



# OZARKA REVIEW

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VOLUME 11

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**STUDENT EDITOR,  
MACKENZIE ANDERSON**



*Mackenzie Anderson is in her second semester of General Education. After graduating from Ozarka, she plans to pursue a degree in physical therapy at the University of Central Arkansas.*

***A note from the student editor:***

*The Ozarka Review would like to thank its student-contributors, OZC faculty and administration, and our growing community of readership for their continued support and interest in this journal. It is obvious that there is light everywhere, physically and metaphorically; we were fortunate to get to work with such creative imagery, language, and research. It is that confluence of light which makes this journal.*

*\_Mackenzie*

**FACULTY SUPPORT EDITOR,  
MAEGON MAYES**





*oil on canvas*

**BY GRACE JENSEN**



## Ephor

---

Stephen Paulson

I was floating in on the warm moist air from the gulf you rode the  
cold front of the northern plains when we met, you slid beneath my  
warmer drafts lifting me up to the cooler air above  
the cooling drove me down again, your  
southerly push forced me back into my own  
northerly swells, we rolled around each other in a  
tightening spin, blending air masses  
to a more compatible form  
the inrush of these  
conflicting masses  
made  
a tighter  
spiral  
pulling us  
to the northeast  
we were  
unable  
to keep pace  
our tail  
behind us  
leaving  
destruction  
in our wake.

Damage was not the plan though always possible. The need to blend  
these masses is demanding, a force of carelessness like a giant zipper  
tearing across the plains to join air bodies that cannot be wed fast  
enough, rotations constricting, efforts redoubled until they reach the  
lakes and a different air mass ends their flight.





photograph by guest photographer

*Debbie Jolly*

## In Love

---

Lexi Sitton

Wallpapers. Poems. Computers.  
They all have stories.  
Falling in love daily should be a crime,  
But it's too easy to commit.  
With people,  
ideas, sensations.  
The air of a new city,  
The thought of a new country,  
Something new-  
you're hooked.  
That boy on the beach  
With the pastel swim trunks,  
preppy and packaged up.  
His brown eyes got you.  
That girl in the crowd-  
Her striped, oversized shirt  
Flagged that you would be friends instantly,  
Given the chance.  
Fall in love daily.  
With anything.  
With life.





Page from Emily Dickinson's herbarium  
(Houghton Library, Harvard University)

## Mother Earth Speaks to the Warrior Champion

---

**Lisa Camp**

I hear your cries  
A Warrior fights for  
righteous principles  
You are my Warrior of Light

When you arrived, you did not  
remember  
But you felt you knew

Time, as we know it, is but a  
drip from a leaky faucet  
It virtually has no effect on  
the universe

Oh! But in this skin!  
A slow dip from a faucet hits  
a nerve. It takes your mind  
from whatever you were doing  
And it echoes with a  
vibration in your brain!  
The drip dissipates, and you  
melt back into whatever you  
were doing

While you push away the  
reality that there is going  
to be another drip eventually  
You intensify on the thing  
that's in front of you  
And then, sure enough - the  
drip pierces your everything!  
Over hours, days, weeks...  
months

You just can't take it.  
You take purposeful action to  
end the situation all  
together.

My Warrior! Do you know?  
Do you know how to fix it?  
That drip that rattles the  
nerve?

How can you know?  
Have you come for me to show  
you?

My Warrior of Light! You came  
to fight for me!  
I am the fragility of a  
dragonfly wing.  
I am the foundation forged by  
fire.

I am the least  
I am the most.  
I am every single One  
altogether.

Ah! My Warrior!  
It's time to remember.  
Yes! You know what you know.  
Question that no more.  
All you must do is remember  
What you know.  
Warrior of Light, your fight  
is not with the least or with  
the most  
Or the good or the bad  
Or the right or the wrong  
Oh, my Warrior!  
Your fight is with the  
darkness that keeps them from  
remembering too.  
WAKE UP.





Page from Beatrix Potter's fungi drawings  
*Hygrophorus puniceus*  
(Armitt Museum and Library)



## Character

---

### John Bradford

Martin Luther King - Let them be known by their character.

Never think skin pigment - only, temperament

Character in the cradle - sprouts

Grows thru formative years - expands

Makes entrance in maturity and reputation

Governs persona with aging - style

Radiates a whole person in the twilight of life - quality

Legacy at death - nobility

When the bell of life rings

the goal is to leave the planet

a better union.





*"Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground."*

*-Frederick Douglas*



## EMPATHY

---

### SHORT NONFICTION BY LISA CAMP

It was cold in Dallas. Temperatures had been in the forties for a couple weeks. I was just coming out of homelessness. I was still in the hood. Dallas was rough. Dirty, nasty, and dangerous. But I had a roof over my head; although, it was a boarding room. The house was not heated, but I had a heater for my room. I finally had a way to store and cook food and a way to be clean. Somehow, it makes me dizzy to even think of all the details. I had managed to get a job in the midst of trying to stay alive. I had to leave at 4 am or so to get to work. It was my first day. I had my gear. It was freezing. I had a thermos full of hot coffee and some cigs. I walked five blocks to my bus stop in the pitch black. Being ever-so-alert for strangers that might think I was an easy target. There was a homeless man sitting on one side of the covered bus stop. He was sitting on the bench, adjusting his plastic bags that he was trying to wear to keep in body heat. He had a big one over his upper body that was too tight. He was trying to adjust a small grocery bag around his shoe. He was grumbling and struggling. I walked to the bench opposite and sat down.

I saw what he was doing, and said "Man! You're already on the bus! The struggle bus!" I was smiling because it was only days before that I was the one using plastic bags to keep from freezing. My partner had a joke; it pertains to those times when you are trying to do something so simple and it just isn't working out. Like trying to open a tiny candy wrapper. It's a tiny piece of plastic, but it might as well be Kevlar. You cannot get it open! That's being on "The Struggle Bus!" Humor kept me from going insane those past couple weeks, and I was feeling very lighthearted, headed to my first day of a job that would change my circumstances around.

He popped his head up and glared at me, scanning my face to try and see if I was full of malice or just an asshole. I showed him my eyes, trying to show kindness and empathy. I saw that I had not hit the funny bone with my joke. Oops! Better just leave him be. I knew where I was. Dallas is not the place you want to create a problem in. Don't piss him off for sure! I sat back and remembered my coffee. I scanned his belongings. I saw an empty Styrofoam cup! I said, "Hey! Do you have a cup?" He shook his head no. I said, "I have hot black coffee! I can share with you!" His eyes lit up. He fished out the cup I had already spotted. I poured both of us a cup. When I had an empty hand, I started to dig in my pockets for my cigarettes. I asked if he wanted a smoke. Yes, he nodded eagerly. I got one and put it in



my mouth then I handed him one. I lit mine then offered my lighter to him. He lit his and inhaled the cigarette smoke.

He held that little cup and looked at it in his hands. He let it warm his fingers before he took his first sip. I toasted the new year. It was January 2nd, I think. He lifted his cup. I said, "Only a moment. . . sometimes that's all we get. . . just one moment of good. We have to appreciate these moments." We just sat there and sipped and smoked. I mumbled something about what a shitty world we live in. He said nothing. I remembered more survival gear. I had hand warmers and a rain poncho. I gave him all I could spare. By the time my bus came, I had learned the man's name. Isaac. I had acknowledged him when no one else would. And I, even with the tiny bit I had, was able to nurture him. Only for a moment. . . for one moment, a human, who had been thrown to the wayside, felt important. By the time I left, my miserable grumbling friend was relaxed and even had a slight smile on his face. I couldn't fix his life. I couldn't share mine. But, I could see him. Acknowledge him. Treat him as I so desire to be treated. Isaac, my friend. He matters. And he is loved.



photograph by

*Mackenzie Anderson*





*“The difference between a path and a road is not only the obvious one. A path is little more than a habit that comes with knowledge of a place. It is a sort of ritual of familiarity. As a form, it is a form of contact with a known landscape. It is not destructive. It is the perfect adaptation, through experience and familiarity, of movement to place; it obeys the natural contours; such obstacles as it meets it goes around.”*



— WENDELL BERRY,  
THE ART OF THE COMMONPLACE:  
THE AGRARIAN ESSAYS

## DEMENTIA

---

FLASH FICTION BY TAMATHA FISHER

One day, Mrs. Yolks, a baker's wife, woke up and knew nothing. She was in a dark room, so she tried to get up and turn on a light. Though she could think of what to do, she did not know how to do it. It was a strange sensation. She was not having good a good morning. She felt as if she were an infant again. She lay in her bed thinking of the layout of her life. Soon, there would be sunlight from the sunrise spilling onto her bed. Her husband would not discover her in their bed until the afternoon when he would tromp up the back stairs, tired from working all morning in their bakery. Mr. Yolks would be sad; she would not get to enjoy their outing today. Normally, when he was done baking and setting the kitchen aright, he would come in and they would go for their walk around the neighborhood. They would sit on a bench, eat a pastry he'd made that morning, and bask in the sun. She enjoyed their time alone. She wouldn't be able to go today. She couldn't understand why she was trapped inside her body. She couldn't remember how to do anything. She silently prayed that God would send someone to check on her. Hopefully, her friend, Lana, would drop by this morning. She usually just walked on in. Perhaps she would have some way of understanding



what was going on with her. Lana was a Christian. She read the Bible and visited the bishop regularly. She believed God's ways. The Yolks were Catholic; maybe God would send her priest by to check on the family. The priest's favorite phrase was, "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose." He said it in nearly all his messages. It meant, "the more things change, the more they continue to be the same thing." She was beginning to hope the quote was true. What would happen if she could not remember how to talk or get up? Would things stay the same? She would be useless to her family. What would happen to her? Suddenly, a bright light flipped on. A woman wearing blue pants and a blue top rushed in. She grabbed her wrist with her cold hand and looked lovingly in her eyes. "Are we doing okay this morning, Mrs. Yolks?" Then she asks, "Do you remember me? I am Patty, your day nurse." Just then Mrs. Yolks felt as if she had been stabbed with a cold dagger to the heart. One moment, she was at home, snuggled in bed, waiting on friends to drop by. She was smelling fresh baked bread from the downstairs shop they owned sixty years ago. Now, she is 94 and in a cold world with no friends or family. It is all rushing back. She had buried her husband, two sons, and many nieces and nephews. She feels alone. The tears that trickle down her face show her silent aggravation.



photograph by

*Haley Mullaney*



# ESCAPISM

---

A SHORT STORY BY JADE TOMKINS

It's another night of lying in my room, waiting for the fighting downstairs to quell. I count the false stars that scatter across my ceiling, knowing that with my problems, this is the closest to space I may ever get. I at least know what floating feels like. Living in zero-gravity is almost natural to me though it would probably feel better if my body would come with me. My eyes move to the fresh poster on the wall, a perfectly glamorous cover for the hole behind it. "At least Mother paid for it," I mutter to myself, knowing that anything less of her would be cruel. It was her fist that crashed through the wall yesterday though it was meant for my face. I know at this point that this isn't normal, but none of us know how to stop it.

I reach over to turn off my galaxy lamp, watching as the stars snap away. As I feel my body settle into the sheets, I let go of the controls and head back inside of my head. One of my favorite protectors, Jack, gives me a silent nod as we pass each other. He was always better at handling the shutdown of our shared system, probably due to his not being as hyper. I make my way through the corridor of our mind, finding my room easily. Normally, I would probably try and bunk with Layla until it was time to dream, but tonight's fighting has drained me of any energy for that ball of mania. As I step inside, I give the door a nudge, and it lands barely cracked. My room is almost identical to the

one outside except the stars are real here. Not to mention, I have a wicked bunk bed, a total upgrade from the floor mattress. The dreams are about as normal as always with the lot of us coming together to see it all from one of our perspectives. Jack's part took the lead this time, leaving us sitting in an old and simple diner, suitable for a guy who has the mentality of a senior citizen. But there's something off this time. Normally this dream is quiet to the end. I see my friend walking in, Michael, the only kid around who knows about our disorder. He lowers himself down on the other side of the booth, shaking. He has the face of someone who just realized their plane is crashing without any way to keep it from plummeting. Jack seems to have slipped out of control, letting me be the one to ask, "Dude, what happened?"

"I, uh, we. . . " He pauses, taking a quick glance around the diner. Everyone else seems to be hustling around, distant as can be, and he lets out a breath. "Clay, you aren't safe here. You keep. . . You keep telling me you'll be okay if you can tough it out a little longer, but we both--we all--know that isn't true."

"I know, I know, but how. . . how am I supposed to get out? Every door in this diner is locked, barricaded from the outside." I take my coffee off of the table and grip it in both hands, trying to use the heat to ground myself.

"I've told you, please just ask and I'll help you get out. You're running out of time." His face is desperate plea on its own, the words a stinging aftertaste.

*Bang!* The window next to your booth gains a large spidery fracture. You and Michael instinctively jolt away and out of the booth.



*Bang!* The web branches out to all corners of the window. You both back up against the counter, nowhere to run.

*BANG!* The glass shatters as the body jolts awake though you barely have a moment to figure out who you are before the next hit arrives.

*BANG!* "Clay William Parker, if you don't open this door right now I will beat you until you look like even less of a human--do you hear me?!" Mother is screaming as I try to gather myself, falling pitifully off the mattress and scrambling up to the door. I don't waste a second opening it for her, trying to stay out of her way as much as I can. I pray that Jack or Liz can take over after whatever this is.

She storms her way into my bedroom, frantically glancing around before spinning on her heel to glare at me. "Clay, my favorite little rotten brat, where is my ring?"

"Mom, please I- I don't know where it is. I, uh, need to get ready for school." I grab my hand trying to keep from shaking. She reacts worse when she knows that I'm scared. She looks at the alarm clock, set four minutes before the 7:30am time it would go off. She puts on a spiteful smile starting to head out of the room. "If I find it in here while you're at school, I'm going to burn your hoodie. Do not wear it today." Before I can reply, she slams the door. Once I hear her footsteps leading down the stairs, I dash back to my mattress and swipe my hand under it. I settle when I feel the satchel of cash, knowing that she won't be finding that ring any time soon. I reach over to turn off the alarm right before it can start and climb back onto the bed. I'm terrified, and I know that if I get too loud I'll get in trouble, but that doesn't stop me from sobbing into my blanket.

Liz finally helps me up and ushers me over towards Jack and Layla, taking over the controls for now. Jack is sitting in the reclining chair while Layla has dragged her beanbag on top of the couch to sit on. I make my way over to sit on the couch beside her, resting my head on her leg as I let myself breakdown. She rests a hand on my head, comforting me as best she can from her bean-filled throne.

Jack is the first to pipe up, "Hey kiddo, do you want me to tell Liz that we aren't up for meeting your friend today?"

I shake my head, focusing on the black throw rug in front of the couch. "No, thank you. Though, I think we need to talk to Mike." I glance up to see if Jack is catching my drift, and he gives me a nod in understanding.

"So like, are we gonna ask him to run with us?" Layla chimes in, "Since his whole, uh, life, is also pretty bogus." I take a second to consider it, since this would completely change both of your lives, but "I can't just abandon him, so yeah. If he wants to come."

"And you're like, totally certain about this? 'Cause there's no going back, y'know. Which I am totally down for, especially since we got the dough to go, but there's no going back." She has a point, but this is something I've thought about for years.

"Amazing that you, the bubbly valley-girl, are the one trying help me make the right choice. Isn't that your job, oh wise old man Jack?" I try and pass him a smile so he knows I'm only trying to joke around. He rolls his eyes, following up with an, "I trust you, kid. If you let me lead more often, I would have already left." He smiles back; the warmth



is a nice comfort from the earlier fight. Liz lifts herself up and practically glides her way back over to the couch, sitting to my left. "The body is dressed and ready to leave, and I have packed your hoodie into the bottom of our school bag today. The money satchel is wrapped up in the hoodie as well, so that should be everything set for you to head out the door." She rests a hand on my back, and I lean into it for a moment before standing up.

"Thank you, Liz. You're like a cool brain-mom." I try to compliment her as best I can while heading back to the front, noticing that she even picked out my favorite shirt. She calls from the back, "That is the whole point of my existence, so thank you!" before I start to tune her out. The switch from back to front is always pretty jarring, especially when I'm coming back to standing up. I start to stumble forward, but I catch myself on the door frame. I take a deep breath before I pull it open, keeping ahold of the door knob as I turn and head out, closing it behind me. I dash over to and down the stairs, glancing to my father passed out on the couch and run out the door towards the bus that is starting to close its entrance. I'm able to jump inside right as it's about to shut me out. Passing the substitute driver a quick, "Sorry!" before I start making my way to the back, the weight of this morning seems to fade away for a moment as I spot Michael and leap over the scattered bags on the floor to sit beside him.

Michael, who looks way too nervous for someone seeing his best friend, immediately grabs my hand. He pulls it up and shoots me right in the eyes with the most anxious bravery I've ever seen. "Clay, bro,

listen. I- I had this crazy idea, and it's going to sound really idiotic and dangerous, but if you hear me out I-."

"Let's run away." I couldn't wait any longer, "I have a few thousand dollars, and I want you to come with me. We all do." I squeeze his hand, praying that the lack of reply isn't him refusing.

"Bro, I was about to ask you the same thing." Oh, thank everything and everyone above! "You're my only friend, er, friends, and I wouldn't be able to leave without you. And now with a few thous-wait. Thousand? Where did you get a few thousand dollars?"

"Oh, well, actually, I managed to steal one of Mother's best rings, and I was able to pawn it off for way more than I thought! Pretty convenient, yeah?" I'm actually pretty proud about that, didn't even have to slip any sleeping meds into her booze. She was just knocked right out anyway.

"Dude, that's. That's so dangerous--and--amazing? And the others just let you do that?" He makes sure to try and quiet himself for the last part, but it won't matter anymore after today.

"Honestly, they were all fine with it. Even Liz, the super logical and literal protector lady." I let him reach around and pull the backpack onto my lap, unzipping it and digging to the bottom until the hoodie is visible. "It's all in there, so we have to leave today. Are you ready?"

Michael peeks in, gawking a little, probably amazed by how much space that stack of cash I got fills up. "I. . . yeah. Yeah, I'm ready." He looks up from the bag with a more serious expression, "Are we doing this before or after school?"



"Oh, that's actually a good question."

I look at him then back into the bag. Staying in school is to risk being caught with all of this, plus the fact that walking past the after-school busses would be a big red flag. Jack also directs our vision to the sea of other students who would see Michael and me walking away from the bus lines. "Let's wait until everyone's inside and eating breakfast. Then we go, okay?"

He nods, "Perfect." He leans back into the seat, and I zip up the backpack and lean back as well. We ride the rest of the trip out in silence, saving our energy for the escape that awaits us. Before we get to the school though, I do reach over and roll down the window. I have to do this, and it's better to get it over with now. I turn my phone off one last time before I chuck it out into someone's yard, quickly looking around to make sure no one noticed. Luckily, there are a few kids making a huge scene up front. Something about spilled yogurt and a ruined dress, I don't really care enough to keep listening. I sit back and enjoy the rest of our last bus ride, ready for the five of us to have our freedom.





Page from Beatrix Potter's fungi drawings  
Himeola auricula  
(Armitt Museum and Library)



## ONCE UPON A TIME

---

A SHORT STORY BY JASMINE GRACE JENSEN

Once upon a time there was old queen whose son had been captured by an evil wizard that lived to the north. She called for all the warriors of the land to band together and fight the wizard and his armies, but out of hundreds of warriors that tried to breach the wizard's walls and save the prince, none were successful. Finally, the task was deemed impossible. Although many more warriors tried to save the prince, but the queen never lost hope, so when a young servant girl in the castle offered to go and save the prince, the queen allowed her. The queen, however would not risk giving the girl a horse, or armor—having been certain that the servant girl would simply abandon her quest and sell them. She instead promised a life of riches and luxury should she return with her son. The young serving girl agreed and set out with nothing more than her father's wood axe. The knights of the court laughed at the little girl as she set off to the north, but she held her head high knowing that only she was brave enough to go and rescue the prince. It took her a fortnight to trek on foot to the base of the wizard's wall that surrounded a great, impenetrable castle. Waiting for her at the base of the wall was an army. Each

soldier a perfectly formed glass figure. The girl got to work immediately, taking her axe to the glass warriors who were instantly coming to life with great movement. They fought back, but with the slightest touch of her axe they shattered into a thousand shards. At first the girl rejoiced, but she realized that it was also a curse. The glass shards were sharper than the sharpest blade. They showered over her and cut into her skin, embedding themselves into her flesh. By nightfall the entire army had fallen, but so had the girl. She lay under the moon and felt the first of winter's winds blow over her skin as she grew numb. She came to terms with her failure, but as fate would have it:

A sleep like death overcame the girl, and a strange figure in silver robes appeared and knelt next to her small, cold, frail form. The figure whispered strange words in a forgotten language before leaving the girl where she lay. The next day when she awoke, her wounds had healed, and she felt strong, stronger than she had ever been, but her surprise was short lived because the army was also rejuvenated. This time they were carved out of wood. The girl, being rather intelligent, found an old pine knot and made a decent torch. She then set out on her task once again; at her first move of aggression the army awoke and attacked. This time it took more than a touch from her axe to destroy the wooden soldiers. She had to hack at them with her



axe and jab at them with her torch whilst they beat her with their wooden swords. The day seemed to stretch and pull in time seeming all at once was too long and far too short. The day crept on and on and the girl felt that her arms would drop off, but the burning soldiers were igniting other soldiers and soon fire had sprung up around her. With the very last light of day the girl felled the last soldier. Her legs were battered and tired from climbing over all of the fallen wooden soldiers; bruises and broken bones plagued her as she still felt the phantom hits of the wooden swords and burns popped up everywhere. Once again, she collapsed in the midst of the battle field, and once again a figure in starling robes came and tended to her wounds and this time sang her a sweet lullaby. The girl, however, was not quite as asleep as the figure thought and as the figure went about singing, she awoke.

The figure was a handsome young man with skin as pale as a lily and hair as black as a crow's wing, but it was so long he could easily have tucked it into his belt. He was startled when she awoke but said nothing, and the girl was too tired to speak. So, he just continued to sing his lullaby and tend her wounds whilst the girl admired his graceful movements and angelic voice. When the song ended the young man smiled down at the young woman and said, "Remember this: tomorrow the soldiers will be stone, and the wizard will be among them. Kill the wizard."

He then vanished as if he had been nothing more than an odd beam of moonlight. The first rays of sunlight spilled on slowly, materializing soldiers made of slick black granite. The girl stood in front of them. She was smiling wickedly—her axe in one hand and a burning torch in the other. She dropped the torch in a pile of wood which quickly caught fire. Lines of wood began to burn revealing that in the wee hours of the night she had laid out a grid pattern. The young warrior ran to the top of a nearby hill and surveyed the battle field. The stone soldiers were unperturbed by the flames and simply walked through them, but after all others had passed through the flames to get to her, marching in rows front to back there was one stone soldier still left in the circle of fire, the wizard. She needed to get to the wizard and even though she now knew which one he was and had him effectively trapped, she couldn't cross the fire either, not to mention the army presently in front of her. She charged at the marching stone soldiers and swung her axe hard. It hit the soldier square in the chest but barely made a dent. However, the force knocked the soldier back causing him to fall into the next one which fell into the next, and, like dominos, all the soldiers in that row came toppling down, some busting apart and others too beaten to get off the ground. She'd found their weakness: they were top-heavy! She took her quickly-blunting axe and set to work first lining up the soldiers in a row then



toppling them down. The Wizard was not amused at being trapped nor that this girl was defeating his soldiers. He began to shout to the skies and summoned a rainstorm. The fires still burned as rain poured down in sheets, but not for long. The rain was so thick the girl could barely see ten feet in front of her, and it was like ice on her skin. Soon she was drenched and shivering. She smashed her way running to the slowly-dying fires. She was faster than the stone soldiers, but there were many of them. They attempted to stop her and struck at her with their stone weapons. She felt her blood spill and saw it washed away by the rain. She felt her bones break but pushed on. She had eventually pushed so many stone warriors down that they had extinguished the fire in a single spot.

She crawled over the shattered glass, burned wood, and smashed stone until she was inside a ring of fire with the wizard. The Wizard had changed his guise as a stone soldier to that of a brown-haired man. Not at all what the girl was expecting, he produced a staff of carved ash and faced off with the girl.

"So, you are the one he has chosen. Very well, but the last test is not of your strength or skill in battle but of what you are willing to sacrifice," He said as he raised his staff high before bringing it down on the wet ground. Nothing happened at first, but slowly the shards of glass began to rise into the air

and suddenly all rushed towards her and pierced her body. She felt pain but then nothing, then strength. A feeling like new power coursed through her body and she felt alive with it. She turned to look at the man in silver robes standing next to her. She smiled and charged the Wizard.

She fought and destroyed the wizard.

As the wizard died, all the soldiers, all the glass and wood laying on the ground, and even the castle disappeared. It was just the girl and the prince in the middle of a cold, dead field, the body of the wizard lying at their feet. It didn't feel over to her. She felt like there should be more, but also, she was so tired she couldn't fight anymore.

The prince was simply astonished and relieved. He had tried to help the warriors who'd previously come to rescue him, but he could never get them to listen. She did.

The Prince turned to the girl, his savior, and smiled.

"Let's go home."

They returned home to the castle and were greeted by thousands of people who'd come to welcome the prince home and to celebrate this new hero. The knights of the kingdom stood somberly knowing that this little girl had been stronger and more courageous than they. The Queen rejoiced at having her son back but hung her head in shame for doubting the girl. She decided to reward the girl not only with the promised amount of



fortune but with a position on her court. The girl stayed at court, not as a lady, but as a knight of the kingdom. The prince slowly fell utterly in love with her, and she found his advancements endearing. She thought he was just playing a role, but it soon became clear that his feelings were of the most real nature as were hers.





photograph by  
*Ricky Via*



## CENTURIES AFTER THE CENTURION

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A SHORT STORY BY DRAKE TRAYLOR

When I was first created by the hands of an artisan, a man whose metalworking prowess was unparalleled in our village, I thought that I would be used by a lumberjack. Perhaps some stray farmer would pick me up and use me to construct a shelter for his family. I had a handle of the finest oak and a head constructed from iron, a much higher quality than the typical bronze tools. However, despite my hopes and dreams, I wound up in the hands of a butcher. Not a typical butcher, like one you might find tenderizing his finest chops in his roadside store, but a butcher of men. I found my haft in the grip of a man who was more often than not bellowing a guttural war cry, a thunderous, hellish scream that struck fear into the hearts of those before him.

Depression is the only emotion I truly feel at this point. The hand that I had been dealt in this lifetime was one that I couldn't play but had no opportunity to fold. Though my origin is crucial to your understanding of my final satisfaction, I feel as if I should speak to you about the turning point of my life. It was the climax of the Third Punic War; my owner stood



in the great field outside of Carthage alongside his fellow soldiers who had only landed on the coast of northern Africa the day prior. In the hands of the Centurion Calpurnius Piso, I watched him stare down the line of prisoners before him. Prisoners who had once been members of Hannibal's great army, that were now to be put to death before their friends and family.

This was a terror tactic, of course--one I was used to. After all, I had been the figurative right hand of this particular centurion since his twenty-ninth birthday. Regardless, it was time to do my duty. The palms of the centurion were sweating; he wasn't entirely used to murder. Even though it had been his career for his entire life, he only found it easy during the rush of battle. I always knew when he was and wasn't nervous; the perspiration of his palms was always telltale. He sheathed me for a moment, hooking my head around the leather of his belt. When I was next drawn, his palms were coated in the hot sand of the Sahara. I was drawn through the air and brought down, swinging softly toward bare skin. The cleanness of the strike cleaved the spinal cord and parted the flesh so far that my chipped head took a bite from the earth. The not-so-handsome head of the Carthaginian fell to the ground and was swiftly kicked away by one of the Munifex. His blood guttered brightly against his tattered garments. However, this

was only the first of the prisoners, and I was used for this vile purpose again and again until all five of the men laid before me were left in the same state as the first.

The battle was off from here; I could hear the shrill cries of the warriors as they stormed from their city gates to meet the legions of Rome on the field of battle. The sounds of steel on steel, steel on flesh, and flesh on earth filled the air. The sounds came together in a cacophonous yet beautifully-melancholic composition. Though I claimed many lives, one of my greatest dreams was realized. The centurion who held me was struck a fatal blow, a spear finding its way into his heart. As he fell to the ground I felt relief. My torturous slavery had come to an end, and I had flown from my prison like a wingless, iron bird who had finally found freedom.

Bodies piled atop the mangled corpse of what was once Calpurnius Piso. He was then just another nameless soldier, a body to add to the count back in Rome. The soldiers came to collect the bodies, leaving behind many Carthaginian corpses to be burned. Tossed aside along with the other seemingly worthless carcasses, I was set ablaze. My haft burned away, an agony unprecedented by any battle I had been subjected to serve in. Like a soldier marching home, I was finally free from my conscription. Many weeks came and passed, and I was still alive beneath the charred remains. Though I was only the head of an ax

now, I still held onto hope that perhaps I would be found and used for some other purpose and not simply left here to be buried with passing centuries. A light shone through the darkness, both figuratively and literally, as the bodies that lay atop me were thrown out of the way. I found myself gripped in the hands of a haggard man, held up to the sunlight for examination as a famished thumb rubbed itself across my surface. This man was traveling with his daughter and wife, seemingly searching for a place to settle based on their conversation.

In summary, from here I was taken to be forged into nails and given to the farmer; as it had turned out he already owned an ax. I was then used to construct his home, fastening plank to plank in the construction of the frame. Though this wasn't exactly what I had in mind, it ultimately made me happier than I had been up until that point. I assisted him, held his home together during storms and during heat, during the lashes of the desert sand against his walls. I was there to protect him in a peaceful way unlike the way I was once used to protect the pride of the Romans. Though now I sit here, a forgotten artifact, buried beneath fifty feet or so of sand, never to be found. Even if I were to be found, no one would find any value on my surface, an old rusted piece of iron, and despite this, I have made peace. My duty was done, and now I may rest.



COCHRAN ROAD,  
BRYAN TOWNSHIP





## HORSE THIEF: A HORSE'S TALE

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A SHORT STORY BY STEPHEN PAULSON

My human, Dan, tells me I'm a horse. He calls me "Buck." Most people don't know it—mainly because he doesn't tell anyone—that my real name is "Buckminster." He told me he would have called me "Horse," but he had already give that name to the mare. I think it's short for "Horseradish" because she's hot and spicy. Today we're going to town. Dan has me all saddled up and we're on our way. Dan never gets in a hurry; he never pulls hard or jerks on the reins unless it's an emergency, and it's never an emergency, even when it is. Dan says it's about five miles to town, what ever that is, so we are just having a leisurely walk through the woods. The road isn't much but it's there. The sun feels warm on my face. Everything smells fresh after last night's rain. The occasional mud puddle feels good on my hooves, and I make sure I get into everyone of them. Dan pretends to be disgusted, but he doesn't really care unless I get some on him. I'd like to taste some of the grass growing on the side of the road, but Dan's kind of in a hurry. Being in a hurry for Dan means we're not running, but we're not stopping either. So, I'll just have to taste that grass later.

We get into town and the road becomes a street. It widens out and there is a lot more traffic with people trying to get their chores done before it gets too hot. At the edge of town there is a small house with gardens all around it. Sadie lives there; she is an older woman who grows flowers and herbs to make remedies. Her favorite are the purple cone flowers that grow out through the fence. They don't taste very good, but I eat them anyway just to piss her off. Here she comes now hollering at Dan because I ate a few more. He apologizes and urges me a little faster and further into town. Dan ties me to the hitching post in front of the saloon. It's right next to the bank, but the post in front of the bank doesn't have a water trough and the saloon does. The bankers don't want their patrons to stay all that long and don't appreciate a mud puddle in front of their establishment. Saloons want their people to stay and don't care about the mud, so they take better care of the horses.

Dan tells me he'll be back in fifteen or twenty minutes. I'm not sure why. I can't tell time; this means nothing to me. I've been tied up long enough to drink my fill when the saloon opens and out stumbles a clearly intoxicated patron who abruptly staggers up to me, unties me, and gets on. At first, I resist because I don't know him; he is not Dan, but he is very aggressive. He jerks my head around violently and spurs me hard. I turn and jump into a very fast gait, hoping he'll fall off.



He does not. I am upset and confused; we are not going home. This is the wrong direction, but the more I try to resist and turn back, the rougher he gets. Spurs and reins, reins and spurs, soon I am in pain on both ends. I can't think straight for all the pain, anger, and aggression. So, I give in and go where he wants; maybe it will be over soon. After a long and tiring ride, we enter a new town. I've never been to this town before. The bank is not next to the saloon, and the saloon is on the wrong side of the street, but it has a trough full of water out front. The drunk gets off me and ties me tightly to the hitching post. I try to pull free, but it is too tight.

The sun is high over head when he leaves me and heads into the new saloon. I am feeling hungry but tied to this thing, I can't get anything to eat. I'd even settle for some of Sadie's flowers. I can only try to ease the hunger pains by drinking water. It's just not the same. The sun goes down and the evening cools; hunger and neglect make me feel colder. Others leave the saloon, get on their horses, and head for home. I am left here tied up tight. The moon is high overhead, and I am hungry. I'm hungry and resigned to my fate because there is nothing I can do. Later, as the moon starts its journey toward the horizon, the thief comes out of the saloon. He can barely stand; he needs to lean on things to make any progress, and as he gets closer, I want to kick him, hard, but I wait. I'm still tied up.

Somehow, he manages to untie me and get in the saddle. He jerks my head around, spurs me in the wrong direction. My home is the other way! He holds the reins tight making sure I go where he wants. We are near the edge of town when he starts to relax. He leans forward laying along my neck. He lets go of the reins but weaves his fingers into my mane. He still has control, and he's not going to fall off. Suddenly his fingers tighten in my mane as he gives a lurch forward. I feel something warm and foul-smelling on my shoulder. It runs down my leg. He finishes retching and his grip relaxes just a little as he starts to snore. I slow my gait just a little trying not to wake him. His weight is heavy on me. Slowly, ever so slowly, I turn myself around. I don't want to wake him. I fear his anger. Every little jostle makes his grip tighten on my mane. I am now turned around and headed for home. I slow and listen as we reach the town we just left. The saloon is closed, the street is empty, and all is quiet. Carefully, I pass through this strange town not wanting to see anyone. We make it through town without incident. We are once again on that road between towns; slowly, gradually, I pick up my pace. I want to get home, but I can't risk waking my rider. The moon is half way down in the sky when I reach the familiar town. It too is deserted. I slow down just in case there is someone around. There is not. I slow almost to a stop and take advantage of Sadie's garden. It eases my hunger some.



She'll be madder than a hornet in the morning. I ease out of town and again pick up my pace as I turn homeward. His grip tightens. I decide not to eat the grass along the road. I'm so close to home now.

Just before sunrise, I arrive home. I am joyful yet cautious; the rider is still on my back. When I get in front of Dan's house, I stop and wait. I don't want to wake the thief before Dan gets up. His grip relaxes now that we are not moving, but still I wait. As the sun comes up, the door opens and Dan steps out yawning. He stops and stares and is speechless for the moment. Dan never did waste many words. This is my opportunity, and I seize it. Rearing back, I cause the rider to lose his grip and slide down my backside. Bucking forward, I kick him as far from me as I can and bolt up to Dan. He puts his arms around my neck and pats me gently as he slips off the bridle. Seeing the condition I'm in, he leads me to the barn. I follow thinking, "It's good to see you, Dan. Now feed me and get this saddle off me. I'm awfully sore."

## RODENT'S LAST SUPPER

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A SHORT STORY BY JOHN BRADFORD

Nobody could say exactly when the last feral mouser had left the Mountain Vista domestic pet food plant. Gone: never seen again in the mill or town. Cats gave years of attempt at total pest eradication which culminated in their being overwhelmed by a genetically superior rat. Rumors that were mostly unfounded circulated around and were repeated out of boredom by folks claiming unlimited folk knowledge. One common myth was about the truck of many colors and told of seeing a log truck headed west with cat hair covering every inch of a pine log. When the truck braked lower in speed to a crawl, descending into Leslie, cats dismounted the ride in a scene described like opening a zippered coat. One half headed south towards Clinton and the other half headed north to Marshall; some eventually made it all the way to Branson. A more viable story that circulated told that the cats simply lost all hope, gave up, then narrowly escaped with their lives as the hybrid vermin had evicted them in a climactic battle of occupation. Who's to know what actually happened?

"My next step in returning this unprofitable mill into showing a profit will be stopping the loss of inventory caused by



rodent damage," the caustic words spoken by the recently-assigned manager, Macel Sellers, as he glared out a north window, across highway sixty-six toward the Ornamental Irons work store. When he was tasked with revitalizing the deficient pet food mill into a profit generator, another rising corporate star came with him from Memphis, Tennessee--a man of immense talent in getting the seemingly impossible done. An old Navy pal, Carl Younger Gaines, (aka Sy) was a former Navy seal who had fought personal demons to a draw and had conquered character defects before eventually finding a place in corporate management. Obviously, a tenacious warrior who never turned loose or looked back on a single opportunity in life. While serving together during the Iraq war, they became confidants, buddies. Returning state side, Macel had left the Navy to join the ranks of corporate America. Sy had stayed in the service a few more years before taking a medical discharge to join Macel at LLC Feed Pets Group. Today, Sy sat in back of the office reviewing a financial sheet of last month's loss caused by nightly product-mayhem, damage that had to be cleaned up, written off the books, then trashed. Sy, the always-observant ex-sniper was struggling to get his arms around this new opportunity. His instincts told him to go live and sleep with the enemy, getting a feel of how the pest lived, reasoned and functioned. Historically the involvement of the United States military created a de-humanization of enemy soldiers in order to

justify killing them. The Vietnam era used the term *Gooks*. Korea, *zips* and Iraqi enemy combatants were referred to as *rag heads*. This adversary, only a common predator, fit the tag of *wire tails*. Sy made a quiet exit thru a door that opened into an executive break room. Elizabeth Elsinger emphatically asked, "How do you plan to do that, Mr. Sellers?"

"No idea. I don't know everything about this operation. What I do know is I'm looking at a chance to make Mountain Vista once again profitable. Me and Sy are looking at the chance of a life time.

"These flat landers were transferred here by corporate decision-makers that don't have an ounce of knowhow in dealing with a hillbilly mentality. It remains to be seen, just what they can do. They'll fall flat on their flat faces, get flat transferred back to flatter terrain, and I'll be flat out back in charge."

Mary had worked twenty-nine years at Mountain Vista pet and knew more about the ins and outs of the mill operation than anyone else. Offended as she was by a corporate decision to bring in outside bosses over her, it would be foolish to openly resist any changes they initiated. Her plan was to sit tight, wait patiently, and stand ready to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.



Returning to the old workplace rule of what happens in Mountain Vista Pet Food Mill stays in Mountain View, Arkansas, Sy leaned forward with his elbows on a break room counter, hands on his jutting chin looking out a large window at what was now a busy production floor, picturing how nightly carnage resulted in torn sacks, spilled food pellets, and contaminated ingredients--damage that eroded the profit margin to borderline insolvency. Thinking how nothing seemed to work in getting rid of the needle-tailed rascals, Sy apologized to himself for the misstatement. "Sorry, I mean *wire tails*. Glad the boss didn't hear that." A worn rat egress hole at the base of a column suggested that they hid out in the daytime under the wooden floor. Nobody knew much about their lifestyle. It was possible that they slept daily in the attic of the Stone County Court House but not probable. Every known control method had been tried and had failed. De-Con poison was purchased from Lancaster Hardware by the case. Zapper traps were set in strategic positions then found ripped apart with the wire guillotine twisted into the shape of a pretzel, springs ripped off board. In the last craze, two-hundred-volt electrical stun guns were short circuited, burned to a crisp, then dumped defiantly on the very counter that Sy was now leaning against. One aspiring genius even tried leaving electrical lighting on twenty-four-seven which only resulted in aiding the scoundrels

focus on the most valued product. That brain storm was discontinued after one week, never to be mentioned in another policy meeting. Macel and Sy came together in agreement that the only option was deploying what they both well understood. Death at the hands of a capable shootist. But how could that ever be done in this situation in this town? City code restricted discharge of firearms within city limits of Mountain View. Exactly how many rodents resided in the building was counted by a game camera that Sy strategically placed in the face of a coke machine. A camera was set each evening and numbers were recorded each morning for one week. Pictures collected showed that twenty-four adult rats were living a good life in the Mountain Vista facility. There's no way to get inside of a rodent's mind, so sometimes broad assumptions have to be trusted. Almost every morning dead rats were laid out comatose when the doors opened for business. Forensic examination indicated blunt force trauma as cause of death. Fashion of death implied a hierarchical system of ruling that eliminated the weak, lazy, or nonconforming members out of the colony, leaving only the strongest, fittest, and craftiest individual predators to exist. They were, no doubt, well organized. How executions were done by a fellow rat was never answered. A lifeless rat was measured at three inches of height, information vital to devising a plan of eradication.

A scheme was born that could possibly finish all the predators in one blow. Sy worked late on July first putting a plan of action together that would solve the rat infestation problem. At the same time, he found great favor with upper management, resulting in hopefully getting a transfer out of Mountain View back to flat land. He agreed with Macel not to volunteer any details of exactly how it got done but to let the end results tell the story. It would involve a highly detailed plan that, in order to work, would require an exact sequence, a series of steps. A list was made of special items that were easy to acquire locally without drawing attention to any one thing out of the ordinary. Sy spent most of the following day purchasing or otherwise procuring items then carefully hiding everything in the break room. On the third of July, Sy called in sick with a twenty-four-hour virus. He slept most of the day in preparation for an all-nighter in the mill. Before dusk, he entered thru the back door carrying a five-hundred-watt stereo. Following close on his heels, a pit bull dog name Dagger, a known hater of cats, rabbits, and rodents. During hours of darkness, all the lighting was left on and loud rockabilly tunes blared on the stereo and Dagger kept a wary eye out for any rodent foolish enough to show his whiskers. As expected, not a creature stirred, not even a tiny mouse. No rats received their nightly nourishment, not one nugget of food. Spending the night alone in mill gave Sy an



opportunity to set the stage of what would happen the next night. Sy put support items in place for use in the execution of his master plan. First, he drilled a one-inch diameter hole--thirty-nine inches above the rat egress hole in the floor--boring two inches deep in a solid oak building column on the north outside wall. Next, he attached a twelve-inch wide board to the wall and butted up three inches below the one-inch hole with shelf brackets. More simply stated: a shelf on outer wall that made a runway to the drilled hole in the column. The break room window, the aperture thru which most of his ingenious plans had been conceived, was removed from its frame and set aside. A padded shooting matt was laid across the counter. The stereo remained blaring-loud for good measure just in case a rat got bold and thought about sticking his head out in broad day light on the Fourth of July. Sy slipped out the back door leading Dagger, who normally slept half the time and was definitely ready to get some shut-eye. The day of celebration would start with a parade lead by the local high school band.

Mid-day entertainment on the square offered food, music, and crafts made by local artisans. At the closing out of the festivities, there would be a thunderous display of fireworks.

Sy tried to rest, but sleep didn't come. His mind filled with visions of an exciting mission that was waiting on him. Macel was the only other person employed at Mountain Vista Pet

Foods that had the slightest idea of what was going to transpire after dark. Many things had to come in place at the exact time in order for the plan to succeed. A rat gun and a mouse gun were packed in a double hand case. There was a night-vision-scoped thirty caliber Remington sniper rifle with a lone solitary cartridge in its chamber (safety on). Understanding that would usually be enough to get the job done, recalling past experience, sometimes it took a little bit of something extra to put a mission in the proverbial bag. If needed, there was a twenty-two-caliber bull barrel Ruger with a round of high velocity rat shot in its chamber and bolt locked open. Part of the standard kit was another twenty-three rounds of the same ammunition--not a real necessity of this undertaking--having centered on the sniper manifesto of "one shot, one kill." Dagger's presence wouldn't be needed to complete this final action, so he lay sleeping as Sy left his room carrying the guns and kit bag to his car. Sy first joined the city mayor in enjoying a jovial Mexican food meal. At Hosea's Restaurant, his honor bragged in great detail about how well-orchestrated the night's fireworks would be. Sy listened closely to exact details of explosions that would shield another load blast in the pet food mill. Hosea, as always, the talkative food matron, had recently returned from a trip to his home in Laredo, Mexico. He made no secret of once being a bold coyote. Serving the spicy

hot menu was a new waitress with a radiant smile who neither spoke nor understood a word of English. Her name tag said Felina, but her disposition didn't fit the description of that Marty Robbins song. Sy winked at mayor before saying "Oh well, she's not hard to look at. Plus, a woman that doesn't talk in this town, how much better could it get? Tell me mayor, is there an opportunity presenting itself to me?"

"Don't know, but why you, Gaines?" The mayor quipped.

"Because you're a married a politician that cannot, I repeat, cannot afford another scandal."

"Consider yourself lucky. The last guy was swept under a moving log truck," the Mayor spat out with a smirk.

"Log trucks get blamed for everything seen or heard in this county," Hosea suggestively stated. "Senoritas coming over here to work need to hook up with gringos that have money like you Sy."

Standing up, Sy made his closing statement. "Enough stimulating conversation for one day. I have work to do. Good afternoon, gentlemen." He promptly walked outside. A low grunt followed by a long breath flushed his mind of the distraction. Knowing the *rats* would be getting extremely hungry, Sy's head churned with the anticipated steps of things he knew best. Definitely not matrimony or politics. He drove down a busy street, parked in the back lot, then entered the deserted mill--



a motionless, silent mill. A quick inspection showed no indication of *wire tail* activity. Mumbling to himself "this is going almost too good; I even got the target's name right this time. *Wire tails* will some be a term of legend around these parts." Methodical, final preparations were made in short order, in silent to mask the absence of activity. A final, visual sweep of the scene showed a row of High Protein Hound (palatable, huge nugget dog food) on the twelve-inch-wide shelf along the outer wall (a favorite on an actual taste test taken by Mary Stell).

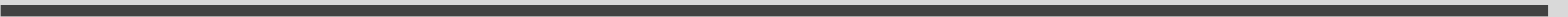
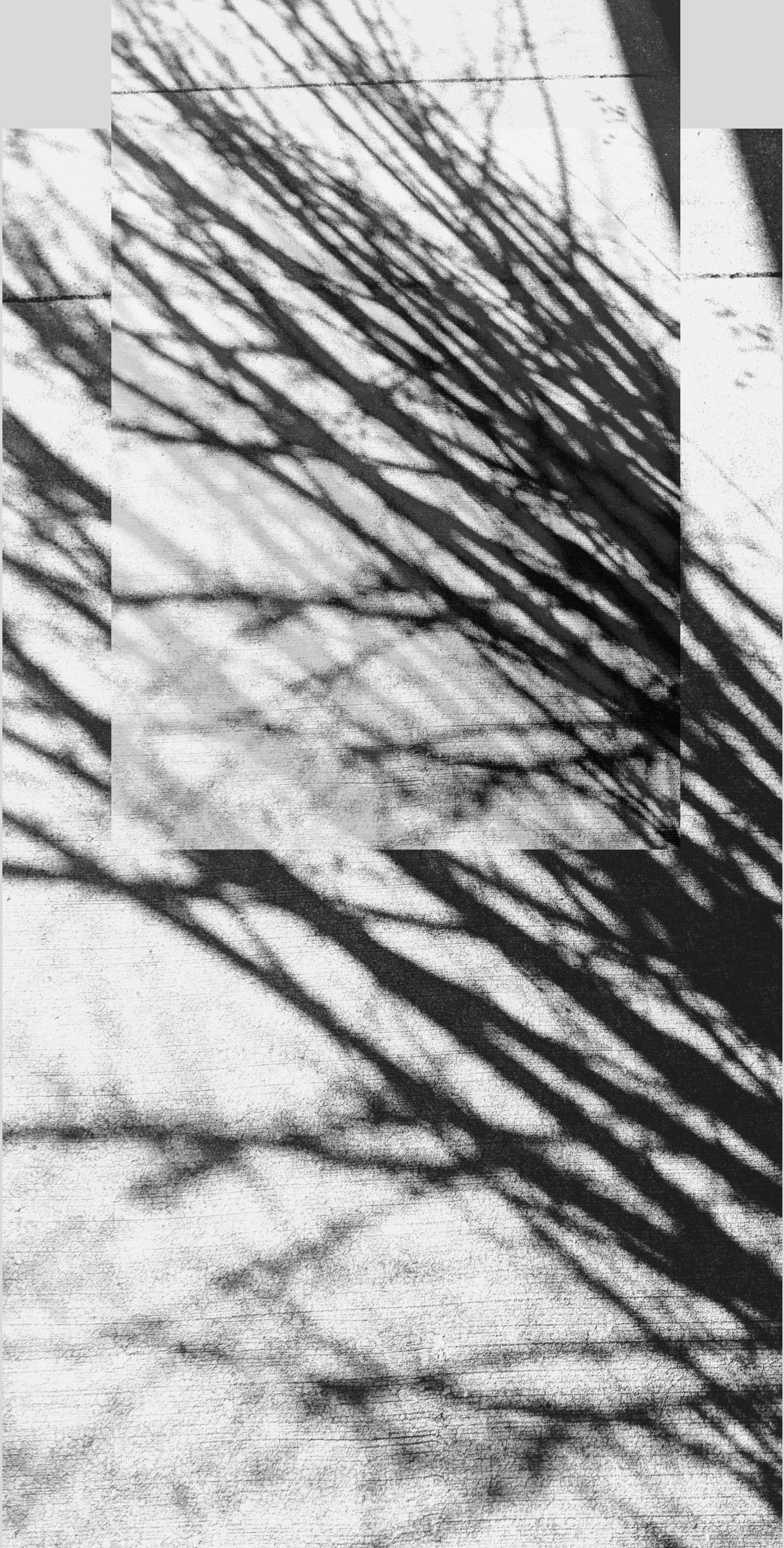
The guns paired side by side and pointed at the one-inch hole in the column. Laying on the wool blanket on the counter, was rat gun one: the thirty caliber Remington. Lying next to the outside wall was the secondary rat gun: the Ruger twenty-two-- just in case something went astray with the initial kill scenario. Daylight was slowly fading; only patience and focus filled the inner being of Carl Gaines. Inside a small office refrigerator stood two pony bottles of Blanchard Dew, just enough caffeine lift to fill the time void. Sitting cross-legged at foot of blanket, aligned with the dog food shelf and facing the one-inch hole in oak column, was a man of valor recalling the rising sequence of events that led up this point. The last sip of dew flowed down the gullet and a belching gurgle overshadowed the long-awaited scratching sound of rat feet on the move. His breathing and belching suppressed marked a

climatic point in rat narrative. Unfolded legs were bent at the knees and ankles with a lowering motion of upper body that results in a sniper lying stretched out in a prone position. The main rat gun was silently picked up with the right hand and placed in forward aim with the reaching left hand. The butt of the rifle was drawn in vertical and tight into right shoulder. His resting cheek bone, just below the right eye, settled down on the stock. His thumb pointed up to turn on night vision scope then rapped loosely around grip. In scope-focus were a few rats nibbling on dog food, with more coming out in single file. His eyes closed to refresh every ounce of vision that might be called on before the event is over. Seconds turned into minutes as the sound of tiny feet moved along the board and began feeding on the premium dog food. Sy's eyelids opened to let his right eye behold twenty-four fat *wire tails* standing side by side feeding their whiskered faces. A quick-blink precedes slight pressure on the trigger. Cross hairs moving in small circles aimed at the six o'clock area of one-inch hole in column. The first aerial blast of the fourth of July fireworks echoes in Sy's ears.

According to the Mayor, there is a cadence of thirty seconds between computer-programmed bursts. Trusting that is easier than dealing with a possible human error. At the second burst, the count started with one-thousand-one, one-thousand-

two, increasing to one-thousand-thirty. He inhaled and held in fresh oxygen in his lungs; his eyes blinked to oxygenate the pupils. At one-thousand-twenty, he exhaled half the air in his lungs. At the count of one-thousand twenty-five, the cross hairs of scope began to settle on the target with an increasing straight back pressure on the trigger. At one-thousand-twenty-nine, all factors were settled, and the sky was filled with an ultra-aerial star burst display. The crowd was mesmerized, in total awe, never hearing the shot that was heard around the old mill. The bullet'd pierced deep and straightway through the inside of the one-inch hole. Falling over, in domino effect: dead rats. "Bombs bursting in air, gave [truth to] the night, [that the job is well done]," sang Carl Gaines, coarsely, as he gathered up the tools of his trade that were secretly hidden in the executive lounge.







# THE RECURSIVENESS OF READING AND WRITING

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A SHORT ESSAY BY SHIANNE LAWRENCE

In Maria Popova's article<sup>1</sup>, "How to Read Intelligently and Write a Great Essay: Robert Frost's Letter of Advice to His Young Daughter," we discover that Frost was never keen on writing in essay form but was still willing to provide his daughter with wise advice on essay-writing when the form is assigned to her in school. It turns out that the advice Frost gave his daughter, in a letter written in 1919, remains relevant to students in first year writing courses today. In his letter, Frost suggests to Leslie that she always remain aware of her own thoughts and ideas as they occur to her while reading and to ensure that those thoughts and ideas do not escape without record. He proposes that although writing may seem quite tedious at times, it can be a compelling activity. He also suggests that reading over a given text more than once can be helpful in better understanding the writing.

Frost's advice involves remaining aware of two kinds of thoughts and ideas that occur while reading prior to

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<sup>1</sup>Popova, Maria. "How to Read Intelligently and Write a Great Essay: Robert Frost's Letter of Advice to His Young Daughter." *Brainpickings*, 19 Feb. 2015, <https://www.brainpickings.org/2015/02/19/robert-frost-letter-daughter-writing-essay/>

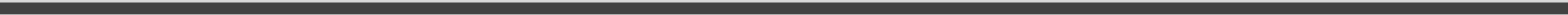
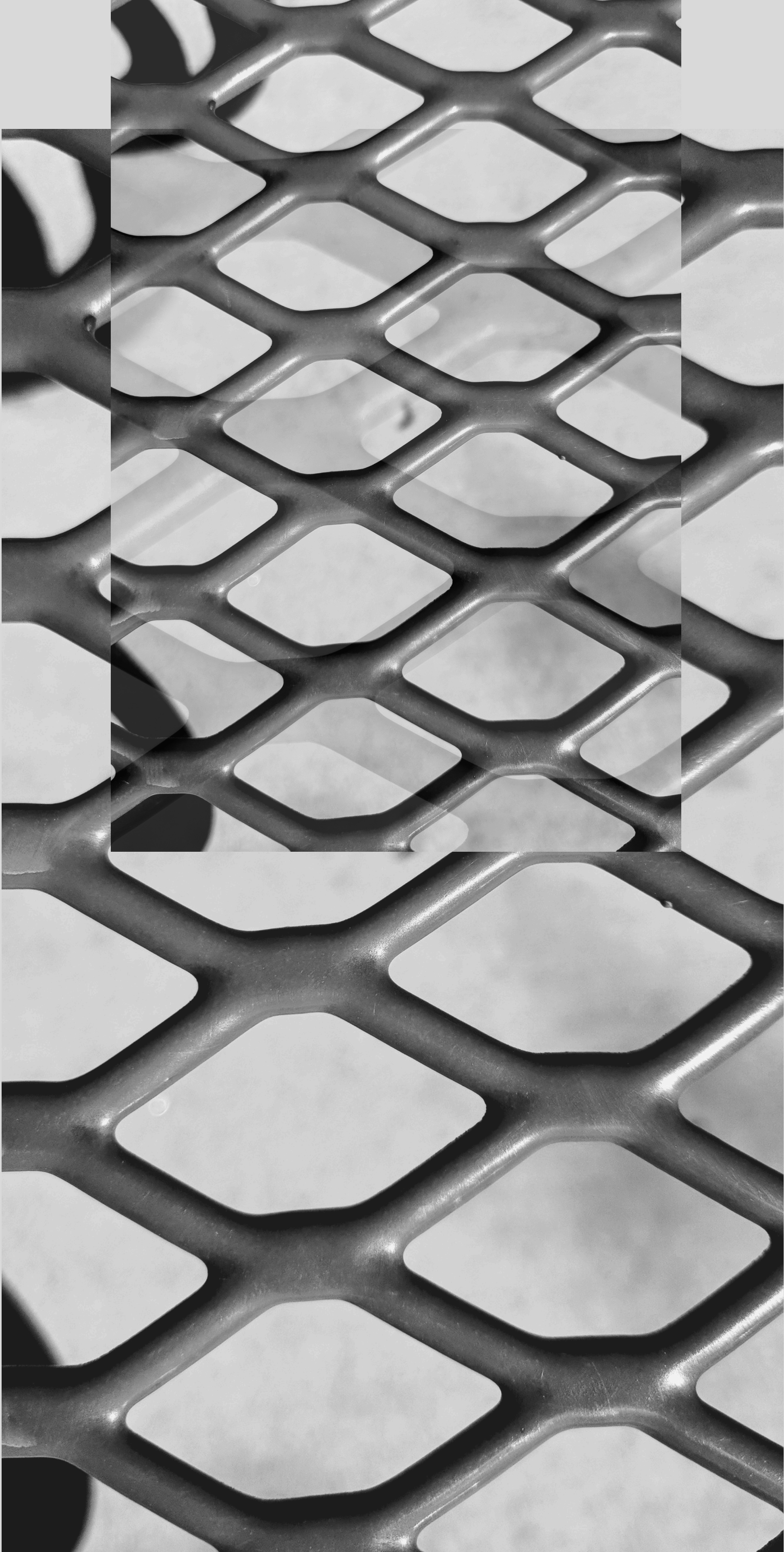
transforming them into words on paper: "you look at your author but you keep the tail of your eye on what is happening over and above your author in your own mind and nature" (qtd. in Popova). These habits of mind are crucial when it comes to essay-writing. Although reading well in the first place is very important, it is essential not to get so focused on the reading that independent thinking cannot be concentrated on at once. If the reader-writer is incapable of transforming thoughts into words on paper, they're probably incapable of writing an adequate essay, but it stands to reason that this is a skill that can be developed with practice.

For many, reading and writing are delightful activities whereas others may feel that reading and writing are nothing more than a mundane task. Even those who vastly enjoy it may not enjoy everything they read and write. Frost suggests, "writing, like all creativity, is a matter of selecting the few thrilling ideas from the lot of dull ones that occur to us." His words are truly inspiring. It implies that the joy of reading and thinking (the trick) is to focus on the "thrilling" ideas and to embrace imagination. He suggests that one need not allow dull and boring ideas to be discouraging. Frost seems aware of great payoff in exploring the both the dull and the bright--toward new depths of the imagination; he suggests that this is what it takes--until



we come to the surface again having discovered ideas that are exciting and thrilling.

It is not uncommon for a person to find that they must read something more than once to fully comprehend it. Perhaps they have read it once, twice, and still must read it a third time to grasp the major concepts. From my own personal experience, it is often the case that the more times I read over something, the better an understanding I have of it. Writing, then, is also a practice that must be done over and over again until it becomes most developed and concise. Frost normalizes the messy process of writing when he says to his daughter: "There more or less should be a jumble in your head or on your note paper after the first time and even after the second." The biggest implication is that in order grow as a writer, one must also grow as a reader-thinker.



## A RESPONSE TO PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

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A SHORT ESSAY BY JOURNEY YOUNG

*The Republic of Plato*<sup>1</sup> is largely narrated by Socrates and Glaucon. In it, Socrates questions everything—especially the fundamentals of learning, teaching, and the distribution of power; we can presume that these questions were seen as a direct contradiction to Athenian culture. In Book VII, Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" starts with Socrates proposing to Glaucon the scenario of men being shackled in a cave facing the wall with a fire burning at the entrance of the cave (193). This scenario sets a clear premise within the allegory for Socrates to further build upon in this dialogue game of reason with Glaucon, perhaps to expose a limiting, fundamental view of learning as well as teaching.

While explaining the method in which new knowledge is introduced to the metaphorical prisoners, Socrates illuminates some basic, human characteristics that are factors in learning. Socrates then presents one factor that might affect a person who is learning something completely unfamiliar. Socrates posits

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<sup>1</sup>*The Republic of Plato*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Translated by Allan Bloom, Harper Collins, 1968, [http://www.inp.uw.edu.pl/mdsie/Political\\_Thought/Plato-Republic.pdf](http://www.inp.uw.edu.pl/mdsie/Political_Thought/Plato-Republic.pdf)



that the characteristic of ignorance may be perceived by the ignorant in this way: "Then most certainly, . . . such men would hold that the truth is nothing other than the shadow of artificial things" (194). Although Socrates touted methods in which to teach internal wisdom and the attainability of light, his methods did not sit too well with the Sophists of his era.

Sophists typically went back and forth with philosophical debates and would argue until one was dominant in the argument, and as teachers, they were paid—something that Socrates refutes as being acceptable for a "genuine" philosopher. Although Socrates seems to have believed in the enlightenment of mankind, his methodology did not gain full support among the common Athenian people. Socrates states to Glaucon:

We must take good care of all such things since, if we bring men straight of limb and understanding to so important a study and so important a training and educate them, Justice herself will not blame us, and we shall save the city and the regime; while, in bringing men of another sort to it, we shall do exactly the opposite and also pour even more ridicule over philosophy (215).

This statement likely contradicts the manner in which the government, as well as the Sophists, worked in the Athenian culture at that time; all were eager to be right and hold positions of authoritative power. There is, however, a less

aggressive sense of power, a more subversive kind that Socrates conveys which, at that time, would have been counter to the political culture.

Socrates was not, however, devoid of educational prescription. In fact, at one point, Socrates explains to Glaucon how "gymnastic" presided over youth, and how it was one of the first fundamentals of learning, but that it should cease to be unaccompanied by "study of number" and the ability to use discretion (200-01). The suggestion for educational reform would more than likely have upset many who willingly prescribed to the norms of Athenian culture, but Socrates's suggestion might also be an indicator that philosophy was the metaphorical cousin—the "soul" [heart-mind] gymnastic, and it's not a far stretch to presume that early education kept the body strong but the mind considerably weaker. Socrates has a whole prescriptive order of age requirements for learning specific tasks. In the end, Plato's *The Republic* leaves modern, critical-thinking readers to ask—and perhaps this is the point—questions such as: How is it that any one person is able to claim complete certainty about the formation of learner-teacher-trainer in the conscious development of any other human being, and when it comes to power imbalance, what is the role of justice in education?





"In yourself right now is all the place you've got."

— *Flannery O'Connor,*  
*Wise Blood*



# COGNITIVE DISSONANCE AND CONFIRMATION BIAS

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A SHORT ESSAY BY EMILY TIMOTHY

We all have opinions. The issue with opinion is that we usually think our opinions are most right. What is more, we like to hear information that aligns with our opinions; it makes our brains feel good when we encounter material that confirms existing opinions. We have all experienced this; it is nothing new. The name for this experience is confirmation bias: the tendency to better absorb information with which we already agree. This particular kind of bias is just one of several types of cognitive bias to which we must resist falling prey. The first step in resisting a bias is recognizing it. Maria Popova helps identify confirmation bias in her article, "The Backfire Effect: The Psychology of Why We Have a Hard Time Changing Our Minds."<sup>1</sup> While bias is a part of how we function as humans, we must learn how to recognize it in ourselves and perhaps in others in order to deal with it effectively.

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<sup>1</sup>Popova, Maria. "The Backfire Effect: The Psychology of Why We Have a Hard Time Changing Our Minds." *Brain Pickings*, 13 Feb. 2014, <https://www.brainpickings.org/2014/05/13/backfire-effect-mcraney/>

Confirmation bias is a reaction to cognitive dissonance—the feeling of discomfort that comes when one is faced with information that conflicts with readily-formed opinions. Popova explains the distress of cognitive dissonance: “That discomfort, in fact, can be so intolerable that we often go to great lengths to disguise or deny our changing beliefs by paying less attention to information that contradicts our present convictions and more to that which confirms them”; this can lead into an event known as “the backfire effect.” This is when a dissenting opinion or idea challenges our position and causes us to be surer of our original stance. The backfire effect can be dangerous because, over time, the cycle of self-assurance convinces us that we are already right, as Popova warns, “we actually end up building new memories and new neural connections that further strengthen our original convictions.”

Carl Sagan’s advice is well-chosen: “Try not to get too attached to a hypothesis just because it’s yours” (qtd. in Popova). This is invaluable. We have an instinct to deflect ideas that don’t align with ours. If we are to be lifelong learners, we must learn to make mental and emotional room for new ideas and not just hold onto the same stagnant ideas for decades. Metaphorically, ideas should be allowed to move and grow throughout our lifetime, shifting as we ourselves grow and encounter new information. It is important to keep in mind that

just because we entertain an idea, doesn't mean we agree with it. As Aristotle simply and eloquently explains, "It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it." Having this mentality will allow broad-mindedness and should, in turn, make one more capable of understanding different points of view.

While Popova dives into the details of how and why we experience confirmation bias, personal blogger Jim Borden weighs in with his real-life experience and owns his own experience. In his blog post, "My Cognitive Dissonance and Confirmation Bias Are Kicking in Again,"<sup>2</sup> he recognizes that both cognitive dissonance and confirmation bias were a part of his experiences as a vegan. He explains that he tended to give more credence to dietary research that confirmed his lifestyle. At the end of his post he gives advice for how to deal with cognitive dissonance and confirmation bias:

We all experience cognitive dissonance, often with beliefs that run deep with us. And we turn to the use of confirmation bias to further support those beliefs in such situations. To lessen the potential negative outcomes

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<sup>2</sup>Borden, Jim. "My Cognitive Dissonance and Confirmation Bias Are Kicking in Again." *Borden's Blog*, jborder, 20 Feb. 2015, <https://www.jborder.com/my-cognitive-dissonance-and-confirmation-bias-are-kicking-in-again/>



sometimes associated with confirmation bias, we need to keep an open mind, consider how important such beliefs are to us, and be willing to change when the evidence becomes clear that our old beliefs are no longer true.

The key, as Borden says, is willingness to change. We can deal with any bias if we are willing to change and let go of our opinions if presented with valid information proving change necessary. From psychological evidence to daily experience, most would admit that cognitive dissonance, confirmation bias, and "the backfire effect" are worth addressing. As concerning as these may (and should) be, it is important to remember that they are natural brain functions that we all experience every day. If we are to live open-minded and free-thinking lives, then it becomes important that we recognize these types of bias and learn about some of the most effective ways to both see and work on these human shortcomings.





Page from Emily Dickinson's herbarium  
(Houghton Library, Harvard University)



Reintegration of Combat Veterans:

What We Owe Them and Why

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Author Note

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### Abstract

The unique challenges returning veterans face are complex in nature. When rejoining public society, they no longer have much of anything in common with civilians. There is a great need to regain normalcy and yet they have been programmed to serve society in an entirely different capacity. Our government attempts to address these situations and provide services to these returning combat veterans; however, they appear to be failing at the task. With billions of dollars approved for use to provide services, the VA system seems to be overwhelmed by the needs of this select group. The mental, physical, and emotional trauma that these highly trained individuals experience creates a specific set of needs with which only highly trained individuals can successfully deal. However, privatization factors and Veteran-based groups have the appearance of successful strategic models that provide not only immediate support for these individuals but continued support even after reestablishing a home in civilian society. Governmental agencies, though well-funded, seem ineffectual and out of touch with veteran service members.

*Keywords:* Reintegration, services, combat veteran, Veteran's Administration, Wounded Warriors Project, PTSD, TBI, privatization.

## Reintegration of Combat Veterans:

### What Do We Owe Them and Why

General William Sherman says, “I am sick and tired of war. Its glory is all moonshine. It is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, for vengeance, for desolation. War is hell” (Grossman, Lt. Col., 2009). As a Civil War General, he what he was speaking of; much is the same with combat veterans throughout our national history. As a civilian, one cannot comprehend the horror that war brings although we try to justify, quantify, or flat-out negate the realities of what service members in the heat of battle face. Generations of combat veterans have served in some of the bloodiest battles our world has borne witness to, yet until recent generations, they have been released back into public civilian life without much more than a bus ticket and a hand shake. Even today, services of the Veterans’ Administration cannot seem to successfully assist these men and women with rejoining civilian society. The glaring question raised should be: “Why?” Reintegration into civilian society poses specific challenges for Veterans, specifically combat Veterans. Therefore, they should receive free housing, healthcare, and other necessities until they can successfully maintain their independence since they have given up their mental and/or physical health and time.

Imagine, if you will, being 18 and walking into a recruitment office wanting to “serve your country,” even though you do not yet know what that will entail. You have watched the war movies: *Saving Private Ryan*, *Full-Metal Jacket*, even *Stop-Loss*; yet you are truly clueless unless you’ve spoken frankly with a combat veteran. Combat Veterans are a unique sub-group within the military: all service members are taught *how to kill*; however, combat vets *have killed*.

Those are two completely different worlds that only combat vets can fully comprehend. From day one of boot-camp, soldiers are told when they can eat, sleep, shower, and evacuate their bladders and bowels; they are subject to direct authority and know who they answer to for everything they say or do.

So, what happens when you don't "re-up?" In a one-on-one interview with 3-time deployed combat veteran, T. Dennis, I asked one question: "What, as a society and country could we have done to ease your transition from a combat veteran to civilian life?" The initial part of his answer reflected, almost verbatim, what researchers in the *Journal of Loss and Trauma* reported. T. Dennis stated: "Educated exit interviewers that can ask more than 'Are you ok? Yes? Good, step to the side, Next!' as they interviewed 1000 of us, not having the slightest clue what we were going through and had done. Also, make it a requirement that we (combat veterans) talk with someone like a psychologist—a specialist with combat, at least once a month about what happened, what we feel, and what we know. It has to be mandatory, not optional" (T. Dennis, personal communication, February 19, 2019).

Combat veterans are given vague information on the Veteran's Administration, given classes on how to fill out a resume', and sent home. Rosalinda Maury, Director of Applied Research and Analytics, along with Anne Demers, Ed.D., M.P.H. from the Health Science Department at San Jose State University (2011) address the complexities of reintegration to civilian life for combat veterans. They speak directly of the shortcomings in our communities such as: access to appropriate facilities and the need for more education and leadership of staff to better assist these men and women with the transition back into a way of life that was wiped away in their assimilation into military life. Addressing how and why transitioning can be difficult for combat veterans, their study of participants listed three aspects, specific to their



sense of alienation: 1. Lack of respect from civilians: in the military these soldiers give and receive respect and civilians appear (to them) not to respect themselves, let alone someone else of a combat veterans' ilk. 2. Holding themselves to a higher standard than civilians hold themselves to: irritation with everything thing from the inappropriate timing of cell-phone conversations to the banality of conversations irritate combat veterans who were "on" for so long [that] civilians seem incompetent at the very least. And finally, 3. Not fitting into the civilian world: though combat veterans reported a sense of their families not "getting them," after further research, it became apparent it was more a sense of losing who they had been before service (Maury & Demeres, 2011, pp. 170-171).

T. Dennis echoes these feelings of disconnection: "You know the cereal scene in *The Footlocker*? Where he's standing there staring at the cereal, lost? He doesn't know what to do, so he leaves without any cereal. Yeah, it's just like that." In other words, combat veterans are being left adrift in a society they no longer understand. Veterans, especially combat Vets, struggle with PTSD and other issues that can impede their ability to maintain employment, if not completely incapacitate them. The Veteran's Administration, along with psychologists, explain that Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder can occur following a life-threatening event like military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or violent personal assaults like rape. Most survivors of trauma return to normal given a little time. However, some people have stress reactions that don't go away on their own or may even get worse over time. People who suffer from PTSD often suffer from nightmares, flashbacks, difficulty sleeping, and feeling emotionally numb. These symptoms can significantly impair a person's daily life. PTSD is marked by clear physical and psychological symptoms and is often accompanied by other symptoms such as depression, substance abuse, problems of memory and cognition, and other physical and mental

health problems. This disorder is also directly associated with difficulties in social or family life including occupational instability, marital problems, family discord, and difficulties in parenting.

In addition to PTSD, there is also Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) which is an injury that was unheard of a few years ago. It occurs when a sudden trauma or head injury disrupts the function of the brain. Before modern-day medical advancements, swift battlefield treatments and advanced armor were developed, most people who suffered these types of injuries rarely survived. Today however, TBI is becoming a more common injury among military members as well as the general public. Most reported military TBI cases are related to Improvised Explosive Devices, or IEDs. TBI can cause a number of difficulties for the person who is injured. This can include physical changes, changes in behavior, or problems with thinking skills. After an injury, a number of symptoms might be noted including headaches, dizziness/problems walking, fatigue, irritability, memory problems and problems paying attention. These symptoms are often related to how severe the brain injury was at the time of injury, but there is much that is not understood, every person is different (King, et al. 2008).

The high monetary cost of caring for our Veterans, and the high societal cost of failing to provide adequate care for them, seems to be a point of contention for both sides of the proverbial political-isle. No matter a chosen side of the military debate one may choose, one fact is clear: until there is world peace, we must care for those that served their country. The Budget Department for Veterans Affairs [VA] requested \$109.7 billion for FY2019 (Budget Department Veterans Affairs, 2019); and in the accompanying report is a detailed account of the proposed budget and the allocation of those requested funds. This report covers every dollar needed to run the VA and its programs, specifically stating the number of Veterans and their families that receive services: over 9.3 million enrolled Veterans. However, as of September 30, 2017, there

were an estimated 20 million Veterans living in the United States and its territories and other locations. In addition to these Veterans, up to 23.5 million family members and dependents may be eligible for certain VA benefits (Budget Department Veterans Affairs, 2019). The report, however, does not cover the innumerable veterans who are unaccounted for—those who are not in the system and receiving services.

Almost 110 billion dollars being pumped into an ineffectual, bureaucratic system that is failing many that have given so much of themselves and has left these men and women on waiting lists to die. Bryfonski's "Does the Department of Veterans Affairs Effectively Help Veterans?" (2015), reports on the discussion over the CNN expose' on the VA in Phoenix, Arizona and the resulting scandal are exposed in frightening detail. In an attempt at damage control, the VA conducted an internal audit that showed 63,869 veterans enrolled in the VA system that in the past ten years had yet to be seen. Inciting calls for privatization of health care for Veterans, Senators John McCain and Mitt Romney (2014) stated: "The best solution is to privatize the system. At the very least veterans ought to receive vouchers that allow them to seek subsidized care from private providers that removes the VA as the choke point" (as cited in Bryfonski 2015).

This is where "Wounded Warrior Project [WWP]," Operation I.V., and others step in by providing services like the VIP (Veteran Intervention Program). According to R.C. Lennox (2019), a 3-time deployed combat veteran and WWP participant, the VIP program provides numerous supports such as:

- **PTSD service dogs** – These often keep Combat Veterans from killing themselves.
- **Psychiatric drugs** – These can be necessary for some people but are better on a short-term basis to help lower heightened anxiety.



- **Talk therapy** – helps in conjunction with other therapies (Vet -2- Vet assistance - helps tremendously in conjunction with other therapies)
- **Non pharmaceutical anxiety lowering treatments** – These are vital (acupuncture, yoga, hypnotherapy, EMDR, etc.) and give Veterans lifelong benefits; they also help to decrease psych meds dramatically.
- **Traumatic Brain Injury treatment** – TBI needs specific treatment because it often interferes with PTSD recovery when it causes one to lose “executive functioning” (the ability to plan and then carry it out).
- **A Spiritual Connection** – Guidance in this is also vital (most people need this when their lives have been threatened).
- **Job retraining/Job search/Business coaching**
- **Giving Back** - Coming back into the VIP Squad to help another Combat Vet is also a huge part of trauma healing.

One additional benefit of these programs is that they are life-long; veterans do not “time-out.”

These programs follow up continually with veterans through all stages of reintegration by sending e-mails and making phone calls “just to check in” with them (2019).

The stark reality in a report from Andreas Bauer et al. (2018), “Is prevention better than a cure?” shows a total is 20.6 suicides every day. Of those, 16.8 were veterans and 3.8 were active-duty service members, guardsmen and reservists, the report states. That amounts to 6,132 veterans and 1,387 servicemembers who died by suicide in one year. Furthermore, they find much success in varied therapies; studies examined the effectiveness of facilitated group interventions, self-directed interventions using multi-media and online formats, and one study evaluated an intervention administered one-to-one by a clinician and were met with success.

Bryfonski (2015) notes that supporters of the VA staunchly stand by the current system, stating that problems are caused by “insufficient doctors and resources; more money is needed to serve the ever-growing population of veterans.” Yet the proposed budget FY2019 is almost 110

billion dollars; furthermore, services like the WWP and Operation I.V. effectively serve their participants with much less.

Overall the tangled web of ineffectual and bureaucratic services is not doing justice for our combat veterans as they adjust to a life outside the military, but the gap is beginning to be filled with services like the Wounded Warrior Project, Operation I.V., and others. These private groups are providing full service for reintegration and even, in some cases, bringing healing full-circle by having veterans work within these programs to serve other combat vets as only those who have been there can. This shows that privatization may well be the better way of serving combat vets who have special set of needs that deserve special, mindful care. The unique challenges faced by combat veterans as they transition back into civilian society warrant no less than our utmost respect, and it is our duty to provide them with the essentials necessary for reintegration: a home, appropriate health care, and other basic needs until they are capable of sufficiently providing for themselves. The vast majority of veterans want and need to be useful after their military duties are over, and supporting them as they find their way in doing that is the least we can do in gratitude for what they have given up for us.

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"Those things make the tape authentic. You can hear the creaking of a split bottom on those straight chairs and the sound of the wood crackling in the stove. There's a little odor maybe, surrounding a string of peppers or herbs hanging up on the wall. You can't blow that smell out of the tape. I sometimes feel that the feel of the rough boards of the seats on my rear is part of the total experience, too. Everything. It is all part of it. And the smell of perspiration, even the smell of dirt."

— *Vance Randolph*



How Technology and Social Media Affect Loneliness

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Author Note

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### Abstract

This paper examines the impact technology and social media can have on loneliness. The use of online communication has virtually replaced face-to-face communication for many. While technology has many benefits, the overuse of text messaging and social media messages without practicing a larger variety of socializing behaviors can have poor effects on health. Depression, social isolation, and decreased feelings of self-worth are all potential complications of increased use of technology as means of communication; those who use more technology for communication experience more loneliness than those that use it less often (Rai & Gill, 2012). Many believe that the elderly population is the loneliest population; however, teens and young adults appear to be the loneliest according to a recent health survey (Morgan, 2011). Professor and clinical psychologist, Sherri Turkle, asserts that loneliness is something that individuals already possess but that technology exacerbates the issue (Strachan, 2012). In order to address this problem and prevent physical, mental, and emotional health issues, individuals must learn to balance online activities with offline activities (Morgan, 2011).

*Keywords:* technology, social media, loneliness, health, well-being

### How Technology and Social Media Affect Loneliness

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has led to many changes and developments in technology. An example of this is social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. Over one billion people used social media in 2007 (Rai & Gill, 2016). These advances have changed the way we communicate. In many ways social networking has improved communication by making it faster and easier. However, some criticize the use of social network because it takes away from human contact and promotes emotional detachment. Many researchers believe this has led to increased levels of loneliness (Rai & Gill, 2016).

### Quantity of Social Media Matters

Many have debated if the amount of time spent on social media and using technology affects loneliness. Massachusetts institute of Technology social psychologist, Dr. Turkle, claims the more time devoted to social media the more likely that person is to be lonely (Rai & Gill, 2016). Researchers also contend that excessive social media use is linked to mental tiredness, emotional detachment, and loneliness (Rai & Gill, 2016). Another study examined the link between daily internet use and low well-being in adolescents. This study found that there was a link between internet use and loneliness, low self-esteem, and depressive moods. This same study also found a link between high levels of daily internet use and low levels of agreeableness and emotional stability (Van der et al., 2009).

### A Study Conducted by the University of Michigan

A psychologist at the University of Michigan, Dr. Kross conducted a study to predict subjective wellbeing among young adults using Facebook. Eighty-two students were studied, and it was found that those who sent more than five messages a day over a two-week period

reported feeling lonelier (Rai & Gill, 2016). These same students also reported that with more time spent on social media felt more dissatisfied with life (Rai & Gill, 2016).

### **A Study of Facebook**

A separate study was done examining if Facebook makes us lonely. This study found that the use of Facebook is drastically increasing and has an effect on social interaction. This study concluded by saying there is a direct relationship between the use of Facebook and one's level of loneliness (Rai & Gill, 2016). Similarly, this study found that the more a person participates in other online activities the more likely they are to feel lonely.

### **The Elderly and Social Media Use**

The goal of technology is to free us from social isolation and make us more independent. However, the more dependent individuals become on technology, the more they become bored, disconnected, and lonely (Morgenson, 1993). It is not uncommon for individuals of different ages to become lonely over different periods of life and for different reasons. It is common belief that the elderly are particularly prone to becoming lonely. Some physicians even think that loneliness is a better predictor of mortality (Morgenson, 1993).

However, in 2011 a poll was taken of 1,204 people who were ages 18 + (Morgan, 2011). This poll was taken to challenge the belief that the elderly are the loneliest population of people throughout society. This poll found that the loneliest population were those ages 25 to 34, in which 27% of this group were found to be lonely (Morgan, 2011). Young adults ages 18 to 24 were ranked as the second loneliest population, with 19% being found lonely (Morgan, 2011). However, the elderly group was actually found to be the least lonely. Only 11% of those polled who were over the age of 70 were found to be lonely (Morgan, 2011).



### **Technology: Not a Cause but a Side Effect**

Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor and clinical psychologist, Sherri Turkle, has invasively researched the link between social media use and loneliness (as cited in Strachan, 2012). Turkle posits that social media allows us to friend individuals while keeping an emotional distance—following the paradigm that texting, instant messaging, and social media posts have taught us to communicate in 140 characters or less. The practice of talking on the telephone and physically engaging has become uncommon. Turkle’s book, *Alone Together*, investigates why we expect more from technology and less from other people. Turkle’s research uncovers the reality that online connections often provide the illusion of companionship without the typical demands of friendship—to belong to a group of friends and yet feel lonely because we are not actually known by them. Turkle asserts that while social networking online does not cause this isolation, it has given light to an isolation that was always there (as cited in Strachan, 2012). An example of this is when people text or email during meetings, or shop online during a presentation, and Facebook during class. Children will complain about not having their parent’s full attention because they text or email at breakfast. However, these same children when gathered with a group of friends will pay more attention to their smartphones than each other. Rai and Gill (2012) emphasize just how much loneliness can greatly impact one’s health. Many different studies have investigated the affects on health after excessive technology use. Frequent technology and social media use can lead to feelings of isolation and even depression.

### **University Students**

Multiple studies have found that excessive social media use affects the mental health of students. Ahmed, Hussain, and Munir (2018) found that students who spend more time on social media were found to be more depressed than students who used social media less. Similarly,

students who spent time on social media researching health information and playing games were more depressed than students who spent time on social medial chatting with friends and family (Ahmed, Hussain, & Munir, 2018).

### **Balancing Online and Offline Activities**

Utilizing technology and social media can be beneficial. In fact, a survey done in Australia found that 54% of individuals ages 18 to 24 feel that social networking can have a positive impact on building and maintaining relationships (Morgan, 2011). This same survey showed that as individuals age this percentage fell. However, online communication cannot replace face to face communication. Individuals who communicate mostly by social media and online resources do not learn to read facial expressions or body language (Morgan, 2011).

Technology and social media users need to be aware of how much time they are using online resources to communicate. Just like any addictive behavior, if the user is feeling a loss of self-control and is devoting hours to source, this is a good indication that a problem exists. To help prevent this addiction or loss of control, online users should try not to lose touch with the physical community and other people who live with them (Morgan, 2011).

For those who have social anxiety outside of the online world, small steps can be taken to improve social habits. For instance, when going to the store the individual can engage with the cashier, or when riding the bus, the individual can make small talk with other passengers (Morgan, 2011). Of course, some may require professional help. In these cases, counselling may be necessary.

### **Conclusion**

While technological advances have many benefits, there can also be significant side effects. This increasing use of social media as a communication tool has led to increased levels

of loneliness among all populations. Loneliness can be a serious issue that leads to other health concerns such as depression, low self-esteem, and social isolation. To prevent these problems, it is important to not replace face to face communications with social media interactions. The use of social media for means of communication must be balanced with offline human interactions in order to maintain health.



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“I KEEP TURNING OVER NEW LEAVES, AND SPOILING THEM, AS I USED TO SPOIL MY COPYBOOKS; AND I MAKE SO MANY BEGINNINGS THERE NEVER WILL BE AN END. (JO MARCH)”

— **LOUISA MAY ALCOTT**

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