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Champions

By Julianna Condo

I stand on the field as my heart begins racing
Warming up with a catch as my fingers run
along the ball's laces

Looking at the nervous batter standing at
home plate

Hoping that striking out will be her fate

As our team's pitcher releases the ball
Her windup is the smoothest motion of all
Pitching the ball it spins rapidly to her
With a swing followed by a miss, it seemed as
if the ball was a blur

Two outs down with one strike left to throw
Our pitcher mixes it up now, in order to ruin
the flow

A swing and a miss which means the batter
was out

My team couldn't help it but to cheer and
shout

We jumped and smiled as the warm sun was
blazing
Winning the championship game just felt so
amazing
After a long challenging successful game
The season was over which was such a shame

Not only was my team friends to me
But it was also as if they were like family
This game was a win I will never forget
And if you think we're good now, you haven't
seen us yet.

Dreams

By Jordan Barbee

My head is a nighttime cinema
That only plays horror
So grotesque

That my imagination can't cope
and it feels as though my body may break
When cold sweats don't explain the creatures
that lurk behind my closed eyelids
Shadows there but always out of sight
Always talking but never heard by anyone but
me

And it seems like no one can understand

Why I'm always tired

But seem to have slept fine

As if day and night are just the same

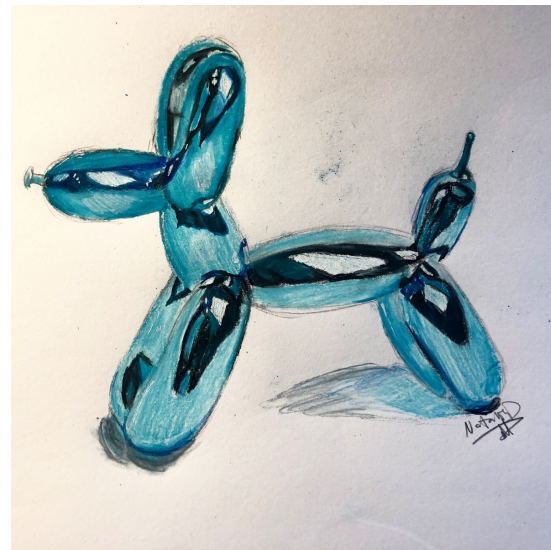
And nothing really changes

As if dreams are always lovely

And nightmares are never there

Waiting and lurking

For the minute I close my eyes.



Real Love, Real Life (Excerpt)

By Alli Walker

6:50 am September 6, 2020

Dear Diary,

First Day. No big deal, just the first day at a new school. Maybe I'll meet some nice people. So far I only have my twin brother, Daniel's, friends and my older brother Ricky's girlfriend as my friends, but they aren't actual friends, just people who know me. It's scary coming to a new school and not knowing anyone. I came from an all-girls school and now I'm going to a public high school. WOW. This random kid is showing me around today so maybe that's another friend. I hope, even though he's a guy, I'll be better at talking to him because being around girls for so long you hate talking to them.

7:15 pm September 6, 2020

Dear Diary,

Jake, the kid who showed me around today, is a weirdo. He made uncomfortable jokes and waited for me to respond. He's definitely not someone I want to associate with. My first impression was that he looked nice, but then he opened his mouth and I wanted to throw a book at his head. Anyway, I won't let that ruin my idea of public school.

4:18 am November 1, 2020

Dear Diary,

I see why people like Halloween parties so much—they're loud, exciting, and entertaining. Jake said he liked my costume but he probably just liked that half my butt was showing. All boys care about are physical features; none of them genuinely like a girl for who she is. Jake's friends say he likes me and I could believe that, but I choose not to because I don't want him to like me. If he does, it's not like he likes me for who I am anyway. He probably likes the chase. I do everything in my power to ignore him and see him as little as possible. The whole thing is dumb anyway, so he probably doesn't like me.

10:29 pm November 30, 2020

Dear Diary,

Happy birthday to me and Daniel. I just turned 15 and I am so happy. I was done being 14—it

was not fun, and I was always tired. Jake's been 16 since June and he's getting his license in December. Speaking of Jake, he does like me but I still think that he likes the chase. There are other girls he could go for and get the chase from, so why me? Maybe it has to do with my brother: Daniel tends to have an effect on guys who like me. Last year, this kid liked me and Daniel told him if he came anywhere near me that he would personally ruin his life. No one has ever told me they liked me since then. That's what could be driving Jake more, the fact that my brother may want to kill him. I hope I see him today, although I said I never wanted to associate with him. He's not a bad guy. I had to get to know him, I judged too quickly. He has a great sense of humor and is kind of cute. Okay, I am not falling for him, I just think he's cute and I would never tell him.

6:23 pm December 7, 2020

Dear Diary,

Okay, so I told him. Yes, I know I said I wouldn't because I thought maybe he felt the same way, and he does. We aren't dating, not yet at least, or maybe we are. I don't know. I'm very confused right now. All I know is he likes me and I like him. I hope something will happen. I've never felt like this about someone. I know it's "cringey" but he's different: he likes me for me, I don't have to put up an image in order for him to like me.

3:17 am December 29, 2020

Dear Diary,

I guess this is where our adventure starts. Jake, he's my boyfriend. For some reason, the word "boyfriend" doesn't roll off my lips when I talk about him. Okay, I'm awake for a good reason. Basically, Jake wanted to take me out because he has a car, so I snuck out around 11:30 pm and we got ice cream. We mainly drove, blasting country music down the highway for hours. BEST NIGHT EVER! I could not be happier and I honestly cannot believe this is happening. The private school girl turns into the girl who sneaks out to see her boyfriend. It's too good to be true. No one pinch me, I don't want to wake up if this is a dream.

If I Have Kids

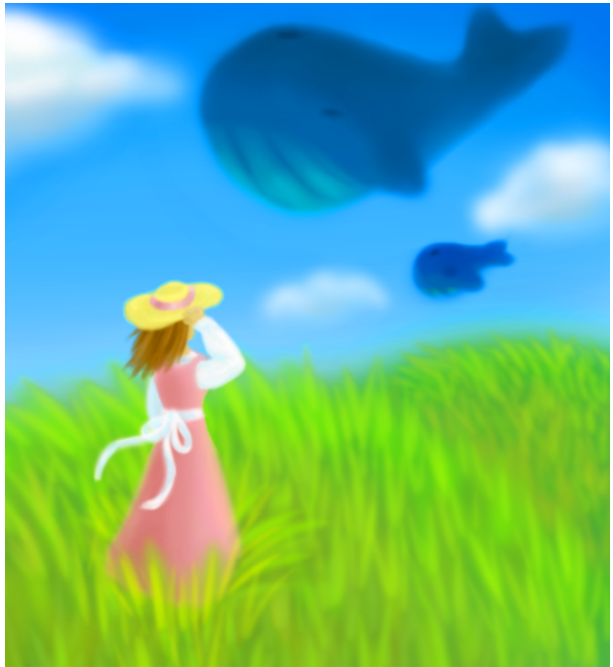
By Santiago Duque-Baird

If I have kids, they'll be mine
They'll be part of my bloodline
I know they would worry me sick
As a dad, I hope I'm not too strict
I want them to love the sunshine
I hope I can show them the skyline
And protect them from the malign...
I will take them on a picnic
I'll worry if they get sick
If I have kids, I'm sure they'll be fine.

A Beautiful World

By MaryKate Ardizzi

What would the world be like without the sun
that greets us with its alluring sunsets and
comforts us with its warmth?
Without the glorious cotton candy clouds,
the most important piece of every child's
imagination?
Without the ocean waves that carry us to
shore and allow us to glide freely,
like we are one with the sea?
Without the beauty of a smile,
the human way of giving happiness and
positivity back to the universe?
Without the moon,
the kindest soul that hugs us with its
enchanting glisten of light?
Without the ability to imagine what it would
be like to fly?
Oh! What a beautiful world.



Rain

By Jimmy Klein

The mist comes down, with silence and
serenity
As calm as a lake on a day without wind
No one is fighting, behaving in accordance
The world is at peace

The rain now descends at a quicker rate
Sending rivers down the street, and leaves off
of trees
Tensions are rising, aggravation is growing
The world is boiling, violence is imminent

Now the sky crackles with pops and roars
Massive droplets fall from the sky, and wind
blows over trees
Nowhere is safe, it seems as if the world
might end
Wars rage everywhere, and families pray for
themselves

Ashes to Ashes

By Angelo DiProspero

The sand was cool from the brisk sea breeze that came and went. The lilacs above faded into the warm and welcoming setting sky. The sun sat almost perfectly on the horizon, turning the usually green-grey water into a deep royal blue. The faint songs of the waves melting into the golden sand, along with the familiar cadence of the seagulls flying just above the water drowned out the noises of the cars passing on the gravel road just behind the massive sand dunes. I've never felt more at peace, being here, sitting next to the one I love.

"Isn't it beautiful?" I said, "There's nothing that clears the head like watching the sunset."

Silence came again, but it was a good silence. The kind not filled with awkward small talk out of fear of the quiet, but the kind filled with serenity. The feeling of being together in the moment, and taking everything in is better than any conversation, I think.

It had been a full year since I'd been back at this beach. Every October, we would jump in the car and drive down for the weekend. On the way down, we would take detours to yard sales to look at antiques, and stop at fruit stands along the back roads to stock up on food for the weekend.

At this point in my life, it had become such a tradition that I never thought it could change. I thought that everything stayed the same and people would stay. Instead, they come and go.

"Hey, remember when I was little, we would go down to the edge of the water and you would help me jump over the waves?" I said with a distinct sense of nostalgia in my voice.

"Or the times we would sit on the lifeguard stands and watch the boats pass over the horizon?" I continued, although this time I felt the nostalgia turn into a longing for those times. That longing eventually turned into sadness as I continued to recall memories of the past.

We sat there for what felt like forever as I talked about all of the good times we shared throughout our lives.

Times have been tough for the family lately, just last week we lost her. The vacation doesn't feel the same anymore without her here, but she didn't want her sickness to get in the way of it. So, we pulled ourselves together and hopped in the car. I feel wrong about not giving ourselves the chance to grieve, but that's something we can face when we get home. I tried my best to not let it get in the way of enjoying my two short days away from all of the sadness and sorrow. And by doing so, I was able to look back at the good times I had with such an immense sense of tranquility.

I had been trying to prepare myself for her death for as long as I can remember. As a small child, I can recall trying to wrap my head around the fact that someone I love so dearly



may not be there tomorrow. And as I have grown and matured, that realization has gotten easier to understand. In theory, I would be able to recognize that someone who I saw every day would be dead, and I would be able to move on over time. But in reality, I know that my heart's need for her will overpower any logic or amount of preparation.

Sometimes I convince myself that she is not gone, in the moments when I first wake up, I think nothing's wrong and that everything is okay. But then, it all comes back, and I remember I'll never get to look into her loving eyes again.

My family is rooted deep in faith, so the idea of her being with other loved ones in heaven consoles me a bit, but the selfishness I have in my heart for her to be pulled away from them and be back with me overpowers my faith.

In the midst of all of my stories, I paused and thought for a moment. "I wish I could go back, just for a minute," I said. "I don't know what I would say, I'd probably just stare, happy just to be there."

"Every time we would come here, you always said how peaceful you thought it was," I continued.

I stood up and brushed the sand off of my pants. I picked up the large steel container that was cool to the touch from the sea breeze. I walked down to the water and stared for a moment or two, and, after a while, I could feel a lump forming in my throat and tears starting to well up.

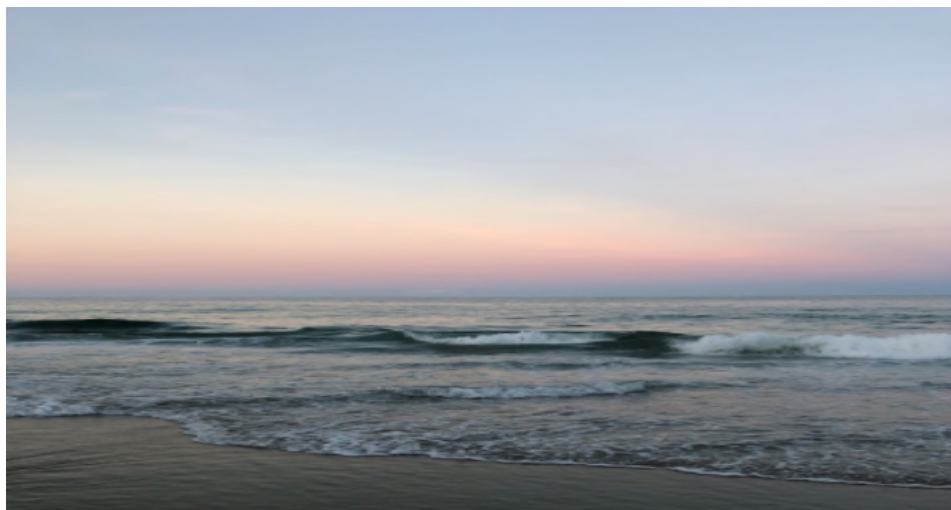
I closed my eyes, took a deep breath, and said, "I love you more than anything in this world and I will continue to miss you every day of my life."

The breeze started to pick up and the sun was minutes from vanishing under the horizon. I hugged her one last time and opened the top of the container. The tears, now streaming down my face, created ripples in the calm water surrounding my feet.

"You've fought hard enough, you can rest now," I cried quietly, "I know you'll be watching over me, and I promise I will make you proud."

"I love you," I wept as I tilted the urn towards a gust of wind. In that instant, I thought of something she always said: "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

As the ashes scattered out towards the sea, I looked up to see the sky, now a cool purple, and the new moon peeking out from behind a large cloud. The seagulls had all returned to land for the night, and the sound of the cars on the streets had been silenced. But I remained in that spot for a long while trying to collect myself, and as I thought of all of our good times, I smiled and turned away, and for some reason, I felt whole again.



Dancing in the Moonlight
By Jordan Barbee

Skeletal shapes
Dancing in the moonlight
Ghoulish figures
Singing to the stars
I admire them quietly
Through wispy trees
I hear them whisper
I watch them smile
As my body tries
To dance along
I hope tonight will be the night
Where they will choose me
To join them
But when midnight strikes
They soar to the skies
I stare up at them
With my heart of despair
For I know I will have to wait a thousand
years
Before they return
To rule the night

The Untouchable
By Ava Samango

The sky is something we see but can't touch
It gives us light and darkness,
fun days and good sleep.

If you go high enough,
you might see the planets
that circle the sun and make the earth go
round.

The sky gives us a lot but we can't seem to
touch it,
"Maybe it's not really there,"
you might think.
But in reality,
it's not meant to be touched.

Sometimes you can't physically feel things,
but that doesn't mean they're not there.
The best things on our earth go untouched,
and that makes them so special and natural.
Earth's beauties have been destroyed by us,
and it's getting worse day by day.



One World Divided

By Richard J. Buehler

Let's take it way back
To a time long, long ago
When the world was just developing
Only very, very slow

Cavemen kicked rocks
And animals hunted for food
There was no organization
And people were just plain rude

Move forward in time
and then we have progress
Civilizations are built
And empires have success

We move through history
And claim there is change
However, we move forward
Still with no restrain

Again, fast-forward in time
And it's a whole new story
A Colosseum is built
And gladiators fight for glory

Now we reflect
And claim we have learned
Looking at the past
Which makes us concerned

We acted as though
We had made things right
Yet slaves were still hard at work
And their owners were out of sight

Those of high classes
Still seem to rule
Getting everything they want
Making the middle class a mule

On to present day
Twenty nineteen

The setting has definitely changed
But only savages can be seen

The world is divided
Nothing more can be said
The rich enjoy caviar
While the poor beg for bread

Politics rule the globe
And gossip is a hot topic
A war is created
From an argument that was microscopic

And here we stand today
One world divided
With the nerve to say that we have changed
When we have only been misguided

Not Sorry to be Obnoxious

By Eli Hochkeppel

Not sorry to be obnoxious
But the air is getting heavy,
Feeling a little nauseous
I can see the stuff I'm supposed to breathe,
It's looking pretty noxious
But hey, the rising ocean means more beach
Not to us, not to us, not to us.

Not sorry to be obnoxious,
Kids in school are getting shot,
Government doesn't give a cuss
They say stay in your lane
They act so pretentious
They're not afraid, they do what they want
Not us, not us, not us.

Not sorry to be obnoxious,
People working three jobs to stay on top,
Can't sleep in bed, they sleep on the bus,
Self-made billionaires tell 'em to work harder
Sitting in their chairs,

Not us, not us, not us.
Not sorry to be obnoxious,
But we're protesting in the streets,
The government calls us treasonous,
We're just asking for our unalienable rights,
While the prez's checks are getting
superfluous
Not us, not us, not us.

Not sorry to be obnoxious,
But the workers want to unionize,
Lack of healthcare leave them leaking pus,
They have kids that want to get a degree,
Who shouldn't be praying to die on campus
Not us, not us, not us.

Not sorry to be obnoxious,
But you're doing it wrong,
Kids are kicking up a fuss,
Trying to fix your mistakes,
Sitting in the school bus
Even when we're laughing, dancing, having
fun,
Doom is stuck in our subconscious,
You say there's nothing you can do but
The solution is not amorphous,
Not to us, not to us, not to us.

You mock us for being young and scared
How can we make you conscious?
We have to make a stand, look you in the eye,
We have to act ferocious.
That's us, that's us, that's us.



What Am I Supposed To Do With All These Lemons?

By Carlie DiMeo

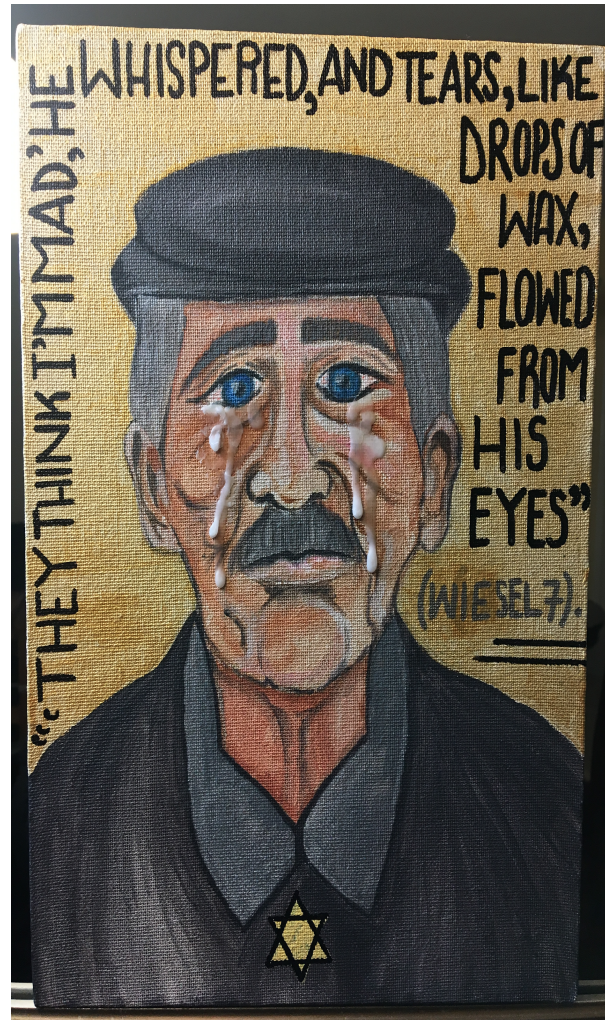
When life gives you lemons, you're supposed to make lemonade.

But life never gave me sugar,
To make my lemonade sweet,
Or water,
To dilute the bitterness,
Life just gave me lemons,
Straight up lemons,
Bright happy yellow lemons
That are sour on the inside.

I don't like my lemonade
It makes my face pucker
And it stings when it's spilled on my scratches.

I wish I had Sally's lemonade
Her lemonade looks like nectar,
Sweet and yummy.
I bet she never had to drink bitter lemonade,
Why does Sally get to have sweet lemonade
And not me?

I'm done with this sour lemonade,
It tastes disgusting and I'm not happy with it.
I'm not going to continue sitting around,
drinking what was given to me.
I'm going to go out and find my own sugar,
To make my lemonade sweet,
And my own water,
To dilute the bitterness,
And I'm going to change it into
The best lemonade it can be.



Little Man

By Anonymous

Save your breath, I
don't want to hear a
word you want to say.
How's that feel?
Don't tell me, I
already know.
You showed me.
Looking back at it
now, what I really
don't know is why on



earth I ever let a man I barely knew rip every bittersweet breath right from my lungs when the ugly truth is: I was never the right beauty, never that one he really wanted.
And while we're at it, why'd I donate so much of me—my time, my energy, my heart, my spirit, and my soul—to one little man who failed me time and time again when I pleaded with him to give me a second thought, just a second?
Save your breath—I wasn't going to listen to your torrent of meaningless tongue-twisters anyway.

So save it.

If there's anything I know, it's that I actually know a whole lot about a lot.

Sorry to be obnoxious, but what makes you think you know me better than I know me?

Yes, I'm well aware I'm standing on what may be the smallest island known to man, and, yes, come to think of it, I do see that I've got sharks circling in the water and, hey, would you look at that!

I even noticed they're all wearing your smile.

That very same smile that used to birth a hurricane of butterflies in my stomach all of the time.

But you see, today, I have no intention of letting them eat me alive.

I'd like to see you say the same, but I know you won't, so you can go ahead and save your breath.

Life is short and small, at least for people who think as you do.

Don't waste what little you happen to have left on little me.

Instead, my ex-darling, save your breath.

Before I take it away from you, and, believe you me, honey, I will.

Enjoy the show—these fireworks are for you.

It's awfully hard to breathe when you feel the way you make me feel, so, instead of pretending I'm alright, I'll show you something truly great, the likes of which I promise you've never seen before because (now that I'm facing the truth and all) you've never laid eyes on the real me.

Spoiler alert: she's all kinds of fabulous.

You'll want to tell her so.

Save your breath.

(February 26 at 4:21 am.)

Selection of Works from Tom's Limerick Circle (Foreword by Circle Arbiter: Thomas Barnes)

Inspired by the sensational NPR Saturday morning radio show *Wait Wait...Don't Tell Me*, in the end of my junior year I created a limerick circle with my close friends for us to banter about our daily struggles and interests through the mediums of rhythms and rhymes. For about one week, members would post updates about their classes, their interactions, their struggles, and their unique experiences from both inside and outside of school. In honor of the many gems posted within the circle, I submit to you a few of the finest, most interesting limericks from the Circle's tenure. Sit back, relax, and prepare yourself for humor, slant schemes, vibrant jargon, and satisfying rhythms.

*Life is often grim;
Filled with bogus, frustrating kin;
So we like to laugh;
By sharing stories, quips, and quaffs
All in the form of good ole' limerines (limericks)
Enjoy!
~Thomas Barnes*

*Marsha has an announcement for us;
Choral Council walks out in a fuss;
She breaks the news;
Our eyes start to ooze;
Senior year just got crushed by a bus.
~Jack O'Leary, A Sad Day*

*In the morn, I am greeted by the siren;
Green, wavy, but not Hawaiian;
My fingers slip up;
I get to the pick-up;
Venti iced coffee too sweet, I'm cryin'.
~Thomas Barnes, The Siren*

*Peeps! Oh those menacing, colorful
marshmallows;
Swarm around the holidays, deceitful little
pillows;
With sugar abundant
My tongue says, "Yuck!" Kill the peeps!
I command my fellows.
~Thomas Barnes, Peeps!*

*Anxiety, anxiety, anxiety;
not until this year was it my piety;
about stress is all I can think;
sleep? I cannot get a wink;
how am I expected to thrive in society?
~Annajean Gionta, A [Dramatic] Bad Day*

*Exiled, shunned, banished, rejected;
dismissed from the group, feeling dejected;
"Read the rules," said Tom,;
"If you don't post, you're gone.";
but, alas, I am back, resurrected!
~Grazia Larosa, I was Kicked Out of the
Group*

*I always feel like I'm hiding;
What I love causes quite a binding;
Upon disclosure;
Unwanted exposure;
I love rice pudding! Surprising
~Thomas Barnes, An Ode to Kozy Shack*

*At Zumba I dance twice a week;
Among 50 middle-aged women is me;
As we twerk and chant;
Cha-cha, lindy, (most can't);
Marielle keeps us young and sexy.
~Thomas Barnes, Zumba Let's Go!*

*Sutton Foster as Star to Be;
Oh, how watching her brings me glee;
Sutton sings the whole scale;
Those high notes she can wail;
Sutton's belting brings comfort to me!
~Jack O'Leary, Queen Sutton*

*I visited my grandfather today;
He's doing better and has much to say;
I brought up third parties;
He snarled, "Oh Tommy...";
"If you're a communist, hell is on the way".
~Thomas Barnes, Grandfather's Wisdom*

Carbon Copies

By Ava McAnnally

I am trapped in a tight loop of pointless noise
The same old choruses passing through my ears
A never-ending string of words jumbled together
Am I listening to anything?
Or is this just bland storytelling and dusty romance?

I miss the violation of comfort
The ignition of feelings that rest in the depths of my chest
The individual niche that makes music an aroma rather than sound merely filling the empty air

Send me on a journey that won't be disturbed by anxious shakes and fluorescent lights

There is a distinct voice in the mix of the carbon copies
The voice sounds like a rustic cabin and all its stories
As mellow as the sight of warm caramel pouring over vanilla ice cream
It is one of the few things that has managed to push me away from my plagued sense of assumption and expectation

Everyone's voices are muffled, swimming outside of my earphones' captivation
I am separate from the chaos of reality
I let my mind sink into the music's mixture of wearisome and peculiar sounds, completely spellbound by the designs created from the inner workings of another's creative mind



Kate

By Meg Donley

Everyone was staring at me as if I wasn't supposed to be there. But who was I trying to fool? I wasn't. After a few minutes of standing in the doorway, a group of people pushed me aside like leftover crumbs and I stumbled onto the nearby and empty couch. A tall boy with blonde and short hair walks up to me and says, "Hey, are you ok? I saw you fall." I looked up at him as he looked back at me with his deep brown eyes that were almost calming along with an expression on his face when he smiled at me and laughed.

"Hello? You ok?" he said as he waved his hand in my face to see if I was awake. I was, just staring into space.

"Yeah, I'm ok," I said as I laughed and began to scratch my head nervously.

"You look a little pale; do you want to eat something?" he said as he motioned towards the snack table. I didn't speak for about five seconds, and he grabbed my wrist, pulled me up, and lured me to the snack table as he grabbed a plate. I don't really understand why he was doing this. I had no clue who he was. He had just met me, was being really nice to me, and was getting me food.

"My name is Bryce, by the way; I was dragged to this place by one of my friends," he said as he pointed towards a small blonde girl across the room sitting in a chair with a bunch of other girls in my grade. I hated all of them so I did not blame Bryce for coming up to me, the loner girl, and trying to start a conversation because anything is better than talking to those girls.

"My name's Kate," I said with a slight smirk across my face.

I talk to Bryce for a while, I mean *a while* a while. And he was actually really interesting to talk to. He didn't speak like other guys. He was very well-spoken and talked about music and art and poetry. I would have never expected him to be such an art guy, but he was, and I loved it because I was into similar things such as writing and photography. I learned that he was not really into sports all that much, and I know what you are thinking, maybe this kid is gay, but I promise you he was not gay. In fact, he was far from it because I could just tell by the way he was looking at me so intimately, as if we had known each other for so much longer than a couple of hours. As the party started to end he began to get a little anxious for some reason. His hands started shaking, and he started to quickly look around the room nervously.

"Hey, are you ok? You look nervous," I asked as I looked directly into his eyes calmly.

"Sorry," he said. "I just get kind of nervous at this point at parties, fewer people around." He continued to look around, "So, I really like talking to you, can I by any chance get your number?" he asked. I nodded my head and he pulled out his phone and handed it to me with his contacts app open, ready for me to put in my number. He continued to look around as I typed in my number, but then his leg began to shake, and he started to lightly tap his foot on the carpet.

"Here," I said as I handed him his phone back with a reassuring smile for his weariness. I pretended I was thinking too deeply about what he would do next, but all I was thinking about was if I was just going to be one of those people that you get their number from but never talk to, just another contact to add to the list.

"Hey, so I know we just started talking, but I think that I should take the liberty of walking you home. Only because it's late, and I also just hate walking alone," he said nervously. My house was right around the corner so it really was not that far away, and I have walked home alone in the dark before, but it was a kind gesture of Bryce to insist on so I would have felt guilty if I had said no.

“Sure, my house is this way,” I said to Bryce as I pointed to the left of Arlo James’ house on his front steps. Bryce looked at me as if I had something on my face but not in a confused way; he looked as though he was staring into my eyes with a gentle look and a little smile.

“What? Do I have something on my face?” I asked. Bryce slowly moved his hand towards my face and touched my cheek; every hair in my body stood up. This was strange to me at the time because before that night I had not come near a boy, or at least not that close.

“It’s just an eyelash, nothing to worry about,” Bryce said as he wiped a loose eyelash off of my cheek. “This way?” he said as he pointed towards the direction I told him. I nodded and took a deep breath of relief. It was as if it was straight out of the old movies from the 80s that I would watch with my dad. I thought for sure that Bryce was going to kiss me, the whole opportunity was right there. So why didn’t he just do it? To this day I still don’t know the answer to why he didn’t kiss me or why I even wanted him to. As we started walking a whole group of cars started racing down the street screaming and blaring music out of every window, crevice, or any opening the cars had possessed.

“Well, this is annoying because this is where we have to cross,” I said, as I rolled my eyes. Bryce looked at me and smiled.

“Kate, it’s fine; we can just wait,” Bryce said as he looked to see if any more cars were coming. One more car passed by and then I started to walk across the street. By the time I had almost gotten to the middle, I heard a scream. It was Bryce.

“Kate, watch out!” he yelled as if he was crying for his life. But it wasn’t his life he was calling for, it was mine. I turned around only to see a large red van racing towards me with the headlights on. That was the last light that I saw before I blacked out.





Schools
By Riley Epright

Another one
Another war in our schools
Our country is walking on thin ice
We need to change something and fast before
it is too late
You say it is the guns
But you need to see the bigger picture
Look into the mind
What is going on in that sick head
How did no one notice before
We need to help these sick minds
We need to make them well again.

Skin
By Jordan Barbee

Skin
Fingernails
Moonlight
Low-light
What's the beast in the mirror I see?
It stares at me
its features moaning a sad soliloquy
I find its eyes
Green, green
the color of envy
I find myself stretching skin.
Skin,
its human-like qualities deeply disturb me
Why can't I take it off?
Peel it
Rip it
Burn it
Cut it
Snip, snip
The more I stare
the more it crumbles, it crumbles
I paint its mask with lacquer
but the same pair of green eyes
stare back at me
What is that?
Who is that beast?
The low-light consoles me
but, still, I see it for what is.

Deadlock
By Ken Guadagnino

Fissures dug,
Trench lines set.
A friendship forged
In steel now trashed,
Tossed aside in a deadlock of ego.

The first man proud,
A heart of gold
In a sea of rust.
Shattered under the examination
Of untested waters.

The second suave,
Apathetic to the first.
His lack of care instigating
A harsh series of distrust.



Rose-colored lenses
Exchanged with the prescription of growth,
As old bonds fracture,
And new ones flourish.

Golden Days
By Jordan Barbee

meet me in a field of wildflowers
where peach sunrises melt
over soft cotton clouds
like little honey apricot love stories
and sunflower petals
tucked away in old journals.

some days summer
wears flowers in her hair
and falls in love with the sun
just as i do with you.
it's a love of soft sighs
and floral smiles.

there is a softness
in the scent of blood oranges
and pomegranates
that peeks from the crook of your neck
when you hide timidly
in salmon pink lavender fields
and sink your nose
into rosemary sands.

you lay beside me
as i trace meadows
of honeyed roses across
the expanse of your threadbare skin
eyes fluttering feverishly
as the sun melts to nectar
basking your arteries
in a palette of molten orange.

i look at you
and my heart overflows.
the wind plays softly
with your hair
just like a lover might
and the sunlight kisses your lips
and swoons.
everything is a little golden
but not everything gold can stay.

Life
By Vincente Senatore

When a cherry blossom
reaches its peak,
magnificence ensues,
and fades away,
However,
it will be remembered,
Not for the ugly
that is now,
But for the beauty that was.

Bursting pomegranates
sparkling like the sun
dancing on water
and laughter
drifting across the sea.
our hair is grown wild
with dogs and honeysuckle dreams
and you're smiling
like you own the whole world.
maybe you do.

i hope you do.

and if they will not allow
you the whole world
i will bring it to you.
i have packed the sun
and the sea
who would not come without her lover
and i will bring them to you.
the mountains were heavy
so i left them behind.
but the sky has been waiting
all its life to be owned
by something,
and now it's Yours.

Symbol
By Anonymous

Cruel wind keeps blowing.
The sky is cloudy and dark,
I know that soon it will be snowing,
But I still head down to the familiar, old park.
The trees are standing still, so quiet
Like life had left them long ago.
And I get scared by it
As I see them lying their branches low.
There is no sound,
No wind, no rush of water.
No living creature to be found.
In seconds it became much colder
And I head back to the old, sad town.





One Sparkling Street
By Brianna R Duffin

A million diamond icicles cascade to the
ground.
In a final moment to enjoy their faded glory,
They vanish into the breathless grace
And I am left to watch them die.
In the cold, I feel so alone.
Tonight is a cloth made of midnight velvet,
And in spite of myself, I let it remind me
Why I came to love this place so much.
Glowing crimson and gold, the candles
Sit in the window with a lonely glow.
How peaceful it must be to hold steady
When the world is spinning, falling apart.
Sometimes, on nights like tonight,
I wish upon a shooting star as it explodes
That I could reverse the hands of time
And give the old me just enough love
To hold some hope—just enough of a spark
To build a fire, just enough to survive.
But then I remember—I already did.
I walked through the blizzard, so here I am
Standing frozen on the outside, watching
My eyes are glued to the play even as
The curtains fall every instant, faster now.
Suspended immobile, my mind dances
And the icicles pitter-patter into my hair
Oblivious. For them, nothing is the matter.
I wonder what it's like to live that life—
For what is this one in comparison?

Flowers in the Window
By Jordan Barbee

It's a dream to most
a distinctively desired beacon of light
the window still

not easily acquired or easily kept
this land is foreign yet so familiar
watched by the ones
who wish for it the most
and which hold many secrets
beyond the transparent glass
of wonder
that shouldn't be revealed

I know that
it's a dream to you
because "Oh, how we all wish to be flowers in
the window,"
was the excuse that dripped
from your lips

I hate to ruin your precious reality
but time exists to leave us
wanting more
and I don't know
that the little time we have
will accommodate your
dreamy desires
to the caliber you wish

and for your sake
and my dignity
I hope you realize soon
how many flowers can grow
in the garden
with petals that fall
and with weeds that hinder
and winds that whisper
and shake the leaves of years to come
because I'm sorry, darling
but I don't think you deserve to be
a flower in that window

A Lion's Faith

By Brianna R Duffin

I don't know if I hate you for killing all my faith
As much as I hate myself for letting it die
That slow tragic death of a lion shot,
abandoned
But I do know that thanks to you and only you
I will never again know the child I used to be,
The one who loved blindly, faithfully, without
caution.
I used to be stronger, but now I'm smarter—
Too smart to believe in you the way I used to.
Who are you when you look in the mirror?
Do you recognize yourself? Because I don't.
I'll never know you again,
But can I ask where were you all those times I
needed you?
Why wasn't I enough to be important to you?
And even though none of it matters anymore
Would you mind if I ask—am I good enough
now?
When I loved you the way a bone loves a dog
It would never have occurred to me at all
That there could be something better,
Something that didn't run me down into the
ground
Anew every day and leave me laying in pieces
Because you kept me under your thumb
Like a firefly trapped in a jar, a nightlight, a
prize.
But then you poked a hole through me and
walked away
So where was I supposed to go after that?
I had nothing left because I had nothing to
begin with, and you took even that from me—
I guess you couldn't take it that I had
something beautiful, so you stole my beautiful
ghosts and killed my soul.
Now all I am is a ghost, a shell without a sea,
And I'm supposed to forgive you—it's
nothing.



Not Your New York

By Amelia Dorn

The rolling hills cascade down the sky like
falling rain
Puddles of land stacked among one another
The house small and quaint
Warm like the s'mores made on the fire
The air cool and breezy like the water in the
pond
The garden like honey in a fly trap to the
wilderness
Year after year
Summer after summer
Until one day the rolling hills were no longer
apart of my life
And the air because loud and busy with the
sound of the city

The Cave of Will
By Brianna R Duffin

If you could see every scar
That I carry on my skin,
Would it convince you
That it's high time
You took notice.
If I could peel back the layers
Of all that over the years
I have lost, gained, and grown
And if you could look at them
With enough care to really see
All the truth that they have to show
Even if there isn't much beauty to spare,
Would you see then that it's time?
Because I see that it's time.
There is an epidemic, a rising tsunami.
And it takes way too many souls
Out to sea with one wave out a time,
Beating them until only a few return
From the journey undertaken by so many.
And would you understand then
Why it takes so long to shake off
Every bear that rides those children's backs?
I wish you would, and I wish I could.
Are all those tears doomed to be wasted
Forever going ignored because nobody
Wants to take a look when they could turn
away.
Or can this all be over at some point?
I was always taught to see the rainbow
That lights up the darkest storming sky
But sometimes it's more important
To realize that the storm doesn't dissipate
By pure magic, no illness is cured by
willpower,
And there is more to be found in life
When you aren't living it in a cave all alone.

Untitled
By Micah Sellaiaha

The Mountain exploded with Anger
Lava soaring through the air like swinging
fists
Black Snow covered the town
The lava was hatred destroying everything
around it
As the Volcano settled down
Death filled the air

The black crow yells while souls in the
graveyard sorrow
Where the crow goes death follows
They say when you die the crow watches
And the last thing you see
Are the crows' beady eyes staring back at you
While you slowly die



Legend of Opho

By Eli Hochkeppel

1. As told by Lady Solwyn:

In the land of Frika, a fictional land, a God lives on earth. This is the legend of that God, told by the Storyteller Lady Solwyn.

“Opho was once a peaceful god, living in the City of Sun with all his brothers and sisters. His eldest brother Uni, God of plants and the harvest. His sister Lioma, goddess of the seas and the rivers. His sibling Whilon, God of Fire. And Gyo, the Goddess of Birth, who created humans from the mud. We rose from the ground just like all other animals and plants, but we were her favorites. And Opho’s favorites. He begged his sister Gyo to let him live among humans, the beautiful, shining creations we were. He begged and begged, so in love with us that he felt that if he didn’t come live with us he could not live any longer,” Solwyn said, with so much sadness and feeling in each sentence that the people could not tear themselves away.

“And when Gyo asked him what he would do if he didn’t live, what would he do instead? And that is when Opho invented a terrible disease, something that once he created he could never take back, he could never destroy. He created death.” Disgust crept into Solwyn’s voice, and the crowd was revulsed, but intrigued.

“And so Gyo was so worried for her brother that he would go into death, that she allowed him to join us on the Earth. Opho was overjoyed, playing, singing, and dancing with humans for days on end. When they got bored, he would create new games, or find different humans to laugh with and serenade. It was wonderful. For a while. Eventually, all humans were tired, exhausted, unable to go on playing with the childish god. They felt as though they could not go on. And humans invented sleep. So Opho, childish, lonely Opho, grew angry. He was all alone, with no

2. As told by Opho:

But that is just one version of the myth, there are always more. This is the story told by Opho himself, trying to convince a priestess of Gyo named Baln and her grandmother, Kula, to help her.

“Humans always get the story wrong. Would you like to hear what really happened?” Opho offered, throwing his blanket over his shoulder.

“Certainly,” nodded the old woman.

“Kula!” Baln shrieked, finally breaking the spell of shock that she had an evil God of death in her very sitting room.

“Baln, everyone has stories. You need to learn to listen,” Baln gaped at her grandmother, then at Opho, before sitting down defeatedly.

“My sister, Gyo, had just created you all. She thought you were perfect, and she never let any of our siblings talk to you, only to the dumb animals. She kept you hidden away in your towns and never allowed any of us to play. So one day, I stood up to her. I asked her why she wouldn’t let us play with these creations, I demanded that she let us down to be with them,” Opho crossed her arms defensively, frowning at the memory. Baln’s brows touched in confusion. This was not the story she knew. Kula’s breath was labored, but she showed no response.

“She wouldn’t let us, so I made a promise. I promised I would make my own world, and she wouldn’t be allowed there. I said that it would be just as good, if not better, and we would have all the same things, but she wouldn’t be allowed in. I call it ‘death,’ you’ve heard of it,” Opho looked proud at this, while Baln became revulsed. Opho twisted the blanket around his shoulders distractedly, making himself a cape.

1. (continued)

one to play with him because they were all asleep. And so, his thoughts strayed to death. Once the people woke up, bragging about how wonderful sleep was, Opho told them about death,” Solwyn explained.

“Oh, family, death is wonderful! It is exactly like sleep, but this sleep lasts forever. Doesn’t a forever sleep sound so lovely?” she pretended to be the tricky, sneaky Opho.

“And Humanity loved it! Sleeping for only a few hours was perfect, sleeping forever would be amazing! And so they let Opho kill them. And when the people truly understood what sleeping forever meant, and realized its cruelty and horror, it was too late. Opho would go sowing the seeds of death everywhere he went, totally mad with power.” Solwyn closed her eyes, mourning those first confused souls to be the first to die.

“But Opho gave himself an out. Whenever he would ‘die,’ his soul would simply move onto a new body, killing more. And that is why I must hunt him down every time he is reborn, and I have reason to believe he was reborn... here!” Solwyn finished the legend dramatically, and whispers rippled through the crowd.

2. (continued)

“So, she let us go down and be with humanity, and we soon understood why she wanted to keep us away. The humans were unhappy. You should have seen yourselves, no reason to live, no drive, nothing to do all day. You were bored out of your skulls! My brothers and sisters left; they were just as bored by you as you were by life, but I felt you had potential. I felt you deserved someplace better. So I created sleep, so you all could visit death, and made it so when you all became too tired for this world my sister created, you would go on to death, and you would be ready,” he grinned again, thinking of how generous he was, while Baln stared at the floor, trying to discern fact from fiction, and Kula coughed.

“But Gyo didn’t *like* that,” Opho actually rolled his eyes at this. Baln had never heard someone talk so candidly of the mother of humanity.

“So she closed the gates to The City of Sun!” the old god clenched his fists, the muscles in his jaw bunched, and his eyes burned with the fire of the pale sun.

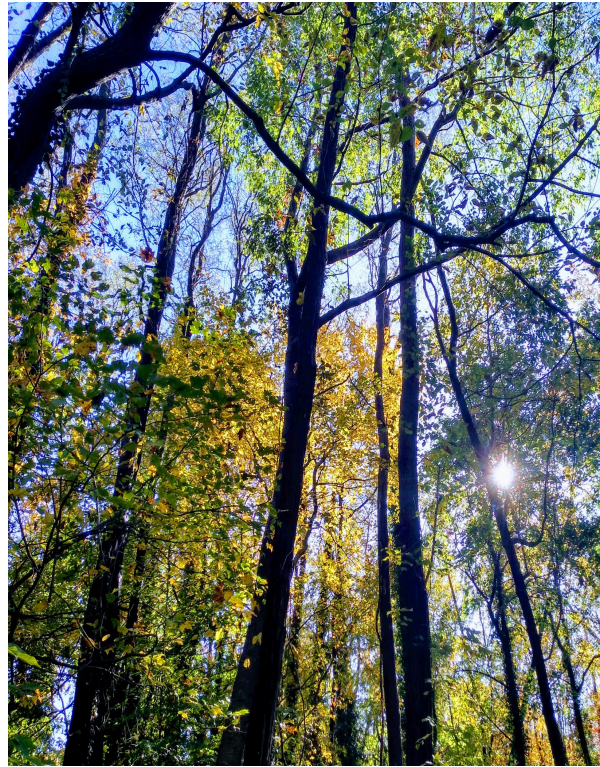
“So none of the gods are allowed down here, and I am not allowed in the City of the Sun. So I just take as many humans as possible and take them to death. It’s better there anyway.”



Fallen Angel

By Brianna R Duffin

Every day is death by a thousand cuts,
A poisonous fog of mosquitoes
Rolling in to destroy everything in its path
It's dark-cold-lonely-deep, the ocean;
A wild game of archery, target on my back.
But more than anything—
depression is a glass castle underground.
What is anyone to do with all that pressure,
Being buried, waiting for the world to
capsize?
Until one day you realize—it did a long time
ago.
So you're left to sort through the rubble
Even though you can't move your body.
But it's made of glass, so every time you try
Your skin acquires brand new slices
Until you realize you may as well have been
born with them
For all you remember is getting them, except
some of them,
Those curses you could never forget.
Are you Oedipus bound at the ankles,
Or Jokasta hanging in utter sorrow, bitter at
the blindness?
For it's a castle made of glass, can't you see?
You may be locked in a tower, but, after all,
You're in a glass castle underground. Buried,
And long, long gone before you realize you're
going.



Untitled

By Laura Wessner

You are fireworks in the summer
And roses on Valentines day
You are 2 AM adventures
You are the blossom in May
And the sunsets in January
You are New Year's Eve kisses
And there's a first for everything
You're the music blaring in my car
And what's a highway adventure without
Fleet Foxes
You're the lyrics I love
The poems I write
And because of you
I'm someone I was only ever hoping to be.

Jelly Donuts: A Story of Life, Loss, and Love

By Anonymous

The Grim Reaper was knocking at our door. I was in denial, but everyone else knew it was a long time coming. It was like rolling a rock from the peak of Mount Everest all of the way to Death Valley inch-by-inch. Maybe for some people, it was easy to see, but I was blindsided. And maybe for them, it's not so sad that you forget you're allowed to be happy, but I was lucky enough to feel the experience more deeply. Grammy always said that a heart can only feel empty if it's been overly full—all part of God's plan to bless us. No matter what happens next, that much can't be changed but still part of me will never leave that moment.



There we were: Lankenau Hospital as the world outside turned as white as the sterilized inside. The clock above the door read 5:46, the one next to the window displaying 5:42 by the time we all found our positions around the bed. We had about six too few chairs and I swear it was the smallest room any angel has ever gathered all the branches of her family tree into. Three strokes down the line, Grammy's heart was finally failing. There was nothing to be done.

"Just take your time," a brunette doctor with a pink shirt told us. "And again, we're very sorry for your loss."

All those times we had put our faith in the doctors, and when that last Hail Mary came around all they could do was fix up a chemical cocktail. But then we realized we had drained that magical hope to the dregs and all that remained was the morphine and an extra shot of sorrow on top. I wasn't sure who exactly they were trying to keep comfortable when they taped tubes to her arms and brought in another one of those miserable hospital blankets that never do you any good because they're made out of the Sahara Desert stuffed in a burlap sack. As long as they kept their metal ears to her chest, her breathing was like a melody for a mouse. But as long as she held onto my hand, I held hers ready to listen.

I missed school, but it was a snow day, so it didn't matter anyway. More like nothing mattered anyway. I could hear a siren maybe three inches from my face. It whirled above my head but I drowned it all out. I remember a strange sensation of doom and I had felt only a few times before in my life—the one where the ceiling crashes into middle earth but the floor is rising like a platform for a subterranean villain in a cheesy movie. You're just stuck in the

middle being crushed like a bug, except it's not you whose heart has been thoroughly destroyed. I felt my Uncle Bobby's tears rather than heard them; he held me steady while my soul wracked my body with transcendent sobs.

Tick tock. Tick tock. We were losing time and it was passing fast. Strange how some days all you want to do is slam the brake so hard it grinds into the ground. Time puts both feet on the gas. Like zombie snails, we crawled back into the room where my mom waited to wrap me up in her arms. She always seems to know when I want one, but that day I needed one like a baby needs a blanket.

We had known it was coming, so why were we so shocked when the call finally came? Why were we so numb when the family gathered in one last attempt to rally? Expectant of what was to come or not, most of us spent every second praying for as many more as possible. I can't decide if the irony in that was sweet or cruel. Thankfully, the world was frozen on a racing timeline. Still, the hours crawled by as if every hand on the clock was pushed by a turtle battling through quicksand to push a car uphill. But still, they passed. As those final, finite hours arrived and took their leave, we got ready to take ours.

The hard chair did nothing for the aches crawling up my back but who was I to complain that this wasn't working out for me? I tried to think back on those positive times I had taken for granted. Had I slept through an entire childhood? Everything the people around me were saying was foreign, I had nothing whatsoever to contribute. For what seemed like the first time, there was nothing I could say, do, or give. I didn't even know what to think. I just held my perch and held her hand.

I watched her skin turn from gray to blue under the fluorescent spotlight. Her hair was still a curled white and her nails a clean pink just like I remembered. But amid all that sameness, something was different. The warmth I had always known was fading from her person and the light in her eyes had been forever extinguished. Every human is a candle performing in the theater of the world but I may as well have tied to my chair while I watched hers being blown out ever so slowly, leaving only a wisp of ash to dance in her place. Lights up and curtains drawn, that too vanished from view before it was time to break for lunch.

My one solace was that after so many years of strife, each breath came with a deeper peace. Slow it was, but steady too and for the first time in a while it carried no trace of pain. Usual slow-motion chaos grinding to a halt, it was as if in preparing to die my guardian angel was born into nirvana's delicate precursor. Her burden had been laid down for someone else to take up. The reminiscing began a few hours into this vigil, and I'd like to think it would've made her happy. No fighting, just talking—sweet, loving, and grateful, just like she deserved. The memories we dwelt on were those that are always the first to fade for some reason—Christmas dinner, dance class on Tuesdays, hide and seek in the attic, the first CD in a brand new player, cartoons on the couch, snowflakes icing the Evergreen, tea on Fridays with the cooking channel, The Great Cracker Debate of '08, miscellaneous laughs bouncing from one porch to another, cartwheels and somersaults judged by the most loving dog in the world—everything you should be able to put in a snow globe and keep your hand wrapped around forever. But one thing about death: it means the games are over. Every last one of them.

Whether you're ready to call it a day or not, it's over—all so suddenly. The reminiscing stopped. Uncle Bobby was crying again.

"We were going to get jelly donuts yesterday morning but the parking lot was too crowded. We said we'd go back next week."

Grammy loved jelly donuts, and I mean she loved them a whole lot. They were right up there with cosmos and macaroni (separately, never together). Usually, they were her Saturday morning treat but when she was in the hospital, the rules were different. She could have as many as she wanted, sitting there with a sugar-coated red tinge on her lips while she told stories about decades past. Mostly about love—everything from the grace of God to the early days of her 65-year-marriage but she kept her theme on message: love is great, love is power, love is grace, love is joy, love is worthwhile. It makes life worth living. Well, love and jelly donuts. But those last days of her life, she postponed that little taste of sweet happiness. She never got another chance.

If I ever needed to be taught a lesson, that did the trick. Grammy was never one to lose track when counting her blessings, she believed every breath was a gift. But even she slipped up sometimes because it's so easy to forget about all that. When our days seem monotonous and interminable, how can we resist taking them for granted? It wasn't about a chance to eat donuts that went by, it was a whole day she didn't seize when it was her last chance. I'd like to believe she died without a regret staining her mind, but if there were any I'm sure there was something oh-so-bittersweet at the top of the list. I don't know everything I'm supposed to know, but when I think of jelly donuts I remember that I have an angel in heaven telling me to grab life by the horns no matter how full the parking lot may be. After all, time is not a gift to be taken for granted. And I'm grateful for the years I got with Grammy before it was her time to pass on, I really am. I still feel the hole she left in my heart, getting easier to bear as time goes by, but never to be filled. Because when you love someone, you're going to have to lose them at some point. You know you're human when you miss them.

NB

By Eli Hochkeppel

They apologize profusely. They won't stop.

"It's okay," I'm smiling.

"Everyone makes mistakes," I tell them. Everyone.

They're apologizing, but they don't mean it.

"I've always cared too much about grammar, it just doesn't make sense," they tell me. I'm smiling.

"That's my grandmother's excuse. And she still does better than you," I want to tell them.

"Lots of people struggle with that," I say instead.

"I'm old," they say, as if to apologize for being born ahead of me. As if it's my fault.

"So is everyone else," I think to myself, remembering the fourteen-year-old who refused to use my pronouns. I'm smiling.



“How was I supposed to know?” they ask crossly. They already apologized, but they’re not done. I look down at the purple pin, my pronouns written in white. I’m always wearing it. Always. I’m smiling.

Someone crowds me as I hide in the corner of the room.

“She’s old, she doesn’t understand,” they apologize for her. I’m smiling.

“It’s fine. I haven’t told her,” and I’m not going to.

“I was thinking about something else,” they haven’t actually apologized.

“That’s fine. I just want you to try.” They don’t try. I’m smiling.

“She loves to dance—”

“They.”

“Fine, yes, they loves to dance. Haha.” I’m smiling.

“She—”

“I actually use they/them/theirs pronouns, remember? Not she.”

“Geez, yeah, I remember, sorry. It’s hard, okay?” they frown at me. I’m smiling.

“And then she—”

“They.”

“I’m not talking about *you*. You need to calm down.” I’m smiling.

I am Non-Binary. I am not a boy. I am not a girl. I’m in the woods, and the trees don’t use the wrong pronouns. I’m on the couch, and the characters on TV don’t tell me how hard it is. I’m listening to music, and the song lyrics don’t apologize for being correct, in its mind. I am smiling.



Notes on a Pandemic: 2020

The goal of *Pen and Ink* magazine is to showcase the writing, art, and photography of the students at Haverford High School each year. Unfortunately, part of this year was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet even within this tragedy Haverford students submitted writing filled with honesty, curiosity, compassion and humor that remind us of the importance of silver linings.

Student Musings and Observations: A Typical Day

(From Ms. Rudolph's Creative Writing Class)

Bethany Jesse: Apr 3, 2020

I'm sitting on my porch reading a book, and I see rolling down my street a man who looks as if he is in his early 40s skateboarding. I often see him these days, he lives a few houses down from me with his wife, and two kids. I imagine that he skateboards to keep himself young and in shape. He also seems pretty skilled at it, so I think he probably did it when he was younger as well. I watch him try to teach his son and daughter, whom he's always so patient with, and always smiling ear to ear. I really admire his positivity at a time like this, even if he isn't optimistic on the inside. He never seems to let anyone see him sweat. ■

Madeline Kent: Apr 2, 2020

As I am sitting in my car, waiting for my mom to return with the groceries, I notice a man walking across the parking lot, with a corgi on a leash waddling in front of him. The only reason he catches my eye is because he is the only other person other than the Giant employee walking in the otherwise vacant lot. From what I see, he is older and walking with a bit of a limp. However, he appears to be walking towards the guardrail that sections off the lot. Puzzling thoughts go through my mind, and I focus more intently. He pulls out a camera and slips his dog's leash onto his wrist. Holding the camera sideways, he freezes, taking a picture of the breathtaking sky, which is putting on an incredible display for those around. I wonder who the picture is for and why he is walking

around the lot. Perhaps the older woman sitting in her car next to me is his wife, and he is taking a picture for her to remember. ■

Maggie McShea: Apr 2, 2020

A very young boy with no cares in the world skipped down the street hand in hand with his father.

One hand firmly gripped a juice box, which, by the purple coloring, seemed to be grape.

All smiles. No knowing about what is happening in the world.

Just happy to be in the sunlight with the company of his father. ■

Nathan Rabadam: Apr 3, 2020

Today I saw my neighbor outside while I was shooting pucks in my backyard. He was playing with his kids on the swing. After picking up some pucks I realized they were climbing the fence to say "Hi" to me, but I had my AirPods in so I couldn't hear. "Nathan, Nathan, Hi Nathan!" They would say while trying to climb the white fence. They were always very excited to see my brother and me when we were outside. They always gave us warm greetings. They were 2 years apart. I think the boy was 5 and his younger sister was 2, but I'm not sure. They were so kind and joyful when they were greeting me, but after, they went back to playing with their father and I went back to shooting pucks. I picked them because I didn't really see anyone else today because that was the only time I went outside and saw anyone other than my family. ■

Quentin Ryan: Apr 2, 2020

Observation: My neighbor trying to build a fence.

I watch from my bedroom window my neighbor cautiously digging a hole trying not to make a mess. I look around the surroundings and see a 4 inch by 4 inch long wooden post and other smaller wooden objects. I assume he's building a fence. With the lack of construction clothes and white vans, I can tell that he is definitely not a pro at construction. He occasionally looks at his phone, and I assume he's looking up how to build the fence.

After about 30 seconds a woman pops up in the door frame with a baby in hand. I assume that's his wife and daughter. The wife asks how he's doing and he puts his thumb up and smiles. The daughter looked about a year old so I assumed the man and woman were in their late 20's to early 30's. I could see the man's marriage ring glistening in the sunlight so that woman must be his wife. I picked this man because it appears he has no idea what he's doing. Why didn't they just call someone to do this? Oh well, yeah social distancing so they can't interact with one another, and the husband probably just said he can do it without knowing how hard it would be. I would've just waited after this pandemic is over anyway. At the end of the day, I decide to look back at the man's progress. There is one post in the ground but slightly slanted. I guess he gave up after that one. ■

Caroline Scott: Apr 2, 2020

As was looking out my window longing for some way to leave my house that I am trapped in like a prisoner, I saw a lady walking by. This was no ordinary thing because my street is filled with younger kids not older people. We rarely see elderly people walking around our street. This was not the only thing weird about her. She had this weird briefcase in her hand. It was black and

shiny and gave me all the questions you could imagine. Who is she? Where is she going? What is in that case? I knew none of my questions would be answered so I tried to guess. Maybe she was someone's grandma and she was going on a walk but then she remembered that her son had forgotten his brief case so she decided that she would bring it to him. ■

Ryan Shindler: Apr 2, 2020

He wore a red hat, and sat in a grey chair. He seemed to be about 40-50, but you can never really tell. He read a book silently in the park, taking in the fresh air and sunlight. ■

Daniel Smith: Apr 3, 2020

A man in his 30's or 40's was talking on his phone. He seemed stressed. It could've been his job or bills and something could have gone wrong or possibly something wrong with his family. And the phone call could be informing him about the situation. I picked him because I thought that maybe what could be happening might be interesting. ■

Madison Smoley: Apr 2, 2020

Kind of indifferent. As if she was occupied with something other than what she was doing. But oddly calm about it like she came to terms with whatever she was doing. She had an orange colored wig on with a bandanna over it. A Staples cashier woman. ■

Brianna Spaide: Apr 2, 2020

I watched the lady as she slowly walked her old dog down the street. She looked to be in her late 30's, and wore a vibrant purple workout pullover with long, patterned leggings. Her thin blonde hair was pulled back in a sleek ponytail, and she wore thick sunglasses. Her face showed no emotion, so I had no idea what was going on in her head. By the way she moved, I could tell that she was trying to take her time with walking the

dog. I assumed that she just wanted to be outside of the house, away from her pestering kids or from a lazy husband. Her dog was an old yellow lab, who slowly wobbled to and fro on the sidewalk. The leather leash that held the dog's green collar was just as old as the dog itself. I chose to observe this pair because I couldn't understand what she was feeling, or even the lack of, and that was really intriguing to me. ■

Tessa Rose Madonna: Apr 3 2020

Plants had always been her therapy.

In her tiny apartment she had kept miniature succulents and teeny ferns alive on her window sill, dreaming of a large garden to look out on instead of a dilapidated parking lot that reeked of gasoline.

Now she had it. She rushed home from work each day to tend to the yard in the last bit of sunlight she could catch, but now that she was working from home and isolated from society, she could spend every minute of her day watering each daffodil, tending to each zinnia. ■

Kathryn Tsukada: Apr 2 2020

The two boys seemed to play basketball 24/7. It was their escape, a way to always stay young, a way to keep themselves closed off from their worries. They had not been made for schoolwork, nor for labor, so they tried their best to stay attached to the one thing that had shown them love: childhood. Innocence, a scraped knee followed by kisses, staying up past bedtime to watch adults swim. It was all they wanted. They wanted to fall into their beds and be surrounded by the constant comfort of a world that demanded nothing from them. A world that would give them what they wanted without asking for anything in return. The boys both knew it was a selfish thought. But how could they escape from reality when it was all around them? ■

Jessica Umlauf: Apr 6, 2020

A hairbrush. I look at all the bristles, some plastic, some wiry. I have many; some pocket-sized for trips, some big to use with my hair dryer. I have many that are black and blue and red. I never realized how much I used my hair brush until now. ■

Sarah Vandevere: Apr 2 2020

I was sitting in my room in front of my window and I noticed that 2 women, maybe in their late 30s, were chatting and walking down the street together. I noticed this because, especially now, I don't normally see people like that. With social distancing, it is encouraged that we stay away from each other, yet these 2 women were walking down the middle of the street like it was a normal Thursday in May of last year. They looked like the kind of people who get all dressed up to go for a run, but then instead decide to grab a coffee and walk with a friend. It seemed like they were having a good time. They were chatting and occasionally would laugh. ■

Emma Wilson: Apr 2, 2020

As I peer outside the living room windows, waiting, just waiting for a stranger to pass by, I get excited when I notice a couple of people out for a run, heading down the street. My eyes lock in on one of the two people. He's a man, maybe in his thirties, who looks quite young and healthy. The man is of average height, and he's dressed in a dark blue hoodie, baggy, knee-length black shorts, and dark-colored, pretty basic-looking sneakers. He appears tired. Most likely exhausted with the craziness in our world today. Even if he is just out on a run to stay fit and get out of the house for once during social distancing, he has this fierce, serious kind of look in his eyes that made me want to write about him, like he's determined to run faster and farther than he has ever before. Right away, I notice the power behind each stride as he heads down

the middle of the street, which is empty except for the cars parked on either side. I may not know this man, but I do know that I'm rooting for him. ■

Grace Yoshioka: Apr 2, 2020

The old man, inevitably hunched over, picks up three oranges and drops them into a plastic bag. What is an elderly man doing outside during a global pandemic? I wonder, pushing my shopping cart down the aisle. I go to pick up a box of blackberries.

The man does not have any gloves on. I look at my own hands; I had put gardening gloves on this morning. He places his oranges in his cart, immediately pulling out a small bottle of hand sanitizer.

I can only imagine how long he has been hobbling around the store. His cart is halfway full: fruit, vegetables, a carton of milk, a dozen boxes of cereal, cans of Campbell's soup, and several microwaveable meals for one.

The man looks at me and smiles. I smile back. He weakly turns around and continues to the checkout.

The man is alone as he leaves the store and piles his food into his car. He drives off and vanishes from sight. ■

Abigail Baron: Apr 2, 2020

A young woman around the age of 16 done with her days worth of school work is completely bored at her home in Havertown, PA. She had not been outside yet and it was a beautiful, but a bit chilly day. The perfect day to go bike riding. She was already dressed in all athletic wear like she had known from the moment she woke up that she would go for a bike ride today. She finds her helmet, lays it on the back of her head and begins her ride. She rides up James Drive and turns onto Clamare Avenue. That is where she sees me walking my dog.

We smile at each other, just two strangers who see each other often around the neighborhood. We pass each other and just like that we are strangers once more. ■

Hye (Katie) Bin Youn: Apr 3, 2020

It was just like any other ordinary day. With America being the number one country in the world with the highest amount of COVID-19 cases, 32-year-old Stacy Johnson thought it would be a great idea to take her family out on a little hike around the neighborhood. Fresh air never hurt anyone, except the 54,137 people who died from the pandemic. It was okay though, right?

"GET OFF THE COUCH TIM!"

"Geez, the whole block's gonna hear ya."

"Do I look like I care?"

Fuming, she continued to strap in her three, beautiful, angelic triplets into their respective bright pink stroller. Laylah, Ashlee, and MacKayla. They were Stacy's everything. She was originally going to name them Niña, Pinta, and Santa Maria (after Christopher Columbus' ships of course) but for some reason Tim was against it. What did he know? He was nothing but a selfish, deadbeat, lazy son of a—

The shatter of glass rang throughout the Johnson house, disrupting Stacy's thoughts.

"Tim? What's going on? I swear to God if that was the china that my mother gave to me I will—"

"God, Stacy, can you ever relax? It's ok. It was a plate. A plate, woman. Chill...."

After what seemed like 20 years (it was really only 15 minutes) the Johnson family finally managed to make their way to the outside world. Stacy wore her mousy brown hair in a tight bun and looked around, the world slightly dimmed by her sunglasses. Her nike tank top was bright pink (you know, to match the stroller) and she felt like a true suburban mom while walking past the houses she was all too familiar with. Tim, meanwhile, was struggling to keep up. Oh well, thought

Stacy. It IS your fault for agreeing to marry him. At least you don't mind his gigantic beer belly. She tried to ignore him as she continued to enjoy the sunshine. ■

Kailey Brown: Apr 3, 2020

The breeze blows against the face of the man with gray hair. Sitting alone on his spacious porch, he just watched the few cars and people pass. The man seemed to be in his mid 70s, but looked to be 65 years old. He was the only person out without a panicked look on his face, just calmly sitting. ■

Tyler Campbell: Apr 2, 2020

When I was outside with my sister I could hear my two neighbors talking about their gardens and what they were going to plant this spring. ■

Margaret DelGaone: Apr 6, 2020

Looking outside I see my neighbors sitting on a bench in their backyard. Seeing how they talk to each other and the way he looks at her with so much love and care. He adores her and you can tell even if you are strangers. ■

Mia Diewald: Apr 2, 2020

She tipped her hat, grabbed her bags, and left the store
Her confidence like a rain shower and her smile contagious
She stood on the edge of a crosswalk, every aspect of her unique.
Her hair, a vibrant red.
Her jacket a sunshine yellow
And her purple shoes sparkling like diamonds in the sunlight.
While others stared down at their phones, she looked up at the clouds.
Walking across the crosswalk like it was a runway, I immediately was drawn to her.
My eyes followed her for as long as they could, watching her hair swish back and forth like it was playing with the wind.

As soon as I got home I looked for those purple shoes, that yellow jacket,
Desperate to gain the confidence she effortlessly owned.

But alas, no purple shoes or cozy jacket could give me what she had.

What had taken her years to acquire,
To welcome the eyes and the stares, rather than hide.

For confidence was earned and learned
Sometimes taught, but never bought. ■

Morgan East: Apr 1, 2020

I was people-watching from the window in my room and noticed a woman, slightly overweight, running. She looked pretty young, if I had to guess I'd say she was in college. She had earbuds in and looked completely zoned out from her surroundings. I imagine she's insecure about her body and she's exercising to feel better about herself. She looks friendly and I would think she has tons of friends that she would hang out with over the summer and wants the ideal summer body. I picked them because I can relate to what I imagine she is feeling. I too am insecure about my body and enjoy running as a form of feeling better about myself. ■

Ava Facciolo: Apr 2, 2020

A lady, in her late mid-thirties, just going for a walk. This her only alone time during this quarantine. At home, she has a teenager, a three-year-old, and a newborn. This walk is the only part of her day that isn't chaotic. It's the only part of her day where all she has to worry about is herself. Her husband knows that she needs this time, or else she will go crazy. She goes at the same time every day, her family knowing this, don't think anything of it when she just walks out the door randomly. Being quarantined has really messed with her. She likes to have everything scheduled, so this walk is one thing that she knows that she has to do every day. One thing that is on her schedule. Every day at 12:30.

So many people, during this time, appreciate their walks, because it's the one time where they can just escape the world. ■

Nicholas Fitti: Apr 2, 2020

I see the old woman who lives across the street from me walk out of her house. She walks at a brisk pace towards her car, then whirls about to make sure her husband is following. The man is locking the front door as she turns, and he turns toward her and begins walking to the car. He is walking slower and more leisurely than the woman, and she appears to be impatient. Her lips are pressed together and she seems to be motioning him forward with her hands. When he reaches the car, he glides around to the driver's side, while the woman flings the passenger side open and pulls herself up and into the seat. He gets in his seat a few moments after her, having arrived at his door later. I see his door close slowly and I watch as the engine begins to puff out smoke from the exhaust pipe. They sit there for a short moment, and then they pull out of the driveway. He turns the car towards the bottom of our street, and as she does she peers out the window towards our house. She gives me a wave with a smile, and I wave back to her. They are gone quickly, with the car speeding off to a destination unknown to me. ■

Steven H Goodsell: Apr 2, 2020

The man looks to be in his 80s. He wears a Vietnam Veteran hat loosely on his head, and his brow furrows ever so slightly when he looks too far upwards to the sun. He sits on a bench next to the pond, but doesn't admire the ducks or feed the pigeons. Instead, he stares into the water, unmoving. He has a little scar on his right cheek, perhaps from a battle with jungle fighters, or a battle with his new cane, which rests beside him, gleaming and clean. I notice a shine in the sun, and see the ring on his finger. His eyes look sad when he looks down at the ring. A look full of sadness, or

loss, maybe? Perhaps he wanted to grow old just a little longer with the one he loved, or perhaps he had done enough growing, and just wanted somewhere to go where time stops. ■

Joy Hyun: Apr 2, 2020

Any dog in the store
That's what I told them
I should have made rules
Like maybe a size restriction?

Well as 10 and 13 year old girls
They chose the biggest one then
He's as long as the porch swing
And tall enough to reach the shelf

Now the girls are in college
Well now they're home
And not happy about it
One was happy at Penn State
The other far away in France

This morning we had a big fight
About something stupid
I think the dish-washing
But now that I've walked the dog
And felt the fresh air
I'm just thankful

I'm thankful that my girls are home
I'm thankful that our dog is alive
I'm thankful that we are not sick
I'm thankful that they eat so much
Well kind of
It would still be nice if they cleaned

I've realized during this time
We must see the small blessings
In every moment
Even with raised voices
And slammed doors
I will miss them when they leave ■

James Kinkopf: Apr 2, 2020

I pull into the parking lot of the Giant, quickly removing my seatbelt and pulling out my phone.. Rummaging through my pockets, I finally find a scrap of paper.

"Aha!" I say to myself.

Reaching to my left, I open the car door and step out.. I walk across the parking lot, up to the front of the store.

When I step inside, I'm hit with a wave of hot air, I hadn't realized how cold it was outside.

As I walk through the store, the empty shelves jump out at me. It's weird not seeing them fully stocked. Kind of eerie.

I stroll through the aisles, periodically looking down at my list to see if they have what we need.

I pass by one section that is fully stocked. I walk up to it to investigate. It's tofu.

"I guess we're not at 'eating tofu' levels of desperation yet," I joke to myself.

Continuing on my quest to find eggs, I walk past an aisle that is completely bare. From the signs that are up, it's the toilet paper and paper towels section .

Finally, I reach where the eggs are, and my eyes light up like a little kid in a candy shop. Surprisingly, there are still some left. I scoop them up into my cart, and look back down at my list.

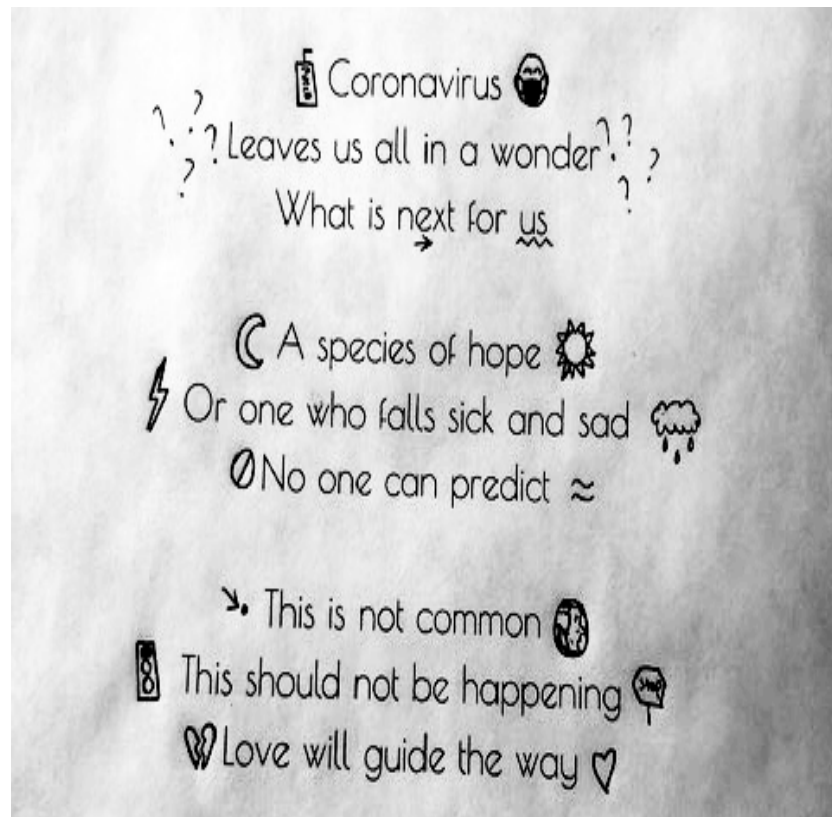
"Coffee, I doubt it."

I search through the store to see if I can find some coffee, even decaf would do. But to no avail. There is not a single coffee bean anywhere in this store.

Defeated, I look back down at my list. The next entry is scribbled in a very different handwriting.

"Snacks." I chuckle to myself.

"Very specific." ■



Senior Year: 2020
By Abigail Del Duca

Senior year
Now is just a big fear
We waited and waited
It was the year we all anticipated
To walk across the stage
But now we're just in a cage
Wanting to say goodbye to our classmates
But this virus dominates
We now are upset
We have been waiting for this moment
Since we learned the alphabet
We hope these times will change
So we don't go on an outrage



Spring Day Haiku
By Lucy Witman

It's easy to think
About how much I hate life
As our world crumbles.

But right now I can't,
As I lay in a lounge chair
Soaking in the sun.

Not because I tan,
(I am far too pale for that)
I simply love warmth.

The sun's soft embrace
Gives me the same feeling as
A blanket cocoon.

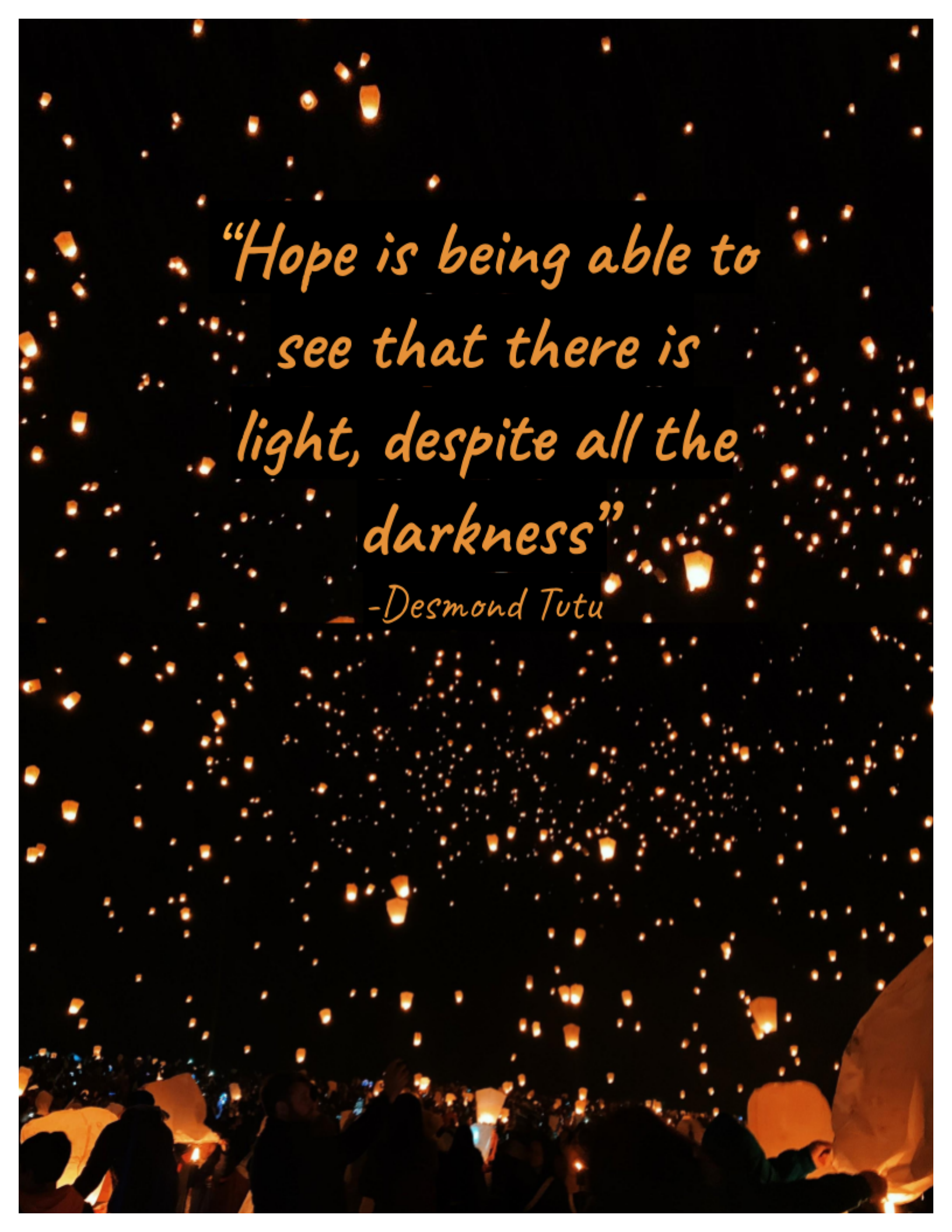
I watch as my dog
Also lounges in the sun
And chews on a stick.

I know there is death
And pain engulfing the world,
But for a moment,

There is just the sun,
And a happy little dog,
And a girl lounging.

There is enough time
For life's many challenges
And present hardships.

So, for now, I'll sit
And enjoy the precious time
The world gifted me.

A night sky filled with numerous glowing orange lanterns, with silhouettes of people at the bottom.

*"Hope is being able to
see that there is
light, despite all the
darkness"*

-Desmond Tutu