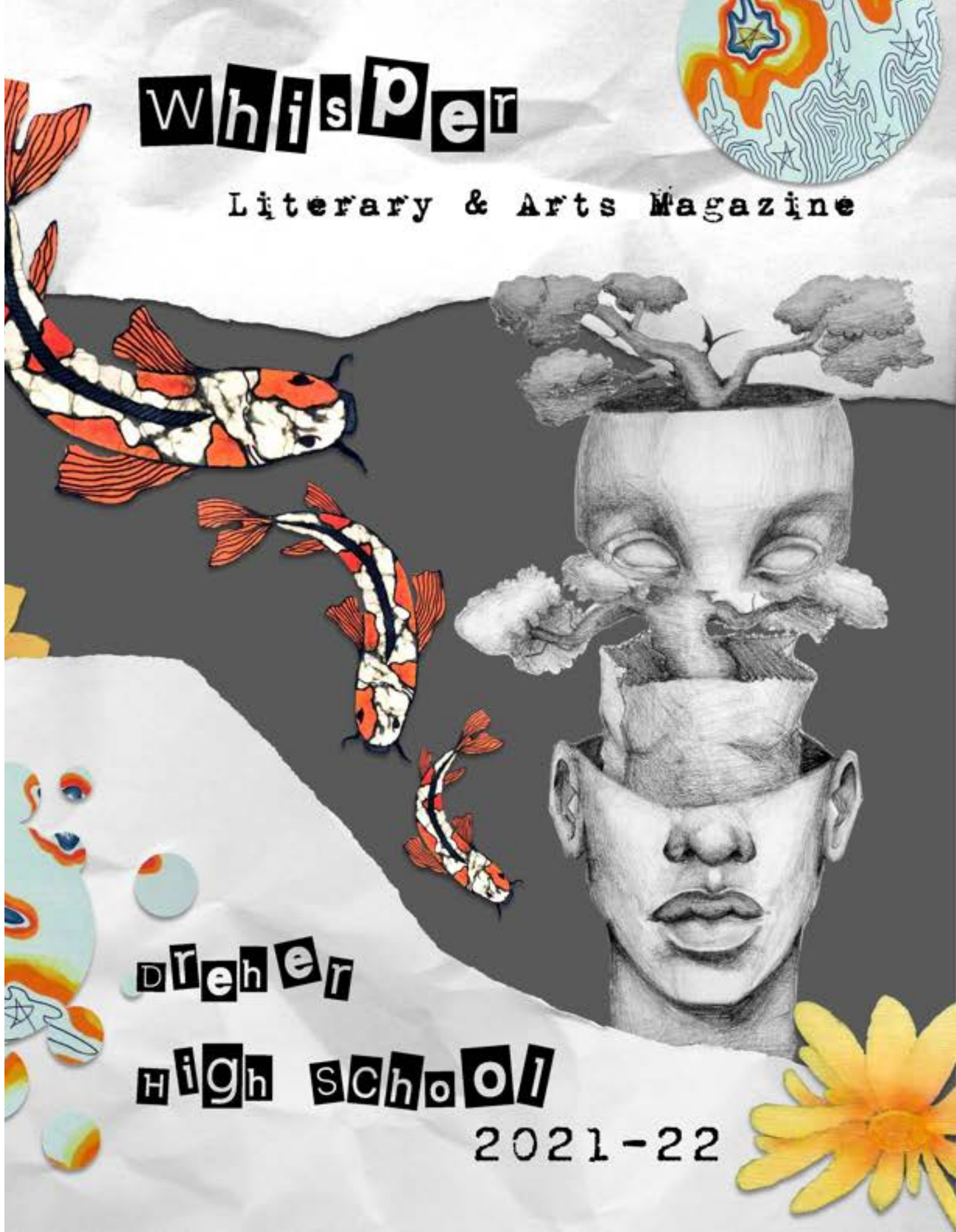

Whisper
Literary & Arts Magazine
Dreher
High School
2021-22

Whisper

Literary & Arts Magazine

2021-22

Our Mission

These last two years have been unlike any other. The events and circumstances have impacted the young and the old, worldwide. There is not one soul on Earth that hasn't been impacted by these tough times. For many, there have been times where life seems hopeless. However, during some of the darkest of moments, light shines forth, bringing hope and renewed energy to all that it touches.

This edition of Whisper is a compilation of thoughts and ideas brought forth by not only the tough times, but also by the small glimmers of hope. It is important to remember that everyone has a voice and the ability to make a positive impact on the world. Change comes forth when positive choices are made, starting with our expressions and actions, regardless of how small they may seem. Each of our voices can make an impact, one whisper at a time...

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Naja Weinkle

Jen Gorlewski (Sponsor)

Our Policy

The Dreher High School Literary and Arts Magazine is a collection of literature and art submissions created by students and staff at Dreher High School. The magazine editing team reserves the right to edit manuscripts for clarity, grammar, spelling and mechanics. All works submitted are original works reviewed and selected by the magazine editing team.

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Front Cover Artwork by Ella McLean, Matilde Baucom, Jackson Robinson, Alexandria Kolomoets, Lourdes Sinisterra, and Julia Gonzalez-Del-Valle

our year

Our Thoughts
Our Stories
Our visualizations

Artwork by Quentin Hilley

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The White Room

By Brook Barilla

I settle into the chair, absorbing the bleak environment around me. The room is all white, with only the chair and a large box about the size of a fridge. I stop looking around and examine my hands nervously; I need the cash, but this place is just so creepy. A few minutes later, a man enters the room. He is dressed in all white, even the frames of his glasses. The man gives me a wide, ear-to-ear smile and hands me a glass of water. I am too nervous to thank him, merely nodding in appreciation. The man grins back. He strides confidently to the box, presses several invisible buttons, and leaves the room. The door locks behind him with a deafening click, and I am left with the gleam of his grin imprinted into my mind.

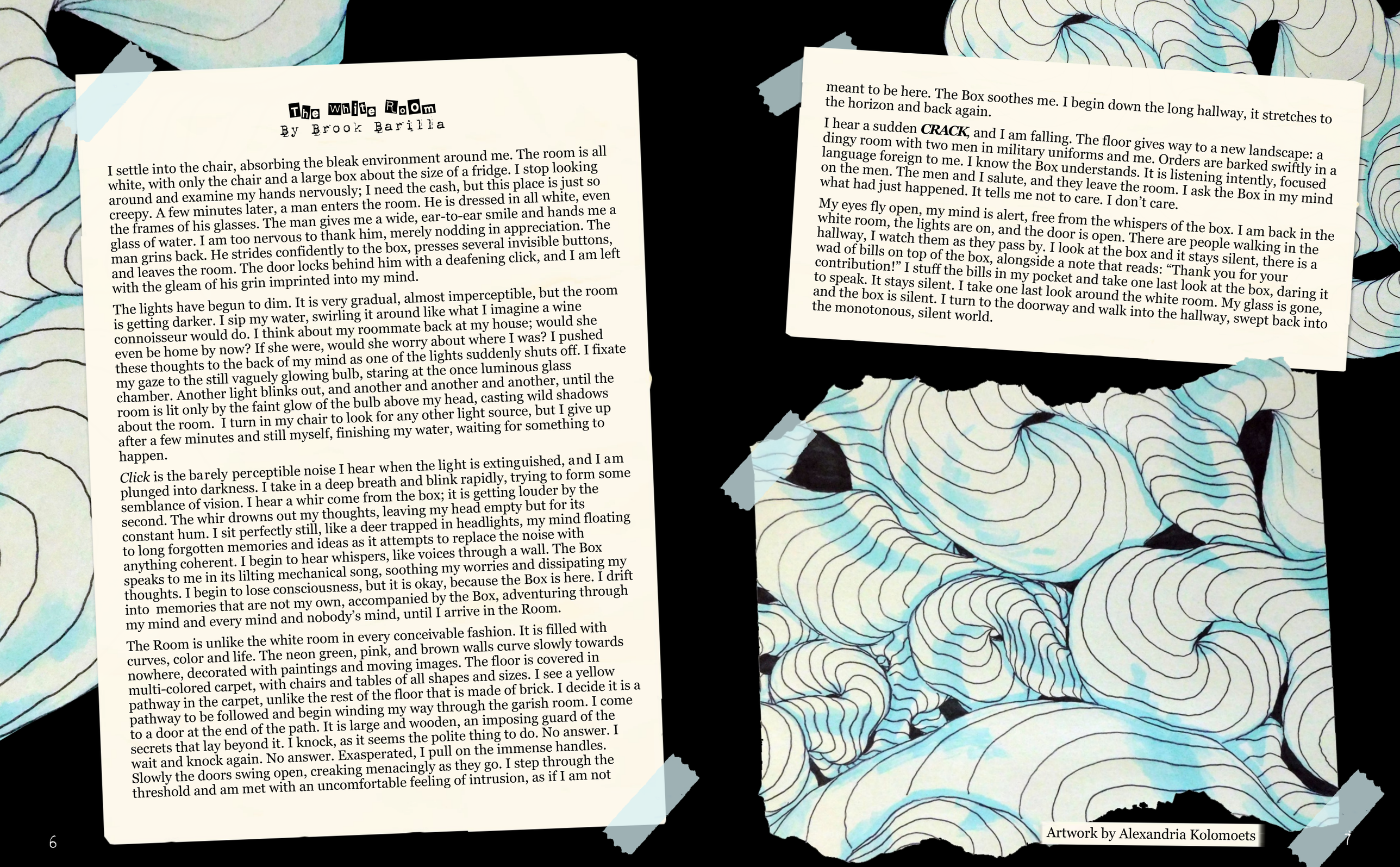
The lights have begun to dim. It is very gradual, almost imperceptible, but the room is getting darker. I sip my water, swirling it around like what I imagine a wine connoisseur would do. I think about my roommate back at my house; would she even be home by now? If she were, would she worry about where I was? I pushed these thoughts to the back of my mind as one of the lights suddenly shuts off. I fixate my gaze to the still vaguely glowing bulb, staring at the once luminous glass chamber. Another light blinks out, and another and another and another, until the room is lit only by the faint glow of the bulb above my head, casting wild shadows about the room. I turn in my chair to look for any other light source, but I give up after a few minutes and still myself, finishing my water, waiting for something to happen.

Click is the barely perceptible noise I hear when the light is extinguished, and I am plunged into darkness. I take in a deep breath and blink rapidly, trying to form some semblance of vision. I hear a whir come from the box; it is getting louder by the second. The whir drowns out my thoughts, leaving my head empty but for its constant hum. I sit perfectly still, like a deer trapped in headlights, my mind floating to long forgotten memories and ideas as it attempts to replace the noise with anything coherent. I begin to hear whispers, like voices through a wall. The Box speaks to me in its lilting mechanical song, soothing my worries and dissipating my thoughts. I begin to lose consciousness, but it is okay, because the Box is here. I drift into memories that are not my own, accompanied by the Box, adventuring through my mind and every mind and nobody's mind, until I arrive in the Room.

The Room is unlike the white room in every conceivable fashion. It is filled with curves, color and life. The neon green, pink, and brown walls curve slowly towards nowhere, decorated with paintings and moving images. The floor is covered in multi-colored carpet, with chairs and tables of all shapes and sizes. I see a yellow pathway in the carpet, unlike the rest of the floor that is made of brick. I decide it is a pathway to be followed and begin winding my way through the garish room. I come to a door at the end of the path. It is large and wooden, an imposing guard of the secrets that lay beyond it. I knock, as it seems the polite thing to do. No answer. I wait and knock again. No answer. Exasperated, I pull on the immense handles. Slowly the doors swing open, creaking menacingly as they go. I step through the threshold and am met with an uncomfortable feeling of intrusion, as if I am not meant to be here. The Box soothes me. I begin down the long hallway, it stretches to the horizon and back again.

I hear a sudden ***CRACK***, and I am falling. The floor gives way to a new landscape: a dingy room with two men in military uniforms and me. Orders are barked swiftly in a language foreign to me. I know the Box understands. It is listening intently, focused on the men. The men and I salute, and they leave the room. I ask the Box in my mind what had just happened. It tells me not to care. I don't care.

My eyes fly open, my mind is alert, free from the whispers of the box. I am back in the white room, the lights are on, and the door is open. There are people walking in the hallway, I watch them as they pass by. I look at the box and it stays silent, there is a wad of bills on top of the box, alongside a note that reads: "Thank you for your contribution!" I stuff the bills in my pocket and take one last look at the box, daring it to speak. It stays silent. I take one last look around the white room. My glass is gone, and the box is silent. I turn to the doorway and walk into the hallway, swept back into the monotonous, silent world.



Artwork by Alexandria Kolomoets

Ode to the Nameless

By Breanna Benson

Because of you, my rippling lake is now an ocean of riptides
As lovely as this may sound, it doesn't feel that way
I never learned how to swim
I'm forever drowning in your embrace and pleas of admiration
Although my lips are cerulean and my lungs bathe in salty waters
I still find time to tell you how much *I love you*
Between coughs and wheezes
As painful as that may sound, I cannot see myself without it—or you
I'm left baffled when thinking about how lonely I have become
I no longer see air when you're away
I'd rather be lonely and breathing than happy and dying
So I have said all that there is to say
Our love intertwines and becomes my pain
I wouldn't have it any other way
Only because it's you



Artwork by Georgia Gosselin

Mercurialityv

By Estella Richardson

She arose from the cold embrace that was her life
Watching her world fade from around her
Leaving her only to bask in its silent reprieve
Grasping on to what is left of her melting existence
That one individual that understood the mass within her skull
For she was cold, and he was her fire
Intoxicating vessels of heat within the Armageddon of his body
While she was a thin sliver of ice
She pretends to be unyielding
But is held back by her own lack of trust
Her burdening and apparent weakness
For she can only dream to comprehend her own individuality
She cannot surrender to such blinding light; to herself
He held her down, a chariot between her skin
She fell, chipping away at her cold exterior
With skin of glass and a soul of iron
This heart is her armor, and it would not deteriorate
Yet deep inside, behind the shallow depths within her
Lay that of love
A man, a woman
He took her between both hands
Looking down upon his world, he held his breath
He was the answer to the mercuriality of her unfortunate heart
And he wouldn't let her go
For his life would meet its glorious end if her presence didn't grace him
She was his life, his death, his everything
He couldn't blink, he wouldn't waste a second
And he was exhilarant; a beautiful prodigy
His voice embraced her
She levitated

YDRLM

By Aniyah Freeman

The words
I love you
Runs from your mouth
Like a river
And into my ears
Like an angelic whisper
Words spoken
So beautifully

Well at least
That's what
I thought
Like a thespian
You acted
And played both parts
YDRLM
You don't really love me

Garden Song

By Rylin Hubbard

Afternoon was a particularly bright child, always drawing or writing. She was only 6 years old, but she wrote amazing stories that most adults couldn't write. She always loved to imagine things, though the line between imaginary and real to her seemed small. She had a garden which was located in the closet of the pink bathroom around the corner from her bedroom. In the garden, there was a big forest with a clearing. It had a brick circle with two benches and a bird feeder; there were flowers and long, wild grass. It was all overgrown with moss and vines. There were animals all over the forest: a friendly family of bears, a sweet gray and white cat, two bunnies who had fallen in love, and a small baby gecko whom everyone loved.

Monday predictably loved this garden; she would go every time she had the chance. She would play with the birds, the bears, and the butterflies. Eventually, someone new arrived to the garden; a boy Afternoon loved. His name was Milo, and they quickly became best friends. She wished she could show him the world outside of the garden, let him meet her friends on Earth, and show him her favorite places. He was very kind, around her same age, and had so many similarities. They both loved animals, nature, and playing games.

Even as she got older, she still went to the garden when she had the time. After she was done with her homework, she would go to unwind from the day. She always loved talking to Milo about everything in her life. He was very understanding of her, and what she was going through as she grew older. However, Milo never aged. He stayed the same age as when they first met.

She liked being friends with someone younger; it brought out the child in her. They would play like young children, bringing back all the fun games she missed from elementary school. She specifically enjoyed the imagination games. It made her wonder why older kids don't play pretend games like house or family like younger children do. Afternoon would play with the animals and frolic in the forest, acting like a child. She loved doing this because it helped calm her down. But, she felt she could do this in the real world because she would be made fun of or ridiculed.

When she grew up to be an adult, she started to forget all about the garden. But, every blue moon, she would go to see how everyone was doing and take care of the animals. She would also check up on Milo, who still had yet to grow up. She enjoyed talking with him just as she had all the times before. Eventually, she moved out, and stopped going at all; she completely forgot about it. She had an office job, just like she always hoped she wouldn't. She worked, ate, and slept, and that was all she had time for. One weekend she decided to see her parents, whom she hadn't seen in a year or two. Driving her run-down car, she finally made it back to her childhood home. Once she arrived, everything seemed exactly the same as it had when she was younger. Her parents were just as eccentric and fun. After dinner, she went to the same pink bathroom around the corner from her old bedroom and remembered the garden. She remembered all the fun times she had with Milo, the animals, and how much she loved the flowers, the forest, and everything in it. At first, she ignored the memory, just laughing at her younger self for doing that. But, she couldn't dismiss the thought of going back to the garden.

So she did just that. But, when she went back, things were different. It was not how she remembered it. Everything was darker; all the colors seemed to be faded. She tried to find the old clearing but there wasn't a clearing anymore. It was all grown and taken over. She found the old bench and Milo was sitting there; at least she thought it was Milo. If it was him, he was older, but she had never seen him past the age of 7. She thought he would never grow up.

He looked up at Afternoon but didn't say anything. She was frightened of him. He was tall and frail and looked like he hadn't eaten in weeks. She also wanted to help him, but she just didn't know how. She left Milo to go try to find the rest of the animals, though she was doubtful they were still here. While trying to find all the animals she came across an old white house on the top of a large hill. She didn't remember this ever being here. She thought, *oh maybe I had never come this far*, but who knows if she had or not. She decided to go inside. What was the worst that could happen?

The inside of the house looked how you would expect an old abandoned house to look. She examined her surroundings and found one small lamp on in the upstairs bedroom. The bedroom was very nice. It had pretty antique furniture and bedding with flowers, just like the ones that used to inhabit the clearing. She turned off the light to see if anything would happen, nothing did. She turned it back on just so she could see and decided to leave the house. She hoped maybe she would have found something there, such as the animals or something to remind her of her happy childhood.

When she opened the door to leave, there was Milo. He was taller than the door and he whispered, "Why did you leave us?" and then walked away. As he was leaving, Afternoon followed him, wanting to apologize, but he was too fast. She ran after him through the thick forest and he finally stopped at a log. Beside the log was what seemed to be a graveyard. She read all the stones and they all had the names of all the animals. She asked about what happened and he responded, "You left us and so we couldn't survive".

Afternoon wanted to apologize but let him go. He turned once again and said, "We were fine at first until around 3 years ago. I figured you had forgotten us. The animals went first. I began to grow up fast, and soon I will be gone too."

She didn't know what to say other than that she was sorry. She created them, so why couldn't she have sustained them? Milo led her back to the old white house. Afternoon tried to talk with him, but he didn't seem to have the energy to talk. She felt bad; she wanted to make him happy again. She didn't know what to do, so she decided to stay in the garden until she could figure out how to fix this problem. She didn't know how much time would go by in real life; she didn't know if people would be worried; she didn't know if she would be fired. But, this seemed most important to her for whatever reason, so she stayed. She stayed for what felt like weeks, waking up, finding food and water, eating, and sleeping. One day Milo said he was sure he would die today. She knew she couldn't do anything but she tried anyway. She waited by his side, hoping that he would be okay.

Eventually, his body gave out and died. She was heartbroken. She hadn't seen Milo in years, but she still felt like he was her best friend. She took Milo's body to the graveyard and buried him there with the last flowers she could find in the forest. She hoped that somehow she could still revive this place. Maybe she just needed to keep coming back. She needed to find a new entrance into the garden.

She left the garden and was back in the bathroom at her parents' house, five minutes later than when she had left. First, she tried going to the garden in her old bedroom. It worked eventually, so she knew she could enter the garden from her apartment in New York.

Once she got home she did just that. It took some determination, but she did it. She started going just as often as she used to as a child, every time she had a free moment. One cold winter day she, went to the garden and Milo finally came back. He was still older and tall, but he looked so much healthier. Everything seemed happier when he came back. The flowers perked up and the trees got even greener. The animals were overjoyed, and of course, so was Afternoon. Her best friend had come back. She vowed to him to never leave them again. She kept that promise forever.



Artwork by Lia Kilpatrick

Generations of Pride

By Lourdes Sinisterra

For generations to come, they all continue to grow
They have traditions of pride passed down and down
For their heirloom necklaces is what they have to show
Alongside their elegance styled with a fictional crown

They are the earth, the stars, the sun, and the sky
They are the backbone of our world
No time for judgments, they let their honor fly
As does the beauty of their curls

Legacies of mothers carry down their story
As they teach their daughters what values they hold
A matriarchal position is their path to glory
As their frames of self-portraits are aligned with gold

For they are the movement, the future, and the reasons
For all the world to see
Pride and tradition lasts for generations
It does in you and as it does in me



Artwork by Lourdes Sinisterra

Ecosystem

By Mary DeSaussure Parker

We grow like the trees in a forest
Creating an ecosystem around us of
squirrels, plants, birds, and deer
We go through different seasons like a tree
Sometimes our limbs are barren
Sometimes they are plentiful and we have
flowers blooming
As the season changes the ecosystem
changes
The birds fly south, the squirrels hide away
The flora is replaced by new flowers and
bushes
We know that they will come back
New animals and plants will stay with us
Like a tree we provide comfort for so many
We are the center of a small ecosystem
If we are off the ecosystem is off

To My Builder

By Cassie Collins

Taking a step forward feels worthless. One step forward always leads to three steps back. I try and get help but then I run over it, like when a kid builds a tower; it always ends up with them destroying it. They told me I needed to go forward; that if I go forward, it'll be easier to take more steps forward. They're right of course. But, it feels so good going back. Going back to control; getting messed up feels so much better than being fixed. It's fun to watch the tower fall. It's fun to build it up high and see all the effort crash; all the perfection of the unbroken pieces broken. We all have that one person who wants to build the tower back up despite you constantly knocking it down. They want it to stay strong; they do everything they can to build it up in a way that will keep it upright, and maybe convince you to see the beauty in the tower, hoping you won't knock it down. So they keep trying, building and building with all the broken pieces that have been shattered. Hoping you will see that breaking will not do anything. It can only satisfy you for a while. We all know that person who will keep picking up all your broken pieces, even when you break yourself again and again. They will be the kneeling, waiting for you to fall so they can rebuild you. Sometimes you wish you could send them away because you like looking at the broken pieces. But after time, you will be thankful that they kept rebuilding your pieces because if they gave up, you would still be broken. I owe great thanks to my builder for picking up my pieces for me when I couldn't.

Mother Nature

By Lenzie Browder

When the trees sway, she sways. When you dance, she dances. When birds sing, she sings. She is everything, but also nothing. None of us know her, yet so many people shun her. We are all apart of nature, and we are as nature wanted us to be. However, we often use this power towards destruction. We were gifted with life, and yet we use it to hurt the very person who gave it to us. Who knows what we are supposed to do with our power, but choosing to give back to the Earth is something that we should do regardless. While all of our greed and carelessness is out of sight (or out of mind), it affects us in ways that are subtle, but serious. Animals are dying, the ozone is being destroyed, and our waters are polluted. This is because of *her;* she strikes back in ways that we can't see, but will ultimately feel. This is not because she wants to hurt us, but it is simply because we are killing, trashing, and murdering not only our home, but her home.

The Wall of Memories

By an anonymous 10th grade student

Him:

I've been like this for some while now; in this state of being. There is an empty space where my body once was with a distinct absence of smell and taste. My eyes are foggy, but I can somehow see everything clearer. I follow my wife around. I know that I love her and that I am home, but that is it. She cries all day and barely sleeps. It must be my fault. I want to cry too but cannot. I want to cry for her. I want to scream and satisfy my itching throat. She lays alone in a king size bed. Is it our bed? I can't seem to remember. Sometimes I leave her to roam the hallways. There are familiar pictures on the wall, but I can't place how I know the faces on them. The answer is on the edge of my mind; a step away. Always a step away.

The days keep passing and she does not cry as much; she does not do much of anything. At first I thought she was recovering, but I now suspect something is wrong. Something is wrong with her mind. Mine, however, seems to be returning. I died, I remember that now. My body was too old.

My most vivid memory is of a little girl. She had soft black hair, hazel eyes, and rosy cheeks. She lived in this house with my wife and me. Her little feet used to run down the hallways. She would sometimes scrape her knees on the tree in the front yard. She loved to trace faces in the wallpaper and name them, and then she would cry when she could not find them again.

She died too, 72 years ago. It was the summer and we were on our beach trip. She had been excited about it for weeks, talking about all the things she would do, and was determined to swim without our help. When we got there we were very careful, never letting her out of our sight. She loved when the waves would get to her and she could float over them. I remember how my wife and I had gotten into an argument. It was over something stupid, like how she didn't think I was making the trip special enough for our daughter. We looked away for a second and she was gone. That feeling of helplessness is something I can still remember even now. I wonder where my daughter is now, and if her young spirit has found peace.

I envy her. I envy that she doesn't have to watch the days passing on without her. I tried to help my wife move on from our daughter, and get the guilt that was tearing her apart. But, the house was never the same after we lost her. I had a hard time looking into my wife's eyes. Everything reminded me of our little girl.

The days keep passing and my wife's condition has worsened. She doesn't go outside anymore. She doesn't even talk. It's as if she can't remember how to live. She silently passes the picture of me that used to make her cry.

I can recognize my old body now in the pictures on the walls, but I feel as if she can't. I worry for my wife. She doesn't move from the couch. The days pass and the bags under her eyes have darkened. Her fingers are bleeding because she won't or can't stop biting them. She sits humming day and night. I recognize the tune. It is a song she used to sing to our daughter when putting her to sleep. *When did she get this bad?* She doesn't flinch when the flies land on her face, frozen in an eerie smile. I move next to her, trying to feel her warmth. But, she is cold; so cold. I scream an empty scream. Out of the quietness, there is a ringing in my ears that grows louder and louder until I feel like my head is going to explode.

Her:

Was it a week ago that he died or two years? All the days seem to blur and it is getting harder to tell light from dark. I don't like being alone in this house. There are too many memories—in the tree out front, the kitchen table that used to sit three, and even in the wallpaper. Our little girl used to see faces in it, and I can recognize them now. How could they both leave me here alone? If I wasn't so strong, I would crack under this crushing pressure of loneliness.

Our bed is so cold. I sleep in the middle now to fill the emptiness. My head is getting fuzzy. I don't know what's happening to me. I am scared to go outside like this. I am scared that if I leave my house I won't be able to find it again. It is easier to just ignore these feelings now: sadness, fear, pain, and hunger. I just exist; you can't call this living.

I take a seat on the couch and stare at the wall. How could I ever need more than this wall? It stands before me sturdy and plain but it is here. They aren't here. They left me.

Goodbye,
wall--



Artwork by Sam Norris

A Letter to my Cerebrum

By Anonymous

Dear Brain,

Why do you do this to me? Why do you make me so unjustly sad? Wait..... Is it actually unjust? I can't tell. You make it so hard to tell. I overthink everything and then overthink that same overthinking. It is your fault. All of my problems seem to be caused by you. You always make me sad. When a normal brain would be overjoyed, you are depressed. You are not normal. I am not normal. You make me feel so alone. I could be surrounded by a billion people and you would make sure I feel hated, not comforted or loved. I wonder why I don't have many friends. Then I think and realize it is because of you. I am anti-social because of you. You make me think there are problems with everyone; with me. I always think everyone hates me because of you. I am scared of people because of you. I am obsessively worried of what everyone thinks of me because of you. You are ruining my childhood. I should be exploring who I am, but you make sure I will never know. You even make sure I will have no one around me to help me figure it all out. Maybe I've just been dealt bad cards or sent bad people. However, I can say with certainty that if these cards are remotely responsible, you make them seem so much worse than they actually are. You make me miserable. I am always so sad and lonely. I will be with friends but still feel so downcast. You do this to me. I want to feel better, to be social, to be funny, to feel loved, to be happy, and to be a different person. In order to be a different person, I need a different brain, but I have a feeling you aren't going anywhere. Please go somewhere, anywhere else.

Sincerely

Confused



Artwork by Allison Zeck

Reflecting on Death

By Naja Weinkle

I was encased by an unnatural feeling of the unknown. It was a lonely, drifting feeling like the one in the pit of your stomach when you know something bad is about to happen. It was so quiet, like that overwhelming fear when you are underwater in a dark lake and you don't know if you can hold your breath for long enough to reach the surface. It was entrancing; beautiful in a way. I hadn't realized that a silence could be so entangling. I felt a disorienting pull to an untold place. It was comforting to know that it was inescapable. I had to accept letting go.

Dysphoria

By Will Varner

This place was not right. It was never right. I did not choose this. People cannot choose where they are born. It feels empty. Meaningless. I should be somewhere else. I know that I belong somewhere else. I desperately need to be somewhere else. And yet, I am not somewhere else. I am only here.

The air is thin. Suffocating. On some days I struggle to breathe. I become ill often. Not many others recognize this. Most people are healthy. It seems that they were born in the right place. I was not.

This place is surrounded by walls; walls that are hundreds of stories tall, rising endlessly into an unending sky. They are covered in vines and cracks, some of which emerged long before others. No one knows exactly how old the walls are. They were built long before we were born. They have stood here for millennia. Somehow, only now are the walls beginning to truly break. Only now are some of the cracks developing into holes. I hope that I am still alive when the walls finally fall, freeing everyone who still desires to leave. It will happen at some point, but I cannot spend my life waiting.

No one knows why these walls were built either. I know that there are other places beyond them. After all, the purposes of walls are to keep people from entering; or to keep them from leaving.

Some say that the walls were God's will; us being born here was God's will. They say that leaving this place is a sin. Others say that the walls are for the protection of all people, both us and those beyond. They are all wrong. No one here is in danger from the other places. All that I know is that they were not here originally. The walls were constructed by people who lived long before us. The walls have outlived them, and now we have inherited this curse that they created.

A few people have tried to leave, but most could not escape the walls. They knew that this place was suffocating and impossible to live in. They were called insane for trying. They were told that they will never be able to leave; they were born here and will always live here. Yet at the same time, they are not welcome here.

There have been a few that have succeeded. They climbed the walls and left this awful place. I don't know where they are now. No one does. I only know that they are somewhere else; somewhere where they can breathe. Somewhere where they are happy.

I stand at the edge of the world at this moment. The walls stand before me, rising far into the sky. From where I stand, they appear infinite. Yet I prepare to climb them. I believe that I am capable. Somehow, I know that I need to be on the other side. I know that another place exists, despite many denying it. I know that there is a life for me in that other place.

Perfection

By Isabella Caicedo Villegas

I opened my eyes and slowly reached for my phone on the nightstand. I got on Instagram and scrolled past all of these girls with perfect bodies. I couldn't help but stop on several of the posts and zoom in on their stomachs; so flat, but with curves in all the right places; the ideal hourglass body. I put down my phone and went into the bathroom. I stared at myself in the mirror and started to feel all the excess fat on my body. No matter how much I starve myself or work out, I still will never achieve the same body as those girls. Tears started to drop from my eyes and I could feel the overwhelming sadness take over. When am I ever going to be perfect or fit society's standards? Although my friends assure me I am perfect, I believe they're trying to sooth me. It just feels like whatever I do, I'll never be good enough.

Everywhere I look, I see constant advertisements of the "perfect body." But, what does that even mean? In order to achieve this, you have to have an ample chest, curvy hips and butt, a flat stomach, with skinny arms and legs!? These ideals have affected me so much that it is all I can think about. I constantly search for weight loss tips, surgeries, procedures, and the list goes on. You name it and I have probably tried it. I have such an obsession that I have been hospitalized due to these dangerous self-inflicted procedures. But regardless, that didn't stop me from continuing to search for the answer of the question that is always in the back of my mind: will I ever be good enough?

A couple of months ago, I decided to go to weekly group meetings with people, who like me, also struggle with their weight. In these meetings, I have learned the true definition of a perfect body. We all have the ideal body, even though some may have a different perspective of how it is supposed to look. I have come to accept and love my own body. Ever since I made this change, I have started to feel more relaxed and genuinely happy. While it is hard still, I know now that is doesn't matter what people think or say.

Happy Plate

By Elizabeth Shifflett

"A clean plate is a happy plate!" the pasta noodles said to me
The phrase which kicked me off to consume 'till I fell lazy
My body ached and I looked different
My new pasta hair and buttery belly looked strange next to my uncooked spaghetti friends

I broke all my plates so I could not see them smile
Replaced them with teaspoons of zero-sugar vials
I changed once more and my pasta hair fell off
My buttery belly, now barren, left scared faces
Where my spaghetti friends once smiled

The chef brought me back to the table and fed me through my tears
I thank the chef now, but I will always recall those years
I now know a plate is a plate, full or clean, don't let food make your happy disappear

The Mirror

By Jordan Davis

I broke it again
It stings my hand
I lost track of how many I've had
I usually don't have any
But this time I got another

Why?
People say I look a mess
I think I look fine
It's my face isn't it?
Or is it my body?

I hate them
Mirrors, I mean
But people need them, right?
I don't

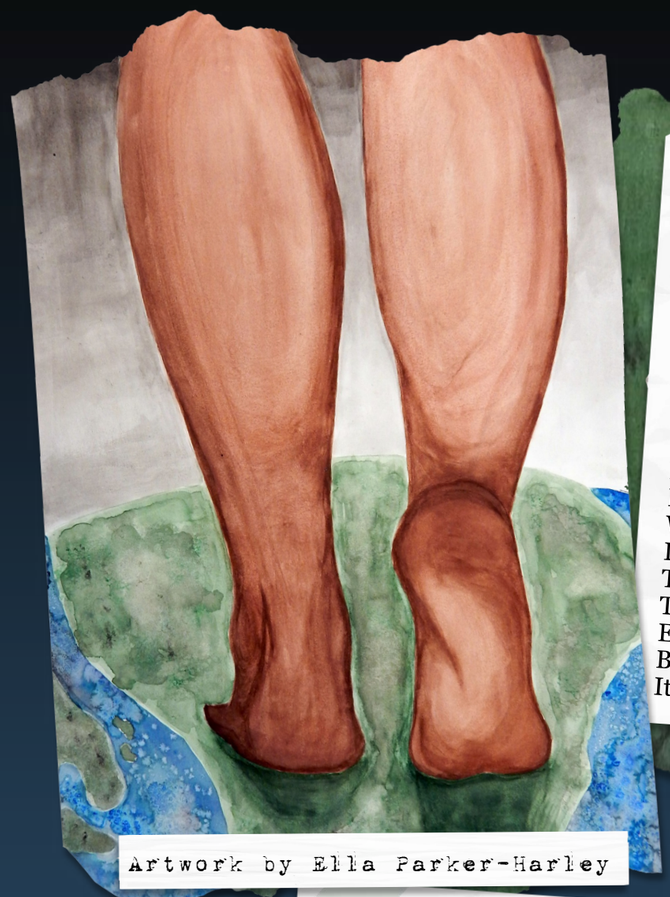
A Mixture of Emotions

By Asia Albert

Happy one minute
Sad the next
Angry in a bliss
Emotions I wish didn't exist
Wanting to escape
This endless nightmare
It's devouring me inside
Wanting to hide
In my own darkness
Wishing I could channel
My mixture of emotions
However I cannot hide forever
Light always wins



Artwork by Anthony Britt



Artwork by Ella Parker-Harley

A dirty Beach
By Brandon Tucker

Of all the things that are yet to come
A wave of misery depresses some
Once a place with shells and pails
Has succumb to darkness with fish that wail
With devastation that lures such waste
Leaving a frown on your face
With litter, debris, dregs, and rubbish
It will not lead any entity to flourish
Despite the constant sorrow and dejection
We, the citizens, can make a proposition
If we immaculate and make the beach clean
Then we can once again make it pristine
This should be the citizens' top priority
Even if it's not in the majority
But if we can keep our shores clean
It can withstand most anything

A smoggy Fish
By John Hardin

There once was a small fish; a bream
Who frolicked in the through the sea and up the stream
Eating what he could, snaking around seaweed and algae
The fish was truly as happy as he could be

As he was eating, he came across something bizarre
What could it be, the fish did ponder
He searched for what his eyes could not overlook
As he swam over, he became more and more shook

A big plastic bottle, the trash was now his treasure
It smelled human, so he feared his capture
When the small fish knew he was in the clear
The fish took his treasure with no fear

As the small fish ate his feast, he felt a slight clog
At once the fish spit out green gooey smog
Now the once small fish is now no more because of pollution
The now smoggy fish is gone with total absolution

Gray
By Beatrice Barilla

The crisp, frigid air bites, and the wild, untamed wind whirls
The wind and the waves move in harmony with each other
The night sky shines above a magnificent blue
Swirled with gorgeous beams of color
Verdant greens, rich purples
And gray
Gray smoke emitted from a dull gray block
The block moves swiftly, tearing the waves in two, fighting against the wind
The beautiful aura of vivid color changes to one of lifeless, suffocating ash
The creatures of the sea and ice stare; some flee
Windows carved into the gray block illustrate pictures of people
They laugh and point and stare as they ruin the very landscape they admire
The ship passes
Yet the scars it leaves are still there

Coral Reef
By Dorothy Weaver

The beauty and magnificence is serene
The elegance and life cause wonder
The main attraction of the vast marine
The most dazzling display of color

A home for all the many scared fish
A hiding place for a ray
A place where crabs eat their favorite dish
A place where the seahorse can play

And then there is...human selfishness

Sputtering, spilling, slowly suffocating
The vibrancy fades to pale
Blistering, bleeding, blatantly breaking
The beauty quickly turns stale

We claim the lives of these creatures as our own
We have no regret, no resent
We destroy shelters, destroy homes
As long as we are content

But, I'm not content
Neither is nature
Do you feel the need to repent?
We must think about our future

The Seeing Woodland
By Elizabeth Lester

Lost, a world of nature's own
Trees contort endlessly into the blue above
Step blindly, your foot sinks
The snake hisses to claim what it will eventually have
Resist, yet mud clings
Perhaps they know what we have taken
Stolen, from the Garden of Eden
Trespass into the gaping maw of the woods
Punishment for humans' theft of knowledge
They take a part of you as well
Hands grasp until they tear away what rightfully belongs to them
You will leave wiser, casted out, permanently maimed by their claws



Artwork by Danielle Perry

The Koi in a Pond
By Danielle Perry

There is no one around
Except him...
Because of his appearance
To them
He is frightening
He is threatening
He is aggressive
However
He is misunderstood
He is lonely
He is like any other
A fish
Only through their eyes
Can they see this

Enough
By Anonymous

Why'd you drop my hand
When we got off the bus?
They weren't looking at us
I swear
And if they were
Why should it matter?
They don't know anything
Please look at me
I love you
Just two girls
In love
Isn't that enough?
For them?
For you?
But you said
That it just wasn't
It won't stop them
From staring at
From caring about
From hurting
Us

Joy
By Aniyah Freeman

My heart full joy
Enemies have done nothing
But try to destroy my thoughts
They've been playing in my mind
Like a scrimmage
But if you look into my eyes
You'll get the picture

Walking Through Life
By Ella McLean

Walking like zombies
Head in a trance
They look on calmly
Pass by me without a glance
They are glued to the colors
As they flash by
They bump into others
And give no reply
I wonder what it would be like
To live in a world
Where technology
Didn't rule our life

Questions
By Elizabeth Vance

How could my world twist so radically?
But it's only in my brittle mind
The creator of my destruction
The explanation for my disorientation
Am I incapable of peace?
Of love?
Of happiness?
Of control?
Am I bound for a life of endless spiraling?

A burden is all I am and all I'll ever be
I will forever wish I was the lion rather the lamb
Yes, I know
We all have our wars
But what has left me utterly sore
Is this everlasting fall into my own despair
Falling so far, I've lost all sight of any light
Will I ever escape it all?

Oh Lord are you even listening?
Why can't you see I'm just barely making it?
Waltzing on the thinnest of threads
Dangling on the weakest of wires
I hear stories of your gifts of grace
When will I receive mine?
I yearn for your miracles
I need your miracles
Yet it would take miracles to just believe in you

I am my own enemy
My own mind persistently working against me
Boundless voices chirp in my ear
Yet they never seem to harmonize
Time stops for no one
No fasting forward and absolutely no rewinding
Time teases me with the control I don't bear
Months go by and seasons alternate
Yet it seems I still fear for my own fate
If time moves on, why can't I?

The Light

By Noah Bridgers

This light inside your heart, it leaves you restless. It burns, it cracks against your chest, and it ignites like ozone. It keeps your mind awake, late into the evening and long into the toil of daytime. It snaps against the others around you as you try to restrain it and refuse to let it out. You are the light's warden, but you are also its prisoner. It rises through the prison bars and strikes at your loved ones, and you pretend not to know why.

The cloud cover will split as if pierced by volleys of cannon fire. It will leave the whole sky open to you and only you. It will be as if the sun is setting and you will feel like it is setting on you, but it is not. Look at what you could be and do not be afraid. It will only harm you if you allow it.

It is you. Every spark of lightning, every wire it strikes, and every photon it shoots off into the endless night you have built for it. It has always been you. You were scared of it not being strong enough, of *you* not being strong enough, and locked it away rather than taking a risk. You are afraid despite what you might say for bravado. You are afraid of failure even when you have such wonder inside of you. As it comes close and licks against your face, like flames faster than light, you must only feel the warmth and deny its ability to burn you.

It strikes from every cloud in the sky, from the atmosphere above, from around you, and also from within. Even as it strikes the earth and goes dead, you will always carry another spark within you. It coils around your chest as if you were made of copper. It is your prisoner, but also your warden. You constrain it, but its hold on you is much weaker. Your potential cares not for failure, for that fear only comes from yourself.

Harness the thunder that rolls through your mind. Conduct the wind that blusters through your veins. Ignore the sky as night turns into day and allow yourself to see only the light that will blaze your path towards the future.



Artwork by Muireall Dickson

Snowy Nights

By Amelie Gosselin

On a cold winter's night
I look outside my frozen over window
To see the sparkling snow
Performing a ballet
In the darkness of the night

The snow dances and twirls
Throughout my garden
Covering the summers leftovers
The remaining plants are now frozen over
And the dancing snow guides me to sleep

Climb to the Top

By Amelie Gosselin

A day filled with sun and glee
Birds singing sweet, sweet melodies
I stand at the mountain's base
Towering over me with a holy embrace
I climb up the mountain, ledge by ledge

Feeling the breeze of the forest on my face
I see the top of the mountain
The feeling of completion and relief
The branches and leaves sway in the chilly wind
As I reach to the top
I feel like an eagle
Perched up on its nest of solitude

A Letter to Music

By Gigi Bartlett

Dear Music,

You mean more to me than anything in the world. You make me feel seen and understood. When society turns its back, you are always there for me. Through this treacherous existence you have helped me find myself. When I feel lost, like a bird without its flock, you find me. When life throws me, like a ship in a storm, you calm the seas. With you by my side, I am reborn, like a Phoenix. You make me feel as though I am not alone, as if someone feels the way I feel. You bring unity and light to an untethered world, and I am ever grateful to you.

Thank you,

Your Devoted Listener

Artist Statement

By Lorelei Kenney

My chosen topic for my watercolor painting was depression. I wanted to make my painting based on mental health and decided to choose depression because it was the mental health topic closest to me. The painting represents what I felt during the two years of quarantine from when lockdown first started to when it was time to start returning to school last year.

Last year was when my decline was at its height because it was my first year of high school, and I wasn't ready to socialize again or to be in a classroom. I spent the first year of high school alone and barely passing most of my classes. It was hard for me to do tasks in public without feeling a little anxious, like walking in the hallway or having to talk to my teachers or classmates. I also had to relearn how to eat in public again without feeling really nervous. I had lost all motivation when it came to school, and I took every chance to stay at home, learning online, when the school allowed it. But, my grades plummeted, and I found myself back in the habit of laying in my bed all day while my classes would continue in the background.

Mushrooms are what came to mind when I thought of how I wanted to show my emotions in this painting. They symbolize the growing dread I felt every day, knowing I would be wasting my day, either in my bed or spacing out in class, not accomplishing anything. The mushrooms symbolize the heavy and vulnerable parts about depression. They form a thick forest on the back of the person to illustrate how heavy the feeling can be and how hard it is to get rid of it. The mushrooms are in different sizes, pointing in different directions. This represents how difficult it is to control one's feelings during this time. The figure represents the people who suffer from mental illness and how it can make them feel trapped and weak. Even though this painting represents my own feelings, I want other people be able to relate to what I illustrated. Therefore, I created the figure without any defining features so anyone could see themselves as that person. The figure is curled up in a ball and in a laying down to represent depressing, gloomy feelings I was experiencing. The towering, overwhelming mushrooms hanging over the figure represent how suffocating and overwhelming mental illness, more specifically, depression can be.

The color palette of my painting is dull and lacking excitement because depression does make one feel emotionless. I used dark greens to contrast with the light yellows to emphasize the figure, using the stems of the mushrooms to create path, leading the eye to the figure. I used the repeating shapes of the mushrooms to create a sense of wholeness throughout the composition.

This painting was made with the purpose of showing my feelings and struggles with depressive thoughts. I want people to be able to relate to my painting and my story. I want my painting to spread awareness about the devastating damage depression can have on someone.

Before I Go

By Brianna Lloyd

Before I go
I hope my family forgives me
Forgive me for not being enough
Forgive me for not being happy
Forgive me for not playing into your hand

But I will never forgive you
You hurt me
You didn't believe in me
You instead deceived me
You made my identity more important
than my health

Before I go
I hope my family finds peace
And I hope they open their minds
For when I'm gone
There is nothing that I can do

Dead Calm

By Ella Humphrey

She sits at her window
With the sound of rain hitting the windowsill
She sits there, deep in thought
Still processing the night before
The sound of yelling, crying comes back to her
As she replays it in her head
The rain starts to fall harder
And the girl's heart beats faster
Her breath shortens
She is unable to process what is happening
Then it all slows
The rain turns to a drizzle
Her heart and breath recover
She opens her eyes
To a wet damp forest
Calm at last

Darkness

By Morgan Cicimurri

Darkness all around
It leaks in through every opening
And fills every nook and crack

It invades at all times
Always overstaying its welcome
Never leaving, never lessening
Getting stronger every day

Darkness slowly bottles up
It weighs me down
I stumble along blindly
Trying not to fall



Artwork by Lorelei Kenney

Anastasia

By Jalen Henderson

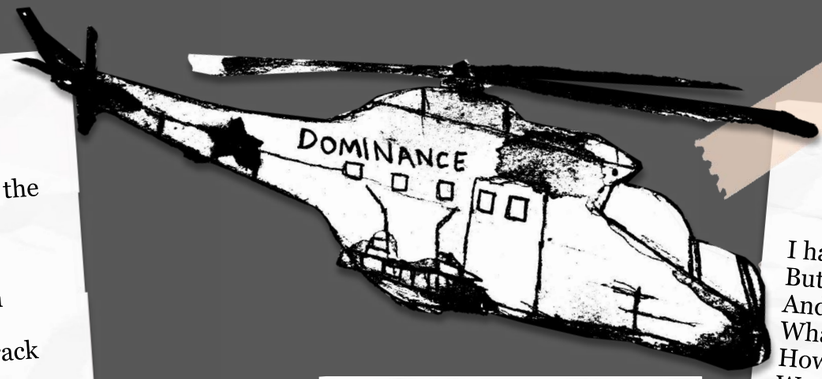
The girl's name was Anastasia. Anastasia lived in a small apartment with her family in the Kyiv, the capitol of Ukraine. From a young age, Anastasia had always been a very intelligent and inspired individual that always fought for what was right and just. In school, she joined the social justice club, advocated for the environment, and gave speeches advocating for causes she supported. She had big plans to make change, with hopes of becoming a human rights lawyer in order to help the lives of those facing discrimination. With support from her family and her striving initiative, she was on track to accomplish her goals.

Everything was normal one day for Anastasia. She greeted her parents in the morning, went to school, and carried on with her day. Then, later that same day, loud sirens began ringing overhead followed by a message from the head of the school on the intercom, warning of an invasion. Everyone was panicked and confused. It was then announced that the disturbance was from Russia, invading Anastasia's home country in order to take control of their land. Immediately after, many fled the school, racing home to gather their family and possessions to prepare to leave the country. Anastasia, however, did not move.

As fear spread and chaos erupted across the country with fear of Russian domination and oppression, Anastasia and her family decided to stay and withstand the invasion. Russian forces moved quickly, trying to take cities. With bombs raining down and homes being destroyed, the citizens of Kyiv waited for their turn, faced with the dominant fist of Russian might. Fearless and brave, Anastasia wanted to take action. She prepared for the Russians to reach her doorstep, ready to face down the weapons of mass destruction the Russians had coming.

A few days passed and Russian tanks could be seen approaching the city on the horizon. Many who had been there before had departed, but not Anastasia. She had encouraged her mother and younger siblings to flee the country a few days earlier, which they did. Her older brother and father had joined the armed forces in order to help physically counter the invasion of their home. As the tanks got closer, Anastasia gathered the few brave souls left in her city to halt the forward movement of the Russian forces. Ukrainian forces lined the city limits ready to repel alongside the few brave citizens. Anastasia witnessed the mass movement of people and machinery coming to take the land she called home. She was ready, with signs and her body; ready to stand in the way of the continued wrong-doing.

Anastasia and a nearby Ukrainian tank stared face to face with the Russian army, waiting for the tension to burst into bloodshed. Everything was still; this moment, face to face with utter domination, defined who Anastasia was: a strong woman who will always fight for what is right.



Art by Jalen Henderson

Ukraine

By Anonymous

I had never wondered what a missile might sound like
But suddenly I did
And not just what it would sound like
What did it look like?
How fast could it travel?
Would you see it in the sky like a shooting star?
And what would happen when it hit the ground?
Now I don't have to wonder anymore



Artwork by Sean Adams

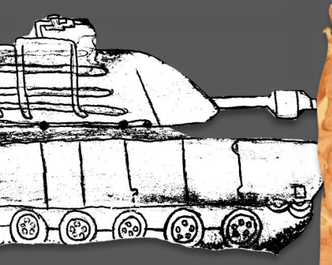
The Void of Revenge

By Samantha Mattox

The void of revenge
A dangerous path indeed
Feeding off your greed

Endanger loved ones
It drags you to the darkness
'Till you're only a...

Shell of who you were
A shadow of what once was
Insanity-filled



Archipelago

By Jay Mooneyhan

There is a white blinding light followed by many screaming voices, none of them identifiable. The screaming continues for two minutes, and then they all suddenly stop as one voice yells, "Wake up!" My eyes shoot open and a sharp pain hits my neck. *I must have slept well,* I say to myself. I stand up and look around and all I see is thick brush and a lot of trees.

After walking around the forest for what feels like hours, I decide to set up camp and wait out the night. Maybe I'll find some clues in the morning as to where I am. Looking at my surroundings, I try to find something to build a quick make-shift fort. Soft fluffy grass would make a nice place to lie, so I begin searching. Next on my list is sturdy branches and a strong tree. I suddenly realize that I am not alone. To my left, I hear foxes squeaking and some birds chirping; I subconsciously follow the chirps of the birds until I hear something that sounds like a person. My legs stop moving and my body stiffens. Quickly dodging behind a tree so I won't be seen, I quietly listen.

"Did you find any more food?" a higher pitched male voice asks.

"Yeah, I found a few apples," a female voice responds.

I try to sneak away so that I won't be discovered. *There are others here.* Suddenly, I hear a loud *CRACK.* As I look down, a branch has been split in two by my foot as I am making my escape.

"Did you hear that?" the male with a higher pitched voice says.

My heart drops as I hear footsteps getting closer to me. I don't want any interaction with them, so I decide to run as fast as I can which causes a lot of noise to follow me.

"Someone is there! Get them!" The female says to the other person.

Now it's a chase. I'm running and they are trailing me. I look back and see that one of them is obviously faster than the other. They are catching up to me. I quickly turn my head to find somewhere to hide, but right as I turn my head I'm met with a tree. Everything goes black.

As I come to, my head hurts and my vision is very blurry. It is dark and I hear muffled voices that slowly become more audible.

"Who is he?" someone asks.

Another voices says, "Don't know, we found him wonderin' the woods."

"Why did you guys bring him here?" a female voice says.

"We couldn't just leave him knocked out cold in the woods. That wouldn't be right, plus we could use some extra help around here," the female voice says.

I slowly open my eyes and struggle to lift my head.

"He's waking up!" the person with a higher pitched voice says.

"Hey, take it easy. What's your name?" A taller man with a brown fur coat asks. I stare at him blankly, and slowly repeat his question to myself. *What is my name?* But before I can even respond to him he grabs me by my collar and lifts me up.

"Marcus calm down!" someone shouts.

"No!" Marcus screams in response. "Now what's your name?" He repeats to me but this time in a more aggressive tone.

"I-I don't know," I stutter as Marcus loosens his grip and drops me, making me land on my back and lose my breath.

"Next time answer me the first time I ask you a question," he says as he stares down at me. "Do you know where you are?"

I slowly shake my head from side to side.

"You are currently on an island that's in the middle of nowhere. No special services, no technology, and limited material. Anyways, I'm Marcus. I've been on this island the longest and therefore I'm the leader, so whatever I say goes. Got that?" I nod to him in agreement not wanting to get lifted up and dropped for the second time.

"Alright everyone, introduce yourself to the new guy," he says as he walks away. What feels like eternity of awkward silence goes by until a smaller male steps up.

"Hello, my name is Dave," the higher pitched boy says. *So that's his name huh? Good to know.* But I still continue to stare at him just like my previous response to Marcus.

"Still a bit shaken up I see," he says. "Well, If you need anything, you can find me over there near the icy part of the island," pointing to the right. The area is covered with about a half of an inch of snow with ice on the trees. After he leaves I'm left alone. I guess I didn't notice that everyone else had abandoned me a bit ago.

It would probably be smart to get better acquainted with the area, so I set out to check out this place. Things are pretty much set up around here. They have food, heat, water, and even houses. Speaking of houses, I need to find a place to camp out for the night. So, I make my way over to the snowy area to find Dave. He has a spacious tent set up. He slowly sticks his head out as he hears me approaching his camp site.

"Hey Branch, what's up?" He says to me.

I give him a puzzled look. "Branch?" I repeat.

"Oh yeah, sorry. That's what I'm going to call you since, you know, you got knocked out by one," he says and begins to chuckle. I brush it off and ask him about an open space to camp out for the night. "I have an extra bed and plenty of room, so you can stay here tonight. In the morning, we will hunt for your own place," he says as he opens the entrance to the tent.

I would be crazy not to accept his offer. I am really tired and my head still hurts. I walk into the tent and see the second bed. I quickly make my way over to the bed and sit down. Just as soon as I lay back and kick my feet up, my eyes begin to feel very heavy. Dave notices this and tells me to sleep well. It takes no time for me to fall into a deep sleep.

Out of nowhere, I suddenly jerk straight up out of the bed as a women's voice screams, "Mikey wake up! Wake up right now or you will miss the bus!" The voice sounds familiar and it takes me a few seconds to recognize that it's my mother. "Mikey! Get Up!" she shouts again.

I nod my head and reply with a "yes ma'am" and she turns to leave my room. I roll over and push my legs off the edge of my bed, shaking myself out of the deep sleep. As I rub my head, trying to make sense of the dream I just had, I realize I have a headache and huge knot my head.

Artwork by Abi Good

The Breeze
By Amelie Galimba

The one who thought thinks
And the one who drank drinks
Neither will know
Her soft touch through their hair
Blessed like her brother Zephyrus
Nothing could break my love for us

Fright and faith are one in the same
Her beauty is of unknown fame
And what is unknown is daunting
Life and death are one in the same
With the wind there is no game
There is no shame
There is no blame
With faith, fear is abandoned

I overlook the green in the breeze
More alluring than it had ever been
My one true love
Unseen

Feeling Free
By Lila Gillam

A bare field with nothing in it
Dead grass and a colorless sky
Beauty's hidden but I feel it
Free and happy with no care
I run through the field with my feet bare
Sun hiding like an artic hare in the snow
I have no thoughts, my mind is clear
The scenery makes me disappear
Free from reality, negative thoughts leave
Everything's clear even though I don't feel near
Invisibility felt but everything's still there
Close to the earth, I feel free like I will never care

The Sun
By Amelie Galimba

Call me Icarius
I have found myself too close to your rays
Hot in the head
I may find myself dead
But at least I am here in your arms

The joy and warmth you bring
Allow the lark to sing
Allow the bells to ring
Ding, ding, ding!
The comfort and cheer you bring



Artwork by Beth Walker

Mornings
By Mary DeSaussure Parker

As the sun rises, flowers open up as if to give the sun a hug
The breeze ruffles their petals and wakes the grass
The sun's light covers everything in an orange haze
The world is at peace and its nature's playground
As the sun rises so does my soul
It goes to meet the sun and join in all the fun
My skin is tickled by the breeze as if it is encouraging me
As the sky turns to a beautiful blue, so do I
As the flowers soak in the nutrients, so do I
I have become one with nature

Harmony
By Mary DeSaussure Parker

The sun becomes the ocean drowning everything in its light
It provides warmth, nutrients and feeds everything
Similar to the sun, the ocean provides with something essential
It provides us with water, but it is cold
Both contrast each other while working together to provide us life
Just like how have to burn fields to plant more life
We work in harmony though contrasting
Our minds can join together yet work in different ways
Like two puzzle pieces that come together
We are like the sun and the ocean
Nature works in harmony like us

A Painted Sunset
By Ella Humphrey

Another day has neared the end
With the sun heading west towards home
Leaving clouds of color to cover the sky
Lasting only as long as you let it
Looking like an image out of your mind
With a little bit of orange there
And a blend of purple and blue here
All while the sun is disappearing
Behind the horizon
Then everything goes black
Your eyes flickering open
To the sound of anger and sadness

Puddles
By Mary DeSaussure Parker

Raindrops dripping from trees, yet the sky is clear
Puddles adorn the street, their reflections are like portals
I travel through them to the sky
I walk across the purple clouds which sprinkle the world
I'm taken to the sea where I swim next to schools of fish and colorful coral
The world is my oyster, puddles sparking my imagination
Suddenly I am drawn out of my meditation
The sky opens into an array of colors as breathtaking as the goddess Aphrodite
The puddles reflect the beauty of the sky taking me to its world
Colored with orange, pink, gold, red, yellow, blue, and purple

Nights on the Beach
By Amelie Gosselin

Standing on the beach
The sand was soft and cold
It was dark, too dark to see the ends of my fingers
Can't see where I'm going, I'm just walking
The sand is colder, the water is closer
The stars are the only light to my path
As I reach the water's edge
My body gets a sense of chill throughout
The wind blows and lifts the sand onto my calves
Like little shards of glass hitting me
I can't see farther than an inch
But I feel every inch of the ocean in that moment

The Night
By Neha Sivankoil

Dark, dark night
There was no light
The little boy's dreams
Were nowhere in sight

He moved from his bed
And tiredly rubbed his head
He walked all around
His mind filled with dread

Dark, dark night
There was no light
The sun arose
And night left in spite

The boy always knew
The sun to be true
But as the hours went by
Away the sun flew

Dark, dark night
There was no light
The boy would beg
For some change to his plight

And beg he would
With all his might
But still the sun left
And away with it the light



Artwork by Cassie Collins

Ghost

By Alexandria Kolomoets

I fluttered around the cold and empty house. Water dripped down somewhere creating an ominous, ambient sound that echoed all around me. My steps no longer clacked against the marble floors that woke the guests in their quarters in the east wing. The walls bled with memories that were no longer mine. Pictures and photographs were frozen in time. They stared at me as I passed through the corridors. The longer I looked back, the more twisted their eyes became, holding my gaze with deadly silence. I continued on with wispy tendrils sweeping the floor behind me and never making a sound. I passed by a rusted gold mirror, finding that my reflection had been reduced to nothing more than a distortion in an empty room. I wondered if the pictures were the only things that could see me now. The balcony, once overlooking a vast garden estate filled with precious roses and willow trees, now overlooked a barren wasteland with no one around to tend or govern it. The roots of the once-beautiful trees twisted and contorted and broke through the ground as if gasping for air. The roses disintegrated, and in their place stood bushes of thorns and brittle twigs. No wind blew. The sky was a greenish-grey that looked as though even the sun had forgotten how to shine properly. I stood over the corroded ledge and looked out over my kingdom. It was mine again with no one else here to lay claim to the throne. Swiftly, I turned and moved through the halls once more, towards the heart of the castle, winding around sharp bends, through elaborate arches, and up staircases that spiraled all the way up to the glass skylight that had become cloudy with age. The last room was concealed within a cylindrical brick wall that was inaccessible. Being a ghost, I phased through. In the room, beneath a warm flickering light, was a tarnished crown on a velvet throw pillow with gold tassels and cobwebs on one side. A spindly spider sat in the middle of the pillow as if protecting its treasure. As I lifted the crown, cobwebs pulled upwards then snapped, and the spider skidded away timidly. I raised it to sit on top of my head, a perfect fit. It all felt right until the sky collapsed onto the stone ceiling.



Artwork by Grayson Moss

Frightful Nightmare

By Samuel Hall

The frightful night sitting by a fire
The endless fight to stay awake
To stay alive for a while longer
The life you live as death sits across
How he stares and glares at your soul
Waiting for his opening goal
How he taunts and haunts you
Waiting for your final breath
And as that breath comes, you wonder
Wonder what life would've been like
If you had gone through with it
That wonderful life
That painless, meaningful life
That happy joyful life
That life worth living
But that life was nothing as you wished
As you watch it go
Watch it perish
Thinking, wishing you could change
Only to see
See your end
The end of life
Your life
So now
You live to die and die to live

Thanatology

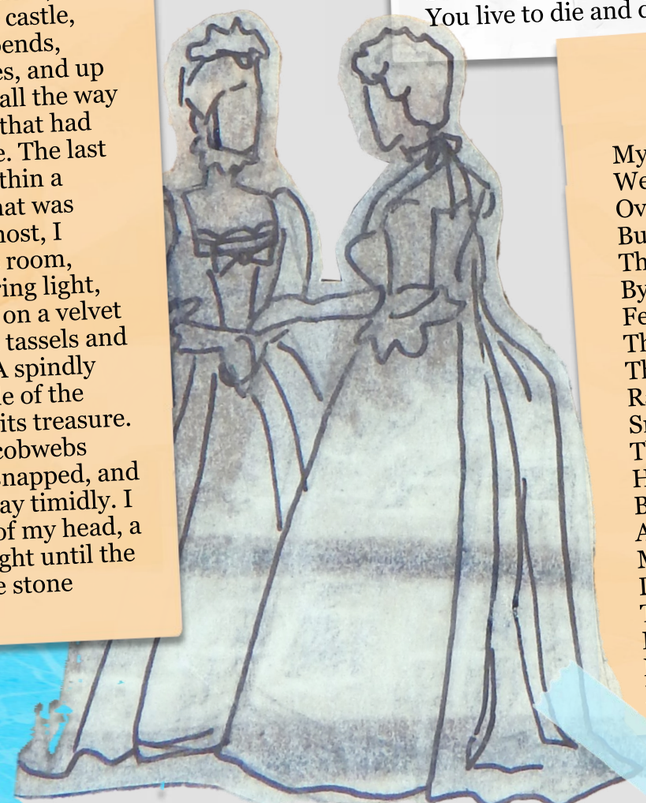
By Teigan Edwards

Thou art the sun of the dark-noon tide
The epiphany of sorrow
The cloud on night's eternal splendor
The son of the elder's shadow

I walk towards thee with sheepish haste
Too young to know thy gentle soul
And yet, thy friendship tis my surrender
And thy arms my finest shoal

Water high or chasm wide
My fate thou still shall serve
To run shall bring no safety
No struggle shall sub-serve

An eclipse pervades thy irises
And in them I find sleep
For soon my heart they shall surround
And there shall be no time for sheep



My Gravestone

By Claire Corbin

My gravestone sits atop of a hill
Weathering the wind and rain
Over time, moss starts to cover it
But, it is always cleaned
The occasional passerby leaves me a flower
By the time the next is left, the last has crumbled to dust
Feeding the ants that march dutifully to their queen
The moss grows back only to be scraped off again
The groundskeeper quickly moves from stone to stone
Rain and wind wear at my stone
Smoothing the corners and obscuring my name
The moss grows back and is cleaned off again
Hot sunlight beats down on the other side of my stone
Bleaching it almost white
As the rain and wind wear at my stone
My name is now barely legible
Diminishing anyone's ability to determine when I last walked this Earth
The moss grows back, but it is no longer scraped off
For the groundskeeper now has a stone
My name fades and disappears
I am forgotten

Guilt Trip

By Brandon McCoy

Once He said: “You’ll never figure out real happiness. You won’t ever experience the feeling of true love.”

I told Him I will sacrifice anything for a real life; to feel the true happiness that I didn’t have inside. I just wanted to be a real boy; a real person with feelings like love, happiness, and joy; all the emotions I live without. Many days I spend alone in my room, wondering will anything get better, wondering if I will ever be able to overcome this depression. Day after day I try to change, but I seem to always fail and end up where I started.

I call on Him again: “HEY please help I beg of you! It’s been to many nights in my room.”

He always responds with the same retort: “Figure it out yourself before you call for help.”

I never knew what He meant. I always thought I knew myself the most. Over time, I thought I could feel myself start to get better. I thought maybe this could be the end of my misery. I could finally live the American dream and be happy. I started to do more activities outside, and in the house, I started to feel like myself again. But, I wondered what it was that changed for me; what gave me the strength to change?

So I called on Him again: “What was it that I did different? How did I find myself?”

He responded: “You changed nothing. It was all a test to see if you would give up or not.”

“WHAT? Why would you do that?” I said, but He never answered. It’s like He vanished. Then I realized it was me the entire time. I was HIM telling myself all this. But why?

Drift

By Merryn Courie

Drifting through this deep dark space
Sparkling white dots litter the place
Distant stars contrast with black
As you stare, floating on your back
Exploring, advancing, making a change
In the name of science, though it’s strange
Stuck in the weightlessness of space

The shuttle drifts and floats and stays
Orbiting inside the Earth’s blue haze
Black and white, mobile home base
The astronaut’s temporary place
Tethered to the ship to keep from drifting away
With Houston in their ear, they won’t be led astray

Mission on the mind, as the astronaut floats
But fun can be had amongst the notes
Twisting and flipping through the dark
The camera comes out and finds its mark
The shutters flick with a single tap
The astronaut takes a quick snap

Nature

By Liam Barr

An eerie fog obscured the transcendent views
Mountains blew that melancholy over
The magnificent sunset that pursues
A song of the whistling wind moreover

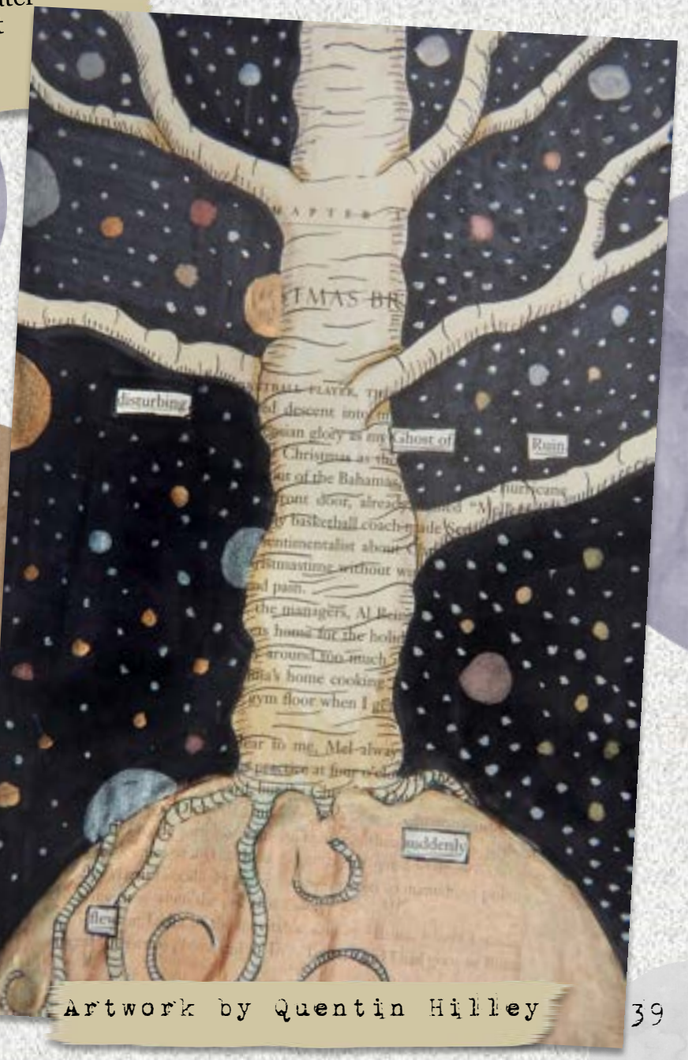
An inevitable feeling of sorrow and delight
Fills one’s heart as sounds of nature endure
A cool moist air feels as if in flight
The dying day and howling beasts secure

That feeling of intense complete
The superlative view, nothing greater
None can generate that feel repeat
None but the one of nature

Forest Fire

By Calder Weinberg

Forest fire so bright and hot
Burning down lush land’s height
Dark skies filled with smoke
Nothing compares to one’s hope
Forests full of ash once more
Nutrients found in soot and ash
Land regrows twice as fast



Artwork by Quentin Hilley

Blackout Poetry

By Quentin Hilley

Disturbing ghost of ruin

Suddenly flew

The vacation

By Maggie Shavo

I've tried to write this narrative before. I never finished the assignment. I just skipped the due date. It was okay, so I spent around ten seconds searching for the old document before realizing I only saved it to my school computer that has since been wiped clean. It was a digital death, so it left no remains. Everything about this 2 year-old memory and its illogical significance still only exists in my own head where it can be further blown out of proportion. I know it is blown out of proportion because it involves something so insignificant, it is less than one inch long. But, for some reason, that little thing changed my life. *Or at least my thinking about life*.

When I was 15, I experienced the entire array of human emotions for the first time, and it has been causing an intense amount of turmoil ever since. In the late summer of 2019, when the music I liked was different, when I had a worse sense of what was cool, and had weird hair, I rode in our wholesome family Toyota Sienna to a place with a dumb name. I don't like saying it. Hhhhhjhhocking Hills, Ohio: a riveting geological location that features such a vast array of tourist attractions people make fun of the place for some reason.

I think the drive was a big part of everything. It was 8 hours or something. When the sun started to set, I was presented with the dazzling opportunity to gaze wistfully out the window at the fields and cows and whatever else was out there, turning pink and orange and all that as they ambled by. *Did they amble or whiz? I think it was a mix of the two*.

I'm never situationally aware, so at the point in which we stopped and turned into a patch of grass was when I discovered that we were staying in a "cabin looking thing" on the side of the road. There was a bunch of dirt and forest-like stuff to its left, the road to its right, and a small area in the front that I liked and proceeded to stare at. I stared at the grass, bushes and a few trees, as the dying sun reached through the branches. *Did I mention that orange was my favorite color?*

I watched the friendly orange sunlight try its hardest to tint our neighbors' shades of grey and darker grey, bringing my attention to the fun-sized twilight zone of crazy people on the other side of the road. They looked at us through dusty windows and from dilapidated front porches with the hostility of an apparition. We felt acutely unwelcome.

Inside there was a weird smell that didn't wash out. There was a solitary pool table in the basement and crunchy hand towels. And, I can't forget to mention one dusty can of expired peach preserves in the kitchen pantry.

We drove to this tiny haunted house, and spent a few nights here to spend the days in the mountains; more accurately the foothills of mountains. So the next morning we packed water, strawberries, peanut butter, and thinly sliced bread before we left on our excursion. It was 30 minutes to get there, I sat in the car and I texted a friend, Timmy, I used to have. I told him he wouldn't hear from me for most of the day because there wasn't any service. He told me to be careful and for some reason it was touching. He said that he would miss me.

I got out of the car and walked towards the hills, warm with that feeling that comes from someone telling you you're special; that feeling that makes you feel like you harbor some sort of secret validating energy within yourself. With the magical power of my secret friendship, I chose to join two of my sisters and two of my cousins. We chose

to brave the more treacherous path to our first destination, while the old people and the people who didn't feel like hopping over fallen trees and rocks took the paved path below it. We went to a waterfall, well, multiple waterfalls actually. They were cool. We went to caves and ponds and things because Hocking Hills turned out to have a lot of exciting cool mountain stuff. There was a thing called the rock house. It was a bunch of boulders piled on top of each other that formed a big dark cave in front of a huge crevice in the side of the mountain. You could go inside and crawl up the walls, or pick a rock to sit on and look down at the threatening fall to the ground below. *Three people died there that year in the same spot, and whoever they texted about not having service didn't hear from them ever again.*

So there was stuff we looked at and things that happened, but there's another thing that happened. I've written this much of the paper up to this point, avoiding writing about this particular thing because I never know how to talk about it. It's the kind of thing that I trip over my words explaining or describing, even to myself because it doesn't make any sense to any sensible person. However, the effect of it is comparable to a religious experience of sorts. To be honest, the whole situation is generally embarrassing to tell anyone.

The trail my group took through the mountain was long, so the "pass-the-time" conversation between me and one of my cousins wandered to the interesting kinds of conversation places that you can reach when you walk for an hour with someone you've known all your life but haven't really spent hours talking to. We conjured up statements about stuff that we all assume the others don't seriously believe in, but continued to conceptually explore together and humor the conversation. We talked about energies in the world, destiny and the all-powerful forces that we called "the vibes" that determine the results of every circumstance and write the sacred script of fate. Eventually, we invented the existential importance of inchworms. My cousin explained that inchworms don't have eyes, so their every movement relies on the guidance of "the vibes." Together we concluded that the illusion that convinces other beings that they control their own futures by way of their free will is erased for the inchworm and its lack of vision. These creatures must submit to the vibes; their only will. We told each other that fate is real. It is God, and that the inchworms understand. As we continued to follow the trail through the mountain and its tall green trees that filtered the sunlight shining through them from above, we stopped in one fateful spot. There was one fateful ray of sun that highlighted one fateful strand of insect silk hanging from one fateful tree branch. Attached to the very end of the strand, there was one little green inchworm floating in midair. The sight of it dangling there finalized the process of some sort of internal shift to an illusory spiritual awakening that, despite its blatant absurdity, became at that moment inexpungible.

So, why is this so unexpected and significant? I guess I expected the fun and the normal, as one does. I hadn't really hiked anywhere before. But, at the time, I was into sunsets and natural beauty, so I was excited for it. I was excited to spend time with all my favorite cousins, aunts and uncles, and to experience "good old family fun" and all of that. But, I didn't expect the town to be that unnerving. I didn't expect the mountain to have three "killer" caves, and for all these circumstances to feel so separate from what I understood reality to be. I didn't expect the inchworm.

I loved being with my family and the way we all had fun. I thought the creepy town was funny and that it was fun to explore inside every crevice on the mountain side that was big enough to fit into. It was fun to walk and talk for hours about the existential importance of a nonsensical thing. But, when I found the inchworm, I realized that I believed in the nonsense. When I saw it dangling from the sky in the middle of the trail, I had the delusional realization that all of the feelings that I had been having in the months

and the years leading up to that moment, about there being fate or destiny or God or a preordained plot point, that every circumstance actually maybe more real than I had previously believed them to be. So, contrary to my expectations, a hiking trip in Ohio ended up being the proverbial "final nail in the coffin" of my grip on reality.

Ever since then, I've felt a growing conflict between fiction and fact, especially when it comes to relationships. I felt connected to my family in the kind of way that comes with being in close physical proximity, having history, and unconditional love. But friends from the internet, such as Timmy, don't come with that. I talked to him about the inchworm and things, about music, movies he and I watched, and how I liked looking out the car window at the fields and the cows. It seemed like we were so lucky to have each other despite the fact that we are 4000 miles away from each other. *But, I just held your hand in my dream last night.*

Before the internet, people formed these types of connections with people in close physical proximity due to lack of other options. They had to share their inner feelings with people that they went to school with. *Eww.* The fact is I have a hard time opening up to Timmy who I have gone to school with since 3rd grade. However, I can open up to Timmy who lives in Spain. It's not deep or edgy or dramatic; I think it's just a fact. There are just a lot of people I'm "friends" with that I just don't know.

There are a lot of people with what's known as a private spam/vent account on Instagram or Twitter or wherever in which they can one-sidedly disclose all of their frustrations and personal struggles to an audience of whatever friends they feel qualify for an accepted follow request. Unlike most people who scroll through all the ramblings without a thought or pause, I do read every comment; every venting moment. I read everything.

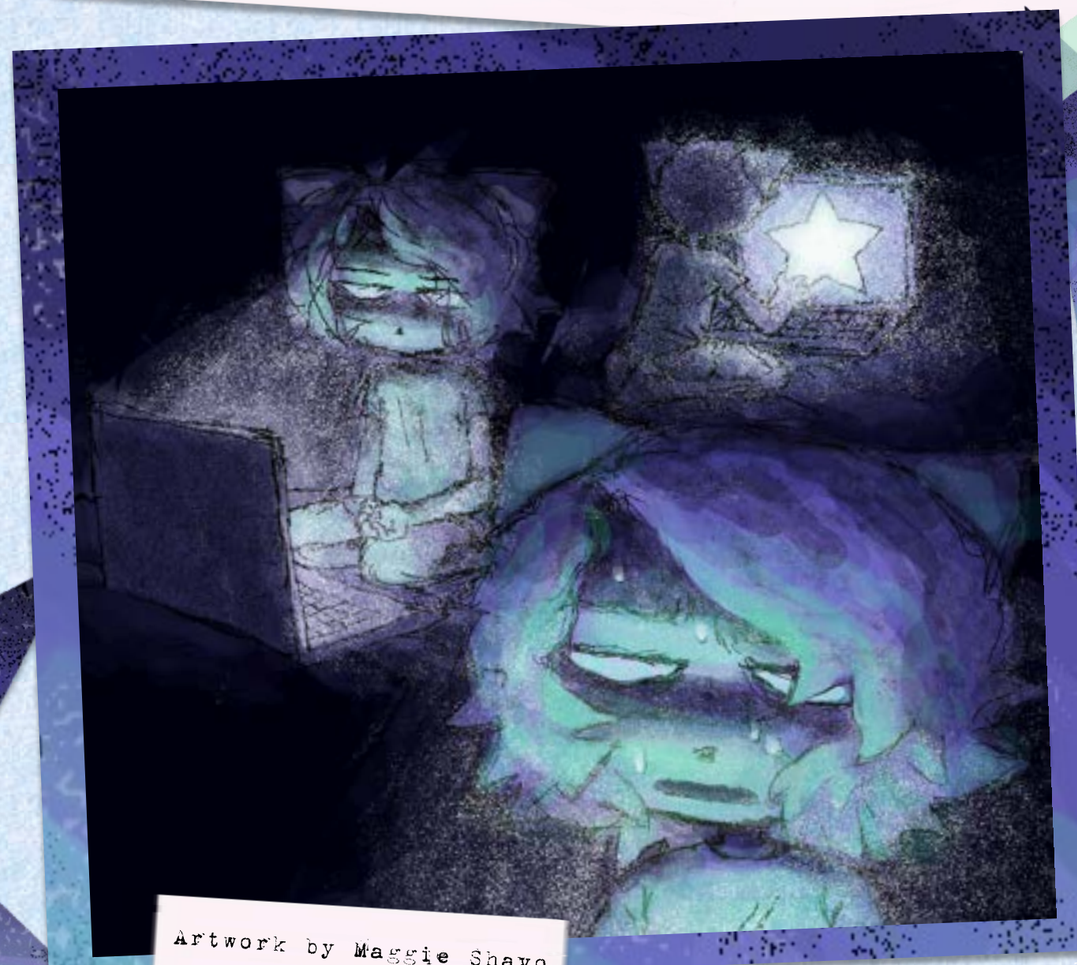
The friends you've never physically met still exist there, between the even rows of Neue Helvetica. Amid the storms of pixels of text you've rained are actual people, beyond the pixels themselves. Getting tangled with one of them means while you're together neither of you have to think about how your hair looks, if you have a stutter, blush easily, or make stupid faces when you laugh. You start to feel like your pixel relationships with people you've never met are more meaningful than the friendships you've had since middle or elementary school. But if Timmy from Spain lived here in an alternate reality, and I saw him at lunch every day, our friendship would be just as two-dimensional as the rest. So then, online relationships seem to have more in common with fiction than fact. So, I have to ask: why are people more inclined to open up with someone that is closer to a mirage than a reality? It's like taking a picture of a relationship and digitally altering it until it ceases to resemble anything that could happen naturally. So then, it seems imaginary things become more important than things that are real. *Even if something is more real than reality, it's still not reality.*

What does this weird tangent have to do with anything? When I was on vacation, I felt more impacted by imaginary things than real things, like the inchworm of my delusions and Timmy from Spain. It was as if the foliage, caves, waterfalls and the sunsets scribbling all over everything were just a background, included for atmosphere. My mom, sisters and cousins, and the flavors of our interactions were written in for the audience to compare them to my interactions with crazy town people, inchworm, and Timmy. The truth is I don't know what the truth is. I don't know if the truth matters. But, like a cartoon character, I've always ended up okay when all the dust settles after a big problem with high stakes. No matter the measures I've taken to assure my own doom, I have consistently, miraculously, ended up relatively fine. Even though I recognize the irrational nature of my faith in the fantasy, nothing has checked me back into reality yet.

I've kept track of all the situations that should have done the job, but the outcome of each one of them has been the same. I feel as if I am being enabled by the cosmic powers of the universe. At this point, if the magical force of my own luck stopped driving, I don't believe I would have the ability to take the wheel.

Ultimately, I believe in fate against my will because the "Inchworm Coincidence of 2019" broke the proverbial camel's back, and all the coincidences fell to the ground where their containers shattered, allowing them to chemically react with one another and produce a powerful delusion whose fumes I accidentally inhaled. I believe in preordained safety for myself, the people that I care for, and the disembodied person I spent every day talking to when I was 15. I believe there exists some reality separate from the one I think I'm supposed to be living in, where faces and voices are rows of digital text and everyone is going to be okay.

I didn't expect the events of a family vacation to instill nonconsensual spirituality within me or inflict irreparable damage upon my concept of reality. But, here I am; here I have been and will be, probably. I still don't know what's going on, what's going to happen, and neither do you!



Artwork by Maggie Shavo

Suspicion

Lyrics and Music
By Sean Adams

A psycho in blue armed with a killing machine
No questions asked, not even if you are clean

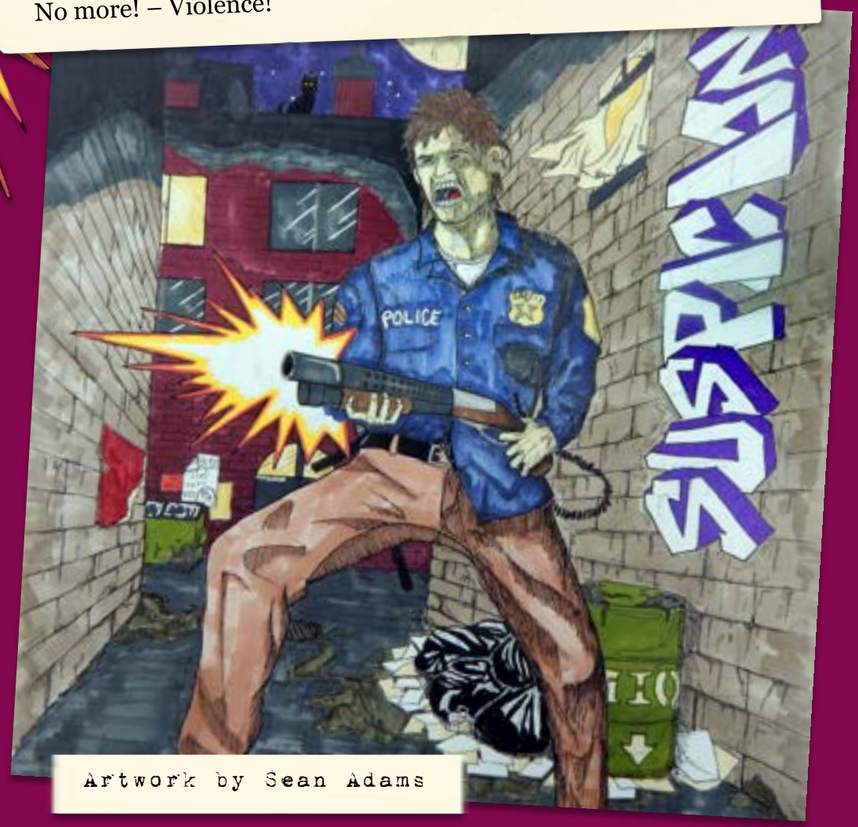
Assumption and failure; erratic behavior
Judgment based off of your skin (Suspicion!)
They've got the weapons; society deafens
Murder on impulse and fear (Suspicion!)

Gun to your back, holding a deadly key
Opens your skull, a racial killing spree

Assumption and failure; erratic behavior
Judgment based off of your skin (Suspicion!)
They've got the weapons; society deafens
Murder on impulse and fear (Suspicion!)

Safety is dead (No more!)
Innocent bloodshed (Violence!)
Beginning of war (No more!)
Knocks at the door (Violence!)
No more! – Violence!

Scan to listen to the song



Artwork by Sean Adams

Corruption

By Madison Green

Corruption; Merriam-Webster defines this as "dishonest or illegal behavior especially by powerful people (such as government officials or police officers)." Corruption is nothing new. In fact, it is deeply rooted in the workings of the American government system; from rigged elections, to embezzlement, and the obstruction of power. Now, this is no secret to the government; they just turn their heads the other way, letting certain people get away with their corrupt behaviors because it may bring a few extra dollars into their pockets. Police is defined by Merriam-Webster as "the department of government concerned primarily with maintenance of public order, safety, and health." If this is the case, why do we see police officers turning their guns towards those who mean no harm? Why is such violence forced upon those who are unarmed and standing up for what they believe?

The first amendment states that the people have the right to petition the government. People can make requests to the government without punishment or reprisal. So again, it needs to be asked, why are the police officers turning their guns towards those who mean no harm, who are simply petitioning the government? Not all politicians or police officers are corrupt or are turning a blind eye to make more money, but the system which they work for is corrupt. This is a system put into place to continuously repress those who are seen as inferior and even *dangerous*; a system for which was created over two hundred years ago establishing rights for only white men. We, the people, must honor the rights we do have, and recognize while our government is far from perfect, we have the ability to change it.

Answer Me This...

By Bryce Peeples

Has there ever been a time when everyone was considered equal? Has there ever been a time when one demographic was not considered superior to another? For far too long, African Americans have been seen as gangsters, thugs, criminals, and hoodlums. Enslaved and forced into labor in the 18th and 19th centuries. In the 20th century, we were segregated in public restrooms, schools, and restaurants. Now, we have been reduced to being killed at the hands of the authority whose responsibility is to protect us. When African Americans hear "police officers" violence, racism, or injustice should not be the first words that come to mind. Cops should not be feared by African Americans, but they do because they fear for their lives. Skin color does not make one person any different from the next. Skin color should not be the determining factor of whether or not a person deserves to live.

The Girl & the Moon

By Beth Walker

There once was a little girl who loved the moon, and the moon loved the girl. Each night, the girl would go outside and talk to the moon, but the moon would never talk back. She noticed the moon was different every night; sometimes there was no moon at all.

One cold, winter night, the girl's parents called her to come inside. "Honey! Come inside, it's too cold to be out. You're too old to be out talking to something that's never going to talk back."

Discouraged, the girl came inside and reflected on how the moon had never talked back to her. All of a sudden her conversations made her feel silly.

A lot of time passed. The girl grew older, and the moon watched. One day, the girl was extremely stressed and overwhelmed, but had no one to talk to in her lonely apartment. She looked out the window and saw the moon. She decided to get up and go outside. To her surprise, the moon looked down at her with a soft smile.

"I missed you!"



Artwork by Beth Walker

Scan to view the entire illustrated book



Artwork by Sadee Broughton

The Fish in the Sky

By Sadee Broughton

There is a faraway planet very similar to ours. At least it was, until one day something strange appeared: fish, flying, gliding, floating in the sky. No one knew where they came from or why. Some marveled at them, and some hated them. But, out in the prairies there stood a small house in which there lived a boy. He longed to join the fish in the sky. Each passing day, he wistfully watched these fish swim by, hoping they'd whisk him away up into the clouds. For, each night he was plagued by a dark, evil thing; its voice crept in his head and twisted his mind. This thing never left, but simply grew stronger. And so, each night, the boy wished for the fish to help him. The fish heard his pleas and decided to help. They sent down to him pearls. He was to take them to the lake near his house.

"Eat these then jump in the lake," they said, "and all will be well."

So, the boy ate the pearls and submerged himself in the tepid waters of his lake. When he emerged from its waters, he was no longer a boy. He was a fish in the sky.

Scan to view the entire illustrated book

My Favorite Place

By Coleman Hughes

Just off the Edisto River, there is a creek that winds through the town of St. George, South Carolina. The water is cool and flows smoothly. At night you can hear alligators bellowing and owls hooting in the distance. The creek is surrounded by all types of trees draping over the water. Occasionally you will see an alligator or a water snake swim across the creek. The ducks weave through the trees as Woodpeckers peck. The sound of the rushing river is occasionally interrupted by the rumble of a motorboat or dogs barking in the woods. On the bank, there are two houses: one bigger than the other, both with scars from the floods that have come and gone. The road leading here is made of gravel that crunches under the tires of cars and the feet of the people that come and go. Down by the water there is a boat ramp with scratches and scars that show its years. There are two plywood boards lining the ramp to keep the damp dirt from falling and covering the gray concrete. Next to the ramp there is a flowing well full of clear cool water with a spigot that is always spewing out cold water you can wash your hands under after a long day of fishing. This is my favorite place; a place where I can just be...

Composition of the Heart

By Elizabeth Lester

Your heart is a story. It has seen the world and its atrocities, over and over. The fact it still beats is a miracle. How many times has it broken into two? How many times has it shattered and you've stitched it up so painstakingly by yourself? How many hearts that are not your own have you shattered? Do they think about you? Do you want them to think about you? Who are 'you?'

You desire to tell your story. You want to spill your heart. Perhaps it is not that you are not brave enough, but that the world fails to understand your words. Yes, they might understand your process, but may never truly see you for your story, for what your story is.

The world will abandon you. It will spit on you when you're on the ground and slam a foot into your stomach. It doesn't care about your cries to stop, or the blood leaking out of your mouth. Tell me, how many times have you heard, "it's going to get better," yet fail to be told when; fail to be given a time? Is this your story?

A story does not end until the author deems fit. Drafts can be written, however. Countless, unfinished writings that will not see the light of day; a story that will never be finished. Tragedy, accidents, wrong place at the wrong time; there are so many ways a story can be left unfinished. Maybe the most tragic are not the ones that come suddenly and without prediction, but the ones that are left unfinished on purpose.



Artwork by Georgia Gosselin

Authors choose this every day, do they not? Why is it suddenly so important that someone's story is purposefully left unfinished? Perhaps the fact it has not properly ended is looking too far. Perhaps it is because no one except the author has seen what went into the draft. Thousands, even *millions* of words; all passion and triumph that are invisible to the world. And at the end? At the end, the draft tapers off, leaving only the frustration and emptiness that comes with an unfinished writing. Countless reasons fuel this fire: stress, lack of inspiration, boredom even. In honor of my friend who hates the vague, flowery prose authors' use, who prefers to get straight to the point, who suffers through the unsubtle meaning in this writing: suicidal thoughts; the purposeful and abrupt ending of an author's heart. I ask you, again, is this your story?

I want to tell you so many things; I want to tell you that it will be alright; that eventually there is a light at the end of the tunnel. But you've heard that all of this before, haven't you? So instead, let me offer you this. This story, the one you are currently reading, was an unfinished draft left in my notes app for 2.5 months. Originally, it did not end the way I wanted. In fact, I never even finished it. The draft felt hopeless. Every word I would type wasn't the feeling I wanted, or the beat that matched. It was infuriating; the blinking cursor taunting me into what my brain simply wouldn't provide onto "paper." Yet, here I am now, aren't I?

I finished this draft not because I was forced to by a deadline, but because I wanted to make an impact. I know someone will listen to my words here; whether it'll be in a magazine, read by only my friends or even only my teacher. So, I ask of you to apply this logic to your own story. I ask of you to spill your heart out in a story of your own. I ask of you to kneel down to the world who you feel won't listen, and to tell it anyways. Do not be afraid of judgement; of snake tongues that tell you it is "just hormones," or to just "ignore it like the rest of us."

It is not pointless to write a story. It will always be your thoughts, your ideas and your words. You made it, and therefore there will always be a point to be made, which can be said about life as well. For my friend who hates flowery prose and is afraid to ever show their writing to the world, I give you the same emotions I feel towards them, whenever I read their stories: I love hearing their thoughts, their ideas and opinions, their characterizations and their twists. Someone will love your story, too; your characterization, your thoughts and your ideals. Someone will take joy in reading your story until its end. It is important to remember that reading a long story that never truly was finished always leaves a need for more. It leaves with us hope that the story will continue.

If you feel no one ever will, then search. Explore and don't stop! Do everything in your power until you physically can't anymore. Sometimes, it is enough to want to live just to discover. The world is cruel, but the people that count, the ones who make it, cannot all be defined by that label. I have no flowery prose for this section. I can offer only advice: a reason to live is never pathetic. You are not pathetic for living to see another episode of your favorite show or because you just want to play a game. Any reason at all is enough reason to continue your story.

I ask you, out of concern of the one reading this who resonates with my words, and for the people who want to read that person's story, to keep going. Keep writing, and eventually you will find that finishing a story is always more satisfying than leaving an eternally blinking cursor.

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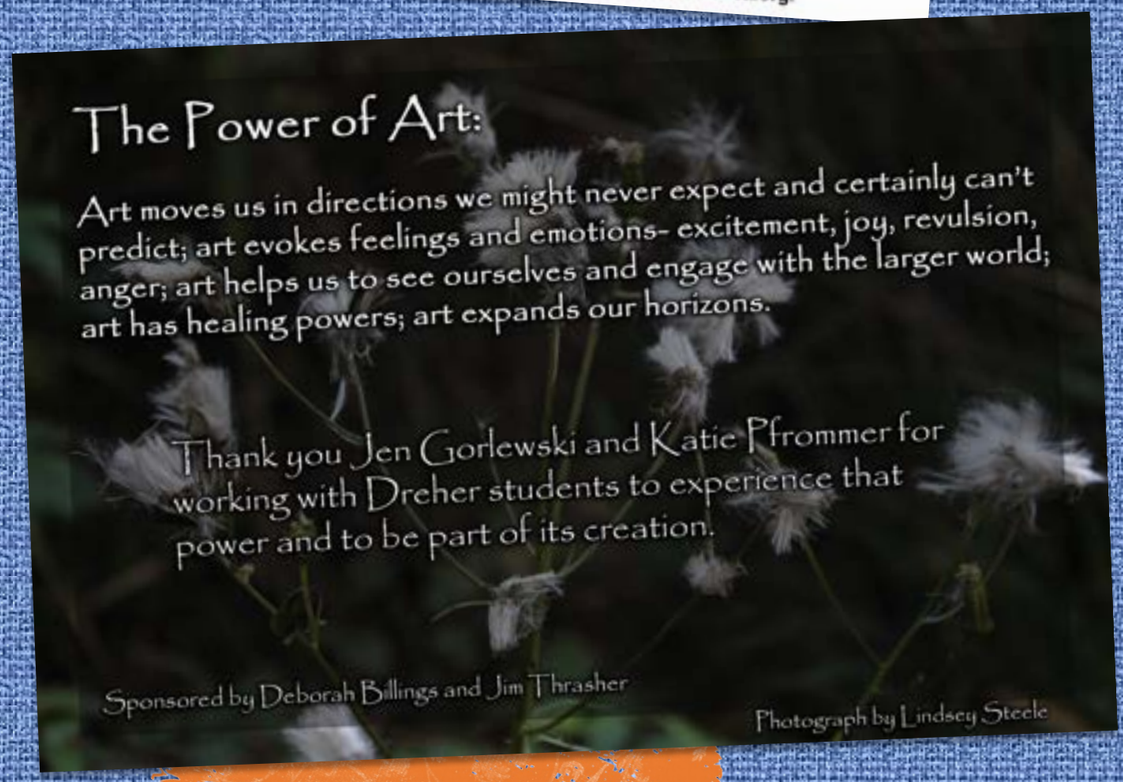


sccadvasa
South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

Congratulations to Layla Davis, winner of the South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (SCCADVASA) "What it Means to Be a Man" art contest.

Her winning piece was featured on social media, print ads and billboards (shown above) throughout South Carolina. This art contest is just one of the ways SCCADVASA is working to engage teens in conversations surrounding healthy relationships, teen dating violence, and sexual assault.

We encourage teens, parents and educators to learn more about these critical issues. Visit www.**LevelUpForChange.org** today, a resource hub of prevention tools to end sexual violence among teens. Learn more about SCCADVASA at **www.sccadvasa.org**.




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