

MOSAIC



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A Letter From The Editor

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

Mosaic submissions went through a rigorous blind peer review process in which student section editors evaluated submissions for publication and ranking of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in the categories of art, fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. 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 continuing to inspire and support *Mosaic*. We would also like to thank Dr. Moira Fitzgibbons for her enthusiasm, support, and guidance throughout the publication process. Additionally, we would like to thank Michele Williams for her support of the *Mosaic* magazine and Editorial Board.

Thank you to Alex Podmaniczky for helping us print *Mosaic*. Thank you to Dean James Snyder, Dean Martin Shaffer, Dr. Carolyn Matheus, Professor Ed Smith, Professor Jeff Bass, Dr. Eileen Curley, and the entire English and Art departments for helping us find the accomplished students that are featured in this semester's edition of *Mosaic*.

And thank you to all of the students who submitted to *Mosaic*! The submissions we received this semester were exceptional and the pieces selected reflect a compilation of the most creative and ambitious work entered.

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

It has been my pleasure to serve as the Editor-In-Chief of *Mosaic* over the past three semesters. I am incredibly honored to have held this position and to have had the opportunity to bring back such an important and valuable tradition. I look forward to seeing the *Mosaic* continue to flourish and serve as an important organization on campus in future semesters.

Finally, thank you to you, the reader, for opening this book and experiencing the incredible work that Marist students have to offer. We hope you enjoy the spring 2022 edition of *Mosaic*.

Sincerely,
Amanda Roberts
Mosaic Editor-In-Chief

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

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Junk Drawer
Nina Bisco '24
Third Place, Art

In Pieces

Casey Brown '22

I tore the photographs
Just to tape them back
To remember how you looked at me.
I was your light, so when I went dim,
You could no longer see.
You kidnapped the stars from the sky
And lit them up for us each night.
Carried them like a flashlight
For each step of mine.
But my shadow was too much for you to bear.
And I loved the stars, but I just wanted *you* there.

There are little parts of me I feel I owe to you,
Like the doodles on the notes you drew.
I now draw them, too
But in a way that's much more blue.
So take a piece of my heart and keep it forever,
I'll keep the rest for someone more tender.
I'll bite my tongue until it bleeds,
You'll see me in your dreams.

The Wakeful Creature Of 2am

Mackenzie Zeytoonjian '25

Tension clamps under the clusters of blankets that tightly wraparound my imprisoned body, frozen into place by a deep slumber. My head peeks out of my soft cocoon as a wakeful creature brushes her tail past my nose, wiggling my toes in discomfort. A sensation of cold air exposes my feet out of their cave, into the open area that surrounds me-- my bedroom. I feel compression fall down onto my stomach as tiny claws clamp onto me, crawling across my organs and forcing me to roll over releasing tension against my body. My aching back seeps into the covers as I feel my mind sink asleep, back into the dreams that my mind had created for me. There are only small fragments in each day where I can almost immediately stop life's duties of acknowledging my reality. When I sleep, I can hide away from my grief, worries, and anxiety, tucking them away. Little blades of sharp teeth nibble on my toes, awakening me from the deep hibernation. Just a little longer I plead, yearning to slip away again, drifting away from life, just momentarily. Quickly my

toes suck back into my cocoon and hide away from the little monster devouring away at my flesh. The kitten squirms her way beneath my covers, searching for my toes to nibble away at. I shrivel up and begin digging through my bed, searching for my phone to check the hour. My eyes weigh heavy as my lids peel away, opening my eyes to the burning kiss of a phone screen pressing against my minuscule pupils.

It's two fucking thirty, once again this menace of a kitten has woken me up, with no surprise I stop and think to myself— the poor baby, must be hungry.

My precious kitten flashes her eyes up at mine as she sees that she has yet again accomplished her desire to wake me up. Sunny sprints up to my crinkled-up face with merriment and begins to serenade me. Her melody vibrates throughout her tender skin, purring into my ears, releasing tension throughout my head. Somehow, even before the sun is able to rise, reaching the soft layers of my skin and putting warmth into my soul, I feel Sunny's

presence curl my cheeks, peacefully forming a smile across my face. My heart feels tense with the thought of knowing such a small creature needs my presence to simply survive. Her morning awakenings give me comfort, even if all I want to do is slip away into my dreams and hide from reality. I cautiously lift my tense shoulders, muscles pulled tight, wrapped in the barbed wires hoisting up shards of stones that fall around me. Even when the wires tear my skin, carving wounds into my back and spine, I heave my body from the soft cushion to slowly curl my weakened spine and sit up. I swing my legs planting them onto my rug, onto my mission of feeding my little monster.

Sunny pounces to the ground and her melody begins to grow louder as her tail sways back and forth. I lead the way to exit my cozy room, cringing the door open, and Sunny sprints out. Her little toes caress the ground beneath her, down the carpeted floor onto the wooden staircase. She stops and turns-- her rounded emerald eyes gaze back at me to follow. Her soft nose kisses me as she tramples by at full speed down our mountain of stairs to the kitchen. As I follow her journey, a tin can falls into my

hands from the kitchen counter, opening itself up to a pungent smell of kitten food. The aroma lures Sunny's mind as her wide eyes stare at her 2 am supper, yelping out a meow. I lower my body to pour out Sunny's slimy chicken platter and without hesitancy, she chomps away at her food. My exhausted fingers cover the can with tin foil, placing it into the brisk cold fridge. I begin to trudge my way back upstairs, in hopes of uninterrupted slumber. I lose sight of the journey back to my comforting room, releasing the entanglement of wire and stones which pulled me down, floating up onto my bed, and sliding under the warm ocean of blankets. I tuck my toes into my silk cocoon. My journey for my precious little kitten has finished and I wilt away fast asleep, from my reality once more.

Four Walls

Screen El Jamal '24

Tearing down walls
Breaking down barriers
You are who you are
Stop trying to change that

But glass can break
And I can bend
My heart might shatter
But my mind does fend

Tearing down walls
Breaking down barriers
You've built these walls around me
Made of fire and failure

I fell down twice
Picked myself up thrice
And grew through the fire
To find within the failure
The pride between the cracks
In the pavement of my anger

Don't you dare underestimate me
And confine me to four walls

I am a Muslim Woman.
I am an Arab Woman.
I am a Palestinian Woman.
I am an American Woman.
I am a Woman.
I am wise beyond my years.

Filled with fire from within

Built from a desire to burn down the walls
That you've built around me

You cannot confine me

I tore down your walls
And broke down your barriers
I am who I am
Your confinement will never change that

I am a Muslim Woman.
I am an Arab Woman.
I am a Palestinian Woman.
I am an American Woman.
I am a Woman.

You made me me feel
As if I was my own enemy
But tearing down your walls?
That is my therapy.

I am.

December 29th

Alyssa Borelli '24

I wish it had snowed. I think a few white snowflakes may have brought a smile to my face even as we said goodbye. Or maybe the cold could've numbed the ache in my heart. But sadly, on that December night there was only dry pavement in that Chili's parking lot, and the heat from your car illuminated the pain inside my chest.

I knew it was coming. I knew it from the moment you stopped saying "I love you" back to me. In that parking lot, I asked you if we were breaking up. You nodded your head. I sobbed and you said nothing. I wish I hadn't apologized for crying. All I ever did was apologize until it became a song on the radio you'd grown sick of.

It was our ten-month anniversary, and for the first time in our relationship we finally spoke to each other. Told each other how we felt. We talked about my mistakes, the distance I felt from you. When it was over, neither of us knew what to do. You drove

me home and let me choose the music. I played "No Tears Left to Cry" by Ariana Grande. God, did I think I was funny. I explained the irony of the song, but I'm pretty sure you got it by staring at the tears streaking across my strained smile.

We finally arrived at my house. I shut the car door and stared at the duck statues on my driveway. There were three of them, a perfect family of ducks. Did you know that I wanted to build a family with you? Never once did I think I'd be jealous of statues.

I trudged down my sidewalk but then I heard your voice echo behind me.

"Thank you for the best ten months of my life," you called out across the cold night. Your voice broke then. And suddenly I realized I wasn't alone in my grief. You just had the gift of holding in your emotions. No, not a gift. A curse. All I ever wanted was to see you, to know how you truly felt. I finally saw you at that

moment.

And what did I reply with?

"I'm sorry."

I wish I bit through my tongue instead of saying those words again.

To think we talked for hours that night, but even now, there is so much more I wish I could say to you. I want to ask you how you're doing. I want to know if we could still try to be in each other's lives, because I lost not only a love, but a friend. It's like you passed away, and I've been mourning you ever since.

I hate that I still think of you. It's been eight months now, how ridiculous is that? That I still hear you in every song and still only have you to write about. God, I hate it.

I don't understand those who think young love isn't real. When you long for someone's touch, when you would give anything to hear their laugh... that's real no matter how old you are. But now that my first love is over, I don't know what to do. Sometimes, I'm afraid you'll be the only person to ever love me. Sometimes, I'm terrified that I'm too insecure to be in another relationship and that you were the only one who could

tolerate me.

How... how idiotic of a thought is that? To think that you were just tolerating me when you offered to drive me anywhere, or to get me a blanket whenever I was cold? Or when you spent hours listening to me rant about music, or when you counted shooting stars with me? I know you loved me.

You called me "love." You'd say "hey love," "I miss you love." And because I cope with humor when you said "goodbye love" to me after we broke up in that car, I said, "You can't call me that anymore," and then proceeded to laugh. And I wish I hadn't done that.

So many wishes. Wishing to have never made those mistakes with you, wishing I had contained my emotions, wishing for snow. But I can't allow myself to regret anything anymore. In order to go on I can't. And I would break up with you a million more times and reenact this lonely scene in my head again and again, if it meant I got to keep the memories you gave me. Because I don't regret you, and I hope you don't regret me.

Goodbye love.

Committed

Kat Bilbija '24

Accepting finite growth; a venus graduation took flight
Nostalgic bruised lips and skin
A sore wish to revise and rewrite

Prolonged desire granted to another; original turned away
Silently tattooed with second place
Lost in a fever of disarray

Telephone wire completely cut; unwritten closure from the bedpost
A wall built in dull expressions
Completely shut off by your ghost

Truth silenced behind smiles; every weekend a new game
Burning red didn't erase vivid green
In the bright christmas themed flames

Finally understanding dizziness; invisible emotions start to gleam
Disconnected without attachment
Too good to be true now really a dream

Closer look at our charlatan tale; dumbstruck with what flew by
Used by surface level heart and care
Young convenience in shallow eyes

Burning myself a new lens; now guided by soaring esteem
Emotional embrace deepen pink roots
I am now my own space and stars between

Personal journeys on public pages; not for your pride but mine
Taking back control of my worth
With every rhyme, with every starry line

Quiet Thoughts

Michaela Ellison-Davidson '23

You sit outside my bedroom door and I am filled with an unnamable happiness,
something that makes me think I won't ever need anything else.

And we aren't speaking, but it isn't a misconstrued silence, it's a natural silence-
like small children who play without words.

I think of you now. You've cut your hair.
And for a moment I'm suspended between reaching for you and staying very still.

Don't ruin the quiet, I think, just sit here and listen to the nothingness of love.

And when I miss you it isn't because you are far away,
it's because I'm reminded of you in small obscure things:

a pre-raphaelite painting, a striped sweater, the chipped paint of a car.

If I ever lost you I would never be able to look at the color blue again
because your hair was once that color.

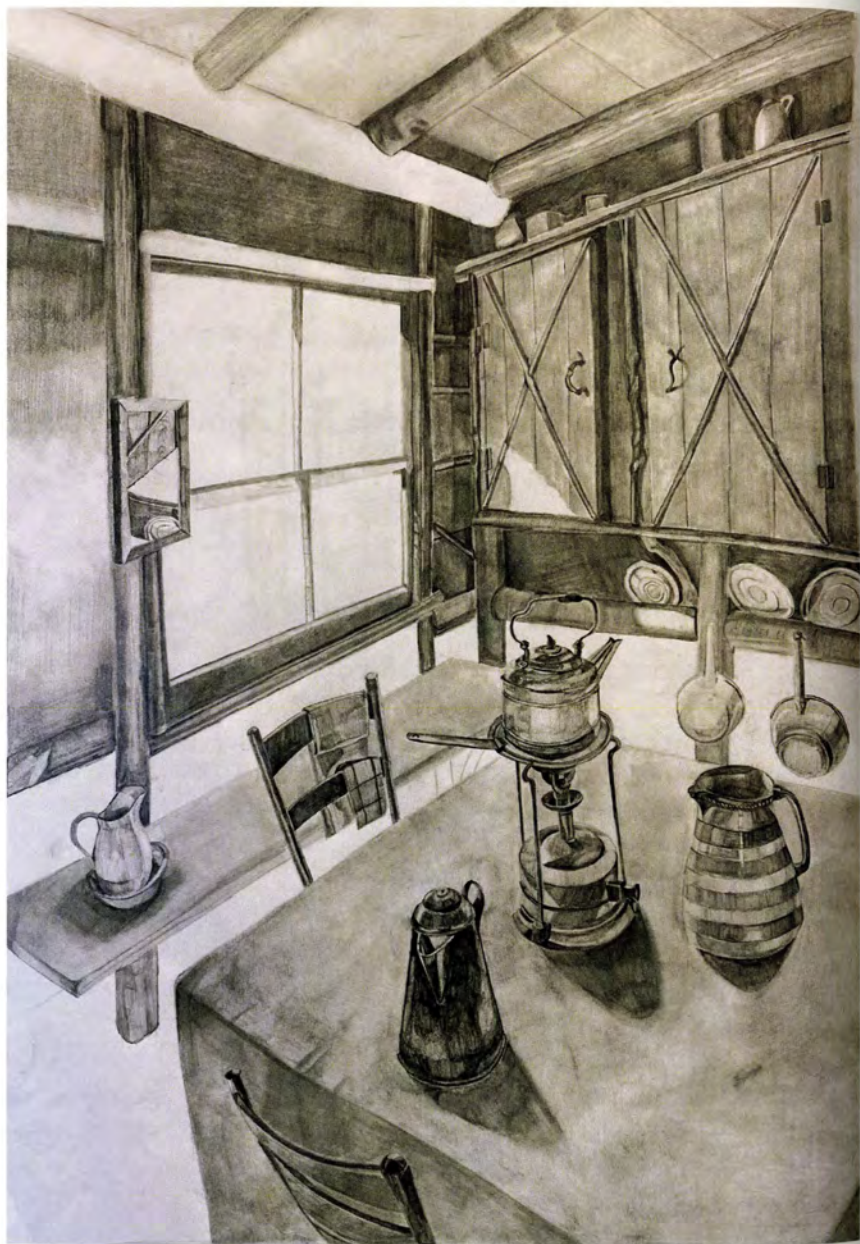
And I am at a loss for words-
These sentimental things just too sacred to be explained.
It's why we cannot share them.

And once shared they are meaningless: a poem, a sketchbook, a story.
It is as if I am exposing the raw wounds of myself.

But these things- they are supposed to be indescribable.

And yet I don't find myself loving you any less.
And yet I don't mind if you know.

Perhaps there's a metaphor in all of this, but it is pointless.
I'm no good at speeches so I'll just sit here in the quiet.



John Burrough's Cabin
Sophia DelVecchio '25

A Sonnet by Someone Who Tries

Alyssa Borelli '24

Consider this permission to let go.
To calm your mind and surrender the fight.
You ignore your hurt but deep down you know
you deserve better than crying at night.
Wanting to be wanted is not a sin.
Love may be impossible to find now,
but soon a new someone may walk right in.
If not look in the mirror and see how
beautifully broken and strong you are.
Love yourself before that love is returned.
Admire your flaws and kiss every scar.
To be wanted, you must learn to be earned.
This is permission to release judgment.
One day you will understand what I meant.

Mere Glimpses

Karina Brea '23

Payless Dance Shoes

1/24/21

If there was ever downtime while my siblings and I were picking out shoes, I headed straight to the dance section at the beginning of the first aisle, the children's aisle. The boxes were all pink, and there were pink, white, and black ballet slippers. I loved them, and would always try them on. I remember asking Santa for a pair when I was about 5, and I LOVED them. I also had to get a pair for the Wizard of Oz in the fourth grade, and I would wear them on the way home from rehearsal and around the house. When I was about 9, I found a pair of tap shoes in my size and finally tried them on after years of curiosity. I tied the black ribbon around my white socks, and stood up. My tank top, shorts, and tap shoes. Mom was checking out, so I quickly walked off of the carpet onto the hard floor. The first click they made, I looked up and smiled. I stood there, softly clicking my toes and heels to hear the noises. I had them on for less than a minute, but I'll never forget beaming the entire time.

Accidental Eye Contact

10/23/21

I think sometimes accidental eye contact is quite nice, especially when it's with a friend. When you're sitting on a train, cafe, classroom, everyone's adapting to the ambiance. When you make eye contact and maintain it, your brain waves begin to sync. When our minds wander and

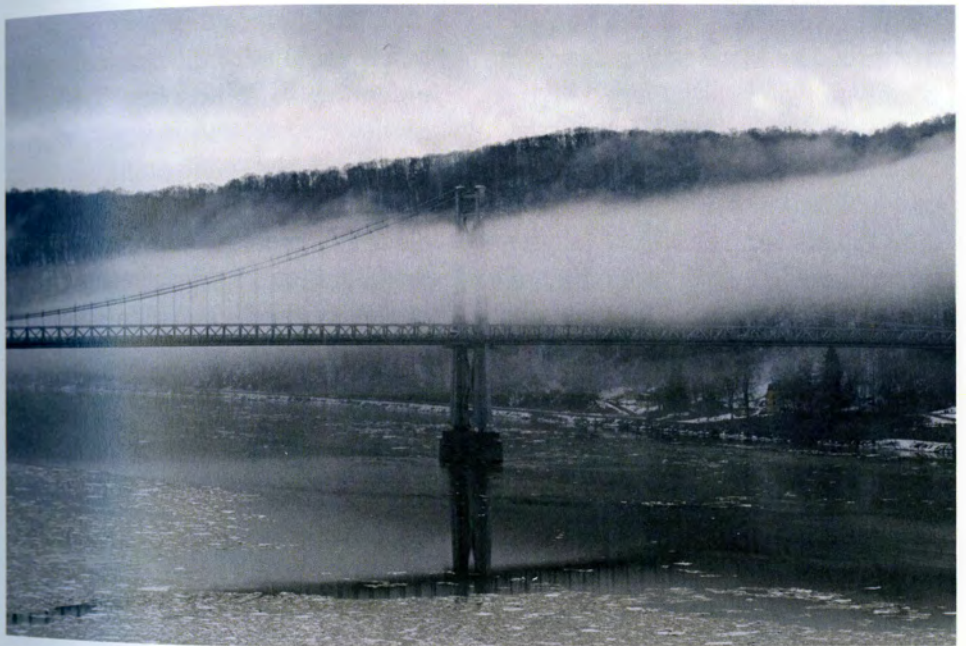
find another set of eyes, often the others' minds are wandering as well. I hate that it's almost embarrassing to make eye contact as people always shy away from it after. If it's natural and calm, we still get flustered and look away. I feel like it's a moment you share with anyone, stranger or friend. Eye contact, smiles, body language is all universal, no matter what language you speak. Even age. They're delicate, human connections. They're all understood. And think it's beautiful!

Camp on a Friday

11/12/21

I finished my headcount. "...21, 22, 23. Okay girls, let's go!"

Their little waddles come to life and their wet feet make their crocs and flip flops squish and squeak. The pool gate rattles behind me as it closes, the next group already jumping, splashing, disrupting the water. Any given day of the week, the pool was chaos. Too loud, too crowded, too sunny. But as we made our way out of the pool, a cool, fresh Friday afternoon greeted us with a generous shade. Through the playground, other groups who had braved the pool basked in the joy of the swings, the shelter of the playhouse, the rush of the slide. Counselors combing back little hairs into beautiful braids adorned with rainbow ties, clips, sparkly butterflies. The sound of laughter, shrieks, sequels, present but distant. Mellowed out from another week of being a camp counselor.



Fog on the Bridge
Claudia Molina '23

Blue and Red

Charlotte D. Del Vecchio '25

Second Place, Nonfiction

From the time I was young, I heard the story of how my parents met. I have watched love stories and read books; they all say the same two things: fall in love with your best friend and love will happen when you stop looking for it. My parents worked together. They grew closer over coffee breaks and office gossip. Long-day dreams of what their futures held, and loose laughter hungered them for more time together. I have looked for that type of love in everyone I meet. Innocent laughs and late-night chats, you lay in your bed as I lay in mine and say whatever I can to get you to keep talking to me because I love the sound of your laughter even if it is only in my mind. Delirium found in dependence. First call from home, just so I could see your face. Laying your head on my shoulder as the train brought us closer. You were warm against my neck as I rested my head on yours. Moving in the same direction, the momentum fed the dream I had always held in my heart. Moving fast, I tried to resist the overwhelming urge to give in to you. Tempting fate by tying knots in

my mind as I held you through the night. Heavy honeymoon remembered as I heave. Trying to teach myself how to breathe.

An afternoon embrace led to a new smell arising. A new scent, unfamiliar to the one I had become accustomed to. Faded from the clothing I was gifted along with my memories of stealing kisses in the elevator as I felt your smile beneath them. A new fragrance reminiscent of fragility and a small face. An odor which flooded my mind with the ominous observation that I had never smelled this before on you. You are smothered in it. It sticks to your skin as I lay next to you, forced to keep breathing in and out the alien aroma. Every nerve in my body on its hind legs, at attention, ready for battle as my stomach bubbles up through my esophagus. My heart erupts and my eyes leak with its lava. I question every conversation, each encounter. Curious who to blame for my convulsions, where I might have compromised my competence. No time for it to be true, but the comfort is gone all the same. Discussion ran dry as my e

swelled and flooded after every interaction. Sometimes they refused to wait until I had left your presence, burnt cheeks and a broken heart. The only person I wanted to pour my heart out to, pushing and prodding the knife himself. *Why are you crying?* The only time I recognized the voice I used to feel safe being wrapped in. Frustration fidgeted in every nerve; your frown wavered as I told you *You're nicer now.*

Sitting in the middle of the road waiting for the light to turn green, I thought you sat in the passenger seat. I thought we agreed on the music to play and the windows being down as we cruised through our lives. I looked away from you for a moment and you were gone. Staring back at the red, something catches the corner of my eye. Head on collision seen from moments away. No time to scream or struggle. No words to change your mind or solve your problems. Just enough time to see what is about to happen and accept it with a clenched jaw and stiff neck. I looked in your eyes as I let the crash take me. Flying through the air with a pit in my throat and a rock in my gut. Reverberations still shake my core. You looked away. Now what is left of me remains in a crushed car on the side of the road, watching you drive

away, seemingly untouched. Shattered glass lies around me reflecting scenes I will never be able to return to, poking my exposed skin. Sirens sing in my ears, but I do not want to listen. I ignore their call and try to crawl closer to you still. I wait for you to come back for me, to finish the job or fix the fractures. An unanswered message lies in your lap, letting you know I do not blame you. I could have run the light and met you halfway, but my foot sat firmly on the brake. Frozen in the frantic thoughts that fought their way to the front of my brain. *I'm sorry* escaped your tight lips as you ran me off the road. Trapped in the box, trying to forget how you fell asleep on my lap as you waited for me to finish my work, the things I told you that I can never take back, the fact that I would've given up anything to spend a few more happy moments with you. Your face blinks in the blue and red. Two shades of the same face, one real and one fake.

The Gods, the Ghosts, the Living

Juliann Bianco '25

When the earth cracked open,
the first to claw their way out of the stars underneath were the old gods, the forgotten ones.
The youngest had never even seen light before.
She cried when the sun came up for the first time, and let her outstretched hands
become petrified in the warmth.
She didn't mind being a statue if it meant the sun would never leave her.
The eldest didn't even wait long enough
to let the light brush the blood of the void off his coat
before he pried open the sea and slipped into the sand
to let it choke out his eyes and ears,
never again letting in something that could be lost.

The ghosts came next,
each one clutching a photograph of who they were,
running around the earth crying out,
Has anyone seen the love of my life?
Has anyone seen my home?
Has anyone seen me?
It was a pity they couldn't read what was written on the tombstones.
They were good people, after all.

The last to free themselves was humanity.
They had to climb slowly,
each crack in the darkness a foothold, a memory of the playground next to the
best friend's house.
A leaf fell into the pit from the surface,
and brushed against a young girl's head.
The rough edges caught in her braid, and in her surprise, she began to laugh,
and soon the world joined her.
It had been such a surprise, and such a long time since they'd felt life besides the
skeletons they climbed with.
Her brother was older, wiser, and he knew where leaves must fall from.
Come on, everyone!
He knew the trees were waiting for them.

When humanity reached the earth,
it hardly recognized them,
their faces streaked with mud and the tears from laughing
and the one leaf stuck in a young girl's braid.
She greeted the statue in the sun, and put her leaf, her life, their hope
in the stone hand pointing toward the heavens.
Somewhere far below the ocean,
a sad old man pushed the sand out of his eyes
and cracked a smile.



Self Portrait
Kaitlyn Dugan '25
First Place, Art

spring break

Kaylee Miller '22

Hi!

My name is _____.

Or is it _____?

No, no, it's _____. *I think?*

I'm sorry. Sometimes I get a little...

Well, here. Just follow along with me :

Today, I will wake up,

and I will be miserable, because I hate mornings.

If I have to work, I will plaster on my unflattering uniform
and the smile with the huge dimples that I wish I could erase.

I am predictable. I am reliable.

I am a doormat.

If I don't have to punch in for once,

I will most likely not change out of the clothes I slept in.

I don't even know if I'll comb my hair.

I try to set intentions that I probably won't achieve.

And if I do, it's never as satisfying as I hope they will be.

There is multimedia I could stream.

There are numerous novels to be delved into.

Or I could "treat myself" and spend my money.

Usually it is all of the above, a conglomeration of eventual discontent,
or it is none of that at all.

Also, I will quantitatively measure the success of my day in this way:

Wow, your mind is active at the "early" hour of 9:07 am!

This is sort of nice.

Now you have so many hours

to do whatever it is you wish.

So let's savor that a little bit

and lay here just a little longer.
Close your eyes and oh,
the next time you check it is now 10:22,
which is basically 11 am,
which is practically noon, lunchtime,
and by that point your family will be home soon
and you know you can't appreciate yourself with others around,
so, oh, I'm sorry.

The day is actually over now!
We have no choice
but to sit here and allow it to happen -
the absorption of the passing of time,
each second like a blow to the lower back,
a choking ache hibernating in your chest.

Or wait!

Let me try that again, where I am better.

Where I am at school:

There are the pros of independence and a sense of routine -
we are supposed to be the best version of ourselves in just 4 short years!
It's liberating and terrifying and nauseating.

We see friends,

and we are a glittering mask of self-deprecation and modern woes.

In a cool way, of course.

But then I say goodbye

and lock myself away for most hours of the day,

and we are the worst sort of amusement park ride.

There is no telling if the minutes will be saturated in overzealous joy or crippling blehness.

We could be harmonizing to the most amazing new song at a dangerous volume

or exploring a new literary expedition,

and we could just as likely

be nursing a headache and forcing back the curdled dread of tomorrow's expectations.

It's either or. Usually both.

Most of the time, there is not even enough fuel in the tank to control the outcome.

Or enough attention devoted when necessary.

Each second is a time bomb,
a life sentence,
a distraction,
a setback,
a *burden*.

Wow, my priorities are out of whack.

I'm so sorry!

This isn't me.

I am ___ and I am *happy*.

I am sweet and unbothered and motivated and thoughtful.

Did I pack the wrong suitcase?

Mugs

Shannon Connolly '24

Today, the masks come off

So I'm gonna smile at everyone

I'm gonna smile at the quiet girl in the back of the class who's always too scared to raise her hand

I'm gonna smile at the boy who only smiles at himself
And the girl who makes snarky comments behind others backs because she's too much a coward to say it to their faces

I'm gonna smile at the professor who's failing me and the professor who thinks I've got it all

Because the masks are off

And I can finally smile again

Now they can when I laugh at their jokes

Now they can see when I don't

Now that guy from class can see me blush when he says my name accompanied with a "hello"

Now they can see when I stick out my tongue to express distaste

Now they can see when I frown because I'm hurt or sad or coping

Now that I can see your face I can see that the smile there that was once hidden and seemed so fake to me is real, or not real

But why does it all feel so weird?

I don't care- because they're off, and I want to see on the world's faces how it makes them feel

Ode to Purple

Lauren Anderson '24

First Place, Poetry

My favorite color is amethyst. My favorite color is violet. My favorite color is the faraway galaxy. I get lost in you, sometimes I forget where I start. Others say you are graceful and elegant, but I see lavender swirled bruises on cut knees and naivety you don't consider relevant. Trinkets and gift wrappings tickle my arm like a bed of clouds encased in a lilac sky. Parts of family bestowed upon me. Butterfly nets and snug baby blankets – they keep me safe; they give me warmth. They're laced with stolen moments and lost memories I may never get back. I have a lot of regrets about that. And I could follow my fears all the way down to where you sit in waiting – patient and understanding. You know I don't quite get it, but that's okay. I will one day when reality is put on display. You're there in the form of carnations tucked into chest pockets of black blazers. You're there to wipe my tears as I sit on lonely church benches. You're there in the sound of hummingbirds perched outside the windowsill, singing Tom Jones's "Delilah." I didn't truly know what you meant until I was staring down at the piled dirt, sleek white headstones, and up at your purple lilac sky again. I'm angry that you sit there so proudly on a day like today. I'm angry that you look so beautiful and so far away, closer to my family than I'll ever be. You are the epitome of childhood innocence that was stolen from me and I'm angry at you, purple. I've grown up and I'm angry because you taught me what it's like to be me, to face the harshness of reality. For better or worse, purple, I'm angry. I'm angry... but grateful.



Ledge Light
Amanda Nessel '25

Heat Stroke

Anonymous

The vibrations of her voice cover the room.
Whispers not so quiet, not so secret,
But were they even meant to be?
A heaviness carried itself through my chest,
Coated in a butterfly softness,
A pedestal I created for her light.
I continue to hold it up even in the air
that seems to be taking away my breath.
The whispers linger in my lungs
Through each new room, each new day.
Her rays weaken the hardness in my legs -
whether her roots willed it or not I can't be sure -
But in defense of our bond and her golden core
I fight through the burns, and refuse to lower the sun.
Hopefully she remembers I'm right below,
And talks to me the way we used to.

The Compromise of a Loss

Emma Shaw '22
Third Place, Poetry

I am at the funeral of a man I never liked
but always loved.
Nostalgia is a painkiller.
It hides the hurt in shadows of
computer games and
St. Patrick's Day Parades.
Sentiment is the advanced narcotic
in the laughter that filled the back deck
before you had one more drink than you should,
and you'd make one joke too far
just to piss off my parents.
I don't hear what my mom says
to my dad in the front seat,
but I do still see your silhouette
waving to us as we pull away.
Memories are a boxed red wine
that you refuse to share,
that decorates the arguments
with ribbons and spaniels.
They look pretty in this light,
reflecting off the candy bowls and back up
onto the cold cheeks of my cousins.
The screaming matches sound more like duets in my head.
Now, I stare at the box that holds
the remnants of your personhood.
Interesting how such a small frame
can hold in the force of your nature.
Is it wrong of me to say
that I like you more now that you're gone?

Someone I Once Knew

Julianna Buchmann '23

The shell of someone I once knew.
Hints here and there.
A spark every once and a while.
A smile I first saw at twelve.
A smile that's just changed now.

It's almost like a death.
But they just sit right there, staring back at you like they used to.
The feeling that look used to give you, it's all gone now.
Maybe moved on to someone else.
Maybe not.

It's hard to see someone you once knew.
Because all you want to do is run into their arms, but a stranger would be holding you now.
And you can't make a person who they used to be.
You can only just try and remember them as they were.

Although we grew together, it didn't remain.
I wasn't there for you.
And you weren't there for me.
There was no abrupt end, it just faded.

And I've changed too, you know.
Maybe you feel the same about me.
Maybe you don't.
I'll never know.

The person you used to love.
That person is just a glimmer now.



White Roses III
Ashleigh Barham '22

Exhibition

Lorah Murphy '24

And I'm thinking of all my loves
The loved
Held in the marble halls of my heart
Tearing at canvases and smashing
Glass blown with the air from my lungs
How they looked at the art made in their honor
and Turned, lit the match
Or worse perhaps still
Never even saw sunlight
Illuminate vulnerable vigils.
Arching into careful agony of memory
Tears swarm to dilute my saliva
Penitent prayers that the newest patron
Wants to see the left wing
Taste like holy ash and watered whiskey-
Embalm me with hope when I die.

Body Language

Kaylin Moss '22

When you were nothing but words on a screen,

your words frightened me.

Your words told me that you did not want to meet until,

you lost more weight.

My words should have opposed yours, but our love started with the fear of you. It began with me inflating my ego with the oxygen of people who looked like you. Days later you are removing your shirt and I am terrified of what exists underneath. Weeks and you are flinching each time I touch your stomach. Months and we are shopping to accommodate your extra large, extra wide, extra long everything but why are you extra? People who do not look like you are the baseline in a broken system. Today I am kissing your stomach. I still look for you in the upper right margin of the dictionary. Maybe now I will find you.

Fatphobia:

the fear of you.

mine.

Emme Armstrong '25
Second Place, Poetry

my body is my own.
to prod, to pinch, to starve,
for my body is my own.

my body is my own,
to gaze longingly in a mirror
and hope for a miracle transformation.

my body is my own,
yet when you grab and push and bruise,
i let you.

my body *was* my own,
but you took it and used it and spit it out.

it is no longer my own.

people tell me to reclaim my body,
liberate it from the chains i place on it,
but it is yours.

my throat belongs to your dry cracked hands,
my wrists as well.

my back is yours to slam harshly into
hard cement walls- you will no longer
care if i cannot sleep on my back anymore.

my head is yours to throw through car windows,
and into tile floor.
to fill with words of hatred,
but you claim to love me-
i am yours.



Gilded Age
Megan Byrnes '24

Life Skills

Michaela Ellison-Davidson '23

I was late learning how to drive. The summer of my sophomore year of college I took a driver's education course. I had little interest in it, even though I felt as if I was missing some sort of necessary requirement in life.

I was late to a lot of things. The idea of lingering on something- whether it be driving, or choosing a college major, or liking someone- it was far more interesting. I don't know why. The whole thing might as well have been an excuse- a subconscious effort to procrastinate in order to feel validated.

My first driving instructor was chaotic, her hands trembling as she lit her cigarette- Parliament Lights, recessed filter, her sixth or seventh of the day.

I didn't like how she had all the windows rolled down, how the wind made my ears pop, how when I went home my face was flushed pink like I'd just done strenuous exercise. I kept thinking, can she tell? Can she tell how little I'm enjoying this? Can she tell I'd rather be anywhere else?

My second driving instructor was a welcome change. His name was Cornelius, but everyone called him Corn. He couldn't have been older than sixty, and he had an addiction to cherry Halls.

When we met outside on my driveway I liked him right away. I wondered how he did it- how he accepted the risk of his life to teach kids how to drive. I wouldn't have had the courage.

He turned on the navigation. "This is Jill," he said, running a hand over the screen, cleaning it. "If she's nice today I might just have to take her out for a drink later."

It was gloomy outside, storm clouds lingering. We'd made it past the mobile mart when it started to rain.

"Pull in here," he said, "No point driving in this. It's coming down in sheets now. I need to fill the tank anyway."

He filled the tank. I parked. The rain came down quickly, like bullets on glass. Cornelius had an arm resting

the window, his cheek pressed against it, fog forming from his breath. I didn't know what to say. We were strangers. If I tried to make conversation I'd simply fail at it.

I wasn't particularly fond of pleasant-ies anyway.

"When I was your age," he said, drawing me from my reverie, "I got stuck in a snowbank."

I nodded, not saying anything. The rain rolled down the windshield in smooth lines.

"There was a blizzard outside," he said. "I was driving home from college for Thanksgiving break. I was lost. I figured that was how I'd die-someone finding my frozen corpse days later when the roads thawed."

"Jesus fuck."

He gave me an amused expression. "I tried everything- even prayed for the first time in my life. Everyone always does that, you know- believe in God when they want something. They'll say something like: oh jesus, just let me live and I'll tell everyone about you. Then they live and don't tell anyone at all. Anyway- no one," he said, "ever taught me what to do when you

find yourself scared, alone, and stuck in the middle of nowhere."

"Yeah, well no one ever teaches you how to file taxes either."

He looked over at me, a smile on his face. The rain was coming down harder, people running out of the mobile mart with newspapers over their heads.

"You lived." I said. "That's good."

"I ended up walking along the road, my hands so numb I thought I'd have to cut them off." He leaned back in his seat, fumbling with the air con. "A plow drove by and picked me up. I'd been walking for four hours."

"Why are you telling me this?"

He frowned, as if I'd offended him. "I can't drive in the snow. That's why I only teach driving lessons during the summer."

"What do you do when you have to go somewhere in the winter?"

"I call a taxi."

I placed both hands on the wheel, resting my chin on them. "I'm afraid of bridges. When I drive over them I

recite Hail Mary's."

"When I fill the tank with gas it has to end on an even number."

"I emotionally cannot handle driving over 65 miles an hour."

He shook his head. "Driving- well- it's more instinctive then you'd expect it to be. Your body knows what to do. Its main goal will always be to protect you."

We were quiet for a long time, the storm not breaking. I thought about Cornelius in the snow bank, his foot on the gas, his hands white knuckling the wheel. To think about something like that, it scared the hell out of me. It had been a week before prom, my senior year, when I was reminded that someone's kid was dead- drunk driver on the interstate, the girl in my class dying on impact, only her dad surviving. He'd been a good driver, said his wife- God, he was probably a great driver. It wasn't his fault his daughter died. He'd done everything right.

There I was at twenty with no driver's license, hating the fact that I was privileged enough to get one, when that girl who died would never have the chance.

When the rain stopped, we got on the highway. I was suddenly very sad. I couldn't wait to get home. I didn't want to be reminded of someone I barely knew. I didn't want to feel sorry for myself.

"Let me ask you this-" he was bent over, looking for something under the seat. "If you could have any job, what would it be?"

I thought for a moment. I didn't like the question. "I don't know," I said. "That's the problem. I'm studying what I want, but what I want to do with it- who knows?"

"You aren't supposed to know. You have time. It took me time."

I considered telling him the truth. If I could have any job in the world, anything, I would be a writer. Nothing else. I'd known this since the second grade. But like driving, I put it off. It frightened me. If I died tomorrow I would not have accomplished my dream. The time he said I had- did I have it? And if I let it slip by- what a waste.

"It's almost better," he said, "to keep an open mind. In this world you have no idea where you'll end up. Think about it. You might take a few lessons

with me and want to be an instructor.”

“No thank you.”
He laughed. He was unwrapping a cherry cough drop. “Anyway, you’ll be fine. What stupid advice, but really- you’ll be fine.”

I wondered if his words were worth believing.

“Driving a car,” he said, “It feels like a big deal to you right now, because you’ve never done it before. In ten years, it will become second nature. You’ll forget about me and your driver’s test and the worry you have right now. It’s a life skill, but so is everything else. Just depends on who you are. That’s all.”

“Does it ever get easier?” I wasn’t sure if I was asking him about driving, or something else. I don’t think he minded.

“Yeah,” he said. “Yeah. It does.”

When the hour was over I parked in front of my house, the rain starting again. Cornelius wrote a few pointers on a sheet of paper (I was terrible at turning. Taking them- as he said- like a Nascar driver). I thanked him, motioning to open the door, when he stopped me. He was holding his wal-

let, digging around for something.

“Take a look at this.” He handed over a small slip of paper. It was a fortune. One of those from a cookie at a Chinese restaurant. “Go on. Read it.”

“You’ll travel great distances in your old age.” I laughed, handing back the paper. “Alright. So have you?”

He smiled, nodding at the dash. “Dozens of miles a day.”

Beauty

Katie Sailer '23

Beauty, *n.* That quality of a person or thing which is highly pleasing or satisfying to the mind; moral or intellectual excellence.

A recognition that swells my chest and wakes me up / My eyes linger, warmth washes me / and everything comes into stark clarity / I'm given purpose.
Plants that move with the sun / or new white shoes / Orchestral strings / The crescendo in Pavarotti's *Nessun Dorma* / Dancers' synchronicity / and consistency in ideal routines / Uniformity / and seedless watermelon / Dying embers / Movies that gift goosebumps / or glances that carry conversations / Completed crosswords / Confidence / and overgrown garden greenhouses / Woods that sparkle with ice after a snowfall / The uproar of victory that follows final scoreboard seconds / or natural light that fills vaulted ceilings / Cutting open poached eggs / Rain that mirrors the world on black asphalt / and the way that eye's light up when there's passion.

“This is my poem”

Anonymous

Oh no!
Our table
IT'S BROKEN

and so
the fable
was spoken

A tableau
of a boy
AFRAID

Surrounded by Bricks
remnants of a recent past

for nothing is
SOLID

And
All Will
One day

F
 A
 L
 L



Untitled
Kat Caravaggio '23
Second Place, Art

Does Anybody Know? (Or Care?)

Gabriella Amleto '24

Smoke and illusions

Laugh.
Applaud.

Do not look behind the curtain.

At the diets,
the dehydration,
the choking fabric,
the surgeries

An industry
where even the best
aren't good enough

Rotting flesh
caked in artificial perfection

Smoke and mirrors,
silent cries,
deep depression, they'll bank off it

They bank off anything

Greedy locusts,
devouring green, gorging on it

They suck up youth,
drain beauty,
claiming everything as theirs,
spin everything into green paper

They don't even let
their Dead
indulge in a final rest

Lights,
Camera,
Action!!!

Sensation and Perception

Karina Brea '23

First Place, Fiction

**January 23rd, Milagros Hospital.
Pediatric Wing, Room 203. 4:54 pm.**

We waited for my second session with Judy accompanied by the early winter sunset, the only source of light I enjoyed. I hated hospital lighting.

Bright, white, fake.

Mom looked over at my newest read, *The Giver*.

"Maybe it's those books they have you reading," she chuckled.

"I don't know."

"Yes! Yes, I had to read that one when I was about your age! Makes you all philosophical, thinking about the world." She raised her brow in wonder. "I guess. I'm only a couple'a chapters in."

My sleep deprived stare dulled her with pity, cramped in a hospital chair like a crumpled piece of paper. I stared back from across the room, under my white sheets attempting a half-smile. My cheeks flushed with guilt.

I didn't want to bother her again with the forest. It hurts her.

And I'd rather her think of me as philosophical than her poor, delusional daughter. Formerly an innocent dreamer, now at her wits end.

I stared at the clock to tame my tears. The ticking was calm, but the air was awkward. It forced Mom to say it

again.

"Marley, baby. It's just a dream."

**January 23rd, Milagros Hospital.
Pediatric Wing, Room 203. 6:03 pm.**

"It's normal for kids to dream about loved ones who have passed on as a result of unresolved grief."

Mom's fingers ran through her hair. "And due to its reoccurrence, it's most likely a sign of psychological trauma and,"

I felt Judy's eyes on me through the hall window.

"the threat of death. Subconsciously, it's on her mind."

Mom joined Judy's stare, observing me from outside. I continued to make my eavesdropping nonchalant, looking ahead as my headphones pumped nothing through my ears.

Mom's voice was quiet.

"It's every night, Judy. I don't want her to slip into actually thinking it's all real. Nonna died almost a year ago and I'm just," She dropped her head in defeat.

"I'm just trying to keep her here."

"I know, Mrs. Wines."

No you don't, Judy.

Watching her cope with my outgrown dream-like thoughts always hurt, but I can't blame her. There's concern in having a teen daughter still going on

about magic forests and Alice-like wonderlands: fantasies that tend to die as reality pushes its way to our imagination.

It's gradual. Inevitable.

Nonna died on February 24th, 2020.

Two floors down, three doors over to the left.

I'll never forget when I found out Santa wasn't real. Nonna sat with me on the couch after Mom had gone to bed, and we watched all three *Santa Clause* movies. I cried mixed tears of joy and sadness as she pointed out the magic happening behind the screen.

"So long as you don't let the magic die *within* you Marley, it's very much there!"

I guess it never did.

And that limitless part of my mind seems to have kept Nonna alive too.

But I *know* it's too vivid to be my imagination. My physical body has been eaten alive for 2 years now. But my *soul* is healed every visit. Something within me is revived every night.

January 23rd, The Forest. Location and time, unknown.

I had reached it as I usually do, in that marvelous place in between sleep and deep dreams. According to Judy, it's simply lucid dreaming. A state of mind we reach in passing to or from dreams.

Just fragments of memory our brains piece together to make sense of the complexity of our minds.

And you know what? Maybe I am insane. Maybe the forest is slowly con-

suming and devouring my perception of reality. They'll send me to the psych ward, my sanity slowly chipping away every time I close my eyes. But the forest isn't a dream. It can't be.

It glistened in twinkling lights structured not by string, but of what looked like pixie dust, quietly wading around the tops of every tree and whirling close to the ground. The bubbling of the brook and mild whistles of the birds were the perfect accompaniment for my beautiful Nonna, waiting for me on her side of the stream.

We matched eyes and sat on the ground, the tall grass soft and pillowy. Once again, separated by the steady stream tugging at the wildflowers on its edge, gently eroding the ground that protects their roots.

"Still giving you a hard time, huh?"

"It's gotten worse, Nonna. Judy thinks I may need a Psych evaluation... and I think.."

"What is it, Mar?"

"I think they think I'm crazy."

Nonna looked at me, chin up with patient eyes. I twirled the grass with my fingers.

"Judy thinks this is just a recurring dream. But I know it's more than that, it's like... I know I'm here with you. There's no way it can't be real."

Nonna silently smiled.

Impatience raised my brow.

"What do you think I should do, or tell them? I mean, It's real, right?"

"Marley, is this forest real?" Nonna

teased.

I sighed as she chuckled. The stream continued to bubble, and the wildflowers persevered in their mild struggle against the current. I cracked a smile and giggled with her. My neck craned at the gold glow of sunshine, radiating from every corner of the sky. My face was warm. A gentle wind rustled my worn hospital gown. I breathed in deep and filled my lungs with the crisp, playful breeze.

I felt refreshed and clean. Reborn.

"Well, I'm here now, aren't I?"

"Of course."

"And the trees and magic, it's real. It's right in front of me."

"Yes."

"And, this isn't a dream." I said matter-of-factly.

A beat.

"Marley, that's up to you."

I squinted at her before crushing a wildflower under me, drowning it below the stream.

"Nonna, this isn't fantasy. Look, my socks. They're wet. I feel them. The water has made them wet."

"Right."

I ripped at the grass around me all childlike, rubbing it on my gown to stain.

"And this is grass, it's real too. It just wouldn't feel this way in a dream."

"Incredible isn't it?"

I looked up frantically, trying to read her.

She gets it. Doesn't she?

"Marley, what's wrong dear?"

"Wrong? Nothing. Nothing is wrong. In fact- this is so wonderful. I look at you and it's everything. Just like I remember you but..."

I hung my head, defeated.

"What is it?"

"It can't be." I croaked.

"And why is that?" she probed.

I threw the fistfuls of grass into the stream. They merrily floated as my head grew heavier and my eyes blurred.

"Nonna, why won't you just tell me?"

She looked at me, chin up with a smile.

"Why can't you stay with me, Marley?"

My face lifted, lighted-headed with hope.

This is it. This is the time.

I stood up and once again, attempted to jump over the stream.

January 24th, Milagros Hospital Pediatric Wing, Room 203. 2:24 am.

I shot awake.

Fuck.

My hyperventilating interrupted the still noise of my hospital room. Judy jumped in the chair beside me before scrambling to put on her glasses. I slumped back, half under my sheets in failure.

"Marley, are you alright?"

"Yes," I muttered.

I hid in my hands. The tears came calmly at first. I was so close.

"Was it another dream?"

This was it. 14 and in the psych ward.

Poor Marley, stuck in a world absent of enchantment, wonder, possibility beyond harsh reality. My feelings were impossible.

"Hey, it's alright. We're gonna sort this out."

Judy clicked her pen with a triumphant sigh.

"Can you tell me your name?"

"Marley Wines, it's Marley Wines."

"Where are you right now?"

"Milagros Hospital." I whispered breathlessly, as I suddenly felt it.

In the room.

She wouldn't believe my evidence.

Was it evident?

"Can you walk me through your dream?"

"I know magic isn't real," I pleaded desperately. "But I feel it."

I knew what I felt.

Hyperventilating, I ripped off the covers to try and breathe, move, relax.

Dreams and fantasies are fake, but I couldn't deny what was happening.

The air of the ceiling fan struck me.

Cold and uncomfortable as I sat criss-crossed, grabbing my feet. Judy crossed her legs as I began to sob.

Not a dream.

"Did you see your Nonna again, Marley?"

My head bobbed up and down as I struggled to regulate my breath. Hot tears kept me alert as I held onto my feet. Tight, staring down at them.

Calmer now.

"Were you on her side of the river?"

I looked at Judy. My face was long, eyebrows curved with concern as I prepared to hand over my white flag. My answer was there with me. In room 203.

"My socks."

"Sorry?"

"My socks are wet."



Connection
Kaitlyn Dugan '25

Hourglass

Miranda Santiago '23

Down, down I go
A speckle of sand slipping down the side of sleek glass
I am prisoner, there is no escape
Living a constant reminder that time is running out
And there is nothing I can hold onto to stop the inevitable from happening
As time passes, I continue to get close to the bottom
To the end of this pile of ash
There is no ignoring the suffocating smell of its near presence
No way to stop it until time is up
But I have not had enough
Not enough moments to cherish and remember
How do I make all of the bad deeds right
When I have been falling left all of this time
Every second is wasted If I do not spend it with you
Every second is spent worrying about the seconds that are passing
Until I feel the sand dune pushing up against my back
Reminding me that it is over

I love you.

Ashley Marcinek '22

Three hauntingly beautiful words.
Striking my heart like a blood stained sword.

Words that used to caress my cheek
Make my knees oh so weak.

They say I must be so lucky,
To have someone who deeply loves me.

Who checks in on me hourly,
Making sure no man is around me.

Who takes a hold of my body with hands so confident,
No matter how much my mind begs for the opposite.

Muttered as an excuse for his abuse,
Phrased in a way to make me yield to a makeshift truce.

Sure he made me leave my friends,
But love is surely something to defend.

Blind to the terror I faced,
All because of how those words taste.

Once that August struck,
I finally could see just how many bruises stuck.

Injuries too hidden to see,
Yet permanent enough to take away any normalcy.

I swore to myself on that Summer Eve,
I would not let love take such a hold on me.

To my word I plan to stick,
Yet you arrive with words laid on so thick.

I beg you to take it slow,
For those three words broke my soul.

I wish I wasn't so fearful of such a phrase,
But wishes won't take back the pain.

So let me dip my toe into the familiar unknown,
Do not push me further than I can walk on my own.

I'm not able to be your muse,
For the last time please give me the space I am due.

Yes, I miss the days where love was something sweet,
Instead of something used to ensnare me.

But don't mistake my hesitant state,
For something that you can take.

I am no longer a child desperate for acceptance,
I am a woman begging for independence.

Two Years Later

Brooke Millard '25

I walk through the Marist parking lot on a warm day in February, averting my eyes when the sun catches on the frosted cars and I pick up the pace for my 12:30 class at Dyson Center, and then I will go to my advising appointment at 3:30 in the James A. Cannavino Library with Mr. Cusano where I hope he can help me decide my major

I admire the matte multicolored stones of the Murray Student Center that contrast with the reflections on the paneled windows and have to abruptly stop as a golf cart labeled "Media Center" peels down the sidewalk and the walk starts to bore me so I put in my earbuds, shuffle, and smile as Anastacia's voice comes on singing *Left Outside Alone*

and then I take out my Nature Valley wafer bar and side-step because I almost walk into a girl holding a backpack practically twice her size and continue walking through the sea of mouthless faces and I start to think about going to Texas Roadhouse for Valentine's Day next week and I look to my left and see the ice lodged in the river that creates a standstill in front what looks like miniature houses on the hills

Now I'm passing the Hancock Center and as I wait to walk across the crosswalk, I glance at the bright red "Study Abroad" sign in front of a speckled snow mound and think that maybe I should bring up studying abroad at my meeting and then I see Elissa and we decide to do homework at 1:45 in Donnelly Hall and I realize today is starting to turn into a busy day

as the bubbled ice that hasn't melted yet cracks under my feet at the edge of the sidewalk and I say thank you to a boy who holds the door of the Dyson Center open for me and I sit on a stiff couch and grab my phone as it pings with a text but instead of a text, I see an Apple News notification with another 5 deaths added to the number of fatalities in Dutchess County

and I continue to stare at my phone but my mind wanders as I think back to that March day of junior year at Ketcham High School and the feelings of joy I felt after two weeks off of school was announced because of this weird virus or something like that, and little did I know the damage it would cause even two years later

They Call It Rock Bottom

Greta Stuckey '23

Rocks are just naturally occurring solid minerals
Change is naturally occurring within individuals
No rock is exactly the same, they all take different forms
For some, the bottom is sharp, for others, it is clear and smooth
No matter the size, texture, or color, the bottom is unique
From the bottom, the rock rises up or out with a new strength
While it is not easy, the rock begins to shift over time
As it gets worn down and stepped on, the rock adapts
Growth and resilience are slowly formed within the rock
The bottom is simply the first stepping stone in transformation



Serenity
Lizzie White '25

Memories

August Boland '23

Second Place, Fiction

When Aimon Seran awoke on the morning of the 43rd of Sixthmonth, he did so with the absolute certainty that the world would end that day. He remembered the flashes of his subconscious filtering through the radio signals that passed through his scalp as he slept. Remembered talk of a new super-computer. It was beginning again. As his mind cleared, he fleetingly decided to forget the memory, and let Aimon Seran live in peace that day. And yet, he chose instead to give Seran a feeling of finality; an appropriate sendoff.

As Aimon Seran, 32-season-old barista at Voran's Tea and Yogurt Salon, came to, he forgot everything. He remembered only awakening. And yet, he knew that this was a day for endings. He could not say why.

"Hey."

He turned, to see the eyes of Novor gazing into his.

"You were talking in your sleep."

Skies, how had he ever been lucky enough to end up with a woman like her?

"I couldn't wake you up. Another bad dream?"

Seran hesitated. "Yeah, sure." He couldn't remember. But it would make her happy.

"It's 8:30 in the morning, you're normally on your way to work by now." Novor pulled the covers off of him. Seran worked up the courage to get out of bed, but as he was getting up, he held off at the last minute and pulled Novor into bed.

"Hey!" she said with a squawk. He kissed her.

"You never know which day will be your last."

As he left for work that day, Seran did not care that he was an hour and forty-five minutes late. He took his time, navigating his way through the skylines in his personal aviation suit, not caring when people flew closer to him that was legally acceptable. He hardly batted an eye as his boss, Mr. Voran, screamed at him for ten minutes, explaining that if he was late one more time, he'd be fired. And when Dr. Geron chewed his ear off for putting chai yogurt in her macchiato mocha tea, he simply turned his back on her, telling her to come back when she was feeling better. Dr. Geron didn't know what to say to that, so she left.

As he went into the back, he was accosted by his coworker, Maran.

"Hey, what's gotten into you?"

Seran shrugged. "I don't know. I just." He paused. "You know what it's like, on the last day of your job, or of class, or of vacation? There's that feeling of— finality? That you're going home, and you don't have to come back?"

Maran cocked her head. "Yeah. Are you quitting? I thought you needed this job since you couldn't get any work with your degree."

"No," Seran said. "It's not that. It's just. Ever since this morning, I've had that feeling, and I don't know why."

Any further philosophizing was cut off as Mr. Voran walked in.

"Seran, that's it, you're fired. I don't know why I keep giving jobs to you polers. Your people are nothing but layabouts who can't do an honest day's work."

"Go hang yourself, Mr. Voran."

Voran paused, about to continue his racist rant, before he realized what Seran had said. "What did you just say to me, Seran?"

"You heard me." The other workers were peering in from the shop, and a silence had fallen over the tea shop. "Go hang yourself."

Voran stared at him, blinking slightly, as though he were a computer with a faulty tape inside it. Seran threw off his apron at Voran, and walked into the shop proper.

"All right, most noble ones," he said, in his best announcer voice. "The planet is closing, accepting final orders

now, last call, everyone, last call." Some of the customers kept eating. That was the city of Arasaka, for you. But others stared at him, and there was talk of calling the constabulary.

Seran threw back his head and laughed. Distantly, a voice in his mind asked, *What's the matter with me? Am I going mad?* But then there was another voice. A directive, one he knew too well:

Go outside.

It was beginning.

Seran stepped outside the shop onto the promenade. They were on the outskirts of Arasaka, where zoning laws kept the buildings low. The sun shone brightly overhead, as individuals hurried down the street, while overhead the occasional aviator flew by. In the distance, the sun reflected off the skyscrapers of Arasaka, making the structures of glass appear as towers of silver and ivory.

Then, the bomb hit.

A brilliant conflagration exploded right over the towers of Arasaka. *That's right. Nuclear bombs are detonated above cities to maximize damage.* The light blinded a patron who had hurried after him, and she screamed. Blessedly, she would not see the doom hurtling towards her.

As though he were watching a broken tape that had slowed itself, the light hurtled out from the Arasaka flashpoint, as the first wisps of the mushroom cloud appeared.

And then, around him, everything began to burn.

Everything flammable was incinerated: Garbage cans, automobiles. People. A choir of screams rang over Arasaka, like a chorus of the damned.

But not Seran.

Seran stood, unmoving, as the beams of light bounced off his skin like UV rays at a day at the beach.

The buildings of Arasaka for which it was so famed began to collapse as the blast radius expanded. Like a child's art project of a papier mâché city, the buildings imploded, turning into dust, and slowly fell to the ground.

Around him, the patrons of the promenade (of whom little remained save for blackened figures) exploded into ash, flying outwards and catching the boiling, hellish winds.

Seran stood, unmoving, as the ash twirled around him. The last part of his mind that retained awareness dimly thought, as he noticed that Voran's Tea and Yogurt Salon had been destroyed, that he was now unemployed, and would have to fill out the necessary forms.

As the gigantic trees of the promenade collapsed, a storm of debris hit Seran. As cars and trucks and helicopters were thrown outward like toys, the subject of a two-season-old's temper tantrum.

Seran stood, unmoving. He stood there while the radiation settled. He stood as the last radio waves flowing

through his brain were silenced. He stood as ash fell from the sky. He stood there until the sun began to set, and a mockery of the original flash of the bomb loomed in the west.

Awareness poured into him, and Aimon Seran remembered who he was.

So, Novrin thought, as he fully awoke from within himself. *Humanity has blown itself to bits. Again. That was what? The fifth time? The sixth? He wasn't certain if the first time should be counted or not, since he was the one largely responsible for it.*

The world had ended. But humanity had not. There would be remnants out there. They would be searching for something.

Answers.

A leader.

A god.

The persona of Aimon Seran that he had created for himself (to alleviate the boredom of immortality, of course) had been an interesting one, but now was the time for something else, he thought. Something new and unique. He considered, for a moment, wandering the post-apocalyptic wastes as himself, but considered against it. It would get too boring after a while. Ultimately he'd just fall into his old killing and maiming habits, and even that got dull after the third week or so.

It was nothing he had not done before.

And so, he sat, cross-legged, in the ruins of the city of Arasaka, his fingers forming a circle of runes around him as he wrote a new life for himself. New memories, a new personality, new morals and flaws. It was a shame that he never got to experience the personas and marvel at his work at the same time. He sat there for hours, as the sun set, the moon rose, and set, and the sun began to rise again.

As Novrin was about to add the finishing touches to his new life and embrace it, letting him begin his journey anew, he paused.

Overhead, a satellite station orbited, so far overhead only his modified eyes could see it.

Within that station was a man.

Novrin paused. He had not studied the causes of an apocalypse after the fact. After the world had been destroyed by runes, it being destroyed over and over again by nuclear weapons was trite by comparison.

Perhaps this time, things would be different.

He scoffed, and took on his new life. His face and memories changed. He fell.

Nonar Verin awoke in the ruins of Arasaka. He was a soldier, who had been spared from the ruin by his faith in God, he realized. Looking around, he saw he was on the promenade. Or, what had been the promenade.

Verin shuddered, and looked east. There would be survivors out there, looking for guidance.

Verin headed east.

There's Us

Allie Steingold '22

Maybe you want me to react
So you can point fingers
And when I don't respond the way you want
Perhaps you're disappointed
That's too bad
I find peace in the silence
Because I have said too much before
I have tried to find when the bonds started to fringe
Studying the timeline as best I could
But I noticed when they shrank, and things weren't the same
Both of us found bliss in the ignorance
We did not try to restore what once was
That proves us both guilty
You seem to have no reason behind your feelings
When confronted you were unable to clarify
Afterwards some sat on the sidelines
Others followed you like sheep
Now the bonds are withered and dead like a pitiful house plant
I have grown sick of the ignorance
I am tempted to react unkindly to your words
Simply to bring the situation into light
I do not
There is no reason for you to affect me
It is only because I'm waiting for escape
I'm sure you're doing the same
In the end we are alone in our actions
You control you
I control me
That's the way it will always be

A Moribund World

August Boland '23

I weep for the jungled planet
Now turned to glass
I cry tearless
For the waters of this world
Have been boiled away
Turning the world into a planet of steam.

The lush green horizons
Are burned away
And the flaming sun that the planet orbits
Appears to have more life
Than this desolate, moribund world
And then I know failure.

Seen through the cloudy reflection
Of a dream I see this
I see this, my vision
Where no animal walks
And no tree grows
And but the roaches crawl.

Failure means death
Death of all things
An eternally decomposing
Corpse, floating through the sea
The sea of space
Like a decrepit shipwreck.

Falling, twisting, flailing
Dying, freezing, burning
Alone and abandoned

Purged and swept clean
By we its guardians
In our moment of hubris.

A once lush bubble
That hung in the void
Reduced to a lifeless marble
As dead and cold as stone
Eternally orbited by metal
Where the winds never blow.



Untitled
Heather Brody '22

Betrayal

Santaliz Guale-Hilario '23

The words cannot describe how I feel.
Whom I thought of as a friend,
shows his colors from which I
must heal.

You see my wounds and scars
as I seek for your warmth,
only for you to disregard.

It hurts because the miles
I have gone for you, cannot
compare
to the little steps you lacked the
courage to take.

And that is what I feel,
Your betrayal.
Trusting you was my biggest mistake.

The Forgotten Rules of the One Night Stand

Saoirse Maguire '22

How obscene it is to stick around,
After the deed is done.
After the kisses leave your body
And the pillowcase goes cold.
And the sheets remain on the floor,
Twisted knotted useless fabric.

It used to be rude to leave in a rush.
An Irish goodbye they'd call it,
One moment you're souls are touching,
Drowning in each exhale,
Fingers white knuckling at anything in reach,
Legs wrapped around thighs like snakes choking mice.

And then as soon as it ends,
The quicker you leave,
The higher you stand.
The less likely you are to hurt.
Although you want to stay,
You don't want to be seen as weak.
You want to continue to hold
But yet you unravel,
Get up,
And leave.

Villanelle For Us, On the Train

Lily Jandrisevits '25

Her head digs into my shoulder.
The emergency brake is red
The train doesn't care about her.

Ruins shine, trees shudder,
She knows everything.
Her head digs into my shoulder.

Later, our words will slur.
Now, the brake swings.
The train doesn't care about her.

The scene blurs,
Zoom into us at thirty.
Her head digs into my shoulder.

Her hands are colder.
Back and forth. Back and forth.
The train doesn't care about her.

We will be like this forever,
We have arrived.
Her head digs into my shoulder.
The train doesn't care about her.

Lonely

Lauren Anderson '24
Third Place, Nonfiction

Sometimes I think about that day when you asked for my number. I was lonely and you were willing. You took advantage of it. I didn't see it then. We were fine – walking a thin line of used and to be used. It was never for the simplicity of friendship but of mutual gain. I didn't realize it until you were hovering at the edge of my bed. I couldn't breathe. Your face went red with tears, and I didn't move. I'd just been through hell, departing the safety of my home after feeling the weight of a casket in my hand.

"Can I ask you something?" I made the mistake of saying yes. I made the mistake of listening. *"I feel like you're pulling away from me,"* you said. I wasn't. You thought I was, but I wasn't. You just wanted me there for yourself. You wanted me close so no one else could even get there too. You were manipulating me – I saw it. I saw it but I had never dealt with this before. I said it wasn't you. I said it wasn't your fault because, at the time, it wasn't. I was grief-stricken and you decided to make it about you. You decided that I shouldn't have that courtesy. You stood there, invading my space. Even so much as having

the nerve to climb on my bed like two little girls at a sleepover. Yet you said that my grief - my sad days - made you feel like a bad friend. You told me I was leaving you behind and I learned something that night.

We were screaming, back and forth, for hours. It clawed at your throat. You never let up and I took it. I'm a pushover and you like to push. You like to test. You like to argue. You like the fight. And when your back was turned, I wanted to run. I didn't want to listen to broken promises and feelings of hurt that were in no way tied to you. But you made it so. You fastened that rope around my throat and made it so I couldn't breathe. You blamed me for making you feel bad. You cursed my mourning as if the whole world revolved around you. It doesn't. It doesn't for me either yet. I know when to stop. I know when to take a step back. You don't. You never do. I realized that when you stared at me with hurtful eyes. I returned with indifferent ones. You never even considered the fact that maybe I was hurting too. It's all about you.

I realized that I had to watch every move I made. I had to think of how

you'd react to my every word. You invade my space, you touch my things, and you put it back heedlessly. You don't even see that you're doing it either. It's easy for you, isn't it? To be the user. I guess I've grown used to being used too. Maybe it's my fault. Maybe I should've known, maybe I should've seen it sooner. Because even as I grieved, I had to think of you. I wondered why I had to think about you at a time like that. Why did I have to worry about your feelings rather than mine? Why was it you over me?

We're like fire and gasoline. We're like sliding glaciers that pulverize on contact. We claw and claw at each other until there's nothing but a crack in my chassis. Yours somehow stays the same. I hurt, I break, and you stay the same. It doesn't make sense.

You belittle me. It's in your voice, the way you talk. You say, "*Don't worry; I'll babysit her. I'll make sure she doesn't do something stupid.*" Only... when I fall - because I'm clumsy - you aren't there like you say you are. I know that I'm clumsy. That's not the problem. I brace for that clumsiness like always, but you say you'll be there; you say you'll make my decisions for me if I can't. You say I don't know how to handle myself underneath kind gestures. You say I'm not meant for anything if you're

not there doing it for me. I walk in your shadow, and I can't breathe. It's always *I can't breathe.*

When you asked for my number, I should've just kept walking. When you asked for my number, I should've said no. But then I wonder, where would I be now if I hadn't? Would I still be lonely? I think hard on it and wonder: would being lonely be better than feeling alone?

Ode to Poughkeepsie

Hannah Gnibus '24

In a city of freezing walks and french fries at midnight,
ears and noses are nibbled by winter's bitter breeze
as friends depart toward the McDonald's of Mid Hudson Plaza.

Joey and I walk alone down Beck Place,
side by side, draining out the slither of another's skateboard as we
talk about anything to forget about the frigidness of the night.

I hear stories of an old man and his two German shepherds,
the only living residents of the street besides
an expansive family of mannequins—dressed and dissected.

Offer after offer come forth worth millions and millions,
but the man rejects them all, leaving the small teal house
and the booming barks of the dogs remaining there out of spite.

During their journey they look upon Cosimo's neon sign;
visions of pizzas topped with red onions, mushrooms, and
broccoli dance in their heads, cheesy aroma lingering in the air.

Then appears Starbucks, home of the finish line
for students of Bertrand-Dewsnap's First Year Seminar;
Pink Drinks, Dragon Drinks, Star Drinks cradled in cramped hands.

Bees swarmed around the sweet-scented drinks,
mistaking the bright colors and aroma of the beverages
for a bouquet of delectable flowers to drink from.

Friends rapidly clamor into the fated McDonald's to escape
winter's harsh touch on their faces and fingers. Not quite like Lola's,
Texas Roadhouse, or the Olive Garden, but it's tradition.

The order consists of greasy french fries and a creamy chocolate shake,
but there is always a side of laughter and smiles
radiating throughout the establishment.

This is Poughkeepsie, New York. Some may call it the “Queen City”
due to its Dutch origins, others “Po-Town” for convenience.
But I call it a perfect home away from home.



Longing for Spring
Olivia Myers '25

Listless

Rebecca D'Ambrosio '24

She misses the flowing cursive.
The way she used to watch her from the couch,
Her hand shook slightly, but her grasp remained firm on her pen.
How it seemed to dance across birthday cards,
Across grocery lists:
Milk, eggs, coffee creamer.
She'd never seen the words prettier.
She remembers becoming frantic.
Searching through voicemail logs, through text messages,
Anything to find a trace of her.
There was nothing.
The only thing physical,
A card from her 7th birthday,
Dusty and slightly bent on the corners.
She remembers tracing her finger across the words written,
As if somehow it would let her feel her touch again.
But she shook with the realization,
That the card stock was nothing akin to the feel of her hand.
She held it close anyway.



Lethargic
Mackenzie Zeytoonjian '25

Cacti Don't Have Feelings

Jeremy Skeele '23
Third Place, Fiction

There is a cactus that lives in the Sonoran Desert. This cactus, like all cacti, does not have feelings and cannot perceive. However, if it *did* have feelings, and if it *could* perceive, it would very likely be bored.

It sits by a stretch of road in which very few cars drive by. Flat, dry land surrounds it. As far as the cactus would be aware, this is all that exists in the universe: a stretch of land in Arizona no bigger than a few miles.

The cactus is a Saguaro cactus. The kind that litter the landscape of the deserts that exist within our mind. It's large and green, and its three arms curve up, pointing to the sky, reaching for the sun. Small, thin spines cover the entirety of the cactus, ready to pierce whoever or whatever comes near.

The saguaro cactus grows slowly. The cactus was 'born' in 1835, and it wasn't until 1841 that it began to poke above the ground. In 1846, the cactus stood an inch tall, and in 1863, it reached a foot. In the year 1900, it was six feet tall and grew its very first flower. By 1912, it was 10 feet tall and began to grow its first arm. In 1936, the cactus was 14 feet tall with two arms. By 1984, the cactus was 26 feet tall. As of now, the cactus is 186 years old, has three arms, and stands 34 feet tall.

The cactus cannot be tired. However, if it could, that's how it would've felt by the year 2000. There is only so much one can handle being alone. And for this long, the cactus would have had no one.

But in its old age, something changed for the cactus.

On one cool spring day, the cactus received a visitor. Landing on top of one of its arms was a Gila Woodpecker. A bird of medium size, her black and white striped wings contrasted against a tan head and stomach. She was looking for something.

The cactus has no concept of social interactions. However, if it *did*, it would try its best to follow every rule it knew. The cactus would wish to make a good first impression. It would be curious, but try not to strike anything too personal. It would stay on safe topics, avoiding anything that could be polarizing and make her fly away. Because before this moment, nothing ever touched the cactus. The cactus would be aware that, by nature, it *hurts* anything it touches. And it would do everything in its power to be better than that.

The bird, of course, did not care for social interactions. But she was paying heavy attention to the cactus.

After a few minutes of looking, she walked up to the base of the arm, completely unaffected by the spines. Finding a good spot, she turned to the cactus and began to peck.

The cactus can not feel pain.

However, if it could, it would be in agony. But even then, the cactus would be afraid to show a negative reaction and spook away the bird. So for hours and hours, the bird stood, pecking and pecking away. Eventually, there was a final result: a hole in the cactus no more than a few inches wide. The cactus would be in excruciating pain, but happy to survive. Happy to be of service, for whatever the bird's purpose.

But cacti don't have feelings.

And the bird flew away.

The cactus has no concept of patience. However, if it did, it would realize whatever amount it once had was now growing thin in old age. Nights turned into weeks turned into months of waiting for the bird to return. And the cactus would begin to believe that the bird was not going to show up.

The hole the woodpecker left stayed exposed. The inside of the cactus, once soft and wet, began to harden. And the cactus continued to live on. Now, however, there would be a bleakness that wasn't there before.

But a little less than a year after it left, the Gila Woodpecker returned. The cactus can not be pleasantly surprised. However, if it could be, the bird's return would make it shocked and ecstatic at the same time. This

would be almost immediately followed by an anger for leaving in the first place. The bird offered no apology, but began to inspect the cactus once more. It seemed satisfied.

And then it flew away again.

But this time, it returned almost right after, now with dried grass in it's mouth. It placed it, flew away, got more, and placed it again. This process went on for a few days, as she began to build her nest inside the cactus.

As soon as the nest was built, a male Gila Woodpecker arrived. And soon after that, the mama bird laid four eggs inside the nest. The father spent most of his time within the cactus, guarding the eggs. The mother would be the one who left, flying around and returning with whatever food she could find.

The cactus has no concept of names. However, if it did, it would like to name the birds that lived inside of it. "John" would be the father, and "Nancy" the mother.

The cactus can not understand parenting. However, if it could, it would know how vital a home is to a family. The need to have a space, a nest, walls, any place where they all could rest together. And the cactus was now that place. After years and years of being alone, it was home.

The baby birds grew up quickly, as kids do. Eventually, they left the nest for good. But that was alright, because by the time they left, four more baby birds were ready to take their

place. And for a few years, that cycle continued. Nancy laid dozens of eggs, and the birds would grow up and fly away. More and more holes emerged on the cactus, where the various Gila Woodpeckers would exit and enter from. Each of them calling the cactus home.

But the Gila Woodpeckers only live for so long. After another five years, John and Nancy grew old. Nancy died first. John soon after. The cactus, if it could, would mourn. But, no stranger to death, it would quickly accept its return to loneliness. To emptiness and holes.

But that loneliness did not come. For soon after the birds passed away, other flying creatures saw that shelter that had been made. And they decided to put it to use.

Over the last few years, the cactus has had a variety of birds call it home.

First came the American Kestrels. Then came the Purple Martins and the Cactus Wrens, followed by the Flycatchers -- both Ash-Throated and Brown-Crested. All of them making home within the cactus. Some stayed till death, some left, but something new always came to take its place.

The cactus has no concept of self, so when the Pygmy Owl flew in and asked Who?, the cactus did not have an answer. This didn't bother the Pygmy Owl, who stayed regardless. This owl, who the cactus would name "Frederick", is the current residence. For the past year and a half, it has stayed with

the cactus and spent as much time with it as it could.

The cactus can not be satisfied. However, if it could, it finally would be. Despite a life of loss and loneliness, the cactus would be content in old age. Satisfied to have company, satisfied to have a purpose, satisfied with its view and satisfied with its past. Sometimes, old memories might disturb the satisfaction of the cactus. And the sadness often returned. But never for too long.

The cactus will die very soon.

The cactus has no concept of death. However, if it did, it would welcome it. 186 is a very old age, even for the Saguaro. That long, with so much of it completely alone, is enough to make anyone or anything greet death with open arms. Of course, even for a cactus, it's not that easy.

The cactus would still think of all the birds that have come through its final years, even when it hurt. The cactus, older than any human, would be ready and afraid at the same time.

The cactus can not speak. However, if it could, it would wish to speak just two words before it passed away.

Thank You

It would say.

And Frederick would say
Who?

And the cactus would die happy.
Of course, the cactus won't die happy.
Because cacti don't have feelings.

A cactus cannot feel or perceive
or be tired or communicate or know
social interactions or feel pain or be pa-
tient or be surprised or name or mourn
or have a concept of self or understand
death or speak or die happy.
All a cactus can do is grow.



Untitled
Annabel Banks '22

Unrequited

Rebecca D'Ambrosio '24

It's a sickly sweet feeling
Like drinking a cup of honey.
Clearing my throat can't make you disappear,
Nothing can wash you down.
The butterflies who refuse to leave their chrysalis,
Undeserving to feel that pleasant flutter,
When yours are free,
Flapping their wings for a different set of eyes.
My gazes go unnoticed,
But the slightest of yours sears my skin.
I remember a compliment you gave five years ago,
You can't remember my major in school.
I heard you liked a song,
I listened to it all summer until I had it memorized.
You're a part of my life, not in the way I want,
But I'll take what I can get,
Because I'd rather sit here and watch you be happy
Than not be able to see you at all.

Flying Sonnet

Kevin Pakrad '23

Through eyes of grey you view this tangled mop.
I flip and flop; fool of pseudo art.
Emotions are caught in dreams. Dreams non stop
And- Hold it. Wait! Lost the verse. Let's restart.

My name is lame; basic. I inspire words.
All words survive through time to fade; none soar.
You soar above me, high, alongside birds.
The stars are yours to touch, thine to adore.

What about the door? How do I return?
Celestial body, all I want is you.
Lessons of heartbreak; never shall I learn,
Although, I know what I want to be true.

O silly poet, surrounded by style,
Let love unwrap itself for the meanwhile.

Do you ever mourn our memories?

Olyvia R. Young '25

Do you ever mourn the
temporary loss of me?
My lurking shadow and
highly contagious giggle.
Do you wish I could be
there to get the piece your
arms can never reach?
My impeccable ability to
Drive to fast, music blasting,
and ringing in your ears.
Do you ever walk to my
room to ask a question,
only to find it empty?
My fragrant candles and
floral perfumes you seemed
to often complain about.

Do you ever mourn the
temporary loss of us?
Our uncanny resemblance, the
five inches between you and me.
Do you think of our
childhood games and
uneducated sleepy talks.
Do you resent the times
we hurt each other with
big words and hateful actions?
Our loud mouths, lashing teeth,
and strong flailing arms.

Do you ever mourn the
temporary loss of me?
My irritating big sister presence
and know it all, often wrong, advice.

Do you desire my closeness?
The way I was never
not always around you.
Do you get mad I chose
to leave you behind?
How I moved so far,
So seemingly out of reach.

Do you ever mourn the
temporary feeling of missing me?
The feeling now being
Something depressingly permanent.
Do you ever mourn the
Temporary loss of us?

I know I do.



In a Cafe
Kaitlyn Dugan '25

Sometimes

HM '24

Sometimes I wish you still loved me
when you brought me flowers and coffee
and you asked me how practice was
and told me that I was yours forever

as we laid tangled in each other's limbs

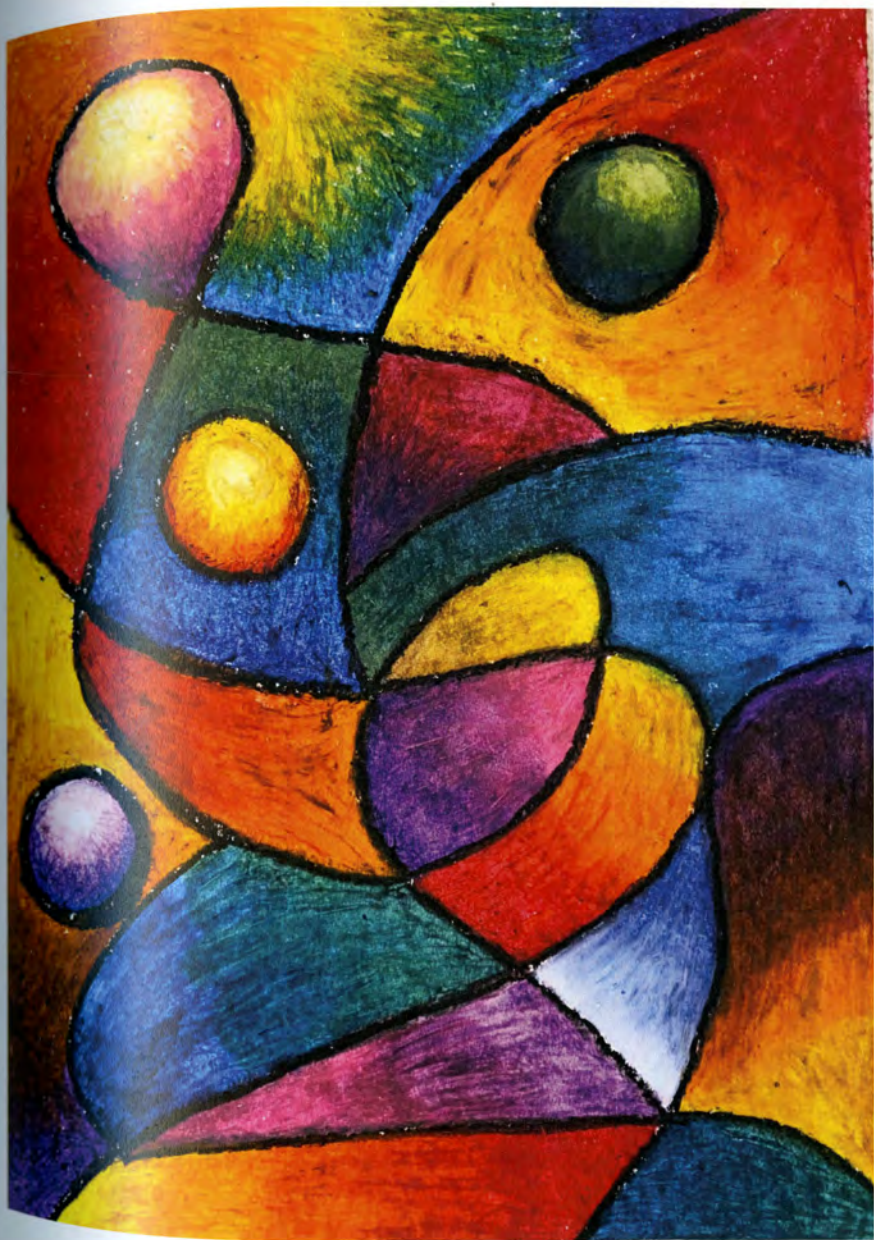
Sometimes I wish that I could be happy without you
when I'm with my family
and all I can think about is you
and you are the only thing I can't have

as I fall to pieces on the floor of the shower

Sometimes I wish I weren't so good at hiding my darkness
when it starts to creep in while I'm with others
and I put on my mask so no one will ask if I'm okay
and I wait until I am alone to confront the fact that everything is not okay

as I walk through life knowing no one sees my pain

I'm starting to worry
because sometimes has become
always.



Bird of Paradise
Christina Levi '22

About love, pain. Strained relationships.

Madelyn Kemler '24

on september fourteenth the blood rushing to my ears was louder than the music.

if this is what wading in the sea of lovers feels like then let me drown

My mom's spleen is looking good, it'll be able to heal on its own.

standing shoulder to shoulder in the dim kitchen light,

softly whispering over the hum of the television

...But how can ribs heal on their own without...

strawberry ice cream and orange soda and you dozing to sleep beside me

...They're doing a procedure to see if the fractures in her pelvis are stable, if not they'll have to...

drive past curfew and run to my bus at 2:10. sitting knee to knee, tell me again

3 fractures in her pelvis, Grade 3 laceration of the spleen, no immediate surgery.

you want two kids, i want three. no i don't want to be your best man

"When did my text come in?"

"After the accident, I was already on the stretcher."

i'm cut open and pouring out. we always said what almost lovers shouldn't.

I will never feel as good as I felt on the morning of April sixth.

How much is a little girl worth?

Kirsten Mattern '24

Silver medal silver tooth
Silver medal silver tooth

She's 7 years old
She lost her tooth
You're 70 years old
You lost your tooth
7 days a week 7 packs a day
7 years old

7 years old she'll stay

She won the medal
You lost your tooth
It's a draw!

A draw! A draw! A drawing of scars
far underneath her leotard

And you don't spend a day behind bars

Silver medal silver tooth
Silver medal silver tooth

How much is a little girl worth?

Looking at My Window in the Gartland Commons in Poughkeepsie, NY

Gabriela Maria Cunha '22

Gazing hopelessly out the window next to my bed,
The fog consuming the hudson,
Drifting eerily across my window,
A ghastly being.
I sit here and wonder the things I could do
If I could just get out of bed and start the day.
As the squall races in next to me,
I can not longer see the hudson across from me,
And I question if it even exists anymore.
The mysterious snowglobe enveloping my thoughts as
I wonder what it would be like to dance in the snow,
Not a care in the world,
As the snow dances around me.
I have everything seasoned bagels waiting for me in the freezer.

An Ode to Sacrifice

Britney Carino-Muniz '22

First Place, Nonfiction

This is in honor of all the people in my life who gave some part of themselves to make sure I was able to take on the world better.

As defined by Merriam-Webster, *Sacrifice* is "the act of giving up something that you want to keep, especially in order to get or do something else or to help someone."

This is one of the defining aspects of my life because I'm the result of the sacrifices made by the people around me who dreamed of something better, not for themselves, but for the generations that would come after them.

Sacrificion is brutal because it strips you from what you truly want to achieve in your life. It means you are willing to put what you want aside in hopes that the outcome of your hard work was worth everything you gave for someone that wasn't yourself. What I achieve in my life is not only stemming from the hard work I put in for myself, but it is deep-rooted in the "could-haves" and "what would have beens" that echoed throughout the minds of those who did not or have not fulfilled their own aspirations.

Although sacrifice is an immensely dark void filled with the vibrancy of old dreams that were dimmed by reality, there are so many cracks within its foundation that allow the light of gratitude and appreciation to seep through. Illuminated by the people who benefitted from that darkness, these people who recognize the power of this struggle and use it to fuel their endeavors.

It is melchionically beautiful because:

Sacrifice takes courage - it is seen with the substantial decision my grandparents made to emigrate their entire family from Mexico to the United States without dwelling on the heavy risks but looking towards the opportunities of a better life. With no documentation, little money, painstakingly long factory job hours, and many mouths to feed, they never let go of the hope that one day everything would be better because they had made it to the land that helped make dreams into a reality, and so, they persisted.

Sacrifice takes vulnerability - it is seen within the six months of my life as a five-year-old when my parents were evicted from their one-bedroom apartment. Desperately needing to seek shel-

ter for themselves and their children, we went to live with my grandparents and then with my uncle. Still living my life, as usual, enjoying the innocence I had, believing that sleeping over at grandma's was voluntary, and not understanding how much we were truly struggling.

Sacrifice takes determination - it is seen within the endless days and nights my siblings and I went without spending time with our parents because they worked countless jobs to provide for us throughout my childhood. Watching them trying to build businesses that would ultimately be shut down, making 50 dollars a day and only being able to pay bills, but still not letting these failures diminish the drive they have till this day.

Sacrifice takes faith and humility - it is seen within the nine years my family and I had lived in government housing until we moved into our first home in the suburbs. Watching my parents look in awe as they reminisce on what their hard work has given them. Hearing my mom say that she never thought that one day she'd own her own home and be able to enjoy it the way she does sitting on the front doorsteps with her kids, eating ice cream, and watching the people pass as they live their lives.

Sacrifice takes love and selflessness -

It is seen with my grandparents who cried tears of joy the day they sent me

off to college, the first person to move away from home to achieve higher education. My grandfather expressing how he had always dreamed of this moment and how proud they are to see their first girl so grown up now.

It is heard with my father who tells me in passing how intelligent his daughter is and how I will be able to achieve anything I put my mind to. That whatever obstacles come my way, I will always overcome them no matter what because I am deserving of success.

It is felt with my mother, who talks to me while I "sleep," telling me how proud she is of me for achieving a goal that had seemed far out of sight for herself. Saying that the downfalls she had gone through were worth it when being able to see her child shatter barriers that were too difficult to even crack.

Next year, I will finally be accomplishing our collective dream of walking across that graduation stage. And although not everyone is physically with me anymore, I understand how monumental this step is for us. But it will never stop there because I will strive to keep accomplishing all of our dreams.

Sacrifice is what drove my previous generations to achieve the improbable - and their sacrifice is what drives me to achieve the impossible.



Transformation
Ashleigh Barham '22

Wednesday's Child

D'Avion Middleton '22

Wednesday is a pretty word.
When you say it,
Not when you write it
Or think it.

It takes long
Looks wrong
And I am busy
on Wednesday

But I lack motivation.
Attempt to write another chapter,
Creativity is running again
To a place which I cannot follow,
Nor see.

I try to go outside,
My white breath stops me.
Even the weather
Is Wednesday's warrior

I call my mom instead, and put the heat on eighty.
She says, "Don't catch a cold"
I say, "A cold can't catch me."

Maybe I'll take a night walk.
It'll be colder,
And darker,

But it means
Wednesday
is over.

The Drive Thru at the End of the Universe

Kevin Pakrad '23

Waiting in the drive thru line
I breathe in exhaust
And look at the wall

There is the worn decal
Of a McDonald's "M"
Speeding onward into oblivion

What power! What spunk
In that sun-damaged "M"!
I can see the potential energy in its wheels,
just longing to
go.

Goooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

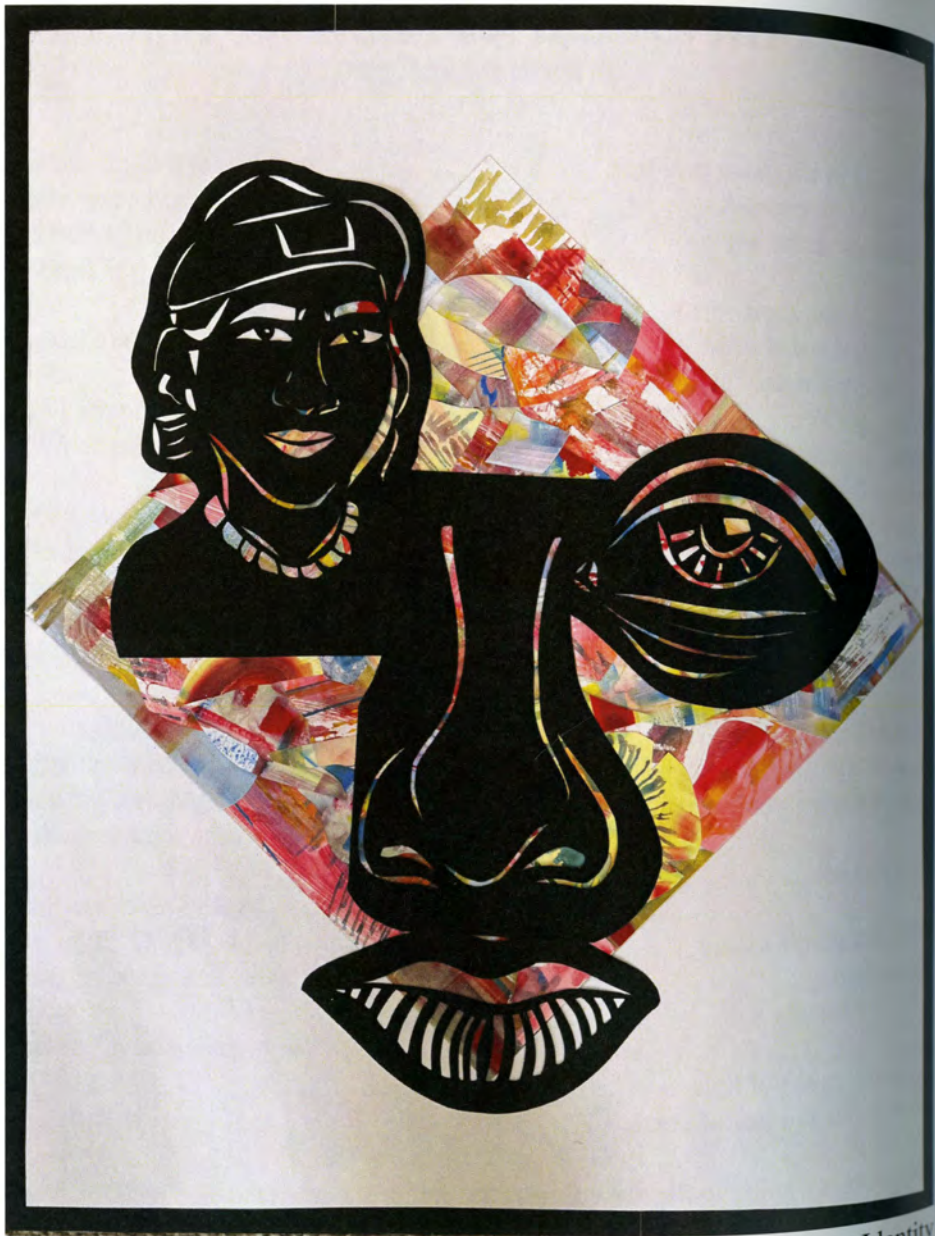
It wants me to set it free.
It will bolt the first second it gets
- It probably won't even pick up a snack for the trip.

It'll just go.

Only looking forward,
on and on
faster a n d
f a s t e r
until the speed of light
overcomes the fear of death.

It's probably going to the drive thru at the end of the universe.

And for all they work,
It'll be rewarded with the wrong order.



Identity
Kaitlyn Dugan '25

Wise Owl

Miranda Santiago '23

Dear Mr. Night Owl,
You have always had a slight scowl,
How I wish you were not able to make me feel as I do
As you walk with your head held high
Do you ever wonder why things turned out this way?
You think you are so wise but your mind is what keeps you limited
I feel manipulated, all the lies that you fed me
As I begged and I plead for things not to end up the way that they did
To tell you the truth I believed in you
All the diluted thoughts you put my head
The reasons I should get out of bed
Now look where I lay as I write this poem about you
You once told me valuable people do not get abandoned
So how is it that I am alone again
Another goodbye, turns into another faint memory
Tell me my wise owl
Do you also ponder why things ended up this way?
Or are you simply, okay?

Childhood Saudade

Emma Shaw '22

It lingers in Coldplay songs
and in her voice outside my shut tight door:
See you in the morning glory.
Oh, hot potato, tomato.
An earth that smelled like dirt covered knees, sundials
and the screened-in deck where the spiders hid.
The backyard that I can only remember
in the hues of passing moments
behind the faces of the neighbor girls
that I never got to tell goodbye.
Homes built from soil and stones
that rise to our ankles, cities underneath
the shadow of the cerulean slide.
The big rock that sheltered the bugs
is lifted by my father --
the strongest man in the world.
Yank the beetles and worms from their sanctuary
to cut their lives short in plastic cups of mud and onion grass.
Now earth smells like detergent,
months without my mother,
holidays where we keep our fingers crossed
for the chance to see my brother.
I meet them between the dictations of my faltering youth.
Images of a life that belonged to a brighter me
play like 16-millimeter in my head.
I know I've lost some of the film,
as I can only see flashing fragments of footage
pieced together in fraying strands
like the thin fabric of my little pink blankie
that I'm afraid will disintegrate
in between my harrowed fingertips.
If I think too hard about
the waning summers between semesters
and the added numbers to my age
I'm filled with dread again,
knowing I have to remember you
for longer than I had you.



Prickly
Christina Levi '22

The End.

Julia Panas '25

We broke up after exactly two and a half years together.

Though we should've broken up three weeks earlier when you went on a fucking bender and I found you passed out on the couch with a pillow covering your dick on what was supposed to be a vacation. "*Uspokój się.*" That's what you told me. "Shut up." Voice low and fierce like a predator.

HOUSE RULES

1. Julia makes the rules
2. If Julia's not around defer to Lucas
3. If you don't cook, you clean
4. If you cook, cook for everyone
5. Everyone helps out
6. No smoking inside the house
7. No loud music
8. No complaining, no drama
9. If the group says ur too high/drunk you stop drinking/smoking
10. *If the group says ur too high/drunk you stop drinking/smoking.*
11. You added that one.

The next day I woke up at 10:30am in someone else's bed to sharp laughter coming from the living room. I walked into the noise to find you on the sofa with a bottle of vodka you bought with the ID you stole from your brother that

morning, half empty. There was *only* one shot glass on the table and a can of whipped cream and strawberries strewn across the wrecked wooden surface. Little did I know that's all you'd eaten in the past three days.

You told me you always wanted to make sure I feel safe but I don't feel safe when you're like this

and I don't know if I ever will again.

I should've broken up with you *then*. But it doesn't matter because we broke up over and over and over again in the coming months. Broke ourselves down, smaller, reverting to our worse selves. All the problems we ignored tearing apart the fabric of our fake friendship friends with benefits relationship *situation* we tried to wrench together.

The Things You Broke

- The table
- The trip
- Our trust
- Our relationship
- Me
- You

Broken house makes broken people.

I've never been in this position before.
I thought it was you who lost
me but I was wrong
I lost you
And I might never get you back
I fucked up and I'm fucked up
and for once I don't know how
to fix it.

I can't believe I hurt you
I don't understand how the
little things I did hurt you so
much
But I know it's not about the
little things
It's the feeling that the person
you always trusted and cared
for and trusted to care for you
Doesn't fucking care anymore.

I'm so heartless
How could I not care
When I see the pain I caused
you streaming down your
cheeks
I'm selfish
You told me and I know now
that you're right
And because of that I can't tell
if I'm writing this for you or
for me:
But I'm sorry.

Therapy Session

We're sitting in my room
Maybe for the last time
 You want to leave
 I want you to leave
 Yet we're cemented to our spots.
 We can't stop the conversation
 Even if it's spoken in silences.

Sunset
Light fading on our faces and our
relationship
Until the light is gone from the sky
And the compassion from our hearts.

It always hurts to say goodbye to some-
thing you love
 Yet we've done it so many times.
 You'd think we'd have it down
 by now, no?

That night, our last kiss felt like our
first kiss
 *We should've known it was the
 last kiss.*

It took us two and a half years. And
then the magic was gone.

Cornelia Counts

Ashley Marcinek '22

Cornelia Counts, better known as Connie, was my grandmother. If you picture a southern lady, you would picture Connie Counts. Her charming accent would grace such phrases as "Bless her heart" or her over exaggerated "Well". I have never known a conversation with my grandmother to be dull, for everything she said was something so remarkable. She had been slowly declining in health over the years, with some years worse than others. In classic Connie fashion, she summoned all the women in the family, which is just my mom, her two sisters, and me. She gave us a speech on how her time is coming and she wanted the girls to have her good jewelry. She was always dramatic like that.

I got the call that my grandmother was near the end of her life just as the weather began to chill. My mother could barely get the words out before her sobs took over. She had been admitted to the emergency room, and suffered a small stroke. *We are going to visit for Thanksgiving, so you and your brother can say goodbye.* Thanksgiving. Three weeks away. Three weeks of worrying about the last time I would see her. Thanks to COVID, I hadn't seen her in 2 years. Did I say goodbye? Did I say I loved her? Did she even remember me?

Those three weeks passed and suddenly it was time to leave for Abington, Virginia. Ten hours of anxious silence passed, and there we were, back home at last. Her piano still stood in that living room, with all our pictures across it's top. The kitchen still had those tiny silver spoons she adored. Pepaw's oversized brown leather chair still sat in the kitchen. Nothing had changed, except for the fact Gran wasn't there. Without Gran, it felt so empty. After taking in the home, my mom gathered us into the kitchen and gave us a heartbreaking briefing.

We are going to see Gran tomorrow at 3pm. The Gran you will see tomorrow is not the Gran you know. She is frail and weak. She is confused and may not speak. If she doesn't remember who you are, do not take it to heart. It's important you say goodbye, for her time may come once we leave.

As we got closer to her door, part of me didn't even want to go in. I was terrified to see her as she was. Yet, I knew how desperately I wanted to hold her hand one last time. So, I went in. She was distant and quiet, only speaking up when she needed a scratch. (The medicine made her itchy, it was our job to scratch her head and chest.) My mom had to step out with my aunt, leaving

my brother and I alone with Gran to talk. I froze, suddenly fearful for this moment, for what do I say if every moment is important? I pulled a chair close to her side and began to ramble on about everything in my life. I told her about my college experience, sparing no detail when it came to my time in theatre. I told her about how my classes are, and how often I wished I was here, holding her hand. My brother sat behind me, stoic and afraid, for we both had absolutely no idea what to say. I shifted the conversation to my brother, telling her all about his Grad School education. But, before I could continue, she softly muttered, "Who?" I thought the saddest part of this would be just that, for she couldn't recall who we were. But, it was the moment that followed that still sends chills down my spine. I began to explain that it was her grandchildren all the way from Connecticut. We drove 10 hours so we could have another Thanksgiving right here with her. Before I could get lost in another story, I felt her hand tighten and I looked at her. For the first time since entering the room, I really looked into her eyes. That's when I saw the recognition flash across them. She scanned my face and I could see a tear begin to trickle down her face. That's when I knew she understood exactly who I was and why we were here. For the first time in her life, she could not care for her grandkids. I think she knew us being there meant her time had come and it destroyed me to know that I was bearer of that news for her. I

squeezed her hand and wiped our tears. I don't remember the rest of that visit, only that once we left, I began to sob into my mother's arms.

The final time I saw Gran was on Thanksgiving. The moment we walked in, it was a completely different Gran. She was aware, alert, and snippy. Immediately she made sure to state, "*Well, I'm itching and y'all ain't scratching.*" God forbid we stop scratching her head. She didn't stop there, everything she said held that Connie charm we all love. Towards the end of the visit, my mom wiped the tears from her eyes and smiled, "*This has been our best visit.*" Gran looked right at her and said "*Don't let that go.*"

In my time of grief, that memory has stuck with me. It is so easy to dwell on the end of her life, but that wasn't who she was. Even two weeks before her passing, she didn't let the pain take away her final moments with her family. Her whole life she spent loving those around her. From her youth as a nurse to her last years spent taking care of all her grandchildren.

So thank you Cornelia Counts, for being the rock of our family. For so many memories that will always make me smile. For showing me what a strong and beautiful woman looks like. For being my grandmother.

A New Love

Lorah Murphy '24

I thought I liked it rough and jagged
Thought I loved the way he broke me so good I
Thought that was how love felt
But you are gentle fingertips dipped in water
Smoothing the cracks and ridges of the fourth-grade clay coil pot of me
You are willowy fingers that are satisfying because *they are yours*
You are hands that shake as they rest on my cheek and
Hands that fall to the small of my back, to my waist, because
You are not the volcano that levels its path but are
A forge's fire, powerfully cultivated,
Warm and life-giving.

Longing

Madelyn Cyr '25

I wish I was the sunrise
New and certain. I wish I was a lie
But never was revealed.
I wish I was a woolen mitten
A mitten that warmed up your chapped
Hands. I wish I was intelligence, I wish I was the ideas
That kept your mind occupied and full

I wish I was the roses
That were propped up in a vase
I wish I was as innocent, as innocent as me.
I wish I was a teacher and students wanted
To learn. I wish I was the constellations
Piecing together the night sky.

I wish I was a traffic light, determining
When you move. I wish I was the worry
Stone that you rubbed your thumbs across.
I wish I was the polished cross
That you draped across your neck. I wish I was the verb 'to forgive'
And I would never fail your trust.

I wish I was a Friday night
That left you feeling speechless.

I wish, I wish.



Haze
Megan Byrnes '24

Without Her

Laratee VanNieuwenhuyze '24

Inspired by *Doris* from Leon Bridges and Khruangbin's album *Texas Moon*

As I leaned on the railing of the bridge, wind screamed all around me, crying out to whoever was around to hear it. It was only me. The sky was weeping, torrential tears being splayed out across the ends of the world. Or, at least it seemed like that in my mind. If the sky here was lamenting the losses of the day, then would it not be doing so across the entirety of its realm? It must have been...

Huffing, I grabbed a cigarette from my pocket. Attempting to feign ignorance to the rain, I place the cigarette in my mouth and tried to light it. First try, a feeble fairy of a flame appeared but was quick to leave. Second try, a stronger one, though only fractionally. It went out shortly after, not alive long enough to make the paper catch. Okay, once more... Not even a wisp. Drats. It's okay...it's alright...

No, it's not.

It was a few measly seconds, but I swear everything around me froze. The only thing I felt was an impending tsunami of rage and anguish about to crash down on the shores of my mind and I had no sandbags up to keep me safe or any chance at reaching higher ground. Taking a deep breath in, I let it come shattering down and felt

time progress around me. I screamed up towards the empyrean. Or, at least I think I did. It seemed like I traded time for sound the moment I expelled whatever had welled up inside me. For what felt to be forever, I stood there until my throat went bare. The air I subsequently drew brought a welcomed sting, for it reminded me that I was indeed alive, however irritating that fact may be. Rain had inundated my shoes, but I did not care. Hell, I didn't even notice the wet softness of my socks. I wasn't feeling anything around me, or on me. Instead of experiencing the pain inside my being or the elements of the world around me, I was just...there. *Existing*.

Clenching my fists, I took deep and intermittent breaths. Tears threatened to spill from my eyes while I dropped my head to the ground. I felt the lighter I was still holding dig into the skin of my hand. A brief rage washed over me as I stared at the butane-filled canister, throwing it off the bridge and into the river down below. The abandoned cigarette soon followed its lover, falling from my lips. Maybe it's a sign that I should do the same.

Reaching into my pocket, I pulled out a crumpled piece of paper. When did I put this in my pocket, I

wonder? Surely it had been a while. Undoing the haphazard folds that I had conjured it into, my eyes scanned the briskly written script. It read:

Darling, please don't cry. Don't curse the world or those around you because I won't be there. When the time comes, promise me you won't even think about following, no matter how terribly you wish I was there with you. You promised me when we started our journey together that you would try and be a better man. A real man. Did our time together teach you nothing? Please, for your sake, prove that it did and keep on going past the end of my time.

I love you, my dearest.

Doris

Doris. My dearest Doris. I had forgotten. Oh, sick world, how could I have forgotten? The love of my life, why have you left me? Why have you forsaken me to a life to be led into the depths of despair and darkness? Doris... can I join you where you are? Would you curse me for eternity if I did, like Paolo and Francesca are condemned to do to each other? Would a real man be able to live with himself without his other half by his side? Or would he condemn himself to everlasting regret, yearning for a longer life?

You *would* curse me, wouldn't you? I know, I know you would.

A quiet sob left my throat as tears raced down my cheeks. A loud and anguish-filled cry escaped me as I sank to the sidewalk ground, the

now drenched letter crushed up in my hands. I sat there for ages, bawling as my body shook, with no one around to see me. The streets around me were dead and bare. I was alone. Oh, so utterly alone. A bitter reminder of how my lover was no longer here. Maybe I should heed her words, take them into consideration. Listen to her last demand of me.

But what if I forget about her again? I don't want to continue on in a world where I've forgotten about the only one that I have ever truly held dear to my heart. If only that wasn't the last time you had closed your eyes...

No, that's wrong. It wasn't her fault. It was just the card she was dealt in this life, as the loss of a soulmate was the card dealt to me. But even so, the world continues on, no matter the hardship one must face or the despair they experience. Including me. Doris, I will keep going past your time. You did in fact teach me how to be a real man and moving past your departure must be part of this. I love you, my dearest. Forgive me, and keep watch over me. Be proud of the man I am and will become. I adore you and miss you, my flower.

Slowly standing, I gently place the letter back into my pocket and began my midnight stroll back home, to the place she once lived with me.

To the place I will continue to live without her.

Endings

Kayla Parkes '25

Sun set. It never rose.

His shoes were at the door.

I never got to say goodbye.



Untitled

Kat Caravaggio '23

the seasons don't change, we do

Troy Lyden '23

We blamed it on the winds of change blowing from the east,
We decided that to do the most would be to do the least,
To let the current sweep us on to wherever we might go,
And that to try and stay and fix it all would just be all for show.
"There is no reason" you had said, "to carry on like this,
Holding on to what we had would just lead us amiss,
When autumn pushes summer out, there's nothing you can do,
But watch the leaves fall to the ground and feel the air turn blue."
And so we let each other go, and let the leaves fall down,
And separately we sat and watched the dying world turn brown,
My forecast changed from sun to clouds, and finally to rain,
And every drop that hit the floor did nigh to numb the pain.

And then a stronger wind blew in; a terrifying breeze,
At first it felt refreshing, but then the rain began to freeze,
The alabaster specks of dust stuck fervent to my hair,
And no matter how I tried to shake them off, alas; they're always there.
They're collecting on my temples, soon they'll cover my whole head,
My skull will be a glacier by the time that I am dead,
My skin is turning white as snow, my eyes are sinking in,
As I long for sun and sky and for springtime to begin.
And once I saw you once again, I noticed something strange,
I noticed that, unlike myself, you didn't really change,
There were no snowflakes on your head, your eyes as bright as old,
While I lived in frost and shivering, you weren't even cold.

And then I realized what was done; then I saw the truth,
I had let the weather change me; I had let it take my youth,
I had swam the floods of autumn instead of cruising on a boat,
I had been facing winter storms without a winter coat.
I had let the cycle take me, I had let it make my life,
I had let the winds control me, let them cut me like a knife,
So I took my hand and waved away the self-oppressive mist,
For it was time for me to break the cycle; time to now resist.
I broke through the overcast with a former, youthful power,
That had sprung up inside of me, reborn, like a Maytime flower,
And so full circle I have come, now with knowledge new:
The fact is that the seasons don't bring change; we do.

Mom Genes

D'Avion Middleton '22

You do not always know what I am feeling,
As I walk this earth without death,
Without an apron
My fear is that I'll have to ride backward—
Into memory.

I hate memory.
Then I was back in it.
Does the truth matter
When it's floating face up,
Or face down?

The young woman whose poem it was,
Crashing home from the Labour Club, mad drunk,
As scars would attach and ride the skin,
Too public, more vulgar than she wished.
Why does everyone want to torture her?

I am her daughter.
This is certain.
Like two angels who are tortured,
That intense affection
For silence and for bathing,

And drink gin slings all day, like real writers do.
I want Viola Davis to save the city in the last scene
with a black fist afro pick —
Music of hair,
Perfume of isolation,

The holy city.
Beautiful,
who would believe?

Lines Taken From:

Danez Smith "Dinosaurs in the Hood," Frank O Hara "For Grace, After A Party," Charles Baudelaire "Le Vin Des Amants," William Aggeler "The Wine of Lovers," Tina Chang, "Love," Elizabeth Bishop "In the Waiting Room," D.A. Powell "Passing Through," Stephen Dunn "Decorum," Lucille Clifton "sorrows," Galway Kinnell "Wait," Paul Farley "Adults," and Marcos Konder Reis, "Map."



Lucky Platt // Rainbows
Nina Bisco '24

Envious

Madelyn Cyr '25

Why is it what I want, he will never need?
Everything he does, he does for her, but why can't it be me?
He finds comfort in the absence of me, yet I continue to proceed.

Like a gatekeeper, she controls you instead.
Dictating and clingy, why can't he see?
Why is it what I want, he will never need?

In his head, she helps him succeed.
But to me, she only expresses what his future's supposed to be
He finds platonic comfort without me around, yet I proceed.

He's a diary full of entries, a book I wish I could retrieve.
I wish I could take back everything he knows, but I've already read.
Why is it what I want, he will never need?

I've painted a picture of our hopeless future in my head
Yet, he and I both know deep down that it erased "meant to be".
He finds comfort in the absence of me, yet I proceed.

I contemplate all of my regrets while I lay awake restless in my bed.
He's not mine and that's too difficult to believe.
Why is it what I want, he will never need?
He finds comfort in the absence of me, yet I continue to proceed.

If We Could Do It Over

Vanessa Hasbrouk '25

Pulling into the driveway after my double shift at the hospital transposes a feeling of relief throughout my aching body. Putting the car in park validates the end of my workday. Entering the house confirms to me that I am able to breathe a little slower, talk a little less, and sleep a little more.

I was so envious that my husband was able to clock out of work 3-hours before me. Because he had a head start, he would have his entire night routine completed by the time my feet hit the welcome mat. Thirty years of marriage solidified our daily routine: We wake up, we go to work, he comes home, then I come home. Throughout this routine, we hardly even saw each other so I suppose you could categorize us as roommates as opposed to spouses.

Every night I made myself the same meal: chicken, brown rice, and roasted asparagus. I am not of the picky species; I could eat the same meal over and over and never truly get bored. I think this is why I am so comfortable in my cyclical marriage; I never get bored in the most boring of circumstances.

I threw my work bag in the foyer along with my sneakers and puffer jacket. The generation of an immense yawn reminded me that it was 12:50 in the morning. Even though I had to go back to work tomorrow, or I guess today, I still craved my savory chicken, seasoned brown rice, and crunchy asparagus.

Upon opening the fridge, I saw a styrofoam container that had my name on it (literally). I grabbed it because of its food-bearing appearance. Placing the container on the marble countertop at the center of the open-floor kitchen, I picked up the note personalized with my name.

Maybe you can go to sleep a little earlier tonight. I know my chicken isn't as good as yours, but I can cook a mean pot of rice.

Love,

Rob

With a slight smile lighting my face, I swallowed my prepared dinner as fast as I could. Swiftly brushing my teeth, cleaning my face, and climbing into bed, I thought about tomorrow, or I guess today. I thought about how we would wake up, we would go to work, he would come home, then I would come home. I thought about how if we could do it over, I would want to be spouses instead of roommates.



Triangle
William Casa '22

Reliquary

Michaela Ellison-Davidson '23

He liked to think there was no wrong she could do.

She drank juice from wine glasses, her black nail polish weeks old,
her hair cut short in that boyish fashion he liked.

And when she spoke she did it softly,
the words leaving her mouth in one languid flow of passion- a soul like a poet, a heart like Hell.

He resented her but nothing she could do made him wish to look away.
So he just kept on looking, even when the looking got hard.
Just kept on reaching for her hand like God reaching for Adam on the Sistine Chapel.

He wanted to keep everything between them sacred,
as if once it left her mouth it was his to hold.

And then one day she sat across from him in a crowded cafe,
the coffee between them growing cold.

*We've given up so much of ourselves to other people- he remembered her saying-
but I'm trying my best. I'm trying to still have something leftover for you.*

And at times he wonders if she still thinks of him in her bed
with the sheets pulled over her chest, with the lights off, with the drapes pulled,
with the moonlight mirroring long tendrils of white along the floorboards.

He wonders these things and his thoughts are futile,
her voice now forgotten, the memory of her a ghostlike apparition in his dreams.

But there she is in small, obscure ways:
a coat in a crowd, a song on a radio, a date that is her birthday.

He is reminded of her and in this remembrance he looks for the validation that she too is
reminded of him.

That his pain is not one sided, that he has not been forgotten before he has forgotten her.

Four Melodies

Brooke Millard '25

1. It is snowing in October. Feet crunching on the freshly fallen snow fills the heavy silence. My aunt makes her way to the front of the crowd. Shoes scuffle and throats clear. I look up at the bright white sky and close my eyes, feeling the globs of snow nestle in my hair and eyelashes. I blink away the snow and tears and try not to catch sight of the white

cloth. I inhale sharply when I hear "He Will Carry You" playing from my aunt's phone. A symphony of emotions overwhelms me. My eyes make their way around the crowd; I've never felt more in tune with my family. My sister clutching her camera, swaying to the rhythm with tear filled eyes and white knuckles. My grandma's deep navy hat fills me

with sadness as she sits on her walker and stares into the distance. Finally, my eyes settle on my grandpa under the draped white cloth that is riddled with droplets of snow. The song ends and I still hear his voice as clearly as the day it echoed beautifully through the chapel when we all came together to praise the Lord. I know he is singing along and smiling down at us, wherever he is.

2.

His hands move carefully as he unwraps his present. I watch as he squints his eyes to read the fine print of the case. The dimple deepens on his cheek, skimming through the list of our songs I downloaded onto the CD. He looks up at me in awe while I avoid his gaze and shyly insist that it was nothing, a stupid grin on my face all the same. And later, when he pops the silver disk into his newly gifted player, I realize that I did not fall in love with him for his singing voice. "Promiscuous" begins to play and the harmony between us is not reflected in our duet as our off-key voices fill the air. But even as his voice cracks on the high notes, I never want this song to end.

3.

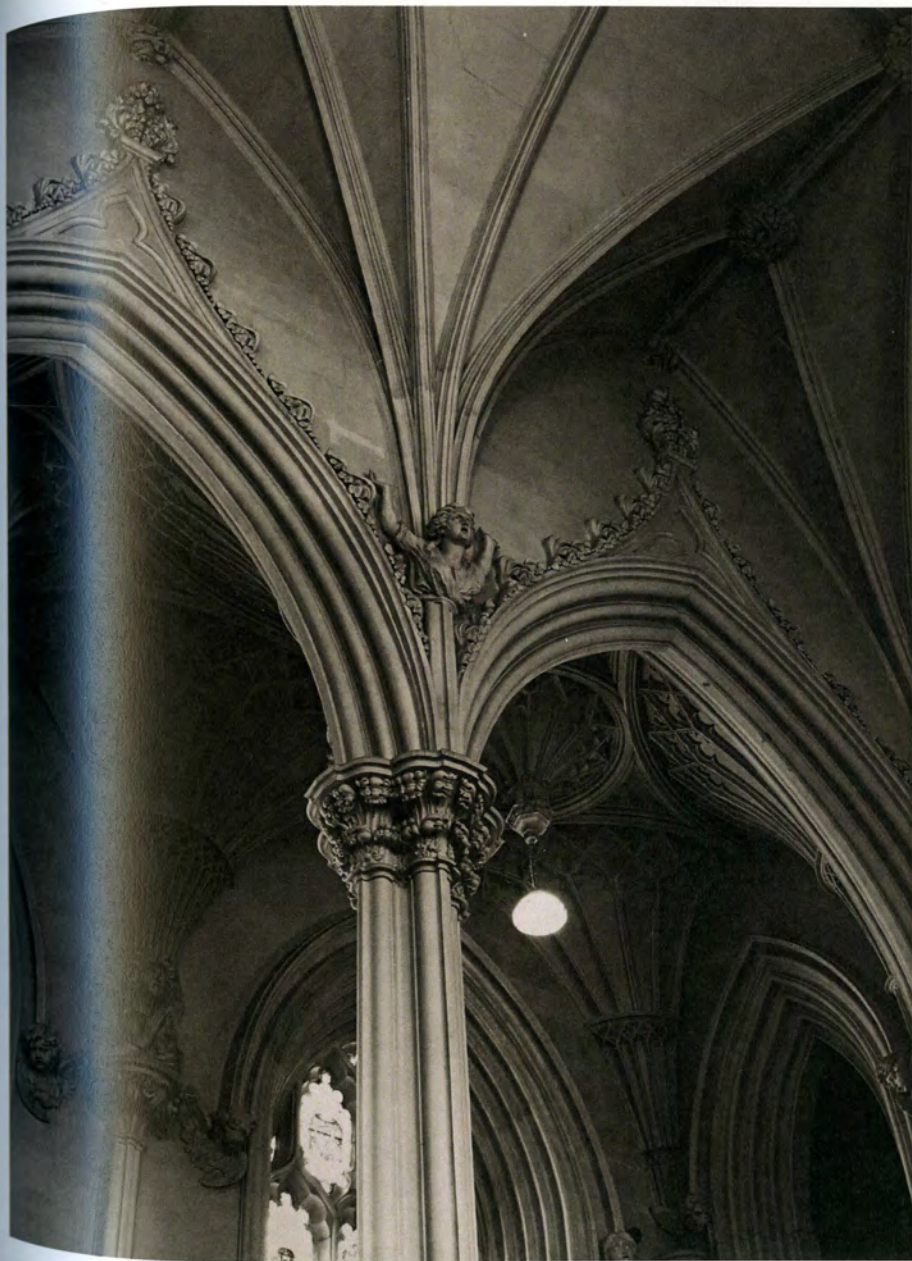
Shaky breaths. Pins traveling up my arms, needles down my legs. I am alone and the dorm walls are closing in. Anxious feelings build, a crescendo of emotions that threaten to consume me. The door opens and my shaky breaths falter, my tears are wiped away. I give a meek and awkward, *hi*, to my roommate and make eye contact with the red, blotchy-faced girl in the mirror. I glance at my phone and spot a new video from Mom:

This is our song! I'm beggin', beggin'

you, so put your loving hands out, baby. Her voice calms me down and I smile. Decrescendo.

4.

Music keeps us in tune with ourselves. The multitude of genres are as vast and deep as our emotions. Songs are attached to core memories; melodies are imbedded within our relationships. We are the composers of our own lives, our masterpieces. You don't have to be a musician to realize that music is crucial for connection. It is personal, it is universal. The foreground and the background, the past and the present. Long drives with tousled hair, windows down and comfort songs blaring. Music is therapy. I listen to music with people I value because I want them to feel how I feel. I want them to be taken back to a time in their lives that they cherish. Like how I remember my mom being there for me when I transferred schools every time I hear "Beggin'" on the radio. How I am reminded of my grandpa's strong presence whenever I listen to "He Will Carry You." The laugh I let out whenever I hear "Promiscuous" and imagine it in his voice, singing our hearts out on his seventeenth birthday. Everyone deserves to be taken away by the rhythm, to let the music of life guide them. Because music is everything.



Exalted
Megan Byrnes '24

Wet Wall Paint

Cassandra Arencibia '24

I am in Fontaine. A building that looks like utopian paintings. The front door is broken, or maybe it has just been freshly fixed. Either way, people do not use the front door, they all shove themselves into the side door, blocking the path and grunting at each other like oxen. They rush to class, some slipping into rooms of fire and ice, others disappearing in the black box, which looks like it is made of chalkboards. I am not here for class, so I feel like an imposter, like I should leave and try to hide my face from prying eyes.

I vaguely think of ordering some coffee, something iced, and as I discover the coffee shop is sold out of iced coffee, a girl bumps into me. She shoots me a glare, but it looks perfect on her face. Her blonde hair is pin straight, with smooth brown lowlights. She is wearing small gold hoops that every other girl has, and she is at least five inches taller than me, maybe more seeing as I am wearing platforms. Her glare makes me shrink in on myself.

Facing a wall, I put myself in an imaginary dunce cap. I should have apologized.

The ceiling in Fontaine is falling apart. The drywall ripped open reminds me

of how a bullet can blow you apart, make your flesh and bone look like ripped out drywall. Blood, or maybe water, has made pockets of wetness in the paint. It surprises me how much I don't know the properties of paint. It has formed a second skin over the wall, and the water dripping in- presumably from the buckets of rain we've been getting- has distended the paint like pimples on cheeks.

It looks heavy, and I reach out, wanting to see if the sack of water is soft to the touch.

"Hey!" a gruff voice yells at me. I start, scurrying back. I open my mouth and widen my eyes, trying to defend myself, but my voice disappears into thin air. I take another jerky step backwards, limbs like a rusty puppet.

A maintenance man is striding toward me. He is big and burly, frightening simply because he is experiencing a different life than me. I would be in love with him if he didn't scare me so much. Perhaps I love him because he scares me.

"What do you think you're doing?" he asks, stopping to scold me. I shake my head, still unable to speak. He doesn't

say anything, and I wish he would just break the silence, cut the tense wire that has been tightening all the while in my core.

"Don't touch that. Get to class," he orders.

"I don't have class," I squeak out, and he frowns.

"Then what are you doing?" he asks. He has calmed a bit, my mousy nature confusing him as he straightens up.

I do not say anything, instead I wave goodbye, regret it, and scurry out the side door, bumping into another girl with pin straight blonde hair and medium sized golden hoops.

It is no longer pretty outside. A hint of spring revealed itself the day before in the form of a mild 64 degrees, no wind, and a shining sun. Now, the bitter cold dries my uncovered hands, and I slip and skid on salt thrown by other maintenance men. I wore heels today and decided to walk around campus.

I feel like a dumbass.

I bundle myself up, fumbling as I try to continue holding my tote bag while shoving my arms into my coat, putting on my earmuffs without mussing my hair, and covering my hands with the mittens my mother mailed to me.

I forget about getting coffee, and instead preoccupy myself with tonguing a new tooth in my mouth. An extra shard has pierced my gums, all the way back, nuzzled against my wisdom tooth. I really need to schedule my dentist appointment.

Trapped

Alyssa Borelli '24

Blue green
I want to paint the color on my ceiling
So I can wake up and think of you
Only to ache for you
Come over

One step forward
Twelve steps back
Plagued by confusion
Pulse in my ears
Blood
Heat
Come over again

I was water in your hands
My tears caress my cheek like you used to do
I have so many thoughts that suddenly I have
None
Numb
Ruined
I hate myself for not hating you
Come over again

Talk about it behind closed doors
But I wouldn't come back
Exhausted but
I tasted real
Your plastic love
Over again

Fingers in my hair
I kissed each of those fingertips
But then they're pressing me down
My head
My chest
My heart caged beneath your ribs
Again

Denial of use
But I was used to fill your loneliness
I laugh and smile
I'm dying all the while
Come over again



Gota de Iluvia
Claudia Molina '23

Good Songs and How They Make Me Feel

Sydney Currier '22

1. Let it Happen – Tame Impala

Listening to you is anxiety. I imagine myself running through an endless field. The sky is flashing between every color of the rainbow as I run with a smile on my face forever and ever. The red, the blue, the green staring down at me flashing but I keep running and running away from something that is chasing me. I am not sure what I am running from, but I feel it there. Flowers covering the field in every pink trying to distract me from running but I have to keep running. For seven minutes and forty-five seconds to be exact. The colors are an endless rainbow that is making me dizzy but to run further and further through the field is the only way to get by. I instantly hit a glass wall. I know the only way ahead is that I will have to climb. I know I'll make it; I know not to get distracted but I don't know how I will make it yet. And I want to do it without any help. Suddenly the base drops and I am at the top of the glass wall. The ever-changing colors of the sky stop changing ending with the brightest of blues and I am overlooking the field of flowers and distractions that once gave me anxiety, but I ran and climbed and made it to the top. And I am satisfied because in that seven minutes and forty-five seconds I let it happen and succeeded.

2. Silver Soul – Beach House

Listening to you makes me calm. I imagine that I am floating through water, wait. I don't think it is water, I think it's clouds. Tears filling my eyes. But it's not because I am sad it's because everything is beautiful. Blissful. Calm. Drifting through the sky. Breathing slowly. Tears are dropping as rain drops. Fulfillment and happiness, floating through the sky. Powerful, I feel so powerful and feel so calm. The same feeling one would get floating on their back in the ocean. Letting the waves take complete control of oneself. Still not a care in the world except to stay floating. Floating on a cloud? Floating on water? Would the two feel different? I often think about what floating on a cloud would feel like, but this song reassures me that I can float on a cloud and that I can be calm.

3. Can't Take My Eyes off You – Frankie Valli

Listening to you is love. You're just too good to be true. I imagine that I am walking into a dark café on a rainy day. With a book and my glasses on. With my glasses on I still make eye contact with someone, but I can't tell who it is. I make my way to the counter to order. The hot latte which is my favorite steams my glasses. But I still make am able to see you out of the corner of my eye. Is this love? The rain pours down outside, the buttery music seeps through the cabaret corners as the lust

of something new fills the air. Excited for the first time in a while the smile spreads across both of our faces. And I sip my coffee.

4. Tiger Mountain Peasant Song – Fleet Foxes

Listening to you is innocent. I imagine I am on a hike with my family like when I was young. Growing up next to the Catskill Mountains climbing over rocks. The sweet guitar. I am virtuous and pure as I run through the forest. Picking up precious flower's curiosity with every new smell every new view. There is mud all over my white shoes, but it does not matter. Because here nothing matters it will all go away with the breeze of the wind, right? The only thing that matters is my family who is running through the woods with me and guiding me through and guiding each other through. A peanut butter and jelly sandwich at the next flat rock and a Gatorade. The hot sun peeking through the cascade of trees towering above a small me. A beautiful note ends, and I am 22 again.



Reflection
Claudia Molina '23

Violet

Casey Brown '22

I'm trying to remember,
Sometimes people do
Things you wouldn't expect them to,
In a way that is no mirror of you.
Learning the hard way
Silence is an act of violence, too.

I was safe with you.
There is no other world to choose
Besides one where I am loving you.
A growing vine in my chest
One that will infiltrate my tomb.
You exist in a world of dormancy,
With no sense of reality,
Too young to realize,
The heart that beats inside,
Was greedy to ever be called mine.



