

# QUIZ & QUILL

OTTERBEIN UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT LITERARY MAGAZINE | FALL CHAPBOOK 2019



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## SUBMISSION POLICY

Q&Q prides itself on publishing the highest-quality creative work. Therefore, every precaution is taken to assure writers' anonymity during the selection process. Only the advisor of Q&Q knows the identities of those who submit work to the magazine until after staff members' selections are finalized.

Q&Q

LETTER  
from the  
EDITORS

# DEAR READER,

We would like to start off by saying that we are so excited and humbled to be your Quiz & Quill Managing Editors. Year after year, Quiz & Quill has exposed us to the most amazing people and creative minds on campus. With this chapbook being the 101st volume of Quiz & Quill, we feel honored to be a part of the Staff that starts off this next century. We hope to bring our own personal flair to these upcoming chapbooks while continuing to honor the history of the literary world we are a part of.

We want to express to you just how important Quiz & Quill is to us. Being the Managing Editors and Page Designers of Quiz & Quill means that we are able to express our love for creative writing while simultaneously getting experience in the careers we aspire to have after college. We feel passionately about the publication we have created for you and are so happy that it has landed in your hands.

We are eternally grateful to all of the QQ'ers who stepped up for leadership positions on Editorial Board. Your roles on Editorial Board have taken us from two girls trying to figure out how to run an organization to a unique and cohesive team. Next, we would like to thank our amazing Advisor, Jeremy Llorence, for helping us navigate through this new experience and for offering us new insights on what it means to work on a publication. Lastly, thank you to all of the members of Staff. Your dedication and willingness to show up every week and contribute your ideas and thoughts is immensely appreciated. Kaitlyn and I would also like to thank our friends and family for their incredible support as we begin this journey.

Quiz & Quill would not be possible without all of the students who have taken the time to write and submit their creative work. We acknowledge and understand how busy you all are and cannot thank you enough for finding the time for Quiz & Quill.

Before you sit down to read this chapbook, we invite you to grab a comfy blanket and a cup of apple cider, while we do the same. The writers published in this chapbook have delivered on their promise to incite fear, so beware.

WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE,  
EMMA AND KAITLYN



- 8**      **AMERICAN DINER**  
Marcus Hallam
- 13**     **BACKROADS**  
Mary Jackson
- 16**     **DEADICATION**  
Alexis Sheets
- 18**     **WHITE JACKET**  
CJ Meng
- 19**     **VOICE MEMOS**  
Rachel Nitchman
- 25**     **LATE**  
Allura Stevens
- 27**     **ONE QUIET MORNING**  
Abby Giardina
- 31**     **BLACK WIDOW**  
CJ Meng
- 32**     **THEY FOLLOW**  
Wesley Strobel
- 35**     **FROSTBITE**  
Lucy Clark
- 36**     **THE SOUNDS OF EDUCATION IN AMERICA**  
Alexis Sheets
- 38**     **THE GOOD PEOPLE**  
Wesley Strobel

# AMERICAN DINER

Marcus Hallam

(JAKE sits at a cheap, white table across from LIAM. They both have cups next to them and are looking at menus large enough to cover their faces. There's a jukebox on JAKE's side and a vase with some flowers in it sitting on a small end table on LIAM's side.)

LIAM

I heard there was a shooting here not too long ago.

JAKE

Really?

LIAM

Yeah. Something like, five or six people died.

JAKE

That's terrible.

(Takes a sip of his drink.)

At least it wasn't more.

(Pause.)

Did you watch the game last night?

LIAM

No.

JAKE

(Puts his menu down.)

Oh man, it was insane. I swear it was one of the best plays I've ever seen in my life.

LIAM

Okay.

(Pause. Puts his menu down.)

You ever think about how crazy that is?

JAKE

Yeah, that's what I'm saying. It was absolutely insane. The moment they got that interception the whole game just-

LIAM

(Cutting JAKE off.)



No, I meant the shooting.

Oh.

JAKE

(Grabs his menu and starts reading it once more.)

LIAM

It happened right here. But now, you'd never know. There's no sign of it anywhere. We're waiting to eat dinner on the same spot where people were gunned down just a few weeks ago. And it's like it never happened. Isn't that crazy?

(Pause.)

JAKE

It's so dead in here. I need some music. (Sets his menu down and stands up.)

(Walks over to jukebox.)

Man, I can't believe they still have one of these. Let's see what they've got... Ah, there we go.

(A jazzy, upbeat tune starts playing. JAKE starts nodding his head to the beat. LIAM watches JAKE the whole time.)

LIAM

What do you think about all of it?

JAKE

(Fiddling with the jukebox.)

It's so quiet. Let me see if I can...

(The volume of the music increases as JAKE also begins to sway his whole body to the tune.)

There we go!

LIAM

(Loudly, trying not to be drowned out by the music.)

Don't you think something should be done?

JAKE

(Dancing, completely lost in the music.)

LIAM

(Shouting.)

*Do you even care?*

(Lights cut to black. The music continues to play in the dark for thirty seconds to a minute, before the lights turn back on. LIAM is sitting in the same spot, looking at his menu. The vase is shattered and the flowers torn to pieces. Both cups on the table are tipped over and their contents have spilled out. JAKE is still dancing as the song ends, then he walks back to his seat.)

Whew! That felt great.

JAKE

What happened?

(Notices the broken cups.)

There was a shooting here not too long ago.

LIAM

JAKE

(Tries to wipe up the spill with some napkins.)

Yeah, you told me that.

LIAM

Yeah. Something like, six or seven people died.

JAKE

(Coughs.)

Awful stuff, really. But can you help clean this up?

LIAM

No.

JAKE

Fine. I'll just see if-

(Coughs.)

If our waiter can help.

LIAM

Okay.

JAKE

Speaking of which where is he? It's been like-

(Coughs.)

Like-

(Coughs, harder and longer.)

Fifteen minutes. Dammit, I think I'm getting sick.

LIAM  
You ever think about how crazy that is?

JAKE  
What? How-  
(Coughs.)  
How long he's taking? Shit, this is starting to hurt.

LIAM  
No, I meant the shooting.

JAKE  
(Coughs, violently.)  
Agh!

LIAM  
It happened right here.

JAKE  
(Coughs, clutching his gut in pain.)  
Dammit!

LIAM  
But now, you'd never know.

JAKE  
(Coughs up blood into his hand.)  
What the fuck?

LIAM  
There's no sign of it anywhere.

JAKE  
(Attempts to stand, pressing his hand onto the table for leverage but, due to the spill, slips and falls.)  
Ah!

LIAM  
(Puts down menu, revealing that his shirt has a few bloodstains near his collarbone.)  
We're waiting to eat dinner on the same spot where we were gunned down just a few moments ago.

JAKE  
(Sitting on the floor, wheezing.)  
N-no.

And it's like it never happened.

LIAM

(Spits up more blood before collapsing.)

JAKE

Isn't that crazy?

LIAM

(Lights cut to black.)

END OF PLAY.

# BACKROADS

## Mary Jackson

The headlights were dim, signaling to Nick that they'd have to be replaced soon. Their light barely illuminated the road ahead, only a dull yellow beam that extended a few feet, but it was enough to have any late-night cop look the other way, if they ever saw any on this tiny dirt road in the middle of bum-fuck Illinois, anyway. Cornstalks walled in the road on both sides, so tall that the sky was only visible from the front. The stars stood stark and the moon was but a sliver against the endless darkness. They would be harvesting soon, before the weather turns cold and the chill of the frost spoils the crops.

“Did we have to take your little shortcut?” Andy asked from the backseat, sprawled out across the leather upholstery as he stared up at the water-stained ceiling. “It’s been nothing but corn for ages. The most interesting thing I’ve seen so far is a bunch of sleeping cows.”

“It’s almost eleven. There’s nothing *to* see at night. Just take a nap if you’re so bored. That’s what normal people do at a time like this,” JoAnne replied, head resting on the passenger door, gaze unfocused.

“Or,” Nick said, eyes steady on the road, “You can both help keep an eye out for deer. The last thing we need right now is to get into a wreck this far from town.”

The car jolted from a long-ignored pothole. “Besides, we’re not that far from my grandpa’s house. We’ll be there in another half-hour or so.”

The car went quiet then, the thrum of the engine droning in tandem with the low tenor of the radio, intermittent with static where the signals don’t quite reach so far out into the country. Dead zones and potholes scattered were throughout the darkness of night on an old, forgotten road. The road trip of dreams.

There was rustling in the fields—too focused to be the wind, too straight and unrelenting. A figure jumped out from the cornfield and into the lane ahead.

*“Shit!”*

Nick slammed on the breaks, but it was too late. They collided with it. It landed with a wet *‘thunk’* on the hood and rolled over the roof as the car continued forward, smearing blood along the windshield as it went. The car skid to a stop shortly after, engine stalling from the impact. With a thump and a jerk, the car died and took the headlights with it.

“What was that!?”

JoAnne checked the rearview mirror, but all she could see was a huddled

mass on the concrete, shadowed now that the headlights no longer shone on it. The moon wasn't bright enough to offer any consolation. "Is it a deer? I saw antlers."

"No, it looked like a person," Andy said.

"Maybe it's someone in a costume? Halloween run in the fields gone wrong?"

"Who cares!" Nick said, unbuckling his seatbelt. "One of you guys need to call the police. I'll go out and check." He reached over to the glovebox and took the flashlight from inside. A quick click of a button told him it still worked.

"Be careful. The deer might lash out if it's still alive," said JoAnne.

Nick nodded and exited the car, flashlight in hand. Slowly he inched forward, checking the walls of cornstalks for any more unexpected appearances before finally shining his light onto whatever they hit. Nick froze. *What the hell—*

He could feel his heartbeat in his ears and his breathing pick up, a small puff of breath appearing on each exhale. The thing crouched on the road, whatever it was, was not a deer. The creature was gaunt and thin, but its form held a ferocious sense of power. Each rib showed through its thin, leathery skin and the knobs of its spine were particularly pronounced, angled, sharp and unnatural. Thick, wiry fur was scattered in patches along the body. Large, bloodstained antlers stood stark on its head. Its eyes were open. *Oh my god, it's looking right at me—*

His grandpa always had a bad habit of telling ghost stories to his grandchildren when they visited. Talk of haunted cabins, wandering spirits, and creatures that hide in the shadows was commonplace, and his own log cabin, isolated amongst acres of corn and soybean, added to the creepy atmosphere. His sister in particular was plagued with nightmares for weeks after a memorable story, told when their parents were out in the barn, about a scarecrow that came to life and killed its owner, then strung him and his wife up in the fields.

But those were just stories, made up by an old man to scare and amuse his grandkids. This creature, crouched in front of him bloody, and breathing, and *staring*, was real. And, with rising horror, Nick realized that it was not injured from the collision. There was barely even a scratch on it. The blood, which dripped slowly to the ground, came from its claws and mouth, which were slick and red with the vestiges of a fresh kill. *Holy shit, those teeth—*

Nick could hear its stuttered, wheezing breaths. Spittle flew onto the cracked asphalt with every exhale. The body shook and shifted, the shadows following the hollows of the bones and the slick wetness of the blood. Slowly, the thing turned to look at the car, its eyes reflective yellow, beading and piercing against the shadowed brow.

*Human eyes don't reflect light.*

They needed to get away. Every nerve in his body was screaming at him, wailing

'*wrong, wrong*' with every second he wasted standing there frozen. He dropped the flashlight and ran back to the car, slamming the door shut and locking it for a false sense of security as he tried to start the engine. He knew without a shadow of a doubt that the car would not withstand an attack from that *thing*. Against claws like those razor-sharp things that could so very easily rend flesh and bone from its victim, a little glass wouldn't stand a chance. It was certainly thin enough to squeeze through the hole.

"Fuck, *fuck!*" The car sputtered fruitlessly and stalled with every key turn, the engine refusing to start. Nick hit the steering wheel, breathing fast as he watched the creature slowly rise in the mirror, a barely-there shadow with two round specks of reflected light. Like headlights heading their way. *It's so tall, oh my god—*

"What's happening?" JoAnne asked, looking up from her phone. "We couldn't call the cops. There's no service out here."

Andy leaned forward and glanced at Nick, whose hands were shaking, knuckles white from how hard he was clutching the wheel. He didn't look away from the mirror. The thing took another step forward. *Oh shit, oh shit, oh shit, it's not stopping—*

"You okay buddy? Was the deer mangled enough to psych you out? You're looking a little pale there."

"We don't have any time, we need to—"

With a terrible screech, the creature rushed towards the car.

# DEADICATION

Alexis Sheets

Her eyes were swirls of lackluster grey

Thick knotted strands of brunette laid in clumps on her tender scalp

The brown stained shirt on her frame was worn and discolored

It smelled of sewage and infection

Her body was covered in bloody excrement

Trails of thick green and yellow pus leaked from each of her orifices

Drying in hardened clusters between the cracks and crevices of her body

I brought my hands up to hug myself

My arms covering my chest and my hands stop my shoulders

The woman's arms mirrored the movement of my own

As her fingers touched the adorned grayscale of skin it rubbed together

Making the sound of sandpaper dragging across sidewalk concrete

I could smell the stench of infected rotting flesh above all else

Her body was now constructed only of rot and decay

I stepped forward towards the woman

She mirrored my movement

I made eye contact with the parasites swimming in the pools of white around her corneas

I could see the slithering movement of maggots in the smile lines around her dry and cracked lips

They made squelching noises as her mouth moved

I tried to take a deep breath by I could only feel my chest deflate

I could hear the splintering sound of ribs



I blinked and so did she

I moved and so did she

I closed my eyes and opened them once more to find the woman in the mirror  
gone

Into me

Consuming me

Becoming me

# WHITE JACKET

CJ Meng

I was drawn into this box  
With sweet late-night talks.

(You slipped out while I slept,  
Proving my judgment inept)

I've found one small window,  
Though I see nothing but snow.

(You now offer me a shining smile,  
Whiter than this impenetrable tile)

The air lays heavy on my lungs,  
Dancing on your forkéd tongues.

(You watch me quake and scream,  
Tell me it's in my head, a dream)

I long to claw at your eyes,  
Hear your own pained cries.

(You're pushing the bricks in,  
Pressing into my broken skin)

My shrieks echo back to me,  
Rebirthing me into a Banshee.

(You laugh, tauntingly call me a trope,  
Fated to be found hanged by her own rope)

Unrecognizable to even my reflection,  
Black has now become my predilection.

(You're bored with what you created,  
Set me free, oh how long for this I waited)

I will search 'till I find you, make you pay,  
Though I do not know who I am today.

# VOICE MEMOS #1-11

Rachel Nitchman

\* - denotes the beginning of a new voice memo

(LIGHTS UP, accompanied by the sound of keys jingling and a door creaking open. MARCEL trudges in from stage left, the sound of the door shutting behind him. He is exhausted and disheveled, his shirt untucked, his hair wild. He grabs a bottle of wine from out of the fridge, sets his backpack down on the coffee table in front of him, and slumps into an armchair. He takes a drink as he stares at the backpack. Sighing, ducking his head, rubbing his neck, he pulls it closer, unzips it, and pulls out a large plastic Ziploc bag full of personal items. He dumps them clumsily on the table. He picks up a cell phone, unlocks it and navigates its contents until he finds what he's looking for. He sucks in a shaky breath and taps it. He is motionless and tense. A jingle sounds off.)

CARA

\* Reminder: pick up Mom's present on the way home today. And buy wrapping paper. And candles. And a card...Additional reminder to stop waiting till the day of her birthday to do the birthday things, Jesus Christ...

(The same jingle sounds off signaling the end of the recording (this happens at the open and close of every memo). MARCEL finally lets out his breath, snorting fondly. He relaxes slightly and clicks on the next voice memo)

\* Reminder: rent is due by the first of every month, write that in the calendar. Also, get a checkbook. Reconsider getting those Green Day tickets, and then make apologies to Mars for breaking his poor punk rock heart...Reconsider laptop shopping cause it's fine, the screen is fine, I'll just pretend I'm at a rave... Also reconsider groceries - you know what, just reconsider fucking eating this week, I guess.

\* Reminder: call Mars to let him know I left a slice of pie in his freezer last night before I left - don't forget!

(MARCEL brings the phone to his face, squinting at the date of the message. He sets the phone down as he heads to the freezer. The memo continues as he rummages).

Also, call Mom and let her know I love her and remind her that she loves me and also that I need to borrow some money for rent cause her daughter is, unfortunately, still a jobless leech.

(MARCEL has parted the sea of frozen food bags in his freezer to reveal a tin foil wrapped plate, which he pulls out and sets down on the coffee table before closing the door)

Reminder to God that I'm a good person! I only ditched school once in my entire high school career! I give blood every three months! And I did the whole four-year degree thing, I have the paper with the signatures, so please send me the job that's supposed to come with it! I understand You're busy but even the US Postal Service's fattest carrier pigeon could've delivered it by now!

(MARCEL busies himself with trying to break the block of frozen pie in front of him, picking up the set of car keys that was in the plastic bag, weakly stabbing and slicing at different angles and directions)

\* Life Update: The carrier pigeon has delivered and useless leech-y offspring is no longer! I am driving home from the job interview I was apparently so qualified for I got hired on the freaking spot! I can't believe it. It was probably out of pity, they could totally smell my desperation, but I don't care. I'll reek of desperation for a paycheck. I'm gonna have a job! That's actually related to my degree! Shit!

(A car horn is heard passing by)

Okay, sorry, it has come to my attention that I still can't talk and drive, bye.

(MARCEL has given up trying to carve a slice out of the pie. He sits hunched over it, apparently trying to key doodles or words into the crust. He absentmindedly clicks the next memo.)

\* Life Update: I. Hate. My job. So much. I am the thing I have always dreaded becoming. I am coffee girl Cara. Vending machine Cara. Take out the trash Cara. Cara who runs down to the corner joint to fetch cigarettes for 'the boys'. Cara who

doesn't even have the merit to be called Cara, no, she's called princess, and darling, and eugh. I swear to god if another sleazy greasy man looks me in the eyes today it'll be the last time he has eyes. I can't believe I fell for this. I have literally no job experience, of course they wouldn't actually give me a seat at the table. I'm the fucking hostess. I take the tables' orders. I've even got a little clipboard with my name on it, not that anyone noticed! They are...sooooo lucky...that my desperation reek is real...maybe tomorrow I'll get to fetch someone's dry cleaning, what a dream, right?

\* Reminder: ask Mars if he likes Mars Bars. Very Important.

(MARCEL laughs softly. A house phone is ringing, to which he appears oblivious)

\* Reminder: add Mars Bars to grocery list.

(MARCEL laughs again. The phone continues to ring, MARCEL clicks the next memo)

\* Life Update: I am stuck on the freeway for what will probably be the next 30 minutes or maybe an hour or maybe it'll be weeks or months this time, who knows. All I know is that I have no reception. I'm stranded with only two gallons of gas left to my name. I've got some provisions in here, but nothing substantial. A single water bottle. A Cliff Bar. Some leftover orange slices from lunch today. The questionable remains of half an Oreo in my cup holder, sans cream. By day three I'll be withering away. Maybe eventually they'll send a rescue chopper with a bullhorn man who'll yell at all of us to start walking home if we wanna see our wives and 2.5 kids again because 91 is gonna be under construction forever or at least until the return of Christ. But by then I'll be too weak! I'll have to crawl using just my overgrown fingernails! Take pity on me, dear Overseer, my legs will be so atrophied they'll look like 36-year-old Olive Garden breadsticks! Only paler! Bullhorn man will hover beside my limp body and go all drill-sergeant on my ass, telling me 'tough Triscuits' and that I 'should've gotten more greens' in my diet and my god, I'm going absolutely nuts. I'm gonna suffocate on my own nuts fumes in this tiny little car. I'm rolling down my window. If you don't hear from me again, it is the end of times. I have likely perished because all of my fingernails broke off from the lack of Vitamin D or C or whichever one it is. Godspeed.

(At this point MARCEL is on the floor with his face folded into his elbows, his shoulders shaking, probably laughing. Probably)

\* Reminder once again to stop fucking waiting till the day of peoples' birthdays to do the birthday things oh my god Cara why are you such a disaster! Pick up Mars's cake before the shop closes at...6:00? I think? Reminder to look up shop hours during lunch break. Haah, I'm such a bad best friend, Mars, why are you

still here?

(The jingle sounds and for a moment there is no sound, no movement. Finally, MARCEL lifts his face, slowly, like it takes monumental effort, and taps on the phone screen, navigating to something else. He opens the photo gallery, which pops up on the wall opposite the audience. We watch him scroll through a few rows of photos before finding a video and pushing play. The projection shows MARCEL opposite the video-taker, who holds the phone low and discreet behind their legs, the recording clearly a secret. Beyond the on-screen barricade, MARCEL sits on the floor with a guitar, which he strums softly. And then we hear CARA, secret-video-taker, begin to hum along with it, to the tune of Edelweiss.

MARCEL, on stage, sets the phone down on the table in front of him and leans his head back, resting against the armchair and closing his eyes. He tries to hum along but suddenly becomes emotional – his throat closes up and he chokes. Frustrated by this, he throws his head forward and slams his fists against the ground before bringing his hands slowly back to each side of his head, leaning forward and rocking himself slowly. His breathing is rough. Suddenly, the guitar stops. On-video MARCEL has looked up and caught the camera recording him. He looks vaguely annoyed)

CARA

What?

(MARCEL says nothing but cocks an eyebrow at her)

Fine, I'll put it away.

(The camera is jostled, the video showing a blur of motion as it is picked up and maneuvered so it faces CARA. She sticks out her tongue playfully at seeing

her own face and the recording freezes, her face projected on the wall. A jingle sounds off. On the projection, a notification appears in the corner of the phone's screen; the voice memo logo. We hear jostling, and then;

\* Okay, so...I don't know that anyone will ever listen to these...but...if you are listening...

CARA (whispering)

(Upon hearing her voice, MARCEL jumps, his hands scrambling towards the phone. He grips it like a lifeline)

...if my phone somehow makes it out alive and I...don't...just...don't go looking for me. Please? I don't want you to-...Chances are, if you're listening to this or if you were given my phone I probably love you, so just...please, I'm asking you to just forget about me...

(CARA's voice begins to wobble and break.

MARCEL gets to his feet, his body quaking. One hand is clamped over his mouth, his eyes are transfixed on the screen in front of him. The lights begin to dim as he moves fitfully to center stage. CARA's voice returns, more resolute.)

I'm gone. That's all you need to know. And I wish I could explain, but...I'm just sorry. I'm so, so, sorry. This isn't...this isn't my note, or anything, I swear that's not what-...

(There are no lights on stage now other than the projection of CARA's face on the wall. The shadow of MARCEL's figure cuts straight through its middle as he stands center stage, his frame enveloped by her face. He's hunched close to the phone, captivated, his grief-stricken face lit by its glow)

I just wanted someone to know that I didn't...I didn't want to disappear, I-...shit, I can't just say that-

(MARCEL heaves and lets out a muffled

cry. What sounds like CARA's name. There's a heavy pause. The recording has gone quiet. MARCEL's breathing is the only noise to permeate the quiet. The hand holding the phone is shaking violently and his other hand moves to steady it when a voice, clear and louder than before, suddenly rings out)

Mars?

(At the sound of his name, MARCEL whirls around to face CARA's photo on the wall beside him, as though he might find her standing there, losing his grip on the phone as he does so. It hits the floor with a reverberating crack and the projection light goes dark.)

End of Play



# LATE

Allura Stevens

12.50 am.

I lay here listening  
To Lorde's discography.  
Wondering if this world  
Will ever be the place I  
Need it to be.

12.52 am.

I'm now wondering if I  
Will ever be the person I  
Need myself to be.  
But is anyone ever that person?  
Silence. I don't know what else I  
Expected. There seems to only ever be  
Silence in response to what I say.

12.54 am.

I think of how often I've  
Been ignored during conversations.  
I think of the people who are  
Heard even less than I am.  
Starting a conversation is  
Harder than it should be.

12.56 am.

I'm out of coherent thoughts.  
Just a big jumble of confused  
Emotions up there in my brain.  
Not even a minute has passed?  
Finally. The words might be  
Coming back. I wonder where  
They go when I can't quite  
Grasp them.

12.58 am.

I think of all the people who  
Have made it a priority to listen  
To me when no one else will.  
I thank them, silently, because  
Most of them I now consider  
Part of my past.

1 am.

I've been writing this for ten

Minutes now. Can't say why.  
I'm not sure poetry can ever  
Say why.  
Just some odd indescribable  
Reason. Or need.  
Like maybe if I keep writing -  
Talking - someone will listen  
Long enough to hear me

# ONE QUIET MORNING

Abby Giardina

I went for a run every morning at exactly 7 am. My route started from my driveway, snaked down the sidewalks and cul de sacs, crossed through the park at the end of the neighborhood and into the wooded trail. On the streets I'd see a few other runners, people letting their dogs out, sleepy kids climbing on the school bus. The woods were almost noiseless at that time of day, just as the sun was rising, spare the birds calling out from in between the trees. It often felt like I had the whole trail to myself, just my music and my shoes hitting the dirt. Running for me had always been therapeutic. Until one quiet morning when it wasn't.

I saw it from a distance, maybe 15 or 20 feet away-- a bright pink something jutting out from the canopy of shrubs on either side of the path. I slowed down to the point of walking the closer I got to it, the hairs on my arms stood up as if I was cold, an uneasy feeling settled itself into the pit of my stomach. Then I started to smell it, a foul stench as if a dead animal had begun to rot. I often think about what would've happened if I had just turned around and gone home. It sounded too quiet, as if the birds had stopped singing. My breath became heavier and louder in my ears. By the time I could clearly make the object out the smell was getting stronger, and I came to a halt in front of it.

It was a running shoe. Lying on the dirt a few inches above it was a pair of legs. The socks were dirty, and the shins were bruised. From the knees up the rest of the body was concealed within the thick branches and leaves of a bush. I stood frozen, chest tightened, staring at the legs as if I expected them to get up. A singular fly landed on a purple patch of skin near the ankle. Wordlessly, I pulled my phone out of my armband.

*911, what is your emergency?*

I met the police at the mouth of the woods. I stayed with one officer while another went to the spot in the bushes I'd described, told him he'd know it when he saw it. I explained how I had found the body on my jog and that was it. After what seemed like a long moment later, the other officer came out of the trees white as a sheet. He cleared his throat a few times and called his partner over. While they spoke, I studied the opening of the path, now seeming to stretch longer and darker. An ambulance came in a sudden flurry of activity, followed by more police cars and people with badges I couldn't identify. I was taken to the police station for more questioning.

The body was identified as Lauren Smith, a married young woman who had moved in a few houses down from us several weeks prior. I'd only spoken to them a handful of times: once at the neighborhood block party, once at the grocery store, once to pick up my husband, Simon, who went to help her husband install a TV, and once at a baby shower for Heather, who lived down the street. At the block party, Simon and I talked to Lauren and her husband for a while.

She seemed happy. We talked about work, about the neighborhood, how both of us loved running. The next day Simon went over to set up their flat screen, and I'd said hello to her on the porch. Lauren had helped me set up Heather's baby shower, hauling party supplies from the trunk of Simon's car. At the shower, she'd told me that she and her husband were trying to start a family of their own. I joked that if they did then Simon could be the one to deliver the baby, which got everyone laughing. The last time I'd seen Lauren Smith was three days ago when I drove past her house on my way home from work. She was on her porch and I waved at her. She held eye contact with me for a split second before quickly getting up and hurrying back inside. I didn't think much of it at the time. Maybe she was having a bad day.

*What about her husband?*

Lauren Smith's husband was a business executive for a large company who said little and smiled a lot. I didn't know much about him. He seemed nice.

I was finally allowed to leave and called Simon to come get me. Luckily, he happened to be on his lunch break. I didn't notice my hands were shaking until he pointed it out. He asked if I wanted to talk and I couldn't bring myself to. He offered to take the rest of the day off, but I insisted his patients needed him more than I did.

I spent the rest of my Friday on the couch with the TV on as white noise. I could still smell that rotten stench. That night I could've sworn I saw a pair of bare bruised legs at the end of the dark hallway. I did a double-take and felt shivers run down my spine. I rubbed at the pinpricks on the backs of my arms. I slept with the bathroom light on.

Two mornings later the news channel came out with Lauren's story: Local woman found dismembered. I took one look at the TV and felt my breathing constrict.

"All her guts were gone," Heather whispered to me in the frozen food aisle later that day. "All missing. Everything. You remember Anna Hopkins from my baby shower? Her husband's the county coroner. Told her all about it. Said the autopsy was the weirdest thing he'd ever seen," she spoke quickly with a hint of awe in her voice, but fear filled her eyes. "Her whole body was intact except for the missing organs, with one clean cut from her chest down to her stomach. And her legs—"

"Her legs were bruised," I stated. The image of the purplish skin flashed in my mind. There was that damn smell again.

"Yeah, bruised like there was some kind of struggle. But get this," She grabbed my arm for dramatic effect. "They only have one of her shoes. They can't find the other one. And there's no fingerprints anywhere. It's practically a cold case!"

Hearing the excitement in her voice made my stomach churn.

“But it had to be the husband, y’know? It always is,” she lowered her voice even more. “I heard they were having some real marriage issues. I mean, he never talked to anyone. Totally crazy.”

“I don’t know, he seemed like a nice enough guy,” Simon said nonchalantly scrolling on his phone that night in bed. “He’s in police custody now so they’ll figure it out.”

I opened and closed my mouth, trying to put my thoughts in order.

“He didn’t seem weird when you helped him with the TV?”

“What?”

“The TV,” I leaned in closer. “You went over there to help her husband set up their TV. Did he seem all put together?”

The scrolling stopped.

“He seemed fine. Said about five sentences the whole time,” my husband shrugged.

“B-but you don’t think it’s *weird*?” I sputtered, heat rising in my face. “She was so sweet! They both seemed so *normal*!”

“Well that’s the point, isn’t it? You’d never suspect anything. We’ve watched enough true crime shows to know that,” he laughed.

The anger slid into my throat.

“But why would someone do something so horrible to her?” I forced the words around the lump that had formed. “Why would you just... cut someone’s organs out?”

“I don’t know,”

More scrolling.

“But you’re a doctor, Simon!” I grabbed his arm, furious that nobody was taking this seriously. It wasn’t a true crime show, it was a real woman that lived on this street. Every time I closed my eyes at night I saw that single pink running shoe, and my brain had started to welcome horrific visions of what lay just beyond the damaged legs hidden in the bushes.

“I’m an OBGYN. I have no idea what the motive would be to cut someone’s guts out,” he finally put his phone down and looked me straight in the eyes. “Do you want to talk to a professional about this? About what you saw?”

I could only shake my head in fear of bursting into tears. I wouldn’t know

how to describe to anyone how for the past three days I constantly felt like I was being watched. How I jumped at the slightest noises that left a hollow feeling in my stomach. How every night when I got up to use the bathroom, I felt ice-cold fingers gripping my ankles. How I couldn't bring myself to go to Lauren's memorial service and my heart sped up every time I thought about her laughing at the baby shower.

About an hour later my husband was snoring softly next to me and I pressed my hands to my stomach. I thought I could feel my insides sliding around from within me. I took a finger and traced a long straight line from my sternum down to my belly button. I think I slept for about four hours and woke up in the morning with Simon still next to me. Sunday was his off day.

I got a text from Heather, wondering if I still had any blue streamers left over that she could use for her nephew's birthday party. I told her all the unused supplies were still in Simon's car and that I'd check. Walking downstairs I thought about my husband's offer. Maybe I did need to talk to someone. Maybe I was going crazy. I grabbed Simon's keys and went into the garage, starting the car and popping the trunk. I swung the keys around my finger as I walked over and opened the back fully.

There was a pile of blue streamers.

Extra paper plates.

A pair of scissors.

A bright pink running shoe.

# BLACK WIDOW

CJ Meng

She smiles, signifying my death.  
My father – his too –  
    succumbed  
        to the same fate.  
She tells me the happy news –  
    blessed with children  
I will never meet.  
Sauntering across the bedroom,  
    she takes me in her arms,  
        squeezes me still, bites.  
I close my eyes, resistance  
    inhibited by spite –  
I wouldn't fight anyway.  
Her teeth rip through my flesh  
    with a hunger satiating  
The bond we had.  
I don't scream, pain  
    stifled by sultry surprise,  
        she swallows with satisfaction.  
My neck starts to sever  
    from my sequestered body –  
My soul is succumbing.  
    Had I settled for a  
        single life of solitude,  
            I may have survived.  
She's nearly done, a shudder  
    sliding down my spine,  
        slippery with murky blood.  
Sacrifice me so she may live,  
    sons to meet their father soon,  
    spun a web as only a wife can.

# THEY FOLLOW

## Wesley Strobel

Zero:

You see them and they smile back.

You walk and they follow.

One:

You look just over your friend's shoulder as a gleaming black-toothed smile edges closer to their ear. A slippery forked oiled tongue slides down your friend's temple and cups around their ear, but only you can hear the shadow speak. *I like your friend....* Leaning in closer to your friend's temple, the demon hushes you, whispering *but they can't hear me, only you can*. Your friend, seeing your distress, tilts their head with concerned grey glassy eyes. Reflecting the fear on your twisted face back to you. A glaring smudge of the mimicked crescent talon cupping itself around your temple.

Two:

The bell rings and you follow on with your day to scurry from class to class, dodging the backpacks and the students and the shadows. You can hear them crawling and weaving through the ceiling tiles, reaching down with foot-long curved nails gingerly petting the hair of the strangers before you. Tickling the soft spot of everyone's neck, just above their spinal cords. Laughing, a deep rumbling laugh as these people in front of you, you realize, are helpless.

Three:

Walking and fading in between the bodies packing the halls, they follow suit. Wrapping themselves around couples walking with interlocked hands, slithering closer to you between the rotating wheels of wheelchairs and mail carts, drawing the distance closer under the footsteps of locker conversations.

Four:

In an attempt to avoid the living nightmares in front of you, you dive down a staircase filled with screaming angry teeth, around the corners of hunkered crumpled dark bodies with glowing eyes until you stop and look out into the sunshine. The window views upon a courtyard occupied by a blackened body of a being, a child with four heads and one arm protruding from its chest sunbathing on the pavement. A fourteen-foot man with knives for arms patrols the abandoned streetlights between cars, the sooty black of his skin absorbing the sunlight like smoke in the air. The reflection on the glass refocuses, showing you,



overstocked book bag in hand, paranoia in your eyes, a black clawed hand upon your shoulder... *you are not alone, you have me.* Your lips quiver as you want to run, but the fear holds you still, cemented to the ground. Your tongue salivates as you want to scream, flick the spit off your teeth. A storm held locked in your stone position. Forehead pounding with the heat as the fiction you feel is real.

Five:

Back of the class, nothing to fear behind you, but no pleasure in what you see ahead of you. A woman with a spider webbing dress crawling along the floor – sucking in the light and warmth from the air. A single white eye of a black hole peers around lusting over the studying pupils. Her hands of scissor blades tiptoe about and slit the air, it's hard for you to breath. The teacher thought you were zoning but you were just watching in paralyzed fear as the woman lurked gluttonously about your fellow classmates.

Six:

Each class, each event, each game is populated by people and shadows. Human skin being caressed by dead grey beings of triple red eyes that gaze hollowly from the emaciated body of a toddler. Teachers being stalked by ebony soaked smoke snakes with human arms and legs extruding from oil leaking orifices. Lunch tables filled with pecking fiendish mouths of pestering students; the wandering place of spider legged human torsos with poisonous scorpion tails for a head. Throwing and pinning its tail into the passing food on the table below it, gently spreading its vile raven mucus on unseeing students.

Seven:

A hanging, bloated body is in the adjacent bathroom stall, dripping black ink from its dulled onyx tongue onto the seat. Your eyes burn with blank, ashy fear.

Eight:

And they still don't notice.

Nobody does.

Only you do, and *you are helpless.*

Nine:

Praying and crying as you walk among the desolate tunnels of the hall, the walls close in as you rush to get home, to wake up from the nightmare. Black hands holding your wrists. *Don't leave, you need us.* Threading and running in between students, they assume you are running to not miss the bus, but you are running for your life. Fang-filled drooling smiles and barking barb-wired mutts surround your vision, a bird with a human face and a pierced tongue yells out to the silence, landing on someone's shoulder.

Ten:

No one can see them except you, you need to wake up, you need to move on: *you need to accept it*. You squeeze your eyes, shut the rumbling of the ground sending a quake through your bones. They are still there on the buses, weaving through the monster-infested roads with the eight-legged men with beetle jaws for mouths and whips for hands running towards you. A hand around your neck, choking you— but you can still breathe.

Eleven:

They follow, you walk, you run, you hide and they follow.

Twelve:

Screaming, thrashing, yelling, you pull yourself up from your suffocating blankets, pillow damp with sweat, drool, and tears. You are awake. The darkest shadow of your room glaring at you, a single red eye— watching you, following you.

Thirteen:

You may not believe me, but this is my life. And I pray you are safe. I see more than you do, living with Schizophrenia, but you won't believe me— until you see them too.

# FROSTBITE

Lucy Clark

a ghost appeared at the foot  
of my bed last night and a  
plastic smile grew on our face,  
my body opening like a book  
for her

i asked her to fill me with her  
gooey darkness and sedate my  
heart with her eternal chill

and oh boy was it sexy

she caressed my cheek and  
hairs raised like a group of  
soldiers' hands saluting an  
empty sky and i fell in love

with the translucence of her  
skin, her veins like iridescent  
spider webs, the creatures  
within crawling with spindly

legs up my chest, reaching my neck, and nestling forever  
in the hollowness of my throat

no pain, no love

just a ghost and me intertwined  
in a never ending sea of ice

# THE SOUNDS OF EDUCATION IN AMERICA

Alexis Sheets

Click-Click-Click  
My pencil taps against the end of my desk  
Matching the second hand on the clock  
Fifteen minutes until we line up for Miss Clark to take us to our busses  
I wanted to go home quickly because Grandma was picking me up from school  
today  
I can see Tommy playing his DS from beneath his desk  
He thinks Miss Clark cannot see him but he is wrong  
She takes it away, putting a red card onto Tommy's name on the Recess Board  
That means he does not get to go to recess tomorrow  
Which is sad really because Tommy is the best catcher in tag  
I can hear a big Click-Click-Click from the hall but this time sounds more like  
basketballs than the clock  
I do not like the noise  
It vibrates through my feet on the floor  
Miss Clark seems to think the same thing because her face gets all scrunched up  
and scared  
She tells us that before we go we are going to play a game of hide and seek  
I giggle as we all get up  
I am the best at hide and seek  
Grandma can never find me when we play together  
Miss Clark says she is going to hide too and that we have to be very quiet  
One by one she picks everyone up  
She puts some kids in the high cabinets we cannot reach  
She puts others into the closets where she keeps the crayons  
She picks me up and puts me next to Jenny in one of the closets  
After she closes the door I peek through the crack  
Miss Clark runs out of places and pushes Tommy under her desk behind her  
when I hear the basketballs hitting the door hard  
Bang-Bang-Bang  
The door falls open and a man starts to yell really loud  
I look over at Tommy as he falls backwards onto the floor  
I can see a big red puddle beneath him as Miss Clark starts to run towards the  
angry man  
Jenny starts to cry and I tell her to be quiet but she does not listen  
I hear another bang and Miss Clark is on the ground too  
Jenny starts to cry louder  
The man walks over to the closet doors  
I can see him through the crack coming to us but I do not know what to do  
I think about how Grandma will be sad that I will be late today  
I put my hand on Jenny's shoulder but she does not stop crying

The man grabs the door handle  
I close my eyes and with a BANG BANG BANG Jenny stops crying  
With a BANG BANG BANG  
I am gone

# THE GOOD PEOPLE

## Wesley Stobel

Whispering Willows and lingering wings  
Distant gossamer and silken dust shrouds your dreams  
Suffocating silk and clothed clover  
Venomous ivy, our childish blood the donor  
Crying and screaming and wrangling woods  
Running through entrapping roots from the people of good  
They wretch and wail, spelling ill-fates to the wind  
The daydream's roses falling to nightshade sins  
Fey folk be tiny with pristine snake eyes  
Wrinkled wings and clawing limbs pierce the sky  
Enchant the innocent children with burned thyme-lavender chants  
To force them into the ring of a wild tribal mystic dance  
Running round roots and rivers to drown  
With snow-white children's toes perspiring bloody footprints to the ground  
Songs of gentle bells and bird calls swivel and dip  
Shadow casting menacing trees and poisonous tulips  
Cheers cross as the child's corpse flows down the stream  
Dropping body after body down the golden twigged hole of dreams  
The good people cross and quiver with quick envy shouts  
Crawling and quaking with empty belly gluts  
Each wee fairy and large oaken beast  
Coax down the bodies an embassies' feast

A feast! A feast! Do the crowing walls speak  
Of child's blood and dirty secrets, hiding the meek  
Dawned and throned a queen of hathaway hums forward  
Her elegance and rose cheeks in the sight of a bloody corpse be altered  
Dressed in rose thorns, spider silk and scorpion tails  
The queen of nightmares dawns herself in the entrails  
Drawing up a long single fingering lance  
Slashes the jugular with a swift and spluttering Slash!  
Lost in the hours and bones of the brittle night  
Fey and good people call out to bristling fights  
Picking over fingernails and sweet-tasting hairs  
Left with the thickened tongue and torn derrière  
Coaxing and coxing, bathing in sweet tooth bile  
They crawl through empty clothes and shoes showing a toothy smile  
Skin slack awriggle a-winged parasites  
Sleeping lungs and elven jugs left and right  
Hairs and bones, slim picking of the preposterous puny  
Skull and torn silk left with wrinkled grape eyes a pruney  
A dare, a dash of raven clawed eyes and cat ears  
Mutilated child corpse and flower braided skin promise the fey here  
Without loss of reason or lucid portrayal  
The truths of the world are lost in fairytales  
Fey and good folks the beginning and last animals  
Living feasts— humanly cannibals

Rachel Nitchman has been a part of Quiz & Quill for five semesters and has been nothing but loyal to the magazine. Since this semester is her last at Otterbein, we wanted to feature her amazing photography because her skills will be greatly missed. We felt that this chapbook would not fully capture the essence of fear without her photography alongside the equally talented writing from our authors. We wanted to give a special thanks to Rachel for always offering support and creative ideas to the team.





















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