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“The Earth without art is just eh.”

- Demetri Martin

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## Editor's Note:

I've known since I was nine years old that I wanted to be a writer. I didn't care about where it would go, I didn't care about what I'd write, I didn't even really care about when I would do it. I just knew I would be a writer of some kind in some way, someday. Never did I think my chance to write would come from a college literary and art magazine, mainly because I didn't know those existed at nine years old.

In The Write Mind has given me and many other students here at CF Citrus a chance to be a writer, a photographer, a sculptor, a poet, a novelist, a chance to be an artist. That's been the goal of the staff this year and a personal goal of mine for the last two years: to give the artists on this campus a chance to display exactly what they create with no restrictions. A chance for art to just be art for art's sake as Oscar Wilde would say. Or as my assistant editor in chief, Justin, would say, "without all of the extra bull\$&!\*, " to put it eloquently.

In The Write Mind's staff has stepped back and evaluated what we mean to the students on this campus as a literary and art magazine. We have realized that we are nothing more than the frame for the true artistry that they will present to you in the upcoming pages.

Enjoy,  
Ja'Onna Brown, Editor-in-Chief of ITWM.



## Our Mission

To showcase the artistic talents of the Citrus Campus, particularly students; to convey the spirit of the Citrus Campus, creatively; to provide the student editorial staff with a glimpse of the publishing experience; and to earn recognition for the magazine.

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## In Spite of You

by Amber Prange

If I knew then what I know now.  
I feel the rush of relief.  
When the truth really does set you free.  
The weight has been lifted.  
The shackles are broken.  
She never wanted me.  
That's her fault.  
She made a stupid decision.  
We have all made stupid decisions.  
Unfortunately for some, their mistakes walk around, live, and breathe.  
Their mistakes make families, and live their lives,  
Lives given to them by chance.  
Hopefully, the mistake will right the wrongs and find purpose.  
Ideally, anything positive for a mistake can show how coincidental life is.  
That our choices are pure chance.

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## In Spite of You [Part II]

Free will can lead you anywhere.  
It can even lead your mistakes back to you and force you to look that mistake in the  
face.  
No matter how hard you pushed it down.  
There it is.  
Staring at you,  
Waiting for your answers.  
Waiting for your explanation.

I was born for someone else.  
What would have happened if that had panned out correctly?  
Knowing where the pieces land. There would have been a great heartache. One I was  
spared from by not having to live it.  
I ended up somewhere else, as someone else.  
I could feel it.  
I searched to solve the puzzle until I did.  
You must know your truth.  
She tried to evade me, but I proved not to need her in the end.  
As I sit here now feeling like the chains that wrapped around my wrists for so long are  
finally broken.  
*Freedom. Clarity. Enlightenment.*

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## A Truth and a Lie

by CJ Adams

In the end

And the beginning

It comes down to

A truth

And a lie

A lie that you should feel this way

But you choose to believe

And so you live your life

Living a lie

Poor people,

Living this life without a flashlight

How easy it is to walk in the dark

Because you can't see it until the light shows you the juxtaposition

Believe me, I know

And I know one thing:

You can choose

So you need to choose wisely

Because what you choose to believe,

Makes all the difference in the world

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## Shallow

by Gabriella Klingensmith

The emotions start to feel shallow.  
The soul becomes almost hollow.  
The darkness becomes too much.  
Friends start to feel a hutch.  
Dozing in and out of sleep.  
In the distance a faint beep.  
The door then begins to rap.  
Wondering why the sudden tap.  
A familiar face sincere and sweet.  
Fingers strumming on the guitar on repeat.  
The shadows begin to fade.  
Through the dark shallow water you wade.  
The embrace of a caring soul.  
Only those can fill the hole.  
What battles we suffer in silence.  
Can only be mended by love, not violence.  
No matter how big or small.  
We should all take a moment and make the call.  
Only you can arrange.  
How to do that smallest deed and make a change.





Dusk at Wallenpaupack by Kenneth Witkowski



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## In Spite of You [Part III]

I have chased her mentally for years.  
She plagued me.  
Not in her actuality but in my mind.  
Her approval lived in my consciousness.  
And only mine.  
She never thought twice about me.  
Which in turn drove her image to thrive in my mind.  
The image fed by my constant need to make her love me.  
The few times she did exist as a person.  
She fed me lies.  
She played on every emotion.  
She's a narcissist.  
I wanted her, she used that.  
Because she doesn't feel.  
At least not as I do.  
Her drugs numb her.  
On some level, I knew she couldn't face me, but I thought that was due to her love for herself.  
She chose drugs over me, so she couldn't see me.  
That wasn't it.  
There was just no love involved in my conception.  
A backdoor business deal.  
A conception based on a handshake.  
Does one's word mean anything, anymore?  
No.  
Not them. Not now. My existence is a cautionary tale of why no one is trusted.  
Someone is always there lurking the background.  
Waiting to take advantage for their gain.  
Always.  
He was more educated than she, but in the end, she proved far more intelligent.  
She changed his life and took his money.  
Along with his heart.

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## In Spite of You [Part IV]

She has been indifferent because I was business.

She's a complete idiot.

If every child is a gift, then she will have to stand before God above and explain herself.

What would she say?

I wish he could wait to ask her until I get there.

I want to see her face it all.

rewind the video and watch it all play,

watch me self-destruct,

watch me spiral down.

Watch me find love.

Watch the miracles we make with it.

Watch how much he loves me.

His love so fierce, even she would be able to see it.

I found what she couldn't.

Watch me pull myself up and overcome her to love him.



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## Momma Had to Lie

by Crystal MacGinnis

A traditional love story  
Gone awry  
Momma never knew  
Not only she  
Would cry

Five years later  
My innocent blue eyes  
Swelled up with sadness  
Because I miss him tonight  
Yet Momma had to lie

He left in a hurry  
With no choice of his own  
Was accused of a heinous crime  
Sent down the road  
Though, I still didn't know

Wrists and ankles shackled down  
Carrying a 15-year load

I'll be 20

I have no idea  
No perception of where he may be  
Where is my Dada?  
"Working out of town"  
Is what my Momma told me.

My heart is breaking  
Before the story's even been told  
I want my Dada before I'm too old!

I miss my Dada  
Momma says I'll be alright  
Where is my Dada? I need him tonight.

Momma says, "he's been working"  
But why doesn't he want to see me?  
I miss him and I want him  
Why did he leave?

Why doesn't he call?  
Why do I only get letters?  
Momma keeps saying she's sorry  
That, "it will get better."  
Sorry for what Momma?

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Where did he go? Why can't I see him?  
Momma says he's too far, but it's just not a good reason!

All of my friends have Dada's somewhere  
Why isn't my Dada here? Am I not what he wanted? Does he not even care?

My Momma sure tried  
All that she could  
To take all the pain  
As a Momma should

It was a heartbreaking love story  
Momma cried and cried  
For she knew his sentence would break  
My tender heart  
So Momma had to lie.



## Majora's Mask by Alyssa Shinaberry

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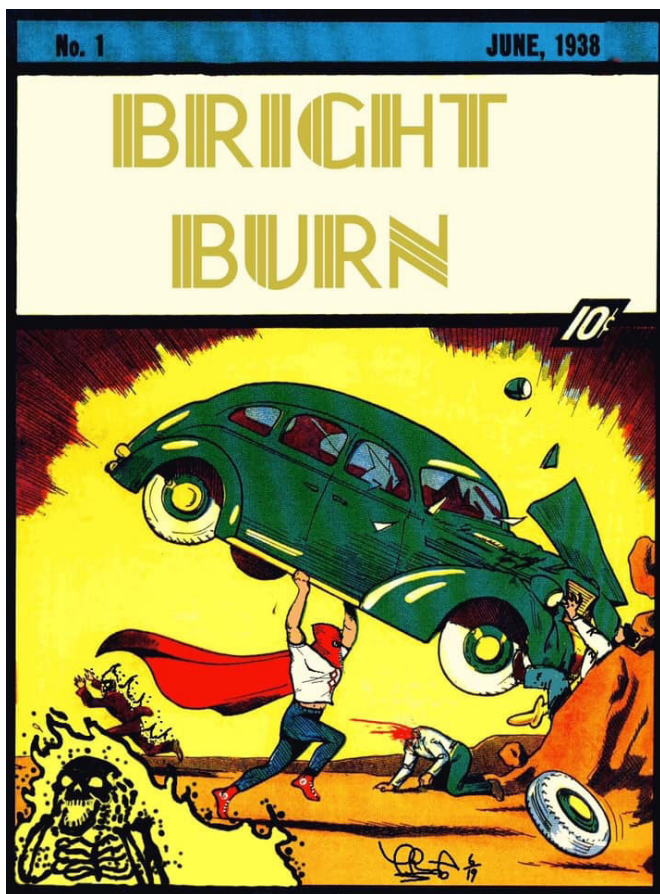
### Morning Dew by Aprille Bergeron

The smell of coffee in the air  
The brisk wind flowing in one window, and out another  
The orange sun beginning the day

Watching the pear tree sway in the breeze  
My mother turns on the old radio  
I lay my head back

The rare weather change was needed,  
Cover me in that warm blanket,  
A sunray finds my pale skin.

A new day to care  
Lover of aurora  
May the dew commence once more



Brightburn Theme Movie Poster by Patrik Rodriguez



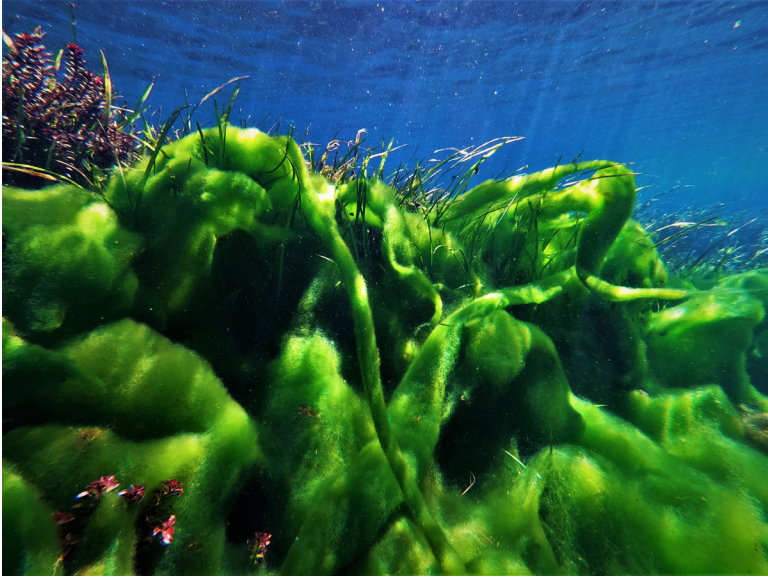
Dragon's Nest by Marjorie Johnston







Peaceful Sitting by Cayenne David





Mew by Alyssa Shinaberry

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## King Alexander

by Daeja Ruiz

Black clouds filled the sky and would not break. Not one ray of sunshine could be seen. One young boy thought this setting fitted him perfectly, like the laced, black heeled boots he wore. Prince Alexander of the Kingdom of Haven. Well, that was once his title, but today he would be given another. Only two days ago did he bury his mother and father, who were taken from him in an assassination that was meant to end the entire family. But, he was spared due to the aid of his uncle, his father's advisor, Gregory. Now today he was meant to be crowned king at the age of eleven.

"You look much like your father on the day of his coronation," Gregory said with a half-hearted laugh as he slid the king's ring on the boy's thin finger.

"Father was older and much more mature than I am," Alexander replied emotionlessly. His brown eyes had a ring of redness glassed over the white, as he stared at his reflection in the dresser mirror. Alexander's dark hair was combed back neatly out of his face. A golden brooch was pinned nicely to his buttoned tabard. The sash that hung across his chest was a teal blue, the color of the royal family.

"A maid will inform you when the ceremony is about to begin. I will see you in the cathedral," Gregory said as he turned to the door. He stopped, sighed and knelt in front of Alexander.

"My boy, please..." he started. Alexander's face was emotionless and neutral. This boy once had the biggest smile that would make the heart of the coldest man melt. He remembered the last time he had seen it, only two weeks ago. Now he was a shell of his former self, as if all the joy had been drained from him.

Gregory cupped the boy's face and raised him to his eye level. "You are not alone. Please remember that I am here with you, I will always be here," he said kissing his forehead. "Give us a smile."

Alexander took a breath and did his best impression of a smile.  
"Good boy. I shall see you in a bit." Gregory rose and left the room.

Alexander's smile withered away like the fading memories of his childhood. Only minutes from now he will walk out of the room a prince and return to it reborn as a king. Darkness clouded his soul like the taunting cloud that jeered at him from the sky. Never again would he hear his father's laughter or feel his mother's gentle and loving touch. He will go through this lonely life without his parents. A knock came from outside the door. He knew what it meant, the very moment he had dreaded since the army of knights bowed to him, pledging their allegiance to their 'young king.'

Alexander slowly crossed the room, his navy robe trailing behind him. Fresh tears filled his eyes, threatening to roll down his cheeks. Stray tears fell, he harshly wiped them away. He stopped at the door and closed his eyes. He took one deep, steady breath. The doors opened and he held his head high, and strode out into the corridor with a troop of knights marching behind.

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## It Was You

by Anonymous

It was you...  
It was you who took my innocence away...  
You did not ask...  
You did not care...  
I was scared, threatened, choking...  
You pushed yourself in, no matter how much  
It hurt...

It was you...  
Now it is me and her..  
Alone, lost, and yet better off.  
She is not we...  
She is me...



Arrow by Emily Butler





Cemetery Jive by Madison Pensinger



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## Down the Lone Road

by Jose Lopez

Down the lone road,  
Everyone walks it once,  
Sometimes people walk together,  
Sometimes people leave,  
Sometimes the road has obstacles,  
Sometimes it's covered with leaves,  
At the end of it all,  
We walk down the lone road.

We walk down the lone road,  
At the end of it all,  
Sometimes it's covered with leaves,  
Sometimes the road has obstacles,  
Sometimes people leave,  
Sometimes people walk together,  
Everyone walks it once,  
Down the lone road.

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## Trapped

by Henry Licklider

Harry was trapped in his hometown and there was no way he was ever going to escape. He stewed on this idea until Ms. Cherie Bailey snapped him out of it.

"Want more coffee, dear?" she asked with her familiar, tired smile. Nannie's Diner may have worn her down, but Ms. Bailey would never let her customers know that. For a moment, Harry felt his spirits lift.

"Yes ma'am," he said. His mug was quickly refilled. "Thank you."

As Cherie left the booth, the idea of being stuck in Howard County flooded back into Harry's mind. He had big plans for what he was going to do after he graduated from high school, but all of them had quickly fallen through the cracks as he hit his last quarter of high school. Instead of heading off to a big university with his friends and seeing the world outside of the rural farmlands he was familiar with, he was hitting the books at the local college for the next two years, because it was more affordable.

Harry had a taste of freedom when he went to university for his bachelors. However, he was pulled back home immediately after when he was called to help pull a family friend's business out of ruin, which ultimately led to him running the place himself.

His mind went back to all the wonderful stories of his friends going off and traveling the country, doing well in the big cities, and doing big, important things he knew he'd never have the chance to do. They had all left him behind and didn't look back.

Harry's pessimistic train of thought was once again interrupted, this time by the ring of the bell at the front of the store, and Mr. Eddie Payne walking in. The two locked eyes and before Harry knew it, Eddie was almost barreling toward him with a big grin on his face.

"Hiya Harry, how're you doin'," Mr. Payne asked as they shook hands. "Listen, I just wanted to tell you again how grateful I am to you. If you hadn't aound that mistake in my records I just know the restaurant would be done for."

"Oh, it was nothing, really. I was just doing my job," Harry said a little embarrassed. All five of the patrons in the diner were looking at his booth. "Really."

Mr. Payne clapped Harry on the shoulder. "It was nothing? Harry if you weren't here I don't know what I would've done! Heck, I don't know what the town would do without you. You're a real blessing here, you know that?" Eddie gave Harry an encouraging smile. "I'll let you be, just know that you help a lot of people with what you do." He began to make his way to the counter. "God bless ya', kid."

Harry stared down at his half-drunken mug. Mr. Payne's words now echoing through his mind. *Just know that you help a lot people with what you do....*

His thoughts were interrupted yet again by a young woman in a messy white apron and uniform sliding into the seat across from him. It was Charlotte Brown. "I didn't know you were coming to visit me," she said with her sweet, perky voice.

"Thought I'd surprise you," Harry said with a genuine smile. "I needed to leave my office for a bit."

Charlotte leaned forward, her chin resting on her crisscrossed hands. The shiny engagement ring she wore on her finger was in clear view. She gave him a smile that was as bright as the ring. "So, are we still on for tonight? I get off work at seven."

"Yeah, you good with the drive-in?"

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“Of course.” Charlotte got up out of the booth and leaned over Harry, pecking him on the cheek. “I’ll see you then,” she said before returning to work.

Harry leaned back in his seat as any feelings of discontent melted away, and his spirits were seemingly lifted as high as they could possibly be.

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## Table 29

by Crystal MacGinnis

She put her single key in her pocket  
and reflected "Don't cry I'll be fine."  
Guard said "You must sit here, the minor there, at table 29"  
She saw his pale white face walk in and  
The consequence of time

After hundreds of days behind her  
She mustered up the strength  
To bring her daughter to the place  
Where felons go to think

6 hours north we drove  
To keep him company  
To witness fellow humans  
Become numbers in a blink

The state keeps them far away  
"Rehabilitation is our goal"  
The state keeps them far away  
"Family can't be too close"  
The state keeps them far away  
"Call! Visit! Or they'll overdose!"

Hypocrites.

My empathy was drained by noon  
I had no more to give  
And visitation ended far too soon  
This is no way for a loved one to live

We played a little Jenga  
My daughter laughed and sang  
We made snack concoctions  
From the broken vending machine  
She got to have her daddy back  
For just a little time  
Filling up his ears and heart  
At table 29.

"Don't hug and kiss your daddy long"  
She didn't understand  
She's his biggest fan  
"He did wrong!"  
What did he do?  
She doesn't comprehend  
"Time to say so long"  
She had to be ripped away from his hands

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We left him staring at us through  
The first of many doors  
“Please come back soon” he said  
With his voice broken and hoarse  
I heard his plea and they made us leave  
Before I could even say...

I will as soon as I can  
It is just too far away  
The distance to get to you  
Lodging, food, is just so much to pay

Not sure when we will see him  
For his safety, I will pray  
Not sure how many times we’ll see him  
For his lengthy prison stay

I whispered as we left the building  
Quiet so she couldn’t hear  
“Please dear Lord have mercy on him, let him be okay,  
As I will worry about his safety  
His well being  
His emotional state  
His heart and  
What’s left of his soul  
Every single day.”

His soul I knew before  
So vibrant and so free  
That day at table 29, I wish I didn’t see  
His soul I knew before  
So vibrant and so free  
Was dead and gone  
Gone so long  
That part of him had to leave

There is no reason for this treatment  
Our prisoners all receive  
For they might have children  
Who love them  
The good in them they believe  
The good in them they see

So as I place my single key back on this stupid ring  
I got see him, she got to see him  
And bring him some relief.  
I will be fine, she will be fine,  
Due to strength and time  
We left a part of hearts right there  
At table 29.

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## In Spite of You [Part V]

In spite of you.  
In spite of everything you do.  
In spite of everything you have done.  
I am happy. I am loved. I am wanted.  
At last.  
Unfortunately, there can be no end because there was no beginning.  
It has long since passed away, with him and  
what you took from him....  
was me....

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## In Spite of You [Part VI]

Now left only with speculation of what ifs...  
What if I wasn't taken away, would he have lived longer?  
Can heartbreak destroy a soul?  
What if my need to solve the puzzle came from him?  
I had to know the answer.  
The truth.  
What if it was me that destroyed him?  
Did I plague his mind?  
Did he have to know but had the weight of the world against him?  
Born in the wrong decade for searching for someone.  
No one he could trust to have answers.  
Was it easier to pick up the broken pieces and just walk away?  
That's what he did.  
Was that all he could do?

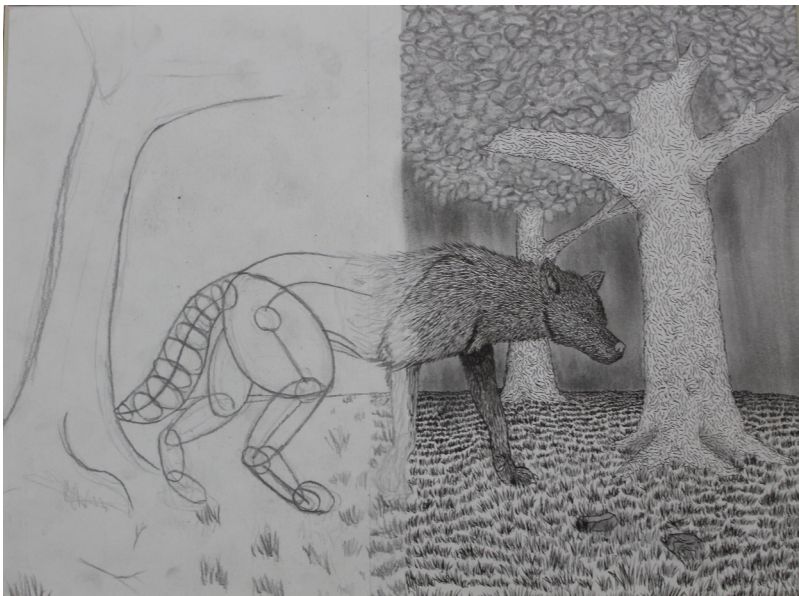


Circling Life by Jade Panyko

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Cyber Wolf by Rhain Martin Hauser Long

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## Time

by Abigail Christian

As a child, I ran up and down the street,  
Exhilarating wind pushing past my feet.  
The street lights dim as the sun sets on the West.  
Beep, beep, beep  
Time passes and morning comes at its best.

A sweet and subtle hello from mother, and  
Soon the savory smell of bacon finds my nose.  
But time goes on, as it always does,  
I found myself alone like a bird alone on its branch.

Reminiscing on memories of my past,  
Coming at me like an avalanche.  
Now the street lights stay dim.  
But as time passes, I grow with the wind.  
Time is a flowing river.  
And I think it might be missed, just a sliver.

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## Thank You, Professors

by Bruno Brito

For you who allow us to increase our knowledge and teach us to live with dignity, a thank you would not be enough. For you who enlighten our ways with words and attitudes, turn our obstacles from daily activities into enlightened ways through your dedication and skills, and make us follow a fearless and hopeful way of life, a thank you would not be enough. To you who always give your full strength and tell us that we should not give up on our dreams, for the long waiting and understanding during our long trips, a thank you would not be enough. For teachers who chose this profession out of love, it would not be enough to say that we have no words to thank you all for this. What I feel can not be translated into words. But, I hope this is enough to express my gratitude to you. Thank you.



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## Lucifer's Plea

by Ja'Onna Brown

I asked God the same question every single day.  
Until I reached the boiling point...  
Screaming into the air as the rain beat against my face and lightning got too close to my skin.

"Why won't you let me die?"  
"WHY WON'T YOU LET ME DIE!"

Lightning strikes closer and I'm glad. It means he's angry.  
But so am I

Tears mix with rain. Sobs shake me better than the wind.  
Fire courses through my veins as I scream at him over and over.

Begging to be reunited as another strike stirs the ground beneath my feet.

Crashing to the ground I scream.

Begging.

"PLEASE!"

The rain stops and the wind calms. No more lightning in the sky.

And I'm back to square one.

--It's not always better to do it and ask for forgiveness later. Not even God can forgive certain things.



The Watchful Outcast by Jessica Burns



Joker by Patrik Rodriguez



Sunset From the Air by Kenneth Witkovich





Sunset Beauty by Jordan Peterson

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## Naples Beach

by Jennifer Barton

In the summer of 1993 my mom and I swam into the sea with trust  
Little did I know what would meet us

My mom accompanied me when it was low tide  
I examined the water for predators that hide

We swam a long way through deep water and a sandbar  
I was just a teen and did not realize we went too far

High tide was coming in  
We were in deep water and turned back towards the land and that's when We saw a fin

To my horror it was a huge shark  
My mom said to get on the inflatable mat; the shark was fast and dark

God was with us that day  
The shark passed by us and swam away

We continued through the shallow and deepsea  
When we reached the shore, I was as scared as I could be  
Our lives were spared  
And I never again dared

To swim out in low tide  
And get caught in deep water where we could have died

I have not been back to that sea  
And I am glad we were spared of what could be

I know that God had a purpose for me  
To tell what happened in that sea

Be careful and try not to go swimming alone  
If you do you may never make it home

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# Soggy Fruit Loops and Warm Milk

by Alyssa Shinaberry

Dear [xxxxx],

I wrote a paper for school, although it was supposed to be a “professional judgment” and not some therapeutic typing aerobics that left me drained mentally, physically, and emotionally, I erased most of it and collected myself to start typing again. It was supposed to be something simple for school to explain why I needed more financial aid to cover my classes and it ended up opening some old scars I didn’t know were there anymore. There was a even a time of almost two years where I didn’t think about you once. You didn’t even exist in the same plane of the universe that I inhabited, maybe not even at all. I hoped you were gone forever. Well, you know what they say about hoping? I ended up writing a paper, not about you, but what I’ve accomplished in spite of the horrendous things you’ve done to me and other children. I see you have two children of your own. Little boys. Hopefully, you don’t touch little boys.

You know my dad didn’t believe me when I told him, right? I didn’t understand what I do now. My dad always trusts men over women, and anyone over his family. I was six when I told him. One would think he would trust what I said was true, but instead, he defended you.

You lived with us, [xxxxx], you didn’t have a place to live so my family took you in, and like a leech you sunk your teeth into our home and into me. I was about four the first time I remember, how long did you wait before you decided to-- Well, that’s a hard word to say. I can say so many words, never caring what they are because they’re just words, right? Like bitch, slut, cunt, whore and a lot more. But ra-- It’s still hard to say. I can’t believe, even now, that someone could look at a child and think the sadistic things you thought, the things you conspired.

You’ve made me afraid of many things for a long time, including the red LED of your alarm clock in the morning. The time 2:23 AM. Something made with an amazing, functional purpose. Great thing we have cell phones with alarms and those are obsolete.

You’ve made me afraid of the dark. I wet the bed until I was eight because that’s when you would get me, wasn’t it? Like a predator, a wolf hunting sheep. Snatch me in the hallway when I got up to pee. I didn’t dare make that mistake again. As long as I was on the top bunk, I was safe. Even if I had to smell like pee. I was embarrassed, my brother always made fun of me. He was younger than me, it wasn’t his fault. He didn’t know the things you were doing to me.

You’ve made me afraid of men. The ones I don’t know and the ones I do. I’ve always been afraid to cross the parking lot at night, to walk in the dark when I needed to. I shiver when a man glances at me for too long. How is that fair to anyone? To me, to men who are probably decent, unlike you. My car broke down, I was sitting on the side of the road and a kind-looking man tried to stop and help me. I told him I knew what I was doing even when I didn’t because I was afraid. Because of the sick things you did to me.

I remember what you said to me when you were afraid. My brother was banging on the door screaming because he though I was getting something special like candy on the other side of the door. But you thought he might tell on you, didn’t you? You picked me up and turned me to face you. I had tears running down my face and you said, “You did something very bad Alyssa. If your parents find out they won’t love you anymore.”



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You opened the door and put me in front of the breakfast that you made, but you didn't let me eat before you grabbed me and took me. I stared into the bowl, bright colors mixing into a bowl of milk. It was soggy and it was gross. I stared at the bowl until you sighed, yanked it off the coffee table and put it in the sink.

My mom, in spite of the issues she's had, was the one who believed me. Though I think she went about it in a way I didn't like, constantly asking me what happened. It was like falling off a bicycle without a helmet or kneepads and scraping your knees and elbows. It hurts but you pick the scabs because those bother you, too. They bleed and it hurts all over again. Taking a long time to heal. Only these scars aren't visible and people that see me don't see how much I hurt. It isn't a casual conversation, it isn't something you want to tell someone even when they ask you what's on your mind.

It's not considered a scar of courage or bravery. Having a big scar on your knee is a cool story and can go from the genuine story of stopping too fast with my front brake to flying down a hill and into a car, which was the story I told my friends.

I know you don't care, sick fucks like you don't have the ability to. I didn't write this letter for you, but for me and other people that wake up every day in spite of their past and people that see me don't see how much I hurt. It isn't a casual conversation, it isn't something you want to tell someone even when they ask you what's on your mind.

I told one friend and she told her parents, and she wasn't allowed to be my friend anymore, as if I was going to be a bad influence on their child because I confided in them things that no child should go through. I didn't know that I couldn't talk about it, I didn't know it had to be a secret.

Now, these things don't have to be secrets. People don't have to be ashamed of talking about it. Even though it's still an uphill battle and people like to blur the lines, I've decided to share because I'm 24 now. I've been ashamed for 20 years of something someone else did. I wouldn't be ashamed if someone stole my car, broke into my home or tried to kill me. Why should I be ashamed of being a victim of something I couldn't prevent?

Is this being open with trauma? Maybe.

It's more like using your past as armor so that it can never be used to hurt you.

I'm not going to hold onto this because it feels better to let it go. Who am I protecting? Not [xxxxx], the supposed "uncle" that my family thought they could trust.

Not myself, holding it in has led to me self-sabotaging my body, making myself look as bad as I feel on the inside. I don't deserve that and I'm not taking it anymore.

I don't know how to end a letter I'll never send to some child molester I'll probably never see again. So if by some way this letter reaches you through the magic of the internet.

Burn in Hell. Sincerely,

Alyssa



Princess Ziva by April Howell



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## Hope: Through the Darkness

by Justin McNeight

“Hope springs eternal” is a phrase that is used to keep people hanging on, often by someone expressing sympathy instead of true empathy. We are all works in progress. It has been said that no person is truly a Buddhist, only that one can be “on the way.” I am on the way. Not to Buddhism, or anywhere in particular spiritually, but I am on a journey. We all are. Our journeys as people intertwine, separate, and one day stop altogether, at least from a certain point of view. The following are a few snapshots from a journey on planet Earth thus far. Hopefully, you may glean some intuition from these words and feel no inclination to emulate the less savory actions of these stories herein. Hope is what often keeps a situation from turning from despair into true darkness.

I was an awkward young kid. I wore corduroy overalls on most days. Osh-Kosh-Begosh was the brand that was big back in my day. I topped this style off with a bowl cut my best friend’s mother gave me every few weeks. My best friend was the girl next door. I was a happy little boy. I hoped to be a scientist/astronaut/sports star when I grew up.

I was baptized in a lake, or a pond. It may have been a drainage ditch filled with water. I know that it was summer. I know it was some sort of revival. Recollections from many early years of my life are haphazard at best, sometimes they are non-existent. The church we attended in my hometown of Murrysville, Pennsylvania was Methodist. I don’t truly understand to this day what that means other than it is a denomination of Protestant Christianity (I think). I would sing a solo of ‘Away in a Manger’ every Christmas Eve. I never remember being frightened of the crowd, or scared

of being the center of attention. I was a natural at singing and started this annual ritual at an age where I was probably too young to understand what stage fright was. I hoped people enjoyed my singing.

Fast forward to high school in Central Florida and my limited tenure of two calendar years where I rarely attended and ended in expulsion for a violent criminal offense. I do not recommend this approach to anyone who seeks a happy, healthy approach to life and success at any age or pace. I had been using drugs - both legal prescriptions handed out by therapists and psychologists and the street variety - for 8 years already. I had ‘blossomed’ into one of the ‘freaks.’ Face painted like Brandon Lee’s most famous and ultimately deadly movie role, giant jeans, and an oversized black t-shirt adorned with the lyrics of my most beloved, offensive musician, whom I still love to this day. My ability to perform in front of an audience had evolved into a way of life. All of my choices screamed, “HEY LOOK AT ME!” That itself was not the problem. The problem was that by continuing these behaviors well into adult age I had morphed into someone who was only comfortable with all that attention when altering my brain chemistry with outside intoxicants. I hoped people liked me.

By thirty-two years of age, I couldn’t function without high-grade pharmaceuticals pumping through my system. A few years later, I was introducing said chemicals directly into my veins via syringe. I’d done and become everything I said I wouldn’t be. I was a junkie, flat out. Down and out. Down and dirty. At this stage, lack of stage fright had reversed into not being able to look another human being in the eye. Not my friends or my lovers, let alone myself. Every human interaction I had was a means to an end, the end result being getting myself the next bag of dope.

I lost my family’s home more than once.

I lost every job and opportunity I was blessed with.

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I lost the love and respect of those I most cherished on this Earth, even the ones that had used with me in the past. This is because I took things to a level they did not, for reasons they may never care to know or accept if they ever did. In the end, it was my choices that brought these consequences to my door. There are even a few dark years after these times. I hoped I would die and did my best to make it happen more than once.

One day, I learned it was a disease, not a moral failing. Years later I accepted it. Every day I struggle with it. For anyone hopeless out there, hold on. For anyone who wants to change, it's possible. Change is the only constant you can count on in your life. It will come whether or not you want it to. It will mock your avoidance of it, it will destroy your plans. Don't fight it, embrace it. It may save your life. Today I've written about it for one reason: that reason is hope.

I've been back to church on occasion. I seek therapy through fellowship and professional help. I take my medicine and I check my impulses. On the good days. In the end, it is the hope for change that shines through the darkness I feel. It saves my life.

Everyday.

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## Come Take a Walk in My Shoes

by Korianne Wheatley

Come take a walk in my shoes,  
I would love for you to try it, I really do.  
It's sure not a walk in the park.  
Everywhere I go, it's like I am marked.

As I walk past I can't help but notice the stares,  
I would like to show them how my attitude flares.  
I hear the whispers as I get close,  
It's normally about my appearance the most.  
I am just a person, as are you,  
I judge myself enough, you don't need to too.

I was born this way  
So please refrain from what you say.  
Or else I will let out what I've been holding in,  
Like a metaphorical kick to the shin.

Who the hell do you think you are?  
When you are not the best by far.  
What makes you think you have the right to judge me?  
You are just a simple-minded prick, it is plain to see.

You think your comments make you look cool.  
But in reality, on the inside everyone sees a fool.  
Needing to break someone down,  
To make you feel like you wear a crown.  
It's pathetic, you think that is the way to be,  
I'll set and use you as an example, wait and see.

I believe kindness is the key to win this game,  
So I will walk with a smile and no shame.  
Lend a helping hand wherever I go,  
No matter what, don't stoop that low.  
I wouldn't dare want to make a person feel that way,  
Or purposely ruin anyone's day.



You'll Miss This One Day by Kelsey Conklin



# The Faces of In The Write Mind



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*Poetry Editor*



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*Photo Editor*



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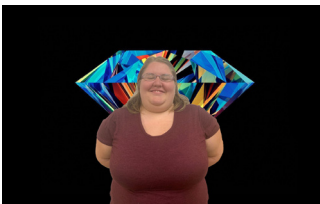
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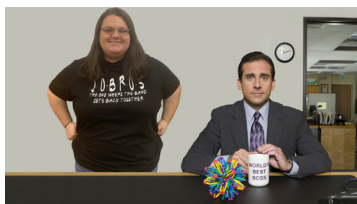


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# Submit to In The Write Mind

“In the Write Mind” is the literary and art magazine at College of Central Florida Citrus Campus, where students’ and staff inspiration is published every spring. Writing submissions of poetry, fiction or essays, and artwork such as drawings, paintings or photography can be submitted.

**IMPORTANT:** You must be a CF student to submit to the magazine and we **WILL NOT** accept any previously published works - your submission must be original content.

Use the following link to submit to the next issue of the  
In The Write Mind Magazine.

<https://www.cf.edu/community/arts/student-publications/in-the-write-mind/>

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## Equity at College of Central Florida

College of Central Florida offers equal access and opportunity in employment, admissions and educational activities. The college will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion, gender, pregnancy, age, marital status, national origin, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status or disability status in its employment practices or in the admission and treatment of students. Recognizing that sexual harassment constitutes discrimination on the basis of gender and violates this policy statement, the college will not tolerate such conduct.



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“To be creative means to be in love with life. You can be creative only if you love life enough that you want to enhance its beauty, you want to bring a little more music to it, a little more poetry to it, a little more dance to it.”

Osho  
1931-1990