

THE

MOTLEY

VOL

74



The Motley

Student Art and Literature at Spring Hill College
Volume 74, 2023

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Student Government Association.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter From the Editor..... I

POEMS

<i>Morning</i> by Harmony Romano	2
<i>Mother</i> by Harmony Romano	3
<i>It Is Well with My Soul</i> by Taleigh Reed	5
<i>The Continuity of Remembrance</i> by Taleigh Reed	6
<i>I Miss You</i> by Malorie Saucier	7
<i>Pigs</i> by Will Newell	9
<i>Longevity and Death</i> by Kali Blair.....	11
<i>Traveler</i> by Sasha Falch	12
<i>Let Me Lie Here with You</i> by Sasha Falch.....	13
<i>Catharsis</i> by Sasha Falch.....	14
<i>Uloni Hymn to the Generation of Gold</i> by Madeleine Braham.....	15
<i>Trapped in a State of Mind</i> by Alisiah Rashid	17
<i>Cynosure</i> by Niyah Davis	18
<i>For All the Little Women</i> by Mikiah Munoz.....	19
<i>i</i> by Abigail Krus.....	20
<i>Lost</i> by Abigail Krus	21
<i>To My Dear and Cheating Husband</i> by Abigail Krus.....	22
<i>Rose</i> by Abigail Krus.....	23
<i>Adore You</i> by Erthaly Thomas	24
<i>A Lonely, Old Soul</i> by Victoria Spivey.....	25
<i>Brooklyn</i> by Victoria Spivey.....	26
<i>The Love of My Life</i> by Victoria Spivey	27

PROSE

A Spider's Web by Kyla Shappell.....10

VISUAL ART

Bone by Sasha Falch4

Dinner by Sasha Falch8

Trancey's Gate by Sasha Falch16

CONTEST WINNERS

Soft Me Now by Lucy Mercer.....28

Snow by Kaytie Van Alstine.....29

Corduroy by Abigail Palopoli.....30

Margaret Hale and Female Philanthropy in North and South by Abigail Palopoli31

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

VICTORIA ELLIS

Dear readers,

Producing volume 74 has been both a daunting and rewarding task for the 2023 Motley Crew. Between our editing and marketing teams, our goal this year was to reach everywhere we possibly could on Spring Hill's campus to bring in a variety of voices. The Motley prides itself on being a platform for students. Thanks to eager contributors, our predecessors, and the team's hard work, we have had the privilege of working with a record number of submissions for this issue. We've loved and connected with every piece and have been so excited to put this issue together to share with the entire campus.

Aside from our submissions, the crew has had so much fun connecting with campus this semester through hosting fun events like Open Mic and Trivia. We thank everyone that came out to support us - we loved being able to connect with everyone in person.

Despite a difficult year, working closely with our zealous crew and talented contributors has been the beacon that kept me going.

Thank you for coming to hang out with us, sharing your voices and experiences, and all the support you've shown us. We hope you enjoy volume 74 as much as we have.

Sincerely,

Victoria (Tori) Ellis

MORNING
HARMONY ROMANO

Peeking through the blinds,
Face glowing from the warmed kiss
Turns away to snooze.

MOTHER

HARMONY ROMANO

Hands holding faces,
The gift of stopping the world.
All is fine, dear child.

BONE

SASHA FALCH



IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL

TALEIGH REED

It happened.
Not the way you wanted it to,
but it happened.
The moment came,
you anticipated the disappointment.
You prepared to feel sad,
but the clouds never came.
Instead of clouds,
You saw a sunset.
Instead of an open door,
You saw a hallway.
Instead of a “no,”
You understood that it only means,
“not yet.”

You do not feel the need to celebrate,
nor do you not feel the need to cry.
You are not happy.
You are not angry.
You are simply okay.

Peace.
That’s the word.
The place that feels like home.
And now you realize what your
Mama meant when she said,
“Honey, let it be well with your soul.”

So, you are in the hallway for now,
and you are at peace.
No longer bothered by the ground
beneath your feet.
No longer afraid
of the unknown because you have
subconsciously chosen,
“It is well with my soul.”

THE CONTINUITY OF REMEMBRANCE

TALEIGH REED

On the other side of the mountain,
 There is a season that you have never seen.
 After exiting the valley,
 being at the bottom of this mountain
 is not where you thought you would be,
 but you're here.
 You are here,
 And so is He.
 You are here,
 and every lesson
 that you have learned
 is here too. You are here,
 at the bottom of another high peak,
 not realizing how
 familiar this place looks.

Mountain upon mountain and
 valley
 after
 valley,
 you can look back and see that somehow,
 the good of it all always seemed to find you.
 And this familiar
 mountain, though it may be new; you know
 that God will
 never let it overcome you.

So let endless courage rise within,
 and let faith burst through the
 seams of impossibility like never before.
 Let the desire
 to keep going
 overtake you.
 Let the recklessness of
 God's love
 live like a symphony in your soul.
 Let His overwhelming grace
 submerge you over and over again.
 And you.
 You repeat this process.
 Repeat it until you see that in every season,
 your testimony
 has always been
 "God was, is, and will always be with me."

DINNER GUESTS

SASHA FALCH



I MISS YOU

MALORIE SAUCIER

You're twenty years old now,
 Thinking about decorating your underwater-themed classroom.
 You're going to be a first grade teacher.
 You smile at this,
 But you want to be sitting in the cold metal stands on Friday nights in the student's section,
 Watching those twenty-two boys under stadium lights,
 Running across the green grass in their red uniforms.
 You wish to put on your jersey, high socks, and sliding pants one more time,
 Or slide into those white bases,
 Running along the diamond field.

You long to ride your pink PowerWheels Barbie Jeep again.
 It seems like yesterday you were in the street riding,
 With your brothers beside you,
 Complaining because they wanted the Razor Scooter.
 But, you were "Daddy's Princess" and you wanted the Jeep.
 So, you got the Jeep.

You want one more turn on Dad's shoulders at the Mardi Gras parade on St. Charles,
 Instead you now stand on your own two feet.
 Not just for parades,
 You do almost everything by yourself.

I still sit in stadiums,
 Just not the student's section.
 Dad still calls every me night and says,
 "I love you."
 I'm still "Daddy's Princess."

PIGS

WILL NEWELL

the lambs, foolish in your gaze
 stand strengthened by their fortuitous rock
 a living monument
 trodden on yet made more lush,
 trampled soil enrich'd by the living waters which gush
 for those who thirst.
 you cannot see them, their innocence blinding
 as your cowardice flees in light
 yet you might be illuminated by such
 a sight, an inconvenient irony, nay
 an all too convenient actuality

A SPIDER'S WEB

KYLA SHAPPELL

The wind blew gently through the chimes, creating a slow, solemn tune on their front porch in the dark. Bella lay awake, resting on her side and listening to the dull melody while her husband dozed quietly behind her. She stared out of the bedroom window into the cold, empty street that was visible only under the moonlight and the dim streetlamps. She breathed slowly and quietly, and every few minutes she glanced at the clock on the nightstand and then back out of the window into the night.

This cycle repeated for fourteen long minutes, none of which she dared to move even an inch. The shifting of her eyes between the window and the clock was all she could manage while she breathed in, and out.

In, and out.

Long, meaningful breaths left a dryness in her mouth that she didn't bother to fix. Time seemed to be standing still, like watching water boil.

Her lips curled slightly at the thought. Her mother had taught her the phrase when she had been young; Had scolded her for eagerly waiting for the mailman to arrive to deliver the latest issue of TigerBeat magazine; A magazine that she was entirely too young to read, but she was good at keeping secrets from her parents. Although it wasn't much of a challenge, seeing as they were busy with all the fighting and the yelling and the "Damn it, Mallory! How many times do I have to tell you to iron my fucking pants? You want me showing up to work looking like this? Huh? Is that what you want, Mal?", and her mother surrendering to his hand on her cheek and never so much as whimpering because she knew it would only further anger him.

So Bella would sit perched on the back of the couch every Sunday after school, staring out the window, awaiting the mailman's arrival, a relief from the chaos that so often ensued in the household.

"You know, a watched pot never boils, Bella," her mother had grinned one day, drying the dishes from the other room. It was a good day for her mother, surely due to Father being away for the weekend on business.

Bella whipped her head around at the comment, eyebrows furrowed,

and her mother giggled at the sight of it before explaining her thought.

How long had it been since she last saw her mother? Long enough to not even be capable of making a logical guess. The thought saddened her, of course, and it was enough to bury the hint of a smile that lingered for a moment on her face and bring her back to the window and the clock and the impossible task at hand. She regathered her focus and glanced back to the clock once more.

To her shock, it finally read half past two in the morning. She held her gaze upon it for a few moments, blinking to clear her eyes and to be completely sure. Because she had to be sure. As her eyes fixated, she drew one last deep breath and let it go.

In... Out.

The silence in the room had never been so loud, and as she lifted her head off the pillow she turned toward her husband. He was facing away from her, yet she could still smell the whiskey all over him. She looked him over, taking in all at once everything that he was and everything that he ever would be. His dark brown hair was matted to his forehead, nearly covering his closed eyes. He was paler than he had ever been, she thought. His drinking had gotten worse recently and his pale complexion and bad hygiene were proof of the matter. She glanced at his heavily tattooed arms, those arms that she used to love (still did sometimes when it wasn't too bad), and for a moment she felt sorry for him. She felt sorry for the way things turned out and pondered what she might have done differently to hold them together.

But the thought was fleeting as she remembered that those arms and hands had been used more frequently to punish her when she had done wrong, and that even the times when it wasn't too bad weren't anything to be happy about. She reminded herself that it was a rarity to be held and comforted by those arms instead. Something like disgust filled her mind as she swallowed and began to move.

She grimaced and sat up slowly as the bed groaned beneath her, keeping her eyes locked on him as he slept. She carefully removed the covers which lay over her and placed one foot after another onto the cold, wooden floors of their bedroom. She paused and made sure his breathing pattern hadn't altered at all in the long moments since she began moving. Once she was entirely certain he was still heavily asleep, she stood and replaced the covers over where her body had been. She bent down slowly

to retrieve the suitcase she had carefully hidden beneath their bed earlier that day before he returned from work. It was a small thing, the suitcase. It held just enough for a few days' clothes and necessary toiletries, but it was all she could manage to keep safely hidden beneath the bed without him taking notice.

Just as she closed her hand around the handle of the baggage, he snored loudly and she flinched, whacking her head against the edge of their bed. "Shit!" she whispered and immediately regretted it. Holding the back of her head with her hand, the pounding of a promising headache beginning to form, she peered over the side of the bed to find that he was still asleep. She exhaled in relief and her eyes darted to their bedroom

door. With the suitcase gripped tightly in her hand, she made her way toward it and slowly, carefully left the room, her eyes locked on him until the door was completely and silently closed behind her.

She exhibited an extreme change of pace as she walked quickly through the hall and down the stairs where she grabbed her shoes. Setting the suitcase to the side and leaving it there at the bottom of the stairs, she slipped her shoes on easily and made her way past the kitchen and into the garage. The cold air accompanied by her brisk pace sent a shiver down her spine as she passed the car and stopped near the back of the garage. In front of her sat an old, rusted safe that barely stood past the bottom of her knees. She bent down to get a better look at the lock and bit her lip.

"C'mon, c'mon..." she muttered, frantically entering random codes into the safe. One after another, they all failed and the safe remained closed, the contents remaining locked just out of her reach.

"What is it, you piece of shit..." She covered her face in her hands and gathered herself to think. She sat on the cold, hard floor of the garage for a few moments before trying again.

"C... H... A..." she whispered as she punched in the letters, trying to contain her rising panic. She knew she had spent too long out here already. "R... L... I... E..." Click! Her hand shot to her gaping, smiling mouth as the safe opened, holding back tears of relief and excitement. This could really work. This could really, actually work. With a smile on her face, she reached into it and pulled out several stacks of money, holding them under her arm and reaching in once more.

Her hand closed around a small handgun and she paused for a few

contemplating moments, then closed the safe and walked back into the house, the money and gun in her arms. She grabbed a small, plastic Walmart bag to place her things in on her way to the kitchen, although she hadn't quite made it there when she came to a stop in front of the large, round mirror that hung between the dining room and kitchen. She took a few steps toward it until she was face to face with her own reflection. Although she had been moving at an impressive, silent pace moments before, she gazed into the mirror now as though time held no power over her. She tucked her long, brown hair behind her ear and sighed, looking over herself. As she held her hand up to her face the world around her went quiet again as though she were trapped in this moment. She traced the deep purple and gray bruises that were visible in various places along her neck and face in a slow, purposeful movement. Some old, some new. The lines blurred and there was really no way to tell anymore. Tears welled in her eyes as she looked deeply into the mirror as though she were seeing these marks for the very first time again. But she stood taller as she took it all in and assured herself that it would be the last.

She turned away from the mirror and made her way into the kitchen where she placed the grocery bag on the island in front of her. As she filled it quickly and quietly with the items from the safe and prepared to circle back for her suitcase, she heard a floorboard creak from above. Her eyes widened and she froze in place, listening intently. Did she imagine it? Was she so terrified in her own home that she was creating illusions now? Poisoning her own mind?

No, she admitted. She knew that he was awake and would soon realize she wasn't there and be on his way down the stairs, although she searched for any other explanation that might serve her better. Realizing she was out of options, she frantically moved the bag from the island to the counter behind her and snatched a glass from the cupboard just as he stumbled into the kitchen.

"Wha' the hell is goin' on?" he demanded, rubbing his puffy, red eyes and slurring his words. Even with one short glance, Bella could tell he was still drunk, which frightened her even more. She took a step back and leaned against the counter to keep the bag from his view. She was grateful for the island counter that stood between them.

"I was thirsty," she shrugged nonchalantly. "I was just getting a drink."

She set the glass down on the island and swallowed, waiting for his response. He eyed the glass she had set down carefully, swaying back and forth as though the house itself were moving. He grabbed onto the island for balance and looked back up at her.

"Then why's it empty?" He questioned slowly, his eyes angry and determined. "Hmmm, Bella? There ain't a drop," He began to make his way around the island. "in that glass." Bella laughed nervously, edging further toward the counter behind her.

"I drank it already, Hunter," she smiled, the edge of the counter digging into her back now. "You're drunk. You should go back to bed." He glared at her, taking another step around the island. He smiled eerily, and the look on his face sent gooseflesh down her arms.

"You think you're sneaky," he grinned. "but I know you're up't somethin'." He took another step and Bella recognized that he was getting too close now. She moved away slightly, making sure the bag at her back moved right along with her.

"I'm not up to anything, Hunter." She shook her head, smiling. "I just wanted a drink. I'll meet you back upsta—"

"Shut up, Bella!" He shouted and took another step. Her smile faded immediately and her heart pounded rapidly. "I saw the suitcase, you bitch," His voice rose with every word and panic filled her mind.

The suitcase. How could she be so stupid and forgetful and she was so close to getting out and now here he was, standing in front of her and he knew what she had planned and now what would he do? He would undoubtedly punish her but, wow, he could get so creative. And there wouldn't be another chance after this. This was it; Her one and only attempt to escape from this spider's web.

He suddenly spat at her feet— she had been quiet for too long. She racked her brain for any explanation he might accept, all the while knowing his mind was already made up.

"I... I just..." she paused, eyes darting. "I wanted to surprise you." She continued inching away with the bag at her back "I wanted to take a trip and—"

"Don' lie to me!" He exclaimed, taking two more quick steps and reaching for her. But she saw it coming and was prepared. She effortlessly reached around and pulled out the handgun before he could grab

her. Pointing it at him, she watched as he stumbled backward a bit, then paused and smiled. Bella moved slowly backward.

“What on Earth,” he sniggered. “Are you gon’ do with that, Bella?” Her hands were shaking now, but her finger remained on the trigger.

“You gon’ shoot me?” He waved his hands in the air pretending to be frightened, that disgusting grin still on his face.

“Don’t come near me, Hunter!” She yelled, moving further away. “I mean it! Stay away from—”

“Mommy?” A small voice called from down the hall. Bella’s eyes snapped toward the child’s bedroom.

“It’s okay, sweetie,” she began but was cut off as her husband lunged toward her and grabbed the gun from her hands. Tucking it away in the back of his jeans, he yelled, “Go back’t your room, Charlie!” He never took his eyes off her, and she could see the hate and the fire burning in them. She had never so much as talked back to him before, let alone held a loaded gun to his face. “Go back’t your room’n lock the door, now!” Bella heard his little footsteps running back down the hall followed by the sound of a door being closed and locked.

Tears began to well in her eyes. Just moments ago, she had the upper hand. Now there was nothing she could do but take the beating that was sure to come.

Just do it already, She thought, their eyes locked. Just do it and get it over with and I’ll wake up in the hospital and I’ll tell them I fell down the stairs again and you’ll smile at the nurse and tell them just how clumsy I am and they’ll see right through your lies but no one will do anything to save me and no one will do anything to save Charlie because they never do and they never will.

For several moments he simply stared at her, and she wondered if he had somehow heard her thoughts. Or had she said them out loud? She supposed it really didn’t matter anymore. She stared back at him, terrified, until he finally started moving toward her. Her eyes darted to the phone sitting on the counter just behind him, but he was already upon her. The tears fell from her eyes as he slapped her hard across the face. She held her hand up to her cheek and ran past him toward the phone. She managed to dial 9 and 1 before he knocked the phone out of her hand and she screamed.

“Who the hell d’you think you are?” He yelled, knocking her backward onto the floor by the phone. She slammed the back of her head hard onto the floor and groaned as she rolled over, still reaching for the phone.

“Gon’ take my kid away from me, huh?” She was mere inches from reaching it, blood already pooling at the back of her head, when she felt the weight of his body on top of her and his hands, those hands that she used to love, wrap around her neck.

“Please,” she begged, barely able to speak, but he only tightened his grip and moved his face closer to her own, nothing but hate in his eyes. Her fingernails scratched at his arms, coloring those tattoos with his blood, but he still didn’t let go. “Please... Hunter...”

Another tear rolled down her cheek as the air grew thinner with every second. It was hard to keep her eyes open, but she was able to see a blazing, yellow light now pulling into their driveway. She knew immediately that it was the taxi she had ordered. It was her and her son’s ticket to freedom, and it had arrived right on schedule, but still too late.

“Bella, Bella, Bella...” He whispered in her ear, shaking his head and tightening his grip. Her last breath of air was being taken from her, and still another tear fell. “Bella, Bella, Bella...”

“Bella,” He whispered aggressively and looked around, an awkward smile on his face. “Bella, snap out of it. What the hell’s wrong with you?”

She looked up, snapping out of the daze she had been in for perhaps a few minutes. In front of her was a man on one knee with a ring in his hand, holding it out in front of her and smiling. But there was no love in his eyes. He was pale, with dark brown hair and heavily tattooed arms. She took in the scene all at once. She was standing by a large fountain in the town square and people were beginning to gather around them. It was a beautiful, sunny day and joggers and dog-walkers had stopped to get a better look. As they each individually understood what was happening, their smiles grew as they waited with anticipation for her answer. She looked back down and realized that she had been clenching her own hands so hard that they were bleeding.

“Bella, what the fuck?” He whispered again, so quietly no one but her could hear. “Will you marry me?” He said for everyone to hear this time,

and grabbed her hand. He dropped his voice again as he said, “Y’know, I think your hormones make you crazy sometimes.” He let go of her hand and placed his own on her belly, which was just beginning to show.

“I want to have this baby with you. I want a family with you.” He looked back up at her, waiting. “Will you marry me?” There was suddenly a tone in his voice that told her he was getting impatient and she wondered how long she had really been lost in thought.

“Uhm...” She began, her mind racing and recalling what she had imagined their future to be like. She did not want to marry him and was afraid of what a life with him might look like. She was afraid for her son and what might happen to him if she accepted this proposal, but she also knew that it was too late. He would never let her go.

“I... Uhm...” She faltered again, and his gaze narrowed as if to say, “you’re gonna pay later for embarrassing me in front of all these people like this, you bitch.” She couldn’t bring herself to voice the acceptance, so instead she just slowly nodded, her eyes hopeless and her smile insincere.

He rose off his knee and moved to embrace her, applause erupting from the crowd that had gathered. He pulled her in for what should have been a hug but felt to her more like being strangled and whispered, “What the fuck was that about?” into her ear before finally letting go. He smiled as if he had said nothing at all and waved at the people who were now beginning to depart.

She was stuck and she would never be free.

LONGEVITY AND DEATH

KALI BLAIR

Longevity (n.)

A long life or existence

I have always had a longing for longevity

A long life is a bit of a fascination in my mind

And death is something I am all too familiar with

It scares me, for it is all too unexpected

Death (n.)

The action or fact of dying or being killed;

The end of the life of a person or organism

He collects souls,

Creeping slowly around the broken streets of a lively neighborhood

Looking from left to right until he spots his next guest of honor,

A man far too young to be taken from this realm,

Death holds out his boney hands in a welcoming manor,

And whispers, “I’m sorry, young one, but it is now time for us to depart.”

Death guides my friend through an ivory portal,

To a place where I can no longer reach

In reality, death is something that instills fear

Death is not just a robed skeleton that walks the realms between this life and the next,

Constantly taking over my everyday thoughts

He is a looming figure that always peering over my shoulder

Death,

Your form does not make me fear you any less

Worrying about living

Does not push the thought of you from me

Death, my old friend

You see, there is this codependency

When it comes to our friendship

You're around so much that you've become my second skin

Leaving second-degree burns within my soul

My old friend, I am not happy to see you,

You meet me at a spot you know I cannot resist,

The park where my friend loved to run for days

I talk with Death like I am talking with someone I have not seen it years

"Death," I say, "why do you away the most precious souls in my life?"

He gives me a smile and replies, "I cannot help it and wish that I could give eternal life."

Nothing was said after that, for I was busy wishing for a place where the dead and living can
convene

A place accessible through a hidden portal that is only seen by those missing someone too hard

Purgatory (n.)

A place or state of being between life and death

If purgatory was a place for us to say our goodbyes we never had the chance to

This white room full of those that were taken too soon

The room filled with images from my memories

Memories of those that I wish to say goodbye to

These memories become the key to a lock

A lock that allows my departed friends and family to feel at peace

Each memory makes the goodbyes harder, but offers relief

Death's fist around my heart begins to ease up as I say my final goodbyes

Purgatory, my one-time access,

Short as a few seconds or long as a few hours

Days, weeks, and months are far too long to hold on to the feeling of
dread and sadness

Once I leave my purgatory, I am at peace with myself and Death

He still gives me then stinging feeling in my chest most days

My heart can be too much to handle sometimes

He does not help the burning feeling going down my throat

He plunges his hand into my chest and grasps my heart so tightly that my breath halts for a moment

His grip on me for months now, but I have finally begged him enough to let go

I have this dread and belonging to a world that I cannot access through the living

This world is full of the people that have understood me the most in life

This is a world only accessible through Death's open arms

As much as I want to visit this world and the many loved ones in it I know I cannot

He has taken so much from me, I need to cut him off

I need to cut the string that connects my soul to his

I need him to realize that it is not my time

I am not his to take at the moment

Death, you may surround me, but you do not define my life

TRAVELER

SASHA FALCH

I'll be home again one day.
 Returning here
 Again
 Will be my last.
 Secretly sided south
 Is my destination.

I travel far away.
 Compassion
 Will be my
 Directional needle.
 Two degrees to
 Avoid
 Nautical North.

Bounce in beats
 Of half of three.
 Sway to rhythms
 Broken
 By shrill screams.
 Hopefully I'll return
 One day.

LET ME LIE HERE WITH YOU

SASHA FALCH

I dreamt of times of just the two of us.
 Sitting together, peacefully beside one another.
 There was something calming about it,
 I couldn't put my finger on it.

Then I remembered it wasn't real.
 That is why it was peaceful.

There was no need for me to pretend.
 There was no awkwardness or waltzing around the truth.
 It was just me and you, you and me.
 Laying side by side on the futon in the basement.

One day it was snowing, you made us cocoa,
 But you spilled it on your way downstairs and almost slipped.
 I laughed at you and you laughed back, the dopey grin on your face.
 I felt so happy while I drank my cocoa.

Then I remembered it wasn't real.
 That is why I felt happy.

I could escape to that reality,
 I could escape to something that I wanted so desperately.
 It was just me and you, you and me.
 Sitting side by side at the dining table on the first floor.

That night, I told you about my hopes and dreams.

About the things I wanted to be.
 You ran your fingers through my hair like tadpoles in a stream.
 Your eyes were so gentle; I almost fell asleep.

Then I remembered it wasn't real.
 Then I remembered it wasn't.
 Then I remembered.
 I remembered.

I remembered it wasn't real.
 It wasn't meant to be.
 I made it up for me.
 So I could be happy.

Please, will you let me lie here with you?
 I promise I'll never say a word.

CATHARSIS

SASHA FALCH

I am renewed once more upon this night.
 Overflowing with an enraged light.
 The stones of Eden,
 Are laid within my sight.

Grave and Earth are weary of my plight.
 Kept face with ropes tied tight.
 Enrich my soul,
 So I may know what is right.

I slip deep inside as you bite.
 I am nothing, try as I might.
 The radio static blares,
 It drowns out our fevered fight.

Totaled seven is told to be polite.
 Nine spheres encompass to reunite.
 Of all golden realms,
 The pinnacle greets my respite.

ULONI HYMN TO THE GENERATION OF GOLD
MADELEINE BRAHAM

There once was a land in times of old.
A legendary kingdom too great to behold.
Ulonica's mount. Alphus Techina's terrain.
UltraRamus was this fallen country's sacred name.

This bright young world was the legacy of a fire
Of a blaze that erupted within the StarDust domain.
But with the intensity and passion of a young god's desire.
An era of destruction would birth the other's pain.

It began with two teachers who could touch the stars,
Two friends whose connection by darkness was marred
When the vengeful Bekonda demanded revolution.
As one brother fell, the other yearned for retribution.

Oh, just how long did the war go on?
Just how many fell to Bekonda's Spawn?
Oh, the youth of this age - of this time long forgone,
Would never truly be set free.

A league of young masters by this brother was trained. A
group of sorcerers and prodigies Ulonica had ordained
To save this young kingdom from its tyrannical king. But
their doom by the Black Scourge forever would ring.

The loyal servant Nikameni with his bare back flayed, His
comrade, Xyon's, spirit that was severed by the blade. Arrows

pierced the golden heart of Spartina's gentle frame, While fires
silenced the notes of a Songbird's broken refrain. Ulonican
children, one by one, fell victim to the harsh abuse, Martyrs
created by the demon king and his powers are so abstruse.

Oh, just how long did the war go on?
Just how many fell to Bekonda's Spawn?
Oh, the youth of this age - of this time long forgone,
Would never truly be set free.

The deaths raged on - but so did the outcry
So many UltraRareans had to wonder why,
Why these special young saints, so brave and so true
Were being maimed as a consequence of living as they did.
One with Ulonica - her abilities, grace, and all
None could have guessed it would lead to their fall.

The heartbroken Fali to never again recite their names,
Like lambs to the slaughter, no salvation came.
She watched her brothers and sisters fall with a barely stifled
sob, Reduced to mere ashes while for each, her heart throbbed.

Nikameni's undying affection - Spartina's unwavering affinity, These
memories with her youthful peers were never to resume. Only She and
Juniorious remained - and they were met with no sympathy As they cleaned
what was left of their home
And fled to the land of the unknown.

Oh, just how long did the war go on?
Just how many fell to Bekonda's Spawn?
Oh, this generation of martyrs - loyal students to the end
Would no longer grace this world

And never would again.

TRANCEY'S GATE

SASHA FALCH



TRAPPED IN A STATE OF MIND

ALISIAH RASHID

I hear you, I don't want to.
 Silence never seemed silent
 The constant noise of thoughts, I thought
 The pondering, shhh
please
 There's no off switch, it seems to forever be on
 Clouded with thunder and rain
 It feels like an ongoing storm of mental pain.
 Scream for help all you want
 No one is there to spare you relief,
 only constant noise, the thief of peace.
 The flatlining of thoughts would never be brought upon
 But forever electric shocking thoughts to revive and haunt you.
 Locked in forever without the key
 Of setting thoughts, constant thoughts, free
 Trapped in a state of your mind.

CYNOSURE

NIYAH S. DAVIS

Queen of Caution,
 One who lurks in the shadows and
 Evaluates every movement
 Finding clarity in nothing.

Queen of Curiosity,
 One who finds meaning in mystery
 Who ventures for the unknown and
 Takes the road less traveled.

Queen of Compassion,
 One whose loyalty knows no bounds
 Whose love follows through and
 Who lives recklessly for kindness.

Queen of Command,
 One who speaks volumes through silence
 Who acts with dignity and brilliance
 That could move mountains with a single word.

Queen of Courage,
 I see now
 You always have a place in your world
 You need only to claim your crown.

FOR ALL THE LITTLE WOMEN

MIKIAH MUNOZ

I was told,
 to say yes.
 To put them first
 To be calm and collected
 To ignore my thirst.
 Two sides of a coin,
 similar but not the same.
 You can't do it.
 Human, yet inhumane.
 A delicate porcelain doll,
 fragile as could be.
 Don't walk, just crawl
 Not allowed to see.
 Here are the rules
 No choice, you must abide. Look at him go,
 now follow his stride.
 The original genius,
 unknown to the world.
 A beautiful mind,
 can't be unfurled.
 Powerful together
 Rockier than a band
 Rights tight like a tether,
 but loose as the sand.
 Let them be named!
 Ride high, ye witches
 The scarlet beauty maimed Our system needs stitches.

I was taught,
 to say no.
 To make my own choices.
 Let them be heard,
 these are our voices.

i
 ABIGAIL KRUS

i look in at Them from the window,
 They know i'm looking but
 never They look back.
 i want to join,
 i always want to join,
 but i know my place.

Their laughter can be heard from
 my room,
 but i think my invite was
 lost in the mail,
 i go back to homework.

my birthday forgotten
 once again
 maybe next year
 They will sing

They all leave together,
 no one left behind,
 i was left behind.

LOST

ABIGAIL KRUS

Every morning
 I pass by them
 Wishing they would
 Ask for me to join

Sitting at the edge
 Of class watching
 The joy of others
 Sitting in the silence

Every day
 They laugh
 at my attempts
 To talk to them

Opening my mouth
 Words don't come out
 As their faces
 Never turn my way

Every night
 I wish they would
 Speak to me
 Instead, I spend my
 Fridays alone
 in the bathroom
 Hoping to try again
 In my next life

TO MY DEAR AND CHEATING HUSBAND

ABIGAIL KRUS

If ever two were lost, then surely we be.
 If ever a woman betrayed by a man, then thee.

If ever husband lost in two woman,
 Comfort with me, ye betrayed, if you can.
 You prize thy love more than towers of mold,
 Or all the trash that America doth hold.

My love is such that dogs stench,
 Nor to be my loves bench
 Thy love is not one for the selfish;

Above would not be of recompense for those who relish
 The love of mine lost in the fold of woman
 Then while he is lost, my love still ripens
 That the day we live no more,
 Is the day that I will soar

Parody of "To My Dear and Loving Husband" by Anne Bradstreet

ROSE

ABIGAIL KRUS

Supposedly I mean love,
 that's why I'm always given to others.
 My thorns speak of this otherwise
 but my scent is magnificent.
 My own love is at the field.
 Sisters and Brothers were chosen with me,
 to be offerings of love
 That would most likely be rejected,
 But to the young man
 It means he may have a chance.

ADORE YOU

ERTHALY THOMAS

You say I'm stuck with you,
 How long does that last?
 You have power over me,
 I won't pretend.
 I can't tell if you already know,
 But I won't let you call my bluff.
 To do so would be to lose,
 When I've fought so hard to keep you.
 I won't be the reason you go.
 Not again.

I've learned that possession is my sickest vice,
 But once it was sweet:
 Softly touching your face
 In the car when I sing,
 Tender smile at the red light
 When you look at me.
 Where did I go wrong?
 Why do I fall short?
 Please, tell me.
 You're mine, I'm yours.
 We hold each other dear.
 However, we're not the same.
 My sickest vice,
 What am I to you?
 Do I make you give?
 It's okay that it's not me,

I'm not the jealous type.
 I won't put myself down
 Cause another caught your eye.
 I get to keep you in the long run
 And the others fade.
 My sickest vice,
 Please, let me adore you.
 Just let me adore you.
 Can you? Could you do the same?

I long to be your virtue,
 But I'll keep you as my vice.

A LONELY, OLD SOUL

VICTORIA SPIVEY

I've never tasted love.

I've never felt it drip down
 My throat like wild honey.

Or brush against my skin
 Like winter's chilling winds.

I've never felt the warmth
 Of a lover's embrace,

Nor a wet kiss on the
 Evening of a summer's day.

I've never felt tear drops on my
 Shoulder, pouring down like April rain.

I've never had a heart pulse for me,
 Bleeding free from the vein.

I've never tasted love.

I've never had it wash
 Me like the salted sea,

Or paint my cheeks the color

Of roses as I smiled with glee.

I've never felt safe in
Another's arms.

I've never heard a promise that
Vowed to keep me from harm.

All I've got are these old bones,
And the memory of past homes.

For I've never tasted love,

And I fear I shall not until I die.

Perhaps, not even on that day.

BROOKLYN

VICTORIA SPIVEY

Sitting by the pub,

Drinking straight whiskey.

You're tracing my tattoo

As my lips quiver from too much caffeine.

We shake until our ribs are tough with laughter.

And in the silence, the rain makes the mood much lighter.

Your voice rubs the air

As the blue of your eyes

Gets drenched by the gold of the street lights.

I inhale the puff of smoke from our neighbor's cigar

As you exhale your dreams and adventures from lands afar.

Never have I felt so free,

Swaying to the beat of your poetry.

And once the night is over,

I tell you that I'll see you again

To which you cheekily smile, saying,

“Only in Brooklyn, my queen,

Only while you dream.”

THE LOVE OF MY LIFE

VICTORIA SPIVEY

We'd walk in the warmth of the afternoon

Nevermind the night with its luminous moon

I want to bask in the light of day with you

Letting go of these desolate ideals

Never again feeling blue

We'd roll in the grass of the wildflower fields

Never stepped on by a heart that yields

And we could paint the sky

With the emotions that we conjure inside

Oh, how you would be the love of my life

If you would but be mine.

SOFT ME NOW

LUCY MERCER

I am so sick of seeing her cry. I'm fumbling to stitch this zipper back on the side of my dress, and it's taking everything not to walk over to that door and slam it in that chauvinistic troglodyte's face. In the corner of my eye, he's standing over her, arm resting on the door frame above her to make him bigger than he is, and my blood boils. Ruby's backed up against the other side of the door frame adorned in floppy Easter bunny ears, and I'm certain he's going to eat her alive. He's here to pick up his watch, the one she gave him, conveniently remembering it on his way downtown, but God, does she make a cute bunny. His words slosh so wet with saliva that he's practically drooling. She fluffs up her hair, rocking on her heels, and biting her nails, not in a gross way but in a way that says, please stay, or maybe leave. I roll my eyes, focusing on this stupid cheap zipper. She's still entertaining him, of course. She says his wolf ears look cute, but he's still in the dog house, and now he's begging her to come over later.

"Ow!" The needle tings somewhere along the hardwood floor. I shake out the sting in my hand before sucking on my fingertip.

Ruby looks over at me to ask if I'm okay, but her cheeks are fuming pink, her eyes widen like she just got caught, and Russell groans.

"Pricked myself," I mumbled back, staring from the leather couch.

"Well, you look like shit. Is your hair still wet or just greasy as usual?" He gestures to my costume, arms crossed. "What are you supposed to be anyway? Ophelia?"

"Oh, so you do know how to read!"

I don't even let him spit out a retort before I make my way to the bathroom. I rummage through the cabinet under the sink for some sort of bandage. Ruby has at least fourteen different bottles of nearly empty hair dyes, most of them a vibrant violet, a few blues, all out of order, in addition to the open dried-out bowl of hot pink from her last dye job so long ago that her hair is now faded to baby pink. Of course, she keeps eyeshadow in here from 2014 but not a bandaid. Surrendering my efforts, I wash my finger and press a little cotton ball from the jar til the blood makes

it stick. A giggle emerges from outside the bathroom, with Ruby urging Russell to stop whatever he's doing before her tone gets more hushed and severe. Ruby doesn't want me to know how things truly are going between them. I don't see her for weeks, and now he's showing up here to mark his territory. His insecurity is telling. He hasn't even told her that he loves her. She still gets him gifts every monthly anniversary. Catching myself in the mirror, I do look like shit. I gelled my dark curls to oblivion to create that perfectly drowned look, although the makeup I applied only made my face look more sullen. My dress hangs off my shoulders, embedded with pansies, fennel, and the perennial columbine.

My heart jumps at the slam of the door. The apartment is now still, aside from a faint snuffle from the living room, unfortunately, a snuffle all too familiar. Poking my head out of the bathroom, Ruby's knees are pulled to her face in front of the front door, hands pulling at her hair, and bunny ears are on the floor. She never used to be so frail. For a while, she was the one slamming the door and walking out, pounding her fists on tables and doors and making it certain that she was meant to be loved. The way she would act on impulse used to amaze me. She'd never hesitate to let me know when I indeed fucked up, and God forbid anybody else ever did. I wish I knew what made her so scared of losing him. Her head lifts up as I sit down beside her. Her honey-colored eyes glisten in the light, mascara speckled on her cheeks.

"I'm not going out tonight."

This again.

I pick the bunny ears off the ground and hold them in my lap. "You have to stop letting him dictate your life." I wiggle the bunny ears in her face, but she hides her face from me. "C'mon, you love Halloween. Ali and Lane are so excited to be in town for Hallweekend."

"I'm fine. It's not about him. I just— I just don't feel my best all of a sudden."

I rest my fingertips atop her hands wrapped around her ankles, and her hands flinch at my touch. She sharply inhales, resting her chin atop her knees and shutting her eyes.

"It's like he wants me one minute, and then the next he can't stand to be around me, and even when I'm around him, it feels so... lonely. But I don't know if I'm ready to be without him yet."

This is the umpteenth time we've done this rodeo. I urge her to tell Russell how she feels, she tries, but he doesn't change. He will keep stringing her along with this on and off again bullshit. But she puts all her effort into a guy who won't even tell her that he loves her. She won't say it, but I can tell she's tired. She deserves better than this. Ruby's clearly pretty, she makes every joke feel like the funniest one ever told, remembers every date and time or birthday ever told to her, picks up coffee on rainy days, and just has this air around her, like she sees the world in different colors. She has everything any guy would be lucky to have.

"I know, I know. You're right. I just wish he cared about me the way you do."

I bite at my cheek, wanting to say how easily she could have that, but holding myself back before I get ahead of myself. I gently glide the bunny ears atop her head, adjusting them slightly before giving her a smile. "Now, let's get you fixed up and ready to go."

"You know what, you're right." She cautiously wiped under her eyes with both hands. "I'm going to look so hot tonight he'll be punching the wall screaming about how he regrets letting me go."

Not what I was trying to articulate, but I'll take it. Although, I don't know what that would accomplish. However, I don't think I have ever begged to love someone. I hop up and offer her a hand, pulling her up cautiously, aware of her heels.

"Let me fix your makeup." Ruby pleads, clasping her hands together in front of her chest and flashing an innocent smile.

"Are you serious? What's wrong with it?"

"Nothing, nothing."

"Say it."

"You look ghoulish."

"I'm dead!"

"Yeah, but, y'know. I just think tonight could be a good opportunity for you to meet someone. I mean, you need to."

"You wound me."

She led me to her bedroom, plopping me on that rocky ottoman aside from the sticker-covered vanity she's had since freshman year. I like her messy things; her smeared silver eyeshadow, tangled necklaces in the jewelry box, sparkly pink lipgloss that leaks out of the bottle, and golden

sequined dresses that smell of spilled drinks. She grabs my jaw, hastily beginning to wipe all my hard work off with a cleansing wipe. Murmuring on about how pretty I am and that I should emphasize my natural beauty even though I'm meant to look drowned, but instead, I should look more feminine or girlish. She rapidly brushes some shadow all over my lid, I close my lids instinctually as she recklessly applies it with no care for my eyes. The smile on her face made it impossible for me to ask her to stop. I flicker my eyes back open, feeling her hot breath on my cheek. I nearly double back as she pulls her face closer to mine, my struggle to focus and my cheeks flare up. She layers my cheeks full of rose-colored powder before smiling.

"You look pretty."

She winks, carelessly tossing the brushes on the vanity before hopping up on her bed. Her phone rings. Presumably, it's Lane checking in. It's like I was never even there. She's already on to filing her nails. She's going to make me lose it. I turn to the vanity mirror, pressing my palm between my brows and grabbing at my face burning in frustration. I don't understand her. Ruby's taken the creative liberty to paint my eyes a shimmering purple, and all traces of murky death have been wiped away from my face. I check behind me in the mirror to ensure Ruby's not looking. She's too busy throwing her head back, giggling to Lane, and kicking her feet while her bunny ears flop around. I shake my head, smudging the look a little with my fingertips, although careful not to make it look too intentional. Ruby's changed again tonight. She's wearing the fluffy blue dress she wore for our AD-Pi formal, a giant green fluffy coat for 'fur,' and extra blush on her nose for a nose. Her costume really isn't anything at all without the ears, yet somehow she still looks cute. And recognizable. By comparison, my costume is somehow worse than hers, and I spent forever on it. And it's still fucked up.

"Can you help me with my dress? The zipper's stuck."

Ruby nods, flashing her hands to the front of me, revealing slightly sloppily applied silver nail polish.

"Cute, right?"

"Ah, don't worry about the zipper then. I'd hate for you to mess them up."

"Don't worry, I've got it." She winked.

She motions for me to stand up, so I lean forwards on the vanity, careful not to knock over the menagerie of beauty products strewn across it. She hovers with her freshly painted fingertips along the track of my zipper before smirking and drawing them behind her, dropping to her knee beside me. Her left eyebrow twitched, and the muscle in her cheek contracted ever so slightly. She leans in, teeth on enamel-coated silver, and draws the zipper up slowly. I squirm at the steady pace of her hot breath trailing up my side. I lean further onto the vanity than before, and my breath fogs the mirror. She lets go, drawing her head up with a sugary smile. I can't look her in the eye.

"Thank you," I murmured before quickly sidestepping. Ruby shoots me a silver thumbs-up in the mirror. She really does look beautiful.

I kick the front of my shitty blue LeBaron to get the front bumper back in place. Ruby's puffs of cold October air and cigarette smoke paint a contrail of laughter that fills the whole block. The bumper hooks back on with a loud thump, and I bow, motioning to our chariot with a laugh before heading over to the driver's side. I squint at the sidewalk, making out some silhouettes of fast-moving figures against the gleaming city lights. Ruby shoots me a nervous smile, rubbing the back of her neck, confessing she had forgotten to tell me that Alia and Lane really needed a ride. Apparently, it was hard to say no, but if I "pretty, pretty please drive them," she'll be a saint the entire night. She won't even take a single shot. I bang my head against the headrest and shoot her a terrible side eye before I groan.

"How's my favorite D.D.?" Lane — Ruby's high school friend that I kind of get on with— giggles, hanging her arm around the neck of the driver's seat, and my nose crinkles at the smell of cheap whiskey on her breath. "Not good, huh? Don't worry, babes, I'm a nurse. Unregistered though, so things may get wi-i-i-ld." She winked, tipping the miniature cap on her head with a cheeky grin. Lane, charming as always.

Alia hushes her with the tip of a gloved hand, unhooking Lane from the back of my seat before firmly patting me on the shoulder. Alia thanks me for my efforts in rallying Ruby together to get her out for the first night in months, yammering on to Ruby about how she should tell that guy to fuck off, but truth be told, she'd fold too because he's fine, hand-

some, whatever they're into. Ruby sarcastically thanks Alia for her brilliant contribution, huffing on about how Alia should just keep some things to herself. Alia gives some mindless, minorly degrading retort, and the girls smile at each other and giggle. But it's one of Ruby's super fake through-her-teeth laughs where her nose crinkles up, and the space on the sides of her eyes fold and at first, she was trying to hide her irritation, but the second I try to hold her back from turning around, she's throwing her feet up on the dash, thumping the seat back on Alia like a child. I'm not certain why they're friends. Lane, in an attempt to make small talk, compliments my princess costume. I'd correct her, but she looks too far gone to even care. I trace my fingertips along the raggedly stitched zipper and sigh.

The bouncer gives a smug nod at the girls' costumes as soon as we arrive at the door. He stops me, raising an eyebrow at my costume, but lets us in cover fee free (as usual) because Ruby bats her eyes at him. She macked on him two years ago over spring break and left him with a good enough impression of all of us. She slides her hand across his chest on the way in, giving him a little wink before she skips inside. The Ninety-Nine isn't anything special, a typical college town bar, vaguely reeking of sweat, but overall, charming. Albeit we're graduated, but the booze is good and cheap, plus we're in that weird threshold of twenty-three, so none of us really know anything better. Inside, at least 80% of the girls were dressed in pink cowgirl hats and next to nothing, sipping on either vodka sodas or the seasonal pumpkin beer. Radio Fire, the semi-good local band, are focusing tonight on building their ranks of questionably-aged groupie girls. They seem to be having a good night. My girls wasted no time finding their way to the bar, of course, immediately doing tequila shots. Saint Ruby, my ass.

I scan the bar, looking for the nearest bathroom or exit, before I lock eyes with a familiar toga-clad manchild. The sad thing is this isn't even the third time I've seen Theodore wearing this. I think my face of disgust may have been too inviting, and he's already stumbling over to me.

"What are you?"

"Not interested."

"Haha, no, let me guess. A fairy?"

He's not going to get it.

“No, no, I definitely have it. You’re that chick from Midsommar.”

I’m giving up on this whole Halloween thing.

“Sure.”

Now he’s going on about how I should at least give him some credit for trying, and maybe if I wasn’t so far up my own ass in the girl-boss, gender studies, independent, too cool for him thing, maybe, just maybe, I would give him a chance. I’m apparently too hot not to at least try. I’m so flattered. Where’s Ruby? She usually can get me out of this, or at least get the attention off me. My eyes scan the crowd of attractive and equally available women. I assure him there are plenty of other nice girls for a nice guy like him to take home tonight. Any one of them, really. I look past him, pinning down a pair of white bunny ears poking out at the front of the crowd, illuminated by the green and purple stage lights. I squint to see what I can only guess are the girls trying to convince the band to let them up on stage. Their pink-haired ring leader leading them in some kind of fervent chant, splashing her plastic cup of God knows what all over her coat. I look back at Theo, and he gives me a wry smile and a condoling nod. I offer him an apologetic pat on the shoulder, but Ruby already has one foot on the stage. By the time I squeeze through the mob to get over there, I have to lunge to stop her from falling into the crowd. There’s a sudden soft pop and the harsh rip of thread coming from the side of my dress, and I know it’s that stupid zipper.

“What were you thinking?”

Alia and Ruby look at each other, pursing their lips before they fold over with laughter, jeering at the tear in my dress, saying at least my costume is sexy now. The problem is they weren’t thinking, probably, at all. Lane offers me an apologetic safety pin from her emergency kit she’s using as a clutch for the evening because that girl will never come unprepared. Ruby’s eyes are already heavy from the alcohol, and she’s in her own little world taking selfies with the band while Alia’s getting the bassist’s number who she’ll never actually go out with. In less than a second, Ruby’s effervescent smile drops dead. She frantically scrolls and taps on her phone, chipped nails clacking, and her irises quiver at the screen. She shrieks, shoving her phone centimeters from my eyes. I blink, pulling her shaking hand slightly back to see the full picture. Russell, caught in 4k in his wolf attire, arms wrapped around a girl in red gingham. Ruby’s face is ghastly, I

catch her on my shoulder to stop her knees from giving out.

“I thought you weren’t even together.” Alia slurs, twirling her drink’s stirring stick on her tongue. Lane giggles at Alia’s words before locking their eyes with Ruby and then staring straight at the floor.

“Who does this hoodwinking Little Red Riding hood bitch think she is?” Ruby’s fists clench.

“Okay, lots of emotions right now. Let’s just take a second. Remember, it’s his fault.”

“Lane. Shut up. Will you please. Shut up.”

Alia chimes in, “I mean, he’s a Pisces.”

“Shut the fuck up, Alia.” Alia and Lane roll their eyes, pushing past her and the costumed crowd to go fuck-off at the bar. Ruby is still clutching the phone in her hands like it’s a fire burning down the matchstick. “I just– I just don’t understand what I did wrong? Am I not enough? What can I do to get him back? I’m going to drown myself.” She cries over the band, holding her cup to her face and pouting as I almost seize it out of her hands. I place my hand on her shoulder, maybe some fresh air will help her get a grip. She flinches at my touch, slapping off my arm, and hisses at me to back off. She stumbles back, nearly stepping on the foot of a Freddy Krueger. She shakes it off, pulling at the hair on the back of her head and downing the rest of her drink with the crush of her cup.

“Don’t look at me like that, Eden.” She wails her finger at me. “You’re so high and mighty, you’re no better than me.” She seethed, her voice peaking over the crash of drums and the sting of guitar.

“I’m tired of always being so goddamn sober for this shit.”

“Go home then.”

“I can’t trust you to get home safe!”

“You’re a terrible friend.”

I stop. My body is stagnant against the crowd, sweaty hot sticky bodies push against me. Ruby’s eyes are burning with emotion that I have only ever seen towards others. She doesn’t mean it. She’s wavering on her footing, she’s not all there. She doesn’t mean it.

“Ruby. Take that back.”

“Y’know, I never was the one to stop us from hanging out. You were.”

“What?”

“When I started dating Russell, you were the one who refused to talk.

Not me.”

“Oh-ho, you’re going to go there?”

“At first, things just kept coming up for you, maybe you really did need to meet a deadline, sure. But the second I said I was serious about him, you just started ignoring my texts, you’d apologize for being too busy, but you have never been too busy for me. Ever. And I’m not saying I’m needy or expect you to be there at my beck and call. I am so sick and tired of people saying I don’t know how to take care of myself.”

“I never said that.”

“You never had to. Every single time something bad happens to me, it’s like you have to swoop in and save me. I don’t need you to clean up my messes.”

I suck my teeth, tracing the ridges with my tongue. I go to open my mouth but can’t say anything. Ruby’s eyes are filled to the brim with tears watching me with anticipation, her lips quivering. My heart drops. I take a step back, and she shoves aside the screeching groupies, grabbing my wrist with her shivering hands. Her messy silver nails dig into my skin before tossing my arm away. She looks at me with something so soft and broken and just walks away. The crowd engulfs her, and all I can hear is the faint feedback on the speakers reeling through my ears.

—

I blare my horn at the idling idiots in the street as trying to speed through the cold air. They’re taking too long. I pound my fist on the steering wheel, fucking move. Their friends pull on the ones too far gone who can’t even bother to think for themselves. Ruby is probably sitting in front of an empty apartment, forgetting her way home after drinking a seltzer she found on the sidewalk. This won’t be the first and certainly not the last time I’ll have to do this. God, I need a drink. The wheels whirring slows as I ease up before Russell’s apartment, seeing three figures standing under the porch light. Three? I jerk my head, craning my neck to see a bunny, a wolf, and Little Red Riding Hood. Shit. Fuck. I whip into the spot adjacent to the house across his building. Ruby is clinging onto Russell’s flannel, bunching it into fists and understandably sobbing. On the other hand, Red is arms crossed and might as well be wielding an axe with the fear in Russell’s eyes. She’s pointing at him, stabbing at his chest above Ruby’s head. Although muffled, anyone could tell that she is reaffirming

the fear of God in him. The passerbyers opt to walk in the street until they get out of earshot of the scene. That should’ve been me. Instead, I am locked in the driver’s seat, hiding like a scorned child. I pull at the edge of the seatbelt on my neck, twisting the strap in my fist. The air in my throat is hot, and the heater is too loud, it’s far too loud, but without it, everything is so cold.

Ruby’s slight frame is shaking, but she turns away from him, clutching at her chest. She doesn’t need me, she doesn’t need my help anymore. He’s trying to apologize to her or, maybe, beg her to stop. I can’t tell anymore. Either way, the cloaked girl is shaking her head, gaze unmoving from the dog of a man. Ruby’s mouth opens, but suddenly shuts, tilting her head and stepping towards the other girl. She tilts her head, imitating the stance of Little Red while he is clearly fumbling for an answer. Red takes Ruby in for a brief embrace before she pushes him aside, whipping his front door open and storming inside. The dog blinks rapidly before his eyes widen, and he scurries inside. There’s a rattling silence before an orchestra emerges of crashes and snaps and short brief yelps.

The hooded woman rips his front window open, tossing anything and everything out on the front lawn. Ruby drops to her knees, hyperventilating, sobbing, and blowing snot as she wipes her nose on the sleeve of her oversized fluffy coat. My shoulders drop at the sight. She’s struggling with one hand to unbuckle her hot pink heel straps before just pulling her legs to the front of her, thrashing and kicking them off along the sidewalk, and smearing the blood on her knees. She’s staring down, ripping away at her nails, and chipping off the nail polish, and the best thing I can do for her right now is just to wait. I squeeze at the handle on the side of my car door, my grip twitching and arms shaking, trying to hold myself in place. I want him gone. I want to apologize to her. I want to rip his head clean off with my bare teeth. I want to shake Red’s hand. I’m useless. Guiltily, I stifle my laugh as I watch Red take his basket of PS5 games and, with direct eye contact, open every single last one of the cases up and chuck the discs onto the concrete. The dog is diving past her to try catching them as they fly out the window with no luck. Red, seemingly satisfied with her temporary justice, returns to sit beside Ruby. The two lean into each other, closing their eyes, neither laughing nor crying but just sitting for a second. I couldn’t help but lean into my steering wheel to do the same.

God, this sucks. If it was any other time before, I would've cried for her. For once, I wish I was still falling apart. I think I would've given it all to her and probably more.

I jump at the sound of tapping on the window, accidentally slamming my elbows on the horn. With a high-pitched squeak, I roll my window down to greet a teary-eyed smile.

"Are you her ride?" Red asks, gesturing to Ruby, wavering behind her. Ruby stares blankly past me, cheeks blotchy and snot running down her chin. I nod to reply, unsure of if I should thank her or apologize. Red opens the door, handing me the pair of heels and bunny ears before Ruby balls up in the passenger seat.

"Take care."

I carry Ruby inside, unlocking her apartment door under her shaking body and kicking the door gently closed behind us, and tossing the keys and bunny ears onto the hardwood floor. Softly setting her atop the bathroom countertop, she flops back onto the mirror. The rusted bathtub knobs turn with a creak as the water rushes out of the faucet. I place my fingertips in and out of the water to feel it out before plugging the drain. Taking the cotton balls, one dipped with soap, the other with water, and I dab the scrapes on her knees to clean them out the best I can. She doesn't even flinch. She looks up at me, her silver eyeshadow and mascara wiped and dried to the sides of her cheeks, no longer hiding behind the cracks of her knees. She gently wraps her arms around my neck as she slides down to me. She lingers there, just for a moment, nestling her face into my throat. I lean my head down to her and nod. Her breath is unwavering until she lets go of me.

Her coat hits the ground like a body on the concrete. She steps into the water, her dress wisps around her, tired and worn. She lies there still, palms open, and lungs breathing. For now, I'll sit beside her, undoing the safety pins along my dress, unrecognizable and torn. I drop them to the ground like metallic rain, raising my hands to the front of me and holding out my index finger with a single red dot until my vision starts to blur, wet with tears. I bring my hand to hers and squeeze. Let me have a few days like this, please.

SNOW

KAYTIE VAN ALSTINE

I am a dazzling and brilliant white, fresh and cool.
I blanket the Earth during the happiest time of year,
Preparing for the next era of life.
Children love me more than any adult does,
For I mean days at home
And playing outside with friends.
As they grow older I will become
A muddy inconvenience
To trudge through until spring.

But for now, I incite laughter and cheer
As they scoop me into mitten-clad hands
And throw me about, dodging and molding me as they please.
It's what I'm here for, to be loved for a while
And bring joy to those not yet jaded.
Like myself, their love for me is
Temporary.

CORDUROY

ABIGAIL PALOPOLI

rows of polyester hills run parallel down my legs
 their soft dunes slope over my knees to graze my ankles

my fingernails trace their edges for trapped lint
 down the hallways of beach day remains

their faded olive hue colors yellowing grass
 smells of autumn and my mother's perfume

she wore motherhood on her legs
 held it in her warm throned lap

these stitches become relics
 of an eternally october woman

MARGARET HALE AND FEMALE PHILANTHROPY IN *NORTH AND SOUTH*

ABIGAIL PALOPOLI

Social stratification during the late nineteenth-century was practically pre-determined according to one's social class. Markers of identity such as occupation, ethnicity, gender, and income all played crucial roles in the socioeconomic status of an individual. A contributing factor to the wealth index during the industrial revolution was geographic location such that those living and working in the north had drastically different experiences from those living and working in the south. Representing this social pattern is Elizabeth Gaskell's 1854 novel, *North and South*. Gaskell closely examines the root of struggle in a factory town where her heroine Margaret Hale inserts herself in the male dominated political space and attends to the poor and downtrodden. She does not privatize her charitable efforts, rather she brings her concerns to the soap box and further into people's homes and conversations. Gaskell's novel offers a nuanced interpretation of women's involvement in public philanthropy that emphasizes an ethic of listening as opposed to preaching outside the domestic sphere with her heroine Margaret Hale whose social maturity is a model for Gaskell's readers.

Public philanthropy was scarcely practiced in the nineteenth-century during the Victorian era. If there were any efforts to aid the lower classes, they were made within the home through private visitations, scripture reading, and lay preaching. The rigid expectations of women limited their mobility within the public sphere and kept them close to all matters of the domestic. Duties of wifedom and motherhood occupied the minds of women; however, a desire to cross these lines drawn by men slowly became a reality. The exclusivity within commercial life and business dealings directly increased the available time and energies of women. From this exclusivity came the observance of a feminine superiority. Assuming the titles of wife and mother, women relied on their natural affinity for caregiving. A belief in their higher sensitivity and greater sense of morality influenced their involvement in charity work. In "Fictional

Philanthropy in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* and *North and South*", Pamela Parker analyzes the importance of women's social participation and their personal moral authority to attend to the needs of the poor. Parker references the normalized view of women's natural ability and tendency towards charity and rejects their cultural role as "domestic angels" (323). This extension of themselves, however, is placed in the philanthropic sphere which is only afforded to them by way of convenience so that their entrance into public life and the business world is further delayed. Parker writes, "The use of women as home visitors accorded with society's deeply ingrained beliefs about the family and woman's place as the guardian of the home. Yet such confidence in middle-class women's moral authority and wider social role often obscured their subordinate position in society" (323). While the term 'lady visitor' and the concept of household visiting is applicable to the superiority of female sensitivity, it is still a reminder of female inferiority in terms of their agency.

Parker considers the female tendency towards philanthropy as indicative of middle class Victorian women wishing to join fashionable charitables and remain relevant within their social class. She goes so far as to criticize Margaret Hale for boasting about her class superiority to Bessy; however, her criticism does not discredit Ms. Hale's benevolence. Parker holds Elizabeth Gaskell up to a light that exposes her fiction as a work of philanthropy in and of itself just as several literary critics have noticed. She describes Gaskell's intention to aid her middle and upper class readers in their own personal philanthropic endeavors while she simultaneously wished to show that these wealthy readers were not all without compassion. Referring to Gaskell's works as "fictional philanthropy", Parker suggests the correlation between Elizabeth Gaskell's philanthropy and her novel's philanthropy.

Social involvement in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century became a struggle for women wishing to maintain authority within philanthropic movements. Their social participation relied on their natural sense of morality, although it was sometimes clouded by a selfish desire for recognition and class security. Middle and upper class women sought ways to involve themselves in public life, and philanthropy seemed to fit their limitations of mobility. There simply existed a necessity for political action during the Victorian era that women wished to tend to. One

main mode of philanthropy was religious preaching. Elizabeth Gaskell's husband, William Gaskell, was a Unitarian preacher whose sermons aligned with her storytellings. William Gaskell inserted the theme of duty in terms of philanthropy and stressed the importance of voluntary involvement with the poor along with the pursuit of political action. They both intended to influence their audiences towards an ethic of charity and philanthropic efforts that employ a sense of humility when caring for the poor. Gaskell's novel, however, is not simply a reiteration of her or her husband's preaching, rather it is what John Wyatt suggests in his journal article: "North and South is a personal, an individual story of the discovery of how an individual engages with people in distress, not an account of how Unitarians managed affairs" (104). This distinction is important as it accounts for the difference in narrative perspectives that would fall upon the ears of wealthy listeners. Wyatt makes connections between the preaching of William Gaskell and Elizabeth Gaskell's fiction in order to expose the deliberation of religious persuasion as an influential aspect in Victorian philanthropy. A vocation towards charity is thus a vocation for everyone, although it socially remained a women's task. Wyatt writes, "In one sense philanthropy became a woman's career, in another sense it was a means of escape from the confines of domestic life...What the novel illuminates is not the virtue of voluntary work nor even the trials of the lady visitor, but rather the spirit which makes that kind of visiting and the kind of charity live" (113). Margaret Hale undoubtedly brings this voluntary spirit of charity to the Higgins and the Bouchers. Wyatt also considers the evolution of Margaret's social maturity as her understanding of class relations grows in Milton.

Margaret's southern gentility aids her in the mediation of class conflict and participation in conversations surrounding workers' rights. In the beginning of her visitations, Margaret employs a typical form of Victorian charity and practices scripture reading. In Kate Nesbit's article, "Improving Ears: Elizabeth Gaskell's Charitable Listener and the Social-Problem", she comments on Margaret's evolution as a female philanthropist. Margaret conducts visits to the poor both in Helstone and in Milton, and at first she gives into scripture reading and spiritual advice, but she later learns to stop preaching and start listening. Nesbit coins the term "charitable listener" that Margaret adopts as her new

ministry (154). To abstain from preaching and practice active listening is a crucial characteristic that Margaret masters throughout the novel. While speaking with her father, Margaret hopes that Mr. Thornton will take an audience with Mr. Higgins. She says, “I wonder what success he’ll have to-morrow. If he and Mr. Thornton would speak out together as man to man—if Higgins would forget that Mr. Thornton was a master, and speak to him as he does to us—and if Mr. Thornton would be patient enough to listen to him with his human heart, not with his master’s ears—” (Gaskell 281). Her earnest desire to amend the conflict between Mr. Higgins and Mr. Thornton is born out of her charitable heart—the heart which takes upon the role of the ears. Nesbit presents a nuanced interpretation of Margaret’s charity which suggests that the duty and responsibility of paying attention is incumbent on the charitable listener and lady visitor:

The duty to listen falls upon the middle-class visitor and, Gaskell implies, the novel’s middle-class readers, whose charitable attention could remove them from the ranks of wealthy Britons who pay “no real intelligent attention.” So if *North and South* offers a kind of visiting manual, it is a manual of attention, one that provides—not a visiting manual’s directives on how to “instruct the ignorant”—but rather instructions on how to let yourself be the one instructed, the one called to attention. (157)

This reacts well to the sense of humility that John Wyatt poses as necessary for political action and social reform. Elizabeth Gaskell positions her book among many social reformist novels as one that acts as a singular work of charity for its readers to parallel Gaskell’s philanthropy with her heroine’s philanthropy.

As a heroine, Margaret Hale is an unconventional one whose rather plain life involves the death of her family members and subsequent coming of age in the north. Readers witness her family’s uproot from the south and big move to the industrial town of Milton. She doesn’t remain in the household, she refuses to let her emotions get in the way of caring for and supporting the working class, and she deliberately places herself within the heart of class conflicts and takes active parts in political discussions. Not only is Margaret unique from other Victorian heroines, but she is unique from Victorian female visitors. As suggested by Kate Nesbit, her charitable listening separates her from other caricatures of the satirized “Lady Bountiful”. Most women visitors of mid-nineteenth-

century England were sponsored by a church or an organized charity to represent parishes as they spit Bible verses at the poor and spewed condescending advice that only reflected their feigned humility, generosity, and public philanthropy. In an analysis of the “objective” and “abstract” intelligence of women participating in political discussions, Nancy Mann discovers the lack of self-awareness in Gaskell’s heroine, albeit she sets Margaret apart from other Victorian heroines because of her strict adherence to producing and engaging in thoughtful and fruitful discussions. Mann writes, “Gaskell displays in this book a new conception of the possible relations among intellect, sex, and class. She has chosen to portray a woman whose intelligence is used in ways opposite to those decreed by the conventions of her time, at the cost perhaps of a fuller and more self-conscious humanity in her heroine” (37). Although Margaret lacks self-awareness in regards to her relations with Mr. Thornton, her intelligence as a class mediator is exemplary of a female philanthropist and of any philanthropist. Margaret, however, does not abandon her religious beliefs. She believes the duty to pray is just as strong as the duty to listen. Gaskell writes, “On some such night as this she remembered promising to herself to live as brave and noble a life as any heroine she ever read or heard of in romance, a life sans peur et sans reproche; it had seemed to her then that she had only to will, and such a life would be accomplished. And now she had learnt that not only to will, but also to pray, was a necessary condition in the truly heroic” (373n2). While Margaret reminisces in her childhood nursery, she remembers her wishful feelings of becoming a heroine like the ones she read about as a child. She combines the need to will and to pray in order to accomplish a life of heroism carried out by her courage and nobility. The empathy with which Margaret displays is an indicator of this abstract intelligence that is contrary to the points in the novel where her emotions as a female character are underwhelming. Such moments in the novel might surprise readers because of her sex; however, Gaskell intentionally undercuts her emotional intelligence to praise her abstract intelligence that deals with the sufferings and shortcomings of the working class. She barely sheds a tear at the deaths of her parents and she did nothing to challenge the social standard which prohibited her from appearing at her mother’s funeral because of society’s suppression of an overwhelming display of

female emotion. If Margaret had objected to this standard that directly affected her, it would have undercut all of the objections she made in the political sphere that directly affected the lower working class. This character which Gaskell constructs is a model of humility, generosity, and true philanthropy—all of which are characteristics of a charitable heroine.

Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* presents its readers with the problems of social unrest and class conflicts and provides the solutions of charitable listening and political action. The workings of a woman within philanthropy is at the forefront of this novel and is the forerunner of modern day social work. As a model of female social involvement within the nineteenth century, Margaret Hale is the heroine that Gaskell's readers needed in order to encourage an individualized and personal philanthropy of their own. *North and South* is a work of philanthropy in and of itself as the novel's themes, persuasions, and choice of narrative are direct influences on the lives of those middle to upper class readers. As several critics suggest, Margaret is an atypical heroine and lady visitor whose words and actions are in contrast to any Lady Bountiful or Victorian philanthropist. Proven by Gaskell's fiction, philanthropy in the hands of women is a medley of natural feminine powers and a voluntary spirit of charity.

KALI BLAIR is an elementary education major from Dothan, Alabama. Their hobbies include reading and writing. Find them on Instagram @chronicles.of.blair and Snapchat @x.blairxx.

MADELEINE BRAHAM is a senior student with a major in public relations & Advertising and a minor in international studies. She is from Opelousas, Louisiana and is an aspiring writer with a love for all things worldbuilding and fantasy. Find her on Instagram @maddie_tat_OI.

NIYAH DAVIS is a senior CIS major from Mobile, Alabama who writes as a way to process what's going on around her.

SASHA FALCH is an artist studying business at Spring Hill College. He uses poetry and studio art to lay out his thoughts and musings, escaping to a fantastical world that he hopes will inspire others to express and challenge themselves.

ABIGAIL KRUS is a freshman English and writing double major with a journalism minor. She is from Houston, Texas, and often spends her time reading novels.

MIKIAH MUNOZ is a sophomore majoring in biology/pre-health. She has a lot of strong opinions but often has difficulty expressing them. Thus, she uses writing as a means to voice her thoughts and life experiences.

WILL NEWELL is a senior English major from New Orleans, Louisiana. He enjoys fiction, especially novels and short stories from authors such as Ernest Hemingway, Anthony Burgess and Walker Percy.

TALEIGH E. REED is a sophomore from McIntosh, AL pursuing an English degree with a concentration in creative writing. She is a writer/poet who plans to keep following her passion for manipulating the English language, making it beautiful, and calling it poetry. Find her on

Instagram @its.taleighreed.

HARMONY ROMANO is a senior bio/pre-health major born and raised in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Find her on Instagram @hvrms.

MALORIE SAUCIER is a junior elementary education major hoping to teach kindergarten or first grade in the future. She is from New Orleans, Louisiana and am in a family of six. She has have three brothers, one older and two younger.

KYLA SHAPPELL is a senior majoring in pure mathematics and minoring in computer science and creative writing. She's originally from Gardner, Kansas and came to Mobile to pursue beach volleyball.

VICTORIA SPIVEY is a junior psychology major with a minor in writing from Mobile, Alabama. Her hobbies include writing, listening to music, hanging out with friends, and reading.

ERTHALY THOMAS is a senior majoring in international business. Her piece "Adore You" is part of a larger project titled In Times Like This One: A Short Story of a Love I'm Scared Of.

KAYTIE VAN ALSTINE is a sophomore English major. She enjoys both writing and reading in her free time, and currently works as a writing tutor for Spring Hill College. She also enjoys volunteering for the school's ESL program. Find her on Instagram @kaytie.vanalstine

ALISIAH RASHID is a rising junior majoring in communications. She loves to take pictures to capture moments to have forever. She also loves reading and writing in her down time.

LETTER FROM THE ADVISOR

BRIAN DRUCKENMILLER

A week before I arrived on campus, I met with Megan Lear, a writing major entering her senior year eager to continue her resurrection of The Motley—a Spring Hill tradition lost in the unexplorable depths of the internet. We met at Carpe Diem over brown sugar lattes and she discussed how she single-handedly brought back a 32-page print version of solicited manuscripts the year prior. Her efforts were inspiring, and I knew that, if I had the opportunity to work with students like Megan, I would enjoy every moment of my time at Spring Hill.

Four years have passed since then, and I have been the Faculty Advisor for The Motley through four Volumes. For the first two years, COVID certainly yielded significant challenges: #71 had to be finished long distance (the Volume not arriving on campus until after Megan and the other seniors had graduated), and #72 needed to be crafted entirely through virtual meetings.

The organization gained momentum for #73, an issue where we saw our funds and crew members double as well as the number of submissions increase by 400%. We held a Cover Art contest in which 15% of the entire student body participated, and our first on-campus reading featuring South Alabama faculty was a huge success. For our efforts, we were awarded Outstanding Student Organization of the Year and Faculty Advisor of the Year.

This brings us to #74 and an academic year filled with overwhelming success. For the first time since the magazine was brought back, we received enough submissions to the point where we didn't need to rely on solicited manuscripts or repurposed Division contest entries. Our funding remained high. Our web and social media presence has grown. And the crew we gathered to put this one together...unbelievable.

Without a doubt, working with The Motley has been the highlight of my career, an experience that will remain unmatched no matter where my

professional journey takes me. As I part Spring Hill College to pursue interests outside of higher education, I must take this opportunity to thank Spring Hill's SGA for believing in us enough to provide us with the funds to keep this tradition alive and in-print. Thank you to the Division of Languages and Literature for trusting me with this 70+ year-old tradition (I hope we made you proud). Thank you to all of our contributing writers for trusting us with your work over the past four years. But most importantly, thank you to Megan Lear, Abby Rhodes, Olivia McNorton, Aeries Plasencia, Anna Pellerin, Darbi Broadus, Riley McDaniel, Darby Roberts, Caroline Moran, Mia Lormand, Emily Lormand, Tori Ellis, Abby Palopoli Peri Carr, Lucy Mercer, Samantha Gonzalez, and Kat Minotti—the collective Motley Crew over the past four years. Y'all are lifting up student voices. Y'all are the reason why I love my job. Y'all are the reason I am hopeful for the future, for it takes a great deal of risk-taking, enthusiasm, and tenacity to create such an important platform for young creatives. I'm optimistic that you will carry these attributes with you long after your walk back down the Avenue of the Oaks and into whatever amazing things your futures hold.

Cheers!

Brian Druckenmiller
brdruckenmiller@gmail.com

THE MOTLEY CREW

VICTORIA ELLIS

Motley Editor, Creative Director, Head of Editing and Marketing Teams

BRIAN DRUCKENMILLER

Motley Faculty Advisor

SAMANTHA GONZALEZ

Motley Marketing / Promotional / Web Team

PERI CARR

Motley Marketing / Promotional / Web Team, Art Director

ABIGAIL (ABBY) PALOPOLI

Motley Editing Team

DARBY ROBERTS

Motley Editing Team

KATHERINE (KAT) MINOTTI

Motley Editing Team

EMILY LORMAND

Motley Editing Team

LUCY MERCER

Motley Editing Team

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

VICTORIA ELLIS Tori is a junior studying ... lots of things. She loves The Motley, writing and video production. She loves rocks and the 1974 *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

BRIAN DRUCKENMILLER Dr. Druckenmiller is the Faculty Advisor for The Motley. He used to be the Head Chef at a Thai restaurant whose Drunken Noodles entree was an Honorable Mention in 2006's Taste of the Town in Myrtle Beach, SC. Nowadays, he can bake the heck out of frozen pizza.

SAMANTHA GONZALEZ is a senior digital video production major who wants to work in the film industry. She loves her cats and horror movies, with two of her cats being named after said horror movies.

PERI CARR is a senior graphic design major, with a minor in PR&Advertising. Peri has her very own small design and apparel business.

ABIGAIL (ABBY) PALOPOLI Abby is a senior English major with a minor in Philosophy. Her only personality trait is studying abroad and making origami cranes.

DARBY ROBERTS is a sophomore Elementary Education major who loves being an overachiever. She is obsessed with iced coffee and really needs some sleep.

KATHERINE (KAT) MINOTTI is a freshman majoring in chemistry. She doesn't know what else to write here.

EMILY LORMAND Emily is a junior writing major who likes bubble tea and traveling the world. She enjoys long drives and short bios.

LUCY MERCER Lucy is a senior majoring in psychology and minoring in writing. She loves making silly little drawings and has a (financially) devastating clothing addiction.

WHY THE MOTLEY? WHY SUCH A PUZZLING TITLE?

Well, in days of yore, one of the most engaging figures in the royal court was the jester, a character who seemed to embody a puzzling union of several characteristics: wisdom and buffoonery, profundity and foolishness, gravity and frivolity. Dressed in his colorful costume, the motley, the Jester enjoyed a favored position. Never regarded completely seriously by anyone, lest of all himself, he was free to pass comments on any subject under the sun, sometimes piquantly, sometimes displaying a certain wisdom, almost always entertainingly. Most important of all, the Jester's sole aim was to provide amusement for the king.

It is from this that we draw our analogy.

We have chosen the motley for our garb to serve as an indication of both our spirit and our scope. We hope to incorporate in these pages a wide and varied choice of subjects, all the while not taking ourselves too seriously and making no pretense at being definitive. Thus, like the famous juggler who entertained Our Lady, we offer our efforts for the pleasure of our Monarch: Christ the King.

We are His jesters.
This is our Motley.

- The Motley, Volume I, 1949