



JUST WRITE!



Quarterly Newsletter of the University Writing Center at UCF

SPECIAL ISSUE

**TUTOR'S CHOICE
FLASH FICTION
CONTEST**





A Note From Our Editors:

We welcome you to the third edition of *Just Write!*, a newsletter sponsored and organized by the University Writing Center! This edition was created and edited by Brittany Herrmann, Mekenzie McElroy, Priscila Santa Rosa, Jarrett Webster, and Lindsey Wright. We wanted to thank our peer tutors and the Director of the University Writing Center, Professor Weaver, for all of their support! Our purpose is to create a sustainable dialogue about writing for all students at UCF. Thank you for being a part of our community at the UWC.

We strongly believe that everyone has the aptitude to write! This newsletter supports writers and students in our community at UCF and eagerly promotes writing-related events. We proudly promote that we should collaborate as a community in all our writing endeavors. We are grateful for the opportunity and the ability to create, write, read, and dream.

In this edition, we are proud to present the winners of the first Tutor's Choice Flash Fiction Contest. These outstanding submissions were evaluated by a panel of tutor judges through a series of several reads to ensure the fairness and legitimacy of this contest.

Thank you to all of the wonderful submissions we hope that you write for us again! Please review the next submission deadline at the end of this issue! There is more to come!

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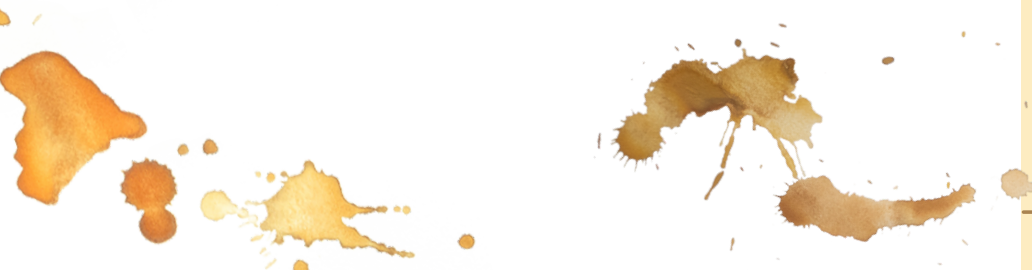
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March 16, 2017

Before we start, I need to clear some things up.

1. I am not a bad driver. If one day I die an untimely death and all that's left of me is this journal, know this: any outrageous tales of me getting rear-ended and pushed off the road were exaggerated for dramatic effect by my dad, unless that's how I actually died, in which case, *touché*.
2. You know I love dad jokes and puns, like, a lot. Once, someone in class dared me to speak only in puns for an hour and I *did* so I cannot have that sort of slander smearing my Punmaster title!
3. I love my dad, so please don't think I'm being mean when I talk about him. I just need to get it all out and move on.

So long-story-short I got into a bit of an accident yesterday. Nothing serious, I just got dinked and now my car has +1 dent. It was my first time being in an accident (yay?) and I'll be honest, my memory's kinda hazy. I don't know if I slowed down too suddenly at the stoplight and it was my fault or if they weren't paying attention and it was theirs, but basically it was a really minor mistake. I guess I just chickened out when the light turned from yellow to red at the last second. But the thing is, my dad said he felt like he had to teach me to drive all over again, even though I already have my license, so today he gave a "demonstration."

What you have to understand is my dad's from New York. He thinks speed limits are just recommendations and calls people "bozo" when they refuse to break the law (i.e. "go faster"). He was also born in the mid-'60s and went to college in the '80s which means he basically has the humor of a sit-com actor who refuses to break character. This includes while driving.

Anyways, we get in the car and he walks me through everything again and I go, "I know, I know," like a billion times but he still keeps talking. I guess it's a dad thing to coddle their daughter? I don't know why it's bothering me so much. I always thought I was a pretty decent driver, but after talking to him, I felt like I knew nothing at all. Like an idiot.

I can't say anything was out of the ordinary at first. When we really started driving, I can see that he's choosing to ignore the speed limit -- sorry, *speed recommendation*. Not too badly though, by about like 10 or 15 mph. It's like he forgot to be a good example of driving, or maybe our definitions are just different. For the safety of himself and everyone around him I should hope not. But I distinctly remember us heading toward a yellow light way too fast. I almost wondered if he remembered why we were here in the first place. When I looked at him to see if he was aware of what he was doing, he was smiling.

He asked me, "You know what the lights mean, don'tcha?"

Unfortunately, I knew what's coming. My dad's the kind of man that has only one gag, one joke that he'll tell over and over to anyone who'll listen, even if they've already heard it before, and then he'll laugh at himself. He's like his own sit-com laugh track. Anyhow, I said, "Red means stop and green means go," and he goes, "Yup, and yellow means go faster!"

We turned the corner just as the light turned red, leaning with the weight of the car and plausible deniability. Once we pass, we jolt upright like bobble heads. My dad leaned over to me and said, "See, that's why we call it astronaut training."

I didn't laugh that time, but he did.



TUTOR'S CHOICE

CONTINUED

I remember the dotted yellow lines on the road appeared as one big ribbon beneath us, like caution tape torn and trampled over, its warning unheeded. I remember my dad crossing it over and over, weaving through traffic. When we stopped, it was because we had to drive across lanes and there was a stream of cars.

My dad sighed and said, "It's just like Frogger with these bozos."

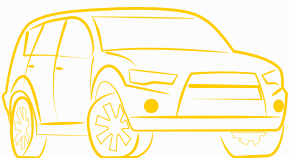
At that point, I understood something, I think. To him, this was all a deadly game of Frogger and he was the frog. To everyone else on the road, he was an inconvenience. I don't know what that made me.

I thought of a good joke then, or at least I thought it was funny. I elbowed my dad and was like, "Ah, traffic. It'll always be there, like gravity when you fall." He didn't laugh. Not even a smirk. Instead, he just drove when the time came and said, "What'd I tell you? Just like Frogger."

And that's basically it. After driving around the block for a bit, we went home. I went to my room, got my journal, and wrote. I don't know what I'm feeling. Frustration? I just don't understand how my dad can be like the way he is. There's so many caution signs when we're driving and not to sound like a driving safety PSA but they're there for a reason. Heck, you can't even miss them, they're all bright freaking yellow! It's like he doesn't listen or doesn't care or thinks he knows better than the people who made those signs or the people who drive with him on the road or his own unfunny daughter and *oh my god I get it now*.

The warning signs were there all along. How poetic.

I think I need to go do something else for a bit. Normally I'd go for a drive but...I think I've had enough driving for today.

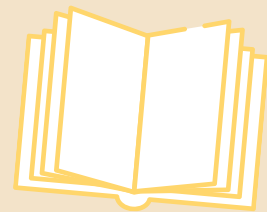


ABOUT THE AUTHOR

R. S. KADIN is a queer non-binary student (she/they) going into their third year at the University of Central Florida where they study linguistics and creative writing. Their poem, "Blood," was published in *The Cypress Dome* their freshman year. Growing up as a bilingual Brazilian-American and a voracious reader, they have always been fascinated with language. They ultimately discovered their love for linguistics when watching *Star Trek: Next Generation* in high school where they discovered the fictional Klingon language. Now they love to give impromptu lectures about what they've learned to anyone who'll listen (and that is a threat). Since having been told they speak like a TEDTalk presenter and a stand-up comedian combined, they haven't stopped talking since. Like many people, Kadin discovered their love for reading and writing when they were little. They believe that creating art and storytelling are universally instinctual, like the way bees make honeycombs. While they are a particular fan of writing sci-fi and fantasy (especially if languages are involved), they sometimes write short fiction with autobiographical elements. They also enjoy writing non-fiction essays about their life and their many intersecting identities, especially through the lens of language.

INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

R.S. Kadin
Tutor Contest Judges



Kadin was inspired to write their piece based on their personal experiences with drivers, both being in the car with their own dad and navigating the UCF area without a car. "Journal Entry #7" originally started as a poem titled, "the men at the intersection" with a similar topic, but they just weren't "satisfied with it."

"Originally, Flash Fiction was my first love. So I thought, why don't I try to adapt to that. I spent about a week just writing and rewriting, I just couldn't get it right. One of the biggest challenges was that this was personal. My dad is from New York so the stuff he does in my piece is pretty autobiographical. He does actually call people *bozo* unironically. I was trying to understand some of the things that people do to belittle other people. It isn't always necessarily because they deserve it. Instead, it is to make themselves feel better. I wanted to explore why sometimes people can be very inconsiderate of each other. Especially on the road where we're in these, like, death machines!"

We asked Kadin what their writing process looked like and they responded, "I would like to know that as well!"

Kadin's Process:

"A series of planning, outlining, telling, and retelling the story to myself until I'm comfortable with it."

Many writers use outlines to help develop some key elements within a specific genre. Outlining and considering how you would retell a story helps when you're considering what to write about. Kadin also states that her process is, "a combination of poking and probing something a bunch but also knowing when to let it sit and when to step back, which is arguably one of the hardest parts, I have to be pulled away almost kicking and screaming."

Many authors have this dilemma. When is a piece complete? When can you safely walk away from a story? Move on to the next project?

Kadin says that their "process is to just try to capture my thoughts, as [they] have them." Allowing themselves to put thoughts to paper gives them the space to manipulate language and narrative. "When I'm ready to form them into words, I plot out points and writing in the connective tissue later."

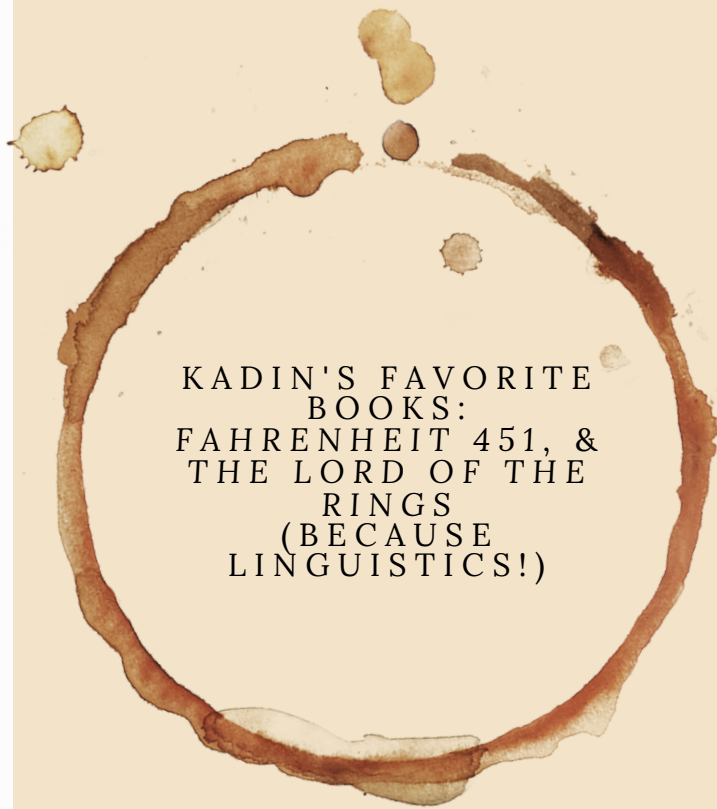
Advice for writers:

"Trust the process and trust your gut. Try to not stifle your flame before it gets to be lit. Which is rich coming from me because I'm currently avoiding several essays right now, just because I'm afraid to touch them."

What is Kadin reading?

A *Beautifully Foolish Endeavor* by Hank Green. "The way he writes voices is so natural, it's like talking to a real person."

Kadin is a writing coach for Page 15 and frequently runs workshops over the summer for youth writers. "Page 15's popular Young Writers Summer Camp gives authors in 2nd–12th grades the opportunity to write, illustrate, and publish their very own book with help from an amazing community of published authors, editors and illustrators" (page15.org). Kadin invites everyone to "come check us out! We do programs all year round. Other than our summer camp, we also do the Young Writer Society in the fall, which is an after school program for kids to just have a safe space to be able to create. We also do other community events, depending on the season."





Director's Choice

FEAR

By Jyazee Daryaei

There was a heavy silence in the air as a young man sat in the corridor waiting to see the Extractor. He had lived a life of serenity, free from doubt or worry up until a month ago when he had last visited his grandmother.

He'd been cleaning her basement when he had stumbled across a box filled with trinkets from the past. Photos of his parents from the day of their wedding. The couple stared blankly into the camera. Old concert tickets from what were once loud and vivacious days. And under that, browned newspaper clippings detailing the first successful extractions more than fifty years ago. He put the lid back on the box and shuffled through the rest, looking for items worthy of the trash. Still, his mind lingered on that same box from earlier.

Aria's grandmother had never been fond of the rapid technological advancements that the nation had experienced over the past few decades. Her temper never failed to manifest at family dinners whenever they were brought up. A temper was practically unheard of outside of intimate moments like that since scientists had discovered a way to drain mankind of emotion.

"A nation immune to the blindness known as emotion," spearheaders of the movement proclaimed.

Why then would she save mementos that caused such fiery and forbidden feelings to take root in her heart? How could she feel them in the first place?

A leather-wrapped trunk stowed beneath the basement stairs caught Aria's attention. He weaved between the boxes until he sat in front of it. A lock hung between its upper and lower clasps, yet appeared to be unlocked. Aria threaded the shackle from between the clasps and began to raise the trunk's hood.

A thick layer of dust swept through the air, causing him to cough. The ceiling creaked under the feet of his grandmother as she peered down into the room. The sound made Aria tense and he wheezed out that he was fine.

Looking back into the trunk, he saw a collection of vials each holding a colorful fluid labeled in a foreign text nestled upon velvet cushions. He reached his hand inside, picked one up, and held it into the air. The vial looked brand new and out of place among the other decaying artifacts in the basement. The crystal clear glass was cool to the touch and sent a shiver down his spine. Inside it crawled with what appeared to be a thick juice. It was a bright neon yellow, almost like a carbonated drink, and bubbled like one too.

Aria surveyed the room to see if his grandmother had managed to sneak up behind him after his coughing-spell, but found that the room was empty save for himself. Peeking back down at the vial, he began to twist the lid from atop the glass and took a whiff. It smelled salty, and Aria could feel himself begin to salivate.

Realizing that the contents of the vial were beginning to vaporize, he quickly began to reseal it and set it back into its place in the trunk. Hearing his grandmother begin to walk down the stairs, he feverishly closed the trunk and swung the lock back into place, as if he'd never noticed its existence. She had come to announce with a smile that she had made him lunch, and Aria could feel himself exhaling. Though what felt like a knot had started to form in his chest.

The figurative knot had only grown since that day.

Each moment that Aria was awake, he felt as if he was being watched. Like an official could kick his door in at any moment and accuse him of resisting the Humor Accords. He was losing sleep as a result of it and hungered to discover the cause.

Regardless of every irrational conclusion that he had come to, he knew it all led back to that neon yellow stuff from inside the vial. He couldn't fathom asking his grandmother what he had inhaled and decided that the only other person that could provide him with a satisfying enough answer was a licensed Extractor.

What felt like weeks had gone by when at last, he heard the man's hushed voice call him into the room.

The room was blindingly white in color and smelled of chemicals. Each of the four walls was sprinkled with informative posters, diagrams of the human brain, and other propaganda sanctioned by the government. It amplified the spirit of unease that Aria had been feeling the past few weeks.

After taking in all of the room, Aria focused his attention back on the man in the white jacket standing in expectation in front of him.

The two had secretly discussed his situation a few days prior and agreed that the Extractor would collect a sample of his blood to decipher his problem. Like never before, the thought had caused Aria's skin to crawl. But he saw no other way out of what he was experiencing.

Attempting to relax into the cold reclining chair in the corner of the room, Aria waited for the process to begin.

The Extractor turned around holding a long syringe in hand. Everything felt as if it was going too fast, and Aria could feel his heart begin to pick up in speed. His body felt like it was on fire and that his insides were melting.

Finally sinking the needle into the young man's skin, the Extractor began to draw out what would have been Aria's blood. Instead, the syringe steadily filled with the same neon yellow fluid that he had seen back in his grandmother's basement.

The Extractor frowned and looked from Aria to the syringe with knitted brows and paused before whispering to the young man as if he too were scared that he'd set off an alarm.

"This is the purest batch of fear that I've ever seen within all my years of practice. Why was this in you, young man?"



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JYAZEE DARYAEI is a budding writer with plans to break into the graphic design and copywriting scene post-graduation. She works daily toward professional publication, but has experience since freshman year of high school commissioning short stories for friends, as well as beta reading, and editing soon to be published novels posted in writing forums. Sci-fi and genre are her genres of choice. But with a bachelor's degree in technical communications, she plans to branch out into more formal writing. Outside of all things literary, she spends her free time playing video games and watching documentaries focused around true crime. Yet, it all proves to be a source of imagination fuel for the novel ideas she has planned. Her journey has only begun.



FLASH FICTION EXPLAINED

What is flash fiction and why write it?

By Brittany Herrmann

After hearing about the UWC's flash fiction contest, and reading the amazing submissions, you might be wondering, "What is flash fiction?" It seems like a self-explanatory term: a piece of fiction written in a flash! Despite this deceptive simplicity, flash fiction is incredibly complex, with numerous rules and details. Luckily, the variations of flash fiction are what make it such a compelling and unique form.

Flash fiction (also known as sudden fiction, short-short stories, microfiction, microstories, nanotales, postcard fiction, or napkin fiction) is a short story ranging anywhere from 5 to 1,000 words. Any genre can be written in flash fiction form, from fantasy to science fiction to young adult. However, it is important to recognize that a fully-fledged story should not be pared down into a flash fiction piece—flash fiction is a specialized genre with its own writing style. One way to think of flash fiction's style is to consider how each sentence builds the plot, character, or tension. In other words, in a genre that confines the writer to a minute amount of words, every sentence must have a purpose.

Another important facet of flash fiction is the existence of a plot. In other short writing forms, such as poetry, a plot isn't strictly necessary. Regardless, flash fiction requires, at minimum, a hook, a conflict, and an ending. Just like in novels,

the ending doesn't have to be a happy or after; it can leave them with a shocking cliffhanger, or force them to challenge their expectations. In fact, it is common for flash fiction to end with a surprising twist or revelation. This technique forces readers to consider what could happen, inviting them to engage in the text as an author.

Audience engagement is one of the most important parts of flash fiction because this style often asks us to consider humanity and life. Even in stories that are set in dystopian or fictional universes, flash fiction pushes our boundaries and makes us consider all the "what-ifs" of our world—what if this happened to me? What could cause an event like this? In just a few paragraphs, we find ourselves sympathizing with imagined personalities, drawn into fabricated emotions, conjuring entire universes, all through the power of writing. Readers can relate to the characters' joy or suffering, and in that sense, no matter how strange the setting is, we can place ourselves in the shoes of the character. Therefore, the boundaries that flash fiction pushes are the boundaries of our imagination. If we can imagine how it would feel for a character to inhale a batch of pure fear, we can also imagine our futures, or the amazing things that happen to real people everyday.





FLASH FICTION TIPS

Focus the flash fiction piece on the moment everything changes for your character. You don't want to bog down the story with too much information, so start with the conflict already in motion, with a character already struggling, with a turning point in the plot. Let the conflict be the driving force behind the piece, with the rest of it expanding on the fallout of that unique moment.

-PRISCILA SCHILARO SANTA ROSA

The length of flash fiction requires you to make your words count more than other forms of writing. Have you given the reader enough information to visualize the scene. Are there stronger, more specific descriptions you could be using? Be experimental, try describing a setting or character in a way you normally wouldn't. Not all of these descriptions will be winners, but it will help you to break out of more mundane descriptions. Though flash fiction is brief, gaining and holding the reader's attention is still difficult, and imagery is an important part of that.

-KIRA DEFREITAS-GAYLE

- Begin with a conflict in the first line. Because the genre is short and terse (usually 1,000 words or less), the writer needs to waste no time engaging the reader. This is no easy trick stating the problem or situation in one sentence, but the more jarring, the better. Doing so also helps the writer identify exactly what the story is about in 25 words or less and keeps the story focused.
- Write like a poet—use strong verbs and descriptive nouns. Be concise. Eliminate unnecessary phrases. This will allow for the relevant and necessary aspects of the story to emerge.
- Resolve your character's conflict at the end with a surprise, a twist, something the reader doesn't see coming. A flash story gives a glimpse of the character's life, one moment of struggle or tension. Be courageous and adventurous in how dilemmas are resolved.

**-DEBORAH WEAVER
UWC DIRECTOR**





Yellowing Honorable Mention

ROSALIND ROHRBAUGH



On Wednesday morning, Ursula Rough stepped out onto her small concrete patio and noticed the top lily on her bushel of twenty had turned from red to yellow. Not wilted or dead, simply the shade itself. She approached the flowering bush positioned in the corner of her porch, holding the front of her silk robe, decorated in frayed threads from overwear, tightly closed over her sunken chest with a hand that now ached when she clutched things with any firmness. She reached out and touched the single altered lily, plucking a petal away to observe up close. She could still smell the plant's sweetness as she held the petal before her face. "Healthier than ever," she remarked as she ran a swollen thumb across the petal. She offered the single yellow flower a mournful gaze, retreating into her small efficacy and hobbling to the kitchen where she retrieved a pair of scissors from the knife block.

On the slow shuffle back, she refused to meet the grayscale gaze of the woman in the bamboo frame hung up on the wall. Ursula sometimes pondered the act of removing it from its lonely spot, where it had only the accompaniment of a thermostat. The thing that stopped her was the fear that upon removing the long-lost woman, she herself may crumble to ash and blow away. She was beautiful once, the woman in the frame sometimes whispered, and that reminder alone still made her worthy of occupying the world. She even chose the fiery lilies for her tiny Florida patio because they reminded her of the auburn that once burned atop her head.

Upon arriving back to the porch, she clipped the lily from the bushel. It fell to the ground, its ugly yellow tint not even a welcome accent to the color of fire. This yellow was dim and spoiled.

She concluded the bud had simply perished strangely and disposed of it in the kitchen garbage.

The following morning, two more lilies had gone the same shade, so she went and purchased plant food later in the day to feed the receding fire. By Friday, more lilies had turned the yellow shade, and Ursula's neighbor two doors down remarked, "looks like that plants had it."

The comment had made Ursula's chin tremble. "All it needs is some extra attention. Old doesn't mean done." The following Saturday, she bought fresh soil and spent an afternoon potting it anew. By Sunday morning, only two lilies remained their original shade: one a brilliant crimson, the other a tiger orange. The rest of the bulbs were now corrupted by the yellowing.

"Ursula, your poor plant!" The young woman who worked the front desk in the rental office drove by on her golf cart a Monday later when each bud had at last succumbed to the yellowing. They now flowered to the rays of the sun in one single static hue, unremarkably stale, the fire no longer burning. "Shame some things don't just last forever," the woman said with her eyes casting a pitying gaze on the muted plant. That evening, Ursula brought the plant inside. She positioned it atop the kitchen table and pondered stuffing the rest of it into the kitchen garbage, right alongside the grayscale woman that teased her from the wall, so that neither could taunt her a single day more over the things she couldn't preserve.

She went to bed early, unable to bring herself to dispose of either, waking the following morning to find the green stems of the plant had been eaten by the yellowing overnight. She wept over her bowl of Cheerios, the faint sound of laughter out her window soon distracting her. Gazing through the glass, she grew pleasantly lost in the sight of children across the way finger painting on their patio.

Honorable Mention

CONTINUED

She watched them until they grew bored of the activity and became engaged in a game of tag. She allowed her spoon to messily fall into the unfinished bowl of cereal as she stood from the table. Digging through the drawer of her writing desk beside the television set, she found a tray of ten acrylic paint tubes she once used to paint Easter cards for two neighbors that never paid her thanks. She carried them to the table where the yellowed lily plant sat and unscrewed the caps of green, then orange, then red, then gold. She used two knotted fingers to smear the green over the lily's stems and leaves, then slowly painted every flower bud either orange, red or gold. She set the plant by the window so it could bloom midday, and she could paint the rest of the flowers.

Once the plant was fully painted, every hue of the yellowing covered, she stood back, paint-stained hands placed proudly on her uneven hips, gazing at the resurrected beauty of the lily bush. She turned to walk to the kitchen sink to clean her hands and caught the memory of herself in the lost woman in the picture frame. She all at once could imagine every color through the grayscale beyond just those that once lived in her now straw-like hair, taken up by its own yellowing.

She could remember the ruby of her lips, the blush of her cheeks, the brown in her eyebrows. She lifted the photo softly from the wall and carried it to the kitchen table, propping it against the newly reinvigorated lily bush. The paint was beginning to harden the bloomed flowers in place, molding them to a state of perfection that now had no choice but to last forever. She retreated to her bathroom only briefly to collect a hand mirror, that she also propped beside the pot, and sat down with her tray of acrylic paint. She scooped a thumb full of a burgundy she newly mixed from the messy tray and ran it through the first lock of her hair, smiling with weeping eyes as she tried to paint her own yellowing away.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ROSALIND ROHRBAUGH is a junior passionately pursuing an undergraduate degree in English Creative Writing with a paired minor in Writing & Rhetoric. Since she was a toddler, Rosalind has been a true lover of the written word, and she hopes to carry this devotion to the craft of writing into a future career as an English professor. She looks forward to the opportunity to continue to grow in the work she does and the knowledge she carries. Her favorite genre of all mediums is horror, and she hopes that alongside being a professor, she can one day go on to become a strong female voice in the world of macabre fiction writers. Aside from her academic pursuits and her personal writing, Rosalind also adores animals, enjoys bingeing campy horror movies, gardening, listening to the Indigo Girls, and experimenting with new recipes the kitchen!





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RESOURCES AND EVENTS

Publication Opportunities for Flash Fiction:

Flash Fiction Online - flashfictiononline.com

- Word Count: 500-1000 words
- Genre: Sci-fi, fantasy, slipstream, horror, and literary.
- Submission call: From the 1st to the 21st of each month.

Daily Science Fiction - dailysciencefiction.com

- Word Count: Up to 1500 words
- Genre: Speculative fiction (sci-fi and fantasy)
- Submission call: Open until Dec 23, 2021.

Craft - craftliterary.com

- Word Count: Up to 1000 words
- Genre: Fiction and nonfiction
- Submission call: Open year-round

SmokeLong Quarterly - smokelong.com

- Word Count: Up to 1500 words
- Genre: Literary
- Submission call: Open year-round.

Ghost Parachute - ghostparachute.com

- Word Count: Up to 1000 words
- Genre: General
- Submission call: Open year-round

Resources on Flash Fiction:

- www.flashfictiononline.com
- writers.com/how-to-write-flash-fiction
- www.writermag.com/improve-your-writing/fiction/best-flash-fiction/

More Info about Just Write!:

- The contest will continue to run throughout each semester as a column of *Just Write!*, twice during Fall and Spring and once over the Summer.
- For information about our adjudication process please contact the editors at uwc@ucf.edu.
- If you are interested in writing for *Just Write!* contact uwc@ucf.edu with an article query.

NEXT FLASH FICTION CONTEST:

- Our element for the Fall Tutor's Choice Flash Fiction Contest is **Orange!**
- **Orange** has to be included in your submission as a major element which is relevant and imperative to your theme.
- 500-word submissions for the upcoming contest are due September 30th, 2021.
- Check your knightmail and look out for flyers!