

Oneirata 2023



Cover Art by Eesha Chen

Oneirata

2023

The Literary Magazine of Hastings High School

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Ms. Walters

Editor's Note

My time at Hastings High School is one that I will look back on with fondness, embarrassment, and in some instances I might not even want to look back. Since I first joined the Creative Writing Club in Freshman year, I never expected myself to eventually become the editor in chief of the literary magazine. It was quite an honor and I had fun while compiling this year's batch of submissions. I learned all about the different, creative, and talented minds that Hastings managed to gather and I'm going to miss it all: Joking around with my fellow classmates instead of doing work, running through halls to get to my classes instead of walking, and waiting to see what will happen the next day. I hope this magazine will be my final magnum opus showcasing what makes Hastings High School what it is as I conclude my time as a senior and begin life as a freshman again.

A Note from Ms. Walters

Putting together the literary magazine is one of my favorite end-of-year traditions. It reminds us in a real, tangible way what learning and school is all about: it's a place to express ourselves, share our work and (hopefully!) receive accolades for putting ourselves out there. Unlike final tests and papers, the magazine is a public sharing of creative talents, and I thank all of you who submitted your work. Oneirata comes from the Greek word for dreams, *oneira*, and many of these pieces mirror as sort of reflective or dream-like state. I hope you enjoy the artwork and writing displayed here. Lastly, I'd like to thank Louis Bagtas who helped me put this magazine together. Have a wonderful summer and think about submitting to the magazine next year!

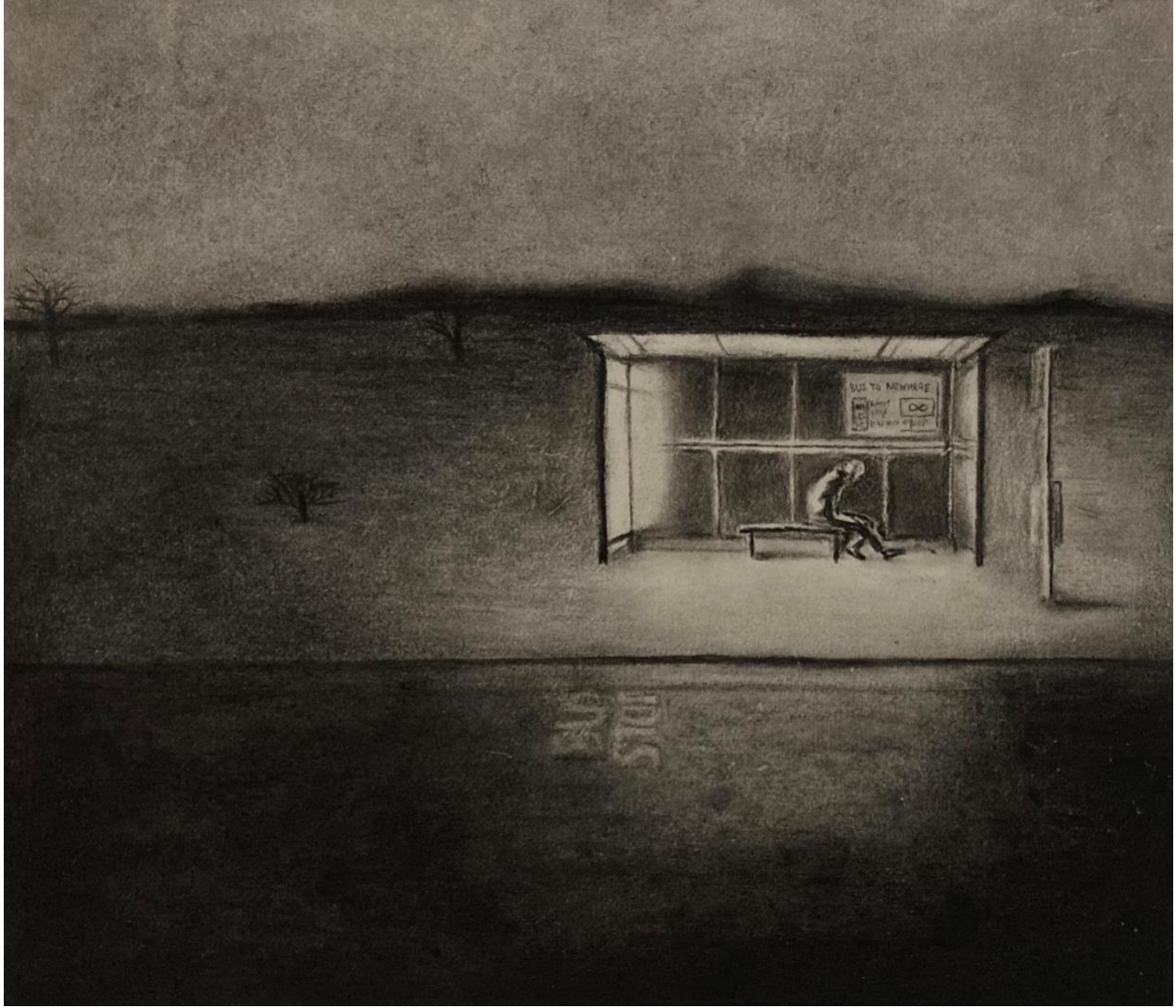
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Dysphoria

A crescendo of emotion that erases all notion
Of an ocean of doubts and insecurities,
Bringing about a bout of rhapsody,
Though I still fall down
Down
Down
To the dark
Dark
Sea
I fall to the sea, but I've still seen the light
So I won't go down without a fight
But right at the moment I prepare for flight,
I notice a whisper of blight,
Telling me I can't
"No, please, stay here with me
You can't go back to the glittering sea,
Of hope, promise
Won't be something you'll find
You better stay here and unwind"
And yet, I still feel fear
Where I wind up, never having any meaning
Until I wound up, back down here
Until now from the ground up
I've heard a little sound and felt wound up,
Put a shroud up of mystery
So that the history of my sisterhood becomes
Nothing but a distant memory
And though I used to put up with the vanity
Of my supposed masculinity
I can no longer pretend to see
Anything less, than
Me

Chloe Hughes



Anna Goiz

The Assassin Game

Maybe it was morbid curiosity, but I decided to open the unmarked package.

It contained a pump-based water gun with no visible way to insert water, a blank card, and a letter which read:

You are being hunted.

You have been chosen to participate in The Assassin Game.

Rules:

- 1. The water gun inside the box has unlimited fluid and must be pumped first before firing.*
- 2. A water gun, like the one inside the box, must be used in order to kill your target (revealed to you once you touch the card).*
- 3. You must be actively searching out for your target to be considered “participating.”*
- 4. Failure to comply with the 3rd rule will be met with immediate termination of your loved ones.*
- 5. In the case that the 4th rule’s condition is not met, your life will be immediately terminated.*
- 6. Other means can be used to impede your target or assailant, but any wound they sustain will not kill them.*
- 7. Winning the game will result in any deceased loved ones coming back to life and gaining the mystery prize (revealed once you win).*

There are 7 people, those of which you may or may not know, in total in this game, so make sure to always be cautious of others and good luck.

What an outlandish piece of writing. I felt like someone was playing an elaborate trick on me. I should go call my friend, Sven, if this was his idea of an April Fool’s Day joke after I forgot to pay him back. Suddenly, my phone started ringing. It was my mother.

“Angus, your father is dead,” she sobbed. I was frozen. My father suddenly died, and I couldn’t help but wonder if it was because of the letter. My mother was still sobbing on the

phone. The world around me started to spin and shrink and my mind grew more and more broken like a hammer to a piece of glass. Tears began to drip down knowing that my father, the man who taught me everything I know, was no longer with me.

The doorbell's consistent ringing brought me back from my grief.

"Hold on, mom," I said, "someone's at the door. I might have to call you back." I rubbed the tears away from my eyes and opened the door.

It was Sven.

"I'm sorry," I told him in a serious manner, "I can't talk about the money right now."

"What's wrong?" he said concerned.

"My father just died, and I think it has something to do with a package and a stupid game." Sven looked at me with tension.

"What game?"

"The Assassin Game." He pushed me out of the way and entered my home trying to search for the package.

"What's wrong with you," I shouted. He ignored me until he was holding the letter and the water gun.

"You're participating in a cruel sport," he said. "Only one person from this game can win and all the rest will be a pile of liquified flesh."

"What are you saying?" I asked. "Why do you know so much?"

"I once was forced to take part in this same game." I was astonished. Sven, the guy I knew for years partook in this ludicrous game.

"You're telling me this game and its consequences are real."

"Yes, and I'm going to help you."

I was waiting inside the store where my target was working. Sven and I had been practicing my skills to shoot my water gun with precision. I studied the distance it fired, and the optimal pumping action required to shoot. I took down my targets one by one until I was down to the 2nd person left in the game.

I walked through the different aisles looking more interested in what was on the shelf than who passed me by to not arouse suspicion. I bumped into one of the employees by mistake.

“I’m sorry, sir,” he said. His sweat was dripping on his forehead like rain, and he seemed to be shaking as he walked away. I held up my card revealing his face on it. Killing him was wrong, but I had to bring my father back. My feelings justified what I had to do. I snuck up on him slowly as if I was just double-checking which brand of soap was better than the other. I got closer and closer until he was in range of my water gun. Bam.

That guy managed to sucker punch me. He was running away from me. He probably knew that I was after him.

I was going to chase after him until I saw Sven dragging his unconscious body on the floor.

“Deliver the final blow,” he said. I raised my water gun up and fired. My target’s body had completely dissolved into a red fluid once my gun’s water touched him.

I breathed a short sigh of relief knowing that I had one target left. My card buzzed revealing to me that my next target was Sven. Confusion and horror quickly turned into impulse as I tried to reach for my water gun. Sven, the man who taught me how to play the game, the man who I trusted, my best friend, was my assassin. Crack.

Sven broke my arm and tossed me to the ground. He was pointing my water gun at me.

“I can’t believe that you always had a plan to try and kill me,” I said in pain.

“I’m sorry about your father,” he said, “but I need this prize more than you do.” I began to laugh as the pain started to overtake my body.

“Does that gun even work on me?”

“Yes, the rules said that any gun like this can be used. It didn’t say anything about you needing to use the one in your box.” My stomach sank deeper than a rock in a pond. I could feel death looming above me waiting to get me.

“Did you visit me asking for your money back or was it finish me off?” Sven appeared miserable holding that gun to me.

“I guess you really did pay me back in the end for being such an easy target.” Sven fired the water gun causing my body to melt. “I promise that your death won’t be for nothing. I plan to challenge the ones who made this game to begin with.” He flashed me his card which read, “You Win!” before disappearing right before my eyes.

Eric Louis Bagtas



Eesha Chen

Sad Sad Day

After the lights go out and my smile is gone all that is left is my sadness, the feeling of a flag pole in my chest overcomes me. When a crew is gone and there's no friendship to return to, does a captain need to go down with his ship or can he go away so that what's left of his crew doesn't have to see what's left of his still crying face? Or does he have to stay? And see them all go, the deserters they are leaving for the future. All I can do is cry. I don't care about anything for my future because the future is full of history that I can't care about. All I want to see is their smiling faces as we hurry off to our next adventure. I care about seeing and being with them, not ruling the world. I often can't tell if things are falling apart or falling in place. Letting the days go by like water underneath is torture by my definition, because of the agonizing pain that's caused by the painstakingly bloody change from “see you later” to “goodbye”. Please take my heart away, take it to a place I can't stay so I can see what's in front of me and not what's at my feet.

Blood, bones, and a sunken friendship.

Jael Sanchez



Jael Sanchez

Ophelia - Sir John Everett Millais

The night breaks through the bronze doors of the museum. That's all Moore can tell. His blood is fermenting with every second of excitement. He will see his love once again. He runs, each footstep somehow light as a feather, not making a sound.

I will find you, I promise.

Oliver follows close behind. The painting approaches. It reaches out to the men, its colors swarming their senses. They must have it. Oliver pivots his head like an owl, checking their surroundings. You can see the strain in his face, tearing it from the alluring sight. "Now. take it now." He whispers like the sky. At his command Moore's hands fly out of his pockets like bullets. With a swift motion he carries the frame down and places a replica in the original's grave. The painting is alive now. Oliver and Moore watch in awe, seeing such an elegant thing from such a close perspective. A citrus scent floats through the air accompanied by jasmine.

"The scent of jasmine makes people tell secrets."

Except there are none. They sing through the halls for everyone to hear. Shapes and colors, lines and shades of extravagant charm. Moore weeps. His tears fall to the white marble and make the first sound of the night. Oliver shouts, the room swims. "Stop right there!" The police have heard, they have seen, they have smelt, they have tasted. The two men run again, this time with steps as loud and grand as Mt. Vesuvius. It sees them through the open door, warning them to stop. The moonlight shines, ugly tonight with unnecessary brightness. The police still chase. Moore clutches the painting in his arms and looks to Oliver. For a second the world is consumed by a white light. Oliver shoves Moore to the ground. A sound echoes through the air. There is a fuzz in Moore's brain, his sight lost and searching for a destination. That is Oliver. His body is slumped on the ground, a liquid climbs through his dress shirt's fabric. Blood. Moore lets out a

sound so horrifying and petrified that the police seem to dissolve for a moment. The air turns black and it drips. “Oliver, Oliver, are you still there?” Moore searches for something, a twitch in the lips or eyes. The body is limp and melts like cold silver at his touch. He is then torn away by four hands grinding his bones to ash as he struggles to gain control of his newfound grief. The painting is taken. Moore now has lost the only two things that make life worth living.

Bea Tolson



Mamie Rushkoff

Editor's Note

Stream of Consciousness is a narrative style that tries to capture the natural flow of a character or person's thoughts and feelings from a particular event; it's meant to be immersive and as though the reader is pulled into the experience the narrator is having. These pieces in the magazine were written by Seniors about a vivid event in their lives.

Stream of Consciousness Piece

Oh my god oh my god *ohmygod* okay I think I should leave. 10:41 AM. Pack up pack up pack up. Did it happen? Why is she telling me to come home? There is a tightrope walker being drawn on the board. I see wood. Wooden desks, wooden floors, wooden doors. How do I leave? Should I just stay here? Class is almost over. I think I can wait it out. Should I wait it out? *Why isn't she answering me???*

Mom: 1 new notification. Okay, I have to check my phone really quickly... "It's about to happen. Just come home during lunch." 10:48 AM. The scent of the air smells strange. Different. *FOCUS!* "Okay... what is significant about the tightrope walker?" The normality of life has completely changed. Left leg is shaking. Heart is pounding. "What do I do right now?" Just put your pencil away... 10:52 AM. *Did it happen? Why isn't she responding? Oh my god ohmygod.* My mind is blank.

11:07 AM. Trying to stay focused as I am driving home. Mom is calling: pick up or decline? "Are you almost home?" She asks. "It happened."

The world has suddenly froze. *I froze.* The driving wheel looks the same. The view beyond the bridge looks the same. But it doesn't *feel* the same. I entered a new world. A new planet. A new

reality. I am looking but am I really looking? What am I seeing? I'M ON THE ROAD. I can make it home. Can I? Okay okay okay ... just pull over Sarah just pull over... My vision is blurry as I make a left turn on to Clinton Ave. I push my foot onto the brake. I can't breathe. Hyperventilating. Tears falling. A wrecking ball aiming at my heart. I look down with water filled in my eyes. The feeling of shock is zipping through my body. *HOW?*

11:21 AM. Breathe. "I'm going home now." I don't want to face it, but *I'm coming home.*

Sarah Korosi



Sarah Korosi

Editor's Note

The following chapter (and others like it in the magazine) are chapters students wrote after reading *Autobiography of Red* by Anne Carson which is a verse novel loosely based on the myth of Geryon and Herakles. Ultimately though, it's story about a young man with red skin and wings (Geryon) who longs to be able to express himself in a modern world where he feels self-conscious.

V. Bathtime

He felt the swish of the warm water.

The lights were dim, casting a low red glow on Geryon and his mother.

He touched the small crack on the side of the porcelain bathtub,

Small enough for only him to really notice

but big enough for it to bother him.

Geryon watched as each movement he made

created ripples in the muted water,

Crashing into one another until the smooth surface returned.

Although his brother liked to splash around in the during bathtime playing pirates,

Geryon would stay still, enveloped in his own thoughts.

In the bath, all he could think about was school.

He thought about having to go back again, worrying that his "stupidity" would be confirmed.

What's wrong? Did something happen again?

Geryon looked up, his mother casting a shadow over him,

pulling him out of his daze.

He looked down again, staring at the silent water which stared back.

He saw his body, distorted,

Becoming painfully aware of his just now heavy wings.

Do these last forever

Gesturing towards them.

His wings forced him to acknowledge the difference to his peers,

Why did he have wings and no one else he pondered.

His mother laughed slightly as she gently washed his delicate red skin.

As the soap moved over his body, it left a shimmer.

Of course they last forever, and they're beautiful, just like your gorgeous skin and perfect nose

She said as she dabbed the cloth over his nose.

Geryon gave a small smile and shivered as the once warm water cooled down.

One minute sweetie, let me get your towel

He dove under the water hoping

To warm himself up, cringing as the miniature waves formed above him.

As he came up for air, the atmosphere seemed darker.

Suddenly he started crying,

overwhelming feelings swept over him like

A black noxious gas cascading through the whole room.

Looking across the room at the glossy mirror, clouded over with suffocating steam,

Geryon saw his tears,

fragile and unrelenting, making their way down his cheek

Like sky filled jewels cooling his red burnt face.

He stared at them like they were little beings following each other.

In a way he was jealous, it looked like they had a meaning

To follow gravity, until his hand obstructed their mission as they

Dissipated and his face was once again just red.

His mother came back in the room,

Geryon noticing her presence from the slight ashy smell of cigarettes,

One that he was very familiar with

and that he could pick up even with the smell of soap surrounding him.

Here I got your towel.

Geryon carefully got out of the bath, making sure not to disrupt the water.

The ceramic tile floor felt cool under his wrinkled feet and the arctic air blasted him.

His mother swept him up in a tight bundle and hugged him.

I know you have been struggling but you are my Geryon and that means everything.

You don't let others define you.

Geryon accepted his mothers grasp,

the distance between them still feeling like 1,000 miles to him yet

warmth swarmed into his body and he felt safe.

Carolina Feng



Mamie Rushkoff

The Death of Socrates - Jacques Louis David

The judge stands with meaning, a sense of empowerment. Moore cannot tell how long it has been. The courtroom glistens with thick air and inhaling it will weigh your lungs down like burying a body at sea. That is all he can envision. The painting is now fading from Moore's mind, getting ripped away. He clutches onto the mere thought of it. He has said nothing throughout the trial. The people are talking, shock runs through the street. With the loss of Moore's life meaning, he has lost any feeling in his body. To speak is impossible, to not speak is out of resentment. If they have taken everything away from him already, he will not let them steal his pride as well.

If I have lost you both, I will lose myself in the maroon of revenge and spite.

"Guilty!" A slam sends a jolt of electricity through Moore. The trial is over, he is done, he can leave. Faceless men grip the dust of his body in their iron fists and drag him away to disappear from society.

-

The cell walls shiver silently. The stone has its back to Moore, it doesn't say anything, it doesn't pay any attention. Shadow consumes him, it crowds inside his mind and soul.

Why must the life of a human being end so despairingly?

The blade is lifted, sharp and glinting like the moon. Moore whispers to himself, only hearing the gravel shift under his shins. "Oliver, I am sorry, I have lost the painting." The guilt devours him. "If we cannot have it, I will bind our souls into one as they were long ago." The knife's edge hits the surface of graying skin and the pain stops.

The darkness of Crow Moore's soul cleanses and spills out like blood from a wound.

My love, I am free.

Bea Tolson



Bea Tolson

VII. God (after Ideas, before Change)

Eventually his mother figured that Geryon should see the pediatrician.

I know you worry, she told him, but you're not wrong in any way.

She held his hand into the waiting room

where the other kids played with rainbow letter puzzles and magnetic drawing pads under bright fluorescent lighting.

You're not wrong, rang between his two red ears, and you're not weak.

The receptionist said it was his turn to see the doctor.

The doctor checked him with extra precision: reflexes, heartbeat, sight, hearing, but there was nothing abnormal about Geryon, he admitted.

He felt like a circus animal as the nurses poured in and out of the room to see the little red monster in his cage.

Geryon merely blinked at them—he didn't amount to much, as far as monsters go.

The doctor asked Geryon to step outside so he could discuss serious things with his mother. His throat swelled and eyes burned.

Outside, he leaned upon the door. *He's small for his age, the doctor began.*

And he's unusual, but healthy. He has sad eyes,

but they work just fine. Inside, his mother was silently nodding.

I hope it's good news, the doctor ventured,

that there is nothing to do. His red heart melted into the core of his stomach.

Nothing can be done, nothing can be done.

His mother smiled, and she grabbed Geryon's hand on the way home.

Outside of the car was loud and hot but
he let the noise of traffic and sirens fade into a hum,
let the red stop lights blur beneath his heavy eyelids. His longing rocked him
to sleep like a sweet lullaby. Geryon slipped
into a neat numbness. He climbed the white ribs of a forgotten dreamscape
until it came to him, slowly.

He awoke pale on an unfamiliar cloud, finding himself a white angel in Heaven.
Everything shimmered with shiny gold, all sun and no shade.
He cowered under the unwavering light. *You're not weak.* He stood bravely.
God cast his round gold eyes upon Geryon.
You've been a very good boy, God said. Geryon nodded. *I am glad to see you again,*
Geryon smiled with his newly pink lips. He had never met God.
Even if you aren't...a normal angel, God finished. He frowned at this.
Behind him, his wings spread dark like the midnight sky.
The other angels whispered and pointed at the little boy with black wings.
Their eyes were wide. *The Devil sent him,* they speculated.
Their dresses swayed like white petals as they held hands and danced and laughed.
They fluttered with daylight feathers and milky smiles.
Geryon straightened his halo as his face reddened beneath the swirling
orb that was God, who said, *you belong here.*
Geryon forced his small mouth into a line. *I don't,* his voice broke.
You did everything right, everything you could do, assured God.

What did I do, he wanted to ask, and why did you make me this way?

But the only word he found was *sorry*

before he was leaned upon the car window again.

Taxi cabs, bicycles, and buses buzzed past him. Geryon winced at the noise.

Again he vanished into dreamless, restless sleep to keep

the bad things away, the emotions and waking nightmares and pounding

screams of red tongues in the outside world.

His mother carried him into the house and placed him beneath heavy blankets.

And when he finally woke, he said to himself,

I'm sorry.

Emilia Anderson



Anna Goiz

Stream of Consciousness

Snow dances above my head, falling wisps commanded only by wind nothing else, just wind blowing the puffs of white to and fro, my cheeks battered by cold stings. Clouds of the ground, layering building creating, like the fort I'm making, layering building creating the white puffy clouds, more and more shaping, the sturdy walls towering bastions against the elements gleaming in whiteness. RED. The shovel cracks and chisels, clumps of cloud become bits, bits become part of the whole, those compact walls hugging me, and the whole is me and the shovel. Together. Red and white.

Keep digging, round out the inside, make it smooth but stable roomy but stable, *stability* matters to prevent Collapse. That's what mom said, *stability* is key. Shear the sides remove the excess expanding the cavern of clouded chaos, my fort, Red cutting shearing removing the excess clouds, light airy and stark landing against the colored fabric, it's cozy, but they must be gone, the goal in sight. Igloo. Red whipping into the clouds, I guess that too shapes the clouds, wind and Red, the angled leading edge of Red a razor for the cloud's ragged stubble.

Enter for a test, sturdy smooth round a Michelangelo of the clouds, cold and white and blinding but inviting, heat in my downy ensemble, gazing out at swirls reflecting the blue orange black of my warmth the hat pants coat, Red lingers admiring our creation and I peer out, the blanket of white draping my vision in a polar haze, blind but not deaf, is that an engine I hear, yes, metal grating with pavement and that *whur* louder, tires engine metal now cacophonous, tires engine metal, salt gingerly ticking in its spread oh shit Collapse. REAL collapse, *stability* eviscerated.

SNOW ICE SNOW ICE, terror in my entrapment, snared in the frozen tears of God, once diaphanous flakes floating in their descent towards Earth now heavy and cumbersome in their

clumped icy form. Never seen the clouds like this, **Help**. Move, Julien, move. Escape, try, no it's impossible too heavy, **Help Help**. Forts are dangerous, she told me again and again but I don't listen too well, that's what the teachers said at least, I just keep talking words into rivers but never pause to hear the whisper of the water. The water. *That* water, so heavy almost suffocating, it now takes its vengeance on me but frozen, my limbs splayed, its vengeance has me trapped and all I can do is listen, the crackle of the snow like fire that could melt me to freedom. And Red. Red is gone too, lost in the abyss of white. White and Red. No longer whole. **Help...**

Julien Amsellem



Reed Kennedy

Matching Smiles

With *American Idiot* by Green Day blasting in my ears, I enter my school. My eyes stare at my purple Converse shoes which are a shade or two lighter than my hair. I'm oblivious to everything except for the familiar two boys I spot on a bench in the lobby. They look at me with neutral expressions, and their lips move, but I don't hear anything. Taking my headphones off, I put them around my neck and smile a bit at them. "Hey, what's up?"

Aiden flashes me an eager, toothy grin and beckons me to lean in. I do. "A new boy is transferring soon. I've heard almost *everyone* in our grade talking about him. They say he's either from England, Ireland, or Australia, *and* he's either mute or deaf – or *something*, so I've heard. Nobody knows his name or what he looks like. But Cal over here claims *we* should befriend him before someone else gets him. Now my other friend group and he seem like they would clash." I feel like Adie is friends with everyone. "Though the three of us befriending him seems like a good idea."

Caleb sends Aiden a proud look. "I bloody *told you* that I have good ideas." Then, he looks at me. "So, Micah, if you see a new kid around. Talk to him." He pauses, "Or write, *or sign*...I'm not too sure how non-speaking people communicate."

"Okay, I'll see you guys soon," I respond, leaving without looking back.

I hate having Algebra II first thing in the morning. It's barely 8:30 – my brain isn't in English mode, so why should it be in algebraic mode? I sit at my usual seat in the middle, not geeky enough for the front but not terrible enough for the back.

"Micah," my teacher, Mrs. Hughes, looks at me. "A new student is joining our class. I'm holding *you* responsible for showing him the ropes. Do you think you can do that?"

I nod, knowing it's the kid Aiden and Caleb were talking about earlier. I'm not all that interested in him, though. But my curiosity is piqued knowing most if not *all* of our grade is talking about him. "Yes, I can handle that."

She nods in reply before clapping her hands to start class. However, she doesn't start with an introduction of the new kid. In fact, there isn't anyone standing at the front of the room or anything like that. So instead of waiting on somebody, I zone out, tapping my pencil on my desk.

Then, the door creaks open, and there's a figure at the door. A kid around my age walks in, phone in his hand. He stands nervously, biting on his lip ring as he rocks back and forth on his heels. Mrs. Hughes smiles at him, then points to the empty desk beside me.

The boy nods, moving to sit next to me. His flannel brushes against my arm for a moment but I don't mind. "Hi," I whisper, leaning in as Aiden had done. "I'm Micah Collins. I don't know if you're mute or deaf or what, but let me know if you need me to write." He moves to type something on his phone, which baffles me slightly. We're allowed to be on our phones in class, but it's teacher-dependent. Mrs. Hughes is *not* one of those teachers.

"*You're fine. I can hear you fine. I'm Landon Harrison,*" it reads. "*I just moved here. I'm from Australia – which isn't as cool as America, IMO.*"

Ha, this kid is *hilarious*.

“Nice to meet you, Landon.” I smile, gesturing to his shirt underneath his flannel. “I like your shirt. *Led Zeppelin* is one of my favorite bands.” It’s now that I finally get a proper look at his eyes. His piercing baby blue eyes look like tiny crystals in a dark-lit cave, but his silver lip piercing makes up for it. His expression is unreadable, but he looks anxious. For all I know, maybe he just hates eye contact.

It takes him a good few seconds to type, but he does. “*Thanks, I like them too! I love your hair, BTW! Purple is one of my favourite colours. BTW, what do you have next block?*”

“Thank you, it’s one of mine too. I have P.E. next,” I grimace at the thought. “But my friends and I have our own locker room ‘cause we’re pains in the neck. What about you?”

“*Hey, me too!*” He replies, “*Would you mind walking with me? Only if you’re comfortable :-)* No pressure.”

I nod before the bell shrieks. Today is one of those random no-homework days she gives, so I’m grateful. I tap my foot nervously as I wait for Landon to finish packing his belongings. We head out afterward and he follows my lead.

Landon doesn’t seem all that timid. I don’t know where Aiden got his assumption from. We enter the locker room to see Aiden with an eyeliner pencil in one hand, struggling to hold an antsy Caleb still with the other. Both of them are already in their change of clothes and are on a bench.

“Oh, hey!” Aiden smiles at us – or, *me*. “Is that the new kid behind you?” I can hardly get a response out before Aiden’s already striding toward him, but Landon doesn’t seem like he wants to back away. “I’m Aiden Ingram, nice to meet you.”

Landon shakes his hand before a robotic voice with an Australian accent comes through his phone’s speakers. “*Landon Harrison, nice to meet you too!*”

“Hi,” Caleb chimes in from the bench, “I’m Caleb Howland. Nice to meet you, man!” He waves; Landon waves back.

“Why are you doing Cal’s eyeliner?” I ask as Aiden returns to the bench and I start changing into a loose-fitting tank top and basketball shorts.

“Cal’s punk rock, remember? He wants to be like Billie Joe Armstrong from Green Day.” Aiden explains.

“*Adie!*” Caleb whines, “When I said I wanted my guyliner done, I didn’t mean ten minutes before P.E.!”

“*Hey, when I was little, I wanted to be a penguin!*” Landon interjects from the other side of the room. “*That doesn’t mean my friends covered me with makeup!*” Aiden snickers at Landon’s remark, “*But hey, Adie? I know we’re not like, friends or anything. But if you wanted to do my eyeliner sometime, I wouldn’t mind.*”

Aiden smiles, “I’d love to, Landon! Also, just for saying that, we’re totally friends now!” Adie is so easily charmed, I wonder why he still doesn’t have a girlfriend. Not that any of us do, though. “I should do all your eyeliners.”

“No way!” I protest, mimicking Caleb’s reluctance from a little while ago. “Eyeliner is for emos, we aren’t emos! We’re punk rock!”

“Hell yeah!” Caleb agrees. “Punk rockers stick together, which means they have to go to P.E. even if they don’t want to. C’mon, guys!”

We all head out toward the gym. As we walk, I turn to Landon. “Hey, dude? Do you want to sit with us at lunch? We usually go off-campus ‘cause we’re juniors and allowed to do that.”

There’s no voice out of Landon’s phone, which worries me. Yet he shows me something he’s typed instead.

Yes, I’d love to. :-)

I meet his gaze for the second time, and this time, we share matching smiles.

Sophia Lopez



Reed Kennedy

X.IV LIFE UPDATE

Is the best yet to come?

Herakles laid on the cool foam mattress

Sleeping a dark red slumber

While Geryon sat up shaking with rosy anticipation

Is it making love if you do not know if you love the person?

Geryon would not dare ask but instead

Just think about it.

He got up slowly, the mattress springing up with eagerness as he walked towards the window.

He opened the curtains, revealing

A cotton candy sky of

Blackened blue

The brightest yellow

Dark pink

And a red so pungent it matched Geryon's wings while being simultaneously

Ominous enough to hide all one's secrets in the clouds.

Geryon then grasped the camera and saw his shiny reflection in the lens

Who are you, he asked himself

Snap

A photo of Geryon went into the camera by accident

Snap

The inviting sky

Snap

A photo of Herakles in a peaceful rest

Time for the autobiography,

Geryon thought while watching each

Breath escape Herakles's unconscious grasp

His blue bony back beguiling Geryon's bold eyes

He was just so calm.

Geryon grabbed his red notebook and a golden pencil. He carefully sat back down on the bed, only releasing Herakles's snore in the midst of positioning himself to write:

1. *Geryon was still a monster*
2. *He doesn't know if he has six arms or six legs. He just is.*
3. *Now in the room of Herakles*
4. *He has to find his red dog*
5. *Herakles can kill Geryon now if he desires*

But does Herakles desire?

Herakles's torso floated up from the bed

6. *Herakles is gold like Geryon's father*
7. *Geryon is red like his mother but no joy. His mother holds the joy for him*

Something is missing from this Geryon thought,

Not realizing Herakles was watching his every move

The eggshells Geryon was walking on shattered in his mind.

Ow, it hurts, he felt in his mind and wings.

The way his elbows jolted in sharpness when Herakles

Moved in belligerence.

I know you now, Geryon said to Herakles

Yeah, okay.

Herakles had no emotions so Geryon had a load in honor of him

Just for the sex?

Geryon said while a droplet of water stubbornly drained from the left side of his eye

No,

Herakles said with too much passion for honestly

Two boys

No, one boy.

One boy and one man lying together in unison, one wavelength on different planets

Persephone and Hades,

David and Goliath,

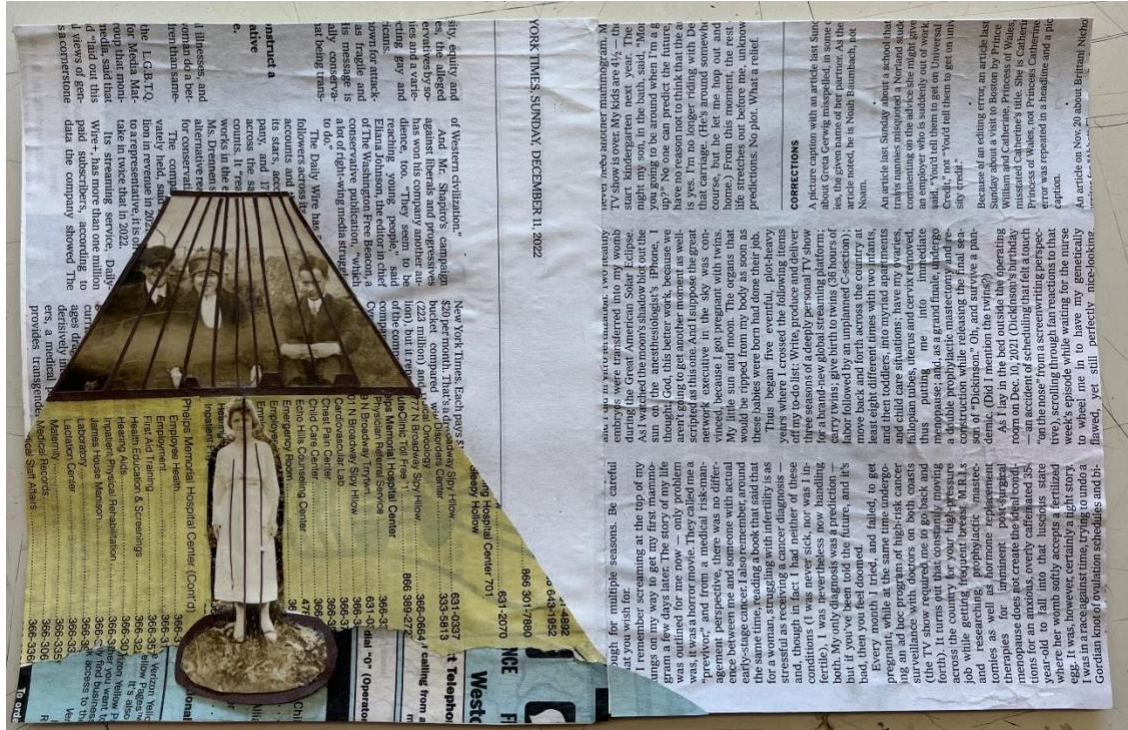
Red and Yellow,

Geryon and Herakles.

One final note, Geryon thought:

- 8. Herakles is not violent enough to kill Geryon.
- 9. Yet.

Mamie Rushkoff



Amanda Scholz

Cherries From Heaven

I laughed
And then it stopped

Nobody knows why
It's the happiest day
Of my life

The sky full of crimson
Cherry droplets
Falling on my skin
I relish in
The sights, sounds, and smells
Of the festivities
Even as
The stage
Fades to black

I dip my fingernails
In blood
I slick back my hair
With tears
No fears

Chloe Hughes



Amanda Scholz

Just A Silly Guy TBH

“No. Heckin’. Way,” announces Atlas as he slams his hands onto the Weirdo Table. “Is that- is that Blue? Like, Blue as in the- you know, BLUE-”

“Okay but like, are my eyes deceiving me? Like is that ACTUALLY Atlas Maplerose? Like, THE Atlas Maplerose of Prismole?” Blue overdramatically gasps and falls onto the table, accidentally landing on an extra-saucy spaghetti and meatballs. (She’s a ghost so it doesn’t really affect her unless she ghostifies it, blah blah magic stuff. Y’know).

“NO WAY!” Atlas cries, literally *vaulting* onto the lunch table. “Mind. Blown. THIS is unbelievable. One could even say scandalous. Like there’s actually no way, IN THE UNDERGROUND, that this is Blue. You know what, this is *definitely* Vee. Playing a prank on us again. YO VEE, WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THIS?” he calls to a messy-haired vampire with her eyes glued to her enchantophone. Her black eyes dash up from her screen.

“Blue just ruined your pasta,” she says matter-of-factly. “I have nothing to do with this.”

“OH REALLY?” Atlas moves his bug-eyed face about an inch from Vee and smiles both evilly and adorably at the same time. “So you’re *sure*, VeeeeeeeeeeeeeeIdon’tknowyourlastname, Student of Prismole High School, *superb* class prankster, SCREENAGER-EST VAMPIRE IN THE WHOLE SCHOOL, that THIS, THIS GIRL, TWO CLASSES BELOW ME, the one ROLLING in my pasta, is *the* Blue the Ghost Elf.”

“Woah woah, wait a second, bro.” Blue joins Atlas on top of the table as well. “I think Atlas is messing with your head, Vee. Because I know for a fact that *I* am Blue Skybright, known as Blueberry to Lucky the Saldrake, and there is NO WAY that THIS... moth... boy... guy... is THE Atlas Maplerose.” She ghostifies a meatball from Atlas’s spaghetti and pops it in her mouth. “He does have great spaghetti, I must admit.”

“Heyy Blueberry, sorry the bug bar line takes forever ahaha- I’m back though!” A short Saldrake wearing some kind of animal ears and tail sits down in their spot and takes a bite of their swampy salad. Blue and Atlas sit themselves down on either side of them. “Hi Lucky!” sings Blue, blushing a little.

“Heyy,” Atlas says with a wave. “Bugboiii!!!” Lucky smiles widely surrounded by their two best friends, meanwhile a highly concerned Vee slowly inches away from the trio’s side of the table to join her friends in the middle of a conversation about some TV show’s problematic creator.

One who doesn’t go to Prismole High might look at this conversation and go “What The Literal Heckity Heck”, but everybody knows this is a classic lunch period at this magic school’s “Weirdo Table”. Not Vee, Sky and Ginger, the kids who actually do productive things with their lives and have at least ten braincells. Specifically *the* trio. Like, the them. The beans. The entities the mortals the flesh sacks the YIPPEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE RGRFGYRFHJHG. You get the point.

Lucky is a Saldrake, an anthropomorphic amphibian-like species that’s technically from the surface. Lucky has always been different from other people, a big dreamer and determined to learn magic. (And yes, they have their fair share of social awkwardness).Of course they couldn’t have been where they are today without their best friend Blue. Blue is a ghost elf who, like Lucky, loves fangirling over TV shows and comics. Sure, she may seem a little quirky or strange, but in reality Blue is the sweetest person ever who just wants to make friends and bring joy to others. As for Atlas, he’s the type of guy who you either

hate or he's your friend. No in between. This humanoid moth boy is literally part of half the friend groups in the entire school. He and Blue met performing in the One Act plays together, and have been friends since. Bro hops between tables so much, the Easter Bunny's got nothing on him. He's just a silly guy who loves art, theater and writing, yet he somehow still manages to be goofy and very chill at the exact same time. No one knows how he does it, he's just that cool.

Speaking of cool, we now return to the trio's mindless chatter only when Blue and Lucky come to realize that Atlas has moved tables again; all that's left of him is a note.

'Hi guys, I'll be hopping tables again! Hope you enjoy your lunches :] -Bugboii'

Blue gasps with shock. What kind of table could Atlas possibly have moved to? The writers? The theater kids? The guys who only wear hoodies and somehow manage to be both nerdy and cool at the same time? "You know what, Lucky, I think lunch just got a little more interesting."

Lucky looks up from their salad. "Hrmmm?" they ask with a mouth full of leaves. Soon their eyes widen as they figure out what happened; Lucky quickly swallows their food and would grab Blue's hand if she wasn't a literal ghost. "I think we've got another lunchtime mystery to solve: Where Is Atlas Today?" Join our heroes, Lucky and Blue, next time on "My OC's Just Being Silly Guys".

(Disclaimer: this is in no way a real show, but if you want me to explain some of my original character lore, don't be afraid to ask hehehe).

Lily Ramsey



Anna Goiz

Stream of Consciousness

The line. Look at the line. Look. Close. So close. Behind me, I feel him I know I feel him. Steps so loud. The THUD THUD THUD. Spikes digging into rubber. Scoop while you run. Doug says Scoop with your feet. Propel. Arlo says Kick it behind you, push it Away Away Away kick it Away. Horse on a race track. Head down and gallop. Push it Away. Where is the air can't breathe trying my lungs empty, void of oxygen need oxygen where is the air I can't breathe can't breathe. Drowning fish out of water where is my water who put me here.

BREATHE BREATHE BREATHE CAN'T BREATHE.

At my side now, getting closer getting closer. *Bring it home Bring It Home*. Quiet roar of the — they are up in the air, dorsiflexion, flex the dorsi curl the toes knees High Up In The Air. Practice 3:30 at the track, run the warmup do the dynamics show the team. Show them the A Skip the B Skip, remember the dorsiflexion guys its important are there any questions? Show Ben he is struggling the movements are not crisp he is laughing I am laughing I show him the rhythm the metronome of footsteps drumming against the red and black. Should be all red says Coach, flaking the rubber is flaking it should not be black she says a new track is all red. *Going strong keep going strong*. The time? Seconds passed? 24.8 is my best Noah runs a 24 I can run faster a little faster. I see the line, fuzzy, it blurs black then white black white black white. BLACK. BLACK. I close my eyes the stitch is a coal an iron it burns hotter than when I grabbed that cast iron when I was little, holding on letting the heat sear my skin mom yelled at me Let Go Let Go Liam. Can't Let Go the bodies are swimming the crowd is underwater the Woodlands kid with the bleached hair is underwater Coach is underwater why do they sway? Behind me just barely behind me now. Face sneering energy and exhaustion paint a portrait. No Rembrandt, maybe Picasso? *Don't Look Back You're Right There*. Loud roar now LOUD LOUD LOUD. I am on the line it is here I am here are they behind me where are they? My time what is my time did I do it am I

faster? The ground is cold I can breathe now, ragged, chin back, every breath is sweet. Release.

This scene is about me running in my first home meet of the year during Track and Field last Spring.

Liam Painter



Jael Sanchez

THE CONFERENCE: BETWEEN CHAPTERS VI AND VII

Geryon, come back here please

Her voice is wrong, not mother

Teacher keeps talking to her

About Geryon

What is she saying, though Geryon

She is saying that I am red

She will tell everyone that I am red

Geryon felt the red bubbling up

Inside him

The volcano is here

And it's angry

Geryon, come back please

Says mother this time

Better voice

Geryon comes back

He puts his little red

Hands on his little red

Lap and sits

Teacher is asking more questions

Do you feel down or sad a lot?

Do you feel supported at home?

Do you feel good spending time with friends doing fun things?

Geryon felt red

The room was colorful, but Geryon was the only red thing

The red was creeping up his throat

He wanted show the teacher the red

Tell her

Instead Geryon looked at the room

There were green plants

Orange pencils

White paper

Pink chairs

Mom was in one

Brown tobacco

On the mother's tongue

Mom smokes too

Teacher makes Geryon

Leave mom

Geryon felt red again

Geryon ran

To the outside

Of the room

Of the hallway

Of the school

Of the doors

The cool air dampened the red

Inside him

Geyon looked around and saw

A green bench

The buddy bench he sat on

When he didn't have someone to play with

On it now

Was a camera

Isabelle Aiken



Amanda Scholz

Stream of Consciousness

The wheels stiff, the seats small, the seat belts tight, the cars cold the cars hot. Sidewalk, cracked, fence, brown, sky, blue. Speak already. Stop hovering in the corner of my eye. she seems nice. Aren't those glasses the same as my grandma's? Don't look don't look, what is she writing, the pens moving furiously on her clipboard, is that a clipboard? Yellow car blue car red car purple car, stop already. It's so quiet say something, stop already. She can fail you for the littlest thing or ignore it. Lady in black jeans, kids laughing, bus stopped, child in stroller. I got this, I got this, what could possibly go wr- "You can start now". Ok, car into drive It's easy, done it a thousand times, grab the handle, when did it have cracks, spiraling out like a spider web, check, no cars coming, go, ease up on the gas, slowly slowly, it's easy it's easy, hands two and ten, two and ten, two and ten, keep hands two and ten. Tires screeching, cigarette out the window, exhaust popping. She's writing again, I haven't even moved what could she possibly be writing, try not to look try not to look, I can't tell looking out the corner of her eye, what is she writing with that little red pen? Focus on the road, I can't look at her I can't look at the trees with their red brown yellow, focus on the road focus on the speedometer, the speedometer, orange thought it was black, there's a black Toyota isn't that the same car, stay a good distance behind, I'm only going 15 ok press down a little, only a little, there's one car, good distance, limits 25, going 20 so a little more gas stay two under switch back to brakes stay back and forth simultaneously between the brake and gas the road and the speedometer. Cars stopped, pedestrians crossing, white, 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1, green. Focus on the road, lights coming up, cracked all over, slow down, where am I gonna go, left right straight, yellow paints chipping, cars are moving, left or right right or left, where where where, 4 cars, 3 cars, 2 cars, 1 car, my car.

“Turn left”

Blinker up, left arrow’s flashing, green, ticking noise. Slow down, hand over hand turn cut the turn close, don't hit red car, don't add another scratch. Foot on brakes and gas brakes and gas gas and brakes. These houses look like the ones in my neighborhood. Wood doors, driveways, 2 cars, lawn, grass, cut, windows, 2 stories, lights on. The speedometers at 24 hit the brakes, slightly. That pothole is massive should I try and swerve it, may take points off, slowly go over it. She looks annoyed, hope she doesn't take off points. Stop, covered in red, black striking it, slow down slow down full stop. Swirly graffiti, no time to look, full stop.

“Take another left and make sure it isn’t as wide as the last one”

It wasn't wide, careful on the next one, focus. Slow down kids live here, how many people notice it, how many listen? Streets light, black, empty, a shell. I'm going 20, blue hondas gonna cut me, I'm going 15, right no signals, 18, end of her mouth is straight, 20, she’s bored, 22, who paints their house green. Suv’s, BMW's. He's just walking, what if he jumped? Focus focus focus focus focus focus, where do I go, left right, up down, no sideways no dow- “Take a right at the end of this road”. She sounds like a school aid. Cut it cut it cut it. Not wide not wide. Hand over hand. Remember. Straighten out. Smooth. Quick. Close. “That was better”. Just do the same. Each time. Ok ok ok ok, good, I'm good, I got this, pass pass pass. Good. Don't worry. Don't overthink it. Im Ok. Ok.

Noah Greenwald



Sarah Korosi

Ramen With Friends

Ramen, meet
Raw men
Or straw man
Arguments being
Blown apart
I begin
To start
To feel
My heart
Beat in time
With the rhythm
Of my mind
Rounded up
All the pieces
Is there a
Higher honor than
Being called
Jesus
By your friends?

Chloe Hughes



Amanda Scholz

XVIII. HEARTBREAKER

Smog entered every orifice of Herakles's body, filling his soul up with empty grayness and obscuring him from himself.

Herakles watched Geryon

No not watched

Studied

Like Geryon was a wounded bird in one of those nature documentaries and Herakles was a hungry predator

The Canary makes itself as small as possible, hoping to hide its broken wings from the hungry lion Herakles said, in his best impression of a British accent

What

Nothing, nevermind

He hurriedly turned up the volume

Discordant electric guitars wailed too loudly

Herakles turned his attention to the window he never could sit still

Gray boredom was tap tap tapping on the window

Pleading to be let in

Gray light filtering through the window

Gray light dappling across Geryon's yellow-tinged skin

Gray filling Herakles's lungs

Smothering him as he

SUFFOCATED

Grabbed his inhaler

Frantic puffing

White fizzy medicine filling his lungs, pushing out the gray

Breathe

It worked quickly adrenaline flooding his veins

Fingers drumming out the beat of the song that was filling the room with a bass line like a heartbeat

Herakles looked at Geryon really

Looked

Geryon wearing Herakles's Lions hoodie

No

Not Herakles's

It belonged to another boy, with tousled goldenrod hair and freckles along the bridge of his nose

Gray eyes welling up with tears

Herakles's fault

Didn't know his own strength, the callousness of the guitar calluses on his fingers

Ripped apart delicate paper hearts

Geryon's own heart beat Crimson red under pale skin

The blood so red so alive moving through spidery veins

Herakles?

He's getting attached

Geryon not Herakles

Herakles didn't get attached

That was the trouble

Better to break it off before

Before

Better break it off

Maybe later he could

No no couldn't worry about that no

Better just end things

Later is for later

Penny for your thoughts? Geryon asked

Herakles fumbled through his own mind

Pointed to something on his wall

Ripped this bumper sticker off a car the other day

Pretty sick huh?

He knew what he had to do.

Anna Thomas



Bea Tolson

Stream of Consciousness

Napkin fork knife roll napkin fork knife roll napkin knife fork no fork knife *excuse me?* He isn't talking to me, focus. again louder closer

Excuse me?

Quickly whiplash Me? big ears wow adorable smile wow so adorable I smile too, too big. beautiful hair eyes brown like me brown hazel pretty brown eyes his eyes wow they are really pretty why looking at me? moving too fast, slow it down, calm down. heart. me me *me? yeah?* Do I like working here? . . . I can feel his breath so close fix your face don't gawk. this isn't real yeah? yeah. *yeah* laugh happy cute laugh I made him laugh wait. why?

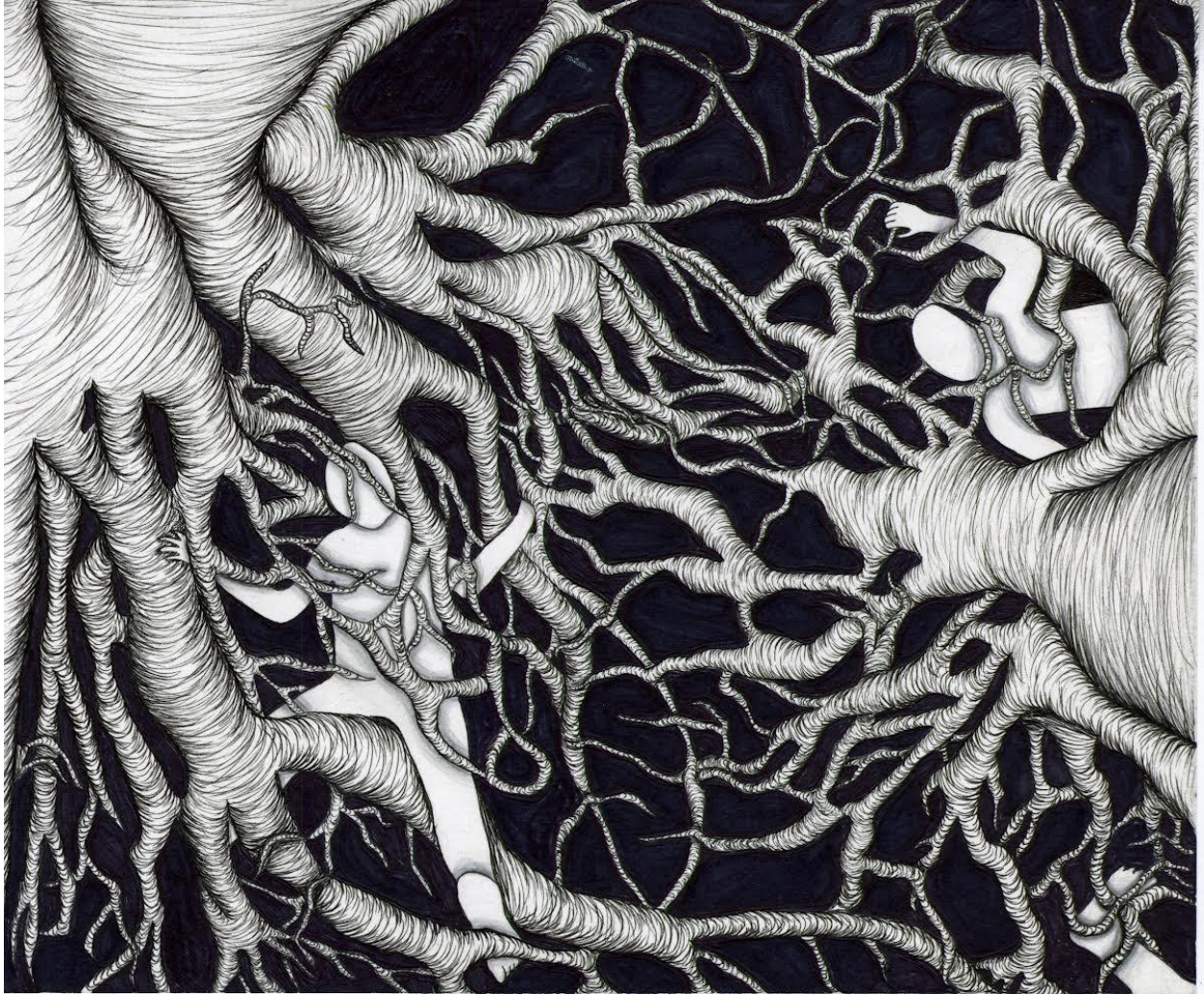
Really?

Oh no I lied I don't no I do like it here I love it here I love him no where has the sun gone it is dark depressing changing keep talking he is leaving NO! come back touch him fall hurt yourself

It gets old

That was a chuckle I've read the word chuckle but didn't understand i understand now Oh he doesn't like it here strong shoulders what about me? I'm here, even his back looks good. Why, why? It's leaving this moment is over I'm not ready no no no it's gone stuck it's moving fast so fast stuck come back . . . excuse me . . . stuck . . . Excuse me? . . . stuck . . . respond! *Is there anything I can help you with?* hello? Can I have some napkins? Yeah napkins, touched her hand oops napkin fork knife roll napkin fork knife roll was my back straight? Did I suck in? Do you like working here? Napkin fork knife roll was I Pretty?? napkin fork It gets old knife roll quick look in the window ok now. look away stop fixating oh crap he saw me Andi

Amanda Scholz



Eesha Chen

woeful reflections

My ritual late-night tears are like honey;
viscous and enrobing, they engulf the shallow, fragile soul with vigor;
I relish in the sweet slowness of life, staring at the fuzzy darkness
the sugary aftertaste a part of my blood, pumping through my limbs and the pulsing tender heart.
Misery sits, warm, within me
an inevitable devil, a byproduct of clouds blocking my view of the horizon.
The brain is vacant, a mere husk, awaiting a dreamless sleep;
as my lids slide over glossy eyes, weak from pushing out the contents of the mind, the heart pools with ribbons of
sweet, sweet honey
Piling, mesmerizingly, oh so tantalizing, like the sand in a sand timer -
only this sand timer won't stop filling.
As the Sun decides to hoist itself up, so do I;
begrudgingly, step after step, I shuffle through the world, letting every crevice of the Earth slap cynical judgment at
my tear-streaked face,
the syrupy delight of weeping awaiting me at my pillow.

Sofia Eliasi



Bea Tolson