

CALLIOPE



UNIVERSITY OF HOLY CROSS
LITERARY MAGAZINE
2019-2020

Calliope

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

**30th Anniversary Edition
2019-2020**

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

**Cover Art by
Kristi Groue
*Compassion***

**Cover design by
Matthew Exnicios**

The Department of Humanities

University of Holy Cross

Sponsored by The Marianites of Holy Cross

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Table of Contents

A Note from the Cover Artist 4

Letter from the Faculty Advisor 5

Creative Writing

Authors

| | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Michael Cooper | 7-10 |
| Jon de Silva | 27, 32-39 |
| Lindsey DiFebbo | 27, 32-39 |
| Jasmine Ezeb | 40-42 |
| Payton Haddican | 43-47 |
| William Luton | 48 |
| Janay Major | 50-54 |
| Haydee Ortiz | 55-56 |
| Carol Wilson | 58-59 |

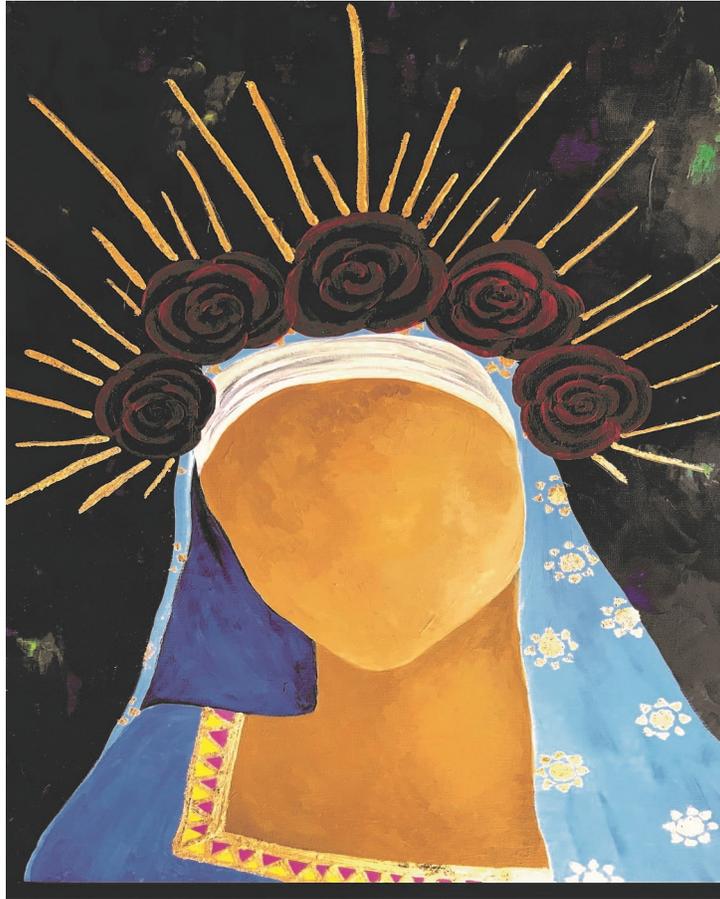
Artwork

Artists

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Aubrey W. Burns | 6 |
| Skylar Fontaine | 29-31, 56 |
| De'Iveon Foy | 49 |
| Kristi Groue | cover, 4, 57 |
| Mariya Jaufre | 11, 28, 36 |
| Sharon Kim | 39, 42, 49 |
| Erin Krause | 11 |
| Maria Perez | 28, 47 |
| Caleb Richard | 57 |
| Alexis Valenti | 36 |
| Caity Whittington | 22, 26 |

Acknowledgments 60

Compassion



A Note from the Cover Artist . . .

When we think of Mary, we think of devotion, compassion, and self-sacrifice. I didn't give her a face in my painting because I feel that it invites self-reflection this way. The absence of an already defined expression gives more opportunity for reflection. Mary is a figure that we aspire to become more like (as Jesus's mother, she was his truest follower) and also a figure who lives inside of us already.

Kristi Groue

A Letter from the Faculty Literary Advisor.....

This is a special edition of *Calliope* for two reasons. First, it marks the 30th anniversary of the publication of the very first edition of *Calliope* in 1990, which was also the year I began teaching English at (as it was known then) Our Lady of Holy Cross College as an adjunct. Dr. Mary Doll was the first faculty advisor, and she oversaw the first ten issues. I became the full-time English faculty member in the year 2000, when Dr. Doll moved out of town. So this is my twentieth edition!! Wow!! The years have certainly flown by, with so much literary and artistic talent showcased in our annual publication.

Second, this is the first time in its thirty years that *Calliope* will not be published initially in print form, as the booklet so many of us look forward to seeing and reading at the end of each Spring semester. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the physical shut down of the UHC campus, a print edition will not be possible until the situation changes. Even in 2006, the year after Katrina, the magazine was printed, just a few months later than usual. I promise it will be printed just as soon as it can be. But, thankfully, we do have the means to publish it electronically. So it is being sent out to the UHC family by email, and it will be posted on our website and on social media. As difficult as this extraordinary experience of social distancing has been, it is made more bearable by our ability to stay in touch virtually. For that I am truly grateful.

I am happy and proud to present this year's magazine in celebration of our students' amazing creative achievements.

Enjoy!!
Dr. Claudia Champagne



Hope



Peace

Aubrey W. Burns

Michael Cooper

Memorium

This is a story about a girl who lived until she died. She lived in the normal sense of the word, like the way puppies and flowers and humans do. She died in a very special way, like the way saints and angels and empresses do. Here is her journey.

She was born in a chaotic bloody splash much like all of us, but for her this splashing was in a living room, under water while her mother labored in an inflatable kiddy pool. While she was being squeezed through the narrow bones of her mother's pelvis, her father hovered close by. Her brothers played on the floor with trucks and ninja turtles next to the tub, wondering if they should be afraid of all the commotion or just excited about their new baby sister. The midwife oversaw each step of delivery wisely and without assistance. The girl came out blue with the cord wrapped twice around her neck. Oxygen rushed into her tiny lungs, and life-affirming screams came pouring out as soon as the midwife calmly untangled her. Mom cussed loudly and then rocked the little girl. Dad was overjoyed and overwhelmed. The brothers held her tight against their little naked chests. The midwife was exhausted and slipped away quietly once all seemed right.

Then the family moved to a new town, just weeks after the little girl came into the world. The father had seen fit to buy them a home, and all settled in with much joy but also some struggle and strife—as accompanies all big moves. The girl grew for a bit. Her bald head slowly began showing red curls, and soon enough the mother was pregnant with another baby, the final and littlest brother of the family. The two youngest grew together, inseparable, almost twins. They shared their mother's milk and kept their parents awake for days at a time. The father worked hard to support his family, and the mother worked day and night to learn the mysteries of this world and the spirit world, while still remembering to cook dinner most of the time. As Dad made money, Mom crossed the borders of Life and Death. By day she kept a house, and by night she tended to the spirits of herself and her family. Father dispatched big trucks for a paycheck, and

Michael Cooper

Mother listened to the Earth and the Heavens. She taught her young ones all she could while learning all there was to know of the spirit worlds beyond this one.

The children played in the yard that turned with the seasons. A great big sycamore tree oversaw their make-believe battles and imaginary adventures and all the while observed and loved the whole family. The tree dropped her leaves on the house in autumn, stood bare and watchful all snowy winter, burst bright green in spring, and shaded them with big wide leaves that would dapple the hot summer sun. The kids grew and swung from the simple swing their father had hung from the tall branches of the great big tree. They raked and played in the fallen leaves. They made snowmen under her careful winter gaze. They plucked flowers in the spring. In the summer they picked tomatoes and broccoli from the mother's garden, mowed the lawn sometimes, and caught fireflies in the warm evenings.

All this life and learning progressed, until one peculiar day when the little girl was sick and told her mama that she had been hurt. She told Mom that the grown-up neighbor had touched her, that he'd kissed her like adults do and told her not to tell anyone. The mother and father got sad, they got angry, then they got sad again. The two of them vowed to do what they could to make things right, and the mother remembered her own pain caused by grown-up men when she was a little girl. As fast as they could, they sold the house with the big tree where the children had played imaginary games and had also been hurt beyond sense. The mother and father dug deep into their courage and imagined a new life, in a new place—far from the painful memories of that house.

And so it was, the family moved again. They flew across the country and found a magical land right by the ocean. This place had big trees taller than you can imagine, and wide-open pastures, sandy beaches, warm rivers, and lots of healing. The children continued to grow in this new special land. They played in the forests and the high grasses. The father continued to work, and the mother found a whole new way to support her family with all the mystical knowledge she had studied. They all moved to a beautiful farm that supported the life and love the family

Michael Cooper

shared, this time under the sentinel eyes of a great cedar tree, which guarded them unconditionally.

I digress, this story is about the girl. Her life went on. She was touched by coastal fogs and heavy rains, by stolen sunlit moments and swollen full moons that turned the pastures silver. She played with ducks and rode horses, she collected warm eggs from her chickens, she petted her cats, she was even once playfully attacked by an overzealous lamb (who was laughingly forgiven for his roughhousing). Her life was beautiful, and it unfolded gracefully despite the pain of the past. The young girl grew into a young woman, whose fiery red hair and sharp tongue were a lesson to all who knew her. She always loved her mother (despite their arguments), she always looked after her father, she always teased her brothers and defended them ferociously. There was another girl she made her friend, a wild child of the wind and saddle, and together they formed a bond as close as sisters from separate mothers could. All these people she held in her heart, and all these people she prepared in a special way for the day that she would die.

Finally, we come to the end that would only be a beginning. On a certain Saturday, when the sun was in the right place and the other stars aligned in perfection, this girl chose to leave us. She did so with the unwitting help of her littlest brother, her beloved twin, her didi. As the girl stepped up into the car that would be her chariot into death, she did so bravely and without fear (though in her heart she held a special remorse for the grief she was about to cause). As she buckled her seatbelt her grin shined across to her brother in the driver's seat. "Are you ready?" she asked him. "This is going to be a wild ride!"

With those words a journey was set in stone. The two siblings drove through the forests, they wound through the sunlight filtered by ancient fir trees, they snaked along the twisty roads deep in the woods along a path that paralleled the river they had swum in each summer. When the time came, she told her didi to take his hands off the wheel. She demanded he release his grip on her, knowing that, truly, he was the only one who loved her enough to do so. As his hands lifted to shift his grip, the car swerved. She reached out and took the wheel, she

Michael Cooper

told him how grateful she was and that he would be okay someday. When the car twisted and flipped over the railing, she was serene. The ceiling connected with her beautiful skull, and all the universe spilled out from her fractured body. Stars and rainbows and blessings and her own sweet sacred blood poured forth, drenching her brother in love, soaking and sanctifying the land where she fell. The girl guarded her little twin. And as the car stopped rolling (caught in the embrace of a majestic young redwood tree), her spirit finally slipped off into heaven. On her way out, she paused to bless the land that beheld her passing, stopped a moment to kiss her little brother once more, soared up and above the clouds to hug her parents, stood in one brother's kitchen to tell him she was done, and then flew across the ocean to tease her oldest brother one last time. Her death happened suddenly and gracefully. It was perfect and holy.

The girl shed her body like a snake. She fulfilled her final wish—to usher in a new type of love for her family and the whole wide world. The trees and bushes and grasses, the river and the soil drank in her holy blood as sacrament. Her sacrifice washed everything clean. The family was left to endure the breaking. They cried and moaned and missed the girl every day. But she fulfilled her purpose. She sees her family always from the land of spirits, that same land that her wise mother learned to travel to so long ago and then passed that knowledge on to her husband and children.

So her story ended, but then it only truly began. This girl, who lived like a human but died like an angel, finally started her real life—a life with wings that fly her around the universe. A life with a heart now big enough to encircle the world.

**Erin
Krause,
*Amanda***



Mariya Jaufre

Jon de Silva

The Note

Savannah Vargas stood in the hallway near her class, making out with her boyfriend, Justin Dalton. They had been dating for a month now. They were students at Whitney High School, she a sophomore and he a senior.

"I hope I'm not disturbing you!" a voice yelled from behind.

They jumped.

It was Mr. Franklin, Savannah's biology teacher. "How many times do I have to tell you two? No PDA's!" He pointed to his classroom. "Now Savannah, get to class. And you, Justin, shouldn't even be in this hallway."

"Aw, come on, Mr. F.," Justin said. "We're not doing anybody any harm."

"You'll do harm to your discipline record if you don't go to class immediately. Now get a move on."

"Okay." Justin waved to Savannah and blew her a kiss.

"See you at lunch." She blew him a kiss.

The class would be a long fifty minutes. She started to write down the class notes from the chalkboard and stopped. Writing those notes would take forever. She thought about Justin for a moment and continued her task.

After calling roll, Mr. Franklin discussed anatomy terms and the upcoming project of dissecting a frog. Justin told her they tried to dissect a pig in Miss Abraham's class one year, but it turned out to be a big mess. Miss Abraham decided from then on, they would only dissect frogs in Biology.

Savannah couldn't get into the discussion about anatomy. It grossed her out too much. Thinking about Justin was more interesting. According to the wall clock, there were only forty minutes left until lunch with her boyfriend.

Twenty minutes later, she finished writing her notes and got out another piece of paper. She drew hearts with arrows through them and wrote things like *SV+JD 4-ever* in them.

She started to write a list of things to talk to Justin about when she heard, "Savannah? Savannah? Earth to Savannah!"

She raised her head. "What?"

Mr. Franklin glared at her. "What's the answer to number five?"

"Number five of what?"

"Number five of your homework. Stop daydreaming about Justin and pay attention."

Jon de Silva

The class laughed at her.

“Do you have the answer, Savannah? Did you even do your homework?”

Savannah blushed. “I did my homework.” She got it out and found the question. “Uh . . . the answer to number five is the spleen.”

“That’s correct. Please see me after class.”

She nodded, and he went on with the next question of the homework assignment.

Mr. Franklin kept an eye on her for the rest of class, ready to call on her if she started to daydream again. The bell rang and she went to his desk, dreading what he would say. The rest of the students left the room and he returned to his desk.

He sat down. “What’s the matter with you, Savannah? Ever since you started dating Justin, your grades have dropped. Do your parents know?”

“No, but you saw I did my homework.”

“You did, but you need to pay attention in class. I know some of this stuff is gross and boring. I was a student once. I remember what it was like. But if you want a good grade in Biology, you have to pay attention and do your work. You know that.”

“Yes, sir. I’ll do better.”

“I know you will. A smart person knows to balance what he has to do with what he wants to do. You need to find that balance. It will serve you well in the future.”

“Yes, Mr. Franklin.”

“Okay. Now go to lunch.”

He watched her leave the room.



Savannah got her lunch and sat next to Justin. The salad line was usually short on pizza day and she wanted a salad anyway.

He grimaced at her lunch. “Why do you eat that green stuff? You need to eat a pizza with extra peppers. It’ll put hair on your chest.”

She watched him revel in his pizza. He covered it with a thick layer of parmesan cheese and pepper flakes. She smirked. “I don’t think you’d like me with hair on my chest.”

He thought for a moment. “True. I wouldn’t.” He took a big bite and said with his mouth full, “You want some?”

“Uh, no. I’ll eat my salad, thank you.”

They finished their lunch and had time to talk. She thought about what Mr. Franklin said. “How are your grades?”

“Five C’s and one D. Miss Hamilton says I have a terminal case of senioritis and have gotten lazy. You don’t think she’s right, do you?”

Jon de Silva

“Maybe. Do you want to go to college?”

“I’d like to, but my parents are too poor, and my job doesn’t pay enough to cover tuition. I don’t know if I’ll even be able to go.”

“If you get good grades, you can get scholarships along with those grants.”

“I don’t know. My grades before this year were pretty good, but even if I bring them up, I don’t know if it’s enough.”

“I want to go to college, and I plan on getting good grades, so I can get those grants and scholarships.”

Justin held Savannah’s hand. “One thing I do know is I like being with you.”

“I like being with you, too.” She moved closer to him. “I know your friends are making fun of you for not going all the way with me. I appreciate you for not trying. I think we have something special that goes above sex.”

He nodded. “I think so, too, Savvy. Don’t worry about the guys. I can deal with them. Besides, they’re not getting any either, so they have no room to talk.”

When there was only a couple of minutes left before the bell, Savannah asked, “What’s next?”

“Miss Hamilton’s English class. We had to write a paper yesterday about what we would want to say if we met an older version of ourselves.”

“Ooh, I like that topic. Can you imagine us meeting an older version of ourselves? Would we still be together? Would we be married?”

“I don’t know about that, but I do know I need to bring my D up in that class.”

The bell rang to end lunch. Savannah and Justin hugged and kissed, then went to the stairwell by the main office. They hugged and kissed again.

“Can I call you after work?” Justin asked.

“Sure.” Then Savannah went to class.

The rest of her day dragged on. The bell finally rang to go home. Before leaving, she decided to go to her locker to gather the books she needed to do her homework. She strolled down the hall thinking about Justin’s English topic of meeting an older version of himself. Would they still be together, say, twenty years or so from now?

Savannah opened her locker and got what she needed. As she started to close it, a folded piece of paper fell from the locker to the ground. There was a handwritten message on the outside.

Savannah!! VERY IMPORTANT!!!

Jon de Silva

Her face went white. The writing on the outside of the note was hers. She didn't write a note like that today, nor had she ever written a note to herself. She couldn't wait for Justin's call that evening to talk about the note to herself.

The last call before the buses left rang out on the intercom. There were a few minutes left before the crowd of students cleared and she could walk home. She opened the note.

Savannah, Go to Dr. Moore's old dentist office now. Everything depends on it!!

The note was also in her handwriting, which made her uneasy. This made no sense. What was so urgent? Why did she have to go to an abandoned office? Dr. Moore had converted a small house into an office in 1976 and worked there until his death last year. The place had been closed since then.

Savannah went outside. The buses had already left and few students remained on campus. Dr. Moore's old office was a few blocks away, and it wouldn't take her long to walk there. She could peek through the boarded-up windows before going in.

She arrived at the old building and looked back at the school. The after-school traffic had already died down. Savannah stepped up to the door, went to knock, and stopped. What happened to the boards? There were curtains on the windows and a light on inside. She tried to see through them but could see nothing.

"Savvy? What are you doing here?" She turned to see Justin.

"I thought you were at work."

"No, they sent me home as soon as I arrived. They cut my hours because business is too slow right now. What's going on?"

"I don't know. I found a note in my locker telling me to come here."

"So did I." Justin pulled out his note and showed her.

It was in his handwriting. He appeared to be as uneasy as she was.

Savannah pulled out her note.

He read it.

"They're in our own handwriting," she said. "What's going on? I don't remember writing a note to myself."

"Neither do I." Justin folded his note and put it in his pocket. "We won't know anything else by standing out here. Let's go in."

They went to the door. Savannah lifted her hand to knock. But before she could, Justin grabbed the doorknob and opened the door. They went inside. The room appeared to be a living room or a waiting room. Both the front and back doors were visible from where they stood.

Jon de Silva

There was a medium-sized table in the middle with four cushioned chairs. The walls were painted a dark green, but other than the bright blue curtains on the windows, they were empty.

An older couple sat in the two chairs opposite from them. They were shocked at the sight of Justin and Savannah.

The older woman put her hand to her mouth. "Oh, my God!"

The man said nothing.

"Can we sit?" Savannah asked.

"Sure," the man said.

The man seemed to have the weight of the world on his shoulders. He appeared to have the life sucked out of him. The woman had a similar expression. Savannah noticed a couple of light bruises on the woman's face and wondered if the man was beating her. The woman's face showed she had nothing to look forward to except heartache.

Both couples stared at each other.

"You look familiar, but I can't place you," Justin said to the woman.

"Yeah," Savannah said. "We know you're not our parents. Who are you?"

"You wouldn't believe us if we told you," the man said.

Savannah decided to break the ice. "I'm Savannah Vargas, and this is my boyfriend, Justin Dalton."

"We know," the woman said.

Justin raised an eyebrow. "How do you know?"

"Because I'm Savannah Vargas, and this is Justin Dalton," she said. "As crazy as it sounds, we're you, just older."

"Boy, you two sure got fat," Justin said.

"Just wait until you hit your forties, honey," the older Savannah said. "You'll change your attitude."

"Did you think you'd be a hardbody forever?" the older Justin said.

"Well . . . yeah," Justin said.

Savannah pulled out her note. "Did you write this?"

The older Savannah pulled a note out of her purse. "No. We have them, too."

The notes were the same. The older Justin pulled a note out of his shirt pocket that was identical to his counterpart's.

"What's going on here?" the older Justin asked.

No one had an answer.

"Does anybody know why we're here?" Savannah asked.

The older Justin said, "I'm not sure, but I have an idea. Justin, do you remember writing a paper about having a conversation with an older version of yourself?"

Jon de Silva

“Yeah, I just got it back today. It’s the first A I got in English this nine weeks.” He pulled out his assignment. “I put it in my pocket to show Savvy later.”

The older Justin furrowed his eyebrows and then he dug in his pants pocket. He pulled out a folded sheet of paper. “Here it is. By some miracle, it came true, because we’re in our forties now talking to you.”

They compared the papers. Both were identical, grade and all. However, the older Justin’s paper had yellowed with age and the ink had faded some.

Justin scratched his head and put his paper back in his pocket. “What’s going on here?”

“One of us must have wished or prayed we could meet the older or younger versions of ourselves,” the older Justin said. “Although I don’t remember doing it, I bet it’s me.”

“No,” the older Savannah said. “I think it’s me. I have a lot of regrets in life, including what happened to us.”

“What happened?” Savannah asked.

“How long have you two been dating now?” the older Savannah asked.

“About a month.”

“It didn’t last,” the older Justin said. “We broke up after dating for three months.”

“Why?” Savannah asked.

“Because we were two immature teenagers who acted like two immature teenagers,” the older Justin said.

The younger couple seemed confused but nodded.

“Savannah was the best girlfriend I had in high school,” the older Justin said.

“Even better than Daphne?” Justin asked.

Savannah slapped his arm.

The older Justin shook his head. “Yes, Justin, even better than Daphne. Is your memory that short? Daphne was fun, but she was way too high maintenance. Even at my age, I remember that.”

“What happened to us?” Savannah asked.

The older Justin smiled. “I knew you’d be the one to ask that question. Talk about young and dumb, Miss Hamilton was right. I had a terminal case of senioritis.” He said to Justin, “I didn’t think you would ask the question first.”

Justin flipped him off and the older Savannah snickered, “Typical Justin response.”

The older Justin started first. “After that English paper, I took your advice, Savannah. I got my grades up and graduated. I went to

Jon de Silva

college on a small academic scholarship and a load of grants. That's where I met my future wife, Brenda." He smiled. "She was from England and had the cutest accent. We graduated with majors in Secondary Education and became teachers. We were married for twenty wonderful years. We had two kids, both now grown."

"What happened?" Justin asked. "Did you get divorced?"

Tears formed in the older Justin's eyes. "No. She died a few years ago."

Savannah saw him having a hard time talking. "I'm so sorry. How did your kids turn out?"

"They took after their mother and turned out fine. My daughter is graduating from college, and my son is in college now. I'm so proud of them."

"When we first came in here, I thought you two were married to each other. You're both wearing wedding rings."

"Good eye, kid, but no, we're not married to each other."

"Actually, this meeting is the first time we've seen each other since high school," the older Savannah said.

"What happened to you?" Savannah asked.

"After we broke up, I didn't date the rest of the school year. In fact, I didn't date anybody until the beginning of football season in my junior year, when I started dating Steven Pollard."

"You dated the third-string quarterback? Eeww."

"He was second-string when we started dating. Midway through the season, Bobby Morris got hurt. Steven became the starting quarterback and had that position for the rest of high school."

"How long did that relationship last?"

"Well into college. He got a football scholarship to Penn State, and I went with him."

"And that's when he broke up with you."

The older Savannah shook her head with a slight smile. "We got married. I graduated with an accounting degree and passed the CPA exam. Steven played with the New Orleans Saints for a couple of years and then became the head football coach at Bradley High School. I worked for a major accounting firm until my children were born."

"Ugh, I just can't imagine that: me and Steven together."

The older Savannah grinned. "You will. He fills out quite nicely junior year. You'll like it. We were married for nineteen years. Both of our daughters attend Whitney High now."

"I know Steven," Justin said. "Did he die, too?"

"No, he's still around." Then the older Savannah's face turned red with anger. "Just before I turned forty, he divorced me and ran off with a twenty-two year old girl. After he left, I worked two jobs to

Jon de Silva

make ends meet. It seems no one wanted a forty-something CPA who hadn't worked in years, and I didn't have the resources to start my own business."

Savannah wrote on her hand with her index finger. "Note to self. *Never* date Steven Pollard."

The older Justin pointed to one of the walls. "I don't think it's that easy."

A sign hung there that read, *Once you leave this place, you will remember nothing from here.*

"That wasn't on the wall when we came in," Justin said.

"Same here," the older Justin said.

"You're both still wearing wedding rings," Savannah said.

"After Brenda died, I kept to myself for a time, mainly doing things for my kids," the older Justin said. "I ran into Mona Flowers, and we started dating. We seemed to be happy together, so we got married."

"Mona's a nice girl," the older Savannah said. "She sounds like a good choice."

The older Justin shook his head. "Little did I know, it's all a front. Mona's a jealous, vicious, witch of a woman, who wants total control of my life. She wants my total attention, and she's trying to drive a wedge between my kids and me. I should have never married her."

"Just divorce her, dude," Justin said.

"It's not that easy," the older Justin said. "She's a divorce lawyer, and she would nail me to the wall in court. I don't have the emotional strength or finances to go through a nasty divorce."

"You've been married for just a few years," the older Savannah said. "It couldn't be that bad."

"Yes, it could." The older Justin put his head in his hands and sighed in despair.

Justin's face reddened with anger. "I'm ashamed. I never thought I would end up being a freakin' coward. Come on, man, Mona's all bark and no bite. Don't you remember that? Huh? Remember when she told Miss Hamilton we called her a slut in the hallway to try to get us suspended because we wouldn't go out with her? Remember? And what did the disciplinarian do about it? Nothing. She's full of crap. Grow a pair! Stand up for yourself. Be the man you once were."

The older Justin kept his head in his hands.

Justin shook his head, stood, and sneered. "I don't believe this. You're a real sight. So, hero, are you going to be a man or be the little coward sitting with his head in his hands? Should I call Mommy, so you can cry on her skirt, you poor little baby?"

Jon de Silva

The older Justin shot up and, in a rage, grabbed Justin's collar. He raised his fist to hit his young counterpart and realized what he was doing. He stopped just before throwing the punch.

Justin grinned and celebrated. "That's it! There you are. That's the Justin I'm looking for."

The older Justin let go of him and sat down. Calm appeared to wash over him. He raised an eyebrow. "Mommy?"

Justin nodded. "It fired you up."

"You're still wearing a wedding ring, too, Savannah," Savannah said. "What about you?"

"My story's similar to Justin's," the older Savannah said. "After Steven divorced me, I didn't date for a while. I ran into Troy Benton, and we seemed to hit it off."

"Troy Benton, the geek?" Savannah said. "Eeww, you really know how to pick 'em."

"We both seem to," the older Justin said.

"He was always nice to me," the older Savannah said. "He had a good job and a nice house. He said if we married, I didn't have to work two jobs anymore. So we married and soon after, everything changed. He became jealous and wanted me to stay home all the time. In fact, he made me quit both jobs. Recently, I discovered from helping friends and neighbors with their taxes, I could create my own accounting business, but he wouldn't allow me to work at all. To make things worse, he forced me to stop helping our friends with their taxes and with other accounting opportunities. We argued all the time and he threatened to do something bad to me if I tried to leave him."

"Is that where those bruises came from?" Justin asked.

The older Savannah closed her shirt and covered her left cheek with her hand.

"That answers my question. Okay, I'll ask you the same thing I asked him. Why don't you divorce him? He's a wimp. He always has been."

"It's not just him. He has friends in high places. He threatened to take my daughters from me if I tried to leave. He has that kind of pull."

"Now it's my turn to be ashamed," Savannah said. "What happened to you? You were a strong, smart young woman who had a future in life. What happened? Why did you pick these losers? Have you gone that low to believe you're not good enough for a decent guy? Justin's right. Troy's a wimp. Challenge him. Call his bluff and he'll crumble. Call the police if that's what it takes. There's no way a judge will give him custody of daughters who are not his. Stand up for yourself!"

Jon de Silva

Savannah expected an angry response, but it didn't happen. She saw the turmoil in her counterpart's eyes. A few moments later, she could see the older Savannah start to think for herself again.

The older Justin held the older Savannah's hand and they smiled.

"Yes, that's it," Savannah said. "Be strong. Remember what Mr. Franklin said. We have to balance what we have to do with what we want to do. Do what you have to do. Stand up for yourself and beat that wimp Troy!"

"You're right. I caved too much." Then the determination she once knew returned. "I'd rather fight and lose than just give up."

Savannah smiled with delight. "That's my girl!"

The lights in the room flickered and dimmed.

"I guess that's our cue to go back to our lives." The older Justin read the sign again and shook his head. "It's sad we won't remember anything after we leave. I hope we learned something important from each other to make our lives better."

The rest agreed. All four got up and moved to their respective doors.

"It was good meeting you both," Savannah said. "I hope we can do something to help you."

The older Justin smiled. "It's good to see all of you again. Thank you two for the reminders of who we are."

They turned to open their doors. The older Savannah muttered to herself, "No . . . No . . . No . . . we can do something. We can do something right now."

She ran to Savannah and flung her around, grabbing both of her arms. "You can still change the course of our lives. When you turn forty, find Justin. Find him! Put this in the back of your mind and don't let it go. Don't you *ever* let it go! On your fortieth birthday, find Justin. *Find Justin at all costs!* You are the key, Savannah. *Everything depends on it!*"

A wide-eyed Savannah nodded.

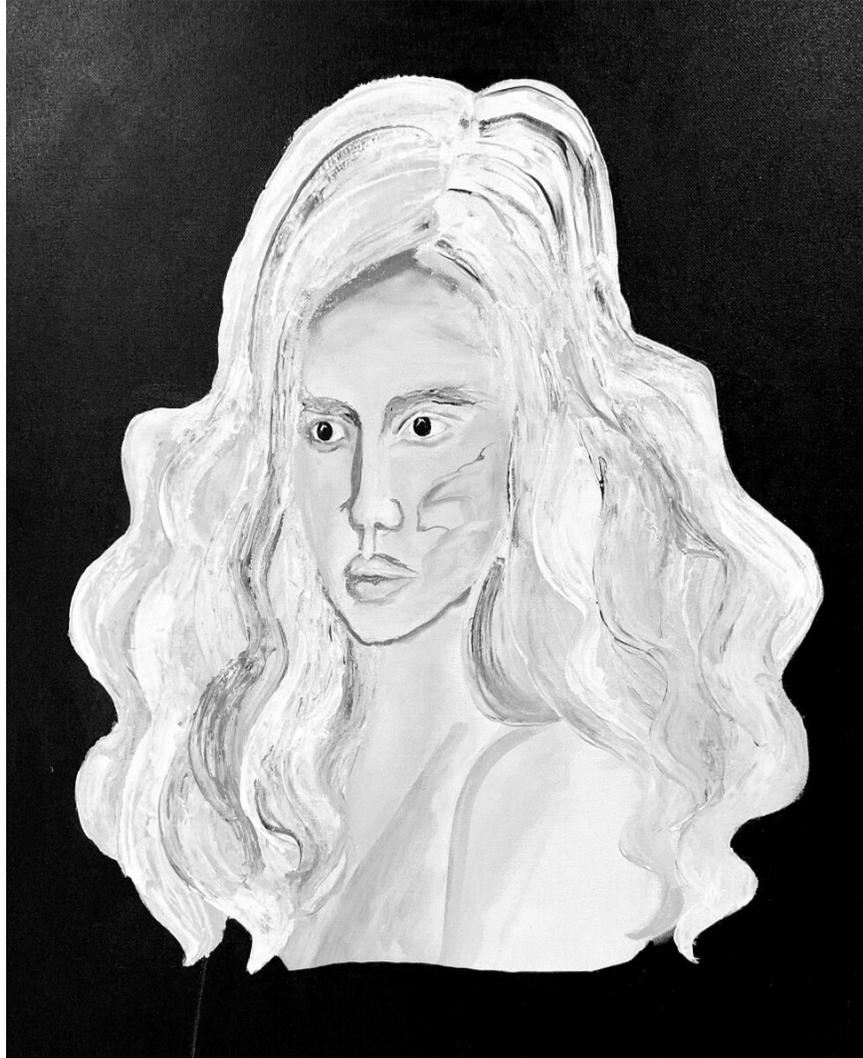
The older Justin pulled the older Savannah toward their door. "We have to go, Savvy. We have to go now, or we may never get back."

They watched the younger couple leave the office. They closed the door and were gone.

The older Justin and Savannah hugged each other and walked to the door. They were arm in arm, just like in high school.

"You tried," he said. "Let's pray it works."

She looked around. "We won't know until we leave this place."



Caity Whittington

Jon de Silva

“If it doesn’t work and I never see you again, thank you for being one of the best parts of my life, Savvy.”

“Thank you for being such a happy part of my life.”

They kissed.

The lights were almost out. Justin said, “We’d better go now.”

He opened the door and they went outside.

◆◆◆

Savannah stepped up to the door of Dr. Moore’s old office and raised her hand to knock but stopped. She moved along the porch and looked through the slits in the boarded-up windows. There were only empty rooms.

She went back to the door and heard, “Savvy, what are you doing here?” She turned to see Justin

“I thought you were at work,” Savannah said.

“No, they sent me home as soon as I arrived. They cut my hours because business is too slow right now. What’s going on?”

“I don’t know. I found a note in my locker telling me to come here.”

“So did I.” Justin pulled his note out of his pocket and showed her. It was in his handwriting. He appeared nervous, too.

They looked at each other, unsure if they should knock on the door.

Savannah pulled out her note. “They’re in our own handwriting. What’s going on? I don’t remember writing a note to myself.”

“Neither do I.” He put his note back in his pocket. “Let’s check around one more time. If nobody’s here, we’ll leave.”

They peered in all the windows. The office and adjoining rooms were empty. They had no reason to stay. Justin turned to leave, but Savannah didn’t move.

“What’s the matter, Savvy?”

“I don’t know. I’m trying to remember something, and it’s on the tip of my tongue. It’s important, but I can’t remember. Don’t you hate when that happens?”

“Uh-huh. You’ll remember when you’re not thinking about it.”

“Yeah, I probably will. Let’s get out of here.”

They turned and left.

◆◆◆

Savannah and Justin strolled out the office door arm in arm. She then closed and locked the door. They turned to leave, and he stopped.

“What’s the matter, Justin?”

Jon de Silva

“I don’t know. For a moment, I thought I saw two other people.”

“I didn’t see anybody inside, but let’s check.”

They went in and checked every room. Nobody was there. They made sure they locked the back door.

“I could have sworn I saw somebody. It must have been my imagination.” Justin noticed the sign on the waiting room wall. “I see you put it up.”

“Yeah, it’s a friendly reminder. *Once you leave this place, let all worries that belong here, stay here.* I like it.”

“I like it, too, Savvy. Now your business is officially out of the house and in its own office.”

“Yes, it is and, as you know, my schedule is already filling up.” Savannah pointed to the clock on the wall. “Our dinner reservation at La Splendor is in twenty minutes. We’d better get going. We don’t want to be late for our second anniversary dinner.”

“No, we don’t. And don’t worry about the girls. They’ll be fine. If they make a mess, they can clean it.”

“If they try to throw a party, they’ll have to deal with an angry momma, and they don’t want to see me angry.”

They laughed.

“I think those boys are afraid of you, too.” Justin hugged Savannah. “I still can’t get over how you found me after all these years.”

“I don’t know. For some reason, on my fortieth birthday, when I was feeling at my lowest, something inside told me to find you. I can’t explain why, but I had to find you.”

“Well, I’m glad you did. After Brenda died, I never thought I’d be happy again. And now here I am, back together with you and happy once again.”

They went outside and stood on the porch.

“You know, after Steven divorced me, I felt the same way. I’m glad everything worked out the way it did. I’m so happy, too.”

They kissed.

They looked at the sign on the door that read, *Savannah Dalton, CPA*. He smiled and patted the sign with pride.

“I remember when we first came here, back when we dated the first time,” Justin said. “It once belonged to old Dr. Moore before he died. Remember those notes we got from ourselves that we had no memory of writing?”

“I remember. I brought them just for this occasion.” She dug in her purse and pulled them out. “It just had something about us meeting here and that everything depended on it.”

Jon de Silva

They opened the notes. What they read surprised them.

“Did you write anything else on your note?” Justin asked.

“No. I haven’t opened mine since high school.”

Someone had written something below each note in Justin’s and Savannah’s handwriting.

THANK YOU!!!

“I don’t know how those messages got there.”

He shrugged. “I still have no memory of ever writing that note.”

Savannah nodded. “Me neither. I guess it will have to remain a mystery.”

“Before we left here back then, there was something important you were trying to remember. Did it ever come to you?”

Savannah thought for a moment. “No, but I don’t think it’s important anymore.”

“Okay, we’d better go then.”

They went to the car. Justin opened the passenger door to let Savannah in. He got in the driver’s side, closed the door, and started the car.

Just before he put the car into gear, Savannah smiled and held his hand. “Happy Anniversary, Justin. I love you.”

Justin raised her hand and kissed it. “Happy Anniversary, Savvy. I love you, too.”



Caity Whittington

Lindsey DiFebbo

Her Metamorphosis

There lies an anger in her
so deep that it takes everything
inside for her not to scream.

She is a tortured soul.

Living in a world
where she tries to break free,
life has her in shackles.
The toxic people in it are the chains
that bolt her to the floor.

She cannot run.

I see her striving for love
only to receive indifference in return.
She does not realize
that the world is unworthy of her strife.

She is beauty in its purest form.

Right now, she is ensnared
in life's cocoon and cannot escape.
What she does not realize
is that she is in the process of change.

She is becoming a butterfly.

Soon she will understand
that she does not need our approval
to be herself. She can find happiness
without us. When she realizes these things
the shackles bolted to the floor
will rust and break loose.

She will spread her gossamer wings and fly away.



Mariya Jaufre



Maria Perez



Art Photography by Skylar Fontaine





Art Photography by Skylar Fontaine





Art Photography by Skylar Fontaine



Lindsey DiFebbo

Before the Hereafter

Energy cannot be created or destroyed; it can only be changed from one form to another.

—Albert Einstein

All she could remember was the pain. Pain like she had never felt before. A hole the size of a fist was punctured through her chest, and every time she breathed it felt like fire was filling every minute cell that made her. She had to do something to stop the pain, anything to just get it to go away. So, she did.

* * *

The young girl blinked her eyes open to the blinding white sunlight. Nearby she could hear what sounded like light waves lapping at a shoreline. After blinking a few times to adjust to the blinding light, she slowly sat up in confusion to see that she had been lying on a white sandy beach. The waves that she had heard earlier lapped at the sand not far away from her feet.

There was a problem. She didn't remember living anywhere near a beach, or even the ocean for that matter. At least she thought she didn't. She scoured her brain trying to remember how she had ended up here, but no memories came to her. It was as if everything that made her . . . her had been wiped from her mind.

Not wanting to dwell on her lost memories, she looked around at the empty beach, hoping to spot some sort of landmark that would either spark her memory or tell her where she was. When she realized that all that surrounded her was sand and water, panic began to set in.

Needing to find something concrete that she could use to ground herself, she stood up only to fall back down again. That was strange. It was like she had forgotten how to walk. How could someone forget how to walk?

After a couple of tries she was finally able to stand and get her feet firmly beneath her. She looked behind her to see a dense tropical jungle, but there were still no signs of any human life. Thinking that it would be better to stay out in the open and on familiar ground, she began to walk the beach, hoping that she would see something in the distance. What was this place? How come there weren't any other signs of life here?

Lindsey DiFebbo

She had to admit that the place was beautiful. A beach that looked like it was untouched by the rest of mankind. The water was a deep blue, and in certain spots she could see the bottom where evidence of life was present in the tiny minnows that swam close to the shore. The sky held no clouds, and despite the blinding sunlight, a cool breeze blew through her dark brown hair.

In the distance she could see what looked like a couple of breaks in the tree line. Maybe there were some paths that led towards civilization. Maybe there would be people on those paths and someone would recognize her.

With hope swelling in her chest, she lengthened her strides towards the paths that traveled away from the water. As she drew closer, disappointment filled her thoughts and hope dwindled. She didn't see anyone standing near the three stone paths, and she couldn't see too far down them because of all the vegetation that clouded her view. She didn't want to go down them because she was afraid she might get lost in the jungle, but it looked like she would have no other choice.

She headed towards the path to her right when a voice spoke from behind her. "You shouldn't go that way, Brielle."

The brown-haired girl jumped in shock and turned to see who had caught her by surprise. She was happy that someone would be able to direct her down the right path, but she was even more shocked when she turned around to see a large majestic lion.

Tall and beautiful, standing at the same height as she, the lion looked at her with eyes that reminded her of the sun. Deep and golden, his eyes were full of adoration, as if she were the only one he would ever love. Despite the craziness of a talking lion, she felt a familiar feeling, like she knew him from somewhere.

"How do you know me? Who are you?" The young girl hoped that her fear didn't show. Lions were natural predators, and she did not want to become its prey.

"I go by many names. I just appeared to you in the form that you are most comfortable with." He stepped closer towards her. She could feel the power radiating from him and a part of her wanted to kneel, but that faded quickly when she realized what he had said.

Lindsey DiFebbo

“You know who I am?”

“I do. I also know that it is not yet time for you to go down one of these paths,” he said with a sad look in her direction.

“Where am I supposed to go then? Where am I?” The young girl felt her hands start to shake and her heart began to race. She didn’t like not knowing things. She just wanted to feel safe again. There was only one person who ever made her feel safe.

The majestic lion stayed quiet staring at her with pity in his eyes as memories of the person who had been her safety net filled her head. Tears began to fall. She now knew why she was here, even though she didn’t know where here was exactly. She couldn’t take the pain of his loss anymore. When the pain had finally overpowered her, she had locked herself in her bathroom when everyone had left and ended the pain by taking a handful of pills.

“Brielle, are you okay?”

“I can’t go back. I don’t know how I could live without him. He was my rock and some drunk driver had to take him from me. Why go back to a world of hateful people where he doesn’t exist? Please, I don’t think I could bear the pain of a life without him.” The pain she had forgotten about came back to her, and it took everything in her not to curl up into a ball and scream.

“You will see him again in another life, but do you really think he would want his death to take away your drive to live? What do you think he would say to you right now? Life is not about finding only one person to love. A wise man once said to love your neighbor as yourself. Love comes in many forms, and it will come to you again,” the lion muttered.

“I don’t want to feel the pain of loss again if I do learn how to love. I don’t think I could handle it.”

“It’s not about what you can or cannot handle, but what you give to others through your love. I know it’s painful right now, but with time the pain will fade and become more bearable. Your journey on Earth is not over yet. You need to go back.”

Brielle sighed. Ashton, the love of her life, would have been mad at her. The great lion was right, but it didn’t make the pain go away. She was scared. Scared that a life without him

Lindsey DiFebbo

wouldn't be a life worth living. She had never loved anyone as much as she had loved Ashton, but maybe it was wrong for her to end her life because of the pain she was feeling when what she should have been doing was living in his honor.

"What is this place anyway? Where am I?" She glanced again at the three pathways that led deep into the jungle. It was so strange how each of them radiated different feelings towards her, but since she was technically in another world, she figured death did not abide by normal rules. Death was something unnatural. It was something that was never meant to be as painful as it was, so being in this world, a world between life and death, would seem unnatural but wouldn't take away the pain she felt.

"Many people call it limbo, it's the place that comes before the hereafter. You cannot go down any of these paths yet because you are not dead. It's not time for you to receive your final judgment."

"I'm guessing each one leads to a different type of after-life? Heaven, Hell, and what does the third one lead to?" She stared at the three forked paths, slightly confused why there would even be a third path.

"Many souls feel like they were not happy with the lives they led. That third path is a chance at a new life. It leads to what many call The River of Forgetfulness."

"So, reincarnation is real?" Brielle stood there shocked at the idea. She didn't know much about religion. She only knew what she read in books. Reincarnation was something that she often read about, but she had always assumed it was a myth.

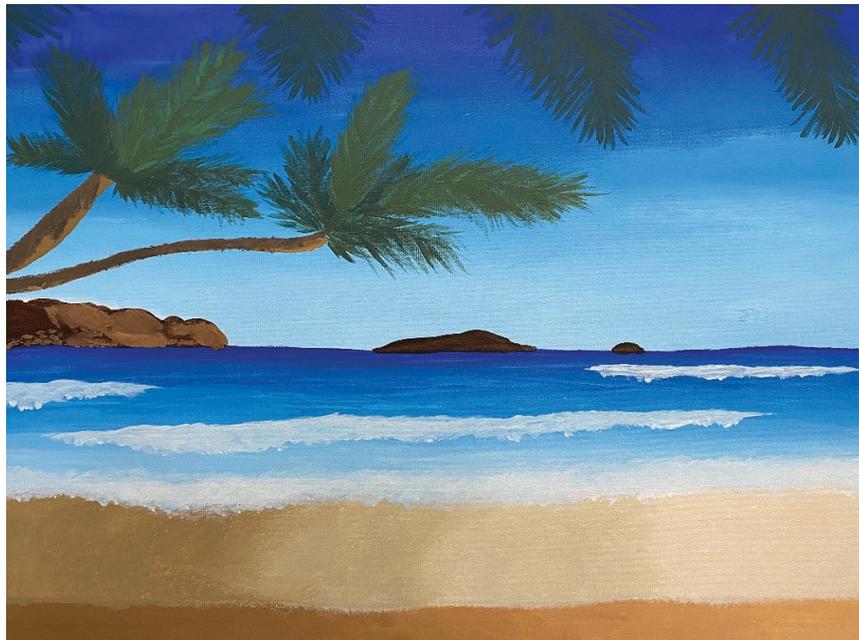
"Only if you wish it to be. It's time for you to go back now. Remember, love comes in many different forms. Let the love you experience back on earth wrap around you and help you heal. Don't push others away," the great lion said, as she felt like she was being sucked through a straw.

"Wait! Who are you? Where do I know you from?" Brielle had been trying to wrap her mind around who the great lion could have been. She knew him from somewhere, but she just couldn't put her finger on it. "Will I ever see you again?"

Before she could fully fade from this world between worlds, she heard him start to say one final thing: "*In your world I have another name . . . you must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought here . . .*"



Mariya Jaufre



Alexis Valenti

Lindsey DiFebbo

* * *

As she came to, she heard a repetitive beep in the background. She was lying down again, but she didn't know where. Slowly a voice started to come through. It sounded like her mother.

“. . . *that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there.*” Brielle knew where that line came from, but she just couldn't put her finger on it.

She blinked her eyes open to face the harsh white light of the hospital room she was in. A long tube stuck out of her arm, and something was blowing air up her nose. She heard someone gasp on the left side of her room, and she glanced over to see her mother holding a book in her hand, a book from her favorite series, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. It fell to the chair her mother had been sitting in as the woman rushed over to hold her hand.

“Ma, why were you reading that book?”

“Oh baby, I was so worried about you. When I came in and found you on the floor with the pill bottle empty, I panicked. You've been out for so long. Why did you take all of those pills?” The tear stains on her mother's face were like dried up rivers, but as her mother spoke the tears started to flow again, this time in relief knowing that her daughter wasn't dead.

Brielle felt ashamed as she looked at her crying mother. She didn't think she would be so upset. She was always so busy with work that she didn't think her mother would even realize she was gone. She had been selfish to even think that. Her mother loved her, and if she had known the pain Brielle was going through, she would have done everything in her power to help her.

She stared into sad eyes that were so much like her own. Eyes that reminded her of the lion on the beach. “I-I'm sorry, Ma. I was just in so much pain after Ashton died. I didn't know how to deal with it. He was my everything, and then he was gone.” Brielle tried to hold back the tears, but she just couldn't.

“Oh, baby, I wish you would have said something to me. I may not be able to take the pain away, but I could have done more to be there for you,” her mother mumbled through her own tears as she squeezed Brielle's hand.

Lindsey DiFebbo

“I know that now. I’m sorry.” The tears started to trek down Brielle’s cheeks as the shame of what she had done filled her.

“That’s the first time I prayed to Jesus in a long time. I was so worried,” her mother said wiping at her cheeks, trying to compose herself.

“I didn’t know you prayed.” Brielle looked up at her mother in confusion, wiping the tears from her own eyes. Her family weren’t the religious type. Her mother had never mentioned prayer before.

“When I was a little girl, I was very religious, but when I started to feel like my prayers weren’t being answered I stopped. When I found you in the bathroom, that was the only thing I could think to do.”

The room got quiet as the two of them stared at each other with love and sadness in their eyes before her mother broke the silence by turning to grab the book she had dropped on the chair. “I hope you don’t mind. You’ve been out for a couple of days, and I know how you loved these books. Do you know how religiously symbolic these books are?”

Brielle shook her head in confusion. She had always just assumed it was just another magical world that she could escape to. Another world where she could escape from her reality of grief.

Her mother sighed. “I thought it might help my prayers to be answered if I read it to you.” Her mother handed her the book hesitantly, not wanting to move too quickly with her daughter being in such a fragile state.

Brielle didn’t know what to do or to think. She was frozen, staring at her fingers as she felt her hands start to shake again, and then she remembered what the lion had told her when he first spoke to her. *I go by many forms. I just appeared to you in the form that you are most comfortable with.*

Could it be? Was the lion in her dream/vision the lion from her favorite book series? Brielle opened the book to the page her mother had marked. “What part were you reading when I woke up?”

Brielle tried not to shake when she asked her mother that question. It couldn’t be. There was no way that what she heard when she woke up was a coincidence.

Lindsey DiFebbo

“Oh, it was right . . . there,” her mother pointed, peering over her shoulder.

Brielle read out loud, “*In your world I have another name . . . you must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there.*”

Brielle’s chest filled up with a deep warmth that slowly radiated through every cell in her body. It wasn’t the same as the burning pain she had been fighting these past few weeks. Instead, it was full of the most intense feelings of peace and love.

In that moment, reading those lines, the same words she heard as she was returning to her world, she knew that everything would be okay. She knew at that moment that, in time, she would experience the greatest love she had ever known and know more about her lion on the beach.

**Sharon
Kim**



Jasmine Ezeb

The Red Robin Outside

Red Robin...
I hear you with your high-pitched squeal.
Your song which alerts anyone in your path.
You chirp cheerfully at 8 o'clock on a Sunday Morning.
The neighborhood is yours,
The humans are fast asleep,
And the street is quiet.

Red Robin . . .
I hear you with your high-pitched squeal.
Your voice rings out like an alarm fit to charm the passerby.
You sing to the other birds: the crows, the ducks, the pigeons,
the geese.
They all fly above in the blue sky, casting their notes by and by,
Which harmonize with yours like a chorus.

All different, all diverse, all unique, but all in sync.
I sit on my step listening in wonderment, my eyes truly open.
What I have missed looking down at a screen . . .
a scene so serene . . . in the sunlight.
Your red feathers gleam and cast an iridescent shadow
down on me.

Oh, Red Robin, I see you.
Glistening in the wind.

I wonder what else I have missed in my absent-mindedness.

Jasmine Ezeb

Beach Mural on My Wall

Scaling sunsets illuminating the sea,
How your pearly rays call out to me.
A sound of adventure,
A sound of fun—
Never letting nature come to none.

Your overhanging palm trees
Hold a shadow from the light.
How I long to take flight and see this sight.

The beach is not something to take for granted for me.
I listen to the rushing waves under a tree.
My heart is out at sea.
My heart is out at sea.

It's always been with thee—
It's always been with thee.

In the air,
Above the wear and tear,
Where all is fair

In that illuminated path from beach to surf,
I find rebirth

Like a cold body sitting by a hearth.
Take me out to the sea with thee.
Into that abundant light.

Fish of many colors,
Water green and blue.
I come to you . . .
I come to you.
In the morning I think of you.

Jasmine Ezeb

Not now,
Maybe not months from now,
But you will always be on my mind.

In the meantime,
I set my hopes on the Divine.

Amen, amen, I say again.

Inspired by Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind"



Sharon Kim

Payton Haddican

Where the Hazelnuts Grow

The hazelnut trees across the pond were in the process of fertilization. The male flowers hung low off the branches, yellow and spindly, waiting patiently for the wind to carry their pollen to the females that sat out of reach. On this side, there was no shade, save for the shadow of the cafe that gave a small reprieve to the occupants at a wrought iron table. The Madam and the maid sat in silence, both staring at the hazelnut trees in the distance.

“What a . . . charming place you have chosen to meet,” the Madam said.

“My mother used to bring me here as a child,” the maid replied softly.

“Hum.”

“We would sit at this table every Sunday. She indulged in a well-deserved glass of champagne, and I savored the one cookie I was allowed before dinner.” A wistful smile adorned the maid’s lovely face.

“How sweet.”

“Let’s have some cookies. This cafe has the best sweets this side of the Mississippi.”

The Madam’s silence was noticeable, but the younger woman pointedly ignored it.

“Excuse me, Sir.”

“Yes, Miss?” A waiter came up to the table.

“The Madam would like a half a dozen cookies and two flutes of champagne.”

“Yes, Miss,” replied the waiter. “May I ask what type of cookie the Madam desires?”

“That doesn’t matter. She wants the freshest batch available,” the maid answered.

“Of course. Your order will be out soon.” The waiter bowed and scurried away.

“Yes, please, enjoy yourself on *my* dime,” Madam said, her eyes narrowing at the maid.

“You’re such a kind and caring patroness, and I offer you my *sincerest* gratitude,” the maid said glibly, bowing her head in mock reverence.

Payton Haddican

“Remember to whom you speak, child,” the older woman hissed through her teeth.

It was the maid’s turn to narrow her eyes. “I know *exactly* who I am speaking to, Catherine.”

The older woman’s face reddened with rage, mixing with the already noticeable rouge that adorned the apples of her cheeks, creating an almost purple hue.

“Your desserts, Madam.” The waiter placed a small platter of cookies down on the table, cutting off whatever retort Catherine had on the tip of her tongue. She cleared her throat, regaining her composure as the waiter continued to place two champagne flutes on either side of the table, filling them both.

“These look delicious. May I ask what kind they are?” The younger woman gingerly picked up a cookie and examined it.

“Anise seed cookies, Miss. It is the owner’s family recipe.”

“Huh.” The maid huffed out a soft laugh. “How fitting.”

The waiter stood to the side, and Catherine dismissed him with a quick wave of her hand.

The pair sat in strained silence for several moments before the older woman spoke.

“You need to reconsider my offer, Miss Turner.”

“And why is that?” The younger woman nibbled on her cookie.

“Because only an utter fool would turn down a deal like the one I have offered you. I’m sure you think yourself to be in love, but I assure you, you are not.”

“We are in love.”

Catherine threw her head back and laughed. “Oh, child. I find your naivete somewhat endearing.” Her eyes were crinkled in condescension.

“I fail to see what you find so amusing.” The sweets and champagne were all but forgotten now as the women stared at each other.

“Darling, my son cannot be in love with someone like you. He is to be married soon to a proper lady. A lady that fits his station. A partner who is worthy of the family’s expectations and respect. I chalk up his dalliance with the *maid* to simply a case of . . . cold feet.”

Payton Haddican

“You call a year-long relationship a case of ‘cold feet’?” Miss Turner tilted her head slightly, looking at the woman in front of her.

“Men are peculiar creatures, Sophia,” Catherine said, shrugging her shoulders.

The ladies fell silent once more, the younger woman gazing at the hazelnut trees in the distance, the older woman giving her companion a calculating look.

“It’s more money than you will ever see in your lifetime.”

“You think I care about the money?”

“I think that you should consider the money, given your situation.”

Sophia swung her head around and looked at the woman in front of her. Her eyes widened slightly and her chest noticeably rose and fell.

The steely expression that Catherine wore the entire visit softened slightly.

“You and your mother have been loyal members of our household for many years, Sophia. When your mother died, I didn’t hesitate to take you on as my personal maid. I made sure that you were taken care of. You had shelter, food, and as much comfort as your station would allow. I admit, I even care for you—”

“I find that rather hard to believe at the moment,” Sophia interrupted. “You are trying to get me out of the way because Lucas loves me and you do not approve. *This* is about control, so don’t waste your breath trying to convince me otherwise.”

“Sophia,” Catherine retorted sharply. “Do you have any idea what will happen if I allow this relationship to continue? Lucas may not care about class stations, but other people, very *powerful* people do. They will make your life a living hell, socially isolating you, and will never miss an opportunity to remind you just exactly where you belong. Your children will never be accepted. Lucas will slowly have everything stripped from him. Business partners will refuse to conduct business. So-called friends will turn their backs. Lucas will fall to ruin and your family will live in squalor, ostracized from society simply because you fell in love.”

Payton Haddican

“He told me to meet him at the station tonight. He told me that we would run away. He said he would take care of me.”

“We both know that my son is not used to providing for *himself*, let alone other people. He is spoiled. Yes, he will play ‘house’ for a while, but can you honestly say that he will not abandon you the moment things become difficult? My husband will cut him off if he runs away, there is no doubt. How long will it be before he wakes up one morning and no longer sees his wife, but rather the woman who cost him the only life he has ever known? How long will it be before he strays, having become bored and resentful?” Catherine asked. “Is your love strong enough to withstand that?”

Sophia hesitated to respond, but her silence seemed to be answer enough for her companion. She angled her head down, her shoulders raised ever so slightly, and her arms hugged her stomach.

“Sophia,” Catherine said softly. “It is time to think with your head, not your heart, for it is not only your future alone that you must think about.”

Sophia looked up then. The hairs that had escaped from her bun blew in the gentle breeze. The younger woman reached for her glass and took a healthy gulp of the intoxicating liquid.

“Take the money,” Catherine urged.

Catherine’s insistence seemed to snap Sophia out of whatever thought she was having. Her eyes narrowed.

“I will *not* take your bribe,” she said. “But I *will* meet your son at the train station.”

Catherine sighed and brought a hand up to her face, covering her eyes with her fingertips. She looked as if she were in pain.

After a moment, Catherine lowered her hand and reached into her purse. She pulled out a check and placed it in the middle of the table.

“I cannot stop you from going to that train station,” she said, looking at the young woman. “But please, take the money. If not for yourself, then for my grandchild.”

Sophia turned her head towards the hazelnut trees, pointedly ignoring the money on the table.

Payton Haddican

Catherine sighed once more, rose from her chair, and left the cafe.

The young woman sat there for several moments before she turned her head and looked at the check in front of her.

“Would you like me to pack up these desserts for you, Miss?” The waiter from before had reappeared at the table.

“No,” she replied absentmindedly. “That won’t be necessary, thank you.”

She did not see the waiter give a quick nod and walk off. She just sat there, staring at the middle of the table. A soft breeze blew, once again picking up the forgotten strands around her face, and she closed her eyes, turning her face towards the wind.

When her eyes opened, she stood and brushed off her skirt. She took the check off the table, gave one last look to the trees, then walked out of the cafe.



Maria Perez

William Luton

Restless Angst

. . . Restless angst . . .
You have again creeped in . . .
I write to deflect
With screeds of verbal defecation.

I hear the washer rumbling,
Tumbling, and spraying in the aft-ground.
The daytime TV onslaught harasses my ears.
Confused am I 'bout whence you come? HA!

I meditatively write
To quell your hold on my psyche,
To allow my diaphragm to descend,
To let go of past, present, and future.

How hijacked now my attention be:
It's a cantankerous conundrum.

If I am rude,
Stress compounds . . .
If I break,
Creativity stifles . . .
If I placate,
Authenticity is lost.

Oh angst, oh fiend, and friend!
I see you now, thankful for your teaching.
I will resign my time to freedom
If serendipitous rest come not first.

Sharon Kim



De'Iveon Foy

Janay Major

I'm Comin Home

The blaring of the alarm wakes me out of my sleep. I groan and wipe the sleep out of my eyes, trying to prepare myself for the hardest part of the day: getting out of the bed. I roll over on my left side to silence the alarm before lifting the covers off my body. I place my feet on the carpet and stretch my arms, rising out of the bed completely. The clock reads 6:30 am, indicating that it is time to start preparing for the day. As I walk towards the bathroom that's attached to the master bedroom, I pick up a picture of my wife and me that's on the tv stand. I kiss it and utter, "I miss you" before placing it back in its original spot. It's a Friday, my favorite day of the week because after the day is done, I don't have to interact with my job and coworkers for two whole days. I go through my usual morning regimen before leaving the bathroom to go wake up my daughter. As I open my bedroom door, I hear little grunting noises coming from the kitchen area. I walk towards the noises and peer into the kitchen. My five-year-old is standing on a stool attempting to pour almond milk into her cereal bowl. I smirk a little bit watching her struggle, but I ultimately decide to help before she makes a mess.

"Was I taking too long?" I ask, grabbing the carton out of her hand to finish pouring the milk. I startle her a little bit, but she smiles when she sees that it's me.

"Good Morning, Daddy, and no. I woke up early and didn't want to wake you."

Lilly follows me to the dining room. I place her bowl of Captain Crunch on the table, and she climbs up on the chair to eat. "If you keep doing things on your own, I'm going to start thinking that you don't need me anymore," I say and place a kiss on her forehead.

"Don't say that, Daddy. I will always need you." I smile at her response and take in the scene in front of me, realizing that my daughter dressed herself as well. She has on a black and white striped shirt with blue jean shorts and her black Van sneakers. The only thing that needs fixing is her hair, which I dread so much. One of the many things her mother is great at doing.

"Finish eating your cereal so I can do your hair."

Janay Major

Lilly groans, “But you’re so rough when you do my hair. You’re not gentle like mommy.” I can’t do anything but laugh; she is right. “I’ll tell you what. After school today, I’ll bring you by your auntie, and she’ll braid your hair, okay?”

Lilly nods her head in agreement and finishes her cereal. After she puts her bowl and spoon in the sink, we walk back to her room to do her hair.

“Lord, help me,” I whisper as I begin her hair.



The day is finally over, and I have just picked Lilly up from school. We are on our way to my sister’s house, so she can tame the beast that lives on top of my daughter’s head. As I am driving, a call comes through. I smile as I read the caller ID, the one call I’ve been waiting for all day. My phone is hooked up to my car, so I answer the phone call via Bluetooth.

“Hey, hey, hey!” The angelic voice croons through the phone.

“Hey, baby,” I say with a smile creeping on my face.

“Hey, mommy!” Lilly screams in excitement.

“Hey, my Lilly Bear. I miss you so much.”

“I miss you, too, Mommy. Daddy has not gotten better at doing my hair. He’s too rough.”

“I could’ve sent you to school with your hair looking a mess,” I say jokingly.

“Daddy, you basically did,” Lilly fires back.

“Hey now, your dad is trying, okay? Cut him some slack,” my wife Tess says.

“Thanks for having my back,” I say. “I miss you.”

“I miss you too, baby. Tell me about your day. How have you been?”

“I won’t be completely fine until you come home. Work is crazy right now. We just got this huge new case at the firm, and it’s been keeping me busy. Lilly is doing great in school; the teachers can’t stop talking about her.

“Well, I know you’re going to do great with the case. I’m so proud of you, Lilly Bear! I have great news for you guys.” I hear Tess’s voice get a little higher; that usually happens when she’s excited about something.

“What’s up?” I ask.

Janay Major

“I’m coming home.”

“Are you serious?” I practically scream.

“Yes baby, I’m serious. I’m finishing my last tour. I am being honorably discharged, and I will be home next week.”

“You don’t know how happy you’ve just made me.” I cannot stop smiling at the terrific news.

Tess laughs, “You don’t know how grateful I am for you. You’ve always been supportive of my decisions, and when you didn’t hesitate to take care of our baby girl when I decided to enlist, I knew you were the man that I will spend the rest of my life with.”

“These past three years have been so hard, Tess. There are days I lay awake in bed worrying about you. Anything can happen while you’re out there. Just talking to you on the phone is not enough. Lilly misses you, and I definitely miss you.”

“Well, you don’t have to worry about me anymore because I’m coming home to my man and my child.”

“I will never stop worrying about you. I can’t wait until you come home. I really need some loving from you.”

“Do you still have me on speaker? Don’t start talking nasty in front of my baby.”

“Oh, I will be doing much more than that when you get here.”

Tess lets out a loud laugh. “I have to go, but I will call later. I love you guys. Oh my gosh, I can’t wait to see y’all.”

“Lilly, tell mommy bye.”

“Bye mommy. I love you!”

“I love you, baby. I can’t wait to see you,” I say before hanging up the phone.



It’s the night before Tess is due to come home, and I still can’t hide my excitement. I miss my wife so much, and these past three years have been the hardest journey I’ve ever gone through. When Tess decided to enlist, I had just graduated from college, and Lilly was only two years old. Our financial situation wasn’t the best, and she wanted a different career path that would also help us out of our situation. Tess had sacrificed school so she could raise our daughter while I finished. When she told me she was serious about enlisting, I didn’t hesitate to step up and make

Janay Major

sure she had a loving family to come home to. With the help of my sister watching Lilly for me, I was able to go to law school and get a great job at a law firm. Our financial troubles are behind us now; I just really miss my wife.

Lilly and I are laying on the couch together in the living room watching tv. Well, I'm watching tv by myself; Lilly fell asleep a couple of hours ago. Over the past week, Tess and I have been talking about taking a vacation with Lilly and having much-needed family time. I wasn't able to reach her earlier during the day, but I'm sure she's just taking the time to pack up. If she's on the plane right now, then she can't answer the phone anyway. It's a 15-hour plane ride from Afghanistan to the U.S. As I slowly drift off to sleep, the memories of my wife dance in my head.

I wake up to the sound of knocking at the front door. I look at my watch, and it reads 7:16 am. I was not expecting Tess to be here so early.

I slowly shake Lilly awake. "Lilly Bear, wake up. Someone's knocking at the door," I say. Lilly wipes the sleepiness out of her eyes, and a big smile emerges. "Is it mommy?" she says excitedly.

"How about going to brush your teeth first, so you won't give mommy stinky breath kisses? I'll go get the door."

Lilly jumps off the couch and runs to her bathroom to quickly brush her teeth. "Don't forget to brush your tongue!" I call out to her as I walk towards the front door.

There is another knock at the door.

"Baby, don't worry. I am coming!" I open the door with a huge smile on my face, and it immediately drops when I see that it is not my wife but two soldiers standing in front of my door. I look at them confused until I look down and see that one of the soldiers is holding a neatly folded American flag with dog tags placed on top. My heart sinks, and I lose all breath and words.

"Are you Ishmael Turner?" one of the soldiers asks me.

"I am," I mutter.

"I'm sorry" is all I hear before I collapse to my knees with tears streaming down my face.

"There was an accident. The plane crashed—"

Janay Major

His words sound muffled; my brain cannot process what's going on. I just talked to her. I just heard her voice, her laugh. No. This can't be happening. She said she was coming home.

"Where is she? Mommy? Where's Mommy?" I hear Lilly's voice as she approaches the front door. I cannot bring myself to look at Lilly right now. I grab her and hold her tightly, continuing to cry.

"Daddy, what's wrong? Where's mommy? Who are these people?" Lilly is trying to break away from my hold, but it only makes me hold on to her tighter.

"Daddy, you're scaring me!" Lilly yelps out.

"Again, I am sorry." One of the soldiers says before placing the flag and dog tags beside me and leaving.

I try my best to pull myself together. Lilly is shaking in my arms because she's scared and doesn't know what's going on. I release her from my hold and wipe my eyes; the tears will not stop streaming though.

"Daddy, where's Mommy? Is she still coming home?" Lilly asks.

I shake my head before breaking down again. "No, Lilly Bear. I'm sorry, Mommy's not coming home."

Haydee Ortiz

Heart of a Noble

Oh, My Dear
What else could I expect?
From a Heart as Noble As yours!

Every time you write to me.
All I see is a
sweet melody of musical tones.

I do not understand why every time
I hear your name.
A smile appears so radiant on my face.

Oh, My Dear
What else could I expect?
From a Heart as Noble As yours!

Listening to you singing is the most beautiful sound
that I have been blessed to experience.

It's like hearing the wind that blows
through my hair when I'm
Relaxing on the beach.

Oh, My Dear
What else could I expect?
From a Heart as Noble As yours!

I imagine you uplifting me,
wherever I go
I imagine you singing on a cliff with the sun shining behind you.

I can hear your angelic voice from miles away.
Singing along with nature.

Although it seems that the wind carries your voice
In the breeze that blows in all directions.

Oh, My Dear
What else could I expect?
From a Heart as Noble As yours!

Haydee Ortiz

You have treated me with love and respect.
And that is why I will treat you with
The greatest respect and immense affection.
With your singing you took me back in time
To our beautiful land of Greece!
For that I thank you in the best way I can!
I have let my poetry express my gratitude.
Oh, My Dear
What else could I expect?
From a Heart as Noble As yours!

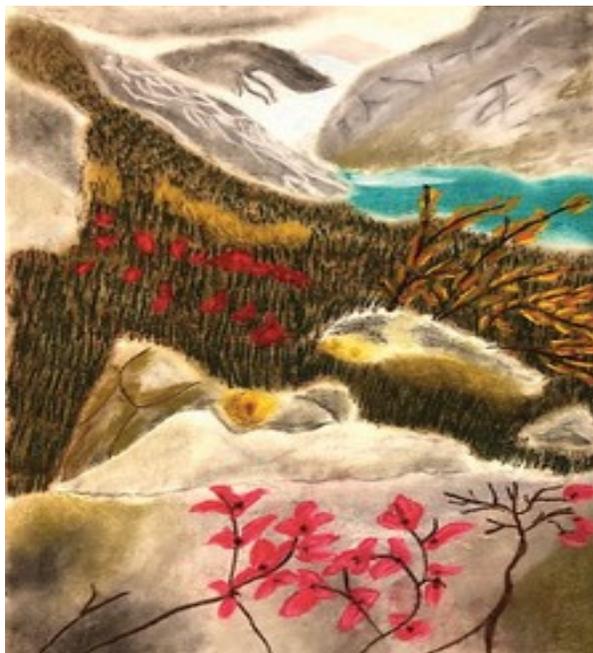


Art Photography by Skylar Fontaine

Kristi Groue



**Caleb
Richard**



Carol Petrone Wilson

**Reflections on the Culmination of My Master's
Studies at University of Holy Cross 2020**

I am 63, and I grieve because I have worked so hard to get a Master's degree in Special Education. It was a lifelong goal of mine, and I am proud of the achievement. I grieve not to have a "hooding ceremony" and not to be able to hug the neck of my instructors who helped me achieve this goal. I grieve to miss a commencement that family and friends were excited to attend for me. You see, my high school graduation, my own mother refused to attend. My commencement for my AB was in the summer a year ahead of schedule so not with classmates with whom I had studied and grown. Holes in my heart that the culmination of my studies in May 2020 was going to fill. Now in the era of COVID-19, my dreams vanish into disappointment.

This was going to be a special celebration for me with people there to cheer for me for the first time ever. I had bought my announcements as well as my regalia. I had already bought a dress, purse, and shoes for the occasion. My Kappa Delta Pi and Omicron Delta Kappa cords were hanging in waiting upon a hook. Dr. Ditcharo had admonished me several times to be sure to find her at my hooding ceremony and hug her neck. Her unwavering support, as well as that of Dr. Muntean, meant the world to me.

I realize things could be worse and that many commencements and special life events are missed due to being shipped off to war and other disasters. This is not a contest. Everyone has her own reasons and right to grieve. Allow those who grieve to do so. Please do not judge us or mouth clichés about how it could be worse. This is my loss, and I feel it keenly. If you wish to support me, be my friend and allow me to grieve my loss in the way I need to do.

Carol Petrone Wilson

The Children Played

In war and out of war,
We fought in distant lands.
People were wounded, dying,
But the children played.

One scandal, then another,
We watched the economy crash.
People were homeless, jobless,
But the children played.

Planes flew into buildings,
We watched them burn and fall.
People were lost, bewildered,
But the children played.

Sickness, fear, death, and panic,
We fought against a pandemic.
People were frightened, alone,
But the children played.

Who knows what will come?
More war, pain, sickness, strife?
People will worry and wonder,
But please, God, let the children play!

Calliope
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