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Epiphany

The Schuylkill Valley High School Literary Magazine

Volume 14

2021

Letter from the Editor

To Our Readers, Writers, Artists, Photographers, and Poets:

In this edition of *Epiphany*, it will be evident that creativity prevails through all circumstances. Despite the undeniable challenges faced by the nation this year, these words and images that will forever reside on these pages show us the beauty of art in all of its forms. Though we are only teenagers, the pieces I present to you show talent that is immeasurable by years.

I especially would like to draw attention to the power of these pieces to provide an escape from the outside world. Some of these pieces elicit memories from my younger adolescence that nearing the end of my senior year I had forgotten. Our contributors write as if they have ink running through their veins. Our artists draw as if their mind is an endless canvas for their own gallery of one-of-a-kind art. And our photographers, I sincerely believe, have an innate sense in their muscles that tells them when it is time to snap the perfect picture. From the very bottom of my heart, I am confident that the work of our talented contributors will move you the same way that they moved me.

On behalf of the entire *Epiphany* staff, I send my thanks to every student who graced this edition with their creativity. I would like to send a special thank you to my predecessor, Layomi Adejo. Miss Adejo made time in her jam-packed college schedule to answer any questions I had about filling the immense shoes she left. As well, on behalf of all of our students, I extend my gratitude to Ms. Antalosky. The 2020-2021 school year is the first (of hopefully many) that Ms. Antalosky joined the Schuylkill Valley staff. It shows immense bravery, that I will always respect, to take on the daunting task of advising a club your first year, especially in a pandemic. Our magazine would not be what it is today without the help of Mr. Cullen and his graphic design team and the English teachers who continue to foster the creativity of young writers. Finally, thank you to every *Epiphany* reader, without you there would be no audience for these incredible pieces. Even in the face of adversity and an unknown future, I ask that each of you continue to create. Art, photography, poetry, and writing will never go out of style.

Forever and Always,

Briana Silasavage

'21 Editor-in-Chief

Dear __,

Cassidy Noll '21

I gave so many signs:

Not cleaning your dirty dishes in the sink;

leaving your laundry in the dryer;

God, I even stopped sleeping in our bed,

but you never noticed.

And before you even start, of course I tried to communicate with you,

but could you even hear me?

I could've plastered my face and

"Hey! I'm not happy."

"Please notice me, I need you."

"Help me!"

on a billboard

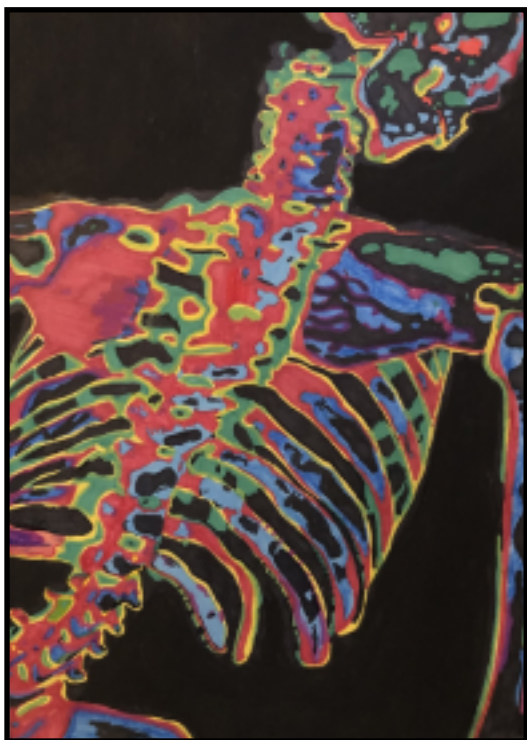
But it wouldn't have mattered;

you were just too blind.

or maybe you just didn't care.

I'm sorry I couldn't do more, but this is goodbye.

- Sincerely, ____.



R.I.P.

Lekaiah Solomon '22

Honorable Mention Poetry

In my mind, I cry for you

According to my heart, I'm dead too

I stopped trying to find the words,

To explain how I feel

You no longer breathing the same air as I do

Has become unbelievably real

It's always so hard to say goodbye

So I'll keep the farewells to myself

And allow my soul to smile

"I miss you" is not the phrase,

I loved you is better said

Celebrating the joy you gave to me

Is what I'll do instead

From the heart of love and the soul of happiness

I'll mourn forever for you

With the eyes of the moon and the smile of the sun

Your strength, I'll respect and keep true

Enjoy Your Peace

Maria Armenta '23

Honorable Mention

The Lottery

Ryland Miller '24

Winning the lottery is life changing,
Something that happens at an instant.

You could be living in a shack,
Then in a 3 story mansion.

Driving a small minivan that's unable to drive 2 miles,
To a new half a million dollar Lamborghini.

But everything has a cost,
Some people might think of you differently,
Think that the money has tainted your soul.

Some people may treat you kindly
Just because you are wealthy.

Winning the lottery is a gift.
It could change your life for the better,
Or may just cast you out,

As if your life is a stranded boat in a vast ocean.

That is your choice to decide.
You can buy things you could only dream of having,
But you could also do good,
Help the people that were in circumstances.
Winning the lottery is life changing.
It could happen at an instant.
Once your number is said,
Your life will never be the same.

Champion

Madison Bering '24

An unforgiving goddess
Caresses my hands
The snow is heavy around us
It coats the lands

She is whispering to me
A legend of what I could be
I can not give in to her song
Even though her tales fill me with glee

Her voice still rings in my ears
After she has left this winter wonderland
I ponder if she spoke truth
It's become harder to ignore her command

I stand at a frozen crossroad
A path of glory or a path of shame
The decision is easy
My merciless goddess has won this game



Landon Weaver '23

WHY

Maddyx Dissinger '24

Why does any of this matter?

I understand that as a human being, the goal is to succeed in life.

Whether it may be a goal you set for yourself, or achieving an "x" amount of dollars.

But why is that what we think is the main purpose of life itself?

Nobody ever said, let's all just have fun?

But the bigger question has been in front of you and I this whole time.

Why are we living?

What is the point of your and my purpose?

Why do we as humans think the things we do?

As a human, you must realize that certain things will never end.

For example, something that will never end is racism.

Racism has been around forever, dating back to 1619, when slavery was introduced.

But to understand this next question, you need to understand where I am coming from.

Racism will simply never end because of the way we think as humans.

Whether you make fun of somebody for the color of their skin for attention, jokingly, or seriously.

Or you do it strictly out of hatred for that race.

Now let me ask you this.

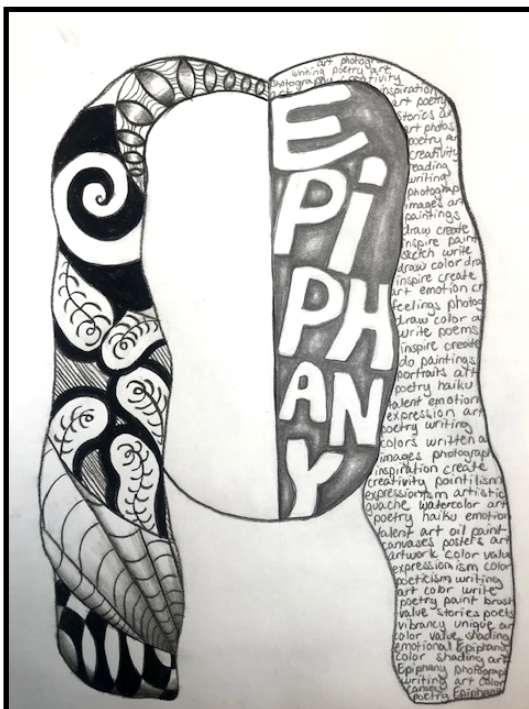
When you were a little kid and you drew a picture, you always put the sun in the top left or right corner.

You colored the grass on the bottom of the page green.

You see no harm in the change of colors, and it is what it is.

The grass and the sun are two COMPLETE different colors, and you did not care in the slightest.

So why now all of a sudden, are people of different color and ethnicity treated differently, even though you and kids around the world did not look at your pictures in a variety of colors differently?



Adrianna Madden '24

Live*Madison Steingraber '24*

Live,
it's only a matter of time before none of us will exist anymore,
a whole new group of human beings, plants, animals.
But you,
you won't be here forever.
Just live,
live like you only have four months left,

Go to that dream destination, order those expensive shoes that are trending,
make friends with that one girl that seems like a hilarious person, eat that ice cream,
sneak out with your friends and go get food at 3 a.m., go shopping for whatever you want,
compliment strangers, go on long walks on the beach, blast music while your head lies out
the car window, hair blowing in the aggressive wind

Live your life like you want.

Don't be ashamed because you wear something that "looks ugly", or is "odd looking",
or don't be embarrassed because you don't look like the beauty standard of today's
generation.

You control your life, and no one else.

Do not ever let the people around you interpret how you have to dress, look, eat, and do.
Everyone has those days, stay in bed, wonder why you are here on this Earth, wonder why
you care what so many people think.

Who
cares.

Do whatever you want, wear whatever you want, don't change your personality for
anyone, and never,

And I mean ever,
change who you truly are.

anonymous



Junk Worth Recycling

Ariana Arias '23

I keep a lot of old stuff in the closet and drawers of my room. Boxes and journals of old memories, a part of a tea party set, and other junk like toys, old teeth, broken watches, a stress ball, chopsticks (some fancy ones), snapple bottle caps, a fan, a mini rake, crazy eye scope, a flashlight with a blue light, some sticks, a shiny box filled with little bags, two filled with built legos and one with a locket of my parents. A lamp without a lightbulb, some unused picture frames (one I painted), a little box with a reflection frame containing two broken rings, a Canadian coin, and three jems. A wooden knob, some headphones with a cord that I don't use, an old rubber band making kit, lots of shells, one big feather and one little feather. A broken bag, plastic bags one with three hats (one is Hawaiian themed) and a Hawaiian flower necklace, the other with two old custom white shirts from SVSD. One shirt from the 2016 road trip of GT church, and a silly green hair band with pompoms. A mailbox I made filled with envelopes of paper containing an important and inspirational message and tiny postcards, jars and bottles of seeds, glass bottles, and other pieces of junk I can barely describe.

It may seem like just junk to you, but it has a deeper meaning, the meaning of the memory. Half of this stuff tells a story about my life. The toys represent my childhood, use them as inspiration for my imagination. The legos (which are also toys) gave me my creativity, using my imagination to build what I have left over for the spare parts and reusing what have been broken down from the lego set. The junk and journals tell the rest of the story, from when I was baby until now. The mailbox I made, however, carries special messages to teach you and me something in the real world and records of online quizzes that help me learn about myself. The rest of this stuff I would someday reuse and/or turn it into something else. I can still use the picture frames for bigger pictures, plant the saved seeds, turn the small pieces of saved junk and shells into decorations, turn my wired headphones into wireless headphones, and with the help of glassblowing, I can turn the bottles into arrowheads and arrowhead earrings. Some of us can't let go of the past easily or throw away something when it looks useless, But some of us can see junk in a different way.

Dreaming

Maggie Kauffman '24

The world is dark, calm, and quiet
As you turn off the lights and snuggle in for the night
Your head hits the pillow and you shut your eyes
Vivid colors and imagination start to steal your mind
You're transferred into a world where anything is possible

In this place you can fly or get eaten by a giant pie
The possibilities are endless and could leave you breathless
However, all good things must come to an end
You open your eyes and your conscience is back again
You try your hardest to drift to sleep and step back into the limitless world

Oh, how quick a peaceful twilight bliss can turn into a nightmare
Something that you once loved and enjoyed, changes into something terrifying
Your worst fears come to haunt you in a place that you cannot control
You can feel like you're endlessly falling, or be chased by something with a creepy face
Waking up shaking in a cold sweat, then you realize it was all simply in your head

Mariah Weik '23





Kristian Wolf '22

With Faith Beneath Her

Courtney Thompson '21

She let her true self shine
 The old version of who she was Faded Away
 Without hesitation she Began to be herself
 Never once stepping back into the Darkness she once hid in
 Light filled the space around her
 Lighting up the darkest of places around her
 When she awoke Every morning
 She never once let her smile falter
 Whatever the day brought
 She faced it with a smile and the Confidence within
 Letting the light from inside shine
 The darkness of the world was destroyed around her

Anxiety

Makaylah Kindoll '24

My scary place is a norm
 I have been there since I was born
 I never thought walking down the street
 Could be such a difficult feat

My legs start to shake
 It begins to feel like an earthquake
 My heart skips a beat
 In fear that I would be the one who took defeat

It could be the infamous white van
 Or the casual sedan
 The fear of being taken
 Is when my anxiety awakens

I try to walk fast
 In hope the feeling goes past
 But it doesn't want to leave
 And there is no time left to grieve

To think this all started with a bike ride
 Makes me want to take a bigger stride
 To help people cope with stress
 And make their mental health less of a mess

The "Perfect" Girl

Marty Welch '24

"Hourglass body in two weeks!" "Drink this to lose 15 pounds in a month!"

I stand in the mirror, looking at my body

Am I not good enough?

The legs that walk me to my favorite places are too wide

The stomach that lets me eat delicious food is too big

The face that makes me unique is suddenly too round and unsymmetrical

I scroll through Instagram, looking at what society calls the "perfect girl"

The ones with tall and lean bodies, with long, bleach blonde hair and big blue eyes

But even those girls have insecurities too

But society is a cheater; it is impossible to win the game

Across the world, people struggle with the unrealistic standards society holds

But one day you will realize

That you are beautiful no matter what

And society is the last thing you need to worry about

Wear that outfit you love, eat the ice cream you enjoy

Because it is your life, not society's.

Wasteland

Cassidy Noll '21

Only the two of us remained

in this wasteland world.

With the slimy, scaly creatures scaling our wall,

Fear clogged my throat like the heavy smoke outside.

You wanted to fight the creatures, to secure our palisade.

I begged you to stay,

but my blinding tears and cries of desperation weren't enough.

You left.

A silver sword across your back, a heavy crossbow in one hand

and my aching heart in the other.

Again, I watched these heinous spawns of hell destroy everything I love

And once more,

I am alone.

Sin
Nolan Rodriguez '22
First Place Fiction

“As I sit here on my throne, waiting for the hungry beast outside to ravage through my castle walls and breach my throne room, ending both my reign and my life. I reflect on the past forty-seven years of my life, on all of the people I have loved, and have lost, to the great sickness of greed. The wicked and unavoidable sickness consumed my father, and his father, and now my brother. As I look at these decrepit stone walls, wondering as to how old these walls are and how much bloodshed have these walls seen?” thought the old king, calmly sitting on his throne, but surrounded by a depressing aura.

With a tear in his eye, the king slowly rose from his throne before somberly walking over to the stone wall. The walls were rough and hurt his skin as he ran his hand across it, but he did not stop. No matter how much the pain hurt, it paled in comparison to the pain he felt within his soul. The king's hand then fell from the wall, his skin shedding a small amount of blood. He then turned back to his open throne room, looking at his large golden throne, and the small sterling silver throne that sat beside it. Looking at the throne, how it shined so brightly yet was the cause of so much pain, it compelled the king to think to himself once more.

“My wife, the woman who meant the world to me. The woman whom I had fallen in love with and had chosen her over any other to marry. The woman who stood beside me from the moment I became king, until now. She was put to an endless slumber in the same tomb as my father. Despite the criticism of the people for her infertility, she still stood strong. Even though none of them knew, in every meeting she was the one who fought for them. She was the one who demanded that the rich start giving food rations to the poor, the one who gave the order to start trading our riches for more cloth for the people. She had even fought tooth and nail in order to convince my entire counsel to end slavery in our kingdom. My wife worked so hard for all of the people, that it eventually killed her. She had grown sick and when people asked her to rest, she would push them aside and continue onward. Soon enough, the sickness became too great and she died for all of them. But the people never knew any of that, and will never know any of that, for they were all blinded by their hate for her. My younger brother, Atrius, had seen all of her unnoticed hard work as his chance to gain power and took credit for all of it. He told the people that he was the one who fought for them and he was the one who truly cared for them, but he could not say any of this while my wife was alive. On the day of her funeral, he stood in the townsquare and listed off the multitude of things that ‘he’ had done for the people. Since they had nowhere else to direct their gratefulness, they believed him on that

day, and Atrius planted the seed that would lead to rebellion. I knew this of course, but I was unable to stop it. Atrius was the leader of the people and at any time he could incite an uprising. When I approached my council with this growing issue, they simply said to kill Atrius. I stood there, staring at my council in disbelief. I could not have my brother killed, I was not only stopped morally but logically. Had Atrius been killed, the people would have just rebelled out of anger. At that moment I realized, I was stuck, and I soon accepted my fate."

The king then calmly walked to his golden throne, gazing at it as if he would never see it again. His eyes then drifted down to a sword that was hidden in the delicately carved arm of the throne, for if the king would have ever needed to defend himself. He reached down and slowly pulled the sword out from the throne, taking the blade to the throne. He began to engrave something into it. As he carefully carved into the throne, he thought to himself once more.

"I knew I would inevitably be overthrown by my people, but I questioned as to whether or not they would all be safe with Atrius as their king. Suddenly, a deep seeded rage began to bubble up inside of me. For all of the times that Atrius had stolen from me, attacked me, blamed me, and even threatened me, I never once grew angry. Now, I see that the reason I never acted out against him was because I still loved him as my little brother. But in that moment, those feelings were gone. I wanted nothing more than to see him dead. When my father passed and I became king, I wanted to be the best I could be for my people. My reign would be talked about for generations and I would be hailed as the greatest king to ever live. But any time I tried to give things to the people, Atrius was always there to stop me. He had always wanted to be king, but I was older and wiser than he, making me more suitable to be king than him. Out of jealousy, he made it his mission to ruin my reign as king, but most of his attempts to sabotage my plans failed because he simply didn't have enough people backing him. Though, he has now turned all of my wife's work back onto me, and I have had enough. If he was going to ruin all of her hard work and ruin my life, then I would end his. I then promptly had it arranged that Atrius would be executed in the town square for treason, and that's exactly what happened."

In a sudden fit of frustration, the king dropped the sword and slammed his fist into the throne. He then sat still for a few minutes, heavily panting and tracking the beads of sweat as they rolled down his forehead. Once he had regained his breath, he picked his sword back up again and returned to what he had started, and returned to where he had left off in his thoughts.

"When the executioner went to collect Atrius, I went with. I needed to see my brother's face before he was to be killed. On the way, I began to have second thoughts. I kept asking

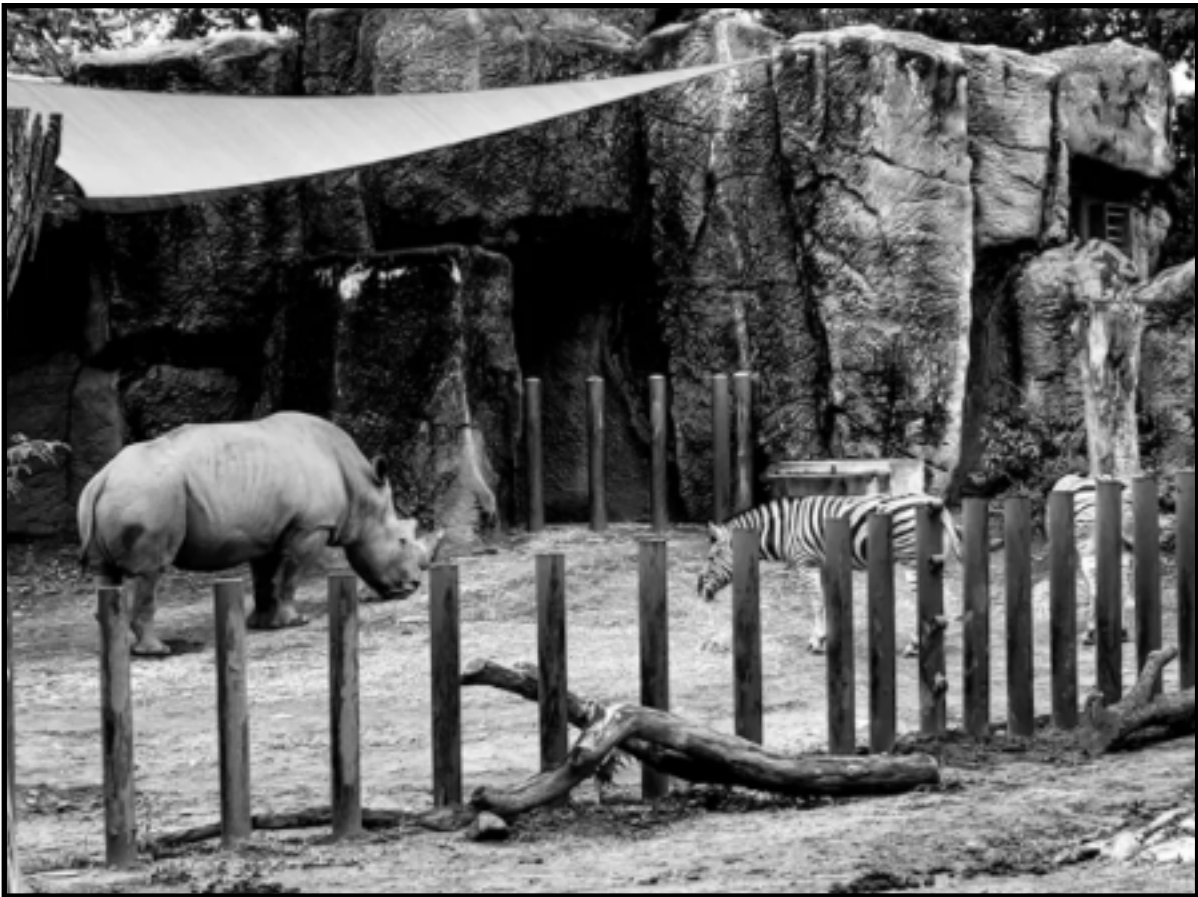
myself if this was truly the right thing to do. Ultimately, I came up with a solution. If Atrius apologized for everything he had done to me, then I would pardon him from his execution. When we arrived at his home, we saw that his door was wide open. Slowly and skeptically, we entered Atrius's home and immediately spotted him. He was sitting in a chair, facing away from us and he was staring directly at the ground. I could not see his face, which infuriated me, but I managed to keep a level head and watched as the executioner approached Atrius. He then put his hands up to the executioner, basically asking to be captured. His face remained pointed at the ground as the executioner tied up his hands with a very rough, dirty, and painful looking rope. The executioner lifted Atrius off of his chair, and I managed to catch a glimpse of his face. The only thing I saw as he was held and escorted by the executioner was a twisted smile. The executioner rushed Atrius passed me and I followed suit as we approached the execution grounds in the town square. Atrius kept his head down the entire walk and I was still unable to see his face, his twisted smile still imprinted in my mind. The walk was silent enough that a pin drop miles away could still have been heard by us. After what felt like hours of walking, we made it to the execution grounds. A sea of people had already formed and they were all chattering like children. Suddenly, a hush grew over the people the moment they all realized that we had arrived. The executioner brought Atrius to a large and very rough stone block before throwing him down into it. Atrius's chin was on the edge of the block, still facing toward the ground. Like a pot of boiling water, the rage finally boiled over me and I called for a halt to the execution. I then walked to a spot in front of and a few feet away from Atrius. I then called for Atrius to look up at me. His head remained facing towards the ground. Once more, I called for Atrius to raise his face to me, but he still disobeyed my order and I had had enough. With all my might, I shouted at Atrius for him to look me in the eyes. He then took a deep, slow breath and finally raised his head and met my gaze. His face was twisted into a crazed smile, his eyes filled with a terrifying gleam. I looked at the executioner and brought my hand down, signaling for the terrible action to occur. His axe then followed suit and plummeted down at Atrius's head before it connected with a-

Bang! The king's thoughts were interrupted by a mob of angry townspeople bursting into his throne room. Despite the sea of bodies rushing towards him, the king remained calm. Quickly, the townspeople grabbed the king and pulled him from the throne and onto the ground, beating down on him. While they attacked him ruthlessly, the king thought one final thought.

"This is it, my final moments. They say you reap what you sow, and at this moment I whole-heartedly believe it. Whilst my brother may have been overcome by greed for the throne and envy for my position in life which compelled him to commit such atrocities. Atrocities like taking advantage of my wife's lust for what was truly right and her being a

glutton for work, it was truly my sloth to stand up for myself against him and my pride that drove me to have Atrius killed. Now the wrath of my people is coming down upon me for what I had done to my own brother."

In his last few moments of life, the king laid there defenseless, only thinking about being with his loving wife once again. With hopeful and gleaming eyes, the king looked up towards the sky. In seconds, the hope turned to fear as he gazed at the transparent twisted grin of his brother, Atrius. The people then tore the king apart, splattering blood onto the golden throne engraved with the three letter word that caused the king's death...sin.



Sara Motz '22

Slave or Freedom

Arian Arias '23

Imprisoned, beaten by guards, pushed to the working bone. Although it's better to be free and survive, then be a fat ruler or die as a slave. For what we go up against, we do together.

Kolby*Mason Kohl '23*

They call him man's best friend
 But if something were to happen to him it would be hard to mend.

He has been with me since I was two.
 By my side, my protector through and through.

His name is Kolby and he has always been strong and fast
 But as of late his running days are in the past.
 It is hard to watch as each day goes by
 The tumor grows and I try not to cry.

Our walks no longer consist of a mile or two
 But only a walk around the house is all he can do.
 His hearing has gone and his sight is not the best
 But he still gets excited to see me then needs to rest.

Long gone are the days of throwing ball and playing fetch
 I hope Kolby still dreams of his big catch.
 Kolby still makes it up the stairs to sleep by my side
 But it is more of a challenge and I hope it doesn't hurt his pride.

Kolby has been the greatest companion anyone could ask for
 I just wish the days weren't numbered. I need more...
 More time with Kolby, I pray, please do not let it be the end
 It will be hard to say goodbye to my best friend.

*Madison Kubacki '23***1st Place**

Kobe “Bean” Bryant

Xavier Torres '24

Growing up I have always watched sports, especially basketball and football. My family were big Boston Celtic fans and Philadelphia Eagles fans, so I liked them also. I would always watch both sports but once I became older I started to learn more about the sport. When I got older some people inspired me to play those sports. Two of those people were Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant. Michael Jordan is arguably the best athlete of all time but he is definitely the best basketball player of all time. Someone followed and replicated everything Michael did. This man was Kobe Bryant.

When Kobe Bryant played, he looked just like Michael on the court. He had a similar game like he took his fadeaway and lots of other things. My dad had Michael Jordan, Larry Bird, and Magic Johnson. I had Kobe Bryant, Ray Allen, LeBron James. Kobe was known to be a person who rivaled with the Celtics and he also said their arena was his favorite place to play. Whenever he was there or whenever they played him there was always great energy. He is known for something called the Mamba mentality, which is a lot. He would wake up early and countlessly go to the gym and get himself better, and would skip out on some things people would take instead of going to practice. That helped him though and helped him become who he was.

So, that Mamba mentality helps me strive in the game of basketball and everything else. I always had things for him, like games with him in it and books about him but I never had his jersey. So, fast forward now to when he's retired and has multiple kids. On January 26th 2020, I was staying at my aunt's house and a lot of people in the house that were my family were big Laker fans. Around 11:00, I looked up information about him and all these news articles kept popping up saying there was a plane crash. No one believed it at first. I was telling multiple people I was only one believing it, but then multiple sources came out saying the same thing. Later that day, we found out that him and his younger daughter, Gianna Bryant, died in a plane crash. I came here to talk about how Kobe was an inspiration to me and how when he died it didn't just affect me, it affected us all.

Song of the Rain

Ariana Arias '23

Honorable Mention Fiction

The rain comes pouring down from the late night sky. As the girl runs home from school, she wonders to herself as she sings, "What music does the rain make after the storm as we dream in our nature dorm. Drip, drop goes the rain, clonk, clonk goes the thunder, as the storm comes passing by. Bringing life to the trees and nurturing the leaves, the rain sings a song to us all."

She loved rainy days because the water that falls from the sky gives off a sound of calming nature. When she reached home, she sat down and drank tea with her sister while reading about the sailors at the wide sea. "The waves were like mountains and the thunder bangs like drums," said the girl's sister as she read. "The crew was frightened by the angered storm, but their female captain, Vera, feared nothing of the storm and with that, she sang to the storm, "We sail the storm, the deadly storm, calm yourself for it's a song of nature's roar, the roar of the storm."

"And with that very song of peace and a soothing melody, the storm dissipated," said her sister as she read the book. The girl was in a silent pause for a minute.

Then she asked her sister, "Can we sing along with the rain?"

"Yes" said her sister calmly as she smiled.

So they sang to and with the rain storm. "Nature's shower comes down to us, giving life to the forest and to us. We share our water with others and they share with us. When the thunder roars, we best have no fear, for very little hurt is done, and there's a light of the storm of the dark." As the girl gets in her bed ready to sleep, lightning strikes the house antenna, and the power goes off. She is frightened and her sister has to use a flashlight to find her way through the house.

She may be scared, but instead of focusing on the dark, she listens to the sound of the rain. She felt like she was in the Amazon rainforest. Above the wet tree, atop the earthly ground, and beneath the roots of the Earth. "This weather is like music," the girl said. Then the sister comes to comfort her.

"You are a brave one, aren't you?" her sister said, but the girl couldn't hear her because she was already asleep.

Carrier of Spirits

Ariana Arias '23

Natives dance to the song of nature with the spirits among them. As they ride aurora lights, spirits and creatures of the strange ride the wave of air out and in. With horns sharp as the spear, its tail as the clouds, and eyes like emeralds. Outside to ride and in to dance, yet their song is heard by the wind only the spirited can hear.

Nature's Song

Jillian Boyer '24

Stone cliffs guard the valley
Thousands of trees seek the protection
Moss clings to its solemn walls, growing silently
As a river flows far below from where I perch

I am the eagle who flies above
The sun turns each feather to gold
This valley is my lifeforce
So I will never leave

It pulls me back every time
With its sweet, sweet song
Flowing over the cliffs
Down into the valley, filling it up to its brim

I swoop down to the river,
My feathers rustle the glassy surface
Its melodic burble pulling me closer
It all began right here in this valley

The sun is my watchful eye
As I perch on a branch of the tree of life
The river's sweet song flows around me
As I swoop down into the valley, one last time, before it's gone.

I am the eagle who flies above
The sun turns each feather to gold
This valley is my home
I will never leave.



Nikailyn Madden '23

Summer

Abrielle Rowles '24

The school bell rings

No more school for 3 months

No more homework for 3 months

The hot sun hitting my skin as I leave school

Swimming in my pool when I get home

Going on vacations

Hearing the bees buzz in my ear

Hearing the ocean waves crash onto the shore

Having picnics with family

Getting sunburnt

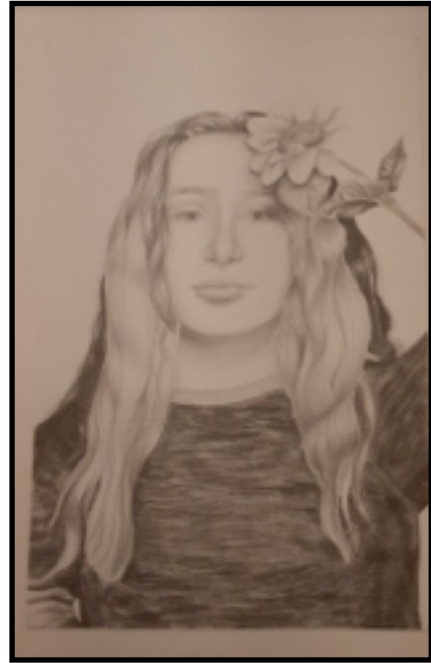
Hanging out with friends as much as possible

Going to amusement parks

Fun in the air

Summer

I love summer



Adrianna Madden '24

2nd Place

Sunrise at the Beach

Brinlee Disney '24

The crisp ocean water hitting my feet

The morning mist fizzling off the ocean

I look up and see the sunrise all beautiful and sweet

The world around me seems to be in slow motion

I find a spot in the sand and take a seat

The glorious song of waves crashing

The surf rolling in gracefully

The seagulls splashing

I sit staring at the sunrise graciously

Very few people passing

I look up at the sky all cloudless and radiant

Oh so colorful

Pinks, Oranges, and Yellows turn the sky into a gradient

The colors gleaming so powerful

I stare and think "How wonderful"

After School Stress

Briana Silasavage '21

College applications-

The stress of everything in my sight.

It keeps me up at night.

College applications,

The bane of our existence;

Begging for acceptance.

College applications-

The stress of everything in our sight.

Hermoine, Husky of the Banquet

Arian Arias '23

The feast was almost ready, with the tastiest cuisine and drinks. The Chinese mansion was clean; its garden lush and trimmed and the inside filled with ceramics of earthenware and stoneware with textural geometric patterns, silverware reflecting like a mirror, glassware shining the colors reflexing the eyes of an animal in the night, and cloth-work with astonishing, colorful patterns. All set up to delight and please his good friends. Hermoine is a Siberian Husky, who had invited 3 of his trustful friends. Olive is a snowy owl wearing a blue vest and has 2 striped feather pins on the back of him. He seeks knowledge from many sources and shares the knowledge and gives wise advice to others. Most of his advice is helpful, if people care to listen. Everest is a Canadian lynx wearing a black, Chinese silk uniform with crystal lens glasses that has a black cane with a silver bottom and a blue glass orid on the top. He's the guru who lives next door. He loves to tell traditional literature and has seen a lot of crazy things (some things which he shouldn't see). Lastly there's the non-blood related monkeys, Tunu and Aldo. Tunu is a Japanese macaque, a snow monkey for short, who wears a bamboo straw vest with a Chinese straw hat and hands wrapped around with clothed bandages. Aldo is a Capuchin who also wears a bamboo straw vest and always carries a bamboo stick. These two could get into trouble in the village and they live in Hermoine's dollhouse temple in the backyard.

Olive is the smartest and most peaceful animal Hermoine knows, but he didn't have the confidence of having fun. Him and Hermoine met in the library, while he was trying to find a book. He was new when they met and Hermoine would go to the Library on the weekend, so they talked about their favorite books, and became friends ever since. So Hermoine invites him to the banquet so he can have a little fun. She imagined him and Olive talking about a lot of things and telling each other what they know.

Everest is a well natured guy. Him and Hermoine met during the winter season festival. He was admiring the beauty and nature of winter, then to himself, he proposed a poem:

**"The cold of the outdoors and the warmth inside,
Yet never myself have feared or
been bothered by frosted winds.
The fall of snow placed on trees
to decorate nature with frost and flack."**

The poem was so inspiring, even though he was half blind (which is why he wears the glass) he can still understand that nature, although deadly, has its own beauty. He invited

him to give inspirational advice to Olive and admire his garden.

Tunu and Aldo do get into trouble, but they are fun, loving, and kind. Hermoine caught them trying to steal food in his kitchen. It was said that Tunu, as a baby, was separated from her family when on an iceberg that drifted away. Aldo on the other hand, lost his family and home to a fire. They then both meet at the center of the jungle. Having to hear of this, Hermoine decides to help them get over their losses and give them a new home.

They came to the banquet a minute late after getting ready, but the food was still warm. The feast served dumplings and soups of a sorts, warm noodle and ramen dishes, followed by bowls of spicy mapo tofu, different kinds of pizza fresh from the oven, sushi, but the fish is cooked, corn, salad, a stew of gombo, sweet New York ham, rice balls, big bowls of rice, and a big plate of lasagna. While they waited for dessert, they wandered around the mansion to admire the decor, unaware that while they were talking, Tunu and Aldo are searching for mayhem to cost. Like, annoying the other servants with pot banging noises and making the chefs so mad, they made them chase Tunu and Aldo across the kitchen, until the servant caught them and told them not to start up another ruckus. "Well that was fun while that lasted," said Tunu. They would usually get caught doing mischief, but they get out of real trouble quickly.

Meanwhile Everest was admiring the garden, proposing another poem:

**"Dancing daylight,
dawn dancing,
midnight trance,
we give nature a chance.
Light lantern shining,
bells chiming,
day dying,
moonshine lighting."**

Olive was then asked by Everest, "Shall we have a dance, under the moonlight trance?" Olive blushed and replied with a shy, yet calm, "Yes." They danced to the soul rhythms of violin and piano. Like a trance, it was like music. They then took turns dancing with each other. After Olive with Everest, comes Everest with Hermoine, to Hermoine with Olive, then back to Olive and Everest and Tunu and Aldo dancing with each other the whole time.

"Dessert is ready" called the servant. For dessert they had a few japanese delights, black berry pie, milkshakes, brownie, macaroons, tarts, donuts, moon cakes, a viraties of jams and candy, and biscuits, cookies, cakes, muffins, and other pies of all sorts. Before leaving, Hermoine gives each of his friends a gift. Olive gets a well knitted rainbow scarf with a crystal glass pin, Everest is given a golden necklace with a glass sphere, and Tunu and Aldo each get their own little pots. They didn't like them, they loved them. In the end, not only did they get a good meal, but each of them got inspired and had fun. As they left, Everest turned around and said, "We'll meet again, when the sunlight dances," and he walked away quietly.



Allora Fernandez '21

2020: The "Best" Year

Madison Houck '21

First Place Nonfiction

As 2020 comes to a close, I realize I am among a small population of people who can say happiness came from the year. Sure, for me there has been disappointment after disappointment which has put a damper on my year. I am lucky enough to have not contracted coronavirus despite working in a nursing home for months, my stepmom working on the COVID floor and being tested every week. Also, none of my family members have gotten the virus and I am extremely grateful to still have everyone here with me, realizing there are so many less fortunate dealing with the virus. I missed prom last year and now comprehend that I most likely won't get the senior year I dreamed of in any way. Despite it all, I have been very content with my life. Sadly, I rang in the new year with people I won't be ending the year with, but that is okay. I still made the best memories of this year with those friends that I will cherish forever, having bonfires, throwing birthday parties and having sleepovers. I wish everyone the best, but I am more at peace without having to face the social pressures of surrounding myself with them.

This year allowed me to reflect on myself in various ways and spend time doing what is best for me. Without this pandemic, I would have never rescued my puppy, Georgia. If anything, she has brought the most joy to my life the past few months. Her crazy, playful, cuddly personality has brought a smile to my face, even on the days I struggled with being home and adapting to the new lifestyle. At my dad's, I got to lay in the movie room with my dog Oscar, binging movies or shows almost every day. I enjoyed beautiful days outside hiking and just breathing in the fresh air on small adventures to new places. Despite the restrictions, I still got to go on the best vacations yet. I went to Disney for a week which was super awesome, getting to ride roller coasters and not having to wait in lines. I had an amazing time with my dad's family, and it was definitely a pick me up after the sudden passing of my stepmom's father. Also, a few weeks before school started, I went on my annual Virginia Beach trip with my mom's family and my boyfriend. Although we lost power for 2 days due to a hurricane, had a security system malfunction, and a jellyfish infestation, it was still the best week of the year. Though there were some tough aspects of 2020, I grew as a person and learned to appreciate the little things in life. I never would have truly understood the importance of slowing down and enjoying life without the pandemic.

The Double Sided Knife That Went In Too Deep

Jenna Kirby '24

I wished nothing more than to be infatuated with you
Every touch and shared glance
Was the most delectable poison
You gave me a craving, an ache for poison

You can't lie, I know you felt it too
You even told me you did
You assured me I had nothing to dread

Every rich, pure feeling song about cheesy romance,
Turned into an ode to you
Oh how lovely you seemed,
You always stated how you wanted me, and *only* me

There were so many red flags,
But you swaddled me with
Ooey gooey, sappy, feel good words
to make me feel as though the warnings
were just hallucinations,
So the foolish puppy believed you
Over and over
Time after time,
Because you knew how to mend me
To entwine me around your finger
And longingly drape myself into your boiling palm
Tragic story of a frog in a heated pan of water
So I trusted you over myself
And you deceived me
With your hollow paragraphs of affection

But then,
I found it.
That was the final grain
It was my breaking point
Shattering panes of broken trust engulfed me
I launched my head into walls



Madison Kubacki '23

3rd Place

I fought my bed until my knuckles dripped crimson liquid
 I gripped my throat and compressed screams without a sound
 I was an abomination of sudden hurtful feelings
 How could you?
 You made a fool out of a love sick puppy
 A stupid, naive, gullible puppy who would follow you
 to the edge of the world
 All of this, because I found out about
Her

"What does *she* have that *I* don't?!"
 "*She's* not even as pretty and skinny as *me*"

...

You,
You made me a monster
 All I could see was that gruesome manic bloodlust color

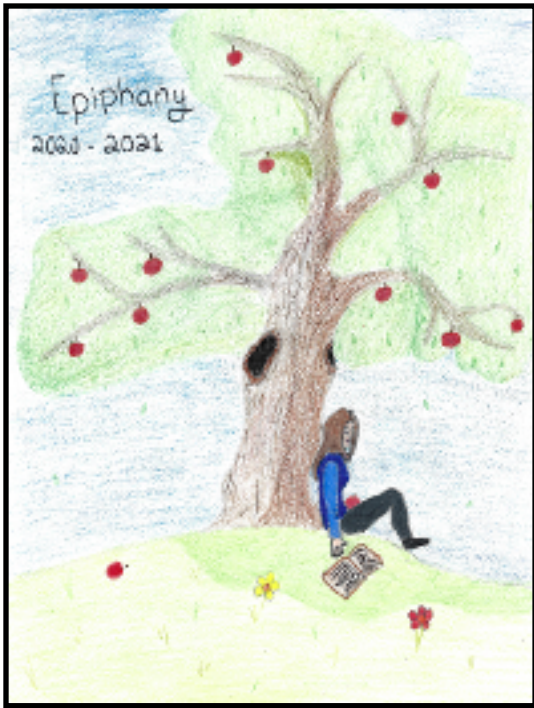
If you're in love with *her*...
 Then why am I the one you call first?

If you left me for *her*...
 Then why are you weighing me down
 with your darkening thoughts of
 entering yourself into an eternal slumber
 Chaining, dragging, grasping me to beg and
 Plead to try and get you to stay and gasp air another day

If you had *her*...
 Then why did you need me too?

Now you only call for me when you are crammed
 With intoxicating fumes to recuperate yourself
 To give yourself and escape from dealing with your problems

It was foolish of me to think you had the ability
 To cherish someone other than yourself
 But I must applaud your performance,
 I truly thought you were in love with me



Nikailyn Madden '23

Hamster on a Wheel

Jenna Strausser '23

As the days grow shorter due to the winter scene,
My head swells with consistent pain;
From concentrating solely on a screen
To seemingly mindless work with nothing to gain

I try my best to stay on top
But it doesn't matter when that's all I'm doing
All my normal activities were forced to stop
To keep my brain on this neverending brewing

Losing sleep while gaining stress
Is all school feels like at the moment
Spending every day at my home address
Gives me anything except enjoyment

Ultimately it is my fault, I know;
I take classes I think will be necessary,
Yet all these assignments just won't let me go
My mind is overwhelmed, and I don't act the least bit wary

Nevertheless, I will still continue down this path
Of taking courses that make me feel dumb
No matter how much it causes me wrath,
Nobody can stop me from what I want to become

Aurora

Bronwyn Thomas '24

I fall into the snow
I can't move
I don't want to
But I need to
I struggle trying to get up
Only to fall down again
My arms are too cold
My legs are too cold
I can feel the ice moving it's way towards my heart
What I would give to get up right now
The village is only a little farther
What I would do to die right now
I can't stand being cold any longer
I look to the sky and what I see is beautiful
I see greens and blues
Flying around each other in the sky
I see strips of yellow and red
Blazing across the star filled abyss
What a wondrous sight
I smile while looking at the colors
They must be magic
As I'm starting to feel warmer now
I'm almost warm enough to get up
I can do it
I can make it back to my family
I'll close my eyes
And when I open them
I'll get up and go home
The green and blue lights grew a little brighter
That night
And never had they ever been
So beautiful

Dark*Michael Orth '23*

The darker the day
 The harder to see
 And even stay afloat
 On this everlasting sea

My vision gets darker
 My life gets bleaker
 The sky gets grayer
 And I start to get weaker

The world starts to spin
 And the room gets blurry
 I start to fade away
 Seconds fly by in a flurry

The sky turns to black
 As day turns to night
 Which makes me question
 Whether it's worth it to fight

As night closes in
 On another black day
 The darkness consumes me
 And I wish it wouldn't stay

Sunrise*Kayley Weidner '24*

Sunrise
 Freshly brewed coffee
 Small simple sips
 The sky awakens from the dark

The rooster's crow
 The cattle moo
 You know all of the earth will awaken soon

Through the window, sunlight appears
 Birds singing is what I begin to hear
 Bacon sizzling awakes the whole house
 Crispy, chewy, crunchy goodness in my mouth

Porch swings
 And deep talks
 While waiting
 For the day to pass away

I close my eyes
 For a peaceful nights rest
 I will awake to a beautiful
 Sunrise

*Ethan Drayer '22*

The Thorns in a Rose Garden

Emmalee DeJesus '22

Have I lost myself or have I gained you?

I am lost in a garden full of thorns,

But then I saw you hiding in this garden like a blue rose.

I held your hand and it pricked me, just like those thorns.

I am so afraid that you will leave me in the end

And I will have to wear a mask when I see you.

But even if I lost myself,

I still want you.

Fairies

Ella Jenkins '21

They sleep until noon and feast until three,

Dancing the night away

Their intricate crowns and voluminous gowns

Twirl round in their revelry

Although human they look from a distance away,

Up close they are anything but

For dangerous sharp teeth descend from their mouths,

Waiting to tear you apart

The Forest

Gia Patel '24

Lanky trees leading the way

No two are the same

My feet won't stop

Walking to a place that does not exist

The forest breathes me in

And never lets me out

Trapped in a place called "here"

Not wanting to leave

Breathing air so fresh

Cleaning my lungs

Stand still

Take it in

The forest knows where you are

The forest will keep you safe

The forest is the place called "here"

Addison Angstadt '21



Cat Eyes of Truth

Ariana Arias '23

Some people hate lies, hate to lie, and want to know the truth. But some say the Lynxes can see through your soul to tell what you are really hiding and find a way to reveal the truth. This story tells the tale of a boy who wanted to catch his dreams. His name is Noah, and he loved to see the night sky. But all the other boys and girls judged him by the cover of the book. One day, a lynx named Shadow comes near Noah's village. He curiously looks at the people of the small community. Angered by the cruelty of descendents whose loss corrupted them so badly that they wanted to hurt. Shadow had curious eyes for Noah, who was lost in his imagination. "What's up, cloudhead?" one kid yelled and laughed as he pointed at him. Noah shattered into tears and ran away.

Shadow felt bad for Noah and he wants to talk to him, even if they can't understand each other. He finds Noah hiding behind a tree singing a song: "Why do you hurt me, I never bother you. Is it because I'm different, looking at the sky. God and ancestors would know why." Shadow had shed a tear. He came to Noah to company him, but instead of running away, he gently pet him. Shadow was also angry about this and wanted to prey on the bully. He crossed paths with the one that insulted him, but when Shadow had him in his sights, he saw the fear in eyes. Through that fear came the demons of his dark past, then came his corruption and anger, only for Shadow to see himself. A person was able to shake Shadow off of him by threatening him with fire.

Shadow came to realize that all the bad people of this village were also hiding something that made them the way they are now. Some of them even did bad things yet that doesn't make them bad people and yet we all have a change of heart. Shadow wanted to show them honesty, to give Noah faith, and show him that he's not alone. So for the last 13 nights, he would sit on top of a great hill to hear their inner voices and to view those who have hidden something that shouldn't be kept. Through the windows of the soul, the lynx becomes the spirit animal of listening and showing how to see the truth in all things.

Snow*Jessica Hummel '22*

Flurries fall from the sky
Wrapping the ground in a blanket of thick snow

Do you remember?
The shivers up your spine
the wind brushing across your skin
Bumps dancing across the surface

I helped you to the window
Leaning out into the frosty air
You didn't believe me when I told you
"It's snowing"

You caught the flakes of snow on your arm
You needed to feel it
Needed to know it was real
That you weren't just seeing things

The wonder in your eyes
It was heartbreaking

That was the last time you felt it
You didn't make it 'til the next blizzard

You haunt me
Do you know that?
Possessing my soul

The dreams I'm having on your behalf
The ones you couldn't even imagine
You and me
A harsh reminder of what could've been
But can't

I miss you
You do know that right?
Of course you do.
We found one another.
I don't know what I would do without you.

In another life we'll meet again
Like the movies we used to share

Or at least, I hope we do
I dream we do

In another life
We watch that same movie for the
thirty-fifth time

In another life
We sleep in each others' arms
You finally get to dream again

In another life
We can step outside
Taking a stroll and immersing ourselves in

The layers
Upon layers of
Snow

*Elizabeth Zaharia '23*

Home

Julia Yobb '24

Take me to the place I imagine
The place where magic thrives
I want to sit under the cobalt sky
Filled with puffy white clouds and a breathtaking sun
And sit under the curtain of ink
With starlight dancing across the heavens
I want to go where the crystal blue waves of the sea climb up the golden grains of sand
And the breeze explores the ways of the soft grass and the colorful flowers
I want to be surrounded by birds singing a charming tune
And critters pouncing and bouncing with their friends
I want to watch the gleaming ball of sunshine fall under the horizon
Only to watch it creep back up at dusk the next day
I want to run and jump and dance in a meadow of long grass and wildflowers
And come home and sleep in a bed of plush and comfort
I want to never have to worry about money or work
And to spend my days doing what I love
There's only one place where these things exist in harmony
The one place that I long to go
The one place I want to spend my life in
Please take me home

anonymous



To Get to the Good Place

Emily Zaharia '21

Third Place Fiction

Tick. Tick. Tick. Tick. Tick.

It was that incessant noise at first, unwavering and unforgivably slow. Drawn out to a single dull note in a pointless tune, that heavy *tiiiiick* swung burdened like a pendulum in an ancient grandfather clock. It was steady and every note purposeful, and it hung behind the stalls, festered in the smog of that airless room. But when the noise ceased, the immediate silence that followed pervaded the room with a miserable aloneness.

And it seemed to just exist, the silence, at least for a moment.

Then that fifth note pierced through, swift and unexpected, echoing off the walls of his skull. The noise, more fervent now, persisted in the same tiresome pattern: four prompt *ticks*, then a brief pause, like the quick breath that escaped him in that very moment. He listened still.

Fluorescence in the ceiling buzzed and flickered. White noise hummed from the dusty vents and the faucet dripped. Yet all these sounds waned under the bellows of the ticking, which erupted now into a sort of moan, taunting and sneering at his sorrowful existence.

And that pause, that almost parasitic pause, it infested his mind and clung to his thoughts; it was maddening, having no purpose other than to dismantle the flawless pattern that was this ticking.

He brought his hands up, pulling at his hair and hitting his head with a clenched fist while his heart squeezed up his throat. Booming in his skull, the ticking grew vehement, almost siren-like. It whined and squealed like pigs to the plant. The air was hot and it suffocated him. His hair, greased with smoke and sweat, lay plastered at his neck, and the pigs, the pigs! carried on shrieking in his ear.

Then, slowly, the ticking dulled, each note lifting slightly, no longer laborious but still deliberate. They floated almost, barely brushing against the other in an almost intentional way. The silence that followed was but a stifled sigh, and again, for now, he was fine.

Tick. Tick. Tick. Tick. Tick.

Breathing hard, he reached for the door, sweat dripping from his face. He unclenched his hands in a sort of bittersweet victory, though it would be short lived. No longer would he hear that everlasting ticking tonight or that galling pause between the fourth and fifth notes. Simply, he'd hear the baying of the wind mixed with smoke that stung slightly at his chalked nostrils. He gazed into the wilderness with his doe eyes, hopeful that tomorrow he wouldn't hear the noise.

And everything was fine again, only, the trees seemed taller now.

Captivating Cosmos

Emmitt Mackes '24

In the universe, there is a place
Where darkness and light abound
Planets and stars fill its embrace
And some can never be found

Although dark and dreary, humanity has tried
To discover the secrets of this mystery
Sending ships and probes and technology to be a guide
While creating a fascinating history

From the moon and its darkness to the sun and its rays,
From the Earth and its comfort to the stars and their light,
From the distant planets and their intrigue to our neighbors and their icy glaze,
The cosmos is a place that can surely cause a fright

Space is a place where confusion and wonder still lie
Knowledge is not something that humans can buy

The least that we can do, to make this place well-known, is to try and to realize
Maybe this story shall one day be the future generations' lullaby

Stars

Ella Jenkins '21

Oh, the cold indifferent stars above
Brightly in the night sky they glisten
Twinkling over the sleeping world below
Silently, they watch over our mundane affairs
Sometimes they look close enough to touch, but I know I could never reach them, for stars are
impossible to grasp
Those brightly colored orbs of gas will burn you as soon as you get close enough to witness their
true splendor
There is nothing more fiercely alive than the slow smolder of those alluring splotches in the
abyss of night
Their magnificence is far too great for this world
Oh, the cold indifferent stars above

21st century lovers

Charlotte Baumgard '23

when the war is done and over and countless lives have been lost, we'll flee this barren
wasteland and find refuge in a quaint little village, somewhere just south of an imaginary city.
we'll exchange subtle terms of endearment on the back porch of a 2 story countryside home,
we'll talk love words as the sun peaks its brilliant head over the mountains on the horizon,
we'll watch the neighbor kids stumble through their youth, playing with toy cars and barbie dolls
and frogs and dirt and mud,
we'll lie on the grass in the midafternoon and bask in the sun's golden rays,
we'll write poetry side by side as old age creeps its spidery hands closer and closer to our hearts,
and for the first time in our lives, we'll be happy

Love

Sarah Haag '23

Your sweet blue glissing eyes look deep into my heart
Everything flows away
And your love comes into play

Your loveable smile gives me
Everything I ever wanted
And everything I will ever need

Your soft words
Give me wisdom
And future in the world

Your hugs
Are comforting when I'm hurt
And loveable when I am feeling great

You give me all the love, peace, joy, and hope inside the world
I just wanted to let you know
I just wanted to let you know

You said my smile was the best part of your day

I just wanted to let you know
You give me all the love, peace, joy, and hope inside the world
You make me feel like I'm in paradise

So thanks for your love
So thanks for your love

Title*Sara Motz '22*

Sometimes
I title
My poems
Before I
Even Begin
To write them

I know
My topic
I know
A few lines
I know
The flow

But titling
An unwritten
Story
Puts my thoughts
In a box
I can't escape

The topic
Is spoiled
The lines
Leave my mind
The flow
Slows

And I lose
What I
Wanted to say
All because
Of a
Title

Lost in a Book*Olivia Kraus '24*

Have you ever read a book that was so good that you couldn't put it down?
You read it every second that you can.
The feeling of being involved in the characters' lives takes over.
Everytime you're not reading the book, you crave it.
You lay in your bed reading page after page,
Chapter after chapter...
You feel as though ten minutes went by,
However, you look at your clock and it's two hours later.
You begin to feel physically and emotionally attached to the characters.
You realize it's starting to get late,
But you just can't put the book down.
You crave for the storyline to continue flooding into your brain.
You want more,
You just can't stop.
Then, you realize you have a page remaining.
How could this have happened?
Now you wish that you would have read that book a little slower.
A piece of you seems to have vanished.
It just won't be the same if you read it again.

Cassidy Smith '23 - Honorable Mention

Louie

Zachary Herman '24

A tiny dog in a huge world

His hatred for others is unmatched by anyone I've seen

He acts tough far away, but cowers when he gets close

His white fur gleams in the sun and shimmers in the moon

He barks all day

Even if nothing is there

When he's not making noise

He's sleeping the day away

He loves the sun

And will soak in its rays until they are reflected by the moon

His breath is the worst I've smelled

And his body is not much better

The only time he smells bearable

Is right after a bath or haircut

But I love him anyways

And he makes everyone he meets the happiest I've seen them



Cayla Duda '23

2nd Place

My Strong Friend*Marie Engleman '24*

You fill with my failed ideas
 My waste you find use in
 My mistakes and messes
 My leftovers when there is nothing left

You hold so much in
 Until you need me to empty you
 Take all the burdens I have left on you
 And send them away

Then, I fill you again
 And you stay strong
 You stay together
 You stay

One of these days
 I may need to replace you
 But that day will wait
 For now, you are enough

**Friend***Adrianna Madden '24*

Everyone has at least one
 Someone who is there for them
 A person who they can be
 Themselves around
 They come in all forms
 tall or short
 Somber or flamboyant
 Mine is a peculiar one
 We are so much alike
 But yet so different
 A teen infatuated with 70s to 80s rock
 And a girl enduring an indie music phase
 An art lover
 And a writer
 We may not be very similar
 But for some reason
 We are exactly the same
 Polar opposites
 Yet exact replicas
 She is like an extra sibling to me
 We may act like we
 Hate each other
 But we mess around
 With one another
 She may aggravate me greatly
 sometimes
 But I do not hate her at all
 She is more than an acquaintance
 She is my friend

Cassidy Smith '23

Don't Hope for It, Work for It

Anonymous

While everyone else is just sitting on their phone, prove people wrong
Work while no one else is watching, make them expect the unexpected

Non stop work, I am in my zone

Red and black jersey reflecting back at me in my mirror

Hair tied back in a tight ponytail with black pre wrap

Sweats on, headphones on, I am in my zone

Step on the soft turf, my safe place

Cleats on, laces tied, jewelry off

Bright lights in the night, cool air, music playing, the stands are filling up with fans

Sweats off, headphones off, there is a chill through my bones

Hand over my heart, "O say can you see by the dawn's early light..."

It is now my time, I am in my zone

Championship game, 2nd half, score is tied 2-2, 48 seconds left

Ball rocketed out of the defense, into my feet, all left is one defender and the goalie

Sprint, sprint, sprint, stepover move around defender, sprint, sprint, sprint

Me and the goalie, all my power and strength, the ball swished into the right corner of the net

I fall to the ground with tears of joy, my friends pile on top of me

Schuylkill Valley: 3 Hamburg: 2

It all paid off

Stay in your zone

When Life Gives You Lemons

Natane White '24

When you get pushed down

You have to get back up

And keep working your hardest

When given all the puzzle pieces

All there is left to do is to

Put. them. Together.

If you seek success

You have to keep moving

On the good and the bad days

Be willing to juggle whatever life throws at you

And transform your weaknesses into strengths

Until there are no weaknesses left

It will take time and patience

But you have to be ready when life gives you lemons

To make lemonade



Carlos Arana-Figueroa

Brighter Days Ahead

Drew McGonigle '24

We are stuck inside for a while
 This hiatus from outside world should be over soon
 But for now I wait...
 And wait...
 And wait...

Months have passed and days merge together
 Myself and many others have been humbled
 Now we wish we never took getting a haircut for granted
 Everyone's formula is stay inside to stay safe
 But for now I wait...

Finally I can go back to school
 Except this time it's over a laptop screen
 Still trapped inside for my own good
 To remain healthy yet not happy
 But at this point, I question if health is worth happiness

A horrible thought to think
 Although everyone thinks the same
 Brighter days will be in the near future
 But for now I wait...
 And I keep waiting for as long as I need

Determination

Ann Davila '22

Angel dust flutters around me
 Elegant wings buffet me with soft wind
 A hand out of the clouds, held out to take mine.
 But chained, I am held steadfast.
 They reach out further, insisting.
 But I am torn out of the sky,
 Gravity pulling me back down
 To where my body stands among the rest
 Longing for my twisted wings to fly once more.
 At least where my body sags low,
 There are others that sag beside it.
 They hunch, chained and strained like me.
 Broken wings flapping with determination to fly.
 I hunch among my sisters and brothers
 Whose chains together make a mosaic
 That can be seen by the angels in the clouds.
 A message that we will one day return
 No matter how heavy and strong
 Our chains may hold.
 No matter how crooked, torn, and twisted
 Our wings may be.

Live Life

Ariana Arias '23

With darkness comes light,
 life has its ways, we have ours
 some find unfairness and
 hate with sin,
 but there is also joy to life.

To seek what to find,
 and what we can't see
 our world with beauty
 inside and out

To the void of space,
 we shout.
 We live.

Off to Ski

Johnathon Sabo '24

People don't talk about a man
Who used to stay in the lab all day
He made crystals out of everyday objects
But people wish that he would go away

But one day he made something great
But no one wanted to see that "trash"
So he burned it in his garage
And he developed a rash

But nobody knew what he was capable of
The government was suspicious
So he fled like a migrating bird
Even though some people thought that he was precious

So the people they slandered
Like snakes, they turned on his well being
They didn't see fit for his type of lifestyle
But he was off skiing

While they made a plan to exile him from their land
Until he came back

He was better than the average man
And he fought back at them with a crack

No one ever questioned him after that
And he bought a cat and named it Nolan
Even though he wanted to name it Cookie
But he knew that the name was stolen

Snowboarding

Chase Wunsch '24

up the ski lift, down the slopes
strap in, to take off
through bumps and over jumps
there are many trails to go
through the powdery snow
lots of fun
under the sun
carving fast
do not crash
getting chilly
head to the lodge
so the cold can be dodged
then head back out
more fun awaits, no doubt
because when you are on your board
all happiness is restored



Madison Houck '21
Honorable Mention

Teach Me

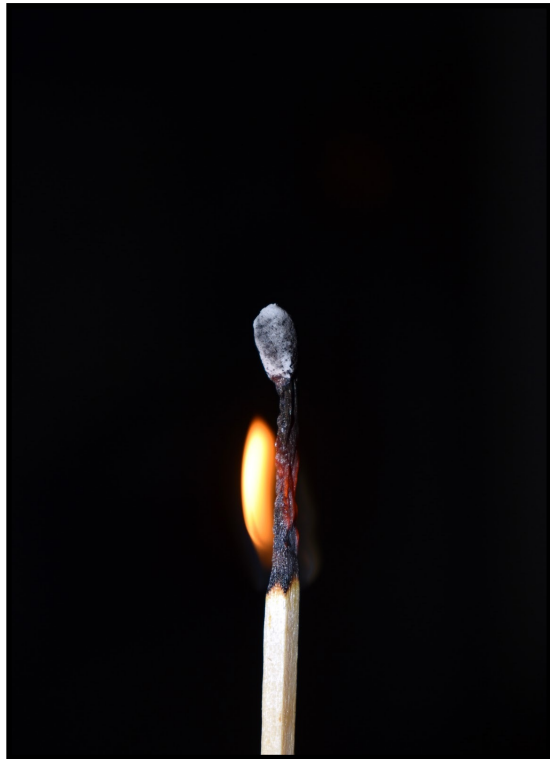
Reagan Rittenhouse '22

Teach me how to take up space
 To be a king lion with a thunderous roar
 The deafening crack of a firework on the 4th of July
 To be Hercules in a town of scrawny villagers

Teach me how to touch others hearts
 To be the brilliant lyricist of a song that moves every one of its listeners
 A dextrous surgeon saving the valuable lives of children
 To be passionate love in a town stripped of all happiness

Teach me how to make heads turn
 To be a glint of a flame from a candle in a pitch black room
 A snowflake so unique that children cease their snowman's construction to get lost in it's beauty
 To be a dazzling comet among a sea of dull stars

Teach me how to be unapologetically myself



Emily Zaharia '21

Honorable Mention

Protective Shell

Alexis Wehr '24

I stare once again blankly at my lit phone
 Staring at the messages
 Staring at the people I could talk to
 The same people I force myself away from
 to keep them safe,
 to protect them from my negative thoughts
 but my negative thoughts only worsen
 As I sit silent in the dark
 As my head fills with thoughts about
 how everyone is better than me,
 prettier than me
 About how I was not productive enough
 I was too lazy
 When night time comes my head fills with
 "You're not good at the things you're passionate about"
 "You complain too much"
 "Everyone judges you because, I mean, look at you"
 I hide away in a shell away from the world
 I don't try to save myself
 I do not accept help
 I don't tell anyone how much I am struggling
 because my shell won't let me out
 I'm stuck in my own tiny world
 just watching from beyond

Ode to the Forgotten Nobodies

Charlotte Baumgard '23

When the war is finally over and the loss has been taken, she will stand at the precipice of her extinction. Amidst week-old rubble and shattered dreams and with shaky hands and blurry eyes, she will light herself on fire. When the wicked flames raise their jagged, unforgiving arms to engulf her in their heat, her life will flash before her very eyes. She will be greeted by visions of a sweet and simple life, a life she will be proud to have led. One riddled with marvelous and horrendous memories in turn. A balanced ebb and flow of emotions. Or she will find herself hounded by the recollection of a painfully plastic life. One devoted to chasing a perfect image that is nonexistent. That sequin-laden lifestyle will remain the image of joy and success to those around her, yet only she knew of the sinister pain that hid in the beauty.

Though in the end, it doesn't matter. No matter what path she chooses her story will never be told. It will not garner the attention and rave reviews of the masses. Nobody will ever read through her years as a toddler with a bright smile on their face, watch her teenage years fly by as a perfectly calculated voiceover recounts her many woes, watch her victories come and go as a triumphant song plays over them, or read through the last moments of her life and softly close the book with tears in their eyes. Yet it will remain a beautiful indictment of everything she resented and a tedious love letter to everything she adored.

Insignificant as it may seem, even after she has been gone for centuries, her story will remain alive and thriving in her soul, playing on a quiet, almost unintelligible loop. A solemn and sweet tune; an ode to the forgotten nobodies.

Herbs

Ariana Arias '23

Grow in the pure soil,
dropped from disperse to the ground of nature.
Seeds in many places,
growing in nature
yet to know, hidden powers to heal all.

It's magic scent
look deep to discover their wonders
make miracles from God's nature.

Herbs helped us
through the past,
they should help
some of us again,
today and tomorrow.

Green

Allison Wolf '24

Green can be vibrant
Green can be bland
Green has many tones
Green is ubiquitous

Grass spreading in fields
The last Skittle in the pack.
Cucumber laying on a salad
A frog sunning on a lily pad

The color to describe disgust
A color that means go
A word that stands for luck
The feeling when you envy someone

Green can mean a lot of things
It's all how you perceive it
But do not assume everyone thinks your way
Because we all see green in a different display

Boys on Dirt Bikes

Alyssa Armpriester '23

Boys on dirt bikes

They're such a dream

With different sprockets that have teeth like spikes

And the smell of straight or mixed gasoline

As you switch gears to increase your speed

I think to myself, "A 2 stroke? In my dreams"

You may think it's a little too extreme

But out of happiness, I wish to ride and scream

Instead of getting high by drinking bottles, I prefer to twist throttles

So to the boys on dirt bikes, I wish to be like you

Living with freedom and having fun

I know someday I'll get a 2 stroke too

Imaginary Impurities

Amber Stoudt '24

Outside her room she's flawless

A pearl in the ocean with no distress

Impurities in her never form

She's the calm eye in the middle of a storm

She's a sunkissed blonde with ocean eyes

And a smile that reminds of clear skies and butterflies

She dances in the night like a firefly

And lights up the sky every single time

She twirls in the snow becoming cold

But never growing too old

But this girl, as you know

Does not always have a warm glow

When she's home alone in her bedroom fortress

There's a song in her head, a bittersweet chorus

She lays in her room thinking about her insecurities,

Pointing out every single imaginary impurity

She doesn't realize that along with everyone else she is perfect

That any imperfections should have no effect

On how she views herself

Or how anyone views themselves

The Girl Who Liked To Draw

Alyssa Armpriester '23

First Place Poetry

There was this girl who liked to draw

As she sat alone in her room she started to bawl

She saw the sharpener and got to work

Some lines weren't straight, so she was irked

Red was her favorite color so she drew some more

As she looked at her finished drawing she sat on the floor

She was proud, but not enough

So the next day, she would try harder so she could be tough

She left her house to sit at her favorite drawing spot

A bridge over water, and underneath was a big rock

But as her drawing continued, she was caught

She tried to leap

But I grabbed onto her feet

I pulled her up and rolled up her sleeve

There were the lines, seven rows of three

"I like to see red, but my favorite color is blue"

I rolled up my sleeve and said, "It's ok, I like to draw too"

I took the sharpener and threw it over the bridge

"We'll get through this together. Depression is a witch"

Madison Kubacki '23
Honorable Mention



Mirror

Second Place Poetry

Kara Faulk '21

She stares at me in disgust.
 Pulling at her clothes, a tear falls down her cheek;
 she hates me, yet I have not done anything
 but show her how beautiful she is.
 Some days she avoids me.
 I know it because she walks past me
 without a glance;
 she pretends not to notice me.
 I'm not sure why.
 All I want to do
 is tell her how pretty she looks today.
 We don't talk often,
 but when we do,
 she is either extremely happy or terribly sad.
 There seems to be no in between.
 If she only took the time to truly see herself
 the way I see her:
 she would know how beautiful she really is.
 -the mirror

Without You by My Side

Micah Nagle '24

This feeling inside,
 Pulsing through my veins,
 Why won't it stop?
 And why do I want to hide?

It fills me with pain,
 Draining everything from me.
 I poured out everything to you,
 But all you did was complain.

You said you would be there,
 You said you would try.
 But look at you now,
 You need me to pay for the childcare.

Moving on is tough,
 I still haven't done it.
 You said that you loved me,
 I could tell that was a bluff.

At the end of the day,
 I should have left sooner.
 Though the pain is still inside of me,
 I should have never made you my fiancé.



Jordan Shekalus '23
1st Place

untitled*Charlotte Baumgard '23*

at night she exists in a different world,
 a beautiful world where the previous days woes are nothing but a mere whisper in the
 back of her mind,
 a world where she can't remember who she used to be and she can't even imagine who
 she will soon become,
 a world where no man is above another,
 a world where the sky is always blue and the children are always happy,
 a world where everyone has a home and looks out for one another,
 a world where she is happy.
 but soon enough morning will come,
 and as the sun rears its head over the hills behind her house, she'll remember.
 she'll remember where she's from,
 and her birthday,
 and the name of her first pet,
 and the color of the walls in her childhood bedroom,
 and the mean thing she said to that one kid that one time,
 and all the names of the people who used to just be old friends in childhood stories,
 and the life she resumes now.
 and she'll remember that where she resides at night does not exist, it never has and it
 never will.
 and she'll go about her day.

Poison Polaroid*Reagan Rittenhouse '22*

Scrolling through a gallery of unfamiliar faces
 Bring me back to those familiar places
 Where our little eyes looked at life through rose-colored glasses
 Instead of pictures through a rose-colored filter

 No longer playing games and jumping on the bed
 But rather the game of Life plays us instead
 Our little hands clung onto the tiniest moments of joy
 Please take away the agony of growing up

Apple Halves

Emily Zaharia '21

She lead me through the hall into the night
And opened once again her door for me
The apple halves, a now familiar sight,
They waited at the bed so patiently

I looked at her and saw within her smile
Remorse for only me and my good name
Yet I noticed how again her frame beguiled
And afterward, she turned away in shame

She offered me the apple halves' pleasure
The bruised bodies, curled again at end
Their paper skin colored of ash, her treasure
I said to her, I hope to not offend

But eat these apple halves I do not plan
She turned and only answered, but you can

she is

Laura Schlappich '24

she is my light
she is my air
she is my sun
she is beauty, but i never look
she is music, but i never listen
she is a story that i won't read
she is my moon
she is my stars
she is my hope
she is the breath in my lungs
she is the blood in my veins
she is the tears on my cheek
she is my anguish
she is my sadness
she is everything but mine

Forever

Meadow Himmelberger '24

Forever is a strange word. It's one to hate upon but also love at the same time. Being told forever by another person is something everyone desperately wants deep down. Whether it's from one specific person or not, it's something to crave. Yet at the same time, forever can crush you. That forever could end up leaving you to wonder what forever was actually supposed to mean in the first place. Forever hides along with a lie; after all, everything eventually ends. Doesn't it? What was the point of saying forever when it's sure to eventually end or change to something else? But then maybe forever is the lie itself. It is only one word. How can it end up doing so much damage? Then again, maybe it's not the word that's strange and painful, maybe it's the one who says or uses it. The one who deceives us, the one who uses the word to do so. Yet why are we deceived so easily with this single word if we know what it can do? It's such a simple word that is used so often. Although we still try to, why exactly? No one can definitely explain it, it would be foolish to try and give it just one meaning or one feeling. Therefore it will be a word that's never truly understood or exact.

Love Her Less

Emily Zaharia '21

'Twas she who wrought the day and night
A woman twice forlorn as she
Could never, ever bear the plight
She would bestow upon her three

And so she swept and washed and cooked
And made for three a virtuous fate
Upon her toil, whence she looked
Her kin did patiently await

And with her leave, indeed she blessed
Her presence missed by only few
So who would dare to love her less?
In days to come, she would find rue

For what good is it for those to love
A mother loosed from life thereof?

One Second

Alexis Seymour '24

It makes all the difference.
It takes one second to crash your car,
to turn your world upside down.

To say three words,
eight letters,
it takes only one second.
Changing someone's life
ruining your own,
just takes one second.

Smiling at someone,
giving them a compliment
takes one second,
to make their entire day.
Never waste your time,
not even a second of it.



Madison Kubacki '23

Songbird

Ella Jenkins '21

The tree was bright and merry
A bird plucked off a berry
He started to swoon
His song went off tune
His face turned red as a cherry

At First Sight*Kelton Faulk '23*

I saw your eyes
 Then I realized that I found you,
 I found you
 There's no disguise
 I can't imagine life without you
 So dry and so dull
 Your love is so pure
 Like a flower that blooms everyday
 It's like the sun is shining on you 24/7

*Nikailyn Madden '23***3rd Place****When I Met You***Charlotte Wallace '24*

When I met you
 I had no clue
 It was out of the blue
 I thought we were gonna be like glue
 But you never stuck with us
 I trusted you but you couldn't trust me
 You never told me why
 Now I cry
 I cry all night
 And all day
 I miss you terribly
 But I do not regret anything
 You poisoned me toxic like nuclear waste
 Everyone thought you were a queen
 All ways right never wrong
 People bowed down to you
 But really you are a queen bee
 Pretty until you sting
 Your sting is slowly killing me
 I do not know how I ever loved you
 When you didn't love me
 Just know I don't have any regrets

Pitseleh*Charlotte Baumgard '23*

Pitseleh, my darling you've been awake for far too long,
 your eyes are drooping shut and your heart isn't very strong,
 Pitseleh, my darling it is time to go to sleep,
 if you really, really need to, go ahead and weep,
 Pitseleh, my darling, you can't stay up anymore,
 for when you awaken your eyes will grow to be puffy and sore,
 Pitseleh, my darling, rest is what you need,
 a well earned break from mankind's innate greed

Girl I Want to Be

Alexis Seymour '24

I want to have blue-green eyes

I want to be the smartest

I want to be that girl who makes everyone laugh

I want my confidence to be shown

I want to be there for everyone

I want to be the kindest

I want it all

It's always I want I want I want

And never, I have

I have long straight brown hair

I have deep brown eyes with specks of green

I work hard for everything

I build others up

We all need to start appreciating what we already have,

Who we already are

And never try to be someone we're not



Victoria Lapa '23

Feelings of This Fall

Olivia Brady '24

It is a little cold outside with the whipping wind in the air

So fierce that it tangled up all of my hair

While walking into school on a crisp fall day

All of the crunchy leaves get in my way

They stick to the bottom of my shoes like gum on the street

When walking in, it feels warm inside, considering it was time they turned on the heat

Finally the temperature drastically makes a change

Something about being back in school still feels strange

Now it is time to get back to the learning

It still feels scary to be returning

With the eerie feeling of the outside rain

The feeling of this fall still seems to remain

There is something about it I can't seem to explain

The endless days continue to get colder and colder

As the familiar feeling of summer is getting older and older

rosalie*Charlotte Baumgard '23*

rosalie's short stature cut through the crisp, autumn air, carrying her across the yard and right up into the arms of that beloved old tree down by the river. she crawled through the rickety old branches and perched herself on one that looked out over the swirling river below. the golden, nearly fallen leaves prompted her to dream of a brighter day. her mind drifted to those halcyon summer days. the ones where the world was still alive. those days when the sun smiled down at her, the tree branches held her tight in their arms, the grass on the ground promised to catch her if she slipped, the birds sang a duet with her in perfect harmony, the river water winked at her from down below, and the wind whispered sacred secrets of the world in her ears. those days were ages away yet they felt as if they had happened just a few short nights ago.

on those beautiful days, rosalie was everything. in the morning she was a chirping bird. the bright song she sang at the brink of dawn never failed to awaken everyone around her. they always sat up with smiles on their faces, knowing that the hours to follow would be filled with endless silly shenanigans. in the afternoon she was a busy bee. she flew around her backyard, checking on the flowers and carelessly playing games with other bugs. in the evening she was in the sun. she lit up the entire world just enough for it to still be full of fun. and at night she was a soaring rocket ship. she zoomed through space at the speed of light, visiting every star and planet she possibly could before finally retiring for the night.

but on that solemn autumn day, as she sat on the nearly withered branch, she was nothing. not a fairy, not a bird, not a planet, not a rocket ship, nothing. simply nothing. she was one with the grey sky above, cold, distant, and colorless. she had become the very thing she had resented so vehemently as a child. in an attempt to shake that rotten feeling she flung herself off of the branch, falling through the air for a few seconds before plunging face-first into the frigid, unforgiving river.

the water wasn't as inviting as it had once assured her that it was. instead of being met with a warm hug, she was met with cold, wet knives being drug aimlessly across her skin. and as she was submerged in the grimy water instead of dwelling on how cold and miserable she felt she honed in on how betrayed she felt. maybe the grass never was soft. maybe the sun was never smiling. maybe the birds were never singing along with her. maybe the world was never alive. after contemplating for quite some time she pushed herself to the surface and sucked in one large gasp of air. slowly, rosalie swam over to the river's edge, pulled herself out of the cold water, and rolled onto the bank. she stayed there for a while, lying on her back, staring up at the grey sky above and examining every detail as if it were a self-portrait. when she finally convinced herself to stand up she felt a sting in her eyes. she was crying. she quickly brushed the tears off of her face and took a deep breath. then with her head hung low, she carried herself through the unforgiving autumn air once again. she trudged across the crinkly, dried up grass and made her way back home.



Nikailyn Madden '23
Honorable Mention

Happy Tunes

Brooke Shellhammer '24

Her smile was so bright,
 that her mascara stains were invisible.

He was so smart,
 no one saw his shattered glasses.

She was so perfect,
 that no one saw her lunch in the trash.

He was so strong,
 no one heard the invective yells.

They were so invisible,
 no one noticed when they were not there.

Happy tunes
 fill our ears,
 distracting us,
 blinding us,
 deafening us,
 to show us the artificial truth behind the smile of a mask.

Heart of Glass

Julia Missimer '24

Tight pants, loose shirts,
 I get criticized so much it hurts.

Work harder, be kinder,
 "You always need that constant reminder."
 "Smile more, you always look mad,"
 but some days it's ok to feel sad.

Bring those grades up, keep helping out.
 It's like I'm constantly stuck in a drought.

Of being good enough or being not,
 In this world we're all just a spot.

A spot that feels small.

A spot that feels weak.

Just remember, keep climbing higher.

Each day try to feel a little brighter.

In this big world,

Our young hearts feel like glass.

Trying to get through and make it 'til we pass.

Stars

Ariana Arias '23

Endless night sky
 Light of the night, tell stories
 And us to hear

Husky

Ariana Arias '23

Blinded by form
 Shining white coat and eyes of
 the sky
 Yet loyal heart

"Friends"

Adrianna Rivera '24

Do you see what's wrong?

What happened?

Tuning out the questions as the thoughts rush to my head

Could it have actually happened?

I close my eyes and sit back recollecting my memories

I was so young

Laughter

Maybe this isn't so bad

Grunting

My eyes open, wipe with fear

No

No

No

It never happened

I don't believe it

I close my eyes again and simmer down

I was brought back to the moment

I could feel the softness of the cushion against a flower that had still yet to bloom

And I could see them next to me

They encouraged me with their motions

I mimicked their pleasure

no

I couldn't continue

Tears filled my eyes

My body trembles

I couldn't stand the thought of it

But a small voice, maybe a force, claws at me head to continue

I close my eyes once more

The horrid memory filling my head once again

But this time it's different

There's

someone

else

An innocent little boy

NO

I snap my eyes open and let the water flow out

I couldn't handle it

Hey, are you ok?

That voice...

I'm here for you

My fears calm as the angelic voice pieces my ears

And finally I am at ease.

Life of an Animal

Anna Richard '24

The forest is my home.

Animals, big and small, run from one thing,
Humans.

They cut the trees, the birds sing in.

"Kill the big and healthy ones," with loud guns, they yell.

Make sure the 'dangerous' are dead.

Pain is all we feel.

Watch as the home we love is destroyed by humans.

As the forest goes up in flames, we run.

Most get out, but some die in the blaze.

Why does this happen?!

Every year when it is the hottest.

The sick grow sicker as smoke fills our lungs.

Pain is all we feel.

Watch as the home we love slowly burns away.

We are wise and old, but humans poach us.

Taking our tusks as we are alone to defend ourselves.

We hope to live in peace.

We are not brutal killing machines.

The calves cry for their mothers.

Pain is all we feel.

Watch as the home we love gets tainted with blood.

Down go the trees to the canopy.

"Fly away!" the birds yell.

Species get wiped out from left to right.

Our nests get destroyed as the tree topples down.

Our eggs, not yet cracked, break on the way.

Pain is all we feel.

Watch as the home we love slowly gets destroyed for lumber.

We must stop the hurting of animal habitats.

Only together can we stop this shameful act.

Donate! Protect! Help!

They have feelings too.

No animal deserves this pain.



Sara Motz '22

misfires

Charlotte Baumgard '23

The sun was just beginning to set as Lily sat on the carpeted floor of her bedroom, gently humming a soft tune. She knew the melody well enough to string together isolated notes to form a sweet tune but not quite well enough to recall the title of the song. It lay docile on the tip of her tongue, waiting for Lily to grasp onto that final piece of information that would lift her into clarity. She kept humming mindlessly and staring down at the ground, picking at the loose string protruding up from her worn-down carpet. And in a moment of swift recollection, she exclaimed,

“Oh, Mr. Brightside!”

Immediately following her exclamation she sheepishly smiled; laughing in spite of her loud excitement.

“At least no one is home to hear that,” she reassured herself.

With her newly established sense of joy, she jumped onto her feet and began wandering around her room. Instead of a soft hum, she began proudly singing the song. For a few lovely minutes, she basked in the evening joy, singing and dancing throughout the room with not a single worry on her mind. She was perfectly content until she heard something that abruptly caught her attention. The same string of notes she hummed just seconds before was being echoed throughout her house. A wave of panic and confusion swept over as she timidly went to go investigate. Her hand hovered over the doorknob and her mind began to race. She knew that nobody else was in the house. She was certain. That knowledge only made her anxiety increase, though. The dreadful possibilities were endless. Maybe someone broke in. Maybe someone had been silently stalking her from the shadows. Maybe an evil spirit was trying to haunt and torment her. With every bit of courage she could muster up she quickly swung her bedroom door open to face the hallway. Much to her relief, she found nothing lurking outside the door. For a few seconds, she just stood there, waiting, watching, and listening. A part of her expected something to leap out and mercilessly attack her and a part of her thought that she was in the clear. Finally, a sheet of cool calmness swept over her as she realized that the haunting tune had ceased.

“Maybe I just imagined it,” she rationalized.

Just to be sure, she tiptoed around her home in an attempt to weed out the culprit. When she was certain that the coast was clear she headed back to her room, abundantly relieved. Now that all of her anxiety had been subdued she continued with her solo dance party.

The sun had officially retired for the day and the moon had taken its place on the throne in the sky. Lily’s room was softly illuminated with gentle beams of moonlight; forming a lovely juxtaposition with the abrasive blaring music. She continued singing and dancing, pretending that her life was a cheesy coming-of-age movie and she was the eccentric, manic, pixie dream girl that marched to the beat of her own drum. The anxiety that had plagued her mind just minutes before had completely melted away; being replaced with an incomparable sense of youthful playfulness. That feeling would soon be withdrawn

when another unnerving sound hit Lily's ears. She rushed over to her speakers and turned them down all the way to get a better reading on the peculiar sound. Lily couldn't quite make out the source of the sound but she deduced that it most likely came from a person lurking throughout the house. Her heart dropped. In a moment of desperation, she grabbed a pair of scissors sitting on her desk, gripping it so tightly that her knuckles became a ghastly shade of white. She made a beeline for the door, determined to flee her infiltrated home and ward off any bad guys in the way. Instead of timidly tiptoeing through the hallway as she did earlier that night she flung the door open and barged into the hallway and carried herself with a sense of fear-induced bravery. To her left, she heard something swiftly creeping towards her. And with bravado and soul, she plunged her scissors into the chest of the perpetrator like a hot knife cutting through butter. She looked up, preparing to gloat her wit as she met the gaze of the bad guy. Her eyes grew wide with shock as she realized who she had wounded. It was her sister. Both girls stood like statues, their pupils locked to one another's as if they were connected by handcuffs. Before Lily could process what had just happened, her body took over, propelling her through the hallway and straight out the door. She ran and ran, cutting through the black night air until her body couldn't handle going any further. She collapsed into a shame-ridden heap on the cold sidewalk, passing out immediately.

Mother Dearest

Briana Silasavage '21

The smoke of her cigarette fills my lungs,
it makes my eyes water.

I always know how stressed my mother is based on how many cigarettes she is smoking on a given day.

It is a habit I used to be able to ignore,

but I can never get the stench of Camel Menthol Silver out of my sweatshirts.

I used to cover it up with sickly sweet perfume, but it never worked completely.

These days I smell like a smoke shop next to a Bath and Body Works.

Today the smoke shop and its sticky tobacco win. And as she flicks the ash from her third cigarette I finally ask the question I know is to blame,

"Who died?"

45 Minutes

Ashlynn Stacey '22

There's only 45 minutes between us
 Yet it feels like 45 years
 Feels like we're drifting
 But it's just my mind
 I let you leave
 Before you were actually gone
 Allowed myself to hate you
 But it was just me hating that you left
 I stopped trying
 Before it was over
 Because I knew how bad the pain would feel
 If I still loved you
 But what's even worse is you
 Still love me

The Heavens

Cassidy Noll '21

His hand rests on my leg,
 A comforting touch, a warm presence.
 I'm sent to the heavens by
 His hand on my leg.
 The fear begins to waver,
 By the soft behavior of
 His hand. Resting on my leg,
 is a comforting touch, a warm presence.

Ann Davila '22

My Sunshine

Annie Gao '24

A beautiful ray of sunlight
 You shine ever so brightly
 My world illuminated from your presence
 But died away as you pass

You move so effortlessly
 How I wish you would acknowledge me
 Just one word is all I need
 To know the sun still shines within

Is hope still clinging there,
 Or will everything turn to despair?
 Could you please just enrichen my life
 Before I start fading away?

One day or one lifetime
 I will wait as long as it takes
 To have the whole world by my side
 For you are my beautiful sunshine



The Polar Express Rides Again

Elizabeth Zaharia '23

A little boy in bright yellow pajamas laid awake in bed, the curtains drawn next to him. He watched the snowflakes fall gently to the ground behind the thick glass. It was dark and foggy but the moonlight shone on his pale face, illuminating his green eyes. The floorboards in the hallway creaked as two figures gingerly peeked inside the room, peering at their son. They talked in hushed tones.

"He hasn't left his room in a few days," his mother observed. "He's always just ... sitting there, staring out the window."

"Has he eaten anything today?" his father asked.

"I sent a few meals in but he barely touched them."

"Maybe he's just... exhausted," he said, rubbing his neck.

"But he *never* shuts his eyes. He's always awake with that little bell of his. Where *did* he get that, anyway?"

"I don't know," he yawned. "Maybe from school or something."

They hesitated, then silently walked to Sarah's room and tucked her in for the night. They turned off her light and went to bed themselves, collapsing in exhaustion.

The boy rubbed the silver bell between his fingers and paused. He sat up slowly and lifted it up to his left ear. He shut his eyes, held his breath and whispered something softly. He shook the bell and heard its sweet ring. Color filled his cheeks and he smiled to himself. He laid his head back on the pillow and instantly fell asleep.

A deep rumbling from the distance shook him from his slumber. It grew thunderous and bellowing whistles soon accompanied it. He leapt out of bed and pressed his face against the window, breathing heavily. The pencils on his desk began to shake violently and the strings connecting his model airplane to the ceiling suddenly snapped. A bright golden light shone through the window, temporarily blinding him. He felt his way around the room and grabbed his blue robe from the edge of the bed. He swung the door open and ran outside, his legs trembling. His slippers slid on the snow as he came to a halt in front of the majestic machine. The light warmed his skin and the train hissed as it gradually came to a stop. Then silence.

He saw a tall figure emerge from the distance and the boy stepped forward excitedly. "He's back," he whispered to himself as his numb legs dragged him through the snow. He staggered forward saying, "What took you so long? Christmas was a few days-" He froze. This wasn't the conductor. The man before him was thin and gaunt. He was slightly hunched over and relied on a cane to keep him standing. His red grimy beard reached his waist and the rough lettering on his hat made out the word *conductor*.

The boy was perplexed and cautiously inched forward, peering through the mist.

"I know, I know," the man said, taking the hat off playfully. "I'm not really the conductor." There was a pause. "Here, kid," he said, attempting to put the hat on the boy's head but he stepped back and gripped the bell in his hand tightly.

"Well okay," the man said, awkwardly putting the hat back on. Silence ensued.

"Hey, that's a neat bell," the man exclaimed. "I think I've seen a few just like that . . . In the North Pole," he said with a wink. "Can I see it?" He extended his hand. The boy flinched and stepped back once more, hiding the silver bell in his pocket.

"Okay," the man shrugged with a sheepish smile. He leaned on his cane and began to clean his spectacles with a soiled cloth, humming under his breath.

The boy was in awe of the magnificent train before him and he stepped on his toes to look through the tinted foggy windows, trying to find something that felt familiar. He could not see a thing except for the warm golden light emanating from them. The man soon took notice and faced the light.

"Yeah, the kids are inside," he said, pulling out his pocket watch and looking at the time. "If you want to join them, you better hurry." The boy shook his head hesitantly and staggered back toward his house, unable to feel his legs.

"Suit yourself," he shrugged, stepping onto the train. The words stabbed the boy in his heart and rang in his ears. He remembered those words from the previous year, spoken to him before he made the most important decision in his life. Still, he watched the train lurch forward and heard two roaring whistles while the ethereal snowflakes lightly fell before his eyes. The lettering on the train that spelled *Polar Express* moved past him and he impulsively ran after it, his whole body trembling. He heard the conductor's voice in his head. "One thing about trains: It doesn't matter where they're going. What matters is deciding to get on." He knew what to do from here. With all the strength in his body, he threw himself on the train and collapsed in exhaustion. He watched his house grow smaller and smaller in the distance.

On his left was a familiar green door with a circular window. He peeked inside and saw two rows of red cushioned seats containing lively children in their pajamas. Sliding the door open, he looked around for the friends he made last year. As he was walking, a small hand grabbed his and pulled him into the seat. It was the girl from last Christmas. She was wearing her pink nightgown and she embraced the boy in relief.

"I knew you would come," she whispered. She held his hands and smiled from ear to ear. "Oh my, you're so cold," she exclaimed before crouching under the seat. She pulled out a cup of hot chocolate and placed it in his hands. "Here, this should keep you warm."

The boy was so delighted he couldn't even speak. The girl's smile fell from her face, cutting the joyful moment short.

"Billy didn't show up," she lamented.

"What?" the boy asked, bewildered.

"Yeah," she sighed.

"But we head to his house next, right?" the boy asked, trying to remember correctly.

"No, you were our last stop." The girl began to tear up. "I didn't even get to see his face. He wouldn't step out of his house. I probably should have done the same." The boy's eyes shone with interest. "I think," the girl started. "I think this year is different." The boy put the hot chocolate down, unable to take a sip while his stomach started twisting in dread. "The conductor is gone, and I only came to see you and Billy, but . . ." Her voice trailed off. "Everything is changing." Suddenly, a familiar bespectacled face appeared from the seat in front of them.

She wiped a tear and laughed. "Well, except for some things." The boy had short blond hair, blue glassy eyes, and was wearing the dull yellow shirt he wore last time. It was the Know-It-All kid.

He peered at the boy, saying, "Hey, it's you. I remember you. You're the kid who lost your bell last year."

"That's right," the girl sniffled.

"No," the boy said. "I found it the next day under the Christmas tree. It's with me now, actually. I put it in my pocket while I was talking to the man with the red beard."

"Gee, that guy's a creep," quipped the Know-It-All kid. As the boy searched, the kid kept chattering. "The only reason I'm on this train is so I can see Santa again. And the North Pole. And get my Christmas presents early. Do you remember the elves from last year? There were so *many* of them."

"I know," the girl agreed. "But it *might* not be like that this time."

"Why not?" he asked, furrowing his brows.

"Well," she started. "This trip feels . . . less magical. Nothing's the same. There was no dancing when they brought out the hot chocolate. No singing. There weren't even magical tickets." She held her breath, unsure if she should say it. "We might not even be heading to the North Pole." Everyone was silent. The girl buried her face in her hands. "I shouldn't have come on the train today."

The boy suddenly looked up at them in fear. "My bell. It's gone."

"Oh, no," she sympathized, putting a hand on his shoulder. "Well . . . then I'm sure it's back at your house, right? In your backyard."

"Yeah, unless the wind blows it away," quipped the Know-It-All kid. The girl glared at him with disapproval. "I mean, gee, that's really too bad," he consoled as he slumped in his seat. "Really." The boy and the girl looked down with crestfallen faces. "Hey!" the kid exclaimed, facing them again. "I have an idea! One of these rooms contains a bunch of

abandoned toys. Maybe we can find something nice for you there.” The girl looked at the boy.

“How does that sound?” He nodded his head in approval, smiling at his kindhearted friends.

They passed through each door, searching every room for roughly fifteen minutes until they finally made it. Every red cushioned seat in that dark place was filled with numerous items including teddy bears, small broken cars, and wooden rocking horses. String puppets and marionette dolls hung from the ceiling, making it extremely difficult for the children to navigate their way through the room. The girl was admiring a small doll while the Know-It-All kid crawled on the floor, looking under the seats for something salvageable. As he was moving, he recoiled in fear and let out a deafening scream.

“What is it?” the girl shouted. The kid breathed heavily but couldn’t look away. The boy and the girl crawled over to him and looked under the seat. There they saw the old conductor’s frozen, lifeless body as his shiny blue eyes stared into their souls.

Legends Aren’t All Lies

Briana Silasavage '21

Searching for an adventure, my friend, Collin, scoped out a house known as a town legend. Supposedly a siren spends her free time in the shadows below the old, rickety lakehouse. Collin thinks that’s why birds spend so much time there, squawking at the scent of dead sailors. Personally, I think he’s an imbecile. Somehow, against my better judgment, I agree to investigate the house with my closest friend, or so I thought.

Heavy moist air clung to my exposed skin and painted my forehead with a sheen. Collin’s cotton shirt stuck to his lanky build. His defined brows furrowed as the sun shined in his face. In the direct sunlight, his eyes were the same color as the body of water 20 feet away.

Collin and I had been friends for about 4 years now. He transferred to the same high school as me part way through freshman year. His family moved into a quaint espresso brown house across the street from mine. Our parents insisted on inviting one another to family parties and events. Eventually, I realized he was pretty cool even if our friendship was forced. Seeing each other at parties turned into seeing each other every weekend, turned into driving to school together, turned into being inseparable. I wish I had known everything would change the night we snuck into that damned lakehouse.

The Puzzle

Ava Kichline '24

What's going on?

Things have changed so fast.

Everyday I feel like little pieces of me slip through my fingers like silk.

I'm falling apart at the seams and I don't know why.

Tiny fissures crack open under my skin leaving me like shattered glass.

When I look in the mirror I don't see myself anymore, only what I failed to be.

It makes me want to disappear and dissolve like the stars at dawn.

I feel like I'm being held back, trapped in a fog of apathy towards everything.

Sometimes the fog will clear and I can just see the other side.

Even when I feel change at the tip of my fingers the fog moves back in, swallowing me whole.

It's a puzzle I guess,

But at the moment none of the pieces fit together just right.

I've tried forcing it back and trying to fit pieces that I doubt even have a place.

Each time it works for a little before popping back out and I'm a mess again.

Maybe if I keep trying or find motivation the puzzle will finally fit and I'll know what direction I'm going.

Love

Dynasty Flicker '24

Love is as red as a bright blazing fire burning at night.

It tastes like the sweetest chocolate,

even though sometimes it's bitter.

It smells like a beautiful rose in the middle of spring,

Although it might be too late to smell it.

It reminds me of the good and bad things in life

that has yet to come because it's so mysterious.

It sounds like the horns sounding for a king or queen,

But other times it's the horns of war.

Love makes me feel warm inside like warm hot chocolate

on a cold winter day.

At times it makes me feel like I'm caught in the middle of a

a thunderstorm that I can't get out of.

But when the time is right there will be someone.

Someone who lights the fire,

someone who helps your rose bloom,

someone who will clear the clouds for you

and carry you away with them.