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# Written Works: Prose

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## *Friends in Passing*

by Emma Croft

Writing is something most people dread. They find it a stuffy project for stuffy people. A waste of time. A futile effort to say things that will inevitably mean nothing in the grand scheme of life. They hate it, and I hate it too. Truly. But not because it's stuffy, and I don't hate it because it's a waste of time, and my writing certainly isn't meaningless. I know mine will be remembered. It has to be. I would be out of a job if it wasn't a memorable experience.

No. I don't hate it for any of those reasons.

I dread writing because I will know people I've never met like dear friends. I write about them because it is what is expected of me. I will tell their stories, personality, and loves for others to remember as I never will. And, as their stories are being told to eager listeners, I will see faces that claim to know these friends. But they didn't. Not truly. Not like me. I am an outsider looking in on a life I had no right to commiserate but will love all the same. It's like meeting and losing someone in a matter of hours, but I'm not allowed to mourn them. I cannot claim friendship with them though I feel I knew them best.

Emotions spilling forth, I relax my hands on the keyboard, caressing the worn keys I had only moments before been assaulting with despair. The longer I sit in this tired, leather chair at this old, scuffed desk, the more despairing my mind becomes. I need some tea. I need to refocus.

I remove myself from the scene, wandering down to a small kitchen frequently stocked with comfort. Leaving my desk is a challenge, but not one most people would understand. I want to leave, to escape from the haunting words shining out at me from the monitor, and yet, I don't want to leave them to suffer alone. I desire to know these people, but I do not. As I heat my water and pour it over an aromatic pouch of chamomile, I contemplate. How do I say this? How must it be said? I should be good at this by now. I express the thoughts of others, and yet I can never seem to express my own. Not well, at least. Maybe there is just too much to say about everyone else and simply not enough to say about myself.

I return to my seat. My tea sits beside my computer, steam rising and blowing into the nothingness of my thoughts. I sigh, rest my fingers on the keys once more, and beg myself to emote another's mind. These people deserve my love, my care. They are my friends. They aren't, but knowing them as I do, I wish they

were. And the words to describe them are there somewhere. They have to be.

Before I can convince myself to continue, however, a knock sounds at my office door. A voice drifts in through the faux wood.

"Are you done with that eulogy yet? The family will be here in an hour."

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## ***Make-Believe Feelings***

**by Emma Croft**

"I wanna jump off a cliff."

What a punch to the gut. No person, especially a ten-year-old, should ever feel the need to say something so tragic. Though shocked, Naomi recovered quickly enough to tell her student, Abigail, "Can you stay after class for a few minutes? Not for a scolding or anything, I just want to talk. Is that okay?" She kept her voice low for privacy.

Abi nodded, but her face was downcast.

Naomi had noticed the sagging shoulders and downturned lips on her student almost as soon as she entered the room, but it wasn't until halfway through class that she'd had the chance to ask how Abi was doing. It was then another hour before class ended. When it did, Naomi waited patiently for the rest of her students to file out of the classroom until the room was empty of all but the two of them. Naomi met Abi on the floor in the middle of the room. They sat cross-legged together.

"If you feel comfortable," Naomi began, "I'd like it if you would share your feelings with me. You seem to have a lot on your mind, and I want to help, if I can."

Abi sat quietly for a moment, looking at her hands in her lap and chewing her lip. "I just feel like people think I'm

weird or awkward whenever I say anything. What if they think I'm stupid?"

"You know," Naomi calculated her response, "I think a lot of people feel like that sometimes, even me."

Scrunching her nose, Abi looked skeptical. "What? But you're quirky and fun."

"Well, I think you're quirky and fun," Naomi countered, lips curving in amusements.

It was meant to lighten the air between them, but in an instant, Abi's eyes welled with tears. "Thank you," she said numbly.

Naomi's heart went out for her student. "People's brains sometimes tell them things that aren't real. The feelings are real, and they aren't fun at all. But the reasons behind those feelings are often make-believe," Naomi explained. "Even so, when those emotions crop-up, they can be really overwhelming."

Abi nodded, eyes shiny.

"But you don't have to have those feelings all by yourself. Sometimes all it takes is talking to someone. If you're ever having a bad day with these kinds of feelings, you can tell me. Or your mom. Or a friend." Naomi could feel herself choking up. She hated seeing her students so upset. "We love you. We want to support you. We might not be able to fix it, but you can vent, and we can listen. And sometimes that can help."



Abi nodded again. "Okay," she said, and Naomi could see the relief flooding her shoulders as she exhaled and relaxed for the first time that day.

They talked for a short while longer about a few different things before Abi cracked a joke about being glad she wasn't in the habit of wearing make-up yet and they laughed away the tears. When the two finally got to their feet, Abi hugged Naomi on her way out the door, the two clung to each other for a moment, and with all her heart, Naomi prayed she had reached out enough.

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***Finding New Roots - A Migrant Connection***

**by Dr. Sherry Hawn**

As a migrant in pursuit of a vocational opportunity, I came to UHCL yearning to build a deep connection to the work, the university community, and the illustrious state of Texas. I hoped to find a place where I was welcomed, although I had a strange regional accent and couldn't say "y'all" with any true conviction. I aspired to bring innovation, efficiency, communication, and growth to the role - the proud hallmarks of my prior life and my personal joie de vivre.

It's been almost a year now.

I learned that "FM" is not only a radio station signal but also the name of a farm-to-market road. I faced down more university acronyms with consonants than the Ubykr language itself. I finally learned to stop taste-testing pizza or bagels within these state borders. Some might consider me a slow learner for the number of times I sought crispy tart McIntosh apples without success; I reframe that label as "passionately focused grit."

What I have successfully connected to here is a wonderful group of people who genuinely care about supporting young people who strive to leave their own imprimaturs in this rapidly changing world. The feast of projects and programs, seminars,

committees, fairs, gatherings, courses, and events has equaled anything I ever saw in the Big Apple or Los Angeles. The intellectual culture is lively, varied, and vibrant—and I love that.

But connection is not only intellectual, it's also about heart. When looking for an office in the Bayou Building, I am usually lost since I work in the North Annex II and can never seem to find my way. Yes, I know how challenging that numbering system is! Each time, without fail, a kind soul will approach and offer gentle direction. It's the students, the faculty, and the staff who, though taffy-pulling from different perspectives, will find a way to connect their heart to the mission and achieve the goal. The mission, in this case, is helping a bewildered stranger find her way repeatedly. They have always connected me, like a human compass, to my destination.

There have been challenges, sure. Days when I wondered if I had made the wrong decision to be here, where my heart connection to UHCL was broken and I couldn't see a path forward to add value, to be of service, or to fulfill my big expectations. Sleepless nights followed, what some might call a dark night of the soul; I could no longer feel connected. Instead, I felt like Sisyphus, pushing that boulder uphill day

after day, only to have it roll right back to the ground, a futile exercise.

Fortunately, I recall a beloved former boss' advice from decades ago. It's a simple phrase that gets me reconnected, back in the game, fully engaged and pushing that boulder with even greater fervor and persistence. "Just prove them wrong." Simple words. Powerful heart connection. Some of my UHCL hopes have been accomplished, some visions are dead ahead, and some dreams are yet to be dreamed. I found connection in Texas at UHCL by staying self-motivated, drumming up encouragement from an inner well of memories, counting small wins, and pressing beyond limitations. Glad I found my forever home, heart, and mind fully connected.

© Dr. Sherry Hawn, 2023

*Sky Dancers*

by Kapila Sankaran

Hi friend,

Lately I've been slipping far too easily into isolation but not feeling solitary. Confusion, fatigue, and loneliness have passed through me with annoying regularity. I haven't been sleeping well, and I find myself hungry all the time. Not just for food, but for everything that sustains me as someone who's alive. I know you can relate.

At times, life on earth feels almost unforgivably relentless. Night follows day follows night; we go through the motions and we do what needs to be done to get over this hurdle, and the next one, and the next one. Haven't you ever felt as though you're living in a world where the background never changes; you're walking through it as a part of that static? You know you're in motion, but nobody else notices.

So that's where I was, in the middle of all that. All that!

But then:

On an everyday walk, on an ordinary Monday, between two ordinary buildings, on our ordinary campus, I happened to notice the water in the aqueduct – the healthy, grey-green bushes of *Salvia leucantha*... the waving, feathery pinks of native Gulf Muhly

grass. I looked up and saw the sky, so solidly blue it seemed nothing could pierce it. There was a shiny little plane heading to Ellington airport, but what caught my eye was a group of some fifty birds, circling, lazily, elliptically, gracefully. The way the sun caught their feathers as they tilted like a collective top, turned them silver, then black, then white again. I don't know what name we humans gave these birds – perhaps pelicans or swans – but if a name determines a relationship, I realized that all I could call them was wise. Their soft, purposeful flight sucked me out of this place of limbo. I kept looking up at them and wishing you were there. I remembered Neil Degrasse Tyson, bidding us to keep looking up. I saw those birds in their unspeakably beautiful ballet and thought of our cosmos, of every particle dancing, even if we never will be able to see or feel it. But it's there. All the time.

That wasn't even the end of it, friend. My eyes shifted left, and I saw a second, V-shaped flock flying right into the shining, flying, orbiting spiral. I saw the newcomers shifting their wings so they wouldn't crash into their airborne comrades. They were braking in mid-air, all entering the dance. Without missing a beat: two galaxies collided beautifully. I wish you had been with me to watch them busking in this corner of the universe. Nothing I say to you here will do justice to the gift I was given that day. Those feathered dancers reminded me that

beauty is to be found in the hidden, least likely, the most unexpected places. In their dervish, they seemed to say: Don't give up your life for naught. Be the one to see, feel, tell, remember.

*Keep looking up.*

© **Kapila Sankaran, 2023**

*It's been so long..*

**by Aracely Viera**

<1 New Voice Message>

Uhm, hello. Hello?

I just wanted to call and say hi.

...uh, I know it's been a while since we talked, but I am trying here.

It's ok if you don't want to talk to me. I'll do it.

Look, I know it's been hard...for both of us. I don't want to dump all this on you, but I know I need to talk with someone, and you're the first person I thought to call. Even after all this time.

...

...I thought back to those nights. The bad ones. When no matter what, I couldn't leave the damn room. Couldn't talk to people. Just couldn't connect, y'know? Jesus, how bad I needed that. Just to talk to someone- anyone.

Like I'm trying to do now.

Don't worry! I'm not that bad again...I just...don't like that I circled back to those days.

This is so dumb. Why am I doing this?



...I hope, one day we can talk like we used to. That would be nice. Coffee, or in my case, tea. Days of endless babble about nonsense, the deep things we dare not tell anyone else, or even just the company of each other in silence. I want that back.

I'm getting closer to it... but I'm thinking you and me should get back in touch.

Even if we can't ever go backwards, we can at least make that last goodbye before we move on. Before we sever our ties and build others.

...Anyway, gimme a call sometime. Or text. Or - something.

...

...

*<If you are satisfied with your recording, Press 1. To delete, Press 2.>*

...

...

*<BEEP>*

*<Message Deleted>*

© Aracely Viera, 2023

## ***Net Life***

**by Aracely Viera**

It starts off simply: Wake up. Do the daily diagnostics. Run on the treadmill. Eat breakfast. Sit back in the chair, then plug in. That's usually the worst part. The silver cord that attaches directly to the cerebrum through the freaking hole in my head. Straight-up Matrix stuff there.

And voila! Online and ready to go. Work, meet-ups, events, and anything you can think of is on the Net. Be anyone or anything you like as long as it doesn't go against server rules. No one knows anyone's real name, because let's face it, you plug in to get away from reality for a bit. Queen is my best friend here and immediately sends a location before I accept the video call. Their handle is actually {HK-08}, but not like mine is much better. A beautiful blue-skinned lizard with white freckles appears on my HUD.

"Dude! Where have you been? I needed you at Simrie's place like 30 minutes ago!" she says waving around her huge salamander-like hands.

"I literally just logged on. And Simrie's? What's he up to now? Selling 'upgrades' to newbies again," I ask, going over my set tasks for the day on the sidebar.

"C'mon Xe, you know we make so much coin when we help him! Plus you don't have your shift at Network for another hour,

right? So, come and help ya droid," she basically commands before hanging up.

Xe. Short for {Xer0Hunter}. She's in a mood for sure, so guess I'm off to that dragon's bar. I hit the pinned location Queen sent me before being engulfed in blue-white light and transported outside of Simrie's Bar & Lounge. Sim is a small snake-like dragon, who happens to be a pretty good BS-er. He could sell you back your own blood before you knew he stole it from you. Not to mention he's a legend with the Gamer Clans. Sure enough, Queen is haggling with some Level 3 newbie over the "latest upgrade" for his weapon before Sim spots me.

"There's my best salesman! Get over here bot, we got customers, and these Uppers are selling fast!" Simrie calls out in that hissing-like Draconic tongue. Bot and now Droid. I know my chosen skin is a Green and Black Combat Android, but jeeze.

So goes the next hour selling off outdated upgrades, and checking if anyone from my job has contacted me. Network - fantastic name - the main server for all of the Net. I'm on the Sales & Acquisitions team, which is basically a fancy way of saying I sell and buy old crap from people. Whatever is useful, I send upstairs to the Upgrades team. Queen was right as I leave Sim's with an extra 400G in my account before loading to Network Base\_1. Oh, It's gonna be a long day.

© Aracely Viera, 2023

## Written Works: Poetry

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### *Love at the first syllable*

by Madelyne Arevalo

The butterflies cried because I promised them they would never  
flutter again

I intended it that way, until you said your name

In other frequencies. I heard it so many times,

Yet yours ignited an eternal flame

At the first syllable, the world stopped

I analyzed every inch of your face, as if it was the most  
precious artifact in existence

Your freckles connected in ways the constellations wish they  
could.

I loved your imperfections in that very instance

On the emphasis, my mind fluttered with the crying butterflies

I understood how every heartbreak had been part of the cost

I saw how the stars aligned perfectly for us to be lovers

Uncrossed.

On the last syllable, it all made sense

I understood why every previous attempt at connection had been  
in vain

I felt the magnetic pull and gave in to it

No name would ever be as beautiful as yours again.

© **Madelyne Arevalo, 2023**

*Shed Light*

by Ashlee Guest

Shed light of the future and the past;  
scrutinize each and every one,  
igniting imagination. As follows,  
a startling and provocative  
self-presentation.

Listeners inspire a deeper understanding,  
generation after generation.

Cloak yourself by laying claims of change  
with rearranged pieces.

Indulge of ideas, transference  
amid a crusade of  
liberation.

© Ashlee Guest, 2023

*Young and Free*

by **Emily Johnson**

Come lay with me under the Joshua Tree.

At midnight,

We can count the stars and

dream of how far we are

from the confines of society.

No rules,

only fools

with nothing to do

and curfews to lose.

Your soul is the one I choose

under the Joshua tree.

© **Emily Johnson, 2023**

***Anchored and Free***

**by Erica Njoku**

We are all here for a season

Searching to find the reason

While we are chasing time

Listening for her ending chime.

Left to wonder, what is the rush?

Painting our futures with an artist's brush,

Knowing progress has slowed to a trickle

With hope ever fickle.

That we may be as strong as a live oak tree,

Both anchored and swaying free.

Together we have grown,

Connected by the unknown.

© Erica Njoku, 2023



*Ode to A Legend*

by Ogoamaka Nwana

~ A Tribute to the root of our roots, the root from which our  
stems flow ~

My centurion Papa, Ezeoba Gbulugbulu,  
You lived long, you lived strong. Still, losing you is sad.  
Your 105 years on earth were a pure gift from God to us -  
children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren.  
We'll forever miss you.

You were ever wise and sharp-minded.  
You knew every single one of our names  
and teased us until your last days!

A man of valor and discipline.  
Papa'm, I remember when you came to spend summers with us;  
I'd ask you "M'pa what should we do to live long like you?"  
and you would reply, "Eat your vegetables."  
I hated the lizards that crawled around the yard,  
but you'd tell me that they are our friends  
because they provided food during the Biafra war.

A World War II hero,

a skilled boxer,  
a faithful Catholic.

When Mama died almost 50 years ago,  
you became everything to your children,  
single-handedly raised them to be epitomes of  
strength, beauty, and love.  
We are the fruits of that labor.  
We promise to hold onto that legacy.

Papa anyi, I can feel your presence living amongst us.  
I know you're looking down on us.  
I'll see you again, ever strong, ever healthy, ever loved.

WE CELEBRATE YOUR LIFE, GrandPa.

May your gentle soul Rest in Peace.

© Ogoamaka Nwana, 2023

***Mutilated***

**by Amy Sasser**

We are all of us beautiful and broken  
Shattered in bits and tiny pieces  
Staining the carpets with weeping red drops  
From the thousands of tiny, criss-cross marks  
On our souls  
Where the bits of brokenness  
Bit into our eager flesh.  
Each fragment of our best selves  
A ragged edge, a remnant of wholeness,  
A delusion we played at as naïve children  
When we still believed.

We are all of us broken and beautiful  
Particles of the people we pray to be  
Each of us begging the universe to  
Send us a sign, to let us know  
That we are not

Alone.

And yet, here we are

All of us, each of us

Just as fractured and mangled as the others.

Feeling defective, damaged, demolished.

In pieces.

Pulverized.

© **Amy Sasser, 2023**

***Renewed***

**by Amy Sasser**

You glanced my way,  
and I felt a sudden pull,  
dragging against my heart  
and things lower and deeper.

When you spoke,  
the timbre of your voice  
enveloped me in its  
provocative promise.

At the mere graze of  
your fingertips,  
I sparked to life  
and blazed with  
an inextinguishable fire.

I am ruined for you,  
by you,  
in need of you.

You have become for me  
the very oxygen

that feeds my lungs,  
the very blood  
that fills my veins,  
the very sinew  
which moves me.

Thank you.

The me I was...  
destroyed, obliterated,  
decimated in the power  
and the force of will  
that is you.

I exist solely for you.

© **Amy Sasser, 2023**

*Spooning*

by Amy Sasser

Humid breath flowing slow and smooth,  
tangling in the tiny tendrils  
at the nape of my neck  
and flowing further,  
leaving goose-pimpled flesh.

Restful, rhythmic pulses against my back  
keep time with dozing dreams.

A scintillating squeeze  
and wistful wriggle  
strengthen the embrace as you  
drift to dreamland  
with a deep, soft sigh.

Lips linger at my earlobe  
with a ghost-soft touch.

I am encircled,  
serene-and-satisfied,  
fulfilled in my repose  
and slipping into a sated

soundless

sleep...

© **Amy Sasser**, 2023



***Written on my Body***

**by Amy Sasser**

My story is written on my body

In scars and ink and steel

And bruises long since healed

It is broken bones

And shattered hearts

My story is written on my body

Each metal piece through flesh

A remembrance

An offering

A tribute to what's made me

My story is written on my body

Some by choice

Some by chance

Each fully earned and freely given

To a lifetime of becoming

My story is written on my body

This, a child enriching my soul

That, a night out of control

Each one in itself

A beginning and an end.

© **Amy Sasser, 2023**

*A Bridge in Paris*

by Leigh Ann Shelfer

I stood on a bridge in Paris.

The March day, not yet Spring, not past Winter.

The sky, gray.

The Seine in slate ripples below.

Île de la Cité, the city's historic cradle, before me,

connecting to the Right Bank, behind me.

A clock set in a nearby wall ticktocked the seconds, as it had  
for over six centuries.

The bridge under my feet, not yet 200 years old.

But in ancient days, the Gallic tribe of the Parisii, the  
Romans, the Vikings all crossed from this island to the opposite  
shore on bridges now lost through time.

Voices, images, surrounding me, receded as the sounds and sights  
of the centuries emerged.

The din of the goldsmiths and money changers conducting business  
in shops perched on the 12<sup>th</sup> century's bridge.

A Revolution of Liberté, leading from King's reign to a reign of terror.

A queen, carted to prison and, later, to death.

A Nazi, on a tour of triumph.

Followed again by a triumph of liberté.

Sieges and surrenders.

Coronations and celebrations.

Princes. Paupers. Prostitutes. Priests.

Politicians and parliamentarians.

The slate Seine rippling below them all.

The clock ticktocking above them all.

Everything is here.

A palace.

A prison.

Flowers and birds sold for delight.

A hospital for mending the body.

A cathedral for comforting the soul.

Cafés for nurturing both.

Nearby, an archeological crypt holds past things deemed  
important to remember.

There are memories kept.

And memories lost.

The clock ticktocking ...The seconds. The minutes. The hours. The  
days. The years. The centuries...

People passing me by.

Lives passing by as each pass along the bridge each passing day  
of their lives.

On this bridge, I am connected to the humanity that was here  
before me.

Through this bridge, I'm connected to those who will come after  
me.

Everything is here.

But for that one moment, I am not.

It was a March day, not yet Spring, not past Winter.

And I stood on a bridge in Paris.

© Leigh Ann Shelfer, 2023

*Eternity*

**Jenna Stevens**

She sat upon a throne, an immortal ruler of a kingdom,

All she desired was to preserve the community forever.

Though, as time passed, she became consumed with distress

And decided the best way to preserve eternity was to put the  
nation in stasis.

She locked herself away to prevent any future interference.

She wanted to hold steady to the path of eternity.

Decades passed, the land wept and changed,

But her absence would guide darkness in exchange.

The days bled into one another in her lonely plane of  
existence.

But one day, the stillness shattered. A strong presence rippled  
the serene waters,

Breaking her resolve. She allowed the presence to enter,

And in front of her stood a mere girl, her eyes wide and round.

The girl outstretched her arm, beckoning, her eyes bright as stars.

Almost trancelike, they interlocked hands. The girl took this as acceptance.

She recounted many tragic events in her absence,

And how the people did not speak out, believing this is the ruling she truly wanted.

She had been deceived, believing the world was the same as she left.

Would she really go back where she promised not to?

But the girl, standing next to her, was a cry for help.

This was not how she wanted to preserve eternity.

Foreign emotions seeped through, overwhelming her senses,

As she stepped back into the world she once remembered.

© Jenna Stevens, 2023

# Written Works: Creative Nonfiction

---

*The Love of Books: Fantasy Romance Edition*

by Lara Edgu-Fry

Connection. Something that is all over and holder of various forms. It is found in family, friends, movement, melody, and the arts. The written word, though, would have to be the most important in my opinion. With the assistance of the written word, people who have difficulty expressing themselves verbally- or face to face- have the option of physically writing out what they wish to say. Once an individual like myself has a pencil and paper (or a word doc) in front of them, they have free rein in voicing the deepest, darkest desires of their heart. The following works of Sarah J. Mass and Holly Black are the perfect example of how the written word is used as a key form of connection.

**Sarah J. Mass:** *A Court of Thorns and Roses Series; The Throne of Glass Series*

Consisting of three main volumes (*A Court of Thorns and Roses*, *A Court of Mist and Fury*, and *A Court of Wings and Ruin*), Mass's thrilling series "A Court of Thorns and Roses" follows the adventures of young huntress Feyre Archeron after she



unknowingly commits an act of murder. Once this commences, majority of the plot surrounds the mystical kingdom of the Fae, Prythian. The main plot point or danger with book one is that the lodging in which Feyre resides is under a seemingly unknown curse, with obscured threats all over. During the second volume once the said curse and threats have been dealt, young huntress Feyre undergoes yet another obstacle. Unfortunately, this time Feyre struggles to understand the complex making of one's own heart. For most of the beginning gorgeous, earth-bound Feyre undergoes the mental challenge of not completely knowing where her place is in the world, and whether she is content with who she is and who she is supposed to be. Within the third and final volume, Feyre now takes a slight step backward as she faces the stand still relation with her two older sisters; the good natured lover Elain and rough tight-lipped Nesta. However, hidden from all till it is too late is the magnifying threat of a neighboring kingdom, Hybern.

*Throne of Glass*, a collection of about seven volumes (*Throne of Glass*, *Crown of Midnight*, *Heir of Fire*, *Queen of Shadows*, *Empire of Storms*, *Tower of Dawn*, and *Kingdom of Ash*), plus the additional prequel "The Assassin's Blade", Mass's deep diving "The Throne of Glass Series", deals with the underbelly of skillful hit men and kingdom held secret. The series itself details the various journeys of one young woman, Celena

Sardothien as she evidently tries and fails to run from that which no one can. Along with the journeys that come her way, Celena unfortunately also has her fair share of disappointments and heartache. Within the first three books, (not counting the prequel) Celena braces the mind shattering pain of her past and a front row seat to death and betrayal's finest work. In the fourth book, Celena's once personal adventure begins to broaden in scope to include those around her as well. As things begin to progress forward, secrets that were once hidden begin to resurface, and if the character's aren't careful, could result in more harm than good.

**Holly Black:** *The Folk of the Air Series*

Like *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah J. Mass, *The Folk of the Air Series* by Holly Black is composed of three volumes (*The Cruel Prince*, *The Wicked King*, and *Queen of Nothing*). In this surreal and dimensional series, we follow the continuous voyage of one headstrong driven Jude Duarte after having the dreadful misfortune of seeing her parents murdered in vengeful blood at a young age. Within each of the three volumes, young Jude is dealt a wide variety of obstacles, from daily, snarky remarks, to being told who she should put her trust in. However, like all female lead characters Jude copes with the everlasting ache of

falling in love. And, of course, it does not help that the one she loves is the very one who bugs her to her wits end.

**The Connection:**

Now, onto why exactly the following series above were chosen to showcase the beauty and wonder of the written word, and the deep earthy connection that follows. Not only is there a connection for those who read the books, but the books have a connection all their own. All three series each have a determined and perceptive female character taking charge in a world overruled by bossy alpha men. All three ladies also are equipped with their own level of expertise: Feyre, being a huntress, has a high level of skill with a bow and arrow; Celena has the arsenal of skilled hit men, and Jude has the ability to lie like a high-quality secret keeper. All three series are magnificent in their own way, and they are definitely worth a try.

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# Visual Works with Written Support

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## *The Mother; The PhD Academic*

*by Katelyn Sherwin*

When I first started at the University of Houston Clear Lake last spring, it was a whole new world to me. Everything was fast paced, whether it was mid-terms, deadlines for certain projects, or just the overall atmosphere of the college experience. As I navigated the halls, there was a particular painting that really struck me. It was located on the second floor, centered in the middle of a wall on its own, which, in a way, spoke volumes to me.

The painting is of a woman sitting in a chair holding what appears to be her young son. There were no plaques explaining the picture. However, I felt the picture did not need any written explanation; it illustrated what the viewer needed to understand of its meaning. It left me with a curiosity of wanting to know more about her. The unnamed woman is resting her head back with her hand and fingers bracing the side of her head, kind of like when a person is contemplating what to do next. Her son looks comforted by his mother's presence. At the time, I just found out that I was pregnant and was expecting a baby boy. Perhaps it was the raging hormones that made this

painting have an impact on me. Nonetheless, it changed the way I look at women overall.

The woman is giving an appearance of power, even in a profoundly masculine world, perhaps being a painting of a mother and her son depicted from the 1980's or 90's. To me, she held herself together as if distinguished, like a scholar. At first, I thought she was a professor or someone who holds an academic position at a university. I was curious to know if she could be a faculty member at my university. But in this painting, it was not just her powerful aura as a female coexisting in a male world, it was the extraordinary power of her role as a mother. We do not generally think of professors having a life outside of their career, and that they, too, are very human, just like the rest of us. In a way, we see them as heroes of the academic foundation.

A mother has two responsibilities: One to her child and family, and the second to her position in this world as a woman, as she oversees upholding the power her ancestors could not have obtained. Women are underrated on such power, for we not only have the responsibilities of childcare, but the opportunities we have now. We can realize our dreams when it comes to success in family as well as career. Yes, we can do it all! We are superheroes on our own! As mothers, our jobs never ends, but

with the hope of occupational equality, this is just the beginning.

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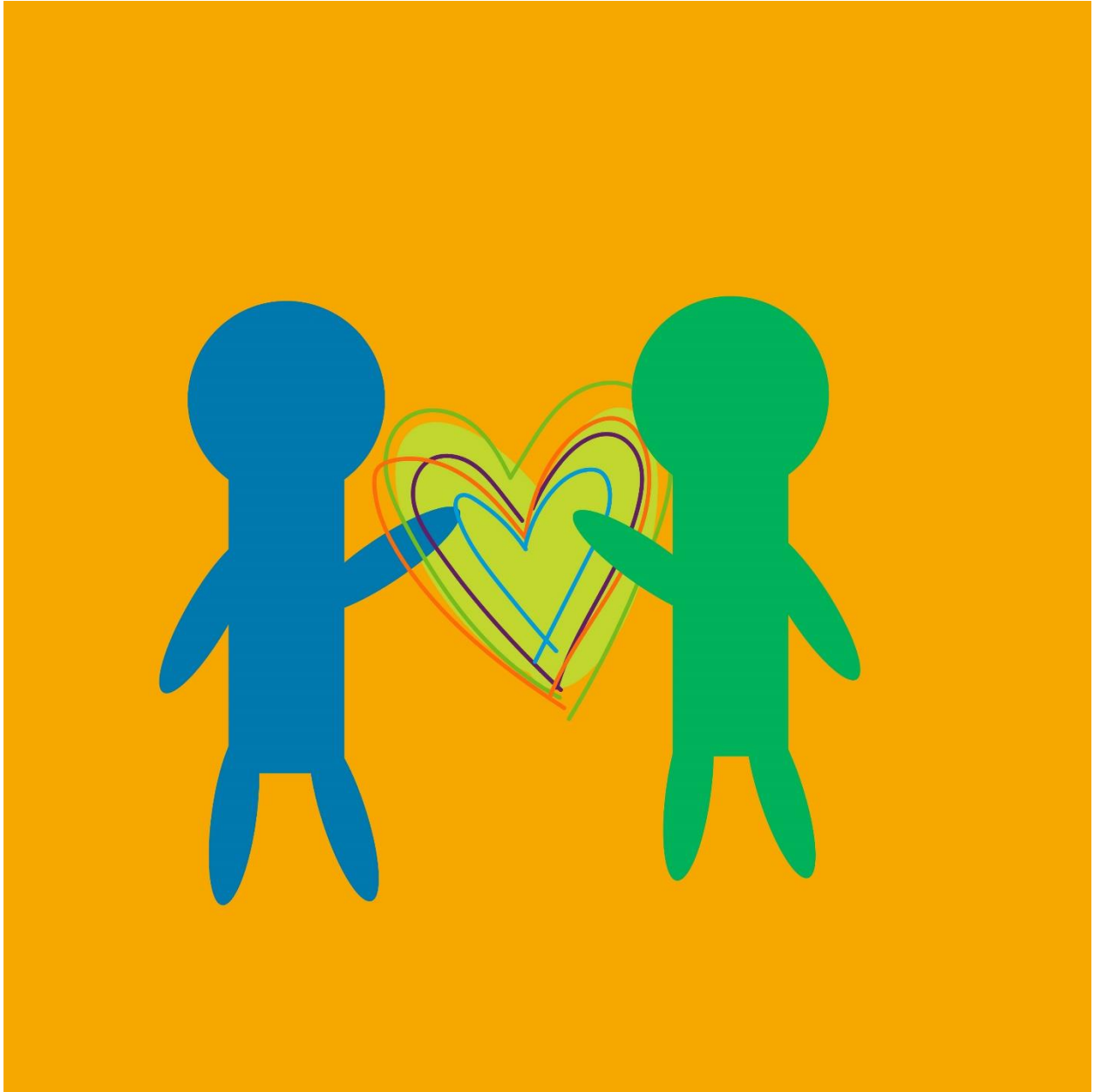
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# Visual Works

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*Supportive*

*By Lizbeth Colocho*



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*First Flight* is an annual UHCL Community Publication in conjunction with the UHCL Writing Center. It serves to highlight short works of burgeoning authors. Written submissions are accepted between November 1<sup>st</sup> and December 23<sup>rd</sup> of each year, and the theme and guidelines for each issue are announced through university email in October. For additional information concerning submission or involvement in *First Flight* contact the UHCL Writing Center at [WritingCenter@uhcl.edu](mailto:WritingCenter@uhcl.edu).