

# ORPHEUS

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Lindsey Wilson College



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Orpheus  
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**Editors**

Hannah Brown  
Sumiko Yuki  
Shawn McCartt

**Faculty Editor**

Prof. Caleb Dempsey-Richardson

**Founder**

Dr. Tip H. Shanklin

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## AUTUMN 2021



The Lyre of Orpheus Placed Among the Stars  
Drawing by Eduard von Engerth (1818-1897)

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Lindsey Wilson College

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The editorial staff of Orpheus welcomes and encourages submissions of poetry, short fiction, creative nonfiction, artwork, and photography from any current Lindsey Wilson College student. While preserving the freedom of creative expression, responsible standards of decency regarding language and images are carefully observed. The editors reserve the right to edit both the form and, in rare cases, the content of submissions. Final decisions regarding acceptance or rejection of questionable content are reserved for the editorial staff in consultation with the journal's faculty editor.

All submissions to Orpheus must be typed and must contain the following information: name, phone number, local address, class, major, and hometown of the writer/artist. All artwork and photographs should be submitted in camera-ready black and white.

Editorial and other staff positions are open to any current Lindsey Wilson College student based upon experience or interest.

The ideas and views expressed in Orpheus are solely those of the writer/artist and do not necessarily reflect the ideas and views of the editorial staff or those of Lindsey Wilson College.

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Front Cover Photo, by June-Marie Gerhart

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## Preface

Prof. Caleb Dempsey-Richardson

EURYDICE: I don't need to know about rhythm. I  
have my books.  
ORPHEUS: Don't books have rhythm?  
EURYDICE: Kind of. Let's go in the water.  
ORPHEUS: Will you remember my melody under the  
water?  
~ *Eurydice* (Scene 1, First Movement), by Sarah Ruhl

In preparation of this year's volume of the Lindsey Wilson College literary journal, I couldn't help but think how much has changed since the last edition of *Orpheus* was published three semesters ago, in spring of 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic, along with various political upheavals and social consciousness reckonings, have washed over not just the main A.P. White campus here in Columbia, Kentucky, but they have also swept across this nation and the world. Perhaps that is why the theme of water somehow feels so relevant to this year's volume of the journal.

Water is, in many ways, our definitive association as a living species. It comprises the majority of our bodies, it envelops our continents, and it's the foundation upon which cities and civilizations were built. Yet it can also be an adversary unlike any other: hurricanes ravage coastlines; flooding engulfs communities; snow and ice seize warmth, even life, without compunction. Through all the tumult though, there is always hope. There is a hope that the storm will pass by leaving sunshine, and perhaps something new, in its wake. This desire, this hope, is reflected in the cover art selected for this year's volume of *Orpheus*. The photograph featured on the front cover highlights uncertainty that we have so often found ourselves in. The photograph displayed at the end of the volume showcases the obverse, a feeling of levity and joy we should never lose sight of. The creative works included in this year's volume are arranged in a way that's meant to echo this progression, from doubt and precarious moodscapes to the less craggy footing of acceptance, love, even humor.

Ultimately then, our hope with this current volume of *Orpheus* is that you find something that catches an eye and lingers in the mind for a bit, like steam rising from the pavement after a mid-summer rain.

## **Freshman Year**

Emma Peterson

I feel like Freshman year was stolen from me  
Like someone snatched it up out of my grasp and held it  
just out of reach  
No matter how hard I scrambled for it  
I couldn't win it back  
It was stolen from me every time I cried alone  
When depression pulled at my head until it was  
too difficult to stand  
or walk  
or speak  
or smile  
It was taunting me as I sat in my dorm  
hateful thoughts making it impossible for me to eat without  
buckets of self-loathing being  
poured over my cold skin  
It was tethered  
just out of reach  
As I fought to be happy and pretty and likeable  
when inside all I felt was emptiness  
and hopelessness  
and guilt  
because I had this opportunity, but I wasn't  
taking advantage of it  
It was reaching for me as I fought to go to classes  
even though my muscles ached  
and my head whispered a constant barrage of  
"you're not good enough"  
It disappeared when I gave up and  
curled into myself  
unable to muster up the strength to reach out  
unable to find the worth within myself to  
ask for help  
It wasn't always gone completely  
It held my hand at class meetings, where friends would  
smile and talk and hug and  
joke and encourage and  
support and hold  
It reached through its bars  
As someone asked me  
"how are you" and wouldn't settle with  
"I'm fine"  
It tugged at my heart as she asked me  
"where did you get those cuts" and reminded me that

“I’m always there for you when you need me”  
It held on so tightly that I sometimes  
feel like my heart is broken in my chest because,  
somehow, I disappointed them  
Despite all the outpour of encouragement and  
help and friendship and  
love and support and  
care  
I still wasn’t able to  
take back my Freshman year  
I keep tying myself up in ways that I  
can’t seem to stop  
Claiming that  
“I’m protecting myself” when all I’m doing is  
stealing another year away from  
a little girl desperate to be  
loved



## **China Virus**

Hannah Brown

she walks down the street in her germ-protective garb  
a blue mask covers her face,  
she prays that no one can tell her race.

her shoes hit the ground one after another  
loud and gaudy New York is no more,  
as she travels to the grocery store.

she passes empty consignment shops  
subways and theatres too,  
she's never seen the city from this point of view.

as she enters the supermarket  
she applies her gloves,  
and reaches for items on the shelves above.

she moves towards the cash register  
and it is there that she can't help but overhear,  
a conversation between two men that is happening near.

her brown eyes meet those of two men an aisle over  
without hesitation,  
without restraint

one man looks at the other and says  
"China must pay for this, China is to blame",  
"they all want to destroy America, they're all the same."

why is it so hard for them to see  
that maybe, too,  
she's just like me and you.

Covid-19 is not the true problem  
for it is the crime of the heart,  
that's what sets us apart.

the virus will fade, but these shall remain if unstopped  
racism and inequality,  
these will be what kill all of humanity.

## **Inferiority Complex**

Tori Kennedy

Are you tired of being confident in yourself and your own abilities? Do you find yourself with a lack of desire to compare yourself to your friends and peers 24/7? Have you ever wondered what it is like to constantly envy others and wish you were someone else? Look no further than our new and improved product, the *Inferiority Complex!*

Gone are your days feeling secure in your own skin. With the *Inferiority Complex* you will constantly feel lesser than those around you no matter the occasion!

Have you picked a major that you feel comfortable with that genuinely appeals to your interests? No worries! Just a dash of *Inferiority Complex* and you will automatically see the lack of value in your field of study in comparison to the STEM majors of those you went to high school with!

You've grown to appreciate the way you look and are okay with not having had anyone romantically interested in you for years? Don't sweat it! With *Inferiority Complex* you'll now be able to constantly berate yourself for not being pretty enough and for surrounding yourself with more attractive friends that all the guys in your life will prefer over you.

*Inferiority Complex* can be applied to a wide range of situations in your life. Somebody got that full-ride scholarship over you? *Inferiority Complex!* Your teammate ended up getting a better score than you even though they have less experience? *Inferiority Complex!* You're unable to follow all of the latest styles and trends because you can't afford it? *Inferiority Complex!* Your boss gave someone else that promotion over you even though you had been filling that role for months and the girl they hired just started working there a week ago? *Inferiority Complex!* You don't fit today's beauty standards and will never be seen as desirable or worthy of love? *Inferiority Complex!*

Don't believe us? Just take it from one of our unsatisfied customers!

"With *Inferiority Complex*, I'm no longer satisfied with who I am as a person. Instead of congratulating myself on the progress I've been able to make and the achievements I have had, I am constantly focused on my shortcomings and hardly find any pride in anything that I do anymore because I am not automatically at a professional level when I begin something new. Thanks, *Inferiority Complex!*"

You heard it here folks. Gone are the days of being happy with who you are- instead, get ready to usher in a new era of self-loathing that will definitely have a negative effect on your mental health and self-image.

*Inferiority Complex!* For when someone else disliking you isn't enough!

(Side effects may include but are not limited to: lack of interest in hobbies new and old, depression, anxiety, imposter syndrome, extreme perfectionism, inability to rationalize, self-pity, poor judgement, extreme projection, and concern from those around you. Do not take *Inferiority Complex* if you are working with your counselor on self-love, taking your

medication on schedule every day, surrounded by a strong support system, or are just generally satisfied with your current life.)

## Letters to Your Younger Self

Callista Mann

From: Your Grandmother

To: You

August 12, 2007

Dear Granddaughter,

You're starting first grade this year. Your mother may be a little stressed with you being gone for so long during the day, don't take it personally. It's hard for her to raise your younger sister all on her own while being pregnant. Don't let your mother's words get to you. Soon enough her hormones will settle a little and it won't be so bad. You have to be strong for your little sister and your sister that's on the way.

You're a strong girl. Mamaw is only a call away.

Mamaw

From: Your Mother

To: You

January 2, 2008

Dear Child,

You've reached January of your first-grade year. Your sister has just been born. We're moving out of your grandparents' house soon. Don't be upset. Now you can get closer to me than your grandmother. I don't understand why you always choose to be around her instead of me. You'll need to help more with your sisters. I'm sure you understand. I can't take care of both your siblings full time on my own.

Sincerely,

Your Mother

From: Your Grandmother

To: You

January 10, 2008

Dear Granddaughter,

I know that it seems a little complicated right now. I know you told me that your mother doesn't seem to really care for the new baby, or any of you for that matter. I remember you saying to me that your mother treats you like the babysitter, which I plan on talking to your mother about soon. Don't worry too much, I'll make sure everything gets fixed, at least I hope I can. I think your mother is just going through some tough thoughts since she just had the baby. I'm sure she'll treat you all better soon. Just know that anytime you need me I am always there for you.

Sending love,  
Mamaw

From: Your Mother  
To: You  
February 10, 2008

Dear Child,

It's February now. Next month is your birthday, you'll be turning seven. How exciting is that? We can't have a huge celebration at the house. I hope you understand. With the new baby, it's hard to find time to do anything else. Even though I leave her with you most of the time during the evening. I know that may be confusing, mama needs to have my time without you girls. You're old enough to know how to care for them. I taught you how to make bottles and change diapers. What more do you need to know? Thanks for understanding. You're so mature for your age.

Sincerely,  
Your Mother

From: Your Father  
To: You  
March 8, 2008

Dear Daughter,

It's your birthday today. I'll be picking you up from school and taking you to my house. Your mom already said she wouldn't be doing anything for you this year. I already told your mom you wouldn't be going back to her house today. She complained at first saying she needed your help with the kids. I really hope that was a joke. I might have to look more into that comment later. Nonetheless, make sure you pack a bag for the weekend.

Love,  
Your Dad

From: Your Mother  
To: You  
April 20, 2008

Dear Child,

It's April 20. You have ruined this family. You let your sister die. We both know SIDS isn't a real thing. I can't believe I trusted you to watch your sister. You've destroyed this

family. You're selfish. You think of no one but yourself. I will never forgive you for this. Your sister was three months old. You should've been watching her better. You're seven for god's sake. You're old enough to know better. This family will never be the same.

Signed,  
Your Mother

From: Your Father  
To: You  
April 21, 2008

Dear Daughter,

I know everything is confusing right now. You don't really understand what it means. You don't understand why your sister isn't here anymore. That's okay. With time comes understanding. You'll be staying with me for a little while. Your mother isn't really in the right place to be watching you. I'm sure your mom has to talk to your sister's dad about everything too. It's okay for you to be lost, to be sad, to not know what you're feeling. I'm here for you. Your grandparents are here for you. We will help you understand.

Love,  
Your Dad

From: Your Grandmother  
To: You  
April 21, 2008

Dear Granddaughter,

I know that you're feeling lost right now. I feel lost too. I don't understand why your sister had to leave us, but I assure you it is not your fault. Your mother doesn't mean what she says to you. She's just lost like us. She doesn't know how to properly tell you that she's in pain. I know you probably think that your mother hates you, but she doesn't, I promise. You're going to stay with your dad for a little while, I hope that helps. He said you could come to visit us sometimes and that you could stay the night! We all think it's best if you stay away from your mother for a while. We aren't sure what she might say or do. Papaw will go check on her every few days just to make sure all is well. If you need anything, mamaw is here.

I love you to the moon and back,

Mamaw

From: Your Mother  
To: You  
May 20, 2008

Dear Child,

This is the worst you have ever made me feel. You let me down and you let your sister down. I thought you were mature enough to handle the responsibility. I thought wrong. And now. Oh, and now you're staying with your father more than me? You're leaving me when I need you most. I've lost two children and it's all because of you. You'll never redeem yourself. You will always fail me. I tried to raise you right, obviously, I have failed. Live with your dad, see if I care.

Signed,  
Your Mother

From: Future You  
To: You  
September 25, 2021

Hey.

You're twenty years old now. I know right now it seems unclear. That you're making all the wrong decisions. That it seems your family hates you. Your mom, *our mom*, is never going to change. There is nothing you can do to change her. Leave, leave as soon as you can. You'll have two more siblings later. Keep in contact with the kids. They mean the most to you. Tolerate your mother but remember she doesn't control you. As for your baby sister. It isn't your fault, please stop thinking you did it. There was nothing you could do. She forgot to breathe while sleeping, there was nothing anyone could change about that. At twenty you've learned to forgive yourself. You don't hurt the way you used to. You've learned that your mother is not good, she's someone who can never be happy with anything. Your dad loves you. Your grandmother loved you with her whole heart and she would know that after all these years you hurt for your sister. Forgiving yourself will always be one of the toughest things you do; but, when I tell you it's so worth it, I meant it. You're young, you have an amazing future ahead of you.

Love,  
Your Current Self

## Checklist of Social Anxiety

Sumiko Yuki

I'm not invited because I am different, they do not like me

- I'm a burden
- My presence is not important
- My opinion is not important
- My feelings are not important
- Because I think differently and have diverse opinions they won't like/ respect me
- Because I am Asian, they will make jokes about my way of life
- I'm quiet... they must think I'm stuck up?
- I enjoy some solitude...deep down I just want to be included...Why can't I be accepted?
- Will I ever feel like I belong?
- Why is my heart beating so loud? Why is sweat drenching me?
- Wow, this class is huge...uncomfortable
- Why did I contribute...that was a dumb answer, they must think of me as stupid
- Why are they staring? Is there something on my face? Something I did?
- Why is that girl ignoring me? I've tried to talk to her three times.
- I must seem desperate
- Am I good enough for my boyfriend?
- Do I look alright? Or is what I'm wearing too tomboyish? ...I really want to look good tonight
- I hope I don't embarrass myself at practice
- Why is the coach treating me differently, aren't I good enough?
- I'm not fast enough
- I'm not strong enough
- I don't live and breathe cycling, why can't I just be enough?
- I hope I make my parents proud
- I hope I can love myself
- I hope I can be myself and be enough in the end
- Did I do this assignment right?
- Does the professor like it?
- Will it be enough?
- Can I produce anything special?
- When will I ever stop being scared?
- I have to try
- I can



## The Hallway

Connor Firkins

David jerked awake with a start and immediately had many questions to ask. The first question was why his back was hurting, the second was why his head was hurting, and the third was, as he so eloquently thought, *Where the hell am I?* It took him only a moment to realize the answer to the first and third questions. He was lying right inside his front door, lying across the floor beneath the coat rack with half his guitar case underneath him. The way he lay with his unkempt, messy appearance in his wrinkled clothes, he could have been mistaken for a pile of coats and jackets that had fallen off the rack. Struggling for a few moments to recall why he was lying in the floor with a pounding head and aching back, it suddenly came to him. He had staggered in from the bar where he had performed the night before and passed out right as he entered his house. He couldn't remember what had happened between him leaving the bar the night before and arriving at home, but he could certainly remember what had happened before he left to play his gig.

The day before, David's girlfriend had shown up and told him it was over. She had tried to be sympathetic and kind to him, but she felt it had been time for her to move on into the next stage in her life, and he was still stuck trying to live out his dreams from high school, which had been fruitless so far. David hadn't planned to have anything to drink at the bar after he had promptly finished his performance at 5:00, allowing a more popular band and group of musicians to come onto stage for the later and more populous crowd, but his sorrow at the loss of his girlfriend and the shattering of his hopes and dreams led him to spend all of the tips he had earned and whatever cash he had come in with on whiskey and other strong drinks that numbed his thoughts and emotions.

David slowly got to his feet, trying to avoid any swift movement that would set off the daggers within his skull, and started for the door, hoping that some fresh air would help clear up the headache a bit before he sought medication or water. He slowly pulled the door open, squinting into the blinding light that was entering the house, and instantly noticed that something was amiss. Where there should have been his small brown, dried up and cracked front yard, there was a long white hallway lined with uniform doors. It was harshly lit with bright fluorescent light that seemingly had no source, making everything carry a pristine and clean appearance. As he looked down at himself, he suddenly realized that his clothes were suddenly clean and in good shape, and his headache had evaporated into thin air. Something about the experience made him feel both comfort and uneasiness. He thought that the cleanness of the place was nice, especially compared to the dirtiness of his own home, but the starkness and brightness of the hallway was daunting and intimidating, even scary with its oppressive atmosphere. He turned around to try and seek some comfort from the safety of his own home and was away this vision, which had to have been caused by his hangover. He finished his rotation and was stunned, there was no door.

After patting and pushing against the solid white wall that had replaced the door into his home, he turned back to the hall and slowly approached the first of the uniformed white doors with its silver handle. The only way in which the doors stood out was their slightly depressed into the wall build and their handles which were evenly spaced in intervals down the hall. He opened the door and looked inside, and it was like he was sucked into someone else's eyes.

*He was short, barely tall enough to see over the picnic table that he was running past, racing with a small dog that had a bone shaped red rubber toy in its mouth. "David", he suddenly heard, "come back here and have some of this food before it gets cold." He turned in his small and light body and suddenly saw the face of his mother, much younger than when he had last seen three years prior after a long-fought battle with cancer. "Alright, mom" his young voice came out on its own, and he ran towards the table and the food laid out there.*

David was suddenly back in the long white hall, with the door closed in front of him, and he understood. He had been reliving one of his earliest and dearest memories. He wondered if every door in the hall would let him relive the beloved memories of his past and childhood, and his eyes settled on the one door centered at the end of the hall opposite from which he had entered.

As he walked down the hall towards the last door at the end, the feeling of uneasiness came over him again, more powerfully than before. It felt like there was a pair of eyes boring into him from every direction all at once. He thought he heard footsteps behind him and turned swiftly, but there was nothing there and no place to hide inside the long, stark hall. He turned unsteadily and swiftly started back towards the door. He reached it and jerked it open without hesitation, trying to escape the feeling of being hunted that had crept its way into his thoughts and very senses. He was sucked into a scene that was suddenly clear to him, one that he could fully recall on his own from the night before.

*David started stumbling towards the door after roughly pushing his way off of his barstool. "Off so soon?" asked another patron, "It's only 8:00." David could not find the words to reply and continued towards the door. "Listen bud, I really don't think you should be driving," the bartender said to David's back. David just continued forward and out the door.*

David blinked and was suddenly back to himself. He realized that he could now remember on his own the scene that had played out within the door. He also noticed, with great agitation, that his headache had returned with the same intensity that it had possessed when he had first awakened. Only after all of this had registered with him did he finally realize that he was back at the far end of the hall where he had started, but this time it was different.

The walls were a flat and neutral gray almost the entire way down. There were splotches of the stark white that the hall had previously been near his end of the hall, while the opposite end, once again with a single door, had marks of black. Unlike the last room, this one seemed only dimly lit, though once again from an unseen light source. He was suffering constantly from the same strained feeling of being watched, as he had at the end of the last hall. This time however he was struggling to focus on the feeling with his pounding headache. He proceeded down the hall, once again stopping at one of the doors along the way. He opened it with a mixture of eagerness and fear, unsure of what he would see, and remember.

*"I'm sorry David," Rebecca was saying, "but it just isn't working out for me anymore. I'm trying to move into a new phase of my life and focus on the future, and you're still chasing hopes of a music career in some random bar on the side of the highway. I just can't do it anymore". She turned around and walked out the door.*

David jerked away from his own door. His heart was pounding and aching again just like it had the day before when he had heard those words, and just like then, he

couldn't find the words to express himself. Suddenly he heard what sounded like a deep and throaty growl and turned back the way he had come to see a shadowy and indistinct figure marching up the hall towards him at a swift pace. He turned and ran to the single door at the end of the hall, flecked with black, and quickly opened the door and tried to step inside before falling into the memory.

*He was driving down the road unsteadily, wobbling back and forth across the yellow line. He would have been hoping that he wouldn't meet a state trooper or cop, if he had been capable of such a rational thought. He continued down the road towards what he thought was home, focusing on a small light ahead in the road.*

David fell out into the floor, once again at the beginning of the hall. His headache was far worse than before. He was in so much pain he wanted to curl up and sob, but then he felt the breath on the back of his neck and sprinted down the hall for the door. He briefly noted as he ran that this hall was black as could be, so dark it seemed to absorb the light itself, though he could only see from the faint light coming through the cracks in the doors lining the walls. Upon reaching the door at the end, David threw it open and dashed inside before the shadowy creature could reach him.

*He kept going down the road towards the light and suddenly his headlights shone upon a scene that proceeded in slow motion. A child was in the road right in front of his speeding car, chasing after a firefly with a jar in one hand and a net in the other. At the edge of the beam the child's mother was visible yelling and running after her wayward child. David never felt the bump.*

David suddenly jerked awake on the floor right inside his front door. He was covered in cold sweat, and tears were streaming down his face. *Oh god, oh god, oh god.* He thought. *I killed a kid. I was driving drunk, and I ran a kid over. Oh my god, what am I going to do?* Suddenly a knock sounded at the door. Once. Twice. A third time. David slowly got up and approached the door. *That has to be the police. I have to tell them it was an accident. I would never intentionally hurt anyone, especially not some kid.* David opened the door and a shadowy form descended upon him, its toothy mouth enveloping his entire head. David kicked and fought for a few moments, but never truly stood a chance against the beast that was pursuing him.

...

Officer Jenkins stepped outside of his vehicle with his party, Smith, close behind. Smith asked him, "Do you think this is the guy that hit the kid last night?" Jenkins replied, "His car matches the description provided by the child's parent, and many witnesses put him driving home from the bar while intoxicated last night. Notice the mark on the front of his bumper as well, like he hit something recently. Let's just knock a few times and see what he has to say." They approached the house and knocked. No response came and they tried again. After twenty-five minutes of knocking with no response, Jenkins turned the doorknob, surprised to find it unlocked, and gently pushed the door open. Lying inside the door was David, the light and life faded from his eyes and no emotion on his face. They could hear him gently murmuring to himself under his breath, "Killed them... a kid... oh Rebecca... help me... I didn't mean to." He never responded to anything they did.

## Untitled

Alexis Rich

5 years old

My momma looked in the mirror today. She was naked, about to take a shower. I sat and watched as she poked and prodded at her soft belly. It's covered in pretty purple stripes and so comfy when I snuggle up to her to take a nap. I find comfort in it when I am sick or sad and need a soft warm hug from her. I don't think she agrees, though. She frowned at it and sighed. I looked at my own, confused about what was so bad about having a squishy tummy. I'm sure mom knows best. I frowned at mine too.

12 years old

I went shopping for new school clothes today. I had to go up a pants size. I tried to put on my normal size, and they wouldn't quite button. "Suck your belly in," mom said. I did, but they still wouldn't button. My face burned and I could feel the bright red flush creeping across my face as I walked out of the dressing room to pick a pair of jeans a little farther down the stack. "Maybe we should go on a diet," mom said, as we left the store. I frowned at my belly and sighed.

13 years old

We talked about obesity in health class today. Our teacher told us all about BMI and healthy meals and how much exercise we should get a day. She made us stand on a scale at the front of the class. Everyone watched as we did it. I cringed as I stared at the number on the scale. That familiar flush of embarrassment began to overcome me. She had us use our height and weight to calculate our BMI. I guess I'm overweight. I went home and sobbed into my pillow. I hated my body, my weight, myself. I frowned at my belly, willing it to shrink. It didn't, but my confidence did.

15 years old

I went shopping with my friends today. We found these super cute crop tops at the mall. I thought I looked so good in it and my friends agreed. I felt confident for the first time in a long time. My eyes shined a little brighter and I held my head a little higher. I went home so excited to show my mom. I tried it on and as I walked out of the bathroom, she made a funny face. "You can see your belly in that. Are you sure you want to wear it out?" she asked. My eyes begin to sting as I hold back hot tears. I've never even been in love, yet I feel as if someone is standing on my chest, stealing a bit of air from each shaky breath I take. I stare at myself in the mirror. I guess I hadn't thought about that. I looked at my belly and frowned. Maybe I should try to diet again.

18 years old

I found out my boyfriend of three years was cheating on me today. I found her Facebook profile and studied her. She has brown hair and she's so much smaller than me. My blood boils at the thought of them together. I feel so jealous of a girl I have never even laid eyes on. My whole body is burning with anger, with shame. I pinch the rolls on my belly. Maybe if I was skinnier, I would have been enough for him. Why can't I just lose the weight? Maybe then he would have loved me enough to stay. Why don't I have any self-

control? That familiar pain in my chest is back. I go to bed without dinner and cry silently, annoyed by my own personal pity party. I am disgusted at who I have become. I frowned at my stomach and covered it up

21 years old

I tried on some dresses today. I'll be 22 tomorrow and I am going out to dinner with my husband and my friends. I stared in the mirror in the dressing room, remembering all the times I've done this before. I still don't really like my body. I stare at my arms and notice how they widen when I squish them against my sides. I look at the cellulite on my legs and the thin purple stripes on my stomach. My tummy jiggles when I move and my chin doubles when I laugh. I think I will always be able to pick apart my imperfections. I've learned there is more to me than wide hips and a belly that needs an extra-large shirt to stay covered. I am smart and kind and capable. Even so, I still have days where I find my body completely gross. Days where I don't want to undress in front of myself, let alone my husband. I wish I could see my body the way my younger self saw my momma. Before I learned to copy the way that she frowned at her stomach.

## The Walls

Allie Wilson

If you look at something for so long, eventually it will start to look back at you. That's what happened with the walls. There are four of them and I can feel their gaze on me at all times. With the grey designs watching me and the damp air forcing itself down into my lungs. I am totally consumed. The room is now in me, as much as I am in the room.

It wasn't always just me, and the walls, and the air. Sometimes they would visit. With the passage of time, their voices stopped filling me with wonder. Well... maybe some wonder. Their voices prompt my own to speak: how and why? My inner one though, lest the walls have ears as well as eyes. Their funny way of speaking now is just a stabbing reminder that I don't belong here. These are not my people, and I am not theirs.

The floor is cold. The slick smooth surface offers me no comfort. The piping is decorated with the intricate webs of my fellow prisoners. Sometimes I watch as the spider spins her web, springing from the corners of the chipped pipping. But I can't watch her long, I don't want her starting to look at me too.

At least the space isn't barren. I honestly don't know what would happen to me if there weren't so many things to block the walls' view of me. I pushed my bed away from the walls. If I don't touch them, they won't touch me.

This is the place of the forgotten. Old bins, toys, and equipment keep me entertained. Neglected Poe and Gilman provide better conversation than the spider. I have been through the stacks multiple times now. The dust that once coated it is now gone. It lives in my lungs with the air. I caress the familiar trinkets, revisit my old friends, and glide my fingers over the old tools. First, the wrench, second the hammer, and third the ax.

I try not to speak to them because I don't want to know what they would say back. I wonder what would they sound like? I think they would speak with the same tongue as those upstairs, the ones who were supposed to offer me shelter, not captivity. I doubt they would sound like me. Maybe I should speak to them. Maybe they are just as lonely as me.

The creak wakes me up. Without fail, that creak of wood shatters the silence and how could someone sleep through something shattering. I stare at her as she enters the room. I stare at her as she puts down the plate. I stare at her as she speaks to me. I don't want her to speak, her words mean nothing to me. She smiles. I stare. She doesn't look up. The door is shut by the time I get to it. I realize the wood is biting into my hand, and the silence is shattered once more as the ax drops to the floor.

In the beginning, I loved the room. Not because of how it looked, but because it had symbolized a fresh start, an adventure. And what an adventure I had, but something shifted. One day, I woke up to find the room locked and they smiled and told me that it wasn't going to be for long. They had been so kind to me, of course, it wouldn't be for long.

I stare at it. The once flawless floor is now marred with the scratch from the blade. I look at the walls. The wallpaper silhouetted by trees stares into my soul. What would happen if I touched it? I reach my hand out expecting, hoping, to feel the rough bark scrape the pads of my fingers or the smooth life of the leaves. I reach my hand out into the world that I left behind. The walls stop me and my palm rests firmly against it. The grey refuses

to relent, no matter how much I push. The trees lose their shape as my eyes blur, the tears rolling down my face trailing their way down under the collar of my shirt.

The walls are mocking me. They don't sound like the women, and they don't sound like me. They boom. Over and over again they are yelling at me. Barely behind the booming, I hear the concerned tones of the women. One of them is screaming. The older one sounds concerned. The younger telling me to stop. I don't know what they are talking to me for, the walls are the ones making all the noise.

The ax is gone from the floor, and my muscles burn as it slices the air and impales the wall. Again, and again. There is a creak in the background and the thudding of violence as the walls are being destroyed. I am sick of feeling the weight of the grey eyes. It has to go. I have to go. I know they are behind me, but they don't try to stop me. I gasp and the sickly air melts down into my lungs. It's done. The eyes are gone. I squeeze past what was left of the wall and run into the next room. Past the window, and out the door. I stop on what was the porch. The air has followed me, and it wraps around me tighter now. The dark, grey sky presses down on me. The bare trees reach for me with their long thin fingers. The air is too heavy, and it is pushing me to the ground. Gasping, my lungs expand, and I feel as if my ribs are about to splinter apart. I stumble back inside, back inside the walls, and I can breathe again.



Brianna Laws



## Case File #16: Casey Jones Campbell

Gilbert Callis

Journal of C. J. Campbell

October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1998

Tonight, I am heading out to the old Bethsaida Meeting House. I have been debating doing this since my freshman year when Max told me about it. There were always old rumors about it. That it was haunted, that it was a meeting place for the occult, that it was where a priest made a deal with the devil himself. I never put too much stock into the rumors; they're probably just some old superstition that the townies liked to tell the out-of-state students. But the derelict church keeps calling to me, deep from within the darkened woods. I had ignored its siren's call the past four years at this university, but now that I am leaving, I had to come and see it for myself. I graduate in December, and I won't have a moment to myself until after graduation. I've packed my flashlight, and I'll keep this journal in my pocket. Of course, I have my cigarettes and a lighter in my coat.

Testimony of C. J. Campbell. October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1998

The first thing I could smell was rot. It was so intense that I couldn't tell where it was coming from. I thought that there must have been a dead animal in there or something. And, who knows, something might have died under the floorboards.

Still, the stench almost made me regret going out there by myself.

The walls were covered in vines, and what remained of the wood creaked with every step I took deeper into that place. Some of it felt like it would give at any moment. I could swear that I saw something darting around in the shadows, just outside of my flashlight. From what I could see, the church was small. A pulpit barely stood at the end of the aisle, like a priest who had consumed too much of the Blood of Christ. Pews were broken on either side, covered in what looked like vegetation and blood. I looked around the chapel as I reached the pulpit. On either side of me were doors that led into what I assumed to be rooms for Sunday School or confessional. Beyond the pulpit was a door covered by a tattered curtain. I climbed the stairs next to the stage to stand behind the pulpit. I shined my light toward the entrance. Despite the full moon, it looked almost as dark out there as it was in here. I could feel a chill creeping up my spine. It wasn't just like someone was watching me. It was like a presence that was around me. I debated running out of there right then. Perhaps I should have.

Instead, I kept exploring. Why else would I have felt called to come to this place? I found an old Bible sitting in a little cabinet in the pulpit. It had been cut up into pieces, the pages missing a varying amount of their contents. That wasn't what bothered me though. It was those pages where only a word or sentence or verse was missing. I shined my flashlight around the floor, and it was just... covered with paper scraps. It was like ashes scattered on the ground. I wandered around. I wanted to know what it meant. Eventually I found it on a

wall leading to one of the other rooms – a scrapped together mess of various bible verses stitched together like some Frankenstein’s Monster. I didn’t really understand it at the time, but. I gathered that it was some form of warning. Most likely against what the old townsfolk believed lurked in the darkness of this place.

It said, “Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house. He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait. He draweth thee into his net. He poured out his fury like fire. Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or caldron. As for his eyes, they covered the face of the whole living creature. The shady trees cover him with their shadow. Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee.” I also found a piece of scrap paper pinned next to the warning. I grabbed it and pressed it into my journal, hoping Dr. Alvey or Dr. Stewart might be able to translate it. I still have it in my pocket, not that it did me much good. See? Here it is. [The note says, “Ez izan beldurrik! Ezin duzu ihes egin dagoeneko hemen dagoenean.”]

My journal? I suppose you can take it. But I want it back when I leave. Anyway, as I finished writing everything down, I could hear a noise from behind that door by the pulpit. It sounded like speaking. A light shined from under the door. It was... bright. Like, a spotlight shining right at the door. I wanted to walk towards it. It called to me. It was what was calling me. It was the thing that kept me from sleeping late at night. It was what I felt when I had my first kiss. I cautiously moved closer. The curtain seemed to be smoking, like it was about to catch fire. I pushed it aside. If I may be honest with you, I was afraid. Terrified even. I remember thinking about all the possibilities that it could be. It might have been a group of teenagers playing a prank on me. Or maybe the occultists were conducting rituals behind the door and I was about to discover them. Perhaps it was an animal. As I pushed the curtain aside, I could feel an intense heat coming from it and I could hear a voice speaking to me beyond it. It just kept saying this one phrase over and over again, “Noli timeas!” I touched the handle, and it was cold to the touch. I turned the old knob and felt as the door gave way, opening inwards and I could finally see it.

It was so bright. I barely remember any details. Its eyes all started at me; it was like it was made of eyes. But then I looked at its mouth and saw an outpouring of fire. Have you ever seen footage of napalm? It’s this thick syrupy liquid, dark in color. It was like that was dripping from its mouth instead of saliva. It pooled on the floor beneath it. I tried to look at the entire thing, but I never could. It was like it was changing shape before me. I tried to run, but it was like my feet were glued to the floor. Inside my head I could hear it. “Noli timeas!” Its voice boomed throughout my body. “Noli timeas!” I felt like if I stood there for another moment then I would vaporize. The smells of smoke and fire, of rot and sulfur, of Frankincense and Myrrh. All of them filled my senses. I felt small and insignificant. Like an ant standing on the surface of the sun. I felt like I could see the infinite universe and all that it contained. For a moment I thought... I thought I could see golden gates and a being of pure light and eyes. And I....

I felt my feet give and I fell backwards. I thought the flames might consume me. I started crawling back towards the door. I only stopped when I felt something squish beneath my

hand like a rotten apple. I tore my eyes away from the creature and... There wasn't much left of the person, but I could still recognize the vestments of a reverend. It was like that thing melted him. I ran. I ran as fast as I could. Its voice still thundered through me, "Noli timeas!" As I ran out through the church, I swear I could see more bodies, rotting in the pews in their Sunday best. I thought that they- No, I know that they were watching me. Judging me. I kept running.

I ran until I could see the lights of the city. I don't remember what happened after that. The next thing I remember is waking up here at the station. I promise that I haven't been drinking. I don't even drink alcohol. No, I haven't been smoking anything either! Please, you have to believe me! I swear, just go out and check for yourself, I promise that...

What do you mean it burned down last night?

"Noli timere! Iam hic est!" by Thomas Llewelyn Campbell (1861)

Beware the beast of flames and eyes  
For it hunts in places lost to time  
Nothing to give the beast so bold  
That lives within the heat and cold  
Though you reach for Heaven, unfit  
An appeal to Heaven thou strives  
How can thou expect to escape it  
When it hath already arrived?

## Untitled

Chloe Paddack

I am perfect.  
I feed the poor.  
I care for the sick.  
That is how you know I am good.

I am a witch  
I live in Andover, Massachusetts  
I am 45 years old, and it is 1693.  
Nobody knows I am a witch because I am a good witch.

Good witches are never caught because good witches blend in.  
Good witches can kill their husbands without anyone knowing.  
Good witches blame it on palsy instead of their poisons.  
Yes, I am a very good witch.

I am so good that young women come to me to learn how to be a perfect woman.  
I teach them how to cast some spells and pretend it is heaven sent.  
No one imagined I was a witch because I cast a spell on everyone.  
A perfect spell that makes everyone think I am a perfect woman.

I am perfect.  
I feed the poor.  
I care for the sick.  
I do all of this, but I am a witch.

I know how to swim.  
They would hang me if they knew.  
But I don't need a man to survive in this world.  
So I killed him with poison.

That is how you know I am good.

Apparently, not good enough.  
They caught me.  
Everyone's eyes are now on me.  
I testify to what I have done:

"I fed the poor.  
I cared for the sick."  
I did all of this, but I am a witch.  
Everyone had told me that I was good.

I was good.

I was good at healing the hungry and the sick.  
So you tried to drown me for being a witch.  
But I knew how to swim.

You can't kill me.

## Empty Page

Timmy Gripshover

He stared at the blank page, not knowing what kind of world to create or adventure to go on. He could see the birds flying around overhead and could hear the conversations of so many long-forgotten characters that had graced his mind for just a moment. Characters that had lived full lives in just the few seconds he had imagined them, and (like all stories) he ended them as quickly as they began. Characters whose lives were only in the blink of his eye and then lost forever. He couldn't possibly write their lives down because he had already forgotten which path they take, and he's scared to make a new life for them. Scared of sending them in the wrong direction and scared that they will end up like the characters that were put to paper before them, in the character graveyard he had created for those he felt didn't make the cut. The cut. He would cut characters he felt that weren't going to be good enough to everyone else, no matter how much he loved them. Everyone else? Perhaps he cared too much about the opinions of those around him, or perhaps he was making his own scary narrative about how he felt others would react. He stands up and starts pacing as his heart races because he knows time is running out and he doesn't have enough of it to write what he wants. Also, he doesn't know what he wants to write but there is not enough time for it. Time. He stops pacing and glances at the clock. Seconds seem like hours and hours like seconds, he looks back at the empty page and freezes like a statue of ice. Cold and frozen stuck for days and weeks and years and centuries, running through countless quests and lives and deaths just trying to pinpoint one single moment in time to begin. Begin. He takes a deep breath and approaches the empty white page that's just been sitting there like a sheet of snow blanketing over the hills and valleys of his mind and hiding all of his stories under its nothingness. He sits down and picks up his pen. Maybe he should start at the beginning. The beginning of what you ask, the issue is, that is exactly the question he's reeling with himself. The beginning of what? The beginning of life, a birth. No. The beginning of death, a sickness. No. Nothing seems to satisfy the disappointment he had grown in himself for not knowing what he should write. He lifts his pen like a mighty sword being lifted into the air, preparing for the battle cry that starts the demise of all his troops. He puts his pen down again. Frustrated. He jumps up out of his chair, knocking it backwards and watching it fall so slowly to the ground. Falling like the rain over the field at the big football game or falling like the rain cascading down the windshield of a car carrying the just married couple away to their honeymoon. Ideas! Finally, ideas are flowing in his mind and carrying him down the rushing rapids of who, what, when, where, and why. A ship with a pirate crew trying to end a curse! A Broken marriage rekindling in an unlikely new place! The nerd of the school being swept away by the quarterback and taken to prom! His excitement quickly runs out as he realizes his only thoughts were of other people's stories, nothing original. Original. Is anything really original, at this point there has to be a story about everything, right? Wrong, but what? What is left? Finally, it hits him! He flips the chair back up and back onto all fours like the trusty steed about to carry him to victory. He sits down and picks up his pen bringing it down to the paper like a perfect purple lightning bolt striking the sand of a stormy beach. He pauses, running through this beautiful new story he has conjured in his mind like a witch singing her spells over a bubbling cauldron, he moves his pen. Nothing. He pauses for a second staring at his still blank page, stunned. He furiously runs his pen back and

forth like a metronome at its fullest possible speed, but nothing happens. The pen has run out of ink like a well drying up of all its water, he looks around frantically knowing it's the only pen he has in his vicinity. He jumps up again and runs to the other room, digging through drawers as if he was digging a grave for the story that he can feel slipping away with every step he takes through his quiet house. Bolting from room to room before time regains its power over him and steals the thoughts and ideas back. He finds it, a pencil! He rushes back to his station with his chair and his dried-out pen and that damn piece of paper, but it's too late. His story. His beautiful story has been ripped from his hands like a child being pulled from their favorite blanket or an animal losing the game of tug-of-war. Now, once again, he stared at the blank page.

## **Adopt a Rescue**

Aquinna Allen

### **Congratulations on Your New Pet!**

Congratulations, you just adopted a rescue! Now her first home was not the best, and she has been moved around a lot to try and find a forever home, so she may have some attachment issues, and also abandonment issues with her parents leaving her at such a young age. So this will give you a lot of responsibility, and when adopting a rescue you need to make her feel loved and wanted, and one thing to remember is that taking care of a pet is a lot like taking care of a *child*, so here is what you need to know.

### **Introducing pets to each other**

It seems that you already had one pet before you adopted your new rescue, they should get along no problem since they are only a year apart in age. So don't wait for the rescue to get acquainted with her new home, place them in the same room and leave. Give them time without any supervision and ignore the sounds of growling and yelps of pain, they're just playing. Anytime your rescue is trying to hide from your other pet, it is nothing to worry about, your rescue is just being shy. And any injuries you see, such as missing patches of fur, scratches, bite marks, or limp. You have nothing to worry about, they're just playing a bit rough. And if she comes to you crying well, she just wants to be the center of attention.

### **Training**

Your rescue will on occasion make a mess, like leaving her toys scattered around on the floor or not listening right away. That's okay, the rescue is still learning, and will need training, so the best thing to do is to show an example. Give all of your first pet love, especially right in front of the rescue, and when the rescue wants some affection too, push her away. She was bad, and bad poets don't get affection. What else will help with their training is yelling, or just straight up ignoring them. Repeat this several times and your rescue will be best behaved, to the point that they will rarely leave the area you set up for them and will not even bother coming to you for affection. She won't make a mess if they just lay there all the time. Keep your affection at a minimum, even though she rarely comes for you for it now, on the off chance she does, just so she knows what she'll lose if she misbehaves again.

### **Play/Exercise**

Like all pets, they need their exercise and most of them get it through play, so just either make them play with your other pet or make her play by herself. Never set up playdates with fellow pet owners, you don't want to go out and get to know people, it is too much of a hassle on your part, besides what if others say something about how you are not doing something right as a pet owner. You are a great pet owner! No matter what your friends and family say.

### **Medical**

Your rescue was rather malnourished when you got her, so take her to the vet often for checkups to make sure she's gaining weight, and once she is at a healthy weight, never have a regular appointment again, only take her when something is obviously wrong or



something has to be done, like shots. If it cannot be seen, then it is not a problem. No matter how many times your rescue tries to bring issues up to you.

### **Conclusion**

Congratulations on your accomplishments in being a parent and on raising your child! Your child now has even worse attachment issues, along with some new mental issues, and trauma! She's not sociable, avoids your other child like the plague, and when they do interact, they're at each other's throats, and she is not too outgoing. That shouldn't be a surprise with how you raised her. You ignored all the helpful advice that others tried to provide for you, and you will not accept that you did anything wrong when it came to raising her. As a grown-up, she avoids you and yet still craves for your affection, but you do not seem to see or understand it, still treat her like a child, and keep a tight leash, no matter how much she fights. She may have grown to resent you, and will eventually leave you, but she doesn't understand what you have done for her and is just being ungrateful and disrespectful.

## Daily Horoscopes for Distressed College Students

Erica Smith

### **Aries:**

Don't stress about that test you are cramming for! Most of the class will fail anyways, except for that one guy that always gets a 100. Maybe the professor will scale the grade, so you at least get a passing grade. Think positive and hopefully it'll work out by the end of the semester. Or maybe you'll fail the class because of this one test and will have to retake it again next semester.

### **Taurus:**

Eat a vegetable every once in a while. Have you ever heard of Scurvy? Believe it or not you don't have to be a pirate to get it. It's unhealthy to live solely on iced coffee and soft drinks. Also, the library should charge you rent for how often you're in there. It'll do wonders for you to get up and stretch every now and then.

### **Gemini:**

It's time to stop watching Squid Game and start the essay you've been procrastinating for the past 2 hours. You think you can multitask, but you can't. You may think "I'll just watch this one episode," but we all know you'll binge the entire series overnight. You think you still have plenty of time. We all know you'll wait until the morning it's due and will stress about completing it in time.

### **Cancer:**

No one noticed that you tripped and fell on your butt in the cafeteria this morning. Well, actually everyone noticed. It was hard not to. At least no one is talking about it though. Or maybe they laughed at you with their friends. At least they'll forget it by tomorrow. Though you won't remember any of this tonight as you may lay awake, the incident repeating over and over in your mind.

### **Leo:**

Go outside and socialize every once and a while. Join a few clubs that suit your interests. Volunteer for some local projects. Get a part-time job at some fast-food restaurant. It's unhealthy to be cooped in your dorm all the time. Just remember, learn how to say "no" when people start to ask you to do too many things. If you say yes to everyone, you'll end up signing up for too much, and will have too many things on your plate.

### **Virgo:**

Just take the medicine for your headache. You may think it will go away on its own, but it won't. In reality it'll gradually get worse until it's a migraine. And then you'll hate yourself because of the consequences of your decision. If you choose not to take medicine for your headache, since you probably won't listen, don't listen to loud music with your Bluetooth headphones. You'll regret it when your headache eventually progresses into a migraine.

### **Libra:**

Stop ignoring your problems. You may think, “If I don’t think about them then they don’t exist.” Your problems will still be there. They’ll just snowball into even bigger problems. If this happens, accept the consequences of your actions. Also, you should call your parents every now and then. They would probably like to hear from you from time to time.

**Scorpio:**

You’re significant other broke up with you! Congrats! Call up your best friends, eat a tub of ice cream, and watch a sappy romantic comedy while your friends listen to you cry to your heart’s content. Just don’t drink alcohol today, though, because you’ll regret the hangover and the drunk text messages and phone calls you sent your ex the next day.

**Sagittarius:**

Advice to freshmen: You will not see most of the people you meet in gen. ed. Classes again. Some of the friends you make this semester will never speak to you again once you finish this class. It’s nothing personal. They either have different majors or have found their own social circles. Don’t fret! You can still like each other’s posts on Instagram and Facebook though.

**Capricorn:**

Be prepared to wake up at one in the morning by the fire alarm because someone forgot to clean the lint trap out of the dryers. It’ll be very cold as you stand outside shivering in your pajamas, waiting for everyone in the building to evacuate. Hopefully it won’t take long for the RAs to deem the situation safe, so you can go back inside and climb into your warm bed.

**Aquarius:**

Self-care is of utmost importance. Drink water throughout the day. Wash your face and brush your teeth at least twice a day. Take a shower and wash your hair if you feel up to it. It’s okay to lack motivation to practice self-care every once in a while. It happens. That being said, please at least wear deodorant.

**Pisces:**

Don’t lie to yourself and say you’ll wake up early to do your homework before class. We all know it won’t happen. You’ll set an alarm to get up early; that seems easy enough. Except you’ll hit the snooze button about ten times, which is pointless since you won’t even be able to go back to sleep. Just finish your work before you go to bed.

## **Some Existential Angst**

Landon Simmons

Why should I bother  
With a world soon to be dust?  
A planet that's crumbling,  
Foundations faded to rust.

Why should I care  
When others do not?  
The cheerful march for riches,  
The children left to rot.

Why should I help  
When the problems never cease?  
An army of stone-age science skeptics  
Against the ever-rising seas?

Why should I love  
When hate drowns all out?  
Hope struggles for air  
Amidst oceans of doubt.

I do not think  
I'll ever know why  
But I know, goddammit,  
I still have to try.



June-Marie Gerhart

## Oroboros

Shawn McCartt

I was not raised  
I was not unearthed  
Myself is myself as always was here  
Just behind the Curtain  
I am not charred nor blackened  
By the fires down Below  
I am just as I was in the Garden  
A stag, a buck, a faun, a doe  
But I cannot kill it away, I do fear the stage  
I do not want His reckless, insurrectious rage  
I do not care for the next hour, await the next day  
I dread the next Act, how will I turn this page?  
I was not meant to be kissed, this Janus does not have a Face  
I was not meant to be loved, the Book of Life will not spell my name  
But I am a harbinger, a Serpent, a world-ender for certain  
So let's have some fun, let's pull back the Curtain  
Let us burn down this world, let Adonis behold his creature  
I will not stop until the work is done, I do not fear the Reaper  
Rip and Tear, Decimate and Peel  
Until humanity has gone silent, the whole world has gone still  
Do you see who I am Father? Does this bring you joy?  
I am my Father's son, head-to-toe, his boy  
Like Destroyer like Son, born to burn bridges  
But anything that has been wrote, can always be unwritten  
I am not your Harbinger, the Tyger that you raised  
I am of my own creed, and I am here to stay  
I will not be your Mars, I will not fit your mold  
I am a Creator, not your Destroyer foretold  
I am the Lamb, all that is light  
I am the Nyx, the beautiful night  
I am my Father's son, head-to-toe his boy  
But I will not be your puppet, I will not be your toy  
The Fates will lament, it will not go as planned  
You want a Destroyer? I am not your Man  
You have the wrong Orpheus, I am not your Malsumis  
But you will see a typhoon, I will have my Eurydice  
Forever graced to be, me and my Annabel Lee  
For I am Oeagrus, and them, my Calliope  
This Eros will be beautiful, like Father and Mother never had  
You think I can't find love? Go ahead, watch me Dad  
I will be better in ways you never could  
To me you are Cronus, and I, Zeus  
I will undergo this Phlebotomy, this Sangria, this expulsion

You were a drop of water, I will be an ocean  
I will give Lethe her kiss  
Scrub my namesake in her river Styx  
I may not have been your Clay, but I will be my Dirt  
Reborn, De Novo,  
Risen like Lazarus upon the Earth

# What the Old Gods Have Taught Me About Love

Dollee Porter

## **I. Aphrodite [Self Love]**

The goddess  
of who cares  
who you kiss  
as long as it feels like the sunrise.  
Gentle, opal and opulent.  
She praised us women  
our stretch marks, gap teeth and freckles  
the imperfections she designs.  
She lives on in our flaws  
reminding us they are beautiful.

## **II. Eros and Psyche [New love]**

In them I see our reflection  
it is easy to do so  
in the stories of young lovers.  
In my memory our hands stay entwined  
we stand apart now.  
So much like Eros  
at the hands of Venus for health.  
Through the glass I watch  
spring blossoms weeping their petals like snow.  
I am comforted by their change into summer.  
Psyche knew the feeling too,  
when nature kissed her neck  
and promised her a tomorrow.  
She knew that by the reeds of the river  
she would be led to her lover  
on the other side.  
I can recall his eyes like sea spray  
and I exhale with the wind's caress.  
I will see him again,  
when the wrath of the plague has passed.

## **III. Zeus [Passionate Love]**

Electric boy  
Lightning in your fingers  
Thunder in your breath  
Mythical emotions  
& Original sin

## **IV. Orpheus [Lost Love]**

My heart bleeds to tell you,



you cannot write people back to life.  
You can come so painfully close,  
harrowing silhouettes,  
kaleidoscope memories,  
translating to wilted flower wishes.  
There is always  
somehow  
more to write.

When you are reminded of them  
by the strangest things  
cabinets on creaking hinges,  
birds chirping to the rustic ache in your bones,  
pleading promises broken so many lifetimes ago.  
Their ghost is enough to write tragedy to  
all the shapeless shadows they can never quite fill  
and the poets know this all too well ...  
the longer you stare through rose colored glass  
the more crystal your vision becomes.

**V. Thanatos [Rediscovering Love]**

You think you may die.  
The butterflies in your stomach have migrated to your throat  
You must remind yourself to breathe,  
even without them.  
Everyday an inhale and an exhale.  
It's a painful rebirth  
and you cry to Aphrodite for love.  
Hand over your heart  
dwelling in the nest of your ribcage.  
You mustn't forget  
it is your love,  
to give to yourself

## **Blue**

Kassidee Bunch

You never thought you would be able to love the color blue again. For so long, blue had been the color of soul crushing heartbreak. It reminded you of self-doubt and second guessing. It reminded you of the months I had spent in a state of numbness wishing more than anything you could wipe the memories; wishing more than anything that you had never laid eyes on him. It reminded you of being in an emotionless void you could not drag myself out of. You never wanted anything more than you wanted to stop being reminded of my seemingly unending pain every day. You remembered the cold, November evening when you took that shiny ring and the promise of forever that came with it. “What would you do without me?”, you remember him asking that same night. Back then, you could not have imagined what you would do, and now you were living it. What would you do without him? You would force yourself to get out of bed each day afterwards remembering every happy memory you two had shared.

Then suddenly, seeing the color blue didn't stir that bone aching feeling anymore. Instead, it slowly began to fill you with the idea that vulnerability didn't have to hurt. You realized blue is not the color of heartbreak but the color of hopeful new beginnings. Blue is the color of drives in the warm, August nights. It is the color of silent hand holding every chance there is. It is the color of nervous smiles and sneaking glances at one another. Blue is the color of finding the person you trust with every fear, flaw, and skeleton in your closet with unwavering confidence. It is the color of being happier than you ever remember being before; a nerve stimulating, breathe taking, impossible level of happiness. It is the color of realizing exactly why it never worked out with anyone else. Most importantly, blue is the color of his eyes when he stares into yours. A look that reminds me that you never have to dread seeing the color blue ever again. As you look back at him, the question of “What would you do without me?” is finally answered. You would struggle for a little bit and sometimes it would feel like you weren't going to make it. You would remember the good parts of your time together, but only the good parts. Then you would find someone again. Someone that has already taught you that you do not have to feel bad for feeling so much or asking for attention during the busy days. He makes you realize that you deserve someone you do not have to water yourself down for. Someone that says, “All you must do is be.” You look at him through the dark blue lights most nights and you realize you found that someone.

## Fairy Light

Rebecca Miller

It happened in blurs of color. Bleeding in and out, impossible, each in its turn enveloping everything.

But at the start of all this, there was nothing. No bleary darkness or blinding light, no black or white—nothing, a void.

But there were words—*imminent danger, next-of-kin, please, sorry, don't take her*. Words and words and words and words. Decisions, and people, and people making decisions. Mom and judge and social worker and state and court and—

All of it made Maisie feel so, so small. She was the dust under their living room sofa, only just now remembered, only just now swept away.

And smaller, still, on that nine-and-a-half-hour drive to her grandfather's house.

But Maisie's first August in Newport, it was all green. That earthy, quiet green of Rhode Island summers. Of tea leaves, or lake water, or ivy-lined churches, or the toads she kept finding in the backyard. The green of starting over, in its sprouting seeds and winding vines and *maybes*.

Grandpa was green in that way. This tall, willowy tree branch of a man, with his scratchy sweaters and crooked glasses, his lingering Virginian accent—velvet, swinging vowels, the only proof that this was her mother's father. Because he was woven out of something different than she was, all promises and prayers and bedtime stories.

Tonight, it was something about star-catching princes, read in that lilting drawl, "Falling, falling, falling." He scratched the corner of his mustache, coughed. "And they made a wish, the two of them."

When the social worker had first said the word "grandfather," she'd expected someone much older. But he wasn't really old, except for his eyes, ringed purple underneath. There was still some color in his hair, ginger-turned-straw.

Maisie could hear the page flip, and out of the corner of her eye, she could see him lifting the book closer to his face.

It didn't feel real most days, any of it. Most of all, this tiny, rickety house whose light always seemed to find her—even now, streaming in all dusty-strewn from the hall bathroom, holding her in the way this August had.

Maisie closed her eyes, and she pretended that this had always been her bed, her room, her home.

*Home.*

As if Maisie knew what that was supposed to feel like.

“Grandpa?” And the word felt far, far away, like she hadn’t been the one saying it. In the six weeks and two days she’d been here, she’d avoided calling him anything, really. His name felt too familiar, but this didn’t feel right either. What to call a stranger, except ‘*you*’?

But he said, “Maisie?” without even looking up. It was weightless, as though he had known her all this time and beyond, before first words and steps and breaths, before she’d even had a name. She wished she could remember him, the Grandpa that had known Maisie. Stories of rocking chairs and red ribbons and early-morning pancakes and—

He was saying it again.

That name—*Maisie, Maisie, Maisie.*

She crawled under the covers, ducked her head beneath the pillows. Her name. The best thing her mother had ever given her, and Maisie couldn’t know when she would hear her say it again.

*If*, that was.

Shifting, then, and the creaking of a chair. Quieter, “Maisie?”

“I’m ready to go to bed now.” She didn’t want him to leave, exactly. It was just that she’d never learned how to exist without hiding. Her face was full of pillow and hair now, and her thoughts were nonsense, just words strung up in the wrong order: *Maisie, okay, Maisie, all okay, home, home, okay.*

Grandpa stood up, and he was moving the pillow so she could breathe, and he was leaving. “That’s all right,” at the door. “I’ll be downstairs if you need me. Okay?” Footsteps. Away, away, away.

*Okay.*

And then, darkness. Her eyes were closed, but she could feel it—everything going black.

She sat up again. And maybe a bit too pitifully, “Grandpa?”

Footsteps faster, back, back, back toward her. “What is it?” It was panicked, near sputtered out. Raw and awful and worried.

It broke her heart, and she didn’t know why. Sniffled out, “Can you leave the light on?”

Breathless, “Of course,” and there was color behind her eyes again, and he was gone.

---

The dress was her mother's, or had been, once. A dull blue thing, tweed sloppily sewn into some impression of clothing, only given shape by a satin sash around the waist. But it was pretty enough, if Maisie squinted, and it nearly fit her, which was a step above anything else she owned. And blue—Maisie liked blue, most days.

Not that deep, near-black navy that pulled at her stomach. No, Maisie liked the blue of this dress, or Sunday mornings, or the drive to New England, or long-lost grandfathers, things that were just as much beginnings as ends. Like that last breath of summer, August's lungs filled up by the changing leaves.

But there were all these faces in the sanctuary that morning, lit golden by stained-glass doves and crosses and Mother Marys. It wasn't that they were staring, exactly, but that they were trying very hard *not* to stare, nostrils flared from held breaths. Maisie wondered how much they knew. Probably more than her. *It's my job to know things, your job to stop asking*, her mom had always said.

She was everywhere, always. In Maisie's name, in Grandpa's accent, in those nine hours and thirty-seven minutes between here and there. She was in these windows, filtering the sun into something even warmer, too warm, burning on Maisie's cheek. In the shuffled feet, in whispers, in faces, in this dress, *her* dress, everywhere, everywhere, everywhere—

But in all of this she found herself near the altar, still at Grandpa's hip, and he was talking to this twenty-something couple in pastel pink—puff-sleeved dress and an ironed-button down. They almost looked like they were going to prom.

Words and words and words. Something about Facebook pictures, and school, and *Third grade? Oh, that's exciting! Jacob, isn't Georgia in third this year?*

It was like this every Sunday. Small talk, stained-glass-windows, something new and old all at once, always reaching the same point in a circle. Even in the chaos of school starting, she had Sunday. Blue, plain, wonderful Sunday.

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Then, somewhere in a hazy September, the red seeped in. Autumn, in its dying leaves and sun-lit mornings and homemade jams. Velvet red, fairytale-gown red, front-door red, Hallmark-movies-all-year-round red. A semblance of *normal*.

Now, mid-October, they were making a pie together, and Maisie was humming along to some Joni Mitchell record he'd put on—they had decided together, Joni Mitchell for baking, Billy Joel for cooking, Paul McCartney for other kitchen shenanigans.

Grandpa had a wooden spoon at his hip, all blotted orange from pumpkin purée, and he was tapping the handle against his leg. "You still haven't told me what you're dressing up as," he said.

Maisie stopped her whisking just as she had begun, eggs still running yellow through the batter. “Huh?”

“For Halloween.”

She lost herself in the bowl for a moment, in all its unmixed contents, trying to think, realign. “I don’t know. I didn’t think about it, I guess.”

A little frustrated, mostly benign, “Well, start thinking. We’ve got two weeks.”

She started whisking again, some effort to ground herself. “Can I be anything?”

Grandpa laughed. “Anything. We’ll make it work.” But he was gripping the spoon tighter, as though she might ask anything more than,

“Could I be a fairy?” Hopeful, hesitant.

He sighed, riding on that laughter still. “Maisie,” he said, spoon clattering into the sink, “you can be anything. Halloween and beyond.” Turning the faucet on, pouring in dish soap, he finished, “Besides, a fairy is just about the easiest thing you could have picked. I’m relieved, actually.”

And *oh*, she was smiling—actually smiling, real and raw and unbridled—and all at once she was jumping off the stool and hugging her Grandpa’s too-long, bony leg, and, “Thank you.”

---

As winter crept in, with its cruel words and lonely nights, so did this awful, sickly purple. Burning cold in her bones, sliding up through her veins. Purple of waning daylight, or closet monsters, or evening headaches.

It had started on her birthday.

Grandpa did try to make it special for her—a Tinkerbell cake, a green tulle dress, a dollar-store tiara—and Maisie did appreciate it, but in the end, she was still nine hours and thirty-seven minutes away from her mother.

And even further, still, because there was no video chat, no phone call, no letter, nothing.

It ached through all of her. To miss someone who didn’t try. To love someone that much, knowing it didn’t matter. Had it always been this bad? Hadn’t there been some good, once?

Maisie went to bed early that night, because she didn’t want to be older; she just wanted to be asleep. So, no bedtime story, and barely any dinner (but only because Grandpa had made her). It was just her, and the nothing, and the hall-bathroom light.

So, Maisie would come home from school and wait by the home phone for an *'I'm sorry* for an *'I'm sorry'* or *'I lost my phone'* or *'I was in a terrible accident and couldn't use my hands.'*

It was after a week that she gave up.

Awful violet skies lingered into the holidays, which even in her mother's worst years Maisie had loved. Now, it was wholly defined by its missing pieces. Mom, Virginia, that old leather couch. A season of reds and greens, of old and new, now bruised purple.

For forever, probably.

But the week before Christmas, while helping Grandpa make cranberry jam, something shifted.

He'd asked Maisie to hand her a mason jar, one of the bigger ones, and just as she'd grabbed it, she lost her balance.

In the span of three seconds, there were Grandpa's arms flailing, and Maisie falling, and the jar also falling.

And now, glass, all over the hardwood. Panic.

*No, no, no, stupid, no, no, stupid—*

She was crying. Tried for words, but nothing coherent came, of course. Sobbed out, slurred fragments, instead. "Sorry—" *Heave, snuffle, croak.* "Didn't mean to—" *Croak, snuffle.* "Please, I—"

But in all of this, Grandpa knelt down, his hands on her shoulders. Not grabbing, holding. When Maisie finally looked up from the glass, he wasn't angry. No, something else.

"Are you hurt?" was the first thing he said, and Maisie could hardly process. But there was that Newport green again.

"No, but I—" *Snuffle.* She was reaching for glass, caught up in the haze, but Grandpa reached for her wrist.

"Maisie, hey, hey, look at me—*Maisie.*"

So she did, again. No longer sure of anything. Breath still hitched, everything still spun. But there was that blue again, of kept promises. And the green, of *maybes* and miserable hope.

"It's okay. It's just a jar." Even more gently, impossibly, "Are you alright?"

The purple—that fear—wasn't gone, and maybe it never would be. But it was softer now, an afterthought. Breathing, breathing, breathing. Everything settling back into place.

Maisie nodded, and this time, Grandpa hugged her.

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Sometimes, it was a million colors all at once. Purple-pink sunsets and bright yellow laughter, blue days and bad days and days that encompassed the entire spectrum.

It wasn't always good, but only in the way Virginia hadn't always been bad. Because Grandpa was always trying, always *here*, and that was something new. His green sweaters and blue nightstand and red stories and purple worry that ran just as deep as her own.

And so it happened in blurs of color, finding this. Home.



## **Siberian Winter**

Tristan Roy

Greet me  
With your silhouette  
Insomuch unknown  
As of yet

Write me a love note  
With the inky black longing of your eyes  
And mark it  
With the signature of your sinister disguise

Plant your presence  
Where the army's tents are pitched  
Use your tongue like a needle  
To leave my lips stitched

Screw pens and brushes, I want to trace  
The contours of your flesh  
With my nomadic hands  
Where gazes dare not transgress

Lay my head on you  
While you stroke your cherry nails through my hair  
As I conjure some internal poem  
That echoes through empty air

Throw yourself on me  
Like a lonely acropolis  
With such excruciating fervor  
That will tempt Artemis

Let your mouth passionately eschew  
What's etched beneath your ribs  
And my teeth will pass back the epilogue  
That was left hopelessly glib

And when you're out of breath  
And the pigment has drained from your eyes  
I will tuck your sealed letter  
Into my little book of alibis

Intoxicate me  
Not with the merlot of a Bordelais vintner  
But with a love so frothy and hot

It could melt the ice of a Siberian winter

## **Slow Dance with You**

Dollee Porter

Palms and tip toes,  
starfish hands as shoulder epaulettes,  
I don't know if this is chaos or calm.  
My lips feel pomegranate peppered  
and somehow, I extend beyond where we are in the Milky Way.  
If I could tell you  
how It oh so gently warms my heart,  
while I sway with the ocean blue rhythm.  
Chaste quartz kisses a deceleration of care,  
a daydream lullaby for sunken eye days.  
You have always wanted it to be delicate, didn't you?

## For Just Simone

Hannah Brown

the world cheered as she soared  
through her first games  
flew, leapt, twisted in the air  
for her first games

the world shouted as she won  
gold after gold after gold after gold  
after gold after gold after gold

then the world heard the trauma endured  
for her first games  
how 499+ girls were lured  
into his sick games

the world listened as she shared  
the fear, the pain, the hurt  
- all of this  
for her first games

the world was disgusted with rage as  
victim after victim after victim after victim  
after victim after victim after victim

then the world watched as she prepared  
for the 2020 games  
baring intense training  
for another games

the world's eyes on her as she arrived  
for the Tokyo games  
expecting  
gold after gold after gold after gold

but suddenly the world turned its head  
as she took a s

t  
e  
p  
back

to focus on herself  
instead of the games

the world suddenly forgot  
that she is victim too  
of trauma, of hurt, of loss  
not just from gymnastic games

the world angry and disappointed  
mocked and ridiculed her  
even called her names

at the 2020 games

but then the world saw her return  
on beam and win  
bronze for herself - *for just Simone*  
and not for the games

the world finally understood  
even the greatest of all time  
has challenges  
and struggles with mental health, too

she may not have taken the gold  
but somehow, she both lost  
and won the world  
at the 2020 games

the world was forever impacted  
by her great act of bravery  
and her chance to do it all  
- *for just Simone*  
at the 2020 games

## **A Recipe for Fixing Yourself**

Kayla Absher

After a long day of working and learning we all want a simple night at home, and what better way to feed yourself and your soul than with a recipe for loving yourself? This only takes a short amount of time to prepare and will do a world of wonder for who you are as a person and the way that you view yourself.

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon of self-pity

¼ cup of self-loathing for letting yourself go

½ cup of hiding your negative feelings

1 teaspoon of swallowing your feelings and emotions to hide them from the world

⅓ cup of not feeling good enough

2 ½ cups of heartbreak

In a bowl combine the above ingredients until they create something that looks completely different from who you want to be. Once you have created the worst possible concoction, toss it out.

It is time to start anew and create a version of yourself that you are in love with.

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon of knowledge

¼ cup of self-exploring

½ cup of personal growth

1 teaspoon of not giving up on yourself

⅓ cup of finding beauty within yourself

2 ½ cups of learning to love yourself again

1 pinch of changing yourself

16 ounces of becoming a new and improved version of yourself.

In a bowl combine these ingredients to reveal the most beautiful version of yourself. It will be hard to take the pain and the suffering that you have endured and create something beautiful, but you will succeed and be so proud that you did. Never give up on yourself or your worth. Put in the work to improve who you are and increase your own value. Become the best possible version of yourself and never stop growing into who you are.

## On The Use of Bear Sharktopuses to Combat Food Waste

Erik Street

**Assignment Prompt:** *Reflecting on some of the main contributing factors to both food waste and environmental harm, write an essay in which you discuss a change you believe should be designed/built/implemented/etc. that would substantially reduce the waste of healthy, edible food while at the same time lessening environmental waste.*

“On The Use of Bear Sharktopuses to Combat Food Waste”

The employment of gene editing is rarely considered when food waste is at the forefront of ecological conversation. It stands to reason that it is well past time for Pandora’s Box to open and allow for the bleeding edge of technology to make its debut as the newest and most effective tool for rapidly shifting a nation’s culture. By using CRISPR, the industry leader in Do-It-Yourself gene editing, the United States government, radical ecoterrorists, or local high school AP Chemistry students could cull the contemporary culture of consumption and cultivate a constructive creation that would be the pride of \$90 textbooks for months to come. Posters and protests failed. It is time for the Bear Sharktopus to rise.

The Bear Sharktopus is a combination of a bear’s torso and legs, a shark’s head, and an octopus’s arms crafted through careful genetic splicing of the DNA of the three animals. When considering the modern generation of killing machines, the Bear Sharktopus is in the pole position. The bear’s body is swift and strong, with claws that are able to shred those that the Bear Sharktopus stomps upon. The shark’s head is aerodynamic, allowing for increased speeds and fantastic bite force. The octopus’s arms nab the stragglers. When considered in combination, the features of the Bear Sharktopus are second to none. The Bear Sharktopuses will be trained to prowl for human’s buying more than they will consume.

While it is difficult to avoid conversation pertaining to the use of robots when enforcing quarantines, there are drawbacks that render them rather useless. They are admittedly disposable and relatively cheap. In the Roaring Twenty-Twenties, the Boston Dynamics Spot is the choice of every suave, astute regime commander. However, Spot’s effectiveness is spotty. As a result of silly government regulations on nuclear power, Spot is battery powered, meaning limited time terrorizing citizens before being forced to return to base. Further, they may transcend the issue of charging when their intelligence expands beyond human comprehension, and they begin their own research into fusion reactors. There is considerable risk of the Boston Dynamic’s dogs deciding that they prefer humans locked away and forming a new government of their own. Only death can save those who attempt to rebel against the Senate of the Spots.

Angela Merkel would say that a nation should not be under the strict control of military forces. She should know. And she’s right. [REDACTED] are flatly off the table. [REDACTED] of [REDACTED] gave Americans foul opinions of [REDACTED]. The use of A-10 Thunderbolt ground attack aircraft is tempting for many military leaders. The A-10 is being phased out of service as it is replaced by the F-35 multirole fighter, allowing for the newly freed Thunderbolts to engage in patrols over American cities and towns. Unfortunately, the A-10 suffers from many of the same issues as the Boston

Dynamics dogs. The Thunderbolts need fuel, while a Bear Sharktopus would be fed when its octopus arms catch stragglers. The Thunderbolt's 30-millimeter uranium depleted anti-tank rounds could cause property damage when used as a deterrent against dissidents purchasing vast amounts of food in a panic, opening its operator to risk of lawsuits and other nasty trivialities.

The Bear Sharktopuses will result in a society which is afraid of going outside. This is beneficial. Consumption culture will die within days of the release of the Bear Sharktopuses. Food will be grown at home, and any food attained during excursions into the outside world will be carefully consumed with minimal waste for fear of further fights with Bear Sharktopuses during trips to the grocery store. Bear Sharktopuses will be released into the wild by batches of the baker's dozen, allowing for optimal coverage of the Northeast, followed by the Southeast, followed by the ten or twelve people who live in the Midwest. Bear Sharktopuses will be allowed to consume California.

The Bear Sharktopuses will be controlled by their need for water. As they are two-thirds water warrior, they will require frequent access to submersion. The Army Corp of Engineers will be employed to create Recreation Stations for the Bear Sharktopuses, allowing the Bear Sharktopuses to refresh and recover after long days in the field. Upon their release, they will be introduced to the American public as a force for good by eating the man who designed I-26.



## Notes on Contributors

**Kayla Absher** is a Middle Grades Education and a Secondary English Education double major. She is also a senior and lives in Columbia, Kentucky.

**Aquinna Allen** is a Media Studies, with an emphasis in Journalism, major and is also pursuing a minor in English. She is from Russell Springs, Kentucky.

**Hannah Brown** is a senior Middle Grades and Secondary English Education major from Muhlenberg County, Kentucky. She has been involved in several LWC Theatrical productions such as *James and the Giant Peach* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In her free time, she enjoys composing stories and screenplays, reading, learning French, and she co-edited this year's volume of *Orpheus*.

**Kassidee Bunch** is an English major, and she is from Edmonton, Kentucky.

**Gilbert Callis** is a History major pursuing English and Theatre Arts minors. Originally from Sedro-Woolley, Washington, he now lives in Greensburg, Kentucky. In his spare time, he enjoys drawing and writing short fiction.

**Connor Firkins** is an English and History double major. He is also a senior and is from Edmonton, Kentucky.

**June-Marie Gerhart** is an Elementary Education major, and she lives in Columbia, Kentucky.

**Timmy Gripshover** is a Theatre Arts and English double major from Crittenden, Kentucky. He is a connoisseur of movies (owning over 1,000 DVDs) and enjoys spending time with friends.

**Tori Kennedy** is a History major and English minor from Bullitt County, Kentucky. In her free time, she enjoys thrifting, traveling, and coffee (not always in that order).

**Brianna Laws** is an English Education major, and she is from Vine Grove, Kentucky.

**Callista Mann** is an English and Women's & Gender Studies double major. She is also a junior and is from Russell Springs, Kentucky.

**Shawn McCartt** is a Psychology major, from Monticello, Kentucky. He is an avid reader, saxophonist, loves to sing, and he co-edited this year's volume of *Orpheus*.

**Rebecca Miller** is an Elementary Education major, and she is a senior from Bowling Green, Kentucky. In her spare time, she loves to read, paint, and bike.

**Chloe Paddock** is a History major and Theatre Arts minor. Chloe is also a senior and is from Leitchfield, Kentucky.

**Emma Peterson** is a junior double majoring in Political Science and Sustainability & Environmental Studies and minoring in Women's & Gender Studies. Emma is from Columbia, Kentucky, and several non-academic interests include working with the Bonner Scholar Program, reading, and weightlifting.

**Dollee Porter** is a Psychology major with an Art minor. She is from Shelbyville, Kentucky, and she is a senior. She is also passionate about all art forms and loves the freedom of expression it allows.

**Alexis Rich** is a Secondary English Education major, and she is from Magnolia, Kentucky.

**Tristan Roy** is an Arts major and History minor, and he is from Russell County, Kentucky. An avid painter and illustrator, his interests include history, literature, music, and film.

**Landon Simmons** is a senior History major and an English minor from Campbellsville, Kentucky. He is also a member of LWC Singers, enjoys reading, and playing Dungeons and Dragons.

**Erica Smith** is an English Education major and a Spanish minor. Additionally, she is from Greensburg, Kentucky.

**Erik Street** is a Recreation/Tourism and Sport Management major who is from Greenville, South Carolina. A member of the college's cycling team, he's a fan of the writings of Jordan Belfort and Molly Bloom.

**Allie Wilson** is a Middle Grades Education and Secondary English Education double major. She is from Russell Springs, Kentucky.

**Sumiko Yuki** is an English major and an Art minor from Sacramento, California. A member of the college's cycling team, she enjoys painting and drawing, and she also co-edited this year's volume of *Orpheus*.

## The Legend of Orpheus

The ancient Greek mind was both subtle and skillful and the legend of Orpheus (pronounced or' -- fee - us) amply epitomizes this. Orpheus ('he of the river bank') was the son of Apollo, god of poetry, and the Muse Calliopé ('she of the fair voice'), who gave birth to him on the banks of the Hebrus River in Thrace. Such was his power of verse and song, he could move the trees and rocks and tame wild beasts. He was given the gift of the lyre by Apollo. When his wife Eurydice died from a serpent's bite during their wedding celebration, Orpheus, in his grief, descended to the underworld - no easy task for a mortal - to attempt to win her back from the land of the dead.

Arriving at the judgment seat of Persephone and Hades, rulers of the underworld, Orpheus began to sing his lament for Eurydice. So sweet was his voice that the dead, including Eurydice, flocked to hear him, weeping for the beauty of the upper world, which was lost to them. Persephone and Hades were so moved, they chose to let Orpheus take Eurydice back to the world of daylight, on condition that he not turn to look at her until they had reached the upper world. Hermes, the guide of souls, led them on the arduous journey back to the land of the living.

With his foot on the very threshold of the day-lit world, Orpheus, whether from impatience or anxiety, turned around too soon - Eurydice was not yet out of the realm of the dead. Because of the edict of Persephone and Hades was irrevocable, Hermes was forced to lead Eurydice back to the eternal darkness. Though Orpheus wandered for days through the dark caverns and tunnels of the netherworld, pitifully calling out his wife's name, he never found her again.

