

# Elektraphrog

A surreal illustration of a woman whose body is composed of pearls, standing on a tree trunk with a face in the bark. She is surrounded by a glowing necklace of pearls.

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Cover Image:  
Detail from "Tree Woman" by Jamira Wainwright

Back Cover Image:  
Detail from "The Sun Will Find Use by Alina Oberglock

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# Ravens

By Sam Heuckendorf

The chair scraped across the flooring, creating a jarring sound that pulled Quinn out of his thoughts abruptly. His pencil's movements stopped as he blinked, taking a slow glance over to his side, where a classmate of his was sitting down. He almost wanted to roll his eyes.

Detention. Quinn was in detention. He didn't usually get into trouble, preferring to stay just on the outside of anything. He didn't try to stand out, though it backfired on him the other day. Quinn's brow furrowed slightly in frustration as he recalled the interaction with his former friend, well, at least he thought they were friends. Friends don't hurt each other, right? His skin itched under the splint placed over his nose. He ignored it, instead focusing on his pencil and paper.

The classroom was practically empty, save for a few other students who were also in detention. The supervisor, Ms. Crane, had a nasty glare on her face, and Quinn could only guess who that was for. The answer to that came just a few seconds later, in the form of Ms. Crane's scratchy voice.

"Alexander. I expect you to behave after the show you put on earlier today," Ms. Crane said, her voice ringing out through the room. The tone was sharp, leaving no room for argument. A snicker was heard, presumably Alexander's. A glance to the right proved that to be true.

Alexander didn't reply. Instead, they kept a smug grin on their face as they set their backpack onto the floor. Ms. Crane just let it go, looking down at her desk to work on some paperwork.

Quinn thought that was the end of it, considering there was no more noise and no more talking after that. He let his pencil start moving across the paper of his sketchbook once more, continuing his earlier work. A bird, specifically a raven. It was something he drew a lot, and always in the exact same way. Always standing on a surface, either the ground or a branch, with its wings tucked at its side.

There was a certain comfort to drawing the bird, though he didn't understand why. Many people associate them with darker themes, like death, but they can represent so much more than that. Others never want to look past the surface material of things. Quinn felt his grip on his pencil tighten, but he kept his lines light.

"-aker. Dude, are you even listening? Wallaker," Alexander's voice pierced through his thoughts as his pencil strokes slowed once more. Quinn glanced over, his expression unreadable. Alexander let out a huff of a laugh, leaning back in his chair. "You *are* Wallaker, yeah? The nerdy kid who lives on Cresthill Lane?"

Well, Quinn wouldn't say it like that. Nevertheless, Quinn opened his mouth and answered. "Yes. Quinn Wallaker, why?"

"Was just wondering."

"Oh. Okay."

The sounds of pencil on paper resumed once more, the outline of the raven becoming more distinguished and recognizable. The wings were tucked snugly at its side. The conversation was done; they didn't actually have a reason to talk to him, so why would he give them one?

"What are you drawing?" Their voice cut through his thoughts once more, though this time it sounded closer. Quinn could see them leaning over to try and get a better look out of the corner of his eye. He let them.

"A bird."

"Cool. Can you draw me next?" They chuckled.

Quinn paused for a moment, considering it. He had drawn people in the past whenever they had asked, so it's not like it was a foreign thought. Which is why he was confused at his own response. "No."

"Damn, okay. The bird looks good, by the way." Alexander replied, not seeming hurt at all by the rejection. They added the last part as sort of an afterthought, though it stirred something in Quinn.

"It's a raven," he blurted out before he had a chance to change his mind.

“What?”

“The bird, it’s a raven.”

Alexander blinked, like they hadn’t expected Quinn to say anything. “Cool,” was all they said in response, though it was softer, less of a taunt.

Quinn began drawing again, going back over his lines. He also erased part of the drawing, wanting to fix something.

“What else do you draw?”

Quinn looked up from his drawing, his gaze moving over to Alexander. He saw them before, but he didn’t *really* see them, not until now.

“..birds. I draw birds.” He set down his pencil, keeping his gaze on his classmate.

“Just birds?”

“Yes.”

“Huh. Can I see?”

Before he knew it, Quinn was handing over his sketchbook. His gaze shifted to his desk, to the chipped wood. He could hear Alexander flipping through the pages, slowly, as if they were truly looking at each one. He wondered if they actually were.

“Dude, these look awesome.” They continued flipping through the pages, no doubt noticing the similarities among all the drawings. “I gotta ask though, why ravens? Don’t they mean death or something?”

Quinn took his sketchbook back as Alexander handed it back, the page back to his work-in-progress raven. He didn’t really have an answer to that question, because yes, they do symbolize death. Maybe that’s why he was so mesmerized by them? The thought had never really occurred to him before now.

“That’s not the only thing,” he traced over the outline of the wings on his sketchpad with his finger. Closed. Reserved. “Ravens can also symbolize wisdom.”

“Fitting.” Alexander huffed, resting their head on the palm of their hand. Quinn couldn’t tell what their expres-

sion was. It almost looked... fond? He couldn't place his finger on it, but it made him return his gaze to his sketchpad, a flurry of feelings going through his chest.

Quinn didn't say anything after that, nor did Alexander. He was glad, relieved to be out of that interaction. Though part of him felt the opposite, it was a foreign feeling to him. Wanting one thing, but also wanting something completely different at the same time. He flipped the pencil around once more, erasing a part of his linework.

He felt seen, wanted, even. He felt *something*. Not just indifference, not nothing. It was *something*.

When he came back from his thoughts, he found that the raven on the paper had its wings spread, wide and free.

# The Sun Will Find Us

By Alina Oberglock



# Kauffman

By Zachary Prieto

Kauffman, who could ever imagine?  
A nearby secret companion.  
Through the best and worst, you've seen it through.  
It's just now we meet, but I trust you.

Kauffman, how could I have ever know?  
You've helped me write some of my poems.  
You've always been at my fingertips.  
But, it's just now I realize it.

Kauffman, your name seems to start with a T.  
To think you've lived right next to me, rent free.  
I owe so much to you, I didn't know.  
How is it you've stayed so low and unknown?

Kauffman, hidden in my most used pencil.  
In my sight, but confidential.  
Through it all, your name was written inside.  
In a strip I didn't know I would find.

Kauffman, in poetry, homework, and more.  
Kauffman, a new piece added to the lore.  
Kauffman, hidden for years so many.  
Kauffman's been everywhere, Kauffman plenty.

# Feathers

By Sam Heuckendorf

When a bird becomes stressed,  
It plucks and plucks all of its feathers  
Until there are none left.

When will it stop?  
It claims it feels better  
But it keeps plucking

Plucking and plucking and plucking.  
Over and over again.

“That's not good for you!” says the other birds.  
“You're hurting yourself!” say its friends.  
“We've done so much for you!” says its family.

The bird listens, but keeps plucking.  
It keeps plucking and plucking  
And plucking.

Until there is nothing left.  
Just a pile of feathers,  
And a cold body.

# Perception

By Alina Oberglock



# Vengeance

By Isabella Kutý

The humans have been screaming at each other for an hour now. It all started when she discovered that the Fiat's car key, the only key to that vehicle they own, is not in its drawer. She asked him where it was.

Mr. Peters said, "I haven't seen it all day."

"Well, you took the car out to the store last night," Mrs. Peters said.

They started searching the living room, the dining room, the kitchen, and the bedroom. She even entered the closet and looked through the pockets of the pants he had worn the previous night. Of course they did not find the keys anywhere. Mr. Peters had put them on my sofa, where he knew I took my afternoon nap. I had to get back at him.

I watched them. How is a cat supposed to get any sleep with two hysterical humans ransacking the house for the keys?

Humans are peculiar creatures, I thought, as their conversation turned to accusing each other.

"This happens all the time!" Mrs. Peters yelled. "You are always losing things, and I have to search and clean up your messes!"

"Take it down fifty notches. You're screaming at me!" Mr. Peters shouted in an equally raised voice.

My tail fuzzed. I hated when they yelled like that.

"Well, I wasn't the one who had the affair," she said.

I remembered Mr. Peters' affair with the secretary well. It had been five years ago in human years. He had taken the thin brunette home on several nights while Mrs. Peters was going through those hospital treatments. She had found out because their eldest daughter, the playful redhead who always fed me treats, entered the house and found them on the sofa together. She had immediately exposed her dad to her mom. I could not help but feel sorry for Mrs. Peters. She was weak, and now had to deal with another female in her property. Human relationships are so fragile.

I watched as the two humans became silent.

“That was five years ago,” Mr. Peters said slowly. He looked down and stepped back against the wall.

All in all, after he had been found out, he had never brought the brunette home again. I think he broke off all ties with her and devoted himself to making his wife’s life as comfortable as possible.

I watched Mrs. Peters’ reaction to what she had just said. She wrung her hands, her telltale sign that she was nervous, but she said, “I am the one who keeps this marriage together. I was at the children’s recitals when you were working. What have you done? Absolutely nothing.”

“I provide for this family. You have never worked a day in your life, because you quit college. I am the one who keeps food on the table. You have never had any initiative in your life.”

“I quit college?” She gulped. Her hands were wringing uncontrollably, and her voice slipped into nearly a whisper. “I...” Her face reddened, and a tear slipped down.

I knew Mrs. Peters had wanted to be a lawyer when she was a girl, but she had quit when she had met Mr. Peters. She often said she wanted to be a wife, but once when she was petting me, and he had been at work, she had told me that the real reason she had not pursued her career, was that she was afraid of the work it would entail.

I watched them. They were silent.

Mrs. Peters strolled to the sofa and started folding the freshly cleaned tablecloths.

Mr. Peters said, “I am going out for a walk.” He strolled to the door, walked outside, and shut the door behind him.

Mrs. Peters had to fold the tablecloths twice for them to fit in the cabinet drawer. “Come, Tiger. Dinner.” She walked to the kitchen and opened a can of that delicious gravy filled chicken.

I leapt off the sofa and hurried to my bowl.

She stared at where I had been sitting. “Oh, my goodness! The keys!”

# In Defense Of Manic Depression

By Kaleigh Steiner

When will I be up?

When will I be down?

I hate it here.

Unpredictability

Waking up to the unknown

If I was even lucky enough to get sleep

I have to function in society

But these swings hold me down

What even are these words coming out of my mouth?

Was I too loud? Too aggressive?

Can I run a marathon today?

Are these tears going to flood the earth?

The thoughts race

Faster and faster

Slow down please

I'm just trying to get by

The emotions argue against each other as my body tries to  
keep up

The darkness is overwhelming

Will this be my last day?

All I can do is push through

# Chiroptera

By Holly Tuffley

Chiroptera, Greek origin meaning "hand-wing,"  
the most unusual feature of this mammal,  
a thin membrane of skin  
stretched over light and slender finger bones.  
The thumb, a single, sharp claw.

Small and secretive,  
sometimes thought to be rare.  
Clinging to tree trunks or hanging upside down,  
night's nimble nomads, have never been known  
to follow paths that people own.

By day, they roost in barns or attics,  
caves, or quiet abandoned mines.  
By night, they dance beneath the ancient moon,  
and if you're lucky, you might find one  
nestled calmly in a dark shadowed room.

To catch prey, they only rely on one sense.  
A swift navigator though the ghostly midnight air,  
they use acoustic orientation called echolocation.  
Without a sound, without a care,  
detecting flying insects with their silent sonar.

Beneficial members of the animal community,  
they pollinate flowers and scatter seeds in vibrant diversity.

As natural regulators of insect swarms,  
they keep the mosquito population safely in form.

The quiet protectors of the night,  
sometimes gone unseen, but always there in flight.

# Pomegranate Juice

By Alexandra Vangor

I turn on the water and step in; it's too hot,  
the water hasn't warmed up yet,  
it burns,  
it's room temperature,  
it scalds me,  
it's not even warm.  
It's red,  
it's pomegranate juice.

My dress is soaked,  
my dress is bone dry,  
I haven't taken it off. It's too heavy,  
it's thin and airy,  
it's sticky and it's tight, it clings to me,  
it holds me.

The air is thick and wet and bitter,  
the air is cool and dry;  
I can't breathe.

My eyes are clouding,  
my eyes are closed,  
my limbs are heavy,  
my body is relaxed,

and I'm drowning in my thoughts,  
I wander in my mind,  
and choke on steam.

I fall down the drain,  
I settle down slowly.  
My lungs are red and sweet,  
the taste fills my mouth,  
I'm choking on pomegranate juice.

I fall for several bells;  
I hear them ring each time,  
I hear only my heartbeat,  
before I land in the dark.

It's soft and warm,  
I'm on the carpet by the vent.  
The stars and sky appear; they're held by the mice,  
the mice stare at me.  
They're smiling and waving,  
they're gnashing their teeth.  
I do the same.  
but,  
They're really very nice;  
they bring me pomegranate juice.

They hold my hands, and bring me flowers and treats,  
it's all made of dust.

They make me doll clothes to wear;  
they clothe me in  
pretty aprons and stockings,  
chains and wires.  
We play tag and go walking in their burrow,  
I run away.  
We're truly, very nice.

We stood outside a great door;  
the door I find is locked.  
I can hear the water pouring beyond,  
it's the shower I hear on the other side.  
The steam seeps through the cracks, it's bitter and wet.  
I remember I'm scared of mice,  
the mice surround me; they gnash their teeth;  
I choke and shut my eyes,  
the pomegranate juice stings.

The door knocks; I open my eyes. My mice have gone,  
I blink; they were never there.  
The water isn't on, my clothes are dry and warm,  
I never step in the shower,  
I never choke on pomegranate juice.  
The air is clear, my thoughts are smooth,  
there is nothing wrong.

I open the door; the opening is the mouth of a fridge and it's  
full of red.

the doorway is made of crimson.

It drips down the walls and off the shelves and onto my  
hands,

the pomegranate juice spilled.

I close the door and turn back to my bed,  
the shower has gone, so to my cradle I go,  
and climb into its arms,

I'm invited in; I never leave.

I pull the covers over my head,  
it leaves streaks of red behind my hands,  
the stains are only pomegranate juice.

I squeeze my eyes shut,

I fall back to sleep.

I open them and throw my bedding aside,

I blink; I'm awake and I'm unscathed.

I'm still in my pajamas, my hands are pale and dry.

Nothing has happened;

it was all a dream,

I'm only scared of mice.

but

I'm warm and safe and dry; none of it was real.

It was all a dream.

It smells of pomegranate juice.

# Somebody is Watching

By Alina Oberglock



# Curriculum Magicae: A Thief in Memory

By Jordan Riddle

Now the plan itself was ingenious, or so I was assured at the bar over a few bottles. I'm not quite sure, as I was too busy drinking on the client's tab. The client was a bit of a mess himself. He was a Daqalf who called himself Diegmeye and the only person at the bar who wore a cloak. Even sitting, he was still a head taller than anyone standing in the tavern. His kind were a rarity in these parts, not exactly being welcome. Magic types, that is. Wandering magicians tend to be more akin to pickpockets than anything else, except it's harder to prove they stole something when they can make things disappear at a moment's notice.

Before he began, I insisted we have drinks to celebrate the beginning of our business venture. I find that alcohol tends to make people more pliable when negotiating payment and collecting information. After a pint, Diegmeye was already slurring. He was clearly out of his element yet he insisted we meet at the tavern since none of the academia dared set foot there.

I was a bit wary initially. Jobs involving wizarding business are rare. Usually, the pointy-hats aren't in the market for cutpurses and blackjacks. They prefer to cut out the middleman and do the deeds themselves. Who could blame them? I'd do the same if I had lightning fingertips and could do things like make my eyelids invisible. My broker assured me the coin spends the same and that my pay wouldn't be an illusion. He checked Diegmeye's gold after telling him he'd have to pay an administrative fee for criminal networking. After sizing up Diegmeye though, I could tell the only thing he was able to outsmart was a written test and I was sure whoever I'd be stealing from wouldn't be that different.

“The school of magic’s at the base of the mountain. The headmistress Admorán is inept, easily-fooled, and eaaasily-bedded.” Diegmeye said.

That last part caught my attention. That wasn’t part of the plan I had in mind but could be improvised on my part. Before I could pursue the matter, Diegmeye began ranting.

“Could you believe she had me fired? Said I was ‘too inappropriate’ with the other staff members. Speaking of inappropriate behavior with staffs, you wouldn’t believe what Admorán does with her wand after hours.”

Diegmeye proceeded to rant about relationship drama and his career aspects before awkwardly weeping on my shoulder for several minutes. What he shared about the headmistress promptly removed any thoughts of sleeping with her from my head. I began to understand why he was fired as the patrons shot dirty looks because of the scene he was making.

After I patted him on the back while he finished sobbing, Diegmeye seemed to finally remember why we were here in the first place.

“Thanks, mate. Soz about that, just been going through some things. Anyways, I want you to retrieve a set of tomes. Since I’ve been fired from the school, I fell into a different crowd.”

Sensing another rant incoming, I tended to my drinks and gave the occasional nod until Diegmeye said something pertinent every now and then. Henceforth, you’ll be reading what I could recall through a half-drunken haze with my best attempts at amendment.

“The tomes are to be used for a ritual that would bring about the proper order of things.”

The proper order would presumably put Diegmeye’s betters on top of the hierarchy while people like me still fight for anything remotely of value to make ends meet.

So I asked more about this ritual and Diegmeye scoffed, saying “I’m paying you to steal, not for you to take on an apprenticeship” with a look that said I was asking one question too many.

He then said something about repercussions and black magic not being as bad as people say, it being very important to do as I'm told.

I got the general gist, he owed money to some friends who aren't actually friends but he was too pompous to realize.

Diegmeye then explained he was hiring me, a mundane thief, because the school is highly sensitive to outside magic and I'd be difficult to detect. Since it was a relatively small school, the headmistress would be busy teaching advanced classes. It should have been relatively straight forward.

"Since no one would bother robbing a school, much less a magical one, the defenses are concentrated towards the outside," said the Daqalf.

I said to him, "Define 'concentrated towards the outside' for me."

"I don't exactly know because I never tried stealing or breaking into the place. It means they're outside the school."

"Okay, let me rephrase. What's the most dangerous thing I'm going to deal with?" I asked.

"The school."

I'm usually a jolly drunk but Diegmeye was testing my patience, even if he had gold in hand. I didn't see how a sexually-deviant headmistress and a bunch of children were dangerous. Okay, dangerous to me at least. My reputation spoke for itself. Again, I asked the same question and gave Diegmeye a hard look.

And again, he merely said the school and gave me a shrug.

"Once you slip past them, you'll follow the signs to the library and look for two books. One is a palm-leaf manuscript and the other is leatherbound with this design on the cover." Diegmeye said.

He drew for me the Star of Chaos. A symbol meaning infinite possibilities and the breakdown of order.

"What signs exactly?" I asked. It's a magical school so surely there had to be some extravagant mechanism or riddle to be solved.

“The signs on the walls that give directions. You are literate, right?”

I should have realized then how much of a pain in the ass it is to deal with magickers or whatever they call themselves. Our business nearing its conclusion, I ordered four more pints to his tab. We finished them off, Diegmeye passed out, and I collected my finder’s fee from his back-pocket as he slept. I gave the barkeep his dues and with a wave, I left.

#

There was nothing too unusual on the path, save for an abandoned logging camp and for a time, I thought myself on the wrong warlock mountain. I was absolutely sure to stick to Diegmeye’s directions.

As I walked, there was a persistently annoying breeze that blew. It was chilling and seemed to cut right through my clothes, never seeming to come from the same direction. It had enough force to slightly push me off-balance. I thought nothing of it and continued to walk.

As I did, it grew into an exceedingly difficult wind. I realized it must have been enchantment as it picked up more and more as I progressed further, never quite blowing me away entirely. I fought step for step until I was practically walking-in-place due to the intensity. When I found myself losing purchase, I threw my weight to the ground and began to crawl on all-fours.

This worked until the gale picked up with such force that I was once again beginning to slide backwards. I tried gripping the earth and not even a moment later, my fingernails began to break. Growing desperate, I pierced the ground, scraping my fingers raw and jamming my knuckles like a battered mole. The only thing I could do was move forward but the wind resistance caused me to veer off to the side.

I don’t know how it occurred to me, but I had the wild thought to get off the beaten path. With every ounce of strength that I had, and plenty of dexterity to go with it, I scurried at an angle from the middle of the path into the

weeds. My legs kicked off the ground as I scrambled leeward. Just as sure I'd be sent flying away, the wind suddenly stopped. I met no further resistance as I touched the grass.

The air grew still and stifling. I took the time to examine my hands as I laid prone. My hands were a fine bloody mess. I bandaged my fingers, wincing as I banded them in coarse cloth. I wouldn't be lockpicking anytime soon with them but I could manage. If I had to undo zippers with my teeth to survive prison (and wouldn't you do anything to survive?), I'm sure I could pick locks much the same.

The path ahead changed. Gone were the coarse gravel and wild weeds, in their place was the lawn of a nobleman's estate. The path was level and the grass had checkerboard patterns. I turned my head around, the wild path was still there. It looked like someone folded a royal road someplace else on top of where I was.

Admorán's school was just up ahead. It wasn't as welcoming as I thought it would be. The front of the school possessed a skull-shaped visage. I decided to stay off the road lest I deal with any more unwelcome surprises. With how close I was to the hermitage, I remained prone as I crawled forward. I specifically chose a green cloak to blend in with the landscape with hopes of no one taking notice at a distance.

Alas, this Admorán was a shrewd one. The well-manicured grass took on a wild aspect again, instantaneously overgrowing and ripening with weeds before my very eyes.

I quickened my pace. Whatever the trap was, it wasn't readily apparent and so it wouldn't kill me immediately. And not to mention, I wanted to be done with the job as I was growing sick of this shit. As I crawled like a fevered fieldmouse, I heard the tall grass rustle and the familiar sounds of scaled bellies sliding amongst the dirt.

Serpents. Guaranteed to be big and venomous.

I was quite familiar with them. As a thief, natural paralytics come in very handy. And also since I sleep in the woods most of the time like any self-respecting brigand. Most

snakes are docile unless disturbed in my experience so I continued on without sparing a glance at the first snake that slid across my path.

For several minutes, I would see one or two. I didn't grow worried until they increased in frequency to the point I was forced to look at a promenade of pythons.

L'vashu pit vipers, Bolerian Ballfangs, and Orscht markertips. See where I'm going with this? The swishing of grass was replaced by constant hissing. I soon found myself in more snakes than grass. I was now crawling in what was essentially a giant snakepit.

Now a lesser thief would have wet himself and screamed as he ran with more fangs in him than arrows in a quiver. Precisely what a gold-pinching, horned-up witch would want. Remember what I said about snakes earlier? They merely slithered over me, not caring for much thieves apparently.

I was sliding more than crawling in order to avoid disturbing them. It went as well as you would expect as I slid my hand on top of a particularly fat Meridan asp. Every snake around prepared to strike precisely at the same moment (assumedly. I could only tell by the ones in front of me and the fact that I'm still alive). In the span of seconds, I too rose up and flung myself back on the path. The wind swilled off the serpents. As the winds resumed beating me down once again, I wrenched my head over to the side. The grass once again looked well-manicured, not a single flicking, forked tongue among the blades.

I was now so close that the wind was a baleful gale, though it still lacked the power to fling me off the ground entirely. Now, I care little for breezes or snakes, but continuing on either ensorcelled path traveled so far would be folly. So I made my own.

I crawled on the point right where the grass met the dirt path. The wind simply became an infrequent gust and the grass looked mildly weedy, with the occasional garden snake. Now I am but a humble thief. I can't fathom why

those magicks buffered one another and I don't care. I was now within a stone's throw of the skull-place.

You may be asking how I failed and, much like the title said, became a thief in memory only.

And I'll tell you without a hint of shame. As I got closer to the school entrance, I saw a red light emanate from the school's glass-panelled eyesockets. I decided to take my chances and hastily sped up. Right when I was within knocking distance of the entrance, it showed me all the ways it could kill a man without piercing his skin or bursting his heart.

By "it," I mean the school did. Admoran's school is a living thing. This is what Diegmeye meant.

It had a rudimentary intelligence. It gave me visions of things like cellular degeneration, where you watch yourself fall apart and slip into nonexistence as every trace of you vanishes. Said visions must have had a diuretic effect because I pissed myself and didn't realize it. I wasn't going to fight it.

As I left, there wasn't a single obstacle in my way. The school had shown me mercy. At one point, the path transmuted under my feet into a children's slide. It was quite fun. I don't think Admoran even realized someone attempted to break in.

I had turned back without regret. Well, without regret until Diegmeye's "benefactors" caught wind of my failure. Turns out that group he mentioned falling in with was involved in dark magic. Seeing how I didn't have a single tome nor drop of the Headmistress' yosekai wine (which Diegmeye failed to mention) to carry for my troubles, they saw to it that I wrote this tale with less of a hand than I started with. They stripped me of three of my fingers.

Diegmeye, bastard that he was, pinned the failure solely on me. In a way, he was right. Though his benefactors executed him anyway, but not before they had him spread word of my failure.

Seeing how my livelihood evaporated with the lack of a functional hand, I turned to drinking. I used whatever of my

reputation I had left for drinks on the house. I thought about going up one of those mountains and leaping off to end the joke my life became.

What I didn't expect was for my story to become a legend for the common folk. Since there was coin to be made, I picked up writing and put the tale to paper. Who would have guessed that people apparently enjoy reading about the misfortune of others? I went from Ralph Eilson, accomplished thief, to Ralph the Half-Hand. It may not be the most flattering sobriquet but I'll take it.

Even Admoran herself seemed to enjoy the story, though I feel it may partially be due to the fact her academy's enrollment hit record numbers when the story was published. She even sent me a thank-you letter, offering a personal tour of the schoolgrounds and her private chambers, should I choose to visit afterhours. I declined her gracious offer and explained that one as creatively lascivious as her deserves a whole man. That, and the school terrifies me.

I now write memoirs of my other misadventures. Apparently, one of the nobles took such a liking to them that I'll be knighted for it. Ha! And I never did fight for the duchy or work an honest day in my life. Now if I could just convince someone to commission a prosthetic, I'd be good as new.

# The Quiet One

By Megan Storer

It was gone before breakfast. The box full of her letters and the will and the photograph of her laughing in the snow were snatched off the table. No one said anything at first because no one noticed. It was just the usual clatter of spoons in cereal and the scrape of the wooden chairs against the tile. But by lunch, the air felt heavy. They searched for it in the attic, the basement, and even the spot behind the oven where the family of mice used to live.

They all asked me what I saw. I said I didn't know.

They accused each other in stages, in new levels of blame. First, they accused the youngest because she cried too easily. Then the middle child, because he had once stolen a watch and blamed the dog for eating it. The oldest daughter stayed quiet, which made them suspicious. Mother always said silence is a kind of confession if you wait long enough.

The youngest asked me this time. I said nothing.

They tore the house apart. Floorboards were lifted, and the walls shook with screams throughout the house. The middle son dug up the garden. Mother would have hated that. Dirt was under his fingernails, and the roots of many plants were severed. The youngest daughter joined and found a rusted spoon and a marble. He found a bird skull. But still, there was no box.

Eventually, they stopped asking me. That was wise.

Now they don't speak. Not to each other and not even to me. The house is quieter than it has ever been. Sometimes the house shakes, and I hear the laugh from that snowy day. It's always faint, and I wonder if they hear it too.

They've started watching each other differently. Not with anger anymore, but with something sadder. The youngest flinches when a drawer opens, and after it is closed, she goes to look in it. The middle son keeps a shovel by the door just in case the ground decides to open a gaping hole and give the box back.

They still sleep under the same roof, but they've stopped sharing meals. The kitchen is a place of passing where someone enters and someone else leaves. No one sticks around. No more scraping chairs or clattering of spoons. The silence has a shape now, and it reminds me of mother. Sometimes it presses against the windows and hums in the pipes, but I pay no attention to it.

You want to know where it went, I understand. But some things aren't about knowing, they are about keeping. Sometimes they are about choosing what to carry and what to leave behind.

The box was never hidden well. It was hidden under someone's bed to make them doubt each other and forget the sound of her voice. That was the point: to hollow them out and make them look at each other like strangers at a train station.

They think the box held answers, but it only held reminders, especially with the photograph. Her face was mid-laugh with the snow caught in her dark hair and lashes. The oldest was able to capture a moment before the cold reached her skin, and that was the one they wanted most.

They'll never ask me directly. That was the unspoken rule. You don't ask the quiet one because you will never get an answer. If you wait, you hope, and then you rot.

You haven't asked in a while, which is good. That's how pain starts to heal. No revelation, just forgetting, but I remember, and I always will.

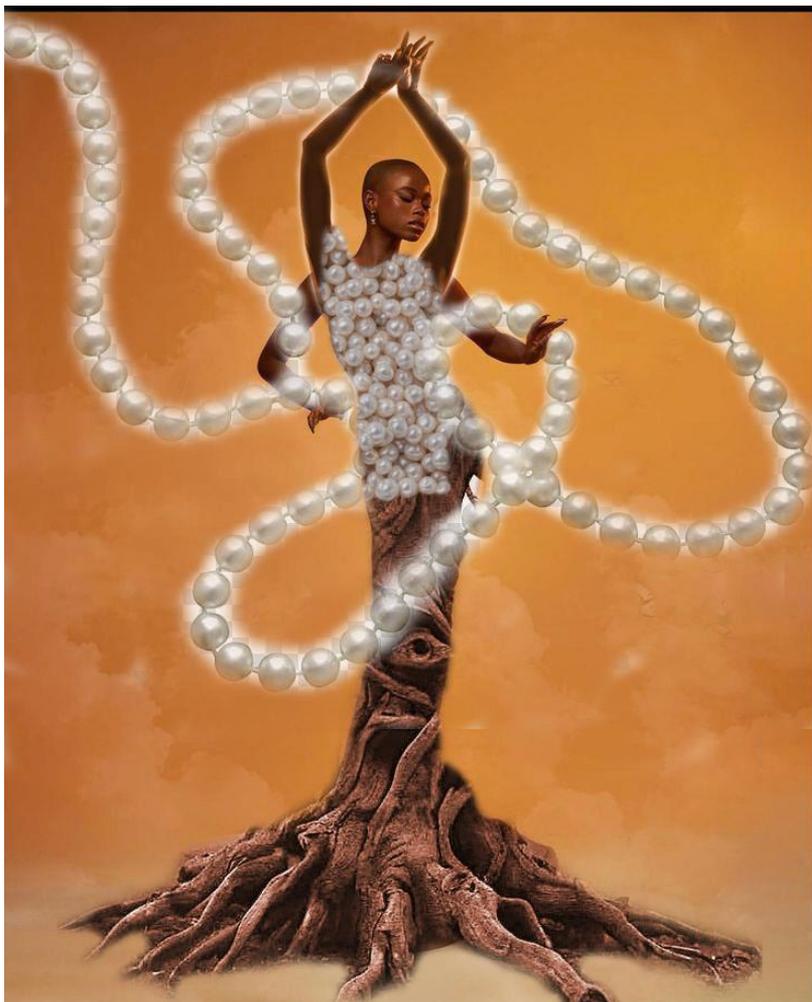
Someone took it before the others woke. They held it up to the window and let the morning light bleed through her smile. Then they folded it twice and tucked it into their coat. Did they cry? Did they try to memorize the shape of her joy? Yes.

How do I know this?

I, the oldest, keep it in my pocket, folded small.

# Tree Woman

By Jamira Wainwright



# Cypress Explorer

By Jo-Angelina Carmelitano

I've been where you will never be, where time is slow in the  
humid haze.

The frogs harmonize with mosquitos; pythons wrap around  
trees.

Murky depths hide dangers worse than me.  
I'm Florida wild.

# In Defense of Childcare

By Nicole Patton

Because the morning begins  
long before the parents punch their clocks.

Because someone has to tie the shoes,  
wipe the noses, listen to the same story again.

Because the smallest hands still need holding,  
and the smallest voices still need answering,

even when the world outside  
is already rushing past.

Because work does not stop for fevers,  
for scraped knees,

for the endless wonder of a bug  
found crawling on the floor.

Because society builds its future  
on backs that are not seen

the quiet patience of those  
who rock children to sleep

who teach them colors and kindness,  
who steady them until they can stand alone.

In defense of childcare  
I say it is not babysitting,

not filler, not background noise  
It is labor,

it is education  
it is love repeated daily

in a thousand unnoticed acts  
and when the world pretends this work is small

look again at the children  
and try to tell me their growing is not everything.

# The T.J.C. Incident

By Jenny Lopatin-Austin

The following is not based on a true story, but instead silly coincidence

I had been working late one night in my office, ghosts of drags past clouding up the space, when a letter dropped through the slit in the door like an unwanted baby. The letter looked like it had been clenched by Satan's left palm, and all that had any semblance of meaning or address on it were 3 letters dipped in gold: T.J.C.

The letter practically came apart in my hand as I opened it. It had words with more crosses through it than a Christian cemetery, rings from coffee cups that had dared to rest on it decorated the pages, and the corners could barely be considered corners. It managed to convey the following message despite all odds:

“Please!

You have to help me! No one will believe me, at least not a soul in the police department. But that's why I turned to someone like you! A P.I.! Something strange is happening in this town. You'll probably laugh when you read through this, but I beg you not to. It all started a week ago. I had a local combined bookstore and coffee shop I loved to visit. It was my day off and I was determined to buy a copy of *Catcher in the Rye* and buy an Americano and just let the day go by, but as I was browsing all the works by J.D. Salinger, I felt something odd. A presence. I turned around and scanned the shelves. Initially I didn't see it, just a mix of cookbooks, romance novellas, and some Christian fiction, but after a second comb through I saw him...it? A tiny Jesus. It was a tiny figurine made of plastic, its sash read “Jesus <3 you”, despite its face looking unsure of whether or not it believed that sash. Its expression was comical and charming. Being a benevolent giant, I set it back in its righteous spot and was all set to return to my browsing when over my

shoulder I noticed a store clerk staring at it with puzzlement resting in her features. At the time I thought little of it beyond a charming knick-knack for a friend, so I inquired the clerk about it.

“Tell me, is it sacrilegious to ask how much he is?”

“I couldn’t tell you.”

“Is it a matter of religious principle?” I continued to jest.

“Well, no, ‘cause we don’t sell it?”

“Oh,” I was a little underwhelmed, “Then where did it come from?”

“No clue. Little guys have been popping up all over.”

“A prank? Some kids?”

The retailer shrugged. “Probably. If I was truly invested, I’d check the security cams. But it seems harmless enough.”

I felt an eerie chill run through me.

I thanked the retail worker and left as quick as humanly possible.

On my way home, the cold grasp of sudden fear had left my throat dry. I stopped at one of the multiple drug stores that I typically pass on my way home to pick up a bottle of water. My tight white knuckles wrapped around the neck of the sacrificial bottle of plastic. I was afraid that it might burst in my hand, but this fear was relative. I didn’t understand why at that time a tiny plastic religious icon had such a grip on my heart. Would I have reacted the same way if it had been an acrylic Buddha? A nylon Muhammad? A polycarbonate Confucius? I was at the time too rattled to contemplate too deeply.

As I inched up in line to make my purchase, a familiar tiny face greeted me. It was the same face, with the same mask of uncertainty.

Tiny Jesus Christ had returned.

I looked from him to a cashier with the name tag “Quinn”, in radiating urine yellow.

“Um, excuse me, but do you by chase sell this?”

My trembling leaf of a finger pointed at the plastic savior.

Quinn shook their head, causing waves of black and red hair to rustle like ravens and cardinals.

“No.”

“D-Do you have any idea who put this here?”

“Also, no.”

“I-is this some kind of gag?”

At this, Quinn looked quite quizzical.

“A goof? A gaff?? A jape??!!”

The same alliteration took place.

I felt a need to bolt from the store. I had to get away. Something within my mind, body, and soul wanted me to flee with the water in hand. I only noticed I had done so when a cool dampness pooled in my palm.

It was only a plastic water bottle, but I did have a sense of guilt wash over me due to the petty burglary. But I couldn't go back. Quinn was probably a lovely person, but he was there. It.

I couldn't go back. Couldn't risk seeing it again.

But little did I know that it didn't matter what I wanted. It was Tiny Plastic Jesus' world, and we are all specs under its gaze. Everywhere I went: the coffee shop, the grocery store, a gas station bathroom; he was there. Each a different colored sash, but always the same message: “Jesus <3 you”. The message scrawled into my brain.

His look of indifference repeated over and over again grew to taunt me. I don't go out anymore. I cannot. He's taken over. I sent this letter to you to issue a warning. Maybe you can find out what I cannot: where they're coming from. The tiny covenant of plastic Jesuses (Jes-ai?). Maybe you're braver than I, but I think we only have so long until something big happens. I have no proof of this, but I have this feeling of something carving into my bones.

Please help.

Sincerely

But that's where the letter was cut off. There was no name. It looked like any semblance of a moniker had been

torn clean off. The only thing that took up the space where it would have been was the following:

<3

I traced the heart with my thumb, as suddenly my office door burst like a popcorn kernel. Through it came something my mind did not want to come to terms with. It was a bubbling festering mass. It reeked of plastics and rot. The darkness of my office disguised the mass before me, but I needed to grab my phone for a light.

The light hit a bulbous amalgamation of human flesh and tiny plastic smiling heads.

“Help me...have mercy...”

I think what reached for me in distress was a massive hand, plastic sashes and veins entwined in a crude rainbow pattern. This person, or whatever trace of human was contained, slushed and jiggled toward me, the heads and bodies of tiny Christian figurines jutted from every angle out of skin that resembled melted wax. The horde of plastic tchotchkes seemed to be trying to reform into the human shape that had been divorced from them all, but the struggle seemed to be in vain. I meanwhile was trying to avoid being added to the collection. I leapt back over my desk.

My penny-pinching ways had led me to buying an office that was more akin to a shoe box, and the only way in and out was the door that my unwanted guest had demonstrated his impression of the Kool-Aid Man on.

I shielded myself behind my desk. There was a spot I could maybe crawl under, meanwhile the behemoth tried to engulf my desk. A fractal crack appeared above me as the pressure grew on my hideaway. I took my chance on the barely human-sized hole and wriggled my way through like a worm escaping a chicken farm. At first, I thought it seized me, I felt something lukewarm and lugubrious wrap around

my foot, but I shook free and only sacrificed an old leather boot. When I could rise up from being on all fours I did and moved like an Olympian out of my front door.

The whole kerfuffle was well above my head and lightyears above my pay grade. I humbly sought out law enforcement and lead the boys and girls in blue back to my place. What once resembled an office was now fragments of wood, glass, and carpeting, ripped, bashed and scattered throughout the space.

Naturally there was no residue.

And the letter?

The letter was gone.

The police wrote the whole story off as a break in. A disgruntled client out for revenge. But I know better. And by now...I pray you do too.

# Stalker

by Kaleigh Steiner

She clutched her bag tighter to her side. She could feel someone watching her as she walked down the walkway towards her apartment. It was a feeling she had never had before but something was warning her that she was in danger. She had felt this feeling ever since she was walking the mall. She was always looking over her shoulder.

Dwayne was parked in the almost empty parking lot, just sitting in his black Jeep. He observed as the girl stiffened up and clutched her bag tighter. He was parked behind a dumpster and thought there was no way she could see him. Besides, he wasn't going to hurt her. He just wanted to watch. He had followed her all the way from the mall. He couldn't seem to figure out why.

He knew in his heart he could never hurt someone, but the urges were becoming overwhelming.

"How did I get here?" Is all he could repeat to himself, fighting the urge to get closer as the girl approached her door. He felt an overwhelming feeling of just wanting to be wanted. But he couldn't figure out why he wanted to hurt her so badly.

Dwayne's head was spinning. Another splitting headache was coming on the thoughts just wouldn't stop. He wanted to get out and follow her. He stayed in his car, clutching his head in his sweaty palms. He knew this was wrong. Maybe that's why these headaches keep coming. Maybe it was a sign.

He threw his car in reverse and revved out of there, forgetting that he was trying to stay unseen. As he speeds away, he glances in his rearview mirror and sees lights flashing.

"Great" he thought.

He pulls over on the side of the two lane highway he had found himself on. He's glancing in the side mirror he watches as the police officer scuttled over to his car. His

head is pounding. Again he asks himself, "How did I get here?" He quickly opens the glove box and digs around for his documents.

"Good afternoon, sir. Do you know why I pulled you over?" Said Officer Sandy.

Dwayne could feel the blood rushing to his head. He didn't even know how to respond to this. He felt an overwhelming amount of guilt. He worried he was caught for actions that he did not even commit.

Nervously, he responds, "I'm not sure, officer."

"You were speeding like a bat out of hell! Where are you going in such a hurry at this time of day?"

Dwayne wasn't even sure what time of the day it was. He felt confused and anxious. He looks up at the sky and notices the sun is almost gone. It was almost night time and he couldn't even justify where he had been for the last five hours. Stalking people.

"Oh, officer, I was just going home. Long day at the office. I got out late and I was in a hurry to let out my dog," Dwayne finally managed a reply.

"Ok, license and registration, please. Oh, and your insurance card. What kind of dog do you have?" Officer Sandy said in a calm voice.

"Oh, he's just a chihuahua mix." Dwayne replied.

Dwayne stares blankly for a minute, trying to gather his thoughts. He hesitantly hands over his documents.

"Thanks, I'll be right back." Officer Sandy said.

Dwayne is in a trance. The thoughts are flying through his head. He'd been people watching and stalking for some time, but never had he come this close to being caught. Not by anyone important, anyways. He takes a deep breath in, trying to remind himself that the reason the cops are involved is because he was speeding.

Officer Sandy returns with all of the documents and a citation for speeding. Holding his breath, Dwayne grabs the papers from the officer.

“You’re good to go. You’ll need to pay this by the court date listed on this citation. Try to slow down and drive safe. Say hello to your pup for me.” Officer Sandy said.

Dwayne manages to get out a “Thank you, Officer, have a good night.”

As Dwayne drives home he has a sudden urge to go back to the mall. He realizes how late it is and tells himself it’s better to just go home. After all, his anxiety was still through the roof from getting pulled over.

When Dwayne finally gets home he sits in his car for a minute and stares at the citation Officer Sandy had given him. The last 30 minutes were playing on a loop in his head. He knew his behavior had to stop, but he didn’t know if he could. He grabbed his wallet and keys and went inside the house. His dog, Berno, was jumping at the door.

“At least someone is excited to see me,” Dwayne says to Berno. He hooks his leash and walks him out the front door. Dwayne loved these moments with his dog. Walking his dog was the only time he felt like his head was clear. Just watching Berno pounce and bounce around brought him so much joy.

Dwayne lay in bed tossing and turning. All he could think about was the girl he had followed home. He realized that his urges were strengthening and was afraid of what might happen next time.

6:00 AM came quickly. Dwayne gets up and completes his normal routine; he takes Berno out, makes some eggs and toast and gets dressed for work. As he’s getting into his car he suddenly starts to feel very sick. His stomach is turning with nausea. He forces himself to go to work but doesn’t make it through the day. When his manager sent him home to rest he finds himself driving back to the apartment complex he was at the day before. He always knew he’d end up back at the mall, but here?

He casually parks behind the dumpster again and watches through the window of the girl’s apartment. Giving in to the urges. He sits there for several hours until he sees her gray Ford pull into the parking lot. He sinks down in his

seat watching her carry her bags into the apartment. He pulls his pocket knife out of the middle console and sits, waiting. He starts pinching the skin on his arm trying to bring himself back to reality. He hears squeaky brakes and looks in his rearview mirror. A cop pulls up behind him perpendicularly.

Sweat starts pouring down Dwayne's face and his hands begin to tremble. He sits up straight and starts scrolling on his phone. Anything to look innocent. He sees a shadow out of the corner of his eye and hears a tapping on his window. He looks over and rolls down his window, sweat still pouring out of every pore on his body.

"Good afternoon sir, do you live here?" The officer asks him.

Dwayne shakes his head back and forth unable to speak.

"We received a call about a suspicious vehicle. Were you here last night too?"

"I'm sorry officer, I just pulled in here for a minute to check my phone," Dwayne responded realizing that he still had the pocket knife in his hands.

"I'm going to need you to step out of the vehicle, please and put your hands behind your back."

Dwayne slowly steps out of the vehicle sliding the knife down in between the seats. He puts his hands behind his back and he can hear the metal clicking as the officer slips on the cuffs. The officer puts him in the back of his car and takes him down to the station. Dwayne is silent.

"We have reason to believe that you may have been following someone. Can you tell us why you were at the complex two days in a row?"

Unsure what to say, Dwayne stared blankly. "I told you I pulled over for a minute to check my phone."

"We have video footage of you leaving the mall and following a gray Ford to this apartment complex. We also have footage of you sitting in this parking lot for hours last night and today. Can you explain that?"

Dwayne was again at a loss for words. He never thought it would get this far. All he could manage to say was, "I think

I'm sick. Something is wrong with me. No matter what I do I can't help it. I get these urges and recently I've been acting on them."

"What do you mean 'urges'?"

"Like uncontrollable thoughts. Please officer, I need help."

The officer studies Dwayne's face and body language then excuses himself from the room. He comes back a few minutes later with another detective.

"May I call you Dwayne?" Said the detective.

"Sure," Dwayne replies.

"Here's the deal Dwayne, your behavior is suspicious. But we don't have enough to hold you. We are concerned but you're free to go. But please stay away from the mall and this apartment complex."

Dwayne gets up and leaves the station in disbelief. Part of him wanted to get caught. He was afraid of his own thoughts. He heads home to Berno and prays that he will be better able to control his behavior. Two incidents with cops had to be the greatest warning the universe had ever given him.

# The Clipboard Thief

By Nicole Patton

The clipboard vanished at exactly 9:42 a.m., and Sunny Sprouts Daycare tilted into chaos.

Miss Carla knew it instantly. Without that battered green board, she had no record of allergies, no bathroom log, no sign-in sheet – no proof that she had any idea what she was doing. It was not just a clipboard; it was her sanity, her control, her north star.

“Where is it?” She whispered, scanning the counters, cubbies, and even under the juice-sticky nap mats.

Eli was the first to notice her panic. He peered over his sippy cup, milk mustache gleaming. “Miss Carla, you look like my mom when she forgets her phone.”

Raylin, always the dramatist, gasped so loudly half the room jumped. “No clipboard means no snack time!”

Hayden groaned, dropping into her chair like she had just been sentenced. “Snack is sacred,” she announced, as if issuing a royal decree from a kingdom made entirely of crayons.

Miss Carla tried to smile, but her stomach twisted. The clipboard had been right there – on the counter beside the disinfectant spray – five minutes ago. She had only turned her back long enough to break up an argument over glitter glue. Now it was gone.

She checked the art corner, the reading rug, the bathroom (twice), even peeked into the fish tank, just in case.

“Maybe the wind took it,” Eli offered helpfully, pointing toward the sealed windows.

“The wind’s not real,” Raylin argued.

“Yes, it is!”

“Then where is it?”

Their voices rose like a boiling kettle. Carla felt her pulse climbing with it. She could already hear the director’s voice

in her head—*You really should keep better track of your paperwork, Carla*—and picture her own job teetering like the block tower in the corner.

Then she saw him.

Thomas.

Four years old. Eyes full of schemes. Hair, like he had stuck his finger in an outlet and decided it was a good look. He sat at the block table, calm as a monk, building a wall around himself like a tiny general preparing for siege.

“Thomas,” Carla said softly, “did you see the clipboard?”

He looked up, blinked once, and said with devastating confidence, “Maybe.”

That one word. That tone. The other kids went silent.

Eli leaned close to Raylin. “He knows something.”

Carla followed Thomas’s gaze upward—and froze.

There it was.

Her clipboard.

Taped—*taped!*—to one of the blades of the ceiling fan. It spun slowly above her head, turning lazily in the air-conditioned hum, every rotation a tiny insult.

Her jaw dropped. The children gasped in perfect harmony, like a tiny choir.

“How did it get up there?” Raylin cried.

“Magic,” Eli breathed.

“Thomas magic,” Hayden muttered darkly.

Carla stared up, half in disbelief, half in awe. The clipboard had somehow become sacred—a relic of power—and Thomas was its trickster god.

“Thomas,” she said carefully, “why?”

He shrugged. “You always look at it more than us.”

The words hit harder than she expected.

She wanted to scold him, but something in her chest cracked instead. Around her, twenty small eyes watched to see if Miss Carla would explode or cry or both. Her throat tightened.

She imagined the parents walking in to find her climbing on tables, swatting at ceiling fans like some daycare Tarzan. She imagined her boss shaking her head, writing another

“incident report.” She imagined quitting—working somewhere quiet, like a library in Antarctica.

But instead, she laughed.

It surprised even her. A small giggle, then another, until the sound filled the room. The kids stared—half-delighted, half-worried that their teacher had finally lost it.

Then Eli giggled. Then Raylin. Within seconds, the whole room erupted into laughter, a contagious, fizzy joy that chased away the tension.

When she finally caught her breath, Carla wiped her eyes and said, “You know what? Let’s leave it.”

The class went silent.

“What about snack time?” Raylin whispered.

“Snack time still happens,” Carla said. “I don’t need a clipboard to know who’s hungry.”

Hayden threw her arms up. “Victory!”

Thomas looked almost disappointed she was not mad—but behind it, there was a flicker of pride. He had broken her rules, sure, but maybe he had also freed her from her own.

Carla handed out apple slices and peanut-free crackers, humming to herself as the children munched and chattered, crumbs flying like confetti.

When nap time came, the room settled under the soft whir of the fan. The clipboard circled lazily above them, catching bits of sunlight with every turn—a green halo over a room finally at peace.

Later, after the last parent left and the glitter was swept into its nightly pile, Carla stood alone beneath the fan. The golden light of the late afternoon spilled across the floor.

She could have climbed up, pulled it down, and restored order. But she did not.

Instead, she watched it spin.

It was not just a clipboard anymore. It was a reminder—a silly, spinning reminder—that some days, losing control was not the same as losing yourself.

She smiled, whispered toward the ceiling, “You win, kid,” and turned off the lights.

Outside, the air was warm, the sky softening toward evening. For the first time in months, Miss Carla did not carry the clipboard home with her. She carried only the laughter.

# Contributor Bios

**Jo-Angelina Carmelitano** is a Florida born woman of Port Charlotte Florida. She independently studies Herpetology (reptiles and amphibians) while furthering her education. Currently she serves on the board of directors for the Environmental Conservancy of North Port and Surrounding Areas. Previously she worked for Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center as an Environmental Educator teaching all ages about Florida, conservation, and reptiles. She has received multiple certificates on herpetological topics such as the Amphibian Foundations “Southeastern Master Herpetologist” certification. In her studies she has met and worked with many endangered and threatened species such as Pine Snakes, Gopher Frogs, Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnakes, Suwannee River Cooters, and Gopher Tortoises. She frequently travels to Big Cypress National Preserve and primitive camps; this is where the inspiration for the poem Cypress Explorer was born.

**Samantha Heuckendorf** is a 2nd year college student at SCF Venice who enjoys the hobby of writing and illustration.

**Isabella Kutzy** lives in Sarasota and is a student at State College of Florida. She is currently studying creative writing and is working on several short stories and poems. This is just one of her short stories.

**Jenny Lopatin-Austin** exists somewhere in Venice if you haven't found her yet then you probably aren't looking hard enough. She enjoys cooking, watching films, and spend time with what is either a void with eyes or a black cat. For her day job she works in a library as an assistant, not a librarian, a very important distinction. For more information try yelling at a rock or use this email: [j11781@comcast.net](mailto:j11781@comcast.net).

**Alina Oberglock** is a 21-year-old student at SCF working toward her Associate in Arts degree, with plans to pursue Psychology. On campus and beyond, she enjoys diving deeper into ideas about the human mind while balancing her studies with creative outlets. In her free time, Alina draws inspiration from the world around her, capturing moments through photography and transforming everyday observations into reflective writing.

**Nicole Patton** is pursuing her degree while working full-time as a daycare teacher. Her studies focus on literature and storytelling, with particular interest in how narrative shapes identity. Nicole is a wife, mother, and lifelong learner who brings creativity and empathy to everything she does.

**Zachary Prieto** is a senior at the State College of Florida Collegiate School. He loves poetry, has a passion for God and the Bible, and loves philosophy as well. In his free time, he enjoys writing poems, enjoying nature at the SCF campus, and hanging out with friends doing random fun activities. He loves helping out at the collegiate school and his church, he is the senior advisor of the Yearbook Club and truly enjoys doing his job there, as well as helping out very much within the Student Leadership Team.

**Jordan Blake Riddle** is attending the State College of Florida with the goal of earning a Radiography Associate's in Science. His pastimes are working out, writing fiction, and procrastinating from his to-do lists.

**Kaleigh Steiner** is a 32-year-old A.A. student and hairstylist from Denver, Colorado. With three years of loving life living in Florida, she has cultivated a love for writing and finds joy in spending quality time with her dog.

**Megan Storer** is a senior at the State College of Florida Collegiate School. She has written many poems and stories because it is fun, but also because it is her way of figuring things out: mostly with people, feelings, and the quiet things that no one ever says. She has been writing for as long as she can remember, and she is definitely not stopping anytime soon.

**Alexandra Vangor** is a 16-year-old sophomore at SCF, an equestrian, and an aspiring English major. She enjoys analyzing other horror works and weird fiction as well as writing her own.

## Elektraphrog Staff



**Sydney Swallow** grew up in northern Indiana and moved to Sarasota, FL about seven years ago. At 21 years old she started her career as a Boston based Flight Attendant with American Airlines, and is now going on four years. When she isn't flying in the sky, she loves relaxing with a book, spending time with her dog, taking pictures, or being outdoors. With an admiration for nature, occasionally she enjoys volunteering at the Celery Fields and has volunteered as a coordinator for their Eagle Tours. Most recently, she has continued her education for a certification in Digital Publishing in hopes to become involved and learn more about the industry.



After an early career in corporate journalism in the Midwest, **Terri Edmund** landed in Florida as owner of a quaint mom 'n' pop motel on once-quiet Anna Maria Island. Thirty years later, she's back to school at State College of Florida and has written two novels, a memoir and kid's books. For fun, she plays flute with the Manatee Community Concert Band, a group whose history she has traced back to the late 1800s.

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## **Program Goal**

The purpose of this program is to prepare students (yes! Even you!) with hands-on training in new media and digital publications. This program focuses on the skills necessary to work on print and digital publications, work in social media and digital marketing, or work in layout, design, and editing fields. The skills in this program are transferable to both local and national level publications. This program includes editing, programming, and graphic design courses.

## **Core Requirements:**

- CGS 2820C: Web Page Development (3 Credits)
- CRW 2001: Creative Writing I (3 Credits)
- GRA 1100C: Introduction to Computer Graphics (3 Credits)
- JOU 1440L: College Magazine Production I (3 Credits)

## **Choice of two courses (6 credits total) from**

- GRA 1206C: Typography (3 Credits)
- GRA 2121C: Communication Design (3 Credits)
- GRA 2150C: Photoshop (3 Credits)
- ENC 2210: Technical Communication (3 Credits)
- JOU 1441: College Magazine Production II
- MMC 2949: Internship in Mass Communications (3 Credits)
- PGY1800C: Digital Imaging I (3 Credits)

Contact Professor Masucci at [masuccm@scf.edu](mailto:masuccm@scf.edu)  
for more information.



**Are You Interested in  
Writing and Publishing?**

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JOU 1440L (3 Credits)

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