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THE PEN  
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*The Pen*  
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**Full view of this issue's Cover Art**  
***Women* by Gabriela Diaz Garcia,**  
**CCRI Student**

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## From the Editor

Welcome to the third issue of *The Pen*! First and foremost, we would like to thank the sponsors of this issue, the CCRI Foundation and the CCRI Alumni Association! We are elated to have the creative efforts of our students, faculty, staff, and alumni funded by organizations whose goals are to support the advancement of the CCRI community, in the classroom and beyond. With their funding, we were able to upgrade the magazine into a bound book, giving it a more professional look and durable shelf life.

This issue, we switched the layout of the magazine, separating works into their genres, with artwork featured at the beginning and end of each section. The three main genres are Fiction, Prose, and Poetry, and we hope you enjoy the selection we've curated for you as much as we do. Many of our creatives have social media platforms and websites where they display their work, so feel free to support their work on their platforms as well.

To submit for future issues, please send submissions to [thepenlitmag@ccri.edu](mailto:thepenlitmag@ccri.edu). Please limit prose to 2,000 words or fewer. In the meantime, enjoy the creativity flowing through *The Pen* at [ccri.edu/thepen](http://ccri.edu/thepen).

Best,  
Jessica Araujo  
Assistant Professor  
English Department  
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# Fiction





*The Unfortunate Traveler* by Isaiah Mendieta, CCRI Student  
Instagram: @humanoidbugman

"A curious man from when all was bright and when humanity was at night, embarked on an odyssey into the deep tethers, discovering a judas to external territory. Upon entry into this realm, a blizzard of past events that his orbs weren't ready to see unravel, already filled him with glee. The fracas of deities and the prenatal of cosmic giants. Unbeknownst to him, his movement became gelid. The enchanter observer spies the man with enigmatic glances, still hungering in his pursuit of the erudition apple nearing the end of his journey."

## The Nature of the Beast by Edwin O'Connor, CCRI Student

It is nearing the end of winter when it happens to her. Her famine-touched community is slim and restless. She is young and wild and hunting another creature. Her family has its sights set on an animal, four-legged, terrified, and running for its life.

When the animal gives her and her family the slip, they are enraged. They slink away in the darkness to share their meal, irritation. Instead, she wanders.

In the forest, there are no leaves on the trees. There is no one left to hide in them. The ground is smothered by sheets of snow, now watery and bitter. Earlier in the season, the snow was downy and bright, but even the infinite sky has little to give these days.

She is wandering still when she sees it. It is two-legged, pale, pink, and graceless. It is walking in the same direction she is, parallel, and has yet to notice her. Silently, she turns at an angle that will allow her to follow it.

She creeps closer and closer to it, low to the ground, and it still takes no notice of her. She makes no noise as she moves, and she has closed the gap between them. She is so close she could touch it.

It is at that moment that the hunted creature senses her. Mortally afraid, it turns soundlessly on its heel as she leaps onto its back and her jaws find purchase in its shoulder. It cries out as she takes it to the ground and greedily swallows it whole.

Delighted and satisfied, she returns to her family when she is beckoned by their howling. They are no longer angry when she arrives and have resigned themselves to resting in hunger. Contented, she sleeps.

Today, they are successful in bringing down an animal. In the hunt, she lags behind. She is weighed down by the hair and cloth and bones in her stomach. When her family tears open the felled creature, she swallows a few small, bloody bites before she is nauseous.

She raises her head and looks at her family, who pay her no attention. They are entirely rapt in consumption. They are frantic and dizzy as they gorge on the warm animal. She notices, for the first time, a lack



of something behind their eyes. They are suddenly and utterly unfamiliar to her.

Curious, she thinks, and it is the first clear thought she can recall having. This is very alarming to her, so she retires from her family in search of a stream.

The air is so much colder than she remembers. For the first time in her life, she feels profoundly cold and alone, and she is starting to feel truly sickly when she approaches the stream.

It is frozen completely, but she leans over the edge hoping to lick the ice. A thrill shakes her as the sight of the stream rattles her bones. In the ice she sees a beast, crouched on two legs, hair matted, shaking. She reels back, briefly horrified to see that it moves when she does. Her hands—hands?—clutch her face and she pulls at it inquisitively.

For the first time, she is looking at her skin. It is all barren of any of the grey fur or warmth that used to live there, and she has never felt so shamefully exposed. Change occurs to her as something palpable and real when she is finally confronted with it.

She stands up with newborn legs and takes her first step. She is naked, shivering, and covered in an animal's blood when she leaves the forest.

A Prequel to “There Will Come Soft Rains”  
by Troy Stanley, CCRI Student

In the breakroom the voice-clock iterated, *Tick-tock, six o'clock, sunrise approaching, shift change and power down, six o'clock!* Like a foreman directing from a control deck. The sky over Los Angeles began to glow as the obscurity of night turned into morning. Everyone at the base followed protocol to switch in day staff. The satellite feed ran smooth while a dizzying line of data ascended on the side panels.

“Officer McClellan! How is the new house? Is it everything the private sector could soon hope for?”

Mr. McClellan jumps without jumping.

“Private First Class Reynolds, It is great, secure and safe, all level five construction, the American dream, functional and fashionable”.

“That’s great to hear sir, just wanted to congratulate you again on your work and accomplishments.”

“Thank you, Reynolds, see you at sitrep on Monday.”

In the living room the voice-clock pulsed, *Tick-tock, seven o'clock, time to get up, time to get up, seven o'clock!* Like a rattle-snake in a tin can.

Its voice vibrated the walls and could be heard through the upstairs.

Mrs. McClellan stirred and rolled over to rediscover that her husband was not in bed. She stared at the small device on the far wall while it

proclaimed, *“Good Morning Blaine, Today is July 25th, 2026, what sounds good for breakfast this morning?”*

In a groaning breath she responded “pancakes. The kids would like pancakes.”

*“Exquisite choice Mrs. McClellan, estimate of meal time, sub 5 minutes”*

Blaine rolled her eyes before tossing a pillow at the wall.

Vacating her bed, Blaine stumbles down the hall. Both Duncan and Isla stood at their open door in wait for their mother and in a loud outside voice Isla said, “mom why does the home say stuff?”

“Babes, your daddy and his friends built this house, soon every family in America will live in this new style. Now run along, pancakes are downstairs, go see!”

She gulped back her dislike while having said it, the cold automation of the house, the comfort of such a monolithic design did not feel like a home. Duncan and Isla’s faces lit up as the lure of sweet breakfast overpowered any concern for the talking building as they ran downstairs to the kitchen. Sounds of excited voices bouncing off the walls, and the slow patter of a dog’s footsteps following in suit.

Blaine walked downstairs listening to the duality of voices echoing around the corner, happily screaming at the kitchen cooking by itself. She could hear Ace puffing in question at the robotic kitchen.

She noticed the door to her husband’s office open, it was almost never

open. With one hand gently pushed the door open. She scanned the disorder in the room, diagrams and printouts were strewn about the drafting table and made a trail to the door.

*It wasn't like Gabe to work on the weekends, it's a Sunday, he promised to spend more time with us and leave work at work she internalized.*

Again she forced a deep breath and affirmed the temporary possibility of change and She made her way to the kitchen.

Breakfast was over. The motion chime went off and the front door opened. Blaine and both kids turned their heads, Ace perked up off the floor. Gabe steps into his home.

“Morning! Sorry I missed breakfast, I had to go to the office...”

Suddenly interrupted by the voice-clock preset of turning on the television in the next room.

*Good morning, Gabe, here are the top news stories this morning: “tensions rise in the east...”*

Before Blaine and the kids could say anything, Gabe has set down his leather bag and raised an index finger as if to tell them he needs a minute as he slowly disappears into the living room.

The entire wall displays the latest developments for his eyes to analyze. His posture now taller and still like a predator remained in camouflage. “...developing stories from correspondents in overseas worry that a terrorist outfit, known as The Blade, have overthrown another weapons

silo following last Thursday's insurrection of their native country. Experts say best case the west will have time to land another volley, worst case is the Blade already has total..."

Blaine whispers to Duncan and Ilsa to go play outside, to which they make haste, a hairy shadow trots in pursuit behind them. She leaves the kitchen to help itself run a cleaning program as she walks to enter the den. Blaine begins to utter an exclamation before Gabe's vision snaps to hers and a smile dawns across his face.

"Gabe. How many times do I need to mention how watching that negative news is unhealthy"?

Mr. McClellan swishes a hand motion toward the floor. The wall and its text puzzle blink to off with an audible blip.

He laughs almost disrespectfully.

"Honey there is nothing wrong, all these reporters and agencies are simply doing their jobs, and doing it well, airtime is still a business."

"I thought we agreed you would take some weekends off," she said with an open hand.

"They needed me to make changes to the *liberator*."

"I don't understand why bringing world peace means having the bigger stick Gabe" Blaine says with a vocalized eye roll.

"Honey, they don't understand treaties, their only option is violence.



Our system gives us a choice. We don't want to eradicate our friends overseas; we want to disarm any opposition from making a wrong choice." he openly shares with both arms.

Blaine looked out the floor to ceiling window of Lexan, with its atrocious bolted frame, "So according to you and your boys at work, opposition is the true meaning of friendship?"

He laughs again as if overconfidence was not a thing. "Yes, and we are also having a friendly global competition to control the baddest stick.

Because he who holds the larger stick, makes the rules."

He sees Blaine looking at him directly, like a laser shooting particle beams through his smug body. After a forced breath, he concludes "Let me change out of this suit and I'll go mow the lawn and watch Dunk and Izzy play outside, okay?" sealing it with a one-sided hug.

The display wall illuminated, and the voice-clock chimed *Incoming video call, swipe to answer, open palm to decline.*

The caller ID oscillated as the photo of Mr. McClellan's superior was illuminated by a border of golden light. The house stood still as shadows elongated and passed over the den's full-size window. The call notification dissolved away as an alert superimposed on top of it, picture in picture. It exclaimed in stark fashion "*Take immediate cover, stay indoors, wait for further instructions.*"

Blaine stooped down onto her knee rest as she prepared to continue

chased each other up and down the side of the house, toys scattered about. Gabe stood tall to maintain a manicured frontage. Ace barked twice before darting toward the back yard behind a wall.

Gabe reaches the curb at the end of his lawn and takes a quick visual survey of the neighborhood. Vectors of people are all outside and enjoying the sunshine. He laughs to himself, *this is why we do it. All of my neighbors can enjoy their Sunday, free to live, free to make a choice.*

As Gabe turns a half circle back toward the house, he smiles on the inside watching Dunk and Izzy facing each other, a ball in Duncan's hand ready to pass. He can see Blaine overseeing the microcosm of the flowerbed, a land within a land, curated to perfection. She stands up and turns to look at Gabe, and seeing so many neighbors outside, she thinks *how strange that everyone had the same idea to come out like we did.*

A four-legged creature exits the side yard and streaks down past the end of the street.

A scream tears the sky's vocal chords, a flash whitewashes the kaleidoscope of homes. From daytime to midnight, the dark has opened its maw, full of aerosolized particles.

A puddle. The boot of a God had stomped in it. A precipitation of particulates pushed and then pulled. The atmosphere opened to a crowning bulge of internally swirling revenge. A smoldering jellyfish departed the bottom of the fiery city's ocean, the liquefaction of the

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surface like disturbed sandy silt following the moving sea monster.

Everything was baptized in dust and ash as the behemoth swam its way higher into the wounded sky.

*Tick-tock, it's seven o'clock, time to get up, time to get up, seven o'clock. Today is July 26th, 2026. A warm front has rolled in, cloudy conditions expected for the next week and the air quality below healthy conditions, staying inside is recommended.*

Editor's Note: This story was written as a prequel to the short story, "August 2026: There will Come Soft Rains" by Ray Bradbury.

Prequel to “The Red Lipstick”

by Jahlil Melse, CCRI Student

The sky is infested with dark, aggressive clouds, as the ground is harassed by the rain. The sky screams and growls, as lightning tears its way across the heavens, slightly lighting up my surroundings. My drenched coat provides some protection against the elements as I walk towards my “home.” It is times like this that I wish I had a car. However, bills and food are more important than convenience. After about fifteen minutes of journeying through the city, I find myself at the doorstep of my “home.” Dollar Tree bag in hand, I struggle to get my keys out of my pocket. As I step inside the dark building, I am greeted with the smell of rotting wood. I walk towards the kitchen and set the groceries down. The light flips on as my wife stands at the doorway with a concerned look. “Did you seriously walk through this treacherous weather Sergio?” she questioned in her stern voice. Her once silky light skin was now pale and frail. “I’m sorry Launa, but I promised *mi niñas* some treats for behaving *mija*. I’m a man of my word,” I stated, watching her deep brown eyes pierce my soul. Instead of giving a sassy remark as she usually does, a sharp cough emanated throughout the room. Another one of her episodes. This time, however, lasted much longer. She tried covering her mouth with her hand to muffle the noise, to no avail. I helped Launa to bed as she continued to cough with no signs of stopping. “I’m fine Sergio,” she said in between her struggling. As I laid her to rest, I looked at her hand, which was usually smooth and lightly colored, but was now tainted with

crimson red.

The next morning, I walked Lana to the hospital for her appointment. The wait wasn't as bad as I expected, and we were face to face with her doctor within a matter of minutes. "So, Launa, what appears to be the problem?" the doctor questioned. "It is nothing but a cold and a pesky cough doctor," she stated. Before the doctor could respond, I interrupted. "It's more than that. Every morning, she says her bones feel very stiff, like her body turned to stone. I have noticed that she struggles to move around and needs assistance to traverse stairs. Never mind the fact that she practically faints if she stands for too long." "Launa, is this true?" the doctor questioned once again with a raised eyebrow. "It's nothing but my age catching up with me doctor, I'll be fine." she insisted. The doctor had a worried face. "Sergio, I will need you to wait in the lobby as we start to run tests." I obeyed and went to the lobby. It felt like hours passed by before I got to see Launa again. The look on her face sent a pain in my stomach, as the doctor walked behind her with a similar expression. Multiple sclerosis is a disease that impacts the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves. That is what I can recall the doctor telling me. It felt as though I was in a dream, rather, a nightmare. "Sergio. Sergio?" the doctor grabbed my attention. "The test results came in, and Launa is in the early stages of MS. There is a treatment, but..." the doctor paused. I can tell what he was going to say without a word being said. It was expensive. Really, expensive.

Eight years have passed since Launa was diagnosed. Now that



Launa can't work, I picked up three jobs. One of my close friends hired me as a mechanic. The pay is better, but it wasn't enough. Even with three jobs, it just wasn't enough. I rarely see Launa or *mi niñas*, and when I do see my girls, it's to pick them up from school. I miss them so. I got into my truck and headed home. It was old, and barely functional, but it got me from A to B. I reached the doorstep to my "house." As I walk inside, I am greeted with the smell of decayed wood. I would like to save up to finally replace the floorboards, but Launa and the kids come first. As I walk, the entire house wails in agony, begging for the movement to stop. I ignore their pleas. I arrive in the dark kitchen hoping to find scraps in the fridge. The light flips on. I am greeted by Launa in the doorway. Her wheelchair barely fits between the doorway into the kitchen, as her midnight black hair sways with her movement. "You've gotten pretty good on that thing," I say, trying my best to lighten my mood, trying my best not to drown in pain knowing she can't stand. "What can I say, I might even do some street racing for money," she laughed, but silence followed. It's hard to ignore the elephant in the room, but we try, for our *niñas*. The next week seemed a bit brighter than usual. I got a promotion for one of my jobs, and the car was paid off. Even the day was brighter. The sun bathed us with its warm embrace as the clouds played in the sky. As I arrive home, the weather shifts. Now, dark, menacing clouds plague the sky. I opened the door to my home once again, but the tension in the air felt thick. Something was off. I walk towards the kitchen, expecting my wife to greet me like usual, but nothing. I rush to her room but see

her on the ground in the living room. Crimson red was marked on both her hands, as her wheelchair lay on its side. “Launa!”

An eternity passed until I heard from the ER doctor. I was told that her MS had progressed into a critical state. If she doesn’t get treatment soon, her condition will reach a chronic state, and she would die. “I don’t have enough money yet!” I yell in my mind. “Why is this happening? What do I do? My jobs can’t pay me enough in time? Do I get another job?” Questions flood my head to the point I can’t even think straight. An idea popped into my head, one that isn’t new. If I could just scrounge up a little more money, I can save her. It’s not wrong if it’s to save the love of my life, right? My kids need a mother! I need her. “How long does she have?” I ask in my now raspy voice. The doctor looks uncertain. “Maybe a year?” His uncertainty speaks volumes.

Two months have passed since Launa was released from the hospital. My job as a mechanic has its benefits. Lots of expensive things can be found there, and I have access to all of them. I’m sorry to take from my dear friend, but I’m sure he’d understand. I’ve even gotten proficient at pickpocketing. My kids would hate me if they knew what I was doing, especially Launa. But that’s something I’m willing to risk. “I will save you *mija*.”

Editor’s Note: This story was written as a prequel to the short story, “The Red Lipstick” by L.M. Quinn.

## Loyalty

By Sharyn Haddad Vicente, CCRI Staff, Psychology Department

Novels and Interviews available at <https://sharynhaddadvicente.com/>

Growing up is hard. Living in a secluded mountain valley is even harder. The closest neighbor is 6.2 miles away as the crow flies. I'm not exactly sure what that means, but I hear my mom say it all the time.

When our dog, Tippy died, my world got much smaller. It made my heart hurt so bad that my legs wouldn't work. I stayed in bed for days.

My mom tried to get me and my brother, Jimmy, interested in other things to take our minds off of him.

I sat up and tried my best to keep the salty tears inside my eyes where they belonged. I swung my legs over the edge of my bed, and got up. Across the room, Jimmy was sitting on his bed—a mirror image of me. Similar in many ways, as different as night and day in others.

“There. That's better.” Mom patted the blond curls atop my head; ocean eyes still on the cusp of spilling the waves within.

Mom said, “Why don't you two go ahead and play outside. Only in the yard or the woods. Stay out of the park!”

Our parents told us stories of how they went to Jolly Time Amusement Park. Sadly, the park shut down when they were teens.

We were not allowed to play there because of the broken, old rides that mom and dad said were too dangerous.

Jimmy stood beside me, on the back porch, with a headlight strapped to his forehead and a satchel secured across his chest. I brought my first aid kit with me when we explored in the woods, in case we came across a wounded animal.

I looked at him and whispered, “You ready?” We kept the fact that we decided we were old enough to explore the park from our parents.

He nodded, knelt, removed the satchel, and took out the map of the woods and the abandoned amusement park we made at the beginning of the summer.

We went searching among rusted metal beams, giant plastic clowns—faded and dirty, overgrown brush, and towering trees growing up through deserted arcade buildings.

That’s when we found the first treasure—a clear glass doorknob that looked like a huge diamond. It was sticking out of the ground, among some vines, as if it had been planted there and grew that way.

Jimmy said that we should mark the spot on the map and see if there were other treasures to be found.

“I know there’s more, Danny, I can feel it.”

He looked at me with such a sense of wonder it intensified my excitement.

“Okay, Jimmy, you sketch our path and I’ll scout for more treasure.” Jimmy looked around and sketched things like a gigantic Frankenstein monster with his mouth open wide—once the entrance to

a funhouse. Large pieces had broken away and it was now covered with vines. We found a total of three treasures. We found the doorknob, a pearl necklace, and a book. We kept them in a box under my bed. Jimmy kept the map under his.

The next day we waited for our father to return from a business trip. We finally heard the SUV pull up. Jimmy and I went running outside to meet him, Mom trailing behind. He picked us up, swung us around, then hugged and kissed Mom. “Oh boy, it’s good to be home! We have a surprise for you two,” he said.

Dad unpacked and we all piled into the SUV, headed up the mountain, and into the city for our surprise. When we got out of the vehicle, I could hear dogs barking. Now, I knew what they had planned. Well, I wasn’t having it.

“Okay, boys. Let’s go on in,” urged Mom.

We walked in and were greeted by a lady wearing blue overalls. “Hi there,” she said while she was putting some paperwork in a folder. When she looked up, she exclaimed, “Hey, twins! I’m a twin. Isn’t it the best?”

Jimmy and I nodded, and then he and my parents spoke with her. I refused to look at any of the dogs trying to get my attention. I would stand my ground.

The lady came over to me, crouched down, and spoke softly, “Hi Danny. I’m Carrie. I heard your family lost Tippy recently. I’m very sorry. I know that no dog can ever replace him.”



Wow. She understood what I was going through. Maybe she wasn't that bad.

“When you both feel up to it, meet me at the cages.”

I knew my heart. I would remain stern and think of Tippy.

Well, we did come all this way . . .

We found Carrie. My eyes roamed the cages, left to right, then right to left. They landed on a brown and black dog. Not too big, not too small. I walked over to the cage.

Carrie said, “That’s Ruby. She’s special, isn’t she?”

Our eyes locked—Ruby’s and mine. I put my hand inside the bars and she licked it sweetly.

“Would you like to meet her?”

I nodded my head. Very slightly. But it was a yes.

“Ruby is a German Shepard mix. She is a great dog for young boys,” Carrie told us.

Ruby came right to me and Jimmy and nuzzled our necks. I tried very hard not to smile, but I could not stop myself.

“She likes you, boys,” said Carrie.

I looked deep into her eyes. “She looks like Cleopatra. See the black around her eyes? We just learned about her in school.”

“Yes, I see that,” Carrie replied.

My parents came in and a look of relief washed over them.

“This is Ruby,” I said. “But I think we’ll call her Cleo. See her eyes? She looks like Cleopatra.”

“That’s a great idea,” said Mom.

We took her home that very day, put out food and water, and played until it was bedtime. Before we went up, we took her out to do her business. She ran in the back to the edge of the woods and seemed very anxious. When she came in, she went to sleep at the foot of my bed.

The following day, Cleo was let out once we woke up. After breakfast, I went to let her in and she was nowhere to be found. I panicked. The three of us searched everywhere. It was no use. She was gone.

“She must have gone into the woods, Mom,” I guessed.

“Danny, she’s never gone in there. The woods seem to frighten her. I don’t think she would go in by herself.”

As we walked up the winding road, calling out for Cleo, I began to feel sorry for myself. I took a chance on her and she let me down.

Turning into the drive, something caught my eye. It was Cleo! She was at the edge of our property and the woods again.

I ran to the back calling her. Cleo stayed put and barked like crazy. I hugged her and tried to get her to come inside. After a long while, she finally did. But she wasn’t the same. She was very restless; pacing and scratching nonstop at the door.

Mom said, “You and Jimmy should bring Cleo with you into the woods. Maybe she is getting lost when she goes in there. If she goes in and out with you both, she might find her way back easier.”

We did just that. I brought my first-aid kit. Jimmy had his

satchel. Armed with lights and the map, we went off into the forest with Cleo. She stayed ahead of us and seemed to know exactly where we were headed, leading the way in the right direction, on through to the old park.

We went as far as the map was completed.

“This is it. Where should we go from here, Danny?”

We watched Cleo. She was firm in where she wanted us to go. We looked at each other, shrugged, and followed her.

She jumped over some collapsed roller-coaster tracks. It was hard to keep up. I had to get her to stop at times so Jimmy could add the park landmarks to the map. She would whimper and whine when we stopped.

I was trying my best to comb through the debris of the park floor for treasure and watch Cleo at the same time.

We rounded a bend and there it was. A pale-yellow baby’s blanket sitting there plain as day. Cleo went over to it and began to bark and turn in a circle.

“How’d she do that, Danny? It’s like she knew it was right here!”

I went over and picked it up. There were dark red splotches on it that looked sticky.

“Jimmy, I don’t know if a stained blanket is a treasure, but it seems like it’s important.”

Cleo started digging in the spot where the blanket was. She was whimpering as she eagerly dug deeper and deeper. She stopped—dead in her tracks—and looked at me with the saddest look in those beautiful

eyes.

Jimmy had looked down while I still held Cleo's gaze.

"Oh, no! Danny, look!"

When I looked down, fingers were sticking up from the ground. Four fingers to be exact. They had shiny purple polish on each long, pointy nail.

Cleo was now barking and running back the way we had come. She stopped and waited for us to catch up with her.

We hurried out of the woods and home to my dad who was working in the yard.

"Dad! There's a hand!" I tried to catch my breath so I could form a solid sentence. "In the park, Dad! In the park!"

"You boys know better. You're not supposed to go into the park."

Jimmy took his map and pointed enthusiastically at the location.

"It's right here, Dad."

"Exactly what did you see?"

I answered, "It was a lady's hand. With purple nail polish."

"And where Cleo was digging, it smelled real bad." Jimmy opened his satchel. "We found this blanket at the spot."

Dad looked at the stained blanket and became upset. He called the police. It felt like it took forever for the two officers to arrive. The whole time we waited, Cleo was at the entrance to the woods barking and trying to get us to go with her. Mom brought some dog treats to try and calm her down.

Once the police were told all that had happened, we all followed the map and headed back to the spot. Cleo was barking and then she did the strangest thing. She lay down right beside the exposed hand and cried sorrowfully.

Soon, more police personnel arrived and handled everything. They brought vans and parked them at the end of our property where a large group was waiting. They had tools and bags with them as they prepared to move into the neglected amusement park.

A woman who seemed to be in charge called Jimmy and me over to her.

We were nervous and thought we were in trouble.

“Hello, boys. I’m Chief Brown. Which one of you made the map to the old amusement park?”

Jimmy bowed his head and stared at the ground. I put my hand on his shoulder and nudged him forward. He looked at me questioningly. I nodded to him.

He crouched down to open the satchel. Jimmy took the map and handed it to the chief.

“This will be very helpful. Thank you.”

At one point, there was a helicopter above the park lowering equipment for the officers. With all the new developments built, the only way into the park now is through our property or from the mountain across the valley. I thought it was way cool, but my mom said I needed to be respectful.



The police were in our yard and at the park for four days. They carried bags and boxes out and into the waiting vans.

After searching the old Jolly Time Amusement Park, law enforcement recovered eight bodies. The four treasures we found were markers for the graves of four murdered women. There were another four that we did not find. Each had a treasure marking their tomb.

We did not even get to see the other treasures. Worse, we had to give the police the treasures we did find.

They gave me and Jimmy badges and a certificate saying we were police in training.

We later found out that the body buried there with the blood-stained baby blanket was that of a missing woman from town. Her name was Adel Burt. Cleo lived with her. When Adel didn't come home, Cleo ran away from the sitter to search for her.

Adel took the pale-yellow blanket to feel closer to her son. To have his scent with her.

They're still trying to find out who did this horrible thing.

Cleo never stayed away after Adel was recovered. She would go for walks in the woods with us but never on her own, and never too close to the park.

She no longer acts anxious or barks at the woods.

Her work is done.

Cleo found Adel.



*Phoenix: The Rebirth of Self*  
by Elizabeth Whitney- Silva, CCRI Staff

# Prose



### *Necklace*

by Marilyn Salvatore, CCRI Faculty, Theatre Department

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# The Feminist Psychological Thriller Starring Abbott and Costello

By Nelson Arias, CCRI Student

In the 1953 comedy classic “*Abbott and Costello Meet Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*” retells the story of the dual personalities of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde with the comedic stylings of the duo of Bud Abbott and Lou Costello. Though some may see the film as a mild adaptation of the classic Jekyll and Hyde story to provide humorous scenarios for the comedy duo, the film provides a subtext to its greater themes. By analyzing the traits of the main characters of the film from a feminist perspective, the film “*Abbott and Costello Meet Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*” acts as a psychoanalysis of the views on masculinity among men.

The cast of the film fall into the three main layers of Sigmund Freud’s proposed approach to the understanding of the human’s psyche: the Id, Ego, and Superego from his book “*The Ego and The Id*” (Freud, 1923). The id is represented by the film’s antagonist Dr. Jekyll. The Id is the collective of the primal wants and desires of humanity. The story of Dr. Jekyll already takes on concepts of the human psyche, as Jekyll is the good natured reasonable personality and Hyde is the devious evil and primal personality of the same person. In Abbott and Costello’s classic, however, we see Dr. Jekyll on multiple occasions use Hyde as a tool for his motives. He plans out ploys that involve becoming Hyde having no resentment towards the existence of his alter ego, and thus shows that in this version of the tale, both personalities partake in their desires. Jekyll

and Hyde represents the Id specifically, rather than its own approach to psyche.

Jekyll then represents the machismo view of masculine men. In the film, Jekyll shows a love for feminist activist Vickey Edwards. When Vickey's love interest Bruce Adams gets involved and begins to win her over, this is when Dr. Jekyll shows the audience the truth that Mr. Hyde as an identity is approved of by Jekyll to perform the heinous acts he wishes to commit. This is representative of the idea of the machismo man that author Steve Neale introduced in the essay "*Masculinity as Spectacle*" (Neale, 1983). The primal desires of violence and power drive the id of men who subscribed solely to the macho idea of what it is to be a man. This notion goes forward when considering the relationship of Jekyll with Vickey. Vickey can be seen as a stand in for feminism being the single feminist activist character in the film that holds substantial importance to the plot. Jekyll feels that he is entitled to the hand of love for Vickey, and as Hyde tries to use his power to take her against her will while battling against Bruce who she truly has romantic feelings for. In the same way, one could say that the masculine identity of being a violent machismo is inherently disruptive to the progress of feminist ideals and in fact would be directly antagonistic towards it, constantly defying it just as Dr. Jekyll assumes an antagonistic role to Vickey herself.

The two main characters, Tubby and Slim -portrayed by the titular actors Lou Costello and Bud Abbott respectively- represent the

the ego of the human psyche. Although the two act as bumbling buffoons who stumble through the film, they ultimately try to follow some line of reasoning. Tubby would take any advantage to twist wordplay to get himself out of having to go after the monster that is Mr. Hyde, while Slim is constantly shown bossing around Tubby, acting in a leadership role in order to coerce Tubby to do his own dirty work. Although more so reflective of the comedy styling of Abbott and Costello as a whole, these core aspects of these characters portray the human ego, the rational and reasoning of the psyche. The duo do whatever it takes to rationalize their actions, even to comical lengths, and thus represent the ego in its extreme just as Dr. Jekyll is to the psychological Id.

Tubby and Slim, although at odds with Dr. Jekyll, still present a poor relationship with feminism. As the representation of the ego in the perception of masculinity, the two are cowardly figures, the opposite of the previous machismo perception of manliness. The ego perception of masculinity fairs in relations with feminism than the id. Tubby and Slim have little interaction with Vickey, and at best only indirectly have some influence over the end of Dr. Jekyll's evil scheme. Though important to the plot, it is clear that their cowardice and bumbling nature is only a hindrance to their goals in stopping Hyde's rampages. To that extent, the lack of interaction with Vickey Edwards shows how men who view their masculinity overly passively tend to avoid the conflict of feminism as a whole and turn a blind eye to the issue, choosing to neither aid nor defy the effort. The ego view of masculinity furthermore may actually support

the masculine id, as portrayed by the end of the film when Tubby's ends up infecting others when he himself became a monster just as Mr. Hyde is, creating even more monsters the world will have to deal with. This may highlight how not just does masculine ego is as well unbeneficial to feminist ideals and progress.

It is then the primary heroic figure, Bruce Adams, who is representative of the superego. As the intermediate of Dr. Jekyll and the duo of Slim and Tubby, his character is resolved by all the other's flaws. Bruce will step in and fight against Jekyll when he threatens Vickey, showing a good will that Jekyll is without and a sense of bravery Slim and Tubby try to avoid. Bruce also acts as a reasonable mediator for the uncovering of Dr. Jekyll's secrets. Although he humors Slim and Tubby's claims of Dr. Jekyll having some terrible secret laboratory, Bruce does so with a sense of reasonable doubt. He plays a middle man to both sides and tries to do what is best, taking a call to action while acting with sound reason. Bruce is the one who moves the plot forward as a protagonist. While the main protagonists Tubby and Slim are the most prominent, it is Bruce who challenges Dr. Jekyll, then putting an end to his scheme, resulting in any sort of resolution in the film.

It is Bruce Adams that finally completes the full picture of the psychoanalysis of the perception of masculinity. As the masculine superego, Bruce does show the median of the previously described masculine traits. Adams is no monster, being depicted with a regular standard attractive build, noting being especially slim or rotund. He is



brave enough to fight against Dr. Jekyll, but never goes on any blind rampage. It is then why he is the depiction of the ideal masculine figure. He is the one man who shows direct respect for Vickey, showing her affection while not demanding or forcing his love on her like Jekyll has. Adam just as well does not shy away from fighting against Jekyll as the duo has. In the sense of masculinity, Bruce represents a reasonable median to the masculine attitude. Bruce is not a coward, nor is he an over-barring machismo. Bruce stands with Vickey in her feminist cause, not showing disrespect or cowardice. The film asserts this is what masculinity must be to coexist with feminism, respectful to the feminist ideals without ignoring them. Men just as the id and ego are managed by the superego, the violent machismo and coward are balanced by a more rational level headed demeanor, allowing a man to truly support the feminist cause. Bruce develops a romantic relationship with Vickey representative of how men should interpret their masculinity for the benefit of feminist ideals. Masculinity is not detrimental and can be allowed to exist in society, and perhaps may even be in some sense important to exist but should not be taken to far extremes.

“*Abbott and Costello Meet Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*” takes the original story of the doctor split between two personas and critiques it. There is no physiological good and evil side of a person, which is what the main problem of how feminism is interpreted. Some men may think it is them versus the feminists, or the masculine versus the meek, creating a misguided view of how men should be and causing harm to society as a

whole. Masculinity is how men view themselves and should therefore be structured as any human psyche. The film uses Freudian psychological concepts to explain to the audience the workings of men to explain what it really means to be a man in modern society. Feminism is not an issue for women alone, as its consequences affect everyone negatively in some way. For in a perfect world where everyone is equal, what does it mean when someone is worthless?

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## Everyday Leader

by Frank DaCruz, CCRI Student

<https://www.facebook.com/Jeromefrank93/>

I am an everyday leader because I know how to stand firm for what I believe in. I will not let anyone come between my goals, and I need a clean atmosphere; I need my sanctuary and escape from people who are not trying to improve their lives. I often find myself being bombarded by people who don't take anything in life seriously and instantly take their views in life and apply them to mine; they think because they are defeated, I am most likely defeated too, or if they can't do it how could I possibly be able to do it? I keep meeting negative people who are two-faced and try to say abusive and mean things to me; they try to bring me down and hurt my confidence. I refuse to let anyone control my feelings, and I press on every day for a better day tomorrow. I look at the circumstances, and I realize that it's not even me; it is just wicked people who see something in me that triggers something within themselves. I am learning not to give in to negative people, and I search for people who stand for something, people who want something out of life.

If I meet someone who seems to have a false opinion of me and some sort of gossip about me or decides to treat me like I am unintelligent, I realize that they are not worth my time. I would not want to be involved with people who follow gossip and decide to mistreat people because of what they hear. I know the people I mention are

shallow lives whom I dislike because they are not genuine, friendly people; they are like sponges and users. I try my best to avoid defeated people, those who suck the life out of everything, and everyone are not for me. I aim to live a triumphant life, and I wish to uplift anyone I encounter. I prefer to interact with people who have dreams or a positive mindset. I understand the meaning of “You are the company you keep,” I honestly would rather be left alone and let my true self shine as brightly as possible; I don’t want some lousy energy rubbing off on me. I am fine walking alone toward the path of success; I am learning to roll with the punches and simply walk away or no longer communicate with people who disturb my peace.

I am a leader because I have vision, and I want to be the change in the world. I began to understand this even more after a conversation with Professor Panaccione. I have some things to work on within myself, but if I can help anyone direct themselves in a better direction, I am all for it. I love to help people who are trying and do not wish to remain defeated. I can sense bad energy, and I can navigate a plan to keep myself or anyone I care about safe from harm. I am happy to be able to achieve growth and am anticipating all the beautiful things this class has to teach me; I am very grateful for being able to go to school and also be able to apply what I’ve learned thus far to my everyday life.

Should abortion be the women's decision or the Government's?

by Hanna DiBenedetto, CCRI Student

Why are abortions being banned, a problem? In 1847, the male doctors of the AMA believed they should have the power to decide when an abortion was legal. At the same time, the AMA was composed of physicians who lacked expertise in pregnancy and reproductive health. In 1930, unsafe and illegal abortions were the cause of death for nearly 2,700 women, and in 1955 Planned Parenthood held its first-of-its-kind conference on the issues surrounding abortions. In the year 1973, the Roe v. Wade law was put in place to protect women's rights to abortions in 50 States, but in 2022 the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade after 50 years of protecting the rights of abortions, as a result, states are banning abortions.

As of January 2023, only 6 months after Roe v. Wade was overturned 24 states had already banned abortions and only a few have exceptions. The only exception most of the states have, as stated abortions are banned except in the case of rape, and before you can be allowed to have an abortion your rapist has to be proven guilty of his crime. Some states have put a law in place called the fetal heartbeat law, if the baby still has a heartbeat no abortion or medical care can be given until it's confirmed there's no heartbeat. Now with abortions becoming illegal in some states, women are traveling to other states to have abortions and/or performing at-home procedures to force an extremely dangerous miscarriage. With inflation increasing and changing every month, not everyone can financially support a child, and/or they might be in an unsafe situation, Women are being left with no options due to so many states banning abortion.

I believe abortion shouldn't be illegal, they should make it more accessible so women can easily have one and be given options. Every

woman should be able to decide what she does with her body without the government and the states telling us what we want and don't want to do with our bodies. I understand that abortion can be against some people's religions or personal beliefs, they shouldn't put those beliefs on those who are pro-choice, just like you have your beliefs, they have theirs. The drinking age in the US is 21, you have the option to drink when you are of age you are not forced, but most states are not giving you the option to have an abortion. Every year roughly 140,000 people die from excessive alcohol use, but in 2019 there was only 4 reported abortion-related death. There are so many more dangerous legal activities that aren't overlooked and more life-threatening than abortion.

I come from a religious Italian family, and I am pro-choice, but I was curious about how my other family members felt about abortion. I asked roughly 40 of my family members young and old, if they were pro-choice and/or pro-life with a few other questions on how they felt about the topic. Most of my family supports abortion, and a few of my family members do not support abortion, but that doesn't necessarily mean they think it's a sin and/or murder to have an abortion. I asked my little sister who is 16, what she thought about abortion she replied "I believe that abortion is completely a woman's right and choice. It is her body, so there's no reason why she can't decide what is done to her and the fetus.". One of my aunts had answered with "I'm pro-life, but every woman can make that decision on her own", My 73-year-old grandfather told me he never heard of abortion until he was in his 20s, he said, "Even though I hadn't been raised around abortion, I still believe it's the women's choice to make."

A small portion of my family doesn't support abortion, because they are pro-life and they had told me "I wholeheartedly believe abortion is a sin and murder, all life is ordained by God! As far as mental health, that's a hard question. I think the person having an abortion, should consider counseling with a pastor, minister, and/or priest." I talked to my

about how they felt about the topic, and I got different answers from everyone, but why is that? I got a different answer from everyone, and the reason is that everyone is their own individual person, they can make their own decisions and they have their own individual beliefs. By talking to make family, I understood that just because you are religious, doesn't mean you can't believe in something that is against your religion, and you can have your own beliefs. I believe everyone can make their own decision on abortion or personal life matters, that's their choice to make not someone else's to decide.

Between the years 1847 and 2022, abortions had evolved into a safer practice and had given women more options, but as of 2023, that decision is slowly being taken away. In a short six months after Roe v. Wade was overturned a total of 24 states had banned abortion and had taken away the options women had been given years ago, women are now traveling to a state where there is no ban and/or forcing themselves to miscarry at home. Women are being left with no options, they are being left in emotional and/or dangerous situations with no other decisions to make. With the research I have done, I've realized everyone is always going to have their own opinion on everything. The problem surrounding abortions is we don't get a say because states are taking it upon their selves to make that decision for women. Not everyone shares the same beliefs, so why are everyone else's beliefs being pushed on the women wanting or considering having an abortion?



*Glory of the Snow*

by Jessica Araujo, CCRI Faculty, English Department

*The Pen* Editor



# Poetry



*All Bones*

by Emily Van Slyke, CCRI Student

## How to Carry Your Dead

by Shay Authier, CCRI Student,  
contact [sauthier@my.ccri.edu](mailto:sauthier@my.ccri.edu)

Fluorescent recrudescence, alive long after darkness began, a flash of icy white light.

*Zm. Zm.*

It flickers, on and off, humming, buzzing lowly.

*Zzzzzzm.*

In the back of the skull, like a wasp, like a tv, like a refrigerator.

*Zm. Flick. Zzzzzm. Flick.*

Bathing damp concrete in its hospital bleached beam, illuminating a pothole full of muddied water.

*Zm. Zipzip.*

The water will freeze tonight, widening the cracks in the concrete, expanding the faults. Tomorrow, tomorrow the hole will be wider. If it sees sun again.

*M.M.M.*

No cars between the polychrome lines. Faded mustard yellow and smearing grey-white. Too many fat black tires rolling in, over and over and over with a hideous remissness. Turning over and over with gravel and bone, or coming to a burning halt.

*Flick flick.*

Someone left a needle in the puddle of the pothole. Someone needed narcain in the bathroom of the Dollar General.

*Zzzzzzm.* A long stretch without light. And then—

*Zip.*

She didn't do it. She died saying those words on a plastic gurney, freezing gusts in her face, sun almost gone, sidewalk runny. Her view was of the sky as she pleaded her innocence.

*Mm. Mmmm. Mmm.*

Here we see an actor coming from the lower heavens, quieter even than the hum of the light.

*Zip zip.*

The moth takes the flash to the face but doesn't need to recover. He has already landed on the bulb, drinking from an empty cup around the corpses of his peers.

*Mmmmm mmm m. Flick.*

Ten seconds, twenty. A faint, desperate wheezing. A moth waiting hopefully.

And then suddenly—

There is no light left in the parking lot, and no one to witness the death. The moth moves on to the neon sign of the laundromat. The bulb will be replaced next week when someone notices, and the pole will be taken down next month when they realize it wasn't the bulb.

Chatter in the interment. Indiscretion.

*I didn't do it.*

Silence.

identity diffusion  
by Faust, CCRI Student  
Instagram: @artofaust

A cascade of personas  
Inherit my wretched soul.  
Like vices sliding, glistening  
Over corrupt virtue;  
I present with good faith  
But really, I believe I am evil  
As if I've been possessed by hate  
And love at insurmountable equals.  
It is not feasible I exist  
With no recklessness and destruction.  
Feeding off my own rage,  
Fire, and hate,  
We're forever chained  
As a caterpillar is to its wings.

We dance across the palest winter  
In the midst of summer.  
Though the Fahrenheit remains high,  
Your blood runs cold  
When looking through me.

There is no heart in my body,  
Only a blood-hungry beast.  
There is no soul behind these eyes  
(My soul exists in the void I have created).

Our fate is consumed by emptiness.  
I see its destination:  
A cruel world with caving rooms  
Of despair and unjust,  
Yet you cause little fuss.

You are a masochist with  
A burning violence  
For desperation.  
Our exchange of places will reign  
When the horses on this carousel  
Meet long-awaited separation.

Masuda Shirō

by Nicole Furney, CCRI Student

A boy, not much older than fifteen, burdened  
by a faith so strong no tyrannical mountains deterred his climb.  
People would gather to hear him preach--strangers with  
eyes wide at the mention of a Savior from a faraway land.  
“Jerusalem?” They would turn the name over in their mouths.  
The wave struck against him and nearly knocked him down  
yet his miraculous victories only caused the rageful storm to evolve.  
Betrayal slit his throat in his sleep, he woke to his rebellion in ruin.  
The ground of Nagasaki cradled the corpses of martyrs, innocent  
followers of Christ finally at peace with their Creator.  
Passing shadows mocked his pain, he sat in a dark place.  
By the end of his journey, he had reached the age of seventeen.  
His neck was relieved of his head and put out as a warning to others.  
He did not start the violence, a boy killed for loving his Savior now rests  
with Him eternally.

## Changes

by Lily Soares, CCRI Student

"I would get your smile tattooed on my eyelids

If it wasn't what I thought about every time I wake up.

I would get a record of your voice because it's the first thing I want to hear when I'm home alone.

I would take pills every minute of every day but they wouldn't simulate the high I get around you.

I'm not the same person I was before but I'm not blind to joy anymore."



## Rope of string

by Kristen Caldarone, CCRI Student

With every tug  
Weaker it will get  
So paper thin  
Since we met  
A relationship built  
On little trust  
Forged from lies  
An endless lust  
Communication  
Never a thing  
No more than that  
A mindless fling  
Lonely are we  
Who love in blind  
Jump in quickly  
Then left behind  
Hold on tight  
Don't let go  
The string we made  
Of paper thin rope  
Like a house of cards  
Or a delicate glass

Too much pressure  
And we'll be past  
Hold out your hand  
I'll help you swim  
But I'm the ocean  
Pulling you in  
Sharp as blades  
Our first exchange  
Worn you out  
Always the same  
Another thread  
Snaps each day  
Every hurtful word  
You willingly lay  
Sun and moon  
Always so close  
But neither are there  
When needed the most  
Raindrops fall  
Cover the tears  
Reality and truth  
Something I fear  
Gone away  
Love is lost  
I gave my all

And for what cost

The rope, it burns

I let you go

Goodbye my dear

I love you so

## A Night Out

by Lincoln Humphrey, CCRI Student

On those reeking nights  
Under those wooden ballroom's lights  
Youthful narcissism that endears  
Beds desire without jeers

How exhilaration overcomes  
Holding the waist of one  
Whom I'll never again see the face  
Once outside of this place

In those Dionysian dreams  
Where lust roams in teams  
How can I deign partake on this floor  
When still your lips are all I yearn for

How I dread it  
That I must grow old  
Though for just one woe

That there will come a day  
When your face in my mind  
Will complete its fade

And despite how much I'll fight  
I know all that will remain  
Is how I felt that night

How much can I regret  
Ignoring Aphrodite's pangs  
Once convinced of lust  
Myself abated love

A truth endlessly taunts  
Nothing makes me think of you more  
Than the lips of a woman  
I care nothing for

# Miss Lily

by Kat Taylor, CCRI Student

There is this one photo  
of you, I don't even need  
to look at to recall every  
detail by heart, your closed-  
mouth smile with dimples  
so deep, I long to dive  
into that pool of memory,  
float there and never leave;  
your eyes, crinkled in genuine  
joy, radiant with clarity, one  
of the last times I remember  
them that way; your arms,  
cradling Miss Lily, chin nuzzled  
into her fur; how I would give  
anything to trade places  
with her; and how tragic it is  
that I'm this envious of a phantom  
dog, from a non-existent realm  
where I can never reside.

## Capturing the Queen

by Dr. Alyson Snowe, CCRI Faculty, English Department

I knew I needed you—

voice of the divine realm.

For years, perhaps decades,

Guarded by the white sand.

Your reign about to end.

I combed through the seagrass.

The protection of the

sandy bottom was not

enough to disguise your

large shell, festooned with spines.

Off the coast of San Juan,

Eighty miles east of

St. John, unearthing you

Not a solitary

challenge. Next came the heist.

Like Piggy, I yearned to

claim your power. Varied

were our motives. Mine, not

as notable. Was there

a defense for slaughter?

Mere realia, or  
pedagogical use.  
Enjoying ceviche,  
May have relieved my qualms.

Antithetical to  
your prized symbolism.  
Your barbaric death was  
not fully justified.

The deficit of time  
and resources deprived  
us both. Selfishly, I  
yearned to quell stifling guilt.

Your designation as  
a protected species  
warranted bootlegging  
across the Atlantic.

Readiness for transport  
in order, I tried to  
look past your whimsical  
eyes. Flared, thick, outer lip,  
pink and orange colored,



firmly in one hand, your  
operculum in other.

Armed with only a fork  
and piece of dental floss  
Like an octopus, I  
tore you from your spiked shell  
with a zig zag motion.

Victim of predation—  
Strombus gigas, lambie.  
Enamored adieu.

## Candlelit Love

by Hailey Rose, CCRI Student  
Instagram: @bagel.am

Let me fill the void  
with your longing rendition  
of how you can't trust.

Please.

Light this small candle  
inside of me with all of your problems.

Let it burn the wax that built me,  
let it evaporate into the world.  
It's almost grounding.

The hot wax swimming in my body floating away,  
and my wick getting smaller.

Weaker.

My jar is all burnt now,  
charred.

I think maybe it's time to put the lid on,  
to call it a night.

Suffocate my flame.

Put me away.

For another temporary love,  
for you to light me,

Ignite me.

Smell the scent and put me away when you're done.

Candle. Lit. Love.

## The Proudful Wolf's Origin in "Wolf's Arrow"

by Pierce Abosso, CCRI Student

He wanted to woo the girls

Like the other wolves he knew

His heart never got the lures

As his dates were always past due.

He thought he had it all

Like his life was prestigious

But his heart took the fall

while it also cried unjust.

He desired the herding role

As his heart felt a sigh

The desire lead him to a hole

Making himself wonder why.

He desired to fly free

To the wolf flocks his type

His heart did agree

Though his family never got the decision's hype

Half said he was not their kind

As the wolf's heart towards them was split

Half said he had no mind

As his heart was only being legit.

The rainstorm covered the wolf

His heart was it's only block

He was only looked at with dirty looks

As the other wolves would mock.

The rain kept crashing down

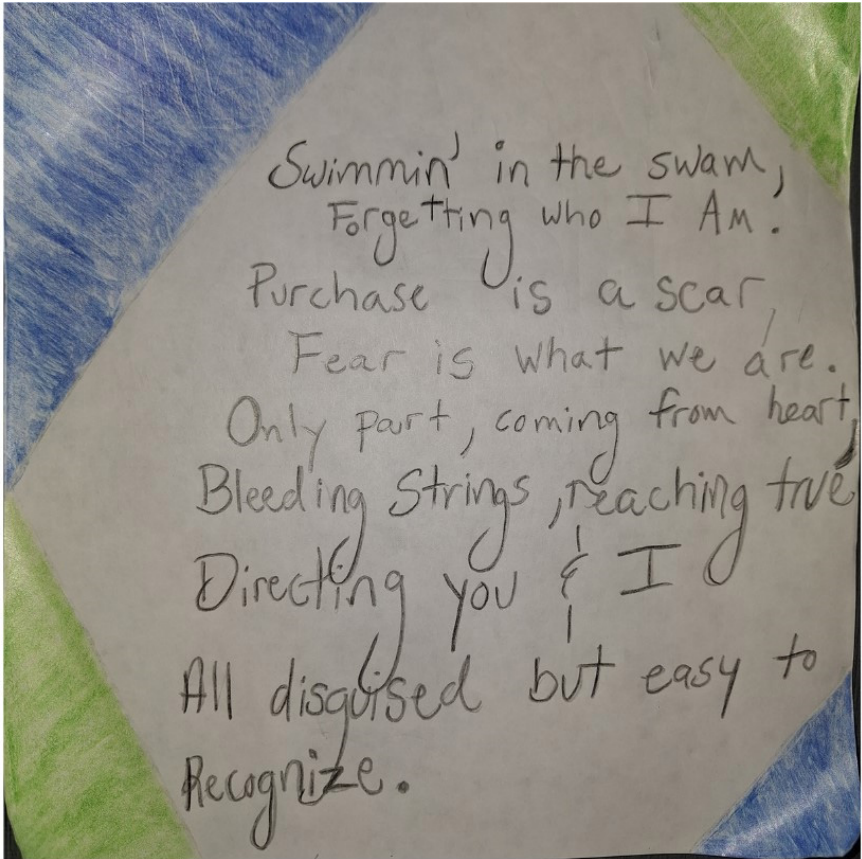
Though soon it swept away

As the wolf's frown

Went to stray

He finally faced his path  
Not for the sake of lust  
As he no longer felt the wrath  
To be the heart for it's must  
He walked into the flock  
As he was howling loud  
The acceptance and story needed no lock  
To say the wolf was proud.

Editor's Note: This poem focuses on the backstory of one of the characters in "Wolf's Arrow," a short story, by the same author, published in our second issue, Spring 2023, which you can read on our website.



***Untitled***

by Rose, CCRI Student

Instagram: @skyconnections

Swimmin' in the swam,  
Forgetting who I am.  
Purchase is a scar,  
Fear is what we are.  
Only part, coming from heart.  
Bleeding strings, reaching true  
Directing you & I  
All disguised but easy to recognize.

# I am too busy grieving what I have not lost

by Julia Caldeira, CCRI Student

I mourn the loss of people before I have lost them.  
Sometimes I wonder why this could be,  
perhaps because I love so hard,  
perhaps it is because I must anticipate everything before it happens,

perhaps it is none of these things,  
rather some other facet of myself yet discovered.

Or,  
because some sick part of me enjoys being sad,  
likes the torture of it all,  
holy masochism,  
beauty in the martyrdom,  
sacrificing happiness in the name of some prepossessing love story.

Whatever the case,  
I am suffering prematurely in ways indescribable.  
I am a lost child,  
I am bandaging myself before I fall and scrape my knee.  
I am praying for forgiveness before I have sinned.

I claw at my skull,  
begging for release.  
I dig my fingers into my rib cage in search of my heart,  
pleading for a reprieve that will not come.

My last resort,  
I call out to a God who will not answer.  
I ask for something that cannot be given.  
I must pay.  
I howl.  
I sob,  
*Forgive me, please.*

I worship a new God now,  
she will leave me too.

## The Garden

by Timothy Kneeland, CCRI Student

Leaving the labyrinth for Heaven's recovery  
The lamp that lighted a way through the tomb –  
A gift is the sense of discovery

An eagle in wind was but hovering  
Yet took the chance at flight and flew;  
Leaving the labyrinth for Heaven's recovery

Sooted patterns streaked the walls of the Bowery  
Like hieroglyphics illumined in gloom:  
A gift is the sense of discovery

Lightning, inspired flashes, thundering  
Spurring the roosters to flock in their coops;  
Leaving the labyrinth for Heaven's recovery

Intricate music swelled up above me –  
The car horn's trumpets and construction crews:  
A gift is the sense of discovery

When tedium dims this marveled drollery  
I use all of my senses to lighten my view  
Leaving the labyrinth for Heaven's recovery;  
A gift is the sense of discovery



*Untitled*  
by Jason Manney, CCRI Student





*Love and Peace*  
by Shengyu Li, CCRI Student

"Love and peace" uses Clay sculptures, worn wooden boards, and steel wires, Size: 50.4inX33.6in. This is an installation art about protecting the environment, in which the sawn-off antlers reflect the destruction of nature by mankind. The clay sculpture is a writer I admire very much, Mark Twain, who is the founder of American critical realism literature.

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