

The Outlook
**Mellon Middle
School**
Literary Magazine
2019-2020

**Andrew W. Mellon Middle School
Literary Magazine**

*The
Outlook*

***A Collection of Original Student Work
2019-20***

**Mt. Lebanon School District
11 Castle Shannon Boulevard
Pittsburgh, PA 15228**

Preface

**For the students,
by the students
--*The Outlook* motto**

In keeping with our motto, *The Outlook* offers sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students a chance to publish their original writing for an audience of peers and community members. The "Lit Mag" staff strives to reflect the range of writing, both personal and assigned, which occurs at Mellon Middle School, and to include the voices of as many writers as possible. *The Outlook* also provides opportunities for students to contribute as typists, illustrators, worker bees, or as members of the selection staffs, and allows student leaders to take charge of the production of the publication. Please enjoy the fine writing and artwork of *The Outlook* while keeping in mind that, like writing itself, publishing is a learning process.

This year, our staff and student writers faced the additional challenges of producing a magazine during a pandemic from our homes. As is the tradition of *The Outlook*, everyone rose to the occasion to produce a truly unique publication. May you take as much pleasure in viewing our work as we did in producing it.

With Thanks and Deep Appreciation

from
The Outlook staff
and
Mrs. Kollar, Faculty Advisor

to
Mellon Middle School Teachers
Dr. Timothy Steinhauer, Mt. Lebanon School District Superintendent
Mr. Chris Wolfson, Mellon Middle School Principal
Mr. Ben Canan, Mellon Middle School Assistant Principal
Ms. Dawn Davenport and Mrs. Patricia Shine, MTLSD English Department
Chairpersons
English Department Faculty of Mellon Middle School
Mrs. Natalie Kukla, Parent Coordinator of Writing Lab Volunteers
Writing Lab Volunteers
Mrs. Claudia Dahmen and Mrs. Jennifer Frink, Administrative Assistants
PTA
Custodial Staff

Cover Design Artist: Riya Verma
Additional Cover Designs: Nadia d'Arrigo and Brooke Murawski

**Thanks to The Pulitzer Prize Organization and Cameron Baverso
for permission to reprint the photography to accompany our
poetry.**

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Leah Keen
Sara Mitchell
Brooke Murawski
Quinn Slider
Riya Verma**

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**Sara Mitchell
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Isabella Evans
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Kiera Hurm
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Molly Kubilius
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Greta Coleman
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Eva Donahey
Clara Druckenbrod
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Amelia Bosch
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Claire Connolly
Shirley Deng
Eddie Ercegovic
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Max Kazmierczak
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Julia Schwertfuehrer
Ashley Wei
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National Council of Teachers of English Promising Young Writers Program Participants 2020

Zoe Apanavicius
Leah Bailey
Eleanor Bartley
Gabby Boone
Camryn Bouvy
Claire Bovino
Emma Carlstrom
Ashlyn Connolly
Nadia d'Arrigo
Emerson Driscoll
Jacey Ellis
Henry Ellwein
Jack Ellwein
Kelsey Erdely
Lizzy Hepps
Molly Hoover
Sarah Hudak
Quinn Hughes
Tessa Imbarlina
Sadie Joseph
Anne King
Natalie Koenig
Gus Kollar
Jack Kraemer
Danica Kramer
Molly Kubilius
Theresa Lascek
Tivon Lee
Marielle Mago

Sarah Martin
Maeve McDonagh
Maddie McDonald
Kylee McKay
Saida Mirzakhanova
Charlie Mistretta
Sara Mitchell
Gillian Mitchell
Kate Mooney
Molly Mooney
Brooke Murawski
Addison Murdoch
Kamryn Natale
Amelia Neemes
Katharine Powers
Ellie Reinhart
Owen Rick
Sage Rohrbach
Julia Schwertfuehrer
Ava Smith
Maura Tatomir
Zoe Taylor
Riya Verma
John Vuillemot
Marion Vujevich
Ashley Wei
Jack Werner
Maja Williams
Madison Wittman

Congratulations!

**MMS Finalists and
Nationally Recognized as
Promising Young Writers by NCTE**

Leah Bailey

Kate Mooney

Brooke Murawski

Honorable Mention

Nadia d'Arrigo

Kamryn Natale

**2020 Themed Writing Prompt:
My Nature**

*If we will have the wisdom to survive
to stand like slow growing trees
on a ruined place, renewing, enriching it
then a long time after we are dead
the lives our lives prepare
will live here.
—Wendell Berry*

Much of the suffering in the world arises from human beings' tendency to forget, deny, or misunderstand our primary bond with Nature, our dependence on Life for life. This year, we invite you to write about your relationship with Nature.

Runaway Rodent

NCTE PYW Essay

"Mom!" my older brother shrieked as he tore down the stairs like he was being pursued by a demon. "Oh my God! Oh my God! Oh my God! There is a squirrel in your bathroom!" he announced as he appeared in the kitchen, breathless from his run, dripping wet and wearing nothing more than a towel wrapped around his waist which he had hastily grabbed after his uninvited guest had interrupted his post-workout shower.

My mother, who is generally known for her composure under stress, looked equally stricken. "Did you close the bathroom door?"

"Yes," my brother replied, his breathing ragged from running. "While I was in the shower, I got a weird feeling that I was being watched. Then I heard a lot of scratching. I cleared the steam to the shower so I could see better, and under the radiator was a squirrel!"

"Are you sure it wasn't a mouse?" my dad the skeptic asked.

"It was a squirrel," my brother adamantly replied. "It was the size of a chipmunk, with gray fur and beady little eyes. Definitely a flying squirrel." Upon making eye contact, the squirrel apparently retreated to the safety of the radiator. My brother retreated to the safety of the kitchen. My parents, sister, brother and I considered our options for our unwanted houseguest. Secure in the master bath, the squirrel explored his new accommodations.

My family's hysteria over this small, harmless rodent was not entirely unwarranted. This was not the first time a squirrel decided to leave his natural habitat in favor of our cozy abode. When our house was built in 1936 on land which had formerly been a fruit orchard, the original owner must have thought it would be a great idea to plant a pin oak tree outside the living room window, a few feet from the exterior wall. I'm sure it was petite and willowy back then, but fast forward eighty-three years and it is a monster tree with giant limbs that extend over our roof so dense and leafy that they block out the sun in the western sky. For the most part, we love this tree. Although we live in suburbia, far from the wilderness of the forests, our massive pin oak, pressed snugly against our house, makes us feel as though we are isolated, living in a tree house or somewhere removed from civilization. However, there are some drawbacks to this oak, most particularly, that the tree is home to a family of flying squirrels, who from time to time, silently glide from the tree to our roof where they enter the house through some small crevice like thieves in the night.

Three years ago in December, after watching *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* and laughing raucously at the scene in which a squirrel who was hiding in the Christmas tree terrorizes Chevy Chase's family, we walked up the stairs of our house only to have a flying squirrel run over my brother's foot. (Although it may appear that he is some sort of squirrel whisperer, my family has decided that my brother finding both squirrels is nothing more than coincidental.) That squirrel showed up again later in the night, after we were all in bed with our doors tightly shut, desperately launching his parachute-like body at the door to my sister's room. My father eventually was able to lure this squirrel into a storage room in our attic where we had a Have-a-Heart trap at the ready. While we are not certain what happened to that squirrel—apparently not even the smell of peanut butter in the trap could entice him—we speculate he met a nice lady flying squirrel and had flying squirrel babies in our attic who we have been listening to for the past few years as they scrabble inside our walls all night long.

It had been three years since the *Christmas Vacation* squirrel incident and although we heard our furry friends in the walls from time to time, reminding us that man can make his home in an animal's natural habitat, but he must learn to co-habitat with nature, we had

not seen flying squirrels in our house since that night. When my brother's screams alerted us to another squirrel loose inside the house, we were understandably rattled. We all elected my father to address the situation. Armed with a broom, gloves, and a garbage bag, my dad thought he would sweep the squirrel into the bag and relocate him to the oak tree. The squirrel had a different idea. He withdrew farther into the radiator, safe from the broom's reach. In the end, after having been outsmarted by the squirrel, my dad baited the Have-a-Heart trap which had sat empty in our basement for the past several years, slid it into the bathroom next to the radiator, and closed the door. We all went to bed, but not all of us slept. Most notably, the squirrel was busy all night, my mother, who also did not sleep, reported. He was running around the bathroom, scratching at the walls, seemingly searching for a way out of his predicament. It was a rough night.

I crawled into bed, but I also did not sleep much. I was concerned the squirrel was going to escape the bathroom, but I did feel awful for the little guy. I could not imagine taking a wrong turn and ending up in someone else's house instead of my own, safe warm tree (house). It did not seem fair that generations of flying squirrels have lived in this part of the country without issue but we are unable to share our space with harmless rodents. No one was to blame for this current predicament and yet I did not see a resolution without suffering by someone.

I learned in the morning that there was suffering. Apparently sometime in the middle of the night, it became eerily quiet in the bathroom. My parents were hopeful that the little invader had dined on the peanut butter in the trap and had been caught so they could release him into the great outdoors. When my dad went into the bathroom in the morning, the trap was empty. He initially assumed that the squirrel must have found a way back into the walls. The night of nibbling and clawing left him unsettled so he investigated a little more thoroughly. Floating face down in the toilet was our stowaway squirrel. He must have slipped in while looking for an exit. We had hoped for a better ending to this saga.

My relationship with this wild critter was admittedly pretty limited. He was in our house (with our knowledge) for less than twelve hours and I caught only the briefest glimpse of him as I peeked in the bathroom when my dad was setting the trap. Nevertheless, he left a lasting impression. This encounter left me thinking about nature and man's impact on it. The human race has inflicted immeasurable damage to the environment over the years. We clear cut forests in an effort to grab more farmland. We drill for natural gas, ignoring reports that fracking can cause health issues. Every day we use plastic wrap, sandwich bags, water bottles and grocery bags, none of which can be recycled, and dispose of them without concern that landfills cannot keep up with our waste. More often than not, humans do not intend to wreak havoc on the environment. They just fail to consider the impact that their actions will cause. Likewise, my family did not intend to harm our flying squirrel visitor. By living in a suburban area which was up until one hundred years ago a vast wilderness, our actions had unintended, yet adverse, consequences on nature. We helped displace a native species, remove some of his food source and predators, and thus caused him to become a pest. We certainly did not mean to harm the flying squirrel any more than he intended to take up residency in our house. I hope that he knew that we meant him no ill-will. I'll remember him for years to come. He not only taught me the importance of considering my action with regards to the environment, but he also gave me another very good reason to close the seat of the toilet.

The Lure of the Cosmos

NCTE PYW Essay

By the time the small, messy haired boy was born, society knew its timer was running out. Like an hourglass, the final grains of sand plunged into the abyss. Still, as nuclear war ravaged the core of humanity and incurable diseases left small children in the ditches along the streets, the secluded town in Maine remained virtually unscathed. It no longer resembled a scene forgotten on a postcard, and the sour smell of rot hung, but it was his home. They lived in close quarters now, one family confined to a single room. Some withered away starving, as the government only delivered supplies to a few crumbling homes. Besides these deliveries, food was limited to nothing more than crusts and potato skins.

In the room next door to the boy's lived a girl. She was around his age and they often spent the cloudy nights lying on the rooftop. It was surreal, the idea that as the earth burned away, children continued to act as nothing more than children. Their knobby knees rested against one another as they stared into the darkness. Sometimes they giggled, rolling upon the crumbling tiles, however, other nights their bright eyes strained upwards into the cosmos, and they would peer for hours searching for stars.

His mother seldom spoke of them now, the shiny, glittering stars. After Baby died, the shell of a woman didn't speak much at all. He couldn't understand how sorrow radiated from his once vibrant mother. She screamed at him when he confessed that Baby's sallow cheeks were nothing more than waxy smear clinging to the recesses of his mind. Before the toddler's eyes sunk into his skull and his small limbs withered away, however, she talked and sang and dreamed with the boys each night before bed. Trees, pools, beaches, and zoos were common topics, but stars captivated him above all else. When his mother worked at the town's small library, she brought him home stacks of magazines. He sat on the worn wooden floor by shaky candlelight and ripped pictures of galaxies out with sticky, thin fingers, and pasted them to the walls. In a crumbling world, he created his own universe. The stars had fallen from their night sky long before his generation. Layers of smog and artificial light crowded the air and blocked the small sparkling jewels they referred to so dully as stars. These stars were in fact something much greater, portals into the past, centuries lost to time and destruction. Still, he and the girl would sit upon the rooftop on a weathered towel and hope for a shimmering glimpse.

He knew something was wrong long before she disappeared; death had heightened his perceptions of change in the living. She often complained of headaches, and they began to spend their time together in silence, preferring it over the scratchy conversation that wore down her throat. In their final days, he made a promise to her, one he could not comprehend fulfilling. He promised he would find her a star. Her little eyes lit up at the notion, and suddenly a peaceful calm fell over her. She was already halfway gone.

The next day, screams erupted from inside the home. He could not comprehend what was happening, but remembered hearing it before, as Baby deteriorated in his bassinet. His mother called it tuberculosis and she cried for the girl who, like her youngest son, was as good as dead.

He did not know, for there was no way an eight-year-old could, but these ailments were unstoppable. The drugs and antibiotics no longer affected the pathogens, and epidemics ran rampant across the United States. Those who fell victim to them were destined to die a painful death.

Day after day she cried from behind her rattling window. Blood-flecked spittle covered the glass, and her father simply continued to wash it, for he knew there was no hope. She fell away, the cries becoming more animalistic, deep and guttural, her lungs heaving for their final breaths as the invader possessed her.

Almost a week later, as the sun crested over the grimy horizon, the house next door fell silent. An eerie quiet hung in the air, even more unsettling than the noise that had filled his every waking hour and haunted him in nightmarish sleep.

He, however, survived the heartbreak of death and the scythe of disease. It was not the end of the world; instead, humans prevailed. They began to cure the diseases with an "unstoppable" drug engineered in Japan, and an ecologist in Arizona claimed to have created a filter to pull the smog from the air. As the boy grew up in a society under construction, he was still unsatisfied. His callused mother chastised him for his childish beliefs and fascination with stars. She thought it was a waste of time, to stare into the darkness looking for something so far away and foreign, when she could count each of his protruding ribs from across the room.

Nonetheless, he chose to study science in remembrance of his childhood friend. Living with his decrepit mother in the same small town in Maine and working a day job at one of the makeshift universities his life was confined to no more than five miles. When he reached his forties, however, he began to see it again: human's bond with nature splitting. He refused to surrender, leaving the promise he made over thirty years ago to his best friend corroding until the day of his own demise. It consumed him, this desire to erase the human light on the earth for just a minute, just a second. All he wanted was humans to see the world they are destroying. So he worked, he dedicated himself to the small fiery balls he wasn't even sure existed.

It took decades for his work to come together; but eventually everything fell into place. War burbled on the horizon, but he spent his time hunched over a yellow pad transcribing equation after equation. In the final moments, he sat in his basement lab before a wall of glowing computer screens. He watched the small blue bar painstakingly fill with glowing light and streak across the computer screen. He made this promise to her, years ago, before his bones were brittle and his skin wrinkled with age. Now he intended to fulfill it. The screen loaded; he quivered with anticipation and a sickly sense of fear. He leaned forward, one hand shakily gripping the handle of his wheelchair while the other, sagging and discolored, punched the button, and around him everything went black.

The world blinked out. Phones died, cars stalled out, and people stopped to stare. In the absence of all their human light and noise, nature prevailed. She splattered the sky with glowing jewels and streaking galaxies, and, for a moment, humans retreated. They returned to a state before time, when primordial urge dominated their lives. At that moment all was fulfilled, the scales were equal, and humans saw all that they could lose.

I think about this man sometimes, when I fall victim to the lure of the natural world, the rolling waves and lush forests that make my second home. Hand in hand with this awe comes grief. I mourn what has been lost, and will be lost in the next generations. Sometimes, these thoughts push to the edge of my mind and quiver into an insatiable abyss. This fear is deeply rooted. I run from the idea that we may dissolve into nothing more than an imprint of disease and waste upon an oasis, the possibility that in the final moments we shall see the world we destroyed. When it comes to humanity's last stand, however, I hope we refuse to surrender, for our earth, a swirling marble inside an ever growing infinity, is a gift we must never forget.

Fresh Air

NCTE PYW Essay

A late-March chill hung in the air, dappling my nose and cheeks with spots of red. Zoey, my miniature dachshund, strained against her harness, powerfully pulling me down the sidewalk. I stumbled along, my mind clouded with thoughts of what to wear the next day, not noticing the old woman walking across the street. As soon as Zoey turned her head and saw the woman with her fluffy little dog, she burst into an embarrassing shrieking fit.

"Zoey!" I snapped under my breath. "*Quiet!*" but my overwhelmingly vocal dachshund did not stay quiet. Instead, she continued her incessant barking, her mouth now frothing with spit. Frustrated, I scooped her up in my arms and pressed her small little head against my chest, calming her down to stop.

"I do *not* have time for this!" I said into her ear. "You know what? We're going home!" With that, I turned back the way we came, looking quite silly with a squirmy little dachshund in my arms and a terrible scowl plastered on my face. When I returned home, my mother asked me why I was breathing so hard. In between gasps, I replied,

"Zoey...is..SO...annoying...never...going on a walk...again!"

Of course, I did not stick to my word, for the very next day, Zoey was right at my feet, ready to walk. I shook her off, ignoring her the best I could, yet she was persistent. Soon, I was overcome by her adorable guilty stare, and found myself suiting her up once again. My afternoons continued like that for the next week, with Zoey persuading me to postpone homework to feed her hungry legs with yet another walk. I would rush outside quickly, intent on the belief there were so many things I had to do. It never occurred to me to take a step back and simply look at the world around me.

Then, on a particularly nice day, where a slight wind swayed the branches of the dogwoods around me, something changed. At first, I did not take any notice of nature's beauty, for I was second-guessing something I said earlier that day, being the worrier that I am.

"Zoey, let's make this quick," I said, moving in big steps which smashed against the pavement. But Zoey did not walk. She was busy smelling the air, her nose up high, her cheeks flapping. "*Zoey. Zoey.*"

Still, my little dog still did not move an inch, for she was intrigued and entranced by the curious smell of the dogwoods which were blossoming. A warm breeze blew down the road, bringing along with it small cream petals from the trees. Some landed in my hair, and I sighed slowly. While I did not want to admit it, there was something calming about the way the wind blew, as if it was a good friend resting their hand on my shoulder lovingly. I inhaled deeply, smelling the strong but not particularly unpleasant smell of the trees. I had never noticed that scent, or even the trees which produced it, and it was mystifying to finally perceive something which had always been there.

The month of April passed with many dreary, cloudy days, yet despite the unfavorable conditions, something still compelled me to frequently walk Zoey. Whether it was the desire to feel the magic of the dogwoods once more, or the obligation to my little puppy, I'm not sure I'll ever know. However, those walks were well spent, for I found my mind drifting from the topics of what to say at school or all the homework to finish to more natural thoughts. I was inspired--inspired by the whisper of the wind and the majesty of the world which surrounded me. It soon did not matter much if the sky

was gray or if the air was humid, or even if Zoey spotted a pedestrian and went ballistic. The walks were my time for solace, the walks were my time for peace.

One day, I returned home from school rather frazzled, with an uncomfortably painful headache spread across my forehead. The past weeks had been tough, filled with the tiresome ups and downs of middle school. As I entered the house, Zoey jumped up to me, licking my tear-covered face.

"She's been wanting to go on a walk all day," my mother said as she looked down at me pitifully. "Maybe you could take her?"

I nodded, then drifted over to Zoey's drawer and pulled out her walking gear. As I strapped on her harness, I felt nothing but hopelessness inside of me. Even the excited wags and kisses of Zoey did little to heal my inner turmoil.

When I stepped outside, a mellow breeze passed through my hair, tickling the back of my neck. I breathed in, then out, closing my eyes for a moment, forcing myself to calm down, and continued on. Strokes of green leaves painted the trees around me, quietly rustling together into a soothing melody. A bird sang along harmoniously as it soared through the late-day sky, catching gusts of wind beneath its feathers before it found a fitting place to land. I focused on its song, allowing my dark thoughts to casually pass out of my head. The sun cast delicate golden rays of light down onto my face, filling my soul and lifting my headache away. I took another deep breath, inhaling the heavenly smells of spring like good fortune, then exhaling the pain of the past. The rush of the wind and the scattering of leaves seemed to speak to me, whispering that there was no reason to worry, and right then, all I could do was relax. Nature gave me a sense of perspective, for I knew in my heart this drama would pass over, and time would heal my wounds. After all, the wind had blown long before me, and the sun will shine long after.

I watched a pile of leaves drag across the road with the breeze. Zoey growled at them threateningly, and I looked down at her with love.

"Zoey, silly," I smiled, "it's just some leaves!" She turned back, her dark brown eyes skeptical. I sighed happily, then looked at the picturesque suburbs which enveloped me. If only Zoey could understand all that her daily walks gave me, for not only had nature showed me the beauty of our world, but it had breathed into me an entirely new life.

Brooke Murawski

The Outlook Writing and Art Contests

The Outlook's Senior Editors sponsored regular art and writing contests throughout the school year. Winners earned \$5 gift cards to local eateries AND the honor of appearing in *The Outlook*. Congratulations to all of our winners, and thanks to all who entered!

Writing Contests

October: Write about a day in the life of a monster.

November: Write about a Thanksgiving tradition.

December/January: The world has turned to candy—except for you! Describe your adventure.

February: Write a short story about LOVE!

April: Write about your experience at home.

Art Contests

November: Design an original Thanksgiving parade float.

December: The world has turned to candy—except for you!
Illustrate your adventure.

April: Draw what you would rather be doing now!

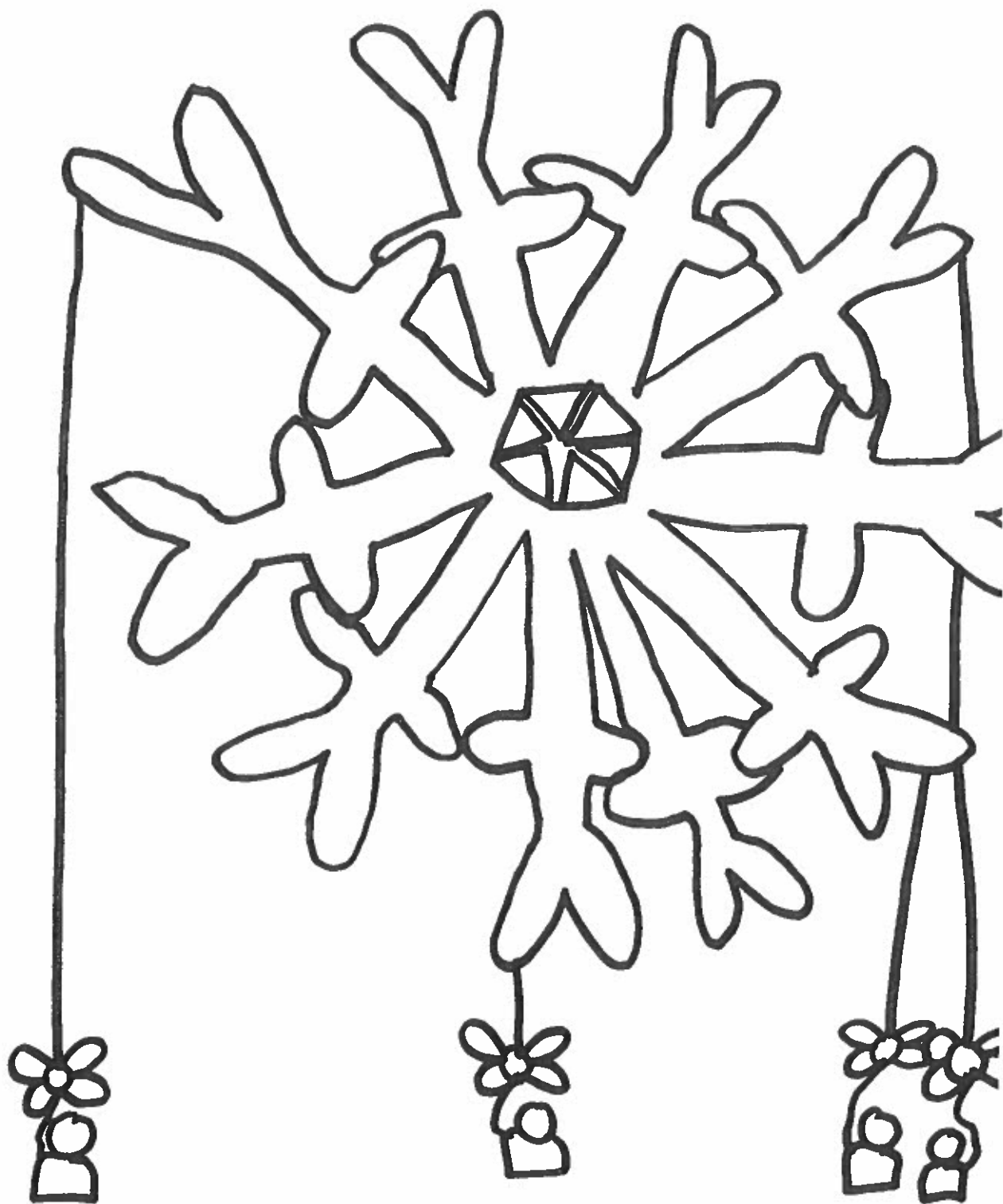
Technically a Monster
(A monster's perspective)
Winner of the October Writing Contest

Technically
I am a monster,
though I don't want to be.
I do everything you would do,
Though it's harder for me.
I brush my teeth once I wake up,
I can climb trees.
And once
I got stung by five bees.
Sometimes I wish I could fit in,
But instead of skin color I am blue.
I am so different,
From the average you.
I am seven feet tall,
Though I'm in ninth grade.
My life is hard,
But this is how I was made.
When I take a stroll, or walk outside,
They run from me.
All I truly want to do
Is live normally.
And even though I pout,
I guess in the end,
Why blend in
When you were born to stand out?

Isabella Evans

Maddie McDonald

**Winner of the November
Art Contest**



Maddie McDonald

Giving Thanks
Winner of the November Writing Contest

Thanksgiving is a time to give thanks.
You give thanks
for the food you have on your plate every night
and the clothes that are on your body.
No matter what it is
everyone is thankful for something.

I have traditions
that I have shared
with my family my whole life.
We invite family over and
have fun with a competitive game of Monopoly.

This year I can say I'm thankful for many different things
like my nephew,
and having a family to thank
because thanks to them,
I can celebrate Thanksgiving and spend time with them.

I was adopted,
and if it wasn't for my family,
I don't think I would have
anything
to be grateful for.

Imagine--
not being thankful
for anything

This would be
impossible
because everyone is
thankful
for something.

Kate Pratt

Eat Healthy...or Else!

Winner of the December Writing Contest

"Vegetables are horrible, Mom! Why do I have to eat the broccoli?"

"You don't have to, Jason, but if you don't eat your broccoli you won't get any dessert, and it's your favorite tonight!"

"But Mom! You know how much I love gumdrops!" Jason complained.

"But Jason! You know how much I love it when you eat your food!" his mom countered.

Jason tried again, yet he could not think of anything to say and he could not choke down the horrible vegetables. "That's it!" Jason screamed. "I am going to bed without any gumdrops and without any broccoli."

"That is quite all right with me," his mom replied calmly. She didn't even turn around to make eye contact. Instead, she just kept drying the pot in her hand.

"When I grow up, though. I'm going to have gumdrops for breakfast, lunch, and dinner!" Jason stated as he stormed up the stairs to his bedroom.

When Jason was all ready for bed, he snuggled in tightly, and read his favorite book, *Gumdrops for Everyone*, by Kate Maryhood.

Gumdrops are the best candy in the entire world, thought Jason. When I grow up, the only food I will eat is gumdrops and I will live in a gingerbread house that is covered by gumdrops. They'll be everywhere. Anything edible that I touch will turn into a gumdrop. That way I can live my life happily. At the thought of that, Jason closed his eyes and fell into a deep sleep. In his mind, one of the many light bulbs switched on. This one was labeled *Dreams*.

"Oooooooooo," cried Jason's tiny voice, "I'm floating in a world of yumminess!" As Jason looked closer he realized that everything in the world had become a gumdrop. "I made it happen!" Jason squealed with laughter. He kept repeating the same sentence over and over again in his head.

I made it happen!

I made it happen!

I made it happen.....

Left and right, in front and behind, up and down, there were gumdrops everywhere! Jason eventually found a house (made out of gumdrops, of course,) and sat down inside to rest his head and fill his tummy.

"Mom, can you please.....wait, never mind!"

Looking around, Jason grabbed the first thing he saw, which of course was a gumdrop, and he swallowed it whole. Repeating this process, Jason finally ate the entire house down to the ground with nothing but a few crumbs left.

Jason stepped out of what was left of the house and continued his journey. With every step he took he felt his body changing and gurgling. His feet became heavier and it started to get hard for him to move them at all. Jason found the last gumdrop and instead of eating it he stared into it. "What.....what color did I change into?" questioned Jason, for he was no longer his the color of a pale white ghost, but instead he was turning blue. On top of all that, Jason was growing a lot taller and a lot wider.

"I'm going to die," Jason mumbled as he took his final step. His feet collapsed underneath all of the weight he gained and Jason sat still, unable to move. All that was left of Jason was a large blue blob.

Am I dead?

Am I alive?

Am I human?

Thoughts rushed through Jason's head as he sat quietly and completely still. He finally realized that he was not dead, that he was alive, and that he was intact, not a human.

His mother had told him in the past, "Jason, you eat too many gumdrops. If you eat any more you'll turn into one!"

She was right. Jason was now a gumdrop and he would stay like that until.....well forever.

Jason let out a scream as he sat up in bed, "Mmmooooooooommm!" Scampering out of bed, he sprinted downstairs, passing his mom on the way.

"Is there something you need, honey?" she asked

"Broccoli!" Jason replied urgently.

"Ummm....ok. Sure."

Jason gobbled his broccoli and by doing so he devoured the leftovers of it.

"Since you ate all of you broccoli and all the extra, I will grant you the gift of five gumdrops," said his mom while holding out the box of candy towards Jason so that he could pick. Rolling his eyes, looking terrified in the face, and starting to sweat a little, Jason climbed down from the table and went on his way to bed without taking a single gumdrop. Jason's mother was shocked. All she could manage to say was, "Something about him does seem a bit off."

Piper Bozick

Zoe Taylor

**Winner of the December
Art Contest**



Zoe Taylor

Ever After

Winner of the February Writing Contest

Hello, I am Aurora, better known as Sleeping Beauty. You probably know my story. I was cursed to fall asleep... yada yada yada. Main point, I didn't die. In your face!

After my Ever After , my gorgeous prince and I settled down in a reasonable castle. My husband wanted children, but I didn't. All those **things** running around messing up the house? I told him no way. He looked disappointed, but what do I care? I am a princess. I am in charge.

Soon after, Prince Charming said that we should give our castle away and give our money to the poor. Again I said, NO WAY. If we gave money to the poor people, they won't be poor anymore and we won't have anyone to feel sorry for. Besides, poor people can't eat money. My husband is so stupid. Luckily he has me in his life to look out for him. **And** if we gave away our castle and moved into a cottage, how will I fit all my 333 dresses and shoes? Not to maintain my makeup. It takes three hours to look this good.

My husband doesn't appreciate me. He says I'm spoiled and bratty and I'm like, **please**, like how am I the spoiled one? It's him who wants to give away all our gold and castle. I also don't like how he is always saving damsels in distress. He says that it's not him, just his brothers, but I know the truth.

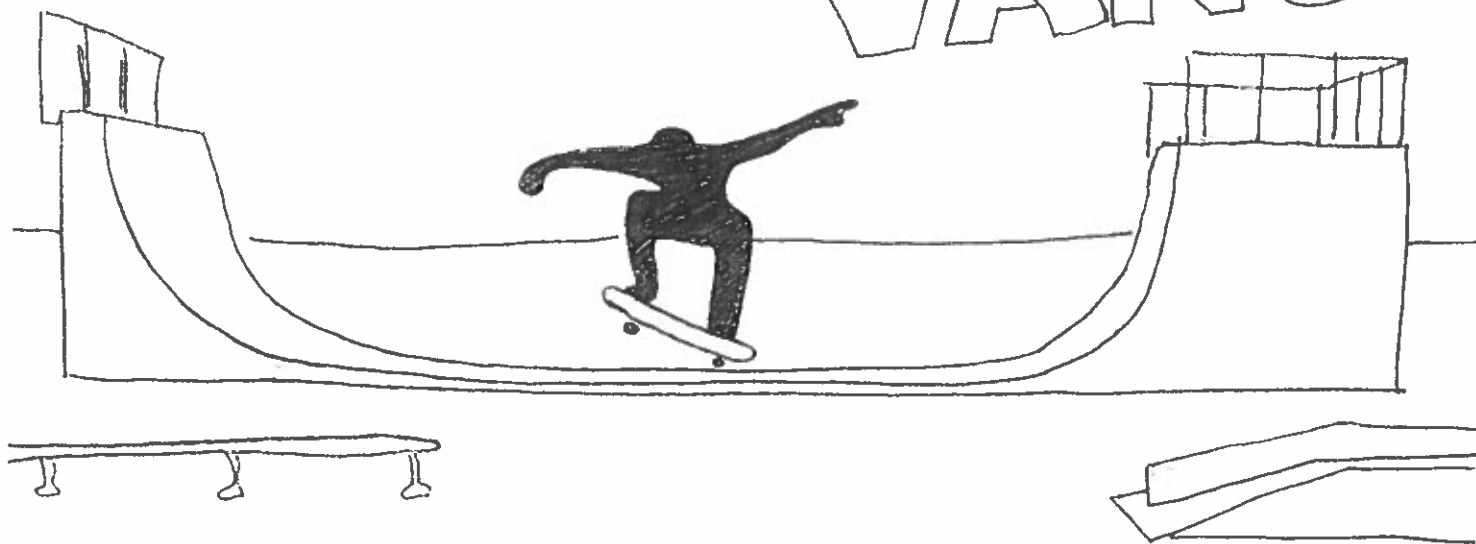
Actually, I don't know. One time I met stuck up Snow White and her prince. Prince Charming was with me but he was also with Snow White. Wait a second. I am so confused. My husband was **TELLING THE TRUTH!?!?!?** How many things have I been wrong about? Is it **GOOD** to give money to the poor? I can't believe my stupid, wise, loving husband has been right, while I, the beautiful, arrogant, hating Queen have been wrong. The worst thing is that he could have left me for a better princess. He is soooooo loyal. I have to go get him a present and say sorry. I have to buy a smaller house. And give to the poor. And govern my kingdom correctly! There is so much to do. I have to get going or it'll never happen! Bye y'all!

Meg Reinhart

Josh Keller
Winner of the April
Art Contest

Josh Keller

VANS



The Light
Winner of the April Writing Contest

Those bright lights outshine everything
The sky turns cloudy and gray
But you hardly notice
The street practically glows
Some people see the hand of god in the forest
I see it in the streets and the cities
The things that small
Tiny humans
Created
The humans who run those shops
That shine upon everything in sight
We are the people
We can be the light
In this world
No longer
Afraid
Of the dark

Lucy Hernandez

Haiku Uptown



This past fall, the Mt. Lebanon Municipality asked for haiku submissions to use on signs to beautify the planters Uptown during the cold winter months. Mrs. Kollar worked with Mrs. Euculano's and Mrs. Harrington's 7th graders to produce haiku, then editors of the high school literary magazine *The Pulse* chose the winners.

Of the 127 submitted from Mellon and Jefferson, only 20 could be chosen for the Uptown Haiku Project--14 of them Mellon students! Congratulations to our poets.

A starry night
In icy winter fields
A fox rests on old legs
--Tommy Harrold

The delicate drinking of nectar
The dark shadow of winging
Delicate in a way of life
-- Natalie Morgan

Newborn flowers
Moss crawling up trees
Pollen dancing in the air
-- Hannah Baker

In a frozen world
A lone holly bush sits
A brilliant red cardinal bursts to life
-- Sydney Mornet

The world sits still silently
Encased in porcelain white
Just the sound of wind
-- Amelia Carey

White sugar falls
On the still, frosted glaze
As winter slices through the air
-- Sylvie Eriksen

Spider weaves its delicate web,
misted with cool rain water
amongst the mossy branches
--Elsa Haywiser

Raindrops patter on roof
Awakening the sleeping lilacs
Sprouts grin towards the sun
-- Bryce Beamon

A caw, a whoosh
The crow leaves the ground
And footprints in the snow
-- Josh Ghil

Walking down the shiny white carpet
Hearing the cracking snow as you
Breathe and slowly taste the frozen air
-- Aisha Sarabekova

Crisp morning snowfall
Dances on the cold, frozen cement
The final leaf falls
-- Harper Flynn

A blanket of frost lays atop every inch of hidden ground
Crunches as tiny rodents
Tiptoe across the land
-- Isabella Evans

From the dark brown nothing
A fresh green shoot peers out
Into the bright sun
-- Will Parrish

A silent mist
Carefully encases
The world in a blur
-- Ella Wong



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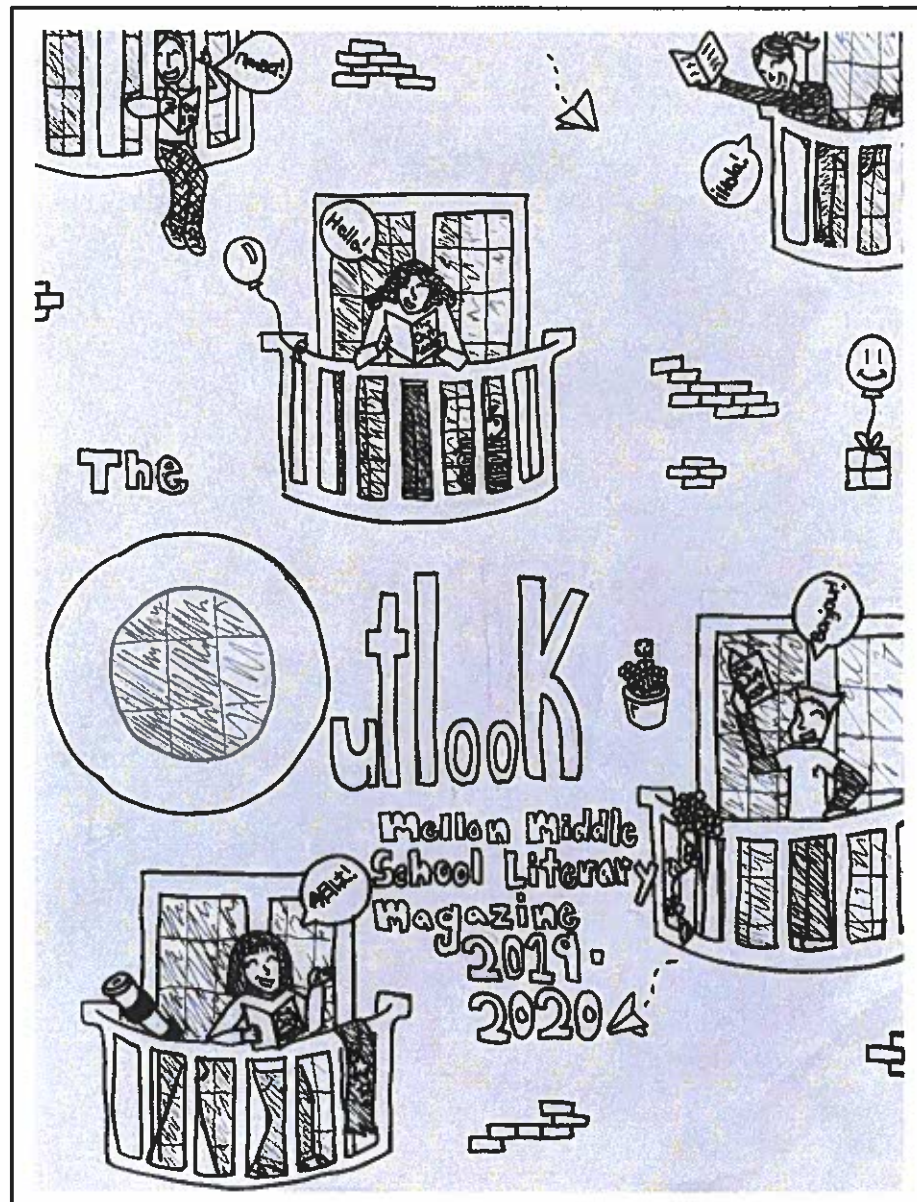
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The Outlook...from the Inside

Special Quarantine Exclusive



All work in this section was created and selected while we worked from home during Spring 2020. A special thanks to the writers, artists, and selection staff who dedicated time during our quarantine to create this unique supplement!

A Little Love

What did I do yesterday?
Last week was such a blur
Maybe I should go outside and play...
But I don't really want to anymore.

What is this life I'm living?
Can somebody press unpause?
All around me, I see people giving
How should *I* help the cause?

Well, my dog likes it when I pet her
Her eyes close, and she shows me a smile.
And as I gently pat her soft fur
It makes everything seem worthwhile.

And when I clean all the plates after dinner
And offer to put out the dog
I start to feel like a winner
And think this won't last for long.

Because, when I do good things for others,
I start to realize that
We can get through all this together
And life won't be that bad.

It's these little things throughout our day
That we start to appreciate
Now there finally is a way
In which we can all relate.

I know it may not be much
To reach out to a teacher or friend
But then...they are so touched
And I realize *this* is what matters in the end.

Love; and no matter how small
It's what keeps us all alive
What catches us when we fall
It's how we all still thrive.

I decorated the sidewalk
With colorful words saying it will be okay.
Then, I watched as merely chalk
Made so many people's days.

After this, I started to see
Goodness everywhere
There were little bits of love all around me
For the world really *does* care.

Teachers rallied their forces
They gave us things to learn
Friends banded together
And called each other from home.

We all found ways from where we are located
To show each other love
And yes, we may be separated
But, remember...only kind of.

So if you're looking for something to do,
Break out into a silly grin
Better the world around you
And let a little love in.

Brooke Murawski

Red of the Moon

A Fractured Fairy Tale based on *Little Red Riding-hood*

Deep in the woods where the wildflowers grow, there lived a girl with the most striking cherry coat. She was as sweet as a daisy, the most angelic being in her village. Her name, well that's not really important. Everyone called her Little Red Riding-hood. Seemed fitting, they thought.

Though Little Red Riding-hood's many astonishing qualities awed the townspeople, there were a few habits that they questioned. Her hood always remained on her head, her fingernails curled just over her fingertips, and she never seemed to pluck her eyebrows! Plus, Little Red was always spotted wandering off into the forest on the night of a full moon. This quirky nature confused the village, but they all agreed that it did not take away from her beauty.

One day, Little Red Riding-hood decided to take a stroll under the full moon, her favorite time. While exiting her cottage, Little Red heard her mother call, "Here, take fresh bread and cakes to your grandmother. She is quite ill and would most definitely love to see her beautiful granddaughter." Little Red Riding-hood took the basket and kissed her mother on the cheek. She set out down the path with a lengthy journey ahead of her.

With eyes glittering, Little Red Riding-hood soaked in the moon's sweet light. In the midst of her basking, she heard a soft rustle coming from the bushes. Stopping, she anxiously gripped her basket. The sound had ceased, all was silent and still. Then, she felt the shaggy, coarse paw rest on her shoulder. She was whisked around, and pulled closer to the infamous wolf. Every villager feared the creature. His teeth, stained yellow and dripping with drool, and his golden eyes stared back into hers. Oh and his breath, absolutely horrendous!

"Hello," he grinned, "what a lovely coat you have."

"Th-Thank you," Little Red Riding-hood stuttered.

"I couldn't help but notice your basket filled with such decadent treats. To whom are you taking them?"

Little Red Riding-hood grasped her basket tighter. "To my grandmother, in the woods."

"Old granny, you say. What a kind-hearted girl. Maybe I could tag along?"

Little Red Riding-hood stepped a pace away from the cunning beast. "A little company wouldn't hurt I suppose," she hesitated.

"Hey, how about we make a little game out of it. There is a split just up the road. We shall take separate paths and see who gets to your grandmother's the quickest," the wolf suggested.

"Sounds like a great idea!" Little Red Riding-hood exclaimed.

Little Red Riding-hood was not as dim witted as the wolf made her out to be. She knew what his master plan was. Her grandmother was not to be messed with, and Little Red was to make sure of it. To beat the wolf at his own game, she was to take the shorter path, and surprise him when he reached grandmother. "How about you take the right path and I will take the left?" she proposed.

"Very well."

The two set off down their separate paths, each wanting to reach Granny first. Little Red Riding-hood practically sprinted through the woods. The moon still shone through the cover of trees, much to her delight. Meanwhile, the wolf took his time, strolling down the path, sure he was to reach the destination first.

Collapsing at her grandmother's door exhausted, Little Red Riding-hood knocked repeatedly so that she would be let in. Opening the door in her nightgown, Grandmother was overjoyed to see her ruby-hooded granddaughter. Explaining the situation, Little Red Riding-hood told Granny to let her hide in the wardrobe and wait until the wolf arrived.

A bang on the door followed soon after. Granny was displayed on her bed, the bait. "Who is it?"

"It is your granddaughter coming to visit," the wolf squeaked, imitating Little Red Riding-hood.

"Do come in dear," Granny greeted in her warm, loving tone.

Breaking the door open, the wolf leaped to the bottom of the bed, licking his lips. "Dinner is served," he chuckled.

Then a growl came from the wardrobe. Suddenly, a wild beast emerged, wearing a red hood. Its claws scratched at the doors, and it let out an echoing bark. Pouncing onto the enemy, the two wolves crashed through the window. A bloody brawl broke out, and Granny was the lone spectator. They chased each other further into the forest. Then, pinning him against the tree, Little Red Riding-hood clawed at the wolf's eye, and brutally bit his neck. Stepping away from her kill, she watched as the wolf's blood streamed from his wounds, and he whimpered in severe pain. The work was done, and Granny was safe. Her claws retracted, and her ferocious yellow eyes returned to normal. She felt no guilt, for this was not her first kill.

She returned to her grandmother, appearing from behind a large oak. Granny stood framed by the broken, blood-soaked window in horror and confusion. Little Red noticed and felt the fear. She tried to console her grandmother, but it only made the matter worse. She could not stay here. Flinging her hood over her head in embarrassment and panic, she bolted into the trees. With no sense of direction, she fled, leaving the innocence behind her.

Kelsey Erdely



An Encounter with a Dragon

The wind whipped against my waist, wrapping around my finger tips and shaking me with cold. I gritted my teeth, bracing the icy blast. High up in the West Mountains was no place for the feeble and weak; it was for those who were brave of heart, and didn't mind losing a finger or two to hypothermia. When I had told my mother the night I left what I was doing, she gave me a stern face and told me no woman had ever braved the West Mountains before, and I best not be going.

"Why not?" I had asked. "You know you simply cannot stop me."

To this, she sighed, and absently waved her hand away, for I was right.

I had left, then, my small little village on the outskirts of the Oak Forest, and made my way to these mountains which were shrouded in so much lore. As a child, I had read fairy tales and legends about the great dragons which once lived in harmony with humans, and how now they only lived in the farthest reaches of the West Mountains. The stories always followed a brave man with a strangely bushy beard who would wrap a mighty chain along the beast's mouth, then fly through the cobalt skies as a sign of strength. Something about those stories pulled at the strings of my heart, for I knew deep inside of myself that it was my destiny to follow in their footsteps, or at least try.

The wind howled as snow surrounded me in flurries, little white specks clouding my vision. I wrapped my thick wool coat tighter around my torso, taking deep breaths with each step. I'm not sure how long I walked, or how much distance I covered, but I eventually made it to a small cave that barely fit me. I huddled as far back into the space as I could, then watched the snow from outside. It would die down soon enough, I told myself. It didn't.

Sleep eventually came over me, but when I awoke I saw the same scene outside of my little alcove. It was like I was trapped in a dream, or one of those snow globes the traveling merchants would sell. I knew I must keep moving, so I forced myself out back into the blizzard and continued along the thin mountain path. There were a few fear-

filled moments when the path chipped away or a particularly strong gust of wind caused me to trip; I would wobble above the cliffside with my arms out in desperation.

For hours I walked on the slow, steady incline of the brutal mountain path. Never could I imagine any dragon rider, traveler, or explorer daring to take this road. The cold only intensified, and my bones grew numb and I could not feel anything but the rapid pump of my heart. My eyelashes were frosted over, my vision was mainly all white. I could go no longer. I would die, surrounded by a faraway dream and a brutal reality.

That was when I heard the cry.

At first it was from far away, almost hawk-like in nature, yet more ancient and deep. It seemed to be drawn from the very pits of the world, as if Mother Nature herself were talking to me. Life sparked into my ears and I listened with every last remaining bit of my strength for another call. Moments later, I heard it, loud and clear, not too far above me. It was unlike anything I had heard before, yet it was also familiar. I knew immediately it was the cry of a dragon.

The beast came soaring down from the endless grey sky, and as it cascaded towards me I stumbled onto my knees. It was beautiful; it was like glass, with layered scales that shimmered against the white landscape. Its red eyes held a fire that glittered with intelligence and life, and its wings--oh, its wings--batted outwards like an angel's. I felt tears come to the brim of my eyes, but quickly wiped them away. This would be the last thing I'd see, for I was sure to be dead of hypothermia within moments. But the dragon, the powerful, yet fragile dragon, swept me off my feet with its right wing and carried me off to a hidden cave. Miraculously, I wedged in between two smooth spikes on its back, and a strange warmth which radiated from it empowered me to grab hold of them and cry out with joy. When we landed, I rolled back down to the rocky cavern floor and the dragon wrapped itself around my frail body, curling its delicate tail once, then twice around itself. The heat, the fire, the spirit which it possessed warmed me back to life, and I fell into a deep and comfortable sleep.

When I awoke, I felt the soft tickle of grass against my cheek, no longer the rough surface of the cavern. Above me fluffy little white clouds were soaring by against the canopy of blue. I heard footsteps, and pushed myself upwards to find I was not in the mountains at all, but the outskirts of my village. From the cobblestone houses there was a figure walking towards me, and I soon recognized it was my mother. She approached me, washcloth in hand.

"Back so soon?" she asked, confusion showing in her face. "See, I told you dragons weren't real. Just an old wife's tale." I looked up at her, the sun glinting in my vision.

"Oh, but Mother, there you are wrong." A small smile perked on my lips. "They are."

Brooke Murawski

Pulchritudinous Whalesean Sonnet #18

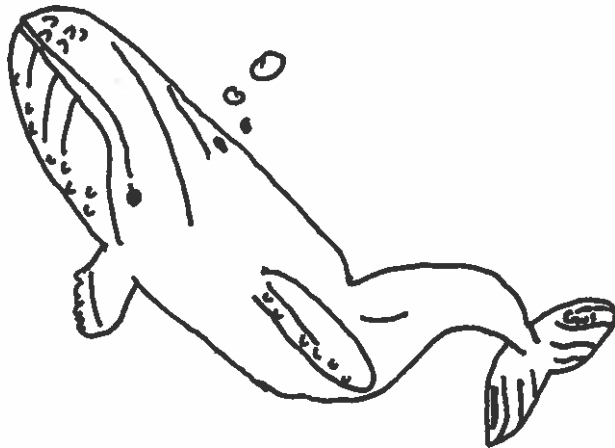
The beefy beasts inhabit the great deep,
Floating amongst all creatures, unique,
Whales travel in pods like large, soggy sheep,
Gliding through buttery waters, so sleek,

To be a whale would bring me great delight,
Gentle giants singing a lovely song,
Using their fluke to propel with great might,
For deep, peaceful waters these mammals long,

Living uncontrollable destinies,
Relying on humans to meet their needs,
Their future remains full of mysteries,
We determine the fate of all the breeds,

Whales may live in a crumbling ocean,
But, we can help them with our devotion.

Eleanor Bartley, Gabby Boone, and Kate Mooney



Run

Feel the cold
On your skin
Lose yourself
In the wind
Let your soul
Leave it's cage
Just pretend
You can't age
Don't think
About when you'll stop
Don't let
Your spirit drop
Just run
Run into the passing day
Run until your worries
Slip far away
Press your feet
On to the snow
Let all thoughts
Come and go
Your chest burns
Like a raging fire
But you were never
The feeble crier
So you run
Run in between the trees
Run and let
Your soul be free

You slap your hands
Onto your thighs
You're lifted off
You're helpless high
The air catches up
With your skin
And you begin

To take things in
How stupid of you to run
So fast
So foolish of you to think
It'd last
Go back to where you came from
Don't lose yourself anymore
There is no point in running
If there is no one you are running for
You're supposed to
Keep yourself in line
Don't ever let
Your spirit shine.

Yet

Something compels you
May it be the earth, the wind, the fire
It pushes you to run
With a passionate desire
There may be no point
There may be no reason
It may not be
The most comfortable season
But if you want to run
Run
And if you want to run
It's okay to have fun
This is your life
Don't let those voices catch you
And don't destroy yourself
If they do
Just run.

Brooke Murawski

Pulitzer Photography Project

In April, Miss DeRienzo's Language Arts 8 classes worked with Mrs. Kollar to analyze Pulitzer Prize-winning photographs, then wrote poems inspired by the photographs.

We would like to thank the Pulitzer Prizes for their permission to reprint their photographs in our publication. Please enjoy our poetry, and check out www.pulitzer.org to find out more about the photographs and Prizes.

Hello, Dear

"I miss you."
No response.
Never a response.

Every day the question is asked.
Every day it is answered with silence.
And yet for two months the question can be heard escaping my mouth.
But what for?
What am I hoping to gain?
Every day without an answer ends with salty tears running down my face.
Every day is soul crushing.
I carry the weight of the world on my chest.
And yet day after day I ask,
"How are you?"
No answer.

I break down.
I wasn't even expecting an answer,
I never am.
I can't hold back the tears.
I should leave,
Move on,
Be normal,
Because *you are gone*.

I know this is true but I continue.

Gabby Boone



1984 Winner in Feature Photography
Anthony Suau of *The Denver Post*

The Third Place Winners

America in tears from the first place finish
Photographers swarming around them
Cameras blinding them
Roaring of the crowd echoes

One photographer in particular
Turned his head from the victors
To find the Nigerian team to learn
America wasn't the only winner

The "losing" team in green
Stared at the scoreboard in awe
To find that they were victorious
To find that they were third place

Holding onto each other
Smiling and elated
Feeling the warm embrace
Without the crowd roaring for them

Their eyes glisten
With no eyes watching them
The photographer notices this
And points the camera at them, pondering

They lost
But acted like the winners.
Cameras weren't pointing at them
Yet they celebrated like everyone was watching.

They lost
According to everyone around them
But to them
Their third place team became victorious

Ashley Wei



1993 Winner in Spot News Photography
Ken Geiber of *The Dallas Morning Times*

There are Two Oceans

The cool, salty pool
Captures her sight
As it crashes against her cheek

Her eyes tear up
Sorrow swims in her cries
And loneliness swells her body

She grasps her last loved one
In hopes of recovering her happiness
She tugs, pulls, and pounds on his chest

Her dress slowly dances with the wind
But her mind races with sadness
While the waves lash on her broken heart

Swiveling her feet
She turns away
Refusing for her baby boy to see her tears

Lost in the vast deep ocean
A boy who will never see his mommy again
And a mother left in her own ocean full of misery

Amelia Neemes



*1955 Winner in Photography
John L. Gaunt of Los Angeles Times*

Bravery Stronger Than a Bullet

A typical August morning
Gleaming sun warming my skin as I sat
on my porch
Everything hot and steaming but
marvelous all the same
Until it happened

Whizzing through the thin, black tube
too fast for me to see
Until it hit me
Shooting through my skin like fire
From my pancreas
To the stomach
Blood spilling out
Next my spleen
From one kidney
To my left lung
Then stuck underneath my shoulder
So quick
A cry shot through me as fast as the
bullet
As I collapsed on the ground
Leaving me wondering who would do
such a thing?

I awake to a crisp white room
Days of waiting pass unbroken
Flashbacks haunt me
The gushing hot blood
My mother's screams
The burning of the bullet ripping
through me
Had I hallucinated?
But the wounds prove me wrong
Finally
Almost two months later
Doctors preparing for surgery
As I drift into a peaceful sleep
Falling under the medicine

As I awake, my eyes slowly blink back
the fog
Head drooping down
Lifting my shirt
My fingers glide over the bumpy,
squishy skin
A smile comes to my lips

The bullet is gone
I am the survivor
Because of my bravery
That was stronger than a bullet

Eleanor Bartley



*2017 Winner in Feature Photography
E. Jason Wambsgans of Chicago Tribune*

The Depths of Blue

Bubbling, the waves reach the shore
In the distance, the faint sound of
giggling children echos through the air
Salt, the faint taste surrounds the
breeze
Everything is calm

A small child wobbles down to shore
Curious
The tide rises and falls
He touches the growing waves
Water rises up, devouring
Ankles
Knees
Waist
Higher and higher

He topples into the frigid water
Not knowing what had happened he
shrieks
The water engulfs him
Nothing but blue
Deep blue
He sinks down, feeling the pressure on
his small chest

He struggles for air
His body turns limp
He disappears

The sand explodes under the feet of the
adults
They rush to the deadly waves of the sea
Horror in their eyes
Guilt rushes through their blood
The woman collapses to the ground,
Wailing
Screaming
Crying
The mist of tears indistinguishable from
the spray of water
The man tries to comfort her
She pushes away but soon embraces him

Live
Love
Loss
It is all part of life
Which is far too short
Embrace the little things,
Death can strike at any moment

Natalie Koenig



*1955 Winner in Photography
John L. Gaunt of Los Angeles Times*

A Sorrowful Remembrance

A step forwards
Her foot sinks into grass
Dewy, lush, jade colored.
She inhales deeply
The scent of maple trees
Silently willing herself
To be strong.
Her children are watching.

Another footfall
She releases the hands
Of her delicate children.
They have not comprehended
They cannot understand,
They could not understand,
Even if they tried to.
They stand behind in
The absence of sound.

Stepping closer
To the alabaster kingdom.
She gazes the rows
Upon rows
Upon rows
Of porcelain stones.
She tries not to think about
How one day
They will be weathered,
Washed away to
Nothing.

The final advance.
She focuses on one stone,
The world around her is
Still.
A symbol of patriotism
Flaps limply in the wind

Though weak alone,
It is surrounded by
Thousands of others.
Their force united
Unstoppable.

For a brief moment,
A flash of memory
Tears through her serene features.
The wall has fallen.
She throws herself
At the foot of the grave.
She weeps.
For the memories,
For those forgotten,
For what she had lost.
She weeps.

Through the veil
Of salty tears,
She hears a faint click.
She peers up
slowly.
A man with a
camera
Bent over a
few yards
away.
She rises from
her
Ocean of
tears.
And
somehow,
She smiles.



Resa Lascek

1984 Winner in Feature Photography
Anthony Suau of *The Denver Post*

The Fantasy of My Mind

At times, when reality is too much for me,
It is to the depths of my imagination that I run.
In this fantasy of my mind,
I can finally start to have fun.

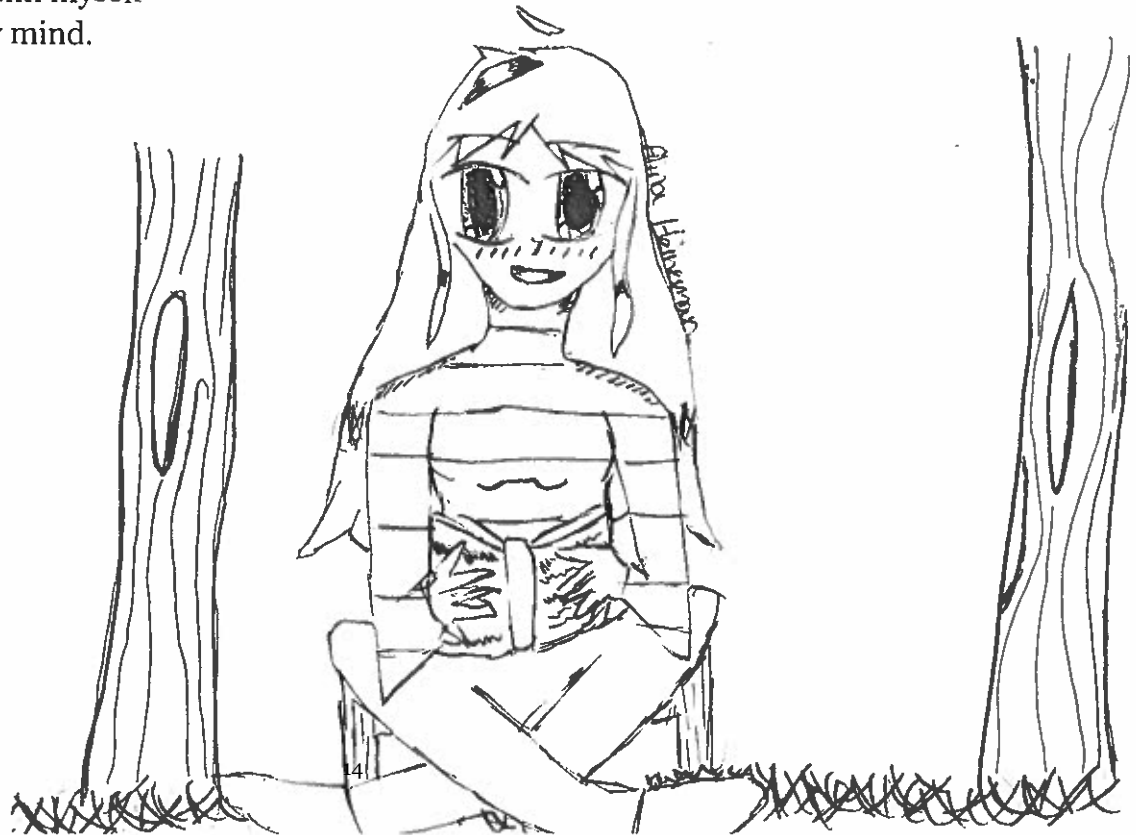
Here I can do quite possibly anything
I can fly, I can create, I can control
If I reach out, I can reach far
I can achieve world peace, and more.

Here is where I make the greatest memories
Here is where the magic takes place
This is where I can do anything
At my own, respectable pace.

When I recede to the fantasy of my mind,
I become pleasantly unaware.
People may ask me what I am doing.
I don't answer. I don't care.

For here, in my imagination,
I can solve the secrets to all space and time.
I can find peace within myself
In the fantasy of my mind.

Brooke Murawski



Ekphrastic Poetry

An ekphrastic poem is a vivid description of a scene or, more commonly, a work of art. Through the imaginative act of narrating and reflecting on the "action" of a painting or sculpture, the poet may amplify and expand its meaning.

--poetryfoundation.org

Many thanks to Mt. Lebanon High School senior Cameron Baverso for sharing his photography and time with Mrs. Kollar's Academic Lab students for their ekphrastic poetry assignment.

A Night's Journey

The night is cold as wind streaks in all directions
But they stay bold
A myriad of trees bend and fold
Drips of frigid dew among the fur of the raccoons
The bushes shiver and tremble and dance in the wind
The light peeking from the clouds advantageous to the raccoons, hungry and thinned
Their damp fur collides with the wet mossy branches
They look up ahead and the pine tree just dances
The clouds become orange, as they brush up against fern sporange*
The strong scent of the dew and the sap keeps them alert and keeps them on track
They are galvanized as they make it to home
The sky turning black with the rest still chrome

**sporange--the case or sac in some plants where the spores are produced and created*

Alden Siegel



Photo Credit: Cameron Baverso

A Deadly Rainbow

The river swirls around her feet
She passes a broken down car similar to her own
Sloshing, spilling, swirling
Black gasoline spewing from its hood

The rumble of cars far away
Drowns out the sound of the gasoline
Sloshing, spilling, swirling
Streaming down by her feet

It collides with the water
Becoming a storm
Sloshing, spilling, swirling
Around her feet it flies

Forming a rainbow
So bright, so true
Sloshing, spilling, swirling
A hidden truth behind its colors

The girl walks on
Unaware of the rainbow behind her
Sloshing, spilling, swirling
A deadly rainbow for all to see

Annabelle Junker

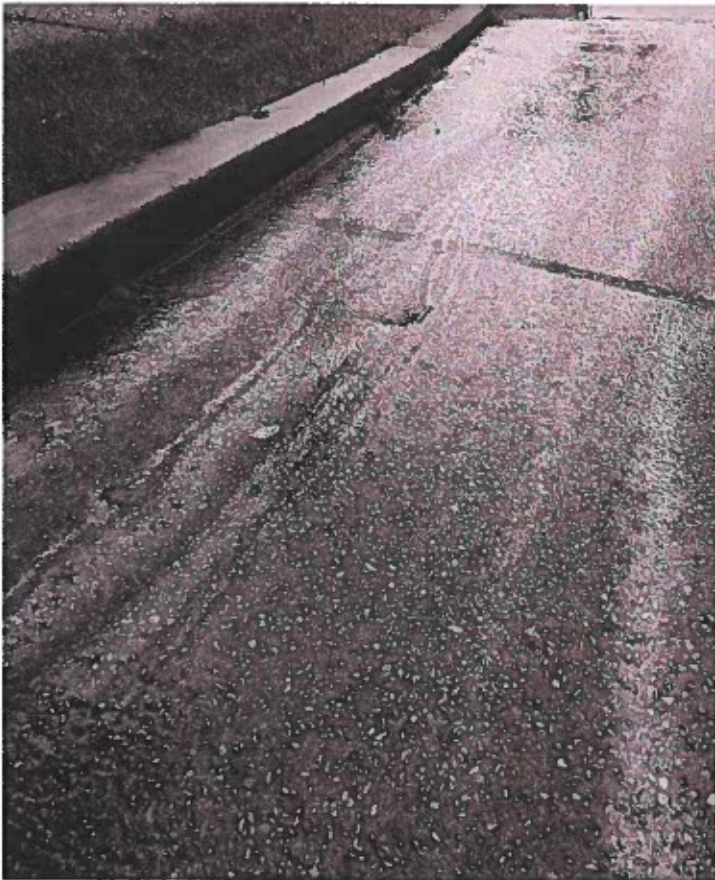


Photo Credit: Cameron Bavero

The Sound of the Sea

Why are the waves
so beautiful and loud?
They crash on to the shore
without a stop
Their white sea foam
looking like fresh whipped cream
And their blue water
going on for miles
without end
The taste of salt
is strong in my mouth
I need some clean water
to wash it out
I dip my feet
into the smooth, sticky sand
I just stand there
watching the waves
as they roll to shore,
crashing on the
glistening rocks
I keep hearing
the same loud
but calming sound
Crash!
Crash!
Crash!
Now I feel
at home

Anika Schmid



Photo Credit: Cameron Bavero

Sharpie

I saw a shiny Sharpie,
sitting on my mom's desk.
The tip was thick and smelly,
and I was instantly obsessed.

Holding it made me feel special,
like it was meant to be mine,
but I knew it was forbidden,
and I was running out of time.

I searched for a canvas,
to let my artist show.
There was a stack of white paper.
It was too small, though.

I needed something bigger,
something to last a lifetime.
My eyes laid on our storage cabinet
and I knew it was perfectly mine.

I rushed over to its white paint.
It was dull, it needed more.
This, I knew, was exactly
what my Sharpie was for.

With giddy excitement,
I gave the cabinet what it lacked.
I drew a pretty picture.
I like to call it "abstract."

I stepped back at my creation.
A smile played on my lips.
My Sharpie and I were done
and I left to eat some chips.

A few hours later,
I heard my mother shout,
and as she pulled me to the scene
all I could do was pout.

She yelled at me for a while
but it was all a blur.
She said I could never use a Sharpie
again
but she was wrong, that's for sure.

Brooke Murawski



The Last Day of Middle School

It began as news.

It began as something far away, something I would see in memes on Instagram but scroll by, something I didn't take much notice of.

It will pass, I thought.

It always does.

But it didn't pass.

Instead, I heard it was in Italy. I still didn't think much of it. I should be fine, at least, it's the older people and babies that we need to worry about.

I heard it was in Seattle.

It was growing worse in Italy.

Then, suddenly,

It was everywhere.

I wake up with "Help!" by the Beatles in my head. As I walk into the bathroom and stare at myself in the mirror, something feels off. My parents had said the night before it was up to me whether or not I go to school today, maybe that was it. It was never up to me whether or not I wanted to go to school. Never.

I wash my face with cool water to lessen the puffiness of the skin below my eyes, then dry it with my bath towel. My sister pushes past me, walking into our parents' bedroom. She sinks to the carpet in their doorway and talks to my mom, who is still in bed.

"Should I not go to school?" she asks. My mom's voice is a soft mumble. I continue getting ready, drowning them out. I step into my dimly lit bedroom and still hear "Help!" by the Beatles in my head. Maybe I shouldn't go to school. I don't need to. No, I'll get through the day. Then I'll have the whole weekend to myself.

I walk downstairs but I still am not thinking straight. The sweet french pastry I eat for breakfast almost makes me feel sick. *"Just make it through the day,"* I think.

We leave, and the sky is an ominous overcast. It is a deep gray, painted with the purples and grays of the morning. I say it looks like the end of the world. I say it looks like we are trapped in a bubble, and the rest of the world is in radiation or something. *"You're feeling poetic,"* my sister says as we drop her off at her usual spot. As she walks off to the high school, we tell her to stay safe. When my father drops me off, he promises we'll have pizza for dinner that night. It doesn't get me excited.

I march into school, and sign into Quiet Lunch. Everything seems different, like everyone is sitting on the edge of their seat. I walk up the steps, opening the door with the sleeve of my jacket, and think it is useless because I will not be able to once I take my jacket off. As I walk, step after step to the eighth grade floor, I cannot help but think about how weird this feels. I quickly glimpse out onto the beautiful morning through the window and wonder how it seems so majestic, so normal out there, but inside,

everything is different. I unpack my things and I hear people talking. From down the hall, someone is saying how we really don't know how many people actually have "it". I know what "it" is. This morning, I don't smell a teacher making toast. This morning, I smell disinfectant wipes.

The teachers I pass on the way to announcements seem tense. We all seem tense. We all know.

I step into the AV room and sit down at the audio chair, rather quiet. I play Beatles songs like "Eleanor Rigby" and "Let it Be" and "Imagine", then "Help!" by the Beatles because it is in my head. The voices around me are blotchy, and all I can focus on is how cold I feel.

I am opening my locker when it happens.

It came like a rush, students suddenly all saying it at once.

"A whole month!"

"Until April 14th!"

"A WHOLE MONTH!"

"LET'S GO!!!"

My head starts to overflow.

As I watch the kids run down the hallway, all of them smiling, whooping, cheering, I feel strange. We have a month of school off, there's no denying that. We have a month of school. Off. A smile spreads onto my face but it's short-lived, and it's only because everyone else seems so happy. I ask myself, why am I not?

I'm not overjoyed.

I'm scared out of my mind.

I walk down the hallway in a dreamy haze. Kids run around, still yelling out. I stumble into the math room and my classmates are smiling. I smile back, as if I agree with them that yes, this is truly a blessing, but the smile is fake. I place my things onto a desk and sit down.

We open up our laptops and there is the announcement, sitting on the district website, like a bad omen. March 16th until April 14th.

A month.

"This is real," I say. I press my hands onto my temples.

Math class goes by quickly. It's strange. It's not right. People are texting their family group chats. This is big.

The bell rings. People are videotaping, smiling. This isn't something to videotape. I stumble to my locker. This is too much. Too many people, too many voices, too many cheers. I want to go home. Now.

I make it to my locker, and my friends surround me. They might be talking to me, I don't know. I can't handle this. Too much is going on at once. Too much.

"Are you okay?" one asks. Why on Earth would I be okay?

"Yeah," I reply. "I just think this is strange. Everyone is celebrating. It's not something to celebrate about." She nods.

“Okay, I gotta go pick something up at the library. Bye guys!” she says. “Have fun on your break!”

“Break,” someone laughs.

“I know,” I say. “As if a worldwide pandemic is any means of a break.”

On our way out, we say goodbye to a teacher who is just cleaning up his things. Somehow, we plunge into a deep conversation about coronavirus. He tells us we are sort of experiencing 9/11, how the world was not the same afterwards. He said there would be changes in travel, changes in everything.

I don’t know why, but I say all sorts of things, with my friend standing right there. I say how I don’t want this to be happening, it shouldn’t be happening. I say how now everything is so much more complicated, what with school being online and virtual meetings and a shift in social interaction. He asks if I’m okay. Maybe I’m not. I feel tears behind my eyes. Why do I have tears behind my eyes?

No, I’m not going to break down. I’ve come so close. Not yet.

“I will be,” I say. “I’m very overwhelmed. I just hope this all blows over.”

We give him a “coronavirus hug”--we reach out our arms but do not touch. As I step out of the general music room, I tell my friend that we need to stay in touch. She hugs me, saying of course we will, but I am unsure.

I’m unsure of everything right now.

I walk out of Mellon’s doors as a student for the last time, but I don’t know it. I say goodbye to my friend, unaware that I will only see her on a screen for the next few months, and stumble to my father’s car outside of the library. He asks for me to return some books. Hastily I leave once more, passing a girl who is on the phone with someone, bragging about how she checked out all of the *Land of Stories* out of the library. *Is this a dream?* I think, looking around at the familiar faces of the librarians. For once, everyone I see has something in common with me. We are all facing this together. I can’t believe we are facing this together.

I squirt some strong-smelling hand sanitizer onto my palm, and leave. The sun is bright, too bright, and as I make it to the cool air conditioning of my father’s car, he starts talking to me.

“We’re going to get through this together,” he says. I don’t want to talk, so I just nod.

Eventually my sister comes in, and we drive away. Out the window, I see students from Washington Elementary school crying, tears streaming down their puffy red faces. “If you want to talk about this, we can,” my father says, supporting us. My sister gladly does, and I am almost relieved because I do not want to say a word. I am too shocked. I can’t just talk about my feelings and how we are going to get through this, because I still can’t come to terms with the fact that it is even real. As we pass Mellon for one last time before driving home, I am reminded of all the memories that my sister participated in that I will miss out on. This is all too much like a dream, for the sun flooding through

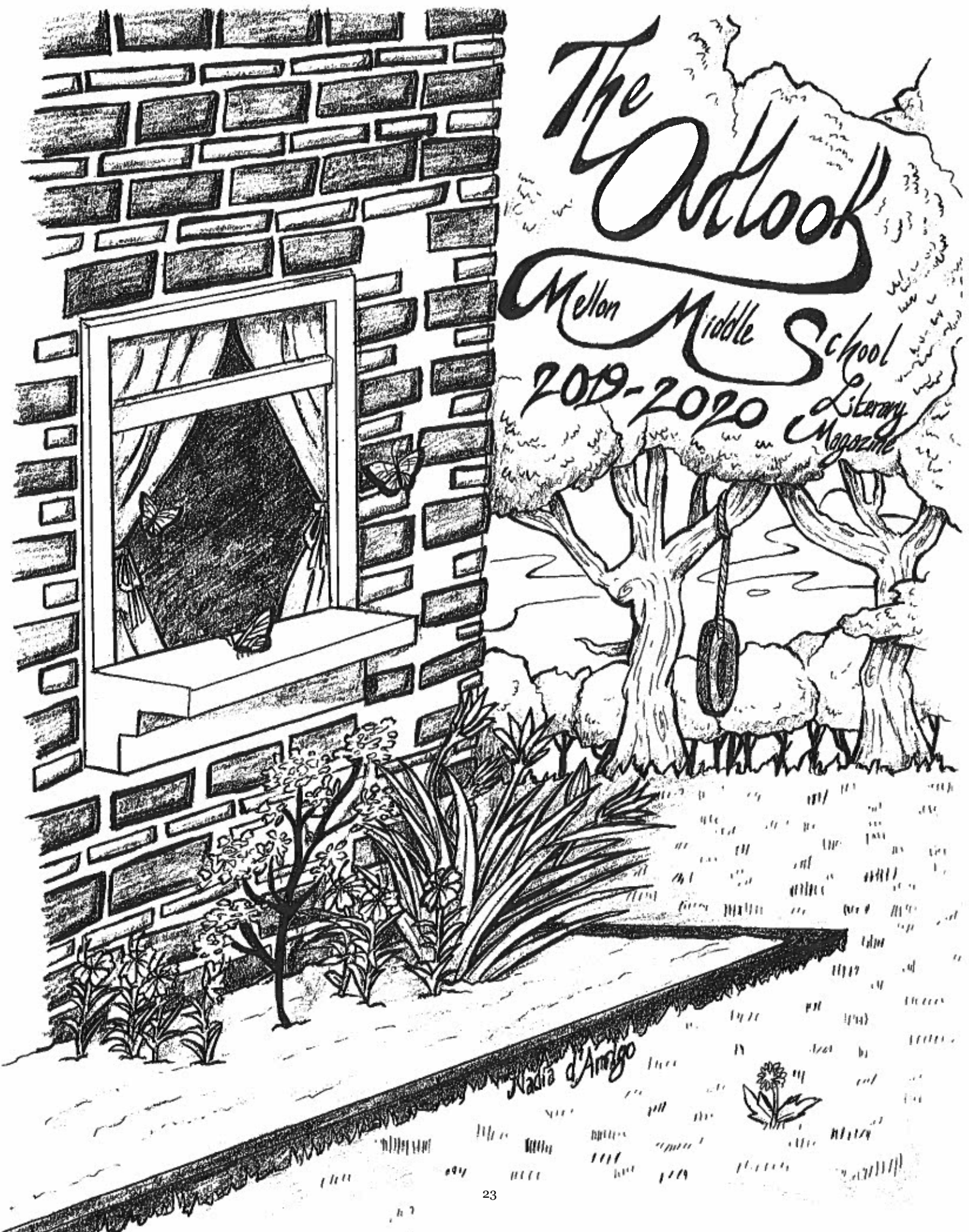
the car's windows makes my vision blurry. I keep pinching myself, picturing waking up, walking into school on Monday and everything is the same again. But it's not.

"Brooke, are you okay?"

"Just don't talk to me. You guys can talk. I just need to think," I say desperately. I want my family to leave me alone, for the first time in my life. I want them to leave me alone because I know talking to anyone else about this will only make things worse. It will make me believe this is all so much more real.

I close my eyes, taking deep breaths. Something I do often is compare myself to stories that I have read, stories about a girl experiencing middle school or a protagonist in a fantasy novel. But as I sit there, the sound of my sister talking muddy in the background, I only feel like I am in my own story. I am historical fiction, something of history books. I can see myself, writing in my autobiography, of how, on the last day of middle school, March 13th, I cried silent tears, painful and confused, as we drove our way home.

Brooke Murawski



The Outlook

Mellon Middle School
2019-2020 Literary Magazine

Nadia d'Amico

Mellon Writing Lab

Once you walk into Mellon's Writing Lab hallway
You have three rooms ahead of you
I suggest going into the one that makes you feel comfortable
For me that is always the room straight ahead of me
That room is with Mrs. Kollar in Room 305

When you first walk in
Your desk might be next to a window just like mine
There are sweet songful birds singing in the wind
But we are not here to listen

As soon as you get to work
You can just feel the taste of writing lying on your tongue
Then, your brain completely fills with ideas
You sign in and get to work as soon as possible
Then, the smartness comes along

When you are all signed in
You start clicking and clacking with your keyboard and mouse
The sound of clicking and clicking and so much other clicking makes me calm and satisfied
That's because for me
Room 305 gets me calm and working

When I am done with my work
I can sense the accomplishment of a job complete
Just then the school bell rings
Everyone is then off to 4th period
And so am I

Samantha Rosenberg





Alone in the Woods

Alone in the extensive forest
 Nothing in sight but trees
 Thick bark
 Gentle leaves
 Sunlight limited
 To patches

A feather in wavy white hair
 Too unusual for a bear
 But perfect
 For a 50-year-old man
 Falcon's feather
 Stands out from
 Dull green leaves
 And shining blue of the sky



Rustling of wind
 Blows through the woods
 Rejecting all sound
 Trees release
 Scented foliage leaves
 Dry dirt
 Nature mist
 A rosy tang
 Surrounded by solitude

Ben Mares



Ten Ways to Look at the World

I: The Pessimist

The world is restrictive, made of broken dreams, and delights in ruining the ambitions of small children.

II: The Grateful

The world is a beautiful thing, made to support life like no other we know, and for that we should be thankful.

III: The Artist

The world is a canvas, one for each of us to make our own mark upon.

IV: The Hoper

The world is extraordinary, brimming with infinite possibilities which we can access.

V: The Determinist

The world is fate, and written in the stars is our future before we know what "fate" and "future" mean.

VI: The Patient One

The world is like a tortoise, moving slowly but surely to reach its destination.

VII: The Student

The world is an open textbook, ready to teach if we open to the right page.

VIII: The Greedy

The world is a milestone, ours to conquer if we wish.

IX: The Scientist

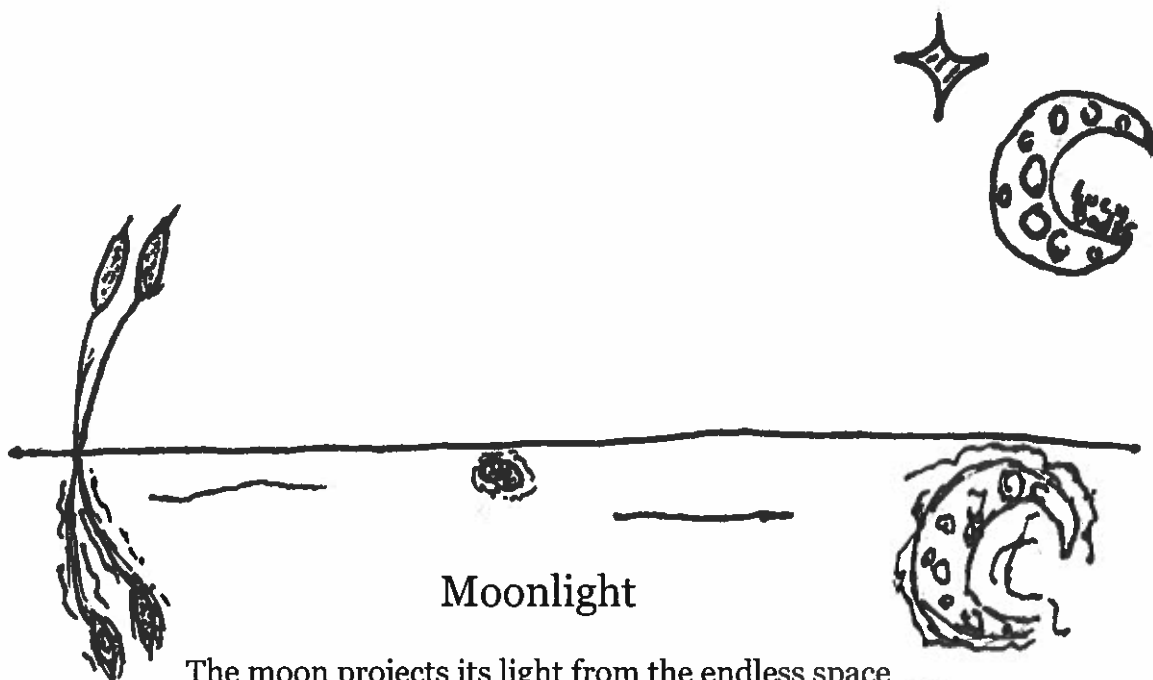
The world is a compilation of atoms that supports other atom-based organisms.

X: The Thinker

The world is an unanswerable question that we, as humans, have an insatiable desire to solve.



Owen Rick



Moonlight

The moon projects its light from the endless space
While the water mirrors it below
Red and cyan soak in the sky
As the wetland reflects the colors
Then it begins to brew together with the texture of water
The bright yellow grass flows freely above
As the bottom roots are under, all hidden
When you hear the water trickle below
You look from every angle
But the colors follow your trail
What a sight

Dominic Nardiello

1st Place

Today is the day,
The day of the race
And this horse wants
to be in first place

The horse was preparing
All day and all night
The sky looks clear
Without a cloud in sight
The weather feels fine
And the sun shines bright

When the race finally started,
He took a strong lead
Dashing fast
At lightning speed
Even at the beginning,
He seemed likely to succeed.

Across the coarse, gravelly road,
As he persisted with speed,
Some horses slowed!
But most decided to proceed.

About halfway through,
Still not giving in.
He knew he could finish,
He knew he could win.

He neared the end,
Completely alone.
Then close to the line,
He tripped on a stone!

The next horse raced ahead,
But he still fell.
He still made it in second.

Oh well.

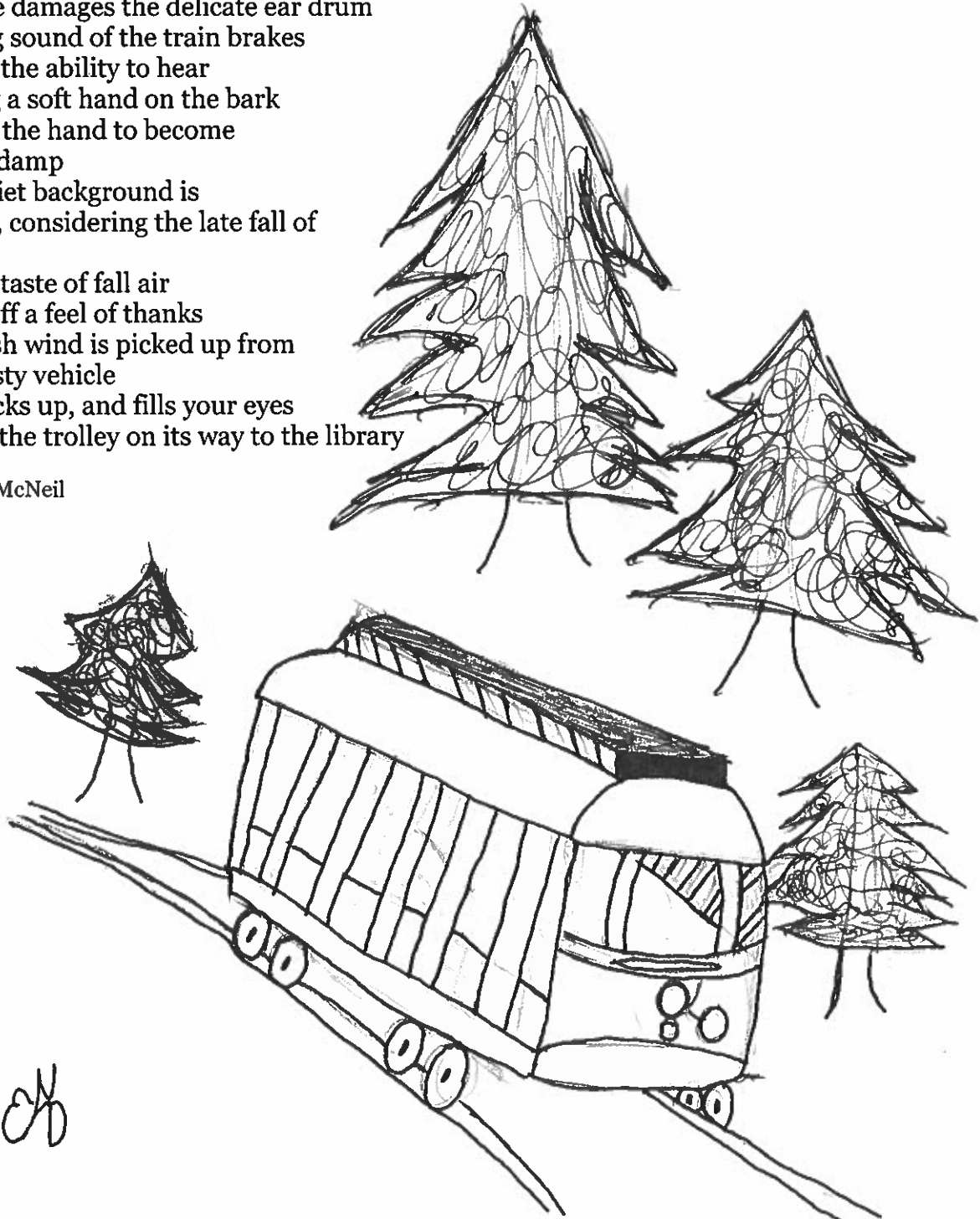
Caleb Carvellas



Trolley to the Library

Rusty, collapsing trees surround the dewy area
Large trolleys whip past
Filling your lungs with delicate cold air
The gentle sound of vibrant leaves
Touching the dank ground
Piercing sound of a train
Whistle damages the delicate ear drum
Hissing sound of the train brakes
Breaks the ability to hear
Placing a soft hand on the bark
Causes the hand to become
Moist, damp
The quiet background is
Dreary, considering the late fall of
Rain
A faint taste of fall air
Gives off a feel of thanks
As harsh wind is picked up from
The rusty vehicle
Dirt picks up, and fills your eyes
This is the trolley on its way to the library

Phoebe McNeil



McDonald's Employee

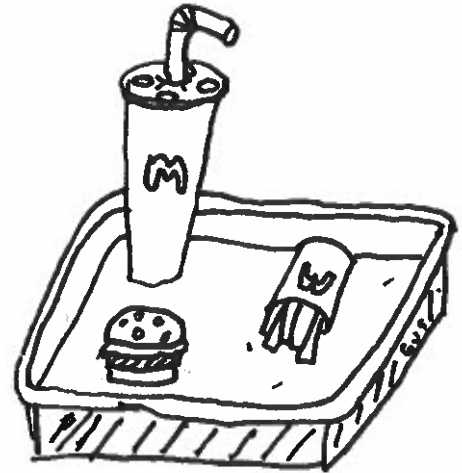
The order appears on the monitor.
He rushes to the grill
and drops
a meaty hamburger.

The grill thaws the icy burger.
It becomes less of the horrid,
no-good state of being raw.
Eventually, it achieves its dark-maroon color.
Perfection.

He grabs a potato, from one of the finest farms in America.
It endures a flood of pain, being chopped by a kitchen knife.
Finally, the torture ends, only for now.
The worker puts the slices into a box, which descends into a
flaming sea of grease, hissing at the sliced potatoes.

He wraps the hamburger in paper, snug and tight.
The fries are cradled into a cardstock crate.
They are laid on a tray, carried by the teenage worker.
He arrives at the customer and announces that his food is ready.
The customer inspects his tray and exclaims,
"Wait a minute!
This isn't what was on the advertisement!"

Aidan McWilliams



Good Bye

I am free
My family cries
Tears as salty as the water
At the beach
Where we spent countless summers
As I kiss them goodbye

I hug my brothers and sisters
Kiss my parents
One last time
I grab my packed my bag
As he scooped me up

And we ran into the sunset

Why did I leave?
I think now
Why did I leave
My mother's wings?
I was too young

I was safe
I was strong

Why did I leave?
Now I am in so much pain
And have no one
I am alone

Why me?
I have asked a thousand times
Why do I have to suffer
Because of his stupid mistake?

Now I am alone
Helpless
With young birds
Yearning for their father
To bring them food

All I can give them are crumbs
I yearn to take them home
To play with them, run with them

But the fault is also mine
For I was also foolish
To go along
With his ideas

I miss my mother
I want her love
I need her love
I need her to help me raise my young
birds

I cry
My tears clear
As the water at the beach

With courage
The only thing I have left
I borrow a phone
From a stranger
Whom I know not
And call my mother

Ella J. Tormey



Dreaming

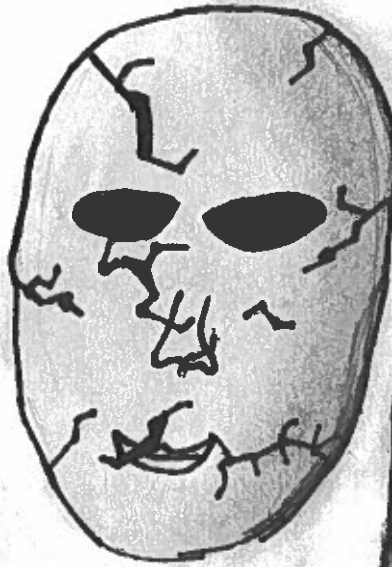
Thinking about something
Thinking about nothing
Don't know what to do
Don't know what to say

The dark glossy wall
In front of me
Speaks to me
It's all I see

The loud sound of my thoughts
In my head annoy me while I think
Ideas overflow my brain
As the weight of my face
Rests on my hand
I scratch my coarse beard
I'm thinking
I'm dreaming

Chance LoCasale





My Mask

People told me for many years that I was privileged. That my life was easy. That I had no right to complain and I should be happy. On the outside, I was a beam of sunlight. I was always smiling or laughing. But on the inside, I could slowly feel myself drifting away. I thought that an easy smile painted on my porcelain mask would make it go away, that if I smiled enough on the outside, one day I'd wake up smiling on the inside as well. But it didn't work. The only thing that was keeping me from letting my mask shatter and drift away into my black hole of self-hatred was my favorite horse.

Noah was everything to me. He was strong and graceful, with a perfect white coat. His mane was beautiful, made up of snowy blonde waves falling down his long neck. I always found it difficult to communicate with people, but with Noah, words came easily to me. He was shifty and nervous around other people, but with me, he was gentle and still. I related to him, and he seemed to understand me. Riding him in the arena was fine, but the place where I truly felt connected with Noah was the trail. We rode down the shadowy dirt path, cut across fields surrounded by grassy pastures, and cantered freely, the wind blowing in my face. Logs lay across a grassy circle at the bottom of the hill, and me and Noah would jump over the rotting oak. During the times I rode Noah down the trail, I was at peace. I no longer had to struggle to cling to happiness, joy came naturally to me there. But other than those peaceful rides, my life felt empty. I had no purpose, was lost and alone. To make matters worse, my barn, home to my old equestrian team, was becoming increasingly difficult to handle. At the same time, it was the one place where I felt safe whispering my true emotions to the quiet horses amongst the musty scent of hay. The girls who rode there were cruel and my coach treated me as though I were but a child. Merely two months before I chose to switch to a different barn, I went to the barn Christmas party.

The moment I entered the cold arena filled with people who seemed to hate me most in this world, I turned to my mother. In that moment, I realized what a mistake coming here was. I looked at her as I felt warm bubbles gather at the inner corner of my

eyes. My mother took me in her arms and I walked unsteadily back up to our car. The silver minivan sat upon the gravel, its windows frosted. We sat down with the music on, not speaking. A tear rolled down my face and in that instant I knew my grip on reality was slipping. I had been barely holding on to avoid slipping into my deep oblivion of depression, but at least I was able to hold my façade around my family and friends. I would contain my tears calmly, then release it all at the end of the day, curled in my bed, crying myself to sleep while I prayed for God to make all of my depression and anxiety go away. But now, even at my favorite place, my safe place, I struggled to hold back tears. I wiped at my cheek, brushing aside the salty droplets that rolled from my ocean of an eye. My mother turned on Christmas music, and as she pulled out of the makeshift parking lot, I smiled shakily. As we left the haven of trails and hay, I began to spiral, panicked, and wondered if I would ever find another safe place.

Two months passed and without any visitation of the horse I loved the most, Noah, my tether to this world, I began to slip away. My mask was breaking, the perfect smile chipped and the brightly painted eyes cracking, revealing the dull, soulless expression that lay behind it. My parents could see it, and they knew that not being able to ride was breaking my soul. Sometimes I wonder what it's like to be forced to watch one of the people you hold most dear in this world collapse in on themselves, losing their will to live. I still fail to imagine how it feels to be a parent and watch your daughter begin to wish she was not on this earth anymore. I heard all of the quotes, about "not taking the precious gift of life for granted," but I only felt worse about myself. I felt guilty for taking for granted something so precious. I knew people were just trying to help, but I felt as though they were wasting their time. As though I was a waste of time. Then I joined a new team at Caustelot Farms.

My first few lessons were magical. It was just me, my horse, and the coach. My soul was still aching, but I was on a path to finally let light into the empty vacuum of my depression. A few weeks went by. I joined a group lesson, and the girls were kind and open. Their smiles were genuine, and they spoke to me. Soon, my coach placed me on a more difficult horse. Her name was Sophia. When I went to get her out of her stall for the first time, I was frozen with shock. Sophia looked almost identical to Noah, and I knew it was a sign that this team was the best place for me. They shared the same crisp white coat and the enormous sizing. Sophia's legs were ridiculously long and she was nearly twice the size of the horse I started with at Caustelot, Willow.

Riding Sophia was the closest thing to tranquility I could find. Although she was difficult with other people, she was sweet and loving with me. We had a connection, one that you could see simply by the way we looked at each other. Whenever I gently nudged her out of her stall, she would release a gentle whinny and rub her face down my khaki-clad leg. The indoor arena was small and lit by fluorescent lights, but outside of the arena lay an enchanting scene of open skies and shady trails. For as much time as I could steal, I would slip away from mucking stalls and climb onto Sophia's bare back. We would ride for as long as we could, getting lost together in the tangles of vines and iridescent trees. Emerald leaves with golden undertones filtered the sunlight until it was barely a hint of a flaxen glow bleeding through the overgrowth. Sophia's strong legs glided across the dirt paths, her ears perked. The wind blew across my face and the cold snipped at my cheeks, but Sophia's soft body kept me warm. The woods were almost like a different world, an ideal realm that protected me from the harsh reality of my life. Each time I would leave the trails, I could feel my panic, a shadowy figure that took over

my body, creep up behind me once more. But the more time I could spend with that beautiful horse, the less tightly I had to grip reality.

Being alone is a terrifying thing. It wraps around every limb, squeezing tighter and tighter until you are paralyzed. Friends can help, but the fear will always be there, waiting for a vulnerable moment. You can sense it crouching behind you, preparing itself to strike. Different things help people get through it. Some people turn to darker things. Drugs, alcohol, bullying. These can be addictive, they make you feel strong. The positives may seem to outweigh the negatives in the moment, but they do not in the long run. The people who are suffering never heal, eternally stuck in an endless cycle of depression. But the people who survive it are the ones who turn to the brighter, more beautiful things in life. Family, art, music, sports. Whatever their passion is, it helps them heal. I turned to nature. I found serenity in the whisper of winds, of the speed of the horse's hooves on the dirt. I found peace in the sunlight filtering through the trees. It was in those moments that I truly understood that I did not need a way out. I was not alone. During those quiet rides with Sophia, I had time to think. I began to understand that people cared for me. I had something to live for. I had Sophia. I had my family. If you are also carrying a ceramic mask or facing adversity, nature will bring understanding, a realization that you are not alone. Nature will always be there, even when all else seems to have abandoned you.

Kamryn Natale

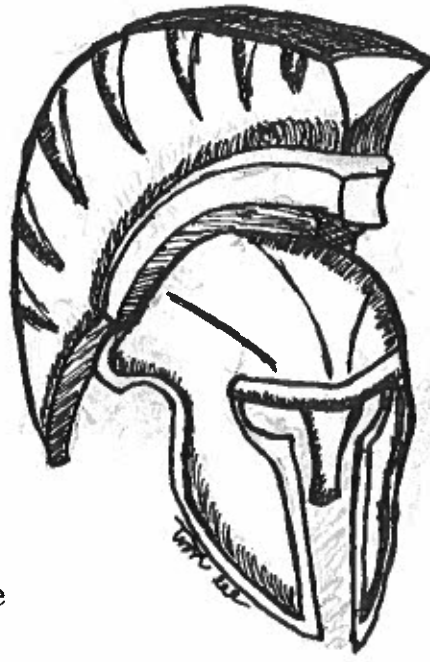


The Soldier

There stands a soldier
Standing tall
Standing strong
Standing so brave and proud
He fights a battle
He lives yet another day
So let him rest away, away.

There stands a soldier again
Standing tall
Standing brave
Still so proud of the wins he's made
He fights yet another battle,
He loses that fateful day
So let him rest away, away.

Liv Park



The Fear Globe

Help.
Let me out.
Please.
Thoughts and fears,
They swirl around me.
I'm banging on the glass,
But no.
Anxiety is holding the globe in which I squall,
Nonstop shaking.
I want to weep.
My mom and dad are outside.
I'm trying to get to them,
Pounding the walls,
But I am too weak.
The fear has enfeebled me,
It has shrunk me.
Please,
I beg of you,
Let me out.

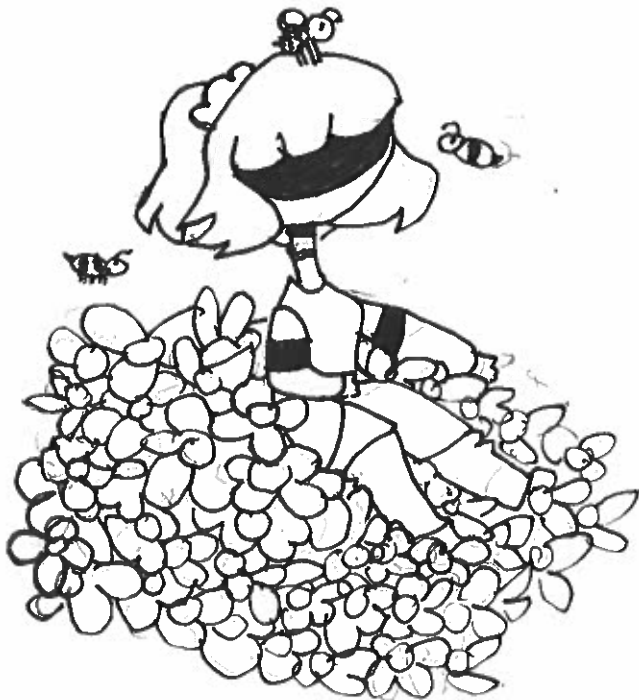
Maddie McDonald



kaleidoscopic wonders

bzzz... the bees buzz around me like a helicopter in the night sky
as the multicolored flowers blind me with color
many colored flowers of lilac purple
flowers as bright as brand new bananas
and one ruby red beauty
the sweet smell touches me ever so softly
the smell is as sweet as perfectly ripe strawberries
looking around i notice the bright sun glaring down and
slowly but surely nourishing the flowers to grow as tall as mount everest
as i bend down to feel the soft healthy petals
i can taste the sweat that drips from my forehead from the hot sun
happily gardening, i look up to be faced with bright blue skies
not only are there petals, there are stems
healthy, full, well -nourished stems
as i look around, it's almost dark
i've been keeping these flowers
company for hours!

Summer Norton



As the Dawn Sets In

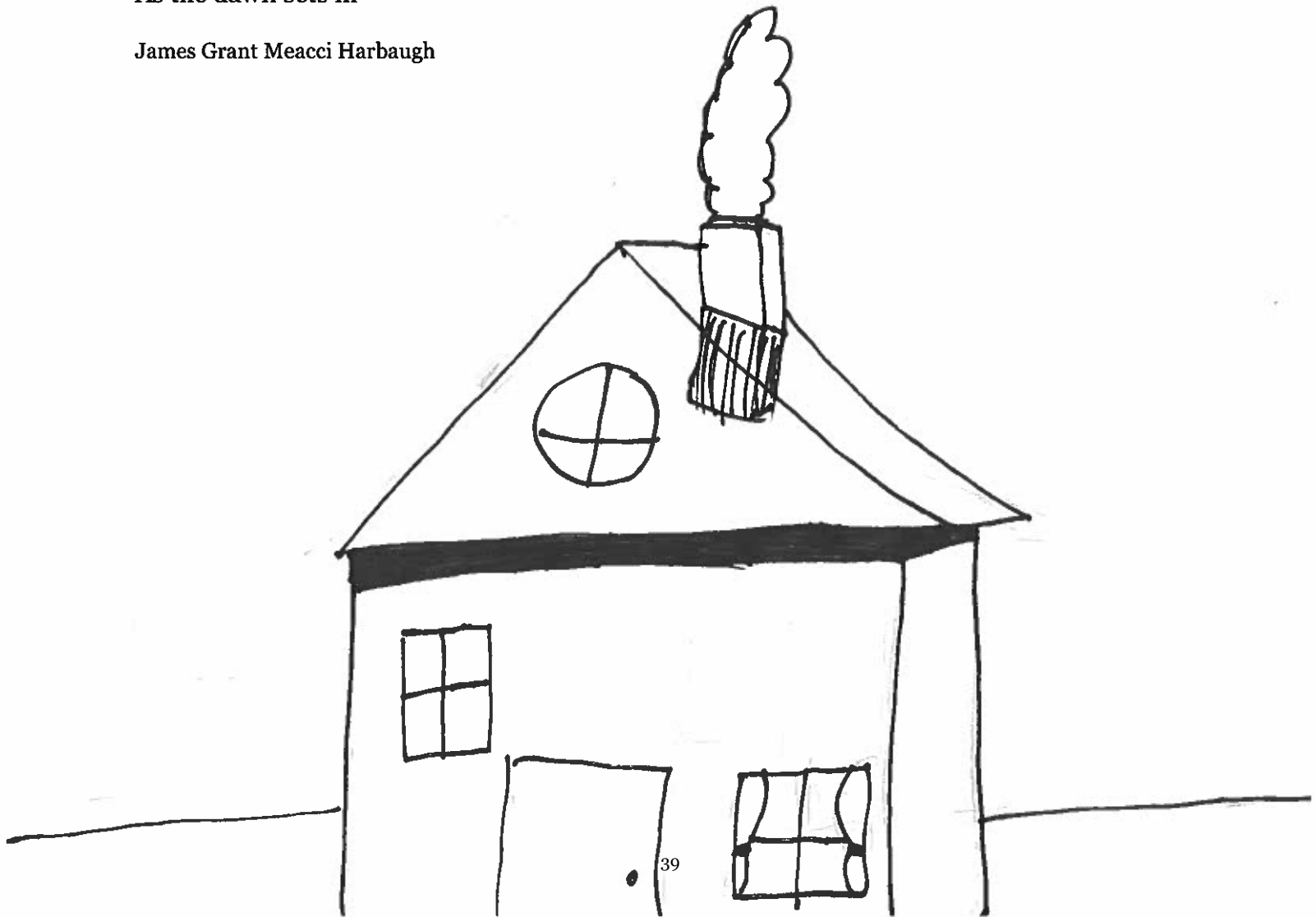
Whilst the town barks and bustles
One house with no trace of rustles
Glimmers like gold in the sun
But near absolutely no one

Yet the birds stay chirping and much alive
You could hear the bees buzz around their hive
As the leaves are swept around
Without making a single sound

Suddenly, out of the blue
A trail of smoke arises from the flue
Soon the neighbors will smell
An aroma that will certainly dwell

As the house begins to awaken
Emerges a smoky smell of freshly cooked bacon
Traveling around with the wind
As the dawn sets in

James Grant Meacci Harbaugh

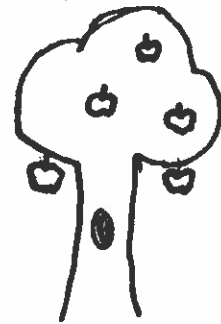
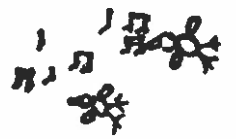


Dreams and Reality

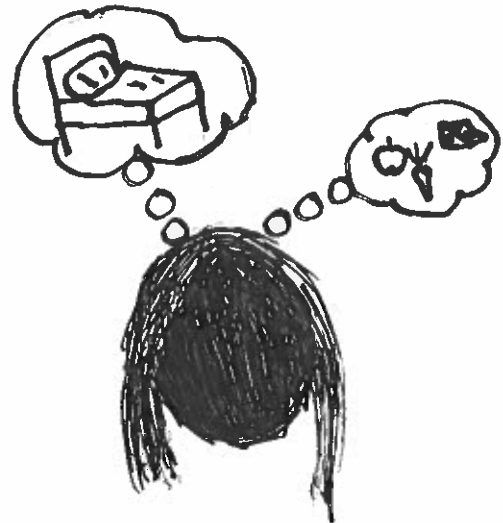
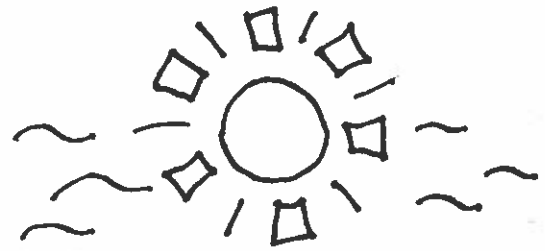
Wind in my hair,
Birds singing,
Smell of apples,
Running free,
Being with family,
Eat as much as desired,
Away from tractors ,
Endless fields,
Free of bugs,
Dreams.

Machine engines wake me,
Metal bite in mouth,
Separated from family,
Belly rumbling,
Lack of sleep,
Hot and humid weather,
Flies biting at flesh,
Tired as usual,
Carrying a stranger,
Reality.

Michelle Yang



Isabella Evans



In the Deep Cold of Winter

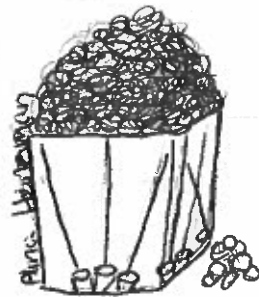
In the deep cold of winter,
I sit by the hearth,
settling down
to feel the fire's warmth.
The orange and yellow hues
dance onto my skin
I inhale deeply
and take things in.
Winter is a majesty,
with the world covered in snow
but sometimes I wish
I could leave to a special place I know...

My eyes fall
on an object just out of reach.
It's my dear ukulele,
which I play at the beach.
Now it sits there,
alone and ignored,
for ukulele in winter
is an out-of-tune chord.
But something compels me
to lift it from the ground,
I pull it out of its case,
and make a little sound.
The chord bounces off
it's mahogany build,
and for just a moment,
my homesick heart is filled.
The warmth of the fire
is now the warmth of the sun,
and the feeling of loneliness
is now the feeling of fun.
If I breathe in, I smell pizza,
the best of the best.
It's from the beach's boardwalk
it's gooey goodness I can attest.
I hear rumbling waves
rolling in the distance,
the relaxing melody
playing with persistence.

I strum another chord
Which goes along with a song,
and the feeling of my paradise



is overwhelmingly strong.
 I can almost feel
 the grainy sand in my toes,
 massaging my feet
 as I forget all my woes.
 If I listen ever so closely,
 I can hear a seagull squawk,
 and the comforting voices
 of beachgoers talk.
 A bell is ringing
 behind my chair,
 it's the ice cream man signaling
 he's got frozen treats to share.
 I feel the icy waves
 lapping against my waist,
 and in my mouth,
 there is a lingering, salty taste.
 My clothing is moist
 from the ever-present sea mist.
 My skin is turning pinker,
 and I'm feeling sun-kissed.
 Maybe we'll buy
 some popcorn tonight,
 and sit by the ocean
 in the last of daylight.
 I'm back at the beach, my paradise,
 my home,
 where memories aren't just pictures
 stored on my phone.



All the while I play
 my little guitar,
 for I miss the beach
 no matter how far.
 And when I look outside,
 to see falling snow,
 I can't help but imagine
 this place where I wish to go...

Brooke Murawski



Hunter

A pack of wolves surrounded a herd of bison,
silently waiting for their Alpha to pick a target.
Silently they communicated by a flick of the tail,
the swishing of ears.

There, the Alpha signaled to an old bison,
falling behind the others.
Following their Alpha's command,
the wolves created a semicircle around the herd.

As silent as death itself,
the wolves crept closer.
A bison noticed them and raised the alarm,
the chase was on.

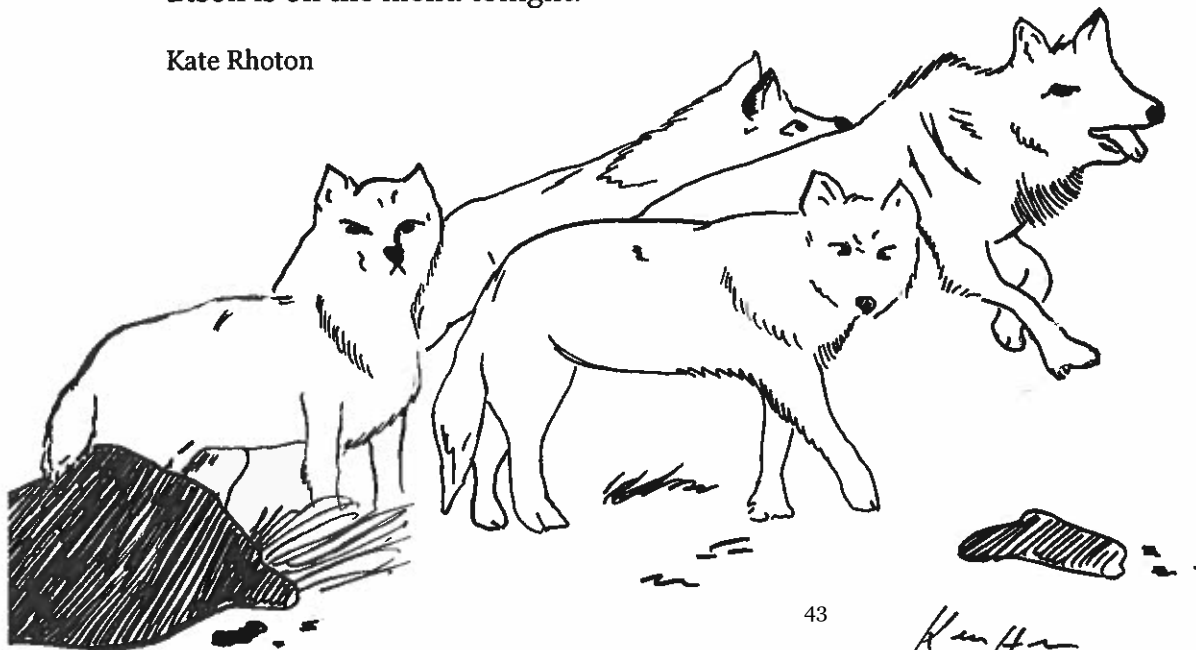
As one, the wolves sprang forward,
chasing the herd down.
Faster and faster they ran
until they were just behind the old bison.

One brave wolf sprang onto the bison's back,
only to be kicked off by its strong legs.
Over and over the daring wolves jumped,
until the bison fell.

While the rest of the wolves held the bison in place,
the Alpha wolf buried his fangs into its neck.
Crimson blood gushed as if it were a raging waterfall
until there was no more life in the bison's eyes.

Bison is on the menu tonight.

Kate Rhoton



Fisherman

It was his childhood hobby.
A nibble on the end of the line.
A slight bend on the end of the rod.
Another dinner of trout on the table,
for his wife and himself.

Even the neighbors asking for,
a
Single
bass.

As he crouches down onto his couch, and turns the baseball game on,
he grunts. Loss number 15 in a row.

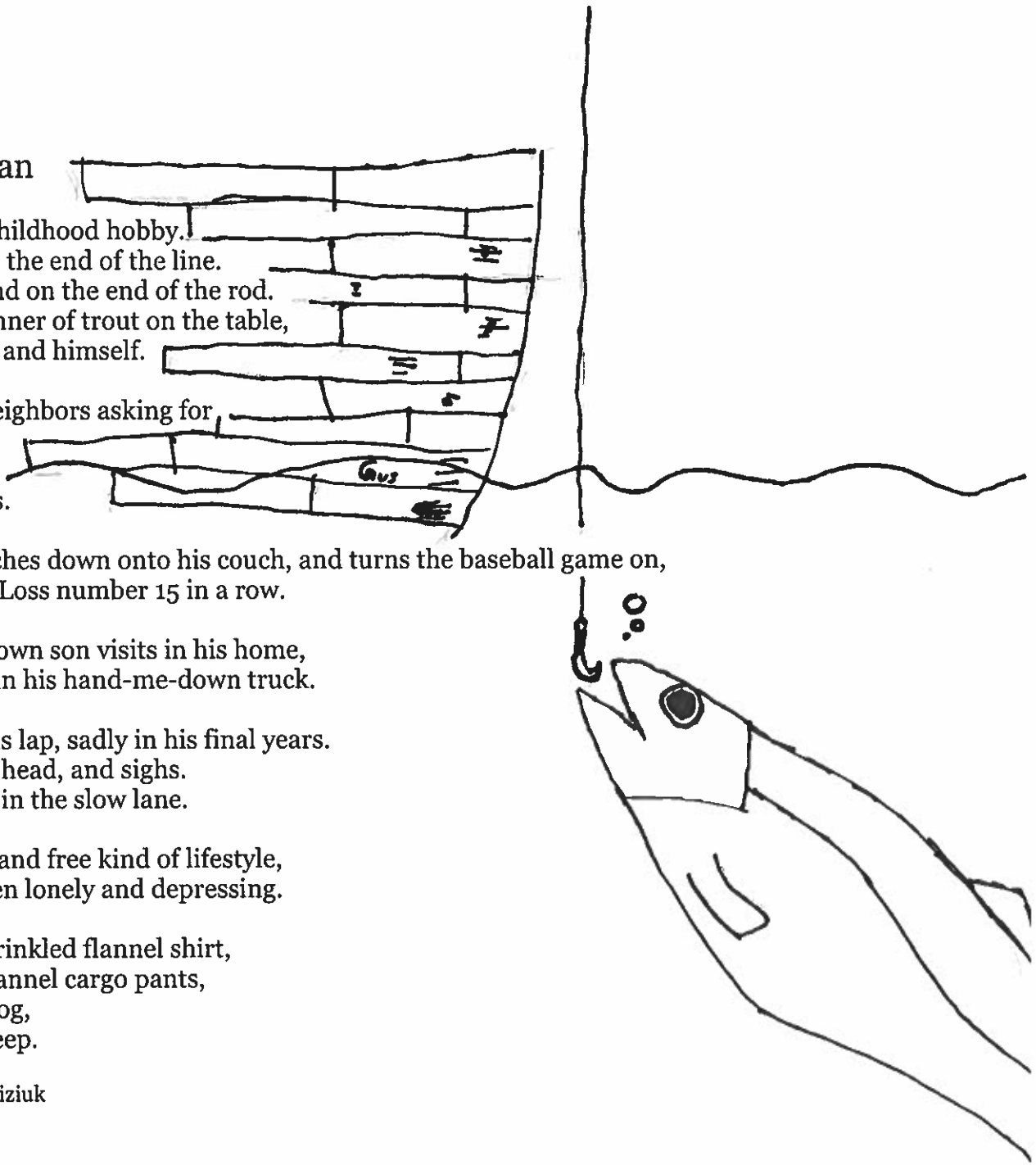
His now grown son visits in his home,
pulling up in his hand-me-down truck.

A dog on his lap, sadly in his final years.
He tilts his head, and sighs.
Life is now in the slow lane.

It is a cozy and free kind of lifestyle,
though often lonely and depressing.

With his wrinkled flannel shirt,
his beige flannel cargo pants,
and aged dog,
he falls asleep.

Dominic Deniziuk



Nature's Decision

The sun's gentle rays extend at your left,
a whispering breeze to the right.
The trees in front are in between
a shining green and bronze.

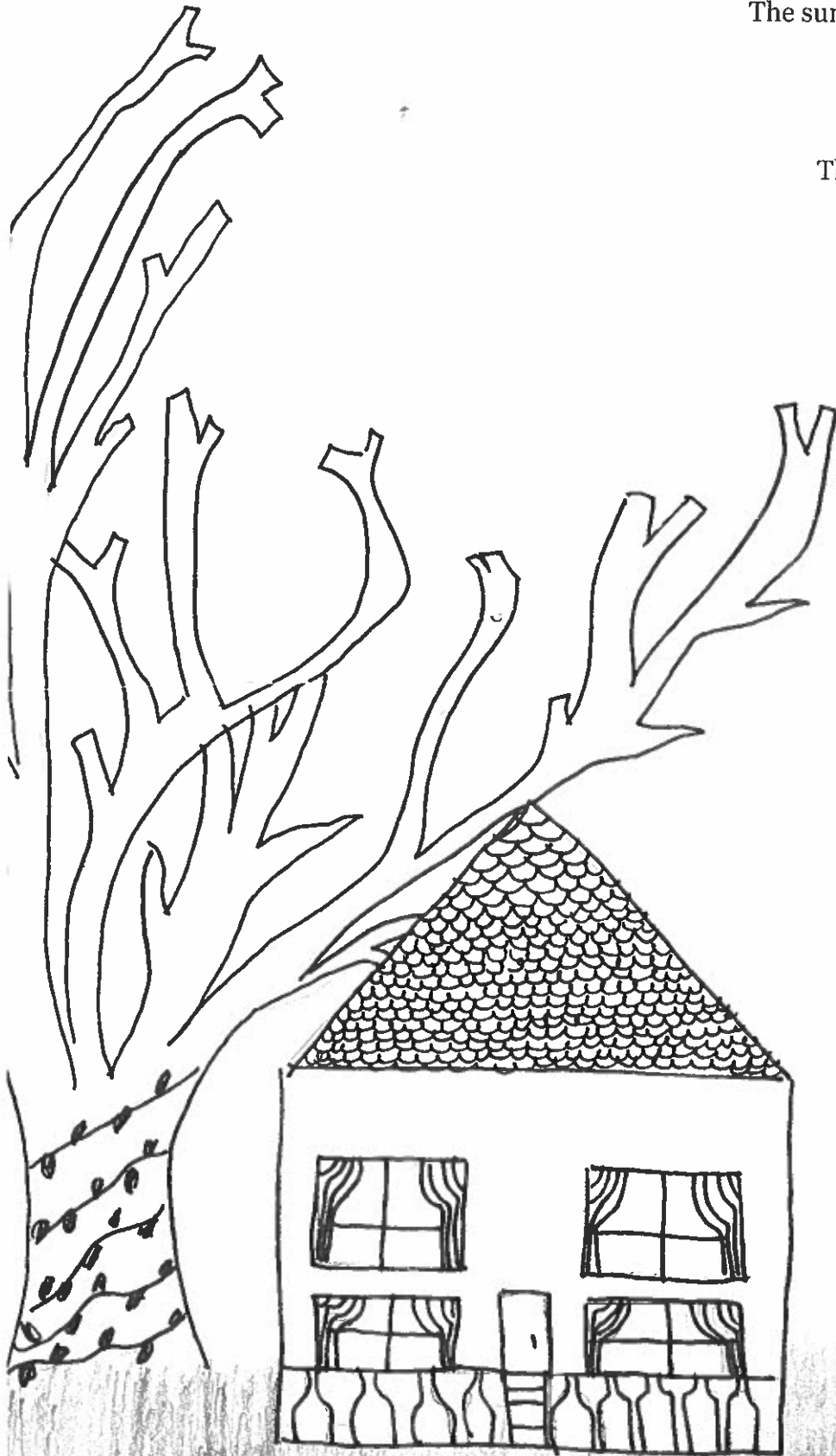
The rushing river water transfixes,
shining like a pearl by the light
of the mid-morning sun.
The wind tugs.
Leaves rustle with a sound like
many birds' wings.

And still,
the river, path, and mountains,
stretch forever ahead;
spotted with trees and bushes,
until melting out of sight.

But what would they conclude
if asked to choose,
as you will have to do,

between following farther
along the path,
or turning around
and looking
back?

Melia Rick



Soaring With Enduring Memories

Frightful, sorrowful
Confused
A mark in a life
One that never fades into dust

A thoughtful man who remembers
Remembers when he was fighting
The scent of healthy air relieves him
He feels free

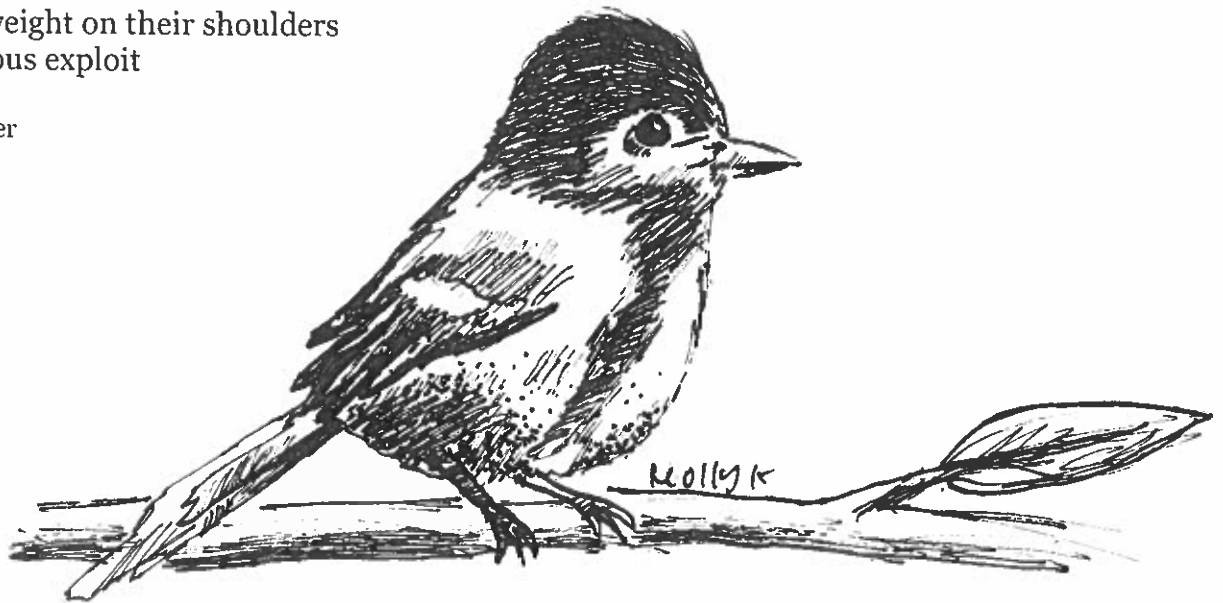
His mind races through thoughts
Fast as the streaming rain
Tired
Drained of energy
As he slowly rests his eyes

He's nervous for the people
The people who will have the same experience
Drifting away from his fears
He becomes a bird soaring, memorable

Feeling the rough,
Blue leather on his coat
Realizing he should be thankful
He is alive
Not even wounded

The birds are his soul
Flying free and safe
Feeling no weight on their shoulders
After a ruinous exploit

Colin D. Kramer



Magenta Veins

Your waxy leaves sway in the blinding light of heaven,
and the fresh morning dew glazes your magenta veins.
As if they were glistening jewels,
rivulets of water create a luminous echo into the vast sky.

That's how I remember you.

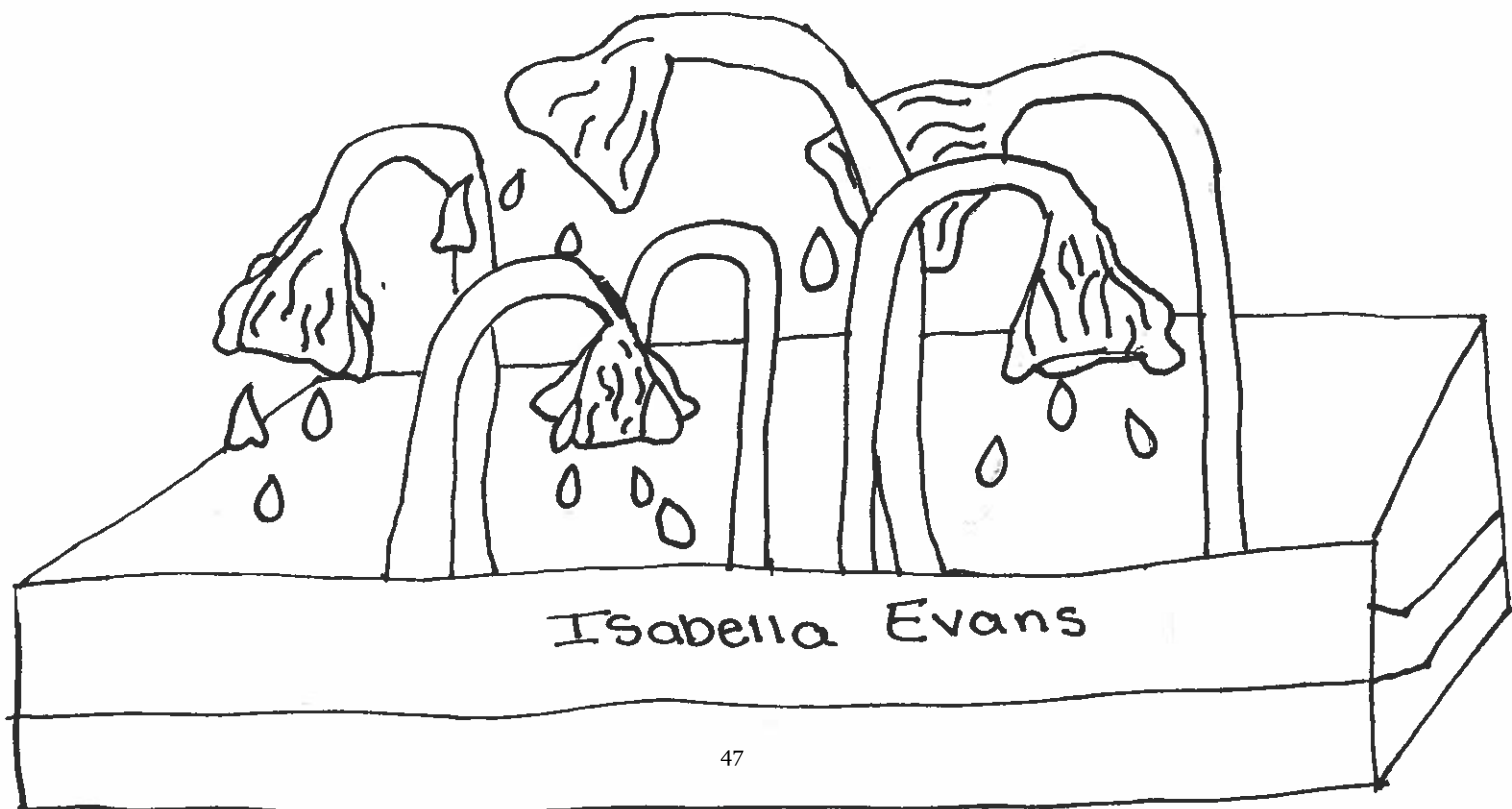
You're now with the others,
dry and thirsty.

I miss you, and I want you back
to show me your true glory,
radiant embers.

Every day, I spray you with water.
Every day, I wish to see you...
Is it selfish of me to do this?
To make you suffer,
just so I can see you?

Sorry,
but I miss you.

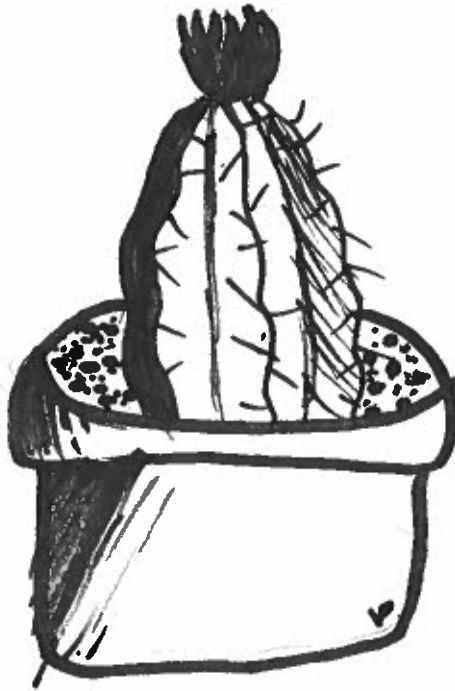
Cai Yankel

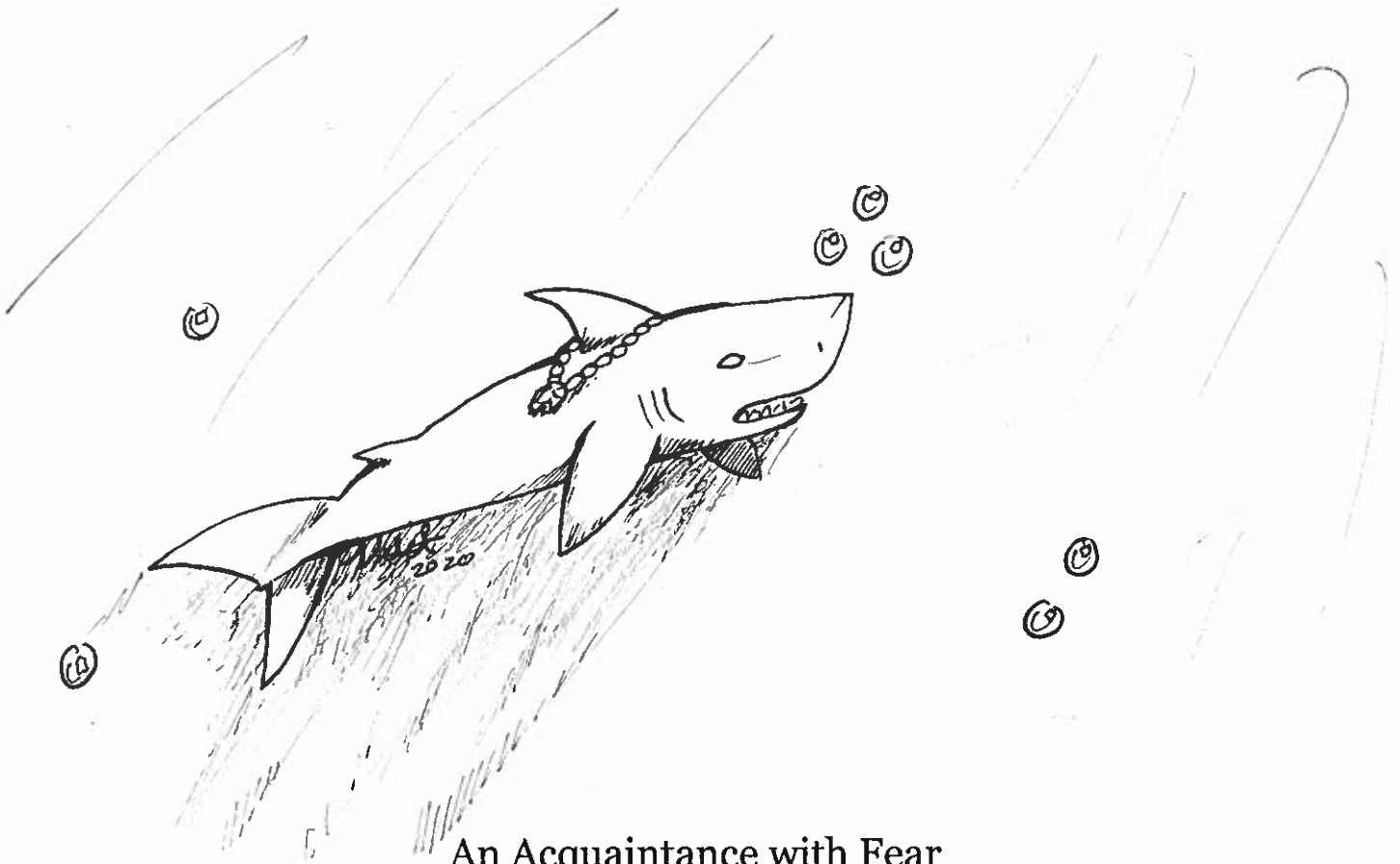


Flowers and Needles

Exhausted
Running through the sand
The taste of grape popsicle in my mouth
Hot and stuffy air in my nose
Stop and stare
Standing in the middle of the desert
Alone
Yet beautiful
The cactus
Colorful cactus flowers
Spiny needles reach out towards me
I flinch in fear
Ready to feel a sting
But the hot sun scares them off
Relieved
I step closer
This time
Encouraged by the sun
The flowers reach out
We smile at each other
Calmness overtakes me
It disappears quickly
As a sudden cloud covers the sun
The flowers shrink down
The sun struggles to bring himself out from behind the cloud
But by the time he sneaks out from behind the cloud
I have left
Long gone
Running far away
Leaving a dusty spiral of sand behind me
The needles are ashamed
Not because they tried to hurt me
But because I escaped

Vivian Page





An Acquaintance with Fear

A Continuation of the Short Story "On Hope" by Spencer Holst

As the gypsy watches the gleaming necklace swimming away, his senses snap into focus. He recognizes that a necklace swimming must be a mistake, and he wants nothing to do with its misfortune. It's pitch black all around him, besides the soft glow of the vibrant carnival lights from the royal festival put on for the queen and princess. As he makes his way to the shore, the gypsy man catches a glimpse of a dorsal fin he hadn't seen before. He tries to focus on where the pointy gray fin is shooting out of the water, but his vision wobbles. Panicking, he speeds around the shark to the shore, barely escaping its menacing jaws, but the shark manages to scratch its sharp, yellow teeth into his hairy leg. He reaches the shore and collapses on the sand, his leg trickling a deep burgundy-colored blood that seeps into the sand. Drifting off to sleep, he peacefully lays on the gritty, itchy sand scratching his back.

The gypsy man is awoken by the sound of rattling. Thrashing around, he wonders where he is. Turning, he scans his surroundings. He is alone. No one is in sight and it's almost daybreak. He had fallen asleep on the beach after his swim. Searching for his clothes, he hears the rattle again. The bushes shake, the wind blows, a stick breaks, as the darkness around him swallows him whole as if in a horror movie. His heart skips and he yells out, "Who's there?! Show yourself, or I will call the police!" He waits, his heart thumping out of his chest. Again he hears nothing, except the soft lapping of the water on the shore and the melodic whistle of wind. He frantically throws on his clothes and dusts sand from his skin and hair. He freezes as he hears footsteps behind him.

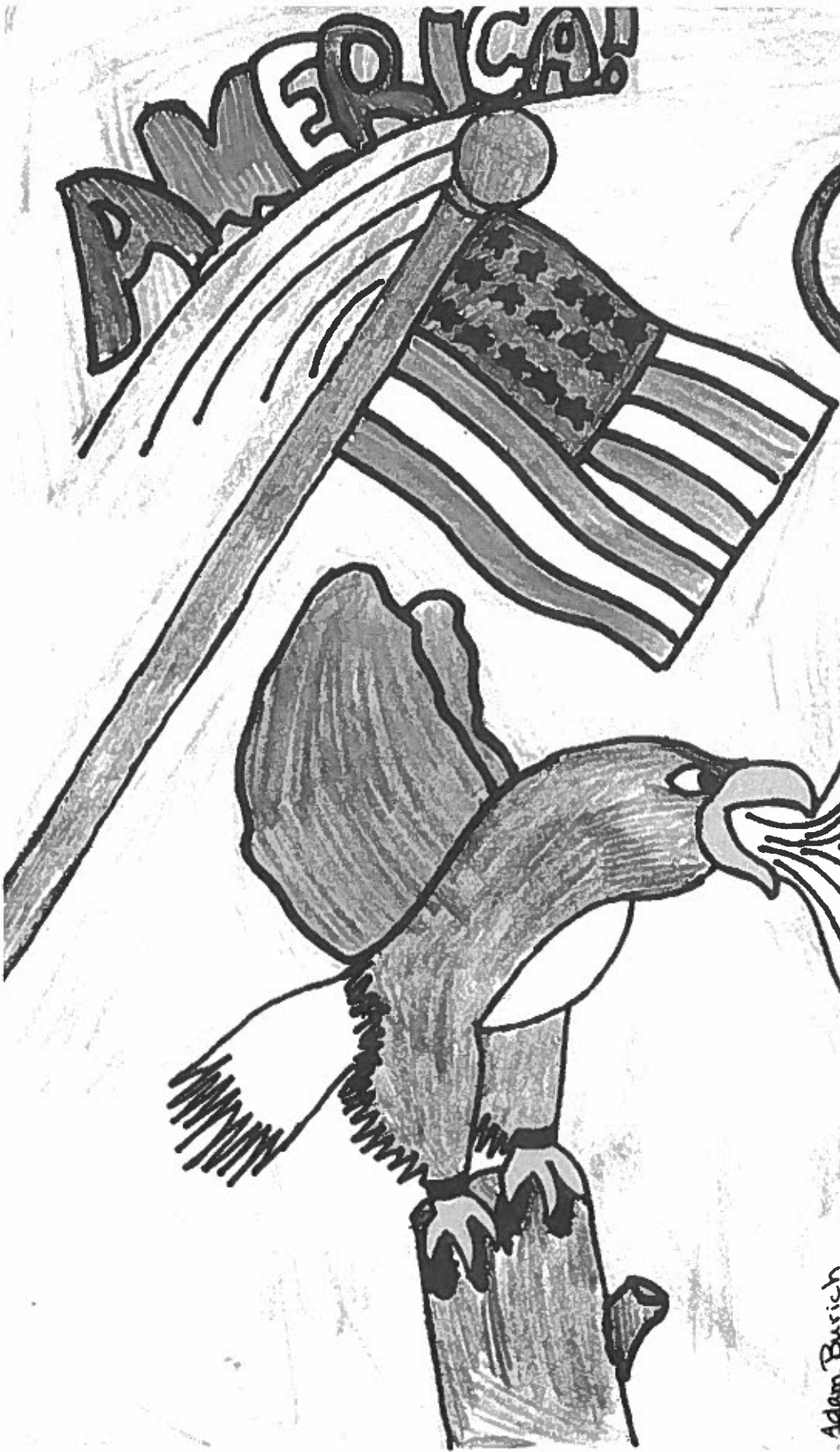
Slowly, he turns to see the demon monkey standing by the shore. The monkey looks drained. His eyes and skin droop. His fur matted. The gypsy man's eyes travel down from the monkey's head, to his shoulders, and finally to his paw and his thoughts race as he sees the object the monkey holds. He clutches the gleaming hope diamond,

dangling from his paw. The radiant jewels shine as if untouched. The necklace could not look more beautiful in the light. The gypsy's mind drifts out of being in awe and he realizes where he is. Screaming, he runs as the quick moment of bliss disappears. His heart and feet pound in sync. The gypsy man races throughout the streets, calling and yelling for help. Glowing yellow lights flicker on, and silhouettes peek out of windows, as he reaches an ally in which to hide. He collapses onto a heap of trash and moldy green cardboard, trying to gather his thoughts. The gypsy begins to sob, his tears running as if in a race across his skin, but suddenly he hears the demon monkey's rattling steps again. Opening his eyes, the monkey stands before him with the necklace missing from his paw. The monkey raises his furry hand, and steadily points down at the man's hand. Looking down, a shriek escapes from somewhere deep inside him, as the necklace sags in the gypsy man's hand. Precisely a split second later, the flashing of fire engine red and vibrant blue shine down the alleyway as police cars appear, their lights flashing, and alarms wailing as the officers launch themselves out of the car and bound down the alley to the gypsy man.

The gypsy man awakes in flash, covered in sweat, his mind running a million miles an hour, until he realizes it was just a dream. He throws off the sheets to his bed to fill the empty glass of water, but something catches his eye. Sitting on the bedside table is the necklace, and looking down at the sharp pain in his leg, he sees a small gash that could have only been made by a shark.

Eleanor Bartley





U.S.A

For the lives that
were lost.
And the battles we won.
We salute the fallen
for what they have done.
We give our thanks
Everybody.
We jump and cheer and
shout hurray.
One last thing to say

GOD
BLESS
AMERICA

Adam Busich

The Thought of Freedom

Dressed in sage and royal yellow
Beautiful woman
Living on a homestead

Cooking in a large kitchen
Full of many other talented cooks
Pots and pans all around
Bubbling like the grumbling bellies of people near

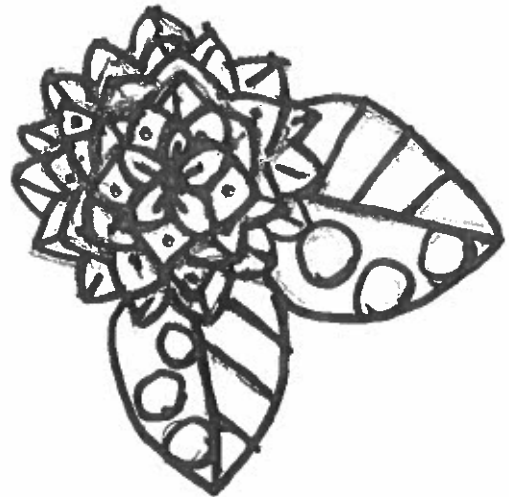
Staring down
But at what?
Maybe stew
Or chicken

Thoughts swirl through her head
The family she has to feed
Or maybe being free
Like the hummingbirds
That suck at the sweet nectar of flowers
Outside the windows

Dreaming of the time
She utters the words "I quit"
But when?

Courage and pride hide inside
Behind a beautiful woman

Lillian Beasley





Monster in my House

Our home used to be a happy home...before the monster entered our lives. We used to get enough sleep, there were never broken dishes around the house, and we always were able to play a game if we felt like it. Now there are blood-curdling screams always echoing around the house, even at night. We can never sleep. She is always awake, always terrorizing the house. We are always afraid, giving her everything she needs. She destroys our games, losing the pieces, never to be found again. There are red scribbles all over my homework, what are they made of? Blood? Wouldn't be surprised. My bed is destroyed, my snow globe smashed on the floor. The monster has destroyed our lives, and her name is Maggie, my little sister.

Lucy Hernandez

T.2



Bow

Dancing and twirling upon
tightropes of steel,
it gracefully flutters and hops.
Oh, such talent it has!
Yet seemingly acting on its own,
it is being controlled.
Like a marionette
manipulated by a puppeteer,
it is commanded
by the violinist.

Lucian Mikush

The Red Scarf

Ah, the snow!
So clean and pure,
Covering the trees' long, bare limbs
With white sleeves.
So silent outside,
On this cloudy, snowy day.

With a mighty roar
Breaking the quiet,
The stampede of adults
Comes barreling down the sidewalks,
Dressed in all black coats and hats,
Briefcases in hand.
Rushing to work,
In order to not be late.

With a loud vroom,
Cars zoom down the street.
The snow on the road
Turns into gray slush
From the salt and grime.

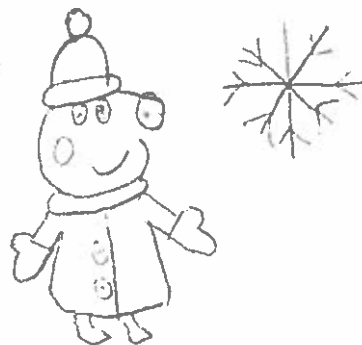
With a noisy scrape,
Shovels move piles of snow.
Neighbors wave to each other,
As they scoop up last night's snowfall
And toss it to the side.

Oh, my!
The snow is ruined!
Blades of grass poke through,
Wet slush sits on the road,
Piles of snow sit on the side of the
driveway.
It has murdered the snowdrift!
It now no longer looks clean and pure,
But now dirty and sullied.

What's this?
A clearing in the woods?
Untouched snow?
A bit of color flashes by.
Red.
Snow angels and snowmen surround
this area.

Children.
They play merrily,
In the new-fallen snow.
A little girl with a red scarf
Leads a game of hide and seek.
Play, little red scarf,
Play.
For this is how snow
Deserves to be treated.

Maddie McDonald



His Path

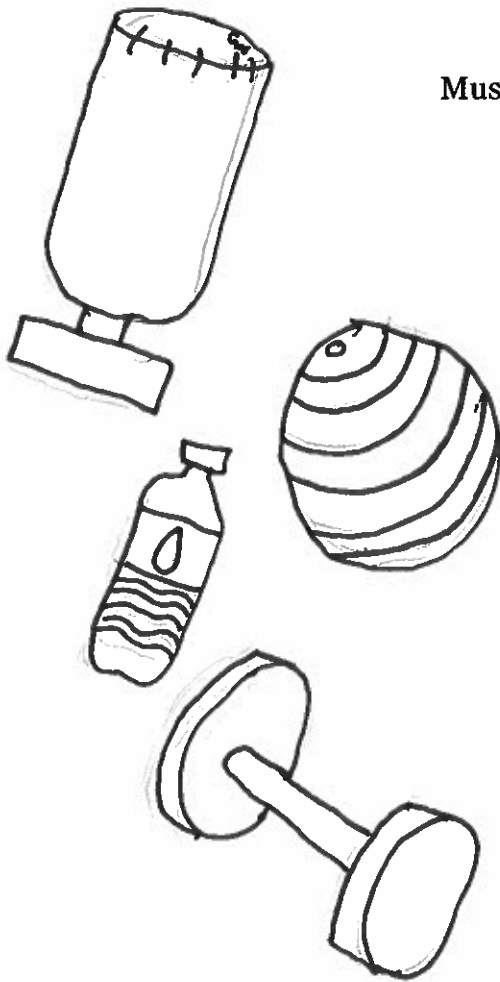
It is quiet in his gym
And as Mike feels the texture of his gray, rough, and scratchy beard
He thinks what he should do with his life
He can be a teacher or an actor
A farmer, a cook who serves only serves very spicy and warm stew
These are his choices and many more
But this is not my path no, no
This is his path, through and through

A hunter in his camo suit or a doorman as red as a cherry
Musician playing the guitar or an astronaut flying through space
A fashion maker who wears his own clothes or
He could make shoes and wear a leather uniform
This is his path, through and through
And it's not up to me or any of you
It's his path through and through
And his choice is all up to him, not to any of you

The choices keep running and running
While people at his gym keep on shunning and shunning
Then he realized what he must do
He just saw a flyer for a job he just had to do
A personal trainer, such a great job
\$20 a class and eight classes a year
He has to get another job, though
But then a fight happened in the gym he was in
Someone needs to save these people
A police officer is what other job he needs to do

His courage starts to grow and he is ready
He signs up for the jobs
Then back home and to bed
The next day he returns to the gym
And sits and thinks
So how long he wants to sit and think
He has to go soon for his very first job interview

Samuel J. Bonenberger



The Interview The Sequel to "His Path"

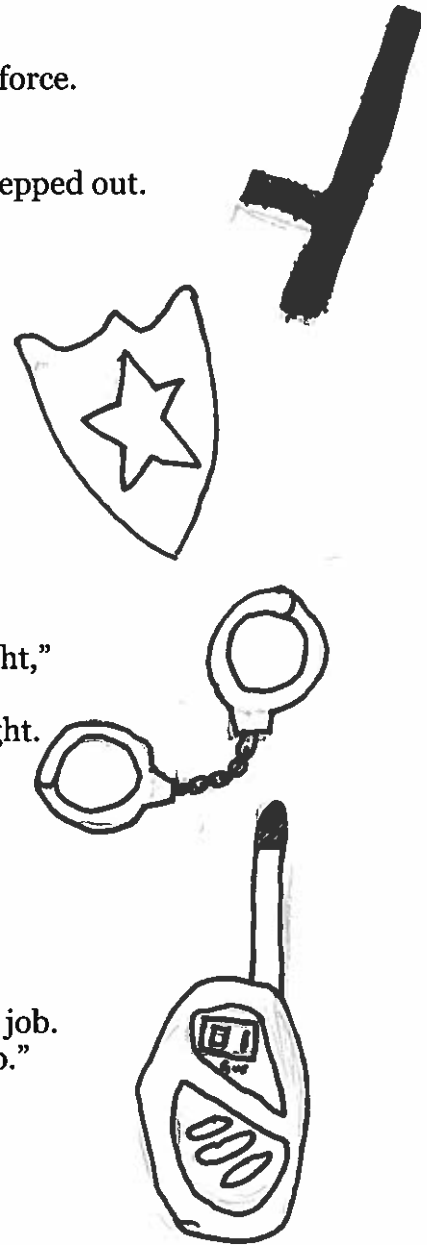
The police department was quiet,
The walls' paint was peeling,
The chairs are broken,
And the lights were flickering off and on
But Mike was determined to ace his interview to be a part of the police force.

The noise of a creaking door opened while a man in a police uniform stepped out.
The man was named Dan.
He would be the one who interviewed Mike.
Mike stepped in the office and the building seemed to change.
The walls were clean,
The chairs were comfy,
The light looked brand new.

Mike sat, and Officer Dan closed the door.
The first question that Dan asked,
Not if Mike had criminal record,
Not if Mike was a good person,
But if he was the man who stopped the fight in the gym he went to.
Mike was never the type to brag but the phrase, "Yes, I did stop that fight,"
It just slipped out of his mouth.
Dan was filled with gratitude, for he was the man getting hurt in the fight.
Dan begun the interview normal,
He asked for Mike's name,
His birthday,
And if Mike had any criminal records.
But then out of nowhere, Dan asked,
"How much do you want this job?"
Mike was shocked at the question,
He thought that since he showed up it would be obvious he wanted the job.
But instead of saying anything bad he just replied, "I would love the job."

Two months later Mike heard back from Officer Dan,
And the next thing he knew he was in his new police uniform.
Dan showed Mike to his new desk.
Mike turned on the computer and looked for any new assignments.

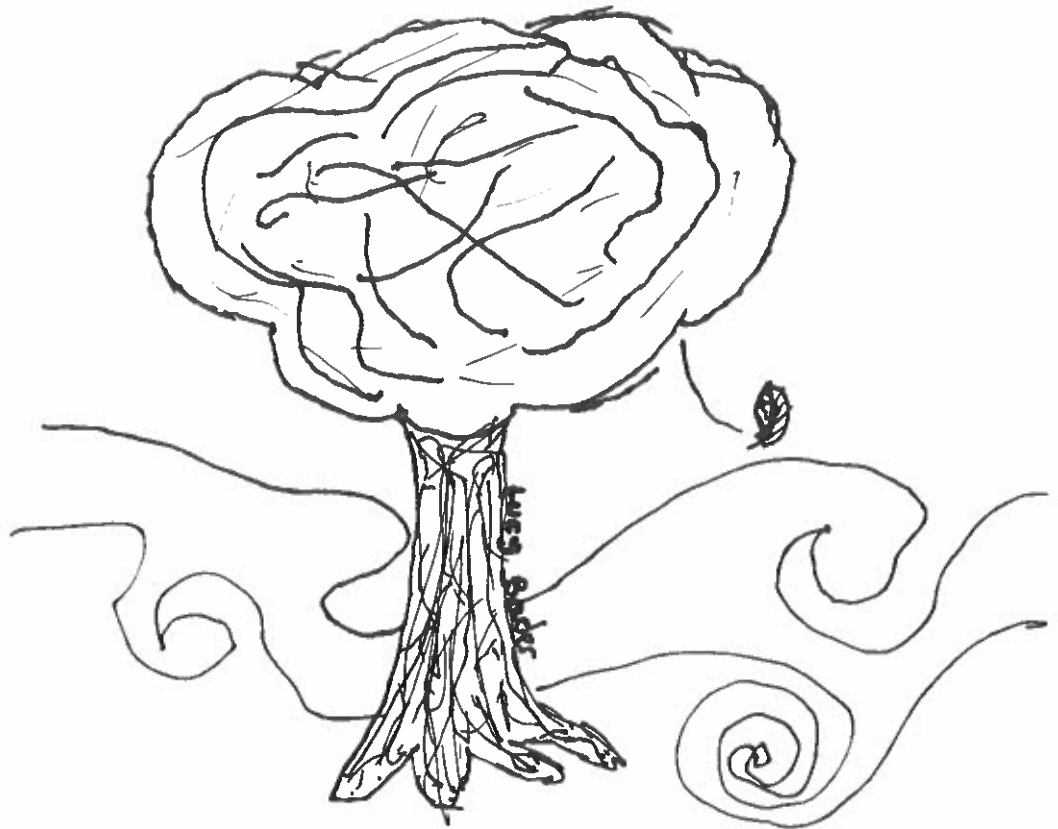
Samuel J. Bonenberger



Look Closer

At first you might just see paint on a canvas,
But look closer.
Do you see
The trees growing onto the green lake?
Do you see the shadows
Of the trees and mountains?
You may also see the blue sky
With a little bit of sun.
Maybe you smell the dirty lake water
Or think about what it tastes like.
Does it taste clean?
Do you hear the birds sing as if it was a musical?
You might hear the wind whistling by the tree.
Next time you look at a painting,
Look closer.
You might imagine even more than you would think.

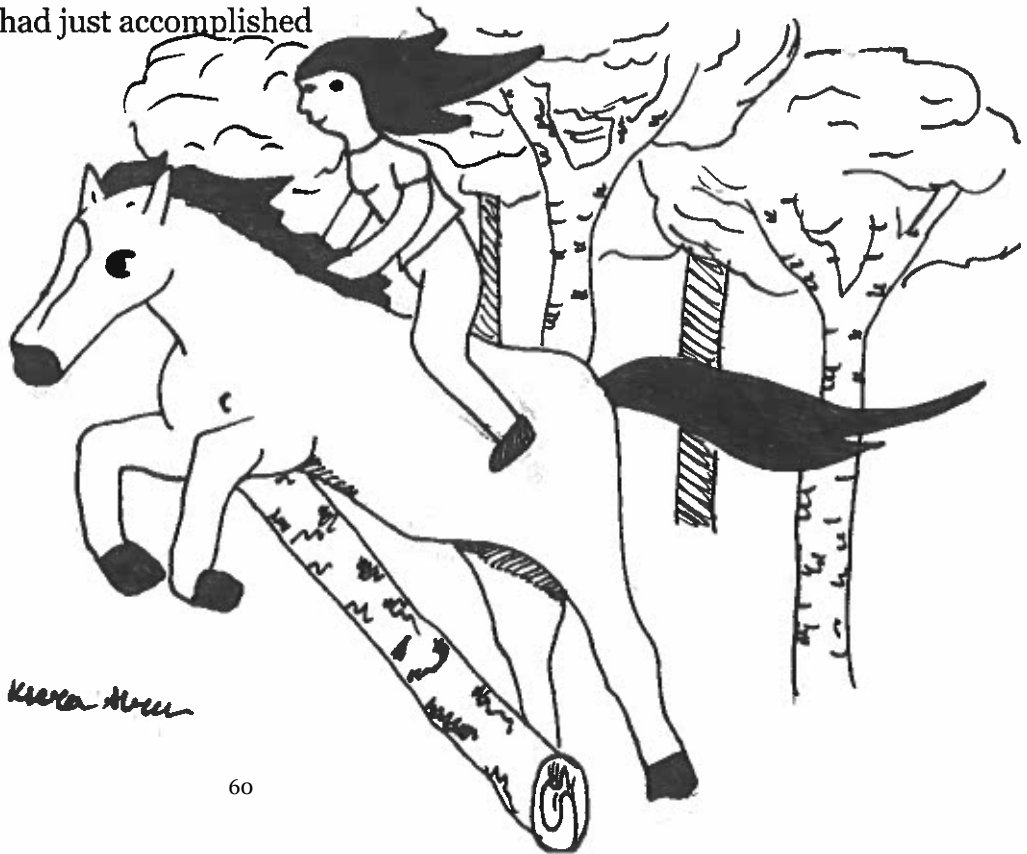
Kaitlin Volmrich



William and I

As I race fast through charcoal colored trees
I wonder *What, oh what will we see?*
The road ahead, long and outstretched
Just for William and I
Humid, spring air encircles my head
Making me regret my decision
But we push on, stronger together
William and I
And the farther we dare to venture
The less I worry
For what can go wrong?
For William and I
His hooves clapping
My breath as heavy as on a hot summer day
We gallop and gallop
William and I
Wind whips my face
Flying me off my horse
We start to worry
William and I
Soon though we are up again
Racing through the spring wind
The force that had stopped us moments ago
William and I
In reaching our destination
I have a sigh of relief
The incredible teamwork we had just accomplished
William and I

Anna Morrison



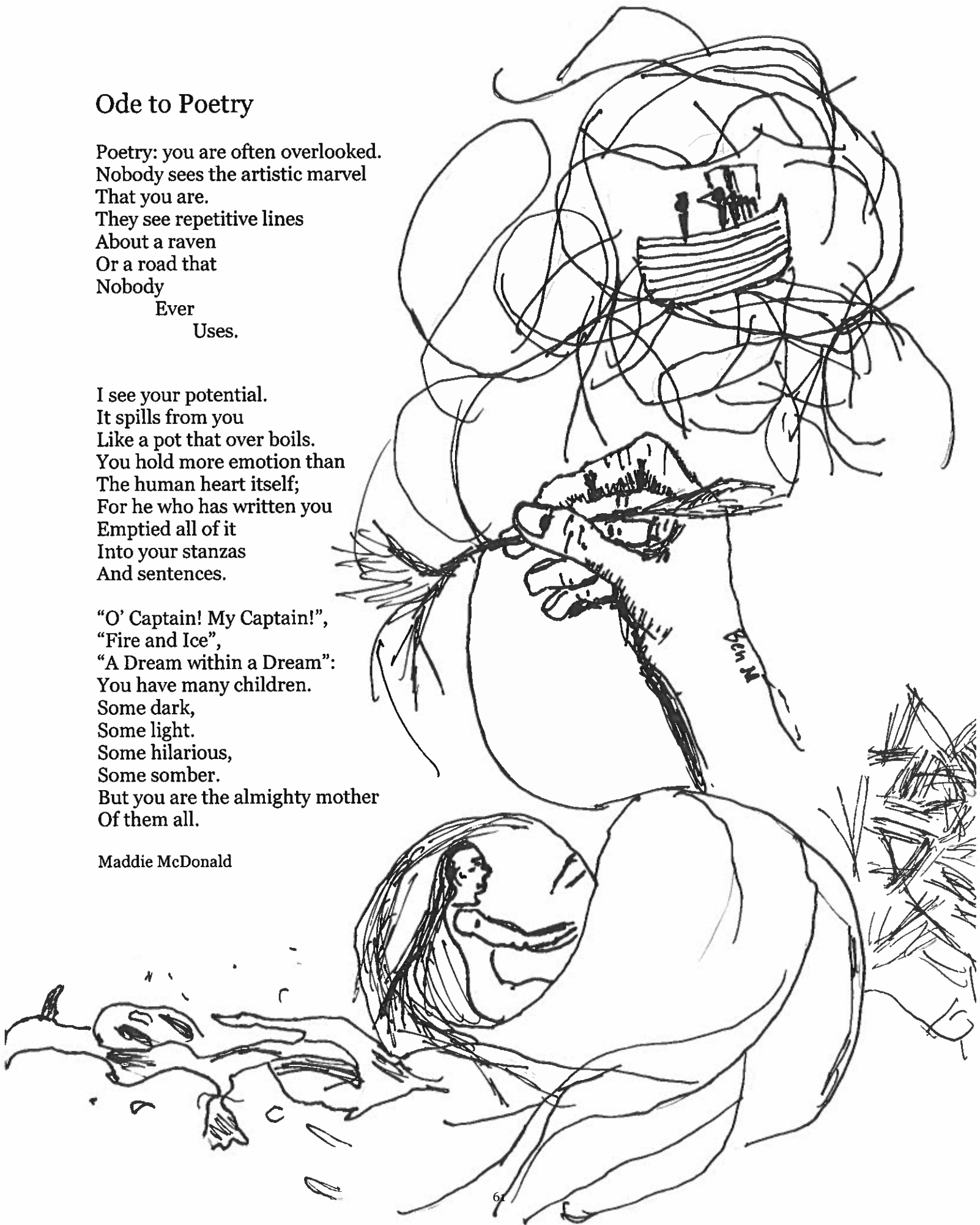
Ode to Poetry

Poetry: you are often overlooked.
Nobody sees the artistic marvel
That you are.
They see repetitive lines
About a raven
Or a road that
Nobody
 Ever
 Uses.

I see your potential.
It spills from you
Like a pot that over boils.
You hold more emotion than
The human heart itself;
For he who has written you
Emptied all of it
Into your stanzas
And sentences.

"O' Captain! My Captain!",
"Fire and Ice",
"A Dream within a Dream":
You have many children.
Some dark,
Some light.
Some hilarious,
Some somber.
But you are the almighty mother
Of them all.

Maddie McDonald



Ode to a Jalapeño

Appearing almost every meal,
in fluffy sun-colored eggs,
or in lunch on a cheesy,
crispy,
grilled cheese sandwich.
Zapping the tongue
with a craving,
fiery feeling.
Sliced up mid-day,
with a razor-sharp knife,
shaving of coin-shaped flesh
of the multi-colored pepper.
Heat rises in the mouth
as the jalapeño juices
trickle over the tongue.
Grown in blazing regions,
the pepper almost shows
the temperature of its home
in the consumer's mouth.
Pouring a glass of
icy, cold, refreshing,
drink of what is in the fridge,
quenches the heat
inside of the entrance
for all food.

Samuel Deibert



Ode to a Ponytail Holder

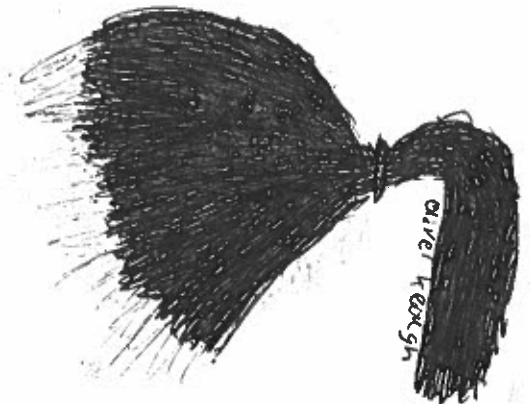
I run
I jump
I dance
I work out
but I sweat
and sweat
and sweat

I inhale
my lungs fill with air like a balloon
I exhale
my lungs slowly deflate
but I still sweat
and sweat
and sweat

That's where a ponytail holder comes in
to hold my sweaty, seaweed-like hair in place
to save my neck from the blanket of hair that lies on it
to make my life easier

It clings to my wrist like a monkey clings to a tree
It goes wherever I go
It's there whenever I need it
It's just a piece of rubber
I could just use a scrunchie
or a piece of string
or a headband
but nothing comes near
to the satisfaction
of a tight ponytail
with a perfect ponytail holder

Emma Lefebvre



Ode to a Blanket

Oh blanket
You provide warmth
You can comfort anybody
You work your magic through day and night

You come in different shapes
And different sizes
Different warmths
Different fluffs
Different designs
Different qualities

Some to hang on a wall
Some to store in a shelf
Some to lay on a bed
Some to rest on a sofa

We all must admit
That a blanket is a
Protector of cold
An object of need
A device of comfort.

Veeraj Jain



Ode to a Road

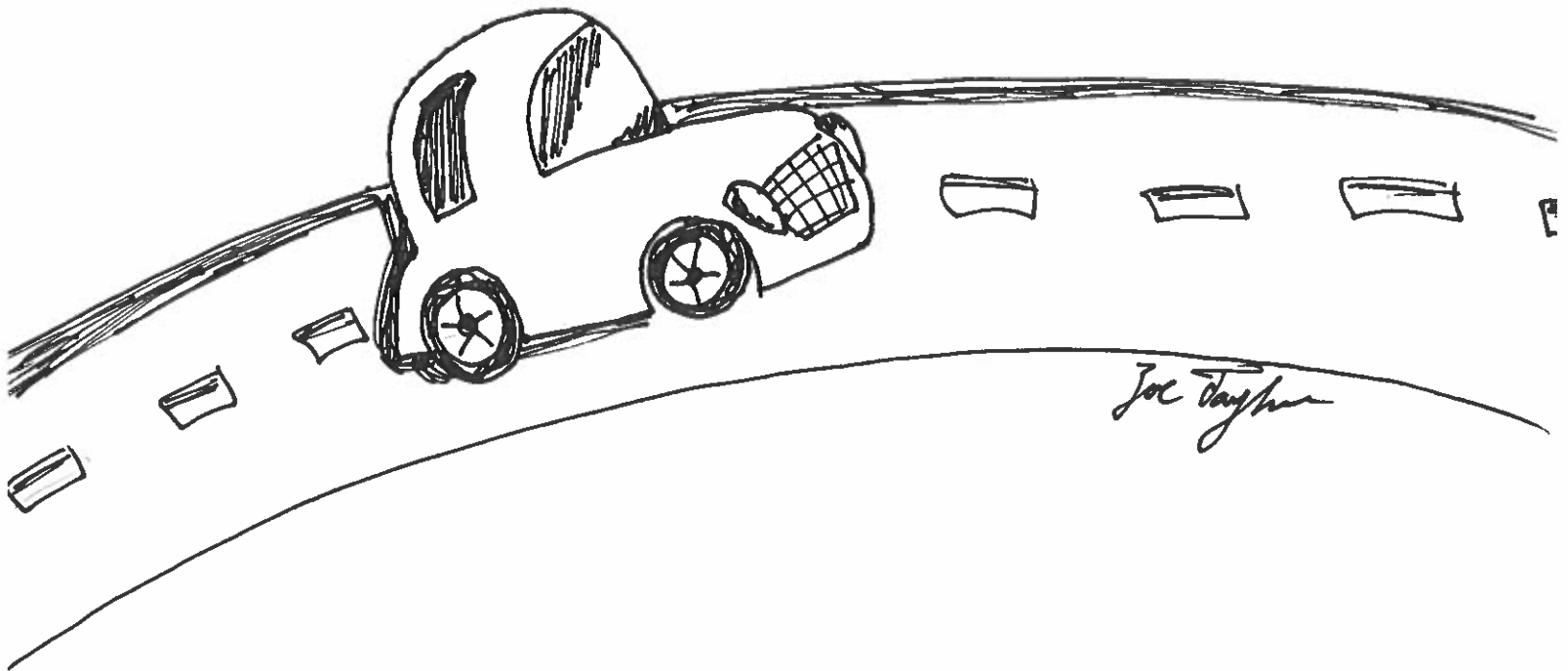
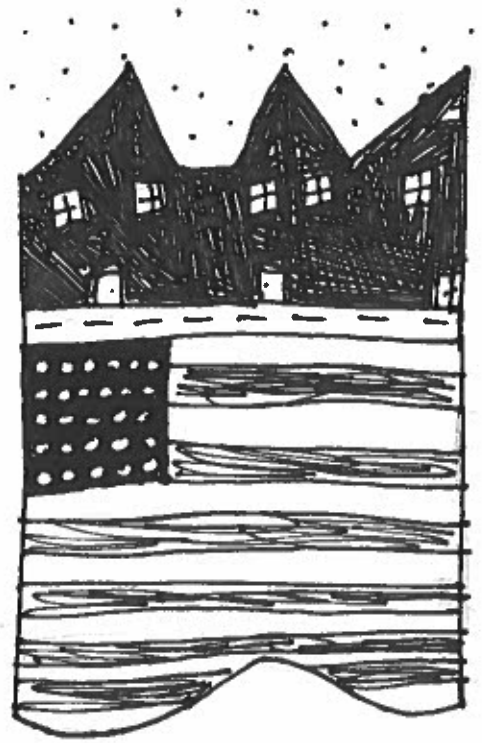
amidst the American dream,
between the childhood homes and city apartments
veins of the world round.

lanes of blood red brick,
highways of rubble
and allies of cement gone brown

to deer, beaver, and squirrel, you are the enemy
with 80 miles per hour razor blades.
and if they dare to cross the river asphalt,
they will almost surely fall down

they carry minivans with moms
sports cars for supervisors
and convertibles for the carefree
leaving and retuning a hundred times to town

Julia Horter



Ode to Hot Chocolate

A cup full of cocoa powder
waiting it's turn to melt into
steaming water
mixing two into one, tying
each other in an everlasting
bond.

A rich flavor waiting
to burst into a cozy new home
that's always on the move.

The steaming liquid shoots out
into its new home for the last
minutes of its pleasant life.

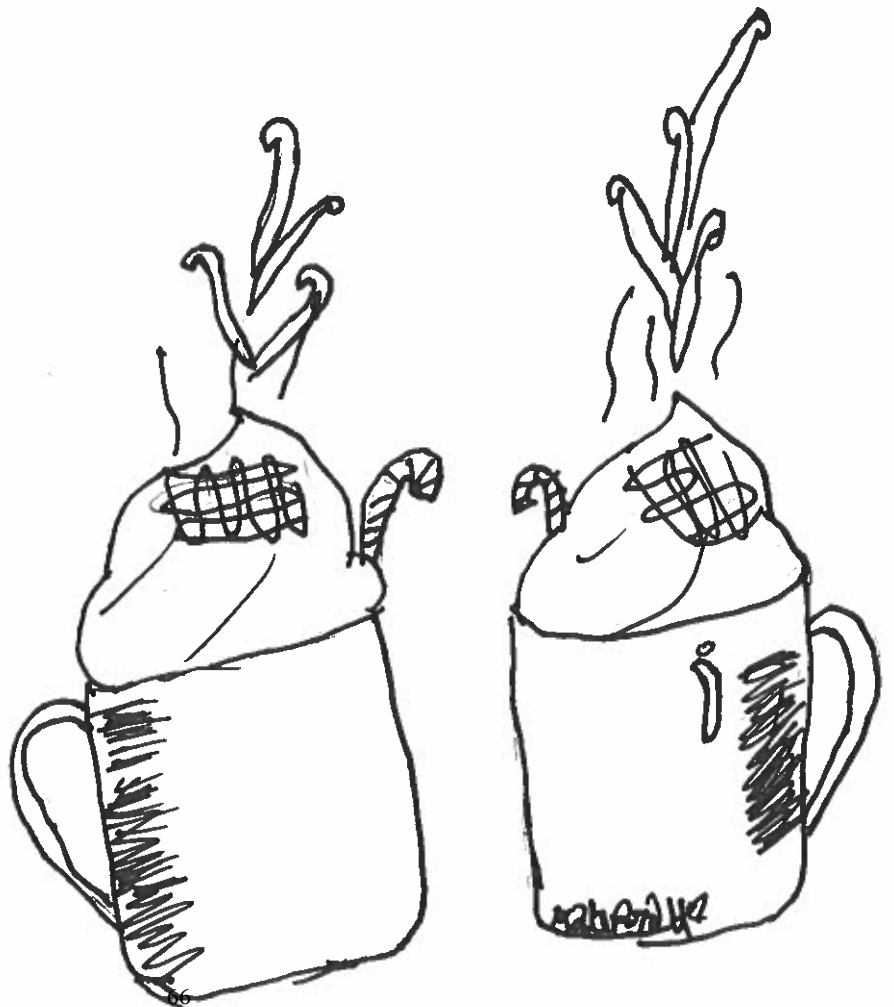
Drop by drop plummeting in a downwards spiral
to the cozy mug, its temporary home.

The drops are a glue stick, for they don't let go
of each other's grasps.

A dash of white falls on top of the liquid,
very light

A very tasty treat.

Harper Flynn



How Softly Does the Cardinal Sing?

How softly does the cardinal sing,
In the tree, blanketed by snow?
Does he hide with his wife,
In his nice, warm nest,
Hidden from all the world's strife?

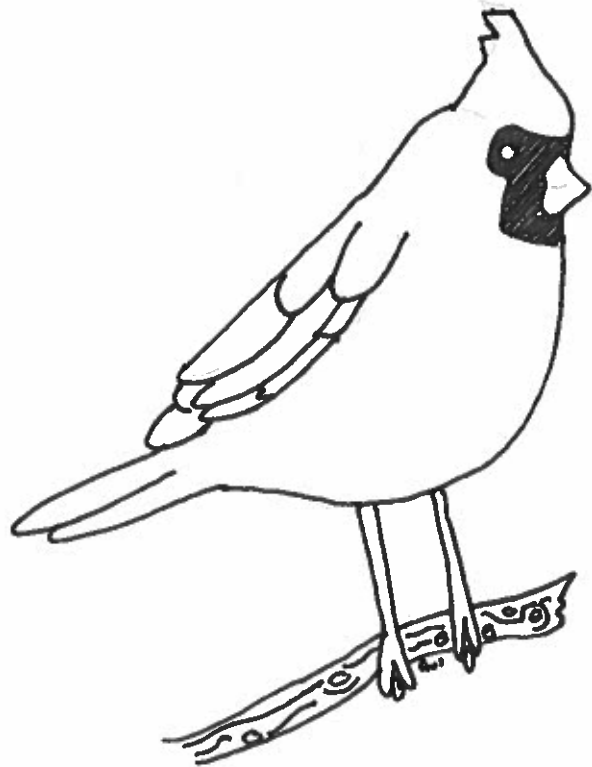
How softly does the cardinal sing,
Atop the snowman's hat?
Does he sit inside the hole in his pipe,
Snuggled in a little ball,
Looking like a little berry that is ripe?

How softly does the cardinal sing,
Perched on the outdoor windowsill?
Does he flit about on the string of lights,
Adorning the house behind him,
Brightening the cool night?

How softly does the cardinal sing,
Inside the holly bush?
Does he huddle down
Against the winter wind,
To the branch tightly bound?

How softly does the cardinal sing,
On the gutters by the icicles?
Does he wake the ones
Behind the windows that reside behind him,
Alerting them of a day of snowy fun?
Oh, please tell me, my dear,
How softly does the cardinal sing?

Maddie McDonald

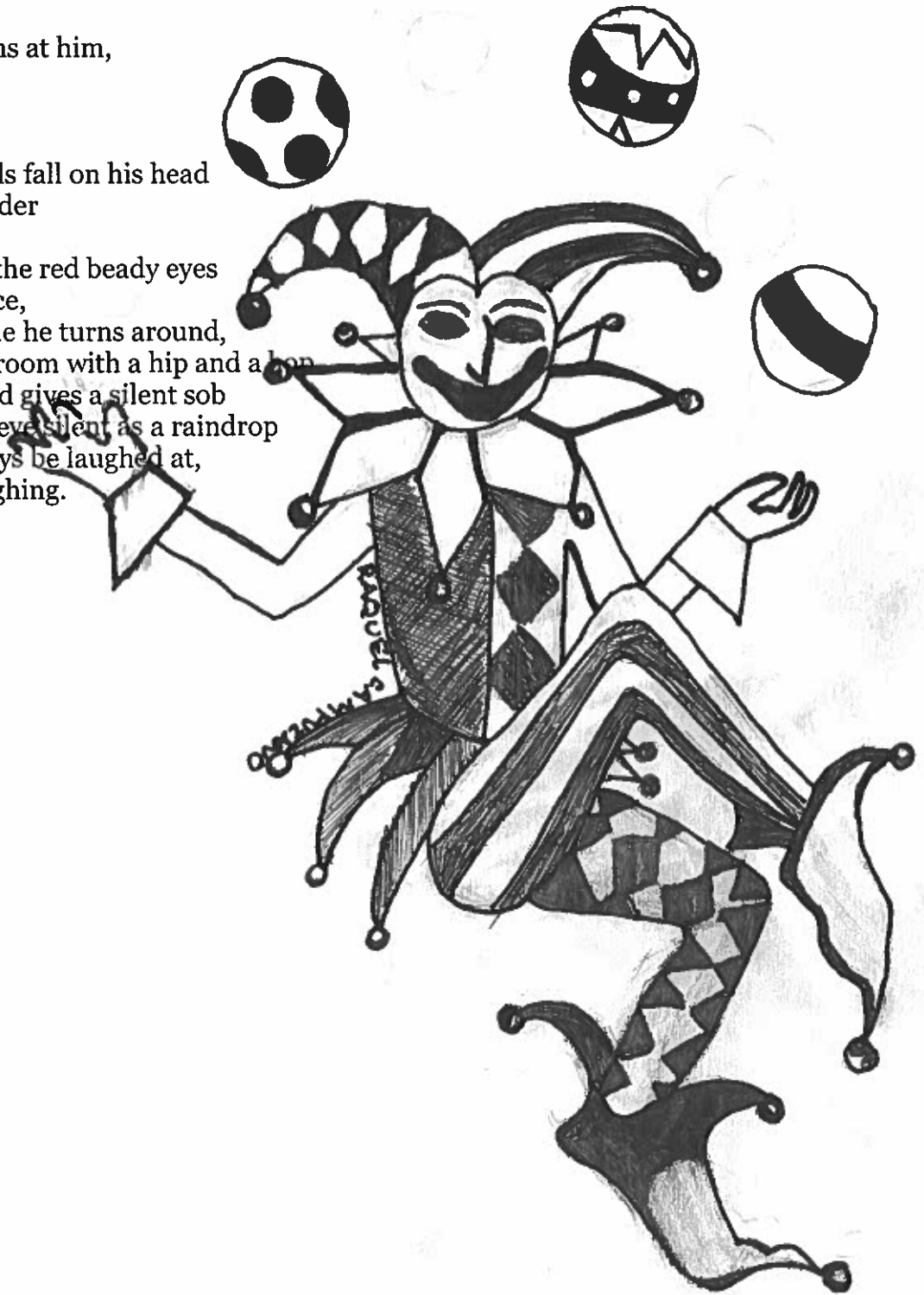


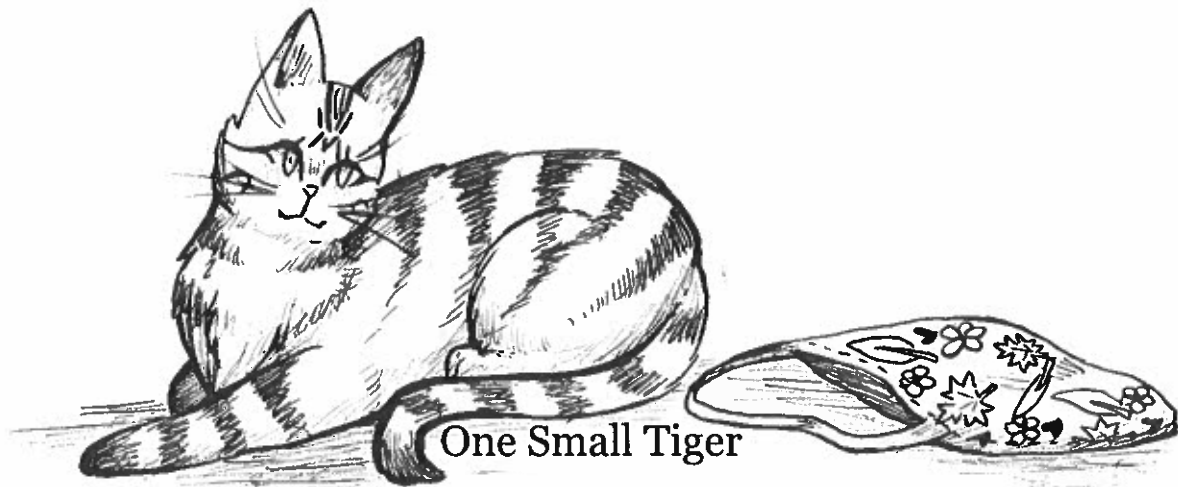
Jester

Dancing into the room
a thousand eyes on him alone
he starts to dance and laugh,
he grabs his juggling balls from his belt
and starts to juggle
the whole room laughs at him,
plink
plink
plink
he made all three balls fall on his head
the crowd laughs harder

He looks the king in the red beady eyes
with a deathly grimace,
and with a goofy smile he turns around,
he leaves the throne room with a hip and a hon
he closes the door and gives a silent sob
a tear rolls down his eye silent as a raindrop
knowing he will always be laughed at,
not the one truly laughing.

Roman Neidinger





Slowly I opened the kennel door. The kennel itself looked like a plastic jail cell, with small cutouts on its side, and door made from black, metal wire. Almost seven years ago, our family had another pet that sat in this same kennel.

A head poked out of the kennel—small, timid, and adorable. The cat, Hazel, observed her surroundings before darting to the nearest place to hide, under my dresser. Awkwardly, she slid under it. I patiently sat there, waiting and hoping that she would poke her head out again, but after a few minutes I knew she would not.

Of course, what else did I expect? In less than an hour, the poor feline had been ripped away from her foster home along with everything she had once known, and brought to this strange, foreign place. Our home was a new and different environment, but Hazel did not fit in her foster home, either. I could tell. There were kids, an obnoxious dog, and plenty of other cats, each with a different personality. There were so many pets there that there was simply no place left for Hazel.

Before my family and I had adopted her, Hazel was once a timid street cat, as we were told by her foster owners. Hazel would have been feral had she not been taken into their home in time. I remember thinking about what her life on the streets was like. Did she catch birds or rummage in the garbage? Did she get into fights with other feral cats, or hide in the darkest corners of her world?

We were also told by the feline foster parents to slowly introduce ourselves to the new pet, to get to know her. She was to be left alone so that she could have time to ponder her situation. I slowly rose and left the room.

After a few days, a petite cat with a solid tabby pattern on her short, cocoa-colored coat of fur and sparkling lime green eyes looked up at me. I put my hand out to her, and she butted her head against it. That was the moment that I knew she and I would be friends.

I often called to her in a sweet sing-songy voice, like a dove. She eventually learned her name and responded to it. After a few more days she stopped hiding in my room under dressers and bookshelves. Hazel got to know my parents too, and my mom was her favorite person from whom to receive pets.

Hazel was not the shy cat we were told she was. Curious and ambitious, her need to explore every nook and cranny of the house could never be satiated. From behind the television to on top of the dinner table, where she looked for fish, her favorite food, no place was left uncharted.

With glistening eyes, Hazel intensely stared out of the windows. She stalked her prey, birds sitting on tree branches mostly, with an untamed, primitive instinct. As the mail carrier, who never stopped chatting with someone on the phone, sauntered onto the porch of the house, Hazel immediately darted to the window. She stared fiercely,

following his every move. She was still, silent, and intense. Her 10,000 years of tiger DNA was ready to pounce. With the looks of a tiger, and this attitude, she would tear everyone to shreds if only she were bigger. Having her in the home was like having a little piece of the jungle come in.

Morning came again. The sun beamed into my room, which cast a golden glow on all four walls. Unfortunately, like every other day, I could not sleep late. Sunlight was my alarm clock, and because my room faced towards the sun in the morning, I was always the first person awake. The creaking of the floor alerted Hazel that someone was awake, and as she rushed towards me she was beaming with happiness.

“Hello, Hazel.”

“Meow,” she chirped.

For the next five minutes, it was non-stop begging for food. All sorts of noises were made from her little cat mouth, and all were simply different ways to say, “I want food.” Plenty of food was still left in her metal cat dish, so I ignored her pleading.

Rustle, crackle.

Peering up at Hazel, I saw her near a plastic bag. One of those grocery store bags, that the baggers double bag and then put a single item into. Each item in a separate bag, leaving dozens of bags with no use or purpose everywhere. These bags really irk me. Each time I go to the grocery store I am reminded of our wastefulness.

As I left the couch where I sat reading my book I saw Hazel gnawing on a bag, like the big cats I have seen on nature TV shows, lounging content with an old kill. I soon took the bag from her, and there were plenty of teeth marks in it. At first I thought she was just curious. But I was wrong.

She did this eating plastic thing all the time. My question was why? Eventually I realized why. Whenever her food bowl was almost empty, or when she thought it was getting stale from sitting out all night, Hazel wanted attention, and she did plenty of weird things for attention. I do plenty of weird things for attention myself, although I do not eat plastic.

I thought about Hazel’s street cat life. I imagined her homeless in a cold dark alley, where dumpsters looked like multi-story apartment complexes. Her ears twitch and rotate like satellite dishes, as she listens in on the sound of plastic bags in what little wind comes through. The leftover food in the bags attracts the feline.

Hazel probably remembers her old destitute life and where to get food without hunting. Hazel’s plastic eating problem reminded me of a documentary I watched once, where albatrosses would consume too much plastic because of the way they would catch fish. They would die from being filled with plastic.

We stopped using plastic bags, just for her safety.

It was totally worth it. The tiger in my house cannot live in a plastic jungle. Hazel is a special cat, and the bond I have with her is unlike any other. I owe her a safe home and a clean environment. Her slow blinking while staring into my eyes is precious. Her purrs are like the rumble of a thunderstorm. And when she meows at the clank of food in her bowl it can sound like an orchestra in my ears. Our relationship can never be replaced by anything else. And I only need to keep her little slice of the world clean and safe.

Nadia d’Arrigo

Showing Poems

Students in Mrs. Harrington's English 7 class were asked to choose a sensory-concrete noun from their daily surroundings, then create a poem that followed a pattern that included concrete and abstract words. Here are some of our favorites!

Sun--
golden planet,
blazing and blinding,
astonishing, fierce, distant--
a glowing orb full of warmth.
--Ella Wong

Cherry pie--
fruity dessert,
juicy and sweet,
energizing, tasty, delicious--
a fresh taste of spring.
--Josephine Marcheck

Doritos--
triangular chips,
crunchy and cheesy red,
delicious, appetizing, delightful--
a filling crunch of joy to make your day.
--Ben Sheppard

Branches--
brown offshoot,
icy and snowy,
glistening, freezing, thriving--
the arms of a tree.
--Isabella Evans

Chick-Fil-A chicken--
mouth-watering recipes,
crispy and salty,
comforting, original, classic--
a meal of smiles.
--Izzy De Macedo

Fireflies--
moving lights,
twinkling and thumb-size,
elegant, majestic, comforting--
stars at night.
--Tiffany Wang

Juice box--
cold drink,
freezing and sweet,
entertaining, distracting, nostalgic--
a relaxing box of tranquility.
--Athanasius Cross

Snowflakes--
gradually drifting,
angelic and alluring,
calming, frigid, Jack Frost's kiss--
a world of ice.
--Ella McNamara

Clouds--
white vapor,
floating and wispy,
calm, creative, mindful--
marshmallows that decorate the sky.
--Claire Nill

The Sleeping General

He wears all blue
With a dab of some gold
A military general
Not looking too old
Because of war
He's worried for many lives
Of military soldiers
Many people will die
As he gets the news
About the war
Sips on his coffee
What is his country fighting for?
Drops of coffee fall down his beard
Wondering how
To get through his fear
All of the sudden
A knock on the door
And his wife tells him,
"Get up off of the floor"
Once he gets up
It looked like he fell
Out of his bed
His hip seemed to swell
And then his wife asked
"Did you dream pretty well?"

Dane Barber



For His Family

All days start the same
The same boring morning routine.

Attend the same boring job
that doesn't pay enough to pay for dinner.

He scrapes and scrapes for a million hours
at the grill thinking of how his life could have changed.

All he had to do is go to college
but he dropped out like a person dropping a ball.

His family of four survive on the very little money they have.

He has to steal and beg for his next meal.
He never knows when he will be able to eat next.

Not even enough money to wash clothes.
Not even enough money to have clean water.

He prays and prays for someone to help him,
never ever does anything happen.
He always feels like giving up.

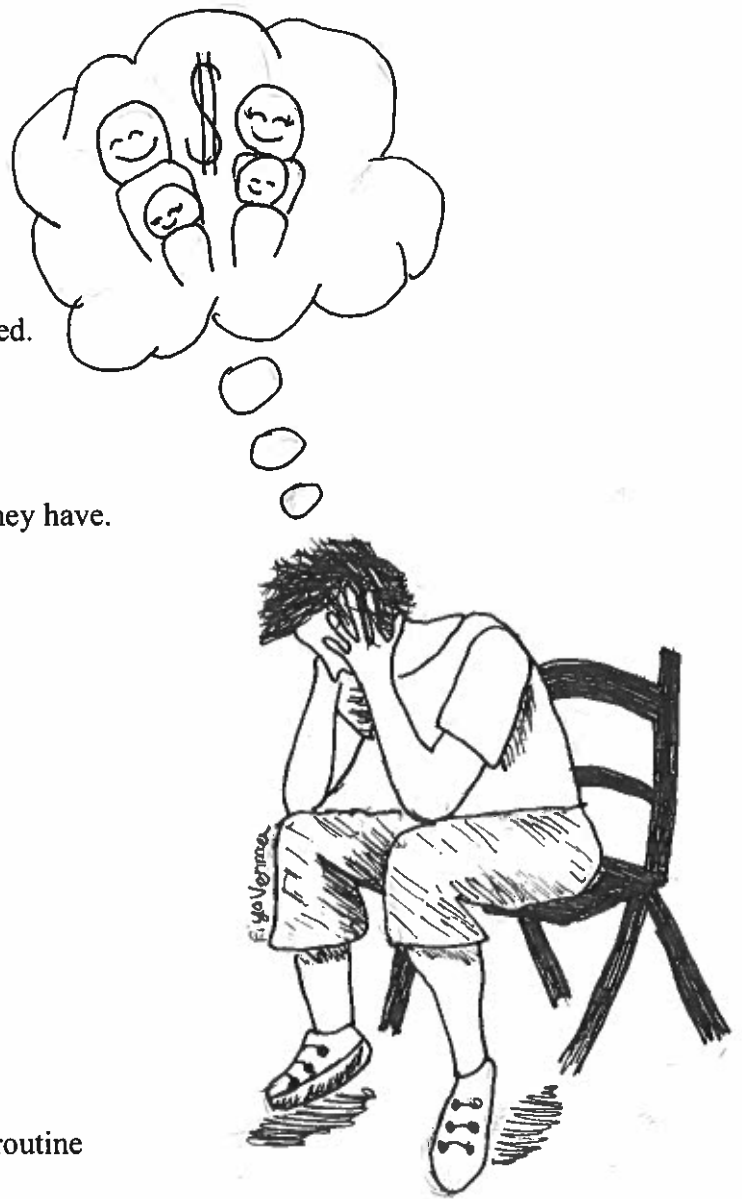
He always thinks, "What if I wasn't here?
If I wasn't here my family wouldn't survive."

He knows he has to do it for his family.

This is why he's fine with the same boring morning routine
and the same boring job
that doesn't pay enough to pay for dinner.

He does it for his family.

Nolan Clipper



When the Lotus Came Out

As the bright lavender and cobalt hues cross the stream
The floating lotus appears so beautiful, calm as a dream
My face is serene and
Cool from the soft wind
Crossing the flower

The tiny buzzing of a dragonfly
Just hovering through than the evening sky
Passes by my face
I realize that I'm free
Just here with the wide, open sea
As I stay with my happy place

The tide moves in
And the flowers come out
Into the dark surf
The soft petals
Rise up in the night
As I stray from my hometown turf

As the glassy azure waves swoop onto the beach
With the twinkling stars above
The full silver moon is up in the sky
And my heart is full of love

On the side of the beach
Aside the shore
And the lotus washes away
To be seen nevermore

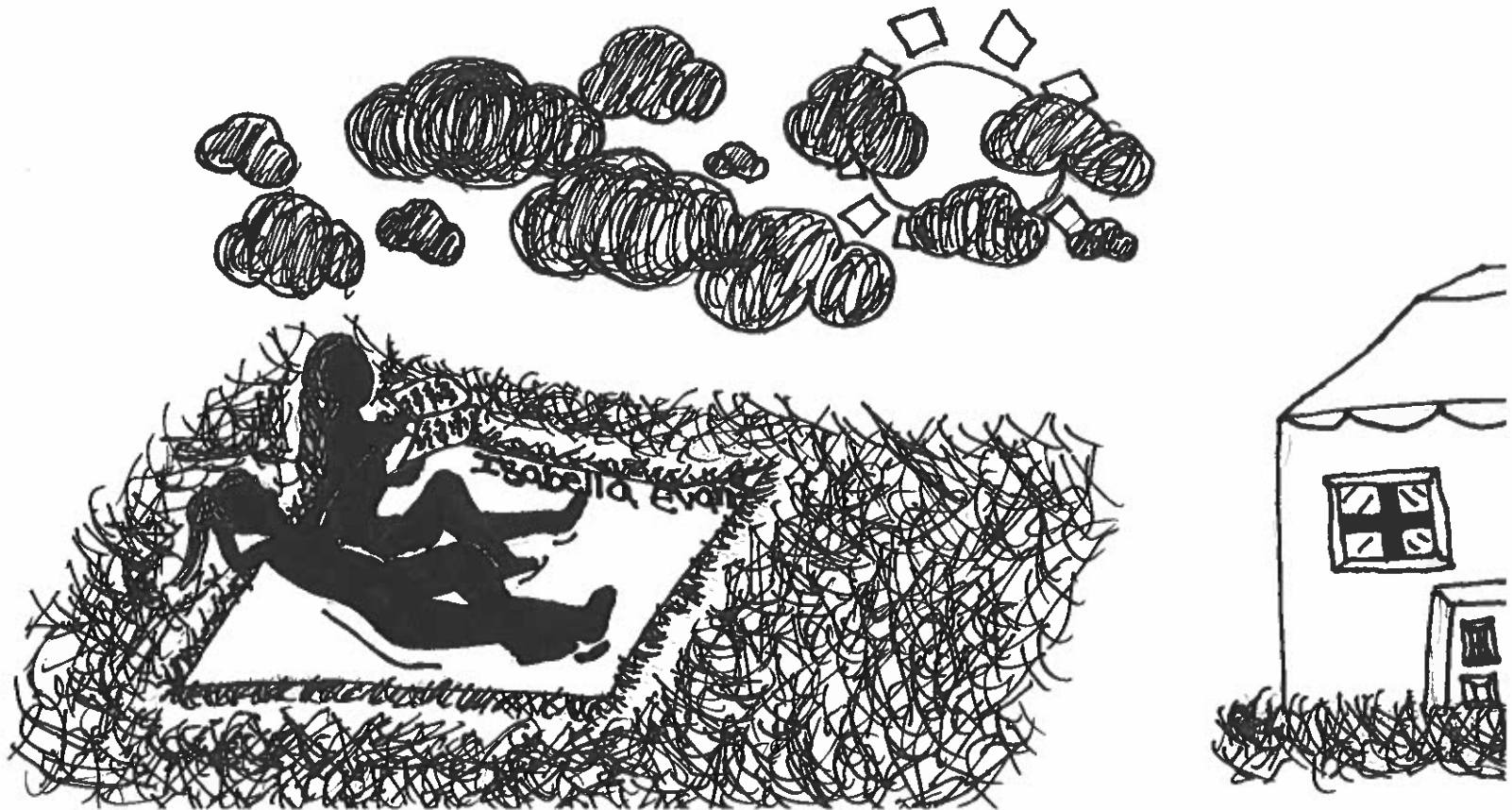
Eddie Ercegovic



Underneath the Summer Sky

A warm, breezy day
for kids to play
while we relax under the huddle of gray clouds
floating above us.
Green grass peeks from underneath the cotton blanket,
tickling my tiny toes.
An open book rests in the palms of my hands,
waiting to be finished.
An aftertaste of raspberry lemonade
tingles the roof of my mouth.
My sister lays beside me,
her twinkling, dark blue eyes
gazing at the gray sky.
A sense of peace,
outside of my cement house.
A calm feeling soothes my body,
as soft as a lullaby.
I lay back and slowly drift off to sleep,
under the humid, summer sky.

Isabella Evans



The Backyard

The wind ran against my back,
Whispering to seek my attention.
Whooh sang the wind.
In my backyard sat a brown wooden chair,
Right behind the ancient wooden chair was a long bent-over tree
With giant green leaves.
In the distance stood two tall houses,
One red and one yellow.
Above the red house was a floating dark cloud,
Maybe a storm cloud or just some smoke.
Right near the tree I could hear a bird singing its song.
The wind raced through the sky, screaming its thoughts.

KK Greene

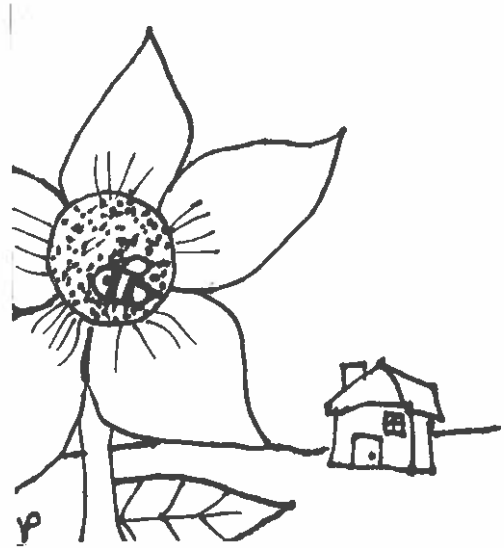


Sunflowers

The amber sunflowers that I cut from the garden
That started as a seed
That grew to the size of my hand
That grew to the length of my arm
That I clipped at the end of spring
Now sit on my kitchen table soaking up the sun

The sun that shines through the open window
That helped the sunflowers grow
That used to be blocked by clouds
That used to be tuned out by thunder
That used to be dripping with rain
Now shines brighter than a lightning bolt

Madi Senneway



The Betta Fish

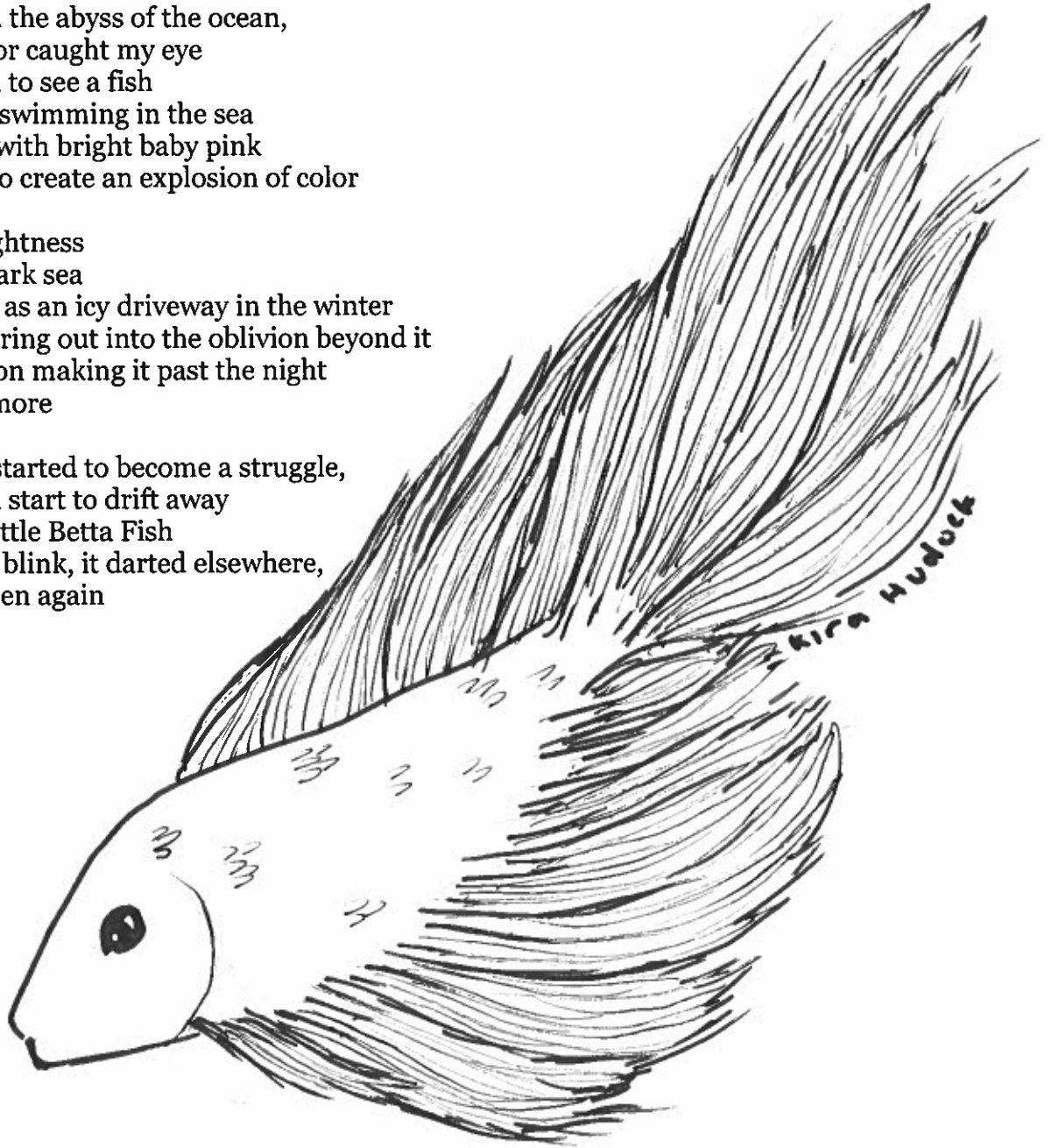
The sandbar disappeared
As I was thrust into the deep, dark, sea
I inhaled mouthfuls of salty, frigid, water
As it shocked me with its chill
I splashed and struggled until I gave in
To the treacherous sea

Floating down the abyss of the ocean,
A spark of color caught my eye
I peered down to see a fish
Calm, serene, swimming in the sea
Ocean indigo with bright baby pink
Intertwining to create an explosion of color

A burst of brightness
In the deep, dark sea
Scales as slick as an icy driveway in the winter
Blank eyes staring out into the oblivion beyond it
Only focused on making it past the night
And nothing more

As breathing started to become a struggle,
I felt my mind start to drift away
Just like the little Betta Fish
With my final blink, it darted elsewhere,
Never to be seen again

Ella Winters



Rain

I love to hear the rain.
Doesn't everyone?
It fills me with joy
To watch the tiny river go down the sewer drain.

I love to smell the storm.
Doesn't everyone?
Except for those who fear
Future water infiltrating their home,
So cozy and warm.

Although some hate it,
Because they must stay inside,
I personally adore it,
Especially when the stairs look like a mini waterslide.

Maddie McDonald



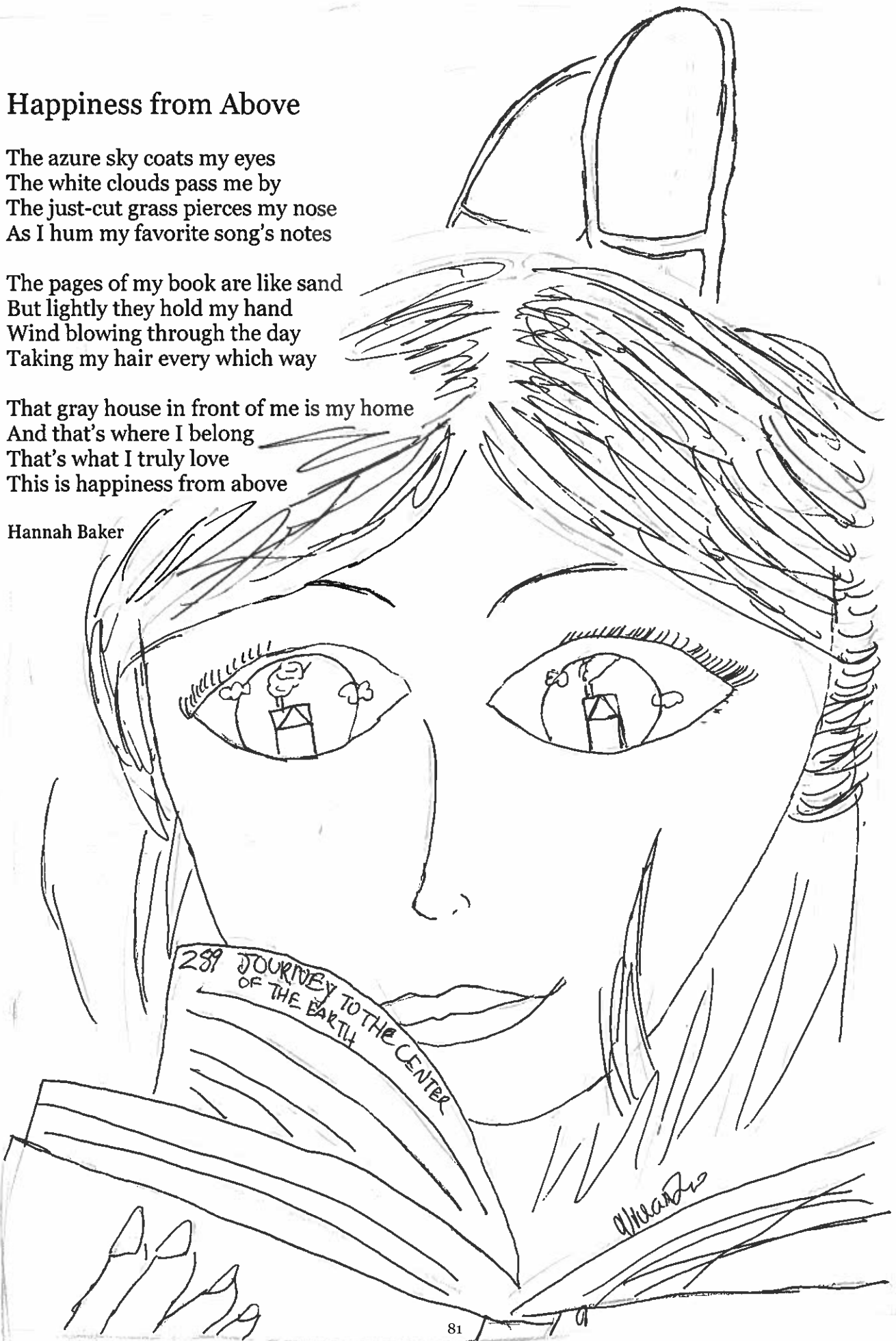
Happiness from Above

The azure sky coats my eyes
The white clouds pass me by
The just-cut grass pierces my nose
As I hum my favorite song's notes

The pages of my book are like sand
But lightly they hold my hand
Wind blowing through the day
Taking my hair every which way

That gray house in front of me is my home
And that's where I belong
That's what I truly love
This is happiness from above

Hannah Baker



In Your Shoes

Put yourself in another's shoes.
It won't always work.
No one can live in another's life
But anyone,
Anyone,
Can feel it.
Compassion.
I embrace your sorrow.
Breathe.
Your tears silently fall to the ground.
Wipe them up.
Your cries are heard from miles away.
No one thinks much of them,
Except me
Who was living your life
For that one minute.
You and me together,
Watch
As tears plummet to the ground.
I say breathe,
We breathe.
We then stand,
Tall once more.
I then leave,
A small part of me still with you,
To keep you going,
To face the world,
Only to realize
That millions more
Live underground,
Their cries muted,
To everyone in the world
But me.

Lily Farrell



