

# IMAZINE 2022

VOLUME 12

DELAWARE LIBRARIES' TEEN MAGAZINE

(cover) *Happy Fish* by Myly Huynh, age 18  
watercolor and colored pencil

# IMMAGINE

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**Burn Bright** by Lyo Doyle, age 16  
digital art: clip studio paint

# *Life....*

by Hailey W., age 15

\*Beep\* \*Beep\* \*Beep\* goes the alarm.

It's nine forty-five.

I overslept!

I stepped out of bed, tripping over the heaps and piles of dirty  
laundry

scattered across the room, to get dressed,  
knowing that today's gonna be another long day...

Somewhere else around the world,

She's crying.

Lost her mother to cancer and doesn't know how  
to  
move on.

Out there,

food is scarce

and we're starving.

I have to work hard for

my

living.

My family looks up to me to be their

Guide,

Helper,

and Protector.

I'm eighteen and have a burning desire

to fight

for

My country.

And one of these days; this vision will come true.

Over here in this country,

We stand strong

for

Our belief.

Daily; we are preaching the Good News

to others.

While being heckled,

Mocked,

And yes, sometimes even murdered.

All for the glory

Of God...

I am crying.  
My parents are  
now  
divorced.  
Counselors keep telling me that  
situations happen like this  
All the time.  
"It's normal," they say.  
So why do I feel  
so  
Broken inside?  
"It's fine to feel that  
way."

These are just some of the many situations that we all face. \*Deut. 31:6\* "Be strong and of good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doeth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Stay strong!



*Sunshine State* by Amira Sandiford, age 19

photo





*Split* by Cat Shapiro, age 16  
photo

# Straight until Proven Gay

by Cat Shapiro, age 16

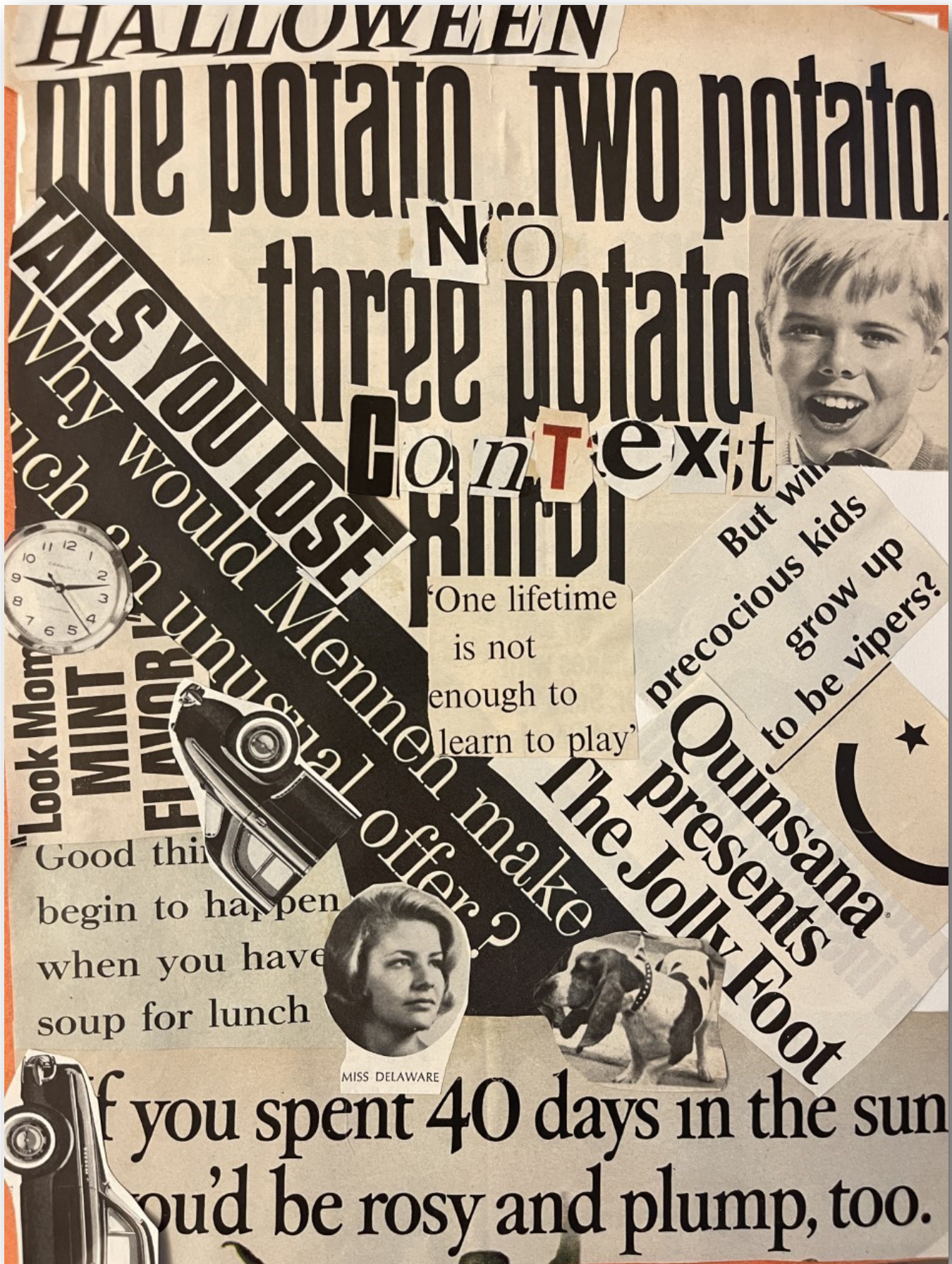
Modern society is majorly heteronormative (where heterosexuality is the norm). Any tradition or institution related to couples is built for a "man" and a "woman." Fairy tales, love stories, wedding cakes, legal papers, adoption agencies, etc all expect every couple to be a straight one. Every kid is born into a box determined by their outer genitalia. It is assumed that it matches their inner genitalia, their chromosomes, their hormones, their hormone receptors, their gender, their personality, their sexuality, their romantic attraction, and the way they will present themselves; when in reality, all of those things vary on completely separate spectrums. A "girl" will be told that she will marry a "boy" one day, she will learn that a man plus a woman is the definition of love, and she will never see any other kind of romantic pairing, at least, that was my experience. Straightness is the default, the expectation. Everything is heteronormative; you are straight until proven gay.

There is nothing wrong with being LGBTQIA+. There is overwhelming colloquial as well as scientific evidence to support not only its existence, but also that it is both harmless and natural. Members of that community, like any other human, are deserving of love and respect; as well as a chance to work alongside their fellow people for happiness, both for themselves and for others. Everyone is different and flawed, but those differences should be embraced, and flaws can be fixed while still loving the person. People can learn and grow and endure. There is nothing wrong with not adhering to heteronormativity, and yet—despite many ancient civilizations recognizing and honoring queer identities—innocents have long been punished for their identity, a thing which they can not change. It is fine to not completely understand, but all one needs to do is try. That is all that's needed, that is all that's wanted.

Many LGBTQIA+ people would love to see more representation and acknowledgement. If being ourselves were an option, life would be far easier. Some, myself included, wish for a less heteronormative society and all that it entails. Would it really be so hard to simply assume "lover is lover, human is human" and accept details as unknowns? Labels and boxes are fine and useful and not completely inaccurate. The only issue is when they are solid, entrapping, absolute, and prevent freedom.

As for me: growing up, romantic love was between a man and a woman. I didn't understand what love was at such a young age, but I knew it was between a boy and girl. Therefore, I thought that I would marry my best male friend. Looking back, I never even had a crush on him. I had plenty of crushes on girls, and I never realized any of them. Most kids won't understand the differences between platonic and romantic relationships, but I was at a special disadvantage in that I had completely wrong definitions of what those things were. All I ever heard about gay people was that they were effeminate men who were "weird," or a punchline. When gay marriage was legalized, I couldn't even fathom love between two people of the same gender. At the same time, I daydreamed about girls, crushed on girls, and felt my cheeks go warm at the sight of a cute girl's smile. I colored everything with rainbows and most of my friends started coming out. Meanwhile, my parents were uncomfortable at the slight idea of me not being straight. As time went on, my upbringing prevented me from ever truly coming to terms with who I was. It took me five years to figure it out and come out, and I'm extremely lucky that my parents accepted me. Now I am proud to say that I'm very, very gay. You could call me asexual or lesbian or sapphic or biromantic, I don't really care. All I know is that I'm different from what I ever knew could exist. I was never straight, so what is the point in assuming the preferences of people who still don't know the world, much less themselves?





**No Context** by Gabriel Borgeon, age 18

glue, magazine clippings

# Breaking Free

by Valeria Lemus, age 14

It was the last straw.

He had tolerated his father for years at this point. He turned a blind eye to the nightly one-night stands. He tried to hide the stench of alcohol, instead spraying perfume around his room and closing the door tight. He tried to ignore the empty seat at all of his concerts. His little brother had been through so much already, he didn't have the heart to tell him that his dad wasn't coming to pick him up after school. That he wasn't going to come for his reception graduation.

He tolerated his father. He never said anything, because he wasn't actually hurting them. He was just *not there*.

Until now.

His little brother sat on his bed, frighteningly quiet. He was wrapped in blankets and pillows, hiding his face in the only toy they had in the house: a small, weathered, dirty teddy bear they found discarded at the mall years ago. He was clutching it tightly. His sobs were so quiet, you wouldn't notice if you weren't listening.

His arms were covered in red, swollen bruises, turning dark blue and purple.

Before this, Aziel lived in naivety, pretending his crappy excuse of a father was a response to loneliness. He pretended his father was grieving, and that this was just his coping mechanism, a retribution for the sudden departure of their mother.

He had nowhere to go. They would send him and his brother straight to foster care, where they would be separated into families that cared more about the tax money than their wellbeing. And Lou, his adorable, happy, thoughtful four-year-old brother, would be alone.

*No contacts. No friends. No money. Nowhere to go. How can you leave?*

His little brother gave up on trying to contain his sobs. His entire body was shaking, he cried even harder.

*But how can you stay?*

Lou's whimpers were the most terrible sound in the world.

Aziel was shaking. He was shaking so bad, he didn't know how he was standing. His entire world, or what was left of it, crashed down. Aziel realized what he should've known for years now.

He had to take care of his brother. And he was completely alone.

Aziel walked to the bed, pulling Lou close to him. He ran a hand through his hair, and planted a sweet, small kiss at the top of his head. A promise.

"Lou pack your things."

His little brother's eyes were wide and bright.

"We're leaving."

---

They say that time heals, but as Aziel stands in the middle of a railroad track, tears frozen by his cheeks, with no jacket, no home, and no future, he thinks otherwise.

Time might heal his brother's bruised arms, but it won't heal his aching heart.

Time won't take away the frost that is melting away at his fingertips or the freezing dampness that sneaks into his worn-out sneakers.

Time won't bring his mother back. Time won't forgive his father.

As Aziel looks down at his brother, his tiny hand clutching the only thing he has left, he knows time steals.

Time steals childhoods, dreams, and worn-out teddy bears.

Lou's nose is still puffy from crying. His face is red from the cold, and his discolored arms are hidden away by the sleeves of a coat that is two sizes too small. One hand holds the teddy bear, the other one holds onto Aziel's hand like a lifeline.

*In a way, that isn't wrong.*

Any other kid would be staring into space. Any other kid would look at the ground, or would be busy wiping away his tears. But Lou wasn't like any other kid. His eyes never once left Aziel as they climbed out the window of the bedroom they had lived in all their lives. Not when they had crossed the street, deserted and dark. Not as they walked on the wet, cold snow, with no destination in mind. Aziel had tried to carry Lou so his shoes wouldn't get too wet in the snow, but the four-year old was heavier than he looked and he had to put him down not long after. Lou did not complain. He just kept on walking. Once he spotted the railroad, he moved them over to walk in its track, no less snow but more stable footing.

Not long after, Aziel realized that Lou had stopped crying. He just kept on looking at his older brother, not a trace of doubt in his face.

Aziel couldn't tell you how long they walked. They were wanderers in empty streets, no cars, and no street lamps. Lamplighters didn't care for their lonely, empty street. They kept on walking, no light to guide them. The clouds hid the stars. The moon was dark, and dead.

He wanted to cry. He couldn't understand how Lou didn't.

Lou sneezed, and Aziel stopped. The falling snow fell like a feather around their hat-less heads. Lou sneezed again.

Aziel tried to kneel as best as he could without getting his pants wet too. He caressed Lou's flawless, small face, and wiped away the tear that had been frozen long ago.

Lou never once stopped looking at him.

"Are you cold Boo?" Lou kept quiet. "Are you hungry?"

Lou finally looked away. He stared into the lifeless, frigid sky. "Where are we going?"

Aziel looked away. He wanted to cry again. "I don't know Lou."

"Why did we leave?"

"He hurt you Boo."

"Maybe he had a reason."

"Lou," Aziel freed his other hand from Lou's grip to caress his face with both hands. "You got hurt. That's not okay, and I don't want you to think it is." His voice was shaking. Lou met his eyes again. "I don't know where we're going, and I'm scared, just like you are, but we had to leave. We'll find somewhere safe, I promise."

Lou took hold of one of the hands around his cheeks and squeezed it. "I'm not scared Azi. I trust you."

His words terrified him more than his dad ever did.

---

In the years that passed, they would learn to grow. After hours and hours of walking, they would find a small town that welcomed them and loved them, gave them food and



a place to stay. Aziel would learn how to trust. Lou would learn how to play and be the kid he was always meant to be. They would learn to forget their father, and their absent mother. They would learn how to comfort each other during nightmares on the coldest of nights. They would learn to heal. They would learn to live.

They went to school for the first time. It was terrible for Aziel to be away from Lou, and Lou could say the same thing. They had to rely on each other above everyone else, and letting that go wasn't easy. Most days, Aziel would tell himself the townsfolk didn't actually care for him, that he should run away with Lou because the only person he could trust in was himself. But he wanted Lou to have the things he never had. Friends. A home. People who cared.

So they stayed. When he was old enough, he started to work. He bought an apartment. Lou moved in not long after that.

Sometimes, Aziel wished Lou would forget what happened. But the scars didn't fade. And neither did his memories, as much as he wished they would.

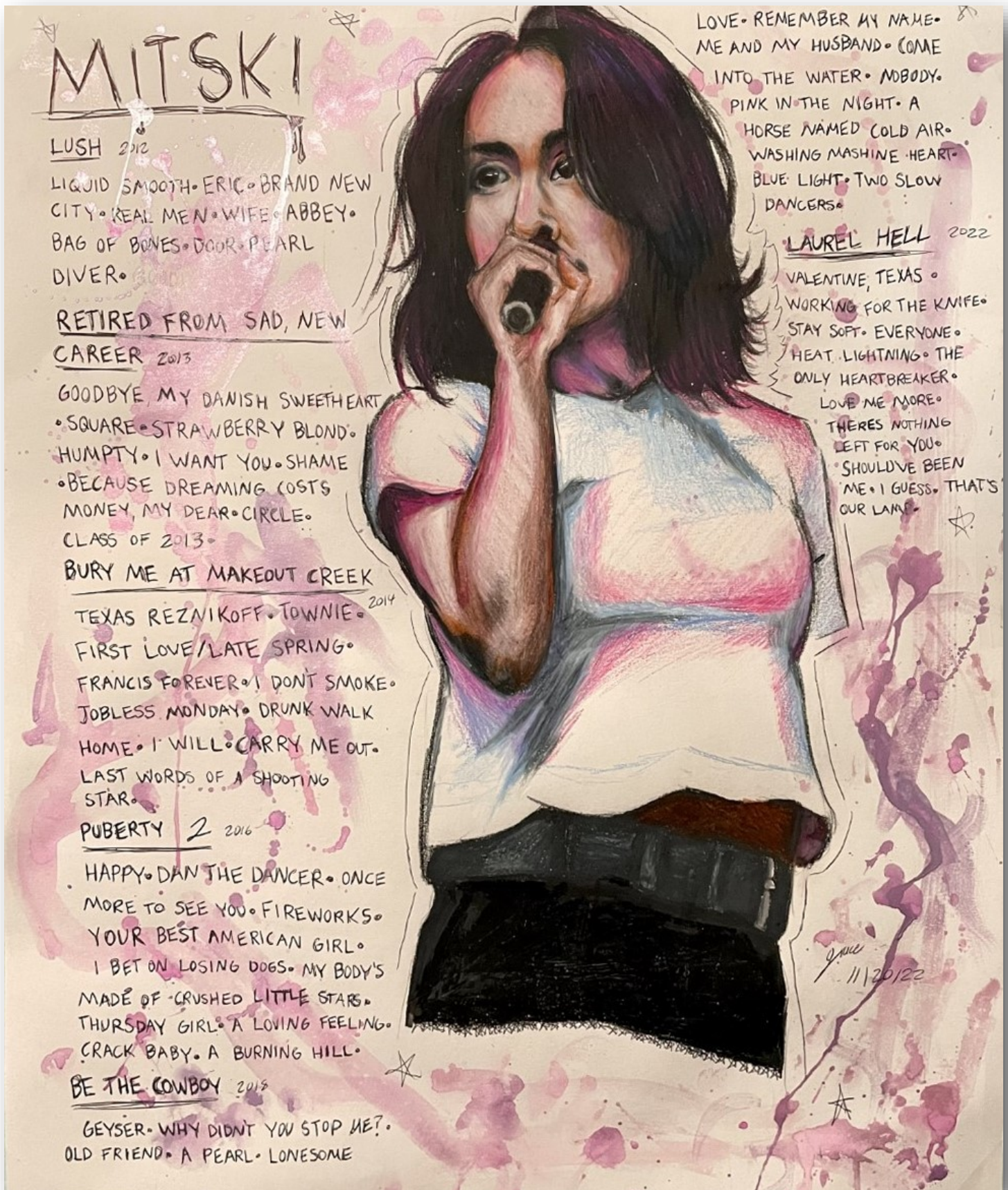
Years later, after Lou found a job, and a nice girl to keep him company, when Aziel got a better job, and moved to the city, when the nightmares stopped, and the distrust faded, he would remember.

He would remember as Lou entered his house for Thanksgiving, newly married with a toddler on his shoulder. He would remember as they ate and talked of wonderful memories he never thought he would have the chance to live. He would remember as their old, worn-out teddy bear sat high on top of their small living room library. He would remember and he would smile.

Time steals childhoods, dreams, and worn-out teddy bears. But it gives you a chance to move on too. A chance to forget, and a chance to forgive.

Lou met his eyes across the dinner table, as his little daughter tried to eat mash potatoes with her hands, and smiled.

And Aziel smiled back.



**Works of Artist: Mitski** by Grace Sweeten, age 12

colored pencil, watercolor & pen

# *Music is a Dog*

by Luke Bartocci, age 13

Sitting on the lightly cushioned seat before the piano, I study the swirling grains of polished wood above the keys. Sunlight slants through the multiple windows and greets the black and white keys kindly. As I begin to play a sonata, I see a white dog, padding into the room, her nails clicking against the hardwood. Her purple tongue dangles from her snout, and above her small nose are maroon streaks.

I ponder her, thinking: music is a dog. It can calm me like the soothing lick a passionate dog gives, or startle me, like an angry dog baring its teeth and growling unhappily. My dog sniffs, and then bounds forward to the pedals by my feet, snuffing. I end my song and reach down and rub the scruff of my dog's neck. She snorts and bounds away playfully, panting. I chuckle. Music can be played with, like this dainty dog. Pulling out another piece of music, I begin a new, minor song at a grave tempo. Music, like a dog's fur, is sometimes rough, tangled; sometimes combed and smoothly fluffed.

My dog, in the process of stretching, notices through the window another dog, large and shaggy, in the grass of my neighbor's yard. She leaps out of the stretch and howls in an extended torrent of barks. Seeing the shaggy dog made me think about how music comes in all shapes and sizes, from a small violin, to a tuba, to my piano. My dog has left the room. I stand from the piano and call her name. Instantly, she comes running, reminding me that I can always find music in any situation. She comes in at a trot, a small white dog with somewhat shaggy fur, fluffy and nicely combed. She licks her chops and sits at my feet. Kneeling down to pet her, I feel her silky fur under my fingers. I look at her: a beacon of happiness. Everyone needs a dog in their life.

# *The Silent Cabin*

by Brayden Hauser, age 13

The tale of the Silent Cabin goes  
As any slasher starts  
An eerie night, unsettling cold  
An inky, midnight dark

A knock at the door, an innocent act  
But when the door was pulled  
It wasn't who was expected that night  
The man at the door was mull'd

The family screamed, the baby cried  
The masked figure stepped inside  
They all ran and dispersed, looking  
Desperate for somewhere to hide

The figure entered, quiet as a mouse  
He stalked and stumbled  
Flipped and fumbled  
All about the house

Hide and seek wasn't so bleak  
He found two under the bed  
One he found behind the couch  
He no longer has a head

One escaped, and to this day  
He says he never knew  
Why he was spared at that Silent Cabin  
But he never found a clue





*Funny Bone (Laughter)* by Vivian Pinckney, age 17  
ink, Copic marker



# Her House

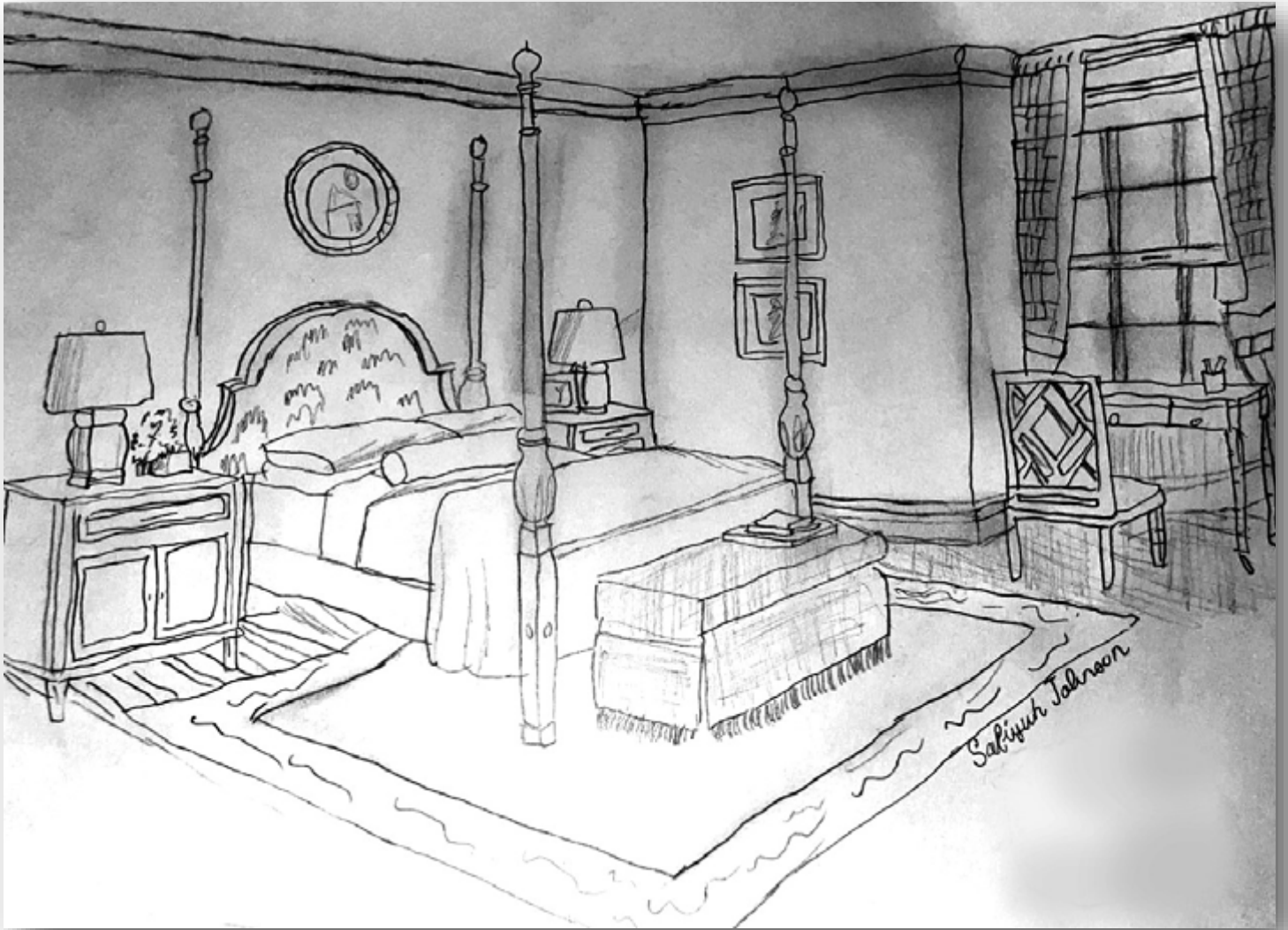
by Zoe Yost, age 19

It is everywhere  
    (stuff and stuff and stuff)  
Open a drawer, any drawer  
    (stuff and stuff and stuff)  
Letters and photos stacked feet high  
    (stuff and stuff and stuff)  
The ones we sent her months ago  
    (stuff and stuff and stuff)

Tiny mandolin behind a stack  
    (dust and dust and dust)  
Lift it, wipe its strings and pegs  
    (dust and dust and dust)  
Fine-grain wood, dark and smooth  
    (dust and dust and dust)  
No one knew it was there  
    (dust and dust and dust)

Lamplight on three tired chairs  
    (dusk and dusk and dusk)  
Open the blinds, startle the house  
    (dusk and dusk and dusk)  
Slivers of sunlight forgotten on shelves  
    (dusk and dusk and dusk)  
Were it but lighter in here  
    (dusk and dusk and dusk)

Between muted walls in bed you lie  
    (gray and gray and gray)  
Entombed in ashes with your house  
    (gray and gray and gray)  
Emerald glow neglected—buried  
    (black and black and black)  
If only we could have dusted you  
    (black and black and black)  
If only we could have dusted you



**Bedroom** by Safiya Johnson, age 13  
pencil

# Missing Piece

by Lyo Doyle, age 16

I have tried to pass this by as  
Certain different traits I've tried  
I can't be the only one you see I'm  
Changing my own certainties  
To understand the fault at ease  
I'm falling out of place,  
To understand my mind is like a  
Stupid messed up chase

Maybe I'm the missing piece  
Of a puzzle I can't take with me  
I'll shape myself to your ways  
But I can never escape  
The fact that I'm too late

Every time I try and see the  
Good in all this retched sea  
I stem the flow of unhappy  
Thoughts that I couldn't flee  
To understand the fault at ease  
I'm falling out of place,  
To understand my mind is like a  
Stupid messed up chase

Maybe I'm the missing piece  
Of a puzzle I can't take with me  
I'll shape myself to your ways  
But I can never escape  
The fact that I can't be saved

Maybe I'm the missing piece  
Of all the people who have been free  
From all the need in wanting to conform  
I'm waiting on a wish that hesitates  
I can't relate  
All I'll ever be is something I can't take





*Shadowed* by Finley Anderson, age 16

photo



# The Barn

by James Kelley, age 17

The night I set fire to Mr. Smith's barn, there was no moon at all. I am terrified of Mr. Smith's house, but on a dare, my friends and I were venturing onto his property. No moon, no flashlights, no problem. The pitch black darkness gave us a cover and allowed us to stealthily trespass with no issues. There is a rumor that on his property, there were dead bodies of the brave ones daring enough to explore. Total bull if you ask me.

The only things that make his house scary are his animals and a shotgun he sleeps with at night. I decided to take the lead and show my friends that there was nothing wrong, despite the fact that the place felt unusually eerie and we could be shot at in a moment's notice. We trudge along, feeling our way through the desolate cornfields and the dormant cows. The party was heading towards Mr. Smith's apple orchard until there was an odd hacking sound. It was dark, but things felt increasingly strange, odd, ominous.

Out of fear of being found, no one said a word. We just listened. Labored breathing was all around me, letting me know that my friends were here by my side. We were sitting there, completely silent, hearing sounds that were no different except for the minute sound that reminded me of dragging my feet across the dirt. Mustering up the courage to speak, I asked my friends what happened. There was no response.

I tried to listen to hear their breathing, but the silent night, and the howling owl were the only noises registered in my ears. I must've gotten cut off from the rest of them. I stumbled around until I bumped into someone. I let out a quick gasp but felt reassured just as fast when I found out the person was simply made of straw. The only problem was I heard more minute sounds. Dragging.

This time it felt closer, and I found out where it originated when I saw a large structure that resembled a barn. Walking towards this structure, there was a powerful pungent smell which almost deterred me from walking closer. My hands started shaking uncontrollably. I had to open the door to find out what all the sounds led to, but walked into the most horrid thing of my life.

I fell backwards, which alerted everything around to my presence. Something got up and pulled something, illuminating the small barn with a single lightbulb. Holding the little chain string was Mr. Smith, with bloodied hands and a machete near his feet. My eyes caught a blood trail and darted to find the source like a police dog. The rot, the stench, the bodies lined up on hooks like hides in a butcher's freezer. It was hard to tell who the victims were, as their mutilated corpses were too mangled to identify. All I knew is that they were human. I picked up a hefty branch at the entrance to the barn and threw it at him as hard as I could. I'm a coward, but I ran. I realized my hands were still shaking after I threw the branch, and witnessed it decimate the lightbulb, causing the filaments to set fire to the barn. I brought up all the courage and anger within me to kill him. "This is the only way. This is the only way. I need to do this. I have to do this to stay alive." Reassuring myself over and over.



The fire spread too quickly to be stopped, so I closed the barn doors and barricaded it. I resolved to not leave until Mr. Smith was dead. It was his turn to scream. The smoke and fire slowly killed him, for after a minute or two there was a loud thud onto the barn door. I know Mr. Smith had bit the dust. I got rid of the barricade, to see his body fall onto me with the machete on the ground. It took all of my remaining strength to get him off me without vomiting. After realizing everything was over, I sat there, still relatively in shock, and started to sob.



*A Starry Sky* by Faith Carter, age 13

acrylics

# *the world won't stop*

by Sindhu Sivasankar, age 17

isn't it funny  
how the world won't stop  
while you're crying  
and screaming  
and sobbing  
and mourning  
others are smiling  
and laughing  
and hugging  
and cheering  
you'd think the world would stop.  
smell the roses.  
mourn the ashes.  
but no  
it won't stop  
it will seep in your moment  
of peace  
of pain  
of pleasure  
and tell you to move on  
move on move on move on  
everyone  
moves  
on  
on and on and on and...



***Mother Earth*** by Lyo Doyle, age 16  
digital art: Clip Studio Paint





*Light Reading* by Mia Dorsch, age 16  
digital art: Procreate

# Fritz

by Elliott Edge, age 16

The odds haven't been in my favor, as of recently. It feels like the world is burning around me. I wonder if it's like the saying "it's a car crash I can't look away from." Hours upon hours of dedication and work, work that goes towards other people. Work that hasn't done what it was supposed to. The air began to turn into noise. A deafening silence. I picked my head up and looked outside. I watched as a breeze plucked a leaf from the tree, letting it gently crash into the ground. The others were decaying, but this one stood out. It was still bright, filled with joy. Yet, it had just been killed. The strange beauty of it was captivating. My brain felt like an F1 race, loud and chaotic. But everything else was the complete opposite. I don't make sense.

It used to be perfect. I was doing my job well, I was keeping her happy. Doing that, I think, made me feel good. The feeling was almost like a spring day, lush and fresh, almost a new feeling. I loved the feeling. It wasn't loud and harsh. It was tranquil. This job meant the world to me. However, she didn't think of it as a job. Even though the days were turning warmer and brighter, her attitude was cold and dark. She opted out of my plans, to be with friends. I have no problem with this. Except, these are the same people she had complained about yesterday and weeks before. It began to set in, my eyes began to turn green. Like these new, lush leaves. I dedicated more time to her than I did with my own family. I felt awful, my nerves turning into hot coals. She didn't even give me the time of day. I was doing my job still, but she wasn't.

At some point, that changed. I stopped wanting to be her puppet. I didn't want to be treated like just a thing. I should be **THE THING**. I want to be what my bike is to me, the most important. I want to be her **LIFE**. I hate whoever this new person is. She wasn't the same, the real her wouldn't have done this. I need her to take off the mask. She needs to be who she is. And for her to realize that, she needs to see how it feels. I was beginning to blur the lines. I know what I'm doing. I was done talking to her. I'm in the wrong, or am I?

The next day, as the clock ticked down to the last moments of class, I dreaded it. Her class was across the hall, but I had to ignore her. I had to fail at doing my job. As the bell rang, I calmly packed up, waved goodbye to my teacher and walked into the hallway. The noise in the hall started to become white noise. Time was moving at a snail's pace. I glanced at her, but turned away from her. To signal my point, I put my earbuds in. I was unphased by her. She didn't exist as far as I'm concerned. I felt my heart begin to burn, almost yearning to speak to her. But I can't give in. I found a new job, and I was going to stay loyal to it for as long as I could. As I walked outside, time suddenly started again. I smiled at completing a task, something I had missed. But it wasn't a smile of pride. It was selfish, pairing well with my newly greened-eyes. But why should I care? I don't love her anymore.

As I rode my bike around that day, I watched the cherry blossoms dance in the wind. Everything seemed so happy. I smiled at the beauty of it all. The smell of wet soil and wood, followed by a floral punch was mesmerizing. I continued to smile, even as I rode

past her house. Everything was perfect and beautiful. It was almost too good to be true. I feel free, but there's something off. I can't tell if I crossed any lines, or if I did any wrong. She may have been spending less time with me, but was this the way to handle it? I shrugged the thoughts off and continued on my ride. As I neared the curb, I bunny-hopped my bike. I loved biking. I'm calm.

I cleared my throat. Knock-knock.... Knock-knock-knock. I shifted my weight, but the rubber bands in the air wouldn't stop following me. The door creaked open, as it opened further time slowed again. It felt like years since I had properly spoken to her. My bike couldn't keep me company for that long. "Do you hate my guts?" She stared at me, it felt like being under a heat lamp. Slowly it started to get hotter and hotter. "Listen, I'm really sorry." She still wouldn't answer. I shifted my weight again. I just wanna hang out with her, ride my bike. I want to meet her over again, but I can't ask for that. That's selfish. She finally opened her mouth. "Leave." The rubber bands snapped.

As I rode back home, I couldn't make up my mind. Is this good for me? Maybe it is, now I can do whatever I want. I bunny hopped another curb. But it wasn't fun this time. I should be taking my newfound freedom for granted. I stopped by the creek. I stuck my finger in, watching the water morph around it. I took it back out and wiped it off. As I stood up, I slipped and fell into the water. "Ironic." I don't know why I talk to myself. Maybe it's because I can't talk to a bike. I groaned and shook the water off of my arm. This time when I stood up, I was careful to not fall again. I watched leaves flow down the stream. They had fallen from the tree, they were still green. As I looked into the trees, my eyes were no longer green. They were blue.

Now it has been close to 5 months since I lost. I still ride my bike, it's been the only thing keeping me company. I looked at my phone. It was completely empty to me. Unless I were to talk to her. I still couldn't bring myself to do it. The F1 race seemed to die down now, I don't think it will ever go away. I should text her. I opened my messages and scrolled down. I scrolled for hours. I began to type. As I typed everything got more clear. I was lost without someone, anyone. I needed her. I was an assistant to her, I was never meant to take matters into my own hands. I'm supposed to be Fritz to her Dr. Frankenstein. I had lost sight, instead I had become the monster. The text sent. I don't make sense.





*Rainbow Girl* by Sovajra Vickerie, age 17  
digital art: Procreate

# Our Story

by Ferdinand Agyapong, age 14

Angie let out another wheeze. She had been coughing like crazy lately.

"Are you sure you don't want to get checked out Angie?" Her brother asked in concern

"I told you I'm fine." she responded "It's nothing serious. Anyway, come on we have to go now."

"If you say so." Niyo let out a sigh and left the house

Before leaving, Angie looked into the mirror and whispered, "Today is the day." She rolled up her sleeves and looked at her arm. There were more scales on her arms than yesterday. "It's getting worse. But that means my rebirth is near."

Niyo called out for her to hurry up. Angie quickly pulled down her sleeves and left the house.

The village was bustling. Today was the day of the annual bonfire. An event where a large bonfire was lit in the center of the town to celebrate its reconstruction after a fire. It was that time of year and they had 15 minutes to get there.

The pit for the fire was quite the walk from their house so Angie sped up leaving her brother behind her. As she ran Angie got a glimpse of the iconic uniforms of the protection and filter corps. A sign it would be starting soon.

Angie called out for her brother to hurry up. But when she looked, he wasn't behind her.

"How about you hurry up little sister," Niyo said mockingly. Angie looked ahead and now saw that Niyo was ahead of her. His magic's been improving.

Angie sped up to reach her brother. In the distance, they saw the pit where the fire would be lit. After a short while, they finally made it.

Angie watched as the crowd silently waited for the protection and filter corp. Without them and the fire mages, the fire wouldn't be possible. In time the two groups made it.

The protection Corp began putting up the force field to prevent the fire's spread. Only powerful people could enter and even stronger people could break it. As the field closed the fire mages appeared.

Angie looked at them with admiration. The fire mages were Angie's idols. Not only did they light the important bonfire but along with the other mages the fire mages also protected the village. They were the strongest out of the group. Most people wished to have fire magic to become one of them.

The bell rang. It was time for the fire to be lit. Angie tugged on Niyo's shirt, urging him to get closer. Niyo let out a sigh and just let Angie go on ahead.

Angie looked at her brother disappointed but still went on ahead. From where she was Angie had a clear view of the mages and the pit. The fire mages began saying their chant. It was a chant that Angie remembered from heart. She recited it in her head along with them.

"Our sacred village gathers on this day. From its ashes it was reborn. Grant us the power o' flame lords and we light this fire tonight."

After the last word left their mouths, a tiny spark lit in the pit. Shortly after, that spark turned into a large fire.

Even though they had seen it so many times the villagers looked mesmerized. The fire signified how the village was brought up from ashes. Showing how fire is just a new means

of creation.

While watching the fire Angie coughed again. Then again and again. Niyo heard this and quickly came to Angie. When he finally got up to her his eyes opened in surprise.

"Angie... Your skin what happened. It looks like the scales on a lizard."

She responded weakly with "The fire-take me to the fire."

Niyo looked at his sister with worry in his eyes. Angie looked back with a fierce look showing she knew what she was doing. Niyo sighed again and picked up Angie.

With the magic he's been working on he should be able to get Angie close enough to the fire for her to walk. Only the higher-up mages would be able to stop him. Niyo looked around to see if anyone was watching him. Once he confirmed he made his move.

Niyo's magic allowed him to go anywhere in his sight range. Although until he masters it the range doesn't cover his entire field of view. Using this ability Niyo got Angie only within a few steps of the fire.

"I'm sorry but this is as far as I can take you." Niyo whispered into her ear "Walk the rest of the distance." Tears started forming in his eyes. Niyo gave his goodbyes and in the blink of an eye, he was gone.

Angie got up and looked at the fire. It felt like it was calling out to her. She took one step towards it and heard one of the mages call out to her. The sound quickly faded out and she continued. Now everyone was calling out to Angie, she was getting too close to the fire. All sound drained and she continued walking.

It got to the point where the mages began running toward her. They all used some form of restraining magic. Angie saw the sparks of the flame and avoided them.

Now Angie was too close to the fire for anyone to stop her. The villagers looked in disbelief as she jumped in.

Niyo wanted to be sad at the sight. He wanted to break down into tears. But something made him feel that Angie was fine.

In the fire, everything in sight turned white.

"Angie" called out a mysterious voice "You are special"

"What do you mean? Are you the one who was calling out to me?"

The voice only replied with "Transform, become one" Before Angie could ask any more questions it said "Embrace it" and then all went quiet.

Angie closed her eyes and took a deep breath. She felt fine now. In fact, she felt much better than before she was sick.

When she reopened her eyes, the white was gone. What Angie saw was the village. Only it was much lower from her point of view. She looked down and saw the villagers. They were all terrified. Incapable of speaking all they could do was point.

The fire mages all faced her and charged up and attack.

Niyo looked up with nothing but horror and confusion on his face. "Angie, what happened to you?"

A nearby fire mage heard him and answered "She's become a creature of myth, an unstoppable force: a dragon."

Niyo looked back at Angie. He questioned why he had helped her. He stepped away from her. Not from fear of her but from the shame of what he'd done. He wanted his human sister back.

Angie looked down at her brother and saw the distress on his face. She opened her mouth to speak but got a face full of fire. The fire mages were done charging their attack and released it.

The filter Corp quickly worked to clean the smoke the fire caused. As the smoke cleared

everyone looked back in surprise to see Angie still standing, unfazed by their attack.

"Now as I was about to say," Angie said her voice booming in the enclosed space "Do not worry brother it is me."

Niyo stopped in his retreat. Tears began forming in his eyes. "Is that really you Angie?"

With that, Angie flew up and out of the fire onto an area the villagers opened up. Everyone but Niyo and the fire mages backed up some more.

The fire mages unleashed another barrage of attacks. This time instead of letting them hit her Angie opened her mouth and ate it all. This scared the fire mages and they ceased their attack. The villagers screamed as their members left one by one. The fire mages had retreated and left the villagers.

"Hm, guess they aren't as great as I thought they were," Angie said

After the last member left Angie began to shrink and the scales on her body disappeared. In front of everybody stood the human Angie. When she took a step forward, she hit something.

Angie saw that the barrier around the fire area was gone. Instead, they condensed it to be around Angie only. Now having freedom all the villagers ran away. The only person left was Niyo. He took a step toward her but a protection Corp member stopped him.

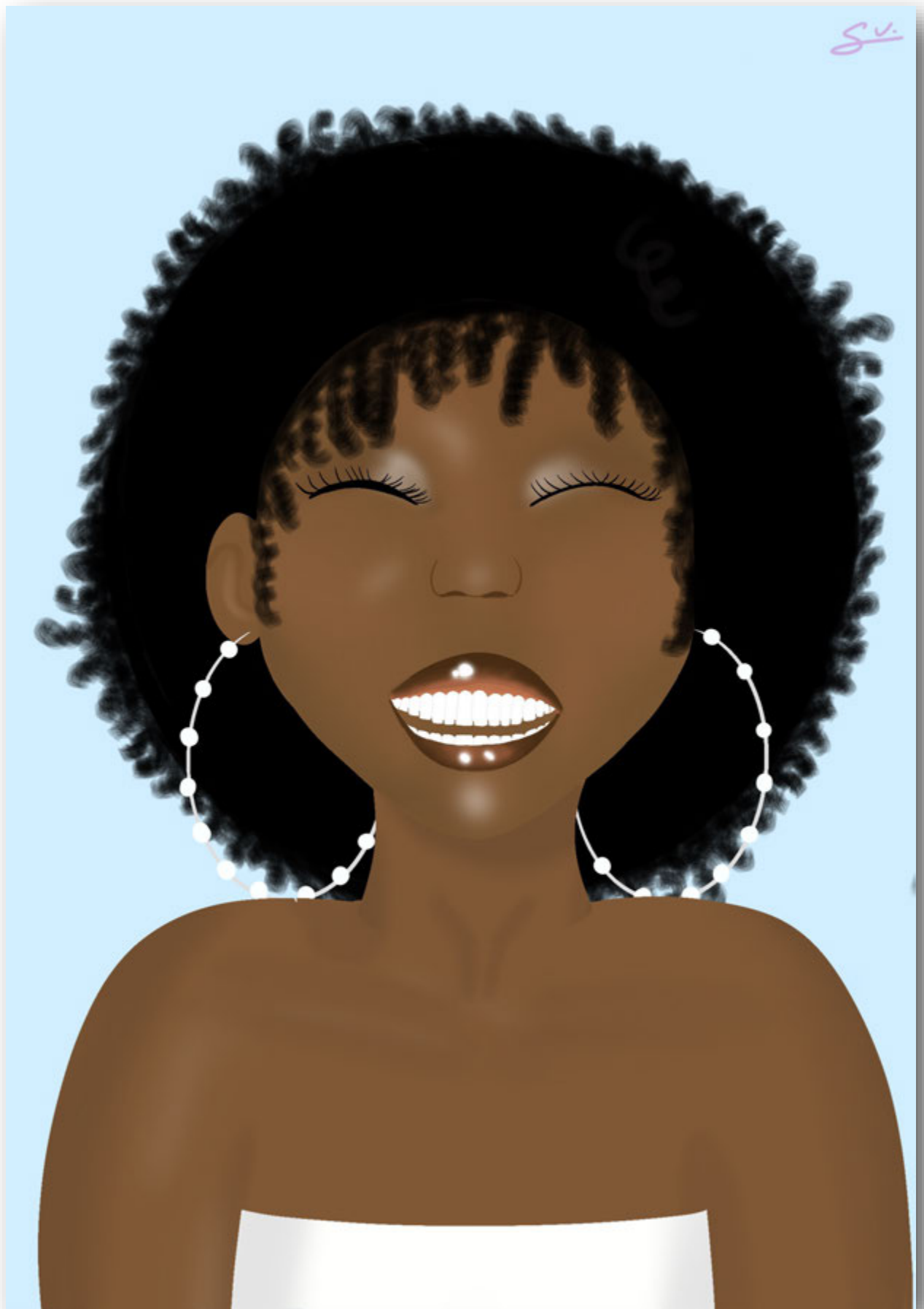
Before he could say anything, everything went black in front of Niyo. Angie roared at the sight trying to reenter her dragon form but failed.

"Sorry girl but you're too much a threat to keep around. We're going to lock you away in a distant cave."

Angie screamed back with rage-fueled words. "No, you can't do this. I haven't done anything. Just leave me alone."

They didn't listen to her. Without being able to do anything, Angie blacked out. The last thought on her mind was simple. Revenge.





***Black & Beautiful*** by Sovajra Vickerie, age 17

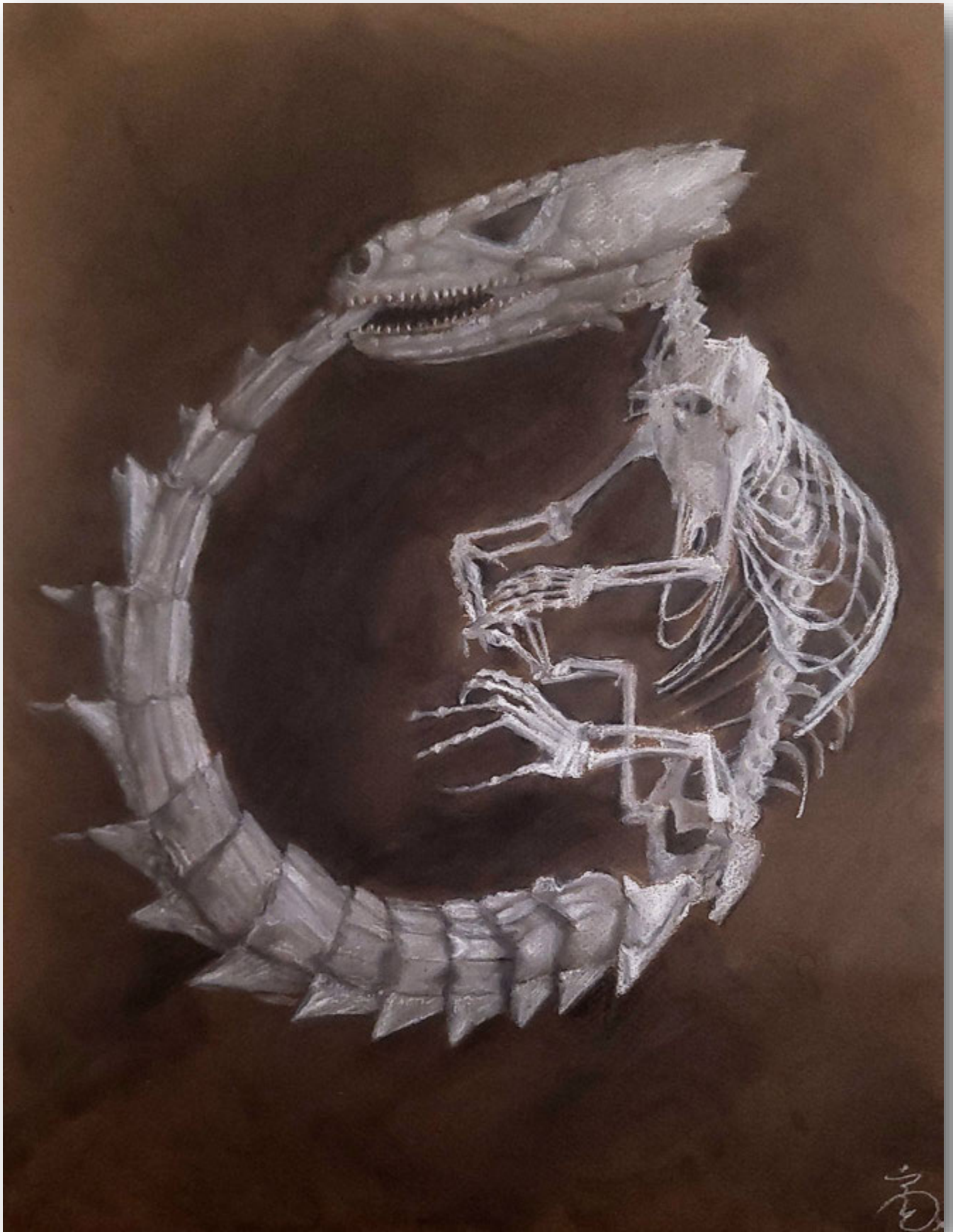
digital art: Procreate

# *Violet*

by Brooke Cresswell, age 17

I don't think you know this but you're my best friend.  
No matter how stupid you are,  
Or how many times you run into a door trying to transcend,  
You really did raise the bar.

Always being dramatic and placing blame,  
But I know you would pick me out of a dozen.  
Sitting with you curled up on my shoulder makes me want to stay.  
So here's to the stupid lizard, with the stupid name,  
And probably a concussion,  
From that god damned door that was in the way.



*Bone Structure of an Armadillo Lizard*

by Li Wilson, age 18, charcoal dust and pencil





*Untitled* by Jentzen Cross, age 17  
photo



# *The First City in the First State*

by Eleni Apolstolidis, age 16

When planning a vacation, what is the first place that comes to mind? For most, the beach is the prime destination for a holiday. However, the settlers that landed on the shores in 1631 in modern-day Lewes, Delaware, could not have imagined what the colony would become. The city of Lewes, Delaware, is abundant in its history, culture, and industry.

First, the city of Lewes, Delaware, is plentiful in history. As newspaper reporter Dick Carter (1976, 5) chronicles, when the settlers landed in 1631, they founded the colony Zwaanendael (present-day Lewes), on land purchased from the Native Americans. But, as some recount, there was a cultural dispute which resulted in the destruction of Zwaanendael. Nevertheless, their influence would continue to influence Sussex County even into the twenty-first century. Lewes was a substantial player in war; as Dr. Gary Wray and Lee Jennings (2005, 9), authors of *Images of America: Fort Miles*, write, "Lewes, the land destined to hold one of the largest seacoast fortifications in the United States, boasts a long and distinguished history. The site of the first European settlement in Delaware was nearby. Battles raged in the bay during the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812." The location of Lewes on the Atlantic Ocean made it a target for naval battles during the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the World Wars, creating major historical attractions for all history lovers. Lewes has a rich history, for not only the locals, but also historians.

Second, the city of Lewes, Delaware, is ample in culture. None would argue that the cultural center is the Lewes Public Library. The Lewes Library (Lewes Public Library n.d.) says in a statement that the library "anticipates the needs of the community and adapts, creates and supports classes and programs for all ages that encourage a love of reading, exploration and discovery. The local library not only houses resources for all, but it serves as the headquarters for various non-profit organizations and offers a wide variety of programs open to the entirety of the community." Another cultural phenomenon in Lewes is Fisherman's Wharf (Fisherman's Wharf n.d.), a boating service which offers cruises. The business recounts that since the 1930s, Lewes has been a fishing and boating market due to President Roosevelt's Work Project Administration Act, which helped the city bounce back after the Great Depression. Ever since, the fishing, crabbing, and clamming markets have been a must-stop for locals and tourists. Lewes's cultural powerhouses will keep the city functioning for decades to come.

Third, the city of Lewes, Delaware, is broad in industry. Lewes remained an out-of-touch, rural city even into the twentieth century, but two men decided to change that fact. Beebe Healthcare (Beebe Healthcare n.d.) accounts for this:

In 1916, these two 'men of vision' founded the first hospital in Sussex County on Savannah Road in Lewes. Appropriately enough, it was in Lewes—The First Town in the First State. Not even Doctors James and Richard Beebe could have envisioned the precedent-setting medical facility that would bear their name. The sons of a local merchant and housekeeper, the Beebes shared a common goal of introducing modern medicine to a rural area where such services were nonexistent.

Some of the brothers' early emergency operations were performed on a kitchen table situated in a nearby farmhouse with instruments sterilized in boiling water on a kettle stove. When the two brothers joined practice, they opened a tiny

four-room hospital adjacent to their father's home. It had just enough space for an operating room and two patient rooms with a total of three beds.

When the Beebes brought the hospital to Lewes, it created jobs and made the city more than just a farming city or a fishing port. In recent years, a report from Delaware Endless Discoveries (2019, 3-4) explains that the Delaware beaches, including Lewes, brought in about 3.7 million dollars in 2019. Tourism is the main industry not only in Lewes, but also in almost all the surrounding area. Lewes's industry provides jobs and resources for all in Sussex County.

Lewes is filled with a plethora of history, culture, and industry. From historical sites to advancements in medicine, boating trips, to job opportunities, Sussex County's Lewes is not only the ideal destination for those visiting but is an impeccable home for those who live there. Every generation in Lewes takes something and leaves something behind for the next generation to use to their benefit.

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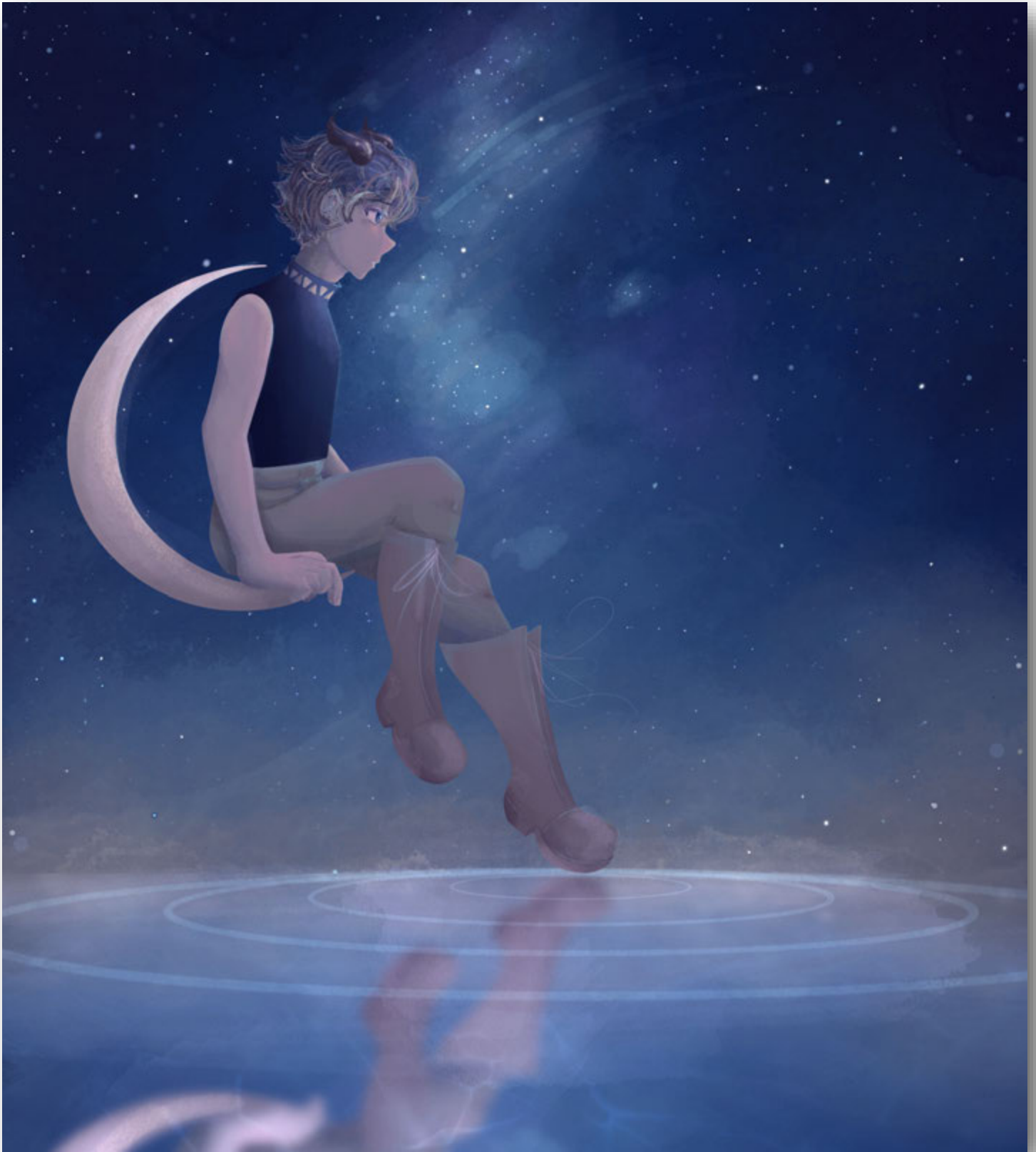
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*Untitled* by Jentzen Cross, age 17  
photo



*On the Moon* by Mia Dorsch, age 16  
digital art: Procreate



# *The Universal Mystery*

by Leana Griffin, age 17

The centuries we've spent looking toward stars  
Have lent us, before answers, questions first.  
We've wondered, in that vastness, where we are  
And found thoughts of our import quite reversed.

Each glimpse we took through each imperfect lens  
Has spread the last horizon that we know.  
The universe beyond unbound extends  
As does the curiosity it's sown.

We look now from a step outside the sky  
Through telescopes that orbit our small world.  
Computers seize our questions and reply  
With clues to answers just barely unfurled.

In all this looking we must surely find  
The presence of another searching mind.



*Crushed Reality* by Samantha Conrad, age 17  
glue, magazine clippings

# Expert

by Mia Dorsch, age 16

Hey kid,  
Whatcha interested in?

Be an expert in science.  
Be a mathematician  
Know your language  
But also know the next.  
Don't forget this,  
Don't forget that.  
It'll pile up  
Until you break down and crash

The system is unforgiving,  
Finding it impossible to make a living  
But what's the point of life  
When grades stab you like a knife?

# *Running is a Snowstorm*

by Leah Walters, age 13

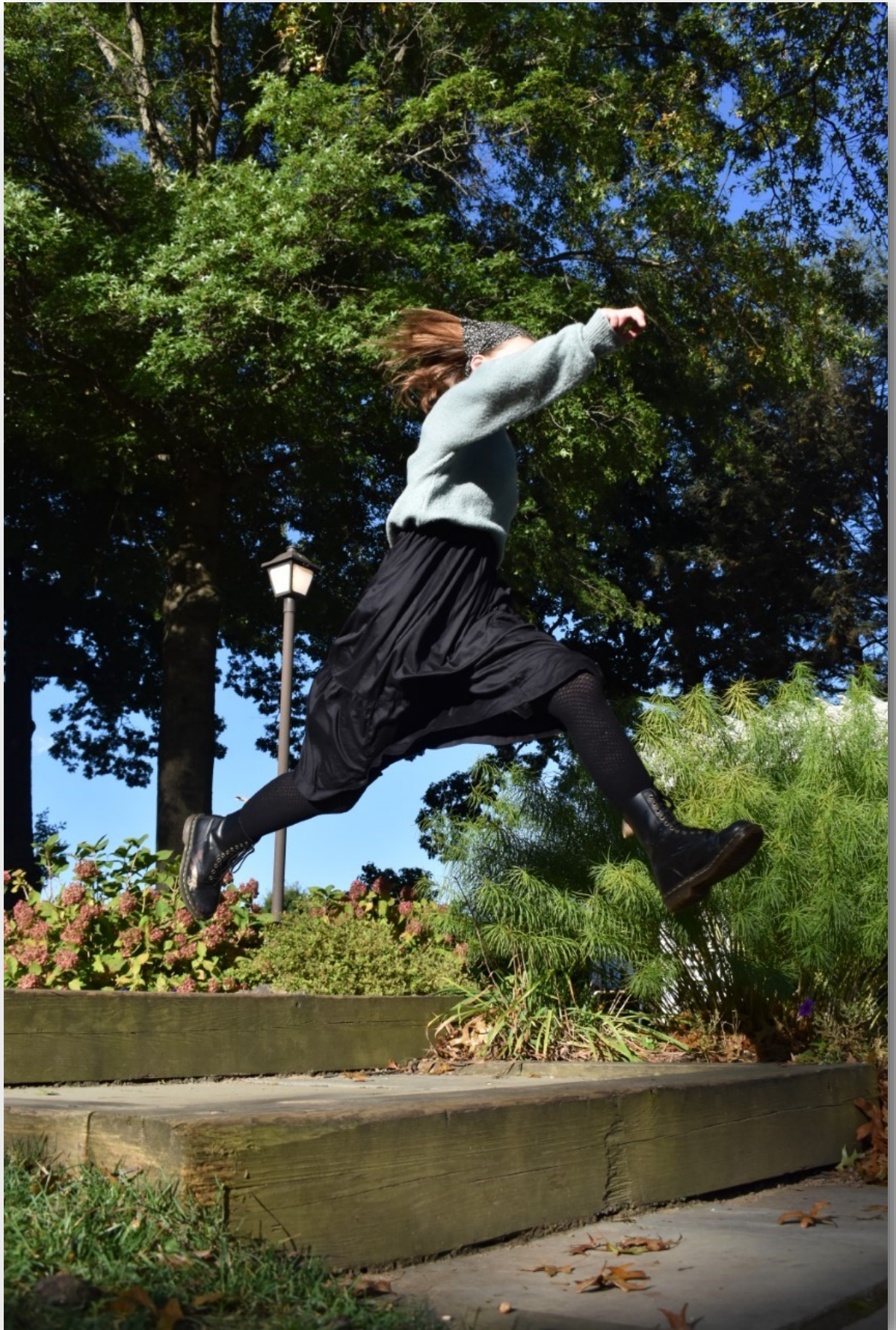
The sound of leaves crunch under the weight of my feet with a steady rhythm. The snow starts sprinkling down and when the miniature snowflakes hit my skin, they send a shiver down my body. This is my last race until next fall, here at White Clay Creek, and I am determined to make it my best. This course, covering 2.1 miles, contains hills galore! As I am running, I think about the past season and how far I've come. Then the idea came to me. Running is like a snowstorm. Running is like a snowstorm because sometimes the snow comes in short, intense waves, just like sometimes when I'm running I might have sudden bursts of energy where I have the strength to sprint for most of the race, and sometimes I just have calm days where I am jogging but I keep that pace for the whole race.

As I run past the crest of Heartbreak Hill, the biggest hill on the course, I think about how each and every snowflake is different, just like every race I run. No two snowflakes are the same, just like how I never run the same pace twice. Some days I might be a little bit faster, and some days I might run a little slower than the race before. As I run along the utility road, made up of dirt, and gravel, I see parents standing off to the side of the course clapping their hands, and cheering, "GO! GO! GO! Keep going! You got this!!" As I run past them, I feel the coldness of the snow falling harder. When I catch a snowflake on my tongue, I never know if it's going to be sweet or sour. Just like running, my race could have a steady rhythm, but turn out sweet, or if my race will be slow, hot and uncomfortable, and be one of my worst races this season.

When I am running my race, I notice that everything is in motion, just like the pure white crystals fall from the sky and they just keep coming, and coming. Then suddenly I come back to real life, as I get to the bottom of the last big hill, the Double Bump. I look around, and see the snowflakes have gotten bigger, and more intricate. As I watch them fall, they remind me of the beauty in running. They are very delicate, frosty, small, but lovely. When they hit the ground, they no longer have the small delicate design they had before when they were falling. They build up on the ground and make banks of fluffy, powdery white snow. As soon as I get to the top of this double hill, I can relax and push for the finish.

As I crest the top of the long, but slightly inclined hills, I realize how far I've come. By this time, the snow is starting to build, and cover the grass with a shimmery white blanket. As I head into the last 40 meters of woods, I realize that this is the last time I will run the finish of our home cross country course. Over the past season, my running skills have grown, just like how the snow piles up over time. From the time I started running a year ago, to now, I have improved so much. It is unbelievable! The last turn of the course is 20 feet ahead of me, before the last 40 feet of just sprinting. All I'm thinking about right now is sprinting as fast as I can for the finish to get a personal record. As I come around the turn and through the opening to the field, I see what looks like a million parents and friends. I see the other members of the boys team, who start after the girls race is over and they are all screaming, "LEAH!! LEAH!! GOOOOO!!!" I focus and sprint as fast as I can towards the finish. As I cross the finish line, I fall to the ground and am laying on my back breathing very intensely as my closest friends and family surround me congratulating me. While I lay there, I let the cool snow fall on my face and cool me off and I am reminded from this race that running is like a snowstorm.





*Mid-Air* by Finley Anderson, age 16

photo

# Legs on Fire

by Matt Whisner, age 17

As I pass the last stretch, my legs are on fire. The other runners are twenty meters, thirty meters, forty meters behind me. I could ease off on my speed, but I want to really impress the crowd; three college recruiters are here to see me run. Ten meters left, five meters, one meter, and the crowd cheers for their star athlete, King. As I slow my pace and walk off the track, my coach greets me.

"Gregory, straighten your form. Correct your posture. I want to see better by tomorrow."

"Yes, coach." My interactions with Coach have always been like this. I wish he would treat me a little bit better, I'm the best runner on our track team after all. Everyone has called me King ever since freshman year. I have been and always will be the best.

Immediately, I gulped down some water. After a 400-meter dash like that, I'm pretty winded. My girlfriend is the second person to greet me. Abigail, the queen to my King. Together, we rule the senior class of Bridgemont High. Those same nobodies that I look down on every day are the ones cheering for me in the stands without hesitation; I am their ruler, and they are my subjects.

...

The next day, I headed to school. The same old routine happens; I shove Billy into his locker for looking at me funny, I spread around the newest scandal that Brent and Ash slept together, and, of course, I meet my group of friends at the entrance to the cafeteria. Abigail and our group of five stand around a table near the doors.

"THAT'S THE KING!" Brent shouts from afar. The ignorant bastard doesn't even know the heat that's about to come when the rumor finally gets back to him.

"Hey bro! You know it, the King is in the house."

As I glance around the cafeteria, I slip my arm around Abigail's shoulders. All of those low lives and losers have no clue how hard life is going to hit them right between the eyes. The gross kids, the band kids, the geeks, the nerds, you see them all in movies, but those movies have a point. Nobody understands that they are just another cog fitting into the machine of life that fuels those who can rise to the top. I am one of those people.

The school day goes normally. Classes are a bore, and all I have on my mind is the race tonight. I'm just running the 200-meter, half of the track. Coach probably thinks I'm tired from last night; he always thinks the worst of me. Maybe he has a point, but tonight's race is going to be a breeze just like it always is, so it's no problem.

...

The King is ready; the gun fires. The other seven runners begin to run, but I blow past them within the first couple of seconds. I can feel the shocked and envious faces on my back as I begin to round the curve of the track. I am in my zone, almost gliding across the orange rubber, which is dulled from being trod on by tens of thousands of feet. Twenty meters, thirty meters, forty meters, I break away from the pack. I reach the other side of the bend. Fifty meters from the finish line. Forty meters. Thirty meters-

A pain begins to grow in the core of my left knee. Almost in slow motion, it begins to

blossom and spread throughout the whole joint. The pain registers in my mind and I falter for a split second.

*Twenty meters.*

The pain worsens. It has graduated from a dull ache to a sharp sting that feels like a small knife slicing through my bones and ligaments.

*Ten meters.*

All of a sudden, the true agony hits my brain. I stagger and stumble as my left leg has almost completely given out on me, and my entire leg is engulfed in searing pain.

*Five meters.*

I faintly hear the crowd start to gasp and whisper from what seems like a universe away. My entire world is focused on this race, this moment, this torture that is echoing throughout my knee. Track is my entire life, my entire being. It cannot end here. This isn't happening, this is something I've only seen in weak athletes who push their limits too much. I am powerful, I am strong, I am King.

Finally, my body hits the hot rubber of the track. My head slams against the concrete with a sickening crack. My arm is just inches away from the finish line, but I am out.

...

I come to consciousness. My head is swimming with pain, and my parents are standing above me with deep worry written all over their faces. The race is a blur. My head is throbbing. I shift my vision to try and look at the alarm clock by my bedside, but it isn't there. My lights, the windows, the walls and ceiling aren't the same. This is a hospital room, and I'm the occupant. My first instinct is to get out of bed and find out what is going on, but the moment I tense my muscles to get up, intense pain stops me. I look up to see my parents anxiously looking at me, worrying lines painted all over their faces.

"Honey, do you know what happened?" My mom nervously asks, shifting her glance toward the lumps on my bed where my legs are.

"I fell during the race. What's happening? Why can't I get up??"

My instincts tell me what is going on before the sentence can make it out of my father's mouth. My running career flashes before my eyes as the words flow out. A torn ACL would ruin my entire life. Track is all I have. I can't walk into school with crutches and a brace, with physical therapy, surgeries, and hospital visits. My career is done. The King has been dethroned.





*Strawberry* by Avah Votta, age 13  
colored pencil



# *You Left Me in a Heartbeat*

by Jamie Olvera, age 14

you left me in a heartbeat

you left me in a song  
now i can't hold on for much long  
crying has never seemed so wrong  
the separation of our bond

fishing for my lost care  
suddenly i grow aware  
of the wear and tear  
of what people find fair

unneeded in your eyes  
tangled in your lies  
cutting our ties  
we've done too many tries

skipped like an unwanted beat  
temporarily tending to your need  
i meant nothing to your seed  
but i watched you grow and feed

i guess i was your little misfortune  
the wrong chord progression  
thought i had the right intention  
i fall flat

# Masked

by Tayjaah Janvier, age 15

Every day I wake up  
And get up from my bed.  
Wishing that I just  
Went back to sleep instead.  
I go to my bathroom  
And look in the mirror.  
I am afraid that  
I see HER.  
My mask is off  
It's clear to see.  
I am not the little girl  
I used to be.  
Once I walk out  
My front door.  
I am not the same girl  
I was before.  
I am talkative  
Smiling and happy.  
Something that takes up  
All of my energy.  
The mask covers my true self  
And hides the shades of gray.  
So it shows the girl  
Who always wants to play.  
As I walk back home  
And lie in my bed.  
I cry myself to sleep knowing  
Tomorrow I must repeat this again.



*Scarlet Princess* by Caelyn Dyson, age 16  
acrylics





*The Female Gaze* by Molly Morneau, age 17  
 glue, magazine clippings



# The Movie Theater

by Virin Jares, age 14

There are many stories about an abandoned theater in an old ghost town called Glenmore. Many say it's haunted, others say that anyone who's been in there hasn't been seen ever again.

But I'm going there today, and I'm coming out alive.

The town of Glenmore was first known for its beautiful seas, though that changed in 1973 as the town then became known for its popular movie theater. In 1985 there was a giant tsunami, which caused the town to flood, resulting in Glenmore becoming a ghost town. All the people in town that day died during the flood; that's where the ghost stories came from. The reason the movie theater in particular is known as the most haunted place in town is because after the people drowned, their spirits remained trapped in the theater; as it was everyone's favorite place.

My friend Scarlet and I rode our bikes to the old ghost town, Glenmore, which was just outside our own neighborhood. We could tell we were close to the town when we saw a sign that said: "*Glenmore - 1 mile away.*" After a mile we saw another sign that said: "*Welcome to Glenmore.*" We were able to see the dusty, rotten and gloomy town. We stopped to look in each place to see what remained. Each building looked just like you imagined: dust and dirt everywhere, with graffiti all over the walls.

We found the building we were planning to go to a couple minutes later in the middle of town: "*The Glenmore Movie Theater*". Scarlet didn't want to go in because of the stories she'd heard of, so I chose to go inside by myself.

I opened the dusty glass doors to show dirt, Broken glass, cobwebs, and very old concession stands from the time when it was open. Seeing that nothing abnormal was there, Scarlet's fear slowed, and so did mine. I took a step inside, stepping on a creaky and rotted floorboard. I took a couple more steps inside, and the glass doors shut behind me-nearly shattering into thousands of sharp dirty shards! I jumped, almost causing the floor boards to break. I tried to wipe my sleeve over the glass doors to see Scarlet but I couldn't see her.

Actually, I didn't see anything, just a pitch black void.

A bright yellow-ish light soon began to shine behind me. I saw what looked like many, many years ago. In fact, it looked just as it did before the tsunami in 1985?

I'm questioning how it's possible, I'm wondering where Scarlet went, and I'm wondering how I will get out of here. I soon saw people walking around, others in lines, and people that were behind the stands. The guests there didn't look old-timey, as they were wearing modern day outfits. I then recognized 3 people that were there, they were all in an exploring channel that stopped posting 4 months ago and listed them as missing. This is where they went! Anyone who goes into the movie theatre gets trapped in it! I was proud of myself for figuring it out... But I then realized that I'm one of those people now.

I tried to use my phone to text Scarlet, but I had no service. A worker there noticed me and came up to me, and asked if I knew where I was going. I tried to act calm and said yes. I had no clue what to do, so I walked with everyone else, many people noticed that I was new but for some reason no one spoke to each other. It made no sense, I mean we were all trapped here! So we should talk so we can work together on how to get out!

I went to talk to a person in line, but they didn't see and hear me. I tapped on their shoulder and they looked at me; I saw their eyes widen, I could tell they knew I was new. They mouthed something to me, and got out of the line to try to talk to me, but I couldn't tell what they wanted to say to me. I talked back to them as they dragged me to a corner with seats. They grabbed their phone out and started to type something; I read their phone and it talked about how no one trapped here can talk to another, and that they've been there for a year already. I was starting to get upset since we can't say anything to another and of course worried again since how long they've been there. I typed on my phone wondering what to do and they typed that I should just do what everyone else is doing; go into food lines, get food that's free, and watch the free movies. I didn't want to eat anything there and I didn't want to watch movies, especially not 24/7.

They walked away and went in a line. I followed them since I didn't know what to do. The worker asked for my order and I got a water bottle and a small popcorn. I wasn't able to talk to any of the guests and they couldn't talk to me, but the workers could talk to me and I heard them and they hear me. I'm confused how that's possible, but everything is confusing. I lost the person I texted with, so I followed other people to the movie section.

There were many movies. The more movies I watched, the drowsier I got.

I needed to escape so I decided to go to employee-only places. I almost got caught, but I was able to take some folders with me that I couldn't read since someone else walked inside. I was able to sneak out easily, with some luck.

I rushed to the restrooms to read the folders. The folders are titled "*Work staff*", "*Maps around area*", and "*Consumer costs*". I figured the "*Consumer costs*" wouldn't be helpful,

so I looked at the others instead. I first looked at "Work staff" in the folder it showed all the staff's interview papers. I tried to look if there were any head staff there like the manager or owner- but nope. I then looked at the "Maps around area" folder; it showed the different rooms, exits, and even air vents.

I decided to go to the 4 exits on the map. The first one was the entrance, and that I already knew how it would go. There was another one in the kitchen behind the concession stands. I knew I couldn't do it alone since workers are there 24/7; so I typed to a random person if they could make a distraction. They dropped the food they just got and I thanked them and rushed behind the concession stand as the workers ran to clean up the mess. I hid from the chefs in the kitchen and I was able to see the door. I began to run towards it; I tried to open the door but it was locked. In frustration I hit the door loudly causing the workers to stare at me.

One of the workers walked up to me; she didn't say anything, she just grabbed my wrist and pulled me out of the kitchen and along a hallway that I didn't know existed. She then took me into an office, in the office there was a desk and bookshelves. There was someone sitting behind the desk. I figured out it was the owner since there was a sign on the desk that- of course -said "Owner." He was upset that I tried to leave, so he brought me to a separate room with no windows or lights, and only one entrance but not an exit. I was locked in there, stuck for hours in pitch blackness; just like the darkness that exists when I looked outside the front doors for the first and last time.

\*\*\*\*\*

The door slowly opened with bright lights blinding me. I was barely able to make out a figure through the light. The person dragged me out of the room, with my eyes still adjusting; I was able to recognize the person; It was Scarlet! But how could it be her!?

I then realized where I was, I was outside; I was outside of the theater! I got out! I hugged Scarlet in glee; but that soon faded once I realized that I had to go back. I had to go back for all those people!

I walked back in the theater but instead of seeing the clean and shiny counters, and lines of people; I saw dusty and broken glass counters, and not another soul. I can't go back into the luxurious-yet-disturbing theater, ever again.

I felt bad leaving those poor souls, but I can't save them, any of them. I suggested that we just leave and Scarlet agreed. We rode our bikes out of there and we never came back to Glenmore again.



***Era Outfits*** by Mia Dorsch, age 16  
digital art: Procreate



# *We Were Friends, Once*

by Lyo Doyle, age 16

By the window you watch only one side  
Through glass you filter the sun  
Let your leaves fall down in disgrace  
But they seem so happy to play

If they ever saw you it was a lie  
Told by a single flower to all of its roots and stems  
To hear only one word is all they need to pretend  
To look back into their heads and their spines

I was the water and I was the stream  
Endlessly moving, endlessly living  
Round and round, just wanting to be still  
Who knew I was going in circles

To be so underground your voice echoes before you even hear it  
You cave in on yourself and become the clay and dirt beneath  
It turns you inside out, upside down  
Around, and around

By the window you've only ever seen one view  
Through glass you filter the sun into exactly what you like  
But let your leaves fall down in disgrace  
They seem so happy to play

# Beauty

by Gianna Smale, age 18

When I think of the word beauty, I don't think of something physical  
I don't think of his symmetrical features or the color of his eyes  
His sports car or the watch on his wrist

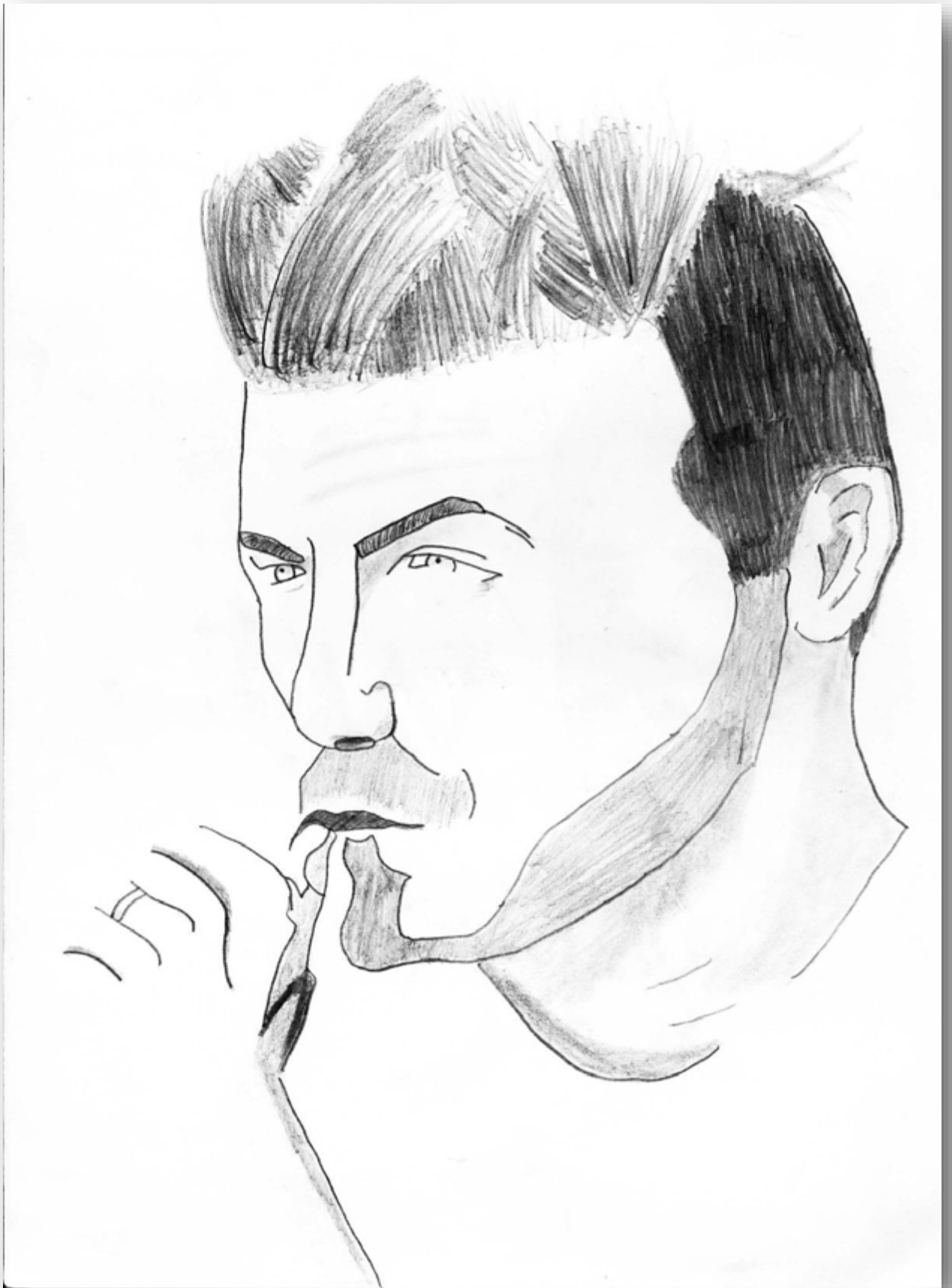
I think of the moments we've shared  
How I've never had to hide with him

How he listens, even to the words unsaid  
And how he believes in me, even when I don't

When I think of beauty, I think of the way he makes me laugh  
How he never fails to make me smile  
And how he cares

I believe the most beautiful things in life can't be seen or touched  
They aren't flowers or jewelry  
Prada or Dior

I think beauty is something deeper  
It's neither good nor bad  
And can only be felt in the depths of our souls



*David Beckham, Himself* by Kenneth Christopher, age 12  
pencil, black marker

# Memories

by Virin Jares, age 14

It all started on May 18th 2015.

That night was like any other night, but something happened; there was a loud tapping sound on my window! I thought it was a tree branch. I ended up remembering there aren't any trees near my house and that my room is on the 2nd floor. I was confused but still I decided to get out of bed and open the blinds. There was nothing there so I just thought it was my imagination. I went back to bed but I felt like there was something, something staring at me. I looked around my room and then I saw it; it looked like a lady with pitch black eyes and bony pale skin staring right back at me! I yelled for my aunt to help me but when she got to my room that thing, that person, was already gone.

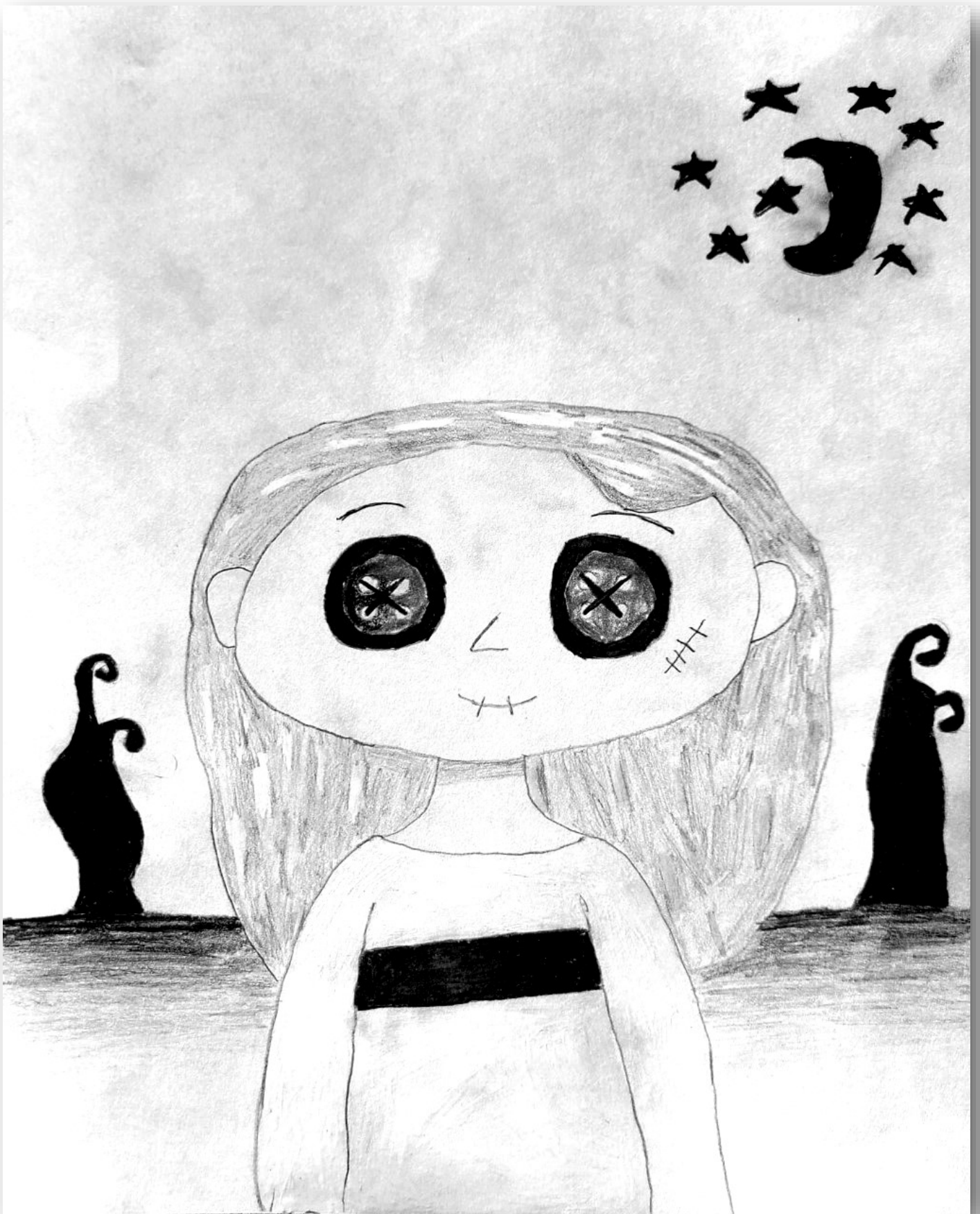
Years passed since what happened, but it stuck with me like a fly to flypaper. It is now December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019. I made a friend named Abigail last year. I haven't told her about that memory I had, but today I told her. She actually believed me, I didn't expect that she would actually believe me. Later that day (after school) I decided to tell my aunt what I saw that she didn't see. I never wanted to tell her but I knew I had to at some point. I told her and then she started crying? After that she managed to walk away, refusing to discuss it. That night I was thinking to myself "should I have done something, something that could help?"

She never told me why she started crying and I was too scared to ever ask or even bring it up.

4 days have passed, it is now December 10<sup>th</sup>. The day was normal but as soon as nightfall came, it all changed. That person came back but this time she wasn't alone. My aunt and Abigail are here too! I'm trying to ask what's going on but there are no words coming from my mouth. I jump out of bed, trying to get away. I run out of my room and lock myself in another room, my aunt's room. My aunt is sleeping in bed even though she was in my room; I'm confused. What is going on!? Who are those things!? Who are you!? She slowly woke up from her slumber- she didn't look like herself- but then She's asking what's wrong but instead of answering I began to run out of the house, refusing to look back.

I was running so far that when I stopped I didn't know where I was. As I look around I see a puddle of water on the ground... I looked in the puddle and screamed! I didn't look like myself, no, not at all. I look like them, those things! I don't know what is going on but I know it is too late, too late for me and too late for this world.





*Freaky Girl Portrait* by Abigayle Umbrecht, age 12  
pencil and colored pencil

# *Drive Away*

by Mia Dorsch, age 16

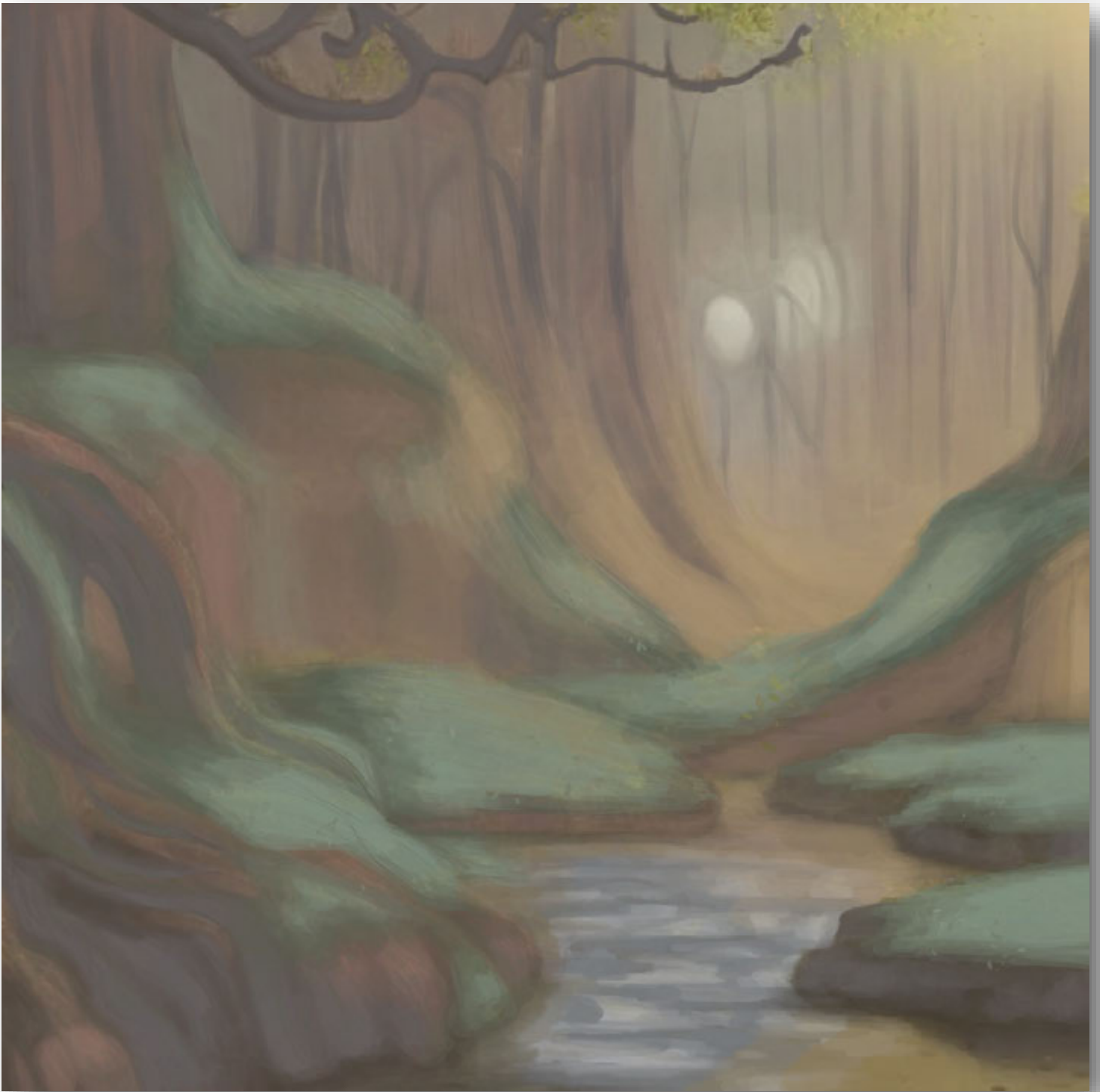
As his grip tightened around the leather steering wheel, tears from the sky ran down the dark windows. Blurring lights and shadows emerging from the dark of night blinded him. Soft, melancholy tunes sang about the fragile dance of love, and the beautiful pain relationships endure. A crumpled piece of paper, a failed letter sat in the seat beside him. No written words could express his loss, his love, his memory. No spoken words could apologize for, mend, or revive what he had once had. Tears stream down his swollen face. She was too perfect, too pure for him. Her life appeared to him as a blank slate, an open book. After his hands had embraced hers, the pages of her life turned into ashes. The cinders slid through his trembling fingers. The embers of their love were washed away by the pouring rain. Both by tears and the constant downpour, washing away everything she once was. All of the things he chased, fell in the wake behind him, tumbling to the side like roadkill. He knew she could never be replaced, yet struggled to forget the past. The dull headlights paved the way to his future life, the road ahead. A quiet reminder that she was the last of her kind always loomed behind the heartbroken boy, haunting him through his rear-view mirror.





*Fall in the City* by Cailin Conway, age 17  
photo





***Glowing Forest*** by Olivia Erskine, age 17  
digital art: Procreate



# *Old Woven Tales*

by Menuha Chitipolu, age 13

*She weaves like no other;  
She weaves for memories*

*From long ago*

*From when the great whale once washed on shore  
When the skies sported the blues*

*When it smelled like Persephone*

*When the blue rivers flowed freely  
When the grass was an ocean itself.*

*Then to remember when the war happened  
That got rid of the green grass*

*The blue rivers now murky  
When the skies were gray*

*An acrid smell like Hades*

*And the whale went back into the deep waters*

*And now she weaves  
To forget.*

# Stop the Clock

by Sarah Szeto, age 14

I'm sleeping but not resting. Squeezing my eyes shut in hopes of waking up from this nightmare. Only, I never do. Nights spent staring at the stars and an airplane in the sky. Except the plane stays suspended in the air, defying all science. I scream, but no one hears me. I can't even hear the crickets chirping. *I am driving myself insane.*

But then, everything goes back to normal, leaving me to question my sanity. *Was it all in my head?* I tried to see a psychologist, but no one could help me. So I let the problem fester and manipulate my life. *I am doing this somehow, so I must find a way to control these time gaps.*

It went away for a bit, leaving me to ponder whether I finally stopped freezing time. I had a party tonight with my friend, Avery, and for once, I was excited about the future. I dressed in a short maroon dress, adorning myself with gold jewelry.

"Let's go before we're late," Avery said, peeking through the doorway of my room. I quickly tied my hair in a bun and headed out.

It was crowded with people as we first walked into the dorm. Music blasted in my ears as we danced the night away. I laughed, played games, and probably got a *little* too drunk. We were seated around a coffee table playing truth or dare when the music went out.

"What happened to the music?" I asked. No one responded. I looked up to see everyone frozen and, *oh no, this can't be happening. Not right now.* I dropped my head in my hands as I trembled, forcing myself to remain calm.

"Someone help me!" I screamed, abruptly standing up and shoving the cups off the table. I was all alone again. I couldn't control myself as I sunk to the floor in a heap. So *pathetic.*

"That's no way to behave at a party." I looked up at the man standing on the other side of the room. His dark clothes were like nothing I'd ever seen, and his face; he was *breathtaking.* His skin was so fair, like porcelain, and his eyes were like fire. I quickly rose but was too stunned to approach him.

"Who are you?"

He grinned as he walked closer, his shoes clicking with every step. "Oh, don't be startled. I heard you plead for help." Shame flushed my face as I wrung my hands together.

"But how?" I asked, barely able to form sentences. "How are you *here* and not frozen?"

He let out a silvery laugh as he stopped in front of me. His presence consumed the room as everything seemed to fixate on him. Part of me wanted to shrink back from his fierce gaze. "Because I'm not affected by time, love. It's so very *mortal.*"

His peculiarity perplexed me. *What does that even mean?* "Well, can you please help me fix this? I think I'm the one doing this, and I can't stop it." I wanted to cry at my desperation and how stupid I must've sounded, but he didn't act like I was insane.

"You must be so terribly confused. This was carved in the stars long before you arrived. If it comforts you, you can learn to control the time gaps. I'm only glad I found you first."

"What the hell are you talking about?" I demanded, suddenly irritated with how bizarre this was. He studied me before he spoke.

"Love, I've come to kill you."



*Let me Go but Don't Miss or Forget Me Either*

by Anwasha Kumari, age 13  
watercolor, colored pencil, acrylic paint, glitter,

# *The Wildfire That is Art*

by Krish Shah, age 12

I looked down at the paper on my desk, scared of ruining its pristine, snowy hue. With a deep breath, I started adding lines carefully and meticulously, and saw something that would only impress a five-year-old. Crumpling yet another ball of failures, I threw it in a furious rage. "Why? Why? Why?" I said, in total frustration. Then I realized: art is a wildfire. It takes over, it has its own process and rules, all that must be followed.

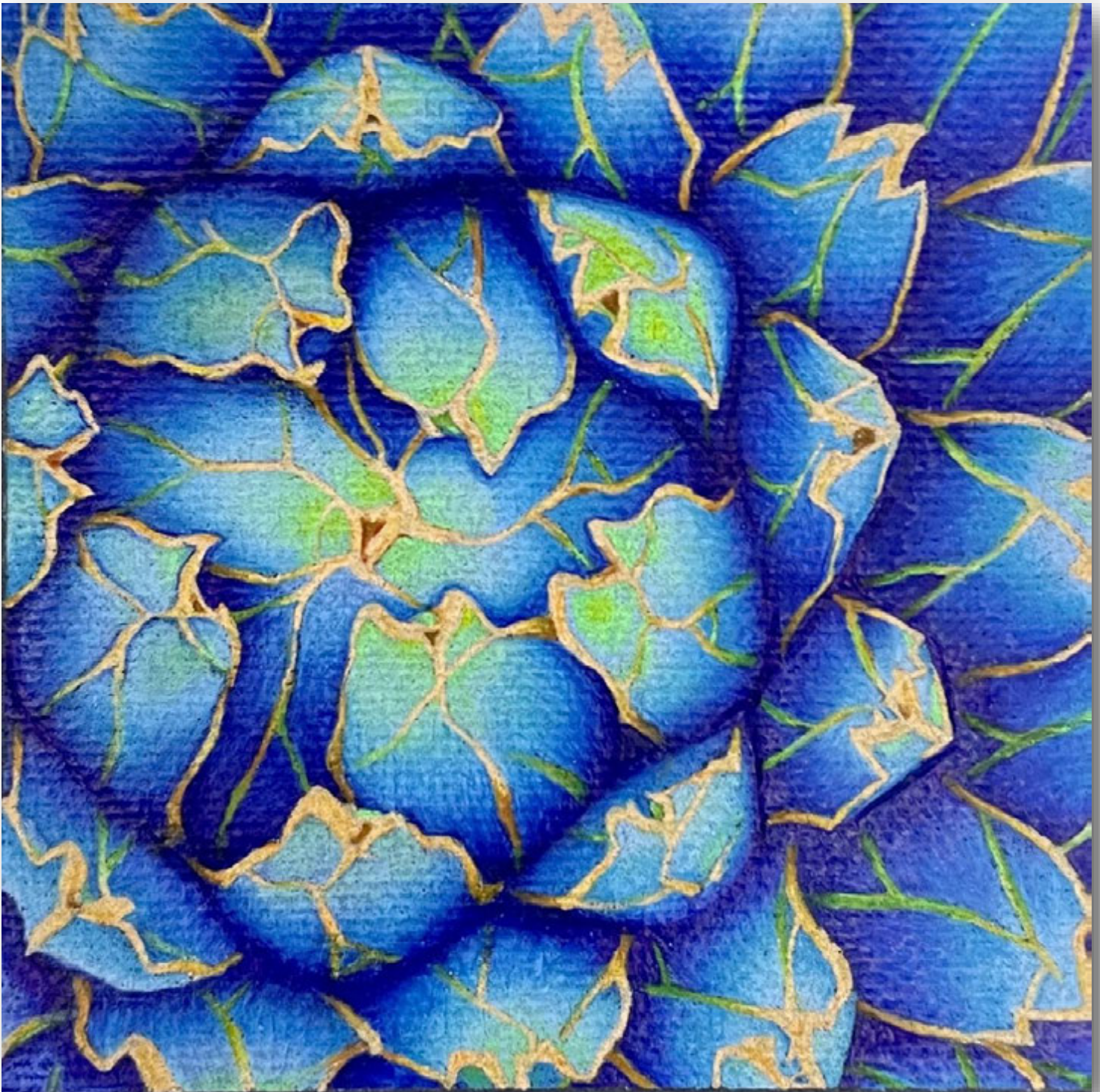
I looked down at my hand. My Sharpie was still in it. Putting it to the paper, I swirled it around, making continuous circles, like a black hole. And I had a reflection: on my journey, my Sharpie was my only companion. It was the thing that started it all. It created beautiful drawings for me, but soon, I made the drawings myself. But it soon became a heated wildfire, and I was unable to control it. After getting burned so many times, I finally got it. And I was back to doing what I loved. Art may be a wildfire, but it is controllable. I just have to commit to my passions and never give up.





*Volcano Sunset* by Brayden Hauser, age 13

photo



***Succulent*** by Myly Huynh, age 18  
colored pencil

# *Brooks Adrenaline*

by Addison Mood, age 16

Famous author and ultra-marathoner, Dean Karnazes once said, "Struggling and suffering are the essence of a life worth living. If you're not pushing yourself beyond the comfort zone, if you're not demanding more from yourself - expanding and learning as you go - you're choosing a numb existence. You're denying yourself an extraordinary trip." In life, one must learn to push themselves to their maximum potential. They must do what others are afraid to do. In order to achieve the dreams that one might think are impossible, they need to do what others are not willing to do. The temporary pain, a fire hovering just under your skin, caused from working hard, is much more manageable than the unimaginable shame of waking up one day and realizing you failed at achieving your goals. Everyone has something they are working towards; mine is pushing myself to become a faster and stronger runner. From the hundreds and hundreds of miles that I have run on my running shoes, I can say with confidence that they represent the journey I took to teach myself how to get comfortable being uncomfortable to achieve my goals.

The size six Brooks Adrenaline 21's with sleek black fabric and maroon detailing. A perfectly sat shoe on a clear shelf among so many others was what I saw when I first walked into my local running equipment store, Delaware Running Company, and that is what the worker who fitted my shoes said would be the best fit for me. I was not thinking of what I would achieve while wearing them in the future. I was thinking of the soft cushion I felt as I moved. I was thinking of the slight arch in the shoe that supported my foot. I was thinking of the black rubber on the soles to keep me from slipping on the rocky trails. But now, the dirt and the grass and the tears and the rocks filling in every small crevice of the shoes are what makes them such a meaningful part of my life.

The maroon heel, a foundation for the rest of the shoe, provides support and prevents injuries. It was once thick and smooth with miniscule circular indents curving around the back of the foam. Now, it has small tears along the sides - small pieces of foam peeling off and displaying the under layers of the thick material - where I have run through trails filled with roots, rocks, twigs, sand, gravel, stone, grass. Above is a small mesh lining that protects the black fabric of the rest of the shoe. Small holes reinforced with plastic tubing provide a place for the black laces with maroon tubing on the end to loop through. The maroon tubing is meant to protect the ends from fraying, but over time threads have started to fluff up on the edges. The high Achilles support in the rear end of the shoe is there to keep my weak ankles from twisting on each and every step that I take.

Every part of the worn soles is filled with dirt. Dirt from every run completed. Dirt and clay from the trails in my hometown, at my favorite parks. Dirt from other states where I have completed runs or raced. Dirt from other countries where I was vacationing but would not take the day off from my runs. For I have too much going for me to let the idea of taking a break ruin all the work I have put in for the past three years. My coach loves to talk about making a commitment. Making a commitment to yourself that you will do everything in your power to improve. When you no longer worry about doing things to please other people, you soon realize that all the work put in will be worth it in the end. When I have a strong

workout or race, I think back to all those times I used to just take the day off because I did not appreciate the opportunity I had to be doing what I was doing. Not only in running, but in all other aspects of life you need to be willing to push past the walls in your mind and just go for it.

Fall, fall, fall. That is what happens now that the soles of my shoes are so worn from overuse. Scars, evidence of the fiery pain of falls, are there to portray the countless injuries. Soles once black squares with individual textures to produce traction are now dull and flat, evidence of the repetitions of drills over and over, and the endless runs on rough surfaces. Those long runs on the slippery trails were like sliding on black ice. Running on them during a rain storm produced quite a few falls where the dull soles could no longer keep me standing, but I never gave up. I continued to get right back up, clean up the bloody cuts filled with mulch from the wet path, and keep working.

Thinking back on all the memories I have while wearing my running shoes, I start to realize just how accurate the name Brooks Adrenaline truly is. The feeling I experience when I change into these shoes every afternoon after a hard and busy day at school is pure adrenaline. My body knows that it is time to work and time to prove just how strong I actually am. My body feels like a freshly changed lightbulb. It changes back from a dull, flickering light to strong rays of pure electricity. Without walking into that running store on that cool fall morning and seeing the shoes that would truly change my outlook on life, I would not be where I am today. Pushing myself to my breaking point and getting addicted to the feeling of running so hard that my lungs burn and the lactic acid fills my legs is now where I feel the most comfortable. These shoes are what changed my outlook to feel my best when I work hard towards being the strongest version of myself that I can be.





*Street Fighter* by Gwenna Foulk, age 13  
digital art: Adobe Fresco

# *He Loved to Fight*

by Brayden Hauser, age 13

He loved to fight they said  
He was always good at that one thing  
He didn't know he'd wind up dead  
A painful element to bring

It started a late December  
Evening if I recall  
Snowing it was, as I remember  
They said 5 inches tall

He got out of sorts that night  
With some angry, angry men  
It caused the boy some awful freight  
The lion stepped out of his den

The scene was quite a blur  
The fists, the legs, the red  
It was quite the massacre  
A night of fallen bloodshed

Swipe left, swipe right, uppercut  
A hand on a throat  
A punch to a gut  
An "ow" or two, I quote

One body fell down  
One body staggered back  
One body 'broke his crown'  
The end of the attack

He loved to fight they said  
I guess the tale was true  
His body still lies there in the ice  
All battered black and blue



***Bull vs Bear*** by Grace Sweeten, age 12

acrylic on canvas

# *when your heart died*

by Sindhu Sivasankar, age 17

when your heart died  
a thousand hearts shattered  
into millions of pieces  
desperate to discover  
a shard  
any shard  
with your imprint  
your hair  
your smile  
your beautiful, unfulfilled dreams  
you  
all of you  
anything of you  
the only pieces  
left behind  
by your forever silent heart  
marked on a thousand  
treasured by a thousand  
remembered by all  
rest in peace.





*Flamboyant Peacock* by Sindhu Sivasankar, age 17  
colored pencil, marker



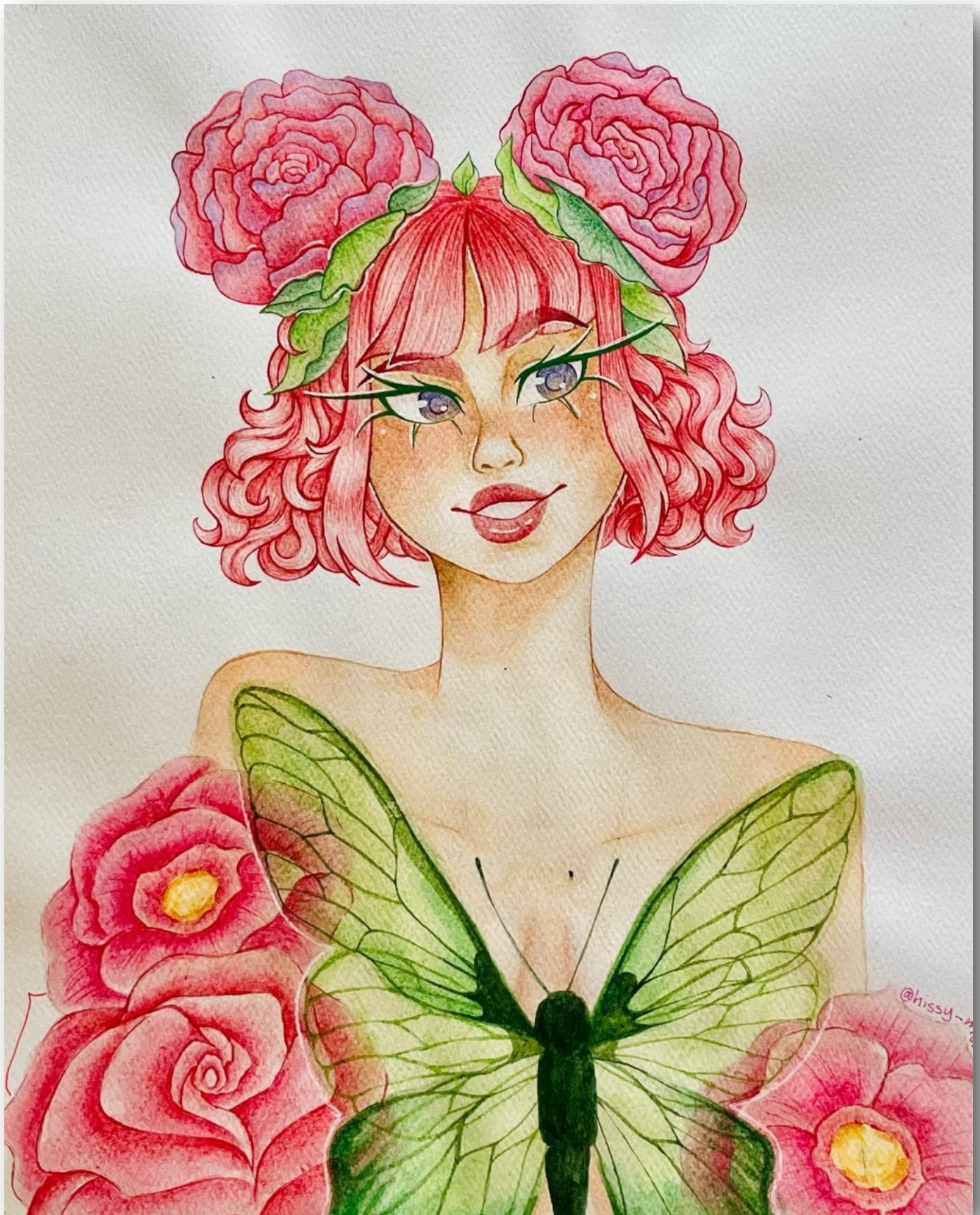
*Life is Sprouting*  
by Grace Sweeten, age 12  
acrylics

## *Admiring Your Soulmate From Afar*

by Sarah Szeto, age 14

There she was. Standing on the other side of the street, hands in her jacket pockets. Her face was as beautiful as ever. She was smiling. Laughing. It warmed my heart to see her so happy. To know that the pain I caused her wasn't permanent. Then he came and kissed her, holding her the way I used to. I should've kept walking the second I saw her. But something in me couldn't bear to leave. Someone finally loved her the way I couldn't. The way she watched him, that was love. She used to look at me like that. That smile warmed me and broke me all over again.





***Nature's Girl*** by Myly Huynh, age 18  
watercolor

# *The Greatest Artist in the History of Forever*

by Mia Dorsch, age 16

"Caleb... the number one artist in the history of forever..."

Sleep talking.

Dreams about middle school crushes.

Not fun.

I wake up, gasping. Reaching for my phone, my fingers instinctively dial my friend's number. He will be there today. I just need some excuse so someone will come with me.

"Pick up, pick up, pick up." I plead, hopping around my room in order to get myself ready. It is obvious that they can't hear me through the phone. They eventually answer. I greet her with my infamous, "Bonjour. Comment ça va?" I almost hear my friend roll her eyes over the phone. Sliding out of my room in nervous excitement and nearly hitting every doorway and wall in my house, I make my way to the kitchen.

"Ça va... it's too early," She grumbles with a sigh.

Morning's golden light leaks through the kitchen window and fills the room with warm colors. The moderate temperature pleases me. It is a perfect day for a hoodie and shorts. Not just any hoodie though, my Block Island hoodie. Oh, and don't forget, a great day to try to see him.

"Wanna get a snack?" I ask with enthusiasm. There is a plan hidden behind the snack suggestion, of course.

"What? It's not even eight."

"It'll be eight by the time we get one."

"Mmmmmmm..." she murmurs.

"Jamieeeeeee," I beg, my eyebrows frowning.

"Oh heck yeah, you know I wouldn't turn down food."

"To think I'm so easy to tease," I say under my breath. "She better not tease me about... *argh* never mind."

We debate on where to go and eventually agree on a meeting time and a place to walk around.

After hanging up, I get dressed in my normal uniform. Too short shorts (but just because my legs are weirdly long), a second-hand hoodie with "BLOCK ISLAND" written in large letters and an anchor across the chest, and dirty red Converse sneakers. Today is not unusual. I pull my thin gray socks up, over my calves, just like my mom tells me not to. My dream remains vividly in my mind.

I swing the pantry door open.

The hanging bell on the shop's door rings gently. Though the shop is indoors, the aroma of the sea's salty air lingers inside. An old clerk sits at the counter, fiddling with his cash register. He nods to us. We wave back before continuing our utterly stupid conversation. Stories and original characters. A common topic for us to talk about. We speak about our fictional creations as if they were real. The clerk raises a brow and shakes his head at our miscellaneous chatter. Nothing on the boring shelves of the store interests me, but then I catch a whiff of beach fries and I am immediately pleased by the scent.



“Want French fries instead?” I turn to Jamie, who nods. Maybe it would be a better chance to catch a glimpse of him. After all, the French fry shop is a floor above us.

Walking out of the dull store, a gust of sandy wind greets us. A spiral staircase leads us to the top of the strange shopping center. I stare up. The shopping center is probably dozens of stories high. Storefronts are all on one side with a path in front of them to connect the doors. A thin, rusty railing prevents shoppers from falling off the side. We make our way up to the third floor, where the French fry shop is located. Despite what everyone usually tells you to do on a rickety staircase, I stare down at the ground far below. A familiar blonde boy waits at the bus stop. My eyes glimmer in enchantment, as my cheeks grow warm.

I apparently stop because Jamie calls out, “What are you waiting for? I’m going to get the fries without you!”

He shakes his head and walks off, towards the boardwalk, a partially submerged wooden path that goes through the ocean that sits behind the shopping tower.

“Caleb,” his name slips through my lips. Almost as if fate desires for it to happen, he looks up at me. I blush and run up the stairs to join Jamie in the fry line as quickly as possible. It turns out she has the fries already.

“What’s up?” She asks.

“He did not…” I murmur, slapping my cheeks. The salty, savory scent of scrumptious fries is overwhelming. Jamie pulls the fries away from me as I instinctively reach for them.

“Nope, not until you tell me what’s up.”

I tell her about the boy. How we were friends. How I like-liked him. How we doodled things together in health class. How we once crafted masterpieces.

“The Stalker.”

“Anabelle and Ron.”

“Safe Kid In A Car Seat With A Seatbelt.”

Those are just a few names of our infamous works.

“To the boardwalk, we go!” Jamie exclaims, running down the stairs before I get my fry.

On the soggy path, we search around for him. I struggle to find him. Jamie continues munching on the fries. At this moment, that boy, Caleb, is far more important than the fries. They smell so good though. Too good. I give up and grab a handful of fries.

“We got our snack, guess it’s time to go,” I say with a mouthful of delicious fries. The pleasantly warm, overly salted snack soothes my needs. We return to the bus stop, from where we had come. A wide bus comes screeching down the street, to an abrupt halt.

I sigh while boarding the bus, keeping my head low. There are four rows of seats, each with four seats, and walkways that run through the rows. Almost no one is on the bus, so Jamie and I make our way over to the back in hopes of sitting in the last row. I suddenly find my gaze falling upon the back of that blonde boy. Gasping, I run up to him. I call out his name. He glances at me, though he gives me no reply. Beside him, a five-foot-tall penguin wobbles while flapping its flippers wings. I feel my heart sink. I almost hear it crash. He is everything I want to be and more. His sheer talents have exceeded mine. My conscience does not let me go unnoticed. As if I am in a dream, my body grows light.

“I like your penguin!” I seek attention from the boy I look up to the most. He loves penguins. At least he *loved* them. He wouldn’t have one now if he didn’t love them, right? I know my hands are quivering, though I cannot feel it. I don’t even feel my feet touching the aisle’s floor. I can’t even hear Jamie calling out my name. That boy, Caleb, remains the focal point of my entire existence. The penguin flaps its wings in approval while he blinks.

"Thanks," is the murmur I get.

I bite my lip in anticipation.

"Congrats. I haven't seen you since..."

"I became the best artist in the history of forever." He keeps a stern expression, keeping his back to me.

Hesitantly, I nod.

The facade of seriousness that has been plastered on his face shatters when he laughs.

"I couldn't have done it without you, you know." He grabs my hand and smiles. His palms are soft and warm. The penguin puts a flipper on his hand. It wasn't quite as warm. I sense my left foot scoot backward in surprise. "It's not me who deserves that title, but you. You brought the rhinestones and Papermate Flair pens to the table." We share a nostalgic giggle. He then spreads his arms out for a hug. He leans in and hugs me. I accept his embrace, stiffly. Why am I so awkward?! This is exactly what I wanted!

"To me, you'll be the number one artist in the history of forever. Though, it is an odd title. History of forever." He whispers in my ear. I blush. "Though it won't keep you from also being my favorite artist in the history of forever."

I gently close my eyes and hug him back. It feels nice to receive recognition and admiration from none other than my middle school crush, the number-one artist in the history of forever.

I rub my eyes before opening them. I must have dozed off again. I reach down and grab a prepackaged brownie out of the pantry.

"Maybe I should call Caleb today."



**Babs** by Abigayle Umbrecht,  
age 12  
colored pencil and sharpie

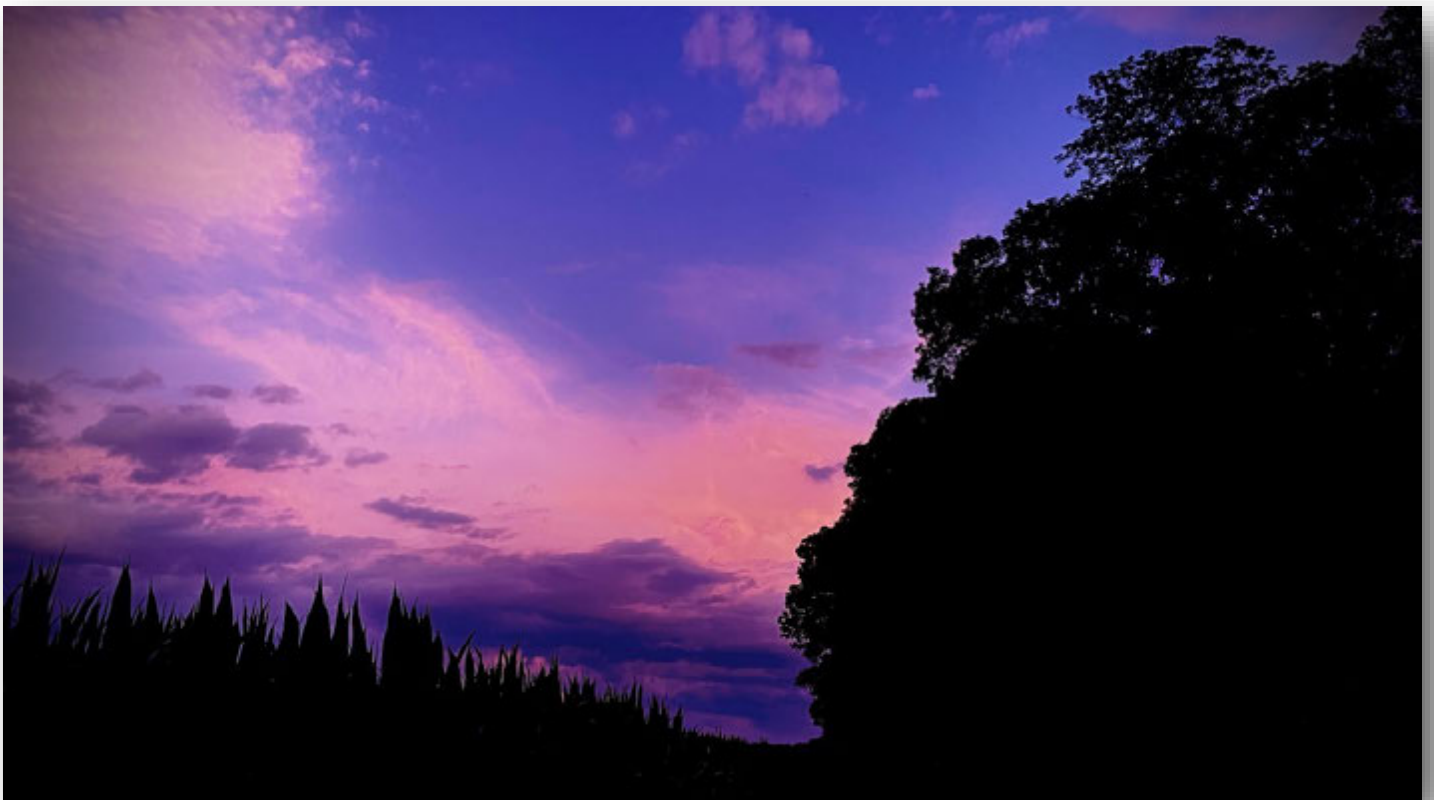


## *Milton Sundown*

by William Dorsch, age 14  
photo

## *Milton Silhouette Sunset*

by William Dorsch, age 14  
photo



# Secrets and Murder

by Addison Palsgrove, age 12

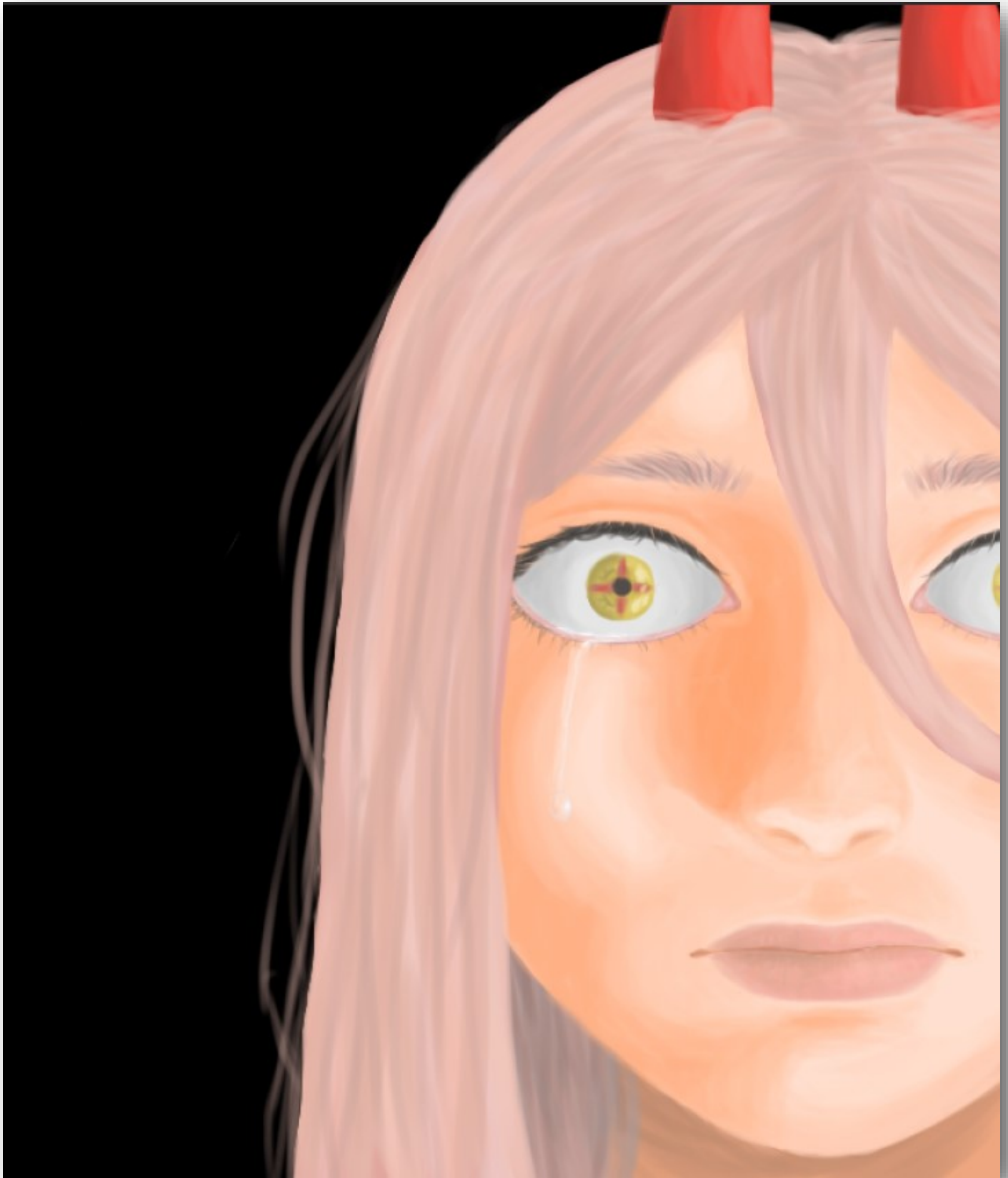
*You grip the bloody knife as you smoothly walk towards the little girl. Soon her life will slip away.* I sigh and put the book down. I couldn't concentrate on what I was reading. I stare at the wall of my bedroom, at the plain crusty old paint from before we moved in. I think about everything that has happened to me recently. Then it hits me like lightning. Secrets are murder.

I roll over and pick up a photo of me and my ex-best friend laughing at some foolish thing we were doing. The edges of the photo stick out of the corners of the frame taunting me to take the photo out and look at it. The wooden frame has pieces of wood sticking up around the corner, frayed from sitting on my dresser for a million years. A single evil tear rolls down my face, but I wipe it away and chuck the frame across the room. I hear the bang of it hitting the wall, like the frame is yelling at me for throwing it. The frame broke just like our friendship. It broke apart and shattered. I sigh. Secrets tear down relationships. Sometimes, even when we don't want them to, they just slip out, like life slipping away from the unlucky victim. My friend's secret came out like that. She was never gonna tell me otherwise. The secret broke our relationship.

The secret also broke my trust. It takes a long time to build up trust and she just broke it like it was nothing. I sit up and look at the cracked frame on the floor. I used to see my best friend's face, but now I see a liar and a person I can't trust. I laugh a bitter laugh. It opened my eyes, that's for sure. Her secret showed me the monster that secretly lurked behind her mask. I sigh. Things will never be the same again. Nothing will ever go back to normal. One more thing comes to mind as I sit on my bed thinking. Secrets and murder bring me closer to the ones I love, either through grief or hurt, my loved ones are there to comfort me.

"Alice!" My brother's voice pierces through my thoughts like a missile. "Are you coming with us to this party or what?" He yells. "Coming!" I shout back. I grab the broken frame on my way out and toss it in the trash can, reminding myself once more before I leave that sometimes the people I trust most of all can break my heart and after that I just need to move on.





*Power* by Ava White, age 17  
digital art: Clip Studio Paint

# *Looking in the Mirror*

by Gianna Smale, age 18

Like a spiders web, beautiful and strong  
You are heavy waves crashing against rocks  
Like my favorite lyric in that one song  
You are fragile like a porcelain box  
You're a soft blanket on a cold night  
You're a good grade on a difficult test  
You're the first sip of a crisp glass of sprite  
You're a sunny morning after a night's rest  
Like a red stain on your favorite shirt  
When you're running late and can't find your keys  
You're the stinging pain after being hurt  
You are but a dog, infested with fleas

And I hate the way that you make me feel  
But the love I have for you is so real



*Self Portrait* by Avah Votta, age 13  
colored pencil



*The Grape Jug* by Sindhu Sivasankar, age 17  
ink



# The Trillion Dollar Food Wastage Situation

by Satya Kokonda, age 13

An issue that I am really passionate about is world hunger. When I was young, my parents told me to not waste food as there are people who need that food and go to very sad situations to get it. When we travel, we have seen so many homeless people, living on the pavement, forced to scavenge for their daily food. I saw an entire section of people, living in poverty, not having basic necessities such as clean clothes, working showers, clean water and healthy food. Here in America, I see people wastefully throwing away food at buffets and wasting water, while there are still homeless, starving people. I see people dumping food into the trash instead of maybe saving it for later or giving it to somebody else.

Saving food has many benefits as well. This can range from saving money, reducing the obesity rate in people, and reducing waste. Have you ever seen over \$400 billion burning in front of your eyes? You probably wouldn't have but that is exactly what is happening annually due to the food wastage just in the United States of America [1]. Around the world, about a trillion dollars also gets thrown away each year. This concept of saving food can save households a lot of money annually. According to an article by Feeding America [2], at least \$408 billion USD is wasted each year just by the United States - this equates to more than \$1,200 wasted each year by every person in the US. This means about 6% of the average US income is wasted every year. The worst part about this massive food waste is that it is completely avoidable.

Saving food would also reduce the obesity rates. A person who wastes their meal would then be tempted to eat snacks instead, which are much more calorie dense, thus increasing the obesity rates in citizens. This point is further proven by an article by Food Insight[3] which states that people snacking due to hunger and thirst is twice as likely as snacking due to a craving for snacks. Snacks also have much higher calorie, and sugar amounts. For example a whole cup of oatmeal is 166 calories, this may seem like a lot until you see a single 3 Musketeers bar calorie count. A single 3 Musketeers bar sets you back about 240 calories, with 36 grams of sugar. For reference, the American Heart Association recommends a maximum of 36 grams of sugar in a day for adult males and 25 grams for adult women [4], so a single 3 Musketeers bar blows your sugar budget for the day. There is a correlation between the amount of wasted food and the obesity of its citizens. For example the US has the highest percentage of obesity as well as being ranked first in the amount of food wastage done by affluent countries [5][6].

This current amount of food wastage is not only bad for our body, or just our wallets but also our environment. This means that planet Earth is going to suffer if we don't clean up our act. According to the USDA it states, "Food loss and waste also exacerbate the climate change crisis with its significant greenhouse gas (GHG) footprint. Production, transportation, and handling of food generate significant Carbon Dioxide ( $CO_2$ ) emissions and when food ends up in landfills, it generates methane, an even more potent greenhouse gas." The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published a report in 2021 on the environmental impacts of food waste. The EPA estimated that each year, U.S. food loss and waste embodies 170 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (million MTCO<sub>2</sub>e) GHG emissions (excluding landfill emissions) – equal to the annual  $CO_2$  emissions of 42 coal-fired power plants [7]. This estimate does not include the significant methane emissions from food waste rotting in landfills or the amount of waste created by the retail, packaging, processing or transporting of food that ends up being wasted. That could mean that the true wasted carbon emissions total would be somewhere over 3 billion tons of  $CO_2$  emissions. This would mean increased pollution and climate change throughout the world, reducing biodiversity and rising sea levels. Moreover, as years go on, the amount of food wastage is going to increase exponentially, due to population increase. The only way to stop it is to make people aware of what is happening.

There are a multitude of ways to save food. This can range from eating all your food, to composting. An extremely simple way to drastically cut down on food wastage is to make sure that you eat all your food. This means that you should only take what you will eat and then go for a second serving if you are still hungry. What if you already put too much food on your plate? You can save it for later as an evening snack. In addition, when you are preparing food you should always use the item with the closer expiration date, to

ensure that less food is wasted. Byproducts of your cooking such as seeds can be saved and used in a garden. Other byproducts such as stalks or peels can be used as compost to allow your home garden to flourish. Using these items will save them from being sent to landfills, which pollute the environment even further. With all these simple tips, you can be sure that you are making a difference in the world.

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*Farm Sunrise* by William Dorsch, age 14  
photo

## *In the Quiet*

by Zoe Yost, age 19

Breeze hints

Time sings

Water purrs

Heartbeat whispers

Vision kindles

Footstep echoes

Starlight murmurs

Tree summons

Breath replies





*Frozen in Time* by Zoe Yost, age 19

photo



# *Family in a Flurry*

by Aaira Allimulla, age 12

As I sat on the sofa cuddled up in my velvety blanket with my family, drinking my delicious hot cocoa in a cute, vintage cabin, I looked out the window and saw millions and millions of snowflakes falling on the delicate trees. The shiny, white snowflakes gleamed in the bright sun as they danced down from the sky. I saw red eyes through the trees and heard the low rumbles and growls of the animals in the forest trying to push the snowflakes away. *Families are like snowflakes.* The snowflakes falling together remind me of how families stick together. They smile at each other to remind them that they are perfect just the way they are and nobody can say anything to change that. I took another sip of my hot cocoa and glanced back at the snowy forest.

It looked like the snowflakes were guarding one another as they fell near each other. Snowflakes are very delicate and we don't want to wreck their balance as if families lose one person, the whole environment is messed up. While gazing out the window I realized that snowflakes are pure like the love my family has for each other. They'll always be there for one another and no matter what they'll always stay together. I got up from the sofa and went to the kitchen to refill my hot chocolate. *Oh my, the tiles on the floor were freezing. It felt like my feet were being bitten off. It's crazy how cold the floor gets when it's frigid outside.* Snowflakes come in different sizes and shapes just the way families have different personalities. Everyone and everything are different in their own way.

When I came back to reality, I looked to the right of me, my sisters, Anaum and Adeeba, were arguing about who gets to choose the movie. On the other side, I saw my parents hysterically laughing at my sister's squabble. I then looked down at my delicious hot chocolate and saw my fluffy marshmallows floating by the surface. Each one reminded me of a family member. One for my dad, one for my mom, one for my oldest sister, one for my middle sister, and the smallest marshmallow for me.

My dad is always there to cheer me up when I'm down and make me smile when I'm having a bad day. Anytime I ask my mom for help, she will come and help me even if she is the busiest woman alive. She always makes my family the best food ever. Even though my oldest sister, Adeeba, is away at college, I can always count on her to give me the best advice. My middle sister, Anaum, is always there to help me with my homework and whenever she is free, we have a blast jamming out to music. And then there's me! The youngest, the smallest, and the luckiest person alive. One thing I know for sure is that I can always count on my family to support me and help out whenever I need them.



*Under the Tree* by Amira Sandiford, age 19  
photo



# *An Island in the Sea of Time*

by Cat Shapiro, age 16

Every day I am reminded of the passage of time. Life continues, the earth spins, spring to winter to spring. My brain acknowledges but shrinks from its inconstant nature, finding relativity and astrophysics incomprehensible. My soul is at peace with the constant march of time, with how all must move forward. And yet, and yet...

Sometimes it seems to me time breathes like an accordion, compressing sunrise to sunset and stretching a millennium from dusk to dawn. Other Times I feel like time is a bullet train inescapably barreling toward me, rushing away my past and thrusting me headfirst into the future. Holding on to time is like trying to grasp sand, even if it appears stable when taken second by second. Time is a river splitting into streams; while other currents continue on, now I feel that time simply eddies around me. I spend the days in listless melancholy, wasting and losing time. Outside my window, I see the hibiscus unfurl its large red petals, the roses come and go. I want to join them in time's current, but I don't. I can't, and I don't know why. I want time to freeze. I want time to push on. Time doesn't care what I want, so I keep going.

Occasionally, I find myself thinking back on my younger days: the ones I regret, the ones I miss and those don't, and the ones I treasure. New Year's Eve is emblematic of the passage of time—from one year to another. This day is especially dear to me, for it harbors some of my most treasured memories.

To me, December 31st means celebrating New Year's Eve in the family room of my friends, the Greenbergs. All my memories of the family room ooze coziness and comfort, relaxation and enjoyment. It's the casual kind of room where people are naturally inclined to gather. Even though a pandemic has made it so that I have not visited in years, I can still clearly picture it. It sits towards the back of the house, a step or two down from the kitchen that it opens into, leading into a cement patio—where I've spent many Memorial and Labor Days—next to a small vegetable garden that produces enormous squashes. The smell of the kitchen with its matzo ball soup and gingersnaps is always wafting through the family room, mixing with the occasional wood smoke from the fireplace. Warmth spills out from the hearth and settles as a comfortable huddle of chairs and a couch with cushions that will lovingly embrace as I put my feet up on the table and play my favorite games on the TV. On the other side of the room are the doors and openings that string this room together with the others like beads on a necklace. This is also where I would add my shoes to a pile by the cluttered desk. A soft shag carpet covers the floor, and the walls hold memorabilia that my young self would always marvel at, like the folded flag and *ROCK EM' SOCK EM' ROBOTS*. My mind always returns to the family room when I think of New Year's Eve, my cozy, stable island amidst the roiling ocean of time.

My family would gather with the Greenbergs and their family or friends in that warm room each year. I would always sit on the couch (after appreciating the softness of the carpet, of course) because I was the most interested in *New Year's Rockin' Eve*, which would be on in the background—even though the main focus was more on spending time and playing

games with everyone. Drawful, Mario Kart, Just Dance, and some trivia cards are the games I remember the most. It didn't even matter that I was the only kid there because I have always enjoyed hanging out with adults. I truly adored coming every year, so much so that I never wanted to go to any other party or celebration—even those hosted by my friends. In fact, I even insisted on going after we had spent 10 hours in the car for a quick visit to my grandpa. Although it's been years, I'm still just as excited for the next time we can gather.

And isn't that just perfect for time's paradox? A memory swept away by the flow of time, returned again by the same currents. A time that is years in the past but as close to the soul as memories of yesterday. Time is like a snake, twisting and coiling as it slithers on. And no matter what, I'll always be along for the ride.



*Twilight* by Zoe Yost, age 19

photo



# *The Gray Zone*

by Vivian Ladner, age 16

It is quite often that we humans surrender to what we believe is a higher power. It does not matter what religion you follow, or what morals you hold dearly; humans see that there are possibilities, situations, problems, and solutions. There is the belief of perspective known as "Black or White," and sometimes even "Gray Areas." Many think that the Black and White idea involves distinct opposing mindsets, principles, and/or morals. The Gray Area in these situations obtains both feeling and emotion, and this makes it a known issue or conflict to most.

People believe that things that enter the Gray Zone become complicated. When emotion meets logic, it creates a relatively beautiful existence, but from both ancient and modern times, beauty has been, and will be, depressed. This internal and external conflict found in the Gray Area is no less than amazing. This conflict between logic and emotion is both the result and spark of true intelligence. Intelligence is scientifically referred to as the human brain's capability to process, learn, comprehend, have abstract thought, and overall, have any cognitive abilities. I do not believe that is what intelligence is.

You see, in this Gray Area we are still limited to only certain thoughts, but if you take a step back, behind this Gray Area, you will find a completely different intelligence. Many may consider this as a liminal stage once it has been reached. May I warn you that after you take this step back from the Gray Area, you will enter existence. This is not a place, a time, a perspective, a cause, an effect, a dimension, an object, a feeling, a memory, a thought, or comprehension. This is coexistence. You now stand in nothingness as it were. Opinions are not formed here, and perspectives are yet to belong. This is the observation of all that is. You now coexist with the known, unknown, infinite possibilities, and past histories.

Scientists of the modern day believe that there is a dimension that links the known dimensions of space, length, width, depth, and time. That dimension may or may not be real, but as of now you are what is holding these dimensions together. As I said, coexistence is you coexisting with all and nothing, and whatever may lie in between. The black, the white, and the gray areas. Existence is the higher power. It is not so simple as a god, or gods that bring life into this world. It is not a matter of science and the big bang theory. It is not a matter of the unknown. The higher power is in the most center part of your core being. You are the fabrication of, and in the universe.



*Love* by Jennifer Cardenas, age 12  
photo and Lightroom editing

# *Missing Piece*

by Valerie Lemus, age 14

Isn't it sad to think  
We could've met?

In another life  
Or another place  
Or a different time  
Or a different age

You're beside me  
As my best friend  
And I'm beside you  
As your dearest person

And we know everything about each other  
Our quirks  
Our laughs  
Our history  
Our pain

But in this life  
We never met

In this life  
You were just a person I passed  
On the street  
Another faceless face  
In a sea of background characters

And in this life  
What could've been  
Is just a figment of my imagination

And in this life  
You are a missing piece I'll never find





*High Flying Flags* by Amira Sandiford, age 19  
photo



# *My Heart or My Duty*

by Sarah Szeto, age 14

The village, humble and quaint  
My home for all my life  
I have naught a complaint  
Recent trouble, causing me strife

For my mind knows what is best  
But my heart longs for another  
A choice that my family would detest  
This desire, I cannot smother

My heart aches for my true home  
A secret discovered as I have grown  
That comfort found when I can roam  
Freedom to explore the unknown

My family, I have defied  
This crisis, driving me broody  
A choice I must decide  
My heart or my duty

# *Fate*

by Jamie Olvera, age 14

fate  
my benevolent friend  
my malicious enemy  
unknown as the mysteries of the universe  
all up to her soul  
all within her heart  
hopes and dreams  
crushed or revived all in an instant  
broken eternities  
will one day become whole  
again  
feed her your tears  
and joyous screams  
even your worst fears  
unraveling  
she's touched my string of life  
o' my whole being  
everything has been planned  
predestination  
all that's left  
is to unravel the yarn



*Interdimensional* by Brayden Hauser, age 13  
photo



*Altair* by Ash Connell, age 17

digital art: ibispaintx



# The Buzzer

by B.H.W., age 12

There's 30 seconds left on the clock and my heart is thumping. Sweat soaks the front of my 7'1 opponent's shirt and mine. Crowds of people are shouting at me saying things like "pass the ball," "shoot the ball," and "focus on what you're doing," [coach]. I even heard someone say, "my grandmother can make a quicker decision." Some old guy who obviously hasn't been updated on the latest smack talk is running his mouth. I dribbled out to the three-point line smoothly dodging 7 foot giants; it was the biggest game of the year for my high school's basketball team, the Trailblazers.

We were currently playing the reigning champs, the reigning champs for 4 times in a row, the "hottest of heats," Miami Heat. We traveled by bus to the high school's home court. A building that was just a giant court that had thousands of seats built in the bleachers.

There were official NBA Miami hoops and basketballs, a commentating section high above the bleachers, and giant screens just above the center of the court for replays (I thought replays were only in college) and for fans that were too far away to see the game clearly.

It was also bathed in Miami's signature colors red, yellow, black and white. With floors so squeaky clean, I almost tripped and caused a turnover because of the astounding grip my shoe had with the court. This was the game that determined the most skilled high school basketball team in the States, and we obviously wanted to win. The problem with that was all the guys on Miami Heat were freaks of nature. Literally, their wingspan was like albatrosses compared to our chickadee wingspan. The tallest person we had on our team was a forward named D.J. and he was only 5'11. I tried not to think about it, after all the bigger they are the harder they fall. Hey, that's a saying that didn't go out of date.

We were losing by 2 points, 112-114 and it was frustrating. We had used our last time out and were tired. It might not seem that bad seeing as we were only 2 points behind. But 2 points is far behind when you are tired, when you can't get a shot, and the pressure is on. People are shouting at you and there's only 17 se .... Oh snap! It's only 17 seconds left; I got to make something happen, fast. I adjust my position so I can glance at my coach. In the process I spot my dad in the bleachers cheering me on... or is he? It seems like he's trying to tell me something, suddenly he stands up and gives me a toothy grin and my mind instantly flashes back to last summer when we were shooting hoops in our driveway.

We had come up with a basketball play he liked to call the "oldest trick in the book," and just in case a time came where I couldn't hear him, like now, he'd flash me a toothy grin. The next basketball practice that summer I immediately ran it by my teammates and coach seeing as I was the point guard, and we decided that we would only activate the play if absolutely necessary.

Now it was necessary! It was also foolish, but we could execute it perfectly. 15 seconds... I yelled out "book!" My teammates instantly responded dashing into and outside the middle of the court simultaneously. The way in which they performed the setup distracted their

defenders. Which hustled to corner them again, leaving me a crooked but clear path to the hoop. I instantly went into action; I approached the defender with razzle and dazzle, dribbling in and out my legs, I advanced toward the right and tripped. Not a big trip but it was enough.

The defender clipped the ball, it slipped out my hand causing me to reach out for it; in the process my left foot clipped my right making me stumble. The ball rolled 3 feet away just outside the three-point line. My opponent lunged for the ball taking advantage of the moment; and just like that he fell for the “oldest trick in the book.” I miraculously “recovered” at lightning speed, snatched the ball in mid bounce, and in one fluid motion I palmed the ball with my right hand.

I executed a perfect 360 spin backwards to my left and because I spun in one fluid motion he fell. 10 seconds... I planted my feet just outside the three-point line and brought the ball up to my chest. 5 seconds... I lined myself up with the hoop and lined my eyes up with the three rings on the rim just like Stephen Curry. 4 seconds... I raised my arms and prepared to shoot. 3 seconds... I fired. 2 seconds... I tripped, evidently my defender recovered faster than I expected; I guess I would too if I just got crossed over in front of the whole cheerleading squad. Not that I would ever get crossed over.

My opponent tripped me in a last-ditch attempt to stop me. I landed on my butt facing the opposite side of the court; I thought no one saw him because he tripped me really fast. I didn't dare look back. I probably air balled it; I could hear the fans groan. But it wasn't our fans! 1 second... I came to and heard our fans and my teammates screaming. I heard the rhythm of the ball as it rolled off the court, and the buzzer as it sounded off. My teammates picked me up, pounded me on the back, and screamed in my ears “you made it!!!”

“I made it?”

“Yeah, man you totally drained it.” I made the no look shot that beat the stinking Miami Heat 115 – 114 for the first time in 12 years.

# *The Mountains*

by Sebastian Trainer-O'Neill, age 18

Mountains of alabaster  
Dreams of milkwhipped skies  
Of beautiful faces  
Of marble temples  
Glazed in colored smoke.

Mountains of excess  
Dreams of lush flesh  
Of stained silk  
Of swollen bodies  
Hanging from barbed gibbets.



*In the Mountains* by Finley Anderson, age 16

photo



*The Pond at Blackbird Forest* by Li Wilson, age 18  
oils



# *Let Me Flow Like Stones*

by Lyo Doyle, age 16

Be the dam that keeps me under  
I'll be the beavers that keep it so  
Slip between the stones just to hurt me  
And I'll be the one who lets it go

And when you finally give way to nature  
You'd expect me to flow so slow  
But the pressure's been building up to my neck  
By god I'll flow like stones  
Let me flow like stones

You'll never be the trees that guide me  
Or the earth that sits by my side  
Strike from the sky only to burn me  
I would never be that sly

And when you finally give way to nature  
You'd expect me to flow so slow  
But the pressure's been building up to my neck  
By god I'll flow like stones  
Let me flow like stones

Let me flow like stones  
Let me destroy myself anew  
Let me flow like stones

# *Fallen Leaves*

by Leana Griffin, age 17

Melanie sits on the same bench as always, its wood warped and weathered gray by wind and rain and time. One foot rests in the overgrowth, more weeds than grass; the other, pointed toes hover above the ground, her legs crossed at the ankles. Her sketchbook sits open in her lap; her pencil is poised in her hand, but her eyes gaze off in the distance, looking at nothing. Or perhaps she is simply admiring the colors of the fall leaves. A crackle of dry leaves is heard behind her, the sound of footsteps not yet seen. Melanie flips her sketchbook back one page. Her pencil hovers above the paper, but does not connect. Again her gaze drifts away.

"Hey." Evan slides onto the bench beside Melanie, sitting to her left, as always. The wind picks up, catching her long chestnut hair, and Evan looks with some concern upon the vacant expression on her face. He forces a smile.

"What do we have here?" Evan casually lifts the sketchpad from Melanie's lap. She turns her gaze to him, finally, and reaches ever so slightly to hinder his grasp, as if in a habitual motion. Her hand soon recedes. She fidgets with the pencil still in her grasp.

Evan lifts the sketchbook and adjusts his glasses in an exaggerated motion. "Let's see: the drawing of a vase of wilted flowers means . . . you regret forgetting to water the flowers. The drawing of a tree with all its leaves falling off means . . . you like watching the fall leaves. And of course, the drawing of me means that I'm always on your mind because I'm amazing."

A smile finally breaks upon Melanie's lips. She quickly raises a hand to cover it, as if ashamed. "Don't make me laugh, Evan. I'm not in the mood to laugh." She sets the pencil down on the bench beside her, then clenches her hands tightly in her lap.

"Well you know what they say, laughter is the best medicine."

Melanie turns away from him, her lips tightening with anger. Another gust of wind rustles dry leaves from the trees, and the pencil rolls across the bench with an uneven clattering sound before falling to the ground with a nearly inaudible thud.

"Sorry, sorry." Evan sighs. "I didn't mean . . ."

Evan reaches for Melanie's trembling hand, setting the sketchbook in his lap. "Mel, talk to me." She remains silent, again staring off at nothing, or perhaps the leaves.

Evan's gaze returns to the sketchbook in his lap. He turns the page forward once, and looks down at a starkly shaded drawing of an empty hospital bed, its sheets crumpled.

"Melanie . . . your mom's going to be okay."

A tear tracks a path down Melanie's face. "No. She's not."



*Hazy Day* by Cailin Conway, age 17  
photo





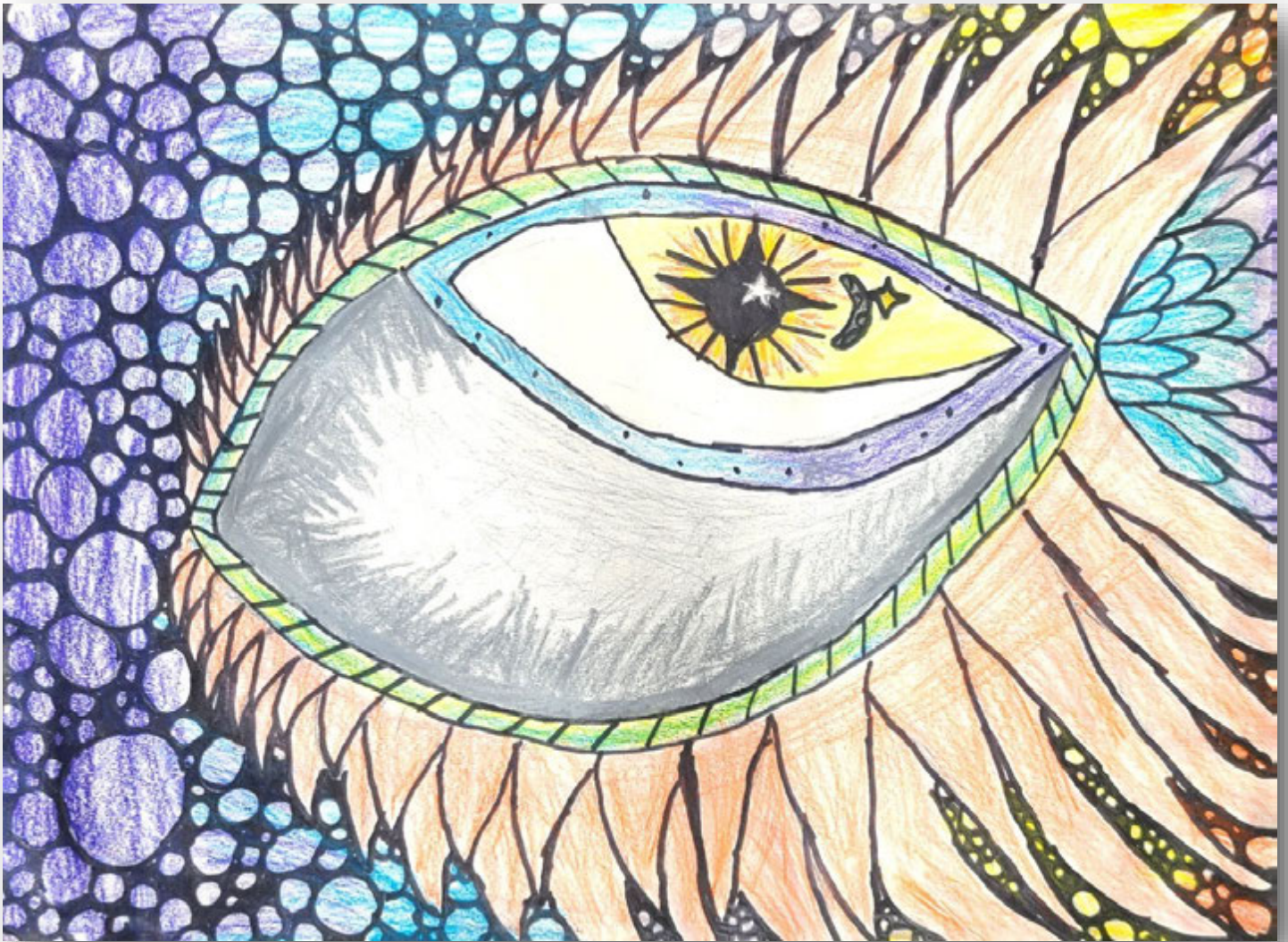
*It Must Rain, to Get Rainbows* by Avah Votta, age 13  
colored pencil



# Wound

by Brooke Cresswell, age 17

A wound can't heal if you don't stop touching it,  
But how can I stop when everything reminds me of you?  
Constantly hearing the songs that make me think of you,  
Trying not to feel guilty when I think of us.  
I'm sure it's not the same for you,  
You probably don't replay the memories in your head,  
But please just one more minute with you.  
I don't want the suffering to end.  
I don't want the wound to heal.



**Dragon Eye** by Alyssa Umbrecht, age 12  
colored pencil and sharpie



*Confidence* by Alaina Cole, age 15  
acrylics

# *To the Unhappy Few*

by Jamie Olvera, age 14

To the unhappy few,  
We all have felt your pain. For you are not special. You could have experienced worse.  
Maybe you should stop whining and follow the will of those above you.

To the unhappy few,  
We all have bad days. Stop making this all about yourselves. All you have to do is swallow it  
down and keep a smile. It's all in your head. None of your emotions is real.

To the unhappy few,  
We are not crazy. Unlike you all. We all struggle, but you seem to make a show out of it.  
Change your face. And you won't seem sad after all. All you want is our pitiful attention.

To the unhappy few,  
We try our best to look our best. Tissues and puffy eyes aren't a good look, honey. What is  
the matter with you? You could be in the streets or starving.  
But you're not. You're ungrateful.

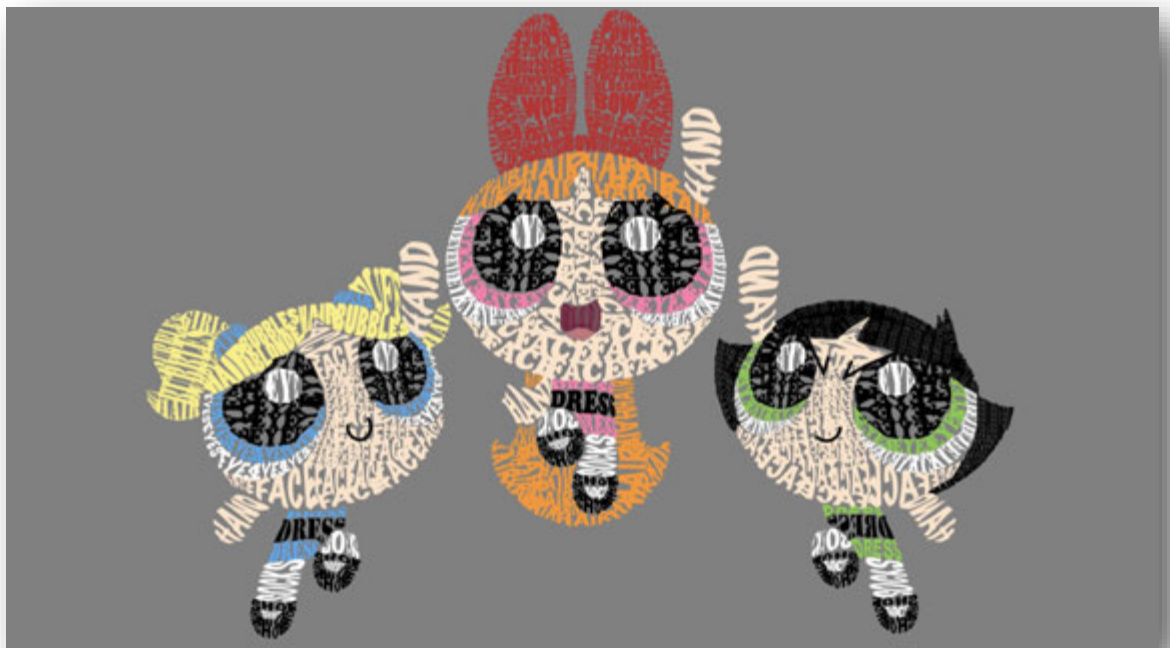
To We,  
Live a day in my shoes. Say for once that you love me. Say that you're here, for we few feel  
alone. We only want to talk, we only want to let go of the pain.  
All the unhappy few want to feel is support. And not to be ignored.





## *Marmot In, Totally Tubular Photoshoot!*

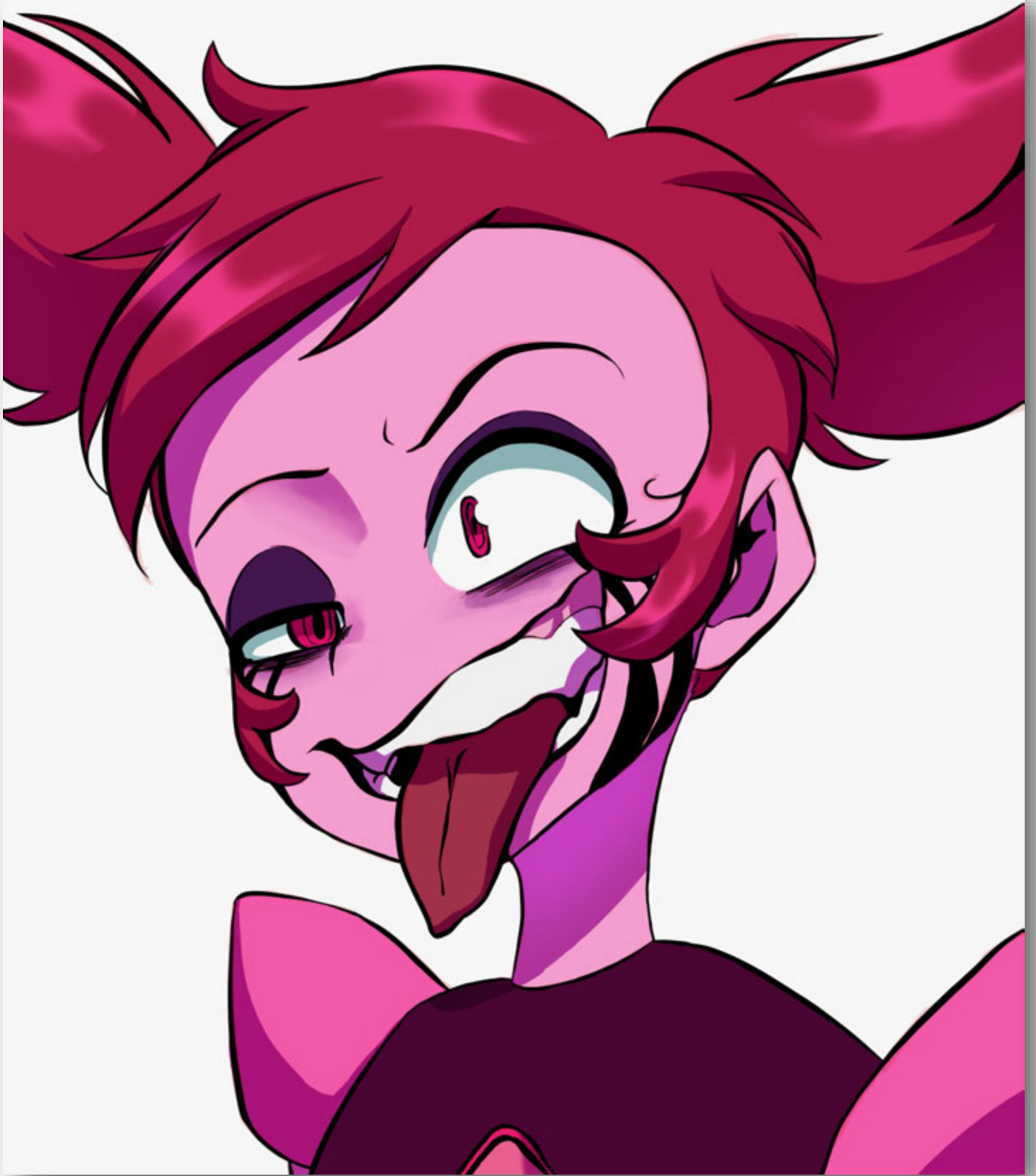
by Quinlyn Cullin, age 17  
digital art: Photoshop



## *Powerful Queens (Power Puff Girls© Fan Art)*

by Sovajra Vickerie, age 17  
digital art: Procreate





*Spinel (Steven Universe© Fan Art)*

by Corinne Hetzler, age 12  
digital art

# *If You Dare*

by Brooke Cresswell, age 17

Loving another is such an obscure thing.  
To put your trust in someone else's existence.  
It's as if your heart's constricted by a string,  
Chasing after them no matter the distance.

Being bound to someone can be a nightmare.  
But what if it leads to a grand miracle?  
You can go and take a chance if you quite dare,  
For what if the fondness is reciprocal?

It is certainly a mortifying feeling,  
The terror of the unknown is what you fear;  
But I don't blame you, I see the appeal in,  
Having another loving you so severe.

So why don't you go and take a daring chance,  
Just don't belittle yourself while in your trance.



*A Diverse Dictionary* by Angelina Stucky, age 12  
crayon, pencil, pen

# *My Frog*

by Kylie E. Coleman, age 16

I love my frog like a mother loves a child  
My frog is small and green  
When I first saw him I smiled  
He used to be as small as a bean

Now he is big and fat  
He's is not small anymore  
He has a little frog hat  
Ha ha, now he's hiding in the drawer

I can't seem to find him  
I look high and low  
Ah! Maybe he's in a bin?!He is really slow!

Oh no here comes the cat!  
Nooooo! My frog is now flat  
Love doesn't last forever





*Still Life of a Plant* by Sindhu Sivasankar, age 17  
colored pencil



# *A Real-Life "Fairytale"*

by Gianna Smale, age 18

All my life I've been searching, for a fairytale type of love,

Though all I've found is heartbreak,

Was I not enough?

So what is love, really?

Perhaps it's just a disease?

Infecting those all around us, bringing them to their knees.

So you see this isn't Cinderella or Beauty and the Beast-

But love is like a fairytale,

It's all just make-believe.



## *Fairytale Winter (Disney© Fan Art)*

by Paige Williams, age 19  
oil pastels, colored pencil



*Untitled* by Cassandra Huntley, age 12  
colored pencil



# *I'm the One*

by Gabby Caputo, age 17

"I saw her first at a cafe and thought, 'she is the one I want.' The deep blue eyes, combined with her smooth, olive skin, and a smile that could light up a room. The way she walks, talks, looks, everything is so perfect. I need her to be mine. I am the one for her.

She was working behind the counter and as soon as I saw her, I knew she needed me. Ever since then, I have watched her. I make sure she gets home safe. I make sure everyone treats her right. I am protecting her. I sit and watch her take orders, greet people as they walk through the door, all of which she does perfectly. There was something different about this one man though.

He's not right for her. He's not me. He brought her food, he's simply trying to poison her. It's obvious. The next day he did it again. I was surprised the poison hasn't killed her yet. She must be very strong. The day after, I brought her food. I know my food isn't poisoned. She smiles, that's how I knew she loves me back.

For some reason, the man still came in. He gave her food again. I knew I needed to save her this time. I followed him out of the cafe and killed him. I watched him leave with a smile on his face. The type of smile that just screams 'I'm a serial killer and I just got away with another murder.' Luckily, however, he did not get away with it. I was there and watching, so he did not get away with it. It was to protect her. I saved her life. If he was still alive, she would've gotten poisoned by his food. I had to do it. I would never kill someone without a reason, I had a reason. I saved her. After that, I proudly approached the door to the cafe to tell her not to worry about him anymore. I reach for the door with my chest out and my smile wide as ever. I definitely looked like a superhero (without the cape though). I confidently walked up to my love and told her 'Don't worry. He's gone. I saved you.' When I told her though, something was wrong. She was upset. She must think this means I'll be gone too. I assure her, 'Don't worry I won't be going away. I saved you. I'll be sure the jury knows I was protecting you, and you can be the witness!'

'Saved me from what? What did you do,' she responded as her smile seemed to melt off her face.

'He's gone. You won't have to see him anymore. I know he was putting you in danger. He would have killed you. You're welcome.'

The next few days, she didn't show up to the cafe. I did though. I was waiting for her to return so I could figure out how she would want to thank me. That's when the misunderstanding began. The flashing blue and red lights surrounded the cafe. 'They couldn't be here for me,' I thought to myself because after all, I saved her life. Even though I was the hero, the officers surrounded me with their guns up and bulletproof vests on. When they started screaming, 'Put your hands where I can see them.' I had to look around to see if there was anyone behind me they were talking to, but it was just me. I followed commands of course, because I have nothing to hide. I saved her, if anything, I should be



telling everyone, so I can get the hero recognition that I deserve. So there you have it. I swear I am not guilty. I swear I had no bad intentions. You have to believe me."

After I'm done speaking to everyone in the courtroom, she stands up. Meredith. Such a pretty name, it fits her perfectly. She starts speaking, but I'm just lost in her. I zone out staring at her eyes, her hair, her skin, just everything. Even what she was wearing was astonishing. Her black, skinny pants and her pink, flowy blouse with a floral pattern filled with blues, reds, and oranges. Suddenly, I see her eyes glaring back at me. Not a kind glare, which seemed odd since I was the one to save her. I start listening to what she's saying at that moment and it is not right. She thinks I had ill intentions. She thinks I am some lunatic who kills people for enjoyment, with no reason. I had a reason.

"I swear I didn't do it." I can tell by the looks on the judge, jurors, and witnesses' faces that they don't believe me. I would never kill someone, at least not for no reason. I protected her. I'm the hero. Why can't anyone see that? This was how she was supposed to fall in love with me. Why is she mad I protected her? He wasn't right for her, I am. She thought she was happy, but I know I'm the one for her. The judge raises his hand strongly, with no hesitation. "Guilty." That word resonates. Guilty of murder when all I was doing was protecting her. As he slams the tiny wooden hammer down, I hear the loud bang, like someone dropped a textbook in a silent library. At the same time, the judge says the verdict confidently. I feel my heart shatter like a piece of glass that just fell to the floor. Shattered into so many pieces I can't even count them. My mind is racing, going in so many different directions. I don't understand what I did. This is all just a huge misunderstanding. Then the judge says more. This is the part that really broke me. "Sentenced to life in prison."

"Life?" I'll never be able to see her again. She'll say something, right? There's no way she'll let me go away that long. She has to feel something. She has to know we're in love. She has to feel those same butterflies in her stomach, the heartwarming feeling that I feel every single time she walks in a room. But she doesn't feel that. This is the first time I've ever thought maybe she doesn't feel that. I brush it off though because there is simply no way. She loves me. I'm the one for her. "I swear. I swear I didn't mean to hurt anyone. I swear we are meant to be. I swear I was just trying to help." Tears fill up my eyes, my hands are shaky, and I feel like my world is coming to a halt. The world is not spinning, there are no other people in this room except for me and her. I suddenly feel a nagging on my arm. Before I know it, my hands are trapped together, behind my back. I'm being guided and held by multiple people. I'm being forced to walk away from her. I yell back, "I love you!" I know she hears me, I know I left her thinking I'm the one and I'm right. Who knows? Maybe one day she'll get me out. The day she realizes I'm the one.

# *Death of the Sun*

by Leana Griffin, age 17

The day's long shine at last descends to mist.  
Of sun and stars we see the glow betwixt.  
The west aflame, the east a somber hue  
As daylight fades and life turns simple blue.

The sun cries, "Look at me, I'm gone away!"  
But I shall choose to look the other way.  
The greedy sun's bright gaze can bring you harm.  
Instead I'll welcome night with open arms.

The world breathes out a quiet, peaceful breath  
As Sun, behind me, dies his millionth death.  
The stars begin to show their subtle shine,  
The gentle glow that sunlight always hides.

I sit here as the stars' unfailing friend  
Until, at dawn, the sun is born again.



*Tears of a Rose* by Cat Shapiro, age 16

photo

# *No Lion Sleeps Tonight*

by Brayden Hauser, age 13

The lightning strikes with a boom  
The flash ignites the sky  
No more hiding in its tomb  
It's reaching low and high  
Like a lion, roaring fierce  
Its claws reaching out with a scream  
The silence breaking, it's now been pierced  
This is a nightmare, no ordinary dream  
It swipes its claw with a blinding flash  
The lion isn't happy, it's angry and it's showin'  
Only a matter of time before it'll crash  
And leave only Croatoan  
The echo is surrounding us quickly  
Before you know it, we're trapped  
The crack is rather sickly  
It's loud as it's clapped  
The ringing in our ears remains  
This lion will put on a fight  
A memory of our burdened pains  
For no lion sleeps tonight



# *Cold Fire Dragon*

by Angelina Stucky, age 12  
crayon, pencil, pen





***Clown - Innocence*** by Vivian Pinckney, age 17  
colored pencil



# The Abandoned House

A Dream SMP © Fan Fiction Story  
(w/ Skeppy, BadBoyHalo as Bad, and A6D)  
by Virin Jares, age 14

One day, like any other day, Skeppy, Bad, and A6D were playing Minecraft together. However, after playing Minecraft for a couple of hours, they started to get bored. So A6D got an idea:

"Hey guys," he said, "How about you two meet up at my place and then we could go to that creepy house I talked about? "

Bad and Skeppy had nothing better to do. "Sure, A6D!" Bad said.

"Sounds fun!" Skeppy agreed.

And so, they both got the things they may need and drove over to A6D's house.

After they all got to A6D's house they started to walk over to the building he talked about. The house looked like it had been abandoned for years; some of the windows were smashed, others were boarded up. There were holes in the house like something big had hit it in the past, and some spots in the wood looked like it had been rotting forever. However, while the whole house may have looked run-down... The front door almost looked like it had never been touched before. In fact, it almost looked new... But it couldn't be.

They all decided who should go first by playing rock paper scissors. Skeppy lost so he had to go into the house first. He opened the door, peered inside, took one step inside and then-

**BAAM!**

The door shut behind him. A6D and Bad tried to open the door but they had no luck. Eventually they both ran into the door at full speed, and it finally opened. They looked for Skeppy, but while looking for him they each got a tap on their shoulder! They both jumped at the same time, turned around and saw Skeppy behind them laughing so hard he may have shed a tear. "What the heck Skeppy!" A6D yelled at him, "We were worried for you!" Bad roared- but with worry in his voice.

"Sorry, sorry, c'mon I had to!" Skeppy said, trying not to laugh anymore.

After a bit of scolding at Skeppy and apologies (from Skeppy), they went to each room to see if they saw anything weird. It was as they were checking the last downstairs room when all of a sudden there was a huge banging sound from the closet inside! Together they checked the closet, only to see Skeppy standing in there with a rusty old hammer that he'd found; evidently the cause of the sound. "Skeppy!" Bad yelled, frustrated with him.

"Ok, ok I'll stop, I'll stop!" Skeppy laughed.

After a bit of Skeppy apologizing (again), they found stairs to the second floor. They all went upstairs, but as soon as they all got onto the second floor, there was another loud crashing sound.

Bad didn't even hesitate, yelling "Skeppy stop it now!!" into the darkness. He then

decided to look at Skeppy, who he found eventually, standing there and shaking.

"Th-that wasn't m-me." Skeppy whimpered.

They both then looked at A6D, who had also begun to shake.

"What was that then!?"

"Ma-maybe it was just the wind or e-even an animal." Bad said trying to come up with something reasonable to explain it away.

They continued to stand there scared, but now they were trying not to show a lot of fear. "May-maybe we should continue walking, I mean like Bad said it could have been the wind or an animal." A6D said, trying to help. Skeppy, A6D, and Bad then started to walk around the house again and act like that loud noise didn't happen at all.

They continued to stop and look through each room they came across. After all, why stop now?

"Let's leave. Besides, we basically checked the whole house." Skeppy said. So they all decided to leave. They walked to the stairs, down the creaky steps, along the dark, empty and creepy hallway to the door. A6D tried to open the door first but it wouldn't open, then Bad tried to help, lastly Skeppy tried to help get the door to open but there was no luck.

They still tried to escape but the door still wouldn't open, they pushed, pulled, hit, and tugged the door- but nothing happened.

*Step... Step... Step...*

They all heard it behind them, and turned around as soon as they could but there was nothing there. Even more scared now they all tried to open the door again.

*Step... Step... Step...*

They heard again, but this time it was closer. Even faster this time they turned around but there was still nothing.

"I got an idea," Skeppy announced.

"If it can help us out of here, then go for it." Bad nodded.

Skeppy grabbed a stone that was on the floor, then he swung it towards a window, there was a huge crash, and the window broke. The hole from the window was big enough so they could all get out.

They all climbed out through the window. But after they all got out...

**WHOOSH!!**

The shattered pieces of glass pieced the window back together!

They all ran away from the building and back to the safety of A6D's house.

"L-let's never go back there." Skeppy said, and Bad agreed.

Lets go!

Don't  
give up!

You  
got  
this!

You're  
Beautiful!

You're  
Strong!

Be  
Brave!



Be  
happy!

Be yourself!

You shine!

*An Amazing Person* by Nayonika Reddy Dumpa, age 12  
pencil, colored pencil, marker



# Masks

by Zoe Yost, age 19

"I can't breathe"

A thunderbolt tumbles down from Olympus,  
strikes a boy's grandpa in the lungs. Soon  
he's in a gown, sprouting tubes. But

the bolt isn't spent. It enters the blood  
of a blue-scrubbed soldier, and drains  
her but departs soon—soon but  
late enough to carry with it her  
sister. Were tests but sharper, asthma blunter.

The bolt ricochets  
to her partner's home. His cat alone  
harbors the cough and sniffles, and he's lucky  
until the palpitations arrive a month  
later. The heart remembers.

Bullets rebound. "Freedom! Justice!"  
cry the gods, even as  
they inhale shrapnel and plummet to mortal

earth, even as  
they swear by their Olympian

ascendancy, even as  
they sicken the angels whose knives are

hope, even as  
those knives slice and buttress their blighted

flesh, even as  
they continue to refuse the mask of selfless and selfish

protection, even as  
they hide behind masks of every other variety.

What is paper to  
paint and  
powder and  
pretense? What  
quaffs sweat and belabors breath more than  
creed and culture and charisma,

smogs welcome on that godly mountain?

Rash gods! Doomed gods! Only blindness  
protects the soul and corpus stillborn  
to imagination, only to send  
its grandparents to the hospital, echoing  
in earnest the grievance of spoiled Olympus, hearing  
with ringing ears the echoes return from  
rooms towns countries continents as the whole  
world coughs up blood

“We can't breathe”



*Untitled* by Jentzen Cross, age 17

photo



# *From the Hell of Screwtape to the Paradise of Narnia*

by Eleni Apostolidis, age 16

"In a world barraged by 'isms'—Darwinism, Communism, theological liberalism, relativism, and secularism—that attacked biblical Christianity, Lewis provided intellectual beef to the idea that Christianity was every bit as true and relevant in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century as it ever was" (Wanger, 15). Born to a middle class family in Belfast, Ireland, in 1898, Lewis was one of the greatest conservative writers in the early 1900s. His writings brought traditional values and Christian morals to many. Clive Staples Lewis's pieces of literature were influenced by his early life, by his friendship with J.R.R. Tolkien, and by his radio broadcasts.

Firstly, many of Lewis's writings, especially *The Chronicles of Narnia*, were influenced by his youth. His mother died when he was nine-years-old, and his father sent him to boarding school. During Lewis's adolescence, he converted from Christianity to atheism. This may have been due to the passing of his mother, the spirit of liberalism of the era, and his time at boarding school (Wagner, 13). As Sayer claimed, "To attain psychological balance, he had to suppress his strong feelings of guilt, a feat he accomplished by rejecting Christianity and its morality" (Sayer, 31). But, as Poe argued, if Lewis had not gone through the trials of secondary school, he would never have found God (Poe, 16). His early life influenced his writing in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and as Downing affirmed, "Virtually every year of his life from early childhood on contributed major strands or minute threads to the complex tapestry that would become the Narnia stories" (Downing, 1).

Secondly, Lewis's writings would not have been as spectacular as they were if not for his academic friendship with J. R. R. Tolkien. As Jacobs conveyed, Tolkien's faith in Christ ran deep. As Lewis learned more about the Gospel, his conversations with Tolkien became more involved (Jacobs, 140-142). Lewis discovered his faith in 1930 and would use this principle in *Narnia*: you find Narnia like you find faith in God (Jacobs, 137). Both Lewis and Tolkien were a part of a group of Oxford professors called the Inklings. The Inklings produced many conservative works, including *The Problem of Pain*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *All Hallows Eve* (Wagner 60-61). While still discovering his faith in God, Lewis wrote *The Pilgrim's Regress* and noted to the publisher, "Kind of a Bunyan up to date...and a fair controversial interest" (Jacobs, 158).

Lastly, Lewis's popularity led to him hosting a radio show on the BBC. As Jacobs disclosed, "Almost immediately therefore came Lewis's first truly popular book, *The Screwtape Letters* (1941), the correspondence of a fictional devil, and then—because J.W. Welch, the director of the BBC's Religious Broadcasting Department, had been touched and impressed by *The Problem of Pain*—the radio broadcast that made him truly famous and were later collected as *Mere Christianity*." (Jacobs, 161-162). As Jacobs continued, Lewis's radio show covered a variety of topics, including right versus wrong, the doctrine of Christ, how to live as a Christian, and the Law (Jacobs, 223). Wagner disclosed to readers that Lewis's program became widely popular, even in the US; not only was Lewis an eloquent speaker, but he relayed the concepts of Christianity in such a way that anyone could understand them (Wagner, 16). Because his radio programs were not



recorded, they were compiled into *Mere Christianity*.

Lewis's early life, friendship with Tolkien and the Inklings, and popularity with radio broadcasts, influenced all his writings in one way or another. Clive Staples Lewis turned the hearts of many back to the absolute truths of God. Wagner concluded with "Similarity, I like to imagine someone around C. S. Lewis exhorting him the same way before he started writing his popular books. 'What we need now is an intellectual Christian,' the person might say: 'To make folks sit up and notice. Write in God's name and let the world stand back in wonder'" (Wagner, 15).

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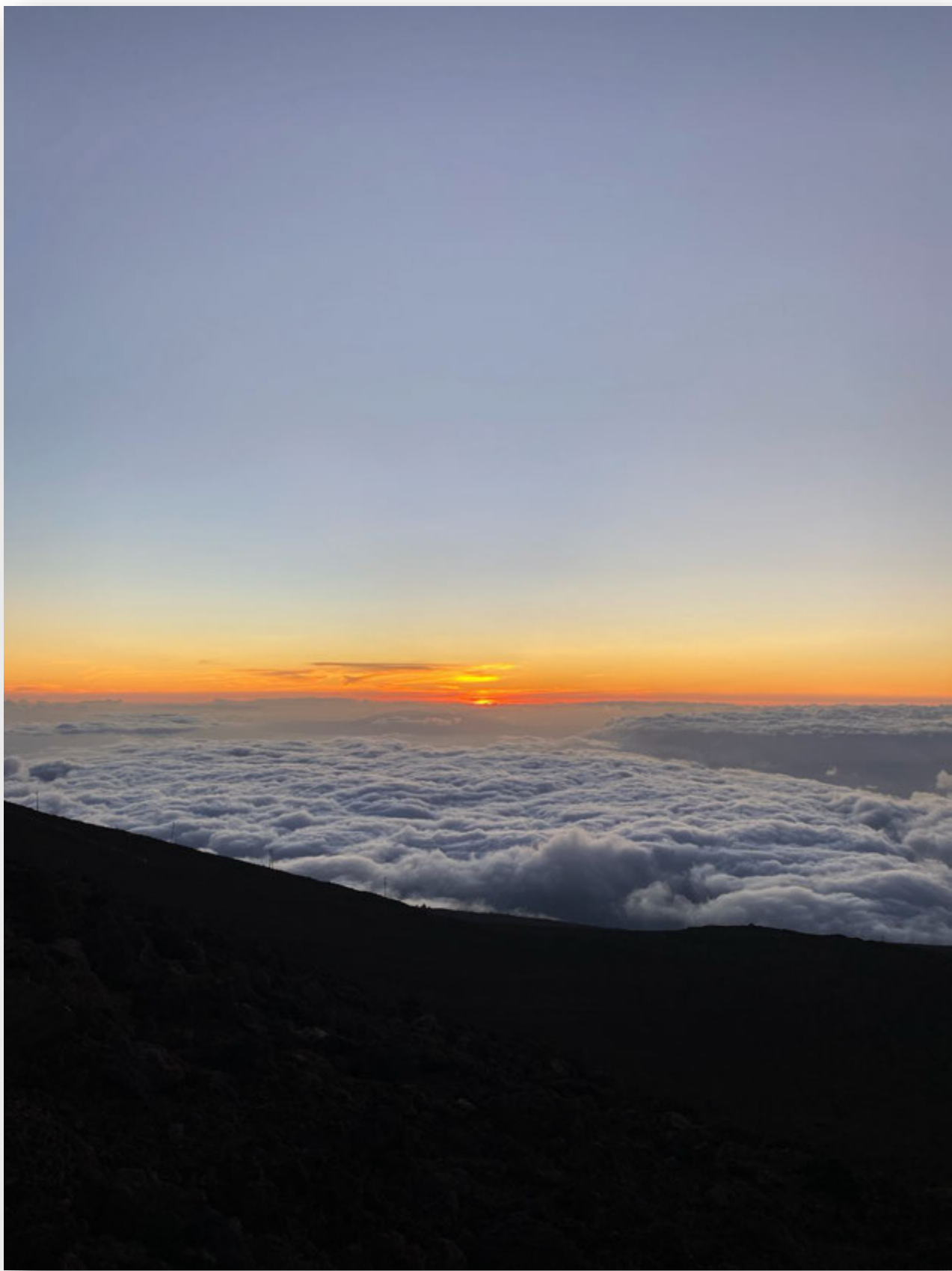
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*Sun Streaks* by Cat Shapiro, age 16  
photo



*Set Fire to the Sky* by Brayden Hauser, age 13  
photo





*Untitled - April 2nd, 2021* by Vivian Pinckney, age 17  
photo

# *It's A Beautiful Day For Faking Cases*

by Addison Mood, age 16

*Grey's Anatomy* is a show that many find addicting in a way that other shows just can't compare. I, for one, started the first season as a joke until, flash forward six months and I had watched all sixteen seasons that were out at the time. I now look forward to every Thursday night at nine o'clock, when I sit on my couch in my overpriced *Grey's Anatomy* sweatshirt and fangirl over all my favorite characters. The sweatshirt is grey in case you are wondering. Netflix must be worried for my mental health when they see how many times I have watched the show in its entirety.

This hit medical drama series made its debut in 2005 and is now airing its eighteenth season. While each episode focuses on different medical cases that the doctors are treating, they also involve a plot full of separate romances and the personal lives of the doctors in the hospital. The advanced production of the show has led many to believe that it is an accurate reflection of people's lives in the medical field. However, I would have to disagree. From icicles impaling doctors on their way out of work, to teens laying in beds of cement for hours on end, some cases presented on *Grey's Anatomy* are so unbelievable that I cannot even fathom them happening in the real world.

Just imagine, you are lying on the ground outside of a hospital entrance in Seattle. It is freezing outside, and icicles cover all the awnings surrounding the windows. Suddenly, a two-foot-long icicle falls from the awning and impales you in your stomach. That is exactly what happens on episode two of the fifth season of this medical drama series. It makes sense, right? You would totally be lying on the wet, dirty, cold, and highly trafficked ground outside of a hospital. No! In what world would someone be laying on the ground there in the first place? Along with the unbelievable idea of someone lying on that ground, there is the idea of there being a two-foot-long icicle that is still intact and decides to fall in just the perfect spot to stab your stomach. But wait, there is more. Like all television shows, something good must come from an accident. For Christina, it was the love of her life. Yes, that's right. After Christina Yang is impaled in the stomach, the love of her life, a trauma surgeon, comes out of nowhere and saves her life. This case seemed like it came straight out of a rom-com. I have a hard time picturing something like this actually happening to someone. This case is by far one of the most unbelievable I have seen, and believe me, there have been a lot.

Earlier in the show, episode sixteen of season four, there was an equally insane and unthinkable medical case. A teenage boy showed up to Seattle Grace Hospital and surprised the entire team of medical professionals with a situation they had never heard of before. The team of paramedics rolled him in on multiple gurneys, as his body was too large to fit on one. His body was a boulder, stuck in a large block of cement that was formed around his body, with the only thing exposed being the patient's head. Now, you may be wondering, "so, what happened?" Well, he was dared to jump into a vat of cement by his friends. I don't know about you, but I always hear, "If your friends dared you to jump off of a bridge, would you?" Something similar happened to this boy, and surprise, surprise, he actually did it. He jumped into a vat of quick drying cement, but it didn't end there. He stayed in the cement for over an hour. Over an hour! His friends just watched and laughed while he made no attempt to escape the increasingly dangerous situation. This was quick-drying cement, acting similar to quicksand. When quicksand is portrayed in the media, people get stuck and frantically move to try and get out. Why would this boy just voluntarily

stay put while laying still as his body was becoming locked in place? This episode highlighted the removal of the patient from the cement and his course of treatment, just barely making it out alive. If you are not convinced by this example that some cases on the show are nearly impossible to imagine happening in real life, I don't know what else to tell you. Actually, that was a lie. There was one in season two that was even worse.

Episode two of season two; a male patient arrives at the hospital with what appears to be a normal bowel obstruction. The doctors started their usual routine medical treatment for this kind of condition when they realized they could not distinguish what caused the bowel obstruction. After further investigation by the other doctors in the hospital, they discovered that what was blocking the patient's bowel was ten Judy doll heads. I am going to repeat that so you can experience the full effect. There were ten Judy doll heads that had been swallowed by the patient and were stuck in his bowel. The patient had decided to go out and purchase these dolls. The patient had cut off the dolls' heads. The patient then decided to swallow each of them. Normally, people think of dolls as the size of barbies; however, these dolls were much larger. Swallowing them would have felt like swallowing a basketball. That sounds like a perfect breakfast to me. This patient would have had to have been severely mentally ill, had an incredibly large throat, an insanely high pain tolerance, a love for dolls, and an extremely large appetite. How someone was able to swallow these doll heads will remain a mystery to me, but this case will forever stay at the top of my list for favorite episodes of the show. The utter shock that appears on all of the characters faces is like a shot of serotonin.

While this show is a favorite of many, many episodes are full of unrealistic medical cases. If you ever walk into a hospital and see things that resemble what happens in *Grey's Anatomy*, I'd advise you to run in the opposite direction. You may end up dying from a case of the hiccups or witness a teenage couple super gluing their bodies together. All in all, this show is like a world record book for the most bizarre and unimaginable medical cases.



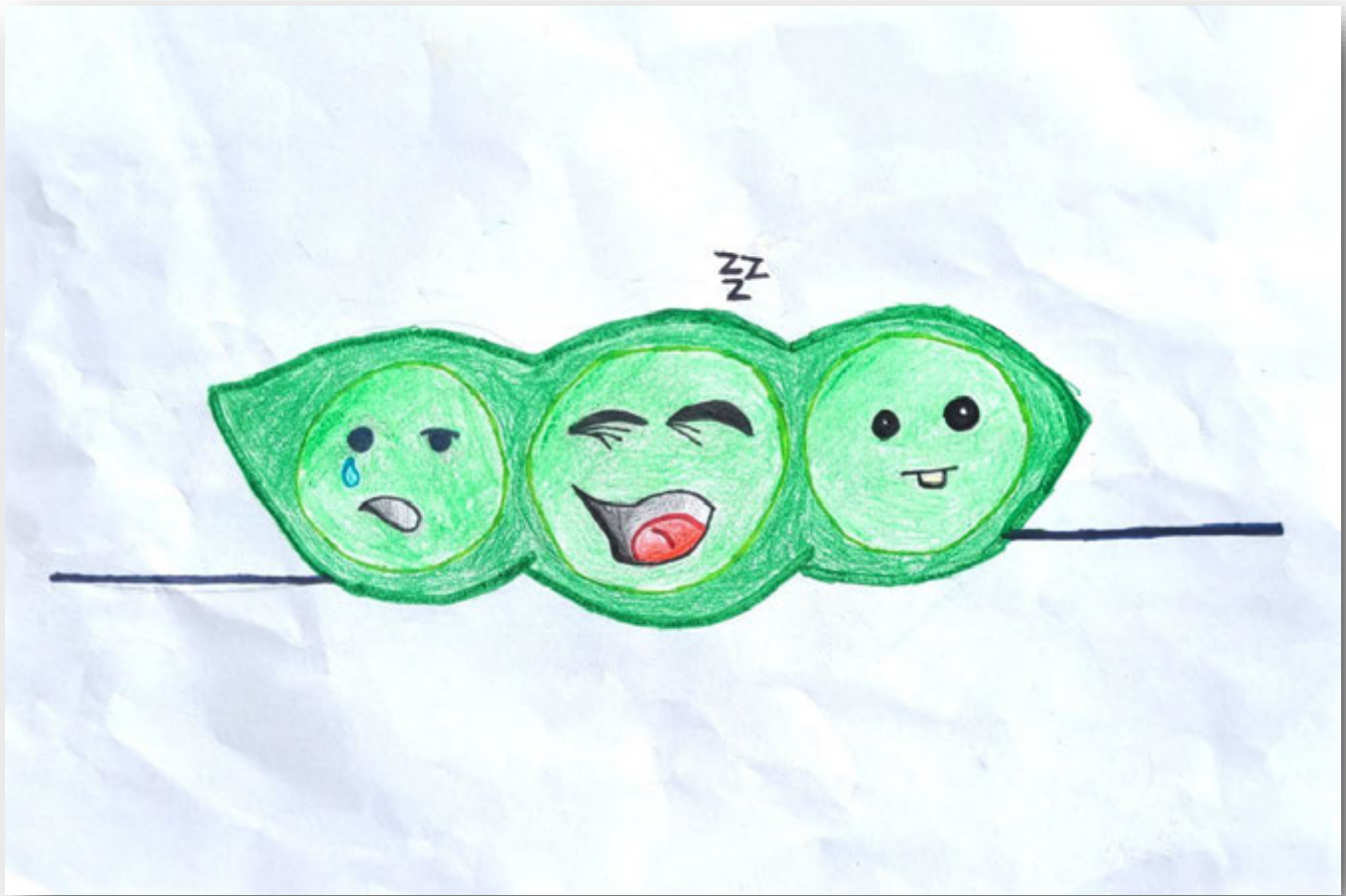


*Witness* by Zoe Yost, age 19  
photo





*Creepy* by Alyssa Umbrecht, age 12  
pencil & colored pencil



*Three Peas in a Pod* by Alyssa Umbrecht, age 12  
colored pencil & sharpie



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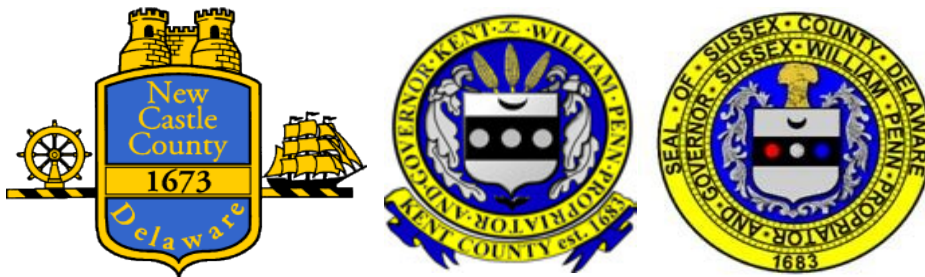
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