

Dear Reader,

We are delighted to welcome you to Issue XI of *Loch Norse Magazine*. Over the past year, we've read and seen so many wonderful works by NKU's unique authors and visual artists.

This academic year showed a great amount of courage among students. We returned to in-person instruction without any knowledge of what the future would hold. Issue XI shows its readers that in times of uncertainty, our authors and artists are still able to show passion with their creations.

Loch Norse Magazine is a student-led publication which runs for, and by students on campus. We have continued to work diligently within our community to showcase diverse voices within the arts.

Our staff would like to thank everyone that came to our Open Mic Nights throughout the academic year. We would especially like to thank the College of Arts and Sciences, Department of English, and Steely Library for their continued support.

Sincerely,

Chloe Cook and Sarah Williams-Bryant
Editors-in-Chief

Cover Art:
Amanda Bollman *Can I Kick It?*

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Loch Norse Magazine

Issue XI

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Russ Gifford

The Beauty of the Door

to leave yours (that place of ugly warmth)

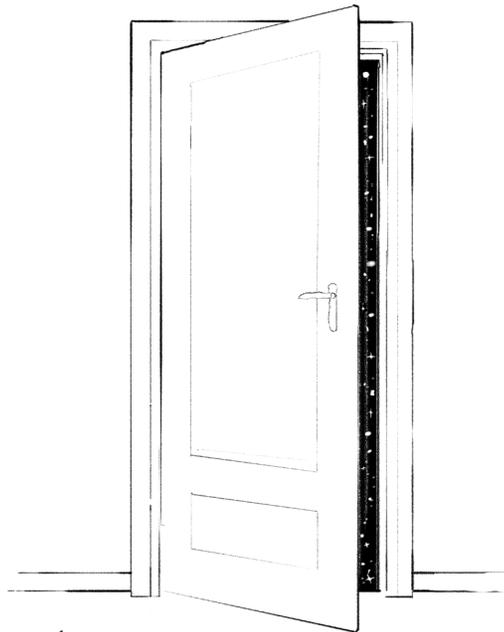
and find full-ness / my-self (oh, how broken!) dear, "truth,"
darling, (can you be named?)

you are a world,

cosmic and empty (such to be full)

a light snow on topsoil

(containers meant to be drained)



Miki Schutte

Icarus, Sun \ Me, You

the Sun wept, wailing
for the loss of a lover, his tears
set the ocean afire, desire
was his downfall and love was his

curse, it was sudden, like
morning light on pavement
after it rains: sparkling, then bright then
blinding, and he set the winding
road to Hades for the
boy he called Love, when

it happened, the boy sank, like
a coin in the Seine—a wish,
never granted, never lived, never end-
ing, swallowed whole by the
sea, and I wonder, when I burn,
will you weep for me?

Denver Pack

Patroclus

We have spent all but eternity together,
seen empires fall,
waiting for our peace.

Elysium is a field of wildflowers and
your eyes look like marigolds after it rains
and I'm plucking each petal from the stem;
one, two, three.
Are you here yet?

Fate made us find each other,
after all this time

To love you is to sit on the sandy beaches of Ogygia,
watching each car pass like ships on the horizon

Like you,
I don't know what my mouth tastes like,
but like you, I know that you've tasted it before

Come to the gates, my Patroclus.
My little moon who,
even among the sunshine,
makes the days seem brighter

I have nothing
but the memory of you,
the rhythm of your words
Tell me again how we are doomed,

fated to lose each other again and again.
Tell me,
and I will still wait for you among the golden marigolds.

Lorel Burgess

Calling It His

1.

He walks into a coffee shop, appearing as the woman he was born as. An exact replica of the doll he had been in high school.

The older woman holding the door open smiles at him before walking out and starting down the street. The bright light from the huge windows covering the front of the shop soaks the hardwood floors. Will comes here on special occasions. He brought a date here once. This is where he told his mother the truth about himself. He had an interview for his current teaching position in the school here.

He steps around a large group of high schoolers spread out across two tables, like puddles on the floor, their legs bouncing with an abundance of caffeine as they study and laugh and get distracted by their phones. He barely manages to skirt around a young lady with a stroller.

"Sorry!" she says, not looking at him from where her face is buried in a phone. "First day on the job!" She says it like he's supposed to know her or her job.

"Good luck!" Will calls after her because he thinks she might need it.

Finally, he is near the counter, fiddling with the frilly sleeve of his blouse as he waits for the man before him to order.

The guy looks a wreck, hair crinkled like paper, clothes wrinkled, half on. Will grins at the obvious walk of shame, laughing a little at the extra three shots the guy orders in his Americano.

He turns around as he pulls bills out of his wallet. He looks ready to snap at Will for laughing at him, but as he picks up a dollar bill he dropped, the guy scans Will's body: his pink cheeks, his hair, wavy and loose around his shoulders, his lack-of-binder chest, his long legs, made even longer by the heels he stuffed himself into this morning. The guy's grin turns cheeky, sly. Will is immediately uncomfortable, wanting to disappear into the two women behind him in line. He hates the predatory gaze.

Like his mother used to do to try to explain why he is "like" this, he puts this on his lists of reasons for becoming something else. As though it is a choice. But it makes her more comfortable, makes it something she can understand and not turn away from, so he will call her as soon as he has his cold brew in hand and tell her to put this at the top of the list.

"It was a hard morning," the guy says, pretending to look shy about it. "But it has just gotten much better."

Will ignores him and focuses on the board listing all the new syrups. The warm weather makes him want something herbal, like lavender or rose. He wants to get an oat milk latte and imagine himself as one of those cottage core girls with the skirts and sweaters who are insanely good at gardening and only need the pleasure of their own company. Will is so close to being that, to grabbing that aesthetic around the throat and calling it his, something that matches, something that he identifies with. He has the gardening down (his apartment is overflowing with greenery) and he will always choose himself over any kind of

social gathering.

"I'm talking to you," the guy snaps, moving aside as the barista hands him his change. Will cringes as the guy remains standing there, half blocking the counter. Will has to angle away so as not to touch him.

"Hi," he says to the barista, reflecting her hesitant smile. She's clearly uncomfortable by the fact that the guy is still there, leering. "How are you today?" She clears her throat and smiles back, a genuine smile that stretches across her pretty face. "I'm great! How's your morning going?"

The guy makes an indignant little sound. "Much better now, thanks," Will says. "Could I get a 20-ounce cold brew with cream and two pumps of lavender, please?"

The guy grabs his arm and tugs his sleeve. "What's your problem?"

The two women behind him in line immediately step in and shove the man back, suddenly yelling and raging. The coffee shop grinds to a halt as the high schoolers pull out their phones and start recording. There's an old couple yelling about the fact that the women shouldn't be touching the guy or yelling at him, wondering why Will had been so rude. Couldn't Will just have given him a smile? The barista at the end of the counter comes around, shoves a drink into the guy's hand and tells him to leave.

Will just wants coffee.

He doesn't want to fight off sexual advances or explain himself or defend himself in a public setting from men who think they have any sort of right touching another human

being without permission. He can still feel the touch on his arm, heavy and tingling. With long nails, he reaches up and scratches until the pain of his scraping covers the lingering weight.

The guy leaves after a fight with the manager and the two women from line ask him, gently, if he's alright. Does he need anything? Does he feel safe to leave the coffee shop? Where is he going, and does he need them to go with him?

He's a block from school, from his waiting desk looking out at a sea of children's faces-- blank and half asleep on a Friday morning.

He graciously thanks the women, pays for their coffee while they are distracted in a heated debate with the older couple, takes his cold brew from the barista that looks at him knowingly, soft and kind, and walks out of the coffee shop, prepared to leave the start of his day behind and start anew, fresh, like it had never happened at all.

2.

He walks into a coffee shop but he appears almost as a man. He forgot that he had shaved his legs last night and his smooth skin gleams under his shorts. He is hungover and his binding is killing him because it's not as tight as it should be. His eyeliner is smudged but he can still get away with this. Men wear eyeliner sometimes. He can get away with this.

The old lady holding the door open smiles at him and stares a few seconds longer than necessary as she walks away, more confusion creeping in with each small glance. The large group of high schoolers he steps around burst into laughter and he tenses, but they haven't looked up from the

one phone they are gathered around.

He yelps as a stroller slams into his calf. "Sorry!" the young lady says, face stuck in a phone as she hurries away, bumping into just about everything in the vicinity. "First day on the job!" Will just turns and steps into line behind a guy reeking of yesterday's stale beer and cigarette smoke. Will closes his eyes and pictures the nasty bar perfectly.

Eyes still closed, Will laughs in a short burst at the three extra shots the guy orders with his Americano. At a pause from the man, Will opens his eyes and flinches at the hard gaze he meets.

"What's your deal, man?" the guy snaps. He looks Will up and down and snorts, eyes hardening. Will braces himself for the attack. "What's up with the makeup?"

Will, saying nothing, steps around him and up to the counter. The barista has a kind, soft face with a smile that stretches from ear to ear. "Hi! How are you today?"

"Hi," Will says, voice shaky. "I'm fine. How are you?"

"Hey!" the guy snaps. "I was talking to you."

At least he's not hitting on you, he hears his mother say in his head. Isn't that why you made the change? Isn't that why you choose to become this?

"Leave me alone," Will says. Then, to the barista, "I'll have a 20-ounce cold brew with cream and two pumps of lavender, please."

The guy scoffs and walks away. Two women step up to the counter after he steps to the side. He stands there and

waits, cheeks burning, rage making his hands shake. He wants to scream, wants his mother to remain silent in his head.

He feels eyes on him and turns a little. There's an old couple sitting at a table near him. They are staring at his legs, then his chest. If he wasn't thin, it perhaps wouldn't be such a big deal. But he was in a rush, and his binding is loose and uncomfortable around his breasts. With his tight shirt, he can look down and see their outline.

The old man looks mean, hostile. The old lady doesn't look any different. Just as she opens her mouth to say something, the two women who were behind him in line ask him where the closest school is. They tell Will they just moved here and are scooping the area for schools for their daughter.

The old couple is forgotten, replaced with the passion to find more young people to teach, to guide, to encourage and inspire. He walks the two women to the school where he teaches and thinks that his morning hadn't been so bad. It could have been much worse.

3.

He walks into a coffee shop but he appears almost as a woman. His beard has grown out, patchy and stretching down a smooth neck that lacks an Adam's apple. His confidence was low by the time he looked into his closet, so his dress is straight enough to hide his curves. His feet are tiny in his heeled boots compared to the man at that front table he passes, but his legs are hairier, darker. He feels exposed without his binding, threatened and unsecure.

He wants to live back in a time where he could strap a scabbard to his hips and feel a reassuring greeting from a long metal blade as it bounces against his leg.

Instead, he wraps his arms around his chest and hunches his shoulders. It's the best he can do with the equipment he was born with, the hand he was dealt, the ingredients that had been poured into the mixing bowl of himself. He doesn't notice the confused look the lady holding the door gives him. He doesn't realize that the high schoolers he steps around are not laughing at a phone screen, but at his barked curse when a young lady with a stroller slams into him. He hadn't been paying attention, too focused on the voice in his head telling him that he asked for this, that living in the in between is only going to get him hurt.

He reaches out to steady her as she stumbles. The lady's slight scowl hurts more than the hot coffee spilled on his sleeve. But then she takes him in, blinks, shuffles slightly. "Sorry," she mutters. She still can't place him, can't put him into a box with a bright label shouting to the world what he is based on what he wears or how he styles his hair. It makes her shift away from him, uncomfortable in her confusion. He can see every question flash in her mind, each more cruel than the last. It could also be a mix of his mother's voice and the voice of every bully he has ever encountered.

Will steps back, right into a guy with a steaming cup of Americano, dark from the three extra shots. The drink spills over one of the high schooler's homework and down the guy's pants. He yells and jumps back, just to slosh the remainder of his drink on a kind-faced barista bringing a bunch of bar rags.

Everything happens in slow motion. It's a bomb about to go off. Anger and rage will boil up out of the inconveniences

that society has let get under their skin rather than learning to deal with as kind human beings who make mistakes. Will wants to vanish into the floor. Will wants to go back five minutes and not walk in here. Will wants to be at his desk where he has the power of an instructor or leader. Will wants to be a hero to children who don't care what he looks like because they have yet to be taught any differently. Will wants things to change.

His want manifests right before his eyes in the form of a nice young couple. They are his heroes. One walks to Will's side just as the guy steps into his face. The other is helping the barista clean up before the high schoolers can really get going with their anger. They are not truly angry. They will go to class in half an hour and show the teacher their stained paper and will be given another day to complete the assignment.

While the woman beside him gets into a heated argument with the guy whose drink spilled, Will watches the young lady with the stroller leave the shop, her eyes failing to meet his again. He wants to apologize for the mess and the fact that he should have dressed more appropriately this morning. Maybe he shouldn't have gone out in public. Maybe he should listen to his mother: pick one way or the other so as not to confuse random strangers in coffee shops with what his true gender is.

Here is the thing: he is male; he was not born that way or with the right parts; he doesn't have enough confidence to be who he is most mornings; that should be okay.

"What's your name?"

Will blinks back into the present, into the kind eyes of the woman who has just run off the guy. The slam of the coffee

shop door settles everything back into something close to peace and serenity.

“Will,” he says, breathless in his anger and fear.

The woman beams and sticks out her hand. “I’m Andy, and this is,” she motions the other woman to her side and she holds out her hand as well, “Emily. My partner.”

He shakes both their hands. The contact is so nice and warm that he could melt right into the sticky floor. “Can I buy you coffee?” he blurts, a lack of filter between his brain and mouth. Because he was raised in the south, his manners and loose tongue will forever be ingrained into his subconscious.

Emily smiles a flash of white. “Tell us there’s a school close to this area and I will buy you coffee.”

Will grins. “I work at the school around the corner, actually.”

They are laughing and talking as they wait for their coffee, small, unhurried chatter that fills him up more than caffeine ever will. Will sees an older couple sitting at a table near them. The old lady yells over, loud and demanding, “What are you?”

Will straightens, laughter dying in his too tight throat. He watches Andy’s cheeks redden with anger and whips around before she can cover for him once again.

“A human fucking being,” he says.

4.

He walks into a coffee shop but he appears as he feels. He

appears as a man. He could have been born this way with the stubble and that jawline and those big hands. They are completely unproportional to his feet but he hardly cares. There isn’t much he cares about when he feels like this, looks like this, when the two are reflected so perfectly, like a light inside of him flipped on to reveal what is on the outside as well. It’s like an x-ray.

He looks like that lady that holds the door open and smiles at him. He looks like each one of those high schoolers scattered around the floor as though they were a pile of leaves tossed into the air and left to land wherever the wind saw fit. He’s human just like the rest of them. What he identifies as hardly matters here in this place of kind people.

He barely misses a young lady with a stroller barreling towards the door. “Sorry!” she shouts.

“No worries!” Will responds back. She stops and peers up at him, grinning a little as she scans his face. She’s cute and obviously checking him out, but he wonders what she would say if she knew the truth of his sexual preferences. You aren’t gay, his mother whispers in his ear. You like men, so you aren’t gay.

It makes no sense.

It makes sense to him: he’s a man who prefers men in bed. It’s not something beyond comprehension. It’s not a big deal or something one should fight to understand. His sexuality is his own business anyway and he’s at least thankful that it isn’t something that has to be physically presented to society like his gender identity.

Will stands patiently in line behind a man who is obviously having a terrible morning. He keeps tripping over his untied

shoe laces and his shirt is inside out. Will is so lost in his thoughts that he doesn't realize the guy has walked to the other end of the counter until the barista says a simple, "Sir?"

It fills him with relief and indescribable joy. He steps up to her and they chat amicably about nothing until he orders and moves down the counter. The guy is stepping around him and his coffee is tipping a little. Will grabs some napkins and holds it out to the guy.

"Thanks," the guy says, rubbing one eye. "Hard morning."

"I hope it gets better," Will says, honestly.

"Once this is empty, it will." The guy nods to him and walks away.

There's an old couple looking over at him with a scowl, and Will straightens, stiffens, until he realizes that they aren't looking at him at all. They're looking behind him at two women holding hands, an obvious couple. They share a smile, a quiet comfort, like they only need to be in each other's presence and everything will be fine.

Will watches as one of the women turns and sees the old couple staring. She walks over, and as they are distracted with the argument, Will slips back up to the barista and pays for both their drinks.

As Will leaves the coffee shop, he thinks that they looked nice and friendly. He is obsessed with the band on the taller woman's shirt. They looked like people he would want to be friends with. He wishes he had stayed around longer, stepped in for them and fought for them as he feels like they would have.

He might not have the courage for that yet, but he will. And he might not have been friends with them then, but he will see them later at the school. They will go to dinner that night and he will meet their daughter. They will inspire him until he is confident enough to stand up to the next person or old couple that think their way of thinking is the only one in the world and that everyone else is wrong.

He may not, yet, but he will.

Anna Burt

adult returns to childhood kitchen, 11/8/21

my mother's back is tired, worn down from
years of carrying growing children on her hips

i have to lift a bowl of raw meat into the fridge,
too heavy for her hands to grip without pain

the metal touches clouded plastic with a muted
clang. she nods her thanks and turns to the sink

i will never ask, but i want an answer all the same.
were her children always worth her loss of motion?

i want to know at which point of my life i might
have stepped on a crack in the sidewalk by our home

to know if she would have finished school instead of
having kids if she had known one would be me

i stay quiet, instead. she does not ask why i'm still in
her kitchen, eyes lingering on the curve of her spine

she dries her hands on a still-damp towel and
straightens up slowly. my back aches in response.



Miki Schutte

Perpetual May

When my soul leapt from my lungs,
crawling up my spine to nestle
in between the soft tissue at the back of my brain,
it set my mind into overdrive,
melting my eyes like candlewax, and leaving the space for
living empty, until blood-red poppies
bloomed in my eye sockets, and a garden grew
in my mouth. For a while, my head smelled
like jasmine, and mint, and
missed opportunities, but then I
started to speak—I ground petals and leaves
between my teeth, my breath becoming a
misty puff of perfume—and my words were real.
Oh—and they tasted like springtime.



Joyce Deaton

Mutually Assured Destruction

I slip into your car without looking at you, a choreography so instinctual I could do it in my sleep. Muscle memory. It smells musky. Sandalwood, incense, pot. Old French fries littering the carpet, paperbacks all dog-eared and bent. This is the car of a teenager, of a grad student, of someone pretentious enough to dream of scratching greatness, but smart enough to know they haven't yet, and won't anytime soon. This is not the car of a divorced mother of two. And yet.

We're long past niceties, formalities, pretending there's any innocence or friendliness here. Your stupid obscure bullshit is in the tape player, and your hands grip the steering wheel so hard your knuckles go white. You stopped wearing your ring, and there's a pink band of skin where it used to be. I know that when I feel it brush against my bottom lip later it will be soft and smooth and satiny. The youngest part of you. The same skin it was 16 years ago, when He put that ring there in the first place.

Gross.

No one else is on the fairgrounds at 3 am in December. Nobody ever comes here but us.

If things were the way they used to be, like if we were still on speaking terms, I might have asked you why you were crying when I got into the car. Or why your lips taste like clove and tobacco again, even though you stopped

smoking a year and a half ago. Or how you knew when you reached out, before you even reached out, that I would say yes. Or or or.

But both of us are untrained trapeze artists, balancing for our lives on this thin sharp wire, and I'm not gonna be the one who stumbles and fucks it up.

The moon and I make eye contact through the sunroof, while you do the same things you've always done. She reminds me that I'm worth more than this. I remind her to shut up and mind her business. The pink keychain swings in the ignition. Fog curls at the windows. Both of us die our little deaths, and you drop me off at my parent's house. I climb into my childhood bed and burn with shame and guilt and anger. I burn the entire house away, the entire world away, and I leave this body behind, floating up to rest with the stars. "You did it again" they taunt me. "Naive little idiot. Stupid little self-sabotaging maladjusted-"

Mind your business, stars. I am going to sleep. We'll deal with this when the sun is back.

Margo Roysdon

*Gaslit (considerations in part provided by:
the male gaze)*

Bottoms of her feet
backs of her teeth
heart on her sleeves
who cares if she's not on her knees?
They want to Penetrate
and subordinate body
and mind as if doing her a favor
—but don't care to know innately
the breadth that made her.

Her uncloseted skeletons perched in the lawn
collecting dew, a many dawn
as his gaze looks on;
a lens that's imbued fate upon so many
sex, lust, shame
nameless
whore, slut, home wrecking cunt.

If Mary was a virgin—
why were her lips so pink?
Her breasts so pronounced—
yet her sanctity so tempting?
Her eyes so bright—
but voice so
empty?
I guess life giving isn't
ALL it's cracked up to be—
barely given a nod in the book of the KING.

Peachy resting bitch face
put that modern day witch in her place
hang her, frame her
tame that Jane Doe
—make her lamer.
Make her a BORE that stupid
—goldfish attention span—
WHORE but for the love of all that's holy in this world do
not fucking name her,
give her credit unless:
you've shamed and blamed her first.
Mansplain that
with your
big
dick
energy.

Stick it where the sun don't shine
and keep all those
big bouncy anime tits
covered shoulders
"Your bolder holder straps are showing bitch"
in your own mind.
No one needs to hear that shit
maniacal industry pricks
—who the fuck gave you the right
to write the script?

—(CALL THAT PUSSY WHIPPED)

Bria Anderson

Fallen Snow

The snow falls heavily, giant flakes shining bright against the immense, dark sky. The wind is still, and the air is calm; this kind of night is what makes me love winter. Upon the fresh layer of powder, the footprints left behind by the crunch of my snow boots are the only indication I was ever here.

I'm not running away, though I've considered it before. I know deep down that running wouldn't change anything. Nature has always been a safe space for me, for I often feel the most at peace when I'm alone outdoors. "I'm just going for a walk," I shout to Mom and Dad as I zip up my coat, grab a thermos, and slip out the door. Most parents would be alarmed by their daughter's rushing out the door late at night in January; however, my parents know where I'm going, and they trust that I'll be back. I take the path outside my house and head down the nature trail behind the church. I've walked this trail so many times that my body is on autopilot, as I don't even have to think about where I'm turning next. I quickly become conscious again as a doe trots across my path, passing gracefully by without acknowledging my presence.

Remember what it was like to be a child, always happy and eager for adventure? Your biggest worry used to be deciding whether to go sledding or build snowmen. You would lose sleep over Santa and pray each night that the snow gods would bless you with just one snow day this year. Each year we said we'd try to break a world record by making the "biggest snowball ever," a goal that only

lasted until the words "hot chocolate" came out of Mom's mouth and we came scrambling inside. As I pass the church playground, I reminisce on all the snowball fights, forts, and snow angels that we'll never make again. All the memories I wish I had cherished a little more because I didn't realize they would eventually be just that: memories.

I finally make my way past the playground and behind the church. I meet you there. I knew you'd be here...you're always waiting for me. I take a seat in the snow and unscrew my thermos. I pour the sweet, rich hot chocolate into the lid that so conveniently doubles as a cup. I take a big sip and savor the warmth as it flows through my body, thinking of all I need to tell you. "This week was rough, but it's getting a little easier each day." I tell you about my Spanish test that I studied so hard for but still only got a C on, concluding that Ms. Andrews must have something against me. I continue to detail all the events of the past week. "Kenai had to get stitches on his back leg. The dummy caught himself on the fence and now he has to wear a huge cone for a few weeks." I know you probably don't care to hear these stories; in fact, maybe you're not listening at all. I do know one thing, though: it sure does feel normal to talk to you again. That's all I want. Normal. Not counselors, not strangers with their pity telling me how sorry they are. "I heard Mom crying to Dad last night. They put on such brave faces, but I know they're just as broken as I am." I pour another cup of cocoa as I feel my throat start to tighten, my eyes beginning to well with tears. "They miss you...I miss you a lot." I look up at the clumpy snowflakes drifting down from the sky that instantly melt when they hit my face. I turn back to you. "Why did you have to leave us?" Tears are streaming down my face now. "You never told me how bad it really was. Why didn't you trust me? I could have helped! I... wish...I could have helped." I want to scream at you. I want to yell and cry and tell you how miserable we

are without you. Tell you how much I need you. But it won't make a difference. You're already gone.

I sit in the snow and weep vehemently. I've been holding it in for too long. I put on a mask when I'm around people. I repeat the lines they want to hear. The ones that will make them feel better. However, I've yet to let them see how I really feel. "They tell me I need to forgive you," I whisper between sobs, "but I don't know if I can do that." As I listen to a wise owl hooting in the distance, I daydream of how nice it would be if there were a remedy for this pain. In my reality, though, I'm stuck spinning underwater and have forgotten which way is up. My watch dings and I instinctively glance down at the time. Midnight. "Happy birthday big brother." I fill up one last capful of hot chocolate and set it in front of your tombstone. "I hope I can see you again someday."

With no hot chocolate left to drink, I suddenly become aware of how cold this sullen winter night really is. My nose is icy, my breath hanging heavy in the air. Though its hard to pull myself away, I know it's time to leave. I follow my footprints back along the trail, trudging mindlessly home. I pass the tracks of the deer that so gracefully crossed my path, slowing my breathing and wiping my salty tears along the way. Eventually, I arrive at my house where all are deep in slumber, except for Kenai who greets me at the mudroom door, cone and all. I remove all my wet layers, tossing them in a laundry basket before heading towards my room. Kenai lays down in front of the door, as if waiting for someone else to walk in. "He's not coming home boy," I whisper as I stroke his dark fur. "He's not coming home."

This world is better with you in it. Even the darkest nights will end in sunrise. Ask for help.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-8255

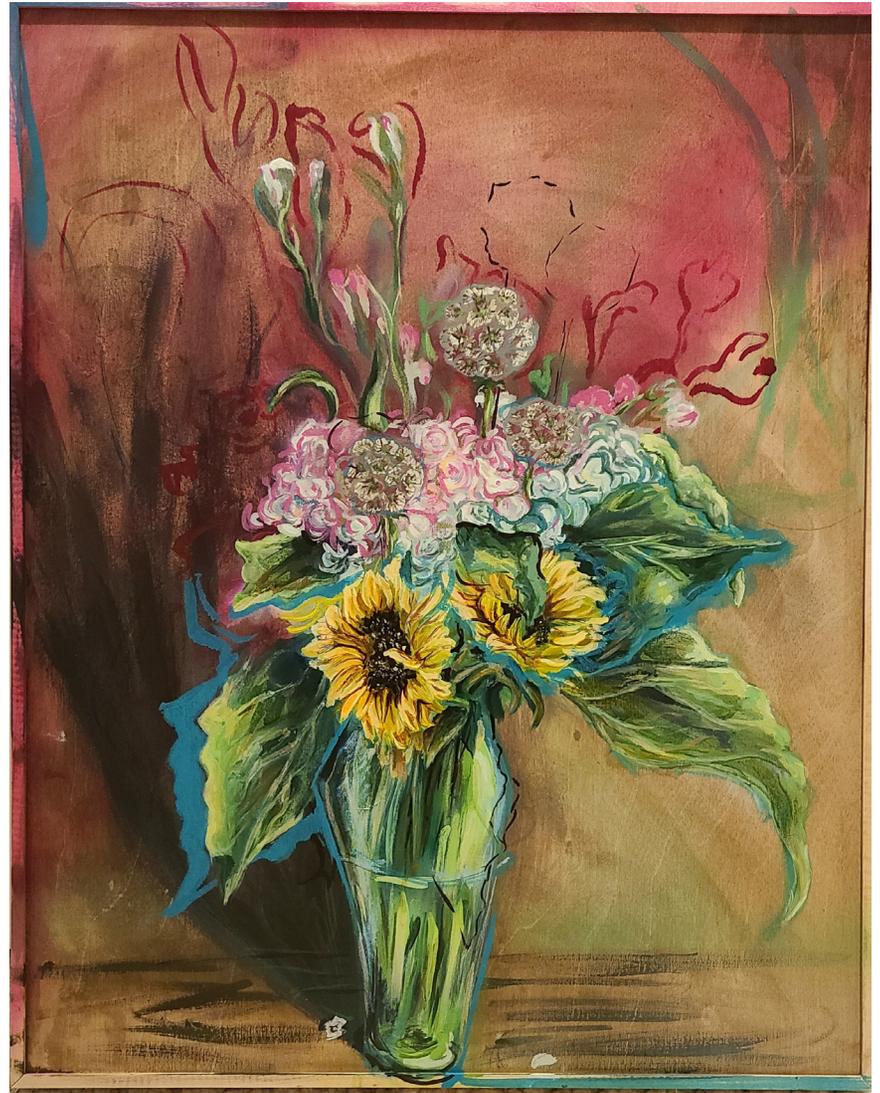
Jemma Adams

Captive



Bailey Roman

The Special



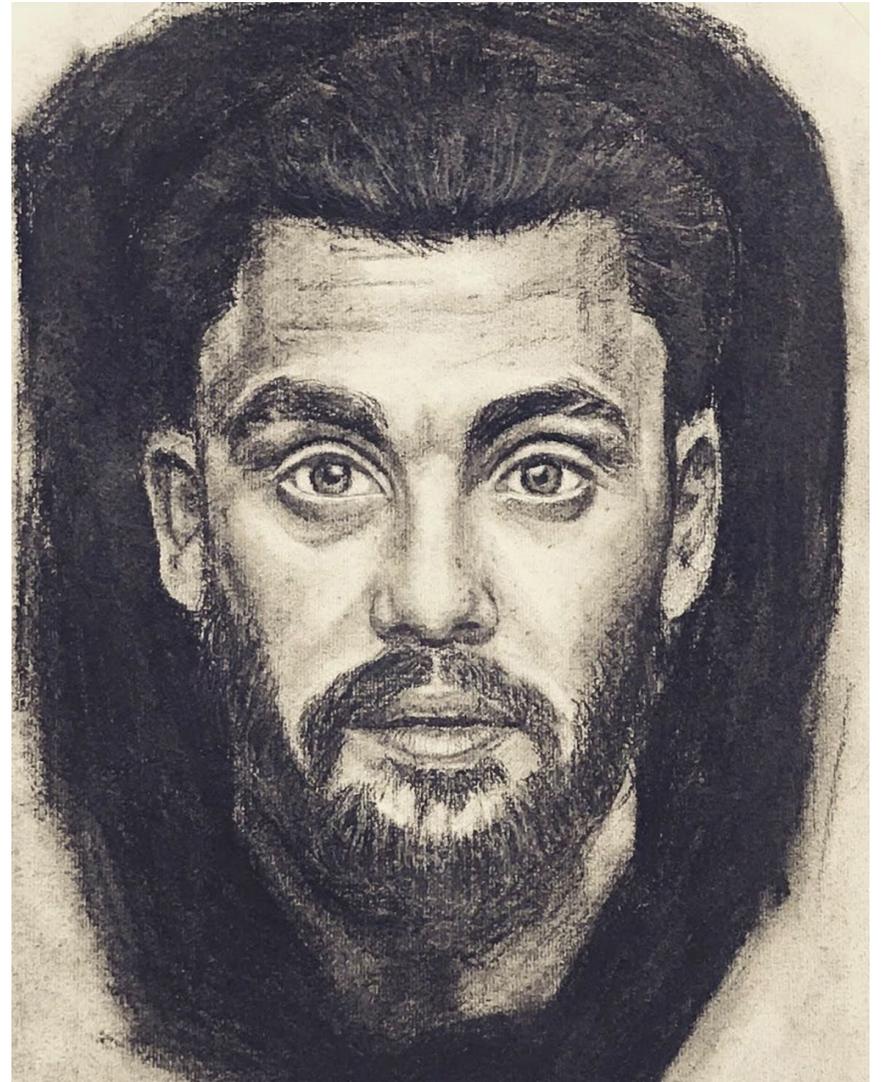
Rusty Surgener

Apathy and Euphoria



Linh Thao Le

A Portrait



Alexander Snedikor

Locked Up



Alexander Snedikor

Two Worlds



Jazmina Robinhawk

Locked Up



Jazmina Robinhawk

Memories



Jemma Adams

Don't be Queer

If you're queer,
you've no room for another flaw.
There is plenty to fear,
you've broken enough laws.

If you're queer,
you'd better be pretty.
To the ugly, we don't lend ears,
and by pretty, we mean skinny.

If you're queer,
you'd better be white.
If not, what are you doing here?
Shouldn't you be losing a fight?

If you're queer,
you'd better be neurotypical.
And since you won't take the hint, I'll be clear,
your theatrics are unforgivable.
If you're queer,
you'd better be non-disabled,
if you want to live enough years
for your story to be fabled.

So please, if you're queer,
don't you dare give us another reason,
'cause we're trying sincerely
to make your sins forgiven.

Anna Burt

Before We Go Inside (Church Camp Summer)

This is what I remember.

Her voice - angry, brittle, bitter - enters one ear and circles my brain just long enough to stick, tiny leech teeth in tissue, before it exits the other. Her hand on my shoulder, the occasional shake; flexing muscles trying to knock some sense into me, leaving white finger dents in the flushed sunburn beneath my T-shirt sleeves.

That I will love a man someday, because I am made for him, made to make vows at an altar, make promises to be true - her voice tells me all of this and more, says how dare I?

How dare I.

Moths dive at the porch light behind her silhouetted head, powder wings fragile and bright against the wooden cabin walls. I watch them because I cannot watch her eyes.

All of this, and yet I hold him in my mind the most, a spot of light in the darkness. I circle him as if I'm a moth myself. The boy from my brother cabin has his arm against mine as we lie prone on the cracked asphalt of the basketball court, still warm from the daytime sun, to stare up at the stars. His breath sounds in my ear, slow and soft.

He knows what happens next, just as I do. I'll return to the porch and hear her leech voice in my head, and I won't be allowed to sleep until she's pulled tears down my cheeks,

until she's satisfied that I want to change, I really do. I really do. I really do, I promise.

He knows, and we both know he's only been spared because he's better at keeping secrets than I am. His counselor doesn't know about his boy back home, waiting for him in Arizona.

Our pinkies hook together as he presses close, and we look up, together, at constellations partially hidden by roaming summer clouds. We both dream our separate dreams of love - a love our counselors cannot touch while we keep it hidden, locked behind our teeth.

Alex Fischer

Lost in Time

I am running from time, but it sticks to me like my shadow.
The sun rising is a constant reminder of how I am
one step away from where I used to be and one from where
I want to be.
Stuck on moving hands and passing numbers like the gum
in my intestines,
I don't move.
22 years and I still don't understand, why I love to suffer in
my own shame, attaching to feelings that aren't mine.
Thoughts mock me,
Ignorant to gratitude,
Still not a thing in my name,
I lost myself to the stranger I've become.
A child is caught on roots beneath the soil of my heart,
She is hopelessly optimistic with a cruel awakening.
10 years go by,
Reaching out to my past self for a hug and she pulls away,
I'm sorry I grew up too fast.
Lost in the paradox with time as my enemy
Escaping reality in any form I can,
This is 22



Contributors

Russ Gifford is a triple major at NKU studying philosophy, political science, and history. He draws influence from the works of Albert Camus, Henry Bugbee, EE Cummings, Ralph Ellison, the beatniks, and a plethora of other things—including the moon & those who holler outside his window at night. He calls both Kentucky and Cincinnati home and is currently applying to graduate programs in Philosophy.

Miki Schutte is a junior at NKU, earning her degree in Creative Writing and her minor in Cinema Studies. She has plans to continue her education after graduation and pursue an MFA in Creative Writing. She primarily writes poetry and creative nonfiction, and her work has appeared in *Hole in the Head Review* and *The Writing Disorder*. She currently lives in Independence with her sister, her dog, and her ever-growing collection of fantasy novels.

Denver Pack is a third year at NKU who loves plants, Taylor Swift lyrics, and singing too loudly in the car. They grew up in Danville, Kentucky before coming to NKU in 2019 to study English. They often write about the queer experience and offer commentary on specific issues within the queer space, such as, love, heartbreak, and the discrimination that comes with growing up queer in the south. Along with poetry, they also hope to pursue a career in music and songwriting in the future.

Lorel Burgess is a fourth-year English student at Northern

Kentucky University studying creative writing. She is obsessed with reading; anything that contains dragons, women with swords, or LGBTQIA+ characters is already on her TBR shelf. Though currently drowning in a sea of fantasy worlds, Lorel tries to keep the daydreaming to a minimum. She lives in Northern Kentucky, though her permanent address should be changed to the public library where you can most often find her with tea and an open laptop.

Anna Burt is a senior Integrative Studies major at NKU, her studies focusing on Creative Writing, History, Political Science, and Gender Studies. She uses all those areas to inform her writing, discussing her experiences with religion as a child and her identity as a lesbian woman living in the Bible Belt within her work. She hopes to keep writing for the rest of her life and is thinking about extending her education in English by pursuing a master's after she graduates. She's currently busy writing a creative capstone about personal identity, which will be completed in May 2022.

Joyce Evelyn Deaton is a 20-year-old proud Southeastern Kentuckian, and junior Theatre BA. She's interested in Playwriting, Dramaturgy, and Arts Administration. Her work typically explores the rural LGBT experience, women's rights, classism, and religious trauma. She will be assistant directing NKU's Keeper Of The Realm alongside Professor Brian Robertson this April, and hopes to direct the world premiere of her play *Both Hands* in The Henry Konstantinow Theater this fall. This is her first publication.

Margo Roysdon is a 22-year-old Northern Kentucky native who currently lives and works in Cincinnati. She's a junior in electronic media broadcasting, with a minor in journalism and creative writing. Writing has been her passion since she could remember. An only child who lost her mother to early onset Alzheimer's at the age of 12, she prides herself in ma-

-king friends who are more like family. Her biggest inspiration stems from a romanticization of life in all its pinnacles and ruts. Margo won GCTC's first place award for poetry in 2019 and finds that as her only publication to date within their literary magazine, *Voices*.

Bria Anderson is a junior at Northern Kentucky University. She is currently studying Secondary Education and English and minoring in Theatre. Originally hailing from Kalispell, Montana she draws a lot of her inspiration from nature and feels most at home on a hiking trail. After graduation Bria hopes to become a high school English teacher, also teaching classes on acting and other elements of theatre.

Jemma Adams grew up in Williamstown, Kentucky. They are 18 years old and enjoying their first year at Northern Kentucky University. Their strong passion for the arts can be credited to her involvement in Williamstown High School's marching band, theatre program, and cheer team. As an Integrative Studies major, Jemma continues to pursue their passion for English, photography, and music. She is excited to learn more about her passions and capabilities as she continues her education with NKU. She currently enjoys challenging herself through working with campus organizations like Norse Film Society and MBG: Fine Arts Coalition.

Bailey Roman successfully completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Studio Art at Murray State University in 2020. Currently she is a graduate student of the Public Administration program and has completed her first year. The medium of choice for her is a combination of mixed media and ceramic sculpture. Many of her works' themes discuss the human condition and invites viewers to engage in a dialogue in order to dissect these themes. She has been featured in over a dozen different group and solo

exhibitions in the past five years. More notably is her acceptance into the Louisville Arts Network, which curated works from various Louisville based artists to build an uplifting communal space during the initial lockdown in 2020. Website: <https://www.baileyromanart.com/>

Rusty Hagen Riley Surgener (R.H.R. Surgener) is known for creating a style he likes to call "Robotika," however, this piece was supposed to be representational of living with Bipolar Disorder and the changes in emotion that happens with this mood disorder. Apathy is a common feeling during a depressive episode whereas euphoria is common of the Manic or Hypo-Manic state. Given that you would like to see more of his artwork please google rhrsurgener_art to see his many social media handles.

Linh Thao Le is a Vietnamese international student who is a third-year student at NKU. She majors in Biochemistry and has a great passion for biochemical and biomedical research. On the other hand, music, and art have offered Linh an escape from reality and allowed her to reset her "science identity." Through self-learning, her first exposure to art was charcoal and pencil sketching. She started capturing the essence of the human eye and worked her way to realistic portraits. She also designs digital graphics. Currently, she is serving in International Student Union by designing posters and managing media content.

Alexander Snedcor is an undergraduate at NKU where he he has earned the Norse Advising outstanding student award in 2019. He is also seeking a degree in art and a minor in psychology.

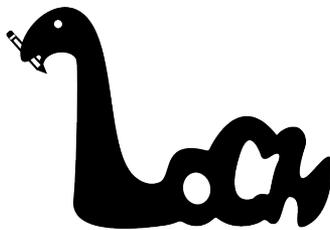
Jazmina Robinhawk is working on her final year as a BFA student. She was raised around art and encouraged to create her own works from a very young age. Over the past

few years, she has been refining her voice as an artist, focusing on femininity, identity, and psychology. These three topics have a deeply rooted importance to Jazmina. While her passion lies in painting, she is excited by all mediums in order to convey a story and provoke emotions. She plans to continue her studies after graduation, obtaining her MA in art leadership and studio arts.

Maria DeWald is a Senior BFA Visual Communication Design Major and Marketing minor. Maria is inspired by emotional moments in life, the beauty of nature, and beauty as a concept itself. Her piece *Chromosome 17* explores family genetics and a state of anxiety. Her piece *Navigate* symbolically reveals ideas of opposites and life and death in nature. Maria hopes to continue to create art inspired by various connections throughout her life.

Alex Fischer grew up in Fort Thomas Kentucky. She graduated from Highlands High School and received a bachelor's degree in English from Northern Kentucky University. She is an avid writer in her free time and hopes to pursue a writing career eventually. She started writing at the age of 10 when she learned how to play her first guitar. She would make up lyrics that turned in to poetry when she went to high school. Her passion for writing lives in poetry. Her poetry contains themes of growing up, mental illness, spirituality, and solitude.

Thank you to all of our contributors, continued supporters, open mic attenders, readers, and our devoted staff for making Issue XI of *Loch Norse Magazine* possible. Thank you for supporting our passions and providing us with a space to be creative.



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