

A close-up photograph of a purple plant, possibly a Tradescantia virginiana, with several large, pointed leaves and a small, light pink flower. The leaves and flower are covered in numerous small, clear water droplets, suggesting it has been recently watered or is in a humid environment. The background is dark and out of focus.

QUIZ & QUILL

Purple Heart

Wrenne Grone



OTTERBEIN UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT MAGAZINE | FALL 2023

Managing Editors | Madison Newman & Harper Wood

Fiction Editor | Dalton Alexander Mosley

Poetry Editor | Adam Willis

Essay Editor | Isaac Jones

Playwrighting & Graphic Narrative Editor | Freddie Borer

Copy Editors | Kate Hedrick, Kendyl Householder, Megan Sprankle

Page Design | Harper Wood & Adam Willis

Secretary | Wrenne Grone

Website Manager | Harper Wood

Faculty Advisor | Jeremy Llorence

Staff

Ayan Abdi

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.



Flora & Fauna

*Letter from
the Editors*



Dear Readers,

The Fall 2023 issue of Quiz & Quill sought to follow a theme which highlighted Flora and Fauna in its many forms. Through this theme, we curated pieces that would showcase the variety of ways in which nature inspires and takes shape. These pieces urge reflection on the intersection of nature and the manmade world, encourage creative exploration, and conjure admiration for the natural spaces we inhabit.

We want to take the time to thank those who continue to make this magazine possible. First, to our wonderful readers who have opened this magazine. We are so grateful that we are able to continue to provide this magazine to the literary community, and our readers' support truly means the world.

No magazine would exist without out talented contributors, whom we have the pleasure of exhibiting in this issue. To every creative who took the leap and shared your work with us for consideration, thank you for your bravery. You are an inspiration to us all.

Finally, to our dedicated Editorial Board and Staff: thank you for your time, consideration, and intelligent commentary on every single one of the submitted pieces. An additional thanks is due to Professor Jeremy Llorence, Quiz & Quill's faculty advisor and fearless leader, for his never-ending support.

We invite the readers to walk alongside us as we head into the pages of the magazine, where crows watch us from tree branches and fairies dance in the moonlight. Breathe in the fresh air, crush fallen leaves underfoot, and take in the sweet scent of the nearby flowers.

With love and gratitude,

Madison and Harper
Your Managing Editors

Table of Contents

10	Bedside Table Angelina Bruno
11	Truck Adam Willis
12	The Crow Rachel Williamson
17	Scarecrow Adam Willis
18	The Great Garden of the Fairies Harper Wood
19	my love Adam Willis
20	Mother Ducker Rachel Malek
21	All Empty Adam Willis
24	In the Jungle Rachel Malek
25	The Peony as a Lifetime Madison Newman



The Bedside Table

Angelina Bruno

It doesn't take much for me to remember
the feeling of brushing a single strand
of hair from your forehead
and the sound of
your breathing
as it tangles with mine.

It doesn't take much for me to remember
the sweet taste
of your lips in the morning
while we are both cascaded in the warmth of
the sunlight.

Or the smell of the orchid
you always kept on my bedside table
to remind me every day that you knew they
were my favorite.

Truck

Adam Willis

started once
they said

now it sits like a
crusted carapace
shedding paint chips
and wilting leaves
rust dissolved in
gas puddles
leaking blood
from torn pipes
the moth-eaten
leather rotting off
the popped tires
turned box garden
for the rice grass
and common reed
sprouting blades
through a husk of
shattered glass and
crow feathers black
mold in the glove
box where we
keep the old
bones where we
keep the old
needles too
warped to fit
our veins

used to run once
they said
we used to
go places

things change
I guess

Crow

Rachel Williamson

The scarecrow looms over me.

Its eyes – two gaping holes where eyes should be, at least – stare, unblinking.

My palms are slick with sweat; my hair sticks to my neck uncomfortably. My own green eyes dart around the field anxiously.

Three things I can see.

The Scarecrow.

The corn. It closes in all around me.

The Scarecrow. With its creepy eyes and its stitched-on mouth and –

What else, Eddie?

A crow.

And finally, my jacket. It's a garish orange because it's a hand-me-down from my genius older brother.

Three things I can hear.

My palms are still sweaty as I skirt around the creepy thing, and it still hovers over me menacingly, so I go on.

I hear the chime of the clock in the town square. It's midnight.

"Hello," I say to no one in particular – and definitely not to the thing behind me.

My voice makes two.

The crow has hopped along to a new patch of ground, head swiveling towards me curiously. It crawls quietly. Three.

I run to the exit, thoroughly freaked out by the scarecrow at the end of the maze.

I thought that would be the end of it.

But of course, it wasn't.

I halfheartedly greet Nathaniel, my older brother, when I come home for the night. He throws some candy my way.

"No luck tonight, Sis?" He teases in response, then pauses when he sees my green face. I glance in the hallway mirror.

I'm a wreck. He seems ready to about to ask what's wrong when I reply, "No luck, Nathaniel." I'm not in the mood for candy and instead really want my bed, but I tear open the Milky Way wrapper anyway, needing something to do with my hands. He grins the grin that makes girls go crazy, showing off his blindingly white teeth as I take a seat next to him.

"Better luck next year, then." He lightly kicks my foot, earning a small, half-hearted smile from me.

"I'm too old for trick-or-treating, anyway. As are you."

A wink from Prince Charming. "You're never too old for free candy, Eddie."

I roll my eyes, making him make a face of mock- hurt.

"What's wrong with you, anyway?" *There it is.*

I sigh, averting my eyes so I don't have to watch a mischievous grin creep up his facial features.

"I, uh..." I clear my throat. "I saw a scarecrow." His hand lightly touches my shoulder, then gives it a bit of a jostle.

"You know they can't hurt you, right?" My green eyes are bright as they shoot daggers at him.

"Yes, I *know*," I snap, jerking my shoulder away. He holds his hands up as a gesture of peace, a candy bar sticking out of his mouth.

"If you know that, why are you so afraid of them?"

I stand up, taking a few pieces of his candy with me for when I march up the stairs. "I don't know, Nathaniel. We've been over this."

"Ok, ok. I'm sorry. Even if I don't know why you're afraid of them, I understand you don't like them." At my look of disbelief, he adds, "I'll stop prying, I promise."

"Thank you." With that said, I go up the stairs – less elephant-like than I was originally planning to – and make my way to my room.

Messiness welcomes me as I flop down ungracefully on my comforter. I gaze at my wall as the candy rolls toward me with the dip of my mattress. Posters hang from the wall haphazardly. I've never fixed them since we've moved here, but the wall behind them is white and boring. An idea strikes me, and I smile – the first genuine one all night.

I may hate Halloween, but at least, unlike my walls, it isn't boring.

I know what to do with my hands now.

I look out the window sometime later. A crow sits on a branch of the tree outside my window, its beady black eyes staring at something in the distance. The clock on my bedside table tells me it's 2:30 AM, but it's never right, so I'm not sure I trust it. Nathaniel's probably gone to bed, my parents aren't home yet, and my hands are covered in paint. My artwork dries around me as the tree branches outside my window bend with the wind. I look at my hands again, covered with every shade of blue and green and red there is. Searching for a rag, I find one and start wiping my hands. The paint under my nails comes off in flakes.

Tap, tap. Tap, tap.

Very funny, Tree, I think, still trying to scrub my hands clean. I'll probably need water. The sink in the bathroom down the hall doesn't work since this house is so freaking old, so I'll have to go to the kitchen.

Tap, tap. Tap, tap.

I give up, throwing the rag on my bed irritably before turning back to open the window so the stupid tree will stop tapping against it.

The scarecrow from the cornfield stares back at me, its spindly limbs spread out against my window frame in order to hold itself up.

I stumble back, my hands clutching behind me for something – anything – to hold myself up.

It tilts its head at me curiously.

It's not real.

Tap.

It can't be here!

Tap.

It's a scarecrow!

Tap.

Just a scarecrow!

But sure enough, I watch as it moves its arm against my window of its own volition.

Tap, tap. Tap, tap.

My stomach drops, and a cold chill runs down my back.

It almost looks like it's smiling at me.

My breaths come shallowly as I just stand there, paralyzed with fear, the thing reaching for the bottom of my window.

I hear the creak when it opens.

My feet suddenly jolt to life, and I run. Tearing down the hall to my brother's room, I barrel through the door, frantically searching the room for signs of life.

Nothing.

There's no one here but me.

And the scarecrow.

I turn back around, hoping against hope the demonic thing was slow. If it's made of straw and took two and a half hours to follow me here, then it must be, right?

Wrong.

At probably over seven feet tall, the thing lumbers toward me as I cower in the shadow it casts and scream for my brother, grasping desperately for something to throw. I throw a book, a water bottle, and a video game case at it to no avail. It just reaches for me, unperturbed. The cold fingers tangle in my hair, yanking me forward. I scream louder, crying now, clawing at its vice-like grip. The pits of blackness that are its eyes are devoid of empathy. The needles in its mouth gleam wickedly.

It can't hurt you. It's not real. Nathaniel will come.

That cool trickle of logic is shoved to the back of my brain because it is here, it is hurting me!

My head is tilted up and my face is forced closer to it. I can feel my own ragged breathing and see the spider crawling along its burlap face. I reach up for its hat and shove it down forcefully, then I kick its legs out from under it. The entire creepy thing buckles, falling forward on top of me since it still has its grip on my hair. I can feel its body pressing against mine as it moves its disjointed limbs awkwardly, trying to right itself. I watch- where muscles should be there is only straw and burlap.

What the...?

I scream again as it looks up at me, reaching for me with its long fingers once more. They scratch against my skin, making it crawl. Thrashing, the thing is thrown off me and I scramble up, panicking.

Nathaniel. Where is Nathaniel?

The scarecrow grabs a hold of my ankle this time, making me jump violently and screech incoherently.

Scream all you want, Eddie. There's no one to help.

A small town with barely more than a hundred people. Why did Mom and Dad want to move out here?!

My thoughts get more and more confused while the thing pulls me down, covering my mouth and therefore my screams.

The last thing I see is a crow, hopping happily along the wooden floor, watching me curiously.

Scarecrow

Adam Willis



The Great Garden of the Fairies

Harper Wood

The fairies have left the men's reality in order to destroy it by making a new one.
Larry Mitchell

The first time I was led to the fairy garden was under the light of the harvest moon, following blooming pansies and the yearning of my own heart. The lunar goddess shone so bright above me that I thought she could have replaced daylight itself and no one would be the wiser until the sunflowers began to wilt without their mother's touch. This garden had not always been here. Like all fairy gardens, this one was born out of the rubble of broken concrete and the abandoned habitations of man. As they crawled out from underneath the rubble to stretch their hands toward the sun and the stars, moss and lichen and creeping ivy followed them to cover the ground with their greenery. Mushrooms bloomed where the fairies' feet brushed the ground, producing caps that acted as steps for the fairies to carry themselves up to the skies. The fairies coaxed the saplings and sprouts from the lush carpet of fresh earth up into the air with them, and lounged in the crooks of tree branches and underneath a canopy of hydrangeas when the heat became too much.

As I entered the garden now, those same sleeping fairies uncurled from their resting places, unwinding from the tomato plants and the daffodils and each other. Bare bodies of all size, sex, and color rose up from the dirt to meet me at the edge of the garden, touching my skin with their gentle, calloused hands. Their bright eyes met mine and their lips touched my own and I was filled with a joy that I had never felt before. As I was led into the fairy garden into their open arms, it felt like stepping into a home I had forgotten how to belong to. Even if my unsteady breathing and stumbling footsteps betrayed my hesitance, my heart knew we belonged here, and the fairies knew this, too. They only laughed when I tripped over my words, cupping my cheeks and kissing my forehead and telling me relax, darling, just come here and dance with us.

So I followed them out into the grove, where fireflies twirled like a second layer of stars in the sky and the birds and crickets orchestrated our dances. Our voices joined in raw harmony above them all, singing songs from our time and from the times of those who had come before us. We spun in large circles, we swayed in close pairs, and we danced alone under the moonlight. Hand in hand, chest to chest, the moon and me. When my throat grew sore, there was water from a spring and honeysuckle nectar to soothe my ragged cords. When my legs became sore from the endless dancing, I laid my head on the bare thighs of a fairy who fed me tomato flesh in between gentle kisses until I regained my strength again.

When the dancing was over, I laid down among the bodies of the fairies that were joined in their own rhythmic dance of intimacy among the rows of cauliflower and spinach. My body became one of the many roots that connected the trees to the blossoms to the fairies, and as I tipped my head back against another's shoulder in ecstasy, I felt my shattered soul become whole again.

my love

Adam Willis

it is this —

the forest and
the rain and
the sun
that trails

like a yellowing
leaf along
the rhythmic
bends of the

grateful river
listening and
knowing the
eternal hum

of the cicadas
and the dusted
moths that drink
the twilight

calling in the
sacred rouge of the
sunset's rusty
swirl for you

to lie like
a dazed child
in the uncut grass
with the flash of

striped underwings
and the insects
glowing neon in
the dark

Mother Ducker

Rachel Malek



All Empty

Adam Willis

Insects—it is what I collect.

Since my abrupt leave of absence, it has become my sole obsession. I talk to no one, scarcely go into town, instead opting to wade through spring waters and the sickly scent of the knee-high grass in search of specimens. This four-acre plot has become jungle in its own right—poplar seedlings sprouting haphazardly across an un-mowed lawn turned a mess of spiderwort and dead goldenrod. The neighbor across the way throws hideous glances at my unkempt land, but this is of little significance—shifting eyes casting judging stares, shifting glances, no significance, no effect on me.

I haul the sack of mason jars and half-cleaned peanut butter containers into my office, setting it gently on the crusted floor. There are stains on the carpet lacking clear origin. The powerful smell of moth crystals and ethanol mixes with a subtle scent of stink bug musk—a lingering odor I cannot remove. Dragonfly wings and cracked elytron litter the corners in heaping piles—broken failures of articulation made food for the roaches whose squirming bodies will one day join the others in their mahogany prison.

Oak desk leaning against the wall. Next to this are four stacks of twenty wooden insect boxes, each measuring thirteen by eight by two—their splitting wood stained with an egregious black-cherry red that for some reason upsets me. The contents of the interiors consist of profound, deathly order—thousands of beetles, crane flies, cicadas, shield bugs, delicate geometrid moths, wings half-destroyed by the touch of oiled fingers and irrational breath. Most abundant, however, are the Hymenoptera; three-thousands or so wasps, hornets, yellowjackets fill half of the cases—entire local populations intricately articulated with hair-pin precision, stiff and brittle in an uncomfortable flexion of legs, antenna, wings, aligned in straightened rows, in perfect order, like an assemblage of death-colonies, a hive of slaughter.

I have filled seventy-six of the eighty boxes and need to make more. I reach into the dusted sack, pulling from the dark contents a mason jar containing a fresh kill. The glass is still frosted from its hour-long chill in the freezer. Until recently, my method of euthanasia was that of a make-shift gas chamber—cotton balls soaked in acetone filling the jar with toxic, volatile fumes. I have come to rely on freezing as a more secure method; the slow chill prevents them from destroying their precious wings in desperate attempts to escape.

I open the jar, dumping the dead insect onto the pinning board. *Bombus bimaculatus*—a two-spotted bumble bee I found resting on a coneflower at the far end of my lot. Slowly, the number two pin splits a hole into its thorax, passing through exoskeleton and internal muscle before exiting out the other side. Utilizing some thirty pins, I articulate the six legs, spread the amber-colored wings with perfect, balanced symmetry.

I stare at the dead thing bought under my control. There is satisfaction in this, don't you think? — dominance over the life and death of the once-breathing thing — a denial of freedom paired with the denial of rest. It serves now as model undead — archived, cataloged — a rot-thing made to appear living for my convenience and my pleasure.

I am fit to place the insect in the cabinet to dry until — to my confusion — I notice movement: a slight, desperate gesticulation of the abdomen, flexion of wings under pinned-down wax paper.

"Frozen for an hour," I mutter, "still not dead."

I stare blankly at the bee. Its abdomen is shaking — it's buzzing and its legs move frantically to escape. My face begins to burn red — lungs constricted within ribcage, magma blood flowing slowly through the veins of my barbed-wire spine.

I desperately search for something sharp; I yank open every drawer of the desk, dumping the contents onto the floor — heaping piles of mothballs and crumpled paper. In the refuse, I find a box of pins. I take one from the container, swiftly driving it through the head of the squirming insect in a frenzied attempt to kill it. The bee hyperextends its abdomen, stretching its legs in every direction — the buzzing growing louder. I yank the pin from its head, driving it again into its thorax, its abdomen, its vibrating wings — it buzzes louder, trembles more.

I hear now the sound of a million humming wings — chitinous legs wriggling — pulsating abdomens thrusting barbed stingers into egregiously stained wood. The deafening cacophony is continuous — a background rumble festering like maggots in a diseased wound. The latches of the insect boxes quietly undo themselves — wooden lids slowly opened by invisible hands. Seventy-six cases of long-dead arthropods brought to bloodlust and malice. I watch as they emerge in a dark cloud — thousands of beetles, crane flies, cicadas, moths — thousands of hornets, yellowjackets, wasps — swarming the walls in a black, insectoid sea.

The bee on the pinning board rotates its body, loosening its legs from the restraints. Its wings tear from the wax paper, vibrating with violent intent. Its abdomen throbs, revealing the black, fish-hook stinger thirsting for vengeance. I feel the millions of barbed feet crawling over my skin — hornet stings and the closing of mantis jaws across my sunburned dermis. The buzzing grows louder, louder. The insects hum deeper, deeper. Entire body squirms with crawling legs and centipede segmentation. The noises reach an apex; I hear the fateful words.

"Put it in your eye."

I pry the pin from the bumble bee's animated body, holding it centimeters from my pulsating, bloodshot eye. My chest thumps with the beating of drums — hands shaking, skin burning. The buzzing grows louder, and the pin grows closer. The buzzing grows louder.

And the world goes black.

~~~

"Yes, sir. I found him just like that."

"Needles in his eyes?"

"Yes, needles in both."

"Was he alive when you found him?"

"No, sir. Looked like he had been gone for a while."

The officer writes this down in his notebook. No crime scene to speak of — no forced entry, nothing stolen, no known enemies in the city. Nothing but a putrid body — insect-eaten, eyes gouged out with pins. And those eighty cases, too.

All of them empty.



## In the Jungle

Rachel Malek





# The Peony as a Lifetime

Madison Newman

*... their trembling, / their eagerness / to be wild and perfect for a moment, before they are  
/ nothing, forever*

*Mary Oliver, "Peonies"*

When, post-death, the stars ask me their  
questions, I will quell their trembling  
with stories of my completed life. Their  
small voices echo an eagerness  
to learn the journeys this body has taken, to  
learn what it is to be  
a blooming, brief brilliance, so wild-  
-ly courageous that it strikes the world open, and  
every creature can think of themselves as perfect  
just for  
a  
moment  
in the wake of it. I will tell them how peonies live before  
they collapse in on themselves; they  
gather their beauty into a soft flawlessness until they are  
surrendered. I will tell the stars I lived so fervently I exploded into nothing,  
asking only to be remembered in the peonies' pink petals forever.

## Contributor Biographies

*Angelina Bruno* is a fifth-year senior here at Otterbein. She's an English BFA and History Minor, who will be graduating in April. She lives with her sister and their array of fluffy friends, and is working hard on establishing herself as a writer. She has a deep love for music, writing, and matcha lattes!

*Wrenne Grone* is a double major in English Creative Writing and Equine Pre-Veterinary Studies. In her spare time, she enjoys helping out at rabbit rescues when she's not away writing fiction pieces or getting lost in the beauty of nature.

*Rachel Malek* is a second-year student, majoring in art and psychology. She is passionate about drawing, painting, and photography. The most important source of inspiration for her is nature. She emphasizes birds native to Ohio in many of her pieces. Rachel enjoys experimenting with various mediums and materials. Although she is still developing a style, she leans toward realism. One of her goals is to explore making more fun and comical pieces. Rachel enjoys making others laugh and engaging audiences through her art!

*Madison Newman* is a Senior English, Sociology, and WGSS triple major at Otterbein University. When she's not writing, Madison enjoys reading, cooking, making art, spending time with her cat Zelda, and caring for her copious, ever-growing collection of houseplants.

*Rachel Williamson* is a student at Otterbein University. She lives in Grove City, Ohio and wants to be a published author someday, as she has been writing since she was seven years old. She enjoys writing fiction and poetry.

*Adam Willis* creates. This is all he can do.

*Harper Wood* loves to write, but like most writers, also loves to procrastinate. They're usually playing video games, listening to Dungeons and Dragons podcasts, or playing with their cat Chai instead of writing.



*Flora & Fauna*

# WRITING & ARTWORK BY:

*Angelina Bruno*

*Wrenne Grone*

*Rachel Malek*

*Madison Newman*

*Rachel Williamson*

*Adam Willis*

*Harper Wood*