



Damozel

DAMOZEL

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Damozel Staff 2021-2022

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Mission Statement

Founded in 1932, *Damozel* is Notre Dame of Maryland University's student-run creative literary magazine. *Damozel* publishes annually and showcases any form of creative writing, art, or photography by current NDMU students and alumni.

Damozel is created with significant contributions from members of the English department's Alpha Alpha chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the International Honor Society in English: Lindsey Pytrykow '22, Rochelle Thompson '22, Maia Giafes '22, and April Boss '24.

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Recovering Wings

You promised to aspire and uplift me,
all I needed to do was grow my wings.

When the time came, and I had grown my wings
all you did was put weights on me.

Heavy weights that held me back,
tore my wings and broke me.

Unintentionally I used them to build me,
to make me see things differently.

I am now stronger than I could ever be
but not because you helped me but
because you tried to break me.

— *Tyonia Sterrett '25, Elementary Education*



Munching Monarchs

Rebecca Malone '22, Biology



Hazy Summer Evening

Rebecca Malone '22, Biology

To the Inner Child Left Behind

hello
how are you?
it's been a while,
hasn't it?

it was a long road for us both
i haven't forgotten
i haven't forgotten who we were
and what we did.

it was hard
growing up so soon
at such a young age
wasn't it?

as i still grow
i think of you often
and how brave you were
and everything you went through

if there is anything i am going to leave you with
let it be
someone is proud of you
no matter what you think

i'm proud of you
you will be healed
all will be well again
you will be remembered

always remembered
always cared for
always brave
always loved.

— *Bethany Jessee '25, Communication and Media Studies*

My Favorite Things

I love the warm smell of Taiwanese bakeries
lit candles in my room
the smell of lavender lotion
bushy pale pink sunrise
warm weather outside
the smell of grass after a rainy night
soft fur of a tabby cat
bright green eyes of a small orange cat
warm dog resting in my lap as I drink a hot cup of earl grey
tea with honey and a laptop in front of me
the branches with cherry blossoms that have bloomed,
moving in the breeze
vast green mountain
This is peace This is life

— *Mei L. Mackleer '22, M.A.T.*



Christmas Is in the Air

Rebecca Malone '22, Biology

Intro I

365 days, to learn to love myself.

“The wish to be a tabula rasa
every new year”

2nd Day of healing; “I am whole”

I have come to terms with being alone,
I am not in a hurry, I’m not chasing Happiness,
I am neither chasing acceptance nor sadness.
I chose to just be, today I just am.
I chose to feel in the present.
I no longer found comfort in sadness
I do not confine in other’s happiness as mine
I no longer crave acceptance
I don’t want love from anyone besides me.
I sit in my room, with the windows open.
I chase impurities out of my space,
I burn sage, my space is now sacred,
In the empty space of a lover, the wind dances with my hair,
Instead of hands, the sun makes love to my skin.
In the midst of it, the birds sing me sweet nothings
I close my eyes and breathe in, and open them as I breathe out
I stay here, I stay here — this is where my heart rests.

— *Farida Danladani '25, Biology and Communication Arts*

Burnt Toast and Water Droplets

I dread this sound. The sound of cold water dripping and slapping against the chipped wooden floors in my room at 1:33 am. In fact, I hated it. I hated a lot of things. I am certain of it. A lot of people like to tell me that I do not know, but trust me, I know. I hate that sound and I hate that smell; the smell of toast that has been burnt more than one time and because of that I hated him. I don't know why she still calls him my father. He is a creature, a horrible, horrible creature and no one believes me. I loathe him. His skin makes me crawl with anxiousness and boils with anguish. I must be allergic to him, whenever I hear his name these tiny red ants begin to cover my arms and legs and I begin to itch uncontrollably. It feels like they are feasting on my skin for hours and because of that, I know I hate him. It was November 3, 1993, 1:33 am. There it was that sound. The sound of water dripping and slapping against the chipped wood. It was the first time I would hear that sound and this was the sound that would live rent-free in my brain for the next 20 years.

I rolled off of my small twinned sized hospital-like bed. I liked it this way. Perfectly condensed and restrained. I did not understand the concept of extra space. Many people find excess space to be liberating for their limbs and body parts, but it was suffocating to me. It reminded me of an aquarium, seemingly endless, but eventually restricting because of the glass walls. The droplets of water continued to slap the ground, just seconds apart. I walked past the sound. The water was falling from the attic roof and was penetrating through the cement, cuffing the wood at the same time. That was not the only sound in my house, but this is the sound I remember the most and the smell of burnt toast. Mommy tells me she forgot the toast in the oven that night. That smell filled the entire house, disgustingly aromatic, but it wasn't her fault. It was his fault. The creature's

fault. He was the reason I smell burnt toast every night and the water droplets continue endlessly at 1:33 am.

The big apple is what they call it, except me. The fact is the big apple has nothing to do with apples. In fact, it is a stolen term from black people. Straight white men are always taking things. However, this is beside the point. New York City is where everyone went to disguise and conceal their hidden truths, for me this is where I became alive. I loved it and hated it all the same. The subway is exactly 333 miles from where I lived in upstate New York. Every third week of the month right before the sun comes up, I hop on the subway from Hudson and ride a metal bullet. This was a ride I would never give up. These moments on the subway had become infused with my DNA. My mommy didn't like me going, but I would tell her it was okay and I had to do this. She knew it was my peace and solitude. I loved my mommy and she loved me, I knew it.

4:33 am and it stopped. The only silver bullet that didn't destroy someone's brain and rupture their spleen halted in the underground parts of New York City. The subway was always crowded, but when I got on it, it was everything but crowded. I walked off the platform and went right. I knew the city like I knew my hands. It was as if half my soul resided here. Walking toward the underground electricity room was purely muscle memory. I never walked off the platform to the city, always straight to the electricity room and no one ever asked why.

As I was walking a few rats sprinted towards their death and then disappeared into the tracks. Then I disappeared into

the closet. I grabbed my tools. They were always here. The truth is no one ever comes here — just me and Fred — one time, but he told me he didn't like it. It must have been the rats.

When I was younger my parents always tried to find new ways for me to make friends. They put me into daycare, soccer, spelling bees. Sometimes they would just leave me in the sandbox at the playground for hours on end — that's where I met Fred. I hated it and loved it. I hated when the kids would come over and smile at me and bring their toys that consumed all my breathable space. Insects would fill one corner of the sandbox and I would admire their ability to disappear in the sand and reappear when needed. Insects have purpose. A short, but purposeful life. Humans desire purpose, they desire to be useful, but most of the time they are not.

After I grabbed my tools, I peered back out of the electricity room and steadily walked back. An hour and a half had passed and the silver bullet was back. A single mother and her little blond-headed son with green-blue eyes walked from the platform. He wore a Spiderman watch and a half-chewed shoelace. His hair was the dirty kind of blond — it literally looked as if someone rubbed dirt in one section of his head. His face was so round and he was pale. The five-foot-four-inched redhead mom looked back toward the silver bullet and turned bright red, she let go of her son's hand and told him to stay. I watched as she desperately tried to run back to the second cart and grab what seemed to be a red wallet. However, the minute she got on, the doors began to close. She half flung her body forward, hoping it would stop the door and somehow teleport her to the platform, but she didn't make it and the silver bullet ran off into the tunnel howling goodbye in the distance.

I watched the little boy slowly turn his body back to watch the silver bullet speed off with his mother. He turned ever so slightly. Now I could fully see the dirty-looking patch of hair. A true dirty blonde I thought. My tall lanky legs made even the slowest strides seem as if I were racing to a finish line. I hated to see something so small abandoned and forgotten, over something as small and red as his mother's wallet. This is why I came here every third week of the month. I came to save those who were abandoned.

The little boy was about ten feet away from me. He began to look left and right, as if he were waiting for someone to come and save him. He instantly noticed me and tried to freeze like a figurine or statue. I pulled down my n-95 mask and smiled at him. My lanky legs and stretched torso squatted toward the ground. I was still so much taller than him despite shrinking my body to meet his eyes. He held his Spiderman watch and his eyes began to turn into little circular pools. "Sssssshhhssshh," I said, very softly and soothingly. Gradually bringing one finger over my lips and then to his.

"I can help you, don't worry."

"Don't worry," I thought over and over again. He was safe with me. I knew how he felt. No father, a mother that tried, but fell short, and all alone. He was me and I had to save him. So, I did. I saved him. I picked him up and pulled my tiny tool from my pocket to help him feel better. I pushed the needle of my tiny tool into the back of his calf. I picked him up. Instantly, he began to sleep. He needed this. He needed these sweet dreams. He didn't need to feel sadness. He just needed sweet dreams. His head rested right below my collar bone. I held him in somewhat muscular arms. My dark curls bounced as I walked him closer and closer to the electrical room so he could rest. I opened the door to the room and quietly closed it

behind me. It didn't slam shut.

I set the dirty blond headed boy onto the fuzzy grass green blanket. I typically laid this out whenever I made my trips. He would be asleep for the next hour or so. It was better this way. No pain, no thoughts, like I said, just sweet dreams.

I looked at my other tools I had left and I knew what I had to do, in order to save him. I began to extract vials of thick red blood while the little boy began to get lost in his dream. This was perfect. His blood was so pure, a spotless lamb I thought as he began to turn whiter and whiter. I made it to vile
3. Done.

Next, I pulled the brownish-tan plastic crate located under one of the broken floor boards from its hiding space. I opened it up and began the next step. One-by-one I began to clip his dough like fingers and toes. Then dropping them into my brown bin. This reminded me of my moments in the sandbox where I first met Fred. He would pretend to clip off my piggy toes and put them in his pale. He would say, "Your piggy toes are so perfect, just like fresh dough." I liked when Fred told me that.

I continued on with my task. The dirt blonde was glowing white — so perfect I thought. This one was good. He could stay like this. He would rest easy and beautifully. The boy was tiny so he would be simple to take. Less than 3 feet tall. I slowly folded his body and placed him into the suitcase next to my tool bag. Fred would love this one for sure. I quickly changed out of my sweats and put on Fred's favorite black and green suite. I walked out of the electrical room, back to the subway stations where hundreds of people allowed me to dissipate into the crowd just like the insects that dissolved into the sand.

A quarter of a mile away was where I usually met Fred. I only took the suitcase with me. I walked up to the stony ground and grassy fields. There were the same few names I always recognized and then there was Fred. I sat next to him and rested my head on the doorpost of his home. It was partly cloudy. There was just enough sun to keep Fred and I warm in early Spring.

“Fred! I brought you the most perfect dough-like boy today. He is perfect and already fit to meet you. Just the way you like us.” Fred never spoke back; he listened most of the time. He was unique. He spoke to me without any words.

— *Rochelle Thompson '22, English and Political Science*



Autumn Dew

Summara Abaid '17, Biology

Untitled Poem #3

A desire converged into something more
Some could have swore
That thou art my soulmate
That something became a manifestation
Of my worriedness
Like coal and dust, worry and desire cannot be apart
All the world thinks out of dust comes an unprecedented
creation of intangible and vague
concept
let's be smart
For once, thou art not my soulmate, but
My gloomy pal that greets me
Welcome to my world
Where worry and hope go hand in hand

— *Mei L. Mackleer '22, M.A.T.*

The Search

I am Elena

Stuck in a dimension of unknowing

My father's descent from an archipelago originally called "rich port"

When blood runs down my skin, I hear the word "*Si no sana hoy, sanara manana*"

I longed to know where those words came from

My life spent wondering where that 50% originated from

Wanting to know more history, so I search...

I am Juan Ponce de Leon,

Explorer and conquer,

Governor of men before the start of assimilation

I am Jose Julian,

writer of words advocating for the freedom of those who make us, us

SPANIARDS, TIANO INDIANS, AND AFRICANS

I am Mariana Bracetti,

Creator of the early version of red, white, and blue

Not with the fifty stars but the one

My father treasures this symbol as it hangs from his mirror

Staring at his identity as it stares at him

I am a coqui,

The amphibian that tells a story of love

As the sun lowers, the volume rises on the beautiful island

"CO-QUI" "CO-QUI"

I am the flame tree,

Given the name because of the fiery red flowers that sit upon my bark

El Flamboyán is more than a tree, it is pride

I am Luisa Capetillo,

Organizer and activist,

Improving the rights of women

"*MI OPINION*"

Juan Ponce de Leon was not the only first when it comes to
governor of men
Sila Maria Calderon was governor of men and women
1898 came with more than just the raising of the thirteen
stripes
Claiming the lands and sugar but not the people
General Nelson Miles promising the unalienable rights to
Puerto Ricans
This promise was not a promise, but a lie
Little did the men who would not have beaten the Spaniards
without the blood, sweat, and tears of Boricuas know...
THE LAND IS STILL OURS
I search and will never stop
For the Boricua descent runs through my blood
The same blood that ran down my skin when I heard the
words,
“If it doesn’t heal today, it will heal tomorrow”
I shed tears for the harsh past
But smile for what has yet been learned
No longer stuck in a dimension of unknowing, but of curiosity
Yo soy Elena

— *Elena Rodriguez '25, Nursing*



Moonlit Desires
Summara Abaid '17, Biology

Good Night Sleep

The first sweet sleeping
Humming to the echo room
Darkness, silence, peace

— *Brittney Green '24, Nursing*

The Baptism

I am standing in the water.
Our prayers matter
I am washed.
Because of my sins, I am abashed.
Yet God's glory shines.
Jesus is the vine
God's light shines on all.
God is above the fallen.

He still loves us. We do not rust.
We are merely made of dust.
God sees us. His eyes are upon us.
My enemies cuss
Jesus died for us.
Not in vain.
Nothing earthly we gain.

I am free.
God, I love Thee.

— *Mei L. Mackleer '22, M.A.T.*

A Mystery

The neck was twisted at an odd angle. The eyes were glossy. A few stray feathers littered the carpet beside the limp, splayed wings. No blood. There was a letter with the body.

Sage glanced at the lock on her door. It was still engaged. She glanced around her apartment and peered around the corner to her bedroom. Sage assured herself that nobody else was in there with her, but that did beg the question of how the body of a pigeon sat just inside her front entry. A calm curiosity washed over her. She knelt down and plucked the letter from the stiff clutches of the pigeon. The cold claws almost refused to let go. Sage unfolded the letter.

“My Dear,
Your education in the ways of a society which cages you worries me. I worry you have forgotten, that you have cast aside your birthright. It is time. One week. One week, and you shall be free. If you can do this, then I know that this is the life you were meant for. That we were all meant for.”

There was no signature. But she knew from whom it was from. Sage folded the letter back up and stood from where she knelt by the door. She grabbed a plastic bag, turning it inside out to pick up the pigeon’s body without touching it. With a little more difficulty, she collected the feathers in the same manner. Annoyed, Sage tied off the bag and tossed it in the trash. Next, she grabbed her lighter and went to the sink with the letter.

It had to be destroyed, she knew that. Sage was hesitant to destroy what little connection she had with...but she knew the rules. She knew every rule. Sage dropped the burning letter into the sink, cracking the window over the sink just enough

so the smoke wouldn't set off the apartment's fire alarm. It was the last thing she needed.

Sage checked the time on the microwave and quickly put coffee on. She changed into her black slacks and red collared t-shirt. The monotony of the routine usually annoyed her, but this particular morning, she was buzzing with energy that had nothing to do with caffeine.

Coffee in hand, Sage grabbed her keys, phone, name tag, and the kitchen trash. There was no need to risk it beginning to smell in her apartment. Sage tossed it down the trash shoot in the hall and made her way to work.

The wheels of the janitorial cart made an awful screeching sound as Sage made her way through each aisle. She stopped at the end of aisle G, reaching up with the portable scanner to scan the barcode on the top shelf — the digital footprint that would tell the store she'd made the appropriate rounds. At the sound of the beep, Sage pulled away and checked the tiny screen as she began pushing the cart again. The cart knocked against an older woman's shopping cart and Sage's eyes shot up.

"I'm so sorry!"

The woman adjusted her own cart. "It's alright, it happens." The woman shook her head, returning quickly to the list in her hand and going back to searching the shelves. "Always happens," she mumbled.

Sage paused, trying to decide if she should offer the woman help in finding what she was looking for. When the

woman reached out for a box of red velvet cake, the decision was made for her and Sage wheeled on.

Aisle H had a barcode at the center of the aisle with the pickles, not the end. Sage didn't know why, but she didn't question it; she scanned the barcode dutifully.

Aisle I had spilled rice on the floor, left by a negligent customer. Sage couldn't scan the code in this aisle in good conscience and not clean up the mess. That was the point of this labyrinth of bar codes and aisles. To clean up, to put everything in order. To pick up after others and do your job, Sage thought as she swept the last of the rice into the dustpan and dumped it into the trash bag on her cart. Then she scanned the code at the end of the aisle.

With the cart put away, Sage returned to her line, opening up her register and switching on her line's light.

"Lane three's back, Deb, we gotta stop talking about her." Becca spoke without even looking up from where she was scanning items. The loud beep with each scan created a quick paced rhythm. Becca's head seemed to bob with it and her bracelets added a jingle to the chorus that made up lane four.

"Hmph." Deb huffed, dull eyes and sagging cheeks turning towards Sage, like it was the first time she was acknowledging the woman in lane two even though they'd been working side by side since morning. Her red shirt was untucked and she was missing her nametag. She was in lane two.

Before Sage could start a conversation with either of them, a man sauntered up to her lane with a cart. When she began scanning what he had brought to her register, she noticed an open bag of apples that sat at the top of his pile of items. He

held an apple with a single bite taken out of it. His shirt was only half buttoned.

Sage almost expected him to have a partially shaved beard and very nearly called him out on it all.

But she kept scanning.

— *Maia Giafes '22, English*

Bereavement Poem

Death has no sting
Money is but a temporal bling
The night may bring tears
But the light of the world comes and sins He bears
The raven at Edgar Allen Poe's grave caws
Under the moon, a barren boat gently rows
In His hands is Hades' keys
The dying lamb's life ceases
Evil and hatred increases
It is done
God calls His son
The battle is won
No more Satan
Fear not death
For God's kingdom is our home
For now, the lonely lion roams
Until the trumpet is heard
And my heavy heart is stirred

— *Mei L. Mackleer '22, M.A.T.*

Untitled

Looking for heaven;
In the arms of a lover.

I went and went,
I ran in darkness, knees aching,
Dry tongue and a dizzy head
But running for a dream
I come, it's not there
I cut my wrist and they bleed
They blessed white liquid
I go again, on top of the world
Come she whispers, and I do.
I come, and there is again nothing
But white, flowy sticking fluid.

— *Farida Danladani '25, Biology and Communication Arts*

Still Thoughts

When you stop looking at the overall field
and take a glimpse at the appearance of a single flower,
you will see the extent of its despair.
Its slumping stem reminding you of a sad sigh.
It is waiting for you.

Will you go? Or will you wait?
Why is it that sorrow is never seen until
after the seed is sown? Must the flower wilt for you
to know that it is weeping? Its beauty comes
from the petals but down at the stem is where the somber
thoughts spawn.

Will you even look? Will you comfort it?

When you stop can you feel its longing as
it reaches for the sun? Will you help in its last desperate
attempt to cling to life? When you stop to
think, the future is already here. The wind you feel in your face
is time breezing by.
It is too late.

As the first drizzle of spring rain falls, the petal on which
it lands, drops. It couldn't reach the sun. And you didn't come
to help it. You pick the flower. Sap from the stem oozes onto
your hands. You realize that it was dead awhile before you
picked it. Think of who could have been gifted this flower had
you saved it earlier.

You stop by this field often. How could you not have noticed?
Rooted among the others in the field its hurt was hard to see.

You feel each petal between your fingertips only
some crumble and fall. Even
dying it is holding on. Afraid of letting go
of the guise it held for so long.

You see the differences now. The brown
rot peeking out from its bud. Maybe once its petals held
pigments of the popular poppy's radiant red. Never will you
know.

The petals are now like faded ink in an old picture book. The
signs were all there but you continued not to see. Now that
single flower can nevermore be.

— *Aniyah Plumer '25, Art Therapy*



Tokyo Streets
*Micah Castelo '18, English and
Communication Arts*

A Place to Miss

The floorboards creaked in the same familiar way they'd always creaked. Once quickly while stepping with the right foot. A longer creak with the left. Kyle looked slowly around the room as he gathered the last of the boxes. Just one small one, leaving mostly dust behind on the bare floors. His eyes fell on the front window, where he'd seen Casey for the first time, shoveling her driveway. Then, without meaning to, he looked at the bare coffee table. The one that had a bit of wood chipped away from Rover's teeth where he liked to gnaw as the pair stayed up to watch late night tv. With the last box tucked under his arm, Kyle strolled towards the door, his feet moving slow on their own accord. His fingertips grazed the wall paper that Casey had helped him put up. They had ruined the original wall paper when they grew overzealous in touching up the tears. Kyle carefully stepped over the familiar lip at the doorway, the same one that had tripped him the very first time he'd entered the house. The same one he'd carried Casey over on their wedding night. Kyle pulled the door shut behind him slowly, tearing his eyes away from the bare living room he was leaving behind. The door shut with a click. Kyle could remember a time when he was afraid that click would wake Casey. He didn't lock the door one handed like he'd done so many times in the past. Instead, Kyle took the time to put the box down on the stoop. He ceremoniously took his keys from his pocket like it was a formal event. Then, he inserted the key slowly, like it was sacred. And it was. For the very last time. The lock clicked into place. The final signal of a chapter in closing.

— *Maia Giafes '22, English*

Forever a Survivor

Three years to learn and reflect
Four years later, I let lightning strike me
For my nightmares are already killing me.
A blur between age seven and eight
too young to know, too naive to recognize wrong
Mama said I could tell her everything

I flinched when she washed me,
afraid I would be punished for the deed
Thunder will come out of the sky and strike me
I tell no soul , Punished and afraid of my voice
Told the world, went and told them the deeds had happen
She killed her and I said more.

It haunts me, some nights I wake up
Disgust is all I can feel toward myself.
I have been cursed with fear,
I fear society for allowing a child to be killed
I fear a society that allows it to happen over and over
I fear the cruel world

I said more. I killed her
Fear I would be killed again
Don't hold me, it would only startle me.
I forgive but cannot forget , It creeps in my dreams,
Every year, I am reminded of the deed.
Back and forth, holes connected child on top of the world

She thought killing was fun but little did she know; She was
being killed.

I'm not sad nor angry or blame myself anymore.
The disgust will always be here
I would never be totally comfortable in society.

I was killed and said more,
Three years to realized I had been killed

Would they deem me innocent if I said I didn't know.
Can I plead ignorance as a child?
I would always be seven and eight
I would always be a child of wounds.
I want to tell her and others to forgive themselves.
To all the survivors , You know how it feel to be killed

You know how it is to never be fully comfortable
The differences in touches,
You've tasted the disgust too
Lighting can come out of the sky and strike me
My lord has forgiven me for the taking so I can live
I can live , knowing I've been killed.

To all who've been killed, Survivors
Let the hurt pass and forgive the past
Time would wash your body of a slate clean
Don't rub salt on wounds and it will heal
Don't blame yourself for the taking
Forever a survivor

“A part of you I am
And you of me we are”

— *Farida Danladani '25, Biology and Communication Arts*

Untitled Poem #4

Temptation draws me in like a slingshot aimed at me
No one spoke, not even a chirp from a curious canary
spicy red and seductive eyes lure me in
My mouth runs dry like a desert
Decisions that only I can make
My heart beats like the rhythm of an African hollow drum
covered with deerskin
One choice can either destruct my life or bring relief to my soul
Only God knows how I feel.

—*Mei L. Mackleer '22, M.A.T.*

Ignis Spiritus Vitae

May your demons stay chained to hell
I say as I see you overthink
when anxiety convinces you to hide
when your voice cracks, or when you hold
your voice from your truth.
When depression makes you feel numb
When you pretend to be happy
When you try to be a little cheerful than usual
When you're drowning and I can't save you,
I pray your demons stay chained to hell.

'for my sister fakiya who has anxiety'

— *Farida Danladani '25, Biology and Communication Arts*

Sisters

There is two of us
Timid, humble, annoying
Little, big sisters

— *Brittney Green '24, Nursing*

Untitled Poem #5

So much to do
Time slips quietly
And rapidly
As if it has no care in the world
And pervades everyone's minds about
How easy it is to lose time
Til the day time shall cease,
We will continue to swear upon our graves
For eternity.

— *Mei L. Mackleer '22, M.A.T.*



I Am

*Nice Y. Mutshipayi '21, Ph.D. in
Instructional Leadership For Changing Pop-
ulation, M.A. in Nonprofit Management*

I Am

I am God's precious jewel
A priceless pearl of great worth
A glorious light that cannot be hidden
A powerful voice that cannot be silenced
I am of God, a masterpiece to behold

I am God's beloved child
Wonderfully and fearfully made
Divinely gifted and immensely powerful
Created for a marvelous purpose
I am of God, a great gift to the world

I am God's glorious work
Bold, beautiful, and blessed
Creativity runs in my veins
Divinity embedded in my DNA
I am of God, in his image and likeness I stand to say:

I am enough...

— *Nice Y. Mutshipayi '21, Ph.D. in Instructional Leadership
For Changing Population, M.A. in Nonprofit Management*

Angela Davis

based on her painting from the Brooklyn Museum

Revolutionary Angela

Revolutionary Angela

The vibrant colors flowing through her body

The words

Her words

bursting out her tight, big bushy black Afro and around her
body like sun rays

she holding her microphone to speak

I sit back and listen to the firm voice of the words-

Black

Beautiful

Revolution

Resist

Struggle

To convey the message of African American rights and freedom

One thing I can say is

She Brave

She Strong

She Black

A scholar

An activist

And notorious in the Black Panther movement

It's The Angela Davis

— *Brittney Green '24, Nursing*

My Body

Being a plus-size woman who has lived through multiple eras of society where larger women fall in and out of favor, my sense of self-worth has been heavily defined by these eras. Growing up in the early 2000s, all of the Hollywood “it” girls were slim and tall. The faces and bodies of Hollywood’s thinnest stars such as Kiera Knightley and Angelina Jolie seemed to dawn every magazine cover. Whereas other Hollywood celebrities like Hilary Duff and Kelly Clarkson were considered “too fat” and constantly ridiculed in tabloids and other media coverage. It is even more disheartening to see the average frames of these women and to realize that even average was “too fat” for the early 2000s.

This was the era I grew up in, the era I had to establish my self-worth in. Diet culture boomed in the early 2000s, with seemingly every celebrity endorsing some form of get-thin-quick regiment of unhealthy and damaging supplements to replace food. The idea of being fat was so damning that people would go to extreme, and scientifically unhealthy measures, of emaciating themselves. Being told that even average is not good enough, and that fat is beyond undesirable, is damnable in the eyes of the society I grew up in, deeply affected my sense of self-worth.

I related this damnable fatness to my future relationships. My adolescent mind thought that surely if society deems my frame, and others who share it, as undesirable, then I will never be desired.

But this all changed in the 2010s, just when I was entering my period of puberty. The 2010s brought in a new era of society, one where rappers and singers with larger frames were the leading musicians on every Top Billboard Music Chart.

Nicki Minaj and Adele, two plus-size artists, shared the tops spots in Billboard's Top 100 of 2012, with Minaj's "Starships" at 9th and Adkins' "Set Fire To The Rain" at 10th (*Year-End Hot 100 Songs*). The same year, previously deemed "too fat" Kelly Clarkson had one of the best-selling singles. Clarkson's "Stronger" was the 7th song on the Billboard Top 100.

With this wave of plus-size acceptance came a wave of plus-size fetishism. Suddenly, for the first time in my life, my body type was desirable. The media covered celebrities with bigger waists, busts, and hips with positivity, and oftentimes with an air of sexuality. Suddenly, bigger was sexier.

Society decided to forget its harmful stance on larger women momentarily to fixate on their sexuality. Magazines were no longer printing hit pieces on plus-size musicians and actresses; they were celebrating their promiscuity. The massive amount of media attention made me, a budding young middle schooler who had just gotten through puberty, jump at the opportunity to be desired. In my early life, society had taught me that being fat was not only undesirable but shameful. But being 13 years old, seeing artists like Adele who shared the same dress size as me, made me feel like I could be desired. My body was no longer only a discussion of health, but a discussion of sensuality.

While the mainstream media continued on its plus-size acceptance tirade, I grew up. I aged out of middle school and into high school, discovering my own sexuality along the way. I made my way throughout the majority of my adolescence in a bliss of ego-centrality because I was desired. My body type, for this while, was the societal standard. People I knew dreamed of having large hips and tiny waists, a genetic feature I was granted at birth. I didn't have to work hard to be desirable, I didn't have to rely on what I had been told as a child by en-

tering diet culture. This has recently changed. Since entering higher education and aging out of the 2010s, the stance around plus-size women has fluctuated. Previously plus-size celebrities have slimmed down and are being praised for their new, healthy figures. Since 2020, the following previously plus-size celebrities have lost considerable weight: Adele Adkins returned to the public sphere in 2021, sharing her weight loss of 100 pounds. Kelly Clarkson lost 40 pounds in 2020. Plus size actress Rebel Wilson lost 75 pounds, claiming she embarked on a “year of health” in 2021. A new face of health is coming, with each past plus-size woman’s journey being claimed as remarkable. Each woman has received positive attention for their weight loss, and it seems that society may be turning its back on the women it once deemed desirable.

This new trend has left me, a once deemed desirable fat girl, feeling abandoned. Now tabloids are coming back with the same headlines they pushed in the early 2000s: Thin is In. Celebrities are endorsing tummy teas, laxative products, and intermediate fasting, which is now just the new form of the supplement diets from my childhood. Society has reconstructed its thoughts on fatness, and thus reconstructed its thoughts on me. I’m not desirable big girl anymore, I’m get-told-to-follow-Adele’s-shoes girl. Once again, plus-size women are being discarded, told our weights are unhealthy, told our bodies need tummy teas, and three-days-a-week workout routines. We are broken down, raised up, and broken down again until we conform to the diets, or wait it out until we’re desirable again.

Society’s view on health and body positivity has always affected me. I carry the burden of my weight just as heavily as I carry it physically. Although I may not physically be sick or weak or unwell or otherwise unhealthy, society says that anyone who looks like me must be. While I know society will one day again flip and I’ll be seen as desirable at some point, I don’t

await this day happily. I would much rather see the day when it doesn't matter what society thinks. A day where big girls and thin girls, are just girls.

—*Alexandria Malinowski '23, Criminology*

Lost Its Blooms

I know how it feels to be disappointed
You are the rose that lost its blooms
Dried and broken
It's red bright color faded
As others are still standing strong

What happened to you?
You used to be so... how can I say this
Full of happiness
Full of light
Helping others
Motivated
Risk taker
Full of love
As a butterfly would spread its wings
But still you the rose that lost its blooms

Now it's like you beating yourself up
Worry about what others think
Stressing yourself
Look very saddened about yourself
But I feel the same way
As the rose that lost its blooms

Each rose petal falling off one by one
you crying your pain away
You can't bare the photosynthesis
just want to be dry and lonely

Not only that...

You the only one that want to be cut away from the grass just
to be thrown in the trash

Why?
Can't let that happen to you
All I hear is you hate this, you hate that
Cause you allow those roses to kill your spirit

When the hell did you give damn about others opinions
Look at you, you turning white with brown stains and crum-
bled
As the rose that lost its blooms

Look!

You better than this
Remember who you really are
You not like these other roses
You very special
You love yourself
You praised yourself
Conquer yourself
Be confident in yourself
And don't be the rose that lost its blooms

— *Brittney Green '24, Nursing*



Cover: Sunlit Dreams

Summara Abaid '17, Biology



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