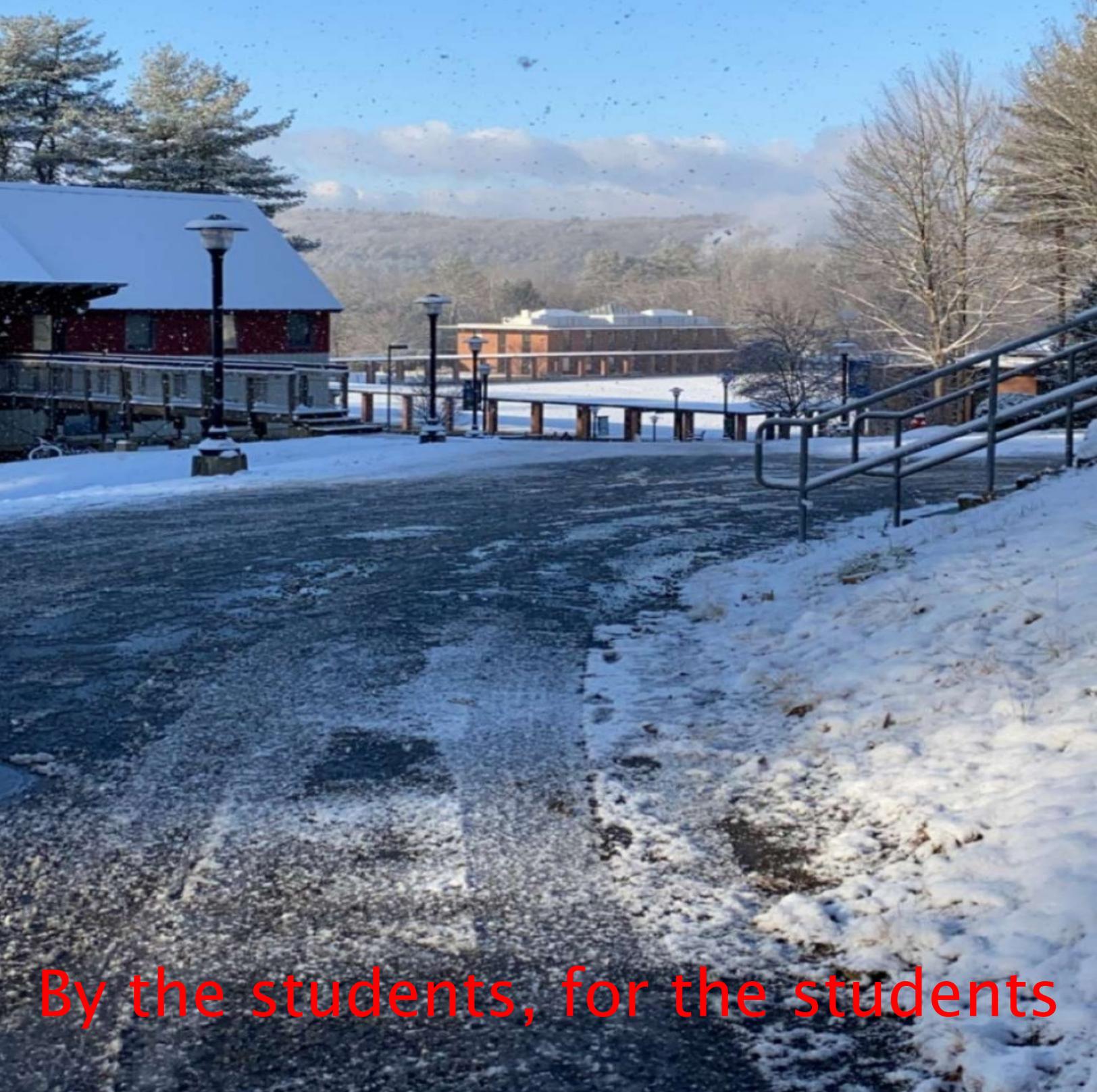


VOICES

Volume 4

Issue 1



By the students, for the students

Voices Mission Statement

Voices magazine is an autonomous publication written and produced by students, for students. We take pride in showcasing the best work that the Landmark College student body has to offer, and to be a platform for all forms of student expression. We strive to give a voice to students through the mediums of Art, Photography, Creative Writing, and Journalism.

As neurodiverse students, we have been silenced in the past. This is a place where our voices will be heard. We are Landmark, this is us. These are our voices.

Letter from the Editor

This issue of *Voices* is somewhat different from previous issues in that so few students enrolled in the *Voices* courses that the traditional framework of a fully-staffed newsroom was bypassed in favor of the more practical route of collecting the best literary work offered by Landmark students over the course of the semester, and releasing them together at the tail end of the calendar year.

This is of course in contrast to the traditional practice of 50-50 production, where roughly half of the material is produced by *Voices* staffers, with the rest trickling in from students eager to be published in multiple issues throughout the semester. In any case, the work in these pages is of the highest quality, and we are so very proud to showcase the work to the Landmark community.

We want to thank all of the students who entrusted us with their written work as magazine submissions: getting a first look at the creativity of Landmark students is always a treat!

Lucas Sillars

Publisher Emeritus

December, 2021

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My Double Life

Nathan Zierlein

I was unsure whether it was the drab green walls, the eerie hum of the radiator, or the mildew-stained American flag that made my 5th grade classroom so dreadful to be in. Maybe it was the aging photograph of President George Washington, the crooked, frame with a yellow tint. No, the worst part about the classroom was my demeaning and ruddy-faced homeroom instructor, Mrs. Quinlyn, whose voice sounded like a shower of glass, her stance stiff and concrete. Pointing and shouting at me, her red fingers would wave in the stale air. She'd taunt and hiss at me, exposing my lack of literacy to those around me. Mrs. Quinlyn was almost infantile in her mocking of me. Her impatience and cruelty remain unmatched by any educator I have ever known.

As ghastly as my experience was in this classroom, I desperately wanted to learn with my peers who were reading [JT2] books like *The Hunger Games* or *The Maze Runner*, doing science experiments, making friends, even solving math equations. Yet this fantasy of mine was not my reality. Instead, I was escorted to a small dull room, my personal classroom. Devoid of color or comfort, A singular rectangular table stood with a washed-out chartreuse chair. Instead of walls, there were large lab-like windows. I was denied the usual 5th grade curriculum; I couldn't read or write. At the time I didn't understand I was dyslexic, nor did the teachers and faculty around me. They only knew that there was something wrong with me.

At eight-thirty in the morning my special education instructor would slither into the pocket-sized room, a petite woman with raven colored-hair and pursed lips, black beady eyes, always sporting a tacky scarf. Sometimes an outdated abstract pattern, occasionally a floral print. It didn't matter, she was awful. Her name was Miss Bahota. She was a European immigrant like my father, maybe Slavic or Polish. I couldn't tell. I once told her my father was an immigrant too but, she didn't care so much. One day I remember having a difficult time with the material presented to me. After that unproductive day (by her standards) she told me that she did things *The European Way*. That's when I knew I was screwed.

Traveling to my grandmother's was an escape from my academic crisis. Every week the family car would slide up 72nd and York Avenue, the ivory shaded buildings towering over our tiny white Subaru.

We'd pull up to my grandmother's building, the Edgewater. The cobblestone plaza shimmering under my shoes, I look up at the tall windows gleaming in the afternoon light. Toy-like boats bob on the Hudson River. Her flat was a curated cream-colored Eden, perched on the 18th floor looking over the river. Original Eartaves paintings adorn the walls along with my own mother's art, Frank Lloyd Wright chairs surrounding the pearly couch, draping floor plants and reflective mirrors scattered around.

My grandmother was a glamorous woman, olive-toned with auburn hair, in the winter she'd wear her ebony-colored furs and hats. I loved my grandma. She was my inspiration and role model, a kind and strong woman, a shimmering beacon amongst the mucky clouds in my mind, gilded in champagne-tinted jewelry. My grandmother knew of my academic struggles, yet she passed no judgement. I learned my bravery and strength through her; she taught me to keep my chin up and my mind ajar. Alas, my weekly time with her would end, and I'd return to my scholastic nightmare. My primary school days were filled with dread and frustration. Later that year misfortune fell upon my family and me, when my grandmother passed away. My double-life was now only one sided.

However, sooner than later, a glimmer of hope would grace my dreary existence. It was the eve of my 6th grade year, a temperate and rich summer. My family and I would travel from the East Coast to Venice Beach, Los Angeles by car. There, in a small school by the name of Pacific Point Academy located in the Santa Monica business district, is where I'd learn how to read, write, and part take in math and the sciences to grade level. Through my grandmother's teachings, and my one-year-long LD program, by age thirteen, I could finally understand the world. Signs were no longer meaningless scribbles, words connected to pictures, numbers formed equations.

Since then, I've been able to graduate both middle school and high school with above average grades. I can express my creativity and love for the arts without my extended guilt of feeling illiterate. I've even developed a love for writing, reading, and poetry. Currently, I am studying in college, and I plan on going into fashion journalism within the next two years. Now, an almost fully realized nineteen-year-old kid, I am ready to swing open the doors to my bright future.

Choice

Jack Belinski

It was only recently in July of 2021, that I have come to the right word to describe my ultimate weakness. This ultimate weakness by the way contributes to most of my problems, from time/self-management on mandatory things to personal I realized this after thinking about my inefficient world building methods, how I approach small problems during my internship work, and a video I watched. My ultimate weakness is being “indecisive”. Though I knew I always had trouble at making choices sometimes, I didn’t have the word to describe much less the nerve to give it thought.

One of humanity’s oldest and greatest adversities (or endeavors) is making choices. And as many of us commonly know: “A man’s got a lot of choices in life, and these choices are made rarely right”, so why don’t we just make them and be on our way? Well, if there is one thing life teaches all, it’s that choice determines life or death, safety or ruin, victory or defeat, good use or waste, an opportunity taken or missed, success or failure, self-fulfillment or regret, and so on.

Our stone age ancestors certainly had their fair share of scary decisions. For example, tribes would have had to choose between staying in places whose terrain, resources, and predators they knew well, and yet beginning to lack enough food, OR migrating hundreds maybe even thousands of miles to unknown places with plants or water they don’t know are edible. Meanwhile, in ancient times generals leading armies had to make seemingly impossible choices with no win situations.

For example, in the year 500 BC, during the warring states period in China, strategist Sun Tzu had to decide between doing nothing to save an ally from being destroyed by an enemy state’s larger force, or be destroyed trying. In response, he led a small force towards the city of his ally to act as bait, drawing the enemy’s force away. Furthermore, during the age of exploration the great sailors and navigators had to

make choices at every turn on every voyage, which would either lead them to their deaths or change history. For example, in 1520 when Ferdinand Magellan’s fleet was nearly halfway to the southern tip of South America, after losing lives, manpower, resources, and a ship they had to decide between returning to Portugal or stay on course and take the ultimate risk. One ship decided to return while Magellan and the rest pushed onwards, resulting in conclusive proof of the earth being round. Today people’s choices range from the most simply with no right or wrong answers like which ice cream to get, to the more complicated like what job (or career) do you want.

As for me, whenever I get my laundry done too close to noon on Sundays, I ask myself: Should I go through with my morning exercise? Or should I just get on with my daily work? Meanwhile, the choices I make on a weekly basis include: exercise for a bit and have a shower in the morning, get launch and maybe sit with company, work on drawing or world building projects, etc. Either way like every course of action we all choose, these are time, effort, focus and motivation costly; Even if they are personal their like paying taxes, no more valuable than my academic stuff, which I struggle every day to evenly distribute my sense of attention as well as effort. Every day with work, the questions are always the same: what tasks to I want to start with? What do I want to get done? And I label those tasks on my homework planner via numbers.

Originally, I used what is “programmed decision making”--routine automatic decision-making process based on rules. And in which case, for every academic assignment or project I made choices based on their instructions, maximizing good quality work done and firmly emphasized my learning experience and enjoyment. But that along with “reasoned judgement” costed time, effort and like my other choices, it costed me mood for doing other personal things like hanging out with friends or my own projects. These projects by the way take no more time, effort, and mood, if not more so than my academic work.

I longed for more time, directed effort, and mood, so after a long ass time of hesitating and being bound by a slow, steady, pain in the ass decision making process, I recently decided no more. That I would be quicker at making choices, and not hesitate, hence my policy for decisiveness. However, as expected that resulted in lower quality work done, and I feel less eager to take time to learn, let alone enjoy the process as much as I used to. In fact, as far as I'm concerned, I'm getting my academic stuff done more out of desperation, which made me wonder, is this how I wanna spend my last months as a college student? How much am I even enjoying myself really? What's more, my policy for decisiveness certainly didn't make my upcoming after college choices any easier: Pursue the exceptional minds program, or my entrepreneurial brand = facts-on-naps, or perhaps I should take internship opportunities via LinkedIn. Fortunately, however,

with the help of my career mentor, that huge choice is behind me, and I've decided to go through with the exceptional minds program, in order to get qualified for the entertainment industry. Like every college student I have to make tough choices and make a big deal out of choices that don't seem all that hard. Even the subject of this whole writing assignment itself took some time and thought to choose, because I wanted this to be special.

In any case, despite being practically a grown ass man and someone who makes hard choices pretty much all the time, whenever my patience reaches it's end and there is nothing fair, I ask myself: "Why do these choices gotta be so F***ing hard?!" An average fellow grown ass adult would probably play captain obvious saying: "Welcome to adulthood", but seriously what makes a choice in general hard to make? This probably sounds unnecessary to ask given my experience, but like the Greek philosopher Socrates, I can humbly acknowledge my ignorance, and honest how often do we really consider wondering or answering ourselves "why" any decision is hard? According to James March and Herbert Simon's "administrative model", factors include the following:

Uncertainty/risk (There can be a certain degree of unpredictability as well as probability that something will happen. For example, not knowing if a choice will lead to a desired outcome)

Ambiguous info. (Information that is unclear and can be interpreted in more ways than one)

Time constraints and info costs (There can be limited time and a certain cost for information)

Incomplete info. (meaning, to not know the full range of choices)

March and Simon's also state human decision making is limited by a person's ability to interpret, process and act, hence "**Bounded rationality**". But perhaps most simply – and this goes for people who make a big deal out of personal preference-based choices – they just don't know for sure what they want.

Is there any way we can improve our decisiveness?

Choices can be hard or complicated for while others related to business or politics requires the judgment of a professional.

But even professionals can't always make "optimum decisions", hence the best choices. For example, Joe Biden's choice to pull U.S. troops out of the Middle East may have resulted in the significant loss of national security, but at least the U.S. can save capital needed to fight climate change, thus increasing chances for a greener future.

Sometimes choices are only as hard, complex and as time consuming as we make them. We can have a habit of making a big fuss over simple things like which book to read or clothes to wear. If there is no right or wrong answer, and no serious consequences why do we fuss over such trivialities? Well, it can be because we feel time pressured, nervous at what others will think, nervous at losing chances, nervous at regretting, or that such could determine our future choices.

Regardless, we make them every day.

The Hospitable Kidnappers

Lucas Sillars

It was December 13th, 2019, when I set out to meet some old, dear friends whom I had never met before. Not in person, anyway – I had met them on the internet some thirteen years prior, playing a real-time strategy game called *Age of Empires* with them in 2006. I had been invited to one of their weddings in Mexico in 2009 but was a mere seventeen-year-old and knew there was no way in hell anyone would permit me to travel solo to a foreign country to meet strangers I had found on the internet. But I was now twenty-seven, and nobody could stop me. Lord knows they tried, though.

The build-up to the trip had been strained to say the least, with my mother running hypothetical kidnapping scenarios by me every weekend and asking if that was what I wanted. “Don’t tell them we have money,” she would say, “if they find that out, they will see you as a ransom payment!” My girlfriend was nearly inconsolable at the prospects of my trek after her coworkers told her that I was stupidly setting out to voluntarily spend time in the most dangerous city in North America. “What if you just get shot at the border or something, what then?” she would tearfully ask me on the phone. My Trump-loving, bible-thumping West Virginian grandmother perhaps took it the worst. “Ohh... Mexico..” she shuddered disapprovingly over the phone when I mentioned the plan. Leading up to the trip, she called me more and more frequently. “Why do you need to go *there*?? Why can’t they just come *here*!?” she would say in a shaky voice. When I explained that two people had saved their only four days of paid vacation time for the year to see me, and that I would not bail on them, the tones of her calls became increasingly desperate. “You know, I was walking in my garden today, and I thought to myself ‘boy, I would give Lucas a *thousand* dollars just to stay home where it’s safe,’” she said in exasperation over the phone to me on the eve of my journey.

The two friends, Ismael, and Alan were from Tijuana, Mexico. Alan is an architect, and Ismael was working at a new tech job he just had taken after quitting a cyber security gig for the Federales, because cyber-attacks from the cartels had become too close for comfort. Somewhere over Arizona, I got a lone Facebook message from Ismael. It was a selfie including both of them making devil horn signs with their hands inside a burger restaurant with a brief caption in broken English: “We are ready to kidnapping you.” It was on.

Stepping outside at the San Diego airport, I immediately realized I had made a mistake. The thermals and wool jacket I had thrown on at 4AM in the 10 degree Boston weather was causing me to sweat like a pig in the 70-degree southern California balminess. After some time standing around, awkwardly out of place in my winter apparel, I saw them across the street waving at me: my kidnappers were ready for me. After a quick detour to a liquor store to replace the bourbon that was confiscated by TSA, we were off to the border. “It’s not too late to turn back, amigo,” Ismael warned.

As soon as we drove across the demarcation line, my friends let out a cheer “Welcome to Mexico! We have beer! Tacos! ... And *high* quality putas!” We made a pitstop at a gas station, where a scary-looking man with facial tattoos took 150 pesos inside his shop and returned with three two-liter bottles of Tecate. The next stop was a traditional street taco establishment, where workers sliced meat from a gyro wheel with a machete and plopped it on corn tortillas with lettuce, onions and guac, and piled random vegetables on the side. It was not the taco bell I was used to, but it had been a long day of traveling, being kidnapped, and smuggled across the Mexican border, and I was grateful for the food.

There is something about traveling in a strange place and finding something delicious on the street after hours of starvation that unlocks a level of satisfaction unattainable by other means. Alan fetched some extra tortillas from the man with the machete and proceeded to stuff them with stray taco ingredients that had fallen on his plate and on the counter. “This is a Mexican solution for a Mexican problem,” he explained, downing the rest of what was left of his two-liter Tecate.

Once we had eaten our fill, I had expected that we would retire to Ismael’s house for the evening, but the night was young, and I was in for a treat. Upon arrival to his property, I was shown to Ismael’s apartment up on top of the complex momentarily to drop off my luggage, before being pulled downstairs to a party that was starting in the home underneath. It was a party celebrating Ismael’s mother and father in law’s 42nd wedding anniversary, and while he referred to me as “the guest of honor,” I would later discover that Ismael had only warned the hosts of my impending presence some 48-hours earlier. Nevertheless, the other partygoers did not seem to question anything, clinking their bottles with mine, and asking where I was from, to which I could only reply with “Boston,” for it was surely the only point of reference anywhere close to my home that they might recognize.

The Mexicans almost unanimously eyed the bottle of Michter’s Small Batch Bourbon that I had presented at the party with suspicion. I learned later that higher-end liquor is rarely, if ever, seen or consumed down there, at least within the social circles of my friends. If anything, it’s jack and coke. Beer is the gold standard there. Eventually, one lady poured herself a glass of bourbon on ice. I watched her eyes light up on the first sip, and she elbowed her friend and pointed to the bottle. One by one the attendees sampled and enjoyed it thoroughly. The bottle did not last the night.

By 1:00 AM, after hours of mingling, drinking, and emceeing a hilariously racist Mexican version of Bingo called *Lo Teria*, we gathered up Ismael’s children, and climbed the outdoor staircase to Ismael’s apartment to call it a night. Alan had already gone home, and I would not see him again in person after that. Once I had taken a few pictures of the city lights

from my guestroom perched atop the hill, I crawled into the top section of the trundle bed, and peacefully went to sleep.

I awoke early to the sound of high-pitched children’s voices, speaking in indecipherable Spanish, and the pitter patter of their little feet, combined with the smell of fresh coffee and something being fried on the stove. Ismael’s wife, Gisela, is a saint. Seemingly always smiling and humming something, she keeps up with the kids – a boy and a girl, aged 5 and 9 at the time, and is an incredible cook. She served us all a breakfast of spicy corn, fried eggs, cut up hotdogs, and homemade tortilla chips, fried right there on the stove, and complimented with her own chili sauce she had concocted in a blender. It was fantastic.

Ismael would not tell me where he was taking me, but we packed up his SUV with his wife and two children and headed south, through a city called Roserito. On the way, we stopped at several markets where they urged me to try on traditional (stereotypical) Mexican attire – sombreros and knitted panchos, and snapped pictures and videos. Thinking on my feet, I achieved screaming hilarity from the family and several bystanders when I burst out a modified Wall of Voodoo lyric, decked-out in a blue Aztec poncho and a straw sombrero:

*I’m hangin’ out in
Tijuana,*

*Eatin’ barbecued
Iguana,*

*Using wifi on my
Smartphone,*

*Shitty service ‘cuz
I’m far from
home!*

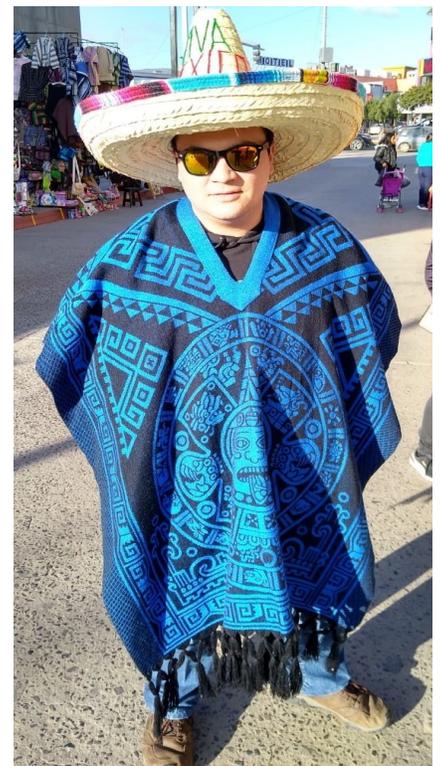


Photo by Ismael Rivas

Holidays...

Ethan Meeder

Within these times so many wonders float around on what the future might look like, particularly within the last few years. But no matter how things turn out in whatever time of the year it is one thing always stays the same. I am talking about holidays. During any of the twelve separate months in the year holidays are always something people would cheer for. Holidays can be full of memories and stories both created and remembered. They can teach us lessons in ourselves and others. They can also preserve traditions which people no matter what year it is can keep and treasure. Wishing for hope and joy in troubled times, lets begin and travel down the path of holidays in a year...

Every year New Year's Eve is marked on December 31; it is the final day of the Gregorian Year and is observed by people around the world. Celebrated with evening parties with drinks, food, and watching lights and fireworks shows. The same could be said for New Years Day always being on January 1, the first day of the year. For each nation it is celebrated differently. In the U.S. people watch the ball drop in time square. Festivities continue through the night waiting for the clock to strike at midnight saying farewell to the departing year and welcoming the joy and hope of the new year ahead. It is a time of reflection and resolution while looking forward. The countdown begins. Three, two, one, Happy New Year! And the familiar song *Syne* begins. Originally from Scottish national poet Robert Burns which has been around since 1788, which translates into standard English can be interpreted as; "Since long ago or for old time's sake, memories of friendships and journeys from long ago. In other words, no mentioning of the new year. Giving a feeling of connectiveness the song resembles comfort of good times.

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot
And days of auld lang syne?
For auld lang syne, my dear
For auld lang syne...
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For days of auld lang syne*

*We twa hae run about the braes
And pu'd the gowans fine*

*But we've wander'd mony a weary fit
Sin days of auld lang syne
We twa hae paidl'd i' the burn
Frae morning sun till dine
But seas between us braid hae roar'd
Sin days of auld lang syne
For auld lang syne, my dear
For auld lang syne*

*We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For days of auld lang syne
And surely ye'll be your pint-stowp
And surely I'll be mine
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For auld lang syne
And there's a hand, my trusty fiere
And gie's a hand o' thine
And we'll tak a right gude-willy waught
For auld lang syne
For auld lang syne, my dear
For auld lang syne*

*We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For auld lang syne
For auld lang syne, my dear
For auld lang syne
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For auld lang syne*

Holiday two is the most romantic time of the year. Valentine's Day also referred to St. Valentine's Day or the Feast of St. Valentine's. Always celebrated on February 14, today is a holiday of romance, love, and passion. However, it originated as a Christian feast day for honoring early Christian martyrs whose name was St. Valentine. Through the years though traditions became significant cultural and religious celebration of love and romance around the world. Becoming more of a connection with people and romantic love for each other. Which is funny considering how today Valentine's is a profitable time generating almost eight billion among candy, flowers, and assorted fine jewelry.

Holiday three, full of giddiness and merriment. St. Patrick's Day marked on March 17, as the feast day of St. Patrick the patron saint of Ireland. Kidnapped from Roman Britain at sixteen he was taken to Ireland as a slave who escaped only to return in 432 CE to convert the Irish to Christianity. Passing away on March 17, 461 CE, St. Patrick managed in less than a thirty-year time many monasteries, schools, and churches. As time went on emigrants heading to the U.S. began transforming St. Patrick's Day into a secular holiday of celebration and revelry of all things Irish. Given the large Irish population in cities like Boston, and New York began having parades as far back as 1737. By 1962, Chicago would dye its rivers green for St. Patrick's Day's luck of the Irish celebrations. This is astonishing because blue was traditionally associated with St. Patrick's Day. Today people both Irish and non-Irish celebrate the wearing of the green and all its glory, while eating corn beef and cabbage as well as drinking hard core ale.

Holiday four is a day full of joy and sadness. You could say this day is bittersweet. Easter is marked on the Gregorian calendar as always falling on a Sunday between March 22 and April 25. As the day people's spiritual faith is amongst one of its highest Easter is referred from the Christian faith as the day of resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The liturgical observance is both that of Western in Christianity and Eastern Christianity practice among Roman Catholics and Protestants, along with Eastern Christianity practices among Eastern Orthodox, Eastern Catholics, and Byzantine Rite Lutherans. This holiday is referred to also as a movable feast which does not fall on the Gregorian calendar on the same day year. Easter has moved as time went on to a less religious version with bunnies, decorated eggs, and chocolate candy filled in baskets. It is considered a time of worshipping and gathering with meals and families.

Unlike the prior holidays, the next holiday, number five is not celebrated worldwide but within only the U.S. Memorial Day is marked as a federal holiday which honors and mourns the military who fought and died to protect the country. It is a day people visit the fallen service members in history as well as volunteers placing the American flag on the graves of those who serve. It's a day of remembrance and reflection along with gratitude for those who protected our freedom. Also, this day is considered by many the kickoff starts to summer, a time full of fun, partying, and picnicking. Having a long history from its inception of both traditions and celebrations including paradise and barbecues with burgers and hotdogs on the grill. Every year on the last Monday in May. Originally observed on May 30, from 1868 to 1970 regardless of which day it fell on. Memorial Day is also a day for

a movable feast which means never falling on the same day of the year. Finally, Memorial Day is a day also have a symbolic flower known as the "Remembrance Poppy" a suitable name for this specific holiday.

Holiday six a day of symbolism, commemoration, and celebration. Marked on June 14, Flag Day is the day the Second Continental Congress adopted the U.S. flag on June 14, 1777. Later considered to be called the "Stars and Stripes" having thirteen stars alternating stripes in red and white which represents the original thirteen colonies and thirteen white stars on a navy-colored background. This represents a "New Constellation the New Union". Although Flag Day is not considered an official Federal holiday. Flag Day is also considered the U.S. Army's birthday. Finally, it is on Flag Day when you can go anywhere in the U.S. and not miss seeing the country's flag. People are proud when displaying them in every corner of stores, businesses, private residences, and outdoors.

When it comes to holiday number seven, nothing says American independence and freedom more than the 4th of July "Independence Day". Celebrated every year on July 4, in the United States this holiday commemorates the Independence of the country and the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. A day in which is filled with celebrations, barbecues, parades, fireworks, picnics, family reunions, baseball games, concerts, hot summer weather, and apple pie. Considered an official Federal holiday since July 4, 1941, celebrated from small towns to large cities the 4th of July is observed through customs, traditions, and people celebrating in their communities today.

Heading into this next holiday is a little different. Holiday eight is marked not just on a specific day but all days within the month of August. This holiday are individual birthdays. The month of August birthdays is commemorated to those who fall under the zodiacs of Leo's and Virgo's. The first half of August which falls under Leo's tell of people who are full of light, energy, and fire. A Leo is someone who has personality traits that are bold, confident, courageous, creative, as well as fierce, and generous. Leos are fifth sign of the zodiac (Jul 23 – Aug 22) and considered to be the "life of the party". The second half of August falls under Virgo's who are sixth in the zodiac signs (Aug 22 – Sep 22). Virgos are considered be dedicated, detailed-oriented, flexible, independent, modest, organized, and practical. They are also strong believers in willpower and perseverance. And finally, Virgo's are the most determined out of any of the zodiacs.

The ninth holiday nine which is considered a movable feast time and marks the unofficial end of the summer season is “Labor Day”. Labor Day which has always been marked on the first Monday in September is a National Federal holiday in the United States celebrating, honoring, and recognizing the American labor movement. This day honors the contributions of laborers in their development and achievement. Every year on this holiday non-essential federal government offices are closed, and trading is suspended on the stock market. Beginning in the late nineteenth century as labor and trade movements grew. Labor Day would become a federal holiday and pass into law on June 28, 1894. Equivalently in Europe this holiday is referred to as May Day marked on May 1, since 1886. Labor Day which is referred to as the unofficial end of summer due to “the cultural summer season” in which many people take vacations and schools would reopen for a new year after that. From amusement parks closing, to colleges reopening, as well as football season starting. It is also during Labor Day that it was appropriate in the fashion world to wear white or seersucker one last time. Finally, it is this time when the retail world is marked with huge sales and discounts all around, second only to Black Friday during the holiday season.

Now let’s move towards the cool crisp fall season. Holiday ten will lean you into fear and will make you want to cheer. Marked on October 31 is a holiday that is its best at night. I am talking about the roaring excitement of Halloween. Halloween has a unique story to it which goes back to the olden times before of Salam. Originated as a tradition of the ancient pre-Christian Celtic festival of Samhain, which was celebrated on October 31, when people would dress in costumes to ward off spirits. People around the world celebrate in their own ways the holidays tradition. In the United States Halloween originated into trick-or-treat. The custom of this originated in Ireland and Scotland, as a tradition called Gisin where young people would dress in costumes excepting so called offerings (candy) from various households. This would later evolve in the early twentieth century and would become what we know as trick-or-treating. And in conclusion with this festive time, these events would always fall on the eve of “All Saints Day”.

Moving away from now the creepy ghouls comes a holiday of thanks and gatherings of family and loved ones which are steeped in traditions. Holiday eleven gives a lot of thanks which is nice considering its name. It turns out Thanksgiving is one of the United States most widely celebrated secular holidays. Marked on the fourth Thursday of November, it is this day when almost everything is closed as people travel near and fare to be together for a special day with fam-

ily. Going all the way back to 1621 in Cape Code, Massachusetts, English settlers invited the Wampanoag Indians to share a meal celebrating the first harvest which the Natives helped them plant. Fast forward to 1863, when President Lincoln proclaimed it a national holiday that would be celebrated every November. Again, fast forward to today, people prepare meals of all sorts. Most known dishes like roasted turkey, sweet potatoes, and stuffing as well as dishes that represent people’s ethnic backgrounds. Aside from food, Thanksgiving is also a time for other traditions like the iconic Macy’s Thanksgiving Day parade in New York City, NFL teams in Detroit, Michigan and Dallas, Texas, as well as the President pardoning a turkey, and shopping until you can’t shop no more. This is considered the busiest time traveling all year.

Finally, holiday twelve is considered by many and in song to be the most wonderful time of the year. The holiday I am speaking of when comes to mind is Christmas. A holiday ending a great year of holidays. It is in this holiday which is a worldwide religious celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ and a secular celebrating incorporating many pre-Christian and Pagan traditions which incorporates billions of people around the world. Marked on December 25, which was chosen by the church in the early fourth century as Jesus’s birthday though the time of the birth is unknown. Celebrated customs today include mixes of pre-Christian and secular themes and origins. Some involves gift giving, exchanging cards, music and caroling, completing advent calendars, decorating Christmas trees, and decorations of all sorts. And who can forget the famous holiday figure St. Nicholas also known as (aka) Santa Clause. And finally, of course, who can forget the economic growth and impact Christmas has during this time.

As we come to the end of our journey of the yearly holidays, we must not forget the common thread and real reason for them. People gathering and celebrating together. These last few years have been rough. People lose sight of positivity and connectiveness during the pandemic. Starting soon three years since this all began holidays have become more important to people all over the world. With taking a new meaning holiday have a bigger role to play now than in the past. People taking new appreciation for these times which can be memorable and joyous that can last for years to come. Because just like the song goes “Auld Lang Syne”, we are reminiscing of days gone by when we finally can gather and reflect on those times. For me being able to see the people I know, and love means more now than ever before. Being able to go home for the holidays and seeing family brings bigger love in my heart.

Disquiet

Declan O'Flaherty

There is a curiosity in the unmaking of things. It is why children take apart their toys to put them back together, it is why when we are grown some turn to science or engineering, the curiosity of how things work and what they are made of. There is no curiosity in the unmaking of the self. It is terror and confusion and pain.

The first time I melted was in 2018. I can't remember clearly what I was doing, but I remember what I was wearing and where I was. It happened like a wave. No, like a ripple at first. A swell on the beach or like the coming in of a tide. It flowed over me slowly, and then I was gone. A week of nothing. Normally, I remember my disassociations faintly, but not then. I was somewhere else, on autopilot, everything was changing. I brushed it off as a fluke when it ended. I knew who I was, and everything would be fine. I was half right.

There are legends, myths in the woods, of things and spirits that corrupt. They change you, warp your body and mind and soul until there is nothing left but the vague shape that you started with, and a hunger. The hunger started for me then. It was a void. Complete and dark and empty. There was no pain, no clenching twisting pain that signals our brains to rip and chew and eat, only a need. The need for something. I wasn't ready. Wasn't ripe enough yet. I still needed.

Over the course of 3 years, I needed. I changed slowly. It wasn't suspicious, it was almost natural. The magic coursing through me slowly corrupting and warping and needing. I changed my clothes, adapted behaviors. A metamorphosis. I thought it would fix it. Fill the void, the need. It didn't. Somewhere, I knew. Knew what I needed. But it scared me. I can't remember why. That self is too far away now, hidden behind fog and ash. There are memories, of course, but they aren't mine. They feel like some... elsewhere. A place outside of our own dimension, where the lost live. Wandering, fading, needing.

I can look back over a young life that feels too long. Butter scraped over too much bread. I see a boy, but not a boy, just a person. Bright and shining like some fae creature sent to bring good harvest. It flits and dances through its life. Friends and family, loving figures to protect it. It knows it's different, but there is no name for this inside its head. Doctors and parents tell it things, and it believes them, because it is supposed to, but they do not know. It doesn't know how to talk of the feelings. It can usually take the words from others mouths to shape what it needs, but there are no mouths it knows that have spoken the words to shape this. So, it sits, trapped in a body that doesn't feel real.

The need finds something later. A way to maybe fill the empty void. A show of colorful Queens and clothing that might make it feel better. Cosmetic changes, yes, this is the way. But then the fear comes. The fear of change, that it will be discovered, confronted, attacked. And so, even as it buys things and collects things, nothing changes. Nothing changes, and it needs. Its outside changes. Its instincts and urges, which it kept hidden for so long, finally bubble up and ripple across its body. This is noticed, but it is not confronted or attacked. The need grows smaller. It shifts. Something has been righted but there are still so

many things wrong.

Something old reveals itself beside the need. Or... it is the need. The same want but in a different shape. Less pure, less wanting. Passive, but destructive. A jealousy. A jealousy of shapes, of expectations, of things given and things taken. It should have this, be this. Why not? The question consumes, like a virus. Rusting and rotting and eating away at a delicate psyche that cannot take much more. In its dreams, it changes now. It morphs. Sloughing off a false skin like a snake, revealing new self, a truthful self. Sometimes the dream is different. Trapped in a cocoon, with everything that comes with such a fate. The ending is worth it, but the chrysalis is pain. It melts away, taking everything with it, and it reforms anew.

This creates more questions. Was everything that came before this a lie? Should I have been truthful before? There wasn't any harm to be done, so why did I lie? I shouldn't have lied. Bad. Pain. Lie.

Then the world stops.

It is sick, and now so are we.

It is able to breathe now, able to think. The ley lines of its life glowing with power and truth and, finally, the chrysalis breaks. The egg shatters. The broken pieces fuse. And the lie is revealed, if still hidden from the outside. And the it becomes a she.

Nobody leaves, but for her it is good. It is good to remember. To go back through her life and to think on herself. She thinks about her relationship to her body. How it never felt right. How it felt like she was something else, something wrong. Like a virus, or a parasite, or a tumor, and one day the universe would diagnose itself and she would be gone. She was told this and why, but it never sat right with her. It never fit.

So many things fit now. So many things make sense. She wasn't wrong, just mismatched. The wrong pieces fitting in wrong places, like square pegs in triangular holes. That was lockdown for me, taking myself apart and fitting places into the homes they didn't know they missed. The lie. The lie I found myself with, something I was terrified of telling. That it was okay that what happened had happened. That was the first step. I couldn't do it. Couldn't tell people yet, I had to fix myself. So, I did.

Old, rusted walls that had no business being made were broken down. Splintering and cracking and sinking like a massive prison in a desert. And hiding inside that place is that fae. That small, beautiful creature that loves too hard and believes too easily.

It did that to itself, you know. To myself. The lie. It wormed its way out of mouths and into the core of me where it sucked and devoured anything that was clean. I was wrong. I was the problem. I shouldn't be me. So, I wasn't. I changed. At the time I thought it was into something better. I turned myself into a monolith. A statue. Beautiful and unmoved. Nothing would touch me or hurt me, and that small creature slept inside a rusted, rotting prison. Where it was safe, funnily enough.

For a long time, I thought I had killed it. Killed the old me. Parts of her were there. I had torn and ripped away the things that I needed before she sealed herself up. I was charming, like she was. I was funny, like she was. I was strange, like she was. Healing was needed. The cracks had formed, and darkness leaked out like blood from an elevator. I was so wrong. I had believed the lie. It was not okay. I was not okay. I had dreams, dreams where a monster I thought I wasn't terrified of came and reminded me I was. That was my first lesson. That fear doesn't care how badly you don't want to feel it.

All the hurts I had told myself were healed finally let themselves known again. They never healed. They never even scabbed over. I looked at myself in the mirror and I was grotesque. Misshapen and ugly and covered in burns and rips and tears and blood. I looked like a monster. Like some creature from a myth that should've never been told. That was the first time she came. I cried, seeing her. Small and soft and beautiful. My opposite. Then we merged. The walls cracked and split and shifted away, and I was whole again. We met, for the first time, the two parts of myself.

It was messy.

Not the beauty of the grotesque; H.R. Giger and Silent Hill, it was something no one should see. My body sloughed off itself. Like white blood cells trying and failing to reject a tumor. She held me close as I shattered and melted. Blood and viscera covering something pure and blemishless.

It wasn't the normal healing. Where something closes over, itching and burning as a wound leaves a scar. Nor was it how poets and writers painted scenes of phoenixes being reborn from their ashes, instant and glorious. This was pain. This was self-immolation and childbirth and scarification. It was beautiful.

I was unmade but I was there to heal myself. For each hurt that I tore open, that little creature was there to paste and latch herself onto it. Millions of little skin grafts made by a tinier me, sewing and gluing like some exert surgeon.

That was the easy part. That was my pain from my own mind. She had to deal with what I had gone through now.

She cried.

She remembered and saw and heard and felt everything that had happened to what had used to be her.

She remembered staring at her friends and wanting to be like them.

She remembered crying as she was forced to want to broaden, and deepen, and strengthen.

She remembered being offered an olive branch. An unknown offer to come out and be free. She remembered the immediate terror, disguised as disgust, as she refused.

She remembered.

It was months of this. Of merging and reforming and remembering.

I don't remember much of it, ironically.

I remember the feelings, though. I knew I felt confusion, and terror. I knew I knew what was happening, but I didn't know how to verbalize it.

Friends helped.

A tribe of those like me.

People who had sloughed and torn themselves open and

grew out of their shells.

They knew the pain. They knew the confusion and terror and anger, and they knew what was happening.

The creature rejoiced over this. It was less solid now. Or... Maybe I was less solid.

I wasn't horrifying anymore. Wasn't something made up of rust and blood and fear and anger and pain. It was still there, but it felt love now. It knew itself. No longer like a wild animal, clawing and tearing at anything too close. It was softer. Safe inside something warm and comfortable. Soft and safe and cared for.

This was all invisible to anyone who looked. They didn't see two beings wrapped around each other tighter than twins. They didn't see the blood and the times when I tried to tear myself away from her, when it was like a punishment to be myself. No one saw my skin and organs and mind knit itself back together.

Sometimes I look back on that time and I cry.

The pain, the blood, it was so much. So much for such a little creature to handle.

The fear is harder than the pain. It always is. I'm still afraid of that thing. The monster I had let myself rot into behind the eyes of someone kind. That someone I've loved will see it and tell me it's still there.

Its fading, bit by bit, but most people still don't know about her. So, until everyone does, the fear stays.

The healing is still going on. She's dutiful and attentive, keeping the hurts from growing too big, and distracting me from the ones that don't matter as much.

The monster doesn't bother me anymore. The terror is still there but the anger isn't. It's replaced by pity, because it has hurts and wounds that have never been licked clean or closed shut.

I hope I never see it again.

Sometimes I felt like I was in a horror movie, like I was in that episode of X-Files when it was about that family that lived in the woods. Something rotten and bloody and *wrong*, but she was there.

She was there to lift me out of that.

She talked to me once. Before we merged for the first and last time.

She sounded like my sister.

It's over now. I didn't believe her. It's over now. The lie, the tumor, the parasite. I thought back to the first time I saw myself after I realized what I was. I was shocked. It wasn't me, but it was. The essence was there, but the shape was wrong. Too angular, too sharp. Hair where there wasn't supposed to be. She eased me. He protected you, kept you safe until you needed to be who you were always supposed to be. This wasn't a lie. I'm grateful to that part of myself. That beautiful boy. He held her close and safe until the rust and the blood and the pain flecked off and she was free. He's somewhere here still, like a ghost. Ready to come back to guide or protect if he knows she needs it.

The pain of growth is different than the pain I was used to. Budding and changing and flowering, something that happens so much earlier to so many but was happening now to me. I'm still not used to it. I hope I never am. This pain makes me happy. It's the pain of moving an unmoved limb for the first time in hours, the pain of a smile gone on too long, the pain of birth. A happy pain, bright and shining and warm like the sun in the middle of winter.

It's over now. But it hasn't ended. The feeling was gone for a month. A blissful 30 days of nothing but beauty and cleanliness. Then the rust came back. Like a cancer, like a mental fungus eating everything it can until nothing was left. She fought it back. Kept it contained until it died again. But pain is immortal. It would be back. Cleverer and carrying deadly whispers that ate at me, some of those wounds opened again.

She didn't have to spend as long healing this time, but it was cleaner as well. Not as grotesque, not the body horror of a Cronenberg film, but still like Tobe Hooper. Rotten, but not rusted. Bloody, but no viscera this time.

It will happen again. I know it. The wounds will reopen, the pain and the blood will come back, and I can smell the rust and the rot already.

It's close, but she'll be ready.

I'll be ready.

My Story

Destany Hankard

Prologue

Everyone thinks that there is a fairytale when it comes to one person's life, and I feel like my life wasn't a fairytale but a story that is worth telling. Let me tell you about my own that has heartbreak, journey, love and embarking on the next steps of my own life.

Let me start off with some basics, my name is Destany Hankard, and this is a story about my own life.

Chapter 1: Early Childhood

It was April 29th, 2000 when I became an official human being into the world. I was born in Oceanside, California in a military hospital at 8:30am weighing 7 pounds 10 ounces and honestly don't remember the feet or height of me but I do remember that I was an average sized baby for a girl.

I remember growing up so much that I've always admired school and parents, but my life wasn't shown off to be. Both of my biological parents were unstable, no matter if it was violence, hatred or love that was going on in the house but there was a lot going on and stories were later told of what was happened. I remember being in preschool, I was about 3 or 4 years old at Fred E. Wish Elementary School on Barbour Street in Hartford, CT. Before I go ahead and continue to talk about my schooling, I moved to Connecticut when I was 2 or 3 but I don't remember the move at all.

Anyways, back to me being in school, I always loved school. The only thing that I hated were the uniforms. We had to wear a red, white, or blue collared shirt with khaki pants but whatever kinds of shoes or accessories we wanted. The school was raggedy, dark, and so big when looking into my eyes as a child. Honestly, I thought that the hallways in the school looked like it would be coming out from a horror movie. I remember that I was either learning colors or about the weather when my teacher Mrs. Nicole Perokas was taken out of the hallway to talk about something. I don't remember many details about that day, but I knew that everything changed when I found out that I was no longer living with my biological parents. I was sad but I was trying to understand what my teacher, principal and Department of Children Services lady was saying to me but all I could do was cry and am

afraid because of the unknown with me. The story that I remember my adoptive mother telling me this day is that I was walking into school with messy black hair in a ponytail with a dirty smelling uniform and it looks like I had a dirty face as if I looked like someone being homeless. I also wasn't talking much during this period when I was at preschool because I was a quiet student, but teachers would describe me as smart.

During my school years, I changed schools. I went to Verplanck Elementary School in Manchester, CT when I was a foster child living with my old preschool teacher. When I was living with Nicole Perokas, I went to school when she was living in Manchester. I was originally there for kindergarten, but I later found out that I skipped a grade because of how smart I was. First grade, I still went to the same school but now this is where I became nervous. I didn't know if I was going to be able to comprehend with the reading and writing material because I felt like my brain was getting drained and I was almost ready to explode since I just couldn't get it. This was a crazy period for me because I kept switching places in where I was going to be. I was moving from Manchester, CT to South Windsor, CT since Nicole Perokas's co-worker was my soon to be mom, Amy Hankard.

Elementary school felt like a breeze but there was so much that has happened. I got the diagnosis that I had ADHD, writing, and reading deficits, speech issues due to my delay in talking and being part on the autism spectrum. Honestly, at 9 years old, I didn't know how to take the news because I felt like it was difficult to comprehend in what was going on. I wasn't bullied at all in elementary school because I was able to get along with everyone and communicate with each other. I am grateful in how we are all able to communicate all my feelings out and everything.

Chapter Two: Middle School

I have always thought that middle school were my best years in being a student, but I was completely wrong. Sixth grade came around, 12-year-old me was so nervous because I didn't know if I was going to be liked by everyone or not.

I developed this sense when middle school started because I was always finding different ways to be friends with people who were extremely popular and into sports. I was so nervous on my first day, my hands were jittering like no tomorrow, the nonstop butterflies that were in my stomach and many other issues. I was always finding ways to be involved in the drama in middle school because I was always wanting to be with the popular crowd. I had some of the same friends from Elementary School, but it turned out in the process that I was abandoning people who I thought weren't cool or popular because they were not involved with the latest trends on Vine, Instagram or Facebook. You can say that I was an odd student but there was so much more to me that became odd.

That next year, everything completely changed of my persona of myself. I started my period, obsession with being popular, having the feeling of being wanted by other people, liked by others, and later starting to like boys hard. I was never good at being slick or low-key about my feelings towards any guy because I have always thought "go big or go home" when it came to the idea of guys. There was a time where I had a crush on three different guys at the same time because I felt like they were all handsome looking, nice, funny and just genuine to me, but it turned out that there's my bullying got started. The words "stalker" "crazy" "weird" and the worst of all "deserved to not live and be in a mental institution". All the crazy things that people said about me, were starting to make me feel like I would never get into a relationship because of the reputation that was later developed. Secrets revealed about me, drama that kept hurting me and constantly being around my guidance counselor and different types of therapy with this. On top of it when they found out that I was adopted, kids started to make fun of me with that, until one day.

The seventh-grade dance came around, and if you knew me in middle school well, I never missed out on a social function. It was a neon theme, so I put on my best neon outfit together and I felt so cute, as well as the best way for myself to be fitting in with everyone. I wore a white bow headband with a neon pink t-shirt and yellow shorts with white Nike sneakers and tall Nike logo socks. I was so excited for this dance and the best part with it is that I had some of the closest girlfriends there. Brittany and Izzy, they always knew how to the best fun at dances, and we would always go together. But anyways, we were all at this dance together until I got asked to dance by one of the popular people. Eventually, a dance battle broke out and everyone was hollering at the other person. I got nervous at first, then one popular guy caught my eye. His name was Alex, he was wearing a bright orange collared shirt with khaki shorts and Nike shoes. He

kept encouraging me but at the time, I didn't know what his name was. After the song, I asked someone what his name was, and a girl told me

"Oh, that's Alex, he plays on the football team and he's a nice guy but extremely quiet."

"That's his name? I thought his name was Chad or something else."

"What made you think that?"

"I don't know honestly, but he looked like a Chad. Thanks for informing me."

"You're welcome! Anyways have fun!"

After that conversation, I got butterflies up and down my stomach because I thought that he was extremely cute, but I had to keep my composure if I was going to have a popular guy being my friend. I walked right up to him at the dance and introduce myself. I will never forget this conversation.

Me: "Hey"

Alex: "Oh, hey there. Were you the one dancing in the middle earlier?"

Me: "Yeah, I guess I have some good moves."

Alex: "I think you did, anyways, what's your name?"

Me: "ummm...my name is Destany Hankard, nice to meet you."

Alex: "Same to you, I'm Alex."

While we were having our introduction conversation, two girls, Erin and Kelly interrupted us.

Kelly: "Alex, you never introduced us to her." While pointing at me intrigued

Alex: "This is Destany, we just met."

Erin: "A guy like that is talking to a girl like you."

Meanwhile I was standing there in silence while Erin was talking. Erin was one of my closest friends in elementary school but once she grew a rack and height, she started being mean to me. Alex interrupted her by telling her off and making sure that I would never get made fun of again, but it wasn't the case.

The torture and taunting didn't stop there. Her friends from the cheerleading and lacrosse team all started to make fun of from that day forward. It didn't make my life any easier because they kept bullying me to the point where I wouldn't want to get out of bed to go to school. I never told my mom what was going on because I was always taught, "Deal with it and it's not the end of the world." It was a phrase that was always caught in my head.

Teachers never believed me when I was bullied and she was also in a resource class with me, which made matters worse. The funniest part of all of this is how we were such close friends. We would all talk on this Skype like app called oovoo and everyone was using it in middle school. One day, on one particular oovoo call, I started to get called, "HANK THE TANK." It was so funny because I was starting to think that they used this name as a way to bully me but my friend Alex was the one created the nickname for me. One great thing that came out of middle school is that I had someone who was standing up for me and that was amazing. It was a feeling like I couldn't describe when my middle school crush was a guy who was extremely nice to me and tried in being my friend.

Chapter Three: High School Crazyness

High school came around and I was excited because I had a popular friend at school, I was starting to understand why people were enjoying my company, but they didn't.

As soon as I got into high school, I had an inkling that the bullying wasn't going to stop. I later found out that the so called "popular" kids were never really my friends. They would pretend to be my friend, and I didn't know this until around my junior year.

Friends were always a struggle for me in high school because I realized that my social issues of not understanding body language, if people truly wanted me to be around, but it never stopped me from anything before.

Throughout my high school years, I always did the best I can for spirit, going to sporting events and later, homecoming dances. I put myself involved with all the drama because I felt like it was something that I could always be involved in without knowing the person. What I mean by this, is how there was a lot of communication back and forth on what was going on with my school while trying to keep a profile.

Before being a manager to the boy's lacrosse team, I was getting bullied a lot. In my junior year of high school, during a class in the morning, I was presenting a presentation and one of the girls told me to, "Shut the fuck up," in class while I was presenting my presentation. I forgot what class it is, but it was during 3rd period, and I was ready to beat this girl up. Her name was Briana, and she had some friends in that class we had together, and she was not happy with me. I walked into the hallway after class was over and I was starting to shout at her because she was starting to call me names such as "retarded" "fucked up" "crazy" "mental" and "stupid." The one time that I stood up for myself, it cost me a two-week suspension and an in

-school suspension. Administration decided to take her side when I was the one getting bullied, taunted, threatened to be beaten up and yet I am the bad guy here. The way that I stood up for myself was yelling at her, called her one name that was very insulting and threatening to beat her up like she did with me.

Once I came back from my suspension, we both got called into the office and had to do a mediation. I honestly did not want to do this because I was still holding a grudge against this girl. I openly didn't feel safe or the fact that she was still lingering the halls. I was relieved because she graduated the school since she was a grade above me, and it put me at ease.

I was on the high school lacrosse team for 2 years and when I started to think that I was making some friends, finally, it all went south. I remember this day so well because it was a turning point for me in sports. When my junior year came around, I realized that the coaches were not very encouraging. I was called "slow" "not deserved to play lacrosse" and I remember coaches telling me, "In order for you to get on the varsity team, you need to be playing better and I don't see your potential there." So from that moment on, I quit the lacrosse team for girls and decided to manage the boys team. I felt like this is where things even got more difficult. At the time, my friend Samantha Bessette and I, along with two other girls were managers for the boy's lacrosse team. It was fun, tons, until one day.

It was the start of senior year, and the boys were preparing for the season back in January and I asked the head coach who also happened to be my old elementary gym teacher, asked me to come back and I said yes. One game in April, it was an away game. I remember that I was working with refilling the water bottles down on the field and I tried to fill it up by opening the top of the water jug and I remember one of the players were being rude towards me. I didn't know how to fill it correctly, so Alex came up to me and told me how to fill it in. I thanked him because he was being helpful, after that, a couple of the players named Tyler, Bennett, and Matt were being extremely rude to me by saying, "Destany, you don't know how to manage." Or "You're only managing because you have a crush on us." I started to get heated and Connor Dunn, another nice player on the team stood up to me and told the coach.

Once the game was over, the coach went up to all the players at the end of the game, to talk about respect to the managers and made the entire team apologize. I later learned during management that you do not talk to players when the team loses because they say things that they don't mean, or they would straight up be disrespectful.

The rest of that senior year went by like a breeze because it was easy for the ending portion of my senior year. I had easy classes and the bullying was gone. I got accepted into college, but I was still having very high anxiety about going.

Chapter Four: College Years

(Editor's Note: For reasons of privacy parts of this section have been redacted.)

After I graduated from high school, I started to prepare myself for college. I was extremely nervous to see where this would take me because I would be living in a college dorm and living away from home. As I first moved into my dorm room in Stone Hall on August 28th, 2018, I was extremely excited because I already knew who my roommate was and knew I was going to be having a lot of fun. I made so many new friends within that first week. I hung around so many people that it would be sometimes difficult in finding who to hang out with.

.....

Sophomore year, I was still having the drama, but I was being very selective in how I was going to approach it and if someone involves me. The approach was both easy and difficult. I only say difficult because I feel like when people always asked me for my input, I seem to have the best advice. The funniest thing is that I use advice that other people would be telling me because I feel like I was never good at giving advice until I had other people's encouragements.

Junior year, the year of covid. I feel like this particular year was extremely different because we didn't have a lot of interaction with people. When we did interact with others, we had to wear masks and maintain six feet otherwise if we didn't, immediately in trouble. Junior year was still hard with drama. Spring semester 2021 had the most amount of drama because of my actions. I would be the kind of person to repeat something to someone else because I didn't feel like it was safe or right for them to do. I don't want to put out names because of confidentiality, but I did lose a lot of friends because of this action and a relationship that I had for 2 ½ years. It cost me everything when I was repeating this action and eventually, decided to keep to myself and not communicate with other students unless they were talking to me. It was a

solid two weeks that I did this until everyone became friends with me again. They needed give me space because I was too much to handle and didn't understand my emotions. They were right until I kept requesting for counseling. After my many requests, I gave up on counseling and ranted to my friends until my ex called in a favor and had counseling right back to me. I was upset when I found out about this, at first, but eventually thanked him because he pushed the school to give me some counseling.

Over the summer, I started talking more to my guy best friend on campus and I felt like he was the only person to truly understand what I was going through. He was extremely supportive, funny, sweet, and always calmed me down when I started to develop panic and anxiety attacks. He has always said to me does this every single time, "Everything is going to be okay and that you're not alone. I am here with you and breathe." I felt better after he was saying that and eventually, our friendship slowly morphed into love.

Now that it's my senior year at Landmark College, I look over in how much I have changed. I used all my advice that was given to me in the past, but I gave myself an additional piece of advice. Never share any of your information except to three trustworthy people and I have done that. I started to see a counselor more on campus since that has helped a lot and eventually, I started to date my guy best friend, and everything has been amazing ever since. Whenever something is bad, he would always be there for me. He would always urge me to tell him what's wrong even though I am the kind of person who is being more closed minded. As far as the drama goes, I just try to help but to a bare minimum because I can tell that it is affecting my mental health, stress, and my own personal anxiety.

Epilogue

After everything that I have written and learned over the past 21 years is that anything can happen when it comes to drama. I've always felt like drama has been a part of me, and yes, while I like being involved with the drama, I have learned that my mental health comes first.

My journey from start to finish demonstrates different ideas in how I can approach this kind of conversation by talking about my life on paper and trying to have other see my story. Mental health and anxiety can happen to anyone, but if you have gone through, what I was through, maybe the picture will become clearer.

Sonnets

Ian Pearce

Your voice sounds like a song in my ear,
ringing with a nuance in its tune.
Sometimes I can't believe it's been a year,
As since the day we met it's felt so soon.
My life has pictures sewn into its weave,
becoming clearer when I see you smile.
It loosened my grasp when I just had to grieve,
the peace I feel when you're within a mile.
I wait patiently through each night and day
for the new chapter about to dawn in my life.
"Is it yours, or ours?" I could say,
in hopes that it could end my burning strife.
I may not be aware what lies ahead,
but in my sight, you remove the dread.

What God puts into our palms is curious,
I have learned this fact one time too many.
Not knowing his intentions makes me furious,
when I look for answers, only to find not any.
He lets his hand drop seeds to form the flowers
that make me sigh and grin in jubilation.
All the same, my biggest hopes take hours,
Or days or weeks or months to reach the station.
Sometimes I must confess I have to ponder,
What can I do to still find that acceptance?
If I just had the crystal to see yonder,
but there are simpler ways to find no pestilence.
What is my fate to ultimately be?
What is the sight my eyes are meant to see?

Nature lets us view her secrets clearly
in the paths we walk among the gardens.
Days like these we hold to our hearts dearly,
As never to let worldly truths harden.
From rustling trees to brushes from a jay's wing,
our paths lead to places that won't matter
to those who can never see our gazing,
when curves of tension could never be flatter.
The wise tell us that today is more than simple.
It makes for the most precious of all gifts.
When our earthly mother helps us form that dimple,
Our innocence makes for a lack of thrift.
There could never be something else that she gave
that would be less valuable to save.

Courage is a double-sided word
It tells us stories about strength and motion.
Yet has a quality one could possess,
From taking the most magical potion.
When we are brave, we know of what could happen,
If good intentions were to go askew.
It's why each movement needs a plan of action,
If we are to assure that we get through.
An obstacle may at first seem a stopper,
When we have goals, we know are hard to reach.
All the same, the corks we hold are poppers.
They lead us to land on the perfect beach.
It takes effort to reach our final fate
that life sets upon our stoic plate.

The *Voices*-WLMC Partnership

Voices is proud to announce a partnership with Landmark's radio station, WLMC, who are kindly broadcasting poetry and creative writing readings over the airwaves! We anticipate providing some of these audio clips alongside text versions of poetry and creative writing on the *Voices* blog at Landmark.edu/Voices. We want to thank WLMC Leadership, Daniel Molster, Christian Laureano, and director Eric Matte for making this collaboration possible!



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Join *Voices*!

Voices is a magazine made by, and for students. That means every page in this tabloid was 100% student-produced.

This also means that *Voices*' sustainability depends on dedicated student involvement. What some of you may not realize is that *Voices* is **not** a club—it is a selection of 1-credit elective courses, similar to our friends at WLMC and the TV Studio, where students take part, gain professional experience, and have an opportunity to be part of something immortal.

Voices was born from BA-COMEL, but its advisory board is comprised of faculty from all different departments. As such, we welcome students with all different skillsets; you may be surprised at how many different talents go into the production of a *Voices* issue!

If you are interested in being part of *Voices*, reach out to your advisor today!

This is Landmark. This is us. These are our voices.

Do you like what you see? You could be featured in these pages too!

Submit your best works of Journalism, Nonfiction, Creative Writing, Poetry, Art and Photography to the *Voices* staff at Voices@Landmark.edu today!

R.U.S.H. Principles, please.

Thanks for reading!

Voices Magazine has run for FIVE consecutive semesters! That's a lot of top-quality content from the very talented Landmark students that have come and gone over this time.

To view an archive of *Voices* publications, go to www.landmark.edu/voices to gain access to all past issues as well as blog posts and video content!

