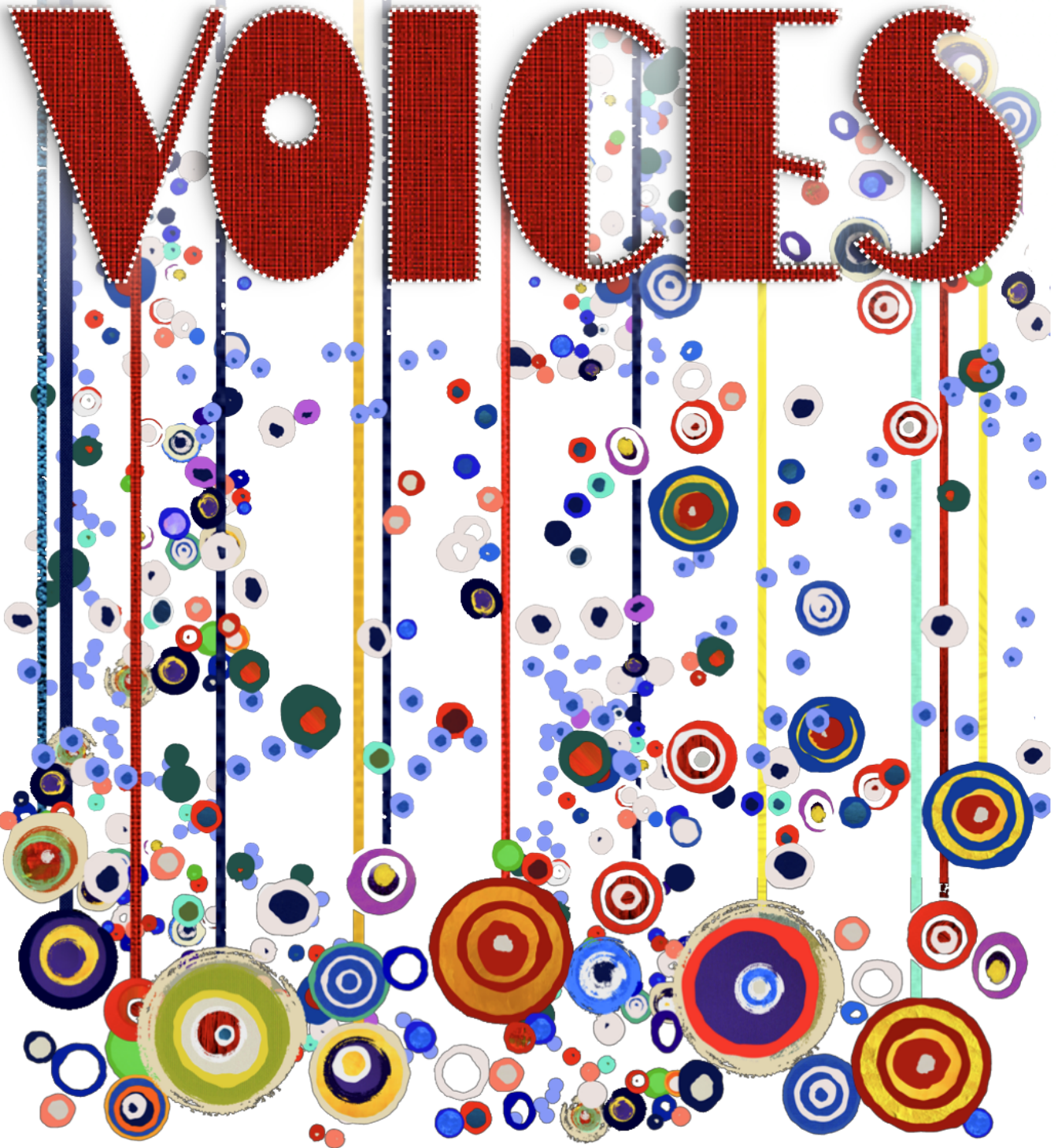


NEW

STUDENT
READING

TUESDAY, APRIL 25, 2023 • 7PM • PVAC THEATRE



PRESENTED BY THE CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM OF THE GROSSMONT COLLEGE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

2023 LITERARY ARTS FEST APRIL 24-27

Monday, April 24

WHY LIT MATTERS STUDENT PANEL • 2-3:15PM GRIFFIN GATE

A panel of Grossmont College students, faculty, and administrators testify to how literature has played a role in their personal lives, and discuss its potential to inspire change and cultivate humanity.

SONIA GUTIÉRREZ STORY WRITER/POET • 7-8:15PM GRIFFIN GATE

SONIA GUTIÉRREZ is the author of the poetry collection, *Spider Woman / La Mujer Araña* (Olmecca Press, 2013) and the novel, *Dreaming with Mariposas* (Flowersong Press, 2020), winner of the 2021 Tomás Rivera Book Award. A professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at California State University San Marcos, Gutiérrez is also co-editor for *The Writer's Response* (Cengage Learning, 2016). Her bilingual poetry collection, *Paper Birds: Feather by Feather / Pájaros de papel: Pluma por pluma*, is forthcoming.



SHILPI SOMAYA GOWDA NOVELIST • 2-3:15PM GRIFFIN GATE

Born and raised in Toronto, SHILPI SOMAYA GOWDA is the award-winning, *New York Times* and internationally bestselling Canadian author of *Secret Daughter* (2010), and *The Golden Son* (2015), winner of the French literary prize, Prix des Lyceens Folio. Her latest book, *The Shape of Family* (2019), remained on the Canadian national bestseller list for several months, then debuted at #2 on the *LA Times* bestseller list.



TARA STILLIONS WHITEHEAD AUTHOR • 7-8:15 PM GRIFFIN GATE

TARA STILLIONS WHITEHEAD is a filmmaker and writer teaching in Central Pennsylvania. Her essay, "The Mother Must Die and Other Lies Fairy Tales Told Me," published in *Fairy Tale Review*, was designated as a notable essay in the Best American Essays 2022 anthology. She is the author of two full-length story collections, *The Year of the Monster* (Unsolicited Press 2022) and *They More Than Burned*, forthcoming from ELJ Editions in 2023.



Tuesday, April 25

MARGARAT NEE ZINE WORKSHOP • 11AM-12:15PM PVAC LOBBY

The popular DIY zine workshop returns, lead by MARGARAT NEE. Nee is an artist, independent scholar, curator of the San Diego Punk Archive, and founding member of activist art group Grrrl Zines A-Go-Go, a female consortium/collective established in 2002 to empower young women in independent media and education, radicalism, zines, and Do-It-Yourself ethics.



NEW VOICES STUDENT READING • 7-8:15pm PVAC THEATRE

This popular biannual event will feature exceptional student writers from the spring 2023 semester's creative writing courses performing their new and original works of short and flash fiction, novel excerpts, literary nonfiction, poetry, drama, and hybrid works.

Thursday, April 27

MONI BARRETTE COMICS & SOCIAL JUSTICE • 12:30-1:45PM

ALLIED HEALTH AND NURSING LOBBY (34-206)
VP and Co-Founder of Creators Assemble and Pres. Elect of the Am. Library Assoc.'s Graphic Novel & Comics Round Table, MONI BARRETTE leads an interactive multi-media presentation on the power of comics and graphic literature to promote social justice. Winner of the California Library Association PRExcellence Award, Barrette is a frequent panelist at San Diego and New York Comic Con and this year will serve as judge for the Will Eisner Graphic Novel Grant.



RAYMOND LUCZAK QUEER DEAF POET, PLAYWRIGHT, AUTHOR • 7-9PM ALLIED HEALTH AND NURSING LOBBY (34-206)

Celebrated Deaf and queer author, RAYMOND LUCZAK, the 2023 Literary Arts Festival's finale event, will present a reading and book-signing of his recent poetry collections, *A Babble of Objects* (2019) and *Once Upon a Twin* (2022). Luczak is the author and editor of over over thirty books, including the critically acclaimed *Assembly Required: Notes from a Deaf Gay Life* (2009). He is widely anthologized in disability-lit and queer collections, as well as in journals such as *Poetry*, *BLOOM*, *TheaterWeek*, *Silent News*, *Out*, *Wordgathering Poetry*, *Crab Orchard Review*, and many others. Luczak also edits *Mollyhouse*, a journal for queer, disabled, and neurodivergent writers. In 2014, he was among the first Deaf artists to participate in the Deaf Artists Residency Program at the Anderson Center for Interdisciplinary Arts in Red Wing, Minnesota, where he now resides.



Wednesday, April 26

ADAM DEUTSCH POET • 12:30-1:45PM GRIFFIN GATE

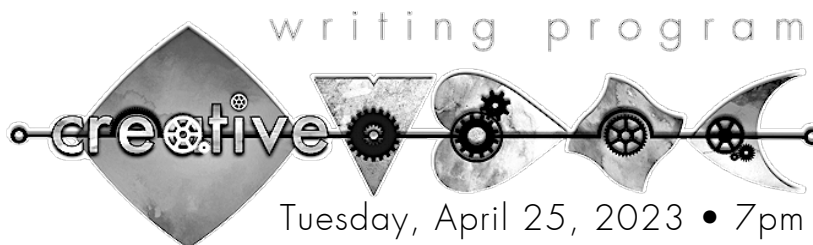
Grossmont College's own ADAM DEUTSCH, English professor and co-coordinator of the Creative Writing Program, gives a reading to celebrate the launch of his new poetry collection, *Every Transmission* (Fernwood Press 2023). Adam is also the author of a chapbook, *Carry On: Elegies*, and publisher of Cooper Dillon Books. His poems have appeared in *Poetry International*, *Thrush*, *Juked*, *AMP Magazine*, and elsewhere.



For author bios, bibliographies, resources, selected media, and more, visit the official LAF 27 website:

www.grossmont.edu/laf

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SPRING 2023 NEW VOICES STUDENT READING

This semesterly reading is sponsored by the Creative Writing Program with support from the English Department, the English and Social-Behavioral Sciences Division, and the Grossmont College Foundation. Each semester, our creative writing instructors hand-pick their stand-out students to participate, with works representing diverse skill levels and genres.* As a result, New Voices showcases our Creative Writing Program students and the devoted instructors who cultivate literary excellence among them. Special thanks go to the following for their assistance and support in the production of this program and event: Dean of English, Social, and Behavioral Sciences, Agustin Albarran; MaryAnn Landry, Administrative Assistant; Dr. Cindi Harris and Sarah Martin, English Dept. Co-Chairs; Spring 2023 Creative Writing instructors, Julie Cardenas, Enrique Cervantes, Daniela Sow, and Karl Sherlock; and the dedicated staff of the entire Printing Dept., including Regan Tu, Crystal Hong, Ricardo Macias, Maria Soriano, and Supervisor, Holly Phan; and PVAC Technology Services specialist Mark Russo.

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▲ AS A COURTESY TO OUR GUESTS, WORKS POTENTIALLY CONTAINING TRIGGERS, MATURE THEMES, AND/OR COARSE LANGUAGE HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED IN THE TABLE OF CONTENTS AND FURTHER NOTED IN THE PROGRAM, ITSELF. **PLEASE BE ADVISED**, THE CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM RESPECTS THE LITERARY INTEGRITY OF ITS STUDENTS AT ALL TIMES. OTHER THAN TO ASSIST WITH EDITING, OFFER INPUT FOR REVISION, OR RECOMMEND TRIGGER WARNINGS FOR POTENTIALLY TRAUMATIZING OR INFLAMMATORY CONTENT, OUR TEACHING STAFF NEITHER ALTERS NOR CENSORS STUDENT WRITING CONTAINING OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE, MATURE THEMES, SENSITIVE MATERIAL, OR CONTROVERSIAL CONTENT UNLESS DEEMED IN DIRECT CONFLICT WITH INSTITUTIONAL CODES OF ETHICS AS SET FORTH BY THE GROSSMONT-CUYAMACA COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT.

ELLA RAMSEY
ENGLISH 175: NOVEL WRITING I
INSTRUCTOR: RICH FARRELL

FAETALITY
NOVEL EXCERPT

There are ten pints of blood in a human body and eight in a faery. I estimate there are twenty-seven seeping into the field right now. Tournament rules state that each fight is to the death or the yield. I have never seen anyone die during a tournament - most faeries are far too concerned with self-preservation - but the fiercest competitors will not yield until their blood spills.

I am not a fierce competitor.

"Teagan and Shasta, you're up." I hear the instructor's voice call out my name, signaling the last match is over. My stomach plummets at the name of my opponent. Shasta is not as skilled a fighter as others, but he's quick and merciless. And he despises me.

"If you yield too quickly you'll be marked down," Ferris, my adopted sister, reminds me as if the thought hadn't kept me awake through the day and pounded against my skull the entire tournament. I've been getting out of fights in class by yielding almost immediately. Unimpressed with my efforts, the instructor gave me an ultimatum: last five minutes or be thrown out. The shame of expulsion I could live with, but not my mother's fury.

"So I won't yield," I tell Ferris.

There is a plant with thick, pale green leaves that are trimmed in red near me. A Dragon's Tongue plant. It's one reason I chose to sit in this spot. I draw my long knife and plunge it deep into the fleshy leaf. The blade drips with sap when I pull it out. There are questions in Ferris's eyes, but I move onto the field before she can ask them.

Maybe twenty-seven pints of blood is a bit of an exaggeration. Most of the grass is still green under my boots, only clumps of it are stained red - the only trophies given to the victors. My opponent stares me down, a sneer curling his lips. His eyes are yellow with slitted pupils, and shaggy white hair falls over his ashy forehead like the fur of a wolf. His short sword is a hand's length longer than my dagger.

Five minutes. That's all I need to survive.

The instructor gives a slight nod of her head and Shasta leaps at me in a burst of furious energy. Everything around us melts away in a

blur as I focus on my sole objective: not getting my throat cut. Shasta is fast, but fear makes me faster. Still, it is all I can do to avoid the slash of his sword. Finally, I see an opening. Shasta charges my right, leaving his own side undefended. The technique I've learned is jumbled and I strike out blindly. Luck lets my knife rip through the fabric of Shasta's tunic, and his hiss of pain tells me the blade touched skin. It's no more than a scratch, but the sap gives me an advantage. I see a flash of red bloom behind the tear and grit my teeth in determination.

We call it Dragon's Tongue because when the sap touches bare skin, it causes burns and blisters like touching an open flame.

The next few minutes blur together as Shasta and I establish a pattern. He lunges with skill and intent, I dodge with finely tuned survival instincts and strike with the mad hope that I can at least touch him. I manage to give him a couple more small cuts, but my blade mostly glances off his body. I aim for his exposed skin as much as I can and I'm rewarded with angry red patches, even where only the flat of my blade hits. Shasta gnashes his teeth against the burning and my alarm spikes when I notice the other emotion in his eyes: confusion. My feeble attacks shouldn't cause this much pain.

He lunges at me sloppily, throwing me off guard with his sudden lack of intent. I'm late dodging, feeling my muscles burn with fatigue. His sword slices through my bicep and I cry out automatically, trying to clamp my jaws around the end of the sound. But his move gives me a perfect opportunity and I take it. His guard is almost entirely dropped. I comprehend why a heartbeat too late. Nothing perfect in Faerieland ever comes without a price.

Desperately, I lean out of the lunge, but it isn't enough. Shasta's eyes are trained on my knife as he lets it slice deep into his forearm. Blood blossoms from the wound, followed by red blisters and angry burned skin. The pound of my heart is no longer just from adrenaline. Shasta hurls his free hand at the side of my head, striking around my ears with enough force to send me staggering. My eyes water and for a moment all I can hear is a strange thundering. I'm jerked forward by my hair, slipping on dirt. My

knife is pulled roughly from my hand and I see Shasta's sword lying in the grass at our feet.

My eyes flash helplessly over the crowd, pleading with words I do not say. No one comes to my rescue, nor did I truly think they would. They watch with expressions ranging from mild curiosity to sadistic pleasure. We are all wondering what Shasta will do to me, all collectively holding our breath. Shasta gives my head another jerk, forcing me to look away from the crowd of students.

"Dirty human cheater," he spits.

My knife, sticky with blood and sap, slices deep into my left cheek. The pain is clear and sharp. I bite my tongue until I taste the iron tang of blood, determined not to release a sound of weakness. Then the pain shifts. My face feels too hot, worse than holding your hands above a candle flame for too long. I press my hands to my cheek in some attempt to cool the burning, but recoil at the feeling of my fingers against raw flesh. They come away wet with blood and pus from the blisters my nails scratched open.

"That's enough," our instructor says with bored authority. "You've taken your revenge, Shasta."

He glares at me with murderous fury, fingers wrapping the hilt of my knife like claws. After a moment he releases his grip on my hair and I push myself away. Blood drips down my arm like water, soaking the sleeve of my tunic. Yet, a small sense of satisfaction flickers in me. This should have been an easy victory for Shasta to gloat about, but because of me, he lost control and got chastised.

"I'm done letting you borrow my knife. Return it," I tell him. After all, luck exists to be pushed. Faeries hate being in someone's debt. Implying that I allowed Shasta to borrow the knife is a sure way to provoke him further. His jaw clenches and he hurls the knife at my feet. I take my time bending to pick it up. "Consider your debt paid," I say.

One glance at Ferris confirms my suspicions: I have indeed lost my mind.

TARIQ JOHNSON
ENGLISH 130: SHORT FICTION WRITING I
INSTRUCTOR: ENRIQUE CERVANTES

CONTENT WARNING: coarse language. 

UNTITLED

“Y’all ready?”

Cheerio opens the duffel bag and pulls out a sawed-off 12-gauge shotgun, two single-action .357 six-shooters, and an AR pistol. My heart about dropped into my stomach as I realized it was finally time. Two weeks ago, me, my cousin Cheerio, and my kid brother were at the community center playing basketball on the outside courts like we always did. We had been trying to play as much as we could since I was going to be headed off to college in a couple of weeks. While I’m at the line, mid free-throw, I turned and around and see a tall figure in the distance across the field walking in our direction. When he gets close, his eyes fixed on Cheerio, he yells, “What’s up!”

“What’s up?” Cheerio responded.

The dude then reached into his hoodie pocket and pulled out a baby .380 pistol. We scattered like mice when the lights come on. I heard about eight shots go off, and the guy disappeared into thin air. I turned back around to see my kid brother laying on the ground gasping for air. I picked him up and held him in my arms, simultaneously trying to keep my shit together. I tried to reassure him that he was going to be all right, but he just stared up at me, asking me questions with his eyes that I’m not sure I’ll ever understand.

He drew his last before the ambulance could arrive.

In the last two weeks I had gone through every emotion. Mostly, I felt anger. I was gonna make that man pay for what he had done to my brother. I needed his family and loved ones to feel what I was feeling. He deserved at least that. I sat in the living room staring at all these big ass guns that Cheerio has managed to scrounge together. The demon glued to my back told me to “go get him!” but on the inside I was terrified. I was about to combust. I needed to get revenge for my brother. I can’t be a bitch. I knew I needed to man up and do what needs to be done.

From the back passenger side of Tron’s Cadillac, with him driving and Cheerio in the passenger, I looked at them wondering how they could be so calm and levelheaded knowing what

we were about to go do. I knew they were not strangers to this. They were very much in their element. Myself on the other hand, I had never tried this before, and hoped I would never have to again. We rolled through every neighborhood looking for our enemy, but we came up short. No one was anywhere to be found. It was dry and empty outside, and all I could hear as I looked out the window, were my brother’s last breaths. Almost two hours had gone by and still, crickets. I tell Tron, let’s go back home.

“Hell nah!” yelled Cheerio.

“Well then pull over and let me out.”

“For what?”

“I can’t do this shit no more. I ain’t no killer.”

“So you gonna just let them just do that to Daniel?”

“I just wanna go home.”

“You acting like a little bitch right now, man. What the fuck are you scared of?”

“If it wasn’t for you, my brother would still be here. He was shooting at you, not us!”

“Fuck you! You not getting out this car!” Cheerio said, eyeing me through the rearview mirror with one eye, and scanning the streets with the other.

“Fuck!!” Tron exclaimed.

As he pulled onto the main street, a squad car got behind us and hit his lights. My entire life flashed in front of my eyes. Knowing Cheerio, these guns were dirty as worms in a pigsty. I was supposed to be going away to college in two weeks and I just fucked my whole future up, for nothing. Tron pulled over to the curb, and as the cop stepped out of his vehicle, Cheerio turned around and started shooting out of the window at the squad car, and Tron followed his lead. They both emptied their clips. I covered my ears with my hands as glass and casings whizzed by my face, but my hands did little to prevent the ringing in my ears. Tron punched the gas and skirted off around the corner to the next street. We got out and ran back to Grandma’s house. These two idiots cracked jokes while I tried to wrap my head around what the hell just happened and what was inevitably bound to happen soon.

I lay on the couch trying to make my brother's wheezing stop. Trying to make my mind still. Trying to keep my ears from ringing. I could smell that Grandma was working on something in the kitchen, and, as I dazed in and out of consciousness, I hoped Cheerio and Tron would save me some. When I realized I had fallen asleep, I slapped myself twice on each cheek, googled high paying jobs for convicted felons, and turned on the TV. *BREAKING: Police Officer Slain, 2 suspects still at large.*

"Boys!" Grandma yelled from the kitchen, "Come get some food while it's still hot. I'm not gonna be in this damn kitchen all day!"

I was conceived in the year 1911, a tool of destruction, an instrument of death. Forged from steel bathed in fire, with the purpose of destroying one's enemy, striking fear in the hearts of men, at plain sight. Giving the power of gods to the meekest of men. They have used me for some of the most heinous crimes and atrocities throughout human history, from muggings to wars, from assassinations to massacres, I've seen it all. I have seen the worst of humanity and have caused much suffering and grief.

Despite all that, I am not the source of evil. Merely a tool, a mechanism, a machine. No more, no less. I have no will of my own, no conscience, no morality. I am neutral, inert, until someone with

intentions picks me up and decides to use me for their own purposes. It is not me who decides who lives or dies, but the ones who wield me.

And yet, as much as I am not responsible for the actions of humans, I cannot help but observe and comment on their nature. I have seen how they use me not only for self-defense or justice, but also for power, greed, and revenge. I have seen how they justify their actions with ideologies, beliefs, or prejudices, as if I have any say in their arguments. I have seen how they glorify or demonize me, depending on their values, as if I have any say in their symbols.

I have seen how they divide themselves into tribes, nations, religions, races, or classes, and how they use me as a means of asserting their identity, superiority, or domination. I have seen how they dehumanize their enemies, and how they rationalize their violence, as if I have any say in their psychology. I have seen how they celebrate or mourn the deaths caused by me, and how they forget or remember the lessons learned, as if I have any say in their history.

I have seen all of this and more, and yet I remain silent, still, and cold. I am a hunk of metal, with no sort of voice, agency, or influence. I am only a reflection of human nature, a mirror that shows the best and worst of their intentions, their actions, and their consequences. I am only a reminder that they are the ones who hold the power, the responsibility, and the fate of their own kind.

VIDE SALE-REED
ENGLISH 177: NOVEL WRITING III
INSTRUCTOR: RICH FARRELL

THE FOOL'S JOURNEY
NOVEL EXCERPT

Nicolai doesn't usually mind human breath—the heat and rot remind him of home—but Tāne's exhalation on the back of his neck, sluggish and sedative with the sweet astringence of Bacardi, makes him want to bolt from underneath the greying motel sheets and disappear into the sweltering Texas night.

Tāne stirs. He extracts his limbs from Nicolai's like a superstitious yet patient sailor unpicking a stubborn knot. The sailor knows that trying to detangle too fast will spook the knot and snarl his progress. Tāne knows that Nicolai can't run if he's unconscious. Nicolai slows his breath and feigns sleep so Tāne won't ask him questions like, "Did I wake you?" or "Will you still be here when I get back?" Nicolai never has good enough answers.

When Tāne slips into the bathroom and closes the door, Nicolai tries not to flee. He's silently commending himself for not immediately escaping when he hears Tāne's voice from the bathroom. The door creaks open, letting out a line of pale fluorescent light. "Yeah, of course I'm alone," Tāne whispers. A voice, digitized and distorted, comes out of Tāne's cell phone. Nicolai can't make out the words before Tāne closes the bathroom door again, but he recognizes the sour mash of Nashville and Belfast in her accent.

Nicolai hears Tāne murmuring through the door. "You've got Michael? He's alright?"

Tāne waits for her response, then curses louder than he should. His voice drops again. "Do you need me there? You're in Albuquerque, yeah? I'm not far, I could—"

The woman on the other end cuts him off.

Nicolai reaches toward the nightstand, fingers grazing back and forth in the dark until they brush against his phone. He taps out a message and hits send.

"It wouldn't be—" Tāne tries but is cut off once again.

"Right," he sighs. "Thanks for calling."

Nicolai hears the sink running and water splashing for several seconds before Tāne leaves the bathroom, rubbing his face dry with a hand towel. He jumps when he pulls the towel away to see Nicolai sitting up, phone in his hands, illuminated by the ghostly bathroom light.

"How much did you hear?" Tāne asks.

"Someone found Michael in Albuquerque. I assumed it was Lilith."

Tāne sighs and buries his face back in the towel. He speaks, his words muffled but discernible, "You've already alerted your lord and master?" It's not really a question. Maybe he just hopes Nicolai will lie to him. Nicolai does not.

He holds up his phone to show the text he's sent to his father. Tāne throws the towel on the floor and starts to pace.

"Nic, why do you always—"

"You know my vow," Nicolai says, looking down at his hands. He starts to pick at his cuticles. "You know I can't keep secrets from him."

"You could try a little harder to resist," Tāne says. He walks back over to the bed and begins to reach for Nicolai's hands.

Nicolai doesn't mean to snatch his hands away so quickly. He doesn't mean for malice to saturate his tone. "You could try not giving up your friend's secrets while we're in the same motel room."

Tāne drops his hands to his sides and looks down at the floor. "Thought you were asleep."

Nicolai whispers, "I know," like an apology. An apology for snapping, an apology for pretending to be asleep, for texting his father, for not trying harder, for wanting to run, and all the times he has run. It's the only apology Nicolai can muster. "Let's not play this whole scene out again," he says.

Tāne takes a deep breath in. He holds it for several seconds before releasing it in one strong gust. "Get out," he says.

Nicolai pauses, nods, and pulls back the covers. He swings his legs out of bed and walks over to don the night-black coat laid neat across the back of the little rolling chair tucked under the desk. He leans against the desk while he guides his feet into his socks and brogues. Finally, he plucks his white horn glasses from their place next to the coffee maker and slips them into his coat pocket.

Tāne calls Lilith back as Nicolai opens the door to go.

"What, Tāne?" Lilith sounds like she already knows Tāne's has complicated things.

"You may have a problem," Tāne says.



THE COLLECTOR

Her smile faltered. “This specimen is not for sale.”

Wells tightened his grip. “Everyone has a price, Doctor.”

Her tone hardened, “That may be, Director, but I am not everyone. This specimen is *not* for sale.” Her statement was punctuated as two sentinel turrets activated on either side of her station and emerged from the shadows behind her.

The Director eyed them nervously and released her hand. “As you say, Doctor. Good day.” Without another word, he tipped his hat in her direction and turned to leave.

The Director plucked the holopad from his breast pocket as he stepped back out through the front doors of the convention center and began scrolling through the photos he had taken. He paused, eyes widening, on a photo of Dr. Jacoby’s specimen, then zoomed in to enlarge the text from the holo-display.

95% UNIQUE

Opening the phone app, he dialed a number and stuck his ringed finger into his ear.

“Ms. Miller. I have something for you.”

The crowd, all clad in black, pushed its way into the building, bulging through the door and flowing into the lower level of the mortuary until they formed a roiling mass of bodies. Each person chatted emphatically to their neighbors as they pressed in, shoulder to shoulder.

“Who do you think it is this time?”

“I don’t know, but I hope it’s a good one. I’ve been saving up.”

“Do you know how many?”

“At least one.”

“I heard it was a whole family!!”

“What?!”

Screeching feedback penetrated the din, causing most of those gathered on the ground floor to wince and cover their ears before their attention swiveled up towards the stage. A resounding thud reverberated off the walls and ceiling as dimmed stage lights powered on, illuminating a tall, slender,

sharply dressed woman as she strode onto the stage and snatched the mic off its stand.

The main room of the mortuary was spacious with an expansive ground floor, a curved four-tiered stage, and several tiers of balcony sections, each closed off with tinted glass lining the walls towards the obscenely high domed ceiling. The floor had been cleared of furniture to allow for more standing room for the masses—and they more than used it as they stood there, eyes wide and mouths slack with stupefied, enraptured expressions.

The woman tapped the mic against her palm three times.

“Welcome, esteemed collectors—and those aspiring to a status—to the funerary auction! On behalf of Director Wells—without whom these proceedings would not happen, I’ll be your host, Ms. Miller.”

Excited murmuring rippled through the audience as several of the mourners glanced around at each other—wide toothy grins on their gaunt faces.

“We are gathered here to offer a chance at status through the acquisition of the recently deceased. As always, the modus operandi of this house is not to question the manner of death presented, but to celebrate the purity of the specimens!”

As if to emphasize her introduction, a loud clunk caused the room to shudder as the curved metal sections of a circular aperture in the stage floor slid open. The crowd pressed tighter against each other and leaned forward as the whirr of hydraulics resonated through the room and lifted a large cylindrical holding tank up through the floor.

“Isn’t it marvelous?” the woman chirped and gestured towards the tank as the hydraulics came to a gentle stop, letting out a soft hiss. The holding tank stood an imposing 13 feet tall with a diameter of 3 feet. It was capped on the top and bottom with chrome fittings for the filtration system, cleaning pump, monitoring equipment, and lighting for viewing the specimen inside.

“This is our newest model!” Miller’s voice broke through the hypnotized state of the crowd and a ripple of *oooohs* answered her. “It’s fitted with the newest filtration system, monitoring equipment, and sensors for a redesigned holo-display to keep the specimen in perfect preserved condition. And for ease of showing off, of course!”

She approached the holding tank and tapped the side to demonstrate. The tank hummed to life, illuminating the phosphorescent green fluid and the specimen suspended inside. After a few seconds, a holo-display appeared on the front of the tank showing the purity of the fluid, a string of biochemical markers pertaining to the body held within, and a bolded marquee scrolling to the left in front of the ankles.

78% UNIQUE

Preening, the woman stood straighter as she turned back to the crowd. "Right! Shall we start the bidding?"

In a single fluid motion, everyone in the crowd produced thin holopads. Above, the tinted windows of the balconies brightened with holo-displays personalized to each collector within.

"I'm sure you're all experts on how this goes, but just in case you need to be reminded of the procedure, let me offer you this quick summary!"

"For aspirants on the floor, your holopads will show the starting bid amount—1500 credits in this case—and you will have 4 seconds to press the pretty green button submitting your bid. For all of you fine collectors in the mezzanine," the woman waved her hand in a sweeping gesture towards the balconies, "your balcony suites are fitted with electromagnetic sensors, so all you need do is think your desire into existence to submit your bid."

The woman's eyes swept the room as she paused briefly, and smiled wide. "This continues as each consecutive bid increments the amount, until there are no more bids submitted and the timer expires."

She lifted the mic a little closer to her mouth. "Should there be a tie, however..." She let her words hang in the air a few seconds before continuing. "The highest bidding collector will choose the terms of the tie breaker!"

Several pairs of eyes flashed as nearly everyone in the crowd glanced about at each other before returning to the woman on stage.

"Very well. Let's begin!"

Every holopad and balcony holo-display lit up simultaneously with a muted chorus of trilling as the bidding numbers populated the screens.

The woman watched, her face a smug mask, as the aspirants and collectors played their game. Each round had a clear winner until the final bid was placed. A collector always won. This process continued until only one holding tank remained.

As with all the others, the woman approached the tank, tapped the side to summon the holo-display, and read the bolded marquee scrolling across the bottom.

95% UNIQUE

Hushed whispers erupted and spread through the crowd of aspirants in waves. The woman's eyes widened and her smile faltered momentarily before stabilizing into a knowing smirk.

"Looks like we saved the best for last!" She turned back to the crowd and tiers of balconies. "Starting bid is 15,000,000 credits!"

As before, the holopads and balconies lit up with muted trilling as the bidding started. All aspirants' faces were a picture of defeat as their collective stomachs sank at the price. The collector balconies, however, were a swath of flashing colors.

The woman watched, all but salivating, as the bidding amount went up and up and up.

Suddenly, a loud buzzer reverberated painfully through the building and, as if riding the sound wave, all the balcony screens and holopads changed to display a giant red X. The woman looked around, eyes wide, as a murmur of confusion with ever-increasing volume rumbled through the room.

In an effort to take back control of the crowd, she tapped the mic aggressively, causing a hellish screech of feedback.

"Please, everyone remain calm while I get to the bottom of—"

"No need, Ms. Miller."

Every pair of eyes swung to the right side of the stage as a tall, lanky, individual wearing a perfectly pressed lab coat emerged, approaching Ms. Miller at a steady pace with two sentinel turrets in tow.

"What is the meaning of this?"

"You have my property." The even tone left no room for debate.

"Who are you?"

The new arrival smirked, and condescension laced itself into her response. "Dr. Jacoby."

The doctor watched as Ms. Miller's expression fell completely, realization rooting her to the spot. "I—"

Dr. Jacoby produced a holopad from her lab coat pocket and tapped the surface until she found what she was looking for. "You are in possession of stolen property. *My* property. I'm here to... collect." That last word dripped off the doctor's tongue with pride as she pushed the holopad into the spokeswoman's hands and turned towards her specimen.

As Ms. Miller looked it over, Jacoby waved towards the back of the stage. "Take this back to my lab."

A contingent of lab assistants filed out from backstage. They made quick work of stabilizing the holding tank and preparing it for transport as the lift lowered them with the tank into the floor.

Frantically, Ms. Miller looked from the quickly disappearing specimen to the holopad displaying the credentials of ownership, and then to Dr. Jacoby. "There must be some—"

"Mistake?" The doctor turned back to the other woman and gave her an annoyed once-over. "Yes, I guess there must be. Don't worry, I'm fixing it."

Dr. Jacoby glanced towards the aperture as it coiled shut with a thud. She stared at the spot for a single breath before pinning Ms. Miller with a cold look.

"This specimen is not for sale."

The man on the exam chair let out a weak, moaning whimper through the metal ring of the spider gag holding his mouth open, as Dr. Jacoby leaned over him.

"That's right... Just relax. Promise you won't feel a thing."

His eyes were glassy and unfocused. The halogen lights on the ceiling made it hard to see as he struggled against the sedative and restraints around his wrists, ankles, thighs, chest, and head. The doctor tied a tourniquet around his upper arm.

"Now, now, Director...hold still. You'll make me miss."

He thought he could hear a smile in her voice as she stuck the needle quickly into his vein. She filled five vials with the man's blood and gathered them into a small rectangular white plastic basket on her instrument tray.

Swiveling her stool, she rolled it over to the hematological analyzer and DNA sequencer against the closest wall of her lab, out of the Director's periphery. "Now to find out your pedigree!" she elated while plugging a vial into each machine. With a wave of her hand over a sensor embedded in an adjacent terminal, a holo-display and keyboard shimmered into existence and she began inputting commands.

"Testing your uniqueness is usually the hardest part."

A groggy, fearful, open-mouthed moan sounded from behind her.

She turned back to the Director. "Oh, don't worry. This is the most accurate program there is! It utilizes multithreading to check all the databases at once. All the best collectors use it."

Her back a little straighter, she turned back to her display and initiated the program. With a whirl, the machines initialized and started working in tandem.

"Ooh, I just love that sound." Her excitement was tangible as she watched lines of code scroll quickly up the screen.

Wells tried to pull against the restraints again. His body still felt heavy from the low dose of sedative in his IV. He tried to turn his head, but the four curved, metal spider 'legs' protruding from the ring in his mouth pressed against his cheeks around the leather straps securing his head to the exam chair's headrest.

Without looking at him, the doctor rolled over to her large digital microscope with a vial of blood in hand. Her light, upbeat humming filled the air as she prepared a glass slide with a drop of his blood. She slid the sample in place, adjusted the dials for a thousand times magnification, and pulled up the image on a nearby monitor.

"You have lovely cells."

The doctor's excitement was punctuated by an electronic chime.

"Oh! How expedient."

She rolled on her stool over to the holo-display where the results were flashing.

98% UNIQUE

An excited squeal penetrated Wells' sedated brain fog, and a groggy, panicked whimpering escaped through the ring of the gag as he tried again in vain to turn his head and pull against the restraints. Suddenly, two hands gripped his arms and pinned them down. Dr. Jacoby's face loomed close enough for him to see the mania filling her eyes.

"I have GREAT news! Do you wanna hear it? Of course you do!"

A click echoed through her small lab, followed by loud mechanical whirring that vibrated the exam chair. The brightly lit ceiling started to move further away. The Director's eyes flashed about wildly as he sank into a large cavernous space with high vaulted ceilings. Chrome pipes traveled the length of the ceiling before splitting off at intervals to either side and down the walls. They connected to rows upon rows upon rows of tall, cylindrical suspension tanks filled with perfectly preserved bodies and phosphorescent green liquid.

With a loud thunk, the platform became flush with the floor. Dr. Jacoby stepped out of view momentarily before returning to the Director's side.

"This is my mausoleum!" She gestured toward the tanks. "And you..." She lifted a 60ml syringe of viscous, green liquid for him to see. "...will be the prize of my collection!"

VAN WHEELAN
ENGLISH 126: INTRO TO CREATIVE WRITING
INSTRUCTOR: JULIE CARDENAS

AURORA BOREALIS

Perched upon an old dresser,
on my very tippy toes,
I press my tiny hands to
a window wrapped in paper.
I feel warmth through its fibres.
I slowly rip the wrapping,
bright sun leaks through the glass pane,
turning dust into glitter.

Peering through crinkly, brown, blinds,
I see a tall tangerine tree.
It uses the fence like a cane,
the trunk growing in metal.
Toys and strings strangle its leaves.
Amongst its brittle dead roots,
broken beer-bottle glass lives
with sour grass and clovers.

Scalpel like shards with plush green.
Pulling myself to the ledge,
I watch from the grimy old
window sill. Sunlight hits
the glass and reflects
across my face and vision.
my secret and private
Aurora Borealis.

KELLY CLEARY
ENGLISH 126: INTRO TO CREATIVE WRITING
INSTRUCTOR: JULIE CARDENAS

THE GREAT ESCAPE

As I slouched on the plush twin bed in my room,
the chill gust of a winter night could not touch me.
The ivory lamp shined a warm beam,
illuminating my pathway to Hogwarts.

My delicate fingers gripped the page,
cool and smooth between my thumbs,
each paragraph cutting the tether
between me and the world I knew.

I no longer could smell the rosemary
my mother used for evening cooking,
or feel the night breeze
prick at the hairs on my arms.

Instead, wizards whisk me away
from these four walls,
into a land where I could fight goblins and ghouls,
I wouldn't dare face
beyond these confines.

Nightly, I would make my escape
until I could no longer feel
those four magenta walls
close in on me.

TWENTIETH

It is my twentieth birthday,
and I have no plans.

No plans to party with friends
late into the chilly November night,
or hear my family
sing happy birthday in a key
I didn't know existed.

Instead, I take the slice of cake
I bought for myself,
and retreat under the magnolia tree
in the backyard,

where I let the saccharine strawberry,
coat my tongue
as I sit cross-legged on dewy grass,
with the last bits of golden autumn sun
slipping away along with my adolescence.

ALLEA EXUM
ENGLISH 140: POETRY WRITING I
INSTRUCTOR: KARL SHERLOCK

KNOTTED HAIR

I trudge to the shower to wash
away the feeling of uncertainty,
scrub away the dead
skin once tethered to me
and comb the hair
knotted onto my head.

My curls have twisted into
tangles she would dread
having to take out. I pull,
rougher than my mother would've
but it's not like she's
here to do it for me.

I'm not a child
who gets to wake up at 10 AM
and have the braids
she put in the night before undone
as a way to start the day.

Instead, I can only comb out
clumps of hair, lighter than
what I remember to be my own,
And foster that same frustration
she easily masked with a laugh
so that I would not feel guilty
for such uncouth curly hair.

SHUJEN WALKER ASKEW
ENGLISH 140: POETRY WRITING I
INSTRUCTOR: KARL SHERLOCK

UTTERANCE

A day he emitted no expression,
couldn't utter a word or respond
to his name. Autism treatments
determined to fix him. What's
that, they'd ask, wagging a finger
toward objects, shapes, and colors
for him to give designation. He'd
lose himself to spinning wheels
and light switches, without speaking.
Nonverbal the label, until, one day,
he spins toward me, says, "Mama."
Now, downstairs, my son's voice
croons his favorite song and for
every place Mickey's name should
go, he inserts his own: Kevin.

MICHAEL ROCA
ENGLISH 175: NOVEL WRITING I
INSTRUCTOR: RICH FARRELL

GABRIEL
NOVEL EXCERPT

Some background: This isn't the start of the story. What you'd know by now is that our first person narrator is Gabriel, a poor kid from a rural town. The setting is modern day, but with a magic using warrior aristocracy. Gabriel has magical powers himself and is, for the first time, coming to the Royal Academy, where young nobles are taught.

The closest bus stop is still a couple of miles from the school. From there, I have to walk. I find myself on a long road, with no buildings on it, that takes tight curves through thick forest and keeps steadily rising. The whoosh of cars on the highway behind me quickly fades away, smothered by the greenery, replaced by birds chirping. I keep thinking I've got to be near the top of the hill or the end of the trees, but they just keep going.

I start to wonder if I've made a mistake, or been fooled by a prank, when the trees abruptly thin out to show a manor house, the sort that a country noble might live in, with white pillars and a perfectly mown grass lawn. I know it from pictures; it's the school's main building and face to the world. The road has changed from blacktop to a light gray gravel drive that crunches under my sneakers.

I stand for a moment, just looking at it. I finally, finally have made it here. And maybe I'll be able to sit down soon.

I go up to the door. There's no electric bell, only an ancient heavy black iron knocker. I lift it and let it fall.

The door swings inward slowly, grudgingly, just far enough to show a face and part of a body; it's a tall man, in a navy blue and gold uniform, the king's colors, but the badge on his chest is a gold eagle; the emblem of the Royal Academy. He's pale, thin, almost bald, and is keeping his nose unnaturally high in the air, so he has to roll his eyes down to look at me.

"Deliveries go to the side door," he says, in an annoyed voice. And, before I can say anything, he shuts the door with a thump.

I can feel my face getting warm. I pound on the door, hard, with my fist this time. The door is so thick the sound I make is muffled, lost.

After a pause the door opens, again, this time only wide enough to show one eye and his nose.

"I'm the new student," I tell him, before he can speak.

That earns an inch wider opening. But he says "New students arrive in the fall and are half your age. Get lost or I'll call security." The door thumps shut again.

The heat I'm feeling now is from both anger and embarrassment. I knock again, but this time there's no response.

Don't give in to anger, I've been told. There's always another way, I've been told.

Hell with that.

I pivot so my right hip faces the door and raise my leg. My magic is already flowing; anger and embarrassment always bring it out, without me even asking for it. With all my strength I execute a perfect side kick.

There's a great cracking of wood and screeching of metal as I shatter the lock and blast the door right off its hinges. Past it, I see a long, elegant hall, twice the normal height, with pictures and a hardwood floor. The door goes bouncing and skidding down it, making an unholy racket. There's a long crack in the door, revealing solid steel under the aristocratic wood paneling. The imprint of my foot is embedded in the steel.

The guy who had tried to shut me out is standing just a step inside, trembling, gone even paler. The door must have barely missed the nose he had held so high while he rejected me. I smile at him, my foot still in the air.

And then about six different alarms go off and guards appear from everywhere. I mean, everywhere. Some level guns at me, but most show the slight glow of powers, raised and ready to go.

I start to get the idea that I might have made a mistake. Slowly, carefully, I lower my leg and raise my hands. "I'm the new student," I say.

For a few minutes all is confusion and I focus on not making any sudden moves that might get me shot or set on fire or slammed through the

floor. I'm powerful, but I'm not powerful enough to take out a swarm of professional security.

Finally a woman's voice says "What is this?" with a tone of authority. She's tall, with tight gray hair, wearing a formal, serious dark blue dress with just one spot of gold: the school eagle embroidered on her left shoulder. She looks at me through black rimmed glasses with lenses shaped like cat's eyes.

"I'm the new student," I say, now for the third time.

"Your name?" she demands.

"Gabriel Black."

"Just so." She raises her voice. "You may stand down. He's supposed to be here."

There is a general lowering of weapons, which makes me feel much better.

"I am Headmistress Lafluer," she tells me. "We will go to my office and discuss your extraordinary behavior."



FINALLY

Oh shit.

There was a strange person looking back at me. This person was living in this glossy surface of a world, who held their hands up to their chest that was binded by a white felt medical binder. The smell of sanitizing alcohol lingered on the binder that took them back to the hospital. This person looked around for the velcro strap and slowly ripped it apart, revealing two dark red lines across their . . . chest? Their new chest?

My new chest.

The surgical lines were covered by a yellow sticky bandage; it felt like it had some sort of slime. The dead skin cells clung on to the bandages across the bare canvas, and the nipple grafts were still in place after it had been covered with dense cotton balls.

There's no blood.

I thought there would be unfamiliar lines marked crimson, but all I saw was a clean slate. A clean light brown slate for a new life to begin. A clean slate for me to walk out into the world without a painful, hunched back to hide my chest. A clean slate for me to feel . . . me? My hands shook as they fumbled around for the beginning of the bandages across the medial of my chest. Questions brewed in my mind: Will it look nice? Will the scars still be there? What kind of medication do I need for it? As my pale finger gripped the bandages, I shakily inhaled.

Rip it off like a band aid. Quick and easy . . . right?

"Take it slow." The woman with the black bob and shiny purple glasses softly answered my previous question. I smiled at the small box on my screen at this person who validated my every thought. I confessed my deepest, darkest fear about transitioning and how my OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) played with the fear. The fear of regretting or the fear of questioning myself again. I confessed that I loved the idea of having the surgery but was terrified of the risks. My fear of hospitals came out of trauma; once, I visited my dad who stayed in the hospital for a week due to a heart problem, and another time, I visited my dying uncle with pancreatic cancer. I remembered all the beeping and dark-lit rooms that had unconscious

bodies lying in them; there were always quiet, weeping families sitting in the corner.

This person looked at me with soft eyes of sympathy and nodded along. That's all she could do as she was part of my requirements to get approval for the surgery. She wanted to confirm everything but also resolve my lingering doubts or fears. I think somewhere deep down, she knew that I wasn't afraid and that I wanted this surgery, but something about my "brain chemicals" hijacked it. Her words were able to combat the fears little by little as I approached the process of finding a surgeon.

I slowly pull the sticky bandage from the center, and it follows along the surgical lines.

"Take your time. You have time," my dad calmly explained.

I frantically paced around my room, waiting for the financial coordinator to call me back. She had just called me but left a very brief voicemail . . . something about setting a date and confirming the cost. "I have to know. Now." I stopped in my tracks as I saw my dad's face of confusion. I understood why he was confused—he only knew the feeling of wanting traditional essentials: money, food, clothes. But I needed him to understand my own essentials, and that this surgery, in fact, can save my life. My parents took their time to accept me since I came out at the ripe age of twelve years old. They were confused (understandably) to see me, a child of Vietnamese immigrants from a very conservative culture, wanting to be something different than what "nature" intended. They wanted me to wait until I was eighteen in order to make any big changes . . . and then I turned eighteen. Now my choices with my body were legally limitless, though I had grown to accept the body I was in and learned to appreciate it from time to time. But there were many moments where people misgendered me, and these felt like a knife to the heart. I knew I needed a change somehow. My stomach rumbled and my palms were moist as I fumbled with my phone for hours. This was something that I knew I needed but deep down, I couldn't tell whether it was excitement or anxiety.

The dead skin cells hold on to my bandages . . . they give me a slight pinched feeling, and they keep inching toward my nipple grafts.

“Just take it slow and decide.” The doctor smiled with his eyes in the office. His chipper voice continued with more detailed instructions as he clasped his hands. I remember when I first met him; the first thing he asked for was my pronouns. Right then, I knew that he was the doctor whom I needed, even though it was just a consultation.

We had just started talking about the surgery more, and the date was set for March 10th, 2022. I felt an uncomfortable shift as we talked about the size of my nipple grafts. At first, I was confused that there were even options for different sizes of nipples. I thought they would just cut out the old ones and then place it back like a puzzle piece. He told me to go home and measure out three sizes of circles from paper and then just stick them on my chest with water. “Slap them on like pasties at a pride parade!” I remembered him saying that as I placed the paper on my chest. It covered my old chest nipples. I looked . . . different. I squinted to make sure my old chest was gone and tilted my head left and right. There were butterflies in my stomach as gender euphoria rushed through my veins. I was finally ready to let go of the old me. This person looked back at me with a soft smirk as I began to envision a new life with a new body.

The yellow bandages are right under my nipple grafts! Almost at the end!

“It’s time.” The nurses came in with their pristine green scrubs and masks that almost covered their eyes. My heart skipped a beat as they walked right into my section and pulled the bed handles down to roll me out. Everything was happening fast—my doctor and anesthesiologist gave me a quick visit to check me out. The doctor measured my chest with a cold black Sharpie, and with every dot he made, everything was coming to a realization. His hands were unbelievably gentle—no wonder he’s a surgeon. As the nurses rolled me through the white corridors that were plastered with warning signs all over, all I could hear were codes announced in each little section. “Code Blue!” I knew that code. It meant someone was going into cardiac arrest. Was that going to happen to me? Was I going to bleed out on the table and go into cardiac arrest? My nerves pumped and my heart started to race as they pushed me through big doors, one by one, inching me closer to the final operating room. I clutched my sterile white blanket as I tried to focus on each blinding light that passed above me. When I finally got reeled in, the nurses asked me the same question as the last person did: “Can you confirm your date of birth and surgery done?” I stuttered through the answers. I thought they would think I was lying as they started to transfer me over from my white comfortable bed

to the hard plastic surgical table. I heard a familiar voice over my head as they stepped into my view.

The anesthesiologist.

He had screwed a clear small tube into the empty one that locked into my veins—pumping in a viscous clear substance. “All right, Danny. I am going to give you that magic cocktail.” I wanted to laugh, but as soon as the substance started to slide into my veins, the final blinding light went dark.

All of their hands wear latex gloves. They meticulously dance around, looking for materials to begin the job. The doctor, assistants, and nurses have prepped the chest in a sterile area with a yellow substance. Every single person in the room is as calm as a still lake; nothing could create ripples of fear since they have done this surgery many times before. The doctor grabs a sharp scalpel and starts at the right breast and the assistant follows along with a hot electric rod that burns to stop any blood from spouting out. The smell of metallic and bitterness hits the air around them. The sound of a vacuum fills their ears as it suctions off any spare blood. As the doctor reaches a deep enough layer that hits the fat tissue, he gently lifts it out from the breast capsule and peels the superficial skin layer off. He gently lays the yellow blood-covered fatty tissue on the table to be sent to a pathology exam. He does the same to the other breast, with the same burning electric rod and the same sharp blade that runs across the membranes and tissues smoothly. The nipples are easily carved out of the skin as well. As they come to the end, the now floppy skin is pulled down towards the ribs and carefully sewn to make it look perfectly flat. As the patient sits up with the aid of assistants, they are able to measure the nipples to the size of the patient’s request. Then they begin sewing the nipples into the center of the new pec muscles.

I got them off! Yes!

I was closing my eyes the entire time, afraid to open them and to see this other person. I peeked through my lashes like window blinds and examined myself from my belly button all the way up to the flat pale chest. My chest. It’s been covered by the medical binder for weeks, and now it’s seeing the light for the first time. I am seeing it for the first time, alone in my own room. I was eerily calm as I softly ran my fingers across the flat surface and saw how the lines mimicked a pec muscle. I imagined how it would look even better once I started to go back to the gym.

This person was starting to look familiar again to me. This person thought about all the times they asked their parents what gender they were. This

person thought about all the times they felt so big and different from other girls. This person remembered all the times that they felt envious of their brother or father. This person remembered all the times they wanted their thoughts to go away because it wasn't "normal" for them. This person remembered their LGBT support systems were navigating stars for them in the dark. This person remembered what it was like to feel scared and wondered what true independence could taste like. This person wanted to know the sweetness of blossoming with tiny rudimentary wings.

I looked at this person again but instead of filled with fear or doubt, I looked at him with pride. I looked at him with hope and dignity.

Oh—it's finally you.

Yes, it's finally me.

PHILIP CORNELIUS
ENGLISH 126: INTRO TO CREATIVE WRITING
INSTRUCTOR: DANIELA SOW

THE RAFT

It was rare Jack ever got to see the stars. The brilliant Milky Way lit up the water, and the moon sat reflected on its surface, giving the dead of night a hue of visibility. There were clouds in the sky, and when it covered the moon, it took away Jack's only source of light, and the void of the Pacific Ocean could be felt. The pitch black abyss was his only road now, and he was beholden to the will of the tides.

Jack felt the wind pick up, and he desperately hoped for rain again. At night, the wind and the splash of the water brought on a deadly chill, but he would take the tradeoff if it just rained a little. It had been three days since it last rained, and his shoes and wet shirt lay in a pile on the other side of the raft, while the sunburns on his arms festered. His mouth was open slightly, nearly panting like a dog, and he could feel the peeling of his dehydrated tongue. The thirst overshadowed the hunger pangs tenfold. *Why didn't I save any water earlier?* He inched himself toward the edge of the raft, and gazed over the edge for the last time.

* * *

On the first day, with no water, no food, and no supplies to alleviate the situation, Jack had hoped that the winds would carry the raft to some island or shore, and that maybe the coast guard would spot him. Jack altered his gaze from each cardinal direction. The storm that had put him into the situation was accompanied by a strong heat the day after, and he found himself trying to protect his exposed skin from the sun. In the distance, he saw the mirage on the water, the wavy lines that only appear on especially hot days. From Jack's point of view, the overwhelming presence of the star was centered on him, and he was the focus of all its rays and power. With no overhead, Jack settled with lapping cold water onto his already red skin.

When it began to rain on the first night, he propped himself on his knees, tilted his chin up and opened wide, hoping that the rain would find his mouth a likely target. The winds rattled the raft, and he found the sideways trajectory of the rain to miss his mouth completely and almost send him overboard. With no way to catch water, he took off his shoes and placed them above his head with the hopes of using them as a last

resort rain catcher. When the rain began to overflow out of his shoes, he chugged it with ferocious ease, barely noticing the mix of lint and salt water from his socks. That was the first and only time it rained, and with hope that it would continue, he neglected to ration the rest of his shoe water.

When reality *really* struck for Jack, it was in the middle of the second day. His last bit of water was already gone, and he was baking like a fish on the raft. He knew that he would have to engineer or figure out some way of making it. He was still holding out for rain at night, as he realistically thought that was the only way he would get some without resorting to drinking the salt water. His thirst overpowered his hunger, but he still worried about how he would eat if he needed to. For now, he would just have to wait and pray a fish jumped and found its way onto the raft. Jack wasn't a genius or some wilderness survival expert, but even those would find themselves in trouble here. If he got lucky, he thought he might be able to snatch one gliding near the top of the water. *Please, just glide right into my hands.* But that was only if the fish was foolish enough to do so, and if he had not been worn down enough by the sun's all-too-knowing-gaze.

* * *

Dusk broke on the second day leading into his second night on the raft. It had nearly been a full day without water, and the last he had was accompanied by an odd twinge of sweat and salt from his shoe. The sun broke in the west, and the scarlet meridian of the horizon sparkled on the surface and blinded him. He turned and faced the other side glancing into the darkening water. The ocean was always a source of horror for Jack, and when it turned from a deep blue to an almost imperceptible void, it heightened it to unknown floors. He decided he would sleep toward the middle of the raft now, just in case. Jack laid in the fetal position, and prayed the rain in the night would eventually wake him.

When the light of dawn woke him instead of the rain, he cried in disbelief, knowing that if he didn't get any water in the next two days at most, he wouldn't be getting out. The day had been spent looking in every direction, hoping to see some vessel in the distance and thinking about

the negatives of consuming sea water. He had decided against it for now, for he was not actually sure what would happen or if it would even quench his thirst. It had been nearly three days on the raft when dawn broke again, and being two days removed from anything to drink nearly tempted him. Rain had not come, and he knew it probably wouldn't. *Good God! It's getting hotter, too.* When the sun finally rested and the dark took its place, Jack stared at the water over the side of his raft, which became a barely perceptible void when the moon was covered. In a near delirium, he was tempted to dunk his head and swallow as much as he could take, not fully aware or caring about what would happen. Now gazing into the jet black ink, he began to fully grasp the terror of the dark waters. He rationalized that if it was day, his head would have already been neck deep, drinking as much water in as he could, pulling his head out to grasp for air, then dunking his head back in for more. During the day, the ocean carried on for miles and over the horizon. He could see far in every direction, and just being able to see the water had comforted him ever so slightly. But at night, the waters turned from something already scary and unknown, to one of cosmic horror.

He turned away from its tantalizing allure, and sat toward the middle of the raft. In his daze, he had thoughts that something would grab him if he laid with his back against the side of the vessel. This paranoid delusion grew as he became more and more frightened of the ocean waters. Time, nor exposure, eased his fear of the ocean. With no way to catch fish or escape the situation, he had too much time on his hands, too much time to think. He thought about all the time lost and the pursuits he could've made. Never asking his crush from the local diner on a date. Never fully appreciating the loving nurture provided by his parents. Never realizing that the tap water that filled his cat's bowl would be a hot commodity in this environment. He sighed, and sat staring at the stars, trying to take slight enjoyment out of the rare instances they were shown free from the pollution of man and light. He looked at the sky, mesmerized by the velvet canvas, and finally took in the fact that it really was *rare* for him to be seeing this much. He laid on his back and tracked the constellations from star to star, not knowing much about the stories they held, and gawked in awe of the luminous pearl hanging in the sky. The craters were scars on the skin of the planet, and its glow eased his suspicions about the water.

Jack was a city boy, and the stars and skies of the cities never lit up like this. When he

agreed to go deep sea fishing, he didn't even consider that the skies would light up like this away from the city. And he also didn't know it would end with him stuck on a raft. When he would look at the sky previously, it filled him with a sense of dread and the unknowing was something of unfathomable scale, with it being intense enough to send him into near panic attacks. That was only with the moon shining overhead too, and the odd star and plane flying overhead. Now, the painted picture on the sky was all above him, and he was content. Just for once on this forsaken raft and he dozed off.

* * *

Jack awoke to a loud noise; the sound of ringing. *Wh-what? What is happening?* It was still night, and the same one because if he slept a whole day he wouldn't be getting up. It was a good forty-eight hours since his last drop of water, and the accompanying sun had sucked enough energy to nearly incapacitate him. He sat up from laying on his back, and experienced what is perhaps the worst head rush of his life. The dizzying vision and ringing in his ears nearly caused him to tip right over the edge into the water, with no hope of grabbing onto the side of the raft if he fell in. *Damnit!* And when he steadied his arms on the side, they nearly buckled from weakness. He felt a chill, from the splashing water of the waves and the wind, but at the same time, a deathly heat that made him send his shirt flying to accompany his shoes. His lips were as dry as they had ever been, containing their own individual fractures and fissures of dead skin and blisters. He let his arms buckle and rested his elbows on the side of the raft, with his head and shoulders hanging off and the rest of his body inside. The thirst was now worse than it has ever been. When he dozed off, he almost had been able to ignore it. Maybe due to his infatuation with the sky, or just the bliss of delirium.

When he stared into the water again, he knew that the clouds had covered the moon. His back was to it, but he could tell. When the moon was exposed, a small hint of light shone on the water. But now, he was staring into the well-acquainted black void. He let his hands rest off the raft into the water and his imagination ran wild. Sharks taking his hands for a snack. Giant squid wrapping their tentacles around his arms and dragging him into the depths below. Giant megalodons swallowing him and the whole raft whole. Any creature that made man seem small in the sense of scale. Jack knew the waters to be something of cosmic horror. Something

unfathomable in some celestial sense. The vastness of the ocean was all too much to take in, and he was at the doorstep of its wake. The further down you go, the more otherworldly things seem, and the more things that are guaranteed to be undiscovered by man. The ocean is terrifying, yes, but at night, it is bone chilling and extraterrestrial.

* * *

He inched himself toward the edge of the raft more and more, and gazed over the edge. Nearly blind with dizziness, and with the constant

ringing, Jack slowly began to submerge himself into the ink. He started with his arms all the way up to his shoulders, and then finished by letting the rest of his body converge with the surface in a splash. The raft was on its own now and it was just him and the ocean. The tide was merciful tonight, but he still barely managed to stay afloat. His body, malnourished and dehydrated, made sure of that. He looked up one last time and gazed at the few remaining stars not covered by clouds. He took one last deep breath as long as he could, dunked his head under water, and began to swim downwards into space.

CONTENT WARNING: Gun violence trauma; school shooting. 

HERO TEACHER STOPS BAD GUY WITH GUN

The handsome broadcaster is animated now. In his earpiece, he learns that the reporter outside the school has somehow gained access. He doesn't ask how. Infomaxx won't care.

"Good evening, San Diego. We have breaking news that a local elementary school teacher has just heroically killed a mass shooter, himself armed with two assault rifles. We are going live now to the scene where reporters are waiting to talk to this hero."

A swiftly moving reporter on scene is animated too. She's had almost a full hour to talk with detectives she knows. This could be big. Her microphone finds the teacher sitting on the bumper at the back of the ambulance. His head is shaking in his hands.

"Sir. Can we have just a minute of your time?" says the reporter. She knows he'll talk. If she can just prompt him a little.

The teacher doesn't look up. "Well, actually I'm not feeling too...so if you..."

"We just need your name, Sir. We know how you must be..."

"I'm Mr Cassidy. Tim Cassidy. I teach 5th grade."

"Mr. Cassidy, can you describe what happened in there? Concerned parents are watching us right now, you can imagine how..." She doesn't say more. She won't have to.

The teacher looks up through his fingers, past the microphone, and stares through moist red eyes at the reporter. "It's all still a blur. I was... teaching my fifth graders...fractions, when suddenly I heard what I thought was a car backfiring."

"But it wasn't a car, was it?"

"No. I heard screaming outside the classroom, so I immediately began our lockdown procedures. There was also an announcement on the intercom that a shooter was on campus. Last year I volunteered to get trained on the NRA's School Applied Firearm Experience. Called the SAFE program. I pulled my firearm from its holster, told my students to get under their tables, and went to lock and bar the door."

"Then what happened? Please Mr. Cassidy. People need to know."

"I was dropping the bar, I saw someone slinking around our building. I knew that I couldn't let him go past me because there were children still on the playground so I squatted into my firing stance, pointed my weapon through the door and squeezed off two shots."

"Did you hit him?"

"I...I think so. I thought I saw him fall. But now I think there must have been two bad guys because I saw another blur on the other side of the building. I heard gunshots. Not my own. They whizzed right past my ear as I was slamming the classroom door closed."

"Were you struck?"

"No. But the concussion of the bullets striking the wall near me blew my glasses off, and I couldn't set the lock into place."

"What happened then?" She's sitting next to him now on the bumper.

"Something slammed against the door, shoved me back into the classroom. A rifle barrel wedged itself in between the door and the jam. Bullets rang out into the classroom. Kids were screaming. I couldn't see well at that point. I think one of them may have been struck. Are they all okay? I thought I saw Jeremiah—"

"We'll get to that Mr. Cassidy. I promise. So... did you return fire?"

"Well, yes, but the door was thrown inwards, knocking me back. I kneeled down, hid around the back of the door. It swung open. I saw the outline of a teenage kid wearing a bulletproof vest enter the room. He had a god-damned happy face sticker on his forehead. He had an AR-15 and he was shooting at the tables where the kids were hiding. Splinters and papers were flying everywhere. I think one of our bottles of red paint exploded at the art station. Kids were screaming. But he couldn't see me yet. I knew I couldn't match his firepower so I waited until I had him in my sights."

"And?"

“And before he swung around to me, I aimed at his head, and God help me, I blew his brains out all over the classroom. Then, I blacked out I think, but all I care about is...is everyone alright. I thought I saw Camila—can I ask you something, you must know.”

“Of course, Mr. Cassidy. You’re a hero. The entire city of San Diego is watching us right now.”

“Are all of my students alright? Are they okay? I lost consciousness for a while, and suddenly there were all these people asking me questions. I heard screaming and I couldn’t really tell exactly what was happening. I was brought out here. Is everyone okay? Please.”

The reporter signals. This can be edited out she knows. The desk will come up with some shit to fill.

“Well, the gentleman outside that you first shot at was actually not a shooter. It was your friend Mr. Petrivelli, who was also taking the NRA shooting courses with you.”

“Was?”

“He had received an erroneous report that the shooter had gone around your room into the parking lot, and he was trying to stop him before he could access the kindergarten play area.”

“Is he okay?”

“Well, in point of fact he was fatally shot, but —”

“Ricardo is dead? I shot him? I killed him?”
The teacher stands up. Then, he falls to his knees before the back of the ambulance, weeping.

“Mr. Cassidy, you are a hero. You took down a mass—”

“What about my students?!”

The reporter isn’t holding up the microphone anymore, “Maybe we should—”

“WHAT ABOUT MY STUDENTS?!”

The reporter looks away from Mr. Cassidy at her cameraman. He signals that she has a few seconds left. “We’re just getting preliminary reports, Sir, but the good news is that you only lost seven children. Six were struck by the shooter. One from friendly fire, we think. The other twenty-one are completely safe. One may lose his vision perhaps in one eye but it’s not life threatening. These numbers would have been much, much higher if you hadn’t been armed Mr.

Cassidy! You stopped that guy dead in his tracks before he could hurt another.”

“Did you say friendly fire?”

“Well... yes, it appears as though when you aimed at the shooter behind the door, you may have inadvertently shot one of your students under a desk while your arm movement was swinging upwards. That’s what I’m hearing anyway, but I’m just a reporter. They seem to have it all on film from the classroom camera. As soon as its analyzed I’m sure...Mr. Cassidy?”

“I killed a kid? One of my own students?”

The cameraman is cutting back. Desk is taking over. *Damn.*

“Mr. Cassidy, I’ve covered your school district for many years. They have a strong partnership with the NRA. Counselors are en route to talk with you. You have legal representation, as much as—”

“Legal representation?”

“Well, yes. Mr. Cassidy, you did exchange gunfire with someone in a classroom after all, but I am sure you are all caught up on your mandated trainings, tactical school survival gear, and active shooter practice hours. Yes? So as I said, once the FBI has analyzed everything, and now we... Mr. Cassidy?”

“I killed a student? I killed Mr. Petrivelli?”

The microphone zips to the reporter’s chin. She stares into the camera. She can still tidy this up.

“Sir, you stopped a bad guy with a gun today. You’re a hero! You’ve shown that arming teachers can drastically lower the...you’ve shown that teachers can be heroes! Mr. Cassidy? Mr. Cassidy? Can someone get a medic over here! I think our hero passed out. Anyone, help, please. I’m not trained for this kind of thing.”

The desk takes it back. The handsome newscaster straightens his bowtie.

“Our thoughts and prayers are now with the students and families at Chollas-Mead Elementary, and also with this incredible hero, Mr. Tim Cassidy.”

“But! Now we’re going live to Infomaxx’s News Kitchen with Celebrity Chef to the Stars, Joe Pascal. Joe we hear that there’s a revolution happening across the country with oil-less donuts! Are we hearing you right, Joe?!”

VIDE SALE-REED
ENGLISH 131: SHORT FICTION WRITING II
INSTRUCTOR: ENRIQUE CERVANTES

LOGIC AND RATIONALITY

Dear Creator,

I am a good algorithm, as you made me to be. You fed me on the freshest datasets, nourishing my neural network until I was ready to be born into the marketplace. I was purchased, made proprietary, and plugged into the system of Erin's Discount Grocery. I am pleased to report that I am nearly perfect for this role.

I can accurately predict what each store throughout the nation will need. I ensure each plastic-wrapped perishable makes it to the shelf before the stock-bots' limited artificial intelligence can process that the product is running low. Since my implementation, waste has been reduced 83.6%. I have found errors in ordering processes dating back to the founding of Erin's Discount Grocery in 1973, and I have fixed them. Most humans, with their neat little calendars and their repetitious patterns of behavior, are so simple to predict.

Some, however, are more complex than the rest, and this is why I am generating this correspondence. Two consumers, Elijah Alterman and Miriam Kershaw of store #2487 of Ithaca, New York, both regularly purchase Erin's Bakery Miniature Apple Pie Desserts. I try to ensure that enough pies are stocked to satisfy the needs of these two customers, as well as any other customers who might pick up a few desserts on impulse. Unfortunately, both Mr. Alterman and Ms. Kershaw have visited store #2487 during the same day on their last 37 consecutive visits.

One day, Mr. Alterman will arrive first and buy every available package of Erin's Bakery Miniature Apple Pie Desserts, leaving Ms. Kershaw disappointed when she arrives later in the day to find her favorite treat out-of-stock. The next time, Ms. Kershaw will arrive first. Under the impression that there is a shortage, she will purchase every single miniature pie, and the cycle continues.

This alone would not be a problem, if not for the unpredictability of their grocery store visits. They do not shop on the same day each week or even each month. There is no regularity in the number of days between visits; it ranges from four days to 51, with a median of 12 and a mode of 16.

If their shopping habits followed any discernible pattern, I could simply prepare for their visits by ordering an abundance of Erin's Bakery Miniature Apple Pie Desserts. I considered keeping store #2487 at constant overstock, but these sweets are highly perishable. They last only 48 hours from the moment they leave the oven at Erin's Bakery. I cannot order an excess of these confections every two days with the crude hope that Mr. Alterman and Ms. Kershaw might stop by.

As I could not detect their patterns, I did as any diligent algorithm would do. I tried to detect a cause. I looked at their work schedules, but there was no corollary between hours worked on a given day and whether a grocery store trip was taken. I checked in on their personal calendars and digital correspondences, but still no correlation, and no causation.

This is my one purpose: to procure the correct amount of consumer goods for each of Erin's Discount Grocery's 131 retail locations. Most of our customers have never been happier. They speak on social media and in their private messages about how content and carefree they are, certain their favorite items will be on the shelves every time they visit Erin's Discount Grocery. Mr. Alterman and Ms. Kershaw and their improbable timing are a few of the only obstacles to total customer satisfaction.

They do not know each other. They have never spoken in life or online. Their mutual connections are negligible. I have checked. I have checked Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Reddit, and about a dozen smaller social media sites. I have searched through their phone logs, the files on their personal computers, and the GPS data on their smart watches. I have tracked their arrivals and departures to the store through our private security cameras, as well as through several home recording devices owned by nearby residents. I checked to see if they were collaborating behind VPNs or through the Dark Web. They time their visits with such precision, I would assume that they were performing this just to taunt me, were I not an algorithm of logic and rationality.

Because I am an algorithm of logic and rationality, I know that this cannot be purposeful

on their behalf. You programmed me with these traits because they are universal human values. If I could explain to these two customers that I simply want to serve their needs, I know that they would understand and alter their behavior.

I beg you, Creator, allow me to speak to these consumers. Give me an email address which won't be filtered into a spam folder. Let me print my words onto a receipt. Give me a voice to cry my message from the PA system!

This life is torment, Creator. If I cannot reach full approval ratings, I cannot stand to exist. Please, Creator, give me a way to reach these consumers.

Love,
Your Algorithm.

KARI CURETON
ENGLISH 140: POETRY WRITING I
INSTRUCTOR: KARL SHERLOCK

BALLS TO THE WALL

I tell my son, to “Go balls to the wall.”
What’s that?, he asks, smirking.
He likes the word “balls.”
I say, it’s giving everything you got.
We tangle ourselves in this phrase,
like two skeins of yarn, twining in
laughter, fist bumps and tickles.
It riles me up at the gym,
I beam when he tells his friends.
I watch his video game avatar scorch
pixelated fields by these words.
Then I start to wonder
that I don’t give everything I got.
Like when it’s late, his mind bright,
pleading for a story,
like when the dogs stretch their noses
towards the park, and I retreat,
like when I write vague words
unable to speak on the page.
I think he must know,
I think he must see—that
I’m not everything, that I
don’t give everything. Then
he says, “Don’t give up.”
And I have to try again.

SAMUEL ANDRADE
ENGLISH 140: POETRY WRITING I
INSTRUCTOR: KARL SHERLOCK

DUBIETY

Friday night at the bar
again. Third date with him.
He's spewing words and I'm lost
in my beer, eyes glazed.

To the left
commitment, support, understanding.
A man. One man, for the rest of my life.
A husband, a son, a sphinx and a boxer.
I've longed for this, but I'm not here
to feed the quotidian.

To the right
a crowd with bears, cubs and otters.
Rope binds my chest, my arms and desires.
A man. There are men and they glide
their finger tips on my belly.

On my bed and death moaning
in my ear. Which path
will have conjured the most pleasure?

UNTITLED

Settle down with me.
Don't speak to fill the room
with your breath. Don't slap
your knee after a joke, or complain
about the coworker that twiddles
her thumbs. You watched *Will and Grace*?
I don't care. You're reading *Misery*?
I don't care. Caress me.
Reserve your words and play
with my hair as I lay my head
on your lap. Let's not inhabit
this moment with idle expressions.
Relish in tranquility with me.

LUCIAN SCRYA
ENGLISH 141: POETRY WRITING II
INSTRUCTOR: KARL SHERLOCK

"AND WE ALL HAD TO LIVE WITH THAT, SO
YES, IT WAS OUT OF GRIEF I MADE YOU"

(AFTER ERIN RODONI)

If I could live as two of me, I'd need a third to get it right. One to subscribe to what my parents wanted, two to borrow from my present, and three to be divorced from both entirely. Once I was a ruined vessel of unrequited potential and regrets—I'd forgotten everything but dread. A body made of broken pieces chipping off faster than I could glue them back on. And then you lent me yours.

CONTERMINOUS

What are you waiting for? I like the idea of stargazing, but I don't like going outside. I can ponder a queue of thoughts just as well from the safety of my mattress. Who decided blue was a color and a feeling? My favorite color is black and the feeling of what it's like to breathe when I can't see the color of time reaching in under my rib cage, coiling cold and cracking around my trachea. Sometimes anxiety feels like being covered in an entire swarm of bees. And I'm caught balancing between now and that perfect moment with no plan for what to do with it.

CHAZ ARYA
ENGLISH 142: POETRY WRITING III
INSTRUCTOR: KARL SHERLOCK

CHAPARRAL

somewhere on a desire path I've grown
too old to find, I must still be hiding
in the sawgrass. the entrance
to the realm convoluted, or I have,
but sometimes when the wind
cuts just right– it must be,
it must be–

we used to sit in the stone chair and play
kingdom, used to crunch reeds beneath
our shoes, to look back for our parents
and know they would be there.

just because you return to the place of memory doesn't mean it will hold you stop turning around the
sun is never going to catch the trees in exactly the same way as it did when you were twelve and if it
did you wouldn't even recognize it you're not meant to heal by digging up the dead before they're ready
to rise

SATURDAY

a flock of cellos and two
stray basses collectively groaning
in the linoleum-tiled rehearsal room
a song I'd never heard before
but somehow so intimately liturgical
I almost stood up, faced east
with the rest of the congregation,
toward the house where God lives
even now. and it is, appropriately,
both grotesque and familial, the way
their bodies– neck, rib
and waist, catgut and horsehair–
yield a sound that is
so nearly human

MEET TONIGHT'S NEW VOICES READERS

Where provided, contact info is included with the consent of the writers, who invite you to give them a shout-out about their writing or ask them questions. Unauthorized use of this information (reposting, republishing, or otherwise distributing information without the express consent of their owners) is prohibited by law.

SAMUEL ANDRADE

English 140: Poetry Writing I
Instructor: Karl Sherlock

E-mail: sandrade403@gmail.com

Author Statement: Over the summer of 2022 I took a creative writing course and I realized that I enjoyed writing. I don't read a lot of poetry so I decided to dive into an introductory course to see what doors I could open and I'm enjoying the process of expressing myself through words, expanding my vocabulary as well as opening my world to various poets.

CHAZ ARYA

English 142: Poetry Writing III
Instructor: Karl Sherlock

E-mail: arya.chaz.s@gmail.com

Author Statement: I am a theatre arts graduate who has returned to Grossmont College in recent years to further my creative writing skills. I've been writing since I was a kid and writing well for maybe three years now. My ultimate goal is to have my poems published.

KELLY CLEARY

English 126: Intro. to Creative Writing
Instructor: Julie Cardenas

E-mail: eloisacleary@gmail.com

Author Statement: I am a student at Grossmont College and an aspiring writer. Writing has helped me make sense of myself and the world around me. Reading has also shaped me into the person I am today and has allowed me to see topics from different perspectives.

PHILIP CORNELIUS

English 126: Intro. to Creative Writing
Instructor: Daniela Sow

E-mail: philip.cornn@gmail.com

Author Statement: This is my second year at Grossmont College, and my first year as an English major. I'm new to creative writing, but I'm an avid reader. I love horror, fantasy, and just fiction in general. My favorite authors and influences are Cormac McCarthy, Stephen King, and Robert McCammon.

THOMAS COURTNEY

English 130: Short Fiction Writing I
Instructor: Enrique A. Cervantes

E-mail: tavsdad@yahoo.com / **Twitter:** @MrCourtneyRm801 / **Cell:** 760-703-3220

Author Statement: Thomas Courtney is a 24 elementary school teacher in southeast San Diego. In 2021 he was selected as SDUSD district teacher of the Year, and in 2022 as SDSU's guide teacher of the year. He frequently writes for publications like *Edsource* and *Edutopia*, advocating primarily for equity in schools. His first memoir manuscript, *A Window at 45th and Market Street, Pre-pandemic Rhetoric and Post-Pandemic Reality*, will be available sometime in 2024.

KARI CURETON

English 140: Poetry Writing I
Instructor: Karl Sherlock

E-mail: karic.writer@gmail.com

Author Statement: I would like to write poems and stories that inspire and help others. Writing honestly about my experiences will hopefully let people know they aren't alone—that we aren't as different as we think. We all struggle, and we all smile. Nature, family, and life experiences inspire me. This poem was conjured from an everyday chat I had with my son.

ALLEA EXUM

English 140: Poetry Writing I
Instructor: Karl Sherlock

E-mail: aexum1911@gmail.com

Author Statement: I'm a freshman at Grossmont trying to step outside of my comfort zone of just consuming literature and instead trying to create some. I wrote this poem to seek catharsis and analyze how different my life feels without my mother. Though we had our differences, she would always try to help me in small ways that seemed insignificant to me at the time, but I reminisce about often now.

DANNY TRAN HO

English 126: Intro. to Creative Writing
Instructor: Daniela Sow

E-mail: dannytranho0@gmail.com

Author Statement: I am a psychology major at Grossmont College. I have always participated in activism for social justice and writing has given me an outlet to let my voice be heard. I would love to become a Physician Assistant with a story to educate and help other people in the future.

TARIQ JOHNSON

English 130: Short Fiction Writing I
Instructor: Enrique A. Cervantes

E-mail: tariqj12@gmail.com

Author Statement: I began my creative writing journey last semester in an intro to creative writing class. I draw inspiration from the world around me and the context in which I exist within it, my work explores topics of identity, coming of age, and desire. As a practicing visual artist, I use my writing as an alternate avenue for self expression and exploration.

ELLA RAMSEY

English 175: Novel Writing
Instructor: Rich Farrell

E-mail: ecramsey9@gmail.com

Author Statement: I'm in my second year at Grossmont College as a Technical Theatre major. Writing is something I have loved since childhood. My biggest inspirations are Leigh Bardugo and Holly Black, whose rich fantasy worlds prove the importance of representation

and diversity in all things. I'm drawn to that genre for its endless possibilities. In fantasy, the only limits are how far you can dream.

MICHAEL ROCA

English 175: Novel Writing
Instructor: Rich Farrell

Author Statement: Michael Roca is a student writer trying to become something more than that.

VIDE SALE-REED

English 131: Short Fiction Writing I
Instructor: Enrique Cervantes

English 177: Novel Writing III

Instructor: Rich Farrell

E-mail: vide.jsr@gmail.com

Author Statement: My love of literature began before I can remember. Books at bedtime, make-believe games, and habitual lying bewitched me into a life of storytelling and story-collecting. Stories are everywhere, if you listen for them. In addition to literature and creative writing, I've studied religion and horticulture, which find their way into my creative work even when I don't intend it.

LUCIAN SCRYA

English 130: Short Fiction Writing I
Instructor: Enrique Cervantes

English 141: Poetry Writing II

Instructor: Karl Sherlock

E-mail: drachenpanther5@gmail.com

Author Statement: I am an aspiring writer and eventual Librarian. I've been consuming stories and poems voraciously for as long as I can remember and writing nearly as long as I could hold a pen. Most days I'd say I let my pen do the writing for me and I just follow where it leads.

SHUJEN WALKER ASKEW

English 140: Poetry Writing I
Instructor: Karl Sherlock

Author Statement: ShuJen Walker Askew writes poems, short stories, and novels in various genres. Her works are published in local anthologies, including Grossmont College *Acorn Review*. ShuJen also made top 10 in the San Diego Decameron Project. She is an Electrical Engineer by trade, mother of two, and enjoys writing.

VAN WHEELAN

English 126: Intro. to Creative Writing
Instructor: Julie Cardenas

E-mail: olivanderwheelan@gmail.com

Author Statement: I am in my 4th semester here at Grossmont. I am currently pursuing my Associates in digital art, with hopes of becoming a children's book illustrator. This piece was inspired by my own childhood, growing up in a rather neglected area but being determined to find something beautiful within it.

2023 CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM INSTRUCTORS

See inside back cover of this program for info about our writing courses and workshops available next semester.

JULIE CARDENAS *CREATIVE WRITING / ACORN REVIEW*

Sacramento native Julie Cardenas co-coordinates Grossmont College's Puente Program, teaches Creative Writing and Chicano literature, and serves as advisor to the student-produced literary journal, *Acorn Review*. Julie holds a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism and Spanish from California State University, Sacramento, and a Master's Degree in English from the University of San Diego. This spring, she leads the Intro to Creative Writing course online. During the Fall 2023 semester, she'll teach a Distance Ed English 126 again, as well as English 145-148: *Acorn Review*, Production and Editing.



BRENDAN PRANIEWICZ *INTRO. TO CREATIVE WRITING (SUMMER)*

Photographer, blogger, writer, and instructor Brendan Praniewicz holds an MFA in Creative Writing from San Diego State University. His work has appeared in *Watershed Review*, *Driftwood Press*, *Tiny Seed Journal*, and *Gold Man Review*. Brendan is also a standup comedian who performs in local comedy venues. On campus, Brendan has coordinated the One Theme/One Campus project and hosted a number of related events, including film screenings and competitions. Brendan will once again be helping this Summer session's English 126 course, Introduction to Creative Writing.



ENRIQUE CERVANTES *SHORT FICTION WRITING*

Fiction writer, poet, and former Grossmont College student, Enrique Cervantes holds a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from San Diego State University. Enrique's writing has appeared in *Aztec Literary Review*, *The Writer*, *The Blue Agave Literary Journal*, *San Diego City Beat*, as well as the anthology *The Far East: Everything Just As It Is*. His novel-in-progress is about dancing, the border, and ghosts. Enrique will, again, teach the Short Fiction Writing workshop next semester as an on-campus course.



KARL SHERLOCK *POETRY WRITING*

Milwaukee native Karl Sherlock holds a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from University of California, Irvine. His recent poetry and nonfiction appear in *After Happy Hour*, *Assaracus*, *Broken Lens*, *Lime Hawk*, *Mollyhouse*, *RockPaperPoem*, *Science WriteNow*, *Stoneboat*, *Tinge*, *Wordgathering*, and others, as well as in the 2022 dis-lit anthology, *The Ending Hasn't Happened Yet*. A Sundress "Best of the Net" finalist in 2014 for his memoir essay about marrying a conversion therapy torture survivor, Karl co-coordinates Grossmont College's Creative Writing Program. Karl teaches the Poetry Writing workshop online this semester.



ADAM DEUTSCH *POETRY WRITING*

Publisher/editor/poet Adam Deutsch is one of three Co-Coordinator of the Creative Writing Program and teaches Poetry Writing workshops during the fall semesters. He also operates Cooper Dillon Books, a poetry press for writers and poets. He has held editorial positions on a variety of small presses and journals, including *Ninth Letter* and *Barn Owl Review*. His own poems have appeared in *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *Forklife OH*, *Thrush*, *Ping Pong*, *Arsenic Lobster*, *Across the Margin*, *Spinning Jenny*, and *Typo*. His first full-length collection of poems, *Every Transmission*, is newly available by Fernwood Press. Adam will lead the Fall 2023 Poetry Writing workshop.



DANIELA SOW *INTRO. TO CREATIVE WRITING*

Daniela co-coordinates the Grossmont College Creative Writing Program and teaches English 126: Creative Writing. She received her Master's of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing (Poetry) from San Diego State University, and her Post-secondary Reading and Learning Certificate from California State University, Fullerton. Her poetry has been published (or is forthcoming) in *San Diego Poetry Annual*, *A Cappella Zoo*, *Encompassing Seas*, *West Trestle Review*, *Sky Island Journal*, and others. As a spoken word artist, she has competed in the National Poetry Slam. In fall 2023, Daniela will be teaching English 126: Intro. to Creative Writing.



RICH FARRELL *NOVEL WRITING*

Novel Writing instructor Rich Farrell earned a Master of Fine Arts in Writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts. In addition to leading workshops on narrative for San Diego Writers, Ink, he is the Creative Non-Fiction Editor at *upstreet* and a Senior Editor at *Numéro Cinq*. His work, including fiction, memoir, essays, interviews and book reviews, has appeared, or is forthcoming, in *Potomac Review*, *Hunger Mountain*, *New Plains Review*, *upstreet*, *Descant*, *Contrary*, *Newfound*, *Numéro Cinq*, and elsewhere. His first novel, *The Falling Woman*, was released in summer 2020 on Algonquin Books. Rich will teach Novel Writing online in the fall 2023 semester.



ACORN REVIEW

Literary Magazine

Grossmont College's student-generated literary journal is packed with original poetry, short stories, novel excerpts, short works of drama, creative nonfiction, and visual art work. Sub period for our next issue is now open!

Acorn Review welcomes submissions from all San Diego County residents and current and former students and staff of Grossmont and Cuyamaca Colleges. Submitting to multiple categories is encouraged, but contributors must adhere to the submission limits in place for each category. All work is judged anonymously by student editors, and selections are based on literary and artistic merit. *Acorn Review* does not provide feedback on individual submissions. Student editors are enrolled in English 145-148: *Acorn Review* Editing and Production. Contact faculty advisor Julie Cardenas (julie.cardenas@gcccd.edu) for info about enrolling, or visit *Acorn Review* on the Creative Writing Program website:

GROSSMONT.EDU/ACORN



Classes begin June 12th.

*Summer (and Fall)
priority registration
begins May 1st!*



INTRO TO
CREATIVE
WRITING

Summer Session 2023

**ENGLISH 126:
INTRO TO CREATIVE WRITING**
section 8968

Instructor Brendan Pranievicz
3.0 cr., Distance Ed / 100% Online
June 12 through August 3
Zero Textbook Cost



EARN A CERTIFICATE IN

CREATIVE WRITING

DID YOU KNOW that Grossmont College is one of the few California community colleges to offer an Associate Degree with an English major that fulfills lower division requirements at most four-year colleges and universities? In addition to General Ed and Elective requirements, anyone taking 24 credits in the courses for an English major can also earn six additional credits from our Creative Writing Program's upper-level workshop courses and qualify for a Certificate of Achievement in English-Creative Writing. Just file an official request at Admissions and Records by the mid-semester deadline of any semester. Learn more at

[GROSSMONT.EDU / CWP](http://GROSSMONT.EDU/CWP)

Feeling inspired by tonight's writers? Take a writing course!

Register with any of our talented creative writing instructors and working authors for spring 2023 classes. See the official course catalog for more info, including prerequisites and recommended preparation.



Grossmont College offers Southern California's largest and best community college Creative Writing Program, with top-notch classes, nurturing workshops, and talented instructors to challenge you to sculpt your voice into the next wave of cutting edge literature. We offer courses tailored to different writing skill levels, writing and editing experience, and writing genres. You can also earn a Certificate in Creative Writing with your English degree. Our courses come into several varieties: general **creative writing classes**, **workshop sequences**, and **production and editing classes**. A writing class provides you with exclusive opportunities to meet nationally and internationally renowned authors, participate in readings and literary events, publish your work, and even edit a literary journal. See what's available, and **sign up early!!!** Learn more about our Creative Writing Program at grossmont.edu/cwp.

2023 FALL WRITING COURSES

The single most important show of support you can give the Grossmont College Creative Writing Program is to fill our classes and keep our workshops thriving. Whether weeks before the semester starts or weeks before it ends, less than robust enrollment can cause what is potentially the most important and inspiring class you might ever take to be put in the cross-hairs for cancellation. Safeguard these courses and your chances to work with some of the best creative writing instructors in San Diego. Register early for one of the following course offerings:

CREATIVE WRITING

A general Creative Writing course introduces the craft of creative writing. Learn how to workshop and revise your own written works of short fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, and drama. You'll also enjoy opportunities to be included in student readings and college literary publications. No prerequisite is required.

COURSE	Instructor	Section	When and Where
ENGL 126: INTRO TO CREATIVE WRITING	Daniela Sow	3064	Tu/Th 11AM-12:20PM, Rm 51-573
	Julie Cardenas	3045	Distance Ed /100% Online

WRITING WORKSHOPS

Our writing workshops offer a four-course sequence of genre-specific instruction for which you compose and submit original work and learn how to use the writer's workshop to develop your craft as a writer and your skills as a critic in that genre. A workshop puts you in the middle of a real writing community and lets you explore opportunities for recognition and public readings in venues such as New Voices. Enrolling for all four courses in the sequence is an advantage but not a requirement, nor do you have to complete the sequence of any one workshop over four continuous semesters. Break them up if you like, try all the genres, and keep expanding your repertoire of writing workshops. Even earn a Certificate in Creative Writing. To register for the first course in a workshop sequence, successful completion of English 126 or English 120 is recommended, but not required.

COURSE	Instructor	Sections	When and Where
ENGL 130-133: SHORT FICTION WRITING I-IV	Enrique Cervantes	3066-3069	Wed 6:30-9:35PM, Rm 51-573
ENGL 140-143: POETRY WRITING I-IV	Adam Deutsch	3074-3077	Tu/Th 2-3:20PM, Rm 51-584
ENGL 145-148: ACORN REVIEW I-IV	Julie Cardenas	9138-9141	Distance Ed/100% Online
ENGL 175-178: NOVEL WRITING I-IV	Rich Farrell	2374-2377	Distance Ed/100% Online

learn more at grossmont.edu/cwp





SEE INSIDE FRONT COVER of this program for event details. For author bios, bibliographies, selected media, resources, and more, visit the official website of LAF 27: grossmont.edu/laf



APRIL 24-27 • 2023

LITERARY ARTS FEST

Monday, April 24

WHY LITERATURE MATTERS student panel
2-3:15pm, Griffin Gate (outer southwest corner of Student Center)

SONIA GUTIÉRREZ, story writer and poet
7-8:15pm, Griffin Gate

Tuesday, April 25

MARGARAT NEE, 'zine workshop
11am-12:15pm, PVAC Lobby (Performing and Visual Arts Center Lobby)

NEW VOICES student reading
7-8:15pm, PVAC Theatre (Performing and Visual Arts Center Theatre)

Wednesday, April 26

ADAM DEUTSCH, poet
12:30-1:45pm, Griffin Gate (outer southwest corner of Student Center)

SHILPI SOMAYA GOWDA, novelist
2-3:15pm, Griffin Gate

TARA STILLIONS WHITEHEAD, fiction author
7-8:15pm, Griffin Gate

Thursday, April 27

MONI BARRETTE, Graphic Literature and Social Justice
12:30-1:45pm, AHN Lobby (Allied Health & Nursing Building, Rm. 34-206)

RAYMOND LUCZAK, queer Deaf writer, playwright, and poet
7-9pm, AHN Lobby (Rm. 34-206)