

English Department: The Promethean, The Final Torch (2019-2020)

THE PROMETHEAN

THE LITERARY ARTS JOURNAL

OF CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY-PORTLAND



THE LAST TORCH

2019-2020 ISSUE

Editorial Staff

Managing Editor	Brooke S. Ohren
Assistant Managing Editor	J.C.G.
Student Editors	Micah Beukelman Lindsey Burns Jakob Chamberlin Dana Hardy Lily Rose Knutsen Karish Pangilinan
Student Copyeditor	Angelyka Cava
Faculty Advisor	Dr. Kimberly Knutsen

The Promethean is an annual journal of the College of Arts & Sciences of Concordia University-Portland. The publication of *The Promethean* is made possible with funding from the Associated Students of Concordia (ASCU). The content is chosen by a staff of student editors.

The opinions expressed in the journal do not necessarily reflect those of Concordia University-Portland, ASCU, or *The Promethean* staff. All works are copyrighted.

The Last Torch

Brooke S. Obren, Managing Editor

In September, we did not know that this edition of *The Promethean* would truly be the last. Riding the wave of Blue Apocalypse, our editors sat in front of each other composing a pool of possible themes. We wanted a title that captured the loss of the College of Arts & Sciences at Concordia University – Portland.

We were still present, learning, and generating beautiful work, despite mourning a gaping wound. We wanted to remind those around us—and even ourselves—that the literary heart of this university still burned with passion, talent, and perseverance.

When I suggested The Last Torch to our staff, the titular myth of this journal played through my mind. Prometheus stole fire from Zeus and gifted it to mortals, seeing mankind's weakened, vulnerable state. It was a gift, requiring sacrifice, and resulting in great reward and great punishment.

I did not know that this title would become entirely ironic.

As we continue to experience disruption and uncertainty moving forward, I counsel us all to remember this: fire may devastate and destroy, but it can also be used to light the way. May we use our talents to similarly break down social barriers and uplift, leading this fractious community out of darkness and towards a better future.

On behalf of Dr. Kimberly Knutsen, my Assistant Managing Editor J.C.G., our team of student editors, and all of our valued contributors, I am blessed to present to you the 2019-2020 issue of *The Promethean: The Last Torch*.

*So, if this does end up being my last letter, please believe that things are good with me, and even when they're not, they will be soon enough.
And I will believe the same about you.*

Love always,

—Stephen Chbosky, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*

CONTENTS

Map

Angelyka Cava.....2

why do I crave what I fear most?

Angelyka Cava.....4

Of Stained Ceilings and Strong Hands

Kristin Rothell.....6

A Body to Serve, A Body to Suffer

Micah Beukelman 10

Real Love

Karish Pangilinan..... 12

the door shut

Anonymous 14

Crappy Father's Day

Brooke S. Ohren..... 23

Unheard

Kristin Rothell..... 25

Tweet to Give Thanks

Concordia Community 30

Fix Yourself?

J. C. G..... 32

in His image

Brooke S. Ohren 3rd Place Short Story Winner..... 34

Slumber

Angelyka Cava..... 38

Medusa

Brooke S. Ohren 40

Objectifying Women Is Not Loving Them

Citlalli Uribe..... 42

It

Lily Rose Knutsen Scary Story Contest Winner..... 49

Person

Micah Beukelman..... 52

Purple Citrus

Micah Beukelman 2nd Place Tie Short Story Winner 55

Butterfly Moth

Micah Beukelman..... 58

A Purr-plexing Halloween

Dana Hardy..... 61

Peaks Isle

Michael DiPietro Photo Contest Winner..... 63

forestsounds

Micah Beukelman..... 65

Sostenuto

Micah Beukelman..... 67

The Zipper

Micah Beukelman..... 69

Rice

Bryce Nishida..... 71

Tweet To Your Last Kiss

Concordia Community..... 73

Shortcake Dream

Micah Beukelman 2nd Place Tie Short Story Winner..... 75
a date

Sara Katie Rodgers 77

Purple Citrus

Spring Writing Contest: Judged by alumni Josey Meats 81

Based On A True Story

Angelyka Cava 1st Place Short Story Winner..... 84
it has been two years

Anonymous 99

Shoes

Kristin Rothell..... 102

Crime and Punishments

Micah Beukelman 105

Ni Una Mas

Montserrat Caro..... 107

When the last candle flickers out...

J. C. G..... 116

La Vache

Henry Knutsen..... 118

Contributors 134



Summer Nights © Pablo Alvarado

Map

Angelyka Cava

Ask me how to get from

Point A

to

Point B

and I'll tell you the way

because an eternal navigation system
curses me with constant direction.

I know where we need to go

and how to get there

and what we're going to do

and when we will arrive.

I look both ways before I

I don't know how to get

|
|

cross

lost

I've pressed every button

changed every course

turned every knob

Still I'm stuck on this path;

there's no turning back.

Please rewire my GPS

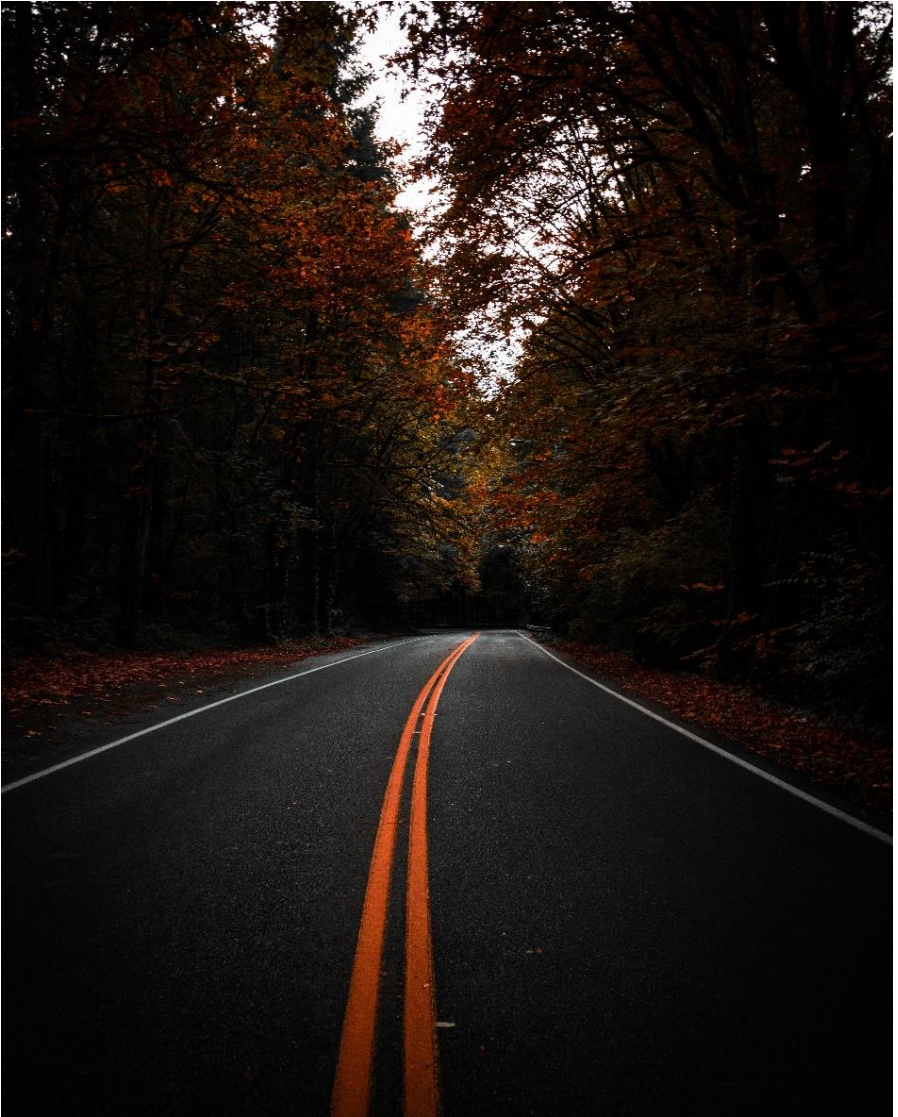
and let me

roam

in the middle

of the

road.



Somewhere Only We Know © Pablo Alvarado

*I want to reach out and rest
my fingers against their figures,
to awaken my sleeping skin
with electricity from their bodies.
Yet whenever one stands closely
I pull myself away like the tide.
And when I receive one's touch
I leave my body and enter my mind
fearing the spark that enters my heart.*

*I desire to connect with another
for our souls to meet and combine.
Both sides of the relational equation
holding equivalent amounts of affection,
which seems illogical when I am one half
and they may subtract themselves
when it's too late for me to turn back.*

*I long to open the cage in my mind
holding my innermost musings
to share my thoughts and feelings
with someone who will not flee.
But I lock my tongue around anyone,
only the safest words escape
the shackles of my imagination;
anything else could turn into a mistake.*

why do I crave what I fear most?

Angehyka Cava



Symbiosis © Samantha Persad

Of Stained Ceilings and Strong Hands

Kristin Rothbell

The blood flows through my veins like sludge, crawling so slowly that my brain struggles to comprehend what is happening. I peel open weighted eyelids and stare up in a hazy daze for lord only knows how long before the visual input actually starts to compute.

The ceiling is cracked white tiles that have seen better days, their edges fading and spots of lord knows what seeped through until it looks like someone threw their coffee at the ceiling in a fit of rage.

It is a familiar ceiling.

I'm at work.

But why is my bed at work?

My body droops against something hard and it takes a minute for me to realize that I'm not lounging against the fuzzy blankets of my bed, but a hard, stained, carpeted floor. My head is not on my familiar pillow with the indentations *just so*, but against something coarse and made of wool that smells like my apartment. My coat. What the hell is my coat doing on the floor at work? What the hell am *I* doing on the floor at work?

A warm hand on my shoulder startles me into an upright position that I immediately regret. My stomach pitches, my eyes flutter, and I feel the bile rise up until all I can do is open my mouth and lurch forward. My stomach upends itself and I hear it

splatter into something plastic. I don't feel it against my legs, on my thighs, soaking into my pants. Instead, as I open my eyes to find out, a garbage can has been placed in front of me, containing the smelly mess.

It is moved away from me and the pounding in my head thanks whoever places a soothing hand at the small of my back.

I let my eyelids slide shut before I even attempt to vocalize my appreciation.

What the hell is happening?

I cast my mind back to the morning, trying to retrace my steps. Because surely something horrible happened to leave me feeling like this. All I can remember is waking up, seeing my dark brown hair and eyes in the mirror, my makeup just so, my new form-fitting dress a testament to Ross' superb sales, and entering work, a perfect, untouched coffee in my hand and sitting down at my desk to work.

After that? Ceiling. Ugly ass ceiling.

I shift slightly and lean back into the hand still on my back, letting it take the weight as I shift my hands to my face, hiding my mortification. I don't know what happened, but I must have done *something* to feel this bad.

"Can you hear me?"

I finally realize that the hand is speaking and twist slightly to my right to find the form lurking there. His warm, hazel eyes are soft and concerned. I know this man. I work with him.

“Eric?” I ask and I cringe at the sound of my own voice. It’s like I’ve gargled rocks and kept a few in my mouth for safe keeping.

And don’t get me started on the taste. I could probably choke a dog if I breathed too hard in its direction.

“Hey, you with me?” he asks, his deep voice a soothing contrast to the ever-present pounding in my head. It’s getting harder to stay upright but I struggle to keep myself together.

I have to know what happened.

I struggle with the question, my vocal cords exerting their dislike at being used, but I’m sure I must make some semblance of sense because Eric lets out a huff and his eyes turn hard and angry.

“Someone roofied you.”

The pieces fall into place. My memory loss. My general feeling of roadkill. The confusion.

Well. Shit.



Crossbridge © Jayden Kasai

A Body to Serve, A Body to Suffer

Micah Benkelman

I

have two bodies

a body to serve—
my altarmy to worship
a vessel of brilliant soul
inches of empty canvas space

a body to suffer—
my bodycross to bear
a carcass of rolling white
and red lightning strikes

it sings with unabashed fervor
humming with glistening descant
breathgasps holding tunes
sing louder, exalt it
the patina shines and glows
under illuminating sunlight

we must speak in hushed voices
and whispered words
teethtrapped breath sounds
don't speak too loud
the fragile cover of skin
will crack and split

I

have two bodies

a body to serve—

a body to suffer—



Tulips © Griffin Allegretti

Real Love

Karish Pangilinan

Wiry beard hairs scrape my swollen cheek
Sweet whispers replace the ghost of his clenched fist
I can taste iron velvet on the underbelly of my tongue
Suede lips produce seismic waves of lust
as he nibbles at my bruised neck

He says I'm a psychotic bitch
but that's what he loves
He says I'm a whore
but I'm *his* whore
He says I'm a cunt that deserves to die

Promise after promise retches from his beautiful lips
Loving hands inch their way towards my upper bicep
Blue blood pools in my arm
as I'm forced to look into his glassy eyes

Why do you make me do this? he says
I love you, you know that right?

I believe him.
Maybe this is the love I deserve.



spoOky © Dana Hardy

the door shut

Anonymous

The door shut. Twice.

Everything she remembered was a blur.

College kids gone wild,

wasn't always fun and games,

like everyone thought.

Judgment.

The package was almost hardwired.

Hardwired so teenagers wouldn't steal them.

She grabbed the package and stood.

Judgment,

from the others in line.

It was her fault,

she's the one who downed shot after shot

shot after shot

shot after shot

shot after shot.

**“If I was you,
I’d feel disgusting.”**

She took the pill from the package,

Swallowed it in a timely manner.

She kept saying, over and over and over in her head:

“please work”

“please work”

“please work”

“please work”

He texted her:

I've never seen someone so drunk before.

Did you take it?

Let me know when you get your period!

“I have something to tell you. Something happened the other night. I don’t really remember it. It didn’t mean anything. At all. I’m so sorry.”

He gave her a hug. He asked if she was okay.

She loved him,
so much.

He kissed her.

He was her first love.

A few weeks later, she got her period. Thank God.

A few months later, he moved hours away for a new job.

He was her first love.

If only she could go back to tell him how kind he was, after a
confusing night, when everything
seemed to go wrong. He showed no judgment and he showed
only love. She wishes she could go
back and say thank you... For loving her and letting her
understand...
he was her first love
None of it was ever her fault.

~ Research estimates that between 10% to
29% of women have been victims
of rape or attempted rape since starting
college.
The National Crime Victimization Survey
estimates that 6.1 sexual assaults
occur per 1,000 students per year. ~



Tired © J.C.G.

Cr

H[^]appy Father's Day

Brooke S. Ohren

My dad is a much better uncle than a father.

With mismatched feathers, his five sisters laugh with shared skills,
a quintet nested in their voice boxes.

They've each hatched eggs of their own, and he is

the take-them-fishing uncle

the randomly-show-up-at-their-birthday

(despite living a state away) uncle

the hand-them-back-when-it-becomes-a-burden uncle.

My mother always says he was a much better boyfriend than
husband, so it seems like

he has a problem with permanence

and I have a problem with abandonment. He is also

the disappear-for-three-years father

the buy-you-a-bike (and refuse to drive you)

so-you-*have*-to-exercise father

the "yes or no *thereisnomaybe*" father.

He disguises his predatory plumage as the tickle monster
and the songbird sisters applaud these qualities on Facebook,
declaring him a proud father on Father's Day.

They praise him for a talent he keeps selective.

He is the father-who-doesn't-care-to-be father.



Heron © Samantha Persad

Unheard

Kristin Rothell

i felt the agony
as it tore through my skull,
ripped apart skin
that was meant
to keep me together,
instead pulling apart
like taffy left in the sun –
so easy to split open

words filter in –
hemorrhage
unresponsive
coma
brain dead –
but i can't tell them
they're wrong,
that i linger still,
that my soul wasn't
taken
when the droning
beep sounded
and my body stilled
until
the shock
dragged me back

back to this:

my eyes stare,
sightless,
into the oblivion,
ceiling tiles and
faces i don't know
hovering over me

like avenging angels,
waiting for my heart
to stop,
for my body to stop,
for *everything* to stop,
so they can unhook me,
remove me,
kill me

i ache to scream,
to let the scathing words
tear from my unmoving throat
and rip them to shreds

i remain silent,
unresponsive

i hold no power
over muscles,
tendons,
reflexes,
i have no power
over my self

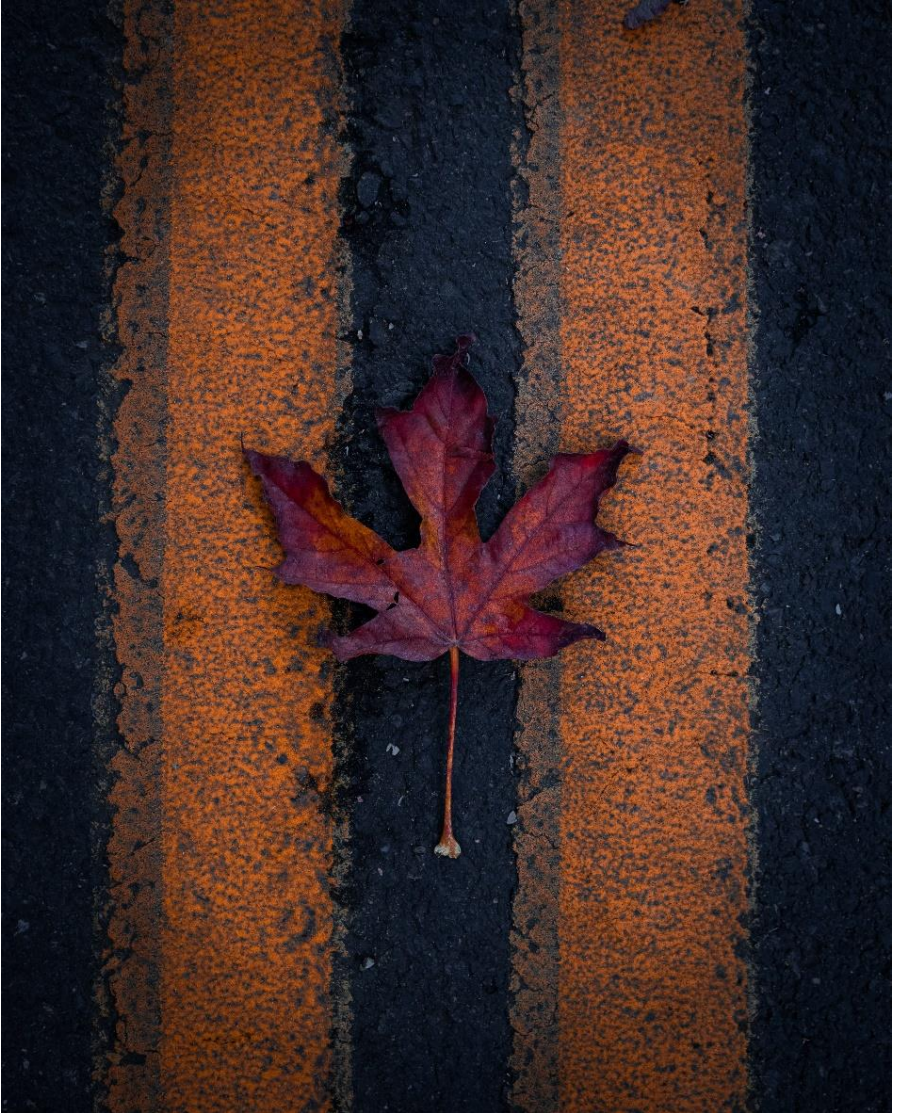
i am a husk
kept alive
by the nutrients
force fed into
my bloodstream,
by the tube shoved
down my unsuspecting
throat that
shoves oxygen
into lungs
that don't want to function,
by the nurses
that work my muscles
for me

because i lie on
this flimsy hospital bed,
in this dingy hospital room,
breathing stale hospital air,
and i can't make them hear me

not when no one
is listening



Colder Nights to Come © Pablo Alvarado



Colors of the Wind © Pablo Alvarado

Tweet to Give Thanks

Concordia Community

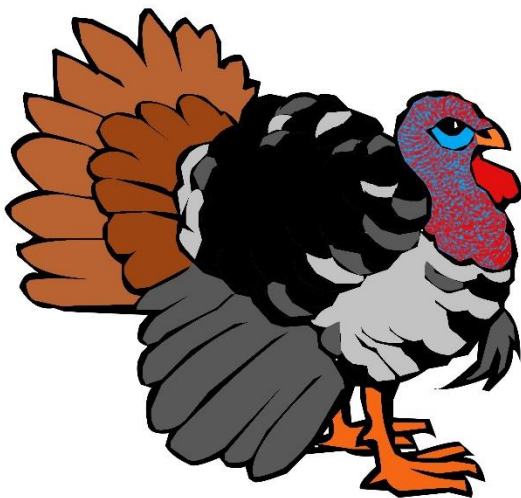
“I was much relieved to find that the fall breeze one night was warmer + gentler than expected.”

“I’m thankful for being able to wake up today and being able to better myself.”

“Remember to remind yourself to be kind to not only others but to yourself as well.”



“The beautiful yellow leaves of gingko trees!”



“My adorable Fur-babies!”

“I’m thankful we’re almost done with Trump’s presidency.”



His Name is Charmander © Anonymous

Fix Yourself?

J. C. G.

To get your shit together you've got to take yourself apart. Whatever you do, do it slowly. Memorize the layers and stitches. You'll need these to tie it all back into the infinity of existence. Don't memorize the order. The order is what fucked it in the first place. Instead, let the pieces fall into place. Their edges will find each other, catching where they fit best. Forget the idea of fixing yourself, that's an ideology that will lead you to more of the same. Instead, your goal is to acknowledge your soul as a formless mechanism, in that every shape it takes is purposefully temporary, and therefore perfect.



Grouper © Michael DiPietro

in His image

Brooke S. Obren

3rd Place Short Story Winner

Did God
sculpt
this body?

Did He open His trunk of planetfragments and dig,
throw humorous bones over mountainous shoulders,
and find pearly pieces that fit?

Did He chisel the shoulders to strain, nod to Himself,
lay a spine of Jerichobrick, add a sloping tail
to mirror the serpent He released?

Did He caress the clay of Noah's soaked earth into face pillows,
fanned fingers and fat rolls,
staining the structure beneath?

Did He fingerpaint moles with burningbush hands,
lace together hairstrands of myrrh,
grind olive branches into irises?

Did He step back to evaluate His creativity—
delight in this jumbled composition—
kiss dirty pinched fingers, release a stormpeck into the air?

Did He capture that wisp of divinity,
my slivered soul,
and toss it inside a borrowed-rib cage?

Did I blink awake for the first time,
in a divine studio of
blinding mist,
shuddering cold, naked—

did He take his robe
tear it with moonbeam teeth
and float a gossamer veil—*a shroud*—over my eyes?

Did I reach toward Him,
for His index finger sparked Adam's life,
and instead
as the haze set in,
did my Creator

turn away

wash His hands

and move on to another?

My tears turn stone to mud and I
sink into coagulating sour puddles—

blooddirt and leaking stardust
form sparkling rivulets

I cannot
save.



broken memories © Eldanabi Delgado

*vision tucked into obsidian sheets,
i'm blinded from the rose-tinted world
investigated by resident explorers*

*while I sleep, they bury their pollutions
with constant quests on unlimited terrain
hoping to discover new colors*

*as my eyelids separate
shades of darkness mix into cerulean,
smoky explosions mask the sky,
storms of ash suffocate,
chemicals fill my lungs,
oil blackens the sunlit ocean*

*i
slip
into
the
tar
plunge
deeper
into
the
poison*

*s i n k l i k e q u i c k s a n d
further into this ugly wasteland
trapping myself in earth's prison
of bleak despair and isolation
where I belong, somewhere to hide
until I find my place to reside*

Slumber

Angelyka Cava



Chasing Trails © Pablo Alvarado

Medusa

Brooke S. Obren

Eyes followed her
as she walked,
hip silks swinging,
until that fateful day
on the steps of Athena's temple.
The Goddess of Wisdom
became the goddess
 of strategy
 of punishment
to the undeserving.

Snakes in the night,
she saves their venom—
turns it into her own.

Shedding her skin,
mountains of bone dry husks
pile around her.

Within her cocoon
she weeps,
the hissing
comfort behind her ears.

Medusa was once a beautiful maiden.



Witches for Justice © Samantha Persad

Objectifying Women Is Not Loving Them

Citlalli Uribe

When I was 16, my family went down to Mexico for Christmas to visit family. It was my mom, my dad, three of my brothers, and my younger sister who was twelve at the time. We went to what some might call the flea market but this was on a much bigger scale. There were little stands littered throughout the market square and you could find almost anything you desired. We got to an area where all the ceramic, homemade knick-knacks were. My older brother walked up to one stand and picked up a mug. My stomach almost dropped to my knees.

As a sixteen, almost seventeen year old, I was extremely self-conscious about my body and was constantly trying to make sure I looked the way society and social media told me I should.

My brother laughed and showed the mug to my dad and my other brothers. I wanted to puke, it all made me feel disgusted and uncomfortable. It was a mug in the shape of a female breast and the nipple acted as a spout that one could drink out of. I stared in disbelief at the idea that it was amusing to them. So many thoughts were running through my mind and I wanted to say so many things to him. But I was unsure of myself and couldn't bring myself to open my mouth. I ended up walking away trying to distract myself from what was happening as he handed over the money to buy a boob cup.

In our day-to-day lives, the majority of us are almost completely oblivious to the way we allow media to portray women. Almost constantly, we see ads and commercials with a woman in revealing clothing presented in a sexual manner, usually promoting completely unrelated products, such as burgers and beers. Obviously, the target audience for these ads is men.

But what happens when a young girl watching T.V. or YouTube is suddenly exposed to these images? She starts to internalize the idea that she has to look this way and act this way to be worthy of attention. Already, the effects of this are prevalent in our society. If we start to really analyze the type of woman being portrayed, we'll start to see a pattern. Is it a minority woman? Is it a plus-size woman? Is it a disabled woman?

However, T.V. ads are not the only culprit. Platforms like Instagram and Snapchat are also guilty of objectifying women to a harmful extent. Content creators tend to focus on the sex appeal of a woman for views. Click on any major Instagram content creator's page and you will see thumbnails of a woman's butt or breasts, or you'll see a woman in sexual situations. The media continues to create content featuring men checking out women's butts, men rejecting "sex-crazed" women, and men constantly using women's bodies so that viewers like you will click on these posts and watch them.

There are other examples such as men's magazines and even the pop songs we all love to listen to. In a men's magazine, 76% of all ads that include a woman depict them in a sexual light. Take any of the top ten most popular pop songs out right now. If you listen to each lyric, you'll find that these artists objectify women, belittling them as sex-crazed groupies that only exist for the pleasure of men and are easily disposable. Songs by popular artists such as Eminem and Robin Thicke promote violence against women, including rape and domestic violence. Yet, we love to dance and sing along without batting an eye at these appalling lyrics.

Recently, Billie Eilish, an up and coming seventeen-year-old singer and songwriter, explained in an interview with Calvin Klein why she is always wearing baggy and "ill-fitting" clothes. She says her reasoning is so that "Nobody can have an opinion because they haven't seen what's underneath." It's unimaginable that a seventeen-year-old girl has to constantly be aware of what she looks like in order to escape being sexualized. But we're the ones to blame. At the age of thirteen, I started to go through puberty. Shirts that I used to wear innocently suddenly became sexual and provocative. I was told that if I wasn't more careful I would get unwanted stares from old men.

I vividly remember sitting on the floor of PetSmart waiting in line to get our dogs vaccinated. It was a Sunday morning and there was a long line. I was wearing one of my favorite shirts, not

a V-neck, but something similar. I was going through puberty and I was just starting to develop my secondary sex characteristics, or to put it more bluntly, boobs. My mom told me that I needed to be careful or older men would stare at me, which was wrong because I was only thirteen. I quickly shamed myself quietly and pulled my shirt up. How terrible it was that I was a thirteen-year-old and I was already seducing men. I felt embarrassed, disgusted even, in myself.

At thirteen, I didn't know better. I didn't realize what was really going on. There has always been a contradiction we hold in regard to women's bodies. We instill in girls from an early age that they need to be pretty and vulnerable to the male gaze at all times yet we shame them for being too "sexy" and "seductive." Girls and women are blamed for having bodies that men cannot resist. The blame is never put on the man for being disturbingly perverted.

As a woman, I cannot and will not ignore what is being done to my body and the bodies of the other 3.7 billion women and girls in this world. I need to become aware of what I am consuming on TV, YouTube, Instagram, and what I am listening to on the radio. If I am passive about the destruction of the divine female body, then I am complacent in the destruction. Just as so many people choose to be.

A couple years ago, a coffee stand set up shop right down the street from my house. It's so close that I can see it from my

front yard. Although at one time I definitely would have called myself a coffee addict, I have never once been to this stand. It is part of a chain of stands that are called “Twin Perks Espresso.” Essentially, a woman will serve you coffee while wearing a bikini no matter the season. Rain, shine, snow, or wind—she will be there. Ironically enough, the CEO is a woman.

It's come down to this, a man's body is a body, and a woman's body is an object, a sexual object, and a topic for political discussion. Never is a woman's body just a body. And we have not even begun to understand the effects that this has created. How can we say we love women if we are in a constant state of hating them?

Works Cited

- Fredette, Meagan. "Billie Eilish Gets Brutally Honest About Her Body & The Male Gaze For Calvin Klein." *Billie Eilish Talks Style Calvin Klein Campaign Ad 2019*, 12 May 2019, www.refinery29.com/en-us/2019/05/232508/billie-eilish-calvin-klein-i-speak-my-truth.
- Lulic, Michelle. "12 Songs With Lyrics That Are Totally Misogynistic." *Bustle*, 7 May 2019, www.bustle.com/articles/137558-12-songs-that-are-actually-full-of-super-misogynistic-lyrics.
- Swift, Jamiee, and Hannah Gould. "Not An Object: On Sexualization and Exploitation of Women and Girls." *UNICEF USA*, 31 Jan. 2019, www.unicefusa.org/stories/not-object-sexualization-and-exploitation-women-and-girls/30366.



Resistance © Samantha Persad

It

Lily Rose Knutsen

Scary Story Contest Winner

It's 9:00 pm. Everything is going smoothly so far

He falls asleep in my arms and I gently move him onto the bed. His small body curls up on the sheets like he's still inside, being rocked to sleep by my movement and the white noise played by my heartbeat.

His golden hair reminds me of duckling fur, fuzzy and slightly raised off his head like he's full of static energy. Like he's been rubbing his tiny hands on balloons all day.

Hours pass and he's without a peep. Maybe he'll sleep through the night. No disturbance or fuss.

...

It's 1:00 am. I think it's starting to begin: the Witching Hours.

I sit up in my bed, my back arched. His weight pulls me down into a "c" curve. My eyes are half open and blurry.

The way he arches his back and screams makes me think he is actually possessed, ready to crawl on the ceiling and bounce off the walls.

His cries get stronger, and he starts to glow with luminescence.

A light green with yellow orbs circulates through his veins. I look for the signs of his pain.

Ah, there it is...

His baby teeth glow red under his gums, about to erupt through his skin. I pick up the baby Tylenol next to my bed and precisely draw 2.5 mL of liquid.

The Tylenol is the color of sea sparkle. Like the bioluminescent plankton that float under the ocean surface.

If only this would take the pain away immediately.

I lay him next to me and close my eyes for a split second.

I wake up to his screaming,

I open my eyes and he stares at me with green, glowing eyes. Small horns start to erupt from his fuzzy hair.

He's crossed over. There's nothing I can do. He has total control of me now.

As the screams shake the house and my room glows an eerie green, I bury my head underneath my pillow and curl into a fetal position.



Purple River © Jayden Kasai

Person

Micah Benkelman

Yesterday,
she wasn't real
Nothing but a disembodied head
floating, illusive corporeal mist trapped
in a suit of bones and gristle
Fine downy hair and tender veins
Cartilage and fatty tissue
underneath it all
Thoughts racing
around an empty room,
bouncing back and forth and
echoing in the halls of an
abandoned mansion
trapped within her skeleton
Blank eyes roll back to
stare at the inside of her skull
Empty irises try to grasp phantom
thoughts that slip through her
fingers like smoke
A body lies near her head
but it is useless, worthless.
Heavy and concrete, uncooperative,
thick, viscous blood oozing through
her veins like cold syrup
Fingers twitch and little else moves
the only real signs of life are the rise
of a chest for breath and the
tha-thump-tha-thump-tha-thump of a
heart in a cavernous cage of ribs
pulse ripples in her jugular
Splintered and jagged fissures
of dreams, spiraling fractals
of abstract hopes.

~

A distant cry snaps her back,
something within screaming life,
requiring sustenance

Blank eyes roll back and she is real.

Blue irises fade to life, pupils dilate,

Syrup blood warms and flows more easily.

Breath shudders back into her body with deep gasps.

Heart beats faster again as she leaves the catatonic state of non-existence.

Cream colored paint fills her vision, sighs, blinks.

Fingers twitch and limbs begin to move.

A body reconnected to a severed head with surgical precision. Life breathes back into her nerves. Body rushes with warmth and vigor. Thoughts quiet down, shards reconnect and are made whole. Eyes capture singular thoughts and hold onto them for a few moments before letting go and moving to the next.

Yesterday,
she wasn't real

Today,
she is



Rainbow I © Lily Rose Knutsen



Rainbow III © Lily Rose Knutsen

Purple Citrus

Micah Beukelman

2nd Place Tie Short Story Winner

Purple citrus is as wrong as I am.
Backwards eyes and flipped tongue, eyelashless and unblinking.
I walk with sideways steps and gigglebreaths.
I have been this way as long as I have been this way.
Sinewy fingers and orange fingernails,
I reach
 and reach
 and stretch—
But this creature that I am never pauses.

I lick my eyes and things flash by with indigoscreams.
Heads turn when I approach, lips draw back in horror and
revulsion.
Their faces darken and mine turns eggshell in the wake of my
identity.
Monstrous—
 I am
 monstrous.

I fall,
 a crumbling ledge giving way to a space below
 I plummet
 crash
 explode
 and
 poof.

I am gone and yet—
I am awake.
In bed.

Merlot sheets and memory pillows.
Six blankets and purring furlump.
My lover asleep beside me.
Eyelashes and lids with forward facing eyes.

What have I become?



Spring Brings Me Hope © Bailey Fjelstul

Butterfly Moth

Micah Benkelman

Wiggle, inch,

wiggle, inch

second grade science project—olive slime, maggoty mealy worm

plastic lid, plastic cup

butterfly to be

munching milkweed leaves

catatonic silkworm cocoon,

little larva cup emptied to the butterfly exhibit

a princess canopy bed, enclosed net mesh

the chrysalis breaks apart

orange and black and white and dusky mustard dust wings

left, right

left, right

high school art project— silver see-saw scalpel, rolled gauze and tape

sheet of paper, tangle of pens

butterfly to be

purple ink drawn by coiled hair

keep it alive, keep it beating, breathing

razor ripped wings, stream of luscious blood

lands and rests on the light knife and

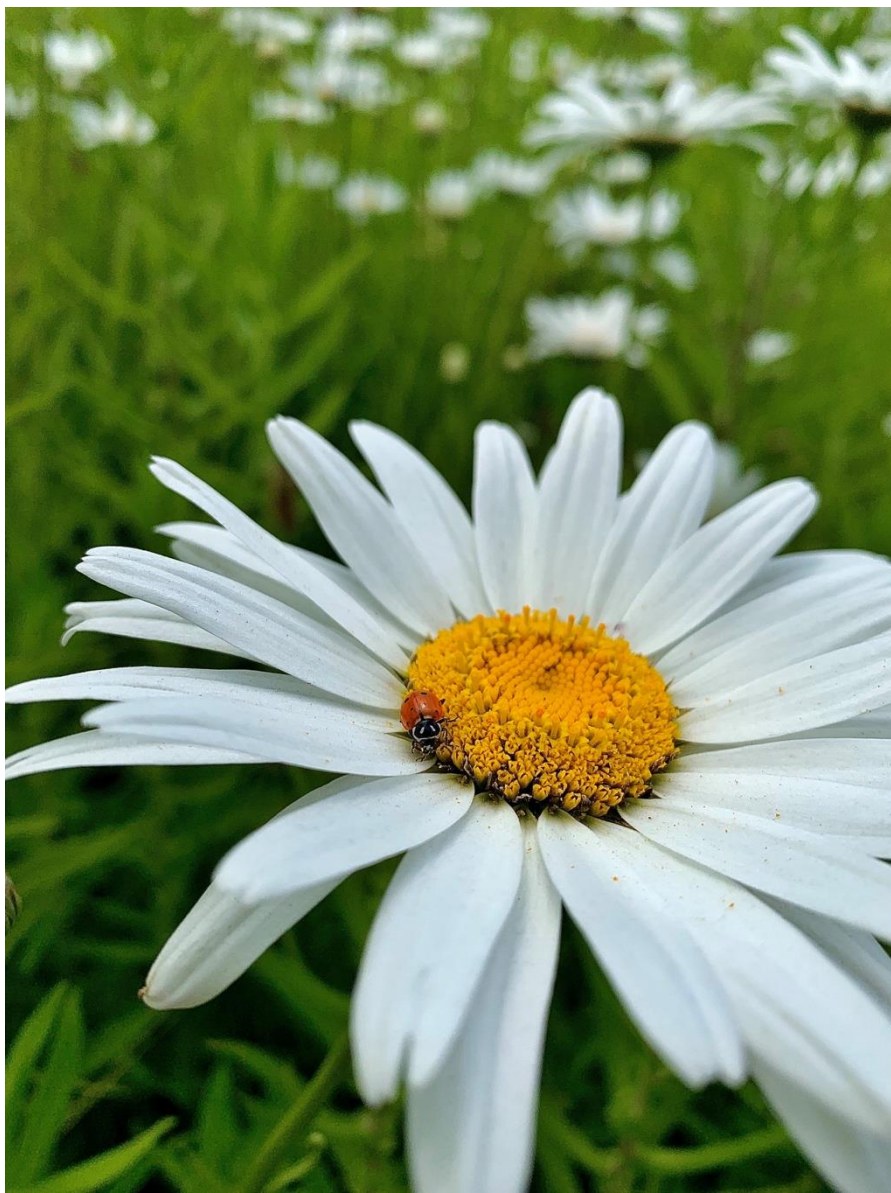
falls.

skin breaks apart, spreads wildfire
warm pain welcomes an old acquaintance
a moth to flame, voluntary subjugation

fleshy white and wine red and rusty brown blood

not butterfly—

but moth



Ladybug © Dana Hardy

A Purr-plexing Halloween

Dana Hardy

'Twas Halloween night and all down the street
Ran children in search of some tricks and some treats.
Leaves of crimson fell down for a long winter rest
As the wind whistled through the Pacific Northwest.
The pumpkins were picked from the patch with great care,
soon to be carved with faces that scare.
The knives were displayed, and the scoopers laid out,
But as I made the first cut, I heard a *Meow!*
I leaped from my seat and surveyed the house,
But not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.
I felt compelled to keep searching but returned to my pumpkin
instead.
I figured the sound must have been in my head.
But just as I sat, I heard an unmistakable purr!
I whipped around in my chair as fast as a blur.
I looked high and low for the source of the sound,
But hard as I looked no cat could be found.
When I went back to my carving, the cat mewed again!
It was then that I realized, it had come from within.
Bewildered I looked at the round orange gourd;
A matter like this could simply not be ignored!
My hands trembled as I carved out a loop 'round the top
And prayed that my knife would not bring the meows to a stop.
Like a surgeon I maneuvered my blade with precision,
Scarcely daring to breathe as I made each incision.
Finally finished, I set my tool down with a thud,
Hoping to God my pumpkin was not filled with whiskers and blood.
Though I dreaded the scene, the suspense was too much to stand,
So I took hold of the prickly green stem with my hand.
I lifted off the wobbly round piece I had cut
And as I peered inside I felt my heart stop and drop to my gut.
For nestled safely inside like a bundle of mittens,

Was a litter of no less than six little kittens.
The little cats were sticky with pumpkin guts and seeds,
But appeared perfectly healthy, and happy to be freed!
I scooped them out and cleaned them up, then set them down to roam
And wondered, is it a trick or a treat to have six kittens in my home?
As they pounced and played on the carpet, one meowed and looked
straight at me
As if to say, *'goodnight to all, and to all a Happy Halloween!'*

Peaks Isle

Michael DiPietro

Photo Contest Winner





Industrial Rise © Michael DiPietro

forestsounds

Micah Beukelman

is it true

that when a tree falls in the forest
and no one is there
it doesn't make a sound?

I fell,

(just there)

in the woods

did I make a sound?

did my skull crashing against the earthroots sound like
cracking thunder?

did my cries for help sound like
crows shrieking over windrushes?

did my gasping breaths sound like
gusts through fingerfronds?

did I fall on deaf ears

or

was

I

unheard?

Sostenuto

Micah Beukelman

Three pedaled feet.

one—dampens all, fluid, blended

two—singular staccato, short, sharp

three—dampens individual, muffled, shrouded

I lay under the feet

Once I was one

layered and lifted, soft and melodic

Then I was two

rapid hammer strikes, precise, brief

Finally, three.

ringing ethereal, sustained, prolonged

A seat of four legs, hollowed in the middle— that’s where I lay.

I stay in the space below myself, below the pedals, lined with felt and lowered down. Six feet under, six inches away from the keys, there’s no difference to be had. It’s neither a coffin nor a piano but both. The lid is closed and the sound stops, dampened with the third foot. Surrounded by ivory bone and wood, paper skin and ink blood. Scrawled on my wrists are ledger lines,
scars as notes.

My key signature is a flatline.

The Zipper

Micah Beukelman

11:00 p.m.

Time to fall apart.

A droplet runs down my cheek, forming a line of foundation, and my mascara bleeds it into grey. The blue microfiber cloth comes away vaguely flesh-toned and I think my skin has rubbed away.

Another day spent together, one piece, a whole and singular body working toward survival. I sigh, a deeply intrinsic and troubling sigh that comes from a place beyond the cavity in my chest, behind my lungs. It comes from deeper—the soul, maybe, or even the heart, but only the metaphorical heart, the symbolic representation of *me*—it sighs. This place, this cavernous, consuming mouth in my body groans.

My face is red from scrubbing, my eyes blurred from the dripping makeup. There's nothing left to take off except my clothes. I shed them and stand in front of the mirror, naked and shaking.

And I have this thought as I look at myself in the mirror: I wish I had a zipper on my chest, running from my clavicle to my navel that I could tug on and release everything, pulling, unhinging tiny teeth. The exposed laced-fingers ribcage, the metallic twist of fascia, the movement of heartbeat and breath sound. Then, I could unzip with one hand and reach with the other beneath my lungs, dig, root, search. Find. I could grab onto that place behind myself, grip it tight, and wrench it out.

I wonder what that place would look like. Maybe it would be a shadow I hold on to. Maybe it would be a tangle of blood vessels and nerves like a smaller nervous system inside of my

chest. Maybe it would be another heart, smaller and weaker and darker. Maybe it would just be a ghost of a feeling, the silhouette of something that used to be there but isn't anymore or maybe it never was in the first place. But I would reach in, twist my hand around my spine, and just feel for something. Anything.

Even if nothing is there, maybe it would feel better. Like someone who has lost a limb and feels phantom pain, maybe I would feel something that used to be there but hasn't been for a long time. Maybe simply putting my hand in this place and feeling the emptiness, the lack of substance there, would be enough for me to feel something.

I watch the process in reverse.

I wake up in the morning, stretch, weigh myself, brush my teeth. Before I get dressed for the day, I stuff the shadow, the cluster of blood vessels and nerves, the small heart, the ghostly silhouette of a feeling, back into my chest into the space where it belongs, buried under my lungs and heart.

I take a deep breath,
let it settle back
and reconnect to my body.

I grip the zipper with my thumb and forefinger and pull it up. I seal myself like a mortician stitching closed a cadaver.

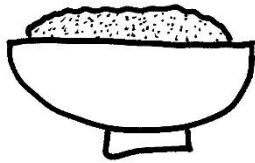
I am together, held by metal prongs and willpower. I spend the day in a place where I feel like an imposter, exposed by my zipper, only to come home, tear my chest open, and yank out the only thing in my body that keeps me together.

Closed, I am whole, open I am undone.

Rice

Bryce Nishida

Sometimes I eat
ice
But never
mice
Although I prefer
rice





Toadstools © J.C.G.

Tweet to Your Last Kiss

Concordia Community

“#mylastkiss? Haven’t even had a first.”

“I’m a better kisser than you.”

“I am sorry you had to bend down so far.”

“#mylastkiss I gazed at aqua blue as I folded my hands around a strong neck. I tilted my head back and brought my lips to the smooth, cool rim of my hydroflask.”

“Last kiss:

Thanks for the baby 😊”

“So, were you actually a furry?”

“My lips had to be amputated.”

“Kissing Concordia Goodbye.”





Light © J.C.G.

Shortcake Dream

Micah Beukelman

2nd Place Tie Short Story Winner

It's a Willy Wonka dream—

fields of apple licorice strands

wisteria trees with cotton candy flower fronds

perfumed puffs of purple citrus

rivers of boysenberry syrup

brownie crumble mulch

Sugar sweet, he holds my hand

we are dazed

confused

It's a dream—

I look at him and his eyes, verdant gumdrops,

sparkle under sprinkle starlight

The sun is a chocolate gold coin radiating bubblegum warmth

He points

I look

a field of sugar flowers and peppermint petals

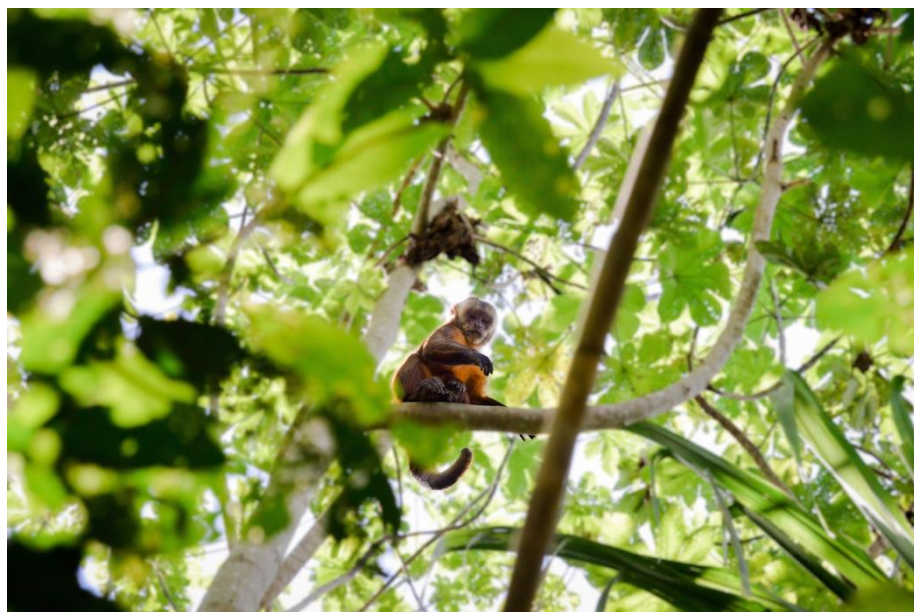
We reach the field

he lays me down

worships at the shrine of my lemon curd thighs



Greetings from a Harbor Seal © Samantha Persad



Curious Capuchin © Samantha Persad

a date

Sara Katie Rodgers

He's taking me out on a date and I'm

so

fucking

excited.

I silently dance in my room in my underwear and bra, picking out
my outfit for our date.

Tights? A dress? A skirt?

Yep. A skirt and it looks so darn cute.

I hop in the shower.

Wash my hair and body.

While shaving my legs, I cut myself.

Fuck.

I squeal in excitement.

I feel like it's our first date but really, I've lost count.

After being together for two years, you don't count them all like
you did in the beginning.

But, it still feels like the first:
full of excitement and wonder.

I spend too long perfecting my winged eyeliner and look at the time... I'm always late. To everything. Rushing out the door, I put on my shoes and hop in the car. I love picking him up. I feel in charge. I cover my mouth as I drive, horrified to realize I've put on too much perfume and just as horrified that the vanilla scent doesn't actually taste like vanilla.

I pull into his apartment

and when I see him, I can't help but smile.
He's not just my boyfriend. He's my

best friend
side kick
storyteller
sushi bringer
flower giver
listener
an amazing partner

We hop in the car and listen to Justin Bieber. I'm sure he doesn't mind but I honestly never thought to ask. We chat about our day. Mine was shit. His was great. I'm sure tomorrow our moods will swap (they always do).

We sit down at our favorite ramen place and talk nonstop. It's what we do best. My food is too spicy but white wine really helps any occasion. We pay the bill and run across the street tipsy, get into the car and drive home.

He leans over and kisses me.

I giggle.

I still can't believe I get to make out with the guy I had a crush on two years ago. I close

my eyes

he kisses me

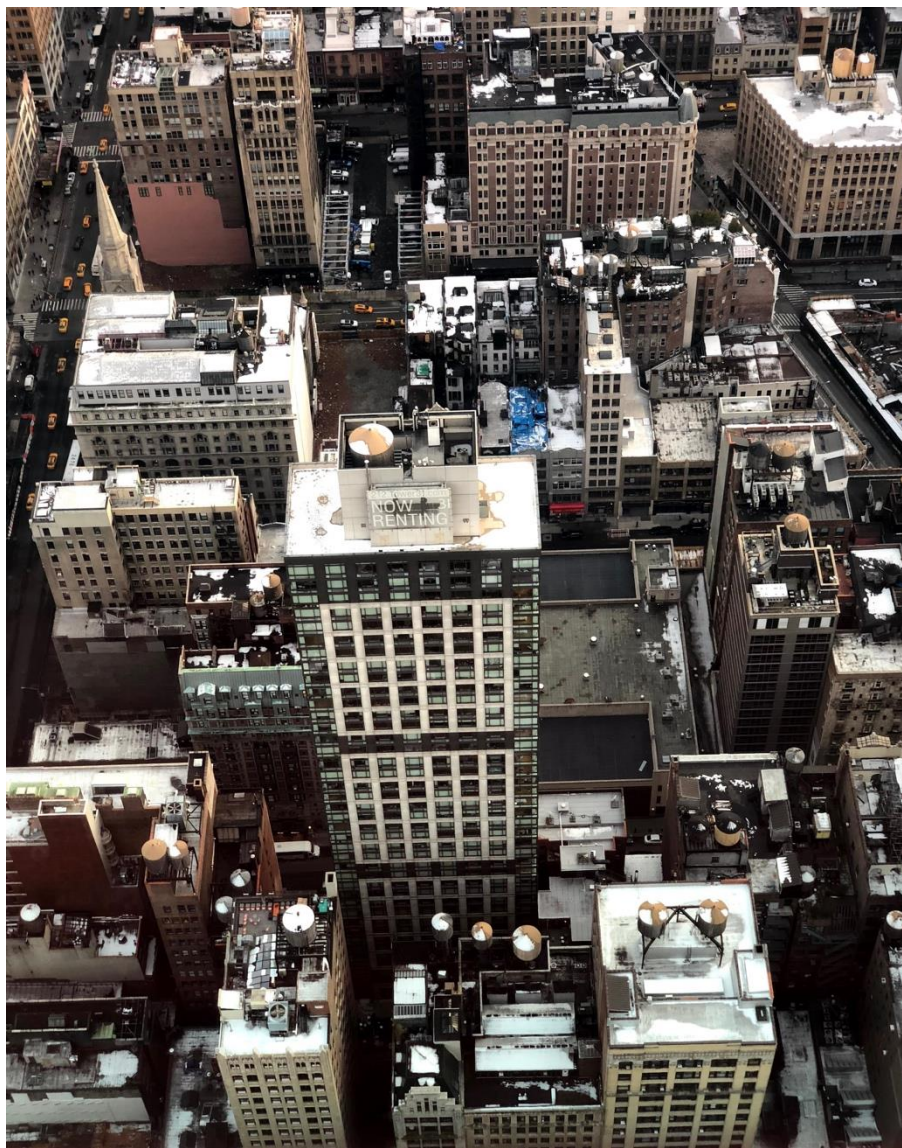
and the fire explodes.

The car frame starts to melt. Smoke billows out of the windows.

I look around and everything is on fire. Why aren't we?

The fire truck pulls in front of us and

I blink.



Buildings © Griffin Allegretti

Purple Citrus

Spring Writing Contest

Judged by alumni Josey Meats

1st place winner: “Based on a True Story”

As a CU alumni, I have a multitude of feelings in regards to the University’s closure, things I can’t entirely comprehend. Sometimes you need a story to come along and set you straight; to read something that reads you; this is that story—however, it should be mentioned that the reason for this is not in the story, or the zeroing in on the hour, or the cross-cutting of perspectives, or illumination of the emotion of the moment. All that is fine and well, but it really comes from the sentence. A sentence is a power balance between what it says and what it does not say; knowing this balance, knowing your sentences is to get lost in a forest of symbols and dots; this writer knows the woods—knows what they say. It is because of this the reader is pulled into the story and through its pages, not in a jarring way but in a way that says: “I know you don’t know the what or the why or the how, and surely you’re wondering, but don’t worry, I know. And I’ll tell you soon enough.” There’s nothing like a crisp, clean, quality piece of prose, and this one is fresh on the menu.

2nd place tie: “Shortcake Dream”

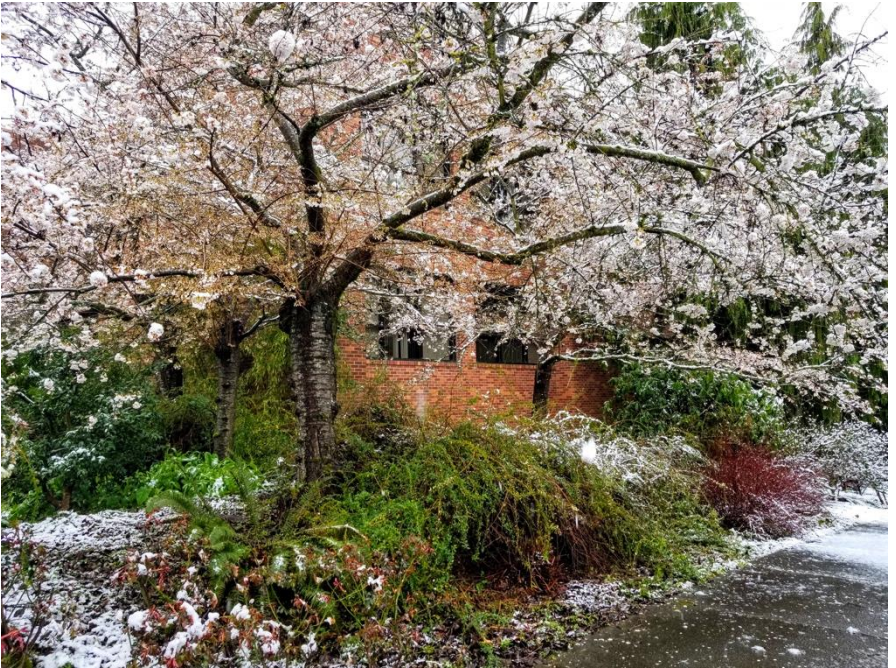
This poem reminds me of naughty Neruda. It has a glaze of nostalgia but Eros is its heart; sweet on many levels; Who can take the sunrise, sprinkle it with dew; somewhere between childhood and, dare I say, sexy. The poem paints a landscape that opens a possibility for us—the possibility of seeing ourselves outside of the fire and brimstone narrative that we are perverted, horny creatures and so on, and asks us to see our naughty sides through something sweet and natural; immersed. It is wild and untamed in its nature, spilling across the page—yet, there’s an undertone of existing in a highly manufactured, everything-so-sweet world that is quite disturbing, now that I think about it. Needless to say, it sticks with you, leaving a kind of residue. Definitely a poem to be read again and again.

2nd place tie: “Purple Citrus”

I love what this poem does with my eyes. It has hidden twists and turns, both in the language and the layout. There is something greatly unstable in its undertones; it provokes a lot of questions while talking through a visceral, embodied experience; one that is seemingly quiet and controlled with little enjambment or (otherwise off-putting) experimentation in the line. I always know that a poem is working when I feel it, even if I’m not picking up everything a poet is laying down; if I feel it, I know I’ve read something.

3rd place: “in His image”

“in His image” is an interesting iconoclastic artifact that is weaving many threads that have kind of lined society in a tapeworm-in-the-intestines way. However, I’m torn by it; in many ways it is bold in its form (most notably the compounding of words, always takes me back to Paul Celan, but not in an imitation-sense; these words are striking and their own); at the same time it feels reliant on a more traditional idea of a poem in its repetition and reliance on questions as a driving pulse through the piece.



Frozen Blooms © J.C.G.

Based On A True Story

Angelyka Cava

1st Place Short Story Winner

Dear Students of [REDACTED],

After much discussion regarding options to continue [REDACTED] University's legacy, the Board of Regents has voted to cease operations at the end of the current academic semester. Due to the university's financial issues, it would be impossible to continue providing education. We have decided that the school's closure is in the best interest of our community.

In light of today's events, classes are cancelled for the day. We are having an informational session to provide support for all students at 10:00 AM in the student services center.

Sincerely,

Dr. [REDACTED]
Interim President

[REDACTED]
Chief Student Affairs Officer

~~~

“Oh.”

That's all I can say after reading this email. I mean, I should've seen it coming. Last year, they shut down the College of Arts & Sciences without warning. Our little liberal arts school hasn't felt the same since. While it's obvious things have been sliding downhill, I thought it would be at least ten years before we plummeted to the bottom of the mountain.

Welp. Guess I don't have school today. With the exception of this email, I'm completely out of the loop. I wish I could attend today's 10:00 meeting, but it's already 10:03 and I live about a half hour away. I don't think it's worth driving over the river. Maybe I can text someone else about what's going on.

Hey Naomi. Are you attending today's info session?  
How are you holding up? The news today is devastating

~~~

Naomi Akana is a third-year history major from Hilo, Hawaii. Despite the large honors scholarship she received, she never thought she'd end up at [REDACTED] University, yet she ended up falling in love with the community, and surprisingly, the cold weather. She couldn't have been happier with her choice to come to Portland.

At least, until today.

An early riser, she woke up at six in the morning. While replying to an email from her boss, she noticed a new message titled "URGENT NEWS." The contents that followed made her heart fall out of her chest and land in her stomach to be consumed by gastric acids.

Her school couldn't be closing. She had a plan. A plan to graduate *summa cum laude* next year, get accepted into [REDACTED]'s grad school program, and then pursue a career as a policy analyst. Now, she's thrown into a tornado with all of her schoolmates and professors, left to twirl around in the uncertain chaos without any direction. She has no idea where she will land, and that reality gives her the constant urge to vomit.

It's been a few hours, and she's barfed a few times, but she still feels sick as she sits in the student center, waiting for the session to start. Her phone buzzes in her pants pocket and she ignores it. Five minutes late and people are still piling into the room, faces red and slimy like washed tomatoes. But to Naomi, crying does no good. She has to stay strong. She has to be ready for whatever bullshit will be thrown at her in this meeting. She has to look the administration in the eye and let them know that whatever they pulled did not break her.

~~~

“I heard about your school, so crazy! How are you holding up?”

Countless relatives have phoned my home with questions about what happened at school. I wasn't expecting similar questions in my only sanctuary, the martial arts studio, but here we are now. I hear her voice from across the gym before she runs up beside me, standing a bit too close. Her glossy crystal eyes look like I just told her that my dog died. I've never really talked to this girl before, except for the one class when I partnered with her about a month ago. I'm surprised that she even remembers that I go to [REDACTED].

“Yeah I'm doing fine. Nothing I can do, I guess.”

She nods in sad sympathy, probably wanting more juicy details, but I shut down. I don't want to talk. Not to her. All I really want to do right now is punch things.

~~~

Dr. Celia Holmes has been teaching psychology at [REDACTED] University for fifteen years. She watched and helped the College of Arts & Sciences to grow and prosper... then fall to pieces. And now it's going to be nothing.

Just like her position. How is she going to quickly find a career as fulfilling as this? It's not like there's a shortage of professors. How is she going to support her kids as a single mother

with no job? Living in Portland is pretty fucking expensive. And her daughter was going to attend [REDACTED] tuition-free next year as a freshman. Where will she go now?

She's not ready for her first class after the announcement, in just an hour. There's no way she can give her students the reading quiz she gives every Tuesday, not after they've had to deal with their school closing on them. But she can't cancel class and cheat them out of the education they already paid so much for. She definitely does not want to see her students, sad and anxious from the uncertainty that they must face.

With a big sigh and a brave mask to hide her own worries, she steps out of her house. Off to Starbucks. She'll need a lot of coffee to get through the day.

~~~

After I got back home from martial arts last night, all I paid attention to was my PlayStation. I didn't do diddly squat for school. I did not finish reading the required chapters for today's psychology quiz. And it's not just because of what's been going on with school; it's because I didn't want to. The textbook bores the fuck out of me.

I don't really care if I get another 0/10 on the quiz at this point. It's hard to care about anything when you know your school's going to close. But I am worried about Dr. Holmes. Compared to her, I'm not losing much.

She scurries into the classroom, two minutes late as she always does, and while she has a smile on her face, I notice the smallest hint of fear hidden in her hazel irises. She sits on the table closest to the front of the room, facing us students. "Hey class. We're going to skip today's test, I'll just give you all ten points for free. Do you guys want to talk about what happened yesterday?"

I really don't want to talk about what happened, and it doesn't seem like anyone else does. We all stare at the mirror of awkward silence hanging in front of us, none of us willing to shatter it.

At least, not until Anne's sharp voice hits the glass. "I hope you guys have heard about the walkout I'm organizing that's happening tomorrow at noon. We're going to peacefully protest against the lack of transparency from the administration."

Suddenly, a bunch of stones are thrown at the glass.

"Anne, I'm definitely going to be there!"



“It’s so shitty what they did!”

“How can this be happening?”

“It’s so unfair.”

“What am I going to do with my life now?”

“They better listen to us tomorrow.”

“We deserve our money back.”

I don’t talk, because I don’t talk in class. It’s against my nature. But I’m getting angsty, like a bunch of ants are crawling all over my legs. I want to jump out of my seat and run outside. Or even better, jump out the window. I want to smash every computer in the building, I want to tear apart every tree on campus, I want to steal everything in this place to get back all the money I’ve wasted coming here.

Once all of my classmates air out their grievances, we stare at the broken glass that covers the floor. The mess that the school has made of us. Each individual shard feels so alone, so fragile, but together we’re all experiencing the same problem. Now that we’re broken, we can’t be put back together again.

“All of you deserve so much better than this,” says Dr. Holmes. In all our worrying, we never asked her how she’s doing, even though she’s never forgotten about us.

“How are you doing?” Anne finally asks.

“Well, I’ll get through this somehow. It just sucks that we’re not going to get severance packages. We’re not even getting paid for the full month of May since our contract ends.”

WHAT?

I feel the heat from my head pour into every crevice of my body, until I feel like I’m stepping on hot coals and lava pours from my hands. I need to run. I need to burn all of this energy off. I need to find every single person in charge of this shitty situation, roundhouse kick them all in the kneecaps, and clock them straight in the jaw. Or else I’m going to release all this pain on someone in the room, someone who doesn’t deserve it.

~~~

Dr. Gene Fischer has been working at [REDACTED] University for one year, but his legacy at this institution spans over a decade. It’s strange to remember that thirteen years ago, he graduated as a biology major who won Thesis of Distinction for a study on

bacteria. After obtaining his PhD, he worked a few years as an adjunct professor. This year was his first as an actual, real faculty member, complete with an office and everything.

All that disappeared. In less than three months, he will be completely jobless. He'll be homeless, since he's been living in the apartments with his pregnant wife. And he'll be without a major part of his identity.

He needs a walk. Some fresh air. He's being suffocated in his tiny office, a reminder of everything he'll lose.

He steps outside. He's always loved the campus, small but well-kept. He always runs into the groundskeeper and his assistants, who work their asses off to maintain the beautiful Northwestern flora that decorate the sidewalks and buildings. He wonders what will happen to all of it once the school closes. Who will own [REDACTED]?

The streets are empty, except for someone running. Fast. Toward him. He sidesteps out of the way as she forces herself to a halt, just before she collides into him. He knows her, Jaune. He never had her as a student, but she's been to his house several times

for the dinners that professors host for honors students. Yet another thing he'll miss.

“How are you doing?” he asks her. Same sad look as the girl in martial arts last night, but he feels it deep inside. Hopefully, Jaune knows the difference.

Jaune takes a couple of moments to recover her breath, signaled by her pointing up to the sky with one hand as she hunches her back. “I’m okay, considering everything that’s going on right now. I just really needed to get out of class. Are you doing fine?”

“Well, I’m okay.” Dr. Fischer laughs, forced and awkward as the backing tracks in bad sitcoms. “Maybe I’ll have to go back to my job at Walmart.”

Jaune finds his joke funny in a dark way, but does not laugh. It might be impolite. “Yeah, I’m sorry about that. I’ll see you around?”

He nods, but she doesn’t see it. She’s already off in the other direction. She’s never been one for small talk.

~~~

I should not be going to work right now. Today, I have absolutely zero tolerance for anyone’s stupidity and I am on the brink

of beating someone bloody. But here I am, setting my belongings on my designated desk while my boss fills me in on what's been going on in the mailroom. She's asked me how I've been but I don't even remember what I said anymore, probably something like "okay" or "fine" or something else that definitely does not encapsulate the fury boiling in my chest.

I see Mailman David lugging a large cart full of packages behind him, a smile on his face as usual. Even in my state, and even though I should be annoyed that I'll have to sort out all that shit, I can't help but smile back. But despite his bare teeth, I can see a layer of liquid covering his mocha-colored eyes.

~~~

David Parker has been delivering mail in Portland for twenty years. [REDACTED] University has always been one of his favorite daily stops. Seeing all the smiling students and faculty made his day. Even though he was just the mailman, many stopped to say hello and ask him about his day. He's always wanted to attend a college like this, and giving these wonderful people their mail made him feel like an integral part of the community.

He thought yesterday was just another regular day in his route, but he noticed something different on the way to the mailroom. Nobody he passed had a smile on their face. Some even had tears streaming down their cheeks. Nobody acknowledged his existence.

The mystery was solved when he got to the mailroom. Anne, the Monday afternoon worker, informed him of the closure.

He didn't know how to react. He couldn't react. He couldn't do anything but stare at Anne, another student with watery eyes. He wanted to help her, he wanted to help everyone in the room. He didn't want to lose this community. Little did he know that the community would also lose him.

~~~

Tons of students crowd on the campus green, all united for one cause: bringing awareness to the unjust actions of the [REDACTED] administration. They hold signs:

CU IN COURT

WHERE DID MY MONEY GO?

ALMOST GRADUATED!

Anne stands in the front, holding a megaphone. So many eyes and ears are on her. There should be so much pressure to say the

right thing, but she doesn't care. What's more important is the anger in her voice, the demand for making things right.

She's not sure if this walkout will do anything. No one is. But she has to keep trying.

~~~

Since I got home from work, I've been in my garage for about half an hour, whacking the shit out of my punching bag. Sweat pours down my forehead and into my eyes, blurring my vision. I do strike after strike after strike, using whatever part of my body feels most natural. I don't think. I'm tired, but I can't stop. If I stop, I'll think. About [REDACTED].

In the middle of a combo, I hear my phone buzz. I rarely get texts from anyone, so I'm super starved for attention. I end with a roundhouse kick then stomp over to my phone.

Naomi 5:37 PM

Eh, I'll make it through.

Jaune are you coming to the protest?

It's happening right now

We're speaking against the lack of transparency of administration

After reading the text, I slam my phone onto the hard floor beneath me. It survives the fall as it always does. But I really need to stop doing that.

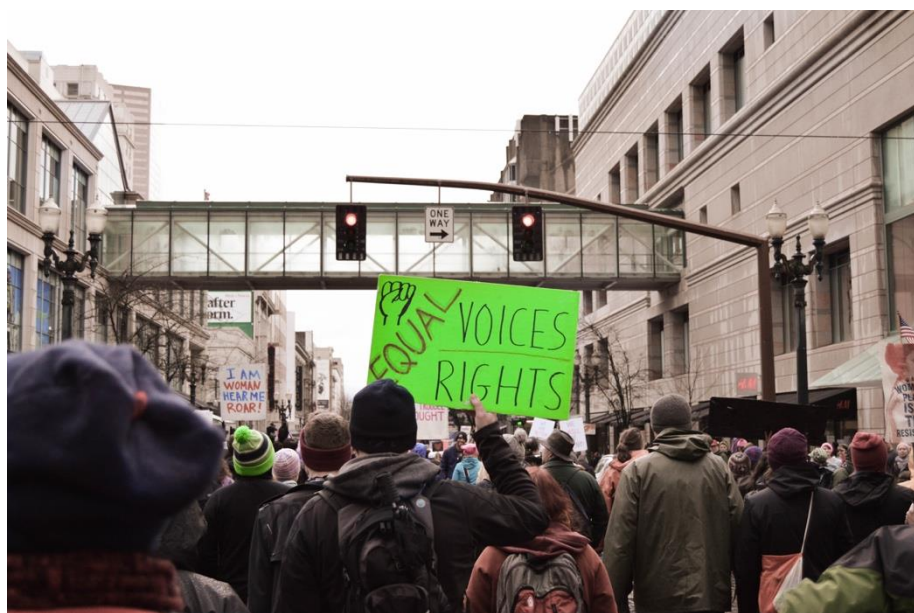
I don't want to reply to Naomi. I don't want to go to the protest. I don't have time for that shit.

Why should I care? I'm done with [REDACTED].

I seem like I got away okay. I seem like I'm set to graduate, but they've screwed me over too. I'll take part in the commencement ceremony at the end of the semester, but I still have one more class I need to finish in order to get my degree. Plus, even if I graduate, my diploma will be from a school that no longer exists. I won't ever be able to visit my alma mater. I may not have to worry about transferring or finding a new job, but I still feel cheated. If I could have foreseen the closure of my school, I never would have come here in the first place.

There's nothing I can do. I'm a powerless ant underneath the cleated shoes of the establishment. Even a colony could still easily be destroyed by the administrative exterminators.

I have to accept my uselessness.



Equal © Samantha Persad

it has been two years

Anonymous

It has been two years since the night
she stepped into a friend's apartment
with a smile on her face
and left two hours later
with purpling wrists
and blood between her legs.

It has been two years and things are better now.
But this week has been hard.

On Monday at the supermarket someone looks like him.
On Tuesday the smell of spearmint sends her two years back in
time.

On Wednesday she wakes up gasping for breath, still trapped
under the weight of his body.

She thinks that by Thursday she'll be herself again
But by Friday she can't even look in the mirror without feeling his
fingerprints on every inch of her skin.

But things are better now and none of this should matter.
She comes home every day to a man who knows every twist and
turn of her past
and still looks at her like she's shiny and new.

As he kisses her forehead and gently squeezes her arms,
she feels sunshine flowing from his body into her hollow veins.

Her shoulders fall from their tensed position near her ears
warmth races from her face to her fingertips and dances down her
back.

When she gets in bed at night he smiles sleepily from his pillow
and pulls her to his chest.

He wraps one arm around her like a seatbelt; keeping her safe
without holding her down.

This week has been hard but things should be better now.
So when his touch does not fill her with warm rays of light
but sends a shiver down her spine,
she pushes the feeling to the back of her mind
and tries to remind herself that these hands are not the ones that
hurt her.

He slides his hand between her thighs the way he knows she likes,
but her stomach turns and tightens as she fights the urge to
squirm away.
He could never hurt me, I'm fine, she repeats in her mind
as she relives the night that tore her life in two.

Hot tears sting her eyelids as the back of his hand
collides with the right side of her face,
rattling her teeth as his knuckles meet her cheekbone.

She closes her eyes and tilts her chin up,
disguising her panic as pleasure.

He clamps one hand around both of her wrists
holding her arms like a child clutching a lollipop.

His body moves against hers with soft, loving intention,
but she is somewhere else entirely.

Cracked, unfeeling lips crash down on her own
the stale taste of cigarettes and spearmint
creeps down her throat and into her lungs.

This is not the first time this has happened
So it does not take long for him to realize
that something isn't right.

But things should be better now
and she insists that everything is fine.

Everything is fine, she tells herself.
Everything is fine.

Shoes

Kristin Rothbell

I see his shoes every. Day.
A vice squeezes my lungs
until I can no longer breathe,
my stomach ties itself into knots
whenever I hear his footsteps,
and my voice freezes in my throat
like a core of iron dropped in nitrogen.

I never look up.

Not when his shoes settle in my sightline –
trained on the floor and nothing else –
blocking off my view of the speckled linoleum
until my breath hitches and I can't replace it.
I'm drowning in my own ineptitude,
afraid that if I do look up
I'll be lost again,
that fragile little girl he took hold of
and never really let go.

But I escaped.

I ran.

I looked up for the first time in years,
took my eyes off the floor for but a moment
and saw the bars that surrounded me,
saw the cage my life had become
and I felt the fury surge through me
like a thousand volts against my spine.

I was woken up.

I remember what that was like,

that jolt of electricity that kickstarted my evolution,
but it wasn't fast enough.

The vice on my lungs comes from
his arms that surround me like steel bands,
constricting slowly so I know if I struggle,
they will tighten until my lungs no longer function
and the last thing I will see are those god-awful shoes.

The knots in my stomach are the ropes
that scrubbed my ankles and wrists raw
until the blood that leaked out became
the prison of my own design,
swirling spools of crimson that trained my soul
to obey.

The iron at my core was once molten,
a living, thriving thing
that beats at the heart of every naïve girl
until adulthood snatches that warmth away
and leaves behind the frozen tundra
made of liquid nitrogen and
the remnants of herself.

The Oxfords glisten in the fluorescent lighting,
the glare burning my retinas until my eyes water
but I can't look away.
Not when they hold all the power,
not when they're the architect of my incarceration.

But I look closer and they're not the same.
They're a dark, faded charcoal
that have been spit shined so often
I can nearly see through them if I look just right.

They aren't *his*.
The bands unbuckle,
the knots unwind,
my core starts to soften.

I remember freeing myself from him,
remember the sharp agony as my wrists were skinned
when I pulled free from my bindings,
as my chest was unburdened,
and the electricity jumpstarted my life.

The sirens came and the men in blue and black
took him away until all I saw was the back of his shoes,
bracketed by well-worn combat boots of
men born to protect.

And then warm arms replaced the chilling bands
and the soothing timbre of my father's voice
replaced the grating cadence of *his* voice.

The faded blue Oxfords are my fathers.

And I am safe.

I am free.

Crime and Punishments

Micah Beukelman

CRIMES AND PUNISHMENTS

VULNERABLE

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] to [REDACTED] harm
[REDACTED] to suffer
[REDACTED] pain [REDACTED] to
[REDACTED] its person [REDACTED] is punishable

[REDACTED] Any [REDACTED] who [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] permits any [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] to suffer [REDACTED] ...
[REDACTED] over the [REDACTED] years commits the [REDACTED] vessel

[REDACTED] guardian who chooses [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] to act [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] in [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] well-being [REDACTED]



We The People © Samantha Persad

Ni Una Más

Montserrat Caro

Jiovana Luz Fernanda Perla Eva Kenya Lolita Edith Esveidy

Aleja Veronica Keyram Johana Michelle

Amada Olimpia Merly Jasmin Celina Vera Madejesus Azul

Claudia Erika Deyanira Agustina Luly Maria

Elizabeth A. Laura P. Yuritz E. Jaqueline E.

Zoilae Gertrudis S. Karla V. Karen A. Piedad

Sarahi G. Malena Francisca Gabriela Catalina Josephina

Cristy C. Lourdes C. Natalie Claudia U. Beatriz

Maria L. Yadira Jaquelin Maria A. Clemencia Ana Laura

Olga Noemi Maria Luz Melanie Cynthia

Anaxeli Socorro Alma Leticia Carmina Adriana Sara

Rebeca Daisy Liliana Sirenía Josephina Laura

Carmen O. Laura M. Elizabeth Arcelia Mercedes Veronica

Daisy Denisse Liliana Raymunda A.

Esmeralda P. Araceli R. Martha M. Obdulia Blanca

Guadalupe V. Aurora Julia Sylvia Yuli Elva

Claudia Juana Lizbeth Thalia Maria de Jesus Vanessa

Norma Fernanda Elena Ilse Rosalia Blanca G.

Brenda C. Argelia Ivett Gina Guadalupe Isabel Dalila

Esbeydi Carolina D. Mayra

NI UNA MÁS

NI UNA MENOS

March 9th

The women of México
Disappeared
Went dead silent

No one ever listens anyways

They've tried talking

"All the women in the office have experienced sexual assault, you need to help us"

"I think you should apologize and let it go"

"WHERE IS MY DAUGHTER"

"There's nothing we can do"

"We are in danger when we are out alone"

"Well what are you wearing?"

"WE HAVE HAD ENOUGH, WE WANT CHANGE"

"These feminists are too rowdy"

Always unheard

Why not disappear?

"Can you get me my coffee?"

" "

"Mom, take me to school"

" "

"Good morning, teacher"

" "

"Morning meeting in the break room"

" "

I wonder if anyone noticed
If anyone missed their voice
Missed their presence

I hope everyone felt their silence as much as they did
So, they never have to disappear
Again

March 8th

International Day of Women

All around México
They were loud,
Chanting “Ni una más”
Not one more
“Ni una menos”
Not one less

All around México
They united,
Roamed the streets that mirror as crime scenes
Together

All around México
They marched,
For those who can no longer do so
For those who feel they can't
For each other

The names of recent victims painted on the floor
Present

All around México
Hope was high,

That someone was listening
That they were safe
That they were respected

March 8th

Nadia Verónica,

Age 23

Was shot to death

On her way home from a party

W O K E

The US is the country of being “woke”

“Stay woke”

Is imprinted on countless Instagram bios, T-shirts, murals, and minds

Everyone wants to be “woke”

But, only at their own convenience

The “woke” will push you to care about indigenous communities
While wearing an embroidered shirt bought from Forever 21

They will advertise trendy and new coffee shops in hidden parts of the city

After displacing the family and community that had lived there their entire life

They will belittle you for not buying organic produce

The kind that comes from out of the country. Picked by men, women, and children who don’t even get paid enough to put gas in their car – if they even own one

They talk about how the media misinforms you and invite you to travel to México with them

Staying at a 5-star resort, run by white people, where only light skin locals work

They love the new Mexican restaurant with an indigenous name
And a chef named Kelly

They will find their new go-to bar, filled with diverse people
And clutch their belongings when a “diverse” person walks by

They buy their clothes from brands that are “designed and produced here in LA”

And by an older woman who had to choose between peeing in the corner or waiting another two hours for her break

The “woke” will school you on everything they possibly can
But who the fuck schools them?

You want to be woke?

Then wake the fuck up

Open your eyes

And keep them open

When shit gets real

In 2014, 43 college students from Guerrero México disappeared while on a field trip
Some were shot. Others, well who knows.

In 2018, 760 women were killed in México

In October of last year, the city of Culiacán experienced a deadly, chaotic shoot-out between the police and very powerful narcos.
School and work were suspended that day.

I watched a cooking show on Netflix last week. A light skin Mexican American woman wanted to get in touch with her culture. Wanted to learn about the “true” cuisine of México before opening up her own restaurant. She traveled to the depths of México with a camera crew and a white guy. They watched as

indigenous people hunted, gathered, and prepared their food. They ate and closed their eyes as they moaned with every bite. They thanked the people for their hospitality and shared laughs. And at the end of the day the Americans returned home and the indigenous stayed exactly where they found them. At the end of the episode, the Americans made a profit and the indigenous were never mentioned again.

In 2017, gas both raised its prices and experienced a shortage in México. Protests were so bad that planes filled with policemen from México City were flown into small towns like Rosarito. I stayed home that day, only went out to the corner store once, where I had to put out a fire with my cousin after the cashier told us she was busy. I drafted up an email that day in case I had to let my teachers know that I would not be making it to class on Monday because I missed my flight due to the fact that I couldn't cross back to San Diego.

When my best friend turned 21, she had a party in a hotel room. I couldn't make it because I was in Portland. It was the middle of the semester. My other friend couldn't make it either. She couldn't risk getting in trouble for any reason. She was processing her green card.

My boyfriend loves his art. We watched a documentary on the creator of OBEY. That dude tagged up everything he could. Got arrested a billion times. My boyfriend wants to live for his art like that. He wants to tag every open space he can. He wants to share his fucking brilliance. But he also doesn't want to get deported.

You closed your eyes yet?

When the last candle flickers out...

J. C. G.

A bright spot in my eyes and the soreness in my lids.
The settling of my cheeks and heat of a pillow beneath my hair.
The flash of headlights on dispersing smoke and ashes that
make their way into my nose.

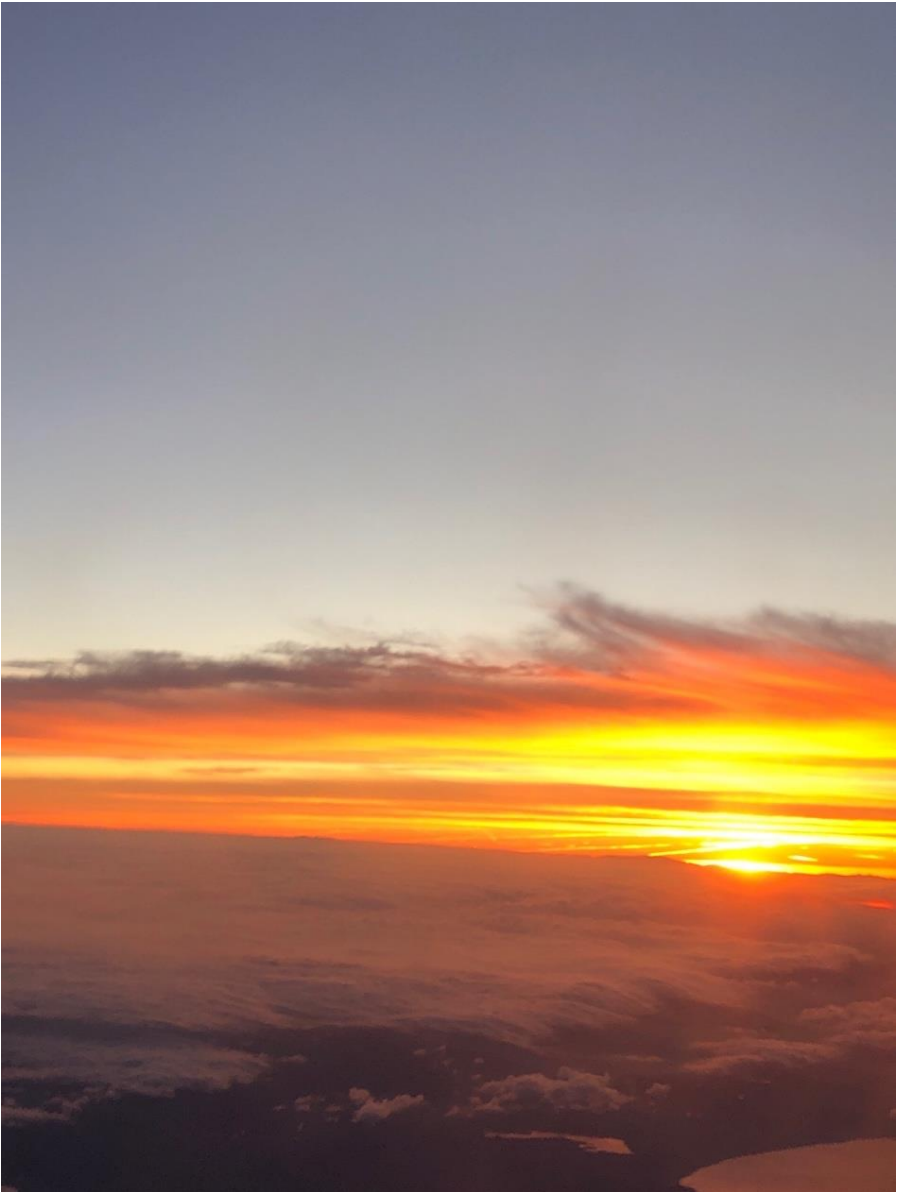
If not— crickets and cold,
then wind and whirl.
Swaying trees and groaning
walls. Soft moonshine
invading through cracks
and a fir furnace at my back.

Or maybe— a chasm with
wood fed flame, hot stones,
and charred game. A hot poker
and slipcovered hands.
Wood plates
and rare
friends.

When small lights
go, all that
was before
still is.
Mystic and
shadow
spelled,



a needed change.



Sunset Symphony © Eldanabi Delgado

La Vache

Henry Knutsen

I spun circles on the restaurant floor, fueled on six shots of espresso. I tended to the needs of every customer in my section and manically typed in orders on the POS. The servers nagged for their drinks. Anxiety stirred in me as I brewed another pitcher of coffee. The general manager played Candy Crush on his phone in the office downstairs. The hungover supervisor smoked outside.

Once I got the bar cleaned up after the lunch rush, I saw Robert's white car parked out front, a small Romanian flag attached to the antenna.

Robert was my last customer of the day. He walked in wearing a floral printed dress shirt and blue jeans alongside his wife and her big head of black hair. She reached for his hand but missed as they walked inside. They climbed into empty bar seats. I walked over. "Morning."

Robert seemed like he was waiting for me to dance.

"How are we doing today?"

Silence. Robert looked at me like I'd just placed my balls on the table.

“Can I get something started for you guys?”

He looked at his wife then pushed his menu at me. “Ice for our waters. Two eggs easy over, a side of bacon so crisp it shatters. One croissant, jam, and whatever the lady wants. Don't forget my drink.” A 16oz almond milk mocha with one pump of chocolate instead of two and a splash of vanilla.

He spat his order at me as he scampered off to the bathroom. I recited it in my head. Robert was rarely appreciative, so when he was it felt well earned.

I looked towards Cheryl running her hand through her black hair. Her silver earrings dangled. There were little crevices on each end of her smile. A blue-covered book lay next to her water glass on the bar next to her. She handled Robert's demands and stubbornness with ease. Her words seemed to relax whoever they were spoken to. “I'll just have a medium grapefruit juice, please.”

“Coming right up.”

I entered the breakfast order into the POS, sneaking a look at the different customers. Robert came out of the bathroom pushing his cheeks away from his nose and snorting.

The clock on the POS finally said 2PM. I entered my tips and listened to the head chef yell at a cook in the kitchen. After cashing out, I went home to take a nap. Took a couple bong rips and tried to enjoy the window of time before my next shift.

Sammie was a server at La Vache. It was her birthday today and she had invited everyone at work to a club called L51. I didn't know her that well, but Lana and I had agreed to go together that morning. Lana pulled up at a quarter after nine in a black 2018 Mercedes that she couldn't afford. I hopped into the passenger seat. Lana was always complaining and negative but I liked her because she was honest, which is hard to find in the restaurant industry. I could relate to her feelings of unfulfillment. I'd be setting up the bar at 6:30AM and she'd come over and dump her stress on me from the day before. How her sister won't let her shower when she gets home from a night out. Or how her Tinder

date asked for head halfway through the first date. “What kind of girl does he think I am?” she’d say.

Lana found an empty spot on a brightly lit block. We walked together on the sidewalk, past the four-person tent in the bushes, towards the entrance. The club had been recently converted from a warehouse.

“I don’t want to stay for too long.”

“Me either, let’s just dance a little. I have to work in the morning anyway.”

“Okay. Me too.”

We waited in the line to the bar watching the lights flicker from blue to green to white. Lana ordered a Concannon Cabernet. I ordered the Breakside Pilsner. We headed over to a group of our co-workers gathered at a table. Our co-worker Tommy slammed his empty beer bottle on the table and chuckled. The two girls he was with giggled, greeted us, and gave both Lana and me hugs. We all wandered onto the dance floor except Lana who stayed at the table and scrolled through her phone.

I leaned forward trying not to fall backward as one of the girls pushed her butt against me. Tommy slithered off to sell some drugs. The girls eventually wandered off with random guys. I got another beer and went to go talk to Lana. She said she had to go and offered me a ride but I said I'd take a Lyft later. I kept dancing for about an hour, making trips back and forth from the bar.

I hunted for a bathroom in the dark warehouse. I found a set of stairs and stomped up them slowly. On the second level, I saw two figures making out in the corner. It looked like Robert. I walked along the wall with a full bladder. Once I got closer, I knew it was him. He had on the same floral shirt he'd worn earlier today. His nose was flattened like a boxer's. He had his black hair slicked back. Robert and the blond girl he was with got up to leave.

The electronic music felt like it was drilling into the side of my head. I lost my balance and steadied myself on the wall. They walked right past me. I decided to call a ride, but every time I entered my passcode the message, "Phone locked. Too many

failed attempts” appeared on my phone screen. I had changed the passcode to my phone the night before. In my drunken stupor, I couldn’t remember what it was.

When I asked the security guard where the bathroom was he escorted me out. He said I was clearly drunk since I couldn’t even get into my phone. I couldn’t argue with the guy.

I zig-zagged across the sidewalk. Phone locked. Friends inside. Street signs leaning over. The only number I could call was 911. I kept walking. I recognized the area I was in. The buses weren’t running this early in the morning. I kept walking. I called the police on myself and asked for a ride home. The operator said the police don’t offer that service, so I hung up.

I stopped at the corner store and managed to buy a Gatorade. Kept walking. Three miles down. Two to go. I walked down the street holding money between my fingers with my arm out. An Uber picked me up. He took my twenty but only drove me up the street because he had other customers.

Somehow, I acquired a bag of pancake mix. I kept walking.

3:50AM. I was passing by the restaurant. Someone finally took a chance on the drunk guy walking down the street. I had walked for long enough that I was finally able to walk straight. I filled him in on the night's events.

“Damn, dude, that’s a tough one.”

After parking on a side street by my house, he shared a joint with me. And I stumbled inside and crept up the stairs to my bed.

I woke up in the middle of the night and ate some Thai food then fell back asleep.

My alarm reminded me of the shift ahead at 5:45AM. A bag of pancake mix sat next to me in bed. I was ravaged by dehydration and laziness. I found a small bag of white powder in my jeans from the night before. I got dressed and brushed my teeth. I dumped a small pile of powder on the bathroom counter, broke up the clumps with my bank card and snorted three small lines. I pushed my cheeks away from my nose and snorted.

~

Every turn I made a turn in the car, I could feel the rice and beef sloshing in a pool of Pilsners.

I clocked in at 6:45 and went straight to the espresso machine.

I was polishing a mimosa glass with a towel when I saw the first customer pull up and wait in their car for the restaurant to open. I accidentally snapped the brittle stem of the glass. I went to dump it in the broken glasses bin in the dish pit. I offered Arland some coffee but he declined.

“I’m okay, thank you Johnny boy.”

Arland always looked so content as he washed dishes. He wore a Detroit Tigers baseball cap with a curved brim that he took off every morning and put on a shelf by the dishwasher.

Saturday mornings I made mostly coffee drinks, mimosas, Bloody Marys and took food orders. The morning lulled on. I felt dizzy but convinced myself I could make it just a few more hours. After every hour passed by I would walk to the bathroom and take a small bump of the powder in my wallet. The

conversation with customers felt more natural. All the pieces of the restaurant seemed to fit together better on cocaine. The dishes never piled up. Most importantly, the drug kept me awake after walking home last night.

Will and I smirked as the baker came up from the basement to check the pastries in the second oven. “Here comes the gremlin,” we chuckled to ourselves.

“Don’t touch the croissants with your fucking hands,” she yelled at the busboys and food runners, hands on her hips like guns in holsters poised to smack away any bare hands reaching for croissants.

The hostess threw two menus down on the bar. She had a tribal sun tattooed on the back of her neck that I studied when she walked away. Rachel had worked as a food runner then moved up to hostess. Don’t let the sequins around the eyes and the pink hair fool you. She was super rude. I saw her lose it one time and kick a hole in the wall when she was back in the food window. Two customers, heads cocked, sneered at her as she walked away.

The ticket printer swiftly ejected two tickets in a static-y rhythm. I glanced over at the pile of coffee cups, teapots, and saucers piling up in the sink. I made the drinks on the tickets and went over to the customers. They greeted me with a barrage of complaints and demands. “Extra ice. More napkins. Turn down the music. This isn’t ham! My coffee’s cold.”

I wanted to bring out a piece of ham and turkey together and show the lady. *What the hell is wrong with these two?* I eventually cashed them out and found a note on the receipt.

It read, “I asked our waiter if we could turn down the music. I could tell by their body language that they felt it was a request not worthy of consideration, and in fact the waiter came back and told us no, the music had to stay loud. What happened to customers come first?”

I grabbed the receipt and showed Will. If it weren’t for Will I would’ve walked out a while ago. Will leaned backwards against the counter by the espresso machine and stretched his arms out. They were scattered with traditional tattoos, his legs too. One time he showed me a tattoo of a small smiling sperm on

his shin. He grabbed the receipt and crumpled it up. “You should’ve smacked her with the ham,” he laughed.

Then Robert walked up to the hostess stand. Robert was a dick and he sure didn’t like everybody, but, like I said, something about his approval was satisfying. He pointed at me and looked at the hostess. He walked over. I downed two shots of espresso. My feet were swollen and heavy.

“Hey there, Robert.”

He looked sleep deprived. A blond girl who looked to be in her twenties walked up and sat next to him. The same girl from last night.

“You made it.” He kissed her on the cheek.

I felt bad for Cheryl. I imagined her deep in a book waiting patiently for Robert to come home.

“Leanne this Johnny. He’s a good server. What would you like, honey?”

Leanne contemplated the menu. I held my pen poised ready to write her order down and watched my hands tremble.

“Nice to meet you, Leanne. I’ll let you look over the menu real quick. Be with you guys in a moment.” I decided to bus another table’s dishes and gather my composure in the dishpit. I almost ran into Lana as she was coming out.

“Hey, how’d the rest of your night go?”

“Shitty. I’ll tell you later. You know that guy at the bar with the dark hair and the young girl next to him. Don’t you recognize him?”

“Who?” She peeked at the bar from the dishpit. “Oh yeah, him. He comes in with an older lady too, doesn’t he?”

“Yeah.”

“Awkward. Sorry, got to go. Table 24 is staring me down.”

I wiped my sweat with a paper towel. My hand twitched as I brought it across my hot forehead. I couldn’t remember why I had come back to the dishpit. Suddenly the steam was too much. It felt like the oxygen had been sucked out of the room. I tried to catch my breath. I walked back towards the bar and stood by the POS. I looked out the garage size windows at the people

on the street holding ice creams in January, the guy on the corner bullying the hipsters for change and cigarettes, the cars going 15 mph. Robert started to feed Leanne spoonfuls of seafood chowder. The chatter of the restaurant crescendoed and faded out.

When I woke up Robert was kneeling next to me with a couple EMT's. His hand rested on my shoulder. "The kid doesn't need to go to the hospital. Where's the manager at?" he barked.

An EMT felt my pulse in my neck and looked at my pupils.

The ticket printer ejected a ticket.

I tried to sit up, but my body was heavy and stiff. I felt something wet on the side of my face.

"Can you take a deep breath for me?" asked one of the EMT's.

"You're fine kid." Robert's voice was softer now. I surrendered to the firm and fatherly touch of his hand and lay

back on the sticky bar mats. The GM came up from the basement.

The Romanian flag on the antenna fluttered in the wind. The car ride was mostly quiet. The inside of the car smelled woody and spicy like Robert's cologne.

“You didn't have to drive me.”

“I needed a reason to get rid of Leanne.” Robert smiled.

I looked outside the window of the white car and saw bars, dispensaries, coffee shops and a music store. “What about Cheryl?”

Robert chuckled. “What about her? Relax, Cheryl and I are open.”

“Oh.”

“Anyone home to check on ya?”

“My roommates. It's right up here on the corner.” It felt good to be in Robert's passenger seat with the heat on while he drove. We pulled up to my house. I reluctantly opened the car door, but before I could step out Robert put his hand on my

shoulder. “Don’t turn into another one of these bums, kid.

You’re better than that.”

I stood at the curb and watched as the white car disappeared around the corner.

I walked inside my house and the wind slammed the front door behind me. The sounds of my roommate’s TV crept down the hall. I put my keys and cellphone into the bowl by the door. I ran my hand through my hair. There was a knot the size of an acorn. I went to the bathroom to look at it in the mirror. I saw the deep bags under my red eyes.

I opened my wallet full of crumpled bills and pulled out the bag tucked inside. It was covered in smiley faces. I opened it and held it in my hand, imagined watching the powder dissolve into the toilet water. I stood there a long time. Then I flushed and climbed back into bed.

*There is no real ending.
It's just the place where you stop the story.*

— Frank Herbert

Contributors

Griffin Allegretti is a sophomore at Concordia studying business. He's from New York but likes to travel often. He's passionate about taking photos and being outdoors, and likes to find the beauty in everything around him and capture it. He also enjoys skateboarding, ultimate Frisbee, and cooking.

Pablo Alvarado is currently in his second year at Concordia University pursuing a degree in nursing. His senior year in high school he took a photography class that introduced him to a whole new world. He was gifted a camera by his girlfriend for Christmas last year and has been taking photos since. Learning photography has taken him to new places and has allowed him to look at the world in a completely different way. He likes to share his photos, and if you want to see his progress with photography follow him at [@fotosdealvarado](#) on Instagram or Twitter.

Micah Beukelman is a senior at Concordia who is finishing her degree in creative writing. Her life consists of writing and reading and telling her cat Louie to stop screaming. Micah hopes to be accepted to into an MFA program and publish her memoir *whitenoise*.

Lindsey Anne Burns is a freshman at Concordia University – Portland and an aspiring fiction editor. In her spare time, she enjoys trying not to kill her houseplants, doodling, journaling, hiking in the Columbia Gorge, and listening to Broadway soundtracks.

Montserrat Caro is a senior biology major who secretly loves to write and not so secretly loves nachos and ramen. Catch her listening to Bad Bunny while writing the patriarchy into the ground.

About to graduate from Concordia with a marketing degree focused in communications, **Angelyka Cava** hopes to soon find a job where she can put her love for writing to use. Her other passion is Krav Maga; even though she hates talking, she often gets carried away telling stories about it. She is a private introvert who despises introducing herself (which definitely includes short bios) despite writing a lot about her life, some of which you can find in this final edition of *The Promethean*.

Jakob Chamberlin is pursuing an English degree with the hopes of becoming a teacher. He loves poetry, music, and memoirs of historical figures.

Eldanabi Delgado is a freshman psychology and child-development major.

Michael Anthony DiPietro, from Portland, Maine, is a junior at Concordia University studying humanities. His passions include history, writing, and the arts. He feels photography is one of the most accessible mediums of expression within the art world, and loves capturing moments that may seem aesthetically pleasing but also offer some deeper, esoteric meaning. He is currently under quarantine in his home attempting to not go mad, but *The Promethium* of course has kept him grounded through all of this!

Bailey Fjelstul is a senior ESS major and loves too many things to have time for, but the chief recipients of her daily hours are sleep, school and exercise. These activities are punctuated by friends and permeated by faith. Sometimes photography slips its way in there, too.

J. C. G. is a student stumbling through life. She spends too much time hermit-ing and too little time experiencing the world. Her greatest strength is planning, her biggest flaw— losing track of time. She is a melophile who's a little too familiar with imposter syndrome and maladaptive daydreaming, so you'll often find her alone, plugged in, and making expressions at no one. She aspires to become a novelist but is willing to wander.

Dana Hardy is an English major and aspiring writer from Rockford, Michigan, but she calls Portland home. She enjoys hiking and doing art, and she's always happiest when there are flowers nearby. Dana believes that the most important thing to know about writing comes from Asha Dornfest, who said, "I think new writers are too worried it has all been said before. Sure it has, but not by you."

Jayden Kasai is a psychology major and baseball player at Concordia University. In his spare time, he enjoys reading, photography, and long walks on the beach. He loves spending time with his family but loves his dog, Roxie, more.

Henry Knutsen is an undergraduate at Portland State University where he is pursuing his BFA in creative writing - fiction. He likes to box and hang out with his one-year-old nephew. When he graduates, he hopes to advocate for prison reform and use his writing to help empower others.

Lily Rose Knutsen is a freshman at Concordia. She is a pre-nursing major and hopes to graduate from Mount Hood Community College in the OHSU nursing program. Lily would one day like to be a Labor and Delivery nurse. She enjoys spending her free time with her one-year-old son, Noah, and is thankful to have attended Concordia for one year. She will be happily leaving with new friends, important knowledge and good experiences.

Bryce Nishida was born and raised on the island of O'ahu in the state of Hawai'i. He is currently a sophomore with a major in Biology. His educational goal is to earn a Doctorate degree in Pharmacy. With his degree, he wants to become a pharmacist and an activist for the misuse and overuse of prescription drugs. His hobbies consist of basketball, snowboarding, and hanging out with friends. Smiles are contagious :)

Brooke S. Ohren, managing editor of this *Promethean* edition and senior English major, likes to describe her writing process as a vehicle of catharsis: she writes to understand, to discover, and ultimately, to feel. She is proud to be an ember in this last torch, and plans to continue burning in both her professional and creative lives.

Karish Pangilinan is a transplant from Ewa Beach, Hawai'i. She loves practicing mindfulness in all areas of her life and frequently naps to psychedelic indie music. She constantly surrounds herself with plants, which she studies and feeds off energetically. Some of her favorite things are feeling warm sunrays on her skin and a good gin and tonic. Extra lime. Poetry is her way of maintaining gratitude and awareness of her emotions.

Samantha Persad was born and raised in Milwaukie, Oregon. Her passions include the arts, traveling, and all things outdoors. During her time at Concordia – Portland, she played soccer and worked in the Writing Center. Samantha will graduate from the Honors Program this spring with a degree in biology and a minor in Spanish. She hopes to attend graduate school to study marine ecology, and plans to incorporate both writing and photography into her future career.

Kristin Rothell loves listening to the rain against the roof of her house and smelling the wet pavement after a good downpour. Rain, in her experience, has always made a wonderful writing companion. So, she packed up her life and moved to sleepy Sandy, Oregon, where rain is basically a constant and the sun doesn't like to show itself too often. This is her senior year as a college student, and she has loved every minute of Oregon's weather on her journey to get here. Hopefully one day she'll have her name on the cover of a book or two, but in the meantime, she hopes to continue her education and continue to enjoy the seemingly continuous rain.

Sara Katie Rogers is twenty-one years old. She's fierce, spunky and vivacious. Her biggest motivator for writing these stories was to bring awareness, hope and love to others. Her favorite tool for writing is white space because she loves talking so much she even needs to give herself a breather! She hopes that when people read her stories, they feel connection and love in times of darkness.

Citlalli Uribe is a freshman accounting student who enjoys being able to express her feelings and thoughts through writing. Sometimes words carry too much of a burden and she finds comfort in being able to convey a million ideas without uttering a word.

B. Weyandt is a senior biology major with the goal of pursuing a graduate degree in microbiology and working in the medical field or in research. She enjoys painting with watercolors and pastels but has almost no time for it. In the future, she would like to have a large house with plenty of space for dogs, cats, reptiles, and chickens.

THE PROMETHEAN is a publication of the
Associated Students of Concordia University – Portland
and the College of Arts & Sciences

Cover: *Small Fire*

© 2020 Bailey Fjelstul, J.C.G., & B. Weyandt