

# *Voices*

A Student Publication

Fall 2020

VOLUME 2

ISSUE 1

Journalism!

Poetry!

Short  
Stories!

&

More!

By the Students, for the Students



# Letter from the Publisher/Editor

Greetings Landmark students! We are so glad to be back! This has been yet another learning curve for *Voices* as we ushered in the very first staff as part of the brand new 1-credit courses made possible and implemented with the help of Geoff Burgess and the BA-COMEL Department! Students in these courses added a credit hour to bolster writing courses they had enrolled in for the Fall 2020 semester. Thanks to a wide range of skillsets between the nine incoming new staffers, along with four returning staffers, we were able to diversify our organization and adapt how we operate to create an even more sustainable and diverse package to represent the best work the Landmark student body has to offer.

This allows us to rise to the challenge of the lofty goals set for *Voices* going forward. This semester will see several key changes as we standardize how we operate; for starters, *Voices* will have not one, not two, but **three** issues released roughly in mid-October, mid-November, and a final (digital) release in mid-December. In addition, you may have noticed some poetry and fiction readings on Landmark's radio station, WLMC – this is the product of a creative collaboration between *Voices* and the radio station, to which we owe our many thanks to Eric Matte for his efforts in making this possible. We are also going digital, with our own webpage, [www.landmark.edu/voices](http://www.landmark.edu/voices), which is expected to go live around the time this issue goes to print. This will allow us to publish masterfully written works that are simply too long for print, as well as publish written work and accompanying radio audio in between print editions. We would also like to extend our thanks to Chris Lenois and the Department of Marketing & Communications for their tireless efforts making all of this possible.

Finally, we would like to thank you, the students, for submitting your best works to us for editorial consideration. Without your submissions, we could not produce a magazine like this! We encourage all Landmark students to continue to submit such fabulous work of all types – Journalism, Nonfiction, Creative Writing, Poetry, Photography, and Art to [Voices@landmark.edu](mailto:Voices@landmark.edu). We also encourage any interested students to speak with your advisor about the accredited courses offered by *Voices* if you are interested in joining the staff!

Again, many thanks to all, as always.

Lucas Sillars,  
Publisher/Editor  
*Voices*

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# Table of Contents

## Journalism.....

### Landmark College's Institutional Adaptability put to the Test

*From 'normal' to digital, and back—How did we get here?* By Luke Sillars

### Down to Business

*Putney businesses discuss the impact of COVID-19.* By Conor Malloy

### Play Safely, Everyone

*Sports on Campus: What's safe... and According to Who?* By Luke Sillars

### Socialization Must Continue

*Clubs and Programs at Landmark College* By Conor Malloy

## Nonfiction.....

### Halloween is Upon Us

*6 Things to do During this Socially Distant Halloween* By Adam Sherman

## Poetry.....

Hope by Conor Malloy

Stella Luna by Julie Vartain

## Short Stories.....

Bad Compass, Part 1 By Jack Belinski

## Photography.....

Stills of Nature by Maria Clark



# Landmark College's Institutional Adaptability put to the Test

## *From 'normal' to digital, and back—How did we get here?*

By Lucas Sillars

When the pandemic struck, teachers at Landmark became students, as they were forced to adapt to totally remote operation over the course of just fourteen days. While students enjoyed an extra week off, Landmark's teaching staff was hard at work, undergoing their own training for what wound up being the rest of the semester at hand.

For some, it was a well-received training that was probably already needed before COVID provided the urgency to make it happen as suddenly as it did.

"We told students to take their books home with them, but we didn't think it was going to get as bad as quickly as it did," said Geoff Burgess, Dean of Professional Studies & Science. "The school made the decision to extend spring break to two weeks, with an original plan to have online teaching training for the faculty in person ... by Wednesday of the first week, we decided we were going to be going fully online."

"We now knew we were going to have to totally shut the campus down," Burgess said. "There were still a lot of unknowns about how it was spread and who was vulnerable, so the college acted prudently.

The first thing that happened is I created a Canvas site starting on Wednesday, [March 18<sup>th</sup>] and I had it done by Friday [March 20<sup>th</sup>], to train faculty how to teach online."

*"We didn't think it was going to get as bad as quickly as it did" - Geoff Burgess*

"That last week, the week students didn't come back, they were putting together modules to teach us more [about Canvas models]," said Rebecca Matte, Associate Professor of Core Education.

"While we all used Canvas to some degree ... this training gave us some good models. Suddenly I got what I wanted in terms of Canvas training," she continued.

Faculty members who were already more technologically inclined faced more basic logistical roadblocks. Contrary to what Comcast might want you to think, not all home internet connections are created equal. Dr. Tamara Stenn, Associate Professor of Business Studies, indicated that her largest challenge was slow internet at her home.

"I [had to use] my father-in-law's apartment in Brattleboro for my video work," said Stenn, who also commented that her teaching style has been permanently modified by the ordeal. "I will continue to make and use tutorial videos for students to use as references and for clarifying readings and lessons ... I love the structure of the Modules – it makes it easier for me to plan and deliver materials."

Once students "returned," the real trials and tribulations began. A sudden switch to remote work would be challenging for anyone, but such a situation thrust upon a subset of students who have a wide range of learning differences and attentional problems adds an additional layer of complexity.

"I worked very hard to help my students be successful, I was determined that no one would fall through the cracks," said Lee Crocker, COMEL Professor and Chairperson of the Professional Studies Department. "I made great efforts to reach out to students who were struggling. I tried to be as flexible as I could."

Crocker said she made a point to maintain her previously high standards and to hold her students accountable for the work that needed to be completed in order for them to complete their courses satisfactorily or better.

The infrastructure in place was excellent and made for a rather seamless transition, especially for the students who were “already inclined,” according to Matte. “Class was as good or better than it had been ... we were more efficient in our Teams meetings, the document sharing was fantastic. For students who were ready to step into that level, it was great.”

*“I’m a pretty physical person, and suddenly I was sitting all the time.” - Rebecca Matte*

In such a brief time, with the help of Geoff Burgess and his team, the faculty had realized their new-found skill of being able to teach from the comfort of their own homes. However, such convenience on the surface did not necessarily translate to a preferable situation.

“I’m a pretty physical person, and suddenly I was sitting all the time,” said Matte. “I mean, I was at my computer from seven in the morning, prepping my classes ... and I was in synchronous meetings from 10 AM to 6 PM. It wears you down.”

For students who were less “inclined” and more susceptible to falling through the cracks, the virtu-

al barrier presented additional complexities to what ordinarily would be rather simple problems. Rebecca Matte said she makes a point to keep an eye out for students who missed her classes, and (gently) confronting them about it before things get out of hand.

“I do have a habit of skulking in some corners on campus to run into them. It’s part of how I do my job, I want to make them feel comfortable and say ‘Hey, I didn’t see you,’ and I couldn’t do that,” she said.

“If they didn’t come to me, I really couldn’t go seek them out and sort of pin them down on the quad by the picnic tables,” she continued. “There is a subset of students who needed that level of attention from me that could not get it. That was hard for me.”

Dr. Stenn also noted difficulty communicating with her students, though this was luckily not too much of a hindrance.

“My students did a fantastic job keeping motivated, engaged, and completing the semester well,” she said.

Burgess, looking back on the immense amount of work it took to get all the faculty online, cites the sometimes 12-hour days it required as one of the things he is most proud of.

“We were under the crunch. It was a national crisis. It was a college crisis. And everyone was pitching in and getting support,” he said. “I kind of had it mapped out for [the faculty], ‘this is what you do on day one, this is what you do on day two, and day three, and so on.’”

*“Nobody said to me, ‘Geoff you should be doing this,’ I just realized ‘Geoff, you should be doing this.’”*



**Geoff Burgess, Dean of Professional Studies and Science**

Burgess credited Glen Powers from I.T. and Denise Jaffe, Director of Online Learning, who were there as faculty were working on their sites, for helping faculty troubleshoot and for giving them coaching via demonstrations using shared screens. He also acknowledges “about 10 out of the 60” faculty who were already experienced with online teaching rose to the occasion to instruct their colleagues.

Burgess attributes his ability to lead the charge in going full digital in such a short period of time to his background in online teaching. Holding a master’s degree in teaching with internet technology from Marlboro College, Burgess’s skills in this realm, which he had not utilized in about ten years, had suddenly come to the fore.

“It became apparent that when we were deciding to pivot online ... [that] I’m the only one who knew what I was doing,” he said. “Nobody said to me, ‘Geoff, you should be doing this,’ I just realized ‘Geoff, you should be doing this.’”



In general, professors seemed to exhibit a preference towards being back in person for the Fall 2020 semester, albeit with cautious optimism.

“For the moment, I feel safe,” said Crocker. “I think the college has done a wonderful job creating a [safe] community. Will that change? I worry. I have family that I care for who CANNOT get COVID. They will likely die if they get sick. How does anyone deal with this? It’s serious.”

“The decision to return to campus, like so many decisions during this pandemic is fraught with uncertainties,” said Dr. Gyuri Kepes, Assistant Professor of Communications. “However, I think the college is prepared to successfully manage the risks, given the protocols and procedures in place. Its small size and rural setting give it a real advantage.”

*As of the writing of this article, there has been one reported COVID case discovered during initial move-in testing at the end of August, and two more one month later in the second round of tests ... All cases have been isolated and contact-traced in accordance with state guidelines.*

*For the most up to date information on COVID safety and off-campus travel, students are instructed to check with Student Affairs for the most recent guidelines.*



**Above: Tents and tables were constructed during the summer session on Landmark’s Quad**

**Below: Outdoor meetings and classes have become a popular, oxygenated alternative to being masked up in a small room for students and teachers alike this Fall**

Photos by Todd Miller





# Down to Business

## *Putney businesses discuss the impact of COVID-19*

By Conor Malloy

All across America small businesses have either had to change or shut down as a direct result of the pandemic. Putney is no exception. Businesses like the Putney Food Co-op, the Putney General Store, and Antidote Books have been forced to change how they do business entirely.

The Putney General Store, one of the oldest businesses and buildings in Putney, is no stranger to hard times since it was rebuilt in 2011 after a pair of devastating fires. When the pandemic hit, the store quickly adapted by offering curbside personal grocery shopping.

“Customers would call and order groceries over the phone, and employees would gather the items and bring them to the curbside to be picked up,” said Kim Cosco, one of the owners of both the Putney General Store and the Phoenix Gift shop located on the next floor directly above.

“We changed a lot of how we do business,” said Kim Cosco, “this was a major blow - the gift store section

Store also had problems with employee retention. “We had a number of employees who were not able to work because they had certain health conditions that



**Kim Cosco, owner of the Putney General Store and Phoenix Gift Shop, as seen between aisles in her store in September, 2020**

**Photo by Conor Malloy**



**The Putney General Store, and Phoenix Gift Shop on the second floor, adorned with a “STRONGER TOGETHER” banner.**

**Photo by Conor Malloy**

prevented them from working in public.” Cosco also added that some workers were extremely nervous about continuing to work given the circumstances, an anxiety that would be offset by just how much business slowed down.

Luckily, since business has started to pick up again and COVID becomes better understood, most employees have returned to work, reassured by a better understanding of how to work safely during the pandemic. As such, the Putney General Store has been reopened for in-person shopping since June.

The Putney Food Co-op never fully closed down due to the pandemic. However, they did have to change their hours to stock and limit employee contact with customers. Much like the General Store they also improvised to be able to offer curbside service to customers.

While some businesses have been able to adapt and continue to generate revenue during the pandemic, not all businesses have enjoyed similar rebounds to the General Store or the Co-op. Carolyn Handy, the owner of a small bed and breakfast, has had trouble with her business since the pandemic started.

***“I had to adjust my personal budget and cut back as much as possible” - Carolyn Handy***

“Although I didn’t officially shut down the business, I had no customers because of the state’s requirements, which are very restrictive,” Handy stated, adding that she has no employees, and that the business is her personal source of income. “I had to adjust my personal budget and cut back as much as possible.” She recounts the measures she took to do so, “I shopped around and found a much cheaper car insurance package. Sometimes I cut my own hair instead of going to a hair salon. I postponed dental procedures and trips to visit family.”

As a self-employed sole proprietor, there is no paycheck protection money available, although she is



**The Copper Kettle Bed and Breakfast, owned and operated by Carolyn Handy**

**Photo by Conor Malloy**

receiving state unemployment benefits until they run out, however, Handy states that “they don’t replace the amount of money I earned when I was working.”

Some businesses in Putney have been able to adapt to the new rules and regulations brought about by COVID, but others have struggled immensely. Antidote Books is somewhere in the middle. They initially shut down due to struggles with adjustment to the new regulations.

“Antidote is not exempt from being affected by COVID,” said owner Ruth Rodriguez, who had to shut down her business in March, before finally allowing shopping by appointment and groups of two shoppers at a time around June. Ruth and her staff also had to narrow it down to one person working in the store at a time, which has boiled down to Ruth operating solo through this entire ordeal.

Despite slow sales, Rodriguez is confident that her method of adjusting her operations was the right course of action. “I feel that there is always room for improvement, and at the beginning it was hard to make that adjustment which is why closing was a good solution. I feel that the adjustment has been good because we have taken it very slow”

Rodriguez maintains that business is “alright” as of September. It is a used bookstore, and with browsing reduced to a minimum, sales have been down.

COVID has proven to be a great challenge for most businesses all around Putney. While some businesses had to temporarily close to make adjustments in their operation, others had to stop their work entirely due to complications with the rules caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. It seems that the only thing we can do during uncertain times like these is hope things will get better soon.



# Play safely, everyone!

## *Sports on Campus: What's Safe ... And According to Who?*

By Luke Sillars

Landmark College may not be particularly known for its athletics and sporting events, but it has a vibrant athletics department nonetheless, one that is still in the midst of figuring out how and where to safely operate under restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Currently, the only sports officially taking place are Soccer and Cross Country – but it is not uncommon to see baseball hopefuls playing long-toss out on the quad between classes.

“Baseball and Softball are typically Spring sports,” said Kari Post, Director of Athletics, Fitness, and Recreation at Landmark. “Skill-building exercises are allowed as long as distance is maintained.”

The aforementioned team sports that are officially taking place have some key modifications.

Cross Country runners will take on routes that do not leave campus property, they are also expected to keep a distance while they're running. Although masks are optional for runners, they must have one on hand at all times.

While Cross Country is a more individualized sport – easier to pull off amid pandemic limitations, according to Post – team sports such as Soccer will be limited to scrimmage play during their seasons.

Throw-ins will be kick-ins for Soccer, and absolutely no headers are allowed, thus keeping players' hands and heads off the ball as much as possible.

“Usually by now I would have had as many as five other institutions reaching out to me to coordinate event scheduling, but there's been nothing ... I don't think anybody else in our area is planning [collegiate competition],” Post said, shaking her head.

She continued: “Even if they were, other schools' students haven't signed our health pledge, and therefore wouldn't be allowed on our campus ... we can't force them to sign our pledge, nor could they force our students to sign theirs.”

*“Usually by now I would have had as many as five other institutions reaching out to me to coordinate event scheduling, but there's been nothing ... I don't think anybody else in our area is planning [collegiate competition],” - Kari Post*

Post said that the situation around sports – much like everything else – is somewhat in a state of perpetual evolution as the college receives guidance from the state of Vermont. The college also looks to other institutions for guidance and inspiration.



**Landmark's Cross Country Team**

**Coach Sallie Banta, Devin McHale, Michael Margolin, Ian McKenzie, Kathleen Gembczynski, Emma Lucarelli, Timothy Turley, Alex Bair. Not pictured: Luke Simon**



C.I.R.T. is Landmark's Critical Incident Response Team, and has been in existence for at least 8 years, according to Executive Vice President Jon MacClaren.

"Back in early March 2020, with early indications of the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Landmark College campus, the C.I.R.T. members began to meet mostly twice a week," said MacClaren.

*"There is not one member of the C.I.R.T. who is a 'point person.' Each of us represents a particular area of responsibility and expertise and each of us is expected to respond to questions or comments based on our area of responsibility."*  
- Jon MacClaren

"We asked the Director of Counseling and Wellness, Jackie Mills, and the Director of Health Services, Jeff Huyett, to join these meetings," he said. "We have continued meeting regularly all summer and just recently, scaled back our schedule to one meeting a week."

The core of the committee is made up largely of individuals in Landmark's upper administration as well as other key staff members responsible for the overall health and safety of the campus.

Namely, this includes President Eden, Vice Presidents Michael Luciani, Gail Gibson Sheffield, Jon MacClaren, Mark DiPietro, and Terrence White, the newly minted Director of Campus Safety, with additional guidance received from other individuals as needed based on expertise.

According to President Peter Eden, Michael Luciani emerged early on as the de facto coordinator of CIRT, hosting the meetings, keeping the minutes, and taking actions where needed. Federal and state COVID guidelines have been and continue to be disseminated to the Landmark public from his office.

As of the first week of classes, 41 students have expressed interest in participating in the two officially allowed sports, 23 of which are new to Landmark.

"The majority of new families and students interested in Fall 2020 enrollment were not concerned about sports," said Sydney Ruff, Director of Admissions. "Many families were very concerned about how much students would be in contact with each other."

"Hopefully in future semesters, we will have more interest and ability to offer more sports [to prospective students] like in previous years," she said. "We have 121 new students that came in for the fall class (110 on-campus, 11 online)."

With 23 of the 110 new on-campus students interested in the only two allowed sports as of the first week of classes (over 20%!) it is clear that such extracurriculars require perhaps just as much attention from C.I.R.T. as everything else to ensure the health and well-being of the campus. Play safely, everyone!



Above: Ben Wright kicking ball into the goal. Below: Ryan Carrol and Nikita Klebnikov face off in scrimmage play. Photos by Kari Post and Todd Miller



# Socialization Must Continue

## *Clubs and Programs at Landmark College*

By Conor Malloy

Landmark College's clubs and programming have had to shift how they operate due to the pandemic, and the guidelines that the State of Vermont has issued for interactions on college campuses regarding social distancing, room occupancy, and mask wearing.

"Some clubs are happening online, but most are operating in person," said Emily North, the Director of Student Activities. "[Clubs] seem to be operating just as much as they were last year."

"The only tricky part is that we can't exceed the occupancy numbers of the rooms for club meetings," continued North. "For instance, we can only have 17 people in the gaming room at a time. Which is difficult because on some nights we fill up and more people want to come but we don't have the space."

The changed guidelines have also affected other programming on campus.

The Centers for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) has been running online programming since students left campus in March.

"Programs like Bro Talk and Girl Code had been keeping diversity programming alive throughout COVID while we were online," said Marc Thurman, Coordinator for the Centers for Diversity and Inclusion.

"The only difference was that we weren't able to connect the community in person as often as we usually do. That was a challenge at first," he said. "The challenge was a good one, though, because we were able to see what we can do online and that's another way of connecting the students."

"I can honestly say that I believe more people want to connect to programs now more than ever because of COVID," said Thurman. "So that's a blessing in disguise where it only adds on to the increase of students participating in CDI programs."

"Now that we are able to have students be virtual and in person we were able to open the coffee house Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday for diversity programs," Thurman added. "Students are still showing up to programs and we're still able to connect to the

community and talk about things that are social issues that are happening in the world today."

"Seeing new student leaders step up and be able to lead programs [has been a positive,]" he said. "We just had a program that talked about Black Lives Matter, peaceful protests, Breonna Taylor, and police brutality."



**CDI Coordinator Marc Thurman (front), seated with students at the BLM mural on campus.**

**Photo by Neo Sagov**

*"Seeing new student leaders step up and be able to lead programs [has been a positive]"*

**- Marc Thurman**

"Seeing the room of diverse faces and different genders just being open just being able to open up on their point of view on certain things and how they connect was really something special," he continued. He went on to say that the program in question was run by two new CDI Staff members.

CDI has been running hybrid programming out of the coffeehouse in Stone since late September.



Another area that has been affected majorly by the pandemic has been the PEERS program - a social-skills program that is offered in many places across the country.

Sallie Banta, the Assistant Director of Social Pragmatics Support and the coordinator of PEERS at Landmark, said “It’s been complicated by the pandemic because we have a lower cap of numbers because we can only have a certain number of people in the coffeehouse safely.”

“We also have an online PEERS session for online students and our overflow students. Students who wanted to do PEERS but couldn’t fit into our classroom,” she continued. Banta also went on to say that they are not doing social pragmatics trips anymore, because she and other members can’t use the shuttles.



**Sallie Banta, Assistant Director of Social Pragmatics, leads a therapy dog walk with students donning masks. Photo by Todd Miller**

“We’re seeing that students are having a harder time; there are just more hurdles getting connected,” continued Banta. “There’s just fewer in person programming or at least that’s how it sounds and/or students are more hesitant to take part because of all the precautions around COVID. Students haven’t made friends as much as they have in the past.”

Whether or not students are making as many friends as they have in the past, programming has undoubtedly become more complicated, and with that, socialization has become more complex as well.



**Above: students (led by CDI Coordinator Marc Thurman) paint the Black Lives Matter mural on Landmark’s Campus in early October. The creation of this mural was an effort of the Centers for Diversity and Inclusion. The finished mural is pictured below.**

**Photos by Neo Sagov**



*The Centers for Diversity and Inclusion are comprised of the Center for Women and Gender, the Stonewall Center for LGBTQ+ students, and the Rise Up Center for students of color. The centers are located on the lower level of frost hall. For more information, visit:*

*<https://www.landmark.edu/student-life/our-community/diversity-inclusion>*



# Halloween is upon us

## 6 Things to do During this Socially Distant Halloween

By Adam Sherman

Halloween is upon us. Not only is it a celebration of all things spooky and scary, but it is one of the most chill holidays out there. Unless you're dressing up or hosting a party, you aren't expected to do very much, just relax and enjoy the spooky as much as you wish.

However, Halloween will be different this year. It will be more isolated. We'll suspiciously scan others for signs of COVID, like a mystery-slasher brought to life and imposed on a grand scale. To combat this, here's a list of things you can do alone on the spookiest night of the year. To aid you, I will not just write a recommendation, but also list whether something is spooky (for children and/or not supposed to be scary,) scary (typically has blood, gore, jump scares, and minorly frightening themes) and/or disturbing.

*Left 4 Dead 1&2* (2008 & 2009, Video Games)

Scary

If you want to hang out with your friends safely, but don't want to mask up, video games will be king. The two *Left 4 Dead* games are particularly great as it pits you and three other friends against wave upon wave of ravenous undead.

Of the two, I would recommend the second one as it is the most updated. It even has a new update coming out! The only problem is that it isn't available on any console except the Xbox 360. However, it is from 2009 and should run on your school-issued laptop without too much trouble.

*The Twilight Zone* (2019 TV Series)

Disturbing

I feel weird about recommending this one. I watched half of the first episode, then stopped. Not because it was bad. If anything, it was too good. Not because of the gore - there was none. Not because of any traditionally disturbing content, either.

I stopped because it got in my head. The story of a comedian slowly destroying his life in order to bring himself fame was one of the most chilling things I had ever experienced. Even without any of the blood stereotypically associated with horror, I found myself feeling physically ill. If you want to stare into the abyss, I wholeheartedly recommend this show. Just expect the abyss to stare back.

*Scooby-Doo* (TV Show)

Spooky

I specifically recommend the episodes "Zombie Isle" or "The Witch's Ghost," but there are so many good works from this show that it's hard to go wrong. Also, right now, the idea of bad guys from scam artists to the occasional monster being taken down by a few meddling kids the age of Landmark students is incredibly empowering. Just avoid anything live-action or featuring Scrappy-Doo, and you should be golden.

*Event Horizon* (1997 Film)

Scary

There's something especially frightening about a horror movie where most of the characters are intelligent. With Laurence Fishbourne as a captain of a rescue crew investigating the titular spaceship, things get very spooky as it becomes obvious that the ship brought back something with it.

*Hellraiser* (1987 Movie)

Disturbing

A claustrophobic tale of demons, sexuality, family secrets, and the lengths people will go to for survival and pleasure. The film opens with a man obtaining a strange puzzle box, after opening it in his family home. Naturally, things go bad for him. Then the film cuts to his brother, his wife, and his adult daughter moving in and awakening the man. Yet this formerly dead man returns with a need for blood. Lots and lots of blood.

**Trigger Warning:** On top of the gore, there's sexual assault and psychological manipulation. It's used both to comment on society and to gross out the audience.

*Star Wars: Death Trooper* by Joe Schreiber (2009 Book)

Scary

A take on zombies in a galaxy far, far away. Centered mostly on characters that only appear in this book (though some familiar faces make a welcome surprise), the story follows Imperial prisoners and guards as a mysterious illness from an abandoned Star Destroyer raises the dead.

What follows is an expert blending of what you expect from good old Star Wars (whichever part you love) and the more supernatural side of zombies.



*"How could we respect COVID-19 safety precautions and still have a fun Halloween?"*

*---Everyone, basically*



## Hope

By Conor Malloy

The street felt barren and cold as I walked alone on a bitter winter night. New York was quiet but not as quiet as I hoped it would be. I could still hear the sirens and angry car horns in the city even if I was walking through Brooklyn. Brooklyn wasn't that quiet either. You could hear the protests from miles away. You could hear them from New Jersey I bet

.

I was looking at the ground. I was disgusted. Seeing all the stuff that our country has been through. The riots in Kentucky. The fires in Maryland. Even the incompetence of the most powerful man in the country. And the city.

I didn't know where I was any more. All that was ahead of me was the sidewalk and above me were the lights of the street-lamps.

I stopped. I looked down.

The light from the streetlamp showed something. It was a single word carved into the pavement. A word that I have forgotten about. It said:

Hope

*Stella Luna*  
By Julie Vartain

The Stella Luna Corporation  
Is my graceful and celestial team  
We rise from Alabama  
To fulfill our glowing dream

We're the ultimate company  
To aim for the stars  
Our song comes from God  
With harps and guitars

One of the main astronauts  
Is my ultimate prince  
He is a medical doctor  
But I haven't seen him since

He and the others sing a song  
Played on guitars, harps, and lutes  
I try to join in with them  
And others join in with flutes



---

# “Bad Compass - Part 1”

By Jack Belinski

As I slowly opened my eyes, my neck felt stiff. I was laying on my right side and saw a hint of moon light shine through a broken window. While I felt the right side of my face pressed against the cold cushioned panel, I realized I was in a crashed carriage. As I rolled over, out of my seat, facing down in front of the black, almost broken window, attempting to push myself up with both hands, I immediately felt a sharp, somewhat crunchy pain in the wrist of my dominant right hand. I dropped and rolled over to notice my wrist was swollen badly. While I grunted in pain, I thought to myself, “why me?” On my second attempt I rolled back to my right, slightly pushing myself with my left arm, then got my feet on the ground, slowly standing up, to open the window and peek outside. Seeing nothing but snow and dark frosty trees ahead as I slowly turned to my left to notice I was beneath a steep cliff. Looking ever so high, up to that tall, jagged thing, whose top was too hard to make out due to the gray snowy clouds and I wondered how I survived. But that split second, I shook that thought out of my head as it didn't matter. Thank god for it I thought.

Suddenly the wind shifted to my right carrying the iron smell of blood that caught my nose. I slowly turned to my right, seeing the two horses that pulled this carriage piled on top of one another, lying lifeless on the ground, while still attached to their straight heel shaft and their singletrees. Their eyes were as blank as dead fish, sinking in their sockets and frozen like marbles.

GOD, the sight of those dead eyes. It made me cringe to my skin, muscle, bone and stomach as I turned with my eyes shut tight in a split second. Poor bastards, I thought. I prayed they went in peace quickly, and suffered little.

As I tried to remember what the hell happened, I felt something in my pocket.

It was a compass with a cracked lens, which didn't seem familiar. Suddenly it began to slightly spin until it stopped pointing northwest, in conflict with the directions I could read from the moon's position. I know a compass was for helping people if and when they got lost, but this compass was clearly broken and outdated given its rusty edges, not to mention its cracked, slightly blurry lens. But regardless, I guess, I

had no choice

but to put my faith in the old thing, because the last thing I wanted was to freeze to death.

However, as I readied myself to leave the safety of my wrecked carriage and hopefully find civilization before it got too dark, I heard the loud, prolonged sound of howling wolves from a closing distance to my right. I couldn't see them anywhere in the midst of the darkening, misty edges of the forests just ahead of me. Not a snap of twigs, rustling bushes, or their glowing eyes. But as the howls got louder I knew there was no question they were coming. As far as I was concerned they were practically closing in. They smell the flesh and blood of those dead horses, they might even smell me. While the source of those malevolent sounds drew closer, I was paralyzed despite my deep breathing, the racing of my heart and the hairs on my neck standing up. Paralyzed with not knowing what to do. Should I stay and hide inside my wrecked carriage and hope they don't find me? Or take my chances and run as fast as I can?

They say not to run away from wolves, it makes you look like prey to them. They also say not to show vulnerability, like turning your back on them or being in a kill zone. Given their strong sense of smell, they will find me, so staying inside that carriage is merely waiting for them to break in the windows and eat me, and if not eat me, wait me out. Either way I'm doomed. So, without hesitation I jumped, leaned and hoisted myself out of that carriage, landing into the snowy ground upon falling. Hearing those wolves howling closer I got up on my two feet as fast as I could with one thought: “RUN.” And ran I did in the direction the compass pointed. Straight into the darkening, misty edges of the woods ahead.

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Running northwest through a foot of snow, my heart was pounding, my mouth belching hot mist with every exhale, and the wind blowing across both sides of my face/forehead, carrying and freezing my sweat droplets.

Halfway to the edge of the treeline, I suddenly heard and felt their loud, relentless barking at my back, and I didn't dare look. To my surprise the edge of the woods was a steep hill with pine trees spaced out, which I didn't hesitate to go down. Running through the now 2 foot deep snow my feet got soaking wet and cold with every step. Of course those wolves were still on me, right on me in fact. I heard loud barking sounds coming up both my left and right sides, and the second I turned right to see a large gray wolf with what seemed like glowing yellowish eyes it became a slow-motion chase. In that moment, I looked to my left seeing another gray wolf, this time I noticed what appeared to be a smile showing off its fangs, as if it was reveling in chasing me and just itching to taste my blood. Suddenly, I tripped and fell down the steepening hill which then became a cliff. Rolling down on my waist and back, it became steeper and I fell faster, slamming my right pelvis into a rock, my left shoulder into the side of a fallen tree trunk and finally falling onto a frozen stream flat on my back.

When I thought it couldn't get any worse, the ice started to break, and the next thing I knew I was pulled by freezing rapids that paralyzed me, until everything went black in the blink of an eye. The second I thought it was over, I heard a voice saying "Weinstein", and suddenly I found myself sitting on a cozy couch, served with a plate of warm tea and soft, gooey-looking chocolate chip cookies with a fire beside me.

"Are you alright my friend? You look like you've seen a ghost". In front of me was my friend, Mr. Robert Frost.

"Oh it's nothing, thank you" I replied slightly laughing. "Anyhow, you were saying?" I asked politely.

"What do you think 'the harness bell'" is supposed to symbolize?" he asked curiously. "Between the woods and frozen lake, the darkest evening of the year. He gives his bells a shake to ask if there is some mistake" Robert repeated.

At that moment, I hesitated to answer, because that question and that quote sounded familiar. And then I immediately remembered: This moment occurred last night. Remembering I replied to Robert "The mind."

In the blink of an eye, I found myself back in reality, laying on that thick sheet of wet ice. In front of me, I saw the end of the stream with fewer trees on the left side. Then I felt the pain. I was hurting everywhere. My waist felt as though 5 men kicked me in the stomach, My left shoulder felt like jelly a little, but I could still move my left arm a little. Looking back on what I endured, I said to myself "OH MY GOD." Not only did I survive, but neither my back nor my shoulder were broken. I didn't know how, maybe the good lord cut me a break or maybe I was just lucky. Well, if you want to call tumbling down a hill, slamming into rocks and trees, landing hard on a sheet of ice and then coming close to drowning or freezing to death "luck." Either way, I got away from the wolves, I didn't win, any more than I wasn't out of the woods yet. I was just safe for the time being.

Once a hungry pack of wolves sets their eyes on something, especially when hunting during winter, even if their prey gets away, they will find it. "I've got to get the hell out of here," I said to myself. Breathing deeply, I took out my compass and realized it was spinning faster than before; after 10 minutes it started to slow down, but it took another 10 minutes to stop spinning, or so I remembered. It now pointed north east and I immediately kicked into action, got off what was now my frozen ass, walked across the frozen river and effortlessly crested a small hill on the other side.

As I looked ahead towards my new direction, I felt as though I had traveled back to the ice age. On the other side I saw no woods, no frozen lakes or streams, no animals as far as the eye can see, nor signs of human civilization. Nothing but a frozen flat field of untouched powder, like a vast ocean of unending deep snow. In disbelief, I checked the compass again, but it still pointed north east, in that moment my gut was telling me: "walking out there is like walking to your grave." So I turned away, and stared back into the dark forest. I heard the wolves again, and I thought, "assuming I can get far out there I can out-distance those wolves," so I chose to go though the tundra.

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Hours passed since leaving the river. Powering through the deep snow, never had I ever felt so tired, hungry, thirsty and exhausted. To make matters worse, a snow storm had to come in, blowing harder, becoming colder and making the snow deeper by the minute. Meanwhile my eyes, ears, face and feet seemed frost-bit, numbing them worse by the second. When the storm started easing up, I began to see things much clearer and noticed a forest nearby. I checked my compass and it was already pointing East. When it had shifted, I do not know, but it now pointed directly at a small mountain ahead. "Maybe I can spot a town from up there," or so I stupidly thought with a presumptuous smile on my face.

As I approached the small mountain ahead, I had another flashback. Staring into my compass, I remembered arriving at Robert's house the previous night, hanging my coat on a hanger right next to another identical coat and now realized that after that lovely evening I must have taken the wrong coat - the one carrying the compass. Little did I know that the compass would get me into trouble.

Finally after what felt like an eternity on the small mountain, I made it to the top of a plateau and found ... Nothing. No lights, no roads and, as far as I was concerned at that moment, I was more lost than ever and with the moonlight gone and with little hope. Frustrated beyond anything, I took my compass with a strong grip only to find its needle moving back and forth, spinning in every direction, as it spun it made this strange sound as it rubbed the inside of its lense. It's as if that was its way of mocking and laughing at me and, although it's immature to blame a piece of technology, especially one that's vital in situations like these, I lost it! I've never been more angry at anything in my life! What else is there to blame for my misery after everything I've been through?! Without a doubt it was that compass! Enraged beyond comparison I punched and broke the lens of that thing, smacked it to the ground, stumped on it as hard as I could, while cursing it. When that wasn't enough, I grabbed hold of a branch on a dead tree, ripped it off, and used it to smash that cursed compass to pieces. Slowly I tired myself out, until I just couldn't hold the stick any more. The only thing I felt at that moment was pure frustration as I breathed deeply and cried my heart out for mercy.

Suddenly, the frustration and crying turned to fear even greater than what I had felt racing from the wolves. I had the feeling I was being watched. When the wind shifted I smelt death in the air; I slowly turned around, shaking.

It was a deer carcass 35 feet away, and then everything went slow, so slow that I even started to hear my own heart beat: Bum, Bum.....Bum, Bum.

It was moving, something was feeding on it, when the wind shifted again, I knew that thing was going to catch my scent. As it lifted its head, I could see that it was a mountain lion. Some say that mountain lions with a full stomach are less threatening, but if you're in their territory you are D-O-N-E unless you can scare them off. So I tried waving my hands in the air and roaring like a bear, but the cat started prowling closer to me. Then I tried to back off as slowly as I could, but I guess all I was really doing was making myself look like prey as it kept coming closer. Running out of options, I grabbed my stick and threw it at him, but all I did then was piss him off as I heard his growls. "Are you kidding me, just what do you want from me?" I said, and the lion replied "ROAR!!!!!"

So I ran as fast as I could, this time I ran as if hell itself was behind me. Although a mountain lion is faster than people, I did have momentum on my side as I ran down the mountain, but of course so did he. By the time I ran all the way down the mountain and into the forest I must have covered the equivalent of three to four football fields. I assumed the cat had given up the chase; however, when I stopped between a small hill and a large tree beside it, completely out of breath and stupidly thinking I was safe, I saw its shadow on top of that hill as well as its glowing eyes, getting ready to jump me.

At that point, I gave up, I just couldn't take it anymore, so I fell to my knees, closed my eyes and said: "just hurry up and kill me already. I just want it to end, goddammit!"





# Photography

## *Stills of nature*

By Maria Clark



**"Lil' Frand"**



**"Fairy Ring"**





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