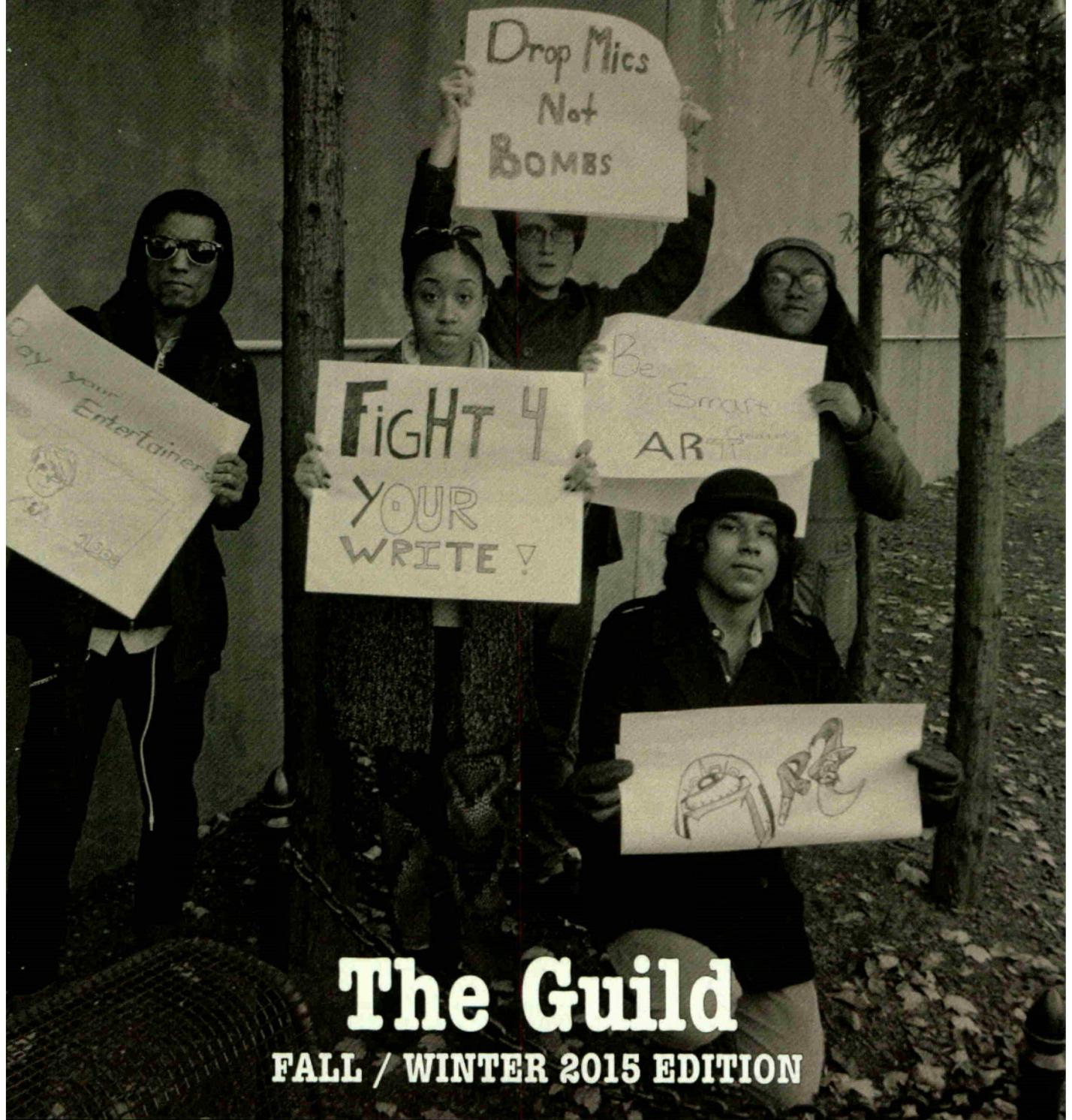


# BMCC Writers' Guild Presents



## The Guild

FALL / WINTER 2015 EDITION

## WELCOME TO "THE GUILD"

WELCOME TO "THE GUILD," A DIVERSE LITERARY MAGAZINE HERE AT BMCC THAT WAS CREATED BY STUDENTS FOR STUDENTS. IT'S OUR OWN LITTLE SIDE PROJECT HERE AT THE BMCC WRITERS' GUILD.

THE MAGAZINE YOU ARE HOLDING CONTAINS VARIOUS STORIES WRITTEN BY PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS, AND SHARING DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES. WHAT WE ALL HOPE EACH OF YOU WILL TAKE WHEN YOU READ THIS PUBLICATION IS A TEMPORARY RELEASE OF JOY, ENTERTAINMENT, AND DEEP THINKING.

WE HEAR AT THE WRITERS' GUILD STRONGLY BELIEVED THAT WE NEEDED TO DISPLAY CREATIVE WORK BY MORE THAN JUST THE CLASSROOMS DURING OUR REGULAR CLUB ROOMS. WE NEEDED TO EXPAND OUR WORK AND SHARE IT WITH THE WORLD. ONE OF THE WAYS WE'VE MANAGED TO DO IT IS BY CREATING A PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION OF CREATIVE WORK FOR PEOPLE TO READ NO MATTER WHERE THEY GO. THAT'S WHY EVERY TIME A NEW ISSUE OF "THE GUILD," WE PRY OURSELVES INTO MAKING SURE THAT WHAT YOU ARE HOLDING IS WORTH READING.

THANK YOU SO MUCH TO **PROFESSOR BENITA NOVENO**, ADVISOR OF THE BMCC WRITERS' GUILD, FOR DOING WHAT YOU DO, AND GIVING THE CLUB EXCELLENT DIRECTIONS. THIS WAS YOUR FIRST YEAR AS THE ADVISOR FOR THIS CLUB, AND YOU DID A SPLENDID GOOD JOB AT IT.

THANK YOU TO **ARTS MATTER PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION** TEAM FOR ALLOWING US TO CREATING NOT ONLY OUR AMAZING COVER, BUT SOME OF THE OTHER AMAZING PHOTOS THAT YOU'LL SEE THROUGH EACH SECTION OF THE MAGAZINE.

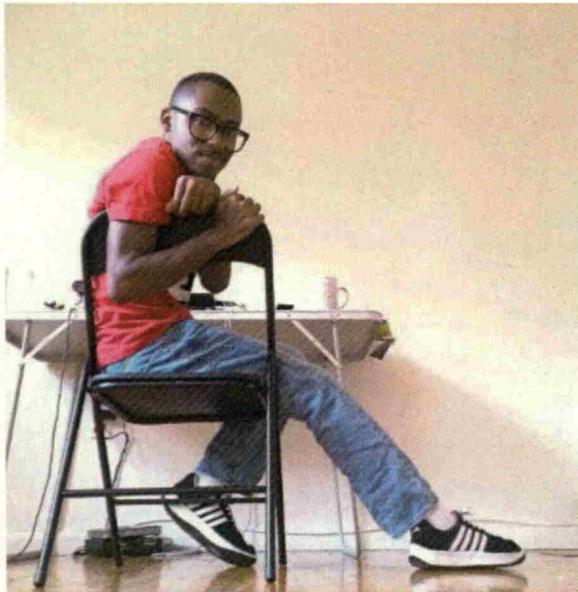
THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO HAVE PARTICIPATED AND MODELED FOR THIS NEW ISSUE; **Hannah Koufos, Mishael Perez, Jada Gordon, Carlos Martinez, Livan Hernandez, Daija Ruiz, Anthony Mustafa, Brandon Short, and Nicholas Luna.**

MOST IMPORTANTLY, THANK YOU TO **BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE**, FOR CONTINUING TO ALLOW THE WRITER'S GUILD TO DO THIS. THIS IS OUR SIXTH ISSUE, AND WE'RE PLANNING TO GO FOR SIX MORE.

IF YOU LIKE WHAT YOU HAVE READ, AND WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOUR OWN STORIES FEATURED IN THIS PUBLICATION, FEEL FREE TO SUBMIT TO THE NEXT ISSUE. WE PRETTY MUCH ACCEPT CREATIVE WORKS OF ALL KIND.

**THEGUILD.SUBMIT@GMAIL.COM**

# Meet The Guild



**Roque Caston Jr.**

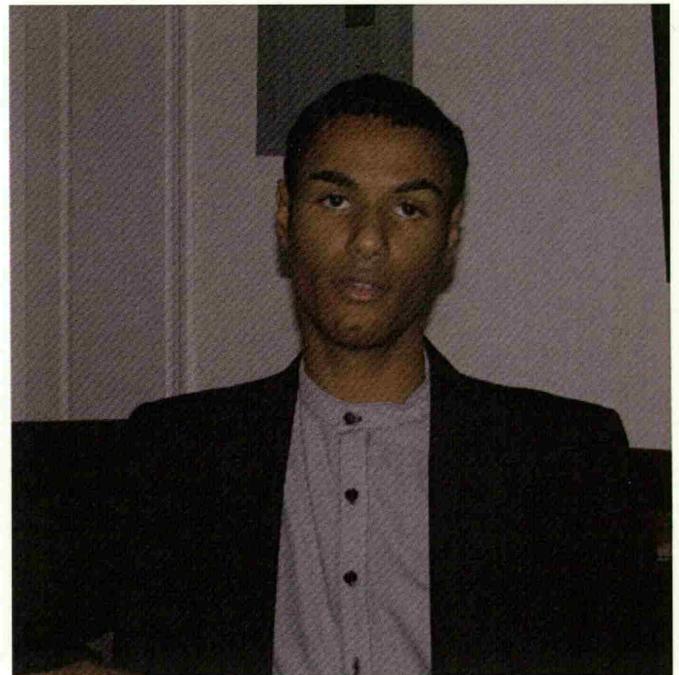
**Editor-In-Chief**

Roque Caston Jr. is a Writing & Literature major. He was the President of BMCC Writers' Guild for the Fall 2015 semester. He created the online blog "Roque's Reality." He dreams of writing novels, critical essays, plays, and screenplays. When not writing he binges on Japanese anime, watching ld movies from the black and white era to romantic comedies from the 1990s, and playing video games all day. His personal favorites are Final Fantasy games.

**Shaquille Smith**

**Editor**

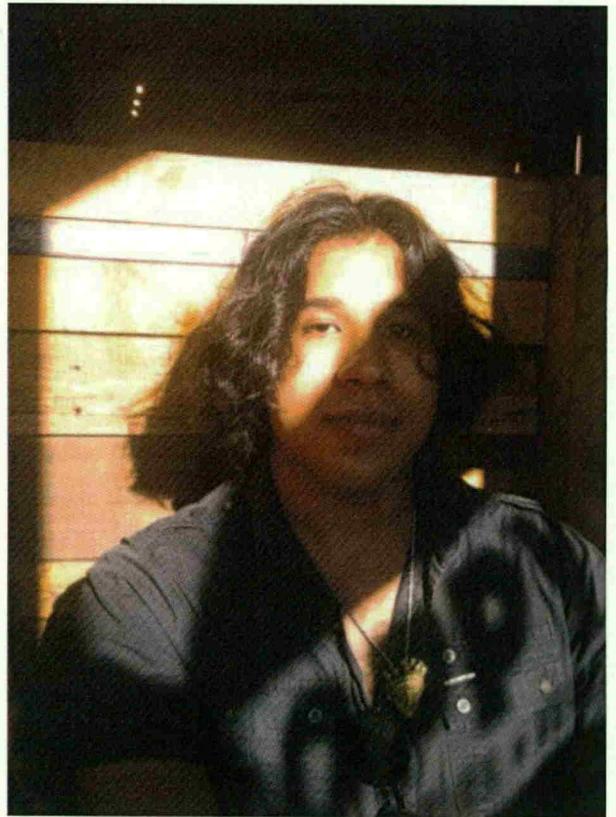
Shaquille Smith is an aspiring writer looking to inspire. Looking to delve deep into the minds of members from different communities and bring out their most obscure fantasies and nightmares. Smith embraces sexuality, uncomfortable vices, and breaks down gender norms along with other expectations from society. Smith supports #ArtsMatter and continues to make art, you can find more here at [inspirationoverintellect.com](http://inspirationoverintellect.com)



## **Carlos Martinez**

### **Editor**

I'm currently studying at BMCC and going for a writing and literature major. I aspire to make my own mark in the literary world. As long as I can remember I've wanted to write and I have hopes and goals in working one day for a literary magazine or newspaper, while also working as a freelance writer. I'm a team player and a hard worker who wishes to get things done at the end of the day so I can have my time to unwind and get loose with a good drink and book in my hand.



## **Jada Gordon**

### **Editor**

Hey guys!! I'm Jada. This is my second semester in BMCC and I enjoy writing and the arts in general. I love writing poetry, short stories, essays, etc. I also enjoy singing and writing music. My other interests include traveling (especially to abandoned places), reading, being a music lover, walking and finding lots of vintage stuff. If you want to see some of my work it's on WordPress on either Lucana Magazine and my blog <https://jadagordon95.wordpress.com/>



## FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

Another semester has passed, which means another issue is finished. This issue that you are reading now is finished. If I had to decide, this issue will probably be the most political, thought provoking, satirical issue that I ever had to put together thanks to my fellow editors and club members.

Throughout the past nearly three years, everyone has been talking about “Black Lives Matter,” and the stance it takes. Black Lives Matter is an international activist movement, originating in the African-American community, that campaigns against violence toward black people. Black Lives Matter organizes protests around the deaths of black people on a regular basis in regards to killings by law enforcement officers, and broader issues of racial profiling, police brutality, and racial inequality in the United States criminal justice system.

What started as a hashtag on social media has now become a international subject matter that has been talked about for decades. In most cases, you can call this the modern day Civil Rights moment in one way or another.

Obviously, we hear at the Writers’ Guild couldn’t avoid talking about that. This serious issue throughout America has been affecting our lives more ways than the other. One time, during a random writing workshop, one of our club members pulled out her cell phone, and it was a breaking news from CNN regarding the Eric Garner case. Immediately, the workshop shifted, and we were talking about the case itself, as well as other things. Before you knew it, news were coming out from one way to the other; transgender injustice, racial profiling at the department store, political corruptions for minority groups, and the list kept going.

It got to a point where I couldn’t have a good time during happy hour at the nearby bar without looking at the TV screen, and see some random CNN report talking about Black Lives Matter. Then once it was time for me to manage and moderate by club as the sitting President, I couldn’t help but to think what was everyone thinking about.

Being the liberal that I am, I knew something was struck, and we had to compartmentalize, and incorporate this into the new issue of “The Guild.” I said to everyone “How are we going to spin this around? How are we going to take this subject matter and make it our own?”

It took only a matter of minutes, but we finally came up with an idea that became the theme of this issue. The theme of this semester’s issue became “Arts Matter,” our own spin on the subject matter of “Black Lives Matter.”

Throughout the years, we have seen society treat the creative arts as second class citizens over the science and technology departments. It has been decades of fighting, but it sometimes feel like the creative arts don’t get a break in being looked at equally. Whether you’re a painter, graphic designer, writer, musician, poet, screenwriter, whatever, it seems as though creative arts need to constantly prove that they are relevant just like those scientists or politicians that are trying to make a change in the world. That is the main inspiration for this new issue.

Each piece accepted here are diverse and express a wide range of subjects that are bound to get us talking. I read each of them one by one, and am floored by how much diversity is in this one issue. There are times when I wanted to pull out a Taylor Swift and invite each of them into my apartment, and ask them about how they came up with these crazy ideas.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **Art/Photography**

10. "Naruto Uzuumaki" by Kenta David

## **Poetry**

12. "The Girl From The Book" by Kimberly Ortega

13. "The Past" by Kimberly Ortega

15. "Revisit Life" by Carlos Martinez

17. "Sonnets 1 & 2" by Mishael Perez

18. "Call For Change" by Brandon Short

20. "Thunders & Almonds" by Brandon Short

21. "House of the Rising Symphony" by Clovis Kabongo

22. "Misfits" by Cherie Jacobs

24. "Untitled" by Sofia Enstrom

25. "Waiting" by Jada Gordon

26. "In Time" by Jada Gordon

## **Fiction/Short Stories**

28. "Welcome To Camp Tamarak" by Bryant Reynolds

29. "A Boat In Still Waters" by Carlos Martinez

36. "Help of the Gods & Angels" by Nissa Byrd

38. "Attractive Dirt" by Shaquille Smith

## **Nonfiction/Journalism**

46. "Freedom & Happiness: The Artist's Aesthetic" by Karina Liriano

## **Playwright/Dialogues**

50. "Wu's Last Tape" by Hannah Koufos



# ARTY/ PHOTOGRAPHY

245  
245



# Naruto Uzumaki

うずまきナルト

By Kenta David

# LEONINE

# The Girl from the Book

By Kimberly Ortega

I remember my mother's dark, dirty floor.  
The pain I felt as every piece of clothing I had on  
was getting torn off in fast motion.  
The hand of the guy I thought I loved,  
covering my mouth, as I screamed for someone to help me.

The pain was something I'd never felt before,  
it wasn't a cut or a scrap.  
This pain would never go away or heal.  
As if time could stand still,  
I lay there thinking what my mother would think.

When I told her what had happened, I was weak.  
Every move I made,  
felt like the world was crashing down on me.  
In reality, it was an eighteen year old guy,  
crushing me as he forced his way into my innocence.

I lay there naked in my own blood trying to figure out why this all  
happened, and why it had happened to me.  
The pain and suffering still lies in my head as I dream at night.  
It isn't forgotten and never will be.

It's been two weeks.  
I feel sick.  
My body aches.  
Mom said she will take me to the doctors.  
I hate doctors.  
I hope they tell me what's wrong.  
I probably have the flu.  
I lied.  
The results came back.  
I am HIV positive. . .

# The Past

By Kimberly Ortega

Imagine yourself  
Alone in your head  
You're hanging, dangling  
From a silver thread

Empty, alone  
With the monsters within  
Internally screaming  
You just want to give in

Now imagine that's you  
Every day, every hour  
Forever sinking  
Like a wilting flower

You try to tell your dad  
And you try to tell your mom  
But they say you're being silly  
You've just got to move on

Because teens don't know sorrow  
Nor the hardships of life  
They're just kids with imaginations  
Just looking for attention, right?

You think that there's no one  
Who knows how you feel  
You're just so alone  
But the feelings. . .they're real

Useless  
Neglected  
Forgotten  
Distressed

Alone  
Afraid

But mostly  
Depressed

And your friends  
They go on  
Like nothing has changed

"They must not care"  
Your thoughts whisper

You can't escape it  
Trapped in your own skin  
You're ugly  
You're hated  
But you hide it with a grin

You hate what you feel  
So instead you feel nothing  
Your insides are numb  
Your confidence is crumbling

You look to other things  
To stop the pain  
Cutting, pills  
But it gives you no gain

No matter how much you plead  
That you're broken inside  
Everyone turns the other way  
They run, they hide

They say you are foolish  
That it's all in your head  
What they don't know, is inside  
You're already dead

# Revisit Life

By Carlos Martinez

I want to go to a desert,  
Where nothing can bother me,  
Where I won't bump into anything,  
To close my eyes for minutes walking for miles,  
To anywhere where I don't have it planned out,  
My eyes shall not guide me anywhere,  
It shall be my mind.

I want to talk out loud my mind,  
I want to cry when I couldn't in front of people,  
I want to scream when I couldn't even in my own home,  
I want to let it all out,  
I want to let my body do what it wants,  
I want to sing lousy without anyone complaining,  
Howl obscene curses when I couldn't in a scared society,  
Recite poetry and smash instruments and objects, all at the same time,  
I want to dance like I've just discovered I have legs,  
I want to run naked like a reborn baby,  
I want to yell angrily or happily at the world and anyone up there listening to me.

Never in my life I felt my body naked under the sun, with the cool breeze,  
I never have put my face on a flat surface, and licking it,  
I never smashed my fists into it,  
I don't know what to feel until.

I want to say out loud and perhaps yell in never before all my years:

*You don't control me anymore  
You cannot tell me what to do  
It's my sexuality and I can do what I want with it  
It's my body and I'll paint it anyway I desire  
It's my health and I'll experiment with it how I choose to  
It's my belief and I'll keep practicing it  
It's my political opinion and I'll stand by it  
I'm not small or inferior  
I'm not weak  
I'm not quiet  
I'm not ignorant  
I have my rights too  
I have feelings too  
I too have opinions  
I'm allowed options  
I'm allowed equal opportunities  
You can't shut me down  
You can't corrupt me hard  
I don't care if it's written in stone  
You won't live forever  
There shall be newer people  
Forever challenging traditions, laws, norms, and ideas*

*All those who oppose them will have already died or be outnumbered  
We won't go violent  
That's only if you drive us to do so  
I want to embrace myself  
Because I'm beautiful in my own eyes  
I'm great in my own creative individual personality  
I'm intelligent under my own ideas  
I'm right because I've said so  
Taking into account what I say will not just empower me  
But everyone who needs empowerment  
Who needed it long ago  
Who need it now  
And who will need it in the future.*

## Sonnets 1

I saw you eyeing me from far away,  
with that longing look and that playful gaze.  
I return it in earnest, as to say:  
That I hope that you'll be the one that stays.  
It's true that you could pick any other,  
and may be served just as well if you did,  
but please let me set your heart aflutter,  
together we'll explore what they forbid.  
Take me down slowly, you don't own me yet -  
though your hand on my spine is a good start.  
Be gentle with me, we've only just met,  
and I'll find my own way into your heart.  
Once you've pored through my pages you will  
see  
that you and I, like love, were meant to be.

## Sonnets 2

She calls to me when I least expect it.  
Whether in highest highs or lowest lows,  
her haunting voice sings that I should submit,  
she plays the lyre to the tune of heart's throes.

What can I make of my mistress's desires,  
when she bids me to do what I shan't?  
Self-destruction alone would stoke her fires,  
and to destroy myself further I can't.

The strings she plucks offer no melodies,  
though they rise in crescendo all the same.  
The songs that she plays are but maladies,  
For disaster, her Siren song 's to blame.

She'd leave my senses stranded and destroyed,  
Should I hearken to the Call of the Void.

**Both Pieces By**  
Mishael Perez

# Call For Change

By Brandon Short

Everybody's talking in their sleep,  
And while I'm dreaming all I seem to see is.  
A similar situation hung on a different degree  
I mean  
A similar world that could be

We could put down our guns, and our religious texts  
Put out the fires that have long since been used for warmth  
Put aside our creeds, skin, gender, orientation  
And pick back our brothers  
We are ALL somebody's baby  
With scars on our knees in the shape of childhood  
Proof that we all can bleed  
Yes that we all are holy.

Allah, Brahma, Christ, God, Jehovah, Krishna, Yahweh,  
And any other gods, please  
Listen  
I'm begging the core of my being at the top of my fucking lungs  
Real or not  
Let it be known  
That this violence is not the answer  
This path is not sustainable  
This blood is thicker than water  
And both are more important than oil  
It does not have to be US and THEM  
And another sleepless night has left me tired  
Tired of hearing the same political lies  
Tired of this hopeless feeling  
And I'm not begging for sleep, no  
I'm begging for change  
I'll adorn myself in the torn rags and flags of our once clean nation  
Go to the grand central station of our humanity

And start asking, pleading, screaming for change.  
Scream for us to do a recount  
And realize that our similarities outnumber our differences 10,000:1  
Our dreams outnumber our fears 14:1  
Which strangely enough is the same ratio of soldiers to schools in the U.S.  
And we wonder where we're learning this violence  
This awful math has us choking on sleeping pills  
Until our humanity is the transparent orange of our bottles  
And our sanity has us all talking in our sleep,  
Everybody's talking in their sleep,  
And while I'm dreaming all I seem to see is.  
A similar situation hung on a different degree  
I mean  
A similar world that could be  
Yes, in this world  
I'm still afraid that we're on the brink  
But I refuse to be afraid of terrorist  
I'd rather be afraid of the skeletons in my closet  
And the nagging feeling that I run away too much  
But mostly.  
I'm afraid we won't accomplish our dreams  
Because we're all too busy talking in our sleep.  
So wake the fuck up

# Thunders & Almonds

By Brandon Short

I fell for you like September Leaves, 6 months early,  
I've always had strange timing like uncomfortable

Pauses

Your July heat wave hips are steaming with the staggered April wind of my breath  
Your stomach is an almond that I skinned with my bare teeth  
And your freckles are as cute as my coffee and cigarette stained smile isn't  
The flavor of you makes my mannered mouth wild again  
And it is a fact that taste buds only last 10 days  
And mine aren't ready to forget you  
They still find mysteries in your softest curves

I have to confess that I daydream about you still in a sexual way  
Just I wish we were dancing naked in a field of daisies and our wildest ambitions  
I want grass stains on my back as long as I have on my chest your shoulder's silhouette as a tan line  
And your mouth on my ear singing wonderful "I love you"s  
Taking the words right off my lips,  
So please come put them back, softly  
And make wishes off my cheeks bones  
As we roll through each other's storms  
It is a fact  
That I'd rather be struck down by your lightning  
Than never having felt your thunder.

# House of the Rising Sympathy

By Clovis Kabongo

I have always been a child trapped. Locked in a world soaring in the heights of perpetual perfection that laws called for compliance. A world lost to youth and demanded the totality of precociousness, commanded that childhood be abandoned so that their needs could thrive with stolen breaths while singing this hymn of family.

This family that religiously destroys, this family of impeccable forgers who see their flock as golden clay ready to beat, to throw, to mold into soulless followers that move to the rhythm of the charmer. That have their individualism snuffed out like a dying light in order to be replaced by a new bulb that shines with his light -- only His light.

Forbidden emotions, bound from feeling, prohibited from living, all while under the gentle belief of choices.

There are no choices in this world that's strings are stitched within us. No cause to leave when his gleaming smile has warmed us kindly, no escape from a world devoid of errors. And although most beam with their new-found lobotomies, my strings begin to weaken until the relieving sound of the impassive "snap" drowns my ears with the choice of freedom.

# Misfits

By Cherie Jacobs

Often ignored or overlooked

They are undermined

Seen as the underdog

Persistent is what they need to be in order to survive

Another statistic, another stereotyped

Misfits can be pragmatic

Sometimes having to face different inner challenges or obstacles

There can be bumps in the road

Progression fuels their existence

Each experience that they're moving into

Each one of them on a different journey

One in which is filled with life lessons

Each one known for analyzing

Observers each in their own right

Writing what they feel

Creators in their own right

The choice to let fear overtake you or to be fearless

Misfit

On a constant pursuit to make it

Trendsetters

Hipsters. Brooklyn. Notorious B.I.G.

Difference has no label

To be loved or appreciated

Misfits often abused and misused

Taken advantage of by those they trust

By those they put their heart and soul into

Misfits encountering trauma

Minorities

Inner City

Third World

Misguided

Each coming into their own

Children. Adults of the 90s.

The Allstars  
A lovely time  
Black Power  
En Vogue

# Untitled

By Sofia Enstrom

dina minimala men betydelsefulla skillnader  
en självklarhet att födas med.

mina bokstavskombinationer blev skilsmässobarn  
intryckta i nya sammanhang  
och att bilda familj kan ta år.

hur du dansar ut ur min mun  
hänger kvar i luften med eftertryck  
är snabb och smart och rolig  
och om dom bara visste!  
om dom bara kände mig så!

istället:  
kravlande  
sökande  
osäker

men:  
sinsemellan  
fjällglaciär  
liljekonvalj

hör ni? lyssna!  
för ni vet inte och ni kommer aldrig veta  
och kanske  
kanske  
är det ändå en skatt

(men jag saknar dig)

# Waiting

By Jada Gordon

Life passes you by because you're willing to wait  
Omit the logic that we oh so die for in life  
Just let it fly by because of your fear and what others state

Wait for the right time and waiting until it's too late  
Procrastination and dependency on others give you strife  
Just let it fly by because your love is right in front of you but you're waiting for your mate

To will to wait to look for acceptance at heaven's gate  
Not actively living makes you want to stab yourself with a jackknife  
Just let it lay because sooner or later you'll be the bait

Weight broke the wagon and curiosity killed kate  
Waiting and wasting so much we've lost the things we loved now things have gone rife  
Don't let it fly by because we have a chance to congregate

Touch and go have a nice date  
Since you're not waiting anymore you might get a husband or wife  
But then again you might let it fly by because with you it seems to be a trait

If I don't wait for you I may get a clean slate  
Going to live anew in the nature and learn how to play the fife  
I'll let the past fly by because in the future I won't dwell, I'll create

# In Time

By Jada Gordon

I want to make sure there's a line in time  
I'm too sure that I'll be fine in time

Friends find love and life to feed off of  
People have hate harvested and then shine in time

Reins and rope hold the horse back in time  
While she seems to moan and whine in time

Pictures tell stories of a moment in life  
Musics tells pictures of mine in time

A coincidence of encounters are great it's true  
If it happens we could dine in time

Strokes of luck lick at your fate  
Hopefully in love I will not pine in time

**TRICHOMONY/  
STICHOMERY  
STICHOMERIS**

# Welcome To Camp Tamarak

By Bryant Reynolds

Camp Tamarack can be described by many in three words: extravagant, fantastical and dangerous.

My name is Berry Donald and I own this camp. I get many campers each year, the more the merrier. I don't have many friends but I have my camp. From children to teenagers you can learn how to fly like Peter Pan, swordfight with enemies, create robots and above all use your imagination to create anything you desire. If you wish it, your dream will come true in seconds. Depending on the wish this can lead to good things or bad things. I'm pretty quirky that way.

The location for the camp is in a magical portal that goes from the real world to the camp. It's a secret place hidden in upstate New York. We advertise to children and teenagers who only have big dreams and big creativity. We talk to them through social media and texting. I'm young myself actually, being 21.

I don't have any counselors, none at all. The children and teenagers pick their own bunks and follow rules they'll create. It's being independent and free, cool right? I do have some workers around campus, just in case. Things can get really out of hand in Camp Tamarack. Anyway, I had a lot of parents sue me over the years but the kids love my lovely camp. Something about it attracts them to it.

I'm glad about that and the pay from the parents is not bad either. I sound like a crazed lunatic, uh? Don't blame you if you think that. In reality though, I'm actually just thinking about our American youth of today. Camp Tamarack is, and always will be, a wonderful but chaotic place. I could admit it's not perfect but you'll have a whole new experience on life when you come.

Camp Tamarack:  
Exciting and villainous.  
JOIN THE MAGIC  
BERRY DONALD

# A Boat In Still Waters

By Carlos Martinez

I got punched at by one of them out of frustration. I had been asleep at the bow of the boat. His dirty hairy knuckles came at me. I stood up but he pushed me back down. He had both hands on my ragged clothes.

“This is all your fault! I hate you! You know nothing! All you do is lay around and sleep!”

“I don’t know what else to tell you!”

We wake the whole crew up. This man is itching to plunge his dagger at my throat. I’m saved by the captain, who runs at my attacker and knocks him in the back. He’s unconscious for awhile. Captain looks at me.

“Are you all right?”

“Are you?”

We all gather around him. He holds his arms up.

“We shouldn’t lose our heads. Do you want your grave to be a watery one?”

We shook our heads.

“Do you want to be at the end of our voyage too soon?”

We shook our heads again.

“Then stay planted. You’re making me nervous too. And when a captain’s nervous, who then, can you turn to? No one.”

I don’t know how many days it’s been at sea. It feels like one long one, because of the heavy thick fog.

Captain kicks the dirty unconscious savage. I shouldn’t be so mean to call him a savage. We’re all losing a little bit of our health and minds.

“I’ll be eating his dinner tonight. That’s how it is. Let him starve longer to teach him a lesson. I don’t want any more at of all of you,” he points at me menacingly, “Even you, boy. We’re all at fault. We’ve chosen this fate. You’ve chosen this fate. We must see what’s at the end of this.”

In the middle of the night, I wake up. Everyone’s huddled under their blankets. It’s terrifyingly dark without the moonlight entering fully. I sit up and see the white sails. It may be dark, but I can see a figure hiding up behind the sails. I stand still staring at him. All I can see of his black shadow is he’s wearing some overcoat with the ends of it ripped and gently swaying. I don’t think I’ve seen him before in my life. He certainly isn’t one of us. He hangs on at the ropes with his long hands and arms.

A small black bird flies past us. Another follows. One of the men in the crow's nest catches the bird. The bird is trying to peck away from his hands. He grins evilly at it and snaps its neck. He then proceeds to chew on its black feathery body. Some of the crewmembers play a game of cards while others either go to sleep too or stare out to nowhere. I feel the exterior of the boat. I lay my fingers then my hand under the water. The fog never leaves and the waters remain still. The boat travels still like on a flat surface. The water is cold. I try to see what's below. From the surface it's a dark shade of blue. Go ahead. See what's underneath. I lower my head very slowly to the surface. My reflection turns into a black hole. At the bottom, I see nothing. It's like we're riding on the surface of the universe. Someone startles me as I come back up. Another crewmember confronts me. I wince a little if he dares to hurt me. If he does, I have my pocketknife tucked inside my boot.

"Why were looking down there?"

"I don't know. Fish?"

He makes a dry crackled laugh at me. "And what did you see?"

I look straight at his beady eyes. "I saw nothing."

He smiles while controlling his laughter. He frowns upon me. "Ration's almost gone. We're beginning to starve. You look big enough."

"For what?"

Captain orders him to come.

"For what?!"

He doesn't turn back.

At night, I see the same man that was once hanging on behind the sails. Only this time he's not on the sails. He stands before one of the crew. Though he is not hiding behind anything, I still cannot see his face. His oval baldhead leans in on one of them sleeping. He just leans in very close but refrains from making physical contact. His head twists to me. No words. We have a little stare contest. This is when I see his arm extend up. He lifts a finger to me, pointing me. Somehow, this causes my eyelids to get heavy. From eyes wide open, I squint at him, till I'm back into my own darkness.

I wake up back to the gray foggy dawn. Everyone is wide awake before I am. They crowd up on the crewmember from last night, who hasn't moved from his spot. He's still covered under the sheets. People poke him. Nothing. When the captain goes to check on him, he notices the man is not breathing through his mouth or nose. No pulse.

The captain speaks. "He died in his sleep. There was no sign of a struggle."

"Who could it be?" They all question.

"Who poisoned him?"

"Who drowned his head underwater?"

Captain removes his hat and puts it over his chest. "We shall not eat him."

He knew what they were all thinking.

“The lord would not think of us to do so. He wouldn’t want us to devour our fellow man like a savage.”

“But his disciples ate his flesh and blood.”

“He was beyond man.”

What we do is we dump over his body. That way no one can dine on him. His grave will have to be a watery one. We tie up his body with whatever old silk we have but before wrapping him up, we find dense rocks for him to sink to the ocean floor.

I stretch and walk around. I talk to someone else who is at least sane.

“Do you regret being here?”

I answer him. “I don’t know yet till we see the end.”

“When we get there, I want to get off this boat and run to a tree full of fruit. What fruit do you think will hang from the trees?”

“It must be juicy. Very juicy. Dripping down your chin.”

“I want to bed with two whores.”

“I don’t care what I find. As long as it’s pleasant.”

“That’s good. You cannot get your hopes up then.”

I go sit with another man. He tells me he is looking to find the one with all the answers.

“You should come where I’m going.” He says.

“I don’t want to know too much about my fate.”

“Then you are a coward.”

“Can you still live with yourself if you knew it all?”

“Yes.”

“Really?”

“At least I’d know who to kill first if their fate says to be my enemy.”

The bastards stole my blanket. I remove my jacket and use it as an alternative. I dig my head underneath its warmth. The rest of my body is freezing. It is here when the moonlight finally breaks sound ground. Rays of blue come down from the thick clouds. There is still fog for miles. I don’t see the bald man again. Someone else does arrive however. It’s another man; a clean faced one. Yes. I can see this one clearly. He wears dark pants, boots, a white silk shirt, a brown rugged coat. He’s got long dark black hair down back to his shoulders. Black eyes. He’s also got a black hat. He comes close to me. Closer. He sits besides me.

I ask him, “Why are you here?”

He replies in a quiet tone, “Because you’re all here.”

“What do you want? What ship did you come from?”

“No ship. I didn’t swim my way here.”

That’s true. He was dry.

“You’re all dying.”

“Do you have food?”

“No.”

“Why are you here?”

“Didn’t I just answered that? I’m her because you’re here. The captain’s here. The crew’s here. It’s really a question of when I’m really needed.”

“Are you with the bald man?”

“You could say we have polar opposite jobs.”

Then it finally dawned on me.

“You got it all wrong. I’m not going to die. I’m not going to die.”

“You have no other choice. Let go, young man. It’s better this way. You won’t have to suffer under my hands.”

“Back off.”

“You can’t tell the dead to back off.”

“I’m stronger than you. I’m stronger than the crew. I’m stronger than the captain.”

“You little fool. It doesn’t matter what you say. I’ll come back soon. Very soon.”

He won’t let me see him depart. What he does is the same that happened with the bald man. He raises a finger at me, and in hypnotizing command, gets me to fall asleep.

Days go by. The two men that walk in the night come back taking away more lives. They inflict fear in me with their constant present. Nevertheless, I’m still alive and I have the perseverance to see my journey’s end. It’s during this time of madness that we unfortunately succumb what the captain was concerned about. We turn into cannibals overnight. I see with my own eyes what essence of evil we have let inhabit our souls. Can there be redemption? Why think about that? I should be thinking about shielding myself from their hairy fat hands when they come for me. I regret nothing. I must not let the devil win, or death for that matter. Good or evil, I’m just another soul for them to take. It’s times like this, that makes living feel like living. My heart, my lungs, my senses, my mind, oh my mind. I must not lose my mind.

The last days, it’s just me, the captain, and the last four men alive in this boat. The devouring of each other’s bodies didn’t saved them like they expected. It only fed their hunger, but made their minds even worse. Mad men live very short lives. Chaos, butchering, and betrayal filled the boat. We were the last ones. The captain and I stared at each other.

“Sins.”

“What?”

“Tell me what sins you’ve committed.” He repeats to me.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“You know. Don’t lie.”

“Conserve your strength.”

“You are so naïve. Tell me!”

“No.”

“I’ll tell you mine.”

“I think you’re only looking to clear your conscience.”

“You’re right. And why not? If we’re gonna die, we might as well spend our last hours getting ourselves prepared for heaven.”

He did had a point.

“What sins have you done, young man?”

“You first.”

“Fine. At least I get to get it out of the way.”

He began to tell me his story.

“I abandoned my brother.”

“Where?”

“In the war.”

“Was he taken hostage?”

“No.”

“No?”

Captain steadied himself, not trying to rush himself.

“He slept with the enemy’s wife, and later ran away together back to my post with our men at rest there.”

“You wouldn’t tolerate it.”

“She was a spy.”

“But he has your brother too.”

“Who looked up to me.”

“They fell in love.” I finished his sentences like that. I’ve heard and read about men like his brother. What dangerous lives they must live in, for a woman.

“Did the enemy found out?”

“Of course. So I abandoned him with his woman and his woman’s husband and army chasing after them, while I sailed away with my men.”

“You saw him being captured? Did you?”

“No.”

“No?”

“I could only hear his screams in the distance.”

“Oh my.”

“What’s your story, kid?”

“I’m still too young to have a story.”

“Don’t lie to me again. What’s your story?”

“Fine.”

I told him mine. I told him mine like my time to die was right there and I had no time to waste.

“I killed my girlfriend’s lover.”

“Did you? How?”

“Dagger at the throat.”

“Where?”

“At a dark place.”

“Are you satisfied?”

“Me?”

“Are you happy?”

“I don’t know. I also killed her too.”

The captain looked at me. We were not so different than we might’ve thought.

“How do you feel after telling me this?”

“How do you feel?”

“I feel like shit.”

“Yeah. Me too, a little.”

“We’ve both killed people in our lives. People we’ve loved.”

“Can we be saved?”

“Only God can say.”

“Hang tight, captain.”

“No. This voyage, has lead us to our destiny.”

“No.”

“Yes.”

The four other men just looked at us, with nothing to say. Let their souls be damned. Hell and heaven will never cease to be filled.

“My boy, I see you...”

“Yes, captain?”

“...I see you...and you’re much too dumb and pretty to die.”

“I’m not going to die. I’m not going to die.”

“I think I’m going to take a nap.”

“You do that,” I pulled out my pocketknife inside my foot, “I’ll stab you.”

“Very well. You would be doing me a favor.”

I didn’t want that. So I put back the blade back inside.

“You should sleep. You should all sleep! I’m done for.”

The remaining crew did what he said. I was once again alone. I thought very carefully on the captain’s words. I thought carefully about mine as well. I closed my eyes. I’m not ready, but then again, I’ll never be.

I woke up. No. Not in heaven, not in hell. I woke up back in the boat. I see the captain the rest still covered under their blankets. I go to tap the captain to wake up. I do the same to the others. The captain and the four men died in their sleep, as they wished. Now I was truly alone. It’s a shame. I’TS A FUCKING SHAME! FOR A YOUNG MAN’S FATE, HIS LAST HOURS...TO BE ALONE AND DY-ING! I yelled to the sky, to the ocean, to the damned cursed boat. Iwass sick of it all! If I have to, if I still want to, I have my blade. It’s another shame. There are pistols everywhere but not a single shell in any of them. I could carve one out of wood. Then I’ll die a quick death. I know suicide is a sin, but

a lot of great men have killed themselves as they reached their end. Why should they be judged on that alone? I may never redeem myself. I may rot in hell for all of eternity. How strange however, for the sinister black shadowed bald man to not come near me, and the clean cut bright faced gentleman to sit beside me. Unless, unless the devil was playing a trick on me. Is the devil playing a trick on me now?

“ARE YOU?! ANSWER ME! ANSWER ME YOU SON OF A BITCH!”

And he did. I looked up at the foggy sky for too long I did not noticed the boat stopped moving. It hit something in front. When I went to check it out, I saw that the bow caught itself in some giant rocks. Beyond those rocks, I saw platforms of green, hilly surfaces, and the rustling of tree leaves.

“I can’t believe it.”

I was on land.

“I can’t believe it!”

I stepped off the boat. I’m not hallucinating. I stepped off the boat, and onto the rocks. From there I ran far and wide, to nature. I ran and hugged the trees. I listened to the birds. I saw the clear blue sky again. The sun came out. I took off my clothes and jumped into a small lake that was on the land surrounded by more trees. I pulled fruit from the trees and ate hearty. I’ve never felt so alive. I cried. I fell to my knees and prayed to the lord.

“I’m forever in your debt! I’ll never turn back from what I once was! I’ll be a better soul for you to carry on! I promise! I swear it on my grave!”

I had to go back however. Back to the boat. I must give them a proper burial. Oh hell, I can do that later! Because I’ve got all the time in the world!

“Thank you, lord.”

Then I heard voices. The voices grew louder. The land was plenty of them. Such pleasant voices alright. I ran to them, sprinted more likely. I ran and ran as far as my heart and lungs could take it. When I arrived, they all stood, watching me.

“I’m here! I’m here!”

They, out of confusion, cheered for me. For no reason whatsoever. They didn’t know who I was. Neither did I.

“I’m here...I’m here.”

“What’s your name?” They all asked me. There were more natives than I imagined. They were abundant. They lived here for generations. It looked unconquered. Ancient, yet stable. Clean. Fresh. Beautiful. I told them my name and they welcomed me to the land.

“My friends. They’re dead.”

“Don’t worry. We’ll find them all a grave.”

“Are you all peaceful?”

“That depends. Will you harm us?”

I said I wouldn’t. But even I questioned that myself.

“Thank you, for accepting me.”

“We haven’t seen anyone from the outside in decades.”

“Really?”

“You’re the first in many years.”

## Help of the Gods & Angels

By Nissa Byrd

*Ever had that feeling of a Tardis flying around your tummy. Has the name Aiko, ever spoke to you? The days have come where I finally understood what they were talking about. His name is Atomsk, Aphrodite gave him special. But Phthonus came and took him away from me. After i sat there and cried the days away while the days Lyssa took pity on me... Rage flourished and the anger turn in to the feeling of sex became stronger then my happiness. Pothos & Himeros came touched my core. Months went by and Kōkai came and smothered me & forced me to look to the night sky. With the twinkling stars & into the moon lover's lake. There was a day that Hephaeshs spoke and pleaded with Aphrodite to allow my love to come back to my arms. The night I went to the moon and pleaded to the gods for such guidance. They would watch me cry into the lake, there was a night where the pen wouldn't stop moving by the fire of the candle light. A night where the light of the moon hit the lake perfectly & the stars twinkled brighter than ever. The gods took pity and saw the letter that was being written my love Atomsk. Falling asleep on the table, the letter that sat next to me while I slept. Tightly sealed in an envelope and saying to the love who waited slowly began to lift & towards the sky. The later i wrote flew out the window & off to a land of wonder. Days went by and it began to turn to late fall. The fallen autumn leaves layer across the ground like a painting, something that by Monet or maybe Van Gogh. Sitting by the lake looking at the two beautiful fish that swam around in circles. The evening lights and the beautiful sun and clouds standing very still. Slowly the night began to taken the evening sky hostage & the sun has changed shifts with the moon. Soft steps and a small wind pulls my hair back, a Hikari no Tenshi appears in front of me and hands me a flower a Spider Lily.*

*The beauty of the Hikari no Tenshi was as strong and bright as looking into direct sunlight. His hand stretched out reaching for mine, beginning to stand he pulls me up and leads me into the small forest that resides in the back of my small cot. The small gown I walked outside in was begging moved around like small white leaves as the moves wind moved it. In mid step, a small gleam of light was shown. Bi no Tenshi stood in front of now just standing there as, the Hikari no Tenshi bows and fades from my eye sight. She walked up to me & pulled my hand guiding me farther into the woods to a large group of trees with only two types of flowers. Cherry Blossoms & Spider Lily's, I look behind me & beautiful Bi no Tenshi points her hand towards the Cherry Blossom tree to the left. But before leaving, she waves her hand in front of me. Instead of a small white gown, I was put in a Short Beautiful Kimono. The pattern of the flowers the layer on the trees. I then began to walk towards*

*the tree to see leaning there looking casually was Atomsk. He had fallen asleep against the tree with the letter in his hand the envelope i had placed it in was opened. I stood next to him, reaching up touching his face softly. He gave a slight jump and began to stand up, only to see he was so much taller than me. Looking down he pulls my face up, kissing my lips very softly. He spoke only two words to me while we stood there and tears began to slowly run down and dance down my cheek falling to the ground touching small flower petals. He held me closely, a slight breeze moved around us. Making the flower petals dance around us in a very colorful way. Picking a flower from the tree placing it in my hair ~ we walk into the dancing flower petals that acted like a doorway and vanish into the next world. Leaving only the letter of my feelings for him that soon began to disappear along with us. In the dancing Flowers ~ Crystal Moon & Twinkling stars.*

# Attractive Dirt

By Shaquille Smith

"I hope I don't win," I whispered to myself, eyes closed and fingers crossed. "I hope I don't win. I hope I don't win." It was becoming a prayer. "I hope I don't win. I hope I don't win. God, please don't let me win."

Upon hearing the door to the dressing room open, I opened my eyes and pretended I was fixing my untamed curly hair in the mirror. Rose slid into the room, "What are you *doing*?" She asked trying to hide her frustration under the caked on makeup and expensive dress. "There's two more awards until they call the big one. You *need* to get yourself together and take your seat in the audience... Like *now!*"

"Rose, I don't want to go up there!" I said looking at her in the mirror. "Accept the award, if I win, I'll give you a bonus - I'll give you cash right now," I said digging into the jacket pocket of my suit, "I can't go up there."

She took my rattling hand out of my jacket and forced me into making eye contact with her, "Lawrence, I'm your assistant not your clone..." She softens her voice as I rub my temples. The stress, anxiety and nerves were suffocating my brain and tightening up my body. "I know it's been a rough few months... with getting invited and nearly getting attacked at Fashion Week -"

"*Invited* makes it sound like a choice, it wasn't much of an option."

Ignoring me, she continues, "... And all of the internet bashing-"

"Abuse," I corrected.

"It's stressful. But -"

"It's maddening."

"BUT! Look at it like this," She grabs me again, forcing me back into her incredibly strong hold of eye contact, "you are making history."

"I don't want to make history, I just want to write novels and short stories and teach a class at NYU and give lectures... What every writer does!"

"At the rate you're going, you're gonna do all of that... And so much more!" Her voice nearly cracks with all of the excitement, "No other writer is being followed around by paparazzi like you are! No other writer will either. You're the biggest thing that's happened to modern day literature. You've been a Bestseller for almost eight weeks straight. You're making so much money... There's a big negative aspect to this but the positives almost outweigh it all. Don't you think so?"

Everything she's saying is right. I am the conversation everyone's having today and it's doing nothing but making me richer and crazier.

"If I wanted to be a socialite, I would've been a socialite. I want to write. I can't write again, not like this. The flash of the cameras send my mind into frenzy, every time I close my eyes I see the little light bulbs create a LED suns behind my eyelids internally blinding my vision, my brain, my creativity. I'm not safe in my own head."

"Take some time off from writing, ride out this one hit wonder... Try something else in the meantime, you're an amazing cook."

"What restaurant is going to hire me? I'm an author, Rose. Do you think Friday's is hiring? Or how about Alfredo? People don't want me cooking up their lunch in San Diego! I can't be flipping burgers in Chicago! If I don't write, the world expects me to open up a little fortune teller concession stand in the Mall of America. People think I'm a psychic, as if I can predict my own future."

They want me to tell them things about their husbands and wives. I'm not a human lie detector! And I sure as hell am not a cook! I want to write another novel, not another depressing journal entry. This fame takes away from every aspect of who I am and what it entails to be a writer."

Out of rebuttals, Rose glances in the mirror to fix herself, checking her watch. "You could be a fortune teller with your luck. You can stop writing forever and dedicate your life to answering questions from people's past... Whether your right or wrong, we - I mean you - you'd still make a fortune."

"This isn't an opportunity to make a dollar, Rose." I said reaching for my wallet, "Although, I did just offer you some..."

"Lawrence, I didn't mean it like that." She was getting agitated. Stuffing my wallet back into my jacket. She makes her exit, opening the door of the dressing room, "You're an amazing writer, and you will write again. I still think about it, reading your book. I remember thinking what an iconic way of spilling everyone's secrets. Then reading in the newspaper a few weeks later that police were investigating some of the biggest names in the entertainment industry because of your book. Sometimes I think you knew all along that what you were saying was true. Sometimes I think about how much of a coincidence it was. But all of the time, I think 'What a beautiful novel.' And you should be proud of it. I'm certain - hell, your certain, that you are going to win this award because you deserve it. Celebrate your accomplishments for one night Lawrence."

"Do you seriously think I know what all of those A - List celebrities were doing in their spare time? Or what they did to get famous? I don't even pay attention to them honestly. I just used their names cause I knew people would want to read 'about' them... Nothing was supposed to turn out this way, It wasn't supposed to be this way," I said getting up from my chair and slipping on my shoes.

Rose comes from the door and helps me fix my tie and collar, "Sometimes you've gotta go with the flow." She said dusting off the shoulders of my blazer.

"Sometimes," I repeated.

"Hey, I'm just saying, you can make a," she kisses all the tips of her fingers, "delicious pasta..."

I respond by clearing my throat and leaving the room.

"We need to put some pep in our step." She says from the dressing room two doors behind me.

"Congo is up!" The Executive Director, Kelly Morgan, called from the hallway of the dressing room. The interns of the award show walkie to the dressing room that Congo is up in two minutes.

Sean Congo, a largely celebrated and awarded journalist, novelist and writer ashes his cigarette, sets his index cards down on the vanity and grabs his cane. He leaves the dressing room, ready to go on stage and present the most anticipated award of the night.

"Mr. Congo!" Kelly says, attempting to help him to the stage quicker, "Are you all ready? Do you need a glass of water?" She turns to an intern and says to her, "Get Mr. Congo a glass of water, please." She looks back at Congo and notices something is missing from his wrinkle fingers, "Where are your cards?"

"Where I left them," Congo says grouchy, "in the dressing room that resembles where they should be - the waste bin."

"Oh, sir. This is..." She gulps down, signaling for the makeup artist and hair dresser from inside the room to grab the cards. "This is what everyone came for," She laughs nervously retrieving the cards from the make-up artist, handing it to him. "We really need you to say exactly what's on the cards."

"I refuse to indirectly berate a writer because the greater portion of the audience is upset with him. Or to cause controversy. The boy is a genius, let live his triumph out." Congo says pushing the cards back into Kelly's hand.

Kelly steps in front of him blocking his way. The water fetching intern hands her the cup of water. She holds the water out to Congo, blocking his way.

"Ma'am, you have about a minute until it's time to go up there. I already told you respectfully that I will not read those cards. Time is limited and you don't want to slow me down now. Certainly not with this cane! Now excuse -"

"You're going to read what's on these cards," Kelly demanded, bending down to Congo's head and waving the cards in between their already too close faces.

He lets out a breath of frustration and smiles at her. Grabbing the cup of water out her hand, he drinks it down and crushes the plastic cup in his hand. He inhales, gaining his composure and exhales one last time. "Miss, you got 45 seconds until this old hag is done with her speech. Unless you have a substitute presenter, I kindly suggest you move...."

Stepping aside, Kelly grabs the plastic cup out of his hand and forces the cards into the now vacant hand. She begins pulling back the curtains to allow him to pass through when the audience starts clapping. Congo looks at his hands and looks at Kelly with a tired smile on his face and sharp eyes staring at her from his hunched over level.

The audience gives an up roaring applause after the author who just gave a lengthy speech after winning her award.

Congo walks on stage, throwing the cards down as the curtains closes behind him.

Please Welcome to the stage author, journalist, Nobel Prize winner, Bestseller and now the Founder of Lit Rat Magazine, Mr. Sean Congo. The voice overhead says and the crowd starts cheering, whistling, stomping their feet, giving all their energy into one of the longest living literary geniuses of the 20th Century.

"How's everyone doing tonight?" He asked the audience of countless faces. They returned with various answers, all too loud and muffled from the clapping for him to catch one. "There's a lot of faces here tonight, it's strange," He looked at the amount of people, shocked. "Feels like I'm at the Grammy's, or the Oscar's, or the Moon Man Awards Show," He points to the cameras, something that has always been at the Book Awards, but never filmed for a major network like ABC. The amount of cameras were becoming overwhelming. The audience had a lingering clap but now they were back to standing and whistling like they were when he first came on stage. "Must've been something I said," He laughs into the microphone. "I'm presenting the award for 'Most Controversial Novel' tonight. Let me say, before these lovely ladies and gentlemen on stage hand me this envelope of opulence, that this is an honor to be presenting this. Just twenty years ago, I was up for this award and unfortunately lost. It's very rewarding standing here today, living out one of my biggest dreams, again. These awards aren't like they used to be, the backstage crew was a lot more lenient and excusing of their routines and scripts... I suppose the world has gotten progressively firm. Sorry, I'm not sticking to the cards, Kerry!" He yells turning towards the curtain and watching the audience support his rebellion, "All of the nominees did a wonderful job conjuring up some conversation." Congo looks to the audience, looking for the person he's certain is going to win.

One of the interns hand him the heavy silver envelope and shake his hand.

"This must be my cue to move along... It's time for me to announce the winner." He fumbles with opening the envelope, trying not to drop his cane. Finally getting the envelope open, he notices security guards lining the stairs. The old man can hear his heartbeat, that's how quiet the overpopulated arena grew. Overlooking the crowd, he got nervous. He could see the anxious in their eyes, all of them, all of the ones he could see. Clearing his throat, he opens the card that's in the envelope. "The winner of Most Controversial Novel is..."

He reads the winner's name and looks to the audience, all of their eager faces. They were beginning to turn colors from holding their breath, "Mr. Lawrence Quest for 'Attractive Dirt'."

The first thing heard from the crowd was booing and then some clapping, but the booing and the stomping of the feet and threats and signs that were held up a reading of pleased reaction to the winner, it all filled the stadium in such a weird way. Congo notices the audience finally beginning to be emotional and having a voice and changing colors. He saw separation in opinion. In all of his years of doing things like this, hosting events and participating in them, he's never seen a 293 page book cause so much uproar. He never saw anyone do nothing but clap for an author who won an award.

I don't initially get up from my seat but my husband's arm drags my whole body from my seat. Rose stands immediately, clapping and hanging her head. My feet feel cemented to the ground and then the audience wakes me up. The teenagers behind me stand, clapping, cheering. They wanted me to win? Is everyone supportive?

No.

The walk to the stage definitely exposed the two opposing opinions. I saw guys and girls standing and cheering happily. I saw some people sitting stomping their feet and booing. I saw some people hold signs up that read "Thank You," and others that held signs up that said "God Made Dirt, Dirt Don't Hurt!" Something I've heard and seen before on the internet. I originally saw it as a meme of me photo shopped with a onto Jesus' head with holy light surrounding me holding what I would think is supposed to be a bible, but instead my book. I heard people saying "Well deserved" and I heard people saying "He ruined my favorite artists' career". Some hands reached out, I couldn't tell with some of the hands what their intentions were but I stuck to the script. Walk in the middle of the stairs, and look forward.

Security guards lined the stairs, behind them I can see some of the faces I've effected from the book I've written. Big (probably angry and vengeful) celebrities, in the front row.

When I got to top of the stage, the intern gave me my heavy trophy that was the shape of an open book attached to a gold column sitting on top of the black base with read on the engraving plate 'Most Controversial Novel'. I stared at it in disbelief, I fucking won. I shook Congo's hand, again in disbelief that I was shaking one of my biggest inspirations hands. That he, Sean Congo, presented me the biggest award of my career to date..

"Well deserved," Congo whispered in my ear. I gave him a nervous, weak smile. I didn't know what to say, really. What do you say when you have a loud crowd behind with members cheering and others protesting and your idol is in your face? I just stood in front of the podium, letting it all sink in.

All the while I was star struck and processing that I won the award, the audience relentlessly kept up their voices and protested their opinions. The emotions of the audience in the room were having a war of its own, giving me time to digest the situation, and come to terms with where I am. Some members of the audience were smiling, in complete happiness, adoration stained on their faces. I saw tears in some of their eyes. In others, I saw blood thirst. It was obvious who was cheering me on and who wasn't. There wasn't a body in the audience without an opinion. I just wondered to myself: did all of these people really read it?

Holding my award, I cleared my throat into the microphone. It made no difference for the sound. How can I get them to be quiet? "Uh," I decided I was just going to speak, maybe they won't hear what I have to say... Maybe that's not so bad. "I wasn't quite expecting this feedback." I looked up to prevent the tears from falling out of my eyes. Why are you getting emotional? Snapping myself back into reality I started again, "I want to -" I ducked my head so fast, letting out a small yelp of fear from the book that was soaring over the audience directly into my range.

“C’mon, let’s go,” I said, covering the mic, to my husband and Rosie. The security guards stepped in front of me, another one in back of me as I started down the stairs, head still low.

“Not so fast!” Congo said, into the microphone. His demand got the attention of everyone, “I’m going to politely ask for you all in the audience to be considerate and respectful while you listen to this man accept his hard earned award!”

With a few people still making noises, the security guards say it safe to allow me to go back onto the stage. They escorted me to the podium standing on both sides and one on one knee in front of me. I tapped the microphone, nodding my head to Congo Thank You! I can’t believe he just did that.

The audience gathered their emotions, finally quiet, I was able to say the first thing that came out to my mind first. “It might sound absurd, considering how most of the scenarios of the book were found out to be true, but you must believe what I say. I wrote this book with full intention of just keeping everyone entertained. I never wrote this book to start police investigations and make some of the biggest names in the music industry get dropped from their record companies and endorsements and modeling agencies. I didn’t write a book to be put on People’s Magazine for where I go, how drunk I am and how I dress. I never imagined people claiming that I somehow wrote the bible. It’s utterly ridiculous what life has been like lately. I’m a writer, I always go down to the Red Dragon and come out hammered. I always dress in tight clothes and short shorts, I’m gay! And I’m only in twenties, I couldn’t write the bible if my life depended on it. Tabloids, Paparazzi, World, please leave me be.”

I took a look down at my trophy and caught sight of a few celebrities I mentioned. “I apologize to the entertainers for using their names. Attractive Dirt, is just a story I wanted to make up. A pretend tell - all of all of the modern day celebrities that don’t allow you into their lives and just put out music. I wanted to give them depth, not saying they didn’t acquire depth already, but I wanted to give them a certain kind of depth. I never once pictured any of it becoming true. To the celebrities: Again, I’m sincerely sorry.

“And I want to apologize to the all of the fans of the singers I affected. My biggest hope is that you all prosper in unity to better times. I want to say Thank You to all that read it, and say Thank You to all that supported me throughout. ”

I raised my award up, “And thank you all for coming and contributing to this conversation. I love you all.”

I held the awards as if I was lady liberty holding her torch. When the security guards loosened their tight triangle around me we exited, this time to backstage. Even though the audience was significantly less angry, they thought it was the best route.

“Amazing Speech!” Rose said grabbing the award from me, “you handled it unexpectedly very well.”

I gave my husband a kiss on the cheek and thanked Rose and him for tagging along going up the stage.

Kelly approaches us, “Congratulations!” She shakes my hand firmly, this is my first time meeting her face to face. I was hiding the whole award show until it was time to retrieve the award, and I know she was patiently wanting to meet me from the e-mails prior to the event.

The curtain from the stage starts moving, and hands start reaching out from the other side, “My brother!” Congo said, finally finding his way to the other side.

It was a beautiful embrace that I gave Congo, it’s not every day one of your favorite authors come to your defense in front of millions.

“What a job well done. You handled yourself the best way you could’ve.”

“It was an absolute honor to have you present my award... And thank you! If it weren’t for you I’d probably have a concussion from having hard covers thrown at me.”

“HA! It was an honor to award one of today’s most talked about author’s today... You deserved this award... You and whatever inside source you have to those celebrities, whose careers you’ve ruined with your fingertips.”

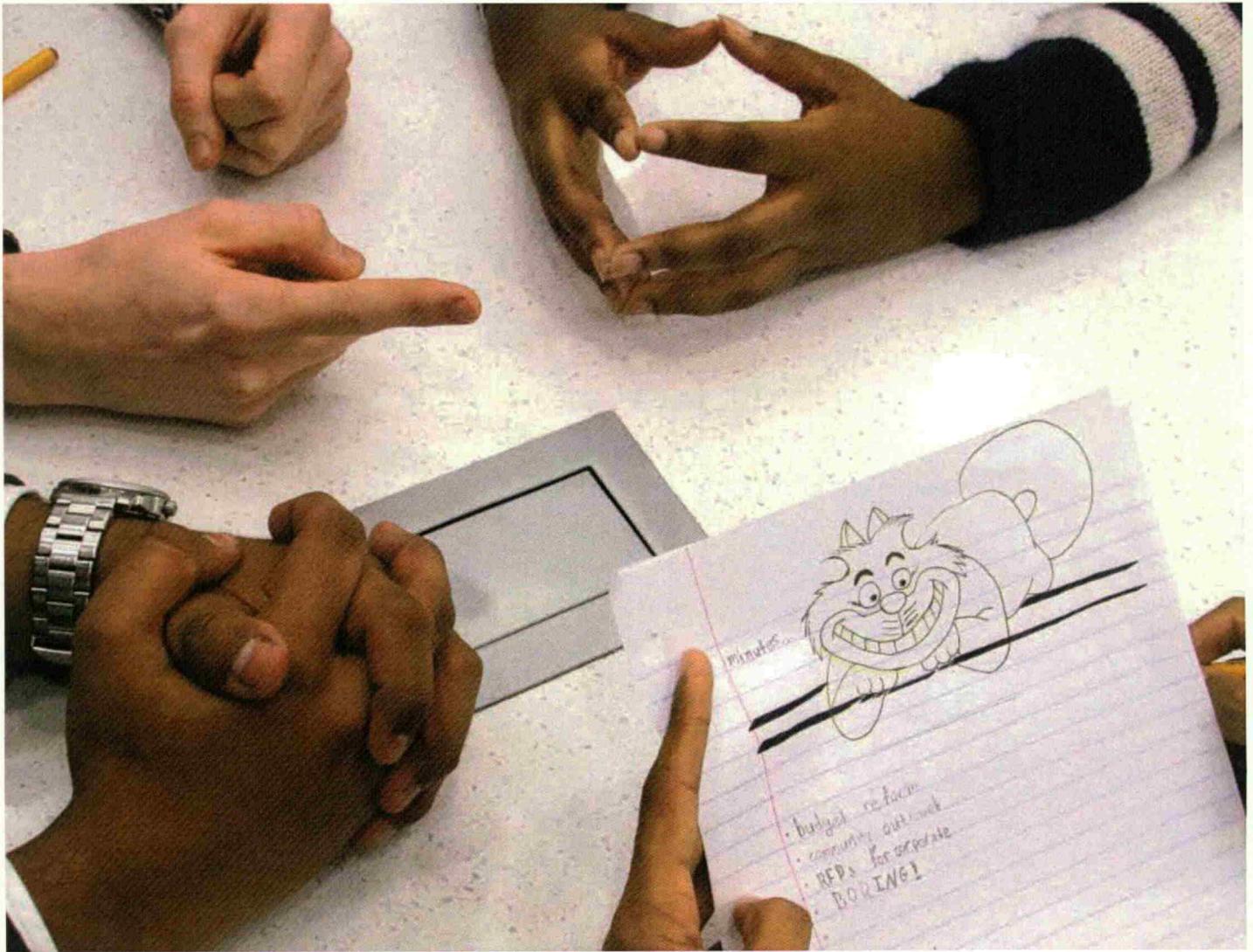
I couldn’t help my face from giving Congo the death stare, which ended with a smile.

“Calm down boy, I know you don’t have an inside source...” He said rubbing my back, “... You are the inside source.”

The other four burst into a laughter, probably of relief. Kelly was reaching for my hand, “On a serious note, can I hire you to look into my husband’s past?” I couldn’t tell if she was actually serious or not.

“I don’t want to ruin that lousy marriage of yours Kelly, but if I must,” I closed my eyes as tight as I could and pretended to be seeing into her husband, who I have never seen before and don’t even know his name, past. I twisted my face into a hard thinking stage, and opened my eyes. She was standing there anticipating her answer, “I couldn’t look into his past, and it’s so dark... But what I can tell you is: you’ll get a divorce within the next three months.”

Kelly gasped and looked at her wedding ring. I was expecting her to laugh, to get my humor instead tears filled her eyes and she ran off towards the restrooms. I guess when an author who writes a “fictional” book about the dirty things a celebrity does to get famous and most of the content in the book is proven true and charges have been made: you listen to him, no matter what he says.



# NON-VENTRICULOMY DYSPLASIA

# Freedom & Happiness: The Artist's Aesthetic

By Karina Liriano

The constitution of the United States of America promotes the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. However, how do we interpret this pursuit of happiness? In the United States, "Happy" seems to be defined solely by one's financial status and employment. Many Americans have been taught that money and a stable job is what proves their ambitions, defines their character, and determines their quality of life. The perception of passion has been masked with a green piece of paper. Many believe they are following a dream, when in reality, they are following their society-instilled hunger for money. They give up what truly makes them happy, to pursue a different "dream" that is more financially beneficial or stable. This is one of many factors that has led a number of Americans to develop a self-righteous lifestyle. One that follows the "every man for himself" statute. "This "money first, you later" way of thinking has made us cold, bitter and empty. It hinders one as an emotional being. How can we as humans be part of an immense and incomprehensible cosmic universe and yet limit our contentment to things that can be bought, broken, sold, or defaced? It seems as if a price has been placed on our pursuit of happiness which is supposed to be our natural birthright. What about the things that money can't buy? What separates us from the manipulative forces of a government that revolves around the worship of money? An individual's creativity, the beautiful human right to self-expression, passion, and emotion; in other words- art.

Artists and art as a whole discredits this unnatural praise of numbers and materialism because it gives us something that money can't buy. Individuality, purpose and a sense of self. Frankly, many Americans do not appreciate it enough. In fact, public expenditures on art in the United States is miniscule compared to many other countries. "Federal funding to the National Endowment for the Arts(NEA), created by Congress to offer support and funding for art projects, remains static at \$146.2 million a year, with a measly annual budget of \$158 million " (Gummow, Jodie). Although the art world proves to be advantageous, little acknowledgement from the U.S. government is offered. "The National Science Foundation's annual budget sits around the \$7 billion mark, despite the fact that research shows art studies close the gap between high- and low-income students and not only improve numerical skills but promote creativity and social development...Such figures are symptomatic of our free-market, capitalistic society. Contrast that with the European model, where art is not viewed as a commodity but as a universal birthright to be protected and celebrated" (Gummow).

Jaefran Rodriguez, one of four creators of the purist and introverted hip hop group Lost Generation, quit his job over a year ago to pursue his passion as a writer and musical artist. He hopes to bring light to the time before "the millennials" sprouted. The time when art brought about a period of enlightenment for society, and wasn't neglected by the start of the technological era that now inundates us with numbers and facts-discouraging creativity and curiosity. "Money can sometimes determine your knowledge of art, therefore influencing your opinion...it shows how materialism overshadows a form of expression" says Rodriguez. He feels that one's freedom and contentment is not entirely determined by things they can buy, but rather by their natural right to self-expression. The humble artists of Lost Generation reminisce in the freedom to be true to themselves and follow their passion. They do not feel an obligation to conform to a corporate world in which they cannot be autonomous in regards to practicing and sharing their art.

Art matters because the sense of individuality and purpose that it instills in us gives us the drive to prioritize the things that don't necessarily benefit us financially, but contributes to our pursuit of happiness. "And, if truth be told, I don't really believe that art is escapist. I believe that art provides a sensory experience that, on the contrary, can be restorative. Art gives our eyes and mind a chance to rest, to muse, to think. Looking at art, we reconnect with our inner spirit, a spirit that is rich in thoughts, feelings, and dreams, a spirit that can't be bankrupted, no matter what is happening in the

financial markets" (Boone, Mary). Without art, we forget that we are human. Art is not only something we create; it is naturally occurring, yet ignored by many. Many American's daily routines and achievements are personally unfulfilling because they are led solely by a perverse and unnatural hunger for materialistic things. Allowing tangent items to dictate our emotions and lifestyles makes us artificial. Without art, we become robots.

Source(s)

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# PLAYWRIGHTS / DIAMOLOGUES

# Wu's Last Tape

By Hannah Koufos

(A tape-recorded message found in the archives of the Women's Foundation, a nonprofit research organization. The message comprises a session or several sessions-it's hard to tell-that take place in the office of Dr. Wu, formerly a psychologist with the foundation. It is prefaced by a short explanation from Wu, Jr. Background music is provided courtesy of Steely Dan.)

**Wu Jr.** In light of the most recent controversy, I dug into my father's old files for a spool he had... (pause)... I have it here and I'd like to play it for you though it's been edited, by my father, just before the end of his career. The tape might reflect that but it's useful, you know, it's not bad, this is not about being bad... (hesitates. Stops.)

**TAPE :** (A great sigh. The loud pop of a cork. A strong voice, slightly pompous, obviously Dr. Wu's.)

**Wu:** This isn't going to be easy. You say you don't want to stop smoking. To find out why you feel this way, in this day and age, will take patience. Honesty. Included in that, a willingness to forget your pride. To recognize desperation. To confront the desire to hurt yourself horribly. To admit you have the illusion of being able to do whatever you want to do. Can you do that, Katy?

(A younger, female voice, nasal, bored, obviously Katy's.)

**Katy:** I dunno.

**Wu** Tell me, when did you start smoking?

**Katy** I dunno.

**Wu** (patiently) Try to think.

**Katy** I can't think without a cigarette.

(The sound of the slap of a pack thrown across a table. A match spurts. The slow exhale of smoke.)

**Katy** When I met the elevator man. He was a man who was fixing the elevator and he wouldn't look at me. I was fifteen. I put on a short, furry skirt but he still wouldn't look at me. I made an olive and cream cheese sandwich, wrapped it in a paper towel, and left it for him. I wrote the number of my apartment on the paper towel. He didn't come. (Pause.) My girlfriend Rochelle said she wasn't surprised. I told her the number'd probably got messed up in the cream cheese.

Rochelle shoved a pack of Marlboros in my hands. I lit one up and he came right over. He asked if he could bum one. Then he told me he liked my skirt. (Exhales.)

**Wu:** (pleasantly) How do you feel about what he did?

**Katy:** I feel the elevator man changed my life. Is that right?

**Wu** If you think it is.

(Pop of a second cork.)

**Katy:** Yes I do. (Pause.) My child will never have a weight problem. Also, my child will be able to live in Pittsburgh. My child will be immune to nuclear war.

(Gurgling in Dr. Wu's throat.)

**Wu:** (Loudly.) Have you seen the latest lungs? How do you feel about lungs that are dark and scarred with carcinogens? Lungs that look like the skin of an undernourished Dalmatian covered with ash from a fire? (Snorts, pleased.)

**Katy:** Can I see? (Pause.) Are these mice?

**Wu:** (Sighs.) Think of this: When you get a heart attack, it's as if a golf ball has suddenly exploded setting loose thousands of rubber bands willy-nilly that tighten around your neck, your larynx, your heart, your breast, your spine, your eyes, your tongue. When you smoke, the chances of this happening increase significantly.

**Katy:** (exhales) I don't play.

**Wu:** Katy, is your vision steady?

**Katy:** How am I supposed to know? I wake up, I eat breakfast, I sit down, I eat lunch. I lead a dull life. I'm pregnant...(inaudible)...maintenance...(inaudible)...washing machines. This is my one pleasure in life. I cannot think without it. I cannot figure out why you're talking about golf balls. (Pause.) As you see, my vision is not very steady- sometimes I use big words, then suddenly you can tell I'm from Philadelphia. (Pause.) I'm writing a memoir about it called "Me." I suddenly remember everything.

(Pop of a third cork.)

**Katy** (quivering voice.) After the elevator man, I loved my art teacher.

**Wu:** (hideously sweet) Did your art teacher smoke cigarettes?

Katy Yes she did, Dr. Wu.

(Pause.)

She smoked Pell Mells.

(Suddenly tape clicks off. Winds forward. Clicks on again.)

Katy (dreamily) –lovely shapes. In our search we came upon an abandoned car. The spokes of the car were twisted...(hesitates)...Martians dancing- the front seat was covered with rusty soot...(hesitates) ...ruby dust. We sat in the smelly car and she gave me one of her Pell Mells. I said again that I did not want to start again and that it was not good going on. She disagreed without turning her head. (Pause.) I asked her to look at me but she would not. She stared straight ahead at the trees.

(Tape clicks off. Winds forward.)

Katy (vehemently.) People that don't smoke don't take chances. They are boring. Morons. (Giggles demonically.) That is my personal appraisal.

Wu (with emphasis.) Morons? Aren't people saying the opposite lately?

Katy No, they are chicken-shits, the people that say that. Jealous. They don't know how to live. (Pause.) When a man walks into a party and he lights up a cigarette, you know he has "it"-he has something-magnificence-an ongoing struggle with life and death. (Pause.) I think people who don't

smoke aren't sophisticated. At best, they're okay. Ordinary. At worst, they don't laugh right. (Pause.) Did you ever smoke, Doctor?

**Wu:** (wistfully) Yes, once.

**Katy:** And?

**Wu:** Bronchitis. Too dangerous for me now. (Brief cough.) I don't like to think about it.

**Katy:** I hope I didn't hurt your feelings.

**Wu:** No, no, go on. It's your feelings we're talking about. (Pause.) I still get the bronchitis. There's no way of knowing but maybe I wouldn't. (Pause.) Could just be me.

**Katy:** (with feeling) Too bad.

**Wu:** Skip it.

**Katy:** (hesitates Resumes, brighter.) As I was saying, they are the turkeys who show up at the high school reunion looking very cheerful as if they've been successful. They can't even tell they're not. (Pause.) What fun is it if it isn't seamy?

**Wu:** (encouraged) Is that how you see yourself-seamy?

**Katy:** This is my one pleasure, for chrissakes.

(Tape clicks off. Winds fast-forward. Stops. Clicks on.)

**Katy:** If possible, I try not to order Russian dressing. I light up with my coffee after the meal. If possible, I try to order veal. I never order drinks that have orange juice in them. My cigarette then, is like a beacon, a lovely shape, a slim message that lets people know I am not a moron.

(Tape clicks off. Winds back. Stops. Winds forward.)

**Katy:** I asked her to look at me but she would not. She stared straight ahead at the trees. (Pause.) After a few moments, I cupped her chin in my hand and drew her face around. Her eyes were cold and lovely. I tucked my head into her neck and she let it stay there. She told me she would not do it again. I told her about the elevator man. She understood. Without thinking, I gave in.

(Tape clicks off. Winds forward. Clicks on.)

**Wu:** (weary, barely audible.) So you think it has made you a better person. When you walk into a party people can tell that you are facing the struggle. (Pause.) Braver? That you are braver than they are? That is something else to consider. (Pause.) You do think you are braver. Indifferent. Insouciant. (Pause. Inaudible.) It is too dangerous for me now. (Fit of coughing. Silence.)

**Katy:** (cheerful) It is my one pleasure. I'm still young. I try to do as much as I can do.

(Pop of fourth cork. Gurgling.)

Didn't you, Dr. Wu?

(No sound. The tape runs on in silence.)



**“WE CONSUME ART.”**

## **It's OVER**

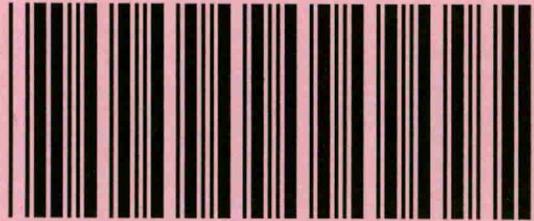
WOW! Can you believe it? After reading so much good material, we made it to the end of another issue of this great magazine.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to another excellent literary issue. It has been a pleasure working alongside each and every one of you.

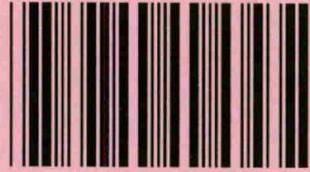
Once again, if you would like to submit to the new issue of "The Guild," don't be afraid to respond back. We listen to EVERY STUDENT here at BMCC.

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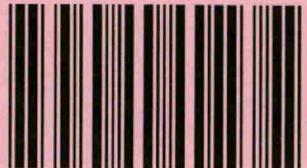
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