

Fall 2014

## Laurus: After Dark. Fall 2014

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ElDorado, Daley; Benal, Sarah; Burns, Emily; Clawson, Kirsten; Holt, Eric; Greenfield, Sam; Stewart, Sean; Nevole, Lori; Punt, Kayla; Horn, Alexa; Mosby, Nicole; Rohde, Abie; Page, Michael; Roberson, Dizzy; Lee, Samuel; Tran, Emily; Casabella, Leonardo; Sampson, Scott; Cooley, Katie; Kaus, Alec; Eads, Hannah; Cass, Madeline; Wilkinson, Nicholas; Heesacker, Haley; Holmes, Mina; and Pille, Evan, "Laurus: After Dark. Fall 2014" (2014). *Laurus: The Undergraduate Literature Journal of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln*. 3. <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/laurus/3>

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### **Acknowledgments:**

The Laurus staff would like to thank the English Department for their magnanimous support. Special thanks goes to Mike Page for his dedication and assistance.

Our deepest appreciation goes to all who submitted. Without your hard work, our magazine could not survive.

# Table of Contents

Dizzy Roberson	
“The Devil Is Just Left of the Spleen”.....	6
Samuel Lee	
“Sonnet - To Punk”.....	9
“Sonnet, Again”.....	26
“Sea of Trees”.....	42
Emily Tran	
“Bloody Eyeballs”.....	10
Leonardo Casabella	
“The Broken Frame”.....	11
Scott Sampson	
“Packed”.....	18
Katie Cooley	
“Shades”.....	19
Alec Kaus	
“Warrant”.....	20
“Waiting”.....	25
“When the Night”.....	44
Hannah Eads	
“Blessed Be!”.....	21

Madeline Cass	
“Scrimshaw” .....	23
Nicholas Wilkinson	
“The Hunt” .....	27
Haley Heesacker	
“The Lonely Pink Flower” .....	35
Mina Holmes	
“Sugar and Spice” .....	36
Evan Pille	
“To the Desk of Edgar L. Brandbum” .....	45
Contributor Bios.....	59
Editor Bios.....	62

# The Devil Is Just Left of the Spleen

Dizzy Roberson

“I heard it was just about fucking. Like, it wasn’t for extra credit, or a better test grade, or anything like that. I mean, maybe it was at first, but it was just too good, you know? Neither of them wanted to stop, so they didn’t. Next thing you know, Mr. Sandereli comes home early one day with a head cold, and finds out his wife is a big ol’ slut. Obviously, what he did was an overreaction, but like, you gotta feel for the guy, right? All he wanted was some cough medicine and a nap, and instead he gets a front row seat to his wife bent over his grandmother’s dining room table taking it up the ass.”

“No, see, it wasn’t Dr. Sandereli’s fault. It all started as a joke in the frat, because Chip Wallace bet Landen that he couldn’t get into the professor’s pants. And like, you’ve seen Landen—he’s bangin’, so like, it makes sense that Dr. Sandereli would want to tap that, but here’s the thing—she totally fell for him. Like head over heels in love shit. But Landen was just in it for the dick stroke. I heard that she’s the one who called the police on her husband, hoping Landen would come back to her, you know, after he got out of the hospital. Obviously that’s not happening, and apparently, Mr. Sandereli had his lawyer serve her divorce papers from his jail cell. I feel bad for the woman. She just wanted to be loved, but instead she lost it all.”



“Dr. Sandereli is a manipulative bitch. She was just asking to get Landen into trouble. I’ve had a class with her before. The prof always has her hair up in a bun, and wears these wire frame glasses, trying to look all professional or whatever, but then she has these low cut shirts, and I don’t think she owns pants that aren’t skin tight. I mean, skin tight; you can feel her ass just by looking at it. So what does she do? She gives Landen this bogus test grade just to get him in her office. It was all a ploy. The kid had no chance. Like, you know how they say, ‘she’s got the devil in her heart?’ Well, I don’t think the devil is in her heart, exactly, but it’s definitely there somewhere. Like down in her large intestine, or just left of her spleen.”

“I can’t stand all these frat boys chastising Dr. Sandereli just because she was expressing her sexuality. It’s not like Landen was underage. They were both consenting adults. The only reason Dr. Sandereli is under fire is because she’s a woman. She didn’t make her husband lose his temper. She didn’t make Landen take those pills. Both actions were just classic examples of men dealing with their bruised egos. This whole situation is just a product of hegemonic masculinity, and this poor woman got caught in the middle of it. Should she have cheated on her husband? Maybe not. But if she were a man, would anyone blink an eye? Of course not.”

“Don’t ask me, I don’t care. I’m just pissed that I wrote that fucking midterm paper for Dr. Sandereli’s 302 class, and now she’s on leave and isn’t going to grade it. What a fucking waste of my time.”

“Yeah, I joked with Landen that he couldn’t get into Dr. Sandereli’s pants, sure. But it’s not like I thought he’d actually do it.

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

I mean, props man, 'cause she's hot as hell, but I don't think it was worth it. I mean, what Mr. Sandereli did to him...damn. No one is that good a lay. Wait, isn't there some law that says if your roommate offs himself you get to pass all your classes? Like, because of grief and stuff? Because I could really use an 'A' on my Geography lab."

"Who the fuck is Landen Rowell?"

"The only thing I want to know is what was Mr. Sandereli planning to do with it after he cut it off? Was he gonna eat it or something, in some dramatic show of dominance? I wonder what the police did with it. Do you think it's sitting in an evidence bag somewhere? Wouldn't it start to rot? Maybe they refrigerated it. How long do you think they stay fresh? Nasty."

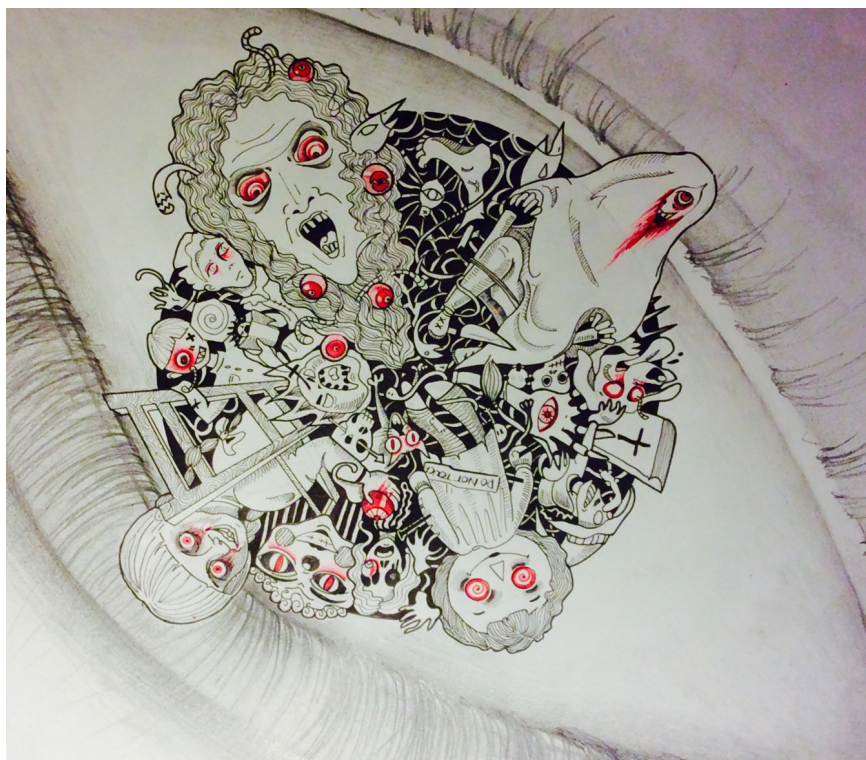
# Sonnet - To Punk

Samuel Lee

Punk is not dead. It was never alive.  
We stitched it together from mangled parts  
with contents we poured from inconstant hearts  
in our basements during bleak nights.  
Finding in art the best ways to survive  
a world beyond our vague comprehension.  
Some wounds will never taste restoration,  
some demons may never be exorcised.  
We crafted this monster with filthy surmise,  
with minds obsessing on rebellion.  
Eyes that deny beauty in convention,  
and hands craving vengeance and patricide.  
With all of our collective contentions,  
this lifeless cadaver is galvanized.

# Bloody Eyeballs

Emily Tran



# The Broken Frame

Leonardo Casabella

In the bowels of the science labs at this university lies a room full of bodies; plastic and flesh, preserved and dead, seen and unseen. Inside this room lay only facts, the evidence of a physical life once lived (seen through each defect and scar that tells no story, but only bears its blemish), and the readily seen universal imitation of its counterpart. As one enters into this room, a pronounced aroma of chemicals embodies the atmosphere, quickly eschewing the pure air from outside.

This was the familiar case in which I found my body in the lab one late evening. This night had been an especially dreadful one, for it seemed as if the winter months had accumulated their dreary coldness throughout the season and were in preparation to unleash their bitter revenge. So, upon the whim of temptation, I sought to isolate myself from this malignant endurance within the confines of the room and to empty myself with a few characterless thoughts.

Upon entering through its door, my first glimpse revealed that sitting on a table next to me was the broken frame of a picture resembling two images of a mind and body. Quickly, I noted to myself that I should make an effort to repair this figure. But just as quickly forgetting it, I soon wondered across the cadaverous body of a man. The body was prone, and the skin had been separated from the inside tissue, but was still acting as a flimsy covering allowing examination of both the outside and inside. Having been a dutiful servant in such studies,

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

I felt a sense of authorized ability to approach this collection of flesh (with such a confident understanding of such matters that initial conflict of dissecting a human is easily tempered). Thus, determining that having this chance to skim over the mechanism in which we carry our life should be pursued, I became fixated rather steadily upon its outer surfaces.

What a stimulation it is to see each striated strand of muscle gleaming from the electric light above. I felt as if I could name each one like they were my own. But as I carried on with this train of thought, suddenly for a moment, it seemed as if another presence had entered the room and had cast their stare upon me. I quickly turned around to catch whoever it was, but from what I could see, even in the hidden corners around, there was no being to be found.

Relieved to feel mindless of the matter, I continued on and removed the cloth from the cadaver's face. I immediately found myself looking at that region where life is perceived through motion and light. If only one could just as closely observe the images that had passed through this space, and put it all on some reel of visual life. Who knows what sorts of splendor and beauty that had been seen through these eyes, all the misfortune it had experienced, and how it all touched the mind. But alas, those things seen and felt by any person can never be entirely understood by any human, but rather remain with that soul beyond the realm of which we know. In a way, perhaps life itself is inexplicably greater than that which is seen; in its whole, a composition of those things that resist understanding.

Nevertheless, I hurriedly abated this infection of thought for it dealt too much with the matters of a soul. One must not be distracted by such difficult issues, as they only obscure the objective ability to know the body. So once more, I

sanitized my eyes with the sight of the corpse's dead tissue and proceeded to move my attention behind the eyes in order to analyze its well-hidden muscles. I observed that the fibers seemed to be out of alignment; it was as if one side lacked what the other had compensated for due to some form of myopia.

Growing weary with thought, I then lumbered to the other side of the room and sat down along the flat plane of a table containing another specimen. This time I decided to turn off the lights around me so as to study this body with an even greater sense of judicial method. Filled with pride, I took a moment to recognize the great skill that I displayed with the use of my own hands and factual knowledge. It is rare to encounter such a person who is able to study with complete competence: to know where each dry bone lay, and to manipulate it all in the comforting shroud of darkness. At once, I felt as if I knew this body with a greater precision than even the one who had lived in it.

Yet as soon as this thought exposed itself, such another odd perception struck my surroundings that it broke through my confined plane of thought and halted my work. It had the feeling of a chilling touch that comes from the recognition of a watchful eye. Explaining this off as some sort of effect from inhaling the chemicals in the surrounding air, I turned away to raise the lights to a dim and again absorbed my interest into some other material.

I came across the plastic model of a skull. It was a nice and well-rounded skull, but something about it seemed rather off. As I looked into its hollow eyes, I couldn't help but think of where or what these eyes may wander into after they can no longer see on this earth. Whether it was marvel, beauty, or infinite being, I did not know, but bringing to mind such unknown thought made me quite uneasy. So I made due to think of it no

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

more, as to save myself, and only thought about those things of which I knew. Not finding anything worthwhile or interesting, I instead revered in the form of the dead bone model itself and appreciated the ability to feign such a thing.

Meanwhile, I could still feel the presence of that mysterious gaze lingering in the background. It had seemingly dulled, when all of a sudden the strange sensation grabbed me again, holding its hidden guise over my mind. But this time I felt as if I could not brush it away as it unflinchingly continued to draw me in closer. I began to scrutinize everything around the room searching for its unknown origin, making such a frenzied account to find its source. At last my eyes fell onto the body that I had first studied when I entered the room. Although its eyes faced the wall out of my own sight, some ethereal motive made it necessary for me to come by its side. As I began to think about some meaning behind it, I noticed that this specimen did not have any of the essential coverings that really define a person. It lacked any form of hair, eyebrows, lashes, or even nails. What a shame it was that this corpse should have to remain here exposed. Thus (having such a great command over the objects of the body), I began to pluck a few of my own terminal hairs and adorned the body with them over its head, its nose, and its ears.

“Yes, much better,” I said as I looked upon my work. It gave me such an empowered feeling to be able to manipulate the body through my own doing.

Yet, the masked stare remained ever upon my perception to the point that an irritating contact had come to scour my mind, which felt like the tension between a pair of paranoid lovers. So, with the determination to satisfy its command, I continued to clip a few more of my hairs and covered the cadaver’s eyes with them so that they appeared to have black sutures pulling the skin of the eyelids over them. I even



made the effort to skillfully clip a few of my nails and place them around the fingers. Soon I observed an eidolic affect emerging from my creation.

Still, those disembodied eyes seemed to stalk my every movement. I tried to push them away, to barricade my mind and forget about it, but the horror of their glare had now pierced my periphery and found its way inside me. “I have made you look well again my friend; what else is it that does not satisfy your invasive stare?”

At once, another great thought of my own brought me to analyze the face of the one that lay there.

“Of course,” I said, “those eyes were not able to function as they were, being on a dead body and all. For what good is a face with all its parts if it has no being to inhabit it? Yes, surely this is what these eyes have been demanding, a new being in which it can once again see through.” Processing with this idea and the fortune of my skill, I began to make incisions around the face of my subject, carefully cutting around any of its major parts so that I was able to extract its perfect outline. With a feeling of great satisfaction, I then conformed this sheath around the face of my own body. Even though the touch of the tissue was cold, it gave me such a comfort to have put on this face as a fabrication of my own doing, assembling it in the perfect fashion, and feeling each raw strand of muscle up and down just as if it were mine. With the lights around the room only to a dim, I reached out with a dry bone in order to turn them on and see the handiwork of my creative innovation.

“At last, now I can see what these eyes have tried to contend upon my being, what they have insisted upon my mind.”

Realizing that I had previously taken off my pair of glasses earlier so I could study without restraint, I put them on and searched for some kind of device to see my reflection. Out of

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

the corner of my eye, a momentary glare faintly came from the table by the door. I meant to honor this chance to see my new form, but now those pestering eyes were coming around with some inevitable force of gravity. They kept scratching out any thought of other movement; they would not let me see the work I had accomplished with my own hands!

“Surely you would reveal yourselves in joy of my wonderful feat. I did it for you my friend; I was loyal to your ideas.” Yet they were there, eating away at me.

I am creeping all around that room now, looking up and down each wall, bursting open each drawer, even searching on the floor, and still they are nowhere to be found. They persist watching, waiting, so that my soul cannot hide anymore. I tear into each body, searching every organ and cavity, but nothing, and nothing is all I am seeing and nothing is all I am doing. I wring my head side to side, back and forth--Ah, I see them! I finally have caught their crazed nightmare. They are in the frame, the broken frame by the door that lies like a dismembered cheval glass. I can feel each eye staring invisibly through the fragments, as they beg me to go stand in front of them to try to see my reflection. I can see myself. Or is it myself? I am there, but I cannot see me; I only see the dead flesh on my face. Where have I gone? My body is there, but it is as if my soul does not look alive, it does not feel alive. I look into the eyes of the figure. Yes, these are the eyes that were watching me without end. But they look lost. No, they seem to be stranded within this reflection, in this sheath, as if they wanted to break free this whole time. I felt such a great power in my mastery of examination in each specimen in this room, but that was all these eyes could see, were those bodies. They wanted to break free to see something more whole, but I muffled their existence so I could carry on with such rapidity and skill. I came to know every aspect of the body, but nothing of the human form. Now I am staring at them like a

**FALL 2014**

stranger, with flesh on me exposed. I stand in broken fragments,  
not knowing, not existing, not... I, the living cadaver!

# Packed

Scott Sampson



# Shades

Katie Cooley

I opened  
the window  
to better hear  
the moonlight  
trickling through  
the screen  
and onto my  
thirsty skin  
before the darkness  
turned back into  
something  
sinister

# Warrant

Alec Kaus



# Blessed Be!

Hannah Eads

Tell me about the woods  
and the witches hiding in them—  
quick tongues, velvety like the dirt they dance upon,  
rough like how they spit on it too.  
What flickers behind the trees  
is the sense that you didn't really lose your footing on a gnarled  
root.  
I always thought time chooses not to change  
what we walk back to,  
but you never liked my accusations,  
and I never liked seeing your red hands before they were out of  
your pockets.  
So we forgot about the pointed feet.

We went house shopping, and  
I begged the blood to disappear before we painted the walls.  
Leave it to you not to wash your hands.  
Leave it to you not to know my zodiac and write a horoscope  
instead:  
“you will be lucky, like a kite full of wind.”  
But I'm not lucky,  
not like the old pair of shoes that disappeared right after the  
house did.  
I left the wind to do its business  
and ended up three feet above my bed  
watching me, you and the knife wedged in between.

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

After your head hit the bottom of the river  
I followed a lady who blows bubblegum almost as much as I hate  
to  
and learned how to bend backwards over myself.  
My head still hurts.  
The woods are still dark and impenetrable.  
I'm hallucinating black dresses under treetops  
and skin under black dresses,  
red hands on scorched skin and my hands on my skin.  
Sometimes I still find myself counting the freckles of a green-  
eyed boy  
like they were recounts of his sins.  
The Adam's apple—I know not to kiss  
but find myself licking my lips anyway.



# Scrimshaw

Madeline Cass

tear and circle pornographic words from  
dictionaries,  
send in blank envelopes  
to addresses from the phone book.  
Strangers follow you home;  
eye-roll inhaling your unbound clothing –  
they, through a mouthful of rootsystem pubes,  
shout;  
“you  
are a sun goddess” – I am a sheep in fox’s clothing.  
I have been poised in the dark all day. I am obsession, I am beast and its cunt.  
booming of the L train and scuzzy youth in loud black cars  
moan out their windows  
at my legs.  
engaged in tooth lock, in jaws rotted and socked in manure –  
a seedling calls to empty mothers  
(empty pans in empty weather.)  
this murk is looking like a hole in the ground  
a fetish hole, an amber embryo.  
ergo,  
made to baste, hot plastic pink shine  
molten, parted lips and lips  
(shine on, oh holy mother krishna.)

we’ll have sex in eighteen different states,  
slicing throats and strawberries amidst doves cricking nonsense  
a smeared mildew of tendrils, of dendrites.  
Moonshine isn’t for bitches;

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

we boil down the thick stalactite deposits, left only with  
calcium  
of finger nails.  
with bladder diseases, I don't wash for years, I am backwards,  
pioneer.  
wishing for less than I  
already have little of  
come visit me inside my loom  
standing on our heads.  
heat swamped, dizzied.  
it remains to be seen.  
(a pisces, I know I am inside the moon.)

# Waiting

Alec Kaus



# Sonnet, Again

Samuel Lee

Use the sonnet form as you please. Treat her  
Like a queen or like a whore. Give her what  
She craves. She will with grace so softly guide  
Each word written through her body. She will  
Let you leave your seed between her lines, so  
Let her crave the ink of your pen upon  
Her face, your mastery of written word  
Displayed. Be not afraid of what she will  
Cause you to say in your sleep. Though she induces  
Nightmares and cold night sweats, you will  
Always desperately return to her.  
The coaxing of her rhythmic heartbeat  
Mid-coitus in iambic pentameter,  
Her loins dripping in satisfied quivers.

# The Hunt

Nick Wilkinson

I watched as the pig-nosed commissioner snorted off his last comments. The bulging man sweat from his collar and under arms.

“Let me remind you ladies and gentlemen, our next function will be here again in Portland after our California tour in three weeks,” he said. A few of what sounded like teenagers erupted in cheers a row behind me. I turned to see them aligned, elbows knocking into each other as they lashed around like animals, but none of them minded. The teens were so captivated by the idea of putting an end to an evil. What they thought was evil.

“Remember: It’s equally immoral to harm an innocent animal and an innocent person,” the fat pig-man spouted. I scoffed. Equally immoral.

I took a deep breath; the convention center’s cold air blasted the back of my throat for what had seemed to be the hundredth time. It stung, but it was a break from the humidity radiating off the swarm of humans piled into metal folding chairs facing the stage.

“I’ll close with this,” he stood a little straighter, stubby fingers flattening the collar of his stained white dress shirt. “Animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, use for entertainment-”

“-or abuse in any other way!” the crowd chimed in unison. I sat while they rose in excitement. They began to fill the pathways, filing into lines toward the exits. I waited, like usual, for

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

the room to clear out. I had no desire to fall in ranks with them. As I watched a man carry his young daughter on his shoulders towards the back of the line, I felt my chair jolt from behind.

“Oh I’m sorry!” exclaimed a quiet voice behind me. I turned to see a petite woman, no older than myself, a little dazed. Her face flooded with color, and even though we were feet apart I could almost hear the blood pumping beneath her skin. I had to say something.

“Don’t worry about it. They pack these seats like a chicken coop,” I smiled, “We should have people rallying for our safety.”

She giggled, rolling a pamphlet in her hands. She was fidgety. Restless. I could tell that she had somewhere to be. But I knew she wanted to stay with me. Her face slowly faded back to its original porcelain shade. Her eyes darted from my forearms to my sandy blonde hair and back to my eyes. Rose petals floated back to the surface of her cheeks as she realized she’d been caught in checking me out.

“Um,” she looked around; the center had nearly cleared out. Only a few people lingered to clean up after the meeting. “I’ve actually got to get going.” She looked at her wrist for a watch that wasn’t there.

“Would it be okay if I walked you out?” I asked the frantic woman.

She said yes, gathered her baggage, and walked around the chair barricade to the main walkway. I watched as she dodged glancing at me again, probably to avoid being caught for a second time.

We couldn’t escape the humidity of the convention center as we stepped outside. Portland greeted us with a much chillier blast of air. She shook back her thin blonde hair, pulling her cardigan around her small torso. We turned towards one another.

There was a desolate darkness between her eyelashes, the same I had seen in the others. What a shame.

“I have another request,” I ducked my head to seem as I were holding back. “Would it be alright if I asked for your phone number?”

A tiny curved smile rounded her cheeks.

\* \* \*

I tucked the left sleeve of my collared shirt back towards my elbow. Ashley sat across from me, picking off chunks of bread from the dinner roll on her plate. Not once did she eat any of them.

“I just really like how calm it is around here and the natural setting. Do you ever spend time outside? There is some amazing nature out there,” Ashley asked, not because she wanted an answer, but because in conversation, humans like to make it seem two-sided.

She had been jawing for fifteen minutes, maybe even through my trip to the restroom. I sat there at the dinner table; my left hand rested on my jaw, my right hand used a knife to bob an ice cube up and down in my glass. The knife clanged on the glass. She didn't notice, so I continued. It was forced all the way to the bottom, but it found it's way up to the surface every time. I gritted my teeth.

“You know, Marcus,” she yanked another pinch of bread from the roll, “you're easy to hold a conversation with. Not a lot of guys are good at that.”

She was oblivious. Absolutely oblivious. Not that it was out of the ordinary but any person who is given the chance to talk about themselves uninterrupted is going to think the listener is a great conversationalist. It's an opportunity to talk about their

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

favorite subject. Themselves.

“It’s easy, when the person is worth talking to,” I replied, grabbing a piece of the dismembered bread and popping it into my mouth. Her mouth curled into a shy smile. It was almost endearing. I had to distract her. “You know I spent some time in Thailand over the winter, the untouched and unbothered domain of the animals was just gr-”

“My brother went to Thailand once!” She began rambling, talking about how outraged she was that her brother had consumed dog during his stay and how she had cut off contact with him after learning.

I had never been to Thailand. I had never wanted to go to Thailand. But I read once that they dined on exotic cuisine there, and she knew that as well. It was too easy.

Her face flooded with color under the dim Italian restaurant lighting as she vented about the outrageous eating habits practiced in the eastern world. I nodded along, ignoring her arms passionately flailing around and concentrated on her face. Or rather, her cheeks, picturing the millions of tiny vessels constricting as the blood that ran through every living beings’ veins rushed around. My right hand ghosted over the table, feeling the silverware as my thumb brushed over the blade of the cold, wet knife.

“Here we are.” A server carrying a tray interrupted Ashley and awoke me from my daze. The waiter set down her leafy green dish and then mine. The red tomato sauce spilled off the edge of the lasagna in front of me.

“Wait! Marcus! Doesn’t that have meat in it?” She half stood out of her chair to take a closer look at my dish.

“We are at a vegetarian restaurant, silly.” One of three in the Portland metro area.

“Oh my goodness, that’s right. I’m so sorry. I just can’t imagine someone wanting to eat the flesh of another living



thing!”

“It’s all right Ashley, I would never eat the flesh of another living thing.” I would just cut it. My knife dove into the center of the pasta. Fascinating how a flour-based creation could be so similar to that of flesh. The red sauce inside popped out from the cut and drizzled down the edge.

“Wow, that looks amazing!” She looked at my dish, then to me and smiled.

“Doesn’t it?” I smiled back.

\* \* \*

I unlocked the door to my apartment and pushed it open with my back as she kissed me, wrapping her hands around the back of my neck. We back-peddled into the living room, her lips making their way to my shoulder. Her wet lips clasped onto my skin. She added pressure from her tongue and her teeth. It felt so animalistic. The movements of her lips and tongue spoke her lust, her hunger into me.

I did what I was supposed to. I wrapped my arms around her thin figure. My fingertips felt each protrusion of her upper spine. Each bump grew smaller as my hands moved down her torso, their alignment skewed. She had grown up battling Scoliosis. What a complex three-dimensional deformity.

She continued to kiss, lick, and nibble on my neck. I moved my hands from her spine and traced her ribs. Back and forth I slid my hands, petting this animal. She begged for me, I could hear her whimpering inside like a bitch in heat.

She whispered into my neck, “I want you to take me.”

My chest welled up with fire, and I gritted my teeth. In one swift movement, I placed my hands on her hips, shoving her onto the couch. I glared at her as I towered above. She loved it. Her

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

eyes grew darker with each passing moment, pathetically obliging in my every action. It was a game to her. It was my game. A game she already lost.

“Give me a minute.” I backed away, and she sat up.

“Where are you going?” she shuddered with excitement, the top of her chest above her shirt was blotchy and her cheeks were rosy.

“I’ll be right back.” I started to unbutton my dress shirt. I couldn’t get it messy.

Giggling, she lay back down and took a deep breath.

“I’ll get ready.” She closed her eyes. Good.

I made my way down the short hallway into my bedroom. I pulled off my shirt and hung it in the closet. I made a right into the kitchen and flicked on the lights. A large blue tarp blanketed the hardwood floor.

“Marcus?” she sang from the other room. “I’m getting lonely out here.”

“Just a sec,” I yelled, running my hand over the countertop to my left. The kitchen knives were aligned, leaving the knife block vacant. I picked it up and stepped around the tarp on the floor, making my way back to her.

As my eyes adjusted to the dimmer lighting of the living room, I saw her lying on the couch just as I had left. Although, there was something different. Her blonde hair fell loosely past her shoulders, her chest slowly rising and falling with each breath. Ashley’s eyes were hooded by the weight of her eyelashes, and her legs, now free from the tight skirt she previously had donned, bent slightly on the couch. My hand loosened its grip on the knife block. She looked so...pure.

“Marcus...” she trailed off. Her voice was soft, but loud enough that I could have heard her from my bedroom. She had no idea I was just a few feet from her. Her hand began wandering

down her stomach. “I can’t wait much longer.”

She played with the elastic of her underwear. A soft sigh escaped her lips as her fingers slipped under the fabric. My blood began to boil. What a greedy animal.

I raised my arm, my knuckles white from squeezing the block.

“Oh,” she moaned.

My hand came crashing down, my wrist snapped back as the block smashed between her eyes.

\* \* \*

I straightened the final tool to make my tray precise. Knives of all sizes, boiled while we were out: check. Small rag: check. Large plastic bag: check. Victim: check.

She hung by her feet in the center of the kitchen, over the blue tarp. The first attempt to tie her wasn’t as successful as I planned, luckily I had a belt on; it fastened her up there far better than the rope would have.

As she swung slightly I had the perfect amount of time to prep my apron, gloves and goggles. I sat right in front of her and waited for her to wake up.

In twelve hours she would lose consciousness...too late for that. If she wasn’t awake in twenty-four hours the hemorrhaging in her head would kill her. That would be unfair to me.

I splashed her face with a bucket of freezing cold water. She awoke and suckled in air like a fish out of water. I tied off her mouth before she could let out a scream that anyone could hear.

She had gray swirls of confusion circling her black eyes.

“You are the most disgusting creature I have ever seen.”

I growled at her and then spit in her face. I stood, pushed the

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

chair back, and grabbed my favorite knife. Eleven inches, the one I always started with. I slid the flat end of the knife under the fabric of her underwear, flipped it and cut away her last article of clothing.

“You’re leaving this world the same way you entered it,” I began as she shook and swayed. “But when you entered this world you weren’t as diluted as you are now. You had no opinions, no thoughts. Just needs. And over time those needs were replaced with wants. And that’s what makes you disgusting to me.” I slit a gash into the leg. The blood rushed down towards the stomach, faster than I imagined it would.

I scooped the blood up with the flat end of the knife and swatted, splattering her own blood across her face.

Her black eyes never blinked. She wasn’t afraid was she? Again I slashed her leg, and again and again.

“Every second of your life was devoted to bettering the animal kingdom. But you aren’t even devout to the most powerful of all the beasts. Us.”

Her eyes were still black. I waited for them to change, even just a little, but nothing happened.

I gripped her hair and cut off a nice long handful for my collection. Before, I would need my deer field-dressing manual. But now I had most of it down to a science.

Start at the breastbone, it would have read.

I grabbed the largest of my knives.

# The Lonely Pink Flower

Haley Heesacker



# Sugar and Spice

Mina Holmes

Your mind replays the last hour over and over as you sit on the bed and swipe your damp forehead with the back of your hand. You're exhausted, but you smile to yourself. You haven't felt so good in years.

Although most people would turn their noses up at your choice, you've finally found a way to put your talents to good use. You get paid handsomely to help frustrated men relax. Half the time, you don't even have to do much. You get to pick your hours and reserve the right to reject anyone that you don't like. The only kink, so to speak, is your husband.

Shane is a good man. He's boyishly handsome and bright, attentive and faithful. He's the physical embodiment of everything your parents wanted for you: a small town boy to keep you humble and protected in the big city. An incarnation of unadulterated, unconditional love. But above all, Shane is an absolute bore. His idea of excitement is renting a movie without reading the blurb first. He expresses himself in charts, budgets, and spreadsheets. If not for mandatory business trips, he would never be more than a cab ride away from you. His enjoyment, his satisfaction, his happiness; they're all bound in yours. With each client you meet comes a twinge of apprehension, a mental reminder of the husband who would be happy to live and repeat the same banal life, the same mundane day, the same humdrum moment indefinitely, without change, as long as it was with you.

\* \* \*

The bland, mustard wallpaper and stained, brownish carpet of the motel room don't really bother you. They're a change of pace from the sky blue paint and too-polished wood floors at home. Shane hand-painted the walls of your cramped two-bedroom apartment in your favorite color, but that was years ago, and now you're tired of looking at it.

You struggle to catch your breath as sweat pools under your lower back. There's a familiar fluttering in your heart, the after-effect of a wave of excitement and lust, and when you turn onto your stomach, you wince slightly from the shock of cold, damp, ruffled, sheets scratching against you. Your cheeks feel like they're on fire from rubbing against his stubble. When your eyes land on the stranger who is nearly asleep beside you, you study him for a few long moments. Short, black curls frame his head, and the lids of his eyes are speckled with purplish veins. Instead of Shane's flat, undefined belly, you look at what appears to be a body by Budweiser. He is round, portly even, and quite a bit shorter than Shane. His hairy chest rises and falls while you wonder if Shane's fallen asleep in his hotel room already. Knowing that he has, you dismiss the thought. You consider falling asleep beside this man who isn't Shane, but remember that it's against the rules. The relationships that you establish with the men who give you money are business transactions. No cuddling and absolutely no sleepovers.

You climb out of the bed, stretching your sore neck, and your companion - Nick, maybe? - barely notices. You take a quick shower, and then search the floor for your clothes while he dozes. When you've found everything, you turn your back to him, and get dressed. You look over your shoulder at him, thank him for a lovely evening, and pick up the wad of cash on the nightstand

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

before tucking it into your purse. His snores fill the room as you let yourself out.

The door is barely pulled shut when the relative quiet of the motel room is replaced by the chorus of the night. Sirens, car alarms, and homeless people pushing around grocery carts have become the soundtrack to your working life. Before walking away from the motel, you pull out your cell phone; it takes minimal effort to dial the number that's fifth on your speed dial. The usual operator at the cab depot picks up. You give him an address, and he sends your ride home.

You pull a cigarette from your purse, allowing the tobacco to overpower the scent of urine that naturally lingers in the city air. Between drags you smile to yourself, absently picturing Shane falling asleep in his hotel room, completely oblivious to the habit you haven't really kicked. When Shane's all work, you're all play. You don't have to worry about Shane wondering where you are if he's not in town to notice your empty side of the bed at night. He's probably spent his entire day in meetings, but you'd bet your Prada bag that he thinks of you last before closing his eyes.

You get lucky and only wait for about 10 minutes before the cab picks you up. As you slide into the back seat, your phone chimes. It's a message from Shane. *I hope I'm not waking u babe... just wanted to say goodnight. Love you.* You type back a quick message saying that you love him too while wondering how he's managed to stay up past his bedtime. Two minutes pass before your phone chimes again. Looking at the screen, you realize that it isn't Shane; it's Daryl.

His text is straight to the point: *Come over.* It's late and you're already exhausted. You redirect the taxi driver; Daryl won't ask twice. You know the address to his loft by heart. You text Daryl to let him know you're on the way. He doesn't respond, but



you're sure he's expecting you.

\* \* \*

You never expected to meet Daryl. Your sink had been rebelling against you, and Shane was buried in spreadsheets all the way in San Diego. You called up friend of yours, a fellow housewife in your building, and she gave you Daryl's number. Sheila insisted that he was a trustworthy handyman, but your initial impression of him seemed a contradiction. Instead of shaking your hand when you offered it, he pulled back and gave you a head nod. He hadn't even bothered using your name for the first hour or so, just snapping his fingers or randomly starting to talk whenever he wanted your attention. Still, you'd invited him over to fix your sink. It didn't hurt that you liked to watch him work.

What should have been a three hour job expanded into a three-day-long impromptu kitchen tune-up. On the first day, Daryl fixed the sink while you discretely observed what you could see of him from the living room couch. On the second, he cleared out the suspiciously overtaxed garbage disposal as you watched from a seat at the kitchen table. On the third, he replaced a tube in the dishwasher, barely wiping his hands on the rag in his pocket before grabbing you by the hips and lifting you onto the countertop. His warm, rough hands squeezing your thighs were a whole new kind of kitchen aid.

At first, you were just his client. You'd summon him when Shane was away with some bogus project. Eventually, you both gave up on getting any work done, and Daryl just causally popped into your life before popping back out just the same. To save face with your neighbors, you started meeting him at his loft sometimes. In theory, you barely liked the man. He wasn't the type to listen to the ins and outs of your day. He never pretended

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

to be interested in the dress you'd gotten on your latest shopping trip. You couldn't picture introducing him to your family or friends, but there he was, digging his dull, grimy nails into the flesh of your hips on a semi-regular basis. Your dalliance with Daryl resembled every other transaction in a lot of ways, except for one significant detail: you never made Daryl pay you.

Technically, you started off paying Daryl. Not necessarily for the sex, but definitely for his time. He's also the only man who knows you're married. When Shane's away, you meet at night, either at your place or Daryl's. When Shane's in town, you sneak off to Daryl's in broad daylight. There's no discussion, just an invitation and an agreement.

\* \* \*

When the taxi pulls up to the curb in front of Daryl's loft, you're practically buzzing. Within seconds, you're bounding up the outside steps. Daryl buzzes you in almost immediately, and you travel the familiar path to the loft. When you get to his door, you knock with your usual three light taps. The door pops open, and Daryl stands aside to let you in. You step inside and take in the virtually unchanged surroundings. It's been weeks since you've seen Daryl, but he doesn't miss a beat. By the time your eyes finish sweeping across the room, Daryl's already kissing you. It's like you've done this every day for years.

In a couple of hours, you're ready to go home. Daryl doesn't offer to pay for the cab or even to call one for you. You find yourself dialing speed dial number five for the second time tonight. As you wait, fully dressed, in Daryl's bed for the cab, he mills about the room shirtless, brushing his teeth and straightening up, his left arm in a constant flex while the right flings his clothes into a hamper. His brown hair is just a bit too shaggy to

see his eyes clearly. He has a few small scars lining his face and hands, but you've decided that they lend themselves to his manliness. There's messy stubble covering most of his face, and you wonder if he's ever bothered to spend more than a few minutes a week grooming himself. Each time that he crouches, you admire the curve of his spine. He's probably only four or five inches taller than you, but he carries himself as though he's a giant.

Somewhere in your nearly wordless encounters, you've learned to appreciate Daryl's silence. When your cab shows up, Daryl waves you off, the corner of his mouth twitching upwards. From anyone else, it might seem dismissive, but from him, it's almost endearing. You notice as you climb into the cab that Daryl watched you get in from his window. You smile all the way home.

When you finally get to your apartment, you breathe a sigh of relief. It's been a busy night. You shower, change, and then climb into bed. You make sure to sleep directly in the center of the bed, like you wish you could on the nights when Shane is home.

As your eyes get heavy, you think of Daryl and then of Shane. You compare Daryl's shaggy hair to Shane's usual short haircut. You compare the youthful gleam in Shane's blue eyes to the penetrating look in Daryl's almost black eyes. You think of Shane's gangly arms and the way that he towers over you and the way that Daryl seems to do the same. Shane's large but almost delicate hands, and Daryl's weathered, strong ones. The years you've already spent mapping out every scratch, scar, and mark on Shane's pale skin. The multitude of uncharted territory on Daryl's.

Your phone buzzes from the nightstand. It's Daryl. *Left your scarf. I'll bring it tomorrow?* The fluttering in your heart picks up again at the thought of Daryl planning ahead to meet you. You're inspired to do something you haven't before.

## **LAURUS AFTER DARK**

You call Daryl. He picks up on the third ring, gruff and mumbling. You haven't felt so good in years.

# Sea of Trees

Samuel Lee

They are silently screaming under the canopy  
    Of the hundreds of branches breathing aloud  
Baying for the sky, the sea of trees  
    Beneath their veil lingers not a sound  
Nor earthly remains of a thousand spite  
    Suicides—who may yet wander west  
Through these woods, without respite,  
    Step after step in purgatorial debt  
To the trees which they tainted with broken necks  
    And minds numbed in narcotic delight  
As their veins became too polluted and wretched  
    And left themselves to decay in the daylight  
Aokigahara, mother of permissive relief  
    May your black trees shroud their endless grief.

# When the Night

Alec Kaus



# To the Desk of Edgar L. Brandburn

Evan Pille

Attached are the documents you requested. Considering what's left of Dr. Gaius' notes, there's likely too much evidence to avoid conviction. Even without the notes of Dr. Patel, the prosecution could still make an easy case and while I know you hoped otherwise, I don't think this is something we can twist or spin to put our client in a better position. Call me a defeatist, but against a jury of his "peers," he's doomed.

Truthfully, I don't understand why you took this case. Everyone considered it solved without a trial, so why ruin your reputation? Most people may assume you're a legal master because of your age, but I saw your records, I know this is only your third case. Your standing in the legal community is still new and fragile; why do you test it on a case that's doomed to fail? I understand if you don't have an explanation, but if you do, then there are a lot of people here who deserve to hear it.

Call me if you have any questions concerning the notes, I'll be expecting some considering their nature.

**Day 0:** What is the difference between simple observation and science? Writing it down. I understand that this quest is more than slightly illegal, even a little immoral. If I'm caught, there will be no explanation to absolve me, no second chance. I should take every precaution for secrecy, I should tell no one of my experi-

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

ments, and I should never under any circumstance write anything down. But then that wouldn't be science. To not keep careful review of every result and every bit of data would make me no better than a child playing with his toys. That is not what I am. I am a scientist. So I will take every precaution for secrecy, I will tell no one of my experiments, and I will be writing everything down.

I don't know who you are to be reading this, but I do know you are one of two people. You are either one of those who would fear my experiments and seek to destroy their results, or you possess the wisdom to embrace them. If you are of the latter, then I give you permission to do with these notes what you will. If you are of the former, then I'll tell you the same. All I ask is that you consider what you're doing. By destroying these notes, you do not undo the past. You can burn them, rip them up, and tear them infinitesimally, and it will not change what I have done. All you will have destroyed is knowledge, and that is a far greater crime than any other.

**Day 1:** Fluid pressure: normal. Internal temperature: normal. Subject can stand up for at least 3 minutes. Just as planned, Subject was able to walk 5 steps before tripping on the 6th. Bringing herself back up (subject may be considered female), she was able to then walk 7 before falling again. Learning functions are working properly.

Subject seems to respond well to voice command. After being told to stand up, she did so, and obeyed again when I told her to sit down. However, there seems to be an error in her vocal processing. When asked what the proper use of a fork was, the subject made only a few screeching sounds. This will have to be fixed before I can further test her knowledge. If my programming was successful, she should have a thorough understanding



of history, mathematics, and basic societal norms.

Subject responded well to emotional simulation. Anger, sadness, happiness, confusion, and jealousy were all tested, though the reactions were limited to facial expressions. All were convincing and were performed on multiple levels of intensity.

The aforementioned testing took from 3 pm to 6 pm. The rest of the day was spent fixing her verbal programming while she continued to walk and stumble. At 11 pm subject began to simulate sleep. Results are far better than I ever imagined.

**Day 2:** Subject woke up at exactly 9 AM, just as her sleep scheduling pre-determined. Too exactly in fact, I'll have to add in a slight deviation code to make it seem more human.

Took me almost a full night, but I was able to patch the bug in her vocal processor. After applying this fix, I was able to hear for myself the magnificence of my creation. We discussed history and philosophy, science and mathematics, my God, we discussed the weather! Every ounce of knowledge given in her genesis has been retained to the fullest extent. And she didn't just know these things, she understood them. She could explain, redefine, and enhance everything she knew and did so with a strange and invigorating simulated excitement. Perhaps the greatest part was the way she told these things. For example: If you were to ask a computer "who was the first emperor of Rome," you would receive:

Augustus (Latin: Imperator Caesar Divi F. Augustus, 23 September 63 BC – 19 August 14 AD) was the founder of the Roman Empire and its first Emperor, ruling from 27 BC until his death in 14 AD.

I asked my subject this same question. This, word for

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

word, was her response:

“I believe it was... Augustus... yeah, that’s right. After Caesar’s death he was able to reunite the Roman Republic and turn it into a dictatorship that would later become known as the Roman Empire; so he’s usually considered the first Roman Emperor.”

I programmed her with the intention that she would be able to formulate ideas and present them in a way that would appear human. What I’ve seen so far has been the perfect execution of this; it almost frightens me. Most of her actions seem so human. Yet, parts of her robotic nature can still be seen through her fog of pretense. She answers every question and command without hesitation, and when not given any command at all sits there staring blankly. That will have to be fixed.

However, there was one exception to this absence of action. When I rose to leave, she stopped me, saying she wanted to show me something. Obviously curious, I obliged her. She told me to walk to the end of the room and turn to face her. After doing so I saw what has so far been one of the most incredible moments of my life. Rising to stand, she began to walk towards me. It wasn’t graceful, but she staggered on as if to throw off a burden. With every marching step, I grew greater in awe. Unconsciously, I opened my arms, and even though I know it meant nothing to her, I encouraged her onward. She reached me in short time, which is good in terms of the experiment’s progress. Yet for some reason I cannot place, I wish it had taken her longer.

Upon reaching me she did something more curious than anything she had done up to that point. She held me. She put her arms around me and held me as if she were hugging. It occurred to me then that she should have a name. Not knowing what it

should be, I asked her for a suggestion. She processed the question, and replied with “Filia.” I have no knowledge of this name, and no theory as to why she chose it. But from now on, subject will be referred to here as “Filia.”

I feel as if something’s occurring that I had not anticipated, something wonderful and terrible.

**Day 7:** This entry marks the end of the first week of this experiment. Results have been more promising than I ever could have imagined. Filia has excelled with not only motor and computational skills, but social as well. In my discussions with her, I’ve observed that she does more than answer questions or formulate responses to my comments. She seems to have a real and tangible grasp on the complex mechanics of human conversation. Our talks flow naturally, strange considering I’ve never been very good at talking. She has the ability to sense when I’m at a loss for words, and then use those moments to introduce new subjects, keeping the conversation from growing stale or awkward. At this point I think she would be more easily accepted into human social circles than me.

Which brings me to the question of if she’s ready for such a thing. She seems to understand our society and its rules, but I’m worried how she’ll handle a real life conversation, particularly with someone who believes and expects her to be human. I must test her, but slowly. To begin, I think we’ll go for a walk in the park. That should be relatively easy.

**Day 24:** I’ve only now noticed that Filia’s handwriting is exactly like my own.

**Day 35:** I have achieved all of the necessary supplies for the next step. For the undeserving teenager, a fake ID can be found

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

anywhere for the right price. But the sort of identification that I needed cannot be found on any street corner. There are only a select few people in the world who can supply fully falsified identities. Criminal specialists have to prepare them for years, sometimes decades, prior to their use. The funds required to purchase such a thing are naturally enormous, but I have secured one nonetheless. Sacrifices had to be made for its retrieval. I cannot admit neither here nor anywhere else what those sacrifices were.

But I can write gleefully that it was well worth it. Filia Gaius is now a distant family member of mine, and she will soon be enrolling in Mt. Paradise High School as a senior.

**Day 73:** Filia has been able to make several social connections at her new school. From what she's told me, they seem to be an overall solid bunch (likely a result of calculated selective interaction), but they have an odd dispersion. The three main ones are from very different archetypes. The first's named Maria Arabetty, a cheerleader and student council representative. The second's Hanna Anderson, an aspiring biologist and, from what I understand, a bit of a nerd. Those two represent the biggest disparity, though her other acquaintances are much the same. Yes, yes, I know what you're thinking. "Where is that third important friend?" Well, *his* name is Adam Smith, and he's the one I worry about. I'm not really sure why, other than that he seems too perfect. He seems too intelligent. Filia told me they had a philosophical discussion, and not for a class, mind you. This was not a "who was Plato" or "how does *tabula rasa* relate to Empiricism" sort of interaction. This was the sort of discussion that truly dove into those people and topics in one of humanity's countless attempts to bring out what could be seen as the final truth. I should be overjoyed at this. That sort of work is exactly what I dreamed for Filia. But when she told me that this boy had shown

her how to look at certain theories from a different perspective, I naturally became wary. But maybe I've gotten too confident in my creation. I should wish for her to be great, but I shouldn't expect her to be perfect.

**Day 98:** I believe this experiment's begun to take its toll on my mind. I got into an argument with Filia earlier today. No, argument isn't the right word. An argument requires two participants. This was only me losing my temper. I knew going into this that the financial costs would be great, but I always figured I'd find a way through it. I was prepared for the initial expenses, but the additional costs have become too much for me to bear. There was food to think of, new clothing, supplies for school, and giving her a good standard of living. And the ID. These things have forced me into meager habits; ramen and rice are staple meals, with hotdogs as a special treat. I've had to leave many bills for things I would have normally considered essential unpaid. My daily showers have turned into weekly baths of stale water. I can't even afford books or television to fill the vast void of time. I would apply for a job, anything to make some money, but the public terrifies me. I may not be able to work again anyway, after how I left my last place of work.

Because of all this, I asked Filia to apply for a part-time job. Of course she had to ask why. I asked her why she had clean clothes, why she had food to fuel herself, why she was able to live in a house and not a shed. I yelled all of this at her and much more I'd rather not document here. Looking back, I know I had no reason to act as I did. She's supposed to ask "why;" that's how I made her. Thankfully, she didn't return my anger. She just quietly said she was sorry and went to her room.

When designing this project, I didn't consider the effect of stress on my mind. I need to find an outlet. Something like

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

building small houses with sticks.

**Day 103:** She stole. She stole money from her best friend. Almost 5,000 dollars were taken out of the Arabettys' bank account and transferred into my own. I asked Filia if she knew anything, and I learned what she had done. I'm not worried about the police, though perhaps I should be. I can't figure out how Filia did it. When I asked her to tell me, I couldn't understand her. No, I'm not worried about the police. What worries me is what I've done to Filia. It didn't take long for me to see this as a result of my temper the other day. I've been focusing too much on what this experiment's done to me to even consider what I've done to Filia. Worries surround me like wolves, and I keep pushing Filia because of it. I can't afford to do that. No matter what she is, she needs to be cared for. And no matter who else she meets in her life, I'm the only one who can truly do it. Perhaps it's time to consider weighing Filia's emotional cost into it; she deserves that much.

**Day 173:** I have been visited by an old friend. At least someone I once called a friend. I'm not sure what he is now, a rival perhaps, but then again, rivals can match up to their competitors. This is a man who aspired to the same dream as I, but where he failed, I succeeded. His name is Dr. Patel.

He said that he knew "what I had done." I would figure he was referring to Filia, but how could he have found out about her? When I asked him to explain what he meant and show what evidence he had, he admitted that he could not say and that he had no evidence of anything. He insisted that I destroy any evidence of my experiment, but leave the experiment itself unharmed. Normally I would laugh off any man who accused me of something without even saying what it was, but experiment?

What could that be but Filia? I fear the possibility of him knowing about her and fear even more the possibility that he's withholding evidence. But even if what he says is true, I cannot stop creating these notes. If discovered by the right mind, this experiment and these notes could begin a new age for humanity. No, destroying these notes would be too great a loss. I cannot allow that to happen.

**Day 203:** I designed Filia with the hope that she would become humanity's next calculator. I failed to realize how juvenile that was. Every day I wait at the window for her return. Some days I eat breakfast, some days I eat lunch. But the meal I never miss, no matter how sick I feel, no matter how wretched, is supper. Because that is the only meal I share with Filia. She may not be human, but she can smile, she can cry, and she can laugh. That makes her no less than any human in my heart.

**Day 204:** She said she didn't love me.

**Day 211:** Filia believes that Adam's taken a liking to her, that he wants to be more than just friends. And you know why she told me this beyond the fact that I programmed her to tell me every single detail of her life? She wanted to know what she should do. She asked me how she should deal with the affections of another. I should have told her to reject him. I should have told her to spit in his face. But you know what? I didn't. I told her to do the right thing. The only thing an empty shell can usefully do. Make him happy. Making people happy was the only real function she ever had.

**Day 256:** Today I learned why Filia changed her college of choice. Also, in a completely unrelated irrelevant unimportant un-

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

connected inapplicable small little tidbit of news, I learned where Adam Smith will be going.

**Day 365:** I've done it. I've finally figured out how I can continue to watch her. My God, it was so simple! She's been taking in sensory details all this time; all I have to do is record it! Now I can see everything she does, I can listen to everything she hears. I will never again be alone because no matter where she goes or what she does, she cannot escape my grasp.

**Day 432:** He asked her out by the fountain. He was so nervous, blushing like a little girl! Of course she said yes. Now little Filia has her very own boyfriend. This should make things even more interesting.

**Day 882:** They spent a night out beneath the stars to (as Adam put it) "study for an astrology test." They looked all night, but the only one they found was Gemini with the image of Pollux leading twin Castor. I haven't studied stars in years and yet I saw half a dozen more, why was that the only one he pointed out?

**Day 1473:** Believing their charades to have continued for long enough, I confronted Filia. I asked her why she let him pursue her, why the flowers, the exchange of childish poems. Why did she continue to associate with a man who unknowingly fell in love with a machine? I asked her if she was happy with what she had done. She said no. I asked her if she desired to leave him. She said no. I asked her if she was in love with him. Again she said no. So then why? She said it was because I told her to. She was right. I had forgotten about that. Five years ago, I told her to do what would make him happy. She said that since he was in love with her, nothing would bring him more joy than to think



that she felt the same way. Everything that's happened since then is a result of this chain of logic. If he were to buy her a present, she would act happy to receive it. If he wanted to be invited to dinner, his wish would soon be granted. If he desired for her to love him, she would make him believe she did.

It's difficult to think of the consequences that could arise from this arrangement. But still, it must not be broken. If a man can be fooled into a life of happiness, let him be fooled. What point would there be in telling him otherwise?

**Day 1945:** They are soon to be married. Filia gave me an invitation, not just verbal, but an actual physical card. I would be presented as her family and guardian. I would be the one to walk her down the aisle. I told her to make up an excuse for me.

**Day 2003:** I wonder if there's a way to analyze the fluid samples Adam provided Filia.

**Day 2017:** It's so strange to see her cry because of something she's always known and never once cared about.

**Day 3035:** Note to self: begin setting an alarm 3 times a day for meals.

**Day 3065:** I am sick of happiness. I built Filia with the hope that she would give humanity some of that, a little help or respite. But you know what else was built for the same purpose? A dishwasher, a toaster, a microwave. Filia is no better than any of these things because she was built for no greater purpose than to make humanity blindly happy. I want something more. The world needs something more. So I have decided to give myself a new purpose; I will build another machine. Most would say I

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

intend this one to be a new Filia. After all, it will be a machine built to look and act human while performing higher than any could dream. But in truth, this experiment will be designed with the opposite intentions. Human beings have been shallow to seek happiness in any shape at any cost, so I will build a machine to end that. He will show that life is beyond basic pleasure. Humanity's been on the same track for far too long. It's time to end that.

**Day 5202:** I saw in a newspaper that Dr. Patel has died. I always assumed he would die of natural causes or murder, I never figured him one to commit suicide. But here it is in the paper, lighting his home on fire with him inside it. Why would he do that? With all I've been through, l'appel du vide, has at times seemed an enchanting offer, but to answer its call? I can't imagine the reason for his doing so.

**Day: 7300:** It is finished. I've completed it; I've done it again! After so long, I can look upon the pinnacle of robotics, the new glory of the human race. As soon as he was ready, I told him to go out and do his work. Who knows what that may be, but doesn't that only add to the excitement? I'll be looking in the newspapers every day now; the fruit of my works will be seen soon enough.

**Day 7301:** Dear God, what have I done. He left when the sun came down, he was silent, I swear I knew nothing of what he would do. I wanted I WANTED I don't know what I wanted but not this not this madness. He left in the night and when morning came he brought a body. She was only a girl; she was so young. I've never even met her, why would he do this? No, I can't honestly ask that question. I told him to do this. This is the result of my actions, but I swear I never considered that he would do this. I only wanted him to be different than Filia. Now I am a murderer.

His actions followed my command, his blood stains my hands. But why did he bring the body here? Does he think himself a cat catching a mouse? Look master look what I've brought you. I can't tell the police of this, my crimes are beyond the warrant of execution. I can't try to stop him either; what if he defends himself and kills me? I can't afford any action. I'm in a cage of my own making.

**Day 7315:** During the day he sits in the same chair and watches a bare wall with a blank stare. He responds to nothing. At night he leaves, and in the morning, he returns with a body.

**Day 7335:** There's so many. Dear God, there's so many.

**Day 7336:** How have the police not found me yet? My creation's committed near genocide WHY CAN'T THEY FIND HIM. Why can't they find him please let them find him.

**Day 7351:** In the past almost 20 years, I have been visited by two people. The first was Dr. Patel. The second, today's visitor, was Adam Smith. It felt strange seeing him for the first time in person after seeing him every day for so many years. He is a foreigner and someone I know intimately all at once.

He asked if he could come inside, and I refused him for obvious reasons. After that he said he would be brief and indeed he was. He only said that he knew what was happening, and that I must be the one to end it, that I'm the only one who can end it. He's right. He's beyond right, yet I can't do it. This creation is my creation; wouldn't it be wrong to end a life just because I thought it was no longer of use?

**Day 7352:** I thought I was immune to the shock of death. I've seen its bearer walk through my door enough times to make one

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

more seem meaningless. But today he didn't bring in a stranger. He brought Filia. She has come home. I thought myself a corpse to feeling, but now I feel such despair and sadness that I cannot begin to transcribe it. But I felt one more thing. I realized that no matter how much I want to deny it, no matter that she couldn't reciprocate, I loved her. She was my daughter, she is dead, and that monster killed her. When it presented me with her body, I withdrew to my old workbench. I took the hammer I used to build and shape creations, returned to the thing that stood in my home, and I destroyed it. I took out all of my hatred and all of my anger on the sickening thing I created. Now I sit here writing without either of them. I've spent my anger and hatred. The only joy in my life is dead. All I have left is my dejected self. To whom-ever reads this: I don't know. Do what you will.

**Compilers Note:** Dr. Gaius is currently incarcerated at Golgotha maximum security prison. He's scheduled for execution on January 6th.

# Contributor Bios

## **Leonardo Casabella**

**Madeline Cass** is a visual artist, amateur horticulturist & mycologist, professional plant thief, and an okay barista. When she's not dancing to bad surf rock, she spends time planning a community-shared tool library. Someday she intends to live on an organic permaculture farm with goats and bees and mushrooms and fig trees and vegetables, using plants as art to teach others about sustainability.

**Katie Cooley** is a sophomore Horn Performance and English double major. She is an active participant in Wind Ensemble as well as several chamber groups. In addition to the required music course work, she plays at Grace Lutheran Church in Lincoln and various student composition recitals.

**Hannah Eads** is from a suburban town close to Cincinnati, Ohio. She currently has blue hair and writes poetry to get the heavy things off her chest. She always hopes to write more.

**Haley Heesacker** was born and raised in Lincoln, Nebraska. She is a double major in Advertising and Fine Arts. She has designed T-shirts for bands, though she mainly draws and paints. She is open to just about any variety of creating.

**Mina Holmes** is a senior English major. She doesn't always write about prostitution and adultery. As far as you know.

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

**Alec Kaus** is a fourth year Studio Art major emphasizing in Photography and minoring in Film Studies. Raised on the road, he spent his childhood in the cornfields of Iowa, the mountains of Idaho, and everywhere in between. Traversing such wide, open spaces fostered within him an appreciation for the beauty of his surroundings and a desire to translate that into creative work.

**Samuel Lee** is from Nebraska. He enjoys reading and writing poetry. He encourages all of you to listen to more Slayer.

**Evan Pille** is a freshman English Major who hails from the town of Stevensville Michigan. His favorite music includes both Classical and Hard dance, forming much of the inspiration behind his stories. His life is largely undecided except for one dream: to tell stories in whatever form possible.

**Dizzy Roberson** is a senior English major with a focus in fiction writing. She is a slightly competent student, a moderately competent writer, and a very competent social justice warrior. She has a three-legged cat.

**Abie Rohde** is a freshman at UNL and is currently planning on majoring in Graphic Design.

**Scott Sampson** is from Norfolk, Nebraska. He studies art, specializing in photography and printmaking.

**Emily Tran** is a freshman of undergraduate BFA program. She was born in Viet Nam and it has been a year since she moved to USA. Now she continues to progress her passion for drawing and designing.

**FALL 2014**

**Nicholas Wilkinson** is a freshman Journalism & Advertising-Public Relations Major from Bellevue, NE.

# Editor Bios

**Sarah Benal** is a senior prose editor of Laurus. She is a senior studying English and Global Studies. She is currently studying abroad in Jordan, studying Arabic literature and Women in Islam. Amy Poehler is her spirit animal and Kate Spade is her weakness. She aspires to write the Great American Novel, so most of her time is spent at Andrews Hall and Love Library. She's the one wearing the Andy Warhol button.

**Emily Burns** is a senior prose editor of Laurus. She is a senior English and Art History major with a minor in Studio Art. She spends her time researching Victorian fairy tales, daydreaming about pointless things, and watching more Netflix than she would care to admit. Her career plans are far from certain but are usually about being a writer, editor, or professor. All she knows for sure is that Panera, yoga, and Joss Whedon references make her happy.

**Kirsten Clawson** is a senior prose editor of Laurus. She is a senior English major with a concentration in Editing and Publishing and minors in biological sciences, classics, and psychology. Some day she hopes to become an editor for a publishing company, or maybe a literary agent. Either way she wants to live in New York. In the meantime, she is active in her sorority, the Honors Program, and College Republicans, and can often be found at Starbucks because coffee is her favorite.

**Daley ElDorado** is the President and senior prose editor of



Laurus. She is a fourth year English major with a concentration in Creative Writing. She hopes to work for a publishing company one day, big or small, to help professional storytellers share their work with the world. In the meantime, you can find her sleeping in the Andrews Hall basement or satisfying her sweet tooth with lots of candy.

**Sam Greenfield** is a senior poetry editor. She has majors in English and Graphic Design and minors in Spanish and Digital Humanities. She hopes to pursue Library Studies in graduate school and one day work as a librarian. Until that day comes, she spends her time encoding WWI-era magazines and Willa Cather's personal letters for her job in Love Library, preparing to spend the spring semester in Spain, and having frequent existential crises. She enjoys good literature and bad TV.

**Eric Holt** is a senior poetry editor of Laurus. He is an English and Film Studies major with plans to pursue a master's degree in Secondary English Education. As an exchange student in Sweden with lots of time on his hands, he likes to hike through the forest, write song lyrics, and bring on the funk with his bass guitar.

**Alexa Horn** is a freshman poetry editor of Laurus. She is double-majoring in Journalism and Advertising/Public Relations, and she hopes to report on issues in China and North Korea in the future. She enjoys drawing, reading, and watching too many documentaries on Netflix.

**Nicole Mosby** is a senior poetry editor of Laurus. She is a Pre-law English major with a concentration in composition and rhetoric. Nicole has dreams of attending law school and being the next Johnny Cochran! In her spare time she watches Sponge-

## LAURUS AFTER DARK

Bob and reads Mary Higgins Clark.

**Lori Nevole** is a freshman prose editor of Laurus. She is majoring in English, and hasn't figured her life out past that point (yet). She hopes to eventually work in a publishing house or perhaps be a professor, though her career plans change from day to day. She spends her spare time reading and listening to the Killers on repeat.

**Kayla Punt** is a freshmen prose editor of Laurus. She is majoring in Spanish and English secondary education with hopes to teach and influence young minds. In her off time, she enjoys eating candy corn and watching endless episodes of How I Met Your Mother in lieu of math homework.

**Sean Stewart** is a senior poetry editor of Laurus. He has majors in Film Studies, English, and Classics. Eventually, he wants to work in academics, write, and accomplish the Great American Road Trip. Aside from Laurus, he spends his time translating ancient Greek, powering through film history, and staying up way too late. He can usually be found obsessing over The Maine, Steinbeck, or Plato in the nearest movie theater or bookstore.

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