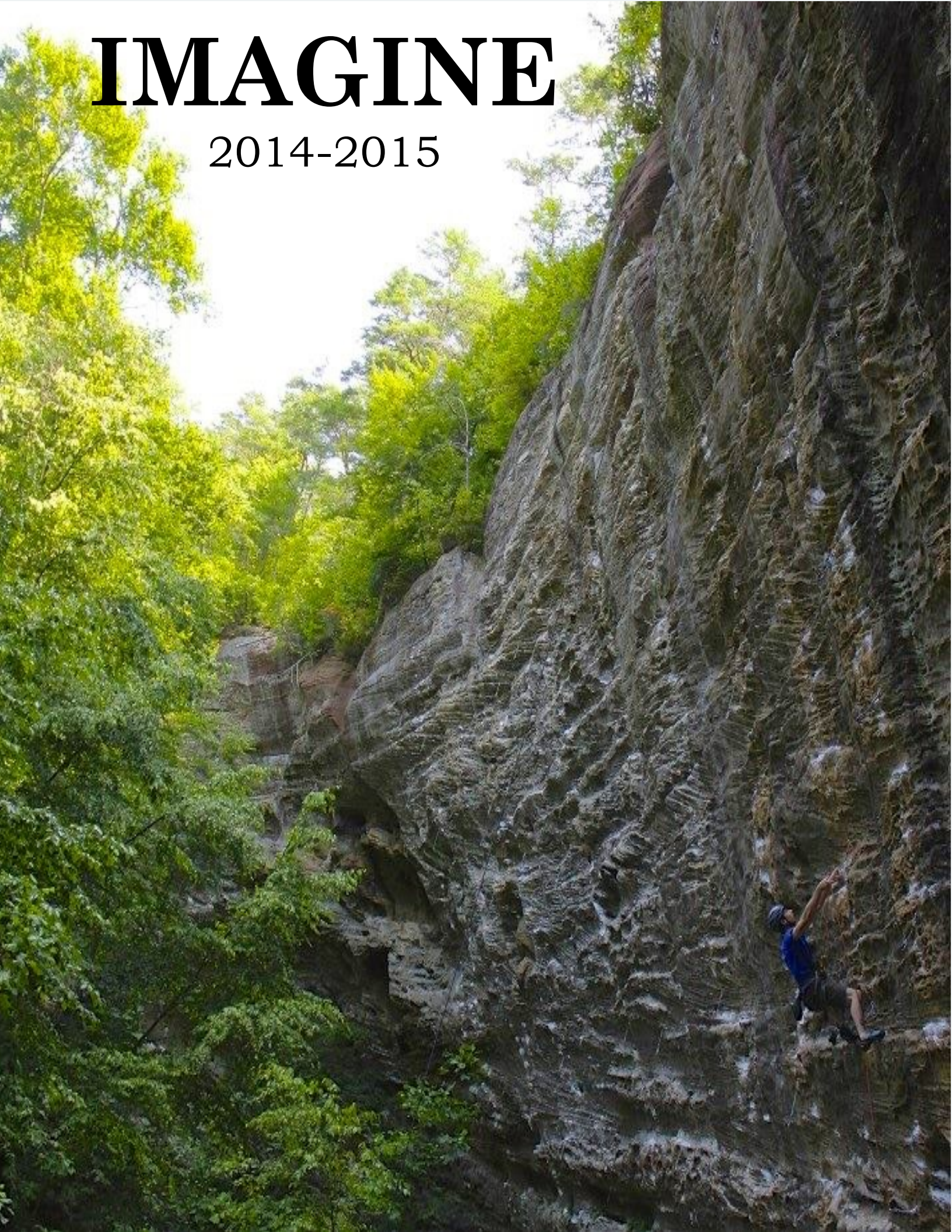


IMAGINE

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What motivates you?

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Change is Unavoidable

We have no choice in who lives and who dies, or what is created or invented or destroyed, or disasters, or miracles that occur.

But it will come and those who see this change as an opportunity to rise and improve rather than crash and fall will be the ones that survive and lead this world with no opposition. The ability to change and become stronger is what shines in disaster and will determine who can become the fittest to survive. And those who fear change will fall to their knees and perish. Those with routine will lose. Those with safe and comfortable lives will see their downfall.



Lilith Sonnenberg

The people we hold so high today like actors, celebrities and billionaires that have fallen as quick as the cold runs through the hard working men in the Arctic. Yet we find another celebrity with no talent and all stupidity and act amazed when they fall.

It's the ones who struggle through each and every day, through the hottest heat wave and coldest blizzard and give it their all each and every single one of those days. No matter what changes and what happens they stand up and keep going with their chins up and body strong. This is the difference between the people in our society and there will be a day when the biggest change anyone has seen occurs and these hard workers will be rewarded and be glad that their life has prepared them for this very moment. They will not be forgiving, and they'll rise through the rubble with an iron fist and exclaim to the world that there will be changes and the human race will be the strongest in history and in the entire universe and beyond.

This is change,
And it is unavoidable.

Ryan Homem

Miles Away

The further I go
The longer I travel
The more I find myself
Miles away from where
I want to be.
I haven't seen day for years,
I'm tripping on bumps in the road.
Blind in the woods
Far from the city,
I know the way.
But once I find myself close
I lose myself, yet again.
I don't know where I am anymore,
I don't know who I have become.
I've been lost for years,
I've lost more than I've gained.
Am I alone or is someone out there?
Will I ever emerge from the shadows?
Will I be lost forever?

Brendan J. Sanders



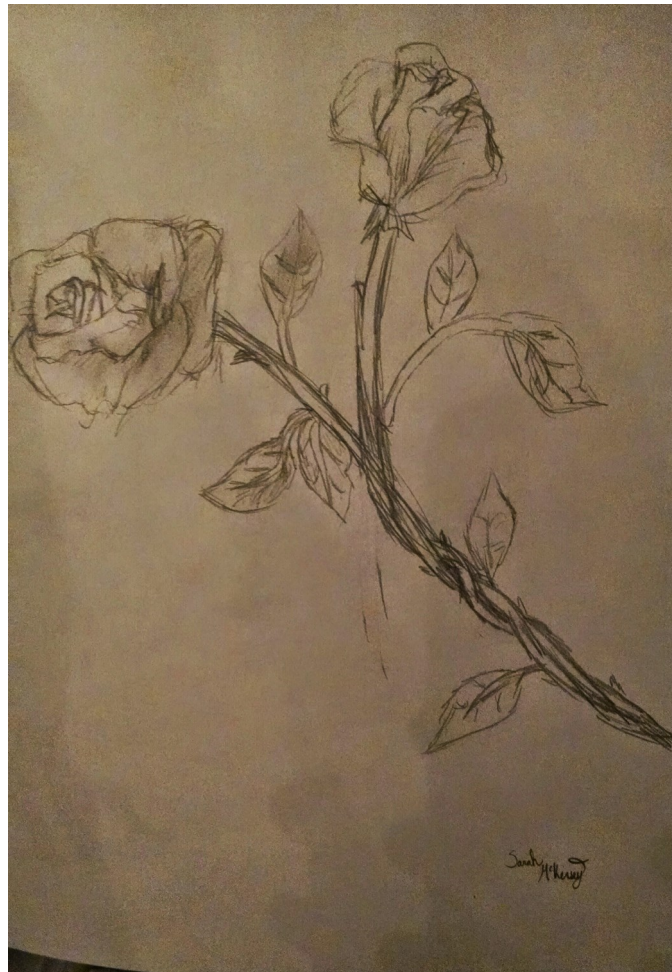
Kiera Cutri

Love vs. Hate

Four simple letters are able to create such a complex word. A word that defines how we treat the world around us. A word that controls every decision we make. A word that logic fears and anxiety feeds off. A word that causes as much pain and sorrow as death. A word with that has the power to cause demise. A word that creates a feeling of turmoil buried within our soul, forcing us to face our fears. Strange, isn't it? These four simple letters can control mankind. At the same time, this word creates a sense of belonging. No one is able to escape it, but it creates havoc in an infinite number of ways. Always in our thoughts. Always a reason for regret. Always apart of life.

Now, let me ask. Have I been describing the word love, or hate?

Sydney Mueller



Sarah McKinsey



Jonathan Crozier

Seeing What Is Not There

I picture classrooms, each with an empty chair.
 The chairs are cold, old and lonely.
 I see tears upon the chairs with flowers draped over them.
 The chairs are filled with sorrow and defeat:
 an empty space, missing knowledge and excitement.

What is missing will never be forgotten.
 The chairs will forever stay in remembrance of this tragic day.
 I do not see this chair
 and I have never seen it
 But now, I can see it in the eyes of the ones who did.

R.I.P. , friends.

Quinn Perini

The Concept of Power

Power

/ˈpou(ə)r/

noun

-the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events.

What is power? This abstract phenomenon which bends even the wisest of minds to its will, the ever present tempest, polluting hearts and incinerating morals. It is this that causes men to raze cities, perform treachery, and wreak havoc across the world. Power is the ultimate goal, yet, when achieved, is so often abused that it has become one of the most dangerous drugs of all time. Power is a toy that is simply too entertaining to resist. It can be exercised over nearly any living creature, giving the user authority over all behavior. To have power is to have security of mind, for since there is control, any fear of the unknown is expunged. It promises a safe condition of mind, and we beings flock to mental stability like geese to bread.



Margarita Juarez

There are many exhibitions of how desperation for power affects us in society. Even at a young age, the primitive grasp for power begins. It starts with the large child on the playground, taking advantage of weaker, smaller children in order to become the most powerful among his peers. It then transitions to adolescence, where physical domination of another person is the ultimate display of power, and is socially revered. This urge carries on into adulthood, where often power is found in the home or at work through exercising extreme control over family members or exploiting employees of a lesser position. In some unfortunate cases, however, adults who crave power can turn to rape. When a man violates a woman (or vice versa), he is establishing dominance over her, relishing in her helplessness and using it to boost his confidence and competency. The intent of this is to put mental feelings of inadequacy or self-doubt by asserting complete control over another human. Too often masculinity is synonymous with power, and what could be more masculine than proving

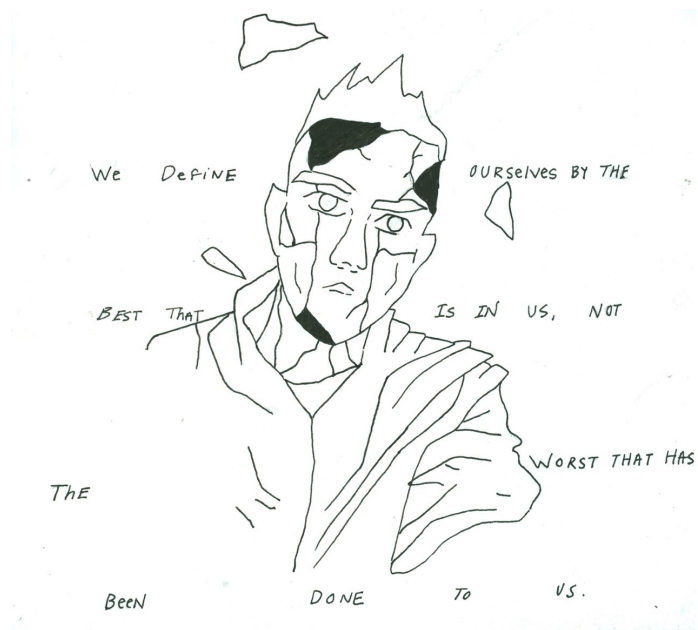
male superiority through rape of a woman? Concepts such as this are some of the most evil actions motivated by power, or achievement thereof. Another less extreme example is bullying. When a person bullies another, whether physically or verbally, there are two goals: To make the victim feel inferior and self-conscious by pointing out their flaws and to establish your power over them because of their feelings of inferiority. Bullying almost never happens without an audience, and by putting others down in front of a group gives the impression that the bully had authority over other people through bullying. I have seen this phenomenon more times than I care to count. The bully teases a person in front of their peers, who watch as the victim is shredded apart by harsh words and taunts. The bully now has an illusion of power which his or her peers attempt to share in. This vicious cycle seemingly has no end, because when it comes to being a bystander, the human instinct is to flock towards power versus defending the weak.

However, there is hope in the face of such situations. As I see it, there is only one force strong enough to combat the craving of power: love. Usually this involves the internal struggle of the desire for power versus helping others out of love. When the path of love is chosen, one has the ability to form connections with others, and not only aid them, but in doing so one aids the world, because one small act of kindness always leads to another. While it is more difficult to do this, the rewards are so much more valuable. Instead of falsely benefiting from a façade of authority, you earn true friendships and loyalty, and most importantly, love. When faced with a decision, it is of the utmost importance to look beyond oneself and try to choose the action that will benefit other's happiness, not simply the illusion of his own. In turn, it will benefit all, because true power does not come from the hatred of victims, but the trust and support of followers. While power can be a lethal motive to mankind's cruelty, choosing to act out of love is the ultimate triumph to this. For as the famous quote goes, "When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace."

Romy Pein

An August Song

I'm afraid to raise children
 In a world where those not of a
 European hue
 Are targeted from the womb.
 Where black children who walk with
 Pride or anything else
 Are branded threatening by
 The backs of their heads.
 Where the light in their eyes
 And the bounce of their curls
 Can suddenly be cut short
 When they step out of
 A convenience store, or
 Onto the corner, or into
 "The Wrong Place at The Wrong Time."
 While white families yarn tales
 Of police, similarly to how
 The bible speaks of Jesus,
 A black mother prays the day will
 Never come when she has to teach
 Her children of fight or flight,
 Of how to bend their fingers into a gun
 (but never how to point it in the streets),
 And she will show them how their blood runs red
 And sometimes they might see it on the floor
 With a face that carries the same nose
 As their uncle or the man who lives down the street,
 And how to carry just enough
 Guilt in their eyes to comfort
 Those who will accuse them of
 Looking.
 On television screens,
 Black children are preludes to
 Candlelight vigils and funerals,
 Gods of shovels and black veils.
 Dying on blackboard streets,
 They are chalk outlines that are
 Power washed away the next day.
 Cut down like trees because
 They are brown and breathing.
 Oil heavy starlight awaiting
 Spark and wind.
 Guilty until proven dead;
 This is a record needle that
 Runs bone-deep.
 There is a lament of blood and gunpowder and tear-
 gassed throats,
 A drumbeat interrupted by flatlines



Pablo Salvatierra

And FOX News,
 By pat downs and chokeholds,
 But you will hear is
 You will hear the echoes
 Of past faces, of lynchings
 And assassinations.
 You will hear the chorus of
 The Present, the sneakers against pavement, the
 Sweat beading on brows,
 Fists beating on trashcans,
 The clutched breathe of mothers
 And the children, oh
 The children who will grow up
 To be the end of the world,
 They will be the loudest of them all
 When they scream in agony,
 And then in liberation
 As societies grow
 Skeleton-out from their
 Black palms like a Phoenix
 From the ashes.

Cyle Rockoff



Lungs

Daniel Shapiro

Tell me, do your lungs rove swallowing the sky?
 Are we better off to float so we don't have to try?
 Well tell me, if you love somebody, do you open up your eyes?
 Or just bury them dreaming beneath a breathless sky?

Tell me, were your hands cold freezing how you felt?
 Words are numbing.
 Let go of things supposed to melt.
 Well, tell me, if you love somebody, do you look them in the eyes?
 Or just bury yours, breathing beneath a breathless sky?

Tell me, do your lungs rove swallowing the sky?
 Are we better off to float?
 Is she the reason why?
 Tell me, do you love somebody?
 Tell me, do you love somebody?
 That's fine.

Elliot Fuerst

Can't Buy Love

There was nothing left to say,
 So we said nothing at all.
 There was nothing left to do,
 So we just sat there.

That's when I knew
 It was over.

His love left my heart,
 When he did what he did.
 Not sure if that will ever change,
 He's a different man in my eyes.

But when it was good, it was great.
 He bought me flowers every day,
 Yellow tulips at home, red roses at work.

But when it was bad, it was hell.
 The money changed the man I once knew;
 And the flowers didn't mean as much
 When his assistant had sent them.

The silence filled the room like helium;
 Depriving the life from our voices.
 The cab pulled up at the end of our driveway,
 And he looked at me.

I didn't even glance in his direction
 Because I couldn't look
 Into those eyes that had once
 Placed a ring on my hand, and
 A child in my stomach.

When I look into his eyes,
 I think I love him.
 But when the flowers die,
 Love suddenly isn't enough.

Megan Clow



Pablo Salvatierra



Keysi Romero

Brief Happiness

There's limited chances you can get,
There are no benefits with possible threats.
However, the predictions of mild consequences are wrong.
Yet, a thought that it will be hidden forever and destiny will go along.
Don't be fooled by the desire of your imaginations;
Don't be doomed by the wild temptations.
However, the dalliance was a lovely memory.
Yet, at the end it was a feeling of enmity.
He was the cynosure of my eyes,
Full of tears, while the inside slowly dies.
However, in one snap everything changed.
Yet, from admiration to estranged.
My mother was right.
It was a dream that lasted only until the night.
Do Not Rush. Do Not Take Advantage.
A situation I thought I could manage.
I was wrong.
That's When I Learned My
Lesson.

Ayeena Simoy



Lilith Sonnenberg



Sabrina Sakai

Bourbon Troubles

Mine is nothing but petty trouble
Mixed with bile and angry tears,
Diluted in the bourbon of my reaping.
I raise my glass to my severed heart,
Each beat weakening with every thud,
For putting up with my sorrowful mind.

My letters of apology will never reach her.

With every vile sip, memories rush in,
Flooding my soul with my deepest regrets,
Of how I wronged her,
Knowing my problems were little to hers.
Mistaken love and mistaken trust,
All bottled up in the young mess I was.
My greatest fault was truly shameful in nature,
Warning her of my selfish farewell to all.

My letters of apology will never reach her.

I order a strong, black, long one, hoping
It'll scare these thoughts away. All but one
Remains: my only moment of penance.
Asking for solace from her was too much,
And I lost myself again. But now, it's time
To sober up. Bittersweet resolve is my sweetener.

My letters of apology will never reach her.

Adolfo Viruet

14 Ways of Experiencing Confusion

I

Sensing the vibration of the timer ticking off
the seconds, minutes, years;
But being unable to move.
Feeling life rushing past in a screaming wind
of indescribable colors.

II

Seeing 100 different arrows,
1000 different paths
None of them right.

III

Tasting the scalding hot tears that
You didn't know were on your face
Because the monsoon began so softly.

IV

Floating through the motions,
Breathing out of habit.

V

Realizing shaking your head doesn't help;
The fogginess is here to stay.

VI

Suffering the physical pain of a heaving chest
with
Furious white tipped waves forcing surrender
And then drowning in unshed tears.

VII

Screaming "why" and letting the desire cut
Through any emotion, any moment, any part
of you.
Knowing the answer won't come in this life-
time.

VIII

Seeing a blank wall where you once knew
What to say,
How to live.

IX

Letting one moment of blissful happiness con-
sume you
Followed by acidic anger
And slow, burning sadness.

X

Coming closer together,
Being each other's steel supports,
But not even steel
Is enough. Nothing is ever enough.

XI

Fighting heavy exhaustion, knowing
You should have shattered by now.
But just breaking again. And again.

XII

Letting the darkness absorb you
And giving up to the flames ciphering away
Your core.

XIII

Watching from the eye of the cyclone,
Ignoring the tears the wind pulls from your
eyes.

XIV

Wanting just one more moment before
The tsunami hit.



Madeline Rawson

Kiera Cutri

Paris

Dare I rouse
 the placid sea:
 Unconquerable to false deities?
 companion who
 accompanies me
 by my lonesome,
 gaze who
 contextualizes the
 ephemeral light that encompasses all---
 I am here and
 blind
 to mirages of
 morrow and
 deaf
 to purpled lies:
 institutionalized and
 rationalized---
 dismal humanity!
 If you were to cease
 patronizing angels with
 psychedelic visions
 that cool all prairies and
 push the earth incessantly onward
 their answers would contort
 to the shapes of
 question marks and in
 a paroxysm of life and death
 all their ephemera would follow
 your languid eyes---
 banishment is
 worse than Hell;
 how maddened
 the serpent becomes
 when flames cease
 illuminating
 the path to the grave
 but instead
 reflect and
 blazing dawn is
 cold night and
 washes over valleys with
 deathly reds,
 demolishes Mosques and
 encroaches on the plight of a prayer,
 imbuing skies with antipathy
 there will be no
 aphorisms
 for the hologram
 dancers---



Shannon Zuccarelli

Harrowing wait---
 Is this morning or purgatory?
 Still---
 A greyscale photograph,
 A temptress
 dressed in
 saccharine dust
 allures the stars, always
 a continuum of holy dust hangs
 just above the calf
 to bathe in the prospect of
 light,
 light,
 love!
 Eros teeming with envy,
 seven and ten letters
 lying undisturbed in
 labyrinthian canals
 and the cusp
 of a dreamer's gasp,
 the sky's dreamy
 idealizations of rapture---
 o, aching city!
 mournful birth;
 a wedding of
 land and sea
 is always

rush---
 ing

How many have
 questioned if
 lovers enmeshed
 in each other
 are enslaved to their
 own seclusions? if
 freedom lives in
 forthcoming days
 peripheral vision
 poetry books?
 She cloaks amidst
 the lantern's lights!
 How heavy with languor!

Seduce
 another with
 tales of liberation delusional
 fantasy machines
 interrupting the flow of our wine---
 leaving mirrors untouched
 and the wind's love
 for the sea's horizon

unrequited---
 Exit graciously,
 perhaps linger
 on the highest crests
 of soaring dreams
 above the tangerine-hues
 of the Seine
 though not weighing
 enough to tip
 the scales of suspended
 rain---

Dreams cannot be conquered blindly---
 Swords are temporary bodies
 for temporary words' dictations
 to siege for but a moment; a stir...
 A damned river is besieged
 by an ever-changing horizon---
 undulates toward the glowing pendulum,
 collective scream
 that ravages like time;
 aged by the pretense of youth,
 lacking beginning or end,
 descendants or ancestors---
 cynical romantic,
 amorous enemy,
 languid rage?
 Stars can scream
 and so can God
 like water on stone
 laboring on always
 paralyzed by sweet nighttime---
 the immensity of
 the brawls of cosmos within
 each manifestation of
 life unapologetically
 horns & rivets &
 dumpsters & jazz &
 sitcoms & wars and
 above a thought
 is thought:
 Dare anyone be woken?
 howling among
 echoes of tragedy,
 it builds a rampart,
 sleeps

Daniel Shapiro



Melissa Yanez

Uncertain

Sometimes I want to write,
 I want to write something
 deep and meaningful
 but nothing comes out.

I want to write about
 Exactly how I feel,
 Exactly what I think,
 I want to write about the past,
 Or the future,
 Or the present,
 But I can't find the words
 to express it.

I feel pressured that I
 Have to write something
 Metaphorical that has to be
 Dissected in order to be understandable.

Mostly, I find myself staring at
 a blank piece of paper
 Wanting to let it all out
 Knowing that I have so much hidden.
 It's like a bomb wishing to explode
 but it can't find its way.

I couldn't find the words,
 Or the way to write what I truly
 wanted to say.
 So I wrote this instead.

Amit Ankawa

The Dot

When you hear the word protagonist, what do you think of? Do you think of the classic knight in shining armor, or perhaps the more modern superhero or vigilante, or maybe you're an avid reader and think about that quiet character that slowly evolves in order to surmount some mundane problem which ultimately serves some greater meaning. Whatever you think, I know that if you were given one trillion spaces on a list, you would never write "A dot".

Now before you start getting defensive and all, saying "oh, but I would have written it down."

1. If you did, you would have done it as a joke, because honestly, who can fill a list with one trillion protagonists.
2. No, you really wouldn't have.

But that's completely irrelevant; the important thing is the next part. How on earth (or in any parallel dimension) is a dot supposed to be a protagonist? Well let's start with the definition: practically all sources would agree that the protagonist plays a central role in the piece of literature. Well, here I am, relating this story, perhaps the only character, that counts for something right?

Well, what else do we associate with protagonists? Generally, they are an integral part of relaying some deeper meaning to us, the readers, they either undergo suffering, some other kind of challenge, or perhaps a combination of both, to achieve their goal. Finally, she reaches it after making some kind of realization about herself. As far as relaying a deeper meaning, I think this entire text, written by a dot, would be a deeper meaning in itself; but let's hold off on that. I must overcome preset traditional norms and beliefs about protagonists, and be willing to accept a change in identity from something people don't ascribe meaning to, to something with prominence in this world.

Well, why should we ascribe value to a dot anyway? Well, it's only the basis of, well everything. Let's start with something simple; without dots, the sentence: "I dislike indigo iguanas" would be read as: "I dlslke Indlgo lguanas." I know, weird right, imagine every lower case "i" without a dot, and it would be an l, and how will we even perceive "j's". However, if you want to go even deeper, the sentence could be read as: "" without dots. Why? Because any line is a series of dots so close together they almost seem as a single figure. So technically, without me, your favorite novel would be pages and pages of nothing.

Well, if right now you're going, "I don't read, I like watching movies," then think about this. A movie is made of pixels; pixels are just digitalized spots of color, a.k.a. dots. That's right, I'm in your movies too; but if that's not enough, then realize I'm in every piece of technology that you have ever touched that involves some kind of visual output. Even if that's not enough, then ask yourself this. What is a dot, but a circle? And what is the 3D version of a circle?

You get a sphere, and that opens up a whole new dimension. I am your ice cream scoop and your football (think Non-American), I am your eggs and your rugby ball (they're just elongated spheres), but even more than that; I am particles. Particles are spherical; sound, light, matter, it can all be broken down or exist in a spherical form. Hence, I am everything and nothing at all. I make up this entire universe yet you think no more of me then as a simple component of your daily lives that you write every time you write the letter "i". So, maybe next time you think of something you would label as "mundane", "simple" and "worthless"; think again. Maybe this time you'll see something below the surface. Maybe this time, you'll find your dot.



Michelle Aguirre

Amr El-Azizi

Blot of Ink

The darkness of the mortal body lit
From behind by ethereal swirls of light,
As pure as the immortal soul within.

An unearthly specter
Not bound by the laws of *our* realm
Momentarily suspended in time;
Defying the powers in place, and in that,
Transforming into something more.

More than just a body shielding inner light,
And more than a blot of ink on the book of life.
In that teardrop of a moment,
Before it fell and splashed on the page,
That figure went beyond its mortal casing.

The blot of ink twisted itself
Into a word
And then
a phrase.

Madeline Rawson



Sakura Tateiwa

Untitled

Excuse me, sir.
I'd like a refund please.
Now I understand we all have
to grow up,
But I came here to take my
innocence back.
Why you ask?
Isn't it obvious?

The world became a
wretched place.

It all began years past.
I watched.
A woman peeling her skin,
She stripped it all and
Began to whisper sweet nothings to all that
could hear.

Hunger in her eyes,
A victim crawled before her;
Then she began to take in their essence as
they came closer.
As her lips began to part,
She fiercely took a bite into the damned with
her fangs,
Ripped the flesh with them
And began to consume the accursed.
She guzzled the blood,
Gorged herself,
Even suckled upon the naked bones.
I believe the heart was her favorite
Since she saved it for last.

She finished,
She dropped to the ground,
Reaching a euphoric high.

Since then
I began to see more beasts such as that
Until I was completely surrounded by detestable
beings.

The world became a wretched place.

We are told to fear monsters
When we are young,
Yet now I see that we became the monsters.



Lilith Sonnenberg

People live in their facades
And bathe in each other's blood
Devouring each other alive
And sometimes themselves.
Reality is composed of fake smiles,
Corruptness and greed,
Selfishness,
Hypocrisy,
A bit incestuous, if you ask me.
It's all pure madness.

I long for the tunnel vision I once had
When life was impregnated with magic
And everyone you met was a friend,
Where you felt the infinities beneath your
feet,
And wonderful impossibilities in the air.

What do you mean no refunds?
I did not sign up for this
Can you at the least change my form?
Perhaps allow my body to sink into the
earth,
Engrain my roots,
And sprout to enjoy the tranquility
Of simplicity.

Ignorance is bliss.
Or should I say innocence?

Nadia Saghei



1932

Lilith Sonnenberg

Carrying my life
by the soles of my shoes.
Hovering over the city that
pulled me up
by my chin, carrying me to
the peak;
Only to drag me down
by the heels of my feet.
As I plummet from the moun-
tain of life
Along with all of my savings.

Thinking about
Susan and the kids.
Thinking about
Life before the crash.
Thinking about
How different things would
be
If I had saved
The money;
If I had been
More frugal,
If the government
Cared more,
If the banks
Cared less.

Nothing to lose
But a job
And a family,
And a life.

Hovering over the city
That rooted all of this pain.
Nights without food,
Winters without warmth,
Years without work.

Give me a job
And I won't look down.

Meghan Clow



Liz LaVigna

Humans

We believe we are the most advanced species, but how would Earth feel without us? There would be no pollution, no global warming, no greed. We pride ourselves on our ability to communicate and our fascination with the newest technology, but what does that matter? Out of the billions of years the Earth has existed, we grace its presence for 75, maybe 100 years. We are merely a speck of dust in the wind of time, centering our attention on all the wrong things. Instead of focusing on the beauty from the sun as it says goodnight through the trees, we focus on when the next iPhone is coming out and where we are going to end up 23 years from now. Rather than appreciating that we have been granted another day, month, or year on Earth every time we open our eyes, we focus all of our time and energy on what is going wrong in our lives. We all belong to the Earth, not the other way around. Once we understand what has value in life, we will prove that our 75 years on this floating rock are well deserved.

Between the Lines

They say ignorance is bliss
 We live like nothing ever happens
 Without a care in the world
 Unaware of what lies about
 Blind to the depths of something so simple:
 A shadow in the corner
 The demon behind you
 The guardian beside you.
 Nothing is what it seems
 We focus too much on what we are used to
 The same thing over and over
 Blinding us from our surroundings
 Separating us from the bigger picture
 Voices in our minds, deafening cries for help
 The messages of hate and love we receive
 Oblivious to what is in our surroundings
 Taking what is given to us without thought
 Falling for misconception
 Until we are slapped with the truth

Brendan J. Sanders

Sydney Mueller



Luis Minaya

She

She's there,
 She's always there,
 I look behind she's there,
 I walk in the rain she's there,
 Taking the photo she's there,
 Getting a drink she's there,
 Opening the door she's there,
 As I open the window I see her there,
 As I place a call she's there,
 As I get to the car she's there,
 She is everywhere,
 That she is me,
 She is my reflection,
 She is my mirror,
 She is my shadow,
 The she was me.

Kayla Alba



Sarah McKinsey

We Will All Get Through This Together

Alissa and Deanna were such sweet girls, always smiling, laughing, and thinking positive. Alissa and I loved to take long drives and blast country music. Alissa would make me listen to songs that I had never heard before. I used to not like country music until she got me interested in it.

Alissa would tell me, "Country music is the best! Just listen you will love it!" My response would always be to just listen to the music and laugh.

Then, my friend Mikey called me and said, "Did you hear that Alissa and her younger sister passed away?" When I heard the news, I was in shock. I didn't know what to do. It didn't feel real. I was so upset I couldn't breathe. Alissa was my best friend. I could talk to her or tell her anything in good times and bad. I was in shock and didn't want to believe it. I never would have thought this was coming. No one did.

Delicate Forest

In this delicate forest
 Humble dandelions join together in prayer
 The creek whispers secrets to the rocks in its bay
 Grass, laying delicately to pleasure and warm such a scenery.

And when the stars glisten at night
 it's all the talk of the forest
 as leaves crumble from the presence of its beauty
 and moonlight kisses the trees goodnight

Tranquility and peace is what keeps the forest alive.
 A small forest it is referred to as
 but what grows from the rich soil
 is a compelling force that can't be tamed.

One maple sapling.
 With tiny feeble pines
 and a vague aroma that barely freshness the air,
 craves for more than compliance.

The sapling knows its potential
 It's seen how mother moon favors it.
 Spreading her white wings gently on its pines
 Giving it a moment longer of importance .

And by day,
 drops of sunlight run down its bark.
 The sapling recognizes the calling
 and chooses not to abide by the status of the forest.

The sapling grows,
 spreading its branches into the sanctuary of weaker trees.
 It broadens its core sucking all the nutrients from the soil.
 Instead of shaking from the wind, it roars with it.

Birds begged to harvest their nests
 so that a once fearful robin
 could rest her offspring into a world of serenity
 knowing she is protected internally.

And what happened to the forest?

The once humble moss backed to the outskirts of the forest
 to make room for the almighty tree.
 And the grass was shredded from the uprising of the roots
 The forest killed, and no longer united.



Sophia Pirinea

The heroic tree had grown its branches so wide
it deprived the starving forest of sunlight.
The moon only had time
to praise her newly favored son.

The flowers, now gasping for air.
The faded drooping lily's
now donating their strength to the boldest bark.

Such a power feeling it was
The once small tree
was now the king of the forest.

Proud of its newly grown pines,
Boastful of its freshly new scent
The young sapling brags of its representation of youth.

By night, the forest watched it's new ruler.
Stretching its roots deep into the ground
Spreading its arms wide, ready to take control
and take it's throne.

The tree spread so wide,
mother moon only knew its presence
and the tree casted a haunting shadow
on the rest of the earth.

The tree, oh so powerful tree
Screaming victory as it climbed to the top of the forest.

But as everything becomes so luminous inside the tree,
the forest wilts in weakness.

Nothing to thrive on.
Nothing to nourish from.
The once humble forest becomes a faint sound
of dying whispers.

One stands bright and bold.
In a pit of emptiness.

Sofia Noejovich



Jonathan Crozier

Why Did You Leave Me Oh So Soon?

Was it me, or was it you, or was it God himself? Did even He want me without you, my love? Without you, I am lost. I am a writer without a pen, a singer without a voice, a musician with no beat. I am lost in the gust of wind that hits every time I think of you, yet you left me like a quick breeze. I have parts of me that went with you and still have not returned. I walk along people who don't share the ache I feel. I walk around thinking about you and no one else.

I walk around thinking, what about you? Do you feel the ache I feel? Do you walk around helplessly as I do? Do you feel a chunk of your soul missing that was ripped out by Satan himself? And what should I say to those of my peers that ask about you, my love? Should I lie? Should I tell them the truth or tell them that you will be having dinner with me tonight? But, my love, I have one question that was burning inside of me the day you left. From the cracks and cuts and holes of my soul seeped out this one question which will be the thing that kills me.

Why did you leave me oh so soon?

Anonymous



Jonathan Crozier

All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Rec Basketball

In my sixteen years of living, I have realized that in determining your success, you should focus on the little things in life, such as making a sports team. Since I have played on many sports teams during my life, not only have I learned how to succeed, but I also learned how to share my success with others. My statement of belief stems from way back during rec basketball. Here is my credo:

All I really need to know about how to live and what to do and how to be, I learned in rec basketball. At about six years old, I already knew most of what's necessary to live a meaningful life. Now at sixteen years old (having ten years of basketball experience under my belt), I have absorbed the rules of life through the game I learned to love. Rec basketball taught me:

Always give 110%.

Winning isn't everything.

Teamwork is needed to succeed; there is no room for selfishness.

There are many ways to foul your opponent and there is a consequence for every foul.

Although there are countless ways to score a basket, it is highly impossible to make every shot you take.

Be tough.

And last but certainly not least, have fun.

Think of what a better world it would be if we all – the whole world – lived by the rules of basketball and had fun. Imagine there was a consequence for every person that hurt you. Or if professional sports teams acted like winning was just a bonus because they worked hard for what they achieved. And it is still true, no matter how old you are – when you go out into the 'real' world, it is always best to give 110%.

Stevie Carpiello

Desk Art

I'm guessing that moving is no one's favorite thing to do. I probably hate it as much as the next person, except I've done it about ten times in my fifteen years of living. Every time you move, you have to start over. People think that means making new friends, starting a new school, getting used to a new house, and it does; but it also means acclimating to little things, like what your neighborhood looks like on a dark night, memorizing when shops are open in town, knowing where the heck you put your front door key when you tossed it into your room...

Try doing that twice in one year; the moment you start feeling comfortable, up you go again.

I don't care about today, which is my tenth "first" day in a new school. I don't care about the cheerleading tryouts poster on my locker or the kid running for student council president down the hall or that weird janitor who's staring at me kind of strangely. I just want to get through this day.

I slam my locker door and shuffle through the oozing mob of teenagers trying to get to their first class. It's an agonizing process to get anywhere, but finally the amoeba of people spits me out in front of my English classroom. I walk in and sit in the back - left corner. It's where I always sit, and it's the one thing that doesn't change every time we move. The teacher starts to drone about the class syllabus moments later, and I stare blankly at the open expanse of finished wood in front of me, not thinking. I pull out a pencil and touch it to the surface,

"Hi. I'm Zachary."

The day ends. A bustle of students head down the hall in a frenzy to reach buses, cars, trains, soccer practice, you name it. It seems like an endless cycle at this point. Get up, go to school, leave, go home, and sleep; get up, go to school, English class. The desk has another line of writing on it, in the same color pencil as mine. But this handwriting is smooth, and somewhat curvy.

“Hi. I’m Emily.” I smile and pull my pencil out of my bag, not caring what the English teacher is writing on the board.

“How are you?” The next few days, weeks, and a couple of months pass. The desk is covered in scribbles and arrows, drawings and smudges where we erased bits of the conversation so we could write new ones.

“What’s your favorite color, Emily?”

“It’s turquoise. Yours?”

“Silver. It’s smooth and pretty. Like you.”

“Funny. You don’t know what I look like, Zac.”



Joey Cipollone

“Maybe I will soon? We could meet up somewhere.”

“Yeah... I’d like that.” I erase a small patch in the corner of the desk and attach an arrow from the last message:

“Outside this classroom, 8 A.M. sharp tomorrow.” I get up and walk out of the class, not caring what other people are doing or saying until someone knocks my books straight out of my arms. I shake my head and start to kneel down and pick them up when a girl with dark brown hair, a small smile, and blue eyes kneels down next to me, helping me.

“Thanks, so much.” I smile at her.

“No problem.” She holds out her hand for a handshake, “I’m Emily.”

Julie Sanscartier



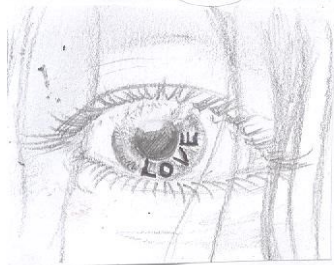
WHERE DO YOU FIND STRENGTH





The pot at the end of the rainbow

College



Role Models

"Happy thoughts"



SLEEP

WHEN YOU NEED IT MOST?



Get those feels out.

feel good

Express



Chocolate

Aspects of my Generation

I am part of a socially inept generation
and I refuse to believe that
I can communicate with others
I realize that it's a shock but
"Technology has exceeded our humanity"
is a lie, and
"Texting is communicating."
So in 20 years, I will text my children that
this is the proper type of communication,
Typing with fingers
is more effective than
Speaking with a voice
I tell you this
Once upon a time
Children play games with each other
but this will not be true in my era
This is an anti-social society
Experts explain that
50 years from now,
I will be celebrating my 15th anniversary of being secluded
My generation is reclusive and incompetent
It is foolish to presume that
Society will work its best,
When working together through communication.
All of this will come true unless we choose to **reverse** it as a community.
Now, read it in **reverse** and choose which one represents the generation you belong in.

Megan Margiotti



Kiera Cutri

Lachesism

The strains of the piano and violin rose up weakly from below. The bar downstairs was filled with patrons beaming with the glow of promiscuity on their faces: below was the elegiacally jilted world of the libertine. He thought that living above this world would allow him to supersede these betrayed romantics, but he could never dream of sifting among them.

*

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*

Abdon sat at his desk with a bottle of Grappa at his side and a teacup full of cigarette butts. His unfinished writings were laid in front of him and his dress shirt was unbuttoned at the solar plexus. He ran a hand through his hair that was now cropped very short and furrowed his brow as he gave out a sigh of exhaustion. He had never felt so tired in his life. Oddly enough, he was never exhausted. The clerical job at the company that he worked for sufficiently accounted for his monetary needs. It also accommodated to his particularly mundane desire to sit upright at a desk with a pen in his hand. His most profound sensation was to gaze at several blank pages that were begging to be saturated with burdens. Over the past several years, his life was imbued with a contented ennui that easily facilitated work and writing. But tonight, something was different. The pen in his hand felt like an unfamiliar object in which his ardor no longer inhabited. He simply couldn't sit still, pacing fretfully back and forth across his room. He felt unimaginably uncomfortable in the skin that he inhabited. He thought of peeling through the envioning layer of flesh that obstructed him.



Adam Eljamal

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He left. Abdon could no longer bear the enclosure. It was just before two in the morning. In order to relieve himself of his dysphoric nausea, he decided to walk to the town square: a place where he could fill his lungs with the selfishness of exaltation. As he hastily exited the door of the bar, three surly, bearded men with vice on their tongues jeered and spat at him as he demurely ducked his way between them.

They threw their glasses at him in their libertine ecstasy as he fled from sight. The thought of peeling infected him once more.

*

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Abdon followed his feet as they lead him hastily along in the company of his thoughts. It was now three in the morning in the midst of autumn. Despite the very late hour, many were walking about, luxuriating in the shadows and the night air. He traipsed to an envious halt as he looked at couples ambling along in their mirth. After several minutes of observance, he solemnly and expeditiously continued towards the town square. After several minutes, all of the inhabitants had disappeared. He became enmeshed in the darkness. The air had now become a vertiginous gas that guided him towards incoherence. His fervency was distant and absurd. All were asleep in their homes as this peripatetic was lost in delirium. He drifted into the town square and sat at one of the benches in the seemingly vacant expanse. Silence permeated the space. Abdon reached into his overcoat and nervously clutched his pen and his notebook that he kept whenever he felt the urgent need to write. His ardor had returned. He felt the familiar fury of vehemence in his pen as he wrote.

*

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Twenty minutes had passed. His eyes moved faster than his pen as he continuously transcribed his deliberation onto the notebook. Suddenly, he felt a cold, lifeless chill on his neck. In this strange, penetrating blast, he heard an abandoned voice speak to him.

“You are misplaced in this world. Your mind is lost in your heart. You tell yourself that are afraid to quench your lust. You live above the weightless in order to hide from them. But you are painfully lighter than they can ever dream to be,” the voice whispered.

Abdon slowly looked to his left to see what had conjured the darkness. It was an old woman with translucent, white hair and hollow, grey slits for eyes. Her mouth was ajar as she peered at him curiously, dissecting the workings of his heart. He wanted to run as fast as he could, but he couldn’t move. Her eyes glued him to the bench as she continued to savor him.

“My child, you lack feeling. You have disguised yourself ever since you’ve mistakenly fallen into this abyss. Because you are weightless, you are cursed. You will endlessly pine and fall; yielding a perpetual return that will erode your spirit. In order to end this misery, you must add heaviness to your heart. Until then, you are banished to a divested oblivion.”

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Abdon shrieked and jolted from the bench. He felt his sentiments crawl to the surface of his skin. They yearned to escape the hollow shell they inhabited and reassume in another. The woman laughed cruelly as he fled into the night. He left his pen on the bench.

The idea of eternal return is a mysterious one, and Nietzsche has often perplexed other philosophers with it: to think that everything recurs as we once experienced it, and that the recurrence itself recurs ad infinitum!

Kevin Oriani



Sophia Jacobi

Love Is...

CYNTHIA

Love is...

CHRISTINA

Love should be blind,

CYNTHIA

supportive,

DEMETRI

and brave.

CHRISTINA

I found my true love at age 10.

CYNTHIA

March 28th, 1986.

DEMETRI

The first time I played piano, I was awful.

CYNTHIA

29 years ago, a star was born,

And her name was...Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta!

DEMETRI

I could barely play "Mary Had a Little Lamb" without playing a sour note.

CYNTHIA

5'1"

Green Eyes

Hair Color: Depends on the day of the week

Stage Name: Lady Gaga.

DEMETRI

Although, the piano didn't mind. It loves to be played no matter what.

The music we make is the one thing I can never get tired of.

CHRISTINA

Music is one of the things I look forward to after a long, hard day at school.

Some kids have sports. Some kids have mom's cooking.

I have music.

CYNTHIA

Her music reminds me of how fierce and unconcerned she is with people's judgments like in "Speechless" or "Alejandro" and even "Born this Way" or "Poker Face"



Jacee Capelli

DEMETRI

A piano is meant to be played. A piano is meant to hear the emotions, to feel the music of the one playing. A piano is meant to be there for its player.

CHRISTINA

Music is my safety net, my passion, my love.
 There aren't many things you can name that will accept everything you do
 and relate to you
 With absolutely no judgment
 But music is one of those things for me

CYNTHIA

I LOVE Lady Gaga
 Lady Gaga tells us to be strong
 Tells us to lock all the freaks outside because when we're all crammed in Madison Square
 Garden, we're the cool kids.

DEMETRI

I LOVE my piano because it doesn't care who you are.
 It doesn't care how you express yourself.
 It doesn't care if you are gay or straight, black or white, 2 or 102.
 It doesn't discriminate.
 Anyone who is kind and gentle to the piano, the piano is the same to them.

CHRISTINA

How great is it to know that there's one place where you can just let out all of your feelings in
 3 minutes and 36 seconds, while actually helping some people out along the way?
 That's what I love about music; that it accepts me for who I am, and it doesn't care if I'm dif-
 ferent because it's different too.

CYNTHIA

Lady Gaga tells us to be brave
 Lady Gaga tells us to "screw everyone else and be ourselves!"
 She's worked to create a community of people who support themselves and each other be-
 cause when we're in that arena all we've got is each other. No one will ever understand that.

DEMETRI

Love is being accepted by those your care about. (*Beat.*) I'm Transgender and some people
 don't like that. I'm Transgender, but to the piano, that doesn't matter. I'm Transgender, but to
 the piano, I'm just a human being. When we create music together, that's the only thing that
 matters.

CYNTHIA

Lady Gaga believes in me when no one else will

CHRISTINA

Love should be like music, where there's no judgment, just acceptance.

DEMETRI

The piano would never tell me anything that would hurt me.

CYNTHIA

Lady Gaga will love me even if I break the TV. My dad wasn't too pleased about that.

DEMETRI

It accepts me as who I am and would never tell me to be something I am not.

CYNTHIA

Love is...

DEMETRI

Love is...

CHRISTINA

Love is...

ALL

Music.

Cynthia Lambertson, Demetri McMullen, and Christina Padro



Kathryn Marsh

James Robertson

"I feel like I'm just a simple average guy having fun...
Doing what I like to do...
Blessed to do what I've been blessed to do."
~ James Robertson

There's something particular that overcomes the suburbia with every sunrise. It's a state of progressive arousal and weary preparations for the coming day. It's a moment when neighborhoods slowly come into focus as the silhouettes of houses rise from the quicksilver. The fog of darkness dilutes. The shadows retreat. What settles over their surface is a dark blue residue left to oxidize from the first dose of light. The air is of a virgin chill, the kind that has yet to be polluted from the fumes of our breathing. If you listen closely enough you might just hear it crack from the coming heat as if it froze weakly into ice the night before.

It's a moment when something stirs inside every house with a slight rattle of its chains; when the beast awakes in its own solitary silence and moans gracefully in submissive protest. Soon, people are scurrying in a frenzy to attend their daily affairs. They all seem to leave in an unconscious succession; they avoid each other with the same routine every morning. There is no melodramatic emphasis on the family's dissipation like you'd see in the commercials of the Fifties representing the American Dream. There are no proud and worried wives waving and no confident, polished husbands, and certainly no high-pitched merry jingles to accompany their movements.

Soon, everyone is gone. The rows of homes now stand devoid of their purpose, devoid of response. Inert, bare, waiting; resting with eyelids of bluish gray curtains over vacant windows. Abandoned. All is supposed to be living yet its unresponsive like the arid stone figures in Emerald City when Dorothy returned to see it barren and crumbled. The lawns are just gritty rubble consumed by weed. Each block is dormant and unpredictable like the sleeping heads of Princess Langwidere. It seems desolate, but you know it can't be. Yes, it's alive but how? Something has to be there hiding. Watching. Every morning, when we spread from this rural setting in our individual directions, we forget the ghost of our integrity, an integrity we haven't identified yet. Maybe that's it. Maybe that's what roams the streets with nowhere to go cowering in the corners, naked and weeping in silence from repression, a silence you can hear.

But there's something else rustling through the brick dust. No, not wheelers, not in this story, but someone, someone oblivious to the noise of his own light shuffle in the snow. Innocent. A soft repetitive crunch, not that of a prowler but neither that of a stroll. It's a man with his hands tucked into his pockets and two hastily worn beanies, the same beanies, loose and slanted to shelter his ears. The apples of his brown friendly cheeks drooping as snowflakes come to rest beside the small freckles that run from his temples to his gray patchy mustache.

James Robertson. His car broke down back in 2005 and he hasn't been able to save up for a new one ever since so from that year on, he's been commuting to the factory where he's employed by foot. He hasn't been able to save up enough money for a decade and so for a decade he's been walking a distance of twenty-one miles to and fro with only two hours of sleep before having to pull his boots back on the next morning and do it again. Though never did he miss a day of work.

Now our Sun will always rise. Many clutch that fact as their element of hope. Many sleep through the night just for that promise. Many tolerate the struggle just for the anticipation of dawn. But they can only be disappointed because the Sun rising is not a promise at all; it has always been rising and will continue regardless of how long the night. That's a fact and it's not necessarily a good one. It's not rising for us. It never has. The Sun represents the Saṃsāra, the wheel of suffering that we should strive to break. Each sun up represents the monotonous passing of time. A curse. In other words, it's the symbol of the indifference of nature towards our agony. The Sun is not salvation. The Sun will always rise every day, yes, but how is that going to change the fact that this man will walk twenty-one miles to work every day nonetheless?



Sabrina Sakai

He accepted that long ago. He saw what needed to be done and did it finding the solution in his own will. He found his own support to keep walking. We always resort to the excuse that there's a problem somewhere out there. We're way too canny however to stop and define it so we skip straight to the answer. We think it's safer. We hand over the responsibility and chuck the blame to saviors like the Sun, or God hoping they will do the dirty work for us. Nevertheless, all we are really doing most of the time is pushing on the closet door and smiling anxiously hoping it won't give way. We tremble. We wait, and wait for something to happen giving all our faith to hope but never to effort. Now I'm sure Mr. Robertson believes in both the Sun and God but he sure didn't wait for them; he sure didn't panic in front of the presumed notion of an almighty problem blocking the way. He saw no problem. He just started walking.

It's true, the Sun is not salvation. We get that wrong sometimes but the Sun is something positive as well; its awareness. The Sun doesn't save us but it shows us the way. It shows us what we are missing; it brightens up what we are avoiding. This man passed by many front yards in his decade of commuting never expecting anyone to see him, never blaming anyone for his situation yet someone saw. A banker who gave him a ride and became his friend, a young college student who read his story and chose to act and soon, thousands of dollars of donations were raised. Now he finally has his own car. It's glistening red and big, but never as much as his wavy reflection approaching up its surface as he moves to feel its hood incredulously. "I wish my parents could see me now," he muttered in his rusty yet gentle stutter while peering with his baptized glare at the snapping cameras. You don't hear that very much anymore.

He finally has the car he deserves. He can now join the unconscious succession of scurrying crowds that attend their daily affairs in a frenzy every morning. But he'll be defiling everything he was. The clinking of the keys will replace the gracious caress of his drag; the puffs of the motor will replace his gasps. There will be no more need of his determination. What will happen to his modesty? He won't be part of what's "left behind" anymore because he'll have left it like the others. He'll be "gone." But at least he'll take his integrity with him unlike the rest. He won't forget it in the cold; he knows way too well what that feels like.

Thomas Baruzzi



Paris Cipollone

Never Forget

Not a day goes by when you ain't on my mind;
 November 8th is a day I wish to rewind.
 From now till eternity I keep you in my heart,
 Trying to move on but I'm still in park.
 I'll never forget what happened that day,
 Awoken by my mother beggin' that you would stay.
 They say what doesn't kill you makes you stronger,
 But livin' without you makes this that much wronger.
 I'll always remember all the times that we shared,
 Chillin' at the crib, playing baseball just wasn't fair.
 And who can forget about that big smile
 Really wishin' you were here so we can chill a while.
 You wore number fourteen on the mound,
 Only thing heard was the strike three sound.
 Never will I
 Be able to comprehend why
 Such a fly guy was taken, still I cry.
 The thirteenth is a day I wish to forget,
 Having to watch my bro, Gurg, get laid to rest.
 Losing someone so dear is a tough feat;
 Being around in your presence was a real treat.
 Now I know I gotta be strong and carry on;
 Andrew Gurg, I love you long after ya gone.

Michael Angarano

Gender Roles

What is gender? Well, if you look up the dictionary definition, you'll see that it says "the state of being male or female." But if you were to ask me, I'd say that gender is about as irrelevant and unimportant as a white crayon. You really want to know what gender is? It's when you either get an extra X or Y chromosome from your father. That's it, that's all. And even that's not gender. It's just your genitalia. Gender is a mental state, stop worrying about what is in between people's legs because it simply doesn't matter.

But what if you feel like you don't belong in the gender you have been assigned? What if you feel like both or neither? Will you just tell us that we're wrong because your God 'never makes mistakes'? Will you think we're outcasts? If you're born a girl, you're expected to *be* a girl. You're expected to wear make-up, and wear dresses, and look beautiful and seduce boys and everything else females are expected to do and be. But having two X chromosomes doesn't mean you have to *like* being female or female clothing or like boys and anything else that is associated with being female. It's just chromosomes. They don't affect your personality and they don't affect your sexual orientation; it's just two X's. So why is it such a big deal if a 'girl' feels like she should've been a boy? Why is that so hard to accept? Why is it considered *wrong*? Same thing goes for guys. If a guy wants to wear a dress, let him wear a dress. Let guys wear skirts, let guys wear makeup, let guys wear whatever the hell they want to wear. We can't let these gender roles affect us. Gender is irrelevant. The only thing that will ever matter is you. Why is that so hard to understand?

Chantale Santiago



Maybellene Aung

April's Seasonal Anthem

As I take shelter under a spring giant,
 Painted in earth and passion, I
 Catch my breath, taking this miraculous
 Season into full view. My gaze soars
 Through the dancing tree lines, outfitted in
 Springs' emotions, of love and life.
 The music of spring is lively and cheerful,
 Illustrating everything around me in vibrant colors.
 The town's atmosphere is grand and uplifting;
 The wildlife move about, beautiful and curious
 Creatures they be; marshmallow fish swimming
 In the endless sky-born sea; my world is alive.
 Spring's anthem comes to another thrilling cre-
 scendo,
 Throwing beautiful petals to the wind. As
 A pink child descends from its heaven onto
 My palm, the kid in me giggles. Grasping
 The silk-like beauty cracks a gay smile, gazing
 At nature's beauty. Without care, I lose myself
 In the moment. I forget all I am,
 Worries and duties alike. Nothing matters.
 Nothing... but this endless song.

Adolfo Viruet



Jessica Hart

Bon Jovi Concert

My father and I received tickets to see the Bon Jovi Concert. We went to the concert on July 27, 2013. It took a while to get to the stadium because there was a lot of traffic. I was so bored and anxious to get there because I was so excited.

It was such an amazing feeling seeing Bon Jovi live. I felt as though I jumped through the TV screen and just appeared at the concert. During the concert, the music was blasting through MetLife Stadium. The lights were flashing and colorful. Seeing it live was better than watching it on TV. I couldn't believe it was really happening right in front of me. Seeing the band members perform on stage was unbelievable. My father and I bought t-shirts and a photo book that had the band members' names and tour name on it.

Watching the concert, buying the shirt and photobook and spending time with my dad felt great inside. I love football and it was better than watching a football game. This whole experience was amazing!

Joseph Vallaro

Hyperextended

7 years of my life.
 That's 365 weeks,
 2,556 days,
 61,360 hours,
 6 days a week,
 3 hours every day.

Gymnastics wasn't just a sport for me;
 It was my passion,
 It was all I thought about.
 To this day, I still have dreams about it.

The challenges and excruciating pain that I
 encountered
 Made all of the daily problems in my life
 Like school work, friends, and drama
 Seem so insignificant compared to
 The problems and challenges I faced
 From the moment I stepped into the gym.

All of the twisted ankles,
 Hyperextended elbows,
 Excruciating rips from the bars,
 Rug burns from floor,
 Joint pains,
 Pulled muscles,
 Achiness I was left with after every practice.

And then I think about all of the wonderful
 And fulfilling things that the sport of gymnastics had to offer;
 The satisfaction I felt when I stuck a landing,
 The feeling of accomplishment I got when I mastered a new skill,
 The relationships I formed with my teammates,
 The trophies and medals I've won.
 It makes me realize that everything I put myself through
 Was worth it.

Despite the demands and incredibly hard work the sport of gymnastics entails,
 It was by far one of the best things that have happened to me.
 It will always be a part of me.

Though quitting gymnastics
 Was one of the hardest decisions I've made,
 I don't regret it because
 I use all I've learned
 In my everyday life
 And I will continue to apply these skills in all of my future experiences.



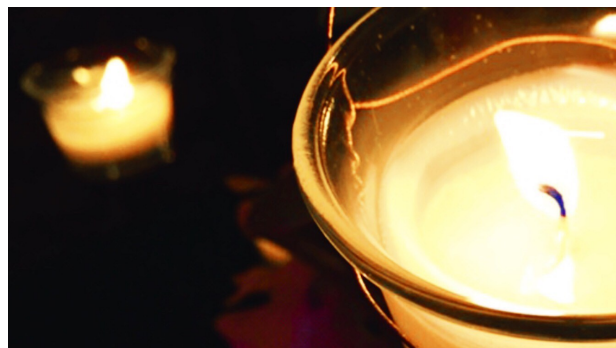
Thea Nitis

Leah Abramson

The Great Gatsby & The Crucible Critical Lens

In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Julius Caesar said, "Men, at some time, are masters of their fate." In saying this, he means that people often determine their own destiny based on the actions they take and decisions they make. This statement applies to both Jay Gatsby in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*, and John Proctor in Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible*. Jay Gatsby and John Proctor both make life-changing decisions that put them in control of their own destiny and as a result leads them to their downfall.

Jay Gatsby portrays the essence of the American Dream in his pursuit to win the love of Daisy Buchanan, but this quest is actually a burden on Gatsby's life because although he achieves the materialistic American Dream, his idealistic goal ultimately leads to his death. Gatsby's strong desire for Daisy's affection leads him to make rash decisions in the text. The most prominent one is when he decides to take the blame for the death of Myrtle Wilson. He decides to protect her and make it out that he was driving the car which hit and killed her, so he was responsible for killing Myrtle. In making this decision, Gatsby determined his own destiny, as he must've known there would be some sort of consequence for this action. Despite being aware of a potential consequence, Gatsby believed that this would help him win over the love of Daisy, which is why he made this choice. This scenario can characterize Gatsby as vehement, as he has an intense passion for Daisy and is willing to take the fall for her actions, no matter what the possible consequence could be. The idea that people determine their own destiny is clearly seen here as Gatsby has decided to take the blame for the death of another person, and as a result of this has determined his own destiny. This decision leads to his downfall, as eventually Gatsby is killed because of this one decision that he made, when Myrtle's angry husband seeks to avenge her murderer. Arguably, his destiny was determined all the way back when Gatsby set out to pursue his relationship with Daisy, as had he not done this he may not have faced these problems. Ultimately, the combination of Gatsby's actions and decisions in regards to his love for Daisy determined his destiny, and lead to his unfortunate death.



Hamza Hamid

John Proctor was a prominent figure in the town of Salem and his irresponsible actions lead to his downfall; therefore he determined his own destiny. Although he was a well-respected figure, one action that Proctor made essentially ruined his life and even the lives of others. John Proctor is guilty of having an affair with his servant, Abigail Williams; and this is the action that determines John's destiny.



Lilith Sonnenberg

After having an affair with John, Abigail develops a strong desire to be with John, somewhat similar to Gatsby's desire to be with Daisy. She makes it her goal to be with John and she conjures with the witches in order to make him fall in love with her. This is where the outbreak of witchcraft hysteria stems from, so John Proctor is conceivably responsible for the hysteria in Salem. Within all the hysteria, Proctor is blamed for witchcraft and over time is found guilty and will be hanged. The purpose for his death all leads back to his affair with Abigail; the one choice he made that determined his destiny. This is an internal conflict for John Proctor in the text, as he clearly regrets his action but there is nothing that he can do to reverse what he has done. John Proctor's actions lead to his death, and thus his decision determined his destiny and lead to his downfall.

The actions of both Jay Gatsby and John Proctor put them in control of their own destiny. Jay Gatsby has a strong desire to win the affection of Daisy Buchanan which leads him to make rash decisions and ultimately leads to his death. John Proctor makes one irrational decision which leads to the major conflict within the text. People often determine their own destiny based on their actions, and commonly they are doing this without being aware of it.

Lake Vayo

Hug

Let us embrace
 For the sake of pressing two bodies
 And feeling whole
 For the sake of affection.

Let us embrace
 For the sake of acceptance
 And for being perfectly flawed
 For the sake of being human.

Let us embrace
 For the sake of warmth
 And feeling secure
 For the sake of comfort.

Let us embrace
 For the sake of love.

Nadia Saghei



Lilith Sonnenberg

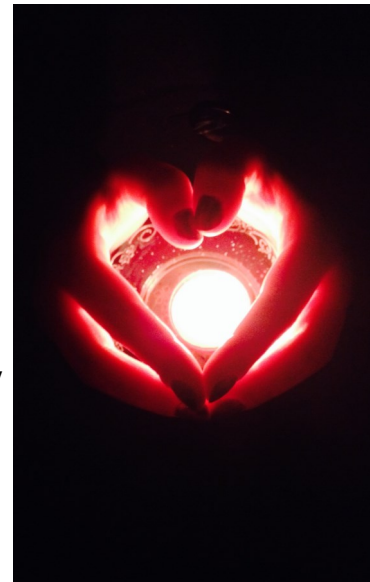
Live

We live our lives in fear of what might happen next, the unknown. How is one not supposed to be scared to live life on the edge, when life is so fragile? Humans, unfortunately, cannot predict the future, which is why we are taught to live our lives to the fullest. At a young age, I learned to not take my life for granted.

I see innocence as a gift of life. The more you are exposed to, the more anxiety and stress it can put on your life. I remember skipping rings in the playground, munching on small sandwiches and simply enjoying myself. When you aren't concerned about what others think of you, what you're doing, or how you're talking, it enables us to live our lives. At a young age, nothing seems to scare us, not even death. It seems as if it's normal, and it will not happen until we're old and cannot walk. You don't realize how, in the blink of an eye, you can be sitting in a doctor's office, wondering how you're going to survive. It used to be, "It will never happen to me," but now, it's happening to everyone.

Growing up, we hope that we will never be threatened with the dangers of life. We're fearful of the day where you are sitting in tears, staring blankly at a concerned doctor. The day when your kids are questioning you, confused, and worried. Throughout life, we impact those around us, and those around us impact us. Not wanting to leave this world, knowing those whom we impact will be left in tears. We put the burden on ourselves and think we let them down. Unfortunately, there is nothing we can do. We simply pray for the wellbeing of those around us, for we never want to watch someone struggle.

When I was in middle school, my mom was diagnosed with breast cancer. I remember walking into the hushed kitchen, approaching two apprehensive parents. I went from having a beaming smile to a blank face in a matter of seconds. It's this mother-daughter connection that my mom and I have always had. Even at a young age, by just glancing at her, I could tell how she was feeling and when something was wrong. I cherish my parents and I don't know where I would be without them. Her mouth started to open, then close. She looked back and forth between my dad and the floor, struggling to find the right words. Eventually, she said, "I have some bad cells that I just have to get rid of." Being young, I thought she would be fine and I didn't fully understand what she was trying to say. Still, with suspicion, I walked down the long hallway, peaking around the corner at my parents watching creepy, visual videos on breast cancer. That was when I knew my mom was concerned for us and our family, and most importantly, herself. We knew our situation, and now it was time to figure out what to do next.



Jonathan Crozier

Memories will never fade, good or bad.

My mom and I used to go into this room, filled with reclining couches, long IV cords, and men and women of all ages hooked up to machines. Some would be half asleep, others would be playing games on their phones, all just trying to pass time. I would sit next to my mom during her chemo treatments, keeping her mind wandering on nothing but good thoughts. Most of the time she looked extremely tired, almost as if she was confused. Her treatments started to tear her down to the point where she almost became nonfunctional. There were many days and

I remember standing in my mom's bathroom with her, looking into the large mirror, as she would run her fingers through her frail hair. There was not much left and every time she would touch it, multiple strands of hair would fall out onto the floor.

I walked slowly towards my mom to get a closer look in the mirror and said, "Mom, why are you doing that?"

She continued to stare back at herself in the mirror and spoke in a soft voice, "It is going to happen anyway." The room grew silent and she observed herself in the glass.

I looked back at her and reached to touch her hair. She shyly moved my hand away and said, "I hope this doesn't upset you."



Bosco Castillo

"You look just as beautiful now, as you did before," I reassured her as we walked out of the room together.

My mom never wanted to walk around school or drive around with a bandana on her head, thinking she would save my sister and me embarrassment. Little did she know that all we wanted was for her to be comfortable. That's when my parents decided to get a wig. Every night, it would sit in the closet on a short, white manikin, until it was time to be worn again. It was uncomfortable, itchy, and would constantly break her hair into shorter pieces.

It's hard to watch yourself go through something so scarring and not know the outcome.

Sometimes, people turn out to be the lucky ones. Many people, like my mom, have battled cancer and survived, and they don't let it wear them down each day. It may make them fearful of the future, but it also makes them realize how our days are only getting shorter.

Having experienced something like this at a young age has helped me grow as a person. Although I wish my mom never had to deal with cancer, it was a time for when my family came together to get through a tough time. Looking back, I never realized how my mom truly felt. She knew how to cover her feelings and wanted me to think she was going to get better. It takes a strong woman to go through this and try to keep secrets to protect your family. My innocence prevented me from realizing what the reality was. It was arduous watching my mom struggle each day, however we can't change or predict the future. When burdens are put upon us, it is crucial to come together, not fall apart. Unfortunately, the unknown will stay the unknown. Through this I have further grown my relationship with my mom and we have built a stronger connection and bond.

Since I don't know what the future holds, I say, "Mom I love you."

Natalie Suozzo



Katie DeBois

Groceries

There was a
 blood orange
 my mother bought
 for my brother
 from Trader Joe's.
 She cut it up
 for him
 after lunch.
 It wasn't
 pure red,
 like normal;
 it was orange
 with specks of
 darkness,
 spilling vivid juice
 from each sector.
 "I don't want it,"
 my brother said
 after peering at it.
 "Looks don't affect taste,"
 my mother replied.

He said it was the
 sweetest orange
 he'd ever had.

Darya Khodakhah



Sophia Pirinea

Boat Racing Fun

Michael, an aid who worked in B109 signed me up to participate in the Regatta at the YMCA. One of the YMCA workers named Hilary gave us directions to make a boat out of a cardboard box. We had 7 minutes to build the boat. My dad, Michael, and Mr. Miller helped me build and race the boat.

We used aluminum foil for the inside of the box. We taped the cardboard box to keep it together. Building it was fun and exciting. After the boat was made we put it into the water and waited for the whistle. When the whistle blew, the race started. Hilary gave us paddles to help us move the boat. We went from the beginning of the pool to the end. It was hard to do, because the boat didn't stay together; it was frustrating, but it was fun. We were timed by Hilary.

I was proud to be a participant in the race and to work together with others. It was nice that Hilary invited us all, and it was exciting to be included. Another student won, but Hilary said everyone was a winner.

Adam Murray

Explosion

Persevere harder than ever
 Stress it,
 Wrack my brains
 Tear them open
 Rake them apart.

Eat; don't eat.
 What does it matter?
 There's no time for such things,
 There's no more time.
 Time...?

My eyes are dry,
 Coursing red vipers pulse around my pupils.
 Hot embers of coal explode in my stomach.
 There's a mallet pounding my rib cage.

I vomit,
 Not through my mouth but my pelvis.
 My organs, my guts, my blood
 Rips me open
 Just to run away and escape it all.

I am now in pieces.
 Liver, heart, lung
 Where do they all go?
 How do I put them all back in?
 I feel the pressure of frustration behind my eyes.

I pick it all up,
 I stuff it back in
 Like sticky, squishy, gushing stuffing.
 I stitch it back in
 With a copper needle and black spider webs.

I can feel them flip over each other.
 They're pushing out,
 Trying to find a natural place.
 I wrap them tight but it's no good.
 They don't stay, won't stay; I panic.

I collapse into darkness.
 I feel it drain me of comfort
 While it continues to take my body away from me.
 My mind is in its own nightmare,
 My body is broken, destroyed by distress.



Jacee Cappelli

And then I feel those arms again,
 Soft and tender,
 As they pick me up and whisper
 nothings to me.
 Little by little those graceful callused
 fingers put me back together.
 My eyes fill with hope, but my heart
 screams.

And with that last stitch
 One final phrase;
 Seared into my mind and soul.
 Never leaving, not even in the
 darkest of times.
 "Now do it again."

Celia Spana

La Nouvelle Vague

I left Antoine and Isabelle at the protest. The screams of our youth echoed through the dark well of my twenty year-old thoughts. I could see my classmates pounce at police officers as the sound of bottles ricocheting off glass windows blared in my ears. As I continued, I turned the corner and began walking towards Montparnasse. I could hear the lull of peace in the distance. I clutched a Gauloise from my pocket and began to light it but before I could, I spotted an angel that wholly subdued me.



Ryann Fitzgerald

She walked alone. This ethereal woman wore her ombre hair loose, letting it fall to her delicate shoulders. Her bangs veiled an unpretentious forehead that seemed to be devoid of imperfections, due to the easily identifiable luster of her alabaster skin. I could only catch her eyes for a mere second as she nervously looked away to avoid eye contact with me. She was hiding, but you could tell that she had a powerful gaze. They were unassailable brown eyes.

We were approximately ten feet apart. As we slowly approached one another, I began to recognize her. She went to La Sorbonne. Along with Isabelle, she was studying to become a sculptor. I also remembered seeing her at a poetry reading of mine at Café de Flore. She was part of a crowd of other students, but she didn't look like she was. This Valkyrie carried the air of an individual who only heeded her own expostulations. She had the countenance of a girl with an overactive mind: someone who was inveterately lost in her own thoughts. She looked like someone who spent sleepless nights trying to exhaust her own mind. Isabelle had once described her to me. She said that when you spoke to her, you couldn't really tell who she was looking at or what she was thinking about. Her eyes failed to focus on anything. Yet, you were able to feel her effectual stare scrutinize your shape and her mind dissect each and every word that you uttered. Why on Earth would she come to see me recite my own self-consciousness?

I desperately wanted to approach her. I yearned for her scrutiny. I felt this strange desire to reveal myself to her: to release every single rumination I had in order for her to tear them asunder. As the moment of judgment presented itself to me, a knot formed in my chest. I began to feel impossibly heavy and my mouth was sutured shut. My reticence was debilitating. Our hearts were closed. As we passed one another, I swiftly brushed shoulders with her. It was all I could do in response to this emulsion of feeling that she inspired in me. I thought she would turn back to leer at me for my utter irresolution. Instead, she glanced at me furtively and grinned as she gently stroked a strand of her hair behind her ear, exposing her ear to the rapid workings of my heart. She knew all too well.

I made my way back to the rancid nourishment of my studio apartment, abandoning myself to instant coffee, Flaubert, and the breeze of May in 1968. I sat at my desk and picked up my pen precariously to write in my notebook, but I couldn't focus. My hands were shaking and my mind was exhaustively moving. I reviewed all that had just happened over and over again in my mind. I was laid bare before her. In a way, I felt violated. My heart had leapt to my throat. I didn't need to speak to her in order to rip apart my words; all she had to do was expose her senses to ruin me.

Yet, I yearned to be enmeshed. I abandoned myself to solitude and a racing mind in order to conjure that moment as I had seen it. I was becoming her. Hiding was all I could do to retain her image.



Amanda Tigani

Kevan Oryani



Leah Abramson

The Mineral

An unformed glob with a hidden core,
 Brought onto the workstation of life.
 The muck cleared off ever so carefully,
 A youthful vision of its essence is formed.
 Now is time to shape it with the blacksmiths tools,
 While it lays against the anvil of time.

A chisel called knowledge,
 A carving knife called experience,
 Topped off with the hammer of truth.
 Refined in the crucible of fire,
 Cooled down through the stream of emotion,
 And polished through the cloth of friends.

As the cycle continues,
 A core begins to reveal itself,
 The true nature shining through from within.
 While the handiwork may fail,
 Leading to tainted ore within,
 Sometimes in the end there is gold.

Amr El-Azizi

Droplets

On the cold barren ground-
Where life is foreign in all form,
Signs of movement were forgotten;
As the winds blew all away to nothingness,
Of sediments and fragments,
And the remnants of what once was.

Any memory that remained
In the fragments left behind by the lost
souls
Whom wander for eternity without rest
With whatever reason that left them there
Those memories have no home
In the emptiness that remains
Here, now

The dark shrouds this place
In the lifelessness
Without mind or body
The scraps of earth that were forgotten
Are withered away
And unusable
Impossible for anything to grow

With this forgotten land
There is no hope to be found
That was until a single ray of sunlight
broke the darkness
And shattered it
Like the inevitable fate of broken glass
That lay beyond repair



Jessica Hart



Shannon Zuccarelli

With that light came smaller spheres
Of liquid
That bombarded the barren ground
With rain
The warmth and cold collided
To form an array of color
Which ended the silence that remained

The scraps that could not bear anything
Were beginning to move,
As the light shined outward on the scene.
And to the naked eye
The abyss was visible,
And found transformed from its' previous state

The forgotten remains of earth
Began to reach up with their green fingers
Longing palms stretching high for warmth and
nourishment
For things had changed, from what once was
The ground had become alive once more

Kiera Cutri

A Dandelion Seed

I am
a dandelion seed,
dancing harmoniously with the breath of
sky,

Nestling gently
into a place I've never seen.

I am
the touch of night –
impenetrable, intensely enveloping,

Allowing the curious
to be sated by more questions.

I am
the vivid autumn leaves,
leaping from home,

becoming an integument
for ground.

I am
the sun,
summoning the birds,

penetrating every seam of earth
compassionately offering warmth.

Come to me,
Come to me.

I
am
freedom.

Leslie An



Matthew Oliva



Sakura Tateiwa

I Wish

I wish I could write you a letter
 Hidden in the ink would be our precious memories
 I'd send it in a bottle
 For the waves of the ocean to carry it to your shore
 Where it would lay
 Glistening on the sand
 Waiting for your touch

I wish I could send you our song
 I would play it to the birds
 Who could sing the tune to each other
 Each melody intertwined with the one prior
 And perhaps someday
 It would reach you.

I wish I could send you laughter
 The kind that would keep us up for hours
 With bright eyes and jubilant souls
 I'd give it to the clouds
 Who'd be bursting with this sound
 And when it rains
 Each raindrop would be a smile
 Each thunderclap a giggle
 And each lightning strike a laugh

I wish I could send you my voice
 So you wouldn't forget
 Who I am and who you are
 I could place it on the wind's back
 And let it carry my sound
 And place the whisper of my name in your ear

If I knew how to reach you
 I would send you it all
 But I am here and you are far
 And so I suppose this poem
 Will have to do
 Until we meet again

Romy Pein



Sabrina Sakai

Home

The unfortunately familiar sound of truck engines fills my ears, suffocating me once again. *They're here.* I sigh and move towards the window in hope that, by some miracle, it isn't what I think. That hope, however, shortly vanishes when I see a dozen men with broad shoulders pour out of the trucks, sporting the company's logo on their blue shirts. I open the door for them, which seems second nature to me now, and watch as they gather all the furniture and cardboard boxes that have anticipated their untimely arrival. If my family didn't feel this event was standard, maybe we'd have hung up a banner parading the words, *Welcome to Moving Day*; however, this was our ninth move, our tenth house, so moving is a bit mundane. After all, when an event becomes routine, it ceases to be celebrated.

People were awestruck by our moving history, as I'm sure you are after hearing of it. "You've moved *nine* times?" they'd ask. Yes, we've moved nine times within the same town, sometimes even moving just down the street! Despite the multitude of questions and puzzled looks from townspeople, I've always thought of our lifestyle as "normal". For me, though, normal consists of dozens of moving trucks, countless cardboard boxes, and, as you might have guessed, ten houses. Moving is all I've ever known. That, and of course, the value of adaptation, which inevitably went along with it. Ask anyone who has ever moved and, like myself, they'll preach about the importance of accepting adversity and adjusting accordingly.

While I didn't loathe our nomadic lifestyle, I also didn't particularly like it. The discussion about moving was never a conversation of which I was a part, leading me to experience a detachment from any place I've ever lived. The strangely dreaded and remarkably familiar question of my childhood always reminded me of this when I was asked which house was my favorite. Although this seemingly insignificant question appears easy to answer, every time it was posed I felt pressured to provide the answer that I didn't have. Each house obviously had its own idiosyncrasies, but they were never enough to make me fall in love with any of them, let alone a single one. I've lived in ten houses over the course of my sixteen years and I have yet to call any of them my home, which is, perhaps, due to my lack of choice in the matter. Choosing to move has always been a decision I longed to make, which has taught me the value in decision-making. Inevitably I crave the choices I was deprived.

I hate to quote the ever-so cliché saying, “Home is where the heart is,” but it reigns true. While my childhood was spent contemplating which one of the ten houses I could truly call home, it never occurred to me that home could reside in the people surrounding me. This concept of home, for me, is rooted in the profound connections forged by each of my relationships. For so long I had naively believed that the feelings of comfort and contentment could only be associated with a physical location, but upon pondering which of the houses was my favorite, I’d finally realized that home is wherever or whomever you choose it to be. While I haven’t been able to control the unfortunate moving situation, I was always able to choose whom I shared the experience with. Like the countless houses that I’ve lived in, people come and go; it’s those that choose to become a part of my life that truly feel like home.

I know now that my next move will not be insignificant; that next move will be my college decision. It may mean seeing the moving truck and packing the cardboard boxes again, but this time I look forward to the chaos because for once, I have chosen it.



Maybellene Aung

Alexandra Franco

