

— THE — Mysticistician

[N E W S] P A P E R

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April 16, 2026



Cap and Gown - Students will don their cap and gown at the BSC Graduation Ceremony, which takes place on May 15 at the bavendick Center.

Clay Sicble-Fox | Photographer

Top Tips for Mystic Graduates

Elena Sanchez
Reporter

Graduating can be incredibly overwhelming for students as much as it is an exciting feeling to be so close to the finish line. Luckily, Bismarck State College has a multitude of resources and amenities for graduating Mystics. Here are some of the top tips that Mystics should know about graduating.

For starters, finish strong. That may seem easier said than done, but it is truly what will make or break

Mystics from graduating. If Mystics are struggling in their classes or prepping for finals, BSC offers tutoring on campus in the library. Each subject has their own days and hours for tutoring. The BSC Library also offers multiple resources, both online and in-person, for research projects and studying.

The library is not the only place that offers assistance towards students, especially those preparing for graduation. The advisors located in the Mystic Advising and Counseling Center (MACC) in the

basement of the Student Union are there to help Mystics stay on track for graduation. It is highly recommended to talk often with the advisors to keep up academically and make any necessary changes. The advisors can also provide additional resources towards personal troubles or niche academic struggles.

Certain academic struggles get handled by other departments at BSC. Specifically, any financial issues get handled by the Financial Aid department

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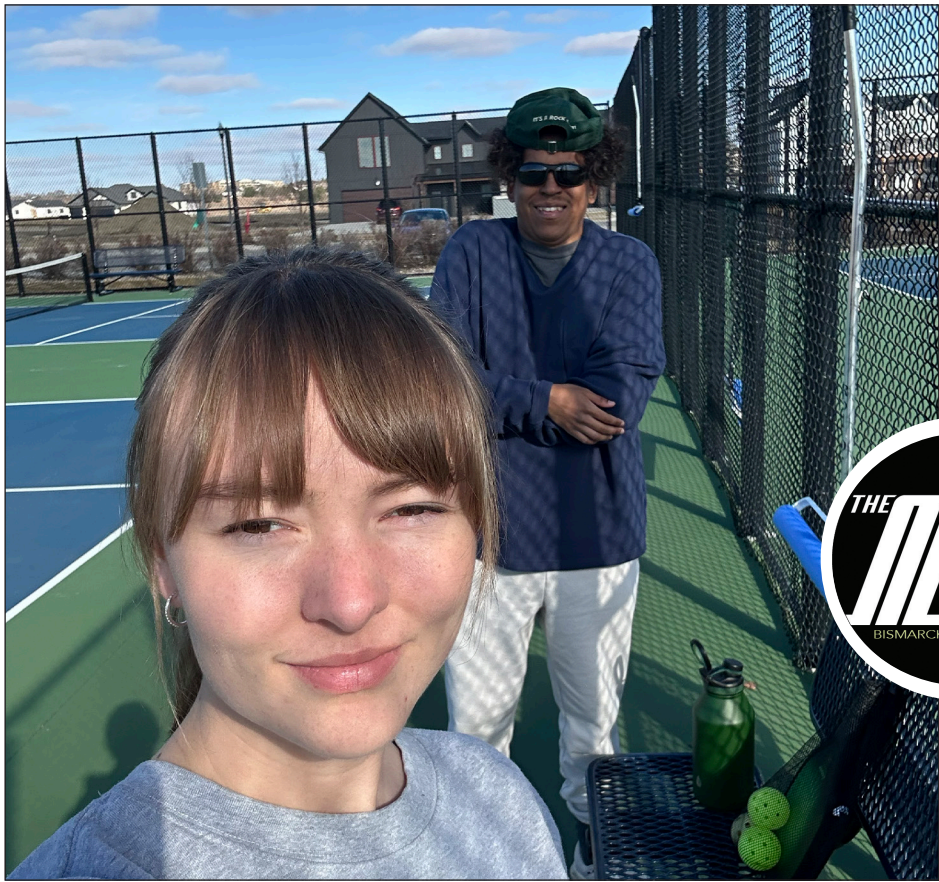
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MYSTIC MEDIA MISSION STATEMENT AND DISCLAIMER

The purpose of college media is to serve and give voice to the students. We, as the student based forum of journalism on the Bismarck State College campus, provide content that is informative, fair, concise and of importance to students and the community. With this goal in mind, Mystic Media is dedicated to accuracy and maintaining ethical journalistic practices. We strive to give a voice to student issues and policies within the local community. Our goal is to incorporate as many students as possible and be an outlet for student expression. Mystic Media strives to be objective and is not affiliated with any outside organizations. Mystic Media upholds the principles guaranteed by the First Amendment and utilizes these rights to bring diverse, entertaining, and thought-provoking material to the college community. Thoughts expressed may not be the opinion of all the staff or BSC community.

Keep Campus Green at BSC

Earth Day celebrates a clean campus

Sophia Faford
Co-Editor

Earth Day is around the corner. The annual event, celebrated on April 22, gives people around the world a chance to showcase their concern and support for the environment. At Bismarck State College, students, faculty, and staff have the chance to demonstrate care for the environment. Still, it can be difficult

for students to practice eco-friendly living if their budget is tight. So how can students “go green” at BSC without breaking the bank? Here are some tips to keep in mind.

Recycle

Recycling is one of the simplest ways students can help contribute to a healthier environment. Through recycling, students help to conserve natural resources such as wood, water, and minerals while also conserving energy. Statistics from the Environmental Protection Agency show that recycling 10 plastic bottles saves enough energy to power a laptop for more than 25 hours. Recycling bins are available on campus, where students can recycle paper, plastics, and more.



1 Recycle

Recycling not only conserves natural resources; it also keeps waste out of landfills. Recycling bins are available throughout the BSC campus.

2 Pick Up Litter

If you do litter, don't. But if you don't, great. The next time you see trash on the ground, why not pick it up? But make sure to wash your hands afterwards!

3 Visit a Park

Connect with nature and the natural environment by visiting a nearby park. The nearest one to BSC is Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park. Go there and get a breath of fresh air!

Pick Up Litter

Even though the BSC campus may be clean, some days (especially windy ones) showcase how much litter is actually lying around. Students can take a small step to pick up trash they see lying around and disposing of it properly. And, if there are students who do litter, make sure to consider how such behavior can affect the environment and fellow students.

Visit a Park

Touch grass, they say, though this saying has become even more important as those in concrete jungles become increasingly disconnected to the environment – and world – around them. Luckily at BSC, it is not difficult to get some fresh air and venture out into nature. Visiting parks can help students understand more about their natural environment and inspire conservation efforts. The nearest park to BSC is Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park in the Mandan area. The park boasts beautiful walking trails and historic buildings and is a great place to connect with nature on Earth Day.

Whether it is any of the three ideas listed or more, being aware of Earth Day and the natural environment is a fulfilling thing students can do. Students may play a small part, but in the bigger picture, those small parts add up. Environmental stewardship is something anyone can practice, all year long, though Earth Day can be a gentle reminder of this.



Make and Take a Plant at the Student Union for Earth Day on April 22 from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.



Graduates

Cont. pg 1

in the bottom floor of Schafer Hall. They are there to assist Mystics with FAFSA, loans, or other financial issues. If you are a graduating Mystic, it is beneficial to ensure you have your finances taken care of with no surprise fees to hit upon graduation.

Lastly, it is important to keep up self care. While graduation is daunting,

Mystics are highly encouraged to take breaks, keep a healthy eating routine, and get enough sleep for classes. Forgoing one's own health for academic excellence can cause drastic effects. Taking care of one's own health is a major key to success. Enjoy time in school before walking for graduation, Mystics.



Kerstin Hilzendecker | Graphic Designer

News Release

March 31, 2026

Kalk selected as next president of Bismarck State College

BISMARCK, N.D. – The State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) has selected Dr. Brian Kalk as the 8th president of Bismarck State College. Kalk will assume the role April 13, 2026.

Kalk currently serves as chief research officer at the University of North Dakota's Energy and Environmental Research Center. He leads a team of scientists, engineers and professional staff. Prior to his current role, Kalk's statewide impact is reflected as a North Dakota Public Service Commissioner. He oversaw regulatory decisions affecting energy production, transmission, and pipeline safety. He worked closely with numerous stakeholders, providing input, analysis, and perspective on complex issues while building strong relationships with leaders across the state.

Kalk has taught at North Dakota State University, the University of Mary, and Park University. His teaching portfolio includes logistics, environmental policy, energy management, and organizational leadership. He has worked with traditional and non-traditional, military, and international learners, demonstrating a strong commitment to student achievement and academic quality.

During his 20 years in the U.S. Marine Corps, Kalk held roles in operations, logistics, and served in command. His career spanned the globe, through Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, and the Middle East.

A total of 51 applications were submitted for the position. The BSC Presidential Search Committee interviewed 11 candidates during its initial round of interviews, narrowing down the field to the top six.

Pleased to Meet You

Mygel Porter
Social Media Manager

Joshua Storsved
BSC Student

Q: What is your Major

A: Mathematics.

Q: What has been your favorite class you've taken while you're here?

A: Comm 110-Speech.

Q: Would you rather live in a cold place or a hot place?

A: Hot place.

Q: Are you more of a test taker or project person?

A: Test Taker



GDC Club Steps Out of Routine

Kade Warren
Reporter

On March 27, at around eight in the morning, eight members of the Bismarck State College Graphic Design Club departed from Bismarck and started their journey to Fargo, North Dakota. The purpose of the one day excursion was to visit two commercial printing companies, Absolute Studios, and Knight Printing to get a behind the scenes look of the graphic design industry and learn more about the processes that drive the growing academic discipline.

Upon arrival in Fargo, N.D., the club's first stop was Absolute Studios. A full service creative marketing agency that specializes in web design and video production.

The club members shadowed the professional graphic designers and got to witness the inner workings of the graphic design studio business model. They also were in the unique position to see how an offset press operates, which is a type of printing machine that transfers an original ink image from a metal plate to a rubber cylinder, which then "offsets" the image onto any piece of paper lucky enough to pass through.

"We got to see how the presses ran,

and we learned how projects come together," President of the Graphic Design Club Noah Schettler said. "They also had a music production studio which I thought was really interesting."

After their tour of Absolute Studios they ate lunch at Old Broadway before the next stop, Knight Printing.

Knight Printing was founded on the first of January 1888. The business has over 130 years of experience and a rich history in the city Fargo. That hasn't stopped them from adapting to the modern era. Besides multiple offset presses, Knight Printing employs the usage of a digital press.

A digital press is much more expensive than its less advanced counterpart, the offset press, but they can be used for fabric, cardstock, and other materials, not just paper.

At around 6 p.m., after the final tour and after the club members finished bowling at Kingpinz, they made their way home.

Overall the trip was a great success, and as the school year dwindles to a close, it leaves just the end of year party as the last big event for the Graphic Design Club to look forward to.



Kayla Hilzendeger | Photographer

Look! - At Knight Printing in Fargo, N.D. students learn about max/min inventory management, how the shop designs, preps, prints, and finishes all their major projects. They also discuss all the different industry machines that assist in this process.



Kayla Hilzendeger | Photographer

La La La! - Absolute Studios has a sound studio on location and Caelyn Mason jumped behind the mic for a test run. The ambient lighting really set the mood for her to sing a tune.



Kayla Hilzendeger | Photographer

Smile! - Students went to King Pinz as the fun activity of the day. Some played a round of bowling and enjoyed laser tag, while others took time to relax and enjoy the food. (Pictured in the back: Kerstin Hilzendeger, Halie Fletschock, Aleah Hoiland, Quintavia Polensky, Caelyn Mason, Noah Schettler. In the front: Kayla Hilzendeger, Janessa Metz, Cassidy Kernitz)



Kayla Hilzendeger | Photographer

Discuss! - At Absolute Studios the students have a Q&A session with the business creators and other staff talking over projects. Students and staff both share their experience and advice when it comes to working in this field.



Kayla Hilzendeger | Photographer

Listen Up! - Students learn all about the photo studio at Absolute Studios in Fargo, N.D. The studio is so big that they are able to photograph a car!

Student Questions: What would you like to see on Campus and Why?

Natalie Lawrence
Reporter

Jess Rhoanes

Quote: I would like to see more campus events to help build community

Blair Ham

Quote: I would like to see the Armory open to all students as a community center. We could have open gyms and other events. It could work because more things are being done at the Bavendick and less at the Armory.

Mystic Media Response: There is open gym at the Armory on Sundays from 1:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Students should bring their own basketball.



Jordan Suntrom

Quote: I would like to see more dining options because I feel like there aren't enough. I would also like to see the Student Union use card swipes instead of Mystic Dollars for the meal plan. A lot of people lose their money or go over their balances with what is used now.

Mystic Media Response: Students are able to use any form of payment, such as debit card, credit card, and cash.

Jasmine Nash

Quote: I would like to see intramural badminton because it is fun to play, and I know a lot of people would be interested in participating.

Mystic Media Response: Although there is no intramural badminton, Bismarck State College has a pickleball intramural league.

Harry Cobb

Quote: I think there needs to be a ferris wheel on campus. If you went on a recruitment tour, why wouldn't you want to go on a ferris wheel. At the top it could say. "Go Mystics" with tiny green fireworks around it.



Wyatt Kraft

Quote: I would like to see cops riding on segways because it will help people see them as more approachable.



Davian Welch

Quote: I would like the cops to stop pulling people over for dumb reasons. I am tired of seeing people always being pulled over on campus.

Cyber Club | WiCyS Club

Bismarck State College students are eligible to join two cybersecurity clubs this year. These are WiCyS and Cyber Club. Both clubs are open to all BSC students, regardless of degree, and both clubs meet monthly.

WiCyS club members participate in online training activities designed to promote and encourage new persons in the field of cybersecurity and cyber-adjacent fields, such as Artificial

Intelligence. Meetings are monthly and take place at the Advanced Technology Center in Room 210. The meetings are virtual and in-person. WiCyS will meet from 7 p.m. to 7:50 p.m. The WiCyS club adviser is Lynette Borjeson Painter. For any questions, contact her at 701-224-5755.

CyberClub is another cybersecurity opportunity. In CyberClub, members prepare for and train to compete in



cyber competitions around the region and nation. Meetings are monthly and take place at the ATC in Room 210. Meetings are virtual and in-person, and the club will meet from 6 p.m. to 6:50



p.m. Club advisers include Painter and Deborah Mantz. Contact Painter at her previously mentioned number or Mantz at 701-224-2407 for any questions.

No Regrets: This Academic Year Has Been A Ride!

Kelsey Riggs
Reference & Instructional Librarian

We saw:

- our beautiful collection boxed up and returned, though it took quite a few months!
- new shelving, carpet, and office furniture installed.
- students, faculty, and staff from all over campus seriously discuss banned and challenged books.
- nearly 50 people of all ages attempt the Halloween Escape Room: The Mystery in the Static.
- everyone devour and explore our databases, books, and records with an excited fervor.
- over 300 students participate in the "Money Smart Mystics Challenge" with 23 of them achieving vouchers redeemable at the BSC Bookstore.
- hundreds of students, faculty, and staff celebrate "National Library Week" and find something to make them smile.
- You all grow.

Every year is a little different, so it is always fascinating to see how everyone and everything changes. You have all worked hard to make the most of this year and you deserve the break Summer can grant. The library will still be open during the Summer, so feel free to stop in, say Hi, play a game, and/or check out some things. We have music to help make those family summer BBQs fun, movie night favorites, and books to keep your Summer Reading Log happy.

If you have any recommendations for library events or collection additions, email me at kelsey.riggs@bismarckstate.edu. Congratulations to everyone on a good year! I cannot wait to see what will happen next!

MOVIES AND MUSIC

North Dakota Filmmaker Shares his Story

Jaxon Miller
The MYX Productin Manager

North Dakota is known for its plains and farms, but there are also many film lovers and aspiring directors in the state. Justin Deegan is a filmmaker from Bismarck who has worked on eight TV shows and films, including the Hulu docuseries "Vow Of Silence: The Assassination of Annie Mae." Justin has been working with film for years, but working in the field was not his plan.

"I started out as an actor," Justin said. "When I moved to New York, the director that I worked with, Larry Schwartz, would send me casting calls for films when I was living in New York, and I would never go. And so he would always hit me up, 'when are you going to go to these auditions? I'm sending you these

opportunities.' And I told him, 'I'm not an actor for film, I'm a theatre actor.'"

One of these auditions Deegan read for would eventually be a turning point in his career. Justin went to the audition and got the part, but when he went to the production companies offices, he found no signs of the company that was once there.

"Like, everything was gone. It was like, chop, chop, you know, like, overnight," Deegan said. "And so when I talked to the doorman, he told me that the production company sold everything they had to make their first film. And so I figured that they put all their resources into making that movie, and they had to cut corners, which meant my part was cut."

From there, Justin went into filmmak-

ing. He thought that if he wanted to be in films, he should make his own films. He soon started work on his short film, Concrete 49, a short about a man going to an audition in New York City. On the way he runs into Native American street performers. This was at the time he was teaching himself to make films.

"... Between that time period is when I was teaching myself how to make my own film. I was doing a lot of research from self-proclaimed and self-made filmmakers like Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino," Justin said. "They had this knack for storytelling, but they just put their investment in themselves in order to make that happen. And that's basically what I did."

One of Justin's inspirations is his mom. Darline Perkins is a fashion designer from the Fort Berthold Reservation who will soon be heading to New York for the 5th Ave Fashion Show. While many young filmmakers do it on



Clayton Sicble-Fox | Photographer

Sharing - Justin Deegan, an award-winning North Dakota filmmaker shares his point of view.

their own, Justin said it is encouraging to have someone like his mom.

"That was the biggest part, is having somebody to support me through getting started." Justin said. "And so because of that support that I was receiving from her, that was something that just kind of encouraged me to keep going."

Today, Justin continues to build a career in film. Shaped by both unexpected setbacks and support from his mom, he is accomplishing his goals in the industry. With determination, creativity, and support, Justin is bringing his vision to life.



Clayton Sicble-Fox | Photographer

Questions - As part of a class project, Bismarck State College freshman Natalie Lawrence interviewed Justin Deegan, an award-winning North Dakota filmmaker.



Clayton Sicble-Fox | Photographer

Camera: Action - Bismarck State College sophomore Jaxon Miller was behind the camera for the Justin Deegan interview. In the background, BSC Assistant Professor of Art Andrea Fagerstrom and BSC sophomore Sophia Fafard listen and take notes.

Justin Payne: From Nashville to North Dakota

Jaxon Miller
The MYX Productin Manager

With a mix of country twang and alternative rock, Justin Alan Payne will bring his unique style to the Laughing Sun Brewery on June 30. Payne is an alt country/alt rock musician hailing from Nashville, Tenn. From Ohio to Texas to Illinois, this rocker has been around.

Born in Newark, Ohio, Payne grew up playing classical music, starting the violin when he was about four years old and continued to play through high school. He went to college for violin performance and studied music arrangement and composition. Through the experience, Payne realized that life was not for him.

"In my early 20s, I didn't really like that or that life. I was subbing in orchestras in the Midwest, and the whole wear a tux, get the mileage kind of life just wasn't really for me," Payne said. "You play a lot of the same repertoire or stuff like that."

After this realization, Payne took another inspiration from his life. Throughout his childhood, his grandparents, who were a big part of his life, were into old time country. Payne's number one inspiration is Neil Young for his lyricism and how he defies convention. Some other inspirations are Paul McCartney, John Lennon, and Cate Le Bon. He also takes inspiration from Beethoven for writing music.

"I got really into Beethoven, and he did this thing historically where he was always carrying around like little notepads," Payne said. "I think that practice of always listening and like being present and collecting what like lights you up in those moments, like what you hear musically and having the discipline to like try to document that like in the moment."

While touring, it is hard not to think of the things that brought you to where you are now. For Payne, that may be his grandparents or even his musical influences. On the road, there are opportunities to create more memories. Sometimes, it's even the crowd that can bring

memorable moments that can last an entire career and push Payne to keep going.

"I was like the first guy by himself. Packed house. They hung on every word, didn't even know me, right. Like I didn't hardly have any music out to like go find and get to know me before I came," Payne said. "And so it was just one of those magic moments where it clicks and like you got the right audience and you hit him with the right energy and the right words and the right songs. And it's hardly ever like that, right. But that reminds me that, A, it can be. [And] B, maybe you got something going on here, man."

Experiences like these drive Payne to keep going. With this drive, he is looking into the future to see what comes next. Whether it be the other bands he is working with or a massive tour coming soon in the summer, Payne has got a lot



H.N James / Punk Rock Photography | Photographer

Musician - Justin Payne will be performing at the Laughing Sun June 30 at 7 p.m.

on his plate for the near future. Catch his performance at Laughing Sun Brewery on June 30 at 7 p.m.

GRAPHIC DESIGN & COMMUNICATIONS

2022 SPRING SHOW

& PORTFOLIO EXHIBITION



MAY 4 - 6

OPEN FROM 6AM - 9PM

BSC STUDENT UNION - ALUMNI ROOM

PORTFOLIO EXHIBITION

WEDNESDAY
MAY 6
10AM-NOON

BISMARCK STATE COLLEGE
STUDENT UNION
1425 SCHAFFER ST.
BISMARCK, ND 58501



Support local design education and come out to see the work created by this years Graphic Design & Communications students.



PUZZLE PAGE

TV Show Word Search

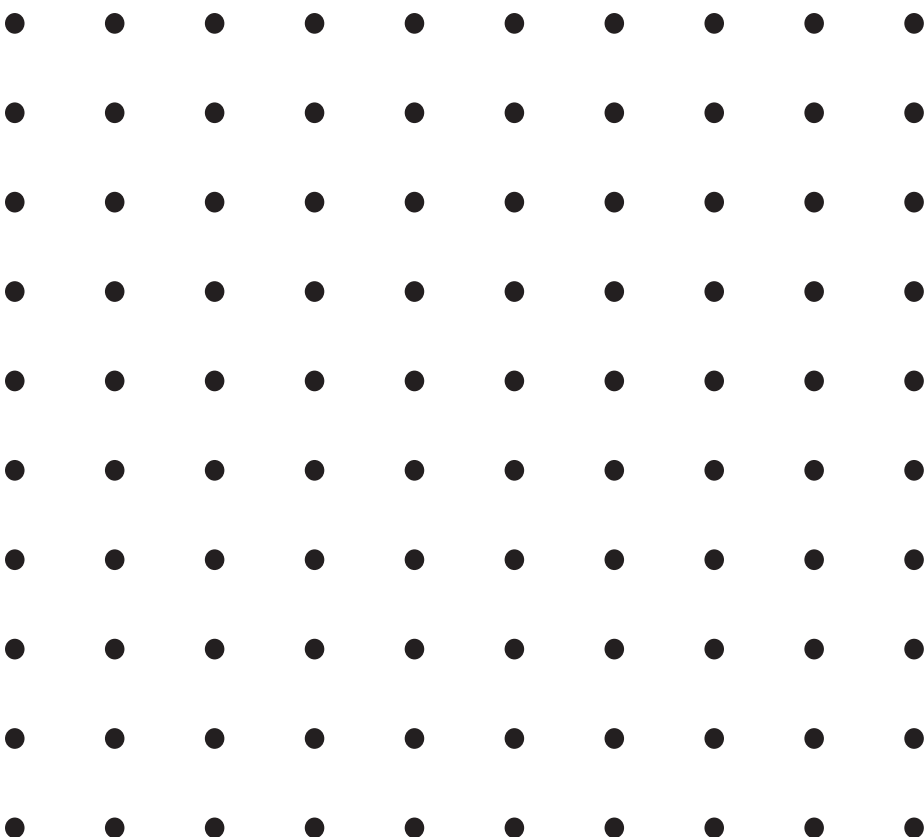
HTDABDFDCRBZBVANGWCE
 OJHMRGZATFODDSAEBDYP
 ZHEARHFBMWGNCFRIENDS
 ASQSRRYAYIIOTEPPXSUOY
 RSFDSROELALZTUNQIGWM
 KBEHMIYBLLMYTHEBEARO
 KCRSQQEPOLORGAAIDIPAV
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 TFAOAOLLSTSWTXYAEMKM
 DHSTNKNSEZTISXXGT YDO
 ZAEZUEIGONSEMTISHABO
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				6	3			
	8				9			7

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|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| Breaking Bad | Yellowstone | Harry Potter |
| The Office | Family Guy | South Park |
| Sopranos | Spongebob | Clone Wars |
| Simpsons | Daredevil | The Flash |
| Mr Robot | Friends | Fallout |
| Landman | The Bear | The Wire |
| Gotham | Avatar | Jessie |
| Ozark | Ted | |

Dots to Boxes

Two players take turns drawing a single horizontal or vertical line between adjacent dots on a grid. The player who draws the fourth line of a 1x1 square claims the square by putting their initial inside it and gets to take another turn. The game ends when no more lines can be drawn, and the player with the most claimed squares wins.



TV Show Trivia

- Q: Where does "The Office" take place?**
 A. Scranton B. New York City C. San Francisco
- Q: In "Breaking Bad," what bug was keeping Walter from cooking in the lab?**
 A. Bee B. Fly C. Worm
- Q: What british sci-fi show has been airing for 60+ years?**
 A. Star Trek B. Battlestar Galactica C. Dr. Who
- Q: In "Friends," what's the name of the coffee shop the characters frequent?**
 A. Perk N' Beans B. Central Perk C. Cheers
- Q: In "Severance," what is Irving's dog's name?**
 A. Radio B. Spark C. Radar
- Q: In "The Big Bang Theory," what is the name of the comic book store owner?**
 A. Stuart B. Clark C. Eugene
- Q: What is the name of Tony Soprano's boat in "The Sopranos"?**
 A. The Questo B. The Moltisanti C. The Stugots

SAY CHEESE!



Mygel Porter | Social Media Manager

Students are happy to be done with class for the week - Nick Pegors, Jessa Lee

BSC ATHLETICS · BSC ATHLETICS · BSC ATHLETICS · BSC ATHLETICS · BSC ATHLETICS · BSC ATHLETICS · BSC ATHLETICS · BSC ATHLETICS

BSC ATHLETICS

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Mystics Baseball Approaches End of Season

Kade Warren
Reporter

Mystics Baseball returned this spring. The team has been slowly getting back into the swing of things and making a name for themselves in the Frontier Conference. The 2025-2026 season is a big year for the Mystics, as it marks their first time in the National Association of Collegiate Athletics. But being in the NAIA is not all sunshine and rainbows as it has given the Mystics more challenging competitors. Still, they have stood out in the new division so far with a total record this season of 16-12.

A lot has changed since the autumn season — the players and staff have matured on and off the field, and in the process built an amazing team chemistry. The Mystics baseball head coach, Jaden Scott, who has held that title for the last four seasons, has noticed this growth.

“Team chemistry is amazing,” Scott said. “[They are a] fun group to be around that pushes each other on the field and spends a ton of time together off the field.”

Since the team’s first games of 2026 last February, they have accumulated a record of 13-9. Their last four games at the end of March against the Dakota State Trojans resulted in an additional three wins. The team expects to expand on these wins and build on their momentum going into their games against Mayville State and Valley City State Universities in April.

The weather has also played a bigger role than expected this season. Because of the cold spell that hit Bismarck on Easter weekend, two games against Valley City State were cancelled and one game against MSU was moved to April 7. Despite this, there are still plenty of games left in the season for the team to refine their skills for the post-season tournament. “We came in, in August with a lot of talent, and we’ve done a great job working our tails off and putting the time and effort into making the most of that talent,” Scott said. “We’re all going at it to be the first ever Frontier Baseball Conference Champs.”



Starting Off - The BSC Baseball team cheers on players that are going onto the field.

Logan Hoff | Sports Information Coordinator



Star Spangled Banner - The Mystics stand at attention for the playing of the national anthem.

Logan Hoff | Sports Information Coordinator

Latest Bismarck State Baseball Games Statistics

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	F
Bismarck State	5	0	3	0	0	3	5	16
Mayville State	0	8	1	6	4	5	X	24
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	F
Bismarck State	2	0	1	0	0	0	6	9
Mayville State	3	7	2	4	4	2	X	22
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	F
Bismarck State	1	7	1	1	4	0	2	16
Spring Arbor (MI)	3	0	4	0	0	1	10	18

Mens Track Races

BSC Track Statistics

Men Races	1	2	3
110M Hurdles		Jace Lovely	
100M	Daniel Oduse		
1500M		Conner Ensign	Jakson Ensign
400	Nathan Mathern	Cayden Kraft	
800		Xavier Bell	
4x400	Daniel Oduse, Nathan Mathern, Cayden Kraft, Timol Walters		

Womens Track Races

Women Races	1	2	3
100M		Katelynn Folvag	
200M		Privilege Bower	



Logan Hoff | Sports Information Coordinator

Group Cheer - Track team cheering each other with continued thoughts of placing at the NAIA Indoor Track & Field Championships in Gainesville, F.I. Men placed 21st out of 68 teams, and the women placed 43rd out of 67 teams.

THE *Special Edition*
MYSTICIAN

FROM THE PLAINS TO 5TH AVE NYC

**TRADITION
NEVER
GOES OUT
OF STYLE**

“I started doing the quill work, and it was like a ritual and a rite ...”

—Darline Perkins

From Tradition
to High-End
Couture:

Red Lightning Woman

Darline Perkins' porcupine quill work takes her to NYC

Quill dreams

"I would have dreams about porcupine quill work, and I didn't know what it meant," Darline Perkins said.

Darline shared her story with a cousin who told her to talk to their grandmother who did porcupine work, so she went and told her what was happening. The grandmother offered to teach Darline, but the lessons would have to wait a year because the grandmother was in mourning.

"There are strict rules about our culture and the traditions," Darline said.

A year later, she started learning quill work—an experience that would lead to a life full of unexpected opportunities and pulling the thread that would lead her to success in the fashion industry and an invitation to show her designs in New York City.

Reverend Darline Perkins is an ordained minister and a former mail office attendant, construction worker, heavy equipment operator, highway flagger and cancer survivor. She is an awareness advocate for breast cancer, diabetes, the elders, climate change, and Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP).

Reverend Perkins is a humble human being and describes herself as a dabbler in fashion design. In May of this year, that design dabbling is taking Darline and her Red Lightning Couture to the 5th Avenue Fashion Show that takes place in front of the Met Gala.

Darline's story

Darline's journey into fashion design began simply. "I started doing the quill work, and it was like a ritual and a rite that I had to go through to obtain it," Darline said. "I started doing small things like earrings and bracelets and working up to bigger projects."

She soon learned because of the frailty of the quills, it would be difficult to put them on cloth. She started working with lambskin, creating dresses, jackets for men, and lambskin leather pants, adorning them with her quill work.

Between 2008 and 2009, things took a sharp turn for Darline. She was diagnosed with breast cancer. In addition to her diabetes, the cancer meant she needed to take a break. Darline stepped back from her ministry and went through a double mastectomy. The illness took a toll on Darline. After surgery and recovery, she realized she would have to rebuild her body if she wanted to truly heal. She started working at her ministry while continuing to do quill work and added a mailroom job to her responsibilities.

Talking over lunch with her friends one day, they suggested that Darline do a fashion show with her quill work. She spent some time thinking about it, and the next time they met for lunch, she gave them her answer.

"I said 'if I do a fashion show, it has to have a purpose,'" Darline said. "And so, we started brainstorming and, well, (they said) 'you're diabetic and you know, breast cancer. Why don't you do one for that?' And so that was the focus."

With her eye for design, Darline put on fashion shows for four years at different reservations throughout the area. The shows raised funds for awareness and education about breast cancer and diabetes. With the growing success of her fashion shows, Darline was



Asking questions - Natalie Lawrence and Sophia Fafard listen intently while interviewing Darline Perkins.



Artful Friends - Andrea Fagerstrom and Darline Perkins share laughs during the interview, especially when Darline said she 'just dabbles' in fashion design.

determined to rebuild her body strength.

That's when she decided to dive into the world of construction.

"I think it was just basically, wanting to know my body was working, you know, after losing parts of your body," Darline said.

She took a course in heavy equipment operations and worked to make roads. During the boom in North Dakota, she learned to test the ground for oil. Darline worked for every department of the seismic group and eventually became a boss for Native American men in a tribal office. Meanwhile, she continued her quill work and fashion shows.

After the shows on the reservations, people started hearing about what she was doing with her quill work.

The Crow Nation in Montana asked if she would do a benefit show for them. Then people in Jackson Hole, Wyoming heard about her work and invited her to the Western Design Conference, a high-end four-day exhibition of artists, designers and architects sharing their creations. Darline attended the conference for three or four years, and in addition to her traditional quill fashions, she displayed an elk hide traditional horse saddle and a horse mask.

"It was (made of) buffalo, and it had quilled eyes and under the nose were three rows of brass beads," Darline said.

She continued to work construction, but her fashion designs were getting noticed throughout the country. Her next stop was the Gathering of Nations Powwow in Albuquerque, New Mexico where she participated in a breast cancer awareness show, the Pink Party.

After that, she was in Dallas, Detroit and Los Angeles.

"I moved to LA and started working with big projects," Darline said. "I went out to New York City for several fashion shows for New York Fashion Week. And recently I met a producer who wanted to showcase my clothing last September in New York City. He really liked what I was doing and kept wanting me to come back."

New York City photographer, videographer and producer Alexander Gurman called Darline in October 2025 and told her the producers get to choose clothing for the billboards in Times Square — he told her that he had chosen her clothing.

And then he called her again and said he was going to put her clothing on the billboards in Times Square on New Year's Eve.

In January of this year, Gurman called her once again and asked if she would be interested in showing her designs at the 5th Avenue Fashion Show in front of the Met Gala.

The show is set up outside the Metropolitan Museum of Art giving designers the opportunity to

display their fashion to fans and people attending the gala. People attending include celebrities from all around the world and Vogue states the event is known as "fashion's biggest night out."

Darline had been invited before but said she didn't go because she didn't know what it was—until she was watching TV and saw Rihanna and all these actors and actresses going up to a museum. She called her son and told him about Rihanna.

He told her that's the place you want to be.

This year she decided she better go.

Darline's son Justin Deegan has been one of her main supporters in her career and her journey as a fashion designer. As a photographer and videographer, he has been instrumental in sharing her designs with the world.

"What's really amazing about this journey is to see her growth from the very beginning to now because I can remember when she



"To see her growth from that point to this point is pretty awesome ... that's been really inspirational."
—Justin Deegan

went to fashion shows at the Santa Fe Indian Market It's called SWAIA," Justin said. "To this day, it's one of the biggest meccas of indigenous fashion. I remember ... when she presented her fashion. It was different from everybody else ... they would get up on stage with their dance regalia—ribbon skirts and jingle dresses and traditional dance outfits, feathers and everything.

"And then my mom came out with her couture—her ball gown, buckskin wedding dress and lambskin, leather skirts with peacock embellishments on them. It's beautiful. But they weren't ready for that because they were traditional. But now that's all you see is couture at the SWAIA Indian Market for fashion. It's really grown, but to see her growth from that point to this point is pretty awesome. That's been really inspirational because I witnessed the growth of her art through the years."

Justin will be going to New York City with Darline and document the event through his creative camera lens.

Takes Her Fashion to NYC

Red Lightning Woman

Darline's Native American culture is not only reflected in her designs but is also evident in the name of her clothing brand, Red Lightning Couture.

Darline is from the Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara Nation located on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in North Dakota. Her father was Arikara and Hidatsa from Fort Berthold, and her mother was Oglala Lakota from Pine Ridge, South Dakota.

Darline's parents divorced when she was two, leaving her to grow up without a strong connection to her maternal side.

"I always wondered, you know, what's my history and where do I come from?" she said.

The question stayed with her, eventually guiding her to climb Bear Butte, a sacred site located in South Dakota. She began making regular trips to the butte with her son.

During one visit, however, something much deeper took place.

"My son and I eventually ended up going up on top, and we prayed, and it's like four days and four nights without food and water, and you pray," Darline said. "That's all you do."

On one of those nights, Darline watched as a glowing cloud moved toward her. As it got closer, she could see little red lightning coming out of it.

She couldn't help but feel fear.

"And as it got closer, I'm thinking, 'oh Lord, don't scare me'," she said. "...don't strike me at all."

The cloud continued coming until it surrounded her.

"Half of my body was in this cloud, and half of it was out. I could see the stars," she said. "And I just kept praying and praying."

After the experience, Darline made her way to the sweat lodge to share what had happened. An elder who was listening began praying and eventually said to her, "it has come to me that your traditional, your spiritual name should be Red Lightning Woman."

Later Darline would share that story with her friends. When it came to choosing the name of her brand, she was encouraged to carry her indigenous identity into it.

"[My] entertainment friend said, 'why don't you name it Red Lightning Couture?' and that's where the name comes from," Darline said.

Today, Red Lightning Couture stands as both a fashion brand and a reflection of Darline's identity and heritage.

What about the gala

The Met Gala is an annual charity benefit for the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and is a major event in the fashion scene. It started in 1948 with a collection that had a variety of fashion, from contemporary pieces to high fashion dresses. Every year, top-of-the-line designers share their works on the runway while celebrities including movie stars, musicians, and athletes attend the event as well to contribute their wealth to the benefit. This year's Met Gala will be coordinated by co-chairs Beyoncé, Nicole Kidman, Venus Williams and Anna Wintour. The 2026 Met Gala theme is "Costume Art."

Outside the museum and before the gala, fans gather to enjoy the 5th Avenue Fashion Show, a type of pre-show, where fashion designers share their creations and sometimes catch the eye of a passing celebrity, which could include Rihanna, Sarah Jessica Parker, Jay-Z, Adele or Anne Hathaway.

For Darline, her journey has not been about fame



On Camera - Mystic Media reporters interview Darline in the studio.

but about supporting others and meeting people. The 5th Avenue Fashion Show will be an opportunity for her to share Red Lightning Couture with one of fashion's major annual events.



"I'm going to have this piece because it's my very first piece."
—Darline Perkins

Darline's artistic focus will be her traditional pieces evolving into higher end designs interwoven with cultural features that are a dominant part of her couture.

"I'm going to have this piece because it's my very first piece," Darline said pointing to a light lilac dress made of lambskin with orange, yellow, and red quill work adorning the top. "I can only take ten this year, so I'm really selective of the pieces and how I'm going to showcase them."

Another piece that Darline will be sharing is made from red willow.

"I'm making a dress with it, (and) it's a very sacred piece of art," she said, explaining that the red willow bark (cansasa) is used to make a sacred non-tobacco

"My grandfather was one of the carriers of horse medicine, and so, horses have always been special to me."
—Darline Perkins

smoking herb for use at ceremonies.

A signature design for Darline are pieces she creates using horsehair. She explained that in their tradition, horsehair is sacred, and only certain people on a reservation carry the medicine.

"My grandfather was one of the carriers of horse medicine, and so, horses have always been special to me," Darline said. "I've done quite a few horsehair skirts. And that's what Alexander out in New York ... was drawn to because it was different."

Darline contrasts the organic look of the horsehair skirts with high-end tops made of satin with beads and sparkles. She is working on a horsehair dress for the gala that was inspired by a photo in a magazine of a horse that was shiny silver with a black tail and mane. When she saw it, she decided to design the dress to look like that horse. She has the horsehair and is in the process of dyeing it silver and black.

As part of the fashion event, she will be creating clothing for the models to wear while riding bicycles around the museum and other items for them to be wearing while riding in limousines and arriving at the event.

Pulling the thread

Darline's journey to the New York City fashion scene has been filled with new experiences and new people.

"When I was really young, I was very shy and inward, and it surprises me now because going into ministry, having to talk, having to preach sermons ... now you can't shut me up," Darline said. "I think I've evolved 180 degrees from what I used to be."

The connections she has made include a network of people from all around the country, including North

Dakota and a friendship with Andrea Fagerstrom an art professor at Bismarck State College.

"Knowing your journey and the different opportunities that have come up—there's kind of a theme I see with anything arts related, whether it's visual, musical, theatrical," Andrea said. "You just keep pulling the thread—where it's not a concrete end goal ... it's not a linear path. It's a weaving and ... taking opportunities as they come."

People she met on her way

During a life adventure like Darline's, one would expect to meet a lot of characters, whether they be everyday people who enjoy her work, or celebrities that want to show off her style on stage.

One of Darline's early encounters that she remembers fondly involves a man named Jason who called himself "The Groomsman." While walking to a restaurant in LA, she noticed Jason who had an embroidered design on his jeans and struck up a conversation with him about the design.

Jason shared his story with Darline about going from homelessness and addiction to helping the homeless with his skills as a hairstylist.

After talking with Jason, Darline showed him her Instagram page with all her designs and fashion. He said he liked a piece and wanted to come to her house to look at it in person. Darline agreed and discovered that Jason was looking at one of her Pendleton hoodies with a buffalo skull on it and wanted it for Matt Ramsey, the lead singer of Old Dominion.

Jason invited Darline to the set of a documentary that the band was working on.

"Old Dominion was there, and Matt Ramsey fitted with the hoodie," Darline said. "So, he bought it, and I had to sign a waiver not to talk about the documentary until it was over."

Around the same time that she met Ramsey, she got a random phone call from a number she did not recognize. That phone number belonged to Taboo of Black Eyed Peas. He asked Darline to come to his studio with the clothing she had for men. She agreed and now Taboo is saved as a contact in her phone.

Plane rides have provided other connection opportunities including a professional football player and a baseball player, both of whom have purchased her apparel.

Through all her travels, Darline's journey has not only been defined by the clothing she has made, but the people she has met and influenced along the way.

"When you (Darline) visit with people, it becomes evident quickly that you talk the talk and you walk the walk," Andrea said. "It's not just lip service ... when you say you're going to do something, you do it, and you do it well and thoroughly, and you keep trying to work and be your best."

Forward to the future

Darline smiles when she considers her future and says she is going to retire.

"I don't see that in your future," Andrea said. "You're always saying 'I have to slow down. I have to rest and take it easy.' And then you take on another project and another project. It's in your DNA."

Darline said even after all this time, she doesn't consider herself to be a fashion designer.

"And when they ask me, I'll say, oh, I just dabble," Darline said sharing a laugh with Andrea.

Throughout the years, Reverend Darline's dabbling has taken her in many directions and offered her many opportunities to minister with her art and her fashion, but what shines through is her quiet demeanor, calming presence and humility.

"I never really say no to people when they meet me, and I just take people for who they are and go with the flow," Darline said.

What started with her simple dreams of traditional quill work has led to a career in high-end fashion and a lifetime of charity, education and awareness—one thread at a time.

"I never really realized I did all that until I started talking," Darline said.

This story is the collaborative effort of Bismarck State College student reporters of The Mystician and their adviser. Students Sophia Fafard, Natalie Lawrence, Jaxon Miller, Elena Sanchez, Clayton Sicble Fox and Associate Professor of Journalism / The Mystician Adviser Karen Bauer.



Traditional horse hair skirt

Darline Perkins will be showing her designs during the New York City 5th Avenue Fashion Show across the street from the Met Gala.



Traditional beaded belt with horse hair skirt



High-end black dress with ostrich feathers



Editorial

OUR VOICE

Letter from the Editors



Kayden Schmitcke & Sophia Fafard
Co-Editors

Four weeks. 31 days. 744 hours. 44,640 minutes, 2,678,400 seconds until graduation. The countdown is officially on.

Truth be told, this isn't a new thing. I've been counting down to graduation since my very first day in the graphic design program. But now it actually feels real. Close enough to see, close enough to feel, and definitely close enough to start celebrating (just a little).

Meanwhile, Sophia has taken her sense of adventure all the way to Seattle and will be back before this issue is out. She's out there exploring America like a true trailblazer. You've got this, Sophia—stay safe, skip the strangers, and please report back on a few coffee shops for me.

Also, a big shoutout is in order: Sophia recently won an award from Phi Theta Kappa and earned the All-USA Academic Team Scholarship and New Century Transfer Award. We couldn't be prouder. Seriously, go off.

Back here in Bismarck, the Mystician crew is holding down the fort while the editor's better half enjoys great food and a solo flight across the country. I guess we can't blame a Canadian for finding the U.S. a little exciting.

Also, as we get even closer to the end of the year, it might be a good time to start figuring out summer plans. Are you going on a trip? Working each and every day, slaving away at the 9-5? Or maybe balancing your life between vacation days and work would be best; making sure to take some time to rest and relax is important after a busy year of college.

And before we get too carried away, let's pause for a moment of appreciation, for surviving tax season. Whether you filed for the first time on your own or just made it through without losing your mind, that's an accomplishment. And remember, it's always okay to ask questions, we're all figuring it out as we go.

Here's to the final stretch.

Grave Mercy: A Good Romance Novel?



Liberty Friez
Content Editor

If you have read more than a few of my previous book reviews, you might have noticed a pattern. I am not a fan of romance. More specifically, romance novels. And it's true, I'm not. Mostly because what I find romantic is not stalker, werewolf men and their insecurities that they mask with fire, guns, and duct tape. I know, I know, call me crazy. But every once and a while, a novel surprises me, and that is true of "Grave Mercy."

My main problem, other than the one I just named, with romance novels, is that the plot is the romance. I personally don't find it interesting to read a 400 page novel of "will they, won't they" knowing full well that they will because it's

a romance. Usually, the main characters have surface level personalities as well. I will not root for a romance if the characters cannot stand on their own.

Anyway, back to what I am actually supposed to be doing — reviewing. So *Grave Mercy* is a young adult, historical fiction romance novel set in 1500s France written by Robin LaFevers. Our main protagonist is Ismae, who was rescued by a killer nuns, the day of her wedding to a cruel pig farmer, and taken to a convent to train as an assassin.

She finds out the reason she was taken to the convent is because she is the daughter of the god of Death, St. Mortain, and discovers all the women at the convent are too sired by St. Mortain. Her parentage allows her to see a black mark that appears on those about to die.

Anyway, time goes on and Ismae is taught their ways — to kill, to poison, to fight, and to flirt. Ismae is given her first big task which goes poorly. To cover up her mistake, she is given another task. She must act as a French diplomat's mistress to gain knowledge of a coup against a French duchess. This diplomat is Gavriel Duval, the young duchess'

Nature and Nurture Examined



Isaiah Johnson
MystiCast Executive Producer

Fresh off of James Islington's *Licanus Trilogy*, I have been pondering just how much our circumstances shape us. Those books challenged me like few other fiction books have. I would gladly write a review of them someday, but I will refrain for now. The aspect of those books that pertains to this discussion is the phenomenon of time travel. I am aware this is a fairly popular topic for books to explore, but it is on another level in this series. (Again, I refrain from incessant expounding.) Throughout the story, the reader glimpses the characters interacting with past or future versions of themselves and their friends. A future version of a character will find his past self quite different than his current self. This seemingly obvious observation sparked a line of reasoning in me that has yet to depart my brain.

I have been grappling with the whole nature versus nurture debate for quite some time. Based on the brief research I conducted, it seems like a more accurate definition for nature versus nurture might be genetics versus environment. Everyone knows that physical traits come from our parents, but what about our personality and inclinations? This is typically how the debate plays out, with psychologists fastidiously advancing their opinions. Inevitably, they agree that there is some middle point between the two and move on. I propose another angle.

Here is my proposition: nurture informs our nature. Here, I define nurture as our outside

influences, much like the typical definition. I define nature, though, as our worldview. How our worldview is shaped seems like a much more valuable conversation than why I have a serious resting face.

Our circumstances are so incredibly formative for us in ways we don't even realize. Current cultural beliefs in America like secular humanism, Marxism, and atheism have influenced our thinking for as long as we've been born. The media we watch subtly steers us hither and thither based on the underlying ideologies of its creators. People from different cultures have a drastically different way of viewing the world. The people in our lives shape our humor, our tastes, our values. What we might call our nature is massively affected and shaped by what we encounter out in the world.

The debate takes another interesting turn if nature refers to our state before God. We are told that there is good inside us that we must simply find. We are told that we are born good but are corrupted by the world. We are told that enough empathy will solve everything. And yet, I do not see how this squares with our nature.

No one teaches a toddler how to misbehave. It comes very naturally to them. A child needs loving discipline and guidance to grow into a well-adjusted and respectful adult. Humans stripped of civilization and shared virtues will resort to their base instincts and become animalistic. Our bodies are decaying throughout the course of our lives. Even at the atomic level, our world is becoming less and less ordered. Why would we assume that our natural moral state is that of goodness?

We are not good deep down but are full of sin. Only by a complete change of nature can we truly be free from the curse of death.

What we deem our "nature" is something we so desperately cling to in our individualistic culture. We want to believe we have a pure nature deep down, untainted by the world, that we can unearth. I have come to realize just how small I am in this massive world. Only when I was saved by Him who can replace a heart of stone with a heart of flesh did I truly begin to live.

bastard half brother, who is becoming aware of the coup against his sister, and is using the convent to help prevent it.

The two don't really like each other but they have to work together and play as a couple which leads to dangerous shenanigans. There are some clashes between their beliefs but as the novel goes on, they come to respect and trust each other.

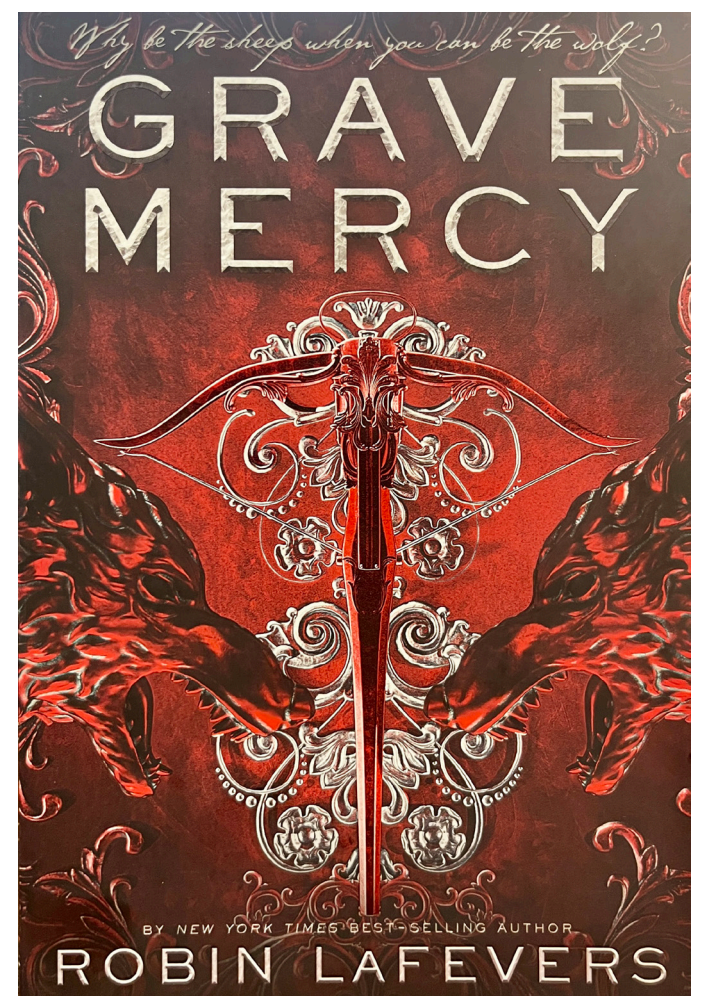
The romance in this novel is not rushed, and it unfolds naturally along the plot. Gavriel and Ismae are both characters who can hold their own, which makes it a more compelling connection. The two don't need each other but they are willing to choose each other.

I am going to delve too much into the plot given that I actually encourage people to pick up this book and experience it for themselves. If you like romance, historical fiction, or just assassins (and who doesn't love a good stabbing now and then), I would recommend this book.

This book just showed me that there are good romance novels out there as long as the plot and characters are equally

balanced which I find that the author does quite well. Overall, I have to rate this a 7.5/10.

This is a book I have read more than once so if that tells you anything.



Staff Opinion: *Would You Rather Live In a Hot or Cold Place?*



Sophia Fafard
Co-Editor

I Like It Cold

Iced coffees. Snow. A nice breeze. Cold beers. Jokes, beer is gross, but I do love when the weather is colder. I would rather live somewhere cooler than warm. After visiting Las Vegas, I was reminded how much I love pine trees and the crisp smell of autumn air, as well as a sunny winter day with hoarfrost sparkling on tree branches.

Although I have poor circulation and get cold easily, I grew up helping my dad with cattle chores, bundled up in layers of clothing to combat the cold. My mom used to call me a “Nordic Girl” from how often I used to play outside in the winter. I also love spring; I remember walking through the melted ravine that ran through the feedyard. I remember going rafting and wading through puddles. And the fall, of course, when pumpkin spice chai returns and sweaters are in style.

Overall, I need to live in a place with all four seasons. I’m not a big fan of summer, but I do like the moments between the extreme heat and extreme cold.



Alondra Vidal
Reporter

If I had to choose between living in the cold or the heat, I would choose the cold. Take North Dakota and Texas as examples—many people would opt for Texas, but I believe North Dakota is much bet-



Michael Huravitch
Reporter

North Dakota made me appreciate each season. I always said that I liked winter when I was young. As a kid I loved playing in the snow, whether it was sledding, building forts, or having

North Dakota Is Good

ter. I simply can’t handle the heat; there have been times when I’ve overheated and felt dizzy from the sun, especially while playing sports. Another reason I prefer colder climates is my hair. The humidity makes it frizzy, and I don’t like how thin it feels or how it looks. Additionally, my skin feels sticky in the heat, and I feel unclean right after taking a shower. In contrast, the cold makes me feel fresh and cute, especially when my nose and cheeks naturally turn red. The snow has a calming effect on me, even after a bad day. It feels like stepping into a different world and helps me escape reality. Plus, I love wearing hoodies, long sleeves, and sweatpants during the winter.

Pleasant Weather, Pleasant Mood

snowball fights. I liked it. As a teenager I inherited the responsibility of shoveling, and my love for winter slightly faded. I didn’t participate in any snowball fights, but I’d occasionally go snowboarding with friends. Fast forward to me right now, I do still find beauty in winter, but I’m also sick of the harsh cold and the darkness that comes with it. Now, I don’t mind the idea of living in a warmer place.

I’d likely live somewhere where winter is short. I feel a lot happier in the summer and I feel like the weather allows you to do more. I’ll also add that I love fishing, and while ice fishing is popular, I don’t care for it.



Liberty Friez
Content Editor

Just Like My Soul... I Want It Cold

As Olaf once said, “Winter’s a good time to stay in and cuddle...” Ignore the rest of the line because this is the only part that matters. I would much rather live where it’s cold.

I love the cold. I do better in the cold. If I could, I would live in Norway or Alaska, no questions. I know they get summers but they’re milder. I have never felt any need to go somewhere warm, or any want. It sounds miserable. All the sand, the sun, the water—yuck. Give me -20 degree weather, some fuzzy boots, and a blizzard. It gives me an excuse to stay inside and drink coffee while reading the next Colleen Hoover novel.

Safe to say, I like the weather like I like my soul—frigid.



Kerstin Hilzendeger
Graphic Designer

Warm Weather Addict

If I had the choice to live anywhere in the world, I would choose to live in Clearwater Florida for the simple reason that it gets extremely hot there. I love anything that has to do with the sun, sand, ocean, or the beach. As much as I love seeing the flowers bloom in the spring, the leaves on the trees change colors in the fall, and watching the snow fall in the winter; I absolutely love the summer weather and everything else that comes with it. So if I had the chance, I would definitely live where the sun is shining and the trees are green all year round.



Mygel Porter
Social Media Manager

As someone from the east coast it is so much easier to bundle up when it’s cold rather than trying to dress down when

Keep it Cold

it’s hot. On the East Coast due to being right next to the ocean the windchill would make it feel so much colder. There are so many clothes and heat warmers to keep you warm when it’s in the negatives but when it gets above a hundred degrees there isn’t much to do besides wearing a tank top and shorts, and maybe a neck fan, which can then be a hassle if you’re doing an active activity outside.

As an active snowboarder and an outdoor runner in the winter, after you get moving it’s easy to get warm and stay warm, while when it’s too hot outside, it’s impossible to stay cool while doing anything.

