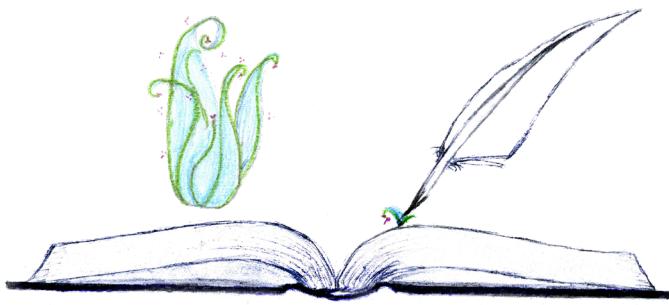




Wheaton College | FALL 2017



SUB~CREATION

Wheaton College | Fall 2017

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WhInklings



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Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

You are about to partake in the creative genius of some of Wheaton College's own fiction writers. Whether it be through the spectacular artwork or the riveting narratives, I hope you will enjoy these stories as much as I do.

I give special thanks to Claire Reck for editing this issue with me, and to Beth Potterveld for giving me this opportunity to work with *Sub-Creation* before I graduate. And as always, this publication is greatly indebted to Laura Schmidt and the many wonderful people in WhInklings and the Tolkien society.

Without further ado, enjoy!

Your fellow writer,
Jon Frevola

CONTRIBUTORS

Caroline “Chewie” Snyder (’17)

Chewie, a native of the Smaber lobby, enjoys drawing comics and writing fiction. She doesn’t remember exactly how she ended up joining WhInklings, but is certainly glad she did. Though she graduated last year, she is still a valuable part of our WhInklings community through the Internet.

Claire Reck (’18)

Claire is a senior English major. Her favorite genre to write is poetry, and her favorite genres to read are poetry and fiction. She can often be found with a blanket and a good book. She enjoys being a part of the WhInklings, and also served as an editor in this edition.

Carolyn Greco (’18)

Dual citizen of Numenor and of the Realm Eternal, currently a student of English Lit. She likes writing fairytales and drawing fan art, and is also a big fan of tea and cake.

Cross Country Dragon Riding by Caroline “Chewie” Snyder

As I barreled through the desert air of the Mojave Desert on the back of a two-ton, flying lizard, I thought to myself, “There really ought to be a rulebook on how to do this.” We had a long ways yet to go on our road trip, so I decided to pass the time by (mentally) writing that rulebook myself.

The first rule of riding a dragon cross country is to always wear a helmet. Not that wearing a helmet would do you much good at this height if you fell; it’s more to protect your head from debris and insects you might run into. And it has to be one of those fancy motorbiking helmets with a face shield, or else you have to wear lab goggles and a bandana around your face, and trust me, that would get uncomfortable. Luckily, Sam had a spare helmet for me when he picked me up off the side of that lonely highway in Oklahoma. I highly recommend wearing thick jeans and a leather jacket as well.

The second rule is to know what your dragon eats, and to make sure you have access to plenty of it along the way. After all, this is a long way for a dragon to fly. Some dragons prefer to eat grass or hay; those are fairly easy dragons to take cross country. If your dragon eats fruit or meat, it’s probably not the dragon for the journey. Sam’s dragon, believe it or not, drinks gasoline. So as long as we

were flying along the path of a highway, we had access a plenty to food for it. We'd get some weird looks at the gas station, but you get used to it. At the end of the day, Sam's dragon probably gets better gas mileage than any car I've ever driven.

The third rule is to know exactly where you are and where you're going, at all times. As tempting as it may be to set out and just fly wherever your heart leads you, you can't do that. You'll end up hopelessly lost somewhere, and if that somewhere is in the middle of the desert or over the Rockies, you could die of exposure before you find civilization. The safest bet is to follow highways; for most of our journey, we followed the interstates that replaced Route 66.

The fourth rule is to realize that taking a dragon cross country is not as glamourous as it sounds. I've been in a lot of tight and sketchy places on my hitchhiking journey, but all the strange truck drivers and cramped semi-truck cabs felt downright cozy compared to traveling by dragon. Flying on a dragon's back, the wind is in your face and blowing your clothes around all day. You can basically only take what you can carry on your back, which worked out fine for me, since I only had a single bag. And you'll need one of those dorky backpacks that clips in the front if you don't want your backpack to blow away. Sam was kind enough to buy one for me at a Walmart down the road from where he picked me up. Oh yeah, and if you like staying in hotels at night, you better prepare yourself to become the camping type. You can't keep a dragon in a hotel.

The fifth rule of riding a dragon cross country

is kind of the opposite of the fourth: appreciate it for what it is. There are a million and one hassles you'll encounter along the way, and it's so easy to miss the beauty of the journey. I know that last rule may sound kind of superfluous, but I really believe it may be the most important of them all. Because as I sat there, making my list of all the bizarre inconveniences I'd faced over the past few days, I realized how easy it was to become entirely negative about the experience. And in that moment, as we zoomed over a 360-degree panorama of brick reds, dusty oranges, and gleaming sand yellows, I knew that every single difficulty that came with traveling by dragon was absolutely worth it. If you think the Mojave Desert is beautiful from the car, you can't even begin to imagine it from the air. Out in the open, I could feel the wisps of warm, sandy air wrapping around my legs, rising toward my shoulders, and drying the tips of my nostrils. On either side of road, I could see miles and miles of small, snarled shrubs, spreading out over the great expanse below me toward the striped mountains lining the horizon. In a car, you could see the scenery; on the back of a dragon, you felt it.

There was no question in my mind; riding a dragon cross country was hands-down the best experience of my life. When I first hitched a ride with Sam, I wondered why he chose to ride his dragon all the way to LA, rather than simply popping her in the back of a truck and driving. But now I understood, and I knew if I had a dragon, I would choose to ride it every time. By that point in my journey, I considered myself a dragon riding expert. My legs were accustomed to spending hours upon hours

strapped into the saddle. My skin felt natural barreling 50mph through the sky. Any trace of a fear of heights was left back in Texas or New Mexico. If I could ride dragons for a living, I thought, I would take that job in a heartbeat. But really, I would take any job in a heartbeat. I had no idea what I was going to do once I got to LA.

Since I was a kid, I had promised myself that the moment I turned eighteen, I would travel around the country. I had been in the Midwest my entire life; I had to see something else. And where else better to start than sunny Southern California? So here I was, eighteen years and twenty days old, riding the back of a dragon over the deserts of Arizona, so far from my home. It was a miracle I'd made it this far unscathed. It was a miracle I'd found Sam when I did. He was the best ride I could have asked for, even if his method of transport was unconventional. For a man who preferred the company of dragons, he sure was a caring guy.

Interrupting my inner monolog, Sam leaned over his shoulder and asked, "I have to say, you seem to be quite the natural dragon rider, doing as well as you are with only a few days under your belt. Have you ever considered becoming a dragon egg deliverer?"*

*This is the introduction to a larger story.



“Peridot” by Carolyn Greco



“The Child’s Muse”
by Carolyn Greco

Coyote Hears Her Howl

by Claire Reck

When Cactus Rose was born in the low-lying lands to the east, her fist didn't reach for her mother's fingers, but towards the rare Rose Devil's Claw cactus, the blossoms an alluring yellow but the needles painful. The sting made her cry, but after her mother whispered soothing words into her newly-formed ear, Cactus Rose reached for the flowers again, earning her name. As Cactus Rose grew stronger, her mother grew weaker and died soon after giving birth to the daughter she had always longed for.

Cactus Rose grew from a soft, red-cheeked baby into a rough-skinned child. She roamed the desert with her older brothers, Ankole, and Fennec. Together they counted every hare, lizard, and snake that dared to venture from the shade of one cactus to another. She played in the sand so often that it became a part of her skin, until her chores at home increased, and she was no longer allowed to play with the younger children.

At every ceremony marking a new stage in Cactus Rose's life, Grandmother would speak of the ancient myth of the flower for which Cactus Rose was named. The flowers of the Rose Devil's Claw cactus were said to possess healing proper-

ties and even to have the ability to return someone from the afterlife for a terrible price. Each time she told the story, Grandmother would say that only the evil spirits knew the cost. Such knowledge was not for mortals.

The only times that Cactus Rose felt truly happy were when Grandmother told myths of their ancestors by the fire. The tales were filled with bravery and cowardice, daring deeds, tragic deaths, and the actions of the spirits who tricked or helped humans according to their own whims. The flames seemed to form characters and scenes as she listened, until with the last curl of wind, the fire died and Grandmother's voice with it.

Though Cactus Rose loved each new story, the ones that she would ask to hear over and over again were the myths of Coyote who stalked the desert at night, devouring creatures and sharpening his fangs on the points of cactus needles. As the originator of death, Coyote not only preyed on small creatures, but also prevented human souls of the dying from returning to life. Whenever wind whistled through the cacti or created a sandstorm, Grandmother would nod her head knowingly and say that a spirit was wandering the desert, on its way to the afterlife, hunted by Coyote.

When many sand storms had passed and Cactus Rose could no longer be called a child, her people were plagued by a stealthy predator. Each night, the men would set traps and watch over their animals with keen eyes. Each morning, an unhappy man lost one of his prized goats, in return gaining the markings of paw prints and streaks of blood. The men knew from the shape of the prints that they

were left by a predator, but nevertheless they were amazed at the size and pressure of the markings. If the rest of the animal were a proportionate size, he would be the length of two fully-grown men and weigh as much as a year's supply of food.

After three goats had been killed, the chosen leaders called a council. "We've been victims of this creature for too long," one official said, pounding his fist. "It's time for us to do more than sit idly by, watching for the thief who steals our food."

"Hear, hear!" the warrior representative cried. "We must form a hunt. We've wasted too much time already."

A third moaned, "We're all going to starve. How can we kill this beast if we haven't even seen it?"

As the head official, Cactus Rose's father, Xerocole, stood in front of the people and listened attentively. When every man had spoken, he waited several minutes before giving an answer. There was an understood silence in the tent until he spoke.

"I have considered the matter, and listened to your opinions. In six days, there will be a hunt formed of every man—" he trailed off.

A few of the men followed his gaze towards the back corner of the tent, but they were packed so tightly together, that it was impossible to see more than the faces of those standing directly behind them. When Xerocole picked up where he had left off, there was a faint wrinkle above his eyes which hadn't been there before, and he spoke in a clipped manner.

"—of every man who is of age to be a warrior. We will not rest until this beast has been killed.

If one of us suffers, we all suffer. As neighbors and brothers, we will help those among us who have lost goats by sharing food and milk. No one's bowl will be dry, nor plate be empty."

The men jostled one another as they exited the tent. None of them observed the small figure standing a few feet away from the entrance, wearing a beaded red headband. Once all the leaders had gone, Xerocole approached the figure with crossed arms and tightened jaw.

The only noise was the harsh rasp of sand grains outside as the wind picked up. Xerocole's voice had a similar sound when he spoke.

"My own daughter sneaking into a private council meeting. I don't have the words to express how disappointed I am in you."

Cactus Rose bit her lip, then studied the straps of her sandals. They were beginning to fray. She should ask Grandmother to repair them soon. At last, she looked up and met his eyes.

"Let me go on the hunt. I'm as strong as any of the men. I can help defend our land."

Xerocole was already shaking his head. "No. We've had this conversation before, and after your behavior today, I'm amazed at your audacity to ask again. You are never to go on a hunt, and under no circumstances are you to enter this tent without my permission. Is that understood?"

Cactus Rose kicked the sandy floor and watched the particles float through the air without looking up. "Yes."

"What?"

"I said, 'yes.'"

"Watch your tone."

"Can I go now?"

Xerocole pressed his hand to his forehead. "Yes, you may leave." For some time afterwards, he stood in this position, watching the sand outside with the same expression that Cactus Rose had when she watched the sand at her feet.

Cactus Rose's two brothers were among the warriors chosen for the hunt, and the day before they were to leave, they talked of nothing else. Then, she wished herself away from her Grandmother's watchful eyes, one blue and one brown, which seemed to follow her everywhere. She longed to slip among the men unnoticed. Instead, she spent her day tending to the sheep, goats, and cattle, while her brothers boasted about the glory of their task.

"I've heard that the predator's mouth is as large as our tent opening and that it swallows goats whole," bragged her youngest brother, Fennec, putting on a show of bravado. His nervous habit of tugging on one of his comically-oversized ears gave away his true feelings.

Her eldest brother, Ankole, added, "Its tail must be the size of the saguaro cactus and its teeth sharp enough to break every bone in an animal's body with one bite. Generations from now, they will speak of us in awe as having killed the most fearsome creature that ever roamed the desert."

That night, Cactus Rose's sleep was troubled. She saw waves of sand in every direction, their heat distorting the horizon line. She noticed a dark spot in the distance and set off towards it. When she looked up, she was face-to-face with Coyote of Grandmother's myths. He would destroy all of her people. She saw Coyote's empty black eyes com-

ing towards her, saw the points of his teeth separate, ready to rip her throat. She shut her eyes and waited for death. She could feel Coyote grip her arm.

“Cactus Rose.”

The voice was surprisingly human. How did he know her name?

“Wake up, Rose,” the voice insisted.

Cactus Rose forced her eyes half-open to see a blurry figure above her. After a moment, her eyes focused, and she identified the figure, not as Coyote, but as Grandmother. She stood up too quickly, and everything went dark as the blood rushed back to her head. Had the men left for the hunt yet? Had she missed her chance warn them about Coyote?

There was no time to waste. Without a word to Grandmother, Cactus Rose tied her headband over her mess of tangled hair without bothering to fasten it properly, and rushed outside in search of Xerocole. She ran down the row of neighboring tents without luck. At last, she reached the council tent. Struggling to open the flap, she cursed under her breath before abruptly stumbling into the room, nearly knocking over the men nearest to the entrance. All eyes in the room turned to her. Her father stood on a slightly raised platform, mouth agape, whatever words he had been about to speak stilled on his tongue.

Cactus Rose took a moment to brush sand from her robe and readjust her headband, which had fallen off in her sprint. She attempted to make herself more presentable by tucking a few loose strands into it. Instead, they stubbornly clung to the

light layer of sweat on her forehead.

Now that she had her opportunity to talk to the council, she couldn't remember what she had come to say. The dreadful silence seemed to last forever. As the council members stared at her, she was painfully aware of every speck of sand or dirt on her body, every wrinkle in her attire, and every blemish on her face.

A nearby goat bleated. Many of the council members jumped at the noise. Xerocole stepped down from his platform to address his daughter.

"Is there a danger or injury at home?"

"No, sir."

"Then what," he asked, his voice alarmingly quiet, "gives you permission to interrupt a private council meeting for the second time?"

Facing her father's anger and the curious expressions on the majority of the faces in the room, Cactus Rose was no longer certain that her message was important. Perhaps it had only been a dream that was the result of listening to too many of Grandmother's stories. She had been foolish to come here.

Despite her doubts, it was too late to back down now.

"I had a vision about the hunt."

"You had a vision?"

Cactus Rose frowned at the insinuation that she was telling a falsehood.

"Yes, I did."

"And would you care to tell us about this event, which is apparently more important than obedience?"

Cactus Rose's throat felt as though it were

closing up. She fought the urge to cough.

"I was in the desert, and I followed some plants to find water. I came face-to-face with Coyote at a stream, and he told me that he's the animal you're trying to hunt. That is, he didn't actually tell me, but somehow I knew. Then I woke up."

As she was talking, she didn't make eye contact with anyone, but now she looked up, scanning the faces of the councilmen for validation. Most of them averted their stares when she tried to catch their eye. There were snickers, and a few of them were trying unsuccessfully to hide smiles. They looked first to one another and then to Xerocole, whose stern expression caused the laughter to die on their tongues. At last, the room was silent once more, and he spoke.

"In this vision, you say that you met Coyote of the ancient myths."

"Yes, sir. It makes sense. The claw marks we've seen look like a coyote's. I've been roaming the desert for years, and I know by now the different markings of every animal."

"Let me see if I understand you correctly. You interrupted a council meeting to alert us that we are about to go after a mythical creature, and you based this knowledge on one of your dreams, though you've never had a vision before?"

Cactus Rose felt heat rush to her ears and didn't answer.

"We will discuss this later." Xerocole motioned for her to leave. She obeyed, plodding back to the family tent.

Not even the long list of tasks which Grandmother gave her could distract Cactus Rose. Her

brothers returned from making their preparations. Out of boredom, they teased her without mercy.

Ankole pulled her hair. "Wouldn't you like to be in my sandals? Dung beetle has to stay at home."

Grandmother intervened.

"The three of you go find your father and help gather supplies for the hunt. Leave your sister alone."

With her three brothers out of the tent, Cactus Rose felt lonelier than ever. While they were there, she had held out a small hope that perhaps one of them would see that she could be useful and allow her to accompany them. The warriors would leave any minute now. She would never have another opportunity to hunt such a creature. It wasn't fair! She scrubbed the bowl she was holding with more force than she usually would.

Grandmother stood up from her chair. Wisps of her white hair appeared almost blue in the sunlight.

"Rosey, would you like to help milk the goats?"

An indecipherable mumble was the only response. Grandmother went outside alone.

Cactus Rose attempted unsuccessfully to push the flat strands of hair stuck to her forehead out of her eyes with her forearm. She huffed in frustration. The clay bowl slipped out of her hands and shattered on a small rock. As she picked up the final piece of pottery, Cactus Rose noticed a thin line of blood across her palm. Her stream of tears subsided as she bandaged the cut. Her conscience pricked her for her rudeness. She should have helped with the goats. Perhaps she could make amends now.

"Grandmother?" Cactus Rose called, as she walked toward the animal pen.

There was no answer but pitiful bleating.

A few feet away, Grandmother's footprints were joined with a set of claw marks and then disappeared altogether. The claw marks continued into the distance as far as Cactus Rose could see, and in the sand beside them was a trench with a red trail in the bottom of it. Upon closer inspection, Cactus Rose could see that the trail was a pool of blood.

She covered her mouth with her hand and turned away to avoid being sick to her stomach. None of the goats appeared injured, and Grandmother was nowhere to be seen. Grandmother, though not crippled, was slow to move and not strong. She couldn't have walked out of sight on her own.

Cactus Rose wasn't sure how long she stood there, but at last her mind cleared enough that she attempted to form a plan. The hunting party had already left. She would have to rescue Grandmother herself. This was her chance. She would show them all that she was fearless and strong.

She buried her face in one of the goat's fur for a moment, then stood and brushed sand from her knees. She grabbed a bag of whatever items were nearby—a water canteen, small blanket, and dried meat, and then set off.

Following the animal tracks proved to be less difficult than she had imagined it would be. Her early years of roaming the desert with her brothers had prepared her well. In places where wind shifted mounds of sand to cover the impressions, Cactus

Rose was able to follow the drops of blood.

Before long, the sun was directly overhead and the tent was out of sight. Sand fleas circled around Cactus Rose's face, stinging exposed skin. She gave up on trying to swat them away and accepted the blistering bites on the bridge of her nose.

Her desire for water overshadowed the nuisance of the pesky fleas. The supply in her canteen dwindled more quickly than she expected. Soon the mild discomfort of a scratchy throat would give way to the more unpleasant symptoms of headache and fatigue. The animal tracks which she had been following abruptly ended, and Cactus Rose considered whether she should try to pick up the trail further on or search for water first. Thirst won out.

Scanning the horizon, she saw a fuzzy, dark shape in the distance and set off towards it. If the shape turned out to be a cactus or an animal, that would indicate a source of water nearby. If a shelter, she would be guarded from direct sunlight. The dark form in the distance seemed oddly familiar. As she drew closer, she realized where she was.

She had never been to the lowlands, but she recognized them from Grandmother's stories. It was here that she was born among the Devil's Claw cacti. It was here that her mother died.

The wicked spines of the cacti appeared almost luminescent in the sun. Fragile yellow blossoms were barely beginning to open. She had never seen them before, but she had no difficulty recognizing them. Her Grandmother had often told Cactus Rose the story of how she got her name. Cactus Rose picked one of the flowers, almost without thinking.



She didn't notice the steeply sloping bank of sand until she had nearly fallen in, leaning back from the gaping void not a moment too soon. It appeared to be a cliff made of sand. As she walked the length of the drop-off, she noticed that the sides were oddly uniform, curving into a circle, despite the small handfuls of sand which crumbled from the edges. Smaller pits appeared in front of the large one. When she came upon an identical cliff a tent-length away from the first one, she understood.

"Coyote tracks!" she exclaimed aloud, though there was no one to witness her revelation. She felt a momentary surge of triumph. While Coyote may have invaded her camp in disguise, out here in the lowlands his true size was apparent.

An unexpected sound behind her made her jump. The faint hissing sounded like a child trying to whistle. She turned to face the threat but saw nothing. After what felt like an eternity of silence, the sound came again. A breeze blew strands of hair into her mouth. Oh. The sound was nothing more sinister than the wind moving through cacti thorns. A spirit on its journey to the afterworld, Grandmother would say. She felt as though a heavy stone had been placed on her chest. She tried to ignore the suspicion that had entered her mind.

For the first time, she realized the gravity of what she had done. She was alone in the desert with a beast which a hunting party of all the men in her camp had been unable to find, much less to kill. She could vividly remember the exaggerated, terrified expression Grandmother would make whenever she told a particularly gruesome tale about Coyote's kills. Grandmother, who braided her thick hair and knew the names of every type of cacti. She had to rescue Grandmother or die in the attempt.

She followed the gaping holes created by Coyote's strides, unconsciously gripping the flower she had plucked from one of the cacti tightly in her fist, crumpling its petals. Her sandals kicked up clouds of dust, which seemed to her to be plumes reaching the sky. She used to love the flatness of the landscape she lived in, but now it appeared to her to be a large platter serving her up as Coyote's next meal.

As Cactus Rose continued walking, her feet felt the coolness of a stream before she noticed that it was in her path. Every grain of sand, pebble, and fish was visible with perfect clarity. She would

have thought that she was looking at glass, had there not been a strong current carrying sediment downstream. As she kneeled down to drink, the water and sand around her turned dark. Cactus Rose was disoriented by the sudden change from burning heat to chilly shade. She wrapped her arms across her stomach for warmth, dreading to see what had made such a shadow, but her fear of the unknown was unbearable. She tilted her head towards the sky.

Coyote blocked out the sun but for a thin halo around his ears. His wispy, white fur appeared almost blue where the light touched it. He sat completely still on the opposite side of the stream, dry wind rustling through his fur. His eyes, one blue and one brown, captivated her.

Cactus Rose cautiously stepped further into the water. She knew that approaching Coyote was foolish, but something drew her towards him against her own better judgement. She made it to the other side of the stream and stood near enough that she could have reached out her arm to touch his enormous front leg. Neither moved; Girl and Coyote, the only two in the desert.

Without thinking, she dropped the flower she was holding. It hit the sand, and as she bent to retrieve it, Coyote lunged towards her. The moment that she touched it, however, Coyote paused mid-lunge, his teeth bared inches from her arm. She didn't dare move or breathe. One of the limp petals on the flower fell, and Coyote bit the air, but didn't attack.

Summoning what little courage she had left, Cactus Rose held out the flower and took a step

towards Coyote, who skulked away from her, ears flat against his bony head.

She continued to approach him, flower in hand. It seemed heavier now. Powerful.

"Grandmother, I see that you're entering the world of the dead, but you're not gone yet. I know your eyes. Coyote might have your soul, but I'm here to get it back."

As Cactus Rose approached, Coyote crouched in front of her, head between his paws. She summoned all the courage she had and placed the flower on top of them.

When the flower touched his fur, Coyote seemed to wilt—he faded away, losing hue, then substance, before disappearing altogether. In his place was a woman. She stood so still that Cactus Rose was afraid she was a statue, but then life entered her body, as her features gained color. In the place of the most fearsome creature ever to stalk the desert appeared Cactus Rose's own, dear Grandmother.

Cactus Rose ran to embrace her. Grandmother opened her arms and held her close, cradling the back of her head and smoothing her hair. Cactus Rose was filled with joy. That is, until Grandmother spoke. "My dear girl, what have you done?"

"I came to rescue you with the Devil's claw flower."

"You don't understand the consequences of what you've interfered with."

Cactus Rose was already shaking her head. "Don't say that. I would sacrifice anything for you."

"I know. But you would be a fool to do so."

Cactus Rose tucked a strand of hair behind

her ear. They stood an arms-length away from each other. At last, Grandmother hugged her again and said, "Let's go home."

The fatiguing journey to find Coyote was nothing compared to the return journey. Grandmother had to walk slowly, though she appeared younger and stronger than she ever had before. They rested many times in the shade of any cacti they could find, at Cactus Rose's insistence.

At last, they reached the familiar goat pen behind the family tent. The animals bleated a greeting, one of them butting her nose against their legs as if to ask where they had been. Cactus Rose milked them, then followed Grandmother into the tent. Dinner was a solemn event. Neither spoke before curling up on their own mats for the night.

Cactus Rose woke up before she realized that she had drifted into sleep. Her dreams were filled with coyotes whose legs reached the sky. The tent was dark, but she heard recognizable voices.

"Still in bed at this hour?"

Xerocole's voice was unmistakable.

"Dung beetle looks funny when she sleeps."

Ankole spoke at a dull roar. If she hadn't been awake already, she would be now. Fennec wasted no time before bragging.

"It was a coyote that killed all our livestock. We found it, alright. It was the size of a fully-grown cactus. You can't imagine how terrifying it was. The pelt alone weighs more than you do. Hold it."

She found a mass of fur and skin shoved into her lap. Running her hand along the length of it, she could feel that the pelt was no larger than that of any other coyote. She wasn't sure what color its

fur was. Why wasn't the sun coming through the cracks of the tent yet?

"How soon is the sun going to rise?"

No one answered her question. She felt someone sit on the ground beside her.

"It's midday."

Grandma put her arm around Cactus Rose's shoulders. Cactus Rose pushed it away.

"You're lying."

She wanted, more than believed, it to be true.

"Why are your eyes ugly?" Fennec protested when Ankole shushed him. "What? It's true. They look white. Only evil spirits have white eyes."

"No, they're more yellow than white," Ankole said.

"Why is everything dark?"

She knew the answer, but she needed to hear it confirmed aloud by someone else. Someone who was courageous enough to tell her the truth.

Xerocole gave the answer she was dreading in the form of a question.

"How is it that you have gone blind?"

Much to her own shame, Cactus Rose began to cry. Grandmother's arm went around her, and this time she let herself be held. She continued crying until she had no more tears. Then she placed her hands on the ground in front of her. She needed something solid in this terrifying darkness that she now had to live with. To her great surprise, her fingers brushed against something fragile and smooth.

Grandmother was still there beside her, and she was holding what could only be the thin petals

of a Devil's claw flower. Perhaps no one would understand her story, but it was hers to tell.

"In the lowlands where the cacti flowers bloom, Coyote makes his home..."

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- We welcome submissions from any member of the Wheaton College community, whether student, faculty, staff, or alum. Only two pieces from any one author may be submitted per issue.
- For copyright reasons, we must limit our published selection to original characters and worlds only. Please, no fan-fiction or fan-art.
- While the journal's main emphasis is on fiction, we will also consider poetry, non-fiction, essay, and art for publication.
- The journal will only publish genre fiction. The genres included are:
 - Science fiction
 - Fantasy
 - Mystery
 - Action/Adventure
 - Horror
 - Western
- We are interested in any mix of these or similar genres. If your piece falls under a genre we missed, please contact us and ask about it. We will most likely welcome your story!
- Short fiction is preferred, but chapters of longer stories may have the opportunity to be published serially.
- Essays and other non-fiction submissions may be on these genres themselves, authors who write in them, personal experiences with genres, reviews of popular works of genre fiction, etc.
- Art submissions must have as their main subject something to do with the target genres. Please submit your work as a high-resolution PDF.

Deadlines

Submission deadlines are:

- Fall semester—October 31
- Spring semester—March 17

We will accept submissions at any point during the semester, but only those submitted before the above dates will be considered for the current issue. Submissions should be e-mailed as attachments to *SubCreation@my.wheaton.edu*. If your piece is too big for an e-mail attachment, simply contact the same address for further instructions. Please include your full name and Wheaton e-mail address with your submission.

Contact Us

You can find out more about the journal and our community of writers at our website and our Facebook page. Just Google “Wheaton Sub-Creation,” and there we’ll be. Also feel free to e-mail us at *SubCreation@my.wheaton.edu*.

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