
Whisper
Dreher
High
School
Literary & Art Magazine
2019-20

Whisper...

Literary & Arts Magazine
2019-2020

Behind the name...

We are living in a very tumultuous and unsettling time, with unrest everywhere we turn. While it may seem hopeless at times, it is we, the people, who can create a movement of change.
Everyone has the voice and ability to make a positive impact on the world. Change comes forth when positive choices are made, started by our expressions and actions, regardless of how small they may seem. Each of our voices can have an influence, one *whisper* at a time…

Nature...

We are whispering words about nature. Between the shear enjoyment that nature brings us, to the destruction of nature's beauty by humans, there seems to be much to discuss in regards to nature in today's world. We are dedicating this edition of Whisper to not just the appreciation of Earth and all its natural beauty, but also to our ability as humans to make a difference in our Earth's future.

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Policy

The Dreher High School Literary and Arts Magazine is a collection of literature and art submissions. 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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Cover Art by Julia Burden

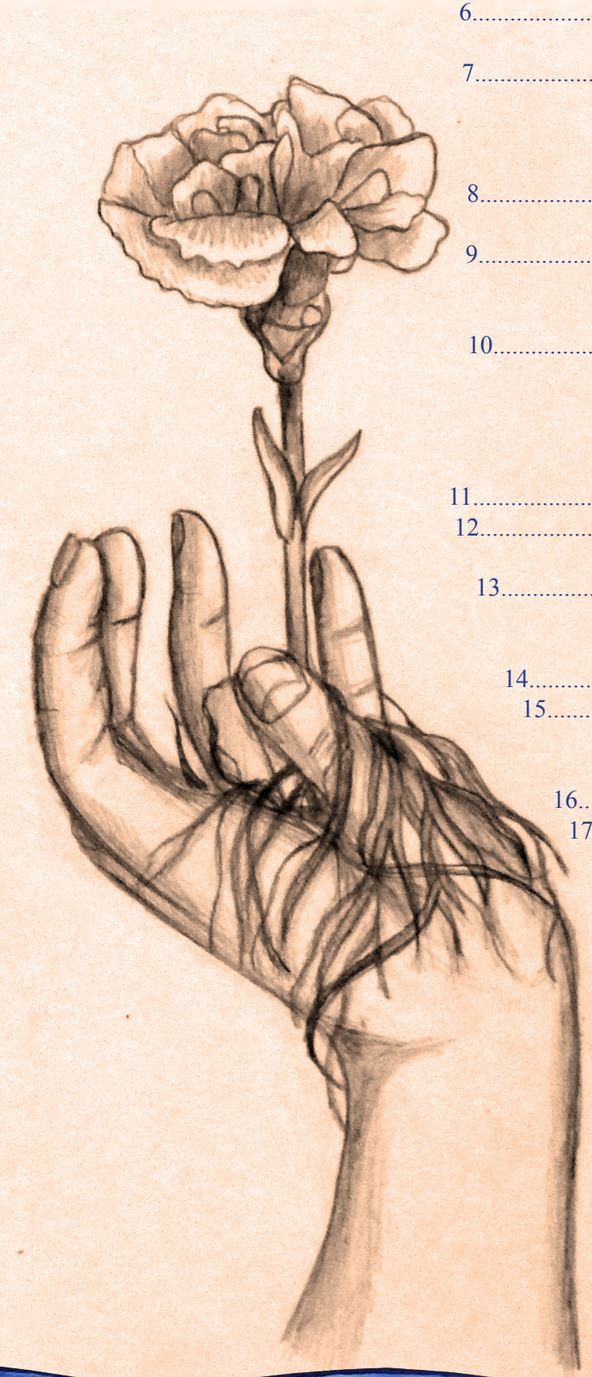
"Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty."
- Albert Einstein



Artwork by Layla Davis

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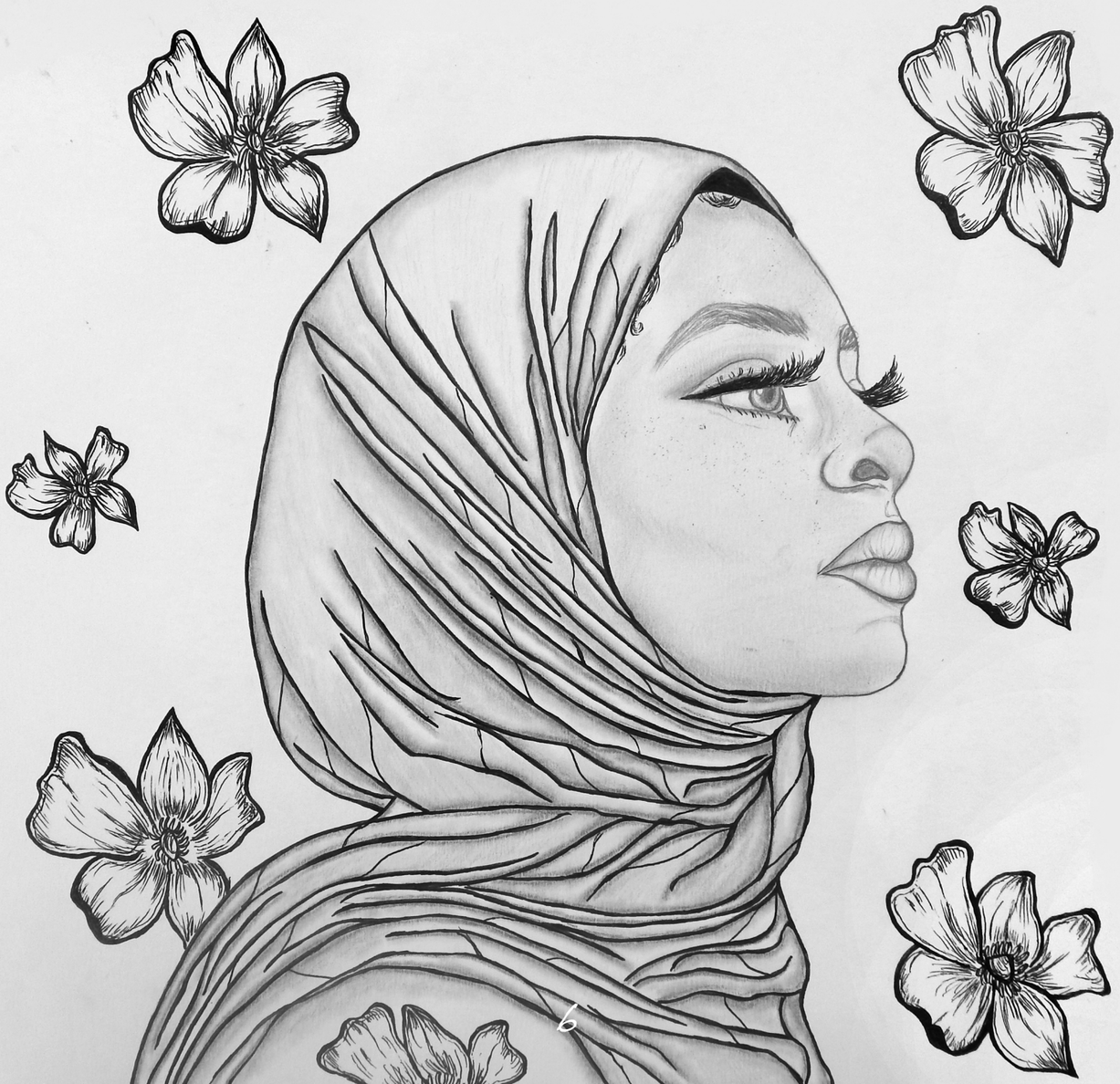
Artwork by Muireall Dickson

“Clouds”
by Maggie Marsh

With sunshine on my skin
And gold in my hair
I’ll carry the clouds in a basket
The weight barely enough to bear

I’ll set them on the hill
And wrap them in blankets
To bathe them in water
And await the sky to take them

When they get to the sky
And turn weathered and grey
I’ll wring out the water
To bring rain to a new day



“Mother Nature”
by Julia Gonzalez Del Valle

As a young being opens her eyes
She’ll see a light, shining from above
And she’ll see a huge sheet of blue
Up above her head
With small white clumps of cotton

When wandering through a large forest of green
With the fragrance of fully-bloomed flowers
She is filled with a feeling
Happiness or relaxation all over

Many creatures of the forest gather around
Running freely, dancing, and singing
Talking about the wonders living in the forest

All these wonders and experiences
Where did they come from?
These wonders were graciously given to us
By the lovable goddess, Mother Nature

“Warmth of the Day”
by Kaitlyn Davis

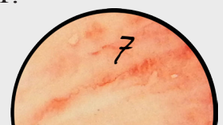
Warm sun on my face
Kissing my neck, smile so big
May this day not end

“Life”
by Madison Sosbee

Life shines within us
Light beams in our lively eyes
The rays flow throughout

“Gold”
by Stafford Dudick

My arms are endless.
I am life as we know it.
Everyone needs me but can’t look at me.
I have many brothers and sisters.
But I am the only to give existence.
What am I?



Artwork by Jazmyn Quattlebaum

“Birds Flying Separately”
by Emma Edwards

You are a finch that I long to see fly
Carry me with you and never let go
Flying above the planes is my vast dream
As our wings flutter, we approach the sky
We’re so high; we could be at the Chateau
As we approach your charm, I see a beam
Condemning you for your many white lies
I want to fly back; you’ve become shallow
I wish to see the Chelsea Hotel gleam
Perhaps I will find myself passing by
On the ground, I study my small shadow
I take flight only to see the moon beam
Fare thee well, just like Dylan said goodbye
Never will you know I was shot by bow
Lying here, wounded, I think of your scheme
Nothing left, my only wish is to fly
Once, in Nashville, I threw it all away
Will you please take me to the river’s stream
So the glamorous nymph can heal the sky?
Maybe then I’ll be set free from your whoa

“Human (Kind?)”
by Lana Vaughn

They ask what will happen when we’ve taken it all
What will happen to oceans, to birds and to Fall?
Humankind only takes; skilled in using and waste
Ignoring the science, living blind in their haste
The planet holds its mystery, origin unknown
But the reckoning is coming, truth to be shown
Change without thought, progress without growth
Forsaking the most basic, most sacred of oaths



“More Action”
by Ella Davenport

More
Calling
On
Them
To take action on climate change
The
Thick
Choking
Smoke haze of this summer is
STRONGER
L o n g e r
Hotter
These moments define
The nation
And
The
World
Yet these warnings have been ignored
The
Government
Still
Has NOT connected the dots

“The Heart That Can Bear No More”
by Jakob Gooch

This place we share ‘n call our home
Has a heart that can bear no more
Which will eventually mean
There will come a day…
Seeds no longer grow from beneath
There will come a day
Trees no longer allow us to breath
Unless we do our part
To heal earth’s broken heart

Artwork by Sydney Gardner-McCrossin

“Sand”
by Ashton Butler

The waves become sand
Their journey is done
They come from far lands
They link bone to bone
And link hand in hand

Men who are clone
Joined by every strand
Of water undone
By small grains of sand
On shores for everyone

“Bones”
by Kaitlyn Rutter

Bones and brittle we all succumb
Bathing in the light of the falling sun
Ashes cover the land in which we walk
Filling the air and into our weeping lungs
Burns the water in which we drink
The end gives birth to a new beginning

“Re.For.Ma.Tion”
by Jameshia Williams

The grandfather dies
A new life comes to the rise
It’s a new rebirth

“The Beginning”
by Lana Vaughn

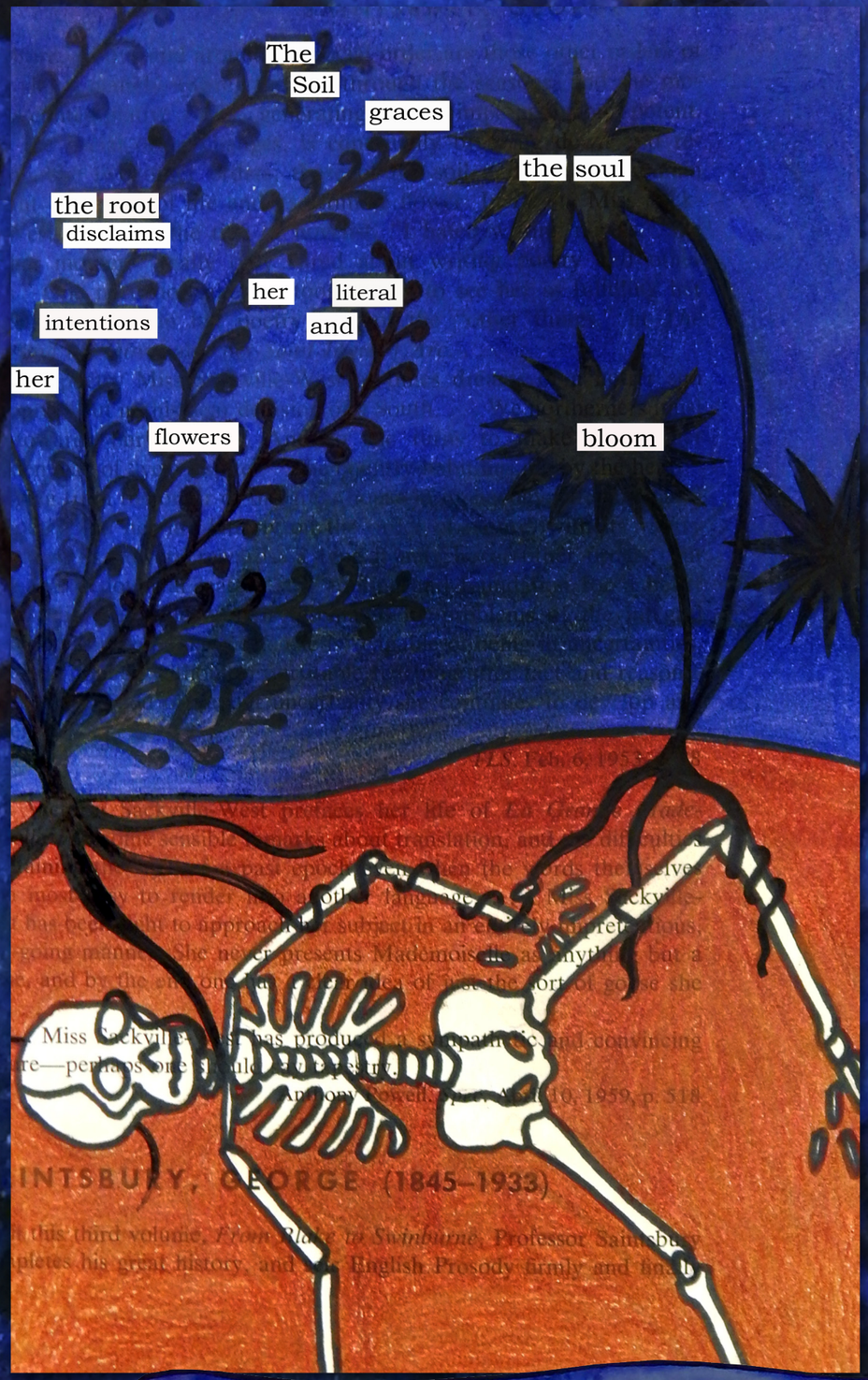
Strange!
A flower
Was the beginning
Of all life form recognition
Humanity knows we are more
Because the beautiful petal provides perspective

Hope
Is born
As we see
That we are meant
Not as empty shells but
Designed to know beauty among pain

“Rebirth”
by Michael Shimizu

Words with pain
Fires ablaze
Windows all broken
Soft red glaze

Brand new day
Water washed over
The sun comes out
Sprouts a new clover



Blackout Poetry by Catie Schroeder



Artwork by Bethany Perryman

“Life”
by Jorden Chase

I lost myself in the
Trees
Among the ever changing
Leaves
I wept beneath the wild
Sky
As the stars told stories of ancient
Times
The flowers GREW towards my
Light
The river called my name at
Night
I wish I had an ordinary
Life

“The Beauty of Nature”
by Kayla Morman

We all start off as a seed
Carefully planted in the ground
Surroundings filled with glee
As we make our first sound

Guardians nourish us
With love and care
Even when we fussed
They were always there

That love they shared
Helped us to sprout a spore
We spoke and stared
With curiosity and more

As we grow into a flower
Full of color and knowledge
We can enjoy the beauty of nature
And its wonderful powers

“Nature’s Gifts”
by Rahul Bulusu

Nature, you make me feel alive
You provide me land to eat and sleep
You invade me and you make me thrive
Always dreaming of the crazy wild sheep

Let’s compare you to numerous clovers
Charming, peaceful, and calm you are
Terrible storms scatter the twilights
Autumn time fills my whole palm

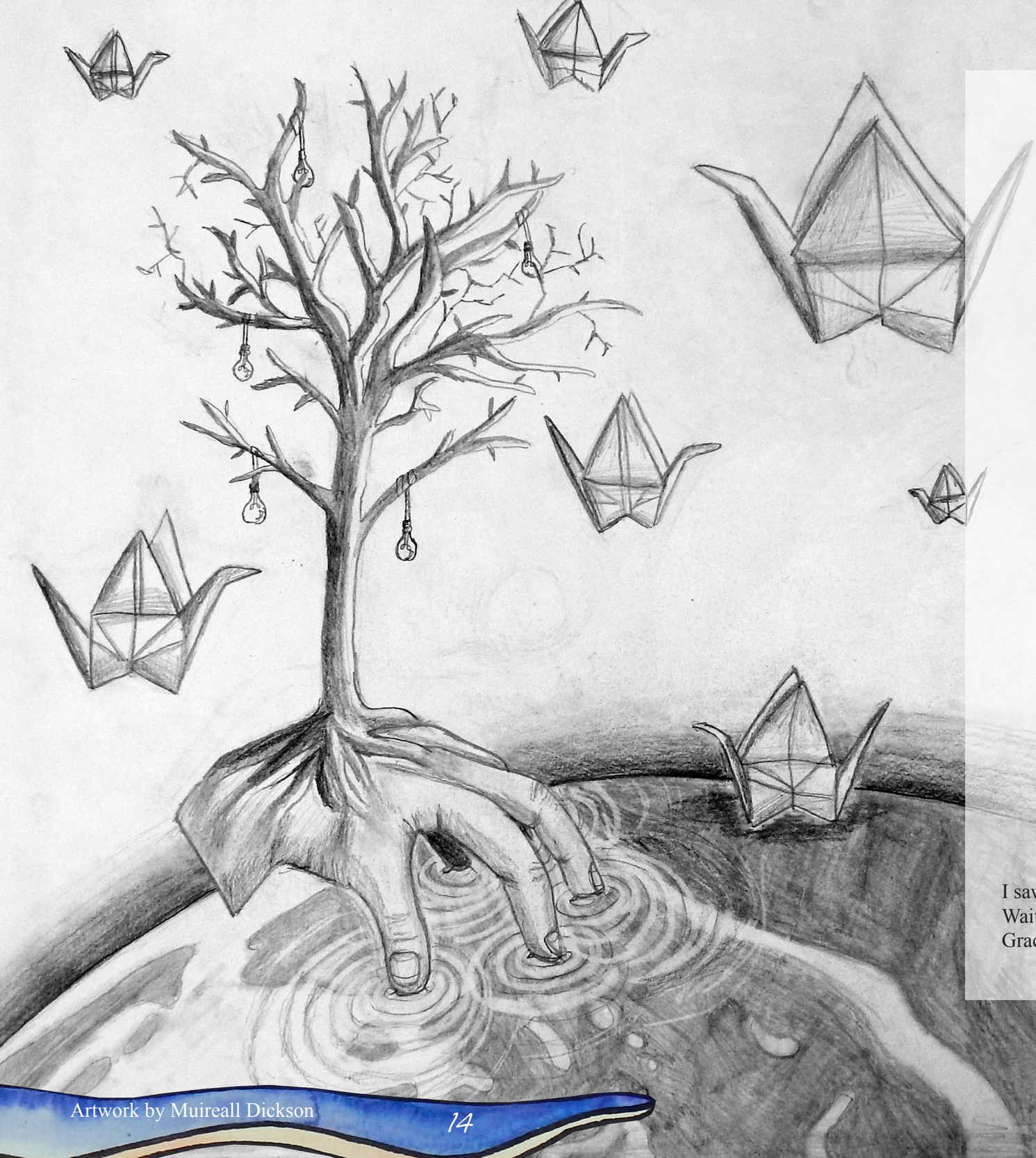
“Mandala of Nature”
by Brendan Reynolds Stoianov

Floral expression
Bamboo, Maple, Sakura
Great vitality

Flourishing wisdom
Nourishing to many souls
Cool, calm, collected

Genuine beauty
A bright-sided mystery
Curiosity

Free-spiritedness
Chirping, buzzing, hummingbird
Silent affection



Artwork by Muireall Dickson

“Pandora’s Box”
by Ana Hait

You may wonder who the first woman was
Her name was Pandora, the Earth Goddess
She was curious and adventurous
But alas, she made a grave mistake

For she opened something she shouldn’t have
She opened a box full of misfortune
For she released sickness, famine, and death
Zeus had hidden these things for good reason

This box, a wedding gift for Zeus himself
Epimetheus, her husband, was warned
Zeus hated man and wanted revenge
Despite this warning, he succumbs to love

He marries Pandora—she’s beautiful
He can’t resist her; she can’t resist the box
Curiosity, her utter downfall
Dangerous, to cats and people alike

This, an example of human folly
After all the horrendous things flew out
Only one small important thing remained
This was hope, to live with us forever

“Bird’s Song”
by Ma’layiah Morgan

I saw the birds sing
Waiting for their perfect spring
Gracefully in tune

“Untitled”
by Josef Lanz

The Heavens are here
Where the mustard seeds flourish
Below and above



Blackout Poetry by Caroline Phillips

"Our Inner Green"
by Alex Randall

The woods of our youth
Filled with bright green life
A place of childlike joy
Where flights of fancy flew free
Years later, this green has grown
To a hardened brown
Not quite old
But not quite young
No longer a child
Yet still to be an adult

The green never leaves us, though
Deep down, beneath our outer brown
Rests a latent green
And, just as life emerges in the spring
Our inner green emerges, too
Like a flower
Sprouting and blooming
For all to see
'Til winter's cold freezes it out
As the tired old brown returns

"Trees"
by Marquel Pearson

To grow in the woods
A deep, dark lonely battle
The weak die fragile

"Zen of Nature"
by Jada Fordham

Enchanting nature
Beautiful, calming, peaceful
Blue skies, clear minds, Zen

"Rainbow"
by Kourtney English

Red, blue, yellow, green
Rain it pours, the thunder roars
Pull dark - bright to light

"I Walk"
by Abby Schroeder

I have not walked forever
My time has not been called
My aching feet are weary
The scenery is all one
I have lost track of time again
My thoughts are all too confused
I don't know where I am yet
I have no gifts to offer
I have been looking for you
I have lost everything but this
Silent eyes block off my cold heart
You can ask me for nothing more
Seven years have passed us by
Silent stars look down from above
I've found everything in its place
I feel so happy I can't see you
Where many feet have walked 'fore me
No longer weary I still walk
And forget time and time again

“I Asked the Winds”
by James Dickson

I asked the winds of the things of the Earth
And they blew their separate ways

The North wind I asked of the things of the air
All the winged beasts of old
I asked of the beetles that fly over flowers
And eagles strong and bold

The North wind replied:
I saw them fly over empty lands
Over towers steel and cold
I saw them fly amidst clouds of ash
That stained their wings of gold

O, flying beasts! The day shall come
When you soar through skies so clear
When the queen is returned her rightful throne
But that day is not yet near

The East wind I asked of the things of the sea
All the swimming beasts of yore
I asked of the fish beneath of the waves
And the crabs upon the shore

The East wind then sang:
I saw them swim through the waters black
Under waste upon the wave
I saw them swim to the ends of the earth
Where they found only their graves

O, swimming beasts! The day shall come
When you wash through waters clear
When the queen is returned her rightful throne
But that day is not yet near

The South wind I asked of
The things of the ground
All the walking beasts there are
I asked of those that stand so tall
And that crawl under hill and mound

The South wind responded:
I saw them walk over barren ground
And through streams so dark and gray
I saw them search for some saving grace
Until they passed away

O, walking beasts! The day shall come
When you run through grasses green
When the queen is returned her rightful throne
But that day has not yet been

The West wind I asked of the tidings of man
Of their folly and their pride
I asked if they knew of what they spurned
All that withered and now died

The West wind lamented:
I saw them hew to make empty lands
Build their towers steel and cold
I saw the flame make their clouds of ash
That obscured the skies of old

O, men of earth! The day shall come
When you need not be so feared
Return to the queen her rightful throne
So that day draws ever near

“The Storm”
by Allison Spivey

The day was bright
No storms were in sight
The sailors set way
To float out the bay
Early in that day,
Once could hear him say
“Oh storm, stay clear, right?
Hope not the beast bite”
Doth this creature’s strength
Match our boat in length?
Her great fires burn
That is when we learn
Make our sleep now tense
Sure of which you sense
Seen in your eyes, it churns
That fire returns
Hidden on her back
Two eyes charcoal black
Bleating with high pitch
With us it bewitched

Causing all to flinch
With only a twitch
On its shoulders it sat
Waiting to attack
And with a great hiss
Nearly shared death’s kiss
Fangs that shine so bright
Might bring sleep tonight
In pain reminisce
It finds cunning bliss
Blocking out all light
The great beasts hear our plight
And now we must pray
Our boat does not sway
Throughout this great storm
That around us formed
The waves grow deformed
A swallowing storm
Sky now a deep gray
We cannot get away

“Reflections”
by Lillianise Cunningham Perez

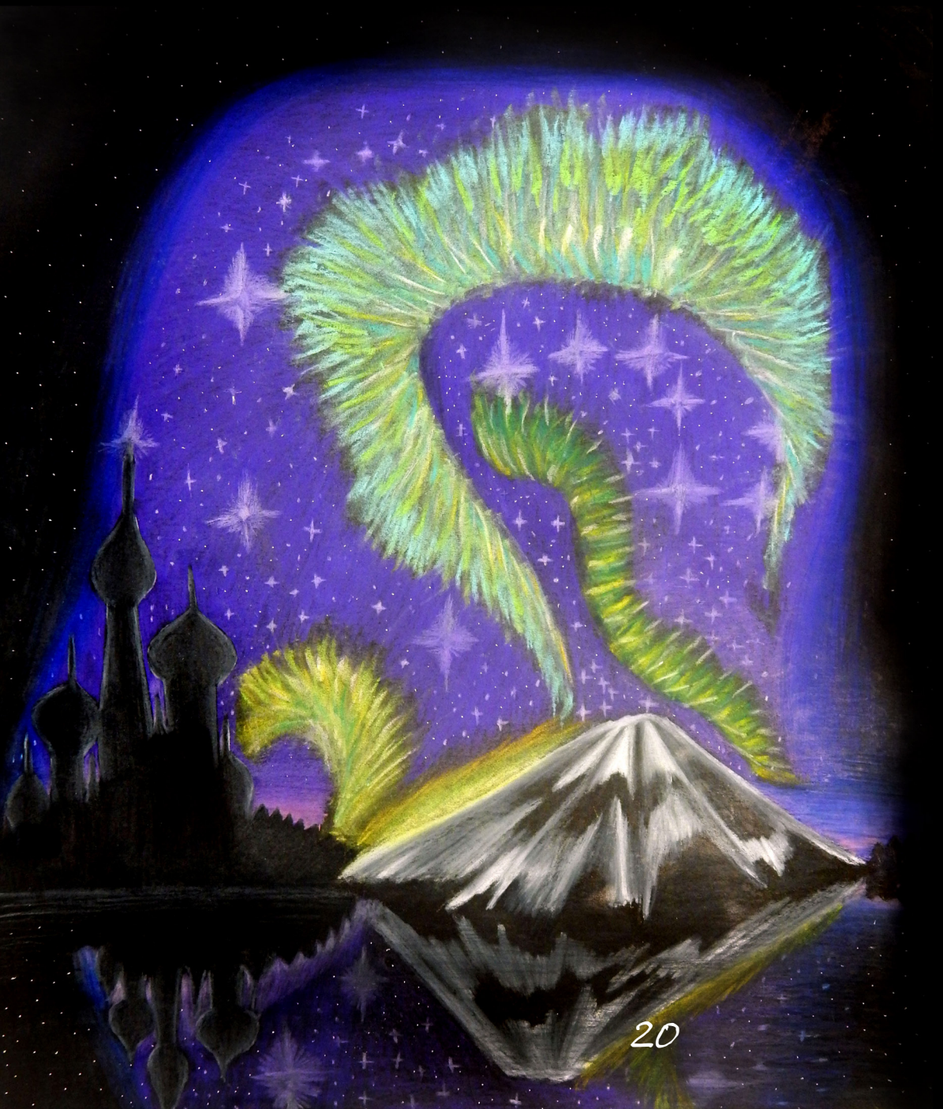
Water shining down
Sun bouncing off the blue sight
Water flows about

“Flow”
by Stafford Dudick

I have many forms.
I can flow.
I can be hard as rock.
I can be light as air.
Everyone needs me.
What am I?

“Stars”
by John David Cate

The sky is coated with billions of stars
Far, far away
Sometimes I want to do nothing
And watch them while I lay
I wait for the day to turn to night
And hope that there’s no clouds
So I can sit and ponder looking up
And escape from everything loud
Stars promote all types of thought
They make you very curious
The nights the stars don’t come out
Tend to make me furious



“Love is Like a Star”
by unknown

See the star?
Always there
Not always seen
Stars are like
My love
Love can be
Bright and beautiful
But it disappears
So quickly
Like a star
Stars continue
To burn just as bright
Even when not visible
But we know
They’re there
Love is the same
Love requires the
Same unwavering
Faith and security

“Utopia”
by Maggie Marsh

Her Libra scales balance both sides
Bring fire and stars for a ride
Across a dotted sky, she sways
Dancing upside down over waves
Iron conquered Earth to the sky
She ran becoming starry eyed
Virgo, safe from man’s misery
She stayed, refusing man’s decree
Man writes stories that say one day
She will return to swipe away
All man’s greed and hate to bring
A Utopia of new bling
Astraea, I ask a favor
When you bring judgment to others
Spare human sanity and air wills
For it is what keeps us from kills
Make gold from the world, make it shine
Without poisoned greed, but with wine
Dear Astraea that is my plea
Let man be strong, let man be free

“Birds”
by Chris Anderson

The wonder of birds
Seen flying calm and swiftly
Throughout the night sky

“Silent Chimes”
by Kristofer Vasquez-Salmoran

The light is changing
Multicolor down to black
Heavy heads lay down

“Howling”
by Stafford Dudick

I am seen by none but felt by all.
I come from the far reaches of the earth.
I come and go as I please.
I carry many things miles at a time.
What am I?

“Night”
by Laymeria Perez

Composure, nighttime
A beautiful flower sits
Whilst watching the tree

Artwork by Brendan Reynolds Stoianov

“The Blind Eye”
by Kaitlyn Rutter

A house that shelters
The trees, snow, mountains, and sky
Crumbles from the neglect of humans
And ignorance
Only when the house has withered away to time
Does humanity not turn a blind eye?

“The Bakery, the Tree and Oliver”
by Jazhara Solan

Building a bakery beside this tree was his dream. The beautiful scenery would occupy the customers while they ate. Oliver set out to make his dream a reality. Working day and night, he managed to build the bakery from the ground up. It was a nice cozy shop. As the days went by, Oliver gathered a large following of loyal customers. His bakery was so successful that eventually his cozy shop could not accommodate his growing number of customers. So, Oliver made the bakery bigger to accommodate all his loyal customers. However, Oliver did not have enough hands to cope with the demand. Therefore, Oliver decided to mechanize his bakery to churn out more loaves. It was perfect; at least for a while.

Outside the bakery, Oliver’s beautiful scenery had changed. The tree was dying. Its leaves were browning and the wood was beginning to rot. Oliver’s oldest loyal customers notice the tree. “The view is just not the same,” they complained. Then, more problems seemed to arise. “These loaves are just as plain as the view.” The loaves weren’t made with the same love and dedication, which was somehow impacting their taste and quality. In the beginning, Oliver had made the bread and delicacies with his own hands, sweat and tears. But, with machinery replacing the sweat and tears, and with the tree outside dead and rotting, eventually the bakery adopted a depressing atmosphere. This part wasn’t apart of Oliver’s dream. He seemed to have lost sight of his dream…just the tree and the bakery.

“Vines”
by Logan Garrick

Vines, veins, flow through me
A strongly-rooted Redwood tree
Vines, veins, flow through me
Family as tall as eyes can see

Vines, veins, grow on me
To draw in Mother’s strength
Vines, veins, grow on me
They nourish me with drink

Vines, veins, run along
My branches thick and long
Vines, veins, run along
Connect me to my mother’s song

Veins, vines, flow through them
They feel no empathy
Veins, vines, flow through them
No wish for harmony

Veins, vines, being cut
They brandish swords of steel
Veins, vines, being cut
Do they know how we feel?

Photography by Kayla Jones



Artwork by Ma’layiah Morgan

“A Letter to Nature”
by Ma’layiah Morgan

Dear Nature,
Your bright warm sunshine, clean air and water nurtures us as a mom does its child. You help us grow and stay strong. Your thick green forests dress up our environment. You give life. We become healthy from you. We are here to protect you as you serve us.

Thank you for giving us life.

Sincerely,
Humankind

“The Deep Blue”
by Samaria Settles

Deep beneath the waves
Where humans would love to play
A world too far away

“Frozen Harmony”
by Logan Garrick

While my body may be cold
I am nothing short of inviting
Home to man; none who speak
While living together peacefully
Nothing less than harmony

But when monsters come
It upsets my citizens
Who run and hide
They cower away from me
As monsters upset the harmony
“Break the ice” they say

“There may be treasures underneath”
But can they not gleam
That wealth was already shared by plenty
On my body, in harmony

And now I float alone
Barren, broken, cracked
Even monsters have gone away
They came with purpose; got what they needed
Though my citizens found one other than me
At least they have a new harmony
However short that may be

“Hot Beeswax”
by Maddy Bales

It was a molten day in Texas; the sun beat down on the farm like a laser beam. The cows, like the land, had been milked dry. The horses were tired and thirsty like the town, but this story is about the bees. Like a party in the trees, they swarmed around their hive; a buzz of rhythm and electric swing in the south. However, this tune of plume would soon spell doom.

There was a disturbance, and all at once, the music stopped and became a thunderous roar as a net came down onto them; a capture of their finest dancers; capture of their queen! Suddenly, there was no individuality anymore. All the bees were sacrificing themselves to the giant to save their lady. It was to no avail, for the giant had a suit. The bees fell one by one as they tired and died.

When the survivors awoke, there was a choke. There was music again, and there were new bees. There was dancing, but it was all sad. They were in a locked jukebox of work. The bees continued their normal routine, but not for the queen. It was for the cold cash that breaks the heat of the south, and fills the jar of the giants.

“Let Me Breathe”
by Georgia Gosselin

For a time in my life I believed I was a coward. While I may not be brave, I also do not desire to call myself a coward. There is a tree house in the woods across my best friend’s house. I barely go anymore, and I don’t realize how much I need it and her until I stop and think.

There is the door opening as the oxygen from outside the house hits our faces; the walk across the green grass and past the gargoyle; the warm pavement beneath our feet; the gateway that is nothing more than metal scraps and a “keep out” sign that is nothing short of a portal for us. As we pass through, we can feel our lungs reviving. I could say the trees are green, but they are so much more than that. The trees are brown and yellow and orange and white and red and silver, and green. And, there is a breeze. There is the rustling of leaves; the birds calling and crickets chirping; the lightness to our step; the freedom to talk, to laugh, to sing, to yell, to cry; to be human. There is freedom to breath. There is evidence of life, and yet the absence of society.

On this pathway that I now know by heart, there is no thinking; just walking, skipping, running, sprinting; being. The path gets darker; the ground muddier; it is as though we are the center protagonists of our story. We leap across tree roots which have broken the surface of the mud. “Don’t slip,” we say, but it is merely an I love you caged in a lie. I would imagine the rich soil that is soaked from night showers would feel cleansing, not dirtying. We approach the trunk of the tree, where there is a ladder unevenly propped atop the tree. We climb, we breathe, and we don’t look down because that is hesitation. We are not hesitant.

We must pull ourselves through the base at which we will sit. We sit. We breathe. There is no roof and there are no railings; it is just a bunch of flat boards nailed to a perfectly molded tree. It could snap and fall from under us at any moment it chooses. But it doesn’t. Whether we know this confidently or not in uncertain, it doesn’t matter because we can breathe.

There is sun peaking over the lush leaves; it glimmers, but not in the way that a sequin dress does. Instead, it sparkles in the way that a glass of sweet tea does onto the porch while the wind chimes sing. After an amount of time that neither of us has tracked, we leave the tree, but not going back the way we came. It is not time for our breath to deflate.

The path gets narrower; there are hills now. There is a pond, a fallen tree, and everywhere, there are animals: bees, butterflies, turtles, lizards, birds, worms, mosquitoes, maggots, and more. There is life that passes through us all as I breathe. The air becomes heavier. We begin to feel drops on our cheeks, with time passing between each splash. Then it starts to rain, and then pour, until we are running. We sprint. We sprint as the rain crashes onto our skin. It doesn’t matter that we are sweating because it is raining. Our mouths are open, cradling any drops that fall atop of our tongues. We are screaming because the trees will listen, and the clouds will protect our secrets. The faster we run, the harder we sprint, and the more our lungs continue to lift and fall without strain. We are still breathing.

Outside of that world, I don’t feel light on my feet. I don’t understand the soul-bound meaning of color outside of that fairytale. I don’t feel confidant or persistent or connected in the real world. The cars are too loud to listen, and the skyscrapers scratch away my shield of protection. When I sweat it is because I am having a panic attack. There is no music and shimmer; only the ticking of a clock which is racing you into adulthood, and the mark of grade which is ranking your future. In reality; in society, I cannot breathe.

So when I close my eyes and cry, I am not a coward. I am a brave soul who is watering Mother Nature; the only entity that has ever seen me live; the only one who will let me breathe.



“A Letter to Humans”
by Eryn Myers

Dear Humans,

You live on land, while we live in the sea. You seem to do what you want, but we hope you are aware that your trash is killing us. The plastic washes up into our home. Each day, we see a new plastic cup or bag just sitting there, waiting for us to eat it. You see, it kills us slowly. You humans think eliminating plastic straws will do the trick, but what about the rest? There is other plastic that will surely kill us faster than you think. Jellyfish and plastic bags look the same to us. However, only one can kill us, while the other helps us live. The amount of trash in our home is getting to be too much. Soon there will be no place that is safe for us. We hope you see what leaving trash on the beach does to us and our home. This world is getting too dangerous for all of us. Soon there will be none of us left on Earth. When we are gone, how will you feel? Will you continue your actions, or will you finally realize what you have done? When will you stop and think about what this is doing to the sea? Our home isn’t a big trash can, and we are important, too. We belong here just as much as you. We are endangered, but we don’t want to go extinct. We fear the day the last of our kind dies, to where we are only a part of history. We want to see the future just as much as you, but we might not if you keep putting trash in the sea.

Sincerely,
The Sea Turtles

“Do You See Flowers and Bees?”
by Grayson Moss

Do you see streams of water
Trickling along hills of stone?
Or do you see charcoal and sand
Flying vultures with bones?

Do you see rainforests
With lush leaves and green roofs?
Or do you see blazing fires
Emitting black fumes?

Do you see waves crashing in
Rolling shells to your feet?
Or do you see eruptions of lava
Engulfing all in its heat?

Nature is around us
Everywhere we are
In the city, in the country
It is never far

But look at it now
Look at all that is here
We don’t have much longer
Slowly it is starting to disappear

Artwork by Eryn Myers

“Dear Nature”
by Catie Willm

Dear Nature,

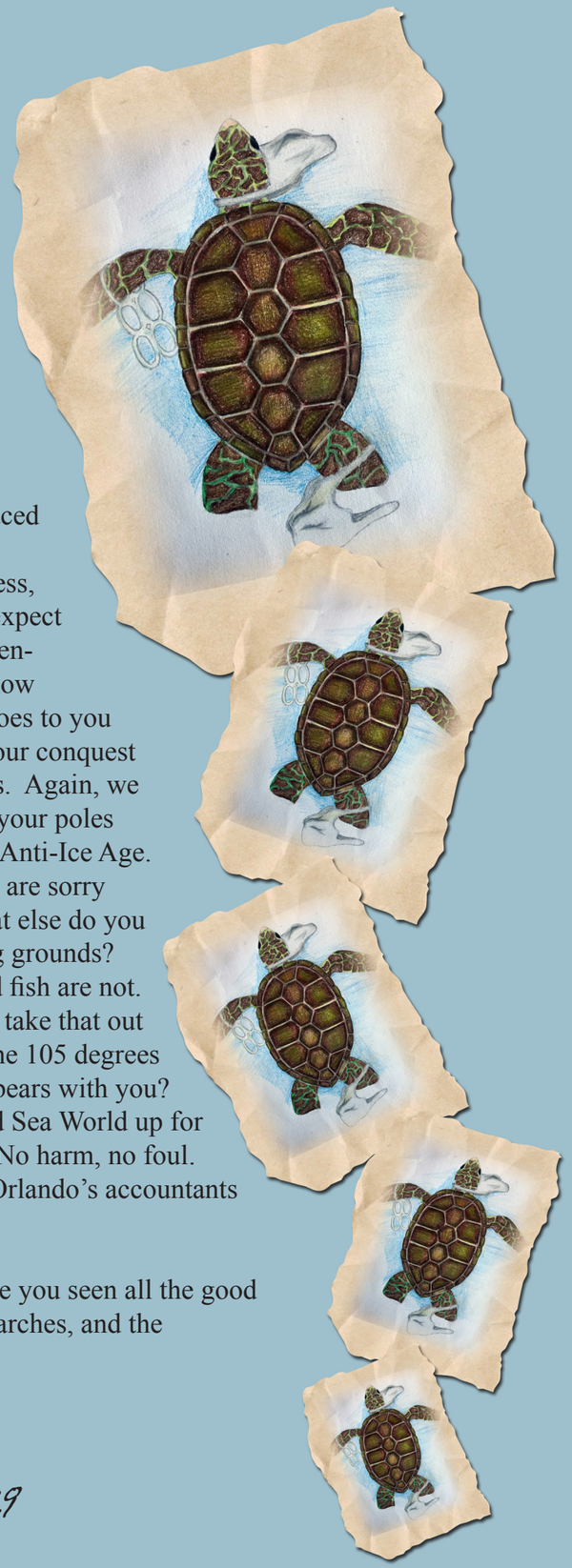
You are our strongest asset. Whether it be the waterfalls that glorify thousands of adventurers or the snowy caps of the Alps, humankind is indebted to you. You are the fruit in which all profit is based around. We are purely indebted to you.

This letter is of celebration, and of remorse. We have not found you in good health. Your most prized possessions are placed at the bottoms of our heaps of trash. Our manmade creations have defied your goodness, and for that we are sorry. How else do you expect us to live, however? If not driving in an expensive car or harvesting the greatest trinkets, how else should we live? I know not of what it does to you but rather, I’m sad to say the superiority of our conquest outweighs the balance of your consequences. Again, we are sorry it had to be like this. We are sorry your poles are met with frost bite, an end of times, and Anti-Ice Age. But we like the summer better anyways. We are sorry your creation chokes on our plastic; but what else do you expect when you place them in our dumping grounds? Straws are essential to survival, hard shelled fish are not.

And yes, you will be angry. But don’t take that out on us. We don’t deserve your fiery July. Is the 105 degrees worth it? And why must you take the polar bears with you? People like them in the zoos. You’ve opened Sea World up for debate; it’s just entertainment. No big deal. No harm, no foul. Can’t you tell the orcas love the applause? Orlando’s accountants sure do. Sea World is a prized and harmless possession, don’t you agree?

I hope there are no hard feelings. Have you seen all the good we’ve done for you? All the activists, the marches, and the movements are in your honor!

Sincerely yours,
Humankind



“Where am I?”
by Lee Burney

Itchy. Everything feels itchy and I really need to sneeze. I open my eyes fast, aware of my sudden consciousness. The moment I open my eyes, I regret it. They are flooded with light and it burns. I rub my eyes to try to focus on my environment. There are sunflowers, thousands of them, stretching out almost like an ocean in every direction. I am lying on the only island in a sea of flowers; a green hill with a single tree. The hill doesn’t seem to be very large, with only enough space for me and this tree. I stand up slowly, having previously been laying against the tree, but now using it for support. I stumbl and grab the nearest tree branch. It’s rough on my hands, but I get my balance together. I take another look around me. The flowers really are everywhere; there seems to be no end in sight. This worries me, mostly because I don’t remember anything or where I am. Now, it is only me and this tree, and of course the never-ending sunflowers. I sigh, run my hand through my hair dejectedly and sit back down. How am I going to get out of this? Where am I? Hold on, who am I? Where would I go if I found a way out?

It’s really hot and I need to sneeze. I sigh again, this time a deeper inhale to try and control my thoughts. Baby steps. Let’s just start with the first question: Where am I? I stand up again, with better balance this time and look up at the tree. It looks reasonable enough to climb. I start my way up the tree, with the same hand on the branch that I had used for support. I jump up, using the bark for traction. I keep making my way up until I am situated at the top of the tree. I blink a few times in confusion.

What is that?



Artwork by Sara Kralick

“Flowers’ Thoughts”
by Ragan Thomas

Oh how the flowers sway
The sky brightens after being gray
Purples, pinks, oranges and blues
Oh what beautiful hues
The children come pick them
To their parents they bring them
The parents smile and the child too
Oh what beautiful hues
In vases they go ‘til they wither and die
Once that happens the children will cry

No one thinks of the flowers’ thoughts
Oh they must be sad at the death that is brought
They see their beauty as a curse
And so they converse
They find ways not to be plucked
It seems in the end
They will always self-destruct
The plan is carried out when days are shorter
This is when they die as brothers and sisters
The snow that falls mark their grave
For a season, they were brave

“The Garden”
by Kate Cook

Some bloom in summer
And some in the spring
Which shows how growth
Is a boundless thing

Filled with colors
Vibrant and strong
There’s not a plant
That doesn’t belong
Everyone wants
The ones that bear fruits
But are blinded to the fact
That they have weak roots

The plants you look over
That may need some love
Might be a blessing
Sent from above

“Flower”
by Valencia Boyd

Beautiful flower
Each flower is different
Standing strong and true



“Locked-In”
by Beth Walker

The coronavirus has put humans in captivity. People all over the world are confined to their homes, ordered to stay 6 feet away from everybody else. Restaurants, shops, schools, airports, beaches, parks, everything shut down, as if humans are being robbed of living their lives of freedom. People are melancholy, anxious, and bored; longing to see friends, to travel, to be set free. However, we are not the only ones who fall victim to repression. Millions of animals all over the world are living behind bars, experiencing the same feelings we humans are experiencing on lock-down. Loneliness, anxiety, and depression are not specific to human beings. We are so tired of being contained for these past few months, but these animals are living their entire lives in captivity. Born to be wild, they sit behind gates and glass walls for our amusement. Born to have oceans of space, they swim circles in pools, forced to do tricks for our entertainment. As we dread this isolation and think of all the opportunities and plans that have been taken from us, we must remember the animals that we have put in captivity; the animals that never have and never will get to experience a life outside of their enclosures.

We must remember, we are guests on this planet, not masters.

Artwork by Beth Walker

“A Letter to Humans”
by Layla Davis

Dear humans,

I have given you so much. I give freely, though you would take either way. I give you my branches and my bark. I give you my fur and the skin off my back. I give you my tusks and my armor. I give you my home and my life. You do not know that it hurts to do so, and so I am telling you.

It is sometimes easy to forget how much I’ve lost in the beauty of your smiles. Your laughter is louder than the quiet drowning of the icecaps, the inferno that spreads across my forests like an infection, and the slow hunt for my children and people. Yet, I love you the same.

I am telling you this because there’s still time to change. Even though I will always offer my branches, my bark, my fur, the skin off my back, my tusks, my armor, my home, and my life; I beg you, do not take it.

Sincerely,

Nature

"A Letter from a Survivor"
by Caroline Phillips

Dear Humans,

Good evening. I wonder how you have been, sitting at your desk in your spacey room, in your duo apartment on the second floor in the city, Brooklyn, New York. I tell you, the city has changed over time. It has changed drastically.

I heard about that new disease; the one that is harmful to you humans. That is very sad. It must be frightening to watch the people you love suddenly be taken away from you. Especially when they are the ones that have been there since the beginning; your elders.
Did you know I used to live there, too? Where your apartment is, I mean. Except, it was not an apartment, but a ginormous tree; a beech tree to be exact. It rose taller than the apartment complex and stretched over the rest of the block. It was my home, my friends' home, and my family's home. The beech tree was simply… home.

Years ago, before you and your apartment complex came to be, I lived where you live now. Years ago, I watched as large structures of metal dug into the roots of my home, shaking the large tree violently, disturbing my neighbors and all that lived in the tree. Years ago, I saw the vibrant, beautiful green leaves that shaded my home slowly start to wilt and fall, perhaps from all the thrashing. Years ago, I saw one of your kind infest my home with a yellow-orange substance that spread to every branch and every limb and every leaf, creating smoke and inflicting pain upon my friends and family. Years ago, I fought to escape my home that I never thought I would leave. I was left blinded by the thick, suffocating pollution caused by your yellow-orange substance. Years ago, I stood in front of my unrecognizable home, scared and in despair and frightened. Is that how you feel now?

It was years ago, but I still feel the repercussions. I am still fighting for a safe home. I still see your yellow-orange substance. I still see the faces of the family and friends I lost. However, with all that I still see, I cannot seem to see my beech tree home.

Sincerely,
A survivor, fighter, & living creature

"In My Eyes"
by Robbie Reed

High up in the canopy lies a home, a home where wildlife small and large live in perfect harmony. At least that is what the world thinks. In my eyes I see fire, smoke, dilapidated trees, and dead animals. The strange men come to our territory to chop down our habitat. OUR SAFE SPACE. Here it is a much different world than what is seen in your eyes. Those tell a different story; one that is almost too good to be true. They see glistening waterfalls and magnificent cr eatures; a world filled with vibrant colors and fascinating specimens. But, if only this was our reality. Maybe someday, when the fog fades and the trees re-grow, I can see in my eyes the natural world in its utmost complexity. But for now, I can only dream.



Artwork by Jen Gorlewski


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