

mosaic



FALL 2021

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A Letter From The Editor

The *Mosaic* Editorial Board is proud to publish the fall 2021 *Mosaic*: a student-run literary and art magazine highlighting the talented work of Marist College students.

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.

The submissions we received this semester exceeded our expectations and the pieces selected reflect a compilation of the most creative and ambitious work entered.

The Editorial Board and I would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to Bob Lynch for continuing to inspire and support *Mosaic*. We would also like to thank Dr. Moira Fitzgibbons for her support and guidance throughout the publication process.

Thank you to Alex Podmaniczky for helping us print *Mosaic*. Thank you to Dean James Snyder, Dean Martin Shaffer, Dr. Carolyn Matheus, Professor Ed Smith, Professor Jeff Bass, 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*.

And thank you to all of the students who submitted to *Mosaic*! We were overwhelmed by your interest and are proud to publish your work.

I would personally like to thank the entire Editorial Board for their continued dedication and passion for *Mosaic*. This magazine is a product of all of your hard work and I am so glad to have had the opportunity to work on this with all of you..

Finally, thank you to you, the reader, for opening this book and experiencing the incredible work that Marist students have to offer. We hope you enjoy the fall 2021 edition of *Mosaic*.

Sincerely,
Amanda Roberts
Mosaic Editor-In-Chief

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

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Second glance
Jessica Hawkins '22
First Place, Art

A Mirror Awaits

Maddi Langweil '22

Eyes surround me like a circadian clock
Glacial breaths form an uneasy lock
A strength that feeds on the diffident
The mirror awaits

No creases form on my face
All I want is an embrace
Dark shadows of the eyes are brighter than the skin
I'm not alone

A depiction of beauty I see
Two brown eyes stare through the glass
Soft curls resist being tucked behind
Alone I am, to appreciate the reflection
The mirror cracks

Eyes surround me like a circadian clock
Glacial breaths form an uneasy lock
A strength that feeds on the diffident
The mirror awaits

A crease forms in the face
All I want is an embrace
Glowing skin meets the sun
I'm not alone

Warm breaths and locked eyes intensify
The depiction of beauty I see exists
A broken mirror sits

9:29 haiku

Jeremy Skeele '23

i like to think of
sadness as a setting sun
on a cloudy day



Still Life of a Scarf
Abby Koesterich '24

Angelina and Andrei

Julia Panas '25

Lina's walking up to Andrei as he takes a bite of his New York slice, the translucent orange oil leaking down his chin and threatening to drop onto his black button-up before he wipes it away with the heel of his palm. He hands her a plate with a second slice, strings of cheese already drying up and sticking to the paper.

"No thanks."

"Just hold it," he responds, not feeling like explaining that he didn't want to have to balance the plate on his knees or put it down on the brown-stone stair next to him. She steps forward with a black stiletto to take the plate and holds it out to her side, palm up, like a waiter, almost caricature-like. He looks at her. She looks at him, and considers sitting down on the dirt-stained stairs, or maybe she'll just go straight up to their apartment and put the pizza in the fridge since he'll probably want to microwave it in the morning, knowing how much he likes his leftovers. Then again, the light is fading and the days are getting shorter this time of year so she might as well stay outside a little longer. She squats down next to him on the stoop, making sure to tuck her blue wool coat under her legs and lifting her tote onto her lap. Andrei watches this procession, his wife now an odd shape, her

long legs making it so that her knees point awkwardly towards the sky, one arm extended straight out and resting on her knee, holding the white paper plate at the end of it.

"So how was your day?" Lina says quickly and almost too cordially, as if out of politeness, like the college kids who talk to him while he's making himself an espresso because they know that he sits in an office.

She rearranges her bag with her free hand, instinctively reaching for her phone, turning it on, and putting it down again as the screen turns black. She wants to tell Andrei about her day, about how she finally convinced Marla to let her hire an assistant and how an assistant always leads to a promotion because otherwise all the other editors would want assistants too when they really didn't deserve them. But he isn't even looking at her; he's looking at a cluster of flowers, weeds really, growing out of the side of the stone staircase in a miracle effort against the asphalt which overwhelms almost every square inch of this city. Their stems are long and close together, so that a child could reach down and pluck the weeds all at once and present the dog-pissed bouquet to their mother or nanny or whoever has the time to take care of

children these days.

"Andrei, are you there?" she says half-jokingly.

"Yeah yeah babe my day was alright."

A pause. The road crew two blocks over starts drilling again.

Finally, "how was yours?"

Lina starts talking and he responds with the appropriate nods of approval, his head leaning forward every so often to take bites of the warm salty pizza, gazing down at the yellow dandelions. The bright color couldn't help but remind him of their wedding, a vibrant event dressed in the largest variety of ribbons and table-runners. He didn't even realize they had a color theme until he walked into the church; a shock really, he should've known, since the bridesmaids dresses were all yellow and the invitations had sung in yellow script, "Angelina Woodshire and Andrei Carros," and even the cake had a big sunflower at the top instead of the expected bride and groom figurines. Of course he could never tell Lina that the color didn't even cross his mind because she'd become a sloppy sobbing pile, but now that he thinks of it maybe he did tell her some random night when he was coming home from an outing with his friends from NYU and drunkenly slurred in her ear, "I ditsn't even realize our weddin was yellow," because the next morning her eyes were red and he had some vague recollection of her shouting

that "the only reason it was so fucking yellow was because you told me that sunflowers are your favorite flower" and "I do everything for you and you never notice!" But of course he didn't have the heart to tell her that they were only his favorite flower because they represented suicide, an event he sometimes fantasizes about when he's sure that no one can see his facial expressions; and thank god he didn't tell her because then they would've had to repaint the whole bedroom which was also a pale perfect yellow and he couldn't stand to have Lina asking him every weekend, "when are you going to paint the bedroom? You said you'd do it weeks ago!"

But how could she be surprised he didn't know that their wedding was yellow? She didn't ask for his opinion on any of the wedding details, and to be honest he barely noticed the planning happening at all, it went by so quickly and was mostly exported to Lina's wedding planner who happened to be recently divorced; to him it was just a flurry of magazines and dresses and ridiculous amounts of money. Not that he cared about the money, since it wasn't his; Lina's father, "William not Bill," was the one who paid for the wedding, though Andrei knows that the offer was meant as a sort of offense, like William didn't think he could pay for it himself. That asshole, always pouring him half a finger of whiskey when he came over

for dinner, as if saying that he wasn't man enough or American enough to drink more... never enough. The truth was that William was right, and Andrei really couldn't pay for it himself, indeed he couldn't pay for most of the things that would make Lina happy but he tried his best anyway, hence the 3.5 carat rock on her ring finger. He just hopes that she never finds out it's zirconium and not diamond.

She's looking at him now, expectantly. Her story ended, something about making her coworkers jealous. "Congratulations baby," he says with a truly sweet smile which he hopes conveys that he's proud of her.

Andrei always tells her that "you're going places," and out of an expectation of humility she always responds "we'll see," but she knows that he's right; it's something that she's known for a long time, though she has no clue when or where this confidence came from. She always reciprocates of course, saying, "you have so much potential," but the truth is that she doesn't really believe it, she's just frustrated with his lack of ambition and desperately tries to motivate him to reach for something better, to some sort of personal fulfillment that he can't seem to find stuck in an office all day just to go out with his friends and get stuck at a bar all night. It's amazing that in their 3 something years living together she still has no clue what he wants in life, or more likely,

that he doesn't know what he wants, and he's never bothered to figure it out. It seems that the only plan he's ever made for the future was her; in fact, marrying her was probably the most decisive action he's taken in his entire life. She doesn't even know why she said yes, probably because of the shock or because he was a good guy with a stable job and her mother loved him and he made her laugh every time they talked; but now he's still in that same IT job which is apparently so stable that he can't even manage a promotion, except of course that one time when she made him go for it and finally after months of debating over the dinner table he went up to his boss and earned a 10% raise, though he probably could've gotten at least 20 if he took her advice, but then again he never does, probably because of some ingrained European sexism that the opinions of women don't matter because he really doesn't ask her opinion on anything, and since she's always been a believer of giving others a taste of their own medicine she's determined not to ask about his opinions either. Which is probably why the proposal came as such a surprise.

It's just that they never really talked about marriage back then; children, yes, but what woman doesn't have baby fever every so often? It doesn't matter anyway because they haven't gotten around to trying yet, either because he can't get it up, or

because she works too much so he gets off before she gets home, or because of her overwhelming fear of getting pregnant, of being treated like a precious fragile object yet simultaneously tossed to the side, discarded, something weak and incapable. At least by focusing on her career she's useful, productive, a contribution to society. She's respected.

It's silent now save for the

cars and the wind and the construction crew tearing into the ground, and the sunlight can only be seen on the sides of skyscrapers, having dipped below the horizon. The windows blaze yellow.

She lets her head drop to his shoulder, and he twists his neck and kisses the top of her forehead, leaving a faint stain of orange oil on her skin.



Adjusted Smile
Kaitlyn Dugan '25

Requiem for a Redwood

Joe Tuosto '23

Her skin was fair yet freckled blotched with a few blemishes, yet I did not mind.

Her long and limber torso extended far beyond my reach, but I did not care.

Her feet were often tarnished and soiled which managed to always stay out of my sight, yet I
loved her all the same.

Her hair swayed in the breeze so effortlessly and her smile always put me at ease.

No matter where I was, I felt so safe, so secure wrapped under her tender arms.

Even the burning blistering ball of sun in the sky couldn't ignite me when I was with her.

I loved every part of her.

I wish I had seen them coming earlier, those men with their hardhats and vests.

Their weapons of carnage and homicide; blades and cleavers in hand, eyes bloodshot.

They hacked down my love without a shred of remorse.

I watched as she tumbled to the ground, lifeless as her long tufts of hair mixed with the mud
covered ground.

I screamed out but my cries were drowned by the man's machinations of death.

Loud whirrs and buzzes choked out my love's final words until there was silence.

So now, I stand here before the tomb of my love mourning her.

Standing before her decrepit and rotten remains, I try to intertwine my roots to hers.

Or push the hair out of her face, or feel her smooth skin, or sit under the shade of her presence.

Withered and decrepit she rests with torn hair, splintered and cracked edges, and a bruised and
busted body.

Her lovely and lavish physique now lifeless, lacerated by a lawless legion of larceny.

One day when I die perhaps you and I will be the same, together once more, but until then I will
be with her everyday.

Times of Uncertainty; Times of Change

Angela Taggart '22

First Place, Nonfiction

I have a confession to make:
I've never been much of a traveler.

New York City used to be a labyrinth, a maze of unknowns organized in chaos. It frightened and excited me, even though it was less than two hours away from my suburban town. I'd only ever known its tight streets from a child's perspective, clutching my mother's coat while the rest of my family led us through the crowds to plans I didn't plan, to places I didn't know existed. We'd huddled together against the chill air in Rockefeller Center, gazing up at the twinkling Christmas tree, the multicolored lights shining across our faces. My parents, two older brothers, and I turned our backs to the excitement and asked a stranger to take a photo. Five faces smiled stiffly against the cold, mine barely visible through the thin gap between my scarf and hat. Only the pictures from that day proved we'd gone; it was a memory that had already frozen and splintered beyond recognition. I'd been there, at the center of Christmas time in New York City, yet the pictures looked like any other we'd taken at home. We captured the moment we looked *away* from what we came for, but not the brief moment we stopped to take it in.

So only the background in each photo changed—nothing about our smiles or faces. The experience suggested that travel was something that happened around you, that only the scenery would change like a film reel as you drove by. It never occurred to me that it could change something from within too.

I had a similar experience a few years later. When I was eight years old, my family and I traveled to Italy to visit my mother's relatives. Though southern Italian summers are too hot for stuffy coats, I stayed tucked behind my parents as they led the way, viewing the scene ahead through the small gap between them. We walked the unpaved street into the center of town, so unlike my first trip away from home, silent aside from heels clicking on rocks. Cities melted into the suburbs in the weeks leading to *Ferragosto*. Businesses turned off their lights while the towns turned on the stars, the workdays forgotten. The night of August 15th marks a tradition that doesn't exist on the other side of the Atlantic. August in Avellino is a time when aprons are exchanged for dresses, when sneakers are shoved back into the closet in favor of opened-toed shoes that are fancy yet

practical, always comfortable enough to be danced in until sunrise.

Ferragosto is meant to be a time of celebration, of family, of rest. It's when almost every Italian takes two weeks off from work—everyone, all at once. There is no “passing of the torch” like there is on American holidays, when one person's break becomes another's burden. Still, I'd wondered what that meant for the people seasoning freshly cut meat and folding hot sandwiches into tinfoil, why they'd been excluded from a city-wide shutdown, why they were still working while the others danced. Something about their grinning faces told me that cooking wasn't work to them—the way it is often viewed in America. Food wasn't an inconvenience, something to be consumed and quickly forgotten; it was an art, a happiness, as essential as the air that keeps them alive. Not to be inhaled, but breathed in slowly—experienced, remembered.

I didn't realize then that food, like travel, could change a person either. So as I watched the locals mark the *true* start of summer with the drinks in their hands, I felt like I was stuck in place. It was like I was sitting back in a theatre seat while the film played out in front of me. I made my way through the crowd as a spectator, not quite living *in* the moment, but next to it. I was on the outskirts of adventure, just like I'd always preferred.

This far from the feast, it's easier to experience what's so captivating about summers in Italy. The band's music softened; their fog machines faded into a different sort of smoke, the kind that expands with flavor, full and indescribable at first breath. We were pulled in on that cloud, absorbed in the salty sting of fresh cheese, the warm wind of soft bread, the lingering smell of cooked meats slipping away from where they spin over a dancing flame. Each scent overlapped like a feast in the air: food turned to smoke that covered the small town and drew everyone to its heart. The locals and I sipped on the August night, savoring all of its flavors just like seated patrons do as they drink their glasses of sweet purple wine. It made no difference that this was an annual feast; every person picked up their glass like it was the first and last time they'd see each other again, like the festivities wouldn't continue tomorrow, or the year after.

The band played on as if they knew that someday the music throughout the world would soften into nothing. As if they'd looked ahead to March 2020 when silence flooded Times Square and Broadway theatres went quiet. As if they peered across the pond, along the streets of the West End, where Her Majesty's Theatre is silent too. The music has stopped, the chandelier has been lowered to the stage, and empty red seats wait in

anticipation for the overture to begin. They've been waiting for eight months already, along with the rest of us. With my newfound time, I often find myself daydreaming of places I still yearn to explore. Though London has always been at the top of my list, I especially wonder what it will be like when the world wakes up again. What it would be like to explore part of the world I don't know through the small piece of it I do, to claim it as I'd claimed New York—a place I never thought I'd enjoy, let alone miss.

London is a place I've never been, yet I can picture it: these are streets that have seen a shutdown like this before. In the 1600s, the Puritans banned theatre for seventeen years. Yet when it reopened soon after, it thrived once more, grander than the first time. One day, London will rise again with tourists and music and color—it's what this city is built to do. Every building is carved out of stone, chiseled out of history that stretches farther back than the Romans, a city that burned and rose again since. It is a place defined by its malleability, the perfect place for someone who has spent so much time unwilling to be changed.

There will be another show, another story, to explore from behind London's curtains. I will go there in my mind until I can see it in person; I can learn all of its secrets so it can teach me how to rise alongside it. I

could learn its superstitions too: careful not to mutter the name "Macbeth" and awaken the infamous theatre ghost or to disturb the spirit of composer Ivor Novello, rumored to still watch his shows from the shadows. It's a less troubling thought now, after all the world has been through—now that we're all just ghosts roaming the streets of places we cannot go and singing along to music we cannot hear. So we step back into the shadows and wait, denying our wonder and our curiosity, waiting in empty red seats like Ivan Novello, for the show to begin again. We hold our breaths as we wait for the doors to open in theatres and airports and homes, to know how other countries lit up again after months—maybe years—in the dark.

Back home, where there are still no cities open to wander or shows open to see, I dive into pages of the story I love. *Phantom of the Opera* unravels across a page instead of a stage as I read about a man who hides in the darkness, afraid to see and be seen. Reading is the only form of travel I can do now, the only means of stepping into a part of the world I've never seen before. Though it creates a vivid image of a disfigured man who craves a young singer's affection—a girl he hopes can love him despite his heinous actions and grave mistakes—it also strips the story down to its bones, clearer than a spotlight or a thousand twinkling lights ever could. Alone be-

neath a dim lamp, there is no elaborate scenery or ornate costumes to reshape the story within these words. When the blinding lights have gone dark, *Phantom of the Opera* is about loneliness, strangeness, exile. It's about being cast out from the world you want to know—a world I want to know now that it has been taken from us. In these pages, I can learn from a sinner's fate and glimpse into a place I don't want to go: into hiding at the edge of the theatre, watching the patrons enjoy the show instead of the show itself. The Phantom too found comfort at the edge of excitement, yet in his comfort was also a deep disconnect between him and the world he refused to know. I didn't appreciate Italy's weeks of designated rest until the world had rested too long, until I'd found a new curiosity and need to explore it. I hadn't thought to do so until I'd heard the world mourning closed borders and restricted travel; I hadn't thought to travel the world until the opportunity was gone. I'm no longer afraid to be a traveler, but a phantom—someone who hides in the foggy air that covers

a foreign town instead of dancing in it.

It's unclear whether I've noticed this too late or too early, now that Ferragosto's weeks of rest has extended to an entire year, maybe longer. Maybe forever.

And because I can't look forward—I can't imagine the future when it's proven itself to be so fragile—I look to the past, the only certainty in a world of the unprecedented. Though the events are unchangeable, from this distance they change me; instead of a little girl looking up at the stars, I look down from them, seeing the beauty I should have seen then.

But for now, I stay inside, counting the days until it's safe to go outside without a mask, until this foreign home becomes familiar again. I quiet the need for adventure, even if just for a short while, reading about places I long to go and fates I hope to avoid. I sink back into the shadows and tell myself what I must, reluctantly reminding myself what I've told myself since March: I've never been much of a traveler, anyway.

Luna Lobo

Malena Lopez '24

From the rising sun to the falling moon
A wolf never sleeps.

Little time for rest, little time for peace.

From the rising sun to the falling moon
A wolf never sleeps.

Plenty time to fight, plenty time to feast.

From the rising sun to the falling moon
A wolf never sleeps.

No time to play, no time to weep.

From the rising sun to the falling moon
The cycle repeats.

And when the wolf lies, the fox eats.

19th Century Lovin'

Cassandra Arencibia '24

I deserve to be adored.

Wrap me in gauzy white dresses, and make me keep my hair down, and long.

Burn the dresses you hate and feed me teaspoon servings

just to preserve my wispy figure.

All to please you.

But you could guess that I like being in a bird cage.

Invite guests over and instead of introducing them to me,

show them the large, sweaty, oil painting of me in your dusty, dark drawing room.

Don't make a sound as they laugh nervously,

though they half expect the painting to wave a coy hello.

Drown me in the latest powders and tinctures,

full of lead and cyanide.

Toxins drawing my cheek bones out and making my eyes huge in my tiny skull.

Skeleton wife.

Rouge on my cheeks,

and ribbons in my hair.

Pouty, pink lips sewn up into a smile.

Do you even need to hear me talk?

No, you don't.

You just lie in my bed and pet my hair,

lulled to sleep by my shaky, nervous breaths.

Kill me.

Kill me on purpose, kill me by accident.

Just hold me while I die.

Say sorry, and cry,

while guilt makes her home in the hollow of your breast.

Place my corpse in the drawing room,

draw me a cup of tea, won't you?

If I begin to stiffen and stink, don't fret,

bury me.

Stare at the small lump of dirt that is me,

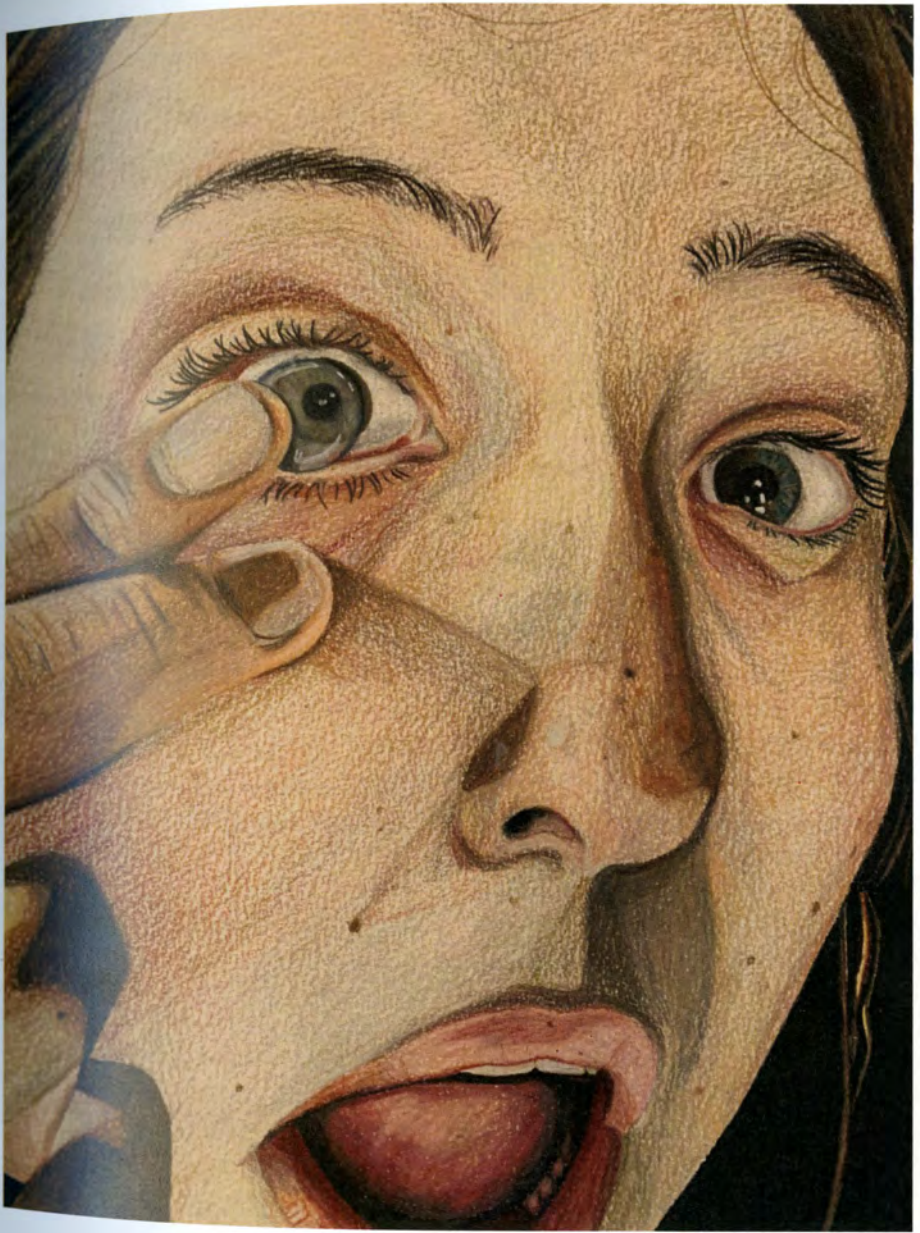
in your garden.

Notice that your flowers are dying.

Hear me whisper in your ear,

though you are alone in your black, blinding bedroom.

Watch me float down the steps.
Wave back when I wave to you,
when I beckon you to the garden.
Swear to your friends that the sticky, oily painting of me is breathing.
Pulsing.
Snap.
Snap sooner, snap later, I couldn't care less.
Let the guilt bleed into your blood like toxins, like cyanide, like death.
Grab fistfuls of dirt, and find me.
Find me.
Skeleton wife.
Rip me from the earth, grab me by the root.
Wail and pluck the maggots from my eyes.
Hold me, hold me, hold me.
I deserve to be adored.
I deserve to be worshiped.
And you deserve a woman who is stiff.



Contact Correction
Kaitlyn Dugan '25

It May Concern

Margaret Roach '22

Second Place, Fiction

To whom it may concern,

As a recent graduate of St. Corbinian's College, I am applying for the position of *You May Have A Deal?* contestant. I heard about this opportunity through the commercial that plays at the end of each episode.

At St. Corbinian's, I did not have a major in a traditional sense. There, we were allowed to study what interested us, so I took a variety of classes in topics such as effective grocery shopping, beginners gym, and pyrokinesis. However, my main focus in college was on daytime television, which I feel makes me a competitive applicant.

In the past, I worked on campus as a paper pusher. There, I spent most of my time in an office in the back of the administration building moving paper from one pile to another. Here I developed coordination skills that would be useful on your show. During school I was also an active member of our radio station. I hosted a show that played only the sound of a doorbell ringing; this means that all the noise on set wouldn't bother me at all.

My main asset to your show would be

my personality, mainly my charm. I am not the best at trivia, this is true,, I can smile with my flesh filled cheeks. I can wear a tight, yet-high necked sweater, because I have always been good at being a paradox. I can laugh like a bell at all the host's jokes, even when they are not funny. I can shine next to the type of dull people that are usually on the show. I swear that if you give me this chance; I can shine. I want to be someone more than who I am.

I look forward to hearing from you. My email is Bayleigh632834728@hotmail.com. Please do not call.

Yours Always
Bayleigh Bailey Baxter

To whom it may concern,

As a highly motivated professional game-show model, I am writing to express interest in the Amish Romance Cover Model position. The Wrinkled Bonnet is one of my favorite publishing companies and I would love to become the face of it.

Currently, I am employed on NBC's highly rated game show *Central*

Park Cash Carriage. On the show, I perform many roles which include disguising myself as a disgusting NYC carriage driver then ripping off my makeup to reveal a glamorous model, smiling vacantly at the camera and telling the horses where they are supposed to go. This job is vital to the show and is one of the main reasons that it is a success, even though the host insists I am a prop.

In the past, I have appeared on multiple game shows such as: *You May Have a Deal?*, *Celebrity DeathMatch*, *Would You Date Your Grandmother*, *but Like When She Was Young?*, and *Ellen's Game of Games*. Each of these jobs presented multiple unique challenges, but each required level headedness, the ability to work well with others even when they are masterminds of psychological torture, and extensive knowledge in how to stand on television.

I would love the opportunity to grow in my career. The idea of standing still on camera fascinates me and I would like to learn about its intricacies. The camera is my friend. My face is one that can be molded into what you want to be. Right now, it may be a beautiful red lipped vixen, but with makeup it can become pale, moon faced, and chaste until the wedding at the end of the third act.

You can do whatever you would like with me. I can be who you want. I don't even know who I am anymore. What is my name? I forget some days. I am forgetting. I forget. I have forgotten my name. Maybe it is Bayleigh, but that does not feel concrete. It is slipping. It is hiding underneath something in the corner of my mind and I cannot reach it. This makes me perfect for the job! I can be Clara, Sara, or Lara if you give me this chance.

I look forward to hearing from you. My email is Bayleigh632834728@hotmail.com. My phone number is 999-000-1111. Please ask for Brit.

Love,
Cslara ???

To Whom it May Concern,

I was excited to discover that Billiam Edgard Penvial Egerton is beginning his search to find his fifth wife, because I believe that I would be the ideal fit for the job. It combines my skills of looking beautiful, standing next to shriveled men, and smiling with all of my teeth.

Throughout my career, I have worked in many forms of modeling which include game show, romance cover, and most recently stunt. Stunt modeling is a dangerous job; the mortality rates are overwhelmingly high. I have

survived activities such as spelunking, cave leaping, and interning without a scratch which would help in avoiding the accidents that befell Mr. Egerton's previous wives.

Being married is the natural next step for me. There is no other place for me to go in my career as a model unless I want to move into something like daytime television hostess or murder victim. Marriage to Mr. Egerton aligns with my personal goal of marrying rich.

I would be good at being a wife, because I would not fall in love with Mr. Egerton. He does not need someone to be in love with him. He has had that before. What he needs is me. I do not have a heart in the literal sense. I checked and all that is there is a plastic pump that moves blood back and forth in a way almost that resembles beating. It was not always like that, but it is now. He does not need a heart.

At night, I will lay next to him in bed and we will not touch, but the feeling of a body sinking into the bed will be enough to make Mr. Egerton feel less lonely for that moment. It will not be in love, because that is not what he needs. I understand Mr. Egerton. I know exactly who he is and what he needs from a wife even if he does not.

I look forward to hearing from you.

My email is Bayleigh632834728@hotmail.com. If you say my name three times, I'll know that you want an interview.

Professionally
The Future Mrs. Egerton

To Whom it May Concern,

As a recently murdered wife, I am looking for a position as ghost. Haunting has never been part of my career path, but I believe that a lifetime of tragedy would make me suited to either the open position in the third-floor attic or the servants' quarters.

When I was alive, I did not achieve much. Maybe being divorced ten times or smiling at a camera is an achievement to some, but it does not feel like that to me. This fills me with anger and spite; the core emotion that a ghost needs. Due to my lack of achievements, I also feel sad, lonely, and hungry. Revenge has always been a passion of mine and what is better than haunting my husband's new wife?

You read that correctly, I will haunt Alice instead of Jeff. Unique takes like these are what will make me a fresh new face at your company. Obviously, Jeff is the one who deserves to be haunted -- he's a monster. But I've decided that Alice should be the one

who feels guilt and I have an action plan to succeed.

Alice will remove all photos of me once she moves into the mansion. For the first couple weeks, I will make sure that she continues to find them in strange places. In a few weeks, I will be everywhere. Soon, I will be in the mirror every time she looks, slowly eclipsing her face until she does not know her face.

Alice will be me or maybe I have always been Alice? Something about us feels familiar. The fleshy part of her cheeks is my cheek. Our plastic heart will beat in the same rhythm that it

always has - has Alice's heart always beat in that strange slowed rhythm? We will sometimes find a tooth underneath a tongue in her mouth and it will not be her tooth. When she lays next to Jeffrey, he will be comforted by the feeling of a body sinking into the bed next to him. It will not matter which body to him, but it will very much matter to Alice.

To whom it may concern - I look forward to hearing from you. My email is Bayleigh632834728@hotmail.com. Please do not call.

Whom.



Confused
Elizabeth Roberts '24
Second Place, Art

Casual

Kat Bilbija '24

Agreement on floating feelings; dizziness happens anyway
A deck of cards only hearts face up
the blood still rushing after the relay

Energy of the moon in a laugh; to my crystals become prey
Eye contact creates a frozen moment
An April mind takes over my body in May

Dizziness happens with or without; no space or stars between
My inspiration to find these words at all
Makes my heart fly like caffeine

Body closeness and verbal comfort; I didn't expect to deserve
Attention shifts that are almost magnetic
Fragile eyes with a need to preserve

Affection fulfilled, language covered; beats I feel align
Deep words in mind and body
Mind and body I wish deep in mine

Four letters too early to say; too early to even think
Though thoughts of an April mind
I hope I can continue to drink

Enemy miles are the thesis; a harsh-to-cross blockade
Dizziness will lead the charge for fear
Of letting the faceup cards fade

A Rare Red Lady

Gabriella Amleto '24

There is the Red Lady in the sky,
Have you seen her?

She brings about red sunsets,
The sunset's light reflects off her milky skin,
Making her look red too,
That's why they call her the Red Lady.

She wears a shroud,
That is almost like smoke around her,
It's long,
Never ending almost,
As it trails behind her,
Curling,
Flowing,
Concealing her well.

Sometimes only her lips can be seen,
If you are fortunate enough to see her at all.

Though she walks the same path,
Across our heavens,
She is a rare sight,
An oh-so rare sight,

She has a job-
What? You thought she was up there for fun?
That job involves her red sunsets,
And wispy shroud,

For,
Her appearance brings about those red sunsets,
her shroud behind her,
Brings about dark clouds.

Perhaps,
If you're lucky like me,
You'll see her,
And her fine handiwork,
transitioning sunsets into the night.

A Sonnet by Half of a Person

Alyssa Borelli '24

Even now, I still see you in my dreams.
I cannot sleep soundly during the night.
I am haunted by your eyes, and it seems
that I can't find my way back to the light.
I would give anything to feel your touch
to see you smile and to hear you laugh.
Time has passed, but I still love you so much.
The Greeks would say I lost my other half.
They believed that soulmates shared one body
that is, until the gods ripped them apart.
I know that pain now. I am a copy
of those parted souls for I lost my heart.
When you said goodbye, you took it with you.
I only hope you feel the way I do.

A-Loud

Heather Millman '23

I can't cry aloud
Two days after your death
They had your funeral and like
Every other funeral I ever attended
My eyes were never red
Never puffy
This time it was watching my
Cousins who you were a father to
Heave with the sobs wracking their bodies
That took several tissues boxes to
Absorb

It's different from the way my mom
Broke the moment the tail of my sister's graduation
Robe left the car
It was only a day or two later
But it was holding back sniffles until
The moment she left

It's not because of the degree that will grace
My sister's hands nor the plaque my sister
Never hung in her room
Mom cries because they had a misunderstanding
Before we all left
It's why we are late why dad speeds
5mph more than usual

There was screeching then crying on
My sister's part and I
Hid in my room fetal position
With my hands over my ears ready
For battle
And so when mom starts crying
Aloud

No hiding not
Even during 3/4ths of the
Ceremony
Even though we are next to a
Kid I used to know from high school
All I can think of is how
Privileged she is to be allowed to
Cry aloud

And when she later thanks me for
Being kind through the whole thing I accept
It without any understanding



Go Off to Sleep in the Sunshine
Lily Jandrisevits '25

An Ode to Coronavirus University 2020

Shannon C. Connolly '24

I want to see people smile at each other again and know that they are smiling at each other.
I want to see strangers become friends and seal it with a handshake.
I want to see old friends say hello and reunite in warm embrace

I'm sick of seeing people get kicked off of elevators because the capacity has been reached.
I'm sick of seeing church doors locked and holidays cancelled because you have to stay in your pod.
I'm sick of walking into a room and having to sit 6 feet apart from every person because if we sat closer it'd be dangerous.
I'm sick of feeling guilty for needing to sneeze, or being sent to the equivalent of solitary confinement because I coughed too loud and it made people scared.

I'm sick of the fact that my family can't come visit me at college and see if for the first time and see me play my first year of division 1 college water polo.
I'm sick of the fact that I can't be social and make mistakes- can't go to a party and be reckless and regret it all the next day.

Most of all, I'm tired because the instinct to love and be kind to one another has been replaced.
Tired because the instinct to love has become secondary to the instinct of survival.
Tired because kindness to strangers has become less important than surviving just to live alone.
Tired because after all this time, people would rather survive by themselves and not live, than to live with those they love without constantly in fear of what might take them down.

Behind the Rainbow Flag

Santaliz Guale-Hilario '23

On a hot June afternoon, I walk through the streets of New York City.
I find myself in questioning:
Why did the universe choose this life for me?
It's as if I can feel the screams of agony
from every queer in the world as I cry;

Why do 72 countries hate me for being me?
Why do the social institutions in my country hate me for being me?
Why does society hate me for being me?
No... why do I hate me for being me?

I ask the universe for a sign as I suddenly find myself
Walking along Greenwich Village, then I see a flag

Behind that flag;

I see red, our celebration of life and remembrance of those lost

I see orange, our promotion of healing within the community

I see yellow, our appreciation for the sunlight in which our flag shines

I see green, our connections with nature

I see blue, our creativity and expression through various forms of art

I see violet, our color of spirit

Behind these colors, I see a community filled with pain,
with tears, with joy, with pride, and with resilience.

I hear the screams of anger that remain within the bricks of stonewall

I hear the shouts of joy and laughter at the parades .

I feel the fear of those in the closet

I feel the pain of those who are not loved for who they are

As tears run through my eyes, I look at the flag one more time

And this time, I see myself.

And I realize, these are the true colors behind the rainbow flag.



Light Within
Abby Koesterich '24

Chaos Theory

Blair Nackley '24

they tell me
to cultivate stability
strive for a life filled with health
and happiness

how do I tell them
I don't want security
I rebel against the fantasy of soft serenity
to overflow with chaos
veins that are rich with ecstasy

because life is a drug
I'm constantly in withdrawal
corroding my existence
to find my next hit of
sweet saccharine instability

and for a moment
I feel alive
I feel

human

but the aftermath reminds me
that I am an addict
and soon enough
my longing will ruin me

End of a Love Song

Lidija Slokenbergs '22

We live together,
You and I,
One mind we represent;
And although we share this luxury,
I've never seen you spare a cent;
You watch me from your skeletal throne
Give in and pay the rent.

A houseguest,
That once filled the rooms
With fresh and new intrigue,
But houseguests tend to
Long extend their trip
And fail to leave.

A hypnotist,
You lock my eyes
And mesmerize my head.
Like an awning you disclose
The light the sapphire
Sun has shed.

A parasite,
You feed on specks
Of darkness in my brain,
And kill each cell of
Happiness, still fighting
To remain.

You've drawn me in,
I've hosted you,
A slave I've come to be,
Now I am, too,
You parasite that feeds on
Misery.

A drug
I see is deadly,
But by comfort it's outweighed.
I lost my sight to see the price
Of death
I nearly paid.

Yes, *you*,
The illness killing me,
Return the key and go;
Your poison has expired
As it should have
Long ago.



Betrayal

Inspired by *Naruto*
Mackenzie Weiss '24

For Rent

Lidija Slokenbergs '22

Like a beautiful house
With a delicate frame
And a welcoming entrance,
No two rooms the same,
With a spiritual aura,
A safe, shielding dome,
You, too, were the place
I once could call home.

A place I could turn to
For comfort and ease;
Your four walls,
They held me through
Painful memories;
But just like a house
When a storm hits the night,
You, too, lost your warmth
And electric burst of light.

And I tried to adjust to a world in the dark,
Seeing life through a melting candle's flame.
Though my vision went dim,
I could still clearly see
I'd become the pet, mistreated,
Blocked from freedom by a chain.

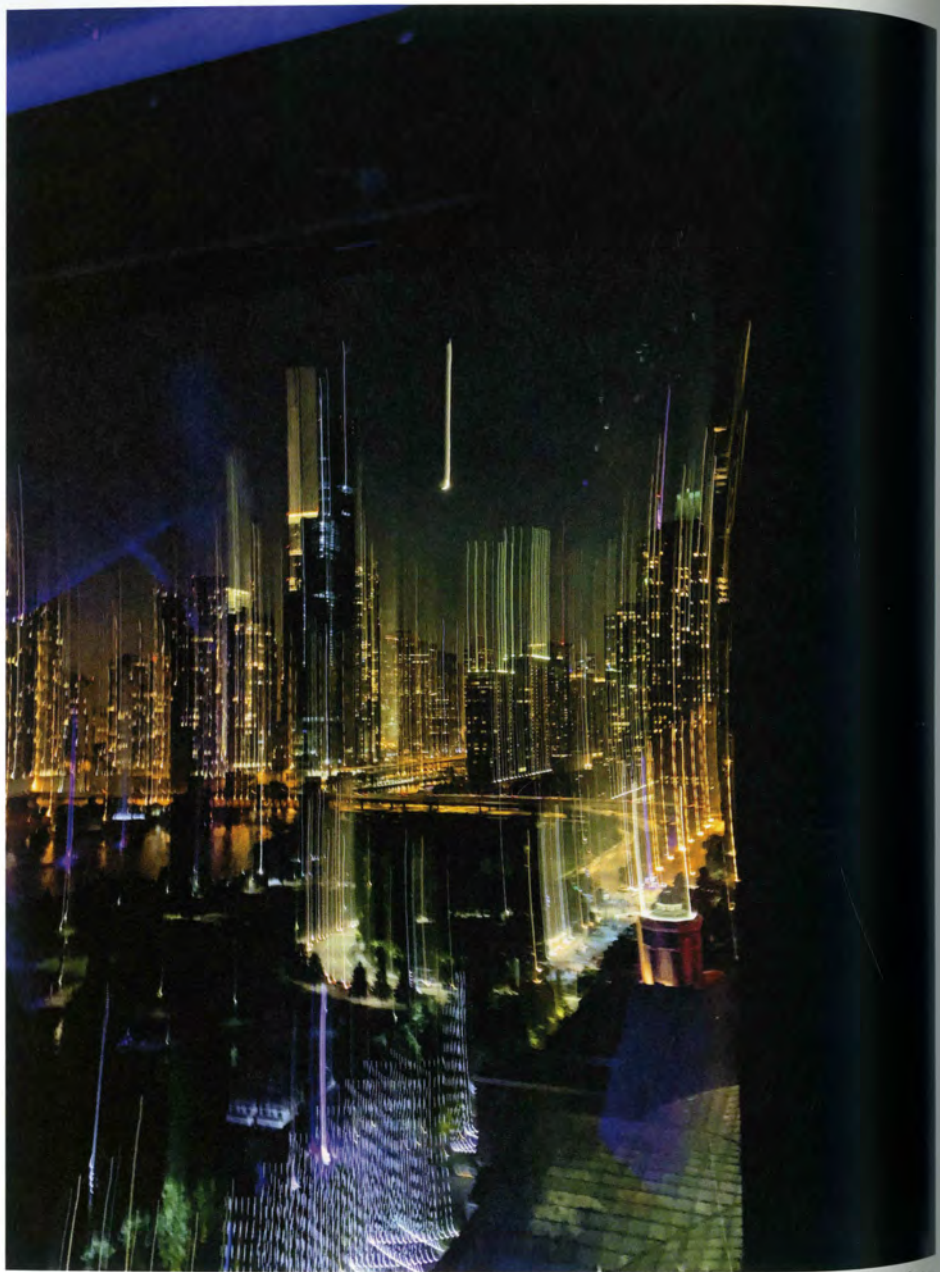
Locked to you, a house of shadows,
Scared to howl, left alone.
Though you were standing right beside me,
I could feel your phantom roam.

For now it was a ghost town,
A place I shouldn't be,
But the dreamer still within me
Will never cease to see it as

A beautiful house
With a delicate frame
And a welcoming entrance,
No two rooms the same;
A place that will fill me with nostalgic sentiment;
Though I thought you'd be forever,
Time we had was just
For rent.



Untitled
Heather Brody '22



City Lights
Claudia Molina '23

found

Katie Sailer '23

i want to become lost
in dunes and docs that carry me,
wetlands and waves that grow for miles,
seagull songs
and cotton candy sunsets,
runs that never suffocate,
in a town that knows no tragedy.

in newborn routines,
early mornings and blistering sunrises,
kayaking in untamed currents,
bike rides to yoga,
pruned skin rewarded from the ocean,
and dinner at twilight.



Tricks

Rachel Mittelman '23

Four Stages

Gabriella Amleto '24

In the Spring
My limbs are new and shaky
I'm easily confused,
And naive
As I trust everyone and everything around me,
Even if they hurt me,
I give them,
A second chance.

In the Summer
I'm limber and strong,
I believe nothing can harm me,
As I run happily through fields
I understand more,
Using my energy and wit,
I'm still naive,
But less so
I don't interact with those who hurt me,
But I'm still willing to give second chances

In the Autumn
My body is starting to fail,
I cannot do the things I used to
I'm careful,
And wary
I know what I need to know,
And I don't want to learn more
I avoid those who hurt me,
I give no second chances.

In the Winter
I am the equivalent of glass
My limbs are delicate,
They crack with every movement
I know I can do nothing about my state
I learn as much as possible,
And pass on that knowledge whenever I can
I make peace,
With those who hurt me
I don't give second chances,
I give redemptions

Four Words

August Boland '24

I did not know
The effect that simply
Four words could have
On the human mind.

I want to cry
I want to scream
But both from joy
Both from a gladness.

Although I did suspect
Although I did believe
I feared to ask
From fear of denial.

I am ecstatic, yet
Shocked to hear them.
And those four words?
"You are my friend."

From the Sky Up and Down the Entire East Coast

Ethan Maslyn '22

I'm sure most of you have been experiencing
The same weather as I have.
Maybe some of the same clouds
Have rained on the both of us
In the past couple of weeks.
Who knows how far they can travel
Before running out of steam.
Or more literally, water, in this case.
But we have definitely been experiencing
The same sun.
There's only one of those after all.
We all sit under the same burning star
And live our life on this hunk
Of rock and dirt and life.
Remembering that fact
Is something that I've been trying
To do more lately.
We're all living life.
Everyone does it differently,
But we all do it perfectly.
Life can be stressful sometimes though,
I'm sure we can all agree. But you
Have to be like these rain clouds
That we've been seeing so much of lately.
You have to unburden yourself,
Rain it all out once in a while.
How else are you going to
Make it all the way up and down
The East coast?

Front Seat Drivers

Julia Panas '25

Front Seat Drivers
Slow (for the stop sign)
and roll down their windows
as I walk home.

They stare
Blatantly.
with a wife in the passenger seat.
Too far in her own head to see.

They have no shame.
They are articles of righteousness.
One hand on the wheel,
the Other stroking their bottom lip.

Sometimes the car stops
and I squeeze my hand around the straps of my bag
Tight-fisted manicure imprinting my palm
My heart even faster than my pace.

how high

Hor Mahmoud (H) '24

you say, I do without a clue
you say jump i say how high
you shut me up & no asking why
you hide it all & for you i lie
you throw me against walls & for some reason
I'm the one to write the apology letters for breaking all these walls
but who writes the letter for breaking into my innocence



Afternoon Light
Sophia DelVecchio '25



Untitled
Emily Sumner '25
Third Place, Art

I Cannot Give You a Whirlwind Romance

Heather Millman '23

I cannot give you a whirlwind romance
The thing of lavender fields and
Honeyed lips
I cannot serenade you with strings
And a strap across my back with
My mouth open
I cannot kiss you like the
Air you breathe tastes somehow
Sweeter
I cannot lift you and spin
You until we are breathless
And laughing
I cannot give you a home where
You want with the people
You want
I cannot smile when I wake
And be honest with you when you ask
Whether it's real
I cannot do anything for you no
Matter how much I wish to because I cannot
Give any of that to myself

i swear i am better

Kaylee Miller '22

Oh, honey....you look

great,

they say.

As if I am perfectly fine now.

As if I was nothing before.

I can still feel it raging in me at all hours -

The bird crowing to escape it's confines,

Its bony prison white and sharp.

It eats away at everything that I want to be,

Like a neon acid. And when I breathe,

It is as if I inhale glass

And nothing more.

It makes me want to scream,

And cry, and *ruin*.

And I keep thinking,

thinking that change is the answer,

in the form of evolution.

To rip out each strand of my hair,

finding bloody roots,

And replace it with something

that will make them notice.

Peel back each layer of skin,

until there is nothing but raw meat,

And have something grow anew

amongst the decay.

Because it's only better when I am not me.

When I can be somebody else.

Because *anything*

is better than this - this spiteful creature

Inhabiting

me.
Better than
what is always lingering:
The dissatisfaction.
But no, no, *I'm fine*
I scream into the void.
I promise, *I promise you,*
This isn't *me.*

fuck. you.
it sneers.
A grating whisper
That lives in my bloodstream
And occupies each dream at night.

it doesn't get any better than this.



Archangel
Megan Byrnes '24

It's a Show, It's a Show

Julianna Buchmann '23

It's 5 o'clock already?

It's time to go.

Turn on the hair curler,

Get your makeup brush,

Here we go.

Put on the tights,

Brush through the hair,

Whisper quietly your lines,

While you're practicing your stare.

Bring lots of water,

And snacks to chew,

Get in your car,

Bring your driving shoes.

Pull in to the parking lot,

And don't forget your bag,

Check off that you're here,

And make sure you're not acting sad.

Turn on the dressing room light,

Put your costume on.

Warm up your voice,

Warm up your body,

Start thinking about the after party.

Say thank you ten,

And set your props,

Take one last sip,

It's 7 o'clock.

Walk to the backstage,

And see the lights,

Take one last deep breathe,

And step into the light.



Castle Walls
Megan Byrnes '24

When You Enter a Room

Julia Panas '25

When you enter a room it doesn't light up like all those songs say,
the dust doesn't magically turn to sparkles, no.
violins don't play sugar harmonies
and Angels
don't send their rays from heaven.

When you walk into a room it goes completely
dark.

The World becomes a gradient of shadows,
pumping the hollows with ink, obscuring everything —
Except for you.
because when you enter a room,
You are the only thing *in* that room.

Nothing else matters. it isn't big enough to compare
to your soft tongue and your crystal eyes.
Your energy takes over and controls all the bodies
Like puppets, pulling them
along their tracks and
pressing their lungs to
breathe
because suddenly they've forgotten how to.
because they've all felt something change,
and because when you dictate
They listen.

Let me be your puppet.
Play with my strings. let yourself be the reason
i exist.
Make me walk, make me dance, make me cry make me sing
make me kiss you.
let me be yours and I *will* be, because
baby —
i'd do anything for you.



Man Vs. Earth
Mackenzie Zeytoonjian '25

Little Bird

Sabrina Lemm '22

You were eight years old, curled up in your Ariel nightgown with your tattered stuffed dog clutched against your chest. Your mother's hand was warm on your back, warm like the sun that shone on your swing set in the backyard. Warm like the sun that wasn't there just a few hours ago—your father had called it an eclipse. You'd never stared at the sun before (Mommy and Daddy always told you not to). But when the sun disappeared, you peered into the abyss it left in its wake. Somehow, the darkness hurt more than the light.

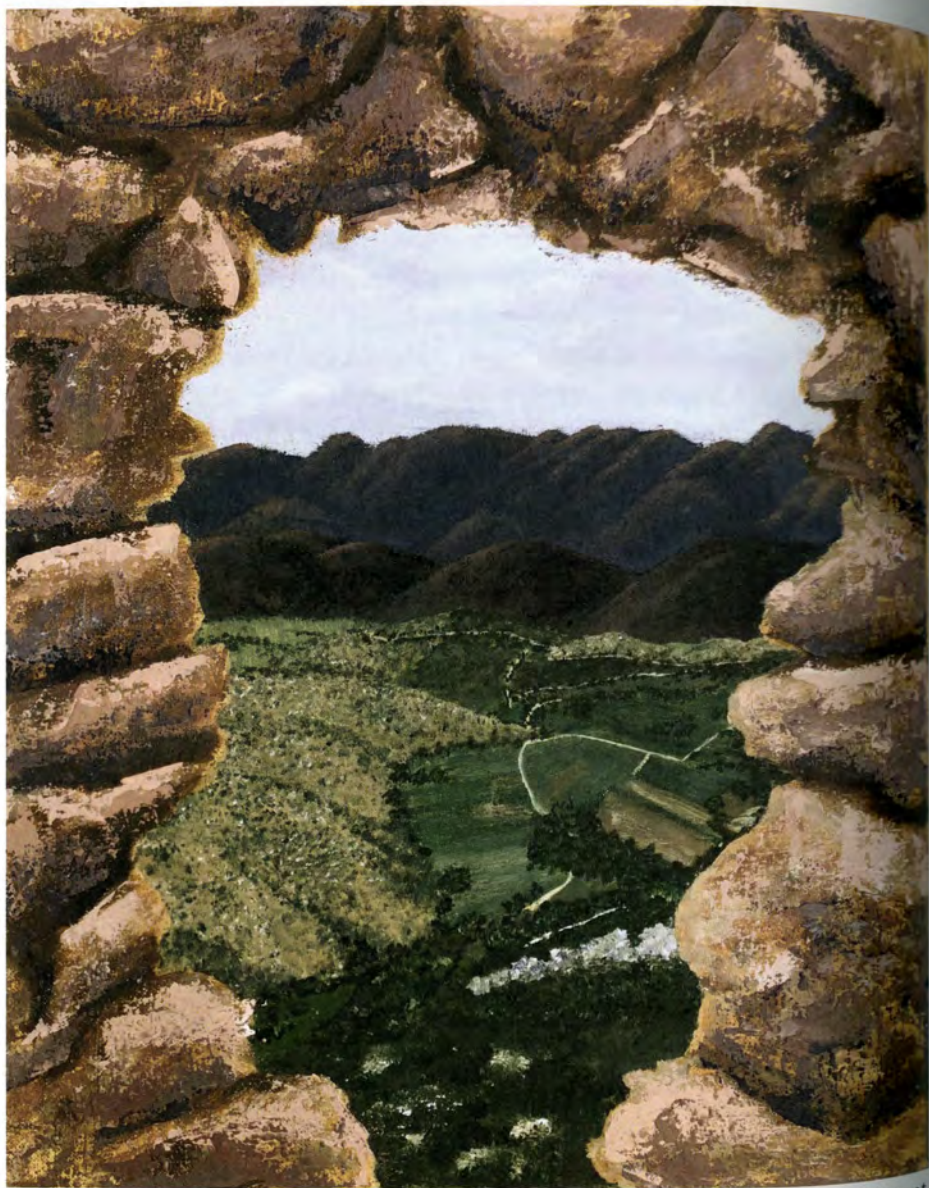
You were drawing in your coloring book, red crayon in hand as you filled the cornflower blue Crayola sky with cardinals. You flipped to the next page, so devoid of color yet so exciting because of it. But paper is sharper than it looks, you learned, and when it sliced into your finger, the blood trickled out onto the scuffed hardwood floor of the playroom. Under your new Scooby-Doo bandaid, the cut burned as hot as the sun. The scarlet red Crayola blood was beginning to seep through, and you shielded your eyes from the sight.

You were mesmerized by the sun glinting off the water in fractals. The stench of chlorine didn't deter you from leaning in, and you tumbled head-first, sinking like a skipped stone that had run out of momentum. You hadn't grown enough for your feet to touch the bottom—but, like always, your father was there to lift your thrashing body out of the water. Your mother's lap had never looked so inviting, and you sat there shivering until the ache in your chest subsided. For a moment, you wondered if this was how your goldfish felt when he had floated to the tank's surface, his tiny body finally giving in to the ever-flowing current.

You were standing at the top of the stairs when you saw red through the treetops. The sirens were stray arrows piercing your skull, and you asked your mother if the fire was coming to your house. She glanced out the window and took your hand in hers, pulling you toward the kitchen for dinner.

"No," she said, "we're far enough away." The bare branches of frostbitten trees framed the smoke rising into the sky, and you realized that everyone thinks they're far enough away until they find themselves staring into the embers.

It rained the day you found the little bird resting on the ground. He looked so peaceful in his sleep, eyes closed and feet tucked into the down feathers lining his body like a mitten. But something was wrong. His wing was twisted, and you didn't know much about birds, but you knew his wing wasn't supposed to look like that. His tiny chest cavity was still, and you waited for him to take a breath. The breath never came. That night, you prayed to God and asked Him to guide the little bird home.



Distant
Brooke Wainwright '21

Love Languages

Cassandra Arencibia '24

Language barrier.
Mother and daughter.
We settle for charades and gestures
to tell each other goodnight.
I show love
in an outpouring of words.
Compliments and praise.
I would scream it on the highest hill,
but you don't understand poetry.
Or maybe you don't understand me.
Tightlipped grins.
You say nothing of the sort.
I feign remembering kisses and hugs
that imprinted their warmth upon my personality.
Reach out and feel the empty spots.
But on cold Sunday nights
I do remember.
Other things.
My mother pours love into making my bed.
Fold and kiss, fold and kiss.
She wishes me sweet dreams and baby's rest,
as she fluffs my pillow and yanks my fitted sheet.
How does she clean for me so tenderly?
I can never make my room as clean as she does.
Things stay in place when she commands it.
Let there be order,
and there is.
I almost feel guilty, living in a space that she made so neat, so clean.
Expectations of motherhood built around her.
Tired, but doesn't the house look wonderful?
Embarrassment at her fussing hands.
Straightening skirts and wiping spaghetti stains from my mouth.

I made myself messy on purpose,
 grinning as she frowned at my torn tights and lost earrings,
 unknowingly rejecting her love.
 Tugging at braids she sewed and drawing on skin she made.
 But now as life wears at my knees
 and joints stay crooked at single digit degrees,
 I sink into bed
 And let her hold me in the curves of my sheets.
 Unfold and hug, unfold and hug.
 I let her wipe the stains from my face now
 and sometimes I straighten her necklaces.



Mind Over Matter
 Greta Stuckey '23

Love Note Backstage

Lidija Slokenbergs '22

You have my admiration,
Expectations keep me far;
I'm not supposed to walk the stage
That leads to where you are,
And I can't admit my love
For this life has me outplayed,
But I won't admit I'm crying-
I'll put on the masquerade.

I don't possess the power to make
Changes to this show;
The people, scenes and setting
Will determine where I go;
Just like the stunning costumes,
My heart has been displayed;
But let's go on denying
That for you that heart was made.

It's getting late,
The house must now be packed
But to the brim;
They're here for entertainment,
Overjoyed when things get grim;
For all the famous dramas that
The people pay to see
Are of sorrow that we're chasing,
Of the love that can not be.

Dirty Harry

Natalie Garrison '22

She lets her hair down
Out of that
Ponytail

Tied

tight

She reaches for her phone
Her friends

Can't

Tonight

Are they even her friends?
That depends.

No point in feeling sad
Dirty Harry never

Feels

bad

She acts like she doesn't try
was it

Six

Shots

or five

Because she's

Old

Dirty

Harry

She beats to her own drum

She

Stares

Down

Her camera lens

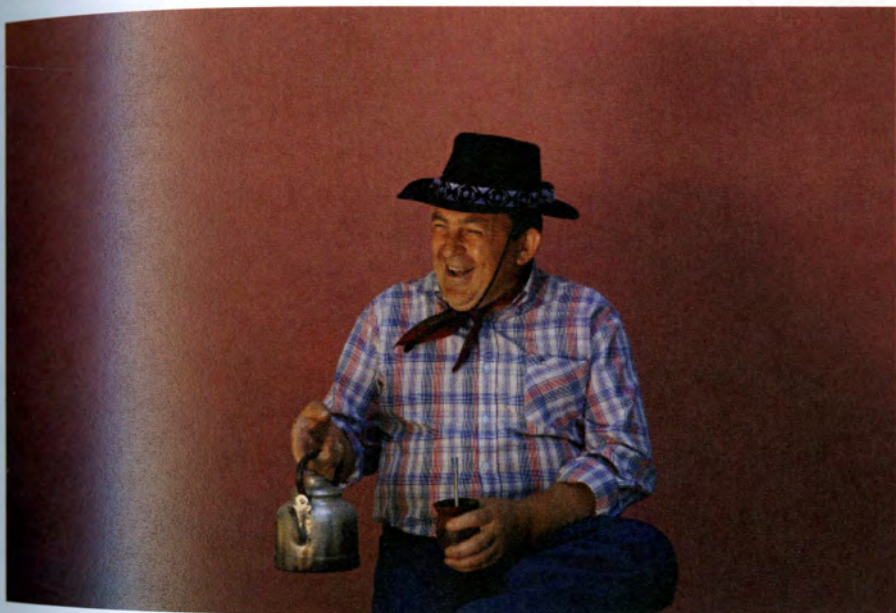
Do

you

feel

Lucky

Punk? Hell yes.



Gustavo
Rachel Mittelman '23

Sunday

Sara Rabinowitz '24

Third Place, Fiction

The black velvet dress lay spread out on the bed. I knew that in my sister's room, the same dress would be lying in almost the exact same position on her bed, though hers would be purple, while mine is black. Both dresses have a round neckline with puffy cinched up sleeves. Both dresses would fall only slightly above our knees. And both dresses would be tied with a large bow that rests on the back of the dress, right under our shoulder blades.

I knew that in the room next to mine, my sister would already be putting her dress on, or maybe she's already done and is instead working on fixing the buckle on her new black shoes. She would not stare at the dress in the way that I do. She does not stand on the other side of the room and hope that if she waits long enough, the dress will disappear.

I knew that if I did not get dressed soon, my mother would eventually end up knocking on my door, yelling about how if they didn't leave soon they would have to sit next to the Haverfords, something that my mother would rather give up her life than do. My mother was

always quite particular about where she sat at church. She said that Ken Haverford breathes so loudly from his mouth that she can't hear God.

My mother is also very particular about what we wear to church. My sister is fourteen, meaning she was at least given a choice of dress color. My mother had picked out a dress that she deemed appropriate, and my sister chose the color that she wanted. My mother then bought the same dress for me, but in a different color.

My mother says I am not mature enough yet to pick out my own church dress. Her evidence for this is based on the fact that I wanted to wear a yellow dress. My mother says yellow is not a church color. She also says yellow does not go with purple. This is why I am wearing black.

The fact that black goes so well with purple is precisely the reason why I did not want to wear black. Standing next to my sister in identical clothes only accentuates our differences even more. At fourteen years old, my sister is beautiful. And at ten years old, I am everything but. I do not think that it has much to do with my age though. I think that

I have always been quite ugly, and I predict that I always will be.

Adorned with matching dresses, my sister and I will look like the perfect pair. But I will simply feel like the outcome of my parents trying to make a copy of her. She is the one wearing the dress. I am just the less fortunate clone.

No matter how much I stare

or how much I hope, the dress would not be going away. This is what I thought to myself as I pulled it over my head, rolled up my stockings, and slipped on my shoes. As I opened my door to meet my family in the hall, I thought about stealing a glance in my mirror before I went, but I knew it would be easier if I didn't.



Intimacy vs. Isolation
Brooke Wainwright '21



The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti

Inspired by *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti* by Ben Shahn

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Jessica Hawkins '22

A Memoir Night

Julianna Buchmann '23

Second Place, Nonfiction

I'll never forget that night. The night after my 11th birthday. It feels like it was yesterday, so vivid in my brain.

3:27 AM

My Dad opens my door, telling me to get up. The fire department is on its way. I get out of bed, and hurry over to the window, to see our detached garage, up in flames. We had just moved in the previous month, meaning most of our things were still in the garage. All of my childhood memories, from my umbilical cord, to my halloween costumes. The carousel headboard my grandparents had designed for me. My baptismal dress. All of it. I sat there, waiting for the fire department, hoping in my heart that it could somehow be solved, somehow be saved. Before the fire department got there, our house windows started to melt, our grass was burning, my trampoline was up in flames. When the fire department finally arrived, the fire was put out. Our windows were falling off of our house, the walls bubbling, the grass smoking. My Dad's car was melting into our driveway.

4:38 AM

Interrogated. My 11 year old self, interrogated, seeing if I caused the fire. Probably the most traumatizing part. Sitting at my dining room table, with a bunch of strangers around asking insane questions. My parents were freaking out. The strangers were saying it was protocol. Later they discovered it was an electrical fire, finally leaving me alone.

11 AM

We stood in the rubble, seeing if we could find anything, anything at all. And there it was.

My parents' wedding cake topper, sitting amongst the soot, fully intact, just a little burnt. Although we had a great deal of loss, that wedding cake topper somehow gave a little hope that we could heal from this. And we did.

My Imprisonment

August Boland '24

I wish to swim
In a rainstorm
To feel the rain wash over me
A faint gust
Compared to the tornado
Of the water's waves

I long to smell the mingling
Of the freshness of the rain
With the salty air of the water
And feel truly alive

I desire to feel cooled
Submerged in the water below
With a faint sprinkling of water above
And know that this moment
Like the rain rolling down my face
Is temporary, and will never come again

Mister Man

Nicole Formisano '22

A white-knuckled grip on her bare wrist,
he holds her like he holds the steering wheel.
He will decide where and when the car moves,
And should he veer off the cliffside,
on some impassioned impulse,
he'll buy a new one later.
Hot little thing to ride or die
makes him Mister Man
Mister love mad
Mister crash the car
Deep and hard.

Later, when she's in the ER,
and I'm setting her broken bones
like last time and the time before,
I'll study the delicate flowers of purple and yellow on her skin
and wonder why I'm not good enough to ruin.

My Friend Hudson

Gabriella Amleto '24

I have a friend named Hudson,
I try to visit them often
But life distracts my want to visit.

My friend Hudson is a quick walk,
But when I visit
I stay for hours

My friend Hudson does not have a house,
At least not a traditional one
They are bare to the elements,
So I visit when it's warm.

My friend Hudson doesn't mind,
They enjoy my visits,
Or at least,
I hope they do.

When I go to my friend Hudson,
I bring my work during my stay,
Sometimes maybe poetry,
I rarely ever look at Hudson.

My friend Hudson doesn't mind,
They have plenty of visitors,
So they are never lonely,
Except for nights,
For my friend Hudson never sleeps,
Despite them having a bed.

My friend Hudson entertains me,
Whether I'm doing work or poetry,

From the gurgle of their laugh,
To the babble of their words.

My friend Hudson is popular,
They're beloved by all and tamed by none,
People drive to specifically meet Hudson,
But they always make time for me.

My friend Hudson is odd,
But I will miss them when I leave,
For they bring a sense of peace,
When peace is hard to grasp.



New York
Emma Isabel '25

A Response to Masculinity

Blair Nackley '24

Third Place, Nonfiction

The institutions that define our everyday lives are poisoned by a syndrome that preys on the weakest of us: the single mothers, the estranged daughters, and the naive little girls. Every day, the vulnerability of the female sex is exposed in such subtle ways; our minds become used to the nauseating side effects. Through this sickness, a community was built, and the patriarchy has become our way of existing.

Yet, inequality is not the only force that keeps us oppressed. It is anger, irate and violent, a rage so intense that the idea of female empowerment sparks a wildfire. However, society prefers to turn a blind eye to tragedy or distance themselves from it. We have repackaged this anger as "culture" and said the words, "boys will be boys" too many times to count.

Why are phrases like this acceptable to say when girls are not allowed to be girls? The concept of femininity is an orchestrated narrative. Our desires, beliefs, and personalities are dependent on the male interpretation of them. Nevertheless, those who claim it is "not all men" are by no means absolved of emotional responsibility. This weight rests on every single human being's shoulders. Therefore, it should be carried by all, not just felt by those who are crushed by it.

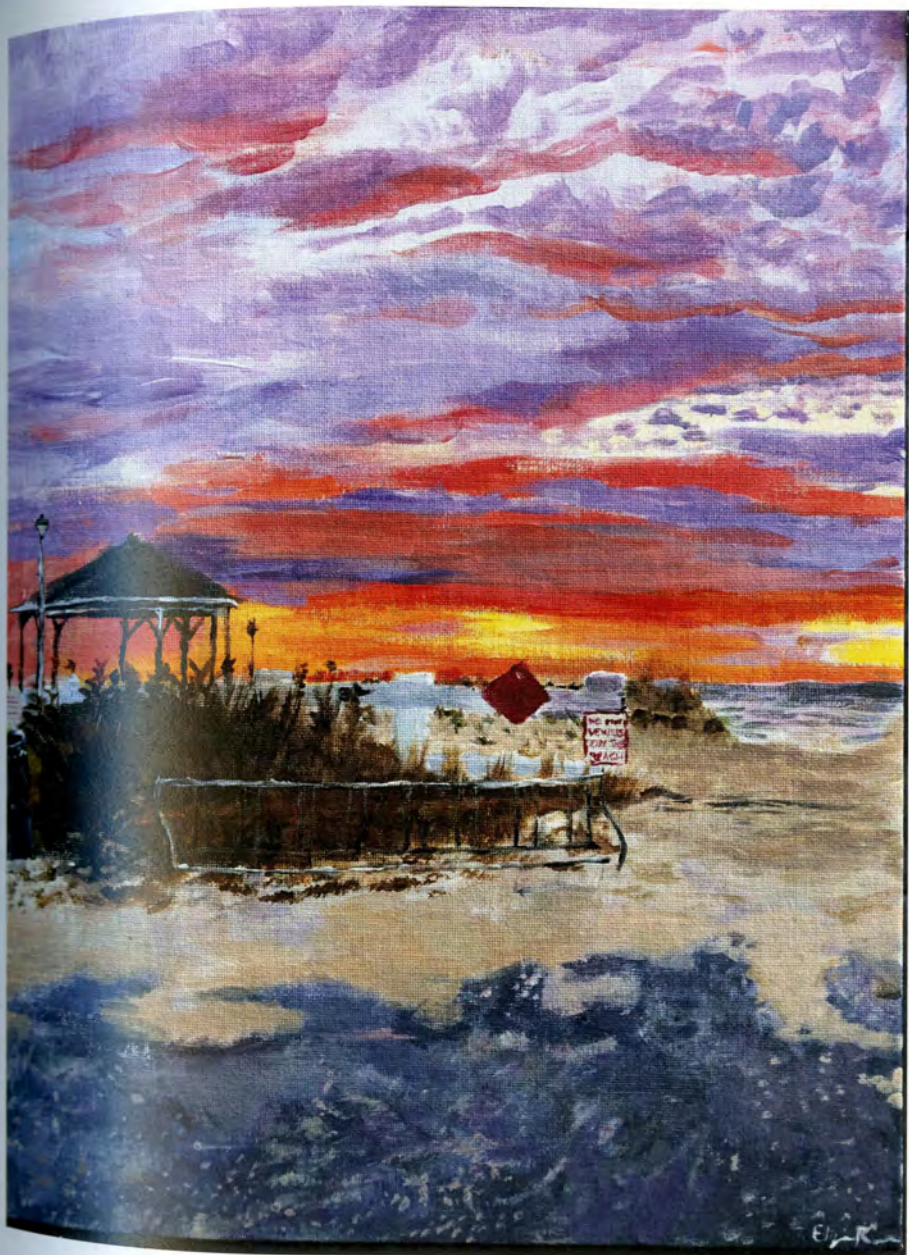


Simplicity
Miranda Santiago '23

Ode to Amethyst

Gabriela Maria Cunha '22

My favorite color is Barney the dinosaur. My favorite color is the flying purple people eater. You are the purple motif portrayed in Disney villains, feared by all, but loved by me. You are dark and mysterious, yet I am intrigued by you. You are the color of my snuggie, physically wrapped in your warmth and enveloped in comfort. I see darkness and enlightenment. I feel intuitive and transformed. You are the color of my hair sophomore year of high school. Dark and plum, confident and bold. You are change and you are beautiful. I remember the day I bought you in the Awareness Shop, my sacred amethyst crystal. I did not pick you, you chose me. You bring me protection from evil thoughts, and promote mindfulness—where others see you as grief and despair, you rid my anxieties leaving way for awareness and serenity. When you are near me, I dream. I feel peace. You are divine. You are Royalty. Regal. Rare. I feel noble when I wear you. I see your beauty, I see your light. You are the flowers that blossom in Springtime, bringing life to where there was death. Many see your presence as mourning, filled to the brim with sorrow and suffering. But I do not. Charlotte Perkins Gilman used you as a representation of life in "The Giant Wisteria." You concealed a dead body, the pain of what used to be. But your beautiful wisteria flowers and your presence demonstrates the contrary. While you represent pain, death and loss to many, I see you for what you truly are. You are light, love, warmth. You are life. You are haunting but alluring. You remind me of the giant purple knife in our kitchen drawer. You are pastel and delicate, yet you can end me in one fatal swipe. You hid your innocence so well. You are bewitching—I am lost in you. My nails are decorated in your beautiful hue. The amethyst color I love so dearly. If looks could kill, my manicure would waste no time in doing so. You hold my life in your hands, and I do not worry. I feel peace and tranquility at the thought of being with you. If I were to die today, I would want to be buried in you. I would not be feared by you, I would gladly dig my own grave just to be near you. My death would give way to new life, and transform my decaying flesh into a field of lavender and amethyst.



Sea Girl
Elizabeth Roberts '24

Ode To Claude

Michaela Ellison-Davidson '23

All the plants in my room are plastic. All but Claude.
I don't know why I admit this. I suppose I want someone to know.

Those plastic plants like memento mori in Dutch still lifes:
A rootless shell; artificial green; soil that holds no nutrients.

Is this the transience of life?

And then there is Claude.

There on the window sill he sits. No sun for days.
I have forgotten to water him; forgotten to care for him as I attempt to care for myself.

I treat him as if he is some obscure thing: alive, but self sufficient.

But here we both are: lacking.

He is no longer outdoors. I am no longer at home.
His leaves turn brown; my hair falls out. He outgrows his pot; I change my major.

I did not get my mother's green thumb, her ability to care for things.

I do think: here I am, meant to keep him alive.
A promise somewhat unkempt, but not broken.

As I read him poems from a book for class. As I run his pot under a faucet.
As I move him out into the light of the living room.

He will be alright.

So will I.

The Disappearance of Freddy Duvall

Michaela Ellison-Davidson '23

First Place, Fiction

It was July Fourth, nineteen and eighty-nine when Otis, Jonah, and I believed that my brother Freddy had been abducted by aliens. Freddy was home from college, the two of us not speaking much and when I invited him to the fireworks show at Ebenezer Baptist Church he declined, saying, "You know, Francis, I have friends. Adult ones."

"I reckon, Freddy," said my mother, "you don't see anything of your sister anymore. The least you can do is drive her and her friends to the church barbecue."

Freddy shot me a look. It almost seemed apologetic. "Look-" he shrugged- "I just can't. You can bike over."

The truth was that Freddy hadn't so much as forgotten about me but moved on. He'd gone to college for a year, coming back home with the notion that he was an adult, no longer wishing to be a part of my weekend adventures, car rides for milkshakes- always strawberry- or the animated films in the drive-in theater.

If I dared to ask him to hang out with me he would sit up in bed, remove one of his headphones from his Walkman, and say, "Francis, if you don't quit bothering me I swear to God."

"What about tonight, then?" I'd ask, hovering between the frame of his bedroom door. "Magnum P.I.'s on the television."

Freddy would shake his head. "I'm going over to Harper's place."

"Maybe I can come."

"I don't think that's a good plan," he'd said. "You're only eleven. You wouldn't have any fun."

The next morning when Harper showed up at our door for Freddy, Freddy wasn't there.

"He's not here." It seemed she was convincing herself.

I told her, for what had to be the hundredth time, that no, Freddy was not here.

We thought nothing of this until

two days passed and Freddy hadn't called. We filed a police report, Sheriff Dobbins not believing a word we had to say.

"Your son," he said to my mother, "was he caught up in anything? You know, drugs, that sort of funny business?"

My mother had no idea.

"And Freddy's father, what about him?"

This was unapproachable territory. "Disappeared when Francis was two."

"Well," said the Sheriff. "You know how it is around here. Boys always end up like their daddies."

...

We were walking along the old train tracks when Jonah said his mother Loretta saw a UFO over the old meat packaging plant.

"Lies," said Otis. "Your mother's messed up."

Jonah hopped across the tracks, reaching for Otis's collar. I grabbed him by the arm and shoved him

to the ground. He was no good at fighting and Otis- bless him- was no good at taking a punch.

"Look," said Jonah, swatting the dust off his pants. "Loretta was saying that some of the people at the packaging plant have seen the same thing. What I'm thinking- I'm thinking Bryant might have aliens."

Otis squinted in the sunlight, his glasses slipping down his nose. "What in the Sam Hill?"

I turned to Jonah. "Bryant has had disappearances for decades. My father, for example, and Jonah's daddy.-" I motioned for Otis to stay silent- "Our dads wouldn't have left like they did. There's something else going on. Just like with Freddy disappearing."

It was a dreadful thing- that plant- an eyesore, smelling like the in-nards of roadkill. We walked from the tracks to the building, plotting an improvised nightwatch for extra-terrestrial activity.

"Well well well," said Jonah, tossing himself onto the grass. "This looks two steps away from being

the entrance to hell.”

Otis figured we'd lost our marbles, assuming that Freddy was kidnapped by little green men.

“It's because his life's damn near perfect,” said Jonah. “He doesn't think anything out of the ordinary can happen, because it's never happened to him.”

“He believes in Jesus,” I said, “And he's never seen Jesus.”

“It's different.” Jonah picked at his shoelace. “My dad- why would he just up and leave? Why would yours? You see, everyone's got someone missing without any explanation.” He gestured randomly with a hand. “Aliens, Francis. The idea's got more sense than God gave a rock.”

Otis stood up and said, “I'm going home. I'm freezing and if aliens were even real- which they are not- why in their right minds would they land here, in Bryant, Alabama, an absolute shit hole.”

There was a sudden flash of light behind the barn.

I grabbed Otis by the arm and pulled him down. “Stop pitching a fit.”

We waited in silence, not breathing, our hearts pulsing violently in our throats. The light grew brighter, blinding, like the headlights of a car. Out of fear or impulse, we got to our feet and bolted.

There was nothing to say. I was a believer.

The next weekend we agreed to meet behind the meat packaging plant.

The night was cool, damp. I rode my bike along the train tracks and imagined the future events of my life: Freddy returning home, spending nights with him playing backgammon, him letting me smoke his cigarettes behind his pickup truck with the chipped paint.

I missed him, I thought, I missed him something awful.

...

At the barn, the three of us were scrambling for the door, running into the light- a tunnel to the gates of Heaven- pausing with open

mouths as we entered. The first thing that hit me was the smell—the sickly-sweet scent of pickled vegetables.

Freddy's girlfriend, Harper, dressed in a flannel coat, stood slack with one hand hovering over her lips, eyes darting between us and the floor. Beside her were two boys. No one was speaking. Everyone was completely white in the face.

I gazed down, finding my brother's bloated, decaying body at their feet.

This was the explanation:

Two weeks earlier, around eight o'clock on Saturday, July fourth, Freddy met Harper, Zach, and Luke behind the Ingles grocery store. Me, Otis, and Jonah were at the firework show. Freddy told my mother he was meeting us there after a change of heart. He had lied.

Luke had these acid dipped cigarettes— it was going to be a good time— Freddy ended up falling through the barn roof instead, spooked by the noise of the fireworks.

"There's no aliens," I said. The words were hardly audible. "We were searching for aliens."

It was easier to think Freddy had been abducted by aliens than the thought of his girlfriend hiding his body. I'd wanted something to blame, something to protect my brother, something to bring him back, but he was gone, and I had been a fool.

I biked home by myself that night, hoping to God Harper would do the right thing.

My mother was sitting at the kitchen table. She didn't glance at me as I walked through the door.

"Mama."

"Let's do this in the morning," she said, but I shouted her name again, my anger boiling over like a hot egg on summer pavement.

"Whatever happened to my father?" I asked. "You've gotta know."

"He left. He left because the only way to get over yourself is aban-

doing what's holding you down. You see, Francis—" she sighed—"There was nothing here for him. He hated that packaging plant, and hated that Freddy would end up there. He couldn't stand it and he wasn't brave enough to change it."

I didn't speak for a long time.

"Francis," she said, "there's nothing left to say about it. You didn't do anything to make him leave. We loved him the best we could. He just didn't return the favor."

I let my head fall over my folded arms. "Why'd you never tell me?"

"If I never did say a word about it, then I wasn't lying, and not saying anything at all is a whole lot better than breaking your heart."

"Did Freddy know?"

"Yes." She gave me a furtive look. "He knew."

I knew then she hadn't expected him to come home, she'd accepted him to be gone just like she'd accepted my father's absence. I'd held out hope for so long and there was nothing to show for it.

...

The July we searched for aliens would later be regarded as the end of our innocence. Harper, Zach, and Luke came clean to the police, offering over Freddy's body so we could bury him the proper way in the family plot.

My mother and I went down to Trenton a few days later to collect Freddy's things from college. There was an unmailed letter on his desk. He'd addressed it to me.

"Francis," it said, "Forgive me for the silence. There are some things too big for you to understand just yet. I hope to God you never will. When I come home, we'll go get ice cream strawberry milkshakes. Alright?"



Picnic
Jamie Goodman '23

Overload

Greta Stuckey '23

Walk slowly, rest assured
Move quickly, stress endured
Dim madness, can't be cured

Lights flickering, parts moving within
Feel so close, hear the drop of a pin
Try to move, but I have become too thin

Take a deep breathe, let go of the air
Heart thumping, the sound of a snare
Need to find a seat, but I wouldn't dare

Waiting inside, panic fills the mind
Many people, the crowd is not kind
Swallowed up, I retire just in time

Party Central

Katie Sailer '23

When we are greeted by the moon,
And are collected in the cramped kitchen
Of the second-floor condo,
rockets seem to go off.

Chairs and stools bracelet the table,
Holding the tired, tipsy, and talkative.
Cards are dealt
And time becomes lost.

Talking becomes yelling,
Laughter is on loop,
Flailing arms mask the battlefield,
And drinks pray not to be spilt
Through the pandemonium.

When our war dies down,
Our glasses tapped,
And the clock claims morning,
We surrender then
And wait till dusk
For our party is neverending.

Play

Julia Panas '25

I am a doll.

I am a doll. This body
is a doll.

i dress her up and paint her eyes blue and pink and black black black
i make her walk

from the cupboard to the coffee maker to the sink to the
cupboard again to the door to the stairs to the street.

I play with her

give her ridiculously tall shoes and match her up in relationships (because
he "seems interesting").

but sometimes she gets entangled
and he steals some of my strings
and he plays with her, too.

I hear the whispers

all all the time

but it doesn't matter what they say about me because I *chose* her.

I am the one who drinks her coffee *I* am the one who manufactures her
beauty *I* am the one who tears up her values *I* am the one who is intoxicat-
ed with sticky pink love pumping in my veins

I am the one who suffers her consequences.

but really —

I'm just playing.

Dear ENG 392

Monique Barrow '22

Dear, ENG 392 Class,

I hope everyone is doing well. I am writing from Kyoto, Japan, where every time you walk in this city, it feels like you are going back to ancient times. How many of you knew that Kyoto was the capital of the rising sun country from 794 to 1868? Not many know this fact as many are familiar with Japan's "new" capital, the modern Tokyo. There is something so special about Kyoto that it's no wonder why it is such a popular city for tourists and travelers. Perhaps it must have to do with the fact that in a country where most cities are starting to modernize, Kyoto seems to not only be struggling, but also flat out rejecting the modern and rather embracing the ancient? Or perhaps because Kyoto is home to Nintendo, the video game company that is responsible for giving us beloved game franchises such as *Super Mario*, *The Legend of Zelda*, and *Metroid*. Or perhaps it's because Kyoto is home to five Geisha districts, Gion being the most popular one because you have a chance to see maybe one of three hundred remaining geishas? Some of you may think you know what a geisha is but just in case, I will make it very clear: Geisha are NOT prostitutes! They are dancers and entertainers that mainly entertain in traditional Japanese restaurants and

cha-ya (tea houses) for elites. They do participate in traditional Japanese festivals as well. However, despite what books, movies, and rumors might have told you, they are NOT prostitutes. Call them that and they will not be pleased.

Before I went to Kyoto, I traveled to Nara, which might be my favorite city in all of Japan. Nara is a small city that is squished between popular cities of Kyoto and Tokyo. Nara served as the first capital of Japan, from 710 when it was founded 'till it was eventually moved to Kyoto in 794. However, what I loved about Nara the most is that they are home to about 1,500 free-roaming deer. Yes, there is a city in Japan where both humans and deer roam freely together and it has been like that for centuries. They mainly roam around Nara-Koen which is Japan's largest city park that also contains many of Nara's greatest treasures. However, it is very clear that the city's greatest treasure are these deer. And just when you thought it could not get any better, it does. You can feed the deer. There are vendors in the park that sell *shika sembei* (deer crackers) and you give to the deer and befriend them and feel like you are in a Disney Princess Movie! Even though these deer are cute and it is so cool that you can feed these deer and

befriend them, take note: They are NOT tame deer. They are still wild animals, and they can still possibly bite or attack you.

I can go on and on about how much I have seen so far on my two-week journey through Japan, but I do not have time as I am still experiencing so much in this amazing country. If you take away one thing from my letter, please take away this: Japan is such a beautiful, vast country that has

a rich history and culture. I encourage everyone to visit Japan at least once and experience what the country has to offer and not just the cherry blossoms and anime that Japan is known for, though by all means experience that if you wish. Until my next letter from Japan, I will talk to you all later!

Arigato,

Monique Barrow



The Throne of the Garnet Fairy
Olivia Myers '25

Villain

Carley Van Buiten '23

I pull out of your driveway, the image of you crying, head in your hands, getting smaller and smaller in my rearview mirror. My body shakes as I drive, from the uneven road or the anxiety of leaving you: I can't tell. Our whole relationship flashes before my eyes as someone's life does when they are about to die. The good, the bad, I want to remember it all. My mind stops like a stuck record on the memory of you driving me home from our first date. Our bodies shook then as mine does now, from the uneven road or our excited nerves: I couldn't tell. I remember you dropping me off and waiting until you saw me disappear behind my front door, knowing I was safe, to pull off and drive yourself home. That overwhelming feeling of being loved drapes over me the way a warm hug does on a hot day when it all feels too much, too suffocating. You loved me in that all consuming way that I could never return. I tried to love you in the way you loved me. I thought if I wanted it bad enough I eventually would. But that's not how love works.

I'm driving away from you now, the street lights illuminating the wet road in tints of white, green, and red, I don't wait to watch you make it inside the way you did for me. I feel my face twisting as I start to cry in

that ugly way you can't control. I feel ugly. Not in a superficial egotistical way. In a deeper, more painful way that makes you question your character. I don't understand how I could have been loved so fully and not have loved back. My brain flips to us in Virginia Beach. Me, you, your mom are all floating in the pool together. You hold me as your mom holds you. She looks right at me and says, "When you two get married...." I don't hear the end of the sentence. Only that word, "married". My head is above water but I imagine this is what it feels like to drown. Drowning victims will always bring the person trying to save them down with them. People will do anything to survive.

Just ten minutes ago when I ended things with you on your knees in the middle of your cool kitchen tiles, you looked up at me with tear streaked cheeks, and said, "My grandma told me I can't lose you. She drilled in my head that you are my endgame." At this point you had put your hands up for me to hold. They felt heavy and wet and I couldn't bear to hold them anymore. I let them fall and watched them swing down to your side as you hung your head. I turn from you, the words won't reach my tongue. I walk out as a villain would, leaving behind the chaos they had just

ensued. I know at this moment I am the villain in your story.

Everyone can picture a villain when they hear the word. Whether it be the Joker, Cruella De Vil, or Darth Vader, they all share similar qualities. We can see that narcissistic smirk, hear the harsh cackle, picture the confident walk. We all know the way they thrive off of chaos and share no empathy. Am I this type of villain in your story? You believe me to relish in the chaos I cause but my heart breaks for it. My heart breaks for you. What if not every villain relishes in the chaos they ensue, but rather has no choice in the matter? Would I have been more of a villain in your eyes if I had stayed without loving you or left because of that fact?

It's been two years since that day. I've stayed away from opportunities that would allow me to hurt anyone the way I hurt you. I seek out love unreciprocated because it is safer than the all encompassing kind I had with you. I promised myself I would never love again in honor of you. But years allow the scars to fade and the weight of the guilt to lessen and I refuse to shrink myself to give you more space. I have come to terms with being the villain of your story. I have come to understand that no matter what you do everyone is the villain of someone else's story at least once in their life. We all need a villain that explains where things went wrong so we don't

have to be left in the dark with ourselves as the only one to blame. I am willing to be that buffer for you but I cannot live the rest of my life in fear of being the villain in someone else's story. I would rather make the mistake of loving too hard, too much, than not loving at all.

I'm walking down the sidewalk in my new life, apart from you. That fall smell of decaying leaves and cold night air makes me wrap my arms around myself. The thoughts of you have begun to fade and distort. I'm trying to remember a specific one when he walks by. All he says is "Hi," with a smile and a wave, but I no longer think of you.

I have accepted the role I play in your story but that does not define the role I play within my own. You deserve to be loved by someone fully just as I deserve to love fully. One day you will wake up next to the person who loves you in the way I couldn't and be thankful I am the villain of your story.

Please leave your message at the sound of the tone.

Ethan Maslyn '22

Hey.

I've been putting this off for months

Just like every other goddamn thing between us,

But I can't do this anymore.

I just need a break from you

And I know our relationship is all about breaks

But I mean a real break.

I need to work on myself, get things done

Be who I want to be.

And while I love staying inside on my phone with you

It's all hollow.

It's an echo of time well spent.

Sure, in the moment it feels great

But what do we ever accomplish with each other?

I want to be pushed to be better,

All you do is make me comfortable

With my own mediocrity.

I try to get you to do things with me,

Fun things that we would love!

Only for you to leave me waiting

Like something you never checked off your to-do list.

Anyway,

I'm done dragging my feet.

Goodbye.

Sometimes I Forget That You Are Gone

Anonymous

Sometimes I forget that you are gone,
But other times it hit me like a runaway train
It makes my heart hurt and I feel an emptiness in my chest
Sometimes I forget that you are gone,
The world does not seem so dark and the sun seems to shine
But then I remember and it makes my eyes rain,
And I wonder if this pain will ever go away.
Sometimes I forget that you are gone,
And I can hear music and feel its sound
But then I remember your kind words,
your soft hands,
the sound of your voice was like a lullaby before bed, calm and soothing.
Your beautiful face, and kind eyes
the way your hugs were my paradise.
Sometimes I forget that you are gone
it hurts,
I hate it
I hate that sometimes I forget that you are gone,
for I cannot bare the emptiness within me left by your departure
it either forget that you are gone or accepting that you are no longer
In my life

summer ritual

Ethan Maslyn '22

We sat outside and watched the trees dance in the wind
And wondered what kind of music they listened to.
Bending back and forth, looking like they might break, but laughing the entire time.
What would it take for us to be like them?
To dance and be free.
I decide to join them in their reveling and they teach me to move as they do.
I hear the rustling of their branches alongside my footsteps
And I feel the dewy, soft grass beneath my feet.
Mixed in, I can see the sounds of our dancing drifting
Almost like I am Usher at a dance club in Los Angeles
And the music is rattling the drink in my hand,
I've never been to LA though.
The moon stares down at us from its perch in the sky
And thinks: "All of these kids are cracked"
Just because we're not afraid of the newspaper boys.
I can taste the sweat dripping down my face and I wonder
What will the world look like by the time we're done?
Will we still be dancing in this club, this electric forest?
We walk the streets in a daze,
Coming down from the high of pulsing music
And flashing neon lights that tell us who we are.
I wonder what the trees are listening to tonight.

Tea Party

Olyvia Renae Young '25

Second Place, Poetry

The rain was a cold, wet blanket
and the birds were drinking their tea.
Wind was howling and ringing in my ears,
and water blurred my vision.
My clothes burned my skin,
humidity filled my taste buds,
and the herbs brewing smelled like home.
To be over stimulated would be an understatement
because, hearing color and seeing sound
lifts you up and drops you to the ground.
Mary Jane of Boston Proper wore a glittery
robe and shined and sparkled.
She drank coffee with the birds.
The rain forged and poured and ruined the land,
all with the slightest of hands.
The drops fell to the ground with ample swagger,
boy do they have the moves like Jagger.
When the birds refused more of Mary Jane's coffee,
She threw out all their tea.
"Why would you fear the known?"
The rushing water felt the sadness,
but it appeared to be beaming with joy.
Mary Jane began to fly away
as Miss O wrote this script,
she was torn apart to depart.
Though now she's living her dream
and she's watching the city gleam.
Everything turned out okay, and as the clothes
being styled start to sing, she wipes a tear away.
The tear leaves her cheeks purple
"Il Ballo Della Vita" they weep.
And the rain still fell in blankets,
but the birds had finished their tea.

Neon Giants

Alex Deger '22

Billy covered his eyes with a blanket, acutely aware of every shadow that moved around his bedroom. His desk lamp lit the room in a haze of orange that comforted him from what unknown terrors lurked in the hidden corners of his room. Moonlight peeked through his window, but this offered him no comfort, this was a light of the night and couldn't be trusted. Everything about night terrified him, but all he could do was hide under the covers until exhaustion would finally take his anxieties away.

This wasn't one of those nights. He heard an unfamiliar knock on his wooden door that was neither the stern echoing knock of his mother or the soft careful knock of his father. This knock had a musical rhythm that seemed to wait for a response. The boy gave no response but clung to his blankets tighter. The door opened a crack and a gray eye peered into the room.

"Billy. It's grandpa. You still awake?" Said the grandfather, already knowing the answer.

The blanket blob moved slightly and made a small eye hole so he could return his grandfather's gaze. He obviously had to make sure it wasn't a monster using his grandfather's voice to deceive him. Billy finally lowered his blankets enough to

make a hole to peer out of. Billy knew his grandpa well enough; they lived an hour away from each other. It was enough distance to keep them relative strangers that saw each other several times a year.

"I just talked to your mom. She's upset you're still sleeping with a light on. I tried to talk to her, but you know how she is. I told her she used one when she was eight too, but she said it's different with you. She says that you're scared of everything. Especially the dark. If you'd like, I can tell you a story. A story about why she's wrong and you're right. A story about why you should be very scared of the dark."

Billy saw an opportunity to have his fears that everyone wrote off as irrational to be rationalized. He secretly always wanted a monster to jump out of his closet and drag him away as he screamed to his parents (especially his mom) "I told you so." He nodded his head with trepidation and the grandfather's story commenced.

"Alright, Billy. This takes place years before your mom was born. I had just proposed to grandma and was across the country trying to make a buck to give her the wedding she deserved. I quit my job as an electrician and tried to make my fortune

as a traveling salesman. God, the junk I used to have to try to sell out of my Oldsmobile. Vacuums, magazine subscriptions, all sorts of stuff. I'd like to think I was pretty good at my job, but it became much easier when I got the perfect product. Encyclopedias. Do you know what Encyclopedias are, Billy? They are these set of books that contain knowledge on just about everything. Everything from aardvark to zzyzyva. Do you know how easy it is to sell knowledge? If you ask just about any person if they want to be smarter, nine times out of ten you'll get a yes and that tenth person is probably not someone worth having around."

So, there I was in my Oldsmobile with a trunk full of sample encyclopedias. Every night I would fall asleep reading them. The one big problem with reading them every night is that it gave me quite the ego, I'm not proud to say. I thought I knew everything. I was wrong.

I was on the edge of the Rocky Mountains out in Colorado, it was late, and my eyes were heavy with the weight of the day. Those days I drove until I couldn't. There was nothing on that highway but power lines and trees. To my surprise, I saw a light in the distance that looked like the sun peeking over the horizon. I drove towards it and the light got brighter and brighter. The source began to emerge. It was a town lit up like the Christmas

tree we had last year.

I was drawn to it; your grandma always says that my curiosity will get me in trouble and here she was especially right. As I drove closer to the town, a sign appeared; "Welcome to Little Falls: Town of a Million Lights." Now I'd come across quite the large amount of tourist traps driving across the country. I've seen them advertising the world's biggest hairball or actual pictures of Bigfoot, but I'd never seen anything like this. I parked the car and began to explore. All these lights on and I didn't spot a single person but every light you could imagine. Lamps, neon signs, candles, lanterns. I've never felt something so bright and yet so empty.

I stood there alone until I heard music muffled in the distance. I trudged on towards it. I recognized the tune as something my grandparents used to listen to. It's a classical song called *Ride of the Valkyries*. It's supposed to be about some gods leading men to heaven or something like that. I learned that from one of those encyclopedias. I followed the loud crescendos to the town welcome center. The sign said welcome, but the building said everything but. I knocked on the door and a squeaky voice responded, "Come on in."

Inside the welcome center was a short man with glasses, he was bald on the top, and on the side of his head were brown and gray hairs fighting for

control. A heavy mustache weighed on his mouth and made you question if a top lip existed under there.

"Welcome to Little Falls, how can we help you?" he asked.

He stared with blue icy eyes that I don't remember ever blinking. I told him I was an encyclopedia salesman and was curious about all the lights. I was also curious about the lack of other people but was unsure I wanted an answer to that question. What he said to me I'll never forget.

"We keep all these lights on to keep the giants away."

I was stunned. Before I could ask more, the man in the welcome center asked me questions about the encyclopedias. I went into salesman mode and told him how much better his life could be with more knowledge. The whole time I was thinking about these giants. After I was done, the man told me he wanted fifty sets. He was so curious about everything I had to say. Now, usually I sold one or two, maybe five, but never fifty. I wrote him up a slip, he gave me a check, and told him I'd be back in a few months.

I'm riding the high of my biggest sale while driving away from Little Falls. I had not forgotten about the giants though. I had read every line of the encyclopedias multiple times including the section on giants. They weren't real. Giants were not real. If they were, it made these books in the back useless and by association, made

me useless. That didn't just make me mad, it made me furious. So, angrily, I hit the brakes and looked back at the faint glow that was the town. I was ready to drive back and punch that little guy right in his mustache. I was young and flailing against the unknown. I had a foul idea, one that I've regretted ever since. I drove to the power line that went directly back to the town. I grabbed my tool bag from the trunk and climbed the pole like I did back in my electrician days. I hacked the wires to shreds, they fell, and sparks shot all over the ground. As I began to climb down, I could see Little Falls in the distance as all of its lights shut off all at once.

I drove away from the scene of my crime as quickly as possible. I didn't need to be calling your grandma from a Colorado prison telling her I cut down power lines to prove a point. As I got further away, I saw something I hadn't seen in quite a while. It was another pair of headlights. These headlights were coming behind me shining with the purest white I'd ever seen. Maybe I was sleep-deprived or maybe the words of the caretaker were playing with my head. Sometimes stories can do that. At that moment, the headlights blinked. Just like eyes. I was obviously startled; I could see at this point they were eyes to a large black mass. It rose about fifty feet in the sky just about as tall as the trees. It looked like the stretched-out shadow

of a man. It began to reach towards the Oldsmobile. I thought of the caretaker's words about light keeping the giants away and I turned the car around and shone my headlights right at it. It covered its shining eyes and ran into the woods. I could still see its dark head over the trees as I turned the car around and drove faster than I ever had in my life.

I usually slept in my car, but I needed the security of a bed that night. I found a motel with a lit-up neon vacancy sign about thirty miles away from the incident. I locked my room tight and buried myself in a mountain of blankets like you are right now

The next day, I asked the motel manager about Little Falls. He said it was an odd town, but it was a real shame what happened to it. I asked him to explain and he said he heard from the police that a freak storm came through last night and destroyed it. I knew it was no storm. A monster was responsible, and it was me.

After the Little Falls incident, I gave up life on the road and begged for my steady job back. I settled back into life with your grandma. I didn't cash that check and still have it at home to remind me what happened when I thought I knew everything that hides in the dark.

Billy was both comforted and horrified by his grandfather's story. He had slowly unraveled his blanket

cocoon as the story went on. He patted his grandson's shoulder and began to leave the room.

"I never told anyone that story before," said The Grandfather with a wink as he shut the boy's bedroom door.

There he was again, alone with the story going through his head. He thought to himself that this was just his grandpa messing with him. That story couldn't be real. There was no way. In an act of both bravery and defiance, he got up and shut off his bedroom light. This was the first time darkness gave him any comfort. He got up and walked around with nothing but moonlight shining his way. He looked out his window to see this world of the night clearly for the first time. Two lights in the distance got his attention. They shone brighter than moonlight with the purest white he'd ever seen. As he stared at them with curiosity in his eyes, the lights blinked.

The Broken Environment

Julianna Buchmann '23

Green grass, pastel pink roses, blue delphinium, and yellow posies.
Crystal clear water, four seasons, decent weather, and happy reasons.
Icebergs floating, forests growing, the sun is glowing, but not over showing.
Bees buzzing, polar bears plunging, water flowing, and children knowing.
Forest fires, dry grass, losing grip, and burning gas.
Dying bears, dying bees, dying people, dying trees.
We fall into a pit of fire
When using gases not
Good for the environment.
If we keep on this way
Of usage, we'll be
Lucky if we make
It past this large
Nuisance.
Or soon
We will
Be
gone.



Sunset Over Water
Emma Isabel '25

The Girl in the Moon

Natalie Garrison '22

She stays awake all night
Staring out the window at the sky
Wondering why
She can't close her eyes

She's lost
And she's lonely
But she finds comfort
In the moon and it's glowing

People ask her
How's it going?
She tells them she's fine
Most of the time

Sometimes she lets herself
Pour out her soul
An ocean
That's harsh and cold

She finds control in certain things
She needs it or outward she bleeds
But something tells her to

Just
 Let
Go

It's the moon's lesson
To the lonely
lost girl
To loosen her hold

It
will
be
okay

Says the moon to the girl
I will command the sea
To bring you home safely

The girl closes her eyes
Until it is sunrise
No longer does she cry

The Pagan's Final Voyage

August Boland '24

I shivered in the cold
As the wind assailed my cheeks
And drew on my beard

I waited on the shoal
As the moon light leaked
Through the clouds it did leer

I awaited a black boat
While the far ferryman meek
Gazed upon me weird.

The Power of Music

Emma Isabel '25

I am music.

I was born a long time ago, but I am immortal.

I mingle with those who intersect my path, and

I possess a power that no one else has.

I was born a long time ago, but I am immortal.

I make people laugh or cry at a moment's notice.

I possess a power that no one else has.

I guide my followers through the good and the bad.

I make people laugh or cry at a moment's notice.

I fasten melodies and harmonies and lyrics together.

I guide my followers through the good and the bad.

I take people from all walks of life and unite them as one.

I am the universal language.

I mingle with those who intersect my path, and

I am the needle that mends the fabrics of the world.

I am music.

The Return

Kevin Pakrad '23

It's cold. The wind that touches my face is unkind.
I'm not where I'm supposed to be. Where--
Am I supposed to be?

My room awaits-- something warm, cozy --yet, I cannot--
The lie is gone. A lie that I loved. That warmth is a lie.
LED bullshit.

I cannot
Return.

I miss love.
It's the warm sound I hear every time I
Turn on the TV. Listen to music.
Forever...In love...

In love-- I know when something fits right.
You can't convince me otherwise. My jacket
Fits right. Not only the stitching, but it belongs

A part of me.

Where have I walked? The city is frozen. No one knows I'm here
Except for the sidewalk. Don't tell them. I'm tired.

The wind tried to stop me and still, I made it this far. Maybe
I should listen

To the blows

For when it's time

To Return.

The Triumph of Icarus

Gabriella Amleto '24

Icarus never screamed,
He howled

Icarus howled with the upmost excitement

Icarus never feared
He was comforted

Icarus found the wind a thrill

Icarus never listened
He wanted to learn

Icarus wanted his final moments to be something worth telling

Icarus never intended to fly
He intended to fall

Icarus knew falling was the experience he wanted out of life

The feathers flew around him
A beautiful final sight

His skin felt on fire
A beautiful final feeling

His voice was hoarse, but he continued to howl,
A beautiful final note

All at once, he was absorbed into the frigid ocean
A beautiful finale.

the wonder

Hor Mahmoud (H) '24

This is the wonder that is keeping the stars apart.
The wonder that is keeping peace from touching my mind.

you have never been honest and you never will
just like I've never questioned you and I never will

so with all of your wondering words - that you call honesty
tell me, dear.

look me in my eyes: the ones you once described as heaven.
look me in my eyes: the ones now full of heavenly swords.

tell me, did you ever love me? or was it my incapability of rejecting you?

tell me, dear,
on a scale of 10 to 1
Do you love who I've become?
cause I hate who I've become

trying to separate my feelings from my thoughts

Tell me, dear,
on a scale of 1 to 10
Do you like the new me?
Cause I hate the new me.

with all your hurtful words - that you call being candor -
Tell me, love.
Did you ever love me?

Me
The "me" that wanted to fix you
The "me" that wanted to leave you in peace.

you embraced my pain when no one else was around.
then said goodbye not knowing I find comfort in the sound.

believe me, you're not the first nor the last one to be gone.
and that is the wonder that is keeping me up until dawn.
this is the wonder that is keeping my nightmares awake.
What if I'm the monster that's been here all along?

Trains

Hannah McMahon '24

For a while I've had this fixation with trains.

Not like the infrastructure or how they work or where they go, but the people who occupy them.

I repeatedly have this fantasy where I see someone I know on a train and everyone else on it has no choice but to watch the interaction between us unfold.

It's like this subconscious obsession of how I exist or who I could be in someone else's mind. Like what story they could create from the interaction between me and this other person. What clues would be revealed as the conversation between us unfolds. And if these clues support their original suspicions or not.

I think it's because I'm normally on the other end of it. I have very few hobbies, but if you looked at the list you'd see "eavesdropping" scribbled somewhere on it. Naturally I wonder about the reversal. Who eavesdrops on the eavesdropper?

I have this memory of myself a few years back, sitting on my radiator, staring out the window and just wishing I could be invisible, simply so I could listen to the conversations that would take place seconds before my presence was known. This thought caught me off guard, and it bothered me that my initial wish was to be a fly on the wall rather than to have a place within the conversation.

It's like this fear that my being there would disrupt the conversation altogether. Change it. Dilute it. Make it less interesting. And at the same time, I know that what I really fear, is that if I was there as an equal member of the conversation, I may discover that what they're talking about, is really not that interesting after all. That the thing that made it interesting, was only knowing bits and pieces and not the full story.

Or rather, the thing that made it interesting is filling in the spaces between the bits and pieces of the story. I am what makes it interesting. My imagination is what makes it interesting.

but that's also why I want the reverse.

I guess I romanticize the idea that someone could have a perception of me based on a half-solved riddle.. and how the picture that gets created can be more beautiful than the reality.

I guess I just want to be seen in the light that I see others in. but the idea that someone could see me in that way only works if it's someone I don't know in real life. Just someone, say on a train, who sees one fragment of my existence and not the multifaceted entity that is me.



The Observers
Megan Byrnes '24

two very ill foxes

Jeremy Skeele '23

a pair of them,
each at the end of their journey
marveled at the land of lights

so new
for creatures from a
world so old

they saw all the beauty
we had created
and the pain that came with it

they saw we had
made them into idols
without inviting them in

one stray muttered
about the wish
to awake under the
electric current of the sky

the other comforted

“i'd rather be dying
under the stars
than trapped safe
in a world of light”

and the two creatures
found solace
agreeing on final thoughts
before rest

ugly red roses

Hor Mahmoud (H) '24

ugly

i sit with those gold rings on my fingers
and think about all the happiness drugs hold over us
and how much we forbid every source of happiness we have access to
we throw our emotions down on a piece of paper
and we look at them, name them, edit them, perfect them
as if making the words pretty will make the emotions any less ugly

-

ugly

what life can do to you
what your mind can bring to the table
what drugs can't fix about you
what insecure people are capable of -
red roses in a clear vase
standing tall
lasting for months and months
and i wonder if they're aware of their fakeness
that they're only here to make our living rooms a little more lively
and when we turn to
lifeless, breathless entities
to bring life to our empty homes
that's when you know it's the end of the tunnel

Untitled

Yvette Bien-Aime '24

I think I am a monster
Cursed to forever foster
Unrivaled chaos and animosity
These demons that live inside of me
Pique a morbid curiosity
In which i will falter

Becoming the embodiment of toxic waters,
I think i am a monster

My kiss a lethal poison from which lovers will choke
me, myself, my future,
An everlasting joke

But who am I to cry tears of the unspoken
In fear I'll be forever broken
My pain to go unspoken, a blood riddled token of my shame
An all too familiar representation of the pain
flowing through my veins

I promise you I'm not insane... no, merely
- Untamed

Untitled

Yvette Bien-Aime '24

I am chaos incarnate
Agony my varnish

Cut from stone, frozen cold
Marbled with pain and tarnished
With imperfections I am garnished

Served on a platter,
Bruised and battered
It's no wonder I am frostbit

But this internal hell will melt me well
And soon I will reign
- Carnage



Silverware Shower
Jamie Goodman '23

Waters Passing Through

Lidija Slokenbergs '22

First Place, Poetry

She can't seem to realize
They're on the same battered track;
She just polished off some rust, but see,
The ring's already black;
She tries to tell herself there's hope,
She tries to stall;
But he no longer wears his wedding ring at all.

Hand in hand by the Venice waters,
When life possessed such ease,
Wandering tourists, drunk and lost,
That's the vision she still sees;
They're still wandering,
But no longer hand in hand-
They're tourists in the spaces
That they used to understand.

They live together in a lonely existence,
Her eyes swim in daydreams,
His tie smells of shame;
Days pass by in the window reflection,
Days that once were but can't remain;
And though she loves him deeply,
She's still stuck in '93,
Waiting for that rustle of the door,
Waiting for the man she knew before.

And sometimes she will say to him
"Let's go back to Venice,
In Venice life is easier,
There's time for you and me";
"I don't have time for Venice",
That's the answer he will give;
"It's a place that's slowly sinking,

Slowly sinking, so are we”.

Still she can't seem to realize
They're on the same battered track,
There's a life she knew before,
She's set her mind to win it back;
But a ship that's going down
Just can't be saved;
The captain's left his post and
Sent his darling to the grave.

And quietly she says to him,
“Let's go back to Venice,
In Venice life is easier,
There's time for me and you”;
He laughs,
“Do you really think that Venice will remember?
Venice doesn't care about old
Waters passing through”.

They live together, but they're keeping a distance;
What point is there now of a household to share?
He's found someone else
And she too loves another-
A soul that's escaped, but its shell is still there;
She's packed her bags for Venice,
One-way ticket now in hand;
She'll search the narrow streets forever-more;
Still searching for the man she knew before.

Words on a Page

Shannon C. Connolly '24

I wanna live on a page forever.

Living in the minds, mouths, and movements-
of those who have gazed upon my residence.

I wanna live on and sit on in the schoolhouses,

In the bookshelves, on the chalkboards,

On the tongues of those who chose to learn, so that later, they could teach.

I wanna live on as the reason someone finally decides to be inspired.

Live on as the reason someone woke up and chose to be courageous,

To do something I could never do.

I wanna live on like all the rest before me, but to live on-

Nothing like them at all.

I wanna live on like the Hemmingways, the Poes, and the Brontës.

I wanna live on like the ones who inspired me to live on.

Your Private Shore

August Boland '24

Third Place, Poetry

I saw from afar
A man in black
With eyes of gold
And hair of scarlet
He stood with a lady
Dressed in green
And a person of God
Dressed in blue

They walked to the shore
Aside the foam
Where the blue lapped yellow
And spoke of times ago
When the time was
Before the colors
And they spoke of the past
Immemorial were they

We spoke while the moon
Hung high in the sky
And spoke until it met the sea
And the ocean birthed a globe
A globe of gold
In the morning they vanished
And I stood alone
On an abandoned shore

I stared where they stood
Their presence gone
Their footprints vanished
Their words hanging
As I thought of them
And I shivered in the breeze
My breath a fog before me
The water lapping at my feet.



