

BEYOND

By: Daniella Nassar

"I just don't see it," I exclaim. By now I have tilted my head about six different ways, and I'm starting to feel a little embarrassed. It's as if I'm the only one here without imagination.

As I am stared at by all of the tourists in the museum for displaying my frustration and repeatedly talking to myself in a dream-like manner, a man walks by me.

"Look beyond the surface," he says.

I immediately switch my focus away from the painting and look back over my shoulder, but no one is there, just a breath. "Look beyond the surface? What does that even mean?" I wonder, my stomach beginning to cramp.

What makes people think I'm not looking beyond the surface? It's simple; it doesn't take a brain.

I'm staring at the painting the way a dog stares at a bone when I hear heel clicks which cause my eyes to shift. I look over and I see a mom and her daughter draw in close to the painting. I eye them as they observe the "features." I try my hardest to overhear their conversation. The woman asks her daughter, "What do you see?"

The daughter says, "I see everything, the good, and the bad, but it's beautiful."

As they walk away, I stare until I can see no more of them. Why can't I see what others see? I slump my back and slide down the wall. As I sit with my hands covering my face, I hear the familiar words echoing. "Look beyond the surface"

I look up to see a yellow cart filled with vacuums and cleaning supplies.

"Have you looked beyond yet? Stop day dreaming and focus, you're looking but not seeing. It's a masterpiece, not just a picture; it represents much more than what you see. In life, things aren't always as they seem. You can judge things and lose an opportunity."

"What do you know? You're just a janitor!"

"Well, if you look behind the surface of me as well, you will see much more to me. Will you do me a favor?"

"What?"

"Read the signature at the bottom right of the painting."

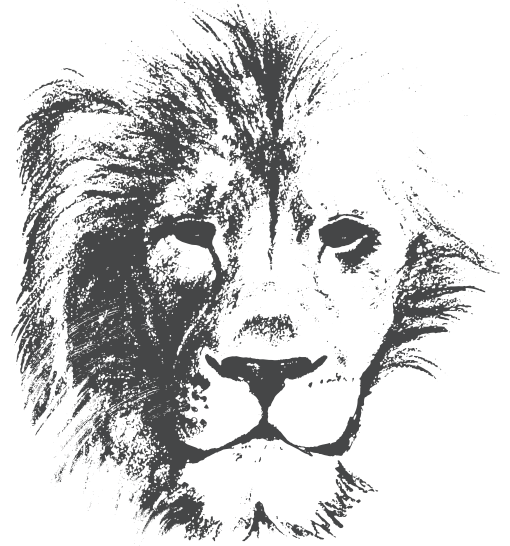
I drew my eyes to the bottom right and read the name, Jerry Clementine. I looked up and couldn't help but to see the bright yellow name sewed onto his janitor's coat: Jerry Clementine.



Daniella Nassar, Class of 2017, participated in Writers in the School and was recognized at the Watchful Eyes series reading event.

FIRE

By: Irene Roddy



*I am fire in the wind.
One little spark
can ignite the entire world. The air
crisp and smokey,
the fire big and beautiful.
I am that wildfire,
spreading like gossip in teen girls' hands.
My ways of life are dangerous; I lunge from
tree to tree,
It takes 1,000,000 people to slow down my
fiery reign of terror.
The outcome of my worldwide scare is poor.
I leave people with almost nothing to live on.
But with pain
comes beauty,
and I watch as friends and family, mountains
and trees
gather together
to build the world up again.
I am not all bad
for my flames create opportunities
to get stronger, more powerful.
I can transform the weakest squirrel into the
strongest lion.
When my destruction ends, I am exhausted.
I tell myself that my wildfire is a warning.
My silent, screaming
message: stay alert.
Another fire is coming.
I am the fire in the wind, ready to ignite.*