

ELEKTRAPHROG



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FICTION

YOU DID

FICTION BY LYDIA

We told you not to light the match, but you did it anyway. You were so drunk you couldn't understand yourself. We tried to stop you. You said you wanted to do it. So you did it.

We hid from the fire department when they arrived at the Celery Fields, ten minutes after the fire started. We can still smell the putrid stench of burnt hair and seared skin. We can hear the homeless man's screams echo in our minds. We can still close our eyes and remember him waking up from his sleep, already engulfed in gasoline fueled fire. The flames licked vertically along the edges of the roof as the entire gazebo was engulfed. The 30 year old picnic bench turned to ashes. You were laughing, holding the matches. We couldn't believe our eyes when you doused everything in gasoline, including him. As quickly as the fire started, it ended.

You were too drunk to remember, but we remember. We remember you threatening us, if we told anyone what we saw; you would do the same to us. Finally, you passed out. Sarah's brothers loaded you in the bed of her Ford pick-up. No one wanted to take you home after what you did. So they dumped you behind the closest McDonald's. When we saw you next, you were drinking again. Jimmy thought about knifing you for what you did, but we told him to wait. We realized if we kept giving you whiskey, you would pass out fast and then we could leave. It wasn't unusual to see someone passed out drunk at a place like Ackerman Park.

Three months go by and a few of us are riding our four wheelers on top of the Celery Field Hill. You hear about it, and ride yours up to ours. Jimmy dares you to take the Trail all the way to the dead end. You were already drunk, at least 12 bottles in. You wanted to put money on it. Jimmy bet a hundred. When you disappeared down the hill, we all bet on your life not your money.

You didn't know that there was barbed wire fence at the dead end. You found out quick, after you couldn't stop in time. The barbed wire made a perfect line across your neck, almost all the way through. Your intoxicated blood was squirting out of

your severed trachea, covering your white tee shirt. We have that memory etched into our brains, too.

We all won the bet we placed on you. We bet you saw the homeless man appear before you as you hit the wire. The Gates of Hell opening for you as you drive through; severed head and all. But you said you wanted to do it, so you did it.

We knew if we told, you would still find a way to kill us, so we didn't. We would rather not think about it, but weeks after we couldn't help but notice the vultures circling, where we knew you were. We would all sit on top of the Celery Fields hill and talk about you, watching the vultures.

We knew you had a rough life. Your parents were going to put missing posters out for you, but they didn't. Your dad is abusive and your mom loves pain pills. We knew you were taking pain pills. We knew your mom practically fed them to you. Your dad would take you out back and beat you until you couldn't fight back. Sometimes he would give you a shovel and make you dig a hole big enough to be your grave. Your hands would bleed, and you would wonder if today was the day your dad would come out and put you in your grave. That was when you were fourteen.

You were really fucked up by twenty-one, selling beer to minors. You went away for years. When we saw you, you had changed from PTSD. Then you came to us, wanting attention. Said you needed friends, someone to care. We thought there was hope for you. Then you turned to the bottle again, twist top and child proof. Then you burned that man alive. We will be the only ones who know you for what you are, a murderer. Who is now in the stomachs of vultures.

GOING DOWN?

FICTION BY RILEY QUINN

The space is cramped with all thirteen of us in here, but we couldn't tell the woman in labor and her neurotic husband to wait for the next elevator with her looking ready to pop, and nor could we disclude the man with his son and daughter here to see their mommy who they talked excitedly about seeing while their father stood behind them with tears silently rolling down his face, but the annoying man yelling into his cellphone about how his mother had yet another heart attack and how could she keep him from meetings with these important high-rolling clients, so him we could've told to catch the next ride up though he had rudely shoved his way in pushing the nurses, just coming in for their shift, towards the back of the elevator and it wasn't that the nurses were nice or anything, shoving is just rude, but I mean, there were three nurses and at the time when they got on the elevator we had plenty of room for them but it didn't mean any of us particularly enjoyed their presence because one kept telling the other female nurse about all the crazy partying she did last night with a bunch of girlfriends since her boyfriend, who was nurse number three, was busy last night doing things with his family but judging by the look he and the other female nurse exchanged when she wasn't looking, so we all figured the only thing he was doing last night was her, female nurse number two, but of course the three of them were oblivious to the doctor in scrubs with a surgical mask hanging from his face just under his chin with this almost broken look on his face because he had just broken the news to a family that he had lost their child on the operating table but at the back, the very back, was the passenger everyone was avoiding and it wasn't because of the two orderlies standing on either side of him because they actually had friendly faces and were some of the nicest guys working in that particular part of the hospital, so, shocker, the other passengers were afraid of the psych ward patient in the wheelchair in a straightjacket muttering to himself about how they're going to die, they're all going to die, crash, bang, boom, splat, followed by a crazy laugh and then he'd start it all over again, and now I know what you're wondering, that's all thirteen passengers, so which one is he because he has to be one of them, and the answer is yes I am, but you have probably guessed already which one I am,

and you are also probably wondering why I am muttering such things and telling you about all these people in the elevator and that would be because they are all going to die, myself included, and someone should know the truth of what happened here today because when people talk about the passengers on the elevator and say they were great people, but you'll know the truth, that some of them were rotten and deserved the end that befell them, well, I'm so funny, you see, the elevator is rigged so that once the door closed after the last person got on from the first floor, the elevator will make a direct trip to the top of the building and then one more express trip, straight to the morgue in the basement and so you see the hilarity of my word choice, and I laugh manically again and you can see them all flinch, they can't wait to escape me, but probably noticed that we have reached the top, the thirteenth floor, that is until the elevator comes to a screeching halt and suddenly drops and over the deafening sounds of their terrified screams, my manic laughter can be heard.

THE THIRD LAW

FICTION BY BEATRICE

The Third Law

(1) MASKING (n). The act of covering up one's own natural appearance.

(2) Beatrice Jolie is an intelligent, attractive 26 year old woman. She is studying to be a nurse during the day and working nights at a nursing home. Beatrice doesn't find it hard to stay awake all night; the patients are elderly and sleep fitfully, so there is often someone getting up who needs her help. They all – the men and the women – tell her how beautiful she is, and often.

(3) Beatrice Jolie leaves each night shift feeling she will never be able to wash the smell of death out of her hair, her skin.

(4) EARLY MORNING AT BEATRICE'S APARTMENT IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.
BEATRICE IS GETTING READY FOR CLASS.

With careful strokes Beatrice applies primer, foundation, and concealer to her face. She no longer has to think about what she's doing; it is a part of her day, putting on this other face. She swipes liner, mascara, fills in her eyebrows, layers color onto her lids. Chooses a larger brush for the contouring that will create bones where none exist. False lashes are the final step, and her work is complete: identity in place. She checks the mirror to be sure. Good.

(5) Lambert's third law states that the luminous intensity of LIGHT decreases exponentially with distance as it travels through an absorbing MEDIUM.

(6) Beatrice gets to class just on time and sits in her usual seat, not too close to the front (where she could draw the professor's attention) but not too far in the back (where she would feel invisible). She feels the eyes of the other students as she stacks her notebook and textbook onto the desk, feels in her bag for a pen. Beatrice is

prepared for this. All young people look at each other, searching for flaws. She is safe, thanks to her careful routine in front of the mirror. The professor starts the lecture.

(7) The professor has wispy, flyaway hair. He hasn't shaved in days. He is highly respected in the field; they even bragged about him on the university website.

(8) Masks keep their own timetables. By the time Beatrice finishes classes, gets home, eats, starts her homework, it is time to change into scrubs and rush to work. All night in the dimly lit nursing station she will answer calls, change soiled linens and try to read her textbook, hunched over the metal desk. As usual, several patients smile up at her as she approaches their beds that night and say, "Hello, beautiful." It makes no sense to Beatrice – her carefully applied makeup has long ago been wiped off with a towelette; leaving only mascara residue ringing her tired eyes.

(9) Her mask expires every night here; these people have never seen her any way BUT unmasked.

(10) No one in Beatrice's classes have ever called her beautiful. If anyone does talk to her, it's mostly about assignments or this or that professor or where to go for a parking pass.

(11) According to Lambert's third law, the luminosity of Beatrice's natural beauty was decreased with every smudge, every brush, every finger full of Revlon and Mac that she placed on her face. The makeup became the MEDIUM which absorbed all the light, so no one ever saw her true intensity.

THIRTEEN AXES

MINUS ONE

FICTION BY LEXXA

Blood is pouring from my fingers again and I have no clue as to why. Maybe it has something to do with my cell phone being cracked. Glass pieces are everywhere and I am lucky enough to crush every piece in between my fingers somehow. At least that's what I think, even though I cannot find any glass on my actual hands. As I am washing off the blood I peak out of my kitchen window. Crazy old lady Jane's garage is open—inside I can see a total of 13 axes hanging from the tool box. Why would such an old lady need that many axes? It's not like she's planning to chop down any trees anytime soon. Her husband was murdered three years ago. I was the one to find him laying in a pile of blood and guts. I thought for sure I would be scarred for life, but I wasn't. They never did find the murderer, even after six more killings. Still, I was not scared. I went to grab a towel to dry my hands and a thought came rushing through my head. Axes. Each victim was killed with an ax. Maybe old lady Jane is hiding something. Something big. What if she is the murderer after all. I must figure this out.

I spent the whole day planning how I would get inside of crazy Jane's home and how I would find clues and fast and get out. It's now 9:02 P.M. and I patiently waited for the clock to strike 9:04 P.M. which is the exact time the lights in her house go off and she goes to bed. 9:03. I left the house dressed in black, I hope she does not see me or attack because I don't have any weapons to defend myself. I am now at her house outside of her window I peek in and stare for 15 minutes so I knew she was asleep. She was laying there so lifeless in her pink nightgown. I went to window number two and stared for another 15 minutes. I sprinted to the next window and to my surprise it was unlocked. I quietly rolled it up and snuck inside. The house is so old lady-ish. Floral wallpaper, floral furniture, floral everywhere and it smells like old people. Figures. I go to the garage and notice that there are only 12 axes now when

earlier that day there was 13. Was she planning on another murder? I search high and low and find no other clues but where oh where did that other ax go to? What is crazy Jane hiding? I go into her room and see her lying there so hopeless, so innocent. "AHHHHHH!" pitiful Jane screams with all her might, I run out of her house drenched in blood and sweat. I look at my right hand and there is an ax in it, a bloody murder weapon. I must have taken it from the garage for self defense when she attacked me and forgot all about it. I fall asleep and when I wake up I there are cops everywhere and the garage is wide open. I look closely and count. Twelve axes hanging on the tool box. A smile rises on my face.

DISJOINTED REACTION TO A SCREAM

FICTION BY BRANDIE HYDE

Hearing the shrill shriek caused her muscles to freeze mid-stride with only forward momentum providing the little extra nudge thus forcing the otherwise stop-motion foot to at last drop from its state of momentary suspended animation.

Her eyes slam closed as if to keep the recalled detail specifics from escaping the swirling centrifuge at work in her skull. Had the person who uttered the sound been a woman? A man? A manly girl? Or a girly man? Not that sex, gender, or identity mattered per se, but it is a factor in terms of deducing a superior approach. Had it originated from a forward or a back alley? From the left or from the right? Was there any other clue to be gleaned from that split second? An informed decision is key.

Her eyes reopen following the near instantaneous blink which felt so much longer while the snap analyzation was conducted. Alone she ran against the sea of others who, in choosing to ignore the potential danger, had quickly spun on their heels 180 degrees opting to mind their own business.

Others flee as she passes in favor of pursuing the origin point most likely, and she readies herself to take on whatever scene she may encounter and simultaneously observant enough to testify to details in court.

The oddity of her otherwise gun loving nation, she didn't see the necessity for them and thus didn't have one nor cared to.

A problem with guns? They're too easy, too disconnected, and she feared they may take her to a place she doesn't care to go. There's no such thing as unarmed as

people have been killing one another from the beginning, so she didn't need a manufactured tool developed specifically for that singular purpose.

A person who needs to be packing heat to defend themselves and are incapable of doing so by any other means were wussies—guns are for *pus*—.

Rounding the corner and witnessing the act in progress she closes in... 3... 2... 1...
showtime.

ULTIMATE ULTIMATUM

FICTION BY BRANDON HENRY

On an ordinary day, Bickford would have been already deep into the bowels of the Clearwell mine. He has now worked in that bloody mine for over fifteen years. Like most families in England, times were tough. Bick only makes five quids a day, barely making ends meet. The Great War has been ravaging Europe for years now. Workers of all types were required to work longer hours in support of the war efforts. Before the war had broken out, Bick had met his wife whom was studying at Oxford University. A beautiful, fair skinned woman, who had fancied Bick since they met at a local tavern while she was on holiday. They wed six months later, and started a family together claiming home to the suburbs of Gloucester.

Bickford would work until the wee hours of the night, eat dinner with Dorothy and his two beautiful children Alice and Peter. He was a picture perfect father, always there to tuck the children into bed with a good story. All of that had changed. The war had forced Bick to practically live in the mines. Some workers have gone on unofficial strikes, claiming they could not afford to feed their families. Which was another reason Bick was forced to pick up more work hours. This inconvenience had placed a lot of strain on Dorothy and Bickford's marriage. He was only home long enough to shower and sleep never seeing his children awake. He was also never drafted, the doctors told Bick he had early stages of "The Black Lung." He wasn't opposed to joining, he actually liked the idea of throwing a spanner in the works on those Jerry's.

Several hours after Dorothy had readied the children for bed, Bick stumbled in the door after a grueling thirteen hour shift, black as the night sky; he headed straight to the washroom to have a shower. Quietly Dorothy says "Bick, I can't do this anymore."

"Do what, Dorothy?" Bick said.

“We never see you, your children, they don’t ever get to see you. They need their father, and I need my husband. You need to leave that mine, it will kill you too, just like your father!”

Bick replied, “How do you plan to live? I cannot just stop work, I have to make money! How would we bloody live then?”

As the tensions rose, Bick stormed upstairs, wondering how she could be such a selfish twat. He thought what can I do? After all he has grown rather zonked of the mine. He finished washing up, and proceeded downstairs to confront Dorothy. As he walked down the staircase, he could here Dorothy whimpering over the creaks and groans of his footsteps on the old wooden floor boards.

Dorothy continued to argue with Bick, telling him to find another job. She stressed that her and the children needed Bick. She gave him an ultimatum, change jobs to be with the family, or they – her and the children – must leave for her parents in London.

“That stonking mine, Bick, it has nicked you from us!” Dorothy said.

“Have you gone barmy? If I leave the mine, where will I make money? I love you, Dorothy, but I can’t just sit on me arse!” Bick said.

“What if we leave? We can pack up and go across the pond, at least until the war is over.”

“Yeah Dorothy, that would be cheap as chips! Sod off! You’re mad!”

The arguing continued until the early hours of the morning. Bick had finally fallen asleep on the couch, while Dorothy had claimed their bedroom.

Bick had been woken up by the sounds of planes flying overhead accompanied by thunderous booms in the distance, one after another. It sent shockwaves that shook the entire house, it resembled the shocks while in the mine. The sunlight had pierced through the raggedy curtains, shinning onto Bick’s face. He realized he was late for work. The sound of the planes and booming was all too familiar. He sprung up off the couch and ran to gather his things for work. As he rushed out the door onto the front porch, he could see plumes of black smoke, the blackest of black he has ever seen. Blacker than the soot that caked his entire body after a hard day’s work.

Overhead were Nazi bombers. Not knowing if there would be more attacks, Bick drove to the mine. As he reached them, he could see police officers and Tommy's blocking off all roads leading to the area. "Blimey!" Bick said, He had finally realized that they had bombed the mine. The Germans have occasionally bombed areas which aided the war with coal and iron. Bick decided to stay, and see if there was anything he could do. Perhaps now, Bick won't have to argue the toss about the ultimatum Dorothy laid down.

Meanwhile, Dorothy had risen and started her day while listening to the BBC on her wireless. There were lots of dishes to be done and other chores around the house. She also figured she needed to pack later to be off to London by dinner time. She thought it was obvious what Bick had decided to do. "How could he choose that mine over his family," she thought? On the broadcast, Tord Lidell was talking about some bombings that had happened in Britain today. "...And in Gloucester, the Clearwell mine, which is a major supplier of our naval ships, had been destroyed just after 7:00 am this morning. Casualties are unknown at this time, it doesn't seem likely any inside have survived." The plate Dorothy had been washing crashed to the floor, shattering at the same time her heart did. "Bick..." she thought, "Bick was to be at work," she did not see his truck outside. Panic had set in, knowing her husband is buried alive. Her stomach began to knot, she felt weak and nauseous knowing the last thing said to one another was not "I love you," but was her threatening to leave him.

After the police had shooed Bick away as if he was a curious child in a restricted area, he headed for home. The thought of him missing work brought all kinds of emotions to him. He felt overwhelmed with a flood of guilt, sadness, and even joy. He kept thinking of his friends, crushed below the surface. He thought of how Dorothy last night yelled and pushed him to leave the mine. He reached the front entry and frantically shoved the door in, almost removing it from the rusted hinges that supported it. There, he saw Dorothy and the children weeping huddled together on the couch, as if striving to stay alive out in the blistering cold of winter. As if seeing a ghost, they hesitated. For a brief second, time seemed to be at a standstill. Dorothy lunged off the couch and embraced Bick, the children followed frantically. "I thought you were dead!" Dorothy cried, "I'm sorry Bick, I love you!"

"I love you too Dorothy, I am sorry I haven't been here for you and the children." Bick replied with a broken voice. Overwhelmed with emotions they all began

to cry, and for a moment, forgot about the tragedy at the mine. Without any other words spoken, they knew they were a family again.

Bickford had been so furious with Dorothy this morning over last night's event. He now knew that if that argument never had happened, he would have been in the mine. It would have become his final resting place, a tomb. One in which would not be suitable for any man. His marriage had been endangered, but without that threat, he would never even have had a chance to decide about the stipulation which was thrown at him.

The following day, Bickford had given it a lot of thought, perhaps going to America was the best choice. They packed their things and sold the house, and left for America. Since that dreadful day, their affection for one another had flourished, it grew greater than when they first fell in love. Bickford started working for General Motors, assembling tanks. As for Alice and Peter, they couldn't be happier to have their father back. No longer would Bick live in a world of utter darkness such as that mine. Even with the war continuing, he at least had his family and they were safe in America. A job can always be replaced, but a family cannot be.

CANDELABRA

FICTION BY MEGAN FINSEL

I spend three weeks in the dining room staring at it on the shelf before I find the courage to touch it. When my hand doesn't pass through, when my fingertips connect with the cold, rough metal, I could cry.

Touch is a funny thing, when you think about it. How when you are alive, you use it to interact with the world. A touch on a shoulder equals familiarity, while a hug offers comfort. Textures tell you what is pleasant, and what is not, while temperatures warn you of danger. Then, when you are dead, touch is what you feel starved of the most.

When I lift it, it's heavier than I remember from my past life. I stroke the metal; run my fingertips over the rust and peeling paint. I touch it to my lips to feel the chill. I sit and hold it for hours at a time. I try to carry it with me, but the doors quickly thwart my efforts. I cannot open them, and it cannot pass through. So I stay here in the dining room because when I hold it I feel alive again. It reminds me of my humanity.

Sometimes, I imagine I can still see traces of blood on it. Isn't it funny that the weapon used to kill me is now the only object I can interact with? Yeah, it's hilarious.

LIES

FICTION BY MEGAN FINSEL

She was lying to me. I knew that because the truth was spelled out across her face. It was hypnotizing, in fact, how each word bled across her forehead. I couldn't take my eyes off them. Was I the only one who could see them? I couldn't tell; no one else seemed to notice.

"I'm alright, a little tired..." she was saying. Maybe I had asked her how she was doing, I don't remember. I just recall watching the words *I'm exhausted* appear and disappear on her cheek.

"...life has been treating me well, you know, and work has been fun." she continued. "I couldn't be happier." *I'm depressed* spelled down her neck. My stomach twisted.

"My brother? Yeah, he's good. Parents are doing well, too." I could see sadness in her eyes, an unwanted emotion she was struggling to mask. I must have asked whether she was sure or not because she answered, "of course." But her right arm spelled out *no*. I tried to smile as she did.

"Well, I'll see you later." she said with a wave and turned to leave, and I stood there watching as two words swirled down both of her legs.

SAVE ME.

STAINS

FICTION BY MEGAN FINSEL

"It won't come out," she said, and I could hear panic in her voice.

"Just scrub harder."

From the sound of the splashing liquid hitting the tile, I could imagine she was slapping it against the side of the tub.

"What do I do if it's permanent?"

I rolled my eyes. "You wear it just like everyone else does."

"But what will they think of me?"

Humans, you're so insecure; you always let the opinions of others define you.
"No one will notice unless they truly know you," I said, "and then they won't care."

She was crying; I could hear her sobs from under the bathroom door. I sighed.
"It can't be that bad."

"Not that bad?" The door swung open and she stood there, bearing before her the shimmering piece of herself. I could recognize her soul even though it had a very red, very obvious, stain in the middle.

"It's still there!" Her voice quivered. "I ran out of good deeds to wash it with." Behind her, I saw the bathroom was a mess; iridescent bubbles floated on the floor.
"What do I do?"

I shook my head. "This is a part of life. We make mistakes, and souls stain. Sometimes we can wash them out, sometimes we can't. Go iron it, it'll be fine."

THE GHOST IN THE BEDROOM

FICTION BY MEGAN FINSEL

She was screaming again. I could hear her even though the door muffled the sound. I tried not to listen as she shrieked and hollered about muddy work boots and nonsense. I didn't envy her husband; the poor old man took the worst of it.

A slice of light fell in a golden sheen between the curtains, making a wedge on the floor. I watched as the dust drifted lazily, not a care in the world. *I wish I were dust*, I thought. Pounding footsteps came up the stairs. When the bedroom door blew open, I jumped from my seat. She swept in with the strength of a tempest, carrying a whirlwind of noise. Nothing about this woman was silent.

"...and that cat!" she screamed. "You're always letting it inside the house! Told you, I'm allergic!" She blew past me without even looking.

"Would you shut up?" I asked. She was rushing about, yanking papers off the desk, pushing books onto the floor. A can hit the floorboards, scattering pencils at my feet. I looked at them, longing to pick one up again, to hold it in my hands and write with it. *I miss creating things*.

"If you can leave the house a mess, then so can I!" she declared, yanking the quilt off the mattress.

I wish they had never moved in, I thought, *the other tenants had been so nice and quiet*.

"Please, shut up." I said, but she didn't even look at me. I missed the days when people could hear me. Not that they listened, but it was better than being invisible. Now, nothing I could do would get anyone's attention.

“And your underwear!” She held up a pair of red boxers and shook them at the doorway. “You’re always leaving them about. Would it kill you to pick them up once in a while?” She went to the closet and began pulling out clothes. “You’re always telling me to tidy up, how ridiculous!”

“Shut up!” I shouted. She spun around and looked at me, past me, through me. Her eyes couldn’t focus on where my face was; they stared out the window and into the woods. *See me!* I thought. *I’m right here. I’ve always been right here. Why don’t you ever see me?* She whirled away and proceeded to yank boxes from the top of the closet.

“Shut up!” I screamed, louder than she had ever been. The walls shook, the floor shook; the entire house quivered with the force of my voice. She stopped and stared at me as if she could actually see me this time. Her eyes met mine and steadily grew larger and larger.

“Can you see me?” I asked. I was both scared of, and desperate for, the answer.

“G...” she whispered, and as she stared at me, she progressively grew paler. “Gh...!”

“Can you hear me?”

Her response was a scream, the shrillest scream I had ever heard from her. She flung herself at the doorway, tripping over the quilt that snared her feet. I ran towards her, but she crawled into the hallway. I was stopped at the door, unable to go any farther; unable to follow her downstairs, outside, or anywhere. I looked about my prison and moaned. *If I weren’t already dead...*

Downstairs I could hear her yelling at her husband again, telling him about me, the ghost in the bedroom. The stories were all true, this house was really haunted, and they had to move. I sat myself down at the window again and wondered who would move in next, as the dust continued swirling in motes.

TODAY AS I WALKED

FICTION BY ANNETTE KINSHIP

...downtown called upon me to notice the many beautiful sights. There are buildings of great importance: a well-known museum; a magnificent looking bank with a Gold dome; an old theatre where famous plays and dances had been seen and an Old Catholic church of great size.

It is fall and the leaves around town were at their height of beauty in color. The old church was wrapped around with leaves, on vines, of golden yellows, brilliant oranges and romantic reds. I stopped to look at this master piece of a building with all its glory: the pillars, the stone construction and stained glass windows.

I became curious as I saw movement through one of the windows. *I wondered, "A woman?"* Then I saw two bodies. "Are they kissing?" I said, wondering as I turned around to see if anyone had heard.

Why would it seem so strange for them to be kissing? What deemed such importance to my soul? Possibly because the Catholic Church has such an incredible reputation of self-control.

Gazing upward into the window, I realized they were definitely kissing and hugging, even more intently now. They appeared relentlessly not wanting to release. Suddenly they backed away from one another relinquishing their lust. For a moment I thought to walk away, but they swiftly and ravenously molded back into each other's arms. I could see them fairly clear as they were behind a window that had obviously been replaced with clear glass, as the stained glass in all the rest of the windows seemed, still, to be intact. The windows height revealed them from thigh to above their heads, which allowed me to see the closeness in which they stood.

Were they so encapsulated that they had forgotten about the clear window? I stood gazing, exhilarated by the beauty of the stone and fall leaves, and the passion of two human beings within a high society catholic church embracing their desires with such efficacy. Romanticism engulfing me in this rare and courageous moment they were sharing.

As I thought upon these things, he reached for her leg at her thigh and pulled it to his hip, her inner thigh being raptured into his groin with such passion. I could feel the excitement. Beginning to feel guilty I wondered should I walk away and give them their privacy. Is anyone watching me watch them in this passionate moment. I could not look away.

*In the church..., I kept thinking, the Roman Catholic Church of worship! Passion discouraged if not shunned especially within the cathedral. They did not know I was there watching them. If anyone belonging to the church knew of this would they be forced to leave the church and never return? Would they be shunned to the body of the church and through eternity? Though I see love as a gift from God, and intimacy of this type, relished by the God I would want to know, **they were making love in the church!***

They had removed clothing sometime when I was in deep thought, and the passion had worked its way to me where I stood on the sidewalk. She embraced him tighter while he pulled her closer, then she lay back, allowing him to move in closer and deeper as she welcomed him into her.

They had absolutely, unconditionally made passionate love in the church, **the Roman Catholic Church**. The heart of legalistic religion. The influence of man's means to survive. They were now my idols.

POETRY

EARTH REWRITES

POETRY BY DR. WOODY MCCREE

You have been bombarded, my friend,
Like the moon and mars, which bear the scars
Of asteroids pounding 4 billion years past.
But you, unlike these wounded giants, bear few such visible scars.

You are alive, ever in motion, always healing,
Ever reinventing yourself.
You are always under revision.

ANNIVERSARY MASSACRE

POETRY BY LEXXA

Roses are bloody
Violets are gutty
Stabbing at your flesh
Slicing off your parts
Happy Anniversary
You little slut.

CAT AND MOUSE

POETRY BY WESLEY STRALL

I have these thoughts.
Magnificent words.
A symphony in my head.
Endorphins release.
Pleasure takes root.
Then they are gone.
I can't remember them.
As hard as I try.
They stay hidden in my mind.
Only to return when I unlock another.
Shortly after, they leave me again.
An eternal game of cat and mouse.
I grow so very tired of chasing.
There is but only one way to end this pitiful game.

OH JUPITER

POETRY BY BRANDON HENRY

Gargantuan gassy globe,
Like a Cyclopes,
Ever staring into the
Deep vast expanse of the universe.

With a large red eye,
Containing
Violent anticyclonic storms,
Churning the atmosphere
Like butter for at least 400 years.

I get a glimpse of you and your
Four largest children,
Lo, Europa, Ganymede, and Callisto,
Appearing as an olive on a tooth pick,
Bathing in a martini.

While gazing through his larger
Eye,
Galileo discovered you,
From your light,
But Simon named you.

Shining brighter than the nearest star,
365 million miles away,
Makes you seem not so far.

Come next year,
Juno
Will be paying you a visit.

Once she is gone,
You will remain alone.
Forever soaking in the black void

You will stay there,
But I will continue
To watch you from here!

SCARS

POETRY BY MEGAN FINSEL

Every scar has a story,
even the ones you can't see
when you look at her
the ones crisscrossing her heart like a map
telling where all she has been and what all has happened.

She is a walking novel,
a compilation of the lies she has been told
and the lies she has believed
the words people have said
sketched for eternity into her flesh.

A civil war rages within her,
although she is taking up arms,
the enemy is throwing daggers into her self-worth.
While her demons
chase her in circles around the room inside her head,
telling her what all she is not,
and repeating every ugly nickname she ever had.

THE FRAGILE LAKE

POETRY BY ANNETTE KINSHIP

My moments of fear
Are fragile like a lake
Carefully I tread
Into the dark of the night
Remembering the pain
On the other side
Tremulous woes
'board my ship
They move about
Tipping and longing
To suck me in.
Moments of fear
As a thief
Into the depth
Of the dark.
No candle, no star
No flicker of lightning bug
As I tiptoe
Fear
Under my feet,
My heart knowing
I could freeze
If a crackle
Beneath defeat.
I tenderly
As if walking on air
Steel my thoughts

Searching for
The memory of light.
A feather if dropped
With the cold night air
Could shift the thin
Frozen sheet of water,
I must stay my mind
Or the chill air
Will become my fate.
I walk with all grace
I lift my weight to God
I tend to my soul
With the strength
Of Love.
My ship does not tip
My feet do not sink
The thief cannot steal
Darkness loosed.

VISUAL ART

A BRIDGE'S BONES

VISUAL ART BY MATTHEW FARROW



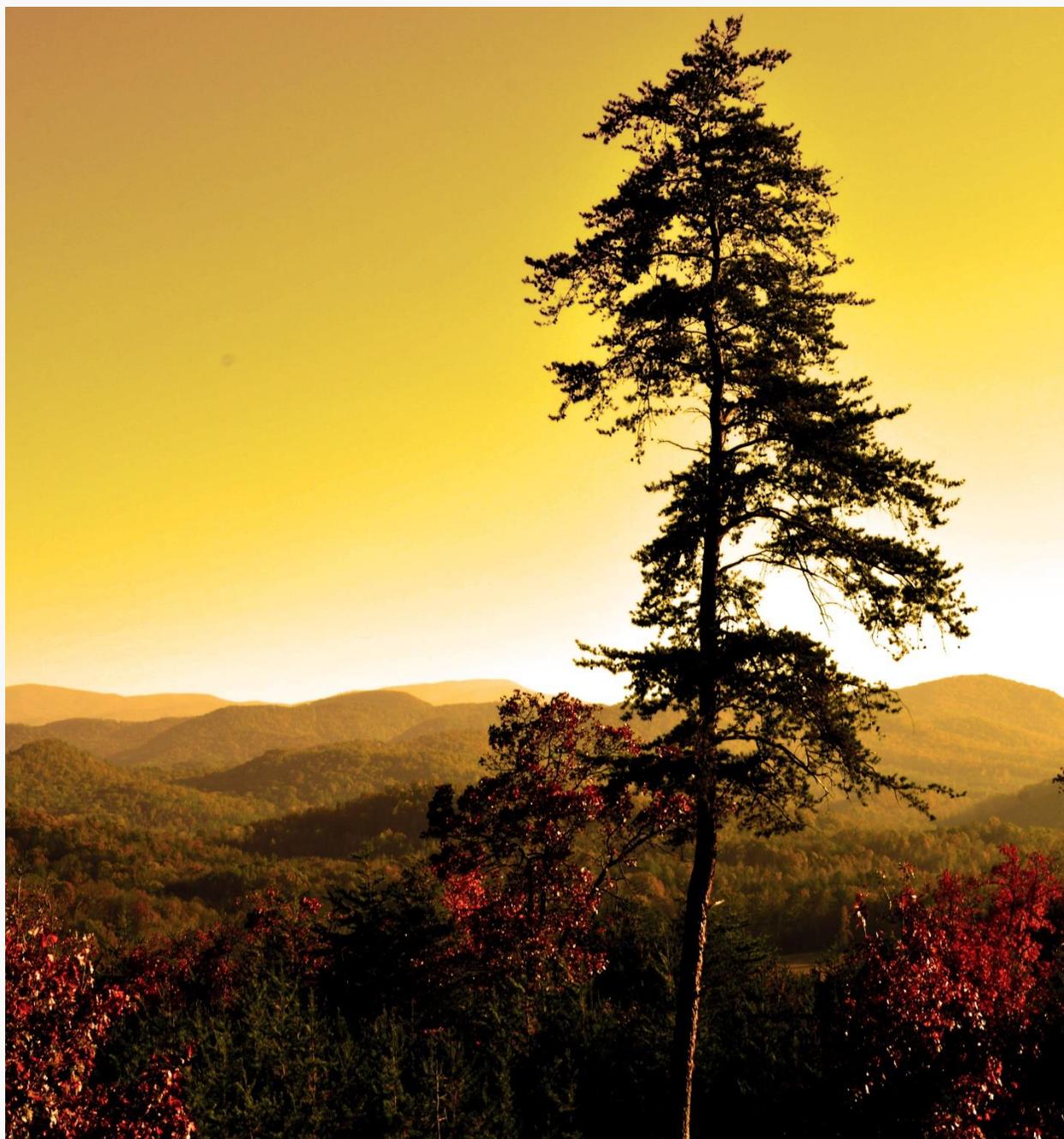
UNDER THE BOARDWALK

VISUAL ART BY MATTHEW FARROW



A GOLDEN SUNSET

VISUAL ART BY MATTHEW FARROW



BIOGRAPHIES

A WORD FROM A FEW OF OUR CONTRIBUTORS

BRANDIE HYDE (FICTION)	My name is Brandie and as a resident of the North Port / East Venice area, I'm what they call a "displaced homemaker" who, in light of her situation, decided it was time to crank out a few degrees at long last in hopes of landing a position making a <i>living</i> wage. I've learned well enough by now that making any sort of "plans" is an utterly pointless and futile exercise, at least so far as I'm concerned anyway. That's not to say it's for lack of trying, mind you...things just rarely go "as planned". To counter this, I typically have a contingency, or two for that matter, at the ready. I was never a girl scout, but as a general rule I prefer to be prepared as opposed to the alternative.
MEGAN FINSEL (FICTION / POETRY)	I'm a Special Education major with a love for books. Writing is not only a hobby, it's my passion; it's how I connect with the world by sharing my thoughts and emotions. If you want to get to know me, you need to read my stories, because I put a piece of myself into each one. My goal is to inspire at least one person with my work; then I know I've done my job.
WESLEY STRALL (POETRY)	My name is Wesley Strall, I was born in Sarasota, Florida and I am 19 years old. Cheers.
MATTHEW FARROW (VISUAL ARTS)	A brief biography: I'm a twenty year old photographer. I wish to make my living by becoming an artist. My objective is to engage the viewer to have a relaxed and comfortable feeling when viewing my work.

STAFF

CARLEY BAKER	<p>My name is Carley and I am 19 years old. I graduated from high school in Massachusetts in 2014 and moved back here after that. I like watching movies, reading, writing, and listening to music. I'm going to major in English but I don't think I know what exactly I'm going to with that yet. I want to be able to do a lot of different things so I don't get bored. I know that I'm not any good at science or math, though. In high school I had to build a catapult for a physics project and I duct taped a ladle to shoe box and it didn't go well. I also like animals and the rain and I know how to juggle.</p>
DANIELLE DEAN	<p>My name is Danielle, and this is my second time taking this sort of class with Professor Masucci (College Magazine and Production II). I'm twenty-one years old, was born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio, and moved down to Florida with my family roughly two years ago. As an English major, I'm a bit of a fanatic for reading and writing, and aim to one day be able to publish my own books. Professionally, I'd like to work in the publishing industry, whether as a reader or an editor. So really, this class has been perfect for me!</p>
TAYLOR HILL	<p>My name is Taylor, a born and raised Floridian who graduated in 2014 from Venice High School. I spend a lot of my time working as either a gymnastic coach or a sales associate at Pacsun, and going to school finishing up my A.A. When I have time though, you can find me hunched over my computer or in front of my TV crying over my favorite shows and movies, reading, writing, and the if I'm feeling adventurous, outside exploring and adventuring. At this point I am still trying to figure out what I really want to do with my future, right now I'm on a route to majoring in English and maybe a job in editing or publishing in the future, who knows, I could want to be a champion mountain climber tomorrow. At this point I'm just trying to take one day at a time and live a full life.</p>
KIMBERLY LIECHTY	<p>My name is Kimberly, I was born and raised in south Florida and I graduated from Sarasota High School in 2015. I enjoy spending time with my family, hiking, gardening, and going to museums. I love to read and write in my free time which, one might guess, makes me more inclined to English and history rather than science and math. I love movies and television shows as much as a good book. I look forward to one day knowing what I want to do with my life. However, at this point, I have absolutely no idea. I have a genuine interest in the history of mankind and I hope to travel the world and learn about as many different cultures as I can.</p>
SHAUNA LONGSHORE	<p>My name is Shauna, I'm 20 years old. I'm from Philadelphia but I moved to this area nine years ago and graduated from Lemon Bay High School in 2014. I've always been very interested in journalism and all the areas surrounding it. I'm an avid reader, sometimes I'll spend a few hours just</p>

reading an entire book because putting them down is so difficult for me. I love traveling, I went to London once a few years ago and since then have been saving to return one day. For me being able to travel and learn about all the different history and art in the world outside of a classroom is incredible. Aside from my interests, I'm also a cake decorator in a bakery! I'll be finished with my A.A. this spring, after that I'll most likely be moving to Orlando to finish my bachelor's degree.

MICHAEL LOOS

I was born in Florida; I've said for a long time that I disliked, and even hated Florida, but that was because I wasn't looking in the right places for something to love, and have lived in Venice for just about all of my life. I now find that it would be hard to live in a state that didn't have palm trees, I adore them and the beach. Some things I find pleasant are bike-riding, hiking (just signed up for an Environmental Ethics class,) reading/writing, and browsing the internet -_- . I also love museums, but there aren't too many around Venice, I love looking at art and I really love the classical era; Greece, Rome. Also, the Renaissance. I also love cultures and don't know what I want to do with my life either. I don't know what kind of picture we're supposed to upload, I hope this Google-Deep Dreamed picture of me on 4th of July is sufficient.

JOHN PEELE

My name is John Bradley Peele and I'm a sophomore at State College of Florida who is pursuing a degree in creative writing. I'm also interested in arts, journalism, and entrepreneurship. I'm 28 years old and I was born and raised in Bradenton, Florida. I put off college for a while, instead working in restaurants and playing in bands, but now I'm seeking my degree in order to become a professional writer and to establish skills that will allow me to do something positive in the world. I hope to eventually start my own organizations that relate to creative arts, publishing, and social awareness, once I have the experience.

DARSIE STROTHER

My name is Darsie and I am 18 years old. I was born and raised in Sarasota and graduated from Riverview High School in 2015. I am currently an Assistant Manager at Chick-fil-a Westfield Sarasota Square Mall. I love hanging out with friends and family and I enjoy staying active. I love going to the beach, boating, rollerblading, and water skiing. Lately, I've been wanting to try new activities such as kiteboarding and windsurfing. In the future I plan on obtaining a masters degree and becoming a Speech-language Pathologist but for now, I'm just having a good time.