

QUIZ & QUILL

Otterbein University's Student Literary Magazine | Fall Chapbook 2021



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SURVEYORS OF THE LAST HARVEST
Mary Jackson

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Otterbein University's Student Literary Magazine | Fall Chapbook 2021

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PLAYWRIGHT EDITOR Harper Wood

GRAPHIC NARRATIVE EDITOR Harper Wood

COPY EDITORS Harper Wood & Allison Steele

PAGE DESIGNER Mary Jackson

SECRETARY Margo D'Agostino

WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER Jordan Hamzee

FACULTY ADVISOR Jeremy Llorence

STAFF

Julia Gillin

Finley Lopez

Dalton Alexander Mosley

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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.



ESCAPE



LETTER
FROM THE
EDITORS

DEAR READERS,

First and foremost, we want to offer all our sincerest gratitude to whoever is currently reading this magazine. This is our first time serving as managing editors, and it means the world to us that we are able to continue providing the Otterbein literary community with high quality work from your peers. Despite the challenges of the past year, Quiz & Quill remains stronger than ever, and it is because of you, taking time to read this magazine and continue your support of our organization.

Our chapbook theme this year was “escape.” We know how much literature comforts the wandering mind in times of turmoil, and we are excited to offer you this excellent selection of work written by Otterbein students that provide just that - escape.

This chapbook would not be possible without our amazing Editorial Board. Almost everyone working on the magazine this semester was new to their position, and took on their responsibilities with admirable dedication. We would not have functioned without your support and leadership. Next, we would like to thank our faculty advisor, Jeremy Llorence. You took on our transition of leadership with stride, helping us weather any storms we encountered, and providing unwavering support and guidance along the way. We truly would not have made it through the semester without you. Lastly, but by no means least, we would like to thank our Staff. All of Staff was new this year, and despite their unfamiliarities with the organization, took time out of their busy schedules to help renew the spirit of Quiz & Quill. Your efforts and dedications did not go unnoticed, and we are so thankful. We would also like to thank our friends and family that supported us throughout this semester.

Of course, Quiz & Quill would not exist without those who submitted their pieces, for whom we are eternally grateful. We want you all to know we acknowledge your efforts and commitment, despite the chaos of the world around us, and are so appreciative. A magazine is nothing without its writers, and time and time again you shock us with your skill and devotion to the art of writing.

Happy reading!

WITH LOVE AND APPRECIATION,
LUCY AND WHITNEY

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THE GUARDIAN

Mary Jackson



IN THE YEAR OF DISTRACTIONS

Kelsey Brown

Dust floats around us in the thrift store.
You hold up a cardigan that looks
exactly like three you already own, and I laugh.
We scan the aisles for costume pieces and
take home our prizes to celebrate
Halloween alone.
I knit hats for children and get to watch
Christmas through their eyes.
Twinkling string lights seem brighter, and
I do not notice the cat about to break an ornament.
When we gather in for the spring semester, we commiserate
about spending the holidays with our families.
My mother whined over the turkey that I had to leave so soon.
I reminded her with a forkful of stuffing that I have a job.
Your father preached to the living room
about the evils of government regulations
while everyone else tried to ignore him.
You spend my birthday with me in my bedroom
playing Mario Kart with someone across a computer screen.
We take nothing seriously except the race,
and winter rages onward outside the open window.
I pass St. Patrick's Day and Easter by
lying face-down on the floor of my bedroom. I make blankets.
I watch cartoons. I write. I forget.
I make blankets.
I watch cartoons.
I write.
I forget.
I make blankets.
I watch cart —
And we return to Halloween. We're going to look
for costumes in a thrift store, and you're going to
show me a sweater exactly like three you already own,
and we will take our prizes home
to celebrate.

A LOVE LETTER TO MY RURAL UPBRINGING

Katie Frame

There's a road in my hometown that doesn't have a sign to mark its beginning or end. There were times when it did have one, but each period seemed shorter than the last. It became a game to see who could steal the road sign the quickest, who could hang the sign on their wall and admire the name that doubled as an innuendo.

And after so many times the sign came up missing, the town stopped putting up new ones. But that's the beauty of a small town — no one needed a sign to know where this specific road was. We grew up with the geography tattooed on our bodies. We knew every gravel shoulder, every unmarked dirt road, every abandoned railroad track. Even though the road was no longer on the map, the locals knew where it was.

—

When I was in kindergarten, I met a boy with an electric smile and a laugh that brightened the room. He was often in trouble, but it wasn't the trouble that hurt anyone else. He was a boy with a lot of energy and nowhere to spend it. He'd shout out in class, get out of his seat, and run around until he was forced to move his behavior clip to yellow, then red, then — I recall this happening only once — to purple.

It was purple that the school would wear thirteen years later for our rival football game. We wore purple from head to toe, carrying purple balloons and pinning purple ribbons to whoever hadn't gotten the message. Purple was our black, and when we released the balloons into the air after the final whistle, I thought of that boy with too much energy, who gave me his school photo with a heart scribbled on the back, who never made it to see his 18th birthday.

—

The crops in my hometown grow wild and without boundaries. They seep into the earth and suck the history of the dirt beneath their roots, crawling skyward until they're cut down by a growling machine, reduced to bloodied scraps in a matter of seconds.

"God," we say, "why is there so much corn in Ohio?" as if it was not planted by our neighbors and our friends and our ancestors, as if our kids do not get lost in it every fall, as if farmers don't set up shop in gravel parking lots and sell it from the beds of their old, rusted pick-up trucks. We complain as if we don't hide from the police between the stalks after finding a clear circle and getting drunk under the moonlight with the same people we've known since we were five-years-old, toasting to those still here, those who aren't, and those who never got the chance.

“God, why is there so much corn in Ohio?”

Because we plant it. Because it feeds on us. Because we take from it and it takes from us. Because generation after generation has farmed the same land, and yet the crops find new pockets to sink their teeth into, to bleed until they run dry, all while we dance between the rows and get lost among the stalks.



My high school principal drank from a mug that read ‘liberal tears’ and chased down any girl who dared to wear leggings, but the n-word was often screamed across the cafeteria, and the football team regularly ripped down posters advertising the GSA.

Everyone knew everyone, but that didn’t mean everyone was safe.



One coffee shop. Three gas stations. Two pizza places. One very lonely Subway. Unmarked dirt roads and Confederate flags hanging from windows. Guns on dashboards and Drive-Your-Tractor-to-School Day. Knowing the cop who pulled you over because his son is in your class. Knowing your librarian because she was in 4H with your dad. Getting discounts at local stores because they’re owned by family friends. Testing the waters to see how safe you are before you dive in too deep.

I grew up in rural Ohio on the cusp of a revolution. There were few people of color, few people who identified as anything except heterosexual and cisgender. I knew every one of my neighbors and every backroad within a ten-mile radius. I could get home seven different ways and pass eight different people I knew.

My hometown is long behind me, but I hear it in the way I drop consonants, in the way my friends correct the way I speak. I see it in the way I still marvel at buildings taller than four stories and highways wider than four lanes. I can’t escape my upbringing — I won’t. It’s a tattoo buried deep beneath my skin.



Take 70 east towards Wheeling. Get off at exit 169 and turn right onto State Route 83. A few miles down the road, you’ll see an unmarked road on your left. It was marked once. Several times, actually. It doesn’t need to be marked anymore. We all know where it is.

PRACTICING THE ART OF RELAXATION AND AVOIDANCE

Margo D'Agostino

Breathe in, breathe out
Inhale to remember the good, exhale to expel the evil
align your spine with the soil of mother earth
let her cradle you

my mat is made of microplastic, by child laborers in India

as you slowly arch your back
reach up, fingers pointing at the sky
let the pull of the sun
lift you
elongate you

I suck in my gut to look as skinny as the girl next to me

feet flexed, holding
holding
hold this pose, and reach
towards your toes
into forward fold

I'm too white to pronounce paschimottanasana

forward fold
and allow yourself to breathe
Allow yourself to release
to escape the anxiety of the world
in this moment you are whole, you are worthy

but it's \$100 for the class to reach "enlightenment"

Now slowly stand
regain your footing
set your feet shoulders' width apart and once again
praise the sky
praise the earth for creating you

*humanity does not praise me for destroying it
breathing in and out
won't repair the damage I've done
and the damage it's done to me*

THE BEAST

Mary Jackson



THE CURIOUS THING ABOUT RUNNING AWAY

Madison Newman

You hear a bird hit the window. It's a resounding smack against freshly Windex-ed glass, a fragile vessel of feathers falling lifeless to the pavement below. The bird is a tiny thing—bright red, as if to emphasize its gruesome fate. It had been flying along so freely, eager to explore the depths of the city, so different from its nest tucked in the crook of a tree branch, until it collided with a roadblock.

You look out the window to the street below, a bird-sized smudge imprinted on the glass. People bled out of every building and out from between every parallel-parked car. A gray haze is cast over the sky like a thin coating of charcoal on an artist's fingertips. The street is made of a blur of colors, faces unrecognizable from where you are. You wonder if anyone you know might be among them—you'd have no way of knowing.

Rain starts to fall over the city—not clear like the rain from where you come from, but smelly and mixed with car exhaust and concrete dust. You follow the droplets down the windowpane with your finger. The bird-shaped splotch is gone within a matter of seconds. Another memory erased.

The curious thing about running away is the memories. They are edited, shuffled like cards, justifying your decision. Some days, you feel guilty.



Ten summers ago, your best friend sat with you on the front stoop, the cream-sicle sunset slipping sticky between your fingers and falling in droplets onto the grass. You liked to sit out on the front stoop because that's what best friends did in movies.

"I think I'll go to New York, or Boston, or San Francisco," you said. You traced your eyes along a branch that had fallen off the big maple in front of the house, now caught between two of its splintering sisters. "Let the city swallow me up like a pill."

"I'm going to California," she replied. "I'll remember you when I'm famous."

"I don't care where I end up," you muttered, hurling a stone into a nearby bush, "as long as I'm not famous, and as long as it's not here. I'm going to get out of here."

She twirled the popsicle stick between her teeth. "I think you and I have very different definitions of 'getting out of here.'"

You wanted to tell her about the backpack that sat on the floor of your closet, unzipped and prepared to be stuffed quickly and quietly on occasion of a sudden impulse to disappear. You wanted to tell her that you think about driving to nowhere so much you might as well exchange your legs for wheels, your organs for

an engine. You wanted to tell her it's hard to love where you come from when it doesn't love you back.

Instead, you smiled absently and balanced your head on her shoulder. You were resigned to thinking she would never understand; leaving was a voyage for her, a discovery journey that would eventually lead her back to her roots. Leaving for you was a necessity. A lifted weight, an escape.

A firefly blinked some long way off—or was it closer than it seemed? You whispered, “I can't wait to get out of here.”

Sometimes, you wonder how she's doing. You don't think she's famous yet.

You kept your word. Not only did you go to New York, or Boston, or San Francisco, but you went to all three. You took planes and boats abroad, collecting mental photographs of the most beautiful metropolitan places across the world. But you never stay in one place for too long.

You move across cities because you like to dissolve. Some people seek out fame, but you actively avoid it. You are tired of being overly-visible. Growing up, it felt like someone different had their hand wrapped around each of your limbs, pulling you in four different ways, determined to be the one that pulled off the largest chunk of you. You: a human wishbone. In a city, you are one face in a million blurry passing faces. You can roam without the feeling of fists clamping around your bruising skin. Your limbs will stay intact.

The curious thing about running away is the possibility. Foreign ground means the opportunity to wear a new you like a sweater. Or, better yet, stitch and safety-pin a new one from discarded scraps. Escape always requires a fresh, creative fashion choice.

The urge to escape again kicks you in the stomach. All of this is wrong, all wrong. The walls are closing in around you. There is too much space and too little at the same time. You need to leave your apartment and go somewhere, anywhere. You grab your coat from the back of the sofa and run out the door.

A plume of car exhaust swirls at your feet as you step outside. It's no longer raining, but the scent of it is still in the air. A taxi honks at a reckless biker, and you don't flinch. You remember how much car horns used to startle you. It smells like cigarettes and dollar-slice pizza grease, and litter box apartments cost as much as a house back where you're from. You're starting to get sick of it, but you're also starting to get tired of all the running.

When you left, you thought the city would tell you what you wanted to hear. You can't let it become easy. The last thing you want to do is get used to this place. That will make you want to escape again.

You come to a crosswalk and hide among the crowd of people waiting for the red sign to turn green. Bodies pack themselves shoulder-to-shoulder on the busy street corner—no one exchanges a word. As the sign signal changes, the group of strangers simultaneously glance up and surge forward. Somehow, you can't bring yourself to move.

The curious thing about running away is that you'll need to stop at some point. You'll run out of breath eventually. It's not an escape if you're constantly moving.

You stand in place, a rock lodged in the middle of a river, the current of people around you rushing past. You crane your neck up to the sky and feel your feet, unmoving, against the pavement. You watch the world move past in blurs of color—for once, you are the only stagnant thing. Sunlight dapples the sides of the skyscrapers in other-worldly patterns. Names in lights blink golden over your head. The stench of emissions seems second for a blissful moment to the smell of grilled street food and a rare fresh breath of air. You take a long breath in.

You return to your apartment. You take the stairs this time, even though they're creaky. The doorknob is loose and needs new screws, and you can feel the springs through the old sofa. The windowsills aren't big enough to host the amount of houseplants you want them to. There's a draft in the winter. Sirens sometimes wake you up at night, and there are always too many dishes in the too-small sink.

It's not perfect here. But it's yours.

For the first time, you feel no desire to escape.

CHARACTER SHEETS

Kelsey Brown

1. A short, round human girl who stole a book and ran and ran and ran to the edge of the forest. She's been learning magic in secret. She likes the color green. She thinks everything will be okay when she reaches the other side of the forest. I swear she isn't me.
2. A teenaged super soldier, altered and improved until she could rival the greatest of Earth's heroes. She's never made friends before. She wears a lot of black. She fights impulsively. She only risks looking back when there is no other option. I swear she isn't me.
3. A small human, so infinitely curious about the supernatural world that they string up newspaper clippings and stolen unsolved case files with red yarn. They've always been the weird kid. They've stared into the eyes of werewolves and ghouls alike and only ever wondered what kinds of stories they could tell. I swear they aren't me.
4. A lifelong Girl Scout, braving the front lines of a caravan hoping to end the endless winter. She listens in to conversations she's not supposed to. She listens to children because they are the only reliable witnesses of tragedy. She's not used to having real friends. I swear she isn't me.

LILYPADS

Mary Jackson



THE DECLINATION PROCESS OF THE VOICEMAIL MENTALITY: A BREAKUP BREAKDOWN

Alexis Sheets

Trigger Warning: self-harm, mention of suicide.

“Hey, you’ve reached Ashlynn Brickter at (740)328-XXXX. Sorry I missed your call, but leave your name, number, and a message. I will call you back as soon as I can. Thanks.” *Beep.*

Eleven missed calls from (740)827-XXXX. Press star to open message one sent by (740)827-XXXX at 8:25pm on October 20.

Step One: Denial

Message (1) sent by (740)827-XXXX at 8:25pm on October 20.

“Hey, I know I’m probably the last person you want to hear from right now, but I want us to talk this out. I know we fight too much, but everyone fights in relationships, right? I mean, we always have. We fight, and break up, and cry, then get back together. This time isn’t going to be any different. Pick up the phone and we can meet up and talk about this. What I said was stupid, and I’m sorry, so just call me back.”

Message (2) sent by (740)827-XXXX at 8:37pm on October 20.

“You have to know I wasn’t serious when I said those things. You know me, Ash. I say stupid shit that I don’t mean when I’m mad. Those words meant nothing. Absolutely nothing. Please just answer so we can talk this out and fix this. Please, just call me.”

Message (3) sent by (740)827-XXXX at 8:42pm on October 20.

“God, I know what I said was stupid, but I didn’t mean it. Ash, you’re the love of my life. Please, I just want you to give me another chance. Please, pick up the phone and let me apologize. Please, let me fix this.”

Step Two: Bargaining

Message (4) sent by (740)827-XXXX at 9:15pm on October 21.

“God, please just pick up. I’m so sorry. I’m so fucking sorry. I’ll try to be better; I’ll try to change. I’ll never say things I don’t mean when I’m mad ever again, I’ll bite my tongue. Please, you know I didn’t mean what I said. I was mad and being fucking stupid. If I could take it all back right now I would. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. Please, just let me fix this, Ash. I’ll do anything. Please, just pick up. Let me fix this.”

Message (5) sent by (740)827-XXXX at 9:34pm on October 21.

“Seriously Ash, this isn’t funny. Just pick up the damn phone. Give me a chance to fix this.”

Message (6) sent by (740)827-XXXX at 9:56pm on October 21.

“Come on, pick up the phone Ash. I’m desperate here. You mean the world to me; you’re my everything. I don’t know what to do without you. We have been fighting to make this dysfunctional relationship work since day one. Just call me so I can fix this Ash; I need you. I need you so damn bad. Please, just call me back. Please.”

Step Three: Anger

Message (7) sent by (740)827-XXXX at 10:23pm on October 22.

“Can you not hear how much you are fucking me up? Can you not hear how close I am to breaking down? It doesn’t need to be this way; you don’t have to hurt me like this. Just pick up the damn phone. I swear to God just... Just pick up the phone, Ashlynn.”

Message (8) sent by (740)827-XXXX at 10:41pm on October 22.

“I don’t know how to live without you, Ash. I really don’t. I just don’t know how I can function in this world without you. We’re fucked up, the both of us, but that’s why we are perfect for each other. You complete me. I don’t know how to live without you. Please, just call me back. You don’t have to say anything, I just need to know you are getting these messages.”

Message (9) sent by (740)827-XXXX at 10:54pm on October 22.

“I don’t think you ever gave a shit about me, Ashlynn. If you loved me, you wouldn’t be putting me through this. If you loved me at all, you wouldn’t be killing me like this. I don’t know how to live without you, Ashlynn. I don’t think I can keep on living like this, knowing you’re out there fucking some other girl. If I can’t have you, I don’t want to be alive anymore. Goodbye. I’ll always love you.”

Step Four: Desperation

Message (10) sent by (740)827-XXXX at 11:44pm on October 23.

“God I just, I don’t want this to be over. Please, you’re my only reason for staying alive. If I can’t have you with me, if you won’t be by my side, I don’t want to live in this shitty world anymore. You’re the only good thing in my life. No one else has ever given a shit about me the way you do. I don’t want to live in this world without you. I won’t live in this world without you. Goodbye, Ash. You were my soulmate and the love of my life; I hope you are happy without me.”

Message (11) sent by (740)827-XXXX at 12:03am on October 24.

“Can’t you see that I’m giving up without you. I’ve already self-harmed again tonight. I’m so close to ending it all. Why don’t you give a fuck? Did you ever even give a fuck about me? If I have you, I don’t have to do this, I won’t have to end it all. If you don’t pick up the phone, I’m going to do it. Just pick up the phone and I won’t. Please, you’re my only reason to live. I can’t live without you. Please.”

Step Five: The End

The person you have called has a voice mailbox that is full. Please call again later. Goodbye.

If you would like to delete all messages in your inbox, please press pound.

Messages deleted.

SOLIDITY

Katie Frame

In the middle of its three-year journey to discover the universe, NASA's *Hero* probe stumbled upon something its creators never expected it to find.

It started as flashes of light in the distant dark of space. It was unlike anything ever seen before. Scientists in Houston admired the blinking lights with a mix of fear and curiosity; sure that it was not a star, and even more positive that it was not man-made.

In an unknown feat, the scientists rewrote the code of *Hero*, steering it away from its original destination and towards the blinking lights in the distance.

What it found was revolutionary.

Hero came upon a city of burnt-out stars and twisting nebulas with creatures resembling humans, yet not quite, who were dangerously drunk off space dust and sang of their wish to be on solid ground.

The buildings they managed to create were made of the elusive anti-matter that humans had still not been able to conquer. The creatures, thin humanoids reaching ten-feet-tall, stretched by the vacuum of space they lived in, drunkenly slurred to the probe that their city was called Gravity; something they wanted so dearly, yet lacked entirely.

Despite their vast knowledge of the universe, their city was stuck floating around two burnt out twin stars that ruined the planet the Gravitans had once occupied when both stars went supernova at the same time.

The Gravitans whisper stories of solid ground and luscious grass, of clear skies and warm rain on their leathery grey skin, passed down to them through countless generations, coming from their ancient ancestors that had been lucky enough to breathe fresh air and walk through water.

The Gravitans fought over getting to touch *Hero*, driven mad by the ability to touch something solid, something from a place where they could find stability in their lives. They tore *Hero* apart as the scientists in Houston hundreds of light years away watched in horror through their probe's camera for as long as they could. They watched as sets of gnawing teeth and bulging red eyes and clumsy movements tore apart the probe, desperate for something stable and delirious with the dream of solid ground.

THE GOAT

Mary Jackson



ON MY DEATH BED

Niah

Brave folks came last night,
Some to visit
Others to invite
Nine choirs sang
Vivid
Fluid
Magical
As the lights dimmed
I was struck by the cymbal of their voices,
Amidst the flames
of this atmosphere.
Burning
Ethereal
Innovations

BAND-AID FOR SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Ashton Bader

Trigger warnings: bullying, mention of suicide, sexual assault.

Do you know what it's like to walk around, staring at your feet, not hearing a sound? I do.

I know what it's like to lay my head on the pillow, stare at the ceiling and say to myself "Breathe, honey. Just breathe." And while my lungs ache and try to fill with air, I feel them collapse inside of me like buildings in a fire.

I walk through life thinking "I can be special too, just like that pretty face on the commercial. Hair up. Makeup done. Thin. Happy. I can be like that too. With a wide smile, yeah. I can be like that too."

I had a smile. He stole my smile. He stole everything from me. My heart, my home, my bed, my room, my ceiling, my stretch marks, my adolescent plumpness. All of it. That was me. That was mine.

The me I was back then, yeah, I was sad. But I still had myself wrapped up in a woolen cloak of love, curiosity, intelligence. I looked up at the ceiling and saw possibilities, endless cities to be explored, new horizons for me to touch. But then he stole my ceiling.

I was 15. A child. He was 18. He knew better. "It's ok if it hurts. It's supposed to. Just lay there. Take it. Let me. It's your job. Can't you be a good girlfriend? Don't cry you're supposed to feel good. Why do you look at me that way? It's your fault. You're defective. I'm your boyfriend; it's not rape. No? You can't tell me no. You will let me, and you will like it, and you will tell me "Thank you.""

Thank you. For ruining my life. For making me walk around hiding myself. "You were asking for it. Look at their boobs. Look how big they are. They asked for it. I knew they were a slut. Stop smiling so big. Put some clothes on. Take your makeup off. Eat less. Work out. Why aren't you smiling? Smile for me! No, stop smiling. You deserve to be unhappy. Go end your life and stop wasting mine."

Kids can be so cruel. But what they don't understand is that I walked through those halls cradling a childhood I could never regain. I hid my chest. I wanted to cut it off. To cut off the fat of my belly, my thighs. I wanted to hide. I wanted to be a weed in the field and become unnoticed. But instead, they looked at me like I was the monster.

I was 15. Walking around, staring at the ground, waiting for a sound. There was no sound. Just the sound of my heart reminding me that I am alive and if I

were to survive, I would have to fight. That's right. I'm not a whore. I'm not a slut. I'm someone who wanted love, wanted to be loved. He was my boyfriend. I was lied to, stolen from, hurt, choked. I bled and bled and wondered "Why do adults like sex so much if it feels like this? Should I tell my mom? What would my dad think... I can't go to court. I can't rip this Band-Aid off. Someone, please rip the Band-Aid off!"

There is no Band-Aid for sexual violence, I'm sorry to say. Time doesn't heal it. Food didn't heal it. Friendship didn't heal it. Good grades didn't heal it. Nothing heals it except for the taste in my mouth as I write this. The stroke of my thumbs as they snap away at the keyboard, the tears in my eyes, my dog's weight on my knee as he dozes off. This is healing. For me, anyways. Because I know the worst thing he feared was me telling someone, so now I'm telling you. I'm looking at you, and I'm saying, "He did this to me." And that's healing. I ripped the Band-Aid off. And now, I'll go home, and I'll think to myself "You did that shit." And yeah, I sure did.

And you will ask me what his name is, what can you do for me, and I'll tell you it doesn't matter. It's irrelevant. His name is irrelevant.

Virginity is a construct that he doesn't get to choose to take from me.

There is no meaning to his name, virginity is mine and there is no Band-Aid for sexual violence.

