

THE BELLARMINE REVIEW



SPRING ISSUE 2019



THE BELLARMINE REVIEW

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The Literary Magazine of Fairfield College Preparatory School

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.



Dear Reader,

We are very pleased to present to you this year's edition of our school's literary magazine, the Bellarmine Review. We have worked extensively with all members of the Creative Writing Club, along with assistance from our moderator James Chesbro, to produce the 78th volume of the Review. The Bellarmine Review is the school's longest-running publication of student-produced work, and the tradition dates all the way back to 1942. Each year that we have worked on the magazine, we have been able to see all different kinds of work from many different students throughout the school. It is this diversity among the authors and the ideas presented in their work that makes the tradition so special.

During this academic year, the Creative Writing Club created a special Fall Issue of the Review and hosted a short story competition, all while working very hard on the Spring Issue that you are about to read. The "Writing Royale" competition was very successful in promoting writing to the student body and reminding everyone of the power of creativity. Along with the pieces that came from this project and the Fall Issue, we received an abundance of creative work to make up this year's edition, and we are very excited to share each of them with you.

The Bellarmine Review plays a significant role in the Fairfield Prep community, and its significance will surely last into the future. As described in our mission statement, The Bellarmine Review provides a place for each and every Prep student to share their voice if they so desire, and guarantees that their voice will be heard. It is an exchange of thought and creativity that ultimately brings us closer together.

We hope you enjoy the 78th edition of The Bellarmine Review.

Sincerely,

John O'Connor '19 and David Smeriglio '19

Editors-in-Chief, Bellarmine Review

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A painting of a mountain landscape. In the foreground, a river flows over dark rocks, surrounded by tall, dry grass. Several trees with white bark and some autumn-colored foliage stand in the middle ground. In the background, snow-capped mountains rise against a sky with soft, colorful clouds in shades of pink, purple, and blue.

SHORT STORIES

FP

Words on "Writing Royale"

Dr. Suzanne Matson, English Professor at Boston College

Guest judge, Dr. Suzanne Matson, Professor of English at Boston College and author, most recently of Ultraviolet: A Novel, selected Finn Mangan's story as the winner of Fairfield Prep's short story contest, Writing Royale.

Of Mangan's winning story, "I Wish I Was the Souvenir You Kept Your House Key On" Matson writes:

It wasn't immediately apparent to me that the title of this story was a line from the Pearl Jam song later referenced. But I figured it out with a little help from Google, and the revelation brought delight. The whole song lyric is structured through repetition, just as the story is. The particular line used for the story title is perhaps the most oblique of the whole song, its power understated. It makes us want to parse its elements to get to the bottom of it: "souvenir" having to do with holding onto a sweet memory; "house key" that thing that unlocks security and shelter; the "I wish" conjoining them only as possibility, not certainty.

Enter the speaker's wish to know "Dad" better, in all of "Dad's" plain and yet occluded ways. "Dad" works too much. "Dad" says little and reveals less. "Dad" is absent even when he's present. The speaker knows there is more to "Dad" than this, that "Dad" had a past, was young, had dreams. He even intuits that although "Dad" keeps a large part of himself hidden, that, too, is in part a gesture of sacrifice and selflessness. Through short, matter-of-fact statements that accumulate rapidly and somewhat relentlessly, the speaker probes. The very rhythm of the sentences keeps sentimentality at bay, which clears a space for true emotion. The speaker needs to know "Dad"; he wants to belong to him and vice versa, like the souvenir and the key.

I won't give away the surprise ending. This writer may be just starting out, but he understands nuance, pacing, indirection, self-reflexiveness, and a host of other craft strategies. He has written an original and arresting short story I won't soon forget."

Dr. Matson also found, "all the finalist stories were written with strong imagination and purposeful use of language. It was a pleasure to read them."

"The Rainman," by William Gualtiere, enacts an interesting reversal of the ghost story trope. The three figures huddled around the campfire don't tell stories about the supernatural, they become part of its mystery. They are absorbed into the forces of nature in ways that vanquish their individuality and their will.

"Coffee Beans," by David Jaworowski, gives voice to a young boy trapped in a world of economic injustice and inequality. His violent story is bookended by that "simplest" of first-world pleasures: the morning cup of coffee.

"Where You'll Find Me," by Benjamin Short, dramatizes grief through one boy's escape to nature. There he finds beauty, and—perhaps through imagination, perhaps through nearly touching the metaphysical—a way to create presence out of loss.

"The Sand Castle," by Trevor Knisely, shows how a family on the brink of rupture gives a young boy an unbearable glimpse of how things were "supposed" to be. Though his perfect interlude was fragile and short-lived, it did happen, and he realizes it does belong to him, however mixed it is with pain.

"Am Fear Liath Mor," by Liam Woods, shows a young man on a quest to be part of his ancestral homeland, only to be tested by a mythic antagonist. He meets true terror, but also gains an extended family he knows he can return to.

"I Wish I Was The Souvenir You Kept Your House Key On"

Finn Mangan '19

Up until recently, I thought Dad was boring. Dad doesn't have many friends. Dad doesn't have many hobbies. Dad doesn't have many interesting ideas to talk about. Dad never talks about himself. I thought these were signs that Dad was just another sweater vest wearing, Excel spreadsheet filler. And while true that Dad is exactly that, I know Dad must be more complex. I know Dad must be this way for a reason.

Sometimes I wonder how strange it must feel to be Dad, to try and connect with a 17 year old 40 years younger than him. How do you have an engaging conversation with somebody who is at such a different point in their life? Does Dad feel like we get along well? Am I intellectually stimulating enough for Dad? Does Dad consider me to be his friend? I wonder what Dad thinks of me.

You see, we don't really talk a lot, Dad and I. Dad works from home. Dad works long days. When I come home from school, I stop into Dad's office and ask Dad how he's doing. Dad will reply that he's just busy working, a response that doesn't answer my question. I wish Dad would answer my question. I wonder if Dad realizes what I'm asking.

Dad goes on business trips a lot. Dad doesn't like traveling for work. Dad says he is too old for planes. Sometimes I'll send Dad a text saying goodnight. Most of the time I forget to. I'm not sure if Dad cares whether or not I text him goodnight. I wonder if Dad falls asleep quickly in hotel beds.

I can tell travel takes a lot out of Dad, but Dad had to take the job. Dad was unemployed for two years. Dad never talked about being without a job. I didn't dare ask about it. I wonder what it feels like to be the sole provider. I wonder if being without a job made Dad feel inadequate. I wonder if Dad just kept it all in. I wonder if there was anything to keep in. I'm not really sure what goes on in Dad's head. Does Dad ever get overwhelmed? Does Dad feel depressed too? I wish Dad would talk about his feelings.

Dad introduced me to rock and roll. These days, Dad only listens to the car radio. Young Dad had a record collection. I wonder why Dad doesn't listen to music in his free time. I suppose Dad doesn't have a lot of free time. It felt good when a song came on and Dad said it was a classic. It felt good to know what Dad liked. It felt like I was starting to catch a glimpse of who Dad was. I wonder if Dad knows how important listening to the radio together is to me.

Up until recently, I thought Dad was boring. I thought Dad and I were incompatible. I resented Dad because Dad wasn't the father I thought I wanted. I thought I wanted a father who told me his high school stories. I thought I wanted a father that drank beers and had a good time. I thought I wanted a father with more life in him.

Last week I went on a long car ride with Dad and we actually spoke. It felt like the years of holding back questions I so desperately wanted answered simply washed away. After all this time, I was finally finding out who Dad is.

Wishlist by Pearl Jam was playing on the radio. Dad said it was his favorite song. I thought Dad liked hard rock riffs and crashing drums. Wishlist is a simple vocal ballad. I thought to myself that Wishlist was a sad song. Wishlist is about a man who feels under appreciated. I wondered why this was his favorite song.

I really like this song too, I said to Dad. It isn't like Pearl Jam's other music.

I'm glad, Dad said.

What do you think this song is about, Dad?

I think it's about a man who wishes he was different.

What do you mean by different? I questioned, begging Dad to show more.

Eddie Vedder is saying he just wants to be special to somebody.

Kind of like Wild Horses, right?

Yes, Dad tentatively said, it's a similar idea. I wondered if Dad thought my comparison was stupid.

Did you have a lot of Stones records?

I had a few, Dad replied. My brother and I used to listen to them all the time when I was about your age. The Rolling Stones, The Who, The Doors. We listened to a lot of music together.

Was music important to you?

Yes. I listened to a lot of records back then.

Where did you live at that time? I know you moved around a lot.

Freehold, New Jersey.

Did you like living in Freehold?

No, not really, Dad replied, his voice trailing off.

Dad was not one to complain. Actually, Dad never complained. Dad never expressed displeasure about his life. Dad's meek response peaked my interest, and so I prodded.

What was so bad about Freehold?

Dad took a second to collect his thoughts. Well, I guess I always felt like the new kid, Dad replied, pausing for a moment. I moved in the middle of the school year. Those were a bad couple years.

Did you make many friends?

No son, not really, Dad replied matter of factly.

Dad's response hung in the air for a moment, suspended by the billowing heat coming from the AC. Dad clearly did not like admitting this. I felt sorry for Dad. I didn't want to upset Dad but I risked a follow up question anyway.

Dad, Do you wish you had more friends nowadays?

Dad's gaze remained fixed on the highway. Well it has always been this way, Dad slowly replied, as if it pained him to say it. He continued, when I was growing up, I got used to being on my own. We moved a lot. Grandpa was always moving us around. I didn't have a lot to say at school anyway. I mostly kept to myself. Nobody picked on me, but nobody was overly nice to me either. I got used to doing my own thing. I wasn't very social in college either. I commuted a good distance. College isn't the same when you don't live on campus. Son, you need to make the most of your college years. Still, I had a couple buddies. We just didn't keep in touch much after graduation. I got a great job and began my life. I worked hard, I wanted to raise my standard of living. I got a nice apartment, a new car, I was doing ok for myself. When I met your Mother and we got married, we knew what we wanted for you guys. We wanted your childhood to be perfect. We wanted you and your siblings to go through college without worrying about money. We wanted to give you guys the best lives possible. A head start. You'll understand when you start a family. When you have a family to care for, you don't have as much time for yourself. Their happiness and comfort is all that matters to you. You don't really think about having friends or not having friends. You have a responsibility to your family. Besides, every other adult is doing the same thing. I have you guys, what more could I want?

I could barely contain myself in my car seat. I wanted to shout. I wanted to cry. I had just gotten the most unobstructed view of Dad to date. It wasn't the bombshell I wanted, but it was a start. I wanted to tell him how thankful I was that he was opening up to me. I wanted to tell Dad how I had been wanting to know more about his upbringing for so long. I wanted to tell Dad that I wished our relationship would grow closer. But my mind was racing and I couldn't seem to find the right words.

I mustered out, I really love you, Dad. I just want you to know how appreciative I am for all you've given up for us. I wish I could be as selfless as you.

It's my pleasure, buddy. I love you too.

*

Okay, I have a confession. I haven't been completely honest with you. I may have embellished our conversation a bit. Last week I went on a long car ride with Dad. Wishlist was playing on the radio. Dad said it was his favorite song.

I asked, what do you think this song is about--

Dad's phone rang.

Hold on, business call, I need to take this, Dad said. Hello?

I wonder if Dad wonders about me as much as I wonder about him.

"Am Fear Liath Mor"

Liam Woods '19

After the death of his father, David MacKerron returned to his native Scotland. After being away since his youth, it didn't even feel like home to him, his last remnants of an accent slowly vanishing with each passing day. There was nothing left for him back in America. His mother's death prompted his father to leave Scotland in the first place, taking David with him. He had no way to have any vestige of catharsis from the deeply buried emotions he had felt when she had died, no friends in his new country, no family to talk to except a father who was so absorbed in his work that he essentially wasn't there, no one to cry to for help. In short, he was lonely. By the time he had grown up and his father had passed, he had made friends and generally considered himself to be happy, yet the scarring still remained from his early days of bottled up anguish.

"When are you going to be back?" asked his best friend Elizabeth. He met her in high school, and David had always had always liked her, but she never seemed to notice him on that level.

"I don't know."

"Are you going to come back?"

"Yeah, I just... need some time. That's all. I need to go home."

"This is your home, David, here, with us." His other friends at the bar nodded along with her.

"I know, I know, but still. I just need to say a goodbye that I never could voice when my dad was still around."

"Did he never take you back, not even once?" his other friend Alex asked.

David shook his head.

"No. It was too painful for him. All my family there was on my mother's side, and they all... Well, they didn't care too much for my dad after what happened."

"The anniversary is coming up, isn't it?" Elizabeth again.

"Yeah. I need to see my family. Let them know I'm alright."

"When do you leave?"

"Day after tomorrow."

They were all shocked by the suddenness of his departure, but wished him well and said a heartfelt goodbye. On his way out, Elizabeth stopped him.

"Have you been taking your anxiety meds lately?"

David sighed. “No, I haven’t had an incident in awhile.”

“Yeah, but you just buried your father, I’d hate for you to have an attack over there and be all by yourself.”

“I’ll be fine.”

“But—”

“I said I’ll be fine.”

“All right, sheesh. Whatever you say, have a nice trip.” Elizabeth said in an insulted tone.

“Liz, I’m sorry, I’ve just been kinda tense since, well... I’ll take my prescription with me if it makes you feel any better.”

“Hey, it’s alright. I understand. Just promise you won’t come back all rude and stuff.”

David managed a single chuckle. “I promise.”

David had a good time meeting with his mother’s family in Moray, but even as he was surrounded by people who should have been making him feel some release from the pain, he still felt empty inside. Like he didn’t belong. His cousins blundered in about two hours after David arrived, both drunk out of their minds. David could smell the scotch on them from five feet away. In a comically Scottish accent so thick it almost caused David to burst out laughing, they challenged him, “Ya aren’t truleh a Lorne until yah climb the mounteen!”

David leaned over and asked his grandfather, “What are they talking about?” He whispered back, “Ben MacDui. It’s a mountain not too far from here. Family tradition that all the lads climb it on their 20th birthday, and since that was quite awhile ago for yeh, you’ll be doin’ it tomorrah.”

“Why did I not know about this when I called last week?”

“Better to make it a surprise than have you not show up because of et.”

David resigned to his room after a few more hours of mindless chatter with his relatives about his mother and what she was like. The next day, his grandfather woke him and handed him a backpack and a coat. As he left in the early hours of that morning for the mountain, passing by the loudly snoring and soon to be hungover duo, his grandfather gave him a warning.

“There’s always been legends about Am Fear Liath Mor - The Big Grey Man - up on that mountain. Don’t pay ‘em any mind; it’s just the fog mixed with the wind and shadows to spook ye.”

David laughed. “Granddad, I’m 25, not 5. I don’t believe in that stuff.”

His grandfather shrugged. “Say what you will, but your drunkard of a cousin came down that mountain faster than anyone I’ve ever heard of, screamin’ bloody murder about something chasin’ him.”

David dismissed that something so ludicrous could have happened. What was more likely was that he had snuck that bottle of scotch up there with him and celebrated his coming of age a little too much. He began his trek toward the highest peak in the Cairngorms.

The journey took a day, and David held the journal that chronicled all the precious Lorne Family Climbs of the mountain. He read his cousin’s report of the day leading up to his panic and sudden descent from the peak as he was driven to the base from the nearby Ski Lodge. Nothing in it indicated he had been drunk when he ran. As David ascended the mountain, the rocky landscape grew colder and more barren with each passing hour. Turning around revealed the clear day and scenic view of rolling foothills, smaller peaks and rivers in the desolate land. If there were anything around here to chase him, he would see it coming ten miles away.

Then came the fog. The sudden onset of a mist thicker than his drunk cousin’s accent startled David, who had been lost in thought about his family when he looked up and realized he couldn’t see. He stopped for a minute to write in the family journal, marking the day, time, and weather condition.

“Dear Family Mountain Climbing Diary,” he wrote in jest. “The fog came out of left f***ing field and-” he stopped. He crossed out his expletive. The Lornes probably wouldn’t appreciate it too much that he had done that, so he made sure that the ink covered the entire curse. “The fog came out of left freaking field and I can barely see the paper as I write. It’s not all bad though, I have my compass and the snow isn’t nearly as blinding anymore. It’s pretty desolate up here, but in a way, it’s comforting? More on this to come.”

((crunch))

David looked up. He couldn’t see anything. What had that noise been? He decided to ignore it, figuring it was probably just a cairn that had been left behind toppling over. He had seen a good number of them lower on the mountain. He packed up the journal and continued his journey up the slope. He was still walking when

((Crunch))

he heard another crunching sound. He stopped for another second, and scanned the horizon to try and see something, anything. All he saw was fog. He walked faster now, trying to ignore the wind that sounded like something wailing. Something inhu-

man. He looked at his map and saw that the peak wasn't far, only a kilometer or so, and that he could probably be there within maybe

((CRUNCH))

fifteen minutes. David was full out sprinting. He felt the tears streaming down his face as he realized he was crying while he ran. He tripped and fell, hitting his head on a rock, and felt his wet forehead to discover that he now had a decently sized gash. He got his hand on a rock. It was flat. He took a closer look at it and saw it was the summit marker. He quickly scrawled his name

((CRUNCH))

into it with the old knife, right under his grandfather's name. He ran for his life, turning around to see the figure of a big grey thing on his tail. The thing had to have been at least twelve feet tall! David heard its horrible cry, which he had previously mistaken for the wind as it outstretched its long arm to grab him. He fell into a fetal position and covered his ears, hoping, praying for something to save him. It never came. Nothing did. There was nothing that grabbed him. He looked up after his minutes of cowering, which had felt like hours to the mortified David. He looked around. He could see. The fog was gone. He was alone. He frantically dug into the bag and fished out his anxiety medication, downing a few pills with a swig his bottle of water. He hyperventilated for a few moments more before breaking into hysterics, sobbing. He raced down the mountain back to his mother's family, never looking back to see the giant footprints in the snow.

"The Sand Castle"

Trevor Knisely '20

When I managed to roll myself out of my bed, I slid on the one pair of jeans I owned and wrestled into my ripped-up shirt. I opened up my moldy door, and the usual loud c-r-e-e-k sounded. As I began to walk down the hallway, I heard it; the sound I dreaded the most, but had not heard the past two days, my parents screaming at each other. It was faint to start, but once I made my way down the hall, it was as loud as a trumpet being blasted. When I turned the corner into the kitchen, my parents stopped. They looked at me as if they had never seen me before, which was normal when they fought, but it didn't feel right this time, because for the past two days, none of this happened.

Those were the best days of my life. On the first day, my parents and I took a long bike ride to downtown, and had lunch together. The next morning, it continued. We all went mini golfing, and at the end, I got a pirate hat and a little flag to go with it. We also took my dog to the beach and played fetch with him. I felt like I was living in a fantasy. I know to some people that might just be a normal day, but to me it was so much more, it was the first sign of my parents having a good time together. But the best part came later that day on the beach.

When I finally got myself out of the salty ocean water, I walked up to my parents, who were sitting side by side in their arm chairs. My mom asked me if I had fun in the water, and instead of answering her, I hugged her, then my dad, and said "thank you."

My dad then got up from his chair, grabbed the wet, sandy plastic shovel laying in the sand, and told me that he was going to help me make a sand castle. A grin streaked across my face as I quickly grabbed my bucket to gather wet sand. After an hour of building, my dad and I stepped back to look at our masterpiece. It was a fairly big sand castle, with a moat surrounding it. I was overcome with joy and satisfaction. I heard the rustle of my mom's beach bag behind me, and saw her pull out the pirate flag I got after mini golfing. She walked over, gave me a kiss on the head, and stuck the flag on the top of the sand castle, creating a perfect ending to a perfect day.

When I snapped back to reality, the first thing I heard was my mom telling me to leave the room. I felt a tear run down my face as I went back the way I came. I walked down the hall and took a right into the living room. I sat down on the cracked leather couch beside my dog, who immediately put his head on my lap. I cleared my tears and pet him, trying to distract myself during the fighting. I grabbed the crumpled blanket from the floor and threw it over myself and my dog. I continued to pet him because I knew he was there for me. The longer I pet him, the more faint the screaming got, until it began to fade into the background.

The moment was short-lived before the noise came back, roaring through my ears like a jet. I got off the couch, sprinted into my room and grabbed my dog's water-logged collar and leash. I strapped him in and walked into the kitchen where my parents continued to scream. I didn't even bother to acknowledge them as I opened the door, walked out with my dog, and slammed it shut. I had no idea where to go, but I

knew I needed to get away from my torture chamber. I started to walk towards the pond across the street when my dog started to pull me toward the path to the beach. I resisted at first, but remembered the sand castle and the joy I felt with the few scoops of sand that had brought my family together. As I began the walk down the path, the trees that for the past two days had sunshine glistening through them, now shined their dark shadows on the rocky path. The tall grass that had swayed with the summer breeze, laid lifeless and still. The rocks under my feet felt sharper than usual, as I squinted in pain with each step. However, when I looked at my dog, he was trotting alongside me with his tongue out and his tail wagging.

We reached the soft, yellow sand, and excited to see the sand castle again, I felt a shiver of hope rush down my spine. But when I turned the corner, it was gone. The remains of the sand castle sat as a grey clump amidst all of the bright yellow sand. As I approached the mound, my heart sank to my feet. I crumpled to the ground and put my face into my hands. The mound was covered in foot and bike prints. I was drained of all emotions, I felt like my eyes were an empty faucet with no more tears to give. I was still but my dog kept moving, almost as if he was chasing a squirrel. I assumed that he wanted me to play fetch with him, but I was wrong. I felt his wet nose graze my arm. When I looked up, I saw paw prints on the grey mound of sand. Then I turned and looked at my dog, who had his tail wagging with the pirate flag in his mouth. I grabbed the flag and stared at it, the perfect ending I told myself, and hugged my dog. I stood up in the sand, dusted of my jeans, and looked at the flag again. Then, I felt my eye push out one more tear, a tear of joy. I began to walk back toward the path with my dog, but just as I was about to turn the corner, I looked back one more time at the grey mound, and then at the flag, which was my joy admits the destruction. The walk back to the house seemed a bit brighter than the trip to the beach. The smallest bit of sun began to nestle its way through the trees, and the tall grass gradually began to stand again.

When my dog and I entered the house, my dog's tail stopped wagging, and stuck straight up. He was staring right at the kitchen table, then let out a bark. I turned my head toward the kitchen table and saw a man in a suit, who wasn't my father, sitting next to my mom. He was tall, and had slick, black hair. His suit consisted of all black except for his white tie. They both stared at me and my dog. I noticed a lot of papers on the table, and a pen in my mom's hand. I saw a tear streak down my mom's face as she continued to stare at me. I asked her where dad was, and she told me that he wasn't going to be home for a while. I asked her why, and she just shook her head slowly. At that moment, it was like a hammer came down from the sky and crushed my happiness. I might not have shown it, but I knew who that man was. He was the guy who was going to ruin my life. I turned my back to my mom and ran down the hall and into the living room. I grabbed the blanket and threw it over myself again. I felt alone, like the whole world was going against me. There was a loud clap of thunder that broke through the walls of my house, and just as the waterworks started up again, I felt the couch move. Thinking it was my mom, I told her to go away, but then I felt a wet nose on my hand. I lifted up the blanket and saw my dog

laying beside me. I inched closer and put the blanket over him so it was just the two of us. I put my head on his, and felt my dry lips absorb a tear. I managed to smile the slightest bit as I moved my hand along my dog's ear, my joy amidst the sadness.

"Where You'll Find Me"

Benjamin Short '20

Raphael kept a light glowing down the hallway, a subtle reminder to Luke he'd never leave. After Raphael's funeral, Sophie kept the light flickering for three days until it died. She hoped Luke would forget, but Luke sat in the hallway most nights, waiting for Raphael before falling asleep on the tiles. Raphael had loved the pebbles he gathered with Luke from the stream in the back, and Luke placed the pebbles around the light like a shrine. Sophie was tempted to quietly remove each rock to make the process painless for Luke, but she never could.

"I'm waiting for Raphi," Luke would tell her when she woke him. It was a still night, and a wind came through the screen door that made Sophie wake with spots of cold sweat. "He promised to come home."

Sophie looked at Luke's fragility in an amazed pity.

"Oh baby," she started, combing Luke's hair back between her index finger and thumb. "Raphi went away for awhile."

"Where?" pleaded Luke.

"Somewhere wonderful," replied Sophie.

"But doesn't he like it here?" asked Luke. "Here with us?"

"Of course he did, baby," said Sophie, now cradling Luke's face. "But he needed to leave. He was sick and needed a place to get better." She paused to look at the door behind them, still sending gusts into the hall. "But the place he went? It's beautiful, Luke. It's always warm, and he feels better all the time."

"He told you that?" asked Luke.

Sophie nodded. "Just the other day."

Luke looked up to his Mom, moving his face away from her hand. "Then how come you're crying?"

Sophie sniffled and quickly wiped underneath her eyes. She hated herself for crying in front of Luke, but she couldn't avoid it. She had clenched her throat throughout Raphael's funeral until she had to deliver his eulogy. Behind the church's podium, Sophie had stiffened and unfolded the sheet of paper she had memorized by then, resolved to be stoic for Luke. But after she stated her relation to Raphael, Sophie felt a dampness spill down her cheek. It increased until she apologized to the church, crying into her shoulder and shuddering spasmodically with labored sobs. The congregation, not sure whether to feel pity or awkwardness at the spectacle, sat silently.

She couldn't talk for days after Raphael's funeral. Some thought it was grief or embarrassment, but it was the small lump in her throat developed from her clenched

failings. It throbbed now, the first time since the funeral, and she tried to refocus on Luke. “Because I miss him, baby. But he’ll be back, Luke. I promise.”

Luke didn’t respond. Sophie stood up from the tiles and took Luke’s hand, leading him to the porch. The wood was cold against their feet, and Luke clung to Sophie. From besides her waist, he looked at the pine trees in their yard that sat above wildgrass. The tips of each blade brushed against the trunks like foamy water against the sand, the way Raphi held Luke’s head during thunderstorms. Luke was terrified of thunder. The Earth crashed and shook around him during the storms, and he screamed for Raphi. There was a place in Luke’s bed with an extra pillow where he made room for Raphi, and Raphi pressed against the sheets and fell asleep next to Luke. That spot sat empty now. Luke just pretended Raphi never left.

“Stay out here, Luke,” whispered Sophie. “I’ll be back.”

Sophie slipped into the kitchen and sat on the stool leaning against the side wall. Despite her resolution to be strong for Luke, she was too weak for him. She hid her face, burying it into her hands, and cried as softly as she could. Luke heard her cries through the screen-door and left the porch, creeping down the steps to the wildgrass below. He knew his Mom was ashamed of crying in front of him, but Luke didn’t mind. He was almost glad she cried; it reminded Luke that it was alright for him to cry as well. Sophie hadn’t cut the grass since Raphael became sick, so it grew wild now and stretched in every direction. It was like crow feathers brushing against Luke’s knee, like thousands of them gathered in a field. And there was a moon that night—a moon that crept through the clouds and illuminated the field and stream behind it. The trees seemed to whisper to each other, to pass information held secret to Luke, and he became desperately frightened. He wanted Raphi to come back and hold him tightly, waiting for morning to arrive.

“Luke?” called Sophie from the porch. “Can you come inside now?”

Luke was fearful, but the trees persuaded him to stay.

“I’ll be in soon,” responded Luke. “I’ll just stay out a little longer.”

Sophie hesitantly let the screen-door close, and Luke walked towards the oldest tree in the yard. It was an oak with a trunk that was grown by generations and branches that spread upwards and bent over the wildgrass. As Luke came closer to the tree, he noticed a figure standing behind it. His fear returned, and he ached for Raphi. But once the figure came into view, Luke wasn’t fearful. A strange curiosity replaced the fear as Luke observed the parts composing the figure. It wore a white cloak that enveloped its body; Luke couldn’t see its arms or legs. This didn’t scare Luke, however. Something in its appearance didn’t frighten Luke, just overwhelmed him with sadness. The final part of the figure were its eyes. It had two black circles on its head that seemed to be cut from the loneliest corner of the universe.

“Who are you?” asked Luke.

The figure didn’t respond. It moved past Luke and positioned itself besides the stream in the soft soil. As the water lapped up against the soil, the figure stood watching the stream with a curious desperateness, as if the stream was the most beautiful thing it had seen. And suddenly, Luke realized the figure’s identity. He realized there was only one person who treated the smallest beauty with such delicacy, as if it threaded the world’s vitality together.

“Raphi?” whispered Luke.

Slowly, strangely, Luke felt him change. The figure felt hopeful now, no longer mournful. Like Sophie, Luke wanted to remain strong in front of people following Raphi’s death. He wanted people to comment on his bravery, and Luke would know he could still survive. But he cried now with heavy sobs, and Raphi came closer.

“I missed you,” said Luke. “And I waited for you. Every night. I stayed up because I knew you would come back.”

Luke yearned to hug Raphi, or even take his hand, but he felt an unfamiliar separation with Raphi’s new figure. It was like Raphi was a foreigner who could never stay for very long and was prohibited from making physical contact. With this feeling, Luke grew fearful that Raphi couldn’t stay forever, so he began speaking.

“I kept your light on, Raphi,” he said. “And I put pebbles around it, the ones we gathered before you were sick.” He paused to look at the stream. “I don’t think Mom likes it very much. She thinks I’ll never move on, but now I don’t have to.”

Luke told him about Sophie and the attic and how much he had missed Raphi. But the more Luke kept talking, the stronger he felt a familiar sensation with Raphi: the sorrow he had first felt. He spoke more rapidly in hopes that Raphi couldn’t leave, but the sorrow grew stronger with each sentence until finally, Luke began crying again.

“Don’t leave,” he pleaded. “You can stay behind the tree on the stream’s bank, and I’ll visit you all day.”

Raphi turned towards Luke, and the black circles met Luke’s eyes. They were horrifyingly lonesome, and Luke recalled in terror. But again, Raphi looked at Luke, and Luke noticed something different this time. They resembled the stream, and Luke saw a certain beauty in them, the kind of beauty that Raphi had observed in life. Luke knew Raphi had to leave, but he knew Raphi wouldn’t be alone.

“But I’ll lose you again,” said Luke.

And with that, Raphi went to the stream’s bank and stood, gazing at the water while Luke followed. And in the shallowest bit, where the dirt met the water and the

moon's glow illuminated everything, there were pebbles that were arranged, almost if by the beauty of the stream, that read one phrase: WHERE YOU'LL FIND ME.

"Coffee Beans"

David Jaworowski '21

At the sun's zenith above the Earth, many would have the understanding that we owe it thanks for the light it casts upon us. When it rains, we often relate the falling water to a dreary nature that exhausts our ability to focus and weakens our feeling of gratitude for life. More often than not, on days like those, we especially find appreciation in our hearts for caffeine, one of the few things that can ensure our continued commitment to the day. Many of you, apparently, turn to coffee for this caffeine. For me, coffee is pure evil.

My name is Tadeu. I don't share that same appreciation of the sun that you do, it's an aspect of the sky that I have learned to hide from. I live in a small shack on the edge of a forest in Brazil, in a patch of land that's beauty has been drained from the falling of trees by scary white men in machines. My parents had built our home alongside others because in this part of the country we were able to hide from the government and their taxes. But now the shack is empty, both my dad and mom being lost to dangerous labor under the canopies of green when I was only eight. Those canopies of green barely hid my mamãe and papai from the sun. In my eyes, the sun was death. It rarely came out in our rainforest, but when it did, you prayed for mercy. If you worked at a certain time of day without food or water, you weren't going home when the sun was out. But in Brazil, many of us have to do what we have to do to survive.

That is probably why, at eight years old, I was already working side by side with my parents, picking beans for more scary white men when I was a witness to the subsequent deaths of my only known progenitors, and the only time anyone stopped to help them was when their corpses were in the way. I tried to help. When I wasn't able to get mommy or daddy to wake up, I screamed and cried but that only brought unwanted attention. The nefarious leaders of the operation, those that we have learned to fear through their illegal beatings and harsh words, looked at me and brandished their weapons with ire. Even after that experience, I continued to work. Four years, and it has only gotten worse.

Every day I would go into the forest. I never want to go back, but the men with guns patrolling our rickety village of shacks day and night ensured that we were up early and on our way out of the inhabited land of weak shelter. It is a life of fear. One wrong move and you were not leaving the false safety of the trees, whether by natural death or the hands of your fellow man. It was the only life I ever knew, but I still knew it was wrong.

The scary men had led all of us once more into the depths of the blanketed landscape. If you walked too slow or showed sign of exhaustion from the few hours of sleep or the hard work of the previous day, you were beaten. This resulted in you going even slower, and beat even more. It was a vicious cycle that ensured no one even dare make that first mistake of tripping over a loose rock or fallen branch that wasn't on the path the day before, the horrors of the night and the heavy rain that occurred during the darkness dropping new pitfalls and traps into the fabric of the ter-

rain. Someone always fell, and they were always one of the people that never came out of the forest. This forest and the men that kept us inside of it most reminded me of something that my Papai would always tell me: Satan would disguise himself as an angel of light to trick the masses into accepting him. The venomous forest would appear beautiful, but once inside you were exposed to the evils it wrought upon those that are kept within its clutches.

Today we had to harvest the coffee beans. We were given latticed baskets with a blue rope tied around it. The merciless twine extended outwards and left space between the cradle and the full circle of the rope to allow a person to step in the middle. On the outermost part of the rope was a leather brace, the only commodity that was given to us. It wasn't given to us out of kindness, but rather to ensure we didn't spill the beans we harvested. Once you stepped inside, you placed the brace on the lower part of your back and used a stick to tighten the rope so that the basket would be carried in front of your waist.

None of us wore shirts: adult men, women, nor children. To wear a shirt would mean you would get hotter, which would lead to faster dehydration, and the more dehydrated you are the more likely you are to fall. Many of us did not have a death wish, and if you did, just get caught stealing. It wasn't abnormal to hear gunshots throughout the covered fields, and to find out your friend in the neighboring shack never came out of the forest. It was often a sign of someone giving up, purposely getting caught. It was something I never understood - not the death part. We all thought of death. What I never understood was why someone would put themselves through the pain to achieve it. The evil men did not just kill you. They made it hurt. Often, they stripped you of your clothing and did unspeakable things before killing you. To them, we were tools and games for their greater pursuit of wealth.

My twelve-year-old brain likes to come up with games I can play while harvesting the beans to make the time go by, and today was no different. I decided that instead of placing the beans in the basket, I can make it a little bit more fun. We were all herded into the small pastures that didn't seem to fit into the theme of the rainforest. Some of the laboring adults would say that the pastures were put here to hide the operations from the government who didn't approve of this kind of work.

I reached my tanned hands, leathered and scrapped from past work, into the bush to begin pulling cherries. You knew they were ripe when they were easy to pull off, probably due to the weight. Instead of placing it into the basket, I began throwing them up and catching them, as to take some form of strain off of the day. I laughed as I maneuvered my waist to land the cherries into the lattice. I wasn't aware of the man behind me.

A strong force was slammed into the wing of my shoulder, throwing me down. I landed on top of the basket, the weak material pushing inwards and snapping. A sharp pain began to spread across my back as tears began to fall from my eyes like

the light pattering of the rain hitting the trees far above. A rough voice began to curse, and a large hand would wrap around the hair on my head. My entire body was pulled upwards, strands of my hair struggling in pain. The large, now noticeably white man would let go, instead choosing to hold me by my wrist. His voice would boom out in an unrecognizable accent, “In what way do you think that you were going to get away with playing games?”

“I- I don’t..” I began to retort, clear anxiety tracing my voice and features, tears beginning to stream faster. The man’s features scowled with disgust, his hand beginning to bend backwards, taking mine with it. A crunch resounded, and a sharp pain shot up my arm after the intentional and clean break of my wrist. I screamed with little tolerance.

“Now you’re useless.” He spoke with a calmed annoyance, referencing my hand. The man dropped his gun, my vision now beginning to go in and out with the pain. He grabbed both of my shoulders, the injured extremity just falling to my side. His knee came up into my thin stomach, slamming into my abdomen and throwing me to the ground once more. Only then did my vision black out, and my last memory was of a laughing white man standing over my young body.

A barista opened the coffee shop that morning, preparing the machines for brewing. She grabbed the large bag of beans and began to scoop them into the top of the grinding machine, in preparation for the many customers that would come to enjoy their morning coffee.

"The Rainman"

William Gualtiere '21

"Rain, rain go away, come again some other day". That seemingly innocent and harmless song, sung by hundreds of children whenever the darkness of rain overtakes the light of the day. There is one dreary place this song takes a deeper and much more sinister meaning. A meaning that keeps children indoors indefinitely whenever the boom of thunder or droplets of rain come into view on the horizon. Instead of the cheerful toon it is known as to most, it is a frantic plea, a prayer that begs for safety from "it". From him. The shape that darts and hides in the dark places of one's mind, the one that comes with the oncoming storm, the Rainman....

Dusk settles on a warm, humid evening. Dark clouds roll in. As darkness falls, the rain picks up. Faster and heavier now. It splatters against the metallic and stone roofs. Shadows are cast all around, few people still walk the streets of Chatham, New Jersey, frantically looking for a place to take shelter. In the woods surrounding the city's dark, now abandoned streets, the orange hue of a campfire shines through the dark, damp tree line. Smoke dances up into the grey clouds as night begins to fall. The rain picks up even harder now, drowning out the sounds of any nocturnal creatures inhabiting the forest's depths. The fire's orange light begins to fade as it turns to smoke and slowly dies. They sat there for a second, those three weary travelers. All of them tired and defeated from their hike, unknowingly putting themselves in danger, the greatest danger of their lives, in fact. The mysterious, wet brush plays tricks on the eyes of the travelers, swaying in the rain. Shapes materialize in the shadows of this brush although most of these are harmless. One hiker seems more panicked than the rest. His dramatic mumbling begins. The fear is clear on his face and in his eyes. It is as if he senses the impending danger. The two others become almost annoyed with the senselessness of his mumbling. They slowly turn their backs to him, trying their hardest to reignite the dead fire. The travelers words grow louder, and the mumbling has began to make the others uneasy, almost to the point where they feel that it needs to be silenced. As they turn back, they catch the beginning and end of their doomed friend's scream. He has vanished. The mumbling is silenced. The rain continues to pour, still clattering against the roofs of the trees, and against the hard ground below.

The panic has spread like an infectious virus to the remaining men. They both frantically call out their friend's name, but to no success. He has just disappeared, becoming one of those many shadows playing tricks on the eyes. Finally the two get the fire restarted. Once again the orange hue surrounds and wraps the surrounding area in a warming light. They sit shivering from the rain continuing to fall on their heads. Wind whips making howling noises through the now cold night. Looking down at their feet, they see the two boot prints near the spot their friend once sat. Theories of what could have happened bounce around in their heads, but neither has enough confidence or courage to speak. They are scared. The panic they once held has transformed to terror. The mind, untamed, is more terrifying than the scariest parts of reality. Imagination, mixed with dark of the night and the rain continuing to fall, has taken over the brains of the men. The orange light begins dying out again. Finally one of the men gets up to restart the fire once more, this time making sure to keep his eyes

on his remaining friend. The rain began to fall even more vigorously now, a clap of thunder echoes through the woods. The man still frantically tries to restart the fire. His matches are damp from the storm, and his metal Zippo lighter is strangely not working. He lets out a frustrated scream, sweat merging with the rain on his forehead. As if on cue, thunder claps again, and this time it is followed by lightning. The yellow light blinds the man, just for a split second. After the momentary blindness, he quickly looks around to see no sign of his terrified friend. There was no scream, no struggle, nothing. Just the rain and the forest, the dark shapes have absorbed another. The rain continues. Heavier. Heavier. Heavier. Through the hard pattering, the sad cries of the man could be heard. They grow louder and louder. Then, they are silenced, leaving only the cold, bitter rain.

The forest surrounding Chatham should be normal, safe, and by all accounts, ordinary. From the outside, they have trees, animals, leaves, and all the basic vegetation that should grow in any forest. On Summer days, one can hear children playing in the woods, telling stories and going on adventures, but when the wind picks up and the rain begins to fall. The voices are silenced. The woods grow quiet and then loud with the sounds of rain. For the locals have grown smart. They know that on these rainy, gloomy, and dreary days, something sinister lurks in the woods. A force that contains the ferocity of the devil, a force that no living soul has ever had the misfortune to lay eyes on. They know this force only as an “it”, as the Rainman.



POETRY

FP

Misery

Gabriel Andrews '19

The wind and the breeze took over my face
Physical pain was not which had hurt me
Those up above had forgotten to see
I ran, but from what, this wasn't a race
It had been today they settled the case
My hand bloodied and red striking that tree
Trying to stand, I'd been beat to my knees
My chest almost burst, it ran with no pace

I let out a cry I knew he would hear
Where do you turn if there's nobody there
The only other sounds the crashing waves
Sitting, hoping anything would appear
This hurt I wished for nobody to bare
Digging in the sand to build my own grave.

The New Journey

Gabriel Andrews '19

I rode the train taking me to nowhere
There was no telling what I was to find
What rest on the inside I could not bare
Thought and emotions of what was behind
I walked around the populated street
But how I saw it, no one was around
I walked with little strength after defeat
You must first get lost, so you can be found
There at the corner, I found a light
In that second I felt as all was good
It gave me hope, and a reason to fight
In that moment I felt as if I could
I remembered the light that used to shine
The journey I venture will now be mine.

A Forest

Evan Farruggio '19

The nature is as far as the eye can see
It's as if an artist painted a picture
The trees, rocks, and waterways stared back at me
The forest was a deep vast mixture
Home to many things, animals survive
Deep within the everlasting tree maze
Most parts of the forest waited alive
The changing seasons created short fazes
The floor was a vast collage of colors
Animals used every nook and cranny
Families were guided by the mothers
Mothers set out to cull food for their children
The artists continue to fill the space
While animals linger in their workplace

Bourbon

Seamus Malloy '19

The lights of New Orleans are brightly lit
Up and down there is life on this great street
The loud of the night refuses to quit
With chaos just finding a place to eat
Yes this famous street lights up the dark night
Making it feel as though there is no time
There is not one tired person in sight
Leaving early would be just like a crime
All cultures are together at this place
Living it up at this very instant
It is crowded without very much space
All the laughter and noise is consistent
This street is one where I would like to be
And a future here is one that I see.

Winter

Connor Boyle '19

The days are shorter and the nights are dark,
Despite the fire, I am always cold,
The air cuts deep, it is so crisp and bold,
Snow kills the grass and often leaves a mark,
The snow color is not gentle but stark,
And soon the color begins to look old,
The chill of the winter has taken hold,
The only thing fire needs is a spark.

Suddenly the fire begins to warm,
Heat is given off as well as some light,
The kids all yelling it is time to sled,
Maybe there's good to come out of this storm,
Maybe there's rest to come out of this night,
And at last warm I settle into bed.

The Final Peak

John O'Connor '19

My life has travelled to its final peak,
And everything that once was young feels old,
And though my body was once big and bold,
It's faded now and has become antique.
If I could travel back to youth and seek
My younger self, I would try to withhold,
That time has passed, and now I must console
All those I love as they are feeling weak.

I hope that you remember me my son,
Now that my life is but a sinking ship,
In which I wander like a welcomed guest.
After Osiris leads me to the sun,
I fear my name won't 'scape your lively lips,
So tell my tale, and may your life be blessed!

Hope (Reverse Poem)

Luke Hopkins '20

There is no hope
So never tell me that
Today is going to be a good day
Because no matter what happens
Fear will always overtake happiness
It is such a lie that
You can find joy in life
Because in the end
There is no good in the world
So don't try to convince me that
It is possible to be happy
The only way to be liked is to change who you are
The greatest lie of all is that
You are good enough

A Different Approach (Reverse Poem)

Luke Martucci '20

No matter what my parents say,
I am convinced that,
Violence and brutality is the only option,
It is stupid to presume that,
There is hope, and people have the power to turn things around

Water Spits Down From the Faucet

Oscar Collins'19

Shaping the water from its aqueous socket,
but for me in this great comfort is found,
the soothing sound fills my ears here on the ground,
I akin the sound to light summer rain,
when I wouldn't view from behind a pane,
but this device has controlled power,
because water spits down from the faucet in my shower.

Wilton

Aidan Dunn '19

This is it, it is all over

This so small town in my rearview

The warm summer days, restless nights

Everything happened here since birth

The place where I first met my love

But my true love in fact this town

Heartbreak, my house gone, my love gone

But as they say, time to move on

Nothing but gratitude for here

Even when I found myself sad

This town kept me safe from others

But I have to set sail I think

Even with the sadness I go

Although it won't be gone for long

I will still be up at night... sad

I continue to toss and turn

For I yearn to be home, alone

It will still be there in Wilton

But for it's not Wilton I miss

I still drift through the days like wind

Waiting to be home, her again

I want to try and move on but

I seem to not let myself grow

Addicted to that one feeling

I must see her again... Wilton

All Dogs Go to Heaven

Eric Ochsner '19

Brown Eyed, Black Coat, Innocent to the touch
The kind of dog to make a whole room rush
Never waned against a run through slush
When the nights grew cold he was in my clutch
Brown Eyed, Brindle Coat, Gentle as could be
Her fluffy coat softer than mothers love
Calm hours of night, peaceful as a dove
Now your kind spirit lay forever free
All dogs go to heaven and I trust that
Angels gathered above sowed through the stars
My best friends get to look down upon me,
And see I am crying outside on your mat
Forever in my heart you will remain ours
Now lay to rest until we next meet

Winter Woes

Eric Ochsner '19

After each season ends, the same feeling persists
The feeling of flying down a mountain side
Knee deep in thick powder slushing beneath me
My head is in the classroom, but my heart is lost
Somewhere in the lush glades of the mountain.
The board causing the snow beneath me to roar
As it spits out behind me as I dart down the mountain
Time and time again I find my mind wandering
Wandering in the back bowls of Colorado
The fresh air filling my wind kissed nose
Her kisses were not that of a mother:
Warm and nurturing
Her kisses bites and gnaws at your face
Reminding all who reigns sovereign
Long do I wish to find myself waking up from class
To find myself lost amongst the tall pines
Ducking and dodging amongst the tree's
Lost to my own playful devices

Yet stuck in my desk, I am confined
A prisoner to my own past and future experiences
My leg jitters up in down on the floor in anticipation
Bobbing and weaving like a well trained fighter before a match
I find myself looking out the window searching for little flakes to
fill the sky
And dance down delivering the gospel of the sterling conditions
of the north
But again, I snap to my unfortunate reality of Hamlet.

In few other places do I feel quite as at home
Than on a mountain side with my board
To not be their now twists and turns at my soul
A soul commanding me to stop what I am doing and leave,
Leave for the mountains and never return.

Icy Walkways

Cameron Kocis '19

Sidewalks covered in
A slick, crystalized, cold, shell
Waiting to melt away

Bridge

Jack Kelly '19

A boy plays alone
The mother falls and they laugh
Close is the grandma's chair

The Past

Josh Fuss '19

Tires mark the streets
Leaving trails of yesterday
Memories vanish

Leave Your Mark

Evan Farruggio '19

Dirt coated black soles
Marking, signing, leaving art
Forming the earth's face

Pregame

Calyb Reeves '19

The ice sits flooded
My steps echo through the rink
Our time approaches

A Tragedy

Colin Bella '19

The warm blue ocean,
The beautiful, yellow sand,
Both tainted with trash



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