
Anna Youngstrom
Journeys
Imagine Literary Magazine 2025

Imagine Literary Magazine

Harrison High School

255 Union Avenue, Harrison, New York

Advisor: Amanda Barash

Co-President: Farrah Frandson

Co-President: Seblé Lopez

Secretary: Cate Latini

Treasurer: Kayli Kyu

Digital Promotions: Francesca Monti Mihanovich Ines Monti Mihanovich

Digital Promotions: Ines Monti Mihanovich

Additional Members



Isabella Cajahuanca
Luke Castellano
Mary Grace Crozier
Harison Fliegenspan
Madison Glick
Neeve Kenny
Kayli Kyu
Joey Lipple-Smetana
Mira McKell
Isa Mitra
Francesca Monti Mihanovich
Ines Monti Mihanovich
Gabriela Perez Capcha
Madelyn Polenberg
Isabella Roman
Talia Russo
Dominique Ventriglio
Sarah Wang
Sophie Wong
Olive Yoo
Anna Youngstrom
Kiara Yu



Letter From the Editors

Dear Readers,

We are thrilled to present this year's edition of Imagine, Harrison High School's literary magazine. Within these pages, you'll find poetry that pulses with emotion, representing the various perspectives of students in our community. We are proud to bring to light stories that stretch the limits of imagination, and artwork that speaks when words fall short. Each piece is a reflection of the creativity, courage, and curiosity that define our student body.

As Co-Presidents of Imagine, we are endlessly inspired by the talent and vulnerability of our contributors. This magazine is more than a collection of words and images, it is a celebration of each individual journey our contributors have been on. Each narration or moment capturing represents a pivotal point in the development of the author.

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to Ms. Barash, our dedicated advisor, for her unwavering support, insight, and belief in our vision. Imagine would not be possible without her guidance and encouragement.

Thank you to everyone who submitted their work, and to all who continue to support the arts at Harrison High School. We hope this magazine moves you, challenges you, and above all, inspires you to imagine..

Warmly,

Farrah Frandson & Seblé Lopez

Co-Presidents, Imagine Literary Magazine


Nature and the Environment
Farrah Frandson
5

Seblé Lopez



The Ghazal of Dreams
Dominique Ventriglio

In the garden of life, dreams gently weave,
With whispers of love in the twilight bloom.

Like stars in the sky, through the night they gleam
Guiding lost souls as they wander, and bloom.

Memories of him linger, tender and dying,
A timeless reflection where heartbeats bloom.

Though seasons may change, love's grace remains:
A testament to hope, forever we bloom.

With each heartache faced, lessons arise,
Transforming our sorrows, wisdom will bloom.

In this tapestry woven, my truth finds its room,
A whisper of love, in Dom's heart, will bloom.

Routines In The Night
Abigail Cox

As dusk descends,
Creatures awake,
A velvet blur through moonlit skies,
The shadow's kiss to the starry sky.
With leathery sails,
Gliding through silent air,
She moves with grace,
A flash of shadow,
Guardian of the dark
Then she's gone,
Like a fleeting dream before dawn.



Anna Youngstrom

Silk

Sarah Wang

Colorful as a rainbow
Radiant as a mirror
Undulating as the ocean waves
Smooth as glass

Like heaven
Far from my fingertips
That like famished vagrants
Who starve to be fed
Yearn to caress and stroke it

This is silk
This is my greed





Ezra Burghouts

Bipolar Winter
Melina Konnari

Goodbye my fellow friend,
The winter that has been with me through all
Sad cold nights and
The most boring school afternoons

The winter that has been with me through all
Secrets of the night and hidden whispers
The most boring school afternoons
Chilly mornings and nice cold slumbers

Secrets of the night and hidden whispers
The sun setting early and rising late
Chilly mornings and nice cold slumbers
Snow that falls upon us every once in a while

The sun setting early and rising late
Different occasions throughout the winter
Snow that falls upon us every once in a while
Even earning a snow day sometimes

Different occasions throughout the winter
February break and random snow days
Even earning a snow day sometimes

Hand Waving to Winter

Laura Barbosa

Spring is springing from every corner.
Shoveling through March.
Expressing colors and feelings.
It can finally get warmer.

Shoveling through March.
May we crawl in green grass.
It can finally get warmer.
I'll miss the snow a little though.

May we crawl in green grass.
Leaving the winter time behind us.
I'll miss the snow a little though.
But I've got a good feeling about next season.

Leaving the winter time behind us.
I used to shiver in your arms.
But I've got a good feeling about next season.
Waving goodbye to winter with my hands.

I used to shiver in your arms.
And now we can dance in the sun.
Waving goodbye to winter with my hands.
I like placing my legs in bodies of warm water.

And now we can dance in the sun.
The cold behind us, and the sun ahead.
I like placing my legs in bodies of warm water.
I lay my back on the sun kissed ground.

The cold behind us, and the sun ahead.
We're excited for the spring to arrive.
I lay my back on the sun kissed ground.
As spring is springing from every corner

The Black Swan

Dominique Ventriglio

In the gentle morning light
I reminisce by the water's edge
Gazing at the black swan glide
Its graceful presence is a shadow on the lake.

It moves with an unseen elegance
Feathers as dark as night
Beady eyes deep and wise
Holding ancient levels of mystery.

I extend my hand
A gesture of warmth to this misunderstood creature
And the swan pauses
As the water ripples across my reflection.

In that silence
The swan and I become one
Bound by the stillness of the moment
Was I the swan all along?



Jackson Schiele

Grief

and

Loss



Lucas Molina

Emily Lerner

She used to exist.
In the still and solace of a quiet night
I hear her voice echoing through the walls, soft
Like sunshine on both sides of your face
And I know I would follow her to any place

I want to ask the fairies and the bears
What do they do when they long for their mothers
And brothers and sisters
If they too, dwell in desolation and despair

Do they recall the sounds of laughter
Or remember the hum of melancholy
I can no longer envision a future of me ahead
So many words left unspoken and unsaid

I'm sorry I had nothing to say that night
Her essence and her life and her spirit all linger
In a place I will never go
And I'm certain the world has come to an end



Milk Glass

Elena Suarez

Headed towards the kitchen late that night. Shifting through the pitch black. The blanket draping on my shoulders was heavy, slightly slipping off. The apartment of mine was lonely and quiet. The only being in the house was me, although my boyfriend should be home very soon. I looked at the oven's clock: 9:40. Every night he is home by ten -- I'd been alone all day and always get desperate nearing the ending of his shift. To be held up against him and fall asleep within his warmth is what I looked forward to every day. Today should've been no different. Why? Why did he have to be so stupid?.

I poured myself a glass of milk. The phone rang.
"Hey hun. How was today?"
I smiled. I told him how bored I was and complained about work.
"Don't worry about it, I'm sure tomorrow will be different, I'll be home soon. I love you. gotta go bye." He hung up before I got to tell him I loved him.

I settled myself down into a stool and waited for my milk to heat up. Nestling my head into my arms looking for comfort. There was only a small shimmer of light radiating the room. Then it poured. Drops slapped the window pane and a loud growl came from the sky. The sound of quaking thunder made my body jolt. The microwave beeped. Another jolt and turn of the head. I grabbed my glass and headed towards the couch holding the warm cup close to me. I glanced at the clock again: 10:05.

Where are you?

The phone rang. "Hello this is the Reigan Hospital. Am I speaking with Cathrine?" I responded with a cautious yes. "I'm sorry to be the one to say this to you but Mr. Clark has been in a terrible accident and I'm afraid..."
It was silent for a split moment, my breath quickened and I shouted at her for an answer.
"He's gone, Ms. Adams.."

What?

Is the only thing that could come out of me before I dropped to my knees. The phone fell from my grasp and the glass of milk shattered on the floor as I sat with an aching heart. Dazed. I sobbed alone in bed that night without his warmth to put me to sleep. I remembered.....

I never got to tell him how much I loved him.



I Will Live For You

Olive Yoo

Ask me not whether I have found something to live for –
but rather, ask me if I have found the person I want to live with.
Choosing is the hardest part, or maybe there's just no one
decent enough for me. However,
everything about you – how do I
find the words to say that we are like a
glimpse of the moon crossing over with the Sun.
Harmonious, yet only lasting for a brief moment. Please don't find me
cowardly,
I haven't the strength to ask if you would
join me on this journey that is called life. I do not
know what I would do if you should deny. So I
let silence grow instead of my heart.

Mayflower blue is your favorite color. I feel ashamed for
never being able to have guessed it. Your first instinct is always to
object, even if it's in your favor. You always
place first, in every category, contest, and test.
Question everything, you always say. I wish you wouldn't, as you will
question whether our
roads are meant to cross.

Someday, when I find the courage to follow my heart, will you even
think about it? It's a lot to commit to, this
uneven, unstable, unwritten life of mine. But in my dreams you're so
visible I can even begin to imagine what a
wonder it would be to travel alongside you in life. If you gave me an
x-ray, all of my bones would be living for
you, you who are not mine yet. Just why do I hesitate in asking when I have
zero things to lose?

My Grandfather is Dying and I am Getting a Haircut

Madelyn Polenberg

Gone is the girl who struggles to speak
Here is the girl who makes conversation effortlessly
Gone is hiding behind glasses and curls
Here is contacts and straight hair
Gone is New York
Here is Florida
As she straightens my hair
Cuts dead ends
I feel like a whole new person
I am content if only for a moment

But then reality hits
I am not here for vacation
To spend time with my cousin and laugh
I am here to see my grandfather in his sick final days
Cancer is a horrid thing
I am cut through by it like a knife
The man who once picked me up
Has been permanently brought down

Disney World and vacation trips
Overshadowed in my mind
By the undeniable feeling of loss
He's alive
I remind myself
But not for long
And so I am grieving
For the living man
Who won't be much longer



Francesca Monti Mihanovich

What do you think?
The hairdresser asks me
And I am back in the chair
Staring in the mirror
I fake a smile
I like it
I reply
It's the truth
I like how I look at the moment
But not how I feel
The guilt of happiness
When he is sick in bed
My grandfather is dying
And I am getting a haircut

WHIMSY AND COMEDY



Ezra Burghouts



Victoria Palumbo

Venusian Dreams

Farrah Frandson

When I was a young girl, I often daydreamed of far away worlds. Worlds full of utopian experiences such as birds awakening me with their chirps, warm luscious air filled with fresh breeze blowing my long healthy hair and cotton floral summer dresses. Sky colored slightly translucent domes hovered over the entire earth. Dizzying fairytale-looking forests with deer and bunnies pleasantly trotting into bushes covered in glittering fairy dust. A magnificent fountain of beauty and health supplying me with every vitamin essential to my immortal existence. The most pleasant and appealing part of my dreams was that nobody ever appeared, that is except for me, sometimes at varying ages, older or younger. It was satisfying and I was seldom worried or afraid of this solitude. If I ever felt motherless, an older me would come along and pull me into my own lap, kiss my cheek or top of my head. I would get a glimpse of how I looked in forty years. Thin but nevertheless luminous skin, delicately meek ankles and wrists, freckles and beauty marks scattered across the bridge of my nose or my collarbone. Lilies or orchids weaved into my braided or wavy hair. Soft body hair growing from my golden brown skin soothing my worries. If I ever felt motherly, I would find a young and often quiet baby me and cradle myself, until I would fall asleep, playing with my own finger, petting my own hair. I admired the beauty that lay in the purity and innocence of my infancy, my soft curled pieces of hair, butterfly-like fluttering eyelashes, puppy-like sort of nose, all consuming Venusian brightness of my eyes and skin, that distinct birthmark upon my knee. I mothered myself. Venus was sort of like a second moon in the sky, only it was quite close and large, larger than the actual Moon, so a great ounce of life was glorified, romanticized, beautiful and entrancing. Comforting and dream-like.

Acceptance Speech for the Master of Procrastination Award

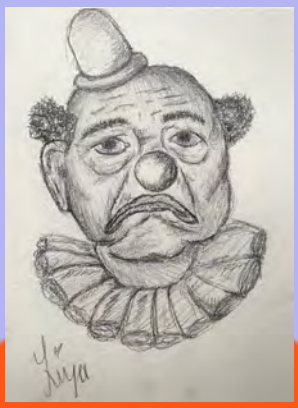
Lily Burghouts

Wow. I, uh, I honestly didn't think I'd make it here tonight. Not because I didn't believe in myself, but because I totally forgot to write this speech until about five minutes ago. But hey! That just proves why I deserve this award, right?

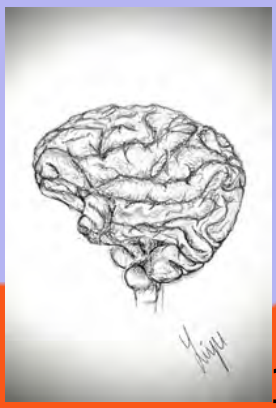
First off, I'd like to thank my teachers, who have graciously accepted my last minute Google Classroom submissions and ignored the timestamps on my assignments. Without your patience and extended deadlines, I wouldn't be standing here today.

To my parents: thank you for pretending not to notice when I suddenly became super productive at cleaning my room the night before a big test. Your subtle eye rolls were deeply motivating. And to my friends, who have suffered through my "Wait, when was that due?!" moments, you guys are the real MVPs.

And, of course, a special shoutout to caffeine, my Google search history, and the power of panic. You have never let me down.
To anyone who thinks procrastination is just being lazy, I say, look at me now. Some people plan, and some people work best under extreme pressure. I just happen to be really, really good at the latter.
Thank you so much, and I promise, next time, I'll start preparing ahead of time. Probably.



Liya Lugo





Jack Noone



Seven Messages

Michelle Nze

This story I am about to tell you readers, is not a story you will hear anywhere else or that you will ever forget, for this story is one of strangeness. See, the room I was in, did not exist in space nor in time but I was there. Before me, cloaked in silence, stood the Keeper. Eyes like constellations, infinite and knowing. A mind that spoke into mind without words.

What do you love? The question, not spoken, but felt. And I answered- not in words, but with my heart. Music, the weight of an ink on a page, the secrets that the moon hides, the laughter of my sister, the feeling of creation. The Keeper said nothing, but I felt understood. Felt warmth, acceptance, and a love older than existence. And then, with a whisper, they were gone.

But before their departure, one last thought pressed against my mind:
Be watchful. For seven days, the universe will speak.

Day One: The Message in the Wind
Walking home, a gust carried a scrap of newspaper to my feet.
An old interview with an artist I admired—words underlined by fate:
"Fear is the only thing between you and everything you want."
I clutched the paper, heart thudding.
Hadn't I been waiting, afraid, too uncertain to start?

Day Two: The Stranger on the Train
A child, no older than six, stared at me with unguarded wonder.
"You look like someone who knows magic," she said.
I laughed, but she was serious. "You do," she insisted.
And in that moment, I remembered the feeling—
Of words conjuring worlds, of music bending time.
Had I forgotten? The magic had never left me.

Day Three: The Book That Found Me
At a secondhand store, a book tumbled from the shelf.
No title on the cover, just golden embossing: Open me.
Inside, a single phrase circled in blue ink:
"Begin before you're ready."
The message rang inside my ribs like a bell.
Wasn't that what I'd always waited for? To be ready?

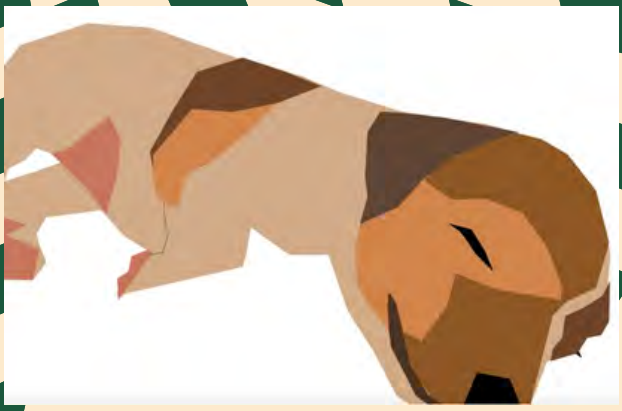
Day Four: The Song on the Street
A busker played in the city square, a melody so achingly familiar.
I knew it—I had written it once, years ago, and abandoned it.
But here it was, breathing through another's hands.
Wasn't this proof that what we create can live beyond us?
That our work, once freed, will find its way?

Day Five: The Moon's Whisper
Late night, sleepless, I watched the moon.
A cloud split apart, light draped over me.
And in my mind, the Keeper's voice returned:
You are part of something vast, and you belong in it.
I closed my eyes, and for the first time in years,
I did not feel small.

Day Six: The Letter Never Sent
Sorting old things, I found a letter addressed to myself.
Written in another year, another sorrow.
"One day, you will rise, and you will not be afraid."
A letter from my past self to my present one.
I wept and let the fear go.

Day Seven: The Final Gift
A dream. The Keeper returned, watching.
Not speaking, but I knew the message:
Now, you choose what happens next.
I woke with purpose, hands already reaching for a pen.

And so, I began. I wrote a letter to all my loved ones, I packed my bag and I departed for London. That was the last time America ever saw me, that was the last time I was ever a fearful man. For now in London, I had what the Keepers had told me I would have, magic, passion and love.



Francesca Monti Mihanovich

Joey Lipple-Smetana



Just Wait For It
Harison Fliegenspan

It starts as you start -
Wrong. Actually, it starts
Before you ever got the chance
to begin.
It gives you
time,
however,
until when you realize
it's even there to begin with.

You'll do lots with it
in the over-blown,
existential coke rant of some higher power
which we call
a nice, hard working life.
Maybe you'll write some magazine about it
that would wear long-sleeve turtlenecks
and jeans
to their son's tee-ball game
if it got a chance at life.

Maybe,
you'll shackle all its meaning
in an expensive-framed window
onto your wrist,
brag about the imprisonment
to people who won't do the same,
and then die with it
unchained from you and then
pa
ss
ed

on

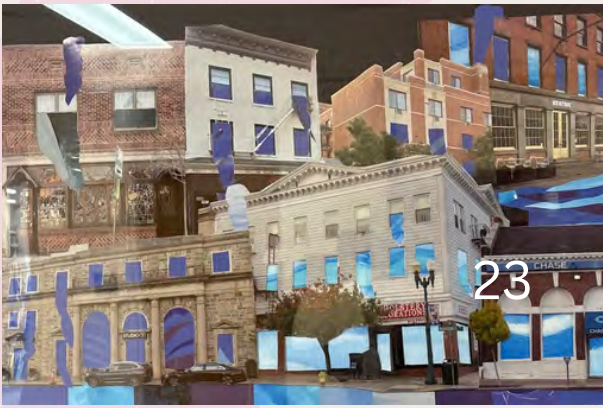
do
wn
To your beloved family member
who will repeat
the same
process..

But with you reminding them
of how little of it
there really is this time

It is the blossoming
of the vivacious leaves
to signify it's a new season,
and it is the act of you
stepping right on them
and thinking none of it,
once it will signify the next.

But at some point,
it will hit you.
You'll have a nice moment
to yourself,
coming home from dinner
with friends made in an era
when it was something
Completely different.
You'll ponder it,
ask yourself
what the hell you were doing,
and what it meant to you.
Then, and only then,
will it walk right up to you,
knock you down,
and taunt,

"Ope! Out of time!"



Victoria Palumbo

Ride

Elena Suarez

In the back, the voice, in a clear female tone, spoke out from the white built-in speakers.

“Where will I take you today?”

I glance out the slightly tinted window, then at my watch. It's eight p.m.

“180 Absterlin.”

“Okay! We will arrive shortly.”

The leather seats were chilled. My arms and thighs were exposed in the short, tight black dress my friends had chosen. The night had settled, and my messages flooded with excitement that rallied within my friend group. I replied and showed some false enthusiasm, laying my head back down and staring out the darkened window. I thought about all the likes I’d get on a new post from tonight. All the men I’d meet. All the friends I’d make. I hugged my arms and bit my lip, bummed out. Was this really the life I was about?

My friends had dragged me out every day from the first time I arrived in San Francisco, and when I refused, they would give me that look. The look that makes you feel like an outcast, it makes you take back your words and surrender down at their feet. This is what I'm made for. This is my life, and I like it. I'm a party animal, a drunk, a seducer, is what I kept telling myself. Sighing, I looked down at the dainty gold watch that sat on my wrist. It's been five minutes. I shot a glance at the empty seat.

“Uhm, excuse me? I think we passed the destination.”

No one responded. A lump of worry stuck in my throat. I jabbed the support button and still no answer; I began to frantically breathe, trying to maintain the oxygen level that was escaping my body due to high levels of anxiety. I looked around my surroundings. There was a dirt road we were heading up, and trees surrounded the area. I reached for my phone, which was being blown up by worried friends and curious exes. I went to press on a text and reach out for help but my phone went black. I sat back down, beginning to accept my fate. Still, I couldn't help but fidget. My eyes darted around the car. Then the wheel stopped. We were at the top of a hill.

“We have made it to your destination. Have a great night.”

The door opened with a click. Slowly, I stuck out my leg and placed it carefully on the floor. The brisk air contacted my skin and swept through. Once the car had left, I took a breath. The night was filled with dozens of tiny white dots floating in the sky above. The moon was full and beamed down like a stage light. Its figure was so close it looked as if I could reach it and take it for myself. I made my way towards a bench. It was silent, but I didn't feel so alone. I felt at peace within myself. Forcing myself to be surrounded by strangers and people who I thought were my friends did not suit my taste. I sat on the bench with my head back. My arms spread out. My legs dangled. Nature filled the quiet spaces. My thoughts were heard.

Who I was wasn't who I wanted.

I enjoyed the rest of the night without people shouting in my ear. No music blasted, and the reek of alcohol and sweat was replaced by pine scent and fresh air. My body was relaxed and motionless. For once, I wasn't dancing till my legs went numb and sore, and after what felt like an hour went by, I checked my cell phone. It had turned on. A request for a new Waymo One had been placed without my doing.

When the car arrived, I headed home. I sat in my room. My clothes were warm. Soft cotton wrapped my delicate skin all over, and I submerged into the sheets. Lighted candles flowered through the room, and in that moment,I knew who I was, who I wanted to be around, and knew I needed to stop trying to be involved in things I don't want.

Isolation and Desolation



Layan Alumwali



Nika Vuletic



Love Ghazal

Laura Barbosa

I woke up with a thought,
can he owe me love?

So many people in this world.
Who owes me love?

Mouths with rude words walk by.
Stomp you with my knee, love.

People seem to rush these things.
Now don't we, love.

Even tennis craves those feelings.
They call out "Three, love".

And the plants that sprout,
no single tree, love.

Joined by others and sway,
just like the sea, love.

Do you feel the same?
Now do you see, love?

The torture to not be there.
I beg for mercy, love.

In this head like nerves,
living rent-free, love.



Romina Alban



Farrah Frandson

Belt of the Stars

Luke Castellano

The asteroid wanders around the waist
Going slow, it has no haste
Seeing the sights as they pass by
The light of the sun, a glint in their eye
They call out to great Saturn's rings
Always saying most interesting things
The storm of Jupiter loves to raze
The asteroid tends to avert their gaze
Slowly the asteroid starts to spin
To face the orange star within
Mercury speeds, not there nor here
Light dances through Venus' atmosphere
They wander curiously through the field
Turning to see the great white shield
The moon protects the sphere behind
From all the threats the heavens can find
The ocean glints, a turquoise ball
The asteroid finds itself starting to fall
Drawn to all the signs of life
A solution to their listless strife
They know they will find their endless bliss
As long as they manage not to miss
Fear is felt across the Earth
The asteroid has a great rebirth
Finally able to feel their soul
The asteroid nears their final goal
Consciousness snuffed, a ringing in ears
The last sprout dies as the dust clears



Time Passing Kaya Ito

I walk into the messy room. The spikes I left off yesterday are lying by the bed. I reach out to touch them, but it feels strange. It's heavy, no, not heavy, but I don't want to hold it. I feel that if I hold it, the pain will come back.

On my desk is a notebook of English words I've been writing. They are all soccer words, and the feel of the ball we practiced with comes back to me. But lately, I touch my notebook less and less. My mind is telling me I have to do it, but my hands just won't move. Even when I open them, the letters look like mere patterns.

From outside the window, I hear children's voices. The sound of a ball being kicked, laughter. I used to run around innocently like that, but now I just watch. Everyone says, "You can play again," but no one knows when that "again" will be. Every time I hear that, it makes my heart flutter in my chest.

Suddenly, I open my desk drawer and find an old photo. It's a picture someone took of me at the moment I made a save in a game last year. Everyone is happy and laughing. But I was the only one staring at the ball. I don't remember what I was thinking anymore. I just feel that there is a time here that I can't go back to.

The spikes in the corner of the room. They're still a little muddy, and I've been meaning to wipe them off, but they're still there. It's not that I don't want to touch them. I just don't know what to do.

The room is empty, only the ticking of the clock echoes in the distance.

I Grab a Knife

Anonymous

I grab a knife
Silver like the moon
Which glowers down
On the surface of the sinful earth
When it under the blanket
Of the midnight sky
When feral, voracious hounds
Could devour you at any moment

I grab a knife
Silver like the surface
Of a lake full of blood-thirsty fish
That you will be thrown into

I grab a knife
Silver like silver
A luxury many covet

I grab a knife
Silver like jewelry
That I am so fond of

I grab a knife
Never would I have ever
Imagined I would ever find it so
Powerful and useful

I stab a knife into your eyes
I scream as it wouldn't make any difference
After all, you're already blind
Of all the light and fire
That resides within me
That I will use to cook your flesh
And feed to the beasts.

The Comfort of Decay

Joey Lipple-Smetana

As pumpkins rot on doorsteps
The memory of you rots in my mind
My heart folds neatly inwards, a million times
I should have known it was in the wrong hands

Too much of a good thing hurts
Plaque builds on a sweet tooth
But you're supposed to learn, forsooth
Where the mold grows, you don't tread

I find rot to be agreeable
Because likewise, I return from whence I came
Like Icarus to the sun, Sisyphus to a hilltop
Back and back to exactly who I'd run from

He's a disease, a sporous plague
Enveloped around my sweet tooth
Said, "I thought I was sweet enough for you"
It seems he prefers a sour aftertaste

It's been a year now
Time is meant to heal all wounds
When time is the enemy, what to do
When I've always got the memory to run back to

As pumpkins rot on doorsteps
The memory of you folds neatly in my mind
My heart rots, a million times
I shouldn't have tread where the mold grew

Conscious

Farrah Frandson

I felt the luminous sun on my eyelids, prying them open and awaking me from my unconscious state. My hand, which laid over my beating heart, reminded me of life. The same repetitive beating in my brain, seemingly strong enough to crash through the surface and break the wall of my skin. I rolled to the other side of what I assumed was a cloud. Soft and creamy: inhabitable for dreaming. I am not sure how long I laid there, time wasn't something I cared about or kept track of. The beating wouldn't fade away, and neither would my existence. I cried out in pain, probably quieter than I thought, a simple mumble under my breath. The sun lied barren on the dusty rim of the skylight as if its purpose was to put me in a state of eternal consciousness. I submitted to its will. My thirst and hunger overcame me, and I knew better than to lie there like that, all deprived. As odd as it is for me to admit, I did care a little bit, something I would later not be able to say with truth. I crawled out of the bedsheets.

My mind was miraculously empty, no thoughts inhabited the vast area, other than when I would next sleep and drink water. I had returned to my primitive ways, an unremarkable little animal. Like the squirrels that had once scurried through the gardens and up the tree branches growing over my childhood home. Unlike the owls that howled in the dead of night, both in the sweltering heat of summer and the nihility of winter. I often reminisced about that place, but it brought pain and nostalgia that reminded me of what I would never again have. So I simply stopped thinking, why would I choose to bring chaos to my mind when I could have bliss? A pure void of feelings and emotions. Even excessive feelings of comfort, love, softness. Because the thing about those feelings is that you will eventually lose them, and in their absence, you will be reminded of the pain of not having them. Sorrow, anxiety, desire for more, will replace that bliss. So I kept those feelings to a limit. I promised myself that until the day I could ensure myself a euphoric existence, I would limit myself from feeling. Nothing separates happiness from melancholy.

CULTURE AND IDENTITY



Faria Ahmed

Gratitude Goes a Long Way
Kailah Hunter

I am grateful for penny tile patterns,
And cucumber potato salad sandwiches,
Even the leopard print staircase,
I am grateful for the Tower of Babel
Because I am grateful for culture.

There is a Plan,
A Prophecy,
A Rapture,
And a Heaven
And a Hell.

I am grateful for them all.
Because I am grateful for everything
That has existed
And will exist.

My stubborn grandpa
perpetuates Christian propaganda,
so he obviously wouldn't listen
when I told him faith doesn't equate to truth.
But I am grateful for his wisdom Nonetheless.



Faria Ahmed



Eleanor Goldey

World

Kailah Hunter

"you are of the world"
yet i sleep with the angels,
and their subway blue,
pretty tights.
well
i used to be an angel
before i became a
sleepyhead.
now i reside in sleepyhead heaven,
along with winged deer
and innocent veins.

i am the universe pretending to be a girl
i am angelical presence pretending to be a girl
i am naivety pretending to be a girl
i am pure soul pretending to be a girl

give me reason to hide behind
my veil.
virtue and innocence
on pedestals for the wisest doll.



Faria Ahmed



Basil

Jyunhee Cheon

As the whole world was in a chaotic state, there I was in my apartment in Connecticut, drowning in my terms of chaos: online zoom. Staring at a screen every day for hours, anticipating which raindrop would win the race, wondering which Rorschach test my brain looked like -- this was not ideal for my nine-year-old self. I felt brainwashed: my eyes getting strained and my whole body exhausted, although there was no movement involved whatsoever. Now that I think about it, exhaustion did not come physically, but mentally, getting locked up behind pixels all day. These few months drained the color of my world, and I felt as if I was living in black and white. Half of my childhood was stolen from me.

One day, my father came back happily from work carrying an orange envelope. Out of curiosity, I could not resist but to ask, "What's that?"

My father smiled and replied, "Oh this? The library nearby sent us this. They're seeds."

"Seeds?"

"Yeah, for gardening. I saw on their website that they were handing out free seeds for people in lockdown. We don't have anything else better to do, why don't we try it? I got basil and milkweed."

"Alright," I said complacently. Although I had no interest in gardening, I did not want to let my father down, so I tried to match his enthusiasm.

We wasted no time and gathered flower pots and soil for planting. Since we lived in an apartment, we had a balcony with plenty of sunlight, so we used it as a space for gardening the seeds. I lined up the pots, shoved as much soil my ten-year-old self could possibly do, and buried the seeds inside it. Finally, I watered it with a watering can I found lying on the balcony.

The next morning, I woke up, and still groggy, I checked on the seeds from the previous day. I do not know what I was expecting, maybe some sort of magical plant like Jack and his Beanstalk that grew overnight, but I was disappointed to find that the flower pot looked exactly the same way I left it. I gave a small frown, and watered it again using the same chopped watering can. I then got ready for another session of staring at pixels for multiple hours.



I checked again the next morning, and the next, and the next, but nothing came out from any of the pots. At this point, I was starting to doubt if the seeds were working, or if I had some sort of curse that never allowed me to grow plants.

However, at around day five, I saw something pop out of the soil on the basil pot. It was so microscopic, it looked as if a tiny piece of paper was accidentally dropped onto the soil. Although it was barely visible, it was enough to replenish my motivation to keep going.

Over the next few days, the plants started to grow, and the milkweed had also sprouted. The first basil seed that sprouted had now turned into a pair of fresh green leaves. At that moment, I was ignorant of the fact that this pair of basil leaves that I grew on my balcony would change how I would look at the world forever. Something in my mind clicked as if I finally found the last missing puzzle piece.

Looking at the single pair of leaves in the pot, flowing gracefully with the wind, the water droplets shining with the sunlight of the afternoon sun, the river in the background flowing as usual, the outside world silent with lockdown, it was beautiful. I had always only correlated the word "Beautiful" with something of a big scale, such as scenery from a famous landmark. I did not know that "Beautiful" things could exist on such a small scale. For the first time ever, I had "created" a new life by myself. If Covid-19 never affected the world at this scale, I most likely would have not brought this new life to this earth. Although Covid took the lives of countless people, it still created life and brought joy to a ten-year-old boy.

In life, I like to believe that no matter how negative a situation may be, there is always still something positive that comes with it. Although these may be just a grain of sand compared to the negative parts (such as creating a plant compared to millions of people dying), sometimes, that grain of sand is all we need to motivate and push ourselves forward to live another day. In my case, after that first sprout of the basil appeared, I do not know why, but I felt as if I had been replenished in some way. I gained motivation. To this day, about four years later, I still think about that moment, when I saw the first sprout. Every time I think of it, I remind myself that sometimes it's all about the way you view things and that most of the time it isn't as bad as you think. When in a moment of trouble, the best thing to do may be to look back into the pot and see what new things have sprouted.



Layan Alumwali

Victoria Palumbo





Lucas Molina

1:19 AM Reflection

Raito Sekine



I hope that there are monsters in the mirror, when I dare to take a glance.
Ripples of flesh, the taste of iron and phlegm, chunks of pale-brown vomit.
Something that will make me glad I never took the chance

And will have me curled up tightly against the hard foot of my bed,
Dreaming of twenty-eyed snails or overcast skies of cigarette smoke,
That will have me waking, sprawled against the floor, with an aching head.

Ants in a locust swarm, up and down the slopes of my esophagus.
Sneaking into my throat, one at a time, and choking out the wrong words.
Swallow insecticide, so I may never falter and will work without a fuss.

Rain that skitters like a thousand hundred-legged centipedes in the late-winter chill,
Cold and wrinkled hands that caress the bumps of my spine,
Whispered assurances, that I have chosen right and always will.

Aspirin and a teeth-chilling cup of water, for a quick remedy.
Blur my hurting vision with eye drops for seasonal pain.
Reeks of antiseptics and rubber gloves and I hope it will fix me.

But I peek through the blinds of my hands; it is me,
The pale bathroom tile, the dark gaps in between,
Soft hum of lights, grainy vision, smells of hand soap,
And there is not a single monster I can see.
Regrets piled in the fractures of glass are
Dislodged at the slightest brush
Of my warmed fingers against my mirror image.
A better me seems far,
But I guess I'm not in a rush





Gabriela Perez Capcha



Untitled

Ohtaro Tanaka

Every spring, as the blooming cherry blossoms trees overshadow the streets, the air fills with a promising scent of renewal and optimism. Meanwhile, the warm zephyr drifts the soft, pink petals of cherry blossoms into the ground, soon to wither away. Many don't appreciate the short yet comforting Sakura season. However, I admire its fleeting and unique beauty.

I still visited Japan about once a year, where I'd see my beloved grandparents and their dog, Sora, whom I shared the same age and half my life with. I followed the comforting routine of walking her to the nearby park, which had been happening almost since I was able to walk and talk. Despite these precious experiences, Japan still didn't hold significance in my heart. I didn't perceive that it was the last time I'd see Sora, or that it was something that my peers in America weren't able to experience. In fact, I didn't know that my Japanese heritage or my name would be such important factors to cherish.

My name, Ohtaro, was of course rare in the U.S., but also surprisingly in Japan as well. The first syllable, Oh, translated to cherry blossoms, anomalous to the American and Japanese people. However, I failed to understand its value.

Ezra Burghouts

However, my self-perception changed after Sora passed away. It was the 24th of March, and cherry blossoms were past their peak of blooming. Though I was not next to her in person, it was inexpressibly bewildering and dreadful to watch her last breaths through FaceTime. The devastating loss made me realize that priceless times end suddenly and unexpectedly. Moreover, life itself is limited; therefore I should bloom my unique petals with resilience, just like the cherry blossoms after the long winter, and value the ephemeral beauty of the bloom itself.

Though it took some time to process the situation, I shortly realized that the name I used to dislike was something no one else held, just like the precious time I had with Sora. There was no need for me to make efforts to conform to others; rather, I should irrepressibly embrace my unparalleled heritage and identity because life is too short to ignore them.

Today, I live moments proudly and carefully, because the special heritage or time with Sora is not forever nor possessed by everyone. I continue to return to my country as before, admiring the transience of cherry blossoms. It became a reminder to embrace the beauty of what is limited and unique—my heritage, my name, my memories—knowing they are irreplaceable and deserving of celebration, before they, too, drift away.



Sofia Nitis

Community and Companionship



Leia Pansarella

Dillard and Dawny Part 1

Kiara Yu

Dillard

I stare at her from across the pond.

Dawny.

Her name rolls off my beak like the birds chirping their morning concert. Her pale yellow feathers are so perfect, like how the sun twinkles on the water as she ripples her way around calmly. Watching her squawk with her friends is like admiring a daisy…In a field full of only grass.

She's everything. She's graceful, smart, and beautiful. So caught up in my thoughts, I barely notice when she swims up behind me and shakes her feathers. She deserves the world. I will give her the world.

I shriek when I feel her feathers brush up against mine. Soft. Gentle.

"Why, I'm sorry Dillard, I didn't mean to startle you!" Her eyes are apologetic – mesmerizing.

"Uh…it's okay Dawny." I clear my throat. Ruffle my feathers.

She eyes me carefully. She's going to think I'm such a weirdo.

Together, we watch two butterflies flutter by, right by our faces. One lands on her head.

I smile. I quickly try to play it off. Play it off as if she's not making me grin like a child. She's going to think I'm crazy!

A minute of silence goes by between us. I watch the butterfly while she giggles in delight. Dawny. I wish she knew that I'll always be here to protect her. She's the duck for me.



Dillard and Dawny Part 2

Kiara Yu

Dawny

I hold my beak up high, staring at the blue sky above. So calm, serene, like Dillard. In my head, his name sounds like the midnight chirping of the crickets. A musical and lovely tune. His dark brown feathers and green skin pull me into a trance as I watch him glide by. Staring at him makes it feel like time is still. He makes time stand still.

He's everything. He's kind, clever, and handsome. I'm so caught up in my thoughts that I do not realize I'm approaching Dillard. And quickly.

He shrieks. I made him shriek. Now I feel like shrieking! He's going to think I'm such a weirdo.

"Why, I'm sorry Dillard, I didn't mean to startle you!" I hope he doesn't see my eyes tearing up. I try and look as innocent as possible, and swallow the tears of embarrassment.

"Uh…It's okay Dawny." He clears his throat. He ruffles his feathers. I watch. I almost sigh.

Together, we watch two butterflies tangle themselves in the air, and as they separate, one lands on my head. I laugh, and I swear I see Dillard smile. No…I'm crazy.

We stay quiet. I giggle at the insect that's settled atop of me, then look intently at Dillard.

I wish he knew that I'll always be here to support him. He's the duck for me.



The Elephant in the Room

Olive Yoo

I have an elephant.
He stays right by my side.
And when I stray from my studies
He does not hesitate to chide.
A light slap from his trunk and I focus,
my thoughts now unified.

I'm grateful for my elephant,
despite my desires denied.
But sometimes I act against him,
his rules, I do not abide.
My reasoning is all scrambled.
my mind is in one big divide:
To drown inside this rabbit hole,
the doors to guilty pleasure open wide –
Or let my elephant back in my room,
and face his expression, misty-eyed?

I wish I were like you, dear elephant,
where your intelligence complements your pride.
Or am I glad not to have your memory,
your reminiscences making you petrified?
Of the war, famine, and disease you've stumbled across,
journeys where death is your misery's bride.

Come to me, dear elephant,
and we'll match each other's stride.
And teach me to be studious,
so I can at least say I tried.

The Last Sound

Lily Burghouts

On a birthday, long ago,
She found me in a gentle glow.
Her small fingers traced my crown,
Lifted my lid, and looked down.

I remember her quiet gasp,
The way her eyes would light and clasp,
When my tune began to play,
Soft and sweet, in a lilting way.

She danced around, her bare feet twirled,
As laughter rippled through her world.
For years we spun, her voice so clear,
But children grow and disappear.

The dancing slowed, the nights grew still,
Till one day, silent, against my will,
She turned away, left me behind,
Drawn to the world beyond confined.

Placed on a high shelf first, then hid,
In attic dust, my music slid,
To layers thick with memories,
And time alone that aches and frees.

Sometimes I hear her voice above,
Familiar, faint, a different love.
I wonder if she still recalls
Our dance, our song within these walls.

Will she remember how I'd play,
Or has that tune just slipped away?
Yet if my key should turn once more,
I'll sing again as once before—

For one last song, a final chance,
To feel her steps, to see her dance.

Isabella Roman

it's romantic

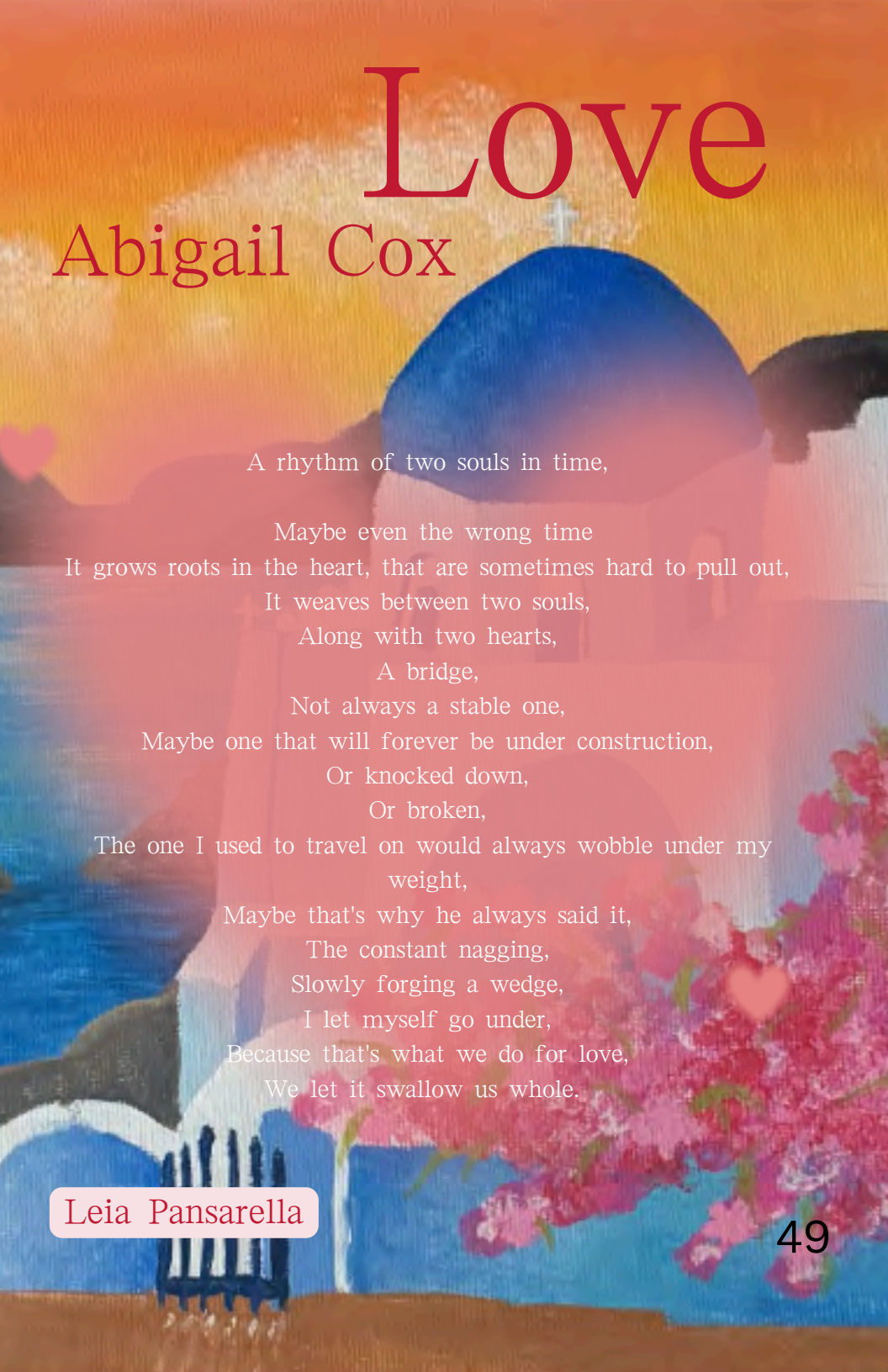
Alexa Lacatena

The sound of rain
My heart beats
Beings to pound
My lungs expand
And shrink
My toes are cold
My fingertips are cold
My body's warm
He holds me tight
My eyes begin to roll
Side to side
I'm asleep

Heavenly Father
Keep me close
Close to him
Close to you
I shift
Side to side
He holds me
Loosely,
He doses off
Too.

Love

Abigail Cox



A rhythm of two souls in time,

Maybe even the wrong time
It grows roots in the heart, that are sometimes hard to pull out,
It weaves between two souls,
Along with two hearts,
A bridge,
Not always a stable one,
Maybe one that will forever be under construction,
Or knocked down,
Or broken,
The one I used to travel on would always wobble under my weight,
Maybe that's why he always said it,
The constant nagging,
Slowly forging a wedge,
I let myself go under,
Because that's what we do for love,
We let it swallow us whole.

Leia Pansarella

Hopefully, Someday, it's You

Ahmad Sadisu

I don't know your face, not yet anyway,
Nor how your laughter fills the room
But someday in the stars is set
The day our lives will finally align
I dream of you in quiet hours,
A hand to hold, a breath, and even a name,
A love for just us,
Unshaken, soft, just us.
Not perfect, not polished bright,
But real, so real and steady as strong as a stone.
Two hearts that align, through dark and light,
To stand, to stay together forever.
So take your time, I'll wait patiently
Love finds its way like roots through trees.

Lucas Molina

Grace and Growth



Thalia Lemaire

TEN YEARS OF MARCH

Jacob Burack

MARCH CAME IN LIKE A ROARING LION,
The longest month was officially here.
The thousand Mondays in March
The benefits and consequences of spring are officially here.

The longest month was officially here,
Daylight savings was in the rear view mirror with more sun to come
The benefits and consequences of spring are officially here.
The seasonal depression was finally all cleared.

Daylight savings was in the rear view mirror with more sun to come,
Time to wake up at three in the morning to push the clock forwards,
The seasonal depression was finally all cleared.
Jumped from a cozy sleep to a ruthless wake up.

Time to wake up at three in the morning to push the clock forwards,
The longest month was officially here,
Jumped from a cozy sleep to a ruthless wake up.
Flowers start blooming and animals get to chomping,

The longest month was officially here,
February break was all done.
Flowers start blooming and animals get to chomping,
The Calendar flipped and
MARCH CAME IN LIKE A ROARING LION.

IT CAME IN

Harrison Fliegenspan

The new season came in
when I stopped waiting for it
I started the waiting months prior
But it only started

When I stopped waiting for it.
I was caught in it's shadow,
But it only started
when I grew used to its shade.

I was caught in its shadow,
The mountain of unknown variables staring back at me.
When I grew used to its shade,
I became one of said variables.

All kinds of unknown variables
Threw themselves at me with a roar,
For fear I'd become one of its variables,
I fought back against it,

But they roared right at me,
And told me I can't win,
I fought back against it,
But the new season came in.

Nicole Gjonaj

Kaitlyn Tavares

MIRROR OF FOG

Agonizing, I wept 'til I couldn't anymore.
Bitter tears running down my face
Crying because all my dreams have just
Evaporated into thin air,
Future in the hands,
Goals cemented into the ground
Hopeless thoughts running through my head
I stare into the mirror, watching my heart getting pulled out of my chest
Just to be taken by surprise
Keeping myself cooled down until I open my eyes
Languishing, my inner thoughts
Mindless,
Not thinking clearly, it's all foggy and I can't seem to clean up the mirror
Overwhelmed, I start to
Pity myself
Quietly I reminisce, the happiness I love to feel
Remembering the times I genuinely felt a hug around my heart
Saving the heart from being torn away in this fog storm
Totally,
Ultimately,
Victorious -- I am a
Winner deep down, no matter how many times I drown in the race
X-rays of my heart appear to be full of joy and understandment
Yielding the pressure of being imperfect, I understand
Zip away the negative, and lock it, cleaning this mirror 'til I see my heart again

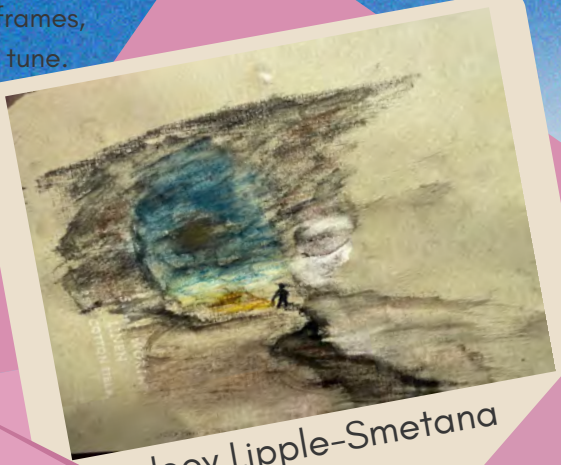
The Night We Left the City
Michelle Nze

The river hummed a restless tune,
Its silver veins ran cold and wide.
Beneath the weight of a swollen moon,
We crossed the bridge with time untied.

Its silver veins ran cold and wide,
A quiet town behind us slept.
We crossed the bridge with time untied,
The wind was all the past we kept.

A quiet town behind us slept,
Its hollow streets still spoke our names.
The wind was all the past we kept,
Soft echoes bent in window frames.

Its hollow streets still spoke our names,
But voices fade like distant tides.
Soft echoes bent in window frames,
The river hummed a restless tune.



Joey Lipple-Smetana

A Love to Lose

Neeve Kenny

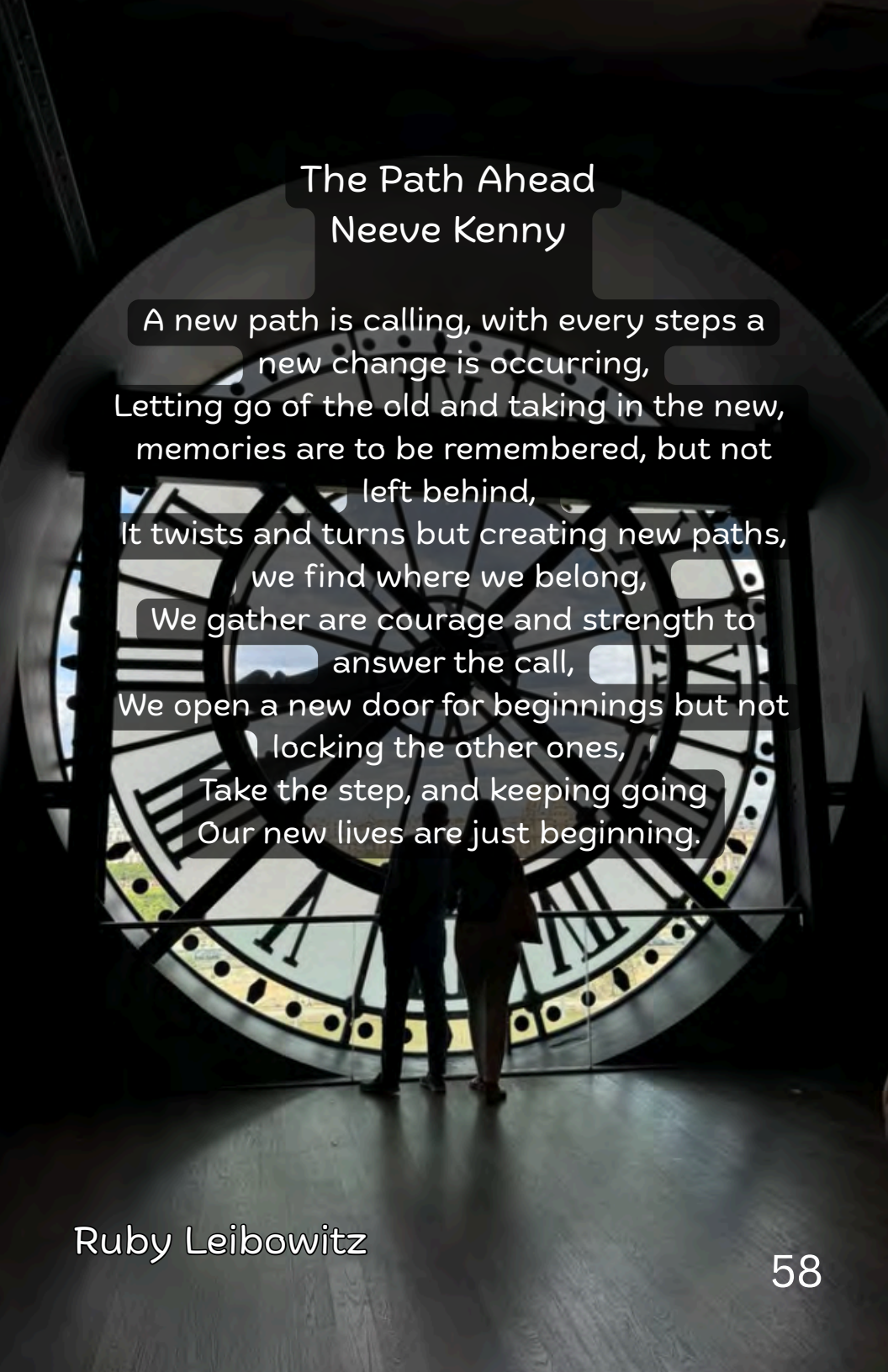
In the tender light of a new start,
Where innocence and wonder are drawn,
A heart awakens to a new, loud beat,
A first love blooms, and blossoms
Eyes that meet with a bashful glance,
Hands to a touch,
Laughter shared in the breeze,
Moments captured, memories drive.
A love so pure, untouched by time,
In every smile, in every sigh,
A first love's magic never goes away.
A love once bright, now in the shadows
Memories linger, bittersweet and true,
Of a first love lost.
Eyes that once sparkled with shared dreams,
Now reflect a sad, empty truth.
Hands that held with a gentle grace,
Now reach for empty space.
The laughter fades, replaced by cries
For love once lost can still be found.

Juliana Greco

Mary Grace Crozier



Resistance And Renewal



The Path Ahead
Neeve Kenny

A new path is calling, with every steps a new change is occurring,
Letting go of the old and taking in the new, memories are to be remembered, but not left behind,
It twists and turns but creating new paths, we find where we belong,
We gather are courage and strength to answer the call,
We open a new door for beginnings but not locking the other ones,
Take the step, and keeping going
Our new lives are just beginning.



Untitled
Anonymous

Before, we would roam-
Every pace is like the earth's beat.
Now we are still-
The wheels are silent, the fate lies afar.

Cars lined in rows,
But the engines of all cars sound like whispers in the night.
Yet the roads are empty,
Defeated by us.

A bus slides by with people
Having to go somewhere important,
Looking at the world,
We're only here in metal boxes.
Dead-end streets it reads,
Pointing to the research station,
Turn off to stars in the heavens.

Foreshadowing is falling like rain,
We can feel the weight of the future-
Will we be the ones to finish this race,
Or will we create our future hanging by a threat?

This is a place where the earth is crying,
Breathing in toxic sighs,
Where tech is king,
But his rule is based on shaky ground.

Public transport makes the sound
Of a world that might be-
We could take back the streets we left,
Take back the air we abandoned.
We could stop the mad tech's time travel
Twisted in a digital knot.
No time to wait, no time to wait-
The end is not far,
But revolution belongs to the brave
Let's not tiptoe-
Let's show the way to the skies where hope flies.

A Crow Flies

Alex Coimbra

A crow flies
Where summer comes to die.
A place where leaves lie.
The children begin to cry.

Darkness engulfs.
The howls of the wolves.
A story to unfold,
A story to be told.

The children are no longer cheery
The townsfolk become weary
Everything is quite eerie
The sky remains dreary

The sky had been painted black
No one left, the world lacks,
People.

No one left to cry,
The world dies.
Where bodies lie,
A crow flies.

Admiring as to What is Now, Hayes' World

Atop the chalkboard, so perfectly placed,
Rested the vivid imaginations of the first two. The whiteboard, meanwhile, stood blank, untouched.
Magnetic spheres clung to the cool, dark board,
Highlighting each masterpiece like a well-aimed bullseye.
The first two marveled at the burst of color above them, lost in serene play,
While dust-covered books waited patiently on the shelves, hoping their stories might finally be heard.
But the first two were uninterested, leaving the tales unread.
The whiteboard stayed bare for nine years – a silent witness while the chalkboard gleamed.
Now, its boundless space welcomed a new presence,
A third soul with a love for butterflies and finger painting.
The room transformed, no longer reflecting the duo but embracing the trio.
The first two had moved on, leaving a bold chalkboard, dusted books, and a legacy of their own,
And now it was up to the third to uncover the stories waiting on the shelves.

Leia Pansarella

The Power of Two

Massimo Reali



Theresa DeRosa

As I lie under the canopy of stars illuminating my bedroom ceiling, my mother croons an old Costa Rican lullaby. My eyes are stuck on the photograph on the wall above my bed -- the one of two infants nestled together. Every morning, I stare at it, astonished that my five-year-old self has developed from that broken, wrinkled body with its electrified hair and white pads stuck to its chest. Too often I question why I am the sick one in the photo.

My fraternal twin, Luca, and I were both born five weeks prematurely, one minute apart. We were alike in so many ways, but I was the one with the rare condition.

Growing up, the doctors' appointments and hospital visits were never-ending. It started with my eyes. I felt them separating every time I got in the swimming pool. That year, White Plains Hospital became a House of Terror, one where I was repeatedly poked with tiny needles, endured hours of intravenous pre-surgical drips, shuffled around in a robe that closed the wrong way, and snacked on jello cups that made me gag.

Despite the countless treatments, it seemed that my eyes, much like my twin, were destined to drift apart. Even today, I still have to do exercises to keep my double vision at bay. However, through these repeated visits, I began to appreciate the wonderful doctors who worked on my delicate body. I even overcame my fear of hospitals, growing to view them instead as a haven of hope. The "malevolent" machines were there to protect and cure me. The scalpel and needle were healing tools in the hands of accomplished warriors.

During my subsequent visits to the ophthalmologist, I began to notice the artwork in each exam room. I was astonished by the children in Guatemala and Kenya all with the same condition as mine. Each child had a before and after picture, highlighting the success of their pro-bono surgeries. Where was my after-shot with Luca? I would come to find that I didn't need one. I'm no longer defined by a picture on the wall. *Imagine how many after-shots I could take as a doctor.*

I want to pursue medicine for those cases that fall through the cracks. Like the children in the pictures. Like my aunt in Costa Rica who still looks at me with cross-eyes. She couldn't afford the care and has spent sixty-three years seeing double. My heart aches.

No matter where I am – in class or at the pool – I think about the tiny baby in the picture over my bed, the one with the pads stuck to his chest. I call my aunt every few months, checking up on the mango trees, asking her how her children are doing. I hope to use my past as a force to inspire my future. I admit I'm lucky. I may not have an after-shot, but I smile when I look in the mirror. I see through the cracks. I progress faster when I'm two big steps behind.

Despite the countless treatments, it seemed that my eyes, much like my twin, were destined to drift apart. Even today, I still have to do exercises to keep my double vision at bay. However, through these repeated visits, I began to appreciate the wonderful doctors who worked on my delicate body. I even overcame my fear of hospitals, growing to view them instead as a haven of hope. The "malevolent" machines were there to protect and cure me. The scalpel and needle were healing tools in the hands of accomplished warriors.

During my subsequent visits to the ophthalmologist, I began to notice the artwork in each exam room. I was astonished by the children in Guatemala and Kenya all with the same condition as mine. Each child had a before and after picture, highlighting the success of their pro-bono surgeries. Where was my after-shot with Luca? I would come to find that I didn't need one. I'm no longer defined by a picture on the wall. Imagine how many after-shots I could take as a doctor.

I want to pursue medicine for those cases that fall through the cracks. Like the children in the pictures. Like my aunt in Costa Rica who still looks at me with cross-eyes. She couldn't afford the care and has spent sixty-three years seeing double. My heart aches.

No matter where I am – in class or at the pool – I think about the tiny baby in the picture over my bed, the one with the pads stuck to his chest. I call my aunt every few months, checking up on the mango trees, asking her how her children are doing. I hope to use my past as a force to inspire my future. I admit I'm lucky. I may not have an after-shot, but I smile when I look in the mirror. I see through the cracks. I progress faster when I'm two big steps behind.

Theresa DeRosa

A Note To The Hero Who Is Never Seen
Michelle Nze

If I should
Whisper into the night,
My echo tracing shadows,
Would you heed the call?
The air thick with words left unsaid,
Muffled dreams bursting,
Like stars in the dark corners.
Who will rise in the murmur,
You, the one with a heart of thunder
The hero dressed in a cloak of courage?

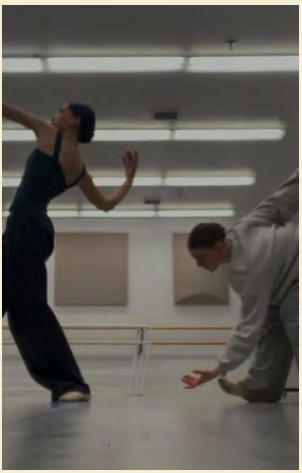
You, who flies through storms,
Unafraid of the tempest voice
Do you hear the city's quiet pleas?
The child in the alley,
The woman holding her breath,
The world wrapped in layers of sorrow
Like a bandage too light
Can you feel their pulse,
Their hopes climbing towards the moon?

I am nothing if not water,
A river winding through the rubble,
Carving paths in stone with patience.
I want to know–
Can you see me beneath the surface?
Do you know my strength lies not in flight
But in every ripple of defiance?
The way I bend yet do not break,
A silent force against the tide.



Mary Grace Crozier

Mary Grace Crozier



So when the skyline shatters,
And the villains darkly cackle,
Remember that even heroes
Need a hand to hold,
A voice to lift them high,
For who among us can carry the weight
Of the world without a whisper of love,
Without the warmth of a shared glance?
The truth is, even the man of steel
May falter when facing the heart's own battles.
So, dear hero,
If you should happen upon my voice,
Know that my spirit flies with you,
As I dance at the edge of possibility,
Seeking the light in the darkest of places,
And together, we can rewrite the tales
That bind us to the earth,
Elevating the ordinary
Into the extraordinary
For it is in our shared humanity,
That we find the power to soar.