

the Lit

Spring Issue 2025



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Letter from the Editors

Another unforgettable year at Choate has swiftly flown by, consisting of memorable moments like Deerfield Day, the Northern Lights, and the Choate Carnival. Amidst the blossoming season, the Spring Term for The Lit flourished with creativity and enthusiasm, bringing joy and life to the campus. Among its highlights were Thursday meetings at The Lit, each featuring enthralling activities like watercolor painting, balderdash, one-line poetry, and blind contour drawing.

While The Lit welcomed new members to its cabinet, our beloved former senior members will depart Choate to start another chapter of their journey. Their creativity, commitment, and leadership have left an incredible mark on The Lit, which will echo in every future publication and event. Thank you to John Markley '25 and Justin Lee '25. In addition to our seniors, we would also like to recognize everyone who brought their creativity to the meetings and submitted their wonderful work to our issues. Whether you wrote, illustrated, designed, or spoke, The Lit is always grateful for your dedication and talent.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to Dr. Sip for his unwavering support and encouragement. Thank you to the Copy Center for their behind-the-scenes support in making each issue possible. Above all, thank you to all students, faculty, and subscribers for supporting The Lit.

This year's Spring Issue embodies the vibrant colors of spring and manifests the creative minds of our student body. With that, we are thrilled to present The Lit's 2025 Spring Issue.



BEN LEE '27

The Upchuck

My little brother's pollen allergies return with Spring and he clutches fistfuls of Claritin as he ducks through our tattered screen door, off buses, into classrooms of thirty, forty kids—
There's sneezing, so much sneezing, his shirt necks and sleeves are stiff from mucus, the stream is vulgar—
And I am not allergic, my mom and I are so proud, I'm not allergic to life's skittish gifts; I can chug all the smog I want, inundate me!—
But the upchuck is obscene, the final outpour demands gasps and cleanup crews, or maybe just one, two good witnesses—
Wait, look, here, at my slop in the toilet bowl—isn't that just the prettiest view of the porcelain throne?

& Now, in the windowless bathroom
stall with the stuck lock
all purpose bleach cleaner
floods my nose and chokes me
from the inside-out

& At the stovetop with Mami, as I
tiptoe to peer over
the rim of a screaming steel pot, the
brujerías cauldron,
I breathe in fuming vinegar and go
blind with sour epiphany

& The hot springs at Atotonilco
replace my spit and snot with
molten water as I dunk and inhale
in the shallow, sputtering adults' pool

& I crack open the long-closed window
of my second-floor room,
(hibernation's ending)
flush out the chlorine with
March's good morning

& Mami leads me
by the hand
to sink,
to rinse,
to cleanse

& I sweat out every toxin I've ingested
until the lava is
only water, again.



Tasting Spring

Tears of Spring will roll
As birds tweedle and the creeks trickle
The grass has not yet plated
Its prickly sheen of green
Lounging, anticipating the sun
To cue its vibrant hue

Shattered the crisp drapes of winter,
The smoky, sharp aftertaste twilight
For the impatient gallops of merriweather
Baby swallows but a trill alarm for 'morrow
Fluttering in the blended palate of sunrise
Whose arms unwind the recluse blinds

Woken from my slumber
Craving the Sun's unleashed embrace
Was an untamed, unsatiated hunger
Daffodil buds gleam and showcase
The furry pollen wind strips to erase

As I savored fresh, sweet spring gliding down my face.



Tonight and Tonight and Tonight

Tonight I'm kissing the floor—
we're in love!

The tap water I drenched my face
with
hasn't dried yet and
now the wet carpet beneath my lips
tastes like all my cologne it's sucked
up: cloves, chestnut, cedarwood
and road salt crumbs.
Me, as a simulacrum of scents.

Fat teardrops are
saliva strings between our mouths
and we taste the same hot, stale
breath
as we throw a collective tantrum.
(Celebrate!)
Tonight we're ugly together.

And we disagree with the pouty
music trickling from the speaker,
because it's disingenuous and
cherry-picked and nothing besides
the floor's stiff truth and
the wind's shrieking sounds right,
if it wasn't thrown onto me
it's no good,
not real,
not like the floor and I are,

and we're almost one:
carpet threads reach out their split ends
to embrace my cheek and palms and
they needle into my pores,
sewing our frayed edges together.
Tonight they have
a message for me,
a confirmation—
oh.
They want me to vacuum.
But it's getting late and
my back is cold.
If it wasn't so uncomfortable to lay here,
I think we'd rival the star-crossed lovers,
but tonight my bed looks warmer,
looks softer, I guess



The Dragon's Game of Uul

The game of Uul is not for fools or those who've drained their luck
It takes more than just a bore to make them run amok
Pick your 20, 12, and 8, three people in the inn
Find yourselves a table and then let the games begin

Roll your dice and take the sum, the rest will do the same
The person with the least is set to start the dragon's game
They choose a die to roll again to increase their amount
But values must go up or else they lose five from their count

Clockwise, as the dragon spins, contenders let dice fly
'Till all who haven't failed do not dare take another try
By then the leader, second place, and third continue forth While
last place gets left in the dust, their time has run its course

Any ties with first or last, the players roll their dice



On Bench,

wink at blinking stars
mar the Mars menagerie
I'm stranded in sky



Folded Swans

The receptionist asked if I wanted
a room with a view.
I said, what for?
So, I could watch the world
leave without me?

The cars driving by the window
look me at eye level.
Because the bridge—
the one that branches between me
and Largo—
comes so close to the tip of my nose
that I can do nothing but hold my
breath.

As the cleaning lady creeps through
the doorway,
I hide beneath cotton-white mattress.
I stare at her tired, worn,
begging-to-be-free boots.

One at a
time,
she folds the towels.
With much grace and precision.

I let out a yawn.

She's gone,
out of my life.
I may finally crawl back into the
world. Just to see the towels folded
into swans stoic on my bed.
And out the window,
was the cleaning lady.
Staring back at me
straight from the edge of the bridge.



SIENNA KIM '28

Dinner on a Tuesday

The kitchen is aglow, shouts of ‘pass the oyster sauce’ along with the roar of the numerous pots on the stove. There’s a steamed fish somewhere in this mess. The soup has been simmering for three hours now, its smell drifting out the door and into the living room, enveloping the whole house in an herbal, faraway odor. The girl dares not to ask what’s inside the pot — something about corn and wood ears and dates and chickens with black skin has her head spinning — but she knows it will be marvelous; it always is. Her mother is frying something in the wok, the sizzle of the pan music to her ears.

Another pot presents itself miraculously on the dining table adjacent to the kitchen, filled with abalone and fish maw and sea cucumbers. “For good luck,” she can almost hear someone say. “To fill the new year with prosperity.” Her heart breaks for a grandmother she never got to meet; glimpses of packed bags, secret smiles, and hushed exchanges; all this effort (and money) just to bring foreign delicacies to her tongue.

The sacrifice is evident; if she doesn’t see it in the sweat on her mother’s forehead, she sees it in the pile of food on her plate, hears it in the shouts telling her to eat more, eat more, hears the clinking of the cups and ‘happy new year’s that echo across the round table.

This home, she decides, will be her proof. Proof that the stories they’ve told, the oceans they’ve journeyed across, have culminated into a fragile sort of existence that makes life worth living.

And amidst this wonderful sort of chaos, she’s found where she belongs.



Remedios

The East Coast lip chap
migrated from my
lips to my tongue-tip,
or maybe the coffee was too hot
this morning. Speech buds and
bears thorns.
(But what's a charred tongue when
a class full of first grade jitterbugs
are chanting already,
Friday Friday Friday?)

Anyway, my tongue burns as it
runs over citrus on my upper lip.
(Post-coffee I was watered with
Breakfast in the Classroom orange
juice.)

It burns good like
sun on skin, but
I should've put on Vaseline,
like crayon on paper,
then my writing wouldn't run
with water, the wax would cling,
cling, even when the paper's
curled in on itself,
limp with moisture.
Should've crayoned my lips with
Vaseline this morning, before the
coffee,
before the orange,
should've some months ago,
before the wind tore us up,
so that the citrus would've
slid down, away, off, etc.

Behind the chain link fence
through the tongue burn sting
Ms. Bonilla's bungalow promises you that mornings should,
will
always taste like wet concrete and
cut grass and scuffed red rubber balls.
The air swells with little voices and
rain coming soon soon soon and
sun's slant rays,
tiptoeing into every corner of every room. They seek me out
and I photosynthesize.

I'm turning book pages.
I count minutes in 2-4-6-8-10.
The kids are making number
bonds and
I root for them.
We're bonding, we're mending.

Then the bell, the alarm, the noise.
I stay behind at the doorstep of
the classroom during the fire drill.
Wave goodbye to the kids as
they take shelter on an open
playground, myself burning to an
imagined crisp.

And now it's me and Vonnegut
and the sun.



破了!

i. porcelain

i'll take you back-
golden age, hollywood retro
tinny voices, black & white TV
girl on screen
 sadistic grin
[cue noise: shatter.]
white carpet red carpet
 sadistic grin
girl off screen

ii. puppet

carved out of bamboo baskets
voices overlapping voicing overlapping city overlapping chaos
& they echo; they ask if i have the capacity to carry a soul;
my strings r fraying at the seams & they tell me
to tie them tightly lest they all break at once.

if i could laugh i would

iii. princess

she'll take you back -
silver screen,
avant-garde
light scatters off the
edges of her crown
her highness speaks!
she send her
 sincerest
 apologies

-
-
-

she has fallen, she says
& she's not getting back up



Pretty girl in Bangles

You know she's coming when you hear her jingle
That's because she's the pretty girl covered in bangles
Her shirts and pants?
As if you'd ever see them with wrinkles
But her eyes,
They never leave her bedroom without a twinkle

She smells like amber, drizzled with honey
A heart so invaluable you couldn't buy it with money
You could only buy it with love, or your words if you're funny
Cracking jokes all afternoon at a park that's real sunny That's
her favorite place

The golden piercings along her tiny ears,
Gives a beautiful view when she sits next to her peers
She doesn't mind all the growls, and harsh words, and leers
Instead, she focuses on herself,
That's why she volunteers

Oh, to be her
The sun,
The happiness,
The muse of all who can see her

I— am a coward
All I can be is a dreamer



In the Gym

You hear the clink of metal,
heavy breaths like whispers,
the thud of weights falling—
today is your leg day,
and you've forgotten my sneakers,
so here you are,
feet wrapped in soft Uggs.

In this space,
no one cares to look beyond
themselves,
lost in their own sweat and muscles.

Gym days are never perfect,
crowded chaos,
AirPods on 0%,
realization that you did the whole
workout wrong.

Yet you tell yourself:
every day is a lesson,
the leg press that used to be new
becomes a story that you know by
heart,
the dead lift that used to hurt your
back
doesn't anymore.

Once trembled at the sight of
the bench, among people,
whose weights crush the air,
yours a feather,
but who cares?
Here for just yourself,
growing,
each drop of sweat,
each plate added to your
barbell,
a testament
to the journey embraced.



Two Koi

two koi

in waters clear as desired skin where
darkness begins to stretch thin,

two koi fish dance, a shining pair their
fins like petals in the air.

one fish of ember, the other a blank
inseparable, they never sank.

or so, that was assumed
but how come flowers never bloomed?

the koi fish circle close, then dart away
they never meet again and play.

when spring unwraps her silken song,
the coy fish out of love glide away long.

and so they sink into murky waters
between them, no more offers.



Do You Hear It Too?

I heard my name again today
And I don't know if I'm insane or crazy
But either way I'm manic
This time the yell was loud
Almost an aching in the voice
Yet no one seemed to hear it
But also, no one was there
An empty bridge
Hanging tall over the muddied water
The voice sent waves through the clear silk

It felt like I was being followed
My left shoulder always feeling a presence right behind it
The feeling of nothing brushing against my hair
All I ask is that you don't kill me
I like to think I have more to my life than just my birth and then
hell
I believe there's a heaven
A heaven made from tinsel and cotton
Where the disembodied voices can't thrive

So, I'm sorry if you think this is just another one of my delusions
But I promise, this is my real life



I hope you never know how much you wear me out.

I hope you never know how much you wear me out.

The idea of you resides in my soul, festering with every interaction. You blot color across the blank canvas of my brain, entering and healing places I did not know were hurt. You cure the lesions that would never have healed, and all you need to do is tell me "Hello," or even "Goodbye." Without the warm embrace of your presence, you curse me, wound me, and you will never even know it. I hope you will never know it.

I hope you never know how much you wear me out.

I sit, examining your back. The back you turn to me every time. I seek you out, I seek your smile, the curvature of your lips and the jumping of your cheeks. I seek the fleetingness of your fickle expressions, the crevices of your wrinkles, the halo that surrounds your hair. The way the sun hits, the way the moon illuminates, the way lights bends to your will and the way you fund my will. You control me, you evoke me, you deprive me. Still, I cannot loathe you, I cannot be disgusted by you. It is impossible to be disgusted by a warmth such as yours.

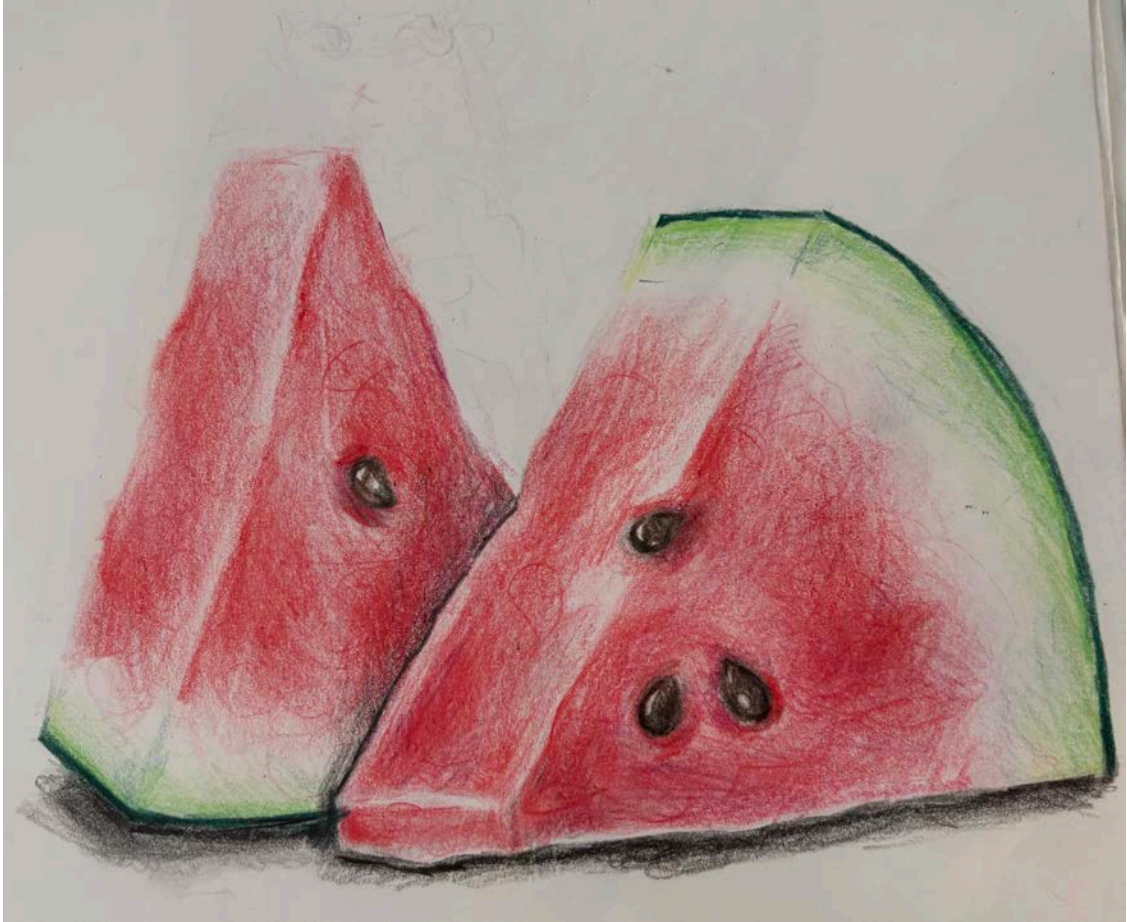
I hope you never know how much you wear me out.

Violence and brutality sound like similar terms, but they are anything but. That which we call violence, it is harsh, and carried out with intent. Brutality is an entirely different force. Brutality can be gentle and kind, but blunt and painful. Violence is widely experienced, brutality is not. Brutality is so utterly directed, an arrow straight to the heart. And yet brutality can come from even the kindest, purest, and most palpable love. That palpability is what brings the brutality. Or rather, that palpability is what amplifies the brutality. The brutality is present, and it always will be. You just will not know it, and you never will, or so I hope.

I hope you never know how much you wear me out.

And still, I carry on like a carrion. An automaton, a sentient piece of meat. A piece of meat that knows what is coming, and has always known. Who continues to know, and who continues to try. Who continues to love, who continues to hate, who continues to laugh, who continues to try. To try until there is nothing left in the meaning of the words "to try." Say something over and over again and it will no longer feel real. The same goes for doing, do and do until it leaves nothing but fragments of a memory, a worn and empty memory. Wait until everything loses meaning, and that is when you will know that you are worn out. And still, I love you, and,

I hope you never know how much you wear me out.



UV 12

My tongue is numb
My tooth aches
My head is pounding
From the ice-cold ice cream
I devoured in less than 5 minutes

The heat wave from the sun
The sea right in front of me
Is a blur of blue paint
On a white campus
Golden glitter sparkled on top
With so much care
And so effortlessly

The sand below me
Turns into black ashes
TikTok I was watching
Turns into a black screen

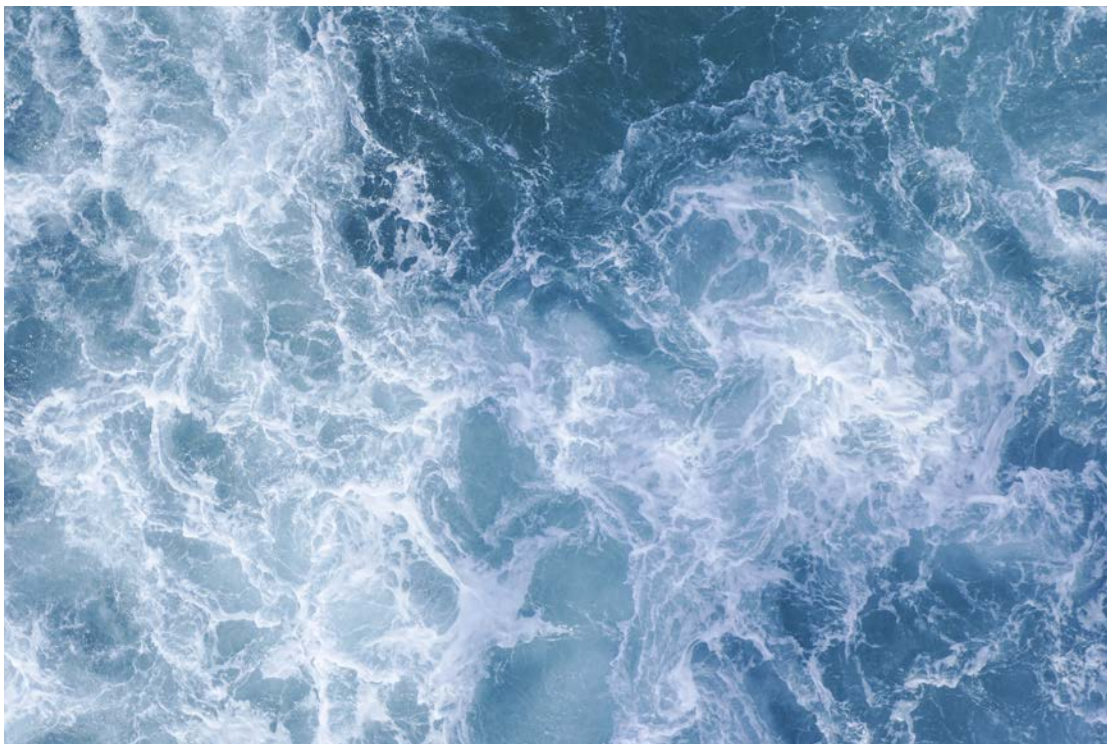
I feel like plastic bag
Thrown out into space
Wandering without a destination

This is not a crisis
This is a hiatus
From all the disordered thoughts and
feelings



The Snowbank Below my Window

The snowbank below my window melts
under a car's tail light beams, slushy pink.
The dorm's downcast rollup blinds —
square, sterile, woozy vanilla— lend me
sleepy eyelids,
but the snow gloats like moon puddles,
peppered with craters of
browning grass blades groaning
as they curl towards icy death.
I kiss my wind-torn knuckles,
the bleeding burlap skin,
and drive them deep into the snowbank. I
hope freezerburn will cauterize the wounds,
but my blood seeps into the gnawing white,
and the snow blushes, coy.



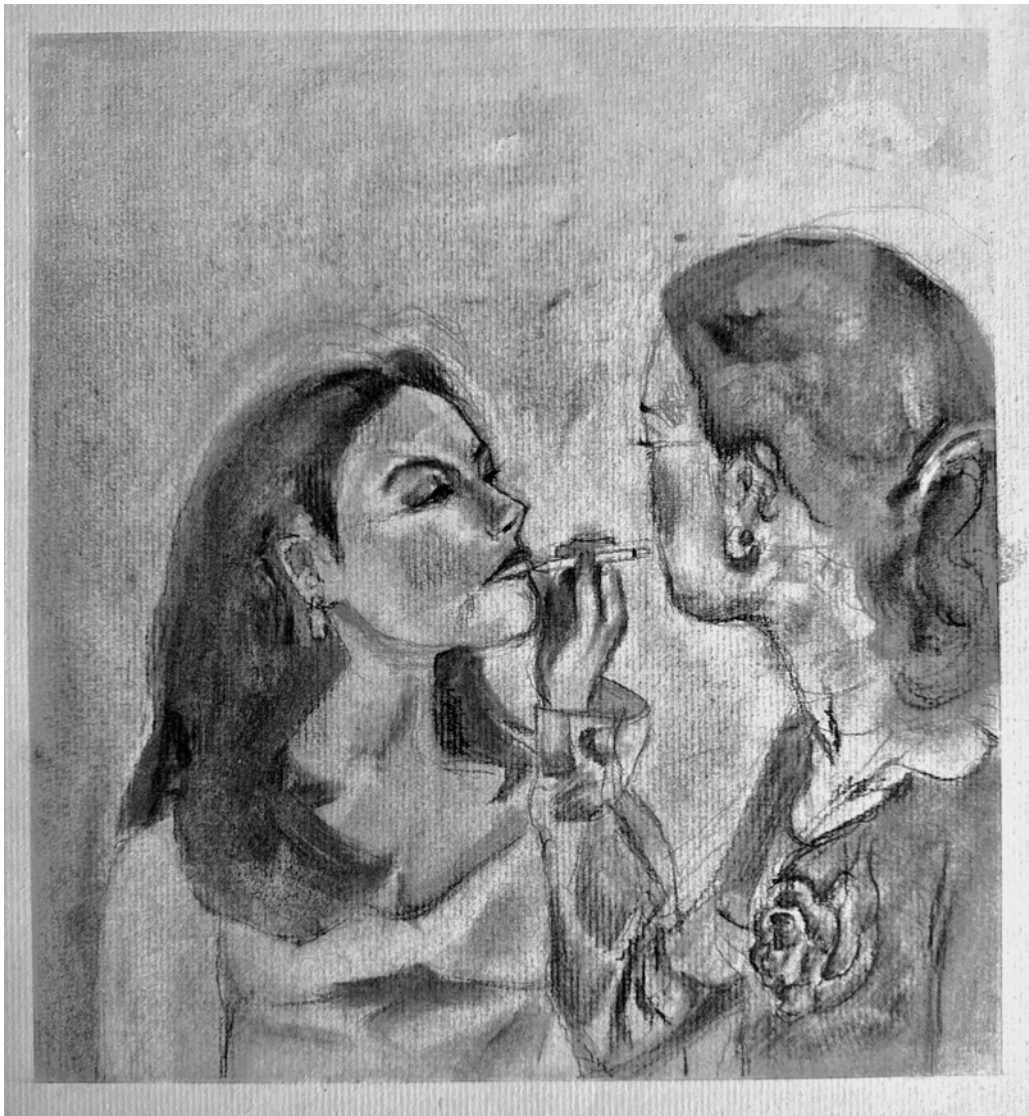
Tomorrow

Tomorrow was the day that my house caught on fire
It sparked from a candle in the kitchen—flames growing higher
Smoke permeated every crevice of my bubblegum lungs
Tomorrow will be the breath that I've been saving all along

Tomorrow was the day that you walked past me without a glance
Yet I noticed that you were wearing your favorite denim pants
The back of your head got smaller as you walked away
Tomorrow will be the first time I won't beg for you to stay

Tomorrow was my last chance to make a conversation
So, I'll just think about you every day, on my too-long vacation
Your thin-lipped smile slips into my cutest dreams
Tomorrow will be the same way; my life is made simple and clean

Tomorrow is forever
Tomorrow is a lie
Tomorrow holds my sorrow
But never tells me why



Shaping Something Beyond Clay

Press your elbows on your thighs Ground
your legs to the earth
Embrace the clay with your palms Protect
the new-born and the naive

Put aside your worries about getting
clothes dirty
You will end up with dirty clothes and
bad pottery
Focus on the hard but smooth
Matt but glossy clay
In contact with your gentle but firm
hands

Feel what you're creating
From scratch
You are creating life from the shapeless,
the dull, the raw

It will resist, wobble, sway
But stand steady
Your frustration won't fix it
Embrace its volatility

Too much pressure will shatter the clay
Too much freedom will make nothing
Tight hands feel good until they suffocate
you

When there is no movement
It is time to drill and rise

Slowly and carefully
Find the center of the clay
A thread finding the hole in its needle

Lift the wall higher
With equal force pushing in and pushing out
Finding the perfect balance

Marks aren't your enemy
Haste is
Imperfections are signs of improvement
Tests for your patience
Take your time
Smooth it up

All you hear is the sound of the wheel spinning
All you smell is the muddy puddles on rainy days
All you see is the clay spinning in place
All you feel is the initially alien texture that has transformed into a calming feeling of wet clay

Your fingers curve
The slip embellishing
Adding the sparks and color
To the pottery

Fire scathing hot
Must come
To harden what you made

Some crack
Some last
But with grace,
Paint the ones that survived the glaze

For in this world
we all must learn
to build, to bend, to brace.



Benefactor
Catherine Kim

Literati

Johnny Jannotta '25
Reid Bock '27
Isabelle Jiao '26
Victoria DeVito '27
Sophia Liao '25
Lucy Domingo '26
Davis Linardos '27
Maya Abeles '28
Henry Gillibrand '26
Will Garcia '27
Johan Mendoza-Luna '28
Marin Wang '27
Violeta Rodriguez '27
Mariana Regalado '28
Kaitlyn Yu '27
Cora Slove '26
Maddox Sohn '28

Faculty Adviser

Stephen Siperstein

Masthead

Rafia Pasha '26
Izzy Cook '27
Jamie Lee '27
Kaz Kousaka '27
Harry Kim '28

Editor's Pick

Parker Jackson '28
Alexis Lee '28
Friday Acuña '26
Rella Wang '26

Literati

Ella McNeil '26
Josh Pan '27
Lucy Pateman '25
Drew Wolfson '27
Ananya Ravipati '26
Jason Chang '26
Edward Jeong '27
Curtis Mbaya '28
Kazuma Iwata '28
Luke Britton '26
Tashi Bista '26
Bailee Timmons '27
Vlada Letti '27
Katherine Chong '25
Preston Shepherd '28
Juliet Eller '27
Yui Sugimoto '28

