

Plum juice runs down my chin, sticky and sweet. My bare feet step gingerly on the cool stone path, and I stumble after my friends in the fading light of a finger-painted sunset. Violently swatting at clouds of mosquitoes with one hand, I continue to savor each slurpy bite of plum. The breeze floats through my hair, and I grin at Nina, who hops as she walks beside me in an attempt to spare her bare feet from stepping on any particularly sharp rocks. The birds quiet, and the sound of chirping crickets steadily crescendos as they take over for the night shift. We reach the top of the hill and jump onto the stone wall. Holding only the pit of the fruit in our sticky hands, we stop to bask in the sunset. The clouds have become an orange haze in a purple sea. We fling the pits into the abyss beyond the wall, and I can see them for a fleeting moment as little black dots against the thick smears of orange and pink sky. They vanish into the leafy chasm, and Nina and I argue about who has the better arm for plum-pit throwing as we head towards the house to rinse the sweet juice from our fingers.

Hannah Adler '21

I stood on the forest's open trail
The wind blew through my hair
The willow's leaves, soft and frail
Eyes squinting from the sun's glare

The songs of the birds caressed my ears
The calls of the bugs roared beneath me
The creek mumbled groans and cheers
The melodies played from tree to tree

The smell of pine had consoled
The scent of the dirt had grounded
The history of the trail was untold
The sight where discovery was founded

I stood on the forest's open trail
Where the forest let my freedom sail.

Andrey (Andy) Cao '21

A frustrated howl sounded from behind me as I leapt over the uneven ground, avoiding roots and rocks until my bare feet hit the shaking wood of the fishing dock. I gasped as it rattled underneath me. The wild night air threaded its fingers through my hair and caressed my smile. I halted to taste the adventure... until I was knocked forward by the impact of his jump on the dock.

Eva Millay Evans '21

Every word

I say

Is another piece of firewood,

And I am worried

We will burn down in the blaze.

But I wonder

If forests need to burn down every now and then

In order to bloom again

- Argument

Eva Millay Evans '21

Propped up against the tree was Carter, unconscious and bleeding, his red sweatshirt torn into pieces, his face bruised and broken with a hopeless expression across it.

Bridget Hall '21

An Appeal to Civility

“Hello all, and thank you for joining me here today. I would like to respond to recent allegations made by my opponent, Misty Champlain, that I abused my position as co-chair of the Prom Committee to allocate funds for my campaign for captain of the Winfield Wildcats cheer squad. This is nothing more than a bald-faced lie, and I urge my opponent to rise above these petty attacks and join me in ensuring that this race remains completely civil. I would not resort to such dirty tactics even if they secured my victory, for making bogus accusations and tarnishing a candidate’s reputation is beneath the dignity of the position we seek. For example, I would never bring up that time when Misty peed her pants in seventh grade on the bus home from Camp Minnoweta because I want to make my campaign about the issues, like my plan to get us personalized team water bottles. The fact that Misty had lice in fifth grade and forced us all to be examined in the nurse’s office is neither here nor there in a race that should focus on the problems facing all Wildcats, like the recent budget cuts instituted by Principal Higgins. I mean, when we’re performing at the pep rally in February, what will really matter to you? The amount of money we can spend on our team dinner afterward? Or the fact that Misty got dumped by Connor Larkin because she’s – and I quote – ‘the worst kisser on earth?’ In conclusion, while Misty has chosen to make this campaign personal, I have chosen to make it about all of you. Despite Misty’s attempts to divide us, we will continue to stand united, until one day we won’t even care about Misty’s nose job or the fact that she still doesn’t have a date to prom, because we mean too much to each other to dwell on her numerous, ever-multiplying flaws. Thank you.”

Ryan Jones '20

Tick-tock-tick-tock. Ding. *A new law has been created by the supreme president due to the overflowing population: there can be a maximum of one child in one household.* His monitored phone alerted him to the situation. He had to alert his wife soon. Putting on his white attire -- no color was allowed -- he raced out to the desolate street. Indeed, nobody was supposed to be out during the afternoon, but it was urgent. His wife was pregnant with twins. How lucky they thought they were when they first found out that she was pregnant with twins. Now, he didn't know what to do. He couldn't just lose them; that would be cruel. He made a decision. Even if the plan risked his own life, he would be up for it.

Emily Khym '23

I was so lost in my thoughts that I didn't notice that Lana and my dad had already begun talking to each other. She was teaching my dad how to pronounce Chinese /tʃar'ni:z/ instead of /tʃr'ni:z/. My dad enthusiastically listened and learned from her. He told me to translate for Lana that it was his first time in America and seeing snow. She turned to me, grinning, and said, "Your dad is so brave."

Hazel Le '22

The Hitchhiker's Guide to Breaking the Galaxy

Being alone, the frightened soul

Enveloped in the darkness of his mind

No sound, no noise at all, except for the echoes of his own breathing

They filled him with words upon words, creating a film of confusion and concern

Listen... they declared

This Universe was created for you to come to, but...

Beware! Beware!

There is danger out there

A bitter aura in the air

An unborn plague just waiting to appear

After a while, this fellow woke up and he didn't think anything of it

But the echoes never silenced

They escaped the REM realm and hammered at his brain

Yet he continued to ignore their worries and warnings

There is a theory which states that if ever anyone discovers exactly what the

Universe is for and why it is here, it will instantly disappear

And be replaced by something even more bizarre and inexplicable

Maybe... this was not the way it was supposed to be

If only this fellow could see

Slowly, a smooth baritone bass hums. It is a mesmerizing yet reassuring feeling, like warm waves washing over a flaming horizon. The vibration forces Henry into a trance; he envisions the darkness swallowing the deeply saturated hues of wine red and fiery orange that surround a round yellow moon. Static overlaps like the crackling of a fireplace.

A song starts playing, something that he has heard before in his childhood: jazz. Brush beats. Piano chords. The crisp starting note of a trumpet. A saxophone plays in the distance, its smooth, round voice echoing around the room. The music is quiet but entralls him.

Jenny Pan '22

With a hiss, the door splits down the middle like the ripping of a rib cage during open heart surgery, sides tearing away from their counterparts, slow and meticulous. Light engulfs the small closet, beginning as a slit against the concrete of the floor and growing into a gaping opening. Ahead, a hallway lined with a warm, white glow lures Topeious, the doors merging back into one after he enters.

Inside, the air is crisp and clean, a welcome refresher from the dank stench in the closet. His footsteps echo off the walls as he ventures toward a hum of voices. He nears the source, the corridor melting into a larger room, and he picks up his pace slightly, gait elongating.

Isabelle Parsons '22

You sit on the bed next to Ben, and the two of you stare at the clothing that is arrayed across the floor. His tiny hands curl into the duvet. You keep finding yourself at a loss for words. It stands out: stark incompetence against the background of grief. That's when he hugs you, and you melt into each other. You can feel the bones of his shoulders and notice how thin he is, flighty and fragile like the birds he buries in shoeboxes in the backyard after they fly into the kitchen windows. You taste salt and know you're crying again. He might be too; you're not sure. You can't see his face, but he's shaking.

Eleanor Peters '20

in memoriam

To you, I am a pile of bones
gritty and dry on a plastic chair
shaped and scarred by tears and empty promises
Your heartbeat, the steady electricity
of cold metal: unremorseful
A robotic sentiment echoed
as though it means something
corrupted by festering greed and stained
by inescapable pride
My death is a routine tragedy
a scheduled farcical atonement
Nothing to be done
but pray, and glut yourself
Yesterday I climbed a tree, danced
today I decompose into statistical proof of your failure
and yet still you simper
meaningless unapologetic defenses
You, an architect of burial
how long can you ignore
the skeletons beneath your feet

Eleanor Peters '20

Whispers of ashes, sand, and steam
Surround formations under a solar gleam
Among lumps and layers of Icelandic rock
Intertwine the rivers and silver streams
As Nature's fury incites human shock

Krishnapriya Rajaram '21

Everyone is tense, ready to run. They're more alert now, waiting for someone to kick down their door. Take school, for example. Parents send their kids to school with a list of instructions: walk quickly, don't stop, don't wait anywhere for longer than you have to, come straight home, avoid police, please be careful. Tearful mothers look from the dirty windows (you really can't see out them anyway) as their kids run across the street and cut through the alley to avoid detection. Most parents are terrified their kids will get taken on their way to school or during school or on their way back, but they also know that school is probably safer than home, where at any moment someone could break in. Parents are also scared to go to work, but they need the money. They worry the whole day through about how leaving their homes unattended might result in losing all of their belongings. Not that they had a lot of stuff to begin with. No one around here does.

Kassie Rivera '21

This power thunders among the mountains
As they rise like kings over their empires.

This power quakes among the volcanoes,
Steadily poised like an executioner ready to strike.

This power manifests in the knightly waterfalls,
Forever raising their swords in an everlasting battle cry.

This power endures war after war
With the steady guidance and timeless wisdom of the stunning, yet ancient,
glaciers.

Christina Stone '20

A backyard swing toddles in midair, its eager rocking
Movements conveying its excitement to be ridden. Slowly
She lowers herself into its narrow cradle and lets the momentum of the rain rock
her like an infant.

From this seat the world around her appears
So green and good. How can she be part of this infinite puzzle of creation? How
did the
Same being that sculpted the mountains,
Strung together papery leaves to drape
Over trees and bushes,
Animated the raw liveliness of a rodent,
Or the busy work of an insect
Decide that the world needed her too?

Caroline Thompson '20

But Eurymachus wasn't free either. He was trapped in his own chains by the same woman who held Melantho's shackles. The sweet and kind and perfect Penelope. Melantho hated her more than anything else in the world. Every time she saw Penelope's tear-stained face, it filled her with disgust. Every time Penelope called Melantho "sister" instead of "slave," she wanted to scream. Every time she saw the desire and admiration and love that filled Eurymachus's eyes when he saw Penelope, Melantho's heart pounded with a dark and poisonous rage. It was still a mystery to her how anyone who wasn't a thick-headed narcissist like Odysseus could love such a flimsy doll like Penelope. It drove her mad whenever any one of her peers became jealous because Penelope treated her "like a daughter." If Penelope really thought of Melantho as a daughter, she wouldn't need to try and buy her loyalty with pathetic trinkets. If Penelope really cared about her, she wouldn't expect Melantho to wait on her hand and foot. If Penelope really considered Melantho her equal, then Melantho would already be free.

Grace Thompson '22

Storming out, Ethan found Steve sitting on the classroom floor, surrounded by a group of kids. Knocking on the classroom door, he raised his chin. “Let’s go.”

“What did the instructor say?” Steve sniffed as he smoothed his wrinkled jacket and messed up hair.

“Nothing,” Ethan sighed, “but he is hiding something.”

“I think I know.” Seeing Ethan’s eyebrows raised up at a suspicious angle, Steve pulled out a picture of the choir and pointed at the kid standing in the middle of the second row. “This is the lead singer. After he went missing, the choir director appointed another one, and that kid disappeared soon after. The director probably realized that something went wrong, so he switched the next lead singer to the third row. But the next two kids in this same spot, though not lead singers anymore, still disappeared.”

He paused for a while. “They say this spot has been cursed.”

Angela Wang ’20

Like a Dream

A thousand gnats in the sky,
the sun shining in my eyes,
the dusky haze,
a sunflower's gaze,
summer's almost over.

Stephanie Zhang '21