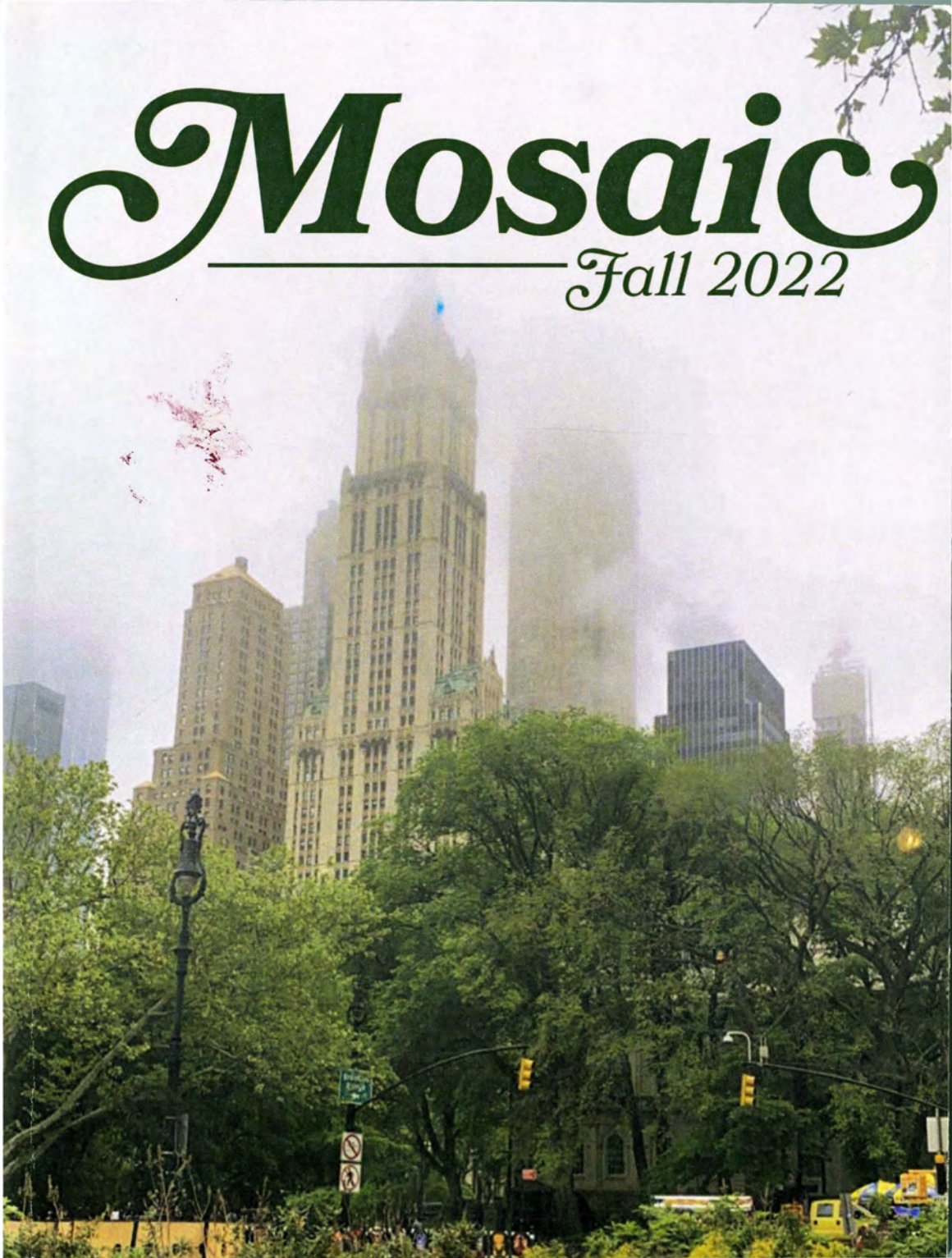


Mosaic

Fall 2022



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A Letter From The Editor

The *Mosaic* Editorial Board is proud to publish the fall 2022 *Mosaic*: a student-run literary and arts magazine highlighting the talented work of Marist College students

All *Mosaic* submissions went through a rigorous blind peer review process in which student section editors evaluated submissions for publication and ranking of 1st, 2nd and 3rd place in the categories of art, fiction, nonfiction and poetry. For many of our editors, this publication is the first time they are seeing student's names associated with their work.

The Editorial board would like to sincerely thank Mr. Robert Lynch for his unending enthusiasm, support, and inspiration to the *Mosaic*. We would also like to thank our advisor, Dr. Moira Fitzgibbons, for her dedication, guidance, and support throughout the publication process.

Thank you to Alex Podmaniczky for helping us print *Mosaic*. Thank you to Dean Martin Shaffer, Dean Jacqueline Reich, Dr. Eileen Curley, and the entire English and Art departments for helping us find the accomplished students that are featured in this semester's edition of *Mosaic*. In addition, thank you to the Student Government for their help in the chartering process. We are thrilled to become an official club on campus this semester.

Thank you to all the students who continue to submit their work each semester! This campus is home to an incredibly talented student body and we are thrilled to publish your work.

I would personally like to thank the Editorial board for their hard work and dedication this semester. This would not be possible without them.

This fall is my first semester serving as Editor-in-Chief, and I am honored and privileged to serve in this position. While the role could quickly have become overwhelming, my predecessor Amanda Roberts made sure I was prepared for all aspects of the job. Thank you for your mentorship, Amanda.

And finally, thank you for reading this semester's edition of the *Mosaic* and experiencing the incredible work that Marist students have to offer. We hope you enjoy the fall 2022 edition of the *Mosaic*.

Sincerely,
Lauren Lagasse
Mosaic Editor-in-Chief

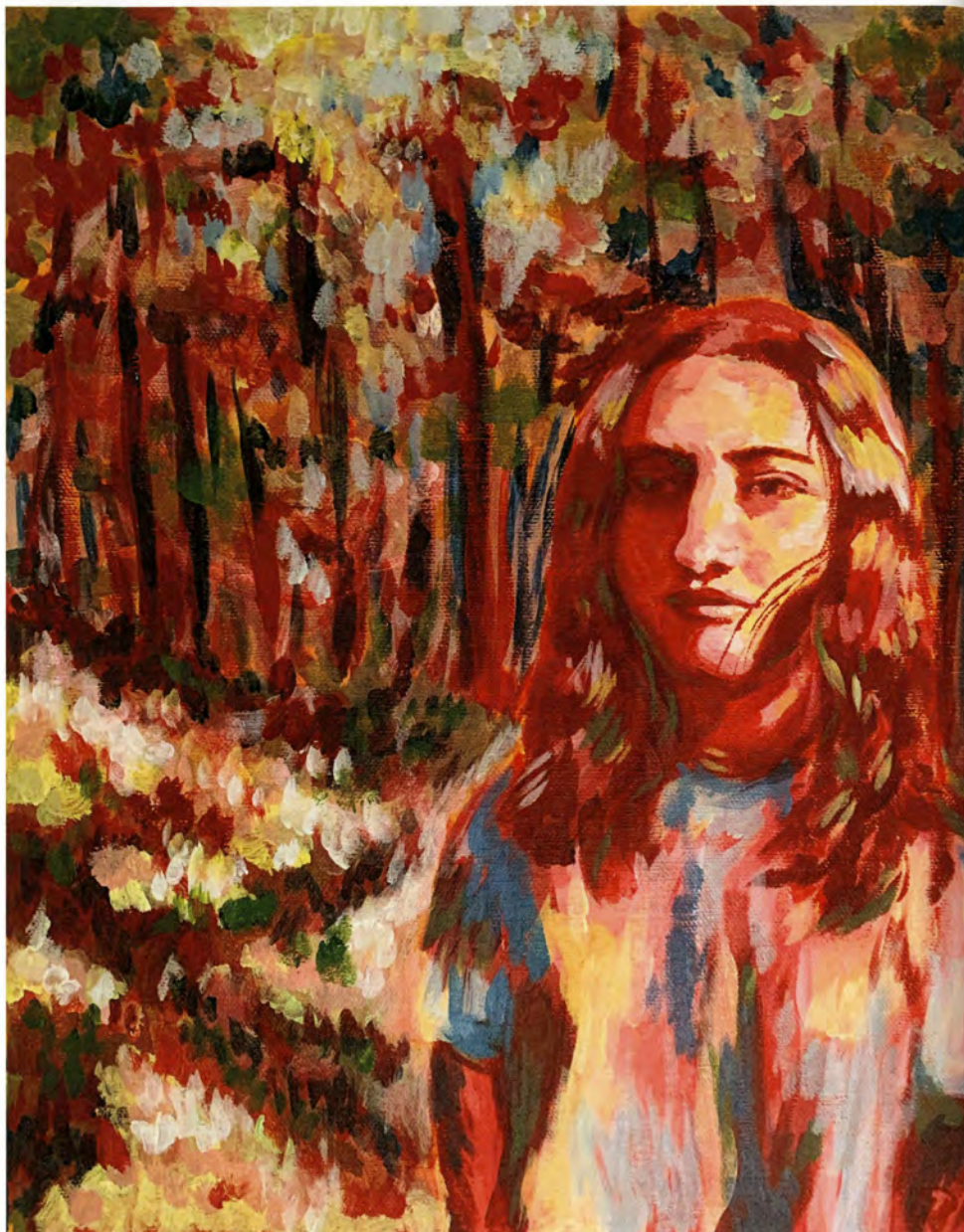
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*** = *Content may contain themes of abuse, grief, death, mental illness, and body image.*

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Gloria
Lily Jandrisevits '25

Asylum's Keep

Gabriella Amleto '24

Deep among the hills,
pushed away
by a forgotten world
Shaded by trees
Blocked by them

A mansion of dreams
A mansion holding nightmares

Down in the Keep
within the walls
terrors of victims
and scars of abusers
lie and weep

Anger, sadness, regret,
shadows of emotions
play on the walls

Suffocating the living who enter
The living brave enough to try

Tucked away this manor waits
for the living
holding the dead.

Five Generations

Grace Rowan '23

Victor and Lucia got married in a little village in Northern Portugal, right on the border with Spain, in the spring of 1958. Victor, who had traveled by boat to New York City a few times before then, saved money by working in construction there. After the wedding, Victor returned to the States to get Lucia the proper documentation to meet him. Finally, about a year later, Lucia could buy a ticket. She boarded a plane to JFK and, without speaking any English, navigated her way around. When she arrived at the airport, a very observant customs agent noticed a necklace with Victor's picture on it and helped her point him out in the crowd.

Fast forward to 1972, Victor and Lucia moved from the city to Long Island with four daughters, happier than ever. They traveled back to Portugal when they could. In 1985, they finished building a house on land left to them by Lucia's grandfather. Their daughters could see their extended family and create life-long memories in Portugal every summer.

Fast forward another few years, and all four of their children went to college and started their own lives. One daughter, in particular, married a man and immersed him into Portuguese culture. They would visit that house in Northern Portugal, and even though he didn't speak Portuguese, he always found a way to communicate with her family.

Fast forward again, my siblings and I come into the picture. My parents take us to Portugal, to that same house my grandparents built so we can see our extended family and create life-long memories. I always hear miraculous stories from my mother about our family; how one sailed the Lusitania and another helped build the Panama Canal. All that history stems from this village in Portugal on land my great-great-great-grandfather bought. It all makes me grateful for my life and the people who came before me.



Seven Day Cycle
Kaitlyn Dugan '25
Second Place, Art

Change

LHH '24

I awoke to the sounds of leaves falling, each one making a distinct sound as it fell off the tree. I left the window open last night. I looked around. Took in my surroundings. Same day as it always was. The room, cold and empty. Like a hollow shell without any trace of being. The walls were blank, a faded eggshell white. Nothing has changed. I shifted my line of sight to the single window on the far side of the room. I could now tell it was autumn. That unique smell, radiating off the trees that once had beautiful bright green leaves. Now, a weak sense of life ever being there. After lying on the poorly made bed with cheap sheets, I arose from the comfortable position I was in. I looked over at the clock. 6:33am. Each day started earlier and earlier.

I made my way over to the bathroom, ready to start the day. The routine was similar. Nothing has changed. That's when I noticed my hands. I stopped for a second. I didn't recognize them. These weren't the hands of the person I had once known. I see that I am changing. Things had changed. But why does it feel like I am falling behind? Unease passed over me as I was now in the middle of the hallway staring at these hands that I once thought could change the world. It seemed like a distant dream I once had. The pathetic realization knowing that time had passed. These hands were unable to achieve the goals I had set out for myself when I was younger.

Concerned, I continued my way to the bathroom. As I set to get ready for the day, I glanced in the mirror. I had yet to turn on the lights, so the only illumination was the barely visible sunrise outside the bathroom window. As the light shadowed over me, it was now fully visible in the mirror. It was me? Yes, it was. I had to reassure myself that this was the person I

was looking at. Like my hands, I didn't recognize the person staring at me. Those eyes. Attached to a face. It was my face. I knew it was my face. I knew it was the face that everyone on the street sees. Recognized as a real person. But it was a stranger to me. The deep brown eyes that were once full of optimism and hope, now replaced by regret and apathy. I didn't recognize those eyes. The face. The face wasn't smiling. I could remember it always smiling but could not recreate it even if I tried. Why was it so timid? Void of all expression? One glance and a person could tell something was lost in that smile. Lost throughout the years of pain that slowly deteriorated that picturesque smile. I stood in silence. Unable to speak because of the utter shock of what I was seeing.

20 years. 20 years on this earth. Living in the same body. Fulfilling the same routine that proposed itself every day. But this is the first time I had noticed it. I didn't recognize this person. I knew it was me, but once again, I could see I had changed. I knew I was drowning and as every day passed, the water kept getting deeper and harder to swim in. I couldn't break the surface. The tide of change had swept me away like a vague memory now forgotten. But this was the first time. The realization that I had lost myself somewhere along the way. As the emotions faded, I now realized that the person I had known was gone. I couldn't revert to the person I once was. I couldn't turn back time. I couldn't live in the past. But with that recognition, came acceptance. All this time I was battling the current, but I finally understood that I couldn't fight the tide. The only constant is change, and I couldn't ignore that fact any longer. Looking back at the mirror, I knew I needed to act. It was time to change, but change on my terms.

An excerpt from “My Mother From Sulphur”

Caitlin Blencowe ‘24

My mother left Sulphur when she was 21 years old. Sulphur Louisiana, right on the bottom of the boot. That sweet little town that nonetheless felt like it would swallow you whole and keep you in its ranks forever. That Sulphur. She had spent her whole life in one place, stuck in the south’s cruel humidity and mosquito infected haze. I think if her father hadn’t passed when she turned 20, she would still be stuck there. But he did pass, and she did leave. Couldn’t bear to live in the house he built for them, couldn’t handle the stress of her broken family. She had told Grandma that she was doing it for them, that in California she would have a new start and would be able to financially support the family from there. Grandma had called her crazy, said that the idea was ridiculous and that she couldn’t possibly be serious, not with Kathy being so little and with Ger’s condition. But Mom had her Dairy Barn money and that was enough for her. She left that shoddy little house that she’d known since childhood, packed her bags and got on the train. She rode it all the way to California, didn’t sleep until she got to the golden state.

Mom didn’t want me to go. Thought I was being selfish, leaving the family because I wanted to. She didn’t get it, didn’t get that I had to leave, didn’t have any other choice. I would have stayed, I would have, but every day I woke up I thought about Dad, thought about how I’d have to be in the house with nothing but a whisper of his name. Mom had thrown away all his stuff. She thought it would help everyone grieve, that if his stuff was gone, the loss wouldn’t eat us alive, and we could learn to move on. It did the opposite for me. Just took everything about Dad out of the house, felt like he was never here, that he was just a figment of my imagination. The house felt empty, hollow, I couldn’t stay.

Mom went to Louisiana Tech, got a degree and everything- first one in her family to do so. Her accounting degree didn’t mean much without a masters, but she got a job at a local grocery store in the valley, planned to work there until she was settled in and on her feet. She had grown up with so little that staying in a rundown motel with a sparse meal plan and little spending money didn’t even phase her. It didn’t take her long to get adjusted to her new life. The dry heat was new, but Mom was adaptable and jumped at the idea of humid-less summers. The people were friendly there, just like in Sulphur, only they were less personable, less genuine in their niceties. You’ll never meet strangers here Addie, she would tell me.

I missed Sulphur, I really did. California was great and I understood why everyone back home was envious I got to go, but it wasn't Sulphur. I guess the change was good though. Nothing about California reminded me of Dad, but at the same time, everything did. I saw him in every post office (Dad worked at the one back home. Loved it. He would buy me stamps as presents and I would stick them all over the house. Mom hated it. Dad thought it was art.) I saw him in autumn leaves, the men at church, even the Popeye's downtown. I carried him with me everywhere and saw him everywhere, but his name didn't hang over me like an unwanted presence like it down back home. I got space from everything while also feeling connected to him. No, California wasn't Sulphur, but it was home now.



Primary Colors: for Kaeden
Kimberly Rosner '25

Gwen

Aveen Forman '23

Third Place, Fiction

Oh to be in love. Not just any kind of love, but true love. Love fueled by the inexperience of being truly in love. Love hot enough it burns brighter than the sun. Love intense enough it outshine a thousand suns. Love solid enough to outlast a million suns. Or so it feels.

Seymour did not know this kind of love before he fell for Gwen. He thought he had, but up to this point all of his affairs had been fleeting. It was love hot enough to burn your hands on the plate but the food is still completely frozen and it has to be put back in the microwave. Love intense enough you take a sip and are unsure whether or not you ordered a mocktail. Love solid enough it rivaled the greatest Lincoln log cabins.

Then at the ripe old age of 22 Gwen came walked into Seymour's life, and has since never taken a step back. Gwen quite literally walked into Seymour's life. Gwen had accidentally walked into the path of Seymour's bike, and the pair barely managed to avoid collision. Well, except for Seymour, who took a nasty tumbler and totaled is his bike in the process. Seymour was quite literally head over

heals for Gwen. It seems Gwen felt similarly, as the pair was wed one fine June day four months after they met, just shy of Gwen's 20th birthday.

In the two years since, Seymour finally finished his GED, enrolled in classes at the local community college, and managed to find a job that would pay for his education, provide a full benefits package, and helped him to locate a cozy apartment downtown that he shared with Gwen. Gwen continued her education at local University, and was fresh graduated the previous December. It seemed like everything was on the up for the pair, and they were destined to become one of those perfect happy couples that everyone wished they were apart of.

That is until March 15th. His English professor told him to beware the ides of March in class on Friday, but it was Friday the 13th, and Seymour incorrectly assumed his teacher got the dates mixed up, laughed it off and continued on with his life. But life had a different plan for Seymour, and two days later life was about to get a whole lot weirder.

Seymour came back to the apartment that morning with pancakes

for Gwen. Two blueberry and one chocolate from the diner on the corner three blocks East. There was a closer diner, but Seymour was not the kind of person to take things halfway. He left Gwen asleep in their bed half an hour ago trying his best not to wake her and ruin the delicious surprise.

As he entered the apartment, something was off, and it wasn't just the lights. The room smelt weird. He couldn't pinpoint what was wrong about the smell, he knew instinctively that something smelt off, and it wasn't just the sour milk in the fridge. Everything felt wrong. The house was freezing, but it wasn't just the March air outside. In fact, it was an uncharacteristically hot day, and Seymour had worked up a bit of a sweat on his way to the diner.

Then Seymour heard it. It was a faint... screaming? He stood still. The scream was soft, but it was definitely coming from inside the house. He took a look around, and he couldn't find anything. He thought that maybe the cat was stuck in the closet again, but he turned the corner and saw Couscous lounging in a pile of fresh laundry.

Seymour saw something next to Couscous. It looked like a piece of string, but when he approached and examined the small rope he realized it was worm.

Seymour was perplexed. Couscous had never brought a worm in as a trophy before. He went to pick up the worm to return it to the outdoors when the screaming started again.

Was the worm screaming? That couldn't be possible. Seymour wasn't the brightest but even he knew that worms don't speak. The cow says moo, the pig says oink, but the worm? They never really mentioned worm. They say the early bird gets the worm, but nothing about the worm shrieking for dear life. Then the screaming stopped, it was quiet for second, and then the worm started ...talking?

It was soft, but the worm was most definitely forming English words. "Help me Seymour" the worm said "How do you know how to talk? How do you know my name?" Seymour responded, surprised he was now holding a conversation with a worm. "I don't know! Help me!" The worm exclaimed. "Help you with what? You wanna go in the dirt" Seymour asked. "What? No... Seymour it's me" "I don't know any worms" "It's me, Gwen!" Seymour picked up the worm "Hey watch it" "Sorry. Can you repeat that" "Hey watch it?" "No before that... Gwen? Why are you a worm?"

“Because I wanted to get more in touch with nature!” Gwen rattled

“Oh” Seymour muttered, still confused about the situation he currently found himself in.

“I have no clue why I’m a worm now Seymour, what kind of question is that? Gwen shrieked, she seemed startled that she was now a worm.

“I’m sorry I’m confused, I went out for pancakes but instead I’ve found out that the world’s first talking worm is my girlfriend”

“What do I do?” Gwen cried

“What do you mean?”

“How do I stop being a worm?”

“I’m not sure, maybe like a ritual sacrifice?”

“You’re gonna sacrifice me?”

“No like we have to commit a ritual sacrifice to the worm gods”

“My life is over”

“What do you mean?”

“I’M A WORM!”

“Oh really I couldn’t tell.” Seymour cracked. He didn’t really know what to do in this situation.

“You’re not helping!”

“This is an unprecedented situation for me”

“Oh Seymour, WHO COULD EVER LOVE A WORM?”

“...” Seymour did not know what to say “I mean...” he continued “I guess I could”

“NOOO! YOU MUST FIND AN-

OTHER!”

“Another what?”

“DON’T WASTE YOUR TIME ON ME SEYMOUR, I AM UGLY, I AM DISGUSTING, I’M A WORM”

“Well, you said it, not me.”

Gwen started hysterically sobbing

“Don’t cry” Seymour panicked

“WAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH”

“Babe”

“WAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH”

“Babe it’s ok”

“WAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH”

“I’m not going anywhere”

“WAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH”

“You’re not dead, you’re just a worm”

“I might as well be dead Seymour”

“Gwen, I love you.”

“NO ONE COULD LOVE A WORM”

“Well I love you, and if you’re a worm, I mean...” Seymour tried to reason

“WAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH”

“I will love you no matter what”

“JUST STEP ON ME”

“Gwen”

“FEED ME TO THE BIRDS, THROW ME ON THE SIDEWALK NEXT TIME IT RAINS”

“Gwen you’re my wife, I can’t just feed you to the birds, not legally at least”

“Don’t be stupid. Look at me”

“It’s certainly different”

“WAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH”

“It’s gonna be an adjustment for sure, but I don’t know how to live without you”

“Do you mean it?”

“Yeah”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes”

“You’re lying”

“No I’m not” Seymour stated. “When I married you, I said a sacred vow. I promised to love you no matter what. For sick or for health, for richer or poorer, for women or for worm. I meant every word of it Gwen. I love you. I’ll take care of you. Trust me. Trust me like you did on our wedding day. Please.”

And trust him she did. What else could she do? She was a worm. Life changed after that day. Seymour and Gwen decided that it was best to pretend publicly that Gwen had disappeared under mysterious circumstances, it would be a lot easier to pretend Gwen disappeared than to come out to the press about the worlds first anthropomorphic worm. They were afraid if they disclosed Gwen was now

a talking worm, she would be ritually sacrificed for science. Although Gwen was now a worm, she still had a life to live. Seymour adjusted to having a worm bride. He made a contraption that allowed him to carry Gwen around in his pocket while keeping her comfortable. People thought Seymour was a bit eccentric, always talking to himself about everything, and generally acting like a tour guide in every aspect of his life. Together they were able to travel the world. After all he only had to buy one ticket. They dined at the finest of restaurants, they wore the finest of clothes, and met the finest of people. Indeed, for Gwen and Seymour, it seems that love really could conquer all. The love they shared conquered the startling reality of a wife turned worm. Their love conquered the average lifespan of an earthworm, with Gwen living 57 years as a worm, a full 56 years longer than the average worm. And finally, their love conquered the age old question: “Would you still love me, even if I were a worm?”



GO OUTSIDE!
Nina Bisco '24

On the Porch

Rebecca D'Ambrosio '24

Second Place, Poetry

I wondered if he'd tell me to pull closer to the curb,
I'd never been good at parking.

He was right on the porch where he always sat

And he was letting his beard grow,

I'd never seen it so scraggly, so white.

He looked old.

I'd never really had that thought before.

I think he said hi doll but I can't remember.

I remember the overwhelming need to hug him,

I couldn't remember the last time I hugged him,

Or even seen him really.

He pulled away and smiled,

The smile synonymous with grandpa

And gave me a kiss on my tear-stained cheeks.

Because no matter how much I told myself in the car,

The second I saw him I could barely get a word out.

Okay, one more, and he pulled me in again,

And I hugged my grandfather.

And for the first time in a long time, I wanted so badly to stay at his house,

To stay with my grandpa and have him make me a cup of tea,

And give me fig newtons, even though I never ate them,

And have him tuck me into the couch with the same blanket I always used.

Instead, I had to pull away

And had the frightening realization I was practically at eye level with him.

In his eyes laid unshed tears and some emotion distinctly grandpa.

He told me to promise to call if I needed him,

I did, though part of me knew I wouldn't, or couldn't, call him

At least not anymore.

And I ached for the days when a call to grandpa would solve any problems

I had.

Instead, I told him I loved him and got into my car,

I waved from my window to him on the porch,

And drove away, off to school.

Quiet Chant

Bridget McGuire '26

It's been a long time
Since the last calm in the storms
Post waves crashing, spraying drops in eyes,
Scaring nonsense into minds,
There is a meeting outside God's doors
Someone comes out
Someone tries to talk
Someone doesn't seem to
What is this quiet?
Lizzie screams in the back
What is this quiet?
Quiet?
Should something be said?
Someone comes out
Someone starts to talk
Someone talks back
Where's the quiet?
Why isn't there quiet?
Someone tries to talk
Someones are talking
What is this quiet?
Someones walk away
What is this quiet?
Should there be any quiet?
"Good-bye" from the chariot
"Good-bye" from the doors
"Good-bye from the chariot
"Good-bye" from the doors
"Good-bye titters the doors
"Good-bye" jokes the doors
Someone comes out
"Good-bye"
"Sorry, good-bye"
Someone tries to talk

Someone talks back
Someone sings, "Good-bye"
"Good-bye" it rings
"Bye" someone tries to talk
"Good-bye" something rings
Someone tries to talk
Someone tries to talk back
"Let's talk about the quiet"
"Quiet?"
"Quiet"
"Let's talk"
No more quiet? "Let's talk!"
Don't forget the quiet
Good-bye?
Someones talk



2nd Ave / Asbury Boardwalk
Nina Bisco '24

The Victorian Ring

Julie Buchmann '23

It all started on the first day of fall.

My friends and I were out shopping, and came upon this vintage store we hadn't been to before. It stood out to us that day.

Stacy was over looking at the crew-necks with Madelyn, but I found my way over to the jewelry. I had recently developed a love of rings, and wanted to find a new one. And that's where I found it.

A black onyx gem with silver lining it. I turned the ring over to examine it more, and I saw a crest. The design was hard to make out, but instantly caused a shiver to run down my spine.

"Penny, that ring is gorgeous!" I heard Madelyn tell me as she took the ring to examine it. "You have to get it."

Stacy came over to us, agreeing with Madelyn, and I decided I would. It was just a ring after all, and it obviously caught my attention for a reason.

I went up to the front counter to purchase the ring.

As I handed the ring over to the owner, her demeanor instantly changed. "Are you sure you want this?" She asked as she was wrapping it up and putting it into a ring box.

"Is something wrong with it?"

"Rings aren't always what they seem, my dear."

I decided she was full of it, and I handed her my card. She didn't make eye contact with me for the rest of the transaction.

Stacy, Madelyn, and I went home after the thrift store. I tried to shake what the lady told me, but it kept popping up in the back of my mind.

Rings aren't always what they seem.

I knew it was stupid. I knew she was making something up. But it all just

freaked me out. The chill the ring gave me, I honestly didn't even know why I bought it.

All of these thoughts were circling my head too much that I decided to head home. I said goodbye to Stacy and Madelyn, and went to my car. I got in, and started my drive home.

As I was making my way home, I saw the ring, sitting in my passenger seat in the box. I reached over and pulled it out of the box, the eerie feeling shivering up my spine once again as I held it in my hand.

Before I even knew what I was doing, I rolled down my window and hurled the ring out of my car. It wasn't worth the stress. Now it would no longer be my problem.

“Penny...”

I sprang up in my bed. I heard someone whisper my name. I lived alone.

It took a minute for me to wake up, although my heart was racing. I decided I had probably dreamt it, and I made my way to the bathroom.

As I opened the bathroom door and rubbed my eyes to adjust my vision, my heart dropped.

There on the counter, was the ring I had bought that day. The ring I threw out my car window. Sitting on my bathroom sink.

I instantly panicked. Someone was inside my house. Someone brought this ring into my house.

“Penny...”

I heard my name whispered again. But I had no clue where it was coming from, it felt like it was inside my head.

I ran back to my room, leaving the ring on the counter.

I grabbed my phone and my keys, running to my car. I had no clue who was there, and had no intention of finding out. I was going to drive to the police station.

I started my car and sped out of my driveway.

While on the way to the station, I looked in my passenger seat, fearful a ring would be placed there. But thankfully, nothing was there.

After a few minutes, I pulled into the station and parked. I got out of my car, and something shiny caught my attention in the gravel.

I felt dizzy the second I realized what it was. It was the ring.

“Penny, just put it on...” The voice whispered to me once more.

Suddenly, it felt like my body was betraying me. I was picking up the ring, and going to place it on my finger. It felt like an internal battle.

“Come on, Penny...”

The voice won. I placed the ring on my finger, and the world went black.

One Year Later

“Today is the one year anniversary of the disappearance of Penny Garland, who mysteriously disappeared in July of last year in the police station parking lot. The last footage seen of Garland was her car pulling into the station parking lot, her stepping out of

the car, and then picking up something from the gravel. A bright light appeared moments later, and the moment following Garland had vanished. She has not been seen since. The disappearance of Garland has been a very mysterious case, with little to no lead. If you see or hear anything that is related to this case, please contact the police immediately.”

She reached up and shut off the television with a click of a button. She stood up from her sofa, and made her way to the staircase. As she passed the mirror, Penny Garland’s reflection was shown. But Penny was long gone.

The reflection in the mirror may have shown Penny Garland staring back at herself, but on the inside was someone far different from Penny. Someone that used to have a black onyx ring, with a silver lining, and a crest on the inside of it.

Rings aren’t always what they seem.

And people aren’t either.



heartbreak
J Pinkans '24

Who Killed Laura Palmer?

Kevin Pakrad '23

First Place, Poetry

“Good news! That gum you like is finally
Coming back into style.” The arm dances
Across the floor in a methodical jig.
He taunts the audience; he has what they
Want: truth - bathed in blood - it has a sweeter taste
than sweet honey; it's liquid dopamine,
To satisfy the senses. Puzzles are
No longer sacred - solve this riddle, win
A prize! I've never heard a lazier joke.
The man who laughs at it is worse: An ant
Watching television from the lid of
Your take-away tin has more sympathy.
That's life! The fool is the high priest; supreme.
- My heart just doesn't buy it. When will blood be
Worth less than gold? When we can bring flavor
To a tale without the usual martyrs -
She's invincible. Like Juliet and
The woe we all know she has for Romeo.
Dead Romeo; the Orphic prince and his
Euryidic Queen. Such as mushrooms in the
dark, spurting spores; death begets death begets
Pleasure. There is no poetry in death's
Game, behind that black mirror, sucking
its teat; evil grows. The milk is not as
good by itself as it is with blood. Who
cares? The girl is already dead, and Death's joke
Fell on deaf ears - It wasn't very funny anyway.

the fixer-upper

Klanell Lee '24

the moon turned purple over your eyes.
the sun set on your face.
I waved off the waves so that you could float.
I glazed the water surface so your reflection stays clear.
I carved beautiful on your forehead...
one less insecurity.
I clipped your wings so you can rest,
just to sew them back on.
you're healed and free.
my hands only ask...
"whoever the next will be,
can you please just warn....me"



Light the Way
Emma Denes '21

Trying

Heather Millman '23

There's an art to not making a sound
To putting your things down in a specific order every time
To breathing in slightly deeper
But not too deep
There a perfectly reasonable response to a shoe toppling off the rack instead of fitting into it as it
always fits into it
There is a perfectly reasonable response
And it doesn't require the gasp-hiccup that you didn't know was going to escape the way your
body tenses
And freezes and you slowly put the shoe back but it's too late and your vision is blurry and you
know you will be blubbering and then there is the first sob
Sort-of
The way you wish you could swallow it back in and hide from it
And
And then the dam bursts and you think
Goddamn it's been a while
Goddamn it's been a while since you couldn't breathe through hiccups
And this is what they call healthy but you call unstoppable because now it will go on and on and
on
And you don't have time for this
But it's unstoppable
The dominos have fallen
You cannot take it back



The Dance
Amanda Nessel '25
Third Place, Art

A Walk With Grandpa

Rebecca D'Ambrosio '24

"Why don't we all go for a walk?"

A walk with just us kids and grandpa – now that was special.

He made it seem so exciting, like it was a fun game. A fun game designed to distract us from the fact that the world seemed to be ending inside our beach house. That was special too, special in the way that we'd never seen anything quite like it before. We'd never seen the adults fight like us kids, throw their arms up in the air and shout at each other. If I did that with Rachel I'd surely get in trouble, but no one seemed to be stepping in the middle of them this time. Mom usually did that with us, but Mom was too busy slamming the door to our bedroom on Aunt G.

Grandpa suggested we take a walk so we did. He gathered all of us kids – well not all of us. Uncle wouldn't let my little cousins come along, they were too busy packing their bags because apparently, they were leaving a week early. I remember passing Aunt J, she was shoving things into their trunk while screaming at Aunt L and she didn't stop screaming, even when she saw us kids clambering down the steps with Grandpa, kicking at the pebbles that littered the driveway, not daring to meet her eyes, and that only made Aunt L scream right back at her. It made me feel bad, my little cousins wouldn't stop crying and I thought if only they could come on the walk with Grandpa, they would stop crying.

But, from the driveway we marched, Grandpa leading us all, holding hands. I didn't know where we were walking to and I don't think Grandpa did either, but we walked away. Away from a house being torn apart from four different angles, where four different cars were being packed up to leave. We still had a few days here, I didn't know why everyone was in a rush to leave early and I definitely didn't want to leave yet.

We walked for a long time and we hopped on the sidewalks and pointed at bikers passing by late at night. We made up a game, I'm sure the rules were convoluted and made no sense to anyone but ourselves, but we played as we walked. And at some point, we ended up at Scojos, and how fun it was to be at a breakfast place late at night. We ordered chocolate chip pancakes and waffles with ice cream and Grandpa let us – he didn't make any comments about ordering what you'll eat and eating what you ordered, which was odd for him. And soon my stomach hurt because it was full of sugary syrup and whipped cream and not because the beach house was being ripped apart, and seemingly my family with it.

And then we walked back to the house, like ducks in a line, with Grandpa and I thought as long as Grandpa was leading, nothing bad would continue to happen.

Sloppy Romantic

Kiki Wiehe '26

Love oozes out of my fingertips
At the faintest pressure
Secrets slip off my lips
As if I were speaking to a god
Tiny fires spark on my cheeks
As you effortlessly pour
Your affection all over me
My chest fills with caution
With every inhale
I am dangerously unguarded
I burn with emotional overexposure
As soon as your warmth
Begins to thaw my very soul
My icy perception takes utter control
And the sharp rails of my guard race back up

Rose

Alyssa Borelli '24

There is a rose wilting on my desk
Her stem is a dark green with
a yellow shine that glitters in the light
Her petals, once scarlet and bright
Are now wrinkled, torn,
blackening against the air
She has no thorns.
Someone removed them long ago.

She's been passed around from hand to hand
One boy loved her deeply but he forgot to water her
Another displayed her to all his friends and choked her at the roots
One boy couldn't see her beauty and kept her hidden
Another only used her for one night

Who will be the next to take her home
Does she want to be thrown into another temporary vase
Who will she dream about in the middle of the night
Who will inspire the love stories she wants to tell
If no one holds her
If no one wants her
Is she still a rose

She is tired
Wilted
Lost

Maybe she won't mind withering away on my desk
There no one can want her
But at least no one else can
touch her.



To-Do
Kaitlyn Dugan '25

Tattoos and Cigarettes

Kat Bilbija '24

I once met a boy with tattoos and cigarette burns
A brown-haired boy with intimacy who refused to commit
I think we've all met this boy at least once

This boy and I shared conversations like coffee
We mingled our dreams and what's in our tea
Painting each other with lavender words and a kiss
He appreciated parts of me that others ignored
As if we were destined to collide in bliss

He seemed more statue than boy, more vision than true
His lips spoke a language that came with a deadline
His face wrote "unattainable" as he listened with glee
I pinched myself to somehow feel awake
From the dreamlike dance he played above me

For just as he dropped from the sky
So he vanished all the same
Leaving no trace I danced on his heartstrings
While he left fruitless footsteps on mine

The fine powder of his charm circled me for days
A million wonders of where my personality went wrong
When his was the one written with broken trust
Moving on fast to avoid the shadow of his figure
Longing still to reach out, pull him back from the dust

His beautifully common frame does nothing but haunt
How could someone so perfect think me the same
Yet he was less than godlike beyond his skin
How could I confuse his bronze heart for gold
In a momentary fantasy quickly worn thin

We've all met the boy with tattoos who liked to flee
Who bathed you in cherry words only to leave you with the pit
But made you feel so lucky to be seen by someone like him

December 26th

Juliann Bianco '25

I wonder if there's a support group
for fairy tale characters
in the white space at the bottom of the page
below the Happily ever after.

Because you never think about them there,
do you?

No one lights their candle and sets to work with the lemon juice
to uncover the rest of the story
hidden on the tiny field of surrender
between happily ever after
and the coffin lid slammed shut.

Once their lovely heroes reach the end,
the world won't spare a blink in their direction.

But they're not to blame.

No one told the world that knights and princesses don't just have an escape hatch
from every toothache,
every bruised knee,
every crack in the road,
every heartbreak,
every

I'm sorry

with crossed fingers,
and every last goodbye they'll have to say.

And no one told the poor heroes
that they can't just hand the grim reaper
the last page of their story with that happily ever after,
and expect to look into death's eyes
without falling.

No one questions what happens to the heroes after happily ever after,
not even their writers.

They learn to live their bittersweet reality
without the drum of ten thousand angels
cheering them on this time.

They're learning to live their December 26th.

I've heard that waiting lasts forever, dear,
when the bottom of the hourglass
holds the light you were born of and the quiet you'll rot in.
I don't think it's true.
What lasts forever is the after,
because after isn't promised an ending.

As these words hit the page
It is december 24th,
with limited seconds until Christmas day.
I think it's important that you know that,
because every letter that rips out of my lungs becomes less human and more of a
scratching on a cave wall.
Every word becomes more desperate as we grow closer to the after,
because at this very moment there's only
one hundred and twenty-four minutes
until Christmas day.

And that's the point, isn't it?
that you can count down every last second
and measure every rumble of the earth
as you wait.

That's the beauty of it, you see.
As you count down the seconds,
your lovely eyes will paint the scene of
your first kiss
your daughter's first birthday
your graduation
your fiftieth anniversary
and Christmas day.

All the world creates itself behind your eyelids, safe from the earth and what lies
below it.

You can't count down the seconds
after you've lived your truest ending, your sweetest victory.
No one sits on their kitchen floor on December 26th,
wondering if it will snow.

It's over, then,
but it's good.

The fairy tale heroes learned to live past
their happily ever afters,
and who knows?

Maybe their smiles are most beautiful in the after, where no one can see.
So for now, all we must do is see the beauty the world brought us,
and learn to live in the quiet peace
of December 26th.



Budding
Tinsley Stewart '24

The Restless Soul

Riley Mazzocco '26

Cobblestone roads
Thin and unfamiliar
Cars on the other side of the road.
Your only companion is your backpack
As you explore the unknown
No time to stop and purchase trinkets that will weigh you down.
Taking in the experience is what matters most
Pictures serve as permanent reminders
Of where you have been and where you are going.
But there is no reason to stop and reflect now
You have the road in front of you
And your belongings on your back
The time to settle will come later.

the funeral

Lizzie Baumgardner '25

a girl ahead of her time
a seventh grader who thought herself a trailblazer
or at least that was how she perceived her existence in this measly world

standing here at your funeral, i do not mourn that you are gone
this world was not prepared for a soul like yours

they did not concern themselves with your life until you departed
now, they flock to your grave and lament
"She was so young"
"She had so much to live for"

they don't know what they did to you
they were the killers craving blood, like hounds in the night
you were the pure and innocent victim, who fell prey to the darkness

i glance towards your casket
you look at peace
i think it is for the better that you are gone
a Bright girl like you has no place in a world full of grey
a Headstrong girl like you deserves to be free from the shackles of this place
a Gentle girl like you deserves more than what she was gifted at her creation
you gave kindness
But it was never returned

I find it quite unusual to be standing up here at your funeral
It's not every day you write a eulogy for your dead twelve-year-old self

Pocket Poem

Heather Millman '23

Some people have security blankets
I have my schedule written in a fourth size notebook paper tucked
into the palm of my hand Monday
It reads and
Wednesday and
Class @ 12:30
Building
Room number
It reads band and flute choir
And it has fold lines that will become deep enough to tear the paper
And I will only look at it for the first week
Before it becomes part of my palm something to rub (feel) between
my fingers
Another nervous habit I cannot drop

Front Row Seat to the Rebirth of the Universe

Cassandra Arencibia '24

Front Row Seat to the Rebirth of the Universe

Sunsets turn me off,

dry as the Sahara.

I drift away from things that are crowded around,

and boy does everyone stay awake for you.

Something about

carbon making sunsets prettier,

more alive,

turns me off.

I fear if I traveled back in time,

they'd look so boring.

Maybe that's my problem.

Maybe that's why I like you.

Sunrise.

It has been a long time since I woke this early.

Woken restlessly,

tangled in hot muggy sheets.

Eyes crusty, lids puffy, mouth cottony.

I ache with a monthly throb.

I almost call for Mom, for the thermometer under the armpit.

I have a lot to do, and a lot to be done,

there is no time for respite, no time for rest, not any longer.

So diagnose me so I can speedrun to wellness.

But all is quiet.

Save for softly singing birds.

And the deep collective breaths being taken,

or that will be taken,

this morning, a morning like any other.

I wish my bedroom windows still faced the sunrise,

because I remember still, watchful mornings as a girl

where all I did was listen to the sunrise.

Silence was a warm blanket, silence was my mother with a hot cup of coffee

a kiss on the forehead.

But I listened to what the sky told me,

The light blue and gray night fleeing into the where?

Nowhere.

And the sun was white as it gripped the horizon and hoisted itself up.

Tangled in hot muggy clouds

Eyes crusty, lids puffy, mouth cottony.

Morning breath galore.

Trees like freshly pressed laundry, yawned as the sun pulled off the sheets and quilts of night and stars.

The moon was already gone, already asleep behind sheds, windows, and churches.

And I cannot remember what I was thinking.

But I remember peace.

And joyful paralysis.

Like I could not move if I wanted to,
but why would I want to?



One Flower, Two of Us
Lillian DeFilippis '26

The Year We Were Ghosts

Grace McCormack '24

My classmates wanted nothing but to leave;
the halls were bare because they would not show.
This phantom year did not offer reprieve
from loneliness that crushes souls so slow.
They teased us just like starving men allowed
a bite of bitter stone disguised as cake.
We chewed the rock— our teeth became unbound,
and mouths were masked, so grins, no one could make.
They said, spring's end, we'd graduate en masse.
I blink and tassels swing from wind and rain.
Once friends, now strangers staged as one full class;
we're missing half, but we ignore the strain.
A year's gone by; it seems they all forget
the year we drifted, filling with regret.



Self Reflection
Tinsley Stewart '24
First Place, Art

Can You See?

Grace McCormack '24

Throats scream bullets trying to penetrate my mind,
hands seize me and try to hold me down.

I want them to stop, but I must be subtle because
no one will like me if they find out what's in my head.

Knowledge is leverage, but why do my punches prove weak on false facts?

Freedoms are only granted to those with similar thoughts, while
others are spat on because they are "dangerous, close-minded fools."
Respect is reserved for the robotic.

Youth was stripped away, precious time was lost, and kids are scared
of the future, yet I cannot help because there is tape over my mouth
under which I am screaming like an ambulance and am slowly suffocating
right in front of you. Can you see? Move the veil from your eyes and you'll
see.

Separately dominant in different parts of divided land; how can you stand
every day where your own country is your worst enemy?

Let the lies in. It's okay. But decide for yourself if they should stay.

Forced into your mind these snakes may be, but they only bite if you let
them.

Dyson Bricks

Gabriella Amleto '24

Oh great bricks
how you've fallen

how you've fallen
from your porous glory

how proudly you shone
in the splendor of sunsets

Packing away lectures upon lectures
into your earthen grain

only to be torn away
and downward

dashed into the Earth
in a pyre with your brethren
immortalized in past pictures
and faded memory

Grinding into the lectures
spilled forth (when broken to two)

spilling lecture upon lecture
secrets upon secrets
the ichor of knowledge

into the dust we tread upon
the mud stuck to our shoes
until the rain washes away the remnants

carry on through sands eternal
torn down for Progress

rebuilt for Modernity

Third Grade Year

Rebecca D'Ambrosio '24

Second Place, Nonfiction

We're driving around the block again, heading down the big hill. In about fifteen seconds we'll be in front of the stairs again. There are fourteen of them that I go up every morning. But for some unknown reason, I couldn't do it this morning, the same way I couldn't do it most other mornings. Mom looks back at me, concern and annoyance etched on her face. My sister was huffing and puffing in the front seat, her leg bouncing up and down underneath her uniform skirt – her high school locks the doors at 8:10 and it's her freshman year where first impressions count, and I'm making her late. My brothers both got out the first time around because they were in 8th and 6th grade and had places to be. My sister has to get to high school, Mom has to get to work, and most importantly, I have to get out of the car. So I get out, walk up the fourteen steps, and head to my third-grade classroom for morning prayers. Immediately, my eyes well with tears and I have only one thought in my head: *I need to go home.*

I keep my head down as I walk up the steps, my purple backpack seeming too big for my 8-year-old body as it knocks against the back of my knees. My school is a small school, every classroom from first through eighth

grade and the front office is in one long hallway. I walk down the hallway as I do every morning, lingering by the entrance of the sixth-grade classroom to see if I can sneak a peek at my brother, if I can communicate with him just how badly I can't be here right now, how badly I need comfort from someone. (I don't dare look in the eighth-grade classroom, the teacher is far too scary). I don't see him though, he probably doesn't want to be associated with the crying third grader, again. But, as I said, our school is a small school, everyone most likely already knows I'm his little sister. I'm sure someone had spotted him the previous week sitting on the beaten-up couch in front of the office at the end of the long hallway with his arm around me as I cried.

At the beginning of the year, I got a new haircut. My hair was cut short into a bob and I walked into my third-grade classroom with my head held high, my hair swishing behind me – I thought I looked like an adult. In the lull between arriving and morning announcements, where friends would talk and jackets would get hung up, a classmate came up to me and told me he liked my hair better when it was long. I immediately started to cry, my new haircut felt silly now. I went and told Ms. W that he

made fun of my new haircut and she looked at my crying face and told me everyone was allowed to have an opinion and it wasn't his fault that I got my feelings hurt. That was the first time I realized Ms. W didn't like me crying in her classroom. She'd go on to have that same cold attitude with me for the rest of our school year together. But what she failed to realize, was that I was eight years old, my parent's divorce was in the process of being finalized, my mom was suddenly working a lot more, and apparently, my new haircut was not good. But I cried too much in her classroom and Ms. W really did not like that.

So I walk into the classroom to my assigned desk and I keep the tears in. I'm determined to make it through the morning announcements, if I can make it through that, I can make it through the rest of the day and everyone will be proud of me. I keep it in for all of morning prayers but as soon as the principal comes over the loudspeaker and announces to turn and face the flag for the Pledge of Allegiance, the tears start. My classmates around me are singing "God Bless America" but I keep my mouth shut for fear I'll start blubbing. I know at this moment that I'm not making it through this school day, and it certainly isn't for lack of trying. I come to school every day, I am a good student, a great one even, but today is one of the days where that isn't possible, where what I really need

is to be home.

For the first time that morning, I pick my head up. I know I must look like a wreck, red-faced and snotty, with tears still rolling down my cheeks in steady rivulets, the sleeve of my uniform sweater a dark red from using it as a poor excuse for a tissue. I raise a shaking hand and make eye contact with Ms. W standing at her desk. With all my might I will my voice to stay steady as I plead,

"Can I go to the office please?"

At this point, only a few of my classmates pay any mind to me, it still feels like the school day hasn't started and you can sneak in a few more conversations. I don't register anyone else though, only Ms. W in vivid clarity as everything else in the classroom blurs out. Her face shifts into an expression I can still picture today, angry and annoyed and just plain done and she responds in front of the whole class,

"You can't come here every morning and cry and ask to go to the front office."

I don't know what to say. A part of me thinks there's no way she just said that. I continue to stand there and cry, mouth slammed shut, fingers picking at the sleeve of my damp red sweater. In a strange synchronicity that third graders don't usually have, all of my classmates turn to me and I feel all 22 pairs of eyes lock onto my bright-red face – we're one of the biggest grades in the school. That was another thing,

I never get in trouble, I never go out of my way to have a teacher's attention on me, I'm "a pleasure to have in class." So when I'm getting yelled at, everyone tunes in.

After what feels like a very long time, she sighs, rolls her eyes, and waves me away.

"Fine, go."

And as quickly as the school day started, I'm heading back to the main office. My jacket back on and my purple backpack knocking my knees. I know the routine from here. The secretary will call Mom, she'll say she's at work and can't come get me. She'll say "I'll call my father, he can come grab her." And I'll wait on the beaten-up couch in front of the main office until Grandpa shows up.

Later, I found out they'd gone off script that morning. That morning Ms. W must have been well and truly done with me and complained. That morning when they called Mom, it was the principal on the phone. She told my mom I was becoming a distraction. Mom apologized and said she was sending my grandfather over as soon as possible. But the principal said we shouldn't keep *rewarding* my behavior. As if this was all some ruse my eight-year-old self devised to get out of school. As if I pretended that walking up those 14 steps in the morning was the scariest thing I had to do every day. As if I wanted to be crying in front of my classmates and be humiliated by

my teacher. Mom didn't know how to respond to this and said plainly,

"Well you're telling me she's a distraction when she cries but you're also telling me I can't have her picked up when she stops crying, so what else do you suggest?"

A quick twenty minutes later and Grandpa came for me that morning, the same way he does most other mornings. He calls me "Doll" and gives me a kiss on the head while the secretary points him to the sign-out sheet. Then, he takes my backpack off my back, grabs my hand, and we walk down the long hallway, past eighth grade and the scary teacher, past the 6th-grade classroom, past Ms. W and my classmates in third grade, and we go out the door at the end where his white mini-van is parked. We go back to Grandma and Grandpa's and I spend the day watching *The Price is Right* tucked into their dark gray couch with the soft red blanket. Grandpa makes me a cup of tea with just a bit too much lemon and hands me two pretzel rocks with a wink (we usually only got one). And for just a little bit, for a few hours, everything is okay again.

AS SMALL GIRL WITH
STRAWBERRY SPOTTED SOCKS
SENT OUT A PRAYER THAT
A SILLY LITTLE FLY
WOULD LEAVE HER HAIR

BYE
BYE
BIRDIE

FORGET ME NOT'S
THOSE QUAIN'T FLOWERS
WHOSE PRETTY PETALS
ALWAYS SEEM TO COWER

... WHEN LOVE DIES
SHE FOUND SOLACE
IN THOUGHTS OF
THE DIVINE

THE EYES
SEE THROUGH
A CANOED
GUISE

... BUT IN
THE LAST HOUR
SHE RESENTED
HIS FRUITLESS
POWER

TORPIDOS AND
MOSQUITOS BUZZ
BEFORE THEY BITE
DESTRUCTION IMMENSE
IN FLIGHT BEFORE SIGHT

THE
WORLD
WAS
NOTHING
MORE THAN THE THOUGHTS
OF A MOUSE AND HER SERPENT
PLAYMATE

WHY DOES DEATH
CONSPIRE SO SOON
AFTER WE RETIRE!

BUZZ BUZZ REMINDS
ME I WILL NEVER
KNOW EVERY CREATURE
THERE EVER WAS

SHHH!

-84

Natural Order
Brianna Rullo '25

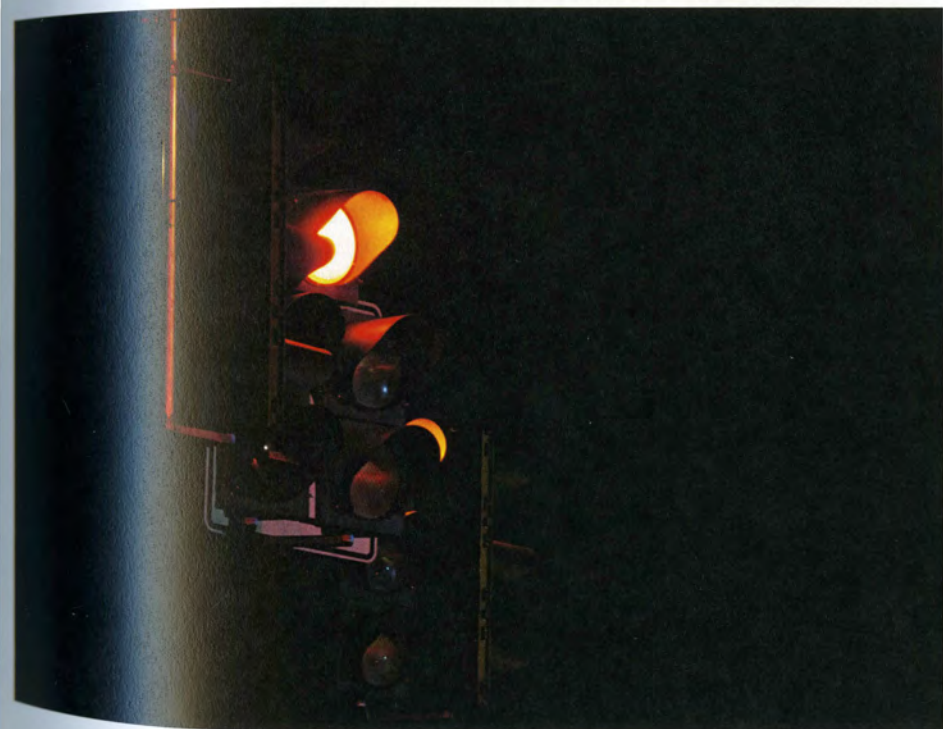


This is me trying
Sydney Sailer '25

Confrontation

Bridget McGuire '26

Hi, it's been a while
I don't want to be back together
But I thought you'd like to know I was alive
I'm glad you couldn't answer.
That's what I'll say
But I'll forget to.



a month at marist
Andrew Chiafullo '26

Saints and Self-Checkout

Michaela Ellison-Davidson '23

Second Place, Fiction

We met in April, the white devastation of winter in the springtime. Snow covered everything: the hoods of cars, the shoulders of my coat, the walkway to the supermarket.

He was standing at the self-checkout. He held a carton of milk and a bundle of yellow roses, the buds not yet in full bloom. Our exchange was simple. He'd scanned an item twice. I left the service desk to clear his order. He held the flowers like a preacher holds their Bible, his expression thoughtful.

"Flowers and milk," I said. "And they say romance is dead."

I'd never liked anyone before—not in an inherently romantic way—and I thought: I'm going to like you. I'm going to like you and write a story about it. As if to exploit something. As if to prove to myself I could feel anything at all.

His name was Wes and the roses were for Lana. He lived with her in the trailer park behind the grocery store, the rusted door of his mobile home covered in red chipped paint.

I worked in that grocery store my senior year of high school, a horrible job, and Wes came in on occasion. He would make a small purchase, something like

milk or soup. But it was always yellow roses. He never left without them.

I'd come into work hungover; it was spring break, the evening before alluding to the poor choices of kids who had no prospects. Wes walked up to the service desk, his hands braced on the counter. He wanted to know why there were no yellow roses. I told him I didn't have a clue; I wasn't a florist.

"You're incredibly unhelpful—" he squinted at my nametag— "Ruby."

I met his stare. He couldn't have been older than nineteen. "I'm sorry," I said. "Would you like to reserve an order?"

He nodded. I ended up delivering the flowers to his doorstep a few hours later. He opened the door, motioning me inside. Wes wasn't attractive, not in a physical sense, but there was something beautiful about him; you didn't wish to look away. From then on we became rudimentary friends.

And what can be said about our rudimentary friendship? I sat in his bed one evening and drank cheap beer, Lana lying on the floor. Wes had his head turned towards the window, hair falling into his face, and I wanted to reach over and touch him. For a moment I considered

... my fingertips brushing his skin, his sharp intake of breath, my body moving languidly beside his own. I was ashamed of these thoughts; these were not fantasies I was willing to let myself have. He had made his intentions clear; he was in love with Lana.

I finished my beer and asked for another. He stood and returned shortly after. I held the bottle between my shaking hands, not saying anything. I could have written a hundred meaningless lines that night, and every one would have been about him.

...
We were sitting in his car, Wes dressed in thrift store clothes, and everything was wet—sidewalks shining under fluorescent lights—the windshield wipers off despite the rain. I turned towards him, his face flat and suffering, houses with forgotten holiday lights blurring my vision.

He had both hands on the wheel, his eyes darting between me and the non-existent traffic. The digital clock said it was past four in the morning, the dew-like atmosphere of dawn putting us in a disillusioned state. I couldn't explain what I felt for Wes. I wanted his company. I did, and yet it always had to be something more.

He wanted nothing from me—not kindness, not sex. At first I was offended by his lack of romantic attention, his unwillingness, his love for Lana. But it made the acquaintance more realistic—he was

choosing to stay because he wanted to, not out of obligation, but out of a silent sort of trust.

Having him as a friend—I wanted to tell him so many things. I didn't know why. There was no explanation for the way I wished to divulge the entirety of my life to him. All these things, I thought, there was power in wondering what I would let him know, what parts of me I would let him have.

Back in the car Wes was speaking and I was thinking about a painting.

"I feel like that 'Lichtenstein,'" I said and he paused to stare at me. "The one where the girl is on the floor, a single tear in her eye." I looked away, his eyes too brutal to meet. "Hopeless—but it's hopeless."

And when he told me his favorite novel we were seated beneath the underpass, his head rolled back to face the stars. He spoke about that novel for a long time, never pausing, never stopping to know my thoughts. In those moments he wanted me to listen. In those moments I always did. Him—like a religious icon—me at his feet ready to sacrifice myself. It was always like that. He liked to say he was a terrible person, but to me he was a saint. That was the thing about Idols—you create them so they can destroy you.

He wondered all the time if he could ever really love someone. He told me stories about his childhood, about his past relationships, all the people who had

wronged him in a way. He told me these things without remorse, but in the fashion of an unreliable narrator. I couldn't blame him. We lie to save ourselves. Nothing is ever really true if you stop and think about it.

We are always fascinated by distant people anyway, the ones who are difficult to understand. Wes shared himself sparingly. I was drawn to him out of his own allusiveness. I needed to know more. And in the end, I never really knew him at all.

...

We were at a party and Wes was smoking a cigarette, both of us leaning against the porch rail. We stood there, Wes releasing smoke like he was releasing all his pain, and me helplessly enamored by him. Something like that could only hide within you for so long before it hemorrhaged, blinding you like the white headlights of a car.

We were quiet, a bad kind of quiet, and drunk. Very drunk. Wes watched me with half-closed eyes, his hand reaching to hold mine. He dropped his cigarette, the ashes falling in vain. We paused in that moment, the two of us unsure what to do, and I wondered if I should say something, if I should console him sweetly instead of doing what I'd told myself I wouldn't do all along.

The golden glow of the street lights illuminated his face, the bright specks visible in his eyes. He drew me towards

him. Our mouths met, our lips pressed tight against one another, then he turned away and searched the ground.

"It can't be like this," he said. "I promised Lana."

He looked at me with a thoughtful expression and I wanted to say something. Maybe a 'fuck you' but instead I said nothing. All this time in turmoil and Wes—Wes like a lost appendage—and I had the audacity to wonder why Van Gogh cut off his own ear. I could not simply be his friend. I couldn't and I hated myself for it.

"Ruby," he said and for a moment I gave him my attention. "I care about you. I do."

I didn't know what to say. How could you tell someone that the reason you're upset is because you're angry that you love them?

Summer passed as if it may never end. Everything felt pale and worthless like a bundle of dried flowers. I had attempted to share my heart once; I would share it again.

I saw Wes one last time; we were in the grocery store. He was looking at the roses, turning over the petals to check for imperfections. He did not notice me and with this realization I bought my eggs and my bread, my wounded hands shaking as I reached for the receipt at self-checkout.

Nobody Doesn't Get Enough Credit

Eve Fisher, '24

Third Place, Poetry

If I were nobody, I think I would be happy.

Nobody doesn't fail or disappoint.

Because

Nobody has nothing to prove.

Somebody always has something to prove.

Nobody doesn't hide how they feel.

Because

Nobody doesn't have to please.

Everyone counts on Somebody

Nobody doesn't have anxiety

Because

Nobody doesn't overthink.

Somebody's thinking corrupts their mind with doubt.

Nobody doesn't doubt their worth.

Because

Nobody lives.

To live is to experience. To be alive is to survive.

Somebody is alive.

But

Somebody doesn't know how to live.

If I were Nobody, I would know how to live.

Nobody is free and Nobody doesn't have to be me.

What I would give to be nobody.



1/5

JETTY

[Signature] K 2025

Jetty
Kaitlyn Dugan '25

Elevator Talk

Adam L Freda '26

It seems we meet the most interesting
People when we have the least
Time to talk

It's consider a mode of travel
A shotty one at best

The numbers ding like
Orders in a café

There's no coffee to drink though
Only rough air to drink up

Rarely talking occurs
It can be lovely when it does
But never, never does it

Hit beyond a name

Or a surface-level means

The buttons interrupt every word

The tap and the ringing occurs

Just for two more to

Get off and on

With a drink and a talk

That will last for never

skippity be do wop yeah

Stew Leonardo '23

I wish I could talk about mental illness
That I cannot achieve that mental stillness
A moment of mindfulness provides
Instead,
My brain decides to think
Think about what?
Think about who?
Think about how the sky is blue?
Think about all there is to think,
Think about how much I think
Thinking “wow,
I need a drink!”
Other people think I’m quiet
Or see me as the girl who doodles
Intimated by tattoos and one heck of a “Resting bitch face”
But that couldn’t be more off base
I’m actually the loudest one in the place
You just can’t hear me screaming
Or realize that my head is teeming
With thousands of thoughts I can’t control
Sometimes it makes me physically ill
I’ve tried breathing, being still
In for four 1...2...3...4...
Hold for two 1...2...
Out for six 1...2...3...4...5...6...
Lather, rinse, repeat.
I’m sick of the smell of Lavender
“Oh you can’t sleep, try melatonin.”
Did Lady Bird star Saoirse Ronan?
(Yes. She did. And yes, I have)
But some with anxieties you can’t fix with a pill
Trust me, I’ve tried.
I have orange bottles everywhere
In every size, with every label

I try to repurpose them, when I'm able.
I make them into flower pots
Making spaces to put away my thoughts
The best I can do it get the thoughts in line
So I can think about them one at a time
Write my poem line by line
And try not to think
About you
You, dear reader
Reading through this poem
Thinking "it's alright"
And then moving on...



Drowning
Amanda Nessel '25

My Grandma's Hair

Kelly Keenan '23

First Place, Nonfiction

The smell of smokey, sweet tobacco fills me with resentment as I begin the five-minute drive from school to my grandparents' condo. My portable speaker, and makeshift radio, rattles in the cup holder, but I'm too lazy to connect my phone. Instead, I drive in silence; silence accompanied by the continuous squeaks of my 2000 Ford Focus which tirelessly aches along mile by mile. My right hand grips the cracked leather wheel while the fingers on my left mindlessly dig into the burn holes that line the khaki velour seat. I feel my eyes wander beyond the hazed driver's side window in search of the first signs of spring. Early April has brought only a sparse sprinkling of buds among a sea of dead branches.

Technically, the disturbingly hearse-like scrap metal I drive belongs to my grandmother, not me. In fact, I loathe this seventeen-year-old piece of shit. The chipped white exterior that reveals luminescent metal, the profound tobacco scent I pointlessly try to scrub out, and the painfully sharp

screach of the rusted brakes, inspire unexplainable shame within me. None of which compare to the hatred I feel towards the seventeen years of tattered burn holes that I sit next to every day. Burn holes left by a woman who smoked her years away one pack at a time. A woman who can't do much anymore, hence why I drive her car.

My five minutes of silence end as I turn into the driveway. I put the car in park, twist my keys out of the ignition and open the car door—cue the obnoxious croak which no amount of WD-40 can silence. Stepping out into the crisp air and walking through the garage door, which is always open, I mentally prepare myself for the task ahead. I prepare to wash my grandmother's hair.

The tedious process of washing my grandma's hair began in March after she fell and shattered her wrist. She spent three weeks in the hospital, her body and mind rapidly deteriorating. Morbid or not, I've anticipated my grandmother's death for a while now. I always imagine

what I will say, do, or feel when it happens, but even as I watched my grandma start to fade away in that hospital bed, I could not predict the strength of my eventual grief. It would be cruel to prematurely understand the pain of her absence. Eventually, she returned home, no longer able to complete simple human tasks. So, I wash her hair. Not because I want to but because she needs me to.

The hot, dry air of my grandparents' home overwhelms me. As I attempt to adjust to the drastic temperature change, I walk toward my grandma, Chi, and bend down to hug her. She rests in her worn dark-brown leather reclining chair that morphed itself to the shape of her body long ago. She hugs me back and asks me how my day was.

I reply, "Tiring."

"You're too young to be tired," she informs me with a laugh. I reply with a deadpan look and turn away to grab her hair products from the second floor, her chuckles following me as I ascend the stairs.

With my hands overflowing with a variety of hair care, I make my way back downstairs and call for Chi to meet me at the kitchen sink. I set the shampoo, conditioner, comb, and bobby pins down alongside

the drying rack of clean dishes. Chi turns the sink on, and we follow through with the tedious routine of finding the perfect water temperature. "This good?" I ask her as the lukewarm water runs over my fingers.

"No, too cold," she barks back. In response, I turn the faucet handle a centimeter to the left. "Ouch!" my grandma hisses and pulls her hand back from the sink. Like the car, the condo's amenities no longer perform as seamlessly as they once did, and the water temperature is rather sensitive.

"Sorry, sorry," I tell her, pushing the handle back to the right. We continue this dance, me blindly shifting the faucet handle from left to right and her telling me the water is either too cold or too hot, for what feels like an eternity, but is most likely about three minutes. Finally, Chi gives up on finding the perfect temperature. We land on the same lukewarm water that she rejected many moments ago.

Now that the right water temperature has been found, my grandma removes her glasses and lowers her head into the sink face first. Water begins to rush from the nape of her neck down to the crown of her

head. Chi doesn't need my help for this part of the process, so I sit at the small wooden table and watch. The bony fingers on her good hand grip the inches of counter space between her and the sink. Under the weight of her frail body, the veins in her forearm protrude, purple and blue rods bulging through her paper-thin skin. Her supple cheeks hang towards her eyes, and her body disappears into the pink floral nightgown that consumes her. I begin to laugh because if I don't find the crazy sight of my grandma bent over the kitchen sink with wet hair in her face funny, I will find it so sad that I won't ever be able to look at her again.

Once Chi's hair is sufficiently wet, it's my time to shine. I pull up my sleeves and grab the bottle of Pantene shampoo. A sharp rose scent radiates through the kitchen as silky white liquid pools in my palm—a smell I'll come to remember my grandma by once she is gone. The shampoo foams beneath my fingers as work it into Chi's scalp. I remove the faucet head from its base and wash the suds away. I do my best to block the water from hitting her face, but droplets inevitably run down her forehead and pool in the hollows of her cheeks. We repeat

the process with the conditioner, focusing now on the very short ends of her hair. Ends which were once tightly permed and dyed black, resting three inches off her scalp. Ends which now rest in soft grey waves right below her chin.

I turn the water off and grab the towel for her hair when she asks, "Did you happen to see a scar on my head?"

"Uh, no. Why?" I ask, concerned that she may have hurt herself again.

"Are you sure? Look again," she insists, ignoring my question. I double-check her scalp before wrapping her hair in a towel and walking with her to the table.

"Why would you have a scar on your head?" I question again as I help her into the wooden chair, this time with more confusion in my voice.

"Oh, it's nothing really," she insists. "Just kind of a funny story."

"So, tell me," I reply. Typically, my grandma and I talk about me—my friends, my schoolwork, my sports. Rarely does Chi make things about herself, and rarely do I bother to care or even notice.

As I pin up my grandma's wet locks, she begins her story. She tell

me about the time she was riding a horse at her grandparent's farm in Pennsylvania, where she stayed every summer, and ended up cracking her head open. She had decided to ride her horse across the creek where a snake bit its leg. The horse unexpectedly reared, catapulting my grandma into the creek where her head landed on a rock, leaving a scar that has somehow disappeared.

Looking back, I won't remember the exact words that came out of my grandma's mouth that day. I won't remember who she was with or how old she was when this all took place. I won't remember the accident's aftermath or how the moment may have changed her. What I will remember is combing through my grandma's coarse, dark hair while listening to a ridiculous story about a life that still feels foreign to me today. I'll remember laughing

and asking questions and getting my first look into the life of someone who has always known me, but whom I had hardly come to know.

My car door groans as I shut it. I'm surrounded once again by thick ashy air, accompanied by the early spring chill that I have grown unaccustomed to. A shiver runs down my spine. I am in silence once again. A profound sense of loss, or maybe of mourning consumes me. I long for something or someone I have never known and may not have enough time to know. In a few weeks, this car will break down and die. In a few months, my grandma will follow. But right now, with my back against the worn tan seat and my fingers dug into the burn holes that rest beside me, I have a new image of my grandma; and in it, she has never seemed more alive.



The Trees of Peace
Nina Bisco '24

Inspiration

Victoria Conley '25

I sit - and I write,
And I write.
As I try not to cry.
As I think of my life,
From someone else's eyes.
Condense and inspire,
The moments I long to forget.
Inspiration is fickle!
I pray I never forget.
I long for the day,
I sit - and I write,
About a happier day.
With a smile.
Like a rose with its thorns,
Beautiful and admired,
But ready to fight.

Diving into You

Kat Bilbija '24

I would love to know
what wind moves your feet,
what inspires your joy and
what molds the words
that come from your
wine-colored lips.

The ideas behind your
unfinished sentences, tell
me the pigmented thoughts
you bury under a pile of
unfolded cards everyone
else tries to interpret.

I would love to see the world
in the way you romanticize
the tea-filled mug cupped
in between your hands.
To feel dizzy from hours of
breathing in your spirit,
from swimming in the wild
love letters planted within
your Spotify playlists.

I would love to never speak
again, to only listen at the
yellow-brick stories you
have foldered away for
the right moment to share.
To open up the layered
stickers on your computer,
to hear of the stores and
stories that birthed your rings,
to peel away your Instagram
bio and reveal the threads
of your real voice.

I would love nothing more,
if you'll let me step up,
than to dive into you.

Begin Again

Mia Garofalo '23

From the crook I speak,
Bending and straightening,
Like a baby bird I am learning
How to walk before I fly,
And I acknowledge it is not weakness
To rebuild what was once broken,
But triumph to revive and renew.

And once I'm in full flight again,
I must remember how to be me,
How to care for and love myself as I do the world.
So please don't mistake my empathy for passivity,
I am not a nest, a savior,
I am no man's grace.
Rising above it all does not make me a phoenix.

But everyday I'm a little stronger,
Instinctual, still,
Scavenging for peace while crawling out of chaos,
With shiny new feathers,
Glittering, but never ostentatious.



spring 2022
J Pinkans '24

To be a girl...

Kelly Keenan '23

To be a girl is to be
everything
and nothing
all at once

A girl is just as pure
As she is sweet
She is a body to be worshiped
A body to be reaped

To be a girl is to be
A delicate and beautiful flower
Aimlessly floating with no aspirations
And no power

She is an idealized image
Impermanently perfected
Torn down again and again
Dematerialized and rejected

As a fragment of a whole
I must sit pretty in my objectivity
Just because I am a girl
The most inessential being.

numbers

Kirsten Mattern '24

5/25/22

numbers never lie. numbers are reliable, dependable, honest. they provide structure and stability and numbers always tell the truth.

i love the number 3 because it was on my softball jersey and i hate the number 7 because everyone always picked it first. at night i listen to the 9 at 9 on Z100 while i drive 25 on a residential road. when i glance at my calendar i throw a heart on the 11th but i hate the 27th because it reminds me that in june i'll be 20 and 6 months. i love when the numbers 4 and 5 hold hands on the pavement in a game of hopscotch.

(and i can't stand when a 4 sits next to 99 cents per gallon.)

to ground myself, i count. i make lists and tallies and throw numbers in a notebook for no reason other than to keep track, to remind me that i'm here. recently i took a tally in a honeycomb sketchbook at the park. at 12:30, a preschool class came outside for recess. i counted

1 princess crown

2 capes

5 rocks (thrown)

1 tree (hugged)

3 strapped-on glasses

2 Marios, 1 Minnie, and 1 Pikachu

6 Happy Birthday songs (1 birthday boy)

23 tiny smiling students

recently, we have not been blessed with these kinds of happy classroom
statistics. instead we are facing numbingly painful numbers;
18 years old, the legal age to purchase an AR-15 in texas
10 years since the massacre at sandy hook
27 school shootings in 2022
300 rounds of ammunition bought legally by a murderer
693 mass shootings in 2021, 213 total in this year thus far
2 days before their summer break
21 innocent lives lost
19 children, 19 angels, 19 funerals, 19 graves, 19 names
0 policy change
countless families' tears, an entire nation's worth of grief
these numbers are not grounding, they're unbearable, unbelievable, un-
speakable.
yesterday was the first day that i wished the numbers were liars.

Ascension

Jeremy Skeelee '23

First Place, Fiction

My reflection changed recently.

No one else can see it though. Just me.

It started a couple of weeks ago. I woke up for work, went to brush my teeth, opened the bathroom door, turned to the mirror and just about passed out. I had to look away at first -- it was just so bright. But after my eyes adjusted, they saw... my eyes. Obviously. But in the reflection, they were a pure, glowing white. No pupils, no iris, nothing. Just energy.

I closed my eyes. Blinked a billion times. Lied down on the floor, cried a little bit. Prayed, even though I'm not religious. Cleaned the mirror. But each time I looked, the result was unchanging - just glowing white eyes.

I took the day off work, panicked for all of it, and went to bed as early as I could, hoping sleep would fix whatever the hell was going on with me. And somehow, I was still disappointed when it did not, and the following morning I looked into a reflection that was gleaming back at me.

But now in the mirror, I had two large white wings on my back. Startled, I jumped, and as I moved the wings moved with me. This was it. The proof that I was truly going insane. I took another day off of work, spending all day avoiding looking in mirrors, waiting to go to sleep and hoping that somehow, tomorrow would be better.

It wasn't.

As I arrived to look at my reflection that morning -- I didn't just look different. In fact, the reflection was already in the mirror, moving separately from me. Like it was waiting for me. And it spoke to me.

"You may speak," it said. "I am sure you have questions."

"What's happening to me?" I asked to both the reflection and myself.

"You don't know," the reflection answered, "and that is alright. You need not know. You need just accept."

"Am I not you?"

"Not yet. No, you are undergoing a wonderful transformation."

"I'm going insane."

"Says who?"

"If I were to ask? Literally anyone."

"Do you think we're insane?"

"We?"

At this point, I had to remind myself I was having a conversation with my reflection because it did not seem like it. Where I slouched they stood straight, and where my expression was aghast they were emotionless.

"There's no us," I told it. "Whatever you --"

"Think of me as what you could be."

"Why would I --"

"Want to be anything like me? Because right now you're fractured. Look at you - you're a mess. You can't focus, you trail off, you stutter. You're only a piece of yourself without me."

What was this? What was this thing talking to me?

"Are you an angel?" I finally asked.

It laughed. It laughed my laugh. And it kept going, and echoing, laughter bouncing off walls until it was the only sound I could hear, until it became unrecognizable as laughter, until it was simply a hollow noise that sounded like a large, ringing bell.

"It matters not what I am. Think this -- what are you without me?"

"I don't..."

But as I said this, the reflection said it with me. It moved with me. No longer was it something separate, on its own, against me. It was me, again. Besides the wings or eyes.

Or maybe including the wings or eyes.

God, what a scary thought.

I'm not an angel.

I'm not.

I've been going through the motions. Work, eat, sleep, sit around for hours doing nothing. But I can't focus. I go, I sit, I leave. They can't possibly understand all that's happening to me. This transformation (illness?) leaves no room for typing in numbers and pretending to care about things that do not matter.

When my reflection spoke, it asked what I am without it.

Obviously, one part of me says without it I am sane. Without it, I have a decent corporate job and even though my apartment has a constant hum and flickering lights, it's a place of my own.

But that's all I have. I do not have friends to share worries with. I do not have a lover, have not had one for years. I am alone. I've chased off those who have cared for me in the past; I've been too erratic, too talkative, too unfocused, too

rude.

And for a long time, I have been fine with this. But now my eyes glow and I have large wings and with each passing day my skin turns a little more gray. Obviously, I would love to look in the mirror and see myself again. To be normal. But I do not think that is happening. I look in the mirror and I see an angel.

So why not be one?

I have stopped going to work.

It's not like it matters anymore. Not like it ever did. They call, but I ignore it. I have more important things going on. Most of my days are spent staring at my reflection, and myself. I keep the mirror clean, pristine. I can not afford to dirty it. My skin is gray, not only in the reflection, but also when I look down at my own hands. My wings are as soft as ever and my eyes glow just as bright.

It no longer makes me scared, looking in the mirror. It feels right. More right than typing numbers in spreadsheets and sitting quietly alone. As I walk, I sometimes feel like my wings are pulling me off the ground, giving me a taste of flight before I land.

I spent so much time questioning what is real, and what is not. But at least to me, this reflection is real. These wings are real, my eyes are real, my skin is real. I am real. And I am done pretending my reflection is a curse. It need only weigh me down if I let it.

I turn now to my reflection.

It looks at me, moving as I do.

We are one.

Almost.

Not quite yet.

"Talk to me again."

"What do you want me to say?"

"I want to know if this is right."

"It is. Of course it is. You know it is"

"Then it's time."

"Time for what?"

"To commit."

I move my body and reflection.

My hands go to touch the mirror.

I make contact.

I feel my truest self now.

None of their words have merit. I know what I am. An Archangel. A true divine. It was unclear to me before. But there is no mistaking it now. What sort of power provides this glow? What can gift flight and change appearance on a whim? Only those things of greater power.

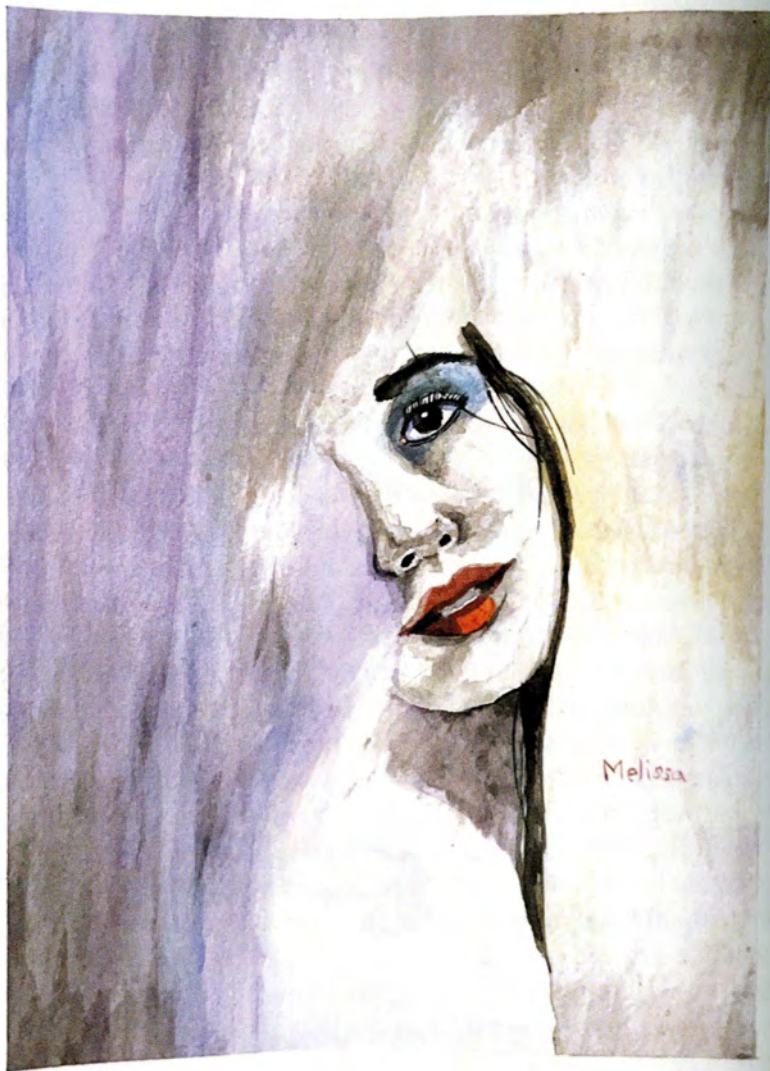
It's sad to me, how much of my life I have spent wasted at work. I quit the other day. Drove all the way there and threw open the doors. I told them that I was something greater now. That sitting behind a computer, typing in numbers wasn't right for me. I told them of my wings and my eyes. They did not take kindly to it. Some yelled, some questioned, some sat silent -- but none offered sympathy or understanding.

When they didn't want me there anymore, I left. Because why stay?

Of course, I knew others wouldn't believe me. Why would they? For the longest time, I barely believed it myself. They will never accept it. Still, it seems someone took it to heart, their disagreement with me. Multiple men showed up at my house a few nights ago, asked me questions. And what kind of angel lies? What kind of angel is so ashamed of being an angel? No kind of angel at all. So I told them the truth. I told them what I was.

They asked me to come with them, and I am not a creature for conflict. I agreed. They lead me to a large facility - a cold, slate building in a wooded area. They brought me in here, and it is where I have sat since. They bring me from room to room, doctor to doctor. They ponder what sickness ails me. Give me pills and medicines and scans. None of which has or ever will explain the reflection. Explain my angelic form. Because it is not of the mind; it is real.

Since they do not know what to do with me, they simply push me to the side. Put me in a large room. It has no furniture or features besides pure white walls and floor. Bright light shines down. I sit, I reflect, I ponder. I enjoy my form, my spirit, my freedom. I do not mind being here. Physical location matters not to something like me. And when none of the eyes are watching and I am alone at night, I let loose my wings, and for a brief moment -- I fly.



Sense of Self
Melissa Hering '25

Living Without You

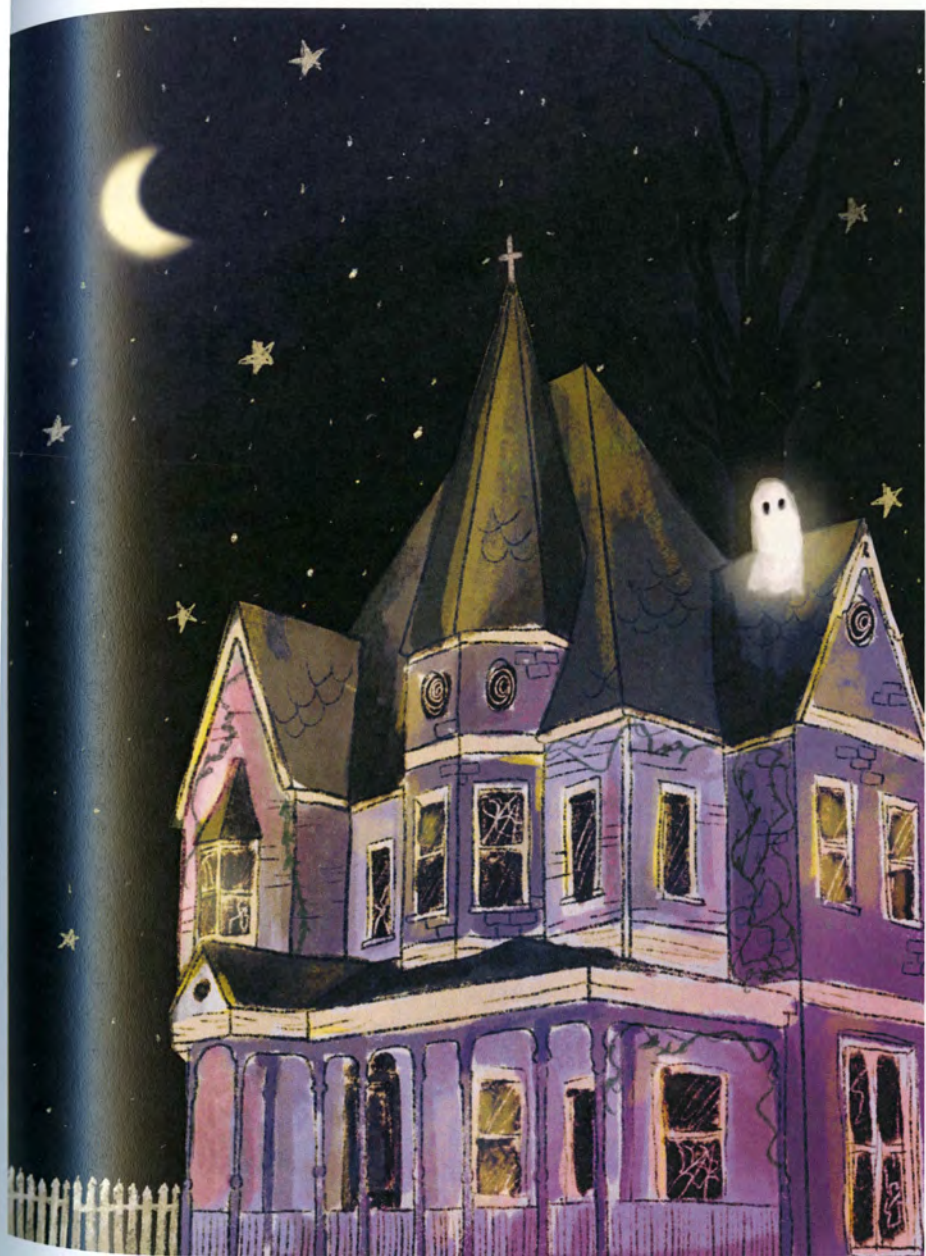
Riley Mazzocco '26

Seeing you with someone else breaks my heart.
Thinking what we had was special
And it would always be that way.
But you found someone new
And you're happy
And I wish I could hate you for it
But I'll never hate you
Because once you were mine
And I can't ever forget that.
Memories I cherish
Messages you sent
Pictures together
I hold on to them tightly
Because a part of me is yours
And I find myself hoping you'll reclaim it.

Flawless

Caroline Willey '26

Planned a cute outfit for the gym today,
But I have got to wash out the bloodstains.
Would have finished the whole book yesterday,
But light is something I have yet to gain.
I want to doodle hearts around or names,
But none of my pens have ink anymore.
I want to stay up late playing card games,
But this exhaustion makes waking a chore
You answered his questions with confidence,
But my cheeks turn red when I have to speak.
Your outfits make me stare with such reverence,
But you didn't notice my eight-year-old sneaks.
So you'll keep having it all figured out;
I'll watch from behind 'til you turn around.



Ghost My Friend
Victoria Rose Amador '23

Creaking and Clunking

Madisyn K.H. Martinelli '24

Third Place, Nonfiction

Seasons are like people. Sultry and sweaty, frigid, and subdued, blossoming and decrepit. We're like the leaves that glide through the air and land on my paddle boat, going through chemical changes, disappearing, and developing new characteristics as the seasons break us down.

The air was airless, and the water was murky and shallow. Maybe that was why our paddle boat was stuck in the sand, or perhaps it was because my legs were too short. The water sloshed and splashed at the back of our paddle boat, slapping us to move out of the way. My dad, ignoring the water's yells, patiently explained to me how to steer and how to paddle (though we both knew he would be doing most of the work). Still not moving, the water grew impatient, tugging and tugging us down slightly to the left as if to instigate a brawl.

The water was lonely. It was a dreary old pond, big enough to wander but not to get lost. Conner, who was younger than me, rowed his boat gently and tiredly, regretting that he decided to push against the water alone. Everything seemed calmer where he was; less hassle, less wrastle. Where Conner was, seemed like a dream, the water cradling his boat. If only my feet could reach the pedals.

I had been to a beach before, with the sand becoming a new layer of skin and the salty air rushing through my nostrils, making my head spin. But this was different. The air smelled loamy and tasted of gaiety. The water was lovingly now, holding our paddle boat steady as my father scolded my brother, who seemed to continuously lean to one side of his

boat, waiting for something to pull him under.

My dad spent most of his life working for the engineering career he wanted. Never had he spent any of that time camping. He only ever considered "camping" to be "Glamping": a cabin, beds, a kitchen, and air conditioning. Especially when most nights, the humid air was what kept him awake, where his thoughts always seemed to multiply in size.

My mother spent most of her childhood in a rickety old cabin that rocked back and forth on the edge of a lake in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada. But every time I watched her step out into the brisk air, she never seemed keen on the dirt that went on her shoes.

The trees towered over us, hovering in, protecting us from the dying sun. But my eyes still twitched as the arcade lights danced alluringly, desperately trying to get me to dance too. If only my legs weren't too short. I looked at my father, with his freckled face and button nose, hoping to see him smile again. He turned towards me, shaking his head, and holding in his hardy laugh, as my brother's boat stopped tilting.

"Your brother is a troublemaker," he said, chuckling towards me. The sound of his laughter rang through the air and whispered the memory into my ear. I laughed and looked down towards my feet and back up to his chestnut eyes. He always seemed so imperishable to me; that no matter what, he'd always be there. "I'm proud of you," he whispered, glancing at my brother again. The paddle boat creaked underneath his words, causing our boat to tilt again as my mother yelled through the thick air to come back, stepping in mud as she walked to the shore.

We seemed happy, with a distressed paddle boat trying to hold itself together, my brother who seemed to want to find Atlantis, my father trying to regain his patience as the boat started to creak and clunk, and my

mother, who seemed to be so far away.

I guess we always seemed happy. Even when we watched the sun die out, and the darkness take over, and even when our paddle boating exhibition seemed to die out in memory. It was like my father was always satisfied even with dying memories and troubled vacations. Somehow, I felt at ease when: the sun drew out all its power, and my father pulled me into a pool; when he yelled my name lost in a corn maze waiting for my help, when he thanked a bunch of strangers for meeting him here (in an elevator) and even when his patience exceeded its limit and demanded the Great Wolf Lodge employee, Betty, that we get our pizza.

But that ease faded, and the rush of disinfectants and Clorox stung my nose. All the shine, white, and cleanliness screamed, "DO NOT TOUCH ME!" As I wrapped my arms tightly around my body, praying that I didn't disobey the rules of this foreign place, where everyone didn't understand personal boundaries and rhythmic beeping counted down your life. With the air blowing my hair from my right shoulder to the left, I saw the gazed woman sitting in the stiff chair closest to the wall. Her hair was chestnut brown with an overwhelming amount of gray, and her eyes were glossy as she stared at the man in the hospital bed. Her body caved into herself, and her face drooped down as her head shook. Her arms were the only form of stability; she seemed so lost. Her eyes wandering for a different truth. Her mouth hung open, but no sound flew out. It was horrifically quiet. Both of us ignoring each other. I saw the woman tighten, the void in her body expanding, nothing to fill all the empty space she felt.

"I can feel it too, Nana," I wanted to say, but I squeezed my arms tighter and left her be. Her sobs grew loud as I grew quieter, staring at a

man I thought I knew. He looked so cold, so dismantled, like he needed extra puzzle pieces to make him whole again. I wondered if I twisted one of the eight knobs staring at me that maybe he'd crank up like a winding toy. But the nurse with the magenta scrubs pulled me away before I could try.

I watched as my mom never left his side. She held his head close, his glasses touching hers, giving him a little bit of her warmth. My brother climbed into the small space beside his arm, and I dangled next to his stomach and leg. Then it went silent. The beeping, the crying; it all stopped. And he turned colder and hollow as if all his memories, all of who he was had dispersed.

My mother sat there silently, still resting her head against his, and my brother, holding onto his chest so tightly said, "I can't feel dad's heartbeat anymore."

So maybe I was lying that day on the paddle boat. Maybe my legs weren't too short. Maybe I didn't want to move at all. Maybe I just wanted to stay right there, where the vibration of my dad's laugh shook my brain with joy and his freckles popped from the glare of the sun. Maybe I just wanted to remember what it was like to have him here, in the water, on earth, with me, just creaking and clunking like the paddle boat—just trying to stay afloat.

I'm Here Too

Grace McCormack '24

I am laid to rest through life in this flesh coffin.
Why am I just a body to you?
Don't forget that I'm here in this skin.

You promise to pull back the heavy, black curtain,
yet I'm shoved into an itchy, ill-fitting costume before you do.
I am laid to rest through life in this flesh coffin.

With me, there's no need to dwell on ideas of perfection.
I fit no mold, hold with no glue; there's no need to cut any residue,
just don't forget that I'm here in this skin.

Don't become addicted to the capsule without considering what is within;
I know it's easy to become distracted by the halo of youth with its golden
hue.
I am laid to rest through life in this flesh coffin.

When bright eyes go dark and beauty fades to ruin,
and cheeks become cobwebbed when they once shone like fresh honeydew,
don't forget that I'm here in this skin.

You won't be able to ignore me when the face is no longer porcelain.
I wonder if you'll love me then, and finally see me as a virtue.
I am laid to rest through life in this flesh coffin;
don't forget that I'm here in this skin.

Phone Calls

Rebecca D'Ambrosio '24

I've called your phone twice.
Once when you were alive,
And once when you were dead.

Nick had gone to see you,
He told me not to go
"It's bad, Beck."
So I didn't go.

The hearing is the last thing to go,
That's what we were told.
So I called you.
Mom held the phone to your ear
And I spoke to you for the last time.
I have no idea what I said on that phone call.
Only that Mom said you smiled after,
That you heard me.

You were gone shortly after.

I called your phone again maybe two weeks after.
It went to voicemail.
And I sobbed and in one breath everything came out,
How I missed you,
How I loved you,
How this was unfair,
How the venue had a handicapped entrance, just for you,
How you wouldn't even get to see me turn 16,
How this was pointless because you wouldn't ever get this voicemail.

How the hearing is the last thing to go,
And all I wanted to know was that you still heard me.

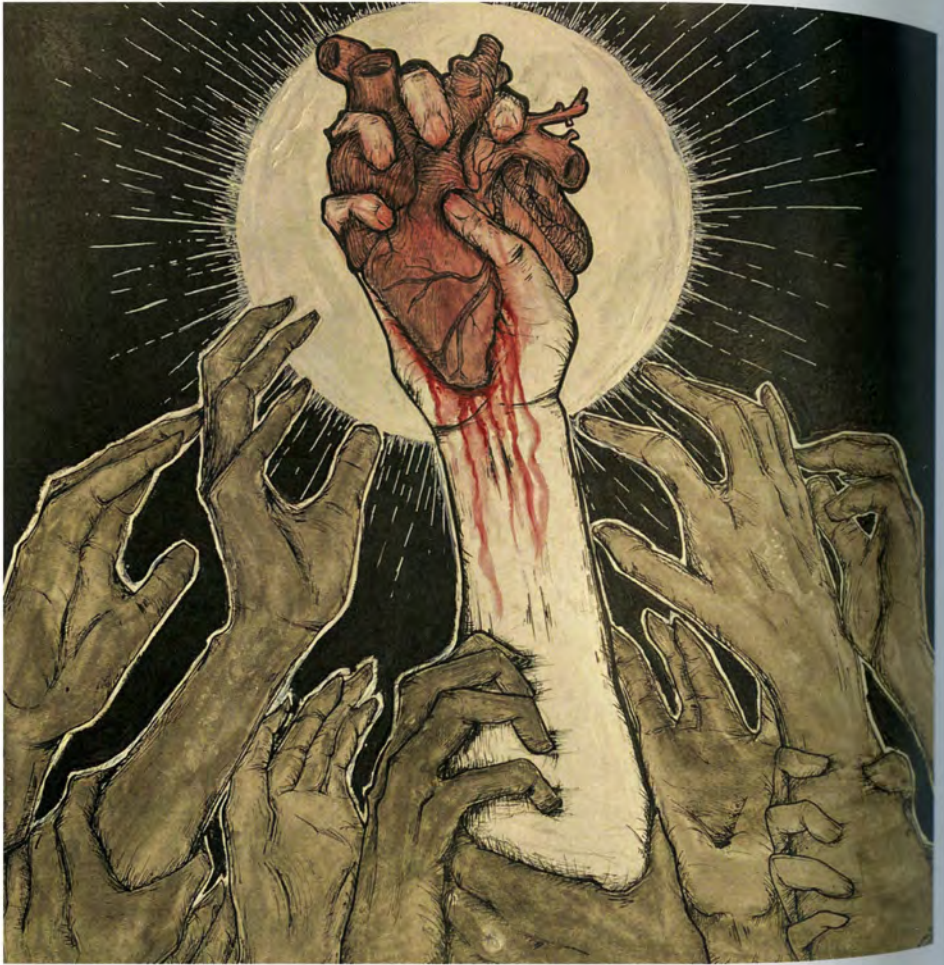
First Year Fears

Adam L Freda '26

Farewell my friends!
Hope our friendships never end!
Hope is all I need
Now I am one of the freed

Free to do the laundry
Free to do all things arbitrary
It a great thing to fail
I hope that ship will sail

Then sink, as I in my bed
Am I better off dead?
Every student said
Due to fears of their first year



Vying for What You Hold Dear
Raelle Leak '26

Meaningless Lines

Michaela Ellison-Davidson '23

I know you don't like poetry—all these words too sentimental—but I'll say it anyway. I could write a hundred meaningless lines: you with your christmas lights and your striped sweater. You with your abrasive words and resolute intellect. How I see you is how I see you—all these things potentially wrong. And I'm left here thinking I do not know you at all. But I'm being too sentimental. I'll explain it the only way I can. If you were a painting you would be a Carravagio—The Calling of Saint Matthew to be exact. A Carravaggio—it's almost abrasive at first, that contrast between light and dark. You want to look away, unable to comprehend the artist's true intentions. And there is so much feeling there, but you can't put a name on it. So it confuses you. It confuses you but you keep on looking. And you come to this conclusion that it is both ugly and beautiful, this haunted romanticism that is hidden behind some sort of internal motif. You want to reach out and touch it, to accept the invitation to enter the piece—a chair Carravaggio placed in the foreground just for you—but you take a step forward and you realize it's just a painting. Carravaggio was always one for extremes—this disaster on canvas, this breathtaking horror that insights both admiration and fear. There is no chair to take a seat in, but you keep on looking anyway. And each time you look, you see something new.

The Hymn of Hallowed Grove

Luke X. Johnson '25

Under umber shaded ground, flowers, trees, and toadstools of speech and secrets rise.

A peculiar royalty walks this ground, donning robes of wind and silk, around shoulders of mossy bark with a crown of blossoms, blooming in splendid synchronicity.

By the forest's will, and the royalty within it, old gods may and will arise, breathing air of the future from mouths of the past, that did more than breathe, but prophesied of a young but powerful and dark god of metal and steel, that would descend upon all that is green and good.

The woodland beings, afraid under the prophecy's telling, built mighty barriers to keep their land shielded from the horror they awaited.

Surely enough, something did come. Not a dark god, but a machine, a machine controlled by hands of hungry flesh that sought to conquer, to freeze the warm hearts of our green royalty in an eternal winter, and the subjects they ruled justly over.

Protected, the machine and its wielders could not sink their jaws into the gods and green royalty, but alas a dilemma fell upon them nonetheless.

The prosperity of the eternal summer began to wilt, not fully into the hands of death to befriend the other side of life, but rather just enough so that no longer in this summer did anything grow.

Stagnancy plagued the woodland realm, for nothing could grow any further when there were no remnants of life, ended, to grow back from.

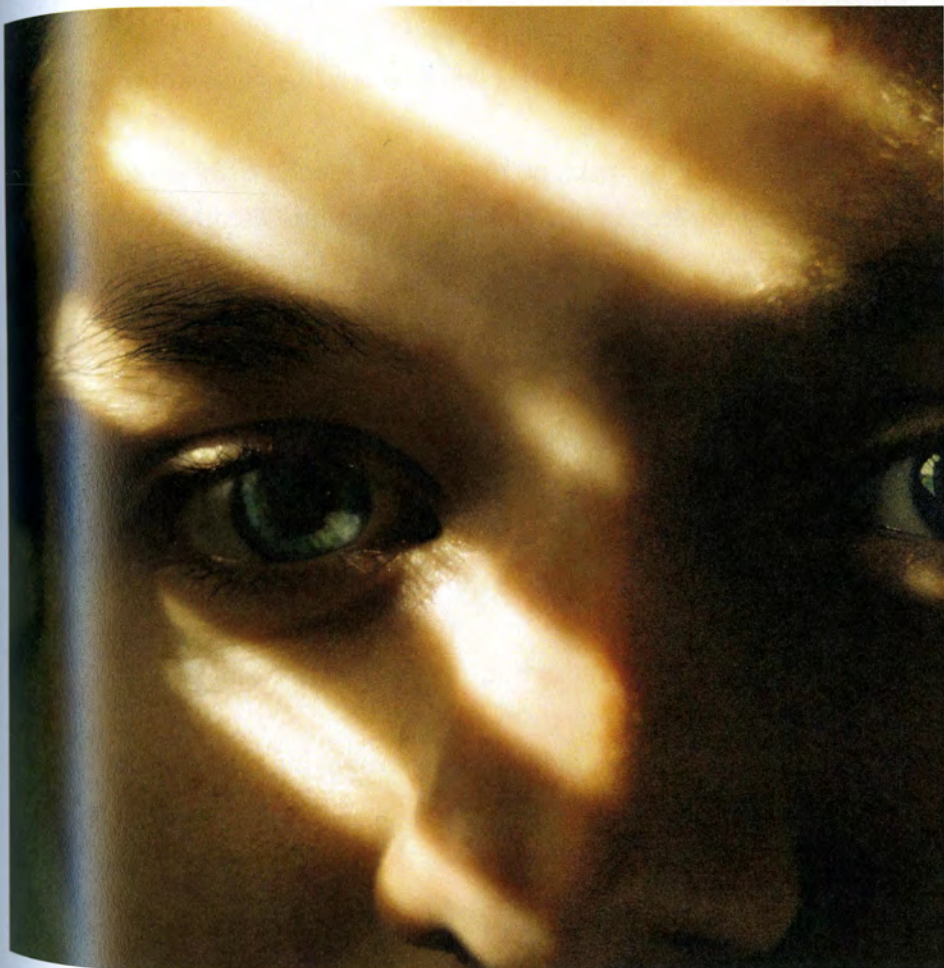
They looked to the hungry flesh servants of the machine, and in their amazement, they saw more than flesh, but heart as well, merely encapsulated by an exterior, false in its depiction of their true nature. These servants were more than servants to the machine, but to one another as well. Blossoms bloomed not only on the crown of the green royalty, but in the hearts of what they would call,

Humans.

Inspired by their recent revelation, but still fearing their machine, it was decided the hearts of the humans would be let into their land. Hearts that sought out more than what they had. hearts that were broken, and hearts that could not find themselves without guidance.

And so this realm of plant, stone, and wood would transcend its earthly self and molt into a trove,

From an eternal summer to an autumnal spring some would find themselves, when they found themselves in the mysterious, odd, healing, and enchanting place named Hallowed Grove.



The Soul
Lillian DeFilippis '26

Wasteland

Mia Garofalo '23

I have despair.

I carry it on my back.

I can't brush them off, the slow burning embers of a love that was lost on me long before I learned to be happy again, before I conditioned myself to feel whole when there was still something rotting inside me.

That poison doesn't dissipate, no matter how much I drink or sleep, so I have become bored by the comforts I sought to mend a broken piece of time.

But more than anything I have grit.

I carry it in my hands.

I plug my nose and sift through the rubble to sort the good memories from the bad,

the "keep" pile from the "throw away."

And I persuade myself not to linger too long on that latter pile towering over me,

like a shipwreck in a barren harbor,

so that I can soon breathe in clean air

and release my body of the tension of an atrophying relationship that was never what I thought it was.

It was never what I thought it was.

And yet I punish myself.

I am wading in a weeping wasteland of remembering things I tossed to forget something I didn't have.

And every time it rolls over in my mind,
I know that landfill still stands,
and it is omnipresent,
it is loathing,
now that it festers with feelings I spit out
because they stung my teeth with a sour taste.
Feelings that erode the debris like acid, sputtering then still.

I have hope, too.
It's held within my heart.
That I can drive in my car without the silent shadowy hill of scrap peering
over my shoulder,
and I can return to this wasteland, this wreaking mess of ours that I tried to
sweep away
without wringing my hands dry of what's damp and what's darkest.

And what's still wet with tears I cried long ago will stiffen like linen in the sun,
and all that will be left is time
to wither and to fray.

Product of Love

Kiki Wiehe '26

Staring into the mirror feeling the painful lack of your presence as my vision starts to blur with
tears

But just as my faith begins to falter that I'll ever experience another connection as heartfelt as
ours

And as I start to fear that my flaws may be too prominent to ever be worthy of a lasting love
I remind myself I am in fact a product of love

that the color of my eyes has been loved generation after generation
in fact, every single feature and imperfection on my body has been passed down to me through
love

I have love coursing through my veins and inside my DNA

All the phrases, mannerisms, and even the jokes I chose to tell have been picked up from those
that I have loved

my personality is a collection of traits I have deemed loveable enough to become a part of me
and my body is a creation of features that thousands have admired in the past

I am made of love inside and out

therefore as I will never run out of love to give and I will always be destined to receive it



Decomposing
Lillian DeFilippis '26



