

ARKANSAS NORTHEASTERN COLLEGE

News

10TH EDITION



Energy

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Editor-in-Chief Mallory Burnette

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A Ghostly Adventure by Peggy Brewer

Human nature is often curious. Some people believe in the supernatural and some do not. The supernatural is often misunderstood because we each have our own encounters that are not something that we can believe is real, or we think it is just our imagination. Most people believe in the basic senses like what we see, hear or touch. Often, we hear stories from family or friends about their encounter with the supernatural or ghosts. Not being a big believer in ghosts and tending to be more skeptical than most, the thought or idea of ghosts being real was the total opposite of being raised in church where ghosts are not mentioned.

The first encounter with a ghost was so frightening that I could feel my heart pounding, thump, thumpety, thump loudly in the otherwise silent room. The night started off like any other night when I stayed with my dad. We would go to his house after school and sit around visiting, talking about how school was going and how we were doing. At this time, I didn't live with my dad. My mother died from cancer when I was thirteen. I lived with my grandparents who were my mother's parents. After visiting, my dad would usually cook us something for dinner that was usually quick and easy because he didn't cook very often. Usually after dinner we would finish up any homework that we would have and watch television or play cards and board games.

My sister, cousin and I got our pallets made up on the living room floor like we normally do and tried going to sleep even though we weren't sleepy at the time. I don't remember falling asleep, but I eventually did. I was not sure exactly what time it was, but I woke up feeling that something was not quite right. I had this eerie and spooky feeling like a person gets while watching a very scary movie. The

spooky shadows in the room seemed to slither and sway across the walls as if they were living objects.. Really not liking this feeling, I automatically turned to wake my sister up.

Imagine my surprise to find her propped up on her elbows looking straight ahead. Trying to get her attention I asked her, "Hey, are you awake.", to which I received no reply. After not getting a reply from my sister, I turned to my right and started poking my cousin in the side to wake her up. "What do you want" she said as she turned to face me. We began talking in low whispers and suddenly from the other room we heard a softly whispered word, "Shhhh." We were stunned into silence with that one small word. My cousin's face was as white as a ghost no doubt, mine probably was as well.

The silence in the room was deafening. We finally turned our heads to look straight ahead in front of us to the doorway of the bedroom where my brother was sleeping. My heart seemed to be galloping like a horse across the plains. Imagine to our surprise there was my mother sitting on the side of the bed where my brother was sleeping. It seemed that fear had somehow become a living, breathing entity within me and was slowly trying to worm its way into my brain. It obviously worked because I lost all sense of time and it seemed that reality slipped away in those brief moments of silence like stars fade away each sunrise.

Staring at my mother's face was so shocking and unbelievable that I kept elbowing my cousin and asking, "Are you seeing what I'm seeing?". My mother shushed us again. Smiling, she just shook her head. She never said a word, just reached over and pulled the cover up over my brother, brushed her hand over his head and smiled. As she simply vanished, I remember her clothing was white as a sheet and seemed to barely ripple like a gentle breeze. My sister was still in the same place and hadn't said a word. She could not see what we were seeing or even acknowledge what was going on. I would never have believed what had happened if my cousin had not witnessed everything that I did. I often

wondered if I was asleep and dreaming, but my cousin confirms everything that happened when the subject is brought up.

That was the very first ghost I have ever witnessed, and I am still amazed at what occurred as much today as I was years ago. Being raised in a religious household, my beliefs were questionable. The more I questioned others, the more I realized that seeing ghosts is possible. I once asked my grandmother about ghosts and she said, "The bible can never be fully explained and who knows what is possible in this large universe. Everything was created by God and who can say that He didn't create them too."

Seeing is believing and I do believe in ghosts after the first encounter. Life is like a rollercoaster with lots of ups, downs and twists. There have been many times since that I have either seen a ghost or felt a presence of paranormal activity. Not everyone believes the same way and I'm okay with that. This episode doesn't change the way that I feel about religion. Knowing what I believe about God has not changed my perspective about religion or ghosts. I just think that anything is possible in this world.

A Lesson Learned by Addison Fithen

Ever since I was a child, I struggled to find foods I enjoyed eating. Because of this, my parents stocked every cupboard and drawer in the house full of foods they knew I would eat. Frosted Flakes filled our cabinets and frozen fettuccine filled our freezers. All was well within the walls of our home, and I was comfortable with my pallet. My father, however, was a man who believed in class, and would stress to us the importance of exposure. To my absolute despair, this 'exposure' would come in the form of restaurants. For years I would resist my father's attempts, until one day on July 20, 2014, I understood the significance of being exposed to new foods.

July 20th, 2014 was a beautiful Sunday afternoon. The sun sat comfortably behind cotton clouds, and the air was light and warm. Church concluded only moments prior, but my family was already talking about lunch. Typically, My sister and I would choose where we ate, with my mother narrowing down our options. This time, however, we were burdened with company, "How about Wings to Go?" I heard one of them say. I did not recognize the name nor the location, but before I could ask, my father spoke up. "We haven't been there yet," he said, "but I've been trying to get the girls to try new things." He turns to my mother, "What do you think?" A buzz of excitement filled the air around us. I, on the other hand, felt the familiar feeling of dread pull at my stomach. I look to my mother, surely she will say, "I'm sorry, but we will not be attending." Dread begins to spread throughout my body when I see her smile. "That would be amazing!" She beams, "We should head over there right now!"

As we pass through the grimy glass doors into the restaurant, I am immediately overwhelmed. The floor grabs at my tiny shoes and threatens to pull me in. Fluorescent lights replace the warm sun; the air is heavy and smells of grease. The entryway is packed full of people and their voices deafen me. My father pushes us to the front of the line, his hand like lead on my shoulder.

“I don’t want anything!” I protest, “I’m not hungry!” My dad rolls his eyes, since this is not the first time I’ve done this, “You’re always hungry after church, now hurry up and order.” he says, tightening his grip on my shoulder. “I said I’m not hungry,” I whine, “I don’t want anything.” “How about this,” my mother interjects, “I’ll order a combo and Addison can have my fries.” My father nods, satisfied with the offer. “But I don’t-” is all I can get out before I feel her gaze. Much like Medusa, my mother has a look that can instantly turn you into stone. Her eyes peer into mine, as if daring me to challenge her. Ice has entered my veins and the dread in my stomach begins to swallow me whole. I only nod in response.

Time passes. I am starving. My stomach grumbles like thunder, and I lay my head pitifully on the table. *Chomp, Cruch, Gulp*, is the pattern I hear myself surrounded by as wings and burgers are devoured. My stomach rumbles again, begging for something, *anything!* I glance at the fries on my mother’s plate, and try to steal her gaze, but she is too busy talking to the other adults. I reach for her arm, but she brushes me off. I try to look for my dad, but he is halfway through his own plate. I am starving and alone. “Just eat the fries, or you will starve,” my stomach tells me. “But what if it’s gross?” my mind rebutts, “Then what will we do?” I am caught between two waves in a storm. My stomach aches and my mouth waters, but my mind will not allow it. Finally, my stomach wins. Slowly, almost fearfully, I extend my arms and reach for a fry. Unlike the lanky, yellow, Mcdonalds fries I was used to seeing, these were fat and

orange. I grab a little one to start off with, “This one can be easily spit out.” I rationalize. I hold it to my nose and sniff. Pepper, Paprika, garlic, and onion fill my nostrils and send my stomach into a frenzy. I eagerly lift the fry to my mouth and take a bite.

Immediately, I am taken away to a land of spices and seasonings. The paprika and garlic dance together like lovers in the city streetlights, their flavors coming together to create absolute harmony. The pepper adds an excellent kick, but remains humble next to the onion. The texture is a song in itself. The crispy exterior of the french fry pairs wonderfully with its fluffy interior. It is neither crunchy nor soggy. Neither hot nor cold. Everything about it was perfect. I cannot remember the next few minutes after that, but when I floated down from cloud nine my hands and mouth were coated in grease. The plate had been wiped clean, with not even a single crumb remaining. It was at that moment that I realized I had been a fool. I had become too comfortable in my own tastes that I neglected to realize all of the wonders laid before me.

Ever since then, I have made it a point to try new foods wherever we go. The Mexican restaurant down the road has excellent sauteed bell peppers and salsa. That one local Chinese restaurant serves excellent bourbon chicken and rice. Do not even get me started on the Italian restaurant near the mall, their Chicken Parmigiana is to die for. I look back on my youth and regret the years I lost because of fear, but because of them, I stand eager and ready for the ones I approach.

Mind Changing by Derrick Moore

Infertility is^[BM1] ^[BM2] the devil, and no one deserves to experience the journey that infertility takes you on. I would not consider myself a close-minded person, but I am like a rock-hardheaded and like my way of thinking. When I met my wife with her big brown beautiful^[BM3] eyes and long dark hair, I did not think I could ever tell her no until she mentioned fostering! My Mom fostered when I was younger, so I kind of always knew that was not something in which I was not interested in.

I remember the day like it was yesterday, the banging^[BM4] on the door and his click-clacking shoes before the he entered the room. I also recall hearing the words “ivf or surgery.” His words were like ice^[BM5] coming from the doctor’s mouth. The room was cold as a freezer and quiet as a mouse. He did not have much personality and was not very comforting to either my wife or me. It felt like all the room in the air got sucked out of it. There are not many situations that leave my wife speechless, but this was one of those situations that just left her beautiful eyes starring with tears filling them. My mind does not change very often but in that room with those feelings, I knew my mind had to change.

On the drive home from the doctor’s office, I already knew what she was going to want to talk about, although she knew my true feelings on the topic. She knew my true feelings on the topic because it has been something she has been trying to change my mind about over the five years we have been trying to conceive. “I am enrolling us in the class for fostering as soon as we get back to the house.” I knew this was not something I was ready for when she said it, but I have always had a tough time telling her no because of the big brown beautiful eyes. I could not tell her no after what we were just told even if I wanted to. I have always known the hurt and

struggles that come with foster care because my mom has been through it. I could not tell her no though, because her eyes were screaming at me[BM6] to change my mind.

September 12,2020, she comes screeching out of the bathroom waving a little strip in my face, “Does this have two lines?” she repeated over and over while I am trying to inspect this little strip. Our foster home was scheduled to open in November 2020, in that instance, I wondered why I ever changed my mind! Every room in our house was sprinkled with kid toys and toddler beds. I knew she would still want to foster even though she just found out she was finally pregnant after five long years. People wonder why I am so set in my ways! We ended up having three kids in less than a year.

In conclusion, one day can change your whole outlook on life and start you on a different path you never intended to be on. We do not know what one mind changing decision can bless us with. I am forever thankful for my one mind changing decision to foster. The road is not always easy, but it is always worth it.

Floating Four Wheeler by Lane Smith

I have always enjoyed riding four wheelers and still do. It is one of my favorite activities and one of the most relaxing for me. I always tried to be very careful, but sometimes my judgment lapsed and failed me. I never tried to be a daredevil, and didn't enjoy disobeying my parents, but one bright Sunday morning with the smell of rain in the air, I decided to take the trash out. That's when I learned my eight year old judgements were not as good as my parent's.

On that fateful Sunday, I rode my olive green Yamaha 125 four wheeler to take the trash out. This four wheeler, which ran as well as the river flows, fired right up, and I took off like the wind toward my trash can. I dropped the trash as the credulous smell weaved its way into my nose. I jumped back on my trusty four wheeler and began my way around my family's fence line toward the blue-green river. As I neared the river, I saw the it had climbed out of its banks and flooded into the woods at the very back of our fence line. I continued riding along the fence and began to enter the green water. It was littered with sticks and logs, many that came out of the deep of the river. I felt the four wheeler's wheels begin to lift.

I continued on as the four wheeler began to float like a boat. I made it around the big tree; at this point I was in about three feet of water. The water became shallower as I made it around the end of our fence line but something stopped me in my tracks. A larger log had caught me The four wheeler, miraculously, continued to float and stayed running. I tried to reverse but to no avail. I began to holler for my Dad, who just happened to be making his way to the house from our barn. He hurried down to me like the hero he is. He was in his ruby red Polaris Ranger side by side and he pulled it as far in the water as he could. Now he was faced with a predicament, either pull the Polaris deeper in water or get out and wade in nasty water. He chose the latter. He waded waist deep water like he had done it a million times. He carefully pulled the log, trying

not to flip me. Once I was safe his angry but compassionate words followed me into the house and into my room. He told me I should never do something like that again and grounded me from the four wheeler for a month.

I learned that my father (and mother) were able to make better decisions than me at the ripe old age of 8. I had never been in that much trouble before (and haven't been since). I was able to get back on the four wheeler after a month and have never wanted to do that again.

ALWAYS listen to your parents and **NEVER** disobey them.

"The King" by Anonymous

I loved you in a way that felt impossible to crack

But it was too much to carry

The weight of our kingdom on your back

You fell and took us with you

You scattered us

Now what we had is shattered

Poem by Ava Lipford

I have to write this thing that thinks,
The more I write, the more it stinks.
I bet they think I'll write a tome,
Yet I'm looking words up on chrome.
Rhyming words like plant
With sycophant.
Some people may write about Rome,
Or maybe their favorite comb.
This is taking a bit of lead and ink,
So unfortunately, this poem has reached it's brink.

Myth Short Story by Ava Lipford

It was almost a normal day. Kangaroo was sitting on her island, eating seeds from her pouch, when suddenly something hit her. She felt something she'd never felt before. For the first time in her existence, she felt lonely on her island. She continued eating her seeds, pondering on how she could fix this feeling. Kangaroo had never known of anyone except herself, she simply lived on her island. Her pouch supplied her with everything she needed.

An idea hit her. Kangaroo decided to reach further into her pouch, when she felt something. She pulled out a creature, and set it on the ground, continuing to do this until there was no more room on her island.

“Who are you?” she asked the creatures before her. “How long have all of you been there?”

The animals stared at her for a moment, before a crow stood up to answer her. “I don't know how long we were in there, I only know that you got us out.”

Kangaroo nodded at the small bird before her, unsure of how to react to all of the new faces. This was all overwhelming for the marsupial, and she didn't know what to do. The small island was crowded, and there was nothing else around it. She reached into her pouch once more and pulled out a pelican.

“Please, can you help us? You're the one who I pulled out of my pouch, you were meant to help us!” Kangaroo exclaimed, begging for the bird to help. He flapped his wings and took off in flight. When he opened his mouth, water and all the fish of the ocean came out. He filled the

world with one big ocean, surrounding Kangaroo's once dry island. None of the animals had seen water before, nor had they seen fish. A raggedy possum emerged from the crowd, placing one of their paws in. All of the animals stood in shock as the small animal proceeded to put the rest of his body in, swimming around the island.

Before too long, almost all of the animals were splashing around in the water. They watched as fish came up to them, staring curiously at the way they swam. Soon the animals were tired, so they became grumpy and hungry. There wasn't enough room for the soaking wet animals anymore, for the great whales of the ocean had created waves that now crashed dangerously against the piece of land.

"Someone has to get off," Kangaroo demanded. "There isn't enough room for all of us." The crow flew up and landed on the back of a lion. "Could you pull more islands out of your pouch? You got us out, why can't you make more islands?"

Kangaroo quickly reached into her pouch, and pulled out sand and mud to create land for all of the animals to live on. They wasted no time exploring, but the kangaroo stayed on her island. She sat, eating seeds as she looked contently at what she'd done. Occasionally, an animal would come up to her and ask for seeds to eat. There was no vegetation, so there was no food for them to eat. This grew very tiresome for everyone, and soon they started to fight over the seeds. The animals feared that there would be none left, or that Kangaroo would keep them to herself. A squirrel got an idea- bury his supply of seeds so that if the supply ran out, he would have some.

He quickly forgot where he buried them. For many days he searched and searched but couldn't find them, when he saw it. A plant was growing from the seeds. He had the idea to bury more seeds in similar places. The other animals attempted to help the little squirrel, but he

refused. He wanted to do this on his own, and he did. This is how the world grew its plants.

Kangaroo was very pleased with the squirrel because now, none of the animals would ask her for seeds. There was enough food to go around. There was a specific group of animals that refused to eat the plants, and only did when absolutely necessary. They were known as carnivores. They were very discontent with vegetation, it didn't supply them with enough energy to run through the forests.

Lion had an idea- he caught a fish from the great ocean, and ate it. It was much better than the plants, so he continued to do this until he had enough energy to run freely. The other carnivores quickly followed his lead, and they learned to hunt the fish of the ocean. They soon grew just as tired of this as the plants. Tiger started hunting small animals: rabbits, raccoons, squirrels. The other animals followed, but this too grew tiresome. She started hunting larger prey, deer, cows, and sheep. The animals that ate plants, the herbivores, grew fearsome of the carnivores. They cowered when the large meat eaters were present, leaving the area to escape from being eaten.

Kangaroo pulled new animals out of her pouch almost every day, repopulating Earth. There was soon a balance between the animals, but something was off. Something was missing. Kangaroo did her best to think of what it could be, but she couldn't put her paws on it. She reached deep into her pouch, before pulling out a human. It stood on two feet as we do today. It looked around, before speaking to the kangaroo.

“Where am I?”

“You're on Earth,” the kangaroo replied, staring curiously at how this new creature moved.

“Earth...” it repeated, unsure of how to feel. It wandered into the forest, watching all of the animals coexist with each other. It particularly liked the wolves, and they accepted the human as

part of their pack. They traveled the world together, as they were its best friends. They protected him from the other predators, and taught him how to hunt.

One night, years later, there was a strong storm. Winds blew like they never had before. The human blamed it on the amount of birds flapping their wings at once. Rain started pouring from the sky, flooding the lands. The winds and rain combined created the mountains and rivers. The force from the winds pushed lands together and apart, causing earthquakes. The land slowly started splitting, separating it into the continents we know today. The animals were thrown about in the storm, unsure of how they could possibly live through this uncontrollable weather. The winds knew where the animals were supposed to be. It put them on their continent, where they would spend the rest of their lives.

The great storm continued for 11 days. It filled our rivers with water, and carefully shaped our mountains. The human woke up to the sun for the first time in what felt like ages. His companions were nowhere to be found, and without them he was lonely. He always had them with him, and he had no idea where they might be. He had to find Kangaroo. He searched for six days and six nights, admiring the terrain that the storm had made. The world he knew was completely different, he wanted to explore it, to learn about it, but he had a mission. He was determined to find Kangaroo.

He found her on her island, eating seeds under her palm tree. "Please help me, Kangaroo. I'm so alone, my friends are gone. Please, reach into your great pouch and give me someone to spend my time with." Kangaroo wanted to ignore his begging, but she couldn't. She reached into her pouch, and pulled out a beautiful creature. She looked just like the human before her, and he instantly knew that they would be the best of friends. They spent hours sharing stories,

discussing the day's hunt. They passed on stories to their children, and their children to their children, and so on.

“Fall” by Cason Rose

Warm, prominent hues decorate the trees.
Shades of yellow, orange and red present.
The delicate leaves rustling in the breeze.
The lovely scene is calming and pleasant.
Lovers of fall adore this grand landscape
As an artist would a finished canvas.
They capture this view with videotape
Before it no longer is around us.
Beware of the storms that sweep through the night.
These storms are a force that perform like thieves.
Their blustering winds greet the trees with fright
For they shake their limbs and rid them of leaves.
Swiftly and softly towards the ground they fall,
Waiting for the frost that will kill them all.

Out by Camilla Valdambrini

Such a quiet place is the one I found out here

I can almost ignore the ticking of the clock

The knocking on the door

The whispers in my ear

Such a quiet place is the one under my bed

The demons seem to have gone away

But I lost trust

I'm hiding on the ceiling

The world is inside me

The rumbling, the screaming, the reaping

Mandatory participation to this agony

The world is inside me

I got upside down

I dreaded peace

All I got was chaos

This is life inviting me in

So i got you

Start of a Family by Jessica Bard

I was right out of high school at the age of eighteen, I had started dating Patrick, a guy 8 years older than I was. My Dad did not approve of it at first, but eventually he turned into a softy and decided to give him a chance. He absolutely loved him. So, when it became time for me to move out, he was perfectly fine with me moving in with Patrick. We always would sit and talk about the perfect life we wanted.

We had decided we were ready to get married and start a family. One morning I woke up and was sicker than a dog. I could not raise my head up without throwing up. I called my mom, and she asked if I was pregnant, I told her no, and she showed up with a pregnancy test. Took the test and sure enough I was “PREGNANT”! I was 19 years old and just found out I was pregnant. I was worried about what my friends and family would think. But Patrick and I were beyond excited to start that perfect life.

As the time passed by, I started to really start showing, my belly was getting huge. I went for my very first doctor appointment and ultrasound. Being able to see my baby for the first time and hearing that “thumping” of his little heart beat just melted my heart. At that moment I knew that I was destined to be a mother. I had the perfect pregnancy, once I got past the morning sickness phase. I craved chocolate ice cream and dill pickles. As disgusting as it sounds, those two together.

On March 10, 2003, I went for my last doctor appointment. When I got there they decided to check to see if I had dilated any. The doctor said I had begun to ripen as does a fruit. Contractions were already at three. So, They told me to head to the hospital and he would meet

me over there. As I walked into my hospital room, it finally hit me, I was fixing to be a mom. The nurses came in and started my IV. I'll never forget the sound of that. That drip, drip, drip, seemed to be the new sound that I would be listening to that night. The pain of those contractions that night had got to be unbearable, so I jumped at the first mention of an epidural. I tried to get some rest when I could. The doctor had finally come around at 4 am on March 11, checked me and said I was at 9, and it was about that time to push. I will never forget those bright fluorescent lights that hung over my bed, how scared I was, but then again, I was so ready to get that baby in my arms. After about an hour of pushing, Dylan Lane Bard was born at 5:11 am . He weighed a whopping 7 pounds and was 20 inches long. They placed him on my bare chest, and just his body against my body, the smell of a newborn swelled my heart, and then the tears flowed down my face. My bald, bawling, baby boy was healthy and loved beyond words. We were so blessed with a healthy baby.

On March, 12, 2003, We got to take our baby home. The first week or so I was so exhausted and just wanted my momma. Parenthood was exhausting. Dylan was a colicky baby, he cried and fussed all the time. It took us like 5 different formula changes to finally get him squared away. Over the years he has grown into a very handsome 19 year old, who is also attending school full time and working full time. To say that becoming a mom was the best thing that has ever happened to me would be understatement.

Life and Death by Arianna McDaniel

Everyone is talking about if killing a fetus is murder or freedom of choice. Now, if someone would have asked me when I was seventeen years old what I thought, I would have scuffed at the subject and gave them a look as if you were already a murderer. Killing something with life is killing. I thought this way because growing up, to me, life was viewed as a gift too precious to throw away for selfish reasons. I just could not understand why anyone would think killing a baby was a better option than facing life once it is given to us. As I grew as an individual, so did my life experiences and I found myself falling head over heels for a tall six-foot-three, blue eyed, farmhand from a small town in Missouri. Little was I aware, that was the beginning of my biggest experience yet.

Okay, so we all have heard the nursery rhyme “First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes mommy with the baby carriage.” What they do not sing about is what happens when life does not follow in that order. I loved him so much. As much as any naive sophomore in high school would love a rough, rogue, romantic, hardworking boy. Loved each other so much we followed each other around, even after we crossed that long awaited stage and threw our hats as high as our hopes. A few years passed and we found ourselves twenty years old and not thinking much about any “what ifs” in life a.k.a children. It was not until two baby pink lines stamped on a test strip that all that changed.

I sat in the doctor’s office listening to my own heartbeat, as if it had its own mixtape it made from my fear and worry. The doctor walked in to speak on the results of my examination. It had been over a week since I took my at home test but the surrealness lingered as if it had only been ten minutes ago. Her lips were moving in slow motion, dragging out every syllable and

vowel. WhaWhaWha is the only sound escaping her mouth. Nothing is louder than my own thought of pure dread. “I know this is hard to wrap your head around sweetheart.” The first sentence she has said that I could finally piece together. She handed me a little folded packet with the title “Understanding Polycystic Ovary Syndrome” labeled across the top. Hunner, my boyfriend, and high school sweetheart, spoke up before I could even think of what to ask next. “Does this mean she will lose the baby?” “No, not for certain.” The doctor answered. “There’s a small chance she might be able to carry to full term, but she would be in a high-risk pregnancy and would need to take things day by day.” “I-is there anything I could do to save it?” I stuttered at the doctor after I had collected my thoughts and stored them to worry about for another time. “Not much other than taking it easy, no hard activities, and eating right. Keep up with appointments and keep a positive head. I would just mentally prepare. Your body just is not in a good condition to be carrying. We can only hope for the best case.” I drop my head as if I were carrying the heaviest weight on my shoulders. I have no clue what I will do.

I did my research and tried my best to do everything I could do to save my baby. While my Facebook timeline filled with “Roe vs Wade” articles and people screaming for the right to take a child’s life I was tiptoeing around my house and eating greens to save mine. It had been eight whole months since I received my diagnosis. I still just could not believe women were upset that laws would be put in place to stop abortions. It is a precious life and I just spent what felt like an eternity walking on eggshells, grasping onto hope like it is the last raft out in open sea after a sinking of a horror filled shipwreck just to hold my baby. I slammed my computer shut after seeing the thousandth post on abortion I have seen that evening and walked over to my bed and gently laid down. Just a few more short weeks and all of this will be over and worth it. I rested my head on my pillow and began to nod off. This little girl will be worth it all.

August 16th, 2021, the day my life would change forever. I laid in the hospital bed. So many thoughts crossed my mind. I was not supposed to be able to carry her. I had a 20 percent chance of making it full-term and here I am three centimeters dilated feeling every contraction labor had to give me. As time passed, I can feel my skin crawling with anxiety as if my body were telling me something was not what it seemed. The nerves were getting to me because I felt myself needing to haul my tail to the bathroom. After using it I climbed back into bed with the help of Hunner and started feeling a little lightheaded. I laid my head to the side and knew something was off. I told Hunner to grab a nurse because I was not feeling okay. As soon as the nurse arrived, I could tell by her demeanor something was wrong. She rushed to look at my baby's charts and instantly started to assemble. Before I knew it, I had the whole labor unit at the foot of my bed. "Both heart rates are dropping. Baby and mother are both in distress. "Momma, hey baby girl I need you to keep your eyes open for me, okay?" A nurse I have never seen before was hovering over me. Three separate nurses were in the corner filling my line with medication. "We are going to break your water and we are going to have to have this baby out in three pushes all right? We need you to be strong momma." I was the one in labor, yet I felt like I was standing outside my body watching as everything unfolded. Three pushes later and there was still no baby. Weak, hungry, exhausted, and broke I pushed for a fourth time. Everything went dark.

When I finally came to my senses I was in a different room on a different floor. "Where is Hunner?" "Where is my baby?" "Is she okay?" "Did I even hold her?" "Where am I?!" The question flew in my head like moths caught by a streetlamp. The door crept open, and a smiling blonde-haired nurse entered my room. "Hey!!" She was happy to see me awake; yet, I had no idea who she was. "How are you feeling?" she asked as she began checking vitals. "Uh, I'm really sore." I felt like I was hit by a truck, but my pride is larger than the truck I felt hit me.

“Could you explain what happened to me? How is my baby?” She grabbed a seat. “Yeah, of course super woman. So, none of your ultrasounds shown this but your uterus grew into your placenta, and you started bleeding as you were about to give birth.” I stared at her in confusion. “Your baby is fine and quite beautiful too momma.” I finally felt myself breathe for the first time as I let out a sigh of relief. “You died on us twice before we were able to send you into surgery for an emergency hysterectomy and 8 units of blood transfusion.” “You’re a strong one!” I took one more look at the nurse before asking her one more question. “What would’ve happened if things went differently?” She glanced into my eyes before looking away. “If we would’ve waited any longer you would’ve had to have a late term abortion or both of you could’ve died.” Then it hit me like a brick wall to the face. There is that word again, Abortion.

My thoughts on it have not been the same since. Abortion would’ve either saved me or killed me. Regardless, I know I am not the only woman who had to face something like that. How wrong of me to judge these women without hearing their story. If I would have been in Texas and would have needed an abortion, I would be sitting in jail right now. Maybe Abortion is not just killing babies. It's medical help that could potentially save a mother. All this time I was not looking at other perspectives. I was looking in the eyes of the child when I needed to see as a mother. I do not think I will ever look at something one way again. Ever since this happened, my eyes have opened to more scenarios where abortion is lifesaving. Murder is not the word; choice is.

Poem by Avery Smith

I remember the pink walls surrounding me in my bedroom and bringing me joy.

I remember singing along to every Disney Princess song, yearning to have a movie of my own one day.

I remember teaching myself to do my own hair, because my mom did her own and I wanted to be just like her.

I remember my brother constantly bugging me and getting on my last nerve to the point where we would wrestle.

I remember being excited to start school, make friends, and learn how to write my name.

I remember smelling like grass after school from playing every sport my cousins and I could possibly think of.

I remember the change from junior high to high school and how hard it was.

I remember jealous, teenage girls being cruel and making me hate who I was.

I remember losing my Pop and constantly crying in my mother's arms, barely even eating at dinner time.

I remember starting to love myself and enjoy life again after all the heartache and pain I had been through.

I remember my brother becoming my best friend and how much I appreciated having him as my sibling.

I remember getting my driver's license and finally feeling a sense of independence and freedom.

I remember being so nervous and scared to start a new school, hoping I wouldn't regret it and dreading being the new kid.

I remember making new friends, losing old ones, and keeping the ones who were real.

I remember always admiring my Gigi in every aspect of her life and hoping one day I'd be half the woman she is.

I remember learning many lessons throughout my life and learning to appreciate and love the person I am and the world around me.

Excerpts of Atley's Anthology Titled;

“Overdramatic & Distracted”

Written by: Atley Laine

Minor Trigger Warning: These are depressing, but please understand, I am a river of a human being and I drown myself and others in my overdramatic emotions until I become distracted by something else I will aggressively and unknowingly pretend to care about until I forget about it too. Please do not worry, it is just who I am, and yes I already have a therapist.

You can't say I'm not self aware.



No. 3 The Personification of SuperMarket Flowers

Written by Atley Laine

I buy supermarket flowers on a biweekly basis
The off weeks I have therapy
I use them to decorate my room as a personal oasis
The flowers aren't that pretty, but it doesn't matter,
they're just for me
I spend \$7.49 every two weeks, the day changes it seems
It wouldn't matter if my souls salvation depended on a
schedule because I'd already be in hell
So a random day of my week, I cut two inches deep into
the stem, breaking bread with the mortality of things
The semi pretty flowers, that I'm semi sure are
daisy's, are actually their to keep me well
The days fade in and out until they bleed together
until one day I look up and the flowers are wilted;
this usually takes 2 weeks
I remember that as times changes, I'm living, I'm
alive, and I don't have forever
A reminder as the petals fall, days pass, and the poppy
shrivel self destruction prophesied by the Greeks
I lay as the time fades in and gets a little dark,
until someone comments on the mold
The vase is gray the flowers are dead and the 2 weeks
have been more like four or three
I ask for help with changing the water, and ask for a
hand to hold
And I replace my supermarket flowers thankful for the
times they've saved me.

No. 4 Propagating Basil Seeds

Written by Atley Laine

Today I barely had the strength to get out of bed.
Today I looked at my messy room, and didn't understand
why yesterday I couldn't see it.

Today I thought about letting the masquerade fall.

Today I pondered not wearing makeup.

Today I imagined myself explaining how I am actually
not fine.

Today I considered not waking up at all.

Today in my window seal my basil seedlings sprouted.

And today that would be enough for me because

Tomorrow I had to plant them

No.7 Overly Me
Written by Atley Laine

I overshare because I'm used to having to share.
My pitcher divided between the people that need me
there.

I make sure they're all okay, obsessively fill,
obsessively care
Losing sleep, losing peace, just like I'm losing my
hair.

I feel like me by myself isn't enough so I use over
exaggerations.

I know I'm not pretty, but I'm better in my
imaginations.

I'm used to screaming for someone to notice my
situations.

I guess I'm better now as one of society's sad
creations.

I start to remember that time, I start to overthink.
It runs over and over in my head, my insanity on the
brink.

Deep down in my heart my previous words sink.
When conversation partner B had let it go in a blink.

Is it things I do or is it just what I've become?
Digging my own grave, just for the dirt to succumb?
When did these feelings start, when had this begin?
I know these actions are wrong, but without them I feel
numb.

No. 12 Questions to the Universe.

Written by Atley Laine

Am I happy or am I just simply distracted?
Am I beautifully normal or is it due to my circumstances that I have adapted?

Am I born this way or have my surroundings impacted?
To be honest I was surprised how long the peace lasted.

Does this bring me joy or is this just a hyper fixation?
Do I need a break from the world or my imagination?
Does this mean I'm a mistake or an experiment of my generation?
Did he make me this, or is this just my retaliation?

My heart is heavy, doesn't that mean I am tough?
If I pile more on top, will that be enough?
As I drag a chain around myself, I wonder will I have the strength to cuff?
They push my feet on the ground, pull my head out of the clouds, but I know I'll miss the fluff.

Will I go further down than I intended with my tunnel vision?
Will I have to sit and watch my priorities and dreams have a head-on collision?

Will I ever be number one if my own brain is my competition?
I will never make it to the end if a fork in the road meets my incisions.

What if I get tired of the weight and try to take it to the church?
What if it doesn't like the judgment of the pews so on my shoulder it stays perched?

What if it drags me down through the soil to the core and out on the other side, grabbing onto the earth it stops at a lurch?
I know what it's like to hold the world on my shoulders, unlike atlas, there is no escape in search.

Will the thoughts seek up on me when I'm most cheerful?
Do they see that even in joy, with my weight, they stay fearful?
Can you try not to show concern, I'm on the verge of becoming tearful?
Rather I am happy in my land of fictions or distracting myself with my mastery of picking up addictions, usually, it's because running from my question is an act of which I have become most skillful.

No. 13 Butterflies in my Stomach

Written by Atley Laine

An egg is placed, a seed if you will
A comment, a suggestion a goal set for a certain time
Not to be rude or rash just to keep you from being
undignified
The egg it cracks and crawls up my spine, to my eyes
where it becomes the only thing I see then down my
skull to my throat where the caterpillar fuz gags me
Don't worry though I'm able to keep it at bay
my emotions cocooned deep deep away
It lay there almost silent hanging from a heart string
This one little worry has managed to connect to the
most vital part of my blood stream
Then, at another comment or the mention of a test
It durst and births again, drawing more attention like
a jest
Agitate and irritate are the words I can describe it
best
People start to notice, people start to ask,
So to protect the ones I love, I put on a mask
I will put a stop to this before my families' heart's
plummet
By fetish and romanticizing my anxieties as butterflies
in my stomach.

No. 17 Oh How I Wonder

Written by Atley Laine

I wonder how many excuses I have made for you
 I wonder how often I was wasting my breath because your
 behavior wasn't excusable
 I wonder about how much time I lost pining over your
 approval
 I wonder how long I've tried to rationalize your inability
 love
 I wonder how many times I've confused being numb for being
 okay
 I wonder how often I mistook your lack of physical abuse as
 a healthy environment
 simply because my beaten soul was not a visible ailment
 I wonder how long I've contemplated the idea of nurture vs
 nature
 I wonder if I truly have no control, if I'm destined to be
 a narcissist
 I wonder if you've spent as many hours as me convincing
 yourself you're not one
 I wonder if you could see the tension in my shoulders when
 you entered a room or
 if you could hear my exhale when you left
 I wonder how many last chances you've been given and
 I wonder how many lies you told to get them
 I wonder how many of those lies you truly believe
 I wonder how I became so conditioned to your degradation
 that
 It no longer felt dehumanizing
 I wonder if the Pavlov's bell is the sound of your footstep
 I wonder if that why I wake up from nightmares hearing the
 echoes of dress shoes
 I wonder when bystanders' faces turned from pride to pity
 I wonder if I ever actually liked you
 I wonder if I'll ever be able to love you again
 I wonder why my complacency made you complacent
 I wonder how much time I wasted on you

And then I wonder how much time I wasted wondering about
you

Best Friend by Zoe Imel

His gaze is priceless, it says I'm unique.

My friend shows his endless kindness to us.

He shows us warmth and love; his heart is meek.

His soul is pure and it will never rust.

He marvels all with his wits, they are in awe.

Athena is no match for his great brain,

For he has mastered every rule of law.

My friend perfection strives and does obtain.

To me, he is my world, my soul, my all.

He means more than the value of my life;

For without him, I'll fall a deadly fall,

Like being cut deep with a hot, sharp knife.

From my eyes, he cleared a dark endless smog

My best friend, who is my life, is my dog

Tournament Day by Damien Smallmon

Nearly everyone has a hobby or activity that inspires them to be the greatest they can be, and that activity was sport karate for me. This sport gave me clarity and was a way to exert my burning pent-up energy until my father tried to live my life through his eyes.

As a child, I was very ADHD. My parents had no idea how to keep me calm or how to make me get all of my energy out. They would ask countless people for help on how to control their “energy stockpile” of a child when one day a good family friend suggested karate classes. On the day I turned four years old they told me my gift was starting karate. At first, I didn’t know what to think because I was only four years old and had almost no clue what karate was, but I soon came around to liking it after my first week of classes.

The reason I enjoyed it so much wasn’t because of the sport itself, but the instructors I had there to teach me. I almost immediately fell in love with who became my favorite instructor now for the last 14 years, David Barnes, AKA Mr. David. This man was the definition of life. He was fun, energetic, easy to understand, fearless, and most of all, kind to everyone he met. No matter where he was, he always had a smile on his face and treated everyone with the respect he desired to earn from everyone else. The setting he created for us kids was almost like a playpen meant to teach karate. The room was always filled with the laughter that warms a parent’s heart, as well as the discipline that my parents were looking for me to have.

As the years went on, he and I grew closer and closer as student and teacher, to the point where I looked at him as my biggest mentor. He taught me well enough that at the age of seven, I made Atlanta newspapers after winning the grand championship for the ten and under division at The Battle of Atlanta. I can remember the ecstatic look on his face when the judges declared me

the winner of the championship trophy (which was about five feet tall). After that tournament, I continued to compete and bring home countless championship awards for three more years until one day when Mr. David moved studios to Joey Perry's Martial Arts Academy (JPMA). I was devastated when my parents told me he had moved gyms. According to my mom, I said I never wanted to go back to class again if he wasn't going to be there, but they didn't let me do that since they were paying for it.

On the day of my eleventh birthday, they told me where he transferred to, and told me that I could transfer there as well. I immediately jumped to a strict "yes" with no hesitation in my voice. A few days pass and I start class at JPMA. As I walk into the building for my first class, I noticed that everything was different, but not in a bad way. There were more students, probably triple, more instructors, more equipment, and better uniforms, and they played workout music while class was going to keep everyone engaged. I could already tell I was going to love it. When I received my uniform and belt, I was told that I would be starting as a brown belt because I had received my black belt at my previous studio, which made me happy. After all, I did not want to start over as a white belt. I quickly made new friends and even a best friend who doubled as a rival, PJ Clark. PJ was just as skilled as I was, and we both had the same style of fighting as well as training. Never did I know that he would be such great competition, nor someone who would make me want to better myself even further.

Within the span of four years, PJ and I competed in about thirty tournaments together going back and forth in our wins and losses. Now my father never had an issue with me winning until late 2017 up until March 10, 2018. This day was the day that changed my outlook on my father and made me never want to compete again.

The morning went on just like any other tournament would, we would arrive at about 6 O'clock to set up the mats and chairs for competitors and judges, and get concessions set up as well as computers. Then later in the morning, all of what seemed like 300 competitors would start warming up on the massive basketball court where the event was set up in. Next, divisions would be assigned to certain mats and the tournament would begin.

When the time came for me to compete in my extreme weapons championship division, my dad came up to me and told me that I needed to put everything into my performance because the prize for the grand champion in the black belt divisions was \$500 cash prize as well as a six-foot trophy. I told him that I would give it my all and do as he asked me to. When it was my turn to do my form, I lined up in the corner of the blue mat and raised my hand to signal my music to start playing. After my music started, I turned around with my bow staff tucked in the bed of my elbow running up my shoulder and down past my knee. I started towards the middle of the mat and took an intense bow and then started my form. I could feel my heart racing as I twirled and swung around my bow staff because I was so afraid of messing up that I was starting to lose focus. As I prepared to perform my most difficult trick my mind went to "what if I mess up" "what if he is disappointed in me", but I still went for it. My trick was to spin the bow around my back and then over the back of my hand, toss it into the air and spin three times while it was still in the air, catch it, and take a knee as my finishing move. This was by far the most difficult trick I had ever learned to do with my bow staff and attempting it with a foggy mind ended up getting me disqualified. As I threw the staff in the air I began spinning and counting them in my head. 1, 2, 3. As I came around to my last spin, I prepared to catch the staff, but I was too late. By the time I made the last spin, the staff was already hitting the ground. All I could think was that I just got disqualified and simultaneously disappointed my father.

When I looked at him all I could see was a look of disappointment in his eyes, as he walked away toward the exit outside. And that was the day that I realized my father tried to live my life through his eyes because he never had a childhood like mine and wanted to experience some sort of excitement through my competition. But what he didn't realize was that his actions made me never want to compete again, and I haven't yet to this day.

“The Right Choice” by Amelia Hatley

The more you grow
The more you decide
Which way to go,
And which way is right.
The choices you will make
The places you will go
The things you will take
The things you will never know
Which plan to take
Which road to follow
The snow that makes your bones ache
The cave that is hollow
Which decision is right
Which will allow you to sleep at night

“The Film I’ve Seen Before” by Amelia Hatley

I’ve been down this road before.
It was cold, it was dark.
At the end of the road is a house on a hill
The house is warm and has colored lights
I’ve been down this road before
But not on this same night
I’ve been down this road before
Two years ago in december
I know you don’t remember
So i’ll keep the past
While you never look back

MATCHsticks

Every night, the branches against my windows sway side to side;
A couple caught in an intimate dance.
The air, a strumming violin playing a romantic sonata.
Careful wooden caresses exchanged.
Heralded by the calming tune of the wind; a plier concluding their routine

-Alan Rodriguez Ledezma

Comparison Kills

By: Riley Norton-Thomas

Comparison kills.

The comparison in your mind is like a nail to a drill.

I remember when sucking in wasn't important, and the only worries I had were if my friends couldn't play.

I remember when I skipped meals so frequently that I couldn't even stand up in the shower, all I could do was lay.

I've compared myself to her since the day I saw her. Always wishing I could have her dark skin, flat stomach, and little legs.

To me avoiding comparison was like needles without threads.

But I didn't even realize the thoughts that went through her head.

She thinks being tall is a flaw and acne is shameful
and kneeling over the toilet after every meal is her faithful.

Meanwhile I pinch at the skin of my legs and stomach in blame
Wondering why our bodies can't be the same.

But one day I finally I knew
That she felt the same as I do.

She wishes she could look like someone else.

And if she did, the intrusive thoughts would melt.
But no matter what she does there will always be dwelt.

"Diets" and workouts left me feeling weak
While everyone else said I looked at my peak.

Until my body shut down after months of drown.

119 was a dream because I finally felt lean.

But at what cost

What good was losing 30 pounds whenever everything else felt like a loss.

Comparing is a disease that only leaves a sense of displeasure.

There's no way to change your appearance through magic potions or pills

But to know you're not alone brings peace to the comparison that kills.

I am. By Cheron Hunter-Wright

I am a woman.

A Black woman,

I am a mother.

A strong mother.

I am a student.

I am a prayer warrior.

I am a generational curse breaker.

I am a fighter.

I am determined.

I am unstoppable,

Once I put my mind to it.

A lot of people said,

I wouldn't. But I did.

People have said I couldn't,

But again, I did.

I am everything, they said I couldn't be.

I am.

Cheron Hunter-Wright

A Day In Blytheville By Whitney Mangum

Let's go on a walk on this sunny day.

In the city of Blytheville is where I stay.

Sometimes we walk far just to get away.

We might see blue lights.

Coming to save our day.

But all of our citizens are here to stay.

A town full of love, peace and joy.

Gets labeled crazy every other day.

However, we stick together to keep it clean.

Sometimes we have way too many crime scenes.

You might see us wear maroon and white.

Those are our Chickasaws so please don't fight.

Dad by Smita Talukder

I used to ask for
One toy,
And Dad used to fill
My room with toys.
But don't know why
Dad used to go to office,
On foot for
Someday!
Then one day, I asked
For a new dress,
And he gave me
Jewelry with the dress.
But don't know why,
On that occasion,
Dad wore an
Old T-shirt.
He is not dad,

He is a magician!
Ask For one and
He will give you a thousand!
He doesn't

Care for himself,
But every month
Brings salary as happiness
For the family.
Someone,
Please tell me,
What world
Dad comes from!

The Walls by Maria Hildebrand

I love being alone
Don't have to talk to anyone
Don't have to help others
It helps

I hate being alone
No one to talk to
No one to help me
It hurts

The walls could fall on me.
They need to stay up.
The walls are to protect me
Are they protecting me?

Was I, am I better off alone
Does being alone hurt more?

- Maria Hildebrand

Paper Heart by Jenifer G.

Just a girl with pen and paper

What will she write on the first line

Just a little bit of anything

Everything is on her mind

In high school it was about the boy

The one that broke her heart

In her early twenties

It was the things that made life hard

When life became busy

With kids and bills to pay

She found it hard to write

Feelings she could not portray

Once her mind so clear

The words flowing freely

Now feeling writer's block

It did not come so easy

Eventually years would come to pass

Nothing being written in her book

When one day she came to realize

Writing everything down is not what it took

Sure, her poetry kept memories

Of the things she left behind

But she no longer needed to write

She did not keep everything locked inside

She still had the ability to compose

If she ever wanted or needed to

She kept her passion for writing

It was just a change in the venue

No matter where life took her

If the reality became too hard

She would just grab that old notebook

Guiding the pen across her paper heart



“Gator” by Jessica Jackson



“Distressed Frog” by Dustin Kemper



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