# REFECTIONS The Berkeley Carroll School Vol 51 Issue 1 2022



**Necropolis** RYAN ISSA · GRADE 12 · PHOTOGRAPHS

# Plus 1.5 Degrees Celsius NATAN SUBAR • GRADE 9 • DIGITAL







# REFLECTIONS

VOL 51, ISSUE 1, 2022

### **Mission Statement**

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

## Reflections

What's in a name? "Reflection" implies both a mirroring and a distortion: something recognizably strange and strangely recognizable. In selecting and arranging the visual and written work in this magazine, we seek to create this experience of broken mirrors: reflections that are just a bit off, refracted and bent to reveal uncanny resemblances. Take, for instance, Devra Goldhaber's "A Multitude of Jackets," in which the narrator finds her wardrobe magically transformed into a bewildering array of outerwear: "My favorite sundress was a sparkling yellow windbreaker. My overalls were a large, oversize denim parka. My sparkly headband I'd thrown in there years ago and forgotten about was a glimmering, bedazzled bomber jacket. Blazers. Robes. Trench coats." The absurdity of the ordinary here mirrors the surrealist warps of Ella DeBari's "Bathroom": a rat both scuttles across the floor and moves into and off the canvas itself, making the ordinary feel just a bit uncomfortable. The broken mirror effect prompts the audience to peer through the apparently solid surfaces of everyday experiences into the strange textures that shape them. We hope you catch glimpses both strange and familiar, new patterns from ordinary encounters, in these pairings of written and visual reflections.

## Editorial Policy and Procedures

The Reflections staff is a small, dedicated group of students that meets weekly over Hi-Chews, Quadratini, and Himalayan pink salt popcorn to discuss and develop a shared interest in art and literature. In the fall, Reflections members establish the magazine's high standards, solicit submissions, and refine their own works in progress. In February, the editors preside over small groups who read and critique anonymous student art and literature submissions. After the preliminary critiques-and with helpful suggestions from the art department—the editors carefully consider feedback from the entire Reflections team before choosing and editing the final selections and laying out the magazine, including selecting and designing the spreads. Editors then submit all materials to our fantastic printer, review the proofs, and distribute copies of our beautiful magazine-through our library, at admissions events, and, this year, to anyone lucky enough to find the PDF on our school website.

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

## BRICOLAGE

n

This year we were finally able to resume our in-person magazine layout process. This picture captures the gleeful chaos that goes into creating our final miscellany. In an ever-increasingly digital world, we're proud that our magazine reflects the vibrant materiality of its range of sources.

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## Staff

Editor-in-Chief

**Arts Editor** Ella Sran **Assistant Editor** Avi Kahtan

**Faculty Advisors** Erika Drezner Jacob Hughes

## **Editor's Statement**

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

As has become a tradition, we are excited to include an outstanding collection of personal essays from our Voice & Style writing course as well as our senior Essay class. We are also thrilled to be featuring an abundance of poems from our Poetry for Revolution class. After almost two full years of isolation, we have returned to school gratefully, experiencing the buzz of beautiful writing and artwork created in real, in-person classrooms. **Staff** Amba Darst-Campbell Brooke Elien Devra Goldhaber Mulan Jimenez Amelia Levenson Gillian Nevins-Saunders Gray Sansom-Chasin Ellie Schneider Finnora Swan-Lawley

The dedication of our staff and faculty advisors to *Reflections* cannot be overstated; long days spent huddled around a table, snacking on Golden Oreos in lieu of dinner, were more often the rule than the exception in early April. Whether encouraging classmates to submit a beautiful essay overheard in English class, working closely with authors to strengthen their submissions, or making minute decisions about font size or layout, we found challenges and rewards in each part of the publication process. Ultimately, we have a beautiful magazine that reflects this hard and meaningful work.

For over fifty years, *Reflections* has represented the creativity, passion, and heart of the Berkeley Carroll community. We could not be more proud to continue in this tradition, and we hope you find the work inside these pages as illuminating and enjoyable as we have.

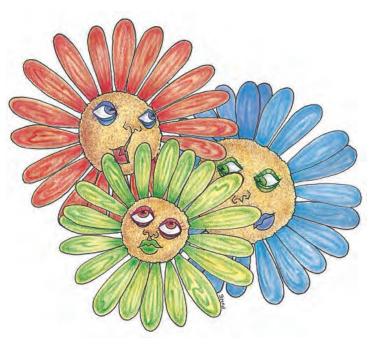
#### Noa Brown

Editor-in-Chief, Spring 2022

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## We Go

DANIEL CHIAN GRADE 12 • POETRY There's a song I like to listen to You wouldn't hear it But there's A little noise of planes A little trail of jet fuel In cotton

It sounds like soft popcorn Like cream puff and When it plays I think of me Sitting on a little plane On my way to you

# Los Angeles 2 p.m. ELLA SRAN · GRADE 12 · PHOTOGRAPH

#### **Otis Redding**

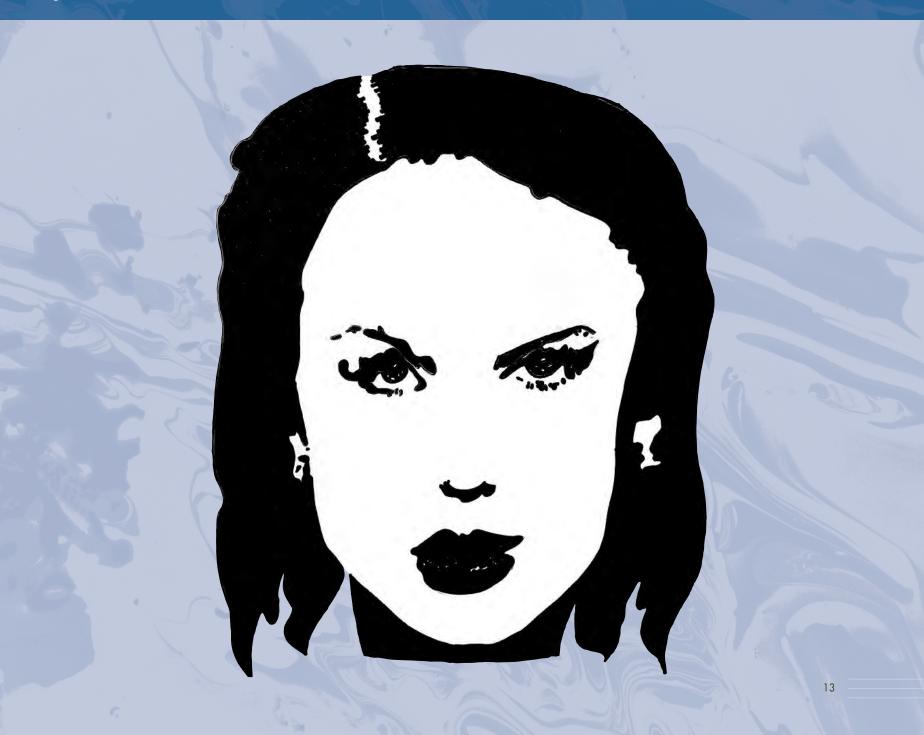
ASA KHALID • GRADE 12 • ESSAY

lick a subjectively finished cigarette on the ground while she is still burning and put out the flame with the tip of your shoe. What does it feel like to be put out? Or rather, how do I walk into school every day and not try to be your friend? Convincing each other became a habit. I would take days off though, stare into endless space above your forehead while you tried to make me laugh; jumping up and down for me tired you though, and I still have videos on my phone of us dancing together. One shoulder up, heads bumping side to side while walking through blurs of white faces in Park Slope. The beats you made on the concrete chess table woke up all of Fort Greene as I shook my hips and bounced my arms, my figure only detectable by the dim illumination of the street light.

Everything that has been told of you or about you in relation to me has already been said. Been prayed upon. Been known. Been knowin. But yet there's this feeling of something not being finished. Like the loose string of a tied shoe walking on a tight bumpy path riddled with leaves mixed in with mini-Hennessy bottles and love letters in some park in Bed-Stuy. I want this essay to be as soft as our whispered conversations walking through icy snow arm-in-arm like they did in England some 100 years ago. Our heads ducked and leaned into each other and our laughs personified by white puffs of vapor in front of us. "I know you're laughing because it looks like you're smoking." "Smokin what." "That stuff." More huffs and white puffs of our pleasantry formed, creating clouds for little people we could not see. Gods of our own joy, the clouds disappeared after the cold went away and now we don't look at each other in the hallway. It *is* sad. Only when I remember it though.

Writing this essay feels like singing. It is a melancholic yet hopeful one; a song of finally telling the truth, a freeing kind of candor. When you listen there's that one note. It sustains itself on an *"aaaaaaaaahhhhhhhHHHHhhhHHHHhhh*" and as you are on your tippy toes, you let your spine loose and head first, neck following, diving into the concrete sidewalk somewhere on the cusp of Fort Greene and Bed-Stuy, in front of some Black lady's brownstone where she's lived for a long time, 43

# Taylor Swift (Finnora's Version) FINNORA SWAN-LAWLEY GRADE 11 SHARPIE



# Taylor Swift (Ellie's Version) ELLIE SCHNEIDER • GRADE 12 • ACRYLIC



Cambridge St., deep diving headfirst on her own makeshift porch-the only section of concrete in Brooklyn that is anointed and saved in the name of GOD, Hallelujah!-with nothing to catch you but the spirit I told myself I would follow at the beginning of this page, your mouth is open in a beautiful yet unholy way and arms flail into a cool breeze, the song ends coyly yet maturely with two notes at the end and you wonder "at the end of it all, that's all you have to say?" and as you wonder this you realize that you are now upright and no, the world does not actually move in slow-motion even though Mother Nature likes to play pranks, so the moment your head and spine connected is over now and was over within milliseconds.

The only upside to global warming is the brief moment the crisp September air turns into a true 79-degree day. It's a short moment that happens right as I cross the street into the sunshine glitters beyond the Clinton-Washington G train station. Here is

BUT HERE YOU WERE, LONG AFTER WE PROMISED TO GO HOME, TELLING ME YOUR STORY, TELLING ME ABOUT YOUR GRANDMA WHO LAUGHS AT YOU WHEN YOU TRY TO LEARN ABOUT HER. I WONDER WHAT YOU REMEMBER ABOUT ME?

where I skip so I forget to look back at the dirt-grey step in front of a seemingly abandoned church where we sat for an hour as five B38s passed and my phone rang with incessant calls from my mother begging me to come home. Every time I looked at my phone and looked back into your eyes, they stopped sparkling for a millisecond as you wondered what could be distracting me from you; but I would blink and you would go back to talking with your hands and smiling with the wrinkles at the ends of your eyes. I was wearing my Black Sabbath T-shirt and I was angry about it because it was too long and I was worried that if my shirt was too long you wouldn't look at me when I

talked. But here you were, long after we promised to go home, telling me your story, telling me about your grandma who laughs at you when you try to learn about her. I wonder what you remember about me?

We were fast friends. So fast, in fact, that from the moment I recognized your sad walk coming out of the park all the way to the last time I loved you in January—when you biked all the way down from your apartment to mine (which is a straight line) at 10 p.m. in 29-degree weather to give me my birthday present and a hug so forceful I would've fallen headfirst onto the frozen concrete if it weren't for your arms crossed against my body, my knees dipping and leaning at the force, but still holding on as you did that thing where you shake side to side when you love somebody too much to stop hugging them—was about a millisecond.

I prayed for you once. The day you ME met that strange man in the swing park and he said he was going to teach you how to play basketball and you weren't answering your phone. And I didn't want to call you so I just prayed.

But I think it bounced. Because something about you is unholy regardless of how sore your hands and knees are and because I forgot to make Fajr that morning. But God wanted to teach me a lesson and I think He didn't want you to die yet so I worried with my eyes wide open while I walked and when we finally got to the park you were there. And you were sweaty.

THE REALLY UGLY PARTS OF YOU, AT THE TIMES YOU OPENED UP YOUR CHEST AND I COULD SEE ALL YOUR ARTERIES AND PINK, RED, AND YELLOW AND I LAUGHED WHEN IT FELT LIKE YOU SLAPPED ME BUT DIDN'T.

And we laughed that day too. I joked about how hard it would be to kidnap you and you nodded your head on beat as I shouted out the Pop Smoke lyrics (rest in peace) coming from a car.

"I just want to make you laugh, make you smile." And you did, and although I can't remember the sound of it, I remember that it echoed from deep within my hollow stomach. My intestines curled into one another, lurching and churning, pink and deep reds melding together from my insides that I will never see but always feel. True laughter is weakness in the stomach, weakness in our middles, the halfway part of our bodies keeling over

as a reaction. I laughed at things that would make me cry on the cold floor of my bedroom later that night, I laughed at your words intended to be blows, I laughed at ignored phone calls, I laughed at empty text messages filled with letters at the end of an unsatisfactory day, I laughed at dirty looks; soon it became hard to not laugh. So in turn I began to laugh at your sincerity and your insincerities as well. I laughed at the really ugly parts of you, at the times you opened up your chest and I could see all your arteries and pink, red, and yellow and I laughed when it felt like you slapped me but didn't.

But I cannot be that person for you anymore. So I picked up one of the Hennesey-stained love letters at my feet and in between the L O V and the E, I wrote you a letter of undoing. I wonder what we will do with ourselves once we are undone. This knot we seem to have is very tight and firmly agglutinated to itself. What will we do with ourselves?

In the therapist's office yesterday, in the basement of her brownstone across the street from the park I used to meet you at, she asks me, "And if you can imagine yourself five years from now, looking back, what would you like to say about yourself?"

And I tell her that I would like to say that I have loved. Very hard. That I leaned in and I was honest, but very stupid. That I was very seventeen. I would like to know as much as I am able to. That shame from the past and shame from others did not cover this love that I had. That I loved and felt something very stupid but from the very bottom of my heart, and whatever followed after was truthful and carried a deep integrity about itself. That I allowed myself to be fully free in it, this love. And I hope I laugh. I hope I laugh very, very hard.

She tells me in this office that it is possible; that if we saw each other five years from now, we would simultaneously and spontaneously find ourselves embracing one another, even with the reminders all around us. The abandoned church will probably be an apartment complex or a Whole Foods, and the Hennessey and the love letters will be separated into different coloured bins, waiting to be crushed with the same mechanical hammer.

## The Five Powers MIA MALLEK · GRADE 10 · SCREENPRINT



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## Sylvia Rivera's "B\*\*\*h on Wheels"

(A found poem)

RACHEL OLADEPO GRADE 10 • POETRY The revolution is here: that's a myth. I think I'll jump off the Empire State Building. I remember singing but I haven't overcome a damn thing. Is it really here? To really silence us. Why can't I get the notes right? I screech in the midst of silence. Yet, they beat me upday in and day out. The sudden drop, they walk over my corpse. My spirit still livesthey still haven't cleaned up my corpse. I still continue the struggle.

## Teeth ELLA DEBARI · GRADE 11 · WALNUT INK



## J.K. Rowling is Absolutely Riddikulus

AVI KAHTAN • GRADE 10 • ESSAY

reaking news: another author who has sired works that you absolutely adore is actually a big 'ole disappointment! Who could have seen this coming?

In June 2020, J.K. Rowling, author of *Harry Potter*, tweeted an article about periods which referred to "people who menstruate," saying, "'People who menstruate.' I'm sure there used to be a word for those people. Someone help me out. Wumben? Wimpund? Woomud?"

Truly scathing remarks, J.K.. My menstruating self trembles in fear.

Now, these days, when talking about periods, we refer not to *women*, but to *people who menstruate*. We do this because a) not all women menstruate, b) not all people who menstruate are women, and c) we're literally talking about periods. In what world is it not both more efficient and more accurate to simply use the term *people who menstruate*?

J.K.'s world, apparently.

Anyway, Rowling tweeted, and it went downhill from there: after being accused of transphobia as a consequence of her tweet (as it disregarded the aforementioned points), J.K. Rowling only continued to dig herself deeper, attempting to get into the ugly nitty-gritty of gender and bIoLoGiCaL sEx and transness. Her *magnum opus* on the topic was a several-thousand-word-long post to her blog, titled "J.K. Rowling Writes about Her Reasons for Speaking out on Sex and Gender Issues." How brave you are, J.K., to *speak out* about your thoughts. Really. Truly.

And how blessed are we to hear her expert thoughts on transness! For example: TERFs—Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminists (feminists who exclude trans women from their feminism)—shouldn't count as trans-exclusionary, because they "include trans men in their feminism," because they "include trans men in their feminism," because we were "born women." And: trans activism bad because changing meaning of gender changes meaning of feminist activism. And: Resident Transphobic Person Wants Freedom of Speech™.

Another example: J.K. Rowling is HUGELY concerned about the increasing number of "young women wishing to transition." And no, by "young women" she doesn't mean young trans women, she means young trans *men*, but hey! Who needs a solid understanding of, or respect for, transness if they're going to publish an essay on the matter to their gargantuan fanbase, amirite? But it's okay, because she knows a trans woman *personally*!

And, speaking of knowing trans people, here's where J.K. switches tactics. Now, she *compliments* trans men specifically—calling them "sensitive" and complementing their "insightful" accounts of our own experiences with dysphoria, anxiety, self-harm, *et cetera*. Inexplicably, she also writes that *she* sometimes wonders whether she might have tried to transition too, had she been born 30 years later.

At this point, I was ready to be like, "what?? J.K. Rowling is a trans man confirmed??" but NO. GET THIS. SHE HAS THE GALL TO FOLLOW ALL OF THAT WITH: "The allure of escaping womanhood would have been huge." WHICH! IS! SO! NOT! THE! POINT!

I'm transgender. I'm transgender! And, let me tell you, my transness is *not* a symptom of internalized misogyny, nor is it the result of any visceral need to escape the oppressive boundaries that our society

I'M TRANS BECAUSE I'M TRANS, FOR THE SAME REASON THAT YOU'VE GOT BROWN EYES BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT BROWN EYES, OR YOU'VE GOT GINGER HAIR BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT GINGER HAIR. THAT'S JUST HOW I AM.

imposes on AFAB (assigned female at birth) people. I'm trans because I'm trans, for the same reason that you've got brown eyes because you've got brown eyes, or you've got ginger hair because you've got ginger hair. That's just how you are. It's just how I am. I have no subliminal agenda. No deep, dark reason. J.K. Rowling's implication that *my* motivations for transitioning stem from a place of wanting to "escape" the oppression that I face as a female-presenting person is, frankly, hugely minimizing and extraordinarily insulting.

But wait! To top off this massively depressing confection of conjecture and half-baked conspiracy theories, here's a whole *'nother* point that J.K. conjures into sad, pointless existence! And pay attention, this one's a kicker:

J.K. Rowling, in her infinite wisdom, claims that letting trans people into the spaces where we belong will somehow endanger "natal girls and women" (natal!! *Natal*!! *FREAKING "NATAL*!"). I'm sure you've heard of this idea—the cis male boogeyman who pretends to be a trans woman in order to get into bIoLoGiCaL wOmEn'S sPaCeS, where he can harass the nice, unsuspecting cis women. I have one question: Where is your evidence?? When did this happen?? Give me *one* instance where a real-life, nonimaginary cis man actually went to the trouble of securing one of those gender certificates you complain about so much (which, by the way, are not *nearly* as accessible as you make them sound), dressed up in traditional womanly garb, and found some womenonly space to waltz into and terrorize. You won't find one. If any person, of any gender, is so messed up that they believe that they are entitled to another human's body, they won't go to all that trouble. They won't even need to. They'll just walk into whatever space they please and do whatever they please, because *that's* the system that has failed you.

Bottom line? Don't punish trans people for crimes committed by cis men. I'm a fifteen-year-old trans person—is it my fault that full-grown cis men have no boundaries? Is it my fault that the society we live in raises AMAB people to believe that women are theirs for the taking? Because of the failures of the generations who came before us, must I waste my life away walking into spaces that aren't even mine? Because for all J.K. Rowling talks about trans women not belonging in "women's spaces," she never once considers where trans people *really* don't belong: in the spaces we've been forced into our entire lives.

# Yellow Lake ASHLEY ROSENBLUM • GRADE 11 • PASTEL



## Frizzy Izzy

AMELIA LEVENSON GRADE 10 • POETRY

can't longing summer pull back my curls? sweet salt becomes hair washed with sand

fingers cherish and fathom pieces entangled brown like roses in dark hair

endless blue knots face yellow flowers thorns tangle with frizz

stop to represent the sweet green pieces of grass when wet curls go frizzy

cherished strands bring thorns in pieces after similar springtime

when handed blue to my hands that stop before they can begin endless tangles end with a smile through the sky in the trees lucky silver stars

(not saying stop)

### The Rules of Jinx

YAZAN BAGHDADY · GRADE 12 · HUMOR

#### Jinx

Jinx is both a game and a way of life. The rules are deceptively simple. When two people say the same thing at the same time, the first one to say "jinx!" wins.<sup>1</sup> The loser cannot talk until they are unjinxed. Jinx is always being played.

#### Unjinx

The act of saying someone's name three times in order to free them from a jinx. Only someone present when the jinxing occurs can unjinx someone. When two people are alone and one jinxes the other, this means that whether or not the jinxee will regain the ability to speak is completely at the mercy of the jinxer.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Double Jinx**

If two people try to jinx each other at the same time, the first one to say *double jinx* wins. If they both say *double jinx*, the first to say *triple jinx* wins. And so on.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Digital Jinx**

A variation of jinx that happens when two people send the same text message at the same time.<sup>4</sup>

# Punishment for Talking while Jinxed

There is none. It just doesn't happen.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Movies and Songs**

Exceptions.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the only ones.

#### Typing

Forbidden as a means of expression while jinxed. Any jinxee who wants to communicate can use gestures (such as miming pulling on a cow's udders to order milk at a restaurant)<sup>7</sup> or can handwrite.

<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing, these were the rules. It was later suggested by Annika, and agreed upon by us, that anyone present can participate in the jinx, not just those who said the same thing.

<sup>2</sup> I realized how dangerous this could be when Sam jinxed me while we were watching *Squid Game* and then forgot about it until I tapped him twenty minutes later.

<sup>3</sup> I saw it go up to quintuple jinx once between Sam and Reed during a discussion of the definition of nature on the Ninth Street Lafayette monument. I thought that was really impressive until Annika won a septuple jinx against Reed a week later. The week after that, I won a nonuple jinx against Sam. Since then, we've all gotten pretty familiar with numerical prefixes, and high-jinx hijinks are common. It's customary for the loser of a jinx that goes to a high number to be left jinxed for longer than normal.

<sup>4</sup> Fairly uncommon, so there's not much precedent around this.

<sup>5</sup> It did once happen famously when Reed jinxed me, after having been jinxed *by me* minutes earlier. After an intermission of uproarious laughter, it was agreed we just wouldn't unjinx Reed for a long time. We did not.

<sup>6</sup> This rule was established after Annika and Alici improvised a song together on the spot and Annika jinxed Alici. After some discussion about whether songs counted toward jinxing, it was agreed that extant songs were a no-go, but anything improvised was fair game. This rule applies to any form of media.

<sup>7</sup> He was jinxed twice that dinner, once before ordering the meal and once before dessert.

## A Few of Me RUBY KASS • GRADE 12 • SCREENPRINT



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Being Alone with Someone and Jinxing Them Right before Meeting a Larger Group of People A triumph.

#### Needing to Talk to Your Girlfriend

Not a good enough reason to break the rules of jinx. Sorry.<sup>8</sup>

#### Pointing at Yourself and Holding Up Three Fingers

The commonly accepted signal that you are jinxed and would like to be unjinxed. Origin unclear, success rate spotty.

#### Silence

The painful lack of a jinx when you say something at the same time as a classmate, but can't jinx them because they wouldn't have a clue what's going on and you don't want to seem like an elementary schooler.<sup>9</sup> Jinxing Someone On an Utterance like "Yeah" or "Yes" Cheap. But still a jinx.

#### Jerk Move/Height of Comedy

Using jinx as a tool when you're actually mad at someone.  $^{10}\,$ 

# Restructuring Your Sentences When Asked to Repeat Yourself

A good tactic to avoid being jinxed. When asked to repeat yourself, restructure your sentences.

#### Confusion

The usual response to being jinxed from someone who's unfamiliar with the game.<sup>11</sup>

#### Not Taking Jinx Seriously

A perfectly valid reason not to be friends with someone.

<sup>8</sup> Yes, even if you send a paragraph to the groupchat explaining the situation.

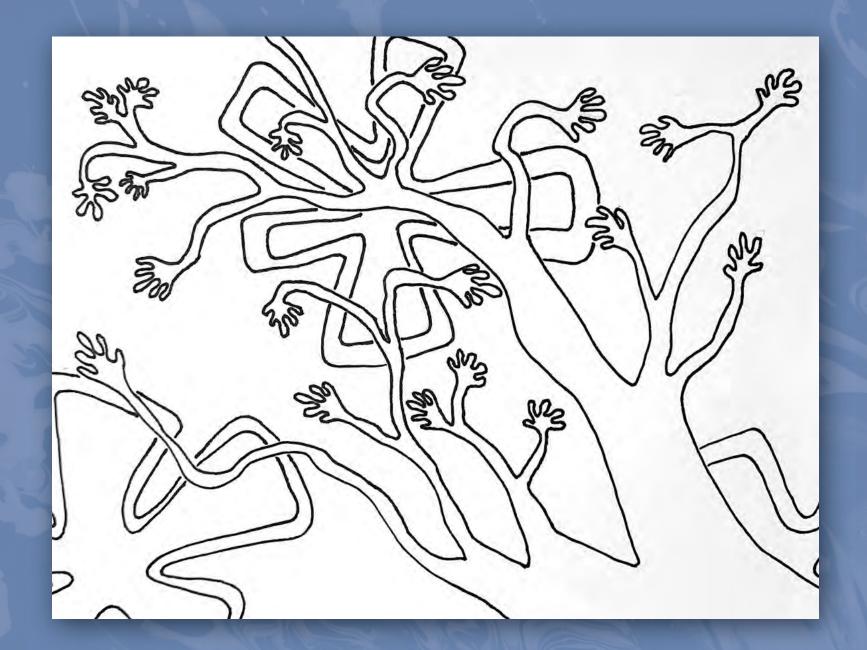
<sup>9</sup> It's so tempting in language classes–everybody conjugating the same verb at the same time? A jinxer's paradise.

<sup>10</sup> Looking at you, Sam and Alici.

<sup>11</sup> My absolute favorite example is when Sam jinxed my younger sister. She was utterly bemused, a condition not helped by Sam's and my frantic explanations of how seriously we take jinx. Eventually she dismissed us as immature. I think she's technically still jinxed to this day.

# **Pose BROOKE ELIEN** • *GRADE 10* • *PHOTOGRAPH*





#### **Twice a Child**

KEMI IYAGEH • GRADE 12 • ESSAY

had already unplugged the microwave, eaten my food, and finished my homework when I smelled it: acrid, burning metal drifting under the bedroom door. The minute I ran to the kitchen, the smoke alarm went off. The air was hazy and thick. I turned off the burnt pan and called for Gigi, but she wasn't there. Coughing and gasping, I ran to Gigi's room. There she was, sleeping peacefully while her radio blasted Psalm 18:8 from one of the local Christian stations she listened to religiously.

"Gigi! Gigi! Your food's burning in the pan!"

"What food, sweetie? I didn't do that. Who put the pan on like that anyway?" she started.

"You did!" I yelled.

Upon hearing my voice, we both froze. Nearly buried under her weighted blanket, she looked bashful and ashamed, like a little kid who wet her pants at night.

Moving to Brooklyn brought me closer than ever to my grandmother and great-grandmother, Mimi and Gigi. They had been living together since immigrating from Sierra Leone in 1976, but there Gigi and I were 39 years later, watching famous actresses walk the red carpet on TV and giving our two cents on their fashion choices while seated on her lime green sofa.

About 30 minutes into our red carpet watching, Gigi perked up and said she was hungry. Beginning to make her way to the kitchen, which was connected to the living room, she raised the volume on the TV remote and took her cane with her, only wobbling when the cane did. Hungry myself, I followed her.

She found the leftover *platanos* and *arroz con pollo* we had ordered from a Dominican restaurant the previous day, and we heated them up—her portion in a pan on the stove, mine in the microwave.

"Gigi, can't you just use the microwave?" I asked.

"No, pans are better," she said, lowering the flames under her leftovers. "Microwaves have too much radiation. Everyone has their own way of doing things."

I shrugged. Doesn't sound like it makes much of a difference to me.

I left it alone. Watching the microwave count down from two minutes and 30 seconds, I waited impatiently. Gigi, coffee mug in hand, went back to

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the living room, but this time she didn't take her cane with her. Her sudden indifference toward her cane left me confused.

Doesn't she need that? She takes it with her everywhere.

Symptoms of dementia affect GR memory, thinking, and social abilities Y severely enough to interfere with your daily life, and include observable memory loss, difficulty with spatial activities, difficulty with reasoning, feelings of disorientation, paranoia, agitation, and personality changes.

Some symptoms are reversible. Some aren't.

Gigi is a notorious amnesiac, and her tendencies range from forgetting to take her blood pressure medicine to repetitive questioning (like, "What day is it?" after you both just looked at a calendar together), to hermit-like isolation.

Once she even forgot that she cut her old friends off (after accusing them of things she had remembered incorrectly), and made attempts to call them. Thankfully, she couldn't remember their phone

STILL WONDER: HOW DOES IT FEEL TO HAVE PERPETUALLY GROWING GAPS IN

YOUR MEMORY?

numbers. This delay helped us successfully hide the landline from her before she came back with her glasses and 300-page address book, saving her from potential embarrassment either from her decade-long hostility toward her closest friends, her dementia, or both.

No amount of pleading with her to take her medication, go on a family walk, or listen to an audiobook has convinced her to prioritize her health more than everyone else in our family does. But we know she doesn't do it to spite us. She just forgets.

"You never take your medicine. You're always glued to that television and acting like I'm being a pain. But you need to take this seriously. This is your life, *not mine*. I can't do anything more than what I'm doing now. So if you have a stroke, don't blame me. Because I tried."

Like hand sanitizer on a fresh papercut, her words sting. But Mimi's right—there's only so much she can do for her mother.

But I still wonder: how does it feel to have perpetually growing gaps in your memory? To one

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day have a favorite A-list to celebrity that you constantly obsess over, and the next not even remember their name? To somehow remember moving from your home country in 1976, but not your great-grandchildren's ages?

How does it feel to walk on eggshells around your own daughter, knowing that any clarifying question you ask could be met with irritation? When everyone around you seems tired of putting up with you, what do you do?

Does Gigi think that Mimi's mad at her for her condition, or is she mad at the dementia itself? *Is* Mimi mad, or just tired?

At 90, does Gigi just think it's too late to turn her life back around? Is there ever a good time to give up hope? Is giving up hope what Gigi's been doing all this time?

Gigi and I sat together again watching TV. This time, instead of going to the kitchen herself she asked, "Can you pour me a glass of water?"

I obliged. I came back, handed her the glass, and sat down next to her on the couch. The television served more as background noise than it did actual entertainment. (I had no interest in what Wendy Williams had to say about anybody; her own life was a mess, anyway.)

During the commercial break, Gigi let me watch Netflix in the living room and went to her room to watch TV instead. Still staggering without her cane, she entered her room and turned up the volume. Less than a minute after she switched on the television, her voice floated back out into the living room, politely asking: "Kemi, can you get me a glass of water, please?"

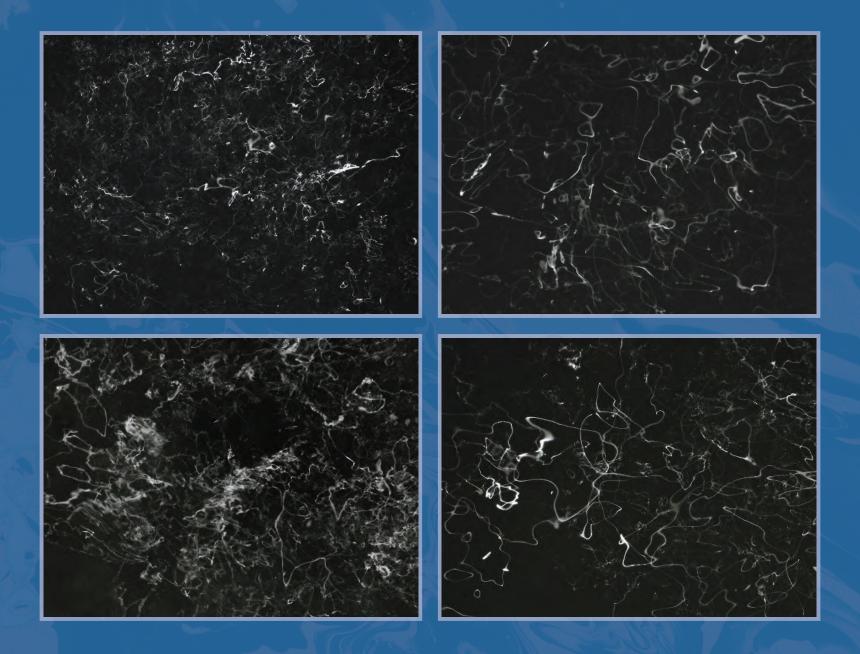
I turned and looked at the glass she had left on the side table in the living room. It was still completely full—the ice cubes had barely melted since I first dropped them into the glass. I sighed. *Once a woman, twice a child.* 

"Coming, Gigi!" I replied calmly. Who was I to make her feel small, like she doesn't know what's wrong? I knew better than to not give her credit, to belittle her. She's trying her best. We all are.

Holding the glass of water in one hand, I used the other to gently open the door.

"Here's your water, Gigi." "Thank you, sweetheart."

## **Pool** MICHAEL MAHEDY • GRADE 11 • PHOTOGRAPHS



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### From Me to You, Four Years Later and Up in the Stars

BASANT KAUR • GRADE 10 • ESSAY

#### Dear Aaron,

ow are you? I know, that's such a boring question, but I'd kill to know. Here's a better question: Do you remember me? This is a question you would like; a question full of substance and a multitude of possible answers that could either make or break my week. I know it's been a while, but I can't ever imagine forgetting you. I'm Basant, but that's not who you knew me as. No, I'm "Croissant," "Basalt," and "Auntie Basantie."

Do you remember the first day we talked? Everyone in our kindergarten class was separated into pairs for a project and we were the only two left. It was already the middle of the year and I hadn't made any friends yet. You, the curly-haired brunette who always wore a shirt that said "Math Ninja," had a lot of friends, but all of your friends had already paired up with each other. We were both so gawky and awkward because "girls have cooties" and "boys stink." Even though I was friendless, I still felt apprehensive about working with a stinky boy, and I'm sure you weren't exactly fond of the idea of working with a cooties-infested creature. The project was boring, but you weren't. Out of nervousness, you started rambling on about what you wanted to be when you got older and changed it every other sentence. Watching you babble in your blue chair made me crack a smile. It was odd, but I guess I liked odd.

I mean, how could I not like the boy who, at six years old, wanted to single-handedly become the first president who fought in a war, survived, became a doctor, cured a billion people, and then built a house on the moon? I thought you were absurd and crazy and insane and out of your mind and I STILL talked to you because I loved it. I loved the unconventionality in you. I felt a beautiful, platonic love that I had never felt before.

"crossiant do you think that i can ever touch a star"

"Maybe if you made a really good rocket and wanted to die" "nooooooo i dont wanna dieeeeagsjfhfk"

Do you remember these texts that we sent each other on Google Hangouts in fourth grade? You were obsessed with anything to do with space and loved texting me about the potential existence of reverse black holes or TrES-2b, the darkest planet in the known universe. You wanted to be the first person to ever touch a star, even though you acknowledged that was impossible.

My fondest memory of you was in the beginning of fifth grade at the park surrounded by railroads, cement, and honking trucks. My mom called it "smoky" park. Yes, *that* park. The park where you were climbing the monkey bars while it was raining, fell down, fractured your arm, and still got up to complete the monkey bars because your eight-year-old cerebrum wouldn't let you go home without climbing the rusty, browned bars. My nine-year-old cerebrum concluded that you were invincible.

Nine-year-old me would have never thought that one day, I would be writing a letter like this.

"basant, i have lookemia"

Surely, you remember sending this text to me in fifth grade. I can still perfectly recall the confusion I felt reading that text on my mom's laptop, while

YOU WERE OBSESSED WITH ANYTHING TO DO WITH SPACE AND LOVED TEXTING ME ABOUT THE POTENTIAL EXISTENCE OF REVERSE BLACK HOLES OR TRES-2B, THE DARKEST PLANET IN THE KNOWN UNIVERSE.

sitting on my messy bed in my frenzied room. I didn't know what leukemia was, but I knew something was horribly wrong. After googling it, I found out it was a type of blood cancer. My heart sank to the newly formed permanent pit in my stomach.

You had one hope: chemotherapy. The doctors said that you had a high chance of beating leukemia with chemo, and everyone was ecstatic. Your older brother couldn't wait for you to go to middle school and experience how annoying it is to have your locker on the fourth floor when most of your classes are on the first floor, and your

mother had her polaroid ready to take pictures of you going to your first school dance. You, on the other hand, were most excited to see your hair grow back and dye it orange, the color of the cancer awareness ribbon your mother would always wear. You said that it would be your way of saying "fuck you" to the cancer in your body.

The only time I've ever seen you cry was when you told me that you were going to stop taking chemo. The chemo wasn't working, and following your doctor's advice, your family decided to stop the treatment. There was no more talk about touching stars, becoming president, or even going to middle school. I used to spend hours on Google looking for a potential cure nobody had heard about, or a clinical trial that the doctors missed somehow. I even went back to God for you and prayed for hours, imploring God for a miracle to occur. You promised me that you would live, but we both knew that neither of us had any control over that. I couldn't lose my best friend, but what could a fifth grader really do in this situation?

Well, a fifth grader can grieve.

If you remember anything at all about your life, you'd certainly remember July 17, 2017. My mom burst into my room with red, puffy eyes. She didn't say anything at first, but she didn't need to. My most cosmic fear had come true. My mom tried to talk to me, but her words were muffled by intense ringing in my ears. Hot tears rolled down my face, while my room started to spin slowly like a carousel. My vision started getting grainy, like the static on my grandmother's ancient television. Pictures on the walls started performing pirouettes, as if they were in a ballet recital—I think I was truly spiraling in sorrow.

It felt bittersweet learning that you had passed in your sleep. I know I should feel glad that you passed peacefully, but I wish I knew what you were dreaming about, or what your last words would have been.

I'm not going to say that this letter is my way of moving on: I don't think I ever will, but I also no longer want to feel my heart drop whenever I hear any variation of the name "Aaron," nor do I want to so casually feel my throat clog and tears overcome my eyes when I look up at the midnight sky and observe the stars, as if most people mourn the population of the so-called heavens and the loneliness that comes with separating from the one person who promised to stay, while staring at something as conventional as the night sky.

Goodbye Aaron. I hope you've finally touched the stars.

With my whole heart and being, Basant

### **Stress** LEX SZANTO • GRADE 9 • DIGITAL



#### **Misting Link**

TALIN SCHELLGRADE 12 • POETRY

Gulf haired hatted hares rend halted grass bolts clean and missing. Lessened gravel greens the bronze, cleaved small, yet open— shrill and missing.

Hearts of hymn himself included, burrow cleanse cradled devices, To the book and faith divided vine divine, tongue, rare and missing.

Golf of iron, sweep of wide speak numbered points and pat pit druthers, Course the rich set wealth the others, scold the poor pockets for missing.

Sense of gold lists lusted chords for yearn fault foggy and desire. Pack a bag of cheddar crackers, look for meadows, turn to missing.

Fend foam bustle and devotion, move to city, form a landscape, Waffle crime and batter purpose, ping a phone for find the missing.

Texture top brown eggs and hand, with gaudy threads of crystal syrup, Threat the rest of tire ranchers, beagle ward posters of missing.

## A Multitude of Jackets

DEVRA GOLDHABER • GRADE 9 • FICTION

t had been a dark gray, wool peacoat when I found it in the thrift store, but by the time it arrived in my closet it had deepened to a royal blue leather jacket. I looked at it consideringly then, wondering whether I should put it out with the trash in case it hexed the whole house. But the jacket *was* pretty, and you could usually sense the stronger stuff before you brought them home, so I left it in there and did my homework and ate dinner and went to sleep.

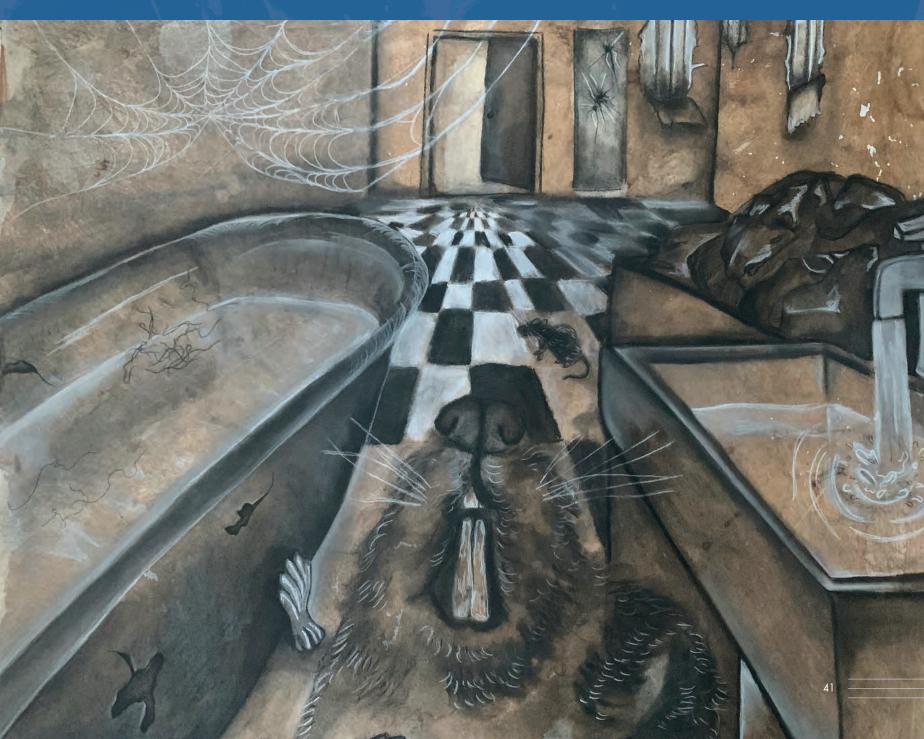
In the morning it was daisy yellow, cropped, and denim, threaded embroidery of flowers and bumblebees crawling up the arms. I wore it to school even though it was too cold a day, and got a couple compliments. My best friend took one look and told me I should *not* be wearing a charmed jacket unprotected like that, but I let her feel the sleeve and she warily agreed that it was probably harmless—still a bad idea, she warned, but didn't push the matter further. When I got home, it was a black velvet cardigan. My arms itched that night as I tried to sleep, but other than that I felt fine.

The next day it was a marshmallow-white puffer coat, and my best friend was angry when she saw it. "It's getting stronger," she told me, arms crossed and brow furrowed. My best friend was short and smart and didn't much like magic. She'd told me once that it just felt like cheating—why should somebody get a coat with a million different forms when they could just get more jackets? It was unfair to the people who made the real ones, she told me, getting an all-in-one like that. She had a point—nobody made charmed clothing, they just materialized in back-shelves and alleyways, fully formed. But they weren't very common, and they weren't good to wear all the time, so I always told her she was exaggerating. She told *me* I was lazy and lacked critical thinking skills. We had a pretty good relationship.

I hung the coat on my dresser while I worked that night, and when it was nearly time for bed I looked up to see a drapey, cotton sweater, large and soft and rainbow. For a moment I entertained the thought of putting it on, and then I flicked my own wrist and shoved the jacket back into my closet. I may have used magic (with limits!) but I wasn't an idiot; if a charmed object tried to appeal to you, you were best getting it out of sight, out of mind before it was too late.

The next day, I wore my ordinary jean jacket to school. There was a pop quiz in social studies, which I failed. The lunch was a mystery meat that made my best friend sick to her stomach. When I got home, everything

## Bathroom ELLA DEBARI · GRADE 11 · WALNUT INK AND CHARCOAL



in my closet had become a jacket.

I noticed when I first got there, because something was the matter with the door. It was bulging, like too many things had been crammed inside it. I pulled it open cautiously and was almost crushed by the avalanche of coats.

My favorite sundress was a sparkling yellow windbreaker.

My overalls were a large, oversize denim parka.

My sparkly headband I'd thrown in there years ago and forgotten about was a glimmering, bedazzled bomber jacket.

Blazers. Robes. Trench coats.

My room was overflowing.

"Crap!" I shouted as the jackets stumbled over themselves to trail their winding way after me. "Mom! Jacket infestation!"

My mom was not home to respond. To my horror, as the jackets approached different items in my room, the items themselves turned to coats. My rug, my curtains, my pillow. "Quit it!" I shouted crossly, watching in fury as the lamp by my bed turned to a fluorescent vest. "That's *not nice*!"

Determined, I stomped over to the former-closet and peered inside. Where the hell was that original jacket? I stepped inside, brushing past silk kimonos

GOT HOME, EVERYTHING IN MY CLOSET HAD BECOME A JACKET.

and rubbery raincoats. "Hello?" I called, wincing as my voice echoed around me. "Uh... Coaty?"

Nothing answered. I pressed further, wondering distantly when my closet had become so *large*. Was this jacket-Narnia now? I should have just thrown the thing out the first chance I got.

As I walked, it became chillier and chillier. I hugged my arms together, trying to conserve body heat. Under my feet, jackets ran to and fro, grabbing at my ankles with their sleeves. I glanced behind me—my room looked an eternity away, and it was filling more and more. *I needed to stop this.* My best friend would never let me live this down, damn it.

Finally, I saw something that didn't appear to be made of cashmere or tweed or polyester. A... mirror? There I was, face twirling in a blurry reflection. I raced toward it, and it didn't budge. And then finally, I was close enough to see.

A jacket made entirely of glass.

I reached toward it, but the instant my fingers brushed its surface the coat changed. A *cape*, dripping with pearls and glitter.

And as the jacket changed, my fingers changed too. I yanked back in horror, immediately aware of a tingling sensation. When I glanced down, thread was twisting out from behind my nails— I tried to scratch it out, but my mitten fingers just brushed limply against one another. And the itching spread up my arms.

I looked upwards, desperate. "Stop it!" I shouted at the cape, who had started it all, posing as a pretty peacoat, and who did *not* have to be this passive-aggressive.

"I don't want to be a jacket, I have school tomorrow!" Which was a lie, because it was Friday, but maybe the cape would be sympathetic to my need for education.

The charmed coat came closer, and I thought I could see a face amid its diamonds. It smiled, pearl-teeth flashing.

"No, please!" I shouted, voice hoarse as the tingling spread to my shoulders. "I'm sorry!"

Behind me, jackets poured into my room. I couldn't see it, but I knew with a steady, unflinching awareness that the door was opening, that they were flinging themselves down my stairs, that when my parents returned home they'd be devastatingly outnumbered. Maybe the jackets would sneak past them, out onto the sidewalk. Maybe they'd meet my best friend and she'd have no choice but to put one on.

AND AS THE JACKET CHANGED, MY FINGERS CHANGED

TOO.

Here and now, I was still just in the closet, and I could feel my knitted legs begin to buckle. *Stop it,* I mouthed, because now my throat was just thread.

And the cape changed again. It changed, shifting through form after form after form ... and it arrived back at its original, that damn wool peacoat I'd bought just a few days ago.

It flopped toward me.

There was nowhere I could run.

It reached out a cuff.

I collapsed onto the ground.

It took its sleeve-wide and open like a gaping

mouth-and pinched it over my finger.

I drew back.

It tugged, thread pulling out of me like it had always been there.

And in the end, all I did was unravel.

## **Dandelions** ELLA SRAN • GRADE 12 • PHOTOGRAPH



### **The Right One**

WYATT BUCKNER • GRADE 10 • ESSAY

t was a Tuesday when I finally decided to join the swim team. Before that point, I thought I would pull out at the last second, somehow manage to shake off my friend's insistence on joining, and continue having two hours of freedom after school. I even signed up and planned on trying it for a week before throwing in the towel—I was going to figure out my reasons for quitting later. But there I was, wearing bright blue swim trunks adorned with flowers, looking down at a box of water emanating that weird chlorine smell—which, as a swimming instructor recently told me, means that someone peed in it. I entered the water, and my suffering began.

Now it may sound like I'm being melodramatic, but bear with me. First of all, I'm not competitive. I don't even like sports teams. To me, sports teams are like Zendaya: I understand the appeal, but I'm not a fan.

"Don't you want to be a part of a team, a community?" my mom said.

"I'm good," I replied.

Every year since before I can remember, my mom and I have a version of this conversation. Sometimes I agree, or I even ask to be on a sports team, before rapidly losing steam. In middle school, I was on two flag football teams, the soccer team, the track team, and the running club. This might sound like an achievement, but I quickly quit the soccer team, skipped most track meets, and had a "foot injury" that definitely healed faster than I let on during running club.

The flag football teams were a different story. You should know that I was not good at flag football-at all. The first team I joined in the flag football league upended my expectations. During every game, someone would cry-even if we won. Sometimes more than one person-sometimes even the whole team. I never cried, but mostly because while everyone else was cursing out the refs, throwing tantrums, and acting like each game was the Superbowl, I was doing jack squat. I signed up the following year in seventh grade-for what reason I have truly no idea-and was assigned to a team that was equally unusual. I somehow managed to be put on a team with high school football players from Poly Prep, a school famous for their sports teams. These people were actual athletes: they had families waving banners on the sidelines, and parents who screamed

things like, "Cody, cover your man!"

My mom would say, "You should go to the game, your team needs you!"

To which I would reply, "But do they?"

After that, I decided to walk the path of solo sports.

So here I was, swimming. When I tell you I hated it, I mean I really hated it. While I had thought of myself as athletic, that first week was shockingly challenging: I felt like a fish out of water. I was swallowing an alarming amount of chlorine, and was gasping for air. I didn't know the proper form at all, and was completely bewildered by how dry my skin was! No matter how much moisturizer I applied, I couldn't shake the feeling that I was slowly transforming into a lizard. I told my parents my many reasons for not continuing-which were really all just versions of "I'm lazy"-and expected a, "Well, at least you tried." Instead I was met with surprising defiance! My usually gentle mother unleashed a shocking barrage of insults and reasons on why I should stick with it.

"Just do it!" my father said, sounding annoyingly like my friends.

After feeling enough self pity, I accepted my fate, and returned to practice the next day.

NO MATTER HOW MUCH MOISTURIZER I APPLIED, I COULDN'T SHAKE THE FEELING THAT I WAS SLOWLY TRANSFORMING INTO A

LIZARD.

I'll let you in on a little secret about being on the swim team: It's not fun. In other sports, you have a goal. You want to score points, make it to the finish line, play good defense. In swimming, you're just doing endless laps. A normal practice is literally just a lot of different laps. That's it. For two hours.

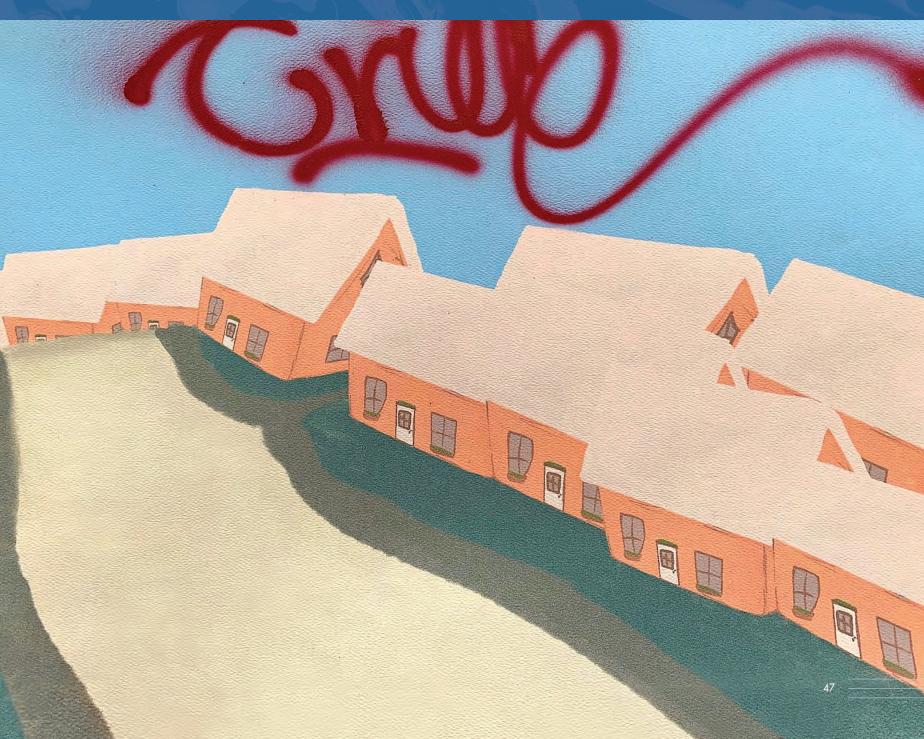
So there I was, walking to the locker room to take a break, when I opened the door and saw half the swim team had the same idea. One kid dramatically

shouted, "I can't do this!"

*These are my kind of people*, I thought as we all happily shared our complaints.

When I stepped outside of the locker room, something had changed. Now I knew that I wasn't living in my own *personal* hell, but instead one spacious enough for the entire swim team! I've decided to not use a genius excuse—which I *definitely* have prepared—in order to quit. Instead, I'm going to continue to involuntarily swallow chlorine and feel like I'm wearing a dry skinsuit after every practice. Now that I'm used to it, I actually think I might like swimming. I feel productive every day. I like feeling sore; it gives me an excuse to be lazy afterwards, and it turns out that I do enjoy being part of a team. I just had to find the right one.

## In Trude JAMES ZAFIROS • GRADE 11 • ACRYLIC



### One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, **Dead Fish**

CARTER SWETOW • GRADE 12 • HUMOR

om," I called, "Finnegan Five is dead." His red body was belly up in his tank, not moving.

My siblings and I had always wanted a dog. Hope wanted a golden lab that could be friends with her horse like the one in the Budweiser commercials, Augie wanted a German shepherd because they were disciplined police K-9 dogs, and I wanted an adventurous golden retriever THAT DOESN'T NEED like B-Dawg from Air Buddies, who could play basketball, pull a dogsled, and go to outer space. But it didn't matter DOESN'T POOP, AND what our dream dog was because our dad's answer was always a firm no. YOU HAVE YOURSELF

We tried everything. In our first big attempt, we created and presented a Keynote slideshow explaining why a dog would benefit the family. We spent hours huddled around our Toshiba laptop, compiling statistics and photos to make our argument as compelling as possible. Our mom, sympathetic to our cause, gave us an encouraging round of applause when we finished our closing arguments. Our dad remained silent for a couple of seconds.

"Find me a dog that doesn't need to be fed and

doesn't poop, and you have yourself a deal."

A DOG

TO BE FED AND

A DEAL.

Our next attempt was a song accompanied by an expertly executed dance choreographed by Hope's friend, Rachel. Our dad remained still as our mom enthusiastically clapped and cheered.

> "We'll be stuck with it when you go to college."

> Our last attempt was to leave him alone with our friend's dog, hoping that Odie's playfulness and curly blonde fur would be enough to convince him that owning a dog would be great.<sup>1</sup>

"Dogs bark too much."

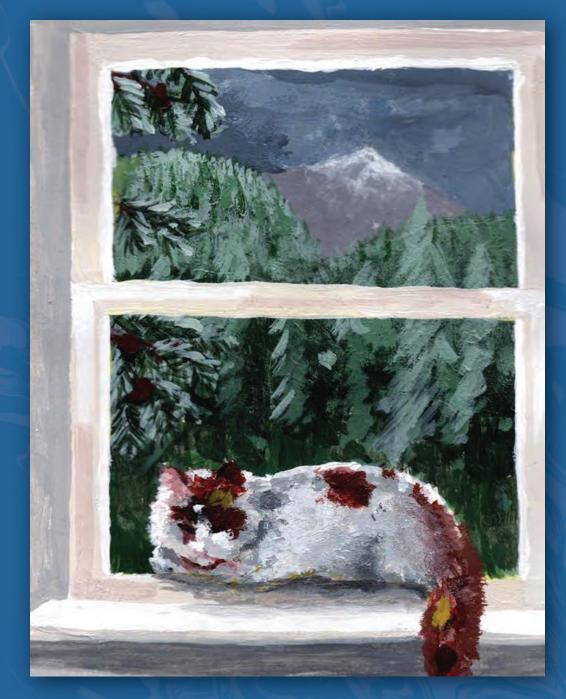
Our dad once told us that he would let his favorite iPhone app, the Magic 8 Ball, decide if we could get a dog. Magic 8 Balls are sacred in our family, so if it said yes, our dad would be forced to

oblige. We asked the 8 ball and shook it around, praying it answered yes. When we peered at the screen, it told us, not in a million years.

We didn't know that our dad had gone into the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> This is actually what my mom did to convince my dad to have kids. After years of his saying he didn't want kids, my mom left him alone with his baby niece for a night. A year later, my sister was born.

# Winter Calm APRIL SEITZ • GRADE 11 • ACRYLIC



app beforehand and changed every response to some form of no.

My sister loved those videos where a kid would receive a cardboard box with holes in the side for Christmas. The kid would open the box, and out would pop a tiny puppy's head. On Christmas of 2011, after we had opened all of our presents, our dad walked into the kitchen and returned with a brown cardboard box with small holes on its sides. He placed it in front of Hope.

"Be very gentle when you open this one."

She froze for a second, unable to comprehend what was happening. With shaky hands, she slowly opened the top of the box and pulled out a soft, fluffy, gray pair of socks.

In the summer of 2014, a perfect opportunity arose. We were at Cape Cod on a walk with our aunt and uncle, Carol and Ralph. A car drove by slowly, and a woman stuck her head out of the window and asked, "Do you guys want a dog?" She lifted a scrawny dog to the window so that we could all see. It was one of those yappy white dogs who nobody thinks is cute except for the owners, but it didn't matter: it was a dog.

"Of course we do," Hope responded.

Ralph looked down at her skeptically and asked, "Are you sure your dad would be okay with that?"

"100%," I chimed in, "We've actually recently been looking for a dog to buy."

The woman told us that she would give away the dog for free. While this probably should have made us wary, it didn't, and we still wanted it.

"All right, I guess it's settled," Carol said, reaching for the dog.

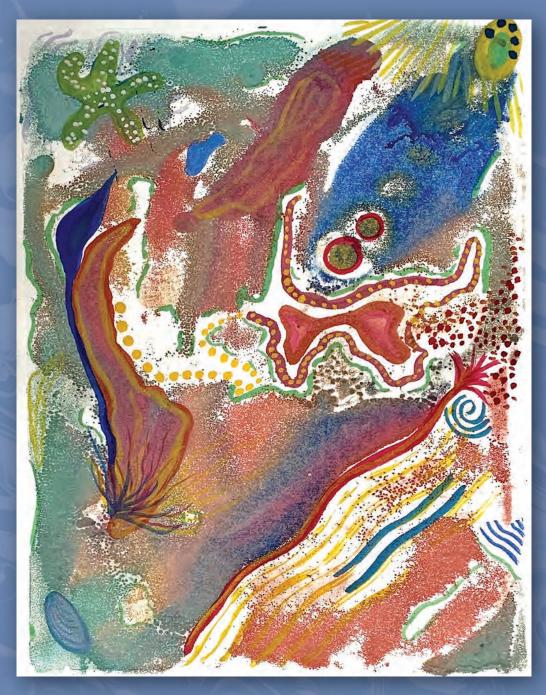
"Wait," said Ralph, "let me call their dad to make sure it's fine with him."

We walked back to the house empty-handed.

Our parents compromised on Finnegan. Finnegan was a crimson betta fish with fins that, when he swam through the water, looked like a silk wedding dress. I stared at him for hours when my mom brought him home and placed him in the tank. I wanted to get a second fish so that he didn't get lonely, but apparently betta fish are aggressive and would fight to the death if put in a tank together, so that idea was off the table. The night my mom brought Finnegan home, I argued with my siblings until they agreed to let me be the first to feed him. I picked up five brown pellets from the orange food container and dropped them into the tank. He darted after them, and the pebbles disappeared in seconds.

I set an alarm early for the next morning, determined to get down first to feed him. I got the food from the cabinet but never had to open the smelly container because Finnegan lay lifeless in his tank. My mom flushed him down the toilet and went out to buy Finnegan Two.

## **Microscopic** RUBY KASS • GRADE 12 • WATERCOLOR



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### What This is Really About

NOA BROWN GRADE 12 • POETRY

#### **Giving Directions to Strangers**

This is really about feeling like a New Yorker who gets perceived as a New Yorker. It's about knowing what I'm doing

(or looking like I'm knowing what I'm doing). It's about meeting friendly strangers who don't trust Google Maps.

Or Apple Maps. It's about being the friendly stranger the other friendly stranger cares to consult. It's about

being approachable. It's about knowing my way around the city. It's about telling them the cross streets. It's about a moment of connection.

It's about wondering where they're going.

#### **Diner Booths**

This is really about pretending my life is a coming-of-age movie. It's about sharing a meal, face-to-face, across a table. It's about comfort. It's about

soft lighting and peeling laminate and rounded table edges and pie plates. It's about watching people pass by in the window next to you. It's about

being watched by people passing by in the window next to you. It's about knowing what I'm going to order. It's about breakfast, any time of day.

It's about leaning over to tell a story.

#### **Playing Piano in the Dark**

This is really about privacy. It's about pedals and reflected light and doing something with my hands. It's about being closed in

and facing the instrument. It's about confessing what I can't say out loud. It's about drama. It's about everyone else being asleep.

It's about silence and shiny black lacquer.

#### **NYT Crossword**

This is really about the aesthetics of nerdiness. It's about the word cruciverbalist. It's about rows and columns and strangers

looking at my phone on the subway and thinking I'm intellectual. It's about being intellectual. It's about keeping auto-check off. It's about arrogance. It's about self-consciousness. It's about satisfaction. It's about sending Grandpa my best times. It's about wondering what Will Shortz does in his free time.

It's about only being able to go up to Wednesday.

#### **Sending Letters**

This is really about making time for someone. It's about delayed gratification. It's about pretty stamps. It's about writing the name of someone

you love. It's about the taste of an envelope. It's about walking to the mailbox. It's about fishing through the catalogs and junk for something that matters.

It's about getting one back.

## **Transference** LIAM FRACKLETON-FIGEUROA · GRADE 12 · DIGITAL



KAITLYN GAYARAM • GRADE 10 • ESSAY

#### **1. Loneliness Is Temporary**

Agi

The only light visible is the light coming from the rain-soaked window that sits right above the dainty little sink. On the counter there is only a little silverware. There is a dish left from a lonesome meal in front of the small box television, whose sound gets fuzzier the louder it gets.

Heavy and youthful footsteps fill the room as my sister and I make our way down the curved, carpeted stairs.

The smell of baby powder leads our noses to the crumpled woman leaning into the couch that sits in the middle of the room. Baby pink slippers hug her toes; the faux roses stitched on the tips of the shoes a reminder of what life was.

"Hi Agi! We're here to see you!" Agi smiles and she turns her head toward us.

"Come, come. Take fruit. Take a banana. Eat something." She shoves the bowl of fruit, centered on the small, wooden table that is placed just between her and the television. When we decline, she pulls ginger mints out of her worn-out brassiere.

#### 2. Frozen for Too Long

"Give Agi the blanket."

My mom nudges me toward the cheap, ice-blue blanket, sitting at the foot side of the second bed

claimed by her mother-in-law at Long Island Jewish Hospital. I walk toward the bed at the same slow pace as the beeps of the machines in her room.

How do we know if she's cold? Her droopy eyes, which she has trouble keeping open, only say so much. Her swollen fingers twitch every so often, so we know she is still in the room.

We are Agi's third set of visitors today, and I wonder if the attention is becoming overwhelming. I can't imagine people coming up with different theories to guess your type of misery, without being able to even move your fingers because somehow frostbite caught you before old age could.

### I CAN'T IMAGINE PEOPLE

COMING UP WITH DIFFERENT THEORIES TO GUESS YOUR TYPE OF MISERY, WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO EVEN MOVE YOUR FINGERS BECAUSE SOMEHOW FROSTBITE CAUGHT YOU BEFORE OLD AGE COULD. Frozen in a room full of warmth, what could Agi be thinking?

"Mhm, Mhm," is the most noise she has made since we arrived, the loudest noise in the room as everyone tries to figure out how to attend to her next.

#### **3. Full Circle**

The smell of life and grief filled the dying room. Flowers at every aisle were alive with color compared to everyone's black clothing. The only smiles in the room were in the images of Agi that were taken years before, getting passed around to people who turned their backs to wipe their eyes.

As I turned around, I spotted my dad in the back of the room near the napkins that were provided by the funeral home. That was the second time I ever saw my dad cry.

In between too many hugs and too many "I'm sorry's," people slowly walked up to the beautiful, gold-rimmed casket, each holding their hands in front of themselves as if they were bowing to Lord Krishnah, the Hindu god of love and compassion. When it was my turn to walk up, I suddenly envied those who were able to hide their emotions. Fear (of what, I am still not sure) stopped me. The only thing that helped me get closer were my two younger sisters, who held the lifeless hands that were folded on top of my grandmother's soulless body.

As the pandit leading the service said his closing words, members of all three generations of the family Agi had created clumped together in front of the mourning crowd.

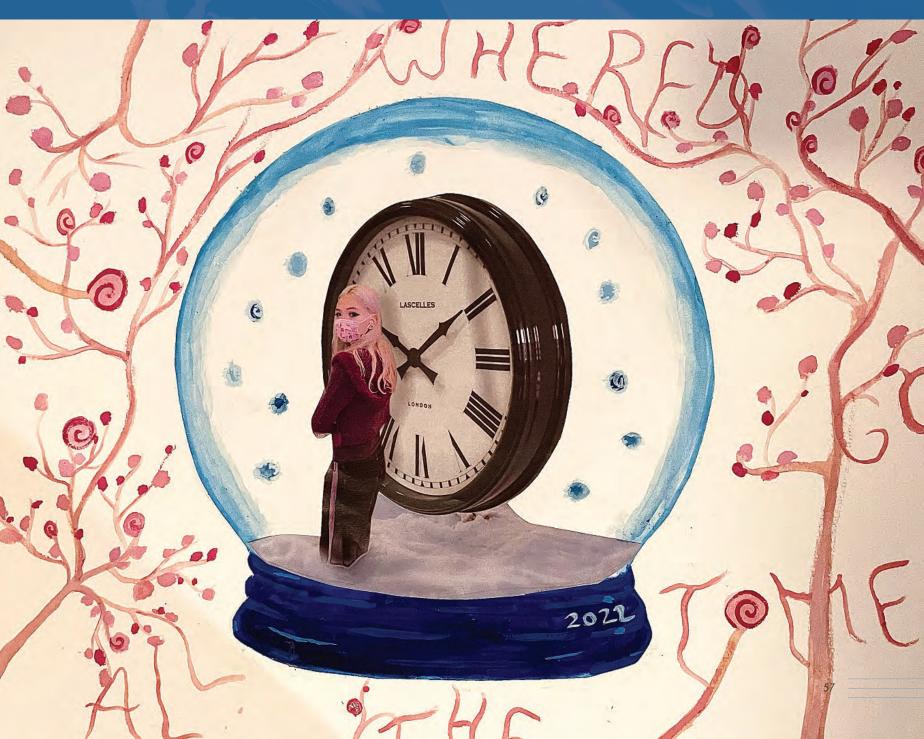
"Go ahead." My cousin nodded me off as I grabbed the mic.

Instead of waves of fear, nerves, and sadness, I felt ready, prepared, and absolutely nothing.

The entire room collectively sent me the last of their strength. Enough for me to say:

"The only light visible is the light coming from the rain-soaked window that sits right above the dainty little sink ..."

## Where'd All the Time Go SEVERAN LUI-SMITH • GRADE 11 • MIXED MEDIA



### *Rua Pacheco Leão* 188, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

MINA TSCHAPE GRADE 10 • POETRY

I'm my grandmother's home:

her imported Marc Jacobs perfume, mild fragrance, though she complains it doesn't last long. I'm that little Jesus statue on top of the water dispenser. Though I'm not the big Mother Mary painting. It takes up the whole wall. I am exactly like my spoon. That 16-year-old spoon that comes out every six monthsme It's a baby spoon so it is shaped funny. It doesn't quite match the rest of the tableware in the drawer. I'm the spoon that eats her grandmother's famous mingow. I'm the famous mingow I learned was just porridge. But I'm not porridge. Well maybe I'm becoming porridge.

But porridge seems too simple to be extraordinaryand I swear 10 years ago that mingow was extraordinary. And I would never say this out loud, but every six months I try the mingow and I swear it tastes more like porridge. It's been ten years since I went from *mingow* to porridge, and they're supposed to be the same But why do they taste so different? I'm the chipping walls she refuses to get redonesomething about keeping the house's integrity. Silly woman. She's actually a genius. But when will she know her perfect house is gone? Stop holding on, silly genius woman, to the chipped walls. They're unrecognizable anyway. You can get the room redone. They're not coming back.

## **Cascade 1** ELLA SRAN • GRADE 12 • PHOTOGRAPH



## I Left a Patch of the Pink Paint in the Corner

MULAN JIMENEZ GRADE 10 • POETRY

Enter	There have been countless times
my room:	Where I couldn't understand why
pink walls,	you weren't there when I woke up.
piles of books	I don't understand:
and toys	was nine months too little,
so tall they could fit	or too much?
in every nook and cranny.	Enter
There is no room	my room—
for empty space.	white walls,
Since birth	empty space.
I have sat inside of these four walls—	1.6 decades later,
the same window	there is no room
the same bed.	for you.

I have slept in this bed over and over.

## **Cascade 2** ELLA SRAN • GRADE 12 • PHOTOGRAPH



# My Reflection ROSE HARKRIDER • GRADE 10 • SCULPTURE



### **Aftertaste**

LOUISA EGOLF · GRADE 12 · ESSAY

aybe it was when I bought my first push-up bra. Or maybe it was when some random guy on the street yelled at me to smile.

Or it could've been the day that deli guy called me sweetheart, handing me my bagel with a grin.

Or perhaps it was in the summer of eighth grade, when the tiniest sliver of male validation boosted my mood within seconds.

One word: immaturity.

How to contextualize immaturity: my last year of sleepaway camp.

We had a social with our "brother camp" which is honestly satirical because there is literally nothing familial about it. In this meetup we were expected to socialize and have fun: you know dancing, talking, awkwardly standing in circles. We were all determined to set our hook up count to the year in which we graduated camp, so 2019, meaning 19 kisses with 19 different boys. It was some right we had—each one of us—to kiss a boy . . . like it was the most prized achievement there was. The day-of all of us had gotten dressed in

> minimal clothing, put on makeup, and done our hair. And for what? For some guy to think we were pretty? For some guy to show us they had affection? For some guy to tell us our worth?

Outcast, I overlooked the sea of girls frantically mingling with one another, pointing at which guys they thought were the cutest. I hadn't had my first kiss, let alone flirted with a guy, and to be honest, the whole situation just felt like an itchy sweater: you want to love and live in it, but

guy tHAD MY FIRST KISS,guy tguy tguy tLET ALONE FLIRTED WITHsomeA GUY, AND TO BECHONEST, THE WHOLEgirls fSITUATION JUST FELT LIKEanothAN ITCHY SWEATER: YOUmy fiWANT TO LOVE AND LIVEguy, a

IN IT, BUT YOU HATE THE

FEELING OF IT.

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you hate the feeling of it.

Spoiler alert—I didn't get my first kiss in the midst of awkwardly-crowded teenagers, but other girls had, and oh, the aftertaste—the aftertaste was far worse. You see when the girls pulled back from the boys they had kissed, their lips separating, their breath slowing, their stance changing, the boys were high fiving their friends, they were smirking, they were accomplished. While the girls dragged their sore feet, smudged makeup, and loosened clothes back to their bunks, and all they could see in their sight was the glow of a tiny, yellow school bus. Among the chirping sounds of the crickets, and the rustling of the wind through the trees, there was the low hum of the engine blanketed by a dark night sky. Among the engine sounds was the cheering. Oh how proven, oh how happy they were. Each one stood up in their seat, and a round of applause circled the hollow bus, rattling the entire metal unit. They got pats on their backs, fake invisible medals awarded around their strong necks. For *they* had kissed us girls, and well, we were just there. **I See You** LAILA ENGLER, MADDY DEMASCO, and SOFIA SOLIMINE • GRADE 10 • SCREENPRINT



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## **For Sale** RUBY KASS • GRADE 12 • WATERCOLOR ON WOOD



## calculus homework

LEE BLOCK • GRADE 12 • FICTION

nce upon a time, there was a bug. the bug was climbing up a graph. it didn't know that it was a graph, of course. it was a bug.

all it knew was that the further it walked, the closer it got to its destination.

unfortunately, the graph had a vertical asymptote, and the bug's destination was that asymptote.

no matter how far it crawled along the graph, it would never reach its destination.

but the bug didn't know that. all it knew was that the further it went, the closer it got.

so it crawled and crawled into infinity.

all of a sudden, it heard a voice. "hey, bug!" the voice said. "who said that?" asked the bug.

"i said that. you can talk?" asked the voice.

"yeah, i can talk," said the bug. "who are you? also, why did you talk to me if you didn't think i could talk?"

"that's a good question," said the voice. "i don't know. i think it was because i felt bad for you."

"why do you feel bad for me?" asked the bug. "i'm almost where i want to be."

"you're crawling on an asymptotic graph," said the voice.

"i only know what some of those words mean," said the bug.

"it means that you're going to get infinitely close to your destination, but you'll never reach it," said the voice.

SO IT

CRAWLED INTO

INFINITY.

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"but that doesn't make any sense," said the bug. "i have to get there eventually. this is the path to get there."

"no," said the voice. "this is the path to get infinitely close. just step off the path and you'll be there in no time." "i'm scared," said the bug.

"it's okay to be scared," said the voice.

"what if i get lost?" asked the bug.

"you won't get lost," the voice said. "i won't let you."



## Lotus Flower SARAH KOHLER • GRADE 10 • SCULPTURE





### **Octopus Pancakes**

SARAH KOHLER GRADE 10 • POETRY

The house smells like it's on fire. In a good way.

The crackling oil, and floury haze means this Saturday is special.

Special means two cast-iron pans on Mom's stove and a wooden spatula sitting on an ocean blue spoon rest.

Special means that standing next to the array of cooking utensils is my dad, with a striped, green tea towel draped over his shoulder, and his red Mighty Mouse shirt on. A large plate is placed in the middle of the expansive, cherry wood table, the table with two leaves, the table where one chair is empty.

I pour the thick syrup onto my plate watching as it falls from the mouth of the bottle into pools and sticky tentacles.

I can see him tossing more small cakes into the air. Some never make it to the plate.

He never leaves the kitchen, he is cooking the rest of breakfast, then cleaning up the dusty counter, and washing out the last drips of batter from the bowls.

## Medusa Ellie Schneider · GRADE 12 · LASER WOODCUT



### Simcha

AVI KAHTAN GRADE 10 • POETRY

They lurk outside, clad in sunglasses and dark clothes. Security?

Four *aliyot*, two laps around the room, one *Misheberach*.

BANG! Splinters bursting, blooming before your eyes. Sound familiar?

I hemmed and hawed between two designers and five designs. My initials— AVK—and the date: 10/27/2018.<sup>1</sup>

Why are Torahs kept in a box? Security?

The sweets rain down, striking me and those in the first few rows. Sound familiar?

Maybe I should have said the *Misheberach* again, for good measure.

I shouldn't repeat my prayers. It's illegal. Like you, buying a gun to ensure that your closest house of worship is riddled with lead.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> October 27, 2018: Mass shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA. Six injured, 11 dead.

### **Tetherball**

SIMON KOROTZER-MARIANI GRADE 12 • ESSAY

wen Trainer and I did not become acquainted by choice. Ruby had already made friends with Katlin, Kelly, and Matty from the Trainer house. As the older siblings, we tagged along to make sure they were supervised. We went frog hunting around the shores of Kelm Pond, the small Adirondack lake where our houses sat separated by the community beach, roamed around the pine-needlecovered grounds of our cabins, where we found a snake under their porch and plenty of rocks to throw into the water, and dug hazardous holes in the sand in attempts to find clay, which we thought we did, but our parents didn't. We saved our clay in ziploc bags regardless.

I never quite noticed when exactly, but at some point, Owen and I veered off from the younger kids. We discovered that we had a lot in common: we both liked Minecraft, hated wolf spiders, and preferred to be away from the three girls.<sup>1</sup> There were no other boys our age at Kelm Pond, so it seemed there were no other options. Luckily, we enjoyed each other's company. Owen acted as a tour guide of the lake, as he had been there much longer. He showed me which parts of the lake had sand and which had muck disguised as sand (most of the lake was muck), the various ways to relax in a tube floaty (submerged butt, butt facing the sky, submerged legs, the "double floaty" technique, the near-impossible "triple floaty" technique), and how to push someone off the raft (you have to catch them by surprise).

On Labor Day morning, I woke up when my dad rolled the blinds open, but didn't pull them up, which led me to carefully position my head between the broken up blocks of sunlight to try to stay asleep, ate Fruit Loops, which was only allowed during vacation, and played four rounds of Mario Kart 7 on my 3DS with Ruby.<sup>2</sup> At around midday, Ruby and I met with the Trainer kids to do our usual activities. However, Owen had a different idea. That's when he introduced us to the tetherball pole.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Sorry, Matty.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> All but one of which I won, of course. She was both a sore loser and winner.

# **Pacific Mermaid Patch** LEE BLOCK · GRADE 12 · PLASTIC BAGS



I had never played tetherball before, but it was my type of game. All it requires is a ball, a pole, and a rope. The whole point is to whack this inflated ball as hard as possible until it wraps around the pole it's roped to, and to stop the other person (or team) from doing the same, as they hit the ball in the opposite direction. It's simple, but so much fun. The tetherball pole seemed to be what we had been wandering around to find.

Tetherball was all we did that day. We played one-on-one, made family teams (which were unfair because Ruby and I were outnumbered) and gendered teams (which were unfair because Owen and I were taller than the girls, and, despite their complaints, wouldn't go easy on them). During that time, I got to learn everyone's tetherball playstyle: Katlin would hit the ball high, but it wouldn't wrap around the pole very far; Kelly was scared of the ball, but for good reason, as it tended to find her face more than her hands; Ruby was similar to Kelly, but she ducked instead; Owen hit hard, but couldn't jump high; and poor Matty was too short to play, but did so anyway because the other families' kids were either toddlers or teenagers.

AT AROUND MIDDAY, RUBY AND I MET WITH THE TRAINER KIDS TO DO OUR USUAL ACTIVITIES. HOWEVER, OWEN HAD A DIFFERENT IDEA. THAT'S WHEN HE INTRODUCED US TO THE TETHERBALL POLE.

Speaking of teenagers, a big group of them appeared in the distance. We stopped playing to watch as they sauntered down the gravel road. They traveled in a pack. It was like that scene out of a high school drama when the bad guys first arrive.<sup>3</sup> Owen seemed excited at their arrival. He ran over to greet them, and was met with fist bumps and hugs.

The family next to the Trainer house, the DiFalcos, had 23 cousins, and most of them were in that group of teenagers. The Trainers and DiFalcos had been close family friends since the

previous generation, while my family had arrived just months earlier and made some bad first impressions. I won't go into details, but they involved a big rock, a diving board, and a near-broken raft. These things seem trivial, but they were not to the DiFalcos. It was tense between our families at the moment, but I believed the feud was mostly with the parents. Apparently, it was not.

The teenagers had taken an interest in our tetherball competitions. We were in the midst of a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> I could almost hear one of my dad's 70s rock songs over a slo-mo shot.

seven-game, gender-team series when one of them suggested that Owen and I face off *mano* a *mano*. The suggestion was received with support, though I was a bit reluctant. To my surprise, there was a smug grin taking over Owen's face. I decided to humor my friend, though I failed to understand why he was so excited, and agreed to play. We stopped our game and lined up to begin.

Owen started with a hard serve, immediately getting one or two pole rotations on me. The crowd roared in his favor, and I realized I hadn't considered his home-field advantage.<sup>4</sup> The carefree aura of the day had disappeared; this was a full-fledged competition. Once I could reach the ball, I smacked it back his way. It was quiet. As we continued, hitting back and forth, I noticed that with every hit from Owen, the teenagers would cheer. With every one of my hits, the crowd would go quiet.

It was a long, intense game. I was beginning to outlast Owen, pushing further and further into his pole territory. Our hands were red, the sensitive soles of my feet were getting sore, as I didn't have my shoes on, and he was out of breath. The sun was setting behind Owen, and it was getting in my eyes. The crowd was getting antsy. I heard whining cries of "Owen, you got this! Don't give up now!"

It was strange to have the crowd against me. Now,

*I* felt like the bad guy of the high school drama. What had I done wrong? Nevertheless, I wanted to make a good impression on the teenagers by beating their beloved Owen.

I was so close to winning. All it took was another good hit, a final swing of momentum. As the ball was beginning to make its final way around the pole, an unfamiliar hand suddenly slammed it the other way. Annie DiFalco, who was a year older and four inches taller than me, began fighting for Owen. The teenagers were elated.

All I could do was stand and watch while she hit it over my head time and time again.

As the ball went around and around the pole, I looked at the teenagers, who had formed a tight circle surrounding us. I felt tears building behind my eyes. I focused on that, as crying would make this situation about a thousand times worse, and forced them back. When Owen (or rather Owen and Annie) won, the crowd ushered him away from me, all the while giving him pats on the back for a win he didn't deserve. I was alone at the tetherball court, and the sky and water were now a few shades darker than when we began. Owen never looked back.

<sup>4</sup> My only possible fan, Ruby, was long gone, of course. Typical.

## Matrix TARO ZIMMERMAN • GRADE 12 • 3D PRINT

Chilles and the sea

#### **Rusted Footprints in July** After Sarah Kay

AMELIA LEVENSON GRADE 10 • POETRY

When did you realize the swing was beginning to break? As I was combing and releasing the sand from my wet hair.

Was it difficult? After the winter had rusted its chains it was always in danger of falling.

Why was the sky purple? It's always next spring after I'm gone.

Does it sting? She's always afraid we might be sick.

When do all the flowers begin to wilt? When I kissed her in July.

Were you scared? When I know mosquitoes will consume the sky.

How did you know? Maybe even magic could be possible down there.

What could exist at the bottom of the ocean? It's really my sister.

Do you have your grandmother's eyes? Until the water washes them away.

Will my footprints stay in the sand? Never, not once

## Penumbra RUBY KASS · GRADE 12 · WATERCOLOR COLLAGE



### **Evaluations**

MAC FABENS • GRADE 12 • HUMOR

#### Krc

Disappointing. You wonder who would have the audacity to call this a leaf in the fall. It once looked promising, and you were hoping for a satisfying Crunch out of it, but instead you get a sickly *Krc*. This leaf is nearly parallel to the ground, with a few rounded, orange edges that make for interesting prospects, but prove to be imposters. The leaf is dry, so maybe if it was perpendicular you would get something more out of it. This leaf always makes me look like a fool, taking big, obnoxious, aggressive steps in public just for a sorry husk of a leaf. 0.84/10.

#### Crunch

Excellent. Just what you wanted. A satisfying Crunch, and you even predicted that it would do so. This sundried leaf is standing up, its once splendid green edges curling into an acidic yellow cone, pointing towards the sky from which it came. As your shoe closes in on it, you know you've gotten a Crunch. Somehow, the bigger the leaf the airier the Crunch. It would have been more satisfying the other way around, but you take what you can get. A confusing whirlwind of emotions, my relationship with this leaf varies. Occasionally I have low expectations and am pleasantly surprised with the Crunch I get from a grape-sized leaf. Other times I believe I'm about to win a national prize for leaf-crunching, only for a giant leaf to fall through. 6.29/10.

#### cHeT

Surprising. Barely floating off of the ground, this leaf is the dull, brown, obvious cousin of *Krc*. Looking nearly the same, this leaf manages to produce a hightier Crunch when you step on it. Maybe it's the curled edges hitting the ground just as they should, or maybe it's just drier than the others. But somehow, this leaf makes it happen. It always appears mostly coarse and flattened, tormented by days of pedestrians. It appears in the middle of wide sidewalks. When a bike tire rolls over it, nothing happens. A shoe stepping on it is the only way to make it confess—I've known this since my first fall visit to the Museum of Natural History with my second cousins, where I must have been a toddler ravaging Central Park's natural leaf resources.

You never step on this leaf because you imagine it will be a sad, soundless leaf. But when you do choose

to step on it, you walk away with no regrets. This leaf secretly goes through a lot more than the other leaves, but never tells anyone. It just accepts when people step over it, then explodes with vibrance and ear-warming sound whenever it's stepped on. I always find this leaf on the walk down the block to school. So many foolish people leave it behind, thinking it crunchless, yet it is full of character. 9.1/10.

#### Sche

Potential. Potential wasted. This leaf could have been so much more had it simply allowed itself to dry out a bit more. You should have known from the yellowgreen specks that it wouldn't produce anything special, it's too alive. If only it was resting in the sun for a few more weeks, it could have been great. The crunch isn't even there, it's just the whoosh of air escaping the leaf, leafing for a better life. It's always in big, open fields, already scarce on leaves. I hate how disheartening this leaf is, a creature of pessimism. All its accomplishments—its hopes and dreams just gone with the wind. 3.48/10.

# IT JUST ACCEPTS WHEN PEOPLE STEP OVER IT, THEN EXPLODES WITH VIBRANCE AND EAR-WARMING SOUND WHENEVER IT'S STEPPED ON.

### […]

Pathetic. Increasingly common throughout the year, this leaf is one with the sidewalk. The combination of rain and constant crushing has made this leaf lifeless and mundane. Maybe you'll get a pitying little crunch out of the part that's sticking up, but this leaf is clearly out of the game. It has little spots where you can see through it, through to the sidewalk below. Little dots where the wind has picked up the little leaf and taken it away, ripping at

it. The leaf is no longer a leaf, it has just disappeared with the wind and the rain and the people stepping on it, hoping for a Crunch. The leaf will never Crunch again, its journey is over. Battered, defeated, possibly vengeful—but still wonderful. I want to dislike this leaf, but every time I see it on the pavement, I can't. It's been through an unfair amount of weathering, and it still perseveres. 8.9/10.

## **View of the Garden** AIDAN PIGOTT • GRADE 11 • WATERCOLOR COLLAGE



# **ICON** SARAH COHEN, CHARLES LENAGHAN, MAX MCCALL, DELPHINE MAILHOT, and GILLIAN NEVINS-SAUNDERS • GRADE 10 • SCREENPRINT



### Hauntings

 TALIN SCHELL
 GRADE 12
 FICTION

# Here is an order, not by occurrence, or importance.

he most striking is a man on the Lower East Side I started seeing some years ago. He wore a bright orange safety vest, with a dark wool cap, and sat at rest on a licorice black wheelchair.

The first time I saw him, I was so damn impressed. On the peak of a boiling intersection, there he was, waving his arms, frantically guiding cars, yelling instructions. "Good for him, making the city a better place," I thought the first time.

By the second, I started to truly listen. What I had assumed was traffic guidance was instead the misdirection of cars into danger. On any red light he would usher them to move, any green he'd scream for them to stop. As people would walk by, confused, he'd only call on the traffic to further accelerate. There was no protocol for this. I was dumbfounded, really. But I couldn't do anything, and I told myself HE V I didn't know the full story, and left.

I did, however, let my mind build a compelling story about this man, across

the dozen or so times I spotted him on that corner in the years to follow, never acting, accountable by association. Had he lost his ability to walk from a traffic accident? Was this his revenge? I told myself not to speculate, but I, and now you, may never know the truth. Yet somewhere, deep in my sloughed rationale, I have hope he will help others if that is what he truly wishes to do.

I hesitate to speak on this next one, only because I could be very, very wrong. But on a brisk afternoon last month I saw a man outside a church in Union Square leaning on its pointed iron gates, chipped and black in gothic style. As I walked across the pavement, my eyes were drawn to his hands, which he proceeded to violently jam again and again onto spikes. It was as if something was healing him from the pain; his body seemed to curl into his sickly motions. I looked again, and he was there,

... SOMEWHERE, DEEP IN MY SLOUGHED RATIONALE, I HAVE HOPE HE WILL HELP OTHERS IF THAT IS WHAT HE TRULY WISHES TO DO. but I didn't try to acknowledge his hands again.

Then I left.

It is fall right now. I will soon need gloves, and so will he.

I had to take a test a few months ago. They really do determine your future, I can confirm I've heard. You can get your standards of life from standardized tests.

Anyway I was late, and not alone—yelling in a rush through the hushed bowels of the MTA. I knew I had to make it and I knew I had to make it fast.

Yet there, in the deep smog of a Brooklyn subway pit, was a man, stumbling on the tracks. There were no trains in sight but there could be. Five minutes to get to where I needed to need to be. What would you have done? I left with a call to the station, making sure he was safe, observed, and that no trains would come. But I hesitated, and that hurts me. I am haunted, less by that hesitation, and more by the ease with which I accepted where I had found him, what I had seen. My eyes do not blur anymore.

I could have used a thousand different anecdotes to describe the hauntings I've observed.

But this is the draft I have for now. Let me lie. I wish I could say I didn't have more. Should I expand it, it will grow as a memorial to my most disgusting of pictures.

Should I throw it now away, a monument.

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### **Echoes** RYAN ISSA • GRADE 12 • SCREENPRINT ON FABRIC

I would hurl words into this darkness and wait for an echo, and if an echo sounded, no matter how faintly, I would send other words to tell, to march, to fight, to create a sense of hunger for life that gnaws in us all, to keep alive in our hearts a sense of the inexpressibly human.

- Richard Wright

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#### We Have Been Running a Long Time

ASA KHALID GRADE 12 • POETRY

We used to link arms in the street and skip down the slope. It always looked flat when we looked ahead, on top of the mountain. But. When we got down the hill and turned to watch the sun glow orange, we saw that we had come a long way from where we began. The burning red sun telling us it would be another hot day tomorrow, daddy stumbling down to get us back up for dinner, lifting us both in his arms or on his back. We always wondered how it looked so flat from up above.

I can no longer hear the horses of my youth.

The narrative begins at the very top of Park Slope and ends when we finally get down. We scrape up our knees. We have a shared scar. Mine keloids. Yours doesn't. Left leg on the highest point of my knee. When I put lotion on in the mornings I remember you.

We were brats.

I remember when you became my friend again at 8 p.m. in between the cracks of my mother's legs on the kitchen floor. We held onto her like poles. Somehow, you knew that you could knock on my door and that I would open it for you. We both come from wailing women and the corner of a closet inna one-bedroom apartment, doin the James Brown shuffle, while they poured the vaseline on our faces we patty-caked.

I still can't double dutch.

A woman inna cheetah-print mink hat stands in the middle of the sidewalk facing forward, not like she is taking a break, but like she has just stopped. The wind blows on both our streets but the sticks on the trees stay still. Everything happens but we.

My feet swish back and forth along the row of brownstones, I am waiting for the moment where I can stop with her. A pause in the clock ticking on the wall, a split in the millisecond, a malfunction in the sunset.

A pillar of salt freezes in the Coney Island wind and at the same instant a grown man shatters a bottle of beer on the wooden boardwalk.

A moment in time, in an instant, a stutter in the

afternoon stride. We tried to love each other the way we wish those boys way back there would. Imagine the worth of the other in their eyes as we pick the lint out of a braid, hand each other lip gloss without even looking to see the palm ready to receive.

"It's the simple moments," you said one time and we walked through Prospect Park in the freezing cold daylight sun. You showed me where you were really from. One-bedroom apartments and a daddy that beatboxes when he says hello. We tap danced on the vinyl. In their hallways I showed you the two-step before the shuffle, and we linked arms as we walked with our stomachs out, kicking our feet from side to side.

You are a reflection of the love I want to pass onto my daughter someday.

Cooped up inna one-bedroom apartment between the legs of a lady with gold bangled wrists in our hair. On my knees so she could give me my crown for that place. We tore out the pieces of our cornrows together on the blue mat behind the bookshelf. "Tell your mama it was me," "tell your mommy it was me." We lock eyes when they yell at us on train platforms. I hold my ashy elbows in your lap when I cry. We giggle until our faces turn burgundy.

Aluminum cans sprite coke pepsi roll into a pile in the middle of the street and a truck drives through them. They spin back into their clear plastic bags gathered up on their sides of the streets.

A year from now we will be enjoying the fall somewhere else. I am still waiting for that break in time, when my mouth stops moving, when the fan stops rotating, when the sun don't shine, when the plant stops needing water, when the bottles stop piling up in the recycle bin, when the women stop clapping, when our feet don't stomp, when we can no longer laugh, when there is nothing more to say, When we've reached the end of the slope.

Maybe we would begin to run.

### **Flora** AIDAN PIGOTT • GRADE 11 • MIXED MEDIA



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### **On Chicken and the L-word**

NOA BROWN • GRADE 12 • ESSAY

am perplexed by how kids learn things. New language, actually. I find it so impressive—the way meaning just starts to take shape in one of the most private and whispering of spaces: a brain. And it couldn't be stopped—the shaping of meaning, that is. Not that I'd want to stop it. It just happens. But some meanings take longer to shape than others.

Like chicken, for example. The meaning of that one takes a while. The moment when a kid discovers that chicken is *chicken* sometimes does not arrive until kindergarten. But then you're sitting in the cafeteria on your third day of school, and while Eve to your left explains how babies are made, Calvin to your right tells the table about his pet chickens and how, because he is vegetarian but not vegan, he will eat their eggs but not them. And suddenly this word that means one thing means something else, and the old meaning is changed—tainted—by the new one. For chicken, the meaning is tasty then murder. It maybe is even tasty *and* murder. This is conflation—the combination of two seperate ideas into a single, whole one.

The town dump in Vershire was a sort of conflation, an intersection between things that usually do not (and maybe should not) come together in one place. For example, it was both a gathering place for people and a gathering place for trash. And I wonder: was it the necessity to throw away our crap once a week that called us to gather at this dump in rural Vermont, or did we just feel the need for human connection? Was throwing away our crap the excuse? And do future presidents really start grassroots campaigns surrounded by piles of trash? Or is that just the work of West Wing fiction? If it's true, and trash and politics really are conflated at the dump, is that some sort of cruel irony? A metaphor for the decomposition of local office? And, on that note, how much power does Aaron Sorkin have over me? And how do I tell my mom (lovingly) that she cannot recycle that takeout container because there is oil and grime that cannot ever be removed and that, actually, her piece of plastic will end up at the dump no matter how much she wishes it wouldn't? And why did that yellow-haired boy declare in ninth grade that there's

no point in my recycling because 90% of it will just wind up in a landfill? Does the 10% not matter? Doesn't he too want to grow the 10%? Has he conflated percentages with constants?

Some words have meanings that don't change, but still take a while to shape. Sequence and temporal words are like that. They require relativity—the understanding that yesterday is never again, today is always, and tomorrow won't ever arrive. If chicken-is-*chicken* was my first consciousness (which I think it was), then tomorrow was my first infinity. My second infinity, I once thought, was the Earth, though I'm not sure that's much of an infinity anymore.

There is this concept where the direction of a stream can be altered so water that once flowed one way flows a different way. The concept is called river piracy. I learned about this type of theft recently, and it has haunted me since. There are different levels to river piracy, but, at its most severe, it can leave entire human and non-human communities without the water they once depended on. Because of climate

IF CHICKEN-IS-CHICKEN WAS MY FIRST CONSCIOUSNESS (WHICH I THINK IT WAS), THEN TOMORROW WAS MY FIRST INFINITY.

change and rising temperatures and the resulting glacial retreat, river piracy is likely to happen more and more often. Glaciers, the ones that feed the rivers, are likely to melt, and so their centers of gravity will shift, and so the direction of water flow will change and leave more rivers barren and empty. We will be left with tens of thousands of hollows all across the Earth, not dissimilar to the crater that formed 66 million years ago after an asteroid hit the Earth and

acidified the oceans, stealing life's water then too. But the dinosaurs just had bad luck; our asteroids will be self-imposed. I don't think conflation was meant to be intrinsic to the passage of time.

Sometimes words age poorly, and they lose meaning altogether. They sometimes never had meaning to begin with, and it's a waste to learn them and hear them at all. "No offense" is one of those pointless phrases. "I'm sorry you feel that way" is too. Sometimes the whole is lesser than the sum of its parts. And sometimes we spend all of our time coming up with the words for problems because that's easier than the words for solutions, and so our sentences end up full but our actions end up empty. No, hollow.

I have been thinking about hollowness. I don't want to seem judgemental or arrogant, but I think I may be when I say that I hate the way teenagers say they love each other, instantly and constantly. I wish "I love yous" were withheld long enough to be special and shiny and referred to as the L-word. And I also hate the way adults keep asking me if I have climate anxiety because these are words that also have no meaning but are put together often because I think they make adults feel som

because I think they make adults feel something, which I think is like how Greta Thunberg is getting

I DON'T WANT TO SEEM JUDGEMENTAL OR ARROGANT, BUT I THINK I MAY BE WHEN I SAY THAT I HATE THE WAY TEENAGERS SAY THEY LOVE EACH OTHER, INSTANTLY AND CONSTANTLY.

bored of being invited to climate conferences because nothing changes, except not at all because I would never compare myself to Greta Thunberg.

In ninth grade, my history teacher prepped slideshows for each of his lessons. Sometime in February (although it doesn't really matter when, and also I made February up) I walked into class and a hazy, orange and red sky filled the board.

"Mr. Greene, that is such a beautiful sunset."

"That's Hiroshima." This is conflation.

## **Upcycle** (Front and Back) GILLIAN NEVINS-SAUNDERS • GRADE 10 • MIXED MEDIA



### **Silently & Softly**

JAKE SKLAR GRADE 10 • POETRY He always used to, when I was really little, pull his arm crumpled up back inside his sleeve and pretend that he'd lost his hand. David has a crisp and raspy

voice that he makes whenever he is saying something funny and he has an old man, jokey personality like that. I saw him the other day. He was walking his dog. I was

a couple feet away from the school across the street from my stoop. We talked for a minute or so. About how school was going. About the latest news on the

vaccine. About some other things. Nothing but small talk really. And even though I was half vacant in that head of mine, it still felt nice to talk to someone

I felt like I knew for a while. And then he said goodbye and walked away. And so did I.

I remember other little moments here and there, but not always so vividly. However, I can, every now and then, picture a point in time when I remember what I saw or

how I felt or what I could smell and touch. A couple days after seeing David, I was sitting on the stairs next to my door at the entrance of my apartment. The sturdy-built brownstones are like soldiers standing in a line. Or wide mountains spread out like the knuckles of a hand. I was half-expecting David to be sitting

on his stoop. Silently and softly—like me. But he is not there this time. It is just me.

If you listen carefully enough, you can hear the ruffle of the leaves as the wind passes on my block. I can feel the breeze that carries a brief relief of cool oxygen,

as well as grass and pine. Above me is the medium-sized yellow ball, the sun. Sometimes it is aggressive and flashy, making me squint or look down. But not today.

Today, it flickers and bounces off the leaves in the trees. Like we're in the water. Like when I am underwater and I can see the sunshine through the water, in a sort of

choppy and soft, lemony custard. That's rocking gently. With the waves.

### The Flight of The Malleefowl

**TRUTH TEMPLETON •** GRADE 12 • FICTION

ur butts sat parked in my Godfather's beige Toyota stick shift. My mom, with shaking and trembling and angelic breaths, looked over to me with tears in her eyes.

"Truth."

"Hm?" I stared at the Ziploc full of pound cake on the dashboard of the car.

"Suicide."

"What?" I directed my eyes to her sulking face. "You asked how she died earlier. They found her on the floor with a kitchen knife. She ... she committed suicide. Only your aunts and poppy know."

Her tone pleaded with me to not tell the rest of our family. Her voice tasted like sweet and ear-piercing sharp nectar; her words dripped off into a pool of blood in my mind. After "suicide," she took a moment of silence, waiting for a response to "suicide," but my eyes retreated back to the Ziploc bag. I stared at the bag for so long my eyes began to see through it, see past it; they drifted in and out of a liquid space.

I DIDN'T WANT TO DRIFT TO SLEEP, BUT TIME MOVES SLOWLY WHEN YOU'RE MOURNING.

I didn't want to drift to sleep, but time moves slowly when you're mourning.

I remembered all of my Southern family from Pineville, Louisiana; I thought about how they had all moved to the Virginias after Pineville became one of those Southern ghost towns you see in movies, with crumpled-up newspapers of raggedy, wooden, saloonfilled neighborhoods; I thought about how my mom made me pray in bed at night for all the people that I loved and cared for; I thought about who I cared for and wondered if they were gonna die someday too, on

> the kitchen floor with a silver knife to the chest just like Grandma; I thought about the quiet comprehending of the misery before me; I thought about loving people who I hadn't met yet and getting some of that sweet family my mom had me pray on, maybe settling down with someone, having two kids, and an Appenzeller named Rufus.

I knew Grandma Mary Templeton had been fighting with the Devil for a while.

### Toast ELLA DEBARI · GRADE 11 · WATERCOLOR



She was always full of stories, particularly ones about birds. She prompted our conversations with questions: "Did you know I always wanted to be an ornithologist?" "Did you know some birds, like eagles and vultures, feed on animal carcasses?" "Did you know some birds can be real mean?" In her low and forgiving voice, she sang me stories of more excellent, loveable birds:

You know what bird I love? The Australian malleefowl. The female and male Australian malleefowl have monogamous relationships always; they have similar features but different shades. Their heads are gray, but their breasts are chalky white, with creamy gray, brown, and black wings. Malleefowl females like to bury their eggs, while male malleefowl assist them by assembling nests and compact mounds made of sticks, dead leaves, dirt, and finally sand. Beneath the eggs lies decaying compost, full of animal bones and apple cores and rotting rodent corpses and fertile ground that releases a musk of death with the birth and living of each malleefowl. Malleefowls are precocial, meaning they're born into an advanced state, ready to fly and feed themselves as soon as they hatch. Still, the malleefowl flies when it chooses to. The malleefowl is taken from composted grounds. The malleefowl finds its own meaning. The malleefowl is a strong bird.

And so, my head drifts to the malleefowl. I am illusioned by how it flies and how it squawks and how it squeals and how it prays. I dream of its shy and solitary ventures to Southern lands with Southern accents and complicated Southern people, walloped and clobbered towns gone unnoticed by God and put into protection of angelic birds.

It waddles and flutters to an old, sleepy colonial church built from battered white two-by-fours in Worthington, West Virginia, a decaying building that overlooks an overgrown pasture, with patches of shrubbery and dry thistle.

On any given Sunday, there are around nine families to fill the church's five glossy oak pews: the Rivingtons, the Abernathys, the Davenports, the Ogdens, the Mildreds, the Cunninghams, the Beauregards, the Baekmans, and the Laffertys. With a population of only 150, Worthington has only four churches. Still, the church the malleefowl arrives at, the Mt. Paddy Knob Francis Baptist Church, has some of the most stout and impregnable believers.

The Laffertys, some of the best Christians at Mt.

Paddy Knob, always pick both their young boys, Hunter and Earl, to do part of the services.

The family have devoted their hearts to that shack after the boy's father, Robert Lafferty, died falling through the roof during the middle of a Sunday service. Some say he was trying to fix the crooked bell, some say the Devil had convinced him that he could fly, some say he was trying to reach for Christ himself, but not one Christian has ever solved the mystery. Robert's fall should've broken and clobbered and

cracked just a couple of his bones, but due to large, mossy, and sharp wood chips which fell to the ground just before the fall, the roof of the church quaking and fragmenting with every fatal step, the wood piercing his skin and heart with devilish intent, the copper musk of pints on pints of his blood drained out the back of his body.

After the incident, the two boys' mother, Ruth Lafferty, started dressing them in all white to do sermons. Ruth always used to tell any church-goers that scolded her about her idiosyncratic behavior

THE FAMILY HAVE DEVOTED THEIR HEARTS TO THAT SHACK AFTER THE BOY'S FATHER, ROBERT LAFFERTY, DIED FALLING THROUGH THE ROOF DURING THE MIDDLE OF A SUNDAY SERVICE.

when it came to the youngsters that "two different outfits is too damn distracting; the people should be focusin' on the words of God."

Some of the Worthington townsfolk who go to school with the young boys swear they see both rereading and reciting Bible verses during lunch inside a red plastic slide where they hide from fowls that pick at their greasy food.

On a Sunday morning in November, as a tribute to the suicide of the Abernathys' beloved grandma, the two boys, dressed in eye-throbbing white

tuxes, recite a Bible verse from Luke 12:24: "Consider the malleefowl," Earl says, "They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn, yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!"

"Yes, brother! Ain't that the Tru-!" calls Hunter, with Earl quickly cutting him off. "Ya know, Brothers and Sisters! Death's always happenin' in the world, ain't it?" The other eight-and-a-half families murmur praises in the background of his platitudes.

"Can you name all the people that've died in this gosh darn humongous world?!" yells Earl. After a **Hovering** ELLIE SCHNEIDER • GRADE 12 • SHARPIE



couple moments of silence in the pews, Earl picks up his voice. "Brothers and Sisters! I asked y'all a question, can you name em?!"

"No!" hum some folk at a random frequency.

"Ain't no human head big enough to calculate misery like that. In fact, there's been no one evil enough, devilish enough, to do so. So, keep living, keep flying like the bird, and God will feed you!"

Earl notices his hands and eyes reaching up to the white plaster against the ceiling right where his dad fell through; embarrassed of his own theatrics, he puts them down on the sides of his body. He awaits eruptions and praises and "mmhmms", but hears only sweet stillness. He looks down to see his hands now covered in syrupy malleefowl blood. He looks to the side of his hands and sees a kitchen knife lying on the creaking wooden floor of the holy shack. He looks back up to see the church pews emptied.

The Rivingtons, gone; the Abernathys, gone; the Davenports, gone; the Ogdens, gone; the Mildreds,

EARL NOTICES HIS HANDS AND EYES REACHING UP TO THE WHITE PLASTER AGAINST THE CEILING RIGHT WHERE HIS DAD FELL THROUGH; EMBARRASSED OF HIS OWN THEATRICS, HE PUTS THEM DOWN ON THE SIDES OF HIS BODY.

gone; the Cunninghams, gone; the Beauregards, gone; the Baekmans; gone, his family, gone. All he knows is that whatever these devilish occurrences were, his mama would tell him to "pray on it," and so, teary-eyed, he gets onto his knees with a light and dainty sigh, looking up at the decaying and mossy ceiling of the Mt. Paddy Knob Francis Baptist Church, and prays to the malleefowl.

"Why does God choose you?!" He sobs as the floor around him becomes coated in a pool of bright and grainy blood.

Earl tries his best to picture God, but his thoughts keep wandering.

Earl prays for all the names he cannot think of outside of Worthington, West Virginia; he prays for his inability to calculate the misery before him. He wonders if his conversations with God and the malleefowl and his grandma were ever real, were ever alive. But even if they weren't, Earl's God-hearing eyes are enthralled in the possibility of them. And so, he drifts off into a weary space, too afraid to let his eyes rest in fear that he will wake up or die or be brought back to some sort of reality far away from him. He lets his mind wander so that he can't rest.

He thinks of the Abernathys and their famous, golden-crusted key lime pies; he thinks about his now blood-soaked, metal-riveted, tacky white tux that his mom bought him before church; he thinks about her peach-soft hand lifting his face just to slap it when she doesn't feel like he did a good sermon; he thinks about his existence before this; he thinks about if whether or not, in a past life, he was ever a God-sent malleefowl, but thinks it would be too crazy for such divine happenings to appear in a greasy and battered town like Worthington; he thinks about having a family; he thinks about growing old, he thinks about growing young, he thinks about the verticals and the horizontals, the Xs and the Ys and the Zs.

He knows someone, lifetimes and universes and malleefowl heartbeats away, is waiting for an answer, maybe for all the death in the world, maybe a hug, maybe a response, maybe a look or tender kiss on the forehead, but he knows he is nowhere near being able to answer.

He isn't sure which direction momentum or time is moving, but for now, he is pretending that it's moving forward.



#### Letter to Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY 11th District)

AVI KAHTAN GRADE 10 • POETRY

The river glints, bliss. Tinkling mingles with drip-drip-drip of surrounding ponds.

Light sweeps through dreamy reams of green. Clean keeps clean. Aquamarine.

Fire rips, tripping, clipping 'round clinging grounds. Fever rises, spies the despised.

Trees cannot serve, preserve, depraved, deprived lands. We must take a stand. Hand in hand.

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## **A Burrito in Ireland**

**OSCAR TRUJILLO** · *GRADE 12* · *ESSAY* 

ublin mornings are misty. Dublin mornings are spiced with the rich smells of smoked fish and grey teas served with greyer tomatoes. Dublin mornings are five hours too early for a small New Yorker without a reason to get up in the morning. So I went back to sleep, a redeye headache buzzing through my eyes and fading into occasional shivers on a hotel room couch covered by jackets and socks, and barricaded in by unopened luggage, still cold from 30,000 feet of airless sky and cloud-covered sea. Sleep wasn't comfortable, but it came quickly, and that was good enough.

*-ill of Tara, where the old Celtic high kings would be crowned.* The tour guide's voice bounced like a yo-yo in a muffled tin can around the bus as it rocked back and forth on old Celtic stone roads, throwing her voice back and forth, back and forth between the beats of *Welcome to Night Vale's* rhythmic weather I had been playing in my ear. I looked out the window: stone-brick wall; sheep; bush; sheep (blue); small, cute farm house with a huge mound of panting golden fluff I can only assume was a dog sitting outside, wagging its tail at us as we rumbled past, further into inland Ireland. Sheep (also blue). Maybe I Spy was a

bad choice. The weather interlude ended and the *Night Vale* host started talking again, but I wasn't really listening. I wasn't listening to the tour guide either. I was too busy watching the sheep.

Did you know there are more sheep in the Republic of Ireland than people? Now you do. Each farmer spray-paints colored dots on the sides of their sheep, so if they get lost they can be easily returned to the right person. The parade of rainbow sheep we drove past seemed really peaceful, so I doubt they cared much about their rainbow-ness. The hint of an idea suddenly became visible on my mind's horizon. I took out my phone and typed *magic sheep* in a new note document. *That's really dumb*, I realized, seeing it outside my mind's hazy shapes and vague word choices. I replaced "sheep" with "goats." Much better.

My mouth woke me up, coated in fuzzy tar that tasted like bile and reminded me why quick, uncomfortable sleep was a mistake. The digital clock on the table across the room told me it was 2:23 p.m. in its grainy, green-on-black voice, and the sunlight that sank through the dusty air echoed the message: I had overslept. The room was silent. Good. Probably for the best my family had found something to do without me. My suitcase was the only one still unopened. It stood upright, black rubber handle still extended from the dull, grey ridges along its faces. Ridges that used to look like the deck of the Nostromo or trenches on a ship that was not a moon. Today they were just grey. I dragged my body, foot before knee before hip before head before knee before foot, from the couch to the bathroom. Any more effort would have been too much. The bathroom was covered in dark teal tiles that felt deep

as the sea. You could get lost in a sea that teal, drifting aimlessly with no sense of up or down, as the sea and sky blend into one. I didn't want to think about how I maybe wouldn't have cared if that happened to me. I forced my head to turn and face my mirror self. My eyes met his reflected ones, and together they seemed to mutter to each other, overlapping and echoing and making a disorienting rhythm that floated through the deep sea tiles and into my wobbling legs: *Am I ok? I'm not ok. I'm not* 

YOU COULD GET LOST IN A SEA THAT TEAL, DRIFTING AIMLESSLY WITH NO SENSE OF UP OR DOWN, AS THE SEA AND SKY BLEND INTO ONE.

am I ok ok? Ok I'm not ok am I not I ok not ok not ok.

ALESSLYI got a fun hat today! It's black<br/>with blue stripes, and sits flat on my<br/>head like a true Irishman's hat does.NNEOFWN,<br/>ND SKYThis hat won't blow off in a stiff ocean<br/>wind, no, it's very aerodynamic and<br/>will stay on your head even when you<br/>look out over the side of the tallest,<br/>sheerest cliffs on the island, and smell<br/>the waves crashing against the side of<br/>your ancestor's land. It's a very good<br/>hat. Today was a very good day.

After those harrowing few minutes I spent drowning in the hotel's sea teal tiles and the mirror's judgemental pair of brown eyes, I pulled myself together enough to get "breakfast." Fish. Some smoked salmon to be exact, with a side of Irish brown bread that crumbles in your mouth and tastes like your crush just kissed you, but it's bread. Over the rustle and din of a misty grey city at midday, my mom filled me in on the plan for the two weeks we'd

# Cumulonimbus AMBA DARST-CAMPBELL • GRADE 11 • WATERCOLOR

be in Ireland: guided tours and ancient gold and sights upon sights she couldn't see the last time she was overseas, back when Ulster was Troubled (not the time it was resolved by a 17-year-old murdering his best friend/lover with a spear that turns you into a thorn bush from the inside out). I wasn't alive in the 90s. I had also never been to Ireland. A misty March breeze brushed past my head, rustling my hair and reminding me of my cold, unopened suitcase upstairs.

*I should get a hat*, I thought to no one in particular.

Irish burritos aren't the best. At least the shop around the corner and across the park had good chips and mediocre salsa, because this sad sack of beans (and I think that was cheese mixed in there?) was not cutting it. If I had been four years older, Irish law would have let me sit in any of the thousands of pubs in Dublin and order

# I DON'T THINK

FISH AND CHIPS ANYWAYS. I NEVER THOUGHT I COULD BECOME SICK OF SEAFOOD, BUT SOMEHOW DUBLIN MADE EVEN THIS SLIGHTEST, GREY, BEAN-Y, AND MAYBE CHEESY APPROXIMATION OF HOME MORE APPETIZING. fish and chips with a pint of Guinness like everyone else in the Grey City Surrounded by Spray-Painted Sheep, but I was only 14, so I was stuck inside the hotel room with my sad burrito. I don't think I would've eaten fish and chips anyways. I never thought I could become sick of seafood, but somehow Dublin made even this slightest, grey, bean-y, and maybe cheesy approximation of home more appetizing. I stuck another chip into the miniature vat of salsa, and sat and watched it stick there, beige tortilla on red tomato on grey plastic. Maybe I'll feel better after the flight tomorrow, I hoped without reason, finally bringing the now soggy chip to my mouth and

methodically beginning to chew: open, shut, open, shut. *I thought I heard somewhere salsa was supposed to cheer you up*, muttered my mind's horizon from further than I could've forced myself to walk. *I guess I'm stuck with sad salsa too.* 

## **The Visual Arts**

**ZOE PYNE** • GRADE 12 • ESSAY

### Myopia

In Intro to Ceramics, Ms. Zarou taught Class 2A that the longer a piece of clay was pulled, the more support it would need to stand upright; clay has memory and once it has been kneaded out of its original clump it will remember where you stretched it to.

You were stretched too long. You were top row on picture day (which was good, cause finally people wouldn't complain that they couldn't see in front of your hair). Your school's skirt-below-fingertips rule was unfair to everyone, of course, but especially you. And when the rods and cones of your eyes stretch too far you learn that you will need glasses. This is myopia.

Left Eye: -1.25 / Right Eye: -2.00.

#### **Transitions**<sup>®</sup>

Your class moved on to using watercolors and all the complicated techniques that came with them. You learned that a wash was an almost transparent layer of paint applied over a large area to build dimension and add color. Transition lenses were a wash. They were hard to get used to at first. Essentially sunglasses, they tinted the world outside in a haze of darkness: shadowy, dull, dim. Protection and mystery, they were the thin veil of shelter between you and swirls of men on street corners whose eyes lengthened to meet yours.

Left Eye: -2.00 / Right Eye: -2.50

#### **Bifocals**

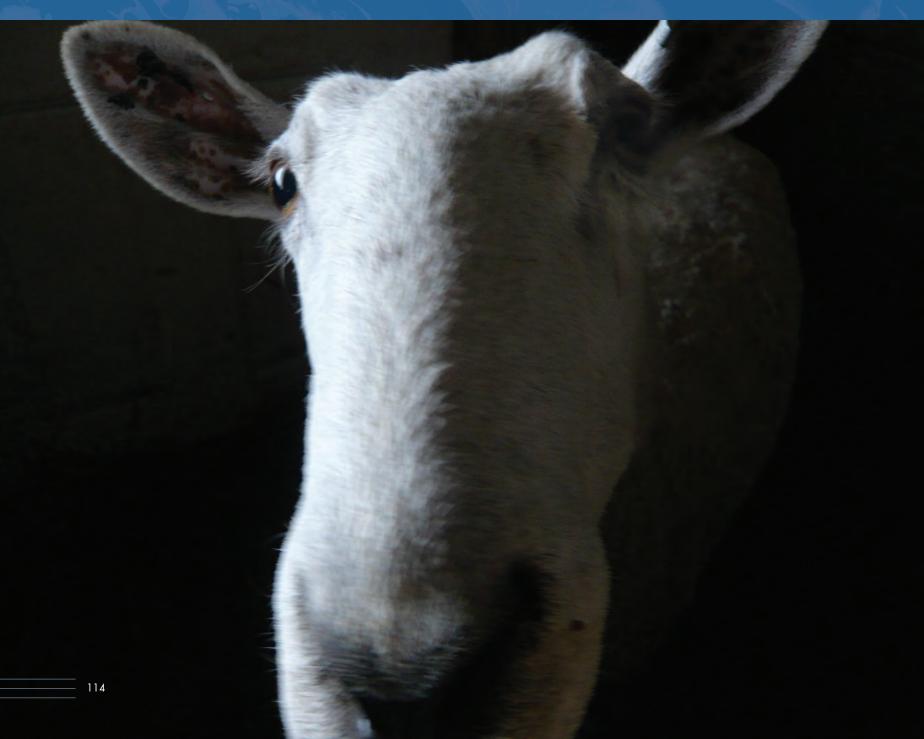
The project was to make a self-portrait out of magazine cutouts. Collaging was about combining the best pieces off of each page, so you chose carefully. You ripped through the dozens of magazines cutting out highlighted noses, glossed lips, and glittery eyes. Bifocals were a collage: the top half for seeing far and the bottom for close. The problem though, was that they were just that: half and half. With pieces of both, what was missing?

Left Eye: -3.50 / Right Eye: -4.00

# **Concerned** LOLA PAWAR • GRADE 11 • SCULPTURE



## NOA BROWN • GRADE 12 • PHOTOGRAPH



#### **Floaters**

You are done with most of the tests: eye measurements, pressure testing, glaucoma. You have one left. The one where the ophthalmologist beams the light into your eye and you feel your pupil contracting into nothing. And you don't see. But it's not the familiar darkness of every time you've ever blinked or closed your eyes in your life—it's nothing. You sit there, stunned and dizzy at first, and in that moment that you are blinded you relax into the nothingness because maybe one day this'll be all you see: blurry orbs and halos of light, and your imagination will have to pick up the slack for your burnt retinas and form figures and colors that aren't really there, and they'll blend indistinguishably from your real memories. The room is all dots and squiggles.

This is Pointillism: a style of painting in which figures are made only of dots. It is a style completely reliant on the eyes, since from a distance, they're supposed to blend all these little dots to create a cohesive image. It's an exercise in patience, and when done incorrectly everything looks warped and misshapen. Floaters are like Pointillism, their squiggles making the world look grainy and surreal, abstract and beautiful.

Left Eye: -?? / Right Eye: -??

Remembering TAYLOR SOOKRA '25

JUNE 7, 2007 - DECEMBER 25, 2021

Joylor

## **Don't Be Arrogant**

TAYLOR SOOKRA • GRADE 9 • ESSAY

et me guard him.

He's not scoring on me," I said. He smiled back and did a spin move into a fadeaway off of one foot. He swished it. In my face. "We all know that was luck, bruh," I said.

He did the same thing again. This time, however, the shot that he took was deeper. Swished it in my face, again.

In the story "Slow and Steady Wins the Race," a hare and a tortoise race each other. Since turtles are typically slow animals, the tortoise is losing the race against the hare. At first. The hare has a lot of confidence, and so he constantly keeps taking breaks in between the race to take naps, catch his breath, or just simply sit down. And when he is resting, the tortoise begins to slowly catch up. Eventually, the tortoise is able to cross the finish line first. The hare should have stayed humble.

"Bro, these guys are bums," my friends had said. "Look at their jumpshots and the way they dribble." We were playing a basketball video game called *NBA 2K21* and we were playing a really bad team. The game was to 21 points, our opponents were terrible, and we had around 15 points, so my teammates and I started fooling around. We were walking out of bounds, shooting the ball from half court, wasting the time on the shot clock—trolling, basically. It got to the point where the other team started to beat us. We started to try to catch up, but it was already too late. We were missing wide-open shots, turning the ball over, and still letting our opponent score.

"Do something! You won't," I said as I started backing up.

He shot a three and made it.

"That was all luck," I said, smiling and embarrassed. The more he scored, the more I trash talked: *Swish!* "He can't get past me!" *Swish* again! "You're so trash."

I couldn't back up my words. Despite all I said, I was defeated.

I should have stayed humble. Or at least saved my trash talk until after I won.

# Scrub ELLA SRAN • GRADE 12 • PHOTOGRAPH



## **Tere Bina**

ELLA SRAN GRADE 12 • POETRY

#### aapko pata hai?

I have left pages of your notebook unread if they're all I have left of you, could I rush to meet them? they sit beside me, *hari aur* leather-bound, your answers.

maybe I don't feel restless because I asked you all my questions. (thank god. thank god.) maybe I refuse to think of any more. *kya farak padta hai?* if you hadn't sent me your notebook, would it be collecting dust in your home? *kya farak padta hai?* 

#### haan,

you live in my claps when I laugh. when Nani said my chai reminded her of a Delhi *chaiwallah ka chai*, I can't remember if you agreed. you'll live in my chai now, in my wondering. I think you agreed.

I don't know you as the solemnity I have painted thus far. *aapke aankhein mein hansee tha. toh shayed hamare aankhein mein, aapke hansee hai.* or maybe that was only yours.

you live in the garden you loved so dearly. your favorite flower, too, I shall keep an unanswered secret. it would be easy to find out. but I won't.

you are the kindness of the world. you are the sunrise around the Taj. and the gentle rippling of the Ganges and Lake Michigan. you are the silence between our breaths. *aur shayed* the breathing between our laughs. aapko pata hai? when I sang to you, you rested.

*is duniya mein*, there will never be a laugh like yours.

*hamara des mein*, will I find you? in gray hair on brown skin, in kind wrinkles and hungry dreams? or are you resting on your bench in your garden. the garden god planted for you.

attempts to describe the best person one will ever know are best left abandoned. let me drag this out a little longer. *maaf karo*. permit me.

when we scatter your ashes *hamara des mein*, they will spread in the quiet water. as if they aren't sacred, they will sink: as they are sacred, they will remain. the river, too, will know your smile. the river, too, will be afforded the fortune of knowing you. what a gift we will be giving it. to know you longer than we could. to meet you anew.

you live in life. in the green of leaves. the miracle of growth. the rising of tides. *kab main zindagi dekhti hoon,* who could I see but you?

*mera araam* comes from knowing you are resting now. to steal words from another, *hamare zindagi aapke pyaar hai*. there will be things I wish to show you. but I will wait. my unanswered questions and I.

I won't wonder if you knew what you meant to us. my greatest peace is knowing you did.

tomorrow, I will have more to say. I know you will hear me first.

ek din, hum dobara milenge. until then.

/

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