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NEVERmore

Franklin Pierce's Literary Journal

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Editor's Letter

It was an honor to be chosen to be the editor-in-chief of the Spring 2020 issue of *Nevermore*. When I began this journey I had no idea what to expect. Now, having put in many hours collecting submissions, reading your essays, short stories, and poetry, and coordinating the making of this issue, I have a new appreciation for literary publications.

Serving on the editorial board of *Nevermore* for past issues and now taking on the role of editor for this issue has been a huge part of my experience here at Franklin Pierce and I am so glad I had the opportunity to be a part of *Nevermore*. I have always loved creative writing of all types, whether it be fiction or nonfiction, poetry or prose, so to be able to help my fellow students to get their own writing out there has been a great experience.

Thank you to my editorial board and a special thanks to Dr. Dangelantonio for being by my side throughout this whole thing and keeping me on track this semester.

Yours,
Desiree West
Edition-in-Chief of *Nevermore*

Nevermore is a student-run literary journal produced every semester. It showcases Franklin Pierce University students' poems, short stories, photography, and drawings. A new editor is selected every semester. The editor chooses their editorial board, sets deadline dates for submissions, creates the final journal, and brings it to press.

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A Promise to Spring

Kyana Brizula



Scars

Alexis Briggs

They say a lot of pieces together is what makes something whole. I never really understood that saying until a few days when I walked past my mirror hanging in my dorm. It's not anything special, just a cheap mirror from Walmart that my roommate hung behind our door. I was changing for a date I had with a boy. I have always been self conscious about my body for as long as I can remember because some of the laughs and snickers still rung in my ear. But he made me feel special, so when he asked me I happily accepted. I woke up this morning and changed to shower. I began washing my body and shaving my legs, when I noticed the small nick behind my left knee. As I brushed my fingers over it, I remembered how I acquired this mark.

It was the summer before sixth grade, the year my mother gave me the greenlight to do adult-ish things. Atleast to thirteen year old me, shaving was a huge deal. I remember going with my mother to our habitual grocery store, and being in an aisle with an array of razors from any color, type, brand, blade number imaginable. I scanned the shelves for what felt like hours until I saw a pink one with a light purple grip. I snagged it off the rack and ran up to my mom and asked permission. When she agreed and asked if I wanted to put it in the cart, I happily declined and held on to that plastic bladed handle all the way home.

Pulling into our driveway, I felt a strange sense of anxiousness and anticipation. I was excited by the fact that my parents, especially my mother, was recognizing me as an adult. Yet in the outskirts of my mind a twinge of nervousness lingered. Not by the fact that I could cut myself but by the fact that I was, indeed, growing up. But those doubts quickly faded when I heard the unclicking noise of the car's lock.

I ran through the garage, to the door, up two flights of stairs, and closed my bedroom door when I caught my breath. I quickly stripped my clothes, reached for my towel, and took one last look at my pre-shaven legs. The cool floor felt like ice shards with every

step, as I made my trudge towards the shower. I turned the water temperature dial towards midway red, and waited for a few minutes while it heated up. When I stepped into the steam, I instantly felt relief. I thought back to my mother beforehand giving me a brief rundown of how to use the body wash to lather your legs, and then take the razor and go upwards towards you over the soap.

As I started the process myself on my right leg, I realized this was easy. Being an adult and growing up was a piece of cake. It wasn't until I switched legs and began belting out the lyrics to All About That Bass by Meghan Trainor, that I looked down at the water and saw the small hint of red. I examined my legs, until my gaze finally landed on the small gash behind my left knee that was slowly drizzling blood into the drain.

I forget if I cried, but I recall my fingers tracing the skin when I carefully placed a Jurassic Park bandaid on the first wound of adulthood. Leaving me with a tattooed reminder that there will be bumps and scrapes along the way but you can still grow up without losing your childhood, even if it is in the form of a dinosaur bandaid.

When I glanced at the time, I realized I had an hour left until he was on his way to pick me up. It wasn't like I felt rushed, I just wanted to ease my first date jitters by taking my time and embracing the process. I decided on taming my eyebrows next turning them from one large caterpillar to two face friendly ones.

Everytime I pluck my eyebrows or touch just above my eye, I am reminded of that day.

I remember the excitement I felt when I found out that our after school daycare was going on a field trip. I remember coming home from school and jumping up and down when I found out that I needed my parents signature on my permission slip. I barely slept that night because I couldn't decide what outfit to wear.

The bus ride was filled with laughter and tears as we were all beyond ecstatic with the notion that we were going

to a waterpark. I remember waiting in line to change into my brand new swimsuit that I bought for an occasion like this. Once everyone in the class had changed into more suitable attire, we walked through those doors. Behind that threshold, the smell of chlorine, the sound of laughter, and the sight of buckets dropping water on unsuspecting victims below, filled my eight year old senses.

When it came time to split into groups, the older kids wanted to go on the “Toilet-Bowl” water slide. Where living up to its name is a slide which has you go down a dark tunnel, opens up into a bowl that eventually drops you down another tunnel after a few swirls. However that was a bit intimidating for me at the time, so I went on the next best thing; the rock slide. The rock slide was a smaller slide than the “Toilet-Bowl”, but was still tall and had rocks all up both sides of the slide.

The line wrapped almost around the whole slide, but the young lifeguard at the top was trying his best to send kids down fast yet safely. Right before it was my turn, the life guards switched stations, and we now had a young girl lifeguard who looked like it was her first day. She began sending three kids down at a time, as opposed to one.

The adrenaline was coursing through my veins as I sat at the top of the slide ready for her to give me the signal to go. A high pitched whistle sounded and that was my cue. A rush of water and pleasure followed me as I went down the slide. But when I reached the bottom that’s when everything changed.

The kid in front of me was still trying to untangle himself from the kid in front of him. After a few moments a body slammed into my back and then another. Soon it was a colossal pile up of children. At one point I felt free, and could move my legs so I flipped my body around to try and stand up. But then another domino hit the rest and I went down, face first into the rock wall. I remember seeing the color of the rocks, yet still have a hint of crimson slowly etching over the wall. When I was finally pulled

crimson slowly etching over the wall. When I was finally pulled to my feet by an adult who obviously did not notice the accident until now. She gasped and let out a soft scream. I was immediately handed a towel and an ice pack. I wasn't aware of the situation because my face just felt a little twinge of pain but nothing too crazy I thought.

It wasn't until one of the head chaperones loomed over me, looking at my wound with motherly concern etched across her face. She stared at me for a few moments longer with her gaze glancing over my icepack area. Her spiky brown dyed hair seemed to dull a bit as she talked to other chaperones and casually glanced in my direction as I watched the other kids splash about.

I didn't even hear her come up to me until I heard her voice. The seriousness rippled through her voice yet humor danced on the edge of her words as she tried to diffuse my tears when she told me she told my mother what happened and she is taking me to the emergency room when she picks me up. My tears still streamed down my face until she made me the best deal any child could take part in when candy is the prize. She offered me a huge bag of M&Ms if I had to get stitches.

Lets just say it felt like Halloween when I came into daycare the next day.

When I plucked the final stray hair, I looked back at the scar in the mirror and let a little smile creep out. Besides the nonexistent cavities, I earned the knowledge seed that growing up means adults may not always have the right ideas sometimes and being an adult means you need to make your own decisions.

My next gracious step includes applying artificial color to my face in order to seem flawless. I grabbed my foundation and began lightly powdering my face like a chef carefully dusting french toast with powdered sugar. It wasn't until I tilted my chin up that I saw the mark. I slowly skimmed the surface of my skin with the brush, while the memory came back in a small rush.

When I was younger I loved playing dress up, like any

typical young girl. I used to wear dresses and costumes all over the house. My wardrobe spanned from magicians to Snow White.

One day, I can't remember if it was the night before school or before a big day, but I remember the anxiousness and joy that I felt. I remember yearning to wear my cutest outfit with my favorite pair of blue Cinderella heels. Granted the heels were maybe a half an inch to an inch off the ground, but to my young mind they were spectacular. I felt like a giant in the body of a child.

I wore them everywhere, and I mean everywhere. From trips to the grocery store to my grandmothers house. I remember running downstairs after school that day to my closet. I grabbed the shoes and wore them until dinner. I was still walking around in them when I heard the familiar yell of my mother calling to come eat.

I was so eager, I decided to try going up the stairs two at a time. I had to conquer two flights of steps, which seemed like a tall task but I was up for it. The first flight was easy, but halfway through the second flight my little legs began to fatigue.

I was four steps away, meaning I had to hoist myself just two more times. The second to last step I almost fell but I caught myself. As I neared the finish line it suddenly hit me how exhausted I actually was. As soon as my right foot took hold on the last stair and I began to inch forward to adjust my left leg, it happened. It was like the movie effect of falling in slow motion. I slowly fell until my body was cushioned by my chin slamming into the ground. My parents witnessed this whole incident and rushed to the scene. After a few moments of examination we were on our way to the emergency room. I don't remember the car ride or the actual process of getting stitches, but I do remember the comments my classmates made about me having a small blue beard on my chin to match my Cinderella heels.

When my eyes refocused back to reality, I didn't hear the quiet ring of my phone until I blinked. I quickly grabbed my purse and made my way towards the door. I reached for the doorknob

and saw a small flash of something familiar. I looked down at my hand and noticed a line across my left index finger. I stared at it, but then the hum of my phone snapped my attention back.

I walked to his car, still lost in thought until he called my name. I looked up still hazed yet managed to let a cheesy smile spread across my face. His eyes met mine and I blushed a cool fire truck red. He led me to the car and graciously opened my door. I placed my hand at my side and waited for him to make his way to the driver's side. Once he slid into the seat we were off. A few minutes into the drive he gently interlocked his fingers with mine and stayed there. He began making small circles around my palm and then traced across my fingers. When he went over that mark, my mind took me back to its birthplace.

I was in fourth grade when I was invited to my first away sleepover. My friend invited me over to sleep at her house. When I arrived I met her dog, cat, and her chickens. That night we stayed up watching horror movies and eating snacks. We stayed up so late we saw the sunlight try and break through the darkness, yet we fell asleep as the day was waking up.

When we woke up in the afternoon, her mom gave us the task of collecting the eggs. We walked into the coop and I almost ran into the heat lamp keeping the chickens at a viable living temperature. We had to be careful not to disturb them, but her dog had other ideas. We devised a plan to distract the target by me playing fetch with him, while she collected the eggs.

Throughout fetch, her dog started to get a little riled up and began to get a little chewy on my hands when I tried to extract the ball from the slobbery mouth. When I stuck my fingers into the mouth, my index finger sharply scraped against the dog's front K9 tooth and began to bleed. I didn't scream but I was in awe over the crimson that came from my hand.

During this whole mission her mom was watching through the window, and came out to check on us. But before I

could react she took me into the house and washed my wound, then bandaged it while it pulsed having a sort of PTSD physical reaction, reliving the K9 breaking its layer. I can still feel the hot water over the scrape along with the pulsing and throbbing sensation of the appendage.

I was snapped from my trance by him coming around to my side of the door and his arm grazing my shoulder trying to motion for me to unbuckle. Nervously I laughed and apologized for zoning out.

The night was full of laughs and some awkward stereotypical first date moments of silence. Towards the end of the date I began to feel more relaxed but I was still a little on edge. He must have noticed me staring at my scar and read my ill at ease that covered my expression. He touched my hand and held it in his. He took my chin in his other hand and moved my gaze from my hand to his gaze. He brushed some hair from my eyebrow that the chilly night swept over its view. He then moved closer, seeing his eyes melt into mine and my own skin feeling goosebumps envelop my body like a blanket. He then kissed me so gingerly yet with a hint of intensity that my left knee perked up.

Every one of my scars felt whole again, like I don't have uninked tattoos on my body reminding me I am imperfect. But in that moment, all my doubts and uncomfortable feelings of my skin were gone. I was whole again and even after those fleeting moments my scars are what makes me whole and because of them I am me. I am a patchwork doll of my own experience and each new stitch is a new memory that guides me through adulthood.

Among the Lilypads

Kyana Brizula



This Job is Temporary

Amalia Seppanen

I stand, slightly slumped over, behind the register, one hip resting unevenly on the cash drawer.

I shouldn't do that. I'm going to mess up my spine and get scoliosis, probably. What is scoliosis? I know it means your spine is crooked, but can you really get it from spending 15 hours a week leaning on the same hip?

Either way, I shift my weight to the other foot, feeling something deep in my lower back pop dully. That probably shouldn't be happening. Oh, well. The bagger at the end of the lane also shifts his weight around. He's young, like most of them, and the silence between us leaves his chatty, restless mind unsettled. I can feel the awkwardness stretching between us and I almost feel bad. I should say something. I feel too tired and uninterested to make small talk and any attempt would be pathetically half-hearted.

He manages to ask, "So, how long are you here 'til?"

"Ummmm, six!" I say, offering a smile, hoping to make up for my lack of effort in making the time pass more quickly. "What about you?"

"Four." He says, nodding and making a clicking sound out of the corner of his mouth. It's that same sound people make when they are trying calm down a horse.

A young mom appears at the end of the belt, two kids and heaps of groceries in tow.

Perfect. The bagger and I, whose name I wished I paid more attention to, were on good terms now. We had spoken to each other and now we could move on.

"Hi!" I say, my cheerful, high-pitched customer service voice barely making it across the noise of bustling shoppers. Too enthusiastic. I remind myself to talk like a normal person, people respect that. I drop my voice to a lower, more comfortable, octave. "How are you today?"

"I'm good! How are you?" She smiles distractedly, re-arranging the groceries her pig-tailed daughter has been throwing on the belt.

“Good!” I say, like I always say. I would never say anything else.

There’s a contract between a cashier and a customer, which states that no matter what tragic, distressing, or mundane events are taking place in either of their lives, they will act as though, for that brief interaction, that everything is “good” and everything leading up to that point has been “just fine” and everything following that will likely be “oh ducky.” The customer signed it when they showed up at the end of my belt, and I signed it when I agreed to work at a grocery store.

Any breaches to this contract are met, at best, with awkwardness and, at worst, with panic. There’s no script for real human interaction. There’s no clause in this contract explaining my response when a customer says they are “doing terribly.” Anything I can offer as a response is so brief and startled it has little hope of reconciling their day. Maybe, if I was cleverer, I could drum up just the right turn of phrase to tickle their stark demeanor into something of a smile. Even then, being clever is risky. Some people don’t want to be happy; they just want you to know that they aren’t. I usually respond with a distant, descending “ohh,” or “ahhh,” or “aww,” as if to say, “that’s too bad.”

The transaction comes to end at some point after I’ve told her the total and said, “thank you” every other word and I leave her with a receipt and a “Have a good one!” She leaves me with a thank you and “you too!” and I can feel my bagger wondering what he should try to say next.

Full Bloom

Kyana Brizula



Survive

Adam DiLiddo

Blood.

Too much of it. The boy had gone and done what he now knew he shouldn't have, and there was blood. He felt it running into and over his pant leg. More than that, he felt pain searing into the freed skin every second his leg was stood upon until he went down. Then there were footsteps. Little skitters drawing towards the door ahead. Out from his side, he drew a pistol and aimed it at the hallway, and then the resident. He fired, and they toppled sideways, collapsing behind the door. Pulling himself up against the wall, he heard their cry and knew.

She was still alive. No matter. If she came around, he had the gun loaded and upright, ready to be fired again. It would just take another bullet or two. Maybe he could even get her through the wall right there, but he wouldn't take that chance. Not after...

Look.

His leg felt damp, and he knew he'd have to look. Assess the damage. See just how much blood was leaving him. But first, he tilted his head, trying to see some more of the hallway. She wasn't in sight.

The boy hadn't heard her take off either, so he made his best guess: she was there, against the adjacent hallway wall. Waiting. Angry. Fearful. Still wanting to kill, no doubt, but too scared to peak in just yet. There was enough time, he figured.

He tore his head down to see. The bear trap had torn deep into his flesh, and blood was oozing out of the black gouges, but there was no bone showing. He'd seen that before: the metal jags tearing muscle away, exposing the dark bone underneath splintered like a wet stick. That was death. This was not. This – it was alright. It was fire seizing his leg and running up his shaking skin, but it could be lived through.

Tourniquet.

Still, it needed fixing. And first, the boy would have to stop the bleeding. People died, he thought, because they were too slow

to realize they could be saving themselves. So quickly, he glanced towards the door and then down upon the rags around him. Up again, and back. He lifted up some faded cloth nearby, uncovering that bit of the floor. Up again. Down towards the shredded shirt, dangling in his hand. Not strong enough. He threw it aside, looked forward, and then back down.

It was smart hiding anything in all this. Down below were mounds of folded clothes or single, matted fabrics packed all together in their mustard stink. This was the drab sight you'd only have to see once to know its craziness and worthlessness. Only here, there was indeed something to the nothing – a metal mouth in place of a shit clump or an ugly thing worth ignoring. And the boy had been numb enough not to care what he'd be walking over in these ruins, so long as he could wipe it off in the snow outside.

He looked up again, and then back to another piece of clothing he'd seen jutting up beside him. With a single tug, it was in his hand. Much less damaged. Good enough to wrap around. He looked beyond it, at the hall. He looked back. Now, to remember what the damn book said. It was two inches – no, no, four – four above the injury, then it was good to do it. He could've just grabbed the thing to make sure, but how long would that take? He couldn't. This was already taking too long. She would come soon. In that hallway, she was waiting for the right EYES.

The boy saw the eyes and he jolted, thrusting the gun forward, firing and screaming "Get back!" Then, the eyes with their shadow head vanished, pulled behind the wall. How long had she been standing there? He kept watching, and without breaking his gaze, he placed his gun upon his other leg. A quiver shook him as the grip left his hand. It was always close, he knew. He just had to finish it.

Grabbing the cloth fully, the boy tucked it underneath the leg and grabbed the two ends, pulling upward with them. Cross. Right end under. Pull again, hard. Look up. Look down. Take the shorter bits. Cross. Look up. Look down. The left one slipped out of his bloody grasp as he was about to go under with the right one.

Desperate, he smeared his palms along his jacket arms, looking up all the while. Then, he grabbed the bits again. Cross. Right end under. Pull again, harder. Look up. Look down. The tourniquet was completed. Now he knew – or at least, he had high hopes – that he wouldn't die of blood loss. Then again, he was still in this place with the crazy trap bitch the next room over. He grabbed the gun and aimed towards the door.

...

Dark.

The boy kept still until dusk had seized the hall before him, encompassing it in shadow. Nothing could be seen; not even the girl, if she was even there. All he knew was the throbbing pain and the darkness creeping up on him. His blood had turned black, and his fingers looked grey like a rotting corpse; two of which still hugged the trigger in exhausted expectation.

He had been figuring something out over the hours. It was in the back of his mind for some time, but now it had filled his head like concrete. Hell, it began reaching his stomach, piercing it with dread long ignored and prayed against. It sure beat getting bitten by a pair of metal jaws, but it didn't matter. He knew. He couldn't lie to himself anymore. He knew. He knew she would come when he least expected, as she already had. He knew the second he let up, she would run out – a blur amidst the black, shooting or stabbing or hacking so suddenly, the best hope he had was popping a wild shot. Maybe it would hit. Yeah, maybe it would hit. Maybe. Maybe...

No.

The energy had left him. He tried to muster it back up. Raise his eyes, clench his fist, lift the gun even higher. But it was gone. It was over. He had had enough. The nights were never his to begin with, even before this mess. Every single party, meeting, and event, he wanted to sleep. And now, here was a night in which his life was threatened, his leg was punctured, his back was against the peeling wallpaper, and it was the strangest thing. It was just like any other night.

“Are you there?” The boy’s voice scraped his throat and left it in a low, broken call.

“Listen, I don’t know what I’m doing. Come in here and get it over with.” From the doorway, he expected the figure to come like a mouth’s rolling tongue, but nothing did. Not even a peaking head.

Only darkness. Only silence.

“Did you hear what I just said? Come on. Just do it already.”

Only darkness. Only silence.

“What do I have to do to make you talk?”

Only darkness. Only silence.

Thud.

Only darkness. Only silence.

“There. That’s the fucking gun. You didn’t believe me, so there.”

Only silence.

“I don’t have anything. Look.” He forced his arms over his head, waving heavy, crusted hands.

In the doorway, amidst the black, was an abyss. He knew she was there. But still, only silence.

“I’m dead.”

The figure grew. It grew larger and closer and larger, and out from its shape came a straight arm jutting out and up ever so slowly. Something was in the hand.

I’m dead.

The girl was getting closer.

I’m dead.

The girl was larger than ever before.

I’m dead.

Her knife was there. Grasped tightly. Ready to open his neck with a slash, or dig into the leg slits until the darkness took him.

I’m dead.

The girl was getting closer. She raised her arm higher, and he noticed how the weapon almost blurred into it like it was a part of her body – a part of the blackest flesh. The girl was FLASH.

Another.

And another.

The ringing struck the boy's ears all at once, and he did not hear her fall. Slowly, he lowered himself to his side, still aiming at the limp mass before him. With a quick lunge forward, he shoved the body with the muzzle. No movement. No flinching. The girl was dead.

There was relief for a short while, until the boy realized he had to keep moving. Still on his good side, he began the process of crawling on it, making sure to keep his gouged leg from pressing into the floor. It still hurt like hell, but he kept moving.

Soon, the boy reached the book he'd thrown out. US Army Survival Manual . He could barely read the words in this darkness, and he knew he wouldn't be able to read if he'd set the tourniquet right. He just had to be sure of it. After all, he hadn't bled out; he hadn't been stabbed, or shot, or cut to pieces. He was living. He had survived – for now.

Home

Kyana Brizula



Sapphire Lipgloss

Alexis Briggs

I am average. A man with a face that blends into a crowd like a chameleon. I contribute nothing to the human race. But some say my art is what speaks volumes when I myself am silent. I could paint an entire picture with the ability to make the observer feel something when I myself am a hollow shell.

“Excusez-moi monsieur” she said as a cough riddled with age followed her snarled voice. This interrupted my daily train ride through self pity and resent.

I apologized for being distracted and continued my work of sketching her unproportioned nose. A few moments later her face twitched from her pose on the bridge and my eyebrow twitched from annoyance.

Eventually, after an hour of sketching this woman’s frail body, leaning against a rotting bridge post, I began to bring her canvas corpse to life with the vivid colors from my palette.

I was halfway glossing over the she-beast’s mustache, when I saw Her. Her radiant skin is only amplified when those perfect peach lips part and a glowing smile spreads across her face. The way the sun dances in her green speckled eyes makes any man swoon to her feet and bless her. She is the epitome of perfection. She made me feel something when so many countless things could not. I was so transfixed on Her I didn’t even realize I began to paint this ladies nose a blush burgundy color. But I didn’t care as long as I still escaped reality for a few more moments while I stared at Her.

Burgundy-nose did not appreciate the altering of her portrait, but I can’t remember her leaving because I was still entranced by Her.

I can recall when I first saw Her, but never the first time we spoke. All I know about Her besides her beauty is she crosses the Pont des Art bridge every morning and every afternoon alone around the same time. Sometimes she is late because of her luxury run to the cafe to aid in her coffee addiction with three pumps of espresso. She pays roughly eight dollars for a large coffee and occasionally a croissant. She always leaves a sapphire red lip gloss

stain around each of her coffee lids, so it's pretty easy to decipher which one was hers.

Most nights I return to my loft after painting roughly three mediocre portraits, and save my real talent for my after hours. Every night I paint for Her. I paint her outfits, I paint us walking together, I paint our dates, and sometimes if I really yearn for Her I paint our future.

Today is our two year anniversary and I can't wait to give Her my present I have had picked out since month nine. I have compiled my collection into one of my favorite paintings and when it dries I will place it on the bench of the bridge with a bow and a tag. She will put it with her other gifts I have bestowed upon her throughout our relationship.

I wear my favorite button down and my best slacks. I organize and reorganize my paint colors six times before I decide to leave my home. Sweat beads down my neck and forehead for the whole walk to my workplace. When I finally arrive at my destination, I stare at the clock until I know she will pass, and place her gift on the bench like I have so many months before.

However, today seems different. I keep checking my watch until I hear a familiar laughter, echoed by a deeper male chuckle.

Is she being followed by another man? Did she trip and he laughed because of her clumsiness?

My mind began to race with scenarios to describe what I heard, but then they came into view. They had their hands interlocked with each other, she had her head leaned against his shoulder, and he kept looking at her with a face full of hunger. I saw her open my gift but after a pause to look I thought I saw something in her expression, but then he tossed my love for her in the garbage a few feet away.

Didn't he know that she was mine? Why was he looking at her like that? Was she being held against her will? Does she need help? I need Her to give me a sign and I will run over and push him over the bridge rail.

But just at that moment, they kissed. I knew in that instant she had done the unspeakable. That wench chose that slimeslicken rat over the man that has given her nothing but love for a whole year.

Maybe I'm seeing things, my eyes must be playing tricks.
She couldn't have betrayed me like this?

I look up and he is continuing to smother her face with his.

He is a monster, I must save her from him.

The whole day I could not paint anything but giant red pools on each canvas. A nice young couple asked me to paint them and I nearly spit in their face.

I know what had to be done, but I must wait until nightfall.

When my time of action has come, I am not nervous. If anything I'm anxious with intoxicating happiness, because I know when this is all over I will still have Her. This is just her testing me, and I know I will pass her simple task and we can be together forever.

I knew where she lived because the first time I went she was sick, and I had to check up on her in case she needed my help. She got better within the week and then our relationship continued as planned.

Her house was blue with white windows and always had her front side window open. I climbed in, like usual, and made my way to Her bedroom. I wasn't sure if he was in there but I just assumed. When I made my way up her creaky stairs, I heard movement in her room. My whole body tensed with rage. I reached for the door knob, took a deep breath and pushed through.

My being blacked out from overwhelming anger that when I woke up blood washed over the room in a iron fumed haze. My eyes lay fixed with shock on a motionless corpse lying in the bed, the room looked like Jackson Pollock took his studio and dumped it in here. I didn't register at first, but after a few moments it hit me. Someone had killed Her. It was Her who was the lifeless body in the bed, it was her blood that covered my clothes. It was Her.

Before my flight or fight instinct kicked in, I grabbed the one thing I wanted to remember her by; her sapphire lip gloss. It wasn't until I was out of breath that my internal GPS had brought me to our bridge. I began to cry, tears rolled down my cheeks in waves and I nearly drowned in my own sadness. My sadness quickly turned to rage.

She deserved this. She brought this upon herself. Why do I feel bad that she got what she deserved?

In my irked phase I unconsciously took out Her lip gloss and began to write my feelings in a oh-so-simple word that effortlessly defined the scenario in which brought on Her death. Lies, a perfect word to an end of something so magnificent that it could have only concluded in tragedy. Staring back at my new favorite art piece, I decided to complete my work with a face. Whether it was smiling, frowning, or angry I can not remember. When I reached for the sapphire brush again, two sturdy hands pulled me away from the pane of glass and brought me to the ground. Without a struggle or groan of defiance all I did was laugh.



Rapunzel

Desiree West

She holds a piece of my heart in her
Young, naive hands
Every time she stumbles,
I worry it will break.

The world is filled with danger
And her delicate smile invites it in.
Wolves lick their chops
Behind their wool coats
Eyeing my heart and hers.

I can't take the heartbreak
So I lock my heart away
At the top of a tower
Higher than their hungry jaws can reach.

Ocean Eyes

Kyana Brizula



And When The Sun Sets It Screams

Amalia Seppanen

Intoxicating and infuriating,
it is a mess,
a profoundly undone symphony of
everything you are chasing.
“Life is too short,” it proclaims from well-worn lungs,
bare feet planted firmly
on the highest rung of a fire escape.
Hair a frenzy of midwestern wind,
and it laughs, it dances. It shatters,
scattered like night skies,
like northern lights,
like firesides. You feel it like a bass drop,
like windows down, top open.
It’s a free fall to a waterfall,
no mountain too tall. It’s a double shot,
we’ve all got one shot, who would have ever thought
we could make it this far, everything you are
and everything you’re not. It’s adrenaline,
it’s the realization of freedom,
it shakes you by the shoulders and looks you in the eye,
saying “don’t try so hard, love.”
And when the sun sets it screams,
it begs with every color for you to do one thing.
Live.
And live abundantly, live with abandon,
live like your head is on fire
and your veins are filled with ice water,
like if you don’t you’ll die. Because death
takes on some unsuspecting names,
“I’ve just been existing, I’ve just been surviving.”
And I bet you haven’t been finding
what you’ve been looking for.
Don’t try so hard, love,

have you tried living, dear?
Embrace the fear. It's calling,
and it's called falling
in love with every creature in every corner of this creation.

Submission Guidelines

Nevermore accepts up to three poems per person (one per page),
up to 2,000 words of prose (fiction, non-fiction, essay).
Photographs and drawings must be sent in as a .png file.

Please email all submissions to:
nevermore@franklinpierce.edu

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