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HARROW FAMILY OF SCHOOLS

CREATIVE WRITING
ANTHOLOGY

Summer 2021

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The cover image is of Lord Byron, an Old Harrovian Poet

Introduction



Welcome to the first Harrow Family of Schools Creative Writing Anthology. This is an excellent way of showcasing some of the tremendous creative talent of pupils studying in the Harrow Family of Schools. Congratulations to all those who accepted the opportunities and challenges presented by the theme "Connections" to submit entries in their schools, the selection panels for their deliberations and those who contributed art work to support the writing. The result is this impressive online publication, which represents another example of the meaningful, outward-looking and collaborative ventures in which our schools are increasingly engaged. I hope that the community of the growing Harrow Family of Schools will enjoy reading the diverse, fascinating contributions, which were finally selected in each of the schools.

Mel Mrowiec

Mel Mrowiec
Chairman, Harrow International Schools Limited.

When the editorial team first began meeting back in September, it was a meeting excited with opportunity and possibility. In the ashes of a pandemic that was hitting the world, we had the possibility to show the creativity of the connected international Harrow community. Now, from those ashes, we have this collection, rising like a phoenix. However, creating an anthology is one of those things which is much easier said than done. It has taken an incredible amount of work behind the scenes to get this issue going. Therefore, in the creation of this anthology we would like to thank all of the writers, artists and collaborators towards this inaugural issue.

The Editorial Team

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With Thanks To the English Departments
of the Harrow Family Schools

The Night and I

“Alright, all of you tested negative. Come sign the papers and you’re good to go.” The woman barely spares a glance to the passengers and myself, who were sat in the quarantine camp lobby. She hurries through files of spare sheets of paper vigorously as she uncovers our declaration forms, the rustle of this midnight procedure closely resembling a bustling daytime office. Luckily, she doesn’t keep us waiting for too long, knowing that all passengers from our midnight flight have been tossed and battered to the limits.

“Who’s signing first?... You’ll do, sir. Yes you, please.”

No answer from the crowd. Everybody stands up

and queues. Silence overtakes the office as everyone lines up obediently, not bothering to argue nor respond.

I walk out the camp with a thin jacket on my shoulders, phone and wallet in my hands, dragging a mini suitcase containing two books and some clothes that are now discolored and bled away. My possessions have not always been this lightweight, but is there anything, really, that necessary to bring around with me all the time?

I glance around at the others: some comforting their crying babies, some standing next to the bin smoking cigarettes, some chatting amiably with their loved ones. They’re all towing hefty suitcases made for families of more than two, which leaves me wondering if it becomes burdensome for anyone at any time, but they seem to be too merry to notice. As if prompted, the chilly wind jabs the skin beneath my jacket.

I should be going somewhere.

Not far away from the isolation centre is the boulevard leading down towards the harbour. Bars and restaurants are all well closed and locked up by now, even the street lamps seem to have fallen into a deep slumber, unveiling the same darkness that drenches every corner of every city in the world without fail. My suitcase rumbles across the rocky floor; its nearly-jammed wheels dragging through the cracked road. The constant rhythm between the bricks and my heels is absorbed by the untouchable void that fills the street, seemingly making it stretch to no end. My heels tap one last “click”, then silence.

I stop at the intersection of the road and an alley, just to test that the sound I’m making is more than just a mere hallucination in my brain. The dense silence swarms upon me, vacuumed space sucking every last drop of vitality from this earth befwwwore giving renaissance to the world out of nothingness;

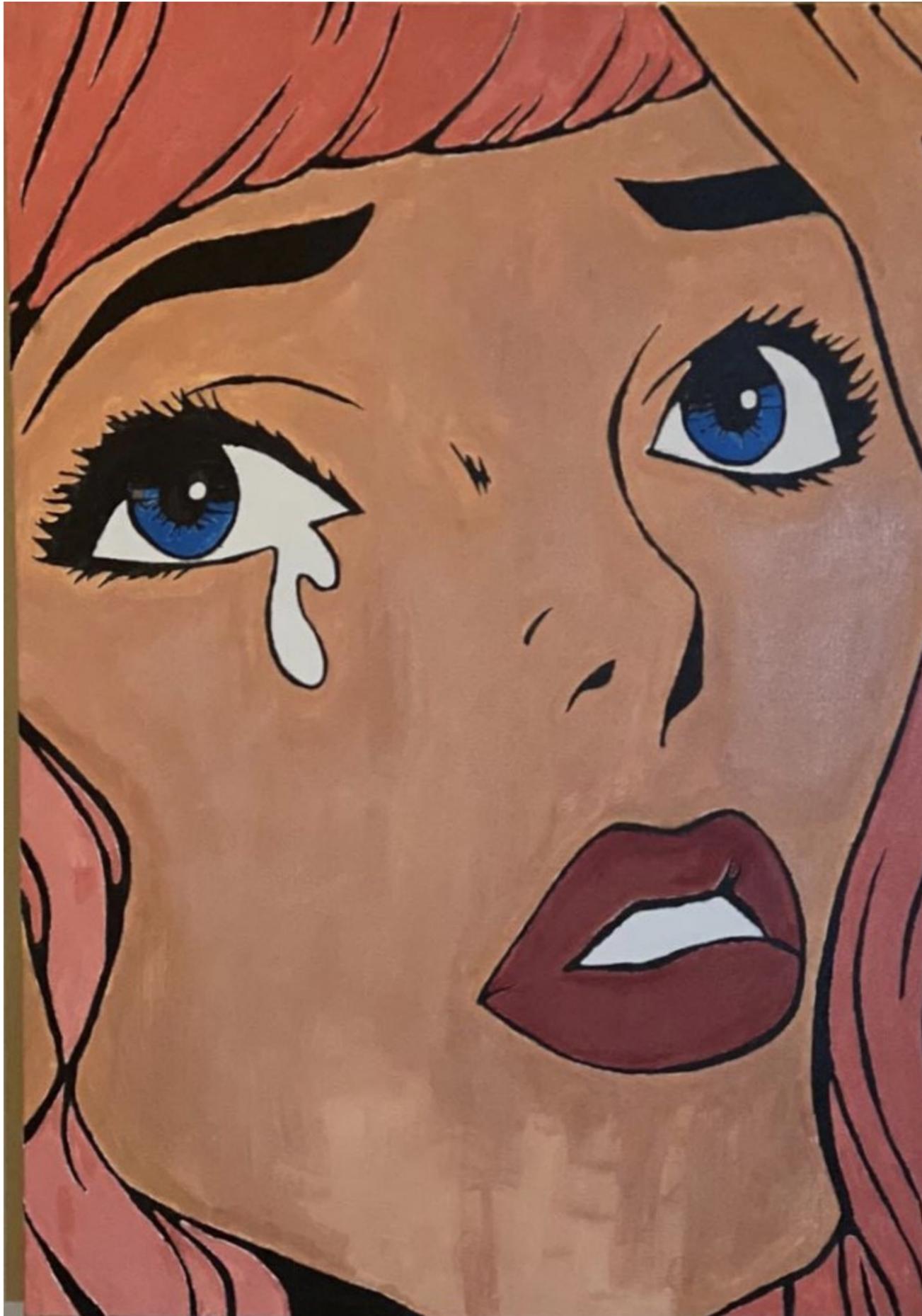
the night air that used to brush past my body now reduced to a pot of viscous mess boiling with heat, anxiety, sweat, numbness, and just for a moment all my anchors in space and time sublimate and I am no more than a speck of dust submerged in the eternal night. Shadows seep through the solid abyss of the bottomless alley, I can’t stare past it, but it stares back at me: his gaze settling upon my tensed shoulders, neck, then clenched fist. A silent negotiation.

“It’s just the two of us now”. We are the only forms of conscience in a universe that has fallen dormant. Like the island and its encircling waters, we coexist yet never really know one another, just like longtime acquaintances who only silently witness each other’s trajectories in life. I believe that we only have each other for the time being - the faintest smile reaches my lips and I continue to walk down the road, this time the darkness holding my steps afloat amidst this empty world.

I don’t know where I’m going, nor do I remember where I came from. All my worries and fatigue are soaked into the dark depths of the night - up, up, and beyond: the universe will take care of it. Shadows flow into a distant river, the pulse of the waters echoing the heartbeat of a dear friend. Perhaps, for everything I do or say or think, darkness does not judge: it listens and understands and accepts everything just the way it is.

The night is long, and I have all the time until dawn arrives. I close my eyes and walk on straight ahead.

I belong in the night.



By Yannis Chatziannnis (Year 13), Harrow UK

Him

By Jamie Jevons (Year 9), Harrow UK

He stared into her eyes; She stared back into his: blue, reminiscent of the ocean. Amanda saw in them dolphins dancing in the waves, waving their flukes at her elegantly, gesturing for her to join them. She took great joy not-only from this, but his entire face: his warm smile could make an entire crowd of women feel weak in-the-knees; his movie-star, slicked-back, black hair; his chiselled face, 'Carved by Michelangelo' – she thought. Having seen his Tinder Profile, she had almost instantaneously swiped right and messaged him in a desperate attempt to meet someone new, someone who could fill the loveless void the past year had given her. They had connected instantly, and he had invited her out for dinner.

'So, what do you do for a living?' she asked, sipping politely on the G&T he had just bought for her at the bar.

'I'm between jobs.' He replied. She took another sip from her drink.

'And you?'

'I left Uni last year, but I've recently been doing charity work with homeless in the area, giving food and shelter to those who are most in need.' She finished her drink. A single, lonely ice-cube was isolated at the bottom of her glass.

'What kind of food do you give to them?' he asked.

'Soup mainly.' Silence followed. He looked at the clock on the wall: It was 9-past-10.

They both turned: The waiter had arrived, food in hand. Smoke arose from the serving tray, floating towards both of their nostrils with a delicious perfume. The scent crept up her nose. He laid the 'Moules Mariniere au frites' on the table, "a speciality" they had been told by the waiter. The mussels bathed in the garlic-shallot concoction the chef had brewed, semi-parted and clean. They both reached into the serving dish, starved – despite having had Gazpaccho, as a starter, earlier in the evening.

The waiter returned, taking away the dish. It had previously been a place of abundance for mussels drowning in a thick, creamy sauce. Now, it was but a desert of empty shells, ravaged. Amanda, now, felt a sudden urge to use the bathroom. Her date asked if everything was ok: She responded the affirmative but she was struggling to get there.

'I'm just a bit tipsy,' she told herself, terrified of other possibilities, 'but I haven't even had that much to drink.' Nevertheless, she assumed the bartender was just ambitious. She managed her way to the bathroom (on heels this was something of a task), pressed her shoulder against the dark-grey door, and shifted all her weight onto the left side of her body. The door opened more easily than expected – she almost flung herself onto the polished-stone floor. However, she kept a certain degree of balance. A mirror mounted the wall and with blurred vision, she found her own distorted image within it. Her lipstick looked smeared in her mind. She thought of re-applying it, however she couldn't quite remember where it was. There was a clock hanging above the door. She could hardly make out the minute-hand, but it seemed to be around 9:40.

'Almost time to head home,' she muttered.

Both of her hands, now, clasped the edge of the sink, gripping it for dear life, in order to keep herself afloat. Her trembling arms were barely able to support her, she was hanging on by a thread. She had briefly entered and exited the cubicle and returned to the table, in slow-motion it seemed despite the panic inside. He offered his arm, so that she could sit down comfortably.

She looked at his face. Originally beautiful, it had become chapped and scarred in this new light. His hair had transformed into something greasy and thin. His warm smile morphed itself into a malicious grin. Once again, they met eyes: In his she now saw a deep-blue shade, the colour of sea-storms, the colour of the unknown – lurking. Her eyes were flickering shut, she could barely sit upright, she couldn't control her body. She was living, but her body was dead – as if she were trapped in a corpse with no escape. She saw herself collapse onto the table. She saw herself being escorted by her date. She saw him tell the waiter that he was going to take her home to rest. She saw herself enter his car. She saw the pills resting on his bag, white like a drained corpse. She saw her eyelids close. But all the while, she was still awake.

Darkness.

Green-Blue Alien

Aeons ago, I was trying to reach you but

You ignored my song,

Responding with deadness and

Sending silence my way.

Decades ago, I was trying to warn you but

You ignored my pleading calls.

Now look up at the expression,

of the great expanse above.

Now look, at how everything turned out.

We were so deeply entwined that

Your blood ran in mine, but

In your haste

You let yours run, too far ahead.

Our green and blue wanderer flew around and around

Held in a balance so precariously maintained.

With every change of the moon

Came phases of steady degradation, leaving only

Echoes of the life that had once grew, like infections upon me.

So when the clouds roll over and

The trees are set alight to emit

An unnatural amber glow,

I am forced to offer my song

In a cruel, twisted sacrifice.

So now here I am, in this shape and in this form,

Wondering... if I clasp, and if I cling

Could I be able to stop

This feverish orb from

Spiralling out of my control?

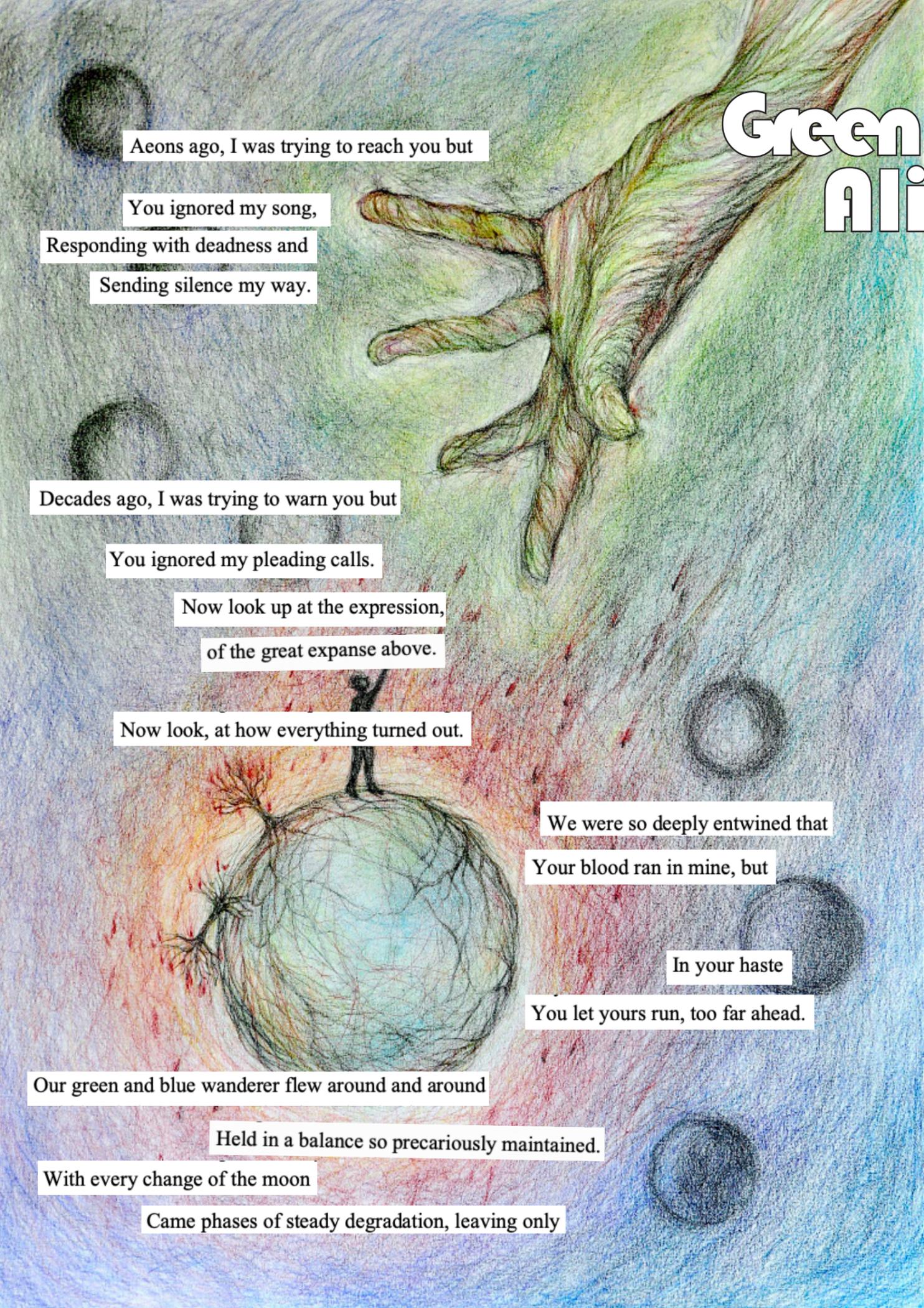
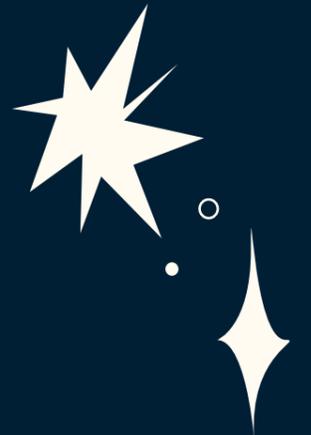
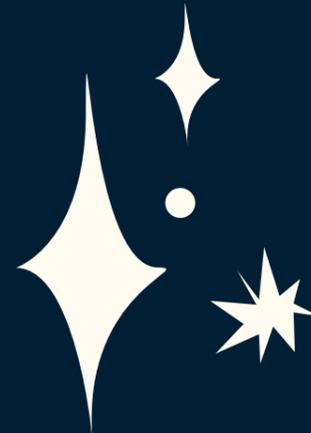
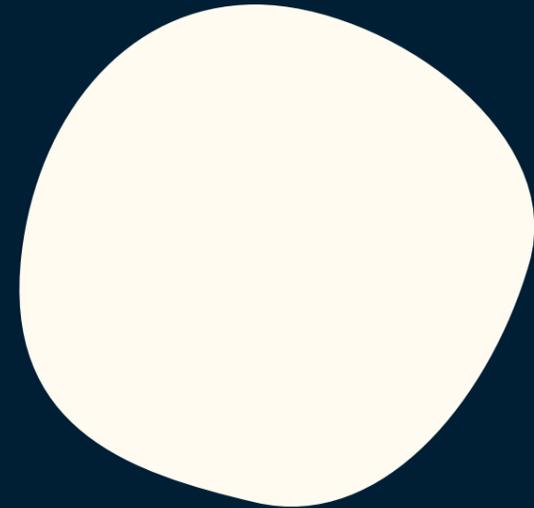
As now you've left me, with nothing more

Than an awry end to meet

And for you, dear man,

Your broken fortress of monochrome and

A chronically corrupted wasteland.



History

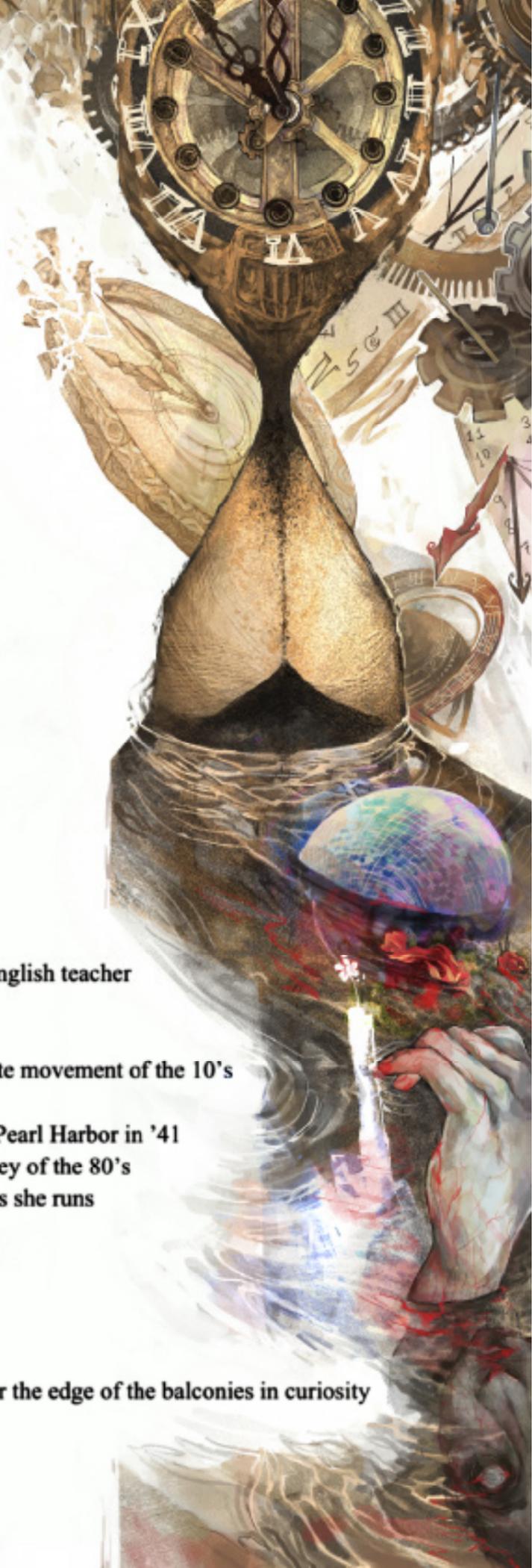
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Sometimes I think about
This strange concept
Of time
Remaining forever entranced by it as I
Breathe and walk
Though life

For
Do you not realise that
You
Hold history in your heart?
In your bones?
In your memories?
Of late night discos in the 80's
Of the counter culture movement
Of the 60's
Of the death of a king
And the welcome return of an incoming one
In the 50's
Of the failed coup and tank-lined streets
Of the racial hostilities of your Midwestern state
Of the KKK's invitation through personal means
Of the communal silence regarding your lesbian English teacher
Proving to be one of your first lessons in ethics
In the 70's
Of your mother's unknown stance on the suffragette movement of the 10's
That she lived through
Of the announcement on the radio of an attack on Pearl Harbor in '41
Of your waitressing and studying days in the Sydney of the 80's
Of your mother clutching you tightly in her arms as she runs
Navigates away from the Japanese bombs
Following the air raid siren
Of the 40's
Of you witnessing drowned, dead bodies
Wash up at the pier of your Catholic high school
As fellow young girls gather in masses to peer over the edge of the balconies in curiosity
Of a vendor ratting you out to your mother
As you took a boat across the river

Escaping from school for some flowers
Of you perched precariously on the rooftop of a building downtown
Blood flowing out of the cut running down your leg
An accident
In your rush to see the tanks roll by in another coup attempt
In the 70's
Of your being in Paris with your mother
Upon Reagan's first election
Of your witnessing the Berlin Wall as it stood proud
In the 80's
Of witnessing news of 9/11 on the TV
Coming in live
Of MJB blasting in the cool Perth air
As you roll around in your convertible
At the dawn of the new century
Of your seeing
Of your experiencing
More
Of your living
Through It all.

And when you open your mouth
And let history stream out
So close yet
So far gone
So recent yet
So distant
Something wedges in my throat
As I know
We know
That the past is the past
That we will never be able to experience this
That we will never be able to grasp it all
And
Do you not realise
That you have this?
The power you have?
Do you not realise how much you hold over me?
Do you not realise how you hold my heart
In your hands as you speak?
Because
To speak it is to claim it
And I could never claim something that isn't mine.
I didn't share that experience with you



I was excluded from it
And I always will be.

It is yours to tell.

And we are
Essentially in a race
To capture all that you know
Against the very thing that made all of this possible:
Time.

So please
Allow us to find a home in your words
Settle a little between the crevices of your memories
Capture pieces of your heart
Let us pretend
At least for a second
To have seen what you have seen
And have done what you have done
In vain
Let us live
Vicariously
Through you
For you must understand that
You are history.

You are history

- Rena Year 12
Harrow Bangkok



Mixed Media
OF
GRAPE

Creativity takes Courage

There was once an old saying
that no man is an island.
I wonder,
who's gonna be the one who
link everyone together, as a bridge
in those days we can't breathe.

Then I saw a bridge that day,
while the sweaty little boy, with
only two eyes twinkling
knock door to door.
Frantic hands waving in the air,
as if they see a savior passing food
with generous hand.
Syllables like 'please' or 'thank you'
pace up and down in the air,
It's such a shame
We can't yet give him a
big hug.

Then I saw a bridge that day,
while twenty of them standing in one line, with
the heavy protective suit hanging
on their slim body.
I can't help imagine their
faithful face under the protective goggles.
I hear farewell words mixed with sobbing sounds.
Let them be, let them be.
God knows when to see them
next time.

Then I saw a bridge that day,
while he stood there solemnly
with sanitizer in one hand and
thermometer in the other.
You ask me
what makes them do so,
I'll answer by 'their belief
makes them dedicated to their mission.'
Their legs grow to a stump of root,
ties strongly to the land under
By veins.

That was the time
I realized,
Everyone can be a bridge
In this battlefield.

**Bridge (dedicate to all
volunteers who participated in
the fight of COVID-19
pandemic)**

By Denny Yan (Year 10), Harrow Beijing



MEDIA

create patterns

UNIVERSE#
art is not about
PROTRY
but about...
EVOKE@.



By Brightly Shen (Year 12), Harrow Shanghai

The Nurse

By Ellie Paterson (Year 11), Harrow Shanghai

She was awoken by a gut wrenching cry that escaped from the tiny mouth of her young baby. She slowly stood up, glancing over at the time that glowed menacingly from her alarm clock on the side of her bed. Groggy and sore from her long tedious shift at work, she made her way over to the crib. She wanted nothing more than to pick her small three month old baby up but she couldn't. She couldn't risk her life so young. If there was any chance that she had caught the virus, she would not pass it onto her daughter. Her heart throbbed as she watched her baby sob for her mother, silent tears streaming down her worn out face.



As the auburn sun slowly rose, the mother was rudely awoken once more, this time by her alarm clock as it screeched for her to get up and go to work, because money doesn't grow on trees and small babies went through an ungodly number of nappies. She rubbed her tired eyes and peered over to her baby who was smiling away happily; at least one of them was happy to be getting up today. Her first job was to get her mother upstairs to change her baby's nappy - oh how she wished that she was allowed to touch her baby, it had been over a month since she had held her in her arms. She put a mask over her mouth and rubber gloves on, so the virus would be contained if she happened to be a carrier. Although it was only sunrise, there was a delicious smell wafting up from the kitchen, she knew her mother would be up. She timidly walked down the stairs, her feet blistered from a fifteen hour shift the day prior, and greeted her mother from a distance.

Her old battered car, a similar picture to herself, chugged along the motorway as she headed towards the hospital. She got there just before eight in the morning. After the usual temperature check and a new mask, she headed towards the nurse section; as she did, she passed the emergency waiting room. A young mother, similar in age to herself, was calling out to someone for help. With only a mask on, she was aware of her unprotected and exposed state to possible viruses, but still rushes over to the young mother; her screams were too much for her to bear. She saw that the young baby in the mother's arms had gone purple, it appeared that they weren't breathing anymore. Without hesitation, the nurse took the baby from the mother's arms and performed CPR, while speaking to the mother, asking her questions about her child.

After a while the baby was fine, the nurse managed to recover their breathing again. However, she felt quite dizzy and stumbled over to the nurses station, struggling to breath. That small baby had contracted the deadly virus and had now passed it onto the nurse.

To My Dearest Eleya

By Kathy Shi (Year 10), Harrow Beijing

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Then the clock clicked: 365:00:00. It's been a whole year since our farewell, which seems to be short, but also long to me, far too long.

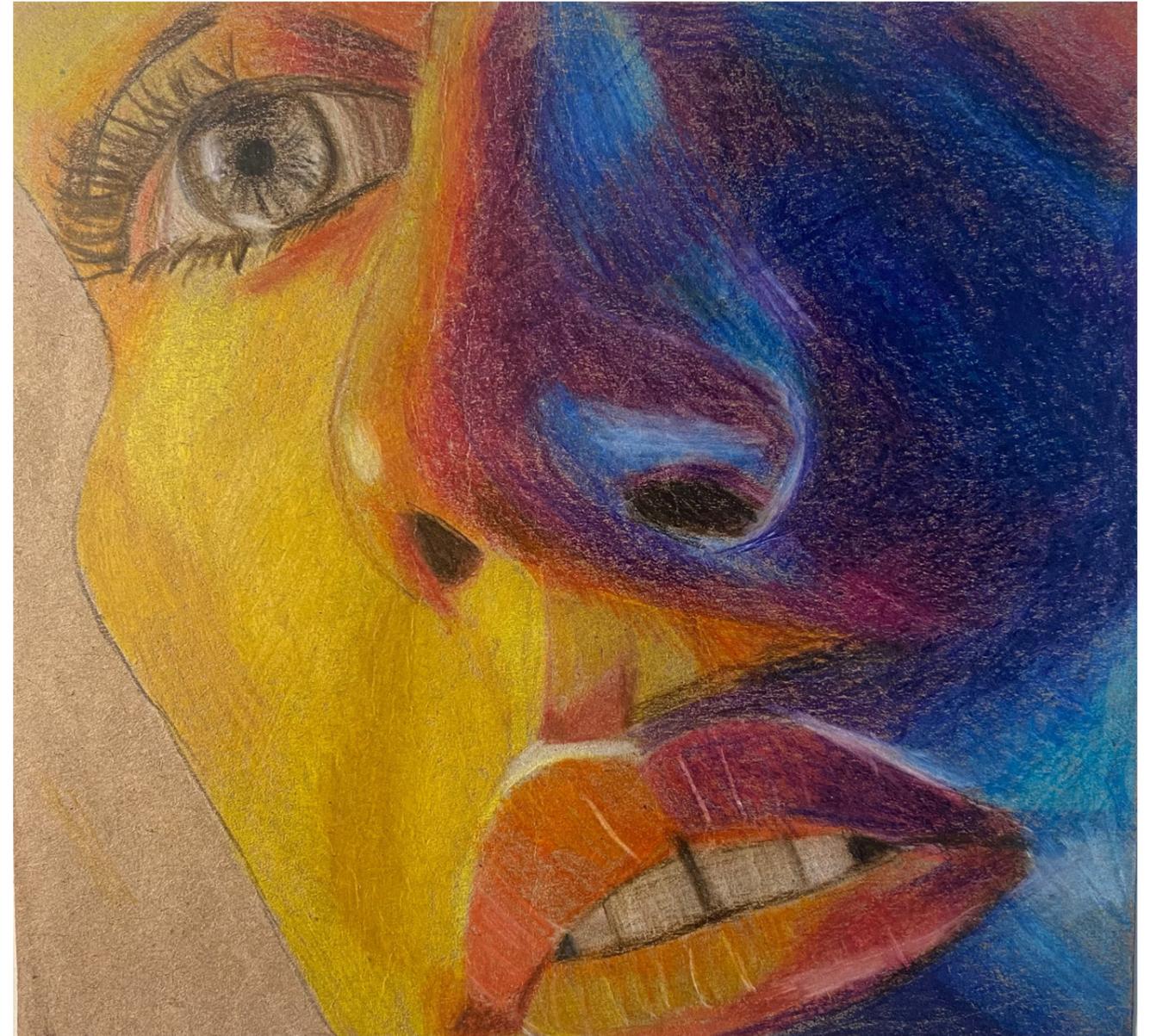
Without the pandemic, this time should've been less than one month, but the world always runs in an unpredictable way, you never know what to expect, just like my arrival to your life.

I hate whenever small children visit my home, especially very small ones. Their naiveness, young age and angel-like appearance appear to be a good cover for the demons hidden under them, causing catastrophic destruction. They are cute, but I still wouldn't accept their brutal actions towards my Lego-made castles or devoted knickknacks. Then my mom would remind me softly while I complained, how ten years ago I ruined a Lego car which you just made, and how I probably ruined your entire teenage hood. That was no doubt a dark period of time for you, when you felt the whole world stood against you, which was caused by small monster who has taken everything away from you: your mummy, your daddy, everyone's attention and love...and this little monster, was me.

However, as time passed, it forced you to accept my existence, the magic of blood even created the most intimate and unique connection between us. What we would call, sisterhood. You're not only a sister for me, but as well as a guidance, an idol, a parent and a close friend. Despite the academic support you gave me as a university student, and anecdotes I heard from you wide knowledge. I could share my secrets with you like best friends, while you could teach me skills I would never learn about from our parents, such as how to do makeup, boys in the school... Your amazing aesthetic always impress me, shopping with you never bores me. I guess I'll have to mention your nail polishing skills as well, which is comparable with any professional shops. While often I'm jealous of your gifted talents in arts, sports, music etc.

In front of you and I, none of us need to pretend to be anyone else.

Last year this time, we fulfilled our girly, fairytale-like dreams and went to Shanghai Disneyland together, it was such a memorable and wonderful trip. Then, holiday ended and you had to go back to the university. Two weeks after your return to the states, COVID-19 broke out. Suddenly, the world stopped perpetually. While you were alone in a foreign country. I couldn't imagine how difficult the situation must have been for you and the longlines you might have experienced. It's the first time in my life, that we were apart for over six months. Gladly, I appreciate the modern technology which allows us to "see" you every wee., although it couldn't possibly lessen how deeply I miss you. Still remember the Japanese fried pork restaurant you took me to? I've been there a few times after you left. With my parents, my friends...But I could never taste the same flavour from the same food again, I guess, it's because someone was missing.



However, whenever after a storm comes to a calm there will always be a rainbow which hangs beautifully on the sky. Things are getting better, with millions of people getting vaccinated all over the world each day. Not soon after, I believe there will be one day when we will be longer be separated, but accompanied with each other, and I really wish this day could arrive sooner.

Numerous people enter and exit our lives, they are only passersby. You and I, our lives are intertwined forever. Thank you for always being there for me, I love you.

Yours Sincerely,
Kathy Shi

Artwork by Rachel Bu (Year 10) Harrow Beijing

Call Out To Me

By Jasmine Wong (Year 11).
Harrow Hong Kong

Alone, secluded and isolated. Sitting at the corner of the filthy floor, listening to the echoing exhalation of air created by the single soul left in this one by one meter cubed cage, feeling the splintered dark oak wood pricking against my dry cracked skin, my head pressed against the concrete wall as I savoured my last ounce of energy. All I could see was a beam of light, as thin as a strand of hair, gushing past the imperfections of the door and giving me the slightest sense of sanity; all I could hear was the thunderous boom of the metal chains clanking against the crusty gates, causing staccato echoes, awakening the ominous bats from their slumber; all I could do was feel the agonising pain of the rusted manacles wrapped tightly around my wrists, rubbing against my skin, creating a fiery red burn. It was rotting; I was rotting.

The thick fetid air crept down my throat and aerated my lungs with practically asphyxiated air, choking my very existence. Physically, I detected the tightening of my muscles as they drowned themselves in lactic acid, screaming for self-destruction. They were gasping and grunting for just a second of comfort or peace. Mentally, the loud silence haunted my mind, resulting in the creation of hysterically hyperbolic thoughts that sucked away every inch of happiness that ever existed within me. My heart was dulled and numbed to the never-changing environment, to surviving the very same monotonous days over and over and over again. When would I be free? An immediate conclusive death would be more merciful than this prolonged antagonising misery of being alone with the taunting thoughts and metronomic heartbeat beating over and over again only to end up in an eternity of endless suffering. The worst was yet to come.

Time inched by. The cold blizzard invited itself into my tiny cabin. The timid thoughts of a toasty luminescent golden flame cast a safe haven over the disintegrating world as it grew dim, abducting my spineless smile along with it. Muscles felt as rigid as Medusa's stone statues; rosy-stained cheeks were accompanied by streaks of tears; whispers of thick air escaped my chapped lips and onto the naked skin of my knees. Quivering, my exposed body gave me no protection against the windswept weather: it was a war between me and the storm, between me and the mind. When the hunger was sedated, when my thoughts were paralysed, when the holler was muffled, it was then I knew I was creeping into a state of hibernation... a slow crawl into death.

My subconscious dived into my thoughts, placing me in the middle of a field of wildflowers.. The gentle spring breeze, the sunkissed glow and the subtle sweet scent unloaded the burden I had been carrying. I could feel my feet touching the soft emerald grass; I could see the patches of grey clouds dissipating, making way for the breathtakingly blue sky to peek through but, astonishingly, I could also sense the presence of family. Her iridescent smile was always my favourite: my little sister never failed to light up the world. We used to run through these meadows freely with no restraint, laid in the radiant flower maze until the moonlit stars saturated the sky and bathed the mountainous valleys in a mesmerizing array of harmonious hues - in that one moment of silence, an uncontrolled sense of euphoria overwhelmed my body and muted the torment.

But when you hear the groaning of deafening airplanes, when you hear the desperate screams of frantic people; when you smell the waft of threatening gasoline, then you know you are free. Water pipes bursting. Ceilings crashing. Ash snowing down. Gunshots firing. The Apocalypse had descended. Instantly, I knew I was unbound, and instinctively, my legs stood upright. Elation consumed my body, releasing oceans of adrenaline into the red rapids, surging oxygen to the ends of my fingertips, siphoning all the pain away and allowing my lungs to be flooded with rich, crisp air; waking my brain up from a persistent vegetative state to witness the chaos unfold. The door stood ajar.

Freedom.

Swiftly, I hauled my legs out of confinement, releasing myself from the shackles of incarceration. Weeks in confinement, days with only a sliver of sunlight to stay connected to the outside world. My eyes were blinded with the sudden white flare. My toes curled into the soil, feeling the soft emerald grass once again. The smell of the overflowing air carried away all the oppressive tension; the breeze ruffled my hair similar to how my sister played with mine when we were children; the appetizing smell of food created a tingling sensation in my stomach but, peace was short lived, like the clouds trespassing the territories in the horizon. The place I had survived ignited in blazing crimson flames. Hell replayed itself like a broken record. Lucifer descended, tearing the paradise apart, dragging Heaven deep down into eternal damnation.

Staring at the bomb like a shooting star plummeting into the abyss, accelerating past the illuminating skyscrapers, paving its way into the rich soil of the Earth and into the hands of gravity, my crippling anticipation grew larger with every moment that went by. My eyes trailed the free falling bullet registering its threat; my mind neglected the chaotic abomination. It was inevitable. Fate found its way to me in an intricate game of hide and seek, finally able to collect the prize, as it did with her. Time decelerated. Terrified yet calm, alarmed yet clueless, it's roots wrapped itself around the base of my foot,

wrestling for me to stay put. Flashes of red irradiated from my line of vision. A ball of fire launched up into the atmosphere which sent out an electromagnetic pulse, flattening the city. Bodies cut in half. Limb for limb. Dust particles fled like the plague. My head plunged into the depths of the soil, cushioning my body into eternal slumber.

Silence.

My tympanic heart created an auditory cocoon, footsteps echoing with harmony like a familiar lullaby. A tiny silhouette stood before me. Instinctively, I flinched and scrambled backwards against the slippery floor, eyes squinting at the indistinguishable figure. The hands reached out as though they were about to strangle me. I flailed my arms in a hopeless attempt to guard myself, only to feel the warmth at the tips of its shadowy fingers. The pulsation of my heart slowly, but surely, turned into a melodious symphony. A chorus of laughter triggering a memory that was compartmentalized deep within my brain, and the vision of her iridescent smile peaked through the dark silhouette. Her face imprinted with the same innocence before she was taken away, the same tears that flooded the wells of her eyes, except the tears were followed by a bitter-sweet smile. Her eyes crinkled, her mouth quirked up, her presence washed away all the agony I had ever experienced, finally submerging myself with the affection that I had longed for ever since they became separated. Embracing her with extended arms, everything was painted with streaks of aurora, and I entered a train with a one way ticket into utopia.

Reconnected.

Photography by
Helen Ng (Year 10), Harrow HK

content

by Anonymous, Harrow Bangkok

There is a wanderer
or maybe two

and they're not quite happy
not quite longing of anything either

the night sings outside a summer song
and the moon hangs dark, a bright street lamp
their cups clink and sweet sake
drips down their throats

you don't quite smell like Tokyo yet
I say
let's stay a little longer

their shoes don't wear down
they have time

and you smile
and I smile
and this is the closest thing to happiness

-ace



Glass Bottle

by Anonymous, Harrow Bangkok

In this glass bottle I keep,
The setting sun
On a canvas.
The one under which
We first met.
Climbing cliffs of many colours.
A world where worries and fear,
Will never bother.

In this glass bottle I keep,
The bittersweetness
Of aged cheeses or wine.
Of which I will never tell you why.
This game of silence
In which we're only players.
Turns us back
Into nothing, but strangers.

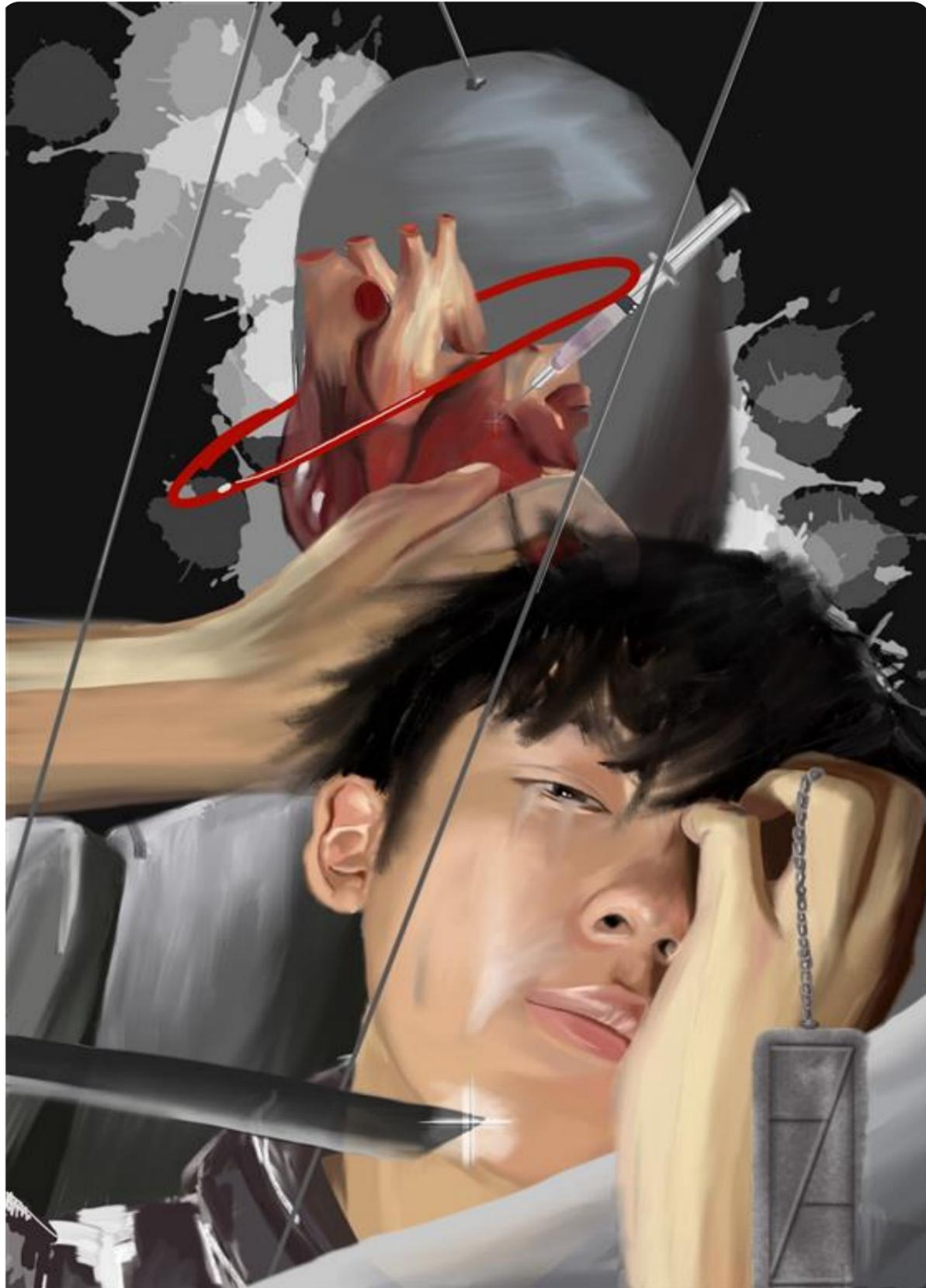
In this glass bottle I keep,
The perfume of pouring rain,
Of a past that haunts me.
In a wasteland
With faceless monsters,
Broken promises,
And forgotten colour.

In this glass bottle I keep,
The symphony of our laughter
That I rediscovered.
How we can be so much happier,
And how much I miss us
Being together.

In this glass bottle, I also keep,
The quiet glow of your presence
One which I'll cherish forever
In a place where
We can smile a little wider
My heart beats a little faster
And the world burns a little brighter.

So if our time together
Has come to cease
Take this piece of me,
One for you to keep
In which those loving memories,
Of you and I
Will never have to fade,
Never have to cry.

• Nineteen Rain Cloud •



Artwork by Zilin Jing (Year 13), Harrow Beijing

To connect

--A poem about autism

David Zhou (Year 10), Harrow Beijing

I am who I am.
Swimming through an endless inordinate ocean,
With all senses crushing in like waves set in motion.
In a world where everything is bright and loud and nigh,
With silent words constantly flying by, words I never seem to get right.
Remaining reticent I sometimes look into a starless night,
And realising blending in will need much of a hard fight.

You are a son and a wonder.
A remarkable life, a brave fighter.
But sometimes also like a lonely being moving between furniture,
With a mind so heavily veiled and eyes so hollow and stale.
Vulnerable you must feel,
Trapped in a deep vale, hiding from all the touches and superfluous senses.
Watching you grow up we know you hate being held,
But sometimes we just want to hug you, kiss you and whisper in your ear:
That we are so so proud of you.

You are a friend and a class human.
People make fun of you in school,
About your diffidence and your struggle with social norms;
Your repetitive habits and your "weird hobbies".
"Weirdo" and "retard" they call you behind your back.
Jest and mockery they throw at you when you look away.
But man, why can't they just see,
The real you living under all that are pointless and superficial:
An authentic and sincere person;
A hard worker and a non-judgemental teenager;
A devoted young man and a caring friend.
These define who you are, and they are what matter.
The world may be hindered by traits on the surface,
But trust me, some people will pierce through the mist,
And appreciate who you really are.

I am who I am.
Sometimes blunt sometimes "rude";
Sometimes anxious sometimes quiet.
But humane I am and always will be.
I may struggle making eye contact,
or seem insensitive to jokes and abstract concepts.
But behind all the lonely guises I remain just a person,
A person yearning for connections.
I may seem aloof and cold,
But approach me and you will find,
that people with autism
can be good friends too.

Synaptic Horror

By Callum Sanders (Year 10),
Harrow Hong Kong

“Why is it so bright here?”

The voice of Atlan rang out from nearby as well as from within my own mind. The echo made me do a double take, telepathy is weird. He could always subvocalise but then there would be no substance to his voice and I'd not know which direction the call came from, so maybe it's better this way? The ruins of Central lay out before us as we stepped into an area of the wayward building that the syrupy sunlight leaked onto, light rays drizzled through the cracks from years and years of concrete decay and the tips of the rebar fingers stretched out to catch the dew.

Slowly, ever so slowly, the light crept forward as the day commenced,

You could see each individual speck of dust as it danced around in the sunlight, the darkness of the shadows providing the perfect backdrop for their dance. I could almost believe it was mesmerizing but my eyes weren't nearly as important as the Precursors. No one knows what happened to them but their artifacts were difficult to understand. It seemed like they had a great deal of individuality, whereas even now my thoughts are being shared with the collective.

Move on, you don't have forever.

The order popped to the forefront of my mind, the warden was getting mad again.

I know, I know, You know you don't have to be so demanding.

My snappy reply sent all the telepathic whispers reeling immediately.

Then get moving or you'll be sent back to development.

But of course the Warden bit back, a tiger would not so easily yield to a cat.

We skirted around the clearing of light as we scrambled over the debris piles caused by the very hole we had to navigate around; we clung to the shadows for a reason, for the sun outside was the size of a yoga ball and all that left the embrace of the shadows would be snatched by the sunlight, those comforting rays stripping off layer after layer of skin, melting flesh like a candle melts wax except so much faster until you became one of the sunborn sludge monsters and the amalgamation of flesh bones and limbs and the sliver of sanity you once possessed now set towards using your own voice to lure victims out to you as you lose all sense of mind, now a mindless drone that snatches your colleagues and families and friends and pulls them out to join you as one of the deceased. I grabbed my head; the disquieting thoughts had returned and shut out the collective. My breathing became ragged and heavy: I couldn't think, I can't think, I can't? Think?

Focus.

The noise of the collective poured back into my head. It seemed the Warden wouldn't even let me die without contesting me. I pulled my 3rd hood further forward- thick clothes protected you from the effects of the red sun; they also gave you more time if one of those monsters got the jump on you. The twelve of us inched further forward. The target was the hospital today, an incredibly dangerous place. The monsters can be in vents, wrapped around pipes, under doorways or just plain crawling on the floor and they were super fast: totally unkillable and incredibly tactically intelligent. You had to scan literally every crevice if you even wanted a reasonable chance of returning home alive, but this was the initiation for all those in sanctuary. The medicine left by the precursors was a necessity for the wounded and the ill and therefore we must retrieve it. Just gotta be careful and sneak in then sneak out.

Of course though, the story didn't go that way.

The dilapidated white building lay ahead of us, so close... but so far. There was a large stretch of sun

Artwork by Stephenie Chen
(Year 13), Harrow HK



baked desert, sands shimmering red and heatwaves blurring whatever was hidden within them. It would be a risk to go out into the sun and potentially be discovered by the sun zombies. The idea of a writhing mass with so many limbs they were like the branches of a tree pulling the cloth off me, wriggling and writhing to loosen the thick clothing. The idea of exposing my skin to the sun and imagining the sensation of my own melting flesh was unpleasant. I shuddered.

3, 2, 1. Go! Go! Go!

All twelve units moved in unison as we burst forward into the desert, the tracks of our sand skis kicked up thick plumes of dust in our wake, like what the tomes described boats to be like when moving in the ocean. The creatures couldn't see so it wasn't as if it were a lighthouse but the sound was still pretty bad for us. Move quickly. The thoughts in my heart were echoed to the rest of the group, we were one body after all and all that mattered was our goal.

The zipping lines cut across the plain in no time and we scaled the walls with the skis attached, jumping up and across like some bunny attempting chimneying with its large feet. The whole group went one after the other until it was just Horton on the ground. But suddenly, out of the dust kicked up from the skis, shadows danced malevolently, without pattern, without form, just pure wild energy channeled into movement. Horton was backed into the corner as he panicked, temporarily severing his connection with the mind and at that moment he was as good as dead. In a final desperate attempt to resist his fate he pulled his shotgun and blasted himself in the head.

But the monsters do not let dead men die.

Syrupy flesh poured into the buckshot wounds, plugging blood loss and mending tissue as it went. There was no more silence from the man as his screams abruptly started again, painful wails as his skin melted and his eyes became soft goop exposed to the red sun.

Everyone backed away from the window. No one wanted to watch. We already knew what was happening to him anyway and we would pay dearly for the precious seconds we lost. Slithering noises of thick water and animals came from the vents and the pipes and we all started ransacking the site for the supplies we needed, for something wicked this way comes, and time was a luxury we could not afford. Room and after room was mechanically searched and cleared and we moved on. Yet the sounds had intensified much faster than we could have thought. I came so close to joining the panic of the collective, no one could afford the severing right now but I needed to refocus. By the time the ringing had faded, the corridor behind me wailed in the voice of Horton, something was wrong with it, it felt synthesized and real at the same time, filled with the hints of pain. The creature burst out of the doorway and scrambled forward, crawling like a slug and dragged by limbs and fleshy protuberances. It was clear Horton had been melded into one of the greater creatures, my guess was at least 20 humans had been consumed, likely from the other collectives though it was entirely possible they were the original homo sapiens. You couldn't tell after all, all the creatures were red like the sand, the sky and what was left of the seas.

These were the new inhabitants of Earth and they were perfectly adapted.

Sunset

by KK Zhuang, Year 9, Harrow Shenzhen

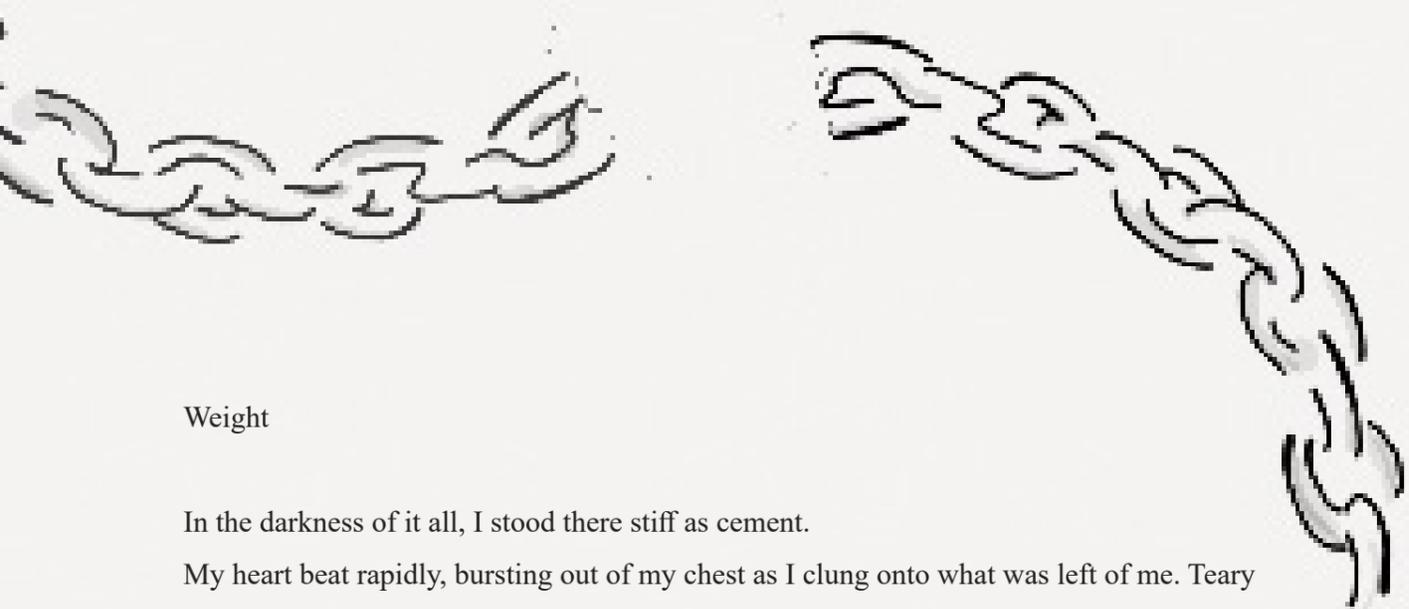
Young teenagers wave their hands in the air at the sunset on the beach. They travel to the end of the sun. He raises his hand and holds hers. They encircle the sun with their youthful energy. The sun's light shines on them; it will never go, just like the friendship they have.

A mutual attraction forces their hands together. There is no place where the sun will disappear from their friendship. Their first meeting was above a sunset. His silhouette in the glowing evening light was branded on her heart. Her face was immersed in his mind. They love each other but they are scared to reveal the truth, afraid it will drive them apart. They kept their friendship in the dying light of the sun.

Are friendships ever pure? How many people have been friends for their whole childhood but they are actually hiding something deeper? Can we still see our teenage hands in the sunset?

One day, the sun will be gone. There will only be crying under the sunset. The thing we want for our whole life can be right beside us, if we are only brave enough to look into the sun and see it.

Artwork by King Guo, Year 9, Harrow Shenzhen



Weight

In the darkness of it all, I stood there stiff as cement.

My heart beat rapidly, bursting out of my chest as I clung onto what was left of me. Teary eyed with wet cheeks and damp palms, I had nowhere left to go.

A million thoughts flashed through my mind. They seemed so distant, yet so close, but I couldn't grasp it. The sinking feeling in my stomach moved up to my chest, as if my heart were filled with gallons and gallons of mercury which kept me on the ground like I was being pulled down closer into the depths of a fiery pit.

But I wasn't alone. A voice so eerie, yet so comforting rang in my ears like a soft chime. A sense of relief, safety, belonging. Warmth cupped my right cheek ever so slightly, releasing me from the chains that I had trapped myself in. The kilos of weight that I had been carrying for years was lifted, and the feeling of pure dread was no more.

For the first time in my life, I felt free.

Free from the pressure which slowly drowned me inch by inch, day by day. The ball and chain which I had dragged along, scratching against the rough streets which led to home.

-Ivy (Year 12) Harrow Bangkok



To Cook A Connection

By Enhe Hu (Year 10), Harrow UK

**In a buttered pan,
Scatter fresh, short slivers of occasions,
On a bedding made of curiosity and interest.
Put it on a stove,
And let dedication and passion simmer their flavours
together.
You now have a friendship.**

**Add freshly harvested dates and movie nights,
And mix them,
In a strong bowl made of the wood of Cupid's arrows.
Swish them into your pan,
And let loyalty, faith and fervour bring out their intense
fragrances.
You now have a relationship.**

**Be aware!
If not handled with tedious care,
Dark spots of jealousy, anger may appear.
They will sour, vandalize,
And disfigure your dish,
Till it sits, mutilated, barely edible.**

**Most will still choose to consume it,
And risk, eternally, being hurt, ashamed and depressed.
But if you have a will of iron,
And the patience of waiting a millennium,
Reproduce your dish,
And you will obtain a connection.**

Artwork by Jun Wha Shin (Year 12), Harrow UK

Thirteen

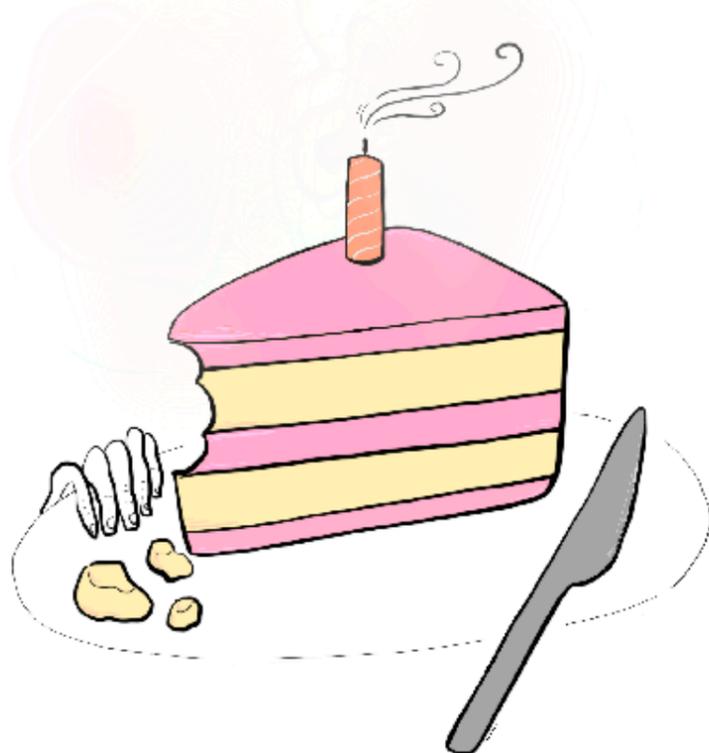
by Anonymous, Harrow Bangkok

There you appeared
With twisting licorice lips
And taffy arms that crisscrossed
Around your body
Like sallow vines on mahogany.

Through the swirling smoke of thirteen,
I watched you slip
Under the door like a death telegram,
Like a starved finger under a locked gate;
Like a child peeking into a butcher's basement.

Blinded by their vacant vows, entranced
By promises of luscious love
And the sun-dipped season of
Thirteen,
My new guest drew breath beside my own. Until the last candlelight
had surrendered in stifled wisps, in strangled warnings of
Thirteen.

-A. Hummingbird



Isolation

Artwork by Emile Chen (Year 13),
Harrow Beijing

Fiona Ma (Year 10), Harrow Beijing

Writing, as my dialogue with the world,
Even though, there's isn't an
respond.
If there is



As I perceive something in this uncertain society,
I'm trying, to reconnect with the
world.
Because,
Nothing means more
than a real connection.

Wren

by Indi Abrams (Year 13), Harrow UK

The distorted image of the rising sun danced over the light swell. The boat — Luna, she was called — danced, too. A slow, rocking dance to her own inconsistent beat, but a dance, nonetheless.

“It’s cold,” Wren said, stifling a yawn.

“I told you to wear your scarf,” I teased, aware that she could feel me shivering next to her, despite the layers of clothing in which I was wrapped.

Wren rolled her eyes. “I’m pretty sure you’re supposed to offer me your jacket, not chastise me.”

I sighed. “The things I do for love,” I muttered, unbuttoning my coat and handing it to her.

Wren leant over and pulled the coat over both of us. “There, we’ll share. Is that better?”

“Much.”

Small waves lapped against Luna’s hull as the gentle breeze picked up. Wren shivered and drew her legs to her chest. I stood up slowly and began raising the anchor. Plumes of sand followed the glinting metal chain as it rose through the water.

“Do we have to leave so early?” Wren asked.

“If we don’t leave now, we’ll get caught in the storm. Really, we ought to have left last night,” I said, unfurling the mainsail. Slowly, Luna picked up speed.

“Can’t we just stay here and wait for it to pass?”

“We could.”

“Then lets! I like it here,” Wren said.

I looked out over the islands. Sharp cliffs erupted from the water, silhouetted in scarlet. Verdant trees coated the steep inclines, giving way occasionally to slashes of rock. One in particular stood out, towering above the rest. Wren had said that it looked like a fish, though I never understood why. Sunlight streaked down its rocky face, illuminating the brilliant blue water beneath it.

“It is nice,” I admitted.

Wren smiled.

I gently steered Luna back towards the islands. The boat keeled over slightly as she turned, and Wren leant over the side, passing her hand through the water. We sailed past the spot where we had been anchored the night before; the storm might pass through, and if it did, I wanted to be in shelter

I furled up the sail and dropped anchor in the shade of the fish-shaped island.

“Really?” Wren protested, gesturing vaguely towards the sky. “I wanna see the sunrise!”

“It’ll be the same as yesterday. And it’ll be the same tomorrow.”

Wren stood up and threw off the coat. She stuck her tongue out and dove over the side of the boat.

When she surfaced, she was giggling.

“I’m gonna go see it anyways.”

“I thought you were cold,” I said.

“I was. I am.” She laughed.

“You’re insane,” I muttered.

“I heard that! Hurry up and get in or we’ll miss it.”

I shook my head. “Let me get changed first.”

“Absolutely not; no time!”

I chuckled and threw my shirt off. Standing at the edge of the hull, I rubbed my hands together nervously. In the shade of the island, the water was a deep opaque blue; I shivered just looking at it.

“Cannonball!” Wren shouted.

“Not happening.” I dove overboard.

The cold knocked the air from my lungs, and I shot upwards, panicked. I gasped for air, but tasted salt-water as a wave slammed into my face. I could barely hear Wren’s laughter over my own coughing. Crazy woman, I thought. All this for a sunrise. She beckoned me towards her.

People always insist that you get used to the cold, that it’s ‘not too bad once you’re in.’ In my experience, that couldn’t be further from the truth. A shivering wreck, I paddled towards the light shining past the island.

Wren swam graceful circles around me. She was born for the water, it seemed. I, on the other hand, rued the day I first set foot on that boat. Tropical water had no right being this shockingly cold.

And yet, I found myself smiling. Perhaps I was just amused by the absurdity of the situation, or maybe I was laughing at my own pathetic form. I doubt that either of those were the reason, though. I was smiling because of Wren. Let the storm come, I thought. We’ll handle it.

Something grabbed my foot. I spun, thrashing wildly. Whatever it was released its grip. I darted away, swimming faster than I ever had before, and likely faster than I ever will again.

I couldn’t see Wren.

My heart was trying to break free from my chest. The cold no longer touched me. I spun in a full circle, scanning the water for any sign of her.

She popped up a few metres behind me, laughing hysterically.

“Gotcha!”

“I swear to God, Wren, when I have a heart-attack at forty-five, it’ll be your fault.”

“How’s it my fault that you’re such a scaredy-cat? Besides, it was so worth it; you should have seen yourself!”

Wren mimicked me, thrashing and screaming as if she were drowning.

I raised my eyebrows. “Yeah right.”

“No, you really did freak out!”

“You were underwater; it must have... distorted what you saw.”

Wren snorted. “Sure, let’s call it that.”

She was next to me in a matter of seconds, rushing towards the light that spilled past the island. For my part, the adrenaline rush of moments ago was wearing off, and I was losing my breath. My arms ached dully, and my legs moved slowly. Wren dove beneath the surface again, and this time, I saw her darting towards me.

Even so, I nearly screamed when she leapt out of the water in front of me. Almost there, I reassured myself. It’ll be worth it.

I was right. As Wren pulled me out of the shadow of the island, I understood her desperation to see the sunrise (not that I plan on telling her as much any time soon). The archipelago of dark cliffs took on an ethereal tone before the sky’s scarlet-orange backdrop. As I basked in the sun, I silently thanked whatever it was that created these islands, and more so, I thanked Wren for insisting that we stay behind, and for forcing me into the water to see the sunrise.

“Worth it, right?” she asked.

I smiled. “There are worse ways to spend the morning.”





By Jacky Guan
(Year 12)
Harrow Shanghai

Born a Hero

By Emily Li (Year 9), Harrow Shanghai

“Hero.”

I have heard this word many times. It's so familiar, yet peculiar to me.

Everyone has called me a hero since I was born. They said I was the only hope in this village, this small village. It is said that I was born with a magic mark on my forehead; it is shiny, incredible and divine. It remains a mystery as to why I am gifted with super powers, as neither my mum nor dad possess any unusual traits. In fact, there are many others with super powers in this world, but none in our village. They train me every day for fighting with different fighting techniques. I never understood why, but I am glad they did.

I was born into a nice family of five. We are very calm and loving, sharing great times together. Sounds great, huh? I am grateful for it.

Life seemed to be quite perfect.

Until I was fifteen, when the monster attacked.

I didn't know what had happened; I just saw people running and screaming. My parents shouted at me to run. But I couldn't move my feet; it was so scary for me that I was paralysed. I saw the monster moving towards us. It raised its hands and smashed a building. It caught a small girl that didn't have time to run, threw her into its mouth... and ate her.

I am the only one who could stop it, right? I had to save the others.

I finally was able to move my feet and, this time, towards the monster. It looked at me surprised, then made a weird laugh. It sounded disgusting.

I quickly turned back to my parents, shouting, “Go, I will come back later. Trust me.” I picked up my sword and ran towards the monster.

I hit hard at its feet. It was enormous so it moved very slowly. I hit it again and rolled away before it stepped onto me. It was painful for the monster and so it became more angry. Its large eyes rolled as it raised its hand to hit me. I tried to dodge but its other hand struck at me. As a defensive instinct, I lifted my arms and shut my eyes, even knowing it was useless as protection. I was ready to die but death never came. Slowly opening my eyes, I saw a crystal wall beside me, blocking the monster.

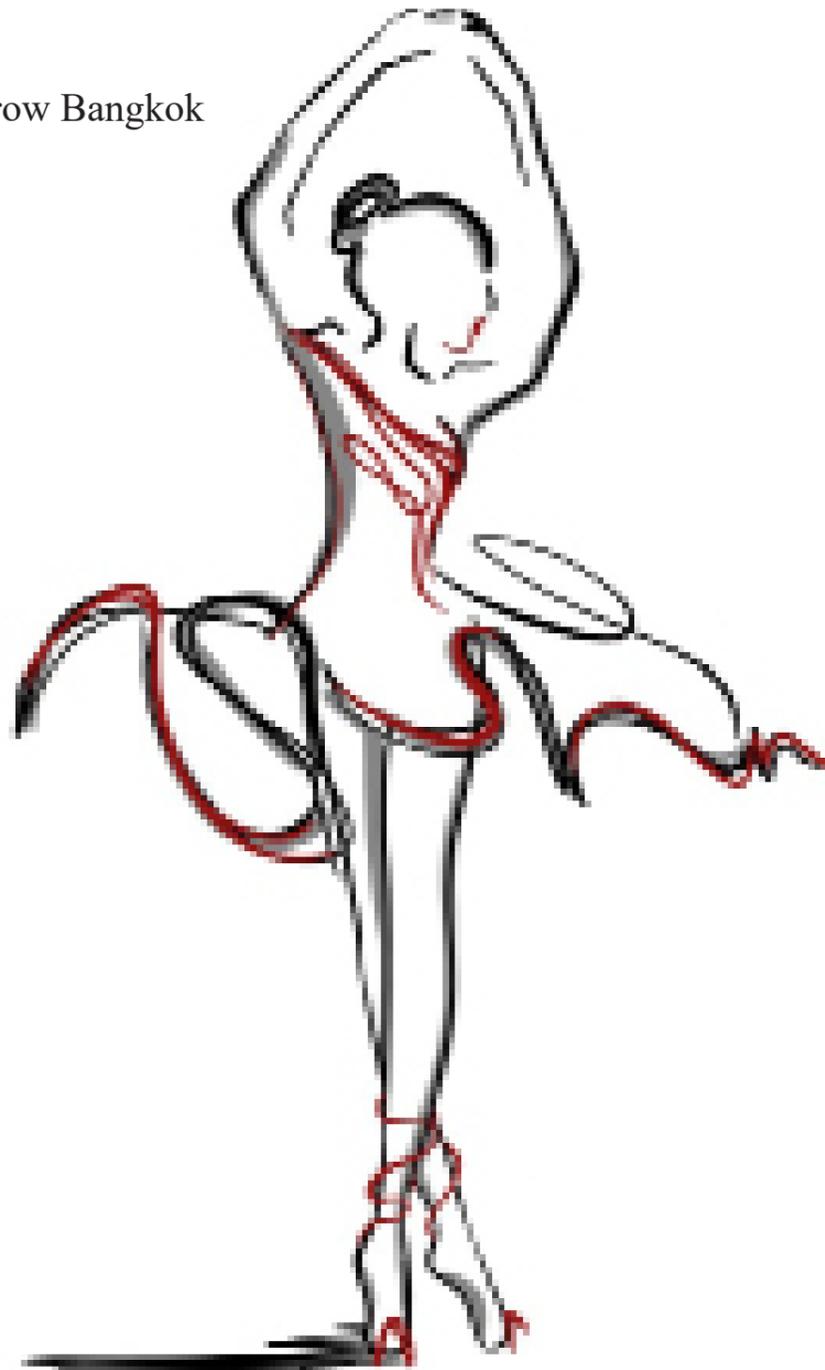
So, this was my super power?

I realised I was able to control these crystals. So before the master could react, I made a sharp, dagger-shaped crystal and shot its arms, then aimed two more at its eyes while it cried in agony. It quickly bolted off and never returned. Finally, the menacing monster who everybody feared was defeated.

This is how the story ends, and how my journey began.

We who hurt alone so badly
Dance around each other
Like a ballerina donned weighted soles.
I wonder, would it be so awful
If I continue to twirl
In our broken rhythm.

- Prim (Year 12), Harrow Bangkok



Artwork by @pattywongbenjarat



Storm in Tokyo

by King Guo (Year 9), Harrow Shenzhen

Artwork by Tiger Li (Year 9), Harrow Shenzhen

A cold wind blows by
dust swirls leaves rustle rain pours
from the crying sky.

The hand is quivering cold

from the air; from the sadness Two strangers shiver.

His hands tugs the loose button,
Pulling his clothes tight.

Her arms and hands and eyes ache

Headlights flash wildly, From an umbrella of tears.
heading towards her body.

He reaches in vain.

Darkness swallows them at once,

falling in to Jigoku. Raging with the wind,

clenching to dropped memories,
passing through pillars.

They were there but they are gone,

A cold wind blew by fading back into silence.

dust swirled leaves rustled rain poured
from the crying sky.

The silence quivered coldly

In the air; in the sadness.

Home

Alexander Newman (Year 10), Harrow UK

This country is my home.
For it is where a roof rests over my head.
It is where I lie myself in bed.
Resting upon a soft pillow my head, Dreaming;
Dreaming of Home.

But my home is not a home of warm fires
And freshly ginger snaps.
Mine is a cold and complex world,

For my home, this country, is a different place
Where every day the dreamer in me dies a little,
My loss, though not tangible, is easy to face;
Slowly killed on the basis of my race.
This is my home.

I see the looks that flicker up at me,
Your suspicion.
My outrage. Outright. But I must withhold,
Or I risk a fight,
A fight I am destined to lose.
Just for one moment imagine being in our shoes.
Knowing that they're so wrong about you
But they don't care,
They just see your skin, your hair.
This is my home.

Lest I risk to dream.
Like so many brothers left on the street,
Left for dead for dead without missing a beat,
To die a hero is no mean feat,
But to die in a gutter.
A place no one knows.
Nothing but the rising fumes and smog of the local Mr Chippy,
The late night London grease,
It makes me think.

Should I lead not from my heart but my head,
So that I don't join my brothers and sisters lying dead,
So that I'm not another brown man to fade into obscurity,
But that I make a difference to the pages of history,
This is my Home.

Yet who are we without a dream,
A medium to channel our rage,
To bring about change,
The likes of Dr King and Malcom X,
What must we do to follow in their footsteps
So that we can tread the path of change next.
This is my Home.

I want to be able to craft a legacy that is beyond me,
For every other person
Black, brown or white to see.
So that we can raise our hand,
To take a stand
and claim the promised land,
To rewrite the odds for those who outlast the short, bittersweet moments we're here,
To give them another lease of life
So that they can treasure it dear.

And if we can't, what can we do?
The likes of me and you,
Do we just continue to lie?
Lie to ourselves and the world that it's fine,
That the dream will come true even if we don't try,
Because it won't- and I cannot lie.

I am the dreamer; And this is my Home.



The City

It is an empty city.

Just over a month ago, the city of Wuhan was still booming with prosperity. The month was December, families and friends were all excited about the grand entrance to a brand new decade of the 2020s.

Home to millions, the city was glowing with a haze of red. The luminous lights covered the streets of Wuhan, and from afar, one could easily see its rows and rows of skyscrapers stood up tall and proud as if they were the guards to this phenomenal utopia.

Moving closer, every building had banners, decorations and LED screens, indicating the excitement the public had for the New Year. Looking around, one could be mesmerised by the aroma of prosperity that lingers indefinitely throughout the streets. It was a booming city.

But what happened to it?

It is an empty city now. One month after the epidemic outbreak, the previously prosperous city is now filled with the smell of fear. Red lights of prosperity no longer glow within, instead the only red is the blood red haze from the alarm signals at city entrances.

The empty city is on absolute lockdown.

Its atmosphere is filled with panic, although now, people are more conscious of what has been going on. Wuhan, which is home to millions, now has only empty streets. The skyscraper guardians of the city still stand tall, but they are inert. No lights, no banners, as if the erect buildings are standing armours on display. Magnificent, but lifeless.

The shopping streets which were heaven for the younger generations are completely out of customers. What are supposed to be signs and banners showing discounts on food and drinks, now show an alarming red "SOLD OUT" on top of empty boxes of surgical facemasks. The virus has been forcing everyone back home, and any festive mood is now shattered into ashes.

Despite being the epicentre of the outbreak, Wuhan has been holding strong. The sensation of a dry and heavily polluted atmosphere is omnipresent within. A soft glaze welcomes anyone who wishes to look out of their windows, and it is a dull grey glow of light, as beams of sunlight desperately try to cut through the dense atmosphere.

It is also quiet now. Without the booming chatter of vehicles, the noises of the city have died down. The sweetness of street food no longer swirls on the streets. It does lightly linger around though, although no one could be here to taste it anymore.

Only the heart of the city still beats like before. Hospitals located at the city centre are at full capacity. They are the last standing guardians of the city. Standing erect as always, they have the responsibility of healing the city. Moving closer, one could easily pick out the long streams of patients waiting in line for treatment.

Tears drip down their faces as they enter. Of course, upon diagnosis, one would definitely shed tears of fear, but not the people here. Their eyes beam, because they know, whatever the people go through, the city will always protect them. Just like the tall standing hospitals, the medics dressed in white coats with glowing aura are their guardian angels.

Although the city is empty, empty of people, traffic, or shining lights, the city of Wuhan will never be empty of hope. It is a battle against microscopic killing machines, and even if the city now has smells of cleaning alcohol instead of the aroma of food, glowing grey instead of a festive red, its people will always stand tall. Wuhan is filled with prayers worldwide, and it is far from defeated.

The city may be empty now, but its hopes stand strong as always.

霖 Kevin You (Year 12), Harrow Bangkok



desideratum

by Alexander Chang, Year 9, Harrow Shenzhen

His tiny hands are newborn plants, filled with hope and spirit. They reach out for his mother's sun, yearning for her energy, stretching to the surface. Closer and closer, his tender skin rubs her protective hands. Tighter and tighter, his newness and brightness show his wonder, curiosity and innocence. Deeper and deeper, the warmth flows between their hands. The baby grabs its mother's hands with strength, stands up and starts walking.

The larger hands reaching out for the baby's palms are so thin, smooth and gentle. Stably, the mother holds her baby up and lifts his panic, steadies his nervous fists which keep running from the monster in his mind. Peacefully, he rests his fists in her experienced and reliable palms, enjoying the warmth and safety being delivered by her. Even though her hands are pale, tense and tired, even though the wrinkles on her hands are obvious, she is the symbol of a beautiful heart.

He trembles as if Big Foot has ambushed him. A voice of unsureness calls for help. A feeling of insecurity yells for comfort. A fear of learning to walk screams for support. He clamps the hands of his mother so tightly, searching for relaxation, while he does not yet have enough courage to step up. In his eyes, his mother is benevolence.

She hadn't always been fearless; responsible; strong. During her pregnancy, the pains that flew through her were swords, raining down and stabbing her, one by one, on every part of her body. The wrinkles came from her aging and pain. Her hands were not young anymore. She had touched roughness, tasted bitterness, heard pain and seen the cruelty of life. But he did not need to know that. She must keep that from her baby.

And so she reaches out and gently responds to the new guest.



By Midori Sissons (Year 12), Harrow Shanghai

Spartan Legacy By Tobey Castle (Year 9), Harrow Shanghai

I woke up early to take in one last view of the sun rising. It was glorious; the red, orange, and yellow mixed into one uplifting glow while the cool heat blew in my hair. I could see the waves calmly caressing the shore. Then all of a sudden, the earth started to rumble. Everyone stood up in awe and started talking to each other about what it could be.

'Earthquake,' suggested one of my warriors.

'No, battle formations,' I shouted, looking around for any sign of the opposition before commanding, 'We have to get ready, they're going to be here any time now. Get everyone in position.'

In the next five minutes, our adamant force looked strong as a brick wall and fierce as a wolf; figures were seen running in our direction just over the hills. The whole Persian army came charging at our line of red capes and gold helmets, their swords akimbo, their faces fuelled with anger at the sight of our polished shields. 'This is where we hold them!' I belted across the line of my Spartan warriors, 'This is where we fight! This is where we live, and they die! We haven't come all this way, won all those battles to lose against Xerxes' forces. Earn these shields, and continue the Spartan Legacy!'

As a formation, we picked up our shields and protected the warrior to the left from thigh-to-neck like a true Phalanx movement. We dug our feet into the ground and held our spears up high to skewer the Persian army.

There was an almighty crash as the Persians collided into our bronze shields. We had enough power to push them back and penetrate their thin layer of armour with our well-enforced steel spears, but they kept coming wave after wave, pulse after pulse.

After fighting for some time, it looked like we had pushed the Persian forces back to their holdout. They all ran, retreating back the other side of the ruined battlefield. Had they surrendered? Our hopes were high, everyone had a slight grin under their scarred Spartan helms when all of a sudden, one of my comrades yelled at the sky, 'Incoming!'

We all raised our heads to find one sight that none of us would have wanted.

The sky was darkening second-by-second, blocking out the sun, as a wave of deadly arrows sailed through the air in our direction. In that one second where the sun was absent, it was as cold as the heart of winter, but yet, I still felt the flame in my soul.

Entropy

By Dora Gan (Year 10), Harrow Hong Kong



In the deepest hours of night, my life erupts in enthalpy and entropy,
Swallowing the bodies I left buried at the back of my closet.
I'll look back through a looking glass, cold against my drooping eyelid;
Centuries of lies I used to cajole myself
Walking on knives, dancing with the beasts,
And I wish to burn, to create a semantic field of flame and heat,
To soothe the half-moon shapes imprinted onto my palm by cataracts of emotions,
Strangling and tangling;
But if I close my eyes long enough, if the moisture on my cheeks cools me enough,
I can pretend to be at the bottom of the Seine,
Amniotic fluid sheltering me from the world.

But it's not Paris, no.
No, it's never been that beautiful drunk glittering city,
Not the roses and the chocolates melting in your mouth,
The music wafting in your ear,
The oscillation of the ear drums through your blood stained with forgotten love down your
arteries and veins and capillaries to the machine that goes

Thump. Thump. Thump.
They're war drums coming after me, aren't they?
But who am I to fight for?

And I'll escape to New York,
Slow dance with Liberty and ecstasy higher than the Empire state,
Attempt to find myself amongst the concrete riptides of the metro and its lights,
The nameless faceless crowd, my cells screaming for caffeine,
And adrenaline soars around, like a mockingbird taking flight, stained dark with the pas-
sion and faults of humanity,
Cruel monstrosity of humanity.
But that's okay because I'll inject myself with sleep,

In London so to say,
Sizzle of flesh being grilled then squeezed into too tight dresses,
My words struggling to uphold dignity,
Ghosts of civilization reflected in their bright blue irises drowning in my oblivion.
Close my eyes and reminisce pen against paper,
Scratching the same words over and over
Being unable to face the writing on the wall --

The fact that the body in my closet resembles me
And that she is me,
Just debris of my presence and of childhood dreams,
A birthday cake, an unfinished diary, a hope for the impossible looked over by Lady Luck
and left unanswered by God.
For from this nameless town I rose and to this nameless town I'll return,
Wait for me to be disillusioned from the drugs of my own imagination,
As I crash down to the floor with terminal velocity,

Because it's all just entropy.

Artwork and photography by
Jarra Devi (Year 13), Harrow Hong Kong

Artwork by Genghis De
Biolley (Year 13),
Harrow Beijing



The Birch

Jack He (Year 10), Harrow Beijing

Part I: Hollowness

When they cut down that Birch tree I knew that my life isn't worth living anymore.....

Part II: Saved!

It was a lovely day with the sun towering above the skies and bird chirping on trees. The sky was bright blue with marshmallow clouds hanging as if it might fall down at any second. I and my mother lived in an apartment right next to the forest. The forest was dark, especially at night time. Whenever I went to bed, I always hear howls that make your heart-rate speed out and distinguish footsteps that just creep you out. My mother told me that the forest was full of birch trees and deadly animals such as wolves, foxes and even tigers. If you don't behave, those creatures would venture out of cozy homes in the forest and get you when you are asleep. Rumors has that Mr. Blake, who was neighbour got killed by a bear in the forest. After that incident, my mother told me to never ever go inside the deadly forest.

The deadly forest was always a big no-no to me. However, people mocked me, I'll always remember my mother's warning. But today, despite of the lovely day, I was in a horrible mood. I had an argument with my mother about father again. She, after all these years, was still crying every night about father and I fear that she is going to break down completely one day. So, we had those fights about moving on in life. Only this time, I had enough of her weakness. So, I slammed the door and without thinking, I violated the only rule that my mother exclaimed, not to go in the forest. By violating it, I paid my price for the rest of my life.

I stormed in the forest, smacking away at leaves and branched. The scenery became darker and darker until there was no light available between the trees. That is about the time when I realized that I was lost.

I sat by a tree and pull my knees up and cried. I was horrified and dread of what's to happen.

Will I die of starvation? Or would be eaten by some cruel animal?

I wept for a long time. I wept about my dead father, who died in a car accident. I wept for my mother, who never got over father's death. "I tried to be strong for you mother, but I can't do this anymore, not inside here!" I wailed. Finally, I got very tired and somehow, I started to sleep, sitting by that tree.

I don't know how much time has passed when I first heard the howling and the footsteps creeping towards me. At first, I thought that I was a dream, but after pinching myself multiple times, I knew that I was in great danger. The eyes appeared first, cold and menacing. Then, its dirty gray coat and then, its muscular legs. Seeing this, I did what most people did, I ran for my life.

My biology teacher said that an adult wolf can run up to 7-8 miles and hour where as an adult human being could only run 2. At that time, I was in grade 3, so you don't have to be a genius to know what happened next. The wolf was gaining on me fast! And after running for a few minutes, I was gasping for air and I know that I couldn't run for any longer.

So, I climbed on a birch tree and that sycamore tree saved my fragile life. After climbing up 10 meters, I looked down. The wolf was howling as if it had missed the best chance of its life whereas I cling on to a birch branch for dear life.

After a few excruciating minutes, the wolf finally gave up and went away. I climbed down with the last of my strength and then, I blacked out.

When, I woke up I was in my bed with a cold towel on my head. My mother was tear-stricken and seeing that I was awake, ran over and embraced me as if I would disintegrate in her arms.

Part III: Gratitude.

After that incident, I decided to dedicate my life to that tree. I went inside the forest, and despite my mother's warnings watered it every day. Day by day, I saw that birch tree develop and grow. And after 3 years the sycamore tree had grown into a 40 feet monster.

A lot of people asked why I was so fond of that stupid tree. Even my mother said that it was analogical to water a tree everyday in danger of getting attacked by wild animals again. But, that birch tree saved me from terrible and painful death. For that, I owe it my soul.

Then, one day, my soul broke.

That day it was raining fiercely, I was in Grade 6 and was ready to go to school. Out of habit, when I went outside my house, I looked for the tallest tree in the forest, which was my birch tree. However, I saw was not what I expected, it was a massacre. There was a fire.

Red hot flames burned me when I went inside the forest.

The last thing that I heard before I entered was my mother command, “Get back here!” I ran for 10 minutes. But, finally I got to my sycamore tree, my heart and soul. As if on cue, the fire was burning the birch. “No, no!” I cried, I tore off my jacket and started to flap, wanting to make the fire better. However, it was no use. Then, a fireman appeared beside me and shouted, “Child, what do you think you are doing?” “Save it, please!” I cried. “No, it’s just a birch tree let’s go or you die.” “No, no, I can’t go! My life almost ending here 3 years before, and it would end here now!” The fire fighter, snatched me up in his arms. I screamed and kicked, but the firefighter was too strong. Then, joined two firefights holding me steady, I watched from behind as they torn my soul apart.

Part IV: Redemption

That was the time when I felt hollow and numb. I felt that my life was taken from me. I walked like a zombie back to our house. Seeing my mother, I neither expressed joy or sadness. Even when my mother furiously screamed at me because of my idiocy, I was only able to utter out one line, “They cut it down, they cut it down.....” After that I never felt the same. I always felt angry and my studies went from straight A to D’s. One day my mother just couldn’t bear it any longer and screamed at me to move on in life. One time, she even tried to make a deal, if she moved on in life, I would have to move on as well. I just shook my head and walked to my room. I quit school after that, it was just pointless after my soul has fallen apart. No matter how my mother persuaded me to go, I just stood there, looking at the forest, desperately hoping that the sycamore tree would magically appear again. Redemption, that’s what I needed. I should have done more, I should have stopped them. There must be countless ways to stop them cutting down that birch tree and thought of none of them. Just like that tree suffered, I should suffer likewise. So, I locked myself in my room, letting no one in expect when my mother is sending food and water in. “Redemption is a hard process to bare, you just have to move on.” I urged myself. At first my mother was angry and scared, she didn’t know what had happened to me. She beseechs me to go out of the room just for a while but every time, I said no. After time, my mother stopped urging me and I was left in peace. “Peace is good, it was the path to redemption.” I thought. Peace was good at that time, but my health definitely wasn’t. I got a high fever and my condition was getting worse and worse everyday. However, I did not retaliate, I didn’t go out of the room or except any medicine from my mother. No matter how she tried, I just shook my head.

Part V: Abyss

I locked myself for 1 month and after that 1 month. I was feeble, fragile, and pale. My mother seems to have disappeared around the house. I never heard her footsteps in the house nor even smell her perfume. I was sure she had given up on me. “That’s good, that’s the path to redemption.” One day, as I was lying on my bed, the abyss came. It was black and murderous. I sucked me in and when I refused, it’s pulls got stronger and stronger. The abyss suddenly flashed white and all my lives memories flashed around me. At that instant, I thought that I was sure to die.

Part VI: Final

Then, my mother rushed to me, and just as my eyes were starting to close, she show me a scene that made my soul full again. It was a sprout of a birch tree, my birch tree. No, it was a tiny version of it. But still it was my birch. I knew it became I have seen it too many times. Its patterns and its light green leaves, were all recognizable. “Please, don’t die, please.” my mother howled, “Look at this sprout and think of the happy and joyful times that you had with that tree. I’m sorry that I could not understand at first. But, please, don’t die, not yet please!” “It’s here, my soul is here.” I struggled to take that photo from my mother’s trembling hands. I looked at it, hard!” Then, like magic, the abyss disappeared quickly just at it emerged and I was looking at my mother’s teary face. “Mother,” I crocked, “Is this really a seed from my birch tree?” “Never mind that, you are alive and you need to get better.” “Where have you found this seed? I’ve never even seen you in the forest before. “ “Please, don’t make me do this to you.” my mother whispered with her hands cradling my head. “Please, I need to know.” “It’s not a seed from your tree, Alex.” She muttered out, barely audible. Everything went black.

St Mary’s Drive

By Anonymous, Harrow Bangkok

i can feel the earth
of my motherland
aching for me
i could feel its pull
tearing at my heartstrings
singeing my identity
at the seams
i could taste
the very air
around St. Mary’s Drive
like mildew and honey
that drips
drips
drips
from great green trees

and i ache
i ache
i ache
i ache
and

i
break

- theintricaciesofwords



Artwork by Aegean Au (Year 12), Harrow Shanghai



Trouble at Sea

By Skye Shen (Year 9), Harrow Shanghai

Jeffry is a brave, handsome and respected adult. He had recently just gotten promoted as the captain of a luxury cruise ship.

One day, Jeffry was crossing the Pacific Ocean on his cruise ship. The cruise ship had many kinds of leisure activities and onboard was a few hundred passengers.

They were about an hour away from reaching the destination when suddenly, a bang echoed around the ship. The show stopped, the eating stopped, the chatter stopped. Everything in the ship stopped. Soon, there was silence, and then panic.

Before things got too out of hand, the captain went on the speakers to calm everyone down, "ladies and gentlemen, do not panic and please head to your emergency stations immediately."

Soon, the problem became clear to everyone on the bridge. The hull of the ship broke apart and the engine room was flooded with water. Fortunately, the flood gates had already closed so no water could leak into the other rooms. However, the electric generators will not work without the engines, so the ship had no power but only those from the emergency batteries and generators.

The ship was sinking fast and was tilting to the port. Jeffry had already given the orders to evacuate the ship and help was on their way. Most of the crew went to the evacuation stations to help the passengers, and others were left in the bridge to control the ship the best they can. Jeffry and a few others ran around, trying to find and rescue anyone who were trapped. Jeffry heard yelling and banging while passing by a passenger's cabin. He stopped to investigate what the noise was; he tried to open the door but could not, so he started asking questions about the situation, "Hello, who is in there and what is the problem?" A croaking voice replied, "It's Mr. and Mrs. Hicks in here. A table had fell and is blocking the door, it seems to be jammed, but it's too heavy for us to move it out the way!"

"I'll see what I can do!" shouted Jeffry, as he tried to push and pull the door without success. With water rushing in from the the end of the corridor and no one here to help, Jeffry started bashing at the door with his shoulder and soon, the door was rammed open. Jeffry climbed in and understood why it was too heavy for them: both Mr. and Mrs. Hicks looked like they were in their 70's. He quickly helped the both of them out and led them to the life boats to evacuate the ship.

When they finally reached the life boats, there were two left: one for the passengers and one for the crew. Both were almost full of people. They climbed into their respective life boats and left the sinking ship.

When the crew got back to dry land, they were announced heroes for helping and saving many lives by evacuating the ship and rescuing trapped passengers.

On that Night

by Mary Li, Year 9, Harrow Shenzhen

On a night with lightning flashes and thunder rumbles, a baby cried hard. The tears flow from her eyes like a waterfall. It sounds like she is trying to get away from this world, but she can't. Her face is as red as a ruby, making people want to touch it, to soothe her pain.

Suddenly, she stopped crying, because a big and strong hand reached out to her. Like the bark from an old pine tree, the hand is wrinkled and rough but filled with tenderness. His hand is a strong rampart, withstanding so much damage; it is not a beautiful palace, but strong still.

Through the rampart, there is a little princess. The hand is small; soft; naive. She is sleeping quietly under the protection of the city wall. She doesn't need to know how scary, bumpy and hazardous is outside those walls.

She is a tiny country made by adults. They were angels with clean wings, but now they have their own child, they do not care about their wings anymore, they just use them to protect the baby. Even though they are not powerful superheroes, they still hunch their backs against the world to keep the dangers away. The old hand used to be a small hand as well. When he was a child, the hand used to play with toys. He grew up and used his hands to work and earn money for himself. But now he has to protect the people he loves. He never thought that he would be a hero to somebody.

The baby fell back into sleep by the cradlesong of night with lightning flashes and thunder rumbles.

Artwork by Grace Liu, Year 9, Harrow Shenzhen



Home, at last

Written and illustrated by
Joy Chen (Year 10), Harrow Hong Kong

Thighs tensed. Effort. Extreme, excruciating effort. The world spinning, going dark at the edges. Blood dredging through the veins in her brain, tides of her breath dragging her along the undercurrents of anaesthetic darkness. Momentarily surfacing from its depths to take a breath, before being plunged back in again. Chaos reigned within her splintering body, clawing its way through her insides, and devouring the rapidly deteriorating edges of her vision. Synapses flaring, agony shooting through her veins like the adrenaline rush of a long deprived junkie, but bringing no bliss- just pure, searing pain. Then nothing. Again. Then her hell-tinged world dilated, and the claws of suffering loosened their grip on her, and light filtered onto her face once more, tending to her as a mother comforts her child woken up from a night terror. Cool, sweet air flooding through the tubes of her throat, cleansing, cascading down in fresh-faced rivulets, and finally: it was over. She peered between her legs, eyes sliding over the now drooping folds and folds of empty flesh. There it was, shining and blood-bathed: a brand new doll. Head dangling to the side, tiny pink tongue lolling out. She looked at the string binding her to it, its grip nauseatingly strong. She stared.

It's yours.

No. No, this couldn't be true. No, no.

Isn't he beautiful? He's going to look just like his father.

Her dull eyes glazed over the baby's face once more.

Venus could remember when her heart had once been gorged with love. Belly bulging with the weight of it. When she would strut around, back arched, distended stomach jutting out: arrogantly, silently, knowingly, demanding everyone to create space for her. This will bring him back, she had convinced herself. This will make him see.

[NOW]

The memory stained Elijah's existence. He could still remember, vividly, when he had walked back to his sea-sprinkled neighbourhood and opened the crusted metal latch that led to the kitchen in which the fish were gutted - "Ma, I'm home" - sliced open and put on display, limp and lifeless. It had been quiet. Resoundingly quiet. The boy was raised with the hum of a steady, monotonous weeping constantly playing on the strings of his mind, and this new, stillborn silence engulfed him. He nudged the gate open. As it faltered, an empty, dingy cellar slowly bared itself, devoid of mother and belongings. It was as if all life had been swept up and snatched out of the after-scent of her wildness, lingering on the handles of the locked doors and the reflective tabletops. When she was still here, she had wrung her veins dry with the effort of preserving him, my beautiful boy, she would whisper to him through tear-stained lips, where did he go? But eventually, the sight of his face became too much for her to bear and slowly, she had faded from his life. Now there was almost nothing tangible left of her. Except for this: a frantically inked scrap of paper, lying motionless on the cement floor.

Slowly but surely, he had made his way through the list. Checking off name after name. Snap, Twist. Run. "You do it like this", his mother had demonstrated, gently breaking the bird's neck. His body suddenly became light, air, feathers. Mouth widened, a worm slipped into his mouth, still warm, wriggling, speckled with fresh dirt. He chirruped happily, signalling a sheepish twitch of the head. Then a crunch. He was walking. Leather shoes on paved ground. A smartly dressed, attractive man. Thump. Making contact with the ground. The soles of his feet pressing, certainly to the insides of his shoe - the shoe pressing, cer-

tainly, firmly, into the sun-baked dirt. A shiver. An old woman, face twisted, touching wrinkled, slender fingers to the pearls at the nape of her neck. Collar open, vulnerable and exposed. Images, snapshots, brief moments of the lives of his victims, they consumed themselves within him. Pinpricks of fear dug themselves into his spine, burrowing deep and settling uncomfortably into his bones.

Elijah had gotten used to the feeling of his lungs burning by now, the flaring shame and guilt and sheer panic hurled themselves through his muscles with the same assuredness each time. A fine, permanent tremor now ran through his legs: dregs of fear leftover from past murders. He had done this multiple times. More than that. His own aching for the comfort of human connection, or oblivion, could not stop him from carrying out his mother's will, and maintaining his own life until he was done with it. He could feel his footsteps lightening, becoming constricted to the shadows with each life he took. An afterthought. At times, he wished he could have been born a bird; a sparrow, or a hummingbird. Something fleeting, impermanent. An unconstrained sliver of the larger sky. But now, there was just one more. One final life to take before he could be free.

This is him. This was the final address scribbled on the list. Elijah, you need to be perfectly calm. He relieved himself of a sigh. It'll all be over before you know it. The boy sat amongst the heavily pruned flowerbeds for a while, admiring the fidelity of the fading light playing on the ornate stained glass. Lying in wait.

"Can I help you?" A concerned-looking man approached him. This is him. Elijah forced his exhausted eyes wide open, hoping that his grimy, matted skin would not scare him as much as incite sympathy.

"Sir, I can't find my mother. Please, help me." Harmless. Vulnerable. The man surrendered.

"Alright, do you know her number?"

"Yes, it's..." Elijah trailed off, looking wistfully into the distance.

"Yes?" He bent down to shove an impatient ear into the boy's mouth, urging him to speak louder so that he could continue with his day.

Gingerly, the boy stood up on his tiptoes and inched



through the room, rage arranged neatly on his composed face. A whirlwind of wealth and power, whisking him back into their secure life.

The warmth of a dead man's body. The chill of a living woman's cheek.

Elijah returns to his body and looks down at his own hands, silver and ghostly in the flitting dusk. He had lived in utter ignorance for his entire existence. Unanswered questions tangled in half-riddles. But now, he knew everything: why his mother never stopped weeping, why he felt such a deep connection to those people whose lives he had ended. Now, he knew that those were the puppetmasters residing over the man who stole his mother's life- his father, dangling helplessly from their fingers like a cheap marionette. Thoughtless. Disgusting. His father. A wail glided through the air, his mother or sirens or the gaps inside his own lonely heart crying out, he could not tell. The ground shook as police cars slammed out of the asphalt, and crimson lights shot through the night, pinpointing Elijah as their next victim. And he ran. He ran as if he were in some doomed dance with death before dawn, leaving the world at his heels as he dove into the wind, feeling it brush through his crumbling hair, snatching playfully at pieces of him until his legs were lost and he flooded into the wind, and in a cataclysmic meeting of dark and light, he glimpsed his first sunrise, unfurling above the wheat freckled hills, its golden warmth radiating outwards from the convoluted insides of his body. The newborn sun reached towards him, beckoning him into its arms.

Home, at last.

towards the man. Caution. Arms tingling, gravitating up towards the moon, towards the tender chunk of the man's neck. The air stretched itself out, yawning luxuriously, savouring the moment, swelling with anticipation. And, with his fingers fluttering near the target, he curled his fingers ever so slightly and time crashed into him. Amidst the flurry of his hands and his frantic mind and the confused yells of the confused man and the protests of his disobedient body, past and present and future are merging into one, and he's racing through to the end of the list, black ink smudged, the map to his mother, and snap. A helpless gurgle reverberates through the earth and he's watching a baby grasp at the fish carcasses piled up on his window. The house fades into an old woman perched on a plush armchair, wearing her best pearls: "Eli, you will not marry this girl, she's mad." Eyes shut, blackness overwhelms him, and the after taste of a storm at sea fills his throat as his tongue pokes around gentle breath, exploring the almost dark of a woman's mouth. This was the love of his life. He's brushing the hair back from the face of a shadowed figure now, sadness emanating from her unmoving skin. He looks her in the eyes, and she looks back, her empty, estranged eyes filled with nothing, shadow-mouth gaping: "The child, it's yours." His head throbs as his grandfather thunders

$y=mx+c$

By Stephanie Webb
(Year 12)
Harrow Hong Kong

you order me to punch:
numbers that map the limit of my existence
blink the stolid screen to life,
yet you ignore the venom
that sits wet on your tepid tongue.
for my flesh is a two-dimensional plane,
poised on the edge of your axes,
subject to your manipulation;
for my thoughts
are strictly confined
within the bounds of x and y;

for my individuality is
composed of computed
composite functions, uniformity
festering the tips of my fingers.
watch it blossom as tears drip,
wrangle with wavering writing.
i yearn to escape: since when did
your intricate singularity equate
my indubitable stupidity?

But for now, I pick up my pen and
steadily trace the outline of a
single, solid, straight line.

Watch it slowly snake

all the way

to you.

Photography by Stella Liu (Year 11), Harrow Hong Kong

The Life of the Lady who Time Ate

by Emily Liang, Year 9, Harrow Shenzhen

In a lonely and freezing room, two hands hold tightly.

A pure angel with a clean white uniform kindly holds the lady's hand. Her sagging Atacama skin is like a deflated balloon, releasing air every second. Innumerable wrinkles like the rings of trees try to engrave every part of her skin without leaving any space. Speckles on her arm create spiders' webs, slowly wrapping her. The butterscotch skin makes her look weak and powerless. I see agony and pain in her hand as she suffers, and it is covered by a pale, ivory palm.

Although the gloves cover up most of her hand, it is clear that she is young and healthy. Her hand is a lifeline, pumping air into the balloon. Blooming, blemish-free skin is like a shell-less egg that we aren't allowed to touch. People like her are weak but strong; they need to be protected; they play roles for god. The role of pure angels who save people's lives. They are the redeemers of humanity and gifts from above. The barrier between life and death. They are envoys of god. Through the thin gloved barrier, the angel finally had the chance to touch the woman's life, and wondered, how had she come to be here?

The old woman wasn't always old and her hand wasn't always covered up by wrinkles. Time has stolen away everything except this antique artwork. She can barely believe that the hand which made her fantasies is the same hand that is now carved with wrinkles. The delicate nails in the past are now uneven and plain. She was a treasure; she was a sweet girl; she was an angel who fell in love; she was a housewife, managing everything for her children and husband. These hands represent her constant past and vanishing future. She knows they are the same hands but it is hard to believe it. Time flies, she knows it. Time flies, she tries to save it. Time flies, she can't manage herself anymore. The reality took her away, left her with only memories and nothing more. The damaged balloon never can fly as it did before; there are too many tears, too many holes, too much damage. There is a long silence. The angel's hand can feel the natural weight. Is this the effect of gravity that sags naturally, or is this the weight of life at the last second?



In this lonely and freezing room, one hand is left alone.

Artwork by Smiler Huang, Year 9, Harrow Shenzhen

Rest

by Calvin Lu, Year 9, Harrow Shenzhen

Everything should be simple.

But is it?

No.

The first time they met, they fought.

The second time they met, they joked around, two four-year-olds in the park eating a picnic.

The next time they met, they sat beside each other in their English class, thinking about their dreams, their ideal jobs, and how they are going to change the world.

The way you only believe you can at ten.

Now,

they fight for freedom,

they fight for equality,

they fight for their dreams and their ideal world.

“The boys are growing up”

Two hands trying to make the world fair and equal

No more pain and no more discrimination

They touch and connect

They say they understand the world should not be separated.

No man is an island

But the truth is this:

These harmless words stab and destroy.

They hold each other, trying to escape.

The world is full of unfairness and blame.

People have the right to speak,

People are born to be brave and fair,

People shouldn't be afraid,

People just want to live...what crime have they done?

People going through a hard life and killed because of the words that people say,

Killed for using a 20 dollar note.

Killed for sleeping in his own car.

Killed for going inside his grandmother's backyard.

Is this world alright?

Spiralling

By Amy Rompotis (Year 10),
Harrow Hong Kong

As the sun dived below the horizon, a comforting blue sky transformed into vivid yellows and pinks, as if effortlessly swiped across an old oil painting. The faint gleam of the sun's dying rays outlined the clouds in a blazing glow that clearly signified the end of a long day. The unique scene forming in the sky could only be seen above the stone wall opposite me that abruptly divided the platforms. A chaotic flux of thoughts invaded my mind as I switched from surges of excitement to a rush of dejection.

"Train 11 to be delayed for 30 minutes," Great. That's the train to Keilor.

When I glanced down, I realised that I'd been gripping my ticket so tightly that it was deformed, crumpled into a ball. Here we go again: my anxiety asserted its presence, as it always insists on doing, at the worst of times. I put the tickets carefully into my bag in an attempt to resist the uncontrollable temptation to damage them further. It appeared that I was going to be waiting a while, so I figured I might as well get as comfortable as possible on the empty, stiff bench I could see a few steps away.

Attempting to block out the distracting whirlwind of sound all around me, I put my earphones in and closed my eyes. The televisions situated on almost every wall persisted on broadcasting the news at full volume, overpowering the music I was listening to.

"Trouble in Kew leads to many leaving town-" Of course, what else could the news possibly be reporting about?

Our side of town had issues. And a lot of them. It was a peremptory order from my dad that I live with my mum now. And I'd given up protesting.

I was parting with my childhood friends, leaving the place that hadn't just been a house, but my home,

abandoning so many cherished memories unique to the little corner of town we called ours.

I felt my nails piercing through the delicate skin on my palms as I uncontrollably clenched my hands into tight fists. As soon as I acknowledged what I was doing, I jolted my hands open quickly, catching a glimpse of my scars that I'd now opened. I placed them gently onto my knees to control myself. I put my head in my hands, staring at and examining the dusty floor below me, trying to make myself aware of my surroundings, just like I'd been told to do. I find it easy to pretend now when I don't care. It's automatic - even while the feeling of spending days, months, years building a life, forming a connection which each and every one of the bricks that holds up this town, consumes me.

I zoned back into reality, and heard the announcement for my train. I could make out "Train to Keilor leaving in 1 minute, please go to platform 3." from the indestructible box of noise I seemed to be submerged in.

I stepped apprehensively onto the train and noticed all the people around me. Suddenly, as it hit me, I got very claustrophobic. I tried my best not to let my brain spiral, and launch yet another attack on my emotions.

I sat, and I looked out the window. Through the black gates just ahead of me that led onto the train platform, I could see just a glimpse of the old park I used to play in. At this point, the moon had emerged into the sky. It was a crystal, lost in a neverending stretch of sea, consisting of only golden flecks and darkness. The effulgence of the moon highlighted the park, making it look more elegant than ever before.

Before I could even look at my home one last time

and say goodbye, the train was off. All I saw were now swipes of different colours through the window as the train set off. I held back a tear. I knew that once one tear had escaped my barrier, it would be nothing but an endless stream that even I, myself, couldn't hold back. So, I put my head on the window, shut my eyes, and started to picture how my new home was going to look.

".. Please mind the gap,"

".. Take all of your belongings with you,"

The monotone voice that played through the speakers woke me up. As my eyes adjusted to the light, I blinked a few times, each time the blurry circles transforming more and more into proper objects, proper people.

I wheeled my suitcase through the long aisle and through the train doors. For those split seconds I'd been preoccupied and hadn't been seeing visions of my home in my head. I walked aimlessly to where my mother was going to pick me up. I felt empty, like my sadness and sorrow had drained me completely. In the distance, I saw my mother waving at me through a crowd of people. I made my way to her and was greeted with a big hug. She had a genuine smile plastered across her face, and I managed to fake a smile through the cluster of emotions in my brain.

I looked around. I took one more of my deep breaths, closed my eyes, and made sure that smile stayed permanently on my face.

We sat in silence most of the car ride back to her house, but as we eventually pulled into her driveway, she looked at me with hope in her eyes and said, "Well, this is it!"

"Yup, that's it. Home." I said, maintaining the artificial smile on my face.



The Goldfish Bowl

By Phoenix Ashworth (Year 12), Harrow UK

“BANG!”

The explosion was not quite as big as expected. In the background the old man stroked his wonderful, white beard with his long, slender, spiritual fingers. He was deep in thought. Secretly he knew it was a case of going back to the drawing board and starting all over again. Geniuses are often lonely people, but are they lonely because of their genius or is their genius because they are lonely? The old man lived on his own, but despite his brilliant brain, he had no-one to share his ideas or connect with.

“What I need is something to satisfy my restlessly enquiring mind!” thought the old man, “An all-encompassing, never-ending, game of life that will occupy all my days and provide me with a window on something that is always changing, evolving and stimulating!”

A look of pure intelligence suddenly shone from his fathomless eye, as the old man realized that he had just answered his own question.

“I know, I shall create a goldfish bowl. A goldfish bowl with a difference!”

It was not long before the old man sat before his magnificent creation. He was looking at a huge goldfish bowl that was so large, you could neither see to the other side, nor to the top or bottom. It was almost as if it had no edges at all.

“But with what shall I fill it?” puzzled the old man, “Goldfish?”



Artwork by Cody Xu (Year 12), Harrow UK

As it stood, the giant goldfish bowl contained absolutely nothing. The inside was just an empty vacuum, and so the old man closed his eyes and entered into the deepest of deep thoughts, until, in the thrilling light of a new revelation, he finally raised a trembling forefinger and touched the outside of the goldfish bowl to ignite his dreams. Suddenly the inside of the gigantic bowl began to grow extremely hot and extremely dense. As each breath-taking second passed, the temperature and inner mass continued to increase at such an astronomic rate that the inevitable happened.

“BANG!!!”

This time the explosion could not have been bigger. It was so powerful that it even scorched the split-ends of the old man’s beard. After a while, the vast exploded space inside the goldfish bowl had cooled down enough to allow for the formation of matter. Somehow, the amazing old man had channeled so much energy into the bowl that he had managed to create tiny particles. The majority were mysterious dark matter, which penetrated absolutely everything and were invisible as they did not radiate light. The remaining were light matter, detectable particles called protons, neutrons, and electrons, which were sprayed throughout the bowl and they had already quickly begun to connect and combine to form tiny, virtually indestructible, atoms.

“These atoms will be my designer building blocks!” declared the old man triumphantly.

The old man gazed once more into his creation and saw a cloud of hot, swirling dust and gas slowly expanding within the bowl. The gas was composed of the simplest atomic element, Hydrogen, but in his infinite wisdom he had also created over a hundred other types of elements and everything seen inside his bowl would be made up of different combinations of these atoms. The glittering cloud kept spinning until it finally collapsed into a thick core, from which bright, star-like, objects flared into existence and were scattered by what appeared to be exploding supernovas. Billions of these stars appeared, suspended in the mysterious cosmic dark matter throughout the inside of the goldfish bowl. The remaining dust and gas was blown away by the solar-wind of the newly ignited star-like objects and swirled into either rocky or gaseous satellites orbiting each of these central stars.

“A solar system within a solar system within a solar system!” exclaimed the old man with obvious delight at his new creation. “For everything seen and unseen, this will be my model on the smallest and largest scales imaginable; from the tiny atoms where electrons orbit around a central nucleus of protons and neutrons, to the giant solar systems made up entirely of these same atoms where satellites orbit around a central star. Now everything is connected!”

The old man had another trick up his sleeve that would ensure his goldfish bowl would become the never-ending game he so desperately craved. Hydrogen was the most common atom within his goldfish bowl, as it was the main substance found in the stars, but Hydrogen means ‘the water creator’ and water was going to be his masterstroke.

“After all what is a goldfish bowl without water?” asked the old man.

The second most abundant atomic element in the stars was Helium, but it was very un-reactive with the other elements. However, the third most abundant element in his stars was Oxygen which was highly reactive and capable of combining with virtually all of the elements. Most importantly, two hydrogen atoms could combine with an oxygen atom to form a compound shaped like the head and ears of a mouse. This compound was water. As he peered through the transparent walls of the goldfish bowl, the old man felt a strange connection with a concentrated area, that in a way looked like a milky cloud. There was one solar system within this galaxy that really caught his eye. It contained more than sixty moons, together with a sun-like central star and eight orbiting planets, including one that was an intriguing blue.

“This particular solar system will become my special pet project!” declared the old man, with all the pride of a new father talking about his baby son for the first time.

His eyes were now firmly fixed on the unusually atmospheric blue planet. Water was the only natural substance that could occur in all three physical states at the temperatures found on this particular planet; namely liquid water, solid ice and gaseous steam. The old man knew that liquid water was essential for life to evolve, as it was the right temperature for chemical reactions to take place, allowing for simple chemicals to combine to form more complex ones. Then, just as the old man was on the verge of another original thought that would cement his eternal genius, he was rudely interrupted by the front doorbell.

“A pair of Neon Tetras and an Angelfish please, Mr Godley!” requested a customer from the shop reception area. The old man promptly shuffled towards the front room of his high-street town house.

“Small Tetras, like Neons, should not be kept with Angelfish, unless they are intended as food!” insisted the old man as he arrived at the Pet shop counter, “By the way, I think I’ve nearly completed my new goldfish bowl!”

“Gosh, it looks like there’s been quite an explosion back there?” replied the lady customer.

“Well, some sparks flew around at first, but it all seems to be working correctly now!” replied the old man, as he prepared the fish for his customer. “Just a few final safety checks, and then the new bowl should last indefinitely. Of course, it might need some cleansing and purifying every now and then!” continued the old man, with a mercurial smile, “But nothing that my son and I cannot fix!”

“I didn’t know you had a son?” queried the lady.

The woman was slightly confused. She was a regular customer, and knew the old man well, having received free fish from Mr Godley for many years. However, she let it pass, as the Pet Shop owner was known to move in mysterious ways.

“Thanks for the fish, Mr Godley!” cried the lady on her way out, “And don’t worry, I’ll look after Gabriel!”

“Gabriel?” queried the old man, anxiously.

“Yes, the Angelfish Gabriel!” joked the lady.

With a certain relief, the old man returned to his beloved creation. He was excited, as he could now see that the outer electrons were held very loosely by the nucleus, and that they had started to move from one atom of light matter to another. Moreover, as they flowed, they passed on their negative charge from atom to atom, and in so doing they realized the old man’s interrupted original thought. For when electrons flowed among atoms of matter, a current of electricity was created, and it was with electricity that the old man would ultimately control his creation, and allow his guiding spirit to connect, communicate and ultimately prevail.

The Event

by Harley Tong, Year 9, Harrow Shenzhen

Birds sang. Flowers bloomed. Whether in rural or urban districts, whether animals or human, whether on land or sea, everyone enjoyed life in this massive and beautiful world. But then, something shifted. The world was surrounded by an unusual aura; everywhere was covered by melancholia and unease.

The Event had arrived.

The sky turned to coal. Everything fell apart; the buildings and roads dropped underground; the corrupted earth was a black hole, taking everything into the deepest place of the abyss. It started with an earthquake. An invisible force spread like a group of devils, celebrating their freedom. Eventually, the last thing that remained in the air was the smell of sulfur. Cracks on the ground’s surface were diffusing like broken mirrors.

Through the cracked, barren landscape, a group of lonely, determined guardians trudge towards the destroyed city. Every one of them is aware of the danger they are in, not just from the aftermath of The Event, but from each other. They have known each other for no more than a few months, with new arrivals joining their group every other week. As they talk, catching moments between dust swirls and lightning strikes, they find out more about each other.

This one used to be a geologist, investigating the center of the earth. They all secretly hope he knows something about The Event. The woman with the small scar over her left eyebrow is a biologist; she had researched the Creature of the Hollow Earth. A policeman who came to disperse the refugees joined them, turning refugee himself.

“Wait! There is a man coming!”

The man’s clothes are ragged; he looks like a scarecrow. His face is covered with so much blood and dust that they can’t even recognise his face; his whole features look like he is walking dead. When he walks forward to them, they see his barefooted, sharp and bestial nails. The smell from his body is rotten.

“We have gone too far,” he said.

Artwork by Grace Liu, Year 9, Harrow Shenzhen



Artwork By Midori Sissions (Year 12), Harrow Shanghai

The Slayer

By Oscar Li (Year 9), Harrow Shanghai

In Lord Monarch's castle, an armored man took the lift all the way to the highest tower.

Inside the tower, another armored man was sitting on the throne, looking at the intruder scornfully.

"Impressive. You broke through every level that was set up for you. What do you call yourself?" asked Lord Monarch.

"I am the voice of liberty, I came here to end your tyranny." said the intruder.

"Well, a good introduction," laughed Lord Monarch, "but do you really think you have estimated me and my loyal butler correctly?" Then, he ordered his subordinate to confront the intruder.

He pointed his sword at him.

Lord Monarch walked towards the intruder and said, "You are a great warrior, but you aren't strong enough." He then took out 'The Slayer', his blade, and continued, "I will spill your blood with no regret." thrusting the blade towards the intruder...

Years later, another warrior appeared on the cliff that overlooked Lord Monarch's castle.

"Father, I will avenge you." said the warrior in a solemn voice.

The warrior began to explore the stronghold. There were guards in every part of the castle, such as the bridge, and the front gate. Suddenly, a guard leaped out of the window and ambushed the warrior; the warrior managed to defeat all that stood in his way, including Lord Monarch's butler.

Finally, he reached the last level.

During the fight, the warrior struggled to parry Lord Monarch's attacks; the warrior's weapons seem to have been inevitably knocked out of his hands, just like his father.

Lord Monarch stepped towards the warrior and said, "You are far more than I expected. So, I offer you to join us - only if you surrender. If not, you will be killed like the other challengers."

The room filled with tension as the warrior hesitates; he did not want to be a traitor, nor was he ready to face death.

A few minutes later, the warrior picked up his weapons. Lord Monarch screamed, "Impudent child! How dare you reject my offer?"

This time, the warrior didn't easily give up like the previous challengers. After a while, he spotted one of Lord Monarch's flaws and defeated him with his last strength.

The warrior became curious about the Slayer, the sword that Lord Monarch carried. He took it to a place he had not explored yet, it was called the 'Reborn Chamber'.

The warrior saw a keyhole that looked exactly like 'the Slayer', which he inserted into; the chamber unlocked.

He saw huge test tubes filled with green liquid, with a set of Lord Monarch's armour in each of them. During the exploration, a man appeared and confronted the warrior. Suddenly, he recognized him.

"Father, why are you here?"

"It's because..." the man paused and said, "I...accepted Lord Monarch's offer."

The warrior shouted, "Traitor! You are a shame on family!"

The warrior ruthlessly defeated his father and destroyed the chamber before he left the castle, without turning back...

Destiny and Endless Love

by Casso Pi, Year 9, Harrow Shenzhen

With their hands gently holding together, he swears everlasting love to protect her innocence and kindness. He brings her out of the darkness into the light, her guardian angel committed to defending her at all times. Her hand has a child's purity. Prepared to devote her life to him, she made him the most reliable and trustworthy person to protect and love her.

Behind the loving couple, simple leaves are suddenly amber and emerald flags, supporting and blessing their eternal love. The bond between them seems as constant as the earth itself, as if it has been strengthened, toughened by a Spirit Guide from deep down within the earth's core, which has given hope to these misguided souls.

Seeing them now, you could easily believe they fell in love at first sight. In fact, it was quite the opposite.

It was just a regular day at school when he mocked this clumsy, ridiculous girl who dropped all her books. Fuming with incredible rage, she swore ultimate revenge. After months of conflicts, everything changed one stormy day. Two soulmates under the rain without an umbrella. His heart slowly softened and liquefied as he realised her beauty, forging him into the guardian and protector he is now. Amazed by their similarities, her cold, metal heart started to heat up, crafted by his love. Two melted souls merged and united.

If two are meant to be together, there is no escaping your destiny. Having destined souls is a gift. Cherish and value this love. Then, it shall lead you to the right path of light and hope.

This issue has been produced with thanks to all the writers, editors and artists who contributed.

In a year marking both the emergence from a pandemic that has changed life as we know it and the 450th anniversary of Harrow's founding, it has been fantastic to see so many entries.

If you are interested in contributing to next year's anthology, speak to a member of your school's English Department.



HARROW
FAMILY OF SCHOOLS