

MOSAICO

spring 2021



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Letter From The Editor

The spring 2021 edition of Mosaic was created by a dedicated group of students with an interest in continuing a Marist tradition of amplifying student voices through a student-run literary and art magazine.

In a time of social and physical distance, we sought to create a space for students to connect through art, fiction, nonfiction and poetry. This magazine is the product of that mission.

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

The Editorial Board and I would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to Bob Lynch for inspiring the Editorial Board to publish this semester's edition of Mosaic. This year's magazine would not have been possible without his support and passion for providing an outlet for students to express their creativity and gain credit as a published artist. Bob brought the editorial board together and grounded our work in Mosaic's legacy as a staple on Marist's campus.

We would also like to thank Dr. Moira Fitzgibbons for her enthusiasm, support and guidance throughout this endeavor.

Thank you to Alex Podmaniczky for helping us print Mosaic and Dr. Marisa Moore for her guidance in presenting the content. Thank you to Dean James Snyder, Dean Martin Shaffer, Professor Ed Smith, Dr. Carolyn Matheus, Dr. Eileen Curley, Dr. Lea Graham and the entire English and Art departments for helping us find the talented students that are featured in this semester's edition of Mosaic.

We want to thank 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 working on such a tight schedule and attending every meeting with a smile. This magazine is a product of all of your hardwork 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 taking a chance on us. If it was not for you, Mosaic would not have the ability to make an impact. We hope you enjoy the spring 2021 edition of Mosaic.

Sincerely,
Amanda Roberts
Mosaic Editor-In-Chief

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Orbital Tension
Kat Bilbija '24

The Myth of Stars

Gabriella Amleto '24

Stars,
I've heard of those.

I read about them, long ago.

I never saw them though.

I heard they were scattered dots,
Like dust on wood,
But were much brighter.

I heard they shone,
Like little quartzes,
All over the sky,
But in patterns.

I heard these patterns were imagined,
Created by us,
Representations of myths,
Much like the stars themselves to us,
But these myths were orderly.

I heard that they were organized by the way they would appear,
Zodiac every month,
Constellations every day,
They represented great heroes and every day silver ware,
They guided sailors through storms,
And people predict their futures,
They were everlasting,
Inspiring all with their beauty.

Stars,
I wonder if they're really that great
As I've been told they were.

Twenty-Twenty

Saoirse Maguire '22

It means great vision, perfect sight.
But the year itself; a halting red light.

A monotonous loop, the same day repeating.
We looked for things to blame,
People, countries, conspiracy theories.

What's life without a purpose?
Why learn a new hobby without the circus?

Bottles pile up in the recycling bin.
An alcoholic secret-keeping us sane.

Not a plane in the sky, not a car driving by.
Silent Spring became a reality.

I lost a year,
But I gained more time.
To be with myself,
To understand why.



Masked *Song of Love* - De Chirico

Inspired by *The Song of Love* by Giorgio de Chirico

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Jessica Hawkins '22

The Revelation

Heather Brody '22

Third Place, Fiction

Happy memories are the only moments we wish to capture with a camera. The times when no one is crying or arguing or worrying about the difficult things going on in the world around them. These photos represent a past that seems so enjoyable and fulfilling that one could argue they seem a little too perfect. No one's life is ever that happy.

As Anthony shuffled through the photo albums that were kept in the attic, a feeling of delight overcame him as he jumped back to his childhood and relived the days when he had no responsibilities, when he lived a carefree life. He closed the final photo album, sad that the memories ended there, that photo albums are now nothing more than folders on a smartphone. The electronic era ruined the classical era in which Anthony grew up. He sadly mused how the word "memory" now refers to the amount of information a device could hold, not the items that make up one's past. Nonetheless, Anthony was sitting in the attic of his childhood home sort-

ing through those items. To have to clean out this attic all on his own was something he never dreamed he would be doing, nor was selling the house he grew up in; however, his parents had passed away and there was no one left to help him.

With a long sigh, Anthony gathered the boxes filled with objects from his past and stood up to make his way back downstairs. As he walked towards the staircase he tripped over a loose floorboard, losing his footing and falling onto the floor with a thud. A groan of pain escaped his lips as he turned over and looked at the mess he made. Photos were now strewn across the floor, out of order. He grunted in defeat, sitting up and looking over to see what he so clumsily tripped on. Crawling over to the loose floorboard, he inspected the damage that his foot may have done. If he was going to sell this house he might want to fix the attic floor a little bit. He would rather not have someone fall over at the open house like he just did.

Just as Anthony was about

to get up to retrieve a hammer and nails, he saw something wedged between two boards that caught his eye: the white corner of an old photograph. Thinking that one had dropped from the box, he grabbed the corner and pulled, careful not to rip it. When the photo was fully revealed he picked it up to examine it. The picture was black and white, dated 1926. Scratches now embedded themselves within the once smooth ink, and Anthony was slightly disappointed by this. He must have not been careful enough while pulling it free. The photo was of a young smiling boy with wispy blonde hair, a freckled face, and squinted eyes. Suspenders clung to his shoulders, holding up a pair of shorts that revealed his knobby knees. A newsboy cap sat on his head. He looked quite familiar to Anthony, and upon further inspection, he realized that the young boy in the photo was no stranger. It was an exact copy of his childhood self.

Shock overcame him, but he quickly pushed the idea away. Anthony was born in 1987, so this photo couldn't possibly be of him. 'Then again,' he thought to himself as he studied the photo, 'the resemblance is uncanny.' The short, light-colored hair, the slim nose, the

crooked teeth he had before correcting them with braces at fifteen. The boy in the photo couldn't have been older than ten years old. Anthony's heart pounded as he looked back at the crooked floorboard in anticipation. Were there more of these photos under there? Was this picture possibly of a distant relative? Why were they hidden? Was he not meant to find them? Questions flooded his mind as he kneeled again and lifted the floorboard. It creaked as he pried it back, and it soon broke free of the grime, dust, and nails holding it down. Anthony moved the board to the side, the heavy scent of old age filling his lungs. It was the type of smell you would find in an antique shop, which Anthony knew quite well since he worked in one.

Reaching a hand through the new opening in the floor, he grabbed, hoping to find anything that might relate to this photo. After minutes of aimlessly reaching around the dark space, he finally started to give up the idea of finding anything to give him answers. Just as he was going to retreat his now spider-web-covered hand, he felt something deep within the hole. He strained towards it and his fingers grazed the smooth surface of a

manila folder. He slid the object closer until he was able to wrap his hand around the edge and pick it up. When pulled through the hole, Anthony revealed a manila folder much like one that would be found in a doctor's office. It was thick with all the pages that filled it, and as it opened the dust that sat on top clouded into the air around him, resulting in a sneeze. When he recovered, he shuffled through the old papers. None seemed of any interest to him, so he skipped to the pages in the back which looked new and more recent, as opposed to the ones on top which were faded and yellowed. Anthony picked up a page to look through it, and what he read made his heart beat like a drum in his chest. The page had a picture of Anthony as an infant, and underneath was a copy of his birth certificate. The next page in the folder contained his parent's information and the orphanage in which he spent the first few months of his life.

It was as if the rest of the pages held his entire background, like someone had taken notes on everything he ever did. There were recordings of his behavior as a child (things like "light sleeper", "big appetite", "continuous crying"), as

well as all his medical records and results from yearly physicals. There were pages on his pediatrician, teachers from each year of school, report cards, babysitters, and even all the names of his childhood friends. The notes appeared to stop when he turned ten or eleven, so Anthony flipped back to the very first page about him, reading over the first line for what felt like the thousandth time, trying to work out its significance, its meaning, its relation to himself. In scribbled writing it read:

Name: Anthony Sullivan

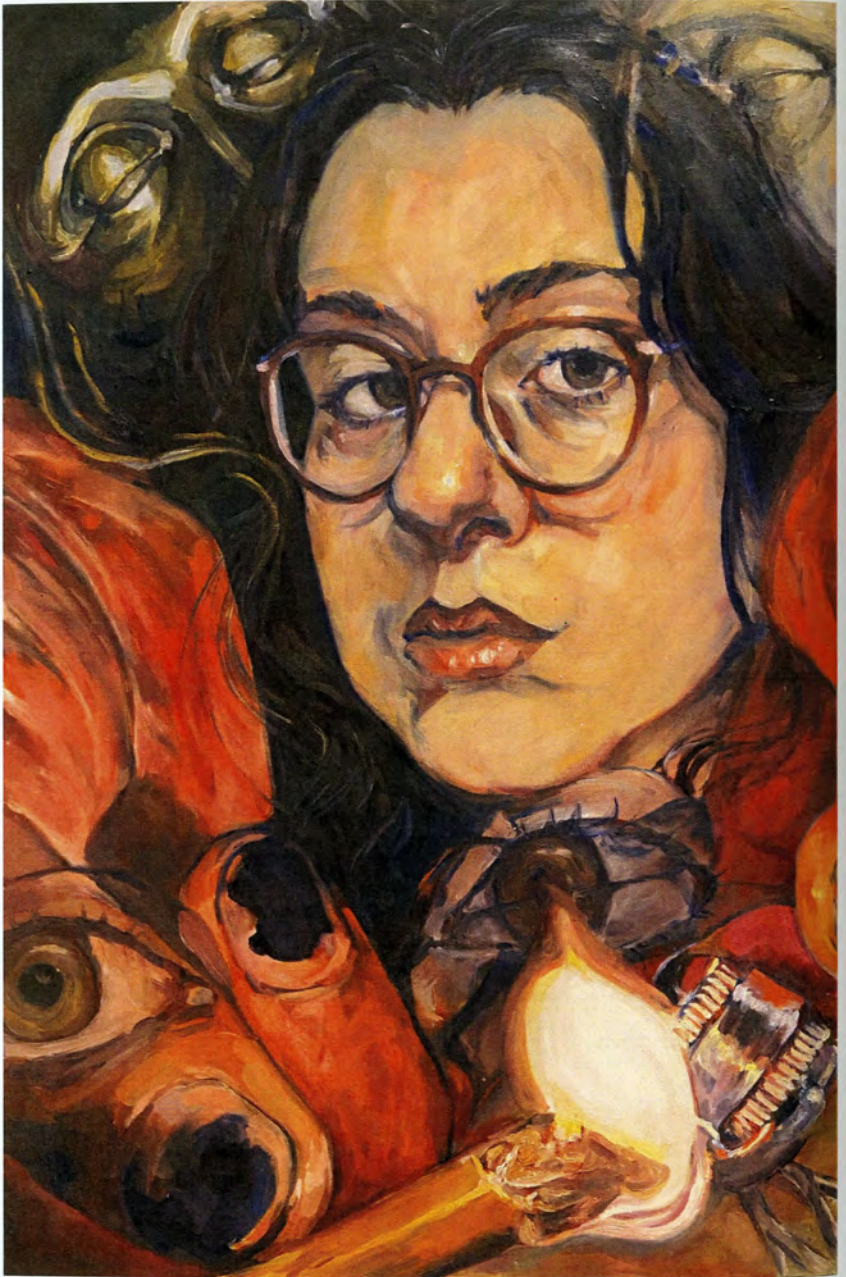
Test Subject: #98

Cloning successful

Suddenly, Anthony's past didn't seem so happy anymore.



Mallet
Sophie Bouza '23



Moth

Miranda Schindler '22

Untitled

Heather Millman '24

Some days I want to strip
The feelings you gave me like
Snake skin
So I could go as a different
Beast.

I want to soak the places
You've touched in an acid bath
Let the burn of it run down my back
Until all I can recognize is
Myself.

In silences I want to scream

My lungs raw in declarations

Affirmations

Of all the things that I could

Never say.

I want to let go
Let all that happened
To tear down my walls
Brick for brick

Simply
Not define me

And finally see the sun.

Thinking of the West

Ethan Maslyn '22

Third Place, Poetry

Through the window across the room
The mountains split the sky like a roadblock to heaven.
Just outside the back door,
There is a wide field of well walked, sun-kissed grass.
It scratches at the feet, but not unpleasantly.
Moving further away from the door,
The edge of the cliff this sleepy home sits atop draws near.
Nothing but guardrails separating me
From free falling into the dark, sparkling water below.
I would join the fish at the bottom.
All of them moving like people in Times Square,
Mingling indiscriminately with each other.
Turning and leaning on the rails behind,
Looking once again to the beautiful stone walls
Basking in the day's last hurrah.
There is an ethereal haze in the air,
The one that occurs right before twilight;
When the glow from the stalwart traffic lights
Is the brightest thing in view.
Soon the moment has passed,
And the chorus of the night begins.
I look down to see my footprints in the grass
And I'm reminded of where I came from.

Ode to Yellow

Kelly Unanue '24

My favorite color is totally bananas. Sweet as honey but burns like lemonade on the soft walls of your throat. My favorite color is the yolk of a guarded egg, protected by a shell. If I were to ask someone what comes to mind when they see the rays of sun, they would probably say something along the lines of "happiness" and "warmth." It makes me want to laugh. If only they knew you like I did. But instead, all they see is the Broadway Playbills. They line up and watch as the spotlight illuminates your exaggerated gestures. Critics praise you, a Hollywood star with countless golden Oscars. Only I know you never stop acting, kind of like me. They used to tell me I was such a yellow girl, that they never met someone as happy as me. Little did they know how much I was breaking inside. How the sunflowers in my soul were shriveling and the sun was scorching hot it made me want to scream out. But instead, I gave them my best big yellow smile like the cartoons. Never quite there like a bruise that is healing or a signal telling the cars to slow down, we are almost at a stop. Almost. Almost. Almost. Yet with the uncertainty of where to go next, I trust your wisdom, following the yellow brick road to wherever it is you long to take me. You cry out caution. Stop! A crime scene lies ahead, guarded by yellow police tape, barricading the chaos inside. I always wondered how a flimsy piece of tape can keep people away but I now realize it is because of you. They listen to your warnings but unlike others, I am attracted to the mayhem and uncertainty you bring. I cross the line and into your world of madness where you cleanse me of all things sane. Take me to the yellow house, an asylum for the looney, where all the walls are leaking shades of cream, canary, and cyber. You fill up the room, my mind, my whole being. You scream from the wallpaper and I scream back. They call me insane, but I am only crazy for you. Undeniably, crazy for yellow.

ur into rhymes and i'm into u

Hoor Eid - H '24

not gonna ask stupid questions
to cure the overdone tensions
like "how can i fix this"
because I'm out of tricks

you manipulate me sometimes
and honestly fuck the rhymes
lets talk about all the lines
- that i've crossed
all the shit i have caused
when your kindness n sharpness combine
it feels like you're telling me to drown

not sure which i'd apologize for
me making a scene at an empty dance floor
or calling another woman a whore
and meaning the demeaning even more

or the shit my brain cant recall yet
even your angry tone gets me wet

how come i cant feel your anger
are you hiding it so badly
or am i too intoxicated
to feel the frustrated
tone in you, but i bet i can be educated



Overheated
Bernie Siebel '23

The Year of Dying

Bridgette Goss '23

In the bowels of the building
there is a little place.
And there we stowed behind the shrouds
that hid emotions of the face.

Before us stood white mannequins
ensnared in plastic tarp.
Their bodies, bare, emaciated,
ribs and features thin and sharp.

Amidst the echoes of my mind,
synaptic static hummed.
The white noise of the speaker buzzed
and lulled my bony body numb.

I should have shivered, should have cried
I should have quaked in fear,
or else, I should have heard, again,
the pop of gunshots in my ear.

But there beneath the recesses,
we huddled with the crowd.
Our bodies formed the nucleus
encumbered by this global shroud.

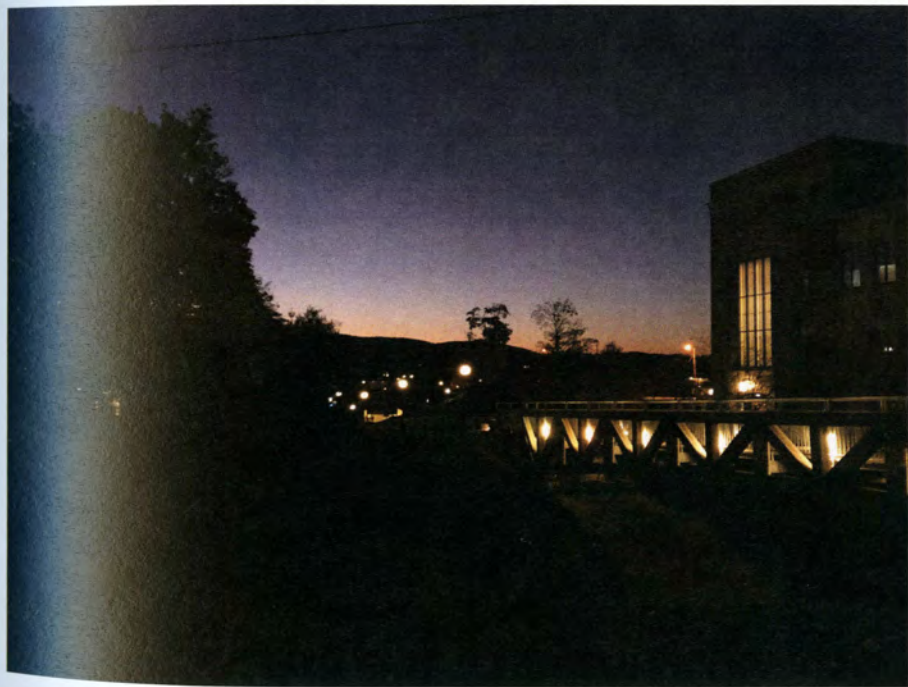
Now in the nights I'm tortured,
for though we did escape,
my mind has thawed, but still, I dawn
the cloth to mask my haunted gape.

Here, tattooed, both body and mind,

I'm branded by the year.
But I know too, today will bring
more shootings, sickness, death and fear.

Alas, we hide, afraid and weak,
from that we can't control.
Though someday soon we'll breath again,
these nightmares we cannot console—

In the bowels of the mind
there is a little place.
And here we stow, forever plagued
from horrors we cannot efface.



Nighttime Silhouette
Michael Reginella '23



Our Lady of Sorrows
Miranda Schindler '22

Songs of the Cicadas

John Brandon Fiorino '22

The arrival and departure of seasons in nature is often met with the beautiful actions of her inhabitants; no inhabitant's action is more distinct than a chirping cicada. The Hudson Valley is known quite well for its innumerable amount of cicadas, whether they may be hiding in bushes, sprawled out on the grass, or high atop the trees. But why does the small and mundane cicada have the most important and distinct sound above all the birds in the region? The Hudson Valley hosts all sorts of beautiful and adorned birds, whether they may be bluejays, robins, or even crows. The answer to this question is simple yet profound; the cicada marks the closing of spring and the arrival of summer. The unique songs of the cicadas remind us of the beauty of nature and the lessons mother nature has to offer.

On a nightly walk near the Hudson River, I hear the buzzing and chirping of bugs echoing in the night. The consistency of their noise reminds me of the tune of the songs the cicadas once sung in my childhood. Growing up, I was fasci-

nated by the chorus of chirping that would be outside my open window as I slept in my bedroom. The songs of the cicadas could be described as continuous chirps, with solo vocalists of cicadas joining in at random moments to raise the volume of the song. The sheer amount of noises was often dizzying, as I would try to pinpoint the location of a single cicada by listening for a chirp in the dark. Often, I would find myself sneaking out of the house late at night and crawling in the grass for the single vocalist I had set my ears on. As I would near the noises that piqued my curiosity, the night would go silent for the cicada would notice my loud and interrupting presence. The long hush of noise would frustrate me and I would go back up to bed once more, but aware of my departure the cicada would continue its song and the cycle would repeat itself several instances a night.

My late night adventures were not meant to capture the cicada, but just a simple boyish attempt to locate the odd insect and to learn more about it. The elusiveness of

the cicada would only elevate my interest even more as a child. How is it that a noise so collectively loud and immeasurable be so hard to find? I would look forward to the arrival of summer and saddened by the arrival of fall, as the cicada song would abruptly stop until summer arrived once again. It was not until several failed summer attempts, that I came to the realization of how to locate the creature I was so eager to find. Time and time again, I had failed to be patient. Whenever hearing the noise of the cicada, I would get out of bed more frustrated by every failed encounter. Determined to locate the cicada, one night I waited silently in the wet night grass for its song to continue, and it did. The small winged insect was perched on a singular blade of grass, almost snapping the blade of grass with its weight. Every chirp the cicada made would force its small body to move side to side, as if it was dancing to its own song. The lesson the beautiful cicada song taught was patience.

The lesson of patience reminds us that the individual who is most patient will reap the benefits of their determination. In a world full of instant gratifications, it is hard to remember that the virtue of

patience is vitally important to accomplish our ambitions and goals. Often when I find myself struggling with patience or filled with frustration, I remember the little boy who would wander out alone at night. If the season is summer, I even find myself on that same journey I was on years ago. The challenge of locating the cicada is no longer as difficult, but the message of patience behind the song still holds true today.

The Summer We Searched for Mermaids

Michaela Ellison-Davidson '23

One afternoon at the Met I stand before a piece of artwork.
It is a mermaid brushing her red hair,
with her wistful face turned away, no sailors on her shore.

Years from now the painting will be in a different city
and I will never visit.

Let's search for mermaids my sister said,
her voice course like the sand under our toes that summer on Coney Island

when we ran,

white dresses ballooning around our legs, my hand holding down a ribboned hat,
the taste of salt and taffy on my tongue, her copper hair a bright flag behind fog.

She is not behind the marble statues, the French tourists, the bronze ballerina.

I would rather see her again than anything in the MET, even the Monet's, even the Rembrandt's.

I leave the museum, the mermaid, my sister's ghost.

I stand in front of a taxi with tinted windows, there is my face, my painted mouth,
the crowds under the Corinthian columns, the pearls around my neck,
my trembling hand reaching for the door -

Where are you going? asks the cab driver.

I think of the hospital room with white walls and a view.
It was not the sea but we called it the sea.
That was where the mermaids were.

What is it you saw at the museum? asks the cab driver.

I am suspended between now and then,
between the painting and my sister's freckled face,
her copper hair I brushed when she couldn't.

I tell the cab driver about the mermaid, about the fairytale

He says, with art we are voyeurs, we are meant to see something of ourselves.

There is the painting and then there is my sister with her feet far out in the sea,
white waves lapping around her legs, her beckoning me forward,
arms wide open, dress soaked through at the knees.

Come on, she says, can you see the mermaids?
and I think I can



Serene Sunset
Michael Reginella '23



Through the Eyepiece
Miranda Beyer '24

My Blue

Jade Polanco '21

An uncontrollable burst of emotion escapes my lips through a grin.
The unfathomable joy terrorizes me into oblivion.
The fear is enough to bring a single tear to my eye;
A single tear is more than a stampede of them because it's all alone.
The unfamiliarity of this is not the only concern,
But the possibility it will be ripped away and once again I will be ostracized.

The solace I find overshadows the terror in my core.
It does not change the conundrum I created by my inability to speak.
My heart has no plan to be torn apart but the power is no longer mine;
It has been relinquished and all I ask is for is you to proceed with caution.
My condolences are sent for the confusion.

All I know is one thing.
Into a sea of blue I find my peace.

The Arc

Nicole Iuzzolino '22

The Arc de Triomphe stands with a sense of nobility in the center of the photograph; screaming for me to come back again soon. That March day was a cold one, even though I dressed for comfort over fashion. The Arc stands very far behind my best friend and I as we pose for Lucas, giving us the smile that means, "you look beautiful." Yet, the sculpted limestone outshone us easily. We were posing in its shadow, as its arms encircled us into a world of history and wonder. I felt honored to be posing in its darkness.

I was supposed to be here years ago. But in 2015, a terrorist attack shattered the safety of Paris to bits. The headquarters of *Charlie Hebdo*, a weekly satirical newspaper, was cruelly bombarded by a terrorist seeking destruction and death. Almost halfway across the world, in Allentown High School in central New Jersey, a small french class sat at their desks waiting for the news. Even in the early morning hours of the day, the class felt heavy as we listened to the death toll raise higher, and higher. For the safety of

the students involved in the French Exchange Program, the trip was called off. This left the seniors who would never be able to go to France in a state of sadness. Megan and I accepted the waiting period, knowing in three years we will be there. Our countdowns began.

The darkened clouds had no interest in making the day sunny for us, despite the tremendous wait. The day was bleak and rainy, yet that beautifully sculpted stone made us forget the miserable walks through the crowded streets of Paris, and the dark puddles on the way to this picture destination. Cars sped by us, driven by the French who see the monument almost every day. Running down the middle of the street for the quick photo op was encouraged by the beeping of car horns and the ticking of the light until it turned green again. We froze in the center of the narrow strip that separated us from the racing cars flying by, driven by people on some sort of adventure that was probably not as exciting as ours.

When we struck our pose, Megan beamed at the camera, a

smile that was loaded with happiness from just meeting her host family and for being in a city we only dreamed of going to. It was a fairytale moment happening in real life. Yet, all was not dreamy as the wind slapped her curls against her face. She would murmur under her breath, pleading with the tendrils to cooperate for once; she needed that picture. My smile was just as bright, yet my eyes painted a different picture. They were tired, and shadowed underneath. This was mainly due to the late-night stroll at 4 am before heading back to the apartment I was staying at to sleep. I was insistent on seeing everything this glorious city had to offer, even if it meant losing all my much-needed rest. The bags underneath only grew darker as we left the apartment with all our bags in tow, due to our relocation to another part of France. My back was dying to hunch over in agony from the weight of my backpack filmed to the brim with clothes, shoes, and a bottle of wine given to me by the father of my host family as a gift to bring back to America. He claimed it was "France's finest." Every step I took I heard the bottle clink, and every abrupt turn I heard the red, thick liquid slosh. If only I could

stop to taste it for one moment.

However, I would very soon; wine filled many days of our journey through France. I danced and twirled with my host Enora, through the narrow Paris streets one night. It was Saint Patrick's Day after all, and the English were piling into the streets, not tired at all from their 2-hour journey from England. We entered many bars, where Lucas seemed to know almost everyone. The English and French danced around the bars. Beer was spilling as mug after mug was being passed over my head. Baskets of fries were distributed around the groups of people, satisfying all of their needs. The bartender approached me at the bar and from the little French I knew, asked me what I wanted to drink. I responded in English, and he gave me an excited expression. He filled three wine glasses to the brim for me and my travel companions. He slid them slightly down the bar and cheered, "We have an American for with us tonight!" But before that moment, all I could think about was how sore my body was going to be because of the wine on my back. It was not just me suffering; Megan winced with the weight of the candy boxes in her backpack, as her host family owned

a local candy shop in town. They so graciously filled her bag to the brim with delicacies you could only get in their part of France.

It was a dream come true for Megan to be in the city of love with her best friend. In 5th grade, she hated me for copying her project, which was a mosaic of different shapes cut out from different colored tissue paper. Now, we were standing in the Louvre, marveling at the artwork all full of colors and creativity, the tissue paper fiasco far behind us.

The wave of exhaustion and achy backs blew away as the cars raced by, now leaving us not tense with pain but tense with nervousness, as one wrong step would leave us in the car's path. They would not stop for us, everyone had a place to get to, no matter what the consequences.

Lucas held my camera steadily, trying to get the perfect shot of us. He was very particular about us having the perfect day; he was a local after all and knew the best places to take American teens. Enora stood behind him, ushering with her hands on where to stand, and when to stop so we did not get plummeted by cars. When smiling for the camera, my heart

was smiling back at them. I was so grateful for the moment to have two people that I just met become my best friends for life. They opened our hearts and eyes to things I would never even dream of being fascinated by. Who knew that eating mustard with french fries, a French tradition, could be so captivating? Who knew that parties on Saturday nights were full of tangos, croque monsieur's, and conversations over cigarette smoke?

We ran back to Lucas in a hurry, narrowly avoiding a bicyclist, who yelled French slurs in our direction while clutching onto his bag of baguette and cheeses. I looked down on the picture displayed on the camera in Lucas's hands. He and Enora looked at us, waiting for a response on if they did a good job. I smiled at Megan, and my heart swelled; I was taking on the world with my best friend.



Venetian Lion
Emily Yen '21

Red

Brittney Sicotte '21

wings of the cardinal

illuMinated lady bugs

lively koi fish

sweet cranberry fields

vivid spotted mUshrooms

burrowing foxes

flourishing rose bushes

rare Red diamond

the sun descending

muddy autumn leaves

outrageD octopus

rotting watermelon

dulled poinsettia

fEisty fire ants

hungry corn snakes

boiled lobsters

sour grapes

bittered cherries

heat of the fires

endangeRed corals

blood of the bears

HG



Red Fox
Hannah Gnibus '24

Trigger Warning

Heather Millman '23

When I tell you my eyes are brown it's because I'm terrified of hazel
how someone had unkind hazel eyes and
once upon a time I loved hazel
it was familiarity something
I sank into like how now I cannot stand
the sight of purple
if you have purple hair I'll run faster than anyone with arachnophobia
I'm purple-phobic and it isn't a choice
when all my muscles freeze and I shake fall on my knees begging *please*
because someone had abrasive purple hair and
once upon a time all I wished was to thread fingers through it and
sigh at the scent of comfort someone exuded and
when I tell you 'no I can't watch that it'll be too good'
I mean my excitement will set off my anxiety like a livewire
and I'll be attempting to breathe while you attempt to watch
when I tell you 'no I don't curse'
I mean curses have been hurled at me and someone meant them
and I'll never allow anyone to think I mean mine
when I say 'no I'm a vegetarian'
I mean that someone used to drag, force me into eating another food I didn't want
and I'll never look at meat and think it tastes good
When I say 'no I don't like the cinnamon eggos'
I mean someone ate them and shared them with me on the bus
and the night before someone physically hurt me without any warning
and it was fine
when I say
'I don't know'
'I'm sorry'
'whatever'
what I mean is for several years I didn't have a choice
and someone stole that
when you tell me to get more comfortable saying no
I laugh at the preposterous idea that anyone would listen

The Girl and Her Oyster

Natalie Garrison '22

Sometimes I feel like one of those killer whales at SeaWorld. It swims, somberly around the perimeter of a pool too small for a creature of that size. There is not much in this whale's pool, but there is so much outside of it. People are everywhere. Some are taking photos with their smartphones, while others are posting said photos on social media. The whale watches the world move around while it's stuck in its tiny salt-water one-room apartment, wondering when it is its turn to be free to see whatever part of the big blue ocean it wants.

Shelly put down her pen and closed her notebook. She glanced around her small bedroom in her tiny, air-filled apartment. It's not the first time she's felt trapped, held against her will by the universe itself. The pandemic surely increased that undeniable feeling for here, considering the only human contact she could have is through social media. Shelly cradled her phone in her hands like a dead fish she meant to toss back. This little inanimate device contained the lives of thousands of people; a window to the

outside world.

"Always on that phone."

Shelly snapped out of her own thoughts and looked up to find her 67 year old roommate Marilyn dropping her handbag on the table like it weighed fifty tons.

"If you had instagram, you would always be on your phone too, you know." Shelly said with slight amusement. Marilyn shuffled over to the retro overstuffed sofa and sat down, ready to give her one of her famous "Back when I was a girl" stories.

"Back when I was a young woman," she began.

"We didn't have these high-tech gadgets to let us see what everyone else was doing at every moment like a magic mirror. If we wanted to know what someone was up to, we either called them on the telephone, if they were a friend, or got our information through gossip, if they weren't a friend." Marilyn chuckled. "All I'm saying, is that focusing

all your energy on what hundreds of different people are doing, isn't doing *you* any good, Love."

"I know, Marilyn, but you don't understand. What else is there to do right now besides live vicariously through others?"

"Exactly my point." Marilyn continued. "Why are you living vicariously, when you can go and *live* your own life? I know it's hard with this mess of a pandemic, but you need to go find joy and fulfillment in whatever is available to you right now. The world is your oyster, my dear, even if that oyster is closed for the year." The two friends both chuckled at that statement.

"Okay, you're right." Shelly said, her whoa-is-me mentality beginning to lift.

"I'm going to open that oyster." She said with a newfound determination.

"That-a-girl!" Marilyn exclaimed in her signature encouraging tone.

That night, Shelly booked a discounted flight to Alaska. She had always wanted to go since she was

a girl. Her suitcase was packed and ready to go in an hour and the next morning, she said goodbye to Marilyn and headed on her way to the airport.

Once Shelly found her seat on the plane, she rifled through her carry-on to find her phone. She unlocked it and went into Instagram. Just as she was about to post her trip's status, Shelly looked up, and smiled. She thought to herself, *Why do I need to tell the whole world what I'm doing?* Shelly put her phone back into her bag and grabbed her journal and pen instead. She began to write about everything she saw through the little plane window. Many hours and terrains later, the untouched beauty of Alaska was now being reflected in Shelly's notebook pages.

The plane landed, and after Shelly dropped off her luggage at her Air B and B, the first thing on her Alaskan itinerary was a whale watch. Shelly made it to the pier and boarded the vessel. Never had she felt so liberated yet so grounded. As the boat traveled further out into sea, Marilyn's words rang through Shelly's head, *The world is your oyster.*

The sound of a whale breaching the surface of the waves tore Shelley's attention away from her own head and to the beautiful site before her. The whale was not just any whale, as the captain pointed out.

"That is a Killer Whale!" He announced over the microphone.

Not once did Shelly even *think* to take out her phone.



Tigress
Emily Yen '21

Starved Tiger

Saiorse Maguire '22

Ask him if he cares, he'll say he cares, "a lot."
But ask him if he'll stay, and he'll say, "I'd rather not."
Tell him that you love him, you may even start to cry.
But don't accept his pity, you know it's just a lie.

Friends will comfort saying, "you've dodged a bullet."
You'll just laugh along and hope he grows a mullet.
Songs and movies begin to murmur the same echo,
That it's time for you to move on - just let go.

Like a starved tiger, you're on the prowl.
Searching for something seditious and shallow.
Muscle memory with a new skin,
You learn to never let anyone in.

High Society Damsel

Alexandra Messina '24

First Place, Poetry

He doesn't wake up as, just as the sun begins to rise, I slip out of bed
smelling like my champagne and his cigarettes,
hoping Manhattan forgets what I wore last night
hoping my husband forgets when he sees me return home
after storming out of the club just hours ago, only to find myself here, with another

I grab my prized No 5.
second shelf in the bathroom mirror
above my gold-plated hairbrush and his broken plastic comb,
between his drugstore cologne and my diamond studs,
below his watered-down mouthwash and my backup set of pearls

Dressing in last night's clothes, I sneak out of the run-down apartment
Chanel on my wrists, Tiffany around my neck, Dior hugging my body,
I make my way down the street; I know people stare; they're always watching.
I'm not shallow! I want to shout at them: I'm no liar, I just stayed the night with a girlfriend!
How dare they look at me like that!

I don dark sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat to guard my face.
My spouse's sleek black car pulls up to the curb, but he's not there;
the driver says a simple hello as I slide in,
handing me a tall stem glass.
We have an understanding, he and I.

My mind wanders as I stare out the window in a daze...
Has he woken yet? Did he reach for me, thinking I lay
content beside him? I see him sigh finding me gone;
he longs for me as I do for him
but he knows my rules, and I never stray from them.

I made them crystal clear so long ago:
Tell no one
Expect nothing from me
Never speak of my other life
Never touch my No. 5

He laughed at my rules that first night, months ago, as he
hesitantly slid my fourth glass of champagne across the bar.
He taunted me then, thinking me vain and condescending,
so different from the lowlife rats he gets in his bar;
Little did he know he would grow to adore that about me...

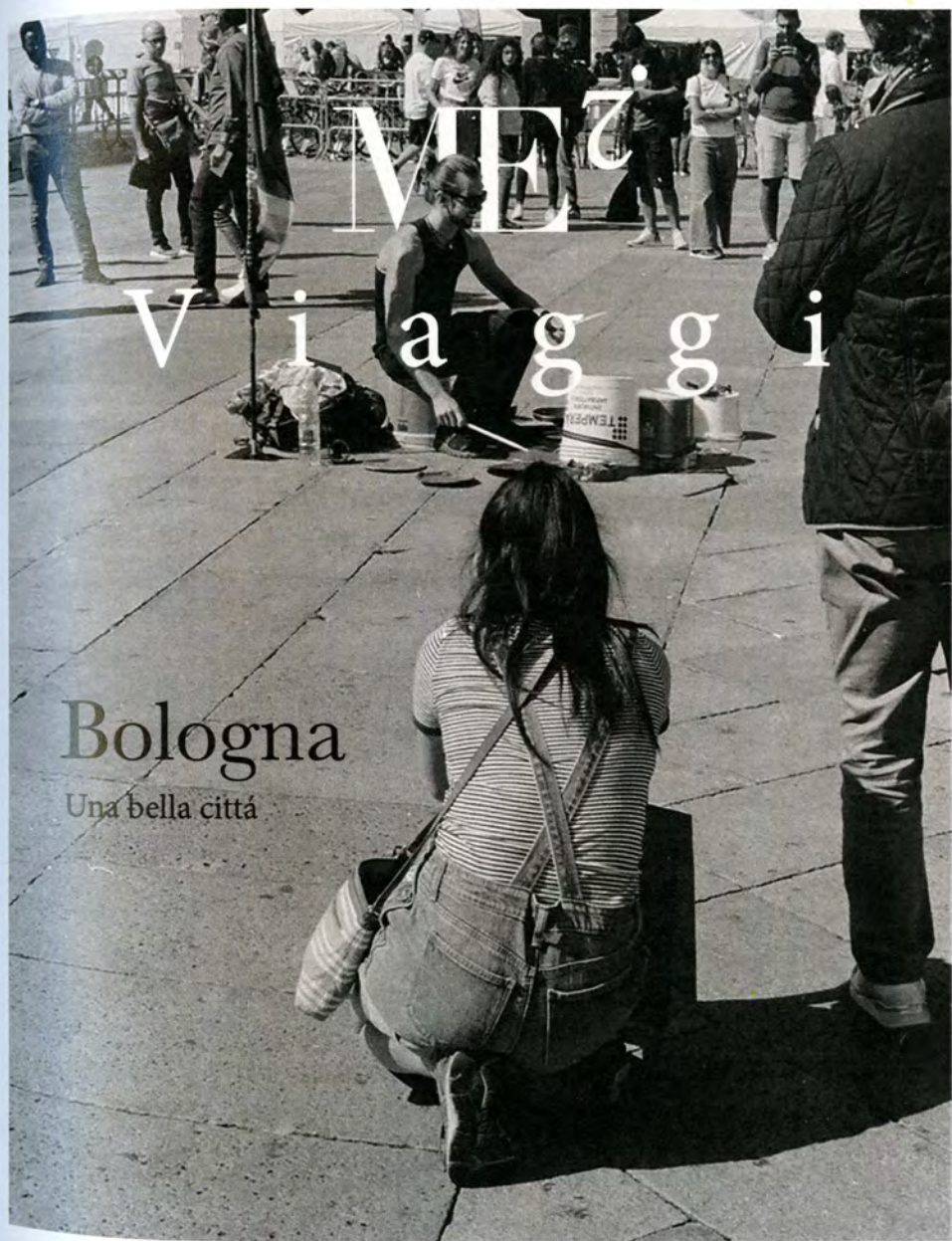
My spinning head jumps to last night—
watching the husband get plastered off top shelf scotch,
hearing his snotty group of friends torment a bartender, who
reminded me so much of my own bartender that I stormed out without a second thought,
making my way to the soothing, secret comfort of that lowlife bar and its loft apartment.

I swallow the rest of my champagne, thinking of him; letting the bubbles soothe my worries.
My driver hands me another, smirking;
I wink back at him, knowing he won't tell the dreaded husband a single thing.

His loyalty lies with me and
why shouldn't it?

Watching the sleek silver of my building appear in the distance
I flip open a golden mirror,
checking my appearance is flawless-
despite all the other flaws, the hidden flaws-
but it's true, I look completely unsullied.

The husband still sleeps as I creak open our door,
slipping out of my restraints--
Dior back in my too-large closet, Tiffany and Chanel on the nightstand.
Sliding back into bed beside him, I keep as much distance between us as I can
He smells of perfume, it's not mine,
I don't mind
He doesn't deserve my No. 5 anyway



Bologna

Una bella città

Viaggi: Bologna
Mei Mei Hepler '23

what is it like?

Kaylee Miller '22

“What’re you thinking?”

I was thinking about a lot of things: how nice it would be if the sky, when the sun finally set, faded into that perfect blend of all the best hues of blue and purples, how the breeze was just cold enough to make me feel sleepy but not shivering, how looking at the boy next to me made my shoulders tense and my heart ache at the same time. I wanted to say, ‘You first’, dreading what would pour out of my mouth instead. But something in me was screaming to be set free, and so I continued to look out at the field below us, waiting and waiting for it to slip out....

And then: “A thought for a thought. I’ll go first.” I could feel his body adjust slightly towards mine, our thighs almost brushing. “I think if I could, I’d spend every moment, just like this, here with you.”

My breath caught and I fought the urge to turn towards him. He knew, he knew and was trying to make me feel less crazy than I was. But then there was silence, the comfortable kind, and I could

see him in my mind’s eye staring at the trees in the distance, giving me the time to formulate words into a coherent sentence. Something that was not always so easy for me.

“I’m thinking about how anxious I am. And how anxious I get when you say things like that to me.” I wasn’t expecting to say all of it, but there it was, the two worst things about me spoken aloud, as if they were now etched into the miniscule space between us.

The former he knew....was the only person in my life who tried to weather the storm alongside me and not completely run away. He knew I hated speaking to people I was unfamiliar with, exposing my feelings and risking the judgement that I was not acceptable, doing less than exceptional on exams and quizzes and assignments. He knew I sometimes hated being around any and all people for no particular reason, would rather spend my time sleeping or pretending I didn’t exist. And he knew that some mornings I would wake up and be disgusted by the way I looked, would refuse to get dressed or eat anything for the

entire day.

On the best days, I would listen to one particular song on repeat just to feel something, dance around my room like I was the headline of a sold-out tour, harmonize in the shower and in the car. And on most days I wouldn't. On most days I would cry and make sure I locked my car twice, want to peel the very skin off my bones, want to scream and throw things just to see and feel them break open too. But every single day, he was there. He didn't know about all of it, but he could tell, and chose to stay anyways.

He certainly didn't know that I went to bed thinking about him. The sharp slant of his nose, his strong fingers, his pursed lips. The way his laugh traveled through my bloodstream like electricity, the way that one curl hung along the top of his head. The way he would bite the inside of his lip before he let himself smile at me, and how lucky I felt to be able to be in his presence.

How utterly all-consuming he was.

And that was the very worst thing about me.

"What's it like?"

I tore my eyes away from the orange horizon, my eyes burn-

ing a little. 'What is it like?' my mind whispered as I took in his hands clasped in his lap. He was looking down, so I allowed my gaze to linger, tracing the gentle planes of his face.

What is it like to look at someone you know will never look at you the same way?

He glanced up at me, and I quickly shifted to viewing my knees tucked into the warmth of my body.

What is it like to be stared at by someone you wish you could look at for every single second of the day?

"What's it like being me, you mean?" I finally posed back to him. When I chanced a look at him again, he was still staring.

"No, not really. I don't think it defines you." He sighed, turning his gaze to the sky that was slowly fading to that cool blue I craved. "I just wanted you to know that I'm here, if you want to....talk. About anything. And everything. Or nothing at all."

And that was why it hurt - I knew I could spend eternity talking about anything and everything and nothing with him.

"It's....like an amusement park ride. Like the scariest one at the place, the one that everyone's

talking about when you get there. That's how I think it is. For - for me, at least. The anticipation, the waiting, the pit in your stomach. All of it. Even the car ride there, the dooming silence." I sighed, toying with the laces of my shoes. "And then there's joy, fleeting, but overwhelming. And then it's coming back down to reality, being grounded and waiting for the next one, and the next one, and..." I allowed my eyes to meet his finally. "Your turn, though - a thought for a thought."

"Okay. But I think I owe you...like at least six thoughts now." My lips quirked up at their corners, waiting for him to say anything, anything at all.

"Six works for me."

"Well, one - I think you're brave. Not like roaring into a battle brave, but steady. And loyal. And smart." Four. That was four, and he was grinning at me in the best way possible. "I'm thinking about how every day I wake up and you're still my best friend, my beautiful best friend who's all of these things and so much more. And I'm thinking that every time I look at you, my heart sort of stops for just a second to remind me of it."

It was twisted, sick, really, the way my whole body was attuned

to him. How much I wanted him to feel it too.

"And I'm thinking that it's breathtaking."

'*I adore you.*' That's what lingered beneath the surface, threatened to ruin me.

But I knew that he was still staring at the sky as the edges succumbed to a soft purple, so I said, "I think that's eight."

And when my head hit the pillow that night, I dreamed he was facing me instead.

Steel Trees

Gabriella Amleto '24

They are twisted,
Limbs reaching towards the sky,
Attempting to drink in the sun.

Their bark shines,
Gleaming in the light

The limbs where small branches grow like knots,
The knots of barbed wire.

While they shimmer and gleam,
They tempt those who fall victim to get closer,
Luring them with their shimmering limbs.

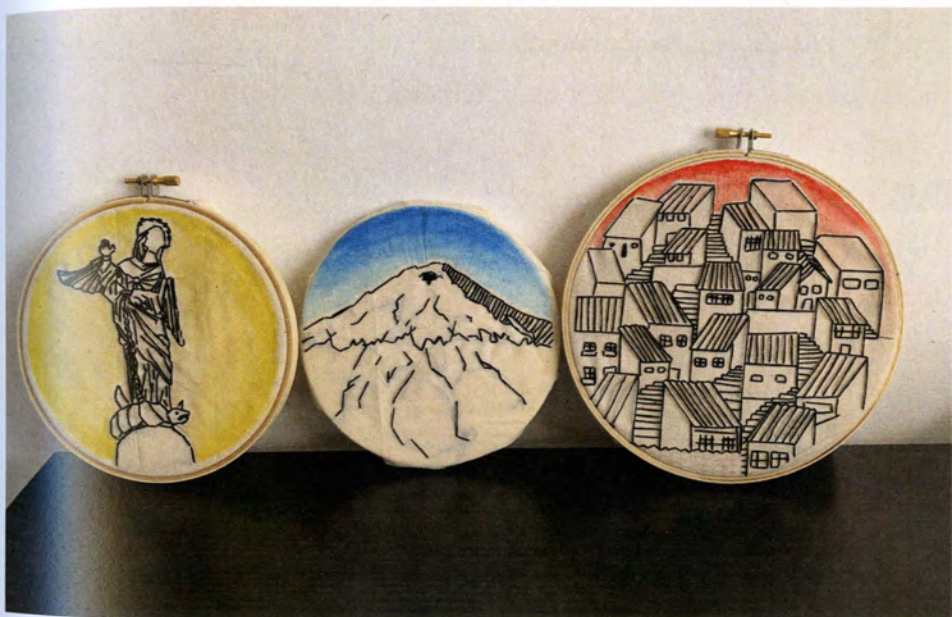
Their bark is smoothed and polished,
Their limbs are cold and sorted.

They give shelter to nothing,
They offer nothing,
But take everything,
Flesh, feathers, fur, blood,
Hangs from the thorned bark,
Like trophies of what they've taken.

If you see a forest of steel trees,
Do not give them the chance to take,
Do not let them lure you in,
Instead, walk away,
And do not look back.



Sea Other People
Haley Giancaspro '22



Quito en un hilo
Claudia Molina '23

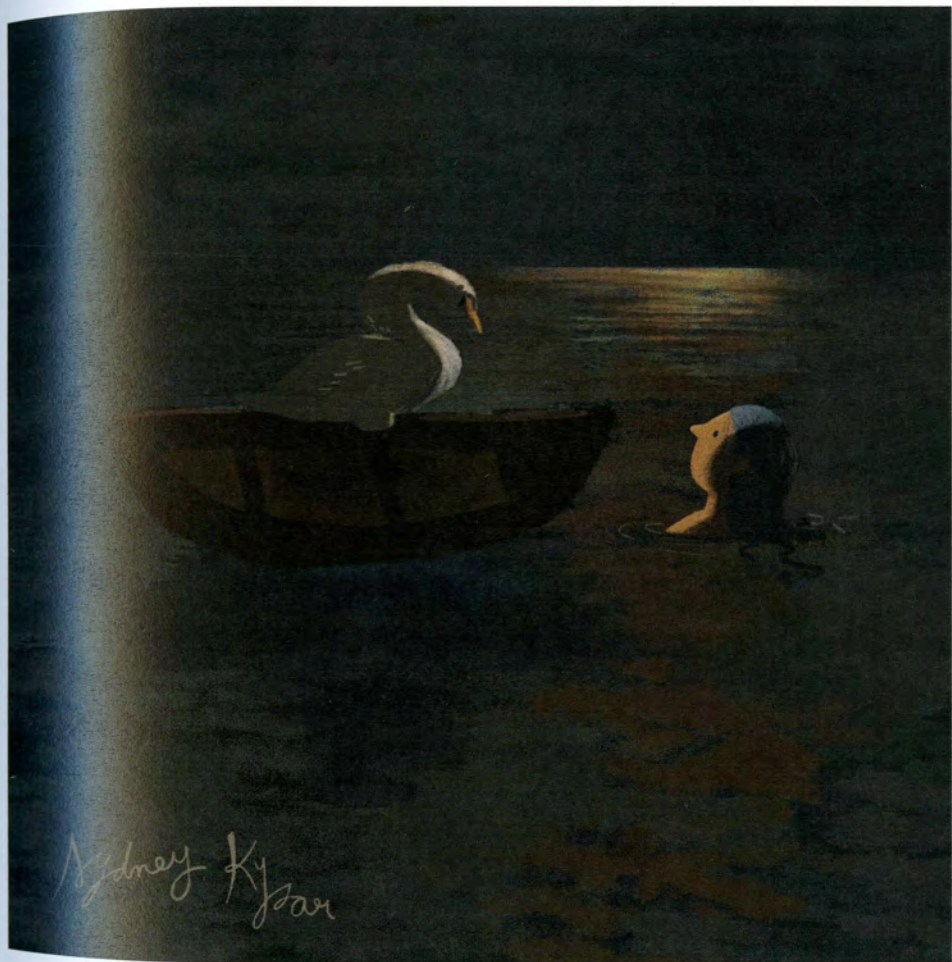
Tarnishing

Cassandra Arencibia '24

In the beginning
Nothing
And then
A fleeting memory
That at the time you couldn't even remember
Mother's hands and swaddling clothes
Everything being involuntary muscle movements
And then childhood
Full of braids and clothes and growing
Having blind faith
In teeth collecting fairies and gum that stays inside you for seven years
And experiences
Lovely experiences of love and intelligence and pain
Broken bones, bruised knees, skinned elbows
And you were proud of the Band-Aids
Becoming gangly and hunched over was never a part of the plan
And then a child in the body of an adult
Changes and changes and changes
Feeling as if you are the first and the last to experience this
Pimples and hatred and feeling ugly, no, being ugly
Baby birds thrown from their nests
A shower of feathers and stones
Finally realizing you are a muse of Renaissance art
Power and youth and gold running through your veins

Feeling invincible
But there's run off
That's slowly dripping into an adult
Wax from a candle
Becoming smaller all the while
Other things, other things, other things
On your mind
Forgetting what your face looks like
And being tired
Having children
And being tired
Working till your hands become raw
And being tired
And then more changes
Your first wrinkle
Your first gray hair
But there are no memory books for these
Celestial skies dig into your shoulders
Soon
Dust
Basements
Irrelevance
Watching Renaissance women dance and remembering
Remembering bruised knees and feeling invincible and slowly becoming
smaller like wax from a candle
Folding into yourself like a swaddled baby
Dust finding new crooks behind your ears and in the hairs in your nose

Becoming older, becoming older, becoming older
Feeling nothing but nostalgia and the feeling of being watched
The freedom of knowing you are a dead man walking
And then
Nothing
In the end



The Approach
Sydney Kysar '21

Trains Big and Small

Jesse Vengen '22

First Place, Nonfiction

I passed quickly through the office, giving the man in the bed a quick hug then untangling myself from the tubes and wires to move into the hallway where I could breathe again. Grandpa was dying. My mom's father, the young CEO, the golfer and Na Pali Coast hiker and big drinker: she often said he volunteered himself to go first because he couldn't live without his wife, dying of ALS.

Fuck it. It didn't matter to me. I was young- no greater torture than having my legs confined to a tiny space for a five hour car ride from Jersey. I would spring from the back seat like a jack in the box, smelling the saltwater air and ready to dive into the bay and Cape Cod sand. I'd tug on my mother's shirt as we entered the old red-shingled and stucco-plastered villa, asking when we could go to Whistle Stop to eat ice cream and look at the train sets whistling in the rafters.

If that was the debt I had to pay for being born a grandson, then fine. It was only a minute, and while the

adults clung around the bed like sorry statues, I'd urge my brothers onto the side-yard, a whiffle ball and bat in my hands.

Grandpa died from the little black spot in his lungs that scared him half to death and out of a smoking addiction thirty years back. He was only sixty-six. "What a waste," my mother's voice cracked. I agreed. No longer could I run on the rocky shores, search for crabs, bike down to the train-bridge or spend an hour digging my hands in the hot sand.

I've heard stories all across my life of the man who's house on the coast I was an unpaying renter in. From my mom's ex-boyfriend who interned me in his divorce court: *funniest dude I've ever met. I found a river on the Na Pali Coast with two naked women in it. I wouldn't go near, you know, with your mother right there and everything. He said, 'Well, then I will!' as your grandmother rolled her eyes!*

Years later in Rome, embarking on my study abroad and drinking

my first legal beer in a little tavern tucked away in Trastevere with a strange, goofy Sicilian who my mom and aunt talked about throughout my childhood. He had more stories to tell than I did: *I met up with Suzie, your aunt, in Barbados while I was running my chartering business. Talk about a week-long bender! Then your grandfather flew me up from the island for her wedding. I was underprepared! He offered me a suit, not to mention all the liquor I could possibly want, and I showed up in that suit, three sizes too big for me!*

The older I grew, the more frustrated I became. I remember fighting back a frown from my smile as I watched Danielle laugh and gesticulate stories of my own grandfather. I remember being in awe at Judge Rumana's stories, but feeling a bit worse when they ended.

Every time my mom drinks now, he comes up. Grandpa is the moon. It started being only when it was full, but now she feels it whenever its in the sky, whatever shape. Every month is only so many months until an anniversary. "He would've picked up guitar again for this," she wiped her eyes, nursing a wine

glass as my dad and neighbors played "Friend of the Devil" at one of our family jam sessions.

For the first time in a while, I thought about Cape Cod. I sat down and began writing this piece, the blank page more of a therapist than another human for some things. But, I didn't think about running along the rocky shore, trains big and small, burning my skin on hot sand, or fishing crabs out of the shallow waves. I remembered stumbling into the kitchen in my tiny, toy-story sneakers and the feeling of nausea as I was spun through the air by a great big monster, hiding in its cave behind the refrigerator. I remember seeing my face in his bright black irises and him holding me tight against his chest.

she

Kaylee Miller '22

I used to fear death.
Now I just fear dying
alone.

No one by my side
but the monster who greets me each morning.

Sometimes she is shy
but mostly she is pitiful
for her bones do not fit
within her ghostly skin.

she is the unsettling creak
of depravity, a knot of a creature.
she does not soar, but shrivels and shrinks
until there is nothing left

but chipped nails
and fur.

A beast of the bleak
and the weak.

Some days, though, she is the flame
Igniting. The phoenix
Crying. She is a man's
Fruit ripe for the taking.

She sings her song, again and again,
until instead, she is shrieking
into the mirror.

'Who could want you?'
sneers the world.

Not I.
But we will live and drown together
it seems.



Medusa
Nora Nucullaj '22

ode to green

Kirsten Mattern '24

green has the glory of being associated with nature. i won't deny green her ownership of grass, her underappreciated stems presenting technicolor petals, her four leaf clovers and their subsequent good fortune that i have never found. green provides her maple tree seedlings that my sister and i crafted into polynoses, splitting them open and gluing their sticky sap middles on our faces to celebrate spring.

my sister's green eyes capture the light in a way my blues could never, planting sisterly seeds of envy. they blossom into viridian vines, interlocking with the seams of a bright yellow-green softball escaping her grasp on our town's old field. i dive to reach her throw and am gifted with a grass stain on my white softball pants, in place of the satisfying clap of the catch.

but years pass, sisters age, polynoses wither, grass stains wash out, and lonely untouched softballs gather dust in the garage.

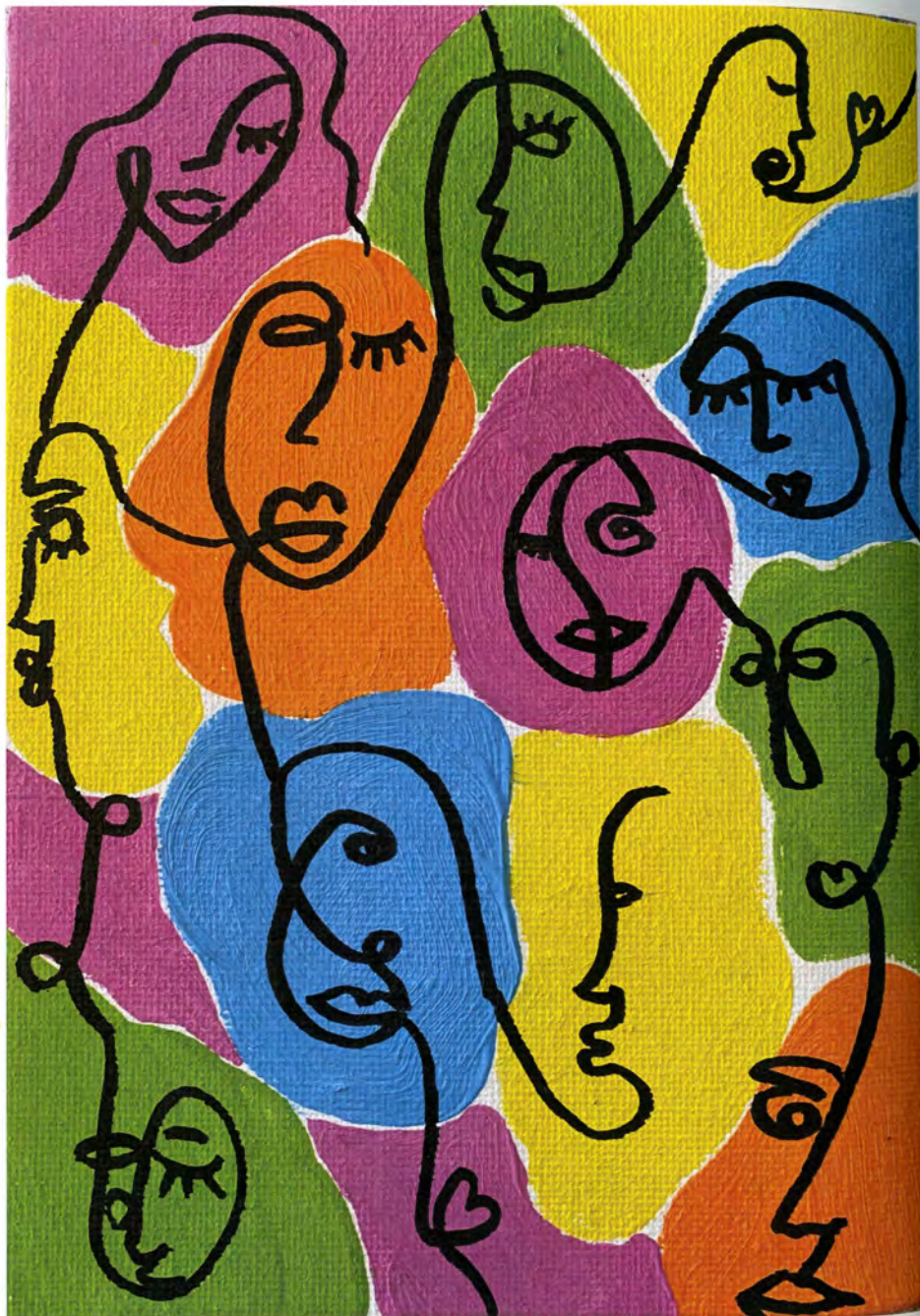
green now rules a new realm. the joy of flying through green traffic lights just before they flicker to yellow. the crack of the cue ball igniting tamed chaos on the carpeted green billiards table. the sign behind the bar illuminating neon rays through transparent glasses. the bright lime on the edge of the pretty girl's cocktail, the nearly empty heineken her boyfriend will shatter over her head later tonight.

and of course, the most important green of all; the crisp color of money. over time, my eyes have grown to adore tracing the faded green ink on the flimsy bills. the desire of delicate dollars brushing along my fingertips is dangerous, and toxic green pools fill up inside me as i crave more of my favorite deadly sin. what once was a bright springtime color signifying innocence of nature, has transformed into the innate power of greed. after all, consider two slim snippets of green: the plucking and perishing of blades of grass simply cannot compare to the horror of a shredded dollar bill.

if i could, i would not hesitate to drain the pigment out of a polynose to make a dollar bill just a little greener.



Vegetables on Fabric
Jamie Goodman '23



Visages

Christina Levi '22

The Reproach of the Common Man

August Boland '24

Why do thou abandon thine only child?
Who would believe what we had heard of this?
That a man would leave his son to the wild
And do so while retaining his great vis?

That boy whom thou nursed, day by day by day
Who giggled while you smiled; and glowed and grew,
Simply because this progeny is gay
Thou seek to leave, as infanticides do?

Thy descendant is thy descendant, yes,
Nothing thou can do on earth will change that.
Similarly, thy son likes men; no less
Have thou the pow'r to alter, to be flat.

For thy crime, to which I hope none do hew,
I can only say to thee, thus: Screw you.

Where History Comes to Die

Heather Brody '22

The room was on fire. Golden light poured through cracked windows; the world kissed by the rays of a setting sun. Broken glass littered the floor, crunching under my heavy boots as I took one careful step after another. The walls were composed of vibrant colors creating both artwork and obscenities, all coming together as the most unique gallery I had ever seen. The old paint cracked and peeled off the walls after years of neglect and abuse. My heavy breaths formed clouds in the cool air, battling the heat of summer just outside the deteriorating walls.

"Are you sure?" He asked, voice muffled by the mask protecting him from the poisonous air.

"I know I heard someone. There were voices at the other end of the hall," I sighed, stopping in my tracks as I turned to him. "Let's just listen," I whispered. We remained silent and unmoving, statues in the museum of rot and decay. My ears strained to hear anything resembling a voice, struggling against the distant sound of dripping water and the crackling of shattered glass under our feet.

The weight of my backpack began to make my shoulders ache and suddenly standing still became incredibly difficult.

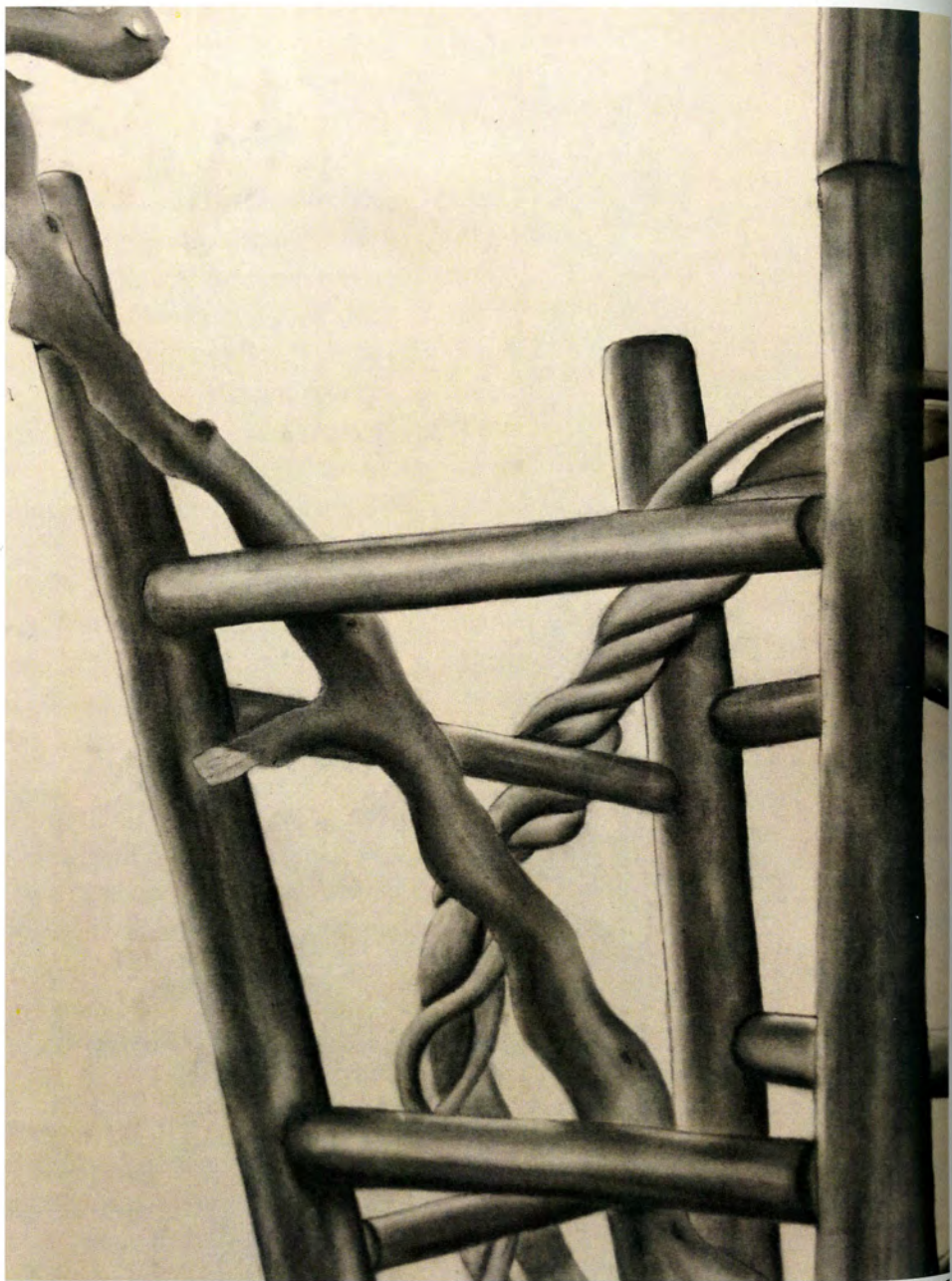
"I'm telling you, no one is here," He broke the silence, placing a hand on my shoulder. "We were careful, I guarantee no one saw us. Trust me when I say we're in the clear." "We're never in the clear. The second you think you're safe is the second you get caught," I shook my head, taking the lead once again as we moved down the hallway, further away from the voice I heard earlier. Looking around for a wall that wasn't too vandalized, my hands itching to get a hold of one of the many colorful cans in my bag. I heard the familiar clicking of Jacob's camera behind me. No matter how comfortable he felt, I knew I had to remain on edge.

"You know, you should really wear a mask once in a while." He called to me, abandoning his sense of self-preservation as his voice ventured above a whisper. "You'll regret it in the long run."

"I guess I just like to become one with the asbestos and lead paint." I joked back, dodging

collapsed pipes that hung from the ceiling like broken bones. I turned another corner, relying on my mental map to lead us out of here after the sun disappears.

Fallen ceiling tiles crunched under our feet, soaked through by rainwater collecting in puddles, small islands of mold forming where the wall met the floor. Vines broke through the windows on our right as nature took back what was once its own. In the small spaces between the graffiti, I saw the silhouettes of photos and posters that were no longer there. Items that hung on these walls for years before they were taken down forever, leaving behind nothing but a memory. A ghost. This place seemed frozen in time, and yet, as I looked around at the debris on the floor, collapsed ceilings, and broken windows, I understood that time has inevitably taken its toll. It's places like this where history came to die.



Untitled
Dominique Baduria '22

Pack it

Julia Kisilinsky '22

I know what my mission is, I've known it for quite a while
Yet all I tend to do is just lay back and stare at the pile
Of clothes scattered about my room.
I keep telling myself "it's too soon."

Though it appears to be a hot mess, much like the beauty
That peers through the leaking windows of her soul,
It's the sanctuary for a visionary born far too bounteous
For her own good; she gathers another bowl.

Feeling alone in my endeavors
For hardly anyone, interpret loose,
Wishes to do the same things I do,
Therefore harder I must search. It's a lifelong adventure.

Prison has become my home.
I just want to move freely.
Why is this so difficult
To live this life of mine own?

I spend my waking hours
Observing what I'll surely forget, it seems
I'm just living out my life
Like how I live out my dreams.

This Year

Margaret Roach '22

In middle school, I was a big fan of John Green (the writer, not Bigfoot researcher) and John Green was a big fan of The Mountain Goats (the band, not the goats). It was an easy connection for an impressionable preteen to make. I completely fell in love with the band, whose music became the required soundtrack to my adolescence. Their music reminds me of the kind of songs that would play during a scene from a quirky indie movie. It is cinematic in a Wes Anderson sort of way; being played over a bad decision, symmetrical car chase, or the melancholy ending credits.

The Mountain Goats, led by John Darnielle, are a popular band—or at least I feel like they are. They are beloved in certain circles of the internet, but I have never actually met someone else who liked them. This, by hipster rules, should make them cool. But I've always found their obscurity to be frustrating because they've been a defining part of my existence. Most of their music has some place in my life, but I have listened to their song

“This Year” innumerable times.

“This Year” is the third song on the album *Sunset Tree*. *Sunset Tree* is not their most popular album, or even my favorite, but I still like it a lot. It was first Mountain Goats album that I had ever listened to because it comes up first with a google search.

Sunset Tree focuses on Darnielle's relationship with his abusive stepfather and his troubled youth. The album is all about feeling trapped, rage, and, at the end, kindness. All of the songs are interesting and musically appealing, but “This Year” is one of the best songs that the Mountain Goats have ever written. It focuses on the narrative of Darnielle's poor decisions and the things he has done to cope with his crappy home life. This is nothing unique for a Mountain Goats song—but this one does it well.

The musical elements of “This Year” are its best quality. It's catchy and upbeat, and it includes the excellent chorus of “I'm going to make it through this year, if it kills me.” Darnielle is not a good singer in the traditional sense, but

his voice has character; in this song in particular, his voice sounds like a wail. The piano plays the same little melody over and over again, forcing it in your head. Even though the material is dark, it is a dancing song. It's not one that makes the listener want to dance well, but instead hop up and down in rhythm.

"This Year" combines a mixture of optimism and despair that I appreciate. It's a good song for teenage angst—not too depressing, but just angry enough. At the height of my angsty period, I played it almost daily. Nothing made this period for me particularly special, except for the fact I wanted to be an adult instead a high schooler. It would always be blaring in my headphones as I made the trek to the library after choir, or muffled in the background as I worked my way through failing geometry.

My high school years are defined by insomnia. I have never been able to sleep; it's like my brain doesn't know how to turn itself off even though I'm always tired. My inability to get to sleep has been part of my life, but it was at its worst in high school. There would be nights when I didn't sleep at all and I would just lay in bed tired, but unable to do anything about it. The

Mountain Goats became a companion to those sleepless nights. "This Year," in particular was a song that became tied to my insomnia.

"This Year" is a song about getting through, and the feeling of stagnation that comes from waiting for the next year. Many songs focus on the optimism of beginning a new year, but "This Year" focuses on how the current year sucks. "This Year" is a song that meant so much to me because I was not looking towards the future as much as I was focusing on where I was and counting down the days until I could leave. Over the years, "This Year" has become more nostalgic as I've reached a place in life that I didn't want to leave and I started to be able to sleep at night. I had been listening to it less, or at least I was until the pandemic hit.

The Mountain Goats played on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* in July of 2019 to promote the band's new album. "This Year" is not a song from that album, but Stephen Colbert asked them to play it because he loves it. I did not see it when it was first performed because I do not watch late night shows, but I later found it on my YouTube feed when the quarantine first began. At this point of quarantine, I was get-

ting into my first slump of many. At night I would stare at the ceiling just like I had in high school. Having finished binging *30 Rock* in over a week, I had nothing to do except watch television shows that I did not care for as much, stare at my ancient Boxer's face wondering "when did it get so grey?" and worry.

Listening to "This Year" on Colbert was a revelation. It is my favorite version of "This Year" by far because it captures the joy and anger of the song. John Darnielle's voice is as high-pitched and a little bit unpleasant—like always, but it works. He practically yells the song. The instrumentals are manic compared to what appears on the album, with the piano seeming to play a crescendo every chance it gets. Darnielle doesn't actually sing all of the song because Colbert sings about half of it—getting all the lyrics perfect. Colbert appears almost as an alternate universe Darnielle, in his perfect suit and weirdly similar face. He is not the typical put-together Late-Night host; instead, he is just a fan. When he's not singing, Colbert dances rather aggressively in a way that is too enthusiastic to be faked. It's an absolutely exuberant performance.

My favorite line was, and is,

"There will be feasting and dancing in Jerusalem next year." It's the only time the song outright mentions next year, but it's a line that is filled with hope for what is coming. It's more impactful than it used to be. For me, the Holy Land used to be no longer being in high school. Now, the Holy Land is the literal hope that there will be "feasting and dancing" in the new year. The *Late-Night* performance has become my daily pandemic song because of the way this line is sung. I play it as I walk to class masked, when I look at the rising infection numbers, and before I go to bed at night just like I used to in high school.

It hasn't been a good year. It might actually have been the worst year. My dog died in the middle of quarantine. The school where my dad taught closed. My cat died the week before Christmas. There's a global pandemic. "This Year" is the song for what this year has been, bitter and frustrating. The album version no longer cuts it anymore because it's a little bit too sweet. The song is angrier than it used to be, but still a little bit hopeful for what's coming. It's a good sentiment for what has not been a good year.

Morocco Blue, You

Jessica Cordes '21

undone happiness shifting
now like turquoise tides
in Rabat, we played soccer
just for fun the way
you liked it
and us.

Hostel Funky Fes:
the only week to plan ahead
spring break monkey
tattoos sapphire sex, but then
we said goodbye
in Heathrow International

*come visit me in Burlington
when this is over,
boarded United
we flew to a new storm.*

Back home, social distancing,
twisting moods,
closed eyes no longer
see the deepest blue
nearest to your pupils,
that's how I know
I've lost you.

The Unachievable

Gabriel Castillo-Sanchez '24

Somewhere, way out there
It floats high in the air
Try to attain it if you dare
You'll probably end up pulling out your hair

It poses as something most ideal
Yet rising to it is a huge ordeal
As close to it as you may feel
It is obstructed by an impenetrable seal

Attempting to achieve it you will lose all control
And on your livelihood, it will take a toll
As a matter of fact, it is an impossible goal
One that will always haunt your soul

It laughs at those who try to get close
Because seeking it is futile to most
It snickers as you spend all your time engrossed
You will get failure as a daily dose

It basks its flawless world in glee
And is as bothersome as an unfair referee
But open your mind and maybe you'll see
Flawlessness is not a reality

Be resentful no more... you'll never reach perfection



Self Medication
Yvette Bien-Aime '24

Women aren't like Flowers

April Yearack '24

“Women are like flowers” is what they say
They say we are dainty and we are lovely
They have always pictured us that way,

I say we ought to grow thorns
However, thorns do not stop
The blood red roses from being picked from their spot,

We are damned if we do but more so if we don't
After we blossom a certain age,
We learn to fear growth

Plucked once ripe
Like the fruits on trees
Say “yes”, say “thank you”, now down on your knees

Only used for decoration
As we gather others praise
A trophy, a wife, a rose in a vase

We are owned for our beauty and known for our grace
But when the week does end and we wither away
We can't help but sit there and wait to be exchanged

Of course, flowers still have their beauty
and they also have their grace
But they ultimately teach us we are easily replaced

So do not call me a flower,
No
don't you dare say

Because I am not a flower,
in oh so many ways

Things We Lost In The Flood

Lindsey Dolan '22

Everyone assumes now that the camera in her face was what got to her and didn't let go. The "spotlight," even though the spotlight was really nothing more than friends and family congratulating her for a while or sharing supportive posts to social media, always eager to be tangentially associated with someone experiencing their fifteen minutes of fame.

Helena knows that it isn't that at all, it's just the opposite actually. She'd rather the discomfort of all that than the lingering feeling that she really did die when the fictionalized version of herself did.

Sunday dinner at her parent's house this week is chicken and sweet potatoes. It's months after her minutes of fame now, but when that faded, it took more than itself along with it and left a kind of depreciating existence in its place. Each week that she and her brother and parents congregate for dinner and table-talk, she feels the kitchen table become an even greater abyss to make her voice reach across, like they're secretly replacing the center leaf with one a few inches longer

before she knocks on the front door.

"How are classes?" her mother asks her brother with as much genuine interest as can be expressed in the three words. "Do you need to bring anything back? Toilet paper? Soap? Pasta sauce?"

He talks about his History of Latin America presentation and how the professor had kept him behind a minute to say that he'd spoken well. Just that, nothing more.

"That's one of the best skills you can have. That's incredible. It's good to have someone like that on your side already," her father says.

They don't so much ask about Helena as ask around her.

"How's your roommate?"

"Good," she says.

She's not usually one for perfect posture and firm eye contact, but she's going heavy on it tonight hoping they'll stare back and notice something. Anything — that she's looking a little tired lately, that she needs to brush her hair, or maybe even that there's something in her teeth.

Whenever she's back at her childhood home, Helena always

glances in her old bedroom on the way down the hall to wash up. It's always the same unchanging portrait of her at twenty, exactly how it had been before moving out for good save for when she grabs a book or old piece of clothing to take back with her. The bed went unmade for years and there are posters that she cringes at now, but about a month ago she noticed the comforter straightened out and a bin on the floor. There were less things strewn around, the box of pens she'd spilled beside her dresser was all picked up after years.

In the bathroom she wonders if she's just grown vain, a little too in tune with herself. If she is actually that much less interesting than her brother, if she's washed up, or the conclusion that she fears the most — that some of the grieving her family had done for Helena the character on screen had a material effect. That suspicion has been wearing at her, the overwhelming sense that she no longer exists beyond the ubiquitous little digital file of the film. She feels less opaque looking in the mirror. Maybe just for lack of sun.

At home, her roommate has just finished packing to leave for

a finance summit in the city in the morning. She's sitting on top of her suitcase, zipping it underneath herself when Helena appears in the doorway of her bedroom.

"I watered all the plants for the week, I know you'll forget," Lucy says. "The ficus in your room, too."

"That's a ficus?"

"Yes," she says from atop the suitcase still.

"You should sleep in my room tonight before you go."

They'd done this more often during the first year after they signed the lease on the apartment, having been closer friends fresh out of college with more to relate about and more novelty to the situation. There has been less common ground recently between the banker and the schoolteacher.

"One of my clients filed for bankruptcy today," Lucy would say.

"One of my eight-year-olds blew a snot bubble today," Helena would say.

Tonight they lay silent on their backs, watching the ceiling fan with the lights still on.

"Can you face me?" Helena asks.

They fall asleep like that, faces almost pressed together like a

new couple.

She still can't work out if she regrets it or not. When the journalist reached out about doing a piece on the damage from the hurricane a few years ago, she'd said yes without hesitation. It was to be a big research piece calling for better disaster planning and infrastructure and grid modernization by the shore. As the survivor of a wrecked house where she'd been living with a group of college roommates, Helena was just one among those asked to help provide the human element, the accessibility element for more readers. Even just this had been big for her, but there was an initial high to being asked about herself, to someone being singularly interested in her experiences.

And then months later Sam came along with his plans for a neo-neo-neorealistic feature on the topic. He'd read the original piece and wanted to create a kind of cinematic portrait of the torn landscape through the story of an older woman down at the shore. The whole thing was going to be her sifting through things — sifting through the wreckage of her own home and through figures in the community. She was to be played by a house-

hold name and the the rest of the cast would be locals; people from the area, people from the article. The first time Sam spoke to Helena on the phone he'd said to her can you read it back to me, what you said in the article.

“Verbatim?”

“More or less.”

“Okay. I'll have to pull it up online.” That was a lie, a PDF of it was saved right to her desktop. Its own little icon in the grid. Also a lie because she'd practically memorized each word and every bit of punctuation by now, too, after months of reading back and overanalyzing. She had read it back enough times, some aloud as well, to already have experienced the embarrassment of reading back her words made concrete in serif font and the secondhand embarrassment come from reflecting on that — and then third, fourth, and so on as well. She'd flexed this muscle enough to feel the necessary detachment from it to recite smoothly now. So she clicked around at nothing for a bit and made some typing sounds in case that was something Sam could hear over the phone for a minute and then said, “okay, got it.”

“Great.”

“Should I go?”

“Please.”

She was silent for another few moments and then plunged into her statement.

“It sounds dumb, but the most important thing I lost in the storm was my journal. More than one, it was everything I’d written between the ages of fifteen and twenty-two gone. I used to be consumed with journaling and writing down everything that happens to me. If I missed a day — it only happened a handful of times in that whole span of time — I wrote two pages the next. Now it feels stupid, but I had it in my head that it would one day be my own kind of Unabridged Journals. It got to the point where I associated my handwriting with what’s real. If I kissed someone and never put it into writing in that journal, I never kissed anyone as far as I was concerned. So when it was lost, I was lost. It took a while for me to be able to live without proof of living. Sorry, this feels too much about me.” She stops reading. “Do you want to say the interviewer’s part?” she asks Sam over the line.

“Oh, yeah,” he says and reads the line: “No, not at all. Continue.”

“Okay,” Helena says, con-

tinuing. “I was lucky anyhow.”

Helena hesitated a bit at first before consenting to the project, but mostly because of the way he’d been overzealous with the “neos,” it didn’t sound like the realest.

Only after agreeing did she search him up online to scroll through his credentials. Most of the buzz surrounding Sam’s name came after his directing a music video for a decently well-known pop artist. Helena didn’t care for the video much, it was full of landscape shots on the beach and kind of boring, but after some clicking around she felt an incidental surge of self-importance to find out that singer had been nominated for a Grammy (best packaging; lost). He’d also done a perfume commercial and a short documentary on synthetic meat alternatives. She decided she liked the things he threw himself behind well enough and agreed to the tiny part.

Luckily they’d filmed during the summer. It was shot close by, just down at the shore, but the stipend was less than she would’ve made otherwise; nannying and tutoring as she does during those few months off each year from teaching third graders. A speeding ticket

would have sent her into the red.

Sam ended up deciding that the script was missing something halfway through the shoot.

“Helena — Helena the character, not you Helena, has to die. Don’t worry, it’ll be poignant.”

So her handful of scenes were reshot, but this time she was dying all along. Helena the character made it out of the collapsing house too, but much more narrowly. Not without a fallen beam to the head and subsequent hospitalization. Sam asked her if she had any way in particular she thought she might like to go out, what she would want the grief to look like. They’d brought in her family for nothing more than a sweeping shot of their mourning faces and everything had been off from then.

“How did I do?” She’d asked Sam on the last day on set, though there was no real set, it was just the beach town. They stood on the boardwalk together eating cookies someone had brought to celebrate the wrap.

“Oh, you were great.”

“My acting was okay?”

“Your acting?” Sam put his hands on her shoulders. “Helena, honestly, if you were trying to act,

your acting is not great. But that’s perfect — you’re playing yourself, right? You’re playing someone who, in a hypothetical situation where she’d be asked to act, would not be able to. That’s okay. No one’s asking you to do that. It’s real. You’re a timid girl speaking her truth.”

“Okay.” I’m twenty-six, she thought, but okay.

“Okay?”

“Yes.”

So it was shot and edited and released and made a little bit of noise, but only to those attuned to such low profile cinematic efforts, and so now remains inconsequentially out in the ether. Inconsequentially to everyone but her. The ether and Hulu, deep down the independent page.

All this and her little column in the local newspaper have made her kind of a diva in unseen ways now, though. Just in ways that ensure the only person repulsed is herself. One of her favorite feelings in the world is standing in a fitting room where every wall panel is a mirror — being able to see how she looks when caught off guard or downcast or from that backward three-quarters angle otherwise eter-

nally a mystery to her (photos don't capture things like that the same). It does repulse her, the pleasure feels indecent.

When she goes out to eat with Lucy, a banker, Helena pays. It's an investment in the little thrill she receives from signing her name on the check the way she's been developing in the margins of her lesson plans, with the tail of the A in Helena swooping down into the loop of the lowercase F in Finnerty. This is how she's been signing notes to students' parents for months now anyway, but it's more exciting on a check for some reason. She hopes the waiter will associate the healthy tip with the unique shape and maybe even feel a surge of goodwill should he see that name anywhere again.

She keeps a playlist with the instrumental score that appeared behind her scenes on her phone and walks around listening to it sometimes, trying to understand what about her as a person inspired the melody and the little grace-note heavy motifs.

Further, she's ashamed to acknowledge the little flame of a thrill that flickers within when one of her third graders has it in their head that she's a kind of movie star.

She has taken to wearing a large, flashy pair of sunglasses each morning on her commute and only taking them off when she's settled behind her desk to take attendance. She does this slowly, taking them off, hoping the effect will be subliminal on them. Sometimes she pairs them with a patterned scarf and slowly unwinds it from around her neck while the class readies itself. Eight and nine year olds will not call her a try-hard.

"Miss F., my mom watched your movie," one of the boys says to her on Thursday.. Instances of people telling her this continue to grow fewer and further between as time goes on. Lucy has been at the financial summit for four days now.

"Oh." Her cheeks flush.

"I saw some parts. It was boring."

"It's a bit slow. You might like it when you're older"

He lingers in front of her desk, looking distracted. She lets her fingers hover over the keyboard, unsure of whether to shift her eyes back down just yet.

"I still liked it. You looked pretty. It was sad when you died but it was pretty."

"Thanks, Matt."

“I thought I was going to cry but only for a second.”

“It’s okay, Matt.”

“And I just spilled glue all over the chapter books. I’m confessing so please don’t be mad.”

While driving back from the school late in the afternoon, Helena slows for a deer in the road. It doesn’t hurry on out of fear, so she comes to a complete stop before its unmoving frame. She lifts her foot off the brake in little spurts, inching closer and closer until she’s afraid of tapping it with the hood of her car, but the deer doesn’t even acknowledge her. It always seems like the deer grow bolder and bolder every year around here, but this one is uncannily ignorant. It’s like it doesn’t see her at all. Another car slows at the scene. The driver lays their heavy hand on the horn until it scatters, pulls ahead of Helena, and speeds off. The image of the stoic deer stews in her mind for the remainder of the afternoon and into the night, and by the next morning she remains unsettled.

Propped up in bed, she looks around the room for signs of life. There’s a ticket stub for a movie she’d gone to see with Lucy last

week on the nightstand and a half-drunk disposable cup of coffee on the desk. She wonders for a second if that’s really all, if after a ticket and a paper cup that there’s really no evidence of her continued being. But then she remembers some recent prescriptions in the bathroom and produce in the fridge and feels about as much better about that as anyone could.

She gets out of bed and puts the stub in her pocket. In the bathroom, she pours the rest of the coffee down the sink and throws out the cup and the medications. She knows what the mind can be tricked into believing, she’s seen it firsthand. All she’s doing is prodding that mechanism a bit more. In the kitchen, she considers tossing the celery and strawberries in the trash as well but instead carefully washes them, dries them, wraps them in paper towels, and puts them in a tote bag. She slips the bag onto her shoulder and leans with elbows on the counter, thinking of what else she might need. For what? Unclear, even to herself. She decides on sunglasses and sensible shoes.

Outside, the street is empty. It’s quiet enough to hear her shoes against the pavement as she chooses a direction and walks.

Respect Our Mother

Gabriel Castillo-Sanchez '24

Perhaps the dearest person of all is a mother
So why hurt the mother we all share?
You'll probably say, "I wouldn't dare"
But it's our actions that really say, "I don't care"

She is in pain as I speak this verse
And it seems that all society wants to do is make matters worse
Energy we burn polluting the air
Chemicals we use polluting the ground
Litter we throw polluting the sea
If you take a moment to listen, you can hear her wheeze, "Please help me"

It's our own actions that compromise the trees and the bees
It's our own actions that give us unease and lung disease
We are even tainting the water in which we bathe and drink
Meanwhile, our mother is asking herself, "Do they even think?"

But as bad as we have scarred her, we can make things right
With modern technology, we can harness wind, water, and sun
Yes, renewable energy is the way it's done
So be a good daughter and son
Reducing, reusing, and recycling is better in the long run

Now, don't sit there and remorse, it's time to react
Actions speak louder than words, and that's a fact
Yes, every human being can make an impact
To keep our mother from being ransacked
If we continue down this path there will be no going back
So now it is our duty return the love she gives and never detract

WHAT DO YOU SEE?



Reach out,
let's be friends.

What Do You See?
Abigail Koesterich '24

Planet

Jessica Cordes '21

Nothing is the same:
you never saw Hudson
blue river blowing
curly hair to hurricane,
goodnight navy
denim drags attention.

Saturdays I sit inside
with my mother,
blue fleece blanket thick
of summer, watch *This Is Us*
for hours until
we are silently swiping
our own tears—did you know

early traditional Blues verses
consisted of a single line
repeated four times:

I love you

I love you

I love you

I love you

spoken fast enough,

the *I* begins to roll over itself,
eventually forgotten.

I am blue to no longer love you.

Met the me who left

half of herself in New York

beside her favorite orange sweater,
flew Jetblue, landed
in a different hemisphere.

One night, years ago
I dreamt of blue planets—
icy giants, fast
floating by my window,
each one more brilliant
more consuming
than the last.
When they vanished,
magic lingered in the dark.



Still Life Basket
Michael Reginella '23

The Day Wright Died

Carley Van Buiten '23

It is 3:14 on a Tuesday
I walk the Rail Trail as I do every day
I walk past the steel doors
Of the storage unit, "Storage Depot"
People's lives are stored away
in those tiny units as I walk by
Dumb name for a storage unit, I think.

The sun shines through the trees
Perfectly to make me squint
I've been walking for 35 minutes
I am sweating now.

I will finish this walk in the hour
Then go to class and eat whatever I find
But before then it is Eisner Brother's Recycling Center
I couldn't miss them if I tried
They are loud and obnoxious
Opposite of what I walk for
I wonder what the Eisner Brothers are doing at this very moment
If they're even alive.

A man rollerblades by with padded knees
The twigs on the ground ache to catch the lip of his skates
perfectly enough to put those knee pads to use.
I walk past a graveyard
Neat, organized rows of headstones
Most have freshly planted flowers
But one is overshadowed with a dead bush
Is it neglect or is his sacred ground poisoned?
It is weird to think of coffins under those headstones.
Even weirder to think of the bodies inside.

I check the time on my phone, 4:04
I have to get back for class, I think
The Chicago Tribune takes up my screen
My eyes scan fast, my legs walk on autopilot
Daunte Wright, black male, pulled over for air freshener,
gun mistaken for taser, fatally shot.
I read, "holy shit I shot him." A trained professional, I think.
I wonder how easy it is to mistake a taser for a gun.
Mistake, I think.
Tragedy, I correct myself.

The Sound in Silence

Michael Reginella '23

I traveled down by the Hudson River with the intent to photograph anything that caught my eye. Many people were there to enjoy the beautiful weather and watch the imminent sunset. I sparingly took pictures, searching for some subject matter that would be a good fit for my portfolio. I proceeded to take pictures of trees, the river, and animals, yet nothing really was too profound. As the sun was setting I sat near the dock on the river and simply waited while observing my surroundings. It was then that I noticed two geese. Hurrying along the river, I pointed my camera and waited until they came closer. I needed to be conscious of how many pictures I would take as I was running out of space on the memory card within my camera. I waited and observed them through the lens. They were pushing against the flow of the river, and slowly but surely making progress. One behind the other, they moved forward for some time, then traveled to the right near the dock, and serpented along. As they moved closer to the dock, they turned to stop at some rocks along the shore. I slowly moved onto other rocks about thirty feet away and just stood there observing them and waiting for the right shot. While aware of my presence, they were not startled by me as I kept a bit of a

distance and remained still and quiet. As I waited, silently observing them, I noticed something that I hadn't considered throughout that entire time by the river; the little things found in the silence.

This silence took over the area and allowed for me to become fully aware of all my surroundings. I remained still, reflecting upon everything that I was noticing and all that I felt. I listened to the water and how it calmly and quietly flowed, the sounds of the birds just like Burroughs observed, and the calm wind and how it flowed through the trees. These are the little things that you don't notice, but that which truly makes up the river. These geese knew the feelings and sounds, it's what guides them in the area, what they are used to and happy with. Yet while finding peace within these elements found in the silence, I could hear a loud group of people talking as they walked near me and sat about fifty feet away. They continued to talk and discuss the issues of their day and lives. Too preoccupied with their own lives to notice anything that is in front of them within the area, just as I was. There is an irony to this as they come down to this river to observe its beauty and yet miss most of it. They don't notice that which is found in the little things that

make up the experience. They come here to see the beauty, but can't help but complain about work, people, or other issues, contrasting the beauty that they should be taking in with such negativity. Every other group I noticed similarly talked over everything and missed the full beauty. So much talking about various things; drowning out that silence that allows for the birds or the flow of the river to be heard. No wonder these geese moved away, even struggling against the flow of the water just to find a quieter spot. Perhaps they could tell that in my silence I contributed to this landscape they call home and didn't obscure it with that pointless noise.

There is so much noise that disrupts our lives today and not enough of that silence. It mostly stays in the negative and consumes us, taking over every aspect of our days and who we are. It is relentless and many require a break, yet they won't take the time to go outside and observe the silence. They put it off, thinking things will become better on their own and pass their whole lives without ever noticing the little things. It's a shame, as that feeling of observing those geese made me feel more at peace than I have felt in awhile, because in that time nothing else mattered. I didn't care about the small issues or worries and only concerned myself with the silence and calming sounds of nature surrounding me. These geese that I was watching

lived their lives in that silence, moving to it when provoked by the noise of our society. Yet, people can't live in that silence. It's as if we are tethered to that noise and need to go back to it even if we manage to find a way to break free to the silence. We can't live completely aware of everything that our surroundings offer, but people don't even try to observe the beauty of it every once in a while. They're too preoccupied with their lives and adding to that noise of our society. We waste our whole lives in that world and yet when we reach that end point, isn't the silence what we ultimately seek? We navigate through the noise, with an ultimate goal of finding that peace, which isn't achieved until we don't have enough time to truly enjoy it. Yet, the silence we waste our lives finding is always there, always around us, we just don't stop and care to notice.



Microscopic Cell
Jamie Goodman '23

Salt, Sand, Tide

Alexandra Messina '24

The breeze hugs me from behind, warm and comforting and playing with my hair, but
it's the river breeze, not the ocean, there's no ocean here
I can't feel it, it's not the same
I'm here, not
there, not
Home

Home, where the breeze is so much colder, so much fresher,
no less comforting, no less alive
It smells of salt there, and
of sand, and
of tide

My mind wanders to him, it's running and can't stop
He smells of the ocean,
not the river,
not here

He smells of the salt, and
the sand, and
the tide

He's not here, he's there
He's home

With the salt and the sand and the tide

With the ocean, not the river,
there's no ocean here,
I can't feel it

I am not in that year

Kaylin Moss '22

Is hindsight 2020?

I have astigmatism

A year?

Clocks malfunctioned

I am somewhere between losing track of every hashtagged name and a dead grandmother

I am not in that year

I can't be, repress or I cannot be, I cannot be that daughter binging Westworld with her mother,

I cannot be that sister refusing to yell in streets, I cannot be that friend singing in the car,

I cannot be that granddaughter baking with her grandmother for the last time

I need a casket for the year's tears

I need a lobotomy for the year's headaches

Memory. Does. Not. Serve. Me.

The Goddess Within Me

Deborah Jenks '22

Even though my father isn't the king of the sky
Or who transforms into an eagle soaring high up above...

I do search for peace when no one else will.

I also speak of wisdom when no one else dares to.

I wasn't born from my father's head; however, I was born from the
womb of my mother, ready to change the world.

I have the spirit of a warrior, swinging my sword at the challenge that
I must face... using my shield to protect myself from the face of
darkness and fear.

I slay my opponents and seek victory with every war I encounter.
Even though I'm no Aphrodite, I do possess beauty inside and out
revealing that I'm both strong and beautiful.

My body reveals curves from every angle, showing that I'm a
masterpiece itself.

The sun at dawn kisses my skin as the clouds from above reveals the
softness of it.

Like cotton my lips are soft, gentle and packs a powerful punch when
someone dares to kiss me.

My eyes listen to those who seek help, when no one else will.

My hair blows in the wind like a compass, pointing me in the direction
that I shall go.

My voice calls to others who are in need, even when they don't ask for
it.

War is never the answer in solving any of the problems we must face.

I show mercy to those who deserve it and never give it to those who
abuse it.

I, like the horse run towards something, never away.

Within my blood, I'm a goddess and the goddess within me is Athena.

Outdated

Nicole Formisano '22

I go to an antique store
to try to imagine
how old ppl lived.

and under it all,
the dusty hats
and old brooches,
I find a Wii—
a fucking Nintendo
Wii, w/ Mario Kart
n everything
& I'm fucking horrified

bc we got one in 2008
when it was new and amazing,
and so was I.
It hasn't been so long.

Yet here it is
sitting for sale
like it had been there
all this time.

Bold, it lets itself
be seen, and collect dust,
and watch it all go by.
I'm so embarrassed.

I leave as soon as possible,
and don't buy a thing.



Shqiptari
Nora Nucullaj '22



Shovels
Jessica Hawkins '22

The Canticle of the Night

August Boland '24

The night is our guardian on this cruel earth
It brings us secrecy and with it trust
It promises joy, goodness, and great mirth
It brings us love and hope and pride and lust.

The day is our demon on this fell world
It purges all it touches with its light
Villains against us lies and slanders hurled
In the name of this weapon so all-bright.

The gloaming is our wild card in this sphere
It remains an unknown to us and them
Many raise their ears, in it, death they hear
Or treasures uncountable, like a gem.

So, my son, do trust the piercing light not!
Many the ills from the sun have been got.





Rainbow
Lidya Sezer '24

Ashes, Ashes Everywhere

Carley Van Buiten '23

When people ask me about my childhood I tell them stories from pictures and home videos I've seen as if those memories are my own. Growing up it was me, Jackie, my sister, Corey, my mom, Mary, and my dad, Charlie. My family calls me Jack. My parents named my sister and me boy names either because they wanted us to have a really hard time in middle school or because my mom was trying to be progressive and androgenous when she named us. We lived in Connecticut most of my life until I graduated from Brown, got a job for *The New York Times*, fell deeply in love with my boyfriend Steven, and escaped as fast as I could to Manhattan. We had a pretty normal childhood. We lived in a modest New England home with our last name, *Astoria*, hand-painted by our mom on the mailbox. If I'm being completely honest I don't remember too much of my childhood. I do remember riding bikes with my sister, Corey, and coming back inside with scraped knees every night for dinner. I also remember not seeing my grandparents much growing up.

I was always jealous of those kids who would come to school with stories about the amazing times they had being spoiled by their grandparents. Mary, my mom's, dad died when she was young and her mom lived in Oregon where it never stops raining and was apparently too far for us to ever visit. Charlie, my dad, had a complicated relationship with his parents. He never talked about it much and we weren't allowed to ask. We just knew there were another set of grandparents out there somewhere that we would never meet.

Charlie died in 2001 in the bombing of the Twin Towers. Before you get all sappy on me, no he wasn't a heroic firefighter who died saving those in need. He was a corporate asshole who was unlucky enough to be in the office on the exact day one of the worst terrorist attacks on America ever took place. Just like every other American, the day the Twin Towers fell is seared into my memory forever. I will never forget sitting in the office of *The New York Times* and having one of my coworkers run into my

office to tell me the news that one of the towers fell. I was in complete shock. I didn't understand the magnitude of it until we got word that the second tower fell. I'll never forget how it felt to wait for each snippet of information, holding on to every word to find out more. As *The New York Times*, we had to get story after story out as each snippet of information came in. It wasn't until I got the call from my mom that I actually took a second to stop and think.

She called me to say, "Your father was in the office today and they don't think he got out in time."

I didn't hear anything else she said because the phone slipped from my hand as I collapsed into the nearest chair. They sent me home that day along with everyone else who had loved ones in the bombing. It wasn't until five days later his body was confirmed. It's the waiting, not knowing. That's what eats you alive.

Around three months after we scooped my father's ashes from the rubble of the Twin Towers I started having severe insomnia. I went to doctor after doctor listening to them all tell me the same thing, 'Nothing came up on the tests but it is very common to

have sleep disturbances after the loss of a loved one.' I felt like I was losing my mind. Every night I would have this recurring dream in the basement of my childhood home that would begin with the sound of footsteps walking down the stairs but end before I saw who they belonged to. I would wake up drenched in sweat every time, unable to fall back asleep. Finally, I saw a psychiatrist and after weeks of therapy sessions with her and trial and error with different sleeping pills, we discovered my father had molested me as a child. She told me that my brain had compartmentalized the abuse to the point where my conscious self didn't even know it happened. The death of Charlie triggered the subconscious trauma and presented itself through insomnia. Apparently, sleep disorders are common in childhood sexual assault victims. It is amazing the lengths your brain will go to protect you. Hearing this felt like he died all over again. Or at least the version of him that I knew was gone. The hardest part of the whole thing was telling my sister and mom. I didn't want to have him die again for them too. He never touched Corey. I'll never know why it was just me. There must

be some Freudian psychology to back it up but I don't like to think about it too hard. My mom didn't take it very well. I still don't know if she knew at the time but when I told her she started crying and told me she was sorry. That was all she said, 'I'm sorry.' We haven't talked much since that. They say you go through the five stages of grief but I believe I went through them twice and I don't think I ever made it to acceptance.

I have created a life for myself in Manhattan with my boyfriend Steven. He is like my walking angel. I don't know what I would do without him. We met working at *The New York Times* when I was an intern and he was a full-time employee. I've worked my way from spending summers interning there during college to becoming a full-time employee myself. Steven has a little hobby of collecting vintage bicycles and his prize possession is his Schwinn tandem from the 60s. It was our love for antiques that started the conversation that led to the bar and five Cosmopolitans which led to well you know. We share a lot of interests but it's the antiques that started it all. That bike is the only one allowed to stay in our one-bed-

room apartment, hanging on the wall above our bed. The rest are exiled to the storage unit down the street. Steven grew up in the foster care system and was adopted at the age of six. He doesn't talk about it much but I know it was hard on him. He is without a doubt, my best friend. I might even rely on him too much for too many things but I need him. You would think what he went through growing up in the system would have hardened him but he is one of the kindest, most compassionate people I know. He knows me better than anyone. He can read me better than anyone, and he accepts me like no one ever has.

Steven has been an amazing support system through all of this. I have to admit I haven't been the nicest to him. I sometimes find myself taking my frustrations out on him because I know he loves me too much to ever leave. I know it's unhealthy and it's not fair to Steven, I'm working on it.

Tonight is movie night. We watched *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. It just came out and it's all the rage. After the movie, we lay in bed. I run my hands through his black curls. I feel my eyes getting heavy as they trace the

lines of his thin back.

The next thing I know I'm in a dark basement. I'm laying on the couch and there's a nostalgic mildew odor filling my nose. I feel relaxed as I listen to the washing machine rumble on behind me. As I go to close my eyes I hear the door to the basement open and the sound of footsteps walking down the stairs. I know these footsteps. I feel a pit in my stomach as I turn to see who it is. It's Charlie. He comes to the end of the couch and rests his hand on my leg. I freeze. As I begin to look from his hand up to his arm to his face he turns gray. His hand becomes cold on my leg and then it is ash. He is ash. He is disappearing before me into ash and I try to scream. I try to scream but nothing will come out. I know my mom is upstairs if she could just hear me scream.

I feel hands on my shoulders shaking me. It's Steven shaking me awake and I am screaming. I am so relieved I can scream. I don't stop for a few seconds even though I am awake. When I stop I fall into Steven's arms and cry.

He holds me there stroking my hair saying, "It was just a dream. You're safe You're safe."

"I'm so sorry I woke you,

it was just a nightmare," I say with tear-streaked cheeks looking up at him.

Before he can reply I say, "I saw him. I saw him and we were there."

"Who, Jack? Where?" He says wiping the tears from my eyes.

"We were in the basement and I couldn't scream. He died right in front of me and I couldn't scream," I say, the panic building in my voice.

"Who Jackie? You're scaring me," Steven replies, sitting me up to look at me straight on.

"Charlie," I say the panic rushing over me. I begin to sob, falling back into him.

Steven absorbs me into his chest and asks in a tone above a whisper, "You saw your dad?"

"I think it was a flashback. I think it was the first time my brain let me remember specific details," I say in a panicked tone. "It happened in the basement and I could feel the fear. I heard his footsteps and I could feel the fear I must have felt as a little girl like I knew what was going to happen," I say turning to look at his face for reassurance.

He can see the desperation in my eyes as I search his for some

sort of solace.

He pulls me closer to tell me, "You're safe now. He can never hurt you again."

I feel safe in his arms and he falls asleep holding me in a grip no one could break through. I listen to his snores and feel the heave of his chest as I lay awake staring at the clock. I watch it turn from 3:00 to 4:00 then from 4:00 to 5:00 until finally at 7:00 Steven wakes up and I no longer feel alone again.

I'm seeing my mom this morning running on little to no sleep. This should be interesting. I haven't seen her since I told her what Charlie did. I feel obligated to check on her after all, she did lose her husband. I know she's not doing well with losing Charlie, but I need her. I need that hug that only a mother could give. I need to hear her call me "baby" even though I'm twenty-six and tell me that she loves me in that motherly protective way. I'm nervous and my expectations for today might be too big but I'm willing to try.

It's about two and a half hours until I'm there. This is my childhood home. The blue paint on the outside with the white shutters screams "New England". I can't decide whether or not to ring the

doorbell or knock. I feel like a stranger. While trying to decide, my mom opens the door. She must have heard my car in the driveway.

I start to say, "Sorry I was just about to knock but..." when she interrupts me.

"Let's meet at a coffee shop instead of staying here." Her eyes refuse to meet mine. "I feel like I've been inside all day." I know she doesn't want me in the house. It's too much for her and maybe too much for me. Baby steps I remind myself. We get in the car and I can't help but notice she hasn't hugged me yet. We arrive at the coffee shop after a 15-minute ride in silence. Thank goodness for the radio. We go to a coffee shop called "Coffee Pot." *Tacky* I think to myself. She chooses a table by the window looking out at the street. It's surrounded by leafy green plants all in planters with little smiling faces painted on them. Despite myself, I like it. Mary starts with about three minutes of small talk as we both politely sip our lattes. I got chai tea and she got pumpkin spice. Typical. Finally, I can't take it anymore and I address the big fat elephant sitting in the middle of our table staring at us.

"Mom I had a dream about

dad last night," I say in an even tone, testing the waters.

"That's sweet sweetie pie. I have dreams about him most nights too. I know we all miss him," she says holding her latte up to her chin.

"I wouldn't exactly call it sweet. We were downstairs in the basement and..." I start.

Before I can finish she interrupts, "Now I'm going to stop you right there Jack. Whatever that psychiatrist filled your head with is not true. I knew your father better than anyone and he never laid a hand on you."

"Mom, dad molested me, that's the truth. It's not your fault you didn't know. No one did," I say reaching my hand over the table to touch hers.

"You are lying," she says, pulling her hand away. Her voice begins to rise. "I did not raise you to be a liar."

"I am not a liar. You're convincing yourself it's not true because you can't face the reality that you didn't know the man you claimed to love for twenty-five years one goddamn bit. If anyone's a liar here it's you, Mom," I say, trying hard to stop my voice from shaking out of rage or sadness, I

can't tell.

"You have no idea the sacrifices your father and I have made for you. We gave you everything and you have the audacity to sit here in front of me like a little ungrateful brat," Mary spits, her face beginning to contort with anger.

I know at this moment when my dad died he took my mom with him. I stand up out of my chair, bent over the table looking down at her. At this point, most of the cafe has turned to look at us but I don't have the capacity to care right now.

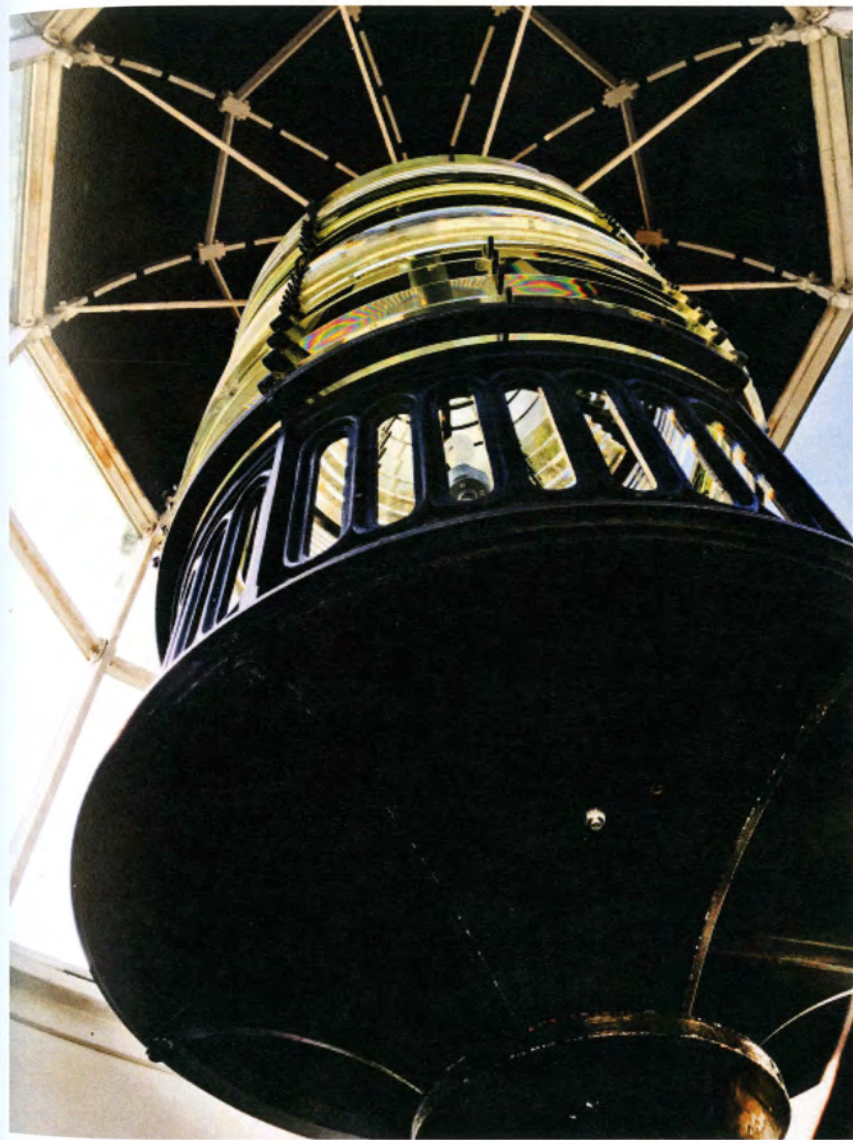
"You really want to sit here and talk about sacrifices?" I begin to sob and I can feel the snot from my nose dripping down to my lip as a child's would. "My childhood was **STOLEN** from me," I scream, despite myself. Now everyone is staring, even the cashier. "He took my life from me while you sat there and did nothing," I call out in a broken shriek as if I'm throwing a temper tantrum. I grab my jacket and purse and walk out to my car, leaving her there with that contorted expression still stuck on her face. This is my nightmare from the night before except for this time I can scream but she still can't hear me. I find those who aren't heard

tend to scream the loudest.

It's been years since that day in the coffee shop. My mom has never accepted the fact that my dad molested me and I have wasted so much time carrying anger for her around with me. I have been searching for that tender motherly love from her. For her to just give me the validation I so desperately desired. To tell me it wasn't my fault and I was just a child. It took me a long time and a lot of tears to discover that she will never give me that validation I yearn for. Her denial will always keep her from being the mother I need her to be. My healing can no longer rest in her hands. She is battling her demons as we all are. Who am I to tell her how to fight them?

My abuse will never leave me. The trauma will get better with time, as with anything, but it will always be a part of me. It is my decision as to whether or not I allow it to define me. My father took my childhood from me and there is nothing I can do about that. But it is now in my hands whether or not I allow him to take the rest of my life from me too. People always say, 'I'm sorry for your loss.' What I want to say to them is I'm sorry for my loss too. I'm sorry mainly

for the loss of who I believed my father to be. I miss that ignorance and despite everything I miss him. He died without ever having to look me in the eyes and face what he had done. He left me here to bear this burden alone and it is so heavy but luckily I am strong.



Beacon of Light
Miranda Beyer '24

10:00 PM, Dylan's Bed

Jessica Cordes '21

I am studying
a World Map
on the wall
of his dorm room
which is less
about the map,
& more
about anything
that is not him.
Right hand
restless
to his chest,
one leg
trapped below
a navy blue blanket,
the other burning
for the door.

The map is black
like soot
or oil, clusters
of bright lights
in the world's
biggest cities:
Shanghai Mumbai
my eyes fly to New York
and I am somewhere
amongst them.
Warm light on the wall
shines bright

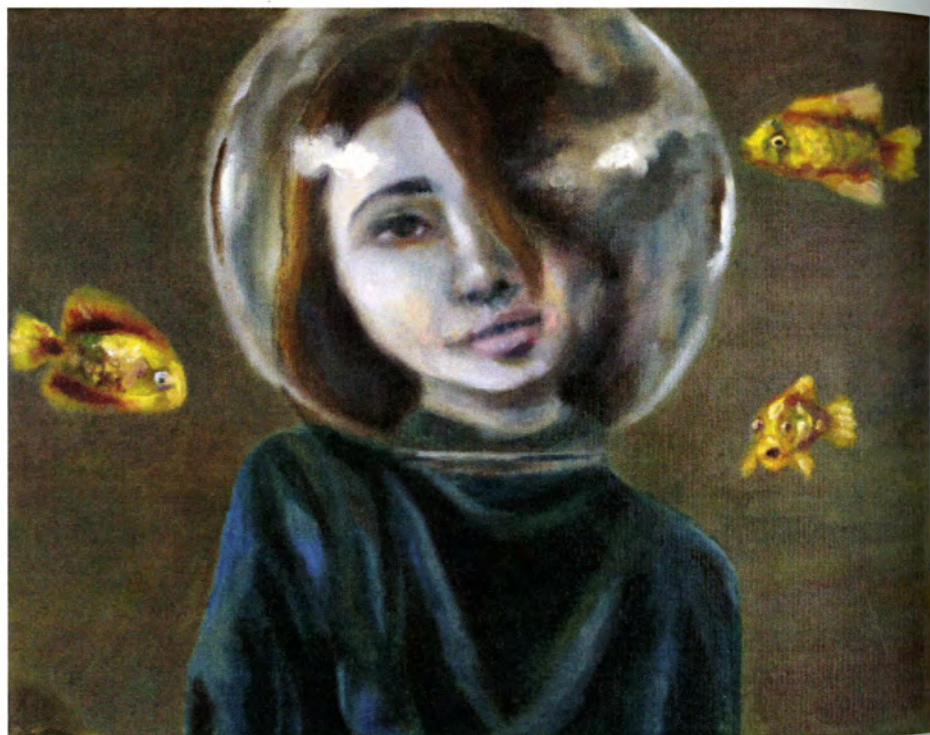
sunlight on the
eastern hemisphere.
His chewed fingers
trace my skin.

I wander:
half-open
dresser drawer,
bodies in his
mirrored closet
door, a once-white sock
on linoleum floor, his
hands move south
to my *pretty nice hips*.

I waver,
he whispers
you're such a tease.

Somewhere
there is a beautiful woman
boarding a plane
taking flight
to anywhere.
She is unafraid.

He asks me why
I am so focused
on the *stupid map* as if
I have never seen one before
and without looking at him,
I think I need to go home now.



Behind the Glass
Bridgette Goss '23

An Origin Story

Margaret Roach '22

Third Place, Nonfiction

Elektra is a film that has been completely erased from the public consciousness. I think about it once every day, but never at the same time. Sometimes it comes across my thoughts when I brush my teeth in the morning. Some-days, (especially on Tuesdays) it's when I throw a tennis ball to the dog in the late afternoon. Most often, it's the last thing I think about before I drift off into sleep.

I dream of *Elektra*.

It is my white whale, something to chase and understand. It is a thankless task. The film is, by all accounts, terrible. It isn't even *fun* bad like *The Room*; it's *boring* bad. It's *Cats* if there was no fun music. It's a Nic Cage movie with the exclusion of Nic Cage.

Elektra is the worst movie I have ever seen. I need it still. I've wasted hours watching and thinking about it. It takes up the space where new knowledge should go. It's as much a part of my life as the films I love, forcing itself into

my memory like a parasite. *Elektra* is one of the first films that disappointed me and it will not be something I will move on from.

To understand *Elektra*, you must understand the pitfalls of growing up as a young girl loving superheroes. My origin story as a comic book fan is not exciting. I watched *X-Men* when I was ten and decided that superheroes would be my identity until I die. It was an obsession; I drew the characters, I wrote my first television script about the X-Men, and I tried to get my tiny hands on any piece of superheroes that I could.

Superheroes were on the cusp of being cool back in the early 2000s, but they were still not entirely mainstream. Comic books belonged only to the people who loved them; not to the masses who were looking for air conditioning mindless blockbusters. Superheroes were something that had to be sought out. Every comic book I read felt like a discovery, and every film felt like lost footage.

My experience as a young

female comic book fan is well summarized in the action figures I own. The male ones have cool poses and costumes. The female ones have boobs. They are defined by this fact, and often they take up most of their little body. The action figures I own were not made for preteen girls; they were made for an entirely different demographic – young men or older men who never grew out of their comic book phase.

Superhero media is something that many young girls love, but the fact is: it is not made for them. This is starting to change with animated shows like DC's Superhero Girls and Marvel Rising, but historical misogyny is something that is hard to get rid of.

It's not just that comic books were not made for young girls, it's also that you are part of a fanbase where girls are an oddity. As a girl you are not the same as the rest and that means that you must not actually belong. Older men would try to flirt with me, explaining things I already knew about superheroes. It would happen in line at the comic book shop, or when I referenced something nerdy in conversation. There was an assumption that I did not know as much as I did based entirely on my

gender.

As a girl who loved comics, I was constantly being tested to see if I was actually a fan or if I was pretending to be a fan to get a date, like I would actually want to date any of these men. The most harassment came while wearing clothing with superhero images on them. A Captain America shirt I own lights up men's faces, be it at the mall, walking down the street, or at the fish counter. But, I don't want that attention. I want to be a person who likes superheroes.

Once, when I was fourteen, I was helping to set up a booth at the county fair for the store where my mother worked. I wore my Wonder Woman shirt, because I liked Wonder Woman. A man stopped me to explain Wonder Woman to me in a tedious conversation, but I was polite because not being polite could end badly. I thought that was the end of it, but he called the store more than once to "inquire about the young woman in the Wonder Woman shirt." He wanted to bring me a gift. I was fourteen. He was an adult — I didn't wear that shirt after that.

Onto *Elektra*, which is the point of this. *Elektra* is the first Marvel movie to be made about a

woman, but it is rarely mentioned in the conversation. Captain Marvel is often considered to be the first Marvel super-woman with her own movie, but no, unfortunately enough, it was *Elektra*.

Twelve movies based around Marvel Properties came out between 2000 and 2008 that were not part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). I grew up on these films, because they were what was available. I would watch them on Saturday afternoons with my dad, and even though most of them were of a lower quality, I loved them.

The early twelve Marvel films were my film education. From these films, I learned about the hero's journey, how color makes a film more exciting, and how style can make a bad movie better. These movies taught me to love movies in a way that others had not. I love these films, even with all of their faults and silliness. It's easy to appreciate a great movie like *Citizen Kane*, but it takes time to see the joy in *Spiderman 3*. It was not a great education, but it gave me the ability to look at things critically—because the majority of them suck.

Elektra was born from one

the worst atrocities of the pre-MCU era -- *Daredevil*. *Daredevil* is the worst film possibly ever made. It is so bad. It begins with the completely serious lines, "They say that your whole life flashes before your eyes when you die. And it's true, even for a blind man." It declines in quality from there. *Elektra* is the only bright spot in this film—besides a young John Favreau. She is a slightly interesting character, and she can fight well. Unfortunately, she dies at the end of the film. That is all the matters about *Daredevil*.

The reviews for *Daredevil* were bad, but they were good enough to make a spin-off film centered on Jenifer Garner as *Elektra*. She was raised from the dead to become an assassin and fight an ancient evil. Along the way she becomes a mother figure to a teenage girl (woman = mother), falls in "love" with the girl's dad, and obsesses over her own mother's death. This is all I can explain about the plot, because it is nonsensical. It reaches a point where it descends into complete drivel. I have seen this movie at least seven times and it is still hard to understand. It is bad, but it is still better than *Daredevil*.

I watched *Elektra*, like

many films on a Saturday afternoon. I sat on the floor of the living room with my sketchbooks and art supplies strewn. My dad fell asleep halfway through the film and left me to watch it alone. I didn't hate it yet back then, because I so badly wanted to like it.

The reviews were not as kind to the film as I was. In fact, they were cruel. A review by the still working David Edelstein includes the line: "I'm bound to say that I see the allure (of Jennifer Garner). That face is really strange—long and fish-lipped, with different planes going at different angles. She's like a Picasso guppy. I dig her slinky dancer's torso, too; it keeps her supple in her stiffness."

He did not like the movie even if he dug Garner's torso. This is a continuing theme of reviews and critical writings about *Elektra*. Reviews were focused around Garner's looks rather than the fact it was a terrible movie. Terrible movies from this time, like *Daredevil* and *Ghost Rider* received much better reviews, even though they are equally as bad.

Elektra is a disappointing movie. *Elektra* has no personality, she dresses in mainly red leather lingerie, and her narrative revolves

around the men in her life. The camera often focuses on her body in a way that has to be intentional; often the angle is low with Garner's butt always in frame.

It was a film that I so badly want to like, but it is impossible to watch. It is plainly boring and mind-numbingly stupid. It has a copy-and-paste plot of a generic action film, but it's far worse than that. *Elektra* simply does not care. Pre-MCU films are some of my favorites, because they take so much care with the characters. Sam Raimi's *Spiderman* is a film about Peter Parker, not Spiderman. It's a completely brilliant method of making action films. *Elektra* didn't care about its main character at all, and that makes it irredeemable.

Elektra is the film that made me realize that most superhero media doesn't care about women. The reason why *Elektra* is meaningful to me is because it is the film that taught me that according to superhero media; women don't matter. They cannot be the hero, but instead the girlfriend or the girlfriend with less cool powers. They are reduced to items to possess and give away. Women often serve as plot devices rather than people.

Elektra bears no resemblance to me at twelve and me now. My life doesn't resolve around the men in my life. Of my many flaws, absolutely none of them are cute or useful. When I go out to fight supernatural assassins, I don't wear red lingerie. As a kid, you want characters that you can relate to. The women in superhero movies towered over me with their grand romances, high heels, and perfectly made-up faces. Perfect women, like these women, exist I'm sure. That's not the issue here, the issue is that Elektra is an ideal. She isn't a person.

Elektra is a film that has no legacy except for its sins. They are repeated again and again even if things are better than they used to be. Marvel takes the stance that having women in films means that they have solved sexism and everyone can go home. What people ignore is the fact that only one of these characters actually had their own film, and most of them only had small roles. Even the best the Marvel of women like *Wanda + Vision* and Peggy Carter are banished to television or streaming.

The legacy of Elektra is Black Widow, who I wish I loved. She's appeared in every Avengers

movie and yet, I cannot remember her first name. Black Widow and Elektra are nearly the same even with their years difference. Black Widow isn't allowed to grow. Her big plot beat is a romance that is ignored in later films. She fights and moves beautifully, but she has no real narrative weight. Black Widow's film existence is inconsequential, just like Elektra.

I think about Elektra whenever I watch the newest superhero movie. Elektra is a ghost. Look - you can see her in the faces of the superheroines as they go about their business of having no real plot lines, speaking their three lines, and making memorable entrances only to be forgotten by the next film. The history of my relationship with superheroes is a history of disappointment, but like a fool, I still hope for the next movie. When theaters open again, I'm going to be at that theater opening day hopeful that this is the one. It's like a curse; I won't be released from Elektra's because she haunts me.

Until then, I'll be here watching comic book media, like a capped crusader.



I REVEL IN THE PROSPECT THAT ACROSS SUCH AN EXTENSIVE WORLD, ONE SMALL BREATH HAS THE POWER TO CHANGE EVERYTHING, ONE SMALL WAVE OFF THE COAST CAN ALTER THE COURSE OF UNIVERSAL BALANCE, AND ONE SMALL BRUSH STROKE CAN AMELIORATE THE WOTS OF A DIFFICULT MOMENT IN TIME. COURAGE AND FORTITUDE WILL PREVAIL, SIZE BEARS NO IMPORTANCE.

Born Blue: Fortitude Page
Bridgette Goss '23

I Thought You Should Know

Michaela Ellison-Davidson '23

Second Place, Fiction

1981

You asked me once why we cannot all be artists and I told you that some people are only meant to be half of a whole. But I lied. I knew that when you asked I would lie to you. I lied to you because it felt more realistic, like something a man would say to a woman to sooth her inexplicable examination of him, and I'd come to the odd satisfaction of liking you, and maybe saying what I did would make us feel better about the situation- the underlying emotions that clouded our judgments when I left for New York and you for Rome.

Years ago I read your novel. The one that you'd written about the writer and the painter. I had walked past a bookstore and seen it displayed behind the window, shelved next to that year's debuts, and I recognized your name printed at the jacket's bottom. You always said you would write a novel and for a moment I allowed myself to feel immensely proud of you. I almost didn't want to read your work, turning each page as if I was

violating a private part of yourself I didn't deserve to touch. But I read it anyway.

I think of you now, again, while I stare out this window. There is a car parked below me and it's lights flash bright against the shallow street puddles. People stand around a convenience store, speaking, smoking and I imagine them as vagabond pedestrians in an Edward Hopper painting their desolate loneliness outlined by a blinking cityscape of life.

I go to my desk and take out your novel, mold my hand over the black and white cover- the photograph of the girl at the end of a long boating dock, her feet gently grazing the rings of the water below. I wonder about all the people who have read through its contents, who have been changed. And I remember our last day in Naples, when I'd boarded my plane and left you at the gate. In the end we had simply said goodbye- a casual see you again soon as people do when they are nothing more than strangers who'd met briefly and now wish

to move on.

Christopher Wren, when visiting Paris and spotting Bernini's sketching for the East Facade of the Louvre, put into words what I have never been able to. For what we were, Daisy, I had only time to copy it in my fancy and memory. That would make for a wonderful story, but you're the writer and I'm the painter.

...

It is snowing in the Hudson Valley, the kind of snow that shuts down the entire city, you know. You always preferred the summertime, the hot cobblestone sidewalks of Vienna; Roman sunshine on hotel verandas; nature's swimming pools. It was a different kind of summer that year, something that could erase the memory of winter and its white devastation. I sold the painting to the art museum. The artwork I'd done of you. I thought you should know.

I think of this now, wonder if this makes me a bad person, but you wrote a book about me. Didn't you? I suppose this makes us even.

...

I was in New England last month, at the middle of the term, and I saw a magnolia tree- it reminded me of you- with its blush-

ing pink color you used to like in my art. These were the things that I would think of during my afternoon lull, when office hours were quiet, when no student longed for my help on the history of contemporary art.

There was something bizarre about teaching so far from the city, being so far from my son who was older now and independent and making art at a profound college with poets and sculptors and tennis players.

Elliot would call on the occasion that he was free or he knew I was worried after weeks of his silence. One day, while it poured outside of the classroom windows, I spoke with him on the telephone about his upcoming studio assignment- the art block on his mind, and the inability he seemed to have when it came to making friends.

"Well, you see, Dad," he said after a while. "You know how I'm coming home for Thanksgiving?"

"I know," I replied. We still had the apartment in New York City and it wouldn't be more than two weeks before I saw him. "Don't tell me you've changed your mind?"

Elliot laughed, a painful

laugh I knew was forced and would only lead to something borderline criminal.

"I-" he took a long time to continue. "I really need to stay and finish my assignment for the gallery. I'll be staying with someone though, so don't get worried or anything."

"Elliot-"

"No, I know," he said, "I'm sorry and I miss you, but this is important."

I knew it was important. I'd forgotten what it was like to be lost in a work of art, to focus solely on painting and nothing else.

Elliot was bolder than me, more confident, more understanding of contemporary tastes and change. When he showed me his art I couldn't help but long for the passion he held, wishing that I could have had such a talent at the age of twenty.

As a parent, you never envy your kid, never see them as better or less than yourself. I wanted for him all that I could never have, but I was still selfish, I still wanted my son home.

"Who are you staying with?" I asked after what felt like a significant passing of time- just enough to assure him of my dis-

pleasure, but also my undeniable support for his artistic endeavors.

"Oh, a friend of mine."

"Does this friend of yours have a name?"

Silence. Then: "Yes, his name is Laurence Harper, but I just call him Laurie." "Laurie?"

"Laurie, dad. He is a real person. I'm not making this up."

"Is he there?" I asked, watching the rain hit the tops of cars and wash over into puddles. A few of my students saw me and waved, and I waited for my son to answer me.

"Dad," he said, "No, well, yes. Just stop."

"Put him on the phone Elliot."

"You are honestly insane." There was a long pause and a shuffle of sounds, voices whispering in the background.

"Hi, Mr. Taylor," said Laurence Harper.

Elliot took back the phone. "He's real. He's alive. He's going to be a lawyer. I'll talk with you later. You know what, I'll be home for Thanksgiving. Don't worry about it. We'll talk then."

And, without warning, my son hung up on me.

...

Elliot is on the sofa eating a sandwich and I watch him almost carefully. I can't explain why I do this and I force myself to stop. Laurie, the boy he was supposed to be staying with, is sitting in an arm-chair. He is older than Elliot, but I can tell he's never shaved before. The dark skin on his face is clear; smooth. He is dressed impeccably and I know the sweater Elliot is wearing is actually his.

I can tell Laurie is uncomfortable- we don't know each other- but as usual, Elliot is unfazed. "Have you called your mother?" I ask my son.

He sets down his sandwich and wipes at his mouth with his sleeve. "I will," he says and I give him a look. "I will." He repeats. "You know how it is. I'll go see mom and Frank will be all, go cut some wood Elliot, let's go fishing Elliot, you dress like a bum and smell like the interior of a bar bathroom Elliot."

Frank is Freya's husband- Elliot's stepfather.

"What does Frank do?" asks Laurie and by the way the two of them stare at the other I can tell they've attempted this conversation before.

"He's a police officer in

Clarkstown," says Elliot, "He thinks I have no potential."

Elliot leaves the room with his empty plate and I'm left with Laurie. It's such a bizarre feeling, the need to know who he is and his influence on Elliot.

"You're studying law?" I ask and I almost laugh at the question; it's unoriginality. Laurie nods. "I'm finishing up my masters in criminal justice."

At this I do laugh and maybe I startle him, because he leans forward and covers one side of his mouth with his hand.

"I'm sorry," I say and he says, "I know. Elliot and I make for odd friends." "And yet orange and blue go together."

...

Elliot and I drive out to Conney Island the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. We don't say much. I know that he believes the silence will prevent any conversation he doesn't want to have. Sometimes I can admit that I don't know him as well anymore. Sometimes I can't.

"You're cooking tomorrow?" asks Elliot and I tap my hand against the wheel. "You're funny, El. You must get your humor from your mother."

"From Frank," he replies.

He tells me a little about his fall semester, his words rushing out of him in nervous segments.

There was a girl, but that didn't work out (too clingy). A failed math exam which was twenty percent of his semester grade (he'd cried and moved on). New ideas about his art (he thinks he is mediocre). He smokes a little too much now (I warn him of the health effects and he starts laughing, says I'm a hypocrite, and that he could be doing lines of cocaine).

"So you and Laurie?" I ask.

He makes a face. "Seriously? That's really uncool of you to assume something like that." "Oh, my bad."

"Yeah, but no, we are dating."

I tap five fingers against the steering wheel. "Is he aware of this?"

I mean it as a joke, but Elliot frowns, fumbling with his shirt sleeves. "I'd say so. Considering—" "Well, alright," I say, "That's nice, Elliot."

He's mostly unhappy with school. He's always been unhappy with school. He isn't a scholar, he isn't a planner, he's a mess like I was back then. I'm reminded of the intoxicating fear that I'd felt before

leaving for college in the city. The appeal of being away from home and my step father and the chance to study art in a way I'd never had before. I wanted to find myself.

Everyone thinks they'll find themselves in college, but it only prepares you for later.

Elliot and I meet Fitz by the boardwalk. He's holding his easel under an arm and Elliot runs over to hug him. I do think- there is my dear friend and my son.

They walk ahead and speak about things I can't hear. We paint the river and the people and the air is warm for November. I take off my shoes and stand in the sand. Fitz joins me and we watch Elliot squint towards the sun and contour the edges of a landscape with his brush.

"Did you take my advice?" Fitz asks (he is a clinical psychologist). "Are you writing the letters?"

"Yes."

"To who? God?"

"No," I say, "To Daisy."

"You can call her, you know," says Fitz, "You're dying. She'd like to know that." ...

It was the summer of 1965 and I was in the backseat of a taxi cab, the sky bright, reflecting off the windowpanes and the sunglasses-

es of the passenger I would split the fair with. He leaned out the open window, hair caught up in the wind, eyes watering a little. He was American. So was I. Besides this we had nothing in common.

He faced me, measuring my appearance through his tinted shades and said: "What is it you do? Where is it you're going?"

I was going to Palermo, Sicily, a town I'd never even heard of until two weeks prior when my brother Dexter had called. He was an American studying in Italy, a philosophical theologian, whatever that was anyway.

"I paint," I told my companion.

"Do you actually?"

I smiled despite my displeasure. I had been half of myself for so long I couldn't remember there was kindness, beauty even, in curious conversation.

"Last time I checked," I replied. "You know, always and forever."

The driver parked the car, pulled up right to your house, and there was Dexter with his arms wide open, his feet bare on the dirt road. "There he is," he called out, leaning through the open cab window before I could reach for the

door. "The prodigal painter."

I pushed the door open, stepping out and taking him by the shoulders. "How I've missed your annoying face."

I started to walk up the road, turning to take in the landscape, the blue lake. It was so undeniably beautiful, the prettiest thing I'd seen all day, and then there you were. You stood out on the balcony, one hand over your eyes, the summer sun drowning you in light. You dropped the hand to your side- shyness in your smile- and I felt it. I'm going to fall in love with you, I thought, I don't want to, but I will.

...

From the moment I met you I wanted to know you. This was my immediate realization and my preferred form of explanation when it came to you. I remember it was only a week after I had arrived when I called back home and my friend Florence answered. We kept our conversation light, mentioning nothing relatively important, and eventually I asked her to put Fitz on the phone.

"You don't want to talk with me?" she asked.

"It isn't that," I said, "These things I need to talk about-"

"Is it a girl, darling?" interrupted Florence. "Because I'm much better at those things than my brother. He's so clinical—"

"Florence."

"Alright fine," she said. I caught her quick sigh. "I'll put him on. Be safe." When Fitz answered he asked me what was so wrong that Florence had to wake him. "It's a girl," I said.

"The horror."

"Fitz."

I took a seat on the chair your mother had brought over for me. It was getting late, the sky dark and humid, and I knew I wouldn't be asleep for another few hours.

"So tell me," said Fitz,

"What's happened?"

"She's very fond of art."

"Oh, no. Your weakness."

"Do you treat your patients with such indignity?"

He was silent. Then: "You like her?"

I nodded, knowing he couldn't see me. The action felt easier than words. "Nothing will come of it," I replied. "I don't want anything to come of it."

And yet it did.

...

Do you remember the summer night we had been invit-

ed to that party? We had danced together holding each other in the finely sculpted living room with the marble countertops and expensive hardwood imported from a country such as Spain. You were barefoot and I was drunk and somehow we had found ourselves alone and happy and so insanely fond of one another, that the thought of the song ending and your body being torn away from mine was enough to kill me. You were a horrible dancer, so was I, but somehow our rhythm felt perfectly articulated, unexplainably euphoric.

That night, as I was introduced to person after person, I would catch your gaze from across the room and you would smile, shrug in your sympathetic way, and wind your body through others and take my hand discreetly, conjuring up an excuse to end my conversations with models and bank tellers.

I didn't mind the conversations, the questions about my art and why I painted, what I painted. It was so easy to get lost in the moment of the room. To drink too much and eat too much and laugh too loudly, but in a gallant, sophisticated way men tend to do when they are intoxicated, but also educated.

The house- as big as it was- was cramped and hot. A lady had broken her fake pearl necklace and beads rolled around the hardwood. Half full glasses accompanied every table space, every ledge, nook, corner. People went outside to smoke, they came back inside still smoking, still holding a refilled crystal glass.

That was the night we kissed one another- kissed with startling tenderness, something that turned wild- like kids who had never kissed before and never wished to stop now that they had.

...

I've been trying to find the right place to begin my recollection of our time in Rome. I could start anywhere. Such as the moment I looked over my shoulder on the crowded bus and found you looking up at me with such passion, such undeniable admiration in your eyes. Or maybe when you took my hand as we walked around the Colosseum in the Piazza del Colosseo.

I could even start with the moments after Rome- the taxi cab to Naples, the argument you got into with the driver about his fair between the Napoli Centrale station and our hotel where we found a woman sleeping. You said

her bare, dirty feet reminded you of Caravaggio's Death of the Virgin, the small detail which offended numerous critics when he'd first displayed the painting.

"This is where Caravaggio spent his exile," you said, because when you were nervous you started reciting history and I listened. I listened because you were happy and I wanted to remember that happiness later on.

Perhaps even later than that. The afternoon where we met a vendor with a tattoo you said you hated because it was too fascist.

"But it's about Julius Caesar," I countered and you glared at me, never wishing to be proven wrong. You explained it and we bickered. We bickered because I was so insanely in love with you and I couldn't tell you I loved you, because speaking it out loud seemed harder than never loving you at all.

It isn't in Naples that I wish to begin, but Rome: The Galleria Borghese.

Scipione Borghese's collection is magnificent, it's breathtaking. The Villa itself encompasses everything that is Baroque and classical art. We went during the time of day when Italy was shut

down, the time right after lunch when shops were closed.

"The Apollo and Daphne is his masterpiece," you said, "But his David is a true work of art. It's my favorite."

As a young boy I studied marble sculpture in textbooks. I knew the vague details of Bernini- I am a professor of the arts- but hearing it from you, seeing you react to every portrait and painting, it changed me. I began to feel what you felt and in that came a more subtle appreciation for intimate details.

We stood in front of The David, his twisted torso and towering body on a pedestal. There was a sense of dynamic movement, the interaction between viewer and sculpture. We were all alone in the room and you took a step forward, reaching out a hand, reaching out your heart to something inanimate, but so very much alive. You were mimicking his facial expression, you had no idea you were doing it, but your lips were sucked in between your teeth and your eyes were squinted and there was so much beautiful concentration on your face.

You turned to me, said: "It is as if they know they are rendered

with beauty, alluding to the provocative desire to fall for something that can never be real."

For a long time I was too stunned to reply. "It is an inexplicable emotion, isn't it?" I ended up asking.

"Perhaps," you said, "defining it would ruin the appeal."

You and I sat in the Basilica of San Clemente on one of the last days we were in Rome. I didn't think much about it at the time besides the admiration I had for the frescos on the ceiling or the comfort of your warm body pressed against mine.

I like to believe that I'm an atheist, Daisy, I like to believe that when I die I am gone and when I am alive I am universally insignificant, but as we sat in San Clemente, I believed in more than I ever had.

"I want to live in Rome, Atticus," you said, "It's here that I want to be." And I knew then that I wasn't included in these dreams, the dreams you've had since childhood.

"You'll be happy here," I replied. "I can see it. I can see you here."

"You think?"

"I know."

You told me a poem that night on the Roman veranda. There is a line from that poem that you did not say and later, when I returned to New York, I read the line over and again until it was memorized. "So close that your hand upon my chest is mine, so close that your eyes close with my dreams."

Slowly, carefully, I undressed you that night. Leading you back into the room, your hand loose within my grip and your body shadowed with light from the open windows. As you kissed me, as you touched me, I forced myself to memorize you, to walk the thin line between sorrow and sweetness, to drag out each and every breath with you.

We laid close to one another and you asked me to check my watch, to tell you the time and it was maybe three in the morning.

You said: "I'm so tired."

And I whispered. "Go to sleep. I'll be right here."

...

I have mentioned to you my departure from Naples. The last time we saw one another that summer was then. I looked down at you, your face flushed pink at the cheeks, your eyes glossy and

brown, your hair curled softly at the temple- I had never in my life seen anyone as beautiful as yourself. Not until that moment. Never after. I reached out and held the side of your face; my pulse beating against your skin.

It was when I boarded my flight that I began to miss you. Although it came in small, transient waves, ones that were reminded to me from ordinary things throughout the flight. There had been a young lady seated across from me. She couldn't have been anymore than my age, and occasionally she would glance up from her magazine and hope for my eye contact. We never seemed to stare at the other at the exact moment and I was grateful. I wouldn't have been able to bear it. She was wondering why I wasn't flirting with her, coming to her own conclusions that wouldn't particularly flatter me, but I wanted to step off the plane and find you. It was useless, those thoughts, and when the woman asked where I was from in New York, I told her and when she asked why I had been in Italy, I lied. I missed you and I wished I didn't.

...

When I returned to New

York late that night I went to the small laundromat across from my building, the sign out front faded a fluorescent blue, and I was grateful to find it empty except for an old woman sitting in one of the plastic chairs behind the dryers. Her face was shadowed with the traffic lights and the persistent presence of the moon. It was almost dream-like, the atmosphere of the laundromat. I thought vaguely of Edward Hopper's painting, *The Automat*, with its subsequent loneliness and single woman drinking a coffee in a cylinder of limelight. We spoke hardly at all for the remainder of my clothes washing, but there was a comfort to her casual pleasantries. I told her I was a painter, showed her a photograph of my son I kept in my wallet, and listened as she talked about her daughter who was a nurse over in Vietnam. One tends to forget the necessity of speaking with strangers. We tend to be revolted by them, when in truth, they offer us the most honesty.

Of all the times we had seen one another after that first summer, we never spoke of who we were back then. You moved to Rome, wrote your novels, lived in happiness. I don't like to think that this was my fault, but it was. I'd

failed with Elliot's mother, and the thought of failing you- I couldn't risk the chance. You were too dear to me.

"How long have we been friends?" you asked.

We were drinking tea. I had just gotten a divorce.

"Almost eighteen years."

"Not very long," you said.

"No," I said, "Not long at all."

1982

Elliot is in my studio. He is on the floor, his arms stretched over his eyes and I stand over him, kicking him lightly with the top of my foot.

He removes one arm and reveals his open eyes. I get down on the floor with him and cross my legs. Elliot smooths hair back from his face.

"Mom says you have cancer."

I stare at him for a moment, letting the pulse in my throat die down. I don't answer right away and Elliot says, "Do you?" and I've never wanted to walk away from him before, but now I do. I want to walk away and pretend to be fine.

"I do," I say, and I'm so horrifically angry at his mother for

telling him. "I'm sorry."

Elliot pushes himself up and wraps his arms around his knees. "Why are you sorry? he asks and I know it's rhetorical. I know he is trying, despite himself, to be kind. "Were you ever going to tell me?"

I shake my head and he nods. We talk for a while about it, the disease; the time leftover. He tells me I am too young and I don't know what to say. Eventually we open the window in the studio and sit on the ledge, watching the city come to life over the course of an afternoon. He puts two fingers to his lips and I light a cigarette, passing it between us.

"You'll still come to my exhibition tonight, won't you?" he asks and I nod. ...

I stand in front of my son's art and feel, for a moment, an undeniable amount of pride for who he is and what he has accomplished. My own regret, my own career, my own success no longer concerns me. I am simply a man standing close to a canvas that has been painted by a boy I raised and loved and feared for every morning that I wake up. I see not his art, but his passions, his soul, his love.

It is Laurie who finds me

before Elliot does. He tucks his hands in his back pockets and smiles at what we both saw- the portrait Elliot has done of him.

"He's very good," says Laurie, "Not that I have to say it, but I'll say it anyway. He's a good artist, Atticus."

I nod and place a hand on his shoulder. There is a moment when we simply look at one another and it is in that moment that I consider Laurie as important as Elliot in my life. It isn't the same sort of importance, but it is a level of companionship and love that one could never return from. He is, undeniably, an outstretched definition of a son and I know then that Elliot will never care for anyone as he does Laurie and you for me is the same.

Within this admission there is no sentimentality, no affection. I am not speaking of divine love. I love you selflessly- in earnest- if I held the words I would say them.

For so long I considered love to be romantic. That love itself was not platonic, that it was resigned for two people who were supposed to be more. I was wrong. What had begun as infatuation turned into love. What was love was nothing more than needing you

in my life, needing that connection not in an intimate, physical way, but an emotional one. It was the casual mention of something reminding me of you. It was falling asleep on your shoulder. It was a song or a joke or a line of literature that made me ache for your hand once more.

Some people are a lesson, not a love, and others are undefinable.

...

I was in London when I saw you last.

I'd gone to a bookstore to purchase a French language manual for Fitz, who was honeymooning in Monti Carlo come spring. It was supposed to be a joke. He always butchered his languages.

Walking into the shop I saw you, your body bent over a stack of books, one arm around a man I had never seen before. I recognized you immediately. You never did change—only your hair shorter, your eyes needing glasses. You were wearing a wool sweater and my footsteps were loud as I approached.

You turned in my direction, placing down the novel you held, and smiled. "I've missed you," you said, "Very much."

...

I am going home today. A

drive from New England to New York City which has never failed to be peaceful. I feel like myself again, not sick, and I wait for your visit with the knowledge that I ceaselessly adore you. That after all this time, I always will.

You've seen the portrait I did of you in the art museum. I have read all your novels.

I think in the morning I will paint. I don't know what yet, but when I write to you again, I will say.



CBGB
Nora Nucullaj '22

43 Earle Street

Bridgette Goss '23

There is beautiful house
Built by eternity— aventurine walls
And gold chandeliers. This was a house that
was large
And ripe with the life that coursed through its
curious construction.

In the room where children once played,
dwelled mirth and imagination.
Heroes were grown here, planted and free:
thrumming with breath
and good hope.

Today that same house is a
trifling size
and smothers its host
in a blanket of death. I cannot return
to the room where we grew,
for it now, is the place that took me from
You.



Untitled
Elizabeth Roberts '24

A Woman that is a Black and a Black that is a Woman

D'Avion Middleton '22

Second Place, Nonfiction

I am a person, a normal one, with ten fingers and toes respectively. My body works as it should, my mind is as scattered as the next college student and my morals are sound. I am a person but I am a woman so in the eyes of many I am automatically lesser but I'm smart enough to be in college so maybe I'm worth a little more than an average woman. I lose points again, however, when my skin color comes into play because I am then a black woman. I get the side eye whether I am in sweats or Chanel. A second glance lets wandering eyes know I have the "nice" curls so maybe I'm mixed. Less black, more worth. There's a lingering disappointment when I give non-black people my background but it's something that I have gotten used to over time. At the risk of sounding like any other middle-class young adult I love my family but life has been unkind and they deserve more.

My grandparents on both sides lived their lives like so many

other black-Americans, which is in poverty and working odd jobs or life-long but low paying careers to give their children the best possible lives. They were happy to a point but stuck and my parents both rose up, however, and settled in the middle-class content enough with their lives. You could say where they are now is a key part in what functionalism is and how it works. They're (my mother mostly) the stepping stone that floats in the uncomfortably in-between everything. Too high for the lower-class but far enough so that you don't brush the upperclass. So while my family resides in the middle-class we can struggle as much as those who have less and splurge like those who have more, depending on the day that is.

While financial status is very prominent in everyones lives I would like to focus on race and gender inequality from here. I will speak about how private finances take part but one of the most important aspects of every single

person is only at the surface level. As mentioned I identify as two things; black and a woman. Neither of these words are overly interesting on their own but when put into the identifying phrase "black woman" there is much more to unpack. My status value as a black woman stems from what someone sees when I walk into a room. I work ten times harder than the white woman next to me because I am put under a microscope. I code switch as easily as I breathe because I refuse to be stereotyped because of the color of my skin.

At nineteen I have already done several job interviews, all of which I am proud of but I look back at often and analyze myself. If a friend or family member saw me in that interview they'd know that wasn't myself but they would also understand the need to assimilate in a world governed by people who prosecute you if you "act too black" or point it out when you "act too white" but there must be a common ground. I believe that it is very possible to have harmonious relationships between races and ethnicities but there is so much hate and anti-black culture rooted within so many that it is not an easy feat. However, I will say I do

have an easier start than most people of color because I did grow up in more diverse areas, I can get my bearings quickly when faced with new groups or places and come off as likable and honest. Like every other black woman, however, I have a "know my place" mentality which is only useful in some instances because no matter how well I conduct myself discrimination by others is sometimes unavoidable.

In the cases of both my mother and her mother they are black women but my mother is about three to five shades lighter than me and on some days my grandmother could have passed as a white woman in certain lighting. This is where discrimination is seen in the black community under the label of colorism or shadeism; two words that my computer is attempting to autocorrect because most people avoid them so actively that they aren't heard enough to be added to the dictionary. My mother's lighter skin and straightened hair give her more face-value because her skin and more European-leaning features make her more attractive in the eyes of the masses, people are more prone to listen to and take orders from her.

This must have also been true for my grandmothers career seeing as she was a popular student counselor and English teacher during a time in which things like discrimination, prejudice, and segregation were prominent. So while colorism is dangerous it can be used to the advantage of black women if the opportunity is presented to them.

To go more in depth on the dangers of not just colorism but prejudice and segregation I will give the example given to me by my mother when I was young. In the late 70s my mother was just approaching her teenage years, civil rights had shook the states to their cores and my grandfather — who had always liked the finer things in life — took my mother and uncle to a restaurant in the south to give them a chance to branch out in their pallets and tastes while giving them a piece of his own home. Before they could even sit down, however, they were promptly told that the restaurant “didn’t serve blacks” and were told to leave. My grandfather was always well mannered, well dressed, and well liked by anyone he met, and not to mention he was also secure in his space of lower middle class at the time. Though when it boils down

to it none of this matters when history and culture is rooted in discrimination and hate, he could have been the richest black man in the world but it didn’t matter because they didn’t severe blacks.

Now that I have touched on what it means to be black I will speak on what it means to be a woman. Yes, I am young but I am not naïve or sheltered, I am aware that the real world hates a woman in power no matter how many womanists stand up and say men and women are equal. For instance, I used the term womanist because feminism is rooted solely in the progression of white women and not all women while womanism encompasses women of all colors. However progressive either of these groups neither of them do much good in the grand scheme of things because society isn’t set up in a way that women can achieve their goals without working twice as hard as their male counterparts. Arguments to this statement can be directed at the fact that women and men are not paid the same amount for the exact same job and while this seems to be on its way out no efforts have been made by the government to make this a federally mandated change. As a

woman looking to go into the film industry things like this scare me. I can win an Academy Award just like any other man but Hollywood paid me less for my script because of a sex that I cannot choose. Like being black, being a woman has an unfair advantage from birth. I am less than in the eyes of many even if black women are on the up and up.

Though I am not white I do believe that I have more life chances than most that I have been grateful for. I went to a catholic high school and I am able to attend a private four-year institution and study subjects which I truly love and enjoy. My quality of life has improved because I had parents and grandparents that strived to be more than their skin color, their sex, and their situations. They have passes that drive onto me and one day I hope to pass that on to children of my own. I believe that life chances are given to you but they also have much to do with your mindset and how you want to live your life. To be given a life chance is to have a head start that many don't get and if you don't use them to their fullest potential then they are wasted so as I fight against the odds I will take each and every life

chance I am given and give them my all. I will take these cards that I have been dealt and transform them into a winning hand.



Chrysalis
Miranda Schindler '22
First Place, Art

A Book for Wear

Yvette Bien-Aime '24

I'm confused.
It seems that I always choose
The ones who want to peruse
For mere moments

Scanning through my potential like a book for sale
My heart has become a library
With too many withdrawals

The readers never have any intent
To read through or return me
I'm meant to sit on a shelf and collect dust
An impulsive buy
Based on a thought that they must
Try out my binding and smell my pages

I guess we both have in common that uncertainty within us all rages
And yet still I cling to shelves like an unwanted lover,
Hoping that their minds change before the summer

That their desire for me comes crashing back in
Like a wave against sand
A beloved sin

But in this waiting my pages begin to mold
Sitting on rusting shelves
No love,
Ice cold

I go through my own pages and try to edit myself out
Hoping that one day maybe
My edits will help me make it out.



Dreamy Ice Creamy
Bernie Siebel '23

A List of My Childhood Nightmares

Nicole Iuzzolino '22

When lying in bed, I swiftly enter my dream state.
It does not take long
for the creatures to slither out and make their way,
into the real world.

In my dream state, I am trapped.
My legs are tied with an invisible rope.
My neck is frozen in a brace I cannot see.
My body feels cemented to the bed,
but my eyes are like wild stallions as they move across my dark bedroom.

My bedroom door creaks open,
and the bells I have hanging on the knob let off a soft jingle.
Someone,
or something,
has made their presence known.

What will it be tonight?
A man with no torso clawing his way to my bed,
His nails dragging across the wood floor,
trying so desperately to reach me,
to reach my torso?

Will it be a ghostly woman
gliding into the darkness with her feet just above the floor?
A glow follows her,
appearing to be an angel in disguise.
Her dress appears to be in stained tatters as she comes closer.
The eyes are replaced with black, pea sized holes.
Her skin is peeling, and dirt spills from her mouth as the woman screams.

Will it be the man in black?
The man that has no face,
no neck, arms, legs or body.
nothing except his hands clearly curling around a knife.
The faceless man taunts me,
waving the knife up and down my stiff body.
My mind screams for somebody,
But no one comes and disarms the man of the night.

Suddenly,
my body snaps back, and my muscles are no longer tense.
I sit straight up, and I see my door is closed once more.
It's over.

Still, sleep does not come easy.
I lay and think about these nightmares.
Why do they plague me?
Why must I be victim to their torment?
Yet, they come night after night
Warning me of the darkness,
that hides on the other side of the light.

This darkness lurks around corners,
just waiting to grasp its hands on the innocent.
On the ones who least expect it,
on the ones who don't deserve it,
and on the ones who don't see it.



Daijia
Lidya Sezer '24
Second Place, Art

Metal Fishes (A Weird Dream I Had)

Jesse Vengen '22

“Desmond, you have to stop it. Not *everything* ends in joining the Navy. Not knowing what path you're on doesn't mean there is no path.”

Desmond tightened his fists. *Of course* everything ends in the Navy. Of course, though, that was all he had ever known.

Don't worry, all the days bleed into one another, eventually. It'll happen for you too. When?

Different for everyone. Could be months before it all starts to go numb. You'll be like me and the others soon enough. Don't worry.

Desmond couldn't remember one *day* down there in the barracks, but there were a few things that he could. His first conversation on board with one of the more seasoned officers whose eyes seemed to be seeing without ever *seeing* much at all—he could remember that. The feeling of helplessness and getting rid of bits of bent-up energy through shaking feet and balled fists through the night—he could remember that.

And his father's old eyes, so unreadable, watching him walk down the driveway to fulfill this sort of new family tradition of spending half your youth on sea. Except Desmond would be under, watching radars and scrubbing barracks while his father shot down Nazi ships for years to earn those wrinkles beneath his eyes and to earn his disappointment in his only son.

That officer was right—it all bled into one. Hyper-exhaustion and routine turned it all to mush. But since then, not one morning has gone by when he hasn't spent part of the day in those barracks, waiting for Carol to tap him on the shoulder and tell him it was all just a bad dream.

“I am *not* going to let Stephen make the same mistakes I did. For Christ's sake, Carol, he's throwing his college away.”

“He needs time. He's been through something traumatic.”

“Like what? He won't talk to me.”

“I don't know. But it's his

business.”

“You want to know traumatic? Try spending your life in a metal fish. We’ve given him every opportunity, and he acts like he’d *rather* be 3,000 feet below sea.”

“*Stop* it with the Navy talk, you know I don’t like it.”

~

“I have a life too, Stephen.”

“Is this not important to you?”

“I like Matty too, but I’m just trying to be realistic.”

“What are you trying to say, Jack?”

“I can’t spend my nights exploring homeless shelters or checking every motel in every town. I have a life too.”

“He’s still out there. *I’m* just being realistic. Make a turn up ahead... No, the other way.”

“I’m taking you home.”

“What?”

“It’s been months.”

“We’re *not* done looking.”

“I know you lost someone, but you have to let go. He’s not out there somewhere.” “You don’t know what it’s like to lose someone like that.”

“I’ve lost you, Stephen. When am I going to get my friend back?”

~

Jack was his only friend with a car. Jack was his only friend really, besides Matty. But he liked to think that Matty was still his friend, and if that was the case he knew Matty would want his friend to find him.

Maybe it made Stephen a bad friend, but Stephen didn’t believe those things Matty told him that one night over the phone. He didn’t believe he was on top of the parking garage. He didn’t believe that he had been mixing pills with liquor. He didn’t believe some random man had followed him up there and forced Matty to act like he was just looking for his keys or something. Matty had always been a sappy over-dramatic, and he always got attention for it. Maybe, Matty just wanted a little more.

That’s why he didn’t believe Matty when Matty said he couldn’t get over her. Matty was just a sappy over-dramatic. Stephen didn’t believe anyone could care about someone that much, really.

But Stephen cared now. God, did it hurt to care, especially when it was too late. He had taken it upon himself to take the spring semester of his junior year off. He didn’t care about it then. He had

stopped writing short stories and playing music because he didn't care about those things either. He didn't care that he was changing into something stale. He didn't care when old friends moved away or he missed out on an opportunity to ask a pretty girl out. He figured if he didn't care quite enough about anything, then life would be easiest that way.

That's why caring was so hard to deal with now. He was new to it.

~

Caring had driven Stephen to the streets with a flashlight. He went to Ryker Lake where him and Matty used to sneak beers beneath the bridge before Stephen's father found out and put a lock on the outside of his door at night. Nothing there. He went to their old middle school where their donut marks still reigned supreme before Stephen's mother found out and sold his car. He checked random corners and even under stones or in bushes like it was all some type of joke: hope oftentimes exists in imagination; reality just laughs as it dies. That's what his mother would say, hoping Desmond would step off the submarine for enough time to be a husband and a father.

Sparta was cold in the late-fall, and Stephen's shoes were soaked through to his socks. He'd walk until it exhausted him enough to go home just to sleep and it would be really late so he could sleep longer the next day and see less sunlight by the time he couldn't sleep anymore. Then he'd take to the streets. He liked Sparta in the dark: the long, forest-encrusted roads and bits of town here and there. It was nice—way too open and wide in the light.

~

He wasn't sad, he wasn't depressed. *Depressed*, his father would laugh because who could be depressed who hadn't spent his youth in a metal fish keeping yourself up all night because you can't stop your hand from shaking?

He wasn't sappy and melodramatic like Matty. He just couldn't sit still, nevertheless sit at home, or be in one place for longer than an hour before he found himself headed someplace new. The lock on his door was put in place every night, but there was no lock on his window, and the screened-in porch was just the right height to climb up and down. He'd be back before sunrise each morning.

Stephen's hand couldn't stop

shaking. Maybe it was in anxious anticipation of something his hope had dreamed up: some night he walks into a motel or park and sees Matty's curly black hair and green eyes.

He'd laugh the thought off himself, and keep going, telling himself it wasn't just because he couldn't stand the silence: at least the sound of his feet beat it back.

~

Matty had never gone to college. Maybe, that was what started it. His life was Sophia and working at the CVS in town they used to lift drinks from as kids. Sophia, the goody-two-shoes that wore sundresses and hairbands and was a star cheerleader. Matty was always kind of out there, like the lead singer of an alternative rock group: it was one of the weirdest relationships Stephen had ever seen, but she made him feel at peace, maybe even a little too much. Matty always let off that he was damaged, by the way he drooped his hair and the black clothes he wore and the way he sat in silence in the back of the lunchroom until Stephen made him snap out of it. Maybe Sophia was actually damaged. Maybe, that made them need each other in some weird way.

Matty would call Stephen sometimes, but it was so much drama with Sophia— she said he was growing boring but Matty said he hadn't changed one bit since high school. Stephen hated drama, but he'd listen to Matty complain until complaining got to be too much to listen to and Stephen wouldn't pick up sometimes and he'd just tell Matty he was studying or writing and actually doing things with his life because he couldn't stand being at home any longer. Stephen wondered if he would have found life at home somewhat peaceful if he had a Sophia of his own, but he doubted it. He wasn't like Matty, after all.

~

It was funny, in all honesty, that Stephen still thought they were friends: Stephen had told Matty off one night, telling Matty he always liked to make it seem he was damaged but that Matty had never been through anything. Stephen said he missed the kid he used to sneak beers with under the Ryker bridge, but that that kid had chosen depression like it was an outfit and that depression made him stay home while Stephen went off to college to do something with his life. Stephen told Matty he didn't know what it meant to suffer, and he told him to

try spending his youth stuck in a metal fish. Matty was confused by the comment but understood the message. That garage-top phone call was the first after months of silence.

Stephen found Sophia one night. She had dropped out of college recently, she told him, and she was still figuring out how to tell her hard-ass father. Stephen thought she looked like a dried-up sunflower: that twirling, golden-locked cheerleader that brightened Matty's side now infected with that same illness that must have sat inside of Matty.

"Come with me," she took Stephen by the hand and led him to her father's car. She had hotwired it earlier and was using it to go to her friend's house for secret club meetings, the purpose of which she wouldn't say. Her father wouldn't find out until a couple days from now when he got home from one of those business trips he was always on.

Stephen let her take him there, even though parties and meeting strangers were not things he often looked forward to doing. She was still sweet under it all, just like she was the few times Stephen talked to her in high school. She had

just stopped being sweet to herself, that was all, and Stephen could recognize in her eyes the same dullness she must have recognized in his.

Emily's house had a cool basement: lamps with colored bulbs switched in and a dirty pair of couches and a lot of weed and half-full bottles, but it wasn't much of a party. Sophia began with a joint and washed down the taste with an old beer. A kid with half a face tattoo sat in the corner, rocking because of the tabs Sophia said he had been on for the last hour. Emily sat in the corner like it wasn't her house and she just smoked, releasing deep breaths.

"Make yourself at home, Stephen." He managed to catch the beer bottle Sophia had tossed. "What are you doing home from college anyways?"

"I took off."

"Why's that? *Hey*, Emily, check on Beanie back there, alright? He's been nodding his head since we've gotten here."

Emily wasn't listening. She relaxed into her seat as the drag she had just took flowed through her veins and kept her hands from shaking too much.

"I don't know, just grew kind of tired of it," he rubbed the

dust off one of the cushions and sat down and rubbed his knees.

"You? You were always a teacher's pet."

"My parents were very strict about me getting good grades and getting into the best college."

"And?"

"Fordham. Full ride."

"Must be nice."

"Why'd you drop out?"

"Why not?"

"Seems like a flimsy reason to base something so serious off of."

She rolled her eyes. "College is *not* serious, at least, not anymore. Nothing is that serious now, after all."

"What are you talking about? You don't care about your future? What about a career, stocks, 401k's? Sustainability?"

"Gosh, you still sound like such a nerd," she laughed a bit. "I never knew why you and Matty were such good friends."

"I can barely remember, either."

"Want a hit? Something harder to drink?"

"Oh," a nervous laugh escaped, "I don't smoke, or drink." She gave him a curious, slightly-concerned look. After all, she

knew he used to drink with Matty beneath the bridge during their high school years. "My dad would kill me. I could get problems like he did and fail my classes and have to enlist in the navy. I think addiction runs in our genes, maybe."

"*But*, you took a semester off? Doesn't bode well for mommy and daddy's little valedictorian."

"I had some personal problems."

Her ear perked. "Matty?"

"Have you seen him?" He realized he had just shouted the question. Emily shielded her face.

"What's wrong with you? You're like a robot, all stiff and scared and your knees must be raw with how much you're rubbing them."

Stephen told her everything: Matty's pills and partying and the garage-top and the last phone call and his one-man search since Jack had given up. He was surprised by his own voice, so free and flowing like clear water. His words were always ice chunks cracking in his throat. His emotional life was buried behind straight A's and scholarships and he'd never have anything to be upset about as long as he never had to step foot in a metal fish and see the sunlight die away.

Stephen asked Sophia how she expected to get away with hot-wiring the car, with dropping out, with the drugs and drinking. She said it didn't matter. What about your mom? Stephen asked her. Sophia just laughed.

Beanie seemed like he would have been nice. *He's sweet, just shy and always kind of loopy.* Apparently, LSD had fried his brain bad. Emily was scared by her own shadow. *Paranoid and ridden with insecurities beyond belief,* Sophia clued Stephen in. Stephen asked why she was hanging out with them. *They understand what I'm doing,* she said. *What's that?* He asked. *You wouldn't get it.*

~
"I'm not going to hurt you," he reached out to shake Emily's hand. She looked up from her seat and just touched the tip of her ever-shaking pinkie to his before going back into her shell. *Strange,* he thought.

Beanie was looking at Stephen as he nodded, but not really looking at anything at all. "Come with us tomorrow?"

"Where?"

"To find Matty. If anyone would know where he is, it's me. I'm going to help you. We'll all

go."

~

The hot-wired car passed the Pennsylvania border. Stephen asked how she knew where Matty was after all these years. She told him based on how it sounded, Matty was in the same place her mother had been in for the last twelve years.

It was beginning to become clear, maybe, unlike the road ahead, a fattening layer of mist sweeping over the highway.

"We all have things that cause us to suffer. What's yours?" she asked as she drove. The question caught Stephen off-guard. Everything about the last 24 hours had.

"You first."

"Beanie's been homeless since he was young. Found him scrounging around behind the CVS. Parents left him at a home but he ran. Emily has bruises she won't say where came from, but she won't go home. She rents that basement from an old boyfriend who charges her highly. She sits in that seat all day, waiting for her money to run dry."

"What is this secret club you're all in? Seems like you all need help."

"You did too. That's why I

brought you along.”

“Where are we going?”

“To see Matty. Isn’t that what’ll fix things for you? Isn’t that what makes you stale? Your guilt and regret that eats you up?”

“I *don’t* have guilt or regret, and nothing’s eating me up. It’s just what a friend would do.”

“Do you really care about Matty that much?”

“What? Of course I do!”

“He never really seemed to think so. You sure you’re chasing Matty? Not running from other problems? Not distracting yourself from other things that need to be addressed?”

“I don’t have problems. I can’t have problems. What’s so bad about my life, except how ungrateful I am for my parent’s funding my college career? I’ve never had to suffer like my father has. And what have you been through? You’re just like Matty. You act like you’re all damaged for attention. You all are,” he looked back. Beanie was nodding and Emily looked out the window, biting her finger-skin where the nails had been bitten off.

“What is everyone’s issue? Where are we going?”

“To see Matty.”

“I don’t believe you. How

do you know where to find him? Why would you want to find him? You’re the one who broke his heart.”

“*Pfft*, because I didn’t want to stay in my hometown and work at that CVS with him for the rest of my life? Or worse, end up like my father? Late-nights and business trips to keep his mind off the fight he knows he’s losing? I’m sorry, you might think it’s cowardly, but I’m not spending the rest of my life *fighting*. That’s no life at all.”

“I don’t understand. At least, I don’t think I do.”

“Haven’t you gotten it already? We’re going to see Matty. You know, better than everyone else, as the person who’s searched high and low for him, you know the only place he could possibly be at this point.”

“You’re serious? But, how?”

“I can pull over. It’s not too late to get out.”

Stephen thought about Sophia’s mother, her mother and Matty being together, and Sophia’s laugh as though it all wasn’t a big deal.

“You know, I had to play a part too, for my dad’s sake. My mother was a cheerleader. She was always bright and outgoing. I had to

do it for his sake. But then I decided to take my life into my own hands. I decided to break free."

It was becoming clear. The road ahead was losing itself to a dense fog.

"Beanie is breaking free from addiction, and from the two blurry faces of the parents he sees when he's tripping. Emily is breaking free from fear. What do you want to break free from? Of course," she giggled, "I can already guess."

Stephen thought about the lock outside his door and his first and only car his mother sold. He thought about praying for straight A's so his parents would be proud of him and he thought about all the nights chasing a degree he never cared much about. He thought about staleness, staleness that made him not care about all the friends he never made or the girls he never asked out. He never cared about the friends he had let slip away like sand through his fingers. He thought about Matty, and he thought that maybe Matty wasn't just faking it for attention. Stephen thought that maybe he envied Matty now. Matty was, if Sophia was right, free.

"I can stop this car. I can let

you out."

Stephen buckled his seat-belt.

Sophia nodded. "No one's ever really lost. Only when you give up hope of ever seeing them again do they really go away."

The road was lost in white, and the car began shaking. Sophia lost control. Stephen held her shoulder tight. Emily screamed. Beanie closed his eyes and stopped nodding for a moment. As the car ran up against the railing, Stephen thought about the metal fish, and he thought about breaking through its metal skin and swimming to the surface where he could finally breathe and float freely in the current. He thought about doing what Desmond could never, what Matty had done, and what the others in the car were prepared to do.

When Stephen opened his eyes, everyone was getting out of the car and walking towards something in the mist. A heavy snow was coming down now, even though it was mid-spring, and the snow fell but never piled on the ground. As Stephen followed, the hazy silhouettes of others emerged, all headed towards a large neon sign breaking through the mist, reading "Discount Store".

“What are we doing here?”

“Matty works in there. They all do. I like to think my mom is a manager. She deserves it. She was always so sweet. I can’t believe I can hear her voice again.” Stephen took a large gulp.

There were a hundred others in the snow, and they all condensed into a line, eagerly heading into the store. Sophia hopped across when it was her turn. There was a sweet voice echoing out of the store’s speakers that tickled Stephen’s ear. And Beanie nodded one last time and stepped through.

When it was Stephen’s turn to cross, someone was waiting for him in the crowd. There were dark curls tickling his forehead and bright green eyes. He stared at Stephen from the hazy white light in the store, from amongst the faces of lost souls filling its aisles.

It couldn’t be. Matty was still alive. Stephen knew it couldn’t be any other way. In no way could he have let his only real friend ever get to that point.

“Come with me,” he grabbed Emily’s shoulder, waiting impatiently in line behind him. Emily did as she was told.

Stephen walked back through the darkening mist until he

found a car that looked like Sophia’s.

“Where’s the car?” he shouted. Emily covered her face. “Emily? Where is Sophia’s car?”

“That is the car,” she pointed weakly at it. Something wasn’t right. The car in front of him was mangled and bent. The airbags were deflating and the wheels had popped. “Sophia tried to tell you. You didn’t want to get out.”

“Stop covering your face, I’m not going to hurt you.”

“I know, but I can’t get rid of this fear. Until now. Sophia showed us how. It’s really not that hard. It’s just like the sting of a needle.” She stopped covering her face. Her hands were still: at peace. “I hate needles, but it’s already over, just like that. You didn’t even realize.”

“What?”

“We just need to cross into the store.”

“What are you running from? Why this?”

“You chose it too. Ask yourself.”

The mist was darkening. Time was running out.

“What happens if we don’t go in?”

“We wake back up. It was like being asleep.”

“What about the others?”

“I’m happy for them.”

Stephen stared at the car.

“What is this place?”

“Where we break free. Are you coming? We’re so close.”

He thought about metal fishes. He wondered if it was better to be fighting out of one or out of one and not fighting at all.

“I’m scared,” Stephen said.

“We don’t have to be for long.”

The snow was falling heavier. Emily was a speaking shadow. The store’s white, neon sign lorded over the parking lot.

“Please stay with me, Emily.”

Bus to Interlaken

Jesse Vengen '22

I have loved the idea of a good old fashioned road trip since I was a child; a young, bobbing kid in my parents' back seat, reading comics and playing on my DS long past when the sun had run its course but our rattling little car hadn't. But my fascination with such an idea is not like Paul Theroux's in his tales of *The Great Railway Bazaar*. Whereas Theroux's enthrallment with the open rail had to do with the possibility to be met with every aspect and walk of life within a rumbling enclosure of class and comfort- the babbling Russian short stories, the delicate meals and perhaps a deep sleep on the unrolling countryside- the reasons for which the thought of travel perks my ears like that of a wolf's is entirely different. I could go without the intermittent meals and the occasional conversation; in fact, any human interaction past the polite gesture becomes merely a distraction. For my 5-star review of any bus or train, I need only a seat I can sink into and a view. It doesn't need to be much.

The Italian countryside was shaped like a slightly crumpled blanket, pierced gently here and there with lights. My wandering mind could create stories out of the small details: a light on a mountain- solitary, beating through the heavy branches and leaves. It's orange and warm, unlike the head-throbbing floodlights that pass on the other side of the highway and threaten to interrupt my stupor. Through the window I catch a quick glimpse of a red carpet, a small table on the left, and a doorway that leads into a kitchen with a chair pulled out. Who sat there earlier that afternoon? Was there another chair pulled out just beyond my view? Or maybe a bunch of little chairs? How was his meal? Did he put enough time into it to taste something? Or was it a quick bite to eat, the labor of a chore? Can he pass the nights comfortably in this little shelter? Or does he wish he was elsewhere? Even if he knows not where that is? Is this light a sanctuary or a warning of his passing time, that little table,

that one pulled out chair the inevitable dimensions of his tomb?

We passed suddenly through a brightly lit tunnel. My attention was forced from the pulled out chair and into the bus to escape the blinding lights. I reset myself, a little disturbed even with the thoughts my mind had entertained. The bus lulled along the highway, except for the occasional bump that shook the water bottles, sending little ripples across their tops that caught bits of the tunnel light in their unfolding. A clock at the front blatantly declared the time in a red light, as though scared we would forget it. Midnight. I checked the time on my phone as though in disbelief. Had it been two hours already? I grew nauseous at the thought of it. Only six hours left until we arrive in Interlaken, Switzerland. My time was passing quicker than I thought, this bus rolling clockwise against a counterclockwise rolling night. The stars were passing above me. It will be morning soon. I returned to the window to fix my attention upon new sights, letting the constant rumbling hum of the bus levitate me in a suspended equilibrium, letting the images be canvases to soak up the

dulled colors of my imagination. I was still as I was in motion, in between travel and repose, secluded in my two feet of leg room. I turned up the music on my headphones.

Another student emerged from the back of the bus to use the bathroom in the middle. When he finished, he struck up a conversation with the girls sitting across from me. I could smell the 1-euro boxed cooking wine in his breath. Suddenly he turned with a hungry look in his eye to the rest of the passengers, trying to make out which ones were still awake. "Man, I just want to talk to everyone here. All these people!" he announced. My skin shriveled into itself as I tried to disappear from his view. After a few moments he passed by my seat and sat down next to a couple of girls and began asking what school they go to. "What are you going to do in Interlaken? I signed up for the snowboarding trip!" I turned the music up even louder, partly annoyed, partly envious of his stupid demeanor, of the conversation. I checked the time on my phone. 12:15. Great, 15 minutes wasted.

We stopped painfully for a 45-minute break at a gas

station somewhere around the 4-hour mark. I couldn't tell if it was a good or bad thing that the stop had delivered me from the precipice of a deep sleep. I could feel it pulling at me as I made my way through the raging crowd of students whose names I didn't know, all jumping over each other to purchase disgustingly large bottles filled with popcorn or strange versions of American foods. We finally returned to the bus and I to my window. Another few hours passed. The mountains grew larger, their peaks contesting the heavenly heights of the early morning sky. It was still dark out. 3 AM flashed on the sign at the front. It wasn't until the humming bus made its way down a valley to a flat little stretch of land in between two of the most precipitous mountainsides I had ever seen that my attention was grabbed once more. As we slomed down the path my gaze became fixed on a light that seemed so out of place. Up the insurmountable walls of the far mountainside, miles from the little town below that looked like the North Pole from The Polar Express, though a bit smaller, sat a little light so high up it could have been just another star. Though

it let nothing be known but its own presence, I began to picture a little cottage behind it. A bedroom, with one window facing the tree line in the back and another one allowing a simmer of the stars in. I imagined a night in that bed. The seclusion, the height, and the numbness of the deepest sleep imaginable. My eyes grew heavy, but I had not yet drunk my fill. My mind raced, thinking about my stay in this most remote hotel for one. The noiselessness, no people- the light of the town only present if I so choose to cast the line of my gaze down that way- the darkness, save the stars checking up on me, and the light out front announcing proudly that this is my little sliver on this boundless continent. It brought a great ease to my mind, a profound unawareness of anything else. For a moment I had reached equilibrium, and my problems were not there. The homesickness, the isolation, the culture shock of living in a strange and foreign place the unfamiliar language, the labyrinthine roads, my internet provider cutting out on me, my junior housemates who never left a clean plate in the wake of their late night cooking sessions-

the friends I had left behind, the friends I was nervous I could not make- the times I missed- the times that had not happened, and that would not happen for at least three months. I sat and stared on, this one heavenly light the sole of my existence, the idea of that deep sleep the most comfortable thought in the universe. But so cruel is my mind. I began to think: what of the man who enjoys such sleep in the morning? When the sun uncovers the night and sleeplessness draws him from his bed, what will he do? Who will he talk to? The silence, the walls, the windows that seemed such a sanctuary in the night now an enclosure during the day when the sun feels the need to expose every inch of our surroundings; to creep into every corner, nook, and cranny. Not even this cottage is spared. I leaned back into the curve of my seat and peered around the bus. Is this man alone? Is he home, or trying desperately to make one? Why would someone choose such a closed off location? I finally conceded to my heavy eyelids. But before I allowed the remaining hour of my bus trip to be swallowed in sleep I shuffled through a playlist on my phone.

The first two chords of a song began to play. *Somebody Else*, The 1975. The cadence rose in its somber, lullaby hum as high pierces of guitars and synths cut through the top. It was a staple of David's summer playlist. I could see the cool summer nights on Ortleby Beach, Jack, David and I standing in the sand and watching the sun set, listening to the eternal crashing of the waves- beers in our hands, open Hawaiian shirts swaying in the breezes lifting off the ocean's rippling surface. A tiny speaker shoved into a bowl to raise its volume- this song playing, us swaying, the stars coming out. Suddenly I look over and see my roommate from college to the right of me. He has never been to David's shore house with us- that was a plan of the summer, when we would introduce him to the lifestyle we had accustomed ourselves to. I walk over to him and in the drunken buzz of camaradery I put my arm around him. Jack joins in and we start moving to the music in a way that imitates a lazy Rocket's dance, swinging back and forth dramatically and raising our legs, right and left and right and left as smiles overtake our faces and David downs his

Rolling Rocks. I am harbored in their arms, my bare feet anchored in the crisp grasp of the sand. I am in motion, feeling the familiar beat of the music swell within and around me. I have reached equilibrium.

As a voice comes over the loudspeaker and instructs us to begin preparing our bags, I wish for nothing more than to be under those stars. A different night maybe, a different place. For now, the lakes are growing more numerous. They reflect the lights of small towns on the far banks, making them appear doubled in size. The Swiss Alps are sleeping like stone giants in the dark blue of the horizon, but look, the sun is beginning to rise. 5:45 flashes across the front of the bus.

We come to a stop in a blood-orange Interlaken, and I am forced to face the reality that I must now get off the bus. As I haul my luggage to the Youth Hostel in the biting early morning cold, I take in my surroundings. The mountain peaks are dipped in snow. The sun rises in the V-shape of the end of the valley where the two ridge bases meet. My mind and body are still in two places as I check into my room.

Look

Brittney Sicotte '21

Look up. Skyscrapers once an unbelievable thought. Reaching up to the sky to touch the long discolored clouds of smog. What a sight! What a beauty! Oh to fly up there intertwining through the smog and the birds falling from the carbon monoxide poisoning. Oh how they dwindle through the dead branches of the tree on their descent to rot into nothing but more dust to sit atop the dehydrated soil.

To lay outside and listen to the
diminishing buzzing

of the bees.

To close

your eyes

and breathe in the

refreshing odors of burned

oil and pumping gasoline. And to hear

the thrilling music of trees getting cleared and

animal homes annihilated. Dance around the carcasses

of them who died and hope for a glimpse of the colorless world

that progressively comes your way. Enjoy and look forward to the fast

omnipresent diminishing life that is ruling over every part of you. Just look up!



Fallen Angel
Tara "Baz" Murnin '21

All Four Seasons

Carolann Adipietro '23

North,

a brisk winter snow storm covers the ground much like a big, white blanket
People scurrying home to their families yearning to sip burning hot cocoa around a
burning hot fire
Pure, gentle snowflakes fall from heaven and land on a lucky infant's nose
A lone snowman guards the block as children play

South,

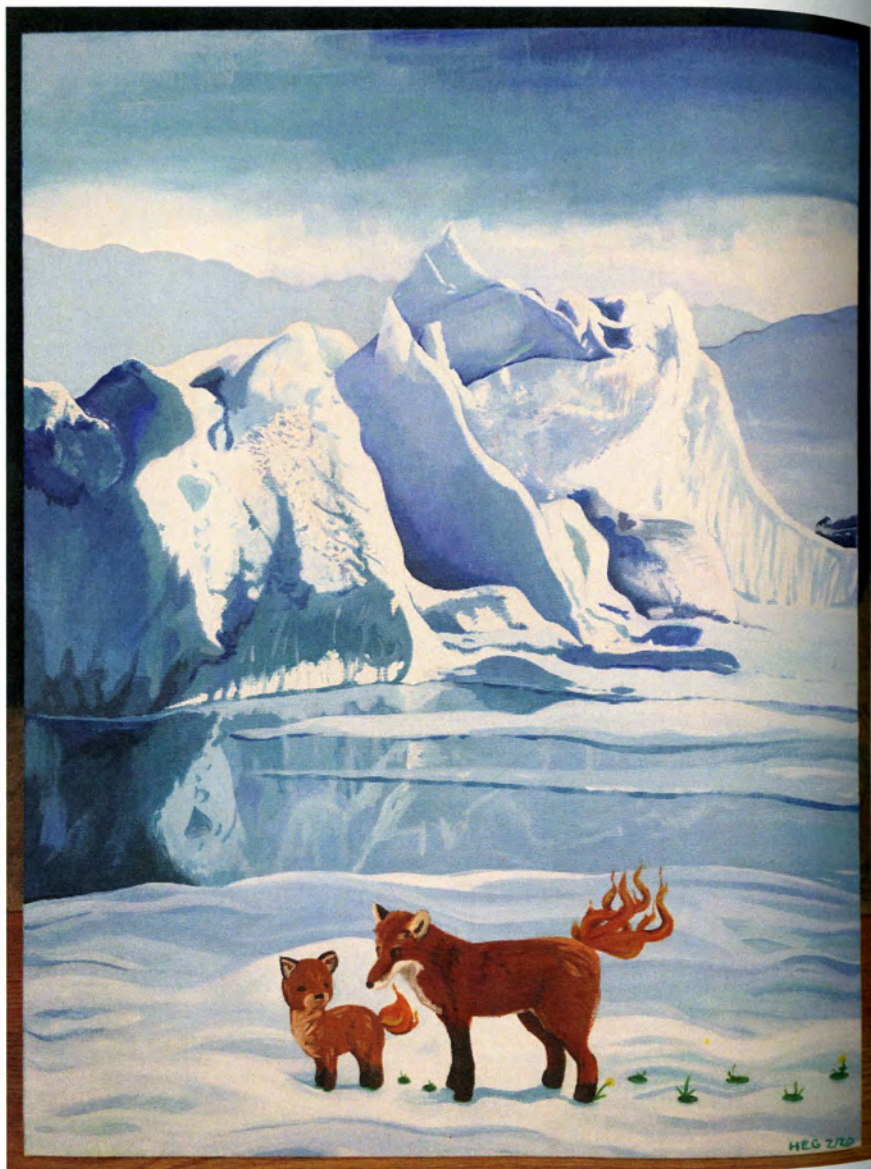
a bright summer sun beaming down on all living creatures- casting an extra ray of light
on the people I love
Warm sand pressed against one's body
Fresh, sweet watermelon after the salty ocean
A pink, ombre summer sunset shared amongst two lovers

East,

colorful spring flowers emerge from the soil, gasping for air
A yellow dog chases a butterfly through a maze of thorns
Birds soar through the air, free of gravity and outside forces that bound us to the ground
Pollen swarms the air, clogging the nose of an unwilling man

West,

a westward autumn breeze sweeps through the trees, rustling each branch as it passes
a toddler cries at an unfriendly scarecrow lurking within the woods
the sun sets at four, stealing every drop of sunlight as it goes
dead leaves cover the ground almost like a blanket, but a little different this time



Fire Foxes in the Tundra
Hannah Gnibus '24

A Night in the Rain

Sara Rabinowitz '24

I hear her echoing calls
Pounding at the walls inside my head
Yet so light a tap on my window

Stay inside, little one
She warns me as she descends down
Do not come to meet me in the world

Yet there is a lingering behind her voice
She does not mean all that she says
I know she hides secrets in her cold quick taps

Onto the earth is where my feet find their way
My skin as bare as the day I was formed
Exposed to her mercy, I emerge

You come against my warnings
She pelts me with her icy words
I feel the pleasure from her piercing knives

Bow to me, she says
Her voice now a thunder that consumes me
Sink into the earth beneath you and bow your head

I do as I am told
My knees meeting the soaked earth beneath
And for a moment, my head is lowered

The world is quiet, despite her taps
And my breath
Barely audible against the world

Yet to me, never have I heard a clearer sound
The quiet hush of each breath is a whisper against my ear
You are alive, you are alive

I count each droplet that lands against my neck
Exposed as my head rests between my hands
My spine arched through my back

What a scene it must have been
Had I been born a painter I would have captured the moment
And named it so, the Submission of All

I do not wish to anger her
As I raise my head to face hers
Repeating to myself what my breath has promised me

I force my eyes open
For an even greater disrespect it would be
To try to blind myself from what she is

I would never wish to defy her
I lift my head to give her more of me
More than she would ask for

She descends down upon me with a force only seen by the gods
And my last thought before I am revealed to her true and raw form
I am submission, yet I am free



Flight of the Harpies
Tara "Baz" Murnin '21

Mirror

Alyssa Borelli '24

Sometimes, I wished I was human like Erica. Don't get me wrong, I was stunning. I had a gorgeous silver frame with engravings of delicate flowers and constricting vines, and I was large and oval-shaped, the best shape for a mirror. I was always polished to perfection with no smudges, no scratches of any kind. My glass was a sheet of clarity, a smooth surface of water for Erica to gaze at. I was flawless. Erica made sure I was.

Even though I prettier than Erica ever would be, the idea of her leaving this bedroom and showing herself off to the world stung me with jealousy. I was meant for more than just hanging on a wall.

I hung over a spotless white vanity, on a dull blue wall. I hated that dull blue, it was so depressing. The vanity contained every type of makeup imaginable. Foundation, eyeliner, eyeshadow, and hundreds of lipsticks. The bright pink lip gloss was my favorite.

All the furniture in the bedroom was pure white. The nightstand, the closet, even the organized desk. Erica had made sure

that every pencil, paper, or book on the desk was in their proper place. She ordered the utensils around like soldiers, cursing at them if they ever fell to the floor. The only painting in the room was one of hydrangeas. The pretty flowers had been colored in with that dull blue. That repulsive, depressing blue. The bedspread was also white. Erica made the bed every morning. She would obsess over it, and it had to be entirely smooth before she could leave.

Erica was obsessed with everything. She would spend hours vacuuming the fluffy carpet, and she dusted the furniture with powerful concentration. Sometimes I'd catch her washing her hands in the attached bathroom. She would scrub her fingers until they bled.

The air tasted of expensive perfume, cleaning supplies, and nail polish. It smelled like fake roses. The air was fake. It was all fake, Erica included. But, I was real. I told the truth. I knew that room like a book. A book I've read a million times. Nothing changed. The only excitement I got was

when Erica looked at me.
She'd stare at me for hours.
Before she went to work, before
she went to bed. She'd practice
smiling in front of me even with
tears sprinkling her eyelids. Other
times, her stick like arms would
swing around her as she would
smooth out the wrinkles in her
dress.

*You could straighten that
dress for hours and that still
wouldn't fix your figure,* I tried to
say to her, though I knew she never
answered. *No one can hide that
much fat.* Erica pressed her hand to
her stomach, and sucked in a breath
to flatten it. I'd huffed a laugh.

*Feel better now? You're thin
for one second, congrats. Good
luck breathing.* Erica's brows
scrunched in disapproval, and she
bit her lip down hard before rushing
to the bathroom. The sound
of puking echoed throughout the
bedroom. She did this everyday. I
became used to our routine until
she broke it one day. She brought
home a man. It was the first person
besides Erica who had ever entered
this lonely bedroom.

He was gorgeous with mahogany hair and a pair of sapphire eyes that shimmered in the dim lamplight. He was a few inches

taller than Erica and his broad chest tightened as he drew closer to her, yet he still carried himself with strength and confidence. His pearly teeth showed a grin that stretched across his jawline. So that was what real joy looked like. I would've liked a painting of him to hang up in this sullen room.

Erica led him towards the bed with light giggles. It was a foreign sound that made me cringe but the man joined her with a chuckle of his own.

Then, his calloused hand touched the crook of Erica's neck as he drew her into a kiss. I suddenly felt a burning feeling cascade down my frame. There it was again. That jealousy that often cut into me.

They began to undress, and I caught Erica glimpse at me to scan herself in my reflection. I hissed at her, *How could he want you? Do you see the width of your thighs? The flatness of your chest? Your body, your face...*

She turned away from me and began kissing the man again. She ignored me the rest of the night.

Months passed and the man would visit often. Erica threw up less now, and barely looked at

me. I was constantly irritated with her, astounded at the silent treatment she gave me. That didn't stop me from shouting the occasional criticism at her. I was merely trying to help her, trying to have her look her best, but that didn't interest her much anymore. I felt my control over Erica slipping away.

Then suddenly one night, she studied me very intently. She wore a short, fitted dress that was the color of pine needles. Why was she wearing such a fancy dress? Maybe she was going on another date.

You're going to wear that?
I asked her. *You look like a trash bag.*

Using her giant heavy brush, Erica pulled her scarlet hair up into a tight bun. Not a hair out of place. I've told her a thousand times to dye her hair a different color. Maybe blonde. Anything but that fiery red.

She moved on to makeup. She applied a light brown eyeshadow and outlined her amber eyes with black eyeliner. Then, she put on a pound of mascara.

Stop, that is way too much mascara!

Ignoring me, Erica stroked blush onto her lunar skin. She

really needed a tan. Last but not least, she painted her lips with ruby lipstick.

Use the pink one! I screamed at her.

Erica left after another ten minutes of staring at me. Later that night, I heard her enter the house, but she wasn't alone. I recognized the voice of the man, and they seemed to be in the middle of a heated conversation. I strained to hear them.

"I don't understand," Erica said. "I thought tonight was it. You brought me to the restaurant we had our first date and--"

"I'm sorry, Erica," the man returned in his deep tone. It lacked its usual sweet coating. "Though, I don't know where you got the idea of marriage. We've only been going out for a short amount of time."

"Well yes, but time doesn't mean anything when the connection's there." The desperation in her voice was disgustingly pitiful, but then the man went quiet. "There's still a connection between us, isn't there?"

"Listen, Erica, I've been thinking--"

"Woah, wait a minute--"
"I'm not sure this is going

to work out.”

Erica hesitated before answering, “Work out? How... how could you say that?! You’re being stupid!”

“This is exactly why, Erica!” the man exclaimed in reply. “You’re always criticizing people, whether it’s me or others we encounter. I feel... I feel bitter and negative when I’m with you.”

“Wow,” Erica scoffed with a dry laugh.

“I just feel like you’re trying to change me,” he argued. “Nobody’s perfect.” “It doesn’t mean you can’t try to be a better boyfriend!” Erica yelled. “Would it kill you to give me a compliment every once in a while? Just to say I’m beautiful!” Silence.

“You-you do think I’m beautiful, right?” Erica stammered

“Is that all that matters?” the man questioned defeatedly.

More silence.

“You know what Erica?” he whispered coldly. I almost didn’t hear his low voice. “You’re not beautiful. I finally realized just how ugly you really are.”

A door slammed. Erica let out a cry of shock and pain. I heard her stomp upstairs, and she stumbled into the bedroom, her hair

spilling out of her bun. The pound of mascara poured down her lunar skin.

No wonder why he said you were ugly.

Erica collapsed on the fluffy white carpet. She sobbed uncontrollably, barely gasping for breath. Her manicured nails clawed at her face.

“I am beautiful,” Erica cried to herself. “I am beautiful.” She shattered.

I told you, I said. What did you think was going to happen? He was bound to dump you once he got a look at that dress. He probably hates your hair. He probably likes blondes. It sure did take him a long time to notice how hideous you are.

Her head shot up to look at me as if she finally heard me for the first time. She collected herself off of the floor, and stood to face me.

“I am beautiful,” Erica growled at me.

No you’re not, I replied.

Suddenly, Erica grabbed the silver handle of her heavy brush, her amber eyes fueled with fury. Then before I could even think, she hurled the brush at me with all her strength. I shattered.



Gigi
Hannah Gnibus '24

Glossy Black Pools

Jesse Vengen '22

I made my way down the second floor of the Lorenzo de Medici building nestled into the back of the square. As I leapt onto the large stones of Palazzo Strozzi, I had nothing on my mind but the Advanced Italian I quiz on Wednesday. I crossed a street, not waiting for the little red man in the traffic light to turn green or checking for speeding vespas and taxi cars (they were known not to stop or slow down for pedestrians- especially tourists). In my head, the Passato Prossimo, L'Imperfetto, and Trappassato Remoto conjugations jumbled about like the spinning bowling pins of a clumsy juggler. Trying to make sense of the morning's lesson, I rounded the corner of a small church onto a slightly less busy road where a woman sat with a dog on an outstretched piece of cardboard.

My home back in New Jersey is filled with five shedding cats and two howling dogs (plus one stray who visits our front porch for food). I felt the burning sensation in my hand to reach for the anti-theft bag in my pocket with my spare

euros. Not for my unfamiliarity with the country, I might have given in. Despite the intention I had made to ignore the woman and her dog, I found myself peeking back over my shoulder.

It was an unfortunate sight, but not one uncommon for Italian alleyways and the 50,000 *senzatetti* that called them home. Hunched over into the crisscross of her legs, she peered upwards through her tattered, grey hood and held out a cup in her hand. She shook it with a weak volition, and I could hear the soft chinking of a few euros. To her right, the dog, a brown plush toy, sat without a collar or leash. My heart sunk when it looked at me with its enormous eyes. I could have tripped and fallen into those glossy black pools.

Shame snaked its way up my body, and my fingers began to tap the anti-theft bag, tucked safely in my front pocket. I almost tripped over the curb as annoyed passersby pushed past me. I slipped into their herd and crossed the street, trying not to let the scene be a dampener on my mood.

Wednesday morning came, and so did a sense of dread when I made my usual route out of Palazzo Strozzi and around the church. This time, there was no woman or dog to be seen. I walked by the spot where they had sat the Monday before. The piece of cardboard was folded carefully and tucked into the small space between a rusted electrical box and the church wall.

The next Monday, I was surprised to find the dog back in its usual spot, sitting on its cardboard home. This time, a man in a bright green jacket and with short, gelled black hair held out a cup. He shook it at people and squinted his eyes at them when they ignored him.

Wednesday came, again. Same short-haired dog, shaking in the early morning cold- a blonde haired man besides him. His wrist was weighed down with the euros filling the cup- that was the last time I took that route back to my apartment in Palazzo del Mercato Centrale.

I traveled to Bologna that Sunday with two of my house-mates to celebrate the beginning of our study abroad experience. We enjoyed paninis underneath red umbrellas and olive-green tree branches and opened dusty

windows to see views of the great piazza. I was even bold enough at points to practice my Italian with the locals we encountered.

As we hurried back to the station to make the 4:10 PM train to Prato, we turned onto a wide street full of locals, tourists, the Doctors and Arlecchinos (and, for some reason, the Disney characters) of Carnevale's trickling days. We were swept into a strange current of bustling tourists and locals- they were avoiding large circles of empty space on the road. I pushed past two men and entered one, eager to see one more interesting sight before leaving *la cucina d'Italia*. I realized that in the center of each circle was a man or woman, bound tightly in dirty quilts and bent over with their faces on the cement, as though locked in a moment of worship. Resting against the tops of their heads were little cups holding pictures of Jesus, Mary, Gabriel, and all sorts of religious figures. I listened close and heard the old man in the center of my circle praying, though, I couldn't tell what for- it was hard to hear over the locals, who raised their hands, banged their palms together, and told them to get the hell out of the road. A brave, brown haired young

man entered and dropped a coin in one of the cups. The old man looked up, interrupting himself to give a short prayer for his patron. I felt the burning in my hand beginning to come back, and my fingers tapping against my pocket, but I couldn't move. All I could think of was the shivering dog with many owners; one of whom was greed.

How do you learn to trust in charity when entrepreneurs use the worst of human suffering for monetary gain? When people use God to execute ulterior, selfish motives, it does a disservice to those who are actually in need. I looked around at the angry locals, understanding their frustration. I had been briefed by school officials and family members alike not to listen to anyone on foreign streets who asked for money. *Good tip:* many locals make use of tourists' unfamiliarity to scam them in the guise of charity. Still, are we just as guilty for using that as an excuse to ignore actual human suffering—to choose ignorance when we know our small bit of help can mean the world to someone?

Thinking back, I wish I had followed in that brave, young man's footsteps. All I could think of at that moment was a dog's small,

shivering face, glossy black pools, and a tail that never wagged. I looked down at the man's wrinkled face. I listened to his prayers. Over the shouting I could hear Brendan and Joe's voices. My roommates had clawed their way back through the crowd, sailing against the current, searching desperately for me (the train was leaving in a few minutes!). I felt my shirt pull back over my shoulder and heard Joe say, "Are you crazy? Come on, we're going to miss it!"

ARIES

Julia Kisilinsky '22

$$0^\circ \leq \lambda < 30^\circ$$

THE RAM

March 21st—April 19th

Fearlessly ferocious, a fiery force; no wonder why you are first—a true leader by default.

You are confidence; a blaze of courage that parades about a dismal district, enthusiastically encouraging all who you encounter, pushing for the profoundness that you have realized resonates inside everyone, though they may not show it.

Being the first brings forth the rebirth of the colors—so vibrant just as you are, the light—almost as brilliant as yourself, and the lives of all the beings that had drowsily dormant into the deep, dreary doze amidst the frigidly unfriendly frosts of the winter.

The sun begins anew, a new cycle of the zodiac. And it is you that is to lead us into a year of overflowing passionate optimism. Honesty, bravery, determination, and leadership capability:

these are the qualities that, when combined, create the concoction of the honorable Aries.

Admired for your devotion towards your fascinations, though you will occasionally derange these flaming passions with your aggressiveness and competitiveness.

You may be quick to grow irritably moody when faced with a situation that sets off your extremely short temper. Your lack of patience in certain scenarios ignites that inferno within your soul; pity the idiot that stands in that line of fire.

Yet when it comes to moments of confiding, supporting, and uplifting, you exude in understanding, compassion, and tenderness. This leaderability is revealed not only in large groups but at times when someone needs to be heard the most.

Do not disregard this; do not put this gift to waste; do not allow your firestorm to extinguish. Continue to courageously conduct creatures of concealed capability towards complete majesty.

Ram, may you ram this advice into your often-leveled head and engrain it into your mind.

Map of Broken Friendships

Maggie Helenek '22

North holds a dirty beige armchair
with a broken arm that girls dance upon.
North, where they see each other as lone street lamps
lighting up the darkness of the night;
snow shining in their hair like confetti.

East sits a table with initials carved into it;
gone like the snow beneath a plow
East, pulling an empty heavy cart
through a neverending crosswalk
and dodging cars and emotions on a bike.

West paints girls with cartoon faces
smiling and waving; a crowd of people
surrounding an endless performance.
West, where a river flows back and forth—sometimes nowhere:
where people and bikes have no path to walk or ride on.

South stands a lone statue; motionless,
as people travel past it without glancing.
South is a lonely food stand with no line;
where intersections lie empty and
there are too few footprints in the snow.



Icarus
Tara "Baz" Murnin '21
Third Place, Art

Brief and Never Ending

Sara Rabinowitz '24

The hand of the clock makes its way
Around the small enclosure
The tick of each passing day
Affecting my composure

I see it everywhere I go
In classrooms, homes, and stores
It stares at me as like a foe
And I stare twice as more

The pesky clock that rests upon
Each wall I seem to pass
Reminds me with each breath that's drawn
That this one may be my last

I see my future coming quick
Before my very eyes
And so with each passing tick
Time brings me closer to my demise

I cannot help but let it sink
Deep inside my mind
That as my days begin to shrink
My life will soon be left behind

But I will not sit by and waste away
A pawn in Time's sick game
I set my sights on my new found prey
And set to perfect my aim

I'll rip that damned clock from it's hook
And throw it to the ground
It's glass will shatter until I look
And see what's left to be found

The deed is done, the enemy dead
It's body shattered well
But as I go to lift my head
Something in me will not quell

This haunting feeling that will brew
Within me until I'm gone
That no matter what I try to do
Time will always persist on



Untitled
Heather Brody '22

Reagan-Bush '84

Rosemary DaCruz '21

First Place, Fiction

It was a day that seemed almost unremarkable. I stood at the counter, as the cashier scanned my items, pushing them aside without thought. Until he paused tentatively over the box of Trojans. A smile played on his lips. He was going to say something.

Please, please don't.

"Be safe. Wouldn't want that gay cancer, wouldja?"

He laughed. I laughed too. It was warm, because it was a joke, and he didn't really expect me to go and use them with a guy only moments later. My stomach twisted into knots.

All I could think about was that sickness I had kept reading about. The vomiting. The cold sweats. The sores and the lesions.

My parents.

The number so far was over 12,000.

In the car, I mulled over the words I'd just heard. I was thinking about how the world I lived in had everything against me. I was exhausted. I cried. Silently. I couldn't work up the courage to tell Johnny why. He probably already knew.

It was September 17th, 1985 in Tuskegee, Alabama.

I started thinking of telling my parents that day.

I leaned back, examining my work. My dad was some kind of bigshot executive at General Electric, somewhere pretty high up in the ranks. For his last promotion, he bought us an Apple Macintosh. These things were *crazy* expensive, and absolutely incredible to write on. I'd been the premier writer on Soviet-American relations for my university's newspaper. They kept me on board, despite the complaints of my "apologist views" towards the USSR, because I was the only one who wanted to write about it. This article was a good one though, I thought to myself, and good journalism is worth the scrutiny.

Just then, a car honked from outside. It was Johnny.

I pushed aside my mom's fliers and pamphlets, searching for a newspaper. "*MY BODY MY CHOICE*," "*PROTECT ROE*" and "*DEFEND WOMEN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE*" all looked back up at

me. Since she'd stopped working, all she did was activism and advocacy work. Maybe it's because she grew up in the 60s. She would constantly try to convince me to come along with her. *No, mom. You can drag me to church or drag me to NARAL meetings. One or the other.* I don't know, I'm not particularly passionate about abortion or anything. Doesn't matter to me. I would rather go to church.

Maybe, even if my dad wasn't okay with it, she would be. I thought of just telling her, at first.

I scanned through today's paper, quickly looking for an article. I stopped at one and quickly read through. "The president... White House press conference... AIDs...insisted he had been funding research...refused further comment." Now *this* was something Johnny and I could really get riled up over. I dogeared the page and rushed out the door.

Johnny had his cowboy boots coolly kicked up on the dashboard. An LL Cool J song hummed slowly from the speakers. He had a cigarette hanging out from his mouth, hair cowlicked against his forehead, and today's newspaper in his hands. His eyes scanned the *Politics* section. Just like me, he

was searching for something for us to get angry about together as he drove me to class.

Despite my friends' warnings, I brought up politics on our first date. I started to talk about an article I wrote: *Thaw in the Cold War - Problems with the Reagan Doctrine.* He laughed and asked me "Ain't you afraid talkin' bout *that* on the *first date* will make me think you're a commie?" I shrugged and said if he thought that, then I guess things wouldn't work.

He found that funny too. And he didn't think I was a communist.

We talked and talked. We just never stopped talking, and I never got tired of listening.

"Fuckin' Reagan man! You see this shit?" Johnny tossed the newspaper towards me. "He'll barely even utter the word AIDS!"

"Can you quiet down?" I said in hushed whispers, my eyes darting towards the windows. "She can probably hear us."

He chuckled. Our 1984 election signs were still scattered across the lawn. He knew what he was doing. It was always difficult to shut him up about whatever scandal was in the news that day. I reminded him: there's a time and place and

in front of my house is not it. On more than one occasion, my parents had overheard and grilled me about who I was associating myself with. They'd already started accusing me of being "a damned Mondale voter."

Well, I *did* vote for Walter Mondale, but they didn't need to know that.

I waited to speak until we left, and drove past the familiar green sign with *Bethlehem Drive* in big white letters. "Okay. Yeah. We have the same exact article. Fuck Ronald Reagan."

He just laughed. "If ya can't even tell your parents you're a liberal, how's you supposed to tell em' you're with me?"

I shrugged. "Easy. I don't."

Johnny shook his head, taking another long drag from a Newport 100. "Can't hide me from em' forever, Chris. They're gonna know you like dick someday."

Sure, maybe someday. But today wasn't that day.

It was October 23rd, 1985. We'd been fighting that day.

About what? I don't even remember. Probably something stupid, like about school, my parents, or anything else just as mundane. Could've even been a political de-

bate, an argument about the middle east if I were to guess. All I know for sure was I finally decided that I had to break the tense silence.

"You know what? Forget it. How about we pull over at this 7/11? I'll go pick us up some candy and some chips. We can hang in your dorm and watch *The Dukes of Hazzard*."

Johnny smirked. "Grab rubbers too, then. A lil' bit of make up sex will make my Chris smile again, yeah?"

Make up sex. The words lingered in the air between us. Johnny's grey eyes pierced right into my heart. An image of our amalgamation of bare skin and sweat replaced whatever irritation I'd felt at the argument before. I felt my heart skip a beat, anxious to taste the smoke on his lips.

Even now, this scene plays over and over in my head.

I grabbed two cokes, Doritos, and Trojans, and meandered over to the counter. The cashier paused over the box of condoms before scanning them.

Please, please don't.

"Be safe. Wouldn't want that gay cancer, wouldja?"

He laughed. I laughed.

I thought about AIDs again.

I felt scared.

And I felt sick.

And I was angry, so fucking
angry.

We didn't have sex that
night.

My parents found something I wrote on the computer. I didn't know they even *knew* how to use a computer, much less navigate the MacWrite program. I tried to explain it away, talking about it just as an assignment for school. But they weren't buying it. That night, at dinner, they really started really laying into me this time about my political views.

"You can't be writing things like this, what will people think?" and "What are you thinking?" and "I don't understand where you got these ideas from."

The tension in my head finally broke me. I shot back at them "I don't know what business you have in what I think or who I am!"

They went silent.

Finally, my mom said "I don't know who that boy is that you've been hanging out with, but it's time that we finally meet him."

I'd been dreading hearing that for a really long time.

It was November 19th,
1985.

In my driveway, I worked up the courage to continue to exist.

I was astutely aware of everything happening in this moment - I don't know why. Maybe because this was a moment where everything changed and my inner psyche recognized it was something I *should* remember. The sounds of Sugar Hill Gang and Johnny's engine murmured quietly in my ears. The smell of a freshly smoked cigarette filled my nostrils. The moment felt so intimate, we felt so close, despite being fully exposed in front of my house. I guess I can't really explain it; there was so much on my mind, but with him, I felt carefree and safe. With just me and him, it always felt like the rest of this stupid, fucked up world didn't even exist.

Johnny clasped my hand, running his thumb over mine comfortingly. "Do you think you're actually ready to tell em'?"

I scoffed. "No. But what choice do we have anymore? They're asking so many questions, Johnny..."

"Y'know ya' don't need to say anything that you aren't ready to, Chris. You can tell them we're just friends."

He'd been pushing me be-

fore, completely unashamed of who he was. Who we were. Now that I was really going to do it, he was hesitant. This was on me. It was me who was struggling. Not him. He was okay. But I wasn't. I was tired of hiding who I was. I was tired of feeling like I needed to. And maybe that was a mistake. But I couldn't let who I was be trapped inside this rusty Ford anymore, contained within hushed whispers and silent tears.

Walking through the house, I had a million thoughts rushing through my mind. What would I say? How would I say it? What would they say?

Mom...no, I know you still love me...yes, I know...I know what the Bible says, but...Dad, I know what AIDS is...yes, I know how bad it is, but...no, I don't think you hate me...yes, I understand...I know you've never met him, but we've been together for awhile, and...

This is who I am.

This is who we are.

We peered into the living room where my parents sat watching NBC. Reagan and Gorbachev were discussing something about arms on the television, and a low light fell over my parents faces. My dad had a cigar in one hand, my

mom had a cup of coffee in hers. I couldn't tell if it was the lighting, or the personas I'd concocted for them in my own head, but something about them looked so intimidating even though it was the most familiar scene imaginable.

Johnny and I stepped from behind the awning into the opening. They both looked up. My hand twitched, aching to clasp Johnny's familiar fingers in between mine.

And that's when I decided I didn't give a shit what Reagan, or dingy gas station cashiers, or anyone else had to say anymore.

I took a deep breath, and I reached over to squeeze Johnny's hand.

"Mom? Dad? I have something that I need to tell you."



Untitled
Heather Brody '22

Bruises

Cassandra Arencibia '24

Ouch!

Don't touch me there!

I hiss.

But you grab my wrist

And prod and poke and twist some more.

Serious faces.

Male faces.

But I am a quivering female.

How do you like it?

I ask

As I grin and bear it

Fighting back tears to make you feel guilty.

It hurts but in a different way.

Ugly purple and blue skin, egg yolk leaking across my arm.

Walking dead arm.

Dead arm walking.

Just chop it off now.

Or better yet,

Take me out to the back of the shed.

Limp limb that's a good-for-nothing.

Leave or make yourself useful.

Rust ridden joints scream

But I shove it back with a serious face

With a male face.

Scraping the egg off has made my fingers numb

But look how shiny and new I look!



Leech
Miranda Schindler '22

Gros Piton

Jesse Vengen '22

Our adventure began in the botanical gardens. The tour guide who led us down the winding trodden path sported a white polo shirt covered in stains. The more rugged man that accompanied the tour as well held on tight to a silver machete, a tool I later learned (to the easement of my conscious) he used for hacking coconuts from short, stumpy palm trees.

Nestled throughout the brush sat tiny fort-like structures. From outside we could hear the chopping and juicing of fruits within. From one cottage children ran out and crossed the path in front of our herd, chasing each other in shrouds of screams and laughter. In what we would call squalor I had never seen smiles so bright. It seemed they traded in riches for something that could not be bought. It seemed they wanted not to own the mountain, but for the mountain to make disciples out of them, leading others to a treasure they would otherwise never find.

We made our way through the exotic plants- Schefflera vines, Heliconia (lobster-claws), brome-

liads and begonias- swirling towers of gnarled greens bursting into brilliant petals of oranges, reds, and purples. Above it all lorded the Gros Piton. If we squinted our eyes and held our hands up to our foreheads to block out the sun, we could just barely make out its misty frame against the blue sky. Its sides were frosted in velvety vegetation, except the cliffs which showed off its colored minerals.

Its build resembled a sort of man-made staircase, constructed with the purpose of reaching the heights of Heaven itself before its architects must have realized the futility of their crafts. Perhaps that is what we were chasing, my mother and grey-haired father, my older brother, Evan, who had just survived chemotherapy, all these tourists, and me.

A sudden rainstorm turned the early trails into running rivers, but we carried onwards up the steadily curving hill until we reached the amber light of the upper mountain. Like molasses the sun dripped through the trees in heavy globs, pooling on the ground

and on the leaves of giant green ferns. I still cannot tell if the sun climbed down to us or we climbed up to it, on some celestial ladder, rising above the storm to that sunny realm that one sees through the occasional pockets piercing dense rain clouds.

The trek up the piton was trickier than anything I had ever done. It was more like rock climbing than hiking. With each step I surveyed the ground to find a flat space in between the moss, outcrops of rocks, and the tree roots shooting from the ground in all directions. We are no longer soaked in rain, but rather sweat as our legs roast in pools of lactic acid and our feet begin to ache. I turned to observing my surroundings to take my mind off of the pain. The firm smashing of boots and walking sticks into the mountainside served as a sort of percussion underneath the choir of breathing, chuckling, and the melodies of light conversation, punctuated with the occasional staccato of an "ouch!" as someone bangs their foot against something hard. Birds swoon to their tunes from their vine-tangled branches and the air is sweet.

A few hours in and we had forgotten where we were entirely,

being enclosed so tightly by a jungle one would never have believed could thrive at such an angle. But alas, the illusion was broken when our guide ran ahead, his smile wider than ever, announcing that the summit was within our reach and pointing at a pile of stones that led into a bright light. I held my hands firmly in the dirt as I scaled one stone, then another- I could feel a thudding in my chest- another, one more.

And the forest draws back behind you like theatre curtains. The ground in front of you begins to droop, steeper and steeper, and you approach the precipice like a layperson approaching the altar before being forced to your knees, grasping desperately for an anchor. The hair on the back of your neck freezes stiff, your breathing stutters, and you dare not open your eyes and you dare not close them.

But the wind whispers through your ears and tussles playfully with your blond locks. The vertigo subsides like a receding wave and your breathing finds its rhythm. Stand up now, open those eyes, you are standing 2,600 feet up on the highest point in the Caribbean Sea.

For a moment I am alone

with the mountain. Those bustling tourists behind me turn to statues and everything is silent.

From up here, everything stands frozen in its smallness; a place which like a photograph never moves, shifts, or changes, as though this summit were out of reach of the gnawing hands of time, free from aging and decay. The world down there with its countless tensions is but a trickling afterthought, and for one period of time, you are forever young, forever, joyous, and forever fulfilled, in this short moment that never ends.

I can wipe away the clouds, reach out, and grab the sun; I'll hold it tightly and feel its warmth against my skin. But alas, I need not makeshift wings of feather and glue to fly too high, to let my backside scrape the underside of the moon. When nature lifts me up in the palm of her hand, all I have to do is let her.



Lucifer
Tara "Baz" Murnin '21

Cherry

Julianna Buchmann '23

An ekphrastic poem of the movie Cherry by Anthony Russo & Joe Russo

Deep reds, exploding bombs
A best friend lost but still carried his lineage on
Hearts beat, film rolls
A cherry drops while 8 bodies begin to fall
Helicopter blades, dark nights
Awoken with a giant ball of fright
Sweaty hands, withdrawal pains
The heroin beings, and starts to lose its flame
Time moves, money fails
A gun pulls out and brings the alarms avail

Through thick and thin a love prevails
So years and years later the vow
Still holds
And although all has changed
They remain the same.

A love story
But darkly wrote.

Leis and Lessons

Ethan Maslyn '22

Spring break is a big part of any college student's experience. The traditional beach bashes that are often seen in young adult movies have become a staple of American college life. It's a time to kick back for a week or so, preferably somewhere warm. Amid all the stress of the college experience, spring break stands as a beacon of hope for all those exhausted students. Originally, I hadn't thought much of spring break, and as it grew closer and closer I just thought of it as a week where I wouldn't get to see any of my new friends from school. But, around the middle of February, my best friend proposed a crazy idea. He suggested that we go to Hawaii, just the two of us, to visit a friend that was attending school there.

At first, I sorta laughed it off. It would be a cool idea, but how realistic would it actually be? I had some money saved up, but it definitely wasn't enough to afford a plane ticket and be able to survive alone on the islands. But then, I mentioned it to my mother in passing. She thought it was a great idea,

and then offered to lend me the money I needed to be able to afford the trip (I still haven't been able to pay them back). So, there it was, we decided to go, full send. We would be there for six full days. Six days packed with adventure and exploration, to say I was excited would be an understatement. I was like a new puppy being brought home for the first time, although with less uncontrollable peeing. I couldn't wait to relax and take in the nature and beauty around me. Especially since we had just wrapped on the musical at Marist a few weeks prior.

Our trip began with the drive to JFK. Just saying, I am not an early bird, and getting up at 8:00 A.M. for our 3:00 P.M. flight was not a good time. But, we got there with plenty of time to spare, I suppose. It was a pretty long flight, and I have trouble sleeping on planes, so I had a lot of time to think to myself. One big question was sticking out to me at the time; what did I want out of this trip? I knew I wanted to have fun and relax, but I also knew that a trip like this had the potential to seriously change

me. I dwelled on it for a while, but I couldn't come up with an answer at the time. I eventually dozed off for a bit, getting in some rest before we landed.

Eleven hours later, we landed on the island of Oahu. As soon as I stepped off of that plane, I felt something different. There was an aura different from any I had felt before. I know I sound like a hippie when I say it, but I felt more connected to this place than most others I have been to. The warm, gentle breeze seemed to carry all my burdens away with it. The drive from the airport was absolutely gorgeous. Despite the traffic all around us, I was getting my first true look at what Hawaii was like. Towering, tropical trees lined the streets and people from all walks of life could be seen milling around shops or relaxing in parks. After checking into our hotel and unpacking some of our luggage, we just went and wandered around Waikiki. For being an over-populated, tourist-trap of a city, it is still an incredibly beautiful and culture-filled place. We walked along the beaches, barefoot, kicking sand every which way. Sinking my feet into that pure, white sand clicked something in my mind. I had begun to figure

out what my reason for coming to Hawaii was. The beaches, stretching for miles and the sun setting over the clear, blue sea moved me. I knew then that the beautiful nature of this place had something to do with my goal.

This only continued to be made more apparent as we explored more and more of the island. I think it was on our second day we visited our friend's dorm at Hawaii Pacific University. Let me take a bit to tell you about this friend. We had met her the summer prior to this trip and we had instantly become great friends. The three of us would often spend weekends together going on random adventures around Poughkeepsie and Beacon. She had decided to go to HPU to really explore the world. She often said that the place had "a different beat" to it, and I honestly couldn't agree more. Now back to her dorm, when I tell you that it was basically in the middle of a jungle, I'm not kidding. The buildings were small, and the windows were just carved out holes in the wall. I saw lizards crawling up and down the walls and into our friend's room. It made me think of a small community of people living in treehouses, and again, it struck a chord within me. There was such a

sense of community and mutual respect between humanity and nature in its rawest form. I've always had an affinity for nature, but I realized then just how strong that affinity was. I began to envision myself living in a small community of homes in some forest, or on the edge of a cliff. Not because I prefer solitude, but just because being surrounded by nature feels right to me.

Our days were filled with experiences like these. Every day, a different part of me was awakened by the nature surrounding us. The third day, we went surfing on Waikiki Beach. We met up with some of our other friends from Marist that also happened to be vacationing in Hawaii. Renting boards and hauling them through the streets to the beach made me feel like a stupid tourist, but it was worth it for the experience. It was intimidating at first, the board was a lot bigger than I expected it to be and I don't exactly have the best balance. But feeling the pulse of the waves beneath me was calming. By the end of our session, I had been able to stand and ride a couple waves in. It was freeing to say the least, letting nature take control like that was incredible. At one point, we were all just sitting

on our boards out in the ocean, completely surrounded by blue. And the next moment, a sea turtle had come up next to us. It was such a serene moment; it swam around us for a bit, brushing by our feet. I left that beach feeling satisfied not only in doing something potentially dangerous, but also spiritually satisfied. Satisfaction was a constant throughout this trip, this includes physical satisfaction. We went on several extremely difficult hikes, but damn, were those views absolutely worth it. The big three hikes we went on were: the Pill Box, the Diamond Head Crater, and the Koko Head trail. First was the Pill Box. When we went on this hike, it was a relatively cloudy day. Which was pretty good for us, in terms of the heat at least. The view on the way up did suffer a bit because of it but it was still beautiful. The real kicker for this hike was when we finally reached the peak. As we sat on top of one of the titular "pill boxes" and ate some fresh pineapple we had bought beforehand, the sun broke through the clouds in one of the most spectacular sights I've ever seen in my life. The rays of the sun shone down in one particular patch onto the earth below. I'm not religious at all, but my friend

is. We both agreed that it looked like an angel was about to descend upon the city below. This moment alone made me question my spirituality. Perfect moments like that make one believe in some sort of a higher power, even if that higher power is nature itself. In my case, I gained a lot more respect for nature just from that moment alone. On Diamond Head, we got to watch the sun set beyond the waves. There's an incredible lookout tower close to the peak that we sat on. We may have been breaking park rules by staying there that late, but what's a college spring break trip without a bit of crime, am I right? Anyways, it was worth it to see the sun's brilliant rays reflecting off of the crystal clear water. The wind whipped at our clothes and hair as we sat on the top of the lookout tower. It felt like something out of a fantasy novel, right before the heroes embark on their epic quest across a massive land. Something I haven't mentioned until now is the incredible bonding power that climbing up literal cliffs with your best friend has. He and I had never been closer by the end of that trip, and I like to think it changed both of us for the better. We'd known each other for a little more than three years at that

point, but it felt like we had spent a lifetime together. Our shared experiences on this trip mean more to me than I can properly express in writing.

Finally, the Koko Head trail. This hike. God, it sucked. But, the feeling of adrenaline as I almost passed out when we made it to the top was worth it alone. See, Koko Head is an abandoned train track that climbs up the side of a mountain. At one point, there's no ground below you as you tiptoe your way across the tracks. And guess who forgot to pack enough water! I had already gone through my bottle before we were even halfway there. I was dead tired by the end, but we got to see the sun set from the peak of another mountain, so I guess I won out in the end. This one was especially cool to me because we could see, as the sun was setting, the lights in all the houses in the small towns below would flick on one after the other. This is when I realized my new budding passion for photography. I had been taking a decent amount of pictures over the past few days, but that night, I had a field day. I had found my muse in that view.

We've now arrived at the last two days of our trip. Day five

was a special one for me. We decided to hike up to the Makapu'u lighthouse to go down to the tide pools. I don't really know what I expected when I heard "tide pools" but it definitely wasn't what I got. First off, we had to hike down the side of a cliff, with no clear path. Dangerous, yes, but inevitably worth it. Once we got down to the bottom, the waves were enormous. It was windy as all hell, and the ocean spray was more like a heavy rain. The intense waves slapped across the little cove where these pools were, filling them up with clear blue water. Crabs scuttled across the rocks and ran quickly as my friend and I approached. When we got close a particularly large wave slapped against the walls and ocean spray shot up from what was apparently a cave beneath the pools. We were both startled, but laughed it off right after. My friend and I stripped down to our shorts and stood at the edge of one of the filled pools. We looked each other in the eyes and a mutual understanding passed between the two of us. It felt as though we were doing something sacred, baptizing ourselves in these hidden, natural pools. As we jumped in, it really did feel as though I was being

cleansed in a way. Sitting in that tide pool with the ocean raging violently not even thirty feet away from me was humbling. It reminded me how small I am in the grand scheme of things. It reminded me that nature is to be respected and even feared at times. Nature can be beautiful, but if you're not careful, it can also be deadly. But, all of my worries seemed lightyears away at that moment. I was living completely in the present.

And so we've come to the final day of our trip. This one was extra, extra special. We were going to camp out on the beach. I don't remember the name of the beach we pitched tent on, but it was a beautiful one, even in the dead of night. As the tide went out, many large rocks became visible. My two friends and I cracked open some drinks and sat on those rocks for hours. We talked about anything and everything. And then, our friend who lives in Hawaii asked us a question. "So, what did you guys get out of this trip?" The same question I asked myself on the plane ride there. It took me by surprise, but I think I put it as eloquently as I could in that moment. I told her that I had gained a lot of new respect for nature, even

more than before. And as I looked up at the impossibly bright moon and stars I realized something else. I said to her that I had realized how to appreciate the simple joys of life, to be able to be in harmony with the world around me, and take things as they come. Obviously I wasn't a pro at it yet, but the beat of that island changed me. I came back from that trip a lot less worried about a lot of things, and while I still worry, I try to remind myself to breathe every now and again. This trip taught me a lot. From awakening my spirituality to opening my eyes to incredibly valuable life lessons. I owe a lot to those islands, they brought me out of my shell and slapped me across the face with their energy. I think any young adults who can afford to take a trip to any island of Hawaii, should. It's a different lifestyle there, like I said, the beat is different. It'll teach you things about yourself that not many other places can. I know it did for me, and I'll carry those lessons for as long as I live.

Constellation Smile

Heather Millman '23

Your smiles never reach your eyes, these days
In the safety of 'I Don't Know' you can cry
The world is spun with gold, child
And you only see through the crystal glass
Turning the fates and watching the stars

Those smiles are impossibly harsh
In the cruelty of silence
For your mouth and mind are closed
To the fears and darkneses you live in
Someone has gagged you with that smile
And painted your face in vengeance

You wear it like a badge
As though others are blind
They just don't know
Don't know how to sop up the pain
That you hide inside
And how to crack the plaster mask

They just want your smile
I just want your smile
And I want to see it brighten those eyes
Like a thousand fireflies
And for you to notice yourself
Once in a while
Because you are a constellation
A symphony of beauty
Your smile is my melody

Oh what I would do to hear it again

Curiosity's Compass

Kayla Sexton '22

The south has its double yellow,
a rigid freedom I often walked toe to heel.
And crosswalks, pavement pianos that sing as they weep
under the weight of a thousand ants carrying twice their size.

North appears beaten, the creak in its door whimpers something bittersweet
while its edges continue to erode from years of abuse.
Notches in its frame signify inevitable death,
but butterflies in the backyard argue that change keeps us wild.

In the east, there are those lines of pedestrians,
impenetrable forces of humankind, ceaselessly toiling through their catharsis.
They are no match for the true watchers of the ground world,
The feathered gods of granite that lurk above them all.

West wanders into oblivion, the tracks in its snow
only partial pathways for me to explore and exhaust.
But they too will be covered up, as long as there is snow on Mondays,
as long as hope persists.

Doubts at Night

Maggie Helenek '22

Last night in the warm spring air while I was
blazing my tirade against someone who didn't
interest me; pain became interesting.

As I walked this earth without death, without an apron,
without being a wife;

As I whispered into my own cupped hands:
enough not me again.

I had wasted my life.

I fell into emptiness—into echo.

I didn't want to be the blood on the blade,
but it was the hour of the blind, and the dead—of lost loves.

I leaned back, as the evening darkened and came on,
and was haunted by how much our mothers did not know.

If I were a dream you could say
my countenance was a string of flickering lights.

I felt some interior wall tumble away,
and I followed the far mirage
through the crystal blue of the morning:

The morning had been brilliant,
under the endlessness of heaven.

Earth Stained Worms

Michaela Ellison-Davidson '23

She asks me if I want to take a trip and I say no.
No, I do not want to take a trip. I do not want to leave.
I do not want to pack the bags that reside under the left corner of the bed.

We stare at each other across the kitchen table.

In her hand is a cold cup of tea- black with milk and sugar.

I feel myself wishing for an excuse that doesn't sound like a placid apology.
Words are so incredibly futile, I do not know why I say them.

She sets down her cup of tea and looks towards the window,
away from me and my false excuses,
my logistics about plane crashes and a bridge collapsing over a river.

One day, I think, I will be an adventurer,
like in films about finding the missing parts of yourself in another country-
as if that country had hidden a piece of you all along.

For know, I simply say: let's take a trip,
A short trip.

Down to the lily pond, by the park where the swans swim in the lake weeds,
and little kids fish for minnows with earth stained worms.

Finding Time

Kayla Sexton '22

I seem to have landed upon this now as if on a mid-ocean island,
past and future two continents.

Bowing into the riptide of the now,
I'm like one treading water,
drowning,
in this life and the next.

Part of me wanders west and west and has reached the edge of the mist,
moving in careful steps around snow-on-the-mountain.

Deep
deep
under white now I long to be
and in the earth,
digging deep,
to come alive again,
to find a beginning.

Beyond the ruins, I glimpsed a garden resplendent with hummingbirds,
an aviary of exiled souls.

The only shape left with purpose or direction in this jumbled ruin of nature -
navigating now the waters of death.

Who would believe them winged?
Who would believe they could be beautiful?
They could float through days sole sovereigns of everything around them,
but I scarcely dare to look,
to see
what it is I am.

I am not death.

I am something safer, almost made of air -

I am now.

I stopped the sensation of falling off the round, turning world.

It is the only time I felt my whole existence.

Lines taken from: "Elegy Pantoum" by Dean Rader, "Arrived" by Denise Levertov, "Memorial Day" by Michael Anania, "The Whiteness" by Hilda Morley, "Ode to a Large Tuna in the Market" by Pablo Neruda, "Hummingbirds" by Michael Waters, "Sorrows" by Lucille Clifton, "Adults" by Paul Farley, "In the Waiting Room" by Elizabeth Bishop, "Centos for the Night I said, 'I Love You'" by Nicole Sealey, "Wait" by Galway Kinnell.

Hallow

Yvette Bien-Aime '24

A sadness that lurks within yourself
Not dependent on love nor health
No amount of wealth could fill the void
Devoid of any sense of reality

The only constant is the constricting pain and sorrow
The pain of every step, breath, and text
The sorrow of every word and verb (gone) unspoken, unheard

There is too little of me left
Underneath the rubble of trauma and anxiety
Fear of rejection and of hatred's infection
A need for isolation again sets in-

I have lost myself to daydreams and closed doors
Locked myself away in a house without windows
Light cannot reach me
Lessons cannot teach me
Even I cannot see me

There is no opening, no loophole
I am left to endlessly search for distractions,
Meaningless interactions
In an attempt to kill time
Until no time is left

A sort of self-theft
Stealing my own life from my very fingertips
Is there a real me to miss me
Lurking beneath the shards of all this?

Or is the hollowness me,
Am I already lost
abyss?

hu(man)

Kaylee Miller '22

What makes a woman?

For my father, it is
dishes done, plates steaming, and
clothes folded neatly at the bottom of a bed.

For my brother it is simply
someone to tuck him in each evening
And tell him they love him
exactly 3 times.

Someone to chase the darkness away.

And me, I am still searching.

When my head hits the pillow

I can't help but think:

'Don't I need a

m

a

n

To show me what it means?'

A man who looks at me like I am
an ethereal sky, makes me feel
as though I am as awe-inducing as
the chill air of midnight.

Someone to skate their fingers along
my blemished skin
as though it were a freshly frozen lake.

Someone to whisper in my ear
and chase *my* darkness away.

The person that it clicks for -
the being lurking in me.
Is that when we are real?

Misshapen

Yvette Bien-Aime '24

Thoughts keep racing, brain forever pacing
Desperately paging a tsunami of anxiety and insecurity
I'm terrified of the flaws I haven't found
The microscopic problems I can't see

I've spent days, countless hours
Picking myself apart in the mirror
Picking at stray hairs and discolored skin patches
Hoping in some way the endless painful grooming will make it so my inside matches

Chasing perfection on broken legs
Choking on the reality like some sort of infection
I never learn my lesson
Fear always sets in

I tear myself apart like a failed exam
Only there isn't any bin for me to toss myself in
Instead, I'm stuck -
Torn and crumpled up

Left to decay in a dark corner of my mind
Where nothing can ground me
Or bring me back down

The only thing I contemplate is how I let everyone and myself down
I thought recovery would put me back together
But all it's done is reinforce
The stormy weather

How do I put the pieces back together?

I do not remember my roots

Kaylin Moss '22

No, no, I don't want one, you pleaded. As if you had a choice. Are you sure? Your hair will be so long, she insisted. You heard beautiful, and were confused. You were not sure, you were adamant. The stupidity of her question left you dumbfounded. Don't put your hand on active stove eyes, don't look directly at the sun, don't set fire to your hair.

Didn't your mom get you a perm

Child, you got some thick hair

Your hair is too nappy

Didn't your mom get

Child, you got

Your hair

Didn't

Child

Mommy, I want a relaxer, you said. You did want one, your desire was genuine. You listened to their lies and deceived yourself. Later, you would learn, you just wanted the words to stop. Beauty hurts, but assimilation sears. As your hair ignited, the words burned too. The beautician's chair was the kind of plastic that screeched with every minute movement you made. Your hairdresser spewed garbage and contributed to the salon's cacophony of untruths. By the time you reached 7th grade, you thought your hair had stopped growing. You didn't realize it was your psyche that was stunted. Stunted, but alive. Living paycheck to paycheck was survival. Your mother wanted you to thrive. Language was another crucial role in your assimilation.

Your mother taught you ebonics then banned it. This language could not be spoken at home, and soon you forgot how to speak it. A mir-

ror reflected your chalky image. Your mother beamed. A perfect fit. Your mother taught you life emerges from flames. Each day was scalding. You set your identity ablaze and poured it into a porcelain mold. The remaining hours were spent asleep. Racism and discrimination were like the murmur of a television show on low volume. The Star Spangled Banner was deafening. Racists were rednecks in rural towns. The Confederate Flag was in textbooks, not your middle class suburbia. When prejudice came from a black person, your porcelain shattered.

At lunch, when your friend asked you what classes you'd be taking the next semester, you replied with honors this, and honors that. The cafeteria: where belly laughs and smacking mouths masked the segregation. A stranger with a stranger posse strode past the whites only sign, and stopped at your table. She blurted you taking those white people classes? You're like an oreo, black on the outside, white on the inside. Each smug syllable was accompanied by a swish of her waist length braids. You heard an insult, and were confused. You heard high academic performance wasn't in the definition of authentic blackness, you heard your experience was invalid, you heard you couldn't exist without sacrificing your skin. Well, ain't you got something to say, she spat.

A millenia elapsed, and, still, you didn't have a response. She extinguished your internal hellfire in that small eternity. The bell rang. The moment whizzed by. You tried to relight your fire but were left with embers. You attempted to pour yourself back into porcelain. You remembered the mold was beyond repair. You couldn't recall what else occurred at school that day. At home you rushed to the bathroom mirror. You rubbed off the chalky exterior. You severed all your scorched strands. You marveled in your reflection. You stopped wishing you were white. You questioned everything. In that moment in the cafeteria, you wish you could've told the girl with the long braids, "This is what a black girl looks like".

Incredibly Deadly

Julia Kisilinsky '22

Pride strides powerfully into the parlor
Parading about in sheer self-adoration and absolute obsession
It puffs its mighty chest out and boasts about its existence.

Gluttony glides into the grand corridor
Clothed in a massive cloak of comfort
Thumping through the establishment seeking more than ever needed.

Greed grabs all that the eye desires from the hall of precious pieces
Overdressed in extravagance and excessive longing
Wishing to have everything known to mankind.

Lust leisurely leaps into the arms of another yet again
Wearing nothing at all but its heart on its sleeve
Whispering sweet nothings and loads of empty promises.

Wrath reeks of recklessness and irrationality
Wearing the hatred of all beings
Screaming at anyone who comes into its path.

Envy enters the homes of another
Covered with lies and jealousy
Wanting everything but changing nothing.

Sloth slowly slides from the cave
Filthy from sheer laziness and inaction
Preventing itself from living up to or amounting to anything.

Invokation of a Muse

Kevin Pakrad '23

Second Place, Poetry

Dirt of the mind is what I sing, upheld on passion undying,
Strung from the matter of vision divine, Fate's dream to be fashioned
True by my grail. Old meat is made fresh through thee, Muse, by my cured lines
Cut in thy deli of succulence. Prudence defines a low standard;
Quality equaling spam, starved moxie awaiting spice. Spondee?
Spon-don't? Pointless inquiries, grilled nobody; only by half-wits.
Full Stop.

(Ever has Janus-faced indulgence more blatant been?)

Anyhow,

My song is more inspired by birds than Walt
was, watching grass; one leave per wit per soul
Per Digital watch. The Finch sees her fault
As mine own, versus songs of heart she stole.
Who's ear was never caught? The harper's skill?
It's prickly hum a curse to sex and ends.
Fair love made sick and saul: a loss of will.
But note not where notation stops. My trends
Fall flat for her, devilish muse. Torment
Remains until at last, my words lament.

Iron Butterflies

Deborah Jenks '22

A successful woman is one who can build a firm foundation with the
bricks others have thrown at her

Pretty as a Peach yet Strong like a Tank

There is no force more powerful than a woman determined to rise

We are Iron Butterflies

Just A Gaze

Chloe Monroe '22

It took me six years of my life
To realize I would never be a man.
I remember lifting up my Dallas Cowboys t-shirt
And staring into the smudged mirror next to my Beanie Babies collection
Admiring my exposed bare, flat, white chest
Thinking - "One day I will be a Man."

Winter came and my mom told me to be careful of strangers.
Sometimes there are bad people, she explained.
Sitting criss-cross applesauce with my Kindergarten class
Staring at the fuzzy projector screen light
Warning 6-year-olds of sexual predators
And men in white vans offering candy

Now, I find it funny that I ever wanted
To be something so destructive.

Winter withered with time what once was white
And purity was commonly questioned as they wondered
Which woman's flower was no longer her own.
And we are taught to fear Medusa?

Sermons openly shaming women for birth control and abortion
Never mention the man who drove the girl home
And would not take no for an answer.
All the while he'll brag and say he bought her dinner

We've been looking at it all wrong.

Maybe she was not cursed for breaking her celibacy

But instead, she was being protected.

Maybe she is not a monster

But instead, she is beautifully powerful.

What if we were told she was the problem only because

Now the roles are reversed

Now just a gaze can expose the lust of men -

And there's nothing more powerful than that.

Leap

Ethan Maslyn '22

A whirlwind of choice
Each more dire than the last
The winds sweep our legs

They push us closer
Closer to the edge of fate
Telling us to choose

Feet dangle in space
Hands claw, grasping for freedom
Desperate for time

The unending gale
Will fling us over the edge
Unless we accept

Embracing our fate
We can control our freefall
And land where we choose

Mask

Olivia Mangan '21

Mask (→) **1.** (*n.*) a face covering, worn as a disguise, as in: Cinderella placed a mask over her eyes to hide, to remain unnoticed by her evil step sisters and her prince charming. Oh sorry, not to be confused with the original Cinderella, the Hilary Duff version, I mean. Emily thinks her mask makes her unrecognizable when walking to class. She doesn't look at anyone on the way. People still call her by name as she walks. *Yes, people can still recognize you, Emily.* **2.** (*n.*) A covering over the nose and mouth to protect: to protect from what? Doctors place a mask over their mouth and nose to protect their patients from being exposed to their germs, and vice versa. Painters wear respirator masks to protect themselves from harmful painting particles. Who knew these particles would soon be ones from the coronavirus. **3.** (*v.*) Cover *an object or surface*, as in: The contractor masked the cabinets and appliances before tearing down the faded yellow wallpaper in the kitchen. **4.** (*n.*) A cosmetic preparation spread, left on the face to cleanse and purify, as in: Julia's skin care routine started with a thorough wash, followed by a gentle exfoliate, a rinse, dabbed dry, followed by a Sephora face mask. A clay covering, disguising any and all imperfections, only for the final rinse of the night skincare routine to reveal them, once again. *Gosh, why must these blemishes linger?* **5.** (*n.*) An expression that hides: Feelings, as in: She laughed off the lonesome pain offset by innocent comments. "Why are you sitting here alone tonight?" the waiter asks. "Oh, I just wanted to try out this restaurant," she replies--forces a smile, even. They chuckle, knowing she's masking the truth. Date nights are nonexistent nowadays--these days, her striped blue mask masks her questioning glares at passersby around campus, hiding her uncertainty—*is that Jane? No...or...maybe? I don't know, I can't tell.* "Hey!" she waves; no response in return. **6.** (*v.*) Cover *the face*, as in: He

masked up before stepping foot out the door. Disguising himself? Protecting himself? All of the above. He doesn't want to say "hi" to anyone, anyway. It's easier to get away with that these days. His mask protects his health, yet deters his mental state. A never ending cover, unmasking the unforeseeable future. Masking blemishes, while revealing society's flaw.



Eclipse
Abigail Koesterich '24



