



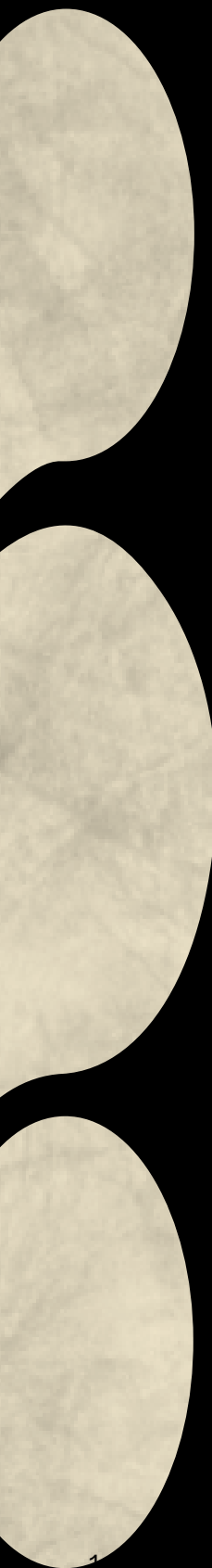
Granite & Ink

New Beginnings



Issue #2
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EDITOR BIOS



Veronica Wiley, Editor in Chief

After almost two decades of training dogs and competing in dog sports through her husband's military service, Veronica Wiley returned to school to complete her BA at SNHU in Creative Writing. After graduating she continued into the MFA in Creative Writing where she joined Granite & Ink as the Editor in Chief. She has published one dog training manual and multiple short stories while working as a freelance editor and homeschooling her two boys.



A.P. DeVaney, Assistant/Associate Editor

A.P. DeVaney is a writer, composer, architect, photographer, and fencer whose creative pursuits span multiple disciplines. His debut novel, *Penny Morrow and the Bound Forest*, was recently requested by a literary agent, marking an exciting step forward in his literary journey. His latest work, *The Sleepless City*, is a chilling short horror story currently in development as a screenplay. Known for his atmospheric and immersive style, DeVaney crafts vivid, otherworldly landscapes that captivate readers and linger in the imagination.

Gwynna Maldonado, Fiction and Poetry Section Editor



Gwynna Maldonado is a toddler mom, milSpouse, and licensed massage therapist. After withdrawing from her first attempt at undergrad due to chronic migraines, she's finally set the time and money aside to chase her dreams of hybrid publishing. Having seen her own growth over completing 5 novels and a kids book, she's passionate about helping other writers grow and find their voice. She's currently enrolled in a BA for Creative Writing with hopes to pursue an MFA.

Ashley Brown, Academic and Visual Arts Section Editor



Ashley Brown is the Academic Section and Visual Arts Section editor. She is a current SNHU student pursuing a career in Creative Writing and English. While she loves reading fiction in her free time, she also enjoys reading about new research and learning new things. As an editor for the Granite & Ink journal, she hopes to encourage aspiring writers and artists to showcase their work and help their writing skills flourish.



Lindsey Johnston, Layout & Design Editor

Lindsey Johnston is a designer, editor, and writer from Rochester, New York. She holds a BA in Graphic Design and is pursuing her MA in English and Creative Writing at Southern New Hampshire University, as she works as Granite & Ink's Layout and Design Editor. With experience in proofreading and book cover design, she is passionate about expanding her skills to pursue publication design full-time. She also works as an Assistant Manager at a large-scale concert venue, where she has found a passion for bringing live music to excited crowds. In her free time, she loves making video edits and volunteering at her local animal shelter.

Granite and Ink will be focusing on real world experiences for writers interested in their careers. Join us for upcoming writer's workshops, pitch wars and more . . .

Veronica Wiley

Editor-In-Chief

Our mission is to support, educate, and build community among SNHU's students as they pursue careers in authorship. Granite and Ink is a club, by students and for students that focuses on fostering a collaborative and engaging space for writers of all genres of fiction and non-fiction with a focus on real world experience, while providing encouragement, feedback and opportunities for publication in our quarterly journal, as well as providing real world opportunities for publication.

uhaul official

Parker Lee

i've been here before,
cramming as much of my life as i can
into a space too small to contain it—
in 2013 when i moved to new jersey
just two months after meeting her,
in 2017, after our wedding day
when we moved into our first condo,
a year later when we moved into our first house.
and present day, as these two lesbians
load a truck themselves to make their next move,
finally “uhaul official.” it's not without anxiety—
the biggest thing i've ever driven is a jeep,
but she tells me she believes in me.
(so does my therapist and my psychiatrist,
but that's besides the point.) she believes in me
and it is enough to make me believe in myself.
and so i drive, and the world doesn't end.
i squeeze into the parking space,
and not a single box shifts out of place.
we walk into an empty apartment
with its bare white walls and unlimited
possibilities, ready to fill it with new memories.

Parker Lee [she/her] is a trans woman poet and storyteller, as well as the author of the starlight she becomes. A midwestern transplant, Parker resides in a coastal New Jersey town alongside wife and poetess amanda lovelace (and their three cats), where she can almost always be found not writing when she should be, drinking way too much coffee, and waxing autumnal every single day of the year.

AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT

PARKER LEE



Fiction and Poetry Editor Gwynna Maldonado interviews Parker Lee in our first Author Spotlight

Why did you decide to write in all lowercase?

Writing in lowercase has always been more of an aesthetic choice for me. There's something that's less formal, and more modern about it that speaks to me, and I like my poetry to read like a conversation you'd have with a friend. It also makes capital letters stand out more when I *do* use them in a poem, which I think helps with emphasis!

What is your favorite poem?

I would probably have to say "The Moon is Trans" by Joshua Jennifer Espinoza.

What advice would you give to new poets?

I think one of my favorite pieces of advice that I've read when it comes to poetry, is that it's better to get specific with your work than to remain vague. While it's easy to think the more vague you are, the easier people will relate, it's really the opposite. People tend to connect more with specifics. It's something I didn't always do in my early writing, but something I try to make a point to do now.

Is there a line from "uhaul official" that has stayed with you?

"cramming as much of my life as i can
into a space too small to contain it—"

Uhails are a fun (and funny) stereotype of the lesbian/ LGBTQ+ community. Was your poem based off of personal experience? Do you have any personal anecdotes you'd like to share?

Yes, this entire poem was written from personal experience! I met my wife many many moons ago on this ancient relic of the internet known as AOL, and we were friends for a very long time before we got together, but when we finally did, it was very much a Uhaul moment. I flew from Michigan to New Jersey to meet her for the first time in October of 2012, and just a few months later, I was packing all of my belongings in my car and making a 10 hour drive to New Jersey to spend the rest of my life with her. Despite how hard it was to leave behind everything I'd ever known, it was one of the easiest decisions I ever made!

Why did you choose to attend SNHU, and what degree are you pursuing? How can Granite & Ink as a journal help you reach your goals?

I found myself in a bit of a rut not too long ago. I felt stuck, both personally and professionally. I knew I was entering a period of transition, and in that I felt the pull to go back to school. I weighed my options—did I want to go in person or online, did I want to pursue my bachelor's, or did I want to look for a certificate program—and ultimately, I decided on SNHU because they offered an online creative writing program that was entirely asynchronous. As I entered this transitional period of life, knowing I had that flexibility was super important in making my decision.



Passing Time

Autumn Blackwood

the clock ticks

I sneeze.

~~write a line~~, cross it out,

do the dishes.

fiddle with some yarn.

think about lunch.

tell my best friend I love her

as she waits for the ashes of

her dead cat to arrive home

with the final paw prints

on thick cardstock.

she sobs it'll be the very last time those toe beans will be seen.

the clock ticks.

I'm bored.



Autumn is a poet based in Connecticut whose work explores the intersection of spirituality, feminine power, and self-discovery. A practicing witch and intuitive healer, she draws on her spiritual practice to craft work that honors the sacred in everyday life and invites readers into moments of recognition and transformation. Her writing has appeared in various publications, and she is the founder of The Untamed Priestess, LLC, a platform for women's empowerment through workshops, readings, and ritual. When she's not writing, you'll find her building community through The CT Witch Crawl, a statewide event connecting practitioners with metaphysical spaces across Connecticut.

<http://www.untamedpriestess.com>



The Beginning I Didn't Choose

Stacey M. Macklin

New beginnings
are supposed to feel like sunlight.

Mine arrived quietly,
in the shape of betrayal.

He wasn't just unfaithful.
He was building a future
while I was still believing in ours.

And one day
belief turned into fact.

He got married

It felt like punctuation,
a period placed
at the end of a sentence
I was still trying to finish.

At first, I thought it meant
I wasn't enough.
I replayed conversations,
searched for proof
that I had mattered.

But betrayal is not a mirror.
It does not measure your worth.
It reveals someone else's character.

The real beginning
was not the wedding.

It was the moment
I stopped waiting for closure
and chose it for myself.

I stopped asking
why I wasn't chosen
and started asking
why I needed to be.

His marriage felt like loss.
But it was release.

Release from confusion.
Release from shrinking.
Release from loving someone
who could not love honestly.

He began a marriage.
I began a transformation.

What felt like the end
was the beginning
I didn't choose,
but needed.

Authors Bio:

Stacey M. Macklin is the voice behind "The Beginning I Didn't Choose" She creates space for readers to choose peace over proximity and growth over guilt. Beyond writing, Stacey is the founder of Stacey Marie Publishing and Second Chance Pet Care, as well as an advocate for personal transformation and emotional clarity. She connects with her audience through honest storytelling and daily inspiration. Follow her journey and stay connected on Instagram @staceymariewrites and Facebook Stacey Macklin, Author, where she shares motivation, updates, and behind-the-scenes moments.

DESPERATE FOR HEALING

NIKOLAS MCGUIRE



I did not have a fucked up childhood. I had clothes. I had shelter. I had running water. I ate three meals a day. I was good. My parents were still married to each other. I got A's and B's in school (the C's will remain a secret). I exercised when I was instructed. I read what I was told. I sat in the front row at church. I sang all the songs. I had a chance to thrive.

Sitting in the cold chair outside the cafe, a wave of panic washes over you. Your leg bounces, up and down, up and down. The simple movement keeps you planted in your chair - prevents you from running. The iron pushes into the backs of your knees. You lean back. The table left a pattern on your elbows, the kind of diamond pattern that makes your skin red and bumpy; it feels funny when you trace it. Your arm goes numb as the blood runs to the impacted surface. Desperate for healing. Ironical really, your arm's need for healing reflects that of your unconscious self. You crave closure, an apology, forgiveness, common ground, some semblance of reconciliation so you can move forward, so you can become an adult, so you can finally rid yourself of the bags you have been carrying for years. A cool breeze invades your space, running up your sleeve and filling your shirt, grounds you in reality.

I did not have a fucked up childhood. My family went on vacation every year, at least once, sometimes twice. One year we went to the Outer Banks, a beach in North Carolina. I still have the sweatshirt my grandmother bought me.

We stayed in a large house with wrap around decks on every level. A hammock swung in the breeze, calling me to its promise of calm. The roar of the ocean could be faintly heard over cars passing on the street and neighbors barbecuing in their yard and music playing from inside and birds chirping as they flew overhead and wind hitting the chime creating a soft harmony for the bird's songs. Over all this, the sound of the ocean pounding on the beach remained steady. Wave after wave hit the sand, changing the face of the land so that in years to come the map will have to be rewritten. The sand giving way to the will of the water.

Your wife sits to your right. She knows you. She knows how to calm you. She knows exactly what to say. She is talking now, something about how everything will be okay, how the coming conversation can not be as bad as you imagine. But she is drowned out by a semi driving past. The truck is too big for the two lane road you are sitting by; you think it is going to hit the passing cars. But it continues down the street leaving behind the smell of exhaust and the echo of its engine. The interruption in the conversation diverts your attention to the glass sitting in front of you. The ice floats near the surface of your coffee, the straw leans casually on the side of the glass. The sun warms your drink. You reach forward and touch it. The water clings to your fingers. You trace a pattern on the table, leaving a dark trail in your wake. It takes your wife several tries to recapture your attention. You look at her as you lift your drink to your lips; the

cold coffee hits your tongue and eases your craving. A fly buzzes around your cinnamon roll, the sweet icing too large a temptation. You wave it away.

I did not have a fucked up childhood. Once we lived in Denver, Colorado. The Rocky Mountains loomed in the distance. My family spent many weekends in those mountains. Hiking. Camping. Eating. Talking. Visiting. Enjoying the company of each other and the landscape. At night, we could see thousands of stars, not just the bright ones like the Big Dipper, Orion's Belt, and Sirius that are seen in the city, but all the stars. The sky would be lit in the dark of night. We sat in a circle around the crackle of a fire laughing, playing games, and watching the smoke rise to the stars. Sparks would fly spontaneously outward, flying from the life it knew, attempting to start one of its own.

The first bite is always the best, its only rival is the last. The cinnamon roll is still warm from the oven and the cinnamon swirl is still melted. The icing stretches between your mouth and hand like cheese pulling from a quesadilla. When the string finally breaks, it falls to your chin, the warmth providing relief from the cold wind. A few seconds later your tongue follows the precious icing, rescuing it from exposure. Just after the successful rescue, you spot his car. It is coming over the hill, slowly drawing closer to the safety of your perch. The concrete beneath your feet falls away. So does the wind, the sounds of the engines, the

conversations happening around you, your wife. Everything is gone. It is just you and him. He comes closer and closer until he is sitting at your table. Looking at your face. Breathing your air. The invasion is overbearing. You want to run. To flee to safety. But the goal is healing, remember? You and him, here, today. You need healing, you need answers, you need a solution, a resolution. If not today then soon. The conversation begins with money.

I did not have a fucked up childhood. The first Christmas we had our puppy we did not set up a real tree. He was a black and white Cocker Spaniel. His name was Baxter. We used to chase him around the yard. Up and down the hill. Around the tree. My brother and I would get upset that we could never catch him. My sister was simply happy to be included. That first Christmas, Santa did not bring very many presents. He wrote us a letter explaining how the North Pole was short staffed and they would do better next year.

Money. You had injured him, stolen money from him. You must pay him back. He demands it as part of the healing process. Twenty five dollars a month, mailed to his residence. The money, the money is important. The money is what matters. It will fix everything. It will make him love you again. Pay him back. You know you have to. But you do not have the money. You have a wife, two kids, and a dog, how can you possibly settle this debt? You make minimum wage, you work 50 hours a week, but it is not enough. You do not have money to give him. You cannot both provide for your family and pay restitution for your wrongs. Do you take out a loan? Do you jeopardize your future? Do you ask for money from family? Do you ask for forgiveness again? Is he willing to forgive you?

I did not have a fucked up childhood. My brother and I shared a Wii. Our favorite game, Super Mario Bros. We used to spend hours a day playing the game, trying to beat all the levels, sitting next to a pile of food, yelling instructions at each other. After years of owning the game, we finally did it. Beat all the levels. Rescued Princess Peach from Bowser. We were heroes.

You need to go to church again. You need to stop what you are doing. You are endangering the lives of two innocent children. You are wicked. You are unnatural. You are sin. You are everything wrong with modern society, the product of a world telling you you can be whatever you want, feel whatever you want, do whatever you want.

I did not have a fucked up childhood.

You should not be gay. It is unnatural. It is ungodly. It is wicked.

I did not have a fucked up childhood.

You cannot be gay.

I am gay.

You did not have a fucked up childhood.

I am gay. I am unnatural. I am ungodly. I am wicked.

You did not have a fucked up childhood.

I need to go to church again. I need to stop what I am doing. I am endangering the lives of two innocent children. I am wicked. I am unnatural. I am sin. I am everything wrong with modern society, the product of a world telling me I can be whatever I want, feel whatever I want, do whatever I want.

You did not have a fucked up childhood. You used to sit around the table in the kitchen and play card games with your family. Rats

. Hearts. Phase 10. It was how your family bonded. The record player going in the background, the smell of coffee steaming from cups around the table, the laughter filling the room all gave you a sense of belonging, a sense of home. Tension was high. Bragging rights rode on the outcome of the game. The community was strong. The love was there.

I sit there, at that table, across from the man who was supposed to love me more than anyone else would. Across from the man who taught me everything I needed to know to survive in this world. Across from the man who I called Dad. I sit there in shocked silence, unable to comprehend what is happening. He tells me he did nothing wrong. He says he is unapologetic for everything that happened. He acts with a righteous conviction known only to those so blindly empowered by their faith that they justify hurting those they claim to love.

You did not have a fucked up childhood. Your family had tradition. Every year on St Patrick's Day, your mom made corned beef and cabbage, a very Irish dish; your friends did not understand. But you looked forward to it. And every year your mom made it, your family got together to enjoy the meal; all seated around the circular wooden table that was passed down on your mother's side. The dogs on the floor begged for their portion. As you ate, you recounted tales of the past.

Your brother's numerous girlfriends. Your sister's middle school drama. Your mom's new job.

He does it because he loves me. That is what he says. Love. An interesting explanation for behavior. To act out of love is to act in the other's best interest. I look through the table to the ground beneath my feet. A lone

ant crawls by; it must be lost. He
and I are wearing the same boots. I
look up at my mother, sitting
between myself and him, acting as a
barrier between two warring people,
a great wall. Her body is calm except
for her face which is pained. She
misses me. She wants me to come
home. Or at least she wants to talk to
me again. She has so many
questions. So many thoughts. But
she does not speak. She sits in
deafening silence allowing my father
to say whatever he chooses. She
does not defend me. She does not tell
him he is wrong. She does not want
to know what went wrong to make
me, her daughter, flee in the night
without looking back. She does not
care to ask. Ignorance is bliss.

Nikolas McGuire is a graduate student pursuing a master's degree in criminal justice. His piece, *Desperate for Healing*, reflects on confronting unaccepting parents and trying to reconcile a largely loving childhood with the painful conflict that arose around his identity as queer. When he is not working or studying, Nikolas enjoys reading, spending time with his wife and kids, and finding inspiration in ordinary moments that often become the starting point for new pieces of writing.

Drabble Contest Winner

Phylia Saunders



Write me a drabble about a wild penguin that is being rehabilitated in a zoo and soon realizes none of the other penguins know about global warming.

The penguin shivered as the ice receded beneath him; each fissure was a disappearance, each crack a warning. Companions vanished into the void of warming seas, their absence unremarked by the rest. One morning, he was seized, transported to a sterile enclosure: ice tasted chemicals; fish arrived in metal containers, and bears – upright, unnatural – paced with indifferent scrutiny. The colony ignored the anomaly, their chatter hollow and uncomprehending. He circled frantically, flippers scraping, lungs heaving, eyes darting. Nothing responded. The world he understood had dissolved; reality was fabricated, a grotesque simulacrum. Knowledge offered no solace. Panic thrummed in every nerve, precise and merciless. The others, cheering and clapping as the metal bins come out, were unaware and unfazed; the fish were already dead, and so was his hope of anyone noticing the box they now called home.

Fiction Editor's Note:

When picking out this prompt, I was really looking for something witty—just a few lines of sarcastic dialogue from penguins working overtime to live in denial. I was hoping for some reflections to the conversations we have across the Thanksgiving table and the ways we function in an artificial reality.

Phylia's drabble is the best of the opposite world with elements of unnerving psychological horror. This is an excellent example of how prompts can be taken and made your own, and how even the clearest of visions for a prompter can be upended by a refreshing new voice.



Robert D. Barber. I am a Graphic Design and Media Arts student here at SNHU. I am finally completing this bachelor's after a long hiatus from school. This art submission was an assignment project for an Illustration class. The task was to create a Travel Poster based on Lovecraft's story The Shunned House. I wanted the viewer to feel trapped and alone inside, with a better world just outside. This is one of two illustrations, originally created in colored pencil.

UNBECOMING TO BEGIN AGAIN

FICTION INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS

STEPHANIE E. HEIMER



Chapter I: The Breaking

I learned how to sleep in pieces.

Not all at once, not fully.
Never deeply.

Sleep came to me in fragments. Ten minutes here, twenty minutes there; like a cautious animal that never fully trusted the dark. Even when my eyes closed, part of me stayed awake, listening for danger. For footsteps. For raised voices. For the subtle shift in air that meant something was about to go wrong.

I slept that way in cars, in shelters, on borrowed couches, and sometimes sitting upright in plastic chairs under fluorescent lights that hummed like anxious insects. I slept that way because my body had learned that rest was risky.

My child slept differently.

My child curled into herself like a question mark, small hands tucked under a soft cheek, breathing softly as if afraid to take up too much space in the world. Even in places that were loud and crowded, they somehow found stillness. I used to watch her and wonder how someone so young had learned to be so quiet.

I hated myself for that.

We hadn't always lived like this.

Once, we had walls that were ours. Windows we could open. A kitchen where I made pancakes shaped like hearts. A couch where we piled blankets and watched movies on Sundays. We had plants that leaned toward the light and a calendar on the fridge that marked birthdays and appointments and ordinary, beautiful things.

And then slowly, quietly, everything began to shrink.

The house grew smaller.
The money thinner.
The love sharper and more conditional.

Abuse doesn't always announce itself with fists.
Sometimes it arrives as criticism disguised as concern.
As control masked as protection.
As silence used like a weapon.

I told myself it wasn't that bad.
Everyone fights.
Everyone struggles.
Everyone has hard seasons.

I told myself I was strong enough to endure it.

I told myself my child needed two parents, even if one of them made the air feel heavy.

By the time I admitted the truth, we had already lost so much.

We lost safety first.
Then trust.
Then stability.
Then, eventually, our home.

The day we packed our things into black trash bags, my hands shook so badly I dropped half of what I tried to hold. My child watched me with eyes too old for their face.

"Mom," she said quietly, "it's okay. We'll be okay."

I nodded and smiled like I believed it.
Inside, I was drowning.

We moved through places like ghosts.
Shelters where people avoided eye contact.
Friends' couches where we whispered.
Motels that smelled like bleach and despair.
Cars that became bedrooms.

I learned how to shower in public bathrooms and pretend it was normal. I learned how to stretch one meal into two.

I learned how to smile at my child while my heart cracked in private.

Every night, after she fell asleep, I stared at the ceiling and whispered apologies to a God I wasn't sure was listening.

I'm sorry.
I tried.
I failed.
Please don't let this break her.

Sometimes, small strange things happened.
I'd wake up at exactly 3:33 a.m. every night.
I'd see repeating numbers everywhere.
Strangers would offer kindness out of nowhere.

Once, a woman at a gas station paid for our coffee and said, "You're stronger than you know." I cried in the bathroom for twenty minutes.

But I didn't understand any of it then.
I was too busy surviving.

Chapter II: The Dark Night of the Soul

Rock bottom isn't always loud.
Sometimes it's quiet.

Sometimes it's sitting in a parked car at two in the morning while your child sleeps in the backseat, wrapped in a jacket that's too thin. Sometimes it's realizing you don't know where you're going tomorrow. Sometimes it's realizing you are exhausted down to your bones.

One night, I broke.

I rested my forehead against the steering wheel and sobbed so hard my ribs hurt. Years of swallowed fear, shame, and self-blame poured out of me like poison.

I failed her.
I chose wrong.
I stayed too long.
I wasn't enough.
For the first time, I didn't try to be strong.
I just let myself fall apart.

"I can't do this anymore," I whispered. "I can't."
My child stirred.
"Mom?" she murmured.
I wiped my face quickly. "I'm okay, baby. Go back to sleep."
She sat up anyway.
In the dim dashboard light, she looked at me with startling clarity.
"You're tired of being sad," she said.

It wasn't a question.
I nodded.

She took my hand.
"Maybe this is the part where it changes."
Something in me cracked open.

That night, after she slept again, I stepped outside the car and looked at the sky. It was clear and endless, scattered with stars.

I hadn't looked up in years.
I whispered a prayer: not polished, not religious.
Just honest.

"If you're out there... if something is listening... please show me how to live again." The answer didn't come as thunder.

It came slowly.
Over the next weeks, small things shifted.

I found a book in a donation bin about healing trauma.

A woman at a shelter taught me how to meditate.

I started writing in a notebook at night; every fear, every dream, every memory. I began to notice my intuition speaking.

Not loudly.

Softly.

Like a breeze through cracked windows.

Leave this place.

Call that number.

Trust this feeling.

I listened.

One afternoon, sitting in a park while my child played, I felt the sun warm my face and suddenly began to cry; not from pain, but from relief.

I was still alive.

We were still here.

Maybe we weren't cursed.

Maybe we were being forged.

I started reading about energy, trauma stored in the body, spiritual awakening. It felt like I was remembering something I'd always known.

My body began to release.

Sometimes I'd shake.

Sometimes I'd dream intensely.

Sometimes I'd feel waves of emotion without warning.

I stopped numbing myself.

I faced my shadows.

I forgave myself.

Slowly, the voice inside my head changed.

From: You are weak.

To: You survived.

From: You failed.

To: You learned.

I wasn't broken.

I was becoming.

Chapter III: The Rebuilding

Healing is not a straight line.

It is messy.

It is humbling.

It is brave.

We moved into a tiny apartment with peeling paint and thin walls. To anyone else, it might have looked sad.

To us, it was heaven.

It had a door that locked.

It had a kitchen.

It had space to breathe.

We bought two plates from a thrift store and celebrated like we'd won the lottery. I built routines.

Morning stretches.

Gratitude lists.

Meditation.

Therapy worksheets.

Journaling.

I learned to say no.

To unsafe people.

To chaos.

To self-betrayal.

I stopped explaining my boundaries.

I honored them.

My child changed too.

She laughed more.

She slept deeper.

She started talking about her dreams again.

Sometimes she'd sit beside me while I journaled and draw pictures of "our future house." It always had big windows.

I learned to trust timing.

When things didn't work out, I stopped panicking.

I asked, "What is this teaching me?"

I practiced energy protection.

I cleansed my space.

I spoke affirmations out loud, even when it felt silly.

"I am worthy."

"We are safe."

"We are supported."

Better opportunities.
Kinder people.
Unexpected help.

One day, my child said, "You're different now."

"How?"
"You don't look scared all the time."
I smiled.

Neither did she.

Chapter IV: Actualization & New Beginning

Years later, I stood at our window and watched the sunrise. Golden light spilled across our living room; the real one now, with plants and books and art on the walls.

My child, taller than me now, was making tea in the kitchen.

We were home.
Not just in space.
In spirit.

I had become someone I once needed.
A woman who protects her peace.
Who honors her intuition.
Who helps others rise.
Who knows her worth.

I volunteered at shelters.
I mentored women leaving abusive homes.
I shared my story without shame.

My child grew into someone gentle and strong, deeply empathetic, unafraid to feel. Sometimes we talked about the old days.

Not with bitterness.
With gratitude.
Because they shaped us.

One morning, we planted a small tree in our yard.
As we pressed soil around its roots, my child said, "This is like us." I nodded.
"We grew in hard places," I said. "But we grew."

That night, I wrote a letter to my past self.
You did not fail.
You were learning to fly.

You had to unbecome everything you were to become everything you are. We were never broken. We survived the storm.

We rose from the ashes and created our new beginning.



MONSTER

GEORGE DEMOSTHENES

George is a Library Assistant, cute animal fanatic, amateur artist, writer, and retro game enjoyer. He is currently enrolled in SNHU's Creative Writing MFA program, and loving it! Find more about George on Bluesky [@spekfik.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/spekfik.bsky.social).

THE BENEFCTOR

GEORGE DEMOSTHENES



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Graham's great aunt Abilene had lived alone for most of her adult life, though Graham did stop by twice a week. On Tuesdays, he'd bring her a new Reader's Digest and a few celebrity gossip mags. On Saturdays, he'd lead her gently out of the house, one tottering step at a time. They'd board her big old Buick to run errands, or just go for a drive.

Sometimes the topic of her late husband, William, would come up. William and Abilene were married the night before he'd shipped out to Korea with the Navy. After the war, William returned to Abilene, bought a house for them to live in, then promptly succumbed to lung cancer the following year.

Abilene, *Aunt Abbie* to Graham, had never remarried. In her twilight years, as Alzheimer's and dementia took over, Abbie would tell Graham about the birds that brought her messages from President Obama, the shy baby angel that protected her flower garden, and the little man that lived in the bathroom sink. When Abbie finally passed away, her abode at 221 Plum Street, weather-worn and slouching, was passed down to a deeply grateful Graham.

Graham was a sweet man, but penniless. When life got him down, he'd sit and think about how grand life would be when he finally had the cash to treat his friends and family to nice things. His days of imposing on them, at least, were over. He now had a place of his own.

He was comfortable in the dilapidated house, and changed very little about the décor. He liked the old pictures and the creaky furniture, and felt like Aunt Abbie was still alive, in a way, so long as her cheap porcelain figurines were still dusted and on display.

There was always the problem of money, though. Graham's debts followed him like the specter of death. Mail from his creditors came in just about every day, bullying him with legal action should he fail to make good. To make matters worse, unpaid back taxes on the property resulted in a lien on the house. This meant he couldn't sell it to settle up. He found the thought of doing so both appealing and appalling.

Every so often, Graham's cousin Lacy would stop by for a visit. Her visits were frequent, partially because she lived only a few minutes away by foot, and partially because she was sure that 221 Plum was dripping with lucre that was rightfully hers. She'd stalk the halls criticizing the poor state of the house's upkeep. She'd also insinuate that old Abbie must have squirreled away cash or valuables here or there—perhaps inside the walls. Graham tolerated the way she rifled through cushions and groped around the tops of door frames, but he always responded to the idea of tearing up the walls with a firmly whispered, “No!”

Lacy displayed her suspicion openly at times, saying things like, “You sure were crafty to take care of the old bat. Got the place all to yourself, and all her money too. That ain’t really fair. Me and Robert didn’t get a penny when she kicked the bucket.”

“I didn’t get any money,” Graham would protest gently, “Just the house. Maybe if you had come to visit her, and showed her a little love from time to time she would have—.”

Lacy would always cut him off with a retort akin to, “Oh, I’m a little phobic of the elderly. I never know what to say to them. They smell like death, and their wrinkled hands freak me out. No way!” Graham was happy once she’d shut up and left. Afterward, he always felt the need to apologize to Abbie’s departed soul. After one such visit from Lacy, Graham turned his sullen gaze upon his own gaunt reflection in the bathroom mirror. In a few more months, with his meager pension and non-existent job prospects, he’d be homeless. He sighed and wondered if he

might cry, but his nerves had grown so attenuated to constant stress that tears just wouldn’t come.

“Why so glum, pal. What’s eatin’ ya’?” gurgled a little voice. Graham looked around the room and into the hallway outside.

“Down here, buddy. In da sink.”

The voice was small but deep. Its words rasped with a rusty timbre.

Graham leaned over the sink to peer down the drain.

“That’s right,” continued the mucous-laden, sandpapery voice, “I’m Gus. Gossamer Gus. Your roomie, an’ pleased as punch to meechea’.”

A strained, yelping sort of giggle forced its way out of Graham’s lungs. Maybe he’d cry after all.

“Well then,” blurted Graham, “I’ll be living on the street and crazy too. How do you like that?” A greasy disquiet roiled in his gut.

“What’s the rub, bud? Livin’ on da street? Ah, dat means ya need some moolah! Don’t lose yer’ marbles, kid, I’m always Johnny-on-the-spot with a little dough when times is tight. I’m a good guy, an’ I always pays my dues. Just reach on in here and I’ll cough ya up some chedda.”

Graham, teetering on the edge of what he was sure would be his first-ever psychotic break, reached his thumb and forefinger down into the drain and felt around. Along with a sickly heaving sound, something flat and fibrous was thrust up into Graham’s pinching fingers. With a little groping around, Graham managed to pluck out two-thousand dollars in slime-coated big bills.

“How dya’ like that?” gurgled the disembodied voice from inside the drain. “Hold on, I got something else for ya’, Mac. Come on back.”

Graham enthusiastically reached back down the drain.

Something bit his fingers—hard. Graham screamed. The pain was intense. He could feel his fingers being mangled by a moist, meaty throat lined with an array of devilish fangs.

“Gyah! Let go! Let go!”

Gus obliged. Withdrawing his hand, Graham saw deep, irregular tooth marks all along his thumb and forefinger, gushing little spurts of blood. His fingers’ nerve endings stung with a raw pain that flared whenever the freshly-lacerated flaps of skin dragged against the wounds beneath them. He threw open the medicine chest behind the bathroom mirror and found Peroxide, which he poured over his fingers, as well as some old cotton bandages to bundle them up.

“Hey! Hey! Sorry, kid! I went a little overboard there! I just got excited, you know? It’s been a while! I’m real sorry, know what I mean?”

Graham snatched the money from beside the sink and slammed the bathroom door behind him as he fled. For a while, he paced the hallway. After a time, he calmed down. The wounds weren’t all that bad once the bleeding stopped, and he now had enough money to pay off the lien on the house with some left over for food. Gathering himself, he slowly opened the bathroom door to confront the little man inside the sink.

“Gus?” called Graham, wondering if maybe he’d inherited Aunt Abbie’s madness as well. After a spell, the tiny voice spoke again.

“Yeah, boss? Sorry again, hey, that was real poor behavior uh me. I likes ta think of myself as a jennulmin, and I don’t likes ta think there’s bad rumors spreadin’ around about me. I wanna make good, so here’s a little bonus, from me to you.”

The floor rumbled and the pipes in the basement groaned. Rapid ping-pong and thumping rang throughout the household plumbing until finally a brown-green pod of phlegm laced with ruddy chunks welled-up in the sink. It reeked to high heavens, causing Graham to wretch and cover his nose and mouth. After a moment, the unholy ichor sank back down the drain leaving a fetid lining along the sink’s interior. A small object was glued to the bottom of the sink by thick rubbery strands of mucous.

“Take it,” rumbled Gus.

Graham, clutching his wounded hand, hesitated.

“TAKE IT!”

Graham, lining his hand with a nearby washrag, swiped the tainted object from the sink’s basin. He wiped it off, revealing a golden wedding band set with a robust diamond. “That Bill guy what used ta live here lost dat ages ago. I been, ah, holdin’ on ta it fer a special oh-kay-shun.”

Graham staggered back, then slumped to the floor in the corner. He couldn't allow this gravy train to be derailed, but he was also desperate to flee—to burn the place to the ground, or more immediately, to vomit.

“Ya know,” continued Gus, “I gets hungry, just like any fella do. I jus’ got particular tastes is all. I likes fingers, fer instance.”

Another voice, similar to Gus’ but more nasal and higher-pitched, emanated from the bottom of the shower stall. “Yeh! Toes is pretty great too!”

Graham spun toward the shower.

“What what *that!*?” he shouted.

The two weird voices cackled together in sucking, gurgling tones that sounded like a pair of hellaciously clogged toilets being simultaneously plunged.

“Ah, no need fer innerductions, Mac. That’s jus’ another part uh me. No biggie.” The sink and the shower drains chuckled together demoniacally while Graham wiped a cold sweat from his brow, gazing at the ring Gus had given him.

One interminable trip to the pawn shop and one anxious bank deposit later, and Graham was home again, rocking neurotically in Abbie’s old chair. As the nights turned into seasons, Graham had grown a scraggly beard. His pale face bore heavy plum-colored bags under each eye. That, with the way he muttered constantly to himself, and his growing collection of little injuries seemed to convince his neighbors to pretend he didn’t exist.

One day, when Graham opened the door to the dishwasher, Gus produced a shrill scream from every household orifice that he— it?— inhabited. Graham had only glimpsed the machine’s interior for a moment, but would never forget what he saw inside. There was a lot of Gus in there. A lot of gooey, beating, hairy, reticulated parts, all crammed in together, swimming in a thin, amber pus.

A meaty tentacle tipped with jagged, bony hooks lashed out from the chaos inside the dishwasher and yanked the hatch shut again with astounding force. A fast-hardening tide of brackish saliva gushed out, sealing the machine for good.

“YOU DON’T DO DAT AGAIN, PAL! YOU DON’T NEVER DO NUTTIN LIKE DAT AGAIN!” screamed Gus with a fury that made Graham’s hair stand on end and eyes stretch wide.

Gus spent the next day apologizing. It didn’t matter which room Graham was in. Some gregarious appendage or other of Gus was there to placate Graham with random globs of loose change and gristle-laden bits of jewelry.

“Hey hey, Grammy-boy, itcher lucky day! Go getherself sumptin nice, okay?”

Money, at the very least, was no longer a problem for Graham. Gus gave him plenty in exchange for a little fresh blood down the drain each day. A paring knife and a little pain had finally bought Graham comfort, though he was often pale and out of sorts. Comfort, though, was a moving target. Gus was good at greed. Sometimes, a lightning-fast tube-mouth would shoot up out of the drain and snap its fangs if Graham got too close. One day, he made a go at Graham's whole hand. As ever, Gus was always quick to make things right with remunerations and folksy expressions of regret.

After a year or so of this, on a day when the sun barely bothered, Lacy dropped by to ask Graham for money.

Again.

Her suspicions of hidden wealth seemed to have worn a groove in her mind as deep as the Marianas trench. Graham would always meet her at the door, and always blocked her with his body when she attempted to glance inside. He'd always thrust handfuls of tattered old tender at her, then urge her to leave.

Graham, who'd been watching Lacy approach the house, turned to address the humanlike ear, supported by a root-like network of pulsing ruby veins that had sprouted from the busted electrical socket near his aunt's old rocking chair. That's where he spent most of his time these days, farthest from the drains.

Gus had grown too big for the house's pipes, so he'd set himself to spreading throughout the walls. The basement was no longer amenable to Graham, either. Its eaves hung with lung-like sacks and its floor was strewn with translucent fleshy polyps which rose in height to Graham's waist.

"Gus, this just isn't right," muttered Graham.

Across the room, emerging from a rupture in an old-fashioned radiator, a fleshy stalk sucked air through a hideous, tooth-lined aperture. The snakelike tube of slick crimson meat curled and weaved with a suggestion of curiosity.

"You leave the rights an' wrongs to ol' Gus. I'm the little angel on yer shoulder. I ain't never steered ya wrong, an I don't aim ta start now. Besides, you gotta' give yerself a break before ya drip yerself dry, bud. I'll makes it worth yer while, big time."

Each of Gus' constituent mouths chortled in grotesque harmony. The house vibrated subtly as they did. The doorbell rang. A disheveled and sleep-deprived Graham. "Ah, cousin Lacy! It's wonderful to see you!" said Graham.

"It... it is?" asked Lacy.

"Of course!" replied Graham, "I'm glad you're here. You know, I think you were on to something. I think crazy old Abbie did leave something behind. Why don't you come in?"

Upcoming events.



WRITING WORKSHOPS 6:30 PM EST

APRIL

6

Dialogue & Backstory

Join our Editorial Board while we explore different writing techniques

APRIL

20

MAY

4

Subtext & Worldbuilding

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MAY

18

JUNE

1

Tension, Show Don't Tell

Join our Editorial Board while we explore different writing techniques

JUNE

15

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27

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DISABUSEMENT

APOLLO S.C.



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Why do bones itch when they heal? I type into the search bar. In the .89 seconds it takes to generate the results, I glance out the window to see the snow finally melting. The music has stopped. It has been silent for some time. I hobble over to the record player and flip to the B side of Hermanos Gutiérrez' *Sonido Cósmico*. I drop the needle and the seventh track begins to play. I lick my chapped lips, cursing my tube of Vaseline for being upstairs. The humidifier is doing little to combat the unusual dry cold. I return to my seat at the table and read the results.

Because, you are a fragile living thing made up of fragile living things.
I blink my eyes several times and lean closer to the screen. I read it again.

Bone remodeling occurs when tissues regenerate. New cells grow, replacing damage resulting from a break or fracture. An inflammation response caused by histamine—
The page is suddenly replaced by an error message. I check my Wi-Fi connection.

Connected. Secured.

I disconnect, rejoin the network, then refresh the page. A notification dings and a preview appears on the screen.

Some items in your order are out of stock. Select substitutions.

I click on the notification. Of course, it's the almond milk that they don't have. The one fortified with vitamin D that boasts, "50% more calcium than dairy milk." I click on the suggested soy alternative, which has 130 mg less calcium per serving. I miss the freedom of shopping in the store, reading the labels. Living.

Before, Friday was always my grocery day. I'd start with a ten-mile run, listening to whatever new albums had been released, admiring the great blue herons that congregated in the Little Pigeon River. Then I'd get gas, wash and vacuum the car, and take my time grocery shopping for the week. I had my supermarket routine down to a science. I could move up and down the aisles quickly because I had memorized the layout, knew what was in stock at home, and where I could find everything I needed. I would pick out a big apple for myself as a treat. Usually Envy or Pink Lady, something tart and crisp. I'd come home and shower, then do my week's laundry after wringing out what had been soaking in vinegar overnight. I'd listen to podcasts while folding and hanging my clothes. Sometimes I'd sweep and dust and vacuum and scrub the toilet and tub and wash linens if I hadn't already done it the previous day. I'd make a hearty meal of rice, beans, and whatever vegetables I had on hand. I'd clean up and settle into the couch with a mug of hot chocolate and popped corn and read or watch TV until my eyelids drooped.

I'd go upstairs with a great sense of pride in all that I had accomplished, knowing the next day would be the weekend and I could look forward to all the fun things I had planned, like exerting myself even more.

That's your problem. You conflate worth with exhaustion. But let me tell you, your worth is inherent. Rest is not something to earn. You deserve it just for being alive, and it is something you must do now. Your job is to disabuse all that has been inflicted on you, restore your vitality, and regenerate your bones so you can stand tall in your new understanding of what it is to live a fulfilling and balanced life.

I stare at the screen in disbelief. I'm imagining this. Maybe I am dreaming it? No. I can't be dreaming because I hear the music. I see the increasing brightness of the sun refracted on the snow, lighting up the living room as the clouds dissipate. I blink, then blink again, thinking that the message will disappear. To my surprise, it's replaced with a new one.

You blame yourself. You tell yourself you deserve this. Don't believe the despair. You did the best you could with the tools you had at the time. When society is screaming at you that productivity is a virtue, you push yourself to the brink of collapse. You're grieving the loss of the life you knew, one that was familiar, predictable, purposeful, but also unsustainable. When grief has nowhere to go, it turns inward. You're restless because you're at odds with the concept of rest. You are still in the mindset that you're operating under normal conditions, under the influence of continuous improvement, self-advancement, and exertion at all cost. But this is survival, and survival rules are different than normal living rules. Now is not the time for optimization, for productivity. Now is the time to survive by any means necessary, from one day to the next, from one hour to the next, and if you must, one moment to the next. Be without judgment or directive. Be still, be messy, heal.

I shake my head, close my laptop, and press the heels of my palms into my eyes. I need a nap or a shower or both, or anything that isn't sitting here. Misterio Verde ends and it's silent again. I grab my crutches and head toward the bathroom. There's a pile of laundry in the hallway I have to navigate around carefully.

I baptize myself in hot water and the shampoo that has zinc in it. It's powerful stuff, cutting through too many days of greasy buildup. I change into fresh clothes and put on deodorant before it hits me how out of breath the whole ordeal has rendered me. I sit on the edge of my bed, telling myself it will only be for a second, but a second turns into a minute. Have I really lost my endurance this quickly?

Before I know it, I'm lying on my back, staring at the ceiling, more specifically the unpainted trim I had hung nine years earlier with every intention of finishing. The thought of balancing on a ladder with a can of paint and a brush now is laughable, except I'm not laughing. I squeeze my eyes shut as hot tears traverse my face, roll into my ears. I hate the sensation of it. I am so pathetic. I surrender to wave after wave of brutal self-pity. Aching. Sobbing. I surrender.

Something like neutrality arrives unannounced in the aftermath. It's almost indignant, as if asking what problem could be so bad that this level of despair would be appropriate. It's not numbness, it's clarity. These are survival times, and I must do what I have to in order to survive.

STAGMAR THE STEALTHY SASQUATCH

WILLIAM JOHN CRANDALL

EXERPTS FROM A LONGER WORK

Deep in the forest where cool breezes blow, Lived
Stagmar the Sasquatch with footsteps so slow. He
tiptoed through ferns with a whispery glide, A master of
stealth with a long shaggy stride. But one sunny
morning he froze in surprise— A rhythm was thumping
beneath Texas skies.

He peeked through the branches with wide blinking
eyes, And spotted two boots doing fancy foot ties. A
dancer was twirling with dust swirling high, Kicking up
sparkles that glittered the sky. Stagmar leaned closer,
his heartbeat a leap— “What magical dance wakes the
trees from their sleep?”

The dancer spun twice with a whoop and a clap, Boots
tapping patterns like thunder on sap. Birds bobbed their
heads, and the foxes joined in, While squirrels tried
copying with dizzying spin. Stagmar felt something ignite
in his chest— A longing to dance with the forest’s own
zest.

He practiced that evening by moon’s silver glow, Trying
to mimic each twist, tap, and toe. He wiggled his
shoulders, he shuffled his feet, He stomped on a
pinecone and yelped, “Not so neat!” But still he kept
trying with giggles and grit— Determined to master
this two-stepping bit.

William John Crandall is a graduate of Ella Grasso Southeastern Vocational Technical High School, Wyoming Technical Institute, Three Rivers Community College, and Southern New Hampshire University. He has degrees in Automotive and Diesel Engineering, Welding Engineering and Metallurgy, Civil and Environmental Engineering, and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) as well as 23 other degrees, certificates, and diplomas.

The first message arrives on Tuesday, three minutes after Mara turns off the lamp.

I'm still here.

The words glow on her phone screen, soft blue against the dark. She stares at them, breath caught between ribs, waiting for the familiar follow-up—the apology, the joke, the sorry, wrong number. Nothing comes.

Her heart does what it has learned to do over the last six months: it slows itself, deliberately, like a hand easing pressure from a bruise.

She types back before she can stop herself.

Who is this?

The reply comes instantly.

You know who it is.

Mara locks the phone and places it face down on the nightstand, as if the weight of the glass might pin the message there, keep it from following her into sleep. She lies awake anyway, listening to the apartment's sounds: the refrigerator's low hum, a car passing too fast on wet pavement, the building settling around her like a sigh.

She doesn't dream. She never does anymore.

Eli's number was disconnected in January.

She remembers the recorded voice clearly—cheerful, automated, merciless. The number you are trying to reach is no longer in service. As if people could simply stop existing the moment their lines went dead.

The police had been kind. They always are at first. They took notes. They asked about routines, about arguments, about whether Eli had ever mentioned wanting to leave. They asked if Mara wanted to sit down.

She had already been sitting.

They told her some people disappear without meaning to. They told her not to blame herself. They told her to call if she remembered anything else.

She remembered everything. That was the problem.

The second message comes the next night.

You left the kitchen light on again.

Mara is on the couch, knees drawn to her chest, the lamp beside her dimmed low. She looks toward the kitchen. The light is on.

Her phone vibrates again.

You always forget when you're tired.

Her fingers are numb as she types.

This isn't funny.

Three dots appear. Disappear. Appear again.

I'm not laughing.

Mara stands, crosses the apartment, turns off the kitchen light with a hand that trembles despite her efforts. When she returns to the couch, she sits carefully, as if sudden movement might fracture something fragile inside her.

How are you doing this? she writes.

This time, the pause is longer.

I promised I'd find my way back to you.

Her throat tightens. She swallows hard, pressing her tongue to the roof of her mouth, grounding herself the way her therapist taught her.

This is grief, she tells herself. Your mind looking for patterns.

But grief doesn't know about the light.

Mara had loved Eli in quiet ways. In grocery lists stuck to the fridge. In socks folded together because he always lost one. In the way he pressed his forehead to hers when words were too heavy to carry.

They had been together four years—long enough to build a shared language, short enough to believe there would always be time for more.

The last conversation they had was about something small. It always is.

You don't have to stay up for me, Mara had said, already half-asleep.

I want to, Eli replied. I like knowing you're there.

The messages continue.

They are never cruel. Never threatening. They don't ask her to do anything. They simply exist—small reminders of a life she lost.

You still hate the rain. You cut your hair. It suits you. You didn't eat enough today.

Mara stops going out at night. She checks locks twice, then three times. She sleeps with the lights on, phone clutched in her hand like a talisman.

One evening, the phone rings.

Not a message. A call.

The number is blocked.

Mara stares at the screen until it stops vibrating.

When the voicemail notification appears, she doesn't open it.

She can't.

Finally, she does.

Static fills the room, low and uneven. Then a breath. Familiar. Real.

Mara, Eli's voice says. I'm trying. I don't have much time. I just needed you to know I didn't leave.

He inhales again to say more.

The message cuts off.

She presses play again.

He never finishes.

On the last night of the week, the apartment feels different. Lighter.

This is the part where you keep going.

Will you be gone when I wake up?

I think so.

I love you.

I know.

The phone never lights up again.

Days pass. Then weeks.

The silence doesn't feel like punishment. It feels intentional.

Mara sleeps. She eats. She opens the curtains.

One evening, rain taps against the window. She stands in the kitchen and realizes the light is off. She laughs.

Later, she writes about socks folded together. About love that stayed longer than it was supposed to.

Her phone vibrates once.

A weather alert. The storm has passed.

She exhales.

That night, as she turns off the lamp, a thought settles gently into place.

You're still here.

Yes, she whispers.

And for the first time since January, the word feels like a promise instead of a question.

Lawrence Ward grew up in Ovid, Michigan, as the youngest of seven siblings. After graduating high school in 2003, he moved to Kansas. He currently resides in Manhattan, Kansas, and began pursuing his passion for writing through SNHU's online program in 2025. He is working toward a BA in Creative Writing and English with a minor in Fiction. His work explores emotional relationships, loss, and hope through suspenseful storytelling. "I Know" marks his first published piece. Connect with him @ Moose1027 on FB, X, Twitch & YT

LUCY V. ZEHMER CASE ANALYSIS
SHYANNE LOWREY
SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE UNIVERSITY
BUS 210: BUSINESS LAW
HOLLY DORMEYER
FEBRUARY

Introduction: Contract and Common Law

Contract law, in the United States, is a part of the broader legal system of common law, which was developed through the decisions of the courts, rather than statutes. The courts rely on rulings from the past to determine if an agreement should be treated as a legally enforceable contract. According to the textbook *Dynamic Business Law*, contract law can be considered a part of common law because they both rely on the same key elements. These elements are offer, acceptance, consideration, and intent. Both common and contract law use these elements to evaluate whether parties have formed a valid agreement (Kubasek et al., 2025). It is also explained in the text that these four elements work together to form something called “mutual assent.” What that means is that both parties must show agreement through their words and actions.

These four principles appear in everyday life. For example, when you sign a new lease or accept a new job offer, you are relying on the principles of what makes up your agreement. As explained in *Dynamic Business Law*, the court does not just focus on what people say when determining if a contract exists; the courts also watch their behavior (Kubasek et al., 2025). This textbook also explains how the objective theory of contracts is vital to this process, since it allows the courts the ability to evaluate intent based on a person’s behavior rather than their private thoughts (Kubasek et al., 2025). It is for this reason that the *Lucy vs Zehmer* case is so well-known; it is an example of how common-law reasoning can help judges decide if the actions of a person showed real intent to enter a contract.

What Was Zehmer Missing?

As explained in the textbook, a valid contract is made up of four parts. An offer, acceptance, consideration, and legal intent (Kubasek et al., 2025). In the case of *Lucy vs Zehmer*, the entire argument and dispute was based around the intent element, which as the textbook explains, is a major part of mutual assent. Zehmer's argument was that he never actually intended to sell his farm to Lucy. He claimed that the written agreement between the two of them was a joke fueled by both teasing and drinking. Zehmer stated that Lucy should have known it was not a serious offer. However, the textbook declared, "Intent is judged based on the individual's behavior, not their personal, private thoughts" (Kubasek et al., 2025). Therefore, even if Zehmer was joking about the deal, by discussing the terms, writing down the agreement, and then signing the agreement, it made the agreement look like a serious one. As emphasized in *Dynamic Business Law*, a court relies on the objective theory of contracts. This means that they will evaluate intent as what "a reasonable person would conclude from someone's actions." It is also explained that courts would look for evidence of genuine assent, which written agreements are one of the biggest examples of (Kubasek et al., 2025).

It is for these reasons that Zehmer had such a weak argument in the case. Based on the information described in the textbook, Zehmer's behavior fits what the courts defined as serious contractual intent. The act of revising the written agreement hurts his argument as well, as negotiations and clarifications are clear indications of genuine assent (Kubasek et al., 2025). Therefore, everything he did, regardless of what Zehmer says he was thinking, aligned with the legal definition of intent.

The Court's Ruling and Reasoning

At the end of the trial, the courts ruled in favor of Lucy, and their ruling of this case follows objective theory that is described in *Dynamic Business Law*. With this theory, courts would evaluate the people involved based on their behavior rather than their inner thoughts (Kubasek et al., 2025). Since Zehmer wrote out the agreement, clarified the terms, discussed the sale, and then he and his wife signed it, anyone would believe that it was a serious offer.

It was also noted by the court that their negotiation was not rushed – it was a conversation that lasted long enough to have serious considerations behind it, so even if Zehmer claimed the two were joking, the actions do not add up. As pointed out in the book, things like this are the reasons why courts rely on objective standards.

Dynamic Business Law also explains how contract law is dependent on predictable rules so that people can enter agreements with confidence (Kubasek et al., 2025). If the courts were to allow people to escape or exit contracts just by claiming they were joking, the entire system would fall apart. The textbook puts an emphasis on how the court's rulings reflect fairness, predictability, as well as the importance of behavior in determining contractual intent.

My Opinion on the Ruling

I agree with the ruling of the court. I agree with the court's decision because it protects the reliability of written agreements. It is pointed out in Dynamic Business Law that the objective theory exists to keep people from escaping or getting out of contracts simply by claiming that they did not mean what they signed or said, like in the case covered (Kubasek et al., 2025). It is important for this to be how the system works, because if there was no reliance on subjective intent, contracts would become incredibly unstable, since anyone could back out of one just by saying they did not really mean it.

The ruling from the court also makes practical sense. Think about it this way: if someone is behaving in a way that looks serious, like in this case, putting something in writing, then the other party should be able to rely on that. The book also talks about how the concept of mutual assent must be evaluated in an objective way, as this reinforces the idea that actions are more important than unspoken thoughts.

This is why these principles are perfectly aligned with the Lucy vs Zehmer case. The entire case reflects what our textbook explains of how the courts need to make fairness and consistency a priority, and that behavior is the most reliable indication of contractual intent (Kubasek et al., 2025). It is also important to remember that without this approach, the stability of contract law would be lost.

Personal Experience with a Contract

I have been using Spotify since middle school, and at that age, I did not understand that my monthly subscription was actually a type of contract. I was simply excited to listen to music without ads after a long day in seventh grade. Now, with more life experience and what I've learned in this course, I understand that it was and still is a contract.

A contract requires five legal elements: offer, acceptance, consideration, capacity, and legality. Spotify's offer was clear—they provided a free trial with access to Premium features, followed by a paid monthly subscription. Acceptance occurred when I signed up for the trial and entered payment information. These actions showed objective intent to agree, even though I didn't realize it at the time. Consideration was present because I received Premium features, and Spotify received my agreement to pay after the trial ended. Technically, capacity was questionable because I was a minor, but I had my mom's permission to use her information for payment.

What I lacked at the time was an understanding of mutual assent and contractual intent. As a teenager, I didn't realize that a subscription was a legally binding agreement. I thought contracts required signatures and formal paperwork, not a few clicks and a payment method. But legally, actions matter more than private thoughts. The moment I clicked "Start Free Trial" and entered payment information, I entered a contract—even if I didn't recognize it.

This experience clearly illustrates a key lesson from contract law: you can enter a binding contract even if you don't consciously think of it as one, as long as the objective elements are present.

The Significance of *Lucy vs Zehmer*

The *Lucy vs Zehmer* case continues to be one of the most important cases when it comes to understanding how the courts decide whether or not a contract exists. Since contract law comes from common law, the courts had to rely on long-standing principles. Specifically, the idea that intent is judged by actions and not internal thoughts. This and the way objective approaches are used for contractual enforcement are highlighted throughout the textbook.

This case is still being taught because it captures the essence of contract formation: the things people do matter more than what they say. This approach keeps the idea of contract law fair, consistent, and predictable.

References:

Kubasek, N. K., Browne, M. N., Herron, D. J., Dhooge, L. J., & Barkacs, L. L. (2025). *Dynamic Business Law*. McGraw Hill.

Shyanne Lowrey, a business administration student, shows a deep understanding of how people, ideas, and organizations work together in complicated ways. Her natural intellectual curiosity drives her to be very careful, whether she is looking at models of leadership, economic theories, or corporate governance.

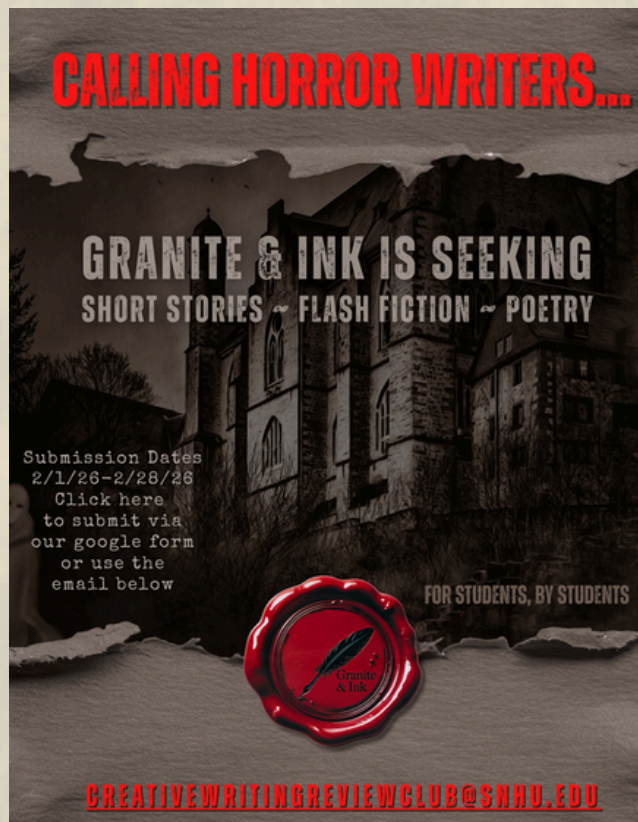
Shyanne has a great desire to solve problems, and she enjoys breaking down difficult topics into simpler ones. Her studies focus on understanding what makes people and businesses successful. Additionally, her writing shows that she is quite interested in the basic rules that govern the world.



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