



# Ink

## Literature & Art Magazine 2021-2022



## Table of Contents:

## Pages:

### *Writing*

Ticket stub in a Bible by Zoë Alter	- 1
Untitled by Lindsay McCammon	- 2
Walking Forward but Looking Backwards by Melania Diah	- 3
Home by Katia Campos	- 5
The Greenhouse by Lindsay McVail	- 6
Bandit by Leigh Newman	- 7
Transformation Through Ordeal by Sam Ya	- 8
Deaf Ears by Konrad Smith	- 11
Pretty Little Liar /It Could be Worse by Anonymous	- 14
Ramblings of an Insomniac by Daria Shepelavy	- 15
How to daydream like you mean it, by an ex-closetee	- 16
Ferris Wheel by Carrie Teti	- 19
Photographs by Sadie Forman	- 20
Swoosh, Thud, Thwack by Dev Gupta	- 22
On Trader Joe's Mini Chocolate Mint Stars by Zoë Alter	- 23
Vignette #1 by Marcus Chiang	- 24
Eucalyptus and Menthol by Fotini Mourelatos	- 25
The High Road by Lauren Coss	- 28
Acknowledgements	-30

### *Artwork Credits*

Konrad Smith	1, 6
Adele Goldader	2, 13, 22
Blake Riesenfeld	3, 5
Gabriel Riccardi	4, 7, 27
Mico Carpinello	9
Chiara Del Testa	10
Fotini Mourelatos	13, 17, 23
Vinaigrette	18
Aurora Soosaar	19
Emmet Sun	21, 22

A huge thank you to Mari  
Reyes-Toidze and the Art Club  
for making our cover art and to  
Daria and Grace for arranging it!

Dear readers, our hope is that you read to learn others' stories and that this platform helps you to achieve that. I was glad to be a part of this magazine and hope you enjoy.

- Grace

I hope that you enjoy the magazine and all of the incredible submissions. I'm so happy to have been a part of this project and I can't wait to be a part of it next year as well.

Thank you to our seniors and I hope we'll make you proud next year.

-Daria

Well, this has been a wild ride. From freshman to senior, I have been part of INK, and a part of the Friends' Central community for quite a while longer than that. I remember seeing copies of INK in the Lower School, laid out on the entry table by the admissions desk, and marveling at everything that had been created by people who seemed impossibly older than me, and now here I am. Another magazine done, another year complete, and it is my time to leave. All I can say is that I truly hope to receive copies of all the renditions of INK that are to come in the mail as I pursue my life outside of the FCS community. Thank you all for being here, and for supporting this tiny school magazine, which I hope will continue to foster the creative spirit in students of *all* ages for years to come.

- Adele

Somehow Lucidpress didn't crash while I was slapping this together. A great big thank you to Adele for taking the reins, so to speak, and turning my hodge-podge of work into a comprehensive magazine. I can't quite comprehend how I'm a senior now and I'm not coming back, y'know? This is it. I am so glad and grateful to have been a member and co-leader of this club, along with being a contributor. Farewell and best of luck to the next generations of artists and writers. I am so grateful for all of you. Send me and Adele a copy every now and then, alright?

-Fotini

Stick People by

Jordan AmenRa

Vice-Assistant Beemus by  
Emmet Sun





## Ticket stub in a Bible

Zoë Alter

I found a ticket stub in the Priest's Bible, sitting right in Leviticus, end furled from his big wide fingers, colors smudging the letters of the Holy text. I didn't know what to do other than stare at it, stare at it for so long that it leached its bright pattern into my brain, till I could remember word for word the scribbled number on the back.

I'm a man of God, nothing more or less, old school junkie-turned blue-collar, ironed ties, and wrinkled slacks. I wash my hands twice

with soap, wash my feet too, comb my hair back and go to Church, do my confessions, say my Hail Marys for my Priest. He listens to me long and hard, me talking about my sins, him granting me a blessing of freedom, a sinless man is he, a fresh slate of human existence. I think he is part of God, an extension of him, though I'd never say it.

That ticket stub won't leave my mind, no matter how hard I try to forget it, sittin' down in the diner with the coffee, medium roast, not cold brew thank you, hot with some Stevia in it. I wish I'd got married to that girl down in Savannah, but she drank something bitter and swam down the river, never came up, they said they found her resting on the border of South Carolina, wonder if she'd been thinkin' of crossing. If I'd married her at least I'd have a ring to fiddle with, not just this cup, this napkin, this fork, and knife.

I'll drive down to the address on that stub, call the number, hang up the second it gets picked up for lack of words, confirmation granted but not wanted. Looking at the flashing lights, neon sign labeled Dahlia, some pretty no-named flower, I'm hearing the loud music from inside, I see the woman's silhouette as a prop next to the name. I'll sit in my car, hat low over my face, obstructed in what I hope are shadows, as minutes turn to hours, and evenin' to midnight.

His car pulls up, I wait for the door to open, wonderin' if I'll do anything, say anything, approach him or just keep sittin'. He opens that door and stands, no more black and white, instead of a wrinkled grey shirt with some olive slacks. He doesn't look right to me, all man and no God right there, all human no angel. He walks to the other side of the car, opens the passenger side door, helps out the woman sittin' there.

I'll wish she was some cowlike creature, all ugly and marred, the Devil taking human form and tryna take down God with him. Lucifer embodied as a woman, long black nails, latex suit, hand gripping the Priest's neck like a Sadist. That's what I'll wish she looks like, but she won't look like that. She'll look elegant, slender, dark circles under eyes from white lines, lipstick messy from her joy-ride with him. She got a striped scarf, wrapped round her arm, I know what she's hiding. She'll stagger on his arm, she's intoxicated, too much so to walk, he's pulling her with him to the club, dragging her, she beats at his arm once, twice, then goes limp, lets him pull her away.

I should get out of my car right now, go seize her, take her away from him. I should make his eyes as darkened as hers, slamming a fist into face, beating sin down the way he did for me. Instead, I'll drive to that alley, scuffling in my coat and pants for a bill. I'll go home, little plastic baggie in hand, pull out some cutlery for a foodless meal. I'll think of her in the river, floatin' down like a little fish, washin' up on a shore all nibbled to bits by bugs and rodents and god-knows-what-else.

I won't go to confession no more.



Photo by Konrad Smith

## Untitled

Lindsay McCammon

I was better than her. I knew it, she knew it, everybody knew it. In all aspects too, singing, dance, delivery of my lines, stage presence, pretty much everything. So, when she got the lead and I got the understudy, not only was I in shock, but I was pissed. Everybody knew that I deserved the lead. After I heard the news that I did not get the lead in the play I have been dreaming of acting in for the past three years, I immediately started going through the five stages of grief. The first one, denial. Maybe there was a typo, a big, big typo on the cast list, or maybe they just got confused between me and her, I mean we both are girls with brown hair and we both have an E in our name. I mean something has to be wrong, this just can't be true, there's no way she would get this role over me. The second one, anger. You know what, screw this girl. She's ugly and can't sing, she has no rhythm whatsoever. And you know what, if the casting director thinks that she made a good decision, maybe she should just change her field of work because she clearly knows nothing about what it means to be a good actress. The third one, bargaining. I decided to go have a little talk with the casting director. I explained the mistake that she made and told her about my extensive resume. I also decided to sing the song that I did for the audition again because maybe the casting director didn't hear me well when I originally auditioned. Then, she told me there was nothing she could do for me. I told her I understood and left, but I did not understand. The next day I was back, this time with a Tupperware full of brownies. I told her about my uncle, my poor, poor uncle, so sick and depressed. I told her that he only has a few months left and his dying wish, his only dying wish, was to see me in this play. I don't have an uncle, both my parents are actually only children, but she believed me, of course, I mean I am an amazing actress and told me that I could be the understudy. The fourth, depression. I didn't go to my vocal lessons or tap dance class after I heard the news that I wasn't cast, what's the point if I couldn't even get my dream role. And, it's embarrassing, but I cried a lot, like the amount where my parents got worried. And the fifth stage of grief, revenge. After the casting director made an exception for me to be the understudy, I started plotting. I decided to make a little lunch date with this girl, you know, to get to know her better. On our lunch date she revealed to me that she was allergic to nuts, interesting, I thought. Well, before opening night, I decided to be a good friend and baked her some brownies. The only issue is that, I swear, the store was all out of wheat flour and only had almond flour. The girl ate them, and ended up in the hospital, poor thing. Well, because she was in the hospital, I got to play the role I was always destined for, and trust me, I did amazing.



Artwork by  
Adele Goldader





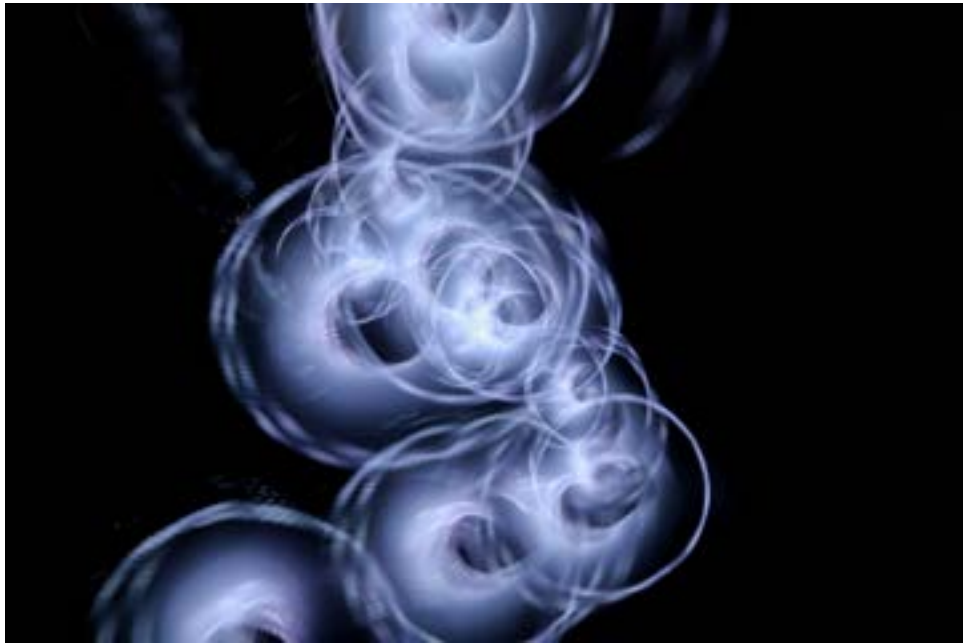
Photo: Blake Riesenfeld

## Walking Forward But Looking Backwards

Melania Diah

As I sit on the bench at Oakview Park, my mind lingers. I used to come here with my mom who would bring bread crusts from my lunch to throw at the ducks. Those things scared me. When I went with my mom back then I was just taller than those menacing birds. She'd say there's nothing to worry about and that they were more afraid of me than I was of them. I didn't think that was true but to this day I have never been attacked by one so maybe she was right. Maybe if I had mustered up some courage to feed the ducks she would have seen her strong child had some of her qualities. She was brave for me when I needed her most and I wasn't. Now I'm thirty with no family, no friends, and nowhere to turn. Mom was my rock until "it" happened. After that, I couldn't let anyone in to know me. Because she was the only one that cared before it all went to crap. I sit by myself on this bench to remind me of the times I had with her. The bench bars are rusty and break off with a simple touch and the wood has split in the splits that would give kids splinters. That's why no one comes to this park anymore. And why would they? Why would they want an old park when they can go to the new one around the corner. But for me, it's a reminder of what I used to have and a curse always having memories of us repeating in my head. But whatever makes me remember her, I'll take. I feel like when I leave this park behind and I am old and grey, I'll suppress the memories we once had. I don't want that. I can't leave her ever because she wouldn't do that to me.





Photos by Gabriel Riccardi



Katia Campos

### Home

With the lights out and my eyes open I find  
myself feeling for something

For what I have no idea

It's a tingly sensation, leaving my mouth  
numb for hours

The night is young and I've found myself  
traveling again

I pass the sounds of cars and city lights

The frat parties blasting music and  
vibrations

It leaves me tumbling around the city as the  
songs play on repeat

I find myself on the wrong side of the city,  
several times getting me lost

And nothing else will make me feel better  
Then going the right way, and heading  
home

Past west virginia and the harsh pieces of  
stone

Through the rocky lush mountains of  
spring in north carolina

It's beautiful, seeing aries cross the sky

The stars leading me to where I ought to be

Passing the fast paced cars on a voyage not  
my own

I give them no mind, it's not where I need  
to be

Eventually the sun starts to waive in, my  
feet are burning and I can feel the blankets

But I'm almost there

I pass the community gates

My body needs water, but I have to double  
check

The door is wide open to your house and  
I'm anxious

It's still dark, and your dog is awake

I have to make it up those stairs  
It's no easy task with quakey legs

I knock on your bedroom door, although  
what am I expecting

But walking in feels so strange

I hold my breath and jump through

There never were any doors my mind  
couldn't open

And there you are, asleep

You're alright, you're safe

I walk to the foot of your bed, the pain in  
my heels all gone

The scratches on my knees are no longer  
there

I collapse in your arms, I can smell you

You still smell like pine trees, even though  
you've never seen a real one before

I feel myself drifting away, sleep finally  
taking me

I am safe when I'm with you

But then my phone rings, and I wake up  
alone

But to a text that says 'good morning' all  
lower case

My face quivers into a smile

I guess you're not upset with me after all, I  
missed you

Photo by Blake Riesenfeld



## The Greenhouse

Lindsay McVail

They say the greenhouse  
whispered at night,  
grass shifting like tiny voices,  
the fog cloaking the cracked glass  
like a veil.

The greenhouse had been laid to  
rest

in a nest of thorns and moss,  
deep in a forest that had  
reclaimed the ground.

The walls of the greenhouse  
bursting with vines,  
creeping through the cracks and  
smothering the swirling columns.

Leaves and flowers pressed  
against the cracked  
and misty windows,  
the ivy crawling from inside  
the door hung  
askew on its hinges.

The thorns encircled the  
greenhouse,  
hiding under the grass  
and swallowing the ceiling.

The trees had grown to shelter the  
greenhouse,  
and in the passing years  
their hugging branches  
had finally braced against the  
world  
outside the clearing.

The greenhouse was forgotten  
then,  
just a sprawling mess of metal and  
glass,  
stolen back by what it once  
contained.

Photo by  
Konrad Smith

## Bandit

Leigh Newman

One morning I was getting ready to go to school and I wanted to wear my pink hoodie that has all these cute red hearts on it. When I searched for it in my closet I couldn't find it so I had to settle for something more subpar. The next day my other planned outfit had gone missing. I walked out of my room again in what I had not wished to wear and saw my younger sister standing in the hallway. Out of her bag, I saw a pink sleeve and ripped it out.

"What is this?" I shouted.

"I borrowed your hoodie, I'm sorry, you can have it back," she replied.

"You mean you stole."

"You never notice when I borrow your stuff I was just putting it back now."

"I would definitely notice."

"You wouldn't. You didn't. Most people lose stuff and it pops back up and they don't question it."

"Well I noticed."

"Only cause I did it two days in a row."

I had to prove her wrong. So I set out on a mission to test her theory and did the same to her, taking her stuff every other day. She didn't notice. Then I moved on to other people. She was right. People are not determined to search for their belongings because of their assumption that they misplaced them due to their own incompetence. Now in the depths of the night, I lurk. I am under your bed. I am in your closet. I am in your attic. I am in your laundry baskets. I am in your washing machine. I am in your dryer. Borrowing your clothes.

Car Part--Photo by Gabriel  
Riccardi



## Transformation Through Ordeal

Sam Ya

Whenever I see a plane flying through the sky, leaving faint, white trails behind, I wonder if the plane comes from China. I wonder if there are Chinese students in the plane who are about to embark on their academic careers in the U.S. As a Chinese student who immigrated to the United States, I often have such musings. I immigrated to the U.S. and enrolled in Friends' Central School when I was in sixth grade. As an international student who spent the first twelve years of my life in Chinese schools and six years at Friends' Central, I am an example of how education can shape personality.

In some aspects, my education in China eliminated my self-confidence. Every school day in China felt exactly the same, as if shaped by the same mold. Every day, after I woke up, I finished my morning routine, got on the squeaking school bus, and went to school. At seven-fifteen, I entered the classroom for study hall, sitting alongside my forty-four classmates. The forty-five of us had been in the same class since the first day of elementary school and became like brothers and sisters after six years of interactions. For me, this situation developed a sense of security, unity, and belonging that I miss and want to re-experience, even after six years. Our learning environment was not the best. The teachers were discriminatory, and at times, even violent. Although we supported each other during hard times, the teachers' methods caused me and other students to develop personalities lacking confidence. I received no praise when I worked hard to improve my academic performance. Moreover, the teachers did not hesitate to shame me in front of the whole class when I made mistakes. It seemed as if I could never satisfy the teachers, no matter how hard I worked. I started to doubt myself.

In the middle of my sixth-grade year, a decision was made which changed my life. However, I was not the one making it. My parents decided to move to the U.S. in order to pursue freedom of speech and escape the government's persecution. We purchased a house in Havertown and attended open houses hosted by different schools. Shortly after my interview, I was admitted to Friends' Central School. Friends' Central was rough for me in the beginning. Not only did I have to get acquainted with foreign teachers and classmates, but I also had to constantly formulate English sentences by translating Chinese. It was not the struggle that scared me, it was the fact that no one else seemed to be struggling as much as I. After my English reached a certain level, I realized that with hard work, high grades were achievable. I became a student with self-confidence. However, I felt as if something was missing. As the only Chinese student in the school, I tried to fit into the FCS community, but reality forced me to give up. When you force yourself to achieve an unachievable goal, that goal becomes meaningless. Despite the lack of connections, I appreciated and enjoyed my choices and ability to participate in extracurricular activities. As a person who prefers variety, programs such as the swim team painted my life with color. What impact did Friends' Central School have on my personality? The school transformed me into a student with confidence by respecting my effort. Although my desire for a sense of belonging is still unfulfilled, I value my identity as a Chinese immigrant who maintains a profound background with Chinese culture.

The experience that intertwined my Chinese identity and my identity as an international student was my time at "Roy", an SAT training school in China. In October of 2020, I took the PSAT and received a score of 1370, a score no college wants to see. One of my parents' friends recommended "Roy", which was well-known for its rigorous training and remarkable results, and proclaimed itself to be the acme of SAT training institutions in China. Of course, I was intimidated by its reputation but decided to try



nevertheless. On the flight to Hangzhou, I felt unease. “Has my time in America made me unable to endure the intensity of China’s exam-oriented education? Will I be suspended?” Throughout the eighteen-day program, my unease intensified. The teachers could expel students for subjective reasons such as attitude and objective causes such as poor scores. As days passed, seats all around me started to empty, often with no warning or explanation. Although I continued to worry, I also began to feel encouraged. I was one of the fifty percent of the original class to survive. I slept less than four hours each night in order to complete my homework, suffering from immense drowsiness during classes. I wondered when the Sword of Damocles would fall. It never did. I graduated from the hellish institution with unprecedented confidence, resilience, and pride. Not only did the ordeal helped me recognize my true capacity, it also helped me to avoid underestimating myself in the future.

As a Chinese student in the U.S., I found it difficult to obtain self-confidence. During my first years at Friends Central, I felt that the school was too foreign for me, and the experience was far out of my comfort zone. Despite this, I was supported by the encouragement and praise from students and teachers, who helped me recognize the true value of my effort. I value the confidence I gained from the SAT training institution. I am proud that I was not one of the people who were crushed by the pressure and fled the training camp. I am proud that I was able to graduate while many other determined students from competitive Chinese schools failed to complete their training. On the other hand, confidence without competence is useless. In the future, I will strive to become someone who makes improvements constantly through diligence and confidence.



I decided to incorporate color contrast by imposing the Ukrainian flag onto a map of the world. This is to symbolize the effect that the war in Ukraine has had on the entire world, and how it has both drawn people together and split them apart. I outlined the country of Ukraine in red and added some dripping blood to show the suffering of the many people living there under the war conditions.

- Mico Carpinello



Chiara Del Testa

These are two anime characters that I painted with acrylic paint on pieces of glass. The images are painted on the backside of the glass in reverse layers of paint so when flipped over you can see the completed paintings through the glass. The one with pink hair is O2 from the anime Darling in the Franxx, and the one with black hair is L from the anime Death Note.



## Deaf Ears

Konrad Smith

The lone and level sands stretch far away. The air is empty, lacking the substance to choke anyone brave enough to breathe it. The sun cooks the sand, but the warmth cannot be felt through the dry air. As I look up I am momentarily blinded by a bright light on the horizon. It was not the sun but it hurt to look at. Squinting revealed that the bright light on the horizon was a large city made entirely of gold. The empty sands are broken as I take my first steps toward the city on the horizon.

After 10 minutes of walking, I come across a structure, a bus stop painted blue. The base of the bus stop is covered in sand. The wind is inching the sand higher up the sides, as though it wishes to consume it, or push it forward. The blue colour of the bus stop is calming, the light reflected off of it is not blinding, but reassuring. It tells me to sit and wait for the bus, yet the complacent sand is unbroken by bus tracks, as though a bus has never been here. Inside is a skeleton sitting next to a man reading a newspaper, the two hard to distinguish at first. The newspaper appears as empty as the sands I stand on, with no print visible. He is reading intently, seemingly reading something important, or at least wanting to.

"Why are you waiting here?" I ask the man.

"I'm waiting for the bus, what else? How else should I get to work?"

"Do you work in the city?" I ask while pointing to the blinding light on the horizon.

"What city? I'm waiting for the bus."

"No bus is coming here, there aren't any roads," I remind the man.

"If there's no bus, why would they be waiting?" He says, gesturing to the skeleton beside him.

He scoffs and returns to reading his empty newspaper. The left hand of the skeleton crumbles, a couple of pieces falling and becoming one with the sands its feet are submerged in, swept towards the city of gold. They are one and the same.

Standing around will get me no closer to the city, so I keep walking. I leave the striking blue bus stop. I leave the man to his newspaper and the skeleton to the sands. My footsteps are the closest thing to bus tracks in this desert until I see another trail. Beside my footsteps is a long and wide line in the sand, stretching forwards towards the light on the horizon. It is ten inches wide and indifferent to the obscuring sands, holding strong. It is ambitious and determined, but heavy enough to compact the sand into what feels like rock. It is not swept away. I follow it. After a short walk that feels as though it should have been a much longer and more treacherous trudge, I see in front of me a man walking through the desert, dragging an anvil behind him. He is pulling a sturdy and holdfast rope attached to the front of the anvil, moving about an inch per second. He is looking down as though he is afraid of the blue of the sky, grunting as he pulls the weight behind him. He is sweating profusely but seems content in ignoring his fatigue.

"Why are you dragging an anvil behind you? It would be easier to leave it," I ask the man.

"I'm a blacksmith, what would I do without an anvil?"

"But you don't have a hammer to use it," I remind the man.

"The hammer was too heavy, I dropped it in the sand no less than a mile back."

"I didn't see a hammer while following the trail of your anvil."

"The sands must have swallowed it, they do that. They hunger for what you leave



behind.”

The anvil has been stained by the sands, the black cast iron taking on a shade of beige. A small wind pushes a reaching dune up the side of the anvil before being parted on opposite sides of its unyielding trail, its weight the only deterrent against its forward climb.

I grow tired of walking so slowly to keep in step with the man and begin to walk ahead, leaving the trail I had been following, instead following the footsteps I leave. I have now found myself close enough to the city to see it more clearly. Towers reach the clouds, piercing the bright blue with gold. Instead of glass, the windows are filled with various gems, each somehow more perfect than the last. The bases of these towers are obscured by a large golden wall encompassing the city. I walk around the circumference of the wall looking for an entrance, a gate, a door. Even the most minuscule of imperfections would have satisfied my curiosity as I had grown hungry for them. I become distracted by a small plume of smoke outside of the wall. I walk towards it. A smell wafts towards me of delicious food, I cannot place what I smell other than a feeling of sustenance. It feels as though every culture is simmering just outside of these immense walls, the smoke and smells the only thing reaching above them. I walk counterclockwise around the wall and come across a man sitting next to a fire with a pot above it. He is muttering unintelligibly to himself. When I get close enough to see inside the pot I discover that the man is cooking sand. He seems to have found a log, likely the base of a tree cut down for the construction of the wall, considering its proximity, and created a makeshift cooking station. A fire burns beneath a pot I can only assume is the man’s only possession. The sand somehow still smells delicious. I can see it burning like the sun-charred wastes beneath our very feet, but in a way that makes it feel alive. Some grains of the sand are visibly larger than others, but this only serves to satiate my hunger for imperfections that the impossibly large wall has left me.

“Why are you cooking sand?” I ask the man.

“One cooks because One is hungry.”

“Is sand truly the best solution?”

“Best is a matter of opinion. No. Best is a matter of perspective.”

“Does it taste as good as it smells?”

“Does it matter? I want Them to smell what they cannot have.”

“Is there nothing better to eat?”

“One has sand to eat. One finds this gratuitous. Those outside of the walls don’t need much. That’s why One believes the walls should be made taller, too easy for Them to join One inside the walls.”

“You’re outside the wall.” I remind the man.

“No, They live outside the wall.”

I decide to keep moving, leaving the man to his meal. After some walking I begin to feel strong gusts of wind, blowing the sands into my face. My skin grated by the dust my journey has kicked up. I cover my eyes to see. After some more walking through unrelenting winds, I see that the winds have created a pile of sand up the wall. A pile of sand this large would collapse with the weight of a single coin, yet I walk up it, scaling the wall of gold. My feet struggle to find something solid to stand on, yet are left unsatisfied. My hands aid my journey, giving me some extra balance. Walking like a dog, I finally crest the peak. I make one final step off of the sand onto gold, momentarily surprised by the newfound stability under my feet. The wall is 5 feet thick until a sharp and vertigo-inducing drop to the streets below. I take the plunge. I feel the wind against my face as I fall. I think I have reached terminal velocity at this point. Any trace of sand has been washed away, scraped. I seem to have forgotten which way I am

falling. My brain says I am falling down, but the winds push me higher. Regardless of direction, I feel my back collide with the second stable surface I have encountered on my journey. I bring myself to my feet and look around to find myself at the bottom of the wall. I walk across the sidewalk beside the streets, taking in my surroundings. I strain my neck to find the peak of the towers surrounding me, blocking the sun but replacing it with their golden shine.

“Why are you here?” I hear from behind me.

I turn to face the question, or the person asking, I do not know. The person may be behind me but the question is all-encompassing.

“I’m not sure I am,” I reply, feeling the stability beneath my feet fade, sinking into the sand.

“How did you get here?”

“I walked up a staircase of sand” I reply, the sand now reaching my hips as I sink further.

“What is sand?”

I try to answer, but find that the sand has reached my mouth. I can no longer move. All I can do is stare, but at what? The question is throughout. My vision begins to go beige as my eyes fall beneath the sand, steadily becoming darker as though I am sinking beneath the surface of the sea. I can feel the footsteps of the person continuing on their day, followed by many more. I can feel the footsteps of the city, squeezing and pushing the sand into me from every direction. I can feel their footsteps as they go on their journeys, but cannot see their faces or hear their conversations. I feel their footsteps but no longer feel the sand, not knowing where I end and the sand begins.

I feel the fire of the man cooking his meal. I feel the crushing weight of the blacksmith starting anew, and I feel the hand of the patient skeleton fall to the sands, grasping in firm greeting.

Portrait by Adele Goldader



Pomegranate Man by Fotini Mourelatos



## Pretty Little Liar

Anonymous

I'm sorry I lied. I never like to admit when I'm wrong or take responsibility for what I've done. There's no avoiding it. And there's no turning back. My heartbeat is almost louder than the sobs that escape my lips as the words echo off the walls around me. I lied and I lied again. The bright sun shines through the window and catches my tear filled eyes. I don't look down because that would mean looking at my mother. I'm sorry I lied and I'll never do it again. I had betrayed my parents' trust and I had turned my sister into a liar too. I wish I could erase that memory from my head. The dance that night was filled with more dread than excitement. The ticking clock was like a ticking time bomb reminding me I would have to face them again soon. The happy faces around me and the night sky above. I'm sorry I lied and I'll try not to do it again. I was in trouble. Because it happened. They had caught on. The inevitable took me by surprise. What I knew and expected to happen--happened and yet I was caught off guard. I'm sorry I lied and I'm sorry that I'll do it again

## It Could be Worse

Anonymous

Of course I did it again. Again, but better. I wasn't stupid and I didn't get caught. Like a criminal who got away with his crime. I was home free with a bag of stolen cash as I slipped by the cops. I had gotten away with murder. The guilt was gone. I no longer cared that I had betrayed them. Because it could be worse. I hadn't killed anyone. I bought a pack of gum. I didn't even steal it. Five years ago I thought the world would end because of it. Because my parents told me no and I did it anyway. Minty fresh lies sat on my tongue as I closed the door of the store. My breath smelled of deceit but I didn't care. Because it could be worse. It could always be worse. It's been months now. I'm popping the bubbles of betrayal in front of them but it doesn't matter. Because I bought a couple two-dollar packs of gum. I crumble up the silver wrapper into a tiny shiny ball. "It could be worse" I say. And the guilt fades away along with the taste of coffee.



## Ramblings of an Insomniac

Daria Shepelavy

When you're awake and alone for hours, you have the opportunity to think. Think about everything and anything. Thinking about the homework that I never turned in last week. Or about how my neighbor's new dog barks to the same rhythm as Jingle Bells. Or how my brother had his first kiss with his girlfriend of three months yesterday, and my first kiss was in a game of spin the bottle with a guy who smelled like tobacco and oranges.

Have you ever seen the movie *10 Things I Hate About You*? I freaking love that movie. It's 1 hour and 37 minutes, meaning I could watch it approximately 12.9 times in the time that I'm awake. There's also plenty of opportunity for absolutely unnecessary calculations. You've probably picked up on this by now but I do not have good time management skills. I mean, I have *so* much time on my hands. I think Isaac Newton invented calculus in less time than I spend staring at the ceiling. Although that might not be *entirely* accurate, I do spend most of history class asleep.

It also gives me the chance to reminisce on things from my past. Like in freshman year I had a *huge* crush on this guy. His name was Calvin and he was an Adonis among men. (He was actually a scrawny blond kid with an attitude problem... but not the point.) I used to imagine that the two of us were meant to be. I had this recurring dream that we were gonna get stuck in the school overnight for some reason. The two of us would be there for hours and trying to get out while simultaneously getting to know each other and falling deeply in love. But before anything could happen we were freed, but that didn't change how we felt about each other and one day we couldn't hold it in anymore and...-you get the picture. As you can probably assume, none of this happened. A summer away from him and I was over him pretty fast, meanwhile he got a girlfriend and promptly cheated on her.

Sometimes I find myself drifting off while making up nonsensical stories, like pretending that I'm actually a robot that doesn't need to sleep, and that I'll outlive all you pathetic mortals. I'm a superior species that doesn't need to "power off" in order to run properly, I'm just that cool. I imagine that one day me and everyone who struggles to fall asleep will band together to save the world like the Insomniac Avengers. There was also the time that I imagined sleep was a disease (similar to the one that affects humans in zombie movies) and the "infected" all turned evil and I was the only one who could save them. It was my time and my world, so I could choose how I wanted to feel about everything (even if I do have a slight superiority complex), but in reality I know that one day I'll probably just collapse on the ground and fall into some sort of Sleeping Beauty-type 100 year nap and everyone around me will grow old while I'm drooling all over a dusty pillow.

My favorite is the super spy story. I have this recurring dream where I have to save the whole world from a villain with an evil cartoon mustache. He planted a deadly world ending bomb. And for some reason it was in my hometown—because that's exactly where someone would put something like that. Anyways, it was my job to defuse the bomb because, again that's exactly who the FBI would have do that—a 17-year-old insomniac. I was getting so close to the bomb and it was like a movie, the countdown was going fast, we were 10 seconds away. 9...8...7 and there was this incessant beeping. It wouldn't stop...I was getting a headache and—oh! Shit, my bad, that's just my alarm. Whoops! Gotta go!

## How to daydream like you mean it, by an ex-closetee

Anonymous

Few are more qualified than someone who spent years of their life in the closet to teach others the power of daydreaming; to master the art of neglecting the confused world of a middle school bisexual and instead embodying the glamorized life of a rich popular twenty-something in the middle of the romance of her lifetime. Below are the steps you'll need to master this time-demanding tool yourself.

1. Know what you're escaping from, but don't bother thinking too deeply about it. Seriously, don't worry! Unpacking the trauma you are currently experiencing can be done in a slightly too warm 120 dollars per hour therapist's office 10 years from now when you "just can't put it off any longer." But for now, you've still got plenty of time! All you need to have at this lovely moment is a problem you are trying to avoid by doing anything and everything to ignore it!
2. Have someone, or someone(s) in mind. Whether you're falling in love in tropical Bermuda, or part of an office scandal in the Big Apple, it's important to put a face to the imaginary person you're going to be throwing onto a pedestal and planning on having to solve all your imaginary problems for the rest of your daydream! I personally recommend the deluxe 2 for 1 option, where there are two imaginary perfect people fighting over you! That's right, in this fake world you've created for yourself, the ratio of risk is low and reward is through the roof, Wow! That's the dream guys! Seriously this daydreaming stuff really confirms what you've known all along; you *are* the center of the universe.
3. Keep the drama coming. In order to stay constantly inside your head, your daydreams are gonna have to be more entertaining than this season of The Bachelor. I'm talking 3 different plot-lines at one time, you won the lottery and have to go into the witness protection program at the same time, meanwhile you're being recruited for the FBI by your ex with a six-pack, just remember the most important part, as long as things are always going well for *you*, you're daydreaming correctly.
4. Reference books and movies are key, this is what watching all those 90s and 00s rom coms trained you to do! Make Drew Barrymore and Julia Roberts proud with an even more insane plot-line than the ones they've been in! If it isn't a hate to love trope I don't want it--remember too, sidekicks who agree with everything you say are integral--they should be quirky but not have enough of a personality to make anything about themselves, obviously.
5. Lastly, have fun! Dead-ass, this is supposed to be your moment to star in the drama of the decade, the only difference is you have complete control over... well, everything! So knock yourself out champ.

Proposed New Event for Strong Men  
By Fotini Mourelatos





Artwork by Vinaigrette





## Ferris Wheel

Carrie Teti

It was the end of a beautiful day at the beach, and the sun had just set over the boardwalk. People walked and biked along the boards, buying t-shirts and hermit crabs. Seagulls gathered to steal the french fries and funnel cake that had been left behind. All the little kids, including me, rushed to get on the rides. I was three years old at the time. My dad and I got on the Ferris wheel, and we rose to the top. I was a little scared, but I calmed down when I looked out from my passenger car and saw the beautiful colors of the sky. The ride was going smoothly, but suddenly, it stopped, right when we got to the very highest point. I looked down to see crowds of people directly below me, all of them pointing up. Even the seagulls laughed at me as they flew by. I cried. To calm me down, my dad sang a song. "Imagine me and you, I do. I think about it every night. It's only right, to think about the one you love, and hold her tight. So happy together!" We sat there, 90 feet in the air, for over an hour, until the firemen arrived. They extended their ladders as far as they could, then climbed up the Ferris wheel to rescue us. I cried in relief when I finally made it to the ground.

When my dad told me that story, I truly believed it. I remembered being stuck in that Ferris wheel overlooking the Ocean City boardwalk and needing to be rescued by the firemen. For years, whenever I looked at that Ferris wheel, I experienced it again in my mind. But it never really happened.



Artwork by Aurora Soosaar

## Photographs

Sadie Forman

My phone case is tiled with photos of my family, friends, and places I've traveled. The time I went to Peru on vacation with my family, visiting and hiking Machu Picchu, I breathlessly willed myself to the top of the mountain and used the new digital camera I had gotten for my birthday to snap a photograph of the Incan ruins below. Or the time I knelt next to Karma, my fifteen year old black dog. My sister snapped a photo at the perfect moment, when Karma's tongue was sticking out just slightly in a way that made it look as if she was posing for the picture. The tiles are colorful, fulfilling a green and blue color scheme across the back of my phone. A picture of me at the beach next to one of my family surrounded by trees. A picture of me snorkeling in crystal blue water next to one on the summit of a grassy mountain. I've had this case for a few years now and over time, it has been scratched up and the corners have begun to chip. But still, I love my phone case because of its originality, its personality and its individuality. I love it because it consists of memories that I can look back on and reminisce about.

Photography has been used for centuries to capture precise moments in time. While cameras used to be very difficult to obtain and were only used by few, now they sit in our pockets, easily accessible with an app on our phones. The first camera was called the Camera Obscura and it was invented in 500 BC to study optics, later demonstrating how light can be used to project an image onto a flat surface. The first physical photograph wasn't taken until 1827 by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce but technology of cameras and photographs moved rapidly thereafter. Although the first cameras were revolutionary for their time, they were flawed and very complex. The process of creating a photograph took eight hours while the images quickly faded away. They were also very expensive and only available to very few. Photography has come a long way since then, and now it is used in many ways, both recreationally and professionally to document important events and convey messages.

Some people say, "A picture is worth a thousand words." This certainly holds true about a photograph, capturing a snapshot of emotion. Every image holds value, whether it's capturing an important moment in history or a momentous day in somebody's personal life. Photographs share a narrative, each one with something different to tell. Something different to share with its audience, maybe just one person looking back at an event or potentially a group of people trying to pull a message out of a photo. I look back at photographs taken during various times in history and am able to see and feel the emotions captured by them and observe the difference between life in the past compared to modern times. It is also interesting to look back at photographs taken during significant moments in my life like my Bat Mitzvah- being able to see photos of me in the Rodeph Shalom Synagogue reciting my haftorah, trying to swallow my nerves as my family and closest friends watch.

The great thing about a photo now is its sense of permanence: you can always look back and remember the events that took place surrounding a specific photograph. Unlike a memory, whose temporary effects escape you, running away as you're left grasping onto something you don't remember anymore, a photo is forever. Forever reminding you of your cupcake-themed birthday party when you turned seven or the time you acted out the play of High School Musical with your family friends, playing the role of Gabriella. No matter how much time passes, you can always look at an image and be transported back to the exact moment it was taken. These events can be shared someday with kids and grandkids, passing down fond memories to younger generations.

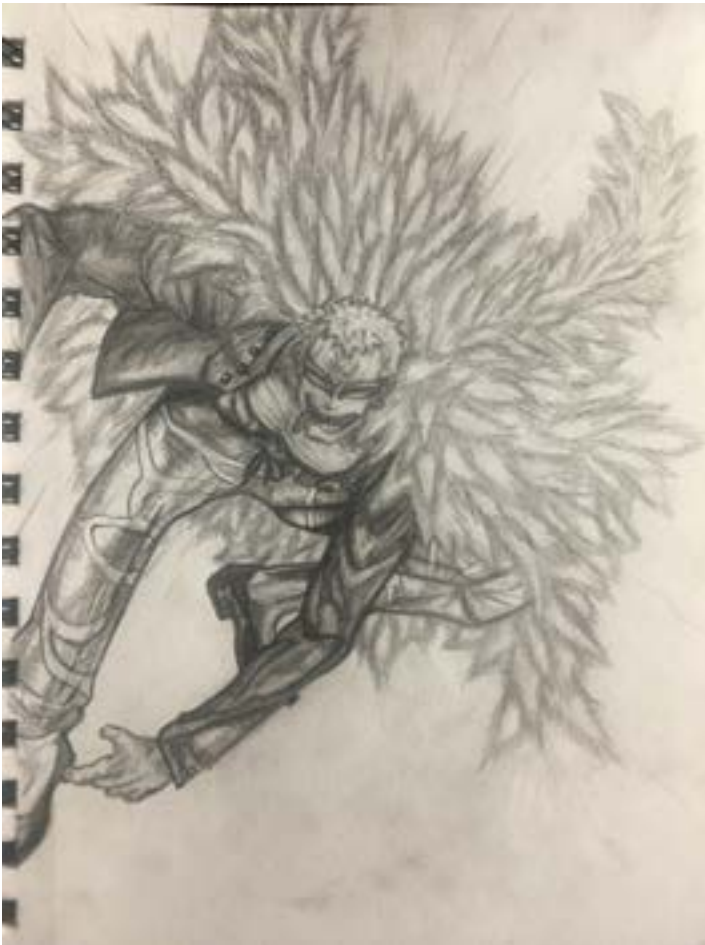
Whenever my grandmother visits, she always brings an envelope filled with old photographs with her, stained with time. Like a time capsule, the moments remain frozen in time. My mom recalls a story to go along with each image. The time she dressed up as a dog for hallowe'en and went trick or treating around her neighborhood

in Hershey, Pennsylvania when she was eight. Or the times my grandmother would dress my mom and her two sisters up in matching outfits for a photoshoot in their backyard, their forced smiles indicating their impatience. Each photo shares a narrative, snapshots of my mother's childhood that revive forgotten memories.

Although photography can bring back old memories and is also very practical, there are many downsides associated with photographs as well. Growing up in the era of social media, it sometimes feels as though we need to document every moment of our lives or we will miss something. In reality we are missing things when we are stuck on our phones taking pictures, videos, editing and posting to various social media accounts. There is a skewed perception that photos are superior because they are tangible and can be looked back on. In actuality, we value memories more than physical photographs and by taking photos of everything, we have lost the value in capturing a moment through memories. Additionally, the permanence of a photograph that has been seen as a good and powerful tool for so many years, has become an unfortunate side effect. Once you post something on social media, it will last forever, even if it is deleted, it will always exist somewhere because of the permanent digital world.

A saying I think about sometimes is, "If you don't have a photo, did it even happen?" I have dwelled on this a lot because we live in a time where cameras are in our phones and we always have access to them, everyone feels the need to capture *each* moment instead of living *in* the moment. We don't spend enough time in the present, instead we capture the present to look at later. Taking pictures and videos of our friends and family, saving them as memories when we aren't actually there to remember them in the first place. There is a fine line between having a photograph to remember a good time and having a photograph that replaces a good time.

Artwork by Emmet Sun





## Swoosh, Thud, Thwack

Dev Gupta

I am not entirely sure what is so satisfying about tossing something up and down over and over again. Maybe it's the *thwack* of the object hitting your hand or the coolness of it against your palm but I have never really known. When I was younger, I used to sit around and toss a ball over and over again. Sometimes standing, sometimes sitting, sometimes lying on the floor throwing it straight up and allowing it to fall towards my face before catching it. Some days I would stand in front of a little section of wall in my house and throw the soft foam against the wall and catch it. Soon this became a habit, *swoosh, thud, thwack*; throw, wall, catch; *swoosh, thud, thwack*. Over and over again, day after day, year after year. Even now, I sometimes just need the calm that comes from throwing and catching. Sometimes I need that time to let my mind drift. Sometimes my thoughts lead me to my school work. "I have some biology that needs doing". *Swoosh*. "Shouldn't be too hard". *Thud*. "That history quiz tomorrow might be something though". *Thwack*. Occasionally the conversation would drift elsewhere. "What was that killer dad joke I heard today?" *Swoosh*. "Oh, that's right, when someone says hey". *Thud*. "Hay is for horses not for people and are you a horse? To that I say neigh." *Thwack*. After a while, one enters a near meditative state with the metronomic steadiness provided by the ball heading to the wall and its predictable return. After writing this journal I plan on going to my wall and throwing the ball for a bit. It always takes a few minutes to get that hypnotic rhythm going. There is an occasional out-of-time one that ruins the whole effect but once you pass that starter stage it's smooth running. *Swoosh*. Thanksgiving soon. *Thud*. A break from work. *Thwack*. Sleeping in. *Swoosh*. Two more tests. *Thud*. Just a few more days. *Thwack*. I like school, but I know I will take full advantage of this break. I toss the ball into the bucket where it rests with a resounding *floof*.

Portrait by Adele Goldader



Jetstream Sam by Emmet Sun





## On Trader Joe's Mini Chocolate Mint Stars

Zoë Alter

On the topic of these little stars, one must first consider the size of them. I hold one now in my hand. It rests delicately in my palm, soft and inoffensive. Its five-pronged sides are like a baby's fingers, the size and shape slightly accurate. No matter the sentimental mood I am in, I will always prefer minty chocolate to a fetus: both are organic, but only one is edible. I cannot simply package babies' hands in a light green box. The advertisement would be too vulgar, and of course, ethically it would be tragic. Maybe that is what I like about these little fresh stars. They are neither tragic nor do they require anything from me. This is also different from a baby. A baby requires everything, it yearns selfishly for warmth, comfort, love. I only have warmth, comfort, and love for these little stars. I love the way they feel when I bite into them when I chew and swallow when their flavors erupt in my mouth like a green volcanic eruption. They comfort me, these stars, their five little limbs descending down my esophagus. I swallow, and they tickle my stomach, before hugging it. They make sure my organs are happy, with their attentive little hands, caressing and smoothing my insides. Warmth explodes inside of me at the mere thought of these little friends of mine. They cannot communicate with me, but they can make me feel loved. They are not Christmas, but they are the holidays. While they do not offer me gifts, and they do not kiss me while I am wearing red flannel pajamas, they instead caress my lips with something undeniable: sweet, decadent flavor. Like a baby, I will reseal their box, make sure they are tucked into bed so that the Devil cannot steal my little infant mint stars from me.



Coach by Fotini Mourelatous

## Vignette #1

Marcus Chiang

It's surprisingly easy to play a part right while sounding completely awful. With any instrument, touch is imperative to getting the right tone for a song. Play a key too loudly on a piano, and you'll jolt someone out of the world of the music and back into a stuffy recital room. Bow that cello string a little too forcefully, and suddenly Bach's prelude sounds like jerky notes with no real rhyme or reason to their placements. Sure, it may not be unpleasant, but anyone who's listened to enough music will be able to tell that something, one crucial thing, is missing.

With the drums, it's very hard to play a "wrong" note. You'll never miss and hit the snare while swinging on the ride. The crash cymbals may hang over the toms, but it's not like you're in danger of clamping that hi-hat accidentally because you need a strong snare tone. No, the trouble doesn't come from playing the wrong or right thing; it's *how* you play it. A simple groove can sound uncomfortable and weak because that stick is just a little too high, that pedal is just a little too loose. It's not easily diagnosable, either. It's only after I've listened to myself play the same four bars of Hotel California that I realize that hi-hat strike before the third beat is just slightly enunciated. I'll listen to Knights of Cydonia over and over to determine what makes the song gallop. Why does Rush still feel like half-time when the song has long since transitioned into double?

And even after I figure out that those bass drum doubles move the song, and that the ride cymbal pairs with the bongos to keep the same feel of the intro, I'm stuck with the challenge of actually replicating it myself. That hi-hat strike is going to feel awkward the first dozen times I try it. The syncopation between those bass doubles and the open hi-hat groove have me tripping over the beat before the main guitar riff even begins. I let out a small laugh, alone in the basement, as I listen to just how fast I need to swing while somehow maintaining a groove that should be half the speed. And once that's finished, once I can run it through with that extra hi-hat strike, consistent bass pedals, and consistent tempo, I am back at square one. I have improved, but it's not hard to improve over nothing; now, to focus on that one fill at the end of the chorus. The 3:2 polyrhythm during the outro, split between my right foot and hand. The drum solo that shouts and responds with a trombone.

But to me, this is the beauty and the challenge of drumming. It's so bare bones and simple that the only way to get better is doubling down on those minuscule changes. The velocity of the stick. The extra millisecond or so I spend on the toms. It can be excruciating, sure, but it's all worth it for that one moment where you *know* you've done it right. You're locked into the beat. You've gotten so comfortable with the groove that your body begins to adjust to it in real time. Your stick lowers itself, you beat down on that pedal. Everything is just *right*.

## Eucalyptus and Menthol

Fotini Mourelatos

They found him dead in the meadow, three bullet holes through the neck and collarbone in a perfect triangle (the coroner measured). In his left hand, still gripped tightly, was a dulled kitchen knife that wasn't his. His sweater smelled of musk and eucalyptus.

He was known, but he was not known. The townspeople had all met him at least once throughout the years, whether through a borrowed book, perfectly tuned to their interests, or a lent hammer or a pie given on holidays, mysteriously absent of the receiver's allergens, regardless of whether or not he was explicitly told what ingredients to avoid. He paid no particular attention to his reputation. Opinions differed somewhat, but he was not hated.

He was loved. He lived on the edge of town next to the forest in a house too large, surrounded by sugar maples and peach trees. He worked at a hardware store somewhat closer to the center of town, known by some to be obnoxious and to others endearing. At the end of the day, those who had issues with him simply turned their backs on him. *What good would it be, they mused, to change him?* And so he was left alone.

The way he carried himself was with an effortless precision. It was said he never exposed his neck. He could've thought himself a god and his surroundings his kingdom, if he wished, and on sour days it looked almost as if he did. Some doubted his perfection, smelled a sharpness beneath his rosy exterior. Perhaps they were right. Few were close enough to him to find out.

He was alone, living in a sprawling, ancient, grey-stone home that stood out from the modest brick-and-mortar rowhomes found downtown. His home, vaguely reminiscent of a French country house, was blanketed in flowering ivy and wisteria. His garden, if it could be called that, was run through with onion flowers in brilliant white and purple and shining yellow weeds. Those who had gone inside the house noted first its almost-neatness: dishes were left on the counter, but they were stacked and pushed aside; he had no bookshelves yet there was order to his piles of books; the cushions and blankets strewn over his sofa were tussled in a way that seemed inviting. They would then notice almost all was green; the furniture, the walls, the flowers. All along the fir-colored walls were strings of little lights, and potted plants thrived in the glowing pools beneath them. The carpets looked Turkish in style, but shimmered with contrasting shades of green; pale viridian, deep phthalo, shining jade, olive, and emerald. The great sugar maples in the backyard were also decked with lights, and on warm summer nights they shone like a miniature galaxy. The smell of simmering peach preserves wreathed the house. In the fall, he would bring in bouquets of red leaves and preserve them in such a manner that they would stay soft throughout the season, woven into mint curtains or placed amongst the pistachio-colored carnations. His name was Omar.

Nick was one of the lucky (*unlucky, unlucky*, the townspeople clicked after) who did befriend him. He knew him for a good six years, a time he considered long and the town considered short. On weekends they shut themselves in Omar's too-large house and put his worryingly expansive record collection to use. On weeknights Omar could be seen lounging on the balcony railing of Nick's apartment, cradling a glass of

something pink. His head was craned up, facing the sky, and he smiled at the stars. The apartment was in a state of stifled organization, where dressers and floors were kept free of clutter and the surroundings were decorated smartly but the insides, the drawers and the closets and the boxes under the bed, were in tangled disarray. The cramped sitting room was upkept in a manner he thought mature, decked out in silver and white, his bachelor's degree framed above the two-seater sofa. Throughout the apartment the smell of eucalyptus and menthol hung heavy in the air, courtesy of the ointment Nick rubbed into his aching arms and joints every other night.

Nick was an outsider, employed at the town's only salon/barbershop, winning the job the moment the owner caught sight of the intricate braids weaving across his scalp (ones he had put in himself). He washed and cut hair for a living, and so his apartment was filled with clear bottles of jewel-colored shampoos (Omar, naturally, was captivated the first time he caught sight of them). Nick's hands cracked and bled each afternoon and he repaired the fissures as best he could with petroleum jelly each night, only for them to reopen the coming morning. Customers soon noticed the delight he took in the unexpected, in tilting their heads every which way in the most counter-intuitive manners in order to work his magic, in telling them anecdotes about his time studying at a far-away prestigious university. They quickly learned that he'd punish those who showed up for a wash with stubborn product in their hair with icy water and foul-smelling soaps.

Nick was not exactly disliked in the same manner that Omar was loved, but six years was not enough time for the body of the town to warm to him. One could find any list of reasons floating around the parks and cafe's: his tendencies in the barbershop, his know-it-all attitude, the way his voice was just that bit louder than everyone else's. It was a good thing no one was there to tell Nick about his friend's status as beloved. Despite that, Nick had caught the eye of many, from Omar's rowdy coworkers to the quiet girl who worked at a coffee shop. Those who did not have issues with him tried to reach out, to show the town what they thought they saw in him. And so he was changed.

Through each other, Nick and Omar found their jealousies. Some nights Nick would appear unannounced at Omar's home, only to stare at the carnations while his mouth watered, trace the wild splaying of the stems and leaves with his eyes until they would roam and replicate them on their own. When he tried to sleep, faintly lit green lines would track behind his eyelids. Omar, though, shivered with envy. Some weeknights he would fall silent mid-sentence, mid-word, and pick up one of the jewel-colored bottles, admiring its perfect positioning along the windowsill, pitying Nick for his inability to replicate that perfection elsewhere, wishing he was the one living in the tiny apartment with the messy drawers and the sweet-smelling shampoos, all the while damning Nick for what he had. He'd pocketed more than a few of those bottles. *It's only fair*, he thought as he caught sight of one of his carnations propagating in Nick's bathroom. Some days he'd call out sick only to follow Nick around, watch the banter Nick held with everyone he met with a watering mouth. Others he'd avoid him at all costs, bad-mouthing him to whoever bothered to listen.

In the weeks before, Omar bemoaned his lonesomeness, how the vast stretches of his house grew larger and larger with each day. Nick listened politely and thought of his own apartment closing in on him. He wasn't sure, but he'd thought he'd lost a room in the past month. And while Omar droned on and on about his lack of connections, about how the regulars at the hardware store had been out of town and left him alone, Nick



thought about how he'd been living in the town for six and a half years and still no one gave him so much as a passing glance.

They had grown, as all things do. It so happened to be in different directions. Nick's once jubilant voice had turned shrill, and Omar's alluring quietness had become discomfiting. Still, they remained together because they thought they had no one else. That wasn't true, of course. Given some time, there were no shortage of people unwilling to befriend the boisterous foreigner or the endearing oddball who lived by the woods.

For some reason, there was a fight. No one saw and no one heard, but they noticed the aftermath through gaps in the blinds and curtains, through the quiet scrubbing at their scalps or the near-silent ding of the register. Nick's apartment had turned inside-out, with every hidden knick-knack and odd bit on disorderly display. Omar's vast house had been, for the first time in a long while, deep-cleaned and put in place. He had even built bookshelves. The blame flip-flopped.

No one knew where Nick found the gun, nor Omar the knife. What unsettled most was the color of the blade: the deep copper that matched Omar's skin so much that, at a first glance, one couldn't distinguish between his hand and the handle.

Photo by Gabriel Riccardi



## The High Road

Lauren Coss

It's the hottest day of summer and the sun is beating down on the asphalt outside, ready to pounce as soon as I walk out at the end of my shift. My boss loves the hottest day of summer, you know, since he owns an ice cream shop and all. I however, do not appreciate the mid-July overflow of customers. Something they never tell you is just how tiring scooping your 1,000th scoop of ice cream is while a bratty five-year-old whines to their mom about how they wanted 2 scoops instead of 1. Today began just like any other day. I biked into work in the hot sun drenched in sweat dreaming of being welcomed into the open arms of the air conditioning. I'm opening up shop today, and I can already see customers hovering outside waiting for me to open up the gates of heaven when I flip the sign in the window from *"Sorry, we're closed"* to *"We're open!"*. I lock up my bike and rummage for the key in my pocket to unlock the door. Once I get it open, the AC immediately makes me feel alive again. I pull on my "Ice Cream Fundae" apron, and tie a bow in the back. I know, the name is so cutesy it almost makes you want to puke, doesn't it. I wipe down the counter, turn on the lights, take the lids of all the flavors, clean the scoopers, and refill the toppings before I am finally ready to open up shop. I walk up to the door, and to the customers delight, I turn the sign, and Ice Cream Fundae is open again. As I am walking back behind the counter, I hear the little twinkle of the bell that the door makes when it's opened. I prepare myself for a very long solo shift—Meredith is supposed to be here, but we both know she never shows up. I turn around to greet the customer and the shock of familiarity pulses through my veins. From just that one glance, I was instantly shot back to a time before. Even before I totaled my car and was forced to take scorching hot bike rides to work every day. So like, 3 months before. It all washes over me in just one instant. The oh-so-romantic first date at TGI Fridays. The time he fell and broke his ankle at the roller rink (which was from getting too excited when they turned on "Play that Funky Music" by the way). Even the time we snuck into that country club together and pretended to be "Mr. and Ms. Barfmen" and put shrimp cocktail and fancy wine "on the tab" all night. And finally, I remember the time he told me he loved me and I thought he meant it. You know, I don't consider myself very picky. There are lots of things I would have been happy to get on my 1 year anniversary. Maybe some flowers, a date, jewelry, or even just a card all would have been happily received. The one thing I personally didn't want for my anniversary was to walk in on him cheating on me while I was on my way to give him his gift and homemade cake. You know, I chose the high road that day. I wanted nothing more than to smash that cake in his disgusting little face. Instead, I walked away and ate that cake myself, crying in my dorm with my flustered roommate by my side. Yet here he is, in *my* place of work. Quite some nerve, don't ya think? I realize that I have been standing here, frozen, staring for god knows how long. I snap back into it just in time to hear him say "hi Ivy" in that classically manipulative way he always does. Who does this man think he is? I ignore his greeting and put on my fakest, most passive aggressive customer service voice and say "what can I get for ya?" I smile with closed lips and eyes that could bite. He orders a large dairy free chocolate milkshake. "Coming right up," I say in a voice so sweet it could've given anyone a cavity. Wow, I had forgotten. He is lactose intolerant, allergic to nuts, and allergic to cats. He truly is the weakest link. I walk into the back where we keep the specialty flavors and I hear him call out to me as I walk

away saying, "Ivy, listen I just want to talk." What on earth could he want to talk to me about? Maybe the fact that he had been cheating on me for over two months? I put the ice cream into the blender and turn it on full blast to drown out the sound of his tinny voice. I pour the milkshake into the Styrofoam cup and grin a malicious grin from ear to ear. I walk back out holding the milkshake much too tight. I grab a straw, and say that'll be \$3. He hands me the bills, yammering on about how he is sorry, and how if I take him back he would be better this time. I ignore it all. I take a deep breath, look up at him, and smile. I hand him the milkshake, and say, "Leave now, enjoy the rest of your day!" He reluctantly walks out, milkshake in hand. Now you may be impressed, proud even that I have taken the high road for the second time. I mean, how mature it was for me to have resisted the urge of throwing that milkshake on his helpless face. And you know what, you're right. I think I should get credit for resisting that urge. I mean, it could have been purely accidental that I used regular ice cream in this poor severely lactose intolerant man's milkshake. I bet he'll feel sorry when he is keeled over on the toilet tonight. But you know what? If he calls to complain I'll just say the same thing he said to me the night I found out he was cheating. "Everyone makes mistakes!" So yeah, while the high road is great and all, for today I think my way worked just a little bit better.

---

*A huge thank you to our Inklings:* Adele Goldader, Fotini Mourelatos, Blake Riesenfeld, Sean McGoff, Daria Shepelavy, Leigh Newman, Grace Schlegel, Katia Campos and Ms. Novo

*Acknowledgments:*

First and foremost, we would like to give a sincere thanks to our club advisor, Ms. Novo. We would be lost without her careful care, attention, and reminders to get our work done. So many generations of INK have flourished underneath her leadership and we are confident that future classes will too.

A big thanks to our Inklings for everything they've done; attended meetings, compiled works, created covers, contributed work. Best of luck in your future endeavors!

Finally, we would like to give a great big THANK YOU to everyone who contributed! Without your art and writing our magazine would not exist. Keep on creating, no matter where you find yourselves down the line. Everyone who contributed is so skilled and talented and we are grateful to be able to include your works in our magazine.



# INK

*Are you a current student or  
employee at FCS? We'd love to  
see your work in next year's  
copy of INK!!*

*We accept:*

♥ Art

♥ Poems

♥ Creative Writing

♥ Photos

+ MORE



*Just email submissions to  
[ink@friendscentral.org](mailto:ink@friendscentral.org)*

