

Danville High-School's
UNDEERTOW
CONTAINED ESCAPES
Student Magazine

Undertow Staff

Mac Perry Editor in Chief
& Design/Layout

Isabella Sepahban Art Director

Chloe Strynick Interviews
Editor

Mike Suarez Reviews Editor

Rylan Montgomery Assistant
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Ramona Pierce . . . Poetry Editor

Kira Pusateri Short Fiction
Editor

Matthew Gover . . Nonfiction Editor

Ben Tibbles . . . Layout Assistant

Chloe



Strynick

Chloe Strynick is a junior. When not competing for one of seven different DHS teams, she enjoys the outdoors, drawing, and listening to true crime.

Mac Perry is a DHS senior. When he's not editing the magazine Mac likes to learn and play instruments.



Mac

Perry

Bella



Sepahban

Bella Sepahban, a junior, is the Artistic Director of Undertow. She is currently professionally studying ballet and plans to study fashion and business in college.

Ben



Tibbles

Benjamin Tibbles is a Freshman at Danville High School. He has always had an interest in literature and uses that interest on the magazine.

Matthew Gover is a sophomore at Danville High School. He plays trumpet in the marching and concert bands. His favorite hobby is journaling.



Matthew

Gover

Rylan Montgomery is a DHS freshman who's interested in art, music, and stories. He is passionate about anything that involves self-expression and acceptance.



Rylan

Montgomery

Mike Suarez is a junior at Danville High School. He believes combat sports are a lot like art, but finds painting much less taxing on his system.



Mike

Suarez

Ramona



Pierce

Ramona Pierce (she/her) is a junior at Danville High School. She is passionate about matcha bubble tea, bad shark movies, and good literature.

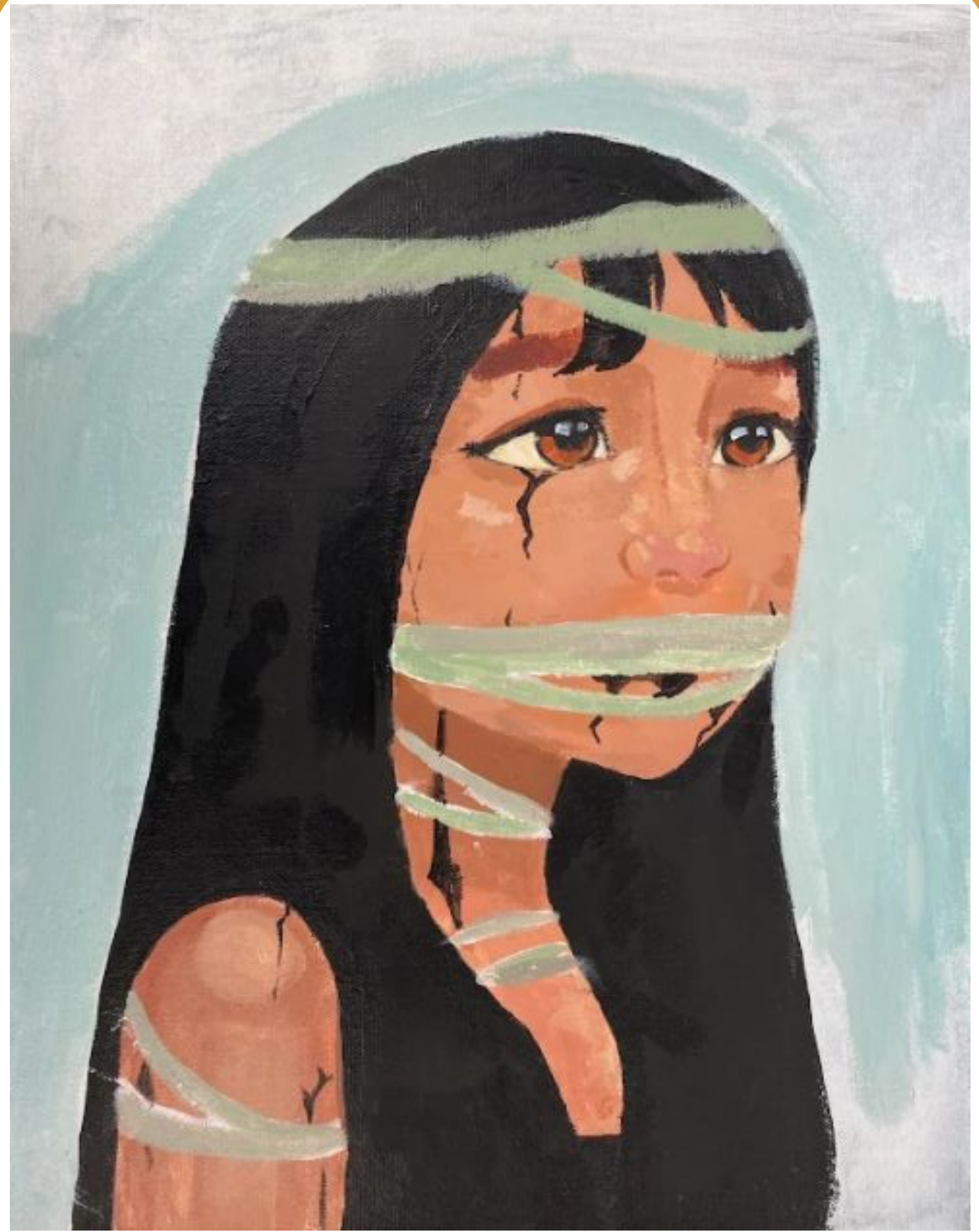
Kira Pusateri (she/her) is a junior at Danville High School. She loves to weightlift, eat poke bowls, and listen to music.



Kira

Pusateri

**Art
Winners
&
Submissions**



GUADALUPE HERRERA

1st Place



DAISY SCHARBROUGH

2nd Place



AVA STEENBURGEN

3rd Place



CRISTINA CHUMBLEY

Honorable Mention



PRECIOUS MCDANIELS



SAM WILSON



JE'NAE TAYLOR

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Poetry Winners

1st

Trinyte Welch

2nd

Bella Murray

3rd

→ *Elena Griffiths*

Thanks 4 Submitting

GOING MASKLESS

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The strange part was seeing everyone's faces again, everyone's smiles and blank stares fully. Some had forgotten that you shouldn't breathe with your mouth open.

Not one frown to be seen. Everyone was smiling and laughing all day.

Strange.

Something being strange is funny to me because it's not the same. It's different; this is not always bad. In this case, finally being able to see everyone smile and laugh and breathe with their mouths open.

A little dangerous, yes.

But I wouldn't say it was bad.

Mike Suarez is a Junior at DHS.

CONTAINED ESCAPES

Inside, you're slowly suffocating.
the steam invades your nostrils.
it creeps down your throat and expands against the soft flesh,
choking you.

skin is too tight for the skeleton.
muscles are bulging, grotesque.
blood floods the mouth, clogs the lungs.
pours into the eyes.
it's dark.

This is your cage.
It feels like that jerk right before you wake up.
when you feel like you're falling.
like someone dropped you.
and then you wake up.
sweats, shivers, shakes. The
air is cold. The
night kisses your cheeks and the
frost is welcomed by your lips.
it's dark.

This is your escape.

As the sound waves crash against your eardrum and you feel their energy
soak into your
thoughts, you realize that this is what you
waited for It feels like a never ending crescendo
The build up the anxiety the tension the overwhelming feeling of being full

T H E R E L E A S E

Trinyte Welch is a senior at DHS

BARBIE

Is it the raised red burns? Or
The hiding of our brazier we've all learned?

Is it the way our silence gives the room to you,
Is that, our best way to woo?
Is it the way we hide our spots & marks & skin
So that you see our art, not what's within.

Wearing a skirt, is not just a whim
You must bring a razor to every limb.

And we can't miss a spot, lest we be
those disgusting feminists, pronouse her/she.

Of course, there is, body positivity!
And ah those loopholes are riveting.

"We don't need an hourglass!"
But no fatties allowed and you need an ass.

And that's why I lie here legs aflame
Wanting to cry, but with nobody to blame.
Burns that last days, but not a hair to be seen
Because I wanted to be barbie.

Elena Griffiths is a sophomore at DHS

BAD LIE

The deeper you stick
it in your veins
the deeper the thoughts
there's no more pain
no more pain
I'm in heaven
I'm a god
I'm everywhere
I feel so hot
it's not a habit
it is cool
I feel alive
if you don't have it
you're on the other side
it's not a habit
it's cool
maybe that's a lie

I'm high above
but on the floor
it's over now
I'm cool alone
I'm just a person on my own
it's not a habit
it is cool
but maybe that's a lie
nothing means the same to me
oh nothing means the same to me
it is not a habit
it is cool
but maybe that's a lie
and hopefully I realize that
before I die
it is all a bad bad lie

Duncan West is a senior at DHS.

SAY SOMETHING

Silence surrounds me.

All I want is to speak
Yet, I can not.

Silence is all that comes,
Out, no noise, no sound.

Muted by all things,
Expected of me.

There is pressure on my throat.

Help, I try to call out.
Instead, no noise is heard.

Nothing said and nothing changed.
Gone is my voice, silenced forever.

Kirsten Blain is a senior at DHS.

A BROKEN VASE

Glass on the floor
a piece that you forgot to pick up.

You said you'd pick them up later but never do.
They'll stay there for days
on end hoping you'll be able to pick up the remaining glass
without bleeding.

A heart that wants to, and a mind that would rather keep
things the same.

It wasn't the glass that scared me, no it was the bleeding,
the fear
Of fixing something you love, the fear of letting your soul
be alive and to only
Bleed again.

But sadly I can't fix this broken vase
after all the vase I created,
I sabotaged, I tried so hard to pick it up
I was scared it would be taken away.
So I'll just keep continuing to keep those remaining pieces
of glass on the floor.

Precious McDaniel is a senior at DHS.

The energy, the pure light
That runs through my veins
Tolls like a pulse throughout my body
A deafening reminder that I am alive
But I am so much more than alive
I realize, as I walk down the darkened street,
That I am not afraid of the consequences of my actions
Consequences don't exist for people like me
For while I am alive, I am definitely not real
When the hammer in my hands
meets the tail light of the abandoned car
The heartbeats in my body line up
with the shattering of plastic

BOOM

CRASH

ONE HIT

BOOM

CRASH

TWO HITS

I am Icarus chained to the Earth
Unable to soar through the skies
like I know I am destined to do
But my wings melt anyway
I can no longer hold the light inside of me
It pours from my eyes, over my lips in streams of liquid gold

It flows over my arms, reaching my knuckles
Which have gone white
from gripping the bathroom countertop
Minutes turn into hours
As the person in the mirror stares at me,
unrelenting, Her face bathed in gold
I stare back at her
Studying her before I even realize what I am looking for
Then it hits me *Reasoning*
When I stare into the face of the ugly creature
before me I fail to see any consideration, any
Thought Behind the pieces of which she is comprised of
There must be no higher power
The skies must be empty,
filled by nothing but stars
Because if there is a God,
and this is his Great Plan for me
Then he is a cruel, uncaring being,
far worse than any villain created by man
He is worse than my father
He is worse than my father's father
He is worse than the ugly creature in the mirror
And he is worse than me

Isabella Murray is a sophomore at DHS.

CONFORMITY

Why has conformity
Turned the majority
Into minority?

The hypocritic philosophies
That takes all that speak free
And bring them to their knees
So all can be pleased

It takes the Children of the land;
builds them a foundation
made of sand
Where they stand
Until they fall

Into the hands
Of the ones who pull the strings
That seek to please
With false promises of
gold and diamond rings

So they can trap them
in their dream

That never seems to end
And forms a cage of Oblivion

Confusion, Depression, Obsession
An overall madness

That drive all to sadness

Where none take the blame

“So it must be the same
As before it came”

They say

Unsure of which side to fight

“This is normal, right?”

Carminy Phillips is a sophomore at DHS.

THE ROOM & THE BEAST

I'm running, where I do not know.

All I know is that I must.

The creature chased me, I duck below,
the pipes covered in dust.

The beast runs past me.

I hold my breath for fear it will find me.

I move to leave but hit a pipe.

The creature stops, raising its ears.

It runs towards me, taking a swipe
at where I was. My eyes fill with tears.

It barely misses my head.

I thank God, I'm not dead.

No time to think now,

I need to get out of here.

I don't understand how
he didn't kill me. The coast is clear.

I dart from my hiding place.

My heart begins to race.

The beast is gone,
looking for me.

I walk down the hall when I hear a yawn.

It's the room where I broke free.

I turn down the hall,

it becomes small and I start to crawl.

I hear the beast coming from behind,

I start to quicken my pace.

I find a door and close it
hoping to keep it contained.

I look around and realize

I am encased.

I surrender to the dark.

My hope has shatter.

A wall opens and I embark.

I find walls covered in blood splatter.

Frightened, I run from the room.

I found another door.

I smell a strange perfume.

My eyes droop closed
and I fall to the floor.

I awaken in the same room as before.

The restraints release
and the beast enters through the door.

Kirsten Blain is a senior at Danville High School.

I don't think she would like me
If we were ever to meet
With her fuzzy french braids and ill-fitting uniform
JM written on the tag, a display of ownership that did
not extend only to the clothes

I think she would question me and my choices
How could I destroy my family?
How could I be so selfish?
I should have followed the unwritten rules that
allowed our family to function:

Chin up, mouth shut, tears dry

I think she would fear me
She would look at my father and me and pick up on
all the similarities that I am too afraid to admit to
myself.
I would make her nauseous
Some part of me bears semblance to the very thing
that nearly destroyed her

I think she would be ashamed of me
I was never meant to tell
What had happened was meant to live within my
ribcage, in my heart
Buried so deep that not even God could see it

She would pummel me
Her feelings would be so big that her
tiny body would be shaking with rage
She would break the same ribs
that had been a cage for our secret for far too long
Her kid fists would be dripping
in the red of her own blood

I wouldn't stop her
She had been docile for so long
She deserves to kick and punch and scream
I can bear it, take her agony from her

Chin up, mouth shut, tears dry

Isabella Murray is a sophomore at DHS.

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Mike Suarez is a Junior at DHS.

خدا

Your God is dull.
My skin is, too.

Bow to Her,
She is Your God.

Your God speaks the truth,
Wants to keep you alive.
I want the same for you.

Bow to Her, she is Your God.

I will dress myself in brown linen and red marble.
I will open my mouth and sing blood into your ears.

You will wish to die.

Bow to her.

I stand on the cold stone.
Your neck is ice in my hands.
I will ring your evil out,
And let everyone hear your screams.
Bow.

You killed the little girl I was.
I am now your deity.
You made the girl crumble to the floor,
Her bones turned to ash and her skin
Became Holy Water.

Her mother watched her sink, and cupped her
corpse in her hands.

She was planted into the earth,
Buried next to her lovers' tomb.
She is covered in crows.

They whisper your secrets into her red ears.
The world watches the little girl become a God.

Isabella Sepahban is a junior at DHS

The Neo God stands from her grave.
She has pain, but more than that she has fury.

You will try to escape.

You will be able to run, but not far.
For she will take slow strides towards you,
She wants you to suffer slowly.

You ask if there is a God.

There was one.

But she killed Him a long time ago.

Watch as she grabs your ankles and drags you
through the mud.

Before she hangs you on a spit

And roasts your body,

You will finally look at God's face,
and realize that it is mine.

You will think about the way you mutilated her.

You have caused this harm.

You were the one who tried to kill the little girl.

This is no one's fault but your own.

I will speak quiet words into your ear.

You will sob the water
your body and shrivel.

You will turn to ash.

I will wear your ash as a crown
and paint my cheeks.

I will cleanse your soul.

Finally,

I am God

BOWL OF OATMEAL

Mornings: Alarm, Shower, Pack, Leave.

I hardly have time to eat,

So most days I won't.

I want to eat,

But most days I don't.

It is a bowl of oatmeal I will eat,

It is in a bowl of oatmeal I find peace.

A small thing, to be sure,

But a big thing for me.

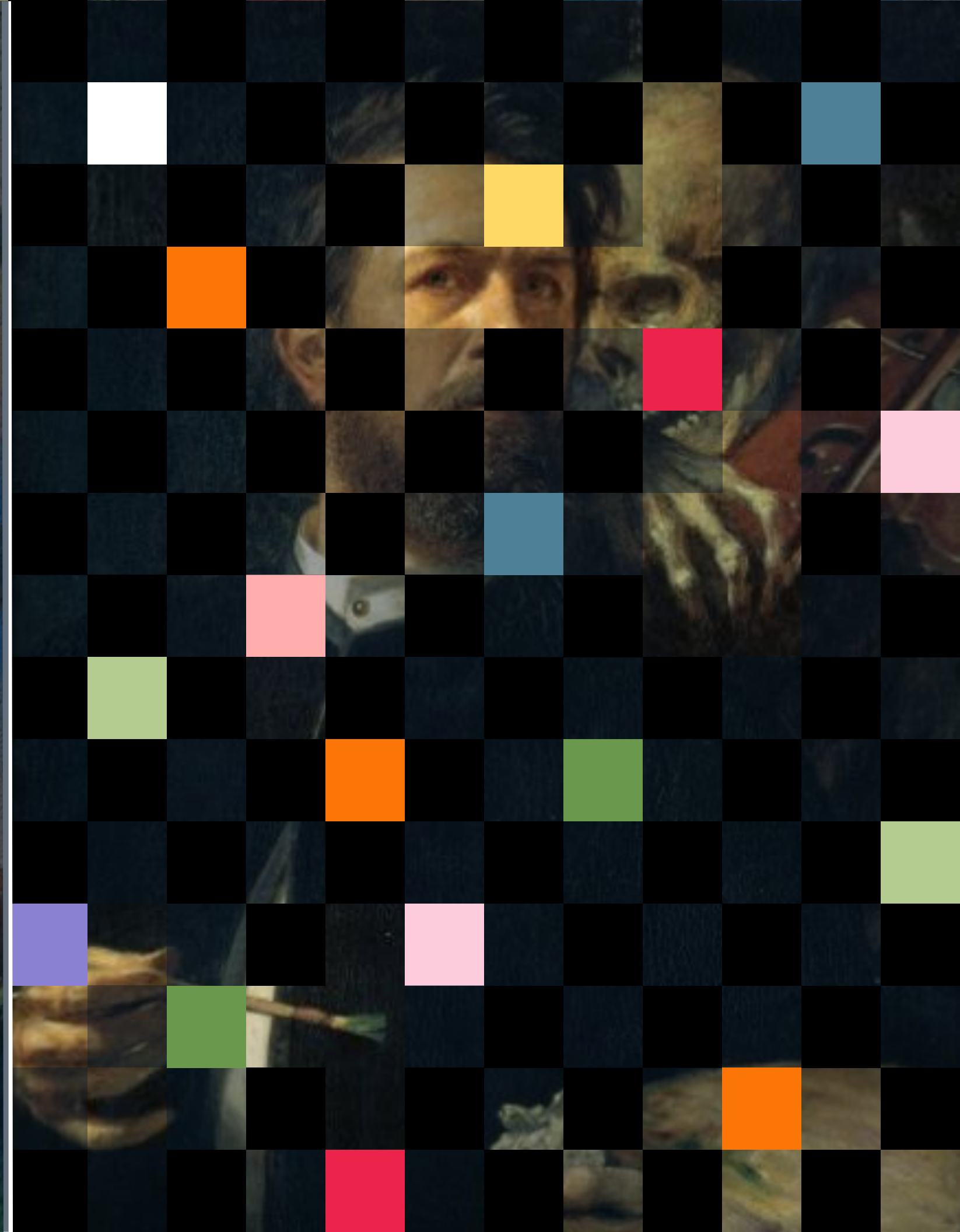
A bowl of oatmeal, in the morning.

**A bowl of getting through it, in the
morning.**

A bowl of peace, in the morning.

A bowl of oatmeal, for the mourning.

Benjamin Tibbles is a Freshman at DHS



April Fools

- Scary Jokes



Rylan Montgomery is a freshman at Danville High School.

April Fools is an album by bedroom pop artist The Scary Jokes. It was originally released in 2016 but was remastered in 2021. There are 12 songs in the album, starting with “Friends with You” and ending with “Toynbee Tiles.”

April Fools is a special album because of the way the listener can interpret the lyrics in a different way and it can be used to tell many different people’s stories. The tone of the album is bittersweet; it feels like it’s been told from the perspective of someone who is trying to move on from the terrible things that have happened or are happening in their life and trying to find happiness with what they have. Again, this album is applicable to different people’s lives, making it a true contained escape.

Even if you aren’t a fan of the bedroom pop genre, this album is an underrated gem and I believe that everyone should listen to it at least once.

The Boy with the Mask

By Carmindy Phillips

I wake in the morning to the sound of birds chirping. The sun shines through my windows to create an iridescent rainbow on my bed. The air was fresh and cool as I opened my window to air out my stuffy room. I headed downstairs once dressed. Mom had already left for work and had not woken me.

I see a bowl of cereal on the table. It's mom's favorite. As I head to the table, I see my B.I.S.O. laying there. B.I.S.O., or Biometric Intellectual Scanning Optimizer, is what we call the item we use to go about our daily routine. It comes in the form of an item that fits that person's personality. It is given to us by an A.I. called Life Integration Systems. L.I.S. helps people go about their daily lives with ease, tending to their every need based on their personality.

We get B.I.S.O. when we are only five. It is the most important thing in anyone's life. B.I.S.O. gets you jobs; stores your money; determines what food to print; what toys you'd like; it helps you with everything. You can even name it and it will respond. Mine, however, is a glitch. It is an outlier that constantly does the strangest things. For that, I get bullied. My unique item is a pure white mask with nothing to it. It's just blank. No one can make anything of it. No item is ever blank. So, I have to live with it. I quickly put on my B.I.S.O. and check the time. "It is 8:30 in the morning... or night," it projects into my mind. "Great," I say to no one but my B.I.S.O. "I suppose I'm late. Again."

I would have hurried and ran out the door when I was younger, but I've learned it's no better for me at school than being late.

As I eat my cold cereal I notice a small, pink note with yellow stripes. It was clearly made by my mom's B.I.S.O. The print on it was unique to her. I carefully picked it up and read it.

Mack, I know you are probably going to be late for school again. I don't know what is going on and I wish I was there for you. I am trying my best to be your mother, but I am failing. I wish that you would open up and tell me. Also, I know you won't listen to me, but please leave that silly mask at home. You don't need it as long as I can make you things. I know we've tried to get L.I.S. to make a new one, but it just keeps on glitching. Have a great day at school and beware of identity thieves. Love, Mom

I sigh as I set the note back on the table. She wants the best for me, but the school requires students to have our B.I.S.O. with us at all times. "Mask," I say to awaken my B.I.S.O. that is on the side of my head. It is a round mask that covers my eyes and part of my nose.

"Greetings Mackenzie," echoes in my head.

"It's Mack. Always has been, always will be."

"Changing to Mark now."

I step out into the beautiful outdoors to the smell of fresh air and cool breeze.

We are lucky to have it. If it wasn't for L.I.S., we would've lost everything. As I walk to school, I see wildlife of all kinds. Bees and butterflies flap around the flowers, squirrels climb the trees in search of acorns, pigeons flap around nests. After The Fall, we lost so many species. However, the ones that survived live here with us in the last human sanctuary, The Dome.

As I walk into the school I am stopped by a security guard that I had never seen before. He checks me for weapons and then scans my B.I.S.O. It gives him an error so he tries again. Another guard walks by and stops him. "Hey, new guy! I suggest you don't mess with that kid's B.I.S.O. It's like a curse or something."

The guard looks at her, "What do you mean?"

"His B.I.S.O. is a glitch. We can't do anything about it. We just have to do an extra security check on him every day." She motions for me to follow her. We go to the investigation room in the school. They usually reserve this for when they think there has been an identity theft which usually is signaled by an error in the B.I.S.O. scan. However, they have to do it every day with me.

"You know the drill Mack. Answer the question correctly and you can go to class." She walks out as the room starts. "Hello, I am I.S.A.S. or Interrogation Security Analysis System. I will ask questions according to who you are. Please tell the truth. As you know, identity theft is a major offense and is becoming more and more common. If you have stolen [Mack]'s identity, you will immediately be taken to prison. Let's begin."

After a whole hour of security questions, I am finally able to go to class. By that time, it is lunch. As I go into the lunchroom people stare and whisper. Some look away or avoid me. I get to the lunch line and wait for my turn to use the food machine. When it is finally my turn I notice some people filming me. "Here it comes. What will be the surprise today?" I scan my B.I.S.O. and out comes a bowl of chocolate-covered synthesized beef.

The vlogger laughs as he posts yet another one of my misfortunes online. I've been the laughing stock of the remaining human race since the 2nd grade.

"Will you stop with that?"

He looks at me with bewilderment. "Why should I? You know, you should be grateful. If it wasn't for me, you would not be famous. You would still be that person that everyone at the school avoids like the creature you are." "If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't be the person everyone avoids in the entirety of the human race."

The boy pushes me to the ground. "You know. You're acting strange today. You sure you are not an identity thief? You know, I bet you always have been. Those identity thieves are always against L.I.S. You probably are too." Some people back away, scared of even the possibility I was an identity thief. In a world where most people have died out and an A.I. takes care of everything, of course, people are going to go against it. Identity thieves steal the identities of others in order to do espionage against the system.

“I’m getting tired of this, you know?” I say as I slowly stand up. “I’m not a thief, I’m not a curse, I am nothing special at all. But, maybe I should be. Maybe this system needs to change.” Two security guards try to get through the crowd of kids egging us on to fight as I punch that silly vlogger in the face. He falls to the ground and immediately tries to get me off balance. I avoid this and kick him again. I kick him once, twice, over and over and then I feel the strong hands of a guard pulling me away.

“Easy there, kid. Stop this at once,” she says. It was the guards from earlier. The new guard checks on the boy I was fighting. He checks him over. “Crap. My B.I.S.O. is showing that he has a cracked rib. Get that kid to the holding room and call for a MedBot.”

I freeze in place as I hear this news. I shouldn’t have lost my temper. I had been holding it in for far too long and didn’t know who to talk to. The guard grabs my hand and slightly tugs on it to pull me out of my trance. “C’mon kid. Let’s get going.”

I got pulled into a room and my mom was called. after a while, my mom came. She was disgruntled and clearly stressed. “Mack! Are you okay? What were you thinking fighting that boy?” I look at her, unable to explain that he and so many others had been bullying me and hurting me for years. I couldn’t tell her that I hated the system or that I don’t really know myself. All I can do is look down and mumble, “I’m sorry.” She steps out of the room and talks to the principal.

I’m sure they were telling her all about how I said I wanted to be an identity thief, how I hated the B.I.S.O., everything.

They come back in a little while later. The principal looks at me, “Mack, we are thinking of expelling you.” I stay silent, understanding why they would. “However, after having a CameraBot find all instances with you in it, we have also found more than 30 students that have bullied and hurt you. We have a zero-tolerance policy for bullying and fighting, but we can’t expel all those students. Therefore, I want all involved to write an essay about the importance of personality in this system with a personal anecdote. Fail to write an essay that the city likes, you will be expelled.”

A city-wide vote? That has not happened for years. However, it makes sense. This is the only school system in the entire human population. It affects everyone when they do this. The principal looks at me. “All students involved will be suspended for two days. They must submit their essay by the end of day one, it will be voted on the next day. So starting tomorrow, you are suspended. However, we ask that you leave early.”

My mom and I walk out of the school with no comment towards each other. I know that she is disappointed and worried, but there is nothing I can do. I walk into my room, frustrated. I am not the best at writing essays. I have no idea how I am even going to complete it. I sit on my bed and think. “Mark, it is time for school. It is 7:00 a.m. Or p.m.,” my B.I.S.O. interrupts my thinking.

I grab that stupid mask off my head and throw it as hard as I could on the ground. It didn't break. I lay back on my bed defeated. If I wanted to not disappoint mom or ruin my life, I needed to start on that essay as soon as I woke up.

When I wake up, I immediately start drafting. I don't want to get expelled and I don't want Mom to be worried. I write about how the system works and how it bases your own B.I.S.O. off your personality. I write about the statistics and success rate of it. As I write, I feel compelled to explain my side of the story, why I hate the system. So I continued to write.

As I write, I hit on points in my life and in the system that I don't like. I might not be good at writing, but I sure will try my best.

"The system is good for many people. However, for me and quite a few others, it hurts us and causes hardship to befall them. Therefore, change is needed in our system that is not as perfect as it once seemed." I say out loud as I finished up the essay and edit the grammar. By the time I was done with this four-paged essay, it was almost supper. I submitted and waited.

The only thing I could do the next day was wait. As I sat in my room, I began to become more and more nervous. What I wrote was very controversial and probably not what they wanted to read. Out of our population of 10,000, more than half would be voting. Will I even have a chance?

The clock ticks slowly, getting slower every minute. I wait for my future to be voted on without a choice of my own.

I don't really know what I want in my life, but probably not this. The system isn't made for people like me so I can't really even get paid for a job. I would just be depending on mom my whole life. I don't want that for me or her. I lie on my bed, exhausted, as I go to sleep before the big reveal.

The next day I go to school and immediately to the office. The principal greets the nervous students. He clearly wanted to get this done quickly. "Good morning students. I would like to announce who is getting expelled. If I don't call out your name, you are free to go to class." He holds out a list and begins, "Tamara, John, Car..." He tells a few more names, "and finally" He holds a long pause as he turns his eyes to each of his problematic students. "Mack."

"Please leave the premises." He says. Everyone called begins to leave, dejected. I too begin to leave when I hear, "Oh, and Mack," I turn to face who was talking to me. It was the principal. "You only got one upvote in the whole city. The rest were downvotes. So next time, try not to show so much opinion against the system." He smiles condescendingly and walks to his favored students.

He acts like I'll have another chance. This was my only shot. I call back angrily, "Thanks."

I leave the building frustrated. As I walk out, I begin to wonder who actually voted for me. Was it my mom? I didn't think parents could vote.

As I think, I'm not paying attention to my surroundings. I run into someone and fall to the ground.

"Sorry. I wasn't paying attention," I say as she looks at me.

"You're one of the kids who wrote an essay. I voted for you," she states.

I look at her. "You must be mistaken."

She stares at me with certainty in her eyes. "No. I'm not. My name is Sarah," she pauses in thought, thinking on whether to say something or not. Probably a sympathetic statement.

"I'm the leader of the Identity Thieves." She blatantly states this. Shocked, I stare at her. As I think, I realize it's probably a joke, so I began to laugh. Then, I noticed the look in her eyes. Cold. Not that of someone that was making a joke.

"Oh, you're serious."

"I enjoyed your essay. I agree that the system isn't working for everyone." She pauses and looks right into my eyes. "So, how would you like to join me?" She holds her hand out to me. I reach out my hand to her and then hesitate. I begin to ponder, should I take the offer and help change my world, or should I stay where it is comfortable?

"Okay." I say as I take her hand. It's time to make a difference.

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