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JUXTAPOSE BY LILLY JOHNSON / CHARLESTON HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 10

Manifesto

We are here. This magazine is a place for young people from Southeast Missouri to have our perspectives reside. Young people's ideas, beliefs and questions about the world enrich all of our conversations as we work together to celebrate our joys and progress solutions to our struggles. Young people are here, and we want to share about the world from our points of view.

Look here. Writing and art looks at the particular, the concrete. It examines that which others take for granted. It sees and pays attention to detail. Believing the people and places around us are worthy of attention, we give our curiosity to here, our place in Southeast Missouri.

Here matters. Southeast Missouri is our home, and we want to be the ones writing the story and contributing to the conversation about our region. Providing young people with the tools to pursue career paths in the arts after high school and contribute to the global conversation about the region we are from matters.

And so, for the past year, students from five schools across Southeast Missouri have met once a month as part of the inaugural Here. Student Editorial Board. At these meetings, we have learned writing and art skills, as well as post-graduation tips for pursuing the arts, from professional writers and from Mia Pohlman and the 2021-2022 Here. Student Editorial Board

artists in our community. We have also read the writing and viewed the art of our peers from 13 schools throughout our region who submitted their work for consideration of publication, participating in critiques about each piece as we decided what to publish here. We have learned about people, spaces and opportunities within the local art community, ate meals together, and made friends with students from other schools along the way.

This literary magazine is the fruit of our labors. We hope you enjoy reading and thinking about the issues, questions and dreams that matter to young people Here.

The Eye of the Storm

by Apollo Forhan

STE. GENEVIEVE HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 12

The people who visit the town come to see that seemed omnipresent. The sky was overthe storm, but they never will.

'cause its comin' back, right?" "What?"

comin' back."

We were huddled up against the walls of our cinderblock school, heads down and

pressed against the painted walls. "I don't believe you. I don't think it's real. Just a normal tornado."

"And the fact that it's blood red?"

"Clay deposits."

My friend scoffed, and I could practically hear him rolling his eyes.

"Oh yeah? What about the swirling hands? The eye?"

I could hear the sounds of a lanyard jingling and heels making their way towards us. "Storms don't have eyes," I hissed. "Unless

they're hurricanes, and we're landlocked." "What about the hands?"

"People hallucinate before they die." "The screaming? The smell of rotting

flesh?" "People. Hallucinate. When they. Die." I

said through gritted teeth.

How long was this drill going to last? "You two, quiet." The teacher said, directly behind us.

school would know, and then Dad would in his mouth and his feet up on a cooler. know, then he'd be all, "What's wrong with you," and, "You're gonna go to Hell."

Hope I see you there, Pops.

cast, as it usually was, and I could see for "You know they make us do these drills miles, the flat plains of the farm stretching off into the horizon. The dandelions in the driveway waved gently, growing with a per-"The storm. It's been 50 years, so it's severance I myself could not muster; when they began to shake from an approaching truck, I wished I could shake with them. I kept myself from jumping at the slam of

the door and the crunch of gravel. "The hell've you been doing, boy? Get in

the damn house, storm's coming!" "I don't — "

"I don't care! Get inside and move some shit to the basement."

As the door swung open, I sighed and went inside. The smell of smoke hung in the air, and I thought fondly of when that wasn't the case. I walked towards my room, also missing when I was allowed to have a door. But when I'm under his roof, privacy is a

privilege I don't have. "No, none of your pansy shit, essen-

tials only.' "I'm gonna grab a book to read while we're — '

"Essentials. Only."

Of course, to him, liquor's essential. What drink number is that, beloved father? Nine? When I made it down to the basement, he was sitting in one of the beat-up lawn

I could just kick her. Stretch out my leg, chairs we kept down there for when it was and kick her. No one has to know. Well, the nice in the summertime, another cigarette "Finally, something knocked some sense

into ya. You can go grab some of your shit now — only the essentials."

I made my way up the steps, wincing at The house was dark and locked, as it usu- the creaks of the ancient wood, and glanced ally was, and I sat on the porch. The wind back at my dad, framed against that dischime, about as old as I was and with the gusting wood paneling. I tried to ignore delicate rolls of metal dangling from below that stupid, familiar blazing red hat he wore a cross, jingled faintly in the gentle breeze to cover up his bald head. The spring-bound

and I trudged toward my room, trying to think of what I could save and what I could hide. The rumbling of the winds had grown louder by this point, and the roaring of rain way dandelions shaking with a fear I pounded on the leaky metal roof.

When I made it back to the basement door, I tried to shoulder it open.

It didn't budge. "Dad?" I called. "Door's jammed, and my

arms are full." "Door's not jammed, Son, it's locked."

I was speechless.

"You need to grow up and quit actin' the way you do, and this is the quickest way. You can come back when you learn to quit within 30 feet of the storm, a towering pilbein' a coward and be a man."

My supplies — practically all of my possessions my dad knew about — dropped to the ground, and the power flickered off.

"What?" I was beginning to choke up. What kind of monster does this?

"I said — " "I heard you." I replied, my voice even

and quiet against the howling winds. As the thunder shook the house, I went back to my room. I sat at my desk — built by my own hands so I could learn what a blindingly bright. real job's like — and held a shaky tube of

mascara in my hands. By the flashes of lightning, I assembled something that felt more ... me.

Clothes I wanted to wear. A face I wanted to have.

Finishing up, I sighed and stepped outside. It was a bit of a Midwesternism to sit and watch storms go through, knowing built for this occasion. that wherever it takes you will be better than here, but I did, anyway.

And then I saw it.

A blood-red funnel cutting against the grassy green and cloudy grays of the sky. And it was heading towards me, some

door swung shut as I pushed through it, sort of light at the top beckoning me like a sick lighthouse to a dying sailor, a sickly yellow light like a false sun.

> The grass around me rattled, the driveshared. Dogs - or at least I hoped they were dogs — howled in the distance, harmonizing with the winds that blew my hair and watered my eyes.

> Like Odysseus to the sirens, I headed for it. Maybe it was the color dulling my senses, or maybe my adrenaline, but it felt like the howling gales were ... gentler. My limbs felt heavy, like when you get off of a trampoline and feel like you're still bouncing. I made it lar of swirling crimson, and I felt calm.

I could see the hands, of course, swirling in the red, reaching towards me, like open arms offering a hug.

And I reached towards them.

Hands.

A scarlet wash over everything in sight. And no pain.

I felt like I was floating, flying even.

And in the center of the swirling carmine, a grand eye, yellow like the sun and I felt home.

The aftermath of the storm was the same as every other storm: swaths of destruction in paths, damage that wouldn't be mended until it was necessary.

Everything was normal, and everyone was safe, their basements and shelters well-Save for one.

A man, a single father with his son nowhere to be found, found impaled on the wood paneling of his basement, cigarette in his mouth and beer bottle in his hand.

His daughter will be sorely missed.



THE WONDERFUL WORLD, CADEN GURLEY / PORTAGEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 10

My Wishes

by Erin Urhahn

OAK RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL SCHOOL / GRADE 11

If I had hands, I'd play the piano. If I knew I'd grow up, I'd cherish my youth. If I could do high school all over again, I wouldn't. Once was enough.

If I had a heart of love, I'd be less hostile. If I knew my mother felt unseen, I'd compliment her. If I liked vegetables, I'd only eat healthily.

If I had eyes, I'd love purple more than any other color. If I knew I would one day perish, I'd stop complaining. If my hair were straight, I'd be just as unsatisfied as I am with curly hair.

If I had legs, I'd never stop running and skipping. If I knew my dad would listen, I'd tell him I miss him when he's not home. If I were pretty, I wouldn't lie with concealer.

If I had a brain, I'd take a chemistry class. If I knew life was short, I wouldn't hit the snooze button. If suffering for another was love, I'd suffer more.

If I had an education, I'd spend days upon weeks reading. If I knew I'd have grandchildren, I'd make a photobook for their little fingers to flip through. If I cared less about others' opinions, I'd always wear a dress. If I had my own house, I'd bring my cat inside. If I had a room, I'd keep it spotless. If I believed in a God of creation, I'd let him create a life for me.

If I had lips, I'd paint them with sparkles. If I knew my husband was waiting for me, I'd stop fighting so hard to find him.

If people asked, I'd express the emotions I felt.

If I had ears, I'd bless them with One Direction. If I knew money was worthless, I'd find a job I liked. If I had a car, I'd name him Brad.

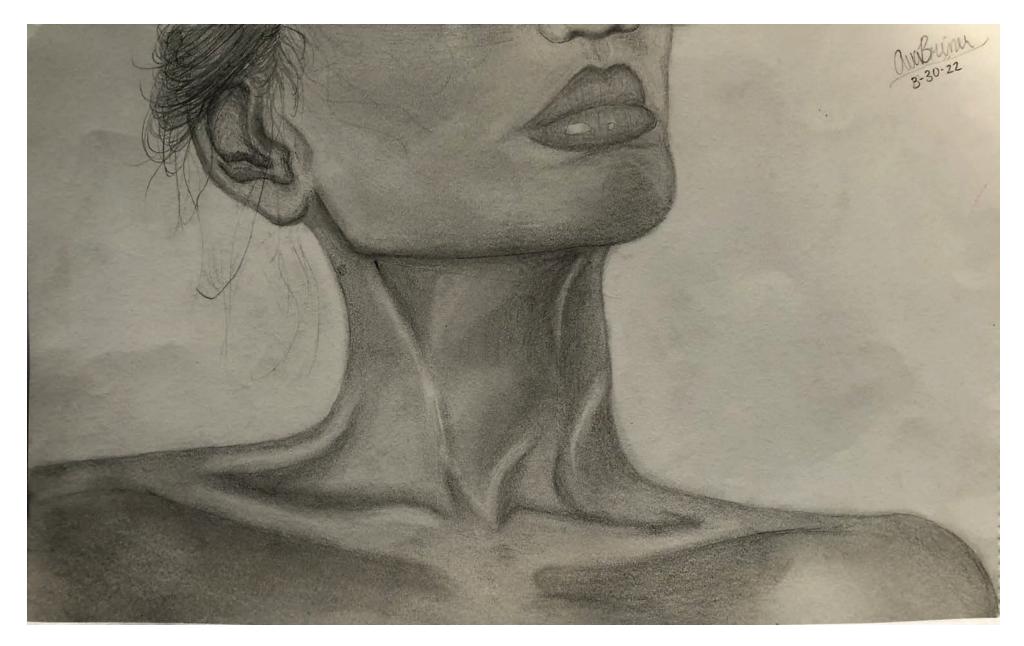
If I had friends, I would call them. If I knew I was leaving the nest soon, I'd hug my family. If I were aware of my life, I'd start to live again.

If I had a pencil, I'd write down my heart and give it to the world.

If I knew I was Erin, I'd stop looking for her. If, for a minute, the world's attention was at my hands, I would say:

Love is always the answer.

Life is trying to figure out the question; if it exists.



SIMPLICITY, AVA BRINER / JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 10

Adult Boot Camp

Tori Bollinger

JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 12

My stomach fluttering as I left the safety of my mom's car, allowed! I stood there like a lost puppy in a new city. I stumbled to the front window of American Ice Cream (AIC), splashing through the puddles and tripping over will fire you," Kayla cautioned. In response, I mutely nodpotholes in the concrete. Before even reaching the window, ded in agreement. I was motioned to walk around to the back door by an employee not much older, it seemed, than my 14-year-old self. tour of AIC while she explained different parts of the job, for them to be washed, dried and put away before closing. There, I took my first steps into the place that would teach deciding at the end it was time for me to make my first me countless life lessons for the next four years.

bombarded me with a mountain of tasks I needed to do the window at which people place their food orders. before going up front. "Here are your work shirts. Go to the bathroom and change into one. Then, wash your small dixie," the veteran requested. hands, put on this hat, read the employee handbook and come find me when you are done," the nameless girl said.

stainless, stainless-steel sink.

ki" glared at me on the first page.

Looking down at my bright pink leggings, I instantly thought, I am going to be fired on my first day!

then Tatum will take over."

Kayla gazed at my outfit like Regina George from

"Do not wear those leggings here again or else our boss

What is a regular, and what in the world is a dixie? Kayla called me over to the ice cream machine and an-I went to the bathroom just as she said and slipped swered both of my questions as if she had read my mind. on my new black shirt with an American flag. After I A dixie was a cup of ice cream, so I grabbed a small, white a black binder clip. "In addition to the dishwashing list, changed my shirt, I went to wash my hands in the not-so-styrofoam cup and filled it with five ounces of vanilla ice there are other lists that tell you everything: how to make cream. Next, I needed to prepare the regular — also known toppings, what the front closers should be doing and how I know she left the employee handbook here somewhere, as a medium — Butterfinger. With Kayla's help, I added six to open." I thought as I searched for the two-page thin "book." tablespoons of Butterfinger to the cup, along with 21 ounc- She then led me to the sink, so I could start washing When I found it and began reading, I saw rule after rule es of ice cream. When it came time to mix the concrete, I listed, each one with its own difficulty level. "Do not wear learned to gently and repeatedly tap a foot pedal on the ma-hours. I still have so much to learn, I thought. This is going any colors other than red, white, blue, black, gray or kha- chine so the topping does not fly out of the cup, and I smiled to be much more than a job. American Ice Cream is going when the Marine thanked me for his treat.

Following my successful first concrete, Kayla ushered me to the back and pointed at a white paper with an old legs proudly strut into the back door of AIC. I watch After finishing reading the handbook and placing 8x20 black grid on it. The grid listed all of the employees' naïve girls leave their parents' car as I once did, and inmy phone on a shelf as directed, I walked back towards names and when they worked. Kayla was at the top of the stead of Kayla telling them to go to the back door, I guide the door I entered through, finding the dark-haired girl grid, which signified she was the person who had worked them. When I look at the scheduling grid, my name is the again. Pointing to a younger girl nearby, she said, "Hi, my at AIC the longest. My eyes ran their way down the list second from the top, showing I am one of the girls who name is Kayla, and I will be training you until seven, and of employees and found my name at the bottom — the has been here the longest. newest one.

the handbook, but her look made it clear they were not Cream GroupMe," which I learned is used by AIC to send friends here like I have.

out weekly schedules and mass text messages from the boss. At seven that night, Kayla's shift was over and another

worker came in to take her place. I continued to mix concretes and learn how to make new treats. AIC closes at 10 After the clothing comment, she took me around on a p.m. every night, so the dishes must be started at 9 p.m. Since Kayla left and Tatum was now responsible for me, sweet ice cream treat. A delicate and frail old man proudly she noted, "Tori, since you are the newest employee here, The girl with dark brown hair who had greeted me now wearing a U.S. Marines cap ambled towards the walk-up, you will be doing the dishes tonight. They aren't fun to do, so I'm sorry."

> "I would like a regular Butterfinger concrete and a "That's OK! I actually enjoy doing dishes at home," I replied.

> > "Hanging above the back desk, there is a list of things you need to wash," Tatum said as she pointed to a collection of laminated computer papers held together by

> > the mound of dishes that had compiled from the earlier to be my adult boot camp.

> > Now, four years into my ice cream career, my 18-year-

When new workers are hired, I help them understand "This is the schedule, and it tells you when you work," that at AIC, they will learn to make ice cream, yes, and "Mean Girls." I knew pink leggings were not allowed per Kayla said. "I am also going to add you to the American Ice to resolve conflicts, but they will also gain many lifelong

Lovely, but Different

by Altyn Kate Timlin

Both lovely but different

NOTRE DAME REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 9

Two souls met by accident now inseparable Two best friends that saved each other A pair of hearts that dance together Every laugh every hug every handshake A new core memory that will never be forsaken The friendship between the two sisters is not blood but choice Bonded together, their friendship like a song Together or apart, near or far, always playing Like a line holding them together, flowering and bursting with sunlight and love But soon, it will all change Not disappear, but change The innocence of childhood replaced with the richness that comes from evolving

Behind Cloth

on Strings

by Madelyn Hicks

JACKSON SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 12

Darkness creeps around her body. But you don't see it. The boy sits alone in the waiting room to see his dying grandpa. But you can't tell. The wedding got canceled, and their happiest day never came. But you wouldn't know. A mother says congratulations to her child over FaceTime, the child finishes the most important chapter of their life, all behind a piece of cloth attached to two strings. A father tells his children he loves them over FaceTime, he is stuck overseas and can't come home, but you wouldn't know, this is life behind cloth on strings. The cloth covers the faces of the students and teachers. Schools grow empty and dark. Churches sit every two rows apart, livestreams now. Shelves become bare, and stores are silent. Colleges send kids home. Shelters close. Food banks lose produce and meat. Time Square stands still. Faces that can no longer be recognized, this is life behind cloth on strings. Missed birthdays, graduations, funerals, weddings, goodbyes, hellos. The kindergartners miss their first day of school, and the seniors miss their last day, visiting nursing homes through windows, parks are closed, children become silent, this is life behind cloth on strings. The world stands still, people become ill. This is the life we lived behind cloth on strings.

Bliss

Lydia Chotrow

PERRYVILLE HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 11

The Little Girl walked slowly through the black expanse. There was nothing in front of her and nothing behind. She was alone, yet she was not afraid. As she walked along, her white tulle dress swayed around her, and her pretty golden locks fell gently down her back. She knew she had been walking for quite some time, but she did not tire nor consider stopping.

She was still walking, when suddenly, the sound of footsteps resounded through the silence. The Little Girl stopped when the tip of a cane and two black shoes appeared in front of her. The Little Girl's eyes traveled upwards to the face of this new companion before her. In front of her stood a tall man; he looked gaunt to her, as if someone had pulled on his head and feet a little too much. His face was pale, and his eyes were like the blood that drips from a wound. The man carried a severe-looking cane and was dressed in fine clothes made of black silk. He smiled menacingly at the Little Girl as she studied him. She was unsure of him; his eyes held a secretive glint to them she felt wary of.

"Hello, Little Girl," he greeted her in a raspy voice, as if he had swallowed some gravel. "Who are you?" the Little Girl asked.

"No one terribly important. I only came to ask you a question," he said tritely.

"What is your question?" she asked curiously.

"Would you like to know?" The man quirked an eyebrow at her. "Know what?"

"Would you like to know?" he repeated.

At her confused look, the man swept his cane in a wide motion and pointed to her right. The Little Girl looked to where he pointed, and her eyes widened. Where there had once been nothing but black, there was now white, but the white was not empty, as the black had been. Inside the white were creatures; they were all different shapes and sizes. The only common factor of the creatures was that they were terrifying. Some had twisted features and jowls that hung open and swayed with their movements. Others had eyes hanging from their head or blood pooling in their sunken heads. The sounds they made were horrid — moans, screeches and grunts rose from them. The Little Girl gasped and took a step away. The man placed a hand behind her, though, and forced her to look at the creatures. As she continued watching, she saw the creatures licking at the white greedily. Wherever one of the creatures licked, the place slowly turned black, the same black she had been

walking through for quite some time. The man looked at her again and asked, "Would you like to know?"

"Do I have to?" The Little Girl asked on a shaky breath.

"No, but if you do, then you'll know," he chuckled, as if amused by his own words.

"What will I know?" She furrowed her eyebrows. "What you should know," he said and smiled like he was in on a secret he couldn't be

bothered to tell her. The Little Girl was confused by his words, but still, she continued with her questions.

"What if I don't?" "Then you may turn around and walk away."

She pondered for a moment, looked to her right at the creatures, then to her left at the endless black. Hesitantly, she took a small step toward the creatures, and as she did, a dark stain started to grow on her dress. It was a black spot that slowly started creeping up and devouring the white. The Little Girl quickly stumbled back, and the black spot faded into white once again, with nothing but a tiny little dot left. She turned to the man and asked, "What was that?"

"The consequences of knowing." He stared at her intensely, waiting with an expectant look on his face, then asked for a final time, "Would you like to know?"

The Little Girl was quiet as she answered the man, her voice barely above a whisper. "No, I would not like to know."

The man looked disgruntled for a moment, seemingly bothered by her answer, but then shrugged uncaringly and strutted over into the mass of creatures. The Little Girl turned away from the man and the creatures and started to walk. She stopped only for a moment and looked over her shoulder, but there was nothing there. She went forward again, and the farther she went, the more the memory of what had occurred faded from her mind, until she could not remember at all.

The Little Girl walked slowly through the black expanse. There was nothing in front of her and nothing behind. She was alone, and oddly, she was a little bit afraid.



RAKING SUMMER, AUTUMN MCBRYDE / JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 10

Owning Societal Identity as a Multicultural Person

by Zariya Hitchcock-Mason

JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 10

as it was the first time I heard it when I was would be contested by others, causing seven and a classmate saw my white mom difficult identity development issues. Furfor the first time. The skin color makes it ther, this theorizing assumed these indiresemblance; when I first heard it, I just Jenkins later labeled 'cultural homelesslaughed, 'cause it was such a silly question, ness.'" In short, individuals from mixed ambiguity. For the first time ever, I noticed secure sense of affiliation or belongingthere wasn't anyone like me in my class. I ness with ethnic-racial groups in society. had some scarily similar experiences as I would lead to experiences of marginalizaand societal identity go hand-in-hand in isolated from parts of their cultures. being onerous to a multicultural person.

Multicultural people have two or more cul- generics, and even though they are similar, tures within them, which can be a blessing they see each other as not the same. being outcasted by not only society but up, and to fully grasp the sense of self-ideneven your own cultures can cause hesita- tification is labeling yourself with things sole identity of that multiracial person, not identification don't exactly feel applicable,

Being biracial comes with a unique per- want you because of your other halves. spective and diversity within diversity. For In the article "Seven Essential Facts About subjectively, people take race subjectively lematic background of the micro-comexample, a Black and Asian man: Not only Multiracial Youth," Astrea Greig writes into their own encounters and experienc- munity, however, the benefits come from is the man Asian, he is also Black. And in some interesting insider facts about the es, while superficially using race from data the strife of figuring out themselves and America, diversity comes in one color for experiences of the multiethnic. She states, research to applied science. In the same fully reaching self-actualization. the most part, so when two cultures come "Multiracial youth and mixed families often article by Moné, she interviews Samantha in one person, neither Asians nor African experience unique types of discrimination Ferguson. Ferguson declares, "People like To conclude, biracial people have a Americans can tell that man how he's go- and microaggressions. Among the mul- a for-sure answer. People like math, be- challenging journey with claiming their ing to be seen by the rest of society or what tiple types, one is exclusion or isolation in cause if you solve a problem, you have an cultures and facing society. The intricacy anyone will say to him walking down the which multiracial people are excluded due answer, and that's just the answer. I can't of the individualistic findings of self and street. It is the main cause of individualism; to their mixed status. For example, an Asian just choose. It's like asking, what half of culture is something all multicultural not a single half of you can tell you who you and white biracial child may not be treated yourself do you like better?" Divulging the have to go through. In addition to finding are and what society will throw at you. as equally as his or her monoracial siblings matter of self-exterior and how other people and claiming a culture, the societal aspect

writer of the study, Jordan Soliz, wrote dren from parts of their culture, giving atin the study, "Early conceptual and the- tention to how truly unique the multicultur-

Black? So, are you shipped from Africa ??" cial identity as a marginalized experience to reach self-actualization due to "cultural perfect color!" Some could dismiss the This particular question isn't as rare now based on the idea that mixed heritage homelessness" as Vivero and Jenkins put it. challenges of being multiethnic because

tion and confusion into figuring out the that apply to you. When those groups of culture; it can be seen in nationality, stan- their racial identities. In a 2015 study, she only as a person, but also how their partic- it provides a whole new set of questions Giving more than one answer on those strated greater creative problem-solving ular cultures can differ and contract into unheard of to the general population. Even sheets is confounding to the person filling skills than monoracials — but only after defining who they are. This long process is though you technically apply to those it out and the one receiving data. Because they'd been primed to think about their especially individualistic and lonesome. groups, sometimes, those groups don't of the paradoxical way racial identity is multiple identities beforehand." Because

need lotion - no child of mine is going Advantage" by Jennifer Latson, Latson pretty uncanny to most people to see the viduals would experience what Vivero and anywhere with ashy knees." "Don't forget affirms, "Studies show that multiracial you're white, so stop acting like you're only people tend to be perceived as more at-Black." These are some of the phrases from tractive than their monoracial peers, but the question woke up my sense of racial backgrounds would not have a strong and the people around me, and the statements among other advantages." The percepare rather contradictory. There are many tion of biracial people through the metimes in life someone will ask you to define dia and people who aren't opposed to the then talked to my biracial peers who have In turn, this lack of a distinct in-group yourself in as few words as possible, and multicultural seems to have abnormal adding an additional culture makes it very fetishizations due to their highlighted have, and it didn't matter what cultures or tion in society, with negative implications difficult for everyone to understand and te- features of tan skin, brighter eyes and races they were mixed from. That then gave for well-being. The text implies the multi- dious for the multiethnic to explain them- unique hair. Another option is the feme the conclusion of how cultural identity ethnic racial identity is largely unseen and selves. In "What You'll Never Understand tishizing of the biracial culture; monora-About Being Biracial," an introspective cial peers can develop a keen disliking The idea of belonging into a group is to not article by Brianna Moné, Moné converses for being compared to their multiethnic be alone in your culture or societal identity; with psychologist doctor Sarah Gaither, counterparts. Another argument could As you can tell from my story, being the the people in the group have experienced stating, "The big problem is that, as a so- be the mixed community has a keen only one in my classroom like me was similar things as you and do the same tra- ciety, we think in either-or categories. You ability to understand more complex sotough, but it's even worse when your par- ditions as you. But the multiracial don't have can only be one thing or another. You can't cial constructs and empathize with other ents don't look like you — and confusing. that. To their groups, they don't apply to the be two things at the same time." Moné no- minority members. In the same article, tices acquiring many races can be inconsis- Latson interviews social psycholog tent when it comes to being perceived, thus Sarah Gaither as she states, "One advanand a curse. And to carry those beautiful Another challenge is self-identification; giving the pressured option to pick only tage of embracing mixedness, she says, curses that no one can truly explain and understanding yourself is part of growing one. Doing this can make it easier in soci- is the mental flexibility that multiracial ety but can be self-inflicting.

dardized tests and filling diversity quotas. found that multiracial people demonsupposed to work objectively but is used of the individualistic mindset and prob-

"Your hair is so pretty, can you give it just say, "Sure."

"Woah! Your mom's white, but you're oretical work positioned multiethnic-ra- al experience is and how difficult it can be to me?" "I'd kill for your skin tone, it's the of the accusatory benefits that come with "You're Black, Zariya, that means you the identity. In the article "The Biracial people develop when, from a young age, Society has always emphasized race and they learn to switch seamlessly between

An experimental study found the per- or cousins at family gatherings by disap- perceive the multiracial can give the mixed- pressures the biracial community to conceived benefits and downsides to being proving distant relatives." In this statement, race community trepidation and there- fine their alleged subsidiary that makes multicultural. The main researcher and Greig signifies the exemption of mixed chil- fore result in a fragile sense of self-identity. them whole. And the next time someone asks me if I'm shipped from Africa, I'll



2021-2022 Here. Student Editorial Board

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Thank you.

To the writers and artists in our community who passed along their knowledge, skill and wisdom through leading workshops for the 2021-2022 Here. Literary Magazine program:

Aaron Eisenhauer rustmedia photo + video producer

Amanda Flinn author + editor

Benjie Heu professor of ceramics

Blake Sanders instructor of art + design

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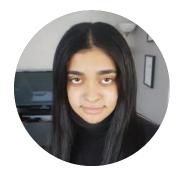
Dr. Tamara Zellars Buck, J.D. professor and chair of mass media



Addy Garagnani CAPE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL Grade 10

Best books I've read: "The Problem With Forever," by Jennifer L. Armentrout; "Call Me By Your Name," by André Aciman; and "Second Chance Summer," by Morgan Matson

I like to write: About my feelings and the people around me. I like to make art about either what inspires me right then or just to do something to help me concentrate. Song I'm currently obsessed with: "Heatwaves," by Glass Animals In the future: I plan to become an elementary teacher, interior designer or zoologist and continue writing. Favorite thing about Southeast Missouri: The Student Aquatic Center pool at Cape Central



Alexis Weibrecht CAPE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL Grade 10

Best book I've read: "Throne of Glass," by Sarah J. Maas I like writing because: I'm able to put my thoughts into great pieces of work. I also use writing as an escape from the real world. Song I'm currently obsessed with: So many songs, it would be hard to name just one. However, one song I like is "We are Bulletproof," by The Eternal. In the future: As of right now, I don't have any plans for the future; I'm going to take life one step at a time. Favorite thing about Southeast Missouri: The weather. This is because I have gotten out of school because of it.



Altyn Timlin Notre dame regional High school Grade 9

Favorite books: "Tweet Cute," by Emma Lord; "The Selection," by Kiera Cass; and "To Kill a Mockingbird," by Harper Lee Favorite artists and writers:

Taylor Swift, Harry Styles and Shannon Messenger I love to write and create art about: My daydreams and stresses Song I'm currently obsessed with: "Angel Eyes," by Abba, because it reminds me of summer. In the future: I really want to do something with design — either fashion, textile or architectural. Favorite memories from high school: Meeting so many new people and getting to spend every day with my best friends! Also, the car rides with my sister. My catchphrase: "Slay"



Ben Gabriel JACKSON SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL Grade 9

Best book I've read: "Prisoner
B-3087," by Alan Gratz
Favorite writers and artists: Jeff Zentner, Alan Gratz and John Williams
I like to: Write poetry and paint
Song I'm currently obsessed with:
"Old Flame," by Alabama
Future plans: Become a teacher
Favorite high school memory:
Hanging out with my friends at my school's spring event
My catchphrase: "You've got to be kidding me."
Favorite thing about Southeast Mis-

souri: Walking in Downtown Cape



Ben Oliver CHARLESTON HIGH SCHOOL Grade 12

Favorite high school memory: Playing at my town's talent showcase. I sang a Foo Fighters' song dedicated to my dad.

Meet the Editorial Board

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Charlie Spence NOTRE DAME REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL Grade 9

Best book I've read: "The Adoration of Jenna Fox," by Mary E. Pearson. It is really easy to follow, and it also raises some pretty interesting questions about morality and what defines a human being. Favorite writers: H.P. Lovecraft, Edgar Allan Poe and Shakespeare. I enjoy these writers because of how they have influenced and changed the world of literature for the better. In the future: I want to study computer science and either be a computer scientist or a video game designer! My catchphrase: It changes a lot, but right now, I find myself saying the word "epic" an abnormal amount of times throughout the day. Favorite thing about Southeast Missouri: The wildlife. I love being able to see all kinds of different animals in my backyard every day!



Kyleigh Pawlowski Advance high school Grade 9

Favorite book: "The Collector,"
by John Fowles
Favorite art piece: "Ballet With Magic," by Leonid Afremov
Favorite song: "Riptide," by
Vance Joy
In the future: I plan to go to college to learn more about filmmaking/

editing or graphic design. **My catchphrase:** "Oh, my gosh!" **Favorite thing about South east Missouri:** The hills! It's so fun going up and down them!



Lilly Johnson CHARLESTON HIGH SCHOOL Grade 10

Best book I've read: "Far From You," by Tess Sharpe Favorite writers and artists: Rachel Smythe, Alice Oseman and Kaiu Shirai

Song I'm currently obsessed with: "Abyss," by Jin

In the future: I plan to go to college and get a degree in art education. Favorite high school memory: Playing donkey basketball with my classmates

My catchphrase: The word I'm constantly saying is "bro" these days. Favorite thing about Southeast Missouri: How close-knit the communities are.



Mia Timlin Notre dame regional High school Grade 12

Favorite book: It's impossible to pick the best book I've ever read, but "A Room With a View," by E. M. Forster, or "The House in the Cerulean Sea," by TJ Klune, are two of my favorites. Favorite writers: I love Joan Didion because she's observant, Taylor Swift because she can make the abstract come to life with music and Lauren Shippen because she tells stories in unique ways.

Songs I'm currently obsessed with: "King," by Florence + the Machine, and "Burn Out," by Isabel Pless Favorite high school memory: Having a water balloon fight during my web broadcasting class Favorite thing about Southeast Missouri: How living here for the past five years has broadened my perspective and introduced me to the different ways people live and interact.

Senior

by Abbigail Naes

CAMPBELL HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 12

Today, I take my last step into the building that has taught me. Out of the past 14 years, nine out of 12 months, from 8 a.m. to 3:15, this home away from home has seen my tears of anguish and desperation, but also the smiles and laughter of triumph. It was here I overcame my biggest problems and fears, but also where I got them. When I leave today, I will never be the same. I may come back here, but never as I was. For I will be granted the great pleasure of walking this stage where I will take my last and final steps. I will walk out of the doors knowing I have accomplished something I never thought I could.

My final goodbye to my friends who were there as I grew, the teachers who taught me well, and last but not least, my home away from home. I leave you for the last time not as a student but as the adult you raised me to be.

Counting Rings

by Mia Timlin

NOTRE DAME REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 12

Sometimes, I ache for the person I will be five, 10, 15 years from now — a stranger.

And when I am her, what will become of the girl I am now?

The one cleaning her bedroom at two in the morning, cramming folded T-shirts into stuffed drawers knowing they'll come out again wrinkled,

and whose left-hand fingers are coated in melted chocolate, recording each little thought in a notebook before it can melt away — panicking at the thought of others reading it.

This girl I know so well, getting out of bed in the dark to put on a dress because reading "Pride and Prejudice" in pajamas just doesn't feel right.

Will she slip below the surface like the others?

I can count them inside me like the rings of a tree stump.

The 3-year-old running around in crooked green fairy wings, collecting a bouquet of dandelions for her mother,

the 5-year-old cutting off her braid because it got in the way of the yellow construction paper she was turning into a countdown chain,

the 7-year-old twirling to a Nora Jones song with a long purple scarf, tumbling when her foot got caught in the sheer fabric.

They are just as much strangers as that girl I have yet to become —

a photograph I saw in an album years ago, or a dream I forgot I had.

Or what about the ones who feel more like friends I haven't talked to in too long?

The 12-year-old who looped thousands of hopscotch boxes around the entire block during the summertime,

the 13-year-old who wrote bad poetry and embarrassing time capsule letters to her future self,

the 15-year-old whose chest crushed with real panic for the first time, waiting to make a left turn across busy traffic.

I can't remember all these girls well,

sometimes I loathe them — mostly I miss them.

The reminders of what I once was, and what I am now, that I can never be again.

But I know they are there,

the voices feeding me songs to sing,

melodies to dance to,

stories to tell.



SELF-PORTRAITS, MALLORIE METZGER / JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 11



REMEMBRANCE, ERICA AMELUNKE / JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 11

Evil Queen Poem

by Riley Adams

JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 9

Listen well, and I'll tell you a story, but take note, my darklings, it's a wee bit gory. Innocence, Heartache, and Treachery, oh, my. What is truth, and what is lie? In this tale of vengeance and woe, foe may be friend, and friend may be foe. Who will survive, who will fall? Who will shatter like a porcelain doll? Put your heart back together, my sweet. It's time to rise up, there are answers to seek. Dry your tears, and march ahead. You can rest when you are dead. Fee-Fi-Fo-FUN, I smell the blood of a broken one.

A welcome home, the stuff of dreams. Of course, nothing is ever as it seems. You can rest awhile, or you can fret. Either way, your future is set. The worst is done. Let's have some fun. For all the warnings you failed to heed, prick your heart, and let it bleed. Run, run, they're on your trail. If you get caught, you will face hell. In battle, stay calm, be smart. Expect losses and a broken heart. One battle is done, but another looms. Who walks away, who greets their doom?

In life, there are risks you must take, and desires you should not slake. The worst has happened, every path a disaster. Behold! Destruction has become your master. Fight the good fight with everything you've got, or even your smallest efforts will be for naught. True love's kiss can break any curse ... or make your life ever so much worse. Your dreams have come true. Why are you so blue? If warning sounds deep in your soul, Pay it heed, or pay the toll.

Secrets are there, yours for the taking. Please be careful, the beast is waking. Hurting others comes with a great cost. Piece after piece of your heart, until you are lost. Time is of the essence and quickly running out. Fight, fight, fight, and ditch the overgrown lout.
The deeper you wade into trouble,
the quicker your life becomes rubble.
Kiss me once, Kiss me twice,
I will be your favorite vice.
They say pride goes before every fall.
I say take someone with you — take them all.
A lock, a lie, an illusion of capture.
The real jailer is desire, oh, the rapture.

Storms might rage in your past, but the temptest cannot last. With this ring, I thee wed. With this dagger, your blood runs red. Leave him in the dust, and his heart will rust. Red wedding, stony heart ... no longer will we be apart. Just when you get bored, in comes the horde. It's time, it's time, the toll is due. Pay up, pay up, and say adieu. Tell the truth or tell a lie. Are you ready to say goodbye?

Beware false hope and its lures. Seek the truth and its cures. Whether wrong or right, you must have might. What's done is done. Fight until you've won. What's theirs is yours. Prepare for wars. My wish, your command. Your heart, my quicksand. I welcome all ... to my thrall.

When all is lost, do not despair.
Dare to act, dare to care.
Death has come.
Who will succumb?
The time has come to pick a side,
for you will never bridge the great divide.
Mirror, mirror, on the wall.
Who will perish when I call?
The taste of vengeance is foul, not sweet.
If only you hadn't believed the deceit.



IRENE (GREEK FOR PEACE), ABBIGAIL NAES CAMPBELL HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 12

hidden tears

by Elizabeth Ann Haas

STE. GENEVIEVE HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 12

happy little girl — full of laughter and cheer.

happy little girl who always sees daddy disappear.

happy little girl feeling responsible for her mother's tears.

happy little girl hides many secrets and has so much fear.

happy little girl isn't so happy after all. look into her eyes and see the cage around her soul.

sad little girl — crying to the night.

sad little girl so ready to give up the fight.



SQUIRREL, MICHAELA PAIR / JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 10

The House of Demons

by Riley Ries

JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 11

I met Heth in the first grade. We trans- mind and only let Heth and Dhuna up ev- world came crashing down on top of ferred schools to be closer to my grand- ery once in a while. But her niceness came me. Lola and Morana came back. Heth mother who was dying, but I think it was with a price. I never had any energy with her and Dhuna were louder than ever. And I had introduced me to. I met a man that me who needed help. Heth kept me from around, and I lost all interest in the things I couldn't talk to anyone to shut them up. year named Samuel. He pushed back all speaking and making friends. He told me once loved. But we bonded over sad music, Not only that, but I found out this whole the demons that had taken over my house, if I said one wrong thing, then everyone and she taught me it's OK to spend as much time, there was a boy who had been living and when he learned about the demons, he would hate me. He told me the only reason time in my room as I wanted, because it was in the attic. my teachers could tolerate me was because mine, and it was the only thing I had that Lelio had slowly been encouraging every- about it. I told him when I met everyone I kept quiet. I could never focus because of would never change. his whispers.

wasn't as loud as his brother, but he still cially Morana. Morana would tell me I was when I would focus on random things rid of them and had forced them out. loved messing with me. When I washed my wasn't worth the life I was given. She'd he enjoyed doing. Like one time, I built an Slowly, Heth and Dhuna and Lola and hands, I had to wash each individual fin- party all night with Heth and Dhuna, hav- entire shelf in one day. The problem was, be- Morana disappeared. Lelio still stayed, but ger, starting with the thumb on my left and ing them yell at the top of their lungs every cause he shut up, I forgot to eat and go to the I think Lelio had actually been there before ending with the pinky on my right. When little thought they had been holding back. bathroom that whole time. The same thing me, and Samuel told me that was OK. came off the minute I stepped inside.

peared into the basement as Lola took over. as loud, because Morana had left.

Dhuna and Heth lived in harmony for four of them would go, as well.

father left us, and a shadowy figure came By the beginning of freshman year, Lola there, and I guess it wasn't nearly as bad rent. You're the landlord, and if they want knocking on the door. The two brothers let was only living in my house during the as I make it seem. I had a loving mom. I to trash the house, then kick them out. It her in with ease, but then, slowly, they disap- winter, and Heth and Dhuna weren't nearly was able to make a lot of friends, despite might be hard, but with some help from the

Lola was nice; she helped me clear my But then spring of 2020 came, and my of Dhuna.

Morana helped him with that one.

When I graduated, it got better.

I went to college for acting, which Lelio convinced me to sit down and talk to him one to be louder so I couldn't concentrate and how they just forced themselves into Sometimes, Lola would invite some of on important tasks. He was the reason I my life. And he told me that at one point His brother, Dhuna, moved in when my her friends over. Some would stay longer couldn't sit for more than five minutes at a in his life, he'd met every one of them, plus grandmother died the year after. Dhuna than others. I hated most of them. Espe- time. The only time he would ever shut up some. He then told me how he had gotten

I got home, I had to put my bag in the far The only reason I didn't give in to her was happened when I got paints and canvases The thing is, everyone struggles with right corner of my room, and my shoes because of Lola. Lola stole any motivation I for my birthday; my mom didn't see me for demons in their house. Some have to deal had to end it all; she knew if I did, then the two full days that time. To be honest, I think more than others, and others only see them every once in a while. But here's the thing: about five years. Then, in sixth grade, my Life went by slowly, but I made it work. I will say, it was nice to know he was It's your house, and they aren't paying Heth. And I was always healthy because professionals, you will find you are more powerful than those measly demons.

the ghosts in my house

by Mia Timlin

NOTRE DAME REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 12

there are ghosts in my house lingering in all the corners where the light barely brushes sliding silently down the banisters

my mom used to turn on the tv and there was a woman there with short sunshine hair who danced and we did too my small head bobbing her arms whirling pushing away invisible ghosts

and when I dry the china an embroidered yellowed cloth becoming one part thread and two parts water I build a tower with the plates the one slotting into its nest on top sending earthquake shivers all the way down the clangs sting my bones and the ghosts feel it too

did you know

I don't know how to say goodnight because we say it two three four hundred times that I no longer believe the first one but my last goodnight is to the ghosts whispers whirling around me and the warm glow of hotel hallway lighting as I drift

AL HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 12	'Dennis Down-Low'! My last post about a motel I stayed at brought my blog 50 new readers! So a BIG thank you to any new 'Down-Lowers' reading now! This week I'm staying out at a motel called the 'Wind- Down' in Merkel, Missouri! Sofar it's much more impressive than the 'Sleep Inn' from the previous post, I can't wait to see what all makes it stand out! The next part of this post will be written in an hour or so after I've had time to take in the atmosphere!! I've had time to take in the low fished here
RAT TEETH, THOMAS DEPEDER / CAPE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 12	wall that contained the vast darkness. Then, there was nothing. There was <i>m</i> nothing at all. The housekeeper of the motel, a 19-year- old girl named Gene, carted her supplies <i>st</i> from inside Room 26 to the hallway outside of Room 27. The door stood in front of her. Jiggling the handle, she found it wouldn't budge. She knew the entire right side of the hall was meant to be checked out by 11 a.m. She rapped on the door. No response from
<page-header><image/><page-header></page-header></page-header>	the screen, unchanged. He tried using the backspace to delete everything he had previously written. He could easily just re- write it. Nothing changed, except the mass of black-gray text began to pulse. Rhyth- mically, as if it were vital to its survival to keep a steady pace. It seemed to grow on the screen, taunting him. Having enough of this Times New Roman-styled black hole, Dennis closed his laptop. The hole slid out from underneath the laptop and gazed up
	hung over the sides of the insignificant bedside table. He fumbled around until he found the switch against the side of the lamp. After struggling to turn the switch, a dull orange light emitted from under the shade of the lamp. Though dim, Dennis thought it presented a much more comforting aura than the overhead fluo- rescent lights that beat down upon him mercilessly. Satisfied with the new source of light, he stepped over to his desk and did down into the down choir orace
	mething enchanted n of the steps, the tt behind them, and k in the frame from Dennis's hand trem- the door handle. He natever roamed be- as a threat to him. sstrain himself from wering what lay be- e golden handle that

Down-Low Dennis by Eli Clubbs

GRADE О 0 KSO

 Dennis Down-Low'! My last post about a motel 1 stayed at brought my blog 50 new readers! So a BIG thank you to any new Down-Lowers' reading now! This week I'm staying out at a motel called the 'Wind-Down' in Merkel, Missouril So far it's much more impressive than the 'Sleep Im' from the previous post, I can't wait to see what all makes it stand out! The next part of this post will be written in an hour or so after I've had time to take in the atmosphere!! Let me just start with how friendly the staff is here. From the moment I entered I knew that this was aplace where I could stay forever just from how welcoming everyone was. The man at the front desk knew my name before I could even say it! He walked me to my room and told me to ask Bernie if there was anything I needled! Bernie for the stay was just for my to start my the previous post of the stay was just from how comfortable the beds were! There is nothing like plopping down on a comprised if the poly there is nothing like plopping down on a comportable mattress after a long drive! Down-lowers. I'm being honest when I say there is nothing like plopping down on a comprised there is lown on a comportable mattress after a long drive! Down-lowers. I'm being honest when I say there is lown on a comprised the mattress after a long drive! Down-lowers. I'm being honest when I say there is nothing like plopping down on a complimation of the stay was just how confortable mattress after a long drive! Down-lowers. I'm being honest when I say there is lown-lowers. I'm being honest when I say there is lown-lowers. I'm being honest when I such there is lown-lowers. I'm being honest when I say there is lown-lowers. I'm being honest when I say there is lown-lowers. I'm being honest when I say there is lown-lowers. I'm being honest when I such a proverse and the beds were! There is lown-lowers is nothing like plopping down on a complimation to how peaceful the notel lown on a complimation to how comfortable mattress after a long drive! Down-lowers I'm beaut
wall that contained the vast darkness. Then, there was nothing. There was nothing at all. The housekeeper of the motel, a 19-year- old girl named Gene, carted her supplies from inside Room 26 to the hallway outside of Room 27. The door stood in front of her. Jiggling the handle, she found it wouldn't budge. She knew the entire right side of the hall was meant to be checked out by 11 a.m. She rapped on the door. No response from within. She pounded this time. Nothing stirred in the room. She cried out, "Housekeeping!" in the hope of waking the guest within. Gene had always refused to give a guest more than three tries to rouse. She produced a master key from her back pocket and slid it into the dull doorknob with ease. Gene cranked the key to the right, and the mechanism clicked from within. She turned the handle and pushed the door open. The walls of Room 27 groaned and shifted as she entered. Gene had long ago tuned out the groaning within the walls of the motel. The young housekeeper analyzed the room, but as she turned, something caught her eye. An ag- ing, clunky laptop rested on the desk. Gene moved to the desk and opened the ancient piece of technology. The laptop whirred and booted in- stantly, opening to a webpage "The Den- ing, clunky laptop rested on the desk. Gene moved to the desk and opened the ancient piece of technology. The laptop whirred and booted in- stantly, opening to a webpage "The Den- ing, clunky laptop rested on the run-down- looking page. She found it odd that only one post existed on the run-down- looking page. She found it odd that only one post existed on the run-down- looking page. She found it odd that only one post existed on the run-down- looking page. She double-clicked on the post and began to read. <i>The Perfect 5 Star motel</i> . <i>Why YOU should stay at the Wind-Down</i> <i>Hello everyone and welcome back to the</i>
the screen, unchanged. He tried using the backspace to delete everything he had previously written. He could easily just re- write it. Nothing changed, except the mass of black-gray text began to pulse. Rhyth- mically, as if it were vital to its survival to keep a steady pace. It seemed to grow on the screen, taunting him. Having enough of this Times New Roman-styled black hole, Dennis closed his laptop. The hole slid out from underneath the laptop and gazed up towards its author. It sat in silence. Dennis sat in silence. He lifted his hands to his face and gently rubbed his eyes. Maybe the void was the sort of floater the eye doctor had told him he could start to expect as he got older. How long had it been since that vis- it? He really should go back. Another thing to add to his list. Satisfied with his self-di- agnosis, he parted his fingers and allowed his gaze to the wall next to him. The hole slid up onto the wall and waited. It rested his gaze to the wall next to him. The hole slid up onto the wall next to him. The hole slid up onto the wall next to him. The hole slid up onto the wall next to him. The hole slid up onto the wall next to him. The hole slid up onto the wall. He wiped furiously, his gaze to the wall. He wiped furiously, here, ridiculing him. Dennis leaped out of his chair and ran to the bathroom to grab a towel to wipe up whatever sort of fatain this was. He glanced back in houror to find the hole was just some sort of dream. Or nightmare. He felt as if he was making good progress. He con- changed, and goading him. For one ter- rible moment, he imagined he could see the void growing in size. A terrible force seized him from behind, a sudden spasm of his muscles collapsing forward, and he found himself falling endlessly toward the
hung over the sides of the insignificant bedside table. He fumbled around until he found the switch against the side of the lamp. After struggling to turn the switch, a dull orange light emitted from under the shade of the lamp. Though dim, Dennis thought it presented a much more comforting aura than the overhead fluo- rescent lights that beat down upon him mercilessly. Satisfied with the new source of light, he stepped over to his desk and slid down into the wooden chair once again. He'd have to put something into his review about how uncomfortable his chair felt. He smiled to himself. Things weren't looking good for the Wind-Down if this review came out. Bad reviews al- ways do well on travel blogs or so he had read from various sources. It wasn't hard to believe. People loved the negative, even if they didn't admit to it. He closed and opened his hands in a stretching motion, the start of his writ- ing ritual. Upon pressing down the power button, he heard the clunky fans inside begin to whir, and he heard the woold ing ritual. Upon pressing down the power button, he heard the clunky fans inside begin to whit, and he heard the woold in his password, "graNnyMaY1596." As it went through the final log-in sequence, he began to compile everything he would need to say into a mental draft. His word processor fi- nally appeared on the screen. The words that had been left there from his review glitch before. He tried hitting undo, redo, tapping on the screen, and then closing and opening the tab. The hole remained, staring back at him from
a force of nature? Something enchanted him about the rhythm of the steps, the earth-shattering weight behind them, and the way the door shook in the frame from the tremendous force. Dennis's hand trem- bled as he reached for the door handle. He knew instinctively whatever roamed be- hind the door existed as a threat to him. Yet, he was unable to restrain himself from reaching out and discovering what lay be- yond it. He grabbed the golden handle that seemed to glitter out at him through the darkness. The door wanted to be opened. The handle was showing him the way. He had to know. He had to know what was be- yond the door. His hand seized the glow- ing orb before him and twisted it with an irresistible spasm of motion. The hallway revealed nothing. A quick up-and-down glance by sticking his head out of the frame confirmed this. The hall stood desolate with the lights flickering just like the light had made his head with the sickly brown wallpaper, and the floor had been sloppily covered with a thick purple carpet decades ago. Just the bore throb. He retreated from the hinges. He looked in the direction of the air condi- tioner in the blackness of his room, only able to identify it from the streetlights outside the window. The bulky machine stared at him and shook from the streetlights outside the window. The bulky machine stared at him and shook from the streetlights outside the window. The bulky machine stared at him and shook from the streetlights outside the window. The bulky machine stared at him and shook from the streetlights outside the window. The bulky machine stared at him and shook from the streetlights outside the window. The bulky machine stared at him and shook from the streetlights outside the window. He bulky machine stared at him and shook from the streetlights outside the window. He bulky machine stared at him and shook from the streetlights outside the window. He bulky machine the trouble it had been giving him. Walking over to his bed, he reached
creeping darkness. He searched the room for some sort of sign of what could've caused such a sound. "The air conditioner must have kicked into full gear," he said to himself quietly. He allowed his eyes to close once again. The warm waves of sleep began to lap at his sides. Despite the bed being stiff and lumpy, the preacefulness of an oncoming map stood as an oasis from the pain of the migraine growing at the back of his head. Ashe began to sink into the sea of sleep that flowed all about him, he felt something skit- ter across his back. Agonizing chills shot down his spine. He involuntarily jerked up and began to probe up and down his back, searching for any form of irregularity. He concluded his search after feeling nothing especially out of the ordinary. He concluded his search after feeling ponthing. Turning 40 hovered above him like a guillorine. He needed to get this back prob- lems checked out. He had filed that down on the list in his head titled "Things I Need After I Can Monetize My Blog" about two months ago. It would happen eventually, it would all fall into place. He just needed to give it enough time. His part-time job of selling discovered antiques became less and less fruitful as the months went on. Merkle had ended up being a profit waste- land. It had been a long shot in the first place. But Dennis was surprised absolutely nobody hunted antiques in the area. While pondering the end of his an- tique-selling careet, he heard footsteps up and down the hallway. Normally, he'd re- main in bed, assuming it was kids getting restless in a cramped more. Be heard footsteps up and down the hallway. Normally, he'd re- main in bed, assuming it was kids getting restless in a cramped more and use to hear toor the world coming down with each step. How world coming down with each step. How world coming down with each toor, the weight of the world coming down with each step. How
ed up pacing on the line of the P. Tucked into the bottom curve of the P sat a bed covered with an ugly-looking comforter. The tiny wooden desk pressed up next to it completed the outside of the hump and connected to the bottom. The single din- gy window rested in the wall to the left of the desk. The window was made to look even more insignificant from the bulky air conditioning unit haphazardly strapped onto it. The window air-conditioner com- bo completed the top of the letter-shaped room. The weak gray light that was cast from the window at the other end of the valkway of the room. The light wisted and reflected its way to the door across from the window at the other end of the room. Surprisingly, no television set exist- ed anywhere within the room due to a lack of space. That docked some serious points from the overall review in Dennis's mind. His readers would he hearing about his, too. The began to work himself into a sort of flow state of pacing and thinking about his writing. How could he get more readers? When would advertisers reach out to him? How much money could he homestly pull from the overhead lights begin to beat down on him. A sudden, yet terri- ble migraine formed against the back for his pack foot, briefly adopting the window and briefly gazing out into the overwhelming black- ness of the night. He swiveled on his back foot, briefly adopting the stance of a pow- er-walker. Once he had paced how his movement. In his mind, any disturbance to the beat his feet were keeping would result in di- saster. Feeling his way back through the unfamiliar space, he bumped into the bed and flopped onto it face-down. The room began to rumble as he did, causing him to pop his head back up and stare out at the
Hello everyone, and welcome back to the "Demnis Down-Low" My last post about a motel I stayed at brought my blog 50 new readers! So a BIG thank you to any new 'Down-Lowers' reading now! This week, I'm staying out at a motel called the 'Wind- Down' in Merkel, Missouri! So far, it's less impressive than the 'Sleep Inn' from the previous post, but we'll seel The next part of this post will be written in an hour or so af- ter I've had time to take in the atmosphere previous post, but we'll seel. Punctuation had always been the bane of his writting. The cursor flashed imposingly in front of him. He just posts usually received two more readers on average if he had a joyful tone. He always been the bane of his writting. The cursor flashed imposingly in front of him. He just posts usually received two more readers on average if he had a joyful tone. He always been the bane of his pinky. He slid his posts usually received two more readers on average if he had a joyful tone. He always been the pressure of his pinky. He slid his in the atmosphere!' With the punctuation complete, he slid his legs out from under- neath the cramped desk and clambered out of the stift wooden chair that had been his writing throne since arriving in Room 27 approximately two hours ago. His eyes needed a break from the bleak, human-manufactured light radiating from his 10-inch screen. He could find nothing better to do with himself than to pace the confined room. After setting his gray laptop, he gazed around the room. In all of his travels, Dennis developed a theo- ry that every motel room was shaped like a "p"-worth of living space. Dennis end- a" "p"-worth of living space. Dennis end- a" "p"-worth of living space. Dennis end- tonically

The Ferryman

by Braydon M. Motley

PRODIGY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY / GRADE 9

looked Farewell, a small and relatively poor town. I stopped gan to turn, when she stopped me. at the middle of the bridge and thought to myself.

In this life, one small, indifferent one of many. I hadn't done anything good or meaningful. I had yet to marry, within 10 feet of this house. to get a job — of course, that was something I didn't neckept in my last life.

I must sound odd, the way I speak of myself.

I suppose it wouldn't much matter, though, because I sit and write this in the mass of chaotic, cosmic muck. Water freezes into dirt here. That dirt melts into molten lava, it is a great city with towers and stone columns. The mass so you will eat with us at six." of obliterated DNA and genes that made up our universe

the in-between decides to organize the chaos into another world or universe or place. And this cosmic journal finds its way into intelligent hands. Then, I write about my life. I never truly was born and never have died. I have always

just been. Existed indifferently in the great scheme of things. ly one kind deed in a million. However, this was the deed see, and now lay in a pile of muck with the rest of the merely for a time. universe. But with all of my time to think, I have come That night, I was invited graciously inside the Whites' All the while, we conversed and discussed life and politics to understand.

the 1800s in a place called Farwell, Missouri, (to continue morous: Mr. Whites and I shared the same name. where I had begun,) Farwell was mostly a town then, but grew as time went on. There, I came to understand the sin- Ms. Emma Whites. A truly beautiful name for a truly I had painted. gle thing that gave my existence meaning, and there is the beautiful girl. place where all of this understanding begins.

their meaningless, ill-moral life. There I was, thinking purpose for this world.

timate End.

really matters.

But then, it was Charlie Aarons. Among the thousand ing struck.

shriek in the house to the right end of the bridge. I turned which it did, I admit. Emma was nearly more intelligible my head, a fair bit annoyed at the disturbance, and saw than myself. And I admit, oftentimes, I wondered (and still smoke billowing from the open window at the side of the do) if she was a person who was never really born. If she assuming recovery, down to a painful whisper. house, facing me.

I wondered about a fire, and so I jogged down to the by that mysterious person I have yet to understand. house, concerned.

There was no fire, only a girl, cooking, who was 22 at that time, only a year younger than myself. That is, if you're 1891, I was only 23.

"Excuse me, Miss. Are you alright? Is there a fire?" I called in from the open window, avoiding the dissipating smoke. "No." She replied simply. "I only burnt dinner. Oh, Lord," she said with a sigh.

joked. Still, the smoke was reviling in the house, doing its best to stay where it could be together. However, after only a moment, it dissipated fully, and for the first time, I saw ing a fool of yourself. I simply hoped my love for you was

the girl's face. How beautiful she was. but not round enough to presume baby fat. She had green not foolish." eyes and brown hair that was so stubbornly wavy the only

way to wear it was to wear it down. She looked at me with inquisitive eyes and a kind of A fool you are not." grin that enchanted me. The most beautiful woman I had ever seen.

"You wish to cook for me?"

"Well, yes, considering you cannot cook for yourself," I said humorously, so she knew I was merely joking.

She laughed and said, "Well, you will have to make four servings; my father is quite fat. And a fair bit gluttonous to cakes." She said it with a smile, but keeping those inquisitive to see that darkness in me that I befriended in this eternal calmed. "I do not take you as a fool. So do not play one and eyes that made me fall in love with her in that instant.

this joke a reality, and then, my decision made, I said, no one else had done before

I was walking along the long, arching bridge that over- "Very well ... four servings ... I will be back by six." I be-

a dangerous stranger, and my father would not allow you truly want."

She giggled to herself, and I responded, first with a huessarily need, considering the wealth I had obtained and morous sigh, "My name is Charlie Aarons; I live atop the was a pain then, a nagging that told me to lean forward hill just Northwest of here. I live alone, no servants or even and kiss my dear friend. It was an ungentlemanly thing to a dog. I must say, I am quite lonely sometimes."

I believe that was a desperate introduction, and by the way the girl looked at me, I believe she saw it, too.

"Well then, Mr. Charlie Aarons. You must eat with us; where it sprouts a human head and proceeds to grow until you are making us food so graciously, and you are lonely,

I wanted only to accept. So, with a slight bow, I hesitated, my dear friend. now sit in aloof memory. Creating, destroying, recreating. opened my mouth only slightly so as to appear to firstly However, if that mysterious Creator that lives in between object. Then, I said, "Very well, I will see you at six, with a That same night Emma had foretold my love for her, she roasted chicken and a sorting of vegetables." There, I left, to make a meal for the mysterious girl and her family.

random, kind deeds for people such as this. This was mere-My life on Earth has had no meaning, not that I could that set the mystery girl in a state of love for me. However,

house and introduced to Mrs. Mary Whites and Mr. When I was living a very simple life, near the end of Charles Whites. Indeed, a coincidence I thought was hu-

Anyhow, the mysterious girl I cooked for was named

I stood thinking on that white bridge that stood over a significant amount of time together, painting and picnickclear, bubbling river. I always thought this a queer river, ing. We had a fascinating two years of friendship, and I bebecause Missouri was always muddy, but this one had all lieve, in those two years, we knew we loved one another. It rocks at its bed. You could see the small bass swimming was only a time in which we searched for a sign. A sign from indifferently in the water, catching small bass to eat in who, I do not know, and for what, I'm not quite sure, either.

about my own existence. My own ultimate meaning and Three weeks into October marked the end of that two years of friendship. We sat on the hill outside of my house, terested in gossip. I brought people, whenever they left their bodies to de- a blanket strewn out with ellipse-shaped rocks holding cay underneath the cold soil, to a place where the road to it down. I looked at her with wanting eyes. She knew, of as if I was a book. She knew what I wanted and said no. the End was. I brought people from the Bay of Life, down course. Just as she knew I wasn't some ordinary man or a She told me she does not wish to be under the confines a river in between, to a dock, that led to death. Or the ul- man longing simply for the pleasures of life. It was that un- of marriage." explainable life thing I was wanting, that for two decades My name was Charon. It still is, I presume; not that it too long I had gone without. That mysterious thing that looked at my painting then, and seemed to get lost in that gave me a mysterious meaning.

"Charlie ..." she said finally, with a sympathetic stare, her friend, however, and perhaps one day convince her marnames I had, this one meant the most to me, because different from the one that captured my heart. "... Charlie, this name was the person I was when this understand- I'm not ready. I want to live a little, without being held in the confines of marriage."

Anyhow, I was thinking, when suddenly there was a She was speaking as though my look had said it all. Of was built in the great cosmic muck that I was built in, built

"I understand," I said, at a loss for words.

"I hope I am not making a fool of myself," she responded presently, looking down at the checkered picnic blanket. "I counting my age for that particular life. In my ultimate ex- love you, Charlie, but something feels so terribly menacing and only daughter. And then I would understand I would istence, I was a century away from 6,000 years old, but in about marriage; I admit, I cannot explain it. I presume I from there on be their caretaker, as the stench of death rose am not fit."

She said it simply. I looked down at the blanket, too. Feeling a sudden wave of dejection and sickness, I realized then how terribly alone I was. How empty that space where Whites said, and I listened. "When I go ... pass away, die, my heart should be was. It seemed then, and for a long time however you'd like to call it ..." "Perhaps you would allow me to cook for you," I half- after, that I would be stuck feeling that feeling of hopelessness that was no more grand than a graveyard.

"I understand, Emma; you need not worry about mak-

not vain, as it has been with others." The girl's face was not too much angular to put you off, "No. Don't you say that. Foolish love is vain love. You are I didn't want to exercise this man's delusions, this man's

"Perhaps I am."

"I know you, Charlie, more than I believe anyone has ...

It was that statement that made me question again if she was some goddess with omniscient powers far beyond that cause my daughter is painfully stubborn on such a silly, of my own. That made me question all of the moments she serious thing, there is no hope." spent looking at me with that inquisitive stare. That stare brought me down a rabbit hole that begged a question of how much she could see in me. Perhaps I was an open dia- heart would stop. A sudden, reeking sweet stench of ozone ry she read any time she pleased; she seemed often enough job I was appointed. I walked with an air of death around argue. Do as I say." "Yes," I said, considering whether or not I should make me, and I believe she saw it and understood it. Something

It made me want her all the more. But that, I could not have. "I understand, Emma. Do not defend your arguments. "Well, I must get your name first. Otherwise, you'd be I will be but a friend, and no more. If that is what you

> She looked at me, nodded, and placed a beautifully soft, angelic hand over my own that had seen so much. There think of, so I dismissed it, and sat there with her.

In the daytime in which we sat, I suddenly got an overwhelming smell of death. I wondered about Emma; still, she sat, however, and looked at me. It was not a stench that came from her, though it held scents of relation to Emma. I dismissed that, too, and stared into the capturing gaze of

discovered her father had fallen gravely ill with scarlet fever, so she told me. And I understood what that over-I had always found it pleasurable to be polite and to do whelming stench of death was. That smell I had dismissed to be in the presence of Mr. Whites' daughter.

> Three days later, I took my painting things to the Whites' home and sat in the bedroom with Emma's father and painted the very scene I saw outside his bedroom window. and books.

> "Perhaps you could put Mrs. Whites just on the road there," Mr. Whites said, pointing to the sliver of road that was seen just outside the frame of the window sill

"I believe that would look exceptionally well, Sir," I re-We grew to be friends after that dinner, and we spent a sponded, and grabbed a blob of white-gray paint, so as to paint her dress.

> "Do you perhaps know of any admirers of Emma? She is growing older and will need a husband before long," Mr. Whites said, to my painful dismay.

"I believe, Sir, I am her admirer," I said rather frankly, in a way that passed on a sense of rejection.

"Have you asked her to marry?" he asked, as though in-

"I was going to, and your intelligent daughter read me

"Ahh ... I sensed that she had a dislike for marriage." He scene. I brought him out quickly, however, saying, "I will stay

riage is not such a terrible thing. Maybe she will find a suitor." "You do not believe it will be you?" Mr. Whites said, almost angrily.

"No, I am afraid not; I am not a man who can fit her needs." "Oh, nonsense!" He coughed then, and a wave of fatigue swept over him, bringing him from a reasonably well day,

"Listen, Son. She will see in time; do not give up that love for her. I do not want her to be with any man other than you. Do you understand?" I nodded, and continued to finish the last strokes of my painting.

I understood then Mr. Whites trusted me with his one in the air. That stench that is otherworldly, outside of what normal humans can perceive.

"Charlie, boy ... Heed my rambling once more," Mr.

"Don't say that, Mr. Whites."

"Please, boy!" he rasped painfully. "I want you to take care of my wife and my daughter, as a friend. Emma will marry, and my wife will be a grandmother, as she is a mother. As a friend and a man, I want you to care for them, yes?"

own drama in which he placed me caretaker of his family. However, he and I both knew he would die and move on into that other place. So, I conformed and said, "OK, but you mustn't believe you will die; have hope, my friend."

"And the very same for you. You mustn't think that be-

"But I am not —"

"Not what!" He rasped with such violence I assumed his and sulfur wafted to my nose and dissipated whence he

"Very well," I said, defeated.

I admit, I was angry with him. For what reason, I still do

not know. Perhaps for not exercising my own delusions. "And please, Charlie. Call me Charles. Mr. Whites is far too formal for how we know one another."

"Yes, Sir."

I left him to rest and be with his family then. I took my painting things and walked in the dark up to my own ing quietly. home. I bathed in a tub by a fire, dressed into my nightclothes and meditated. I do not sleep, nor eat for the need. I do not need most things others do. Food is merely a pleasure, sleep is something I cannot do.

crossed legs and go to that place in between. That place real as if conjured from the material world. where life and death meet.

There in the darkness of the great cosmic muck that resembled trees and a path that glistened silver and white, I stood. Waiting for the people to arrive at the dock. Waiting, I looked up above me. Above, there was pure and utter chaos. Glowing things turned to opaque and dark things. Grass melted into lava, which cooled into a hard sediment. Life two sofas, her hands in mine as she silently cried. and death battled there, causing a great booming sound over and over that was the collision of polar opposites. I waited a stuffy nose, both their eyes quite red from crying. There there, and there turned up no one. No one paid the fee for was nothing much said after that. We stayed there nearpassage that night. No two pence ever entered my money ly all night in one another's presence and cried together. sack, tied around my waist. I stood there for a long time, I admit, that day was truly depressing. Though I believe I before surrendering to the nothingness that was the ground, had a fair amount and I watched the chaos ensue above me.

I rose from my meditated state and made coffee for myself, enjoying that next morning as much as I could.

I admit, I was more than dejected at the rejection of Ms. Emma. I loved her dearly and wanted nothing more than her. Yet, here I was, waiting for the moment that was never assured to me, the moment Emma would realize her love for me and marry me. I was being told I would marry her one day, all I needed was patience. I couldn't have it, could not accept that. I do not know why, and I will never know why I felt such a way.

Days went by, and I spent all the more time with Charles and Emma, talking and painting and eating. They were a kind of family for me, and I relished that, never taking them for granted. As the time passed, Charles became more sick, the fever never ceasing its wrath.

Three weeks passed on slowly, as if Time reveled in Charles' pain. In Emma's and her mother's grief, in my hopelessness. It was a pitiful day, cold and rainy, thunder looming overhead.

The clouds were so very thick that day, the street lamps were lit and candles lit inside our houses. It was the type waiting of weather I loved. I believed it was nature revealing a dark side of itself, hiding the sun, perhaps the greatest miracle of all. And letting the conscious beings know, ogres and all, that darkness, and everything that followed, existed. Even ly exhausted. beings like me. Not a good person, yet not evil. It reminds me, and perhaps everyone, the world has no good people. A pessimistic thought, but one I have come to under-

stand in the millennia and millennia I have existed. I apologize for the rabbit trail, yet who am I kidding? I

write to no one. I walked to the Whites' house under the cover of my picnics with Emma. I had not cried ever, after I found that umbrella, and as I neared, that great, cosmic smell of kind of contentment I believe I always cherished. Nearly ozone and sulfur pressed my nose. Stronger than before, in those days I spent with Charles. Emma was outside, tears streaming endlessly down her smooth cheeks. She held a

handkerchief in her hands and wailed. "He is gone," I said, sitting beside her on the rocking chairs that sat on the porch. She nodded and let out another wail.

Late that day, after a considerable amount of mourning, I believe I am quite jealous." walked into the room where he lay, sleeping eternally. Two pence in hand, I placed them over his closed eyes. Standing there for a moment, I saw how pale his cheeks looked, that once, not too long ago, were bright red with fever. His thick, graying beard and balding head seemed so stale.

I was there in another moment. The great dark, cosmic place.

the base of the dock staring up at the great chaos above him. "It's beautiful, isn't it?" I asked, announcing my presence. "I've been waiting for you," he said, looking down and ly why I asked that question.

staring at me. "Hello, Charlie." I cannot say I expected that to come out of his mouth. It he lives not too far from the Farmingtons ... But there and true love. was another of those mysteries still unanswered. It is not is someone else who I believe I have always loved, but in so important, however.

"Come along, I'll ride you downriver," I said, stepping "Emma, please do not be vague — "

into the nothingness in particular that was some form of boat to the deceased spirit.

"You drive a tugboat?" he asked, stepping off deck and into the tugboat, which was what he saw. "So that's what this is to you?" I asked myself, whisper-

ride; however, he was in tears whenever he got off onto the my composure and not sound desperate. deck, the deck that led to the ultimate end. His appearance was faded, like a transparent image, or a ghost, as looked So, I meditate. I sit on the floor, place my hands on my all spirits who rode with me. However, his tears were clear,

> I remember saying my farewells, and in a moment, being began to get queer looks from those around us. back. Back in my body, gone for merely minutes.

"How are you, Mrs. Whites?" I asked, bringing coffee be OK with. This man you just now speak of, if it is your wish for her and Emma. We all sat in the drawing room. Mrs. Whites sat in Charles' chair, and I sat with Emma on one of

"Oh, I'm alright, just a little down." She sniffled through of depression in that time of

not know what I am saying." She stopped walking and placed a hand over her eyes. "I believe I understand," I said, keeping perfectly calm. I do not remember what we talked about during that My emotions were for later; I had then only need to keep

> "I do not know what to do, Charlie. I know you have always loved me. And you have been such a good friend, being so patient." She started to cry then, and we continued to walk until we were somewhere more private, for we

"I love you, Charlie," she said, rather harshly. "But I am

fond of someone else, and ... well, I think I have always

loved you, however, not in a romantic sense. I ... oh, I do

"Emma," I said slowly, "By the way it sounds, you do not wish to marry me. And that I can do no other than accept and for him to court you, then so be it. I cannot object."

"It is not fair to you. You deserve my taking your hand in marriage."

"I deserve no such thing," I exploded, speaking firmly, and rather irritated. Not at her rejection, but at her thought I deserved anything so great as her hand in marriage.

"Yes, you deserve that and much, much more. Your love and kindness and friendship to me and my family, your patience. I cannot do something so cruel as to reject you something you have well earned." Emma spoke in a hopeless tone, defeated and simply ready to accept the easiest path that was my taking her hand in marriage.

> However, I could not allow it. She would not be happy; I knew it and accepted that. I accepted I would love her as a friend and watch her from a distance as she lived her life as a wife to another man, as a mother to his children.

> > "But you will. I only desire we stay as we are, friends. I will tell this man to court you and bug you until you accept his courtship, if need be. You won't sacrifice your happiness as a gift for my pitiful patience. Do you understand?"

She merely nodded. Angry, perhaps, I was not conforming to her wishes. The wishes that were the easiest to accept at that moment.

"How come I have never heard of this man before?" I asked, needing to know, for I truly had never heard of him.

"I met him two months ago, and we have been having tea together for some time, seldom going on walks. I was afraid you would become jealous," she choked out finally

Moving back to the previous conversation, I asked, "So then, you accept what I am telling you?" She nodded in acquiesce. "Very well."

Something seemed to change in Emma that day. For weeks afterwards, after meeting this man and having an open courtship, she seemed only to become elated, joyful. It was sometime, days after, that we had Mr. Whites' fu- (The man's name was Austen Gravesman, and he worked neral, and we experienced another day of extreme dejec- as a tailor.)

> As weeks passed, she began to speak to me less and less. Falling in love with this man and forgetting me. I loved her still, for years to come. And I would always love her. However, I could not make her happy, not as this man could. As she came to accept what I had given her, she grew to forget me, and a year later, she married.

I was not invited, and I was only to be content with that. I had lived long enough waiting, with that myste-"My dearest friend Lidia has married, did you know?" rious thing called love in my heart. I spent those days pondering what love meant and what it was in the grand scheme of things. All I can say is, it is unexplainable. "Well, she did." Emma let out a kind of elated giggle I Magical. Mysterious. I had fallen in love with so many women, loved and married them, raised children and grown old with them. However, the one woman I loved "Jealous? Says the girl who despises marriage, for she be- most was kept away from me. I have been left, at the end lieves it is a purgatorious lifestyle only foolish little girls of the world and universe, in this great chaos, to ponder dream of," I said, making up the word "purgatorious" on why I was not able to be with my one true love. I believe the spot, laughing a little myself. "How do you now be- perhaps I loved Emma so dearly that in my own acquiesce and dejection, I spared her a life of unhappiness and "I do not know; perhaps I see now that marriage can be meaningless love. I believe I loved her so dearly I saw something for love. Maybe I was naive in thinking other- even though my love for her was great, I could not make Charles — Mr. Whites — stood there in front of me, at wise." She spoke a little bit more seriously now, and I could her happy. I had told her that and did not mean it at first, nor did I understand it. However, it came to be true, and "Are you in love, perhaps?" I blurted, not knowing exact- I do not regret sparing her that life. Truly, now. It has made me happy and given me peace in this chaos I spend "I do not know. I met someone who I am quite fond of; eternity in. I was able to let her go, so she could have joy

sense she was feeling less elated now.

found I did

tion and mourning.

town together and chatting.

"No, I do not believe I did."

come jealous?" I asked.

some way — "

ing and did not taste the food I seldom ate. Coffee was only

bitter and otherwise tasteless, and I found myself frequent-

I had come to some sort of contentment later on; per-

haps a month later, which I accepted graciously. I was then

able to think properly and paint and have those beautiful

four months later, Emma and I were walking about the

she asked me as we walked past the town's general store.

had never heard before. "And I am all but sad for her. I

not enjoy paint-



A SEPARATE PIECE, NATALIE ARBUCKLE / JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL / GRADE 12

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