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The Lone Flower: A Collaborative Cybernovel

Western Kentucky University Department of Communication

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The Lone Flower

A collaborative cybernovel

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The Lone Flower - A collaborative cybernovel
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To my wife, Ligia Coe,
and my three sons, Andrei, Michel and little Viviane.
Riverson Rios.

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Preface

This work commenced in January of 2014 when I started teaching a course entitled COMM 400-001 Special Topics in Cyberculture in the Spring Session at the Western Kentucky University. It's an adaptation of the same course I have been teaching in the last several years in the Instituto de Cultura e Arte of the Federal University of Ceará (UFC), my home institution in sunny Fortaleza, Brazil, from which I'm on a leave of absence this academic year.

The class was composed of twenty two students, most of whom were majoring in Communication Studies, with a few others in Popular Culture Studies, Film, Psychology, Religious Studies and Corporate & Organizational Communication. Two thirds of them were senior students and the rest were juniors, except for one who was a sophomore. Along the semester, two students dropped out of the course.

As part of the students' work in the course, they were requested to write a collaborative novel. This means that they would have to come up with a story of their own on the go. No previous meeting or decisions would be made. The students were supposed to give their contribution to

an online text whichever way they wanted, be it by adding new paragraphs, correcting typos and errors, providing a description of the characters, changing their names or even by deleting existing words or whole sentences. It was their work so I might not interfere. The story would have to be built based upon the work of the students who came before, as long as it made sense. One student volunteered to read the final draft so as to connect possible open threads and write a conclusion.

Therefore, an account was set up on <http://www.wikidot.com>, a site that lets you create a wiki-based work and allow several people to edit the same text and especially compare and review different versions. This last feature was crucial to our goal.

Next, the students were trained on how to use the tool and leave a description of their contribution for grading purposes.

A few months later and after several modifications in the story, it is my pleasure to present the result of their effort, a cybernovel written by 40 hands, a book that has been voted to be available online for free.

I really would like to thank my colleagues at the Journalism and Advertising programs at UFC for giving

me the chance to spend my sabbatical leave as a visiting scholar at Western.

Thanks go as well to prof. Dr. Helen Sterk, Head of the Department of Communication at WKU, for believing without hesitation in my proposal of teaching such a 400 course, and having the chance to meet such wonderful students.

I also must send special thanks to prof. Loup Langton, Director of the School of Journalism & Broadcasting, without whose invitation to spend a year at WKU nothing of this would have been possible. I truly appreciate his great support and thoughtfulness ever since the beginning. Please extend my gratitude to the faculty at the School.

And of course all the credits go to the authors. The students did a fantastic job and came out with this magnificent story full of love, suspense and humor. I do hope their effort will delight its many readers.

Way to go, girls and lads! Go tops!

Prof. Riverson Rios, Ph.D.

Spring 2014

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The Lone Flower

A collaborative cybernovel

Birthday

* * *

Rose Labouche was born on October 8th. She was very pretty. Indeed, as pretty as can be. She had smiling eyes that could light up the blue sky. Her long black silky hair was like a reflecting mirror. She liked reading novels and listening to classical music. She loved riding her blue bike in the park near school. Her favorite color was blue. She excelled in piano. However, she could only practice at school. Her parents did not have enough money to buy her a piano. Rose told herself that when she had a decent job, she would buy herself a black grand piano and perform for her parents.

She dreamed that one day a handsome Prince in a blue shirt would show up at the front door of her house and ask her to run away with him.

At school, Rose was an outstanding student. She always made straight A's. Almost every teacher at the school knew her. They were astonished at how smart she was.

Rose, however, was never proud of herself. Very humble, she always tried her best in everything she did.

She wished, though, that her parents knew how well she was doing at school. She wished that they would feel proud of their little girl, holding her in their arms, and telling her how much they loved her. Sometimes she thought, "If my parents don't love me, who else in this world will love me?" She was afraid that the handsome Prince would never come and she would stay single the rest of her life. She started to lose hope.

As a matter of fact, Rose Labouche did not have a happy childhood. She felt lonely in her own home. The only person with whom she ever established deep relationships during her childhood was her cousin Anna Poutine. Although being cousins, they looked very much alike.

Anna was very nice to Rose. She would always be there for her whenever Rose needed someone to confide in. Rose wished that Anna was her sister.

But Rose had another friend, actually the best friend someone could ever have. Her secret best friend was called Mona Lisa. Mona was always by her side and somehow fulfilled Anna's role when Rose was alone.

Rose was sad that she was an only child. Her parents would never remember her birthday unless she reminded them. She was sad and angry because her parents knew

nothing about her. They did not know what she liked, who she hung out with, and where she went on every Sunday afternoon. She had to hear all of their fights and arguments over trivial things in life. She avoided her parents whenever she could. She found them tiresome. Her broken relationship with them was later reflected in her inability to build profound relationships with others.

Ever since her early years, Rose's relationship with her mom, Lyanne Labouche, was superficial and problematic. Her mom would never ask her how her day had been or who she had met.

Rose could not even remember much about her mom. All she could remember were her sad eyes. Whenever she got home from school, she would see her mom sitting at the kitchen table, looking out of the window. She would not hug her, kiss her on the cheeks or prepare lunch for her. She only told her directions of how to make her own lunch. Rose would try to do anything to get attention or a reaction from her mom. She desired to be loved and cared for by her. She wanted to make her happy. However, Rose felt like she could never please Mrs. Labouche.

On the 8th of October that year, Rose came back home from school feeling excited. She thought that her mom would buy her a strawberry cake and a beautiful gift

to celebrate her birthday. They would sing the birthday song together. However, to her disappointment, her mom was sitting there near the kitchen window as usual. Nothing was set on the table. Rose gathered all of her courage, asking her mom, "You don't remember today is my birthday?!"

Mrs. Labouche remained silent, not saying a word to her. She kept looking toward the horizon.

On a windy day, Rose's mother decided to run away. Rose came back from school but did not see her mom sitting at the kitchen table anymore. She tried to look for her around the house but did not see her. She thought Lyanne was running some errands. She waited, waited, and waited for her mom to come back. However, she never did.

Her departure wounded Rose deeply. Because she was already unsure about her love for her, she felt like she was abandoned by her own mother. Her life still went on but the deep wound in her heart never healed. Sometimes she could not sleep at night because when she closed her eyes, she would see her mom sitting at the kitchen table as if she never left, and then she started to burst into tears.

One day, Rose got a letter from her. Surprisingly, her mom told her that she loved her very much. However, she

had to leave her because of an "unimaginable reason."

Thoughts raced through Rose's mind of what possible reason would her own mother would have for abandoning her. She clenched the letter tight and began to cry. She didn't cry because she missed her mother, she cried because she was unsure if she even loved her mother at all.

It was in this moment that Rose decided she would no longer be the whipping post to everyone else. The image of her mother's sad and tired eyes would become the motivation for Rose to leave this town, and become someone of importance. She will start a new life, and use her mother's abandonment as motivation to become something she never was.

Far away

* * *

For some time, Rose has had that idea. After all, being a Labouche, she would succeed too. Her mind was set. She would follow her destiny.

Rose opened the door, and stepped out in the grey, and shambled alley where her house was located. The only thing worth looking at was the Georgian fanlight atop her family's tattered green door. She only packed the essentials, and understood that her journey was not going to be easy, but she had grown tough living in the slums of St. Augeirs. That didn't matter, she was determined to transcend the life her parents had set before her. Rose was destined to become something far greater than her family and friends could fathom after generations of oppression and living in fear.

Fearless and determined, Rose Labouche went into her mother's room to see if anything useful was left behind. On the dresser, she found an envelope with her name on it. Enclosed she found \$300 in cash with a note. It read:

Rose, I imagine you must not care for me too

much at the moment. I understand. But please take this envelope with you whenever you choose to leave this place. I know you don't want to stay here in this rotten hole any more than I did. Take care of yourself and know that I do love you.
-Mom

As much as Rose pondered ripping the note to shreds and leaving the money, Rose knew she would need it. So she took the envelope and her belongings and marched out of the alley, went to the train station, and bought a ticket.

"Where to, Miss?", said the fancily dressed man in the ticket box. "As far away as the train can take me...just don't tell me where it's going." said Rose. "As you wish ma'am," responded the man.

So Rose hopped on the train and it took off. She had never been on a train before, let alone outside her own city. She was nervous, clenching her knapsack tightly, as the train entered through the tunnel that lead out of the town.

When the train came out the other side, Rose looked up and saw beautiful fields with mountains behind them, the sun setting right in between the mountains. She saw beautiful orange skies which she had never taken the time to notice before. Rose knew right then that there was hope; hope for a Kentucky girl that had been cooped up,

socially unaccepted, and abandoned to make something of herself. She then laid her head down to rest.

When Rose Labouche awoke the next morning, the train was coming to a stop at another station. She jumped up, picked up her bags, and got off. She looked around and saw tall buildings everywhere... except these kind were not the old, rusty ones she was used to seeing. No, these were new and beautiful. There were all sorts of people walking around in all different directions.

It looked familiar to Rose. She remembered seeing this place before. It was in pictures in the newspapers her mother used to read. She also remembered seeing it on television. It was Alvion City. Rose had always dreamed of going there. It was always advertised as being the "city of wonder... where opportunities are open to all." Rose knew that this was her chance. This was the life that was meant for her. It was here that she would make something of herself.

Rose knew that her money was limited so she could not afford to stay at the Westenburg Hotel, which was known as the most beautiful and popular hotel in all of Alvion City. She remembered what Mrs. Labouche told her once before at a young age... "In order to move up, you have to begin low." So she called for a taxi to take her to the west end of the city.

While it was not like the slums she had lived in before, it was still not like the rest of the city. Most who lived there were lower class folk but that did not bother Rose... for she was raised around such people. She was just excited to start her new life. She began to look out the window at the tall buildings and all the people in their business suits, on their way to their jobs, with their suitcases in their hands. She wanted to be like that. She wanted to be successful. And she smiled, knowing that her time would come soon enough.

As Rose exited the cab and made her way across the uneven street pavement, she suddenly found herself gasping for air. The sky was thick with pollution, and dingy smells greeted her nostrils almost instantly. Rose quickly dug through her worn out suitcase for any random item to cover her nose and mouth. Luckily, she found her red scarf tucked into the top corner of her bag. As she yanked the silky material from the safety of her briefcase, she felt herself drifting into the distant past. The material in her hand wasn't just a scarf; it represented a piece of her life.

Bringing happiness

* * *

“Rose, can you come inside, would you please?” yelled her mother. Rose had been playing outside for over an hour. It was the only way she could escape her mother’s silence, the only way she could ignore the sad eyes and pretend that she was a normal child. Reluctantly, Rose answered, and then slowly made her way into the house. “What’s going to happen to me?”

She could never really predict her mother’s behavior. Sometimes, she was called into the house to make her lunch or do chores. Other times, it was to clean out the ash tray or sweep up glass from another broken beer bottle. Her mother had a drinking problem. She also had a smoking problem. Truthfully, her mother had more problems than Rose cared to think about.

“I’m here, mom”, Rose answered as she hopped up the last cracked step on her rickety front porch.

“Good”, said Mrs. Labouche, with a slight grin on her face. “I want to talk to you about something. Something of real importance to you”.

Rose gulped. Her mother was actually talking to her. And she was smiling. But the sadness in her eyes was as strong as ever. After motioning to Rose to sit down at the kitchen table, her mother sat in the seat across from her. And then she began to speak.

“Rose, I want to give you something. I know it doesn’t seem like much, but there’s no one else in the world I would rather give this to.”

Rose eyed her mother cautiously. She had never given Rose anything but the silent treatment for as far back as she could remember. Yet she continued to listen, mainly because she was curious. With trembling hands, her mother reached under the table and removed a small red scarf from some secret hiding place. For one long second, her mother clutched the scarf in her hands, and then slowly slipped it across the table in Rose’s direction.

“This scarf means a lot to me, Rose. I’m giving it to you because I can’t handle it anymore. I can’t handle the memories, or the grief that it brings. But I want you to have it, because at one point this scarf was the source of my greatest happiness. Maybe one day you’ll find yours outside of this hell hole and away from me”.

After that, her mother gave her another soft smile, and then turned toward the window, as always. Rose’s

heart was beating out of her chest. Did her mother just give her a gift? And a beautiful red scarf at that? She glanced down at the silky item that was now in between her fingers. How could a red scarf bring happiness to someone?

As she rose from the kitchen table and slipped outdoors, Rose Labouche began to make a connection between her mother and the scarf. She remembered seeing pictures all over the house of her mother as a child, teenager, and young adult. And in every single picture her mother was wearing a red scarf. So they were all the same one! Rose lifted the scarf to her face, rubbing its silky material against her cheek. She could smell the faint scent of roses...

A brighter future

* * *

BEEP!!!! Rose Labouche was suddenly jolted back into the present by a loud car horn in the middle of the street. Shaking her head, she made her way out of the middle of the street and wrapped the red scarf around the neck.

No matter what happened to her now, she could not lose that memory. It was the best memory that she had of her childhood. It represented the one time that her mother had a conversation with her. It was a gift that she would always treasure, even if she had no idea what it meant to her or her family.

Rose had no idea where she was in this new city, and she loved that. She was on no time schedule and had no plans. So she decided to be adventurous and walk around. She noticed a fountain across the street and made her way over there. With the little change she had, she gathered two pennies, tightly closed her eyes and threw them into the fountain, making a different wish with each toss.

She sat next to the fountain for a few minutes, observing the fast pace of people around her and enjoying the sound of the fountain to her back. In this moment,

Rose felt truly happy and her heart exploded with hope that there was a brighter future for herself. She suddenly felt something tugging at her foot.

Rose looked down only to find a dirty little puppy sniffing her old sneakers. “Hey there little guy,” she whispered to him. Rose began to pet him and play with him and his tail began to wag. She couldn’t help but smile.

“You sure are dirty, we could both use a bath,” she giggled to him. Rose decided to keep the dog and named him Paco Bell.

Several months later, once Rose had settled into life in Alvion City, she began a job at a local bakery. It was menial work, kneading the bread, cleaning the oven, flowering the pans, but this was as happy as she had every felt before.

“Day Dreams” was the most famous bakery in town. It used to be crowded every night the WKU Toopers played against another team.

Each day Rose would wake up at 5:00 AM in her tiny studio flat, then head off to the bakery for a twelve-hour day. Day in and day out this was the same, until she met this young man named Jameson Chabot.

Jameson worked across the street selling ties in a men's shop. He was just around her age, blonde hair, and brown eyes, with just a blink of mischief in them. He wandered into Rose's store for a baguette during his lunch break, but stayed for her company and warm smile. He could not take his eyes off of her lips.

"Have you lived in Alvion for long?" he asked, watching her blush slightly as she carved shapes out of dough with her cookie cutter.

"Not until recently," she replied lightly, while curling her hair. "How about you?"

"Oh, no," he said, leaning back, resting his hands on the back of his shaggy hair. "My dad was a chimney sweep up north. After he passed away, I knew I didn't want that life, so I came here." He seemed lost in thought for a moment then added, "Who would have thought 'here' meant working as an errand boy for rich men and suit makers?"

Rose smiled at this. "We all have to start our dream somewhere, I suppose."

Jameson smiled, "How about starting tonight then. Can I take you out?"

Blind of mischief

* * *

At this point it is important to add a remark about the main characters.

First, Jameson is not unique. His hair is not particularly blonde, and his eyes are no more brown than those of any other brown-eyed individual. The “blink of mischief” detected by Rose (though let's face it: what does Rose know about mischief?) does not actually indicate a greater intrigue within his character. Jameson usually meets his sales goals in the men's shop, rarely going beyond the existing benchmarks. He's been working there for so long that he knows exactly what he has to do. His determination to do whatever he has to do is also reflected in his relationship with Roe.

He dislikes his job as much as the next guy. Similarly to Rose, Jameson had dysfunctional relationships with his parents when he was young. He even shared Rose's unfulfilled aspirations for the piano and for being happy with the one they love.

In spite of what you may have been thinking earlier, Jameson is rather mundane. If it weren't for Rose, it is

doubtful that Jameson Chabot would even be in this story. Fortunately for him, he greatly piqued Rose's interests. This turned out to be less fortunate for her. She was disarmed when it was her turn to banter...

A letter

* * *

Awkward and shy, Rose Labouche did not know what to say. She wasn't really expecting to be invited to go out. Never in her life did she hang out with such a potential date.

She was only able to mutter out, "I like seafood but I don't know what is around here". She began thinking to herself, "Wow, not only have I started to make a life for myself, I have also been able to move into the social world as well. I have not made it all the way yet, but I am well on my way."

Rose was so busy talking to herself she wasn't listening to Jameson Chabot. All she caught was a "...pick you up at 8?" She said, "Sure, sounds great." Rose was ecstatic. She couldn't believe it, she had a date!

The walk back to her studio apartment was amazing. She noticed every beautiful thing around her. The clear blue sky, the changing colors of the leaves, the scent coming from the flower shop near her house. Everything was perfect.

Upon getting back to her apartment, she decided to check the mail. She had received another letter from her mother. "How did she find me? Is she here?" Rose had lost the wonderful feeling when she had received the letter. The letter read:

My dear Rose, I am happy that you've left that awful place. I had a feeling that you would get a job involving cooking, what with all the making lunch for yourself I made you do. I am so proud of you for making it on your own.

I have something to tell you, though. You have a half sister named Ellie Labouche. She was born after you and was what all of the arguments between your father and me were over. I cheated on him in our very house. That is why I looked as if the life was being drained out of me the last time you saw me. I was constantly being reminded of what had happened in this house.

That is why I left. I am telling you now because I sent Ellie to live in Alvion City with her birth father. I am so sorry I hurt you and this family. I love you so much – Mom.

Rose was shocked. She didn't know how to handle this new information. "A sister, here in Alvion City?" She had forgotten all about Jameson and her date. However, as she had stated, she was not going to let her mother's

mistakes influence her anymore. She went on her date and had a wonderful time.

This led to several more dates over the course of nine months. Rose was now the manager of the bakery she worked at and had forgotten all about her sister, until she received another letter.

Nevertheless, it was from Ellie herself. Before Rose opened the letter, she had to remind herself that she was now the manager of the bakery, she had a blossoming relationship with Jameson Chabot, and things were going well for her. She sat and pondered for a while, and decided to wait to open the letter. She did not want to flood her mind with the hurtful feelings that her mother had dumped on her months before.

So she decided to call her boyfriend to discuss what she should do with the letter. Moments later, Jameson showed up at her apartment.

“I just don’t know if I want to have a relationship with the girl that is supposed to be my sister. I don’t know anything about her, and what if we have nothing in common? I don’t want to be let down,” Rose protested.

Jameson waited for her to calm down and said, “Rose, what if you are missing out on a wonderful relationship with your sister? If you don’t open that letter,

you will never know anything about her. You may regret it for the rest of your life.”

Rose sat and thought about what Jameson had said. “What if she really is someone that I can connect with and share a bond with?”

After a few awkward moments passed, Jameson took her hand and the two of them walked down the street to get some dinner. They shared casual conversations about their day and had a peaceful walk home. All the while, the thought of Ellie was in the back of her mind, and she wanted it that way. Rose felt so happy that she had Jameson to turn to in her time of need. As she walked through the door of her apartment, she flipped the light on only to see Ellie sitting in the kitchen with her letter in her hand.

Tea for two

* * *

Rose Labouche wasn't sure whether to feel excited or upset. She wasn't sure she was ready at that moment to see Ellie. This was all quite a bit to take in.

"Um, hello. I'm..." she was cut off by Ellie before she could finish. The visitor ran up to her and hugged her.

"Ellie," she said in a muffled and surprised tone. "I'm sorry I didn't read your letter yet, I just wasn't sure what to do about all of this."

Ellie looked at Rose for a second and tears began to well up in her eyes. "I'm sorry I came before speaking with you, I just had to get away, to meet you. I wanted to know what you were like, if you have had to go through the same things that I have. I wanted to meet my sister."

"Well, I will put on some tea and make something for us to eat if you are hungry, and we can go from there. I would like to hear about you and your life as well," replied Rose.

She gave Ellie a smile and got started on the tea. "Is there anything I can do to make you comfortable? How

long will you be staying?"

Ellie looked a little embarrassed, "I don't really have anywhere to go at the moment. That's why I came here so suddenly. I'm so sorry to impose. And I'm perfectly comfortable, thank you."

Rose gave her a look of assurance, everything would be alright. She poured the tea and fixed the snacks and the two sisters sat down at the kitchen table to catch up. Rose was way too excited.

The girls started talking about their childhoods, everything they had endured. Ellie quickly opened up to Rose and told her how horrible her childhood had been. Ellie went into detail about how she had grown up in and out of foster care because their mother could not raise her along with Rose. The reason was that Rose's dad did not want Ellie to be a part of their family.

Ellie's father did not know she existed until their mother informed him almost a year ago, around the time she moved and left Rose to fend for herself. Ellie told Rose how she was beaten numerous times and that was why she had to be put in foster care continuously.

She never felt at home or loved with any foster families she had. The men she came across with these families used to beat her and emotionally abuse her. She

was so down she tried to kill herself. The mother of the last foster family found her and rushed her to the hospital, where they saved her life.

While she was in the hospital she contacted Mrs. Labouche. That is when the girls' mother decided to tell Ellie's dad she existed and to move Ellie out with her real father. As Ellie continued the details of her horrible childhood, Rose sat back, taking it all in, holding back tears. She had just met this girl, her sister, and felt love for her. She just wanted to hold her and tell her everything would be alright. Rose was trying to figure out what step to take next. She had to help her helpless sister. She had to be strong for the both of them.

The right decision

* * *

As it turns out, Rose Labouche has become very capable of loving others (even totally boring strangers like Jameson) in spite of her dysfunctional childhood family. Ellie also seems well-adjusted despite her circumstances. In the face of all their previous experience dealing with family, the two are certain to develop and maintain a healthy, functional relationship. How pleasantly unexpected?

After Rose and Ellie finished catching up, Rose showed Ellie the guest room where she'd be staying. They then said their good-nights, and both went to their bedrooms.

Rose lay awake all night, kept awake by the whirlwind of thoughts going through her head. Not only had she not known of her sister Ellie, but now her sister was staying with her. Rose knew that, after hearing Ellie's story, she had to let her stay for the near future. She wanted her to stay. However, her life had just begun a new chapter and everything was going her way. "Maybe this is just another blessing", she thought, as she cuddled her pillow.

There was so much uncertainty going through Rose's mind. Supporting an extra person would cost her, literally. She knew that she would have to make some accommodations for her sister. However, through all the uncertainty, the only thing Rose knew for certain was that she would love Ellie. Together, they would be all the family they needed in Alvion City. The more she thought about living with her sister, the more excited and positive Rose felt. Rose decided that she would not only take in her sister, but that she would embrace her, love her, and befriend her.

The next morning, Rose woke up early with a smile on her face. She rushed to Ellie's room and woke her up abruptly. Startled, Ellie looked around and asked her sister what was going on. Excitedly, Rose told her "Today is the day we give you, your room, and your closet a makeover! Girl, we are going shopping!"

While Rose looked excited and thrilled about this idea, Ellie looked down in silence. "What's wrong, sis?", Rose asked her. Ellie sat still, unresponsive. "Hey, Ellie", Rose said as she sat next to her, "I know this is a lot for both of us, and I know this may be sudden, but you are my sister. I love you, and after hearing about how hard your life has been, I want to make sure I do everything I can to make this chapter a better one!"

Ellie looked up at Rose, with eyes full of tears. She started to laugh and cry at the same time. Rose began to ask Ellie if she was fine. "Ellie, are you okay? If this is too much, I can", but suddenly, before Rose could finish, Ellie gave Rose a huge bear hug.

"You know", Ellie said, "I have always seen actors on TV cry tears of joy, but I never knew it was possible until now." While Ellie continued to hug Rose, Rose began to cry as well. She knew she had made the right decision.

Amidst hugging, Ellie said to Rose, "I have something for you; something really, really exciting. Wanna see?"

Rose looked frazzled. She had never had too much excitement in her life, and all of the boys in her grade thought she was boring and uneventful. She supposed they were right. Nevertheless, Rose was curious about Ellie's gift. "What is it?" asked Rose.

Ellie then pulled out two tickets and gave them to Rose. Rose looked at them and discovered that they were front row tickets to the Paul McCartney concert the next weekend! Wowza! Rose could not believe it. "I thought that they were sold out weeks ago!" screamed Rose with anxiety and joy.

Ellie just laughed. "I would do anything for you, Rose. You've helped me with so much in my life. I owe it to you." Rose was ecstatic.... until it dawned upon her: how could Ellie even afford those two front row seats to the best Beatle's concert? "But.... how in the world were you able to purchase these tickets? I don't understand. They had to be sooo expensive!" said Rose.

"They were \$3,000 dollars a piece.... but they were definitely worth it," Ellie whispered. "I'm really glad you liked them."

Rose was stunned. "But how did you pay for them?" Rose eagerly questioned.

"You really want to know?" asked Ellie.

Rose nodded. "Yes, of course!"

"I.... I.... sold my eyeballs on the black market," said Ellie in a low voice.

Rose looked at Ellie with the most stunned look on her face. She was speechless. Ellie then popped out her glass eyes and gave them to Rose. Rose fell to her knees, crying.

"What's wrong?" asked Ellie, unbelievably sad and feeling that she had done something to upset Rose.

Rose's lip quivered, as she struggled to whimper, "I.... I.... wanted backstage passes too....", she said while looking up at Ellie's face.

Living together

* * *

It didn't take long for Rose and Ellie to get comfortable living together. Rose finally felt that she had a family, a loving boyfriend, people she could really rely on.

Rose Labouche and Jameson Chabot were in the kitchen planning how to spend their day off together. Jameson suggested going out to a movie but Rose had worked all week at the bakery and wanted to have a movie night at home. Ellie stumbled into the kitchen after just waking up. Rose notice Ellie didn't have any pajamas on, only wearing panties and a sweatshirt. Though Rose was shocked Ellie would present herself that way, Rose still greeted her with a big smile,

"Good morning, sis, how did you sleep?"

Ellie replied in a raspy voice, "Fine, I just didn't sleep great last night. Oh, Hey Jameson!"

Jameson reciprocated the hello with an eager response, "Hello, Ellie!"

Suddenly the phone rang. Rose walked over and answered. After a series of, "Yes, I understand, sir," and,

"Yes, I can," Jameson saw Rose's face turn from a smile to a very stoic smirk. She got off the phone and announced to Jameson and Ellie the news.

"I have to work tonight", she said in a sad voice.

"Are you serious, honey? Why?!", Jameson exclaimed.

"Apparently the WKU and Uconn basketball game is tonight and I have to be at work because the store is staying open late."

"Well, now my whole day is going to go to waste," replied Jameson. He was always excited to spend time with Rose. Especially since Rose became manager, he never got to spend time with her.

Finally finishing her second glass of orange juice, Ellie chimed in and said, "I could hang out with you Jameson. We can watch a movie here tonight. I can make some popcorn while we wait for Rose to come back from work."

Jameson didn't move or react. Whatever Rose agreed would be fine with him, especially considering how she was upset.

Rose was lost in her thoughts and angrily answered for him, "Yeah, you guys go do that. At least someone will

have fun tonight."

Rose was so angry about the phone call that she just grabbed her bag and left for work, leaving Ellie and Jameson together at the apartment. Even though Ellie and Rose only knew each other for a small amount of time, Rose didn't second guess leaving her half-naked sister with her boyfriend. Of course she trusted them. She and Jameson had been together for so long that their relationship was strong enough. As for Ellie, she was not only a sister but her best friend now.

She worked all day, a long 15-hour shift because so many people had called off, and it was a busy day because of all of the requests for WKU cakes.

Rose was tired, sad, and still angry when she got off of work. All she had wanted to do on her day off was to hangout with her boyfriend, who she had neglected a bit lately because she had been spending so much time trying to get to know Ellie better. Rose ended up getting off about 30 minutes earlier than expected, though, so she cleaned up and left as quickly as possible.

On her walk home, she was finally starting to feel better and was looking forward to hanging out with Ellie and Jameson. She brought home cookies from the bakery and picked up a pizza from a pizzeria by their apartment,

as a surprise for her two loved ones at home. She couldn't wait to see the two most important people for her at this moment in life.

Excitedly, Rose ran up the stairs to her apartment, opened the door, and immediately dropped everything she had been carrying and began crying because of what she saw inside the apartment.

Dismay

* * *

Rose Labouche could not believe her eyes. After working all day long, that was the worst vision she could ever ask for.

To her dismay, she witnessed her sister and boyfriend stuffing their faces with delicious looking pastries, from the box on top of the night stand next to the bed. This box belonged to a rival bakery across town, “Do-Wholes,” that has been competing with Rose's bakery.

“How could you? How could you both?!” yelled Rose, distraught.

“It's not what it looks like!” Stammered Jameson, with his mouth half full.

“It is exactly what it looks like”, replied Rose. “I trusted you, I trusted you!”

“The part with me in bed with your boyfriend, or the part where me and your boyfriend are in your bed and eating pastries from Do-Wholes?” Said Ellie in a rude tone.

“I’m not worried about you being in bed together, I know nothing would happen. But, how could you turn your back on me and eat from Do-Holes? I would recognize that awful box from miles away. You know raspberry filled pastries are artificial. They don’t even use natural raspberries like we do at Day Dreams,” clamored Rose, tears still falling down her face. “Can’t you see how important this is to me?”

“Baby, just hear me out for just one second,” said Jameson, now jumping off the bed and falling down on his knees before Rose. He extended out his arm, as if to touch her.

Rose stepped away, stumbling a bit as she did. Her voice quivered, barely audible above the noise from the television. “D-D-Don’t you b-b-baby me. Don’t even dare come close to me after all you’ve done tonight.” Rose seemed determined and without hesitation she continued. “You can have the artificial raspberry pastries for all I care. W-We’re through! Yeah, it’s over, over!”

Rose turned around and walked out, stepping on the pizza box as she went. Next, she headed back to Day Dreams and turned the ovens back on. All night Rose slaved over the fresh rolled dough, icing, and natural raspberry filling, determined that working will keep her

mind from wandering to the incident that she had just witnessed.

Her tears began to slow down and eventually came to an end, as she entered her seventh hour of non-stop work. “I’ll show them, I’ll show them all. Natural raspberry filling is a thousand times better than that artificial crap! How could they?”

The bakery

* * *

She had worked at the Day Dreams bakery for almost a year and a half now and it was more than just a job, it was a part of her new life and one of the first things she had when she moved to Alvion. Her company and its arch-rival Do-Wholes had been in competition for quite some while and Rose believed that they use artificial flavoring that is harmful.

"How could they?" Rose mumbles to herself as she vigorously hits the dough on the counter. "Ellie knows that this bakery is what supports the both of us, and without it we would lose everything."

Right then Rose's phone began to ring. She looked and it was Ellie. She sat for a second and gave thought about if she should answer it or not. She finally picked up, not wanting them to worry that she had done anything too crazy. "What do you want?" asked Rose right away.

"Where are you? We've been trying to call you for hours. You never came home last night," said the voice on the othe end of the line.

"I'm at the bakery, and I hope you and Jameson had a good night eating that fake crap. All I wanted to do was come home and enjoy time with the people I care the most about, but you two had to go off and and bring that Do-Wholes crap into my house", Rose continued ranting on the phone when she heard the bakery door bell ring.

She yelled, "Be right out!" and continued her rant.

Then she heard a deep voice say over the phone, "Turn around." As Rose thought to herself, "That voice sounds familiar," she turned around, and to her surprise she sees Ellie, Jameson, and Mrs. Labouche.

Three visitors

* * *

A million things were going through Rose Labouche's mind. Her sister Ellie had a glister in her eyes and was glowing and looked as pretty as she had ever looked. Her boyfriend Jameson was in a nice blue polo shirt, and her mother Lyanne was wearing a sundress with flowers on it, and her presence felt as if she had brought in a slight breeze with her. She was smiling, not only with her mouth, but with her eyes as well. It was as if she were a whole new person.

The bakery was still closed, so there was no one else there except for them.

"What's going on? Why is Mo—" Jameson Chabot cut her off mid sentence and sayd, "Yesterday, while you were at work, Ellie and I had an amazing day."

He smiled, looked at Ellie and winked. Then began again, "Ellie helped me realize how great of a person you are and how much we have become like a family. Last night when you ran out like that it was the first time you've ever left out like that and in that moment I realized I never want to see you walk out again." Then Jameson

took a step toward Rose, looking her in her loving eyes...

Jameson then dropped to one knee and pulled from his pocket a diamond ring. "Rose, will you be my wife?" he asked as he looked up at her, awaiting an answer.

"Wow," was all that Rose could think as she sat there and looked at the three of them. Her mother standing there before her as graceful as ever, with the sister she had come to love and cherish, and her boyfriend on one knee asking for her hand in marriage — something she never could have imagined a boy asking her in her biggest dreams.

As she stood there smiling at them she forgot to answer the question. "Say yes," whispered Ellie.

Rose snapped her head at Jameson and said, "YES! On one condition. Promise me no more Do-Wholes in the house.

Jameson laughed and said, "Deal." He could notice how happy Rose got.

"Ill go ahead and apologize about the Do-wholes," Lyanne said. "I wanted to come by and see my girls and talk to you all, but no one was at home so I left the donuts and put my address and phone number on the box hoping we could all sit down and talk. Last night when Jameson and Ellie called me and said you ran out I was worried, so

I wanted to come look for you with them."

Rose just stared and mumbled, "But you look so good."

Her mom replied, "I turned my life around and have become a better person. I moved to Alvion and met a guy, and I'm doing a lot better. I wanted to show Ellie and you how well I was doing, that's why I came by. I want to have a part in my girls' life. I love you both so much!"

Rose stood there in complete silence. She finally realized that this was her fairytale ending and the beginning of her happily ever after. Her mom had finally told her she loved her and got her life together. She met the sister she never had and had gotten to build a relationship with her as well. And as she turned to look at Jameson she realized her Prince in a blue shirt finally showed up after all. Yes her dreams were all becoming true, one at a time. She couldn't be any happier.

Plans

* * *

Rose Labouche spent the following weeks basking in the warm waters of her newfound contentment. She spent her days at Day Dreams, softly humming and gazing serenely at the ring encircling her finger, counting all the promises of the future—the white dress, the delicate wedding, the protection of Jameson’s eternal embrace as they happily drifted into old age surrounded by the love of her reunited family.

In the evenings she and Ellie Labouche would flip eagerly through bridal magazines, cutting out pictures of elaborate floral arrangements and towering lace-encrusted cakes, assembling from them a pastel-colored collage of expectations.

Rose deserved this. She had traversed the emotional desert of her childhood, had slain the dragon of her isolation, had forged a castle from the jagged stones of her past, and now, as the heroine of her own story, was ready to reside in the comforts of the home that awaited her.

“Day Dreams may be my job,” she mused, “but I am living my fairytale. Mrs. Rose Chabot... not bad!”

A date was set for late in the Summer, and while Rose's heart ached at how far away that felt, she knew there was much to be done. There were dresses to buy and locations to book and guests to be listed.

Rose and Ellie's wedding binders bulged until, unable to hold another brilliant idea, the collages started to spill from the pages and all over the tiny apartment. Pictures—of mason jars and votive candles, of sparkling silver cake stands and crystal chandeliers, wildflower bouquets and plush red carpets covered with softly fallen flower petals, and of dresses in every shade of white—littered every surface. It was as if all of the cluttered contents of Rose's mind came loose from her head and fell out her ears onto the floor.

Jameson found his young fiancée's unfettered fervor endearing. He felt blessed that God had sent him, such a simple man, such a demure and devoted woman to walk hand in hand with in His heavenly light. On his visits to her, he would make a space for himself amidst the sea of scrap paper and settle in to listen to her talk.

Rose talked endlessly and enthusiastically of wedding plans, and he would smile and nod, not quite listening, but letting her words form a babbling brook that flowed through his brain. Talk of table runners and typography for the invitations became a comfortable white

noise over which he played out the simple joys of their future lives.

“Lilac or lavender?” she would ask, and he would reply with a noncommittal, “Whichever you think, my dearest,” before promptly falling back into his thoughts. Rose’s happiness was Jameson’s only objective, and he knew that whatever decisions she came to regarding the wedding would be the right ones, so long as it led them to the altar together.

Jameson’s quiet deference to Rose’s wedding wishes seemed to stoke the intense bridal fire that burned inside of her. What began as a rather humble affair, involving only their small family and the few work acquaintances with which they occasionally associated, began to grow in size and ostentation.

Rose Labouche, despite being relatively new to Alvion City, became increasingly certain that the story of her life deserved a wedding befitting of a long-suffering protagonist such as herself, and that the whole city of Alvion should be present to celebrate her triumph. The longer Rose’s guest list grew, the evermore extravagant her desires became. As the number of invited guests doubled, then tripled, and then quadrupled, daisies were deemed inferior to orchids and glass, an unacceptable alternative to real crystal. And still Jameson acquiesced.

He began to search for a second job, reasoning that any amount of work was preferable to curbing even a single one of his beloved's requests.

As the weeks wore on, Rose would babble endlessly to everyone and no one in particular. Ellie would sit cross-legged on the floor, absently flipping through the wedding tomes that had begun in such optimistic earnestness. Their mother, hunched over the table, would gaze into the bottom of her wineglass with the same vacant stare that Rose had seen her wear all those years of sitting at the kitchen table.

All the while Rose would prattle, "We absolutely must have a monogrammed linen stationary set. And a string quartet. And the finest champagnes! No one will remember a wedding unless it has the finest champagnes! Oh and of course an ice sculpture. How could I forget the ice sculpture? Naturally the ice sculpture will be of me. Or maybe a swan. Or maybe me holding a swan? Or what if it's an ice sculpture of me as a swan? Like a swan princess. I absolutely must have a life sized ice sculpture of myself as a beautiful fairy swan princess or this wedding will literally be an absolute disaster."

"You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours," Jameson Chabot would repeat to himself as he dragged his weary body from job to job. His

feet and back screamed in agony, his eye sockets became sunken and yellow, but the thought of Rose's smiling face soothed his mind and gave him the strength to press onward. "There is no price too high to pay for the privilege of binding my eternal spirit to Rose's in the glorious eyes of our Lord," he would think to himself as another excruciating workday came to a close. He was certain that he beloved one's heart was worth every sacrifice.

Hard work

* * *

“Lobster!” Rose Labouche exclaimed suddenly one evening while she and Jameson Chabot sat quietly stabbing at Chinese takeout.

“Huh?” Jameson said, roused out of his near comatose state of exhaustion.

“We need lobster for the guests, obviously.”

“I’m allergic to shellfi—“ Jameson started trying to explain, but Rose, caught up in her own grandiose thoughts, continued.

“Not just lobster but oysters and crab legs and abalone. An entire shellfish smorgasbord!”

“But I’m allergic to—“

Rose wasn’t listening. Sometimes she didn’t care what he was saying, just like now.

“You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours.” Jameson clung to it throughout the course of his grueling 16-hour workdays. “Blessings

and prosperity will be ours. Blessings and prosperity will be ours.”

The invitations were sent and the cost of the wedding continued to soar. Jameson, unable to fit any more work hours into his days, turned to Rose’s mother.

“I don’t know what to do. I know my hard work will earn me God’s blessing and Rose’s love, but despite His kindness, I simply don’t know how I’m going to pay for all of this,” he softly explained.

Lyanne Labouche took a long drink from her glass of wine and looked somewhere far away.

“I made her this way,” she mumbled sadly under her breath.

“Ma’am?”

She looked Jameson in the eye. “I’ll help you pay for the wedding,” she said clearly.

Jameson was taken aback. “Bless you, my future mother. Surely your family has been sent to me directly from Our Father as a test to prove my worthiness. I will devote my life to making your daughter happy.”

“Maybe there’s a chance for one of us,” Mrs. Labouche muttered as she took another long pull from her

glass.

“Ma’am?” Jameson asked.

“Never mind.”, replied Rose's mom with a mysterious air.

Salty drops

* * *

With the wedding imminent, Rose Labouche abandoned her job at the bakery entirely. Instead she spent her days counting calories, laying in the sun, and hiring and firing florist and caterer one after the other. Her skin grew darker and her waistline grew smaller as the expense of the wedding continued to grow larger.

She rarely saw Jameson, and she used the fleeting moments they spent together between his jobs demanding finer and finer things. Her mother rarely spoke, occupying her mouth instead with an ever-present glass of wine. Ellie hadn't been home in days, but the absence of the maid of honor went unnoted.

The day of the wedding dawned beautifully. A day to remember for everyone in that city. Jameson Chabot, despite his utter exhaustion, felt elated to finally walk down the plush red velvet aisle runners and leave the cathedral finally as man and wife. With the wedding behind them, they could begin their real lives together as humble servants of the Lord.

When the time came, Jameson looked down the aisle, eagerly awaiting the appearance of his soon to be bride. As Rose rounded the corner he was awed by her beauty. In layer upon layer of delicate white lace and beadwork she was a vision to behold and he looked into her eyes, expecting to see the image of her beaming face from his dreams come to life. What he found instead in his beloved's expression was a contorted mix of rage, embarrassment, and sadness.

“Why isn't she happy? This was the day that she has dreamed of for so long,” he thought. As she slowly approached the altar and he lifted up her delicate veil he could see the tears streaming down her cheeks. Each swollen, salty drop that fell left a line on her cheek where her makeup had been. “I do,” he heard himself automatically say, and when Rose's turn came she sniffled and whimpered a meek, “I do,” and with that they were married.

Two months passed and Mr. and Mrs. Chabot found themselves in their cramped, sparsely furnished studio apartment.

“I hate you!” Rose screamed at Jameson.

“You don't mean that, my love. Remember Proverbs 10:12, ‘Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love—’”

“Don’t give me your Biblical bullshit. It’s your fault no one came to the wedding. All your fault. You didn’t even notice that the cathedral was practically empty. How could you?”

“I see nothing but you, my love. All else is—“

“Just shut up! You lazy, worthless loser. It’s all God and love with you, but look where we are. In a rattrap shithole with hardly anything to eat.”

“You will eat the fruit of—“

“SHUT THE FUCK UP. I don’t want to see your worthless face,” Rose sneered as she stormed out of the apartment.

As she rode the bus to her mother’s, Rose stared out the window at the people of Alvion. Those were the people that snubbed her, that humiliated her, that had robbed her of the fairy swan princess wedding that she had rightfully earned through her struggle.

“I hate them,” she thought to herself. “I hate every last one of them. And I hate Jameson and Ellie and everyone else that ruined my wedding.”

Upon arriving at Mrs. Labouche’s apartment, which was even smaller and dingier than her own, Rose found her mother sitting at the tiny table, staring out the window

with a glass of wine in front of her.

“YOU did this to me, you bitch!” Rose screamed as she entered the apartment.

Her mother sat silently for a moment before saying quietly, “Please, Rose. Not again. Not today.”

“I was supposed to be a princess. I deserve to be a princess!”

Her mother took a long sip of wine before answering, almost inaudibly, “I thought that too.”

“You don’t deserve anything, you old bat. I would have been better off never having a mother. You’ve never cared about my happiness. No one has ever cared about my happiness.”

Another sip of wine. Another long silence.

“Well, bitch. Tell me. What do you have to say for yourself?”

“Have you heard from Ellie?” , asked Lyanne.

Rose released a guttural, blood-curdling scream and rushed out of the apartment, slamming the door behind her.

Arriving back at her own home, Rose screamed, “Don’t even try to talk to me, Jameson. You don’t deserve me. You never deserved me.” She didn’t hesitate a single minute to look at him.

Instead of hearing Jameson’s spineless, whimpering voice reciting some contrived verse, Rose’s anger was met with silence. Again she screamed out, “I f*cking hate you!”

But as she turned the corner into the cramped little kitchenette the sight of a swollen, purple figure crumpled on the ground confronted her. Next to the figure was an assortment of partly eaten clams, lobster, and crab that had been left over from the wedding and frozen for future meals. She fell to her knees next to it, sobbing into her hands.

“I deserved better than this,” she chanted over and over again as she rocked her body back and forth on the floor.

Cheap wine

* * *

The paramedics that responded to the 911 call found Rose Chabot sitting at a small, rickety table. She seemed not to even notice their presence, or the presence of the bloated corpse of her young husband.

“Are you okay, Ma'am?”, asked one of them. No answer. She just continued staring blankly out the window with vacant eyes, clutching a glass of cheap wine in one hand.

“Ma'am, looks like a pretty straightforward case of anaphylactic shock caused by a shellfish allergy.”, said the man dressed in white.

Without averting her eyes from the window, Rose responded flatly, “Huh. I didn't know he was allergic to shellfish.”

A month later, while packing up her few worldly possessions to move in with her mother, Rose stumbled across a note scrawled on the monogrammed linen stationary originally meant for writing thank-you notes. Dated the day of Jameson's death, it read simply:

No wickedness comes anywhere near the wickedness of a woman. Sin began with a woman and thanks to her we all must die.

The Authors

Bethany Hughes. Major in Communication Studies and Religious Studies. I chose to write a chapter about hackers and hacker culture because it seemed like this area in cyberculture was underrepresented in the mainstream media. Many people have misconceptions about what it means to be a "hacker", and I felt that it was relevant to reinvent the conception of this word by busting the myths surrounding it. I am interested in cyberculture because it is so prevalent in the daily lives of most people in the world today. There have been many times that my behavior has reflected the effects of cyberculture, and I had no idea of its impact on me until I took a class on it. Since I've taken this course, I've been able to put my experiences into words, and I can describe the world of the Internet in a way that is easy to comprehend. Whenever someone asks me about my life goals, I'm usually taken aback. I know that I should be more prepared for this question, but somehow I never am. If I were to put my life goals into words, then I think it would be sufficient to say that I aspire to be a good person. I want to give back to the people that give to me. Whether I accomplish this goal by doing something big or something small, I live for the satisfaction of knowing that my life has been lived for the benefit of others.

Candra Hall. Major in Popular Culture Studies and Minor in Folk Studies. I chose Cyberculture not only because it is an upper-level class that counts as an elective for my major, but because I consider myself to be a relatively well-educated citizen of the Internet, and I find the way that the rise and proliferation of the web is constantly changing our culture in a way that is both visible and and tangible, and ways that we cannot even begin to fathom yet, absolutely fascinating. The internet has become the most powerful driving force behind popular culture, and as such has serious and direct implications on our future as a society and a species. In the future I would like to go to graduate school for library science or some sort of museum or curatorial program. My dream job is to work for public radio as a librarian or archivist. I think that understanding and preserving our culture is the only way to continue to move forward and build a better future.

Chris McHargue. Major in Film Studies with a minor in Communication studies. My goal in life is to combine my passion for video production and what Jesus Christ has done in my life.

Cody Wooten. Major in Popular Culture Studies and Marketing. I choose Cyberbullying because it's an issue that is costing young lives, and I intend on not just

highlighting the issue, but providing creative and effective solutions. My goal in life is to become a musician and help create education and awareness for serious issues that can have severe consequences in regards to cyberculture.

Donald Simpson. Major in Communication Studies.

Donnie McHenry, Jr. Major in Communications with a minor in sales. I chose to write about online prostitution because I wanted people to see how we have evolved with technology and are finding ways to use the internet for every day uses. I have a very high interest in cyberculture because I think that it's something many people tend to not really pay attention to but it plays such a huge role in our everyday life. My goals in life are to go into sales and become successful.

Elyse Madigan. Major in communication studies and minor in international business. I chose cyberstalking because of its importance and relevance in today's digital world. My goal in life is to become a successful lawyer.

Ethan T. Mefford. Major in Communication Studies. I chose CyberArt because I am an ardent supporter of the humanities. Art is fundamental to any culture; creativity fuels innovation and development. Art in Cyberculture encourages the free expression of ideas on the interminable space of the internet, and I think that this

attitude will help broaden the possibilities for the public domain, both online and otherwise. My personal goals are to foster inclusive and hopeful ideologies in those around me, and to build a harmonious life for myself.

Hannah Burd. Major in Corporate Communications. I chose Cyber racism because I am against racism and discrimination. I hope I can do my part in changing the way people in our society thinks of each other. I have loved Cyberculture. I believe everyone needs to learn about it because our generation is evolving into where everything is technology based and social media is taking over. I learn many secrets about the web and the people behind it.

Isabelle Fuster. Major in Interdisciplinary Studies with a focus in Art. I chose cyber dating because it is a growing phenomenon in today's society. It is interesting to see how people are now meeting in such an informal way and making relationships work that last for lifetimes. I would like to learn more about the psychology behind cyberculture, studying the effects it has on all different aspects of life. My goals in life are to be happy! To live my life to the fullest and to never do anything because of money, but instead because I'm passionate about it. I want to travel more, eat more, dabble with organic farming and be a curator or promote local artists. The possibilities are endless.

Jeffrey Walker. Major in Psychology & Communication Studies. Cyberculture is important to me because technology is a growing entity and will become more important and influential in our everyday lives. I will go on to get my Masters Degree in Psychology and then my Doctorate and become a Psychologist.

Jonathan Martin. Major in Communication Studies. The topic that I chose was Social Networks and the reason I chose it was because I see great value in social networks. I also see the harm that it can do. I personally use social networking all the time for a variety of things such as planning events, keeping up with students in my ministry, and more. Therefore, it is very useful to me. At the same time, I hate to see others misuse this great tool which leads to nothing good. I am interested in Cyberculture because it deals with the primary means of how we communicate in today's society. It helps us to gain a better understanding of the technology we use and the billions of websites we visit on a daily basis. My goals in life are to first get my bachelor's degree in Communication Studies from WKU this May. Then, I will be getting married in August and hope to have a job as a full-time youth minister at a church by that time. I also hope to first get accepted and then to achieve my Master of Divinity Degree in Christian Ministry from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I hope to one day be a father as well.

Jordan Smith. Major in Communication studies. Internet addiction is something I recently heard about. I never thought someone could actually be addicted to the internet. Maybe very very fond of it, but not clinically diagnosed with an addiction to it. This peaked my interest. My goals in life are to be successful in what ever career path I choose and live comfortably.

Maggie Riney. Major in Communication Studies with a minor in Creative Writing. I chose to speak about censorship in the web because I am very interested in electronic censorship, especially in Asian countries. My goal in life is to teach English in South Korea after I graduate in December.

Minh Dao. Major in Communication Studies. I am interested in Cyberculture because I want to learn about the issues related to the Internet and how the Internet has changed the way we communicate, feel, and think. I chose to write about Collective Intelligence because I think it has become an important social phenomenon that needs to be addressed and informed. I have set many goals in life and hopefully I will make them all come true. For now, I want to have a successful career in Human Resources Development, to be an influential public figure, to make the world a better place, to travel around the world, to own beautiful houses near the beach and mountain, and to have

a happy family with a wonderful husband and beautiful children.

Monet Becker. Major in Communication Studies. I chose this major because I have always been intrigued by the methods in which people communicate and why. I hope to use my degree and go work abroad in Volkswagen's marketing department in Germany or for Volkswagen USA. I chose to write about web radio because I am an avid user of most all popular web radio sites, and the history of web radio interested me.

Paige Drazga. Major in communications with a minor in marketing and media & convention planning. I found Cyberculture to be very interesting because it shows you that the web is more than what meets the eye. People all around the world access the web which means they are as close as the click of a button. My future goals are to graduate from Western Kentucky University and eventually become an event coordinator for a major corporation.

Patrick Sparks. Major in Communication Studies. I chose this topic because I had no idea what it was, and it sounded interesting to research. My goal in life is to find a way to sustain happiness.

Peej Packer. Major in Communication Studies, with two minors in Broadcasting and Sales. I chose the topic of Netiquette because electronic communication is still a fairly new concept, compared to other forms of communication. In a sense, netiquette is the nonverbal cues of computer-mediated communication and it should be considered when posting on social media, sending e-mails, composing blogs, etc. Netiquette is only a small component of cyberculture and my interest goes far beyond this one aspect. Cyberculture is truly a fascinating way to think about the internet and how our world has changed because of this culture.

Robert Greenleaf. Major in Corporate & Organizational Communication. I chose cyber activism because I am very interested in that subject matter and how it relates to communication. My goal in life is to develop an appreciation for living in the moment.

About the Editor

Riverson Rios is an associate professor with the Instituto de Cultura e Arte of the Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC) in Fortaleza, Brazil, where he's been teaching since 1986. He has a Ph.D. in Computer Science from the University of Ottawa, Canada (1998), a Master's degree in Computer Science from the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (1987) and a B.Sc. in Computer Science from UFC in 1983. He is the editor of three other books, and the author of four book chapters and eighty free full papers. Fluent in English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish, he decided to learn Russian only recently, being *любовь* his favorite word. His main areas of interest include cyberculture, digital photography, web advertising and free software. When not doing research at the university, he can be seen playing on the sandy dunes of Fortaleza with his three kids and wife or practicing his beloved volleyball. This academic year prof. Rios is on a leave of absence from his home institution, interacting with new friends at the Western Kentucky University in snowy Bowling Green, where a part of his heart will always be.