

Issue 14
Spring 2024

The Agathist



The Agathist

ISSUE 14
SPRING 2024
GERMANTOWN HIGH SCHOOL
409 CALHOUN PARKWAY

Principal: Cody Zumbro

Assistant Principals: Brent Brownlee,
Dr. Syl Burrell, Jeffrey Coleman, Corrie Ramage

Faculty: Jamie Dickson

Staff: Kyrie Armitage, Olivia Engel, Grace Gardner,
Erik Herring, Audrey King, Chloe Reed, Leo Tingle

Advisor's Note

MR. DICKSON

Recreation is, literally and figuratively, fun. I mean, the dictionary definition is "a diversion," something done for enjoyment. But let's look at the word itself: re-creation, to make yourself new again. We do things we love because they make us ourselves. You re-create yourself when you do something that brings you pleasure.

This has been a glorious spring season, so verdant and full of life. Even if you, dear reader, are going through something tough, it's hard not to feel hopeful when you look outside and see the new leaves shooting their way out of the trees or see the sprays of wildflowers dancing on the side of the interstate. The world is, yet again, singing its persistent encore of spring, re-creating itself once more, and we're lucky enough to bear witness to its beauty.

There is a joy in making. Philosophers and poets and theologians all agree that creating something borders on the divine, and this edition of The Agathist is a thrilling testimony to that idea. The written and visual creations in this semester's magazine have brought me joy, recreation. They have made me whole, and I hope they do the same for you.

To the staff: thank you. Once again, y'all have put together a top-tier collection. And, personally, y'all have helped me through a stormy patch. The work y'all do, even when I'm not in the classroom, is necessary and fun. It re-creates. Thanks for making.

Table of Contents

Artwork

Cover -- Life after Death, Ash Loftin
pg.5 -- Prelude, Gabby Caraway
pg.7 -- My Grandma, Ava Fulgham
pg.10 Set the Table, Mary Robertson
pg.11 -- ALL the Deserts, Christina Kimble
pg.11 -- Triple Scoop, Mina Aldridge
pg.12 -- Ice Cream Sandwich, Kaesun Brown
pg.13 -- Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Ash Loftin
pg. 18 -- Generations, Ash Loftin
pg.19 -- Glassware, Dylan Walker
pg.21 -- Dancing In The Glass Cathedral, Grace Gardener
pg.22 -- On CLOUD Shoe, Tripp Buchanan
pg.23 -- DOCTORS / ACTORS, Gabby Caraway
pg.27 -- Embracing the Light, Kalyb James
pg.28 -- UNTITLED, Nadia Stamps
pg.29 -- ELVIRA: MISTRESS OF THE DARK, Ava Fulgham
pg.31 -- Masked Love, Kalyb James
pg.33 -- Untitled, Nadia Stamps
pg.35 -- UNTITLED, Nadia Stamps
pg.38 -- Rainbow Snow Cone, Cohen Smith
pg.39 -- Citrus COMfort, Kalyb James
pg.41 -- Monochromatic Mania, Kalyb James

Poem

pg.4 -- This Song, Ariel Morris and Johnathan Owens
pg.6 -- Distant Memory, Ceamber Jefferson
pg.12 -- Popular, Lauren Land
pg.20 -- Eighteen Candles, Ceamber Jefferson
pg.22 -- A Fictitious Life, Ceamber Jefferson
pg.30 -- Dear Time, Audrey King
pg.32 -- Grief, Ceamber Jefferson
pg.34 -- Appreciation of Nature, Zykeria Langston

Fiction

pg.14 -- Lovely Flowers, Preethika Lakshminarayanan
pg.24 -- The Beginning, Chloe Reed
pg.36 -- I Made Tea, Andria Feraci
pg.40 -- Death Comes Ripping, Olivia Engel

Non-Fiction

pg.8 -- You, Camryn Owens

This Song

ARIEL MORRIS AND JOHNATHAN OWENS

Did I play this song before?
Yes I remember
But I missed every note
Hummed wrongful melodies
And slammed the keys
At every harmony
But this time I'll play it
For you again, you'll see
And I promise all the notes will fit
And that I'll stay in key
We will be the musicians made in dream
Even Mozart's ears will bleed in jealousy
Our lyrics will burn with flames
And turn Shakespeare's sonnets to shame
And even bring him to tears
For entire cities will have to turn their ears
We'll strum every string and then
We'll try our very best
To play this song again



Prelude

GABBY CARAWAY, OIL PAINTING

Distant Memory

CEAMBER JEFFERSON

Your mother is only your mother until one of you forgets.
It starts off with the simple things,
Forgetting each other's favorite colors and movies.
The simple things eventually swallow both until you both forget.
You may live together but you are roommates,
Not family.
A fading person can hurt at first,
When it's your mother, it hurts all the time.
One day there will be no more visits or walking past each other,
It'll simply be static on a TV that never stops.
That's how you know they've faded into a distant memory.



My Grandma

AVA FULGHAM, PENCIL DRAWING

You

CAMRYN OWENS

This shall be by far the hardest thing explaining a beautiful soul this reader never got the blessing to meet. Who is “you,” you may be asking. “You,” is Cameron Pace Mohr. Cameron was called by many, Pace. Pace was 18 years old when his time on earth came to an end. Pace Mohr and me, we did not have the same last name, but he was my brother. Blood does not mean family when you know someone so well enough to call your own. That is how I describe my connection to dear Pace. Pace was passionate, loving, and outgoing. In some ways, I’d like to say his characteristics are taken over in my footsteps. Pace was one many other souls looked up to whether it was just his unforgettable presence, or his looking up worthy human being.

Like I’ve mentioned, Pace was my brother. This may tie into your questions to my references. Halloween, Christmas, Fourth of July, New year’s, just about every name worthy holiday name able, you can guess, I spent it with him. My meaning by fireworks being unbright able, if Pace was here, you could sit down and ask him how they used to spark and light up when he lit them! The necklace on my neck, you can bet its Pace’s! Pace lived life his way. Whether he was hunting, working on his truck, or sinking a four-wheeler in a pond, Pace was about as care-free and country as it gets. He loved to laugh. He lived to have fun. If Pace didn’t have tools in his hands, he was most likely hunting or fishing with his people. He loved the outdoors. In my brother’s short life, he touched countless people. Pace loved to crack jokes, especially on me and his sister Andi. Pace always wanted to see people smile. I attended East Rankin Academy, same as Pace did. Those rides to school and home with him, I feel a sense of sadness for those who never got to experience what that feeling felt like. I would sit in Algebra class, and when Pace walked down the hall, you could bet a smile lit up on my face, just like one of his many abilities to do for the people Pace loved. He would steal my candy every Halloween and make my blood boil when he did because he loved to crack up some jokes. There’s many times Pace and me would go head-to-head about him having to replace a four-wheeler battery, because every time me and his sister rode it, one of us would mistakenly leave the light on. I won’t forget about the time Pace, and I planned on swapping phones before he

passed, I regret not doing it that day, but I now have just another smile making memory to think.

While Pace’s time on Earth had me living a blessing, April 1st my brother’s time was entered into rest. The way my brother died is a touchy and tragic situation, so you will not be reading about his death, but about the death I have faced when he left. Questions of why and how continue to replay every day in my head. Why didn’t I value those moments with him when I didn’t know they’d turn into memories? Or how did God allow this to happen? The smile I once had is unbright able, just like those fireworks that used to be o so bright. The spark before, it’s inflammable. The absence of him, it’s not fillable. Not another soul could be or replace what or who Pace Mohr was to me.

Grief is a state I wish upon no soul on this Earth. I mourn his voice, his being, his presence. I miss hearing that truck rev, and I miss the smile he placed on my face when it did. You may be questioning my ability to still be living. The truth hurts, but there is no pain killer to take this death away, but there is a way I have found to heal my low state. I now have passion, I now have someone to tribute to, and more than anything I know have a sunset to see, knowing that Cameron Pace Mohr painted it o so pretty and for me. I know put my four-wheeler in gear, knowing that the one and only Pace Mohr taught me.

His death leads me to daily grieve, but it has also taught me how to live so carefree and country as can be. His special sticker in his loud truck, it now goes in mine. His songs he used to sing, now they are passed down to me. He is up there; he is looking down and looking out for me. No more questioning, no more mopping, for I thank the times God gave me. I am comforted in Christ and know that I will see the one and only again. In the meantime, I sure will miss those sparks he lit for me!



Set the Table

MARY ROBERTSON--ACRYLIC



ALL the Deserts

CHRISTINA KIMBLE

Triple Scoop

MINA ALDRIDGE



Popular

LAUREN LAND

I love talking to people who have lived a dead life,
Their sorrow and overwhelming joy abound,
Their wisdom cannot compare,
To the masses who live a dead life.

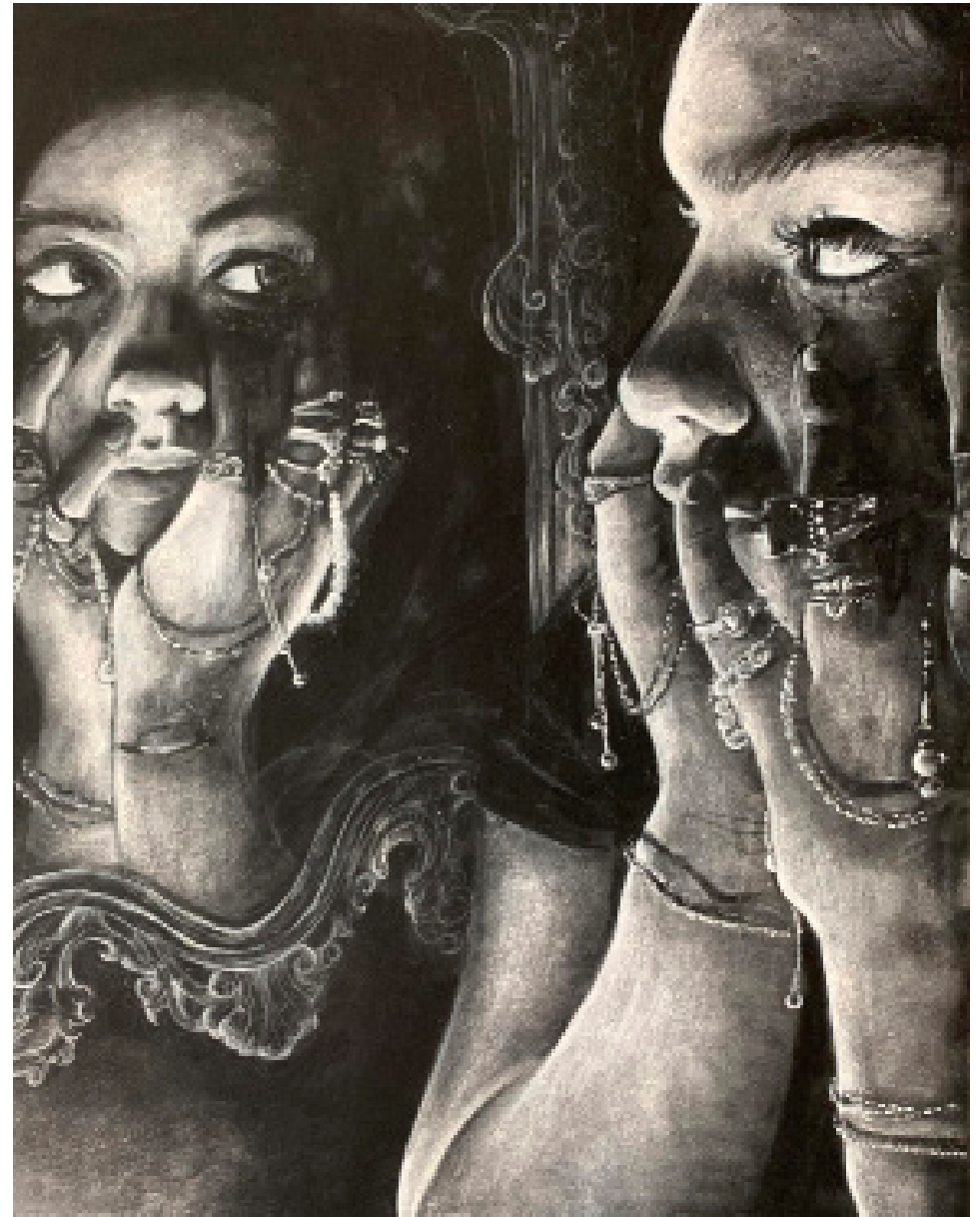
The plethora know no sorrow, only sadness.
The world knows no joy, only happiness.
The genius brains are nutshells,
Where cockroaches abound,
And cobwebs dry out their life half-empty.
To the world, every loss is a dead end.

But the wise know that they've already won.



Ice Cream Sandwich

KAESUN BROWN



Mirror, Mirror on the Wall

ASH LOFTIN, WHITE CHARCOAL

Lovely Flowers

PREETHIKA LAKSHMINARAYANAN

"Mama, the flowers are so pretty!"

"They are, aren't they? Which one's your favorite, sweetie?"

"Mmmmm that one!"

"Oh, the hydrangeas!"

"Yeah the hydoranges! They're tiny flowers all happy together."

"You really are my daughter haha! You want to know what my favorite is?"

"Hmmm?"

"It's warm and fun just like you!"

"Really?! Whatisit? Whatisit?!"

"Hmm, maybe I won't tell you..."

"No, pleeeaaase tell me!"

"Ok, ok! It's the –"

"Hello? Excuse me?"

"It's the –"

"Are you awake? Hello?"

I opened my eyes, still a bit hazy from my dream. I noticed drool that had collected onto the counter before I registered the woman standing before me. I scrambled up and hastily placed my sleeve over that part of the counter, hoping she didn't notice.

"Sorry about that!" I ask. "What can I help you with?"

"Hi! And sorry I woke you up, but I couldn't find the flowers I wanted. I was wondering if you had them stocked here?" she asked.

"Of course ma'am. What is the name of those flowers?"

After ringing up a bouquet of pink and purple azaleas for the woman, I soon got more customers. They were eager to get different flowers for anniversaries, holidays, and other special days in their lives. Around one PM, Nan finally showed up. Her silvery hair was tied back in a bun, and she hauled in pots of blue hydrangeas before giving me one.

"You're late." I joked as I braced the pot in my arms, running my fingers over the flowers.

"My shop, my hours. And besides, I had to stop for these!"

I rolled my eyes and smiled as she joined me behind the counter. We handled some more customers together. and soon there was nobody in the shop and an hour till closing.

"Should we just close early?" Nan asked.

"Someone could still come by!" I retorted.

She groaned and I was about to make a remark about her laziness until the front door chimed.

A blonde woman with a cloth grey jacket and beige slacks walked in, hand-in-hand with a little brunette girl in a bright pink jacket. Both wildly gesture and point at a variety of flowers. Though I didn't know them personally, the wonder in their eyes and the love they had for each other felt achingly familiar. My throat ached and my eyes started welling up. Nan must have noticed because she looked over at me and softly whispered.

"Are you ok?"

"It's been a year. Of course I'm fine!" I assured myself.

I mustered up a smile. "I'm just gonna take a break near the park real quick. Can you help them instead?"

As soon as she nodded, I fled out the back door. Tears stung my eyes as I raced blindly onto the street. I was only brought back to reality by the sound of a car honking at me in the middle of the road.

"Get out the way!" the driver screamed.

"I'm sorry!" I yelled back as I finally reached the sidewalk circling the hill.

I rushed up the wooden stairs etched onto the hill until I finally reached the top. I saw kids relaxing on the playground equipment, playfully jabbing at each other with items and chasing after one another. Most of the parents were invested, proudly watching their kids with a smile on their faces. Some even came onto the playground to join them. This did not help at all, but it was the first place I could think of to get away. I crouched on the grass near the side of the stairs and lied down. Tears that stung my eyes now started pouring as I started getting lost in painful and loving memories. I was starting to calm myself down when I noticed a silhouette casting a shadow over me. I turned around and saw Nan, who was starting to sit down beside me.

We both looked at the playground in front of us. I noticed that the parents and their kids have gone home. Nan and I were the only ones here. For some reason, that made me feel better. She took a deep breath before she finally spoke.

"Do you know why I opened The Flower Hollow?" she asked.

"To pay the bills?" I replied.

"No..." she chuckled. "I've always had a love for gardening."

That's why I named your mama Rose. Because she was like a beautiful flower when I first looked at her and I thought everybody should love her like that. Apparently not everybody did, and she used to come home from school crying her eyes out, poor thing. So, one day, I arranged all my flowers together and hanged some golden pixie lights above them. When she came home from school that day, I led her onto the porch, holding my hands over her eyes. When I lifted them up and she saw it..."

She trailed off, her eyes tearing up. I squeezed her hand and looked at her.

"And?" I asked.

"Her eyes lit up like...like – I can't even describe it. She started looking at all the different flowers and wanting to put them in her hair like a fairy! Ever since that day, she started gardening with me and I realized I wanted to bring this joy to other people. So, we said good riddance to that school, moved here, and opened up The Flower Hollow!"

She wiped off her falling tears with her free hand and lied still, looking up at the sky.

"Does the pain go away?" I asked.

"Not for me." she replied. "But I like it because that's how we know we truly love someone."

"How do you live with this then?" I cried out.

"It's easier on the weekends. Not on weekdays though when I open up shop. But each day, I tell myself something."

"What?" I asked.

"She loves us. Not loved past tense. Loves present." she chuckled. "And because of that, I don't think she left. I think she's watching over us, like a guardian angel. She was probably at the flower shop while we helped out the customers. And she's probably here too, sitting right by us. She never wanted us to be apart."

"Like tiny flowers all happy together." I related. But I shook the thought out of my head.

"But that's 'probably' Nan. And I'm not sure I can hope like that. At least not right now."

"That's ok." she replied. "She's rooting for you either way. This I can say for sure."

After a while, we both stood and walked back to the flower shop. As Nan was starting up the car, I asked her a favor.

"Hey Nan, I was wondering if we could visit Mom before we go home."

"Sure dear!" she warmly smiled, "Go inside the store and make her a bouquet too. She would like that a lot."

And I do just that. After some time, we finally arrived at Trynille Cemetery. Nan parked the car and told me to go ahead as she needed to make a call to someone to who supplied coolers for our flowers. But I knew she thought I needed some time with Mom by myself. And she was right.

I walked up the rickety trail to her headstone. It reads, In loving memory of Rose Urone Mathey/1974-2021/Loving mother and daughter/We love you as much as the sun loves the sky, both never-ending.

My hands trembled a bit as they held the bouquet, made of impulsively-picked flowers, including her favorite. I brushed off the leaves surrounding the headstone with my free hand and delicately placed the bouquet in front of it.

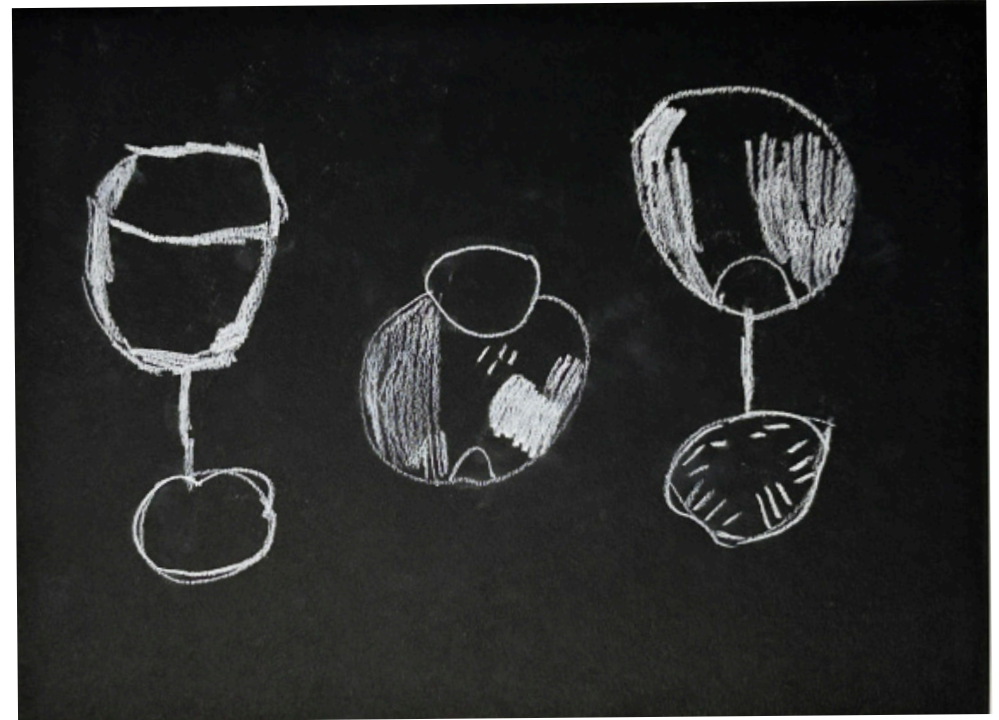
"I don't know if you can hear me, Mom. Or if you are standing beside me." I thought "But, if you are, know that I hope to find the strength to notice you everywhere like Nan does. And know that I love you. So. Much."

When I finished, nothing happened. Only leaves rustled as the bouquet lied still near the headstone. While I would have been disappointed before, I felt content instead. Because, for now, this was enough: knowing that I want to start believing again despite everything telling me otherwise. I walked down the trail and got into the car. Nan must have noticed my new mood because she looked at me and smiled.

"Are you ready to go, Dahlia?"

Generations

ASH LOFTIN, WHITE CHARCOAL



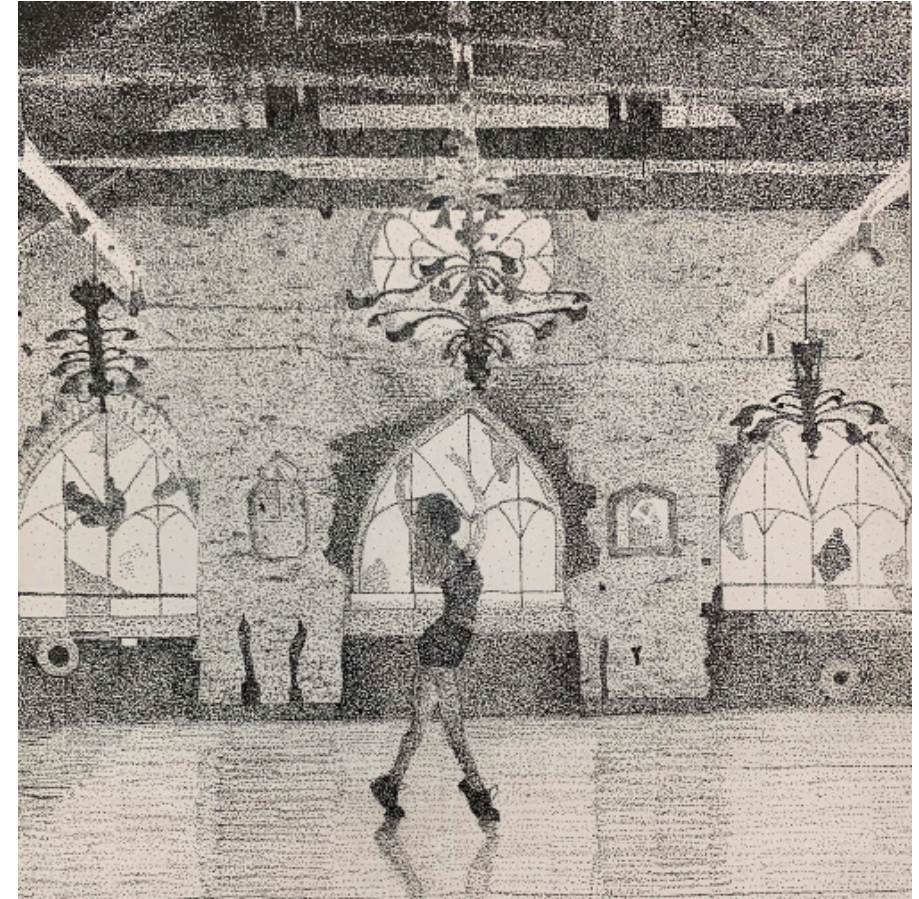
Glassware

DYLAN WALKER, WHITE CHARCOAL

EIGHTEEN CANDLES

CEAMBER JEFFERSON

A little girl looks in the mirror on her eighth birthday,
Excited and feverish to what the day may bring.
Walking into the living room, it's silent,
A normal setting for this little girl to wake up to.
With a burning, passionate fire in her heart, she looks past it,
Makes herself breakfast and sits at the table alone.
Half the day has gone by now and she's still alone,
A splashed drop of water hits the table.
She quickly wipes it away and pulls herself together.
9:17 pm hits and she breaks.
It was the time she was born, and they forgot.
Mom and Dad forgot.
The special day she was looking forward to being forgotten,
Just like her.
Putting her dish in the sink,
She walks to the bathroom.
Running the shower water and letting the steam fill the room.
She looked in the mirror at her puffy face,
Knowing that her story wouldn't have a happy ending.
The water runs for hours.
The next day, at 9:17 am, the front door opens.
Happy Birthday little girl.



Dancing In The Glass Cathedral

GRACE GARDENER, POINTILISM

A FICTITIOUS LIFE

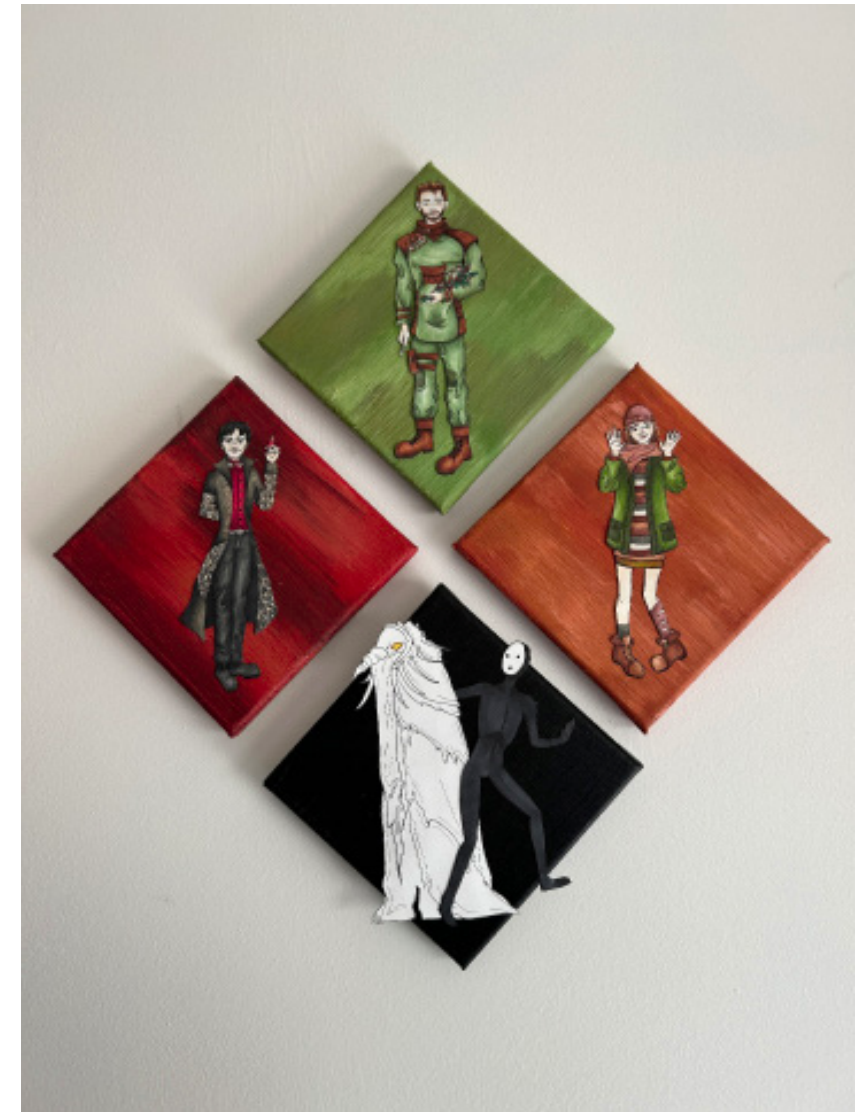
CEAMBER JEFFERSON

A girl out there fears that the only happiness she will experience is with words on paper,
Written by some author who doesn't even know her name.
They don't know they've saved her life plenty of times,
Gave her a feeling of purpose through their writing.
She has lived a thousand lives in books,
In reality, her life has barely started.
The best parts of her life were fake,
Scenarios that she made up in her head to fill the void.
Words on a page made up in her head to fill the void.
Words on a page made her feel something.
A feeling reality couldn't offer her.
If she could trade reality for a fictitious life,
She would.



On Cloud Shoe

TRIPP BUCHANAN



DOCTORS / ACTORS

GABBY CARAWAY, OIL PAINTS & ALCOHOL MARKERS

The Beginning

CHLOE REED

Fairies commonly never walked, they fluttered, they flew, heavens, sometimes they flittled, anything but walking. So when a fairy was walking, much less running – something was definitely wrong.

Wyise was rushing, and as a time fairy, she never rushed because she was always on time, but here she was, running through the halls because she was late. Normally she'd be flying but a part of her didn't want to go to the meeting, instead, she found herself wanting to hide away somewhere she'd never be found. But she couldn't, she was a headmistress and she had a job to do and a problem to solve.

She shoved open those large wooden doors, fairies of Old danced up and down the sides and she prayed to the Heavens she wasn't disappointing them.

Clearing her throat, she entered the room and looked up at her faculty members. All eyes were on her, waiting, expecting, scared.

"I'm sorry for my late arrival, I had a prior engagement." She put on her brightest smile as she took her seat at the head of the table. "Let's get this started, shall we?"

Immediately the room filled with different voices all expressing their worries and fears, "The plants! They're telling me something horrible, they aren't as lifelike!" "For the first time I didn't feel good after getting a compliment!" "You were LATE!!" As the voices grew louder, Wyise grimaced, she was scared too. For the first time, she didn't know what was going on, which meant she didn't know how to help.

Titania placed her rough calloused hand on Wyise's beneath the great table, turning to look at her, Titania found the fairies eyes brimming with tears, but with her reassuring nod, Wyise felt she finally had the strength to speak. "SILENCE." they all went quiet, "One at a time, please." She whispered.

Wyise was not one to yell, in fact she often gave them all looks of dis-

approval when she passed their classes and heard them yelling at students. The only staff member who bypassed this little unspoken rule was of course Titania, she needed to yell anyway, she was the headmistress of the specialists for crying out loud.

For a few moments, the faculty members looked at each other in either shock or they were waiting to see who'd speak first. Hesitantly, Professor Gardenia spoke, "Something's off Wyise, we all feel it and... truth be told, we're scared. What's going on?"

All eyes were on her, they were needy for answers, and for once, Wyise didn't have any. She didn't want to disappoint her beloved staff, but most of all she didn't want to disappoint Titania. Slowly, she looked over at Titania and then back to everyone, "I... don't know." an array of gasps flooded the room and she didn't bother to silence them when they started asking each other questions.

She knew she needed to be the one to break the silence but her ability to speak vanished, and in the end, Titania was the one to speak. "Stop worrying. Whatever ails our school will not beat us, together we stand strong against any and everything. We will solve this together. Just try to keep discussions of it on the down low to not worry our students. We promised this year would be a great one, I don't plan on breaking that."

Wyise was considered a beacon at Luxrose, whilst Titania was the foundation of it.

When times went wrong or were filled with fear and anxiety, she was the one who grounded everyone — who grounded Wyise. 'Thank you,' Wyise mouthed, and Titania half smiled in reply.

If everything else was crumbling around her, one thing she'd be grateful for was Titania.

Because she was her saving grace.

Clearing her throat as the room went quiet, Wyise stood once again and put on her best smile, "I agree with Titania, everything will work out beautifully. Don't be afraid, we can overcome anything, okay?" silence followed, "...Meeting adjourned."

As the fairies slipped out of the room, only Titania and Wyise remained, and once those large doors had been shut, Titania grabbed hold of Wyises hand and pulled her into a hug, "Everything will be alright."

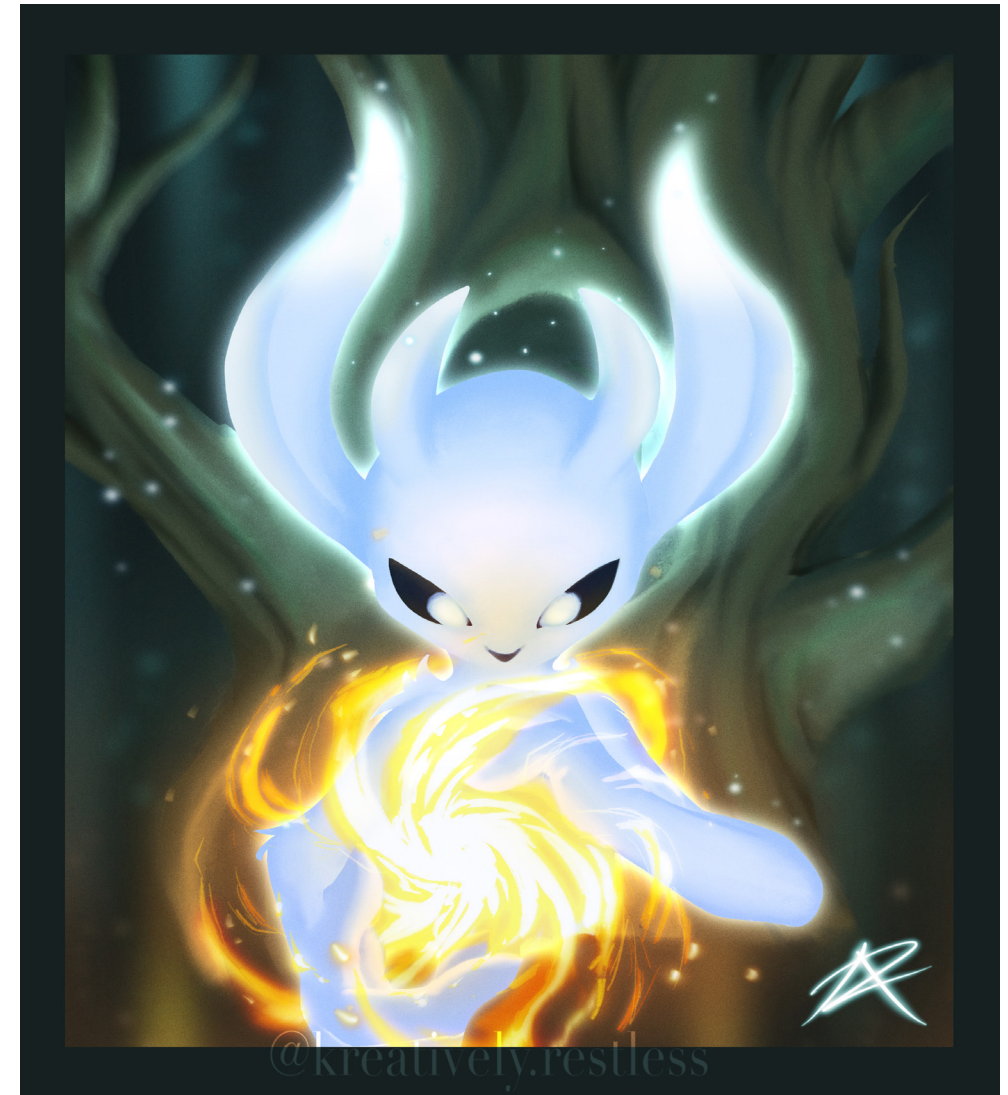
"How do you know?"

"Because you and I can overcome anything, okay?" Her voice was everything Wyise needed at this moment, it was calm, reassuring, and steady. Everything Wyise was not.

"I'm scared, Tee."

A soft sigh escaped the taller woman's lips and she placed a gentle kiss on Titania's forehead, "Fear is what makes a fairy strong, we've got this- you've got this. "

Wyise nodded in reply and gently squeezed Titania's hands, "Thank you."



Embracing the Light

KALYB JAMES--DIGITAL DRAWING

UNTITLED

NADIA STAMPS, DIGITAL DRAWING



ELVIRA: MISTRESS OF THE DARK

AVA FULGHAM, DIGITAL DRAWING

Dear Time,

AUDREY KING

In all your bitterness I wish the best for you. Though I haven't forgiven you for taking what is not yours, I see your side. I see the misery you insist on bringing to some and the happiness to others. Though I do not understand it, I see your works. I see how you work in my life, in my friends' lives, and strangers alike. You hold no prejudice; you cannot be escaped. Your grasp chases all. The underlying villain to every fairytale.

Peoples last wish, "I wish I had more time." But you can't even grant them this. You let them live a long life, a life of hardship and pain. You take what is rightfully theirs and you take it swiftly. Uncaring you don't let them say goodbye. Without remorse you laugh at their tears, but then you let them live. How do you decide who you will be the god of today? Proving the same point again and again.

But through all this I start off by saying "I wish you the best". With all that you have taken from me. In all the goodbyes I still long to say, I wish you the best. Through all the pain and suffering you have caused me I wish you the best. Do you believe me yet? If I keep saying it, maybe I can believe it too.



Masked Love

KALYB JAMES, POINTILLISM

Grief

CEAMBER JEFFERSON

Little girl, you may grieve over who you could have been.
The thought of growing up in a happy, wholesome home,
With loving parents and siblings.
You're allowed to feel loss over what could have been,
What you know deep down will never be.
The constant voice in your head reminds you,
There's no escape from the past.
Knowing that your future won't be any better,
Grief, feel the loss of happiness, and accept it.
Little girl, you may feel.



Chocolate Ice Cream

TYLER HONIGFORT



Untitled

NADIA STAMPS, DIGITAL

APPRECIATION OF NATURE

ZYKERIA LANGSTON

In the quiet solitude of the woods,
I find solace in nature's embrace.
The gentle breeze whispers secrets,
As sunlight filters through leaves above,
A symphony of life unfolds before me.
Birds trill their melodious songs,
Wind blowing ever so gently, as
flowers bloom all around,
dancing in the winds gust
The sound of water as the river meanders along,
It's crystal-clear water reflecting the sky.
The reminder of nature's sternal rhythm
The scent of all variant flowers fills the air.
Treading light on this beautiful earth,
Careful not to hurt a blade of grass.
With every step I am grounded and connected
To the core of existence.



UNTITLED

NADIA STAMPS, DIGITAL DRAWING

I Made Tea

ANDRIA FERACI

John and I had been having a rough patch. He thought that we were over it but he still wouldn't put the seat down after he was done in the bathroom. So, we were definitely still in it. We had just had a major fight. One that had ceramic pieces our child had made that I had displayed with pride, thrown at the wall. He aimed a few of them at me or at important photos on the wall but he missed most of them. He left home that night but I knew he'd come back soon enough and he did.

I made tea but our stove didn't work.

I begged for John to go to behavioral therapy. He took that as if I had just called him a child. I mean he did act that way sometimes. More times than I could count did he start a tantrum. I wouldn't let him back into the bedroom to sleep at night. I wanted the bedroom to be the one place I felt safe in that house. I tried to have him sleep in the guest bedroom or on the couch. He took it as a challenge and kicked the door down as I was getting ready for bed one night. I tried to stop him and when that seemed to only piss him off more, I hid but he found me. I had to bandage my face afterwards. He left again that night and he didn't return for almost 2 whole weeks.

I made tea but our stove didn't work.

I didn't sleep at all that night he came home. He kept sobbing and begging me to forgive him for the hideous mark he left on my face. It had now turned almost a sickly green. "He wasn't himself." "He didn't mean it." I knew he "loved" me. "He's trying to get better."

I made tea but our stove didn't work.

Eventually one night when I was cradling my child, singing softly and hoping he would finally cease crying and go to sleep. I found burn marks on my little 6-month-old. I didn't smoke. None of my friends smoked. Nor any of my family. But John did. He was trying to get better? That was the one and only time that I laid hands back on John.

John decided that he wanted to go stay at a friend's house overnight and that he would see me in the morning, or ever again if I was "lucky" enough. I think he couldn't stand the fact that I wouldn't let him hurt our child in the process. He could hurt me all he wanted but when I draw the line at OUR child, oh that was too much? Too strict? I wouldn't let him do what he wished to and I was being too much?

I made tea but our stove didn't work.

While our stove didn't work, Liam's did. There was always Liam when I needed him. We spent several nights together while John was away. He would let me come over to his house and he comforted me when John had laid hands on me or when he would leave for days at a time. He cared for our child when I needed rest and he would stay with me through the nights when I couldn't do anything beyond staring at the ceiling when I had finally woken up. I loved Liam in a different way than John but we did everything a normal couple would.

Liam stayed with me for months after John had finally left. Those months were pure bliss. My babies burn healed beautifully and left a crescent shaped scar. Liam started to call him "His little moon." Liam and I relied on each other. I didn't know where John had gone and I didn't care.

Eventually John did come back. He wanted Liam out, he found out about Liam and I's relationship and he was pissed. I was still "his" after all, we had never broken up. He knew that all the times I had gone over for tea at Liam's, wasn't just for tea. He promised to never lay hands on me nor our child if I cut contact with Liam. He kept his word and he never laid hands on my baby again. I still gazed at my babies scar occasionally, wondering what could have been.

I made tea but our stove still didn't work.

John came home as I had brought a cup of tea from Liam's. He knew it. I wasn't supposed to be there. He stared at me and I stare back. I finally broke the tense silence.

"I made tea."

Rainbow Snow Cone

COHEN SMITH, COLORED PENCIL



Citrus Comfort

KALYB JAMES, ACRYLIC

Death Comes Ripping

OLIVIA ENGEL

Maybe it should be strange, seeing my own corpse. I mean– I’m right here. Physical, tangible. But my corpse, my own bloody and mangled corpse, it’s here as well. Physical, tangible. It should be strange, weird, confusing, frightening.

But it’s not.

The smell, it’s atrocious. Like rotting meat, mixed with something metallic. It burns my nostrils, but my mouth waters.

I squat down.

My finger hooks under a particularly large gash, right under my ribs. ‘What happened to it–me? How long have I been here?’ briefly flashes through my mind; I don’t dwell on it. I tug down, ripping through the flesh. Blood spills through, soaking my finger. My stomach growls. I lean down. The smell, the awful, putrid smell, fogs my mind. My thoughts are hazy, clouded with desire to eat, to consume. I bury my face in the wound.

Blood fills my mouth, its copper taste coating my tongue. I lap at it, drinking it. My teeth sink into my skin–myskinmyskinmyskin; this is my skin my body my corpse–tearing it off. A wail rips through my throat.



Monochromatic Mania

KAYLB JAMES, PRINT MAKING