of depression and anxiety. Morgan follows the notion that men have the illusion of control in the story, but the noblewomen hold the keys to the downfall of kingdoms.

Aside from her magical abilities, Morgana uses her skills of seduction in *Morte D'Arthur* to bring about the destruction of Arthur's kingdom. From sorceress to temptress, she steals the heart of Accolan. In his ignorance, he falls madly in love with her beauty. Morgan le Fey capitalizes on the love from Accolan, using his emotions for her advantage. According to *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Witches*, "Morgana, invariably portrayed as evil, plotted against Arthur to steal his sword, Excalibur, or otherwise bring him down" (Guiley 236). In *The Death of King Arthur*, she procures the sword and persuades Accolan to fight Arthur until death, hoping the king would be mortally wounded. The failure of her lover fazes her little; she is only disappointed in the lack of his mission's fulfillment.

Morgan le Fey proves to be quite the magical narcissist, a worthy adversary to any king. Arthur is condemned by her dark powers; he falls time and time again when her spells envelop Camelot. Morgana's thirst for power and revenge provoke the impending doom for the land Arthur calls home. Destruction and madness follow in her wake as she destroys everything she once loved by any means necessary.

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JUST OUT OF REACH

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You know, like the kite that caught the wind
and tumbled tragically into a tree.

And like the beach bucket washed asea
just before his little hands could pluck it
from the water in which he could not swim.

Like the star you've chosen in the sky because its
bright essence reached out to you, and for a moment
when you closed one eye, it appeared as if you could
grasp it from the universe and make it yours.

Like the butterfly on a lilac branch~

Like the dream that felt so real you hoped to never wake~

Like a wish~

Like a wonder.

Just out of reach are the words I want to say but can never say them.

Just out of reach is what you are to me.



ON THE CORNER OF NEVER AND AGAIN



ZACHARY JONES
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Michigan*

I'm standing on the corner of Never and Again
I'm not quite sure which way to go
Back that way there's a cul de sac
With the pavement weathered from my
footsteps

Forward there's the one-way street
And no way back
And beyond that, all the roundabouts to get
lost in
Islands in the traffic
Sinking out of sight

I know Again very well
We are like old friends
Who walk alongside each other
Again and again
It is a familiar street
No outlet
With that tear-shaped end
Dripping back to the intersection
Where I now stand

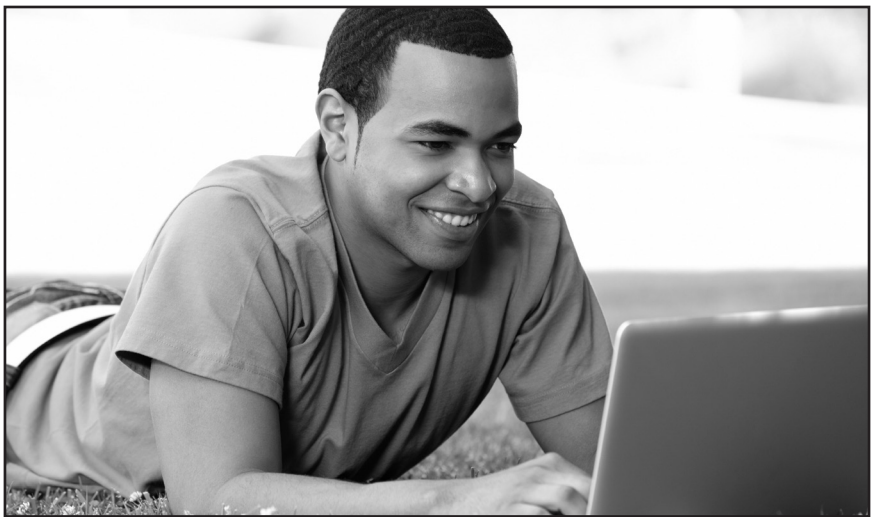
The pavement is cracked
All along Again
Potholes collect oiled water

They dance iridescent in the rain
I reach the end again and I must decide
Circle back
Or take the final step forward

I don't know what's out there
At the other end of the street
Never could go on forever
Getting lost going round and round those
roundabouts
And I could end up nowhere
Where would I be then?
The signs say ONE WAY
I don't know if it's the right way
And I'm afraid

I've heard a lot about Never
Someone told me
"All kids walk down Never
Someday."
Does it have to be today?
I'm afraid there's
No coming back
What if I can never talk to you again?
What if Never means never Again?

THE ONLINE EDUCATION QUANDARY: IS HIGHER EDUCATION READY TO EMBRACE THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION?



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In the 1970s, computerized Scantrons revolutionized the world of higher education, enabling professors to grade 30, 50, 100+ students' examinations in only minutes. The 1980s brought the age of Apple into the classrooms in both K-12 and post-secondary education as the personal computer company partnered with schools and institutions to ingrain the desktop computer as part of every students' school necessities. In the 1990s, standardized test scores and various levels of recognition for individual schools and then districts and states became the tools reshaping the direction and focus of national education attention.

In the early 2000s, education concentrated its nucleus of energy on the K-12 "No Student Left Behind" program, which reduced classroom size, reemphasized the rewards for the highest of standardized test scores and changed the K-12 school calendar to one revolving around the spring's "testing period." At the start of the Obama Administration in 2008, America began to refocus on the post-secondary system, underscoring the common core belief that a college education should and would be the goal of every graduating high school senior.

Over the last five years, we have seen that pledge take a number of developmental directions; but one of the most highly controversial as well as overwhelmingly prevalent directions is the conscientious shift towards online course offerings by traditional brick-and-mortar post-secondary schools from the community college levels up the ranks to the hallowed halls of the Ivy League. Despite it's many opponents, online education provides rural students, working students and students with families and other draws on their traditional daytime hours with a viable chance to take their shot at the American Dream; and in the highly competitive and nearly non-existent job market of the last five-to-seven years, a college degree has become not a luxury but a requirement.

Online courses for higher education have actually been a part of the post-secondary offerings to students since the mid 1990s; however, most traditional institutions did not begin significant offerings of online accredited courses until the millennium. This delay was largely due to the

negative academic literature on both online learning and online teaching. Critics claimed that the nature of the interaction between students and instructors and among students in the classroom was too valuable to the overall higher education experience.¹ Early research studies tended to support these concerns, as Phipps and Merisotis' 1999 literature review on the data published on overall distance learning since 1990 found a higher dropout rate among online students when compared to their traditional counterparts. Additional criticisms included the qualities of online libraries and resources and that the nature of an individual's learning style was not identifiable — much less able to be addressed — by earlier online educators.² In the nearly decade and a half since these findings were published, much has changed. Not only has the world become remarkably more tech savvy; ours is now a global world with global connections accessible to entire populations and generations at a few keystrokes. Online education has become a major actor in the higher education arena, and strong components of online education in courses offered in 2013 involve the design, construction and standardization of the course material and format by the online educators themselves.

Online courses at accredited post-secondary institutions are now increasingly being developed by a cooperative team of instructional designers, curriculum specialists and instructional technologists; and in most cases, these courses reflect standardized content, reusable course modules and defined learning outcomes.³ The higher learning institutions that originally fought the technological notion of online education as a serious supplement if not possible replacement to the night-school adjunct are now taking online courses to a high-quality level. Recognizing the mounting demand for flexibility in scheduling and the daily emergence of communication technologies has post-secondary institutions at all levels rationalizing online education as a viable means of providing quality instruction to an extensive academic audience any place and at any time.⁴ In a 2005 study conducted by D.E. Hillstock, a staggering 67 percent of all United States colleges and universities agreed that online education was the most logical, long-term strategy for their institution.⁵

So what is the appropriate balance between the clear benefits of flexibility, rural proximity and wide-scale availability of online educational courses offered by accredited post-secondary institutions and the notable pitfalls of reports of student isolation and disconnect at the lack of face-to-face student-student and student-instructor interaction, varying levels of instructor preparedness required for students to succeed and the myriad of characteristics required by the students themselves in order to achieve in a self-motivated environment? According to an online seminar, "Teaching an Online Course Developed by Others," Dr. Susan Ko, Executive Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Maryland University College, says the first hurdle to overcoming issues and enabling success is the implementation of standardization of online course format and curriculum. In addition to being an efficient method of ensuring consistency in learning outcomes, standardization affords institutions the ability to serve more students without the added costs of individualized course development and help meet the demand for consistent, high-quality online education courses.⁶

¹ Hurt, Joyce. "The Advantages and Disadvantages of Teaching and Learning On-Line." *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, Summer 2008, 5-11.

² Ibid.

³ Bart, Mart. "Teaching Standardized Courses: Advantages and Disadvantages." FacultyFocus. Last modified July 12, 2012. Accessed April 23, 2013. <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/teaching-standardized-coursesadvantages-and-disadvantages/>.

⁴ Ernst, Jeremy V. "A Comparison of Traditional and Hybrid Online Instructional Presentation in Communication Technology." *Journal of Technology Education* 19, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 40-49.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Bart, Mart. "Teaching Standardized Courses: Advantages and Disadvantages." FacultyFocus. Last modified July 12, 2012. Accessed April 23, 2013. <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/teaching-standardized-coursesadvantages-and-disadvantages/>

According to Ko, standardization does not translate into "canned" and should not be equated to lack of input and involvement by instructors or the opportunity for instructors to infuse their expertise and individual teaching styles into their courses. Standardization is a practical form of delivery of a consistent breadth and level of course content and student evaluation. Among the benefits of standardization of online courses are the additional time afforded to instructors in not needing to prepare individualized online courses and the ability of instructors to focus their attentions on teaching the material and to possibly teach a wider range of courses or curriculum. Ko acknowledges that online instruction and standardized online course format and content has its downside and warns instructors to be wary of a lack of ownership and engagement with their students and potential disagreement with course content material.⁷

Among the most standard methods of delivery for online education is through portals such as Blackboard, edX and other massive open online course (MOOC) platforms. Common to each of these portals are the discussion threads, which provide a rich environment for student-instructor as well as student-student interaction. In her qualitative study of online education, educational researcher Joyce Hurt described the additional benefits of discussion boards within online courses as providing an opportunity for students who are often too shy to speak up in class a more comfortable and safe environment to engage in "classroom" interaction and discussions. Additionally, Hurt notes that while traditional face-to-face courses can be hampered by the time constraints of set schedules, which can stifle or cut-off enriching discussions, online discussion threads provide a continuous forum for the same enriching discussions to carry on over a period of several days, if not the entire semester.⁸ In her research, Hurt cites a 1997 study at the California State University at Northridge (CSUN) as acknowledging the online class environment of email, discussion boards, text postings and chats saw online students score an average of 20 percent higher across the board than their counterparts who took the same course in a traditional classroom setting. In this study, CSUN statistics professor Jerald Schutte concluded that online students quite possibly fared better through the more extensive collaborative efforts required by the online environment.⁹

Generally a leader in educational trends and technological advancements until recently, the Ivy League schools have been relatively reluctant to embrace the world of online education. Following years of standing by and watching while public and other private institutions gained momentum in online course offerings, some of the Ivy League's heaviest hitters are now ready to forage their way and take major steps at incorporating large scale and open online courses as well as other online tools into their undergraduate programs. In 2012 Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) partnered in a \$60 million venture with edX, one of the leading nonprofit MOOC providers, to establish an online platform and curriculum that could also serve as a lab for studying the dynamics of virtual classrooms.¹⁰ Though finally entering into the online educational arena, both schools made it plainly clear that any MOOC forums would be supplemental to traditional classroom courses. For the upper-echelon institutions, there is an understandable concern that for students (and parents) paying for the traditional college experience, any wide-scale movement towards online education has the potential for resistance

⁷ Bart, Mart. "Teaching Standardized Courses: Advantages and Disadvantages." FacultyFocus. Last modified July 12, 2012. Accessed April 23, 2013. <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/teaching-standardized-coursesadvantages-and-disadvantages/>.

⁸ Hurt, Joyce. "The Advantages and Disadvantages of Teaching and Learning On-Line." *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, Summer 2008, 5-11.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Kolowich, Steve. "Online Education May Make Top Colleges More Elite, Speakers Say." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 4, 2013. Accessed April 23, 2013. <http://chronicle.com/article/Online-Education-May-Make-Top/137687/>.

for those seeking the distinct university experience for their money. Though the nation's top-tier institutions may be finally giving way to the demand for online education, former Princeton University President William G. Bowen, who has studied the efficiency of online educational tools, believes that the Harvards and MITs are more likely to adopt supplemental online tools such as seminars, project-based courses and mentorships in their online curriculum rather than extensive online offerings of traditional core subject courses.¹¹

Among the online tools now being refined are systems such as i2.002, an online version of 2.002 (Mechanics and Materials II), a core requirement course in mechanical engineering. Use of this platform as part of MIT's OpenCourseWare MOOC features videotaped lectures as well as recitations and a discussion forum similar to other MOOC providers. What makes i2.002 unique is the implementation of a powerful search engine, which enables the student to search the database of lectures, etc., on a topic or keyword and initiate the video feed from the moment in the lecture where that concept is introduced and discussed.¹² Tools such as these only further enhance the entire sphere of online education, providing an unparalleled flexibility to all levels of post-secondary institutions to implement distance learning in ways that best suit the individual needs and demographics of each institution.

"These are exciting times for online education," admits Pedro Reis, an Assistant Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Mechanical Engineering at MIT. "There's a huge momentum at the moment for developing technology, through edX and other MOOC platforms, to deploy to a very large number of students."¹³

For many institutions that have embraced online education for more than a decade, none of these revelations is news. Institutions such as the University of Phoenix have adopted technology aggressively; and by integrating online courses with traditional classroom offerings and charging less-than-Ivy-League tuitions, the for-profit sector of higher educational institutions has doubled their share of the U.S. higher education market, now more than 10 percent, in the last 10 years.¹⁴

Skeptics continue to profess that distance learning will destroy the college experience requiring students be at a geographically central place (school) in order to interact effectively with their instructors and peers, though nearly two decades of research and implementation have not borne out such negative prophecies. As with countless industries before it, post-secondary education will be and is being transformed by technology — in and out of the traditional classroom. It is critical that lawmakers, public and private institutions, educators, private corporations and entrepreneurs accept the IT revolution in which higher education is already immersed. Early stumbles and hiccups have long-since given way to a viable, affordable and statistically successful adjunct to higher education in America and internationally. The U.S. must maintain its leading role in the quest for refined online education standards of development and delivery in order to provide the opportunity of a quality education and a path to fulfilling the American Dream to those that famed American architect Frank Lloyd Wright once referred to as the *American Everyman*.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Chu, Jennifer. "A New Wrinkle in Online Education: An Experimental Online Course Gives Some Students Scheduling Freedom." *MIT News* (Cambridge, MA), April 3, 2013. Accessed April 23, 2013. <http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2013/2002-mechanics-and-materials-online-0403.html>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Chubb, John E., and Terry M. Moe. "Chubb and Moe: Higher Education's Online Revolution." *The Wall Street Journal* (Washington DC), May 30, 2012, Opinion.

AWAITING THE GEESE

JOANNE ROSIER

*Berkshire Community College
Massachusetts*

It's lonely standing here in the grey mist of the morning
as the fog creeps slowly across the quiet waters.

I wish the mist would stay and wrap its airy shawl around my shoulders —
I don't want to be left standing beneath the gold and brown trees,
waiting for the geese to cross the sky.

I want to share this moment, but there is no one to share the moment with.
I looked around and found familiar faces walking by, but when I called
to them, they simply smiled and continued on their way.
I don't understand why everyone has everyone but me.
It's lonely standing here in the grey mist of the morning,

waiting for the geese to cross the sky. I look through trees where
leaves have turned to gold and drop like tears and gather at my feet.
I wish they didn't have to die each year. Each year I mourn the changing of the guard.
I know the leaves one morning will return, yet I cannot await the month of June —
certain that when the seasons change again, I'll be left alone to watch them pass.

It's lonely standing here in the grey mist of the morning.
I feel the chill of life against my back. I wish someone was near to warm my bones,
to soothe me as the mist, like a whisper, melts away.
I seldom see the beauty of the autumn, because it marks the sadness that I feel.
And I may never know the month of June and appreciate its warmth upon my skin.

I hear a distant call above my head, but I'm afraid to find out what it is.
In my heart I hope that it might be, exactly that which I've been waiting for.
But to know for sure and to find that it is not, crushes hope and hope is all I have.
So, I'll stand here with my arms across my chest, and try to keep the chill I feel at bay,
while waiting for the geese to cross the sky.

LIGHTNING BUG



CASSANDRA VAN GELDER
College of Southern Nevada
Nevada

Firefly.

Lampyrid.

Pyrophorus noctiluca.

I liked that one best — *noctiluca*. I found it in the encyclopedia Mama brought home from the Piggly Wiggly that some lady paid for with S&H green stamps but never picked up (she only got A-L because that's all the lady had ordered, but Mama promised me she'd get the rest someday.) It said in Latin that's what they called them, but I'd always preferred *lightning bug*. It sounded like castanets when I said it aloud. The colloquialism made me think of luminous glow in their bellies, flickering in the dark. (*Colloquialism* was the section I found on language, just before the encyclopedia ran out.)

Our front yard in Pearl, Mississippi, was filled with lightning bugs. When I was little, I thought they were invisible during the day, hidden by the sunlight like fairies, only to be revealed when the sun would disappear behind the hill's edge. I'm 11 now, so I know better. Now I know they sleep during the day; and at night after they wake up, they go to look for dates, much like my Uncle Rudy.

After the sun dims in our neighborhood and the yellowed living room lights seep out onto the roads, the steps in front of the clapboard houses crowd with mothers. They sit with their long-

haired daughters between their legs, untangling their hair with their fingers and the gossip with their tongues.

Mama sits with the ladies, sometimes messing with one of my sisters' hair — the both of them still had long strands that cascaded down their backs. After I stumbled into the bathroom one night and didn't see that my braid had ended up wet, Mama chopped my hair off rather than, "...let you end up with typhoid." I didn't want to tell her that the encyclopedia said I'd have to ingest the toilet water for me to get sick. I was getting tired of all that came with long hair. I liked it better chasing the lightning bugs with my cat, Brown Kitty, than listening to stories and having my head pulled raw by combs.

Once in awhile, a lightning bug would fly into my hand. I would get so excited, cupping my hands around it, feeling it flutter lightly against my palms. When the ache of holding one prisoner for too long tugged at me, I opened my fingers and let him flutter clumsily away.

It's been two months since I played in our front yard, since we left Pearl, skirting away in the 1959 Ford van Daddy bought from Mr. Humphreys. He told Daddy the shift was on the column, but that it could pull stumps out like no ox ever could.

We set off for Hot Springs, Arkansas, in the near dead of night, exhausted from packing and crying good-byes. It would be the first time we have ever lived more than 10 miles away from Grandpa and Grandma, and I wasn't quite sure we'd find our way back in a timely manner.

Still, the ride there was simpler than I expected. Summer was easing into its middle, causing my sisters and me to sweat while we slept in the back seats, even with all the windows rolled down.

After months playing alone or pretending with my sisters, Amy and LouAnn, that I couldn't make a word out of seven Scrabble tiles, Mama announced we'd be starting school two weeks earlier than back home. She said it was because the kids down here got out before we did because of the roofers. They couldn't work the tar once the devil had gotten in the wind and caused the air to burn when it touched you.

School was my most favorite thing in the entire world. I could barely sleep nights before a test, not from fear, but from excitement, the sheer pleasure of handling the freshly mimeographed pages, smelling their sweet ink in the air and the dampness of the pages, and then looking down the pages at all the questions lined up in rows.

When Mrs. Robinson assigned us fifth graders a project of selecting a country and then presenting it, most of my classmates showed up with discarded shoeboxes filled with cutouts from their mothers' Good Housekeeping magazines. I had selected Italy and spent the prior three weeks shaping a dome to mimic the cathedral foyer, painting the interior with cobalt blue I had bought at the Ben Franklin store.

I used gold for the fleur-de-lis I had painted on the ceiling, fresh sprigs of rosemary to imitate the decorative bushes in the foyer, and then I rigged Daddy's leftover tiny white Christmas lights to look like sconces near the altar.

I turned the lights off in the room when I presented my diorama that Friday and had borrowed my cousin Kyle's Walkman so I could play Pavarotti singing like he would be in my chapel.

The room was quiet and chilled, even after I turned the lights back on. Nobody in the room would talk to me, not even Mrs. Robinson. Kim Crittenden whispered behind her hand to

Christy Whittington and I heard the word "brown-noser" behind her fingers. I wiped my face, just in case.

It wasn't the first time the room got quiet after I was done, but I don't mind. I was used to sitting by myself at lunch. Sometimes I would sit with June Connell. Nobody — not even the girl with purple fingers that everybody teased and said she had lice — would sit with June.

Even that tapered off after awhile and I began to eat my bologna sandwiches alone while I reread the outside of my Partridge Family lunch box.

Mama took me, Lou Ann, and Amy over to Little Rock to pick out new school dresses. She said, "Hot Springs don't have nothing that nice girls can wear outside a they front yards. We just have to find the next big town over." And Little Rock was the biggest — four Sears, two JC Penney's, and a full two-story mall just like they had in the movies, with its own Swenson's and Casa Bonita.

Hours later, we emerged with white crisp bags full of dresses, tights and slightly high-heeled shoes that tapped like dance shoes while I walked. My favorite dress was the creamy-colored one with bright red cherries all over it that Mama found for me hidden in the size 8's. When I turned around to show Mama how I looked, the skirt lifted up and made me look like a ballerina in the mirror. I made sure I carried that bag all around the mall and kept it with me the whole two-hour drive home, rather than let it sit in the trunk and get car fumes all over it.

"This year will be different, girls," Mama said to the three of us. "Won't it, Grace?"

"Yes, Mama," I replied happily.

"We'll get you some friends for sure," she said more quietly, but she looked in the rearview mirror at me and smiled.

"Yes, Mama," I replied hesitantly.

The night before school started, I tossed and turned, excited to wear my new dress and use my new supplies. Fresh pencils have such a fine sharpness that made my signature look even more daring and creative. It irritated me to no end when one broke, especially during a test when I was concentrating hard. Every time, I was forced to walk to the front of the class, being watched as I did, listening to the snickering behind the boys' hands, a slight push as I went by.

One time, right after pep club started, Mama spent the night before making my gorgeous regulation-gold, puffed-sleeved shirt. I had worn it that morning in spite of having a test, because there was a pep rally after school. I had gotten up to sharpen my pencil and on my way back, I saw Kim Crittenden whispering to Mark Bailey. Before I could figure out what she was saying, Mark's foot went right out into my path. I came down hard on the floor. Kim rushed to help, she said later, but instead she jabbed my elbow hard. Normally, it wouldn't have mattered, but Kim knew I was harboring a large scab under the silky golden fabric, a scab she put there just the week before, a scab that easily came loose, causing blood to ooze out and permanently stain the elbows of the shirt. I sat in my seat, in front of Kim and Mark, making sure to wipe my tears only when I could make it look like I was scratching an itch.

I didn't want Mama to see the stain after all her hard work so I lied and said I didn't like pep club after all and I quit.

My fresh pillow burned against my cheek as I remembered that day, fresh tears collecting on the pillowcase. I fell asleep without dreaming about my new crisp folder or my scented notebook paper.

The next day, Mrs. Hart, my new sixth grade teacher, had our whole class introduce ourselves to each other by coming to the front of the class. As each pupil came up, the others would make jokes or say their names in funny ways, the way they had for all the years they had known each other. I was the only one in the room who had not been in kindergarten with the same children.

When I stood at the front of the class, they were all silent, listening intently. I saw one girl, called Savannah, lean in to whisper to the boy named Elmer. When she pulled back, I saw her smile at me. As I passed by her desk to reach mine, my whole body tensed and prepared for the fall. Instead, she reached forward with a fresh pencil, offering me one of hers with butterflies on it.

When lunch came, a small group crowded around me, asking me smiling question after another, so curious about this place so far away, farther than they had ever been. Some looked on with curious gazes; others nodded with seemingly knowing and understanding nods, as if they knew exactly where I was talking about.

After school, we all clamored together, teasing and tickling as we walked. When we came to our house first, Mama seemed surprised but she recovered quickly and asked would "Miss Savannah" like to join us for dinner. She did indeed and went inside to call her mother, who was only too delighted to have one less person for her maid, Elsie, to cook for.

After dinner, Savannah and I ran around, beginning to wear a new path in our new yard. We pulled out my sisters' cheap Barbies and played fairyland in our bushes.

As the sun dipped below the hang of the trees, the lightning bugs appeared, twinkling under the weeping willow. I put out my cupped hands and captured one between my fingers and Savannah did the same. I peeked inside and watched the lightning bug lighting the inside of my hand, turning it pink. Savannah did the same.

Suddenly, Savannah took a hold of her lightning bug between her fingers and drug its tail across her shirt, leaving an iridescent trail. She looked at me, smiling, the remnants of her bug in her hand.

I smiled back weakly, feeling my lightning bug clamoring against the bars of my fingers. I picked him up by his thorax. Looking at Savannah, I dragged his body against my shirt, leaving a trail behind. I quickly dropped the remainder and looked down at my belly, all beautiful and lit now, already fading. I smiled at Savannah and she returned it, all big and loopy and giddy. She grabbed my hand and off we ran into the bushes, into fairyland.

FAULT LINES



ZACHARY JONES

*Jackson College
Michigan*

Now I am leaving so you can wait
and see
If I really meant it
Wouldn't I stay?
Now I am waiting so you can leave
and see
What I meant by
"I'm sorry," I whisper
She rolls over
She turns her back on me
and the dark
The earth shakes
Rocking us gently to sleep
Outside a transformer blows
and sparks fly
as they once did
"I'm sorry," I whisper
She rolls over
"It's not your fault,"
she says
She faces me
and the dark
The quaking subsides
The sparks remain
One thing I learned from fault lines is
Sometimes your faults
Are not your fault

Sometimes things just slip
Like a foot
That slips through a door
Leaving accidentally
Without meaning
"I'm sorry," you whisper
To the dark
But alone the words lose meaning
The ground sighs a little
Stretching along its fault lines
Your face, now old
Holds its own
Weathered cracks that remember
When I was young
I loved intensely
I had a rage to love
And I was never satisfied with you
Because I could never love enough
So I left one day
Accidentally
When the ground shook
And I found footing outside
But I returned and whispered,
"I'm sorry,"
And you said
"It's not your fault."

EQUINE-ASSISTED THERAPY: EQUINE TALENT OR MAGICAL PROPERTIES



STACY MCELVANEY
Red Rocks Community College
Colorado

There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man.
Sir Winston Churchill

Some people would say it's equine talent.¹ I say it's something more — a bunch of things — some magical, some not.² Let me explain. My name is FCF Satinique, but those I allow near me call me Misty. I am a gray Arabian mare owned by Whispering Withers Ranch. I have heard my owners say they picked me for my special work because we Arabians are renowned for our superior intelligence and affectionate nature. I'm very loyal, and I quickly become attached to my owner.³ My finely featured face and large eyes make my owners want to trust me.⁴

My job is important because I work with "at-risk" youth aged 11-19. I live at Whispering Withers Ranch, a facility dedicated to providing experiential treatment to youth who must overcome obstacles such as trauma, abuse, neglect and incarceration.⁵ I am the equine part of Equine

¹ On page 201 of her book, *The Tao of Equus*, Linda Kohanov states, "Horses were found to be unexpectedly talented in dealing with mental health and emotional needs."

² Linda Kohanov writes that magic occurs in interactions with horses on page 207 of *The Tao of Equus*.

³ This was described on a blog post entitled *The Inner and Outer Beauty of Horses*, published in 2012 on the Parelli Natural Horsemanship website.

⁴ Shelby Rokusek, Arabian horse owner, made this claim during a personal interview conducted November 9, 2012.

⁵ Whispering Withers Ranch is the fictional facility modeled after Aspen Hollow Young Ranchers, Inc. (www.ahyr.org), which serves this particular population and demographic.

Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP). My team includes a human therapist plus human volunteers. Once you hear my story, you will agree that while EAP may not work for everyone,⁶ it is a very important and highly impactful way to help some people heal from their emotional wounds and become functioning and productive members of society.

Although Corrine Faith of Whispering Withers Ranch officially owns me, about a year ago I gave my heart to Maggie, aged 14. I was in the arena snacking while waiting for the group of kids to come. I heard the van bringing them, and I lifted my head and watched them file out.

It didn't take me long to find the young person I would pick as my own. The human therapist explained to the group that they would be led into the arena where my herd and I awaited their entrance. They were told to pick a horse and put a halter on it, but nothing else. The therapist wanted to use the experience to naturally bring forth issues the youth would need to address in therapy, such as self-esteem, self-confidence, fear, patience and leadership.⁷

My herd and I are prey animals, meaning that predators use us as food. As a way to overcome being dinner, I was created with a heightened awareness of my surroundings. That's how I was able to sense the fear Maggie felt as she entered the arena. I carried my tail proudly and whipped my neck in circles as I cantered around the arena, driving away any horse too close to my Maggie. I saw her eyes grow wide in panic. I slowed to a trot and came up slightly behind her and planted my hooves.

I knew she didn't know what to do, so I lowered my head next to her arm and purred. Gingerly, she touched my nose. Because she touched me so softly and hesitantly, I knew she was afraid to hurt me. This told me she had been abused and physically hurt in the past. Horses are known to reflect energy and mirror self and core issues.⁸ Since I had been abused and physically hurt when my handlers were breaking me to ride, I immediately knew I could help her overcome her hurt by being a comfort, but it would require a great deal of patience from us both.⁹

As Maggie started petting me, she was able to lower her level of fear and build her self-confidence. Unfortunately, she soon remembered she was to put my halter on, and she had no idea how to do so. I stood motionless with my head down; I sensed that she was struggling emotionally. When people think, they often have words replay in their minds.¹⁰ I knew she was replaying harsh verbal accusations of being stupid and never able to do anything right. I could only wonder who had spoken the words that created this low self-esteem in Maggie.

Fortunately, Desi, one of Whispering Withers' volunteers, came to lend Maggie some guidance. Desi showed her how to "catch" me by draping the lead rope around my neck and loosely holding it. She then demonstrated how to unlatch the quick release snap on my halter, bring the noseband over my nose, slide the brow band over my ears, and clasp the quick release. Desi reversed the process and asked if Maggie had any questions. When Maggie retorted with a snarky "No!" she backed off a few paces but remained watchful in case she

⁶ Lisa Craig MSW, LSW, writes in her unpublished Master's Thesis, *Evaluation of Aspen Hollow Young Ranchers, Inc.*, that EAP may not meet the needs of all clients.

⁷ Bradly Klontz, Alex Bivens, Deb Leinart, and Ted Klontz state the issues commonly addressed during therapy in *The effectiveness of equine-assisted experiential therapy: Results of an open clinical trial*.

⁸ Executive Director of Aspen Hollow Young Ranchers, Inc., Karen Gardner, in a personal interview conducted October 26, 2012, stated that this is one of the main reasons why EAP is an effective treatment method.

⁹ In *From kids and horses: Equine facilitated psychotherapy for children*, the authors indicate that patience is required in the therapeutic environment.

¹⁰ Sandra Ciccarelli and J. Noland White describe this in *Psychology*.

needed to intervene, allowing Maggie to experience a personal success of her own. I was the only one who caught the raw smell of triumph in the air from Maggie, and I knew it was a huge step in her recovery process.

The next activity was for the youth to lead us to our stalls, where they were to learn and execute basic care for us to build their sense of responsibility and ownership.¹¹ These activities included grooming, hoof picking, feeding, filling water troughs, mucking and ensuring our general safety. After my herd and I were safely stalled, fed and watered, the Ranch's staff took the students on a tour of the ranch and gave them responsibilities with the other farm animals. At the end of the day, each student was exhausted from the physical activity, yet they all had started the personal growth process.

A full week passed, and I could not wait for Maggie's return. Today we would work together as a dyad. I would allow her to saddle me and climb upon my back. I knew something was terribly wrong before Maggie even opened the gate to the arena. She fumbled with the halter and swore out loud. I followed her to the hitching rail and waited while she grabbed the grooming supplies. I felt very melancholy. I couldn't help it. Maggie was holding something in, and I could only express that same melancholy.

Maggie was not as rough with my grooming as I expected. Initially, she brushed me with short, quick strokes, but the more she brushed, the calmer she became. I heard that grooming decreases anger and promotes calmness in the handler.¹² She whispered to me that she was scared and asked me to be careful with her. After my grooming was complete, Desi appeared holding some of my tack. She showed Maggie how to properly place the saddle pad on my back, then Desi helped Maggie place the saddle on my back. Desi demonstrated the proper tightness for the cinch strap: tight enough to keep the saddle in place, but not so tight as to keep me restricted. Maggie was shown how to place the bridle on my head and how to place the bit in my mouth. Desi made sure Maggie knew not to pull hard on the bit, because if she pulled too hard it would damage my mouth, and I would not be able to eat afterward.

Maggie was terrified to get in the saddle. Desi showed Maggie how to do it without hurting me and without falling off. I could sense Maggie's shaking even before she climbed the mounting block. I stood particularly still. Maggie mounted perfectly. I could feel she was still anxious but relieved and proud of herself at the same time. Desi kept the lead rope on and directed me to the round pen. Once in the round pen, Desi took off the lead and asked Maggie to get me walking once she felt comfortable. Desi did not tell Maggie what she needed to do to get me going.

Maggie tried bouncing up and down in the saddle. She tried saying "Giddy up." She tried kicking me in the ribs. She tried everything she knew to do. I wouldn't budge. Why? She was giving me mixed signals. She kept the reins tight, which put pressure in my mouth telling me to stop; all the while she was doing all sorts of crazy things. Her frustration grew, as did mine. Maggie eventually learned that I need loose reins so that I have the freedom to move my head. Because I am a prey animal, I am born claustrophobic.¹³ I don't like to be constricted. Neither

¹¹ Lisa Craig MSW, LSW, describes in her unpublished Master's Thesis, *Evaluation of Aspen Hollow Young Ranchers, Inc.*, the goals and outcomes from experiential learning activities.

¹² Lisa Craig MSW, LSW, describes in her unpublished Master's Thesis, *Evaluation of Aspen Hollow Young Ranchers, Inc.*, the results of interactions with horses during experiential learning.

¹³ Pat Parelli describes the attributes of horses in *Natural Horse-man-ship*.

does Maggie. Once we started communicating with one another in ways that were different from what Maggie was used to,¹⁴ our bond of trust started developing exponentially. Maggie trusted that I would treat her in a safe manner, and I trusted Maggie not to keep me reined in.

Our next meeting was the one in which we gave each other our hearts. It was the end of the day, and Maggie was alone with me in my stall brushing me down. Maggie sat down on an overturned bucket and brushed my tail while I slurped up some water. It was then that she confided in me that I was her only real friend. She told me that I was the only one she could trust. She had tried to trust her mom, but that bond had been broken through years of abuse.

Because I knew this moment to be of great importance, I allowed myself to mirror vulnerability.¹⁵ I chose to lie down in my stall and rest my head on Maggie's lap so she could gaze into my eye and stroke my face while she shared her deepest secrets. She told me how her mother drank constantly and used drugs. She told of the first time her mother made her do drugs so she didn't have to do them alone. This was what led her to start using a variety of drugs. Eventually, she got tired of always coming home to a strung out mother who would beat her or use her as an ashtray for cigarettes and joints. She then showed me the small scars where she had been frequently burned on her arms. After she ran away, she started selling dope to support herself. That's why she picked up criminal charges and was placed into the residential treatment center where she now lived.

She told me that her mom used to trade her for drugs. She sobbed and said she had no idea how many men had used her just so her mom could get a fix. It was when she started pounding her fist against the ground in anger that I became alarmed and leapt to my feet. Because Maggie started experiencing the cathartic release of pent up frustration, anger and grief, I became quite agitated.

The human therapist, who was watching the activity in my stall from a nearby bench, saw my agitation and walked over to ask Maggie what had happened. Maggie confessed she had gotten angry at her mom and started beating the ground, which upset me. The human therapist used this opportunity to connect with Maggie. Simply getting Maggie to a point like this was significant because during talk therapy, youth learn to say what they think the therapist wants to hear and avoid dealing with the root emotional issues.¹⁶

The following day proved to be one of great significance. Whispering Withers Ranch had planned a tour for a grant committee. The committee was in the process of evaluating a grant request to fund our program. Several of the committee members wanted to see exactly what transpires with EAP because there were a few dissenters and skeptics in the group. It was important that they understood the process of emotional healing and personal growth for the youth that occurred in the sessions.

One of the very first questions raised by a committee member was how we proved EAP was effective. His view was that unless something is measured, science would not concede it

¹⁴ During a personal interview conducted October 26, 2012, Karen Gardner, Executive Director of Aspen Hollow Young Ranchers, Inc. described communication during horse and human interactions.

¹⁵ This was explained during a personal interview conducted October 26, 2012, Karen Gardner, Executive Director of Aspen Hollow Young Ranchers, Inc.

¹⁶ Karen Gardner, Executive Director of Aspen Hollow Young Ranchers, Inc., described ways of avoiding issues in the course of therapy during a personal interview conducted October 26, 2012.

exists.¹⁷ He said that science refused to deal with such nothings as the emotions.¹⁸ Our onsite therapist agreed that EAP did seem to be a pie in the sky sort of therapy and that it was indeed difficult to quantify both the process and the progress of the youth. Self-reports in the form of pre- and post-treatment evaluations from the youth combined with observations from the therapists at their residential treatment centers were the current methods of evaluation.¹⁹ She explained that the results could be biased based on the fact that the youth were receiving a variety of methods of treatment, only one of which was EAP.²⁰

She then explained that many of the youth receiving treatment have incredible trust issues, and prior to their experiences at the ranch they are unable to comprehend that their actions have an effect on others and are unable to experience empathy.²¹ A large number of the youth have been involved in the criminal justice system and have not had to do things for themselves.²² They are told by those in authority what to do and when to do it. Similarly, they haven't had to fix problems on their own and have not had the opportunity to experience and develop the skill of effective problem solving.²³

To drive home her point, the therapist led the group over to my stall, handed the skeptical man a hoof pick, and asked him to pick my hoof clean. Stunned, the man looked at her and asked how to do it. The therapist responded that she could not tell him because she wanted him to be exposed to the same experiential learning as the youth. I could sense that man was prideful and didn't want to appear daft in front of his peers, so he climbed over the rails of my stall and stood next to me. I wasn't sure how I would respond.

The man bent down and tried a variety of ways to pick my hoof up. Did he honestly think he could make me lift my hoof by sheer force? I stood with my hooves planted because I could not help mirroring his arrogance back at him. After about 10 minutes of trying to force me to lift my hoof, the exhausted man leaned in to me so as not to fall on the ground. It was then that I lifted my hoof and allowed him to clean my hoof with the pick. He experienced the elation of accomplishment, yet he was not haughty, because he learned a valuable lesson about pride through our interaction.

I discovered about a week later that the grant committee not only approved our funding request, but they had also reached out to a variety of other charities to further our cause and secure additional endowments on our behalf. Not surprisingly, our Doubting Thomas spearheaded the efforts.

There was a bitter sweetness that came with my final session with Maggie. She had grown tremendously in the eight weeks we had together. I could see her beaming with newly found

¹⁷ Candace Pert describes this view generally held by the scientific community in *Molecules of Emotion*.

¹⁸ In *Molecules of Emotion*, Candace Pert describes this view generally held by those in the hard sciences.

¹⁹ Lisa Craig MSW, LSW, describes this in her unpublished Master's Thesis, *Evaluation of Aspen Hollow Young Ranchers, Inc.*

²⁰ In her unpublished Master's Thesis, *Evaluation of Aspen Hollow Young Ranchers, Inc.*, Lisa Craig MSW, LSW describes potential reporting biases.

²¹ During a personal interview conducted November 6, 2012, Red Rocks Community College Psychology Department Chair Amy Buckingham MA, explained this concept.

²² During a personal interview conducted October 9, 2012, Jefferson Hills Residential Treatment Center Milieu Counselor Jennifer Torres explained these youth experiences.

²³ Karen Gardner, Executive Director of Aspen Hollow Young Ranchers, Inc., described this during a personal interview conducted October 26, 2012.

self-confidence as she practically bounced out of the van that brought her and her crew up for their final hours with my herd and me. She had an exuberance and sense of freedom about her that was not there when we first met, as well as determination and increased self-esteem. She no longer depended on illegal drugs as a way to deal with her strong emotions. Because she was well on the way to healing, she no longer needed to participate in EAP.

Our final day consisted of a trail ride through the fresh mountain air, a joyous graduation ceremony complete with cap and gown, and an extended grooming session. It was during our final moments of grooming that Maggie braided her tears of sadness into my mane. She confessed how much she loved me, although she hadn't needed to do so. I knew we shared a special bond from the first day we met. I wrapped my head around her and nuzzled her neck in a gesture of affection. She then said that because of me she learned how to start to forgive her mom for all the horrible things that she had done. Since she wasn't so focused on anger and rage, she was doing better in school and was excited that she would get the opportunity to serve as a peer mentor for the program up here for the next session.

She led me to the pasture so I could join my herd. I trotted in circles around the pasture while she climbed into the van. As the van drove off, she craned around in her seat and frantically waved good-bye. I nickered in return.

The next group of youth came just a few hours after my Maggie left. I sniffed the air as a group of boys sullenly emptied out of the van. It was then that I saw Jake. We briefly made eye contact, and I knew Jake needed me far more than Maggie ever did. I couldn't wait to see how long it would be before he gave me his heart.

WILL THE LAST ONE OUT PLEASE SHUT THE DOOR



TAMMARA LEMINEN
Berkshire Community College
Massachusetts

"All right, I want everyone to put on their helmets and fasten their seat belts," Mrs. Halloway instructed the third grade class. "Make sure they're fastened tightly! The gravity will switch off just before they fire the rocket thrusters prior to entering the atmosphere, so it's very important that you're all buckled into your chairs."

She walked down the aisle, checking each of the children's safety harnesses as she went (Harold, of course, wasn't properly fastened) before taking her own seat at the back of the ship. The landings were a bit bumpy and were always Mrs. Halloway's least favorite part of the trip.

Once they were on the ground and the seat belt light had gone out, Mrs. Halloway took care to make sure that each child had full air canisters and their helmets were properly sealed. Then she instructed them to line up single file.

"Observation Platform DX-475 is on a class-K world," Mrs. Halloway told her students, while she waited for the ground crew to attach the docking corridor to the passenger exit. "Who can tell me what that means?"

There was a small show of hands, and she pointed to Jeffery Wallace.

"A class-K planet is incapable of supporting life," he replied smugly.

"Exactly," the teacher agreed. "It's a completely toxic environment. Nothing can survive here, not even simple bacteria."

The light near the exit door began to blink on and off, accompanied by a gentle pulsing tone. This was the signal that the ground crew was ready to open the exit hatch. A small murmur of excitement went up from the row of children.

"Follow me through the corridor," Mrs. Halloway instructed firmly, as the hatch hissed open. "No running! Stay in line, please. When we get to the end of the docking corridor, we'll be let into the air hatch one at a time."

This was a slow process, and it took several minutes before she stood on the other side of the airlock with her class. They were met there by a pleasant-faced man, wearing the blue insignia on his space suit identifying him as an employee of the Science Outposts Department. "Hello, children!" he greeted the class warmly. "Welcome to Observation Platform DX-475. My name is Brian."

"HELLO, BRIAN!" Mrs. Halloway's third grade class hollered in unison.

"Why don't you all follow me?" Brian said with a wide smile. "We have a specially constructed room at the top of the platform where our visitors can view the conditions on this planet. Has anyone ever been to a Science Outpost on a class-K or class-G world before?"

Julie Prescott raised her hand proudly.

"My parents took my brother and me to CF-83," she reported. "That's a class-G."

"Can you tell us what the difference is between a class-K and a class-G planet?" Brian asked the little girl.

"A class-G planet has never been capable of supporting life," Julie Prescott responded dutifully. "A class-K planet was once able to, but can't anymore."

"Exactly!" Brian exclaimed, leading them all down a broad corridor. There were no windows, of course; the outer supporting walls of this building were constructed of solid lead, nearly two meters thick.

"How come you live here, then?" Harold asked. He forgot to raise his hand first, and Mrs. Halloway frowned slightly.

"That's a good question!" their tour guide smiled. "At any given time, there are 14 ground crew members stationed here at DX-475. Our living quarters are 30 floors beneath the planet's surface, and it's quite safe to work there without a space suit or oxygen tanks."

They arrived before a bank of large elevators, and Brian pressed the UP button.

"Actually, it's pretty safe — within the facility — to be above-ground, too," he assured them. "But we all wear space suits, just as all our visitors do, as an extra precaution. Also, crew members are never stationed here for longer than six weeks."

The children were taken to the top of the observation platform in two elevators; Mrs. Halloway escorted one group, and Brian escorted the other. Mrs. Halloway had to warn Harold not to play with the buttons in the elevators twice.

They disembarked on the 80th floor, and trooped behind Brian and Mrs. Halloway in reverent

silence. The observation platform was a lengthy, rectangular room dominated by the 30-meter window running along its face. Mrs. Halloway told the children that the window was made from transparent titanium; it was an effective filter against the planet's radiation, just as impervious as the lead two-feet thick outer walls, in spite of the fact that it was a mere eight inches in thickness. It was so expensive to construct that the window represented a full third of the cost involved in building a Science Outpost like this one.

The ruins of a large city stretched before them, laid out beneath an orange sky. The children spread out before the window, their faces scant inches from the cold transparent metal barrier. Side-by-side, their eyes drank in the devastation.

"What happened here?" Susan Berman gasped.

"Well, we don't exactly know," Brian replied. "But our scientists can make some hypotheses, based on the conditions of the planet. The city you see was once densely populated, and perhaps as many as eight or nine million inhabitants lived here. You see how all the buildings come to a stop along the edge? We think that once there was a great body of water there. Of course, there's no water at all on this planet now."

The children nodded, all eyes.

"There are similar ruins all over the planet," the tour guide continued, "and we believe that this world was once home to a thriving civilization. They probably had early space-flight capabilities, but they were most likely not sufficiently advanced in that technology to escape when this," he made a sweeping gesture with one hand towards the ruined landscape, "happened."

"My brother visited LG-783 with his class," Lisa Harper piped up. "He said that the planet had been hit by a massive comet, and that's what made it a class-K."

"That's correct," the tour guide nodded. "At first, we thought something similar had occurred here. But we never found a crater, and the radioactivity levels are too high and too dense in uranium to be of natural origin. We found evidence that the planet was using nuclear fusion to fulfill its energy needs..."

"Isn't that illegal?" Harold asked.

"It is on our planet," Mrs. Halloway replied patiently.

One or two of the other children shot him exasperated looks. Harold always seemed to be one or two jumps of logic behind the rest of the class, and even though he had been receiving extra tutoring for months, Mrs. Halloway was still trying to push the boy through simple trigonometry while the rest of the class was halfway through calculus. By now, Mrs. Halloway was certain that Harold would have to repeat the third grade.

"...so at first, we theorized that there was some sort of terrible accident," Brian continued. "But once we began to map the planet's radiation levels, it became apparent that they rose and fell in a pattern of many concentric circles, which led us to a rather unpleasant conclusion."

"They killed themselves," Robert Gardener gasped.

"They killed each other," Brian nodded sadly. "They didn't possess the intellectual capabilities to grasp that it amounted to the same thing."

A small, collective sigh arose from the third grade class as they peered out the window at the twisted rubble of the blackened, deserted city.

"What's that over there?" Harold asked, pointing out the window.

"We're not really sure," Brian shrugged. "The radiation levels on the surface are still too high for any non-mechanical exploration. We sent out probes, and we discovered that it was hollow and metallic. Perhaps it was a religious idol; however, it stands as tall as any of the surrounding structures, so perhaps it was also some sort of building. We may never know for certain. But it certainly suggests that the inhabitants of this world possessed significant artistic skills, doesn't it?"

Twenty pairs of third-grade eyes stared out the observation deck in awed silence. The city only gazed back, forever dead; nothing moved beneath the screaming orange sky. Brian began to explain about the planet's surface temperature and the radioactive half-life of the rubble before them, and everyone listened carefully except for Harold, whose eyes remained fixed on the unusual structure on the city's edge.

He wondered if the creatures that had once inhabited this city had resembled the massive green idol they had constructed — and if they had, it seemed understandable to him that they had annihilated themselves, for surely anything so war-like must eventually self-destruct.

"If you'll all follow me," Brian said cheerfully, "we'll go back to the elevators, and descend to the main station below the surface. I bet you're all ready to take off your helmets for a while, and maybe have a snack?"

All the children trailed out behind the tour guide, except for Harold, who stood transfixed before the window, staring at the idol. The huge green figure stood on the outskirts of its dead and ravaged city; its proud and stern female face looked back at him with blank eyes, devoid of pity. It wore a fearsome crown of spikes, and its body was wrapped in a shroud-like garment. With one gigantic out-stretched arm, it held a massive golden torch aloft, as if to set the wounded sky afire.

"Harold," Mrs. Halloway called.

The boy nodded, but didn't move; he couldn't break away from the idol's blank eyes, so full of idiot meaning.

His gaze traced the borders of the half-demolished buildings, and he tried to imagine water coming up to the city's edge. But if the scientists studying this planet were correct that there had once been an ocean there, wouldn't that place the giant green idol out in the water? Harold thought they must be mistaken, for surely no one would build a massive statue — if that's even what it was — and place it out in the water, would they?

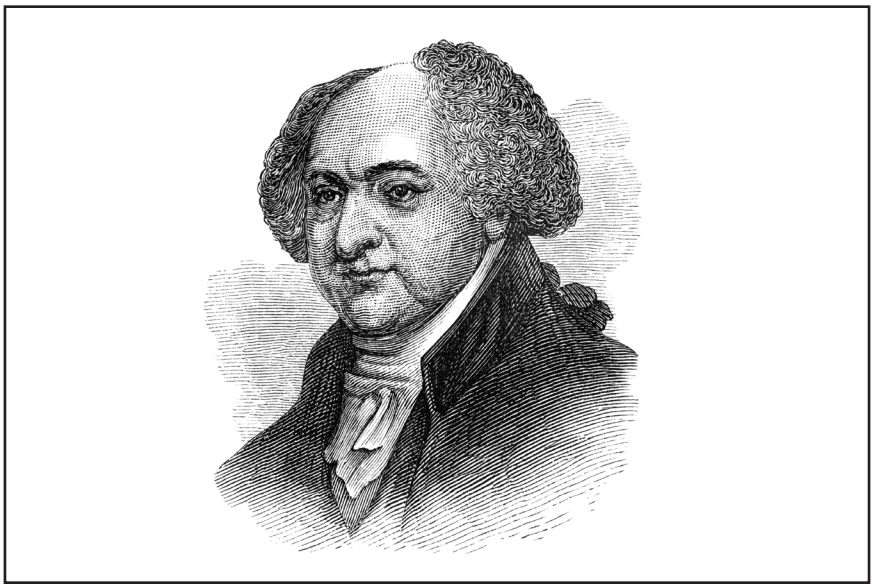
"Harold," Mrs. Halloway called again, with just a hint of her impatience with the dawdling child creeping into her voice.

"Coming," he responded, and went over to the door.

But he couldn't resist turning, and taking one last look at the ruined landscape and its mysterious idol, perhaps once a guardian but now only a tombstone, looking out over the graveyard city.

With a slight shudder, Harold went back to his classmates, shutting the door firmly behind him.

JOHN ADAMS AND THE ALIEN AND SEDITION ACTS



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INTRODUCTION

John Adams, patriot, Founding Father, first vice president, and second president of the United States of America, had assisted his friend Thomas Jefferson in the writing of the Declaration of Independence. Adams himself wrote the Massachusetts Constitution, which, along with his other political writings, such as his pamphlet "Thoughts on Government,"⁽¹⁾ was a great influence on the framing of the Constitution of the United States of America. Yet as president, Adams signed into law the Alien and Sedition Acts, which threatened the very rights and liberties promised by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

The public and private outcry against these acts was a major factor in Adams' defeat by Jefferson in the presidential election of 1800 and also played a part in the dissolution of these two old friends' friendship for many years. This essay will examine what factors led Adams to sign these acts and the consequences of his decision to do so.

BODY

John Adams' life prior to the Presidency

John Adams was born in Braintree, Massachusetts, in 1735. The eldest son of a family of modest means, he was the first in his family to attend college. He established a successful career for himself as a lawyer. He was a vain, proud, contentious, but intelligent man who had definite ideas about the role of government in society. His strong ideas and convictions spurred him to become involved in the American Revolution from its beginning.^(2, 3) He wrote essays in

opposition to the Stamp Act of 1765, protesting that the Act deprived colonists of the right to be taxed only by their consent and the right to be tried by a jury of their peers. He went to the First and Second Continental Congresses as a representative from Massachusetts, and it was he who nominated George Washington as commander in chief of the Continental Army.⁽³⁾

Adams became known for his strong belief in the revolutionary cause, his intellectual qualities, and his well-reasoned writings on the formation and role of independent governments. He played a prominent role in the writing of the Declaration of Independence, serving as a sounding board to Thomas Jefferson, his friend and colleague. Adams realized that he should not be the writer himself, since his confrontational personality had made him unpopular. In addition, Adams thought that Jefferson was a better writer.⁽⁴⁾ Adams wrote the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which was the first state constitution to call for a two-house legislature, a separate executive branch with the power of veto (though only a partial veto), and a separate judicial branch. It was also the first constitution written by a constitutional committee and then ratified by the citizens.⁽⁵⁾ When the time came for the new nation called The United States of America to write its constitution, the delegates to the Constitutional Convention had Adams' wise words to look to as an example.^(6, 7)

Although by nature Adams was not of a diplomatic temperament, he answered the call to serve his country as minister to the Netherlands and then to Great Britain.⁽⁸⁾ He was further pressed into his country's service when he became the nation's first vice president upon the election of George Washington as the first president. At that time, whoever had the second-highest total of Electoral College votes became the vice president.^(3, 8) According to his biography on the website of The White House, "Adams' two terms as Vice President were frustrating experiences for a man of his vigor, intellect and vanity. He complained to his wife Abigail, 'My country has in its wisdom contrived for me the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived.'"⁽⁹⁾

During his second term, Washington supported a treaty with Great Britain that was designed by Adams' Federalist rival Alexander Hamilton and negotiated by John Jay. This treaty, signed on November 19, 1794, became known as The Jay Treaty, and it would play a significant role in the events leading to the Alien and Sedition Acts. The treaty eased tensions between the United States and Great Britain, increased trade between the two nations, and threw America's lot in with Great Britain against France in the war between Britain and France that arose from the French Revolution. Democratic-Republicans such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison opposed the treaty and sided with France. The treaty's provisions increased tensions with France that later came to a head during Adams' presidency.^(10, 11)

John Adams' presidency and the Alien and Sedition Acts

In the election of 1796, Adams was the top Federalist candidate; and his victory over Jefferson, the Democratic-Republican, meant that Jefferson would be his vice-president, although they were in different parties. Their differing views about the role of the central government and about France meant that underlying conflict was present between them from the start of their term.^(3, 8, 9) France had begun seizing American ships at sea that were trading with the British. This amounted to an undeclared state of war between the United States and France. Many Americans did not want war with France, however, because France had been an ally against the British during the American Revolution. Public sentiment changed drastically when the "XYZ Affair" became public knowledge.⁽⁸⁾

Adams sent a diplomatic mission to France in July 1797 to try to prevent war. The diplomats were informed by agents of the French foreign minister Talleyrand that America would have to pay a bribe to the agents before negotiations could begin. Adams was outraged by this

demand.⁽¹²⁾ In his writings, Adams referred to the French agents only as X, Y and Z, thus the incident became known as the "XYZ Affair."⁽¹³⁾ The American people were equally offended, and Adams' popularity soared. He and the Federalists took advantage of that support to increase the size of the army and navy to defend against a possible invasion against the powerful French forces. Adams had the navy follow a plan of harassing the French ships to try to put a stop to their aggression. This conflict became known as the Quasi-War. Adams realized that America could not win a full-scale war with France at this time, because the French had far greater resources and skill, so he still sought opportunities behind the scenes for peace negotiations. His quest for peace was not popular with his own party, but he felt that he had to follow his own principles, no matter the personal cost. This was a recurring theme of his life.⁽³⁾

Federalists also looked for ways to quell the intense opposition and outcry of the Democratic-Republicans to Adams' policies. With support of the Federalists having become so strong, the Democratic-Republicans had become a vocal minority.⁽¹²⁾ Their newspapers flung insults at Adams, and their ranks were filled with many recent immigrants. The Federalists were already dealing with internal conflicts between the conservative wing, led by Alexander Hamilton, Adams' bitter rival, and the moderate wing, led by Adams. Many Federalists felt that the survival of their party and its values was the same thing as the survival of the United States, so they felt entitled to take drastic actions against their opponents. Even the more moderate Adams became swept up in that tide.^(3, 8, 14) In 1798, the Federalist Congress passed — and Adams signed into law — the four Acts that became known as the Alien and Sedition Acts. These acts lengthened the residency requirement for American citizenship from five to 14 years, restricted speech or writings critical of the government, and authorized the president to imprison or deport aliens considered dangerous to the peace and safety of the United States. These laws were meant to silence and weaken the Democratic-Republican Party.^(15, 16, 17)

Consequences of the Alien and Sedition Acts

The Alien and Sedition Acts were used by the Federalists in several high-profile prosecutions of dissenters. Twenty-five people were arrested, 11 people were tried, and 10 people were convicted. These numbers included Matthew Lyon, a Democratic-Republican Congressman from Vermont, who spent four months in prison, and a number of journalists, including Benjamin Franklin Bache, the grandson of Benjamin Franklin. The public began to see the Acts as repressing freedom of speech, in direct conflict with the liberties granted by the United States Constitution. Many foreigners fled the country, rather than risk being prosecuted. A climate of fear took hold because people realized that any criticism of the Federalist government could result in their arrest and prosecution.⁽¹⁸⁾

During the presidential election of 1800, the Democratic-Republicans used the fear of the Alien and Sedition Acts to their advantage. Thomas Jefferson won election to the presidency, and Adams became the first one-term president in America's history. Despite Jefferson's opposition to the Alien and Sedition Acts, he and the Democratic-Republicans used them several times before they expired to prosecute their own opponents.^(3, 8) Because of the conflict between Adams and Jefferson during Adams' presidency, and also because of the bitter campaign of 1800, Adams and Jefferson did not speak to each other for many years, until they reconciled in 1812, when Adams made the first move to renew their friendship. For the rest of their lives, they kept up an invigorating intellectual correspondence through letters. They both died on the same day, July 4, 1826, the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, with Jefferson leaving the world a few hours before Adams. Adams' last words, not knowing that his old friend had already departed, were "Thomas Jefferson survives." On that day, our nation lost two of its greatest citizens, whose friendship and conflicts had helped shape our nation.^(3, 8)

CONCLUSION

Despite John Adams' commitment to the American Revolution and to liberty, his own character and the circumstances of his times caused him to be willing to trade liberty for security when faced with possible threats to the nation and to his party. He followed his own convictions and decisions, but the opposition to those decisions cost him re-election to the presidency and caused a long-lasting rift with his old friend and fellow revolutionary, Thomas Jefferson. In the end, the two friends reconciled, but Adams' reputation never quite recovered its former stature in history.

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BLOOMS OF INTEGRITY



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James MacArthur Moretz takes the CTA bus every day to get from the American Floral Art School in Chicago's Loop to his home in the northwest section of Chicago. He will be 70 years old this coming June and looks his age. With great effort he boards the bus and flashes his senior rider pass. The bus driver lets him through the turnstile and onto the bus with a quick "thank you."

The bus driver has no idea who he just thanked.

"One time, the driver wouldn't let me on with my boxes of wires," James said, with a mischievous smile on his friendly face. "I was taking them to the school from Kennicott's, and the driver told me I couldn't come on. 'Well!' I told him, 'just you watch me!' and I walked right on. Honestly, they're just wires!" Kennicott Brother's floral wholesale house is a sanctuary for Jim, as he insists everyone calls him. A more than accomplished floral designer, Jim spends most of his time between his quaint home office and the American Floral Art School Chicago, a vocational floral design arts school, where he is the director and teacher. His work outside of the school revolves around worldwide floral trends and techniques, such as writing articles for the American Institute of Floral Designers (AIFD), teaching abroad in Asia, and judging international floral competitions, including the Intercontinental Cup Flower Design Competition 2011, held in Taipei. It is throughout the world and finally to Chicago that his lifelong journey has led him, all starting with a black and white television and the world's most famous flower: the long-stemmed red rose.

When Jim is asked how he decided that he wanted to be a florist, anyone who knows him

well is never surprised by the story he tells. He smiles fondly, as if remembering a first love, and immediately launches his memory back to his very young childhood, in the hills of South Carolina, as one of the middle children in his family of 18. "Do you know that old show 'Queen For a Day'?" he will always ask excitedly. "It was a show that picked a woman from a small audience to be the Queen for a day, every day. They would take her onto the stage, crown her, put her Queen sash on her, shower her with gifts, and present her with a huge bouquet of two-dozen fresh, long-stemmed, red roses," he reminisces, the twinkle in his eye unmatched. "It was huge, the most beautiful bouquet, perfect every time. At five years old, I would stand in front of our TV and watch those roses every single day. I wanted to be the one to make that perfect bouquet." It is a rare thing for a person to fulfill his childhood dream, but Jim has more than likely managed to surpass whatever it was that his five-year-old mind could come up with.

Jim stayed in South Carolina until he was 18, completing school and making whatever money he could, always keeping those roses in mind. In the summer that he turned 19, mustering every ounce of bravery he had, he made the trip to New York City, alone, to work in the famous Plaza Hotel's floral department, working alongside accomplished professional designers. Here he expanded his love for floral design and proved himself as a hardworking young man, unafraid to participate in a break-neck environment. "I would work sometimes 18 hours a day before an event, and we would have two or three events each day on weekends: weddings, parties, conventions. It was hard work, and not great pay, but I loved it all," he says about his career as a young man, the same determination and enthusiasm he had all those years ago blooming through on his aged face like a pristine tulip.

It was during his time at the Plaza that the energized and youthful Jim got his own personal chance of a lifetime. Through all his work and talent, he caught the eye and attention of Mr. Bill Kistler, the second, and at the time, current, director of the American Floral Art School. Mr. Kistler offered Jim a job, and after he passed away in 1981, Jim inherited the position of Director, control of the school, and many of Mr. Kistler's treasured worldly possessions.

The glamorous encounters in his life that may have changed the average person have seemingly not affected Jim in the slightest. He dresses casually and takes nothing for granted. He demands nothing fancy, getting by on the essentials, not out of necessity, but simply due to a lack of desire for anything more. He doesn't even drink coffee, but has to "have (his) Coke every day!" — a full two-liter of Coke, every day. He doesn't cook, having been a bachelor all his life, and his favorite lunch toggles back and forth between carryout vegetable pizza and Kentucky Fried Chicken, never entirely finishing his meal purposely, so as to have leftovers for his evening meal. Having lacked sweet treats as a child, Jim has found an indulgence in marshmallow Peeps, "the purple chick ones, but they have to be aged! They have to be nice and chewy," he demands, licking his chops with a hearty guffaw.

Jim's Southern roots have never left him, and he greets everyone as if they had been friends for years, referring to each of the women in his life as "honey." For a man that has designed floral arrangements for iconic people, including a banquet for the Queen of England, his grandfatherly persona exudes hospitality and humility.

To speak to him, it becomes quickly apparent that his down to Earth wit is the star, and he is absolutely unafraid to speak his mind. Those who attend his classes at the school can often catch him many mornings, singing at the top of his lungs to opera music playing loud enough to be heard from the street above all the Chicago hustle and bustle. Upon entering the one-man performance, he will turn down the music and proceed to tell stories from some of his favorite shows past at Chicago's famous Civic Opera house, as animated as ever.

However, Jim's playful nature has a serene side. Between classes and AIFD writing duties, he can be found in his own personal library on floral design. Throughout his career, he has amassed enough books to fill an entire apartment the same size as his own. This unbelievable treasure trove is truly a chronicle of his life, where there are books from each and every country he has been to, as well as hundreds of historical books purchased from international auctioneers. He spends hours amongst the beauty organized within each of the pages, gathering inspiration and reliving the creations of his own work. Any and all of his students have an open invitation to visit his library, "whenever they have a few spare years to browse (his) literature," consisting of over 10,000 individual tomes. The floor to ceiling, wall-to-wall collection embodies the creativity and talent that Jim so modestly possesses.

Despite such an amazing collection of both books and accomplishments, it is neither that truly defines Jim's life. It is not even the love for floral design that takes first place. Any student and friend of Jim's can tell you it is his constant plans for the future and the aspirations he has for both himself and the school that carry the tides of his life up the stem and through the petals of each and every endeavor. It is the integrity in which the school is run under his direction that makes it what it is today. "The school must continue," he will announce to any doubtful inquiry. And continue it does, with no end in sight.

In the final days of each three-week course, the students of the American Floral Art School are taught to make a perfect arm bouquet, consisting of two dozen of each student's favorite color flower. To demonstrate, Jim makes his sample bouquet with red flowers, every time. While the 19-year-old man working in the Plaza hotel has not changed very much in the last 50 years, it is apparent that the five-year-old boy in front of the black and white television in South Carolina has. He has grown up into an immeasurably brave, accomplished, humble and loveable man; but in the final days of each three-week class, he comes back to visit, to make that perfect bouquet he has admired all his life.

THE SONG OF THE MORNING STAR



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Close to four stone-throws away, firelight filtered through the smoke-hole and open doorway of the head chief's lodge. The light glowed red.

Like blood.

Pitalesharo stood on the roof summit of his father's lodge and watched while dark shadows came and went through the other's narrow entrance. The glow and shadows offered an eerie contrast to the peaceful sky above him that winked with untold numbers of fading stars.

A southern breeze toyed with the fringe on his deerskin leggings and brushed long strands of hair from his scalp lock against his bare shoulders. Above the close murmur of the river, a coyote howled in the dark expanses of the prairie.

And then, as if in reply, the song of the Morning Star rose from the chief's lodge.

The trembling wail sent a cold chill along Pitalesharo's spine. His jaw clenched, and his fingers curled into two tight fists that squeezed at his sides.

He remembered the night he had first heard the Morning Star's song.

*

Youths, children and a few adults crammed themselves around the already-crowded lodge. Pitalesharo shoved his way between their legs until he reached the large hole dug in its wall. He perched on his tiptoes to peer inside, and dirt crumbled onto his nose when warm bodies pressed from behind.

The air was hazy with smoke from pipes and fireplaces. Voices rose and fell with chanting notes he had never heard before. He scanned the figures packed inside and watched firelight flicker across their faces. Some stood, others sat or crouched. Many joined the chants, their bodies swaying, but several others conversed in quiet murmurs. Close to his peer hole, a small group of women exchanged trinkets, while four men shared a pipe.

So much activity. So many people.

He shivered with excitement.

Father sat with the other village chiefs in front of the patch of bare earth where the priests danced. Across from him sat the young Ponca woman. Pitalesharo stared at her.

Her large, black eyes followed the priests' swooping, twisting motions, and every once in a while, they sparkled with a look of excitement that gave way to a smile. He had never seen such a beautiful smile before. Her red-painted cheeks pinched into two tight dimples, and her lips parted to reveal two rows of perfect white teeth. Sometimes she tossed her head, and her dark, waist-length hair gleamed against the dull black of her skirt and robe.

Surely she must be considered beautiful. It was no wonder such a large celebration should be held for her.

He didn't think as much for the man sitting beside her, however. He had heard people talk about the man in admiring tones, calling him "Captor." Why, though, he wasn't sure. The man was very ugly. Even though Captor's face was painted bright red, the large, jagged scar that ran all the way across his left cheek was still plainly visible. His nose was crooked and too big for his face, and he was fat. Pitalesharo thought his painted red hair and fan-shaped headdress made him look ridiculous.

The priests stopped dancing. They stood straight and still, and their black-painted bodies reminded him of burnt tree trunks. The chanting faded away.

"The time has come! "

Pitalesharo craned his neck when a shout rang from the lodge's roof.

"The time has come for the sacrifice to be prepared!"

Sacrifice?

He watched, fascinated, while the chief priest approached the young Ponca woman. The chief priest's body was painted black like the others', but he also wore a shiny otter cape around his bony shoulders. A feathered headdress adorned his head, and sacred omens hung from his neck. He helped the Ponca woman to her feet.

The people clapped and cheered. Pitalesharo tried to clap and keep his tiptoed balance at the same time. When the young woman smiled again, he clapped harder.

But he stopped when the priest undressed her. He'd seen naked women bathing in the river or lying on their beds in his lodge. But they'd never been undressed in front of the entire village.

And none of them had been so pretty.

The woman's eyes darted around the room. People called to her with encouragements and reassurances.

A woman set a large water basin before the chief priest, and the priest soaked a rag and bathed the Ponca's body. Then he brushed her hair and repainted and redressed her. He ended the process by placing a headdress to match Captor's on her head. Pitalesharo thought it looked much better on her.

Suddenly, strong hands jerked him from his perch and tossed him to the side. He knocked against several pairs of legs before crumpling to the ground.

"Get out of the way, little peeping prairie dog."

Pitalesharo spat dirt out of his mouth and glared up at the back of a tall youth who had taken his spot at the wall's hole. He scrambled to his feet and gave the youth a firm punch in the thigh. "Let me see!"

Muffled laughter tittered behind him. Pitalesharo received a stinging slap across the face that sent him sprawling and licking blood from his lips.

"Get away from here, little prairie dog!"

Pitalesharo slunk into the shadows. He found a quiet place to sulk when the song began.

The notes rose like a wail, trembling, falling and rising again. He sat very still, not sure if he should be afraid, entranced or both. He listened, frozen, until the song faded away. It left him shivering even though he wasn't cold.

The glow of torches appeared in the dark, narrow tunnel of the lodge's entrance. The young woman appeared first, followed by Captor and another man. Gone was any sign of a smile from her face. Instead, she wore a mask of fear.

And then Pitalesharo saw her hands. They were bound with leather thongs.

She and the two men were followed by the priests, then Father and the chiefs, then the rest of the village. The endless, snaking line kept silent except for the priests' low chants.

His heart pounded. What was happening? Had the wailing song cast some sort of evil spell? Why was the woman bound? Only moments before, the people were celebrating her. Would something happen to her?

The people trailed through the village past the dark, empty lodges. They trudged onward until they reached the outskirts that lay away from the river. He followed them and hurried toward the front of the line behind Father and the chiefs. He tried to catch a glimpse of the Ponca woman, but the men blocked his view.

A sudden scream pierced the stillness.

The line stopped, and he ran to the side to see what was happening. The young woman thrashed in the grip of Captor and the other man, shrieking, weeping, pleading. Slowly the two men forced her forward, and the line started moving again. He tried to see what had caused her so much alarm.

All he saw was the close, dark outline of a tall wooden scaffold. A tight knot formed in his stomach, but he didn't know why.

The men dragged the young woman to the scaffold and lifted her kicking and screaming from the ground. The village clustered to watch while she was tied to the poles and left hanging, now still and exhausted. Pitalesharo stared, stricken, and watched her sides quiver. The men kindled a small fire at her feet.

"Hail! The Morning Star appears!"

The chief priest pointed to the eastern sky. Above the graying horizon, a single star appeared.

The Morning Star Warrior.

Two new men wearing owl skins around their necks stepped forward and lifted glowing brands from the fire. The Ponca screamed hysterically when they touched them to her skin. "Help me! Please help me!"

A war cry rose from the darkness. Maddened shouts erupted among the people. A man with a bow and arrow charged the woman and pulled back his bowstring.

And then the woman's body jerked when an arrow tore through her heart.

A fourth man caved in her skull. Another opened her body with a knife and painted his face with her blood. A rush of men and boys surged forward, shrieking, laughing, filling her body with arrows.

Pitalesharo's knees shook. Bile rose in his throat. Everything was so horrible, he thought he was dreaming. Something warm and wet dripped down his cheeks and onto his belly. He realized he was crying.

Someone shoved a miniature bow and arrow into his hands and hoisted him into the air, above the body. He went rigid with horror. Everything spun in a bloody muddle, and he closed his eyes.

He knew he was in someone else's arms. The sickening sounds grew fainter. He opened his eyes and found himself staring up at Father. Father's eyes were cold. They strode back to the village, almost running.

Pitalesharo would have never dared to do this at any other time, but he reached up and clung to Father's neck. He buried his face in Father's thick chest and forced his tears to stop. In the distance, he could still hear the people's cries, trembling, falling and rising again.

Their cries were like the song.

★

Pitalesharo's memories ended with the last notes of the song, and he watched the procession emerge from the glowing doorway. Although it was too dark to see, he pictured the Comanche girl at its head, quiet, innocent, unsuspecting. Blood surged through his veins.

"Someday it will end." Father's voice interrupted his brooding, coming from somewhere close

below the roof's edge. It sounded old and tired, even defeated. "This bloodshed will end. It must end, someday."

The torch-lit procession threaded toward the distant scaffold. Pitalesharo worked his fists.

Someday.

Someday would be too late.

The Ponca woman's screams for help echoed in his ears, followed by the screams of many other women and girls since. Each scream had been left unanswered.

He turned his eyes from the procession and leaped to the ground. "It will end tonight."

Father's tall figure moved in the darkness.

"Tonight, I will answer her scream."

Father's strong hand gripped his elbow. "I have no power to protect you, my son. They may kill you."

"Silence will ensure that they kill many more." He pulled away. Already, the stars were fading.

"Wait. Take this with you." Father removed the silver medallion from around his neck and slipped it over Pitalesharo's head. "Now they will see that my words and authority go with you."

Pitalesharo gripped Father's hand in silence. And then he ran and left Father behind.

The darkness made him believe his moccasins never left the ground. The warm air rushed past his skin, and he went faster, faster, faster. He could not be too late.

The torches were in a cluster. The village had already reached the scaffold. He saw the Comanche girl's body hanging silhouetted against the flickering torchlight, and the air whistling past his ears carried an anguished moan.

His fingers gripped the medallion.

He broke into the crowd just as the men with owl skins lifted their glowing brands from the fireplace. Everything stopped. Everyone watched him.

But he hardly noticed when he remembered the Ponca woman's cries.

He shook the medallion so that the firelight glinted off it crazily. "My father hates your sacrifices! This is what he says about them: 'They must end!'" He dropped the medallion and jerked his knife from its sheath. The girl whimpered when he whirled toward her, and his fury drained away before a rush of pity. He reached out slowly, supporting her, and slit the thongs binding one of her arms. Her whimpers stopped.

"Don't touch her!" The chief priest approached him in long, purposeful strides. His eyes glittered, and he also held a knife. "The Morning Star must have blood! Our crops will fail otherwise, and we will have no success in war or hunts." He swooped back toward the people as if to rouse them.

No one moved.

Pitalesharo freed the girl's other arm, encased his knife, and placed her feet on the ground. She collapsed. His jaw tightened, and he stepped in front of her crumpled body to shield her. He met the priest's dark gaze. "I will take this girl from this place. Or I will leave my body here beside hers."

Rage smoldered in the priest's eyes, but he seemed to realize the crowd's silence. He said nothing. But his fingers stroked the hilt of his knife.

Pitalesharo lifted the girl from the ground. She clung to him, just like he had clung to Father those many years ago. Her warm tears dripped onto his arm and chest and mingled with his sweat.

The priest's blade gleamed, but Pitalesharo turned and walked away through the dozens of pairs of black, staring eyes. No one stopped him. No one spoke a word. He left the crowd and entered the unlit darkness. The priest's knife had still not found his back.

And then he fled.

The village horse herd shifted in the dull shadows of early morning. He hoisted the girl onto the back of one and slung his leg over another. They galloped on and on, following the river. They did not stop until golden light streamed between the trunks of the cottonwood trees and the village lay far behind them.

Meadowlarks whistled in the tree branches. The breeze murmured through the young leaves and whispered across the springing grasses. The river laughed between its banks. The earth sang the song of life.

And that's when he knew the song would not rise again. The song of the Morning Star had died with the village's sacrifice.

He looked at the Comanche girl. She was staring at him and weeping silently. Her eyes spoke more than words.

Emotion stirred from his heart and crawled into his throat, and he turned away so that she would not see. It was a long time before he could turn back. When he did, his hands did the speaking.

"You are free," he signed. "I will take you back to your people."

The girl sobbed out loud. She managed to raise her hands even though they were shaking. "Thank you," she signed back. "Thank you, thank you."

Pitalesharo felt the corners of his mouth lift upward slightly. He nudged his horse's sides with his heels, and the girl followed him beneath the cottonwood branches, across the river, over the rolling hills.

And while they journeyed, the song of life filled their ears.

IF ONLY I COULD THINK OF SWEETER THINGS TO SAY...

DARYL WATKINS
*College of Southern Nevada
Nevada*

Liquefy rose petals and write with pen strokes as soft as harp notes from wherever my
soul was last seen...

Return address in satin, silk and white gold envelopes, honey-soaked kisses and stares so
deep I see and hear the ocean in your warm smile
Inspiring, embrace the sun and soothe the moon, while each and every star paces the
night sky in a constellation that spells your name, only I can see it

I stroke your ears as if you can hear my touch
Hold your hand until I feel your pulse to reaffirm the fact that we connect...
...please

Lose yourself for once in comfort, held closely
I've seen you asleep and wondered if you dream
Sweet scent of baby powder blended with femininity
Overdue temptation drug me through deserts of sleepless nights or
Nightless sleep, I move in a constant shadow of my thoughts of you

I would be honored to support your passionate endeavors, to kiss your scars and convince
your self-determination to stand by me...

I would be honored to have your undivided attention while doing absolutely
nothing...I've done it all twice over in my mind

If only I could think of sweeter things to say...

You may lose this tomorrow
You may keep this forever

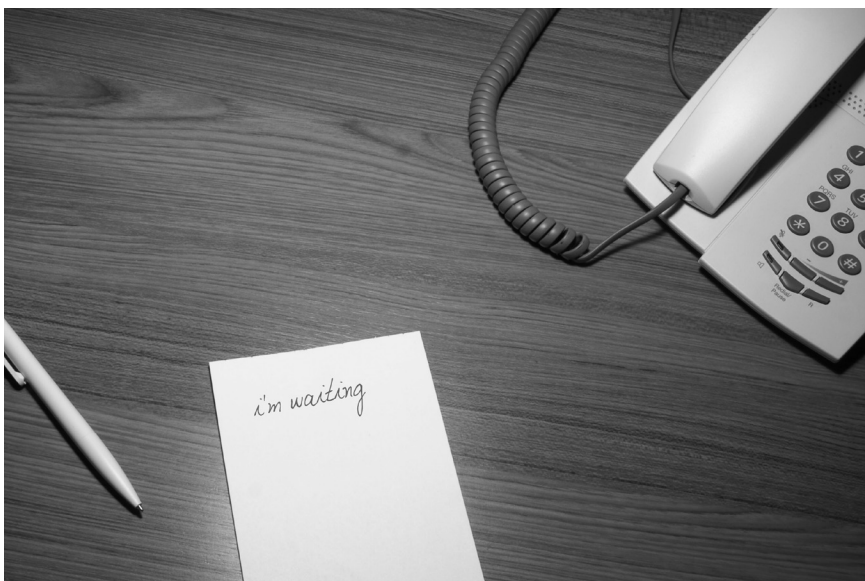
I may lose tomorrow in forever with a preoccupation with each second I go without your kiss
And each second it draws nearer my stomach speaks Hebrew love poems nervously
My rifle aimed to fire ceased by emotions that are grizzly
I fall asleep in caverns, dream of clouds and awake in oceans

If I wasn't so proud I'd be embarrassed to admit this...I rack my brain and let you break
My heart is green velvet your smile striped spheres, all I can think of is building solid foundation
Through the haze of emotions smoke and love's fluorescent bulbs we share similar fire
and add that eternal spice to water and ice as well

The time you want
Is yours
As my offering to my quintessential Woman...

If only I could think of sweeter things to say...

OVER



JOCELYN WAGNER

*Merced College
California*

"I'm waiting."

The note was barely legible; the paper looked as if it had been crumpled up and then smoothed out several times. Those two words, written carefully on the index card, were obviously a source of great inner turmoil for the author.

The phone lay next to the note, as if asking him to end the waiting, to end the suspense, to end all this fighting and to just let it be.

But he couldn't do that, not after what she had said. She had hurled those words like throwing knives at him, and she was an incredible shot: each had found its mark.

And as much as he loved her, he couldn't pretend it had never happened. He could not forget that she had lost faith and he could not forgive what she had said.

He reached for the pen, head and heart still warring within him, and shakily wrote "I'm sorry" beneath her words.

That was it. The game was over.

She had been sitting by the window for hours, reading the same paragraph in her book over and over, never fully absorbing what it said. Absentmindedly she turned the page and watched yet another couple exit the book store, giggling and in love.

She had debated leaving the note. What she had wanted to do was wait until he had come home and rush into his arms, begging his forgiveness. But she had known, before she had even reached for the pen, that she couldn't do that anymore. She was tired of feeling restrained and oppressed; like she didn't have a voice.

She wanted to be heard.

And so, she had made the tough choice. She made the strong choice. As hard as it was, she had left the note. It was his turn to come crawling back.

But that was hours ago and panic was starting to set in. He hadn't called.

Slowly, as if her actions were weighted down by some invisible burden, she packed up her things and drove home.

Those moments, as she walked through the door and over to the note, were agonizing. Hope and doubt wrestled in her heart until she saw the two words penned beneath her own:

"I'm sorry."

She didn't have to look around to know that his things were gone. She didn't have to see his key on the table to know that this was real.

She slumped onto the couch after grabbing a bottle of wine.

So that was it. They were over.

DESPERATE DECISION



VIVIANA MENDOZA
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"Heil Hitler," the soldier clicks his boots together and saluted his commandant to which the commandant responds the same.

"Barracks are backed up. First 200 that go left, send there. All others to the gas chambers." With the orders given out, the commandant takes his leave.

~

"Let's go," a mother speaks gently as she stands up holding her son's and daughter's hands as the soldiers yell for them to quickly file out of the train car and direct them into another.

"Left," the tall man with the riding crop directs what he thought was a family of two before sentencing everyone after to the right. Another soldier notices the mistake and walks towards the family.

"We only have space for two in this direction, so choose who will go with you. Your son or your daughter?" he asks calmly, awaiting an answer.

The mother stares at him confused before she realizes what each side meant. "Take them. I'll go to the right. Let them stay left, please," she pleads.

"No. Your son or your daughter?" he asks becoming irritated.

"I beg of you," she implores once again. "Take me instead. Let them go left."

"Decide!" the tall man in the green uniform shouts harshly, having lost his patience with the mother and threatening to strike her across the face with the back of his left hand high. "Today! Your son or your daughter?"

Anna clutches her mother's skirt tightly within one of her fists as the other reaches out for her older brother. The thunderous yells cause her to jump and shrink away from the intimidating men while still timidly shaking behind her mother's leg.

Callused soldiers' hands pull on both children's tiny arms and thin legs as they began to strip them away from the only person who had embraced them the entire train ride. Anna tightens her grip refusing to let go of her mother's clothing even though her knuckles begin turning white. Despite not understanding her current situation, she knows that she does not want to let go, yet the soldiers pry open her small fists and loosen the grip she has on her mother's clothing.

"My son! I choose my son!" the mother screams frantically quickly realizing if she stalls any longer in her decision, she will lose both of her beloved children. As she pulls her son back towards her chest protectively, her daughter grasps for something, anything to keep her from being separated from her mother.

"My son," she whispers kissing his head knowing he will have a higher chance of surviving this. Her daughter... She was still young and small. As much as it pains Anna's mother, her mother understood the severity of the situation.

~

"Mama! Mama!" Anna screams as her lip quivers with uncertainty, her hands reaching out to grasp anything belonging to her mother. "Mama!" she continues shouting and kicking the soldiers carrying her.

"Shut up!" a soldier quickly smacked her across the face drawing blood from the edges of her mouth.

Upon tasting the iron in her mouth, Anna stilled quickly, too frightened to breathe, which only escalated the pounding inside her chest.

"Move it!" the soldier shoves her into a line with the other children, causing her to fall to her knees, quickly followed with a swift kick to the ribs. "Get up and get in line," he snarls and drags her brown curly hair up until she is standing upright.

Small whimpers escape between her quivering lips as she controls the urge to burst into tears. "Mama," she pleads to the wind silently praying for it to carry to her mother, so she can answer her. After several deep breaths, her lip quits quivering.

As the line progressively moves forward, she hears the buzzing sound of clippers, but she doesn't dare peek her head to the side in fear she may be stricken across the face again. Her mouth is still sore from the last slap. With a touch of her finger, she winces at the pressure, but she senses that the blood has dried.

With only three people in front of her, the buzzing of clippers is louder than ever, and the horror of her situation begins to register. Around her are women and little girls who sit still as soldiers and other prisoners shave their heads. Pieces of blonde, red, and brunette hair litter the dirt floor.

"No," she shakes her head not quite believing the reality of her situation, causing her lip to begin quivering again. To take her away from her mother and brother should have been enough, and now they will take away her hair as well.

"Next!" a German soldier shouts unsympathetically.

For several moments, Anna stands in her place and shakes her head, refusing to move forward. She could not allow them to take away these curly locks of hers.

"Go on," a soft voice nudges her forward. "If you do as they say, they won't hurt you," she whispers.

Complying, Anna drags her feet forward still hesitant.

When she is within arms shot, a large hand grabs her by the wrist and forces her to sit on the bench. "Stay still, or I might shave your head off," he sneers as he presses the clippers to her scalp.

The comment causes her to stiffen, willing herself not to move a single muscle once again. Only her chest rises up and down, but she dares not make a sound. She only stares forward where she could see the front of the line.

The voice who addressed her earlier had come from a woman who is about the same age if not younger than her mother. Anna and her stare at one another for several moments before the other woman mouths, "You're doing great," with a small smile.

After haircuts, everyone is lined up once again. The brief moments Anna and the stranger had while being shaved causes Anna to stay near her and clasp her hand.

"All will be disinfected," a booming voice informs them in a flat tone. "Take off your clothes and hang them. You will use this clothing after your shower." This message repeats several times more since several of the individuals were too shy to remove their clothing until one woman begins to do this and several join her in her actions.

Within minutes, everyone is fully undressed and lined up once again to enter the showers.

"Quickly!" soldiers on either side of the room shout. "Line up, you swine!"

Shuffling to reach the shower, Anna continues to cling to the woman's hand, afraid they may be separated from each other if she doesn't.

"Oh, a shower," the woman exhales partially in relief and in excitement. "After that train ride, a shower would be amazing, don't you think?"

Anna nods her head slowly, slightly embarrassed she will be bathing next to all of these strangers. At least she can see the shower room now. A shower was better than no shower.

Everyone is squirming next to one another after the door to the disinfection facility is closed. Some gaze upon the strange single stream shower heads expectantly waiting for water. Children embrace their mothers closely, unsure what to expect.

"Look," Anna tugs at the woman's hand and points to some scratches on the walls, "what do you think that —"

Rattling within the pipes is heard, which excites the shower room's inhabitants. Many reached towards the shower heads expecting water to flow out, but instead, three cerulean spheres plop and scrape along the concrete floor. The room is silent as they continue rolling along the floor until they slowly roll to a stop. As they oxidize, a dark blue gas is emitted.

The room panics. Adults scream causing children to shriek. All rush to the door pounding on it and begging to be let out of here. Minutes pass by and still no response. Mothers hold their babies up to the ceiling, hoping to keep them away from the gas. The woman picks up Anna and places her on her shoulders.

"Shallow breaths," she tries to calm Anna despite the fear evident in her own eyes.

Thump! Thump! Bodies are falling on top of one another, causing more of an uproar. Although determined to stay standing, the woman holding Anna begins swaying and after several moments, her legs give in.

Anna shrieks when she senses the woman giving in. "No! Don't give up! No!" she screams, trying to encourage her. She lets go before the woman lands on the ground hyperventilating, which is accompanied by coughing.

Attempting to shake her awake, tears brim at her eyes. "No," she whimpers, her lip quivering once again. "Wake up. Don't," she coughs, "leave me."

Thump, thump, thump! One grazes Anna's shoulder as she leans over the woman, which she recoils away from. Adults are sprawled everywhere. The only ones remaining are the children.

She leaves the woman scratching at the walls. "Mama! Mama! Help me!" she wails. She wheezes since she no longer has enough air in her lungs to scream. Anna coughs, attempting to compensate for the lack of oxygen she is receiving.

Her throat is closing, her eyes burn, and her heart can be heard above all the children. "Mama," she whispers hoarsely. Her eyes flutter shut as she collapses on the ground. A single rasp exhales from her lips, "Mama, why didn't you pick me?"

~

The crematorium is quiet out of respect for the dead. It was an unspoken and unwritten rule in this sacred area. The only disturbance were the new arrivals carried from the gas chambers.

As a mother, it was difficult for the woman to lift children and load them into the fire. Any warmth that their life brought to someone else is now gone, but she continued to do so until she came across a familiar face.

~

All of her lovely brown hair had been shaved. Her once cheerful daughter lay on the pile of bodies, but the woman simply stared. This is what she had sentenced her daughter to when she had chosen her son instead.

She couldn't bring herself to touch Anna. After a few moments, she leaned against the crematorium for support sliding down and placed her hands over her mouth. Between breaths, she muffled, "A-Anna... Oh, my baby, Anna..."



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