

Calliope



University of Holy Cross
Literary Magazine
2020-2021

Calliope

**A collection of artwork, poems, stories,
and reflections by the students of the
University of Holy Cross**

**31st Edition
2020-2021**

**Calliope is the muse
of heroic and epic poetry.**

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The Department of Humanities

University of Holy Cross

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The Colors of the French Quarter



Eman Ishaq



The Dome of the Rock

Michael Cooper

All Spirits' Day Feast

—a children's tale—

*Dedicated to all my ancestors, all my spirits and ghosts—
I love you forever.*

This is a story about people who are dead. You see, my dear, when your loved ones die—your family, your friends, your dog or kitty or cockatiel, your horse or goat or fine shiny black duck, your sisters, brothers, cousins, aunties and uncles, mamas and papas, children, babies born and unborn, grandparents, and great great great grandparents—when they pass over, their lungs stop inflating. Their hearts stop pumping, the electricity in their brains stops sparking, and their blood stops flowing. But their spirits, oh no, their spirits never stop moving. In fact, most dead people are happier being free of their bodies, because they can zoom around the Universe unburdened by heavy flesh and bones.

These spirits become our personal angels, our ancestors, our beloved dead ones who live on the other side of Life. They play around in the Land of the Dead and secure blessings, good fortunes, and sometimes hard but beautiful lessons for their living loved ones. The spirits have a whole different kind of life in that place and experience a beautiful vibrant sort of party with more fun than living minds can ever imagine. They sing, they dance, they laugh and pray, but they cannot eat or drink. There is no real food over there, no real coffee or tea, no cakes, no pies, no chocolate, no bread. There are a few pomegranate seeds around to snack on—however, that is another story starring the queen of the Underworld, Persephone, but that is for another time—and anyway we all know a few pomegranate seeds can't ever really fill a belly, not even a ghost belly.

Now don't sit around worrying about your dead ones, don't imagine them wandering and wailing on the other side moaning about their empty stomachs. The spirits don't need food,

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they are just fine without it. And definitely don't let the greedy ones convince you otherwise. Even your big-old-great-auntie-on-your-mother's-side who ate a cupcake or four every day in life doesn't need cupcakes to survive now that she is a ghost; she's over there doing just great without them.

Despite not needing food, ghosts do remember how it tastes, how it smells. They remember homemade pork and ginger dumplings dipped in soy sauce and black vinegar with some chili infused sesame oil. They can still clearly recall fresh baked bread and melty butter with steam rising off the first hot-out-of-the-oven slice or a simmering pot of lentil stew with curry basted roasted lamb on the side. Ancestors do gather when you cook, especially when you serve up their favorite dishes. They flock to hang their ghost noses over your pan and remind you that the shrimp scampi needs more garlic, more fresh parsley, and an extra dash of lemon. Just listen next time. Especially listen to big-old-great-auntie-on-your-mother's-side when you mix up chocolate chocolate chip cupcake batter and whip vanilla and rum-flavored buttercream frosting—make a double batch, she whispers.

Luckily for both the living and the dead, we have the magical holidays of Autumn. This once each year spirit extravaganza allows our dead ones to come so close into our everyday lives, so close they almost feel the hot sweet coffee and cream sliding down their ghost throats when they sip. Every year, without fail, Autumn equinox comes around at the end of September and opens a doorway between the living and the dead. At first the door is open just a tiny crack. But each day after the equinox the door opens a little more. The boundaries and distances separating where we breathing people live and where those beautiful shining dead people live get thinner, easier to hear and see through, like cheap apartment walls or dirty windows slowly being wiped clean—the sounds and sights of the ancestors bumping and rustling around over there get louder and clearer moment by moment until finally building to a full volume crescendo on All Spirits' Day. We celebrate this day and its eve

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each year with candy and witchy mischief. You can bet the dead get a kick out of us dressing up and fooling around in their honor. Each Hallows' Eve night and the night after they are so nearby that they can reach out to touch you, sending goosebump shivers up your arm and down your back. The barriers between worlds become silky veils, barely even separating us from them, falling open at times in their thinnest gauziest moments.

Of course, our family and friend spirits are overjoyed to be so close to us during this time, especially on their feast day, but let's not kid ourselves—they are also here for the food. Yes, they love sitting quietly with us, going out dancing with us, carving pumpkins and lighting candles with us . . . but they really, really love All Spirits' Day because of the snacks! Being so near to the living world allows them one night a year to be the closest they can get to eating real live people food.

Being so excited to return here among us, they will gladly have just a bite off your plate. But if you really want to tickle them—serve up their own favorite meal. On All Hallows' Eve and All Spirits' Day take a moment and create a beautiful little space, place your dead one's photo on the wall, or put out a symbol of who they were, light a candle—and offer up your food. Put out some tortillas, some steamed rice or dinner rolls, an apple, an orange, a bowl of soup or plate of shepherd's pie—whatever's handy. Pour a glass of wine or whiskey, a mug of hot cocoa or green tea—and don't forget dessert—or you know who (great auntie) will whine all year.

Feast your glorious dead, honor your ancestors and tell stories about their lives, speak and write their names. Remind them of your love and your appreciation for all their hard work securing blessings for you from Heaven. Cry fresh tears over them and laugh loudly over old jokes about them. Sit peacefully sipping mug wort tea and pulling tarot cards together, burn incense, and pray together.

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Enjoy this reunion and know, of course, that your benevolent ancestors and loving spirits are always with you, with each and every step. Trust that they are behind you for all breaths in and out, from your very first to your very last. Until finally one day your own lungs, too, will stop inflating. Your own fiery feisty heart will stop pumping, your crazy lovely brain will stop its sparking, and your ocean of blood will cease flowing. On that day, the beloved dead will be with you closer than they ever have been before.

They will shush your worries and sing you gently across to the Other Side, onto brilliant shores—over there where you too will zoom and zip around the Universe, body free, and you will also wait for your blessed living family to feed you once a year, while remembering you always, always, always.



Kieva Tipado

Lindsey DiFebbo

Terror at the Petting Zoo

A young girl, no more than six, stood staring at the brown wooden gate that would lead her into a place with smelly animals bigger than she. Her parents were behind her, talking excitedly about their child's new adventure. But she was anything but excited while she stood watching the other children run around screaming, as the goats and sheep chased after them.

Did her parents not see the horror that the other kids were enduring? Surely, they wouldn't make her go in there?

Her father noticed the terrified look on her face and tried to reassure her, but his reassurance didn't make her feel any better about the situation.

Bravely, she opened the gate, knowing that her parents wouldn't let her run in the other direction. The day was perfect, but the smell was horrid. Bright blue skies stretched out for miles, and a gentle breeze swept her short brown curls around her round face. But on the breeze was the disgusting smell of animal manure, reminding her that this beautiful day could easily be spoiled.

As if sensing her fear, a young sheep with beady eyes turned to stare at her expectantly. Both the child and the animal stood frozen for a moment assessing each other, waiting to see what the other would do.

Little Lindsey took a step back, and the sheep let out a bleat before charging at her. The young girl let out a scream of terror and went running in the opposite direction. Round and round the petting zoo the sheep chased her, bleating at her angrily. She was afraid to turn and see how close the beast had come, afraid if she looked back, she would misstep and the thing would eat her.

Lindsey DiFebbo

Wanting to gain some more distance from the creature with the evil noises and beady eyes, she began to climb up the wooden stepping blocks that were at the center of the petting zoo in the shape of a large pyramid for kids to play on with the goats. She thought it was a perfect place for her to escape the monsters that the others thought were so cute.

As she ascended to the top of the pyramid with alligator tears falling from her eyes, she couldn't help but think that this was the end. She never knew of anyone who had died from a sheep, one that seemed smaller than all of the others, but it was a monster just the same.

Once she reached the top, she turned to watch in horror as the sheep that was out for her blood started trying to climb up after her. That was her breaking point, and she let out a wail of terror.

For what seemed like ages the young girl stood at the top of the wooden pyramid of stepping blocks screaming and crying at the top of her lungs, hoping that one of her parents would save her from the beast. When she looked back to see that the sheep was succeeding in climbing up the stepping blocks behind her, she began to look in every direction to see where she could climb down.

She locked eyes on the gate as more tears began to fall down her cherubic face, but as if reading her mind, the evil monster clambered around the wooden pyramid to block her exit. She was cornered now and had nowhere to go. Surely, she would be eaten.

Just as her nemesis figured out how to get to the top pyramid and bleated at her again, and her hopes of being rescued were diminishing, strong arms swooped in and plucked her right off the top of the pyramid, saving her from the beast.

Lindsey DiFebbo

As she clung to her father with everything she had, she watched the sheep follow them at a distance, bleating at them. She just hoped that they would make it to the gate in time. The last thing she wanted was for that monster to find a way out of the petting zoo.

Her father kept trying to calm her as her tears began to slow, and he muttered something about the sheep being out for her blood, but she wasn't paying attention to him. She would not take her eyes off the creature until she was behind the safety of the gate.

Finally, the gate slammed shut behind her father, and her mother rushed over, looking confused and worried. She began asking the little girl questions like "why didn't you just pet the poor animal?" and "why were you so mean to it?"

Lindsey didn't pay the questions any mind. She was still trying to calm her racing heart from the traumatizing event that had just occurred. As far as she was concerned, she would never set foot in a petting zoo again.

Now, looking back on that trauma, I can understand why I'm so wary around petting zoo animals. Every time I'm around a sheep or even a goat I tense up in fear, thinking that I'm going to have to relive the nightmare of the demon sheep.

Sure, it's an odd fear to have as an adult, but there isn't anyone who can convince me that the sheep I encountered as a child wasn't evil. To this day I still don't go to petting zoos, and whenever I hear those wretched bleats my heart starts to race. It only takes one single bleat to bring back the memory of the day I experienced terror at the petting zoo.

Lindsey DiFebbo

After that early day leaves

After that early day leaves:
a dissipating hatred, the going darkness.
We sleep with a heaviness which falls within our darkest
 nightmares,
clouds evaporate, nightmares fly out of our minds,
taking away cold clusters of earth.
After the early day our hearts in our chests beat
while today's light withers out of us.

Lindsey DiFebbo

Inner Beauty

“Ello?” A voice shouted from the entrance of the castle.
“Ello, is anyone here?”

This is ridiculous, Amethyst couldn't help but think as she sat guarding the tallest tower in the castle. She wasn't about to respond to this idiot who thought it was smart to scream in an abandoned castle. What did he expect, a beautiful woman to guide him to where he needed to be?

Twenty years ago she had been human, and she dearly missed the feeling. She missed being able to walk through crowds without people screaming when they saw her. She thought that, living in the twenty-first century, science would be able to explain everything, but as she glanced down at her shiny, sharp, purple scales she let out a huff of smoke through her nostrils. Science could not explain this, and she wasn't about to let any scientist try. The witch, or whatever the thing was that did this to her, told her that she would only turn back into a human after she learned that beauty is more than skin deep. She had to learn to see beauty from within and not just what was on the outside.

“Ello? Is there really a dragon in here?” Another shout echoed through the castle. This guy had to be someone special to ask that question.

He would be in for a rude awakening as soon as he rounded that corner. Every man who had either tried to kill her or ran away screaming, never to return. Amethyst was never able to even speak to them, and she wasn't going to bother with chasing them down. It was pointless.

The man came into view and Amethyst had to do a double take. This man didn't look like all the other men who had wandered into her prison. He didn't look like a buff, cocky, ass wipe. At least she thought he didn't. Looks could be deceiving, and she was getting tired of those types of men.

Lindsey DiFebbo

His brown wavy hair curled handsomely around his round face that held a little stubble. He probably left the stubble there to help him look older. He probably looked like a child without the scruff. He wasn't thin, but he wasn't muscular either. When Amethyst had been able to mingle with other humans, they would have described him as a man with a dad bod, but it didn't look horrible on him. What struck Amethyst the most wasn't how ordinary he looked; it was his bright green eyes. They almost looked like a cat's eyes. They were stunning and became the only thing she could focus on.

"Bloody hell, you're real," he muttered, taking a step hesitantly into the room.

Well, he wasn't running away in terror, and he wasn't trying to kill her yet, so she thought it was a good start.

"I've passed by this place a hundred times. I've always wanted to explore it, but I never thought I would find something as amazing as this." He dumbly took another step closer. "You don't look dangerous though."

Amethyst let out a huff of smoke in annoyance. He was stupid if he thought she wasn't dangerous. She had never killed a man, but she had injured those who had tried to kill her, and she was willing to do it again if she was backed into a corner.

He jumped a few steps back when the smoke came out of her nose. He looked terrified, but the curiosity in those green eyes drowned out the fear and pushed him forward.

"How are you not stuck in a lab right now as a science experiment? You're absolutely stunning," he muttered, as he took a couple of steps forward again, until he was standing right in front of her.



Allison Serpas

Lindsey DiFebbo

“Do you think that I want to be some science experiment? I hide away here so that I won’t have to be,” Amethyst grumbled, speaking for the first time in years and making the green-eyed man gasp in wonder.

“You you can can talk?!” His voice changed from a deep baritone to high-pitched and squeaky, causing Amethyst to hold in laughter. He sounded like a chipmunk when he was scared, and it was amusing to her.

“Of course, I can talk. I’ve been able to talk this entire time, but no one has ever bothered to stick around long enough to listen,” she said, looking down at her claws as sadness filled her heart.

“Well, I’m here now. I’ll listen,” he said, hesitantly sitting down in front of her.

“You’re crazy. What person in his right mind would not run away? But here you are wanting to sit and listen to my story. Don’t you have other things you need to do?” Amethyst was astounded at the nerve of this man.

“Sure, I have other things that I need to be doing, but none of them are as fun as talking to a dragon.” He shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

Amethyst felt a small spark of hope bloom in her chest. Could he be the one? Could he be the man who would help her turn back into a human? She didn’t want to trust him with her full story just yet. She was afraid that if she opened up to him, he wouldn’t like who she was on the inside. It was his curiosity that was keeping him here now, but as soon as he found out about her Amethyst worried he would get bored.

Lindsey DiFebbo

“What’s your name?” Now it was Amethyst’s turn to be curious. No one, in all her years of being a dragon, had time or the nerve to sit and actually listen to her. But if she was going to trust him and tell him her story, then she at least deserved to know his name.

“Jasper, and yours?”

“Amethyst, yes, like the color. The witch that turned me into this must have had some sense of humor.” She looked down at her purple scales in annoyance.

“Well, Amethyst, I think you’re beautiful. I hate to tell you though, I really haven’t seen many dragons to compare you to.” He started to relax when he realized she wasn’t going to eat him.

“Thanks, but I hope you never encounter any other dragons. The others might not be as kind as I am.”

“So, what’s your story?”

“Are you sure you want to hear this? You might not like the story you hear.” She was giving him one last chance to run away before she told him who she was and received his judgment.

“I’m a big boy, Amethyst. I can handle a story about a woman turning into a dragon . . . Bloody hell, I never thought I would say that while talking to a dragon.” Shock finally registered on his face as he realized how insane his reality was becoming.

She let out a small laugh before taking a deep breath and beginning her story. “I used to be human, just like you. I used to be beautiful. I worked my ass off to get that way, too.” She let out a sigh before continuing. “I had many different boyfriends. I flew through men. No one was ever good enough, ever handsome enough for me. If they were handsome, then they didn’t have a brain. If they had a brain, they weren’t handsome.”

Lindsey DiFebbo

“It seems like you were only beautiful on the outside.” His blunt statement surprised Amethyst. She had never met a man able to state his opinion about her so openly, even when she was human.

Before she had been turned into a dragon, she had never taken the time to listen to her partners’ opinions. She always plowed forward, not caring about how other people viewed her. She was too worried about how she viewed herself to care about how the world viewed her or how she affected others.

“That’s the same thing the witch said before she changed me. I don’t remember what caused me to change into someone so shallow,” Amethyst admitted. “I used to be kind and caring, not worried about outer appearance. I guess I just got so lost in being perfect on the outside that I forgot who I was within. At least that’s what the witch said before she turned me into this monster.”

“Do you still care about outer appearances now?” Jasper asked her curiously.

Amethyst had to think about it for a second. “Not as much as I used to. I don’t really have a lot of opportunities to judge others based on their appearance. They’re too busy judging me on mine before I can even get a proper look at them.”

“Well, now that you have me to look at, why don’t you give it a go and see what’s the first thing you notice?” He stood up and did a slow turn before looking back at her.

“You have the most exquisite eyes I’ve ever seen.” She heard herself say before she had time to filter herself. Sure, there were other things she could look at about him that weren’t as aesthetically pleasing, but she kept being drawn back to his eyes.

“Thanks,” he muttered. “So, how exactly were you turned into a dragon?”

Lindsey DiFebbo

“From what I remember, I was out jogging on one of the nature trails that circled my old home. Ironically, one of them led me to this castle. Not many people knew about this place back then. I ran past an elderly woman who needed my help, and I ignored her.” She had always felt ashamed of her actions when she thought back to the day she had run past the woman, but she felt even more shame admitting to the horrible act.

Amethyst really hadn't ignored her; she had called her a diseased old hag who didn't deserve the pleasure of her aid. She didn't want to tell Jasper though; he might think poorly of her. She had just met him today, and if he was the person meant to help her turn back into a human, then she didn't want to have him running for the hills based on the type of person she had been before.

She realized now that she had been the real hag back when she was human. Maybe she deserved to be a dragon. Maybe the world didn't need another person like her treating everyone else so badly.

“Next thing I remember was this bright flash and excruciating pain. I woke up in this castle, in this form, with the elderly woman looking like a beautiful maiden standing in front of me. She looked so angry. She told me that I had to stay in this form to pay for how I treated people. I would not be able to turn back into a human until . . .” She sighed, wondering how she was even going to turn back into a human again. She didn't want Jasper to feel obligated to help her. She had never provided others with her help unless she was receiving something in return. Why would Jasper want to help her?

“Until what?”

“Until I learn to see beauty beyond the surface.”

Amethyst looked into his bright green eyes and felt bad for even hoping he might want to help her. She wanted to confide in Jasper. She wanted to trust him, but she was afraid of how he

Lindsey DiFebbo

would judge her. It had been over twenty years since she had encountered another human who actually wanted to speak to her, and now that she had someone listening to her story, she didn't want him to run off in disgust. She couldn't afford to lose this connection. She didn't want to be lonely again.

"Have you learned to see beauty beyond the surface?" He tilted his head slightly in curiosity, and Amethyst couldn't help but think how cute the gesture was.

"I guess not or I would have changed back by now."

"How long have you been a dragon? How old are you?"

"I'm pretty sure it's around twenty years now. That would probably make me around forty-five? If I ever transform back, I'll be a lot older than I was." Amethyst felt the shock of how old she truly was. A tear fell from her eye as she set her head down on her large claw. What was the point of her transforming back now? She would never be young and beautiful again. She would never have a chance to have kids and raise a family, like she had dreamed. She might as well stay in this disgusting form for the rest of her days. Maybe it would be better for the rest of society if she did.

"Why are you so sad?" Jasper stood and took another step towards her.

"I don't know if I'll ever change back. When I do, I won't look the same as I did before, and I had worked so hard to be the woman I was. I'm afraid I won't like who I've become."

"Well, if it means anything to you, I think you're on the right path to becoming a beautiful person on the inside. You're obviously not the same person you were before you changed, but we all need to work to become better. Now you know that your definition of what better was in the past was wrong." Jasper patted her shoulder kindly, surprising her.

Lindsey DiFebbo

No one had wanted to touch her since she became this monster, at least not in a kind way. Everyone who had tried to lay a finger on her had wanted her dead. This man might just be the one who could help her change back. At least, then she could experience being around people as she lived out the rest of her days.

“Well, it looks like it’s getting late, and I can’t see that great at night. I better head out. It was nice meeting you, Amethyst . . .”

“W-wait! If you don’t mind . . . would it be too much if I asked you to come back? I haven’t really been able to talk to anyone in so long. It’s nice to finally have someone not trying to kill me or running away in terror.”

“Are you kidding? I wouldn’t miss coming back to talk to you for the world. You’re a bloody fire-breathing, talking dragon. If you didn’t have any friends before, then you definitely have one now. Don’t worry, I’ll be back tomorrow, and I promise I’ll help you turn back into a human.” He dusted off his trousers and sent her a giant smile.

“You would do that for me even though we just met?” Amethyst was astounded at the kindness of this man.

“Of course. What are friends for?” He smiled, waving as he exited the castle.

Amethyst felt a weight lift off her shoulders, and a bright ball of hope filled her body. Maybe, just maybe Jasper and she could figure out a way to change her back into a human, and she could learn how to be the good person she was always meant to be.

Lindsey DiFebbo

Endless Tales in Memoriam

Life starts out as a journey: a tale,
a story. It rushes by as fast as
a bullet. This story is one of old.
We start with children as beautiful as
angels. But our bodies are subject to time
and our statement would be untrue
if we said life is permanent. Life is as
fleeting as a butterfly's wing beat. It
happens in the blink of an eye and can
give as much as it takes. But our tales will be
wonderfully imaginative. We can barely
believe the love we will endure even
with all the trials and tribulations. Friends
will come and go. Strangers will meet, then
life changes; the heart beats differently. Somebody
waits with breath bated. Then, like a tree that bends,
there is a surprise that comes unexpectedly.
Love takes ahold of the soul just
with the snap of the fingers. A
present is gifted, seeming so small,
but all life starts out small. Then, change
occurs over the years. A small
child at first but, like all speeding cars, to
us, that child grows and changes before we say
goodbye. Then, our children are left to tell the
stories within their memories. At least
we will be remembered by all those who both
loved and cherished us. It gives us a
small glimmer of hope that the little
time we have should keep us from getting scared.
However, life holds deeper truths. Humankind is neither
invincible nor do we shatter easily. We are one
people of love who are prepared
to accept the horror and the beauty
life has to offer. With the beauty life holds and
the fear of death, darkness seems beastly, but in the
darkness is light so bright that it conquers the beast.

—Inspired by the Disney song "Beauty and the Beast"



Katelyn Nelson

Lindsey DiFebbo

Road Trip Adventures—Therapy?

Monday—Leaving

It's early—like the sun is not even up yet early—and we are loading up the car to head to Missouri at the end of November.

My large overcoat can not even fit in my suitcase, so we have to lay it atop all of the suitcases in the back of my mother's red GMC Acadia just to make sure that it comes along with us.

We all know it will be cold when we get up there, but we are not prepared for the type of cold and the level of elevation we will have to experience.

Once we are on the road, driving past miles of trees and farmland, we all take turns falling asleep. If there is one thing I hate about road trips, it's sleeping in the car. When I wake up, I always have pains in my neck.

Despite this, I love the anticipation of going somewhere different. Not necessarily new, we have been to Branson plenty of times, but when we go on road trips, I get excited about the drive itself. It's like a build up of anticipation for an adventure, and when I'm with my dad's side of the family, every day is an adventure because we are a bunch of crazy people.

Ten hours into the trip and now I hate road trips. The pain in my neck is unbearable, and I'm tired of hearing my dad and sister fight. My Uncle Matt, in the vehicle behind us, keeps complaining that my dad is not driving fast enough and calling everyone on the road bad names—according to my Aunt Theresa who has been riding in the back seat with him.

Good thing we are almost there.



Ishaq Eman, *Enigma*



Brooke Baltz

Lindsey DiFebbo

Tuesday—The Titanic Museum

This is the adventure I have been looking forward to for this entire trip. I love history, and I love anything that has to do with the Titanic.

While at the museum on a crisp cold day, we are given cards and little remote devices where our own personal tour guide speaks to us and tells us about the Titanic when we put in the numbers we see painted all around the inside of the museum.

The cards that we are given tell us the story of a person, a person who we get to be while exploring the ship. The woman I have is named Martha, and she has two little girls, ages seven and four. By the end of the walk through we will find out if our person survived.

Martha is in third class, so I don't think she survived, but I have hope as I walk through the ship, learning different facts about how they got the ship in the water—they used oil and soap—and standing on platforms that simulate how the ship sank.

I can not stand on the final platform. My shoes keep slipping as I hang down from the railings. I can not even fathom how scary it must have been falling back after their hands slipped off the railing and then dying those tragic deaths.

My Aunt Theresa sticks her hand into a bucket that holds water at the temperature it was the night the Titanic sank. She cannot keep her hand in there longer than three minutes before her fingers go numb and start to turn blue. I don't know how some of those people survived.

One of the rooms holds the pictures of the children of the Titanic. Beautiful little faces stare back at the tourists who do not know how they met their end in those brief snapshots. I cannot believe that so many children died when there were enough lifeboats to save them all.

Lindsey DiFebbo

I reach the section where it tells us if our person lived or died. I search for Martha's name and read her story. She's from Sweden, returning to America after introducing her children to her side of the family. She states, "If I hadn't wanted to show off my children, we would have never boarded the Titanic."

Martha and her children all survived. They were able to make it onto lifeboat number 13. She died in 1985 at the age of 98. I bet she had some stories to tell.

Wednesday—Shopping

If there is one thing that I hate it's shopping. If there's another thing I hate it's the cold. So, of course, the family have to decide that we all go shopping—in the cold.

The day is cloudy and misting—of course it is misting because I'm outside. As we walk the streets lined with shops, Christmas music plays in the background.

We pass a Chocolate Factory store, and I am the first one to head in there, not only because I love chocolate—I do love chocolate—but because I'm cold and the sweet smell of sugar pulls me inside like I am tied to a rope.

Despite not going in for the chocolate, I end up eating chocolate bacon because why the heck not? I love trying strange new things, and if I don't end up liking it, then I can at least say I tried it.

It is pretty good.

The chocolate store is so warm, and I'm wearing my Eskimo coat that drags on the ground behind me, so I go sit outside to enjoy my chocolate-covered bacon while I wait for everyone to come back out.

My Aunt Theresa comes and sits next to me when "My Favorite Things" from *The Sound of Music* comes on.

Lindsey DiFebbo

Like the fun person she is, she gets up and starts belting out the song while dancing to the music in the middle of the plaza.

She's barely five feet tall with a spunky personality and a lot of pizzazz. She has dark short hair and a pale complexion and looks like an older, but shorter version of me.

Behind her I see my dad come twirling like a ballerina out of the chocolate shop with his purple Hershey's hoodie on and a blue medical mask on his face. His glasses are fogging up with the heat from his breath, but that doesn't stop him from dancing past my Aunt Theresa while using his head to steer.

She doesn't even know he's behind her, but it doesn't stop her from singing. Not until he steps to the side to let her finish.

I'm glad I got it on video. It can be a memory I relive over and over again. I can also show everyone I know just how crazy my family is. Maybe I'll post it on social media sometime later in the week when they least expect it.

Thursday—Happy Thanksgiving

My family are big eaters. We love food, and one of the places where we make it a tradition to eat is Cracker Barrel. So it would only make sense for us to order our Thanksgiving feast from our favorite place.

The food is precooked, and all we have to do is reheat everything. The kitchen becomes filled with the smell of turkey, cornbread dressing, homemade macaroni and cheese, green beans, sweet potato casserole, buttered rolls, and homemade pumpkin and pecan pies.

When the food is all heated, we attack it like a bunch of starving animals that haven't eaten in days. No food is left untouched, and everything is devoured after prayers are said, and laughter travels around the room in waves of joy.

Lindsey DiFebbo

After the food is conquered, and while it is being digested, we all sit down in the condo to enjoy Thanksgiving football—the men are technically enjoying the football while the women are groaning over their food babies.

Soon enough, a conversation of snores can be heard coming out of the mouths of my father and my Uncle Matt. My father looks like Jack Nicholson from *The Shining*, but he is a lot less dangerous. His head is tilted back on the couch, and a loud pig-like snore erupts from his mouth.

My Uncle Matt reminds me of a pale faced, red haired, but white bearded Santa Claus. Freckles adorn his rosy cheeks, but he is not the type to be all holly jolly. Instead he grumbles and complains about everything. His biggest complaint today has been that he cannot figure out how to find Fox News because the channels do not indicate which station he is on. His head is lolled to the side while football plays in the background, and he answers my dad's pig-like snore with a softer one of his own.

My Aunt Theresa and I sit on the love seat next to them wondering whose snore is going to end up waking the other one up.

These are the things that entertain us on Thanksgiving, and I wouldn't trade them for the world.

Friday—Adventures in Nature and Injuries

Another beautiful day, and I am happy because we get to spend most of the day outside. For the first time this week the weather doesn't feel cold. It's a perfect temperature with a light breeze and not a cloud in the sky.

Early in the morning we head to this place called Top of the Rock where people rent golf carts and head down nature trails, past waterfalls, and through caves. I am super excited to see the beauty of Branson, Missouri and all it has to offer, and my phone is out, ready to snap pictures.

Lindsey DiFebbo

In the beginning we are only traveling past trees and grass, it's nothing special, but then the trees open up to reveal beautiful waterfalls and pristine blue bodies of water that are probably freezing. If it were summer, I might be tempted to jump in, the water is that beautiful.

Pictures of family are taken all around, and smiles adorn all of our faces. We are all excited to see what will be coming around the corner.

Rocks that look like layers of flooring stacked one on top of the other create a beautiful landscape, and despite all of the trees losing their leaves, there are a few that still hold the colors of fall, clinging to them like a child clings to a favorite toy.

We round the corner and can see the caves up ahead. As we travel inside past the bar that is handing out alcoholic drinks—I don't know how they can give drinks to people driving—we witness in awe the beautiful waterfalls that adorn the cave.

My father, being the crazy man that he is, screams in the cave while we follow a train of electric golf carts. He likes to hear the sound of his own voice.

We pass two skeletal structures that are displayed in the cave. One is a short-faced bear, and the other is a saber-toothed cat. Both of them are huge skeletons and creepy looking. I cannot believe that creatures that large actually roamed the area we are traveling through.

As we exit the cave, cold water from a waterfall drips down on us. We have forgotten to pull the top over the golf cart, so we all feel the sting of the icy water hit us and protest in outrage.

As the drive comes to an end, we are still excited that the historical museum that is only a shuttle bus ride up the hill. Sadly, our party needs to split up, so my parents and I get on the shuttle bus ahead of everyone else.

Lindsey DiFebbo

In the driver's seat is an elderly man who looks in his nineties. As my mother and I go to sit down, he puts the pedal to the metal, and both of us go flying across the floor of the small bus.

She almost lands on a small boy, while I almost hit the floor. During the ordeal she twists her knee; she says she heard it pop. I end up hurting my shoulder trying to use my arm to brace myself.

Dad screams for the man to stop, but because he is so old and deaf, he only pauses for a second before speeding off again.

Due to her injuries, my mother is not able to walk through the museum, and despite our good mood earlier in the day, we are now all worried about my mom. She's had problems with her knee before, and we can only hope that it's just a sprain.

Saturday—The Return

Every time we have to return home after a vacation, I never want to leave. I guess it could be the fun memories we've made that I will miss, or the adventures that we don't get to go on while back home that I long for. Either way, I never like coming home from vacation and being reminded that reality is not as fun.

We make the entire trip in one day, which is not what we planned in the beginning. We do that though because of the weather that is predicted for Louisiana on Sunday. The last thing my dad wants to do is drive through the rain on the interstate where people drive like they've just gotten behind the wheel for the first time.

Once again, I fall asleep in the car on the way home, and I have to endure the pain in my neck. I dread going home. This time it's not only because it's a return to the ordinary, but it's the first time we're coming home from a trip without my dog there to greet us.

Lindsey DiFebbo

If I had a choice, I would vacation at a new place every week. Maybe it's because I would rather run from the reality our world throws at us than face the troubles we have to go through on a daily basis. Maybe it's because I long for a world where people can go on adventures and not have to worry about getting a job or finishing a paper. Maybe it's because I don't want to face the fact that death is inevitable, and returning home to a house where my dog isn't there to greet me excitedly after being gone for so long is something that seems strange to me.

Either way, I don't want to go back. I don't want to deal with the anxiety of trying to get a job. I don't want to walk in and see my dog Jake's ashes on the mantle. I just wish that the world could be filled with beautiful adventures that we would never have to wake up from, but I guess that's just the way life is. If we didn't have the bad, we could never appreciate or look forward to the good.



Kelsie Cooper

Lindsey DiFebbo

Whispers on the Wind

Wind blows.

Do you hear it?

One, small, child-like whisper

floats through the air and trickles like soft rain into your ear.

This is, supposedly, the sound of your conscience.

Or so they say, but truth is, it's angels.

Their whispers have always been ringing in your ears.

They are your conscience, guiding you through
life's long journey to the end.

Their goal is to teach right from wrong.

Will you heed the voices guiding you towards love?

Only through love

can we stop hurting one another

and be the beings we are called to be.

These secret whispers are the key to creating a better world.

So, why is our world full of hatred?

People are ignoring the whispers.

We are becoming a species devoid of love.

We will destroy ourselves.

The world is tumbling towards destruction.

Our only hope is if we remember

to follow the advice of the whispers on the wind.

Read it backwards now.

*Inspired by the 1889 painting by William-Adolphe Bouguereau called
"Whisperings of Love"*



Falyn Hardouin

Lily Gilson

AN INKLING OF VULNERABILITY

THE IMPASSIONED, BLAZING PAROXYSMS HAD COME
TO PASS.

AND STILL, ONE'S FADED FEATURES HAD REMAINED
UNCHANGED.

AND YET, THE INTERIOR,

NOT THE EXTERNAL, THOUGH IT WAS NOT USUALLY A
DISHONEST GUISE,

WAS SOMEWHAT FILLED WITH A KIND OF PLAYFUL
AWE-STRICKENESS,

AND WAS NOT LEFT UNSCATHED.

WHAT HAD COME ABOUT WAS A KIND OF HANKERING
TO BE A PART

AND TO SAFEGUARD WHAT ONLY ONCE IS THERE.

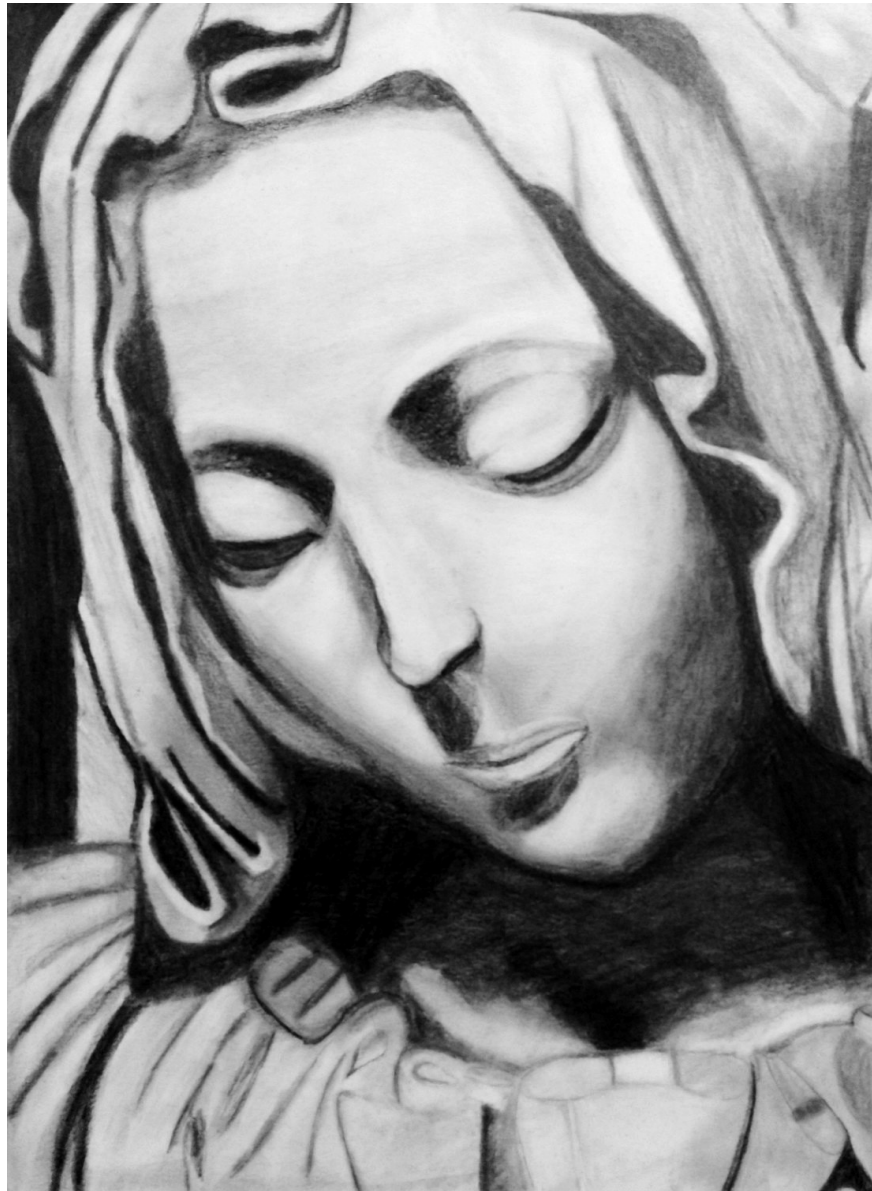


Nazira Amigo,
Tea Party

Mary Gilson

A View From The Boulder: Meaning or Vanity?

“What are you looking for?” I asked myself. Behind the bend I looked but could not find the thing I was looking for (if indeed I was looking for anything at all). We constantly spend our time in dissatisfaction, longing, and endless striving! Is it because there is something to look for, obtain, achieve, or possess? Or are we simply creatures who are never satisfied and always in vain pursuit of pointless goals? I continued my search anyway, despite these doubts, and persisted in looking. I looked atop a massive boulder in hope better to understand life from below. Was it worthwhile at all? Most would argue “yes,” and yet the reason why is so hard to pinpoint. For anyone who claims to know the reason wholeheartedly is a fool. We all want to agree there is a meaning to life, and yet we cannot even comprehend or explain what the meaning is. Looking from the boulder, I certainly saw life from a different angle. But being a couple feet off the ground did not answer all my questions; it simply provided me with a new perspective . . .



Isabelle Giangrosso

Payton Haddican

Haikus Composed During a Break

I.
Time ticks against us
Deadlines drawing ever near
Time—crushing me down

II.
The house is quiet
I cannot hear myself think
Thoughts still will not come

III.
The birds chirp in trees
Blissful wind blowing a breeze
Flowers pop color

IV.
Verdant trees pass me
Luscious blurs zooming pass me
The soft breeze is cool

V.
Driving on the road
Body on auto-pilot
Haikus on my mind

VI.
Nature and music
The perfect combination
Curing my ailments

VII.
My brain will not stop
Damn those professors of mine
My brain will not stop

Payton Haddican

VIII.

The chirping bird sings
I hear the beats of her wings
Ideas taking flight

IX.

Break is over now
My laptop is calling me
Three more weeks to go

X.

The house is quiet
I can hear myself thinking
Breathe deep —thoughts soaring



Allison Price

Payton Haddican

The After Party

Dark, chilly night
Moon shining clear
Blankets bundle us tight
With loved ones dear

Long, sunny day
Perfect for a shower
Fades away
With each passing hour

Life, burgeoning new
Celebration filling the air
Excited for all things blue
An ocean hue seated in chairs

Guests, now leaving
Family lingers near
The tables begin interweaving
The area cleared of everything but cheer

Dark, chilly nights
Moon shining clear
Blankets bundle us tight
With loved ones dear

Payton Haddican

Ode to My Honda CR-V

Old girl, you have seen better days,
But till the end of time, I will
Sing your praise.

My first taste of freedom you have
Given me, filled me with the
Headiness of teenaged liberty.

Responsibility you also taught me
Patience with each expensive
Problem you brought me.

Little blue car passed down, a jewel,
Chipped and cracked,
Fit for a teenager, a fortune too.

Though beaten, bruised, you carry
Me through—waters, bumps,
And even bridges too.

For all my days and with the highest
Of praise, I will look back and say
That you, little blue car, set me on my way.



Nazira Amigo
Rose

Payton Haddican

What Remains

The broccoli plant is the last that remains. Surviving all the cold weather, refusing to die in vain. A death in summer was the end for the garden, once vibrant with life—now bleak, black, and sodden. One by one, the plants faded away, yet the stubborn broccoli remains. Overgrown yellow flowers produce seeds for another year. Once a dreaded sight, but over time become almost dear. Our garden is dead, but a life still remains—standing stoically in the cold, the wind, and the rain.



Kieva Tipado
When Life Gives You Lemons

Janay Major

Chocolate City

Welcome to Chocolate City, where the residents are as smooth
and velvety as its name.

Their culture has seeped into the city, their influence has been
marked and claimed.

Their journeys are in lights, their struggles in the street,
Bullets are in their bodies, their blood washed away
for the tourists' feet.

Do not be alarmed. Chocolate City is a beautiful place,
very unique.

We keep the culture in, but the bodies out because
that's what the visiting seek.

Danzinger, corruption, deep waters, pain
The pride, the love, passion for war, enflamed.
Chocolate City isn't as chocolatey as it used to be,
but the title still remains.

For Chocolate City has to stay chocolatey, so Ronald, James,
and Henry's loss won't be in vain.

That fatal day, the cocoa almost washed away,
No help, no aid, melted chocolate everywhere, the survived
praying for a better day.

Chocolate City has survived, the future so vast, so bright.
But whose future from Chocolate City?

For it is not dark chocolate anymore, it's white.

*Ronald Curtis Madison: March 1, 1965—September 4, 2005
New Orleans, LA*

*James B. Brissette Jr.: November 6, 1987—September 4, 2005
New Orleans, LA*

*Henry "Ace" Glover: October 2, 1973—September 2, 2005
New Orleans, LA*



Isabelle Giangrosso

Calliope
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