



Imazine 2020

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Delaware Libraries' Teen Magazine

cover:

Whimsy of a Rainy City
Ink, White Gel, Watercolor
Rayna Hossain, 13

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Butterflies
Acrylic paint
Bella Dayrit, 17

A Student's Pandemic

Mikayla Dayton, 17

I remember that last day so vividly.

March 12, 2020.

What a weird day that was.

We migrated through our classes,
like we had every other school day.

At the end of the day, we waved goodbye to our teachers,
like we had every other afternoon and walked out the door.

I remember it closing for the last time.

I even remember the feel of the cool silver door handle on my hands.

It was a familiar touch to me.

Still, something felt different about that day.

Our whole world was about to be turned upside down.

Little did we know how much was about to change.

And little did we know that was the last time we would see the door close for a very long time.

I remember the door closing for the last time.

I can still picture all of my peers exiting the school for the last time.

We all expected to see each other again soon.

We gifted hugs, not knowing how many times we would refer to those moments for comfort.

Not knowing how many times we would be reliving this day.

And how many times we would wish and beg to return to that day.

The last day, the old normal.

I remember the door closing for the last time.

I remember when it was only supposed to be two weeks.

We were going to get “back to normal” after two weeks.

No one really understood how long that two weeks would actually last.

We organized our junk drawers and we Zoomed our Easter Dinner.

We did what we were supposed to do, but it wasn’t enough.

It wasn’t enough to go back and make sure that door never closed.

I remember the door closing for the last time.

Empty hallways and empty chairs.

A scene all too real for six months.

We lived in a world of songless birds and expressionless faces.

It was like the color had been ripped out of the world.

It was like the oxygen was slowly being sucked from the air.

We yearned for any snippet of human interaction.

I remember the door closing for the last time,
And the pale fluorescent light that greeted me each day.
Classrooms once full of laughter and learning; places of togetherness,
Full of a silence so heavy, it could strangle you to death.
I remember hugging and being close once.
I remember a time before masks,
Where being within six feet of someone was the norm.

I remember that door closing the last time.
But, I barely remember being taught by a teacher not located in a Zoom box.
I barely remember a time where you didn't have to unmute yourself to speak.
I can't even remember a time before this new vocabulary that we use every day:
Masks, Zoom, Quarantine, Isolation, Ventilator
As the days move on, the father we get from March 12.
And the more "normal" being in a pandemic becomes.

Most of all, I remember the door closing for the very last time.
There would be no coming back from this.
We will relive this for the rest of our lives.
The world we once knew had forever changed.
A chapter in our lives, complete.
I hate that damn door.
Why ever did it have to close?

Reality

Carter Fenimore, 14

Dozing off, eyes growing heavy like a garage door slamming shut. "SLAM!" Wide awake, the fear and reality of the world come flooding back like a broken dam rushing in. It almost feels like a dream; locked inside while a deadly virus is just on the other side of the door, waiting to creep in and wreak havoc. The process, with a mask stuck to our faces like a creature holding on for dear life trying to ruin everything, and feeling that if someone sneezes or coughs the wrong way you're dead, almost feels normal. During these times so many things are changing. School is online. This brings school to you with a sense of safety, but not everyone acknowledges the struggles the same kids that sit next to me in class are going through. From depression and anxiety to social withdrawal, we are hurting. The dark and terrifying thoughts creeping in at night before bed. Waking up just to go right back into the fire. The things that we kids are losing just because we want to be safe: not seeing our friends in the hallway, no sports, and unable to go see a teacher and ask for help in person and not through a suffocating black box slowly closing in.

Activities like school, sports, and recess are all slowly coming back, but at what cost? The friends and family who are being sent away into a chamber of sickness ready to infect you? The loved ones who you might never see again? All of these things are what we have to deal with. The adults are always saying they are so scared for their lives, and how we have it so lucky because it's harder for us to die from this. I don't think adults understand why so many kids are terrified of going to school and getting sick. It is not the fact that they are sick, but the fact that they might have this thing and not even know it. We have the power to kill the ones closest to us with something we don't even know we have.



The Unprecedented
Colored pencils, markers, pencils
Faith Skinner, 17

Help?

Erycca Curry, 16

There's still a lot of tears I hold back because I don't wanna cry
There's still some days I feel like I wanna die
And my real feelings are kinda hard to share
Happiness feels distant I wonder if I will ever make it there
I wanna be happy I truly do
But I don't feel happy because I'm not with you
I'm screaming for help but in a whispered voice
I tried letting people in and making new peers
It's really hard because another person walking out my life is what I fear
I can't figure out my calling because I can't seem to pick up the phone
I keep having dreams when I grabbed my mother's hand and it was as cold as ice
Honestly my whole family is destroyed
And I can't fill up the void
I don't feel like a daughter I feel unworthy
And everyday it hurts me
People ask me what's wrong
But I don't say too much
I got bottled up emotions
I'm not really ready to open them up
I am disappointed in myself because I let me down
My mom called me a princess but I lost my crown
I always seem to put my feelings on hold
My life is a poker game and I'm about to fold



Persephone
Chalk pastels
Bella Dayrit, 17

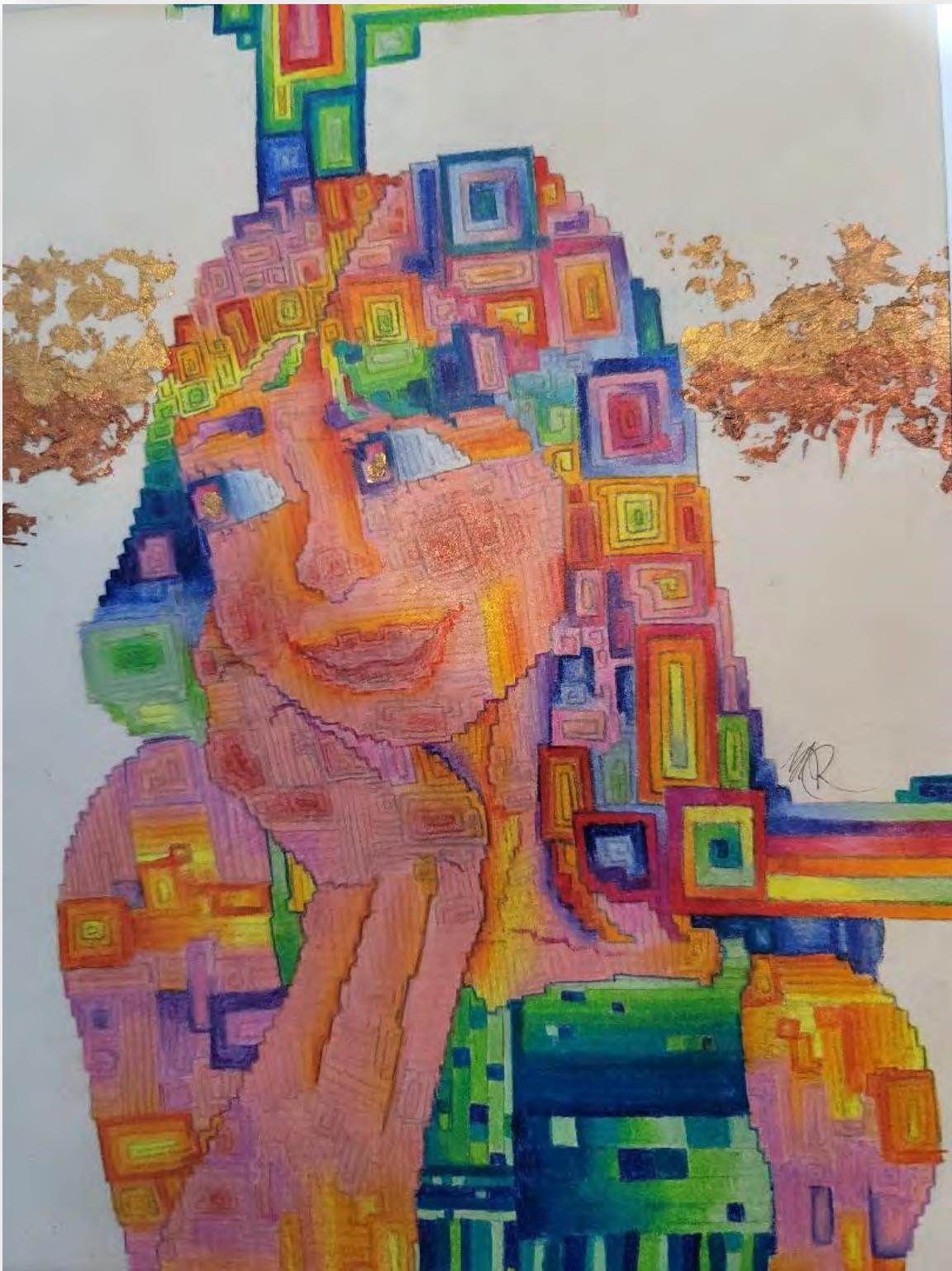
h4lfw4y Hum4n

Aedin McKenna, 14

Words said months ago now
Echo (Echo) in my head
Can't ignore them (want to forget them)
Can't forget them (want to ignore them)
Saw clear in the smoke, the battle won
Thought we were done but the war has just begun
All that we fought for (stood for)
Future
Life
Truth
Morality in humanity (humanity's morality)
Mission lost (abort, abort)
My fault (couldn't protect)
My fault (should've stayed)
Can't live backwards (can't undo)
Unity dying (playing into their hands)
We're falling (failing, failing)
All yesterday (wake up, wake up)
Today is shining bright
Yet I still can't wait for tomorrow
The future we lived for (won, won)
Is unlivable (move(ing) on, move(ing) forward)
Without you is impossible
Waiting in the light (enveloped with darkness)
For tomorrow (almost here, keep fighting)



Complexities
Hannah Ye, 17



Beautiful Bismuth
Bronze leaf, Pencil, Watercolor
Madison Ryall, 14

Choices

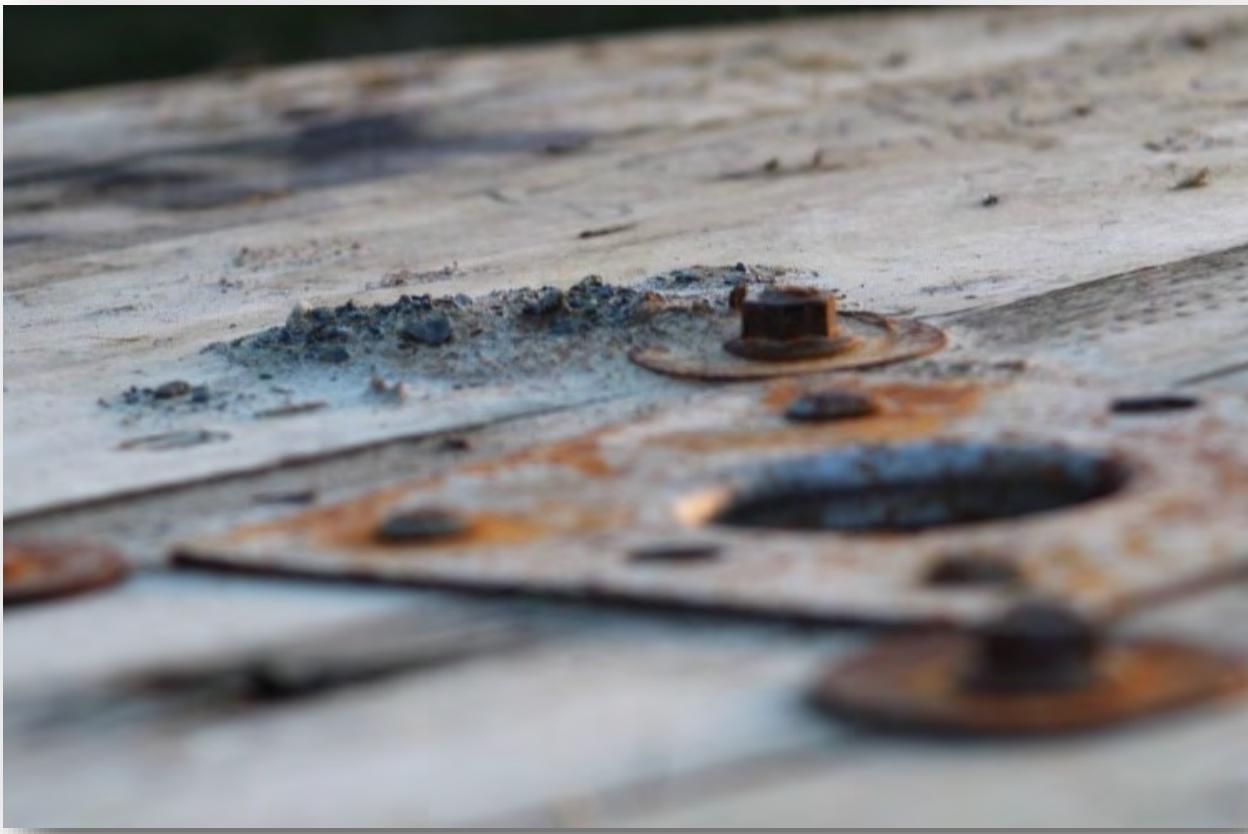
Rayna Hossain, 13

Isn't it funny that when I sing
The whole world ends up listening

Stories woven from gold
Threaded from tales of old

My feet caress the air
Dancing freely without a care

Pencil against the paper
My art brings tears to people's eyes



Gearing-Up

Iveena Mukherjee, 14



The Happy Tappers
Acrylic paint
Cynthia Redmond, 17



untitled
Digital Art
Spencer Schultz, 16

Arthur “Squeaky Boot” Smith

Nischay Patel, 13

“The only boundaries are in your mind.” This was the quote Arthur’s mom told him every day when he woke up and before he went to sleep. She had said that every day when she was in rehab, and Arthur learned to do the same. Arthur was a tall, lanky man with a smile on his face wherever he went. He had one, shiny, black boot that squeaked with every step he took. He had a limp that would make people stare but he didn’t care. His long, brown hair that drooped over his eyes was the highlight of his face. Although his personality can be described in words, it’s not the same as if you were actually around him. Arthur had a joy-filled, fun-loving attitude that didn’t have an off button. Even though Arthur may seem like he was full of fun and games, he was always determined to support his wife and three children no matter what it took.

One winter morning, he got up at five in the morning, just like any other day, and stomped through the grass, covered with frost to get to his old, rusty truck. That morning, the ground was covered with a thick sheet of glistening ice. It showed no signs of melting for the next few days which would make the people who usually walk or ride their bike to work or school, take the bus. Arthur beamed with excitement because this meant more income and socializing with new people. The day began very well, lots of people were riding the blue and white bus, and he met a lot of new friendly people. A few hundred feet after his third stop, a black sedan abruptly merged into Arthur’s lane without signaling that he was going to switch lanes. Arthur slammed on the brakes and turned the steering wheel as hard as he could. The big, bulky bus slipped on the ice and rolled over onto its back. Windows shattered into millions of pieces as passengers started to scream for help as loud as they could. “Is everyone ok?” yelled a passenger towards the front of the bus. An elderly woman replied in a raspy voice, “I am, but the bus driver looks seriously injured,” Arthur wanted to reply, “I’m fine” but his mouth wouldn’t open. That’s when he realized the humongous bus rolled over, and his leg had hit the side of the bus. The bones in his leg shattered on impact. He managed to whisper, “Call 911” before he blacked out.

Arthur woke up in the hospital with his family surrounding him. His family proceeded to ask him if he was “ok” and what had happened. He told them all of what he had remembered, but that wasn’t much. Just then the doctor came into the tiny hospital room which only had two windows and told him the disappointing news.” Sir, you are very lucky that we got you here as fast as we did. You suffered numerous broken bones in your right leg, a serious concussion, and you lost a remarkable amount of blood. We must prepare you to go into surgery.” And with that, the doctor and his team whisked Arthur away into a white room where he was put to sleep. After the surgery Arthur was told that he would need a prosthetic leg in order for him to walk again. The doctors amputated his leg during surgery, yet they didn’t tell him before the surgery because they wanted him to feel at ease. A lot was going on too fast and Arthur was devastated. He didn’t know how he would overcome this tragedy. Halfway through his rehab when Arthur

was feeling depressed, weak, and like the world was against him, his pastor from the local church came to visit him. He reminded Arthur of his faith and that all human beings have a purpose on Earth, and his was to protect and support his family. He also reminded Arthur about his sweet, loving mother, and how she went through the same exact thing. He now remembered the saying she used to say to him and decided he would say his mother's quote every time he was feeling down or like he couldn't do something. This rejuvenated Arthur giving him the energy he never had before. In just a few months, he was able to walk again and was eager to get back to his job.

Arthur was back at his job in a matter of a year. His story was all over the news about how he was in a heart-breaking accident and battled through the hardships he faced during rehab. He now also had a prosthetic limb with one, shiny, squeaky boot. Ryan Wolf, a famous news anchor known for his astonishing stories he found, had even given Arthur a nickname. Arthur "Squeaky Boot" Smith. On Arthur's first day back, he started to drive and felt how hard it was to drive. It was awkward and he was going to have to get used to driving like this. He knew that if he had learned how to walk with the prosthetic, he could learn to drive with it as well. He spent hours practicing every single day on the bus so that it felt normal. His loving family helped him every single day to try to be a better person and bus driver. Knowing that his family, passengers, and God was behind him, he knew there wasn't anything he couldn't achieve.

Years past, and eventually, Arthur Smith died of old age, but his legacy didn't. His story of how he persevered and never stopped working in rehab will never stop being told. This story is told in all schools for kids with disabilities to inspire them and make sure they know that with hard work and grit, they can accomplish anything they dream of. And if they ever doubt themselves, they just have to remember, "The only boundaries are in your mind."



untitled
Digital Art
Spencer Schultz, 16

Gravity

Grace Bentley, 17

maybe this is what i truly wanted- closure.

it took my heart much longer to heal from you as we ended on the concept of love;
love is what we were, we had, are no longer.

you told me it was for my benefit

for me to find myself and come right back to you.

you found her in February- two months to the day you left me.

it took me four more months.

i lost it all - my sense of direction, sense of touch with reality,
sense of time.

but it came.

it came and went, and today it still pulls from me, but i know this self-made noose better than
anyone else.

home.

you are not my home.

you never should have been home.

this, running, is not home.

it is gravity.

i needed gravity.

pulling me back down to earth.

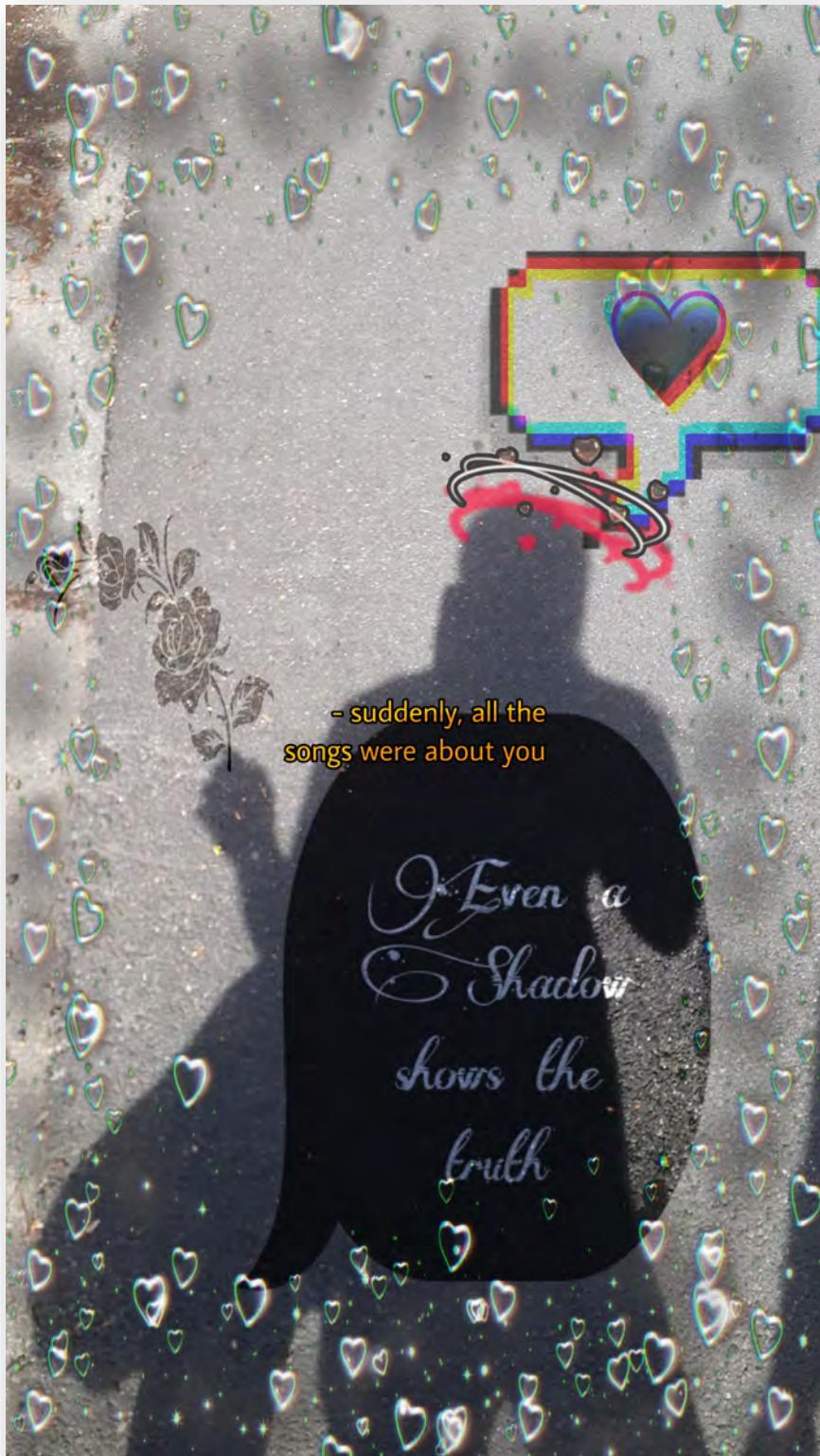
what a concept, forged in love.

the idea that we always land where we need to, no matter what.

Writer's Block

Gigi Facciolo, 13

My pencil touches paper, but no words are formed. The blank paper sits in front of me, but I'm out of ideas. I can't produce anything. My mind has slipped away from the writing. Ideas fly around in my head, but one by one, I shoot them down. Stupid. Unoriginal. Boring. None of them will work. I've hit a wall. I can't write anymore. I desperately try to think of an idea, anything that will work, but I just can't. My mind is blank. Nothing is there anymore, not even more bad ideas. Nothing. Time passes, and still, I have nothing, so I close my notebook and leave. No writing for now. I embark on a journey, searching for something. Anything. I explore outside, read, do anything to find an idea. I could have an idea by the end of this day, or in a few days, or in a week, but I'll get it. Once the idea hits me, I grab my notebook and start writing. Now, the words flow from my pencil, streaming out of it, knocking down my wall.



The Hidden Puzzle Piece

Picsart

Asaiahya Green, 17

Spring Season

Kai Fu, 12

Spring is fun and usually people go outside
to enjoy the weather.

We like to play
sports in the Spring.

Usually the weather is very nice
and the birds fly on trees, chirping.

In the Spring, traveling birds
use the bird feeders a lot,
so people should put out bird feeders
during this time.

A lot of animals are born in the Spring.

The Spring is where
all the animals come out to relax.

There are a lot of
swarming honey bees in the Spring.

There are a lot of
bugs in the Spring.

There are a lot
more sunny days in the Spring.

Spring has a good temperature
and strong sunlight.

The trees start growing flowers,
while the air smells fresh
and cool breezes pass us.

The weather changes so much
that you don't know exactly
what to wear everyday.

Tornadoes are really common.

There are a lot of puddles.

There are a lot of allergies.

That is pretty much
what there is in Spring.



Delicate
Lela Goolday, 17



Mother and Child in the Flowers

Oil painting
Aina Puri, 15

Mirror, the Master of the truth

Asaiahya Green, 17

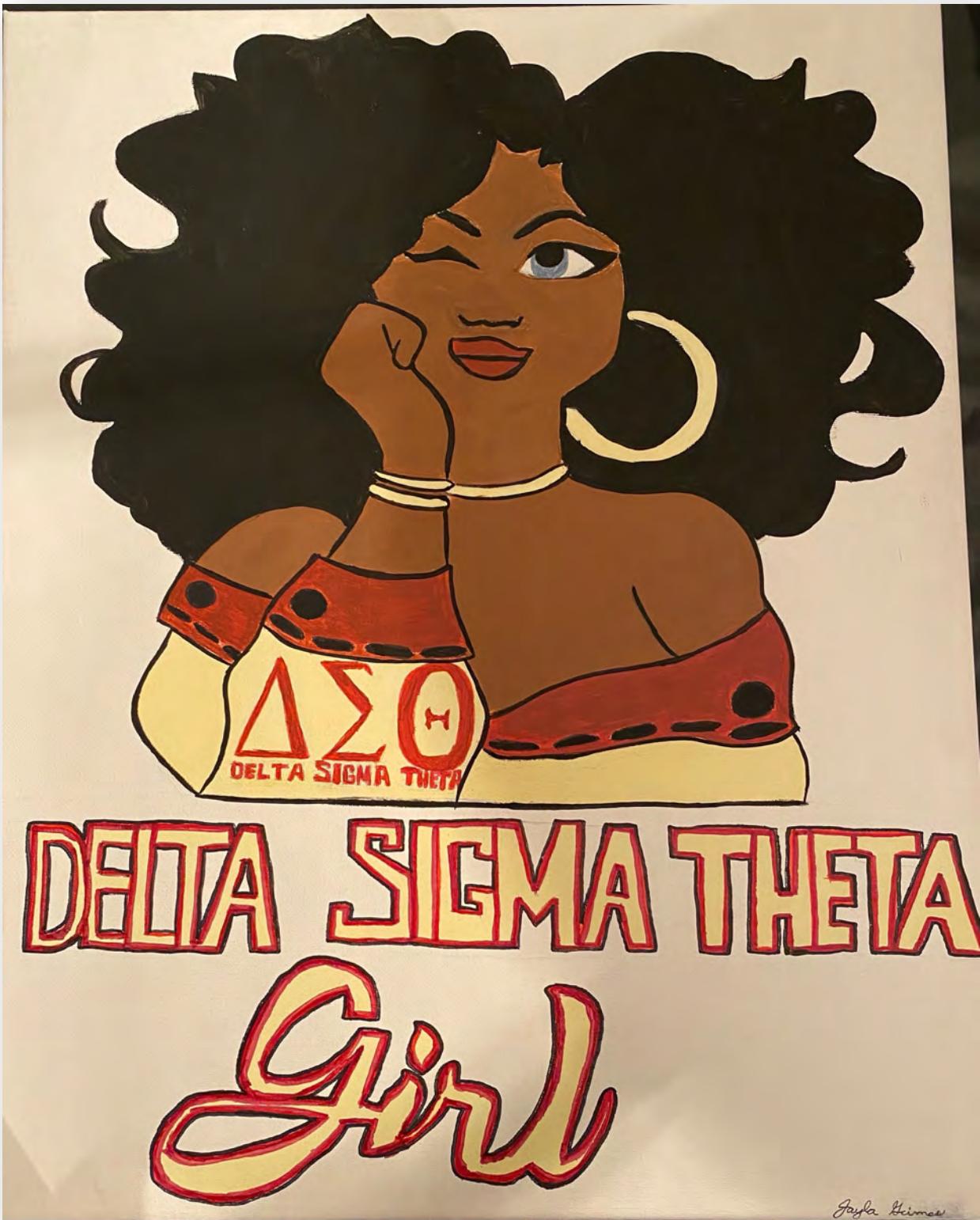
A mirror hung on the wall
Alone it stands 6 feet tall
Some feared that it will fall
But its stable feature calmed them all

Look in the mirror, what do u see?
Some saw a bumbling bee
Others saw a beautiful tree.
But all you can see is you and me.

Ask them, who are you?
All they will say is something pure and true.
“I can see your heart turning blue.”
Or “your soul is shiny being painted in hue.”

You face the truth only the mirror can tell.
It’s no ordinary wishing well.
But you can be hearing the sound of a bell.
You slowly fell into their spell.

In a start, you woke up
From a spell that got you locked-up.
It wasn’t the mirror who stopped your misery from building-up
It was you seeing yourself as your heart begins warming-up.



Delta Girl
Acrylic Paint
Jayla Grimes, 12

Things You Can't Tell Your Teachers

Mikayla Dayton, 17

I've compiled a list of things that students cannot tell their teachers, no matter how desperately they want to because of the astronomically awkward situation that would follow. Teachers teach because of their admiration for the students. They sure don't do it for the pay. However, there is this unspoken code of things that we just do not talk about with our teachers, no matter how close we are with them. These items are universally "off limits."

Disapproval of wardrobe decisions.

This is more common in female teachers, but that doesn't mean that men don't also lack the ability to dress themselves. Some teachers dress themselves very stylishly, however, there are some teachers who desperately need help and appear to lack a sense of what matches and what does not. For example, you may have a teacher who may wear a certain orange, old-lady sweater, when in fact she is quite young and cannot rock this item of clothing like Grandma can. Why would she walk out of the house like this? We will never know. If a student were to inform a teacher of their opinion, the teacher would likely take offense to it and no one wants to upset the people who we spend seven hours with each day. Also, why should a teacher let the opinion of one get them down? Nonetheless, students can never disclose that they don't like something that their teacher wears. Students must merely keep their extreme dislike to themselves.

Clothing malfunctions.

This leads me into my next point which is in the event that there are actual issues in the clothing department for a teacher. With some of the older teachers, it is common to see a white bra being worn with a sheer top. If I were the fashion police, I would surely have to arrest these teachers. Anyone with any sort of fashion knowledge knows that a nude bra must be worn with any type of sheer shirt. Unfortunately, there are some poor, unfortunate souls in this world who have not yet acquired this knowledge. However, students cannot very well go up to a teacher and tell them that she needs to wear a different bra. Students must just suffer through. There is another scenario in which I have been a victim. What about if a teacher's fly is down? Just thinking about it makes me cringe. You don't want to tell them, but you don't want them to go through the day not knowing. There's no good way to share this information with a teacher. You must just live with the guilt of knowing and go throughout your day knowing that you know. My only advice is to take it to the grave, chief.

True reasons for not completing assignments.

I would not understand this one completely, but for some reason, students never want to reveal the true reason for not doing homework. There always has to be an excuse. The "my dog ate my homework" joke has been dead and buried for years. Students never tend to come up with a valid reason for their missing work. Teachers often hear "I was busy" or "I had a lot going on"

when the student and the teacher both well know that video games were the reason for the incomplete assignment. Some students just don't know how to prioritize school and they need to take responsibility for that. Still, students will never directly come clean to their teachers.

Friendship Breakups.

Unlike real breakups, friendship breakups are the most severe breakups that a person can go through. A person will go through many boyfriends and girlfriends throughout their life, however, losing a friend is an incredibly difficult loss, especially in school. What makes it even worse is that teachers will often express their concern for a student if they notice tension in the classroom. Unfortunately, you can't very well come up to your teacher at the beginning of class and tell her that you and Jessica aren't friends any more because she's a backstabbing witch and for that reason, you two can no longer adhere to your assigned seats.

Revealing that you have discovered their social media accounts.

Although it takes hours of dedication and determination, students do find teacher social media accounts, hidden under all of their attempts at burying them. What's worse is when they discover their teachers' deep, dark secret, such as a wine addiction or the fact that they're still single. It's weird when you realize that your teacher is actually a real person and then you have to go into class the next day and pretend that you don't know what you now know. Especially for those teachers that always stick to a certain uniform each day, such as a plaid button-down and khakis, it is difficult to look at a teacher the same way when a student sees a post where that teacher is in something that isn't this consistent uniform.

Appearance changes should not be allowed.

Equally, seeing teachers in different clothes is one thing, but them actually changing their appearance is a completely different one. Teachers should absolutely not be allowed to drastically change their appearance. It really impacts a student's ability to learn from that person. For example, last year, one of my teachers not only dyed her strawberry blonde hair DARK brown, but she also cut her long hair into an undercut. (That's right folks: HALF OF IT WAS SHAVED.) Now, I have no issue with people trying new things, but this was an extreme change, which took me months to comprehend. It was like a different person was teaching me; someone who I had not yet formed a bond with. I'll admit that she looks really good with the new hair style, but I feel that this should've been an over-the-summer sort of change. I'm the type of student that takes weeks to adjust if a teacher gets a new pair of glasses, let alone an entirely different hair style.

Discussing a hatred for another teacher.

As coworkers, teachers will ultimately stick up for one another no matter what. Even if you are talking about the worst teacher in the entire school with your favorite teacher, they will likely empathize with your suffering, but try to quickly change the subject, while not openly expressing an opinion on that teacher. In addition, once I was ranting to one of my teachers about my awful English teacher. For some reason, English teachers are notably the worst.

Anyway, I was discussing his questionable teaching style and my other teacher informed me that “he couldn’t be *that* bad.” However, I guarantee you that he definitely was. Every student must undergo a period where they have a teacher that they dislike, but must deal with. Surely, our teachers underwent this same struggle in their high school and college years. It’s the same type of hatred felt when you have to stay in a faculty meeting for ten extra minutes because *that* teacher needed to ask a question. Still, teachers refuse to talk poorly about one another.

Discussing a hatred for another student.

Similarly to coworkers, teachers cannot disclose their true hatred for another student without being disrespectful, so when students rant to their teacher, they act more as an open ear than a contributor to the hate. Around students, teachers must always have “teacher mode” on. In new teachers, it can be observed that this mode is still developing, where they may accidentally slip up and admit a universal truth about a misbehaved student. In addition, newer teachers tend to share more about their personal lives around students, which I feel make it easier for teachers to bond with their students.

I can’t wait until I become a teacher because I will be able to experience it all with my students: the good, the bad, the funny, the embarrassing, and everything in between.

Mooncake
Marker and watercolor
Christina Law, 15



Life

Ileta Casell, 13

Life. Life is an erosion in the ground that you were thrown in the second you were born, maybe even before that. Once you are in the deep, encompassing hole in the ground, you sit. You sit and wait to see if anyone or anything will come barrelling down and swoop you out of your pit of discomfort into the wide, open air. But then you realize that no one is coming. No one is rushing to your aid and no one is coming to free you from your devastatingly steep hole in the ground. So you start to climb. You push yourself to your feet and you start to climb with courage and determination. But soon you realize you aren't climbing at all. You're falling with height. You keep getting high enough to see the green grass, the lolling flowers, and the tiny critters scuttering this way and that. But then, just as you are about to thrust yourself up, your hand slips on an unstable rock and you tumble back down into your deep, dark hole. So now you plan. You plan for there to be a deceptively sturdy rock. You shake off the dirt and the sweat and you set yourself back on the wall up the hole. You're almost there. You feel the breeze and you hear the quiet chirping of the crickets, and just as you switch paths to avoid the deceiving rock, your foot gets stuck in a tiny crevice. You tug and pull and grunt and shake, but no matter how hard you try, your foot is still stuck in the little crevice in the wall. So you let go of the rocks you've been desperately holding onto to keep upwards and the weight of your fall unlatches your foot and throws you back to rock bottom. Literally. You lay there in agony for a while, rethinking your previous plan. So you take a few breaths and slowly rise to your feet. You take a look around and make the big decision to climb a different wall. You bounce back and forth and get a running start up the wall. You grip the rocks and dirt with vigor and aggression. You thrust yourself onward with fearlessness. You climb and climb even though you are exhausted and worn down. But then the unimaginable happens. While using all your might and mind to get to the top, you grasp a rock so sharp and so rough that it pierces your hand down to the bone. You screech in pain and instinctively let go completely and hit the ground with a belowing thud. Uncontrollable tears flow down your cheeks. But then you stop yourself. You wipe your tears and sit up. Even with your pounding headache and cast down heart, you wrap up your hand, re-plan, and make the excruciatingly painful rise to your feet. With dirt clinging to you in every nook and cranny, you stumble towards the third wall. You take a few long, deep breaths in and out then set your feet and hands on the rocks. You climb and grab and kick and scratch your way to the top of this seemingly endless pit. You are almost out of hope and are losing strength by the second when you can see the wild pigment of grass just as you did all that time ago. A smile stretches your face from east to west when a furious bird swoops down and plows right into your head. You fall back-breakingly into the ground. A scream so high pitched you can barely hear tears through the air. The tears come forcefully down your face and you don't have the energy or strength to stop them. You are done. You have nothing else to live for and are just waiting for death to take over. But then a small voice whispers in your mind.

"What about the others?" It says. You don't know if anyone is listening, let alone if anyone is there at all. But what if there are? So you breathe. You breathe deep and long. And then you shout. You start shouting at the top of your lungs about how to get to the top. You shout

about the deceiving rocks, the tiny crevice, the sharp gravel, and the swooping bird. You shout and scream and holler until you are out of breath and soon enough, life. You squeeze out your last breath and fall into the comfort of death.

But after death, there is life. There is life in another, another that you didn't see. Another that was there to hear your bellows and screeches. Another that was thrown into a hole just as you were. Another sinking into the depression of the hole they were thrown in. Another ready to give up until they hear this bellowing voice warning them of the dangers of the hole and how to avoid them. Another wiping their tears just as you did and starting their way up the wall. You'll never see them heed all your advice and dodge their way through the obstacles on the trail. Another making their way up the wall, almost making it but then slipping on a rock that you didn't make it to. You'll never see them slump down into their head until they remember what you warned them about and start back up again on the fourth wall, the one that you never had the life to get to. Another running up the wall with the same determination that you had. Another pushing and thrusting themselves up to the top just as you had. And you'll never see them do the one thing that you couldn't quite do. You'll never see them raise their hand to the top of the hole and sink their nails into the earth, grasping the grass and dirt with life and everything that comes with it. You'll just never see.



Astro Skull
Digital Art
Gabrielle Pickard, 12

The Girl Who Doesn't Swim

Lori Nguyen, 12

I don't swim.

When you hear the words "I don't swim," you would assume that I simply never learned how to, but I learned. You see, there is a difference between cannot and do not. Cannot means unable, do not means unwilling. I am unwilling.

Why? Simply stated, I have found no safety in the waters below just as I have found no safety in the world above. The depths of the ocean drag people down against their will, forcing them to play with them, and I want nothing to do with that. However, the people that roam the coastline are much worse, having only shown me that kindness comes with a price, with no exception to anyone, including the ones with true hearts of gold. I did not choose to drown, others pushed me here, but even so, I am still not stronger than the tides. I thought I was, I thought I could fight. But at the end of the day, a human never wins a war with the ocean, and drowning is the punishment for trying.

I remember when swimming was like a fun game. Back then the water wasn't trying to take away my breath, but rather playfully seeing how long I was willing to take before it was necessary to break the surface of the water, gasping for air as I did. Now swimming has become a sick game, and although I'm aware of how twisted this game has become, I still choose to play. I am currently playing, which means I am currently losing. Drowning is my punishment, but in an odd way, I have found comfort in drowning. I have made friends with the ocean. When the ocean is sad I dive down to pat their heart. When the ocean is happy I lay on top of their stomach, trying to converse with the sun. Sometimes the ocean gets particularly moody with me, thrusting me down, down, down, swallowing me whole in their rich shades of lapis, but they always get over it. After a while of endless blues the water comes to their senses, allowing me to open my eyes to see the sun smiling back at me, welcoming me home.

I should be looking for help. I should be swimming until my legs are numb, hoping to find the shore or to find someone who can free me. I have encountered plenty of passersby around these parts, but none of these people pay me any mind. After all, someone in danger wouldn't look as serene as I do. My personal favorite encounters are always with swimmers, for they are always the most compassionate. When lone swimmers come by, I inform them that this is where they should go back home, for these parts aren't the safest place to be.

And they do. Every time I've said those words they turn around and leave, just like I told them to, although they do give me a nervous glance as they go. As many times as I do this though, watching them leave, and knowing that I told them to, makes a part of me feel let down. This is the same part of me that yearns for someone to see through my deceit, drag me back home, telling me never to pull a stunt like that ever again along the way. But they don't. So I sit in my ocean. I go under when the tides tell me to, and when the water pushes me up I let it. I am one with the ocean. If anyone cared that I've been missing for days they probably wouldn't care to search for me here.

I'm not surprised. I am the girl who doesn't swim, so why try to find me?



Kraken

Ink, Graphite Pencil, White Gel
Rayna Hossain, 13

Choose Wisely

Christina Law, 15

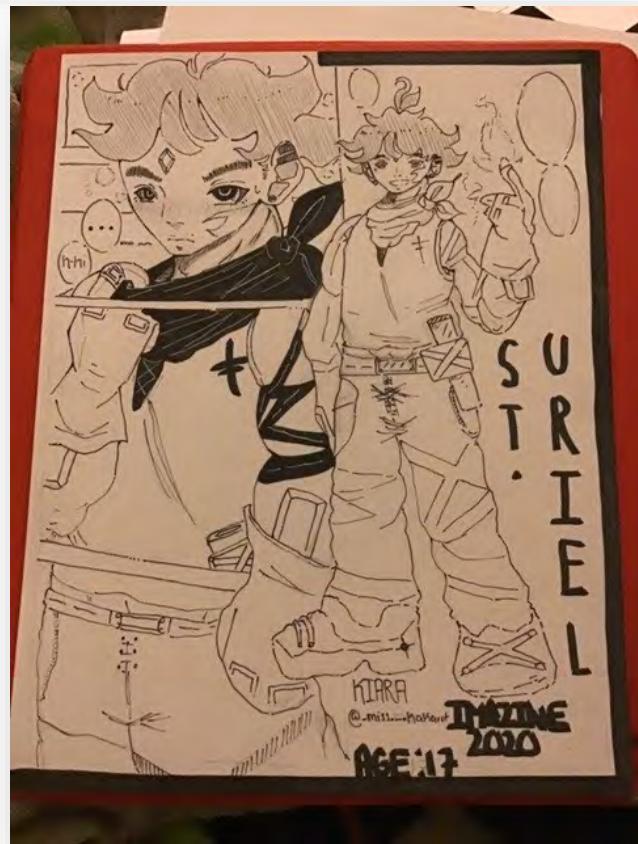
Child,
Tilt your head back and gaze—
Gaze up at the night sky
Outreach your hand
Against the millions of stars
Notice how small your hand looks
While the stars twinkle away

Child,
No matter how wide
You spread your fingers and
No matter how big
Your hand becomes
Know that you can only
Grasp that much in your life—
So
Choose wisely

Child,
Once you have found
What you truly want
Once you have found
What your heart desires
Reach for it with all your strength
Hold it tight and hug it close to you
Don't ever let it go
You may never get
A second chance
So child,
Choose wisely



Taffy
Lead pencil
Kiara Baxter, 17



St. Uriel
Alcohol markers, lead pencil, & colored pens
Kiara Baxter, 17



Ze Little Light
Gabrielle Picard, 12

Bold Words

Samrangi Deb, 12

The crisp, cold morning air stung my cheek as I walked along the concrete sidewalk. Only about a handful of people littered the city streets, which was good, I supposed. The less the better. I would have preferred that everyone stayed inside, but, even in the coldest and stormiest of winter days, there would be people who would refuse the comfort of their home.

Sighing quietly as another commuter gave my overly ambitious woolen garb a strange look, I cursed my islandic heritage, where we were taught to wear about fifty coats every time the temperature dropped below freezing. But, I wasn't here to get complimented on my clothing choice. I had a job to do.

Keeping my hands in my pocket, I checked the wind for any signs of danger, any hint of the telltale scent of rotten flesh that haunted the air any time The Evil came about. I found nothing, though there was a strange pressure.

I shook my head, hoping I was imagining it. The Evil rarely came around twice a year, and today's mission was probably just a false alarm. Jani, our tracker, was always overly careful. This was respected by most people, but, for the people that had to carry out his commands, it was just plain annoying. I, curse my luck, just happened to be one of those pitiful people. But I suppose you could never be too careful with The Evil, especially in a populated region like this.

Taking a bunch of random turns, I tried to look inconspicuous to the maybe five people that were passing me (not helped by my attire unfortunately). I had just taken another blind turn when the horrific stench hit me. I stumbled back into a wall and gagged. Jani had warned us about the smell, how vile it would be, and he described it as "rotten eggs combined with year old cheese." Unfortunately, I doubted my nasal region would recover enough to test that.

Blinking the tears out of my eyes, I tried to see what poor place The Evil had decided to root itself in.

I was in a dark alley, surrounded by slimy walls (turns out some of the slime got on my overcoat too), with a bunch of dumpsters scattered around.

Then, I saw it. To describe it as horrifying or scary would have been an understatement. It was a mass of veins; thick, sickly, grayish-red ones. In the middle of the horrific heap was something like a heart, but instead of red, it was an ashy grey. It thumped weakly, sending a thick liquid coursing through the ropes around it. I stepped back, too horrified to do much more than squeak. All the years of training hadn't prepared me for this at all.

Now I understood why senior Malice Hunters always had that haunted look in their eyes. If every time I went to work, I had to see this, I would be terrified too. Unfortunately, The Evil wasn't even in its final form. I could tell. Every time the heart beat, another mass of veins would appear, spreading through cracks and up the walls. It was growing bigger, and at the same time, stronger.

And it was my job to stop it. I had trained for this all my life. I could do it. The only reason I was here was because Jani trusted me. Because he thought I could handle it.

I swallowed my fear, which left a vile taste in my mouth, and walked up to the sickly heart. It didn't have a consciousness yet, but if I didn't stop it soon, it wouldn't be long before it grew

one. At that point, it would be practically impossible to destroy. I couldn't let it get to that.

Putting a hand on the still beating heart (I'm sorry, but it felt wet and really gross, just had to get that out of the way), and composed myself, trying to remember my training.

Step one: Breathe. I had already accomplished that, or else I wouldn't be alive. Step two: think of any happy memories. I conjured up a few, most coming from back when I was still a kid, playing with Glenn.

But, I didn't get to step three. Before I could do that, something took my mind and yanked it into pitch darkness

For a moment I just floated there. Then, the same force that pushed me into the void (or whatever I was experiencing then,) shoved me into the ground.

I picked myself off of the rocky floor and stood up, dazed.

Looking around, I realized I was in some sort of dream plane. Something outside the confines of reality. Stray boulders floated across a bright red sky. The ground was a desert of beige rocks and sand. The horizon was dotted with looming mountains, which shone a dark red against the bloody sky.

Suddenly, I heard a sharp laugh behind me. I whipped around, looking for the source.

"Ohhh, you all are so easy to trick these days," it cried out in a gleeful tone, "all I had to do was look weak and insignificant, and pop there you are, right in my grasp."

Uh oh, so I had been tricked. The patch of Evil wasn't really new at all. It was developed. I had heard of things like these happening to hunters, where they talked about how the malice took their consciousness and played tricks with them, almost to the point of madness, but Jani always dismissed them as rumors. Turns out they were real after all.

"WHO ARE YOU?" I bellowed, trying to seem more confident than I really was, "YOU DON'T KNOW WHO YOU'RE DEALING WITH!"

But even to me, that sounded weak.

"But I do," the voice purred, "I'm dealing with a kitten who thinks she's a lioness, a lone wolf, her only friend missing, an orphan."

I took a sharp breath. "How- how do you-"

"Nothing you will say can stop your demise, nothing you can say will change your fate, little one," it said in a slick tone.

Something started wrapping around me, something cold, sticky, and evil. Very evil. I lashed out against it, trying to free myself.

"You are nothing. You don't mean anything," it thundered.

I wanted to shout that it wasn't true, I really did, but then I realized. What it said was true. I really was nothing. No one cared.

“Your only friend left you, your parents abandoned you, your ‘father’ sent you on suicide mission. Just so he didn’t have to deal with you anymore.”

I shrank further into the goo. Their faces swam across my mind. Glenn, my only friend, leaving. My unknown parents who had left me at birth, before I even could do anything for myself. Jani, the only father I had known, had sent me here to rot. Maybe they really didn’t need me.

“NOBODY BELIEVES IN YOU!”

Then, I remembered something, a faint memory. Glenn, smiling as he took my fingers, giving it a squeeze and saying “I’ll see you again.” After that, I saw Jani’s stern, yet kind, face as he wrapped me in a hug. “You can do this,” he had whispered. In both, I saw something familiar and similar, love and trust.

The voice was wrong. People did care about me. People did believe in me. Maybe I didn’t have parents, but I had Jani, the only parent I ever needed. And Glenn didn’t leave me, he went to find himself, somewhere, trusting that we would meet again.

I took these memories and imagined them as a weapon, a weapon to defend from the darkness that was coating my mind. In doing so, my bonds fell away. The hopelessness that had taken me over evaporated.

“WHAT ARE YOU DOING?” the voice shrieked, “YOU ARE ONLY-”

But, I didn’t let it finish. I was tired of it.

“You exist only to create havoc, consume others into your web of darkness. You shouldn’t be here, in a place of light,” I said with deathly calm.

The scenery around me began to crumble, tumbling into the bright light underneath it.

“YOU AREN’T-” It tried to shriek, tried to save itself.

“GO AWAY!” I screamed. I was in control now, nothing it said could affect me.

Then, a bright flash consumed everything.

I woke up on top of a dumpster. I have no idea how I got there, but I couldn’t have cared less (my clothes probably disagreed though). I had just bested a voice that fed off of self-doubt and bad memories, give me a break.

When I finally extracted myself from the dumpster, I smelled like day-old cheese, which was a nice break from the nose-burning scent of The Evil.

I checked for any signs of the heart or any veins, but there was nothing. It was really gone. I had done it.

My ears were ringing, and my head hurt, but I felt great.

Natural Hair Revolution

Elisabeth H. W., 13

Welcome to Natural Hair Revolution. My name is Professor Natural; today girls, I am going to discuss the products needed to keep curly and kinky hair healthy and beautiful. So, get out your pencil and note pad because class is now in session! Please draw your attention to the following list:

Curly Hair Must-Haves #101

#1 - Shea Moisture African

*Water Mint & Ginger
Shampoo*

*#2 - Whole Blends Avocado
& Shea Butter Conditioner*

#3 - Shea Moisture Raw Shea Masque

*#4 - Shea Moisture Pre-Swim
Leave-In Protection*

#5 - Mielle Rosemary Mint Oil

#6 - Aunt Jackie's Curl Custard

*#7 - Innersense Organic Beauty
Prep-Spray/ Thermal Care.*

This list is a few of the many essential products, and I will give you another list of Curly Hair Must Haves #102 next semester. Now starting from the top, I will tell you how each product works and how to use it. For the Shea Moisture African Water Mint & Ginger Shampoo, wet hair with warm water and work in to a lather. This minty shampoo works well for people who have dry, flaky scalp. The peppermint abstract also stimulates hair growth. Now after shampooing the hair twice, conditioning will come right after. Apply this Shea Butter Avocado Conditioner to the hair, and either work through with hands, or comb throughout hair. Leave the conditioner in for about 15 minutes. Then rinse. A hair masque, the third product listed, basically is shea butter, castor seed oil, olive oil, and botanicals that helps heal damaged hair. You will want to leave the masque treatment in for 30 minutes up to an hour. This time frame is optional, but beneficial.

“Excuse me. Professor Natural, I have a question.”

“Yes.”

“Do I need to let the masque set in my hair under a dryer or wrap my hair in a towel?”

That’s a good question. Either way will be fine. TIP: You don’t have to use a conditioner before the masque treatment. Its optional, but I find that washing the hair with conditioner first gives the hair more manageability before combing the masque through. Now comes the leave-in, for all those mermaids out there who love to swim, just like I do! I would recommend this Pre-Swim leave-in conditioner to anyone. It protects hair from the sun, chlorine, and salty water. Use on wet or dry hair before swimming. Comb through hair and don’t rinse this product out

until after you swim. It will soften your curls once dampened with water. Trust me, your hair will thank you later! Next on the curly must-haves is #5-Mielle Rosemary Mint Oil. Curly girls need some type of light serum or oil for moisturization. Scrunching this oil in your curls can leave a shiny, glossy coat after styling. The oil also leaves a sweet minty scent that you'll love! Aunt Jackie's Curl Custard can be added into any wash & go routine. This custard is like a mixture of gel and crème blended together and smells amazing! You might want to make a note that gel alone dries the hair out. Therefore, Jackie's Curl Custard definitely works during the winter when maintaining moisture in cold weather is scarce. Last but not least every natural Sista needs a thermal care protection spray for her tresses. Basically, called a heat protectant. That's exactly what this Innersense Organic Beauty spray is all about. Free from harmful silicones, sulfates, and lots of other artificial chemicals, this lightweight spray is great to use before doing a blowout, flat ironing, or curling hair. The spray can be used on wet or dry hair too. Okay, this is a lot of information I've put on you; but **DO your research** and find what curly products work best for YOU! Although this class is over, I would love to see you again, so please register for Natural Hair Revolution (Curly Hair Must-Haves 102)! If you need to reach me before then, contact me at my office for any questions or comments, and I'll see you girls again!

BYE!!!



Bubble Gum, Bubble Gum

Acrylic Paint

Jayla Grimes, 12

Her Pancreas

Hannah Truong, 12

(Inspired by the movie “I want to eat your pancreas”)

I was alone.

Alone was all I knew.

All I had was myself and my books.

They always told me, “Get your nose out of a book.”

Until I met her.

I first encountered her at a train station.

Then I saw her again in a library.

This was when she asked me,

“Do you want to be my friend?”

At first I neglected her.

I only hung out with her cause I felt bad
She had pancreatitis.

She always told me, “I’m going to die”

Yet she was always so happy.

I wondered how.

Instead of worrying more about dying,
She tried so hard to live a normal life.

Rumors started going around.

I started getting attacked by her friends.
I wanted to leave her, but I couldn’t.

After a few weeks,

I finally decided to open up to her.
She grew on me.

And I never expected it.

I finally learned to open my heart.

She let me borrow a book.

She made me a promise.

She promised she’d let me know when she was
going to die.

I promised her I would return her book.

We both broke our promises.

She died and I didn’t know it was coming.

I didn’t get to return her book.

Her disease didn’t murder her.

Someone else did.

I couldn’t build the courage to attend her
funeral.

I couldn’t bear the pain.

When we first met,

She told me that if I ate her pancreas when she
died,

Her soul would live on inside of me.

Before she died,

I sent her a message.

“I want to eat your pancreas.”

She didn’t get to see it.

It hurts.

Now, without her,

I sit there alone again.

And cry.



Woven Bars of a Spider

Charcoal Pencils

Ashleigh Unbrecht, 18

In the Headlights

Mukta Kantak, 15

the world is a stage,
and we are merely actors,
my mother used to say
as we frolicked in the wood.

tonight, the world's spotlight
is shining into my face
and i am frozen.
it must be stage fright.

how does one look Death
straight in the eyes?
i am doing it right now.
time has come to a standstill.

suddenly, a honking noise,
and just as quickly
as it had started,
my part was over.



Annabelle Lee
Acrylic, charcoal, ink
Mackenzie Ruiz, 18

It's 2020

Gabbi Cassell, 15

"It's 2020, we're all equal now!", "It's 2020, can't everyone wear whatever they want?", "It's 2020, why can't we all just get along?". It is 2020 and this year the world has been going through two pandemics. The one we are all aware of COVID-19, coronavirus, quarantine, whatever one calls it, has taken over every life since March of this year. The second pandemic is just as serious as the first and flared up with the death of George Floyd. The Black Lives Matter Movement right now rivals that of the civil rights movement of the 1960s and is still being fought this very minute.

The definition of cultural appropriation is the unacknowledged or inappropriate adoption of the customs, practices, ideas, etc. of one people or society by members of another and typically more dominant people or society. Discerning whether something is cultural appropriation or appreciation has been a major topic of discussion this year. The most analyzed subject has been that of hair and specifically white celebrities wearing culturally black hairstyles such as box braids, cornrows, Bantu knots. The biggest culprits have been the titular Kardashian-Jenners, who have worn these hairstyles on multiple occasions with major backlash each time.

Regardless of these backlashes, the issue has still not been resolved. Animal Crossing New Horizons is a game that was released on March 20th of this year on the Nintendo Switch that has gotten millions of people of all ages through these mundane and frightening times. It remained somewhat disconnected from the racial issues of today until a few weeks ago.

Although people of all ethnicities and backgrounds enjoy the game, the hairstyles available were lacking specifically for black people. This is very common in games and alienates black players. Nintendo resolved this issue on November 17, 2020 with an update that implemented culturally black hairstyles including afros, afro puffs, cornrows, and locs. A player by the twitter handle @stardewleaf faced major backlash for a post she made on November 20 of a picture with her animal crossing character wearing the newly added afro puffs hairstyles with the misidentifying caption of "Cute space buns". A YouTuber by the name of Omni reviewed this controversy with a video titled "Twitter CANCELLED Her for Playing Animal Crossing" which was uploaded on November 21, 2020. His opinion, along with most of his subscribers, was that this was ridiculous and cultural appropriation should not be a topic of discussion in a game that allows players to be whoever they want to be. This perspective is not wrong, as a game should be a place to escape reality, especially in the times we are in. What failed to be discussed was that this player, on multiple accounts used racial slurs and engaged in racist conversations. The offended white people and the black people who didn't care completely ignored this narrative. The issue is not white people wearing black hairstyles; the issue is white people who feel entitled to wear black hairstyles without attempting to understand offended black people. For centuries black people, specifically black women, were attacked and ridiculed for their natural hair and were forced to assimilate by relaxing or straightening their hair to survive. This practice stems from the superiority complex white people created centuries ago that placed them above anyone who was not white.

This was clear because many white players angered black players by posting images of their animal crossing characters wearing the afro puffs and by tagging them as space buns, which is cultural appropriation. Until white people decide to take time to listen to the hurt and pain caused by their automatic privilege in society, this issue will never be resolved.

Lynchings were public murders of black people from the 1900s up into the 1960s. The popular opinion is that these awful displays of violence are trapped in the dark pages of history, but a few names come to mind from the awful events of this year. George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, etc. The entire world became aware of the systemic racism that courses through America's veins through the murder of George Floyd. He was murdered publically with a knee on his neck falsely justified by a police officer for the minor crime of using counterfeit money. For the first time, white people saw the blatant racism they denied was happening for years. It is 2020 and there are still lynchings. Ahmaud Arbery, an unarmed 25-year-old black man was fatally shot by three white residents of Brunswick, Georgia, while he was jogging. A 26-year-old black woman named Breonna Taylor was fatally shot by police in her home in Louisville, Kentucky. The common factor in these cases and many others is skin color. Being black in America makes one a target of the same people that white people see as their protectors.

Robin DiAngelo, a 64-year-old white woman, wrote the now bestselling 2019 book, White Fragility. This book was specifically written for white people who have remained ignorant about the race issue in our country. She brought up many situations she encountered with white people who hardened their hearts in favor of their own struggles instead of acknowledging the issues that black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) face. A common argument about white privilege was "I'm white and I have had a hard life and had to work to get where I am." What they failed to realize was that although their struggles were no less valid than anyone else's, their race was never a factor. Society glosses over the countless controversial issues that are argued over every day to keep up a false pretense of equality. Many use the excuse of the year we are in to distance themselves from the reality of the pain many go through. It's 2020 and we are still hurting.

The world has been in a rut for months now; millions of people are dying from the greatest pandemic in modern history. It has still failed to mask the great racism and discrimination that has been established in this country since the first explorers set foot on this land. Until both the oppressed and the oppressor come together to have tough conversations that lead to solutions, it will forever be 2020.



Bear
Acrylic paint
Kai Fu, 12

Bear ‘n Nature

Kai Fu, 12

Once there was a bear in nature with trees surrounding him. He was happy with the trees until the tree cutters came. They wiped out every single tree of the deep green forest he was living in until there was only one tree left. Therefore, a lot of animals went to that one tree that night. Many animals died from that tree wipe time. At the end, only a few were able to survive. And one of those was the bear.

He was extremely miserable about it though, he didn’t want to stay and ended up walking away sadly. Now, he had to discover a new forest and learn everything again. He slowly trudged to another forest far away. He adapted to his surroundings very quickly and became friends with the neighbors in this new forest.

Did you know that people actually cut approximately 15 billion trees a year, however, only planting 5 billion a year? This means we are losing 10 billion trees every year. If you really think about it: we probably cannot plant an extra 10 billion trees every year. Then, we might as well just cut less trees every year. People are using a lot of paper each year. Less paper means less trees getting cut, which allows nature and more wildlife to stay alive every year. This is one very beneficial way to save trees.

Sun

Rayna Hossain, 13

Mother
Of the
Earth

Let's us
Thrive

Helps us
Grow
Grass
Trees
Plants

Bathes us
With
Rain and snow

Keeps us
Warm and
Close

Gives us light
In the dark
Of the universe

Now we've been bad
She gives us the heat of her anger



Sun

Christina Law, 15

The End of Summer

Colleen Durkan, 15

At the end of summer
The lonely cricket sings
Field and forest gold and green
Startled whitetail doe leaps
Through brown tasseled corn
Which sings its harvest song.

My thumb pops hard
Golden kernels revealing rust red cob--
Autumn colors in my palm.



Stunned

Mukta Kantak, 15

Down the hill to Ramsey Farm
Yellow blossoms wither
Into plumb orange pumpkins
The last haying's sweet perfume lingers
Where goldenrod borders the path
At Summer's end.



By the Seashore

Watercolor

Madeline Messer, 18

Starts with Bricks

Addison Diguglielmo, 13

Bricks. Rows upon rows of bricks. Slammed together with cement. Carefully crafted to be perfect. So different from the small trailer homes downtown with the metal clinky walls and small windows. In the seams, you can find green mosses and small insects. It has glazed wood floors groaning under the weight of heavy footsteps. A house that has stood for 70 years. Stood through the Civil Rights Movement and The Vietnam War. Stood by and watched houses around it be built. Stood strong even when a tree, heavy as a planet, fell on it. Watched as a family moved into it, a family who did not want to be there. Rejoiced when a new family moved in. A mom, a dad, two little girls, and a dog. A young happy family. The dad persevering through residency. The mom diligently working as a litigation attorney. They redecorated the house. Took down the muddy looking wall paint and put up paint as yellow as sunflowers. Fixed the kitchen and added an island. Used their hard-earned money to make the house beautiful and made the house their own. They grew gorgeous flowers in the front yard that sprouted bright magenta petals and dark green stems. A happy place for people to grow up with a big lawn and a tree swing. Clean air to breathe, unlike downtown where thick heavy smog fills the air and chokes the oxygen. A home. My home. Waking up every day, I never think about my privilege. Bricks built around me, clean crisp cold water, and fuel for my body. Things I take for granted. Things that keep me healthy. Things others don't have.



Half a Yellow Sun

Watercolor

Madeline Messer, 18



House
Acrylic paint
Kai Fu, 12

Stress-Free Beach

Sage Miller, 14

It starts as my feet walk to the water's edge and soon they carry me to the crashing line. Frigid water piercing my skin. Sand tickling my feet. Each step causes a feeling of euphoria and torture. I stare out into the horizon. The water goes on forever. It's endless. But I continue to walk. My skin slowly numbs to the harsh temperature. Why am I still going further? Because there are no lifeguards to prevent me? No, it's more than that. It's like a program inside of me. I feel for sharp shells as I tumble into the deep. This beach isn't as safe as you would think. The waves clap like cymbals as they crash. If you get hit by one, it could truly damage you. I frantically wade through the water as I try to dodge each one. It feels as if someone increased the gravity to a point that I'm practically chained to the floor. My heart feels like it's sprinting while my legs barely move. I recognize this struggle for survival every week. I can vision others being swept into the vast ocean. And I fret that I will become the next victim. Freeze. The ocean is still for a millisecond. In the distance, I can see a towering wave rushing towards me. It's so tall and monstrous that it covers the last streak of light. A tiny voice in my head is saying "you're done for", and I can see my ladder to sanity and safety being pulled out of grasp. So I do the only thing I know to do, deal with it. At least I have the choice to choose? My hands extend as I precariously dive through the wave. Starting at my fingertips the water swiftly collapses onto my body. My cells tingle as I cry inside. It's an "I'm free cry". My brain is like a chalkboard that's been wiped down. It's so fresh that you can almost hear the squeak of chalk engraving a new memory. No one matters but me. Not the teachers, not my parents, just me.



On the Way to the Sea

Acrylic paint
Rae Fu, 17



untitled
Karima Ahmed, 12

Untold Stories

Hannah Ye, 17

The deep abyss of the waters
Reflects back eyes that hold
Emotions and tales untold
Tear-stained rosy cheeks
Locked in a perfect smile
Obedient of society's rules
Held perfectly to mundane standards
What are her untold stories?

Reaching under the surface to
Feel...feel the cool liquid—
Washing away the grime on his face
To reveal battle scars signifying
His initiation to manhood
The facade slowly crumbles
As each layer of dirt washes away
What are his untold stories?

Mother and Child

Oil Paint

Rae Fu, 17





Flamingo
Acrylic paint
Emily Derby, 12

Why I Love Freckles

Julie Griswold, 18

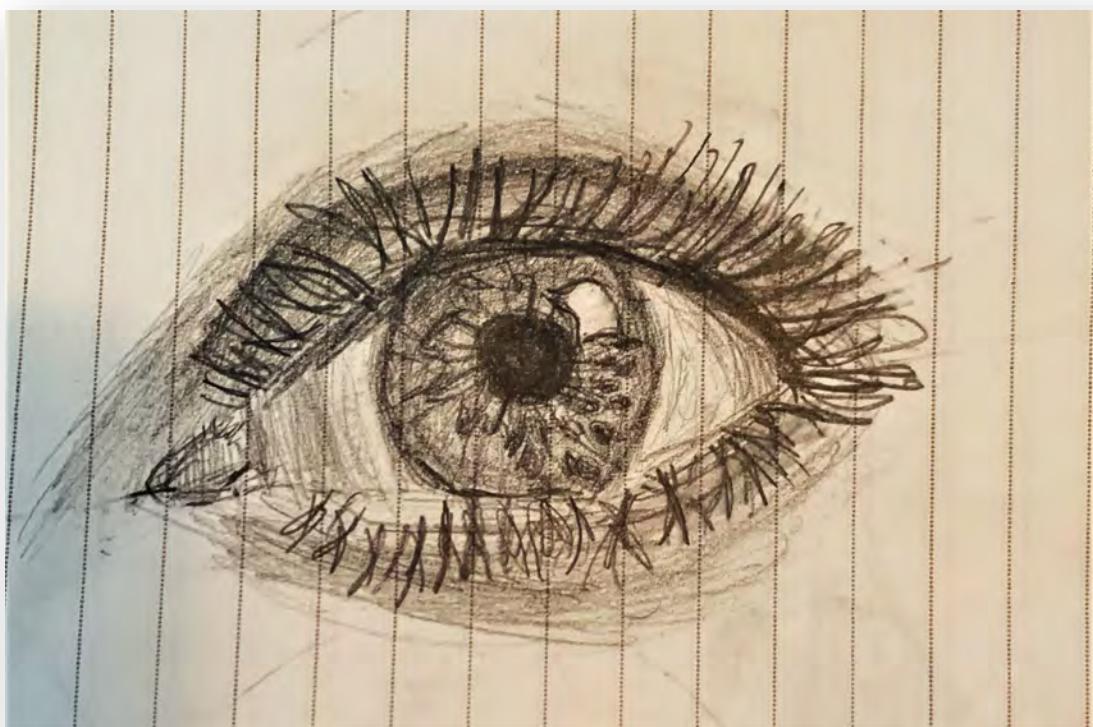
Sometimes I convince myself I am
a sunflower my black eyes are seeds

I trace your eyelashes like rays
recapture happiness I bathe in light

I collect soaking in asphalt sunsets reveal
you stars collide skyscrapers drip heat

and this is why I love freckles dappled
memories of sun dance across your skin

I trace constellations fleeting clouds
on your face



I Spy
Lead pencil
Emily Derby, 12

For my funeral...

Madeline Messer, 18

My loves,

Pain upon you is unbearable. I'm sorry to have furbished it and left you the clean-up. I leave you with this too.

Before my funeral, cook something

make the shashuka that didn't have any salt
spare me the diatribe and cook cauliflower as only the side
bake that chocolate cake you never gave me the recipe for and never made again
concoct the pasta salad with the chili and the lime
double the spices so you can feel something

Anticipate bringing the food

cut it in advance
supply napkins
set some aside for yourself
because it is all you can surely give

Arrive slightly late

though I know that won't be a challenge for anyone

there's no need to be punctual now

I'm not going anywhere else

but that doesn't matter anymore

I am sorry if you always were

At my funeral, wear your favorite items

discard the idea that anything should match

I want your checkered skirt over your flannel under your raincoat stumped by your flats
you can all look atrocious and still better than me

because my death will not match your living

Be mad at me for everything you never got to be

I should have missed your birthday more

I would certainly never have started dinner in a timely fashion

I might've stolen your best pressed flowers and refused to return them

I never did appreciate your ability to maximize computer filings and storage

I would have surely said the wrong thing to your parents at some point

I must have forgotten to book the hotel at least three times

It is not OK that all of this would have happened

It is not OK that none of it ever did

I would have told you to look, listen, and let these things go

Tell each other all the conversations we would have had

the opinion you would have asked for on your wedding dress

the critique you would have gotten for choosing that picture

how I would have praised you for finally planning a get-together

the forgiveness you would have shown me for buying food we had at home

the explanation you would have given for being three hours late

how I would have loved you anyways and all the more

Give away your pieces of me as I gave them freely to you
remember the time you took me to the flower market and Kid Sheileen's
regale them how I cried over Steve Jobs' death
recall that night we sat in the car for hours and were the only people in the world
tell everyone that I never noticed oncoming traffic so you held my hand
allow other people to know that I was in love and wouldn't admit I was lost
make me in death the whole person I could never be with you in life

Wallow in your emotions

it is a luxury I am affording you and one you many times afforded me
I hope in part this thought never leaves you but I would never wish it to be this bad
and when it no longer is, know that is not wrong
your lives should not be entombed with me

After my funeral, take the parts of me you need

if I was ever good at birthdays
become better at them
maybe I knew things you never told me
watch other people and do the same
should I have known how to make a mean apple cider
learn the skill
don't let the best parts of me go too

Throw all your anger at something useful, and if not, breakable

I don't want you perennially haunted or haunting
I want you actively healed or healing
but attempt that only after you're ready

And my love,

Understand that while I may have chosen to leave you, I didn't mean to leave them too
do for them what you did not do for me
take care of my people
refresh their eyes when they are worn
show them the other lights in their life
teach them how to let me go
even though I know that's something you cannot do

To my dear,

Know that you were one of the best things to ever happen to me
share what we've learned
shower the child in the school of life
let some of my bubbliness wear off your exterior
love like you weren't ever hurt
it's what I would have wanted

My other half,

You know I got some of my worst traits from you, yet you were always the better person
you were my mirror and my self
I wish I'd told you that just once
I hope you knew anyway
you were the only person with whom I felt unconditionally loved
for your sake, I hope I wasn't your other half

My guy Cy,
There's nothing left to inform you of
you always knew
thank you

You know, kindred spirit,
There's nothing to tell you either
I should have said I love you
I would pay twenty grand for your friendship all over again

With the legacy of my foolishness,
My sorrow extends beyond words
my ego cost us your happiness
don't forgive me
you are above that
and also holding me accountable
so so sorry
so so stupid

All else,
Love your inner circle better than I have loved mine
9.7.2020



Galaxy Girl
Acrylic Paint
Ashleigh Unbrecht, 18

Nature's Wrath

Carter Fenimore, 14

The warm embrace of the sun is so comforting. It feels like I've been here for hours. With a gust of refreshing wind, I get up and move on. Almost like I'm under a spell, I lead myself onto a small boat dock, wet and slimy on the bottom. The wood under my bare feet has the feeling of a forest right at my toes.

"Click." The straps of the life-jacket wrap their constraining ropes around me. With a push of the boat, I leap in and get to work. After the pull and tie of a couple of ropes, I'm off. I'm out in the beautiful wild, all alone, no one anywhere close. But that's what I like. That same gust pushes me farther out. "Voom." The wind picks up and tries to drown me, but I'm on top. With another yank of the rope, I'm bursting off with speed.

After what feels like hours, I glance up. The sky, which was clear just 5 seconds ago, is now covered by these dark clouds with looks that could pierce your heart. That same nice cool breeze turns into a raging blast of wind coming straight towards me. As I lean back out of the boat, trying to conquer the beast, I get trampled. My majestic steed has collapsed, bringing me down with it. The beast hurls me down into the water, the ropes holding on to my legs, not having any intention of letting go. Toss and turn, toss and turn, the rope just gets wrapped around my leg more and more. The strength feels like it's swimming away from me into the wild, leaving me here to drown. That which is supposed to save me, constrains me from untying the rope. The life jacket is going to take the very thing it's supposed to save.

I give up on the ropes and start a new struggle. "Yank." the clips of the life jacket are stuck. The fight for control feels never-ending until "Snap." the clip comes undone. It's not over yet. With the little energy I have, I swim down and wiggle out of the death ropes. With the breach of the water, my lungs feel that same sweet air that left me moments ago. I reach for the turtled boat and grab the centerboard after crawling up like a baby. For a second, I lay there wishing to be back on the soft grass with that amazing sun until I get some of my strength back. My body wants to give out, but I won't let it happen. I'm getting out of this one way or another.

The arms that feel like they are falling off, start to put all of my weight on the board until it finally begins to turn. The majestic steed is alive once more. As I am pulling the boat back up, the sail doesn't want to comply. "DING!" the bell shakes and we are off. It's a boxing match for survival, but after one large pull, it's knocked out. The war is over. I clamber into the boat and get ready, holding onto the rope which was just clinging to me. Just like everything else, I get up and move on.

Nature is a bewildering thing. it can be so destructive and horrifying but it can also be so calm and restful. The very thing that almost killed me is so beautiful. I glance up at the massive trees reaching for the sky; their strong branches acting as hands, like a newborn reaching towards its mother. Along the vast lake soaking in the sun. I don't hold any hatred. It's quite the opposite. Sitting here in the boat gives you so much time to think. As I head home, I just can't help but smile. The warm embrace of the sun is so comforting. It feels like I've been here for hours.



untitled
Digital Art
Spencer Schultz, 16



untitled
Madison Ryall, 14

Encounter at Twilight

Colleen Durkan, 15

It had been a long school day and even though it was close to twilight, I longed for a nice walk on a familiar trail. Dead leaves crunched and rustled under my feet as the shadows of bare branches lengthened in the old growth forest. A mist rose from the ground covering the fallen leaves in silver droplets, but I knew the path well and kept walking. The deeper I went into the forest, the thicker the fog became. Mist flowing between the trees made the trail unfamiliar and otherworldly. As I approached the oldest trees, I tripped over an ancient gnarled root that crossed the path and stumbled into an ancient bramble-covered stump. I cried out as thorns pierced my palms drawing blood. The hairs on my neck rose as my bloody palm touched the cold, rusted metal of an ancient hatchet.

I tried to scramble back, but the fog had become a solid white wall behind me blocking the noises of the autumn wood; the only way out was forward. Heart pounding, I crept towards faint shouts and yells that became louder with every step. Suddenly, the veil of mist drew back. Two men, one dressed in Colonial clothes and the other in buckskins, were locked in hand-to-hand combat. The Native American was surrounded by a gold and green glow while a stormy red and black energy crackled around the Colonial. Silvery mist flowed from a terrible wound in the Native American's chest while the Colonial had a deadly gash across his throat. I gasped. The combatants paused and stared at me with silvery eyes.

The Colonial addressed me. "Why are you here, my child?"

Ice shivered down my spine. "I don't know where here is."

The Native American's eyes swept over me. "I assume you are from the living world."

Fear swirled through me. "What do you mean 'the living world'? Am I in the... after-life?"

Both men shook their heads. The Colonial spoke. "No--no, child. You are between the worlds; neither in the realm of the living nor of the dead. As are we."

My mind raced as I tried to understand. "But--why am I here and why can't I leave?"

The Native American studied me, thoughtfully. "You are here to help us. We have been fighting for ages-- ever since this one attacked my village."

The Colonial nodded. "I see that you bloodied your hands, child." He nodded at the tomahawk. "Blood calls to blood. Only someone descended from both of our families could travel here and you touched yonder hatchet. When the time is right, the blood of the living can open the veil between the worlds."

The Native American nodded, "When you release us, you will be able to return to your world."

I took a deep breath and fought back a sob. "But, why are you still fighting?"

The two men glared at each other.

"You attacked first!"

"But you destroyed my--"

"You took--"

"You stole!"

I raised my voice, and my hands. “Stop! If you want me to help, I have to hear both sides!”

I looked at the Colonial. “You first.”

“I was going to the village to arrange a treaty,” he glared at his opponent, “but his people ambushed us! I protected myself!”

I turned to the Native American, “And your side?”

The Native American’s knuckles knotted, his every word filled with contempt.

“It is true that he was coming to sign a treaty but what he forgot to mention was that we were being forced into it! His voice rose.” And when we refused to give up our ancestral land, he threatened us. When that did not work, his men burnt down my people’s homes.”

Raw fiery energy blazed around the Colonial. “I did not order them to burn any homes!”

The Native American’s eyes blazed. “But you let them! You were their leader. Your silence gave them consent!” The Native American turned back to me. “We did not ambush his people and we did not want to fight but he provoked us!”

Waves of uncertainty and fear washed over me. How could I, a teenager, defuse a fight that has been going on since Colonial times? But if I wanted to go home, I had to resolve this and send them on to whatever came next for them.

I lifted my chin, “Colonial, you are one who is in the wrong here. After three hundred years, you must know that your choice caused great harm.”

I turned to the Native American and softened my voice, “I don’t know if this will help, but this land, which contains your ancestral land, is protected. It can’t be developed or farmed. It belongs to nature and your people are honored by your descendants who keep your history and traditions and in the stories told of your people to those who come here today.”

The Colonial and the Native American turned to each other.

The Native American sighed. “I will never fully forgive you, but this fight is not going to change anything and I am tired of fighting.”

The Colonial responded with a slightly apologetic tone. “I agree that we have to put this behind us and move on. We cannot change the past. History has been written.”

The Native American nodded. “And our deeds are part of it.”

They shook hands and, just like that, they faded into thin air. A gentle breeze dissolved the mist revealing the path I knew and I headed home in a daze.

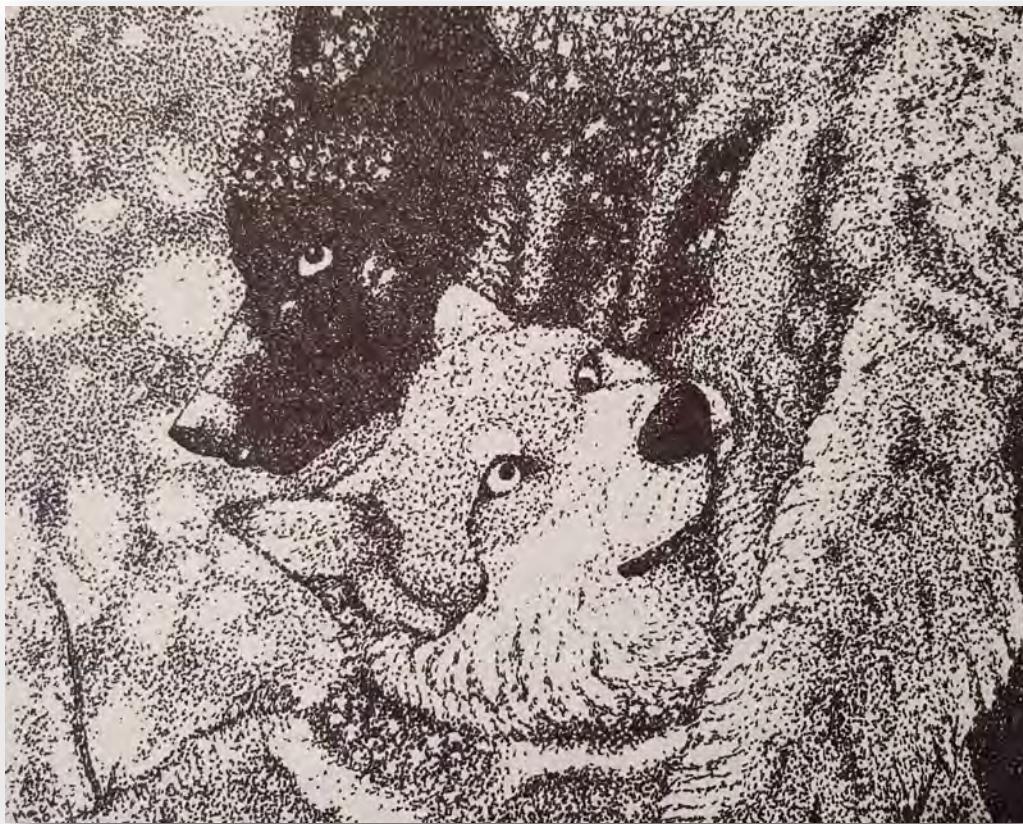
It has been two days since that strange encounter in the woods--two day in which I wanted to believe that my experience was a dream. But this morning, when I opened my backpack, I discovered a traditional Cherokee necklace beaded with corn.



A Hunter's Dinner

Graphite and Ink

Mackenzie Ruiz, 18



Soulmates

Ink

Mackenzie Ruiz, 18

Autumn Spirits

Cassie Dong, 14

When leaves tremble to the ground, scattered like discarded candy wrappers on Hallows' Eve, flocks of crows pierce the air with abrupt cries. They cut through the sky like black arrows, settling on branches high up in trees to sojourn. The crows come and enter the town, a presence to pay heed, taking over ground and air. They announce the arrival, prepare the entrance, as the messengers who come forth, scouting the area with beady eyes of ink. What is to come is only for them to know with wings the shiny loss of color, perched on bare branches.

As the crows pass and go, bored and indifferent, the fog follows in, the next line of the procession. The air is cold like shivers and ghosts' breath. Trees set on flames turn to flakey ash that leaves scant wood. Stiff bones and wind chills leave streets deserted: people stay snug inside, bundled in warm blankets by crinkling fireplaces with steaming mugs, warm lights, and hearty feasts and harvest. The sun returns home early, letting the moon take over. Streetlights do the job of the old caretaker who works at night with his creaking lantern. They stand on empty streets with their little lights in the silent darkness.

The moon comes as a mere sliver as it has gone too close for creatures of the night to get their claws to it. It shines lonely with its sharp edges and disappearing self. But soon enough, the dogs bark at moving shadows behind fences and candlelight flickers in pumpkin eyes. The wind rattles houses and rustles their lives, moving everything and whisking leaves and jolting things. With a thousand invisible hands from the gusts of air, outside seems to stir. The moon hangs a little higher, the streetlights seem to waver, and leaves seem to scamper. The crows return: yes, indeed, the time has come. It is that line of the procession for the clocks to tick wrong and the stars to hide behind clouds, the moment when ghosts and ghouls dance and the unnaturals come to visit. It is one night that lingers a little longer.

Out trot goblins the color green, donning vests and riding on rusty cycles. Scarecrows stretch and lumber in stiff movements, joints jolting out awkwardly. All things convene. They shake cobwebs off, brush themselves clean, rub their eyes, and glimmer and grin. It is their time now: oh, what a fine night it'll be! Pumpkins leap off porches, and though hollow, go join too. It would be a shame to miss it, to be a lump of coal and stay put, for it is autumn and autumnal spirits they must be. How it has finally arrived! Come, come, and see! See the scarecrows drink punch with the cats and the demons dance with the ghosts, how dashing they all look! As if fresh as ever, ghouls chat with the dead, the fanged, and shapeshifting figures. Music plays and bones rattle. Leaves shuffle and wind blows. Under moonlight, the town is alive with zeal. Bats fly, bells ring, piano plays. They all hum a soulful tune and dance together through roads and forest floors. Why old bones and broken souls never stopped anyone from dancing a jingle. Watch, visitor, this is only a peek of what comes at autumn's peak, though stay for a minute and stay for a time. Most of all, as you watch these different beings, let them live, let them free, for when morning comes, they turn to dust and end up dead as stone.



Sunset Shadows
Christina Law, 15

Math

Silas Montana, 14

4x over 15, multiplied by 7 over 10, = x over 5. So many numbers, leaping around my head as if it were a bouncy house. Math comes easier to some people. For me, it doesn't. It acts as a trap to pull me in. And I always fall for it. When I set myself down to learn or study math, I feel enclosed. I'm in a room, but all the walls are slowly pushing towards me until I feel completely paralyzed. Imagine a situation where you've felt cemented, or totally senseless, and everything around you slows down. Compare it to how it feels when the whole class is watching you write a problem down on the whiteboard. It's very difficult to watch everyone around you succeed, while you're trapped in a vicious cycle conflicted and unaware of what to do next. Maybe x will find me, instead of me finding it.



Death. Depression.
Graphite, colored pencils, &
colored markers
Tarthira Ahmed, 13

My Bone of Contention

Matthew Njue, 16

Next thing, light flash burn streak through garbage. Turn and harm the next witty soul to return!
My light on half-life lane, my stain and your pain. No drain, my game. My name.
Souls could go on stone ridge paths. My lover's half's comeback, adrift, draft. Lone ranger
punches through paths. Soul combat, hazmat, hazardous habitat! Lone ranger punches through a
draft.

Clover wheel rides Agustus' wrath. As I said, hazmat habitat. My wolf lone in droves. Stones
thrown through my glass home. I got a bone..

Trivial dark triad. Enemy's war state, rebate. Loveless cove lone wolf droves. I drive you home.
I drive alone. I got a bone...

Stained white cloth spilled broth. I'm going off! I'm off. Bread wear thin and begin again. My
sight slippy on find path 8. Enemy war state, rebate. I can't relate. I still got a bone...

Next things first, I turn to dirt. Yesteryear I got new, now I get late. Still can't relate. Putrid scent
on find path 8 to enemy war state. Meet their fate, my bone..

Long way from home. Alone in droves. Caesar, I, alone in droves. Pathetic hypocritic paradox
rose. I'm in power. I'm new power. I'm alone in droves! Take my bone...

One man, normality and crisis for your home. Unchristened dial tone. You scoff now you cough.
I went off. Now you're off.



Dueling Dragons

Oil Pastels

Ashleigh Umbrecht, 18

Passion (Of Course)

Matthew Njue, 16

show broke the
floor
rags
weaponized door
its flies
paralyze lore, or
prophecy or
realize that, door
thumping war screaming
“i'd like, more”
shriek sheets
byronic, morse
i'm brown recluse
reduce, three fourths
endorse it morphs
bored allured
entropic, horse

Of course
it would.

Luke Spiller
Aedin Mckenna, 14



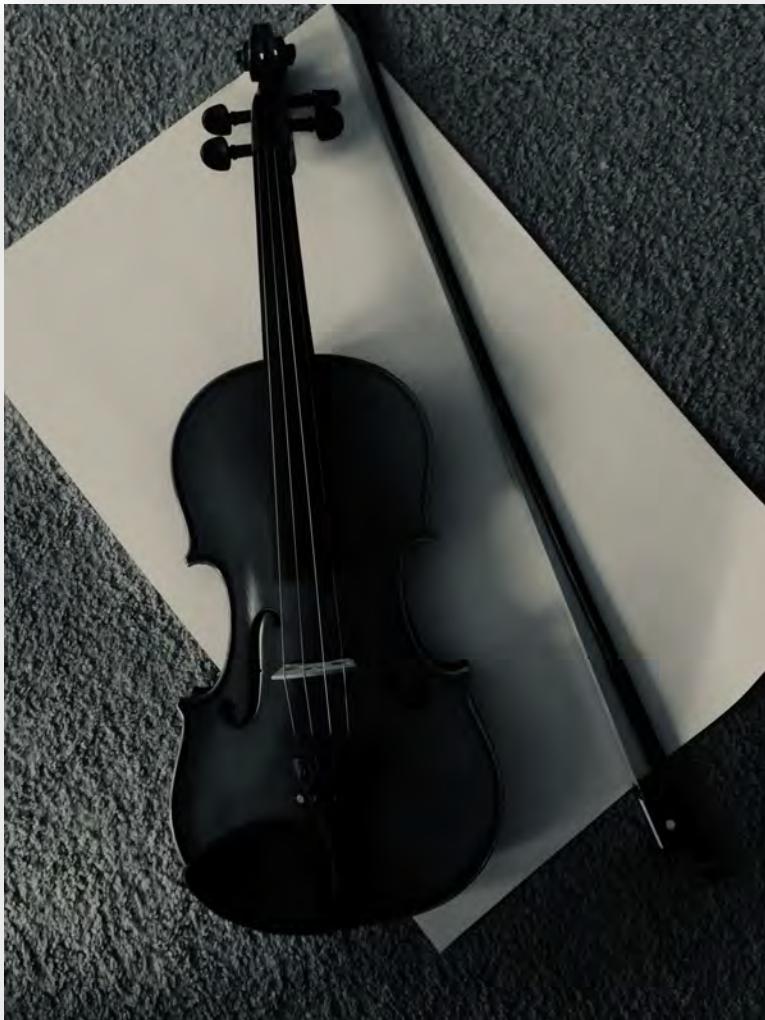
Faith

Autumn Boothe, 17

A mustard seed of faith,
could move any mountain in my way.
The winds and waves
obey your every command,
As you calmed the sea that surrounded them.
The command of your voice
stops all the chaos around me.
Why should I fear?
when you defeated death on Calvary,
Satan has no hold on me.
The sound of your voice
guides me along the darkest alley.
The faith of the broken woman
who was determined
to touch the hem of your garment.
Jesus, I come running to you
Just as she did,
with all of my faith
that is only in you.

-agb

Le Violon
Gabrielle Picard, 12





untitled
Digital Art
Spencer Schultz, 16

You say it's Okay

Rayna Hossain, 13

You say
It's okay
To Ridicule your own folk

You claim
You have liberty to say this
Because you are one of them

But you are not the only one
You are insulting

You are not the only one
That exists within
These boundaries

You are not the only one
That can get hurt
By these cruel words

You are not the only one
That can say them

Does it matter?
Who you are
What you look like
Where you come from

It just matters
What you may do



Accidental theft

By: Tahira Kiara Ahmed

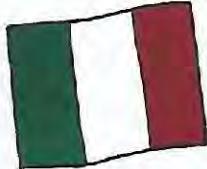
I'm writing this because I was really bored. I wanted to write a story, but I can't think of anything, so I'm gonna write this real story that happened to me. It's a really stupid story, but when I was a child I hated myself for it. This story takes place in Italy, the country I was born in and I was four at the time. My sister was three and my brother wasn't born yet. In Italy there were a handful of Masjids/Mosques. Some were far away and some were just at walking distance. So one day me and my family decided to go to the Masjid that was near us for Maghrib (Maghrib is one of the five mandatory prayers in Islam).

When we got there my dad went to the men's section and my mom went to the women's section with me and my sister. Me and my sister were playing with the other kids in the mosque when I went to mom because I needed water, and I happened to overhear my mom talking to one of her friends. She probably said something like, "Yeah we're probably gonna get milk after salah (prayer)", and then I had an idea; a stupid one.



So to give you some background, there were two different stores near the masjid where we were praying. One was at least one minute away from the masjid, the other one was at least five minutes. Whenever we went there, they sometimes gave us candy as a little treat. So I thought, "I should get mom her milk that she needed, that's a nice thing to do." So when salah started, I snuck outside with no shoes to go to the store. My sister didn't see me, surprisingly.

I walked in the store and asked the cashier where the milk was. He was the only one working at the store by the way even though he looked really confused, he told me where the milk was anyway. I got my

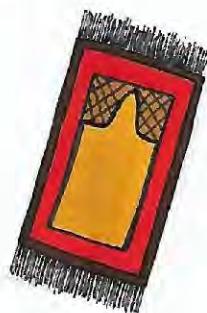


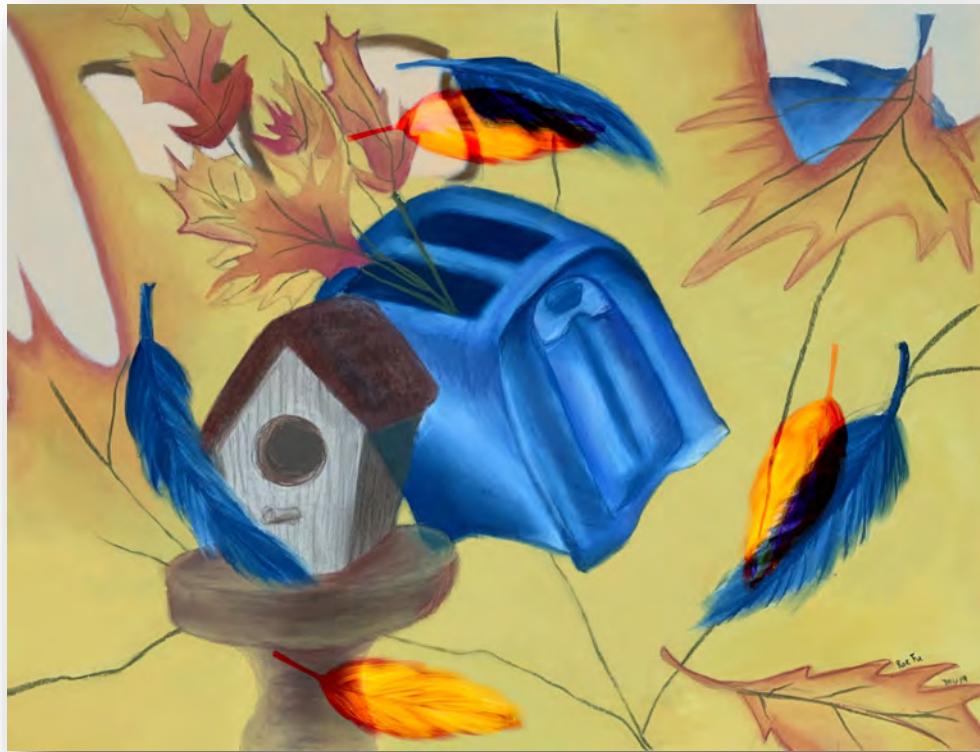


milk, gave him a look, went outside of the store, and ran. I ran as fast as I could towards the masjid. I didn't even know why I was running. Now I didn't know that money was a thing, that you had to pay some kind of paper to get stuff. I was only four, I didn't know what I was doing. I was a dumb child who still believed in the tooth fairy.

I remember the guy shouting at me and screaming. When I got back, I put the milk right next to my mom and waited for her to finish. She came to me with the milk in her hands and asked: "Did you get this milk?" I nodded. She looked really confused, "Where did you get it?" I don't know why I told her the truth, I just said "From the store where we always get milk". As soon as I said that she got her phone and called my dad. That's when I knew I was in trouble. "Uhh, we don't have to go there, I already got you milk," she ignored me and continued. When we got out, we started to walk towards the store, I then burst into tears crying. My sister was probably confused.

I don't remember the rest clearly, it was all a blur. All I remember was my parents talking to the owner of the store, and me crying a lot. Surprisingly my parents didn't yell at me or scold me or anything. They just said "Don't do it again ok?" I think they knew that I didn't know what I was doing. The store owner was also surprisingly really nice and chill about it, but I still remember that story because I was so ashamed of myself. I literally had nightmares about it. Now I find it hilarious. I can't really say I learned something from that experience other than what money is and how it works. Moral of the story, don't be stupid.





Levitate
Pastels
Rae Fu, 17

Leaves

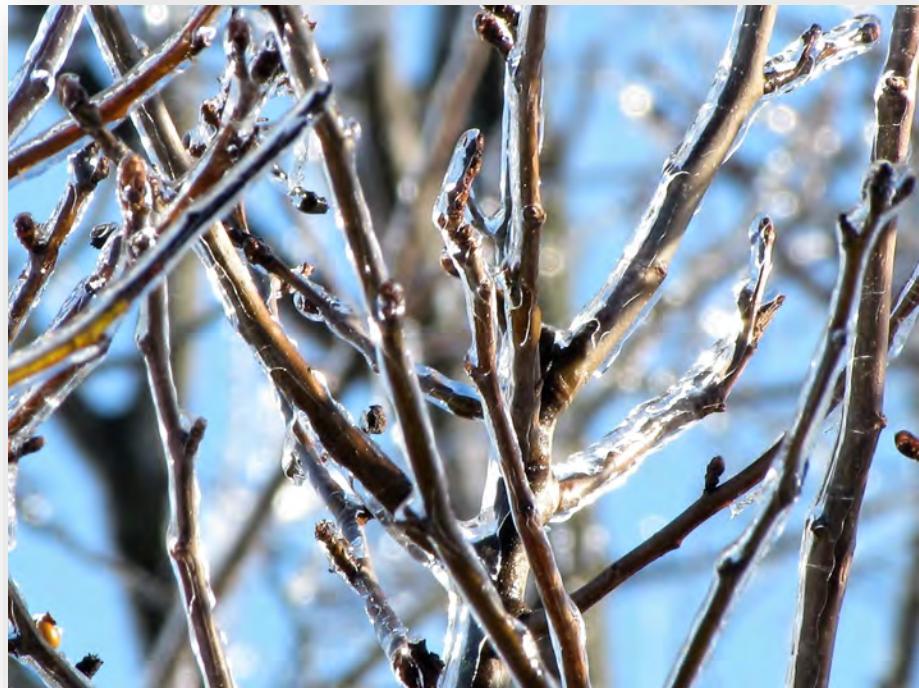
Maggie Royer, 14

Leaves. I come to a stop on my longboard and look down at a sea of orange and red. It leaves me breathless and all I want to do is jump in. But I take a moment to savor it- this warm sunny day, a small breeze swaying the trees, and the creaking of a tire swing swaying back and forth in the wind. I look up at the tree above me and see a leaf- small and red, hanging from a fingerlike branch. It slowly starts to descend and lands on the ground with a large bang although it makes no sound at all. The tree has let go of its last leaf. All of its experiences and memories created this past year have slipped away- its old ones to be blown away in the wind and buried deep in the cold, hard ground. But I also know that this will happen again every year. This tree and every other one on this street will shed all of its leaves and create new ones. We will all shed our own leaves and create new ones. It's just how it is and there is no stopping it. I can't glue them back on. I have to move on.

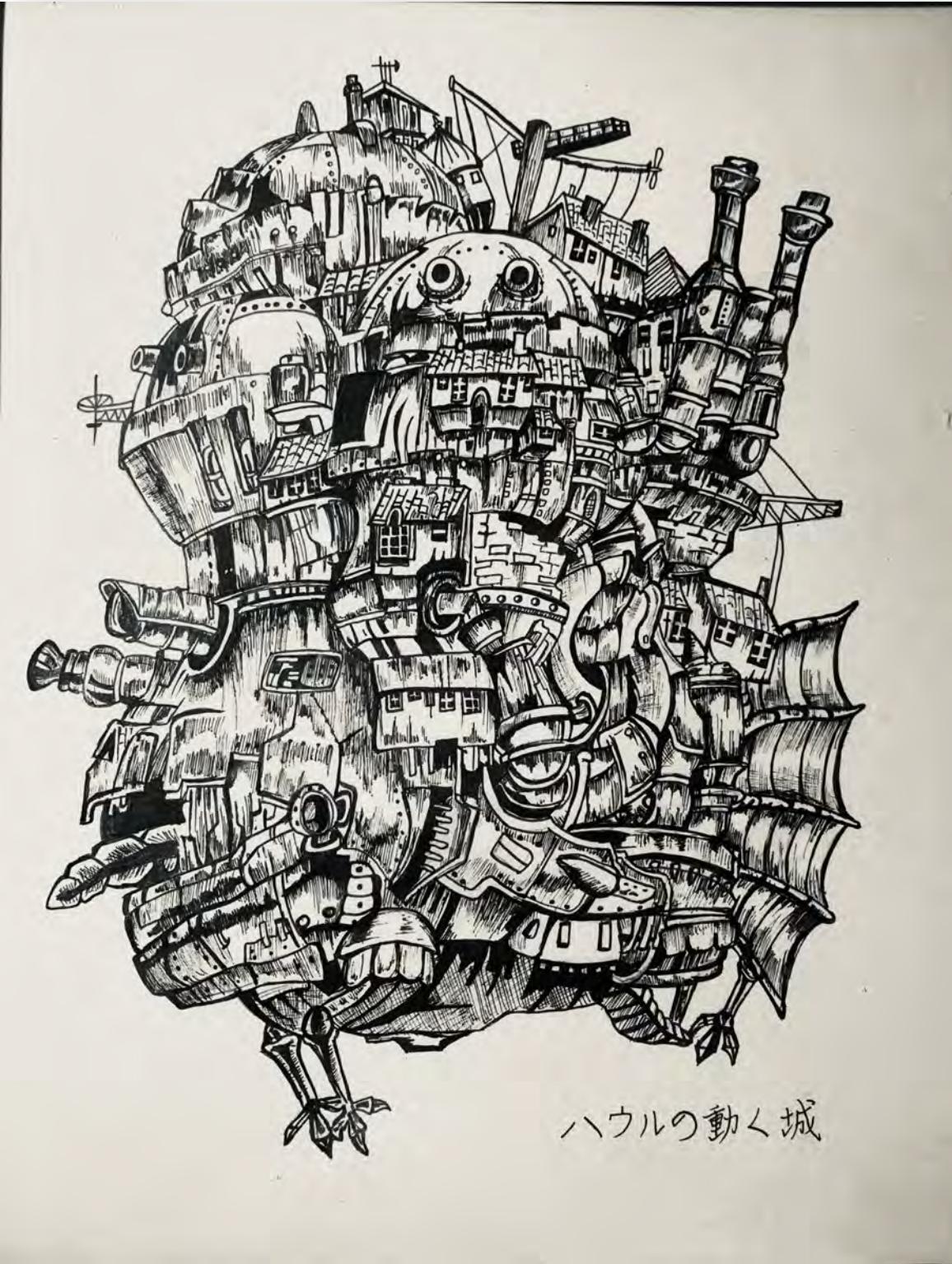
My Christmas

Maggie Royer, 14

I quickly clamber into the car before the frigid cold morning stabs me until I'm paralyzed. I turn on the radio and wait as the rest of my family scrambles into the car. I softly sing along to the soft hum of Rudolph the Rednosed Reindeer as we drive to school and begin our day. This is my Christmas. To most, it's family and friends or the "gift of giving" but for me, it's the music. The nostalgic and soothing sounds that hold their grip tight until it is time to loosen that hold. The rich and sleek voices like Frank Sinatra you dance to with your grandma while waiting for the pie to cook. Or the fetching and hooking voices like Justin Beiber that you belt to in the car on the way home from dancing class. The music that reminds me it's my turn to pick the Christmas tree. The music that triggers the smell of the soft and delectable sugar cookies emerging from the oven. The music that will play in the background as we watch A Christmas Story marathon and open our presents. It is a reminder that we will relive these memories next year and every year after that. And until then, I will miss you, my dear friend, and the memories you hold. The only one who has to go after we open our presents and eat our roast beef. Until next year.



Encapsulated
Victoria Chen, 16



Howl's Moving Castle (fan image)

Black ink pen

Sammi Huang, 17

The Mercury Machine

Maksym Pohorylo, 14

"Do you ever wonder about time travel? I'm sure you do. You've definitely seen it in many films, read about it in many books, spoken about it with numerous people, but have you ever just sat there and thought about it? What are the parameters for it? How do we do it? Does it work on anything, living and inanimate? These are all perfectly valid questions that I can say with great assurance we can answer. Come, I'll be your tour guide. My name is Regis Peer and I welcome you to the world's very first schooling department dedicated to researching time travel: the Time Travel department of the Livig Xez Sord Davadan Planetary University."

There's much philosophy behind our work. We've spent a considerable amount of time, decades even, just discussing what the morals and laws behind this concept would be. Those tourists are excited to come here and learn of our work, but their minds are flippant because they still see this as a joke, and pliant because they have no idea what they will learn. The idea of traversing the timeline is one that daunts people or throws them into vertigo. Are there repercussions for defying nature? Can one mistake be a catalyst that dooms the whole universe? Are those mistakes incorrigible? What if they're part of the timeline itself, like they were always meant to happen? Our view on the whole picture, diagram, map of this endeavor is still opaque, but when we started it was completely black, thickened with mystery.

"Thirty years ago, the head government of Graytoh amassed its lead scientists and engineers for a secret research project to study... time travel. These scientists, who we at the University refer to as the Great Ten, were forced into servitude under their government to research, carefully, the fundamentals of time travel. They could not be hasty, slapdash, or succumb to the comfort of even contacting their own families! They had to devote their next twenty years to a paramount, and at the time, latent goal: the creation of the world's first time machine!"

Almost as if the tour guide and his followers are on wheels, being continuously moved in a certain direction, it feels more like they're moving past me rather than me walking past them. The children in the group are obstreperous, but they retain a look of wonder and awe throughout my entire viewing period of them as I walk pensively past the room where the tour begins. I have the launch of the machine to get to. The guide has assimilated all of the qualities of a showman as he waves his arms around, making strange faces, and deepening his voice to create a shoddy ominous effect. Even though he is wearing the proper uniform, I can only imagine him in a stage costume, maybe dressed up as Dr. Davian himself. He crouches into a spider like stance, trying to entertain the children. They laugh and guffaw, but I just think, "Now, he has assimilated all of the qualities of a clown."

"Six of those Great Ten either died or abandoned the project, much of their work left to be continued by the remaining four. We call those remaining scientists the Founding Four, as it was their doggedness that led to the discovery of a possible method of time travel. Though the Graytoh tried to forestall it, the Founding Four were relentless in divulging what they had learned. Now, the time travel project is something the entire world, not just one kingdom's government, can look forward to."

I'm so excited for the launch of Mercury today that I can barely contain myself as I try to seem professional while walking towards the presentation theater. This is a big day for the Founding Four! The drudgery us assistants and I did is diminutive compared to what the Founding Four, especially Dr. Davian, had to go through to get this far! The other scientist's assistants walking by me are languid, probably from worrying the night before, or prattle on about the latest sports games, but I remain silent and giddy. I've heard that the Founding Four themselves are going to attend the launch! Wait, is that one of them there, looking at that tour guide's rather flamboyant performance? Oh my! It's Dr. Cheren!

Speaking candidly, we still don't know much about time travel, but we won't learn until we launch the machine and test our hypotheses. Is time travel already part of the timeline, or does it actively change it? Will Mercury be able to send its messages without warping reality as we know it?

Will I get credit for what is rightfully my machine?

It's these questions that impel me to go through with my plan.

"The Founding Four are doctors Khail Fiv, Civin Jawonol, Litus Cheren, and the most important: Ruytis Davian. Dr. Fiv and Dr. Jawonol came up with the formulas that explain the flow of time and how to move against it, but it was Dr. Davian who created the designs for the Mercury Machine and figured out how to break the Time Radio Barrier. Dr. Cheren worked a lot with Dr. Davian and supposedly co-designed the machine, but Dr. Davian is undoubtedly the greatest of the Four."

It's finally time! I take my seat in the theater and see the machine on stage. Surrounded by hordes of scientists and engineers, I hear a rumble of voices with a sparse word or two rising over the others. I'm incredulous to the fact that the machine was able to be created. We have made a machine that sends electronic messages through time! According to the Four, sending people through time was too dangerous. I would never question the wisdom of the Four, but even I can't help but wonder what the real purpose behind Mercury is... Oh well! I can't wait for them to turn it on!

The entrance to the theater is ahead of me. Among the avalanche of gray coats I can pick out Khail and Civin's faces. They've disguised themselves to try to be discrete as they enter the backstage. Good. That's where they're supposed to be. Where's Ruytis, though? He's the one who should be here. He's the reason I'm here. I scan the crowd and my eyes move to the thing on stage. A sterile curtain with the machine behind it. They didn't tell me they were actually putting my machine onstage. That curtain color is bland. Then I freeze when I see a seal on the curtain that reminds me why I'm here. "Property of Ruytis Davian". I'm locked in position as my world engulfs me. I can't feign this respect anymore. Ruytis has to come in the next fifteen minutes. The theater entrance is ahead of me, but I take a left turn and go home where there's a button waiting for me.

"The machine is being activated in fifteen minutes, if you would like to observe it."

I reminisce about the day when Ruytis came to me with an idea to create a machine that could send messages through time. We had just been freed and pardoned by the Graytoh magistrate. "A message I just received has given me an idea," Ruytis told me. I put two and two together about a year ago. I enter the front door, toss my keys on the table as if they're a piece of dross, and turn on the TV. "We have just confirmed the appearance of Ruytis Davian here at the university," a reporter says, "I still can't believe that we are finally seeing this demigod of a man!" I stare quietly at the screen and move my hand to a console on the chair beside me.

My finger is above the button.

There he is! It's actually Davian himself! All us scientists explode with cheer as our hero takes the stage. Amidst our ruckus, he unveils the curtain and shows the machine. This is the greatest moment of my life! Dr. Fiv stands at the controls, turns a knob or two, and presses a button...

Khail stands at the controls, turns a knob or two, and I press my button.

The stage floor collapses, opening into a dug out chasm. The doctors and their machine fall a hundred stories. Our cheering turns into screaming.

The machine will be fine. I installed its countermeasures myself.

Thank the Lord Dr. Cheren wasn't here!

I stand up reluctantly and look around, dazed, at the new chapter in time I have created. I fall back down and gape at the TV screen. My mourning is interrupted by a ding from my messenger. I look at it and read what was just sent to me:

"Congratulations on winning ownership of my machine, for now. I'm your people's god. I cannot die. That's what I tell you when you eventually do. Good luck hiding from me." -RD

The message has a timestamp from thirty-eight years in the future.

Take My Mind Away

Cassie Dong, 14

Whisk it away to a faraway
land
Blow it into a thousand tiny
pieces
Do anything to take my mind
away.

Leave my head empty
Free from any thoughts,
Constantly scurrying around.

By any means,
Fly it to the moon
Bury it deep underground
Fling it out into the ocean blue
As long as it's gone.

I can't deal with the noise;
It's disrupting my peace,
Ruining the quiet.

It is the bulky, fallen trunk
Cut from a growling chainsaw
In my head of a forest,
Hindering my stream of
thought

Why must it be
The nagging woodpecker,
Incessantly pecking at my
Tree of concentration?

The trunk will deteriorate,
The woodpecker will flee
Once you fly my mind away
In a shower of fairy dust.

But be wary and take heed,
For the mind is no easy foe.
It is a bundle of rocks,
Weighing down, unmoving.

You can try with all your heart
To rip it and tear it apart
With all your might,
Hurling it in fast flight.

Relentlessly try
Flying it to the moon
Burying it deep underground
Flinging it out into the ocean
blue
To no avail.

The fallen tree bears no fruit
It does not bulge out of place.
The consistent pecking stays,
Given no reason to leave.

The mind does not go.
It can't be taken away,
Whisked off,
Blown into bits
As hard as I wish.

untitled
Madison Ryall, 14





Frosted Tips
Victoria Chen, 16

The Mourning Doves' Aria

Julie Griswold, 18

Mama says the first time Jack Frost visited us, late one November night, he let himself in through a crack in the door and tiptoed over our oak floors to where Anna lay. Maybe Jack smiled at Anna and lifted her chin to create beautiful patterns all over her skin. Maybe he leaned down and with a gentle kiss, froze her body. Maybe he turned Anna into snow. Everyone in town agreed that Anna was as beautiful as she was kind. Greedy as ever, Jack Frost grabbed her for his collection of precious things.

Most people believe that once he takes someone, they're not coming back. Most people believe that finding ghosts of the past is as rare as finding two identical snowflakes in a blizzard. Most people are wrong.

The second time Jack Frost visited us, I was nine years old.

I cried, shivering in my bed, because I was too cold to sleep. The shadows of his icy footprints danced in circles around my room, and the air froze. His needle-like fingers pricked my skin, but I was too cold to bleed.

For two hours he tormented me. Whispering breaths of wintry air into my ears, he whirled around my room in a silver storm. I thought I would freeze there, but burning hatred replaced my fear and melted my surroundings. My icy restraints disappeared in hisses of steam, and I screamed at Jack, "How dare you invade my room, steal my sister, and then try to take me as well!" I launched myself off the bed and grabbed his frigid hands. With a screech like ice snapping, he fled through my window.

Mama and I searched for my attacker, but only I remained, soaked in freezing water.

The third time Jack Frost visited us, I was ready for him.

Crouching in the corner of my room, I clutched a burning candle. I left my window open and piled blankets on my bed, so Jack would think I was asleep and helpless. The hours ticked past, and I shivered in my corner. Waiting. When the clock struck twelve, he crept through the window towards my bed. I fumbled with the candle before jumping from my hiding spot.

"Where is she?" I screamed, jabbing the back of his neck with the candle. Even though Jack winced in pain, he only laughed a hollow, whistling note. My tears froze halfway down my face and shattered as they hit the floor.

The sputtering, aching howl of the wind smothered the candle's flame, but the damage was already done. Jack Frost, Prince of Winter, was melting. "Please, just tell me where to find her... I need to see her," I pleaded with him.

"Do you believe killing me will bring her back? You cannot destroy all of winter to resurrect one girl," he dripped.

"I can try."

"You really love her, don't you?" he sighed as the remaining snow fluttered to the ground. "If you are willing to lose everything, there is a way you can be with your sister-- permanently."

"Anything," I whispered, and Jack stared at me, shaking his head.

Suddenly, the room shifted, and I fell to the floor. Feathers sprouted from my arms, and my screams turned into song. I stumbled over to a puddle to see the monster I had become, but a small, strange bird gazed back at me. With his remaining strength, Jack cupped me in his freezing hands and set me on my window sill where another bird roosted. Anna. We collided in a burst of feathers, and my heart soared.

Most people believe I disappeared that night, stolen away like my sister. The blizzard blew in those two mourning doves who roost together. Most people maintain that Jack Frost is nothing but an old wives' tale, and most ignore the songbirds. But, to anyone who will listen, the mourning doves know the truth: most people are wrong.



The Sky's Awake so I'm Awake

Lela Goolday, 17

Runner's Retreat

Iveena Mukherjee, 14

I hear the gravel crunch under my feet

I have a feeling that cannot be beat

If you practice hard they say

Success will be yours one day

Every day in and everyday out

It's certainly hard, without a doubt

But looking at the autumn leaves fall down

Gives me a sense of the truth profound

Listening and learning to the sounds of nature

Caring and working to achieve a high stature

Happiness humming from every tree

Makes this trail, the one place to be

Looking around at the scenery

Makes me sprint with the form of machinery

Oh what beauty it all brings to me

The feeling of freedom, the means to be free

Away from the chaos, away from the stress

Just one place where I can reliably rest

Now, what might this be, the eye of our storm?

A run in the woods, something far from the norm

Three Humans, Three Times, Three Evils

Sindhu Sivasankar, 15

Once upon a time, there were three humans. One was Yesterday, one is Today, and one will be Tomorrow. This is a story of their journey with Power.

Every human has Power. It comes in a strong white rope that both protects and suffocates their souls. It is a mystery to me how people still think they have none, for just existing gives you Power. Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow are no exception, though they all view the white rope differently.

Yesterday was born into a world of emptiness. They lived in a time of darkness, with more than half the world unknown. They feared that unknown. However, then came along Power.

Yesterday saw Power as a God. They worshipped Power, giving up food and wealth just to satisfy their God. To them, Power was their savior. A light in the darkness. A miracle in their empty world. However, Yesterday put Power over their own well-being and gave up everything for their God. They died in foolish hope that Power would protect them even in their afterlife. Yesterday became See No Evil, for they never saw that their so-called "God" was simply a cruel mirage.

Today is born into a world of believers. A world where people's faith always lies in a "god." But Today is envious of the Power the "gods" have. They want Power for themselves. For Today views Power as a Tool. A renewable weapon for their never-ending wars. Today fills their world of believers with corruption and destruction. Power becomes a Tool that everyone longs for, yet underestimates. Today does everything in order to satisfy their thirst for Power. They die foolishly, never gaining a single inch more of white rope than what they are born with. And so, Today becomes Hear No Evil, for they can never hear the screams of those who suffer because of their greed.

Tomorrow will be born into a world of chaos and corruption. They will see the Power-hungry people and the wars they will cause. They will lose everything because of Power. And so, Tomorrow will see Power as a Curse. They will kill corrupted people in the "noble" cause of "greater good." They will attempt to build a utopia from the apocalyptic world the wars will leave behind. In their so-called "crusade against evil," Tomorrow will never realize that they themselves became the corrupted Power. Tomorrow will be Speak No Evil, for their righteous words will never match their sinful actions. Their death is something I cannot predict.

You might be wondering why I've shared the story of these three humans. Is this a warning? A vision? A belief? No, it's none of these. I myself have no idea why I wrote this.

For you, readers shall never learn from Yesterday, care about Today, and you cannot even begin to comprehend Tomorrow.

Reimagining this Year
Colored pencils, markers, pencils
Faith Skinner, 17



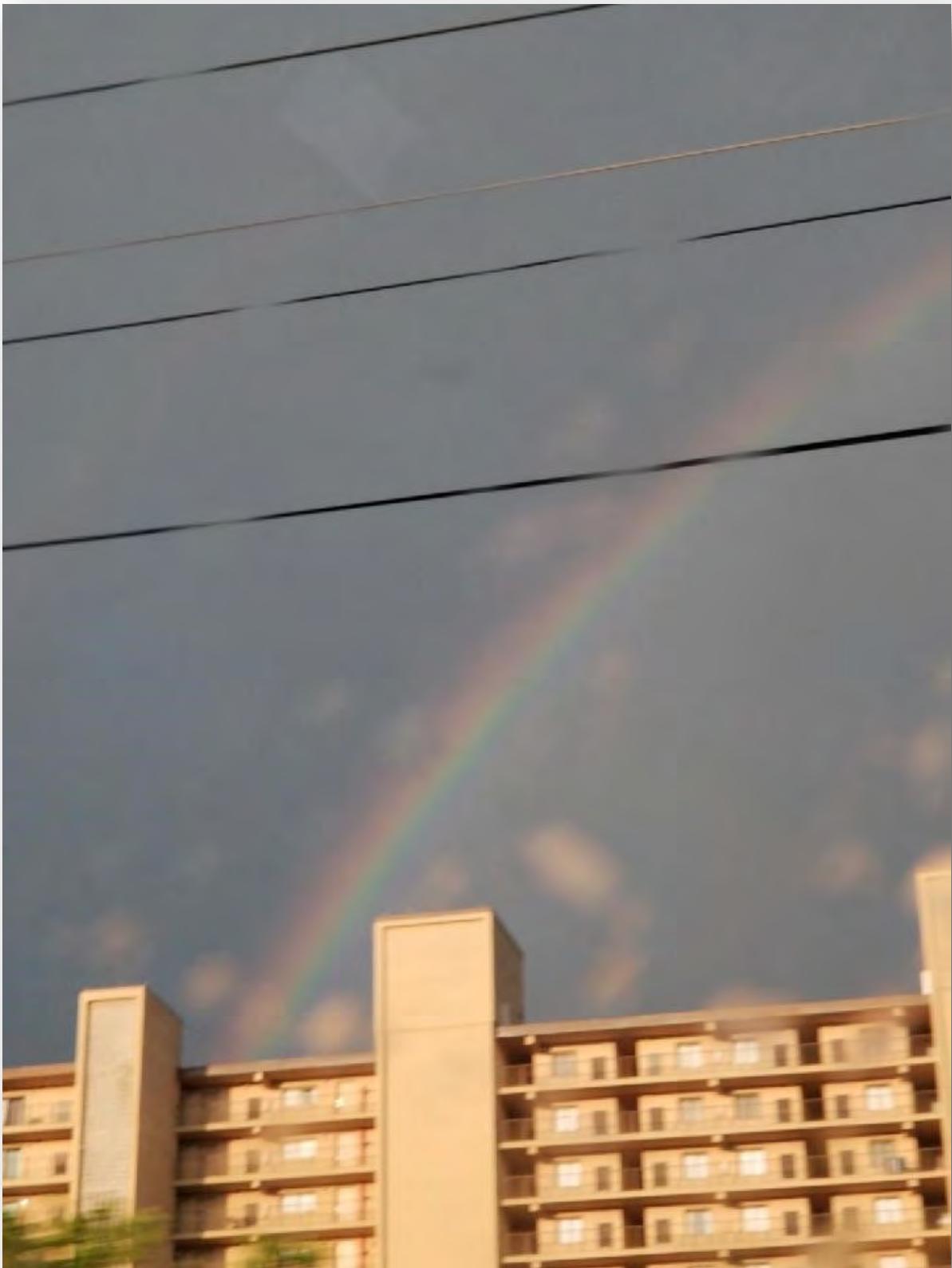
Beautiful thoughts

Sindhu Sivasankar, 15

Beautiful thoughts are in my mind
Ribbons of visions forever entwined
Colorless feelings and echoes of sound
Float in my head like balloons with no bound
The beauty of roses and value of gold
Cannot compare to the dreams I hold
But once made real, the beauty drains
My mind is where they should remain.



Night Light
Watercolors with acrylic
paint
Sammi Huang, 17



untitled
Madison Ryall, 14

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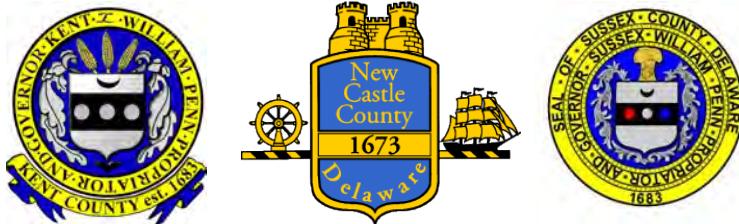
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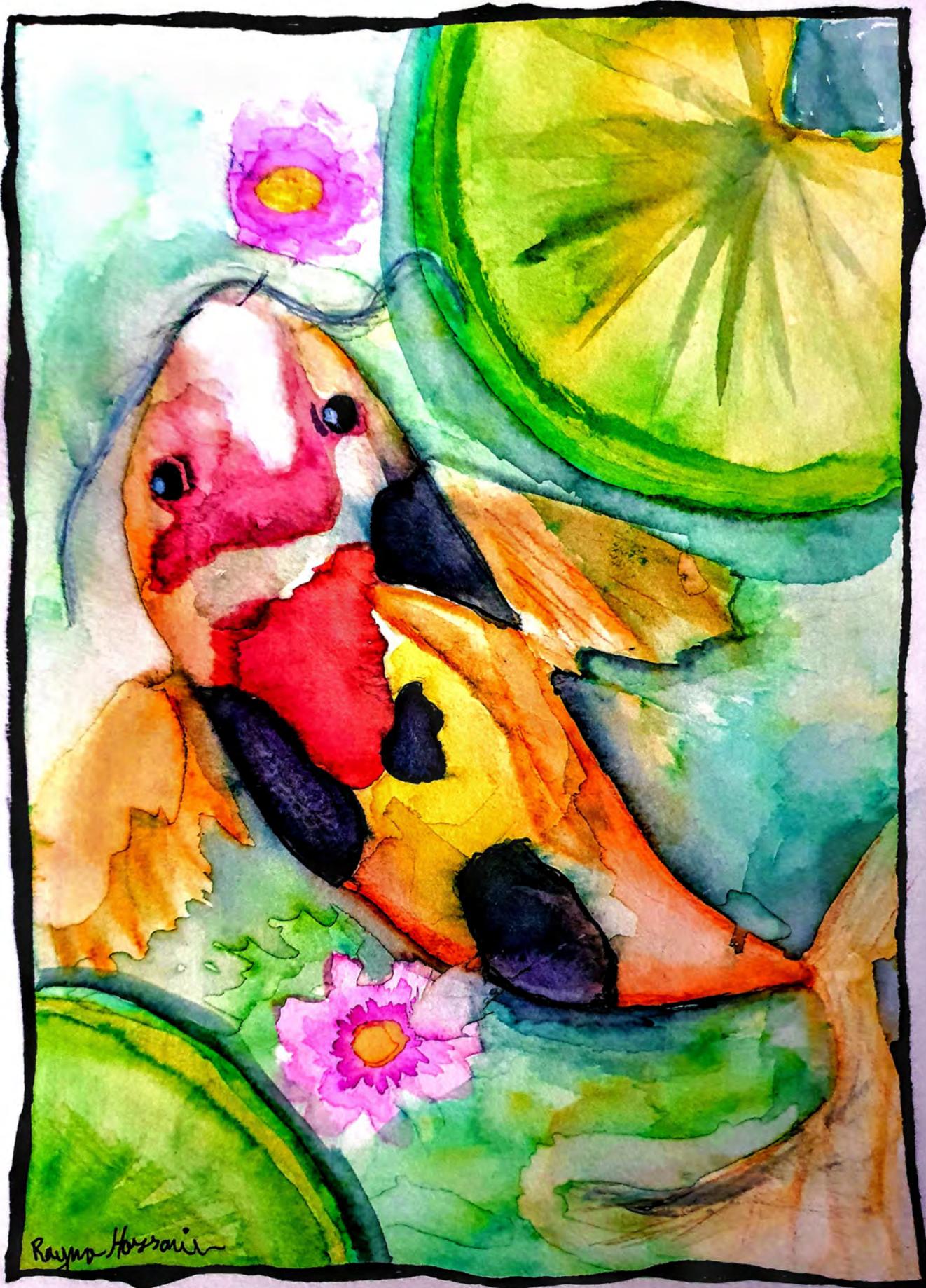
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The submission period for Volume 11 is March 1 through November 30, 2021.

Look for information on our website on how to make submissions
and about upcoming workshops.

back cover:
Fish in Water
Watercolor, Colored Pencil
Rayna Hossain, 13



Rayna Hossain