Venture accepts submissions from Rider students, administration, and faculty. Please send all submissions to venture@rider.edu and be sure to include each submission as a separate attachment to the e-mail, your name, and place the title of the submission in the subject line. New staff questions, and contributions can be directed to Dr. Matthew Boyd Goldie in the English Department or to venture@rider.edu. Please feel free to visit Venture’s website at http://www.rider.edu/~venture/.
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Jimmy’s friends call him Steve, which is why I call him Jimmy. One day Jimmy will be walking down the street and I will trip him. Then I will stand over him, with a foot on his chest. At that moment, as Jimmy lies on his back, possibly, hopefully, bloodied and ruined, Jimmy will know, the world will know, that he’s been beaten, and there will be no going back.

There was a time when I called Jimmy, Steve. Steve and I would play tennis together in the afternoons after school let out, and there was nothing better to do but to hit a small, neon ball as hard as we could between each other.

“You’ve gotten better,” he would say, driving a back hand over the net, over my head, over the fence… “but I win again.” He was so god-damn-smug. I hate him. Then he would smile that victorious smile of his. But this was all in a time when I didn’t mind being beaten. Life was a game, and each game was simply a test between us that helped to train us, make us better as a unit. It helped us depend on each other, and use that as a strength. I didn’t mind Steve’s victories because I shared in them as well. I was his general and he my fearless leader.

We were like brothers, we shared everything: food, money, ties. We even shared the same prom date. After we graduated that summer, Steve and I did some of our greatest work. We foiled the evil Thurman twins and their plan to poison the town’s water supply by pooping in the rivers upstream. We fought side by side to solve the case of Water Buffalo Crescent, where what appeared to be an evil scientist attempting to create a master race of buffalo-human hybrids turned out to be some hobo with a buffalo fetish who just happened to be evil.

But then college came. I wanted us to go together. I wanted to continue our work, but I’ll admit that I was also afraid to go it alone. But he had to strike out on his own, make a name for himself. We separated for the time being, and we swore that nothing between us would ever change. And that’s when everything changed.

I continued to fight monsters and ninja assassins disguised as girl scouts, foiling the dark agencies at work in the greater Delaware Valley area. We kept in contact at first. He was on a trail. Some sort of
conspiracy. It was big. He was going to blow the lid off the whole thing just as soon as he got enough evidence. That’s when I lost contact with him. At first I was jealous. Here I was thinking I was doing good, and he one-ups me once again by fighting evil on a grander scale than I would dare to fight alone. After a while, though, I became worried. He couldn’t have failed, I knew that for sure, but I still couldn’t help but worry. If something did happen, I couldn’t help but feel the need to help. He would do the same for me.

Come winter break I saw him once. He’d changed. He was wearing a tie-dye shirt and baggy jeans, he had long hair and what was a poor attempt at a beard, it’s thin strands of blonde hair sticking out like the hair you might find on a moldy peach. Where was the suit and tie we’d always worn? Our nicknames in high school were the Blues Brothers. Now what would they call us? Moldy face and his suit-wearing sidekick? I hope not, I try not to broadcast the image of a “sidekick.” I prefer the term “hero in a supporting role.”

We talked. I asked him about the conspiracy.

“Oh that? That was nothing dude, turned out to be some school fraternity… ha, can you imagine?” No I couldn’t. It was too convenient. Steve had always been too careful to make that kind of mistake. “So anyway, as I was saying, I’ve been pretty good. I went through a pretty big snickerdoodle phase a while back, but now I’m back on chocolate chip and I haven’t regretted it. What about you man?” He waited for my response, his once raptor-like eyes now soft and unfocused.

“What have I been doing?” I said, adjusting my tie. “I’ve been fighting the forces of evil, that’s what. I’ve been carrying on the work, our work, that’s what I’ve been doing.” He looked uneasy.

“Ed, you ever think that maybe we weren’t fighting evil… you ever think that all the things we fought against were just normal things that we called evil?”

“No.”

“Oh… Well, I gotta run, I promised my moms I’d be back for dinner. Take ‘er easy bro.” Something was wrong. Steve had never said the words, “moms,” or “bro,” before, and the phrase “take ‘er easy,” had always been strictly taboo. He’d changed, possibly brainwashed, and I was going to get to the bottom of it.

In the spring I took a train up to his school, located in the heart of the most evil city known to man :New York. While there, it took every ounce of strength I had not to punch out each and every incubus-disguised-as-a-mailman I saw. Every nook and especially
every cranny of the city was infested. But I had to stay silent and hidden. No matter what had changed, Steve would sense I was close if I wasn’t careful.

I found him under a short tree in the quad of his campus. He was wearing the same thing I’d last seen him in, like a bad cartoon character, writing in a book with a plain red cover. I followed him all day. He went to class and I was the foreign exchange student with the mustache and sombrero behind him. He went to the bathroom and I was the one in the ceiling tiles sneezing from the dust. He didn’t suspect a thing. Or at least I thought he didn’t.

Later that night however, my worst fears were realized. Steve donned a black hoodie and went off campus. I followed him down the dark streets that seemed to get darker as we went. He was up to something, I was sure of it. He disappeared around a corner. I hurried after, but as I turned the corner I was confronted by two large men.

“Where are you going punk?” One of the brute’s pushed me. From the strength I could tell he was either hopped up on Venom, or a mole person in disguise. They were trying to slow me down.

“Who are you working for?” I shouted at them, frustrated beyond being reasonable.

“What is this asshole talking about?” They looked between each other for a moment confused, and that’s when I sprung at them. I delivered an elbow to the sternum of the bigger one, dropping him to his knees. Then I punched him in the face, which sent him the rest of the way down. However, the other one, having the drop on me, his muscles bulging with what was probably eighty percent Venom, picked me up by the jacket and threw me across the street, into the wall of the first national bank, sending bricks and various other debris flying. Then he cut his losses, picked up his friend, and fled the scene.

As I lie there, recovering from the scuff, I cursed that Steve had gotten away. That’s when I noticed something lying on the ground. It was the red book from earlier that day. He must have dropped it in his hurry. I opened it and began to read. It appeared to be a journal of Steve’s time at school. I flipped through various beard growing tables and illustrations of boobs to the most recent entry, which read:

_Tonight is the night. After several long months of paying my dues I will be inducted into my university’s chapter of the Alpha Zeta Omega fraternity. Everything I’ve been working for is coming to fruition. Soon I will have 24 new brothers. I’m so excited I can’t even focus on my homework._

—Jimmy
He’d become an entirely different person. Since when did he go by Jimmy? Since when did he care about focusing on anything other than fighting evil? This “fraternity” had brainwashed him. No, it’s time to see the truth. After a long time of deluding myself I realized what was really going on. Steve hasn’t been brainwashed. He’s simply given into the temptations of evil. I wonder what it took to break him. Whether it was a promise of money, or power… I guess it doesn’t matter. Steve is no more. He’s Jimmy now. I took the journal with me back to the campus. After breaking into his room, I placed the book on his desk opened to the last page, and under his entry I wrote one of my own.

You’ve changed. You’ve gone somewhere I can’t follow for the first time in our lives. Don’t bother looking for me anymore. I used to play the game to have fun, to grow, but know that now I play to beat you, and to the exclusion of everything else. I promise you Jimmy, one day you will look up at me from your back, and know you are defeated.—Ed
Spain was nice, but the matador never smiled at her. He never even looked her way. The Matador smiles at all the other girls but her. Back home is boring, but there are no matadors to ignore her at least. School is a waste of time. She sits and tries to fit the lyrics to Belle and Sebastian songs between the margins of her loose leaf notebook paper. When she can’t remember all the words, she draws pictures of the bull being slain by the handsome matador. His steely face alone is enough to make the bull’s head explode. The teachers all ask how Spain was and she does her best to kill the conversation with one word responses: Good, okay, yes…

“Did you see a bull fight?”
“No.”

Deflecting the teachers isn’t a problem, and the students for the most part don’t care. She writes about it in a diary she’s been keeping in her notes. She goes into detail about the bull fight especially. She finds she’s exaggerating the events and adding things that never happened. She adds in a love affair with a shy Spanish boy named Diego. He is a matador in training and promises to teach her to become one as well. She writes: “one day I will be a matador and smile at everyone”. They spend their nights wandering the crowded streets of the Gran Via and trying to sneak into the movie theaters to watch movies she doesn’t quite understand. They see a movie called Hable Con Ella, together. The movie is about two men who become friends while caring for their girlfriends who are in comas. One of the girls was a matador, and she imagines that the movie is about her. In the end, she leaves Diego at the airport broken hearted but promising to come back for him some day so they can be matadors together.

She doesn’t know why she lies in her diary, but she enjoys reading it much more when she does. The final words in the diary are: “but the matador never smiled at me”. She wants to write more but that seems like it says it all. Last bell and everyone’s buzzing. The end of school for another 18 hours. Writing in her diary took almost all day between pretending to pay attention and pretending to do her work. She is surprised how fast the day went. She avoids going to her
locker and just tried to get out of there as fast as she can. She isn’t in the mood for another, “you went to Spain? How was it?” conversation. Sometimes she wishes people just didn’t care. Before she reaches the exit she is nearly run over. A boy called Picasso has been running down the hall and the two collide. She’d forgets what his last name is but it rhymes with Picasso which is why everyone calls him that. He has a strange haircut, like he put a bowl over his head and buzzed the rest. His glasses are perpetually sliding off his face and his freckles remind her of the stars in Spain. He apologizes profusely for knocking her down and calls himself an asshole.

“I’m so sorry, I should have looked where I was going.” He helps her to her feet and she forgives him.

“It’s okay,” she says and does her best to keep going.

“Hey, didn’t you just get back from Spain?”

“Yes.” She eyes the exit. So close yet so far.

“Did you see a bullfight?” Why is that the first question people always ask?

“No, hey— I gotta go, I’m late for work.”

“Where do you work?” he asks.

“Herman’s convenience store,” she says increasing the distance between them.

“Oh, well… sorry again!” he calls after her. She simply waves in response and leaves the building. Outside it’s like she can breathe again.

She goes to work at a bodega on 8th Ave, and the manager is standoffish, as usual.

“Look at this place, Izzy, it’s filthy. Get to work. You need to clean up before your shift starts, okay?” His thick accent would normally make him hard for her to understand, but she is used to this speech and knows approximately what he’s saying. She dons her apron and starts sweeping the floor. The store is pretty quiet and she manages to finish without too many interruptions.

That’s when Booger Logan and his friends walk in. Booger always steals something, and usually she looks the other way because he’s kind of cute, but today she isn’t in the mood. If she sees him take something, she’ll call the manager. In her head she imagines a huge confrontation and tries to map out just what she will say to Booger if she really does catch him. He looks over at her as he walks in and jerks his head to clear the hair from his eyes.

“Yo, you got any like…. what are those things?” he gestures with his hands trying to illustrate some invisible mystery object.
“Erasable pens?” she guesses sarcastically.
“Nah, I mean uhhh. Never mind, I’ll find it.” Sure he will, she thinks.

He joins his friends toward the back of the store and they laugh about something. Isabelle can’t help but think it was a joke at her expense and she tries to ignore them, but becomes self-conscious. They mull around the back by the alcohol and beef jerky for a while and when they leave she is talking to a customer.

“Did you find what you were looking for?” she yells after him angrily, but he’s already gone. The customer stares at her and she hands him his change with her eyes to the floor, embarrassed. When she’s free she walks back to find that Booger and his friends managed to swipe a twelve pack of beer without her noticing. She returns to her post behind the counter frustrated, and passes the time by thinking about all the nasty things she wants to say to Booger’s face.

At home that night she picks up a blanket and a dowel from her father’s work bench and pretends to fight an invisible bull with Booger’s face. She moves like the wind, in and out, then parades around like she owns the entire stadium and everyone in it. They rename it Estadio Isabelle in honor of her skill against the beast. She watches the Booger-bull move quick and deadly, rattling the ground beneath her, but she is quicker and more clever and she evades the powerful bull. When she strikes the killing blow the cheers of the crowd are deafening. She’s defeated the monster. She bows and glares out into the stands, flashing smiles at only the prettiest señoritas. She sees herself seated amongst them and turns a cold shoulder, already forgetting her promise to smile at everyone.

In bed she can hear the sounds of the city outside and can’t help but notice how different they are to sounds of the small town she and her father had stayed at in Spain. Everything there had been so quiet. She’d spent the nights staring up at the sky and wondering why she’d never seen the stars before.

Isabelle wakes in the morning and takes a shower. She draws hearts in the steamed glass and thinks about Spanish breakfasts and sunrises. Her clothes are too big for her, but she likes them like that. Her wardrobe is comprised mostly of her father’s old T-shirts. Today’s shirt says Yo La Tengo across the front with an eye chart on the back that says I Am Not Afraid of You and I Will Beat Your Ass, which gets smaller as it approaches the bottom. She likes the shirt. It’s her father’s favorite album. She doesn’t like that her father is always already gone in the morning. In Spain they were always together, and
she’d gotten used to having him around. Now it was going to be back to normal.

She listens to music on the walk to school and tries to pick out people on the way who the songs might be about. When the shuffle brings up *Isolation* by Joy Division she is only reminded of herself.

At school, her first stop is her locker. Upon opening it, her heart skips a beat. She never went back to her locker yesterday, which means that everything she had she left in her last class. Everything, including the notebook with her diary. She darts down the halls, her loose clothing doing its best to slow her down. The other kids stare as she goes, some laughing, others yelling after her to crack a joke. She doesn’t listen to them, she keeps running like her life depends on it.

When she gets there her worst fears are realized. There in the middle of the class room Booger Logan is reading her diary aloud to the whole class. Everyone in the class is laughing. Most stop when they see her enter but a few of them don’t. Booger continues. He is at the end anyway.

“Spain was nice but the Matador never smiled at me.” He reads in a mock sad-voice and punctuates the sentence with uncontrollable laughter. Isabelle is too embarrassed, she runs from the classroom trying fiercely not to cry. Her father never cries. With nowhere else to go, she runs out of the school. She couldn’t be there; all they would do is laugh at her. She goes to the park and wanders around trying to clear her head. Like everything else, the park only seems to remind her of Spain. It begins to make her even more upset. She starts to feel like she had the whole world in Spain, and back home she has nothing, is nothing. People could be so mean in America…

Later, she goes to work like she is supposed to. She doesn’t know what she would do if Booger Logan and his friends come in again, probably ignore them, but she hopes she won’t have to deal with the embarrassment. It isn’t long until the high school kids start coming in to buy soda or ice cream. It is pretty busy for a while. She doesn’t even notice when Picasso comes in. He waits in line like a customer, but when he gets to her he doesn’t have anything to buy. Instead he holds her notebook. He places it on the counter and says “I think you left this at school.” She blushes and can’t manage more than a thank you. He smiles and leaves without saying anything. She flips through the pages making sure everything is still there, then comes to the last page. What she sees makes her smile uncontrollably.
She forgets what the jerks at school did, she even forgets about Spain for a while—because below the last line which reads: “but the matador never smiled at me”, is written in clear, clean pencil… I will always smile at you Señorita.
Like a School of Dolphins

Brianne Bergen

We return every year
To the same soft sands that
Touched our toes as toddlers,

To the boards that stretch like a ribbon
Along the rim of the world,

To the top of the ferris wheel where
Cotton candy air dissipates
To the saline cologne of the Atlantic.

To the boat that gently slices the cosmic sea,
Carving our names in silky waters.
In my lawn chair, I sip my coffee and survey the Sunday shoppers
Like I am watching some show on Animal Planet.
They graze through items
As old as the rickety tables they rest on.

Their eyes hunt as their grubby fingers dig
For something valuable.
Children burrow through the toys that
My sons and grandsons used to play with,
Toys that had watched the times change, the boys grow,
Until adulthood took them as its prey.

A woman scurries up to me with my white and gold
Vase tucked into her paws like a squirrel clutching a nut.

It once held the most beautiful bouquet of flowers
Whenever my husband felt the need to apologize,
Or tell me just how lucky he felt.

The squirrel points out a tiny crack in the vase,
Where I must have chipped it putting it away
After the very last petals had fallen
From the very last bouquet.

She jumps at the opportunity, bargaining for half price.
The woman scampers back to her friends,
Snickering and squealing about her deal of the day.
The boardwalk does not cater
to the five-year-olds that stumble
on the displaced once smooth wood.

It opens its mouth and eats
the already-tasted ice cream
as little girls cry for their losses.

It denies boys if they’re too short,
rejecting the tippy-toed warriors
with dormant pituitary glands.

It waits until they turn their heads
to pop the swarm of bubbles
that have drained the neon glow
from the ferris wheel light bulbs.

It convinces them to eagerly push
yet another dollar into a machine
rigged to make their excitement swell.

It crushes them as the stuffed pig
drops down into an unreachable pit,
ultimately shielding its stitched face
from looks of pure disappointment.

It introduces them to foul smelling,
color-coated creatures that clip
the delicate protected skin

of the invading five-year-olds
that believe they truly belong
in a corked translucent bottle,

with grains of abrasive sand,
and a boat that would sink
in the tiniest puddle of tears.
Contemplation

Kristyna Barbella
Where Things Always Stay the Same

Monique Guz

The tea always tasted weird. Probably because of the scales gathered at the bottom of the kettle. And although they always said they'd invest in a new one, they really couldn't be bothered. It was the same with their shower—strong enough to force out a few drops of water. Cold water. The kind that makes you jump back for a few seconds with the false hope that you might acclimate yourself to the glacial temperature. They too said they'd invest in getting it looked at. But they knew, in the back of their mind, that a messy, drunken night was a much more reasonable investment than a new kettle or a functioning shower.

The living room was an archive of foods eaten over the past week. It was decorated with crushed beer cans, rolling paper, the strangest collection of rubbish, a discarded deck of cards, and layers upon layers of dirty dishes—some molded over in hardened casts of curry or pasta. Occasionally, a fork or spoon emerged from the crevices of the sloping sofa—usually to poke you in the arse when you were just about to win an intense round of Mario Kart. But you were never really going to win Mario Kart.

A lot of anger resonated from the living room, usually because the man with the mustache always seemed to win Mario Kart. Other times because the man with the muscles could not defend the DVD player while he was outside pissing in the garden. But more often, because while the man with the muscles was intently engaged watching the latest “best fight ever,” the man with the mustache would subtly provide UFC with a soundtrack of his choosing. Sometimes it was performed on the violin. Others, the bongos. But most of the time, the guitar. It always started with a song about dinosaurs and always ended with the words, “I'm fuming,” followed by the all-too-familiar door slam.

The kitchen usually echoed with disagreement between the Welsh man and the redhead because dinner was always a war of preference. And despite all peace efforts, the redhead could not seem to keep the Welsh man outside of the kitchen, on the other side of the door. If she could, she wouldn't have to endure an intensive
interrogation concerning her preparation methods, cookery, and ingredients. The man with the shaved head would use this opportunity to slip into the room unnoticed and slyly pick out food from each pot and pan, mumbling to himself while the other two fought it out.

A knock at the door usually revealed the arrival of the American and the farm boy. Within an hour, the American would find herself drunk after a pint and a half. The farm boy was accustomed to this, but he was not accustomed to the fact that time after time after time, his stomach would simply not agree with vodka. And in his attempt to defy the laws of his own biology, the farm boy found his torso hanging outside the sliding glass door of the living room, painfully regretting he had ever done such a thing, when he thought this particular time would be different from all the others. And as he gags over the uncut grass, the sun starts to rise over the shimmering ponds of his bodily fluids. In the late afternoon, an avalanche of glass bottles and aluminum cans pours itself into the mouth of a recycling bin as Super Criminal gets arrested for the tenth time.

The smell of sausage and eggs tries to conceal the wreaking stench of one too many spirits, hanging onto the orifices of these seven deeply hung-over, dry-mouthed friends. The Gamecube is right there, but it hurts to look at the screen – let alone think about what buttons to press.

The sun, for once, is warm and the sky—cloudless. The white, plastic chairs in the garden are destroyed—but memory fails to recall how. Yet, despite their armless deformities, they still serve their purpose. The man with the muscles takes a piss in the garden while the redhead stumbles over to the table with handle-less mugs that she offers to the others. The tea always tastes weird. Probably because of the scales gathered at the bottom of the kettle. They complain about it and discuss buying a new one.
Be Nice to Those Who Handle Your Food

Cara Schmutter

**Author’s note:** The following instances have actually occurred to me and/or to those I have worked with therefore I have witnessed these instances. Along with myself, fellow co-workers, the customers and the places I have worked have been given code names to hide true identities. Although after the way the customers treated me and fellow co-workers we shouldn’t spare them anything except to reveal their true selves.

Before I begin telling you about my hands on experiences, I’d like you to know I have worked in many food establishments thus far in my life. It has been my impression over the years that when you are a customer, there is a certain hidden etiquette you must follow and the same goes for the person waiting on you. I have considered over the years that I have the patience of a saint. I am always a pleasant, cheerful, friendly and welcoming employee for any customer to come in my direction. I have burned myself with hot plates, pitchers, and ovens; cut myself with knives and other such sharp objects while working; and I have had food drop while trying to rush to serve a customer. Through all of this, I have managed to maintain my poise and smile to the customers. I have had managers yell at me, have gotten into verbal altercations with fellow employees and even some customers and at the end of the day, I continued to say “Have a nice day” to customers who left my register.

**Our Coffee is Always Fresh**

My friend Lori and I had been working a busy shift all day in the café. We were beyond the point of exhaustion and it just happened to be one of those days where the customers all seemed to be coming in at once to purchase overly priced, shitty coffee drinks. It was approximately 10:45 in the evening and we only had 15 minutes before we could make our final announcement throughout the entire store, which meant Forever Books would be closing along with the café shortly; that if you wanted to make your final purchases, please do so now. Sure enough, one little old lady came hustling over to the café and ordered a large decaf coffee, paid and left. Now a decaf
coffee is not by any means difficult to make. It requires you to open the spout and let the liquid gold flow into the cup. What made this customer unpleasant was after showing off our good customer service, we did not receive a ‘thank you,’ not a ‘have a good night,’ nothing. Not even a smile!

About 45 minutes later, we had just about finished cleaning up the café when a call was transferred over to the café phone.

“Hello and thank you for calling Top Brew of Forever Books in Perktown, this is Beth speaking. How can I help you?” A familiar, warbled, old lady’s voice responded.

“Yes, I was just at your café and had purchased a large decaf coffee. I wanted to complain and mention to you that by the time I got home and wanted to sit and enjoy my coffee, it was ice cold and had grinds in it. What kind of coffee do you serve? It tastes terrible! Where is the young lady that served me earlier? I would like to speak with her, now!” the crotchety old woman yelled into the receiver.

I turned away from the phone and said, “Hey Lor, customer complaint for you.”

“What the hell would I want to deal with that for?” Lori said.

“One large decaf wants to speak with you,” I replied.

“Ah, shit,” Lori groaned, taking the receiver from my hand.

Lori took a deep breath, readying her patience and said, “Yes this is Lori. How can I help you?”

“Yes, hello, I wanted to complain to you about your coffee that you had sold me. The coffee was ice cold by the time I got home. It tasted like it had been brewed hours and hours ago, and it doesn’t taste like decaf to me,” the old woman complained.

“Ma’am, I’m sorry that your coffee was like this, If you would like the next time—” Lori was cut short.

“No, I want to bring my coffee in now and you’re going to give me a new large coffee at no cost to me.”

“Ma’am I’m sorry we can’t do that right now, the store is closed until tomorrow. If you would like you can come ba—” Again she was cut short.

“That’s what I’ll do. I’m bringing the coffee back tomorrow and you’ll see just how horrible your coffee really is. Goodnight.” With that the woman hung up. Lori looked at the phone and I could have sworn I noticed steam brewing from her ears.

“She thinks our coffee is so shitty? I’ll show her a shitty coffee tomorrow.”
The following evening, the woman came back to the store, with her original purchase from the night before, still in its original cup. The older woman complained to the café supervisor and to Lori yet again. Our supervisor told Lori to give the woman a complimentary new large coffee and a coupon to be applied to a free bakery case item.

Our supervisor was called to the book floor, leaving Lori instructions on how to finish handling the older woman. Lori gave the woman her complimentary beverage all right. I watched as Lori drained the coffee from an old decaf pot that had been sitting for about four or five hours prior to the woman coming in. She filled it $\frac{3}{4}$ the way up and added hot water. I noticed the coffee grinds float to the top of the cup. Mmmmmmm chunky coffee. It looked like an over-watered flower pot. Lori slid the new beverage over to the woman after she had returned from browsing the magazines, then smiled kindly and said,

“Ma’am I’m sorry for your troubles. I hope this coffee is more to your liking. Thank you so much from coming back and allowing us to take care of this problem for you.”

The woman grabbed her coffee from the counter and walked away, pleased with how the situation was handled. Lori turned to me once the woman was out the door and said, “Too bad she’ll never have the opportunity to come back and put to good use her coupon for her complimentary pastry item. Our coffee is too shitty.”

One Specialty Latte Coming Up:

While working after school at my job which I have renamed the Coffee Hut, a woman walked in from Main Street whom I have named Park Ave. By her name, I know you can imagine what she looked like. She sauntered in wearing her ankle-length, tan-colored Burberry coat and matching scarf. She wore large rounded sunglasses that covered most of her face and heels that clicked with assertion on the hard wood floors. She approached me at the counter and just stared at me through her reflective eye shields. It was an awkward few moments, for I didn’t know if she was waiting for me to address her or not.

“Good afternoon ma’am. Welcome to The Coff—” I began to say.

“Excuse me!” the woman rudely interrupted sticking her manicured finger inches away from my nose to silence my speech. “When I’m ready for you to address me, I’ll make sure you are aware
that I am ready to be waited on.” With that the woman walked away from the counter, and revealed she had a Bluetooth in one ear speaking mostly likely to some schmuck that worked for her. How the fuck was I supposed to know she was on the phone?

I watched the woman walk away as I stood there following her with my eyes and my mouth still open, completely flabbergasted at what just happened. I turned to my co-worker and just froze.

“Girl, don’t let it bother you, Park Ave over there knows she can treat us mere mortals like shit and can get away with it. Best part it is, no matter how nice we are to her, we won’t get a damn penny,” my fellow worker, Mary said.

“If she won’t tip us then maybe we should give her a little something extra to show her how much we appreciate her purchase today,” I exclaimed finally finding the words to roll off my tongue.

Minutes later, Park Ave returned. She removed her large black eye shields revealing striking blue eyes and placed them on the counter along with her phone and her keys.

“I’m ready for you to take my order now, thank you very much,” she retorted.

“Well thank the lord you are ready to order, and here we thought the world would end if we didn’t get your order at sometime today,” I thought to myself.

“Yes ma’am what can we get for you” I managed to say through a vice like smile.

“I would like a tall, double shot, skinny, sugar-free, hot but not too hot, hold the foam latte. Oh and a chocolate chunk cookie,” Park Ave demanded, pointing to the bakery case

Clearly, she was holding off the calories in her latte so she could splurge on the cookie.

“Sure thing, your total is $5.25. Thank you and have a nice day,” I replied handing her back the change which she shoved into her wallet and walked away to take another phone call.

My brain was churning in every direction possible with the joy of knowing that I would be making Park Ave a specialty latte all her own. Mary and I proceeded to get Park Ave’s order ready and considering she was getting such a special order, I thought I would add my own personal something to her tall, double shot, skinny, sugar-free, hot, but not too hot, hold the foam latte. I made my best effort and coughed up some of the most hated, completely vile, from the bottom of my stomach spit. Spit so depraved, even the roaches steered clear of its pathway if it was laying on a sidewalk somewhere.
put my mouth to the edge of the cup and noticed how good the spit really was. It was yellow, gooey and of loose pudding consistency. I watched as it slid down Park Ave’s cup leaving an angry and triumphant trail behind to mix in at the bottom of the cup with the sugar-free syrup. We added the hot, but not too hot milk, stirred well and served. Mary and I watched as Park Ave came over and snatched her latte from the counter, ignoring our presence (not even a thank you), and walked out the door. We watched as she took a sip before crossing the street to her BMW. We turned to one another, high fived, nodded in satisfaction and began smiling as we began to clean the steaming pitchers from Park Ave’s specialty latte.

**Be a Scrooge to Others? Then, be Prepared to Get Scrooged:**

Twas the night before Christmas and all throughout the clubhouse, the martinis were being drained while the men felt up their spouse. All the wait-staff buzzed about taking orders with care, while secretly they wished members would leave a tip there. “Merry Christmas to all!” the club owner had said. “Please enjoy the holiday atmosphere, including the drinks, both green and red.” I ran around all night thinking I could use a good nap, but there was no such thing while I was dealing with all this crap.

The members at the club were most certainly enjoying the holiday cheer that evening. I remember walking around picking up dirty plates that night and constantly running back and forth like a chicken with my head cut off and re-filling beverages. Fellow wait staffers and I leaned up against the walls near the kitchen and on the bar when we had a moment to spare as we watched the members quickly drink up, slap each other on the back, make vulgar comments and jokes about the other, and laugh drunkenly into the night. I felt like I was a fly on the wall at times during the evening because not all members who I attended to that night cared to even recognize my existence. Most were genuine and even happy to see me as when I went over to their tables. Some of the men grabbed me around my waist and hung onto me, laughing and bringing me into their mundane conversations.

“Beth! Merry Christmas kiddo! How are things going?” Mr. Moneybags drunkenly said while sneaking a dog like wet kiss onto my cheek (I got stares from his wife the rest of the night).

“Beth! Well, well, well, don’t you look gorgeous as ever!” Mr. Highroller slurred, giving me a bear hug and putting me back on my
feet again (I got a month and half’s worth of gas money in tips later that evening from his table).

At one point during the night, I lifted my eyes from the table I was at and noticed Mrs. Gucci standing up and glaring at me. She waved her arm as she snapped her fingers at me, and gave me the “come here” finger roll. Oh, hell no she didn’t! I scornfully walked over to her table and put on my happy face.

“Mrs. Gucci, is everything ok? May I get you something?”

“I said no dressing on my salad, and no tomatoes. What is this?” she motioned angrily towards her plate.

“I’m so sorry; I will take it back right away and get you a new salad.”

I quickly grabbed the plate of vegetation and stormed into the kitchen to yell for Chef. He had had problems with Mrs. Gucci a number of times before with her and her specific food demands. He threw together another salad and tossed it on a bar tray for me to take out to her.

“It’s about time you got here with my salad. The rest of table is finished with theirs and ready for dinner,” Mrs. Gucci paused. “You know what I don’t even want the salad anymore. Take it back and tell Chef, thanks but no thanks. Just bring me my dinner with everyone else’s. I would also like a refill on drinks, in fact we all would,” Mrs. Gucci demanded hastily motioning to the entire table.

With my “to do” list at hand, I smiled kindly and apologized over and over to her and her guests. Mrs. Gucci’s guests seemed to be the only ones feeling sorry for me having had to deal with her. I stacked their dirty dishes on a bar try and Mrs. Gucci’s untouched salad along with empty glasses and hurried back into the kitchen. Moments later dinner was soon upon their table and it was my time to give Mrs. Gucci her Christmas gift, which just happened to literally fall into my lap that night. Chef was just about finished setting the plates with the members’ 50-dollar steaks and side orders when he hollered that Mrs. Gucci’s table was ready.

“Beth! Get over here now as not make her highness wait any longer. Heaven forbid,” Chef sneered.

Just as Chef was putting the last steak on a plate, it slid from the crab like tongs holding the piece of dead cooked flesh and we watched in slow-motion as it tumbled to the floor. We all stood there gawking as the steak continued to sizzle on the floor; the juices running from the top and sides. We’re pretty sure the steak may have double bounced as it landed itself in a pile of crumbs underneath the
grill. I also noticed a clump of fuzzy dust waft it’s way over to the surface of the steak and settle on one of the corners. A couple ants started making their way over to the dropped smorgasbord instantly.

“Hell if I’m going to let that one go to waste! This shit is expensive!” Chef yelled.

He grabbed it from the floor rushed it to the sink, rinsed it, threw the seasoning back on it and reheated it on the grill for a few moments.

“Look at that,” Chef smiled. “50-dollar steak, good as new! Like it never touched anything more than the packaging and the grill.”

I couldn’t believe what Chef just did. But hell if I was going to tell anyone what had happened. I knew exactly who this specially prepared steak was going to go to that evening. I placed it on its rightful place on the bus-tray, ran the obscenely large tray out to the floor over my head and placed it on the tray stand next to Mrs. Gucci’s table.

“Here you are Mrs. Gucci,” I said, placing the twice violated steak in front of her. “I’m so sorry for the wait this evening and for the mix-up in the kitchen. I hope the steak is to your liking. If you and your guests need anything else throughout the evening, please let me know,” I smiled. I cleared the table of the tray stand and other additional empty dishes and walked away casually and watched as Mrs. Gucci made her first cut into her dinner. A cat-like grin stalked its way onto my face as I headed toward the kitchen doors.

“Merry Christmas, bitch,” I said quietly to myself. “I hope Santa brings you exactly what you deserve this year.”

Twas the night before Christmas and all throughout the clubhouse, the party room has closed down; all was quiet as a mouse. Members stumbled to the door with disheveled clothes and hair, it was time to clean up and I didn’t care. All I wanted was to be in my bed, but this mess was going to take a while, a big pain in my head.

I didn’t mean to do anything to the previously mentioned customers’ food and or beverages. I was forced internally by my inner devil. It had said to me, “Are you really going to take the shit lying down? I don’t think so.” It felt so good to play around with customers’ food. Am I sorry for doing what I have done? Yes and no. No, because it felt good on one hand because those poor customers had it coming to them for treating me like a slave at their service. Yes, because it’s not really fair to have tampered with their food when they were paying over the top prices for simple items in the first place.
They didn’t need me to give them any free samples. My golden rule is if you are nice to me I will be nice to you. However, until I graduate into the big people world of working and as long as the money comes easy to me through the food service industry, I will be dealing with stupid customers and their petty demands. For this reason, I will continue to judge all customers that cross my path and judge them on my mental “How to Be a Good Customer Checklist.”

**Final note:** I ask you this, as a person having had many jobs in the food service industry, please be nice to those who wait on you. They may not be the happiest of people at times, but chances are if you try to be extra happy towards them and be a good table or a good customer, you will make their job a lot easier. People who work in the food industry tend to get shit handed to them all day long. Be nice to us, and we will be nice back. Be a shitty customer, and you might want to think twice about how that food got on your plate, or how your drink was prepared for you. Just remember: be nice to those who handle your food.

You have been *warned.*
Relinquished

Nicolette Atkinson

I strode in circles, utterly confused by the strange ruined building. The peculiar older woman paced behind me, picking the roses off of the vines that were growing through the cracks and placing them in a large wooden bowl. The ominous grey sky let out a clap of thunder and the clouds opened up and it began to rain. The woman took me by the arm. She led me around the corner and into a place I had never ventured before.

“They will be here soon,” she told me, but I was distracted. Hunched over and writhing in the corner was a human-like creature. My pace slowed, but she urged me on; talked to me, words that I ignored. This creature was the only thing I could concentrate on, everything else around me became grey as it faded into the background. His head twisted painfully to the side, and as we grew closer, it looked at me. Its black irises stared into my green ones. His black rags that passed for clothing made his sickening green skin even more prominent. I tried to look away, to look at the roses, but the roses were gone. Only vines and thorns remained.

We passed the man, his tar-like eyes following us until we turned the corner. “There is nothing to fear that’s just…” I did not hear the name. The roses reappeared and we instantly began to pick the flowers once again.

“We must hurry, they will be here soon.” She said again. I was not listening; the face of the creature was on the forefront of my mind.

Just as I began to become comfortable again, we turned again. She had brought me back to the rose-less corridor of the ruins.

“I do not want to go down there.” I told her frantically.

“You must. You must face him,” she said as she pulled me along.

“No, I do not want to look at him! He frightens me!” I shrieked as I fought the grip that she had on my arm.

“Look at him! Face him!” she pressed, pulling me towards him.

I stood in front of him, his head twisting painfully up to look at me, a snarl on his deranged face. I closed my eyes, refusing to do as she said.
“Open your eyes and look at him!” she yelled, now behind me. “Face your fear!” she ordered.

Shaking, I opened my eyes and stared into his deathly black soul of this hunched over creature. I stared, allowing this things image to be imprinted on my mind. His hand began to reach out for my leg. I did not move. I was afraid, and the creatures black irises held me in my place. I was unable to move on my own free will.

“Good.” I heard the woman say, now calmly at my side. She took a hold of my arm once more and pulled me a step back and out of the reach of the creature.

“We must go now, they are here.”

We turned the corner again and I saw them. As we approached them the roses on the vine began to fade; first from red to beige and then they were gone. The woman handed me the wooden bowl full of the bright, vibrant, red roses as we continued down the open hall.

I was short of breath as we approached the riot.

“There she is!” one yelled. The older woman was unseen by them. It was as if she was a figment of my imagination. I walked toward them at a calm pace. All fear had been relinquished. I reached the man who had been yelling and offered him a rose from the wooden bowl. As he took the rose from my hand, everything faded. The riot, the ruins, the woman, and the creature were all gone. I stood there alone with the wooden bowl full of roses.
My shears reach forth and grip the neck,
closing quickly, snapping shut—
the head falling just short of salvation.
I can’t stop myself from smiling,
giggling, giddy with the gesture
of general gall, my nerves of steel
steeled against their cries,
their pleas, the empty sky
that they view from their knees;
a sea of violet, crimson, and yellow
twirling freely in the luscious meadow
hoping that, maybe, they may live
unperturbed by my hands,
now disturbed by my hands,
falling to pieces as the petals
pedal away, wheeling towards
a destination unknown, forwards
and backwards, strafing left to right
and falling into my palm.
I look upon them, my smile still standing
firm as a testament to my joy.
This is truly one for the ages,
a massacre inexplicable to the sages
of old, the masterminds, the geniuses,
the tacticians of tyranny’s employ,
as none could reckon the relentless rush
of ecstasy that pushes me onward,
pushes me further as I chop
and lop and hack and slash
and sever and separate and
mince and mash
the bits and pieces
into a bewitching bouquet
befitting the most beautiful of brides.
The Unsuspecting Bird

Michael Boldizar

I saw a man in the sky
as he threw a net
over a bird
(the unsuspecting bird).
The wind blew,
and the man became a bird
with its beak pointed directly
at the ever rising sun.
The sun rose,
and the bird became a flower,
a sunflower,
illuminated by the horizon.
That flower bloomed
into a myriad of blues
and whites and yellows
while the birds flew away.
I saw a man on the ground
as he cast his thoughts
over a bird
(the unsuspecting bird)
and watched as they both took flight.
Untitled

Ken Krupa
The Puppet

Aimée Simone

They sit on shelves, feet buried in shavings, arms tied with string. They stare at him with eyes not yet formed, waiting. From his corner, in the midst of the gloom, he looks upon his unfinished creations. Imperfections cloud his vision, driving him mad. Frustration forces him to sigh. Silence lowers his eyelids. Exhaustion drops his head.

But purpose sobers him. Eyes open again, head straightens up, mind churns frantically. He picks up the half formed block of wood sitting in front of him, running his fingers over the grain. Grasping his tool in his free hand, he begins. Metal touches wood and for a moment he is content. His grizzly hand guides the instrument over the wood in curving patterns. Back and forth, up and down, in and out. Every movement is strategic and precise, following the plan he labored over in his mind. Careful contemplation controls every maneuver. Nothing is left to the imagination. But everything is forced and mechanical. He is a machine. He is controlled.

But he, he is the great puppet-master, he reminds himself. He creates and controls life: beautiful, sad, comical, whatever he wants. String, wood, and a knife make him king.

Staring up at his shelf of prized creations in the midst of the cluttered darkness, he sees her, his inspiration. She stands posed as usual, staring right back at the old man, seeming to whisper, “you no longer have the cleverness you had when you made me.” But her words mean nothing. She has no power. Her limbs are tied with string.

But he himself was always held by strings. The strings were always there. As a child, he would sit on the floor across from his mother, legs crossed, eyes anxious. She would place large bundles of string, all different colors bunched together in front of him and say, “separate the colors. Go on now, you know what to do.”

“Blue with blue, red with red, yellow with yellow, green with green,” he would repeat aloud as his hands dove into the mass of tangled string. His fingers flailed around inside until he could grasp just one scratchy string, pulling it out and placing it on the splintered floor in front of him. There he would stay, fishing for string and then sorting it, blue with blue, red with red, yellow with yellow, green with
green until he grew tired of the twisted labyrinth before him, sicken-

ed by the connection he had to the string. The pieces clung to his

reluctant hands and so he would shake them back and forth, up and
down, until the string released, twirled slowly to the floor, landed
limp. He would get up and stomp out of the room, but the string
followed him. It was everywhere.

There was string on toys, string on shoes, string around his

mother’s neck, string to put clothes on, string to fish with, string at
the end of candles. Rope was made of string, clothes were made of
string, blankets, bags, carpets, instruments, gloves, scarves, paper were
all made of string. String controlled everything. String held everything
together.

He was married once. String held them together, tied them to
each other with an inseparable bond. Her name was Coppélia. He fell
in love with her painted cheeks, oak eyes, and birch-tree skin.
Childhood was in her laugh. She was a perfect little doll. They tied the
knot, making two strings one, her strings twisting around his. If she
moved, he moved, leg with leg, arm with arm, mouth with mouth. He
tried to move away by sitting in his workshop, at first late at night,
carving his tiny children from the precious wood. But there was the
string connected to her beautiful summer face that always pulled him
back to her, and before he would realize it, he would find himself
leaving the workshop, making his way back to her arms. She was
controlling him. The string was binding. He couldn’t move, though he
tried. She only clung to him more, latched to his reluctant arm.

“I always want to be with you,” Coppélia would say, almost
pleading, “I love you.” He wouldn’t answer. He had to get away. If
she looked away for even a moment, he was gone. But she knew
where he went, she knew everything about him. She followed him
down to the workshop and stood there watching him, chanting in
whispers, “I love you, know that I love you.” Her wooden eyes
became muddy with tears but she was persistent. She was always
there, always attached. The strings were pulling him down.

So he cut them, snipped them in two. And to be certain of his
freedom, he grabbed each string in his oversized hands and pulled
them apart, strand by strand. He was free, leaving behind a sad rag
doll, broken and frayed.

And he was free, free to sit in the darkness of his workshop
and create life from wood. Wood and string. But he controlled the
string; he dictated its every move. He was master. The day he gained
his freedom he created her: his perfect creation, his beautiful
inspiration, his masterpiece. He created her drunk on exhilaration and exhaustion; he didn’t know what he was doing. He grabbed a block of wood and his carving knife. Half-possessed, he hacked away at the piece. Hour after hour he worked, shavings drowning shavings. With a color-tipped brush he painted life into her newly formed body. Each stroke was careful but without known purpose. Paint, shavings, and sweat stained his face and beard, but she was finished.

She glowed with perfection before him, poised in an arabesque that could rival Pavlova. Her lips were stoic but her eyes told the story of love, and heartbreak, and scattered dreams. He tied string around her hands and feet and she was his, forever bound. He placed the tiny figure in the middle of the highest shelf, in between other creations that were seen as treasures before she existed, but now only looked like mistakes.

Now, this revelation, the realization of his full potential is barely a memory, her perfect figure the only reminder. She taunts him from her pedestal.

“Try to replicate me,” she laughs. “I dare you.”

He ignores her ridicule and turns back to his work. But her eyes are watching him, looking over his shoulder, silently criticizing every move.

He turns to face her. She is deliberating judgment. Her verdict is passed down.

“Finished,” she condemns. “You can’t remake perfection.”

Frustration brings him to his knees. Helplessness allows him to weep. Everything is over. He looks up at her smug face one last time and sees string rising up from her delicate arms.

“I am the master. I am in control,” he chokes, standing again, confident.

“Are you?” she challenges, unwavering.

“I created you! I hold the string!” Before she can answer he lunges at the shelf, bringing lesser creations to the floor, clamoring for the top. He clutches her, enraged, and with a final look thrusts her to the ground. Her face shatters.

The sound explodes around him, echoing off the walls, numbing his skin.

He’s not finished yet. Everything must be destroyed.

His monster hands grip the shelf, ripping it down, sending prisoners to their deaths. He tears down the next shelf, and the next, each time ending the same until the walls are bare. Corpses line the floor, covering his feet, string wrapped around his legs. Shaking, he
reaches into his pocket, pulling out a tiny box with matches inside. He opens the box and takes out a match. He strikes it against the side, the bone striking sound warning the puppets of their doom. He throws the match into the pile of bodies surrounding him, watching the flames rise up and devour the useless wood. He is in control now. He is the master.
Cheesecake

Michael Potts

Charlene is a slice of cheesecake. She is two minutes old, having just been cut from the side of her mother. Her crust is a crisp deep brown and her milky surface is glazed in drizzled honey. She has just been lifted by a waiter. Her mood: excitement.

Oh my God oh my God oh my God! I’ve waited my whole life for this! It’s so…POETIC! YES! O! Thou who doth choose me from a menu vast, seen me cloven thus and lain upon thy serving dish…Shakespeare is sooo dreamy. (pause) Hurry up you jerk! My beloved awaits me! Oh shit! Does my crust look okay? What if he doesn’t like blondes? I should have gone tanning, GOD I’m so pale! This is going to be terrible. Oh my God he’s putting me down. Look at that face. It’s destiny. Oh…take a slice out of me, that’s right, put me right in your m—HEY! Where are you going? Oh no. He hates me. He HATES me. He’s gone off to find the waiter. I can hear him now. “Um, waiter, I asked for cake not some pale little…PIIIIE!” (Sobs) “Bring me a nice piece of chocolate cake” God I’m SO PALE! No, no no no. He’s damn lucky to have me. He’ll be back. I know he will. Look at me. I’m rich. I’m decadent. I’m moist. Moist…the most hated word in the English language! I put on my best honey for you! It was in drizzles! Now it’s just a glaze. I was a delicate cheesecake and you made me feel like a… a… DONUT. Well fine. If that’s what you want, some cheap, fat-ass, deep-fried little strumpet, then go ahead. I don’t need you. I’m fine just right here on my own. I’m fine without—HUH! I KNEW YOU’D COME BACK!
Our Trip to India

Pat Mosto

1
The streets were full of people,
Crimson, orange, yellow clothes,
Beads and glitter in their saris,
Powerful women sharing their goods.

Awesome smells of sweets and curry,
Playful children, funky monkeys,
River waters honoring the death,
To the steps of majestic palaces.

The beautiful women offer me a bracelet
“for the young lady” she says,
I praise the beauty of the design
…. I am so sad I’m going back home.

2
The streets were crowded with people,
Purple, brown, deep green garments,
Rotten darkness on their saris,
Worn-out women sharing their sadness.

Awful smells of filth and putridity,
Poor children, savage monkeys,
Dirty waters spitting death
To the steps of old, ruin palaces.

The ugly men offer me a ring
“for the old lady” he says,
I dislike the gold design
…. I am so glad I’m going home.
Landfills

Pat Mosto

A pile of smashed crayons. 
Their color dispersed on the land. 
Footprints of different shapes 
on wax left by time. 
A red flow, like blood, 
snaking down a path. 
All color tainted, 
polluted by filth and sand.

Piles of plastic cups. 
Containers of good and bad. 
Giving away a taste of humanity, 
not enough to know its tides. 
Pieces of frozen wraps. 
Particles preserved as in a lab. 
One can chemically analyze 
the different rays of life.

Sadness, broken level time. 
Crystals showing tears of past. 
Love letters shredded to parts. 
Peels of humanity, 
like an onion wrap. 
Labels of soup cans, 
diluted, digested 
and thrown away afar.

All the world’s trash glued. 
Tied together with fingernail clamps. 
Swallowed by the mother earth, 
vomited like a cocktail flask. 
Scared, I am scared of the trash. 
In the darkness of the night, 
thrown against the dark blue sky, 
humanity’s leftover piles.
And the cycle always starts.  
Until the earth can vomit  
no more trash …
Untitled

Megan Moyer
Howie Mandel

Sarah Sassone

We love the sparkling, speckless, spotless, spic-n-span, *sanitary*. It sucks that no one gets you, Howie. They just don’t comprehend that they carry so many—too many—estranged anti-bodies. How don’t they see that the finger-prints on a glass are chancy, too chancy, that those swirly smudges from their own damn hands get so close—too close—to uniting with your lips as you drink your perfectly purified Fuji water. They are so naïve, so ignorant, and they don’t see that you spray your bed with Lysol every day because when they sit on your bed, their ass germs are rankling where you sleep. Oh Howie, you’d understand if I said that I can’t lend you a pencil because if your hand—which just touched that desk that you share with sloppy society—held my pencil, that pencil would contact all my other pencils in my specific Ticonderoga pencil case and ruin me? They don’t see that it’s not so funny, Howie, that we’re not always comedians. You understand why I can’t offer you a handshake or walk within a nine and three-sevenths-inch radius of you, Howie. Right?
Staff Biographies

Matthew Asson (Editor) is a senior English and Philosophy major with an interest in poetry and logic. He is part of Phi Sigma Tau (the International Philosophy Honors Society) and Sigma Tau Delta (the International English Honors Society). Matt enjoys writing short stories and poems, playing paintball, and attending heavy metal shows. He hopes to attend graduate school in the near future to gain an MFA in creative writing. His greatest academic influences include philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, as well as poets Paul Muldoon and C.K. Williams. Matt values education and believes that “there is always more to learn.”

Amelia Byrnes (Copy Editor) is a senior English Literature major with a minor in Film and Media Studies. In addition to working at Rider’s Department of Graduate Education, she interns at Cineaste Magazine, a film magazine. She presented works at Rider’s Horror Film Symposium, Rider’s Gender Studies Colloquium, and the New Jersey Women’s and Gender Studies Consortium in Spring 2010. In her spare time, she writes “Gluten Freebies by Miel,” a blog dedicated to those with Celiac Disease and the gluten-free lifestyle.

Sarah Sassone (Copy Editor) is a junior English Writing and American Studies double major. She is the historian of Alpha Phi Omega, the co-ed community service fraternity, and a tutor at Rider University’s Writing Lab. She has loved reading and writing since she could remember and is a huge fan of J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series. Sarah also loves watching hockey and listening to all sorts of music in her free time. After graduation, she plans on getting her M.F.A. in Creative Writing and pursuing her dreams of being a novelist.

Zachary Bragg (Copy Editor) is a junior pursuing a double major in English (Literature) and Fine Arts (Music). This is his second year working for Rider University’s Student Success Center as a Writing Tutor. Zach enjoys a number of muses including making music and reading great pieces of literature. His favorite book is The Red Badge of Courage by Stephan Crane and his second favorite novel of all time is The Professor’s House by Willa Cather. He regrets that he was not born early enough to propose to Annie Dillard, who wrote Pilgrim at Tinker Creek. He has written some creative pieces that have made shy appearances on “The Broadest Writing Collective,” a successful online literary magazine created by veteran writers from Rider.
University (see http://www.thebroadset.com/). He has been working on a lengthy experimental novel about books that explode when opened that he hopes to someday publish. Ironically, Zach has taken an interest in the art of bookbinding and preservation. He has bound his own book using a hand press and special materials. One of his favorite quotes is as follows: “A room without books is like a body without a soul.”

**Maiada Ibrahim** (Art Director) is a sophomore English (Writing) major with a minor in Journalism (Editorial). Maiada enjoys listening to music, playing guitar, painting, drawing, reading, and writing short stories. She also works for Triond.com, an online website for writing articles and blogs. Once she has graduated, Maiada hopes to work for a publishing company and even become a novelist herself. Maiada also dreams to travel and study different types of artwork around the world, especially in Rome and Greece. Maiada wishes to work hard and do her very best to succeed because she believes that you cannot give up before you have even tried.

**Emily Eiermann** (Copy Editor) is a sophomore Journalism major with a News-Editorial track. She is a co-editor of the Features and Entertainment section for the *Rider News*, and is also a member of Alpha Lambda Delta and an associate member of Lambda Pi Eta (the Communications Honors Society). She hopes to graduate with honors and go on to edit at a publishing house, hopefully for fiction novels, or a newspaper. In her free time, she likes to write short stories and poetry, travel as much as possible, play (or, well, attempt to play) any instrument she can get her hands on, and sleep. She believes that you should always be yourself and not stress over the little things in life, and is inspired by Maya Angelou and e.e. cummings.

**Kristyna Barbella** (Webmaster) is a senior majoring in Multimedia Communications and Web Design. She also has minors in Graphic Design and Film and Media Studies. She plans to attend graduate school, but for now she would like to get as much experience in her field as she can. She is an avid collector of various genres of movies and music. She enjoys road trips, playing video games, spending time with family, and anything tropical. She believes that if you have a dream, you must protect it because when people can’t do something themselves, they try to tell you that you can’t do it. So if you want something, go get it and ignore those who try to stop you.