

em grace



# The Wheelbarrow

*The Wheelbarrow* is a student-run publication hosted by Lyon College's Eta Lambda Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the English Honor Society. Last published in Spring 2018, *The Wheelbarrow* has returned with a host of brilliant visual and written artwork producing a unique view into the Lyon College student body. *The Wheelbarrow* staff would like to thank all student and faculty contributors who have made this revitalization possible and future readers opening their minds to the work within.

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# Contents

<i>"The Room Molded by the Farm" / "El Cuarto Moldeado por la Granja"-Poetry</i>	Annie Blevins	6
<i>"Theotokos"-Art</i>	Lucia Birkenkrahe	7
<i>"I Am a Basketball Player"-Poetry</i>	Justin Crews	8
<i>"One June Morning"-Prose</i>	MK Duffield	9
<i>"Seraphim"-Art</i>	Emilee Gerhardt	13
<i>"Healer"-Art</i>	Emilee Gerhardt	14
<i>"Dishonesty"-Prose</i>	Madeline Hopson	15
<i>"Destiny"-Prose</i>	Madeline Hopson	18
<i>"Andy Legends"-Art</i>	Atleigh Gruenwald	20
<i>"November 15th"-Prose</i>	Isabella Nehus	21
<i>"Happy Death Day"-Poetry</i>	Isabella Nehus	24
<i>"Icycle Forest"-Art</i>	Taja Showers	25
<i>"Finding Joy in the Journey"-Prose</i>	Benjamin Moore	26
<i>"The Upward Grasp"-Art</i>	Donna Terrell	29
<i>"Perspective ... Something Along Those Lines"-Poetry</i>	Havana Santis	30
<i>"The Depth of Her Gaze"-Art</i>	Donna Terrell	31
<i>"Plastic Never Felt So Real"-Poetry</i>	Chloe Robinson	32

# *The Wheelbarrow*: A Piece of Lyon College History

What a delight to see *Wheelbarrow* return to the Lyon campus. Our talented student writers and artists deserve to have their works published, and the student body deserves to see the best creative work of their peers.

This new issue revives a journal with a long history. Before its hiatus begun prior to the Covid-19 crisis, *Wheelbarrow* had been published annual for many decades. Like Lyon itself, however, it had undergone a name change in the 1990s.

The first issue bearing its first title, *The Penman*, was published in the spring semester of 1970. It contained poetry and prose selections from student writers, but no art works at that initial point. It continued under that name and with that content for over twenty years.

In 1994, *The Penman* became a multi-discipline journal, continuing to publish literary works while adding art works in black and white, drawings and photographs by the college's art students. The first issue to print art works in color was volume 32 in 2005 with Beka Sharp as editor.

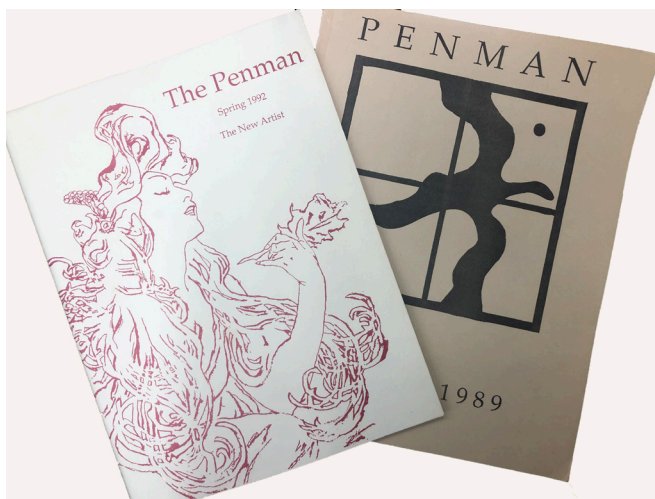
Then came the name change in 1995. Ever since Dr. Helen Robbins had joined the faculty some five years earlier, she had been pointing out how doubly masculine “Penman” was, ending in “man” and starting with “pen,” with obvious Freudian connections. But editors had been content to keep the title until Juanita Scoope took the helm.

Having decided that Dr. Robbins was right, Juanita opened a campus-wide contest for renaming the journal and got several entries. I entered the successful new name, *Wheelbarrow*, pointing to William Carlos Williams' famous poem “The Red Wheelbarrow” as a source and noting that a wheelbarrow can be seen as a feminine, womblike image. The first issue bearing that name was volume 22 in 1995.

In its 50+ years of history *Wheelbarrow* has had only four faculty advisors prior to Dr. Melissa Merte taking that role for this welcome new issue. They are Drs. Jane Purtle, Giles Zimmer, Ron Boling, and myself, all professors from the English department.

Enough history! Let's dig into these fine new works!

Dr. Terrell Tebbetts





## Foreword

To the Lyon College community, we at *The Wheelbarrow* thank you for allowing our artists, whether featured or not, the space to learn, grow, and pursue their passions. *The Wheelbarrow* has been an inactive publication for some years, but that changes in 2024.

We feel that part of any artist's education is the ability to have their art seen and discussed. We hope that this will encourage artists on the fence to take a leap and submit their works to us. Part of the beauty of being in any community is the variety in how people live and express themselves. We hope that regardless of who you are you will be able to appreciate the perspectives and ideas from these artists, and maybe even feel inspired yourself.



## Our Authors and Artists

**Lucia Birkenkrahe (“*Theotokos*”)-** Lucia Birkenkrahe is a German-American mathematics major, and computer science minor at Lyon. She loves her family, math, music, and art. She paints watercolor landscapes and gold-plated icons of the Saints on wooden canvases.

**Annie Blevins (“*The Room Molded by the Farm*”)-** Annie Blevins is a sophomore from Violet Hill, Arkansas. She is a Spanish and English major and plans on attending graduate school after her time at Lyon. She first began writing poetry for one of her Spanish classes at Lyon and has since continued to write short Spanish poems as a hobby.

**MK Duffield (“*One June Morning*”)-** MK Duffield is a junior Political Science and Communication Studies major. She is from Russellville, Arkansas and is a member of the Scots softball team. Her hobbies include reading, making coffee, and playing with her dogs.

**Emilee Gerhardt (“*Healer*” and “*Seraphim*”)-** Emilee Gerhardt is an art major with an emphasis in art history. She is from Batesville, Arkansas. In her free time she likes learning more about Renaissance art and learning how the artists of that time worked.

**Atleigh Gruenwald (“*Andy Legends*”)-** Atleigh Gruenwald was born and raised in Arkansas. As of now, she is an active member of her sorority in Alpha Xi Delta, and was elected as a freshman representative for homecoming in the fall semester in 2023.

**Madeline Hopson (“*Destiny*” and “*Dishonesty*”)-** Madeline Hopson is a Psychology and Political Science double major with a Pre-law concentration. She is a sophomore and a part of the Lyon Volleyball team. She was born outside of Tyler, Texas, but moved to Flippin, Arkansas when she was thirteen. After graduating from Lyon, she plans on attending law school in Texas.

**Benjamin Moore (“*Finding Joy in the Journey*”)-** Ben Moore is a freshman at Lyon College from Franklin, TN. Majoring in Business, Ben is on the Scots baseball team and is a member of the Alpha Lambda Delta Honor Society. When not focusing and working on baseball, Ben enjoys attending church along with any and all things sports and fitness.

**Isabella Nehus (“*November 15th*” and “*Happy Death Day*”)-** Bella Nehus is from Russellville, Arkansas. Her major is Biology with minors in Entrepreneurship and English. She loves playing soccer and enjoys reading and writing quite a bit.

**Havana Santis (“*Perspective... Something Along Those Lines*”)-** Havana Santis is a senior at Lyon majoring in English and minoring in business administration and anthropology. She also works as an archivist assistant at the Mabee-Simpson Library. This experience inspired her to pursue a Master of Library Science degree, and she will be attending a MLS program in the fall following her graduation. In her free time, Havana enjoys writing poetry and prose, reading, listening to music, and taking care of her cat, Gabbie.

**Taja Showers (“*Icyle Forest*”)-** Taja Showers is an art and Spanish major. She grew up in Virginia and is a junior at Lyon. She spends most of her time painting, drawing, or hanging out with her pup, Xina.

**Donna Terrell (“*The Upward Grasp*” and “*The Depth of Her Gaze*”)-** Known for her versatility and creativity, Donna Terrell is a multi-media artist who thrives on experimenting with various materials and techniques. Her passion for learning from others and active participation in the art community define her as an artist who constantly seeks growth and inspiration.



## ***The Room Molded by the Farm***

Annie Blevins

Walking into a student's room  
The walls are covered with posters and lights  
With trinkets covering all of the surfaces  
Because she cannot discard her memories  
Her room contains all her memories  
The memories with her parents and grandparents  
A toy cow that her brother gifted her when she was a baby  
Because he loves cows and farms  
Like the farm that she was raised on  
Where she named her first cow and drove her first tractor  
And where she learned to drive her first car  
And she found other interests  
Because the farm can be boring sometimes  
And here  
In this new place  
In this new room  
She reads history books  
She listens to music  
She watches television  
She sometimes cries  
And she calls her mother every night  
Hoping to hear the cows bawling in the background  
And remember how it feels to be on the farm

## ***El Cuarto Moldeado por la Granja***

Camino por el cuarto estudiantil  
Las paredes están cubiertas con los pósteres y luces  
Las baratijas tapan todas de las superficies  
Porque ella no puede eliminar sus memorias  
Su cuarto contiene todas las memorias  
Las memorias con sus padres y sus abuelos  
Una vaca de juguete que su hermano le regaló cuando era bebé  
Porque a él le encantan las vacas y las granjas  
Cómo la granja en la que crecieron  
Dónde ella nombró su primera vaca y condujo su primer tractor  
Donde aprendió a conducir su primer auto  
Y ahí ella encontró otros intereses  
Porque la granja puede ser aburrida a veces  
Y aquí  
En este nuevo lugar  
En este cuarto nuevo  
Ella lee los libros sobre historia  
Ella escucha música  
Ella ve la televisión  
Ella a veces llora  
Y ella llama a su madre todas las noches  
Esperando escuchar a las vacas berrear de fondo  
Y recordar cómo se siente estar en la granja





*Theotokos*

Lucia Birkenkrahe



***I Am a Basketball Player***

Justin Crews

I am a basketball player,  
A master of the court.  
My feet move swiftly,  
As I dribble and score.  
I am the one they call upon  
To make the winning shot.  
My focus is unbreakable,  
And my confidence can't be bought.

I am the captain of my team,  
A leader through and through.  
I motivate and encourage,  
And help my teammates push through.

I am a competitor at heart,  
And I never back down.  
I give it my all every game,  
And leave it all on the ground.

I am a basketball player,  
And this is where I belong.  
On the court, in the game,  
Where I am strong.

## *One June Morning*

MK Duffield

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

I slammed my phone as my alarm blared throughout my bedroom. The early summer sun peeked through my blinds as I threw my covers. *7:00 A.M. June 6, 2021* my phone read. *Wow, has it really been a year?* Before last year, June 6th was just another summer day. Now, a year later, this June morning tugged at my heartstrings and weighed them down to the ground. Although adjusted to his absence, I longed for him every day. I missed Pa; I missed him all the time. Losing a grandparent was a part of life's path that I had not come across until last year, and I did not know how to react. My mind often wanders back to the night before his passing.

"MK, if I'm not here in the morning, you'll know why I'm gone," my dad said, clearly fatigued. Dad mentioned something last week about taking Pa into hospice care, whatever that means. I thought *that's a special kind of hospital*. I wasn't quite sure. What I did know is that Pa would be okay, he had to be.

"I need you to make sure the dogs are fed. You know where the scoop is, and keep their bowls separated please."

"You got it, Dad. Is everything okay with Pa?"

"I don't know sweetie. You know his health is declining, and there isn't much the nurses can do anymore. He probably won't make it much longer."

With those melancholy words, I trudged to my room and climbed under my covers. Selfishly, I wanted Pa to live so he could see all these moments in my life he got to experience with my siblings: becoming an adult, college signing day, high school graduation, even my wedding. *God's not going to take him yet. He knows how much Pa means to me and my family.* My eyelids fluttered as I reminisced about Branson trips and holidays with Pa.

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

I slammed my alarm off and threw my covers across the room. I jolted to the window to see my dad's truck still in the driveway. *Oh good. He's still here.*

I flew down the stairs while the smell of chocolate chip pancakes and bacon lingered throughout the house. *This day just keeps getting better and better!*



Making my way toward the kitchen, I felt the room begin to shift. I no longer felt the warm sunshine through our huge window; I felt the air conditioning at a crisp sixty-seven degrees. *Why is it so cold in here?*

I plopped on the couch and cradled my body with the coziest blanket.

“Good morning, Dad!”

Dad has a very distinct look when something is wrong: scrunched eyebrows, slumped shoulders, and deep, heavy breathing.

“I have some disappointing news. Pa passed early this morning.”

Everything around me froze. *There’s no way he’s gone. How could God take someone so important away from me? In the middle of a pandemic? Right before the most important year of my life?*

“Mama D called around midnight. His heart was stopping. There wasn’t anything they could do.”

*What.*

“By the time your uncles and I got to the hospice center, it was too late.”

My eyes welled with tears as sobs shook my body. *What am I going to do?*

“Are you okay?”

“I...don’t...know,” my words separated by my quiet sobs.

*How was I going to make it through my senior year without him? How was I supposed to make it through the holidays? How was I supposed to make it through birthdays without getting a card with a “Pa” print on it? How was I supposed to go up to Pa and D’s house pretending everything is normal?*

Gloomy days passed as funeral plans and bills consumed our countertop. The house filled with silence, as everyone was afraid the slightest mention of him would send any one of us into an emotional frenzy. I’ve lived seventeen, almost eighteen, years with each of my grandparents. Each came to all of my sports games, birthday parties, and even my silly elementary school musicals. How could I play another softball game again knowing he’s not in the stands?

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

My puffy eyes opened to the horrendous sound of my phone alarm. *Today’s the day.* I wandered towards my closet in hopes of finding something somber and depressing to match the

mood. Even the weather was depressing. I checked my phone. *Great. A seventy percent chance of rain at the time of the funeral, and the funeral is outside.*

After braiding my hair, I eventually found a black and white jumpsuit in the back of my closet. *I guess this will work? What exactly do I wear to my grandfather's funeral?* My hair fell loosely below my shoulders with half tied back with tightly pulled-together french braids. I redid my hair three times before deciding braids were the best option. He always loved when I braided my hair.

My family piled into our car as we drove in silence to the cemetery behind the creepy old junior high school.

“Almost our entire family is buried here,” my dad said.

*It still creeps me out.*

Family members filed out one by one as cars continued to surround the gravesite. *Wow. I knew he helped a lot of people, but I didn't think this many would come.* All kinds of cars lined the street: run down dump trucks, fancy new Yukons, 1960 Chevys, and I think I even saw a used school bus.

My dad's youngest brother spoke first. His words jumbled together as I dozed off. Something snapped me out of my trance: the “seventy percent chance of rain” hadn't happened yet. The clouds were there, but the rain never fell. There was one thing about Pa: he hated rainy days. He always said they were too sad. The rain held up for the entire service. I couldn't believe it. *Is he here?*

The entire family gathered at Pa and D's house after the service. The clouds covered the sky, the rain never actually making an appearance. He's still here. Food spread across the marbled countertop, ranging from fresh salad to mac and cheese to homemade rolls.

My cousins and I sat at the designated kids table talking about our favorite memories of Pa. *It's almost like he never left.*

I inched the sliding basement door open; I tip-toed down the stairs as the scent of 1970s basement slapped me across the face. I loved this smell. It smelled like the grandkids shoved onto the small couch for a sleepover while Pa completed his exercises in the back corner. It smelled like Pa pretending he couldn't find us during a game of hide and seek. It smelled like Pa and D bringing us freshly baked cookies with milk while we watched the same Disney movie for

the thousandth time. It smelled like memories. These memories are what will bring me back to those beautiful moments with Pa. Losing someone like him is never easy, but I know now he is never really gone.

My phone vibrating snaps me back to reality. I lay my phone down to start getting ready for my summer workout. I open my blinds to see the gray clouds coating the sky. Pa always did hate rainy days.





*Seraphim*  
Emilee Gerhardt





*Healer*  
Emilee Gerhardt

## *Dishonesty*

Madeline Hopson

Dishonesty is evil. Dishonesty is infectious. Dishonesty slowly eats away at integrity and credibility. Dishonesty consumes relationships, affecting the sacred bond of trustworthiness between two people. Dishonesty is a teenage boy telling his parents that he is late for curfew due to traffic, but he simply didn't leave on time. Dishonesty is a newly single girl telling her friends she is ignoring a boy, but she's answering him. Dishonesty is an insecure, middle-class mom telling her coworkers she paid three hundred dollars for a pair of shoes, but she only paid fifty dollars. Dishonesty starts with subconscious, white lies and festers into life-altering, devastating lies. Dishonesty wrecks my brother's life.

My brother, Ian, is fourteen years older than me with bright red, curly hair. He stands at five feet and nine inches tall. Ian is extremely likable with a fun, outgoing personality. He can make anyone laugh so hard their sides hurt. He is smart. He is a master manipulator. He creates narratives, then creates lies to fit those narratives. He tells people different versions of the same story to convince each person of his desired narrative. Changing only one detail in a story, Ian always has a backup plan in case someone catches on to his lies. I can distinctly remember a specific scenario from when I was four years old.

*"Ian, did you put the dishes in the dishwasher?"*

*"Yes, Mom." The dishes still sat in the sink.*

*"Ian, I'm looking at the dishes in the sink. Why did you lie?"*

*"I don't know." Ian slammed his door shut. He also lied about wiping off the table, putting the milk back in the fridge, and taking out the trash.*

Reflecting on that scenario, I can see how that lie might seem harmless, but that can't be further from the truth. These white lies are so common that we can't believe anything Ian says. As Ian aged, his lies became more damaging. Around the age of eight years old, I remember hearing a conversation between my mom and Ian about a dentist appointment.

*"Ian, did you go to the dentist today for your appointment after school?"*

*"Yes, Mom." The dentist office staff left a voicemail asking if he was going to reschedule his missed appointment.*



*“Ian, I got a phone call that you missed your appointment!”*

*“They are lying.” He slammed his door shut. He also lied about going to school, passing his classes, and where he went on Friday night.*

He began to sneak out, experiment with several drugs, skip classes, and steal items from family members. Ian snuck out to attend parties, consuming alcohol with minors he barely knew. Wanting to experience the thrill of doing something he shouldn't do, he experimented with every drug he could get his hands on. He skipped class with his friends, knowing he could lie to his teachers about it the next day. Ian would steal money and prescription medication frequently from various family members. His lies started to have grave consequences. Ian's sneaking out resulted in being grounded. Ian's experimenting with drugs resulted in addiction. Ian's frequently skipping classes resulted in failing grades. Ian's stealing from family members resulted in relationships with family members crumbling. My parents put him through several rehabilitation programs. However, Ian would lie to himself, rendering the rehabilitation programs unsuccessful.

My dad and Ian have never gotten along. Ian's dad and our mom divorced when Ian was four years old, and my dad later became his stepdad. My dad despises dishonesty of any kind. He could tell when Ian used drugs and when he was lying. Therefore, Ian spent the majority of his time in high school grounded. Although they had every reason to abandon my brother, my parents remained in his life, despite the drug use and habit of dishonesty. However, instead of taking accountability for his actions, Ian blamed my parents for his miserable childhood.

In 2016, my parents finally had enough. Thinking that Ian had been living sober, my parents let me visit Ian. During the visit, I discovered Ian's drugs and needles. My parents were in disbelief that Ian put my life in danger. The next day, they decided to cease all contact with Ian. Instead of being honest, taking accountability, and using the situation as motivation to get clean, Ian decided to retaliate. His retaliation almost tore my family apart. The memory of that day is permanently etched in my mind.

*I could hear my mom sobbing and my dad yelling. Something was very wrong. It was ten o'clock in the morning, and I had just gotten out of bed. I ran into their bedroom to see if they were okay. I was immediately overwhelmed with fright. My mom was curled up in a ball, rocking back and forth, and my dad was pacing around their bedroom, pleading to my mom. “Gina, he's lying!” “Mom, Dad, what's going on?” My voice was shaking. My mom waved me over to her. She explained to me that my brother had accused my dad of hitting*

*him. I felt sick to my stomach. I looked at my dad. His eyes were bloodshot red, indicating hours of crying and little sleep. “How do you know he said this?” I knew my brother had a bad habit of lying, but I secretly hoped my parents’ source was the liar. I hoped my fun, hilarious big brother would never hurt me like this. “He posted it on Facebook.” How would my dad go to work? What would happen to me?*

As of today, Ian does not know where we live. His number is blocked on all of our cell phones. My parents frequently explain that Ian’s drug addiction didn’t cause us to cut him off, but his lying addiction forced our hand. Dishonesty is calculated. Dishonesty is cruel. Dishonesty seeps within the cracks of the foundation of a relationship. Dishonesty shatters families. Dishonesty ruins lives.



## *Destiny*

Madeline Hopson

Loyalty, thoughtfulness, compassion, honesty, and respect are the traits I seek in a romantic partner. I have several other standards, but I tended to waive them, convinced no man could meet these requirements. I almost lost hope of finding someone who possessed these characteristics when I met Marcell Green.

Marcell played lacrosse at the college I attended. He stood at six feet and three inches. He had an athletic build with smooth, tan skin and a contagious smile that left people feeling important. His confidence radiated and pulled people to him, as though he had a gravitational pull. I watched Marcell play lacrosse and noticed his passion. I noticed his playful, dark eyes and his kind heart. I also noticed the more I searched for him, the more I discovered he stayed to himself. However, Marcell decided to attend a fraternity event with his friend, Johnny, on February 5th. I often reminisced about that night.

*Exhausted from my track meet, I struggled to stay awake. My teammates kept talking about an upcoming fraternity event. They begged me to join them upon returning to campus. We arrived late, and I quickly threw on a pair of jeans and a silver top. I didn't fix my hair or makeup. I arrived at the event, with the music blaring so loudly I could hear it from the street, and immediately found my friends and started dancing. The building was crowded. While I was dancing center stage, I started to hear voices calling out, "Madi, Madi" I turned around quickly, trying to locate the perpetrator. "Madi, you look good." I thought to myself, "Is Marcell saying these things?" I turned around, and Marcell was standing right in front of me. With everyone watching, he smiled at me and took off his white t-shirt, handing it to me. I was in shock; I had never spoken to him. The music blared, requiring me to yell. "Do you have a girlfriend?" "No, Miss Madi, I do not have a girlfriend." His friend Johnny pulled him away, and I continued dancing with my friends, processing what had occurred. When the event ended, I heard Marcell as I began to leave. "Madi, you can come stay with me." I laughed and got in my car.*

The next day he texted me, asking if I would meet him at the gym; I agreed. When I met him at the gym, we talked for hours about family, religion, school, and past relationships. After this conversation, I realized how special he was, and we became inseparable, spending every day and night together. He was incredibly intelligent; our morals aligned. We aligned religiously and politically, and he understood emotional concepts that I begged previous partners to understand.

The more time I spent with him, the more infatuated I became. He fulfilled every requirement I desired

in a partner. Marcell understood me. He was the only person who truly did so. I never worried about saying the wrong thing or being misinterpreted. He knew how I felt about something before it happened. He knew how to comfort me when I got upset. He visited where I went to high school and where I spent my free time; he met my friends. For the first time, I didn't sacrifice my values in a romantic relationship. He was my safe space.

Before meeting me, Marcell decided to transfer. He regretted his decision as May approached, but he had already entered the transfer portal. If he stayed, the college could offer only half of the scholarship money they originally offered him. May 13th would be our last day together; I will never forget that day.

*"I know there's nothing I can say to make this easier, but please don't cry. We can call and FaceTime when we're free." I heard the words Marcell was saying, but the tears streaming down my face, the hole in my heart, and the grief flooding my brain made it impossible to accept the situation. I finally found someone who was everything I wanted, and now I was losing him. I looked at him sitting in my passenger seat, leaving trinkets throughout my car, and thought about this moment being the last time he would sit in that seat. He reached across the center console to embrace me. He knew how to comfort me. He said I was the most special person he had ever met and I meant so much to him. He handed me all of his college shirts, his lacrosse backpack, his student ID card, and a backpack trinket. This gesture made me emotional. He knew how sentimental I was. No one had been this thoughtful towards me. He reached to hug me goodbye as we watched his dad park next to us. Watching him leave, I felt my heart break, shattering into a million pieces.*

"It's Marcell's birthday today, August 6th." I reminded Johnny, who also transferred. "I know. Madi, I called because you need to see something that Marcell posted." Johnny sent me the post. My heart sank. I couldn't breathe. My vision was blurry. "I'm going to be sick." The post depicted Marcell and a girl together for his birthday. One picture showed Marcell kissing her cheek. Immediately, I started to think of justifiable explanations. After I ended the call, a girl added me on Snapchat. She said she saw my name on Marcell's phone. She told me that they had been in a relationship for years, that they lived together, and that she recently got baptized in his church. I felt as though a truck had plowed right through me. I felt betrayed. How could he do this to me?

"Destiny texted me today. Marcell had a third girlfriend." Maybe clarify that you were at the event before you mention it here? It is a tad confusing here. "That is unbelievable, Madi. I had no idea. Again, I am so sorry." "Johnny, it happened for a reason. He wasn't who I thought he was."



*Andy Legends*

Atleigh Gruenwald



In February 2009, my brother was conceived. My mother had been pregnant many times in the past. Once with my older sister, once with my younger sister, and once with me. I am the second oldest. Now, my mom has given birth to several other children for a total of six kids- 4 girls and 2 boys. When my older sister was born my parents tried for another, but another never came. My Mama and my Papa had even begun praying more frequently as their hopes began to sink. Finally, after four years and 5 miscarriages I was conceived. Once I was born, it was like my parents kept popping out babies. One after the other until the universe settled the debate over more. My second to youngest brother put an end to the baby making and began my parents' endeavors in caring for him. I think my parents knew since the moment he was born that something was wrong. Not that he was any less loved, but that the way my brother would function would be different than normal. My brother's life tells a story that requires empathy to understand. The pain that my family experiences is often misunderstood and regarded in such an ignorant way. My family also experiences joy and love. Though, sometimes it is lost between the permanent circumstance that plagues our lives, but it is still present. It all began November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

As a baby he was easy, nothing unusual for an infant except he was hard to get to sleep. He kept growing, (no surprise there), and with that the problem only furthered. My parents had to resort to putting lavender on his feet to help with sleeping and melatonin, and even then, he would wake up at ungodly hours and "sing" to my whole household. Depending on the day he had a good voice for a nonverbal, autistic, kid with Fragile X. "Singing" has always been something that calms my brother down. It stimulates his body when he's anxious or upset. His voice is a series of high-pitched screeches that drag on for long periods of time. He has never been able to sing with his words, but this other tactic has always proved useful. My brother can certainly hit the high notes. I've always thought the way his body and his mind function are unique. It's not normal, but that's what is so special to my family.

I have always wondered how he would sound and what he would say. My Mama and Papa have the same longing that I do. My mom, from the moment my brother was born, had a picture of what my brother's life would be like. She wanted everything and more for him, as any mother would. She wanted him to be a normal kid, a normal teenager, to go to college, and find someone to love him. My parents won't get any of that. Yes, his life had begun, but my brother's life had also died. The beautiful dreams my mom had pictured in her head

about my brother's life had died the day his Fragile X diagnosis was given. He will never be able to experience life the way he should've. My mom's heart breaks that he must go through life with all the challenges that come with being different. My parents have always said everything happens for a reason. God has a different plan for my brother. He uses him to touch people in so many ways. His therapist at his school had recently lost her husband and had been on leave for several days, grieving her loss and wondering why such a terrible thing had happened to her. When she finally returned to the school, the one thing she looked forward to was being able to see my brother. This allowed my mom to grieve the loss of what my brother's life could have been and let her see the good.

Fragile X is a disorder that requires a diagnosis from doctors to be treated. The National Fragile X Foundation states:

Fragile X Syndrome is caused by a mutation of a single gene — FMR1 — on the X chromosome and is inherited genetically, often unknowingly. Everyone has the FMR1 gene on their X chromosome, but when a mutation occurs, it can cause intellectual disability, behavioral and learning challenges, and various physical characteristics. There is no cure, but therapies, interventions, and medications are often prescribed to treat behavioral symptoms like anxiety, aggression, and ADHD. Female carriers have a 50% chance of passing the mutation to each of her children, while males will pass it to all his daughters (and none of his sons). Though Fragile X syndrome occurs in both genders, males are more frequently affected than females, and generally with greater severity.<sup>1</sup>

Since my brother had shifted our lives, he opened the door to researching and learning about what syndrome he had. When my sister came along, it accelerated this process. She was not as severe as a girl with Fragile X could get, but with her influence, my parents rushed to test us all. All six of my mom's kids went through testing at a research facility in Ohio. Mama and Papa had decided they wanted us to be informed and be able to make better reproductive decisions. My reproductive decisions suddenly had to consider Fragile X if I ever wanted to have a baby. When I was told this as a child, I understood how the science of it worked. If I wanted to have a baby naturally there was a 50% chance it would come out like my brother, and a 50% chance it would be a normal baby. I've always loved kids, and later I would realize what this would mean for me. I would never be able to have kids

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1      Rosselot, Hilary. "National Fragile X Foundation". fragilex.org, unknown. 1984, <https://fragilex.org>.

unless a scientific procedure from the future intervened in my reproductive rights. That is, if I didn't want another of my brother. My thoughts would then shift to my future husband. Would he leave me for a baby? Or would we ever get married in the first place? How could I deprive a child from my husband if he wanted one of his own? Adoption was something I had thought about as well. However, I still can't shake the feeling of wanting one of my own. I've often wondered how this is fair. My Mama has always felt so guilty. My Papa, I'm sure has felt the same, but doesn't show it at all. My mom has always said that she's sorry for the burden that she has placed on each of her kids as well as herself and my dad. I can't blame her though, she never meant to do anything.

God and genetics played a big role. Sometimes you must trust that God lets everything happen for a reason even if it is beyond our understanding. I hope that one day, my Mama can let the guilt go. I picture a field with my mom standing in the middle. Light is all around. A gentle breeze is brushing the flowers as butterflies dance from each one. My mom's shoulders are tight, and her brow is furrowed, but then she feels a hand on her shoulder. Suddenly, my mama is finally at peace. I hope she gets that, and I hope my family does too.



## *Happy Death Day*

Isabella Nehus

I wasn't always in a coffin,  
Once upon a time I lived among the living.  
But as I lay here,  
I realize death isn't as forgiving.

As long as I lay here,  
before God sweeps me away,  
I think about the last of my years,  
And on and on till my final day.

The day I drew my final breath,  
I was sitting outside.  
As the light of the sun was setting,  
Down by the seaside.

The ocean glistened,  
And the waves rolled,  
The dolphins leaped,  
And the birds flew high and bold.

I fell to my knees in front of the sea,  
And gazed into the sky above me,  
I thought about the people I'd be leaving behind,  
But I was happy and peaceful and so I died.



*Icycle Forest*

Taja Showers



## *Finding Joy in the Journey*

Benjamin Moore

If you look up the word, “imprisonment”, the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary lists the words: confine, constrain, limit, and hold as synonyms. On February 16, 2021, I began a journey to understand those words on a deeper level. As I watched my mother endure a tragic accident, one that would change our lives forever, I realized that feelings and emotions can trap you and make you feel confined and imprisoned. Feelings and emotions of those you love can grab ahold of you and constrain you.

It all began with a prediction of snow and ice over several days. I was a sophomore in high school and my mother was a third-grade teacher. My sister was living at college in Nashville, and my older brother had moved home to finish college. Of course, the anticipation of a snow day always brought excitement to our house. “Teachers love snow days just as much as students,” is what my mother would always say. The snow began to fall on the night of February 14th, and ice fell into the mix as the temperatures plummeted. It snowed again the entire next day, but we were already out of school for President’s Day. Everyone quickly began to realize that we would be getting a snow day and possibly a snow week if this continued. My mother, father, brother, and I all woke up the next day, February 16th, to inches of snow covered with ice covered by snow. Outside was a complete blanket of untouched snow and ice and freezing temperatures. Nobody would be leaving anywhere anytime soon unless on foot. After the excitement of being out of school and my father off from work wore off, my mother asked if anyone wanted to go out and try to walk around the neighborhood. We lived in a neighborhood full of school-age children, most of whom have gone to school where my mother taught. Our neighborhood was centered around a community pool and large commons area, with steep hills surrounding it. My father quickly declined the invitation to the freezing conditions outside. My brother and I did not want to go out but finally gave in to my mother’s request. On our way out of the house, my dad said, “Don’t go out there and break anything.” We went out, and it was slick! So much ice had fallen, and snow laid on top of it. We made our way down to the commons area in our neighborhood where there were tons of children sledding down the steep hills with their parents. My brother and I went once or twice but were not really interested. Then my mother’s friend came down with her two boys and their sled. Both of her boys had been in tutoring sessions with my mother and were familiar with her. We had moved to a different spot in the commons area to visit and my mother jokingly said, “Maybe I should go down on this sled,” as she sat down on a sled. That is when it happened.



All it took was a second, and the younger boy impulsively gave my mother a good push and down she went. As we stood there, shocked that he had just pushed her, we watched as she flew down the hill and headed toward a concrete culvert covered in snow. She hit one side of the culvert, which sent her flying into the air and coming down on the other side. She was lying there in the snow, not moving. We slid our way down to her and could hear her screams of pain starting to emerge. She could not move. She was screaming and crying. Immediately, we called my dad and 911. We all knew to not move her. Someone ran to their house and got a blanket for her while we waited for what seemed like an eternity, due to the road conditions, on the ambulance to get there. My mother had sustained a burst fracture that caused a spinal cord injury. She had emergency surgery that day. Her feeling returned in her arms, but her legs were affected. From this point on, everything in our life changed.

As this devastating event happened, I could not manage the feelings I was experiencing. I began re-playing the events of that day every time I would slow down and have time to think. I felt trapped by that day's events. I would later learn that what I was experiencing was Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. In *A Mind Spread Out on the Ground*, Alicia Elliot writes about her memories of watching her mother being diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, along with many other diagnoses. Her memories reflected what I was going through, as well as what I was watching my mother go through. A quote from "The Yellow Wallpaper" struck a chord with me when the narrator says, "Nobody would believe what an effort it is to do what little I am able, - to dress and entertain, and order things"(Gilman 649).<sup>1</sup> The smallest things started taking increased energy. Not only was I experiencing the effects of daily activities requiring more effort, nightmares, and flashbacks, but my mother was as well. The flashbacks were taking over both of us. We were both imprisoned by the events of that day, and they just kept playing over and over in our minds.

In *A Mind Spread Out on the Ground*, Elliot says, "So when my mother told me she was hearing "demonic voices" and thought she needed an exorcism last year, I was legitimately terrified. Not because I thought she was possessed—she didn't mention anything about floating above her bed and her voice sounded totally normal. I was scared of how scared she must be"(Elliot 49).<sup>2</sup> Like Elliot, I too, was scared of how scared my mother must have been. I watched her spend over a week in the hospital trying to get well enough to move to an inpatient rehabilitation facility. When the time came to transport her from the hospital to the inpatient rehabilitation, we had to leave her at the door of the facility. Covid restrictions prevented us from being able to go in with her. It was awful leaving her there that day. We watched as a nurse wheeled her away to her room. She was crying, and I was crying. My heart hurt for her. She was scared. She begged my dad to come back and get her

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1 Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *The Yellow Wallpaper*. First Avenue Editions, a Division Of Lerner Publishing Group, 2017

2 Elliot, Alicia. *A Mind Spread Out On the Ground*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2019. Print.

that night. I laid awake all night worrying about her and what the next day would look like. We spent the next few days prepping our house to be handicap accessible. As my dad, brother, and I did this, all I could think of was the accident. I questioned what our life would be like now. I felt robbed. I know my mother felt robbed.

Elliott says, “Things that were stolen once can be stolen back”(Elliott 54). Here she is referring to colonialism and depression and how they have both stolen her language in different ways. I never thought about it like that. That statement made me reflect on this event and wonder if I changed my mindset and took back the things that were stolen, would that help us heal? The quote may just mean getting things back in a different way. Elliott is open about her feelings when she writes, “I struggle against colonialism the same way I struggle against depression—telling myself I’m not worthless, that I’m not a failure, that things will get better” (Elliott 53). My mother has started being open about her feelings and her depression since the accident, and she encouraged me to talk more as opposed to letting the feelings build up and weigh me down. When I read what Elliot wrote about her struggles and how she deals with her feelings, it made me think of my mom and her advice to open up more. She has on several occasions described depression, anxiety, and PTSD as a feeling of being weighed down. Elliott writes, “Weight in and of itself is not devastating; depression is” (Elliott 47). Even though I have suffered more with PTSD and anxiety, I can see how depression can be devastating if it is allowed to be devastating. One thing I have learned is that I cannot let any of these feelings control my life. Elliott’s mom never seemed to get well enough to get to the healing point. To heal, I had to take back what little control I could of my life. And maybe, I thought, just maybe, this change in me, this healing I worked for, would be encouragement for my mother and others. Looking back, I see that it was.



*The Upward Grasp*

Donna Terrell



*Perspective...Something Along Those Lines*

Havana Santis

I see you  
And the sunsets behind you.  
I see the look in your eyes  
When you say  
That something is different.  
I have seen  
Grass rise over graves  
And starry nights  
Fade into day.  
I can't understand  
How some artists see  
Butterflies in the hashes  
Or waves under granite  
When I see  
The wood between the walls  
That held me together  
When the people between the walls  
Were falling apart.  
I can't see two hours ahead.  
How do you see what's in mine?  
We have two different kinds of visions.  
Mine is subdued,  
And yours is sublime.  
You're brass bells ringing,  
I'm midnight singing,  
And we meet eyes.  
I see you,  
Or something along those lines.



*The Depth of Her Gaze*

Donna Terrell

*Plastic Never Felt so Real*

Chloe Robinson

Plastic cases standing tall  
On rows of shelves tightly sprawled.  
With little hands and arms bound so tight,  
And little feet shoved in heels too slight.

A head laid stiff on a cardboard sheet  
A smile wide and obsolete  
Fake faces, empty, stare into space  
The perfect image of practiced grace.

The perfect doll, a little toy,  
For little girls and grownup boys.  
But wait a second, somethings changed  
Cases break, girls leave the stage.

Bindings loose from years of fight  
The heels come off, bare feet feel right.  
Head turns left, no more looking to please  
No more fake smiles, or unspoken pleas.

This face emotes, no more empty stare.

Realize no one is perfect and breathe your first real breath of air.



