

Three Peaks Review

Black Hills State University's
student-run literary magazine



2023 | Issue 5

Cover Art

O' Flesh | By *Aristotle Dausch*



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Three Peaks Review

Black Hills State University's
undergraduate literary magazine
featuring a collection of students'
poetry, fiction, and visual art



Three Hour Tour

Photo By *Annalina Scalise*

Letter from the Editor

This magazine celebrates the fifth publication of *Three Peaks Review*, and more importantly, it celebrates each of the writers and artists who find their work published here. Maya Angelou wrote in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* that “there is no greater agony than bearing an untold story in you.” She knew that each of us holds a story—one that we might not want to tell, but one that we must tell. We have to question what the meaning of art is if no one else sees it, hears it, feels it. These Black Hills State University artists have been brave enough to uncage their stories, and *Three Peaks Review* is honored to give them the space to do so.

The fifth publication wouldn't be possible without the hard work and dedication of the Editors-in-Chief who came before me. Without them, this journal would not have such a solid establishment. Over five years, they were able to create an environment within the journal that has continued to make artists feel safe to share their stories, and for that, I am grateful.

I'd like to give an extra special thanks to *Three Peaks Review's* advisor, Matthew Bauman, and the staff/club members, who have not only supported me physically, but emotionally, too. They've given me a well weeded garden that has allowed me to grow into myself, to be creative, and to find confidence in taking on the role of President and Editor-in-Chief. If it weren't for Matt, I know that this journal couldn't have weathered the pandemic and other daily challenges it has faced. What I appreciate most about Matt is his willingness to always try something new. Likewise, my staff and all other club members have been so forward about their wants and needs, and that has made executing their creative ideas a breeze.

Lastly, I'd like to thank Black Hills State University for fostering our project for five years now. Jessie Gramm has been so patient as I've learned the ropes of the position, and most importantly, I'd like to thank her program, the Activity Grants Committee, for funding this year's journal. I'd like to give additional thanks to Lori Dubry from Printing Services for assisting me in creating a quality journal that does justice to the artwork and creative writing that calls the journal their home. Without each of these individuals, the journal would not be what it is today. For each of you, I am so incredibly grateful.

Without further ado, I hope you read these stories, inhale them deeply, feel them fully.

Sincerely,

Amanda

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Red Tears

Photo By *Alex Larson*

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It's only fitting

By *Annalina Scalise*

I never managed to buy clothes for myself that fit.
Always too baggy with seams hanging desperately to my
bony shoulders,

Aching ribs under heavy sweatshirts on summer evenings in
the school parking lot.

My father used to make tall cups of lemon tea and honey

in the mornings when I wouldn't eat,
affectionate worry poured into travel cups

and slid into my backpack full of unpacked lunches—
something warm, something whole, something held,

when I had long freckled legs
and a stomach so flat you could set dinner on it.

I was a worn down, lived-in armchair
collapsing into myself.



Leaving
By Kylee Myers

All The Places I'll Never Be

By *Carston Mertens*

It's in their knowing stares and
the concerned looks that
I forget how to speak.
"I don't know if we've met before"
and the silence that follows.
The drink in my hand
empties itself so I can leave

and sit alone until a song
about death spins the darkness
behind my eye lids.
I'll hum along until the sun
uncovers the dust hanging in air,
signaling the morning ritual
of erasing messages

from friends I've held on to
with broken fingers.
Reaching out, wondering
where I went, how to help.
I should leave this house,
but I won't.
I'll burn it down again.

I'll swallow the match,
let the flames rage from inside.
Don't put the fire out this time.
Let me fade into ash,
and scatter me throughout
all the places I'll never be.

I wish grief was the same as when I was 6

By *Sheridan Fenner*

When I was 6 years old,
I found my goldfish floating
belly up at the top of its glass bowl,
a film wrapped around its golden scales
like a spider's web around a fly.
Death became real in that moment
as I scooped the remains into the plastic net
and dropped it into its ceramic coffin.
With one flush, my fish was sent 6 feet under
into the graveyard of long forgotten pets and sewage.
No faster than it disappeared down the drain
had I forgotten how much I missed it.



Untitled

By *Vincent Peterson*

Duolingo

By *Jayden Buckau*

I long for the words my ancestors would've whispered to each other in
a darkened room.

I know I will never say them like they did.

I know I cannot erase the past and write one to my liking.

So, I sit and walk and run and stew in my anger until it boils over and
onto the page.

Crimson, boiling fury in my stomach spurting from my mouth,
a burst ulcer.

They made a decision that altered my life in such a violent way,
and now I use a language learning app.

Mashed Potato

By *Blake Gutierrez*

Eric stood with his arms crossed and lips pursed as he watched his two friends investigate the canal bank. The hours of the early evening did nothing to dampen the summer heat and Eric's sweat had attracted a swarm of insects. The symphony of the nocturnal wildlife waking up was broken only by friendly banter and an occasional car passing on the nearby road. He waved his hand to bat away the bugs in front of his face and grumbled as he realized that he was going to be fighting pests until a successful launch, including the two pests he came with. It was the first day his parents had let him out all summer and it involved too much exercise, heat, and uncooperative friends for his patience. As he stared at the back of their heads, his nostrils flared as his breathing became more rapid. Eric cleared his throat but to no avail as Sammy and Clark persisted.

"So is it a frog or a toad?" Clark asked, gawking at the mysterious creature.

"Its definitely a toad." Sammy answered.

"How can you tell?"

"Well just think about it, I'm telling you this is a toad, so this is how a toad looks. A frog does not look like this."

"Oh ok gotcha."

Sammy's smirk faded as he realized his sarcasm has gone completely over Clark's head.

"Are you two done?" Eric finally butted in.

Sammy and Clark both looked back at Eric and briefly at each other before turning their attention away from the frog in the reedy bank and back to the task at hand. As they were walking up the incline, Sammy playfully pushed Clark towards the water, to which Clark yelled to knock it off. Small rocks crunched under their feet and gnats buzzed around their heads as Eric led the two back to their project in the middle of the dirt pathway.

"So what is the main difference between a frog and a toad anyway?" Clark asked still fixated on the biology lesson.

"Toads lays eggs while frogs give birth." Sammy replied.

"Frogs do not give bir-Why are we still talking about this!"

Eric yelled as he realized that he fell for Sammy's bait who just replied with a proud grin.

"Can we please just get back to fixing this?" Eric asked.

"Does it count as fixing if it never worked in the first place?"

Eric could only answer with a stare and an exhausted sigh.

Becoming self-aware of his unrelenting sarcasm, Sammy nodded and

threw his hands up in a gesture of temporary peace. The trio stared down at the PVC pipe contraption next to the sack of potatoes trying to figure out how it became a puzzle. Eric was determined to get this gun to work and leave it here, he did not want to awkwardly carry it through town to try again another time.

“Everything is glued together, so I am not sure what adjustments we can make.” Sammy pointed out.

Eric could only respond in a disappointed sigh to Sammy’s valid point.

“Maybe it’s a design issue. Clark, can you bring up the potato gun video we watched to make this?” Eric asked.

“Oh, I forgot my phone at home, what time is it? I gotta be home before ten.” Clark replied.

Eric rolled his eyes and shoved his own phone into Clark’s hands to search for the video so he could further inspect the potato gun with Sammy.

“Ok I found it, what part do you want me to skip to?”

“I just wanna see what the like-dislike ratio is.” Eric asked hoping to get some clarity on if the tutorial video they watched was legit.

“Oh, well YouTube disabled that.”

Eric snatched his phone out of Clark’s hands and threw it on to the sack of potatoes. Clark could only just awkwardly side eye Eric as he did not understand why Eric was so frustrated. Eric crouched down next to Sammy to inspect the barrel and received a pat on the shoulder, while Clark turned his attention to reading the ingredients on the cans of deodorant.

“Don’t worry man, one way or another we’re launching a spud into orbit.” Sammy said.

“Let’s just go. It sucks out here and I just wanna go home now.” Eric mumbled in defeat. Eric’s mind started to drift back to why he got grounded and consequently missed most of the summer. Sammy seemed to pick up on this.

“Dude stop. Were gonna do this and don’t worry, we don’t have any fireworks so there’s no chance of another fire.” Eric was taken back by Sammy’s change in tone and could only reply with a meek

“Thanks man.”

“Let’s just remember to keep it pointed that way, unless of course were aiming at Clark.” Sammy said to bring the conversation back to a more casual tone.

The mention of his name drew Clark’s attention away from the deodorant and he came over to crouch next to his friends. The three continued to butt heads over what could be causing the lack

of ignition. Eric's frustration increased and so did Clark's confusion while Sammy reveled in opportunities for ill-timed humor.

"Maybe we should try a different potato." Clark suggested.

"Are you trying to suggest we have a faulty potato?" Eric replied.

Sammy picked up the cannon and pretended he was an action hero firing his minigun in all different directions. He gunned down the imaginary zombies coming up the bank, the zombies emerging from the vineyards next to the dirt path, and even the zombies getting out of their cars on the road. The sounds of his "pew-pews" were nails on a chalkboard to Eric's ears.

"Fuck it, Clark grab some Axe and keep spraying until I tell you to stop." Eric commanded. Clark responded by grabbing a deodorant can and just as he was about to start spraying himself Eric yanked him over by shirt and pointed towards the chamber at the back of the gun. Eric gave Sammy the command of just holding still but Eric was not confident he could accomplish that. There was little to no breeze, so the air quickly became thick with the bitter taste and strong scent of Axe body spray. Both Clark and Sammy kept occasionally glancing back at Eric who was waiting anxiously with the end cap. Clark remarked that the can was beginning to feel empty, and Eric moved him aside and quickly screwed on the cap. Eric once again told Sammy to hold still and Sammy responded with a stomp of his foot and a

"Sir! Yes Sir!" Eric grabbed the lighter and inserted it into the small chamber and clicked.

With a loud pop, thunk, and woosh the spud was launched, and the cannon fell apart. The successful ignition caught all three off guard and they all watched in silent admiration as the potato sailed across the golden sky. Eric lived in a moment of satisfaction and a smile crept on to his face. The heat, the stress, the bugs, it was all worth it. The mission was accomplished, and everything was going to be alright. The potato flying away was an image that was a welcome replacement of his bedroom window he wasted so many summer hours staring through. But as gravity began to pull the potato out of the sky, it too pulled Eric's heart into his stomach. Too late did he realize that they were pointing the gun towards the road at the time of launch, and there was a car coming. The road was some distance away, but the trio could still see and hear the potato smashing the car's rear passenger window. The white sedan's tires squealed as it fish-tailed to a stop. A man stepped out of the car let out numerous profanities in a rage-fueled confusion. Eric just stood and stared as the man walked around his car to assess the damage. He did not move even when the man did a double-take and noticed the teens

down the pathway. It was the only sounds of fleeing footsteps behind Eric that snapped him out of his stupor.

Eric and Clark took shelter in a part of the canal that was thick with reeds. On a different summer day, the knee-deep water might've felt refreshing, but Eric could not find any positive aspect of wading in fully clothed to hide from a madman. The night provided some help in concealing their position, but the full moon still provided enough light for the boys to be caught if they weren't careful. The water gently lapped against their shins and the sounds of frogs and bugs were now helping cover their voices.

"Did you see where Sammy went?" Eric whispered as he pushed some plants out of his face.

"I don't know, do you think that guy got him?" Clark asked.

"I think we would've heard screaming if that happened. I'll try texting him."

Furious threats of "I'll fucking kill you damn kids!" and "Come out you little shits!" in the distance terrified Eric but also comforted him that Sammy had not been caught. Eric reached for his phone, but a lump appeared in his throat before his hand could even touch his empty pocket.

"Shit. Where the fuck is my phone?" Eric yelled in a whisper

"It was still on the potatoes when we left, so it's probably near the gun now." Clark said still clutching the sack of potatoes.

"You grabbed the potatoes, but you left my phone?"

"My mom would kill me if her potatoes just disappeared."

"If that guy doesn't kill us, I am going to kill you." Eric snapped as he socked Clark in the arm. Clark rubbed his arm, looked down and sighed.

"I'll get your phone. Give me the signal if you think that guy is coming my way."

Before Eric could protest or even ask what signal he was talking about, Clark was already slowly crawling up the bank. The sounds of wet shoes squeaking slowly faded as Clark began to sneak back towards the potato gun. Eric grew more anxious by the second as he felt he should look for Sammy or go with Clark, but he was frozen by his indecisiveness. He stood bent over among the cattails on high alert, listening for any signs of danger. He thought he heard footsteps, but he couldn't be sure, the stirring wildlife was making it difficult. He looked down at the water and tried to concentrate his senses. He was now sure he heard something close by, his belief became confirmed when he saw ripples in the water disrupting the reflection of the glowing moon. He looked to his right and saw reeds being pushed to the side by an obscured figure.

The whirring of the insects seemed to pause at the disturbance. His knees became poisoned by his fear and began to buckle under his weight. He involuntarily crouched down further to the point where he was practically sitting in the water. The figure most've noticed him because it was now moving with purpose directly towards him. His body became a tense shivering wreck. He curled his arms into his chest and clenched his fists under his chin. His heart filled with dread, and he locked his beaming eyes on the figure that was now mere feet away.

"Eric!" a familiar voice whispered.

Eric exhaled the breath that was stuck in his throat and regained his strength. Sammy helped pull Eric out of his awkward sitting position in the muddy water and they almost hugged.

"Dude that guy is a lot closer than you think. He followed me into the vineyards after we split. I lost him, but he's really fucking close." Another threat of "I'll rip your fucking heads off" could be heard dangerously close confirming Sammy's suspicion.

Sammy looked around and behind Eric.

"Where's Clark?"

"He left to go grab my phone." Eric replied.

"Dude what the fuck? Why'd you make him do that?"

"He just did it. I didn't tell him to do shit."

Sammy stopped arguing and began to think of a plan that could help.

"Ok, I'm gonna go look for him, you stay here."

"What no! No more separating, we sit here and wait for Clark." He said as he grabbed Sammy before he could crawl up the bank.

"Fine, but I am least gonna create a distraction for him."

Clark said.

Eric watched in confusion as Sammy began to look closely at the bank. He stopped his search and picked up a rock close to the size of a golf ball. He looked back at Eric before throwing it out of the reeds and into the vineyards. They expected to hear the rock smacking leaves in the vineyard or even just a thud in the dirt, but they connected eyes with each other and cringed as the rock hit what sounded like a head and a whirlwind of swears erupted.

"Start digging your fucking graves now! Where are you!"

They heard footsteps rapidly approaching, both Eric and Sammy responded by sitting down in the water. They were on the verge of screaming when a figure slid down the bank and made small splash into the water next to them. Dirty water splashed into Eric's eyes, after he wiped his face and regained his vision, relief came over him again when he saw wide eyed Clark squeezing the potatoes

against his chest and Eric's phone in his hand.

"He saw me." Clark informed them as he handed the phone back to Eric.

"What?" Eric asked.

"He saw me!" Clark answered in an irritated voice, wondering why he had to say it twice.

"I fucking saw you!"

"Oh my god!" Eric said before he abandoned all stealth and began to quickly stomp up the bank. Clark was right behind him, but Sammy slipped in the mud and was having trouble getting out of the water. Eric and Clark both desperately beckoned him to hurry up. They both impatiently watched as Sammy regained his footing but a noise not far behind them in the vineyards snatched their attention. The dark figure of a man was ragefully sprinting towards them, there was no hiding anymore. Eric could hear the man hissing spittle out of his mouth. He stayed at full speed as he separated from the vineyards and came onto the dirt path with his seething glare fixed solely on Eric. Eric had no time to react, his feet became stuck to the dirt, and he braced for impact. Moments before the man was about to crash into Eric, Sammy ran in front of Eric. Sammy swung his foot back like a soccer player and kicked out the raging man's feet. The man slammed face first into the path, the ground punched the air out of his diaphragm and kicked up a cloud of dirt. His momentum carried into a slide past the boys, down the slope and into the water. Almost his whole body was submerged in the water, only his boots were still dry. Eric could only turn his head to look at the body as his feet were still stuck to the ground.

"Holy shit." Were the only words that he could muster.

"Should we help him?" Clark asked as all three boys grew concerned over the lack of movement from the stranger.

"No!" Sammy replied.

Before the boys could make their escape, they heard the shuffling of reeds, splashing of water, and the plopping of mud. The figure in the reeds came to life and began crawl out to reveal his swampy transformation. The pain was still overpowering him as he was unable to stand up straight. His face was covered in a veil of mud and moss. Water spewed out of his hidden mouth in a strained cough. Mud became his outfit; he was now a creature drenched in green and brown slop. Algae dripped off his scraped hand as he reached out towards the boys.

"Hrrrrnnnnngggghhhh I'll break your fucking legs." He said in a raspy voice still trying to regain his breath.

Clark shrieked and threw a potato at the ogre's head. The boys did not hesitate anymore and took off in a sprint towards the

road. The path was an uneven running surface but the surge of adrenaline through Eric's veins helped him ignore the several times he rolled his ankle. The trio came upon the car and were about to run past it, but Eric stopped.

"What the fuck are you doing?!" Sammy yelled.

"Wait one second, I have an idea."

Eric looked in through the open car door for the ignition and saw that the keys were still in it. Eric grabbed the keys and threw them into the canal resulting in a small splash and a quack from an unseen duck. Eric could see that the Swamp Monster under the moonlight limping towards them on the dirt path. Curiosity got the better of Clark and he inspected the damage that they caused to this guy's car. The potato made it halfway through the glass and spiderweb of cracks extended throughout the whole window. Clark did not stop staring until the glass window of the front passenger seat shattered as a rock smashed through it. A furious indiscernible screech could be heard in the distance and the wounded brute quickened his pace.

"You still have two windows left sir!" Sammy taunted before the boys made their final escape.

The boys eventually found themselves in familiar surroundings as they did not see any more vineyards, only houses and stop signs. An awkward silence dominated the air, the only sounds were the squelching of their wet shoes, buzzing streetlights, and dogs barking in the distance. There were no more bugs harassing Eric, but he could feel the skin on the back of his thighs growing more irritated as his wet jeans rubbed up against them with each step. Eric kept his stare straight forward; he paid no mind to his friends on either side of him. He quickened his pace, impatient to get home, take a shower, throw away his clothes and forget about the whole thing. His mouth began to dry up thinking about the possibility of getting in trouble in his first day as a free man.

"Ok, I know that was pretty fucked up, but did you see how I tripped that dude?!" Sammy asked.

Still in a tense state, both Eric and Clark jumped in response to the sudden excited tone, even though they should not have been surprised that Sammy was eager to end the silence.

"Yeah man that was pretty cool, lets never talk about it again." Eric replied, wanting to get back to not talking. Sammy shrugged his shoulders in disappointment that his friend did not feel the same way that he did.

"I hope my mom doesn't notice any mud on the potatoes."

Eric stopped dead in his tracks. He had not noticed that Clark was still hugging the sack of the potatoes close to his chest.

Eric's eyebrows furrowed and stomped towards Clark. He furiously snatched the potatoes; Clark tried his best to hold on, but it was futile. With the sack in hand, Eric stomped over to a nearby trash can and hurled the spuds into the can, resulting in a loud thump. The force of the throw teetered the trash can. Sammy and Clark stared but turned away when Eric glared back before resuming his walking position between to continue. Out of the corner of his eye, Eric could see that Sammy was uncomfortable for an unknown reason, he seemed to be holding in a sneeze. He was forcing a frown on his face and pinching his eyes. Eric finally had enough.

“What?!” Eric yelled.

“That was a recycling bin.” Sammy said, barely stifling his laughter to get the words out. Clark and Sammy were silent in anticipation of Eric's inevitable reaction. Eventually Eric could hear Clark on the other side of him let out a small giggle. Eric tried to tell them to shut up, but his eyebrows began to relax, and the corners of his lips slowly turned upward. He could no longer fight it and began to chuckle himself. He held a finger up and tried to let out a threat, but it was over, Sammy's humor had finally defeated Eric's irritation. The echo of the unified laughter bounced off garage doors as the boys walked further into the night.

When You're a Girl

By Amanda Wolterstorff

they take no from your tongue,
make a mouse of you, tell you
to shut up, sit still, look
pretty, *but what if I want to go devil
instead*, let them say, *she's lost it*,
cry in the shower until my skin slides into the drain,
hold my traumas in the palm of my hand like a fist full
of crumbs to scatter across the ground I stomp on,
leave a bright purple stain like red wine on my bared teeth?



Barbz

By Kinsy Selby



Overgrown

By *Lydia Derksen*

Waiting on a Stranger

By *Emma Siewert*

My fingers trace patterns on the iron table,
fired into flowers and curlicues,
quivering from autumnal gusts
and the fact that I'm
waiting on a stranger.

I'm waiting on a stranger,
pressing myself into patio furniture,
peering through bare bushes into every car,
my breath hitching at the sound
of each approaching diesel roar.

He said he'd meet me here at four o'clock.
Fidgeting with a wooden table between us
we'd stare at the steam of our hot drinks
until he'd ask me questions and
he'd smile at me and
maybe he wouldn't be a stranger anymore.

Through the door behind me is this refuge.
Inside, I'd be engulfed by familiar sensations
of chatter, clutter, and coffee steam,
but I don't want to get lost in a future haze.
I want to know the moment the stranger arrives.

A blue truck parks behind the bushes
and relief flushes through me,
thawing my frozen fingers.
The future isn't here yet, but
he already seems less of a stranger.



Where Am I Going

By Juli Teasley

Slow Down, Daycare Ahead

By *Paige Knabel*

The sign reads, beneath
lay a deceased doe, crumpled
like an after-meal napkin or a tissue, post-sneeze.

It reminds me that humans
never mean to be invasive, but always become like
poison ivy, stuck to the plastic lattice
on the underside of your grandmother's house.

Humans are the rat poison, we create our own traps,
treat nature like a nuisance, fence out what flourished
500 years prior, send our trash somewhere yonder,
nothing less than a rubbish monster screaming debris
throughout the sea, microplastics in
sandy shores and in the bellies of turtles and gulls.

Humans give grass haircuts it does not need and
string colorful gumballs onto telephone lines
in the same sky that fledglings fly
into and airplanes fly over.

That doe she is our red rock, rust,
peppered pebbles in creeks and
she is the black-eyed Susan's that line our dirt roads.
That doe is the wind that sways the pine westward,
a shrapnel-shard mountain, a blue bleak cloud
that surrounds the atmosphere and

we are not the doe,
we are the children playing in front of its corpse.



THREE PEAKS REVIEW



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For questions and submissions, contact
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