



**WESTMINSTER
COLLEGE**

Janus

**20
23**

**LITERARY
MAGAZINE**

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

As I have proofread and edited dozens of pieces of poetry, prose, and art/photography, I have noticed the immense amount of talent that the students at Westminster College have. These pieces are filled with creativity, humility, intelligence, and curiosity about the world and the people within it. It is important to recognize that the authors of these works are from voices all around Westminster College's campus and these voices are not limited to only one group or club. This variety of authors allows a unique insight into the different backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and values throughout these individuals' lives.

When I chose to be part of the Janus editorial team in spring 2023, I did not realize the high level of expertise of the people that I would be working with to put this literary journal together. Our genre editors, designer, and marketing team have made an immense impact on Janus through their dedication, hard-work, knowledge, and drive which were all needed to make the journal outstanding.

However, Janus could not be where it is today without the support of the people who value the success and preservation of this literary journal.

First, I would like to thank Westminster College as a whole for their push and emphasis on providing students with a Liberal Arts education which allows Janus to thrive.

Next, the English Department is crucial to the continuation of Janus through their funding, endorsement, and unconditional encouragement.

Lastly, I would like to thank everyone that submitted to Janus and everyone who was published. Janus could not continue to flourish without the creative minds of the authors, and the constant promotion of this journal.

As a reader and editor, I have learned so much from the issue that you now hold in your hands, and I hope that the pieces within the journal can do the same for you.

— Lauren Halamiccek

MEET THE EDITORS



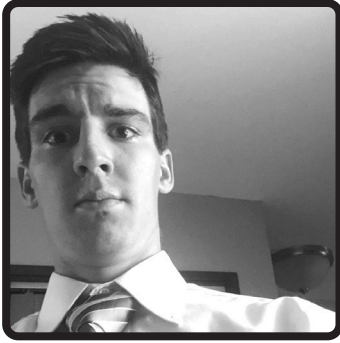
**LAUREN
HALAMICEK**
*Managing Editor
Blog Editor*



**SHELBY
WEATHERS**
Designer



**GRACIE
HAMRICK**
Marketing Editor



**SPENCER
KEISER**
Marketing Editor



**TIMOTHY
FITZPATRICK**
Prose Editor



**VERONICA
TOEBBEN**
Poetry Editor



**MEGAN
UELIGGER**
Poetry Editor



**HOPE
CRAIGHEAD**
Art Editor



**DR. JEREMY
REED**
Advisor

poetry

MORGAN GORDY

Morgan Gordy is a Senior at Westminster College. She is majoring in Business Communication and English Creative Writing. Some of Morgan's hobbies are thrifting, sewing, and of course writing.

MY MUSE

2023 Prize in Poetry

I could write a hundred songs;
A thousand sonnets;
A million poems;
A billion novels;
over all the feelings that I have for you.
In fact,
I think that's what I'll do.

MAYBE I DO

It's hard to describe you in words,
Maybe because I don't know you yet.
Or maybe I do know you,
But I just don't know that it's you.

Though I don't know you,
I can envision our future together.
I can see us walking on the beach,
Or holding each other on our porch swing.

I can see myself walking down the aisle,
Your smile is the brightest I've ever seen.
We giggle as we stumble on our vows,
Looking up at one another in awe.

I can see us swirling around the dance floor,
So present in the moment nothing exists but us.
My head lays on your chest,
As we feel our hearts beat in tune.

I may not know you yet,
Or maybe I do.
All I know is I have loved you for centuries,
And I will love you eons more.

poetry

THE HIM I USED TO KNOW

He's not who you think he is.
There was a him before you,
And you wouldn't like that man.
I can never tell you who he was,
Because you have made him better.

But there will always be something
that distances us from one another.
He will always hide who he was,
You will never know who he is.
In fact... nobody will.

People don't believe me,
When I tell stories of the old him.
They say, "really him?"
He seems to hide it pretty well,
As if he's trying to erase the past.

It is hard seeing the old pictures,
Because the man I see there
is not the man in front of me.
The smiles seem like a mask,
Worn for everyone else's comfort.

I'm jealous...
You never have to meet the old him.
And even though he has changed,
I see the old him,
Every time I look into his eyes.

THE KISS

As I sat all alone,
hot tears streaming down my face,
He came to me.
He promised to exorcize my pain,
But there was a price I must pay.
A simple kiss.

I thought to myself,
“One little kiss can’t be so bad.”
Little did I know,
One kiss would lead to another.
Kisses not only on my lips,
But all over my body.

And though he kept his promise,
I wanted to escape,
I found myself kneeling in prayer pleading,
“Lord save my soul, for I have sold it in vain.”
Then God answered me with forgiveness,
For I could be saved.

I believed the words of God,
and I believed in myself.
I laid my body down to give my life to God,
But as the water covered my body,
I could still taste it on my lips,
The Devil’s Kiss.

poetry

BUKURU DIEUDONE

Bukuru Dieudone is a senior majoring in Education. Bukuru loves writing, particularly poetry. He appreciates the freedom one uses in poetry to express emotion. For Bukuru, poetry is a way for him to be vulnerable to people, express his beliefs, and share the experiences that he has faced.

BUKURU GIVES ADVICE TO KARIMBA

Never search for a man in an unsure season
He'll only distract you from what you need to work on-Your-
self
Watch out for his clever schemes,
Watch out for the man who carries a bag of romantic tricks to
Get what he wants
He will take your hand and stare into your eyes as he
Gently runs his finger into your hair
As beautiful and grasping his eyes are,
They will not complete you.
Never give yourself to man to complete you
If you do
You will lose yourself
You will displace your self worth
You will have no judgment of how valuable you Are.

poetry

Never rely on a man to fix wounds that Jimmy caused, he
Will leave you with more wounds to treat.
on a man to heal your family wounds, he'll
Only cause a division between you and your family.
Never change yourself for a man
If you do,
You will hurt yourself
He will only see what you allow him to see
He will only like what you allow him to like.
Never search for a man in an unsure season
If you do,
Don't be disappointed if the effort you put into the relationship is not returned.
A good man will recognize you
A good man will say to you- Hey, let's go take a picture of the sunset up from Three Story Coffee
A good man will pursue you not only
For your looks, but
For your meaningful conversation, he will say to his friends,
she's passionate about what we talk about
A good man will pursue you for your love of The Most High
For your attention to Nature
And for your beauty
When you search for a man in a sure season,
Reflect on

Why do I search?

poetry

DEVIL A LIAR

He said, "You are not loved"
I nodded.
He said, "You are not worthy"
I hide
He said, "Stop praying, He's not listening"
I questioned.
He said, "If you're a child of God, why struggle?"
I cried.
He said, "What you doing is not enough"
I worked.
He said, "They don't like you"
I feared.
He said, "Do it, it'll satisfy you"
I did.
He said, "Don't go to Him, God is disappointed"
I doubt
He said' "Your love for God is not real"
You lie

In God's presence
I sit
Hear a gentle whisper in his word
which
Brought peace to my spirit,
Say,

*I will be with you, and
Will save you
I will protect you from the evil one
I will take great delight in you
I will quiet you with my love
I will rejoice over you with singing*

GRACIE HAMRICK

Gracie Hamrick is a senior from Versailles, Missouri. She is a major in Business Communication and a minor in Health and Wellness. She loves to write poetry and is an aspiring artist, just like her father who she wrote about in her poem, she believes that the most fulfilling life is making a career of doing what you love.

DADDY

You told me my art was good,
even when it wasn't.
You told me I was beautiful,
even when I felt ugly.
You told me to watch the sunset,
even though I thought it was silly.
You told me I was the fastest girl on the team,
even though I wasn't.
You told me to always appreciate the small things in life,
even though I forget to sometimes.
You told me I was amazing at so many things,
even though I didn't think I was.
You told me even when life is hard everything always ends up
okay,
even though I struggle to remember that.
You told me I deserved the most beautiful things in life,
even when I thought I didn't.
You told me I was capable of anything,
even though I didn't think I was.

poetry

You told me to do kind things and never expect anything in return,
even when people were unkind.
You told me you were proud of me,
even when I didn't think there were things to be proud of.
You told me that no matter how old I am I will always be your little girl,
even though I'm all grown up now.
You told me that someday when you aren't here,
The sun will still rise over me,
And that my life will go on without you,
Even though life without you,
Just doesn't seem right at all.

MARYANNE KORTE

Maryanne Korte is a senior at Westminster College graduating with a Bachelors of Science in Political Science and Minors in Pre-Law and Criminal Justice. After graduation she will work as a Crime Advocate before going onto law school. She has a passion for helping others and hopes to become 'that person' who helps others escape their own "paralysis of the soul."

PARALYSIS OF THE SOUL

The paralysis of the soul,
where a fog weighs down
all thoughts and dreams.
No light can unburden me.

My head dismantled and
my body hung like a sack
of sand draped on a fence.
No relief is coming for me.

The paralysis of my soul:
heavy, steep, and daunting
the pain, the mountain, the fear.
Can I escape this alone?

poetry

My heart sunken and
my hope dwindled like the flame
of a waxless candle.
No more straws are left to grasp.

The paralysis of the soul,
where a fog weighs down
all hope and belief.
I can no longer wait to be freed.

SHELBY KURTZ

Shelby Kurtz is a third-year student at Westminster College, majoring in Secondary Education. She is involved in several organizations on campus including Westminster Women's Basketball, Education Association, and Student Athlete Advisory Committee. She enjoys reading, writing, and playing cards in her free time. She will graduate in the Spring of 2024 and pursue a teaching career.

15 UNEQUIVOCAL TRUTHS OF A LIE

Beauty is not the tax you pay to be a woman.
Strength is not a currency to buy masculinity.
Your value is not determined by other people.
Going to college is not the biggest thing you'll do.
Your happiness is not dependent on your last decision. Being in love is not a once-in-a-lifetime event.
Yesterday was not the worst day of your life.
She was not your only friend in the whole world.
Your heart is not broken.
Life is not impossible.
You will not shrivel up and cease to exist simply because you wish it. My love, you are not dying.
This is not the end.
This is not the end.
This is not the end.
Stand up and be.

poetry

THE BELL-RINGER MADE ME SPIRAL

A lady in a red coat swings a bell
next to a bucket labeled *Salvation Army*.

The ring sounds the same as the timer
that lets me know my clothes are dry.

I blink twice.

What a mundane thing to observe.

It's the kind of thing I'm thinking constantly;
the kind that no one really cares about.

No one wants to hear about a laundry timer.

I know it's not that exciting or interesting,
but it's what I've got.

What else am I gonna say?

That I still think about the bad stuff?

That my heart pounds when I hear car horns?

Or how about I say something about how

I'll never trust a man again?

No matter how good he is.

And it might be all my fault.

I am a chronic screw-up.

Everything in me is tinged with brokenness.

And I've been me my whole life.

So yeah, saying something about my dryer
is a goddamn victory.

Saying anything that's not dripping in trauma
is a miracle God would be proud of.

I blink twice.

The lady in the red coat smiles

as I drop forty-seven cents into the bucket.

"Every little bit helps!"

Yeah, I know.

I know it does.

WALKING HOME

Walking across campus as the evening fades is spiritual
The clouds muffle the highway noise
The streetlights, an oasis every twenty feet
Cutting through the library brings the hum of fluorescent
bulbs
And the gentle hush of flipping pages
The stress of undergrads hunched over tables
Is thick in the stale air between the bookshelves
Back outside, November wind whips at my ears
I remember my wool hat hanging from my bedpost
The clock tower chimes the sixth hour
The sound vibrating across the empty landscape
My winter boots find a rhythm
They crunch September leaves on the sidewalk
One two, one two, one two, I make my way home
A siren wails somewhere in the darkness
And reminds me of 1:00 am two January's ago
A tear strikes its trail down my cheek
I think, *it's so much harder to cry in the cold*
But December brings more tears than July
I produce a laugh that disappears with the wind
Even nature beckons me to be resilient
A candle flickers behind a curtain across the street
It grows in my mind to a June bonfire
Laughing and telling stories; carefree and happy
When we left the classroom behind in May
We exhaled the tension in our shoulders
That came somewhere between March and April
I shift my hands in my pockets and remember
The promise of warmth that used to come with August
And the heat that used to greet me as I walked out the door
Yes, every beginning should be a strong one

poetry

Brake lights shine red before me and I turn down 5th
A symphony of thoughts has been on repeat
Running through my head since October
Yet nothing is quieter than a town covered in snow
It occurs to me as I turn the key in the lock
That I don't have a single memory of last February
And I sigh in tune with the click of the deadbolt in the dark.

COURTNEY SANFORD

Courtney Sanford, a local of Portland, Missouri, is a junior at Westminster. Her major field of study is Psychology with Spanish as a minor. She is a very involved student on campus being Spanish Club President, Student Library Advisory Board President, Performing Arts Club Vice-President, a Psi Chi member, an Omicron Kappa Delta member, and a Remley Intern.

CHOICE IN THE SILENT

What is the point of living
if we all don't get that choice?
The bee's, we smooch, make honey,
devotedly help their queen,
and make sure their kingdom is cared for.
Buzzing around, with motivation, have a life.
Trees, sturdy, strong, and plentiful,
when ultimately cut are money.
They, silent, have no say on life.
Should we stop to know their suffering,
we might think to give them choice.
If we, the speakers, have choice
why should choice not be given back to the silent?

poetry

I MEAN...

I mean I'm dead,
dead like people who no longer have meaning,
I mean I'm a person with no meaning,
my life is just going, floating,
I mean I'm just floating along like a ship on rocky waves,
and that ship is slowly sinking,
I mean I've already sunk before,
but I know I can get back up,
I mean I'm trying, trying to get up,
but getting back up isn't always enough... I mean, am I
enough?

NO SAVIOR, JUST WITNESS

I know you were there,
how could you not be,
I watched you watch and stare,
you couldn't of helped me?

He pulled at my hair,
he defiled me,
and you, you just stood there,
I know you heard my pleas.

But you didn't care,
you just let him leave,
why did you stand and stare,
when you could of saved me?...

SLEEP IN PEACE

I was asleep, free from torment.
In my dreams, without fright,
I am at peace, for a moment.

You are there when I wake.
I'm not ready to leave the calm of dreams.
You, destructive and uncaring, pounce upon me.

I, not of my will, slip back,
into the world of peace.
This time I stay, not able to wake.

This world of peace,
now a eternal home,
is where I shall stay.

poetry

VERONICA TOEBBEN

Veronica Toebben is a senior graduating this spring with a degree in English. She is from the small town of Loose Creek, Missouri, where she got her start seriously writing poetry in the eighth grade when she was commissioned by her class to write a memorial in honor of their class pet, Hermy the Hermit Crab (2015-2015).

A QUESTION I ALMOST ASK

Remember when we were small
Little kids wishing we were tall
Just wanting to reach high shelves
Back when we believed in elves
And wished on stars for dreams come true
Stubbornly sure of what we knew
Got to run carefree and wild,
Nothing expected of a child,
Off in our worlds of pretend
Worlds we thought would never end

Before we were told to settle down
Switched our cheesy grins for a neutral frown
Let the dolls collect their dust
Learned to do as we must
Began to care what people thought
Became someone we were not
Traded fairytales and fables
For words at grown-up tables
Talking politics, wise beyond our years
Pretending we like the taste of beers
Like we've nothing better to do
And can stop time for a moment or two

While we watch them out there
Kids without a single care
All so tiny and so small
Probably wishing they were tall
...
Do you miss it at all?

poetry

HELEN

Face that launched 1,000 ships
Disaster born from coveted hips
Whore born, whore made
Be very, very afraid.
Is that how you see me?
Is this what you want?
Or is this not really the story?
And you can't call it all my stunt.

Would it be better if that were true?
It wasn't me, but some other shrew?
I wasn't some foreigner's whore
Just another pretty bore
A Powerful man's perfect wife.
Not the cause of 10 years' strife
Is that all? Is that my "life"?
Sure, sure, bury the knife.

Or would it be best if I did what you say,
But it was never my fault, I'd tried to stay?
Put all the blame on pretty Paris!
He's the one to embarrass!
Does that work? Settle your whim?
Make me the poor, unfortunate victim?
Or why not put the blame on gods and fate?
Set mortals free from the sowing of hate.

Is any of this true or none at all?
It's been left to you. Make the call.
Make me the villain. See if I care.
Make me the hero. If you so dare.
I know what happened, does it even matter to you?
Everyone thinks that they know me
but none of you do.

MEGAN UELIGGER

Megan is from Centralia, Missouri and is a sophomore majoring in creative writing. Her favorite color is blue, and her favorite food is anything at McDonald's.

TO THE TIRE SWING

We charge,
dashing through the ring of fire.
Slicing through wind,
mud threatening to pull us under.

We're off.
Arms are swinging,
children are screaming,
all the laughter.

Scotty in first,
Brandi in second,
and I take last.
Headed to the tire swing,
where time doesn't last.

To our finish line,
where our trophy lies.
We skid to a halt.
Why?

Scotty fell into a pothole,
and onto his face.

art

JENNIFER FRISELLA

Jenna Frisella is a junior at Westminster College pursuing a degree in Accounting and Security Studies, graduating in May of 2024. In her time here, she has been involved in the Women's soccer and golf teams, Kappa Alpha Theta, Blue Blazers Investment Committee, Student Ambassadors, Student Foundations, and more!

THE BEAUTY OF PERSPECTIVE

2023 Prize in Art



JENNIFER FRISELLA

art

NATALIE BENTON

Natalie Benton is a freshman Digital Media and Business Communication major at Westminster College from St. Peters, MO. She is involved in Alpha Gamma Delta, Women's Tennis, Churchill Singers, Student Ambassadors, Performing Arts Club, Westminster Democrats, Finance Committee, and Blue Blazers Investment Committee.

PINK COLOR AT CONCERT



RAINBOW AT CONCERT



NATALIE BENTON

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art

KAITLYN HALAMICEK

Kaitlyn Halamicek is a Freshman who was born and raised in St. Louis, MO. She plays on the Westminster Women's Soccer team and is a member of Kappa Alpha Theta, Blue Blazers, Student Ambassadors, and will be a mentor in the fall. In her free time, Kaitlyn likes to spend time with her friends and travel!

art

SUNSETS ON THE EAST COAST



KAITLYN HALAMICEK

32

art

RILEY HEILIGER

Riley Heiliger is a senior at Westminster College graduating in May 2023. She is majoring in Biochemistry with an emphasis in Biology and two minors in women and gender studies and public health. Outside of school, she enjoys reading, spending time with her family, and binge watching Netflix.

SMILES FROM TANZANIA



art

POSTCARD FROM TANZANIA



RILEY HEILIGER

34

art

BRANDI HOLLOWAY

Brandi Holloway is a passionate artist who expresses her creative vision through the art of portraits. Brandi has been doing different aspects of art for a long time as well as self-taught in the painting genre.

SNOOP DOGG



35

BRANDI HOLLOWAY

MADDY LAWTON

Maddy Lawton is a senior health and wellness major with a special interest in nutrition. She had an amazing opportunity to go to Tanzania, Africa, where she helped local communities better their community and the lives of their people.

BAOBOB TREE



art

GIRAFFE ON SAFARI



art

YOUNG CHILDREN AT LENGAI'S HOUSE



MADDY LAWTON

38

art

ALLY WATSON

Ally Oglesby Watson, currently studying abroad in Oviedo, Spain, takes joy in exploring the lesser known wonders of her new home. She has found Oviedo to be a place of relaxation, beauty, and discovery.

art

CLIFF WITH WATER

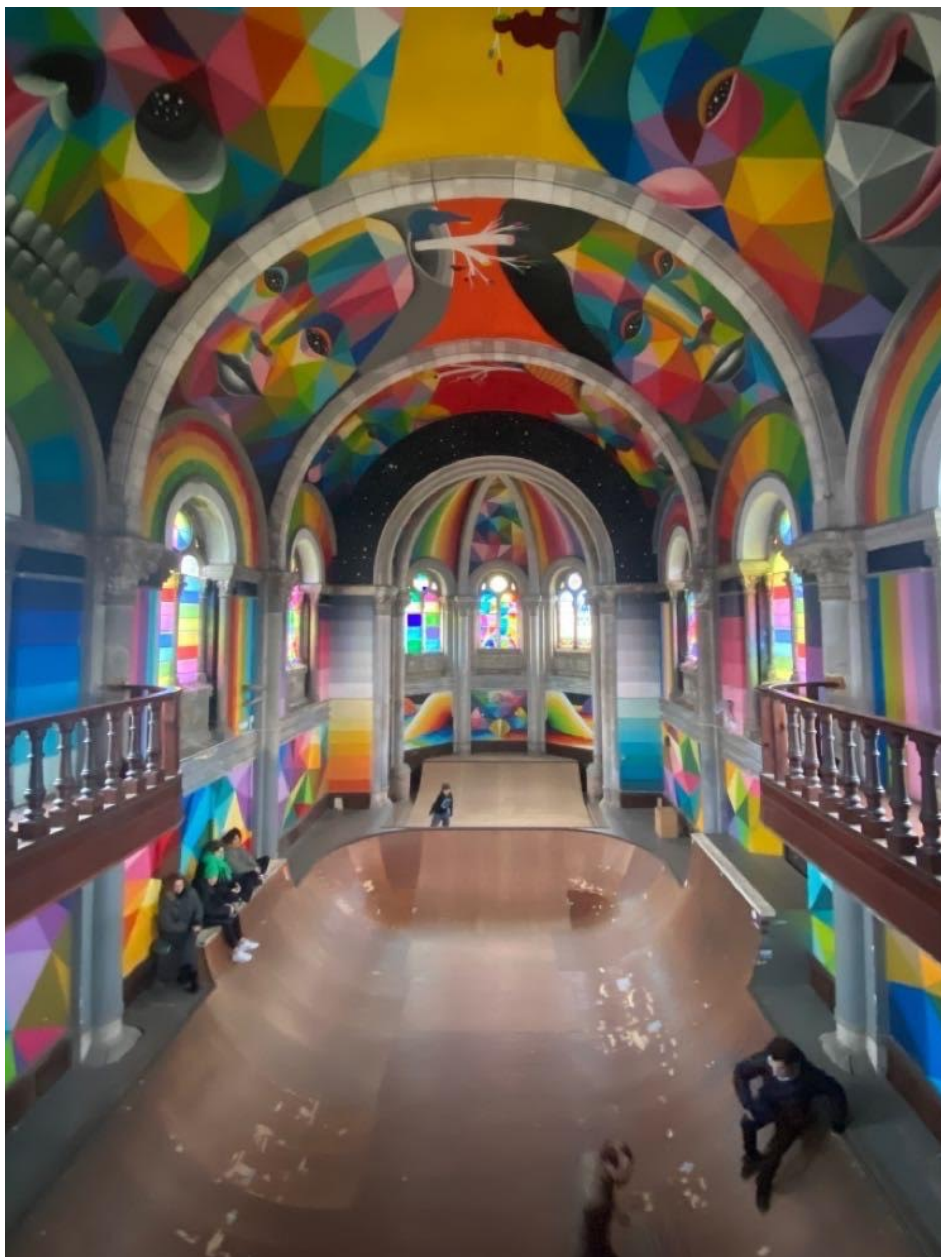


ALLY WATSON

40

art

COLORFUL CEILING



41

ALLY WATSON

BELLA CARTER

Bella Carter has six years of writing under her belt. Driven by her mom who is a publisher for the Lawrence Journal World. In addition to being published by the rose society, Bella has also won the Kansas Authors Club poem contest and the Dear KC: streetcar contest as well.

MY PINK COLORED PENCIL

2023 Prize in Prose

Growing up, my favorite color was always green. I had a green bed, green clothes, green everything. So I was very excited when my mom surprised me with all green school supplies. It was the least she could do after making me move so much.

Three schools in two years. I was tired of it. Tired of meeting new people just to leave them over and over again. However, this time I felt it would be different. I liked my new house, my sister's school was right next to mine, and I was excited to use my green pencils.

The first day was nerve-racking. The hallway was loaded with pale-colored people and brightly colored clothes. It was apparent that I stood out. I didn't know where I was going and people would constantly turn their heads to look at me. I was very nervous so I proceeded to clench my clammy fists around my dark green backpack straps and head for my classroom.

prose

As I continued to my classroom I caught a glimpse of the art room. Huge pottery wheels, sculptures, and drawings were hung up all over the room. I was in awe, I've always loved to draw. Of course, my drawings were just a bunch of doodles and poorly drawn stick figures. Still, somehow scribbling with a green colored pencil brought me comfort.

Every time I drew something my parents would be the first to see it. We loved to talk about it even though my mom would always tell me to try something different because green lines on green paper were getting old. But if she didn't like it, she wouldn't continue to hang them up on the fridge anyways.

After my first long week of school was over, I made one friend. Her name was Brooklyn and I met her during recess. I didn't know who to play with or what to do, but I looked over towards the blacktop and noticed she was the only girl playing four square with the boys. The fact that she stood out too made me think we'd get along really well. She started sitting with me during art class which was the only class without assigned seats. I loved drawing and hanging out with her so it was easily my favorite time of day. I noticed that all the girls were obsessed with pink. Pink paper, pink clothes, and pink pencils. I didn't get what was so special about it. It kind of bothered me that I was the only girl with green paper but it wasn't that big of a deal because that was what I liked.

Making a friend in the first week meant everything to me. It was the first time that ever happened because I've always been pretty shy. Teachers and students always knew me as the new girl who liked the color green. That's all I let them know because I wouldn't talk to anyone. I just didn't really see a point because we move so much.

The second week of school I was actually really excited. However, my excitement quickly turned to disappointment when I found out we were getting new assigned seats in art class. I stood there very anxiously, hoping I'd get to sit next

prose

to Brooklyn. Instead, I ended up sitting next to this girl who thought she was a wolf and this GORGEOUS blue-eyed boy, he was stunning. He had a slight mohawk, a perfect smile, and just happened to be the fastest kid in the class. I hate to say it but I fell faster than the blink of an eye. Regardless of his shoes always being untied and the fact that he chewed on all of his pencils, he was perfect. But who cares about that little stuff when you look like that. I figured I'd have to talk to him sooner or later if we were going to end up married but I just couldn't ever seem to get a word out. Once, during snack time while we were eating goldfish, to my surprise, he spoke.

"Bella," he said. I was kind of hoping he wasn't talking to me and another Bella would just spawn into the classroom.

"Do you want my goldfish? I don't really like them."

First off, who doesn't like goldfish? They're like the best snack in the world. Second, I was sweating so much and my goldfish suddenly got a lot harder to swallow.

"Oh yeah... Um thanks."

That's all I said. That's it. He just looked at me and smiled.

"No problem," he chuckled.

This was just the first of me falling madly in love with him. During gym class when we'd play tag, he'd always go for me just to make sure I was included. I even started to help him with his math, and he'd occasionally tease me for being shy. I'd tease him for never having his shoes tied. Not to mention he continued to give me his goldfish all the time. He has other friends he could give them to. Yet he still chose me.

Brooklyn would always say he liked me and I would just ignore her. On the contrary, things did change one day when he didn't play basketball like he normally would and decided to swing with me. That's when Brooklyn and I decided to make a plan; A plan for me to ask him out.

The morning of, my mom did my hair into a high side ponytail with a bright pink bow to match my sparkly high-

prose

tops. I decided to wear my new blue shirt that we just picked up from Claire's. I really wanted to look pretty and blue was his favorite color. I put on some black capris and my green backpack and I was ready for school. As I'm walking out the door my mom yells at me to put on a jacket, I argue that none of my jackets match my outfit. Yet she still stuffs one in my backpack.

When I got to school I sat down in my cold beige seat and started to mentally prepare to ask him the big question. Brooklyn comes up to me and asks if I'm ready. I take a big sigh and then tell her how nervous I am. Mid-sentence he walks in, "Good Morning" he says. I awkwardly say "Hi", then scoot further down in my seat. Normally you can't tell when my cheeks are red because of my dark skin, but today I'm 100% sure you could. I decided to wait until recess to ask him.

Brooklyn and I had everything planned out. I'd be on my usual swing 2 down from the left (that one gets the highest) and I'd have his best friend ask him for me and then come back to deliver the hopefully good message.

I wait. I wait all day until that first bell rings. Finally for what seemed like forever but weirdly not long enough, it rings. That bell meant I had three minutes until it was time. I eat some Smarties my mom packed to give me a little extra confidence. Then, the second bell rang. I grabbed my ugly ass coat my mom packed, grabbed Brooklyn, and we ran out the door.

We get to our swings like always and sit in silence. As the other classes came out I knew what I needed to do. I call his best friend over and tell him to go ask. Reluctantly, he does. I stare at him the second he leaves the swings making sure he does. It feels like my heart is going to beat out of my chest. As his friend walks back over Brooklyn blurts out "So, what did he say?" and his friend says,

"Sorry, he says he doesn't like darker girls."

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I was stunned. Brooklyn and I looked at each other shocked and I felt my small red heart shatter. She then tries to comfort me but I'm kicking the dirty wood chips below my feet wondering what's wrong with me. We didn't speak for the rest of the day.

When I got home I threw my coat and backpack on the floor and went straight to my room. My parents came in about an hour later asking what I drew today in hopes to cheer me up. I was mute, pretending to be asleep. Immediately after, when they opened up my art folder all they found was a dark green piece of paper with pink scribbles all over in an attempt to cover up the ugly green. Unfortunately, it was still very apparent it was a green piece of paper. It would always be a green piece of paper whether I wanted it to be or not.

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ANONYMOUS

I FEEL SICK

I've never liked my hands. Recently, I saw the outside of my hands, laying flat on a table, side by side. I noticed all the wrinkles and bends and crevices in the skin. It was like I was looking at a stranger's hands. They looked alien to me. I suppose I had only really seen them balled up into a fist.

I have always been an angry person. As a child, I found myself with fists at my side at all times. I was furious with everyone. A stranger I barely knew for ruining my life so early on, my parents for never noticing that something was wrong with their little girl, and at myself for everything else. Instead of speaking up, I held my mouth tight and my fists even more so. I would go to bed at night when I was little with my hands more exhausted than any other part of me from being so tense all the time. Once I hit my mom with those same fists. She finally saw something in me that told her something was wrong, that something happened. I was angry and I took that out on her. She never asked me anything again. I beat myself up now.

I am an anxious person. I would feel my heartbeat in my wrists and through my fingers from all the blood rushing through it at a pace that would never seem to slow. I could never get my fingernails painted nicely because I would bite them down until my nail beds bled over what was left of my nail and coagulated and dried on my fingertips. I always have hangnails too. Had. I like to rip those out the moment I see them. After realizing what I had done, seeing the massacre of my cuticles and nail beds, they would get tucked away into that fist at my sides, or tucked into the folds of my arms. You can imagine the state of my palms with the crimson stains

pressed into them.

I tend to fidget. Along with the fist clenching and unclenching and nail biting and hangnail ripping, I pop my fingers and joints in my hands. I'll start with my wrists, twisting and bending until I hear that familiar crack. I move onto my thumbs then my individual fingers, forcing them back and forwards, side to side, and pulling them out until that final release. When my hands are in their usual form, my knuckles jut out from years of popping and cracking and snapping. The ivory bones do nothing for my already pale complexion, but they are so normal to me now. All these years of watching my skin becoming more and more stretched over the bones has made these hands a reminder of the transgressions made against me by others as well as my own.

I hate having to look at them. Taking notes for class, a part of my brain is noticing the currant red imprint on my palm from picking at my nails waiting for my friend to come sit in the chair next to mine in class. When I grab the strap of my bag to hoist onto my shoulder, I have to force myself to look away from the fresh bit of fingernail that grew in the last two days, ripe for the rip and tearing. As I type this, I watch my knuckles dip in and out of view as my fingers extend to hit the letter T in "extend" and "hit."

I feel sick.

prose

GRETCHEN CAPPS

Gretchen Capps is a senior from Louisiana, Missouri. She is self-designing a major in Speech and Hearing Instruction with a minor in English. On campus, she is involved in the softball team, Spanish club, and is a mentor for transfer students. When she is not serving tables at Texas Roadhouse, she enjoys reading and playing the piano.

AVERY

“So, why a camel?” I look back at my tattoo artist as she places the stencil on my forearm. I don’t know why her question catches me so off guard, I mean a camel is kind of an odd choice for a tattoo. In that moment all of the memories I have of Avery come flooding back, and suddenly, in my head, I’m back in the middle of a deli, frying chicken in a grocery store.

“What do you want to do with your life?” Avery just looked back at me over the fryer and said, “I’m not sure why you’re so fixated on what I’m going to do with my life when you can’t find a school you want to stay in for more than a semester.” His face started to flush, and I know he only snapped because deep down we both knew he had no idea what he wanted to do yet. No matter how many times I had tried to tell him that that was okay, and he would figure it out, it didn’t matter. It was still a conversation Avery didn’t like having, even two years after graduating high school. He looked up at me and said, “Who knows, maybe I’ll decide I want to fry chicken for the rest of my life or go back to school, or I’ll take the easy way out and just become a

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professional criminal.” I knew he was deflecting because he didn’t like to talk about it, but I also knew he only had the idea because he happened to spend the night before in jail. He thought he was sober enough to drive, but the cop did not; he also happened to have drugs on him so they decided to arrest him. He then concluded that he enjoyed spending the night in jail so much that he decided to make a career of it.

I knew that his newfound profession was just a projection of the night before, but to lighten the mood I decided to play into it. “Professional Criminal,” I said “Avery, you literally can not do that.”

“Give me one good reason,” Avery said.

I just looked back at him, “Fine, Avery, but what would even be your plan, like how would you go about becoming a professional criminal?”

“Well, it’s actually quite easy,” he said as he started to dive into his criminal plan.

Avery had never really been a school guy, so his answer to me was not too out of the blue. He preferred to go with the flow and figure life out as he went. I, on the other hand, am not like that. I like to have a plan and know what is going to happen, so I never really understood the way Avery lived his life. In the nine months that I knew Avery, he had set his heart on a multitude of different careers. He started off just wanting to work in Champ’s Chicken for the rest of his life, and maybe even end up managing the place, and then he moved on to taking classes at the local tech school for aviation, and he had considered the army because both of his parents had been in the military so to him it seemed like the obvious choice, he also went through a phase where he wanted to own camels just so he could ride one to work since he refused to buy a car, but to make a profit he would obviously open a petting zoo and run that out of his front yard, but for some reason, he was currently fixated on becoming a

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professional criminal.

“I have one big plan and one backup plan of course,” Avery said. “For my first plan, all I’d have to do is create an account on the dark web and start selling fake lean. It’s expensive and most people won’t be able to tell the difference between that and the real stuff anyways. I’ll make money quick and before anyone even realizes it’s fake, I’ll be done. And if that doesn’t seem to work out for some reason, my backup plan is to just buy a gun and start robbing people’s houses.”

“You’re going to buy a gun?” I said looking back at him. “I mean they sell them to just about anybody so that shouldn’t be an issue,” he responded. For a second, I just kind of stared at him, trying to read if he was joking or not. Even though I had not known Avery long, I knew how to read that boy’s face, and I could tell - he was indeed not joking. His new life plan was to sell fake lean online and rob people’s houses if necessary. He was never worried about long-term issues like money or a career, instead, he was always just focused on the short term.

The “What is Avery going to do with his life debate” was always kind of a running joke between us. Even after leaving the chicken place, I would go back to see him and that would always be the first thing I asked him. He eventually did figure out what he wanted to do with his life. He was going to join the Navy, well he was going to join the Navy as soon as he could piss clean. Avery had always had a past when it came to drugs. He mostly smoked for his anxiety, but there had been moments throughout his life when it was more than that, and moments where he just wanted to have fun. For example, the instance when we were talking about smoking and he got mad because girls always get to “smoke for free,” and then he proceeded to ask if I wanted to do shrooms with him five minutes later. But when he first told me that he had decided to join the Navy he was so proud because he had finally

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figured it out, he finally cared about a career for once in his life. Avery spent the entire summer getting clean and working out with his buddies trying to get in shape for boot camp that was coming up in the fall. All of this didn't matter in the end though, because Avery overdosed. Nobody saw it coming. I mean, yes, he had been doing drugs, but never anything hard. Never to the extent that anyone was sitting around the phone waiting for the call that he was gone, but one night he took a pill to help him sleep, and that small pill happened to have fentanyl in it. It wasn't fair. I had never seen him so excited for something, and as quickly as he had been filled with life again, some stupid pill drained it out of him.

I look back at my tattoo artist as she stares at me expecting an answer. "It's for my friend," I said, "I'm finally getting him his camel."

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TIMOTHY FITZPATRICK

Timothy FitzPatrick is an English major and Junior here at Westminster College. He has also written a play performed by Westminster's Performing Arts Club and has acted on stage for them as well.

CAN'T STOP TALKING

Rick Murphy killed seven young men over the course of the year 2014. He was arrested in January 2015, and made headlines after the police discovered that he was to blame for the murders. For a large portion of 2015, there were news stories in circulation surrounding the deaths he caused. Rick was given a life sentence, and died in prison in 2019.

The details of the murder do not matter to this discussion. In all sincerity, they are not remarkable. Murphy was an angry man who hurt people. There was no righteous anger, no political ambition. He was not lashing out at a world that had hurt him.

At the start of his life as a public figure, the spectacle of his crimes proved to be somewhat lacking when it came to drawing attention. That is until somebody claimed that each of his murder victims were killed with a different kind of weapon. Tabloids and less reputable sources took to calling him the “Swiss Army Killer” which boosted his publicity quite substantially. This is definitely worth thinking about, considering that it was based on a lie. Three of his victim’s were killed with knife wounds to the throat, one was shot in the gut and bled out, two were poisoned, and one was killed

with an unidentified blunt object.

This inaccuracy was corrected a few months into the media circus, but it didn't stop the idea of Murphy as a "resourceful killer" from being ingrained into the public consciousness. A horror movie with the title of *Swiss Army Killer* was sped through the production process and shoved to market in 2016. It was inspired by the myth of Murphy, but was not marketed as a biopic or documentary.

The film made \$207 million dollars for a Budget of \$90 million.

After Murphy was sentenced, mainstream news media began to stop covering him. However, the high profile coverage of the trial had created an audience out of the viewers. This audience wasn't ready to leave their new obsession behind.

A large number of podcasts began to tackle the subject of Murphy's murders. They weren't popular at first, but they were numerous. Most of them had very generic titles, like *The Murphy Murders*, *Murphy's Massacres*, *Swiss Army Killer*, and the like. It took a while for one to cross over to the mainstream, as they mostly just re-played the hits of the media circus. The first one to hook a large audience came up with a question to ask.

The Fifth Victim was a true crime podcast that stretched the definition of "true." Despite a title that implied that the hosts would dig into the life of one of the humans murdered by Murphy, the hosts instead devoted the majority of their time to trying to figure out which blunt object was used to kill Mason Briggs. They interviewed reporters. They interviewed forensics experts. They interviewed just about everyone who had an opinion on the murders. They posited theory after theory on what Murphy used to kill Briggs. They brought on honest-to-god conspiracy theorists. They interviewed Briggs' family members, and only seemed to care about the logistics of the murder.

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The audience for the show spawned mostly from negative reviews. People who listened took to the internet to criticize the podcast, which attracted rubbernecks. The more people talked about the show, the more people listened to it. Critics of the show rarely condemned it. Most of the time they made fun of it. They composed sarcastic memes, dunked on the show on twitter.

The Fifth Victim became the 4th most-listened to podcast of 2015.

A rapper by the name of Riley Swanson was rising to prominence in the early months of 2016. He was generally liked by critics, and had a satirical, self-loathing edge that separated him from many other artists of the time. The lead single for his album *King Raphael* was called “Can’t Stop Talking.” The song criticized the way that social media encouraged people to constantly talk. Each verse of the song was written from the perspective of a different figure who had been made famous by the internet. Swanson adopted the persona of Murphy in the second verse of the song, where he thanked his “fans” for guaranteeing he had a legacy as “some kind of dark genius.”

“Can’t Stop Talking” was mistaken for a generic boastful rap song about how controversial and charismatic the singer was. It attracted both an audience that knew what the song was about, and an audience that didn’t. Some news articles written about the song explained that it featured references to Murphy. Few people read those articles, but many people read the headlines. The public at large now thought the entire song was about Murphy, and Swanson was at the center of controversy for weeks.

“Can’t Stop Talking” placed at number five on the Billboard 2016 Year-End Hot 100 Chart.

In 2024, following the success of Netflix’s Jeffrey Dahmer series, HBO Max premiered *Murphy: Story of a Sinner*. Murphy, who who was 19 at the time of his murders, was

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played by 27-year old Alex Drukowski, well known for starting his career as a model. The series was inaccurate, poorly-written, weirdly sympathetic to Murphy, and a massive success. Entertainment news and social media alike were awash with memes, hot takes, criticisms, and analysis discussing the show. Alex Drukowski's face and Murphy's name became permanently intertwined, and were posted all over the internet.

Story of a Sinner scored 1.9 Million viewers in its first weekend, and received a Golden Globe nomination for Drukowski's acting.

Rick Murphy Murdered seven young men over the course of 2014. Mason Briggs was among these victims. Victoria Briggs, his mother, wrote a memoir to memorialize her son. Murphy is never mentioned by name in the text. He is referenced only once, in the following quote:

“I have been told that I must keep living. That I cannot allow a monster who destroyed my life to have power over me forever. I have tried. Yet whatever power I withhold from this dead man is given to him tenfold by a culture that worships him posthumously.”

The memoir was not published until Victoria Briggs committed suicide in 2028.

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MORGAN GORDY

YOU AND NEW YORK

I opened my starry eyes, blinking in the lights of the city so bright and harsh, yet warm and comforting. There was something about New York City, an indescribable feeling that I had never felt before. For the first time, I knew what home felt like. It felt like a million fireflies swirling around in your stomach, it felt like warm cider touching your lips on a cool autumn day, it felt like wrapping yourself up in a fuzzy blanket in the cold, cold winter. New York was everything to me, that is until you came along.

The light in your eyes outshined all of Times Square and the sound of your laugh was sweeter than any street performer. Every time our eyes met it was like a million fireflies swirling around in my stomach, every time we kissed it was like warm cider touching my lips on a cool autumn day, every time you held me it felt like I was wrapped in a fuzzy blanket in the cold, cold winter. You and New York were the only two things that made me feel like that. I soon came to the realization that any city can feel like home, but you never know the true feeling of home until you're laying on his chest in the middle of the day feeling his heartbeat next to yours.

SHELBY L. WEATHERS

Shelby is tired. Shelby is also the designer for Janus this year, and is writing this bio as she formats it. She is a junior studying creative writing and public health policy. There is far too much on her plate, being involved in theatre, choir, Campus Activities Board, Student Foundation, and probably a million other things she is too tired to remember without consulting her Google calendar.

IN CASE YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN WHY I HATE HEARING THE BIRDS SING

I say this while holding my breath, wrist bent in anticipation of knocking on wood.

I have been doing that a lot lately, because my life feels as if it relies upon a single strand of cobweb. The cluster can blow away at any moment from a gentle breeze, taking all of my experiences, perceptions, and ambitions along with it. At some point I picked up the stereotypical compulsion. While I know that it has no tangible effect on my outcome, and I find my participation despite that awareness absurd, the action is the only thing that could possibly tie the miniscule thread tighter around my waist so I do not plummet to the ground. I have not done enough yet for the gust to take me away. I want to die old and frail in the arms of loved ones, having

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accomplished every dream; I do not want to sink into the abyss alone in a sleep taunted by jolts.

So I knock on my nightstand, one more time.

...and maybe another, for good measure.

Even this sentiment is wishful thinking. There is an intensifying chance that this will make me drop dead. I do not know what this is, or if it really can kill me. I am beginning to think that I will not even have the chance to die in my sleep, rather my deprived mind will fail me and I will accidentally drive off of a bridge. I am afraid of the helplessness, of not seeing a way out, not finding anything wonderful enough in life that could balance out my ever-deteriorating state.

Please, remember this moment for all that it is: this year-and-counting from the depths of hell. If you got through it, look back with understanding and compassion for the both of us. I do not have the strength to do so now.

I tend to reflect on the past with disdain and embarrassment. I beg of you, do not give me the same assessment. I have told myself time and time again that I should have done more, less, should have done this, that, swallowed the situation like a simple shot of tap water rather than acknowledging that I was attempting to drink the ocean as a means to escape the peril of drowning. I have surmised that the tsunamis I was whisked into were nothing more than the tide lapping at the shore, and any wave there may have been returned to the sea which birthed it, with any evidence of its existence merely dripping off the tip of my nose. Repeatedly, I have told myself that pausing to cough up water on the beach only makes the world I drag myself back into harder to navigate, my sopping shirt cementing me to the ground while I try to not let my umbrella fly off without me. Perhaps there was nothing to get swept up by, maybe the droplets falling from my hair were brought on by a simple sunshower.

I hate that I could have danced in the rain, rather than gasping for air in the puddles produced by the shoe prints of

my own missteps.

I hate that I still believe the aforementioned was an option at all, when all I could do was what I did. I survived.

I wish that I could see the waves now in order to know that they were not imagined.

I want you to know, to believe, to feel agony resonating deep within your chest when this time is brought to the forefront of your memory. This really is as bad as you remember. It is probably worse. I know time will serve as a chaser, making it more palatable for you to move forward, but time lies. This is a flood, a catastrophe, and there are no life rafts in sight. My toes keep grazing the seafloor and saltwater burns my esophagus.

I want you to remember me crying when I wake up, because I keep sleeping through hours upon hours of every-five-minutes alarms. I try to exercise, eat routinely, take my therapist's guidance to heart, but what is birdsong other than a mockery of circadian rhythm? Their chirping reminds me of laughter, as I struggle to capture sleep through the repeated sensations of being struck by lightning just as I drift off. Nothing is left of my day when I stir in the afternoon, or in the middle of the night, when I feel drunk for hours after waking, and the rest is spent in a haze. I want you to remember how afraid I am that I will be impaled during a tornado, will die in a fire, because if the screeching of my phone will not wake me, a siren from across the highway or the fire alarm five feet away will fade into lullaby.

Others perceived my month-long absence in my attendance-optional class as laziness, then they believed that I was losing my mind because I did not sleep for two days as way of ensuring I would be able to get to that attendance-optional class that I had not been to in a month, my words slurring and eyes bloodshot.

Do not forget the shame and embarrassment I feel when I have to scramble to apologize to people I had plans with, to

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let the ones who called me know that I am still alive and am not intentionally ignoring them, and tell them all that I am seeing doctors and a therapist and am having tests, and apologize for those doctors dismissing me as anxious or depressed or fat and that I am sorry those tests came back normal and that my therapist does not make sense because the gears in my brain no longer turn. I know, I know. I am so sorry. I know that this is the umpteenth time I have said all of this, and I am sorry. I am so sorry. I know I don't have to apologize, but what else can I do?

I thank everyone tirelessly for dealing with me.

Remember Valentine's Day in the emergency room. Dad had to pull over so I could dry heave in the ditch on the side of the highway. There was a moment when I no longer saw a point to living. That girl could not hold down any job, nor could she give herself permission to acknowledge her gritty ambitions, her fantastical daydreams. She could not learn enough to contribute to the conversation, considering she could not remember whether she left her straightener on or not, where she left her keys, what that person is talking about even though they are responding to something she said two seconds ago. That person could never take care of herself when she continues to be in that position; she could never nurture a child in the way she was not, let alone a dog, a goldfish. No one could ever be loved by this broken person. Her love is too damaged to be of value. She could, at best, become a statistic.

I want you to remember staring at the essential oils on my nightstand because I have been using them for months and I still want to scream at every tender melody the birds sing. I cannot throw the bottles away because I would feel bad for offending my friend for not following her advice despite her putting up with me, or not giving it a real chance to fix everything because it totally could even though it has yet to do anything, and I am indebted to my Dad because I had

prose

to use his money to buy them since I am too sick to get a job or go back to school so I can get a job so I can stop wasting Dad's money on shit like essential oils. All I want is to throw these stupid fucking bottles at any bird that so much as enters my line of sight.

I want you to remember when I screamed, begging to die, while the toilet seat dug into my ribs and the heat of my breath came back to my face from the bowl.

Do not forget these things.

Do not forget me.

Do not look at your past harshly.

I hope you can dance in sunshowers and accept waves for what they are.

I hope that you can learn to love birds singing like you did before.

I hope that you are alive.