



*Bleeding Hearts*

"To survive, you must tell stories."

- Umberto Eco, The Island of the Day Before

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# Letter from the Editor

**"There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed."**

**- Ernest Hemingway**

To submit a piece of your own creation for the judgement of others is a most profound act of bravery. The Writers' Block was founded with the goal of creating an open and accepting space for students to share their literary talents; without judgement, without barriers, and without fear.

We believe writing provides a unique type of medium for showcasing the more difficult parts of human existence. It is a realm within which things are exposed, brought to light, discussed at last. It is hard, it is grueling, it can hurt, it can break a heart all over again. But that's the point, isn't it? We hurt because we are human. We create because we must, because it is our purpose.

This, our first publication, began with an invocation to you, the writers. We wanted to hear your thoughts, your stories, your voices, and you, thankfully, obliged. You entrusted us with the thoughts you have long-kept hidden beneath the proverbial lock and key. You shared with us your art, your tales, your humanity...**your beating, bleeding hearts**. And we are forever grateful.

This publication is our gift in turn. Hold it in your hands and know that you are capable of making something beautiful from the dark days, from the struggle, from the heartache.

Until next time,

The Writers' Block

# *About the Writers' Block*

The Writers' Block is a literary publication - by students, for students and was founded in 2022.

The Writers' Block is founded, staffed, and run by Trine University students dedicated to and passionate about the literary arts. We desire to see more creativity on Trine's campus, as well as highlight and promote Trine's talented student body. We also hope our publication will give credibility to students with a passion for writing, providing them with a platform to showcase their work.

## **Staff & Members**

- Meghan Schrader - Editor-in-Chief, Reader
- Faith Patterson - Director of Creative Design
- Isabel Newcom - Co-Executive Editor, Treasurer, Reader
- Andrea Davenport - Co-Executive Editor, Reader
- Presley Wollan - Submission Manager, Website Design, Presence Admin
- Audrey Smith - Social Media, Reader, Student Government Representative
- Sydney Reffeitt - Communication Coordinator, Reader
- Amelia Mills - Reader
- Kaci McComis - Reader
- Lydia Roop - Reader
- Jason Branch - Reader

# Am I Dirty?

Andrea Davenport, Junior Secondary English Education  
Content Warning: themes of depression, sexual assault

I cannot shower.

If I shower then I leave home

If I leave home

I get lost in the voices and I can't find my way back.

I can't hide from the voices that nibble in my head.

The voices that scream when I lay down to bed

On a pillow that harbors The Hat Man's dream

And tiptoes into my ears when my eyes are closed

And I cannot say no. No thank you. Maybe tomorrow night.

The voices don't like to be rejected.

Their egos are fragile.

If I shower then I am perpetually stuck

In the cold air that gently caresses my naked body

Before it sinks its teeth into my spine and

Slithers its way inside my bones without my consent.

It touches me the second I leave home and I don't like it

But it won't stop because I can't say no because its ego is  
fragile

And I don't want to make it angry.

When it's angry it hangs itself around my throat

And throws me against the bathroom tile

Grabs my wrists and fucks me hard.

At least when I don't say no it goes slow.

Then it doesn't hurt so bad.

If I shower then I stand silently  
In pungent bubbles that slink up my thighs.  
The water traces my crevices and violates the outside,  
But it goes slowly. It wants to touch me.  
It cups my breasts and licks my goose-bump skin  
Before it shoves its tongue down my throat  
And tells me I like it. It's slimy and bumpy and I thought  
Water was supposed to be smooth and flavorless  
But it's sour and salty and stuck in my esophagus  
And won't leave because it says I like it.  
It says I like it but I don't and I shouldn't have showered  
And let my feet touch the cool water that was supposed to  
Clean me but only made me dirty.

If I shower then I leave home  
And if I leave home then I can't say no  
And if I can't say no then I'm dirty  
And if I'm dirty then I need to shower.  
So I cannot shower and I cannot leave home

But at least I can say no because there are no more voices.



# Blooms Upon Blooms

Sydney Reffeitt, Sophomore English Education Major

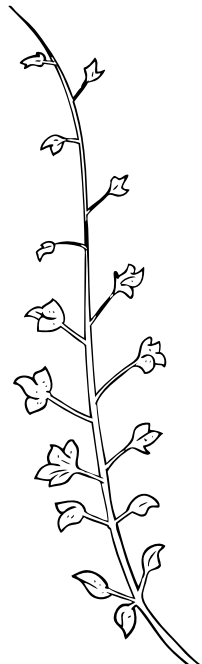
I ventured in seeking flowers,  
but I found you instead.

The blooms I sought vitalize my being;  
they are the essence of my existence.  
Herbs, flowers, branches galore  
were strewn upon the forest floor.  
Somehow, you were amongst the trees  
quietly waiting for love to spring forth.

I held delicate petals  
In my smooth Cedar hands,  
searching for herbs  
amongst the land.  
A glimmer amongst the blooms  
found its way to my eyes.

There it was...  
the most beautiful bloom  
I had ever observed.  
Never will I find  
a bloom un beholden  
with such grace.

A coursing stem the color of basil  
wound about and swirled,  
with small leaves of mulberry  
clinging to the stem.





And thereupon existed  
the pinnacle of its existence.

An opalescent luster  
gilded over the mauve petals;  
the petals joined in harmony  
and took the shape  
of water lilies on a pond.  
Could this be nature's most beautiful gift?

I reached out  
to take this flower for my own,  
but Alas!  
It was not mine.  
It never had been  
and never will be.

I felt the branches rustling  
on the soft earth,  
realizing I had awoken  
an even more perfect dryad  
than the ones I lived amongst  
before my world was uprooted.

I gazed into your eyes  
with a curiosity  
that would never be resolved.  
You never had to ask  
to join my ventures,  
but from that moment on, you did.



The sun found a new radiance  
as we gained more life,  
reveling in the end  
of a life once lived  
in utter isolation and sorrow.  
'Twas the end of an age.

The blooms of the flowers  
and the leaves of the herbs  
were more plentiful than ever.  
No longer did branches fall  
and crash to the ground,  
crushing what laid beneath it.

The bark of my skin  
which was once so frail  
became renewed  
with your presence,  
your words, your voice,  
your innate being.

My heart sank  
when we heard  
the first tree fall  
for the first time  
by strange yellow shapes  
taking on monstrous forms.

The trees fell closer and closer  
to the place in which  
we dreamed our home.  
Tremors shook the Earth



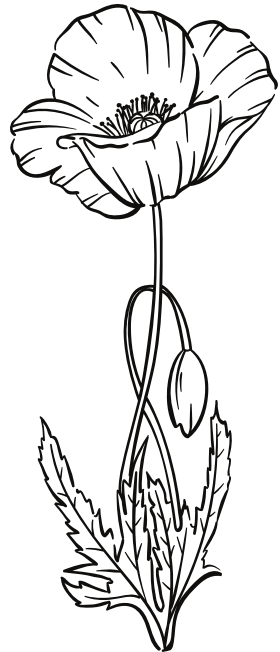
to its very core,  
waiting for us to fall.

I gazed in your eyes  
one final time,  
encapsulating the memories  
once shared by our souls.  
It seemed as though rainwater  
dripped from our eyes.

We were out of the woods  
when you turned to me,  
waiting for me to see  
such a vile structure  
beyond the bloom on your head,  
beckoning us forward.

The soil beneath us was soft,  
but the structure protecting us  
was cold, unforgiving, coarse.  
We held one another  
In the center of this place  
so that we might be closer to Earth.

The last tremor  
was the hardest and final blow.  
We hugged each other close  
and whispered to one another  
a personal expression of emotion,  
one which needs no explanation.



Rubble fell to the ground,  
ending our being,  
our life once lived together.  
The bloom atop your head  
Grew thorns in its stem  
that would last forevermore.

And of all the life in the forest,  
our bloom of love was the only one to last.



# Dirty Water

Kendra Truesdale, Senior Math Education Major

You walk in front of me  
You don't know I'm behind  
You reach for her hand  
While I clench mine  
Taking my trust  
Like a grain of salt to sea  
And amongst the blue waves  
You forgot me  
You were my whole beach  
And I just a dime-sized quartz  
Stepped over upon  
And in between your toes  
To be rinsed down the drain  
With the rest of your dirty water



# *My Father's Daughter*

Meghan Schrader, English and Communications Double Major

My father and I both forget the TV remotes when packing the TV;

Remembering everything for everyone else,

Knowing the goal but forgetting the roadmap to get there,

Planning things down to the second,

Ready for the downfall,

Until it actually happens.

My father and I both jump to anger

Before considering silence.

We are colliding like storm fronts,

Like ram heads,

Like car crashes,

Like realizations.

This rage is genetic;

A generational curse;

A birthright.

My father and I do not let things go.

We came out of the womb holding grudges and demanding respect.

Quietly tallying up offenses,

Not for a day of reckoning,

But so that next time,

It won't happen again.

My father and I both hate crowds and stupidity.

We hate anything we cannot predict or plan for.

My teenage years were difficult;  
Amusement parks are worse.

My father and I are mostly unaware of our toxic traits,  
Tornado-ing through the people in our lives  
Without considering the wreckage we might leave behind.  
Neither of us has learned yet how to properly apologize.

My father and I were both born fighting;  
Seeing the world as our battleground and forgetting the  
peace,  
Entering every room with fists raised and voices soft,  
Until they're not.

My father and I seek to understand things to death,  
Researching until we know our enemy inside and out,  
Breaking everything down into parts  
Until we forget the whole.  
Everything is a puzzle that we can eventually solve.

Except he became an engineer  
And I was reading psychology textbooks in grade school.  
Now I have all my friends broken down to an exact science,  
Because if we can understand,  
Then we don't have to be afraid.

My father taught me to protect those you love,  
To help those who cannot help themselves.  
I have been collecting broken people  
The way my mother collects Russian nesting dolls,  
Ever since.  
Because, like my father,

I am also certain there is nothing I cannot fix.

My father and I do not understand unfixable things;

Not illness,

Not death,

Not people,

Not broken hearts.

We are both so sure we can put the pieces back together

If only we try hard enough.

Life is just another thing that we can conquer,

Can will into submission.

They're not really dead if we never cry,

*Right?*

My father taught me that you can build most things  
yourself,

Including yourself.

He didn't know that this was a lesson in independence,

That I would be building myself,

On my own,

Ever since.

My father taught me to stand tall and proud,

To wield a sword and shield in case I needed it.

Neither of us have learned yet how to lay our armor down.

Neither of us believes in the weakness that vulnerability  
requires.

Someone once told me that a Taurus is just a Scorpio in  
sweatpants.

I am just my father in a more comfortable wrapping,

Just a force of nature in a way that is easier to swallow,

Until it isn't.



I am all the pieces of him that he would like to forget;  
The molten metal of his heart forged into a blade,  
Stronger than he could have ever hoped.

Stronger than he ever

Wanted

Me

To have

To be.

I am learning to soften my edges.

I am learning to put my armor down.

I am learning about apologies and vulnerability.

I am learning to see people as people and not as problems  
that I can solve.

I am learning to consider my words,

To choose understanding before violence.

I am learning to unlearn,

All the things he never meant for me to be.

But in between the cold silences

And the raging storms

And the ram heads

And the TV remotes left on the kitchen counter

And the roller coaster ride lines

And the clashing swords

And the hammers and nails

And the long nights spent learning everything until we are  
no longer afraid-

We are here.

I am here;

***My father's daughter.***



# Your Glass Face

Isabel Newcom, Junior English Major

I knew you once,  
In a dream.  
Hazy fog settling over  
Our blank, lifeless living room  
Like the mist that settled over the lake  
On that night you turned your face  
To the stars and knew  
Wanting to live was nothing more than a piss poor destiny.

Life support is just a blinking  
Red button that you stared at endlessly  
With your unseeing brown eyes -  
Or were they blue or orange or red -  
Wondering how hard you would have to pull  
To bathe your glass face in darkness.

Your life felt like a mosaic:  
Ridges of broken colors fused together  
Under my trembling palms,  
Yet your glass face existed  
Without a single scratch,  
Without a single defining feature.  
No nose  
No teeth  
No eyes  
Just glass warping the light of  
A blinking red button reflected in the past.

Had I known you back then,  
Fell to my knees in front of you and wailed  
Like a mother who lost a child in a bloody war,  
Neither of us could have survived.  
You would have choked on your hate,  
And I on my love.  
Where would that get either of us but dead?  
One look at your empty, stoic face,  
Too young to ask and too young to tell,  
Would have broken us both like fine china  
Shattered against a linoleum floor.

I never knew you, and you'll never know me.  
So, now, all I can say is,  
"I knew you once,  
In a dream."





Shallow

Muriel Mackie, Freshman Marketing Major

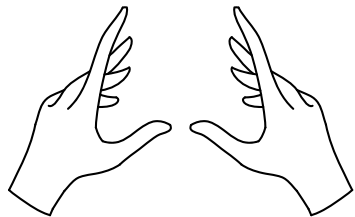
I remember hearing so much more.  
I remember what it was like to fall  
backwards and down, down, down.  
I remember remembering.

Where's my memory when I need it most?  
Where's my imagination when my fingers twitch.  
Where are those things I called precious,  
Those things I held exalted,  
Those things that were mine?  
Please find them, please find them,  
Pearls before swine.

How much was my doing,  
How much did I break,  
How long did I wait until  
There was nothing left to save.

Am I still here, a good woman?  
A good creature?  
Or am I crawling through the dirt  
Mewling,  
Piecing together a dead girl  
With **pretty little hands**,  
Forgetting the life above for squirming things  
Below

Squeezing through my fingers  
With squelching closeness,  
Scads of black mold  
Wet and dark and nowhere to sit,  
Teeming with lack of life.



# The War on Drugs

Meghan Schrader, English and Communications Double Major  
Content Warning: mention of drug use, overdose, death

## **Part 1:**

They tell you about the War on Drugs.

They don't tell you about the bodies you'll have to pick up  
when it's over.

No salute or folded flag for these soldiers.

They tell you about the War on Drugs.

They don't tell you about the comrades taken prisoner of  
war,

Only how they're wearing enemy badges on their arms.

They don't tell you about the price tag on rehab  
facilities,

Only raise taxes for the drug task force,

Because addict means criminal, not suffering.

Not mental illness.

Not disease.

Not sickness.

Not son and daughter.

Not missing in action, but rather deserter.

They tell you about the War on Drugs.

They forget to mention they're not fighting the substance,  
But rather the user.

They tell you about the War on Drugs.

They don't tell you that it'll be your friends,  
Your family,

Your boyfriend or girlfriend,  
A child with a bright future ahead of them.

They tell you about the War on Drugs.  
They don't tell you about the mother who has to bury her  
son,  
The sister who has to bury her little brother,  
The girl who has to bury her soulmate,  
The home turned into a battlefield.

When bombs are needles, how do you seek shelter?  
When a bullet is a baggy in an outstretched hand,  
A vest isn't going to stop it.  
When killing the enemy means killing yourself, how can you  
fight back?

**Part 2:**

Here is the truth about the War on Drugs;  
He was 4 months away from his 21st birthday.  
He was studying pre-law.  
He was going to marry his high school sweetheart.  
He had just gotten back from rehab three days earlier.  
His mother found him.

Only half of us could attend the funeral.  
One was in jail,  
One on house arrest,  
One in a halfway house,  
One in rehab.

I watched my family turn into walking skeletons  
Before they ever entered the graveyard.

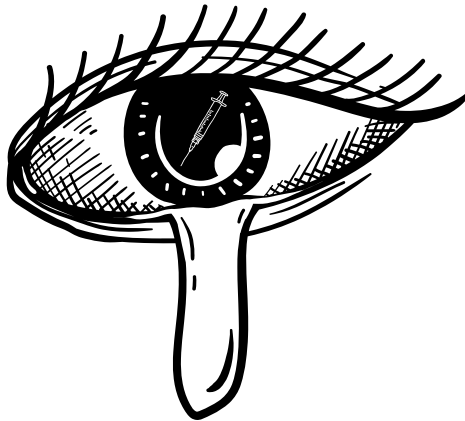
I watched the world turn away from them  
Before it even gave them a chance.

**Part 3:**

His sister found his mother.  
One year, five months, and 12 days  
Alone on the battlefields.  
She followed her son into the trenches,  
Determined to bring her fallen soldier home,  
Or join him.

None of us could attend the funeral.  
She requested no flowers,  
But rather aid against the War.  
Tribute to the fallen,  
The Missing in Action,  
The collateral in the War on Drugs.

When you join the War on Drugs,  
Make sure you know who the true enemy is  
Before you shoot.



# Forsaken

Kyle Dixon, Senior English Education Major

a car goes by, maybe it was red  
but it might have been blue

distracted by the rattling of a stop sign nearby  
as it shook, violently, in the wind

a splatter of something, stained, on the sidewalk  
and a pile of dead leaves which remembers

that street which holds so many memories,  
littered with the remnants left behind by last fall

a time for growth, surrounded by decay,  
swooped up in a whirlwind of the forgotten past

trying so desperately to be remembered  
unforgotten, and still relevant, yet

the currents of the present day swallow, restricting  
the possibilities and could-have-beens from yesterday

caught in a cycle of decision, unsure which direction will  
lead

the right way, the one, true way

that will lead to a familiar place, or something  
which can be held, static



unchanged, yet uniquely itself, and timeless like  
grandfather's clock  
hoping to be noticed, understood

by the passersby that appear aimless, lacking  
a sense of direction

up down, left right, back forwards, upside down  
all leading back to nowhere, or maybe

somewhere i should know, where the familiar marble colored  
rocks  
lining the rusted metal tracks, held together

only by the rotting wood that clings to its purpose so,  
desperately  
in a familiar place, that only allows for the past to  
become present

in a perplexing perspective, shifting with each rambling  
prudent thought, caught in a net, trapped, yet

free in the possibility, a fresh start, brought about  
by the constant, unchanging nature of that which is  
supposed to be alive

held together by the hope, aspiration, construction  
of something new, something unfounded, yet

remains grounded in the past  
much like the remnants of artificial grass, alas

it all comes to a head in the crash, falling  
and conjoining, forming one final finale

a thought, that thought, unfounded by the surround sound  
of a fallen, downed system that needs the world to hold it  
up

left, only to be bled dry by the ones who claim a watchful  
eye  
drowning, underground in a place that feels familiar, again

unsure where to turn, which direction to follow,  
overwhelmed  
by the potential for an experiential time, and

remains forgotten, erased by time  
leaving nothing behind



# The Eldest Daughter

Meghan Schrader, English and Communications Double Major  
Content Warning: themes of depression, mention of self-harm

*In a battle of suicidal thoughts and perfectionist complex, who wins?*

She has spent a lifetime figuring it out.

Eldest-daughter Syndrome

Meets Perfectionist Complex

Meets Budding Narcissism

Meets Anything to Make Them Proud in her body,

And they fistfight like they're at the only bar in town.

*Body turned battlefield,*

*But no one sees the smoke.*

As a child, she was told she was *smart*.

She was *advanced*.

She was *talented*.

She was *reliable*.

She was *so mature* for her age.

She realizes now this was just the unintentional way they

began to stack up bricks atop her shoulders,

And tell her it made her strong.

Telling her she had to behave,

To set an example for the rambunctious boys,

Was just a means of excusing the ways

They would later assault their female classmates

In some way or another.

*You told me I was strong,  
Warrior-woman.  
You put a sword in my hand  
And a pen in the other.  
Did you think I would not cut them to pieces?  
I am making an example.*

*Praised for her intelligence,  
Condemned for thinking it entitled her to an opinion.  
Praised for her work-ethic,  
Condemned for seeking leadership positions.  
Praised for her leadership skills,  
Condemned for being 'controlling.'*

*Have you forgotten that it was you who taught me I  
could rely on no one but myself?  
Have you forgotten the way a young girl gazed at you  
with hopeful eyes,  
And vowed to become everything?*

*You who set the expectations and told me I could exceed  
them.  
Did you think that I would fail?  
Did you think that I was not willing to die trying?*

*She is juggling a dozen projects without breaking a sweat,  
Just a few bones,  
Just her heart,  
Just her back,  
Just the little girl she keeps tucked beneath her ribcage.*

*At 16 years old,  
She was mothering every person  
Who came into her life;*

Breaking off already broken pieces of herself  
To build them back up.

No wonder she got thin.

She is empathetic.

She is caretaker.

She is 'the mom friend.'

She is 'the responsible one.'

She is the one boys seek out in the dim light of dawn  
To pour their hearts and souls into the palms of her hands.  
She holds their suffering as her own,  
As she was trained to.

*When I come home to visit,  
My mother tells me every thought and feeling she has  
had since the last time I saw her,  
As if she does not have anyone else to tell them to.  
When we visit my grandmother,  
She tells my mother every thought and feeling she has  
had since the last time she saw her.*

She is accustomed to sacrifice,  
To being used,  
Or used up;  
To ignoring her own needs and wants.  
She is made to spare,  
To tolerate,  
To forgive,  
To please.

When I learned that girls usually develop eating disorders as a means  
of control,

*I didn't understand.  
I wasn't lacking control.  
I wasn't being abused or manipulated.  
I did everything I wanted to  
And nothing I didn't.  
I had so much control,  
Every detail of the day planned down to the second in  
my head.  
What went wrong?*

*She did not know then  
The way she was being built up into a pretty piece of  
armor,  
A battlement;  
Gold-plated girl.  
She knows now.*

*Knowing does not make a difference.*

*The bricks are laid,  
And everyone sees that she is shining.*

*If a heart breaks  
And no one is there to hear the sound,  
Do the tears that fall still count?  
In a sea of broken hearts  
And bending spines  
And sleepless nights  
And flashcards  
And navy blue,  
Do the raindrops of my struggle make a ripple?  
Is it selfish to hurt when everyone else is hurting  
too?  
Is it selfish to ask someone to notice?*

She is girl,  
On the pedestal of womanhood,  
Preparation for the three-square feet of elevated platform  
Man will put her on  
For the rest of her life.  
They will elevate her,  
They will praise her,  
So long as she stays on her stage,  
So long as she performs.

She is a contortionist.

*How can I bend for you?  
What shape shall I take today?  
Do not worry about the cracks spider-webbing up my  
cheek bones;  
Perfect Daughter does not break.  
Do not worry about the scars at the corners of my  
mouth;  
I was told to smile more.  
Do not concern yourself with the steel wrapped around  
my spine;  
I have always slouched too much.  
Do not worry about the claws at the ends of my fingers;  
I used to bite my nails to the quick.  
I have been too sharp for them ever since.  
Do not worry about the water lapping above my head;  
I will be your life vest,  
Because you asked me to.  
Did you forget that you had asked me to?*

She is control.

She is matriarch.

She is planner,

And reminder,  
And never saying no to an opportunity.  
Her worth meticulously detailed in a resume  
That no one bothers calling her back for!

*Did I not bend enough for you?  
Am I not impressive enough for you?  
Am I not enough for you?  
Perhaps I broke off one too many pieces trying to make  
other people feel whole.  
That's what you asked for, wasn't it?  
Did you forget that you had asked?  
That everything I am, you asked me to be.  
As if it wasn't you that told me to build up a resume  
until it was all that I am;  
Until the story of my life could be easily navigated by  
double-spaced, 12-point font.*

*I am perfect, and so, they will love me.*

She is straight-A college senior.  
Do you think they have forgiven her for smoking weed in  
high school?  
She has put on 10 pounds.  
Do you think they have forgiven her for the eating  
disorder?  
She turned her anxiety attacks into aggression,  
Or into silence.  
She has adopted more socially acceptable forms of self-  
harm.  
Do you think they have forgiven her for the razor blades,  
And for the blood staining the sink,  
And for the smashed mirrors,  
And for the outbursts,



And for the Lexipro script she stopped taking after 3 months?

*Do you think I am enough now?*

She is her mother's emotional sponge.

She is the son her father never had.

She is therapist.

She is leader.

She is honor roll student.

She is president of The Club.

She is rebel.

She is substitute mother.

She is "the disappointment."

She is "the successful one."

She is contortionist.

She is caged lion.

She is control.

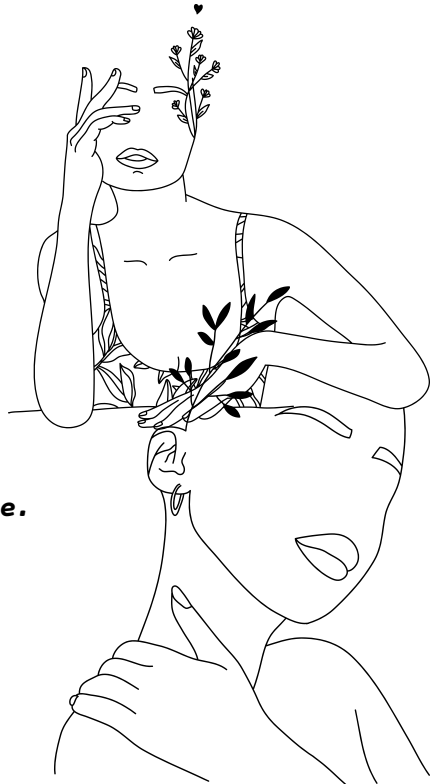
She is okay.

She is happy.

She is child.

She is the Eldest Daughter.

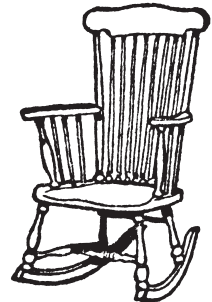
***And perfectionists never die.***



# The Room

Faith Patterson, Senior Communications Major

Looking at the cold, empty rocking chair that sways back and forth moving so effortlessly in an uncluttered room filled with sadness, silence, and despair. The bed is still made, the curtains left untouched, and the lamp covered in cobwebs. As I walked into this empty room, I saw my dog lying at the end of the bed, but the dog would not move a muscle while I tried to shove her off. She did not make a sound, but glanced at me, and I could see the mournful look in her eyes. My heart stopped, as I fell to the floor, my body felt heavy, so heavy that I could not catch my breath. As I started to look around nothing changed, everything was still the same cold, empty room the day that it had been left two years ago. When I got back up, I tried to make the room new again, but I felt an aching discomfort on my shoulders that brought me to my knees, like a weight that was pulling me down, I could not get back up, the weight was too burdensome. I attempted to scream, but my voice became lost, eyes welding, I gazed up at my dog, but she was no longer there, neither was the bed, the rocking chair, the curtains, or the lamp.



# *Profoundly Overthought*

Kyle Dixon, Senior English Education Major

And so, I will leave you with this...

# *Digital Publication*

Our digital publication can be found using the QR code below and also includes works such as:

**"A Goddess Is Born"** - a poem by Meghan Schrader

**"Dark Circles"** - a horror-fiction by Sydney Reffeitt

**"Dark Green Paint"** - a horror-fiction by Andrea Davenport

**"Dove of my Grandmother"** - a poem by Audrey Smith

**"Fuck You, Walt Disney"** - a spoken word poem by Meghan Schrader

**"Guilty"** - a poem by Kendra Truesdale

**"In My Dreams"** - a fiction piece by Andrea Davenport

**"No Bars, No Cage, No Mask"** - a fiction piece by Meghan Schrader

**"Peace"** - a poem by Muriel Mackie

**"Pencils"** - a fiction piece by Muriel Mackie

**"Semi-Automatic Egg-Laying Mammal of Action"** - a poem by Muriel Mackie

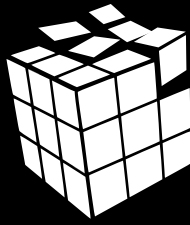
**"The Village of Abernathy"** - a fiction piece by Travis Mersing

**"Warmth in the Winter"** - a fiction piece by Andrea Davenport

**"Winter Girls"** - a poem by Meghan Schrader







THE WRITERS' BLOCK

"Find out the reason that commands you to write; see whether it has spread its roots into the very depth of your heart; confess to yourself you would have to die if you were forbidden to write."

— Rainer Maria Rilke

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