CREAN LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL

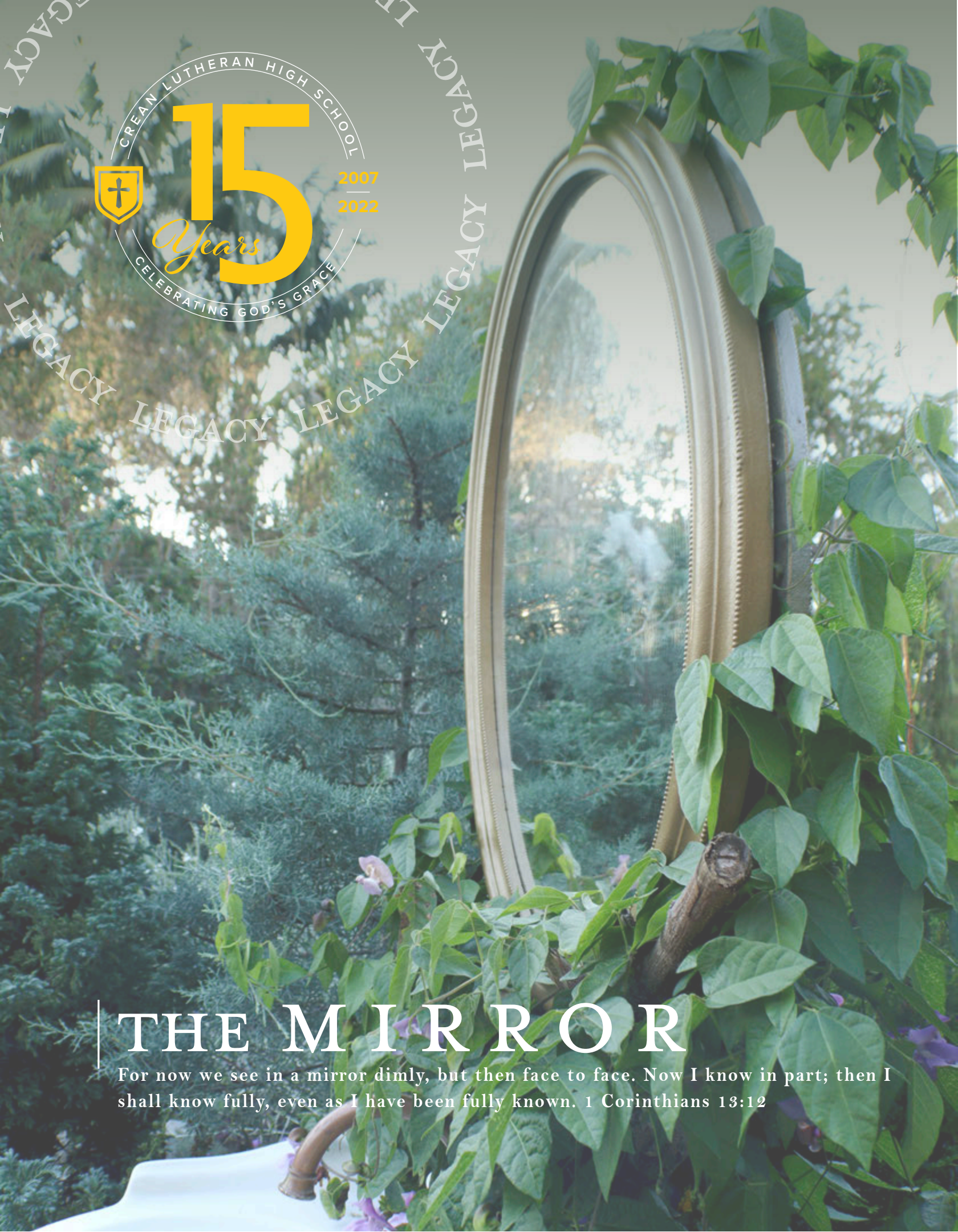
THE MIRROR

A LITERATURE & ARTS MAGAZINE
VOLUME 3 | 2022

Celebrating 15 Years of God's Grace

Legacy

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Matthew 28:19-20



THE MIRROR

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. 1 Corinthians 13:12

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FROM THE EDITOR

Appropriately, the theme of the 2021-2022 edition of *The Mirror* is LEGACY. By God's grace, this school year marks the 15 year anniversary of Crean Lutheran High School. I have worked here for most of those fifteen years — the majority of my professional career. In fact, my first year at Crean Lutheran was the first full school year at the permanent campus location. Since then, I have seen new classrooms, new athletic facilities, the entire North Campus development, and year-after-year of new students. When former students send an email update or come back to visit, I always recall the words of 3 John 1:4: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my [students] are walking in the truth." That truth, God's Truth, is a core component of everything we do at Crean Lutheran. I prayerfully hope that students "walking in the truth" is part of my teaching and coaching LEGACY.

As Christians, perhaps the best verse to encapsulate a LEGACY of faithfully following God is the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20a). At Crean Lutheran, not all of our faculty and staff are ordained to officiate baptisms, but we all stand whole-heartedly ready to make disciples and to teach God's commands! We strive to live up to Crean Lutheran's motto of *Proclaiming Jesus Christ Through Excellence in Education*. That is our school's LEGACY.

The Mirror magazine too has a LEGACY. Each year when publishing current student and alumni works, the magazine builds on its LEGACY of helping readers "know in part" the world around them as we wait for eternity when we shall "know fully" in the presence of God (1 Corinthians 13:12). Many of this year's works help us to recognize the LEGACY others have left in our lives and the LEGACY we want to leave for others. By way of example, we learn about the importance of family (*I Remember*, *My Legacy*, *The Heart of Our Home*, *Hand-Me-Downs*), the transcendent value of music (*Await Resurrection*, *Composition*, *My Old Friend*), and the fragile beauty of nature (*All Dried Up*, *Lonely Snow*, *Homeland*). Of course, we also celebrate — and share a laugh about — Crean Lutheran (*Reflection*, *Days of Blue and Gold*, *Welcome to Saints Cafe*, and the Crean Lutheran Annual Christmas Cards). And there is so much more beauty, tragedy, triumph, and inspiration inside. Enjoy the read.

May Volume 3 of The Mirror be a blessing to you and your loved ones. Praise God for the amazing literary and artistic talents of our students. May each of us use our abilities to leave a LEGACY of faithful service.

IN CHRIST,
GLEN WORTHINGTON

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SPECIAL THANKS TO:
Crean Lutheran Art Department
Crean Lutheran English Department
EunChu Kim, Vice Principal of Academics
All those who left a LEGACY for us to follow

THE MIRROR

REFLECTION | CHLOE ROBINSON '24 | GRAPHITE PENCIL

i remember the day
almost four years ago
when i first
set foot on campus
i was young, then
i didn't know much
i didn't know if i *did* want to know much
and i was afraid
afraid that i wouldn't fit in
afraid that i wouldn't have any friends
but most of all
i was afraid of the unknown
i hated
being uncertain
i hated
not knowing the answers
because i hated asking questions
just as much
so i was the quiet girl
in class
i didn't talk much
i spoke through the various doodles and scribbles
in my notebooks
as my teachers rambled on
making sense only to the kids who actually paid
attention
and for the record,
i did pay attention
i just had to be doing something else
to keep my hands busy
i remember the days
the weeks,
i spent
sitting alone in the halls at lunch
preferring solitude
than socializing outside

i remember, then, finally
finally
finding my way in
to my first group of friends
i remember
talking with them,
sharing notes and sharing laughs,
sharing our collective anxieties over tests and quizzes
i also remember the year
when the whole world seemed to turn
on its head
i remember the months
when the whole school went online
and we went to school at home
and attended class in our pajamas
i remember the months
when only half the school went back in-person
when the campus felt so empty
i remember the feeling
of isolation, of distance
i remember the feeling
and i do not love it
but i am also
thankful
so thankful
that in this last year
of the high school chapter
i can come back to a campus
that is livelier than ever
that is fuller than years passed
i will remember
these last days of gold and blue
for a long time
for as long as i can

The huge ginkgo tree that I climbed up and down for years towers above me.

The gleaming gold leaves fly down from its branches, along with its fruits that always startle me as they hit the ground, often creating a dramatic explosion when they break. A pungent moldy smell mixed with a sour yet fetid scent brings me back to the time when it was still green and vigorous.

I wander on the four-foot wide hutong street seeing rickshaws of all kinds, particularly the tri-wheeled bicycle with the handcrafted umbrella, travel through this street making a rhythmic pounding noise as they proceed. It used to be my sincerest dream to be able to ride a rickshaw, experiencing the feeling of being carried by someone around these narrow hutongs like a noble princess or a wealthy lady from the Forbidden City. Yet, pondering now as I walk on this street, this idea seems naive and tacky.

Houses lie behind the ginkgo tree.

As all these years have passed, the color of the houses faded from a pure dark into a somewhat smoky shade, with multiplying cracks due to the eroding summer rain of Beijing. Each house forms a perfect square with sharp angles that waste away neglected by the sun. In contrast, their shiny red wooden gates remain unchanged, standing out in the midst of the grey walls. Past the gates, doorknobs are rusted, yet the petrifying lion faces with jarring pupils inscribed on the knockers are still as frightening as when I was an infant.

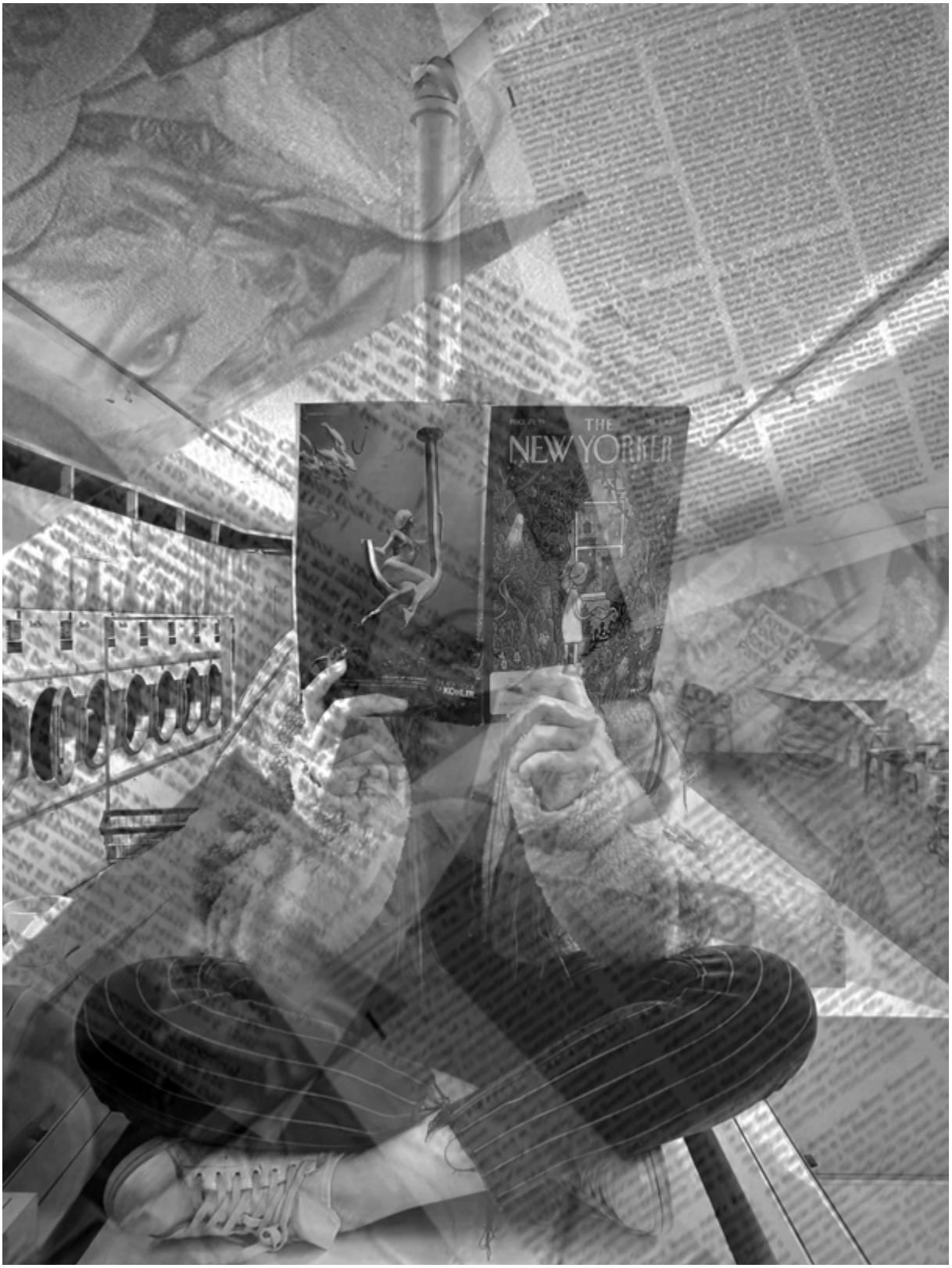
Inside of the gates is a small garden, where Mother used to plant all kinds of flowers and vegetables. My eyes were always wide open as I saw the garden, as the daisies and daffodils and orchids always had a new look or were in a new place whenever I came back from preschool. I remember that the time in the garden was constantly filled with crisp laughter, pulling out the grass, preparing the soil, and oftentimes, being tripped by the jagged tiles popping up from the ground as I ran around in the garden. This garden has condensed so many memories together, and yet, they persisted as time flew by.

The house is the same as how I remembered, filled with a cold autumn breeze and the echoes repeating everything I ever said. The conversations I have had in the room seem to be stored away by the passing of time, but as I try to revisit this house, they pour out to me through my pounding heart and the noise of my steps. I open the kitchen door, and it emits an unbearable squeak that I am not familiar with. As the door opens, spider webs of several inches wide break and drift in the air without a place to cling to. The old pot is still resting on the mud stove, but the wooden lid is already eaten away by the worms. I can still recall the appetizing chicken soup Mother used to make, but I can hardly picture the image of her cooking now, glancing through the remains of the kitchen.

Rainy days are the worst. The houses were built in the late Qing Dynasty, and the sewage system is as ancient as the dynasty, unable to send away the water. The feeling of wet sand and tiny sharp rocks together with intolerably soaked socks sticking on my feet as I walked the muddy floors were my nightmare whenever the city was washed by rains.

Walking out of the room, the Hello Kitty drawing and self-made paper lanterns for the 2008 Olympic Games are still hanging on the beam, but the thick dust on them tells me precisely how long it has been since we moved out. I close the door, walk across the deserted garden, open the gate, and see that gleaming ginkgo tree once more.

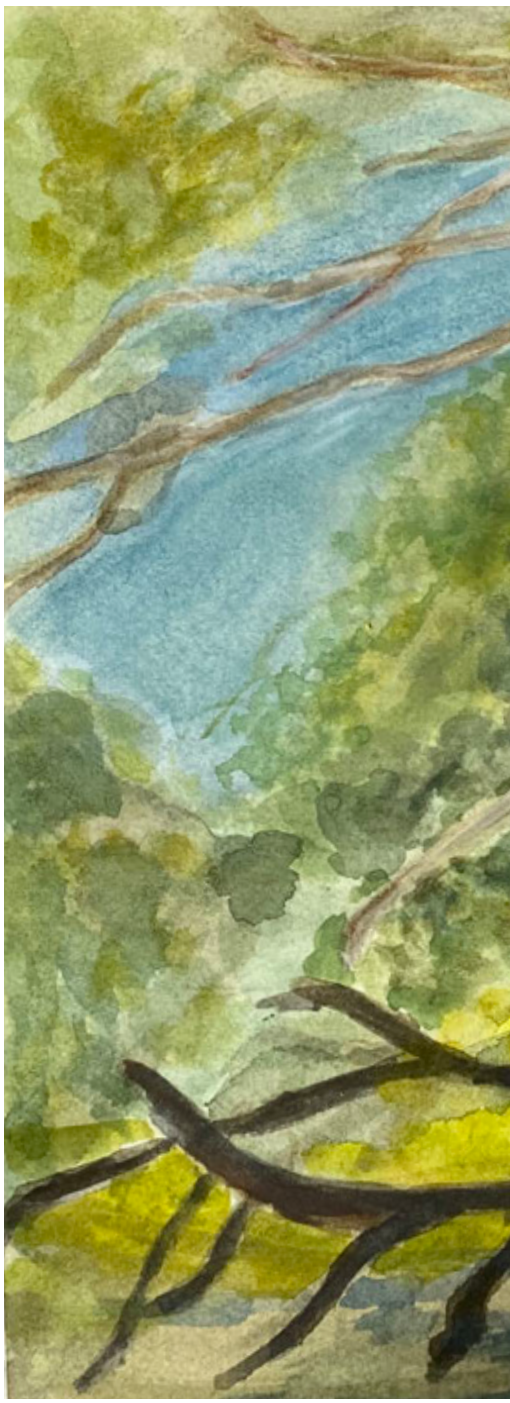
This time, with a different feeling.



SILENCE, WHEN SWEET LOTUS DIES | XINRUI QUE '23

You, my dear
glittering like stars in the graceful night;
Shining eyes genteelly teasing the boat passing by
As sweet lotus, fascinated butterflies;
luscious smile of yours
like a fragrant perfume lasting in memory;
If the boat sinks
On this mist-covered water
As I sink on you
Will you use a moment of silence to pray
Hoping you are waiting when sweet lotus dies

Whenever I feel sad, the instant I glance at you, all
the dark clouds just disappear. Wish I could
freeze this moment,
have this glance of you forever.
"I can see the whole galaxy from your eyes," I said
"and I got lost in this galaxy"
Let me be the first ray of sunshine shine on your
window in the morning, with no voice, by your side.



BROWN-EYED | OLIVIA JIN '22 | MICRON PEN

I REMEMBER | EFROSYNA TAWFIK '22

i remember
his eyes
would crease
when he smiled.
    and mine do the same
    and so do my father's.
i remember
his sarcasm
would often annoy
his wife
    and i often annoy my mother
    and so does my father.
when i feel like i'm not
loud enough
for this world,
i remember
his silent presence
    and how it is now
    so dearly
    missed.
i remember my father's father.

LEGACY OF FEELINGS AND THOUGHT | JING DING '22 | DIGITAL

I enter the escape room and right away start assessing the layout. I see sculptures and paintings and a door and a lock with a passcode. I look at my friends and my friends look at me. We have been waiting for this moment for the longest time. The doors shut, the lights dim, the timer starts.

Sixty minutes left. Isaac starts reading the descriptions of each painting. Jayden examines the paintings themselves, and I start feeling the sculptures. All of a sudden, the sculpture turns and a compartment appears. With a loud bang, a case opens with a key inside. I clutch the key tightly and immediately hustle to the door to try to use it. However, the door does not have a keyhole and a passcode is required instead. We have been deceived. I know the key will be of use later in the room, however.

Fifty-five minutes left. We struggle to find the clues for the correct password. We sweat while searching for numbers in the descriptions. We then realize that the descriptions do not matter whatsoever. The dates of the paintings were the clues all along! We decipher the numbers and try multiple combinations on the lock. "Click!" The lock drops and Isaac pushes the dirty, old door open. As the door slowly creaks open, an even more mysterious room is revealed to us.

Forty minutes left. The new room is more sophisticated than the first. On the left, there is a big map with red markings all over it. On the right, there is a table with a jigsaw puzzle on it. On the far corner, there is a big door that resembles that of a bank vault. We each split up to try to solve the puzzles individually. All of us struggle. None of us can figure out how the puzzles lead us to the answer.

Thirty minutes left. Jayden finally comes to an epiphany. We cannot solve the puzzles individually. Instead, we need to solve them one by one and collect the clues as we go. We all gather around the table, because that one seems to be the easiest puzzle. We open all of the drawers of the dark wooden table, and we find a bunch of puzzle pieces. However, after completing the puzzle, nothing happens. We are left in despair and all hope seems to be lost.

Twenty-five minutes left. We frantically look around the room for more clues, but nothing seems to come to our attention. Finally, I decide to recheck the table. To my surprise, there is a gigantic clue under the table, and it shows us that the puzzle has to be oriented differently than the correct pattern. We complete the puzzle, and it gives us three tablets, which we assume will be used for the map on the left.

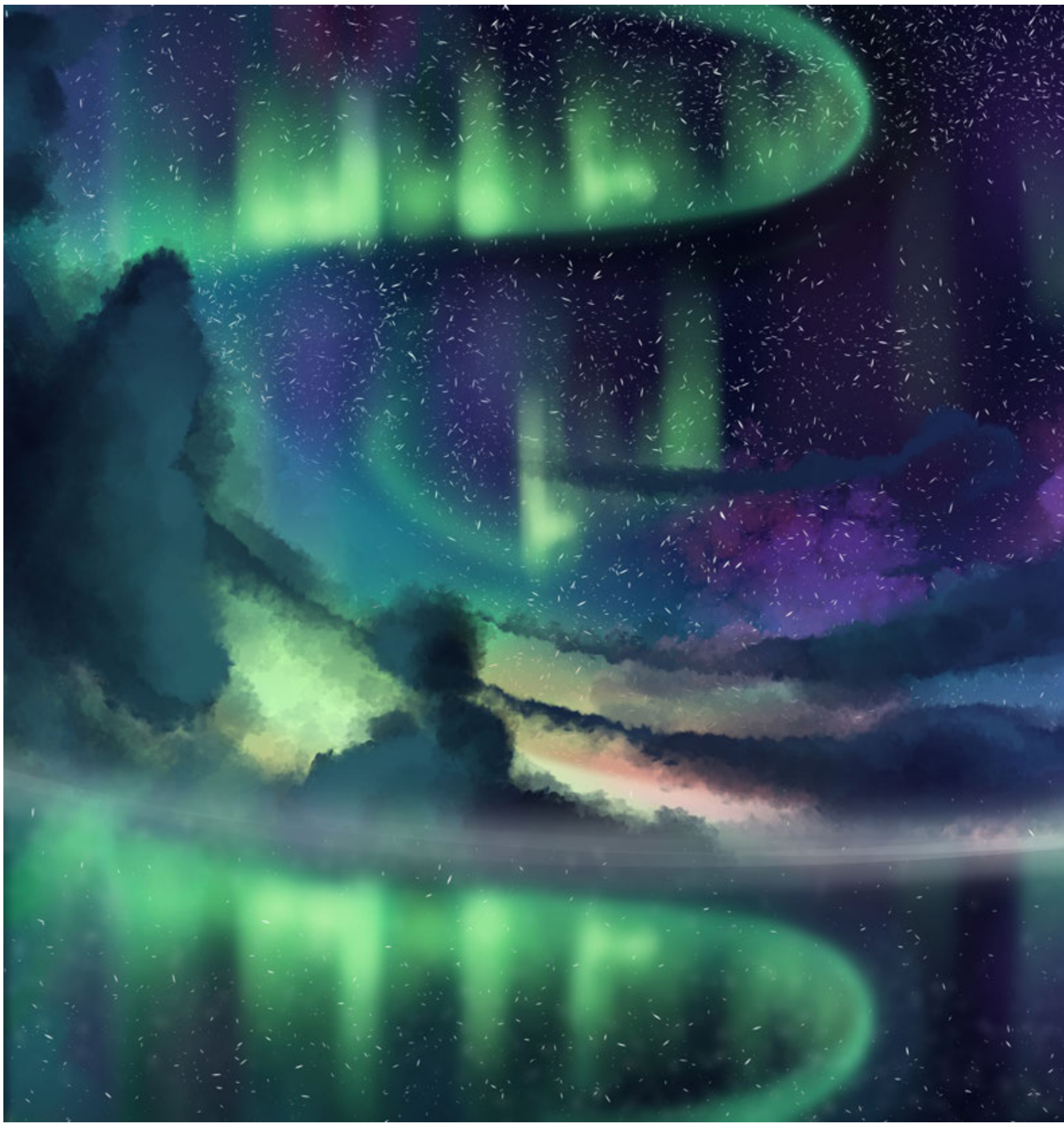
Twenty minutes left. The huge map seems impossible to figure out within the amount of time left. However, we each take a tablet and put it against the map. The holes in the tablets reveal a password and we regain our hope, stronger than ever.

Ten minutes left. We use the password on the gargantuan vault door, and it unlocks. However, it requires the strength of all three of us to push it open. After opening the door, the five-minute warning rings and the tense music begins.

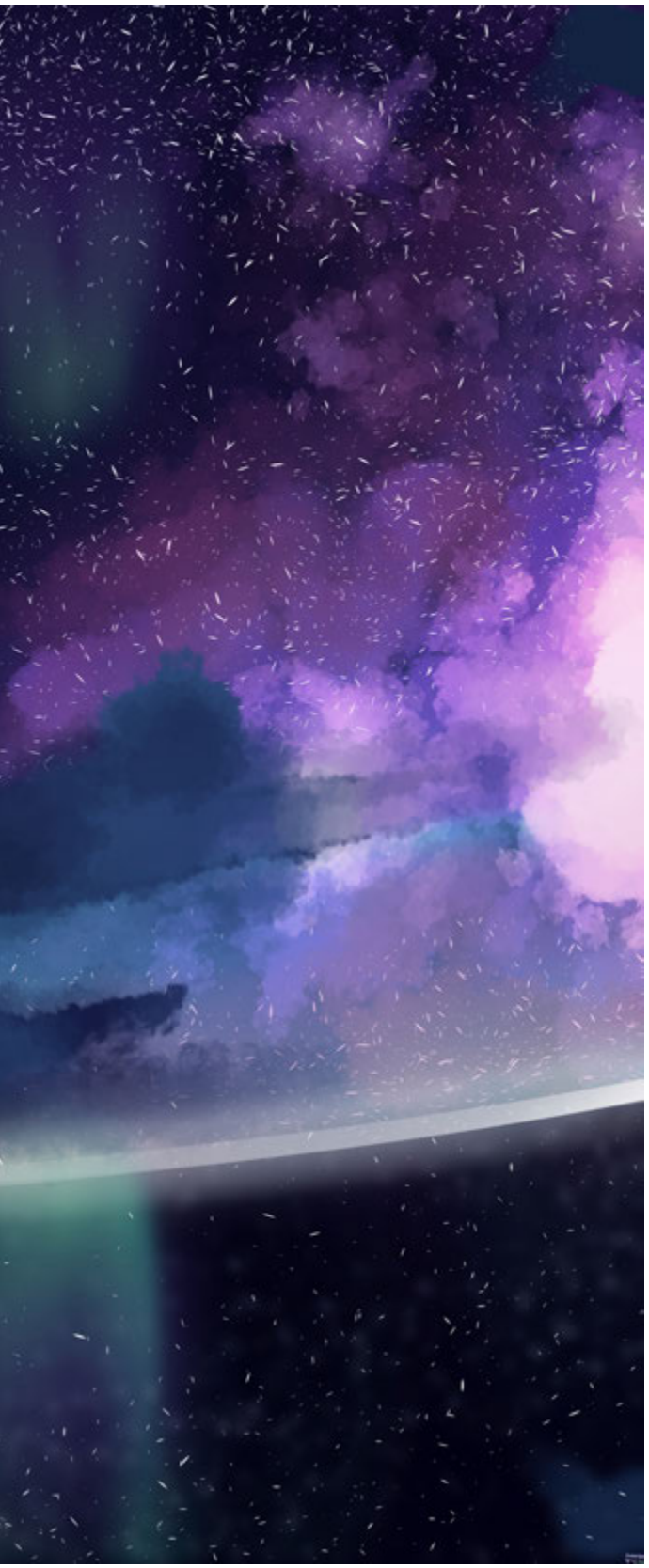
Five minutes left. The music puts pressure on us, but we maintain our calmness and finish the puzzle within the bank. We look around inside the vault, but we are lost. There seems to be no step after the final clue. However, after some quick thinking from Isaac, we find a chest and put in the password.

Two minutes left. After unlocking the chest, there is another box with a keylock. Once again, we lose hope. We missed a clue. However, I suddenly remember the key from the first room that served no purpose at the time. I quickly run and grab it, almost tripping on the tablets, the puzzle pieces, and every clue we solved so far. I run to the box with little to no time left. I open the box, grab the paper, the music stops, and the announcer speaks, "Congratulations!"

One minute left. Room escaped.



DEFLECTED JOURNEY | KANOA LOO '22 | DIGITAL



FUTURE STARS | KANOA LOO '22

As time goes on,
The most luminous of stars
Will be gone.
Millions of light years away,
A colorful array,
The works of a supernova,
As the dying star
Disappears from the night sky in disarray.

Ah yes,
A new nebula is formed.
As God blesses,
New stars will be born.

How is the demise of the brightest star
The greatest blessing of God?
The nebula, a legacy of the prominent star afar,
Gives the perfect ingredients for more stars:
magenta, ultramarine, even goldenrod.

As time goes on,
The most luminous of stars
Will be gone.
It does no good to miss a star of the past,
For it has already lived its lifespan,
And is a legend of the past.
For now, look at the new stars,
As the Future Stars outshine the past left afar.

MY PRETTY ROOM | ELENA IM '23

My room was always beautiful. Although my mom was never an interior designer, our house was always painted, furnished, and matched to perfection. It was the type of house that we were proud of showing all our friends and family.

My room was no exception — in my last house, it was beach-themed. My walls were painted a crisp mint green and furnished with colorful signs saying, "Life is Better at the Beach" or "If you're not barefoot, you're overdressed." My bed frame was made of sturdy wood, chosen to match the coloring of my room and its theme. From my ceiling hung a thin but sturdy cream-colored hammock. My bathroom was clothed with beautiful, scaly mermaids, their faces hopeful and mysterious at the same time.

But it never portrayed the homey or comforting vibe that any home should have. My room would always seem untouchable — like I was never meant to mess it up or use it to my pleasure, but rather to keep everything intact and pretty. It was like my family and I were renting out a model house, and everything was mainly for display. Every morning, my pillows had to be fluffed to perfection, my sheets neatly tucked in, and my bathroom wiped clean until it sparkled. The mini-fridge was always unplugged, because it was "prettier that way," and we would always have to warn visitors not to touch any of the five-year-old snacks or vibrant-colored drinks on the racks because they were only for decoration. I wondered, then, if I would ever get to feel comfortable in my own house.

We moved into that house in 2016. Back then, I recall feeling that childlike giddiness of moving houses, of having a change in my life and daily routine. My sister and I would lay on our bellies on our parents' soft closet floor and blasted YouTube Kids as the moving workers grunted and groaned, hauling in new, shiny furniture. As everything settled in, though, I began to realize that there was no sign that I lived there besides my dear room — my mark was simply not there. My innocent excitement faded as I became homesick for a home that did not exist.

Bedrooms always reflect a child's personality and interests, their habits and desires. Mine did not — I always had the eerie sense that I was invading upon another girl's pretty room. Even as the years passed and I graduated from elementary, then middle school, I never fully got used to it. As I entered high school, my room looked the exact same with the exact same feeling of alienness. There was no soul in it, like a hollow but nice-looking shell one could pick up at the beach and throw away later, forgetting about it.

Then, the effects of high school and growing up hit. Suddenly, grades were ten times more important than before and I had to plan unique extracurriculars that would become useful to me four years into the future. I was surrounded by competition, not potential friends, and everyone seemed to be doing better than me in everything. Good grades earned me praise, and bad ones earned me my parents' disappointed faces and my own feelings of incompatibility.

I spent more and more time in my room. I began to appreciate alone time, finding it calming in a way. I stared at my walls countless times when my mind became occupied with self-defeating thoughts, reading the words on the hanging signs over and over and tracing their pictures with my eyes until I memorized them. The metal seahorse on one frame was rusted at the edges, and in another, the sunset crudely painted in a bright orange. The wooden paddle hung crooked and had been chipped away on the handle. I swung in my hammock occasionally while thinking, rocking back and forth absent-mindedly and feeling the rough texture of my walls as I pushed off from them with my feet.

In this way, my room became my fortress from my own feelings and thoughts. Those brightly painted walls housed my tears, my self-reflection, and my growth. They saw my endurance and the special bonds I shared with my family when they came into my room and sank onto my bed to reassure me that I was doing enough, that failing one test did not mean the end of the world, and that I was their beloved daughter whom they were more than proud of. In the secrecy of that room, I called my friends, invited them over to sleepovers, and gushed to them when I got into a special relationship with one of them. I became more comfortable in my relationship with my pretty room. I no longer viewed it as a foreigner, but a protector.

My pretty room became my best friend.

ALL DRIED UP | KAELA BRENNER '22

When I was a child, the creek ran with purpose. The reeds bent in the breeze and the crawfish scuttled across the rocks in the cool shade. Trees protected the banks from the stifling but ever-present California heat. Mud coated the shores in which egrets and lizards called home. The water was always the perfect temperature for wading in, the larger rocks providing a warm place to sit after a long hard day of chasing tadpoles.

When I was a child, the creek was a magical kingdom. Fairies resided in the nooks of eucalyptus trees and goblins slithered underneath the water's murky surface. I searched for mermaids sunbathing on the banks. I made friends with the tiny water dragons that hid and played in the deep turquoise rapids. The more sunny spots were the kingdom of small-winged golden pixies and the gnomes whose homes were buried under the weeds and greenest patches of grass.

When I was a child, the creek was endless. It went on and on for miles, the end never in sight. The water was deeper than my small, stumpy legs could ever reach, the width too vast for me to ever cross. The banks stretched as far as my young eyes could see. Reeds covered more land than the sky.

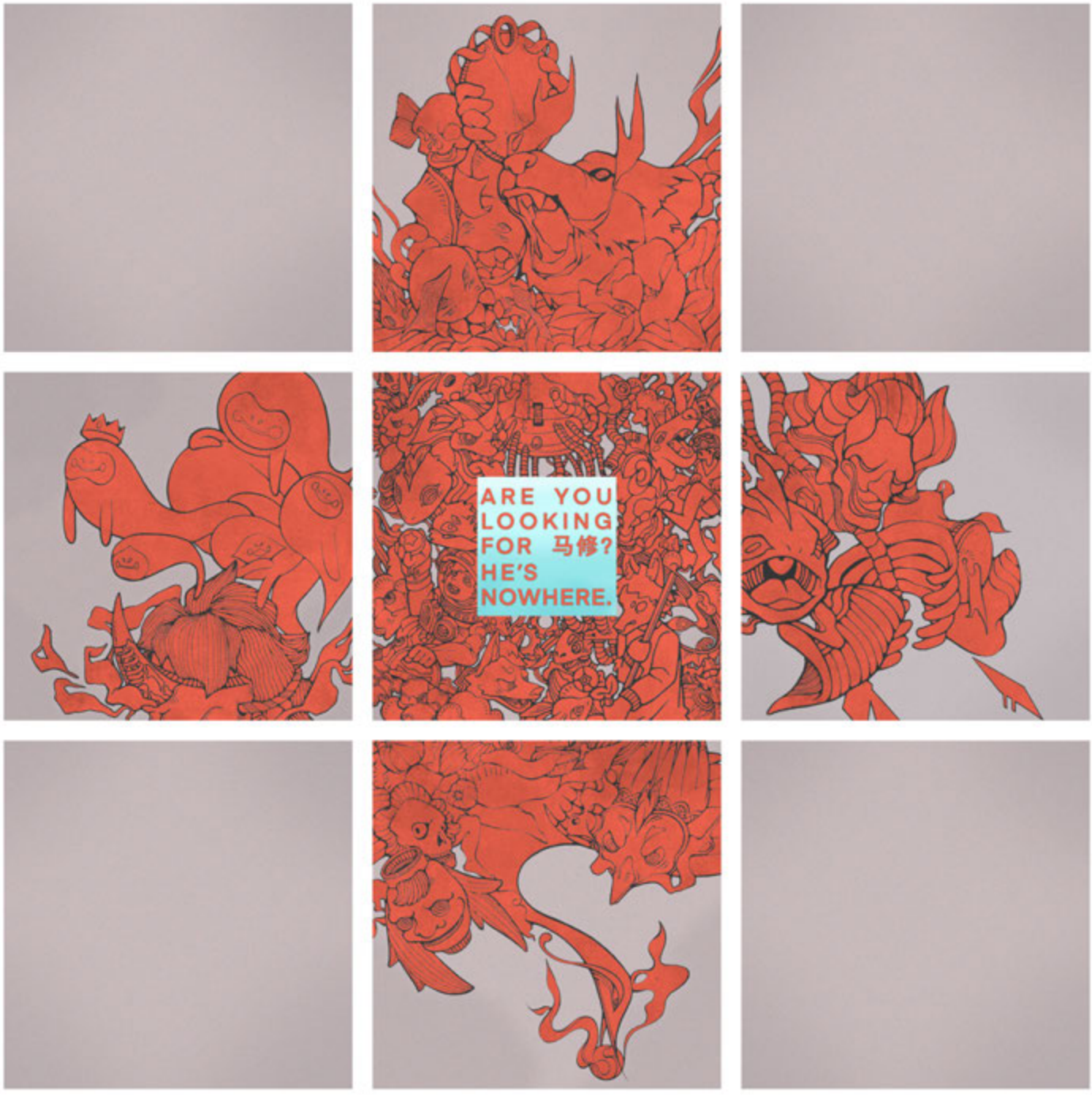
And then the years passed me by.

When I was older, the creek dried up. The reeds seemed to shake and quiver in even the slightest of gusts, as if weighed down by the years that had passed. Clumps of leaves from the eucalyptus trees had long since fallen, leaving large, all-too bright patches of sun casting down every other step of the way. The crawfish had boiled. Mud turned into dirt and the large rocks now scorched my fingers.

When I was older, the creek felt empty. No longer did fairies come out to play with me. The patches of grass had wilted, the gnomes trampled by passersby. I no longer searched for mermaids on the shore nor did I befriend the tiny dragons who played innocently in the depths. They were also gone. Dead and gone along with the water that used to flow through the creek bringing life and longevity with it.

When I was older, the creek ended before it could begin. There was no water. There were no animals. There were no mythical creatures nor friends nor leaves. I could see exactly where the other side was and found that I could easily walk the length of it.

When I was younger, I saw the water. When I was older, I felt the drought.



FANTAJI | JIANFEI SUN '21 | DIGITAL

MY LEGACY | PETER CHEN '22 | PHOTOGRAPHY

The instant people walk into the Wong family kitchen, they are overcome with the smells of cooking mixed with the ebony wood and ripe peach blossom scent of my mom's favorite Voluspa candles. It has become one of my favorite smells in the entire world because it reminds me of my family and my home.

The windows are open, and the afternoon breeze wafts in. My dad is in the backyard, grilling carne asada, and the flavorful scent of cooked meat, fresh lemons, and earthy-smelling cumin fill my nose as I walk into the kitchen. On the other side of the countertop, my mom flips tortillas on the stove while my sister takes out the ivory dinner plates. I walk over to her and pull out the top drawer that contains all the silverware. Then, I open the fridge, which is organized by leftovers at the top, drinks in the middle, and fruits and vegetables near the bottom. I look at the sauce section when, at last, my hands grasp onto the ice-cold bottle filled with the spiciest ghost-pepper salsa. In the background, peaceful music with its soft piano tones play from the kitchen speakers, but we can still hear our neighbor's dog barking in the backyard next to our house.

My dad finishes grilling, and my parents cut the meat. A few minutes later, everything is ready. On top of the glistening white marble table in the kitchen nook lays the dinner my family has prepared together. My parents and I coat our meat with salsa whereas my sister strongly advocates for plain tacos. As I take my first bite, the chewy meat pleases my mouth with its perfect balance of salt and pepper. Sitting next to me, my sister slurps a chilled glass of milk as my parents love to mention that milk strengthens bones, and we will thank them for making us drink milk when we are older.

While the sun sets, we talk and talk and talk about our days, our thoughts, our future plans. I have never learned more about my family than when we are sitting around the kitchen table. I learned that my dad is a feminist. I learned that my sister got into Santa Clara University. I learned that my mom was going back to work this year.

When we are not talking, we are laughing. Some dinners, my sister and I crack jokes out of hysterical delirium. All of us build upon each other's words until we completely burst into endless laughter. On many occasions, our voices rise out of passion or out of frustration. While my sister speaks passionately about the latest dance she is learning or the newest piece of gossip, dad's frustration screams out because he cares so much about his work and current events in the world. On the other hand, my mom rambles on about the latest British murder mystery show she has watched and all the things she still has to do. Nevertheless, nothing makes me happier than seeing my family come alive in the things they care about.

I understand now why King Arthur and his knights gathered around a round table. The table is the centerpiece that encourages each person to truly see one another face-to-face and eye-to-eye. Where we are matters just as much as the people we are with. With the four of us all together at our own round table, dinner lasts for hours. By the end, my throat feels sore from talking so much. However, night settled in a while ago, and our eyes have started to droop as our energy wanes from a long day of school and work. Family dinners are the only time we have all together, and we cherish every minute of it.

When I finally do walk upstairs, I call good night to my family in the kitchen, the heart of our home.

ALTERED BOOK SCULPTURE | KATIE KEZERLE '21 | PAPER

A CHANGE OF HEART | REBECCA KORNU '23

Editor's Note: This poem is a reversal poem. A reversal poem has one meaning read from top to bottom but a different meaning read from bottom to top.

Nothing we do today matters
Because I refuse to believe that
Anything will be worthwhile
"Following fantasies is simply a fallacy"
No one can even fathom that
"A dream is worth chasing"
Is meaningful yesterday, today, and tomorrow
Hope, happiness, and harmony
Do not exist in my future
Persisting chaos and conflict
Will prevail in the end
It is true that lifelong integrity
Is just an illusion
"Life is as hopeless as the sun trying to reach the moon"
Apathy
Is more powerful than
Passion
My mere existence is senseless and foolish
Because I will never believe that
"Life is a book worth reading to the end"
Continuing on to the next chapter is pointless
There is no reason to consider that
Our future will not slip away from our grasp

We will keep sinking into darkness forever unless we turn around to the light

I AM A NOMAD | YUNA JEONG '23

I am a nomad. According to Google, a nomad is defined as "a member of a people or tribe that has no permanent abode but moves about from place to place." Whenever someone thinks of the word "nomad," it may remind them of a time before advanced technology and civilization existed. Nomad ethnic groups such as the Mongols were known in history for making their homes across different continents. Although I can confidently say that I'm not a Mongol, I certainly fit the modern-day version of a nomad. I move between two countries every six months. I have two "homes," neither of which is my permanent home.

I am a nomad. During the summer and winter breaks, I am in South Korea. Although I was born in this country, sometimes it feels like I am not actually Korean anymore. Unlike the pale, snow white skin that is favored in Korea, my skin has become tanned and golden from the California sun. High school students in Korea are not allowed to dye their hair or perm it. I stand out in my friend group with my bright orangish-brown hair whereas my friends have to keep their natural hair color. People assume that I am having the typical "American teen experience" like the ones portrayed in movies such as *To All The Boys I Loved Before* and *Mean Girls*. Dance parties, huge football games, free dress, epic teen romances — these are the fantasies that my friends think I'm living out. In reality, my high school experience is just as ordinary as theirs. I am stuck in my room doing homework and studying most of my time. I still have to wear a school uniform like they do in Korea, and I have only attended a football game once. Yet friends and family still regard me as an Americanized exchange student. If everyone claims I am "Americanized" in Korea, does that mean I fit in America more?

I am a nomad. When school is in session, I am in America. Although I am fluent in English, I still struggle to deliver my thoughts as accurately and elegantly as I would in Korean. There are cultural references and contexts I can never fully understand. One time when talking with a fellow classmate for a group project, she said we needed to "cut to the chase." Chase? How can we cut a chase? With scissors? It was only until after I got home and looked it up online that I realized it was an expression that meant "to get to the point." Language isn't the only thing that sets me apart. My daily lunches will usually consist of rice and kimchi while other kids bring sandwiches and chips. People jokingly refer to me as a "fob" — fresh off the boat. I go to school in America and live here most of the time. Yet I have never felt like I fully belong here. Domestic students have lived in America for their entire lives, but I'm an international student. I have two places I call home.

I am a nomad. Some people are jealous that I have two homes on opposite ends of the world. I also have the opportunity to travel back and forth across the globe. But being a nomad has its own struggles. Am I Korean? Am I American? Am I both? My identity cannot accurately be put into a box. There are times when both places don't accept me as an official resident. Even though I am a nomad now who does not fully fit into any group of people, I see this change in my life as an eye-opening opportunity that will open more doors. In the future, I will most likely leave the nomadic lifestyle behind to search for a more stable life with a permanent home. But as of this moment, I am happy to experience two sides of the world where I am constantly meeting new people and learning about different cultures.

Am I Korean? Am I American? I'm neither. I am a nomad.

LONELY SNOW | XINYU ZHU '23 | OIL ON CANVAS

FROM A BOTTLE'S PERSPECTIVE | ALEXIS GRIFFIN '23

Alone, lost at sea
The world around me a brilliant blue
The sky and sea blurred together
Their details and colors invaded
I forget all the colors I knew before
They seem to disappear, like they were never there
Sometimes I wish I could see them again
Something other than blue
But that's what everyone says
When they're lost at sea
A ship in need of rescue
A child who's lost its home
I'm a tree in need of water
Or a home without residents
Lost, utterly lost
Never to be found by those who once loved me
Never
There are times though, that I'm glad to be me
I may not swim or walk
But floating can be better I think
Every day and night
For just a few minutes
I catch a glimpse of something other than blue
When millions of colors far from the color I know
Come together to form something...
Something magnificent
Something I can't quite place
Early and late each morning and night
A large sky of color fills the air
Making me feel somewhat happier to be here
If I lived on land
I would see bright colors, yes
But nothing compared to this
I would miss the true colors of day and night
If I lived in the sea
I would see coral and plants
But nothing compared to this
I don't walk on land or swim in the sea
But I can see well, almost better
Things while lost at sea
But still, the days are tiring
The days pass by slowly
Hour after hour
Day after day
My whole life is lost at sea
A vast of nothingness
A world without time
An ocean without action
A sun without heat
Time has gone
In its place stands darkness
Until one day...
When the sky does not show a brilliant blue
Instead, it is filled with greens and browns and silvers
And not only that, but fruits!
They hang from trees in magnificent beauty
Their colors shining in the bright sun

Something else, too...
A human!
A tall man stands on shore
His brown shaggy hair gleaming with sweat
His rough face looks at the bottle in the ocean, me
I know it
I've arrived at an island
A long, beautiful island
Trees surround every inch of it
I stare at the man, and he stares back
I'm drifting slowly to the island
The man's hands reach out to me
They're gruff and hardened
He grabs me, the lost message
Fresh air hits me a second later
A breeze only found near the ocean
The man pulls the cap off the bottle
Inside is a long scroll
On it are small, curly letters forming words
Its words are even prettier than the letters, though
It says these words:
To anyone and everyone
Or to someone that will listen
From there is even larger, more beautiful lettering
The notes say things of hope and love
A day when life will be normal
A time when no man will fight or hurt one another
It speaks of the truths and lies of this world
All magical
The man closes his eyes
I can see his happiness
He grabs the bottle and walks away, almost
Instead he grabs the paper
On it he writes a note
A note that would be remembered for generations
He places it in the glass
And I, after all my excitement,
Am placed back in the water
But before I go he turns
His hands reach for me again
One last time he sees me
"Find someone who needs kind words," he whispers
He places me back in the water
I float away, confused and dissatisfied
What was my purpose?
To see land once and never more?
But something inside me tells me otherwise
I am a messenger
I deliver to those who need it
And my mission is to find someone new
Even if it takes years to complete the task
My goal is to help the people
My only reward is to see the islands
Which is good enough for me
But until I find someone new
The world will be blue except at morning and night
For a little while, at least

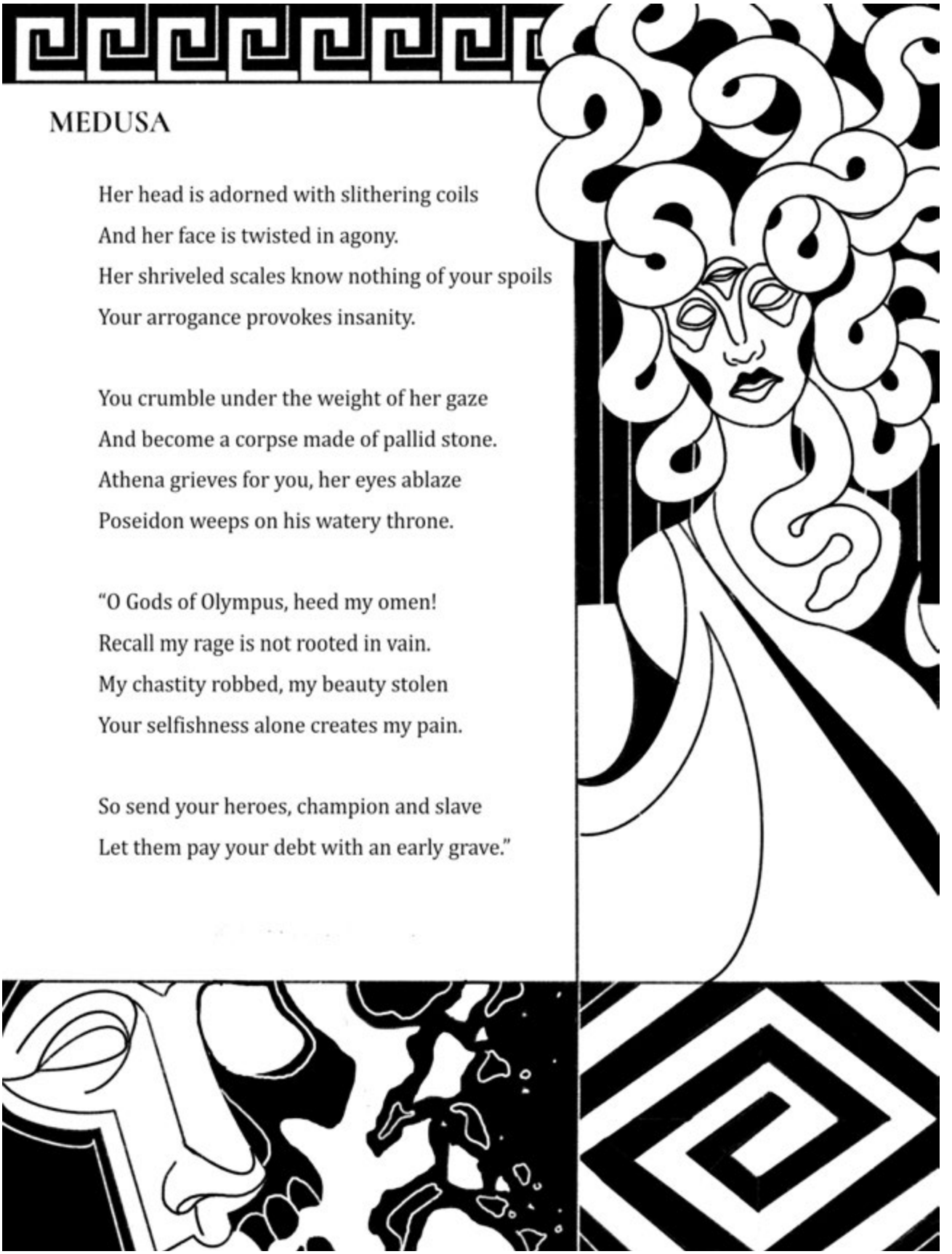
MEDUSA

Her head is adorned with slithering coils
And her face is twisted in agony.
Her shriveled scales know nothing of your spoils
Your arrogance provokes insanity.

You crumble under the weight of her gaze
And become a corpse made of pallid stone.
Athena grieves for you, her eyes ablaze
Poseidon weeps on his watery throne.

"O Gods of Olympus, heed my omen!
Recall my rage is not rooted in vain.
My chastity robbed, my beauty stolen
Your selfishness alone creates my pain.

So send your heroes, champion and slave
Let them pay your debt with an early grave."



NOSCE TE IPSUM | MIA DIAZ '21 | DIGITAL

HAND-ME-DOWNS | JOANNE LEE '22

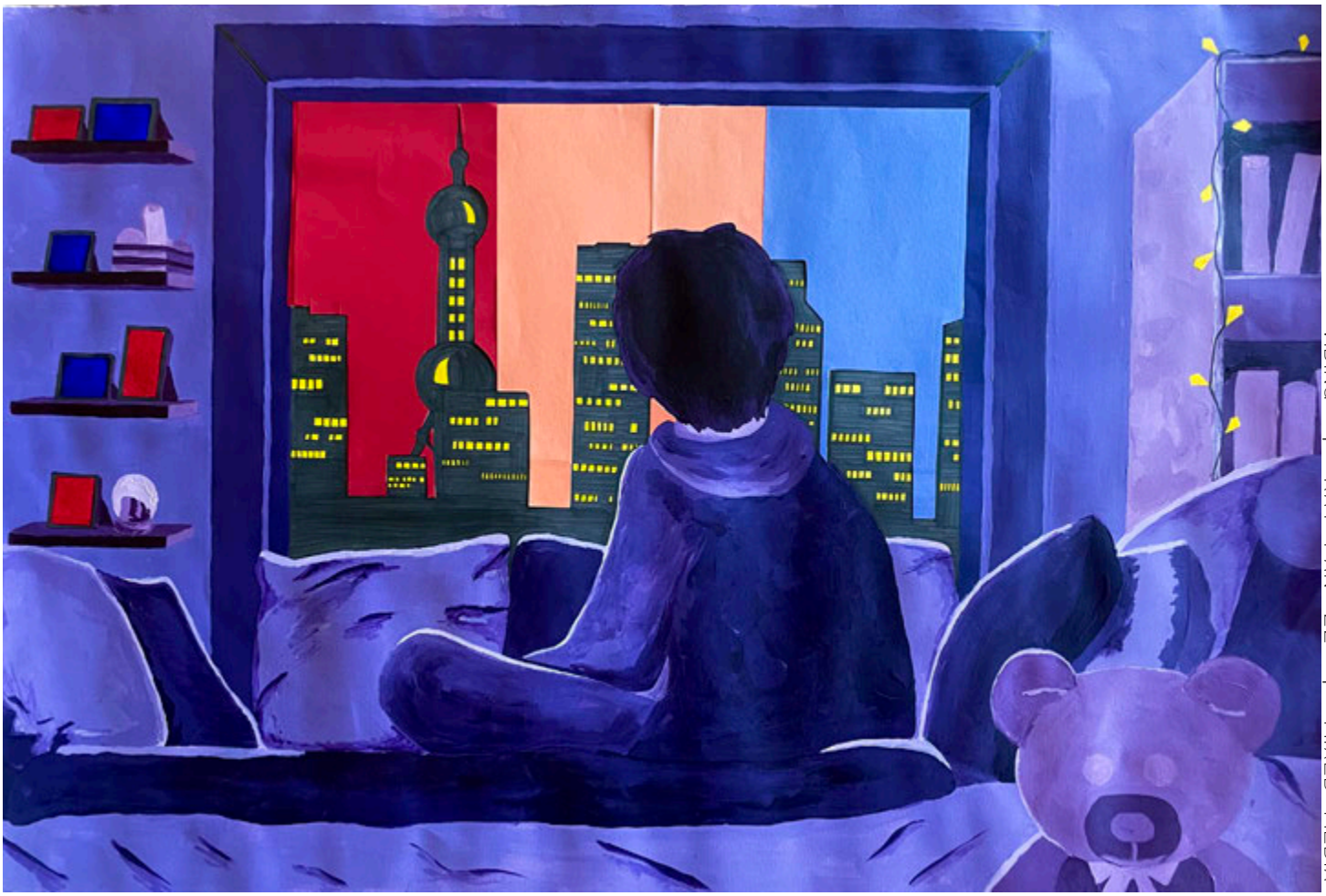
For as long as I can remember, a good thirty percent of my closet has been filled with hand-me-downs. At first glance, this may seem like a mere normality for a second-born child — always getting a worn out shirt every other day, being told that you'll "grow into" oversized pants — all of the wonders a younger sibling gets to experience. When I told one of my friends I was wearing my older brother's old shirt, however, the look on her face made one thing very clear: that was not normal.

My older brother is three years older than me, which also means he was twice my height when we were younger and thrice my size. My parents made sure to buy me all of the princess outfits and pretty pink dresses I wanted, of course, but whenever the opportunity arose when they could decide between shopping for new pajamas or rummaging through my brother's closet, they tended to choose the latter. For most young girls, getting stuck with boy clothes would have been their worst nightmare. I, on the other hand, never minded as much. Walking around the house, I would strut through the hallways wearing classic pieces such as a scarlet Power Rangers shirt made from the finest cotton Target could produce, baggy sweatpants that hid my unsavory baby fat, and a fierce pair of gray sunglasses that I happened to find lying on the ground.

As I grew, both in size and intelligence, I started to put the pieces together, connecting certain items of clothing to fond memories between me and my brother. The gray Transformers t-shirt I usually wore as pajamas was the exact same shirt he wore the day he taught me how to use the swings. The blue winter hat I brought to camp was the exact same one he wore when we went sledding for the first time. The jacket with the monster hoodie I tried to scare my friends with was the exact same one that he sported around only a few years prior.

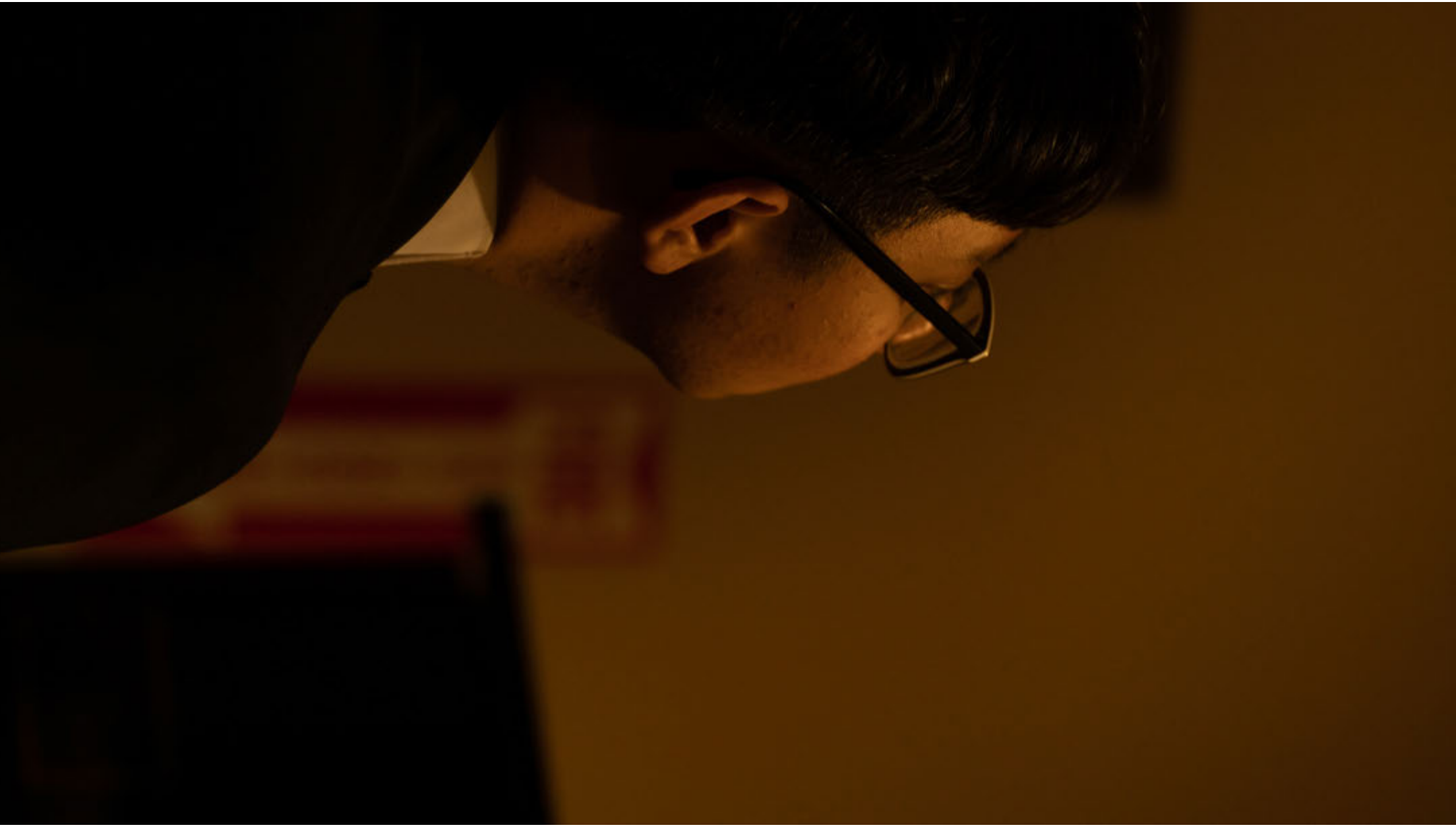
Although I have more freedom when deciding what I want to wear — and dresser drawers overflowing with hoodies and shirts that may be more suitable for a seventeen-year-old girl — I still find myself floating back towards the familiarity of my brother's hand-me-downs. Yes, the fact that they're all oversized makes them so much more comfortable to wear, but when I choose to have on an old Minecraft shirt or a piece of clothing infested with the words "ultra" or "super," I do so because they carry the legacy of the childhood I shared with my brother. A childhood where we could stay up all night watching Disney movies together. A childhood where Barbies and Legos lived in harmony on our living room floor. A childhood where we could spend an entire afternoon biking without worrying about homework or an upcoming final.

So, whenever my brother asks, "Are you wearing one of my old shirts?," I'm reminded that ordinary hand-me-downs can be worth so much more than just spare clothes.



VIBING | RAY PAN '22 | MIXED MEDIA

AWAIT RESSURECTION, PIANIST | KHANH TRAN '22 | PHOTOGRAPHY



"Happy birthday, Marie."

Amos slowly revealed the bouquet of lilies from behind his stooped back, presenting them to his dear wife.

Classic white lilies — her favorite.

He gingerly placed the bouquet on the wooden bench and scooted across the bench to sit closer to his beloved. His cane leaned steadily against the seat's edge. The light spring breeze ruffled Amos's thin white hair. An eyelash flew onto his narrow glasses, but he did not mind. "The weather is always perfect on her birthday," he marveled to himself.

"Thank you, they're beautiful," Marie cooed, "70 years of lilies, but each bouquet still leaves me in awe."

The special thing about these lilies was that Amos grew them on his front porch. With over 90 different varieties to choose from, Amos cultivated a new lily to give to his wife on her birthday each year. Although Marie loved all types of lilies, the classic white lily held a special place in her heart.

Amos unpacked the picnic basket, displaying an assortment of homemade dishes, snacks, and refreshments: egg sandwiches, tomato salad, lox-filled bagels, blackberries, green tea, and a sky blue lunchbox cake.

Upon seeing the feast before her, Marie immediately looked up at Amos in both amazement and questioning as if she wanted to ask, "Where did you learn to cook all this?"

Amos beamed with delight and satisfaction. "Those cooking classes at the community center are finally paying off," he thought, "I should've enrolled sooner."

The elderly couple finished their meal and prepared for dessert.

Strawberry cake — her favorite.

As the sky began to dim, Amos lit the candles, eagerly waiting for Marie to make her wish and blow them out. A strong gust of wind got to the flames before she did.

As he carefully rose from the wooden bench, Amos scooped up the bouquet of white lilies, crouching towards the freshly mowed grass and placing the flowers atop the granite gravestone, his wife's portrait smiling back at him.

"Happy birthday, Marie."

They say, "The first step is always the hardest."
They say, "You just need to get the ball rolling."
They say, "Once you start, it'll get easier."

They say, "The first week is always the worst."
They say, "You only need get past square one."
They say, "Beginning a project is never easy."

But the first day,
The first lap,
The first hour of studying
Is so full of hope,
And of energy.

You're never tired at the starting line,
Never burned out at the first question,
Never truly clueless at the beginning of class.
Never a blocked writer at the first chapter.

It's that last lap,
That last question,
That last hour of a project,
That last moment of struggling;
That is always the hardest.

When you're exhausted,
Panting,
Sore from head to toe,
Yet still moving,
That's when life is most difficult,
That's when it hurts the most just to keep on running.

But if you stop,
There is no prize for not completing a race,
No pay off to a business idea never brought to fruition
No achievement for a story unfinished.

HOMELAND | LANCE VON SPRECKEN '23 | PHOTOGRAPHY

The first step isn't always the easiest,
But the last rarely isn't the hardest.

But you can't live a life of only starts,
Or travel a Journey of Beginnings without ends.

Life is a race,
With a beginning and a conclusion.
It's that last part that is so hard,
And it's that last part that we must push through to reach,
To reach the finish line,
To reach the final chapter,
To reach eternity,
And to reach the presence of our God.

Once you have run the race,
Kept the faith,
It is then that we may rest,
It is then that our hardship will be at its end.

But until then,
We must keep running,
Keep writing,
Keep working till we draw our final breath,
Because a Journey of Beginnings is fruitless and disappointing.

But a life of completion finds potential,
Finds purpose,
Finds a conclusion to every beginning.

And it is that life we all strive to live:
A Journey of Completions.

WELCOME TO SAINTS CAFE | KAYLA HONG '23

There was nothing that could measure my swelling anticipation as I walked into the crowded school courtyard and stood in front of the mystical beige dome. Although the school had multiple beige domes, I knew that this one was special. I grabbed the frosty metal door handle with my cell phone in hand and walked past the tinted glass doors. I allowed the rich dark navy interior to engulf my sight. A small television screen on the ceiling lit up as if acknowledging my presence. It greeted me with the phrase "Welcome to the Saints Cafe."

As the doors closed behind me, it almost felt like I had entered the dark crevices of a cave, in search of forbidden treasure: snacks. The walls were lined with chilly refrigerators filled with refreshing iced tea and sweet Starbucks coffee. Four-tier snack stands covered the other side of the wall, overflowing with Hot Cheetos, Takis, and Pocky. Cinnamon rolls and strawberry danishes fresh from the local bakery lay wrapped in cling film next to the chips. The cafe receptionist gave me a warm smile as I made my purchase and walked out satisfied. I knew that nothing ever came for free, but I felt entitled to help myself to a snack whenever I wanted.

A month later, my mother asked me on the way home, "How much money have you spent so far?" That was all it took for me to snap out of my financial insanity. With trembling hands, I logged into my bank account only to see that I had spent $63 this month on snacks alone. Cold realization and the gravity of my mistakes pierced through my heart as my face grew hot with shame. Gritting my teeth, I privately swore that I would dedicate myself to live frugally.

But promises are easier made than kept.

The excitement I originally felt when walking into Saints Cafe was no longer there, only to be replaced with guilt from my past mistakes and rising temptations. The television screen that read "Welcome to the Saints Cafe" no longer felt welcoming. Its harsh white light glared at me, as if it was casting judgment upon me for what I did. The brightly colored exterior of the Hot Cheetos that once made me feel joy now instilled despair, knowing that I could not buy any snacks if I wished to keep my promise.

Yet, I picked out a bag of chips and stood in line.

As I waited for my turn, the things that I wanted to buy for myself crossed my mind. Fantasies of wearing a red plaid skirt, leather platform shoes, and a much coveted band tee to school clouded my thoughts. I imagined the compliments I would get from my friends and the satisfaction and happiness I would feel from owning these clothes. The voice of reason told me that I could have all that if I kept my promise, that it was not too late to get out of line.

Yet, I ignored the voice of reason and continued to wait in line.

While waiting, my mind drifted off to the summer of two years ago. When I was a young girl, my grandmother ushered me and my siblings into her bedroom. I watched as she ran her wrinkled fingers through a thick stack of money and handed us a generous amount of cash to support our college education. Gratitude filled my heart as I wrapped my arms around her neck and promised to spend the money wisely. As my mind traveled back to the present, I could hear my conscience begging me to get out of here, that I should stick to my word if I had any love and respect for my grandmother.

Yet, I did not hesitate to insert my card into the chip reader.

I stood there holding my card as the chip reader drained my money, my aspirations, and any goodness I had in me. I walked out a different person with my chips in hand, weighed down by immeasurable guilt and regret. As I trudged to class, I secretly promised myself for the hundredth time that I would not spend any money at school tomorrow.

Yet, tomorrow I return to Saints Cafe, like a fool returns to folly.

COMPOSITION | YUXUAN ZHOU '22 | MIXED MEDIA

MY OLD FRIEND | SARAH LIU '22

My old friend doesn't greet me with words when I say hello but gives me a warm sensation of being at home. My old friend isn't particularly dressy or fashionable but gets the job done. When I meet my old friend on Sunday, I reflect on the hundreds — no, thousands — of times that I have met her before. She fills me with nostalgia every time. Her whiteboard with half-erased marks, her curved wooden walls splayed out like a fin, her heavy gray-blue door that I have to pull with my entire weight. Everything about her is so familiar to me.

My old friend is everything to me, despite her being a bit plain. Standing alone, my old friend doesn't have much to say or to show off. She's a constant friend, never failing to meet me at the same corner of the same hallway of the same building, but she doesn't do much. So what makes her so special? Is it, perhaps, because we pack her with chairs with solid backs and sturdy legs? Is it because, with the chairs, we add in music stands with squeaky hinges? No. My old friend is a decently-sized room, but the hundred or so of us make her seem smaller. The hundred or so of us also give her more meaning.

Apart from each other, the hundred or so of us make spontaneous, disorganized noises — a trumpet warbling cautiously, a violin running through fast notes, a laugh in the distance. But when the clock strikes one on every Sunday afternoon, we come together as one body, as one mind — as one orchestra.

My old friend has been there since day one, when I was in sixth grade. Back then, our sound wasn't as rich or as full or as mature, but we were learning. We learned how to play together, how to make the pitch line up just right, how to move with the music but never let it carry us away. Being middle school students, we left my old friend and flirted awkwardly during breaks. I for one itched to return. After all, who would keep a friend waiting like that? And return we did, refreshed with new passion, energy, and excitement.

Recently, we returned from a hiatus caused by unforeseen circumstances. It was a lonely time, devoid of the music made by the immaculate combination of strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion, devoid of my old friend and many other friends, devoid of the symphony orchestra. But now, just like we did before, we have returned.

We have returned to the great masters — Tchaikovsky, Britten, Shostakovich, Dvorak, Bernstein — and their music. We have returned to meeting every Sunday without fail. We have returned to my old friend.

At first glance, one might say that my old friend is a bare room, a boring room. Nothing to look at, much less to get excited about. But in that room, I am at my best, playing music with all the passion and energy that my small body can contain. I don't play alone, however. What makes my old friend so special is that she is where we all come together as one family to create one big, beautiful sound soaring with colors and stories from composers past and present, of timeless melodies.

My old friend isn't anything more than a UCI classroom. But open the door and look inside; she has a story to tell, a song to sing.

A SIP OF HEAVEN | ABIGAIL LARSON '23

"This was a mistake of colossal proportions" was the only thought running through my head as I approached the swinging doors, feeling again like an anxious young tot rather than my mature 14 years. Immediately, I was assaulted by the pleasant sugary aroma, the sweetness doing nothing to abate my apprehension about the tortuous road ahead or to quiet the noxiously chattering voices that pierced my ears.

I had done everything in my power to avoid all measure of decisions, always regretting the choice I made, wondering what could have been, or experiencing the pounding of my cowardly heart when asked to choose. This hamlet of choices had always been out of my reach, even after I unlocked the bitter joys of coffee. But one too many rounds of not-so-lighthearted teasing by my sister had prodded me to enter the Starbucks on Von Karman.

I had forever watched hordes of crazed adults stumble into the Starbucks, seemingly following their noses like hounds on a hunt until they were handed a warm traveling mug of pure heaven. They'd shuffle like addicts, waiting hungrily to jump on their next score. They talked in strange terms that were unfamiliar to me, like frappuccino, cappuccino, macchiato. Women with their hair straightened until lifeless, wearing Lululemon workout sets that they had absolutely no intention of actually working out in, sporting designer sunglasses and Gucci purses — they would march in with arms linked, ready to post envy-inducing photos of the foam at the top of their espresso. For less than $10, I would make a series of fraught decisions that could forever change my life. If I was successful, I would receive the satisfaction of both beverage and growing decisiveness. This, I knew, was what it meant to be an adult.

Precisely twelve steps inside the piazza of adulthood, I encountered the first hideous obstacle of my great journey to the cash register: middle school girls. They looked at me as though they knew my hands were sweating and I'd broken into goosebumps underneath my leather jacket. They knew that I was an imposter. "Deep breaths," I urged myself. "You are older, stronger, wiser, and infinitely less irritating than these cackling shrews who fancy

themselves popular." Still, the urge to run away in my stunning taupe stilettos was so great that I nearly reached for my mother's hand for support. Nearly. "I am in high school," I reminded myself, counting the spotless black granite floor tiles. "If I can't order coffee on my own, how can I survive?"

With dread, I successfully navigated the labyrinthine rows of preoccupied adults, tables of bug-eyed computer geeks, and the aforementioned Lululemon ladies. The brief seconds melted into bits of eternity, bleeding my nerves as I approached the tattooed, blue-haired lady at the counter with a large diamond stud in her left nostril.

By far the most spine-chilling step of my journey was the final one: ordering. I made my sister go first, shoving her ahead of me like a human shield as I frantically scanned the menu. The sheer number of decisions instantly paralyzed me, and the clock raced in time with my frantic heart. Venti, grande, or short? Iced or hot? Did I want a muffin with that? A frappuccino, a latte, an espresso? Cold-brew?

That's when the shrill clarion call of the cash register barista brought my whirring thoughts to a grinding halt. "And what would you like, young lady?"

Trying desperately to ignore my sister's smirk and calm my shaking breaths, my voice trembled as I asked for a grande eggnog latte. And yes, I did a muffin with that. A chocolate one, to be exact.

I was instantly met with the feeling of soaring triumph. Never had I felt more mature than I did at that precise moment. Even the shaking of my fumbling fingers handing over my Christmas gift card could not sink my elation. Nothing had ever tasted as good as that first hot sip of victory.

This is adulthood.

CREAN LUTHERAN ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CARDS | 2015-2021

2015 2015

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

ARTWORK BY HESOO JOO '15

2015 2015

2016 2016

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. John 1:14 & 16

ARTWORK BY AMBER UNDERWOOD '17

2016 2016

2017 2017

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

ARTWORK BY JUNGMIN LEE '18

2017 2017

2018 2018

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

ARTWORK BY LEIA LAUGHLIN '19

2018 2018

2019 2019

Who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. Philippians 2:6-7

ARTWORK BY THOMAS CHO '20

2019 2019

2020 2020

In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. John 1:4-5

ARTWORK BY MIA DIAZ '21

2020 2020

2021 2021

And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:10-11

ARTWORK BY SARAH KAN '22

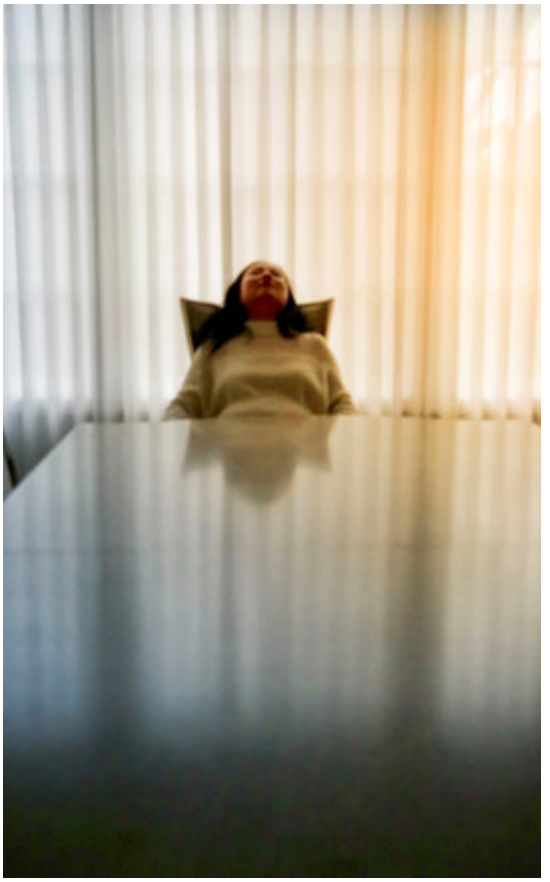
2021 2021

FROM THE STUDENT EDITORS

Legacy. What will be of our legacy? It's fair to say that we all worry about our legacy, especially in these uncertain times. As graduating seniors, the question of what we will leave behind as we depart Crean Lutheran looms large in our hearts and minds. Our four years may very well be the strangest four years our school has ever seen (and hopefully will ever see). Yet at the same time, our beloved institution has also seen tremendous positive change. Student enrollment has reached record highs, campus expansion has moved into a new phase, and the quality of a Christ-centered curriculum has never been better. With every disruption comes change, and with change, the opportunity to grow. Our hope is that in this new period of change, as we move forward from the pandemic, we will again emerge with a steadfast mission of proclaiming Jesus Christ and an unwavering commitment to excellence in education.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "The end of life is not to be happy, nor to achieve pleasure and avoid pain, but to do the will of God, come what may." At Crean Lutheran, we are continually reminded that it is not our fleeting legacy that matters in this world but that His legacy may be remembered and that His grace be known. While all else falters, Christ remains.

DISCOVERY | CATHERINE FISCHER '23 | DIGITAL



GIVE ME ONE MORE MINUTE | YUYUAN ZHANG '22 | PHOTOGRAPHY

This year, we celebrate artworks that deeply challenge assumptions and writings that reflect on the fundamental nature of who we ought to be. Works ranging from *Deflected Journey* to *All Dried Up* serve as poignant reminders of the urgent need for environmental protection and the devastation humanity can unleash on the Earth. At the same time, the artists who created works like *Fantaji* and *Nosce Te Ipsum* challenge our notion of self by reflecting upon the complex identities each of us carry in a fast-changing society.

It has been an honor and privilege to serve as Student Editors for Volume 3 of *The Mirror*. Throughout this process, we have witnessed the outstanding talents and abilities of our fellow classmates, and their works have been extraordinarily inspiring. Through these students, may we all be reminded of the legacy of Jesus and the promise of salvation.

IN HIS LOVE,
PETER CHEN & EFROSYNA TAWFIK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