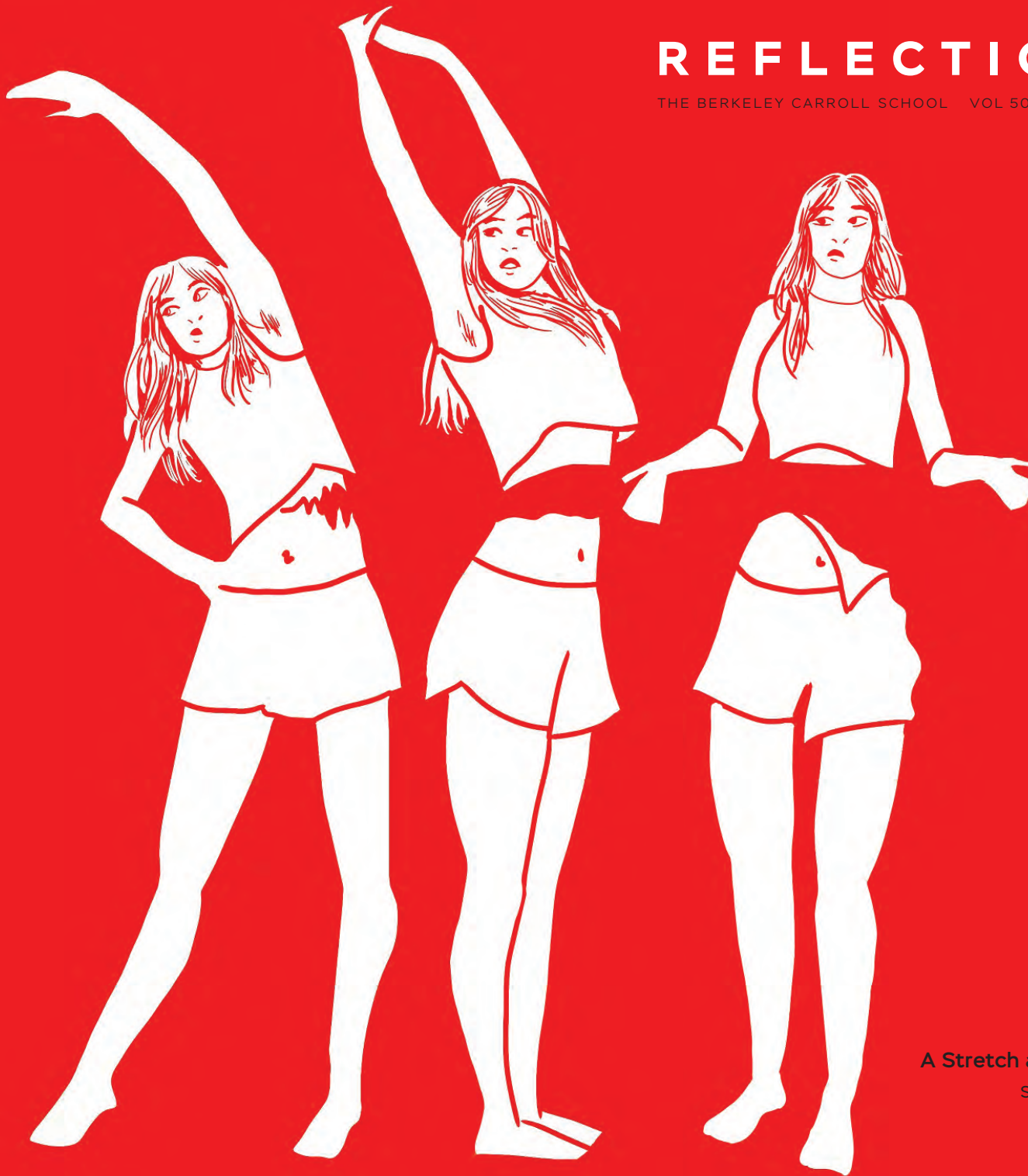


REFLECTIONS

THE BERKELEY CARROLL SCHOOL VOL 50, ISSUE 1, 2021



A Stretch and A Break ●

SABRINA ELLIS

Grade 12, *Digital*

● To Euna

RUBY SALVATORE PALMER

Grade 12

Sharpie/Digital Media



REFLECTIONS

Mission Statement

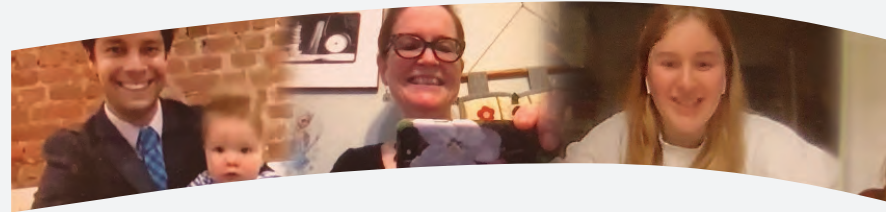
Reflections, the annual literary and arts magazine of The Berkeley Carroll Upper School, seeks to tap the vibrant, creative energy circulating in the classrooms, hallways—and, this year, Zoom calls—of our school. Berkeley Carroll’s mission is to foster an environment of critical, ethical, and global thinking; *Reflections* contributes by making space for artistic conversation and collaboration, in our meetings and in this volume.

Reflections

What’s in a name? “Reflection” implies both a mirroring and a distortion: something recognizably strange and strangely recognizable. In selecting and arranging the visual and written work in this magazine, we seek to create this experience of broken mirrors: reflections that are just a bit off, refracted and bent to reveal uncanny resemblances. Take, for instance, Lucija Jurevics’ “3 of Clubs” paired with Sorah Guthrie’s “Toast.” The facade of balance belied by the tumbling cards in Jurevics’ structure reflects the dancer’s desire for poise and perfection—ultimately knocked ironically off-kilter—in Guthrie’s piece: “A good pirouette is hard to do. It’s not a spin or a turn, it’s a balance[....] It is a moment of total suspension: your supporting leg is strong and grounded, your arms are iron, your core tightens, your foot is pointed and turned out and you are smiling (softly).” Here the broken mirror effect prompts the audience to peer through the apparently solid surfaces of everyday experiences into the moving pieces that shape them. We hope you catch glimpses both strange and familiar, new patterns from ordinary encounters, in these pairings of written and visual reflections.

Editorial Policy and Procedures

The *Reflections* staff is a small, dedicated group of students that meets weekly—usually over Goldfish and Oreos, this year online over snacks and tea that we wished we could share with each other—to discuss



and develop a shared interest in art and literature. In the fall, *Reflections* members establish the magazine’s high standards, solicit submissions, and refine their own works in progress. In February, the editors preside over small groups which read and critique anonymous student art and literature submissions. After the preliminary critiques—and with helpful suggestions from the art department—the editors carefully consider feedback from the entire *Reflections* team before choosing and editing the final selections and laying out the magazine, including selection and design of the spreads. Editors then submit all materials to our fantastic printer, review the proofs, and distribute copies of our beautiful magazine—through our library, at admissions events, and, this year, to anyone lucky enough to find the PDF on our school website.

Reflections is a student-run, -led, and -organized coterie; neither the editors nor the staff receive class credit for their work. We are proud members of the Columbia Scholastic Press Association. The striking artwork and writing in this magazine were all crafted by Berkeley Carroll Upper School students, sometimes to fulfill class assignments, but always from the engines of their own creativity.

Staff

Co-Editors-in-Chief

Noa Brown
Charlotte Hampton

Arts Editor

Lucija Jurevics

Poetry Editor

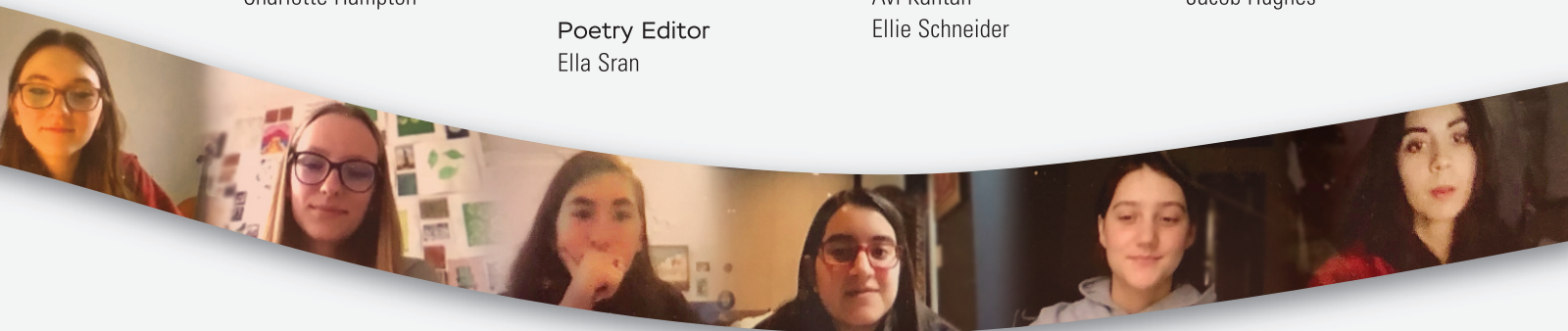
Ella Sran

Staff

Amba Darst-Campbell
Avi Kahtan
Ellie Schneider

Faculty Advisors

Erika Drezner
Jacob Hughes



Editor's Statement

This year's *Reflections* would not have been possible without our faculty advisors, Ms. Drezner and Dr. Hughes, whose support was crucial in producing this volume. The publication of this magazine would not be complete without the help of Andrew Bauld, Berkeley Carroll's Communications Coordinator, and the design talents of Bob Lane at Studio Lane. We're also grateful for the guidance and support of Dr. Daniel, Mr. Cortes, and Mr. Smaller-Swift in the Art Department. And of course, *Reflections* would be blank without the thoughtful writing and intricate artwork that is shared with us each year.

Like in years past, we are so excited to include a wonderful collection of personal essays from our Voice & Style writing course as well as our Senior Essay class. We are also excited to be featuring an abundance of poems from a school-wide, collaborative poetry workshop the *Reflections* staff facilitated called **Joy! Transmogrification**. In this time of isolation, we were able to find joy both in creating poetry and bringing together the voices of our community.

Though we could not return to our normal, in-person publishing process due to the ongoing turmoil of COVID-19, the dedication of our staff and faculty advisors (both during school hours and beyond) made it possible to work through and sometimes even enjoy the challenges of an online setting. Ultimately, we have a beautiful and insightful magazine that reflects this hard and meaningful work.

Lastly, with this volume of *Reflections* being our 50th, we would like to acknowledge the legacy and longstanding impact of the magazine. For half a century, *Reflections* has represented the creativity, passion, and heart of the Berkeley Carroll community. We could not be more proud to continue in this tradition, and we hope you find the work inside these pages as illuminating and enjoyable as we have.

Charlotte Hampton & Noa Brown

Co-Editors-in-Chief, Spring 2021

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Grade 12

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● Nightly Ritual

NICHOLE FERNANDEZ, Grade 12, *Poetry*

The doctor draws red curtains closed as
You fall asleep with a full stomach.
She folds your blanket back, sees
Where you are softest, and returns the blanket
Over your shoulders. She does this throughout the night,
Folding, noticing, returning.
By the time the sun rises, her hands begin to tremble.
She curses this, the imprecision with which
You will one day be cut open.
One day,
She hopes, you will wake up to see
that iridescent orb in her hands
This.
The source of all pain.
This.
This remnant of childhood.
And you will tell yourself that it was all very scientific.

Waiting Was Good For Me ●

CATIE WITHERWAX

Grade 12

Paper Cut-out

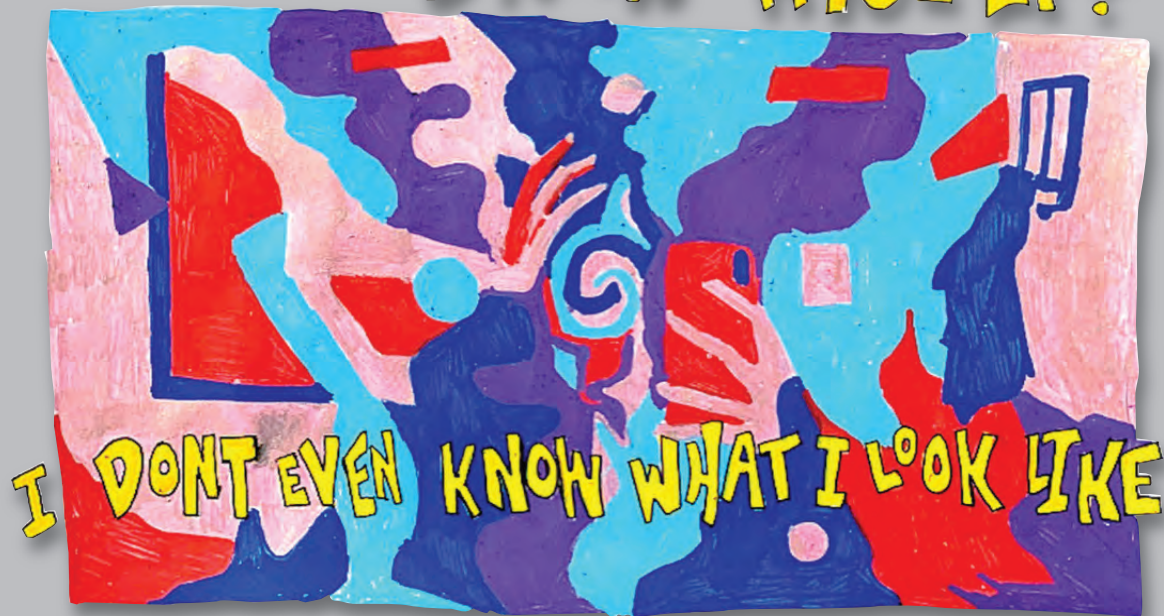
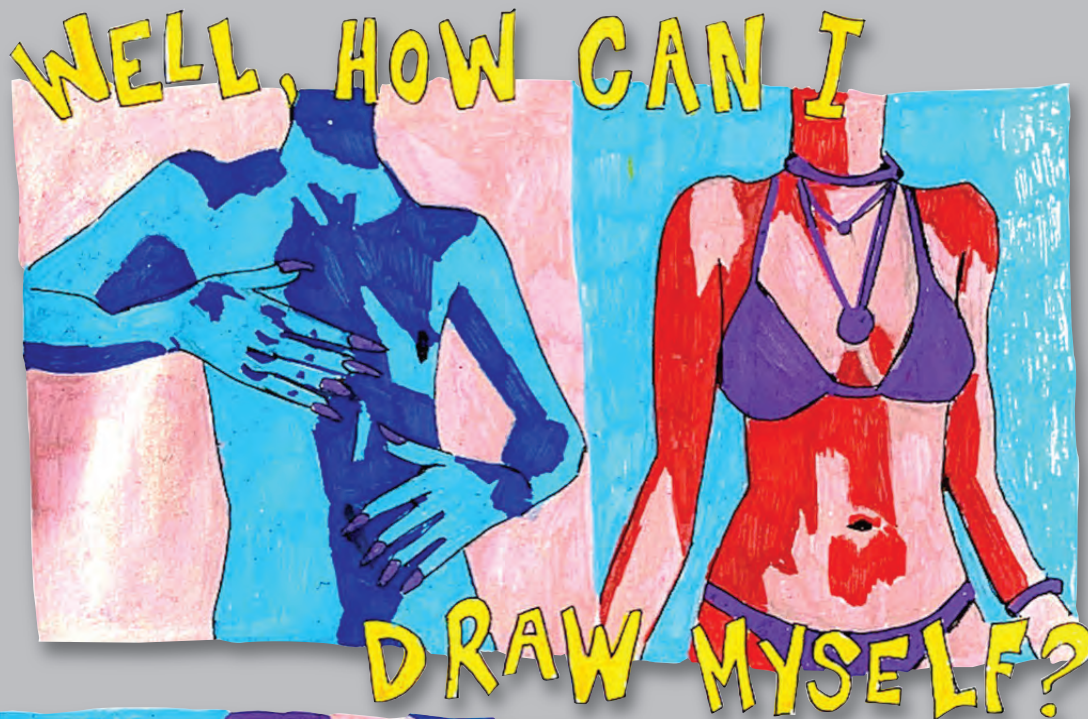


● **Self Portrait,
As I See Myself**

SABRINA ELLIS

Grade 12

Posca Markers



● Sorbet

NOA BROWN, Grade 11, *Personal Essay*

I am 6 years old. Mom is trying on the dress she bought two sizes too small a year earlier. It's a week before my sister's bat mitzvah, and in my family we have this saying: the day my older sister started studying her Parashah was the day my mom cut out carbs. As she steams the wrinkles out of her doorknob-hung gown, Mom's best friend, Lacy, says how flattering the shape is going to be on her, and asks if Mom wants to go put on her Spanx while she finishes up.

Emerging from the bathroom, Mom makes her way in front of the mirror clad in pinky, skin-tight shorts that reach just below her chest. She slips the dress on with ease, turning to see her body's profile before Lacy even has the chance to fully zip it up. I look in the mirror too, and ask her the question I've been meaning to: "Mommy, why are you wearing clothes under your dress?"

My mother doesn't lie. She thinks for a moment, but doesn't break eye contact with her own reflection: "To hold my belly in."

I am 6 when I suck my stomach in for the very first time. I haven't let go since.

* * *

Each summer, Jesse, Sarah, and I spend July in the ocean, only getting out when the sun goes down or when our moms say we need to wash the sand out of our hair and lather on more sunscreen. The beginning of July is particularly special: the three of us get to pick out a matching bathing suit for the rest of the summer, and, this year (because we are finally 9), the moms let us search Target alone for the first time while they finish up the grocery shopping a few aisles over.

It does not take us long for the three of us to pick out the perfect suit. It's a one-piece made of beautiful pink plaid that I adore. It has neon-green straps. Eager to show the parents our selection, Jesse and Sarah grab their smalls off the rack.

I file through the hangers looking for my own size. My own size that doesn't get to be at the front of the rack. I'm a medium. I run to catch-up to my friends and wonder if the perfect pink plaid pattern will be bent by the shape of my 9-year-old stomach.

* * *

● **Soft Serve**

ELLA DEBARI

Grade 10

Graphite pencil



Between the ages of 9 and 12, I only wear dresses. My mom is so excited, not because she has anything against pants or her daughters wearing them, but because my older sister *only* wears pants and, as a result, my mom has been deprived of shopping in the other half of the girls' section at Gap for her entire mothering career.

My love of dresses stems from my hatred of pants. I loathe the way pants make my legs feel, like sausages squeezed into their casing. They are tight around my waist and itchy, and when I look down I can see my thighs touch with every step I take. In third grade, I see the legs of the boy I like and realize mine are bigger, rounder. I'm devastated, because I understand that girls aren't allowed to be fatter than the boys they love.

In eighth grade, I see a nutritionist for the first time. The week before this appointment, I tell my mom I don't want to be the fat girl at my new high school; I want boys to be interested in me, to borrow my friends' clothes without a thought, to know something fits without using a dressing room. When I talk to my nutritionist on the phone, I tell my friends it's my dermatologist because having acne is better than being a teenager on a diet.

* * *

On the last day of ninth grade my friends and I plan to walk to the Brooklyn Bridge and get ice cream from our favorite place. It's the first time since September that I wear my favorite pair of cut-offs to school. My backpack is virtually empty, holding only a few pencils, a Carmex, and my phone. We're sweating by the time we make it there.

After a half-hour, Stella, Grace, and Moni order, and I wait a moment longer for it to be my turn. I pretend to weigh my options by tasting the Ooey Gooley, though I've known what I was going to order since before we arrived.

"Can I have a small Lemon Sky Sorbet, please?"

Stella looks at me, and I instinctively smile, saying that I shouldn't have any dairy because it makes my stomach hurt.

I tell her, "It's just as good."

I tell myself too.

● @ People Who Don't Like Zendaya. Why?

FATOUMATA NIANGADOU, Grade 10, *Humor*

"Zendaya Recalls the Moment She Realized She Could Call the Shots With Her Career." – E

"Awards Chatter Podcast — Zendaya (Malcolm & Marie)." – HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

"What Makes Zendaya a Great Celebrity." – VOX

These are the first three articles that appeared when simply googling “Zendaya.” Even if you scroll, you’ll only find good reviews describing Zendaya’s ambitious and positive personality.

She is such an inspiration for young people to find confidence within themselves. It’s quite difficult to grasp the fact that Zendaya wasn’t present in some people’s childhoods—does Child Protective Services need to get involved? I mean, was your childhood okay? You don’t remember *Shake It Up*? *KC Undercover*? The good old Disney days?! You haven’t watched *FRENEMIES*? That movie was top tier.

If she isn’t one of your favs . . .

Cool.

If you don’t do blood sacrifice rituals for her . . .

Kudos to you.

But, to the miserable and bitter people in this world who have the audacity to say they don’t like her . . .

It’s so clear you want to be different so badly.

I don’t find anything cute or quirky about disliking our versatile queen, Zendaya. She’s a singer, dancer, actress, model, songwriter, starring in *Spider-Man: Homecoming* and in movies with Golden Globe nominations like *The Greatest Showman*. She is predicted to make Oscar history with her new movie *Malcolm and Marie*. She could be the youngest nominee and would be the first woman to be nominated for best actress and producer. (Now I’m sure the remaining 1h 30m of *Malcolm and Marie* was great, but I’ve just been really busy with schoolwork, and I’m still dealing with the mental trauma of *Kissing Booth 1* . . . and in need of therapeutic help after the second movie . . . okay, FINE! I didn’t like this ONE movie with Zendaya, but I feel TERRIBLE about it.)

And I didn't even get into how impeccably beautiful this woman is.

What valid reason do you have to not like her?

“ShE dOeSn’T uSe HeR pLaTfOrM tO sPrEaD aWaReNesS.”

Oh I'm sorry, are we not talking about when she donated a huge amount of charity work to feed more than 150 children on her 18th birthday through the Feedone organization?

Or we are going to ignore when she called out Modeliste Magazine for heavy touch-ups on her photos that promoted unrealistic beauty standards?

Oh wait, did she not acknowledge her light-skin privilege and desirability as a biracial Black actress and reject roles meant for darker-skinned black women?

“ShE’s NoT a GoOd AcToR.”

Oh so is that why she is the youngest Emmy Winner for Lead Actress in a Drama Series?

“It’s JuSt A pReFerEnCe. ArEn’t We ArE aLI eNtiTIEd To An OpInIoN.”

No.

“ShE’s OvErRaTed.”

Deep breaths. In and Out.

“I dOn’T gEt ThE hYpE. ShE’s NoT aLl tHat.”

Have you seen yourself? 🤔

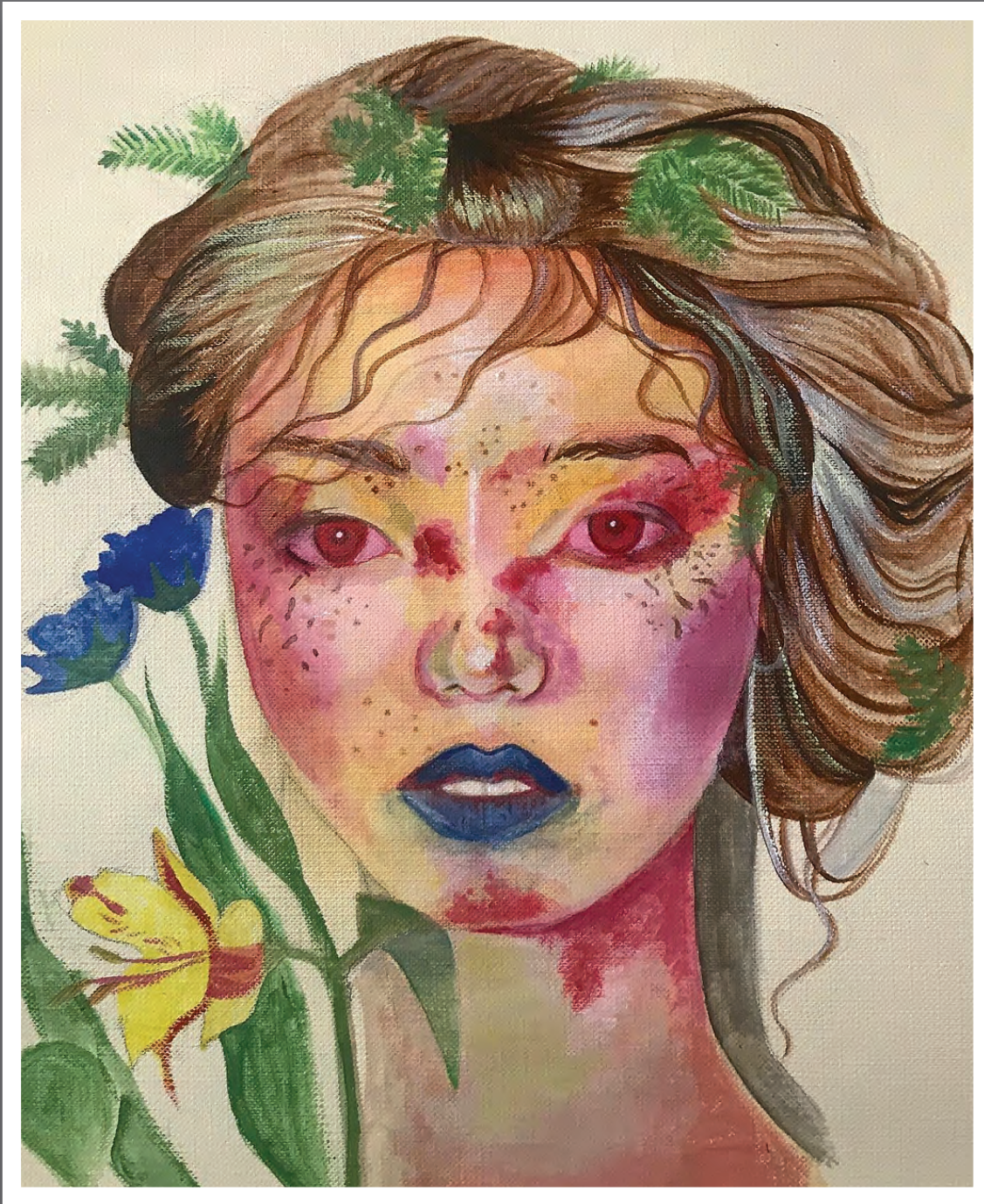
“ **It’s JuSt A pReFerEnCe.**
ArEn’t We ArE aLI eNtiTIEd
To An OpInIoN.
No. ”

● **Persephone**

ZOE PYNE

Grade 11

Painting (acrylics)



You have literally NO reason at all to not like her. She's a talented woman who speaks up about important social issues and uses her platform to spread awareness. She can't do and does no wrong!

Eventually we get the fools who bluntly share out their misogynoir.

Sometimes, it's subtle: "I don't have a problem with black actors, but why is she playing MJ? Because if the roles were reversed it would be whitewashing."

It's funny how no one cares for "accurate" role depictions until it's a black woman.

1. She's playing a new character named Michelle Jones, not Mary Jane.
2. Where was this same energy when Sam Jackson was cast as Nick Fury, Will Smith was cast as Deadshot, and Idris Elba cast as Heimdall? It's giving me very anti-black-woman vibes.

3. Now that representation supposedly matters—move on to the other quadrillion Marvel characters who cater to white people.

And finally we have these bums: "You only like Zendaya because she's black."

Okay?

Was this supposed to be some gotcha moment? Of course, it isn't just her blackness which has me obsessed, it's her authenticity and beauty. But I was a child addicted to Disney, and Zendaya was one of the first black faces I'd seen on TV. I held onto her influence as I grew up, and seeing her success has brought me enormous pride within my own identity as a black woman.

And seeing Zendaya—who is the literal embodiment of perfection—attacked like this only reveals that no matter how ambiguous looking, how unproblematic, and how talented black women are, it will never be enough.

● **Magnolia**

NOAH SHAKNAI

Grade 12

Charcoal and Charcoal Pencil

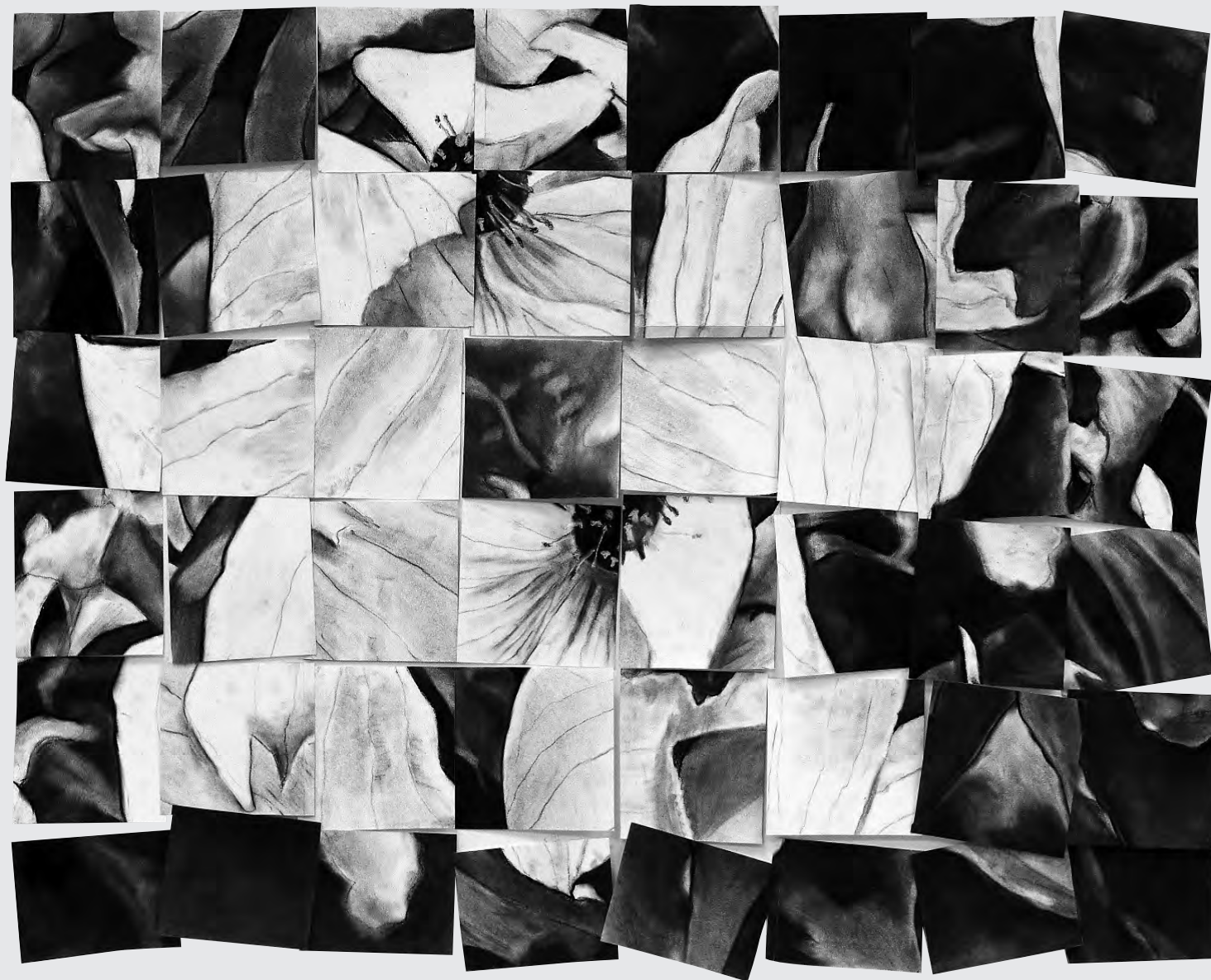


Cut Up Magnolia ●

NOAH SHAKNAI

Grade 12

Collage (charcoal and charcoal pencil)



JOY! TRANSMOGRIFICATION

● EDITORIAL NOTE

2020–2021—a year during which we sometimes came to school but spend many days learning from home—challenged us, isolated us, and sometimes depressed us. In the heart of winter, our school came together (remotely) for BC Talks: Joy, a day of creation and connection on which we heard from poet Ross Gay and performance artist Ayana Evans about how joy can be a radical and resilient force. Inspired by their work and energy, the *Reflections* staff led a madcap, improvisational, and collaborative poetry workshop for as many people as wanted to show up: picture 46 poets on one Zoom call, scanning

● JOY! Transmogrification Poetry Activity

Get a piece of paper or open a doc, and write on it these labels:

Object: _____

Question: _____

Answer: _____

Opposite: _____

Freestyle: _____

● INSTRUCTIONS

- a. Find an object, memory, or photo in your space that sparks joy for whatever reason. Write a line of poetry relating to it in any way.
- b. Now write a question that your first line answers.
- c. *Email that question to the person next on the list. Label it: this is my question.*

their workspaces for inspiration, jotting their first thoughts, and emailing each other lines of poetry.

We called this activity, which we found delightful, confusing, and surprising, our Joy! Transmogrification. The directions are here if you want to understand our process or try it yourself, and on the opposite page—and again periodically throughout the magazine—you can read some more of the strange and joyful results.

- d. Write an answer to the question you received.
- e. *Email the answer you wrote to the next person on the list. Label it: this is my answer.*
- f. Change the line you received to have an opposite meaning (any that you like) and write that on your page.
- g. Freestyle! Think of a joyful word—it can be joyful because it's your favorite word or just because you think it sounds nice. Write a line that includes the word one or more times.
- h. Now find your number in our group document and write your lines of poetry everywhere your number appears. You will find that with your partners you have assembled the lines you've written into poems that read: object-question-answer-opposite-freestyle.

JOY! TRANSMOGRIFICATION

- **Sitting on a park** bench beside a woman who does not exist.
What happens when you try to interpret maladies?
You discover more.
Nothing and everything.
Inescapably real, because it is all my feelings,
poured into one cup of tea.

● *Serena McGrane / Grade 12* • *Piper McGraw / Grade 12*
● *Zola Osman / Grade 12* • *Juno Pasdar Newton / Grade 9*

- **Its lavender color** feels familiar.
What is familiarity?
A sense of comfort and belonging.
Fear is confusion meeting sadness and anger,
and panicking.
We don't call boxes cubes because they have a
job to do and they're not quite there—cubes just
sit there and look perfect, except they're not
arrogant about it.

● *Jade Angel / Grade 9* • *Julia Bailyn / Grade 9*
● *Sadie Barrett / Grade 9*

- **A computer, a portal to another world.**
How do you escape?
You step across the threshold.
Though it's scary to take the first step over,
I want to see what is on the other side.

● *Ethan Chieu / Grade 10* • *Emily Crawford / Faculty*
● *Nellie Davis / Grade 9*

- **I lay my head on the pillow**, making sure to flip
it to the cold side.
How many memories have the trees sung?
As many as the rings inside this log: you see the ones here
radiating outward like rings of Saturn from core to bark.
Sound is golden.
Over and over and over again we say "soulfulness"
because we like all of the sounds, and the meanings
in each syllable—"soul," "full," and even little "ness"—
and the way that it fills up the space
between us.

● *Oluwakemi Iyagheh / Grade 11* • *Charlie Hodgkins / Grade 12*
● *Jacob Hughes / Faculty* • *Luke Kretschman / Grade 10*

- **A great ball of fur** curled in a corner:
What's the first thing you remember?
A beautiful tree on a breezy hill.
Like storm clouds rolling in as the sky changes from
blue to dark grey, it is cold and still.
The preamble is this chaos; the resolve is the
rainbow that I have faith will appear when
the sun appears.

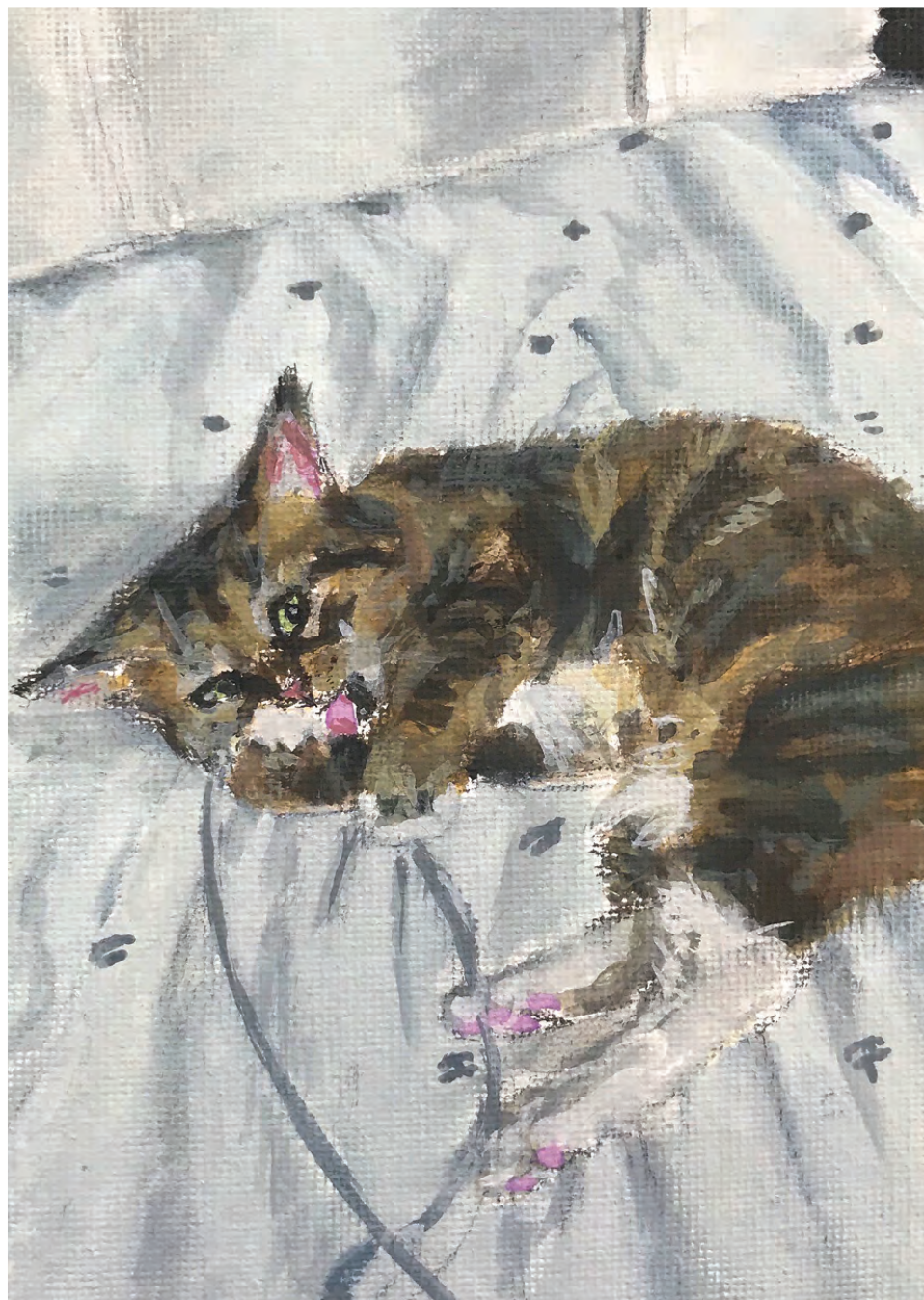
● *Will Schwartz / Grade 11* • *Jude Tait / Grade 10*
● *Traci Lyn Thomas / Faculty*

● **Elsa Eats an Apple**

CHARLOTTE HAMPTON

Grade 12

Painting (acrylics)



● Names for Cats

ALEXANDRA JANEY THOGMARTIN, Grade 12, *Humor*

Names I Would Like To Give A Cat Someday:

- 1. Archibald the IV.** Although there will not have been previous Archibalds, I feel like adding “the IV” brings an air of esteem and confidence that a cat named Archibald would have.
- 2. Harold.** Harold is one of the many “old man names” you can expect to see on this list. There is no rhyme or reason to naming your cat an old man name other than that it’s funny, adorable, and whenever they’re being bad you get to say, “*HAROLD!*” which I think I would really enjoy.
- 3. DOG.** Obviously, Dog is a great name for a cat if you’re a terrible person, which I am.
- 4. Kate.** I think it’s always really funny when pets have completely normal and common names. Imagine you have a roommate or friend named Kate, and every time you were referring to either of them you would have to distinguish between the two by saying “Kate—cat Kate,” or “Kate—human Kate.” It would be infuriating in the best way possible.
- 5. Celery.** Celery is a so-so vegetable and a 10/10 cat name. Think of the nickname possibilities. You could go with Cece, very cute, straight to the point, and works around normal people. OR you could go for Lery, pronounced like Larry, and then boom you get an old man name, too! Two birds, one stone—two names, one cat.
- 6. Reginald.** Old man name. Regal AF. Nicknames could be Reggie, or, if you’re feeling funky, Naldo. Also, imagine having a female cat named Reginald. She sounds baller the second you learn her name and she clearly gives no whiskers about gender conformity.
- 7. Fern.** I think Fern sounds like the name of a really sweet librarian, and I think that a cat named Fern would just be set up to be so cuddly, warm, and overall the cutest lil’ thing. Fern would cheer you up by snuggling you on a rough day, and pee on your bed on a good one because she loves you, and wants to keep you humble.
- 8. Jerry.** Jerry is only a good name if your *cat* is a terrible person. It just fits and I feel like you know exactly what I mean if you’re planning on naming a cat Jerry. Jerry is a hooligan, but not in a cute way at all. Jerry will pee on your bed regardless of your mood. Jerry could give two rats, because Jerry is just doing Jerry. This is Jerry’s world and we’re all living in it. Either get with the program or get out.
- 9. Olga or Dmitri.** Then you could talk to your cat in a Russian accent and pretend like they know what you’re saying. Also, they’re like old people names but with a little more flavor.
- 10. Spoons.** Spoons speaks for itself.

● The Various DeeDees

MOYA LINSEY, Grade 12, *Personal Essay*

She drove a Mini Cooper—no, scrap that. She drove *two* Mini Coopers: one red and one blue. And they had stripes, of course. I mean, what’s the purpose of having a Mini Cooper if it doesn’t have stripes? You might as well drive a Subaru.

She lived in the Empire State Building. The penthouse. With maids and personal chefs and whatever forms of opulence you can imagine.

She shopped exclusively at the now-defunct Barney’s on 7th Ave. She was always meticulously outfitted, as one would expect. I’m talking about full-length ball gowns for grocery runs and Cartier jewels to go to the pharmacy. Not that she would actually go to the grocery store or the pharmacy. So I guess that the ball gowns and jewelry were just for posterity’s sake.

Evidently, my imaginary childhood friend was kind of a bougie B.

DeeDee first appeared in my life around age 3. At the time, she exemplified my goals in life: sophisticated, stylish, cultured. I didn’t need siblings as long as I had a DeeDee. She was always my main topic of conversation, which I’m sure

bothered my parents. She followed me everywhere, driving alongside me at two miles per hour in her blue Mini Cooper (she kept the blue one at my house and the red one at the Empire State Building. It must have been such a pain to find roadside parking for *both* cars). She ate dinner with me; she went to birthday parties; she drove back to the Empire State Building when I went to bed; and yet, every morning, she had returned to 12 Fiske Place by the time I woke up. She was always with me, the two of us metaphorically hinged at the hip. I anthropomorphized her. She had a distinctly human figure: two legs, two arms, two feet, two hands, a torso, and a head. And yet, I could never visualize what she actually looked like. Her face was like the pixelated screen that TV shows use to hide license plates: it was obviously a face, but her exact features were undefined and indistinguishable. She was almost like a deity in this sense (I certainly think of God as faceless—if he even exists, that is). She was this looming, omnipresent, messianic figure. I worshipped her in a way that Christians worship Jesus (though said Christians would probably consider my DeeDee-based faith system sacrilegious).

Respite ●

ELLA SRAN

Grade 11

Photograph



DeeDee's presence in my life persisted for quite some time. It wasn't until I first visited the Empire State Building that my toddler cleverness failed. I tore through the lobby like a hurricane tears through Florida, desperately trying to find the entry to DeeDee's Empire State Building penthouse. I had such a clear image in my head of what her apartment would look like. Eerily, it shared some similarities to the interior of Mar-a-Lago. Just think *gold*. Everywhere. Gold wallpaper, gold banisters, gold curtains, gold rugs, gold kitchen appliances (though I imagine that a gold blender would probably be just as effective as Saddam's gold AK-47, by which I mean wholly for display purposes only). So in addition to being bougie as all-get-out, she was also as tacky as some of the 21st century's worst leaders.

But I digress. Envision a miniature-Moya, probably wearing a horribly mismatched outfit as I was going through a phase in which I insisted on styling myself, running through the lobby of one of New York City's most recognizable landmarks like a dachshund on amphetamines, my feet going far too fast for my body. When I finally concluded that there probably wasn't an entrance to DeeDee's palatial apartment, I threw myself on the ground and, in classic toddler fashion, threw a tantrum. The Echidna of all tantrums. It was only after causing my parents a using-*embarazada*-to-mean-embarrassed-in-Spanish-class amount of humiliation that I eventually picked myself up off the ground and went home, my belief in DeeDee crushed to smithereens.

Or so I thought.

Fast forward nine years. I'm 12, and I have enough societal understanding to know I hate Upper East Siders (not to generalize or anything). My goals and interests have changed tremendously over the past decade. I'm fascinated by politics and current events, not whatever newest trend Barney's is hocking to the masses of Madison Ave. Two summers ago, I also started attending Camp Wa-Klo for Girls, aka the summer home for every Jewish American Princess (JAP) who is too embarrassed to admit to their status as a JAP (myself included). It was here that I met, and you guessed it, a girl named DeeDee. She is interestingly not a JAP, but rather a WASP (ah, the children of Isaac finally reunited). She is the real-life version of my childhood friend. She lives on 95th Street on the Upper East Side, attends the Marymount School, and, as far as I can tell, spends the majority of her time shopping and obsessing over boys. She tells me that her neighborhood is "sketchy." While her family doesn't drive a Mini Cooper, they do drive a Range Rover and have a full-time housekeeper. Her older brother is a competitive sailor, and he unironically wears boat shoes. She only leaves Manhattan to visit her friend on Martha's Vineyard or to go on a foreign vacation. I have never met her father. He works on Wall Street. Her mother shops at Barney's.

We are friends for a while. We text and Snapchat and FaceTime, but mostly it's an empty friendship. We *say* we're

friends. It's not an actionable friendship. Even though we live in the same city, we only see each other at mutual friends' bat mitzvahs. She doesn't want to leave Manhattan, and I'm more than happy on the other side of the East River. A year later, she moves to New Canaan, Connecticut—every WASP's Mecca. The next year, she doesn't return to camp. Without three weeks living together in the middle of the woods in a 100 sq. ft. cabin completely technology-less, there is no longer any pretext for our friendship. We naturally drift, like two accompanying ships gradually separated by the wind and the waves and the weather. We make excuses not to see each other even though we have no other plans. *The Sry, can't next week! My grandmother's coming to town and I promised that I'd spend time with her. Wish I could! Miss u <3. And the I just have way too much homework. I hate math class! My teacher is soooooo*

annoying. Another time! And of course, the ever-effective *I got a rly bad fever yesterday. 103 degrees, ughhhh. I just don't want to get u sick either. We'll see each other soon!* Then somebody just stops making excuses entirely. It's too much work. The other person is secretly relieved. As anticipated, there's the occasional polite check-in about life and school and friends. It's cordial and awkward, but it alleviates each person's guilt about being a terrible friend. Then these check-ins become more and more infrequent. Next thing you know, you're both seventeen, and you haven't spoken in three years. The in-person DeeDee has become just as irrelevant, just as much a thing of the past as my childhood imaginary friend.

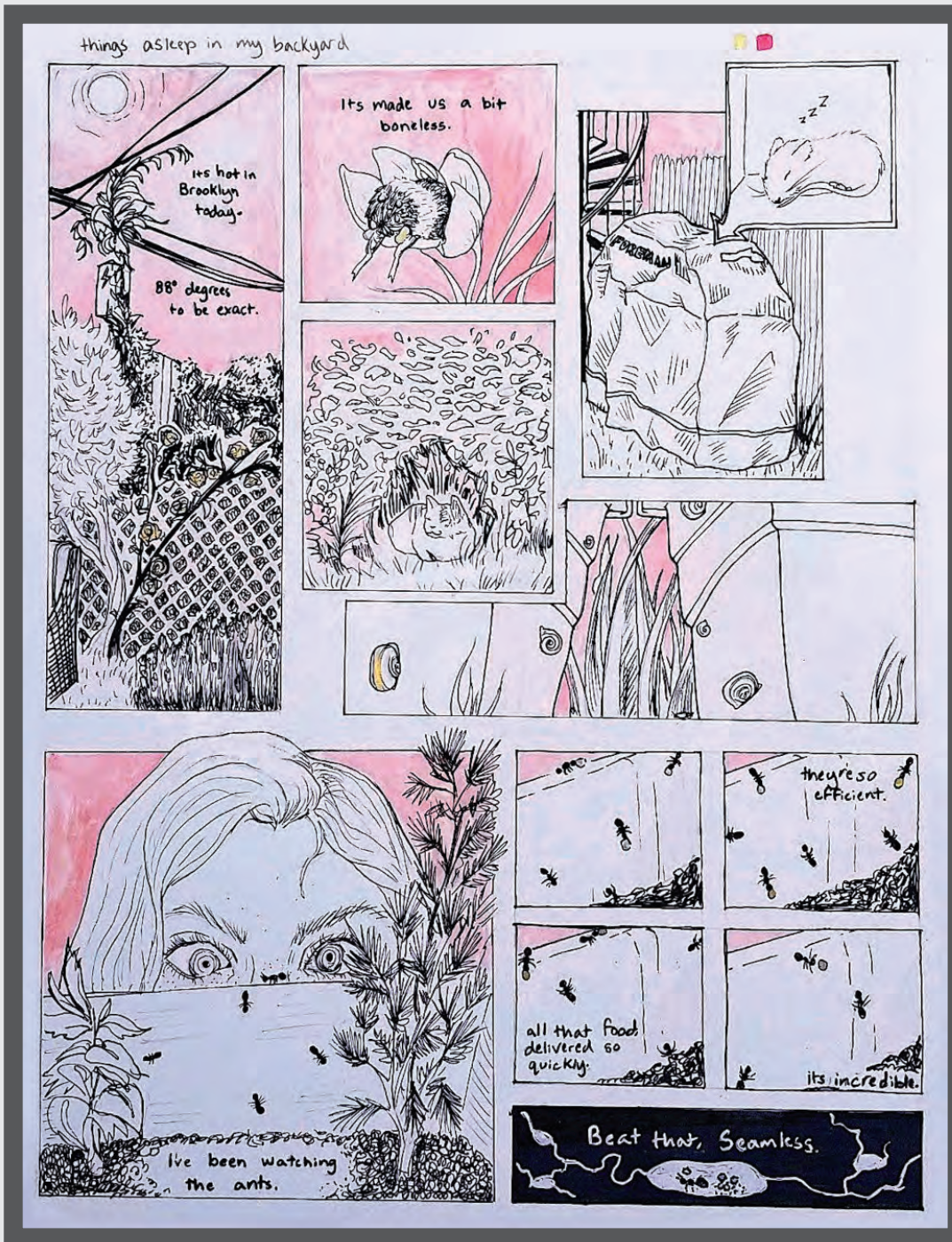
From here on in, they will simply be known as the various DeeDees.

● **Things Asleep
In My Backyard**

CATIE WITHERWAX

Grade 12

Pen and Marker



● Starling

ROWAN DEWITT, Grade 12, *Fiction*

My mom makes taxidermied birds. In the sitting room, on the far wall next to the doorway to the kitchen, there is a large wooden cabinet with glass panes on the doors. The dead birds sit in there, on the shelves made of a dead tree. Most of them are sparrows, but among them are a few crows, some warblers, a falcon (her favorite), and a magpie (my favorite).

I like to stand before the glass and examine every bird that I can see without needing a stepstool. Their feathers are carefully dusted each week, and their eyes are polished. I look through the glass panes and into their little glass eyes, and if I look closely enough I can see my reflection in both. Ever since I was little I have done this, and ever since I was little I have watched her work. She narrates it to me as she does it, as if she were teaching me. I know all the steps by now, although I've never done them myself. I know the sounds, the smells, the delicate way she handles the birds—I do not know the feeling of holding one. I can imagine it, though, watching her face as she works. I didn't understand the word 'reverence' until I watched her tie off the final stitch in her falcon and lean back to see the light reflect in its glass eyes.

A few days ago, she found a starling. She cradled it in her hands and took it to her desk and I sat in my chair across from hers. The phone rang just as she was parting the feathers to cut it open. She left to answer it, leaving the door cracked so her voice could drift through, muted by distance. The room was emptier and quieter with her gone, but I felt the presence of the bird. I leaned forward and scooped its body into my hands. I had never done that before. I did not feel reverence. The bird

“ *I didn't understand the word 'reverence' until I watched her tie off the final stitch in her falcon and lean back to see the light reflect in its glass eyes.* ”

just felt dead. The ones in the cabinet don't feel dead, they feel inanimate but aware, like deities perched in limbo. The ones in the sky and on telephone wires feel alive, even from a distance. This one was nothing but dead.

I thought of it among the others, in eternal flight, with sleepless glass eyes, and I wanted to let it rest. I put it in my shirt pocket and paused briefly as if to think, although there was nothing on my mind except the dead weight of the bird pressed to my chest. I pushed open one of the windows that let out into the yard and climbed through, then onto the table in the patio, then up the incline of the roof to the window of my room, where I put the bird in a shoebox under my bed. My mom's footsteps were going back down to the basement. I did

not go downstairs. That night, I said I saw a cat in the neighborhood with hungry, yellow eyes.

I don't know what I had expected, exactly. Maybe I wanted to save it from limbo, from its life after death. Maybe if I left it long enough, it would stop being a bird, or even a dead bird, and just be bones instead. But it began to smell. My mom found it soon after that. She stared into the shoebox at her starling as I explained it to her, but the starling was more dead than ever before. There was no reverence for this one.

"You let it rot, Danny?" She asked in a half-whisper.
"You let it rot?"



Bard Rock ●

CHARLOTTE HAMPTON

Grade 12

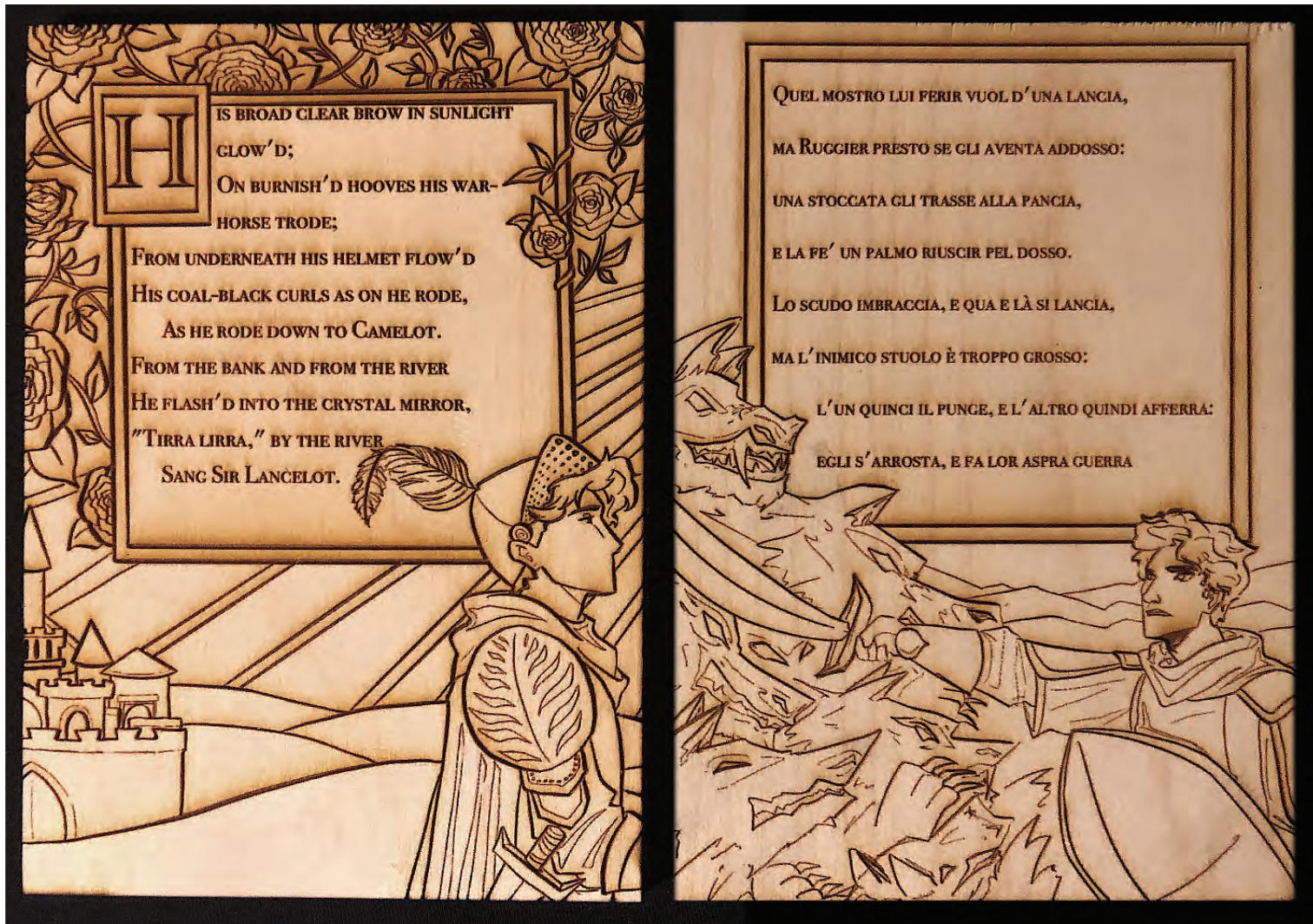
Painting (gouache)

● Knights and Arms

SITA PAWAR

Grade 12

Laser-printed engraving on wood



● I Wish I Wasn't a God

DENVER KELLEY, Grade 9, *Poetry*

It's always, "Hermes, I have something for you to do,"
Never "Hermes, how are you?" I find it obscene
That I'm never seen—unless it's to deliver a message overseas.
It's as if it's all I'm used for. If only they knew I
wanted so much more.

I'm father's right hand man, but truthfully, I'd rather be getting a tan
Off on the island with Calypso—oh the way her skin glows,
And with her, the wine always flows, and
my yearning to escape grows.

Life isn't fair. Being a god is tearing me apart. You'd think
being a messenger would bring you praise, yet big sister
Athena gets all the craze. Oh everybody loves good ol' Athena:
Greatest warrior in any arena.

The brightest star, far far away—I lurk in her shadows astray,
Too scared to stay in her light, as she outshines me. It's so difficult
Having wings and never being free

● Toast

SORAH GUTHRIE, Grade 12, *Personal Essay*

When you hear the music start, that means go. You are here. In your chalky pink tights, the elastic straining against your foot, and your brown hair slipping out of the black band. Her manicured hand presses play on the speaker and the piano music starts. You are 8 and you bend your legs when the teacher tells you to and you try not to look bored. She tells Lily to come to the middle of the room and do her second-position plié.

“You see how her back is flat, it’s like she’s a piece of toast, completely flat going through the toaster.”

The teacher smiles at Lily who looks back at her, a little too proud. You wonder why anyone would want to be a piece of toast.

When the class is finished, the teacher reminds us of how a ballerina’s hair should look for the day of the recital. She says your name and asks you to turn around. You get excited thinking, *yes, she likes my hair; I am a piece of toast.*

And she says, “This is how your hair is *not* supposed to look.”

* * *

A perfect ballet bun is an art. You pull your hair into a tight ponytail and slick back the sides with gel. Then, twisting your hair into a cord, you wrap it around the base of the ponytail, creating a donut. Then secure the donut with pins, sliding them around the circumference of your hair. Sliding is a little too gentle, more like shoving. Wrap a hair net around it, push some more pins in, and prepare yourself for the ache that will come later.

* * *

Pink satin. And ribbons too. They are beautiful and delicate but ready to be dirtied by linoleum floors. Your first pair of pointe shoes. They are from the company Block and you keep the box. They mean that you are a real dancer. Your teacher will show you how to cut the ribbons diagonally and burn the edges with a lighter so they won’t fray. You will also learn to sew the ribbons and elastics on—a practice that will take days to complete. When they are all finished and stitched up you slip your foot into the shoe and prepare yourself to walk on air. But it isn’t like air, it is hard wood on bandaged toes. Before class you will bang them against the painted white brick walls in hopes of breaking them in. You sleep with them on some nights, willing them to mold to your feet. In class, the

arch of your foot is more like a sharp angle than a smooth curve. They don't look like Alex's feet or Linnea's. But it is okay because you earned them and they are yours.

* * *

A good pirouette is hard to do. It's not a spin or a turn, it's a balance. The objective is not to rotate, it is to pull yourself towards the sky and stay there. It is a moment of total suspension: your supporting leg is strong and grounded, your arms are iron, your core tightens, your foot is pointed and turned out and you are smiling (softly).

* * *

It was your back first. She would yell at you every class to reverse the curve and straighten it out. You worked on it and she didn't yell. Then it was your feet, sickled and turned in, and so you made a habit of curling your toes toward the ground when you sat down at the dinner table. Then it was your bow legs. Which you couldn't fix. And your head shape.

* * *

You will soon welcome the feeling of exhaustion and the heat in your toes because it feels good to work hard. The *tombe*

“ **She says your name**
and asks you to turn around.
You get excited thinking,
yes, she likes my hair, I am
a piece of toast. ”

● **Three
Of Clubs**

LUCIJA JUREVICS

Grade 12

Sculpture



pas de bourree is second nature and you feel light when you move. You love the warmth of the studio on a winter night and the sweat in your hair cooling when you step out into the cold.

* * *

There's a buzz on performance night. A magical bustle of pink and blue tulle. A glittery orange as she rounds the corner. Ooh and you don't know what will happen because sometimes little girls forget the steps or a satin shoe slips on a shiny black floor. It is a warm coursing energy in the air that is made by hairspray and resin and whispers met with shhhhhh.

* * *

And suddenly it's you and it's only you. You are here. On the stage with a million lights shining onto your smiling face and the music starts and you go. You jump and leap and everything comes together so perfectly. Your feet hit the floor and you throw your arms up at exactly the right moments. Then comes that final jump—the one that touches the sky—and you nail it. And the moment it begins, it ends. You hear hands against hands and you fall into the open arms of the offstage darkness.

JOY! TRANSMOGRIFICATION

- **Golden mirror**, cracked at dawn,
Would you go into the abyss?
I would, with a friend
(you wouldn't without two enemies).
It was peace, so beautiful, at ease.

● Nellie Davis / *Grade 9* • Erika Drezner / *Faculty*
● Brooke Elien / *Grade 9*

- **Though the air plant** has left its home, the nest of
green brambles, the yellowish sponge moss, my tiny eucalyptus,
and my stiff little pink ombre flower remain, holding on like the
fighters they are.
What's left in the background when the main attraction is gone?
Fear and emptiness.
Fullness, fulfillment, courage.
Rejuvenate!

● Sadie Barrett / *Grade 9* • Adam Berg / *Grade 9*
● Ekene Botofasina / *Faculty*

- **On two skis sliding down** the silky white snow—
How can you get from peak to peak?
Ziplines.
There's no rigamarole, no kerfuffle, just joy.
I get the breesh then it's *adios*.

● Lucija Jurevics / *Grade 12* • Aidan Klinges / *Grade 12*
● Brandon Knights / *Grade 12*

- **A fluffiness unimaginable—**
Who's my little PogChamp?
The title of "My little PogChamp" lies upon his highness,
Kermit the Frog.
A failure in the eyes of many: Miss Piggy. But this
of course is a lie.
I like the way it snaps.

● Anthony Reznikovsky / *Grade 12* • Isen Ritchie / *Grade 11*
● Sade Robinson / *Grade 12*

- **There seems to be** a calling from behind her eyes saying,
"What will you accomplish today?"
Why does she insist on looking at me all day long?
It's because you bring her joy.
It is because other people bring her joy—
Elated to see you aloft in the night sky.

● Traci Lyn Thomas / *Faculty* • Charlotte Tirone / *Grade 12*
● Jeremiah Vaughn / *Grade 9*

Festa de 15 ●

SABRINA ELLIS

Grade 12

Copic Markers



● Untold Stories of the ER: So Bad it's Good

NOA BROWN, Grade 11, *Humor*

I love late night TV. More specifically, I love *Untold Stories of the ER*, a fast-paced medical series filled with re-enactments of horrifying emergency room visits broken up by confessionals of under-qualified medical experts played by under-qualified actors. Between the scrubs, starchy-white doctor coats, and the constant blaring of sirens in the background, *Untold Stories of the ER* (or, to those of us on the inside, *Untold ER*.) paints the perfect medical drama picture for its audience. Simply put, *Untold ER* is everything a TV medicine junkie could wish for.

The structure of the show is exquisite. First of all, like any quality TV show, *Untold ER* airs between the hours of 2:00 and 6:00 in the morning, which everybody knows is the most sought-after cable slot. And it has been running for 14 seasons straight—a hallmark for TV excellence! In recent years, I have particularly appreciated the producers' flair for the dramatic and the editors' ability to master the art of suspense: not only does the show consistently break for ads at pivotal and anxiety-inducing moments, it treats you to those same pivotal and anxiety-inducing moments a second time immediately following the commercial break. And it seems that no matter the type or severity of an injury, patients begin to flatline or become tachycardic just before they are miraculously cured.

Untold ER can be found on TLC, an acronym that, unsurprisingly, stands for The Learning Channel. And let me tell you, boy have I learned! As a veteran watcher of *Untold ER*, I've picked up so many important things. For starters, I've learned to never, and I mean never, skydive above a neighborhood with picket fences, leave my mouth open when launching a bottle rocket, or try my best friend's wedding ring on unless I want to *keep* it on—the amount of times men and women have raced through hospital doors frantically yanking at their index fingers on the morning of their dear friend's big day is truly astounding!

“**For starters, I've learned**
to never, and I mean never,
skydive above a neighborhood
with picket fences, leave my
mouth open when launching a
bottle rocket, or try my best
friend's wedding ring on unless I
want to *keep* it on.”



Halloween ●

CHARLOTTE HAMPTON

Grade 12

Painting (gouache)

● **Grab Bag**

NOAH SHACKNAI

Grade 12

Oil pastel



Though repeatedly snubbed by the Emmys, *Untold ER* is undeniably the most profound TV show in cinematic history, and has never failed me on a late night of TV binging. It's downright therapeutic. Some call it strange but, if you ask me, nothing provides more relief after a long night of pitying yourself or indecipherable chemistry homework than watching patients come into a hospital with outrageously stupid and seemingly impossible injuries. For example, a personal favorite episode of mine revolves around a clan of botfly larvae making a cozy habitat inside a woman's brain.

It also happened to be that woman's wedding day.

Though medical dramas like *The Good Doctor*, *Chicago Med*, *Doogie Howser M.D.*, *Nurse Jackie*, and *Grey's Anatomy* are fabulous in their own right, nothing can beat 50 minutes (well, 30 without ads) of wildly inappropriate jokes and aggressively mediocre acting. Nevertheless, I've heard it said that *Untold ER* is just a newer, more low-brow version of *Rescue 911*. On the contrary, I would argue that *Rescue 911* is just an *older*, more poorly-produced version of *Untold ER*. And I would be right.

Sure, *Rescue 911* may be more "reputable" and "realistic" than *Untold Stories of the ER*, and its actors may be "qualified"

and and have "credentials," but is it really a comparison when looking at the true character and heart of the two shows? No, it isn't. What *Untold ER* lacks in polish it makes up for in chaotic allure and utter charm.

The magic of *Untold ER* is undeniable. But what ultimately draws me in time and time again is not the over-the-top nature of the show or the horrifyingly hilarious circumstances frequently surrounding an ER visit, nor is it the rudimentary medical knowledge I gain or the mishaps and malpractice of medical professionals. In fact, all of that is just a bonus. More than anything, I think it is the satisfaction of watching someone going to the brink and back within a 50 minute time-frame that keeps me and other viewers alike engaged at 3 a.m.—our butts glued to the couches, our eyes glued to the organ-filled screen.

So, next time you get a candle stuck in your ear, an industrial fish hook caught on your scalp, or a stiletto impaled in your pancreas, give me a ring. I know just what the fake doctor ordered.

● **Blue Eyes**

AUTUMN KNIGHT

Grade 12

Painting (acrylics)



● The Missionary

ELLA SRAN, Grade 11, *Poetry*

a golden voice cries out to us,
there are poor lost souls that wander.
oh, you were born of jasmine and dove flight,
child of pearl and snow.
so go find them, won't you please?
a beautiful world is kept from them.
they trudge in difficult waters,
all evading them but pain.

oh, these poor lost souls beyond the brink!
they cry out to me now.
so some comforts I must leave behind,
but they are not such fickle things.

still at the door, watching the rain,
my holy book beneath my arm,
I say *one day I'll find them all.*
she says *please don't be late.*

so now begins my slog,
from bitter cold to scorching heat.
darker days I haven't known.
only lost souls would live here.
far beyond my homeland,
between trees and under caves,
a golden voice cries out to me,
lost souls are here,
lost souls are near.

so on I trudge, a wicked thing
is the grass and the sea and the sand.
sunsets are fiery death-calls,
a brutal beginning to night.
under trees that look down on stars,
it's here I begin to slow.
a mossy green calls me below the earth,
and my feet are tired now.
but the lost souls are waiting,
and the lost souls are near.

I find them here, beyond a hill,
smiles so bright I've never seen.
with unlined skin of mahogany,
and a caramel and golden sheen.
oh poor lost souls! I cry to air,
what anguish can I not see?
they laugh at me, a bell too loud
for ears as new as mine.
they say *Weakened Man, Wandering Thief,*
what you must be missing
under gloomy, dark grey skies.

they banish me then, and the sky
is the only company I can claim.
a golden land is before me,
and I wander here,
and wander there,
until I meet the sea,
a blue I have never seen.
a black baza cackles then,
a piercing, golden cry.
oh foolish one, oh how you've lost!
it shrills before its flight.

it circles my still body now,
holy book long having slipped to sea.
do you see now? it asks me,
the broken lie you live?
do you hear now? it asks me,
the empty cries you chase?
your sun doesn't touch you,
it shrills into the fire.
you were born of cotton and ivory,
a child of bone and frost.
your sea is the night and the end,
a darkened, ugly thing.

my sea is the morning,
and my sky is the flame.
my trees and land are golden,
and still warm is my night.

oh, these poor lost souls beyond the brink!
the baza shrills out now.
oh, what darkness you have left behind,
and they are such, such fickle things.

it stills on a branch of a quiet tree,
facing some golden gate.
it says, *one day, you'll meet your end.*
this time, please don't be late.



Jellyfish ●

SITA PAWAR

Grade 12

Painting (acrylics)

Sita Pawar

● Hamilton Fish

RUBY SALVATORE PALMER, *Grade 12, Personal Essay*

When I was 12 and Max was 13 we decided that at 16 we would get matching belly button piercings. We decided this horizontally, while staring at my stomach, then hers, then mine again. It was the same summer we stared at our stomachs that a boy chased me in the water. Getting chased was nothing really out of the ordinary for Hamilton Fish—the neighborhood pool on the corner of Pitt where we stubbed our toes on bagel-colored cement and grandmas smoked in sunglasses and where we walked to the bathroom (up the stairs, past the community center, back down stairs) together, just in case.

Summertime meant stuffing our clothes in a shared locker and Max tucking her phone in the folds of her towel. When we got to the lip of the line, the men in sandals who cursed and guarded the gate told us to shake our towels out. They found the phone but we smiled and moved from foot to foot until they agreed to harboring a shared secret. In years prior we'd leave our towels with our moms by the sharp and chalky shallow pool, drained at least three times a week for throw up or floating pieces of diaper. We came with Maya and Sabena and Henry and Angus and Ayla and Michaela and all our little siblings back then. We played family or obstacle course tag

and someone always face planted on the pavement and ran back to the moms, sobbing. They came back with watermelon. Max and I were alone now though, no Maya, no Sabena, no Henry, or Angus or Ayla or Michaela, no moms. We would lay our towels near the lifeguard chair by the deep pool where Jayden, the lifeguard with green eyes and three little sisters, was stationed at least once between 1:00 and 4:00.

The ground around the pool was always harder than normal ground, and Max ran ahead on it. When I walked I felt the ground shake now, and not even in a way that suggested heaviness, but because I was aware of each step. I paid attention to the meeting of my foot and the pavement, and what shook and swayed and rebounded as I moved. We stared at our stomachs. Max had an outie and it was really the only part of her body that strayed from bone. I was getting boobs and Max pointed out every pair of old man eyes who noticed them too.

The day I was chased, Max and I were moving towards the middle of the big pool; in the big pool, the deepest point is right at its center. A girl in a bloated white T-shirt swam violently up to us. “My brother thinks you’re cute,” she

ordered. My stomach curled into my ribcage. Having a boy like me was cause for a panic attack then. In 6th grade the boy I thought I loved asked me out and my crush morphed into feardisgustloathing the second I said yes. “Where is he?” Max asked. She was craning her neck around, looking through clumps of coughing kids and grownups in goggles swimming laps and teenagers with the same belly button piercings we fantasized about. I fought for Max’s attention. I mouthed: NO. The girl bared her teeth to laugh. She was heavy set with angry eyes and curls knotted abrasively on top of her head. A strand roped down and posed between her eyebrows. I never left the strand.

“Ayo dumbass,” she said and waved her arms in the direction of three boys (the kind who also wore white T-shirts into the water). I could feel my heartbeat behind my eyes and in the back of my throat. As the boys swam-ran toward us I swam-ran to the silver ladder that absorbed all of June, July and now August. It also warped my reflection—sprawling forehead, planet nose, super metal-y metal mouth. Dream running, nightmare running, Max followed. Everytime I looked back the three boys seemed closer, the sister too. One ran with his arms bending and straightening and bending around his

**“ I could feel my heartbeat
behind my eyes and in the
back of my throat. As the
boys swam-ran toward us I
swam-ran to the silver ladder
that absorbed all of June,
July and now August. ”**

● **Dress Code Violation**

BILLIE WYNN

Grade 12

Painting (oil)



head like the Tompkins Square hawk swooping down to claw at the hill between my eyes and feed me to her children.

I reached for the ladder pulling myself upward. One foot tore out of the water as I shifted forward and I felt a tug on my ankle. Making sure it was Max, I whipped my head back. One of the boys was smiling, his head angled downward. Ankle in hand. “Where you going, mama?” I watched his tongue move behind his teeth. Then his teeth behind his lips. Then his teeth came back. White white. My heart was beating. Hard. I don’t remember what I said. Or what shapes my face made. My heart was beating. Hard. I remember diffusing the situation in a rush, probably maneuvering through lies and the knowing-unknowing-knowingness I had gotten so good at:

Oh sorry, I actually have a boyfriend.

Oh sorry, me and her are dating.

Oh sorry, I don’t speak English.

On other days when the pool was past maximum capacity, as it was most days in early August, Max would jerk and pulse from hip to hip as we stood by the side. I flattened my hair to the backs of my ears and moved the strings of my bathing suit up and down and back up. Max spoke at me while her eyes made preplanned rectangles over everything, securing a target or targets perhaps. The older kids, always in basketball shorts never swim trunks, would run up to us in an opaque haze of bilingual sound. They would grab our waists tight while we laughed and screamed loud enough for the smoking grandmas in sunglasses and teenagers with belly button piercings to see. Those boy hands often slipped. I never told them I was 12.

After the chase, Max and I lay back down on our towels and looked back at our stomachs. “You should’ve gotten his number,” she said. I didn’t even have a phone.

● **A Moment's Pause**

ELLA SRAN

Grade 11

Photograph

R & D
FOODS



Memorial Arch ●

ELLA SRAN

Grade 11

Photograph



● Dancing for No One

CALEB DUNN, Grade 12, *Personal Essay*

What she was doing downstairs at *my* hours of the night, I did not know. She, of course, did, and quickly whispered for me to approach her—where she was sitting on the couch—for an explanation. Earbuds offer an invaluable pretext for ignoring people in this house, and with eyes focused on the stairway to my left, I left her questions upstairs and limped to the freezer in the basement.

Pad Thai, macaroni and cheese, pretzels, popped corn, crackers, lasagna—I had any choice of “midnight snacks,” as I call them (it was 3 a.m.) and I chose the frozen burrito. On to the fridge, with the offerings of green tea, coffee, and Yerba Mate; I chose a Coke. I do not like Coke. I do not like burritos. I do, though, like a meal that says *You’re on your way to rock bottom. Who eats a frozen burrito and a coke at 3 a.m.?* Lucky for me, I had an audience to appreciate such outrageous behavior only a staircase away.

“What are you—What are you doing down here so late?” I asked, astonished.

The astonishment was not put on; I often enjoy late nights here, without the chore of pretending I cannot hear people over the music playing softly in my earbuds. The little gasp of

“ I do not like Coke.

I do not like burritos. I do, though, like a meal that says *You’re on your way to rock bottom.* ”

surprise when I got to the top of the staircase, however, was fake. But I have been running on three hours of sleep a night for a while, so I am not going to beat myself up over needing a minute to prepare to have a conversation with her.

“I have tons of final essays due tomorrow,” she smiled, conscious of whose hours of the night she was in.

I had essays too, but it was sort of surprising that there was no mention of the Coke and frozen burrito. That, after all, is a meal that screams *you're on your way to rock bottom*. *Who eats a frozen burrito and a coke at 3 a.m.?* Obviously not loudly enough.

“Hey, would you take a photograph of me? I want to document this night.”

“Why do you want to document it?”

“Um, what do you call the opposite of a peak?”

She leaned back and laughed, the bottom of her chin pushing against her neck. She took a video, reciting my joke, and then sent it to a group chat.

I hate to be vain, but when school makes me want to throw myself down a flight of stairs, I'll take whatever I can get. Even if it's just the brief excitement of short-lived attention. That, of course, is the second excuse I've written in this essay to pardon myself from acknowledging the fabrication of seemingly natural moments.

She walks upstairs to go to sleep and then I turn off all the lights, put my earbuds in, and press shuffle. “Life During Wartime” comes on. I know how I like to dance to this song; my brother and I dance to it a lot after dinner, as our mother watches in confusion and awe, all infused with the type of parental love that will make her genuinely amazed by anything we do. Sometimes I wonder if that is harmful. I look at my reflection, dancing with fervor.

“I'm dancing for no one,” I tell myself, “it is just a natural need to move my body.” But I am also imagining I am a famous singer, in a famous band, at a crowded concert.

● **Apartment 5R**

RUBY SALVATORE PALMER

Grade 12

Mixed Media



● Symbiosis as Community Care

NICHOLE FERNANDEZ, Grade 12, *Poetry*

There are villages in the Dominican Republic
Where a Taino deity lives in each body of water.

(Let's think about how we're all bodies of water in which an entity worth honoring lives.)

Their altars are low to the ground, and they are offered up fruit.

(How lovely it is
to feed each other the food
we taught each other to grow.)

I met a hundred-year-old woman once,
Who told me her secret was never living in isolation.

● Friendship Through Fifth Grade, Emails, and Beyond

LUCIJA JUREVICS, Grade 12, *Personal Essay*

At the age of 5, I knew we would be best friends, having been in Ms. Piscino’s first grade class together, and so we were, with joint ice skating birthday parties that had both our faces on the cake and weekend-long sleepovers where we played *Legends of Zelda* on your Wii after going to church on Sundays, despite the fact that I didn’t know how to play video games and I never went to church otherwise. We made up songs about Celebi to the tune of Christmas songs and traded Pokémon action figures; we watched *Winx Club* and *My Little Pony* and obsessed over every -ology book, from vampirology to Egyptology.

In school, we would sit together whenever possible, giggling through music class when it was time for recorder karate belts and quietly planning what we were going to be for Halloween. We exchanged a glance when our teachers announced tests, a glance that first said, *uh oh I am so not ready for this*, and then also, *who does this lady think she is, giving us a test on a Friday?* We talked and talked and talked at recess, running around having had way too much sugar. You got us cute little red plastic best friends necklaces—mine said

BE FRI, yours said ST ENDS—and we had matching bracelets—M for Madison, L for Lucy. We studied together and ate lunch together and did everything in between together—in short, we were inseparable.

Correction: we were inseparable, for the most part. Everything had to be in moderation, and even though we were so close, we still fought, and it was usually about the dumbest things, like disagreeing over who was what character from a book or show and deciding that we’d spent enough time with each other and should hang out with other people too. Regardless, we always came back together, and I was devastated to have to move away for middle school (especially given that we would have spent another three years together if I hadn’t left). But we swapped emails constantly, with subjects like “My Lifez,” “Rainbow and Pictures,” and, most ominously, “REVENGE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” that detailed our lives as separated by about 3,459 miles and a giant pond. From run-ins with the fifth grade’s most popular girls to the most British breakfast food to how awful *Frozen* is, these emails were a window into a life back home in New York, a world that I had



once been so comfortable with: given the seven-hour flight and the five-hour time difference between us, the different schools and communities, and the eternally-conflicting schedules, I felt removed from the city I had given a piece of my heart to, becoming almost a complete stranger to it.

Our emails became less and less frequent and revolved more and more around holidays like eleventh birthdays and Christmases. I went skiing in Austria (a not-long-ish flight from Heathrow) while you went to Orlando (a not-long-ish flight from JFK). You dyed your hair blue and got a dog; I obsessed over Harry Potter and wished I had a dog. We wrote about our own middle school dramas through references to elementary school friends because neither of us saw the other's school. We talked about who liked whom and who's kind of annoying and who's actually not that smart, the Queen and the presidency, the high school application process, and more or less lost touch around freshman year, or at least that's when the emails really petered out.

I'm not entirely sure why I've come back to our friendship at this moment in time, so many years after our endless conversations. Maybe it's because we're in a time where everyone seems so far away, and our email exchanges became the highlight of my week and brought me comfort in knowing

“ . . . We talked about who liked whom and who's kind of annoying and who's actually not that smart, the Queen and the presidency, the high school application process, and more or less lost touch around freshman year, or at least that's when the emails really petered out. ”

that our friendship didn't have to end because fifth grade did and we didn't see each other every single day anymore. Maybe it's because our ten-year-old lives were devoid of any real drama—our steady group of friends bickered about the most delicious food combinations and who should be Bloom or Stella or Flora or Musa or Tecna far more than anything in the realms of love and smarts, and despite applesauce and graham crackers sorely losing that competition, our relationships weren't questioned and we were, for the most part, nice to each other. Maybe I'm thinking about it because it reminds me of my closest friendships now: although my best friends now didn't play wolves or invent new games and new lives when they were our age then, they remind me of you in their kind listening and witty remarks and the way they're always there for me, always rooting for me even if I don't know it. Maybe our friendship taught me how to be a better person, a better friend, a better best friend, and I'm only noticing it now that I'm thinking about it.

Maybe I just miss the simple ease of this friendship and how we could do absolutely nothing and still have fun. Or maybe it's just because it was just your birthday and I texted you to say “omg we are SO old now” and look back at funny photos of us from when we were 6 or so. There's pictures somewhere of every birthday we've spent together, spanning at least a decade now, though now at home rather than at the Aviator ice rink. The latest set from your kitchen—me in a chunky green turtleneck, you in a purple and white sweater, two chocolate cupcakes in front of us—ends with our heads together, blonde and black hair coming together to blow out pink candles again.

● **Airhead**

NOAH SHACKNAI

Grade 12

Acrylic and Airbrush



JOY! TRANSMOGRIFICATION

- **Ruby ball cactus:**

what do you like about the color red?
I love that it means love.
I'm indifferent that it means indifference.
Syzygy is as syzygy does.

-
- Samantha Rosario / Grade 11
 - Ashley Rosenblum / Grade 10 • Scott Rubin / Faculty

- **Robot piggy bank** with your eyes full of hope and dreams.

(How does it have hope in its eyes?)
It has hope because it knows that it is loved.
(It's despised, despaired.)
Kindling. Making a fire in secret.

-
- Adam Berg / Grade 9 • Ekene Botofasina / Faculty
 - Noa Brown / Grade 11

- **Sea otters PogU—**

Quite enchanting, are they mammals?
They are mammals, enchanting ones indeed.
They aren't mammals, and charm no one.
Apparently, sleep helps you rebuild—muscle, organ,
sanity, and faith.

-
- Kai Ellis / Grade 12 • Grace Freeman / Grade 11
 - Emily Gorman / Faculty

- **These doggie cousins are closer** than I am with
my cousins and I am living for it.

What am I currently thinking about?
A red water bottle,
remembered, in an overflowing cabinet.

The steam dissolves into an ethereal message from the
heavens, grounding me into the frozen dirt below.

-
- Luke Lamazor / Grade 11 • Amelia Levenson / Grade 9
 - Moya Linsey / Grade 12

- **My stuffed animal** which is a cow—

What's the difference between the way happiness
and joy make me feel?

Happiness tends to be external, triggered and based off
other people, whereas joy is more consistent and
cultivated internally.

Sadness consumes you.

Freedom.

-
- Charlotte Tirone / Grade 12 • Jeremiah Vaughn / Grade 9
 - Cece Vickers / Grade 10

● Built Up Plaque

EDEN WEISSMAN, Grade 12, *Personal Essay*

The very first thing Paula, the dental assistant from St. Lucia, asked me when I walked into the room was:

“Why would your parents name you Eden?”

She was holding the little piece of paper that had my name and birth date on it as she watched me climb into the chair. I didn’t hear what she said, so I laughed, hoping she hadn’t asked a question, before a familiar feeling of doom washed over me as her eyes remained unchanged and unlit.

“Why would they do that? Huh? Were they in a garden when they named you?” I laughed, very forcefully, and muttered something about how crazy they both were to name me that. My palms began to sweat.

“You know, I don’t trust the Bible. Who wrote those stories? I don’t trust stories written by a white man. And those stories, they’ve been changed over and over, how can we even know they’re true anymore? All the people who believe in the revelation and Christian prophecies, they’re having a field day right now. Me? No, I don’t believe in that.”

She began setting up the X-ray machine. It had been a year since I’d gone to the dentist, and despite intense debate with my mom about how the dentist is “useless,” she made me go anyway, before I turned 18.

“They say it started with Cain and Abel. You ever heard of them? Cain killed his brother, and that’s why the world is crazy. Too many people in it. Too crowded. And it’s all rich versus poor, you know? We screw them, the poor.”

I laughed with my mouth still wide open and nodded my head again. I am usually caught off guard when someone I don’t know starts talking to me. I hate small talk with even close friends, and words seem to get snared in my throat when I meet someone unknown. To me, friends are friends, and strangers are strangers.

But Paula spoke three sentences a second, never pausing to take a breath in between, and stared at me so intensely I could not look her in the eye in the first ten minutes of the appointment. Her eyelashes were curled and long, her reddish-hair was slicked back, and her pupils were so dark her irises looked black.

“You’re 17? 18? I grew up here, you know. On 5th Avenue and Flatbush. There used to be a movie theater, an old-school one, and pimps with real afros would hang around. I was never fooled by them. They enchanted girls. Girls would run into their cars and give them all their money, and they would drive off, leaving the girls on the street.”

She laughed.

“They fooled my cousin, isn’t that crazy? My mom told me that my cousin ran into her house one day, took all her money, and gave it to one of the boys in the car. And they just drove off. I was a teenager then, you know, so I didn’t even care. I didn’t think anything of it. But I could never be fooled by those boys. Right by that movie theater was a television shop, and when the blackout happened in ’77, people smashed the window of the shop and stole everything. Me and my sister wanted to watch so badly, but our mother made us come inside, because she thought it was dangerous.” She inhaled slightly.

“I never thought so.”

She said all of this in a minute, taking brief gaps in between to tell me to bite down on the tabs in my mouth for the X-rays. She left the room for a minute during each one.

“You must think I’m crazy,” she said after returning one time. “Talking like this. I just get euphoric with my last patient of the day.”

She did the same laugh as before. It was a pogo stick, each inhale an octave higher than the one before.

She let the chair’s head slowly angle down as she asked me where I went to school.

“Oh, I know Berkeley Carroll. On Berkeley Place, right?”

I nodded my head, and a second later wondered why, as I knew fully that Berkeley Carroll was not located on Berkeley Place.

“ You know, I don’t trust the Bible. Who wrote those stories? I don’t trust stories written by a white man. And those stories, they’ve been changed over and over, how can we even know they’re true anymore? ”

“I wanted to go there when I was younger. The Berkeley Institute. But we were too poor for it,” she said as her eyes glowed. “I went to St. Francis Xavier. You know it? The nuns were horrible. The strictest people I ever met. And our English teachers were the Bible teachers. Can you believe it? We had to wear a uniform, of course, but I didn’t mind that. It’s good, uniforms, because then all the kids wear the same clothes and it’s fair. And it gets you into that school mind. My son, he’s 14, and I just had to buy him a whole new wardrobe, because boys grow at that age. Everything. Underwear, socks, shirts.”

She had placed a stream of water running out of a tube into my left cheek, and another tube sucking all the moisture out of my right cheek. She applied numbing gel as the tubes fought for control in my mouth, creating a whirlwind of noise that made it hard to hear most of what she was saying.

“But you know, I loved school. I loved reading, philosophy, history. My son, when corona started, I had to teach him everything myself. But I loved it. The Pythagorean thingy, the radius of the cube, you know I loved it. He had to do a presentation on corona, and I”—she giggled mid-sentence—“I did the whole thing myself. Sometimes I still look at it and think, yeah, I did a good job.”

Before I had a chance to say anything, she took the water stream and began to go over each one of my teeth with it. Droplets flew into the air.

“Oh, I loved reading. When I was younger I read so much, on the hills, in Prospect Park. Richard Wright changed my life. Do you know him? He changed my life. He helped me understand my place in this country. I read *Native Son* so much. And James Baldwin too, but I never liked him as much as other people did. I’m from St. Lucia, and there, everyone is black. I didn’t know what racism was. When I came here, Richard Wright helped me understand.”

I asked her if she read Toni Morrison.

“Oh, yeah, I liked her. *The Blue Eye*, right? She was big in the 80s, so of course I liked her. We all did.”

She began to apply the water harder, and I cringed with the knowledge that the metal hook lying on the side-tray was soon to come.

“I feel so bad for you. You can’t have fun right now, with corona, and all the craziness. I’d have gone crazy. When I was

“*I’m from St. Lucia,
and there, everyone is black.
I didn’t know what racism
was. When I came here,
Richard Wright helped me
understand.*”

your age, I”—she suddenly stopped, leaned down closer to me, and whispered in my ear: “don’t tell your mom I told you this.”

She resumed her usual pace. “When I was your age, I sat on the hills, ate mango, and smoked a joint. You know what I think? The world would be better if everyone listened to reggae and smoked a joint. I think, instead of all this corona stuff, we should put marijuana smoke in the air, and we should all take a big inhale.”

She threw her head back laughing. I laughed too, and choked on the water that was flowing out of the tube.

“We moved from St. Lucia when I was 11. But you know, I have so many siblings . . .”

I still don’t know how many she actually has, because I could not hear a single word she was saying over the stream of water pummeling my teeth.

“. . . and once, when I was on the subway, I was talking with my friend about Trinidad, because it was their independence day coming up. And another girl came onto the subway and started talking with us, because it's New York City, you know, and I knew she was different, because she had lips just like mine. And, you'll never believe it, but after talking with her, it turns out she was from St. Lucia too, and after talking more, I realized she was my half-sister! Isn't that something. So I talked with her, and gave her my number, but she wanted me to call her every day, and I don't do that. I don't talk if I don't want to. I could let the phone ring for an eternity if I wanted to. I don't care.”

She sounded pleased with herself, and her eyes glowed.

“I never met my dad, and me and my sister always grew up asking my mom to see a photo of him, and she never showed us. Finally, one day, she took out a photo of a man, and said: this is your father. And you'll never believe it, but it was a photo of James Baldwin! It was ridiculous of course, because he's gay, but she put that photo on her mantle for years and told us it was our father. And people do think we look alike. Once, when I was on my way home from the airport, the taxi driver kicked me out on the street because his tire broke down. So another taxi driver, who looked like Danny DeVito, came, picked me up, took my suitcase into the trunk, and then said to me: Are you James Baldwin's daughter?”

Her hands shook as she laughed, the water stream ricocheting off the roof off my mouth and into the crevices of my teeth. She turned the stream off, grabbed the metal hook, and began to scrape my molars as I tried not to squirm.

“I dated a white boy once. He was a famous painter. His name was Paul . . .”

I have no idea what the painter's last name was, because I still couldn't hear her under the face shield and the two masks she had on. But she asked me if I knew who he was, and I felt it'd be rude to say no after she just told me of his acclaim, so I nodded my head.

“You do? Oh, you should Google him now. He was nice, and he had a real old-school New York accent, you know? When I dated him, his friends didn't want me there. Only one or two treated me well, but when I went to dinner with them, most of them just looked at me and whispered.”

The numbing gel had worn off, and I suddenly realized how hard she was scraping my teeth. I could see the hook stained red as she pulled it out of my mouth after each scrape, wiping the tip of it on the side-tray.

“But he was nice. We still talk. He owned an entire vinyl shop. An entire one.”

I tried to ask her what her zodiac sign was in the midst of the scraping, and it came out a garbled mixture of syllables. She understood me immediately.

“You don't know already? Of course, I'm a Scorpio. That's why I talk so much. That's why I look at people the way I do. You know, we get a bad rep, but people don't really know us. They don't know us.”

She moved the hook to my top teeth.

“You’re a Sagittarius, I already know. You have a good work ethic, I know you do. Your mother’s proud of you. And you love learning. Philosophy, history, just like I did. You know, my ex-husband, he was the father of my daughter, and he was born on the 18th. One day before you.”

I felt the taste of metal in my mouth.

“He died in a fight.”

Her eyes remained fixated on my molars. In that moment, as her fingers were weaving the hook in and out of each tooth, I realized you only have two places to look when sitting in a dentist’s chair: you can either stare ahead at the overhead light that shines down on you, or you can stare into the face of the person who is inches away from you, scraping away the plaque that has accumulated over time.

“Yeah, I really loved school. I learned business, and I learned how to write a business plan. Once, I had a group project with six other people, and we all had to write a fake business plan together. They decided on the fake business without me, because I was away when they decided, maybe in Miami or somewhere. Anyway, I came back, and not one of them had done any work. I had to write the whole plan myself. And you know what? Not one of them asked me to see it. The professor knew I had done all the work. He was nice, so of course he knew. But I stayed up until 2 a.m. during school nights, just working. I didn’t mind it at all.” She swiveled the overhead light closer to my teeth, and the auburn strands of her hair gleamed in its harshness.

She finished power-brushing each tooth, put the side-tray away, and let the chair return to a nearly 90-degree angle. I could see the Hudson River from the window in the office, and the patches of sunlight that burned into the river and angled out, casting iridescent blobs on the water. They floated like oil, jumbling together and breaking apart with a serene clamor that demanded attention. It all felt a little too odd, like the haze you sit in after waking up with lines etched into your arm and your hair matted and sweaty.

I checked my phone, and I realized I had been there for nearly two hours.

As Paula was giving me a bag of floss and a toothbrush, she said:

“It’ll all be over soon. The vaccine will come. I hope it’s fair. I hope everyone gets it.”

“I think the Western countries are hoarding it,” I said.

She nodded her head.

“It will always be the rich versus the poor. You know, class divides us. It really does. I think we all need a restart. It’s all gone too far.”

I realized then I never knew what her name was. I asked her, and her eyes stared at me with the same intensity as when I first met her.

“Me? I’m Paula.”

**Mind and
Body** ●

TALIN SCHELL

Grade 11

Mixed Media



● My Favorite Things About the US!

SABRINA ELLIS, Grade 12, *Humor*

1. Halloween

Whenever I say this, people always go: “There’s no Halloween in Brazil?!” Short answer: no. We have Halloween parties because Brazilians use any excuse to party, but there’s no candy, no school events, no elaborate or funny costumes. Just parties that are the stereotype of the *Mean Girls* Halloween scene. Meanwhile in New York, I got to go trick or treating last year! It felt like a dream.

(Also: we had school during Halloween? I always thought it was a national holiday or something?)

2. Tater Tots

Funky! Little! French fries! We had them in school last year and that was the first time I’d ever seen them. I think I read about them in a book once, but I was too lazy to Google a picture. I thought it would be something like Narnia’s Turkish Delight. I only found out what they were because while I was eating them I told my friend “These french fries are shaped so weirdly.”

3. Ice Cream Trucks

They’re real! I always thought they were fictional and/or an old thing from the 1960s that didn’t exist anymore. First time I ever saw one was during a summer camp bike trip through upstate New York in a campground in the middle of nowhere. It felt like a hallucination watching the truck and hearing the jingly music playing on a small path between the trees.

4. Have a good one

If you ever hear me say this, it’s because I’m trying to pass as American. God, I find this sentence so funny for no good reason. I always feel like I’m now a part of the country. No one can tell that I’m not from here. Have a good one. Same vibe as the cool sunglasses emoji.

5. The MTA

Every New Yorker is now going to hate me. Saying “have a good one” will not save me from this fate. Instant tourist. But I love the subway. Have you thought about how many lines there are? The whole alphabet! How many places it reaches?

Sundaes ●

NOA BROWN

Grade 11

Photograph



● **Broome Street**

FINNORA SWAN-LAWLEY

Grade 10

Photograph



I can go anywhere, bro! I think you have more subway lines than the Rio Metro has stations. Only thing the Rio Metro wins at is the little voice that says the next stop and our version of “stand clear of the closing doors, please.”

6. Snow

Pretty, pretty, pretty, pretty! I remember in my American Studies last winter when it started snowing and my teacher said, “Okay class, quiet down, this isn’t our first time seeing snow.” Yeah, I know—it was my *second* time! Still exciting. It feels like I’m in a Christmas movie.

7. Hanging out . . . at parks?

One of the questions I asked my school buddies when touring (along with “What do you eat if you don’t have rice and beans every day?”) was where people hung out. I was used to the

beach, the shopping mall, and the cinema (which was in the shopping mall). And then I found out about parks. Of course we have parks in Brazil, but they’re too dangerous to just chill in with your friends unless you want to get both your wallet and phone stolen in one go. But I love them here! My new beach.

8. Rats

I don’t think I’d ever seen a rat before coming here. It’s kinda exciting, not gonna lie. Like a tourist attraction. Now I elbow my sister while waiting for the train and go: “Alice, a rat!” and she goes: “A rat!” and we both get our phones out to try and take a photo. You’d think every NYC rat we see is a movie star. Please give me your autograph, Remy from *Ratatouille!*

● The Great Kelp

KAI ELLIS, Grade 12, *Fiction*

“And now, we pay our respects to our brothers and sisters, great stewards of this grotto, who have been taken by the Great Kelp, selected to ascend to a greater purpose.” Reverend Finley swam down from his roost among the rocks, descending to the mossy-pebbled congregation area, where he paused and looked among the faces of the crowd. James looked down. “We now remember Marley. We remember Ann.” The wince came to James earlier than he expected, just before the reverend began saying their names. “We remember Bruce. And we remember Jeffrey. May their contributions not be forgotten, and may the Great Kelp bless them.”

“And may the Great Kelp bless them,” James muttered, in sync with the congregation. And with the motion of Reverend back up to his roost, the group disbanded. Some had roe to look over, others small fry to attend to. The majority, like James, went off in search of a bit of breakfast. The congregation had begun at first light, so it was still fairly early. James weaved through the wispy seagrass around him, seeking splotches of green. Finally, a plump bit of algae clinging to a small rock caught his attention. It swayed in the current, uneven bits flopping back and forth. James began to nibble away at the overgrowth as he looked back across the cove. In

the center sat the grand rock, where the Reverend made his roost. The top was lined with a fresh strip of moss and harvested seagrass, all collected and placed by the community. The storm last season had torn through much of the grotto, ripping up vegetation and settlements. The community had insisted on repairing the Reverend’s stay first, and as a result it had the softest moss in the grotto. James only knew because he had been the one to place the moss, and had hidden a bit for himself underneath his left fin on the day of rebuilding.

Around the grand rock was a large congregation area lined with small, smooth pebbles covered in moss and algae, which blended into the seagrass meadows. Beyond that, kelp lined the sides of the grotto, growing all the way from the seafloor to the surface above. Squinting, James could make out a group of juvenile fingerlings racing through the kelp. He had done the same as a fingerling, not so long ago.

“I’m sure she is very happy, you know.”

James coughed up a bit of algae in his mouth, startled. He turned around to see Ms. Goldeen, a bright red rockfish with orange flourishes in her fins and faint splotches of pink on her side.

“It’s not surprising the Great Kelp took her up and out. She did a lot for us. Oh yes.” She looked up towards the surface. “You know she helped me out this one time. Back when the big waves were upon us.”

James politely smiled to mask his familiarity with the story.

“After the currents destroyed my stead, she helped me put it back together, pebble by pebble. And, you see, after we were done, I was back in my roost, and I noticed one of my own dear eggs was missing! Why, I was in such a *such* a frenzy, I was swimming everywhere, overturning rocks, uprooting kelp. I probably looked like quite a mess. And well, your mother came up and asked what was wrong and I *of course* told her exactly my situation. And then she went off. No words, no consolation, no anything, she just left! Later that night, she returned, woke me up, and handed me the little orange devil. And then she was off!” Mrs. Goldeen turned to look over at the group of juveniles across the grotto racing through the kelp. “Why, I wouldn’t have my little Jonathan if it wasn’t for her. Wonderful woman, *wonderful*. And I mean it, she—”

A smaller grey rockfish, Ms. Talia, tapped Ms. Goldeen on the side, then whispered something to her. “Ohh, yes, oh yes. Of course.” Ms. Goldeen muttered and promptly turned and swam off in the direction Ms. Talia had come. Ms. Talia turned towards James to offer a quick “May the Great Kelp bless her” before turning briskly and rushing off behind Ms. Goldeen.

James continued to nibble at his bit of algae, looking up at the shimmer of the surface. He had just about finished when another familiar voice approached from behind him.

“Jimmy? Jimmy that you? Oh, huh, well I’ll be.” James turned around to see a large bass with a smile outstretched from gill to gill—Old Gillroy. “If it isn’t little James.” James attempted what he believed was a smile, though his Uncle’s unaltered expression did little to indicate whether he had succeeded. “Well how are you doin’ son, uh—how’s your mother? And your sister?”

James looked away. He was sure he had seen Old Gillroy at the ceremony. “Uh . . . well they’re not exactly with us . . . anymore.”

“Oh, right, oh right.” Gillroy said, suddenly very solemn. “I remember now. Yeah.” The faint patter of kelp waving in the current permeated the momentary silence. “Well, you know they were phenomenal. Just phenomenal. I mean your sister was so nice. Always greeted me in the mornings. Always with a smile on her face.” Another pause. “So, hey, I’m just thinkin. You remember my boy Gilbert don’t you?” A smaller juvenile bass made its way out from behind Gillroy. His striped scales were shinier than his father’s, but noticeably fainter. “So I was thinkin’ you probably don’t have much going on since well, uh . . . er, and well I got my boy Gilbert here, and well he really wanted to go out exploring into the kelp, but I don’t have the . . . well I just really gotta, and well I think it would be good for the both of you, so does it sound like a plan?”

James sighed. “Yeah sure, I can ta—”

“Great! Oh wonderful, I’ll just leave you two and, well, uh, I’ll just be . . . I have some really, uh yeah I guess I’ll just leave you to it.” And with that, Gillroy swam off in the direction of Finley’s rock in the center of the grotto.

James paused, looked at the young bass, then made his way into the kelp. “Come on,” he grumbled.

“Hey look,” Gilbert prodded at James’ side, “Hey, dude look at this. I can balance a pebble on my nose.” James continued to swim forward, kelp brushing past his face. “Hey

look, look.” James turned around. The young bass rummaged through the sand and nodded to a pebble. He then dug his face into the sand, and emerged a moment later with the pebble balanced on his head. James rolled his eyes and continued swimming forward. Gilbert followed behind.

“Hey did you look at my scales? My dad says they’re pretty shiny and, well, I think it’s pretty brilliant.” Gilbert swam up in front James. “Look!”

“Yes, I see” James mumbled, not stopping. They continued forward, and soon James spotted a dark, purple urchin nestled into the seafloor. As they passed it, James could make out a faint mumble: “Water’s warm today, nice water today.” A few moments later Gilbert swam up next to him.

“Hey, what was he saying? What does that mean?”

“I don’t know.”

“Bummer.” A pause. “Hey, you know I fought off a crab once. Whacked him right in the face like this” Gilbert smacked James in the right eye.

“Ouch—will you cut that out!” James snapped at Gilbert.

“Why are you so mad? Is it ‘cus your family got chosen?”

James was silent.

“You know we all get chosen at some point, you’ll probably get it soon, I can understa—”

“No, you don’t!” James shouted. “You don’t! I have to live down here while my family lives up there!” he motioned to the surface. “The Great Kelp chose them. *Them*. Not me. It’s not fair! You don’t understand and you’ll never understand, so stop bothering me!” James was breathing heavily now.

Gilbert stared at James, his face blank. Then he rushed off into the kelp, back towards the grotto.

James spent the rest of the afternoon alone, picking at algae off of the kelp beds. As it began to get darker, James started to return to the grotto. Making his way through the kelp, James passed the urchin he had seen before. It was now curiously burying itself in the sand, mumbling as it did:

“ . . . bad water, bad water. Would not want to be in open water right now . . . ”

James entered the grotto just as the daily bustle was coming to an end. Some were gathering their fry and returning to their steads, others grabbing a bit more algae before retiring for the day. James started to make his way across the seagrass towards his own stead, until he was tapped on the side. He turned around to see Ms. Goldeen.

“ **The Great Kelp chose them.**

Them. Not me. It’s not fair!
You don’t understand and
you’ll never understand, so
stop bothering me! ”

“I just wanted to apologize for leaving you so abruptly like that this morning like that. You see, I just had t—” Ms. Goldeen froze, her smile inverting to a vacant gaze. Her eyes widened. “It’s . . . it’s here,” she almost whispered, looking back beyond James. James turned around. Entering the top of the grotto was a large green mesh of what appeared to be kelp, swaying in the current. It flowed down into the grotto with a force, as if to notify observers that it was not simply drifting. “The—the *Great Kelp*” Ms. Goldeen muttered. Suddenly a clear voice penetrated the chorus of murmurs that had accompanied Ms. Goldeen’s—James recognized it as Reverend Finley’s.

“Everyone! You know what to do, now. We must allow the kelp to select as it deems fit. Not a single fish shall move!”

Silence overtook the grotto as the conglomeration of kelp strands morphed and swayed, sweeping through the eerie stillness of the cove. James felt his heart race, his gills twitch. Suddenly, he darted straight up to the kelp, as a collective gasp emanated from those behind him. James swam faster and faster towards the kelp, until THUMP, an impact. After recovering from the brief stun, he examined the kelp more closely. It was mashed together in knots in a repeating pattern, forming a sort

of chain. It felt rough and tensile on his scales, unlike the slippery and nimble kelp he had expected. The mesh now began moving faster, pushing him forward with an accelerating force. James squinted into the kelp and saw what appeared to be other fish, some fully enveloped in it. James tried to move, but by now the kelp was pushing him towards the surface with more force than he could lift his fin with. Then, a sudden WOOSH came over him. His body and eyes began to sting, his vision became blurred. He felt impact after impact of the mesh—which he no longer was certain was kelp—on his body as its ambiguous form shifted and morphed. He could barely move other than to flail helplessly, trapped in the endless chain of rough knots. As his breath began to shorten, his vision became slightly more clear. He could make out the reverend’s rock below, though it appeared blurry, and shimmered like a mirage. James began to feel lightheaded, and continued flailing, trying to get out of the mesh, back into the . . . the . . . James wasn’t sure what it was, but he knew he wanted to be back in it, back in the grotto. And, as James longed for something he could not name, as the grotto blurred out of view, a faint smile grew on his face. *He had been chosen.*



JOY! TRANSMOGRIFICATION

- **Colorful explosion** of fragile paper.

What makes a celebration?

When you can look at the people around you with a reason to smile.

Like you're just out of the frame, like you've just left to go to the store—

Candles that my dad lights, candles happysad as I dip my fingers into the wax.

-
- Emily Gorman / Faculty
 - Charlotte Hampton / Grade 12
 - Clea Haran / Grade 12

- **To be fully myself, soft, flexible and shiny** without apology—

What does this peacock feather remind you of?

Big Bird (but blue, not yellow, and maybe a little bit arrogant).

A small snake, orange and purple.

For your escape is what you wish it to be.

-
- Ekene Botofasina / Faculty
 - Noa Brown / Grade 11
 - Ethan Chieu / Grade 10

- **Fragrant and burning, tea snaps** me into a chemical alertness.

What wakes *you* up in the morning?

That's impossible to answer

(come here, I'll tell you).

She dropped her last penny in a puddle.

-
- Moya Linsey / Grade 12
 - Michael Long / Grade 9
 - Serena McGrane / Grade 12

- **A green stringy thing:**

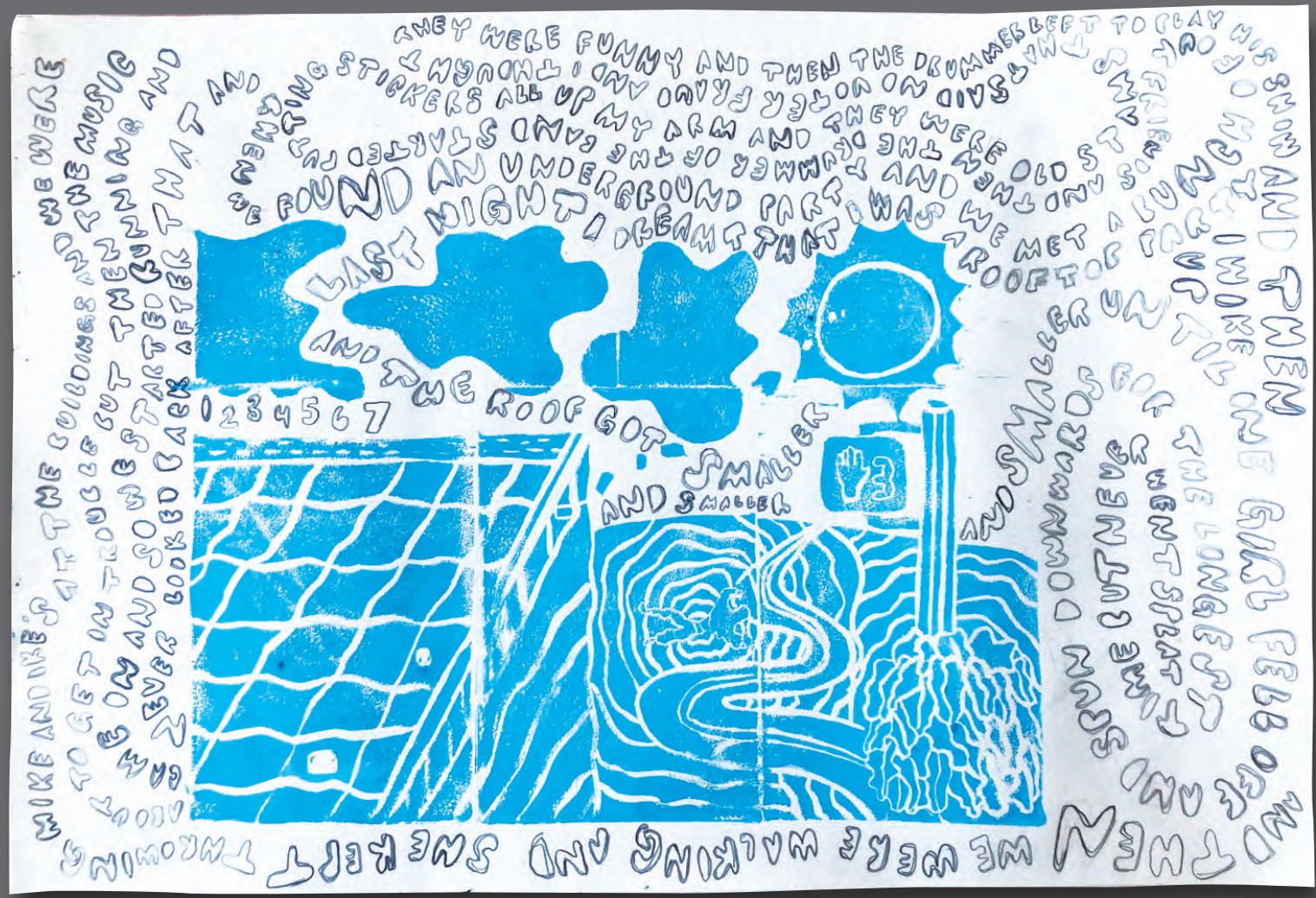
What is it?

It is a pronoun that refers to an inanimate object.

It is a pronoun that could refer to multiples of anything alive.

It's the honey that drips from the dying tree.

-
- Ashley Rosenblum / Grade 10
 - Scott Rubin / Faculty
 - Ella Sran / Grade 11



● **Cave Within
A Shell**

BILLIE WYNN

Grade 12

Charcoal



● Formaldehyde

NICHOLE FERNANDEZ, Grade 12, *Personal Essay*

There is a subcommunity of fashionable craftspeople who have immersed themselves in “vulture culture.” A vulture’s culture of course, is finding and eating dead things (like us, if we were a bit more open to surprises), but this is a more aesthetically-oriented consumption.

One item on my wishlist is a set of earrings described as “[r]odent clavicle/radius earrings . . . Very goth/punk.” It’s sitting there until I find a way to either justify the purchase or lie about it in a manner that will minimize my mother’s anxiety.

It reminds me of Picasso’s *Bull’s Head*, a sculpture of, of course, a bull’s head—made by arranging a bicycle seat and handlebars. Like the rodent bones, the objects weren’t altered in any way other than being removed from their additional structure. What does it take to transform something? When does it stop being preservation?

About a month into my internship at the American Museum of Natural History, my fellow interns and I proved ourselves worthy of learning the Discovery Room Lore. It’s a maximalist space designed to help kids lead their own science-learning, but there must be secrets in a place so large and full

of dead things. The main area is a circle with a realistic recreation of a baobab tree as its defining feature. There are animals in the tree, most of them taxidermied, like a monkey from the 40s, when the museum still upheld violent taxidermy practices. Next to the tank of Madagascar Hissing Cockroaches and Giant African Millipedes (who were rescued from someone trying to smuggle them into the U.S.) are more bugs, all of them dead and in little plastic containers to be examined under a microscope. Some of them were collected by small children who donated them to the museum.

One of these dead things is a toad in a jar of chemical soup. Our coordinator, Sarah, gently lifted him off the shelf, gazing at him lovingly. She told us he lived to be 13, which we

“One of these dead things

is a toad in a jar of chemical soup. Our coordinator, Sarah, gently lifted him off the shelf, gazing at him lovingly.”

all agreed was very impressive despite being a horrible age to be, based on personal experience.

That same internship ended with us learning how to pin a South American moth that had orange, rainbow-tipped wings. The insect equivalent of blood had already been replaced with the chemical soup that toad probably lived in forever. It was a form of preservation too clumsy to last. This was a room full of 16–21 year olds trembling from multiple cups of coffee, and each moth left with at least one wing creased, torn, or missing some scales.

There's a mortician in Los Angeles talking about how she puts makeup on bodies. She specializes in natural burial: an eco-friendly coffin and your body as you left it, now wrapped in cotton.

Sometimes a loved one will bring in the makeup bag of someone she's preparing. Sometimes they will lean over from the other side of the steel table.

"No, the blush should follow her cheekbone, not be on the cheek itself."

Sometimes they do it themselves. It's like a first date.

Last winter I attended a 90-minute poetry seminar at Saint Ann's. The teacher's name was Marty, a man so straightforward and so rarely pleased that the table of

“ . . . we might be the first species to
a) *decide that something deserves to
live forever and*
b) *do something about it.* ”

charcuterie boards he placed in the middle of the room each week seemed out of character. He thought my name was Michelle no matter how much I insisted it was not, which was only one of the reasons why I would eventually quit.

There were many beautiful days before I would reach that point. The most notable one being the day I read a three-page poem by an absent girl. I think it was a bird she found on the street, or in the woods. She removed its flesh with bleach? formaldehyde? something dangerous and smelly that lived in a big blue bucket. It was gorgeous.

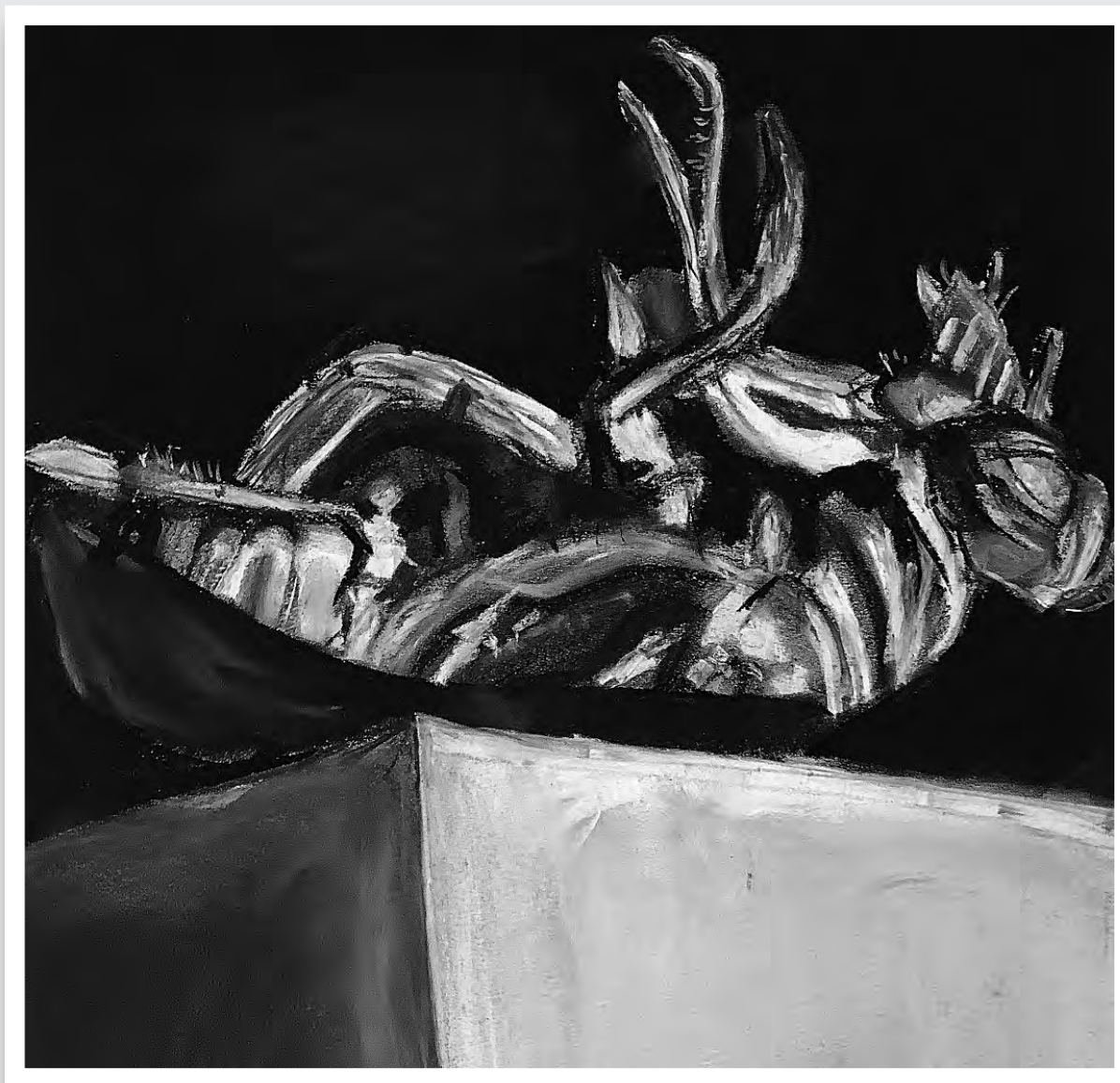
I think there's a lot that can be said about teenagers handling dead things, encountering the end of life at its beginning—or maybe it's a symbol for ego death. None of it matters, though, because she's here and it's hard to breathe under that mask and she's scrubbing that ribcage clean and we might be the first species to a) *decide that something deserves to live forever and b) do something about it.*

Dead Bug ●

RUBY SALVATORE
PALMER

Grade 12

Charcoal



● Anxiety Ridden Reality

LAUREN ANATOL, Grade 12, *Humor*

I wasn't planning on writing about reality TV, but after watching the semi-final of the latest season of *The Great British Baking Show/ Bake Off* (don't worry I won't give any spoilers) and being so upset that I almost cried at the results, I couldn't think of a better topic. I have always loved television and if you've gotten to know me, you probably have heard me rant about some show, whether it was *The Flash*, or *One Tree Hill*, or even that time I tried to watch *This Is Us*, (sorry, not sorry, but every character but Beth is terrible and Sterling K. Brown's crying is not as heart wrenching or entertaining as people make it seem). Recently, I have started watching almost only reality shows, specifically competition shows, for a guilty pleasure and some relaxation. The problem is, I keep ending up with more anxiety than I started with because reality shows keep disappointing me.

The Voice

I'll start with *The Voice*. I don't really like *The Voice*. I have attempted to boycott it multiple times, but my parents love it and want to watch it while my mom braids my hair so I usually end up caving and watching it anyways. I like the coaches for the most part (but Kelly Clarkson talks too much

when it's literally not her turn and all Gwen Stefani does is attempt to adopt everyone under 18 when their parents are *right there*). My family's favorite coach right now is Blake Shelton because he's a good coach and he makes fun of everyone else, but I have to admit, he's made some questionable decisions in past seasons by picking artists like Hannah Kirby in Season 8 and a man who called himself "TSoul" in Season 12.

Usually at the end of auditions, when teams are starting to fill up, the coaches become more picky and only go for the people that they think could go far and really wow them. With that being said, I have no clue why Blake Shelton turned his chair for Hannah Kirby. Her voice sounds like a demented elephant with a cold and she somehow made it into the top eight out of 48 artists. I was so upset when she sang "Higher Love," a song that I can't find a bad version of—except Hannah's. Her weird singing voice matched with her duck-like dancing almost ruined this song. TSoul was better in that he did not have the worst singing voice, but the main thing that the judges liked about him was his "dancing," even though this show is literally called *The VOICE*, not "how well can you roll around on

the floor to a soul song while mumbling off-key and call it singing and dancing?”

As much as Hannah and TSoul bothered me, nothing on this show upset me as much as a man by the name of Craig Wayne Boyd, another Blake artist, winning Season 7. Now, Craig Wayne Boyd was not untalented, but just about everyone else on that season had singing voices that were at least three times more interesting than his. I was surprised every week when he continued to be in the competition, considering every week he put me to sleep. Maybe that’s because, if you couldn’t tell by the name, Craig Wayne Boyd is a country singer, and to be honest, I have found most country music to be pretty boring, but if there’s anything I’ve learned from *The Voice*, it’s that country people show up for their favorites. This was probably the first time that a reality show not only disappointed me, but angered and baffled me, so much so that even my brother knows Craig Wayne Boyd by name, and my brother does not pay attention to anything I say.

DWTS

Now onto *Dancing with The Stars*. For the last three seasons, I have wholeheartedly disagreed with the winner who

was chosen to the point where I wanted to throw my computer out the window. After country radio person Bobby Bones (and you already know how I feel about country music) was announced the winner, all he did was give his partner whiplash, dance the floss badly, and smile like an idiot. He won off of America’s votes because again, country people vote for country people, but his win was so undeserved that the controversy surrounding it threw *Dancing with The Stars* into a year-long hiatus where they had to change the entire voting system, from just America’s votes to the judges picking who goes home every week from the bottom two, which has brought its own problems to the eliminations. Don’t even get me started on the favoritism of the Bachelorettes in recent seasons.

Cooking Shows

Coming full circle, now I’m going to talk about food competition shows, which I have watched not only for entertainment but for ideas on food to make since my mom hasn’t let me eat outside food since March 2020 because getting other food is basically just spending money to get coronavirus. *Holiday Baking Championship* is a show that my

family recently discovered and finished the first season of this past Saturday and I was so angry about the results! The winner was a woman named Erin who was known for her extreme “holiday spirit,” but really she was just extra and acted like an SNL character that makes fun of people on baking shows. For me the only thing worse than someone who bothers me on a show is someone who bothers me and consistently wins. Erin won almost every mini challenge, won advantages, made terrible-tasting food, and then got to stay because she “took risks.” In the finale, Erin made a pretty cool Mad Hatter tea party scene, but it wasn’t very complex and the food tasted bad and/or was overcooked. Most cooking shows look for a balance between presentation and flavors, but will ultimately put flavors above presentation because, you know, FOOD, but apparently not *Holiday Baking Championship*. My rage at the end of this season can only be matched with my hatred for mullets.

The only other food show that upset me even close to *Holiday Baking Championship* was *MasterChef*. I love cooking shows but here’s the main problem with them: a lot of them involve a group of white people telling people of color that their food is too spicy or that they overuse seasoning. Now, I know that everyone’s taste buds are different, that white people do not automatically have a lower spice tolerance than POC, and that some of these chefs are probably still qualified

“ I love cooking shows

but here’s the main problem with them: a lot of them involve a group of white people telling people of color that their food is too spicy. ”

to tell contestants that their food is too spicy. However, when I hear a judge comment on how “brrrOOOOWWn” a dish is or spend five minutes coughing because of the amount of black pepper, it definitely feels like there are some cultural differences present. This kind of behavior can become even more problematic during moments like in *MasterChef* Season 9, when Gordon Ramsay repeatedly referred to contestant Farhan as “Spice Boy” when he would make dishes inspired by his Indian heritage. I was almost happy when Farhan was eliminated because it was terrible to watch this man be told he was making his own food wrong every week.

If that wasn't bad enough, in Season 10, we had to endure the judges' opinions of Subha and Sherry. Subha is an Indian man who was constantly treated like a child by almost everyone there, and then there was Sherry, a white woman, who started cooking when she married an Indian man and his mother taught her how to cook, so both Subha and Sherry's primary/go-to food was Indian. Subha was always told that his food tasted bad and looked unappealing (as all Indian food does, according to Gordon Ramsay because of all the "brown and yellow," which is maybe one of the most racist-sounding things I've ever heard), and yet Sherry was told every time that her food was fantastic and looked good. Gordon Ramsay even went so far as to tell her that "she made Indian food look good" which he had thought was impossible. My mom and I were horrified, and so was my dad, but he wasn't surprised because he always says that on *MasterChef*, they always try to send the black people home first. After all, what's a cooking show without hypocritical judges?

Why does this matter? According to my parents, it doesn't. They think that I should just move on and calm down or just stop watching these shows, and they're probably right. I watch these shows with the intention of enjoying myself and forgetting about the world's problems, like racism and bias, but instead I end up reminded of the inequalities and inequities that exist every day. On the one hand, it can be very eye-opening to see that bias is everywhere and that once you can recognize it, you can never unsee it. On the other, I just want to watch people equally grow in their talents or be equally tortured by ridiculous and borderline impossible challenges, and having to go from enjoying myself to feeling irritated can be extremely frustrating, especially as a POC. But if you're looking for a show that's not problematic, I recommend *Worst Cooks in America*: the judging is blind at the end, they respect other cultures, and watching adults struggle to turn on a stove is a definite self-esteem booster.

● **Fabricated
Reflection**

AMBA

DARST-CAMPBELL

Grade 10

Painting (gouache)



● Expression Transcending

AVI KAHTAN, Grade 9, *Personal Essay*

I stand in front of my computer, which I've perched on a low shelf, and click "join meeting." Not an action altogether unusual, these days. But this . . . this is something special.

It occurs to me that I'm not as nervous as I probably should be. Maybe that's because this class is over Zoom, or maybe I'm just too old to feel embarrassed. Or, I'm just too excited to be tethered by anything else.

I run through a mental checklist: White shirt? Check. Black leggings? Check. Waterbottle? Check. Ballet shoes from last year's dance camp? I have no clue how they still fit, but check. Anyway, I've got everything I need, and it's nearly five o'clock.

"You excited?" my mom asks from the doorway (she's carefully stationed herself just out of the range of my computer's webcam. Any second now, the light next to it will turn green, showing that I'm in the Zoom).

"Heck yeah." I spin my hair into a tidy bun at the top of my head.

And then I'm let into the Zoom, and I see the teacher, Ms. Clara, and my classmates.

"Hello, friends! Happy Thursday!" Ms. Clara is saying, waving through the screen. "Just a moment, and we'll get started."

With our few spare seconds, I exchange a glance with my mom. I hope I don't look too ecstatic, but honestly? If my face is any expression of the excitement spreading inside me, a huge grin is splitting across my features.

How did I get here? How on *earth* did I get so lucky as to make my way into a beginner ballet class, at age 14? Had it really only been a week since I'd signed up for this class? I examine my screen—evidently, Ms. Clara is still busy with something off-camera. I can afford a few seconds to lose myself in my memories.

Now I hear sounds in the hallway—

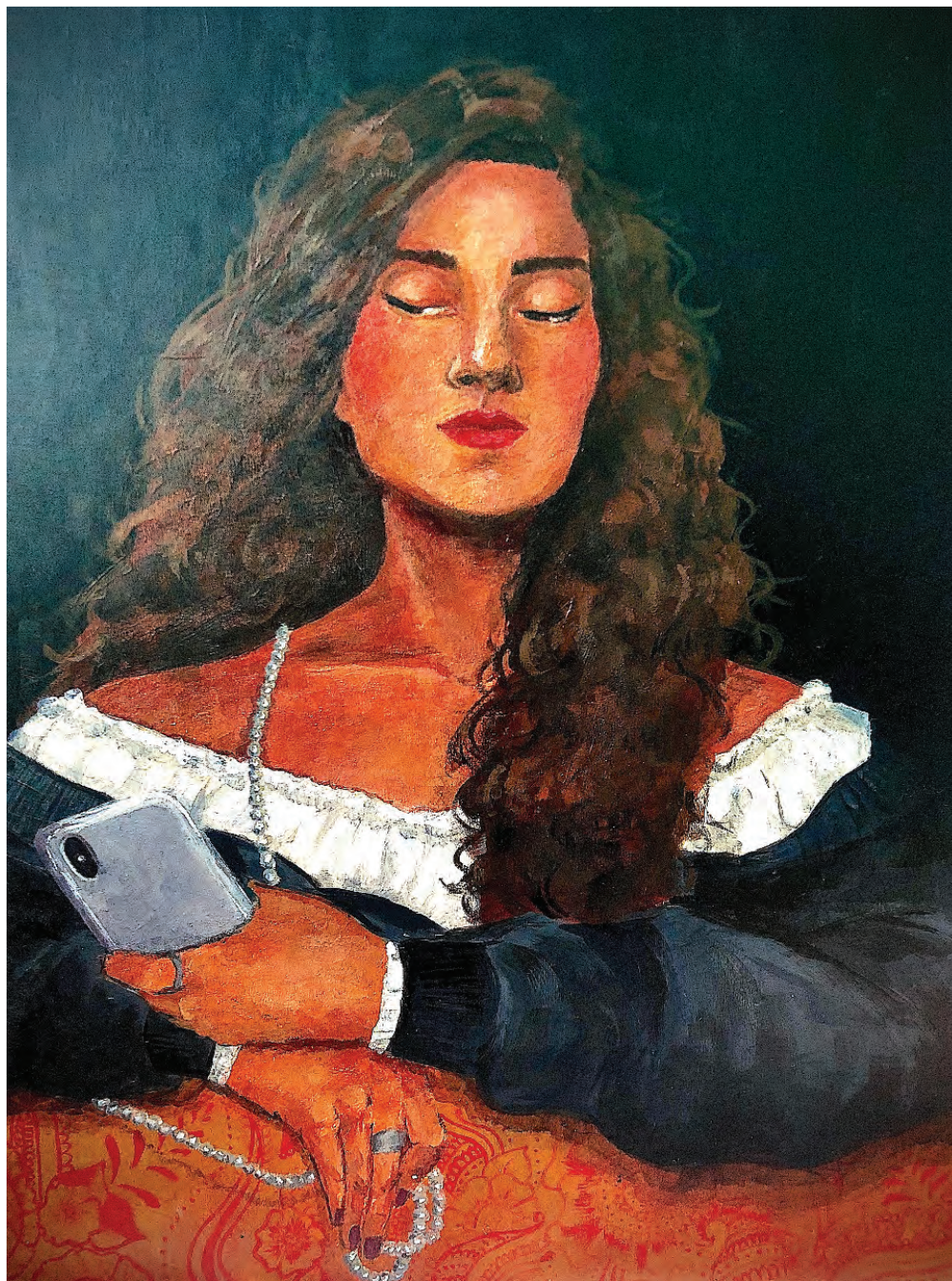
Just a regular Thursday night, exactly one week ago. I remember the sensation of my hair whipping through the air. I'd been leaping around my room as methodically as I could, dancing to the music flowing from my phone. My biology homework had sat at my desk, forgotten; it had been too easy to lose myself to the swaying lilt of "Freaking Me Out" by Ava Max.

21st Century ●
Vanity

SITA PAWAR

Grade 12

*Painting (acrylics),
inspired by "Vanity" (1907)
by Frank Cadogan Cowper*



● American Sonnet Triptych

(after Terrance Hayes)

JOAN MARIE VAROUS, Grade 12, Poetry

1. Reality TV

There is nothing real about Reality TV. Producer manufactured:
Built up tension, explosive arguments, designer clothes, bonds broken,
Rhinoplasty, eating lettuce, undeserved fame, clout chasers, noses broken,
Naked & afraid, “unexpected” coincidences, one-on-one interviews, lip fillers,
Boob jobs, pretending there was no boob job, winners, losers,
Villains, angels, people who are just there, repulsive personalities.
Reality: something that is real; TV: something for entertainment.
Big screen TV, dramatic previews, a false pretense of reality.
But is it a false pretense if everyone knows about the . . .
Overdramatization? Eyes glued to screens, mindlessly
Consuming each second and each moment and each falling out.
However, there is nothing real about Reality TV.

2. Botox Commercials

Forehead lines and crow’s feet and frown lines are holding
You back. You receive a Botox injection, you become
The life of the party, you suddenly have the confidence
You longed for, *you own your look*, with the riddance
Of wrinkles. These commercials plaguing my screen create
An echo in my mind. *Botox will rid me of the forehead lines and
Crow’s feet and frown lines* that I do not have at 17. Botox ads trick

You into thinking that you need something that you don't
(Like clothing store workers telling you that those unflattering jeans
Make you look like a model, telling you that your eyes are lying to you).
Somehow these cinematographers persuade people to paralyze
Parts of their faces through the injection of a lethal toxin that reduces
The appearance of fine lines, not to make people more "happy,"
But to increase both the demand for Botox and the money in their pockets.

3. 23andme.com

23 chromosomes, 46 pairs, each one helping
Determine who you are. Twenty three and me. Spit does the telling,
Breaking down where you are from, possible health conditions,
Quirks about you (do you have a cleft chin, do you have brown eyes,
Do you have red hair, do you have cheek dimples, do you have freckles).
You pay hundreds of dollars to confirm where you are from. How much
Of being American means searching for other nationalities? You find
Joy in seeing the map light up in bright colors (purple and blue and teal
And lilac and navy). Greece, Ireland, Germany, and Lebanon are in the
Forefront, while America remains in the background of my mind.
The spit doesn't lie. The chromosomes don't lie. The map doesn't lie.
Despite all this, the twenty three do not know you're American by birth.

● Expression Transcending

ABIGAIL KAHTAN, Grade 9, *Personal Essay*

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It occurs to me that I'm not as nervous as I probably should be. Maybe that's because this class is over Zoom, or maybe I'm just too old to feel embarrassed. Or, I'm just too excited to be tethered by anything else.

I run through a mental checklist: White shirt? Check. Black leggings? Check. Waterbottle? Check. Ballet shoes from last year's dance camp? I have no clue how they still fit, but check. Anyway, I've got everything I need, and it's nearly five o'clock.

"You excited?" my mom asks from the doorway (she's carefully stationed herself just out of the range of my computer's webcam. Any second now, the light next to it will turn green, showing that I'm in the Zoom).

"Heck yeah." I spin my hair into a tidy bun at the top of my head.

And then I'm let into the Zoom, and I see the teacher, Ms. Clara, and my classmates.

"Hello, friends! Happy Thursday!" Ms. Clara is saying, waving through the screen. "Just a moment, and we'll get started."

With our few spare seconds, I exchange a glance with my mom. I hope I don't look too ecstatic, but honestly? If my face is any expression of the excitement spreading inside me, a huge grin is splitting across my features.

How did I get here? How on *earth* did I get so lucky as to make my way into a beginner ballet class, at age 14? Had it really only been a week since I'd signed up for this class? I examine my screen—evidently, Ms. Clara is still busy with something off-camera. I can afford a few seconds to lose myself in my memories.

Now I hear sounds in the hallway—

Just a regular Thursday night, exactly one week ago. I remember the sensation of my hair whipping through the air. I'd been leaping around my room as methodically as I could, dancing to the music flowing from my phone. My biology homework had sat at my desk, forgotten; it had been too easy to lose myself to the swaying lilt of "Freaking Me Out" by Ava Max.

Rocking chairs are moving on their own—

I'd jumped, I'd twirled. My hands had woven through the air as I'd laughed to myself, joyfully swishing my hair around. Sure, my movements were a little ungainly, but I was dancing for myself. Who cares, really?

I'm falling for you, so much so that it's freaking me out—

After a few more seconds of thumping, I'd paused, breathing heavily. My body just hadn't been moving how I wanted it to. My legs hadn't known how to bend and leap gracefully. My arms had protruded from my shoulders at awkward angles, dragging through the air. It hadn't been the end of the world, but it had been frustrating. Twirling nonsensically was fun, no doubt. But expressing myself through dance was the joy that I'd really craved.

I remember thinking about taking dance classes, for the millionth time. After all, I hadn't exactly been unfamiliar to the world of dance; I'd been doing tap for six years.

But tap was only one kind of dance; and ballet and modern (the joyous, more expressive dances—with all due

respect to tap) were entirely different breeds. How far would lessons even get me, a *14-year-old*? Most dancers my age had probably been training since birth; how could I possibly catch up?

My head had still been spinning as I'd entered my kitchen, still slightly sweaty, to get a snack.

"Hey, honey." My mom had been sitting at the table, holding some papers.

"Hi, mom," I'd said automatically, opening the fridge.

"Wanna see something?"

I'd closed the fridge (nothing good in there, anyway) and turned to her. "Sure, what's up?"

That's when my mom had gotten up and held out the paper to me. Taking it, I'd realized that it was actually a pamphlet, for...

"... Mark Morris Dance," I'd mumbled, nearly to myself. Well, if that wasn't impeccable timing.

● April

RUBY SALVATORE

PALMER

Grade 12

Painting (acrylics)



I'd inspected the pamphlet, flipping through its various offers. Sure enough, listed had been beginner teen classes for Jazz and Ballet.

"Can I sign up for these?" I'd breathed, excitement starting to curl through my stomach.

"Yeah. Isn't it awesome?"

"Yeah!"

Which brings us back to the present. Music is playing now, the dainty notes filtering through my computer speakers.

"All right, we're going to start with a warm-up," Ms. Clara instructs. "First positions, everyone."

I turn out my feet and bring my arms up to first position, as gracefully as my untrained muscles will allow. A week ago, I hadn't even known that taking beginner dance classes, at my age, was an option. Now, miraculously, here I am, doing pliés on a Zoom class.

As we continue out to second position, I glance at my peers on the screen. It occurs to me that there's definitely a disconnect between us all; dancing in unison is a difficult feat

when Zoom's lag inevitably staggers our movements. And we're all in different rooms around New York, with varying ranges of mobility in our cramped spaces, and different parts of our bodies able to be captured on camera (for one person, I can only see their legs; for another, only their waist).

But this class also feels as miraculous as it does strange. Through this year's madness, we've managed to pull together into an actual class. And even through a screen, our movements unite us.

(And, for the less poetic reasons: dancing in a different space than others feels much safer, as a beginner who also happens to be a self-conscious teenager; fewer people are there to judge you.)

Now, we're shifting back to first position for our *tendus*. There's a joy in these simple movements, in the knowledge that I'm finally doing it. After years of dreaming, I'm finally dancing.

● I Don't Listen To BTS

CHRISTIANE CALIXTE, Grade 10, *Personal Essay*

“You’re watching *Diary of a Mad Black Woman?*” the girl next to me asks, taking up and examining the DVD case I set between the two of us. (She’s also looking at my hot chips. She’s not getting any.)

Startled, I take off the headphones I have just put on. People aren’t usually talkative in the library.

I turn and look her in the eye. If I were to use one word to describe her, I think I would say “bright.” Her eyes have a certain sparkle to them. Maybe it’s just the intense lights reflected off her dark eyes, but I still see it. She has those plump and wide lips, the ones you see celebrities paying for all the time, and they are made even wider by a foolish smile wiped across her face. The most noticeable feature is her cyan headscarf, identical to the one I have at home but never feel like wearing.

She nods. “That movie is my favorite. Just wait until the salad scene. Watch what she does to her husband there. She’s so evil but he totally deserves it. It’s so funny to watch her get her revenge.”

After giving her a fake laugh, I quickly slip my headphones back on before this girl spoils the movie.

I haven’t even gotten to the salad scene when I feel a hard tap on my shoulder.

“Do you like K-Pop?” she asks.

“Yeah, I guess,” I respond. (This is a lie).

“Really?” (Why is she still smiling?) “Anyway, look at this!”

She points to her computer, where I see the BTS Instagram page. She clicks on a photo of one of the members and her smile grows even wider. I’m not sure how to react or what I’m supposed to say.

“He’s so hot!” she squeals. (Okay?) “Why do I have to be 15-years-old? I wish I was as old as he is! Why couldn’t have Jimin been born in my generation?”

Hearing a 15-year-old girl talk about a grown man like this makes me want to throw up. But she apparently is one of those die-hard BTS fans. It’s not one of the craziest things they’ve said. I entertain her for a while, nodding my head in agreement until she runs out of things to say. When she’s silent once again, I quickly put on my headphones before she can start talking again. I am disturbed by the fact that while I was

watching the movie, that crazy BTS fangirl spent the entire time *ooh-ing* and *aw-ing* at her precious K-Pop stars. *Diary of a Mad Black Woman* is about two hours long. She spent *at least* two hours looking at random boys. (Heaven knows how long since she was at the library before me). And it's fine if she wants to gawk at those heavily-photoshopped Instagram photos. Heck, she could have even gotten on her knees and worshipped BTS and I wouldn't care (I wouldn't be surprised if she did). BUT THERE WAS NO NEED FOR HER TO INCLUDE ME! I just wanted to watch a movie in peace without any psychotic fangirls interrupting me all the time. Little Miss I Don't Know When To Shut Up apparently had a different plan for me. The girl just *had* to tell me how cute Jungkook looked sitting on that sofa or how she thinks blue is totally Jimin's color and not Suga's every single time she saw one of those wretched Instagram posts. So no, I did not enjoy watching *Diary of a Mad Black Woman* nor was I having a good day in general. I didn't even get to finish eating my hot chips.

Perhaps I have angered God by stealing my mom's DVDs and he has sent the cyan-scarf girl to punish me. When I go to the library to watch *Legally Blonde* the next day, she's there, smiling, waving, ready with her endless chatting. Over the next

few weeks, I accept my fate. She wants to talk about her hair when I'm playing a video game. She wants to talk about a boy she likes when I'm curled into a beanbag, reading the latest volume of *Cursed Princess Club* (I literally waited a month for it to be released; I deserve some peace and quiet). She makes me stop listening to my music when I am breathing in the fresh air of the Botanical Gardens to tell me her birthday's coming up. (Please don't speak to me when I'm listening to music. I may become violent.)

The cyan-scarf girl talks, talks, and talks. I, not knowing how to push her away, have no choice but to listen, without any idea of how her shenanigans will come to an end.

I realize my wish for peace is granted at last when I see the spot she usually sits at is empty. Hallelujah. It's September and I figure she is probably busy with school. I have homework as well, so there goes my movie-watching and comic-reading. But, at least I have peace and quiet once again.

I am picking up cinnamon swirl pancakes I have ordered on *Seamless* when I see my former tormentor's cyan headscarf. I know it's her, even though she's wearing a mask.

Who else could those eyes belong to? They wander as she studies every one of the old-fashioned tiles of Tom's Diner with the same childlike fascination she had when looking at Jimin or Jungkook.

Memories flood into my head as I see the girl from the library. The diner transforms into the computer lab as the smell of pancakes and coffee become the scent of the library cafe I had always longed to go to but never saved up for. The tiny stool I sit upon, waiting for my breakfast, is now one of the computer lab's small plastic chairs that I never found quite comfortable but tolerated due to the love of the library.

I've never liked strangers. I still don't. They are mosquitoes during a summer vacation, grappling onto your skin when you want nothing more than peace and quiet, only to suck up every drop of joy and optimism in your blood with their "How are you?"s and "How was your day?"s. As much as you frantically swat them away, your attempts are only in vain. Ultimately, you will be left with no choice but to continue your vacation despite them.

It's funny how this stranger, this mosquito in the hot sun, has impacted my life without even trying. Her idle banter and gossip have become a staple of my Summer 2019 experience, yet I do not even know her name. When I am miles away from her, in the safety of my bedroom, tucked under a warm blanket, she continues to tap my shoulders with ice-cold fingers to tell me about her beloved K-Pop group.

Her head darts up as she hears her order. She strides over to the cashier to pay, nodding her head, and saying thank you to the old man, as she reaches for her chicken and waffles.

She hurries out of the diner without acknowledging me (rude). I'm wearing a giant winter coat, so of course, she wouldn't recognize me. But, it is strange to see her pass me by without saying hello.

The diner's doors slam shut. As I scroll through my phone, waiting for my order, I realize that I, too, am wearing my cyan headscarf.



Outreach ●

ZOE PYNE

Grade 11

Collage

● GRONK 2020

GABO OSBORNE

Grade 12

Digital



JOY! TRANSMOGRIFICATION

- **A seedling born** of a used-to-be seedling, my father's
50th birthday gift's baby.
What is the best gift you have ever received?
One that helps me every day.
Nothing can harm me ever again.
Lilies, white lilies, tiger lilies.

-
- Noa Brown / *Grade 11* • Ethan Chieu / *Grade 10*
 - Emily Crawford / *Faculty*

- **Today a brown cat** crossed my path.
Does anyone else notice the petals?
The petals of who?
The frog of what?
Larger than the baritone tuba that rang up and down
Bourbon Street.

-
- Clea Haran / *Grade 12* • Sam Hartmann / *Grade 9*
 - Charlie Hodgkins / *Grade 12*

- **Visions of younger me**, lying at night, staring at a
blank ceiling, with the sole comfort of an unreal cat guiding
me through the fear of the darkness.
What was a fear you had as a kid and what helped with it?
I was deathly afraid of the Grinch. Hid under the covers to cope.
Even in the summertime. Cute green beast thing :o
Blanket, warm blanket :)

-
- Juno Pasdar Newton / *Grade 9*
 - Chloe-Marie Pauyo / *Grade 11*
 - Anthony Reznikovskiy / *Grade 12*

- **A withering tree** has never looked so green.
How do you know it's not dead yet?
Because it's still moving—
Still, stiff, and stationary.
We do not question these developments.

-
- Ella Sran / *Grade 11* • Will Schwartz / *Grade 11*
 - Jude Tait / *Grade 10*

- **Momentum building**, increasing as I grew, a passion
for the talent I was gifted as a little kid.
What made you pursue basketball?
Getting to win and lose as a team.
The feeling of isolated loss . . .
I lay under the golden sun.

-
- Jeremiah Vaughn / *Grade 9* • Cece Vickers / *Grade 10*
 - Jade Angel / *Grade 9*

● **Grand Army Plaza**

ELLA SRAN

Grade 11

Photograph



● The Sun Gets Strongest Before It Sets

RUBY SALVATORE PALMER, Grade 12, *Personal Essay*

Moral relativity. Marxism. Band-aids. Freudian theory. Goodness.

I passed my phone from my left to right hand and crossed Delancey.

War. Oil paint. Buddhism. Porn.

Three men in matching gray snowsuits raked leaves in the playground on 1st and 1st. My phone battery dropped 10% in five minutes and I offered a warning to the voice on the other end. We hadn't spoken in months prior to this circular, white day. I couldn't help but recognize pattern, in two ways. The first: although I successfully scrambled to stay tethered to a windy path of words, there was nothing I could offer in return but a sound, *mmm, mmhm, yeah*. The second, and more important: I knew the amazingness of right now's conversation, a barely-breaking veil, would exist just temporarily. I read something that said it takes three months before you stop lying to yourself about the way you truly feel for people new to your life. I lie in bed watching and rewatching three month intervals, sometimes even shorter, and convince myself I'm a sociopath. *16personalitytests.com* just calls me "avoidant." When my phone died, I went on the swings.

Seven or so years ago a neighborhood girl and I sat by these swings and ran through fish sprinklers and I sat up straight in her purple room listening to a song she only sort of wrote. We had been monkey bar friends—the girls you talk to waiting in line for the monkey bars and nowhere else—for a while. One day we hung out in the sprinkler park, and soon I was asking my dad to call her mom to plan today's and tomorrow's. Morning after morning I woke up thinking about how our moments together were like the first five bites of Extra watermelon gum, until one morning when the thought of her was finally too familiar. And since then it happens and happens, completely platonic at its core. I saw her on 9th Street between 1st and 2nd last weekend. We hugged with nothing to say.

There's this poem I read in the beginning of the pandemic where the author describes words that "lead you along punch drunk, addicted to real life." Addicted to real life. That's the feeling! When I listen to a new voice navigate the things I know and things I don't, while watching me undividedly receive, I feel addicted to real life. But the longer I think about how I'm romanticizing the beautifully

normal, the faster it falls from real life to a barely-breaking veil that exists for a select few or maybe no one. Maybe I'm not addicted to real life but a never-ending work-in-progress, constructed by the people who never stop talking or never talk. And maybe I don't truly crave people at all, but continue to look clumsily for an explosive fix of feeling. My mom doesn't think I'm a sociopath.

One day last earlyspring I took the C to 190th and walked slowly through Fort Tryon Park with a curly-headed kid. We found a rock and took turns making dinosaur faces and sometimes noises and watched joggers chase trails of their own breath. For a few moments we sat in complete silence, noticing how on days like this one, the sun gets its strongest before it sets. We went back to his apartment on the fifth floor of a big beige building and sat in the dark, in his surprisingly clean room, watching John Oliver flail his arms at no one. When I rode the C all the way back down to where streets no longer have numbers I was struck with a notion of future—an afternoon when the sun sets again and this time, it's gentle. If I were to assign all this a name it would exist within the letters that spell "satisfied." Stisd tafis adsaf isfad. Commitment without satisfaction? Dsits sifaf fasda dafsi.

I got off the swings because it started to rain. Politely. Unrhythmically. And I started walking home. On the south side of Houston between Essex and Norfolk was a hallway of Christmas trees. I imagined if my phone was still alive the voice on the other end would make a statement about religion as a weapon. Christmas trees as propaganda for a fundamentally capitalist agenda and overall corrupt institution. He's Jewish but celebrates Christmas too.

I've never been one for making plans. If it were up to me I'd float in and out of obligation without strategy, stomping

“ *If I were to assign all this a name it would exist within the letters that spell “satisfied.”*
Stisd tafis adsaf isfad.”



Untitled ●
(Self-Portrait)

NOAH SHACKNAI
Grade 12
Mixed Media



across a game I've known well for some years. That said, I recognize my responsibility in shortening the shelf life of friendship. I welcome it even. This might be about a borrowed pair of Adidas sweatpants, or maybe an English paper about objectification, fake exhalations, wordless affirmation, chipping nail polish, cut-up tank tops, made-up meetings, eight-year nausea, sore toes, a ticklish neck, Chinatown temporary tattoos, pretend marriage, or maybe just the pages of a pink sparkly diary from The Children's Place. There are not very many people I truly miss.

How long will this last?

Misogyny. Poetry. Girls. Divorce.

How long will this one be?

I've also never been one for pet names. Nicknames however, I love as long as no one else uses the given nickname but me. I will never call Iz, "Izzy." Isabelle is reserved for frustration. That way I am able to nestle into another person's being and study the closeness, sometimes grossly, and still

know this person can be so far from forever. Iz and I became friends in 8th grade on the crosstown bus. Last year we realized that we took the same ballet and tap classes when we were three, and saw the same therapist at nine and ten. Not to mention we went to school together from 2nd to 8th grade and we only became friends on the crosstown bus.

Does everything really happen for a reason?

Friendship. Pretty privilege. Tomorrow.

Time. Bones. Tears. Socialism.

It's late January and the days are starting to get longer. Last night I told the girl I grew up next to that I'm scared I'm wasting time. We stuck our heads out her window while the sun set and stayed awake until it rose.

Pajamas. Milk. Abortion.

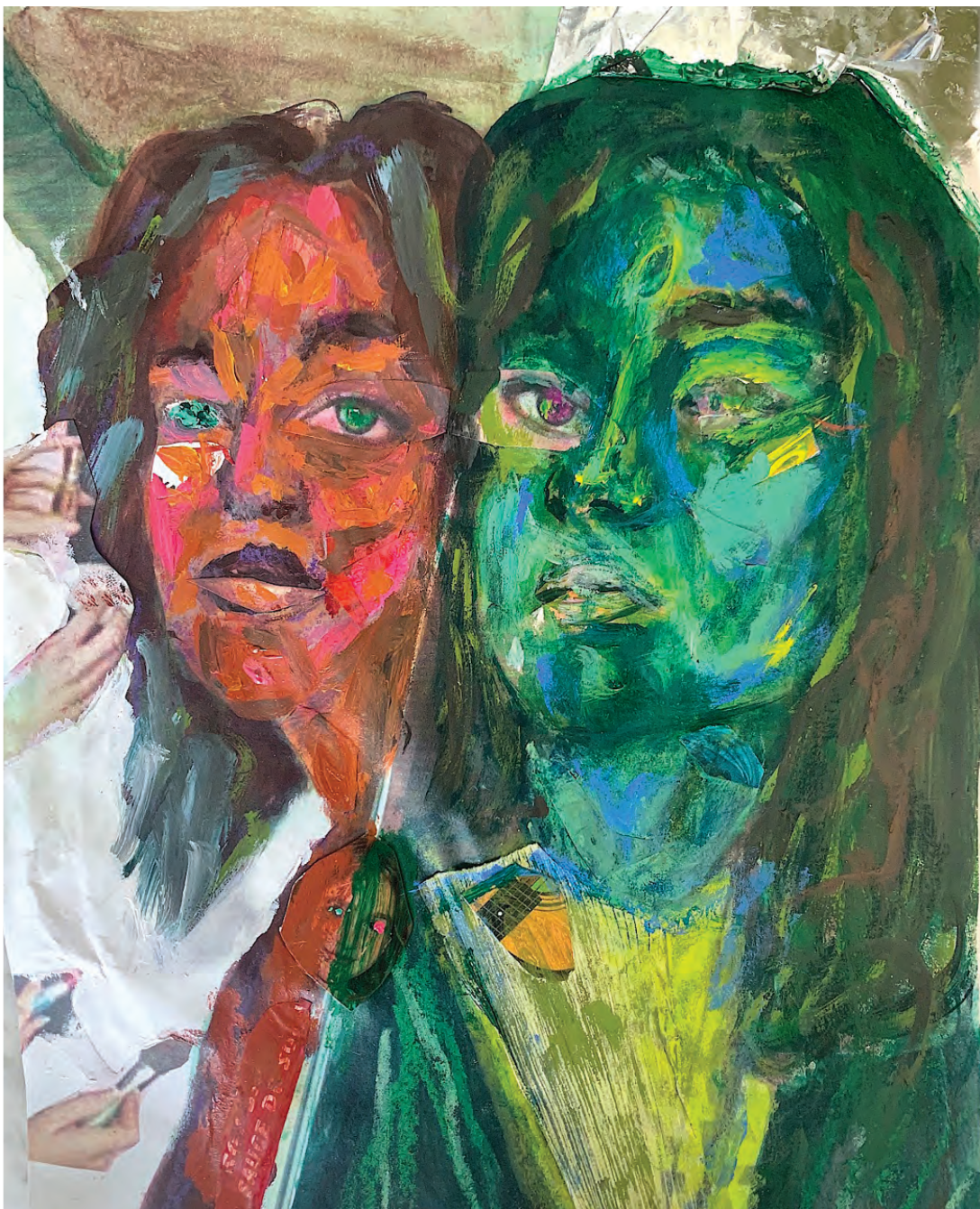
Foreign policy. Virginity. Toast.

Reflections ●

BILLIE WYNN

Grade 12

Mixed Media



● What Happens on 10th St

ASALAHTU KHALID, Grade 11, *Poetry*

What Happens On 10th St

Little black kids dancing on the burning pavement
skin soaking up the sunset
tank tops and dreams hanging loosely on their shoulders
So let God keep you in Heaven
Your laughter makes you too precious
to hold

Chess versus. Checkers

That old man with the cane wakes up every morning at 6 am
and gazes from his beautiful front porch at the world he learned he
could never have
He plays chess in the park with other men and their canes where
little black kids' skin soaks up the sunset and they watch them as
their tank tops and their dreams float loosely on their shoulders.
They have never learned about the world that won't have them. They
have never known about fear.

Courage and integrity

when black women look up at the sky and smile
Mmmmmhhhhhhmmmmmm
a melancholic humming comes from deep in her stomach
she is finally here
she opens her hands her palms face up at the heavens
she takes a deep breath and smells the budding wild flowers in the

field beneath her
the grass tickling her bare feet
her white gown sweeping the summer wind
at last

Summatime

Our ending is familiar. You open up your arms for a hug
and I fall for it again an embrace about as sacred as the
dirty seats on the A train.

Every time you leave there is something more lingering in
the air and every night I think about how I really missed
out on you.

Thank you for convincing me every time. I'm sorry I could
never quite grasp you hard enough to make you stay.

Maybe I need one more night to say all that I have to say.
see you again? Until tomorrow then.

I always wish we had more time.

Can't hold water

even if you was a cup
you carry the water cup with both hands and you tiptoe
down the hallway
the liquid spills at the side and part of me is somewhere
dissolving into new york city concrete
even if u was my cup

Make a wish

jan-u-ary twen-ty eigh-th
one clap in between each syllable so my little brain could remember
you didn't.

I felt the heat of the candles on my cheeks as i smiled for the
pictures mom would send u later

I blew out the fire

Make a wish

Your chair was still empty when I opened my eyes.

happy birthday is a wish as holy as the inside of your mouth
if you hadn't said it i would've cried.

Holding Onto You More Than Myself

All the doors in the house are closed now. Grief is a hallway
with shut entrances. An empty couch. Someone is always supposed
to be there, but never was. It's a heavy weight. And I wonder if I'll
retain some muscle memory. Probably not. But we live on anyway.

That's grief. The continuity of life. An everyday routine.

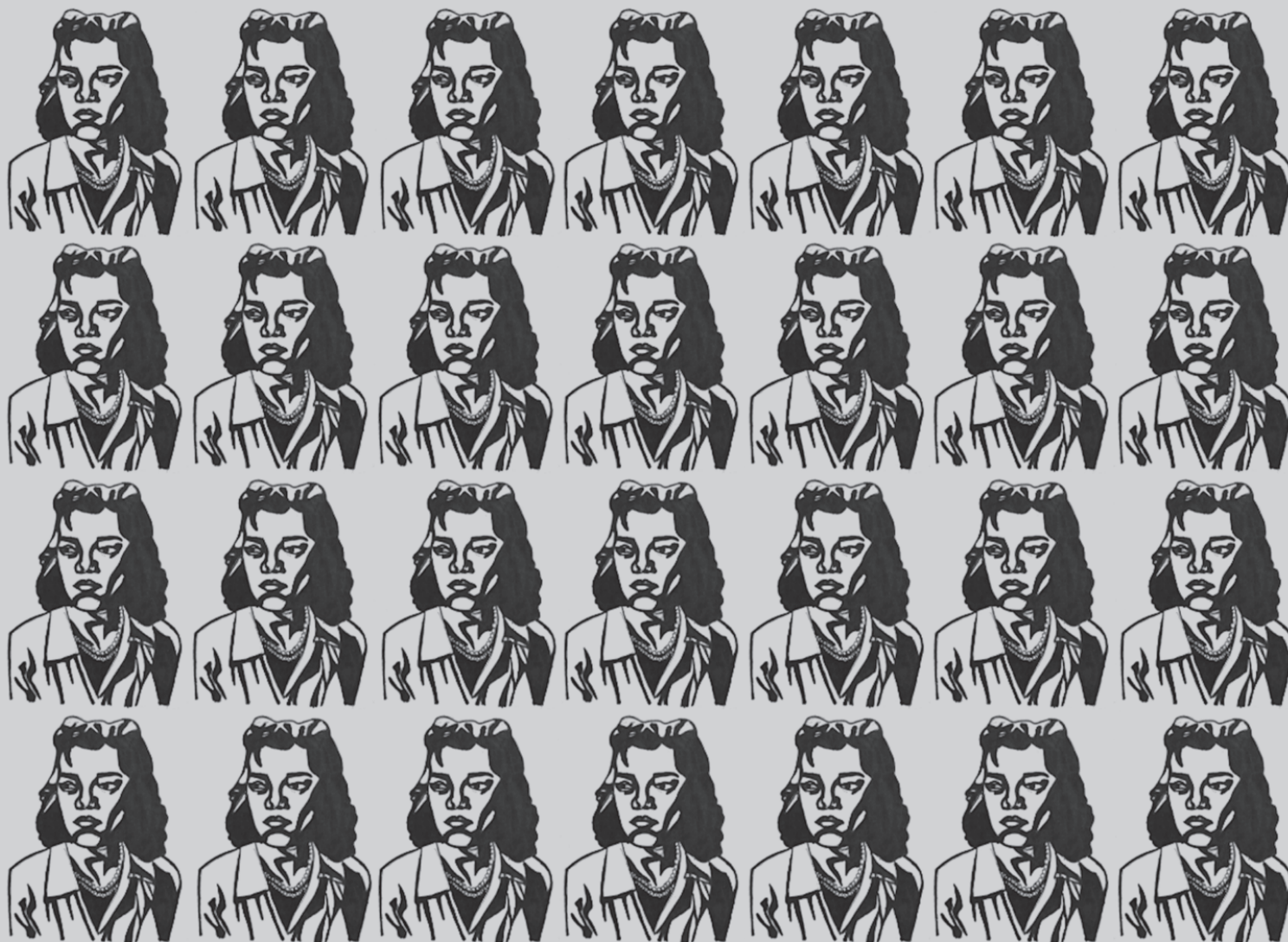
Perhaps grief is my morning joe. I miss you. The mirror reflects
back at me. I don't know who she is.

To Euna ●

RUBY SALVATORE PALMER

Grade 12

Sharpie/Digital Media



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