



The Phoenix

Milligan College 2017

The Phoenix

Milligan College
2017

About the 2017 *Phoenix*

From Dr. Heather Hoover

The Phoenix rises from the ashes again this year after a brief hiatus in 2016. This edition is worth the long wait, and it highlights student interests and passions from a variety of disciplines. The magazine coheres, accidentally but happily so, around shifting perspectives, a timely and timeless topic. From Kristen Williams' new understanding of self to Megan Fontenot's story of the crucifixion—these student contributors ask readers to give weight to another person's story, to experiences that might otherwise elude us. This year's edition also welcomes work from the vibrant Spanish program and from some of our fine arts photographers—especially exciting additions. And finally, this year's *Phoenix* is the first to feature a student-designed cover and layout by Candace Tingle, a graphic design major. The entire magazine testifies to the possibility in collaboration. Special thanks to Sarah Collie, who tirelessly worked to solicit contributions to the magazine, and to Professor Art Brown, who generously made *The Phoenix* a graphic design project and priority. And finally, special thanks to all the student contributors and to the professors who mentor and partner with them.

© 2017 Milligan College

Cover and Interior Design:
Candace Tingle
Graphic Design Major
Milligan College

About the Cover

By Candace Tingle

As I began to brainstorm ideas for the cover, I wanted to create a design that would entice the reader to pick up the book. After studying contemporary work and samples of historical works in the field of graphic design, I decided not to rely on a single photograph or illustration, but use vivid colors and type. This helped to create a sense of excitement and movement on the cover. My goal for the design was to reflect the diverse content of *The Phoenix*, and the bold colors help visually express this idea. I separated the letters to lead the viewer's eye through the whole cover. The cover and interior design of this year's edition of *The Phoenix* were produced as part of Graphic Design 460, taught by Professor Art Brown.

Table of Contents

<i>Diamonds</i>	6
<i>A Note</i>	7
<i>Newfoundland I</i>	11
<i>Gatito y Pajarita</i>	12
<i>From this high place, we can see the world</i>	13
<i>Capture the Buffalo</i>	14
<i>Caroline</i>	21
<i>Artists of Asheville</i>	24
<i>Redefining Worth</i>	25
<i>Rain Drop</i>	28
<i>Short Skirt</i>	29
<i>The Words of Bar-Abba</i>	31
<i>Elizabethton, TN</i>	36



Diamonds
Shaun Whitson
Silver Gelatin Print

A Note

By Abbey Booher

Her red-rimmed eyes flit over the wall directly behind our shoulders, avoiding our eyes that have dried out from staring at screens for too long. The air sinks in my lungs, grows heavier with anxiety and controlled panic. She makes the air taste like it is rapidly depleting, like the time left in her day. So much to do, so little time. So much air needed to breathe, so little air to share. Katie, sitting with me on the couch, asks her how her day has been. Stupid question, of course it has been suffocating, can she not feel that? Brooke volleys back a perfunctory positive reply. Stupid answer, of course it has not been, she has only carried in absence with her presence. Lack of air. Lack of time. Lack of self. I open my mouth to offer something, and choke on the words. Brooke's phone starts vibrating in her hand. "It's my future mother-in-law," she mutters, closing her eyes, "We've had a huge mishap with the wedding venue and I just can't deal with that and classes and work." She takes a deep breath before answering the call. "Hello," she answers, as she walks dejectedly into her room and closes the door behind her. I stare at the closed door, and gather my belongings. Nodding my goodnight to Katie, I walk into my bedroom and turn off the light.

I gently fold the note, running my hands over the minimalist card. "Just because" in small, gold font in the left corner of the cream front.

Dear Brooke,

I went ahead and finished the work I have due on Thursday. On Wednesday, I finish early at two in the afternoon. Please leave me a list of things you need to finish this week. I can address invitations, buy your groceries, or clean whatever you need. From two to eleven, space has been made for you alone. Use it to breathe a little easier.

All my love.

The morning light streams in, and I position it against the vase of fresh flowers, and I hurry out the door, hoping to avoid seeing her before the sun fully rises.



Her hands seem to hold little strength until they adjust, the skillet on the red stove eye. The veins raised underneath translucent skin pull with every motion. The motions convey no special talent or grace, but rather extraordinary familiarity: reaching, squeezing, pulling, kneading, almost absent-mindedly. The wrinkles pooling around the knuckles sag just beneath the joints. My heart constricts with the thought of all the time in her life she lived before me, time lost in which I could not know her. Her hands are like the soil, working countless unseen hours to nourish, sustain and grow one brief moment of visible wonder. The hands, like the soil, say remain within me, until it's time to grow again. Mamaw calls that the food is ready, and suddenly all fifteen of us are crowding around a table meant for six. Mamaw shrinks back into her seat which has been awkwardly added to the jutting corner. Her hands tremble as she tries to carry her mashed potatoes from her plate to her mouth. She is tired and hot in the overcrowded kitchen. I hastily chew my food to say something to her, but pause, and instead, shovel in another bite.

As we leave, I place a smoothed receipt from my wallet on her nightstand, staring down at the black ink glistening in the lamp light as it dries, the words scrawled clumsily in haste.

Dear Mamaw,

I have often found chamomile tea to be the most relaxing of teas. I'll be by tomorrow at three with two bags. I noticed you have some lovely lavender growing outside, and lavender is wonderful addition to soothe souls. I would love to watch that Hallmark movie you mentioned. Maybe we can do that together. Be sure and save me a seat.

Until then.

I quickly jog to the car, hoping no one thinks to ask what took me so long.



Her throat expands and contracts with each squeal. Her hands vibrate in the air, displacing stillness with sweeping movement. Her celebration is a dance. My head jerks from side to side, the movement stiff and uncomfortable. Her eyes glimmer and bounce from one thing to another, swift and unconscious. Muttering sentiments of disbelief, she slaps her hand lightly against her thighs, her cheeks, the table. I carefully lift the glass of water to my lips. "Oh my gosh!" I swallow. "I can't believe this!" I lick my lips. "Oh my gosh!" I lower the glass back down to the table. I can tell her pulse is fluttering, her skin a red tint. Her hands tremble with excitement as she tries to eat a bite of beans. Mom beams from across the booth, inviting Maggie to share the good news of accomplished goals and dreams creeping into the world of reality. Maggie's glazed eyes meet my drowned ones and our world blurs. I open my mouth to congratulate her, and instead press my trembling lips, afraid of the deep waters. She quickly flits to the next object, turning her gleaming eyes on some unsuspecting waiter, as I sink back into the booth, curling inward on the loss.

A week later, knowing I won't see her until she gets out of dance practice, I slide the folded sheet of notebook paper under her door.

Dear Maggie,

I found Mamaw's recipe for the chocolate cake you love so much. I actually converted her "pinch of this" and "dash of that" into something more helpful as you start to learn to cook. I went ahead and made one for us to celebrate with tonight. I thought we could look up cool coffee shops in Louisiana while we eat it, and plan when I can come visit you.

I am so proud of you.

I grab my bag and turn back the way I came, petting the dog on the way out, and hoping I don't pass anyone in my family on my way back to campus.



Dear Abbey,

You've been a little quiet recently, and I just wanted to make sure you're ok. Let me know when you have some free time this week, and we will go get some chocolate chai, my treat. I can't wait to hear all that's going on in that brain of yours.

Sincerely,



Newfoundland I
Abigail Jones
Silver Gelatin Print

Gatito y Pajarita

By Brittany Helms, Katie Kitchen, Cailyn King



From this high place, we can see the world

By Aurelia Markos

High above the wailing
Streets filled with crumpled refuse
Waiting to be thrown out,
We stand alone together.
Our bodies crave green plants, a sweet breeze
And we give it to them.
Our lungs are filled with tainted air.
We draw ever closer
To each other?
To the edge,
To the end of the world.
The screams are always louder than the laughter, yet
For a moment, we fly.

Capture the Buffalo

By Caleb Perhne

In years past, the Pardee Rowdies were among the best known groups of pranksters at Milligan College, having stolen the buffalo mascot many times. The Rowdies' name came from the former Pardee Hall, demolished in 1992. The name was reused for a new dorm built in 2013. During Milligan's 150th anniversary, fiberglass buffaloes were placed across town, one in the center of campus. Curtis Clark, class of 2016, was part of the Buffalo Bandits, a group part of a long tradition of pranks at Milligan. Over the fall of 2015, the buffalo placed on campus disappeared twice. Curtis was the only member of the bandits ever caught. This is his story.



It all began the week before homecoming, and I was walking up the hill by the library behind Zach Hollifield and President Greer.

I heard Zach say to President Greer, "So how many buffaloes are around Johnson City?"

President Greer said there were seven.

"Well, where are they?" Zach said.

"There's one at the Johnson City library, one at Niswonger Children's Hospital. Why do you ask? Y'all trying to do something with them? Because, good luck with that. They're secured to a 2,000-pound foundation."

"No, I'm just curious."

And that was the moment where I said to myself, "We'll see how much longer they're secured."

So I walked right up the hill, entered into the caf and found some of my friends. In very hushed voices, I told them, "That buffalo that just got put down, it's getting moved." All decided that was a very good idea.

It was October 22, 2015, the day after they dropped it down, that the buffalo disappeared the first time. It had been placed in the grass right in the center of campus, in front of the library and right beside the road. They put that fiberglass buffalo down, and the next day it was gone.

We all snuck down to the buffalo in the dark of night to examine how this was secured. There were seven of us the first time. We were all wearing black. It was a somewhat overcast night. There weren't that many stars in the sky.

We figured out this was going to take a wrench. One of us lived locally, so we went off and raided through their storage shed. We all hopped in a truck and rode out there.

It was frigid. It wasn't really that cold, but riding in the back of the truck, it was pretty cold.

When we came back about half an hour later, we started to get to work on it. We had found the right wrench. We soon realized it was secured way better than we thought it was. We later came to find out they had cemented the bolts into the foundation. It wasn't like you were just trying to unscrew a bolt; you were trying to break through the seal of the very compacted cement.

"Eh, we'll get this somehow off if we have to lop off the hoofs," one of the guys said.

"Absolutely not," I said.

While we continued to work on it, two people went off to get a saw to cut the bolts, because we didn't want to damage anything in any way. We were very careful not to damage anything in any way.

Everybody thought it was just this really easy thing, but the security officers came by, so we all sprinted off into the bushes. Then we went back, and we worked on it a little bit more. We got two of the bolts free, and the security officers went by. We ran into the bushes.

They saw us.

They didn't know what we were doing, but they saw us.

We ran all the way up behind Kegley and Quillen. They were still following us. We ran all the way up behind the dumpsters behind the cafeteria. Three of us were there; the other two were grabbing the saw.

We saw the car go by and we were going to leave when it went by,

but little did we know, there were two officers in the car and one of them had gotten out.

We ran right into him and didn't stop.

"Hey! Stop! Stop!"

We just sprinted back to my dorm. Some of us were going to sneak in there and hide out for a little bit, but right as we were getting ready to walk into my dorm, Pardee, we saw the security officers again.

"What are y'all doing?" They yelled.

"Well, uhmm... You see, we're..."

"Are y'all playing Capture the Flag?"

"That is exactly what we're doing, and it is so much fun! Campus wide Capture the Flag, and there's like eight of us doing it, you know, teams of four, and it is so much fun!"

"Ahhh... I really wish I was doing that right now. Y'all are so lucky being college kids. Gosh, that sounds like so much fun."

So, I walked into my dorm.

The security guard was the one that suggested we were doing that, and that's exactly what we were doing. Capture the Flag, Capture the Buffalo, you know?

We just, we decided, you know, that our flag was a buffalo.

Shortly after that, the other people had gotten back from getting the saw, and we were able to cut through two of the bolts and loosen another one of the bolts.

We had actually gone through a wrench already because it was so securely fastened. Instead of stripping the bolts, we stripped the wrench. There was a circle around the wrench instead of the hexagonal shape. We lost a few wrenches in the process.

But finally... we got it detached.

We planned where we were going to move it. I texted the pastor of Hopwood Christian Church. I have heard of many a story from Milligan alum of his past pranks when he was a Pardee Rowdy.

I texted him and said, "Hey, I know how to get into Hopwood."

So I got into Hopwood and opened up the front door.

I told the pastor, "Hey, if this needs to get moved, if you have anything going on church-wise in the morning, let me know. We will get it out of there before, but this is the only place that we can think of that's technically still on campus."

And we didn't want to move it off campus. We thought that's where you cross the line of, you know, criminal theft.

I got a text back from him the next morning about 6:30: "Absolutely fine, that's completely great."

We carried it from where it was placed down to Hopwood. It's not very heavy, but shuffling that thing along behind Derthick to Hopwood took a little bit longer than we thought it was going to.

We decided right before we picked it up. We said, "Guys, if someone shows up, we have to set it down, and then sprint. We can't start sprinting while it's still in our hands. We cannot break this."

We shuffled along. There were five of us carrying it, and two people looking out. Then, they switched. We got it in the front door and we just placed it right in the center of the aisle of the main sanctuary.

Another pastor at the church texted me around 10:30 and said, "Hey, you know anything about this?"

And I said, "Maybe."

He had told me some stories about how he used to be a part of this group called Deep Six, who were well known for their pranks.

He said, "We've got to move it to a better place."

"Okay."

We, right around lunchtime, picked it up and carried it in this corner in a back prayer room at the church and put a curtain around it.

Kate Anderson (director of residence life) and Heather Vaccaro (a professor) found it around 5 o'clock. Word had gotten out. A secretary at the church had told her mother, who was teaching a class for one of the professors. The buffalo had been missing since about 1:30 in the morning to 5 o'clock.

The maintenance people had looked all day. Brent Nipper (who is in charge of the Physical Plant) had gotten out there at 6 in the morning and had been looking.

The original plan was to hide it there and then hang it from the balcony of Pardee and say "This buffalo sits here in honor of the Pardee Rowdies and Deep Six of old and the wonderful pranks that they pulled." But we wanted to make sure it was gone for twenty-four hours to create some buzz. We figured if we hoisted it up at 1:30, by about 9 o'clock they were going to take it down, and it wouldn't get around very well.

Maintenance came and chained it up. We had a meeting back at my

dorm, and we argued back and forth trying to figure out what to do.

Some of the people involved thought it would be a good idea to get some bolt cutters. I tried to convince them that was not a good idea. They were able to sneak into the Physical Plant a couple of feet from the buffalo even though the security guards were supposedly in the Physical Plant during that time. There were only two people willing to steal the buffalo using the bolt cutters, and that really wasn't enough people to pull it off.

November 13, 2015: Airband, one of the biggest events of the year. Students line up around the block more than an hour before to get tickets to see friends perform choreography and lip-sync with pre-recorded music.

We thought it would be hysterical if the buffalo ended up on stage during Airband. We grabbed the buffalo again the night before Airband. It was a lot easier the second time. Power tools were involved. We couldn't hide it at Hopwood, obviously, but it never left the Milligan campus.

We started to realize that we weren't going to be able to get it on stage. We thought we could probably get it to the big side garage door. If we could have gotten it through there, we could have gotten it on stage so easily, but unfortunately, that thing is loud. Loud as can be.

We said we were going to probably just hang it like we originally thought of, but right before Airband started, one of the people involved said,

"I think it would be so cool if we could somehow slip it in here."

But he wasn't going to be able to be involved.

"Y'all should do it."

He pretty much called another guy in the group a coward, and baited him into deciding: "We will do it," to prove that he was not a coward.

They went and got the buffalo and put it in the back of a truck with a sheet over it. The security guards drove up Sutton Hill as the buffalo came down Webb Hill. It showed up right in the front. I opened up the doors. We rushed it inside, took the sheet off, and they all got away. I went back inside and texted some people who couldn't be involved:

"By golly, it's out in the lobby!"

They freaked out.

They didn't realize that by calling the other person a coward, they had convinced him to do it.

Airband ended and everyone came out into the lobby. Tony Jones didn't think it was funny, asking how in the world the buffalo showed up in the lobby. He was asking what in the world the security guards were doing.

Everyone was taking pictures with it, thinking it was the coolest thing in the world. I started taking pictures of people with the buffalo.

The buffalo didn't disappear for a while after that, but the bandits were determined to fulfill their goal of hanging the buffalo from Pardee.

The final time, I had been joking with some people about the buffalo. "You know it would be great if the buffalo went missing again."

Nathan Hall took that as a hint that it was going to get tried during finals week.

Something had happened since it had been missing the last time. Milligan College installed two cameras trained on the buffalo. I was tasked with the job of covering the camera. I consider myself a pretty good climber.

I got up there, and I got a text from one of my friends that was going to help move it and it said, "The RDs are headed your way." I was very confused, didn't put two and two together that RD meant resident director and resident director meant Branden Jones and Nathan Hall.

I had climbed up on a ledge on the nursing building. It was about 15 to 18 feet up there. I covered the camera.

"Looking good up there, Curtis!"

I was like, "No, no, no, no, no." I'm wearing all black. I have a mask on. There's no way. There's no way.

I turned around. That's what they meant by RD.

I was worried about getting stuck up on the roof and them grabbing me, so I decided to jump off the roof and barrel roll and run away.

"Gosh that was athletic! That was some crazy parkour stuff right there!"

I ran off and met with the people who were going to help me with the buffalo.

“What are we going to do?”

I went back over to the camera, because if the RDs were going to just chill out over there, I needed to remove what was covering the camera. The last thing we wanted to happen was for someone to be able to say some crime happened while the camera was covered.

I climbed back up on the roof, uncovered the camera, jumped back down. They’ve seen me; they’ve called my name. So I put the mask up. I went over to talk to them. Then, I went to bed.

I got a phone call that woke me up the next morning.

“Hello, is this is Curtis?”

“Yeah, who’s this?”

“This is Dean Tony Jones.”

Caroline

By Lily Knott

She stared at the ceiling, listening to the methodic creaking of the bed frame. He moaned. She winced. He climaxed. She didn’t. He sighed and rolled off of her, walked to the bathroom and shut the door. She lay there, never taking her eyes off of the popcorn ceiling. She heard the toilet flush and the quick running of the faucet before he reemerged and climbed back in bed. Without a word, he turned off the lamp and lay down, his back towards her. In minutes, his breathing evened out and she knew he was sound asleep.

“You’re despicable,” she spat at his still figure. His shoulder muscle twitched. Finally, she moved, peeling her aching body off the mattress. Locking herself in the bathroom, she flipped on the vanity lights and studied herself in the mirror: a giant purple bruise blossomed across her left shoulder; her usually slender neck was swollen and marred with fading bruises. She pushed up onto her toes. The three bruises on her ribs were almost gone as well. Pressing her fingers to her left side, she winced. The color may have faded but her bones carried the pain as if the injury were still fresh. Her hips still showed red from where his hands had been just earlier that night. Unnecessarily rough. He hadn’t always been that way. She twisted her wedding ring around her finger before yanking it off and tossing it unceremoniously in the dish by the sink. Splashing cold water on her face, she watched the remainder of her makeup drip off to reveal puffy eyes from a lack of sleep and a mean shiner on her right eye. She finished washing her face and pulled her robe around her shoulders. Tiptoeing out of the master bedroom, she went to check on the children. Ingrid snored softly, tucked away in her bed and JoJo lay sprawled out on top of her covers. Her sweet baby girls. She smiled as she watched her daughters sleeping so peacefully.

Back in the bathroom, she ran the bath and poured in a liberal amount of bath salts and essential oils. Steam rose from the water and she grimaced as she stepped into the hot tub. Settling in, she closed her eyes

and focused on her breathing. The hot water dulled her aching muscles and for a few moments, she could forget about her present and reminisce of the past, when he had been gentle and loving, warm and sweet. She had been 18 and he 23 when he proposed. Young and stupid, she didn't know what she was doing.

Angry tears created ripples in the cooling bath water. She slid down the side until her face was fully submerged in the tepid water. Silently, she counted to ten. Then counted again. Her lungs began to ache. She could be free of her loveless marriage. Another ten. Her body screamed for air. Blackness began to close in on her. But no. She had her girls to think about. She resurfaced, gasping for air. Wiping the water from her eyes, she slicked her hair back, and sat up, pulling her knees to her chest. She rocked back and forth, the small motions sending water splashing over the rim of the tub. Things could get better. There was always hope. She repeated her mantra over and over to herself until the words began to jumble and her lower lip quivered. Tears ran down her cheeks, resting on the tip of her upturned nose, before diving into the water. She just had to keep loving him; except the problem was, she couldn't remember what it felt like to love him. It had been so long since he had elicited any romantic feelings from her, stirred her passions, given her butterflies. She missed those days, the long, lazy days spent in bed, him telling her how beautiful she was and how much he loved her. Some days, she did feel like he still loved her and that she could love him back. But then he would go straight from work to the bar before coming home other days, drunk as hell, and cause all kinds of trouble. Those nights usually ended not unlike this night had, him forcing her into bed and her realizing just how much contempt she truly held for him.

Her tears spent and her fingertips pruned from sitting so long, she unfolded her body and stepped out of the tub, dried off, and rummaged through her drawers for something to wear. Pulling out her carefully organized drawer of lotions, she reached in and chose a random bottle, squirting some into her hand. She had already started slathering it onto her legs before the smell registered. The hints of rose, jasmine, sandalwood, and amber brought an onslaught of memories crashing into her mind. Closing her eyes, she took a deep breath. She had worn

this on their wedding night. She smiled, remembering how he couldn't stop burying his nose in her neck, just to catch a whiff of it. A few tears managed to leak through her tightly shut eyelids. Quickly brushing them away, she continued on, massaging the lotion into her damp skin. Sliding into bed next to her husband, she turned away from him, pulled the covers up to her chin and closed her eyes, allowing the fragrance to wash over her. Perhaps tonight she could dream of something good.



Artists of Asheville
Ashlyn Lightfoot
Silver Gelatin Print

Redefining Worth

By Kristen Williams

I was sitting in church before my sister's chorus concert, talking to her and our friends when I heard, "Just because one twin is pretty doesn't mean they both are." I laughed it off as my sister started taking up for me. I don't even really remember the concert because all I could hear was this voice whispering "not as pretty." At home that night I went to my room and pulled out my journal and started writing. I only let myself cry when I was alone. I did not let anyone know how much that hurt me. I held onto this phrase for years after and even now I still have moments where this phrase comes back and I have to check myself.

Hearing this at fifteen years old devastated me. I felt like someone punched me in the gut. But I smiled and acted like everything was alright, kept everything together until I was alone. Crying my eyes out, I realized that I did not like the person I saw in the mirror. I heard this and it reinforced everything that I had been thinking about for years. My sister was prettier than I was and no one could look at me like that. My self-esteem hit rock bottom. I did not like the way I looked. And all these voices in my head just wouldn't stop telling me everything that was wrong:

"You're too athletic."

"You're too blunt."

"Can you try and wear more makeup?"

"Why don't you try flirting more?"

"Maybe you need to lower your standards, no guy is ever going to fit into them?"

"Maybe you could lose some weight."

"You are not good enough."

And so many more.

The person I was at fifteen just wanted to fit in. I wanted guys to like me. I wanted to recreate my identity.

I wish I could say that this was the first time I have had an identity crisis but sadly I have not. I struggled with deciding who I am for years. I have always been a part of a set. I have an identical twin sister named

Katie. Ever since we have been little we have been “the twins” or “twin one and two” or any variation of the nickname. Which is fine, I am a twin; it’s who I am. I was also very athletic in middle school I played four sports. I had a lot of friends and we all grew up together so we had seen each other through our awkward phases. And it was easy to think of the world as my small middle school out in Sulphur Springs, where everything was easy and normal. I relied on Katie a lot because we were twins and she was always in the same class as me. I relied on her to help make friends. So when I was in my own class for the first time I did not really talk to anyone. I was a nervous wreck. I thought everything I said was wrong and that everyone thought I was stupid.

When Katie and I found different interests we started to act differently. Katie found out she liked chorus and I liked creative writing. We both played soccer and basketball but I decided that being athletic would be my identity. I wore sweat pants, always had my hair pulled up, minimum amount of makeup, and I tried to give off a lot of athletic confidence. I was a varsity starter in soccer so I thought that made me somebody.

However, not everyone appreciated my newly constructed identity. I was very insecure in high school for this reason. My freshman year, Katie got a boyfriend; I didn’t. In my mind it was because I was so “confident.” But it didn’t bother me so much until sophomore year, when Katie’s boyfriend said that “just because one twin is pretty doesn’t mean the other one is.” I laughed it off and watched as my youth leader put him in a headlock and basically tell him off. But because this was before church, I played it off and held my tears in until I got home that night. This was the wrecking ball to my fragile identity. At this point I did not like the person I saw in the mirror. All I saw was a mask and all I needed was for someone to voice the opinion I already had of myself. I had tried to become like my sister, but that was just not who I am. I did not feel like I belonged anywhere. I was an athlete; I was a writer; I was the church girl; I was one of the nerds. I was a chameleon when I could be one. When I was with Katie, she was the outgoing one and could make friends easily. She is one of the nicest people I know so I can see what people see in her. However, I was more sarcastic and cynical. I was quiet.

All of this culminated into the belief that I did not feel like anyone could have ever viewed me as someone attractive when Katie was there.

When I got home I went upstairs to my room and I cried. I sat in my room and for a little while let myself wallow in my self-pity. I allowed myself to think about everything that was wrong with me, at least what was wrong in my mind, and I let myself have that moment to be upset. I wrote down everything that I was thinking and feeling, let myself write down all the negative things I saw about myself:

You are not worth anything. You are too athletic. Your legs are too big. You are blunt and obnoxious. You are not pretty enough. You try to hard. What are you even good at? No one would ever want to date you. Why do you even try? You will never be good enough.

As I was writing this list I realized that God did not see me like this. He loves me more than I could ever imagine. I felt I like I could feel God wrapping His arms around me and saying, “Why does what everyone else think matter so much to you? Am I not enough?”

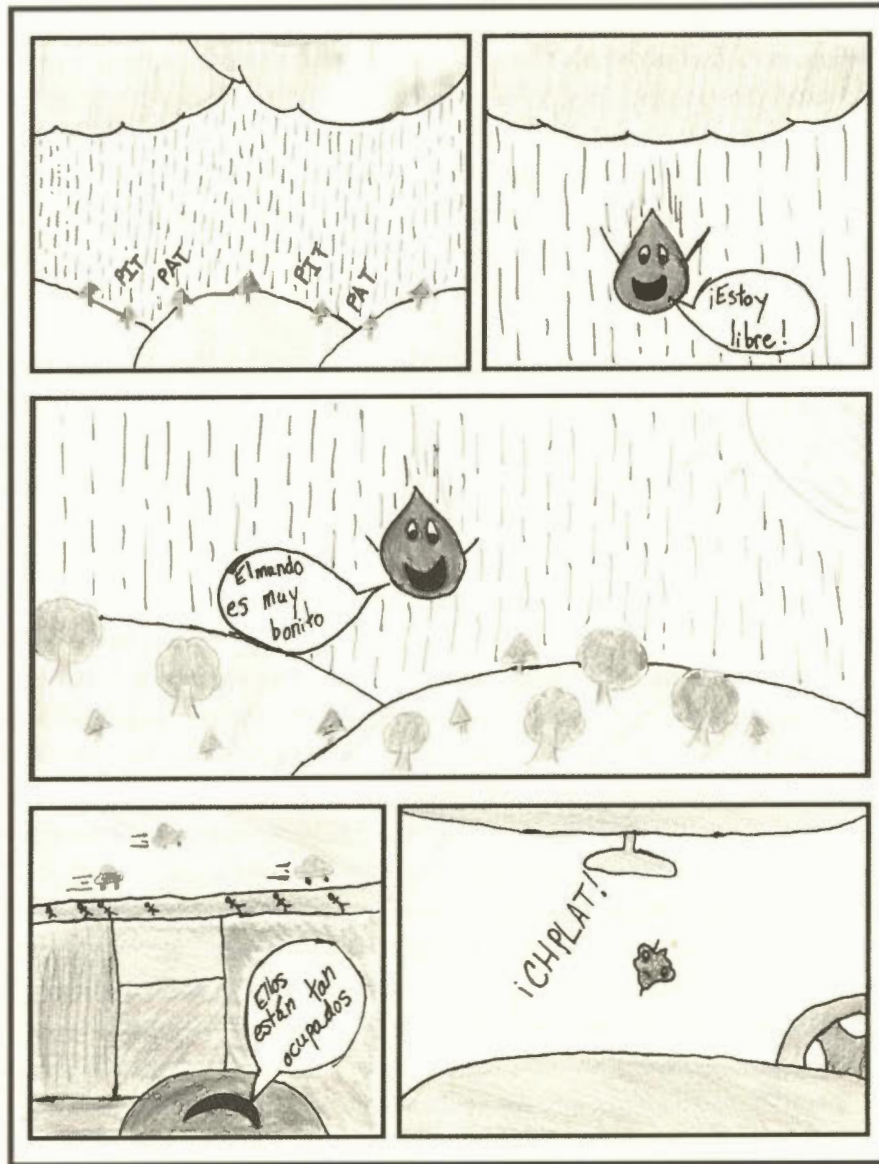
When I got to the end of that page in my journal I saw this verse:

Psalm 139:14 “I praise You for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” This verse has become a crucial part of my testimony. I realized that I placed too much value on what petty kids said and I forgot what really mattered.

At twenty-one years old I have a new identity. I am a woman who knows her worth. I know that I have a cynical side and I can be sarcastic. I know that what I wear does not define me as a person and that I can be who I want. I am a twin sister but I am different. I have confidence in who I am now. I do not rely on other people’s opinions to define my self-worth. I am someone I like to see in the mirror now. I still have moments where I doubt who I am but I know my own worth now. I am fearfully and wonderfully made. And I am going to praise God that he made me the person I am.

Rain Drop

By Emma Warax and Luke Dove



Short Skirt

By Sarah Collie

She's wearing a short skirt

Read me like a book, except
I'm not a book
Or a billboard
I am not a charity
Not your fantasy
Look at me:
Don't stare like I'm a piece of meat
Don't look through me, to me
I take up space same as you, so
Don't you dare ignore me for
The things that I can do.

She's just playing hard to get

Is this a game to you?
This game is my life.
Look at me:
I am through with you and
Your assumptions about
What I want
Well guess what
What I want is what I want and
I know that, not you.

Her mouth says no, but her eyes say yes

How can you hear my eyes

And not my mouth?
Listen to me:
No means no or never or not yet, and yet
You hear yes
Tell me, why
Can't my words mean
What I want them to mean?

She's asking for it

Listen to me:
I ask for
What it is I ask for
When the words
Leave my mouth.

The Words of Bar-Abba | Isaiah 53

By Megan Fontenot

One. Two. Three.

I sit hunched in the far corner of the prison cell, eyes shut, counting the footsteps of the soldiers on the parade ground, just as I have been for the past hour—or hours, perhaps. I lost count lifetimes ago. On the far side of the small cell, Achim stirs with a muffled groan. A faint light filters through a grate far above our heads, and by it I can just make out the fevered welts that brand his thin shoulders. Shemu'el still lies where they cast him, a huddle of torn, bruised flesh on the rough ground.

Romans. I spit fervently into the rotting straw though there is no one to witness my anger. Will it never end?

One. Two. Three.

My band was attacked by soldiers three days ago. They scattered us like dust, though at first we fought with the desperate ferocity of wild beasts. Was it no more than an arena to them, even then? The damage we'd inflicted at that point had been regrettably minor. A couple of protests here and there. A bit of thievery. A few slit throats to prove we were a threat. I'd recruited for months along with my closest friends, Achim and Shemu'el. In that short time everyone in the surrounding countryside came to know my name—and to fear, and love it.

Yeshua bar-Abba. Zealot.

We had gathered about two hundred followers before Rome decided to make an example of us. My two friends stood courageously by me that day in the Name of Adonai. The rest quickly fled in fear and shock, for they were untrained, untried. And what are three against a cohort, even if it is full of gentile dogs? Nothing. I couldn't understand it. We were convinced that the Kingdom was at last coming and that Israel would be free of her oppressors, just as our God had promised. But our scars are proof enough that we were mistaken. We were taken and tortured by every device Roman cruelty has imagined—except the cross.

They tell us that is to come today.

One. Two. Three.

Everything about this Empire is measured. Her men are like living machines. Her armies devour the weak and helpless like the raging sea, senselessly rolling on and on and on without remorse. But only let me fight freely against them and this Jewish son of Abba would show Rome what it truly means to be a child of Mars.

Shemu'el moans, his cry as pitiful and weak as a newborn baby's. My thoughts are interrupted and I heave my aching body forward.

"Yeshua..." His voice is shattered and rasping, his young body mutilated. "Yeshua."

"I am here, Shemu'el." Grief and guilt batter my heart. He is like a son to me.

"Water." His hand opens and shuts desperately over straggling bits of straw. "Please."

I crawl forward on raw knees, my chains scraping harshly against the unforgiving stone. "Forgive me, my son. I have none." With each movement the fingerprints of Rome that defile my body wake to torment me with new fire.

Shemu'el groans again, blood strangling each shallow breath. I reach out to place a hand on his head and he grasps my arm like a drowning man. We are silent in the shadows. I can do no more than this.

One. Two. Three.

The rhythm has captured even the vengeful beating of my heart. Suddenly, unexpectedly, the pattern is broken by footsteps in the corridor. I raise my head, hearing muffled voices, but the words are lost. I think suddenly of our rabbis, who teach that a secret Word lives within us, making us different from the beasts. Since I have been old enough to see and understand the tyranny of Rome, I have not believed them. Words cannot make us men, though they may easily make us monsters.

The cursed footsteps are joined by others, and coming closer. They stop at our cell door and the clatter of keys wakes a mad spirit in me. With a cry of pain I struggle to my feet. I spit at the feet of the soldiers

as they enter—they laugh among themselves and spit back in my face.

"Yeshua bar-Abba, your presence is required by the governor, the honorable Pontius Pilate."

Four of them surround me and I try to fight back, but my arms do not obey. They tie my hands roughly behind me, shoving me forward. Shemu'el clutches at my ankles.

"Yeshua! Yeshua!" He can say no more.

I struggle to look back, struggle to catch his eye as a soldier mocks him.

"Yeshua!" he scoffs. "Jewish dogs! This is what happens to zealots, see?"

Another soldier aims a kick at Shemu'el. "Quiet! Your Yeshua can't save you."

I push desperately at them, but little strength is left in my trembling body and my tongue feels thick in my dry mouth.

"They're to be crucified soon," the first adds. He laughs in my face. "You might survive though. Rumor has it the governor is going to let a prisoner go free to keep you lot quiet for a while. If you're lucky it might be you. After all, the High Priest is after a different Yeshua, another radical who made himself out to be the son of your God. Not so different from you, is he, bar-Abba?"

He slaps me across the mouth so that I cannot answer his taunts. My head hangs and I am silent, feeling keenly the sting of his words. We Jews believe that God declared himself the Father of Israel during the time of the first Exodus, but never before has he felt so distant. Perhaps we have been wrong all these years.

The soldiers lead me from the cell. My halting, shuffling feet and the burden of my broken body do not alter the rhythm of their strides.

One. Two. Three.

Up stairs, through hallways, into the blazing, piercing sunlight. It burns my eyes and blinds me, intensifying the throbbing in my head, the pounding that marches to the beat of a Roman drum. They drag me across courtyards and finally onto a raised platform surrounded by people. Angry people. My people. I stand before them as one condemned, shuddering with exhaustion and pain, the wounds on my body screaming

to be healed, the torment of my soul screaming to be heard. Where is this God who calls himself our Father?

Then I see him—the other Yeshua. He is standing on the opposite side of the platform, supported by soldiers, not two yards from me. Blood seeps through his garment, staining it in ugly blotches, crimson on white wool. He wears a crown the soldiers made for him—as my eyes adjust to the light I see the thorns upon it, driven into his head. Sweat (or perhaps tears) runs down his face and catches in his matted beard. He trembles, almost too weak to stand, and does not meet my gaze. He too is silent.

The crowd is screaming unintelligibly. Fists pound the air, sandals beat the ground under their feet. The noise deafens me and I shut my eyes as a harsh cry bursts from my own throat as well, for the pain is almost too great to bear. A moment later the crowd falls reluctantly silent and I look up to see that the governor has appeared above us, his hand raised. I spit, more out of habit than defiance, and a soldier's fist crashes against my temple. Blackness pushes in, deadening the governor's words.

“Do you want me to release the King of the Jews?”

Murmurs surge through the crowd. For the first time I notice that priests are moving among them, hurriedly, anxiously, casting self-conscious glances up at the prisoner standing so near me. Why do they fear him? I know the look of a man who will fight—this one is not a son of war.

Like the sea before a storm the rumblings swell to a roar, but this time it finds words. “Give us Yeshua bar-Abba! Bar-Abba!” I stand dazed, listening without understanding to this untamable mass demand my release. The other Yeshua does not move.

Again Pilate raises his hand and subdues the crowd, but not as easily as before. His movements, like his voice, are fitful. “Then what shall I do with the one you call the King of the Jews?”

So close now to victory, the priests do not pause to refute the governor's accusation. At any other time they would not have let the man by my side be called their king. Now they must overlook it. They move among the people, sharing the word that today will make them beasts.

The verdict comes like the voice of sudden thunder.

“Crucify!”

But Pilate hesitates and wipes his brow, tosses an anxious look at his wife, who stands behind him. Her face is pale and drawn, her dark

eyes wide. “What has he done? What?” The governor is shouting now, his voice cracking like a young boy's as he grips the railing with white-knuckled fingers. “I found him innocent!”

The crowd will not listen to Pilate's justice. Their words fall effortlessly into the rhythm of Rome.

“Crucify! Crucify! Crucify!”

At last Yeshua moves. He raises his head, looks out over the sea of angry faces, watches them calmly. No word escapes his lips as the centurion looks to the governor for his command. It comes, half drowned in the tumult of the crowd: Yeshua bar-Abba will go free.

The words engulf me, my battered soul stirring suddenly in triumph. Because of this moment the Kingdom of Adonai our God has another chance. I will live to fight Rome until we are free.

Above me, Pilate nods to the soldiers as he turns to wash his hands in a gold basin. Behind me, a guard cuts my bonds and frees me. Beside me, Yeshua turns as the soldiers surround him, emotion flooding his face. Our eyes meet, and his are brimming with an anguish that cuts me to my soul. I wish I could explain to him how it is that his death is saving our people.

Even so, the exultation throbbing through me is tinged with a strange regret, a sorrow for this man I do not know. Tears run through the blood and filth on my face. The word comes unbidden to my lips as I watch them lead Yeshua away.

Crucify. Crucify. Crucify.



Elizabethton, TN
Collin Hawley
Digital Print

Contributors

Abbey Booher
Sarah Collie
Luke Dove
Megan Fontenot
Collin Hawley
Brittany Helms
Abigail Jones
Cailyn King
Katie Kitchen
Lily Knott
Ashlyn Lightfoot
Aurelia Markos
Caleb Perhne
Emma Warax
Kristen Williams
Shaun Whitson



5 800121 902987