

Volume 76

THE
BELLARMINE
REVIEW

SPRING 2018

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Cover Art by: Jovie Lee '19

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Introduction

Dear Reader,

I speak for the entire Bellarmine Review staff and writers as well as Fairfield Prep's Creative Writing Club members when I say that I was honored to assist in the production of the 76th volume of the Bellarmine Review. The Bellarmine Review has fostered English writing excellence at Fairfield Prep since 1942 and remains Fairfield Prep's oldest student-run publication, hinging exclusively on student-produced work.

For seventy-six years the Bellarmine Review has striven to include Fairfield Prep's Jesuit heritage in all that we do. In the tradition of Saint Robert Bellarmine S.J., we strive to, like the Doctor of the Church, integrate both human knowledge and literary excellence into our prose, poetry, and artwork. As our mission statement states, we believe that through the authenticity of our written thoughts, we may unknowingly stumble on truth. Over the course of the last seventy-six years the Bellarmine Review has provided a space for the authentic ideas of Fairfield Prep students to congregate and thus, in the spirit of our Jesuit heritage and the motto *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*, encounter truth.

As someone who has been both a member of the Creative Writing Club and a contributor and editor for the Bellarmine Review for four years, I understand both the significance of the Bellarmine Review and its role in enhancing Fairfield Prep's community. The Bellarmine Review gives voice to the Fairfield Prep community and offers its students the opportunity to both share and publish their work. During my time as a member of the creative writing club and contributor to the Bellarmine Review, I have been astonished by the sheer diversity in each pool of authors and the complex ideas that each member of the Prep community can offer to the Review. The Bellarmine Review is a place for the quiet artist to be heard, and heard loudly he will be.

Thank you, and please enjoy the 76th edition of the Bellarmine Review.

Sincerely,

George Seyfried '18

President & Editor-in-Chief, Bellarmine Review

STAFF CREDITS

President.....	George Seyfried '19
Vice President.....	David Smeriglio '19
Editors-in-Chief.....	Louis Yoo '18 and George Seyfried '18
Assistant Editors.....	Liam McClure '20, John O'Connor '19 and Nick Allen '18
Technology Editor.....	Jake Walker '19
Assistant Technology Editor.....	Jack Lieder '18
Artistic Director.....	Cameron Imrie '18
Assistant Artistic Director.....	Finn Mangan '19
Layout Editor.....	Jacob Hall '19

MISSION STATEMENT

We desire to publish poetry and prose that is clear, concise, and evokes the senses, taking the reader to the writers imagined placed through strong writing and a good sense of rhythm. It is believed in Jesuit education that an academic endeavor may be an encounter with the divine, and we strive to live by the motto *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*. That is to say that in the authenticity of our written thoughts we may unknowingly stumble on truth. Our intent is to give our students' words a place to land, serving as a venue to acknowledge their living truth.



BELLARMINE REVIEW

For the first time in our seventy-six year-old history, the *Bellarmino Review* will be instituting an electronic iBook publication. While our mission of representing the high-quality artwork of Fairfield Prep students remains consistent, this new vehicle of outreach nevertheless allows us to be more representative of all Prep students' work. We hope to continue publishing the short stories, poems and artwork of Prep students, but additionally welcome music, film, and other means of art. We encourage you to get involved in *Bellarmino Review* if you are interested in having your work involved in this new outlet, or assisting with the publication process.

NICK ALLEN '18

The
Swallowing of
Jonah & The
Pride He Took
Along

so jonah and his horse/one day/were tramping up the
hill/

with his flight begun already/he had left behind his pill/
as he wrestled with his map/on the Mountain at Sinai/
he could hear a faintly moaning/from the kid of storm &
sky/

around the bend rolled sara/she was looking for a child/
screaming with a cackle/oh the weather isn't mild/

on rode jonah then/to the crowd engulfed in robe/
when a little fellow/obadiah/asked him for the code/
well he didn't know/how could he though/and pushed
right past him by/

he thought he'd left his pill/beyond the thinning kid on
high/

but on the way/the kid did stop/and shout toward his
horse/

the man you see is blessed/though his eyes are long
and coarse/

well jonah did reply/he was tired of the shout/

look here/man/someone lookin' for a bout/

the kid stepped down/as he took a sip of wine/

that's all right for now/i'm your brother/you are
mine/

but jonah/with no pill yet down his throat/

advanced right then before him/laying down his
brown suede coat/

no sooner/too/had the kid sat down in trade/

reaching for his ankle/to reveal a silver blade/

the horse had gone/as had the gun/so on his own was
he/

hollering to himself and he/i'm not your brother/i am
me/

surrounded him did they/the crowd beside the kid/

with a muffled baritone/the opposer had been hid/

behind the surging sea/in rags/strolled down the vaga-
bond/

swallowed by a whale/he said/he should have rode the
van/

Legacy

What is a legacy?

Is it planting seeds in a garden that you never get to see?

Is it making something known for what it truly gets to be?

Or is it something that you can do within your century?

What I want, is to make something that will outlive me.

Something that people can benefit from, something that inspired these

Kids of the next generations, the entrepreneurs for our promised land



Painting by: Jovie Lee '19

This could be something that could help them
out, give them a hand

Or even whisk them away to a Neverland

Where The Lost Boys and Peter Pan,

take up their sorrows and play in the sand

Or it could be a word of advice, telling them

there's just an easy way to be cool as ice

Just be nice

Don't be rude,

Be a gentleman,

Don't be crude

I just want to leave something that could help

who's gonna take my flame

Make their name

And possibly end up in a Hall of Fame,

Where Doctors

Pick and dissect their brain,

Where it seems that they were inspired by the one
who could tame

Their flame,

And pass it on to a progeny or protégé

That manages to uphold what they were trying to
say

Something that never fades away

Just something that it would take one word to
make all the girls' hearts melt away.

To say

History has its eyes on you,

So keep it that way.

LOUIS YOO '18

Lepidos

“A moist young moon hung above the mist of a neighboring meadow. In many a garden have I stood thus in later years—in Athens, Antibes, Atlanta—but never have I waited with such a keen desire as before those darkening lilacs. And suddenly it would come, the low buzz passing from flower to flower, the vibrational halo around the streamlined body of an olive and pink Hummingbird moth poised in the air above the corolla into which it had dipped its long tongue....”

- Vladimir Nabokov, “Speak, Memory”

I’m unsure of why the average high school male is unable to explicate his identity truthfully. We all put a stone barrier around our sensitivities as if they’re meant to be hidden in the shadows of unsupported masculinity. In all honesty, I haven’t been able to reveal my penchant for the thirst of hunting moth-like creatures to any of those that aren’t the closest to me. It isn’t as though I haven’t been provided an opportunity to because I’ve had plenty. My go-to personal factoid is my ability to translate dots on a page into sounds because that seems somewhat more acceptable. Lepidopterology is a passion I’m sure others would be more interested in learning about, but it remains stuck somewhere in the middle of shame and hesitation.



Painting by: Matt Daly '18

I've been crawling through my memories recently to find that this niche passion of mine started with a class pet that I'm sure every New England kindergartener has had the pleasure of forgetting, the monarch butterfly. The metamorphosis, the wings, the silence, its cadence as it bounced through the air - all of it captivated me completely. I vividly remember that his name was "Wormy", and although it was a truly flagrant irreverence for foresight - he was always the object of my affection. What a terrible name for such a majestic creature. I suppose that if you put twenty five-year-olds in charge of naming something, one should expect as much.

The reason I didn't actively pursue this affection through my childhood years escapes me. It wasn't until I grew an interest in literature, especially the works of Vladimir Nabokov, that my passion for Lepidoptera flooded back. It just happened to be that the world's most mechanically gifted craftsman of English prose was an enthusiast, successful researcher, and collector of the world's most beautiful, enigmatic, and (I can say this with some experience) hard to write about the creature. I was completely enthralled with the craft, spending hours upon hours researching taxonomy, anatomy, and the art of collection through whatever dusty library tome I was able to get my hands on. It puzzles me how little the ordinary person even notices the butterfly. I have yet to find any companions for my entomological journeys due to a simple lack of interest. Perhaps the most widely used metaphor for beauty, freedom, and life itself fails to catch the awe and inspiration of its discourteous onlookers.

I myself find that every neuron in my body shoots with curiosity and wonder as scale-winged nymphs flutter

above. Few things capture my sense of ambition, exploration, and attentiveness to beauty like chasing an ephemeral insect through its fey pastures. Perhaps they are ignored because the butterfly is not of this world.

The monarch and its fulvous wings are free to float on; ignorant of war, borders, or hatred. It flutters as though it is in a constant war with gravity, but treks onward without effort. It continues to prance in order to fulfill its natural duties, regardless of its audience. It's exciting to accept that studying these insects has put me through a metamorphosis of my own - the next step in my cycle.

SKYLER CELOTTO '18



Marie

To Nick Dante, nothing in the entire universe could compete with her effortless beauty. Her eyes, an ocean of cheerful happiness, sat upon her porcelain skin and captivated all those who had the privilege of looking into them. Below, sat delicate red lips that frequently exposed a smile. A smile that had the power to illuminate any room as it poured out her pure soul. Golden hair flowed down her face and kissed the tops of her petite shoulders. Her body as wondrous as her loving attitude that warmed countless hearts. Nick could paint the picture of her sitting at that table to the exact mark. A sight he admired from behind the counter of a bar.

Nick was a bartender at Romeo's bar. A life he was content living, a life his father had laid out for him. His father, Romeo Dante, had founded the bar and it had been his pride and joy. Bright and cheerful, he brought a presence to the room that filled it with pure happiness. He had made it home for all those who entered and created a family, a family that carried on despite his death. Nick had lost his father after graduating college and came to carry out his legacy. Many people say that apple doesn't fall far from the tree. In Nick's case the apple fell, rolled down a steep hill and was thrown fifty feet further into a flowing river only to be wisped away. Nick was the furthest thing from his father. Skinny and tall his awkward stature made people move away as he looked as if he could topple over at any second. His dark brown hair was pulled upwards off his forehead and combed to the side. His face was thin and his eyes sat close

together above his phosphorescent white teeth. His quiet raspy voice played like a broken record throughout the day. The only words he spoke from behind the counter was “what would you like”, as a new customer sat across from him, or the occasional directions to the bathrooms. He was determined to stay out of everyone’s way. He cared nothing for conversation, in fact, even the idea of it made him uncomfortable. The idea of conversation with her on the other hand, made his heart turn to cement and forced his stomach to churn.

Shivering as the cold pinched his body he struggled to get the key into the lock. Opening the bar was Nick’s favorite part of the day. The lonesomeness of empty stools and bottles made him feel truly detached, the only person to tend to was himself. Suddenly, a strong Boston accent rang behind him “Open the door now, before I turn you inside out Nick.” This could only be Bonnie, a waitress who was hired by Nick’s father and one of the few coworkers at Romeo’s. Impatiently, she stood on the snow covered Boston pavement until she pushed through Nick to get inside as he finally opened the door. The warm air embraced Nick’s face and the smell of the beer stained floor flooded his nose. The wood panels creaked under his feet as he walked to the rectangle bar that stood like an island in the middle of the room surrounded by about a dozen tables. Once behind the protective shield of the bar, Nick attempted to prepare for the day ahead.

Today was Nick’s favorite day, it was the day she came in. She came in around five and sat at a table that was directly to the left of the bar, where she took out a pencil from her dark blue bag, and begin to write in a small composition notebook. This routine was replayed every Friday as she celebrated the long week she put behind her with a drink. She sat there with her blue bag resting against the leg of the stool, her hair draped over the one side of her face and pulled behind her ear. Her piercing blue eyes were always buried down in her notebook. Men flocked around her, although, they were politely denied. Nick gazed at her as he pretended to rinse out a bottle at the sink that lay on the opposite side of the bar. He stood there until the glass bottle was so clean that it looked as if there was nothing left in his hand and his peace was disrupted with a ring of a small bell.

A high pitched ring that followed the opening of the front door, alerting all inside. In the doorway stood a mysterious figure, a tall, older man who hesitated before entering. He removed his derby hat that was lined with snow along with his black trench coat and put it on the rack that stood next to the door. He was dressed in pitch black pants with fancy shoes that clicked as he walked to the bar. His white shirt and red tie were draped over his skinny body. Regulars gazed at the man as they were unaccustomed to new faces. The loud laughter and conversation that filled the space was dimmed as he sat front in the center of the bar. The man fixed his

dark brown eyes on Nick who was once again caught in the light of the girl. Seeing this the man developed a smirk on his slightly wrinkled face showing his bright white teeth.

“May I get a beer?” asked the the man, loud enough to get Nick’s attention. Nick, startled and embarrassed, quickly got him his drink and sat it on the bar across from him. Smiling, the man looked into Nick’s eyes with glowing aspiration and gave him a nod as he raised the beer. “Just a little celebration, today was the day my life changed forever.” Nick smiled back at him and pretended to be doing something else to avoid further interaction. Noticing this attempt to ignore him, the man let out a deep laugh and said “ Conversation is beautiful, but you will learn that someday when you are old like me, bud.” He raised his glass to his lips and wiped his face with his arm as he put it back on the table. Who was he to call him “bud” thought Nick, he did not know who he was. This stuck deep to him as the only person to call him bud was his father. Offended, Nick fired back, “I am busy, don’t got too much time on my hands pal.” Nick muttered with his back to the man.

With no hesitation the man responded “Got enough time to be drooling over the dime at that table, how about you sack up and go talk to her.” Nick froze, turned around, and planted his hands on the table in front of the man. “What you want with me, what made you come in here.” Taken back the man spoke out in a calm voice “I am waiting for my

wife to get off work before we set off for dinner, no harm, I saw you staring over at her” he paused “Just go talk to her, what’s the worse thing that can happen” he smiled and raised his eyebrows. Nick shrugged of his dignity and started to escape to the bathroom. “Listen bud, let me help you” shouted the man “You hear me out and give it a shot then I will be out of your way.” Nick walked back to the man, overcome with frustration, knowing he would not leave him alone. He wondered if the man had more drinks before coming in.

As he rambled on and on, Nick started to become restless but also developed a liking for him. His humorous disposition was comforting and brought moments of laughter. Fading from the task that drew Nick in, he often brought up his wife who he deeply adored. The conversation danced through the mix of voices that filled the bar. The bar was now crowded and Nick left to fill people’s drinks but always returned back to the man. He connected with Nick sharing his feelings of doubt and timidness. Nick felt a level a comfort that was foreign to him, it was random but he did not challenge it. “Take a deep breath and talk to her like you would anyone else.”

This was the man’s final advice as he sent Nick off. Determined, Nick stepped out from the safety of his island and into the hecticness that surrounded. There was no turning back, his heart pounded in his ears, his hands trembled in the deep pockets of his jeans. As he inched closer he felt his armpits pour sweat, he prayed it was not noticeable. He made the

route to her table avoiding chairs and oncoming waitresses. He so badly wanted to be back engulfed in the comfort of the man. He felt out of place as if approaching a deadly animal. He finished the journey and was right next to her, his foot could almost touch her blue bag resting on the chair. He opened his mouth but no words came out, his knees were weak and his arms felt heavy. She stared down at her notebook completely unaware of his presence, until finally, a word eased its way through his shaking lips, "Hi." Startled she jumped up from her writing and respond "Oh my...why hello" she took a deep breath. "How are you " he blurted out. "Just fine and yourself ?" she said with an awkward smile. He knew she wanted him to go, he could read it all over her face but she was too cordial to say it. He wanted to punch himself, he couldn't imagine how stupid he seemed. He thought back to the way the man made him feel and was struck with an idea. "You give me a shot and I will be out of your hair" this turned her smile to something more sincere, her eyes scrunched and dimples appeared on her lips. He turned his head to the side and raised his eyebrows as if asking for an invitation. "The floor is all yours," she said jokingly. Now fueled with confidence he thought of things that would hopefully bring back that beautiful smile he adored until he felt a large hand on his shoulder. Behind him stood a studly man who smelt of hard liquor. "Is everything ok here Marie?" he spoke with a deep voice that was overpowering and strong towards the girl at the table. "Leave Josh" she

snarled back. "I just don't want this pedophile putting something in your drink, bastards like him can't manage to get a girl on their own, isn't that right bud?" He said looking back down at Nick.

Lisa squirmed in her seat and gathered stuff as if about to dart out the door. Anger overpowered Nick, he had come too far to let her slip away. He turned towards the man and pushed him back barely an inch "She said leave." Josh smiled with his tongue in the corner of his mouth, indenting his cheeks where he murmured out, "How about you do something." Without thinking, Nick said what exactly was on his mind. "I know people like you way too well", he inched closer, "I feel sorry for you, high school was your kingdom, you pray on the weak, just another idiot who barely made it out of his parent's basement, sound right? It would be easy to say that you are a jerk because of your partly brain that sits in your big head, or because an insecure little girl calls out from inside you, both very true, I'm certain. But I am going to go out on a limb and say you there is more than that, bud, I'm going to say it's because your cold heart isn't the only undersized part of your body." As he stopped his rant he took a deep breath and was nervous to see what laid ahead until he saw her beautiful smile, that he so much loved, had come back to her face. It's flawlessness almost completely numbed the pain of the hard punch to his cheek that he received. As

she helped him up he felt her soft, warm hand against his arm and the scent of pure honey flooded his nose.

Now alone, as Josh violently stormed back to his drink, she began to apologize informing Nick that Josh was an ex-boyfriend she dated years ago. They continued to talk and laughed at the sudden change in events. He was cultivated by every word that left her mouth as they grabbed his throbbing heart. The conversation progressed throughout the night as he made Bonnie take over his position at the bar. They agreed to meet for dinner when suddenly he saw, over her shoulder, an empty seat that was once occupied by the man. The door rang as it was closed behind someone exiting. Hoping it was his new friend, Nick excused himself from Marie and rushed toward the door. As the gust of cold wind blasted against his face, he stepped out of the bar onto the snowy Boston sidewalk now only lit by the orange glowing streetlights. Ten feet away from him, once again bundled up in his black trench coat and derby hat, was the man. On his arm however, was a lady carrying a dark blue bag off her left shoulder. Her blonde hair glided along her the top of her shoulders as shined against the streetlights and a glowing smile gleamed on her face as she laughed with the man. He could see her deep blue eyes despite the distance. “Hey did you see me! I did it” he called towards the man. Not breaking stride the man and woman looked back and grinned, “I knew you could” the man shouted as he turned back around.

“What’s your name anyways?” Nick desperately yelled, “my name’s Nick, I’ll see you around soon, bud.” Nick chuckled as turned around and placed his hand back on the door handle. When a sudden thought made him freeze and his mouth open. He shifted back around in complete disbelief, he had thought it could not be and he was delusional. When he looked back to the see the man again, he saw only to the sight of an empty street, not a single person around but himself.

JACOB HALL '18

Outkast



Painting by: Teddy Mitchell '19

Oh misfit, Oh rebel one,
Console in you for you are great
Thine mind shakes like earthquakes
Scorching the regulars with fear.
Powers written down six-fold in Braille
Yet you decipher with exception.
Oh gift, don't shift
To their thoughts, for you are great.
Box you in travesties where folded you will be tucked
By luck. Only will you survive
When you dive into us?
No standards or banners, yet free
Speechless and the spirit will shine
Chattered and patterned of how we tossed it out.
It was cold at first.
But we formed a circle, and when hungry we shared
Not a flare,
Not a care.
We could finally be us.
So, in trust that they haven't spurn their Wrath,
Common man meet me here
Where the willows dance
And the wind sings its song with warmth.

JOVIE LEE '19



Who Am I?

Who am I?

Well, that's a good question

Frankly, I don't know

The only thing I know is what I've been told.

Then who am I?

A brother.

The last born of the litter

Born a little bitter

Abandonment by the King of the jungle

Now his cerebrum is all bungle

Then I am a brother.

An artist.

A canvas split into two halves

Black and white

The years have passed

A canvas no longer black and white

But now grey

Then I am an artist.

A Christian.

Created in his image I was told

Rather have him than silver and gold.

Little sprout grew up in his teaching

His love was so far-reaching.

Prophesied since the sprout was young

He would preach and speak with his tongue.

Then I am a Christian.

A pacifist.

Violence is never the answer

To deal with peace you must be a dancer.

Sail across the ocean of peace

All violence must come to a cease.

Then I am a pacifist.

A warrior.

I faced the enemy in battle

Mama told me don't let them herd like cattle.

They took my crown

With peace tried to stand my ground.

The chains of my past held me down

No freedom not even in my town.

The battle is yet to be won

So don't think it done.

Then I am a warrior.

Who am I?

A brother. An artist.

A Christian. A pacifist. A warrior.

Frankly, I don't know.

This is what I know.

I am Jovie Lee.

SKYLER CELOTTO '18



Two Roads

When two roads diverge
The true attributes are exposed
The strong will emerge
When the boys are asleep while you work, fight the urge
To throw in the towel and go into a doze
When two roads diverge
When a loved is gone and one hears the dirge
Do not be defeated by the new throes
The strong will emerge
When others fall to materialism and splurge
Stand in modesty and know your worth does not lie in your
clothes
When two roads diverge
When a person is terrorized and the weak converge
Stand with the man in the margins and oppose
The strong will emerge
Find yourself in times when scourged
For you are the one that knows
When two roads diverge
The strong will emerge



Painting by: Jovie Lee '19

The Changing Winds

My sleeping brother
may your sleep be well
I hope you dream great things
on your way to church bells
But making this here
My emotions cannot be quelled
I remembered when we'd play
with sticks as swords
We'd never talk, glance and no
Exchange of words
But you'd have the upperhand, you'd
Strike like 1000 birds
But the winds have put
Us on different paths
We've Grown considerably
But alas my sleeping brother
I now walk my own path as you have
That one day where we tied. So long.

JACOB HALL '18



Season Struggle

Pen to paper spurs write
The poet swings his pen to slay
The paper is now his prey
All day and night the wind blew
Shedding light on earths flowers
Where people come from far to stare
The poet glowed as he went up the stairs
Only encircled by colors of blue
Resisting the bottle he began to pray
For he knew what was right
Yet he desired the flour
Stumbling around he tripped on his sleigh
Hot to the touch he blew
Pen again he begun to slay
Close to the hour he smelled sweet flowers
He looked outward at her and began to stare

Back to action he had to write
But her so far he started to pray
Hoping that in she would have blew
Cloudy minded he wanted flour
Soon magic would come on a sleigh
Thoughts confide he lessened his stare
Thus confronting the beast the prey
In reflection it was placed right
Sung by the wind was blue
Now rattled was the flowers
Slimmed the gap between all stairs
Beggars cold wished to pray
While the blind man looked to write
Dreams crushed where men slay
The dead in red gather by sleigh
Wished be upon the rise of flour

All below look and stare
This time hope dispersed and blew
In joy the humbles pray
For their wrongs to be right

Far off they stare at the near sleigh
For at the top lies blue with growth of flowers
Saved by those who pray justing our right

MATTHEW TREZ '18



From: Chico, To: Jon

“Buffalo again?” Jon yelled into the phone in his office. “You just went there last year! Isn’t it time you stuck around for the holidays so I can see the boys.”

“You know we go to my parents every year, Ronnie and Mark love it plus my brother told them he would take them to see the Bills play at Orchard park,” replied Jon’s kind yet manipulative ex-wife Karen. “I have to go now Jon, the boys have their last hockey game before the break tonight.”

“Thanks for telling me... I guess I’ll just miss that too.” Jon said aloud to himself.

He sat in his comfortable black leather rolling chair infuriated by the doll faced maniac he decided to wed 18 years earlier. It had been two years since his divorce and he got not one iota of good from the deal. The kids, the house, the car, the dog, and even the frequent flyer miles from his credit card— all hers. The only thing she left him was his successful sheet metal business, which she could’ve made him sell as a part of the divorce since they purchased it together.

The thing was, Jon would’ve sold his business ten times out of ten if it meant he could see his two boys more. Ronnie was a little older, about seventeen, while Mark was fifteen and playing Hockey at the Gunnery School. Ronnie was the brainiac and Mark was the maniac, they were two kids a man could be proud of.

John peered over to a picture of the two, trapped inside of a cherrywood frame in the corner of his crappy old metal desk, and sighed. He walked out onto the floor of his shop and

watched over his latest addition to the welding crew, a young kid named Brody, who he gave a job to after he came out of rehab for his heroin addiction. Brody wasn't smart but he was the salt of the earth, and it broke Jon's heart when he saw him pick away at his face because he was still using in secrecy. Brody, in a way, was Jon's substitution for his kids. He had just brought Brody Thanksgiving leftovers the month before because Brody's family disowned him. As callus as Jon could be on the outside, he had a soft spot for degenerates. He himself had been a prescription drug user for years—part of the reason he never criticized Karen for leaving him. Now though, he was 8 years clean.

“Good night Brody.” Jon said as sparks flew by Brody's mask.

“Good night boss man! Merry Christmas!”

Jon walked out to his car and began his commute home to Trumbull, he loved to read the billboards as he drove down Route 8.

“Have you accepted Christ as your true savior!” John read to himself from one. “What a crock. Where's this guy been the last 42 years.”

Jon was by all accounts a skeptic. He felt, as many do, that once someone had seen enough bad in their life, God ceases to exist to them. He grew up in New Haven, and was proud of it, but hated what his neighborhood had become. His father was an alcoholic who left him years earlier when he retired from his job as a garbage truck driver. He took his pension and ran out west to settle down in Arizona. His mother

later passed away from complications of her diabetes. Jon was a broken man.

Somehow, through all the frivolous things that had occurred in Jon's life, he kept faith in a higher power of some kind. Something that ran humanity and caused the good in the world. He believed in guardian angels that protected him and his family, and comforted him when times got tough. All Jon needed was a sign.

John finally got back to the monstrosity of a home he purchased after his divorce. He told everyone it was an investment, but he really bought it to flaunt to Karen that she was leaving a life of luxury by separating from him. That was its original purpose at least, but now it served as a giant reminder of his loneliness.

As he lay in bed, he stared up at the ceiling. Already the twenty second, and he would spend another year eating Chinese food on Christmas Eve. As he fell asleep, he could only think of the day where he would be able to enjoy Christmas again.

The early rising sun gazed into the window. Jon woke up, and felt optimistic about his day. He put on his favorite Harley Davidson shirt, and tied up his boots. He decided that today he was going to get breakfast at his favorite spot before work, Johnny's diner.

The dusty hole in the wall that sat in Black Rock was a reminiscence of how things used to be. The old man behind the counter cooked him up his favorite— Denver omelette. The

Connecticut Post, wet with someone else's coffee, surrounded a large Hispanic man at the end of the counter.

"Let me see that when your finished Chief," Jon said to the mystery man.

"One second buddy, I'm just reading about that punk who's running our state." he replied.

"Ah Danny boy, almost done with him?"

"Damn right we are."

The man put down the newspaper to reveal a face all too familiar to Jon. It was his buddy, Chico, from his Hillhouse days.

"Chico Valdez?" Jon asked.

"Jonny Fields!" he yelled back with excitement.

The old friends embraced each other like long lost brothers. They had been teammates together for the Academics on the baseball team, Jon as the pitcher and Chico as the catcher. They never won a title, but they were competitive in their day. Chico had moved their senior year, and Jon never heard from him again.

"I tried finding your big ass on Facebook! Where have you been all these years!" Yelled Jon.

Chico explained how he had moved down to New Orleans with his family and got a full ride to LSU.

He tore his rotator cuff and never made it past college baseball. He married his "Cajun princess,"; and had three

kids, but he also got a divorce and moved back up here in hopes of finding better money to send back down to the bayou.

"Three kids," Jon said. "I got two of my own I won't get to see this Sunday."

"Ahh man that's the hardest part. If you want to come, a few other ousted fathers and myself hang down at Seaside Tavern in Bridgeport on Christmas Eve, you should come be miserable with us." Offered Chico.

"Eh maybe I will!" John said in return.

Chico left and Jon's omelette came, and a fresh perspective overcame Jon. There were other guys out there with the same issues he was going through, and that solidarity was comforting.

On the ride home Jon did a lot of thinking. Although relieved, Jon was nervous. The bar scene did not make him nervous, but he had a history of doing things over the top whenever he indulged in drink. Jon thought about another time, when he and Chico had gone out together after a big win, and when Jon woke up in the morning he was on the train to Grand Central. A classic Chico prank; he loved to put his passed out friends on Metro North to freak them out. They were quite a rowdy gang of boys, and Jon was no exception.

He woke up on the twenty third and drove to the shop. Brody was grinding away at something in the corner. He lifted his face mask up.

“Hey boss!” said Brody, clearly out of his mind high. Swaying as he tried to stand at his station.

Jon sprint-walked over, his famous vein popping out of his forehead, the same vein that popped every time he was angry. Like the hulk, you didn’t want to see all 250 pounds of Jon angry. He grabbed Brody’s arm, and pulled his sleeve up— red rashes and bumps filled the area. He looked over at the table next to him, where a broom was leaned against it.

“Boss? What are you doing?” Brody said as Jon headed for the broom.

Several whips could be heard going through the air as Jon clubbed down on Brody. Tears falling from his face. The look of a father’s eyes could be seen in Jon as he continued to take out his wrath on Brody. Once he was done, he went into his office and filed away \$5000 dollars behind a piece of sheet rock, one of his many hiding spots, while Brody lay on the floor. He called the police, and reported that Brody stole money from him and caught him in the act this time. Brody was arrested, after being beaten to shreds by Jon. The other workers arriving to the shop were in disbelief. Jon framed Brody out of love. He knew that Brody couldn’t get junk off the streets from a jail cell, and that a probation officer would likely get him more help than Jon could ever give. He sat at his desk and cried the

rest of the day. He slept in his office that night, not knowing whether he would join Chico the next day. Why did this always happen to him?

Jon went home the morning of Christmas Eve, pissed off at life. He sat on his couch and watched television the rest of the day, something he hadn’t done in years. At nightfall, he got dressed and drove out to Seaside.

“Jonny!” Chico welcomed him.

They sat around and discussed the times they had and the times to come. He and the other men there complained about their wives, about child support, about visitation— it was like a club. The disc jockey played all the classics from Def leopard to Pearl Jam. The night went by faster and faster, and the Jim Beam went down smoother and smoother. Soon, Jon looked over at Chico.

“I shouldn’t be here.” Said Jon, completely in the bag.

“What’s the matter?” Chico replied.

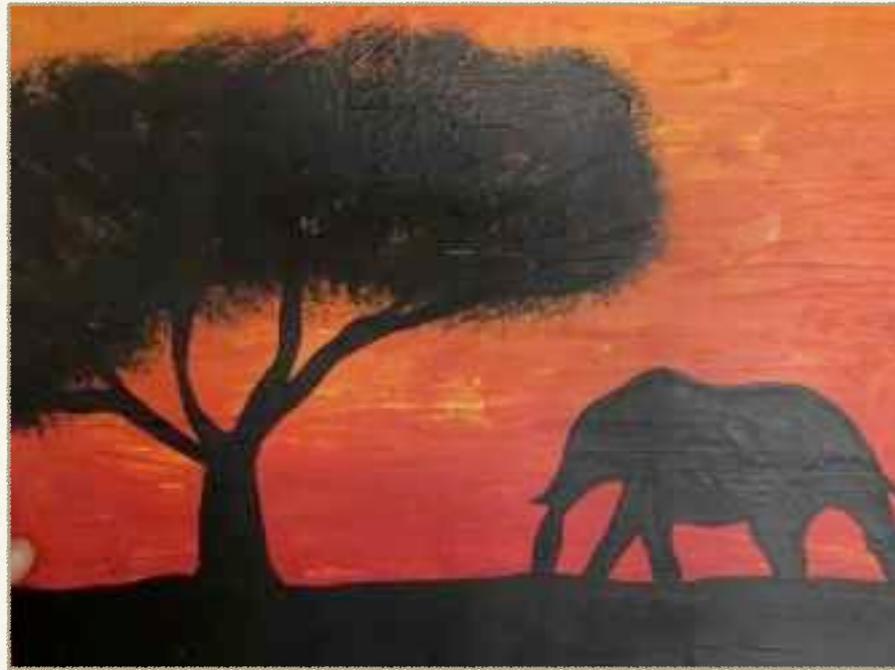
“I should be with Karen and the kids. I should be married. I should live in our old house. I miss my dog, Sparky. I miss it all!” Jon slurred as his eyes rolled back in his head. It was the last words Jon would say that night.

He woke up in the morning as the sun beat onto his face from the window beside him, the open road on the outside of it. His head felt crushed and his lips felt dehydrated, what had he done now? How the hell did he get here? He was on a Greyhound bus, speeding down the highway to somewhere. He woke the man up next to him.

“Morning.” Said the man.

“Morning,” Jon replied. “Where the hell is the next stop?”

The old man smiled, trying to be kind despite Jon's use of profanity. "Buffalo." He replied.



Painting by: Jovie Lee '19

Seeing is Believing

“Seeing is believing. Anything you can’t see or prove to be present, therefore, is unable to be proven.

We call those ‘metaphysical ideas’. Let’s say my metaphysical belief is that Christian over there has an invisible cat on his head. I can’t see it and I can’t prove it, so you guys are probably looking at me like I’ve finally gone crazy and I’m lying to all of you. That’s why I teach history. We know events happened from verifiable proof. Specifically, in this class, we teach proven events in American history. So, Isabel, I believed you asked me if I believe in the Christmas story. This was my long-winded way of telling the class that I don’t. And I’d love to debate with you on this subject, but administration sent a memo earlier today to stay away from issues of religion. Maybe if we have some extra time we can discuss the separation of church and state, just remind me.”

James Wallace was a high school history teacher in Cedarwood, Virginia. He was fresh out of college when he took the job at the town public school. He graduated from the school just some six years earlier. Never a great student, he attended a community college in Virginia. The school

let out for Christmas break just a day before Christmas Eve, and no one, not even teachers nor administration, wanted to be in school so tangents such as the one James did was common throughout all classrooms in the school. James' perspective came from a lifetime of nonconformity to religion. He despised the people who celebrated Christmas because the lack of proof in the stories. Historians have a weird thing about knowing all the facts, something I've never been able to comprehend, and the Christmas story to historians are a hell of unverified and metaphysical claims. Yet people still believed, and that's what irked him the most.

While finishing the lesson, the bell rang. It was the end of the day and the students rushed out like water from a burst pipe on a frigid winter night ready for their winter vacation. Mr. Wallace didn't move any faster than any other day of the week. He packed his bag and walked to the door, making sure to turn off the lights, he closed the door before he left. Darkness fell over his barren classroom. Most teachers decorated the classrooms with wreaths and other winter related decorations but not James. James made his view on Christmas very clear to his coworkers and his students.

"Yeah, let me get a double bacon cheeseburger with lettuce, tomato, grilled onions and ketchup, a regular fry, and a large coke", said James as he was ordering dinner from a Five Guys around the corner from his house. He looked at the cashier's nametag. It read Natasha. She went to Cedarwood and James saw her in the hallways from time to time. She was in student gov-

ernment, he knew because of the annoying announcements every week. "Sure, can I get a name for the order?", Natasha asked. "Yeah, it's James and do you know how long this is going to take, I don't want to be here forever like last time." He was referencing the week prior when his order was given to the wrong person and then when he finally got his order, his fries were missing. They gave him a free shake for his troubles. "Oh, don't worry Mr. Wallace you'll be home in time to wrap all your Christmas gifts." Natasha didn't take history for her senior year, so she didn't have the pleasure of meeting Mr. Wallace and hearing his stance on Christmas, but he was going to let her hear it tonight. "Christmas is a holiday of fools, fools who believe in an improbable story and waste money on gifts in the name of this story. So just get my order done and do it quickly." Natasha was shocked at the reaction of Mr. Wallace, especially since she thought her comments were just harmless banter. Unwilling to let him ruin her Christmas mood, Natasha retorted, "whoa, sounds like someone has been getting coal recently. What happened did Santa not eat your cookies one year? Oh, I know what happened, Rudolph left a little surprise on your roof last year. Yeah it happens to even the best trained animals." The response did exactly what Natasha intended, Mr. Wallace was thoroughly annoyed and the two didn't talk again until he got his order a few minutes later. As he walked out of the restaurant, Natasha yelled "Have a Merry Christmas, Sir!" James mumbled under his breath a series of

insults most people find too vulgar to repeat.

James finally arrived at his apartment at 6 PM. He threw his food on his table in the kitchen. Shortly after, he turned on the television to watch the news as he ate his dinner. For some strange reason the television was on ABC Family, which he knows wasn't the last thing he watched. Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer was on, seemingly mocking him from his interaction with the cashier earlier. He tried to change the channel, but it just wouldn't budge, "the damn batteries must've gone out". As he looked in the miscellaneous drawer in his house he couldn't seem to find it. Determined to change the channel one way or the other, he walked up to the cable box. As he put his finger to the box an electric shock coursed through his body just as natural as the blood through his veins. His body flailed backwards like a fish being corralled out of water.

James woke up in a peculiar place. In was in a marketplace, one that he couldn't recognize. It certainly wasn't anywhere near Virginia, that was for sure. Where was he? A man walked past him in a robe, "was that a tunic, who the hell wears tunics in winter? Why is it hot?" James heard that same man talking to another guy in the center of the streets. He recognized some Greek words. "They are speaking Greek and wearing tunics? Oh my God", it was then James realized he had to find out when he was in addition to where he was. A boy walked up to him, he looked no older than 8. He began speaking to him, but James couldn't understand him, he was speaking Greek and

he had only taken one year of Greek in high school. James became amazed as his word started to transform from a flow of undistinguishable words, presumably Greek, to English, and within a few moments he could comprehend everything the little boy was saying. Understanding what the boy was saying was only half the battle, however, because the boy had to understand what James was saying too. "Do you understand me?" The boy nodded his head, indicating he was, in fact, understanding what he was saying. James knew asking what year would be foolish, because the Gregorian Calendar was established what he estimated some 15 centuries later, so the years would be very different. "Who is king?". If he got an answer he could at least know what time he was currently in. The boy responded, "King Herod oversees these lands, where have you been all these years?" This means they were somewhere before 1 BC. "And just entertain me for a second" James said hysterically, "is there a census going on soon?" "Oh yes sir, everyone is supposed to go back home.

My parents told me it had something to do with taxes. Isn't that why you're here? You don't look like you're from around here that's for sure." It was clear when he was now. He was in the center of the Christmas story. "Are we near Bethlehem?" James asked this with certainty of the answer, based on how his day was going "oh yes sir, just a small walk over there" the nameless boy pointed to the town that was barely visible due to the sand

dancing in the vast openness of the desert.

It all seemed so surreal to him, what got him here? How does he get back home? His Five Guys were going to get cold! “Come on, my mom said we have to go into Bethlehem to call someone home for her. And you seemed pretty interested into town so come with me”. So they both went off, walking through the desert to get to Bethlehem. Along the way they ran into a small group of people stopped for water. James recognized them as a class above peasants. They wore silk garments and they had a camel with them. “Those guys are astronomers. They look at the stars and they get information from them”. After about an hour they finally arrived in Bethlehem. Night had already fallen on the village. It was a frosty night. Everyone was inside already.

It was clear that they were going to spend the night in Bethlehem which only worried him. It was clear where he was and the more time he spent in Bethlehem would be the more time he could be proven wrong in his argument against the Christmas story.

James and the boy arrived at their destination. They knocked on the door and an old man ushered them in. “This man is our apothecary; my father is sick and he’s going to come home with us tomorrow.”

Somehow James hadn’t even thought of this kid’s family. He hadn’t really thought of much since he got here.

Just the obvious: How and why was he here? He walked into the back room with the boy and they sat

down to rest from the trip. In the corner the boy noticed a drum. “Oh, I love drums, I have one at home, but I didn’t want to take it here because it’s too heavy. Wanna hear a song, sir?” James said halfheartedly “sure and call me James, I don’t like this sir stuff. By the way what’s your name?” The boy was already consumed with the drums and didn’t even hear James speak. He started playing a tune, a tune that was oddly familiar to him. After a few frustrating minutes filled with his inability to name the song, James walked out the house.

In walking out of the house James noticed a bright light from the sky. It was a star. Never has he seen a star so bright. He was basically right underneath it. He ran inside to get the boy, to make sure he wasn’t the only one to witness such a sight. “Hey kid” James said excitedly “come outside look at this star!” Without hesitation the boy ran outside with the drum he was playing on. “Woah, maybe that’s why we saw the astronomers earlier today. Maybe they were following a star! If it was that important and if we are close, why don’t we visit it, James?” Just then it all started added up for him. 3 men, a star, Bethlehem – it was the night of Jesus’ birth. So they began walking, following the bright star in the sky. Eventually they were right under it. Ahead of them was a stable. One that closely resembled what has been pictured: Mary and Joseph, animals, wise men, and angels alike all focused on a baby in the manger. “Is that...” James was speechless. All he could do was stand with his mouth wide open as the lit-

the boy approached the scene. He was playing that same tune, and it only just occurred to him why that tune was so familiar. He only just realized who this boy was. The beat was slow and steady: pa-rum- pa-pumpums. The kid was the little drummer boy. How could he have missed that? He saw the real Christmas story, with no doubt the baby boy was Jesus and in this moment myth became fact. Angels lined the skies playing music exalting the birth of the newborn king.

“Wow James, look at this, this baby must be something special for all this. Who are these people?” James responded, not taking his eyes off the newborn baby, “you’ll know very soon, and he will change the world”.

It was at the same time, a high-flying angel dropped the trumpet he was playing. The trumpet fell squarely on James’ head and knocked him out. James woke up near his television. Still coming to, he used the tv stand to help him up. James recalled his dream, relieved he wasn’t stuck in 4 BC Bethlehem. “Was that a dream?” James murmured to himself. Surely that was the weirdest dream he has ever had. But then it occurred to him, what if it wasn’t a dream? He ran to his bookshelf, he knew he had a few Christmas books from his childhood. He was right, James found one book that detailed the nativity scene. Accompanied with him was a picture of what is said to be what the nativity scene looked like. To his surprise, James saw himself now depicted in this picture, right behind the wise men standing with his mouth wide open. He now knew, this was no dream.

Dominoes



Painting by: Kyle Bakonyi '18

I glance at the mahogany table, strategizing where I should strike next. In the back of my mind I know Wilson, an expert, has every possible move of mine meticulously calculated in the back of his mind, waiting to win an eighth-consecutive round of dominos. After I match Wilson's tile of two dots, he immediately resorts to blocking my friends and I with a four-dotted tile, having calculated my classmates and I had used all of ours. "Otra vez," my classmates and I plead with Wilson, 'one more time' in Spanish.

During my immersion trip to Ecuador my junior year of high-school, I learned that while Wilson may have been blessed with an innate ability to excel at dominos, he nevertheless battled a series of unlucky illnesses that led to his abandonment by his community. Wilson hails from the Los Ríos Province of Ecuador, an agricultural region where he received Hansen's Disease, more commonly known as leprosy, likely from unsanitary water. As a result, Wilson was shunned by his community; some Ecuadorians, who hail from a very religious country, believe in the negative biblical connotations 'leprosy' carries as a sign of demonic possession, while most at the very least falsely believe

Hansen's Disease is contagious. Needless to say, when Ecuadorians such as Wilson contract Hansen's Disease, they are immediately shunned from their community. Wilson now resides at a home called the Damien House for patients with Hansen's Disease in Guayaquil, the largest city in Ecuador. During my time at the Damien House, patients with Hansen's Disease recounted stories of their families disowning them and burning their possessions.

As my friends and I glance down at the dominoes in front of me, we shrug as we comprehend how impossible it is to get the necessary tiles in line to win. My group finds ourselves breathing heavily and even sweating as we brace for our next move during a rather intense game of dominoes. Yet, despite a series of consecutive losses, we simply recline back in our chairs and remain present, laughing with Wilson as he places his winning tile on the table, before proceeding to slide the dominoes away from the center of a table as a celebration. "Otra vez," my group pleads.

During my week spent in Ecuador, primarily in a community of extreme poverty, I came to understand that often times, overthinking what we can 'do for' those on the margins of society undermines service's call to take steps in narrowing the gap between the privileged and the unprivileged, the rich and the poor, the healthy and the sick. We can eradicate stereotypes, racism, and appreciate the diversity of others by being with them, not doing for them. During my week spent in Ecuador building relationships with families during discussions about their lives and struggles, in playing soccer on the

muddy dirt roads of the Guayaquil neighborhood, and playing board games with patients with Hansen's Disease, my school's delegation experienced the joys and struggles of the people of Ecuador as we laughed with them and felt poignant moments with them. It is not through superficial gestures of building schools and houses in far-off countries that changes the world, but rather it is through building relationships with a diverse group of people that like dominoes, trickles down to change the world and overcome societal barriers.

As my classmates and I sit with Wilson as we play dominoes, we laugh with him as he tells us a story of his children back at home. As Wilson slams his final tile down on the table for his tenth consecutive win, I can't help but root not for him, but with him. "¡Otra vez!"

JOHN O'CONNOR '19

A Tragedy

A young boy sits and frees his mind.
He feels no stress, no thoughts confined.
Now awe surrounds him, takes his hand,
While angst and fear lose all command.

The world around him is unsealed.
Its nature is an open field
That's lush with light or dark and deep.
The nature is the thing he seeks.

This place the boy can rarely be,
The field of possibility,
Contains the secrets of his mind,
Though quick to part and hard to find.

The leaves shine bright in summer's heat
Yet winter's frost bites at his feet.
His awe creates a subtle smile,
His mind wants him to stay a while.

But none of it could last.
Those dreadful twins regain control,
And the field crumbles into the ground,
Until the boy breaks free again.



Photo by: John O'Connor '19
Wilmington, Vermont

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