

Tenth MUSE

VOLUME XII



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TENTH MUSE | Volume Twelve



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Tenth MUSE

VOLUME XII

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Website

www.tenth-muse.squarespace.com

EDITOR'S LETTER

By Jes Stewart-Wagner

To improve is to change; to be great is to change often. For over a decade the *Tenth Muse* has featured poetry, prose, creative writing and visually artistic content. While the body of our literary magazine has remained consistent, the editorial design is increasingly inspired by contemporary literary publications. The positive influence of graphic designers, with various skill sets, has proven beneficial to creating a publication that reflects its contemporary context. Designers not only put thought into the layout of the literary work itself, but also the way in which it is displayed. The intentional use of color, the selection of paper, and the exceptional detail-oriented mindset of our crew has made possible a publication that will stand the test of time. Literary works and artistic ventures no longer exist as separate entities; they work together to create a cohesive statement of artistic vision. Volume Twelve displays the epitome of the *Tenth Muse's* growth over the years.

As an experienced *Tenth Muse* staff member, I have seen what goes into such a mingling of artistic works. The creation of this publication would not have been possible without the dedication of our exceptional staff members. We have combined the literary prowess of English majors with the creative ingenuity of graphic designers to create a truly one-of-a-kind publication. As a team, we have devoted countless hours to this literary volume, including, but not limited to, managing our social media platforms, planning the flash mob event, and designing the printed publication. The goal for our staff was to create a visionary literary magazine that combines the *Tenth Muse's* rich past with the flourishing future that lies ahead. Like Clarke, we aim "to remain progressive with the times in which we live."

We dove into the Clarke archives to find imagery from Clarke's revolutionary beginnings. We have included Clarke's first literary publication, *The Labarum*, through the repetition of imagery. In so doing, we have acknowledged the importance of our past, but also have expressed the drive to move forward. Time moves forward, swiftly; the *Tenth Muse* moves along with it. Endless possibilities and a buzz of excitement inform every page of this volume. Change is necessary, advancement is prevalent, and innovation IS the Tenth Muse.

The following pages have each been touched by the hands of students, both past and present. But now, most importantly, these pages are in the hands of you, the reader. We invite you to join us on this literary venture and to experience each and every page just as we did.

POETRY



Sketch of Estelle, Lily Nesta, Graphite on Paper

CATCH ME ON THE LIVELY SIDE

Art & Poem By Bree Naylea

In a cozy withered tree house lived a small dead girl—
she was so lonely but loved to explore.

Like any other day, came along her venturous friends
and they set out to travel to yet another dead end.

Their favorite place to go was high up above
tall lifeless mountains with nothing to love.

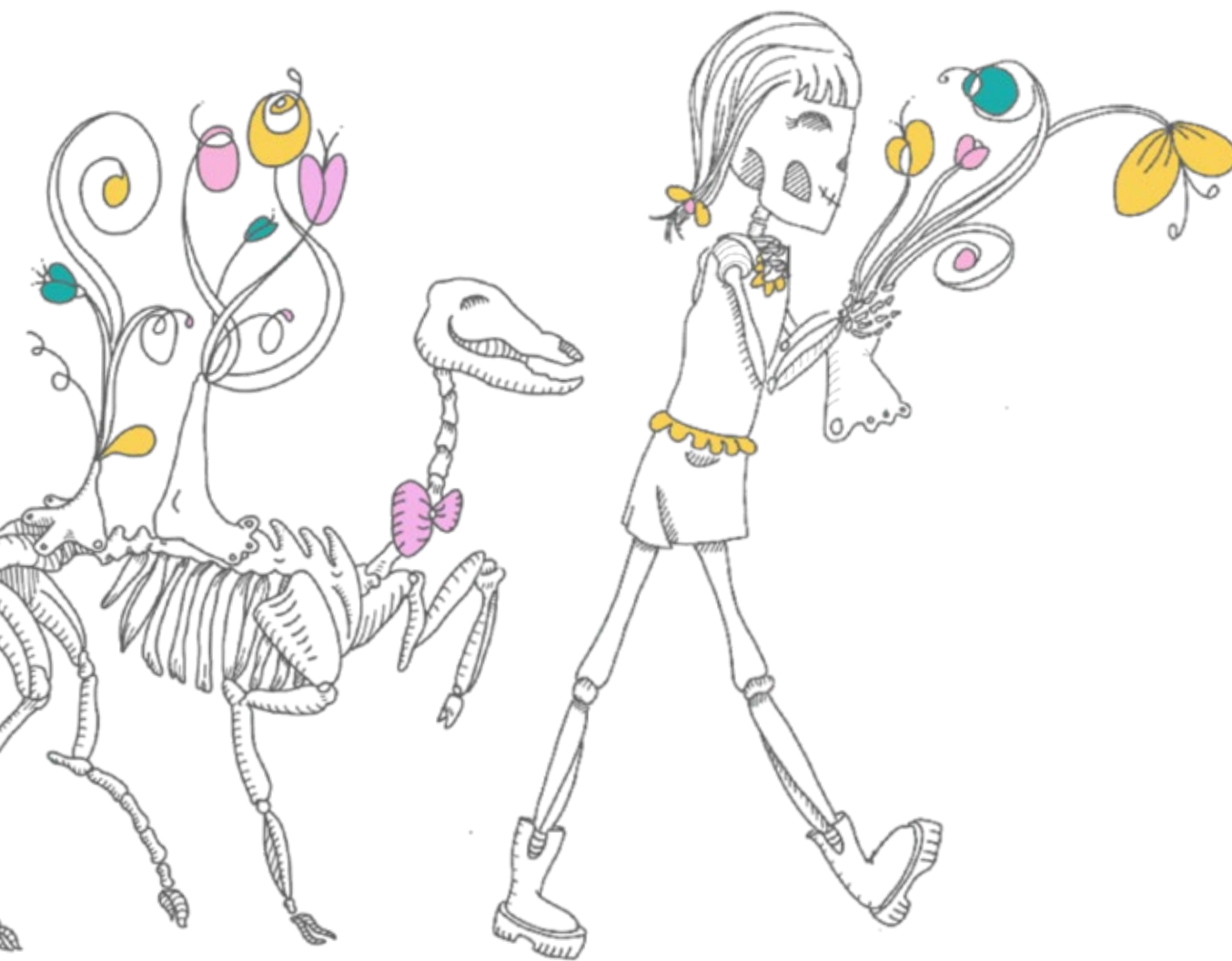
Yet today was much different, for they found something
novel, bright colored flowers all tucked in the gravel.

But once they tried plucking, quick did they die—
so prompt did they plan to take home and watch thrive.

They dug and they dug and they found it had roots,
some looked like hands and some looked like foots.

All smiles grew bigger once they neared home base—
they planted the foot roots and hand roots all over the place.

Thousands of flowers came into sight
and grateful they were for a brand-new life.



ISLAND BOY

By Marcos Hernandez

I was five when I fell from my bike
 Scraped my knee--the skin peeled back
 Like a detached avocado from the meat
 My mother brought me to her
 Cured me, encased me, carrying with her the scent of strawberries

A few years later, I was a child of water
 I sink under the waves while I surf
 My feet on the ground, the sand scraped my toes
 It's the same sand that runs through my veins
 The sun toasts the curve of my cheek
 And between blinking lashes I see the green of the mountains
 The years will be quick and swift
 And the memory of the sand will be a shadow
 between my toes

LATIN BOY

By Marcos Hernandez

Adulthood came,
 A rope around my waist yanked me to the United States
 Land of gringos
 They cannot understand my words
 Consonants twist around my teeth
 In a room full of jokes, they go over me like waves
 Bird of paradise in a room full of pigeons
 A shift in my wings and they will be able to see
 The smell of strawberries fades
 I cannot find in the mountains of snow
 And the snow is nothing like sand
 It doesn't leave shadows, it only melts

WHITE BOY

By Marcos Hernandez

It's January
 I haven't seen the sun in twenty days
 Once golden cheeks are now pale and harsh
 The curve of my words has flattened
 Like the flatness of Iowa
 Colorful feathers have slowly dropped
 They no longer stare
 Soon all that will be left is the scar on my knee
 Shadows fade between my toes
 And the smell of corn and manure rips away my mother's scent

SEVEN CHICKEN LEGS

By Jes Wagner

Seven chicken legs stood by the lake
with Bugeyes, the grasshopper.
The bold ridges in the distance
contrasted the Hawkeye sandbar.
Tinker-bell approached,
sporting webbed veins
that pool peanut crème.
Separated from her elfin shoes,
crowned the clown jester as fat and jolly.
A mixture of bleeding and poofy pants
shown outwards.

J. ALFRED PRUFROCK SCUTTLES ACROSS THE FLOORS OF SILENT SEAS

By Jan E Bristol

I saw you again tonight
in the local bistro
a new girl on your arm,
stroking your wrist.
“We grow old, we grow old,
We shall wear the bottoms of our trousers rolled.”

The music doesn't change much,
and the girl looks a lot
like the last one, with a little more meat on her bones,
a good sign, I think.
She's too young for you, of course,
but it's not as if
it's a long conversation
with an old friend.
It's just a distraction.

In the bistro, people come and go,
No one speaks of Michelangelo.

The earth turns and the coal train
moans around the south end of the lake.
I'm glad I saw you tonight, my friend.
There's a continuity that should be maintained
by those of us who appreciate the river
and the rhythm of inland tides.

(Honoring T.S. Eliot and J. Alfred Prufrock)

MOMENTO MORI

By Jan E Bristol



Elijah Fed by Ravens, Jes Wagner, Digital Collage

it doesn't take much to remind me
that all is dross and my coffee
will cool into a weak shadow
of its former self

while I, in my big, soft armchair
decay from the inside out even as I
pen these few lines and consider
the mortality of every living thing:

my loyal black dog, and yes,
eventually that old fat bastard cat,
although I suspect he may have found
the key to eternal life

the exuberance of the crocus along
the sidewalk will fade and blossoms drop
onto the fickle ground, which
will someday cradle us each and all

as the coffee cools and the crocus
shyly green one more sunrise, I believe

I will survive this day in wonder and gratitude
and that the inexorable rhythms of
an indifferent world will spare me:
another day, another sunrise,
another prayer.

DRIFTLESS

By Jan E Bristol

I remember when
you wove beauty from the sky
in purple hues and bands of green
and gold,

a woman of passion and fire
who painted the Sangres, who drank
deeply from mountain streams

I long to see you take up
your brushes and your loom once again,
old friend

The West has become a faded memory
behind your eyes.
Banked fires hold the heat
of youth,
of memory and desire...

You live now among green hills
and fields unbroken by time

Driftless
in a cocoon of memory
mute, with tales untold



Jes Wagner, Digital Collage

Blood clots stampeded my lungs. Emerging from the depths of a lake, drowning inside, scissoring for my life, I was resuscitated from a black void of charred logs and the scent of dead ashes on an island of cattails and burs in the ER. The tart lemonade in my veins stabilized and flowed like my grandma's nourishing bean soup. Clots busted like a piggy bank full of change. I emitted a deep breath of joy; euphoria surged through my hummingbird mind.

Like Lazarus, I returned from an unconscious tomb, a narrow entrance thrown ajar by the grip of love. I glimpsed my lover hovering by my side. The chambers of my heart contracted and I believed the shed blood of Jesus saved me, resurrecting my life. His name on my chapped lips like a dog-eared hymn dug out of a piano bench. Elated I was spared, not done with the bread of twilight talk and margarine of pulses.

CLOTTING

By Rob Luke After my near-death experience, an inferior vena cava filter, released in a vein in my groin, resided permanently in my ramshackle body as a squatting regulator, and my communion wafers became blood thinner tablets, unleavened dependence. I could feel my blood course through me like a slithering Genesis ophidian, my tall frame as susceptible as origin.

Sloth blinded my eyes and bound my lanky limbs. I thumped the snooze button on a chattering alarm clock. I stowed my thankfulness on an out-of-reach mantle. Unable to keep time, I wasted time like an awkward self-indulgent waltz. Our love out of the gauze of a death shroud, yet merely syndicated, filled with an old, redundant, and canned laugh track grown wearisome.

Then, I was awakened by my lover's empathy, which produced new episodes of talking, laughing, eating, and drinking. Our rafts by the lake secured, ready for celebrations of leisure. Unafraid of wet hair, we doused ourselves, like impassioned Baptists, for renewal. A half-full windsock billowed sweet summer gusts, a tapestry of our delights. Having been nicked of the loneliness by Wordsworth's daffodils, our blood wounds mingled our shared transfusion. As dandelions, the towheaded lilies of the field, verified the distant wonders of our childhoods.

Latching our dragonfly maneuvers, she holds my hand like a cinched Windsor knot, dressed up for our love to keep my thinned blood warm. I toast the iron in our blood, and dependable labor within veins, with sparkling flavored water on New Year's Eve of our revitalized reconciliation. Headed en route to the grave of my final resting place, when my blood will cease, and in the interim of my refurbished second life, I will not take her for granted. After travels in the desert under a blood sun, everything tastes like manna, the sustenance of grace. After yawning off our coordinates, my lover is the epiphany of God's mercy of faith and hope, my blood oath.

CLOTTING

HEADSTORM

By Ariane Campbell

Rushing red thoughts
blur the crowded sidewalk,
worry of lurking futures
polluting heads
like acid rain against
clear water,
blackening brains with
gnashing stings
anxiety medication
cannot cure,
so the sidewalk will remain
blurred and the rushing red
will keep humming until
the sidewalk in their brains ends.



Two cockroaches wait belly up
for their autopsies
so they can finally rest and
not have to endure
Metallica and Aerosmith.

Behind the socks whose pair
are around here somewhere
lies the stain of the
monster that used to
torment.

His wolfish shadow
curves into the wall,
dead Skittles like
buttons running down
his
red velvet petticoat.

Sandman's grains
could not shield
the growl
that reverberated across
childhood.

The stain went away with time,
though the monster's shape
haunts like the residue of a taped
outline crime scene.

He's laid in this tomb for years.
Someone should really clean up those Skittles.

UNDER THE BED
By Ariane Campbell

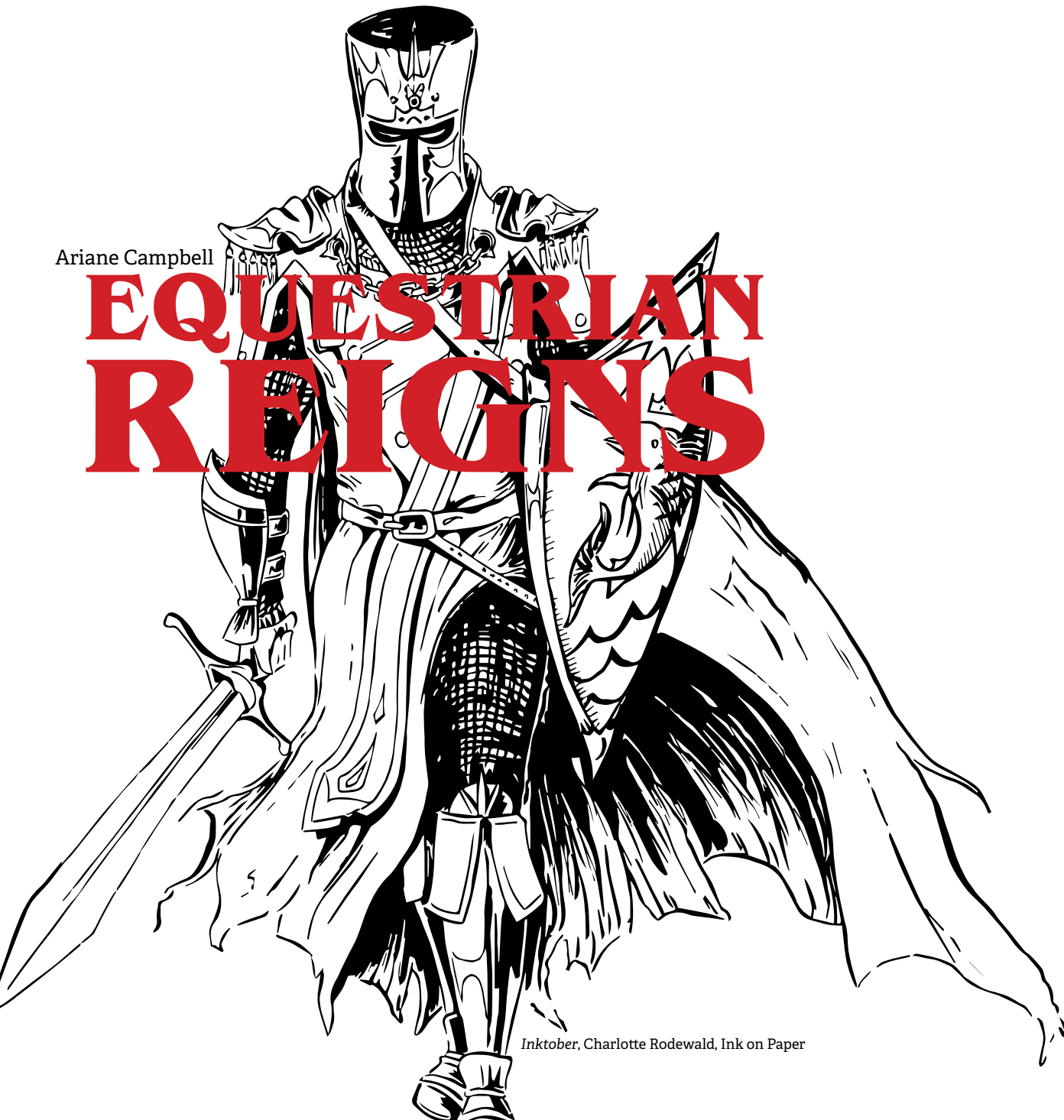
UNDER THE BED



Mushroom People, Lily Nesta, Painting

Ariane Campbell

EQUESTRIAN REIGNS



Inktober, Charlotte Rodewald, Ink on Paper

Old legs
lean into a rhythmic run
over wispy grass that sways
like an audience in worship.
Stratus clouds cast imperfectly
pointed fingers that shadow
the Appaloosa mare's elegant charge.

Black mane and tail
streaked with brown highlights
billow against Irish countryside air.
Mottled skin hides underneath
a freshly shampooed
gray coat.

Vertical stripes painted up her hooves
can hardly be discerned through
the momentum.

Sharp exhales puff with every other stride,
her aging lungs replenished by the breaths of
mares that led before her.

By Holly Beauchamp

ablaze

your rebellion starts with

Decapitalization.

turn off the autocorrect in religion class

and spell god in a matter where you don't care.

you don't know Him here.

the images of faux and real have already crossed

and you are left suffocating in falsehoods

based on 'His' rules.

it didn't matter that you went to indiana.

your triduum didn't heal your soul

as tears seeped into new cracks

(having filled up every crevice)

every time you swallowed down

your truth.

bury your prayers

as you attend His funeral.

you won't be laid to rest any time soon.

there is comfort in knowing

your sins are no longer safe with god.



Every quarter mile a sign—
painted star of gold or blue or green
on shiny white cardboard

and so I pedal on

guided by one point of each star
outstretching the others
left or right or straight up
but never down

and so I pedal on

watching glitter gather headlights
sharpen star points, direct travelers
two miles ahead
fifteen hundred feet
just two more blocks!

and so I pedal on

to a corner of lights—bolder gold, blue, green—
trees strewn with electricity as if children had strung them
the way they toss tennis balls blindly over rooftops

and so I pedal on

to a final tri-colored, triple-size star
pointing to a parking lot
and a church
with wide-open doors and shadowy figures

and so I pedal up

but removing their caps and jackets, straightening ties
disappearing into a great hall I cannot see
they leave me at the sidewalk
great doors hissing slowly to a close

and so I read the signs:

The Living Nativity, All December Long
Fridays and Saturdays, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.
A New Jesus Every Hour

and so I pedal in.

Christmas Criterion

By Thom Chesney



I
do
not
know
how a
caring
man can
stand to
look away
as his own
sisters are
pushed quick
into a corner
like this one.

Watching

By Thom Chesney



Vast Beauty, Kali Milder, Photography

"AT A MEETING"

By Gary Arms

I am at a meeting
And appear to be taking notes.

In fact, I am remembering that time
We wrestled on Norm and Carolyn's floor.

Were they awake? Listening?
There were children in the house too.

We kept as quiet as possible
But there are limits.

The chairman of my department
Asks me for a comment.
"I agree," I say solemnly.

You whispered intriguing advice into my ear
As we rolled about the floor.

The carpet was neither soft nor hard.
In any case, who thinks of the carpet
At such a time?

It smelled of graham cracker crumbs.
How important that I recall that scent
After all these years.

You smelled of the ocean. And dry grass,
The variety that grows out of sand.

Your hair was so long it tangled all around us
And at times threatened
To bind us together forever.



PROSE

with
MUSE



NOMBRE HOMBRE

By Colin Muenster

About the Author

Colin is currently Enterprise Architect at Clarke University, which sounds fancy and provides him with hours of time to play with gadgets and computers. He is operated by a committee of three daughters and a beautiful wife. He graduated from Clarke in 2008 with a degree in theatre and there is not a single aspect of his life that does not benefit from that fact.

“So, is Josephine your step-daughter?”

It’s not as if I don’t expect this question from time to time, but I guess I expected it at a much higher rate than what has taken place since becoming the father of three daughters. It’s not as if the nurse was cross-examining me, waiting on bated breath until she knew the answer. A small voice inside me, that nasty little character who is not welcome in polite society, says something to the effect of, “Why don’t you mind your own fucking business!” but I wisely decide to keep that outburst to myself. I’m not even that upset, if I am being honest, I just like to daydream what would happen if I said something like that to somebody someday. However, as I’ve already suggested, I am nothing if not polite.

So.

I smile that stupid smile I put on whenever somebody asks or says something with perfectly innocent yet misguided intentions.

“Ha! No, she’s all mine.”

There is a moment of awkward laughter on my end, and the nurse behind the clean, yet eternally dirty counter takes a moment to consider what this actually means. I continue to smile as I watch the wheels turn slowly in her head until-

“But...you two are married, right?”

“Yup,” says cheery ol’ me, desperately trying to soften the blow of the inevitable conclusion this woman must soon come to. She, of course, will

be frightfully embarrassed by the whole situation and will beg my forgiveness for making such assumptions. I know this feeling. I hate this feeling.

The wheels turn and I give a little nudge.

“Yeah, she kept her maiden name,” I say, as if Elizabeth’s name was ever mine for the changing. A realization as the wheels come to rest and the lights turns on.

“So, she took her mother’s last name?”

“Yep,” I reply, as casually as I can, making every effort to show I am not bothered by this intensely personal and inappropriate line of questioning. I’d hate for her to feel bad

about it after all. We live in a society after all. Niceties must be observed and followed. Cordial order must be maintained. Feelings spared.

I'm losing the battle; I can sense it. Uncomfortable laughter on both ends signals the kind of fight or flight response we polite members of the citizenry must employ in times such as these. I look through my ready-fire tension-breaking responses, but I am unable to find anything to satisfactorily end the conversation with both parties maintaining their dignity. The florescent lights only sold to businesses with waiting rooms emit a soft buzz while the office itself is already ensconced in the spirit-breaking pale drabness one can only find small town medical offices. Wainscoting, matted carpet, layers upon layers of tired magazines carefully arranged on the worn wooden coffee table at the surrounded by too-comfortable-for-chiropractor's-office padded chairs. This was a place a body was meant to do, to sit and agree, but not to think. Pop. Crack. Thank you. Goodbye.

I catch hold of something in my mental rolodex and offer it as the out we are desperately looking for: "Yeah, I'm the youngest of seven, so, you know, I'm pretty easy going."

I am unbelievably satisfied with this answer, something I will not, in retrospect, be very proud of. What I am really suggesting, if I would have taken the time to fully consider what I was saying, is that if I really wanted it, my wife and children would have my last name. It's only because I am so unbelievably lazy from years of being the coddled weakling at the tail end of my family that I just decided it was easier to let my wife win this one. I mean, obviously, right? There were articles to read on Cracked or things to look at on Amazon that I couldn't afford. Who could be bothered with such matters? What kind of self-respecting man just willingly gives up passing on his family name, not only to their wives, but to their children as well unless he was a born-and-raised weakling? A man with no self-worth or pride or anything resembling the spine he is supposedly seeking to be fixed in this very office. This is clearly the case with this pathetic waste of oxygen and testosterone, what little there was to be found.

She contemplates this excuse, seems satisfied with its resulting unspoken conclusions, and laughs, then just as quickly pauses to think. A new question has appeared to cruelly extend the conversation.

"You know...why not! I mean, if she can take your name, why can't she take your wife's?"

She is awakened, even refreshed by this new-found bit of worldly knowledge and I am again put at ease. This is good, I think, as I schedule a follow-up appointment for a few days later. I clumsily sign the receipt, as I am preoccupied by the vision of this

woman sharing the story of her strange encounter at the office with a few friends as they are out for a drink, or perhaps some relatives at the next family function or gathering. I imagine the phrase, "It takes all kinds!" being thrown into the conversation as they share in the delightful oddity of the life that I am apparently living on a day-to-day basis. What a card!

This wasn't the such encounter, but I guess I also expected a little more confusion. That doesn't mean real confusion and non-coherence hasn't occurred in some of the least expected places. A year prior to this particular encounter, I was working with group of students on a play we were producing at the school where I was employed as theatre director. One of these students who I had assumed was more, I don't know, hip, I guess, was left bewildered by the whole premise of my wife keeping her last name after we were married. We were expecting Olivia at the time, and I had just casually mentioned that she would most likely take her mother's last name. My student was quite taken aback by that fact, but oddly even more confused as to why my wife did not change her name.

"But...you're the man?" she managed to get out despite her confusion.

I assured her that, yes, I was indeed a man, at least the last time I evaluated my gender and biological identity. She repeated the question, still not quite comprehending what was happening in this world that she, indeed ALL teenagers, so perfectly understood.

"You're the man though. Why doesn't she have your last time?"

There it was! My opening! My universal right as a teacher to turn any inconsiderate or misinformed student opinion or comment into a teaching moment! I was ready; I had the exact response to this question ready to go ever since my wedding day when the world found out Elizabeth would continue to be an Enzler and not take my last name as hers. To say I had been eagerly awaiting to put someone in their place with this perfect retort would have been an understatement. I wasn't exactly expecting it to be directed at a seemingly cool and "woke" teenager, but it was ready all the same.

"Well, why didn't I take her last name?"

There it was, delivered in all its perfect glory, smiting the wicked and putting the kibosh on the toxic man-centered hierarchy at the root of all our nation's ills. Righting the wrongs of generations of male oppression and rule. Score one for the feminists because I had -

"Whatever," she muttered as she swiped the screen on her iPhone and moved on to what I can only assume were far more pressing matters.

I imagine that my future interactions with my teenage daughters will not be too far removed from this one, if not regarding why their last name is what it is, then at least to virtually everything else we attempt to have a sincere discussion about. In any case, I do often wonder what they will think of me when they start to become preoccupied with things not involving princess slippers, unicorns, and Princess Elsa. It was often my impression during my formative years that women who kept their maiden names were the brassy in-your-face type. Those who thrust off the shackles societal norms, and bravely faced the criticism of their peers as they forged a new age of women's rights and leadership. It was my impression that these were women to be revered, if perhaps a little frightened of, and served as role models for the women of the future. It was a revolutionary spirit a young boy could get behind, yet when it came to the children it was a different matter. They would take dad's name. Obviously. Let's not get silly here folks! Otherwise, you are just mom's boyfriend Darrel who comes over on Saturday nights and looks creepily at teenage girls from his rusting Camero, and who has a court case on Monday regarding some bounced alimony checks.

So.

I do not take any issue or even stop to think about the multitude of women in my life, both now and then, who decided to take their husband's last names. It is a complete non-issue for me. Likewise, I've grown so accustomed to the incredibly common-place nature of maiden-named women that it doesn't even register on my radar as anything that particularly radical.

And yet.

I still just assume that the married men I meet share the same last name with their wife and any children they happen to have together. It's still such a given in our society, and I am constantly thrown off balance when this has proven time and again to not be the case. I assume, like my student and nurse, that this must be a step-dad situation and instantly start to work out the dramatic familial history in my head. Who had the affair? Did she leave him, or did he leave her? Do they share custody? Is the biological father even alive? If so, good for her for getting herself back out there!

This is a particularly idiotic line of thought, considering my own life choices, which is not even taking into account the idea that any of this is a) none of my business, and b) who the hell cares if he is the step-dad? That should put him on a much higher level of esteem, but that's not how we are meant to think.

But then.

Olivia smiles that smile to tell me, yes, I know you said to not put my feet on the table while I am eating, but I am doing it anyway just to see how angry I can make you before I fear for my safety. Her mouth is stained with the viscera of her annihilated blueberries, parts of which somehow finding their way to her left ear and forehead. As she slowly, ever so goddam slowly, lowers her foot to non-eating heights she quickly points her indigo-colored index finger at me and then at her mother and shouts, "You're daddy Muenster and you're mommy Enzler!" She bursts into maniacal fit of painfully cute giggling, stopping abruptly to concentrate on whether or not she will poop her pants right now at the dinner table, or later, while she sleeps.

I wonder if our only trouble with accepting lives different from our own stems from the over-proselytizing trappings of parenthood. People are, given to their own inner-workings and machinations, able to come to the most logical conclusions. Being a man doomed (blessed? bloomed?) to have all biologically female offspring, I'm not exactly certain what kind of conversation is warranted to discuss why daddy has a different name than the rest of the family, but I'm certain that it involves no greater fanfare than a simple explanation, a kiss on the cheek, and a "Nightnight!" to cap things off.

Or, like my new nurse friend says, "Well, why not!"



Calla Lily Ladies, Lily NESTA, Painting



STRING of THOUGHT

THE BURDEN OF BEING CAREFUL

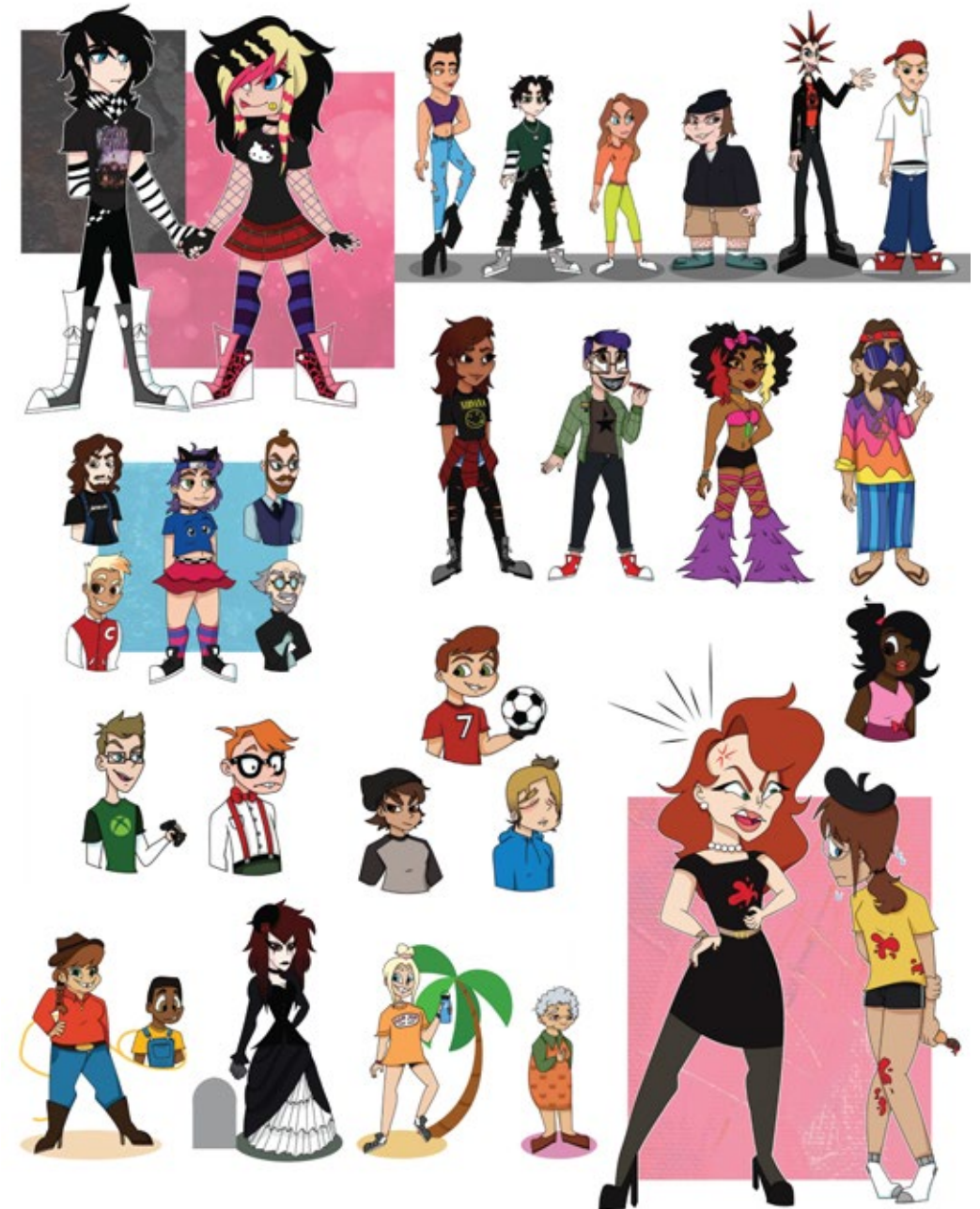
Prose & Art By Jes Wagner

Every day when I walk to my car, I have to worry.

Worry about what could happen. Worry about who could be following me. In fear of an unannounced threat. Tonight, I hear footsteps behind me as I walk to my car. I instantly assume the worst and begin to prepare myself. In my mind, I visualize what could happen next, preparing myself for the seemingly inevitable. Coming up behind me, arms around my neck, dragging me away towards the nearby bushes where seclusion becomes available. As I struggle, I feel a sharp pain in my ribcage, “Stop fighting or you’re DEAD!” I go limp from fear. The pain dissipates. As his hand clenches my throat, an arms length of space comes between us, giving me a glimpse of my attacker. The lamppost illuminates his guise, light glinting off his knife. His face is obscured with a mask and the overflow of tears pouring out of my eyes blur my vision. I snap back to reality, realizing I need to get to my car as quickly as possible. I grab a hold of my keys for protection, fumbling them in between each finger, I begin walking faster to my car. In a frenzy, I trip over the curb, dropping my keys. Panic rushes over me, I instantly reach down and pluck my keys from the cold ground. I barely make it to my car door, grappling with the idea that this might be the last item I will ever hold. I struggle to find and insert the proper key. Hastily, I open the door and jump inside. Instantaneously the door becomes locked, almost as if my locking the door is a subconscious response rather than an intentional act. As my anxiety begins to subside, I look over to my right only to see a woman walk past with her dog. This time wasn’t a threat, but what about the next one?



Judgement, Jesser Hernandez, Painting



Personality Stereotypes, Kat Jones, Digital Illustrations

About the Author

Jackie Moss, from Richmond, Virginia, is a senior at Clarke University (Dubuque, Iowa) working toward her Bachelor of Arts degree in Music with a concentration in vocal performance. She is the 2019 recipient of the Sr. Ann Siegrist Vocal Performance Award for her academic success and efforts as a student worker and music librarian within the music department. Jackie also assists students in writing, sociology, and music in the Margaret Mann Academic Resource Center (MARC) on campus. She serves as a cantor for Clarke University's campus Mass, as well as the Cathedral of St. Raphael under the direction of Mr. James Mendralla. Jackie studied voice with Prof. CJ Greer, Dr. Kylie Gougler, and most recently Dr. Joshua Glasner. She also studied with Dr. Sharon Jensen for piano and Prof. Johnathan Garde for percussion. Jackie is a regular member of Clarke's Collegiate Singers and Cantabile (Treble Ensemble), and Wind Ensemble as a percussionist. Under the guidance of Network Director Dr. Emily Goodmann, Jackie worked as an intern for the Library of Congress' Radio Preservation Task Force (RPTF). After graduation, she plans to pursue a graduate degree in Library and Information Science before returning to Richmond and serving as a public librarian.

MILEY CYRUS

A FUCKING FEMINIST WOMAN

By Jackie Moss

Miley Cyrus is a controversial figure. She is most known for playing the title role in Disney Channel's *Hannah Montana*, twerking at the 2013 VMAs, and the song "Wrecking Ball." Over a decade later, Cyrus is known as a queer activist, a feminist, and a sex-positive advocate. Having grown up in the public eye, Cyrus has often found herself the subject of ridicule and scrutiny. As it relates to her love life or gender expression, Cyrus' sexuality and sexual expression have been parts of discussions of today's pop stars. However, Cyrus is not alone in this regard, as female sexuality has become part of mainstream conversations of feminism and what it means to be a woman. Exploring themes of female sexuality, reproductive rights, gender expression, and body image, Cyrus found inspiration to write and create a music video for her song "Mother's Daughter."

Since her breakaway from Disney, critics of Cyrus have said that she is overly sexual and perverted. One commenter wrote in response to the "Mother's Daughter" music video, "Miley u r the worst inspiration to those children's [sic] out there" (Nifras). Another commenter challenged her feminist efforts saying, "I'm not understanding all the women's rights, wanting respect... and then wearing this?" (Nifras). These comments imply there is a right kind of role model and feminist, painting Cyrus as the wrong kind of both. She is not conservative in her dress or speech, nor does she censor herself for different audiences. Instead, Cyrus embodies individuality and exposes her body, making it harder to ignore it.

Cyrus' critics are not limited to anonymous commenters online, however, as some of them are fellow female musicians. Anita Brady details the criticism and harassment Cyrus received from singer Sinéad O'Connor in response to Cyrus' "Wrecking Ball"

music video, which was inspired by O'Connor's "Nothing Compares 2 U" music video. O'Connor, referring to Cyrus, says, "real empowerment of yourself as a woman would be to in future refuse to exploit your body or your sexuality in order for men to make money from you" (Brady 430). Cyrus and O'Connor would engage in a Twitter feud that almost ended in legal action, with Cyrus making statements alluding to O'Connor's irrelevance. O'Connor's responses were primarily referential of Cyrus' body, saying, "if you're not too busy getting your tits out to read" and demanding Cyrus to "take five minutes between g-string fuckin' changes to publicly apologize and remove [her] abusive tweets" (Brady 430).

Despite the backlash, Cyrus has said of her own sexual expression and feminist views that "[she feels] like [she's] one of the biggest feminists in the world because I tell women to not be scared of anything" (Brady 431). While some like Sinéad O'Connor have criticized Miley Cyrus for being overtly sexual in her videos and live performances, writer Karolina Wilde states, "being sexual is not only about riding and sucking dick or having sex with tons of different partners—but it's also about being sexually turned on by yourself." Wilde speaks of her inspiration for Cyrus as Cyrus says, "I enjoy sexuality

more than sex...Lingerie is for me...I want to look down and see me in my thing that makes me feel hot" (qtd. in Call Her Daddy). Wilde relates her sexual awakening to Cyrus' sexuality as self-empowerment by asking the reader if they "look in the mirror and think: 'Damn, this bitch is hot. I want to rail her,'" and challenging them to "learn to

"the woman's body—the right to own your own body and make it free from the male gaze, in any way shape and form"

truly love yourself and say: 'Damn, I would fuck that bitch anytime.'" Wilde argues that Cyrus' presented sexuality is not a stunt nor a performance but an exercise in self-expression and self-love.

This self-expression that Cyrus speaks of is most apparent in her music video for "Mother's Daughter." Directed by Alexandre Moors, the "Mother's Daughter" music video visualizes female liberation and passion. Moors, who has directed "videos for Kendrick Lamar, Jennifer Lopez, Schoolboy Q and Miguel, as well as the Jennifer Aniston-Alden Ehrenreich war drama 'The Yellow Birds'" (Lee). Cyrus and Moors' intention behind the video was "the woman's body—the right to own your own body and make it free from the male gaze, in any way shape and form" (Lee). They achieved this by using bold visuals, controversial images, and vibrant colors, especially red. Some of the main themes of the music video are the definition of womanhood, intersectionality, sexual expression, and bodily autonomy. Freedom from the male gaze was almost fully realized by not including any cisgender male individuals in front of the camera; however, a male presence was still felt in Moors' direction on set.

In the lyrics, Cyrus references terms used to disparage women—in the first verse, it is "freaks," and in the refrain, it is "nasty" and "evil." However, in the bridge, she controls the narrative, singing that women "got the power." Additionally, throughout the video, text flashes across the screen in red, black, and white reminiscent of "the slogan-centric methods of feminist groups like Femen, Riot Grrrl and Guerrilla Girls, 'women who fight for their freedom but put their physical body in harm's way to achieve the goal'" (Lee). These visual components reinforce the lyrical content redefining women as "F*** BEAUTIFUL," "FEMINIST AF," and written on someone's body "A RIOT."



Another World, Burgundy Barklow, Photo

There are more than just textual definitions of womanhood as described by Ashley Lee in her review of Cyrus' video. Listing the cast of people included in the music video and their significance, Lee explains, "the video has appearances by [people] of all shapes and sizes, such as model Aaron Philip, dancer Amazon Ashley, performer Angelina Duplisea, model Casil McArthur, skateboarder [Leo] Baker, activist Mari Copeny, singer Melanie Sierra, dancer Paige Fralix, dancer Tydryn Scott and model Vendela, as well as Cyrus' own mother, Tish." This diverse cast includes non-binary and transgender folks, disabled folks, people of varying body types, races, and ages. Rather than showing them overcoming some kind of adversity or mistreatment, the cast is depicted in an empowering manner. They are well lit and stylized to show their strength and individuality as most of them fill a frame on their own.

The empowerment represented in the physicality of the cast members is reinforced by overlaying text related to sexuality and sexual expression throughout the video. "VIRGINITY IS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT," "SIN IS IN YOUR EYES," and "L'HÉROÏSME DE LA CHAIR" are flashed on the screen, while written on another body is the statement "MY BODY MY RULES." "VIRGINITY IS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT" relates most to the stigmatization of sex and the pressures to have sex by a specific time in life. Virginity is also used as a sign of purity and completeness as if someone who is not a virgin has "lost" something and is tainted for the rest of their lives because of something as natural as sex. "L'HÉROÏSME DE LA CHAIR" (translated directly as "The Heroism of the Flesh") and "SIN IS IN YOUR EYES" challenge those that view Cyrus' sexual expression and sex-positivity as sins. "The Heroism of the Flesh" directly contrasts the phrase "the sins of the flesh," which is often used to describe sexual debauchery, and "SIN IS IN YOUR EYES" (meaning sin is in the eyes of the beholder, not the action itself) eliminate the power that naysayers may have over women's sexual activity. The sexual freedom exemplified in the "Mother's Daughter" music video is described by Karolina Wilde. She states, "while it's true that being a sexual person includes being sexually active and well versed in the language of love--it's not the full picture...While sex is all about equal effort to please your partner and yourself, your sexuality is all about you." Cyrus emphasizes this self-love in her lyrics as she repeats "back up boy" in the refrain as if to say, "this is for me. I do not need you," or it is not "about riding and sucking dick or having sex with tons of different partners—but it's also about being sexually turned on by yourself" (Wilde).

Female individuality and autonomy are central in "Mother's Daughter" as more messages and signs appear in the music video. The texts "NOT AN OBJECT" and

"I AM FREE" are paired with the refrain's lyrics, "don't fuck with my freedom." Symbolic of women of "power," Cyrus is seen in a position reminiscent of Joan of Arc, and another cast member is shown breastfeeding as Madonna and Child, both of which are juxtapositions of religious iconography and nudity and sexual expression. Other semiotic elements in the music video include Cyrus' red latex suit referencing Britney Spears' red latex bodysuit in her music video for "Oops!...I Did it Again." Moreover, red is vibrant and in the viewer's face throughout the video. Red is often used to portray strength, aggression, or sex. By wearing a bodysuit as if it were her skin, Cyrus is physically embodying the attributes of the color and becoming strength personified.

Moors and Cyrus did not choose these images of strong women by chance. Their goal was to respond to what was then a very controversial anti-abortion bill in Georgia: "[Moors] and Cyrus finalized the concept as the anti-abortion 'heartbeat' bill gained traction across the country" (Lee). Additionally, the United States Women's National Team (USWNT) had demanded equal pay after winning "their fourth Women's World Cup title, while the men lost in the final of a regional tournament" (Goldman). These issues are still relevant today two years later but in contrasting ways. The U.S. Soccer Federation announced that they would offer the same contracts to both the men's and women's teams starting at the beginning of the new season in October. However, work remains for female soccer players as FIFA offers \$400 million in prize money for male athletes but only \$60 million for the Women's World Cup (Diaz).

Regarding how Georgia's heartbeat bill of 2019 relates to the present context, recent abortion bills in Texas and Florida can be scrutinized. Texas recently passed a law banning abortions after the sixth week of pregnancy, even in cases of rape and incest, and Florida is working on a similar bill as well. This cycle of progress and setbacks mirrors Cyrus' music video as people with text reading "RIOT GIRL," "EVERY WOMAN IS A RIOT," and "I AM FREE" are seen being dragged away from the focus of the camera, as if protesting while being held back by looming forces.

Throughout being held back, Cyrus sings, "don't fuck with my freedom," and challenges those who stand in her way. She confidently shares her sexual expression and encourages other women to feel empowered to do the same regardless of their appearance. By saying she is her mother's daughter, Cyrus not only exemplifies the connection she has to her mother but her shared connection with all women. This connection represents unity and gives responsibility to future parents to raise their children in a way that celebrates their entire personhood through equality and freedom of expression.

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Warrior, Jesser Hernandez, Oil Painting



I Don't See Anything That Isn't Beautiful: The Veils, Louise Kames, Screenprint on Silk Organza



I Don't See Anything That Isn't Beautiful, Louise Kames, Toner Transfer on Paper



I Don't See Anything That Isn't Beautiful, Louise Kames, Charcoal and Pastel on Paper

About the Author

Katherine Fischer, MFA, is an award-winning author (*Dreaming the Mississippi* and *That's Our Story and We're Sticking To It!*). A featured columnist in newspapers, her work also appears in magazines like *The Cream City Review*, *the Iowa Review*, and *Creative Nonfiction* as well as on NPR. Past chair of the Language and Literature Department, Katie graduated from Clarke College and Goddard University.

COLLECTOR

By Katherine Fischer

I've been a collector all my life. No, not stamps, duck decoys, comic books, Elvis whiskey decanters, or even swizzle sticks. My younger brother Charlie accumulated 563 swizzle sticks by the time he was eight. Some came from our dad's J&B Scotch-on-the rocks-with-a-twist but mostly Charlie would pilfer them from empty Bloody Mary and Vodka Tonic glasses at restaurant dinners with my parents' friends. Summer barbecues at the country club provided his best prize pigs: brightly festooned margarita swizzles.

Charlie was fond of parading the sticks out in front of the pastor who came to our house for tuna fish casserole on Fridays. Little brother lined up the one with the captain's wheel from the marina alongside the belly-dancing one from the Tiki Lounge and so on all the way down to the last—a palm tree stick with a monkey climbing up its bark. I'm sure when Father Mackin returned to the rectory those nights after dinner he wondered just what was to be done about those Fischers? So many swizzle sticks and their youngest child only eight. Certainly, Father Mackin prayed for us—and returned the next Friday with visions of redemption dancing in his head. Little did he know we prayed the rosary every night in front of the sad Sacred Heart of Jesus painting that seemed to drop blood down over the piano. If that didn't work, nothing would.

I also don't collect coins, autographs, matchbook covers, guns, or horses. My ex-sister-in-law collected horses. She even had a ranch. She got up to six of them.

That's a lot of oats.

Although I own five bushel baskets of yarn, I wouldn't say I collect them. I knit the skeins up and give away hats, sweaters, scarves, and socks. It's something like Jesus collecting the loaves and fishes and multiplying them. When his followers gathered up the leftovers, there were twelve basketfuls for food the next day. I'd call that stockpiling, not collecting. Then again, I don't work miracles. At least not most of the time.

Psychologists claim that our collecting habits are established by age ten or eleven, but my mother, Tweety, didn't begin collecting spoons until she was in her forties. At first, these were spoons she'd pick up on trips to Spain, Scotland, or Germany. Spoons were a far wiser choice than oriental rugs or chairs. I'm just saying, try squeezing a chair into a suitcase and explaining to TSA why you're a barcalounger-toting traveler. Eventually, mother's children began gifting her with spoons from our many travels. What else do you give a woman who already has a complete collection of ninety-eight Hummels, eighteen teacups, and eleven children? I sent her a spoon from Japan—no small feat given Asian propensity for dining utensils. After a few years, with all of us spooning her, Tweety ran out of room on the four racks in her dining room. She resorted to actually using the spoons to stir her tea. "No more spoons," she announced at a family reunion. "Knives?" I asked. No, she didn't want those either. Too dangerous.

Collector burnout must be common. But not in my case. My collection is definitely dangerous and so addictive that not all the twelve-step programs in the universe could cure me.

Some collectors are obsessive compulsives. We only feel safe by surrounding ourselves with the sureness of our collected objects. The more we collect, the more we feel we expand ourselves or some such drivel. Others suggest that collecting is a way of dealing with inner panic and fear. King Tutankhamen collected rocks. President Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark on an expedition so they'd pick up more fossils. Jesus collected souls. My husband is off the psychiatrist hook—or couch, as it may be. As a museum man, he collects for a living. They actually pay him to do it. There's a whole science to acquisitions. My dad acquired corporations. Acquisition editors collect manuscripts. Tell these to your head doc.

After each acquisition, I add the newfound prize to my shelves of increasing collections. I may change their order on the shelf, shift them around one in front of the other and then behind. I make them march two by two depending upon my mood. Occasionally I remove one but it's never forever. It's all for the sake of color, size, drama, and orderliness. You understand, of course. Here, let me show you.

See this one? This is John, a former teacher I heard about on National Public Radio.

He went off the deep end of the chalkboard one spring and never returned to the classroom. Instead, he now runs a B&B south of the Mason-Dixon line and he cooks. Because he traveled the world in the years intervening between making grades and making beds, he's more oyster and coq au vin than black-eyed peas and chitterlings. Maybe I'll re-name him Jesse and use him as a springboard into an essay about life after teaching—or one about cooking international.

That one in the middle of the shelf—I scooped her up at the symphony before anyone else could grab her. I named her Madame Guinevere the moment I saw her walking through the lobby at intermission. You couldn't miss her—the Prada snakeskin spike heels, the gold lame pantaloons, and that emerald-studded lorgnette! I keep meaning to write her into a story, but so far, the right place and plot haven't shown up. Villain, though, definitely a villain. Unless, of course, I use her as the alt.savior. I never know until I tap the keys.

Here's one of my favorites. I call her Dottie. I found her one afternoon boating the Mississippi River when I docked at a backwater diner. There she was flipping pork patties and fried onion rings, "Here, have another, hon. You're just skinny-shim and rag-bones." Eventually in real life she left the diner. I hear she lives in town now. She moved on. The diner was torn down and a new one built in its place. But in my book, she is forever at the diner, orchestrating river campers and boaters who drop in expecting sliders and backwater gossip. That's the thing about the people in my collection who end up in my publications. They become set in stone right there on the page.

That handsome man with the moustache next to Dottie on the shelf looks a lot like young Omar Sharif, doesn't he? Oh, Dr. Zhivago. I gave him thick black glasses and made him a murder suspect in one of my short stories. See the recklessness in his eyes? Don't worry. He didn't do it. I found him one summer before I was even much of a writer. He sat across from me on the hovercraft crossing over from Dover. Another writer might have put him in a James Bond novel I suppose, but not me. He turns out to be a random geeky guy traipsing around the world in search of love. He never finds it. Well, at least he hasn't found it yet.

Maybe I should give him a comeback? Pair him with Guinevere? No, it would never work. He's too purposeful and she's too reckless. He is all borscht and she is all spider soup. Besides, he has a gap between his two front teeth. You know what that means.

Sometimes a prize item just lands in your lap like manna from heaven. I know that's a trite cliché. Some even say manna is just plant lice, but I'm using it anyway. I've got the pen and you don't, at least not on this page. Not today.

Anyway, back to the manna. I was minding my own business writing on the computer one day when what should appear over the screen out my window but the hero in my next story. In real life, the neighbor across the street died. I only knew her by sight, so she was perfect fodder for fiction even if she was dead. Her children were carrying away her possessions. When the hatboxes came out, so did my story. Was she really an ax-murderess?

It's a wonder I haven't been sued.

It's not only strangers who end up on my shelves, however. My mother appears so frequently on the pages I write that in real life she's taken to saying to me, "You can't write about this" as she launches into one of her childhood recollections. On occasion, however, she lets me place her on the shelf along with the others I've collected. She should never have told me about naming her dolls "Bread" and "Doughnut." She got them as premium awards because her parents bought so much bread during the Depression. They're going on the shelf. I just can't help it.

My friends, colleagues, my children, my husband—they all appear on the shelf from time to time. They're quite aware of their roles in my newspaper columns and nonfiction essays. They don't suspect how they're built into fictional characters yet, however. That's why using the possessive pronoun "my" is particularly true when I write "My friends," "My children," "My husband." When I write them, they are Mine. The girl who counts syllables, the lover away on too many business trips, the diva, the easy-going sheriff, the singer, the nature girl, the arguer—they're all there. Of course, they'll read this and I'll have blown my cover. Then again, maybe not. People rarely recognize themselves in print unless you make them empresses or princes. (It's the same with reincarnation. No one claims that in a past life she was a scullery maid or he was a ragpicker.)

Pickle 'em. I considered putting them all in jars on the shelf, lids screwed on tight, but there's really no need for such extremes. For one thing, as soon as I put them behind glass, they can't breathe. Sure, once in a rare while one of them escapes. I try to name her, attempt to insert her in a story or essay, but she rebels. Then when I'm not looking, she slides down the side of the shelf and makes off out the door. What she doesn't know is that I can get her back. Every time. Her attempted escape is part of the thrill. It's part of the story.

Book collectors are called bibliophiles; stamp collectors are philatelists; conchologists can't get enough shells. I wonder what I'd be called? The inventor? The creator? The murderer? "Supreme Being" has a nice ring to it (although the real one is probably not as ruthless as I am).

Among the rarest in my collection is "Ellen," the shawled woman I discovered pa-

trolling the streets back when I was in college. She had an enormous tapestry bag slung across her chest and pulled a shopping cart behind her. Between swigs of whatever was in the brown paper bag, she regularly dropped in at O'Toole Office Supply on Main Street. I followed her in once and eavesdropped. She asked the sales clerk, "Got any pocket calendars?"

Even though you might not be a collector, you must admit that one was too good to pass up. Ellen showed up in one of my stories later in Alaska as a woman who drops into the parish rectory to convince the young priest that she'd be an excellent bookkeeper. Only in my story, there's no brown paper bag and her name is Bridie—not "Birdie." She gnaws on a chicken leg which she pulls out of that tapestry bag instead. In real life, she'll never know I've included her in my collection and installed her in a story. None of my characters do.

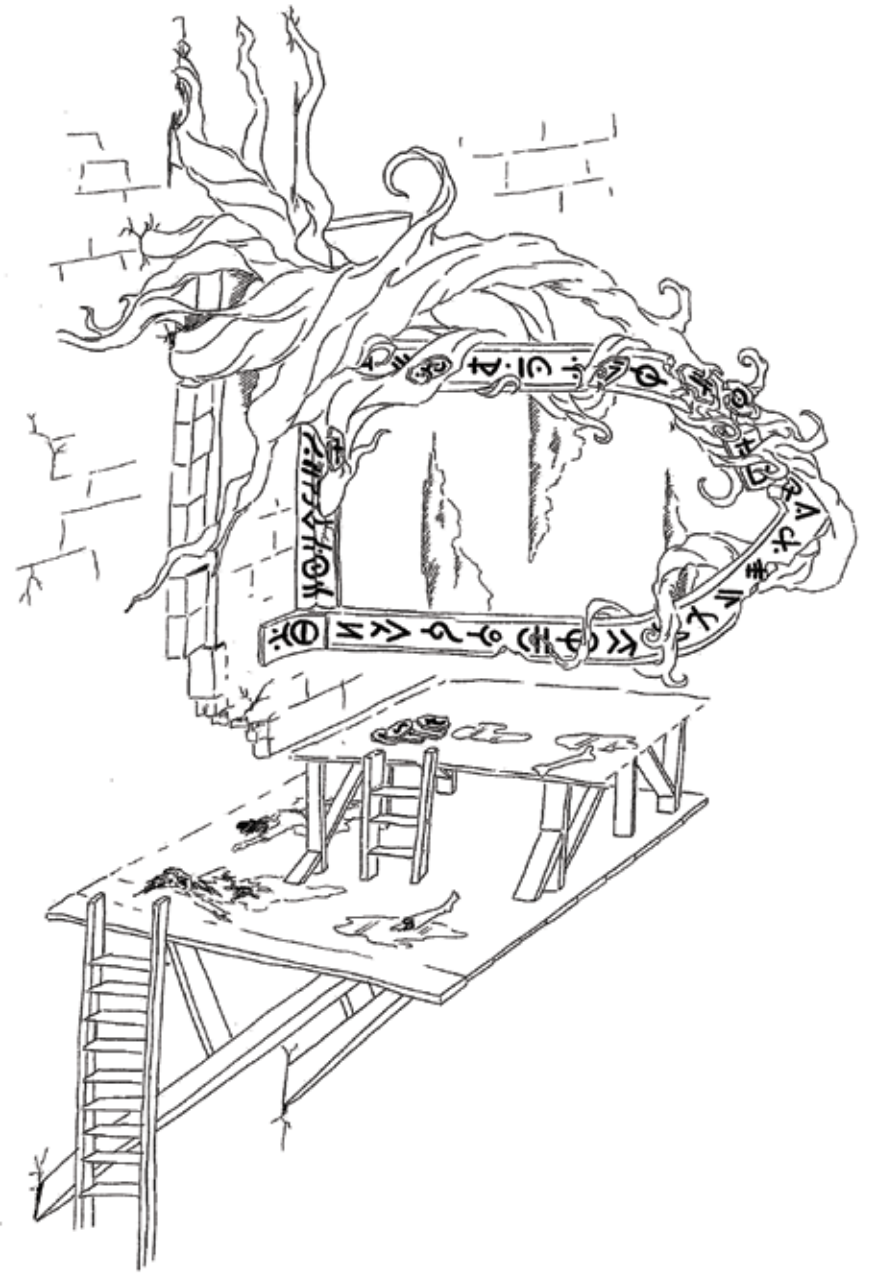
Neither will you for that matter.



Bridging, Thom Chesney, Photo



Legacy, Naomi Noel, Painting



Inktober, Charollette Rodewald, Ink on Paper

chestnuts off the carts (even if the vendor had just retrieved them from the street muck where they'd spilled moments earlier). I lived in the Bronx, lived over near 42nd Street, even lived in Manhattan for a couple months. (That was when I was shacking up with that dandy from NYU back before I met Chet). Mostly, I lived near the wharves. No matter. Wherever you live in New York, newspapers don't bother with livestock or crop prices. Imagine opening the Times and reading "Bull Semen On The Rise" on the front page. Bizarre existence, but I get along all right here in Donna Reed-land—most days.

More hatboxes! What did Mrs. Gillespie do with all those? Never saw her wear a hat. Makes you wonder.

I'm a city girl through and through. A reporter, to boot. When I see a story, I know it. Like at Mrs. Gillespie's that day. I saw that one red splotch on the bottom basement step and I knew. Someone had been bludgeoned to death with a crowbar. I'm sure the wound had been bound up in one of those ratty nightgowns we used to see Mrs. G. in when she retrieved the mail. Probably the wrappings held just fine until that single drip fell onto the step. There you have it—the lone telltale sign permanently etched right there in the wood. But no one had gone missing lately, so I figured it was a deed done years earlier. I didn't call the cops; she was going to get what she had coming eventually.

No, old lady Gillespie wasn't fooling me with that helpless bit. Sure, she spotted me as a sucker and knew I couldn't turn down the opportunity to get inside her house. Even so, I couldn't believe she'd call on me to help her out. I still remember back when she didn't have any use for me at all.

"Just move it a few inches, lady, and it'll be fine," Officer Smiley grinned at me through the screen door. There's nothing worse than a cop delivering bad news with a grin on his face. When we first moved in here ten years ago, Mrs. Gillespie didn't care for our old Impala. A few dings in the finish and she decides it's rusting into the gutters—"a neighborhood eyesore," she called it. She may have been nasty, but she wasn't stupid.

If she didn't like something or someone, she had ways of getting rid of them. I could just picture her down in the basement of the Carnegie Library riffling through the city archives until she dug it up: "Vehicles parked on city streets must be relocated every twenty-four hours. Violations of the ordinance may result in impounding the vehicle." She probably cracked a rib laughing when she read that the cops could tow the car.

Well, she didn't count on my tenacity.

I just kept moving that old Chevy so we wouldn't be in violation. At first I'd wait . . . twenty-three hours, twenty-three hours and thirty minutes, twenty-three hours and forty-five minutes. I'd see her spying on us repeatedly, looking out from behind the curtains, the smoke from her cigarette curling down, outlining her sneer. She'd light them one off another when it got down to the final fifteen minutes. And then with five minutes left, when she was no doubt lifting the receiver on her landline to call the police, I'd saunter out the front door, stroll down to the Impala, get in, and slowly move that buggy forward one inch—no more, no less. A week would pass. She'd call the cops again, I'd wait twenty-three hours and forty-five minutes, she'd send up smoke signals through the curtains watching us, and I'd move the car. A couple of days later, she was at it again watching from the window. She probably had a stopwatch.

We went on like that for years.

I don't remember if we just got tired of Mrs. Gillespie's time-keeping and moving that car or if our economic status improved enough to buy up, but we revved up that white chariot and drove it to the junk yard, clanking all the way down the block. As Chet drove away, I'm sure I saw Mrs. Gillespie peeking out from behind her kitchen curtains. She wasn't laughing exactly but there was an odd crook to the upper right corner of her lip. That she felt glee, I have no doubt. She won that battle.

If I'd been in charge, the story would've had a different ending like in "A Rose for Emily." The woman knocks off the unfaithful boyfriend by putting rat poison in his tea. In the novel I've been writing, the heroine does in the nosy neighbor by lacing the thorns on her roses with a super herbicide. I call it the Sleeping Beauty Murder. One prick and



View From My Desk At Dupaco Voices @ Seven O'Clock AM, Charolette Rodewald, Watercolor Painting

the old lady is a goner. She falls dead right there in the middle of the American Beauties. Yes, I could have done in Mrs. Gillespie easily if this were only fiction. Send her a dozen roses.

Happy Valentine's Day, sweetie.

That was only the start of our Car Wars.

Three years ago Mrs. G. dented the left front fender on my classic Miata. After smashing the taillight, she sped off. She didn't fool me with those lace-edged collars, her gray-haired bun pulled back so-tidy, and her incessant knitting. I know Madame Defarge when I see one. Hit and run on her very own neighbor! Godalmighty, her driveway borders our peony bushes—what'd she think? I wasn't going to see? Even Bob, the guy across the street, called to tell me, "She came barreling out of her driveway, cut the wheel hard to the left and plowed right into your car at the curb, Syl." Old lady G. got out, looked at it, looked around, and drove off in that little blue Fiesta of hers.

I phoned her that night after she finally returned from playing cards with her other little old lady friends. Or maybe they were up to something else. You ever notice how some of them snap their tongues against their teeth at you when you walk by them? "Click, click, click" as if they're tallying up who's going to die next.

"You hit my car."

"You shouldn't park there, dearie! Nowhere within twenty feet of my driveway!" Even if you hate her, you have to acknowledge that she knew absolutely for sure that the street was hers. The rest of us were peons. But this time I wrote the ending.

She said she'd get a lawyer. He must've told her the case was hopeless though because a few weeks later her son came tromping across the lawn with a check for the damages. She never acknowledged any fault. I'd won the battle, but I was sure the war was far from over. There are just some dents that can't be pounded out at the local garage.

"Mother is dented," it was her son's voice on the phone this time. "Dented"? But then what do you expect of a man who floated his brains away on a cloud of acid decades ago? As I said before, I have my suspicions about that story, too. You ever see that horror movie? The one where the brain surgeon gets a little whacked out and decides to go fishing inside his assistant's cranium? The way I figure it, Mrs. Gillespie performed a lobotomy—probably just wanted to test out her new equipment. She was a retired nurse after all.

Chet went over there that time and found Mrs. Gillespie wedged between the coffee table and the Barcalounger laying on her back like a fly pinned by her knitting needles

to the floor. She must've fallen. The son was strong enough but not smart enough to figure out how to hoist her. Chet told him to take one arm and he took the other and on the count of three, to heave-ho.

"She's heavier than she looks," Chet told me coming in the back kitchen door reaching for one of the plastic wineglasses and filling it with water. "I never knew hot air weighed so much. By the way, she told me that if you park that 'little squid of a car' so close to her driveway again, she's going to tell her son to ram it."

I remember smiling at Chet, joining him in the gentle mocking look of poor-dear-old-Mrs. Gillespie, but my heart wasn't in it. "We could put up a fence," Chet will say when he wants to get me riled up, "You know what Frost says about good fences." But I knew better. No fence could ever make old Madame Defarge into a good neighbor. Chet grew up here in Centerville. He is forever patient with whiners like Mrs. Gillespie. "You'll get used to life out here sooner or later, Syl. Just give it time. These folks can grow on you."

I've been here ten years and the only things growing on me are plots and characters. I never wrote a single fiction story until I ended up out here in the middle of nowhere. Back with the Daily Yorker, I was the if-it-bleeds-it-leads reporter. I got in on all the complicated stuff, the tangled webs of human conflict, leading to. lots of blood. Lots of knives, hacksaws, axes, and body parts. The good stuff.

After leaving that, what was I going to do? Take a job reporting for the Centerville Herald? Sure, I could report, "the monthly meeting of the Centerville Chapter of the Linda Club will be held this week at the high school gym" or "the Watch Paint Dry Festival was shorter this year than usual due to high winds." If I stuck with it, maybe I'd become the lead reporter. Maybe I'd even land the top scoops of the year—the outdoor Stations of the Cross or the annual Twin-O-Rama! I'll take fiction writing over that kind of reporting any day. I didn't realize when I moved here that I'd have Mrs. Gillespie next door. Lots of material.

I'd waited seven years to get that Miata. Call it the outpouring of a desperate woman needing a little Candy Apple Red in her life. That's what Chet claims. He calls it's my "midlife crisis car." But just because the crisis is over, I don't have to return the car. Finding a Miata is its own uphill-er when you live in a state whose main religion is John Deere; Deere doesn't make a two-seater. Finally got a lead from my cousin that a hot one in mint condition was about to come on the market. Chet and I had to drive all the way to Sandusky.

So when Mrs. Gillespie hit that car the second time, I swore revenge. Do you know how hard it is to find replacement parts for a classic Miata? Besides, if I had to hear that

moldy green bird of hers once more in the middle of the night calling out her bedroom window, “Charlie’s on time, give me a dime, Charlie’s on time, give me a dime,” I’d twist its neck like saltwater taffy.

“Charlie was her husband. He was an efficiency expert before he died,” Libby told me as she chopped away at the hard early spring soil the day we were both out gardening by the back fence. Apparently, he’d had a heart attack right in the Des Moines airport. “He missed the 12:42 business commuter to Kansas City. Too much stress, poor man,” Libby said. But it didn’t matter to me. I kept turning the manure over on the lettuce beds. By the time I heard about “poor old Charlie,” Mrs. Gillespie had hit my Miata a second time. The broken taillight and the crease in the back fender leached every ounce of mercy out of me. Besides, it’s hard to ladle out compassion for a woman you know killed off her husband. I can prove it.

First of all—motivation with a capital “M.” She had loads of reasons to bump off hubby dearest. Gillespie? I figure his real name was something like Grivetti—they’d Irish-ized it to hide the Mafia connections. Probably had his mobster friends watching the wife. I figure that Grivetti forced her into dealing in his underworld “gonnec-



Whiskers, Burgundy Barklow, Photo

tions”—just like in *The Great Gatsby*. One day, I figure, she just got tired of it. Second of all—evidence. Within just a few short weeks Gillespie/Grivetti lost all his hair. Went from full chia-pet to Yul Brenner. What more evidence do you need? And they called it “natural causes.” It was about as natural as hemlock in your soup!

Gad, look over there now. They’re taking out those huge aluminum tubs. Antique packing crates? Bins for ashes from the fireplace? Makes me think of that poor fellow in another Poe short story. He goes nuts—total lunatic—from being watched by the old guy’s evil eye. Having someone watch you day after day. Can you blame him? Even a perfectly normal person might think of grabbing an axe, chopping up the old man, and stashing his fingers and shins under the floor planks. It can all seem pretty harmless when there’s enough motivation.

But those tubs. You could fit body parts in those things. Chop off a couple of arms, boil ‘em in acid until the flesh and muscle wear away, throw ‘em in the tub, slap on the lid. Roll some duct tape around the edges to seal in the aroma. Before you know it, you could bury half the neighborhood with hardly a liver or foot to show for it. Mrs. G. was just the kind that would have done it, too—make her son do the dirty work. Ever see Arsenic and Old Lace? The nephews? Amazing that the cops never could pin the murders on them.

Hey, there’s Hannah Baker on her afternoon walk with that mangy giant poodle of hers, Neal. She slays me. All around the block, you hear her saying, “Heel, Neal!” and the mutt still yanks the leash. Hannah may only be in her twenties, but she doesn’t believe the story of his death any more than I do. “Heart attack”? Nah, what got Mr. Grivetti was cancer, no doubt about it. Only thing is that I know how he got it. After all those years covering murders for the *Yorker*, I know evidence when I see it. Hannah doesn’t agree about that part—says I’ve let my imagination get the better of me—but she hasn’t been around that block as often as I have. She’s a Centerville girl, after all.

I read all about it in *Murder Between the Sheets*. The main character, who also happens to be a chemist, brushes his wife’s hair every night—brushes and brushes and strokes that long golden hair of hers. It’s every woman’s dream. So attentive. So romantic. But what happens? She gets melanoma of the scalp. Ups and dies quickly. Not even the family doctor knew what hit her. The perfect crime. Suddenly-bald Mr. Grivetti with a heart attack? No way. The old woman laced his bristles.

But did they investigate? Did they even talk to Mrs. Gillespie? Nope. Not even an eyebrow raised. Not a single question was asked. She’d never have gotten away with a thing like that back in New York. People back there know better than to be so trusting.

Murders like that, the kind made to look innocent, happened all the time back home. You'd see cops and detectives all over the place within twenty-four hours on South Street. That's down where they developed that yuppie hipster South Street Seaport Museum. Nowadays, of course, the tourists—most of them nice folks from the Midwest—stand around the nice fancy boardwalks along the nice harbor pointing at one old rusting wreck after another telling their nice kids, "Look at this honey. This is an important part of American History." But years ago, that was the place to cover as a reporter. Right over the Brooklyn Bridge and a murder-a-minute, we used to say. New York is a place where the cops have to work hard. Not like here.

Here they just sit around over at the Donut Boy and wait for churlish old bags to call and complain about a neighbor not moving her car. On a lucky night they might get two speeders. But back at South Street? Let's just say things were very different there. You ever hear about that hatchet murder case in Milwaukee? My friend, Frankie, from the old neighborhood called laughing, "Syl, why the hell did they make such a big deal about Jeffrey Dahmer? Twenty years ago we had grannies living right next-door making doilies out of elbows!"

They must be almost done over there now. Look, Sonny-boy is carrying out another hatbox. Ever wonder what might fit into a box like that? The real estate agent just drove up and he's spiking the lawn with a "For Sale" sign. Probably some nice young couple with one slobbery kid dressed up in bright overhauls and matching Nikes will move in. They'll have to fumigate. They'll put heartsy flowerpots on the side lawn to replace Mrs. G's lime green and yellow cement hippo. They'll own a nice white minivan, too. They'll be excellent drivers.

I'm sure they won't have any hatboxes.

Come to think of it, maybe the idiot son really did do all the killing? Yeah, that would be a great plot! Hold on a sec. Let me grab a pen.

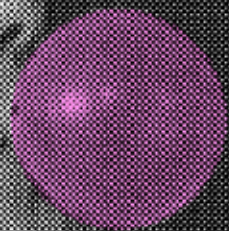
Ok, scratch out the grizzly bear and Dr. Frankenstein. Instead, let's say the cops think it's the neighbor next door. They send an investigator over to pin the blame on her. They figure she's got it in for the old lady for hitting her classic car. She talks on and on about the old lady and you can tell she hates the woman. The investigator keeps jotting down all kinds of notes. Just as he is about to arrest her, the idiot-son bursts through the door carrying a hatbox. He's wearing a frock, "patterned in pink pansies." Yes, that's good—alliteration— nice ring to it. Sonny-boy yells, "I should have chopped off your head when I had the chance!" as he brandishes two size 10 knitting needles in the air.

Now there's a story.



Baptisia, Louise Kames, Pastel on Paper

FICTION
POETRY
NON-FICTION
DRAWINGS
DIGITAL ART
PHOTOGRAPHY
SCHOLARLY ESSAYS



About the Author

Dan Hankner began penning stories about himself and his idiot friends as a teenager. Now, masquerading as an adult, he lives in Davenport, Iowa with his wife and three children, working as an electrician for his own company, 12 Stones Electric. Dan's work has appeared in places like Downstate Story, SQ Mag, Memoirist, Bendin Genres, and others. If you'd like to read more of Dan's writing, he sends out a new story every month.

Visit his website www.storyunlikely.com to read more and sign up.

ON CHANEY ROAD

By Dan Hankner

“We’re moving into a house,” explained Boz. “There’s four bedrooms but three of us. We need you Dan, it’s science.” Actually, it was math, but Boz had this way of making even the most outlandish suggestions seem wise. “Joe’s in, Tall Paul will be over daily, and we can all watch Boy Meets World together, as a family.”

By peddling his wares to all his friends, Boz had spent years honing his salesman skills; like the Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon, every golf club that we owned could somehow be traced back to Boz. Suffice it to say, I moved in a few weeks later. House Chaney was a grand experiment in teenage communal living, but there were obstacles. For one, Joe scoffed at the idea of afternoon reruns.

“Boy Meets World? Why?” Joe was an all-around good guy and the unofficial family glue, but sometimes he just didn’t take to the things we did, especially when he felt blindsided by tom-foolery in his own living room.

“Every episode has a lesson,” explained Tall Paul, seated on a dingy recliner.

Joe stood indignant near the doorway, backdropped by a blanket cast over the window, stapled against the wall to reduce screen glare. “Oh? And what’s the lesson for this episode?”

Paul took a bite of his whopper and adjusted the Burger King crown atop his head. “Shut the hell up and we’ll find out.”

During the day, we’d eat out of boredom or play ‘guess Joe’s password’. If his computer’s login didn’t have something to do with baseball, then it was by default an object in the room. Chair. Pencil. Notebook. We usually nailed it in under ten guesses. He tried to throw us for a loop once with password as the password. We shook our heads like disappointed sensei’s and proceeded to hijack his internet.

In the evenings, Boz, Colter and I would play basketball at the park we called Harlem. We kept a radio on us so we could check in on Joe, who was always watching something important, like a Maverick’s game, or Entourage.

Once, we gathered the guys together and played adult hide-n-seek in the house,

which was exactly the same as regular hide-n-seek, only with a title that sounded less juvenile. With a dozen guys concealed amongst the furniture, the rounds didn't last long. All I remember was Joe throwing a lamp shade over his head and standing in the corner while BJ morphed into the curtains.

On the weekends, I worked at a paintball field, while a mysterious character from the deep state landed my roommates jobs at this super-secret bank. They couldn't tell me the details, nor did I ever meet their shadowy recruiter they called Austin Putman, but from what I gathered, whoever was on shift just hid out in this dark room all day, and when the classified documents printed, they would forward them to the proper channels. The space was small, with no windows or oversight, and the work itself was sparse. This led to boredom, which led to random acts of comedy.

The computer screensaver rotated landscapes, so it was only natural that Boz began penciling in hot air balloons with the caption, "Where's Joe?" After the user spied a rough sketch of Joe hiding amongst the baskets, he was treated to the roving gaggle of hot air balloons traversing the countryside, with Joe making witty comments like, "God bless America," and "The southern sun hurts my ginger skin."

Unfortunately, this merely postponed the boredom. A TV, DVD player, and Xbox were promptly smuggled in. Anyone who knows Boz will tell you that he most enjoys watching a good flick in his natural state: a blanket cast over his shoulders covering everything else that his boxer briefs did not. Understand that the following is pure speculation; a supervisor may or may not have walked in on one of these pants-less movie showings, which may or may not have led to terminations.

It wasn't until a decade later while we awaited the bus in, of all places, the Las Vegas airport, that I bumped into a couple wearing Iowa Hawkeye gear. We talked about the upcoming Rose Bowl game, and I mentioned my origins.

"Not far from us," said the man. "We live in Dubuque."

"I used to live there, once upon a time," I responded. "In a house on Chaney Road."

The stranger paused. "You didn't happen to live with a bunch of other guys from Maquoketa, did you?"

It was my turn to pause. "I did."

"With Boz, and Joe, and those guys?"

"Yes!" I shouted. "How'd you know them?"

He extended a hand. "I'm Austin Putman." Visions of popped collars and lavish jewelry burst in my head as his true identity--just another dude--was revealed. We talked about Dubuque, and Chaney Road, and the rise and fall of our friends' employment.

"Those idiots," he laughed. "I got them the best job on the planet and they blew it."

Many visitors found their way inside the walls of House Chaney, but it wasn't until the weekend when it reached full capacity. Generally, a group of alumni or a van full of younger brothers made their way to the house. Little Caesar's was divvied, teams formed, arguments ensued.

"I'm not playing HALO on a 20" TV," demanded one.

"Who's the jackass who ordered a plain cheese pizza?" cried another.

"I can't be on Potter's team," insisted a third, "He hogs the sniper rifle."

"Who used all the toilet paper!" hollered Joe from the bathroom. "And where's the Kleenex?"

Generally, things got worse before they got better. Our friends were a stubborn lot, the worst of which was Boz's little brother.

"You have to play downstairs," instructed Ben.

"No," insisted Chuckles.

"It's the only way teams are fair."

"I didn't haul my TV all the way up from Maquoketa to play on someone else's."

Flummoxed, Potter jumped in. "Chuckles! A TV's a TV!"

"No," insisted Chuckles.

Potter threw his controller on the floor. "Fine, take my TV, it's the biggest in the house."

Chuckles folded his arms. "No."

"Why the hell not?"

"Well, now I'm just holding out for more."

We gamed well into the night, cashing in our anxieties and forgetting the world around. We didn't burden ourselves, not when we were low on ammo, when the enemy had captured the flag and the cheese on our \$5 pizza was beginning to solidify.

These are the moments that flash through the highlight reel of your life. Never mind the fridge that constantly blew fuses, the deposit of dirty dishes towering over the sink or the perpetually clogged toilet in the house's only bathroom. You played hard, and when you awoke the next morning and stepped downstairs to the many guests that were sprawled out on the living room, you didn't think twice about your brief sabbatical at this house or the impending finality of real life banging on the back door. Your only thoughts were centered on the comical sounds of snoring fermenting in your friends' mouths, and how all that gaming made a man tired.


Or, perhaps in the case of Chuckles, it was the arguing.



Inktober, Charolette Rodewald, Ink on paper



Inktober, Charolette Rodewald, Ink on paper



About the Author

John Day was a lifelong Chicagoan and a career law enforcement officer with the Chicago Police Department as a Patrolman, Tactical Officer, and Detective. After retiring he relocated to Stockton, Illinois where he became involved with wildlife and prairie restoration as well as writing in his free time. He has written about local issues; prairie burns and conservation; and early Illinois history.

THE DREAMER

By John Day

The dream comes as it always does. There is no noise, other than the wind rushing through the air. Looking downward, the motion and view is like what a great bird soaring over the landscape might see.

It is panoramic.

Bluffs on the Iowa side of the great river rise like a fortress wall. To the east, Illinois stands on the water's edge. The Mississippi rolls southbound in a slow measured flow as it has done for thousands of years. Giant barges move southward pushing the river water out of their way and leave a wake of churning foam behind. The movement of all things seems to amble along in slow motion. Tidy farms pop out of the green landscape displaying bright red barns, shiny white houses, broad fields baring the harrow lines of recently plowed fields. A man driving a tractor looks upward and waves his hand. This man is eerily familiar.

Unknown birds begin singing and call back and forth to one another. The sky is sunny and clear except for a few white streaks of thin clouds that are evaporating.

The leisurely moment is shattered by the sound of gunfire echoing through urban streets and down alleyways. Pop! Pop! Pop! The wail of people shouting and screaming comes crashing through the early morning air.

Mary bolts upright in her bed and gasps. The shouting is not far off, and another round of gunshots ring out. "Wait!" Mary thinks to herself. "Never run to the window or door until you're sure the gunfire has stopped completely."

Mary inhales and glances at the clock on her nightstand. "2:45," she says to herself.

Soon the wailing of sirens streams into her apartment. The flashing blue lights of police vehicles pierces the dark followed by the distant squad car sirens. Then comes the screaming of ambulances with flashing red lights that fill the night sky with ominous glow.

More shouting. Of course, car engines will roar as they hurriedly leave the area. Small groups of stragglers will meander down nearby streets, some, navigating alleyways to avoid contact with the police.

Mary looks around and notes that few people make eye contact with other passengers. Few people, if any, ever strike up conversations.

Mary inhales again, this time more deeply and sips water from that glass that always rests on the nightstand. Glancing once again at the clock, she slides beneath the covers to try and get a few more hours of sleep before having to rise and head off to work. To her dream job. She wonders how it all changed.



Cloud Nine, Burgundy Barklow, Photo

It has been three years since she graduated from college, left home, and came to Chicago to pursue her ambitions, her fantasies of career, success, and romance.

Once under the covers the dream will return. This time she would dream about the great silver castles and towers that line the Iowa landscape. Yes, the castlest--those giant silos and shiny domed grain bins with chutes and conveyors connecting one huge structure to another looking like castles on the horizon. As a little girl she had dreamt of flying over the fields and woodlands to the castles where the blue sky met the green earth. She could live there in the castles in one of these royal lands.

Mary stands in the shower soaking herself. Her thoughts turn to gunfire and screams she heard during the night. She wonders if anyone has died. Mary knows it is likely that she will be walking through the intersection where the gunshots had been fired. She remembers an incident a year ago, walking to the elevated train station and seeing dried blood, bloody gauze bandages, spent syringes and other medical debris strewn across the sidewalk and lawn near her apartment building. A woman she frequently chatted with on the train had told her two boys had been shot and killed.

Coffee, a small glass of juice and a muffin and she is out the door and on her way. She is met by another gray Chicago morning sky. A chill breeze comes off Lake Michigan shaking the bare tree branches and sending street litter scurrying across lawns and tripping down the sidewalks.

Mary avoids the intersection that was the scene of last night's trouble. Her regular route takes her on a path near the openings of alleyways. She pauses, being frightened by large grey and black rat that scampers along the edge of the alley. The smell of garbage always becomes more pungent as the week wears on and the volume of refuse grows.

The ride from Logan Square to downtown Chicago on public transportation is a necessity. Mary found out early on that driving a car from her apartment to Chicago's Loop is impossible. Traffic on the expressway is horrific every morning. Harsh weather increases travel time. Then there is the cost of parking. The greater of all the problems is finding a parking space near her building when returning home. The last thing anyone wants is a three or four-block walk from her car through side streets and back to her apartment building, especially after dark.

Mary goes down the stairs to the subterranean train station on Kedzie Avenue. Standing on the platform, she glances down at the train track which had already become littered with Styrofoam coffee cups, fast food wrappers and all kinds of trash. She spots a homeless man sleeping on a bench at the far end of the train platform. The vagrant had

carefully stacked his backpack, several plastic bags, and a suitcase alongside the bench. Commuters one-by-one walk by the man, looking past him as if he is invisible.

As the train grumbles into the station, commuters take a step or two forward, better positioning themselves to board the train and hopefully, be one of few lucky enough to get a seat. As she often does, Mary looks around and notes that few people make eye contact with other passengers. Few people, if any, ever strike up conversations.

This day offers the promise of becoming a good one. The train stops alongside the platform and the car door directly in front of Mary opens with a whoosh. Mary steps right in. Taking only three steps, she is able to plant herself on a vacant seat as the train car begins to fill with people. It is then that Mary notices the Ugly Man standing at the far end of the train car looking at her.

Where is the line that is drawn between someone smiling at you and someone leering at you? This is not the first time the Ugly Man has been on a train with her and went out of his way to try to get her attention. Mary looks out the window. The train will be crawling out of the tunnel and on top of the elevated tracks in a moment anyhow. The city views from the lofty elevated train tracks are always captivating.

As the train rises from the darkness of the tunnel, the passengers are offered a look at the city from a unique perspective. High above the street the train cars rattle and rumble on the steel pathway that parallels Milwaukee Avenue. Looking down at the pathways of Chicago, the city moves to the sound of an unheard kinetic symphony.

Cars speed up and slow down and stop as traffic does its best to navigate the city. People on foot rush in every direction while crowds huddle on street corners waiting for buses and cabs. Bicycles carry the brave to their destinations, bobbing and weaving side to side, up and down the streets. Throngs of young children saunter along making their way to school. Coffee vendors hawk their offerings to passersby.

The buildings that line each street are a medley of architecture. Some are old brown or red brick of a style that harkens back to the nineteenth century. Others are early twentieth century that recall the Roaring Twenties and the gangster era.

Every day Mary feels a rush of excitement as her day starts. Soon, she hopes, that she will have saved enough money to move closer to the pulsing heartbeat of Chicago. Perhaps, Lincoln Park, River North, or Rush Street----the neighborhoods where nightlife is in play twenty-four hours a day; where trendy coffee houses and bistros cater to the young and talented; where one is within walking distance from live theater and the Art Institute of Chicago. Neighborhoods where you're not awakened by gunfire during the night.

The last week was difficult for Mary. Thoughts of returning home haunt her throughout the day. The cost of keeping her car, the cost of finding a nicer, safer place to live, finding the something that seemed to be missing from her life---- all have been coming together to plague her with worry.

As the train glides along the steel rails and over the intersection of Milwaukee, Damen, and North Avenues, it takes a downward tilt and begins to enter the depths of Chicago's tunnel system once again. The interior lights of the train always flicker as it descends into one of the tunnels.

The train eventually stops below the Chicag Loop--a name applied to the downtown area because of a system of elevated train track that circles Chicago's old, original downtown area. Climbing the stairs to the State Street exit Mary inhales deeply and takes in the view of the skyline. She gathers in the sounds and sights all around her that create the din of excitement. A short three block walk, and she will be at the office building where her dream job, photo editor for a small advertising agency, awaits her.

Mary anticipates having lunch with Iris Ruiz. As different as the two could be they formed a friendship when they met in an area grocery store. Iris introduced Mary to her Puerto Rican culture, new food, and other mysteries of Chicago life. Mary gave Iris a window into rural America and a slower lifestyle. They shared a love of music, dance, trips to art shows, different dining experiences and books. They immediately understood one another's concerns and joys as young women living alone in a big, strange city.



Pink Water Bottle, Charolette Rodewald, Painting

Mary's day is drawn-out with calls to make and answer about photos for future displays in advertising campaigns. She is annoyed by freelance photographers notoriously unable to respond to messages. During lunch, Mary and Iris agree to ride the train home together and go to dinner. It is Friday. They may even go to one of the nearby clubs for a few drinks.

The ride on the train back to Logan Square is uneventful. The two women dine at a favorite restaurant where the menu features a mix of Puerto Rican seafood cuisine and Mexican pork fare. They enjoy a few drinks, a fine meal and lengthy conversations about love lives, or as Mary says, the lack of a love life.

Iris confides in Mary, telling her of the occasional dreams about trying to return to Puerto Rico and making a life there. Mary recounts recurring dreams of the Iowa landscape and growing doubts about having a life in Chicago.

After dinner, the two walk along Milwaukee Avenue to a club. Iris notices an unusual number of marked and unmarked police vehicles cruising back and forth. Iris is the first to notice an unusual number of marked and unmarked police vehicles cruising back and forth. There are a few uniformed police officers walking the streets. In a hushed tone, Iris takes Mary's arm and asks, "Can you feel the tension in the air?"

A large crowd gathers at the entrance to the club. "You'll have to wait to get in," a bouncer tells them, but he doesn't explain why. The smell of weed and cigarettes fills the air. There is laughter and loud talk. The music played inside leaks out through sidewalk level windows. Patrons in line begin swaying and dancing on the sidewalk. It's a happy scene.

A square jawed young man with dark hair curling at his neck approaches Mary and says, "Hi. Remember me? We met here a few weeks ago."

"Yes. Andy, isn't it?" Mary replies. "I've been hoping to see you again."

"Me too," Andy says.

And then the flash of gunshots. Pop. Mary watches as Andy screams in pain before crashing to his knees.

The crowd scatters, some tripping over one another in every direction. Screaming. A woman shoves against the man next to her, but there's no space in the vast beehive-like conglomeration of people running for their lives. (Iris would later tell the detectives that she's not sure how many gunshots there were.) The last thing she sees is Mary smiling softly before she is knocked over. She sees a boy whose name she thinks is Andy, doubled over on his knees screaming in pain, clutching his abdomen. Two paramedics tell her she is being taken to a hospital.

When the detectives speak with Mary, she complains of a headache.

"What happened?" she asks.

One of the detectives says, "You got knocked over. Cracked your head on the sidewalk. You probably have a minor concussion."

The other detective, older and more wizened than the first asks,

"Where are you from?"

"Iowa," Mary replies.

The older detective looks at her with a calm, reassurance and says, "You ever given any thought to going back home?"


"No," she says, "I'm a Chicagoan now."

The detective nods his head and smiles sadly. He says, "Good, kid. You're going to be OK."

Mary leans back on the pillow, resting her head. She feels tired. She closes her eyes, and the dream comes again. There is no noise, just the sound of wind rushing through the air. The view below is what a great bird soaring over the landscape might have seen. Chicago's lakefront, Wrigley Field, Lincoln Park.



Trio of Pumpkins, Emma Grant, Charcoal Drawing

The background of the image is a complex, abstract geometric pattern. It consists of several overlapping squares and rectangles, some of which are filled with a fine, white halftone dot pattern against a black background. The squares are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, with some appearing to be in front of others. The overall effect is a high-contrast, textured composition.

Tenth MUSE



Ariane Campbell

Outside of writing novels for young adult audiences, I love reading, horseback riding, and any excuse to snack on something sweet.

Rob Luke

Rob Luke is a graduate of the MFA in Creative Writing Program from Minnesota State University, Mankato. He teaches English at Delano High School in Minnesota. He lives on Lake Minnewashta, near the town of Excelsior, Minnesota, with his wife, Sara.

Bree Naylea

Bree Naylea is a goofy artist that is reliably late and incredibly charismatic. She is a student by day and an exhausted student by night. She enjoys doodling, organizing art events or closets, and experimenting with creative ideas.

John Day

John Day was a lifelong Chicagoan and a career law enforcement officer with the Chicago Police Department as a Patrolman, Tactical Officer, and Detective. After retiring he relocated to Stockton, Illinois where he became involved with wildlife and prairie restoration as well as writing in his free time. He has written about local issues; prairie burns and conservation; and early Illinois history.



Jan Bristol

Jan Bristol is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and Johns Hopkins University. After living many years in Colorado, she returned to the Driftless Region and the Big River. She is a member of the E-Town Scribes and her poetry has been featured in Northern Illinois Public Radio's "Poetically Yours," as well as in publications by the Galena Center for the Arts.

Thom Chesney

Higher education professional by day, writer by night; cook, cleaner, and craft beer aficionado in between. Dates and times may vary. Subject to change.

Jes Wagner

Jes Wagner is in her second year at Clarke University; in that short amount of time, she has been a partner in the Morbid Muse Gala, been commissioned to paint a mural for 7 Hills Brewing Company, and is now the Editor in Chief of the Tenth Muse.

Holly Beauchamp

Holly Beauchamp is a senior at Marquette Catholic High School and will definitely miss her mom's chicken adobo when she goes off to college. All of her writing inspiration comes from the crazy ideas that formulate right before bed. And yes, she calls nightmares 'dreams' instead. They make for good stories.

POETRY CONTRIBUTORS

ART CONTRIBUTORS

Burgundy Barklow

I am a senior at Clarke University currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Communications. Photography has always been a passion of mine and I wanted to share a few of my favorite photos.

Emma Grant

I've been drawing as long as I can remember but I got serious about it when I was in the 7th or 8th grade, when I really thought about making what I love into a career. Now that I'm at Clarke, I'm learning more about the craft I love and I'm able to share my love of art with others!

Jesser Hernandez

My name is Jesser Hernandez and I'm from San Francisco California. I was born in Nicaragua and I moved to the US at the age of 12. I started painting 3 years ago, but I have always loved art. I also play baseball for Clarke and I've been traveling around the world playing baseball.

Kat Jones

I am a 2023 graduate and I am a Graphic Design major with a minor in Studio Arts and Psychology. In my leisure time, I enjoy illustrating, designing, and building out characters.

Louise Kames

Louise Kames holds an MFA degree in drawing and printmaking from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is a professor of art at Clarke University where she is program director for Art + Design. Her drawings, print, and installation-based work are exhibited widely including solo exhibitions across Iowa and the Midwest. She is a regular participant in regional, national and international juried exhibitions. The Iowa Arts Council named her as an Iowa Arts Fellow for 2021. Kames enjoys the creative and cultural exchange offered at artist residencies.



Kali Milder

Hello! My name is Kali Milder and I am a senior, graduating in December 2021. I am a Social Work major with a minor in Psychology, with high hopes of becoming a licensed Social Worker in the near future. I have been on the Clarke Women's Volleyball Team for the last four years and have thoroughly enjoyed being part of a team. I am from a very small town known as Wilton, IA that is about an hour and a half from Dubuque, IA. I chose Clarke as my "home away from home" because of the very welcoming staff members, small community, and engaged/involved campus. I have loved my time at Clarke University and in Dubuque, but I am ready to start my next adventure!

Lily Alice Nesta

I am a sketch artist currently learning the art of oil paint. I am interested in existentialism and the concept of life and death. My name is Lily Alice Nesta and I am a current student at Clarke University studying studio art with an emphasis in drawing and painting. The art I make is inspired by nature, existentialism, and the circle of life. There is beauty in everything and communicating it through art is my passion.

Naomi Noel

I am a first-year music education major that dabbles with art occasionally. My primary instrument is the piano, secondary is the flute, and I've already performed on three other instruments in a concert.

Charlotte Rodewald

Charlotte Rodewald is an alumna of Clarke University. She is currently working in the Marketing department at Dupaco Community Credit Union. She is an illustrator as well as a writer. She has had many pieces both visual and literal exhibited in the Tenth Muse before. Her current passions are water-coloring scenes from hikes and adventures with her family, as well as designing and running adventures for her friends in Dungeons and Dragons.

Jes Wagner

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