

QUIZ & QUILL

Otterbein University's Student Literary Magazine



Vol. 104 | Fall Chapbook 2022

QUIZ&QUILL

OTTERBEIN UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT MAGAZINE | FALL 2022

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Submission Policy

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



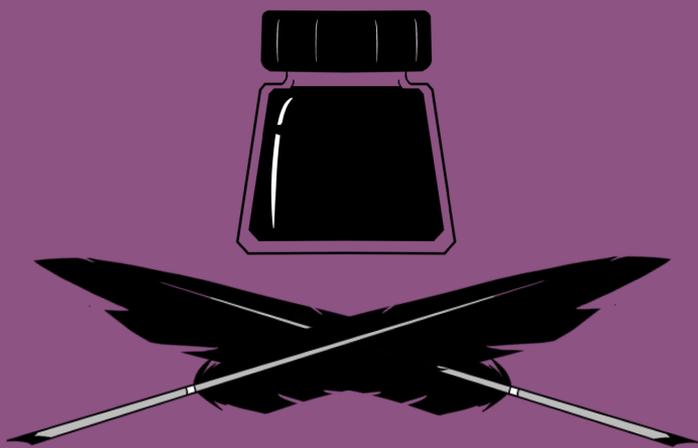
TWIST

Truck

Adam Willis



Q&Q



*Letter
from the
Editors*

Dear Readers,

The leaves are changing color, the air is cooling off, and the world feels like it is almost normal again. As we go about our daily lives, we can't help but compare them to the way they were before. Things are almost the same, but there is an undeniable twist on the way things used to be. There is no denying that our experiences of these past few years will forever color the way we see the world, giving us new perspectives and a level of introspection that otherwise might have passed us by. We asked Otterbein's students to submit works that also felt "twisted", whether in form or content, and you all delivered. You surprised us, shocked us, and made us think. This magazine wouldn't be possible without your amazing contributions.

Thank you to everyone on the Quiz & Quill staff for working so passionately on this magazine. Your enthusiasm and your insight have made this semester engaging, inspiring, and chaotic in the best of ways. Finally, thank you to our faculty advisor, Jeremy Llorence, who constantly wears different hats all for the sake of the magazine. Whether you are staying up editing the next edition of the Quiz & Quill podcast or arranging our party venues, we are forever grateful for all of the work you do for us.

We are so appreciative of each and every person who picks up our magazine. So please, brew yourself a cup of tea and enjoy the twisted, imaginative, and truly remarkable works ahead. Explore enchanted forests, immerse yourself in villanelles, and be reminded that the world isn't quite what it seems.

With Sincerest Gratitude,

Allison & Margo



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Twisting Werifesteria

Megan Sprankle

I look and I walk

I look again

I know not of where I am

Yet

I continue walking

I am lost within a great forest

The trees twining twisting terrorizing

I only carry a compass

I look at it again

The needle frantically points

Left

Right

Up

Down

I won't ever find myself

I'm losing my vivacity

Grayness, darkness swallowing me Languorously

I reach and reach

And a hole grows deeper around me

Help me! someone

Help...

After Arizona

Adam Willis

My drive down Farmland Avenue—
things I tend to see:

An open dumpster.
Some roadkill—
a flattened raccoon.

The twilight sun becoming peach tea in the remains of the rainclouds—
the former storm becoming a brass meadow
framed in an uncanny outline of black.

An orange-tasseled pine tree.

A crow.

A stream running under a bridge—
by the overflowed bank, two youths stand with fishing poles.

A stubborn streetlight mid-hospice—
it blinks,
then dies,
then blinks,
then dies,
then blinks again.

A parked car.

The crow again.

Amber light from the tired sun and shops and streetlamps—
it melts into the wet asphalt like liquid gold.

A pet store.

A black Jeep missing a headlight driving the wrong direction down a one-way
road.

Shards from a shattered beer bottle—
sapphires on concrete.

A Kroger—

out front, the red-haired girl sticks her head out a car window—
her face is angelic and sinister.

The crow is on top of her car—
its eyes shift like black marbles.

The streetlight blinks,
then dies,
and it doesn't blink again.

The white-haired woman
carries her groceries –
she drops a peach from her shopping bag.
Soon, she drops herself.
She collapses in the parking lot;

I run her over.

A cracking sound.
A child screaming.
Fresh blood trickling through the bars of the storm drain.
Sirens.
Red and blue behind me.
The ginger drives off into the golden hurricane.

The crow watches atop the streetlamp.

Lightning Bugs

Alexis Sheets

The sun had set over the hills. Its crests and valleys sink below the visible horizon of pine trees and tall corn fields high above my range of sight. The prickling heat of summer cooled slowly as the sun's glow glistened in the grass at my feet. My hands ran across the leafy stalks, my fingers scything against the sharp stinging edges.

The bees were asleep now. Their wings carry them back to their hives at the end of a day's work of harvesting pollen. Their honey breath kisses their honey wives and honey children. My Mother used to tell me that if I stepped into the ankle high grass with my bare feet, I would step on a bee. Really, it would be to the bee's turmoil as its stinger would be plucked from their bodies after only one jab at my adolescent feet. Now the sun was setting as the earth turned for the other half of our planet to experience the day. The bees were asleep now.

My feet touched the grass. My toes wiggling like earthworms into the cooled soil made way for goosebumps on my chlorine kissed and freckled skin. My eyes glanced toward my sister. She sat cross-legged beneath the hundred-year-old oak tree in our backyard. Its arching branches full of internal rings overlooked the fields and the woods behind them. Its trunk leaned, pushing the higher branches just too close to the roof of our one-story house. Its body's like the leaning tower of Pisa, brick by brick coming loose. Her stature would be the death of her when the hands of my father years later would visit her with the chainsaw he borrowed from my Grandfather. Having spent so much time in a home, growing and thriving, to only be subjected to a cruel death by young hands who know nothing of time and of value.

My sister's knees had been pressed into the dampened ground, stained green and indented just below her Ohio shaped sun mark that seemed to shape itself like the clouds in our afternoon skies. Her plump finger dug into the earth to her side, her auburn hair slid down her red freckled face and her lips gaped open as she slid slivers of onion grass between them. Her teeth pressed into the blades, spilling their flavors onto her tongue.

I met her eyes and tilted my head towards the house. She knew what the gesture meant. She puckered her full lips before she spits the remains of grass onto the ground at her feet. She pressed her palms into the grass and heaved her body up. I followed her into the open garage door leading into the kitchen. The linoleum floor stuck to my dirt-cruste feet and created suction with every step. She knelt down at the wooden cabinet to the left of the closed dishwasher.

I heard the clinking of glass as she pulled two mason jars from the cabinet. Her body lifted from the floor and she handed me my glass. My hands stuck to the sides like fly traps, the sweat and dirt of my hands smudging the surface of the glass. I pulled the ends of my shirt and rubbed the sides of the jar, but only managed to smear the sweat. It didn't matter anyways.

We both made our way outside again, the summer heat still bolstering above the shielded sun. Our feet padded towards the field facing the back of our house behind the oak tree. I could see from my space across the yard that the lightning bugs had begun to wake. Their bodies disappeared before my hands could catch them and appeared feet away; teleportation my young mind failed to understand. They must have been magic to me, as if their bodies disappeared between flying those short distances.

My sister and I would run through our backyard, edging closely to the growing corn stalks without having ever stepped in, our knees scraped and stained green and our hands greedy to consume the flying bugs. I longed to devour them with the hands of my adolescent body and to damn them to asphyxiation all for the sake of lighting my childhood fantasies.

We knew not of the deaths that would reside in the bodies of our bugs. That their dead corpses would be laid to rest within the glass prisons with copper rims that they were captivated within. My memory evades me as to what would happen after the nights spent stealing the lightning bugs away from their homes and families, how their bodies would be disposed of. It never mattered to me what happened after, only what I could use them for.

My greedy hands gasped them with open palms before running them to their jars, to their deaths. My sister looked up at me, her body down on her knees, her palms full of her prey. Her hazel eyes were wide with excitement as she opened her hands to show me those she had managed to capture. The smart ones flew away into the darkened field, the not-so-smart ones crawled slowly in her palms, and the unlucky ones had already become prey to their captor; their guts spread like broken glow sticks across her fingers. Still, they glowed even in death.

It was funny really, to play death with my sister on summer nights. The wind in our hair, the smiles on our faces, our adolescent hands with pudgy baby fingers; we held the power to tear away fathers from their families, to destroy whole civilizations. The only barrier between myself and the little bugs' painful agony of death, their inner lights snuffed out between my fingers, their guts playing in glowing streaks down my skin, was my will to do so.

Once our jars were full and our eyes could no longer adjust to see through the darkness of our yard, I wondered what the bugs in my hands were feeling. Did they have the sentience to understand that danger loomed near? Did they understand that in a mere second with little thought, they could cease to exist? Did they know that they stood in the presence of a being far beyond what their weak minds could comprehend?

I reached my hand into the jar, casting a quick glance between my prey and my sister. She smiled wide. The freckles on her cheeks and upturned nose illuminated above the bugs crawling up the side of her mason jar. I allowed the lightning bugs to crawl up my hand, spreading my fingers. Once I had a hand full, I clutched my hand into a fist. Their intestines spread across my fingers like butter, their lives snuffed out in an instant leaving only remnants, chunky innards, and glowing liquid oozing from their unrecognizable carcasses.

I pressed my hands together, spreading the glowing mess of death across my other palm. I looked at my sister and smiled wide.

I am God.

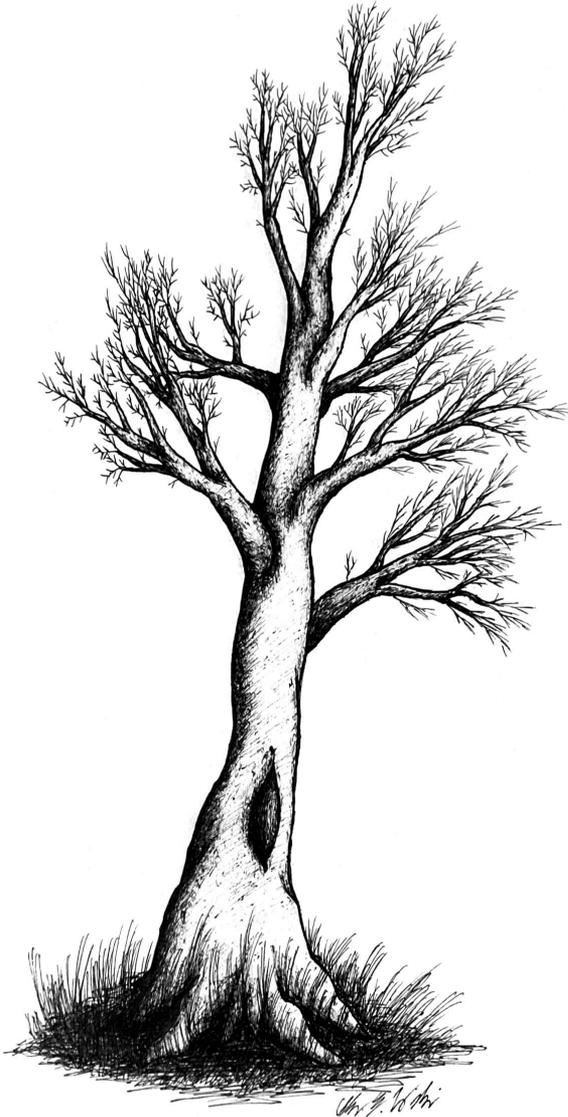
To Grieve the Past

Niah

You must take off your mask
and remove your greaves
Let your blood boil
Have your heart tear in two
as you collapse on your knees.
Don't look away, not straight on.
But down, down to the ground.
For it may be the glorious rays of sunshine
that make our flowers bloom;
But it is our tears that feed the soil.
For how can we reach the sky after the turn of our leaves,
if our roots do not ground us to Eden?
Leaving the door ajar to the thieves.

Tree

Adam Willis



The Moon's Conspiracy

Jasmine Shanaah

If I should steal the sun's rays
As the moon, I would shine brighter
For the sun seems to receive all the praise

The moon may have its fellows' gaze
But I strive to be much, much lighter
If I should steal the sun's rays

I, the moon, could not cause haze
That is the sun's desire
For the sun seems to receive all the praise

Oh mourn the loss of woeful days
Should I wonder if one shall notice I conspire?
If I should steal the sun's rays

Though there is surely no hope for a moon to blaze
The summer's heat as I aspire
For the sun seems to receive all the praise

Though, would I be known for my phases
If I shone all morning and night?
If I should steal the sun's rays
For the sun seems to receive all the praise

I am a goldfish

Allison Steele

I am a goldfish
People like to watch me swim
They peer inside the glass
And stare at me in awe
They marvel at my ability to breathe
Their wide-eyed stares make them look like fools

I am one of those fools
For I hate being a goldfish
I long to fill my lungs with the air they breathe
I want to walk like humans long to swim
No longer do I want to be looked at in awe
I hate that my house is made of glass

My heart is made of glass
Fragile and tender and played with by fools
Yet this is just another spectacle for those looks of awe
For I am nothing but a goldfish
And no one cares about me as long as I continue to swim
They have to use their mouths to breathe

I long for the space to breathe
In a space where the walls are not made of glass
And I can stretch my legs and walk instead of swim
I want to be one of those fools
Whom I hate for making me a goldfish
I wish I could remember the feeling of awe

Admiration and horror can be found in awe
It will probably be present when they find I can no longer breathe
But until then all I will be is a goldfish
For their pleasure, encased in glass
I would love to watch those fools
Struggle as they try to swim

I envy the fish that float instead of swim
They do nothing but they still receive looks of awe
From those shallow minded fools
Who find pleasure in merely watching fish breathe
I hate that those fish love their houses made of glass
And love the fact that they are a goldfish

For you fools, I am a goldfish
But I can't breathe even as I continue to swim
I'm sad I will miss your looks of awe when I shatter this glass

House

Adam Willis



Late Shift At Aviary

Adam Willis

What – if anything – is certain?

I find this to be an oddly relevant question; one more prevalent in my daily experiences than I would wish to consider. As I finish my late shift at the aviary – clocks striking 7:00 PM – this thought of mine dawns on me, and I am forced, as I have been countless times before, to analyze the last hour and a half of my life for some sort of crack in the logic.

Did I actually scrape that bird shit off the walls? Did I rinse the grime off their looming perch? Did I place the quartered rat on their bloody feeding rock? Or was this all an illusion?

I remember *these* sensations: flapping wings, the smell of carrion, the sound of water gushing through a hose, overturned gravel, a red-shouldered hawk, a pristine feather I cannot touch, a turkey vulture staring at me with its blind eyes, a gaping beak, an outstretched tongue, sweat dripping like beads of cool silver down my calf, a child skipping past the cage, a black frog under the pail, a palthis moth against the grain, a creeping shadow, the last taste of golden sun.

I *remember* these sensations. *They* happened – but, was that *me*? Did *I* experience them? Was I ever even *there*?

This millisecond of baseless doubt is enough to break my logic; I'm divided by zero, thrust headlong in a crazed loop. I turn to leave, and I feel the presence of that dangling obsession, the pricking of that compulsive pin, that dripping tap that will not cease. I run back to check something – locked doors, filled troughs, dead rodents on bleeding stones – and when I turn away, thinking the panic has ended, the urge to start over returns. I repeat. Each time I turn around, I *see* their fresh water, I *smell* the limp rat oozing precious life from its severed body; but when I turn away from the immediate, it's as if a vast and immeasurable moon has eclipsed my brain, twisting neurological pathways, casting me out of the present. I'm compelled to rush back – breathless, sweating – one more time, then a second, then a third, then a fourth, just to make sure it's all real, that I was there, that I did what I was supposed to do, that I wasn't imagining everything after all. Clear water. White fur. Red tail, red shoulder, red blood – checking, running, checking, running, checking, running, checking. Every completion of that loop marks an amber sun slightly deeper in the tree line, a twilight sky slightly diminished, slightly darker. By the time I finally break free from this cycle, another hour has lapsed; it's 8:00 PM, and I am left stranded like a confused child in a stark black ocean. I drive home in deep compilation, certain only of a single truth:

There is no catharsis, and I am sure of nothing.

How I Cope With My Birth

Amaya Serrano

A Golden Shovel from Dominique Christina and Denice Frohman's "No Child Left Behind"

For the first time, I crack open my brain and see
 Endless amounts of thoughts, the
 Kind that finds the quickest
 way
 to
 Slither out of silence

 The blood in my body comes to a
Stop, the next step is to open my mouth

 And there is
Nothing like the feeling of my teeth sizzling to
 Achar from the acid and blood, a treat

 The ending is near and it
 Will not be an open casket as
 If
I had not torn off my flesh in a non-
 Consensual way and had
Waited for Jesus or reality to come.

 This is all before
I was born, a way to prevent it.

"See, the quickest way to silence a mouth is to treat it as if none had come before it."

When Sorry is Not Enough

Niah

After another dagger pierces my heart,
bleeding fear and resentment.
Tasting your venom at the tip of my tongue
A crescendo of judgment deafening my ears,
And my nostrils filling with the salt of my tears.

How does it feel to finally be at the top?
To be immune from critique?
Holding my already bruised and battered feet to the fire
After nailing them to the ground
because it's your God given "right?"

As both Judge and King on his fragile throne you demand my defense,
only you have already made my sentence.
When the storm finally calms you take me in your arms
believing it's reconciliation but in reality, I'm coerced into the Iron Maiden.

Just wait until my pockets are full of silver and gold.
I shall no longer have your shadow looming over me.
I may fall flapping my wings,
But the impact of the ground is more assuring than the thorns of the nest.

Death to the Unspoken Wish

Wrenne Grone

To the stars that are still there,
I will wish on dandelions for the unspoken wish.

To the clouds we curse,
Let me drink the lightning and sing with the thunder,
I swear to the Ancients that I will *live*, and they better watch before I outlive them.

To the shattered bones in my skin,
I will drop the burden of youth and make gravity fear what I can do.

Even the rooted tree knows to move at my step
As I fall from the sky, the world will know to quake at my voice

And even when the flash of thunder lights the way and an earthquake rattles my
soul, Death to my Youth
Death to the Stars
Death to the Sky
So to the stars that are still there, the clouds we curse, and to the shattered bone in
my skin,

I will live.
Even if I let the world kill me, I will live.

kick — it strikes,
sinks its white-hot chromium fangs
deep in my flesh.
A moment of clarity;
then — in ignorance —
see the coloration:
less like spots, more like stripes — not a copperhead:
a corn snake.

curl up in a ball
laughing;

I can never win.

Are you lonely?

Dani Davis

Mornings in small towns were always the same. Some chafed at the quietude and the monotony, but Hunter never had, even as a child. He liked the steady, soothing rhythm of chores and prayer and study that had always ruled in their safe valley. The quiet hum and chatter of the town changed an hour before zenith, and the adults would hail their children back home before exchanging gossip with each other, save for on Sundays when they would all gather in the nearby church until the moon was at its highest — it was all part of their little rituals. He especially liked how isolated his home was, so away from the others, yet just close enough to snake his way into the community, and they were all too caught up in saving face to be outright rude to him, but never did anyone pay him any visits or even linger outside the home of Hunter Ashe.

He wasn't always a Hunter, and the only ash about his birth name lay in the fireplace where he burned the last inscription of it, but nobody thought about such things out loud; scandals in important families get buried in neither ceremony nor stone. It never gets spoken about, but those half-hearted smiles reminded Hunter he was nothing more than a fly constantly buzzing past their ears. Lucky for him, he supposed, that he always preferred solitude, that he was a homebody, anyway. Lucky for him, he supposed, he did not suffer from chronic loneliness.

When he did leave his home, he would often sift through an old video store, despite the length of the drive. The owner was an old woman with clear signs of senility, but always good for conversation. Her collection of obscure DVDs and VHS tapes was always a source of wonderment for him — many of them so old they were in a state of decay, only certain parts of the tapes even watchable.

"Ooh, those are dating videos," she said, peering over his body as he looked through a box of tapes.

"Dating videos?"

"Yes, yes. Before you kids had your Tinder or Grinding or what have you — we had videos."

"How did that even work?" Though he laughed, amusement gave way to genuine curiosity.

"There were services where you'd record a video for yourself or you'd be given a bunch of tapes from others. You'd go through them and pick out whoever struck your fancy."

A lot of work just to get a date, Hunter thought. He found himself amused at the amount of desperation someone must have to get a video of themselves prepared. Although, there was no shortage of desperate men on dating

sites either, but the effort seemed far too painstaking for him to consider. No shield of instant messaging to hide behind, either — Hunter did his time on those sorts of sites, both open to romance and friendship, neither coming to fruition (the latter almost always ended up being a ploy for sex, regardless). When someone started getting a bit too clingy, he could simply block and move on to the next.

He bought the box of tapes, deciding that'd be sufficient entertainment for the next night or two.

And entertainment it certainly was. What Hunter noticed first and foremost, at about the fifth tape, was that these were likely all men. Secondly, they were all painfully awkward and usually had hideous facial hair, and Hunter quickly realized he had nothing more than a box full of cheese and creep-staches.

"I'm a line cook by day, a wild animal by night."

"I'm looking for the goddess. Are you the goddess? Who is the goddess? A goddess is a woman, the woman, ALL women —"

"A co-ed bubble bath is something I've always wanted to try."

"I'm very lonely."

He was halfway through the box before he finally switched the VHS out to something a bit different than the rest — this time, a woman was centered on the screen, which seemed almost like a miracle. Yet no less awkward than her male counterparts, he quickly decided as seconds ticked by and she said nothing; was she not informed the recording started? She stared, smiling, as if patiently waiting, and just off-screen was the movement of her hands toying with the ribbons binding the end of her braid.

"I'm Debbie," she finally said, cutting through the harsh sound of VHS static, "I believe in God."

What an odd thing to start with — so odd there was no helping the pig-like snort in the back of his throat. She was a beautiful girl (though no telling what she looked like now), and Hunter couldn't help but briefly wonder why she would have needed to turn to video dating, but she was beginning to answer that question for him. Even the most devout, God-loving person in his town wouldn't have considered that an opener.

"When's the last time you went to church?" Debbie spoke again after another long, awkward silence — only to follow it with another one.

As Hunter stared, perplexed, he caught the faintest flicker of movement on Debbie's face. Her features were slowly, slowly warping — slowly twisting

into what looked to be an attempt to eventually form a spiral, unnoticeable before until her eyes became distinctly uneven and the edges almost smeared. It was likely due to the tape's age, glitches in old VHS were nothing rare, but coupled with the sound of static and weird religious questions, Hunter felt deeply unsettled. The subtle movement of her face had pulled at her lips enough by now to make it look like a wry grin rather than the sweet albeit awkward smile from before.

"Do you hate God? Are you mad at him?" She asked.

If Hunter wasn't creeped out before, he definitely was now. Though he knew it to be impossible, and she was merely looking into the camera and not at him, it was almost as if she were speaking to him beyond the veil of static and screen.

"He isn't mad at you, He has no reason to be," she continued, "If you talk to Him, He'll answer."

His pulse ran swift and hard, his body visibly shaking just ever -so slightly with each beat of his heart. He watched with repulsion as her face continued to form a spiral, features becoming more and more unrecognizable as anything human.

"Aren't you lonely?" The tape said, "Are you lonely?"

"No," he answered – what on earth compelled him to actually talk back?

He rejoiced in his solitude, finding reprieve in his isolation. He held no commitment to lovers, friends, or family. The venom in their stares had long ceased hurting his heart, and he found power in being unapproachable; he found a way to transmute his pain into honey. So why did an old dating video, of all things, feel like a hand attempting to handle him like a wounded sapling and bend him back toward the light?

Debbie tilted her head, as if doubtful, that much clear even through her spiraled face. She raised a hand towards the camera, palm out, as if offering her hand to him.

It was then Hunter decided he watched enough. He removed the tape from the VHS player, rushing towards his fireplace as if it would keep him safe.

He tossed the tape in its flames, the scent of melting plastic pungent and almost sickening in the air, and the flames became an unsettling tumble of red and blue, smoke twisting through the air in a strange helix.

Contributor Biographies

Dani Davis is a student at Otterbein University who does not own a microwave.

Wrenne Grone is a freshman at Otterbein University and is double majoring in Equine Pre-Vet and Creative Writing. She enjoys horseback riding and volunteering at the Ohio House Rabbit Rescue in her free time. Additionally, her favorite time for writing is at 2 A.M. with a cup of tea during a thunderstorm.

Niah is a senior Theatre and English double major at Otterbein University.

Amaya Serrano is a double major in Creative Writing and Political Science, with a minor in Public Relations at Otterbein University. She has won a Silver Key and earned an Honorable Mention for her poetry in the 2021 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. Amaya is from central Florida and has been writing since middle school, where she found her love for reading and eventually writing.

Jasmine Shanaah is a first-year student at Otterbein University. They are an English Major with minors in Music and Philosophy.

Alexis Sheets is a senior, class of Fall 2023, double major in English Creative Writing and Communications Studies with a minor in Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies. She is the active President in her sorority, Epsilon Kappa Tau. In her free time, you can find her singing in the Cardinal Singers choral ensemble.

Megan Sprankle is a sophomore Creative Writing major at Otterbein University. She particularly enjoys writing poetry and is currently working on a novel. She writes because she wants to make a positive impact on those around her and because writing has changed her life for the better.

Allison Steele is a senior BFA Creative Writing student at Otterbein University. Her writing mainly focuses on prose or poetry containing a magical element.

Adam Willis is still writing, and he's loving every second of it. Additionally, he is still addicted to Diet Coke.



TWIST

WRITING BY:

Dani Davis

Jasmine Shanaah

Wrenne Grone

Niah

Amaya Serrano

Alexis Sheets

Megan Sprankle

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Adam Willis

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