

SIGNATURES



Sam Stone '21

"Plaza" (Charcoal Drawing)

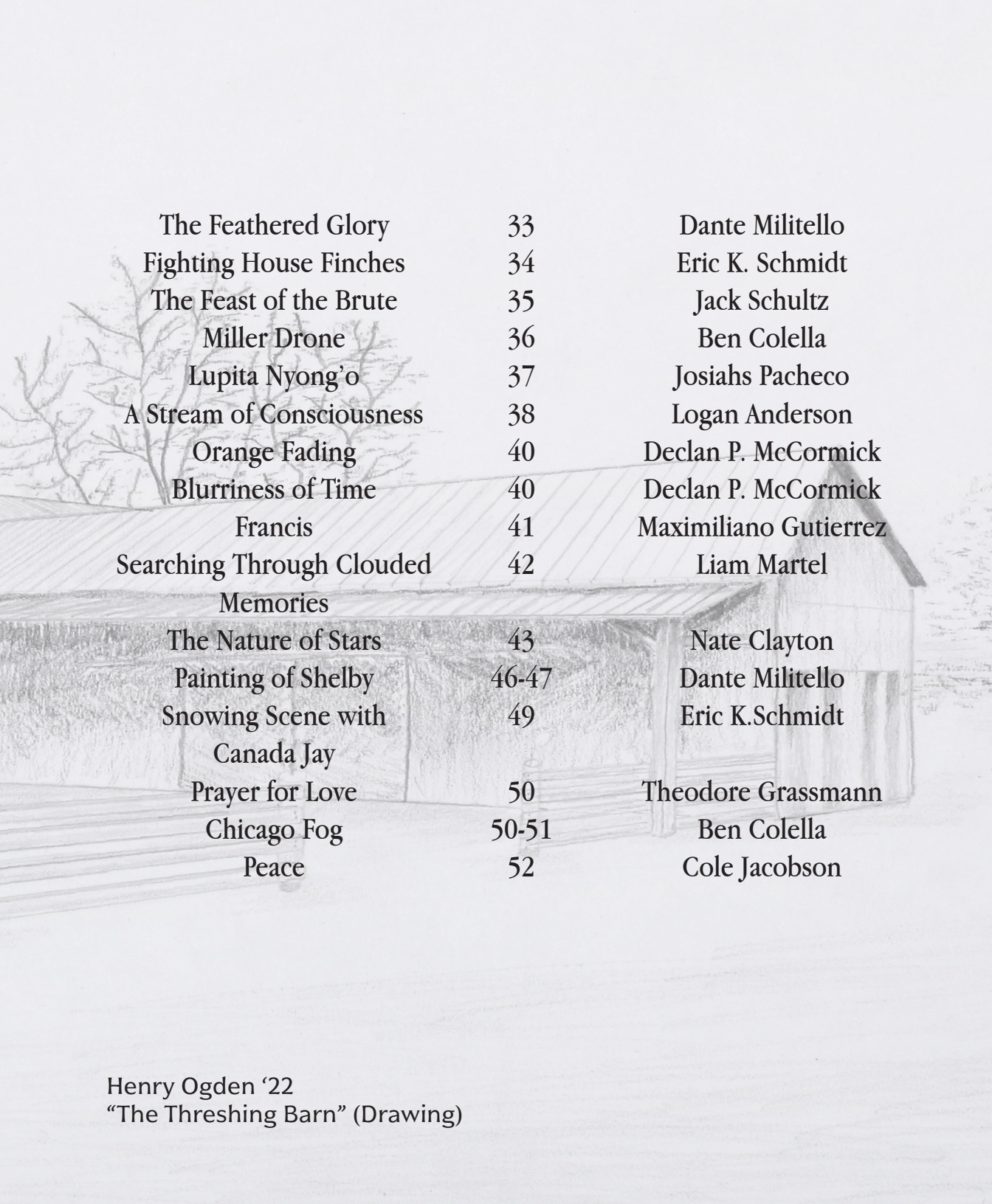


Signatures 2021

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Henry Ogden '22
"The Threshing Barn" (Drawing)

The Maze

The sewers reminded Kendar of a maze. A dark, damp maze where all the outcasts and renegades came to play. He drew his sword, the Claíomh Solais, the Sword of Light. It immediately began to shine, revealing where exactly he was, but Kendar shoved it back into the sheath, so as not to reveal his location to his prey. Kendar turned a corner and kept walking.

Water splashed under his shoes, but it was quiet enough that only he could hear. Kendar stopped to take a breath and pull his shining sword out for one second, when he heard the splashing of someone else's footsteps. Kendar began to run as silently and softly as he could to find his enemy. The maze was hard to navigate, with dead ends and doors leading nowhere at every other turn. Kendar continued the hunt.

It was not long before Kendar spotted a large, bulky figure running down a passageway. It could not have been anyone other than the monster he was chasing. It must have heard his footsteps, because the monster turned around with Kendar five feet away from it. Bearing its hideous fangs, the beast revealed its animal features. The head of a goat and the body of a lizard, with one arm seemingly made of metal and a sword sheathed inside of it. This creature was the enemy Kendar had been stalking, a warrior of the Fomorians, the enemies of his people. It was Morc, Lord of Tory Island, and the butcher of Nemed.

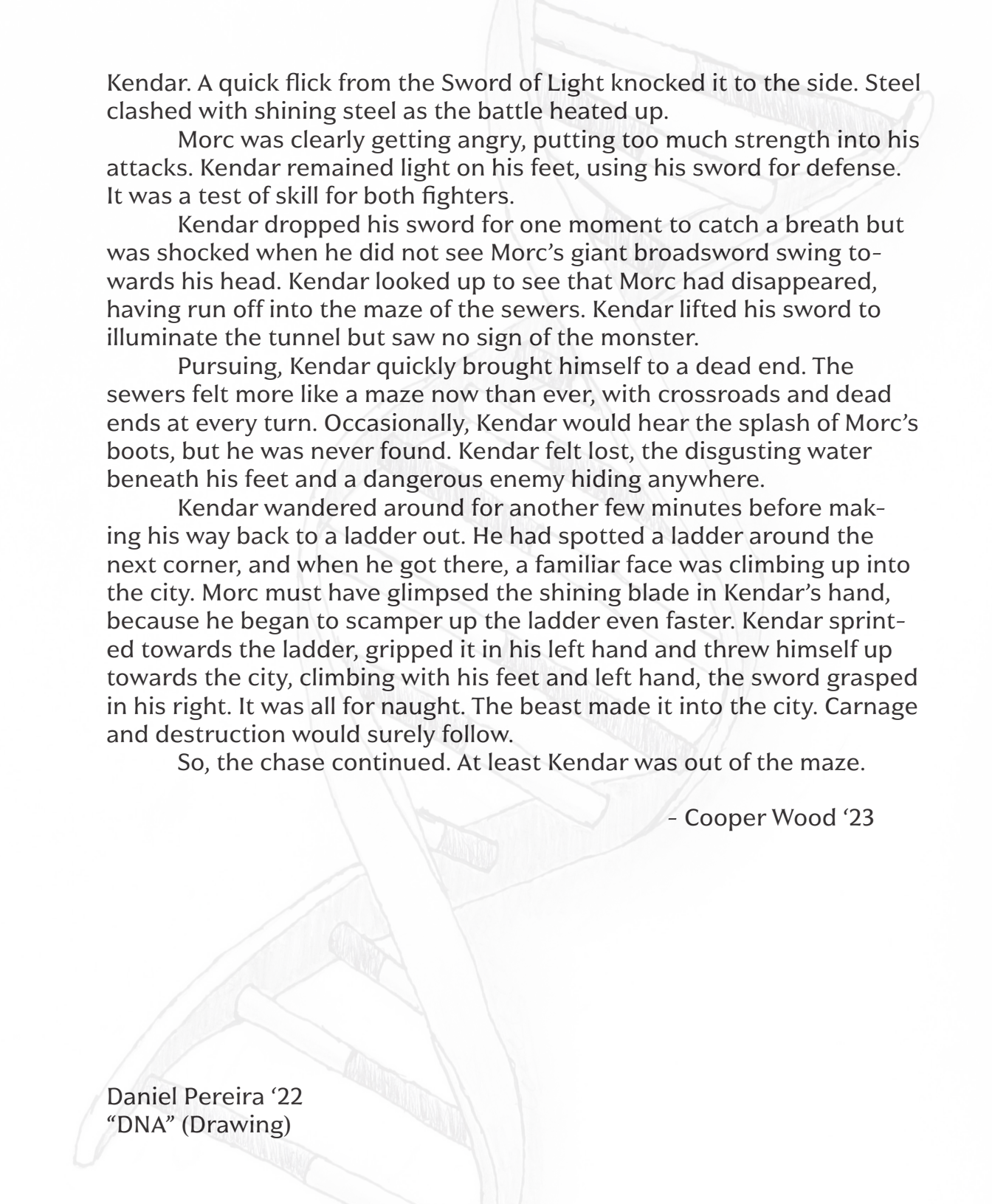
"I've been tracking you for a long time, Morc," proclaimed Kendar as he drew his great, bright sword. The Fomorian looked frightened for a moment, before turning his face into a malevolent smirk and drawing his sword out of his metal arm.

"You caught me by surprise, hunter," said Morc, "but I am still prepared to fight."

"I don't want to fight you," replied Kendar, "but if you force me to, you shall regret it."

"Don't get ahead of yourself," sneered the monster.

Morc rushed forward, and a quick sidestep by Kendar sent his prey flying past. Morc recovered quickly and swung his sword towards



Kendar. A quick flick from the Sword of Light knocked it to the side. Steel clashed with shining steel as the battle heated up.

Morc was clearly getting angry, putting too much strength into his attacks. Kendar remained light on his feet, using his sword for defense. It was a test of skill for both fighters.

Kendar dropped his sword for one moment to catch a breath but was shocked when he did not see Morc's giant broadsword swing towards his head. Kendar looked up to see that Morc had disappeared, having run off into the maze of the sewers. Kendar lifted his sword to illuminate the tunnel but saw no sign of the monster.

Pursuing, Kendar quickly brought himself to a dead end. The sewers felt more like a maze now than ever, with crossroads and dead ends at every turn. Occasionally, Kendar would hear the splash of Morc's boots, but he was never found. Kendar felt lost, the disgusting water beneath his feet and a dangerous enemy hiding anywhere.

Kendar wandered around for another few minutes before making his way back to a ladder out. He had spotted a ladder around the next corner, and when he got there, a familiar face was climbing up into the city. Morc must have glimpsed the shining blade in Kendar's hand, because he began to scamper up the ladder even faster. Kendar sprinted towards the ladder, gripped it in his left hand and threw himself up towards the city, climbing with his feet and left hand, the sword grasped in his right. It was all for naught. The beast made it into the city. Carnage and destruction would surely follow.

So, the chase continued. At least Kendar was out of the maze.

- Cooper Wood '23

Daniel Pereira '22
"DNA" (Drawing)

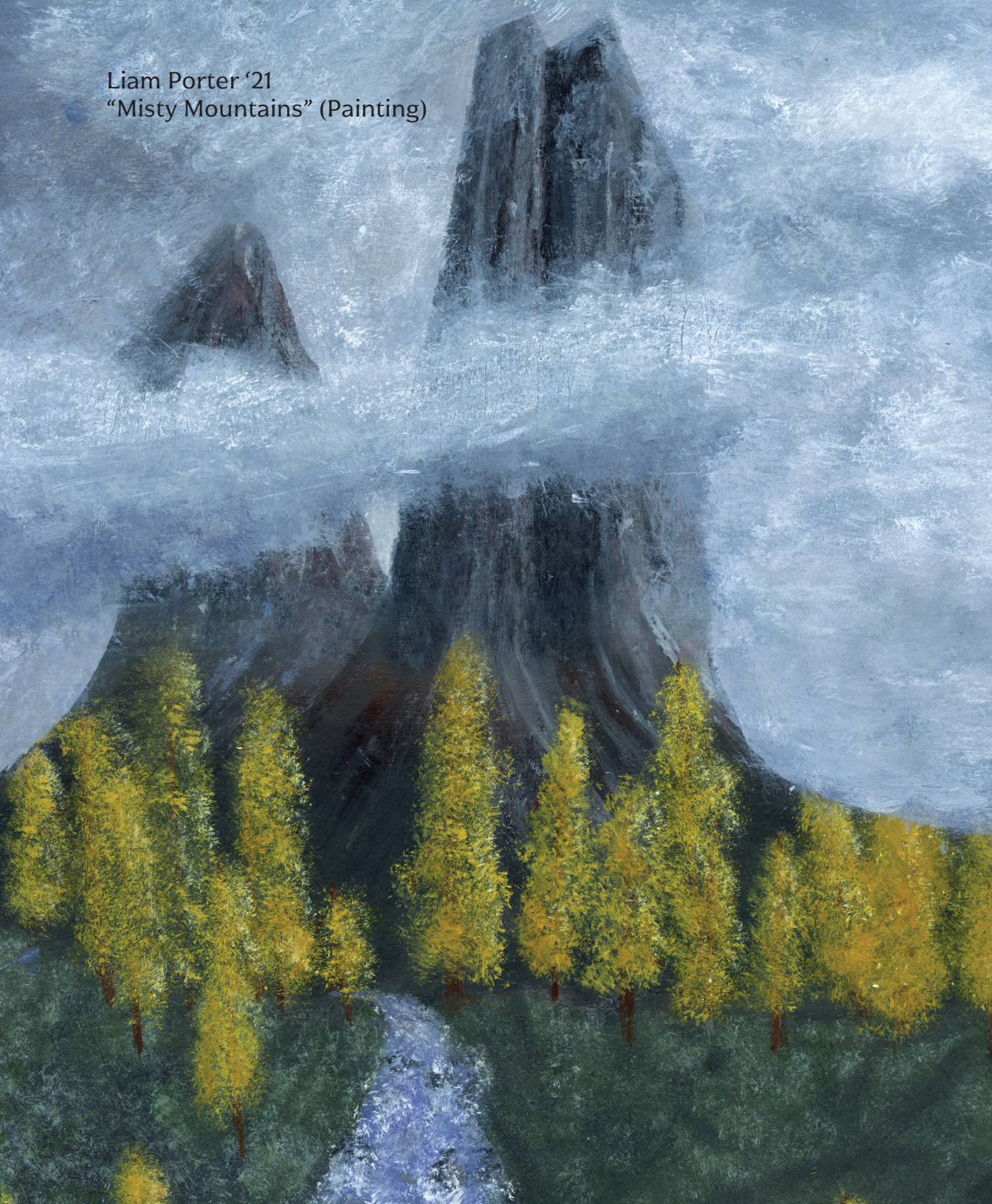
Grape Pickers

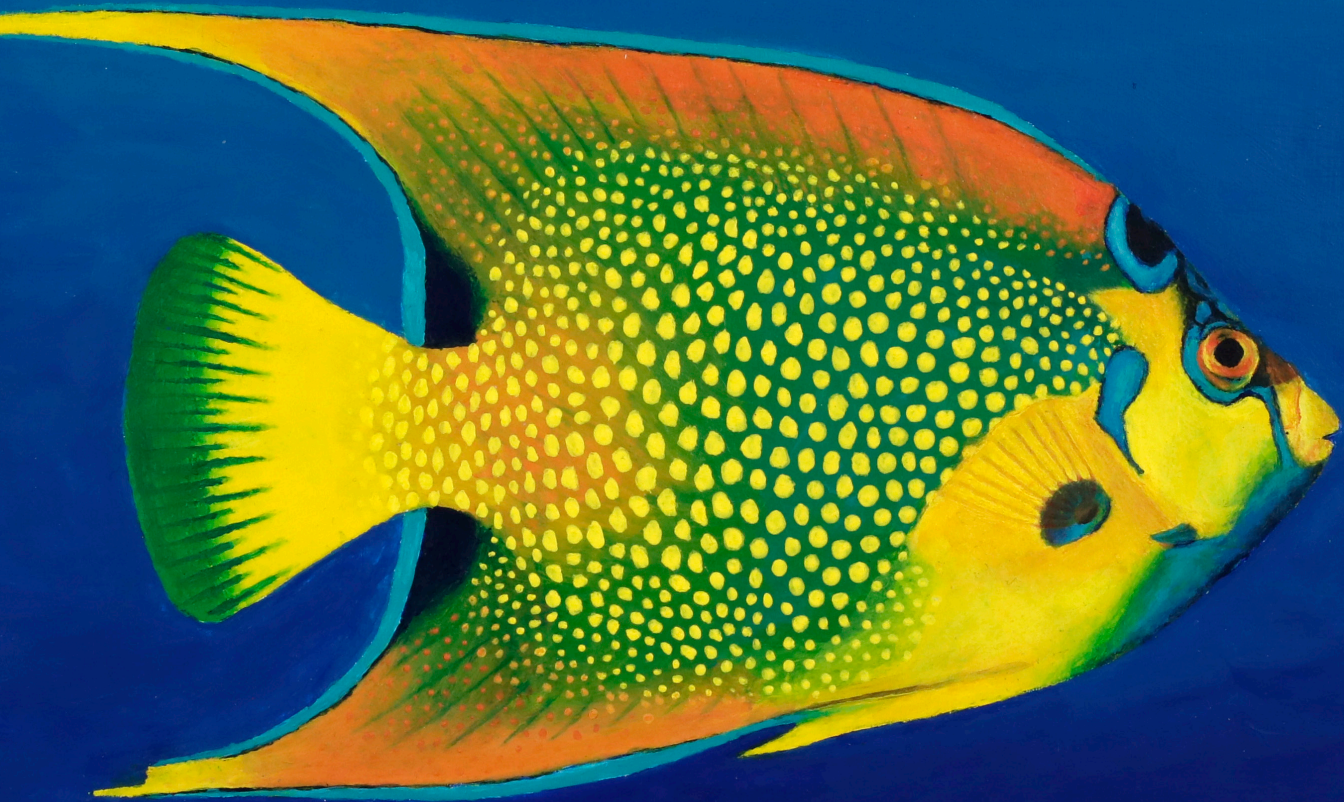
Their strong diligent hands pick.
They pick the large, plump, purple grapes.
They do this all while the mighty sun shines.
The sun shines upon their wet backs.
The mighty pickers are unfazed.
They continue to pick with their charred skin.

They pick for the future.
The future that everyone who
Came to this place wants.
A future for the future.
So they continue to pick
Imagining their pride and joy in their heads.

- Luis Vazquez Chavez '23

Liam Porter '21
"Misty Mountains" (Painting)





Ayden Ellis '21
"Queen Angelfish" (Acrylic on wood)

The Whispers of the Lake

The lake whispers to me. Softly, softly. I am quiet, listening to the whisper of the lake. It is indescribable, the most humble of sounds, and yet the most awe-inspiring. It is the voice of God; the quiet after the storm. When everything has been stripped away. When it is just me, alone in His embrace.

I am usually quite lonely, but not now. Now, through my tranquility, I defy the curse, the great fear of humanity. I am not lonely. Not anymore.

The stars caress me. Their light my saving grace. I am alone here, in this little hollow on shore. They are sprawled out across the tapestry of the sky, like a great hand tossed them into space and was satisfied with their placement. It doesn't matter that they're placed unevenly; the most beautiful things in life are uneven.

I sigh and inhale the sweet fragrances of the forest around me. I smell the storm that passed through earlier today. I inhale the sharp scent of lightning, the purity of rain, the freshness of new life. Here I am safe, nestled in the embrace of a thousand living things. I am not alone. Not anymore.

I quiet my mind and stare at the horizon. The rippling mirror of the lake reflects the stars, bringing the lights of Heaven down into this mortal world. I float in the ocean of serenity, with stars above and below, and the peace of the forest blanketing my senses like wisps of cloud. I breathe out all the stress of the world and float, float in my serenity.

I am not alone. Not anymore. I am at peace. In tune with God and His creation. I relax and hear the whispers of the lake. And now, at one with the beauty of creation, I understand.

- Nate Clayton '23

A House Sits Empty On Knoll Terrace Street

A house sits empty on Knoll Terrace Street.
Once filled with light that beamed through the windows,
Now sits dark.
The paintings that once hung on her walls,
Hang on somebody else's.
Her life was extinguished,
When every piece of evidence of a family was taken.

A house sits empty on Knoll Terrace Street.
The hallways are dark and bare.
Her living room is all but one couch and a chair.
She was filled with laughter and parties,
Yet now lies soundless.
Her lawn was formerly unblemished,
But Father Time forgot to stop the grass from growing.

A house sits empty on Knoll Terrace Street.
We pass her often,
But we don't remember her looking like that.
The house is nearly just a skeleton,
The remains of a past life.
The curtains drawn and the leaves unraked.

The house is empty on Knoll Terrace Street.
No sign of life appears.
Just mere memories,
Trapped in photos.
No grandma waving goodbye,
Or mother raising her kids.

Just a closed door,
And curtained windows that long for air.

There once was a home on Knoll Terrace Street.
But a house now stands in its place.
Empty and forgotten.

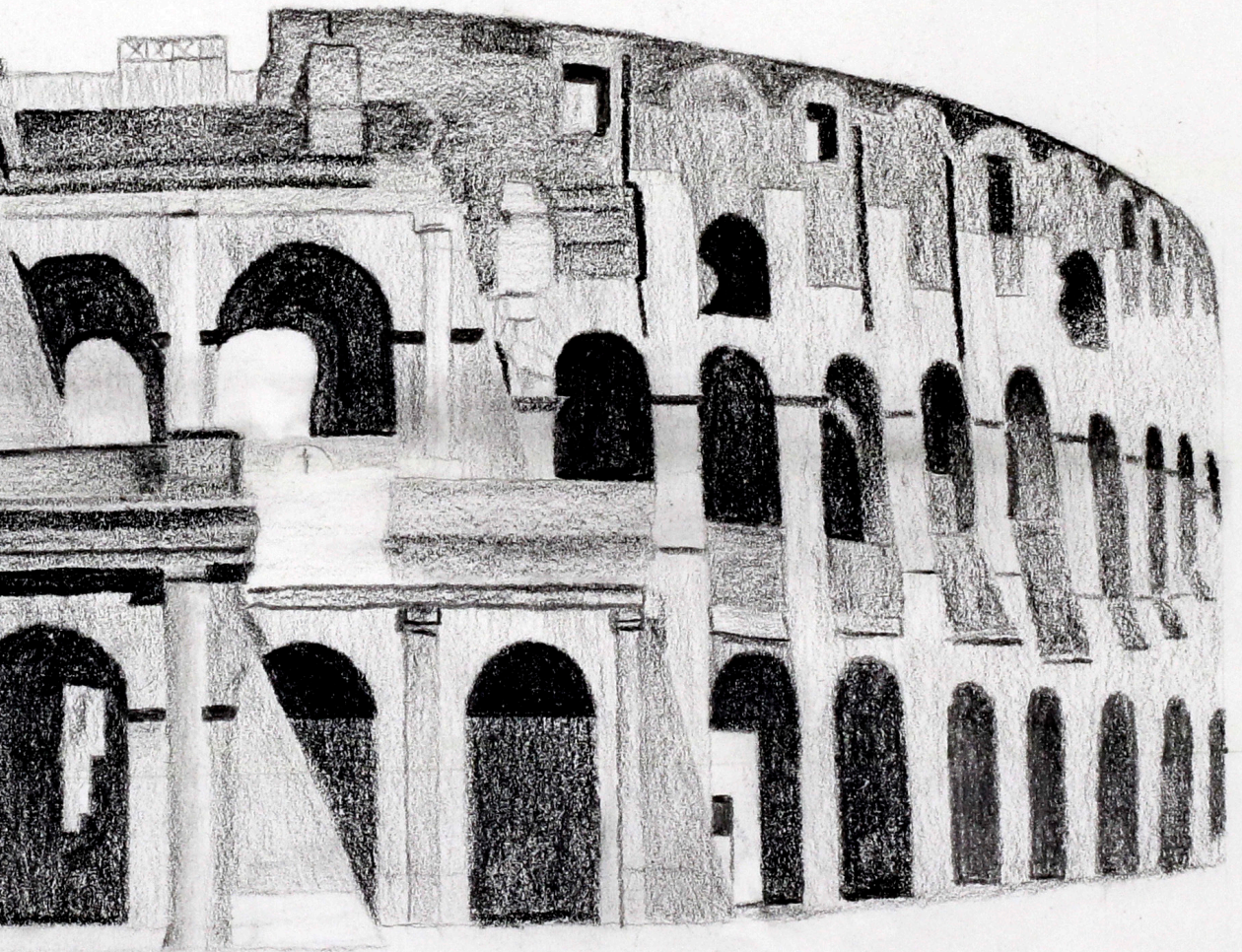
- Charles Doucette '23



Caleb Yatchak '22
"101 W. Wisconsin" (Painting)



Max Merrick '21
"The Colosseum" (Drawing)



The World is on Fire

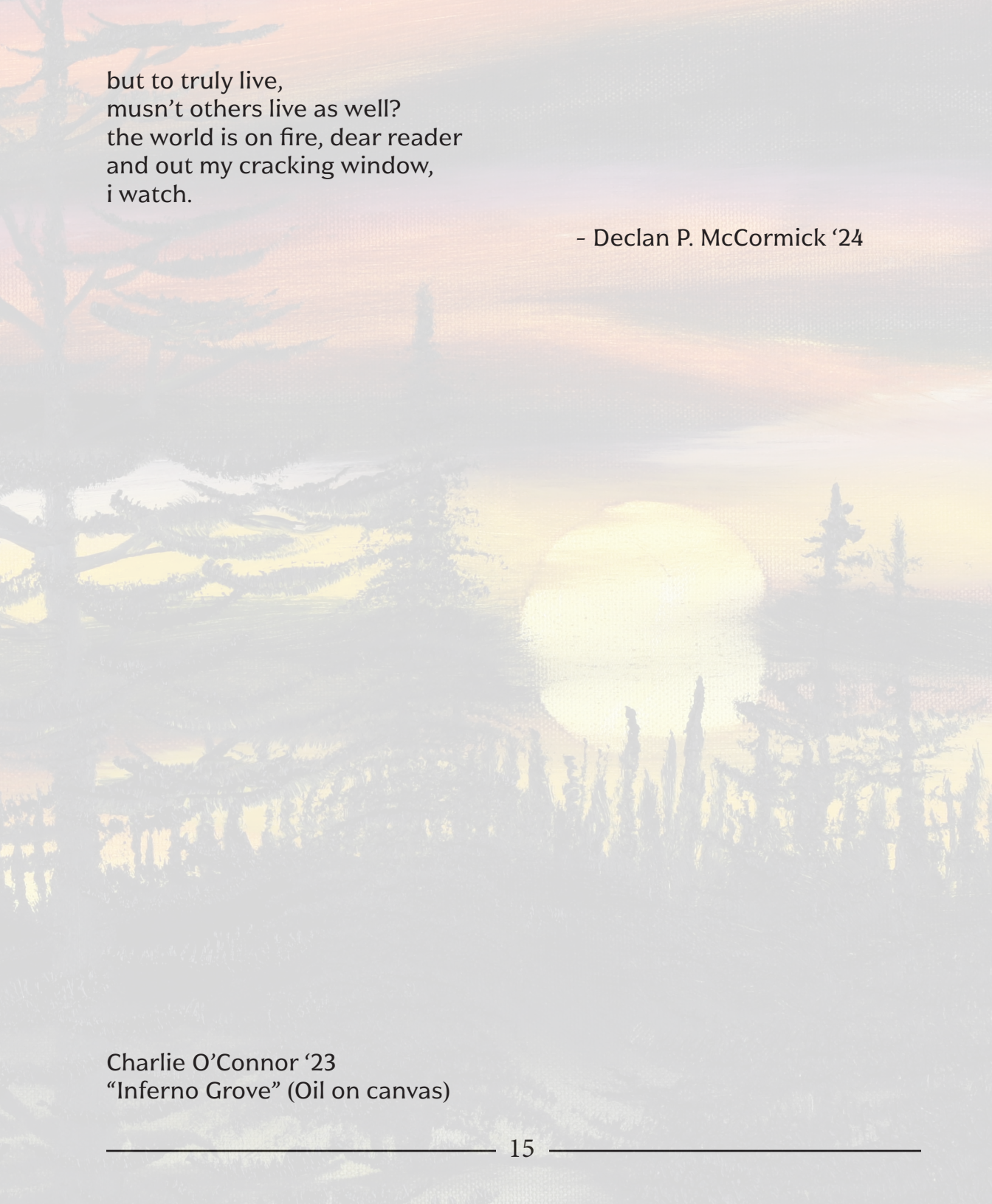
the world is on fire
and i watch.

the people are angry
at each other, at their governments
at the planet, at themselves
and in my calming mindspace,
i watch.

the country is divided
“over what?” you ask, i’ll tell you
we fight amongst ourselves, you see
not over things, but puzzle pieces
over abstract concepts, social constructs
waging war against the puzzle
with fists, and not with reason
and on the cover of the puzzle box,
the world watches.

our planet is going mad
temperatures rising
ice is melting
places alight with the roars of Mother Nature’s cries
and in my man-made jungle,
i watch.

o reader, I ask you this
what action must be taken?
we’re all desperate
for resolution, for an end
a denouement to this perpetual climax
we all just want to live



but to truly live,
musn't others live as well?
the world is on fire, dear reader
and out my cracking window,
i watch.

- Declan P. McCormick '24

Charlie O'Connor '23
"Inferno Grove" (Oil on canvas)

August

The dream I imagined for myself became real for a fleeting moment I love the feeling of you and I sparkling, for no other reason than the fact that it's summer The enchantment, more real than the real thing, has already faded and left us behind What warmed our hearts, clenched tight in our hands, wasn't only for the season! The sky in the evening was clear, save for the heavy September raindrop But we can exhaust the downpour if we remember that magic

My words can still call out, even if meaning is nowhere to be found! You laugh and smile, even if summer is nowhere to be found!

There's some reason I can smile, yes, it's right before my eyes!

And what's connecting us has always been the same!

I can dream of a thousand different moments, but to hear it will make you smile Yes, I feel as though my words might be heard!

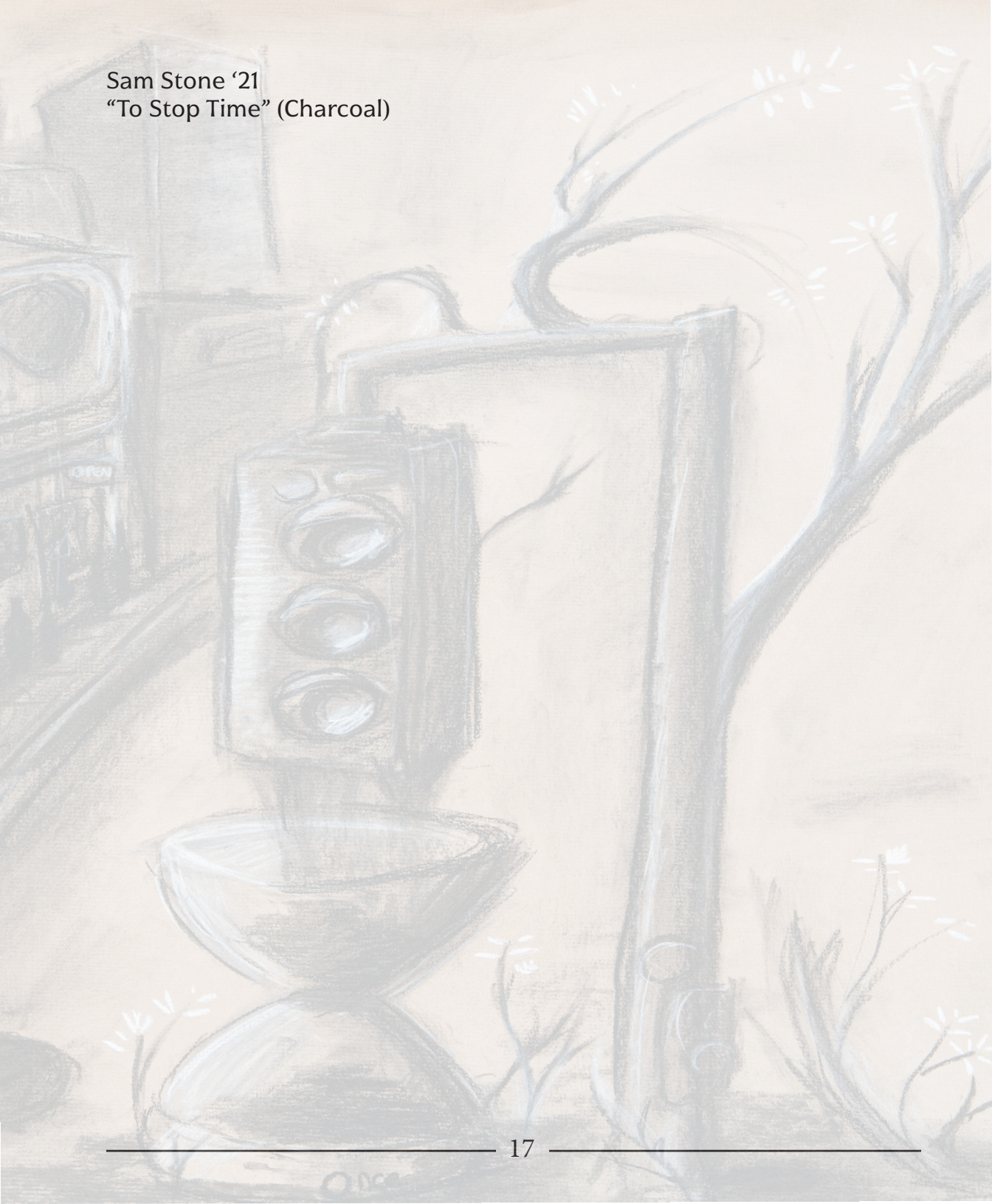
You and I aren't extraordinary, but if you're with me...

Who knows what's worthy to mention, but if I say it now...

I feel as though my words might be heard!

- David Paul Manning '22

Sam Stone '21
"To Stop Time" (Charcoal)



A Tenth of a Second

The school day was drudging along slowly until I finished eating my lunch, consisting of a homemade peanut butter and jelly sandwich, a packet of Goldfish, and a bottle of water. The bell reverberated through the halls of MUHS, and all the students still in the Commons rose from their chairs and prepared to head off to 6th period. I picked up my black backpack and swung it over my shoulder as I filed out of the room with a pack of my peers. I followed a sea of students up a marble staircase, with the group growing smaller and smaller as I went up each flight. I finally left the group on the third floor, as my next class, AP Biology, was on that floor. A few other people exited with me, and I happened to overhear part of their conversation. They appeared to be a group of juniors who were walking calmly and reminiscing about pre-COVID times, when we weren't restricted to an assigned seat in the lunchroom, when we could go to any gathering place during a free period, and when we could play video games during lunch periods every month or so. This last point stuck with me, which you'll hear about in a minute, but it also kept the conversation going for them. They discussed the specifics of certain characters and moves in *Super Smash Bros*, their favorite tracks on *Mario Kart Wii*, and even how the *Mii* persona Matt is a legend when it comes to *Wii Sports Boxing*. I related to all these discussions, and I could have contributed to them, but I just wanted to listen and learn instead. I kept listening to this talk until they stepped into the room adjacent to my Biology classroom, but when that happened, time froze as I made a sudden realization. There are people who do what I do, but I have no idea that they exist. They play some of my favorite video games, but I have never seen them before. People have my exact same interests and passions, but I don't know who they are. The worst part is, I may never meet them.

My face lost all emotion when I considered this idea. I plunged into numerous rabbit holes and explored multiple streams of thought within a tenth of a second, but they all led me to the same point. There will be people on this Earth that exist as much as I exist, and at the same

time I exist, but we will never know, tangibly, that each other existed. We will never meet, we will never speak, we will never hear each other's names, yet we still will have both existed on Earth during the same time period.

I did some research when I finished my homework for that night, and as it turned out, there is a name for this peculiar emotion, and it is called *sonder*. According to the Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows, *sonder* is “the realization that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own—populated with their own ambitions, friends, routines, worries and inherited craziness... in which you might appear only once”, which really put my perspective on life in a centrifuge and spun it around for quite some time.

Now, this idea pushes me to be the best person I can be to everyone, because that one meeting could be my only meeting, my last meeting, with that person. And who knows - maybe this will be the last time you read my work, but maybe, just maybe, you too will start to look at life a little differently once you consider the emotion of *sonder*.

- Logan Anderson '21



Maximiliano Gutierrez '22
“Rosa” (Drawing)

Should I Trust Him?

Should I trust him?
Will he do as he says?
Will he take me to a better life?

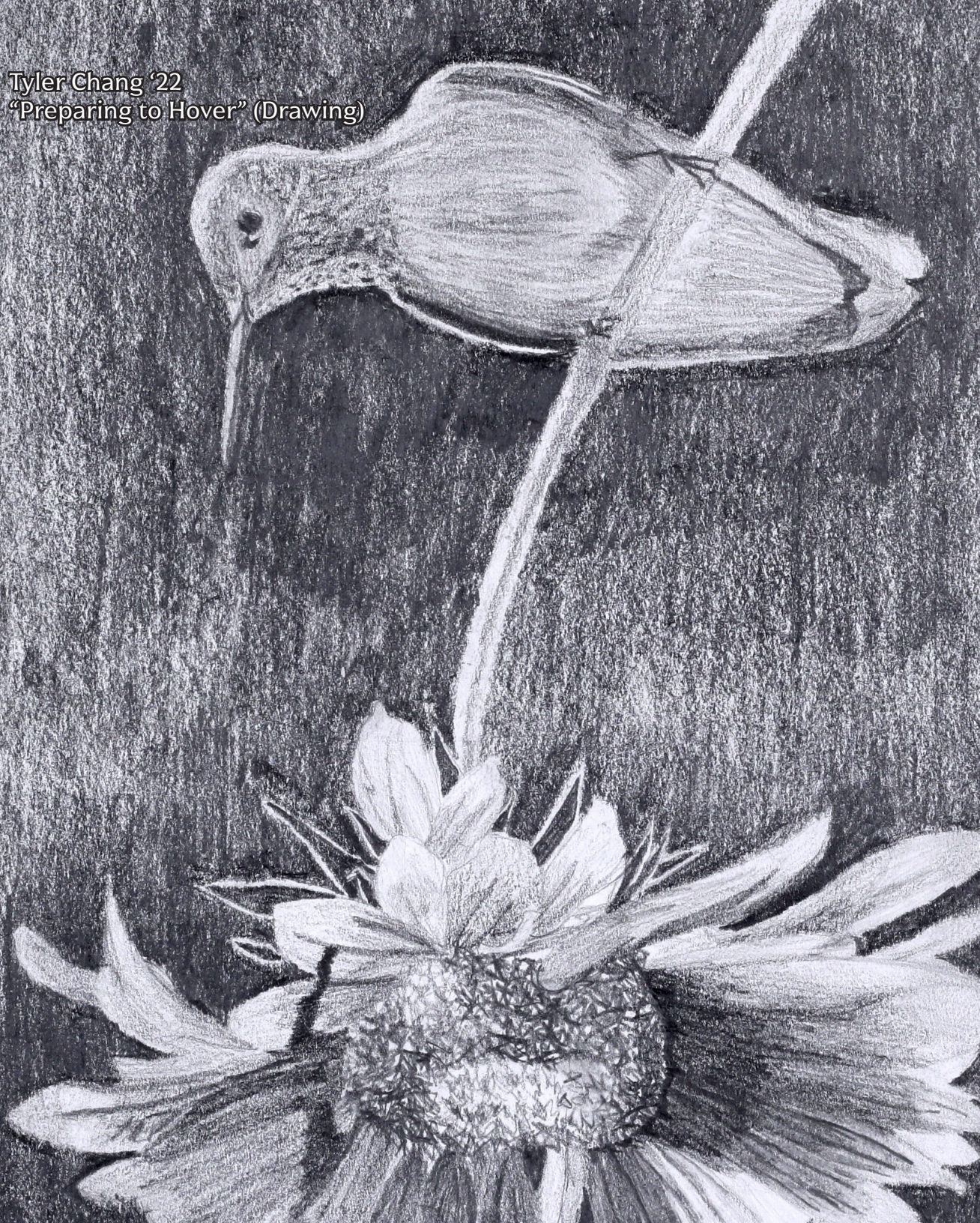
His strange smile I paid for -
as many others.
His strange brown fur -
I must get used to.
He is the gateway to freedom.

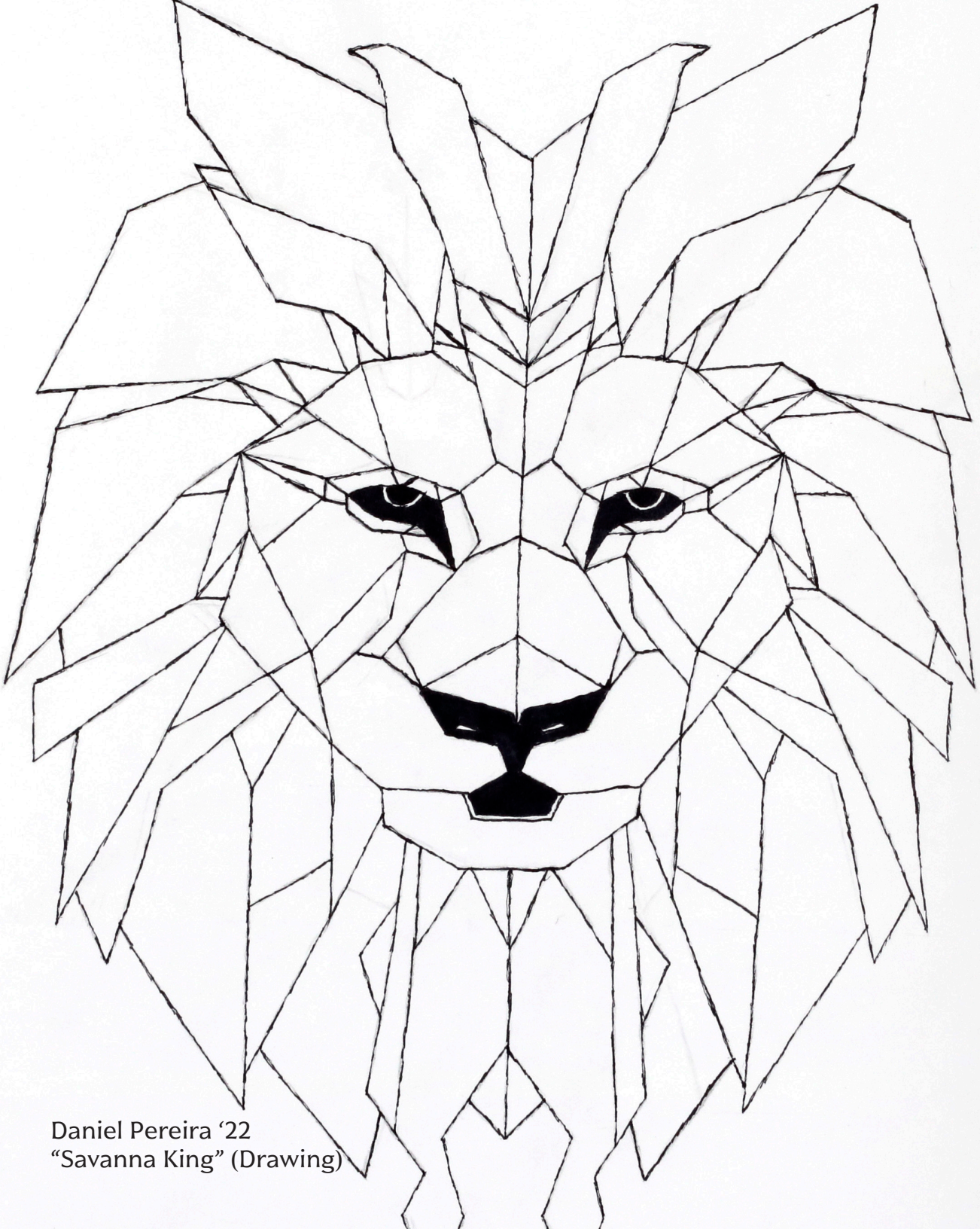
"A long journey," he states.
"You must trust me," he tells the group.
"Some may fall, but we must continue!" he barks.

I do this for my future.
I do this for my children's future.
El Coyote will take me past the wall to my future.

- Luis Vasquez Chavez '23

Tyler Chang '22
"Preparing to Hover" (Drawing)





Daniel Pereira '22
"Savanna King" (Drawing)

The Hunt

I wake up to the chirping of birds. After a short while, I finally roll out of my bedroll, stand up, and breathe in the fresh air. A soft breeze kisses my cheek. It's a cold breeze, but this is a cold day, one of those days when winter is almost over yet spring is not yet here. It's cold enough that I can see my breath in the air. The ground is cold but dry, and there is still some snow in the trees. The ground is several shades of brown and gray, a combination of slush, cold dirt, and the occasional stick. It's cloudy today; the gray cloudiness that makes the sky look as dreary as the forest. I'm the first one up, and I glance around the camp. There are six of us: Jaron, the brute; Axel, the thinker; Markel, the leader; Armat, the archer, myself, and Esha. I only know Esha, but the others are famous warriors, apparently. I've never heard of them.

Esha wakes up next and smiles at me, his blue eyes the color of the clear morning sky. It's logical that we would be the first ones up. We're both orphans, after all, and we've lived on the streets for almost all of our lives. We've taken care of each other for as long as I can remember; that's the only way we survive. If we weren't orphans, he says that he would be a musician. I would be a writer. A writer who travels the world.

He gets up and helps me open up a bag of salted pork. We divide it into six portions, four bigger ones for the warriors and two smaller pieces for ourselves. Then we sit down and eat our pieces as the others get up.

They slowly wake up and immediately grab for their breakfast. There's a lot of groaning between the four of them as they get up. After they eat, they grab their weapons, and we pack up their bedrolls. As soon as we are done, we are off.

We're hunters, of course. Hunting the Hoolo bird. It's a legendary beast, with bright red feathers and eyes that blaze like the sun. Its talons are said to be encrusted with diamonds and can cut through flesh like a Valshog's teeth cut through steel, and its beak is said to be made of solid gold. It has never been captured, but that never stops anyone

from trying. Everyone wants it. Whoever captures the Hoolo bird is famous. Other than the precious metals on its skin, whoever captures the Hoolo bird gets to eat its heart. It is said that whoever eats the heart of the Hoolo bird shall never know misfortune and that their name shall be written in the stars. It can only be hunted in the winter, when it is sleeping, otherwise it will be aware of our every move.

We go first, trying to be as quiet as we can. Our job is to remove obstacles from the path of the warriors, so that if they see the Hoolo bird, they may move swift enough to capture it. At least, that's what they told us. We both know that we mean nothing to the warriors. We're just cheap labor. Nobody cares about orphans, and nobody accepts orphans.

I move forward as quietly as I can, careful not to make any noise. The ground is hard and cold beneath my feet, but my new leather boots, lined with wool, keep my feet warm. The warriors were kind enough to give us nice clothes before we left so we wouldn't freeze to death. But they probably gave us new clothes because they had extra money to spend. Everyone knows how famous people like to flaunt their wealth. Still, these are nice boots.

Esha steps on a stick, and one of the warriors, probably Jaron, curses at him. He's going to say more, but Markel cuts him off. Too much noise will scare away the bird. Jaron grunts, and we keep moving.

I look down at my feet and avoid a small pile of snow. This late in the winter, the snow will crunch as we walk over it. I step to the side and plant my foot down slowly. Then I pick up my other foot slowly and place it on the hard ground. I move forward slowly, knowing Esha is moving at the same speed as me. Years of working together to survive have led us to think almost in sync. I turn to look at him. He looks back at me and smiles. His beautiful blue eyes are piercing against the dreary landscape.

Esha and I are trying to be as quiet as possible, but the warriors behind us aren't that focused on staying quiet. They avoid the twigs on the ground, but one of them steps in mud. The mud squelches beneath his foot, and Esha and I freeze for a second. Everyone is silent. After I'm sure nothing's following us, I breathe out slowly and keep moving.

We make our way through the forest, treading only on firm ground. Every so often, snow slides off a branch. Each time that happens everyone freezes. Axel curses under his breath.

Then we keep moving, our eyes peeled for the elusive Hoolo bird.

There! A flash of red moving across the snow. My muscles tense up, and we move toward it, ever so slightly. No one wants to scare away the Hoolo bird. The bird, I hope it's the bird, stops behind a line of trees. We crouch lower, and I hear the warriors draw their weapons as slowly as possible. I hope the bird doesn't hear them. As we approach the lines of trees, I catch a glimpse of the Hoolo bird. It's feathers are russet, yet they gleam in the weak sunlight. There's something on its head and below it's beak, but I can't make out what. Eventually we break through the tree line, and we gaze upon the mythical Hoolo bird.

It's a chicken.

A chicken.

Esha and I just stare at it in stunned silence. Then the warriors behind us see it. They immediately charge at it with a wordless cry, shoving us to the ground as they pass us. I look at Esha, and our eyes connect. We scramble up from the ground as the chicken turns to look at the people charging at it. We run away as the chicken lets out a cry and attacks the warriors. Soon we're far enough away that we can't hear the sounds of fighting. We keep running, though, just to make sure that the chicken isn't coming after us.

After a while I look over my shoulder, careful not to trip over a fallen branch. I don't see the bird, so I slow down to a stop. I double over and gasp for breath, my chest heaving like a heartbeat. I look over at Esha. He's doubled over, too, but he'll be fine. He's faster than me.

"Well, that was fun," he says wryly, and we both laugh, our breath drifting up in front of us.

"Can you believe it?" I ask. "The Hoolo bird a chicken?"

"Yeah." He smiles and shakes his head. "Is a crazy world."

"Indeed it is," says a voice from behind us. Esha and I whirl around to see a weathered old man standing behind us. He's wearing an old brown cloak, and his hair is white as snow. A wooden staff is clutched between his hands, as he stares at us with old eyes.

“Who are you?” Esha asks. The man doesn’t respond.

“You were hunting the bird,” he says. His voice is soft, like a gentle wind in a meadow. “Why?”

Esha and I look at each other. The thought had never crossed my mind. “For fame,” Esha replies. “Whoever captures the Hoolo bird gets famous.”

“Indeed,” says the man. “Why?”

“Because,” Esha says slowly, “when famous, you do whatever you want.”

“When famous, you have whatever you want,” I add.

“That is true. But look at the warriors who accompanied you. Do you think they had everything they wanted?”

“Well, yeah,” I say. Of course they had everything they wanted. They could afford it.

“Yet they wanted the bird. What does that tell you?” asks the old man.

“That they didn’t have everything,” replies Esha. He’s always quick on the uptake.

“That is true. And if they had the bird, they would want something else. What does that tell you?”

“That they wasn’t satisfied?” Esha guesses.

“That is true,” says the man. “Being famous does not mean that you will have a good life. Now why did you want the bird?”

We’re quiet, thinking about what he might mean. After a while, Esha speaks out.

“Because none accept us.”

“Go on,” says the man.

“Nobody likes orphans. We,” he gestures to the both of us. “wanted the bird so that people accept us. So we could live a good life.”

“Would that make your life good?” says the old man. “To be accepted?”

We both nod. “But,” I say, “nobody will accept us.”

The old man stares at us for a while. “Says who?” he says. “Says them? You need them to accept you so you can live a good life?”

I hesitate to nod. The idea sounds foolish now, once someone says it. I don’t answer, and neither does Esha.

“Now you see,” the old man says. “A good life isn’t about other people. It is about you.” he points a finger at us. “A good life is doing what makes you happy with the people who make you happy.” After he says that, he turns and walks away. He passes behind a tree and vanishes.

- Nate Clayton '23



Charles Doucette '23
“Lucy's Eyes” (Painting)



Charles O'Connor '23
"Moor's Path" (Oil on canvas)



An Empty Pew

An empty pew,
Can question your faith.
Longing for smiles,
That don't appear.
And in God we trust,
Turns into in God we trusted.
Questions get raised,
Thoughts turn dark.
The sky still blue,
The grass still growing,
Though your heart stops,
Every time it wanders into the dark.
Your faith plays tricks,
Rings bells,
It tells you she's rotting,
And her soul died with her body.

An empty pew,
Can question your faith.
Hoping for signs,
That do not appear.
An aching heart,
Counts every second she's not here.
You reinvent yourself,
Look at life through prejudiced eyes.
You find yourself angry.
At battle with a friend.
Time goes by,
Seasons change.
A mind finds clarity,
And regains a friend.
The steps are small,
And your trust uncertain.
And you pray to God,
To stop the next pew from being emptied.

- Charles Doucette '23

Magnified

A thousand accents to a thousand tongues
A thousand ways to think
A thousand breaths to a thousand lungs
A thousand ways to speak

A hundred races to a hundred places
A hundred ways to leave
A hundred wrongs to a hundred rights
A hundred ways to be

All creation accounted, balance gratified
All so profound, even wonder testifies
Still, the soul spins, longing magnified
Can this world ever really satisfy?

One home for all hearts; another's heart shall be our home
One life surrendered, that all surrendered may receive life
The world's purpose of worship for one God alone
The sun setting on anxious days, the King of grace shall suffice

Blessed are the meek; the highest mountain is their seat
Where beauty becomes fractured, the shameful see their rise
What perfection cannot earn, the broken destined to receive
Behold; the glory of Jesus Christ the King

- Juan Pablo Sanchez '24

Dante Militello '22
"The Feathered Glory" (Painting)





Eric K. Schmidt '22
"Fighting House Finches" (Photo)

The Feast of the Brute

First guns are shot, the War is Out! A boy from east Lorraine
Is off to war to battle for a glorious German reign.
Artillery rings and with it brings the vile presence of Death
But newfound camaraderie has kept the soldier's breath.

First guns are shot, the War is Out! The Brute has been released!
The Brute, the Kaiser of Distress, the life-destroying beast.
With every shell, it feeds off fear and sucks humanity.
But the breath of life has just been saved by camaraderie.

The war moves on and bodies fall. The Brute is fed and fed.
Though it sucks more blood, more empathy, the mind is not yet dead.
The damage is indefinite and memories are hazy.
But brotherly presence still protects. The man is not yet crazy.

More precious poppies plummet as the shining shells shatter,
And the Brute takes bites of humanity, lost, served upon a platter.
More guns are shot, the War is Out! His comrades now are gone.
Hope no longer present like a faded lifeless dawn.

Humanity has disappeared forever with the Brute.
Identity is as good as gone, just aptitude to shoot.
The Brute completes his feast and now the man is gone—insane.
His fate is gone, the red of blood no longer fills his veins.

- Jack Schultz '23

Ben Colella '22
"Miller Park" (Photo)





Josiahs Pacheco '21
"Lupita Nyong'o"(Drawing)

A Stream of Consciousness

What exactly is a stream of consciousness, you may ask? Well, a stream of consciousness is simply a path of thoughts that someone's brain has that ties certain memories and ideas together, whether you want them connected or not. It is usually a flowing conversation with yourself, but it can also be between two people. This well-known monologue of sorts is the reason why a conversation about favorite desserts can radically swing into a heated debate about the supposed greatest state in the United States. These two fine people will now show you what I mean.

"Hey bro, what's your favorite dessert?"

"That's a tough question... I really enjoy Costco's ice cream."

"What? You have to be kidding, right? They produce that horrible placebo for ice cream like a farmer collects wheat during the harvest! You need to find something that is truly tasteful."

"Are you seriously insulting my taste for desserts right now? Because if you are, why don't you name your favorite dessert, if you think your sense of food is vastly superior to mine."

"I will gladly tell you my favorite dessert. First, though, you have to guess what it is. I'll give you three chances because I'm feeling nice today."

"What kind of person forces someone to play 20 Questions before they can have a normal conversation?"

"I know, I am extremely mature." The friend sighs, and then responds with,

"Fine, I'll play your little game. Your favorite dessert is... a caramel apple." The slightly older friend stares at him for a few seconds, then he bursts out into laughter. After calming himself down, he looks at his friend in the eyes and says, "No, not even close. Two more guesses though."

After giggling for a bit, the friend responds, "Alright then, umm... how about a creme brulee?"

“Whoa, man, just because my great-great-grandpa came from France in the 1800s does not mean that I love creme brulee.”

“Fair enough. My family came from Germany after WWI, so I guess we have something in common. What state did your family move to?”

“Utah.” He gives his friend a judgmental look, then responds with,

“Utah, huh? You’re telling me that your family moved from the City of Lights and Love, to a plain in the middle of the country?”

“Utah isn’t just that. My dad told me that it was the best place for my great-great-grandpa to start his business; he wanted to produce and sell honey.”

“Honey? That doesn’t seem like a very useful thing to be selling, especially when Utah just became a state.”

“Well, it is known as the Beehive State. Who knows, maybe my ancestor had a hand in bringing that nickname to fruition.”

“I think you’re pulling my leg on that one, dude. Let me check before I let you win this argument.” The young man pulls out a phone from his pocket, his mother’s phone, to be exact, and looks up a nickname for Utah. Surprise and disbelief covers his face as he puts the phone back in his pocket. “I guess you were right. It really is called the Beehive State.”

“Told you so. I guess that’s another point for me.” They both look away from each other, one in triumph and the other in embarrassment. Then, the younger boy looks back to his friend and says,

“Hey, what were we talking about again?”

“We were talking about Utah.”

“No, no, no. What did we start talking about? As in, what was the first domino that fell and, because of the butterfly effect, caused that entire discussion?”

“First off, I don’t get that metaphor, second, we were talking about our favorite desserts.”

“Oh yeah, right.” He pauses for just a brief second, then he asks, “So, what is your favorite dessert?” Without looking at his friend, the older boy responded,

“Well, I love Costco’s ice cream.”

- Logan Anderson ‘21

Orange Fading

barren empty trees
contemplate shades of orange
maybe I find hope

as the autumn fades
giving rise to a crisp dawn
the blinding sunlight

piercing clear blue sky
a world awaiting first snow
shades of orange fade

- Declan P. McCormick '24

Blurriness of Time

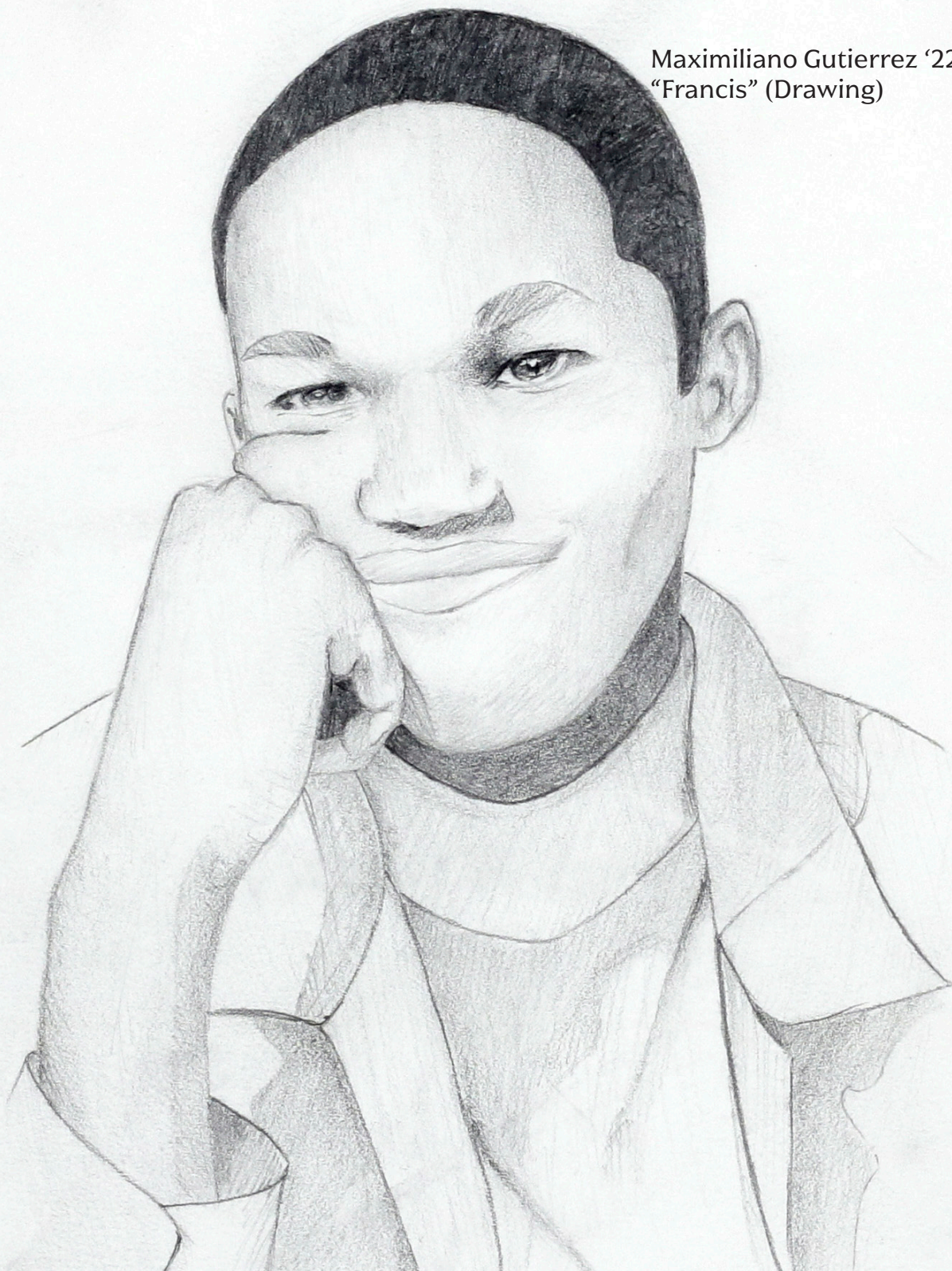
thoughts in mind, fleeting
i can't do this forever
lifetimes pass, one day

once ample nations
fall from their great golden thrones
no one foresaw this

i look out on earth
crying out for normalcy
blurriness of time

- Declan P. McCormick '24

Maximiliano Gutierrez '22
"Francis" (Drawing)



Liam Martel '21

"Searching Through Clouded Memories" (Photo)



The Nature of Stars

My phone vibrates, jerking me out of my blissful sleep. I blearily open my eyes and grope around for my phone. Once I grab it, I lean over and check my notifications. I immediately hiss. The screen's too bright for my eyes. I quickly enter my password and immediately turn down the brightness. Then I check my texts.

Sofia: *When r u guys coming over?*

My thumbs quickly type out a reply.

Me: *just woke up. Will b ovr n 30 minutes. Is every1 coming ovr?*

She replies a moment later.

Sofia: *yep. U betr not b l8.*

As soon as she replies, I roll out of bed and put some clothes on. I run out of my bedroom and into my bathroom, where I brush my teeth. I don't want to be late. This is our last day together, and I don't want to waste any of it. I run downstairs and grab an apple from the fridge. I hear my mom come down the stairs, but she ignores me. She knows how important today is to me. I hurriedly slide my shoes on and grab the backpack I packed yesterday for today. I grab my keys, run out the door, and unlock the doors to my car. I scramble in, turn it on, and start driving.

Eventually I turn onto a lonely dirt road that cuts through a forest. I follow it for a while until it ends in front of a massive lake house. The house is light blue, like the color of an ocean shore, and has several sliding glass doors on the first floors. It's silhouetted in front of a gigantic blue lake. There's a wide pier thrusting out into the lake with a black jet ski and an orange speedboat on either side of it. I count two other cars in front of the house.

I sigh. That means I'm not the last one here. I turn my car off and step outside. Sofia's running toward me. Her wavy black hair bounces with each step of her white Adidas shoes. She's wearing a pink shirt and black shorts and practically leaps in to hug me.

"It's so great you're here, Ben," she says. I hug her back, and we let go quickly.

"Come on," I say, smiling back at her. "I wouldn't miss it for the world." She leads me over to the house. It's nice outside. There's a soft breeze from the lake and the sky is clear and bright. It's not too hot or too cold outside. It's perfect.

Sofia slides the door open, and we step into the house. It's a little cooler inside. There's a nice glass table to my right, and from what I can tell the living room is to my left. Z and Ava are already here. They look up as I walk over and sit down.

"Ben, you made it!" Ava shouts. She gets up and runs over and squeezes me into a hug. I reply in kind and pat her on the back gently. She squeezes me tighter. I pat her again, but she doesn't get the hint. I smile.

"Okay, Ava. Time to let him go," Z says, walking over to me. Ava squeezes me one last time, then slowly gets up and walks over to her chair. He plops down next to me. His short hair is cut on the sides, but his hair on the top of his head hangs down on the left side of his head. His blue eyes reflect the sun, and he smiles. His plain white tank top goes nice with his blue shorts and shows off his muscles.

I turn to look at Ava. Her brown eyes are just a shade lighter than her skin, and her black hair falls over the shoulders of her purple shirt like a waterfall. Her legs are folded beneath her on her chair, and she takes a drink of something. Her hand's in the way of the label, but knowing her, it's probably Diet Coke.

"Is Luke here yet?" I ask. Z opens his mouth to respond when I hear Sofia run into the gravel driveway.

"Guess that answers my question," I say. Z laughs. A few seconds later, Sofia comes back with Luke behind her. His brown hair reaches to the shoulders of his green t-shirt. His blue eyes twinkle with amusement, and he smiles, white teeth gleaming. He's wearing flip flops and holding a towel, obviously prepared to go swimming.

“You still haven’t cut your hair,” Z says as Luke enters. I grin. It’s the endless debate.

“Nope,” Luke cheerily responds. “Everyone knows that long hair is better than short hair like yours.”

Z opens his mouth, probably to insult Luke’s long hair, but Sofia interrupts him. She’s eager to have some fun.

“Alright guys, my parents are giving us free reign of the house all day. They just want us gone by noon tomorrow. They don’t care what we do, as long as it’s within reason. Now, what do you guys want to do?”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

I walk down the dock with my Coke in hand, stepping carefully as not to trip and fall in the lake. It’s dark now, and the stars shine in the sky like a million diamonds. I approach everyone and sit down next to Z, my bare feet hanging off the end of the dock. The lake is beautiful now, reflecting the starry sky like a mirror. We sit in silence for a while, swinging our feet and enjoying the beauty of nature.

“Today was a good day,” Luke says eventually.

“Yes it was,” I reply. “We should have done this more often.”

I look over at Luke. His hair shines in the starlight.

“Dude, your hair’s still wet.”

“One of the benefits of short hair,” Z says with a smile, before taking a sip of his Sprite, “It dries really fast.”

Luke playfully elbows him, and Z shoves him back. We’re quiet again for a while. I see our reflections on the lake, silhouetted by the moon. Five friends hanging out.

Eventually Z brings up the problem. “Have you got everything packed yet, Luke?”

He shakes his head. “I wasn’t planning on packing until tomorrow night.”

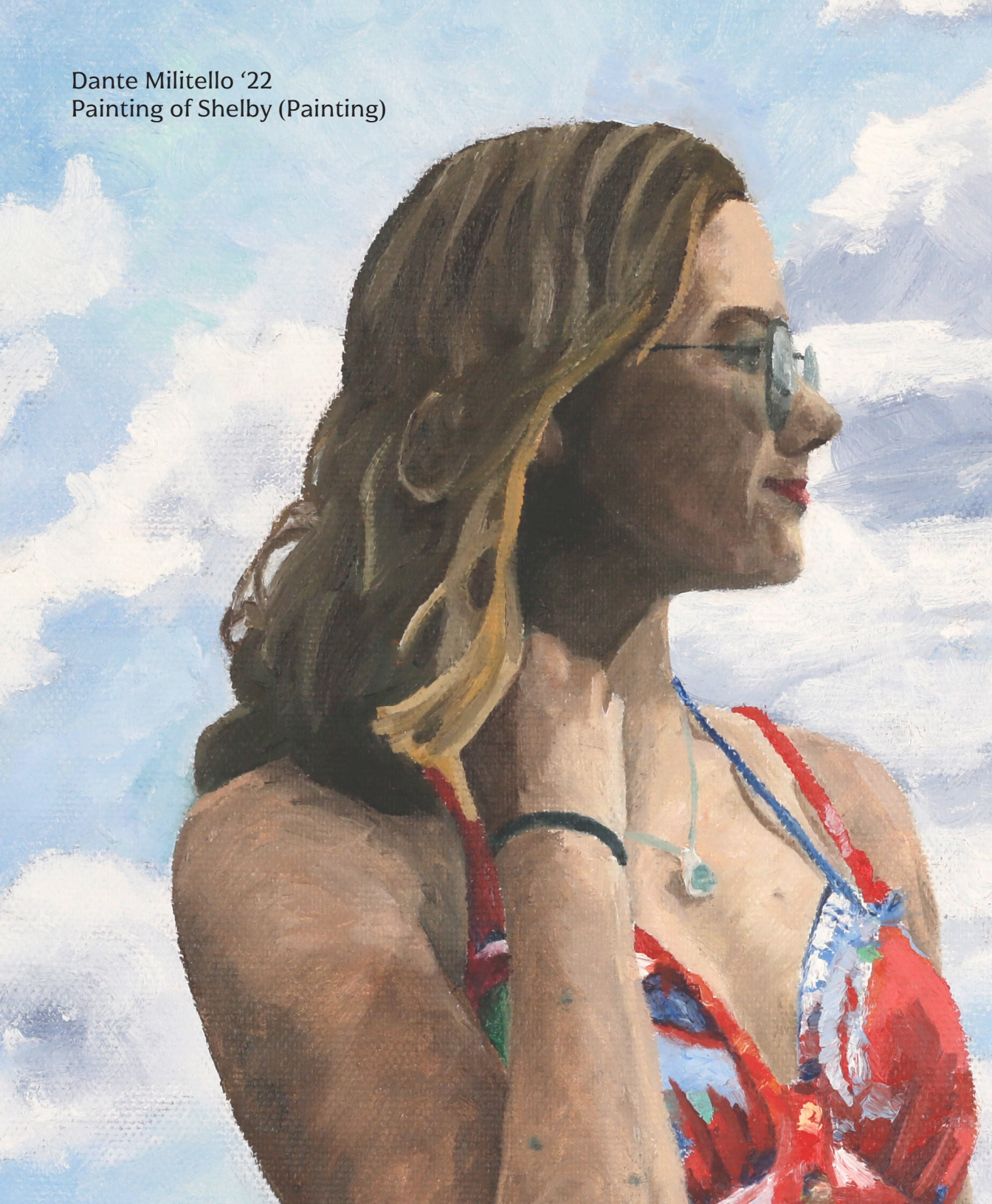
Z and I are heading off to Notre Dame in a few days. Ava’s leaving for Xavier next week. Sofia’s going to UCLA. She has relatives there and plans to stay with them. Luke got accepted into Harvard on a full scholarship. He leaves the day after tomorrow.

“Well,” I say, “It’s been a good run.”

Sofia sniffs and wipes her eyes. “It sure was. Just too dang short.”

“What do you mean?” Z says. “We’ve been friends since third grade.”

Dante Militello '22
Painting of Shelby (Painting)



We weren't friends until third grade. Sure, we knew each other, Sofia used to be in a clique, Z was one of those elementary school jocks who picked on nerds like Luke, and Ava and I were pretty much loners just drifting through school. That all changed when Sofia found out her parents were getting divorced. She was kicked out of her clique and spent most of her time crying. Luke, Ava, Z, and I were the only ones who were nice to her then. Ever since then we were best friends. We didn't hide anything from each other. Since then, Sofia's parents have gotten back together, Z got back together with his father, and Luke told us about his struggles with depression and anxiety.

"Yeah," Sofia replies, "We should have gotten to know each other earlier."

"Well," Luke says, raising his drink in a toast. "Here's to our many years of friendship."

Ava raises her can of Sprite next. "Here's to the memories we made. May they never fade."

Sofia laughs. "That rhymes." Then she raises her can of Dr. Pepper. "Here's to our future. May it be bright."

Z's quiet for a second, then he raises his glass. "Here's to healing," he says. We're all silent for a while. Out of all of us, Z's had it the hardest. After his mother died, his father became an alcoholic. He was an angry drunk and attacked his kids at times. Z's sister moved away to college, fortunately, leaving their father to take his anger out on his son. Z ended up sleeping at my house for a couple months before we got his dad into therapy. If not for us, he once said, he probably wouldn't have made it.

After a moment, my Coke joins their sodas. "To us."

"To us," everyone echoes. We finish off our drinks in silence.

"Hey Ben," Ava says quietly a little while later. "Give us a poem."

I smile and wince inside. Ever since I told them that I sometimes write poems, they sometimes ask me to say a poem at random. It's kind of nice and embarrassing at the same time.

"Uhhh . . ." is all I say. Everyone's watching me. I look around at the lake before I clear my throat.

*“Five souls are we, beneath the moon,
Five friends both true and dear.
Together we have shone like stars,
Like bright suns above the world.*

*But soon our paths diverge they must,
But do not fear, we’ll meet again.
For no matter how far away we are,
We’ll return, like shooting stars.”*

Everyone’s silent for a while, and I’m really happy it’s night. That way they won’t see me blush.

“I’m sorry, that was really bad,” I say.

“No, no,” says Ava quietly. “It was really good. It’s just . . .”

“This feels like the end,” I whisper. She nods.

“This isn’t really goodbye,” Z says with a shocking certainty. “You were right, Ben. We’ll meet again. In fact, let’s meet here again next summer.”

We all nod enthusiastically.

As we sit here, it’s clear no one wants to sleep inside. Ava’s the first to go. She yawns and slowly lays down, sliding back to get her feet on the dock. Luke follows her soon after, drawing his feet up and reclining back on the dock. It’s just Ava, Z, and I awake now. Just staring at the stars. Some time later Sofia lays back and falls asleep. Now it’s just Z and I watching the stars. I see a flash of light. A shooting star streaks across the sky, leaving a starry white trail in its wake. Eventually Z fades, sliding down onto the dock with a whisper.

It’s just me now. Me and the stars. I watch them shine in the sky, like jewels in some vast tapestry far beyond my understanding. Maybe each star is a soul, shining throughout the ages. Maybe a star is an angel, giving us the light we need to make it through the darkness. Maybe each star is an answer, an answer to those big questions everyone asks, those same questions that drift through my head on nights like this.

I don’t know who I am. Not really. I don’t think anyone really does. All we can do is guess. Guess and hope that, deep down, we are good people. Caring people. Loving people. Maybe that’s the good life. A life of love, spent with those we love. Maybe that’s our purpose. To love.

I don't know who I am, not really. But I will. One day.
But for now, I'll fall back . . . and let my thoughts drift into the
heavens. . . like ships . . . into the great unknown.

- Nate Clayton '23



Eric K. Schmidt '22
"Snowing Scene with Canada Jay" (Photo)



Prayer for Love

I rejoice in my suffering!

In my aches and pains –
the pounding of my head
and the swelling of my ankle –
I find my delight.

That which God has wrought;
by which I am made crooked,
by which I am made sinful.

Ben Colella '22
Chicago Fog (Photo)



That which I have incurred upon myself;
the dread of my heart that I may soon die.

That which angers and offends me;
red blaring sirens of fire and vitriol.

In these I exalt!
For all that is good is Love,
And all that is Love is suffering.

- Theodore Grassmann '21

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