Vistas
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limit • less

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This is not an introduction...
We push boundaries...
My Old Man

Andrew Q. Starr

Is it my father who I chase to be?
Is my end goal being blocked by an obstacle I cannot easily let go of?
Am I soul searching in the wrong people and places?
Are my hopes and desires not being answered because I am asking the wrong person?
If I want a wife and kids, then does it matter who I'm married to?

I want to grow up to be my father.
So why am I not chasing after someone like my mother?

*I feel like there is something missing in my relationship with my girlfriend?*

Am I happy or am I making myself believe I'm happy?

*Do I not want to accept the fact that my girlfriend and I do not connect on a deeper emotional level?*

Am I scared that our love only goes as far as passionate and cannot reach compassionate?

I'm scared that I'm going to end up marrying the wrong person.
Am I scared that she is not the right person for me?
Did my upbringing lead me to always look for the better in people?

Why am I so optimistic?
Why do I question how far this relationship will go?

Is it a bad thing that I do this?
Am I a bad person for growing up the way I did?

*Am I inconsiderate to my girlfriend for trying to be true to myself and my family?*
Is there someone to blame for this or should I be pointing the finger back at myself?

Why do I look to be so much like my father?

Why am I so awestruck by who he is?

Is it completely subjective that I see my dad to be the best person I’ve ever met?

Is it the fact that we are both so emotional that we connect on a deeper level?

Then how come I always talk to my mother about relationship stuff?

*Why do I feel like I need to end this relationship with my girlfriend to flourish as a person?*

Why do I feel like I might be better off being in relationship with someone else?

**Why is my father the driving force behind how I feel towards my girlfriend?**

Why am I anxious to figure out these questions?

*Am I trying to spare my future emotions and feelings by holding on to this relationship with this girl?*

Why am I the way that I am?

*Does my girlfriend make me truly happy?*

Is her definition of happiness the same as mine?

Will being my wife and having kids with me truly make her happy?

If she says yes to my definition of happiness does that mean that I should stay with her and end up marrying her?

Why do I feel like I’m chained to this relationship?

Why do I feel like a bad person asking some of these questions?

*Will I find out how this relationship works out by being my father’s son?*

Who am I chasing to be?
Is the stress really worth it?
Are we not just robbing our future happiness?

Every semester we tell ourselves we will change.
It’s a fresh start!
We are no longer behind on assignments or scrambling to meet due dates.
Making up excuses or half-assing our work.

This time will be different.
This time we will be proactive!

We spend the first 2 weeks catching up with “friends,” hitting up the bars, and barely putting ourselves together before class.
School is the farthest thing from our minds. We only have four years here, tell ourselves
We are supposed to live it up, right?

Then one day, we walk into class and… damn.
Death by due date.

You were wrong
You forgot to check the syllabus.
The five-page paper, it’s due at midnight.

Your heart sinks, you’ve done nothing.
What’s wrong with you?
Won’t you learn?

You know what you are capable of.
Take the time.
Why won’t you?

You managed to finish.
Click submit right on time.
A sigh of relief.

It’s perfect.

You know it’s not,
it sucked.
The short relief turns to disappointment.

You know a procrastinator is all you will ever be.
I take a step back, and perhaps, take a seat. Take a look around, and attempt to truly appreciate what’s occurring in my environment. I absorb myself in the subjective mood of the room.

Sometimes it is better to take a closer look at your surroundings rather than to just jump right into what is happening. More times than not, I can get a lot more out of life when I take a moment to profoundly observe my surroundings.

I believe I identify with the person sitting cross-legged on the floor in the midst of everyone the most. This person is neither secluded, nor included in the crowd. This person is not engaging in the activity of the room nor isolated. This person is simply observing before acting. This person seems to be in the middle of the extraversion-introversion spectrum, and can possess both types of personalities but generally have equivalent characteristics of both. I identify with this person the most.

I am like the person sitting cross-legged on the floor amid everyone else because I also tend to rate towards the middle of the extraversion-introversion spectrum. I can be very outgoing, enthusiastic and eager for human interaction, but at times also somewhat reserved, quiet, and very self-aware. Just like this person, I like to sit back and view a
situation before jumping into action. This person shows self-constraint and power in watching the situation before acting, and showing dedication to analysis and intelligence through simple actions just as I do.

The conclusions of the simple action of sitting back to observe a situation before acting is what truly identifies me with the person sitting cross-legged on the floor amid everyone the most. I sit back, watch, evaluate, and then act. Like the sweet blending of an introvert and extrovert.

Four years later, I can confidently say I am still the person sitting cross-legged on the floor amid everyone. I’ve grown tremendously throughout my college career, but I still hold the same morals and personality as when I wrote this originally. This person, is me.
Throughout life, parents prepare their children for the day they move away from home. It is a time period where a child becomes an adult. They learn how to do the right things without their parents there to guide them. A person physically and mentally develops into someone she has always hoped to be. Someone begins to find who she is in college and who she wants to be. A person matures in her moral judgment because the decisions she makes in college will impact the course of her life. She begins to realize this and becomes more morally sound; she will realize what she wants, and her future will be ahead of her. It is a time where she has to make sacrifices to better herself and to help the people around her.

Now she understands the commonly statement that, “your first semester friends are different than your second semester friends.” She realizes that some people may negatively impact her life, and as hard as it may seem, she knows it is better to hold onto her true friends. It is important to find friends that share similar moral values. It is the mature and grown up way to move onto better things with good friends at her side. This all happens in
college since people typically say, “you’ll find yourself in college.” This is true because she now has the opportunity to create a whole new self in front of another community.

Lifelong friends are made through the foundations of the school community. Through this, she has developed herself and how she wants to present herself to other people. After college, it is all work and not as many foundations are needed; foundations are just added.

Sacred Heart University provides students with many different communities for people to be involved in. Within these communities, people find who they are similar to and share different values. It allows people to find themselves and better themselves through the qualities that interest them. Her college plays a huge role in allowing people to begin to see their moral values. It should be a place to grow. People are taught lessons and guided in the proper direction in ways that allow them to succeed. Professors do not stand with childish behavior which shows students they need to mature and develop these morals that they believe in. Students, she knows, need to have guidance and someone at her college to trust.

SHU has a welcoming environment where students find their trustworthy friends through these groups. People follow in their footsteps and want to strive to focus on their future. There are many opportunities given to students to succeed and help plan ahead. Everyone here has someone they look up to that allows them to be themselves. She knows that it is a matter of finding her community and peers; sometimes this involves transferring to another university, but she understands that making that decision shows moral growth.

College is about maturing into a better person and developing life values for herself. She has found her community at Sacred Heart University.
We decide our futures...

The Story of Michael Jung’s Daughter

Amanda Jung

Michael’s Daughter’s Prologue

Explanations and reasons are used as excuses to comfort the human mind. They rationalize why bad things happen to good people.

It’s simple.

Humans crave the answer to the question why.

There’s no explanation to why God let my last words to my father be, “You’re worth more dead than alive.”

My last words to my father were my last words to him because I was a raging teenage bitch.

There’s no explanation as to why my father’s decaying flesh was kept under the cold sky.

All.
Night.

Long.

It was because he was simply walking home on the wrong road at the wrong time.

And there’s certainly no explanation as to why my father’s beautiful dead body looked younger in his casket than the last four years of his life.

It’s because the North Haven Funeral Home simply has phenomenal morticians.

Bad things happen to good people.

Not for a purpose.

But, because that’s life.

Explanations and reasons are used as excuses to comfort the human mind. They rationalize why bad things happen to good people.

No God, no adult, and no drunk friend could answer the question why. So, I would spend countless nights looking at the sky to pull an answer from E. E. Cummings when he wrote “the wonder that keeps the stars apart.”

But then, I finally realized the earth still spins, the sun still sets, and life keeps going whether I'm in it or not.

I no longer wonder why.

Instead, I live a life without any answers except for an unknown tomorrow.

This is a story of how Michael's daughter grew up.
March 10th, 2015, approximately 10:45 p.m.

Was Michael Jung Still Alive?

Silent snow-filled train tracks, a dainty church with glass-stained windows, and his white picket fenced home a mile down the road stand very still. It’s the intersection of Pool Road and Route 22 where his body lies. The sidewalks are deserted and the roads are unoccupied except for an unfamiliar driveway populated with one too many pieces of a deteriorating heartbeat. The bloody scarlet stains mirror the wet, obscure, starless night. No one saw or heard anything but the comfort of their warm cozy homes. Parking the shattered car on an irrelevant named road, the lights appear but nothing was found. Silently screaming insignificant sound, his body stays coddled in a fetal position on the ground of an unfamiliar driveway. Shortly after the dented piece of scrap metal freely drives away, the blue and red flashing lights disappear in the distance. Unable to share his last words, he breathes his last breath on a stranger’s frozen asphalt. Now, the streets where he taught his daughter how to ride her first bike are a constant reminder where the Grim Reaper resides.

I went eighteen years with my head down perfectly content being invisible. But little did I know the night I rested in my cozy bed while my father became twenty-one grams lighter would be the moment my last name became the topic of that little town.
March 11th, 2015, approximately 11:15 a.m.

An Emotionless Response

Without any knowledge but blissful ignorance and the ability to sleep a peaceful sleep, his daughter woke up to what seemed like the first morning of confidence, sunshine, and warm weather. All was well until she heard the knock.

The knock that still haunts her ears.

The knock that made her throat catch fire.

The knock that began her eternal guilt.

Her aunt answered the question she could not form words to ask.

“He did not make it.”

I never lost my fear of death until the day my dad died.

My worst fear became my reality. I didn’t cry, I didn’t speak, and I didn’t even flinch.

Death was always a part of my daily routine.

“Amanda, death is like you’re permanently sleeping,” my mom used to say.

My mom thought she was comforting, but I could only think about suffocating in my own casket.
Death was something I always feared.
Death was something I used to think about every hour.
Every day.
Even in my third grade classroom.
Now, it’s something I still think about at every hour.
Every.
Single.
Day.
But instead of fearing death, it’s the only thing that keeps me going.
Death is the only thing separating me from my dad.
The one person I never got to say goodbye to.

Friday the 13th of March 2015, approximately 6:30 p.m.
All She Wanted Was a Hotdog

With looming guilt outweighing her shoulders. All she knew was their favorite restaurant. They went there once a month. All she just wanted was a hotdog. But that was the night she became visible.

Waiting for her number to be called, a stranger leaned in, pointed at her, and said, “That’s his daughter.”

She tried to look away but that finger was sharper than a dagger sculpting her throat.

“No number fifty-eight.”
She couldn’t speak.

She grabbed her hotdog, ran outside, and tripped down the stairs until she realized she forgot the fucking ketchup.

March 24th, 2015, approximately 7:30 p.m.

She Signs the Papers

Just turning eighteen, she was the only advocate for his insignificant sound.

Being his only child with the same last name, she had to sign the dotted lines.

Only a second semester freshman in college, she was forced to learn. Learn fast.

The case remained open for two years.

Hope and anticipation filled those two years.

That’s how I got out of bed every morning.

Though I may fool everyone on the exterior, I’ll be the first to admit I am a rollercoaster. The kind of rollercoaster that makes your stomach flip at every theme park.

I am an exact replica of him. I see him every time I look in the mirror. I embody pieces of programmed yet unpredictable metal through my bloodstream. Each screw and bolt was designed to follow my father’s psychological blueprint.
First, I’m up, and then I spiral down. Back up. And suddenly I corkscrew uncontrollably around. Living everyday with the same schedule, I stick to the same track. Going zero to sixty full-speed ahead, I have no choice but to start the same cycle over.

Again.

“You are definitely your father’s daughter,” my mom always said. My stomach would turn. Again.

The creaks and screams are all too familiar just as the unsteady steadiness of each loop and drop contributes to my inner twists and turns.

Unlike my father who could not prevent his rollercoaster DNA from an inevitable breakdown, it only takes me one or two tweaks to pull it back into gear.

Coming to an abrupt halt, it is not long before I have no choice but to look in the mirror, see him, and start the whole ride over.

Again.

But, I did it for him.

I moved on for him.

It was an obligation.

For what his eight-year old self deserved.

For what he always wanted.

For what he never was.
A Paralyzed Update

It was the first morning his daughter could not get out of bed.

That was the day her lawyer rang.

“I’m sorry Amanda. There were five or six causes of death,” she said.

“Okay. But I don’t understand. He was found in a fetal position,” she said.

“The fifth or sixth cause of death makes it impossible for a justified case.”

Everything felt over until I talked to my cousin.

“Keep grinding, Mand,” my cousin would say.

Everyday.

There was no more life to waste.

Two years escaped, patiently waiting, persistently wishing, and faithfully wondering.

Now, I do it for myself.

I move on for myself.

For what my eight-year old self deserves.

For what I always wanted.

For what I never was.
Michael’s Daughter’s Epilogue

As I am writing this, it’ll be exactly two years and nine months since I received the news.
And it’ll be two years, nine months, and one day since that night.
All I wanted was some sort of answer.
Obviously.
But I was forced to swallow the bad news.
At first, I needed to be my dad’s advocate. The extreme amount of guilt fed that aspiration.
So many people had something to say and their voices encompassed my thoughts.

But even after two positive comments from my friends and family for one negative troll on the Internet, I still felt guilty.
But now, the word, “felt” is in the past.
Now, I mean what I say when I wrote, “I do it for myself.”
Although I don’t think we ever fully finish our “mourning” processes, I was done wasting time wishing, hoping, and wondering for an apology.
No one was going to admit their wrongs.
They still haven’t.
And that’s okay.
Because I know where my dad is.
Sometimes I see him smiling from the sun.
I still hear him singing to me whenever “Born to Run” comes on.

And I almost always see him swooping over my head whenever a blue jay flies near.

But, some days are still harder than others.

Especially since there is not a single day that goes by where I don’t think of him.

But even though his body is gone, he still teaches me something new each day.

And I’ve made myself a promise from it all.

To live only for myself.

Because I know for a fact that’s the one thing my dad wants.

And up until December 11th, 2017 at 3:33 p.m., this is the story of Michael Jung’s daughter.
“This is a whole lot of gobbledy gook!” That’s how I knew I did something wrong. Maybe my first indication should have been the fact that my grandfather had actually picked up the phone to call me.

My grandfather, Peeka, was an editor for Newsday, a popular newspaper on Long Island. He worked nights and ripped apart articles written by amateur writers and professionals alike. That was then, but now he’s got a little bit of a different job.

On paper, my grandfather is retired. We celebrated with a retirement party, maybe a cruise for him and my grandmother, the whole shebang. However, he soon found that being an editor once meant he was an editor forever. Middle school history paper? Send it to Peeka. Research paper? Send it to Peeka. College application essay? Send it to Peeka.

After years and years of feeling discouraged by the number of red marks on my papers by my own grandfather, I started to take corrections seriously and improve my writing. He inspired me to start writing more and work hard to make my essays better. He fueled my passion for English. He’s the reason I found myself writing in little notebooks and pursuing a career in English education.

These days when I send him a new paper it doesn’t have nearly as many comments written on it. So, when I find him calling me at 10 PM and I pick up the phone to hear him saying, “This is a whole lot of gobbledy gook!” I know that I have a bit of editing to do.
How to Love Yourself:

An Essential Guide to Self-Care by an Introvert

Alexa Kober

1. Go outside once a day. When you leave your footprints in the forest, it’s comforting to know that you weren’t the first one there and you won’t be the last one there either.

2. Drink more hot tea. The heat from drinking tea mimics human warmth. If you hold the cup with both hands, you can call it a hug in a mug.

3. Take more baths. Bubbles help wash away worries: the big, the small and the in between.

4. Journal often. Rant about the bad, but make sure to mention the good. When there is no good in the worst of days, you can look back on the happiness in the past.

5. Meditate. Do not mistake this for a nap. Light scented candles. Use this time to clear your mind, to let things go.

6. Make dinner for yourself at least once a week. Soup is good for the soul. Wine helps maintain a certain level of sanity.

7. Find a hobby where you are creating something. Be kind to your creations. Do not destroy them. Only edit them.

8. Know your favorite movie. Pick wisely. Watch it as often as needed. Use it to recharge.

9. Reinvent yourself. Do not be afraid to cut your hair, to pierce your ears, to ink your skin;
your body is a canvas.

10. Get eight hours of sleep. Nothing good happens after 3 A.M.

11. Drink more water. The more hydrated you are the less headaches you have.

12. Take care of yourself. You are the only person who will always be there for you, who will know how to do all of these things.
To the Guy We Couldn’t Save

Alyssa Ingmanson

20 weeks.
5 days a week.
70 minutes a day.

30 chapters.
8 written exams.
6 practical exams.

All this time I spent training for emergencies,
Yet I couldn’t save you.
We couldn’t save you.
We had one goal.
To save you.
But we couldn’t.

We did everything we could.
We performed countless chest compressions,
We pumped oxygen into your lungs,
We rushed you to the hospital.
But it wasn’t enough.

So, what would have been enough?
What if your wife called 911 sooner?
What if we got in the ambulance and got to your house quicker?
What if the paramedic arrived faster?
Would that have been enough?
Enough to save your life?
Enough to save your wife from heartache?
So many “what ifs?”
But no answers.

And for this lack of answers,
We are sorry.
For this lack of answers, for all these “what ifs,”
These are questions that haunt us, too.

There is no erasing the bad memories.
The sweat, the blood,
The crack of your broken ribs during chest compressions,
The continuous chilling beep of the heart monitor,
showing no detectable heart rhythm.
“1908”
The time of your death.

What if…
Why?

Paxton McLane

Scene 1

(Lights up in a hospital room, there is a faint sound of a heart rate monitor, a man lies in the hospital bed, off to the side there is another man, a woman stands up and addresses the audience)

Judy: Hi, my name is Judy, the man lying in the bed is my son, Samuel. Sam was one of the best sons a mother could ask for, he was always the sweetest and most considerate little boy. He grew up here in New Hampshire. Me and my late ex-husband Frank raised him and his little brother James up here, Sam still lives here in New Hampshire but James moved away a while ago. Sam still gets coffee with me every Thursday to check up and see how I’m doing.

(Scene breaks; the fourth wall is built)

Judy: Oh Samuel, what on Earth were you thinking? Your father would be so disappointed in you. He always told you never to drive over the speed limit, especially in the snow. I thought you had learned your lesson during your junior year when you got trapped in the snow on the side of that hill

Sam: Ah yes junior year, they decided not to close school during a snowstorm. I had to drive down this big hill that I thought I could make, I couldn’t. I slid halfway down the hill into a snowbank and had to call my dad to come get me, took him three hours just to get there. But I’m getting ahead of myself
Judy: Oh Sam, I don’t know what I would do without you, I still remember when you were a little kid, no more than six or seven you would crawl into my bed early in the morning to watch TV before school. I could never say no to you Sam. I know I was never the perfect mother, but I tried Sam, I did the best that I could.

Sam: She’s right, my mom wasn’t the perfect mother, for starters she married my dad, big flaw right there. When I was growing up my father was this great guy, my hero, he would take me places, we would have fun. When I look back on my childhood, it was some of the better years of my life, I had fun, I was happy. But good things don’t stay that way for long.

Judy: Why did this happen Sam? This isn’t what I wanted for you, not this (gestures to room), not any of this. I don’t want you to go Sam, I don’t want you to.

Scene 2

(Lights up James breaks the fourth wall and addresses the audience)

James: Hi I’m James, Sam is my brother. I don’t live in New Hampshire; I live in Washington DC. I got a call last night, I walked out of my meeting and I drove all night to get here. I don’t get to see Sam very often, not since he went to college, I miss him like Hell but the way my job is I don’t get up here very often. We went to Nashua High School together; Sam was a grade ahead of me. He was a great older brother, he always looked out for me when we were kids, I wasn’t the biggest kid, he stood up for me a lot. I always looked up to him, but we drifted apart through the years, I never wanted it to happen. Sam left home when he was eighteen to go to college in New York, and after college I took a job in D.C. Because of the nature of my job, I work so many hours, I barely get to leave the capital. Sometimes that’s just how it goes.

(Scene breaks; the fourth wall is built again)
(James enters the room)

James: Hey mom, how’s he doing?

Judy: James? (runs over and hugs him) James! Oh my god! I can’t believe you came

James: Yeah I came as soon as I heard. What’s going on?

Judy: They didn’t tell me much, they say that he was in an accident, that he was driving in the snow or something and his car went off the road

James: Did he hit anything?

Judy: James I don’t know, probably, look at him! He must have hit something

James: Okay I’ll track down a nurse (turns to leave)

Judy: (grabs his arm) James wait, the doctor said he will be in to give us an update soon, sit down, keep me company please

James: Alright alright I’ll wait for a bit
Judy: Thank you James

James: Yeah, no problem

Judy: Have you talked to him recently? To Sam I mean

James: (Looking away) No not, not really, Sam and I haven’t really hung out since he graduated high school, I mean I came home for Rachel’s christening, and I planned on coming back for her graduation

Sam: Ah yes my little brother James. He was a good kid; I don’t see him much these days. James was always the smart one, always getting good grades, got accepted to the best colleges. He went to school in D.C. James always wanted to be a politician, he would always watch some news station, studying some war in some country I never even heard of. I always told him I wouldn’t vote for him if he didn’t cut my taxes.

Judy: You two were so close in high school

James: Things change mom, people grow apart

Judy: I wish they didn’t, remember when he would wait after school for you when you would have practice?

James: (Quietly) Yeah, and he would bring me food for when I was done
Judy: Why couldn’t you visit home more James?

James: (Defensively) Sam didn’t come back to New Hampshire until after dad died, and you never yelled at him for that

Judy: You know damn well why your brother didn’t come home after I divorced your father

James: Yes of course I know! I was there when it happened!

Sam: Senior year was a turning point in my life, it was the last time I spoke to my father. You see my father was an alcoholic for most of his life, by the time I turned eighteen my mother had decided she had enough of him, and she left. James wasn’t eighteen yet so they got joint custody of him, but I could decide what I wanted to do for myself. The night I confronted my dad I went to his house and I told him, I told him that if he ever wanted to see me again, that he would have to quit drinking, and get clean. That was the last time I ever saw my dad.

James: It wasn’t just hard on him you know, after you left dad it was hard on me too

Judy: Your father has been gone for a long time, and you still almost never visit me, or your brother

James: (sighs) It’s nice seeing you two when I can, but this place, lots of bad things happened here, and I just, I just don’t like reliving it
Sam: For too many years I thought that me leaving New Hampshire only hurt my mom, I never realized that James was hurt by it. He went through the same things I did, and I, I was selfish and I left him there

Scene 3

(Lights up, Jack breaks the fourth wall and addresses the audience)

Jack: Hi my name is Jack; I was Sam’s roommate all throughout college. Sam and I were best friends in college, but we haven’t spoken in years. See Sam and I had… a falling out at the end of college. All of college we talked about starting our own business. Senior year we had all of it planned out, logos, business models, everything. We planned on moving to New York city and starting our company, we had big dreams. We had put a down payment on an apartment in Brooklyn but at the last second Sam’s dad died, said he wanted to go back home, to New Hampshire.

(Scene breaks; the fourth wall is built again)

(Jack enters the room)

James: (Looks up, confused) Jack? I didn’t expect to see you here

Jack: Your mom gave me a call, the doctors said that it didn’t look like he was going to make it, and that I should be here
James: (Turns to Judy) What? Mom I thought you said that you were waiting for an update

Judy: James I’m sorry, I didn’t want to upset you, the doctors said he has a lot of internal bleeding and brain damage, they’re looking into how bad it is… but they said it doesn’t look good

James: And you called Jack to tell him this before you told me?

Judy: Jack wouldn’t have come if it wasn’t serious! I didn’t want to upset you, but your brother would have wanted to Jack here, so they could put the past in the past

James: (Turns to Jack) Is that what you’re here to do? To put the past in the past?

Jack: Well I haven’t decided yet, either way, after all I’ve been through with Sam, I wanted to be here

Sam: Jack was the third person that I loved that I hurt. College was not an easy time for me. After confronting my dad, and leaving my mom and James, it was hard. There would be days where I couldn’t get out of bed, nights that I couldn’t sleep. Jack helped me function, he kept on top of me with my classes, he was my best friend. In a million years I could never repay him for everything he did for me, instead, I left him.

Judy: You know Sam leaving you wasn’t personal

Jack: Really? Because it kind of felt that way, I spend four years being the best friend I can be, we created a business, the sky was the limit, everything was ready and then he just left. He left all the
work we did, all the money we put in to it, and most of all he left me, I thought I was important to him…

James: Come on Jack, do you really think that all the time and money you and Sam spent to start your business he just up and left for no reason, do you even know why he left?

Jack: I mean, I know he wasn't really happy in college, but he was hoping things would change once we got our place and started work

James: He came back because our dad died, because he felt that it was the right time to come home

Sam: It happened right before I graduated from college. I hadn’t seen or spoken to him in almost four years. He never called, he never wrote, and I wanted it that way until he got sober. My dad died on March 22nd, 1995 from acute liver failure. Drank himself to death. He chose drinking over his own son, and it killed him. That destroyed me. I had to leave New York, I needed to be with my mom, and since my dad was gone there was nothing keeping me out of New Hampshire.

Judy: Jack, Sam loved you, I know that it hurt when he left, I know it was a horrible thing to do, but Sam was suffering for most of his life. You’re right he wasn’t happy in New York, you were the only thing that made him happy, but he needed closure, and now I think you need some too

Jack: (Looks at Judy, then walks over to the bed) Sam, I’m sorry you weren’t happy in New York, I wish you were. And I’m sorry I wasn’t there for you all these years, I should have been. You really hurt me Sam, but I forgive you
Scene 4

(Lights up, Matt breaks the fourth wall and addresses the audience)

Matt: Hi I’m Matt, Sam is my best friend. We were friends growing up but lost touch when he went to college. When he came back we started hanging out again, we’d grab a drink every week, we’d watch the game, it was great. I was even Sam’s best man at his wedding. After Sam got married things were normal for a while, then things changed. Sam wouldn’t want to come out anymore, we grew apart. He and I got into some fight a couple months ago because he kept cancelling on me. Last night, the night of the accident, I asked to come to the bar and meet me, I wanted to make things right. He never made it.

(Scene breaks; the fourth wall is built again)

(Matt Enters)

James: Matt? You still live around here?
Matt: James, it’s been a while, and yeah I stayed close to home, not all of us can be big shots in Washington DC

James: Well I wouldn’t say I’m a big shot…

Matt: (Looks at Judy) Hey Mrs. Hanson, how you holding up?

Judy: Oh Matt, you’re not a kid anymore, call me Judy

Matt: Alright Judy, how are you doing

Judy: I’m doing as good as I can be

Matt: That’s good to hear

James: So why are you here Matt?

Matt: I’m here for the amazing food and incredible hospitality, no, what does it look like I’m doing here? I want to be by my friend’s side

James: Since when are you and Sam close
Matt: Well we were, until he had Rachel, and things got kind of complicated, and I was hurt that he didn’t have time to be there for me anymore

Sam: Matt was both my best and my worst friend. He cared a lot, and he really is a good guy. But Matt brought out some of the worst things in me. With Matt things were always supposed to be a great time, and the more I hung out with Matt the worse my drinking got, the less happy I was with my life, and the more I hated myself. It wasn’t his fault, it was just who I was, after my wedding, and after my daughter was born I decided that I was leaving that life behind me, that I was going to be a new man, even though that it would end up hurting Matt

James: So if you and Sam aren’t close then why are you here now?

Matt: Well that’s the thing, I understand why Sam no longer hung out with me, I was an immature asshole and didn’t realize that he had more important priorities. Actually when Sam crashed he was heading to the bar

Judy: Why was he heading to the bar?

Matt: Because I invited him there, I wanted to make things right between us, you see, Eliza and I are having a baby, it’s a girl

Judy: Oh Matt congratulations (Hugs him)

James: Congrats buddy (Pats him on the shoulder)
Matt: Thanks guys, but I invited Sam to the bar to ask him to be the godfather, I’ve been stressing for weeks about asking him, I didn’t know if he would say yes, or even if he wanted to see me

Judy: Of course he would have said yes Matt he loved you like a brother even if he didn’t always show it

Scene 5

(Lights up, Lily breaks the fourth wall and addresses the audience)

Lily: Hi my name is Lily and I’m Sam’s ex-wife. Sam and I met in high school, we dated for a little while before we went off to separate colleges. We were both supposed to go to University of New Hampshire, but Sam changed his mind at the last second and ended up going to college in New York. The next time I saw Sam was when he came home after college. He was a mess, he couldn’t hold down a job, he was at the bar every night with or without Matt. When we started dating he began to clean himself up, he got his act together, he managed to hold down a steady job, he was doing great. We got married and had our daughter, Rachel. He loved Rachel more than anything else in the world.

(Scene breaks the fourth wall is built again)

(Lily enters the room)
Judy: Well it was only a matter of time

Lily: Nice to see you too Judy

James: Alright come on let’s be civil

Matt: He’s right, there’s no point in fighting each other, we are all here for Sam, okay?

Judy & Lily: Fine

Lily: How is he?

James: Its bad Lily, there is a lot of internal bleeding, and a lot of brain damage, they said that the chance of him waking up is very slim.

Lily: (Sits down) Oh, wow, I. I didn't realize it was that bad, what happened exactly?

Matt: Sam was heading to the bar to meet me, I was trying to make things right with Sam, but he ended up sliding off the side of the road on that sharp turn

Judy: They said he was going almost 65 miles per hour when he hit a tree
Matt: 65? No that can't be right, Sam would never take that turn that fast in this weather. He's been to the bar a thousand times, the speed limit is like 35, and he would know to take it slower in the snow

Judy: I just know what the doctors told me

Matt: Lily, did you call Rachel?

Lily: Yes, she should be here soon... Why did this happen

James: I wish I knew, maybe you would if you were there

Lily: Like you're one to talk James! When was the last time you were here huh?

James: That's irrelevant you're the one who divorced him

Lily: I had to! Sam was a sinking ship; he hasn't been well! I tried to help I really did, but he did nothing but bring me down with him for the past year!

Sam: Lily and I have a complicated relationship, we always have. We dated for most of high school, I was in love with her. We planned on going to the same college in New Hampshire after we graduated, until I confronted my dad. I left Lily and New Hampshire behind me, but somehow both of those things made it back into my life. Lily is right, I have been sinking for some time now, and for a while I managed to stay afloat, but that wasn't enough.
Lily: (Begins to break down) Sam was suffering for a long time, and he wouldn’t help himself, I tried to get him to get help but he refused to see anyone. I couldn’t let him keep dragging me down, I needed to leave.

Matt: Really? Cause it seemed like Sam cleaned up his act after the wedding, he seemed happy

Lily: (Wiping away the tears) He was happy, for a while. When Rachel was born that was the happiest day of his life. He has spent every day since then loving that girl.

James: Then what happened? (Rachel enters quietly) What made him unhappy? What sunk the ship?

Rachel: It was me

(Everyone turns to face Rachel, blackout)

Scene 6

(Lights up, Rachel breaks the fourth wall and addresses the audience)

Rachel: Hi, my name is Rachel, and that’s my dad. Growing up my dad was my hero, my knight in shining armor, he would do anything for me. Things began to change when I started looking at colleges. My dad was clearly upset about me going out of state, it was nice to see that he cared, but eventually it was clear that something was clearly wrong. Shortly after I went off to college my
mom called me, she told me that she was divorcing my dad. She said his drinking had gotten worse, and that he wasn’t happy, and he wouldn’t do anything about it, he gave up on himself.

(Scene breaks fourth wall is built again)

Judy: Rachel what do you mean it was you

Rachel: When I was looking at colleges, when I chose to move far away, that devastated him, he was so heartbroken that I was leaving, that he went back to drinking, he couldn’t be happy, this whole thing was my fault (begins to cry)

James: Rachel hey hey hey, it’s not your fault, your dad had an accident, he slid off the road and hit a tree, it is not your fault

Rachel: (pushing back tears) No you don’t get it, after my mom divorced him and told me he started drinking again, I confronted him, and we got into a fight, and I told him I never wanted to see him again (breaks down crying)

Sam: Ah yes the day my daughter confronted me, the day she told me she never wanted to see me again. Of all the low points in my life that was the lowest. I hit bottom so many times over the years, but those times were nothing compared to this. Rachel was the one thing in this world that truly made me happy, letting go of her, not seeing her everyday was hard. But having the one thing that makes you happy tell you that she hates you, hates the man you’ve become, and that she never wants to see you again, that was the lowest point of my life.

Lily: (Comforting Rachel) Rachel, honey, why didn’t you tell me, when did this happen?
Rachel: It happened yesterday, a few hours before his accident

(Blackout)

Scene 7

(Lights up, the rest of the cast is offstage, the only person onstage is Sam, he addresses the audience)

Sam: Hi, as you probably know my name is Sam. My name is Sam and I’m dying. I’m dying because I drove my car off the side of the road in a snowstorm. And as some of you may have figured out, this was no accident. All my life, I have struggled to find happiness. Ever since my mom left my dad I was searching for it. I couldn’t find it in New Hampshire, so I went to New York. In college I should have had a great life, I had good friends, I went to parties, I started a business with my best friend, but still none of it made me truly happy. When my dad died I thought that the thing that made me unhappy at home was gone, so I went back. I married the girl of my dreams, and I had a daughter, and for a brief moment, I was happy, Rachel gave me that happiness that I so desperately wanted. And the day I had to let her go, the day I had to let my happiness, my daughter leave me, it broke my heart. I spiraled, I started drinking again, I wasn’t whole anymore. The day my daughter told me she hated me, that she never wanted to see me again, that was the end for me. So on January 14th 2017 I drove my car off the side of the road in a snowstorm, because I had nothing left to live for.

Scene 8

Sam: Sam died less than a day later, he left his daughter without a father
Matt: Less than a week later quit drinking for good, he realized that he needed to clean up his act if he wanted to keep what he had. 7 months after the crash his daughter was born, they named her Sam.

James: After the crash James went back to DC. It wasn't the same, he realized that he always put his job in front of his happiness, less than a year later he moved back home to take care of his mother.

Lily: Lily stayed in New Hampshire once in a while she visits Sam's grave and just sits and there and talks to him, talks about Matt and his daughter, how helpful James is with Judy, how Rachel does everything she can to make her father proud of her.

Rachel: After the accident Rachel went back to school, it was never the same. The man she loved so much had chosen to leave her, she decided that she would never let anything come between her and those who she loved.

Jack: After Sam died Jack went home, Jack sat down and thought for a very long time. He thought about all of the people who have wronged him, about the people had cut out of his life, people who he hadn't spoken to for years. And he realized that forgiveness cannot change the past, but it sure as hell can change the future.

Judy: After Sam died Judy was never the same. She had lost her eldest son, and no one should have to bury their child. There was only one thing that made her life better, and that was when James came home for good.
Lily: When Sam sat behind the wheel of his car, there was one thing that never occurred to him, that every person here with me right now would have given anything for him to be there with them, despite the pain he had put all the ones he loved through, they still loved him, no matter what.

Scene 9

Sam: The second I turned the steering wheel and my car flew off the side of the road a thousand thoughts flooded my head. I was thinking of my family, of my daughter Rachel, the love of my life Lily, I was think of my friends, I was thinking of my Mom. I forever changed the lives of those who loved me. I never wanted to become my father, I hated my father for so long, for not choosing his family, for leaving us without him. I became what I hated so much. I didn’t have to, I let my anger and my hatred control me, until it was too late. And now, now it’s too late, everyone I ever loved, everyone I ever hurt, has forgiven me, and it’s too late for me.

Waves

*Paxton McLane*

Scene 1

(Open in a dimly lit interrogation room, there are two detectives standing around the table talking)

Julia Cooper: So this is a clear cut suicide right? We just need to talk to the kids to find out what happened right?

Matt Carver: (Slightly annoyed) That’s what it appears to be Detective Cooper…
Julia Cooper: It’s Julia

Matt Carver: What?

Julia Cooper: My name, it’s Julia, we’re partners we should call each other by our first names right Matt?

Matt Carver: No, you can call me Detective Carver, its more professional. In this business you have to be professional, that’s the way it’s always been

Julia Cooper: Noted… so Detective Carver, as you were saying

Matt Carver: Anyways, this was a textbook suicide, the kid threw himself off the bridge, the fall alone would be enough to killed him, I can’t believe I got out of bed for this, it’s almost four in the morning

Julia Cooper: If it’s a clear-cut suicide why do we need to call in these kids in?

Matt Carver: Well with all suicides involving young adults the captain likes to call us in and try to figure out why they killed themselves. Johnathan was Anthony’s emergency contact and… Wait why are all the other kids out there?

Julia Cooper: (Looks over little notepad) Oh! They say they were all hanging out at Johnathan’s house, they all decided to come in when Johnathan got the call, all of them were friends of Anthony, but they say they never saw him once tonight

Matt Carver: Okay, anything else?
Julia Cooper: (Flips page) Ummm Rebecca Clark claims to have a bad headache and may not be able to be of much help, but don’t worry I already got her Advil and some water

Matt Carver: (Rolls eyes) Okay let’s get in there and get this over with

(Detectives Exit Interrogation room)

Scene 2

(All of the friends are sitting in a waiting room, all of them look stressed out, they don't seem too broken up that they were just told that their friend had died, they seem more nervous, especially the girls)

(Door opens, both Detectives enters)

Julia Cooper: Johnathan, Zach, Nicole, Andrea, Rebecca, I know you all must be... in shock right now, but I assure you that we are doing everything that we can to figure out what exactly happened to your friend Anthony

Johnathan: Well what can you tell us?

Matt Carver: A fisherman pulled his body out of the bay about three hours ago, he had not been there long, it appears as if he jumped off the bridge, however the fisherman’s boat ran him over, so we can’t tell anything for sure, his body, his body is almost unrecognizable
Johnathan: Do you think it was suicide?

Julia Cooper: That is what we think, this is proper procedure when dealing with the suicide of a young adult, we are just trying to figure out why Anthony may have tried to kill himself.

Andrea: I can’t believe he’s dead (starts to softly sob, Nicole goes over to comfort her)

Julia Cooper: Thank you all for your cooperation, we will start the interview’s shortly.

(Exit detectives)

Andrea: They’re onto us, we have to give it up, we didn’t do anything wrong.

Jonathan: Are you crazy? They don’t have anything on us, they think it was a suicide. Stick to the plan, besides we all know this wasn’t an accident.

Zach: What do you mean?

Johnathan: It’s obvious that Nicole killed him, she was standing next to him when he went over the edge of the boat, she must have pushed him.

Nicole: I did not!!! We hit a wave and he slipped and hit his head and he fell, besides what about you, you were sailing, you didn’t stop until after we hit him.

Johnathan: (Pauses, gets defensive) I was wasted, I didn't know he fell over, I would have stopped.
Nicole: Sure you would’ve; we all know how much you want him gone

Johnathan: Not like that!! I just wanted him to find some of his own friends, I mean I know we grew up together and our parents are really good friends, but he's been piggybacking me all my life, even going to the same college I chose, it was definitely you, you had the motive, means and opportunity

Nicole: STOP IT I would never hurt Anthony

Zach: Oh yea? You were pretty upset when his essay got published

Nicole: (furious) Because it was my essay, my ideas. I had been working on that for weeks and he basically copied it word for word. Of course I was going to be mad at him for that, but I'm over it, it’s in the past

Zach: Doesn't sound like it to me

Nicole: Shut up Zach

Andrea: I’m going to tell him the truth I don't have anything to hide

Johnathan: If you crack I will tell him about the fight the two of you had downstairs

Andrea: Fight? That was just a small disagreement

Johnathan: You threw my mother’s favorite vase at his head and it shattered when it hit the wall
Zach: Yea I’d be pretty pissed too if I found out Anthony was messing around with my sister

Andrea: SHUT UP ZACH

Zach: Alright alright, hey Becca, you’ve been awfully quiet, how do we know you didn't kill him

Rebecca: (lying on a bench) (sits up) Because I was down in the cabin dumbass, I get seasick, I don’t even know why I even agreed to go on the stupid boat with you guys

Johnathan: Hey it’s not a stupid boat, my father bought that during his midlife crisis, its anything but stupid

Rebecca: Whatever all I know is that I didn’t do it, I’m not the idiot who decided to drink and sail

Johnathan: Whatever Rebecca just go back to sleep

Rebecca: (Shoots Johnathan a dirty look and sits down)

Scene 3
(Lights up in the interrogation room)

Julia Cooper: Do you think I should bring them all coffee?

Matt Carver: No! Why would you get the coffee Cooper? I am trying to get out of here as fast as possible I don’t want to be here, you don’t want to be here, they don’t want to be here so let’s just get this done with

Julia Cooper: I want to be here…

Matt Carver: What?

Julia Cooper: I want to be here, ever since the Captain assigned me as your partner all you’ve had me do is take notes and do paperwork, we finally have something interesting, and I want to be here to figure out what happened

Matt Carver: There is nothing to figure out!

Julia Cooper: But he had so much to live for! He wouldn’t just do something like that, something isn’t right here

Matt Carver: It happens, as sad as it may be it happens. Kids kill themselves, kids kill each other, adults kill kids, it happens. If you can’t accept the fact that this kid killed himself then I have no idea how you are going to take big cases, real cases

Julia Cooper: What do you mean, this is the most interesting most important thing to happen here since I started
Matt Carver: You think this is important? Or big? Or interesting? When I was a detective in the city this is the kind of case we gave to beat cops fresh off the obstacle course. This isn’t worth my time, this isn’t worth your time, this is an embarrassment

Julia Cooper: About the city… Why did you leave?

Matt Carver: I don’t talk about that

Julia Cooper: Well the captain said that I needed to start to learn about you more, at the academy they can teach you all about procedure but they can’t teach you how to work well with your partner, and, well I’m your third partner in the past year..

Matt Carver: Look, there was an accident, someone got hurt… got killed. Even though it was an accident, the bullet still came from my gun, so instead of suspending me and facing public ridicule, the department decided to promote me, and transfer me here, (sarcastically) to good old Malden PD

Julia Cooper: Is that when you and your wife separated?

Matt Carver: Now that is off limits, how do you even know about that?

Julia Cooper: She called the station last week looking for you, you were out smoking so I picked up, she told me to forget that she called

Matt Carver: (Puts head in his hands) I hate this, she keeps calling me and then hanging up, I know she wants a divorce but she doesn’t have the guts to say it

Julia Cooper: Look we can talk about this later, let’s just get through with this and get some
(Detectives exit interrogation room and enter waiting room)

Matt Carver: Alright let’s get this done with, who wants to go first?

(Silence no one responds)

Julia Cooper: How about you Andrea?

Andrea: (stands up wipes away a tear) Yea, okay

(Detectives and Andrea exit the waiting room and enter the interrogation room)

Scene 4

Julia Cooper: (Hands Andrea a box of tissues) I’m sorry I called you in first, you don’t look like you’re taking the news too well, I wanted to make sure that you were okay

Andrea: No its okay I’ll be fine

Julia Cooper: That’s good to hear, so let’s start out with an easy question, how did you know Anthony?
Andrea: Well he’s a friend of mine, I’ve known him since middle school, Johnathan introduced me to him. They’ve been friends forever

Julia Cooper: Yes, Johnathan, how do you know him

Andrea: Well he and I became friends in middle school, and we’ve been dating on and off all through high school

Julia Cooper: Are you on or off right now?

Andrea: Well we have been off for the last couple of months, but tonight we were hanging out and I think we are getting back together

(Matt Carver’s phone rings)

Matt Carver: Sorry, I have to take this, Cooper, do you think you can handle the rest of this interview?

Julia Cooper: (Lights up a little) Yes sir!... I mean, yea I can handle it

Matt Carver: Good (Steps to the side, still visible)

Julia Cooper: So let me cut straight to the point, do you think Anthony would have tried to kill himself?

Andrea: I want to think this was an accident, but yes I think he would have, he was going
through a rough time, he was kind of a drag, that's one of the reasons we didn't hang out with him tonight

Julia Cooper: Do you think you guys excluding him would have led to kill himself?

Andrea: Oh god no! He had trouble at home and at school I think, Johnathan would know more about it, but us not inviting him to hang out one or two times wouldn't have driven him to kill himself

Julia Cooper: Thank you Andrea you can go now, thank you for your help

(Andrea exits interrogation room and enters the waiting room)

Matt Carver: Thank you (hangs up the phone) Cooper

Julia Cooper: Yes?

Matt Carver: We have a problem

Julia Cooper: What is it?

Matt Carver: That was the lab, they rushed the bloodwork on Anthony, and they found an irregularity

Julia Cooper: What did they find?

Matt Carver: They found large traces of Rohypnol in his system
Julia Cooper: Rohypnol?

Matt Carver: Anthony was roofied no more than two hours before he died

Julia Cooper: You are saying someone tried to rape him?

Matt Carver: Well according to the statistics 80% of people who are roofied are female, and of the 20% that are male, 16% were accidents, this is cause for concern

Julia Cooper: So there’s a strong chance foul play was involved?

Matt Carver: Not only that, but Anthony didn’t really have any other friends, I’m willing to bet that whoever drugged him, accident or not, is sitting in that room

Julia Cooper: What makes you so sure about that?

Matt Carver: You have to start being able to read people Cooper, close your eyes

Julia Cooper: What?

Matt Carver: Just do it

Julia Cooper: (Closes eyes) Okay
Matt Carver: When we first walked into that room what did you see? Picture everyone’s faces

Julia Cooper: Okay

Matt Carver: Now tell me what was everyone’s reaction

Julia Cooper: Well Andrea was very upset, Nicole was comforting her, and Rebecca was laying down, nothing about that seems out of the ordinary

Matt Carver: Now what about the other two

Julia Cooper: Well Zach was... Zach didn’t seem upset, he seemed nervous

Matt Carver: Zach always gets like that, he’s in here a lot, what about Johnathan

Julia Cooper: He was... He was thinking! He didn’t seem upset at all, one of the first thing he asked us was if we thought it was a suicide!

Matt Carver: There you go, he’s hiding something, that’s who we need to interrogate next

(Detectives exit interrogation room and enter waiting room)

Scene 5

Matt Carver: Some new information has come to light; Anthony was drugged no more than
two hours before he died

Nicole: (Clearly surprised) What?

Matt Carver: Anthony was roofied two hours before he died, that is a red flag and we now have to believe some foul play was involved, we will continue the interviews like before, Johnathan we are going to need you next

Johnathan: Alright

(Detectives and Johnathan exit waiting room and enter interrogation room)

Nicole: What the hell? He was drugged?

Rebecca: Sounds like it

Andrea: We weren’t doing anything but drinking, how could he have been drugged?

Zach: Maybe he took it before he came to the party

Andrea: We all know Anthony wouldn’t do anything like that, someone must have drugged him

Nicole: Zach? You are always the one with the drugs

Zach: I only sell weed! I’ve never sold anything else, besides maybe Rebecca spiked his
drink, she said she was in the cabin and that's why she couldn't have killed him, but she doesn't have to be upstairs to spike the drink she could have spiked it and then went down in the cabin to have an alibi

Rebecca: Let's think about that real hard for just a second. I know it might be tough for you to think, but bear with me. First off what kind of motive do I have to spike his drink, sure they guy was kinda a loser but why would I commit murder just cause I don't like him very much. Second the drinks were all upstairs, which means I would have had to spike it before I got sick and went down into the cabin. The spiked drink could have ended up in anyone of your hands, besides what would be my goal? Just sit downstairs, hope that he would be close to the edge when it kicks in, that we hit a wave and he falls off, and that Johnathan doesn't stop and runs him over? Could you just take a second and think before you open your mouth Zach?

Zach: Okay okay whatever maybe you didn't do it, but this whole thing isn't some sort of freak accident, one of you killed him

Nicole: One of us?! Maybe it was you

Andrea: Or maybe no one killed him and it was an accident like Johnathan says!

Nicole: Look we have no idea what actually happened, let's just keep level heads and stop fighting, it won't do us any good, we're in this together, right?

Andrea: Yea

Rebecca: Yes

Zach: (Reluctant) I guess so
Scene 6

(Lights up in the interrogation room)

Julia Cooper: Okay Johnathan, Matt.. Detective Carver and I are going to start asking you a few questions

Johnathan: Alright

Julia Cooper: You are currently a freshman at NYU correct?

Johnathan: Yea

Julia Cooper: How long have you known Anthony Byers?

Johnathan: All my life, we grew up together and we've been going to school together since kindergarten

Matt Carver: Where were you tonight?

Johnathan: Nowhere, I went to bed early I have a test tomorrow

Matt Carver: Really, the smell of whiskey on your breath suggests otherwise

Johnathan: (Leans away from detective) What? No I don't drink
Matt Carver: I am going to ask you again, where were you tonight?

Johnathan: Fine, we were all hanging out at my house

Matt Carver: What were you doing?

Johnathan: Just hanging out

Matt Carver Lying will only hurt you, was there alcohol

Johnathan: No

Matt Carver: I can send an officer over to your house to search it, do you want that?

Johnathan: Fine we were drinking

Matt Carver: Was Anthony there

Johnathan: No he wasn’t, we didn’t invite him, we’ve been trying to hang out without him lately

Julia Cooper: I am going to be straight with you, do you think Anthony would have committed suicide?
Johnathan: Honestly, it doesn't surprise me that much, he's always had a tough time making friends, we were his only friends, he doesn't have a girlfriend, he’s never really done anything worth mentioning, his life seemed like a dead end. All of us are going places after high school, and he’s just gonna end up working at the 7/11 next to his parents’ house, it was really only a matter of time

Julia Cooper: Did you try and help him at all?

Johnathan: I did I tried to help him spread out, meet some new people, I even introduced him to a girl

Matt Carver: What girl

Johnathan: Shit, okay please don't tell Andrea, but I introduced him to her sister

Matt Carver: How do you know Andrea’s sister

Johnathan: Well Andrea and I have been going out, I know her family

Matt Carver Enough to set up her sister

Johnathan: …Okay fine, Andrea and I have been off and on lately and… well when we are off…I end up sleeping with her sister, and this was a way to get her off my back, she’s kinda clingy and I've been trying to get back together with Andrea

Matt Carver: What did Andrea think about that
Johnathan: Well she doesn't know that I introduced them, and she obviously doesn't know about the other stuff, but she was pretty pissed when she found out that Anthony and her sister were fooling around.

Julia Cooper: (Scribbles some notes down) Okay thank you Johnathan, I think that’s all we need from you right now

(Johnathan Exits)

Matt Carver: He’s hiding something; the whole thing about Andrea’s sister, he didn't mean to say that, he let it slip, if we keep questioning them they’re going to start to unravel

Julia Cooper: I don't trust him

Matt Carver: Me neither, I'm going to grab Zach next, fair warning, I have a history with this kid, he's in here all the time, let me handle him

Julia Cooper: If you say so

(They exit the interrogation room and enter the waiting room)

Scene 7

Matt Carver: Okay I need Zach next
Zach: I’m not coming with you

Matt Carver: How about I slap some cuffs on you and drag you in there?

Zach: Fine, whatever

(The Detectives and Zach leave the waiting room and enter the interrogation room)

(Zach sits down, arms crossed)

Matt Carver: Zach how many times have I had you in this station?

Zach: Too many times

Matt Carver: Now, I want to know exactly how you fit into this story

Zach: I don’t know what you’re talking about

Matt Carver: Where were you tonight

Zach: At a party in Johnathan’s house

Matt Carver: What kind of drugs did you bring

Zach: None. I’m clean now
Matt Carver: You've always brought drugs to every party you've been to, what kind of drugs did you bring

Zach: I told you I'm clean

Matt Carver: I want to know how those drugs got into Anthony's system

Zach: Maybe he took them to keep himself from chickening out

Matt Carver: Despite what you might think, I am not an idiot Zach, I know that nine out of ten times when I find drugs on kids in this town, you are the one they point the finger at

Zach: Fine he asked to buy them from me

Matt Carver: We all know you are lying

Zach: I'm not

Julia Cooper: You already admitted to dealing drugs, if you tell me the full truth we will go easy on you

Zach: Fine, he stopped by the party, he left in a hurry

Julia Cooper: How did he get the drugs into his system
Zach: I… I spiked his drink

Julia Cooper: Why

Zach: It wasn't meant for him...

Julia Cooper: Who was it for

Zach: It… it was for Nicole. I wanted to hook up with her, so I spiked her drink, ya know to make it a little easier

Matt Carver: (Shaking his head) Zach I can't look the other way this time, this is not just me finding a couple grams on you, this, Zach you're under arrest, you have the right to remain silent anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law you have the right to an attorney if you cannot afford one one will be appointed to you, do you understand these rights?

Zach: Yes

Matt Carver: Cooper, take him down to holding and have a uniform process him

Zach: Are the handcuffs really necessary I didn’t do anything that bad

Matt Carver: You don’t get it do you, not only are you being charged with possession of illegal narcotics but also with conspiracy to commit rape, you could get jail time for this

Zach: Shit…
Matt Carver: Take him away

(Detective Cooper handcuffs him and takes him out the door to the waiting room)

Matt Carver: (grabs her arm) Don’t let the kids know why he is being arrested

Julia Cooper: Alright

(Julia, Zach, and Matt walk into the waiting room, Matt stops at the door, Julia and Zach continue and leave the waiting room through the door in the back)

Johnathan: Hey where is she taking Zach!

Matt Carver: You both have been lying to me, Zach told me that Anthony stopped by the party before he went to the bridge

(Andrea tries to talk but Johnathan interrupts)

Johnathan: We thought it might look suspicious, we had no idea he planned on killing himself, he stopped by for a quick drink and then he left

Matt Carver: Alright that’s it I'm sick of the lies, you are all officially suspects

(Andrea begins to cry again)
(Detectives Exit the waiting room and enter the interrogation room)

Scene 8

(Lights up in the waiting room)

(Nicole is comforting Andrea, Johnathan is in thought, Rebecca is laying down)

Andrea: Why did they take Zach away? So what that he told them that Anthony was with us? Why did they take him away and not us?

Johnathan: He was in cuffs, something isn’t right, they wouldn’t be arresting him for giving them information, something else is going on

Nicole: Maybe they found weed on him?

Johnathan: No, I made him leave it all on the boat, I knew that we would end up being here and he could get searched. What the hell did he do this time? I swear I am always bailing that guy out and cleaning up his messes

Rebecca: Why do you keep bailing that idiot out? Why are you even friends with him?

Johnathan: Its… I met Zach in middle school, he was a funny likeable guy, and, well he’s had a rough life. His mom died giving birth to him, and his dad always blamed him. He practically lives in my basement because his dad is always in and out of jail. The guy has had kind of a rough life; he deserves a little bit of slack. Sure he’s been caught a few times with some weed on him, but he’s never been in handcuffs before, not once, something is really, really wrong.
Andrea: (Goes over to comfort Johnathan) It's okay John, Zach is always in trouble, and he always gets out of it, don't worry

(Lights up in the interrogation room)

Julia Cooper: I have an idea

Matt Carver: You do?

Julia Cooper: Actually, it’s nothing let’s just keep questioning them

Matt Carver: Like you said we’re partners, I want to hear your idea

Julia Cooper: These kids, they’re best of friends, right? There's no way they're going to talk to us, not while they are all sitting out there in solidarity. Johnathan appears to be the ringleader, I say we drive a wedge in between them. We tell them about him and Andrea’s sister, she’s close to cracking I can tell. The only thing that’s holding her back is her love for Johnathan, when she finds out that he slept with her sister, she’ll hate him. We should also tell Nicole about Zach’s plans, that will drive a wedge between the girls and the guys. I think their bonds as friends is the only thing keeping the girls from talking

Matt Carver: I like it, it’s very underhanded, but I think it’s the only way we can find out the truth, you are a fast learner

Julia Cooper: Just trying to do my job to the best of my abilities… Detective Carver?

Matt Carver: Yes?
Julia Cooper: I’ve been thinking a lot about what you told me about why you got transferred… what exactly happened?

Matt Carver: Do we have to talk about this now?

Julia Cooper: I would like to

Matt Carver: Fine, if you insist. It was about ten years ago, I was just a uniform in the city back then, I was working the graveyard shift when I got a call, double homicide a couple blocks from where I was, the killer was spotted fleeing on foot in my direction. I saw someone open and climb through a window in the building across the street. The building was this greenhouse type thing; they were growing all sorts of flowers inside. I climbed the fire escape and climbed into the building with my gun drawn. I turned the corner and there was a hooded figure, he started to run I chased him. He got to a locked door and turned around, he said wait, and then he reached into his jacket pocket, I shot him. I went over to him to look what was in his pocket, it was a flower, I shot a 14-year-old kid who stole a flower for some biology assignment.

Julia Cooper: That could have happened to anyone

Matt Carver: But it didn’t happen to anyone, it happened to me, I shot a 14-year-old kid because I was scared

Julia Cooper: Look, that doesn’t make you a bad detective or a bad cop, accidents happen, but we can’t let that stop us from doing our job

Matt Carver: Thank you Julia, I needed that
Julia Cooper: Your welcome

(The detectives enter the waiting room)

Julia Cooper: Nicole it is your turn

Nicole: Okay

(The three of them exit into the interrogation room)

Julia Cooper: Nicole you understand that you are all in a lot of trouble, right?

Nicole: Yea I know

Julia Cooper: Then tell us what really happened, we just want to get to the bottom of this

Nicole: Like they said, we were at Johnathan’s house, Anthony stopped by, had a drink, and he left. There’s nothing more to the story.

Matt Carver: Enough of the bullshit. If you won’t tell us the truth, then we will tell you the truth

Nicole: What do you mean?

Matt Carver: We have information on all your friends out there
Nicole: What information?

Matt Carver: Oh just that Johnathan was the one who set Anthony up with Andrea’s sister, and he also was sleeping with her when Andrea and him were broken up

Nicole: He wouldn’t

Matt Carver: He did, he told me himself

Nicole: He knows how protective Andrea is of her sister, why would he do that

Julia Cooper: Johnathan is the reason why you are all here isn’t he? He should be the one in trouble, not all of you, please, tell us what happened and we will make sure whoever is responsible for Anthony’s death is punished accordingly

Nicole: (considers telling the truth) Johnathan is not responsible, Anthony killed himself… May I leave now?

Matt Carver: (stands opens door) Fine, but one last thing, we figured out how the drugs got into Anthony’s system

Nicole: How

Matt Carver: Zach spiked his drink

Nicole: (Shocked) Why would he do that?
Matt Carver: Because the drink was meant for you

(Blackout)

(They exit)

(They enter, Nicole remains standing, fists clenched)

Julia Cooper: Alright, lastly Rebecca your turn

(They exit)

Scene 9

Nicole: That son of a bitch!

Andrea: (runs up to Nicole) Nicole what’s wrong???

Nicole: Zach, that stupid, selfish idiot spiked my drink, that’s why they found roofies in Anthony’s system!

Johnathan: Whoa whoa take it easy, I’m sure this is some big mistake, Zach wouldn’t do something like that
(Nicole turns to face him)

Nicole: You. Shut up and stop defending him, they didn’t just tell me why he was arrested, they also told me what happened when they brought you in to question you

Johnathan: (Nervous) What, what do you mean?

Nicole: That you and Andrea’s sister…

Johnathan: (Interrupting) Nicole, please don’t

Nicole: No. Time and time again you have broken Andrea’s heart. And time and time again I have had to be the one to pick up the pieces. I looked the other way when you cheated on her, I looked the other way when you broke up with her for not spending enough time with you. But no more. You are selfish, ignorant, and you don’t deserve her. (Turns faces Andrea) Andrea, Johnathan was the one who set your sister up with Anthony. And he did it because he’s been sleeping with her whenever you two have been broken up

Andrea (Devastated) Is that true John?

Johnathan: … Yes, it is

Andrea: Never. Speak. To. Me. Again

(Andrea tries to storm off)

Johnathan: (Grabs her wrist) Andrea wait
(She turns around and slaps him)

(Johnathan turns around stunned)

Nicole: If I ever catch you talking to her again, I’ll kill you

Johnathan: What can I do to make this right

Nicole: Nothing, there is nothing you can do to make this right, the only thing you can do is clean up this shit show that you put us in, and leave Andrea the Hell alone

(Blackout)

Scene 10

(switches to the interrogation room)

Matt Carver: Like I told your friend, Zach spiked Anthony’s drink, but meant to drug Nicole

Rebecca: What? I knew Zach was a dumbass but I don’t believe it

Matt Carver: Yea he did, he told us himself

Rebecca: What a scumbag Nicole is one of the most independent, intelligent people I
know, she doesn’t deserve to be treated like that

Matt Carver: Also, Johnathan set Andrea’s sister up with Anthony, and was sleeping with her when him and Andrea were broken up

Rebecca: Seriously?

Julia Cooper: Yes

Rebecca: Typical, I knew I didn’t like that guy, maybe now Andrea won’t be so dumb, or love struck by him

Julia Cooper: Why are you friends with those guys? You don’t seem to like them very much

Rebecca: Well first off I’m only really friends with Nicole, Zach is an idiot, Johnathan is a douche, Andrea is okay, but she is so in love with Johnathan she’s blind

Julia Cooper: So why are you friends with them

Rebecca: Well its senior year of high school, and I don’t have many friends, my mom wants me to make some before we I go to college, and Nicole is awesome, she’s a free thinker, she’s a writer, I respect her a lot. But she’s always been friends with these guys, so she always hangs out with them, and she brings me along.

Julia Cooper: Okay I understand, so please, tell us what happened
Rebecca: Unlike them I have nothing to hide. First of all, you have the most basic part of the story wrong. Yes, we were all at a party but it wasn’t in Johnathan’s house, it was on his dad’s boat.

Julia Cooper: Was Anthony there?

Rebecca: Yes, he was, they thought I went downstairs because I was seasick, but in reality, I didn't want to be around those drunk idiots.

Matt Carver: So who killed him?

Rebecca: That’s the thing, I was completely sober, and I saw the whole thing, and I can say without any doubt that… it was an accident.

Julia Cooper: Tell me what happened.

Rebecca: They were all drunk, Johnathan was at the wheel, Andrea was with him, Zach was grabbing a drink, and Nicole was standing on the bow next to Anthony. He was looking a little woozy, we hit a wave, he slipped, he hit his head on the railing, and then he went over. He got pulled under the boat, and he got slashed by the motor. Even if Johnathan could have stopped the boat, he would have drowned. He was knocked out under the boat, and if any of us jumped in after him we would have drowned too. After that, they panicked. Johnathan said that they could all get expelled, and worse, Zach had too long of a record, he could get in far more trouble than he’s ever been in. Johnathan just got into NYU, and if you want to be a lawyer you can’t have a criminal record. Andrea just fell back in love with him, and Nicole is almost done with the book she’s been writing for the last four years.

Matt Carver: How did they cover it up?
Rebecca: It was Johnathan’s idea, I was left behind, I wanted no part of it. He drove Anthony’s body up to the top of the bridge, and he threw him off, they knew Anthony was a little depressed, he didn't have anything to live for, so suicide would have been believable.

Julia Cooper: How well did you know Anthony

Rebecca: (confused by the question) Not very well

Julia Cooper: Did you know he just had a paper published

Rebecca: Yes

Julia Cooper: Did you know that he just got a full ride to NYU in the computer science program?

Rebecca: No

Julia Cooper: Did you know that his sister just had a baby, he’s the godfather

Rebecca: No, I didn’t know that

Julia Cooper: One last thing you didn't know, Anthony… Anthony was terrified of heights, if he was going to kill himself, he would have never have gone through throwing himself off the bridge

Rebecca: (A little broken up) Are… are we done here
Matt Carver: Yes

Scene 11

(Rebecca and the detectives leave the interrogation room and enter the waiting room, its divided, obvious tension) (The girls are together, Nicole looks furious, Andrea is softly sobbing, Johnathan looks stressed, Zach is sitting with his head in his hands)

Matt Carver: Rebecca has shed some light on the incident, it appears you have all been lying to us, you were all with him on the boat when he died

Johnathan: Whatever she told you is a lie!

Julia Cooper: Really? Because she says it was an accident, do you think someone did kill Anthony?

Johnathan: Well-

Nicole: (angry) He thinks I did it, he thinks that since I was next to Anthony when he fell off the side that I pushed him

(Johnathan sits with his head in his hands)

Johnathan: No... No... That’s not it

(Julia grabs him on the arm)
Julia Cooper: Come on Johnathan lets go talk

(The detectives and Johnathan Exit)

Julia Cooper: Johnathan, you don’t look well what’s wrong?

Johnathan: Everything is wrong, Anthony is dead, and it’s all my fault

Julia Cooper: Rebecca says that it was an accident, what makes you think that it’s your fault?

Johnathan: (starting to tear up) He... he fell, and I didn’t stop, I was sailing and I didn’t stop, I was trying to push him out, out of the group, I didn’t want him around me anymore, and.. and maybe I meant to run him over, I could have helped him, if I had stopped the boat, maybe I could have jumped in and saved him, maybe I did this on purpose. I don’t remember all of it, the night was a blur, but all I can keep picturing is when we pulled his body out of the water, I saw the waves crashing down on the beach, soaked in his blood, they kept crashing, and crashing and crashing, like nothing had happened, like I didn’t just kill one of my closest friends

(Julia puts her hand on his shoulder)

Julia Cooper: You messed up, you really did, you can’t do anything to change that

Johnathan: I panicked, I was scared to go to jail, I thought I would get charged with murder, it was my idea to throw his body off the bridge not theirs, I take full responsibility, I took him there myself, it was all me
Julia Cooper: Do you understand what you are admitting to? Obstruction of justice, as well as manslaughter, you could get in a lot of trouble

Johnathan: It’s the right thing to do, I see that now

Julia Cooper: Well then, Johnathan Fraiser, you are under arrest, you have the right to remain silent, anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law...

(Fade to Black)
Mirror on the Car by Harris Tran
Incomplete Reflection

Eve Papa

A walk in the woods
is not a walk in the park.
For a walk in the woods
leads me to the lake.

I hover over
still water, and what should be
reflection looking back
is actually you.

You motion to me,
beg me to swim in the murk,
“I am not my whole self
without you,” you say.

And so I enter,
enveloped in your embrace.
I plead “it’s not my time,”
you tell me “don’t wait.”

These waters run red
with crimson blood on my hands.
These trees keep the secrets
no others will bear.

A walk in the woods
is not a walk in the park.
For a walk in the woods
begins all the end.
We decide...

**Who Am I?**

*Megan Bowlin*

I am from the town of Sombrero Guy
From Band-Aids and needles
I am in the condo with
Diaries I never used, books,
And right across the street from Him

I am from the dandelion sprouting among the weeds
Begging for the sun and struggling against the breeze

I’m from bottomless pies and
Dog beds by the fireplace
From old name to right name
I’m from the love that is too deep to express
And gambling at three

From *you’re worthless* to *that wasn’t me*
I’m from claustrophobia, a reckless fear of spiders,
And the Irish but without the luck
Peanut allergies and Epi-Pen stabbings
  Worth the taste
From the uncle my grandmother used as
A neighborhood enforcer against bullies
The Bloody Marys, Whiskey Sours, and beers with salt

  Memory boxes of the good times,
Poems I’ll never publish of the bad.
Unapologetically Resilient

Amanda Jung

Resilience.

Like the potential of a gun, it’s a loaded word.

Unlike just any word, with one quick pull the bullet is gone and that trigger springs back to its solid shape.

That’s how I like to deal with the past.

There’s an old saying that used to haunt my soul: those who don’t remember the past are condemned to repeat it, just as those who refuse to forget the past are condemned to relive it.

I am condemned to resilience.

Because pain is relative, just like beauty, it is in the eye of the precious beholder.

I am the only daughter of a dead man.

But I thrive on the ace of clubs I’ve been dealt.

This is how I learn resilience.
We all experience adversity.

I’m not the only one with trauma.

What I do after staring it in the face defines who I am. Not the family I’ve been born into, what I’ve been named, or who I’ve been told I need to be.

Although circumstance can never characterize, listening to my fears that prevent me from becoming who I am, will.

But with resilience, I gain that vigorous strength to break the constant cycle.

Emotions are humanly inevitable, but hardships are temporary.

Become resilient.

Deal with those cards.

And like that trigger of a gun, I cope with adversities.

When the bullet flies into the past, I bounce back into the impending solid shape of my now.

Instead,

I learn.

I grow.

I persist.
I become unapologetically resilient.

Struggling to Identify

Gabriella Lind

She’s twenty-one years old. A senior in college. A daughter, sister, cousin, niece, granddaughter and friend. Constantly growing and tirelessly working towards the fulfillment of her dreams. Hoping to become an elementary school teacher, bringing a sense of joy and excitement to the learning process and catering to the imagination of her students. Although the future is intimidating, she has confidence that with hard work and dedication comes reward. Recently, she has gained insight on the importance of living in the moment rather than focusing on what lies ahead. She has alleviated her mind of the illusion of control, understanding that God has a plan. She knows that life really is short and that reminding your loved ones that you appreciate them every day is a simple task, yet so meaningful.

She firmly believes that each obstacle in life is there for a reason, that every person on Earth is here for a reason. Perspective and positivity have become main priorities of hers, as they are key to a happy life and becoming the best possible version of yourself. She was brought up on values manifested in kindness, faith, love and acceptance…values that she wears on her sleeve. Values that define who she is as a human being. She has experienced hardship, conflict and pain. She understands what it feels like to think the whole world is against you. To think “why me?” “why us?” or “I thought this couldn’t get any worse…”. These thoughts have led her to the power of prayer and the realization that any given situation could always be worse. She counts her blessings and has recognized that
the Struggles have made her stronger and wiser. She is constantly putting her trust in God and knows that she can do all things through Him who gives her strength.

Life is a beautiful gift and she plans on living hers to the fullest. She wants to help others. She wants to make the bad days good and the good days even better for the people in her life. She wants to become a better person with each passing day and is looking forward to the lessons and experiences that tomorrow will bring.

Semper Fi, Little Guy by McKenna Staurovsky
Hawthorne’s Representation of Women:

How Gender and Body Image Can Function as a Disability

Daniela Sznaj

Abstract

This paper will contain an analysis of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s representation of women in his works, especially “The Birthmark,” and will also speculate on how gender and body image can act as a disability. This paper will also attempt to display how many have seen women as second-class citizens to men and expect them to obey their husbands. This unfortunate perspective can ultimately close women off from opportunities and act as a disability. To support my thesis, I have directed most of my research to focus on how Georgiana is represented by Hawthorne’s, “The Birthmark”, and how she has been shamed by Aylmer to detest her imperfections rather than embrace them. I compare this shame to modern society and in order to show that the social construction of body image and gender has acted as a disability throughout the history of time. Based on the fictional character, Georgiana, along with my research, I intend to awaken the consciousness of the audience and bring their attention to an extremely pressing topic in today’s society. I believe that no woman can truly be free if the patriarchy controls and disables her, as represented in Hawthorne’s work.
Throughout the history of time women have been denied opportunities because of their gender and oppressed due to the unattainable image of perfection. For centuries, women have been perceived as second-class citizens to men and only measured by their beauty and ability to be an obedient, charming homemaker. Nathaniel Hawthorne’s, “The Birthmark,” is a classic short story about a man of science, Aylmer, who attempts to remove a birthmark from his wife, Georgiana’s face for the sole reason of wanting to achieve absolute perfection. As a result, Georgiana dies in the process, thus proving that perfection is unattainable. Hawthorne’s writings represent women as creatures that are undesirable unless they lack physical flaws, submit to their husbands, and are sexually repressed. While it is common for scholars to focus on themes of mortality, sin, and man’s effort to control the natural world in “The Birthmark,” I believe that recognizing female gender and the paradigm for perfection as a disability are equally crucial.

In the short story, “The Birthmark,” by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Georgiana, allowed Aylmer to convince her that the very mark that made her unique was detestable. Aylmer is a direct representation of society telling women that being unique is a misfortune that is not to be celebrated. As a result, Georgiana becomes so obsessed with the removal of her birthmark that she once thought of as a charm, “If there be the remotest possibility of it, let the attempt be made at whatever risk. Danger is nothing to me; for life, while this hateful mark makes me the object of your horror and disgust, life is a burden which I would fling down with joy. Either remove this dreadful hand, or take my wretched life!” (Hawthorne 1024). Georgiana becomes so obsessed with the removal of her birthmark that she states that she would rather be dead than have it on her face any longer. Georgiana essentially
becomes unable to function once she is conditioned to hate her appearance, which proves that once a woman becomes self conscious of her appearance, she becomes disabled. Women in today’s society are conditioned to believe that their appearance is one of their only assets and that being beautiful is the only way to be desirable, therefore, when they are ashamed of their appearance, their world seemingly crumbles.

Georgiana is easily influenced by Aylmer, her husband, throughout the entirety of the short story. She submits to his wishes even though she knows very well that it could lead to her demise, “With her whole spirit she prayed that, for a single moment, she might satisfy his highest and deepest conception. Longer than one moment she well knew it could not be; for his spirit was ever on the march, ever ascending . . . requiring something that was beyond the scope of the instant before” (1031). Georgiana is easily manipulated in her relationship, which is similar to many modern relationships. It is clear here that Georgiana realizes that even if the birthmark is removed, it will never be enough to make her husband happy. Despite this fact, Georgiana stays with him and still strives to her utmost ability to please him as much as she can. This mindset exhibits many problems that women in modern relationships face. Men are given the power to manipulate and incapacitate women because of the societal standards and invisible hierarchy that has existed throughout history. The reason that women allow themselves to be manipulated by their husbands is that they have been conditioned to obey the patriarchy and are taught that they are second-class citizens to men.

In The Scarlet Letter, also by Nathaniel Hawthorne, the extreme shame and isolation of women who wrong their husband is exhibited, “Measured by the prisoner’s experience, however, it might reckoned a journey of some length; for, haughty as her
demeanor was, she perchance underwent an agony from every footstep of those that thronged to see her, as if her heart had been flung in the streets for them all to spurn and trample upon,” (Hawthorne, 17). In this book, Hester Prynne, a Puritan woman, becomes pregnant through an affair. Although she is wrong by cheating on her husband, she is submitted to excessive public humility and shame by having to wear a red “A” on her clothing to show that she had committed adultery. If, however, she were a man, she would not have had to endure the same public scrutiny and ridicule. Women have been enduring this type of shame in many similar ways throughout history due to the fact that they are seen as their husbands’ servants. This also brings to light the idea of the “marked woman” in Hawthorne’s writing as represented in Georgiana’s birthmark and Hester’s embroidered red letter. Hawthorne represents women who are marked as imperfect and impure, which connects to today’s society within the modern standards of beauty and purity. As a result, women are mentally and physically held back by these standards, causing them to be disabled by feeling as though they are never good enough.

To expand upon Hawthorne’s representation of women in relation to modern day society, women have been shamed mercilessly throughout history for acting on their sexual desires; this shamefulness results in repression and anxieties, which can ultimately disable women from being their true selves. In the article, “The Surveillance of Woman's Body in Hawthorne's Short Stories,” Monika Elbert states, “Hawthorne’s stories serve as vignettes exemplifying the compulsion to control the woman’s body. The scenarios vary but point to the same conclusion: unrestrained female sexuality (or unrestrained in the eyes of men) is perceived as a danger to the social order” (Elbert 23). This need for control can be seen in many different ways in Hawthorne’s stories, especially in Aylmer’s
obsession with controlling Georgiana’s appearance and the community shaming Hester Prynne for acting on her sexual desires, “In many of his female centered stories, Hawthorne shows the need to control a woman’s sexuality or insist upon her purity with a type of morality play whose sexual dynamics correspond to the theories of nineteenth-century sexuality that has been set forth” (Elbert 23). Again, Hawthorne represents women as creatures that need to be controlled, especially sexually, or they will be seen as pariahs who are utterly sinful and dirty. This thought process still exists in modern society as women are thought to be immoral and undesirable if they are sexually active outside the binds of marriage.

While Hawthorne insists on the idea of purity in the ideal woman, it is also subliminally implied that women must be homemakers rather than career women. This notion is represented tirelessly in modern pop culture, especially in popular movies. In the 2004 adaption of The Stepford Wives, the idea of the “perfect woman” modeled by Hawthorne is displayed in the form of a horror film. The movie centers on a family with a career driven, independent matriarch. Once the family moves to a suburban town in Connecticut, a town that is described as perfect, they realize that every woman is a quintessential homemaker who lacks any flaws. This dramatic metaphor symbolizes the utter perfection and brainlessness that women are encouraged to adhere to (The Stepford Wives 2004). While some women may truly want to be mothers, homemakers, or wives, gender stereotypes have made them the only options, even for women who would rather pursue a career or follow a different path. This idea connects to Hawthorne’s portrayal of Georgiana because her only job was to be pleasant and look beautiful while Aylmer was the character with a passion and a career.
Another popular movie, *Mona Lisa Smile*, reaffirms the idea of women through the male gaze in a slightly different light. The plot centers on a prestigious all women’s college where the students are some of the most intellectually advanced women in society. However, most of the women in this college focus on becoming a good wife and homemaker rather than continuing their education or pursuing a career (*Mona Lisa Smile* 2003). As a result, these expectations of being the perfect wife, mother, and homemaker are what confine women to incredibly narrow choices for her future. It is all too often that men claim to support intelligent women, but are still expectant of women to assume all of the stereotypical tasks of a domesticated woman. I have been personally fortunate to live in a household with parents who shared responsibilities. If more children grew up in a household where they witnessed mutual respect and equality between their parents, the standards that women are held to would ultimately diminish.

Not only are women marginalized by the expectations that are demanded of them, but also, the standards they are held to are utterly impossible to attain. As a result, women become inevitably disabled from achieving happiness and are destined to a life of dejection. As portrayed in “The Birthmark,” physical perfection is implausible, “As the last crimson tint of the birthmark -- that sole token of human imperfection -- faded from her cheek, the parting breath of the now perfect woman passed into the atmosphere, and her soul, lingering a moment near her husband, took its heavenward flight” (Hawthorne 1032). Georgiana’s death served as a metaphor for the notion that perfection is not in existence. Human flaw and sin is inevitable and attempting to achieve perfection will result in failure no matter what.
Although Georgiana is one of the most gorgeous women that Aylmer knew, he still finds her unbearable to look at because of her one small mark, “Aylmer is making a logical error, ‘the very nature of beauty is its being flawed, and that which, in this life, is most pure and ethereal is so only in its imperfection.’ Beauty is different from perfection; to equate them is a formalist error with dire ethical consequences” (Steiner 181). The problem with Aylmer and modern society is that we all too often equate perfection with beauty, which in reality, is the opposite of what it truly is. While Hawthorne represents Georgiana in this light, he also teaches the reader an important lesson. If more people embraced the idea that imperfection and flaws are beautiful, women would be free from their invisible chains that hold them back from happiness.

Essentially, gender and body image have oppressed women for centuries. While we have come a long way as a society and women now are more liberated than ever before, there are still battles to fight against those who oppress women to the point of disabling them to be their best selves. Thus, since women are not able to achieve their maximum potential due to the impossible standards of beauty and being objectified in their relationships, they are ultimately disabled. A domesticated animal will never be truly free if it is owned. The same goes for women so long as they are held down by societal standards of beauty and perfection, the inability to express themselves as sexual beings, and the allowance of men to be in complete control of their lives. I challenge my readers to ask themselves, how much have we truly evolved? What can we do to improve society’s impossible standards that women are held to? How can we ultimately develop into a mature civilization that empowers women instead of tearing them down?
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American Literature’s Aesthetic Dimensions, edited by Cindy Weinstein and

The Stepford Wives. Dir. Frank Oz. Perf. Nicole Kidman, Matthew Broderick, and Bette
Pilar goes over the weekly list of silly things my mother makes her write.
Cake
Butter
Steak
Nothing we need, but she doesn’t understand that.

She furrows her brows, glares at her from the kitchen, muttering words to herself. Incantations.

Pilar claims to be una bruja, one of those who heals wounds and cooks potions, but for now, she is making dinner.

She can’t read, she can’t write, but she can make my mom lose it and she knows it.

“You don’t need magic for that, Pilar,” I say.
“Yo lo sé,” she confesses.

Dinner is ready.

“Pero si el chaman magia usa para hacer el bien, también la usa para hacer el mal.”

Pilar leaves after the weekly list and we never see her again.
We are anti-conformists...

The First Time

Sharifa Ahmed

As she looked in the mirror, she drew in an anxious breath. It is the first time she is going to wear a hijab to school permanently.

How would people react? Is it going to look nice? Would others still treat me the same?

A million questions race through her mind as she wraps a hijab on her head, placing the pins carefully.

This looks so bad, the tutorials made it look beautiful. Maybe I should wait until later, no one will care whether I start now or never.

Nonetheless, she puts on a brave face and walks out the door with her new look, praying silently to Allah that the day goes well.

Here I go, let’s hope for the best. What’s the worst that can happen? It’ll be alright.

As she walks through the hallways of Sacred Heart University, she cannot help but lower her head, as if that will make her invisible from the stares. But to her surprise, no one was staring.

They are probably not staring because they are glued to their phones. Eh, it’s whatever.
Breathe, she thought to herself. She entered the room to her first class and scanned the room. There were a few students sitting, and she chose her seat in the middle of the room. Not too upfront, but close enough to see the board.

*Okay. I can do this. No one will judge. Plus, they probably don’t know how I looked before wearing a hijab.*

The introductions started and everyone said their name. Her turn. Hi my name is Sharifa and I am a sophomore.

*Phew. See that wasn’t so bad. Freaking out for no reason. No one asked about my hijab or my appearance.*

The rest of the day passed in a blur. She went from class to class with the same introductions, and just like that her day was over.

*This hijab is giving me a headache. I wrapped it too tight and my scalp itches. Tomorrow I’ll try another way. Hmm, I’ll get used to it. So many other Muslim girls wear a hijab the entire day and don’t complain. It'll get better.*

She passed friends, professors, and classmates and did not see any negative reactions from them that she was expecting. Not even a slightest moving of the eyebrows to show any surprise. No questions were asked about why she started covering up. Nothing.

*So far so good. I can’t believe I was so anxious about this day. All that worry for no reason. I planned for this day to become a full time hijabi since the summer. Now it’s time*
to live up to that. I’m not going to take the hijab off after a while like those other “fake” hijabis. I must suck it up and become confident in my hijab so I can wear it for the rest of my life.

As days passed into weeks, she became comfortable in her hijab and ignored the stares and judgements. She uses her new identity to educate others on what a hijab is and has fun mixing and matching her hijabs with her clothes.

Alhamdulillah! One of the best decisions of my life. I am proud to be a hijabi. Many times, I even forget that I am wearing one until I start sweating and overheating. My hijab is a part of me and I will never be ashamed of it.
The Issues of Not Being White in America

Courtney Ebert

Black and white, why fight?

Racism has been an ongoing issue in America throughout most of history and it is still an issue today. This particular issue has been addressed by countless historic people such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks. However, racism has not been completely abolished. In the songs, “Say it Loud- I’m Black and I’m Proud” (1968) by James Brown, “Where is the Love?” (2003) by the Black Eyed Peas, and “Freedom” (2016) by Beyoncé featuring Kendrick Lamar, all found on Azlyrics, they discuss racism as well as how hard it is to deal with this issue on a personal level. The song, “Say it Loud- I’m Black and I’m Proud,” discusses the events that blacks have to deal with on an everyday basis just because of the color of their skin. In the song, “Where is the Love?” the Black Eyed Peas talk about the events that would take place if there was no racism involved in this world. In the song, “Freedom,” Beyoncé and Lamar talk about their personal experiences that they have gone through or heard about that have to deal with racism. When the songs came out, they were trying to make a change to help resolve the issue of racism in America. All of the songwriters display their character throughout their lyrics on a very personal level. To address this change in America, the character of the songwriter displayed in the song is extremely important. Although all of the songs initiated a change to abolish the
discrimination of other races, racism is still an issue today. All three songs speak out about self-identity and self-worth of being a human of a different skin color living in America. In order for a change, racism must be stopped and abolished.

Racism is an issue because it does not matter who you are, where you live, or how nice of a person you are. The song, “Say it Loud- I’m Black and I’m Proud” by James Brown, states, “I’ve worked on jobs with my feet and my hands//But all the work I did was for the other man.” Throughout previous decades, racism was far more intense but that does not mean that it is not a major issue today. “Say it loud,//I’m black and I’m proud” Brown states that he is dedicated and proud about his skin color and rightfully so. The fact that Brown is showing his character through personal experiences throughout his song makes others hopeful for a change. In the article, “Another look at symbolic ethnicity,” in the journal *Ethnic & Racial Studies*, by Herbert Gans, he states, “But the acculturation of poorer and nonwhite newcomers has generally been limited by financial and other obstacles, for example, the inability to afford the prevailing standard of living and by the social exclusion that accompanies segregation and discrimination.” Gans says that many people of a different race come to America and have to deal with issues in regards to financial and social exclusion. This kind of discrimination against blacks should not be tolerated nor should it matter. Both Brown and Gans are trying to change the way people think about others of a different color skin as well as try to abolish racism all together. A change must be made in order to eliminate racism in this country.

Although most Americans state that they strive for love and peace, this is contradicted by the blatant racism in this country. The song, “Where is the Love?” by the
Black Eyed Peas, states, “But if you only have love for your own race// Then you only leave space to discriminate.” People need to respect others no matter what color their skin is because we are all humans living in the same world with similar needs and wants. The band sings, “If love and peace are so strong//Why are there pieces of love that don’t belong?” The Black Eyed Peas are saying how racism still exists today and it is absolutely disgusting. Some of the members from the Black Eyed Peas are black, so their sharing of personal experiences shows their character and how much they truly care about this issue.

In the article, “Surviving in America: Race, Assimilation and 19th-century Catholic Immigrants,” in the journal *America*, by Tom Deignan, he states, “Other than ignoring them completely, the dominant trend among historians when it comes to 19th-century European immigrants particularly Catholics is to note that they strove to ‘become’ white. They were first marginalized, the argument goes, but in ‘choosing’ or ‘fighting’ to obtain ‘white privilege,’ Italians, Irish, Poles and other ethnic Catholics went on to exacerbate America’s terrible racial problems.” Deignan explains how many different races strive to be white and want privileges that whites receive which leads to racism in America. Both the Black Eyed Peas and Deignan demand a change in the way people perceive blacks so that racism can be decreased or demolished entirely.

For years now, blacks have been trying to break through this obstacle of racism and are trying to gain the freedom they deserve. The song “Freedom,” states, “Freedom! Freedom! Where are you?// Cause I need freedom too!// I break chains all by myself// Won’t let my freedom rot in hell.” African Americans are constantly fighting for their rights and are doing everything in their power to be treated equally to white people, “Eight blacks left, death is around the corner// Seven misleadin’ statements by my persona” said Lamar.
Both Beyoncé and Lamar are showing what they had to deal with and what other black Americans still have to deal with on an everyday basis. This shows Beyoncé and Lamar’s character and how this issue personally affects them. In the article, “‘Without Regard to Race’: Critical Ideational Development in Modern American Politics,” in the Journal of Politics, by Desmond King and Rogers Smith, they state, “Today, massive racial inequalities persist; yet national candidates avoid discussion of racial problems and policies.” King and Smith are saying how racism is a huge problem in America but no one of a higher authority will do anything about it.

Racism is an ongoing problem that has yet to be resolved. People need to open their eyes and look at what is happening around them. Although racism has lessened does not mean that this issue has been completely resolved. In the songs, “Say it Loud- I’m Black and I’m Proud” by James Brown, “Where is the Love?” by the Black Eyed Peas, and “Freedom” by Beyoncé featuring Kendrick Lamar, they state that racism must be addressed and resolved in order to achieve equality. The songwriters and authors of the journals all discuss the issue of racism and help people to become more aware of it but none of them resolved the problem. Racism is still an ongoing issue that must be changed immediately.

Wake up and look at the mess we have made.
Works Cited


Love has no definition…

Meghan Bossone

which is why writing this essay is causing me such difficulty.

I will describe what love is to me, and once I am finished, you can tell me if that’s what love is to you.

Odds are, you will not agree with everything I say and that is perfectly fine. For love is not the same for everyone, which is why…love has no definition.

Once Upon a Time.

That’s how all fairytales begin and odds are if they start like that they end in 

Happily Ever After.

That is not what love is to me.

Love is simple but it can also be extremely difficult.

Love makes you feel alive but can easily make you feel dead inside.
Love is falling into arms that were once a stranger’s and knowing that you are safe.

Love is coming to the realization that home is not a place but a person.

Love is trusting that the person who holds your heart is going to keep it safe.

Love is a leap of faith, for we do not know what the future holds.

Which brings me back to why fairytales ending in “and they lived happily ever after” don’t define what love is to me. We fall in love more than once in life and sometimes it does not end “happily ever after.” That does not mean it was not love.

As I grow and experience different events in my life, I begin to adjust my definition of love. I am growing and so is my meaning of what love is.

Still, love has no definition.
We create...

Prosthesis

Maurice Rodriguez

We slide on glass

We slide on glass

We slide on glass

Part I. The Breakfast of Champions

Alarm sirens signal the awakening
Of a somnambulant cyclops, searching
For gradient light through layered cotton blends.
Biometrics authenticate quietude
When he doesn't choose to snooze.
Maladaptive to the artifice of light,
He squints routinely into superimposed squircles.
Which does he open first? The white bird
Soars against the beguiling blue, singing--

ravioli ravioli give us the gun control
(attach SpongeBob meme)
We should stop outsourcing education
to objects that birds shit on
#StrikesOnSyria
a thread
No time, no time, no time
For that. And yet—he slides,
Closes and opens the next—
Polaroid glyph set on the background
Of dispersed light. A lens
In which to view a working collage
Of detached lives:

watch me
preserve in time
consume
connect
consume me

No time, no time, no time
To feed. And yet—he slides,
Closes and opens the next—
Woolf’s leaden circles halved,
Trapped in shamrock—

No time, no time, no time
To choose. He crawls
Out of warmth. It's a race
To rinse himself of dead cells and oil.
Shed his fabric in exchange for finer.
Consume the body of wheat and oat
With fig-like guts, a decaying banana,
And spring water. It's a race
To routine, synchronized to the ideal song.

Biometrics authenticate, he slides–
"Oigo las sirenas
Suenan tan violentas"

We slide on glass
We slide on glass
We slide on glass

Part II. Mother Night

Water seethes rapidly
Rising to a rolling boil,
Steam trapped in stainless steel
Seeks fretfully for egress.
The whistling spout sings
Over the drum of scurried steps.
She pours the kettle's source of song
Over the dried of skullcap flor.

Screens illuminate the dark room
Through light-emitting diodes.
A cinnamon-colored couch chews
Her body. Talking heads vomit
Violent sound bites–
"Waffle House shooting leaves four dead."

"New details: Reunion with birth parents led to incest, murders."

"A VERY NORMAL LIFE."

She watches in abhorrence until
She shifts her attention to a new screen.
Two fingers glide across the trackpad
Navigating her quest for Articles to–
Vibration interrupts.

Biometrics authenticate, she slides–

Yeah, I think we need to talk

She emits an audible breath,
Unable to form the words so Easily forged in anonymity:

I don't think now is the time

I don't think now is

I don't think now is

I don't think now is

Her response is acknowledgement
And no more. Her lids become laden,
And yet—she slides in search for
Diversion, closes and opens the next—
Gradient eighth note on white—

"I'm melting from the light
One drip, one drip at a time"

While music permeates the air,
She rises and douses the room of light.
Death's cousin calls her to lay
In the comfort of fleece blankets.
Before rest, biometrics authenticate—
She slides to posit time for tomorrow.

_We slide on glass

_We slide on glass

_We slide on glass

_We slide on glass
Where's My Moon?

Nicole Soto

I remember the moon that night

It was the most beautiful

You kept saying “Where’s my moon?”

As if it only belonged to you

*It was behind the clouds somewhere*

You said that the first time we met too

I remembered that, same place

But this time it was just us

We had to park so far that night

You said you didn’t mind walking

The thought of how I would approach holding your hand struck me

*How could I have not thought about this?*

I was so nervous, I stupidly just put them in my pocket

You held onto my arm as if I was escorting you to the beach

Then you looked up at me & said

“Get your hands out of your pocket & hold my hand right now, I know you want to!”

*I did want to*

Your crooked smile exposing your dimples were hard to take my eyes off of

You pulled my hand out of my pocket

Slipped your finger between mine, where I wanted them to be

You liked to people watch

I remembered that

We would name the people walking along the boardwalk

Make up stories for them as they passed by

For some reason that made you happy
You would analyze the smallest implements of human interaction

I never did that until I met you

I know, because I would watch yours

That would make me happy

It wasn’t only the people you liked to watch

It was the sky, the water, the lights

The only thing I could watch was you

“Where is my damn moon?”

Oh man did I want to kiss you

In that moment

The moment the moon kissed the sea

“There’s your moon!” I said

Your jaw dropped open

We sat on the lifeguard stand

Just you & me

Right where I wanted to be

The moon displayed its permanent scars

Covered in a shade of blood

You couldn’t take your eyes off of it

Then you looked at me

I could see the reflection of the moon in your eyes

You pulled at your lip in a sudden deep thought

Your mind went where I often try to escape

“Are you going to tell me before I leave?”

You see, the moon stopped hiding eventually

But I never did. I should have. For you

You were the most beautiful moon
But I was the clouds

Apollo 11

Zachary Festini

“I’m going to step off the LEM now.”

Neil loosened his grip on Eagle’s extended ladder and turned away from the lunar lander to face the void. Like a drawn curtain, the expanse of darkness before him stretched out across his entire field of vision and engulfed everything above the bright lunar surface. It was a limitless ceiling of black that expanded onward and onward into uncertainty, careless of the small things in the universe like Neil, who struggled with his cumbersome EVA suit as he descended the ladder. With his head turned, his eyes shifted from the darkness above to the lifeless, gray landscape ahead: Tranquility Base. He had given it that name upon their initial landing, and not far above the horizon of its stark terrain was Earth, a small, blue beacon surrounded by nothingness, a hole of light cut into the starless curtain. All Neil had ever known was but a distant image projected out onto a field of black emptiness, and while he feared that thought, it was one he had known too well.

“I’m at the foot of the ladder,” he said, once he had sufficiently lowered himself down toward the surface. Millions heard his voice, yet for the first time in his life he was truly alone. “The LEM foot pads are only depressed in the surface about one or two inches, although the surface appears to be very, very fine-grained as you get close to it. It’s almost like a powder.”

“This is Houston, we copy.”

Neil turned back and looked at Eagle, a construct of metal paneling held up by four stilts wrapped in gold, reflective foil. He stood in the shadow of it. Though it balanced precariously on the lunar surface and appeared more fragile and makeshift than Neil could recall, he found solace in knowing there was a safe haven nearby. Eagle’s entrance hatch was flung open, its cabin depressurized, and Neil’s partner Buzz was hunched in the opening clad in a bulky EVA suit not unlike his own. It was decorated with the same embroidered patch of their mission insignia. A camera attached to Eagle’s side was angled down at the ladder and set Neil center stage as he pushed himself off with a single, quick thrust. His left foot hit the ground first.

“That’s one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind,” he said. Neil drew back his boot to reveal a perfect footprint stamped into the dull sands. He was the first.
Now, with both of his feet planted on the thin soil, Neil began to slowly move forward toward the edge of the long shadow cast by Eagle. Each step he took was muted by the vacuum of space and left him with only the sounds of his steady breathing and the intermittent crackling of his radio receiver.

“The surface is fine and powdery,” he said. As practiced, he dug the toe of his boot into the gray sands—not too deep, he had been warned, but also more than shallow—and he moved it back and forth, manipulating the tiny grains as they scattered like ants across the contrasting white of his boot. “I can pick it up loosely with my toe. I only sink in a small fraction of an inch—maybe an eighth of an inch—while walking, but I can see footprints of my boots and the treads in the sand.”

“This is Houston, we’re copying.”

Neil left the shade of the lander and lowered his protective visor. The radiance of the sun beamed down on him like a blinding spotlight brighter than anything he had seen on Earth, and in the heat of it, he felt as if his water-cooled suit was useless as sweat formed on his brow. Behind him, Buzz slowly followed as he climbed down Eagle’s flimsy ladder, his labored breaths piercing Neil’s ears in a mess of static through the receiver. He bounced in Neil’s direction, leaving the lander unmanned, until he reached his partner’s side and made the same, sluggish movements with his toe in the sand. Yet even with Buzz beside him, Neil still felt the isolation he had grown so accustomed to through their training. Buzz was right there, he saw, but his presence wasn’t. He was just another disembodied voice on the radio, and the silence was everywhere.

“Beautiful view,” Buzz said. They looked out over Tranquility Base at the sea of rocky gray that stretched on for miles until its collision with the black horizon, and then with Earth, the blue marble hovering above. Neil could see tiny wisps of clouds running in stripes above the oceans and continents of the sphere, and while he felt a strange longing to be home, he was also comforted by the thought that it was rather close.

“Isn’t it magnificent?” Neil asked him.

“Magnificent desolation,” said Buzz proudly. It wasn’t the first time Neil had heard those words, for Buzz, who expressed great enthusiasm for the mission, had uttered them countless times during their rehearsals. He must have been smiling beneath his visor when he spoke them now.

~

Forty-seven minutes into the EVA, Neil and Buzz prepared the American flag for raising. Buzz made a second trip back to Eagle to retrieve the bundled flag and its supporting pole, and upon his return he mounted it deep within the lunar soil with a stab
that seemed far too powerful against the weak sands, and so the pole sank downward quickly. Like children fighting over a blanket, they unfolded the flag and attempted to straighten it out on the pole against the difficulties of zero gravity.

“Let me ask you something,” Buzz said as he struggled with the fabric. He spoke to Neil through their private radio frequency. “That ‘one step for a man’ thing, was that improvised? Or was that NASA talkin’ through you?”

“Oh, that was me,” said Neil, “and it was improvised. Let me tell you—NASA, I think, couldn’t come up with somethin’ nearly as great even if they tried.” Buzz laughed.

“Well, it’s definitely one for the books, Neil. Now help me with this damn flag so we can—”

The transition was sudden. Neil’s radio receiver began emitting static and he lost all communication with Buzz. As the white noise grew in intensity and filled the silence of the vacuum around him, Neil turned and faced his partner, unsure of why the malfunction was happening. He watched as the American flag floating between them abruptly sagged down toward the ground and dangled from its pole, and in moments he felt his EVA suit grow heavier on his bones, and he struggled to maintain his balance. The sensation of weightlessness and isolation vanished as the void exploded into a deafening blast of sound. And from all around the astronauts, above and below, came the sharp hissing of air as it entered the chamber to pressurize. The violent ripping of the wind tore away Neil’s pride as the façade emerged out from the blackness and replaced his euphoric dream of space with a disappointing reality and forlorn hope. As it all faded, Neil clumsily pushed up his protective visor. In the midst of the confusion, the flagpole had fallen over and Eagle was toppled on its side with pieces of its gold foil torn and fluttering down through the air like burning tapestries. The entire chamber was covered in displaced dust that clung to the black walls and high ceiling, and even clouded the distant image of Earth in a layer of ash. Buzz was sprawled out on the gray sand, grappling awkwardly with his EVA suit to stand up.

“Damn NASA scientists!” he said, kicking up ash as he scrambled to his feet. Plumes of the faux lunar dust hovered around them like a sick cloud. “Why couldn’t those eggheads install an alarm to give us some kind of warning? Every damn rehearsal ends the same way, with me on my ass and you grinning at me like an idiot!”

“I’m just amazed that you still manage to fall every time,” said Neil.

They removed their helmets.
Beams of light shining through my shutters woke me. Rolling over I was greeted by my cat, Felix. His purring woke me up from my deep sleep. As I pet his tiger colored pelt I wondered why my head was pounding. This must be what a hangover feels like. As I rubbed my eyes I wondered if it was just a fog from sleep. The longer I laid there the more I realized that something wasn't right. Then the strange thought occurred to me, I wasn't here last night. I was in Joder. How did I get back here to Connecticut? What happened to me? Slowly, my memories began to revisit me, bringing me back through the peculiar things that took place in Joder, Nebraska.

The last thing I can remember is being with my aunt, uncle, and Brody. Something wasn't right. I jumped out of bed and began to tear my room apart looking for my backpack. Tripping over my own feet I ended up falling flat on my face. Ouch. I was moving way too fast, but I couldn't help it. After a frantic minute I found it wedged under my bed. Inside was my notebook, which held all of my journal entries. Sitting on the edge of my bed next to Felix, I began to flip through the pages. I read as fast as I could. My gut was telling me the answer as to how I got here was in this notebook. I could feel my hands beginning to shake, as I read exactly what happened to me in Joder.
Chapter 1

Nothing would be the same again. I took one last glance back at my mom, grabbed my backpack and decided to never look back again. Life in Stratford had gotten boring, and I couldn’t help but see my father everywhere. Since his passing I’ve been angry at everyone, even my mom who doesn’t deserve it. Because I’ve been getting in so much trouble with school and around town, I’m now on probation. She wants me to be myself again and do well in school, like I used to, which is why I’m boarding a plane to go stay with my uncle. I’m going to start a new life. I want to prove to her that I can handle not getting in trouble anymore. I’m going to make her proud.

Arriving in Joder Nebraska was a shell shock. Grasslands ran as far as the eye can see. It’s nothing like living in Stratford, where Target was a five-minute drive. Dirt roads took the place of concrete. I could spot the border of the grasslands off in the distance. My uncle, Travis was waiting for me as I stepped off the plane. He was a strong but weathered man. He stood in steel toed boots, brown construction pants, and a blue faded flannel. He was a hardworking farmer. His burly demeanor and fuzzy beard scratched my face as he greeted me with a huge bear hug.

“It’s great to have you here for the summer Hunter, you’re going to love Joder like we all do,” Travis said.

I held back the urge to make a snide comment, and replied, “Thanks Uncle Travis, I’m thrilled to be here too.”

“Your aunt can’t wait to see you, kid. It’s been years” said my uncle.

I was excited to see my aunt. She was quiet, but was an extremely strong woman. She gave my uncle a run for his money. She could hang with the best of them.
“I can’t wait to see her too. How’s Brody doing?” I asked.

Brody was my aunt and uncle’s dog. I’d only seen pictures of him as a puppy, but I couldn’t wait to meet him. I missed my pets at home already.

“Brody’s a good boy, he’s gonna love you being around to play fetch with him. He could play all day, and I don’t have the time while I’m working” said my uncle.

Around me I could feel a few locals looking at my high top red converse, as if I don’t belong here. I don’t. My uncle led me to his beat-up baby blue Chevy. Throwing my duffle bags into the bed of the truck we headed off down the dirt path that led away from the tiny airport. As my uncle drove us through town I saw Joder’s only gas station with one pump, a general store, and a pharmacy. The town’s diners had lit up words only spelt out D I N. I’d only seen something like this in movies.

Pulling up to my aunt and uncles I was given a warm welcome by Brody. He was the typical sheepdog, with an infectious energy that didn’t fail to put a huge smirk on my face. My aunt, Wyona was right behind him, meeting me with a warm embrace before my feet could even reach the front porch.

“Hunter! I’m so happy you’re here! You’re going to have the best summer here. We’re so happy to have you,” said my aunt Wyona.

Leading me inside we all sat down to enjoy some of my aunts famous cooking. This was exactly what I needed to clear my mind so that I could stop seeing my father everywhere. I miss him so much.

After dinner I helped my aunt clean up the dishes and pack up the leftovers, my uncle showed me to my room. It was a bit smaller than my room at home, it had two large windows overlooking the front of the house. The twin sized bed had a maroon comforter on it, and a desk
stood in the corner of the room. I placed my duffle bag down on the floor and took a seat on the bed.

“Is this all right?” my uncle asked.

“Yeah uncle Travis, it’s perfect. Thank you.” I replied.

The small room gave me a sense of comfort, which was nice considering it was new place. My uncle left me to unpack, so I pulled out my MacBook and started watching Netflix. I placed my laptop on the desk as I began placing my clothes in the dresser. Dexter played in the background, as I looked out the two large windows overlooking my aunt and uncle’s property. All I could see was a faint light a few miles away. I couldn't help but feel at peace with my surroundings. I took out my iPhone and sent my mom a text telling her that I missed her and that I was settling in, and that I would call her tomorrow. I lost track of time. When I finally settled in and laid down in my new bed, it was 11 P.M. In a few moments I was fast asleep.

Chapter 2

I had no idea I had slept so late until I walked downstairs to find the house empty. My uncle was outside with Brody tending to the chickens. The kitchen stove clock read 12 P.M. The silence was different, something I wasn’t used to. At home in Stratford I was used to hearing cars pass into the early hours of the morning. It soothed me to sleep. I was at peace with the quiet, but also overly in my thoughts. I went up to my place in the guest room and threw on ripped jeans, an AC DC t-shirt, and my favorite red high-top Converse. I brushed my teeth, threw some cold water on my face, and headed downstairs. I grabbed a Macintosh apple out of the bowl on the kitchen counter. Taking a huge bite, I stepped out of the screen door and onto the porch. Within a few minutes, I was helping my uncle in the chicken coop. All I could see were fields and the dirt drive leading up
to the house. The air felt clearer and I was starting to feel lighter and better. This is just what I needed.

I had been playing fetch with Brody for hours. He had endless energy and by the end of our playing I found myself needed to sit on the stoop to continue throwing to him.

“Hunter come in for dinner! I made macaroni and cheese” called my aunt through the kitchen window.

Dinner? I wasn’t used to eating dinner until like 8 o clock back home. As Brody and I entered the house, I found my favorite dishes, macaroni and cheese, chicken, corn, and carrots. I took a seat next on my side of the table, across from my aunt.

“How’s high school treating you?” asked Travis.

“Eh, not bad it’s boring” I replied.

My aunt chimed in, “It must be a lot different here than in Stratford.”

Is it ever, I thought. But I replied, “It’s a change, but I’m starting to like the quiet.”

I helped clean up dinner and went to join my uncle on the porch. We both sat in rocking chairs, looking over the vast land. Travis told me stories about Joder, and how it all came to be. He told me about his high school, and how he met my aunt. It was probably about ten o clock, when a red Ford pickup truck came up the driveway. My uncle immediately told me to go inside as a man with a tough face and beard stepped out. I went into my room and tried to watch from my bedroom window. Something about it just didn’t feel right. I could barely overhear anything from my spot.
The conversation didn’t last long before my uncle climbed in his truck and followed the mysterious man down the road.

I tossed and turned all night, struggling to get the strange meeting out of my head. Was my uncle in trouble? Was he involved in the mob? I contemplated talking to my aunt in the morning, but I didn’t want to worry her. After a restless night, I decided I had to know more. It was 7 A.M. when I left my room and went to find my aunt. She was in the kitchen making a fresh pot of coffee.

I walked up to her and said, “Aunt Wyona, I saw something last night with Uncle Travis and I don’t know what to make of it.”

Her smile turned into a strict straight line. She said in a harsh tone, “It’s nothing Hunter, you need to forget about it and leave it alone.”

Shocked, I managed to mutter an OK.

Wyona continued, “Please don’t ask Travis about it either. He has a lot going on right now, and you need to stay out of trouble”

I agreed to what my aunt had told me, but something still didn’t feel right. I went out through the front door and decided I wanted to talk a walk. Brody was right by my side. I wondered how long it would take me to walk to town, but it was so early I really had all day. We started off down the driveway, a dirt road with nothing on either side of it but fields. Although I wasn’t sure exactly where I was going, Brody led the way and made sure I knew where I was going. I felt safer with him around. I began to talk to him and then I told myself it was kind of silly that I was talking to a dog. I couldn’t help it though, it felt like he understood me, and at least he really listened without judging me. As we made our way to town I noticed the few cars that passed slowed down to stare at me. I stood out like a sore thumb with my red converse. To them, I didn’t belong here.
As we entered town we passed the few shops in Joder. The Diner had what looked to be four people there eating. I found this weird considering it was 10 A.M. Such a small town. From the gas stations single pump, you could see the whole town. It was being manned by a kid that had to be 16, my age. He was sitting on an overturned bucket, looking like he wished he was anywhere else but there. Maybe he was wishing he was in a big city, opportunities behind every door, with 10 gas stations in the town.

Chapter 3

It struck me that this kid and I had so much in common. We were both trying to get away from something, we just came from opposite settings. I didn’t realize that I had stopped across the street from the gas station to stare at him. When I finally snapped out of it, he was looking straight back at me. I looked around to see Brody sitting a few feet away, waiting. I smiled at the kid and kept on my way. The pharmacy and general store were across the street from the gas station. I was starving, so I told Brody to wait outside, and I entered the general store. A small cooler held all of the drinks in the town. I rolled my eyes. I looked at the menu in the back of the store, it only had a few items. Sausage, egg, and cheese it is. I placed my order with the lady behind the counter and decided to wander around the store. I found a package of Twizzlers and grabbed a notebook and package of pens so I could write down everything, sort of like a journal, for my probation officer. It was required, even though to me it was stupid. My food was ready at the counter, so I moved to the front of the store to pay the friendly clerk for all of my things and started to head out. I could see through the glass windows of the store, and what I saw left me dead in my tracks.
Chapter 4

It was my uncle. He was stepping out of his baby blue pickup truck in front of the vacant building across from the general store. He must not have seen me or Brody, because without hesitation he entered the building. Shortly after my uncle disappeared through the door, I saw the man from the night before enter. What was going on? I grabbed Brody and took cover behind an old Buick. In a span of ten minutes, three other towns people entered the vacant building. I camped out behind the car, eating my breakfast sandwich trying to figure out what was going on. Out of nowhere, a dust storm hit, or that is what it looked like to me. I squinted my eyes to try to see through the dust, and that is when I saw a black Tahoe flying down the road. No one else seemed to notice this oddity. I looked across the street at the kid working at the gas station, he paid the SUV no mind. Still taking cover behind the car, I watched the SUV park, as a man and a woman both dressed in black suits got out and entered the building. Around me cars passed normally, and the locals carried on their normal days as if nothing was going on.

My watch said it had been about half an hour, and that is when everyone one by one exited the building. My uncle would be coming out soon, so I ran back into the general store to make it seem like I hadn’t been watching. As I re-walked out of the store, my uncle spotted me.

“Hunter! Brody come on over! I’ll drive you guys home!” said my uncle.

Brody immediately ran to greet him and I followed close behind. We all got in his truck, headed toward home. I couldn’t ask what my uncle had just been doing. That would raise too much suspicion. I tried to act as normal as I possibly could with my head racing a mile a minute. My uncle played everything off normally. I could feel he was trying to see if I had seen anything. I knew
better. As soon as we got to the house I shot up to my room and grabbed my new notebook and pens out of the plastic bag they came in. I shut my door as quietly as I could and laid down on my bed. I opened the notebook and started writing. I guess my probation officer’s assignment for the summer would maybe work to my advantage.

Chapter 5

I couldn’t help but feel that this was a girly thing to do. What guy keeps a journal? My probation officer told me I had to, and I wanted to remember all of the details. I first put down all of my questions. Then I put down what the people looked like that I saw with my uncle, so that if I saw them again I could identify them. I wrote down what I thought the man in the red Ford pickup truck looked like, and what I thought I heard the night before. I could just be overthinking things. Maybe my uncle is part of a committee for the town, or part of a neighborhood watch. As much as I wanted to believe these notions, I couldn’t lie to myself. Something was weird about this, and the town that I believed to be so small and quaint. As much as I wanted to listen to my aunts’ warnings, and leave everything be, I couldn’t help myself. My mom had always told me that I was persistent, sometimes to a fault, but it was also an extremely redeeming quality in me as well. She would be really upset with me if I got into trouble here, so I have to be sneaky about things. I have a plan to figure out what was going on.
Chapter 6

The next morning, I woke up and slowly made my way downstairs. I was met by Brody, my partner in crime. On the counter was a note left by my aunt, Hunter,

I am running into town to pick up a few things. Help yourself to a bagel for breakfast, they’re in the basket. I’ll be back soon.

Love,

Aunt Wyona

I found an everything bagel in the bread basket and poured myself a glass of orange juice, no pulp. Sitting at the kitchen table I could feel the warm summer rays on my face. Brody laid across my feet chewing on a bone. I needed to explore the town more, and my best bet was to talk to the kid at the gas station. Maybe he could help me. He saw the SUV too, but hadn’t paid it any mind. I didn’t understand why. After my everything bagel was gone, I grabbed a water bottle and set out with Brody on my heels.

We retraced our steps from the day before, leading us past the small shops in town. The gas station was vacant today again besides the kid working. I took a deep breath and walked over to him. I spoke.

“What's up?"

“Hey man, I'm Jordan. You're not from around here are you?” the kid asked.
Up close I noticed that he had dirty blonde hair and piercing blue eyes. His sneakers were covered in dust, and his tan Carhartt pants had a hole in the knee.

“No I’m from Connecticut, pretty far actually. I’m staying with my aunt and uncle. Travis and Wyona” I replied.

“Oh, yeah I know them. My parents know them” Jordan said.

“How long has your family been in Joder?” I asked.

Jordan’s demeanor completely changed as I asked this question.

His smile dropped, “We’ve been here my entire life. We’ve never left.”

I could feel the sadness behind his voice as he said this. I’d seen this before in the kids at NA. He’s been in treatment before, and it’s complete bullshit. We seemed to be the only teenagers in the town so I decided to invite him over to hang out after dinner tonight. He accepted without hesitation. The town was so small he knew exactly how to get to my aunt and uncle’s house and we agreed to meet up at 8. With a smile on my face I said goodbye and Brody and I were off again, walking through the dusty roads of town to get home. I had to break the ice first, and later on tonight I would find out more about the mysterious SUV. As much as I like being on my own, maybe I actually found a friend.
Chapter 7

It was almost time for Jordan to arrive. My eyes were drawn to the clock on the kitchen stove all through dinner. 6:35, 7:02, 7:31, 7:45. My aunt and uncle seemed pleased that I had found a friend so easily. I was also happy. I usually feel like the outcast wherever I go. It must’ve been 8 because there was a soft knock on the front door. I jumped to go get it. On the porch stood Jordan and I stepped outside to join him. We headed to the barn where there was an old pool table and an old radio. After starting a game of pool with some Def Leppard playing in the background, I learned a lot about Jordan. His parents were corn farmers, and they expected him to follow in their footsteps. He didn’t want to spend his whole life living in Joder, his dream was to leave this place and go to college in the city, where he could go to an architectural school to pursue his dreams.

“What is it like where you come from, Hunter?” asked Jordan.

“It’s a pretty populated town. I live about 10 minutes from two malls and we have multiple grocery stores and places to get food” I replied.

“It must be amazing living so close to New York City I’ve always dreamed of going there,” said Jordan.

“It’s pretty cool,” I said.

I didn’t wanna give too much personal information out too fast. I didn’t know him that well yet. Although I didn’t outwardly say this I thought in my mind about the many times my parents and I went to New York City for the tree lighting. It had become tradition of ours. We’d get hot chocolate
and roasted peanuts and explore the city, always stopping to take a picture in front of the huge red ornaments. I remember feeling incredibly calm and at peace even among all of the craziness of the city. My heart ached. I missed my dad and all of the memories we had together.

After hanging out for a while I decided it was time to start picking Jordan’s brain about Joder.

“How often do you work during the week?” I asked.

“I work Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Sunday” he replied.

Wednesday, the day I had seen him.

“I remember seeing you on Wednesday working at the station,” I said.

“I think I saw you too, I don’t really pay much attention while I’m working. It’s a pretty boring job but it pays the bills” Jordan said.

“Did you see the black SUV that came flying through town Wednesday?” I anxiously asked.

A look of confusion crossed his over his face.

“What are you talking about?” asked Jordan.

After a few moments his facial expression changes and he started to open up. It felt as though he had been holding all of this in for a while but was too scared to confide in anyone.

“Alright man listen; I’ve never talked to anyone about this before. Everyone in town has seen the SUV before, but no one speaks of it. It’s the most bizarre thing ever” He practically whispered. “The SUV appears every few weeks and parks in front of the vacant building
and two people always get out. A man and a woman. I can see everything from my post at the gas station” Jordan continued.

“Do you think it’s the government?” I asked.

Jordan replied, “I don’t know. I’ve seen the man and woman dressed in black walking through town. They just pass by, without making eye contact. Then just like that they’re gone.”

Together contemplated if they could be from the government. I’d seen movies and heard of the men in black, although when I heard about it the men have faces that have no features. They all look the same.

It was past 11:30 when Jordan and I finally looked at our phones to see the time. We tried to do as much research as we could on government agencies, and why they could potentially be in Joder. This raised so many questions though, who were the people other than my uncle in the meeting and why was Joder the site of these meetings? Who were the people in the black suits? Why was everything a secret? I began to wonder if my aunt knew what my uncle was up to, but after my last talk with her, I was nervous to bring it up.

Jordan looked at me all of a sudden, “Do you hear that noise?”

Before I could answer we both took off out of the barn doors to spot in the distant sky, what looked like a triangle with 3 lights. It hovered over what Jordan said was the Oglala Grasslands. I could notice that it was humming and there was a light on every corner, and a larger light right in the center. The light in the center became so bright it was as blinding as looking directly into the sun, and then just like that it was gone. From this moment on we knew we were onto something. We came to the conclusion that we were going to work together to get to the bottom of this. Everyone
in Joder could turn a blind eye to whatever is going on, but Jordan and I simply cannot. It’s also
nice to have someone I get along with here that sees things as I do. Our best chance at figuring out
more was to explore the grasslands, and the next night that is exactly what we would do.

Chapter 8

Jordan and I set out the next night with our IPhones fully charged, water, and snacks in our
backpacks. I brought my notebook and pen so I could write down observations if I needed to. We
each used our phones as flashlights to set our path into the infamous grasslands. Not a sound
could be heard so I tried to walk as quickly and quietly as I could. As if anyone would really hear us
anyways, we were in the middle of nowhere. I could tell Jordan was doing the same. As we made
our way through the tall grass, I began to notice that up ahead there was a clearing. I made sure to
signal to Jordan to shut off his flashlight, as we entered the open space. Jordan began to walk the
border of the open area, and turned to me with a pale face.

He whispered, “Dude, is this a crop circle?”

A what I thought? My mind quickly shot to all of the alien movies I’d ever seen. Area 51, crop
circles, aliens.

“Oh my god. Is it? How did this get here?” I replied.

Jordan’s voice shook, “Look at the shape. It has to be a crop circle, Hunter.”

to hold down my dinner and keep a clear mind.

“We need to get out of here” I said to Jordan.
“We can’t just yet. We were right. Something is going on here, and we need to figure it out. We came all this way,” whispered back Jordan.

He wasn't wrong. The two of us were on to something. This was all super unreal. After having my momentary freak out, I got my head on straight and started brainstorming with Jordan. This was not the time to freak out.

“You’re right,” I said. “We need to take pictures. No one will believe us otherwise.”

Jordan quickly opened his camera app and began taking pictures to document our findings. Now we had proof that something strange was going on in Joder.

We were completely exposed in the middle of the crop circle, when a low hum rose from the distance. I grabbed Jordan’s arm and pulled him into the cover of the grass. Crossing over the grasslands flew what looked to be the same flying triangle of light we’d seen the night before. It stood out distinctly among all of the bright stars shining. This was the most scared I’d ever been. Jordan shook quietly next to me. Just like before, as soon as the triangle appeared it vanished, making its presence known only for a brief time. We both looked at each other with faces full of astonishment, and we took off at a full sprint for my uncle’s house.

It felt as though we had been running for a lifetime. We immediately ran into my aunt and uncles barn and shut the door. We both tried catching our breathes, but it wasn’t happening.
My phone screen read 3:12 A.M. and I still couldn’t sleep. I tossed and I turned, but I just
could not shake the feeling that Jordan and I had come across something serious. I kept running
over the events in my head over and over. I let out a sigh of distress and I could hear Brody shift
around on the ground next to my bed. Man’s best friend. After hours of tossing and turning I finally
fell asleep. This is where my scary dreams met me. I was being chased by aliens, down the dirt
roads of Joder. I tried to scream for help but no one could hear me. There was nothing insight
around me for miles. I tried to wake up but I couldn’t. I was stuck. I kept running as fast as I could
to escape these beings. It wasn’t long before they over took me and I was swept up into a beam of
light. Everything went black. I woke up to find myself strapped down to what seemed to be a
hospital bed. My hands and legs were tied down. I squirmed and tried to free myself, but nothing
was working. I heard a door open. Out moved a tall thin being, which was grey in color. It looked at
me with its large eyes, and I could feel myself slowly drifting away.

My eyes opened and I was in my bed laying in a pool of my own sweat. I looked over the
edge of my bed and Brody was still there. Then I reached for my phone, it was 8:21. My heart was
still pounding like crazy. Jordan had texted and called me 5 times. Something was wrong. I called
him back and I could hear the frantic tone of his voice.

“Hunter, we need to meet up now. We can’t talk on the phone it isn’t safe” said Jordan.

“Be over my house in 15” I replied quickly. I hung up the phone and jumped out of bed.
Throwing on a pair of gym shorts and an old band t-shirt I ran into the bathroom. I splashed some
water on my face and brushed my teeth. Within 4 minutes I was heading out to the barn. Jordan
wasn’t too far behind me. He ran in, red faced and out of breath.

“Dude, you’re not going to believe this. I went through my pictures on my phone this
morning to see if I captured anything good from last night, but they’re all gone” he blurted out.
“What do you mean they’re gone? How could that happen?” I asked.

“I don’t know. Someone deleted them. It’s impossible” he responded.

“This can’t be happening. There’s no way” I said.

Jordan put up his hand as if to stop my talking. “Hunter. Something serious is going on here.”

“I know, I know. But how could those pictures just get deleted?” I answered.

“That’s what I can’t figure out. Someone must know that we’re on to something here” Jordan said.

I was so confused I couldn’t even think straight. I finally opened my mouth to speak.

“Jordan… What if it’s the government?” I stammered.

Jordan’s eyes grew larger as he replied, “The people in the van…”

“O.M.G. man, you’re right.” I answered.

It was all starting to make sense. The SUV, the people dressed in black, the crop circle, the strange meetings, the flying object. How did my uncle play a role in all of this though? He must know something, but I couldn’t go to him with this. It was up to Jordan and I to figure all of this out. I was scared. I could tell Jordan was too, but we were both trying not to show it to one another. We were still both very troubled teenagers. After going back and forth for a bit, it was time for Jordan to show up for his shift at the gas station. We planned on meeting up later, texting was too risky.
After Jordan left my head was spinning. I decided to call my mom since I hadn’t talked to her over the phone since I’d been in Joder. Opening up my IPhone her number was under my favorites. Placing the phone up to my ear, it only rang twice. I heard my mom’s familiar voice, comforting me already.

“Hello? Hunter?” My mom asked.

“Hi Mom, what are you up to?” I responded.

“I’m at work. Have you been enjoying your time in Joder? I miss you so much” replied my mom. I so badly wanted to tell her what had been going on the past few days, but I didn’t want to worry her. I had to put on a brave face.

“It’s nice, Brody comes with me everywhere and I met a kid my age too” I responded. “Uncle Travis and Aunt Wyona have been really nice to me.”

“I’m glad to hear that sweetie, have you been doing anything fun?” my mom asked.

“Oh, you know, just the usual” I replied, wanting so badly to tell her what was going on.

“Well, I hope you’re staying out of trouble Hunter” She said.

“I am. I’ve been feeling a lot better. This just what I needed. How’s Felix?” I replied back. I started to feel sad and empty, missing my mom and everything about home.

“He’s being a good boy, he misses you and sleeps on your bed every night” my mom said.

“I miss him too. Well listen mom, I have to get going I’m going to meet up with my friend Jordan” I responded

“Okay, hunny. Have fun and be safe. I miss you” she said.
My voice broke as I said, “I will! I’ll text you love you.”

“I love you Hunter bye” my mom said back.

“Bye mom.” I pressed the button on my IPhone to hang up and I placed it beside me. I wish I could tell her what was going on in Joder, but the last thing she needed was to be worried. I just couldn't do that to her.

I sat on my bed for a while just thinking about everything that had been going on. I missed my dad, and being away from home, but I had to stay strong for my mom. Picking up my phone I realized it was 12 o’clock. Time to meet Jordan. Throwing on my converse I was out the door and heading to the gas station. As Brody and I padded along, I ran over in my mind what had been going on. There was no logical way that the pictures could have been deleted. Something greater than us was going on here, and I had a gut feeling that Jordan and I were about to get into a lot of trouble.

Chapter 11

As we arrived at the gas station I found Jordan sitting in the same place that I first met him. Dust flew around us in the air, but I could see he was motioning to me to follow him. I started walking faster and Brody followed close on my heels. Joder was particularly quiet today, and there were no customers at the gas station, so we headed to the side of the building. We were out of sight but could still keep an eye on the front of the station. Jordan crouched down, so I did too.

“Okay dude, there is seriously something going on” whispered Jordan.

“I know, but how is this possible. Are you sure you didn’t accidently delete them?” I asked.

“No I swear on my life I didn’t. When I went to bed they were all there” he responded.
“We can’t text or call each other anymore, we have to be secretive, someone is following us” I said back.

“You’re right. If it possibly is the government we could be in some serious trouble. I’ve seen it in movies, they can listen and monitor our calls. You’ve seen the men in black on T.V. right?” Jordan responded. His voice shook.

“I’ve seen it. What should our next move be?” I asked.

“I think we need to be careful, we should get a disposable camera, and make sure everything that we have to talk about gets told in person. I think the government is monitoring this. They have to know something” Jordan said.

“You’re right” I said.

From that moment on we made a promise to only trust each other. Everyone else could turn on us, and we weren’t about to have that happen.
Phantasm

Tyler Lascola

*I, a chthonic shadow in the muted earthlight,*
*Lift my leaking lids,*
*Origins of streambeds fresh with briny water,*
*And pick up my pen.*

In the frostbit forest
I steer my metal steed onto
A path that looks to want for wear,
Over the gravel past two basketball hoops
Hanging forgotten from the birch,
Beside a gully waiting in earnest for snowmelt—
Waiting futilely.

I hear their voices—laughter—
I veer from the path,
Tires scrabbling for purchase on a pallid
Polyethylene pipe spanning the pit.
Across I charge through the wintry wood,
Climbing to the crowded clearing
By the dying light of day,
And on the cusp of the glade
I drop my bike and face three faces
That make all the others melt to mist,
That nine years could not erode from memory,
Aged and yet the same.
My eyes meet Elizabeth’s
And an oh-my-god! escapes her mouth;
Whitney half-rises, lips half-parted, en train de souvenir—
She’s bleached her hair;
And Kayley turns toward me, the setting sun
Glinting off her glasses, putting a veritable fire in her eyes.
Liz is first on her feet, but Whitney is first to reach me.
Awash with nostalgia, words choke in my throat.
They embrace me as one,
Say my name, and my name,
The hymn to the hearse,
Transcends its sex and mosaics unrealized,
And the sounds lose their meaning,
For the sounds become the meaning.
We are a bubble of warmth that the cold
Winds of change must swirl around.
The wind changes direction.
It flees from the east,
Where mountain towns taste the cinders first,
And whispers *curse* through every ear.
The iridescent oil-painted sky
Becomes a bruise as cirrus filaments
Make a desperate bid for the blood-red horizon
Where the sun beats solemn
Down to its termination.
We watch with human wonder.
Beyond the veil of clouds,
Our scarlet star touches the Earth,
Pulsing weakly,
And I spin and see behind us,
Diametrically opposed,
Rising between two peaks,
A black cigarette burn in the tapestry of the world,
Spreading like the incandescent edges of a childhood love letter
Set alight by someone else’s perfect match.

It was then I knew:
Today was the last day.

Darkness Howls across the land.
Land undulates like boiling water.
Waterfalls of fire spill on sylvan hills.
Hills quake and stretch for the heavens.
Heaven mandates the rise of Hell.
Hell-on-Earth occurs with strangely little sound.
Sound indeed seems altogether absent save our voices.
I voice a question to Kayley:
Are any of these mountains volcanos?
No.

Her answer is an impetus
For us to remain *invictus*,
Not in No's literal meaning,
But in the sound that carries it.
Simply because she said it.

Three more steeds conjure before us
And we ride not gently into the black night:
Our tread attacks the loosed earth,
Our mounts bucking and hurdling
Down the slopes as some vengeful
Force of nature hurtles after us,
Brittle sundered branches snapping at our heels,
The woods unlit by any moon or sun or star,
Now only discernable by the nocuous glow
Of the crackling tapestry at our backs.
We are four horsewomen
And we are monarchs, queens,
Painted ladies, woodland skippers,
Pressing against our stirrups,
The pedals of flowers.
We are butterflies on wheels.

When Whitney’s wheels spin out from under her,
My spirit leaves my body on the ground;
I watch myself and Liz and Kayley skid
To semi-halts to aid her, locking arms
With one another, lifting friendship from
The jaws of dissolution, kicking off,
The Darkness just another obstacle,
The next adventure just a night away.

I couldn’t tell, for the untimely break
From that reality, if we had bade
Adieu the cataclysmic tide that rent
The knolls and roads, the sweet repose that I
Can see that little life was rounded by,
And yet I chance to say I’m confident
We left behind the threadbare strands unlaid,
Another realm to smolder in our wake.
We build...

A Piece

*Emily DeGennaro*

Spring, the almighty season of rebirth. March, when the snow melts just enough for the weeded dandelions to peek through, spread their roots, wrap their stems. The virus from those weeded roots must have grabbed and pierced her by the ankle, because after that day she was infected. She was never the same. He sat on a throne. The weeds let her go for a second and she was bowing. The fall was hard, fast. She’d remember it as her first. Things got serious even faster, but everything did at that age. Stems grew into vines. Summer, he was more omnipotent than the spring. Every harsh word tightened the vines around her throat. She couldn't breathe. But she loved him. Her wrists tied to his, she couldn't move. But she felt so close to him. When he would loosen them, she felt like she needed oxygen. But he needed to know the feeling, she wanted control too. One night she crawled into his bedroom window and planted a seed. Now he would have the weeds. Every word, argument, and tear shed against each other only fueled the now thorn-covered vines around them. Thorns would cut deep, thriving off the pain that they created with each other, to each other, for each other. Some days she would let him walk a few steps ahead of her, and step on his vines, just to see him fall. Some days he would wish her dead, just to have her tears water her own roots and grow. June, growing, her parents hated the weed-roots and cut them from her while she slept. They threw the weeds in the backyard and went to bed. She woke up in the night screaming in pain, touching only her
body. She ran outside and found her beautiful weeds chopped into a mess and threw herself into them. Forcing a re-connection, the weeds did something even more divine. Constricting her, the weed-roots forced her into the ground, planted her into the Earth with them like the weed she had become. Slowly, the weed-roots pushed her deeper into the ground, as the dandelion above grew prouder. Eventually, the weed-roots let her go. Untangled and tangled at the same time, she found herself on a stranger's lap, in a place known as The Hole.
I've been given my wings.

Adrenaline rushes through my veins as I become invincible. Sounds of thunder fill my ears. Dirt flies up around me. I can taste the grit in my teeth. My skin feels warm as the sun's strong rays beat down on my shoulders. For the only time ever my head is clear. Happy.

Most people will never get the chance to feel as if they are flying. I am one of the luckiest people alive because I get this chance. I feel his hooves hit the ground moving faster and faster. My heart pounds in unison with his. Here I am not restricted by anything. Here I am free. We both are. This is the key to happiness.

My wings are given to me by a black and white paint horse named Koda. To me he is the epitome of an Indian war steed. A long black mane cascades down his neck, embodying his wild spirit. His gentle eyes look into my soul. One ice blue, the other a soft brown. He runs as his ancestors used to.

Fast.

His formal name is Takoda. Friend of everyone. A loving spirit, compassionate to animals and people of all kinds. Never did I think that I would find love in a scraggly two-year old that looked like a mule. But something about him caught my eye. He had never been ridden before. He was incredibly gangly, but very endearing. I was the first person to ride him. The journey was far from easy, but we worked day in and day out. We grew
together. A bond was created, formed. Some days were harder than others. It would have been easy to just give up. I couldn’t. He needed me just as much as I needed him.

Trust.

Four years later it is now unbreakable. We proved everyone wrong who said that buying an untrained two-year old was crazy. Koda is my partner. We have endured tears, laughter, anger, and joy together. He has been there through every year of college, giving me wings when all I needed was to run away. You could say that I saved him, but I think he truly saved me. Through our journey I have learned patience, commitment, and the meaning of pure joy. Some of the proudest moments I have ever experienced have been with Koda. Earning the love and trust of a thousand-pound animal has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

Partnership.

Riding has always been my escape, but connecting with an animal and becoming a team has been the most rewarding of all. Not every day will be easy, but together our journey to grow continues. We will push on. Koda has given me my freedom. We will continue to run. Free and happy. Hearts beating in unison. Faster and faster till we leave it all behind. Sounds of thunder fill my ears.

Wild.

I am invincible.

I have my wings.
Takoda by Sara Robacczynski
Imagine an alarm sounding off in the background as I heard, “Excuse me, Ms. Wilder, you can’t smuggle coconuts into your luggage.”

“Bummer,” I thought. I finally overcame by opinion on coconuts, went beyond my comfort zone by working up the courage to try one, loved it, and then got them confiscated by the TSA when I tried smuggling them home.

Being fooled was a constant theme in my life. First it was the tooth fairy, then Mickey Mouse, and now coconuts! My mother’s words were so deeply ingrained into my head: “You will not like them, Bon. They taste awful.” Not until age fifteen did I finally break free. That delicious coconut was the missing puzzle piece to my life; it is also the exact moment when I learned to make my own decisions. How could I not do something as simple as trying a coconut and having my own taste buds be the judge?

The first time my mom showed me a coconut was on our back porch. It came with a Chanukah fruit basket sent by friends who clearly didn’t know that my mom despised coconuts. She picked it up, along with a hammer, brought it outside, and smashed it into hundreds of pieces. It was actually quite funny, but it didn’t look very appetizing when it was all cracked and scattered on the porch, which led me to decide against trying it that day.

My next encounter with coconuts occurred on vacation in Puerto Rico, when I was fifteen. Driving my family’s rental golf cart with my cousin in the passenger’s seat, we found a coconut abandoned on the sand. I stopped the golf cart and ran over to get it. With flashbacks in my head of my mom hammering the coconut open years before, I remembered the thrill, and I wanted to
shatter this one too. I placed the coconut in the back of the cart and drove on, but the acceleration caused the coconut to roll out of the cart and break apart on the pavement. My heart dropped.

“That was it,” I thought. “I must try a coconut!” Without my mother knowing, I asked my grandma to buy me an open coconut, and she willingly obliged. I took my first taste...and I loved it! I couldn’t believe it! What was my mom thinking?

Looking back, I had seen only two coconuts, one shattered, and one broken. Despite my mother’s warnings, over time I discovered that I love everything that has to do with coconuts: coconut oil, coconut water, Pina coladas (virgin, of course), even coconut deodorant!

Coconuts keep me healthy and are now ubiquitous: at school, at home, and on vacation, they are a tasty part of my life. Lesson learned: never shortchange coconuts. In fact, never shortchange anything. Trusting my own instincts was the only way to rebuild that shattered coconut. I finally broke the spell that my mom casted on me by trying other foods she didn’t like, such as kale, mangoes, and peppers. The important lesson for me was learning to make my own decisions. I was the only one judging my food and if I can’t trust myself, then who can I trust?

Trying new things, new ideas, and new ways to complete tasks is what I have come to master. Being ruled by others’ theories, opinions, and actions is what I have learned to avoid. Relying on myself and constructing my own opinions is the proactive choice. It was crucial for me to learn on my own because it has kept me open-minded and thinking outside the box. And, just to emphasize, coconuts are delicious! Sorry, Mom.
You Shall Be Named Pugsly

Daniela Sznaj

I'll never forget the moment my five-year-old self stepped into a kid's version of heaven- FAO Schwarz toy store in New York City. As soon as I walked through my version of the pearly gates- Barbie’s life size dream house- I was enveloped with gizmos, gadgets, and knickknacks galore. I could hardly control myself as I slipped out of my mother’s grip and sprinted around the gigantic emporium with the same amount of energy as someone who had just consumed twelve shots of espresso. I sped past rows of toy trains, puzzles, and board games.

“Now remember Dani, you can only get one toy, so choose wisely,” warned my mother as she trailed behind me, trying to keep up with my bursting energy.

I finally came to the conclusion that I wanted to get a container of farting putty that I would most likely forget about after twenty-four hours. That’s when I saw him- a stuffed animal dog… a pug! I all but dropped the putty I was holding and plucked the life-sized toy right off the shelf. In that moment, I knew my choice was made. I stared into his large glossy eyes and declared,

“You shall be named Pugsly.”

Fifteen years later, I could not be happier with my younger self’s decision. It may seem silly, but this tattered old stuffed pug has gotten me through some pretty rough times in the past decade and a half. He was there for all the tears, the joy, even the awkward middle school phases. He was my watchdog when I had nightmares and my piece of home in my college dorm. He’s been more of a constant in my life than some people have been. In short, I am forever thankful that I chose Pugsly over a green jar of farting putty.
The Perfect Blend

Sara Robaczynski

For $2.49 my day gets a little better.

Like many times before, I walk into Dunkin Donuts on a Monday morning. I order a medium iced caramel coconut-coffee with almond milk. I am proud to be a regular because the barista knows my order.

At the first sip I am woken immediately and struck with energy. I am not grumpy. My grogginess fades. I am ready to conquer my day.

Why would I purchase anything else? My coffee is the perfect blend of strong but sweet. The flavor shot of coconut-caramel gives just enough sweetness that I don’t need sugar and my addition of almond milk gives my coffee its perfect coloring.

I haven’t found another coffee that compares. Starbucks doesn’t cut it: too strong, overpriced, and gives me a headache.

It has taken me awhile to master my coffee order, and it breaks my heart that my perfect blend is only seasonal.

It took me a long time to discover that regular coffee (cream/milk/two sugars) is too bland. Light and sweet coffee (four creams/four sugars) is too sweet and creamy which hurts my stomach. French vanilla gives me a migraine. Therefore, the perfect coffee for me is a medium iced caramel-coconut coffee with almond milk.
I have found the best coffee.

A Man’s Best Friend- Anna Leone
Buddy

Zoe Wollert

I felt myself fading farther and farther away every day. I became unimportant, even insignificant, as she got older.

I had been replaced. By her new friends, her phone, things she considered more important than me. She would go days without thinking of me, sometimes even weeks. I sat, in silence, waiting for her to remember that I existed. After all, she was the one who had imagined me.

Today felt different. When she came home, I knew saw me, but she wouldn’t look at me. Her eyes darted around our room, like she was forcing herself to look anywhere but at me.

“Hello?” I questioned. She sighed, dropped her backpack, and sat down next to me on the bed. She looked like she wanted to say something, but didn’t. She looked at me with a blank face.

“Do you want to play? Do you want to talk?” I asked hastily.

“Buddy…” she said my name, almost like it embarrassed her. “I can’t play with you anymore.”

Her words destroyed me. I felt myself fading even more.

“One more time?” I begged.
She stood up and walked towards the door. It felt like the last time I would ever see her, but I couldn’t bring myself to believe it.

“I don’t need you anymore. I’m too old to have imaginary friend. This has been a long time coming.”

“Please?” I tried to say, but I found myself unable to speak.

She turned away, “I don’t need you anymore.”

That was all she had to say.

The door closed behind her. I felt invisible. I knew I was invisible. I looked down at my hands, but they weren’t there. None of me was. The day I had feared for so long had finally come. Just like she had said, I wasn’t needed anymore.

I was gone.
The Definition of a Shadow

Julia Francese

A shadow is a noun. It is defined as the dark area or shape produced by a body coming between rays of sunlight and its surface. Ever since I was three, a little shadow has been following my every move. Even when the sun isn’t shining outside my shadow still appears, feeling the need to be involved with my environment.

When I look at my shadow, I notice it:

Moves when I move.

Falls when I fall.

Runs when I run.

Laughs when I laugh.

Cries when I cry.

A shadow just wants to mimic the actions of its person or object.

But as I got older, my little shadow started to fade a little. I wouldn’t let it follow me to college and the day finally came when my shadow started to make her own decisions. I
was conflicted in knowing my little shadow didn’t need me as much, but proud in knowing that she was becoming the great person I always knew she would.

I’m the oldest child.

My shadow is now 18 and venturing to college.

A shadow is a verb. It is defined as a thing that follows and observes closely and typically secretly.
We acknowledge the past...

My mom had grown a graveyard.

Nicole Soto

My mom had grown a graveyard.
Cigarette butts were planted all around our backyard.
They all had a gravestone & all held emotions accountable.
I walked down the aisles of the dead to pay my condolences. Their length illustrated their life span & their epitaph rose from the soil like soot to whisper in my ear.
I stopped in front of one smoked all the way down to the filter. It rasped somberly...

One of many I did not die alone.
I suffered for sadness for I was her comfort.
I touched her lips & could taste her tears.
She pulled the most out on me.

Another voice trembled through my ears. Planted on the fringe, it called to me…
One of many I did not die alone.

I suffered for fear for I was her companion.

I touched her lips & could taste the alcohol on her tongue.

She flicked me furthest so I could not scare her.

I turned to a cigarette curled & beaten into the ground & a blare rang through my ears…

One of many I did not die alone.

I suffered for anger for I was her fighter.

I touched her lips & could taste her blood.

She held on begging to kiss me longer.

Then a scent seized my attention. I followed silver smoke to the edge of the porch.

A cigarette smoked half-way remained lit, but dying. Its harsh tone pierced through me…

One of many I am not dying alone.

I’m suffering for addiction for I am her liberation.

I touched her lips & went to war with her demons.

She depends on me the most for I silence them.

My mom had grown a graveyard. Planting her addictions in the ground.

I cannot blame her for how she kills her demons & one of many she does not suffer alone.
All of you are addicted to something. When reality gets ahead of you. Something that feels like a tight grip of freedom. Silencing your demons with temporary
lusts. All of you grow your own grave yard.

DissolveMent(al) by Maria Saporito
Not Everyone Gets to Go Home
Hector Gutierrez

There's a mountain back home that people swear is the closest place we have to heaven.

A lone, old bus follows a route from downtown to where the clouds can no longer be found above. The people from *el pueblo* at the foot of the mountain believe that the last stop is meant for angels and angels only.

I didn't believe any of it until God got onto my bus.

From the way She was dressed it was clear that God was going back to the sky. She wore worn out jeans with holes in her knees and an oversized jacket despite the sweltering heat. I noticed Her guitar was in need of new paint and was missing a string. There’s not a musician in Mexico who would ever board a bus if their intention was not to play a song. How was She going to play for us if Her guitar was missing one string?

Her dark skin glistened under the sun as She stood out among the rest of the passengers. Not for being God, but for being different.

I closed my eyes and brought my hands together and prayed for all the things I wanted.

Money. Love. Concert tickets.
I opened my eyes and God was staring at me. She knew I only prayed when I thought She could hear me.

God didn’t sing us a song, but She still captured my attention. I don’t think anyone noticed Her the way I did. Why would they?

But my curiosity went beyond why She wasn’t singing or why she wore a heavy jacket in the summer. I wanted to ask something that only God could tell me.

Why are You going back to heaven when we need You the most?

A part of me wanted to believe She was going back after helping people. But since the world is such a fucked-up place I figured She had lost her faith in us and just wanted to go home.

Who was I to judge if God wanted to get away from us? I would have done the same thing if I were Her.

As our run-down bus traveled the unpaved and winding road up the mountain, the seats emptied. It was only Her and me when the driver announced the last stop. At this point, the clouds were so far below us that they resembled broken pieces of cotton and I realized that I had missed my stop.

When the bus came to a halt, She stood up, grabbed her guitar, and got out. She didn’t spare me a glance or a word. Why would She? I wasn’t dying. I wasn't sick. I wasn’t anyone. But out of all the buses in this route—in this world—She took mine.

And that had to mean something.
Sasco Hill Beach by Daniela Sznaj


Factory Finish

Andrew Q. Starr

Seated alone

The space is packed

Dominant hand runs over the hammer

Intimately

Controlled chaos

Irony realized

By him

Silence

Calm before the storm

Cliché

Realization of his solitary

Always alone

With himself

The hammer feels smoother

Than the polish

Ruggedness of edges feels right

Precision accompanied by variousness

The decision is not his
It is the will of choice
With choosing
Comes the dealing with environment
What envelopes him will ultimately be his downfall
Cliché
Swelling fists
Followed by
Hysterical laughter
Crying laughter
Laughter that makes psychologists flinch

Stalking
In the snow
Running his thumb over the hammer
Ferocious yelling
Merciful pressure on the hammer
SIGHT
SHOT
STOP

A blank stare into the distance
Slow
Paced
Breaths
Sets the mood
There is no stopping of what's to come

Hiccups of snarling
Emotions hesitate
Muscles contract
STOP
Wait

Darwinian theorists would be proud
Of this animalistic peak of moments
The passionate flames within him burn brighter
Than a phoenix
Cliché
This
Survival of the Fittest

Barrel pressed against chest
REVOLVER

No jamming occurrence with firing pin
Moonlight shines off the frame
Into his eyes
BEAUTIFUL

Cold oxygen inhaled
Trigger pulled
Flesh ripped
Five
Consecutive
Bullets
This is only the beginning...
Contributor’s Notes

Sharifa Ahmed is a graduate student working towards her Masters in Teaching and getting certified as an elementary school teacher. In her undergraduate years, she obtained a psychology degree also at Sacred Heart. She was awarded the President’s Excellence Award and Honor’s Medal in her undergraduate years. She plans to graduate in May of 2018. She’s from Stamford, CT.

Meghan Bossone is an English major from Calverton, NY. She is a rising senior and will graduate in 2019.

Megan Bowlin is an English major with a Political Science minor from Succasunna, NJ. She is a part of Sigma Tau Delta, the Education Club Co-President, and a recipient of the President's Excellence Award. She is currently part of the MA Program in Secondary Education and expects to graduate in the Spring of 2020. She hopes to obtain a position at the high school she currently student teaches in.

Emily DeGennaro grew up the small town of Wading River, NY. She’s been playing field hockey since middle school, and now plays D1. Since a young age she's wanted to pursue a career in law, and this past spring semester, she was a Legislative Intern at the General Assembly in Hartford. An English major with a minor in Political Science, she hopes to publish a book of my own. Emily graduates in 2019.

Grady DiAntonio is a Political Science major from Milford, MA. He graduates this May of 2018 and will pursue Suffolk Law following graduation.

Courtney Ebert is a freshman Nursing major and Spanish minor from Northport, NY. She was awarded the Academic Excellence Scholarship and is a member of the Tri M Music Honor Society. She has been featured on the Dean’s List and plans to graduate in May of 2021. Her plans after college include working as an RN at a hospital while attending graduate school to become a nurse practitioner.

Lauren Elmslie, an Art and Design major from Fairfield, CT, plans to graduate in May 2018.
**Zach Festini** is an English major from Shelton, CT. He is part of Sigma Tau Delta and is anticipating graduating in May 2018. His plans after college include looking for a job with a creative position or something involving writing and editing. He will continue to write fiction on the side, no matter where he ends up.

**Julia Francese** is a junior from Scituate, MA. She is a Psychology major in the Honors program. She is a recipient of the Thomas More Honor’s Scholarship, President’s Excellence Award, and Athletic Scholarship. Her after college plans are still being decided, but for now she enjoys being a part of the Division I Rowing Team.

**Christina Ghillani** graduated in December 2017 with a degree in Art and Design. She’s from Old Brookeville, NY.

**Héctor Gutiérrez** is an English and Global Studies major from Veracruz, Mexico. He is also a part of the Honors program and recipient of the Rycenga Scholarship Award. He is also a part of Division I Men’s golf. Héctor will be graduating in May 2019 and will be attending Graduate School for Creative Writing.

**Abigail Hood** is a senior from Gloucester, MA. She is a Sociology major with Psychology and Human Rights and Social Justice minors. Abigail is part of the women’s golf team, individually setting the program’s record for the lowest round in a tournament. She is a 2017 NEC Team Champion. After college she is planning on taking a year off to travel and work, and then continue on to UMASS Amherst to get her master’s in Elementary Education.

**Alyssa Ingmanson** is a Physical Therapy Graduate Student from Stratford, CT. She is a member of the Delta Epsilon Sigma National Honors Society. She will be graduating in the Spring of 2020 and will pursue a career in physical therapy for individuals with neurological disabilities.

**Chris Janneck** is from Emerson, NJ with plans to graduate May 2020, with a Bachelors in Graphic Design. While at Sacred Heart he has been heavily involved in sports, playing on the club football team. Last year his team won the 2017 National Club Football Association National Football Championship. He also in his free time does community service giving back to the people around him. In the future Chris wishes to attend graduate school and after hopes to get a job in the video game industry, where he can design characters for video games.
Amanda Jung is an English major from Branford, CT. She has been awarded with the William Pitt Scholarship and is part of Sigma Tau Delta. She is graduating in May 2018 and continuing on in Sacred Heart’s five-year Elementary Education Program.

Megan Keane from Farmingdale, NY is an English major with a secondary education concentration. She is also a Women’s Studies and Creative Writing minor. She plans to graduate in 2019 and then go on to graduate school to receive her Master’s in Secondary Education. Her plans after graduate school are to move home to Long Island to teach in a local high school while living with her parents and hopefully pay off her student loans. She then plans to move far away from Long Island, obtain a Ph.D. in English, start teaching in colleges, and one day publish a book. She has been published in the New Britain Herald, was a writer for The Odyssey Online, and her tweets have been published in The Spectrum.

Alexa Kober is an English major from Beechhurst, NY. She has been awarded the President’s Excellence Award and Trustee Scholarship. She plans to graduate in May of 2018 and will be attending graduate school to obtain an MFA. She has also been published in the Spectrum.

Tyler Lascola is an English major from Milford, CT. He is expected to graduate in May 2020. Tyler has multiple other works published in The Spectrum. While he is unsure of what he wants to pursue after graduation, he may pursue Graduate School or work in copyediting.

Joseph LaSpina is from Lindenhurst, NY, and plans to graduate in May 2018. His major is in Media Arts with a concentration in Film and Television Production and he has a minor in Criminal Justice. Joseph has had a memorable four years while at Sacred Heart always trying to be involved and make the most of his time while here. He is a member of the Theatre Arts Program and has had the opportunity to work on some great shows and meet some even greater people through the program. When not at SHU he really enjoys traveling, studying abroad three times in Ireland, Luxembourg, and Italy. After graduation, he is set to travel again, this time to Sydney, Australia, where he has an internship with a video production company. Joseph is very thankful for where he is now and for all the friends he met along the way. He is excited for his future and looks forward to where it takes him.

Anna Leone is from Queensbury, NY. An Art and Design major, she’s to graduate in May 2018.

Gabriella Lind is a senior English major and Psychology minor from Colts Neck, NJ. She is
graduating in May 2018, and will be a Graduate Assistant in the Office of Financial Assistance here at SHU for the next two years. During this time, she will be taking classes to earn her Masters in Teaching and later on will be going for her elementary education certification. She has been awarded the President's Excellence Merit Scholarship, 35th Anniversary McAllister Scholarship, and has been on the Dean's List. She is also a member of Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honor Society. She is also on the student ambassador executive board.

**Fiona Maxwell** is a nursing major from Burlington, MA. She plans to graduate in 2021.

**Paxton McLane** is a sophomore from Warren, RI. He is a Media Studies and Theatre major. He has been awarded with the Theatre Arts Great, Martire Photography Exhibit, and has been on the Dean’s List from 2016 to present. After college Paxton plans on going to graduate film school and hopefully working in a studio in New York or California.

**Natalie Moncada** is a current sophomore from Stamford, CT with plans to graduate in May 2020. Her major is Digital Media and Design and she has a minor in Communications. She is proud of the photography she has taken while at Sacred Heart and just this Spring received an award for winning the Imax. After graduation, she has her eyes set on NBC, where she wishes to intern. Eventually she plans to work her way up, working in photography marketing for businesses in NYC. However, her dream job would be to explore the world as a travel photographer.

**Sara Robaczynski** is to graduate in May 2018. She’s from Stratford, CT, and will be continuing on to Sacred Heart’s Secondary Education Program in the Fall. She is part of Sigma Tau Delta and has been a recipient of an academic scholarship for all four years. When she isn’t with her horse Takoda, she is reading and writing fiction! She is excited to continue on after school and become a high school English teacher!

**Eve Papa** is an English major with a minor in Film from New City, NY. She is also a co-editor/editor for *The Spectrum* and *The Odyssey Online* at Sacred Heart University. She is expected to graduate in May 2019 and intends to take a year off to prepare for her pursuit in a Ph.D in English.

**Maurice Rodriguez** is an English major with a minor in Philosophy from Norwalk, CT. He graduates this Spring of 2018 and will be attending Uconn's Graduate Program in English to begin his pursuit of a Ph.D.
Maria Saporito from Shelton, CT, graduated in December 2018 with a degree in Art and Design.

Nicole Soto is an English major with minors in Communications and Psychology from Massapequa, NY. She is expected to graduate in the Spring of 2019 and intends to travel and write following graduation.

Andrew Q. Starr is an English major from Norwalk, CT. He plans to graduate in 2019 and go to graduate school.

McKenna Staurovsky is from Milford, CT. She graduates in May 2018 with a degree in Art and Design.

Daniela Sznaj is from Berlin, CT. She’s the Creative Nonfiction and Essay Editor for Vistas. She is an English major and psychology minor in her junior year at Sacred Heart University. She is in the five-year education program at SHU and is working towards her certification as a secondary education teacher. She plans to graduate in the fall of 2018 and obtain her graduate degree in May of 2020. She was inducted into the Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society in April of 2018. She is awarded the President’s Excellence Award and has been on the Dean’s List each semester thus far.

Harris Tran, from Bridgeport, CT, plans to graduate with a degree in Art and Design in May 2020.

Bonnie Wilder, from West Hartford, CT, is a freshman majoring in Exercise Science and eventually Physical Therapy. She plans to graduate with her undergraduate degree in 2021 and her graduate degree in 2023. She is involved in Cross-Country and has received the Cross-Country Rookie of the Week Award. She was awarded the Pioneer Scholarship and has been on the high honor roll. Her plans after college are to be a physical therapist with a side job in photography. She has also been published in the Spectrum for being Rookie of the Week for Cross-Country.

Zoe Wollert is an English major from West Hartford, CT. Her plan is to graduate in 2020.
Editor’s Notes

Mary Awad is a 2016 SHU alumna who was an editor for Vistas all four years of her undergrad. Returning to help on the tech side of things, she worked as the Webmaster for this edition, designing and stylizing the layout and format. She is always happy to come back and help out Sacred Heart.

Joseph LaSpina is from Lindenhurst, NY, and plans to graduate in May 2018. His major is in Media Arts with a concentration in Film and Television Production and he has a minor in Criminal Justice. Joseph has had a memorable four years while at Sacred Heart always trying to be involved and make the most of his time while here. He is a member of the Theatre Arts Program and has had the opportunity to work on some great shows and meet some even greater people through the program. When not at SHU he really enjoys traveling, studying abroad three times in Ireland, Luxembourg, and Italy. After graduation, he is set to travel again, this time to Sydney, Australia, where he has an internship with a video production company. Joseph is very thankful for where he is now and for all the friends he met along the way. He is excited for his future and looks forward to where it takes him.

Sara Robaczynski is to graduate in May 2018. From Stratford, CT, she will be continuing on to Sacred Heart’s Secondary Education Program in the Fall. She is part of Sigma Tau Delta and has been a recipient of an academic scholarship for all four years. When she isn’t with her horse Takoda, she is reading and writing fiction. She is excited to continue on after school and become a high school English teacher.

Maurice Rodriguez is an English major with a minor in Philosophy from Norwalk, CT. He graduates this Spring of 2018 and will be attending Uconn’s Graduate Program in English to begin his pursuit of a Ph.D.
Daniela Sznaj is from Berlin, CT and is the Creative Nonfiction and Essay Editor for Vistas. She is an English major and psychology minor in her junior year at Sacred Heart University. She is in the five-year education program at SHU and is working towards her certification as a secondary education teacher. She plans to graduate in the fall of 2018 and obtain her graduate degree in May of 2020. She was inducted into the Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society in April of 2018. She is awarded the President’s Excellence Award and has been on the Dean’s List each semester thus far.

Sandra Young