

Elektraphrog



Issue 10.2

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her.

By Savannah George

he opens a book
to find that it perfectly
defines the woman of his dreams.

she is wild
like the palominos
that still run free in the west

her hair was
gifted by the sun
glowing with golden hues

her eyes are
intimidating yet beautiful
like a rattlesnake's diamond back

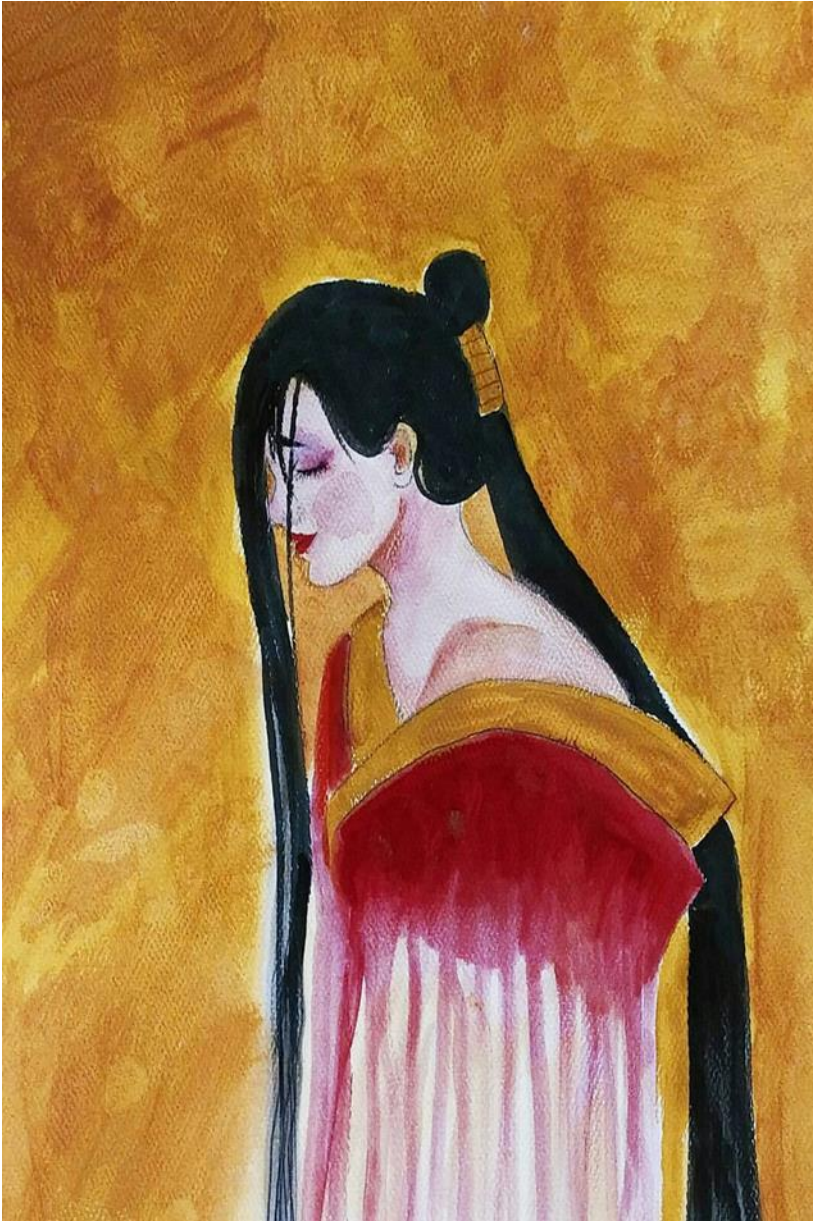
and she is
sweet honeysuckle
that grows in the south

her lips are
two perfect petals
of a newly bloomed rose

she is a wolf
both tough and fierce
never ready to give up

her love for you
is an endless midnight sky,
it knows no bounds

you are hers
and she
will always be yours



“Untitled” by Miranda Olsen

Bird Songs

By Natalie Huey

The birds only speak to me in the summer.

If I haven't enough warmth for them in the winter, they
pay me no mind.

The cold is a lonely place when you've no one to sing with.

But they come to me when the sun is highest in the sky.

When my skin is wet

With the lust of a boy who still hasn't returned my winter
coat,

Not that I need it now anyway.

I'm wondering why they leave me when I need their song
the most.

When I am shouting into the void of a black solstice,

Craving only a harmony.

I sing the tune they taught me in the stout July of my
childhood,

Knowing they will be back,

Because they always come back.

I wait for summer.

For bird songs all day long.

They are always so gentle.

Yellow inside out.

Hunting

By Miranda Olsen

1965

Tom Parker didn't understand hunting. His father had tried to take him every year since he was eight years old, and every year he had an excuse. Doctor's appointment. Stomach flu. Work. This year his father was no different. They were at his house, drinking beer by the fireplace.

"How about we go hunting, Tom?" His father asked.

"No thanks, Pa."

"Well why the hell not?" He demanded.

"Because I..." Tom trailed.

He froze.

Why couldn't he think of an excuse? He could always think of an excuse. Lying was the only thing he was good at.

"I said why not!" His father snapped.

"He'll go," his mother quipped.

She took the empty beer bottles from them both, and left the room.

Betrayed by his own mother. What a world.

"I don't care for it, but I suppose that doesn't matter to you," he sighed.

"You're twenty-five years old, Tom. You're not married, and you spend more time here than at your own home. It's about time you manned up," his father said.

"Are George and Jeffrey coming with us?" Tom asked.

"Jeffrey is staying with Kim and the baby. George is coming, though. He enjoys hunting," his father remarked.

Tom stood up and stretched his arms.

"Well, let's go kill some innocent animals," he said.

His father smacked him upside the head.

"Go get your brother, smartass," he growled.

"Pa says it's time to hunt."

"Better hurry. Dinner is at two. It's already eleven," George said.

He kissed the girl, then followed Tom upstairs.

His mother handed them both hunting rifles. Tom rolled his eyes, but George smiled. Their father was already holding the front door open.

“Ya’ll better not be late for Thanksgiving dinner,” their mother said.

The boys nodded and exited the house behind their father. They all walked into the woods and Tom realized none of them had orange vests on.

“No vests?” He asked

“Don’t want the animals seeing us. Got to blend in. Vests are for idiots who can’t tell where they’re shooting,” his father explained.

“Great,” Tom said.

George punched Tom in the shoulder and he winced.

“What the hell, George?” Tom demanded.

“You’re such a baby,” he snickered.

Tom ignored him on the rest of their journey into the woods.

It was cold in Georgia, right on the cusp of winter. Tom hated holidays with his folks, but he was codependent on his family, mostly thanks to his mother. She was nothing like his father. She had a heart. She doted on Tom because he was the youngest of the three boys, and she was very protective of him. Even now. He missed her. His mother was the only one in the family who understood him. Tom’s father suddenly stopped moving and pointed to a deer in the distance. Tom had inherited his mother’s terrible eyes, and so he couldn’t see the deer, save for its silhouette.

“You two go west, I’m going to track this one,” his father whispered.

The deer started to move away, and Tom and George headed west.

George had a compass watch, which he wore every Thanksgiving, eager to go hunting. Tom thought it was tacky.

“You really enjoy this?” He asked.

“Vests are for idiots
who can’t tell
where they’re
shooting,”

“It’s a sport. Of course, I enjoy it,” George answered.

Tom’s hands were sweaty, and the rifle kept slipping out of his grip.

He hated this. He hated every single minute. What was the point of hunting down deer when they had an entire turkey waiting for them at home? It was pointless.

“So, who’s the new girl?”

“April? She’s a friend of a friend. Cute, right?” George replied.

“Real cute, I guess. Are you two going steady?” Tom asked.

George responded with laughter.

“Going steady? We’re serious, if that’s what you mean. God, you’re so much like Ma. It’s creepy! Maybe you should have been born a girl. You don’t like hunting, you’re too picky to date, and you whine like one, too,” George added, laughing hysterically.

Tom clenched his rifle so tightly the tendons underneath his skin were showing.

“You just scared a deer away!” Tom hissed.

George searched the hill in front of them.

“Where?”

“Just ahead, over that hill. Go after it!” He insisted.

George jogged over the hill and continued scanning his eyes for the deer.

Tom took a single step back and aimed his rifle. He knew what to do. He had seen his father and brothers shoot in the backyard plenty of times. Tom removed the safety and once his eyes were locked on George, he fired. The shot rang out like a scream. Tom nearly dropped his rifle. George collapsed, falling to the ground like a broken toy. Tom ran to him and saw that he had been shot in the back of the head. Bullseye. He let out a roar of agony and heard a voice in the distance. Perfect.

“Hello!” A voice called.

It was his father.

It took ten minutes for him to find Tom and George, but when he did, he started yelling too.

“George!” He cried, rushing to George’s body.

Tom was crying.

He was holding George's head.

"I saw a deer on the top of this hill, and I told George to stay still and hush so I could get it. He didn't listen, and started towards the damn thing. He got so close to it, too. I told him to stay put and I lifted up my rifle and I pulled the trigger. George had jumped in front of the deer, hoping to make me stop, I guess, but I had already fired, and he just dropped," Tom explained.

His father didn't cry, but looked visibly broken.

"That's something George would do, god damn it. That stupid son of a bitch!" He yelled.

"I'm so sorry, Pa. He just jumped. I couldn't stop," Tom said.

His father touched his shoulder, for the first time in years.

"I know it ain't your fault, son."

He had never called Tom that.

"We ought to call the police, back at the house. You carry the rifles and I'll carry George over on my back. He's a bit shorter than me, I think I can manage," Tom said.

His father wiped his nose and nodded.

He left George's rifle next to the pool of blood beneath his body. Tom managed to lift him up and carry him all the way home. As they neared the house, he suddenly realized something. He actually liked hunting.

He left George's rifle next to the pool of blood beneath his body.

Artistry

By Natalie Huey

In the midst of licking fresh wounds,
I am thinking of Love.
I am pondering the art of love
Because that's what I've come to believe it is,
an Art.
And everyone is an artist.
In their own dull
or magnificently colorful way.
Consciously or unconsciously.
I am continuously baffled by the
belligerent, uncontrollable pull of Love.
How it demands attention,
and always hovers close by.
I am positive that everyone experiences love differently,
but we all have a common understanding:
Without it,
Life would be colorless.

Nobility

By Amanda Finsel

“We will stay in contact until I return. I promise, Patrick.” His words should have been a comfort but all they did was constrict my heart.

“I don’t want you to leave, Ian.” I said, looking so deep into his eyes I worried I would get lost. He sighed. We were only sitting on his porch but I felt like my stomach was on a spaceship, traveling the galaxy at high velocity. I looked away from him and began untying my shoe.

“Listen, it breaks my heart to leave but I have to go. Please don’t think just because you can’t go to war with me that you’re not an amazing man, because you are, Patrick.” he said. My eyes shot from my shoelace to his face. He leaned closer and laid a hand on my bad shoulder. I should have been elated because he was finally touching me but, in that moment, my embarrassment burned my skin so harshly I forgot to enjoy it. He said the words I had been waiting a lifetime for someone to say, but it was nothing like how I pictured it. I felt so unworthy of this type of comfort.

“This doesn’t make you any less of a...”

“No.” I said, cutting him off. I stared at the tree in the yard in front of us; leaves falling slowly in the breeze. I remembered in that moment all the times my reflection felt like a tree’s. My mutated right limb looked like a tree branch that never finished growing; veins protruding like ivy, discoloration like infected bark. I did not want him to be touching it. My past was written all over my right side. The burn might not have killed me but it left me without an arm and discoloration all across my side and collarbone.

“This makes me less of everything.” I said. My own mother left me in a burning building for dead. I am worthless. “I am some kind of monster to this town. I’m deformed, I’m ugly, I’m disgusting...”

“You’re beautiful.” he said, cutting me off with his compliment.

We both froze.

Our eyes began to do a disorganized tango, darting back and forth from each other, waiting for someone to say something. His hand slowly glided from my deformed shoulder to my neck; his grasp so tight I knew he could feel my pulse quicken with excitement. He leaned toward me, lips parting.

Oh shit. My thoughts raced. I let myself lean toward him. In that instant I think the judgmental voice in the back of my mind muted itself. I felt my walls come down like leaves from my tree. For a single moment I felt beautiful, because he thought I was.

Suddenly, a loud creak separated us like school kids during recess. His sister, Emily, came through the screen door to the house, startling us back to reality. We now sat on opposite sides of the steps.

“You guys ready to go to the party?” she said, as she put her hair up in a slick ponytail.

“Yes.” we both said in the most robotic manner possible. We stood up and started walking toward the car. She paused on the porch, watching our awkward glances and swift feet. He got in the driver’s seat and started the car up. I held open the passenger’s door for her.

“The fire took my arm and thirty percent of the skin of my right side, but it didn’t take my soul.”

She shot me a big smile. Swaying her hips in that “I know something you don’t” way she did so often, she opened the door for the back seat.

“You take shotgun.” she said, winking at me.

I hate you sometimes.

With an eye roll I sat shotgun, and we listened to the wind the entire way to Emily’s friend’s house in town. Ian’s right hand rested comfortably on the stick shift between us, but my mind could not help imagining what else that strong hand could do.

The drive from our homes in the farmland to the town was long. We lived in the very outskirts of Kilgarvan, in Kerry. If you blink while driving through Ireland you miss

it; the place is full of farms and history but lacking in people. Rumor has it my mother was too ashamed to raise a son she had out of wedlock, so she left me in my crib in the small home we had, dropped a cigarette, and fled town.

My adoptive father was a true godsend. He was poor but a hard worker and one of the men who saved me. I guess he was helping the people next door rebuild their barn and heard my screaming. After being part of my rescue, he did everything he could to keep me. He started working with a farm owner who let him work for food and milk for me. After my recovery in the hospital, we stayed in the upstairs loft of the farmhouse; it was just enough room for a bed and a crib. The fire took my arm and thirty percent of the skin of my right side, but it didn't take my soul.

I grew up and kept to my studies; the farm owner's wife homeschooled me because the town school did not accept handicapped children. I grew up playing in barns and running through pastures but never going to town. The scandal of my mother followed me like a poltergeist so it was best I didn't go out and make people feel obligated to stare and whisper.

Around the time I was thirteen or so, a family moved into the house next door that had been vacant for years. I was never very good at conversation, or interacting with other kids my age, so when the neighbor girl climbed our fence to pet our horses I had no clue how to react.

Emily was her name. She was many first times for me. She was my first friend, my first kiss, and the first person to see me without my shirt on. She has always said that the reason I was born without a right arm was because God wanted to remove my bad parts, and that was the only way to do it.

She made me feel less ugly.

Evenings were for playing board games together. She would tell me about all the other kids she went to class with. I knew all the drama and secrets that were circulating, even though none of them wanted to acknowledge I existed. She would steal her father's liquor and, after half a bottle, we told each other jokes until we fell asleep. She made my youth bearable.

She was also the first person who I told I was different. Of course, she thought I meant my arm, but I meant I was different because when I kissed her I did not feel anything. I told her I was more excited by the thought of a knight in shining armor than she was and I think she understood. It was our well-kept secret for years.

At least until her brother came home from military school this year. I think something inside my twenty-year-old spirit woke from a coma. He was so dashing and heroic to look at; a few years older and a few decades more mature. I lost myself in his nobility every time we crossed paths. The first couple months, we just smiled in passing. After a few family dinners, Ian and I were together almost constantly.

I knew that he had noticed my injuries. His eyes would

“Emily was her name. She was many first times for me. She was my first friend, my first kiss, and the first person to see me without my shirt on.”

sometimes glance over at my shirt sleeve that I usually hang just right so no skin is showing. I knew that Emily had told him the story and I hoped it wasn't the town's version. I think it made him more interested because he would frequently tug on my sleeve where my arm is missing and then run as if I was going to chase him down and pin him to the floor, kissing him in an act of revenge for touching my secrets.

One time, we ran after the geldings in my pasture and I tripped.

He tried to catch me.

He laughed so hard after we fell into the high grass. It felt like something out of one of the romance novels I read to pass the time. His strong arms were around me and, in that moment, I felt what it was like to be held by someone and feel like the world was spinning.

I jumped back, as if it hurt.

He told me he would marry me that day.
In the same breath, he told me he was going to war.
That day was yesterday.

This evening consisted of moonshine, loud music, and uncontrolled youth hormones. The house was full to the ceiling with students celebrating the first day of summer and what they felt was the beginning of freedom. Many of the people here had the worries of war on their mind, but decided to use this night to be with their sweethearts and have a good time.

“I somehow let myself fall in love with a
soldier who was leaving me tomorrow.”

I stayed in one place the beginning of the night, leaning on the living room wall. I was hiding my scandalous secret in the wallpaper; I could only hope that the ungodly floral pattern could hide my missing parts. No one said anything about it, but also no one spoke to me either. This was how it worked in this town. I knew every single one of the people at this party but not a single one of them knew my name; I was known as the scolded child and that was all.

There were guys taking shots with their mates, celebrating making it through training and being selected for the draft. There were lovely women in beautiful skirts that were dancing away their worries for their lovers leaving soon. War was on everyone's mind except the minds at this party. We were in our paradise for the night.

All of these people and only one person was my concern. Only one person was paying any attention to me. He started by bringing us drinks. He continued by asking me to dance profusely, only becoming more persistent the more I declined. Social situations were so new to me I was noticeably out of my element. I was so worried that someone would see us and get upset.

“It was in that moment I realized that I did not need to be a whole man to be seen as a good man.”

“You don’t understand the words “I don’t know how to dance”, do you?” I said as loud as I dared over the music.

He grinned. “I don’t understand the word “shy”.” he said with shameless flirtation.

When he started to sway and swing his head to his favorite song, I gave in. I moved from my wall-paper safe place. I laughed and watched him dance around me for the remainder of the song. His luscious locks reflected the light from outside, becoming a strange mixture of chocolate and moonlight.

His leather jacket fit as close to his body as I wish I was while he danced. I felt envious of the whiskey glass he sipped from.

The whole time my eyes kept scanning the room. I was thinking I needed to be sure no one noticed us or knew that someone was talking to me. I think I worried more about his reputation than he did. No one knew me and I wanted to keep it that way.

The idea of homosexuality was never a discussed topic either. A couple, a few years ago, came out to the town and had to leave because of the threats to their safety. I felt like I was walking a tightrope every time I looked at him that night. Maybe that was why I could not stop staring at him. My adrenaline was so enticing.

This was unexplored territory for me. This was an experience I had yet to understand, let alone feel was acceptable. I somehow let myself fall in love with a soldier who was leaving me tomorrow. My heart had this awkward tug on it to tell him just how I feel, but my apprehensive mind stopped me every time.

Further into the night, dancing began to feel easy. We were singing to the band louder than the instruments could play. I felt like no one else existed in the entire building. All the gossip and all the worry melted off my body in beads of sweat. I honestly do not remember going upstairs and do not remember laughing so hard that my drink spilled down the banister. I do remember lying on an unknown person’s bed.

I remember kissing him and tasting the liquor on his tongue.

Clothes were coming off like snakeskin around us. He started tracing the veins of my burned side with his fingers, smiling between kisses. Before I had a chance to speak he said something I was not prepared for.

“For tonight, let me complete you.”

“Okay.” I said, quivering with more excitement than I think my body could handle.

To my surprise, and slight disappointment, he got up from the bed. I watched as he went to the full-length mirror in the corner. He turned it to me and demanded I join him. I crawled to the edge of the bed and stood up.

“Close your eyes, Patrick.” he said.

I did as I was told.

I tried to not let my imagination get the best of me. I knew that my fantasies were probably not going to come to life tonight. As soon as his breath tickled my earlobe I opened one eye.

“See...” he said.

My eyes focused in on a reflection of my body that I was unfamiliar with. This body standing in front of me had all four of its limbs. This body was complete. This body had a strong right arm that had muscles primed for battle. Ian stood behind me with his arm taking the place of my missing limb in the mirror. My traumas melted away for the first time.

It was in that moment I realized that I did not need to be a whole man to be seen as a good man. My mother’s demons did not need to follow me forever.

He decorated my neck with his kisses as the rest of the night faded away. But I would hold onto that reflection for the rest of my life, even after he left for war.

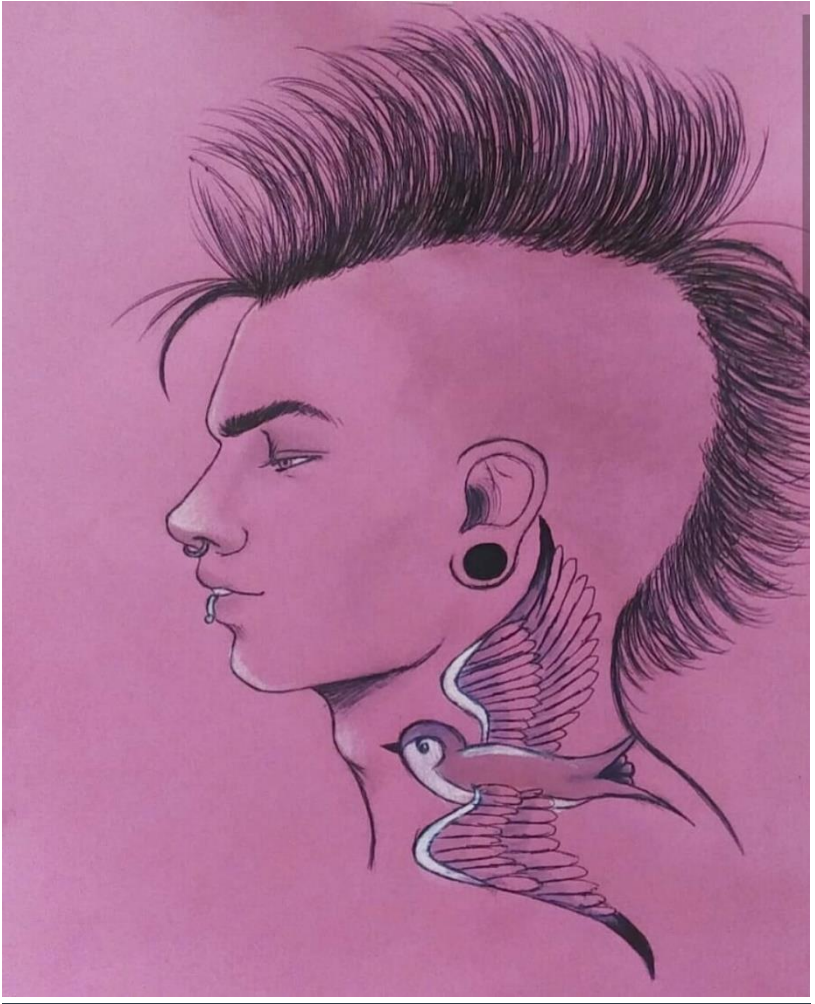
Even after all of the letters.

Even after getting the last letter that would shatter my world to pieces, because my soldier would not be coming home for our wedding.

He completed me. And I would hold onto that until I die.



"Rose" by Miranda Olsen



"Fly" by Miranda Olsen

Why Is It Wrong To Feel Sad?

By Miranda Olsen

Why is it wrong to feel sad, why are my bad days toxic?
Sadness is like a disease or illness, and now it's becoming chronic

I cry by myself in my bedroom, because tears make people upset
I mention my struggles daily, but everyone seems to forget

The sadness doesn't go away, because nobody helps you out
They call you a liar, a faker, a phony, they fill you up with doubt

I'm on an emotional roller coaster of ups and downs
Sometimes I'm quiet, sometimes I make sounds

I feel like a storm is inside of me, and I can't make it through
I'm stuck on high seas, blown around by the breeze, abandoned by my crew

Even when someone listens, they don't offer any help
They tell me take it easy and I tell them to go to hell

What is the cure for sadness? Because it never goes away
It hides down deep inside you, waiting to rise up again some day

Why is it wrong to feel sad, why do I feel so guilty?
Sadness is all I feel these days, and it's spreading much too quickly

I've tried talking it out, tried hiding it away, but nothing
really works

These days, I accept it, and when it's resurrected, I
think of it as a quirk

Sadness is a part of me just like it's a part of you
Try and defeat it, even if you can't beat it, because that's
all you can do.

Breathe

By Craig Eckert

“How does that make

You feel?”

Processing, processing, “I feel broken,

Garbage to be thrown away. The dialectical behavioral therapy

Blends with shock treatments to turn

My mind to mush.”

Searching through the rubble of my mind

I find reasons for actions I could not

Divine. Before it was a blast of electricity to fry the brain, I thought couldn't take anymore.

From medicine to magnets attached to your head to stimulate those

Chemicals that can produce happiness that you sorely need.

While sitting in group hearing them plead to be let out “I

Don't belong here. This is a mistake.” People scream

About being sick, lost, and confused. “Time for breathing exercises,”

Fake smiles to help you feel welcome in a sterile place

That you cannot leave. Leaving becomes synonymous with

Breathing, each breath gets you closer to the exit. “Feel the fear exit your

body, from your head to the soles of your feet. Breathe, just breathe.”

Now the doctor is putting you

Under telling you to count back from

10, you breathe its just a shock. Breath flies from

Your lungs in a panic. Nine, your heartrate
Spikes and the nurses rush to check.
Breathe the panic away, just breathe like
They said. At eight you start to slowly
Slip
Away.
Wake up.
Wake
Up.
Now in a chair,
They wheel you out, telling you to
Just breathe. You are going home today.
You have more treatments scheduled
For later.
The breath catches in your
Lungs, and you can't breathe
Not a single molecule of oxygen goes through your
Lips.
Just
Breathe.

River

By Masha Sacali

She would wake up to bright sunrises and she would fall asleep watching the starry skies, and that's just how she liked it. Her name was River, but when she was younger, her passerby's would call her wanderer. She never didn't wander, nor wonder, about one thing or another.

"This isn't how the world works," an angry face once told her when she handed him a dream. She often wondered why so many angry faces came crossing her paths, but she only ever wished to see those faced mended. In ways like this, River often made no sense but she liked that as well.

River carried memories and stories, deep within her hand-me-down dress pockets. When she passed the mirror, she'd pause, admiring the flowers on the fabric, which had long since faded from its charming state. She understood this, but she dreamt of ballgowns anyways. Neither this, nor the bare souls of her feet dare to stop the heart that's run wild. Through the mud puddles and the summer dust, those feet wouldn't cease.

Among the ones concerned for her false hopes were the people she'd shared a home with. Neither the seven polished sisters nor the ten courageous brothers comprehend the things she's dared to grasp. They'd see her dancing in the rain and they'd run to Mama and Papa. Mama didn't like Rivers' untamed hair and spirit while Papa thought it marvelous. Sometimes, the siblings would join her. When no one was looking, yes, they would join.

There was one, a friend named Joop, who was different than all the other people that she knew. He'd laugh with her through raindrops and help carry her dreams; the really heavy ones. He understood the ones too big for any single man to carry, so he always helped her carry those too.

Joop liked her freckles and the all the other flaws she'd mention secretly. They did everything together; laugh and cry. The parents liked him too, but she cared little about such things. And times would come and things would happen, hearts would shatter and turmoil's rise, but she kept as

far away from all of it as possible, and he was there with her too.

Through the grapevines, they'd escape at times, up the cherry trees on other times. There was little they would fail in, for their bond was just about as strong as death is bound to beings.

Even still, she feared when he was far at times, but see, she had to do things this way. It was her way of evading his disappointment in her, so she would tell him not to come. Those times were harsh and the magnitude of space from him would pierce her very soul.

Because at night, the angry face would come.

The angry face held bright stars in the palm of his hand. He would look at River often, especially when no one else was near.

"You like these?" he would ask.

"Yes" she would say back.

He then would laugh, and she couldn't understand how, laughing: such a pure thing, could be turned into such evil. Because he would proceed to crush the stars, chocking out its last beams of light. To this, she had to clap, and so she killed her likes this way, to her dismay. The angry face would whisper that the stars were made for men to crush them, rather than admire and adore.

"The sooner you learn this, River, the better friends we can become" he would say.

She couldn't understand how the angry face became like that, for many times the face was happy, especially during the hours of the day. She didn't like the angry face. But in the deep dark hours of the Eastern Sky, she'd shatter in dismay as anger and defenselessness would grab hold their hands and bring her in the sandbox.

She didn't like those games.

Constellations shifted and even fog would come, which then turned into morning dew, which then turned into tears. River would lay helplessly, and she would often wish for Joop, and many tears would come. She couldn't dare cry to the face of anger, because that anger terrified her. But with silence as her closest friend, she kept on dreaming.

When dawn arrived into the core of the entire matter, she ran into the arms of Joop, who never didn't want her there.

He took her long and far. Far from the angry face she couldn't dare to process. In those times, not much was said between them, but he was honestly okay with that. At times, she stared at lilac skies like they were cages. At times, she'd look into his kind eyes and cry. She'd cry for days and months and years, but still he was beside her; he was the most faithful friend she knew.

Joop one day took her hand and walked her down to their grapevines. He was just being himself, but he was good at that. He stopped and smiled at the clouds and prayed for rain, lifting her high at the raindrops first fall.

"Look down," he told her, "its broken dreams, let's dance upon them."

So, for a long, long time they danced. They danced until the rain turned into harmonies. She saw herself then, healing. Love: the best resolve that ever known. Since the occurrence of those times, he's never not on her mind. Their story's never ending, and still, he's the dearest friend she's known. She knows of a hope that is beyond resolution, and that is the man standing in front of her.



“The Suns of the Valley: by Bandzart

Roommate Wanted

By Craig Eckert

Man seeking roommate. The room for rent is a spacious five by ten room, you will not have use of the bathroom for there is a backyard. The roommate will pay for all utilities used including the utilities I use. The roommate will be responsible for cooking and cleaning for themselves and me. The roommate will be responsible for driving me to my various doctor's appointments and meetings, I will not pay for your gas. There is a washer and dryer in the space you are renting. This is for my clothes only, you are to wash my clothes using the washer and dryer in the house, you can use the laundromat down the street, it is open twenty-four seven. Use of the kitchen is limited to making meals for me which will become one of your duties. I am a gluten free vegetarian who hates vegetables, get creative with your cooking, though not too creative. I am a very picky eater. The roommate must conform to these rules.

The roommate must also meet various physical requirements. I do not care what ethnicity you are, I do not discriminate in this regard. The roommate must however be over six feet tall, weigh from one hundred and eighty pounds to two hundred and twenty pounds. I have a scale in the house and will measure your height and weight. The roommate must be left handed, if you are ambidextrous that is acceptable. I will test this out as well. The roommate must have some form of physical deformity, one that is obviously showing. I will poke and prod it asking how it feels when you are being poked and prodded. Do not be alarmed I am a professional of sorts when it comes to poking and prodding, I can show you my degree if it makes you more comfortable. The roommate can be either a man a woman or even neither I do not discriminate in this regard either. The roommate must also have blue eyes that I can get lost in, that pierce my soul. If you do not have blue eyes and still want the room I suggest contacts, if you cannot get blue contacts or do not have blue eyes then do not apply. The roommate cannot have feet larger than a men's size seven or a woman's size nine. I do

not want to hear feet slapping on the tile floor in the house. I do not accept amputees of any kind, you can have extra parts, but no missing parts. On this rule I am very firm.

There is a dress code to be observed while in the house. While occupying your room you can wear whatever you want or nothing at all. On Mondays you must wear a bathrobe that is loosely tied in the front. On Tuesdays you will wear jeans, a flannel shirt, three bows in your hair, and sandals, no underwear will be worn. On Wednesday I require underwear to be worn on the outside of your clothing which will consist of cargo shorts and a t-shirt. Thursday you will wear a loincloth and socks, I will provide the socks. Fridays are casual, and you can choose between wearing a bikini or speedo, I usually go for a speedo myself if you are afraid of matching. Saturday and Sunday will consist of wearing sunglasses even while indoors, a collared shirt with the collar popped, two denim jackets, shorts that say "juicy" and three-inch high heels.

The roommate must not wear the color yellow. Especially if that color matches the shade my skin has turned. This would be in bad taste and would offend me greatly. There will be consequences for wearing such a color. There is no negotiation on dress code, and it is strictly enforced.

While applying I will need your full name, date of birth, place of birth, mother's maiden name, and your social security number. These are for filing purposes only and will not be used to fund my pornography addiction. I will need a blood, urine, and follicle sample from the roommate. Again, this is for filing purposes only, not to test for the compatibility of your liver to mine. I will need a physical from your doctor stating that you are in peak physical condition and could survive an organ transplant. Blood type AB is preferred when applying for this room. I will be doing a thorough background check on you. This is to assure me that you were once a criminal of some sort. I prefer you to have a violent criminal history instead of one that consists of white collar crimes. This is for my own protection. The roommate will preferably be estranged from their family or have no living next of kin that may call the police if they are not spoken to frequently. The roommate will preferably not be

missed if they were to go missing or wind up dead missing their liver.

If you happen to meet all of this criterion and would like to apply for this room, please do. Put your application in the mailbox in front of the abandoned lot on first street on the seventh of the month. Leave your contact information on the application so I can find you. Do not worry if you think you are being too vague I can and will find you. When I do find you, we can discuss at length the living situation. Thank you for application, I look forward to meeting you.

The Mysterious Disappearance of Gwendolyn Gray

By Miranda Olsen

1890

Gwendolyn Gray was without a doubt, the most beautiful and charming young lady in all of Missouri. She lived in West Lake, a small woodland town, with her mother and two sisters. The Gray's consisted of Lady Cordelia, a forgotten count's daughter, and Gwendolyn, Elizabeth, and Charlotte. Gwendolyn was the oldest, and most by far the most beautiful. Elizabeth and Charlotte were rather short, like their mother, and had cherub faces. They were much more beautiful on the inside and liked to teach the local children how to read and write. Gwendolyn preferred social events. She was a socialite, relying on her mother's forgotten status. The last time anyone saw her was at a party. It was a chilly September night. The wind was causing every lady to smooth down her dress and try and tame it. Gwendolyn stood with her head high, eyes closed, savoring the frigid night air. All the men in the room were drawn to her. An unusually underdressed man bravely approached her.

She was on the balcony of a grand house, trying to draw attention to herself by singing.

"Is that Greensleeves?" The man asked.

"Indeed, it is."

"Your accent sounds more English than Creole. Are you royalty?"

"My grandfather was a Count. Until I am wed, I remain Lady Gwendolyn Gray."

"What brings you to America?"

"My mother married an American and my grandparents disowned her. I have been banished as well, I suppose."

"Were you born here?"

"I lived in England until my father died, and my mother came here to stay with his family. The Johnson's."

“I know the name. They are good friends with my family. You should be Gwendolyn Johnson, though, yet claim to be otherwise.”

“My sisters and I refuse to stain ourselves with that name.”

“They are good people. I know everyone. You shouldn’t be so cold.”

“Who are you to judge my choices, sir?” Gwendolyn asked.

The man tipped his plain black hat and gave her a coy smile.

“Why, I am Jesse Grant!”

“Any relation to President Grant?”

“I am his youngest son.”

“You speak true?”

“I do.”

“And you choose to be here? At this garish party?” She asked, laughing.

Jesse shrugged his shoulders.

“I enjoy parties like these. I like to watch the people.”

Gwendolyn eyed him up and down.

“You are an odd one, Mr. Grant.”

“So, I’ve been told. My father was odd as well. He was quite the drinker and said the most peculiar things when drunk.”

Gwendolyn clicked her tongue.

“One should never gossip about their family. Especially a family as famous as yours,” she scolded.

“If you don’t mind my asking, why are *you* here, Lady Gray?” Jesse asked.

She smoothed her braided hair and adjusted her earrings.

“To put on a show,” she replied gingerly.

“Everyone’s eyes are on you.”

“Then I have accomplished my mission.”

“I dare say you have. You’ve captured my eye, as well. Perhaps we could dance?”

“I’m feeling ill this evening. It’s why I’m out here, breathing this fresh air.”

“You ought to have stayed home. I can take you, if you like.”

“I am merely a girl of twenty, and you are older, if I'm not mistaken. It's hardly proper.”

“I should like to add that I am married as well. My only reason for being in Missouri is to visit family. I am an honorable ma'am, Lady Gray.”

“Thank you for your kindness, but I am quite happy right here on this balcony,” she insisted.

Jesse gave up and returned inside to socialize with the rest of the guests.

The next day, a group of women found him at the house he was staying at. Cordelia's face was red and puffy, and she was wiping her eyes with a handkerchief.

“Did you speak with my daughter last night, Gwendolyn?” She asked.

“I did. She was very pleasant to talk to.”

“She failed to return from the party. I have searched everywhere for her to no avail. Was she acting strange last night?”

“She said she was feeling ill and needed fresh air. She stayed on the balcony all night. How is it that no one saw her leave the party? There were dozens of people there.”

“I've spoken to the owner of the house. They said Gwendolyn was on the balcony for some time after the party ended. The owner stepped out to ask her to leave only to find her gone. He thought she jumped, but there was no body below. She had somehow vanished.”

“Vanished? How could one vanish from a balcony? Perhaps the owner has done something to her. Have you gone to the police, madam?”

“I will go at once, but the man seemed genuinely puzzled. I cannot imagine he would harm Gwendolyn.”

“The police will find the truth. I am sure of it,” Jesse replied.

Cordelia and her daughters left as quickly as they appeared.

Two officers visited the house where the party was held but found that the owner had been with his wife cleaning up when Gwendolyn vanished. Cordelia and her daughters searched the town for weeks, knocking on doors and looking around every building. Finally, they gave up. Jesse Grant

returned to his wife and told her the strange story. Many years passed, and he returned to Missouri for a funeral. Many locals attended, and he asked one where the Gray House was. After the funeral, Jesse took a carriage to the house, which was well hidden in the thick forest. He knocked on the door and two women answered.

They looked completely surprised.

“What business do you have with us?” They asked together.

“I am Jesse Grant. I was the last soul to see your sister.”

The girls opened the door and he stepped inside.

The house was dated. It was likely that it had not been changed since Gwendolyn disappeared, many years ago. Elizabeth ushered Jesse into the parlor, and he sat down on a dusty sofa.

“You must keep your voice low, our mother is not well,” Elizabeth explained.

“She still searches for Gwendolyn?” Jesse asked.

“At night, she goes out into the woods and calls her name. We fear she is mad.”

“So, she remains missing? Even now?”

“My sister and I believe her to be dead. Something terrible must have happened. A murder, or some sort of accident.”

“Yet your mother believes she is still alive?”

“Her mind is long gone. She calls for our sister every day. We can't bear to send her away, so we try to keep her sedated. She takes many pills that put her to sleep.”

“I am only in town for a few days, but I was certain your sister would be found. People don't just disappear.”

“I am sorry you came so far for naught.”

“I must be going. I hope you all find peace,” he said, but knew they never would.

Jesse returned to town, but not before stopping at the house where he last saw Gwendolyn.

It had been kept in pristine order and looked the same as it did all those years ago. He took off his hat and gazed at the balcony. A woman suddenly appeared on it, looking the exact same as Gwendolyn. Her same dress, her same face and hair, and her same coy smile. Jesse raced to the front

door to find it unlocked. He burst in and ran up the stairs and to the balcony. The owner of the house grabbed him by the collar.

“Who are you?” He demanded.

“How is she here?” Jesse replied, his face twisted in anguish.

“Who do you speak of?”

“I have seen Gwendolyn Gray!” Jesse shouted.

He wriggled free from the man's grip and stepped onto the balcony.

Upon further inspection he noticed the woman was not Gwendolyn. She had brown eyes instead of blue and was thinner and taller.

“Why do you wear the dress of a dead woman?” Jesse asked.

The girl looked down at her dress.

“It was my mothers,” she replied.

The owner of the house pulled Jesse inside.

“Can I trust you not to speak of this to anyone?” He asked.

“I *demand* an explanation, sir.”

“The truth is-I loved Gwendolyn Gray. She and I were lovers for years. I had promised her I would divorce my wife but couldn't bring myself to do so. I loved them both. It was selfish, I know, but I truly did. That night, Gwendolyn stayed until the guests had left to tell me she was carrying my child. I told her about a small cottage behind my house in which she could stay and have the baby. Every night I would sneak out and have dinner with her. She was well fed and well taken care of. Months passed, and she had the baby in spring. I went to medical school and felt confident I could deliver the baby myself. But the birth was long and hard, and poor Gwendolyn died before she could even hold the child. It was a girl. I named her May, for the month she was born.”

“Then she truly is Gwendolyn's daughter?”

“She is.”

“How is it that your wife raised another woman's child?”

“I buried Gwendolyn near the cottage, under a beautiful orange tree. I cleaned May and put her in a basket and left it in front of our door. I knocked and hid in my study. My

wife found the baby and the fake note I had written. She believed the girl to be an orphan, and since she was barren, gladly raised the girl as her own.”

“Why does she wear Gwendolyn's dress?”

“I know not why I kept it all these years. She was buried in a simple gown, so I took the dress and kept it in a chest. I recently told Gwendolyn about her real mother. My wife passed away last week and so I felt it was time.”

“Do you know of the pain you have caused? Gwendolyn's family is in a terrible state. Her mother has gone mad, and her sisters are sure to follow. You must tell them the truth. They have a right to know what happened.”

“I do not wish to crush their hope, it is what has kept them alive all these years.”

“You are wrong sir, it is what's killing them.”

“May is all I have left. I will *not* lose her.”

Jesse sighed, but knew he would never win the argument.

“I am glad I at least know the truth.”

“You must never reveal it to anyone.”

He stepped back onto the balcony.

May offered her hand. Jesse kissed it.

“You have your mother's charm,” he said.

“You knew her?” She asked.

“Briefly. But her beauty haunted me for years.”

“My father says I look just like her,” May replied.

“Like mirror images,” Jesse said.

He tipped his hat and went downstairs.

There were pictures of May everywhere. Pictures of her with the man and his wife. She had been given a wonderful childhood, and although Jesse knew it was cruel to keep the Gray's in the dark, he knew it was not his right to tell them. When his own children were born, Jesse told them of the mysterious disappearance of Gwendolyn Gray.

Graveyard

By Amanda Finsel

I like to play in graveyards

I get along better with the dead because they don't try to change me

I can be truthful in a eulogy because honesty is only scary when you're looking someone in the eyes and you think they think you're wrong

I am a perfect example of a casket

On the outside I look full

But in reality

I'm missing

Missing a final piece

Like a tomb stone

Chipped

Wind blown

Grass too high you can't read the words written on my lips

You don't listen

That's all the dead can do

I can list all my problems off and sing them in a song to my grandmother easier than I can to my friends

I can scream on the top of my lungs to a new patch of dug up earth easier than to a therapist

Maybe it's because the ground can't judge me

Or tell me to stop

I don't worry about picking up a hitchhiker between the headstones

My past is already so good at haunting me

No

I don't believe in ghosts

I believe your own emotions creep out when you find an opportunity to blame it on something other than yourself

If you think you hear a voice telling you,

You don't belong here

You're not good enough

You hope

Hope it's a poltergeist

Because thinking it's someone else makes it easier to swallow the fact it's probably just you talking to yourself

The thought of a demon grabbing my wrists doesn't scare me as much as me doing it to myself

Maybe it's the fact I'm a little jealous

Jealous of the dead sometimes

They don't have to fit into society's molds anymore

Everyone looks the same once the skin is gone

See

Do you understand now?

Why I like to play in graveyards

Contributors

I am **Rajae' Bando**, a 20 year old student majoring in architecture at the State College of Florida. I am from the beautiful island of Jamaica and have been living in Florida for almost four years. Art is anchored in my culture, whether visual arts, dancing, poetry or music; Jamaicans are experts in at least one of those categories. Furthermore, Visual Arts has always been my passion since I was a child; I discovered that I was blessed with this talent at a very young age but was never comfortable with sharing my work, but now that I am older I couldn't be more excited about people seeing my art. This publication opportunity might be a first step in exposing my blessing to the world and what I am capable of, and even if my piece is not chosen, I am still grateful for having the opportunity to participate.

My name is **Craig Eckert**. I am a student at the college, and I am currently the president of Swamp Scribes, and vice president of Pop Culture Club. I love to read all genres of books, and write when I can. I play Dungeons and Dragons with my friends.

My name is **Amanda Finsel**. I am an Honors SCF college student that is pursuing a degree in forensic psychology. Poetry and creative writing have become one of my true loves, and I feel very happy to share my works with others. I hope you like them.

My name is **Savannah George**. I am twenty-one years old and I am a full time student at SCF. This semester I am taking Creative Writing with Doctor Ford and Digital Imaging with Professor Evans. I have always had a love for writing short stories but poetry is something I am just beginning to dip my toe in, so to speak. So far I am happy with my work and I am always excited to see what else I will come up with. And Photography is something I have always been passionate about and I enjoy learning new techniques every day.

Natalie Huey: I am currently completing my A.A. degree and plan to pursue a career in Mental Health Counseling. I am an avid reader, and writing is something I am very passionate about. I enjoy spending my time outside under the sun, laughing and learning with people I love, doing yoga, and traveling. I hope to positively impact those around me through my words, actions, and friendship.

Miranda Olsen is an English Major at SCF. She's written plays, poems, novels, and more. She's been writing since childhood, and hopes to make it to the New York Times Bestseller List one day.

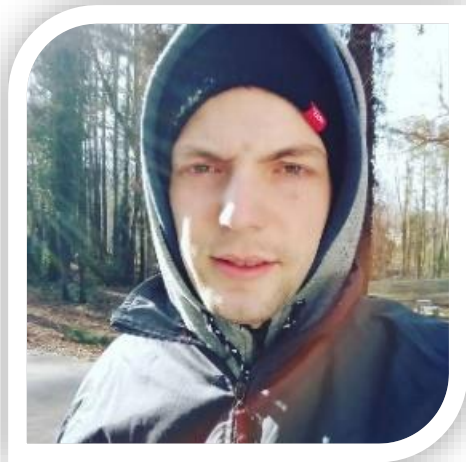
Masha Sacali is a full time college student in search of writing her heart away. She is full of life, passion and dreams. Masha loves coffee, but she also loves sleep. There is very little that she doesn't do but attempts to do her best in all she sets her mind too.

Elektra-Bios



Alysa Curley

Curley was born in Bradenton, Florida on December 7th, 1998. At age three, she moved to North Port, Florida where she still resides today, Alysa is the oldest of three children, having a younger sister and brother, both currently in high school. She is a recent high school graduate who is attending her first year here at SCF. Alysa is planning on transferring to another university to go into Mechanical Engineering. She enjoys reading, painting, and viewing architecture. She is a Methodist who attends Myakka City United Methodist Church, where her father is the pastor.

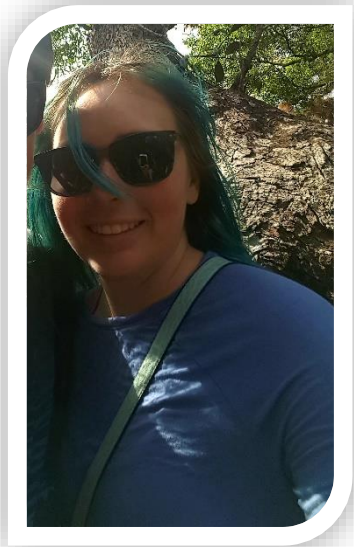


Matthew Wheeler

Wheeler is a sophomore at the State College of Florida, pursuing a major in Broadcast Journalism and/or Public Relations. Matthew has had prior broadcasting experience, such as being the Main Anchor and Producer of Riverview High School's "Ram News" from August 2014 to May 2016. Matthew has had social media accounts for 9 years and has learned the ins and outs of how and what exactly happens on social media. Matthew plans on going to the University of Florida in the Spring of 2019.

Alison Sagirs

Sagirs is currently in her 4th semester of college, studying for her AA degree so she can continue and study for elementary education. She is originally from New Jersey but has traveled her entire life to AKC dog shows, and her family also relocated to other states. She enjoys traveling, and being around her friends, and more importantly she enjoys the idea of striving in her future. Alison is more of a behind the scenes type of person, which is why last semester she joined Elektraphrog, she hates being the center of attention.



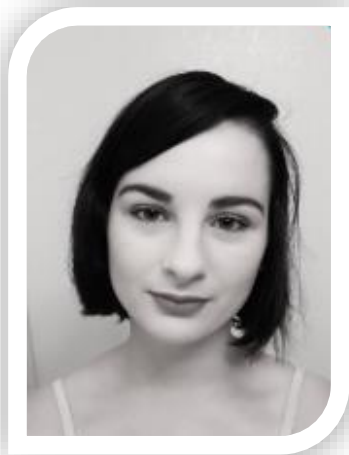
Mikala Dawson

Dawson was born in Overland Park, Kansas in 1996. She grew up most of her life there until 2007 when her dad moved her family to Florida. She hated Florida when she moved here, and she still kind of does now. There aren't any seasons, it's almost always summer. She loves the beach though. She works at a concession stand on Nokomis Beach. She loves how many activities you can do in the water, swimming, paddle boarding, and skim boarding. Her family has been in the Venice area with most of her family since they moved here. She spends all her time working and going to school. When she has free time, she likes to ride her dirt bike with her boyfriend. He's the one that taught her how to ride. It was scary at first, but she loves it now. If she doesn't have time to take her bike out, she'll read a book. It's been a while since she had time to finish a book. She likes to read short stories, so she doesn't feel like she's missing anything.



Aleksandra Yefremova

Yefremova was born in Estonia, Europe in 1997. She moved to America at the age of 2 settling in Portland, Oregon. Later she moved to Florida at the age of 17. Alex is currently attending State College of Florida as a Criminal Justice Major, and later hopes to transfer to the University of South Florida. Alex also enjoys the theatre and has a passion for photography. Alex aims to one day join the Police Force, and eventually higher levels of law enforcement.



Miranda Olsen

Olsen was born in Port Charlotte, Florida, in 1998. She is 19 years old, and currently attending State College of Florida as an English Major. She has been writing from a young age, and has written plays for school, won writing awards, and even self-published a novel during her senior year. She was a student journalist for the Asolo Theatre and worked with theatre and television critic Jay Handelman. She has her own website, editorial, and poetry blog. Miranda is also an artist and attends comic cons all throughout Florida as an artist in artist alley, selling her work and meeting new friends. She enjoys helping her friends with their English classes and has tutored people in the past. She has worked for Sarasota County and YMCA as a counselor and teacher. Miranda intends to teach English overseas, preferably in Japan or Germany.

Olivia Murphy

Murphy was born and raised in Western Massachusetts. She moved to Venice, Florida in July 2017. While Olivia was a senior in high school, she participated in a dual enrollment program at a local college in Massachusetts. She contributed to the school newspaper. Now a freshman in college, Olivia is working towards a degree in communications specializing in Public Relations and advertising. She is hoping to transfer to Florida Gulf Coast University, after receiving her Associate Arts and a Digital Publishing Certificate. For two years, Olivia has been part of an anti-bullying campaign called “Unify Against Bullying”. She served on both the student board and the social media committee until moving to Florida in the summer of 2017.

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