2020
2021



Eye of the Storm

Pueblo West High School

Welcome to the Eye of the Storm Journal.

Art is multifaceted. It takes the form of writings, poems, illustrations, music, photography - whatever someone can breathe life and self-expression into. Here is a book made up of those expressions; a testament to creativity. Within these pages are stories told by multiple people in a variety of colorful ways. These are stories of hardship, grief, love, horror, adventure. These are the stories of Pueblo West High School.

"The chief enemy of creativity is good sense."
Pablo Picasso



"All Eyes On Me" - Audra Fair

Credits:

Faculty Sponsor - Ms. Woelfel

Head Writing Editor - Drea Williams
Graphics Coordinator - Breezy Anderson

Table of Contents

2 Intro
All Eyes On Me - Audra Fair
Credits

5 An Open Letter to the Class of 2020

7 Anaphora as a Reminder - Hailey Rageth
8 Impulse - Anonymous
9 Flavors - Brooklyn Philips
Noooooo, That's Not How You're Supposed to Peel an Apple - Bethany Marble
10 Wake Up - Michael Richardson
12 Untitled - Brooklyn Davey
13 Unexpected Beauty - Corinne Wilder
Flower Girl - Jiorgianna McMurtry
14 The One - Carlos Mabrey
16 Untitled - Alex Osborne
17 Autumn - Mikael Corona
19 Painted Me Like One Of Those Sky Kids - Breezy Anderson
20 My Addiction - Bethany Marble
Water - Corinne Wilder
21 How the Voice in my Head Became my Landlord - Caleb Mitchell
22 Forest Pixie - Spencer Medved
23 Con Gái - Vy Nguyen
24 Untitled - Abigail Cid
25 You Broke Me - Anonymous
26 Among the Stars - Riley Smith
27 The Lonely Blue Rose - Amber Smith
28 Library Date - Breezy Anderson
29 How to Exercise - Collin Koonce
30 Unus Annus - Spencer Medved
31 A Meal Fit for a King - Devin Caldwell
32 Blended Montage - Katarina Corona
33 In this Little Universe - Riley Smith
34 RELEASE - Alyssa Sears
35 Death Angels Noah Rivera
36 Untitled - Noah Rivera
37 Jackets - Blake M. Johnson
38 My Prince - Aubree Vecellio
40 The Door - Drea Williams
42 Singularity - Logan Gravatt

43 Captured Memories - Spencer Medved
Guiding Light - Spencer Medved
44 Character Art - Adalia Nile
45 Ridged Rails - Jade Mitchel
46 Eye - Jolie Iler
47 Ocean - Corinne Wilder
48 Truths of a Traveler - Vy Nguyen
49 Loneliness Lingers - Gabriel Ososco
50 Demons - Colby Kleven
53 Mind Your Business - Bethany Marble

54 Back

An Open Letter to the Class of 2020

I have no words at my disposal to express how I feel as I watch the sun set on our senior year three months early. That's a lie. I do. However, writing three solid pages of four-letter words would not be very explanatory or deep. (It would probably be cathartic though). And I refuse to use euphemisms for said words, given that I am graduating in Colorado and not Utah. I'll have to make do I suppose.

For me, losing my senior year began long before Dracula became a side dish. In August of 2018, my parents concurred on the decision that a move across the state would benefit our family. My siblings and I dissented, but due to our own negligence, we were absent at the constitutional convention that developed the governmental organization in our family. The vote was 2-6 with one abstaining member (he was a fetus and was therefore unable to reach the ballot box). I guess democracy is overrated. This move, which tore every member of our family away from various academic, personal, and athletic pursuits, happened in June. I wished and prayed (and cried, an embarrassing amount) that my classmates and peers would understand what I was going through. That I was losing more than a school. I was losing my safe space, where I could really be myself. A sadistic god must have heard my prayers. This is all my bad really. Sorry about that.

I believe that now, you all know what I felt. Maybe it is better that I went through these months before the masses. A silver lining or a "Tender Mercy," if you will. Because now I understand how you feel. There are few things that hurt more than a loss of potential. With one fell swoop, Fate has ended countless state and national championships, proms, graduation ceremonies, and perhaps the most important thing: the ritualistic "Last Ride" that every Senior is entitled to. It hurts. There's no other way to put it. It hurts to see that what were once important dates pass by on an academic calendar that no longer has any meaning. It hurts to think of the prom royalty that will never be coronated, the state champions that will never get their rings, the races not run, and the points not scored. It hurts. (It also sucks that we won't be able to flex on the underclassmen one more time too.)

Nothing I, or anyone else, can say can stop it from hurting. I wish I could say a magic spell or put my hands on your heads and mumble up a prayer to an omnipotent and indifferent God and fix all of this. But that's not how reality works. Only time can heal an injury like this. And it will leave a scar. There will always be a dark spot in the photo album of our memories for this time. We can do nothing to solve this in time to rectify that. For us, we drew the short straw.

But this isn't the end, it's not even the end of the beginning. Just because somebody tripped us as the starting gun went off doesn't mean we can't run a good race. (I mean I can't, but that's for reasons that are not pertinent to this letter). College is still out there. Careers are still out there. Undiscovered relationships and families are still out there. This is far from the end. It's going to be a painful few months until this

is over. And then the world will continue spinning on its axis. But with all of the tools for coping available, it would be wrong to pick the shovel that digs us deeper into a hole of self-pity and unrealized potential. When this is all over, and the wound is beginning to heal, don't infect it with thoughts of what could have been. I speak from personal experience when I say that it hurts a lot more. Learn to move on. It's a hard and grueling skill to learn, but an essential one to traverse a life fraught with ups and downs.

Sincerely,

-Kel Perry

Anaphora as a Reminder
by Hailey Rageth
After Ocean Vuong's "Anaphora as Coping Mechanism"

(Trigger warning: Dead pet, Descriptions of euphemism)
Can't sleep
so you pick up her ball -- nothing else -- & step
into the field. Even though she's gone, you think, I still want
her to fetch. If only the fields were oceans wide, her youth
a ship, & you can sail without bounds. If only
she dies the second the flowers bloom
in the field. But she doesn't. She dies when the euthanasia kicks
in & the vet ushers you out the room, your eyes an ocean torrent. She
dies as your sobs grow louder,
as another piece falls out of place. She dies each night
you pet her coat & hear her gentle whine. Your cries silenced by
the pillow. Your cries slamming every door. She dies
with the results of the CT scans where everyone is silent & all you want is to go
outside & throw her ball seven times before aiming it
directly at the window. All you want is to run into the field & never
look back. She dies when you wake
& it's December forever. A broken clock
with anxious hands. She dies the morning she lays her head in your lap
for several moments too long, when she looks upon your face
and whimpers softly & you quickly grab her favorite plush toy & pet
her fur as she licks your arm.
You gently stroke her ears until she's very quiet,
until the walls transfigure & you're both standing in the shelter's enclosure
again. Look how her tail wags back & forth like a welcome gesture
seen again through the years. You're still a child. You're still
but she licks you anyway. Her tongue drowns your face in wave of slobber
like that of an immersed vessel, as you laugh -- her youth
an ocean's ship.

Impulse
By Anonymous

You are alone. You've been alone for a long time. You have loved ones and friends of course, but you ARE alone. There's so many mastodonic and antiquated metaphors that can hide those simple words in an utterly profane pile of verbiage. I use “profane” in a twisted sense, because it's not real. It’s hard to tell the truth – I know – and it’s easy to tell a lie. You want your solidarity in the truth ...and that feeling... but what are you going to do about it? Write poetry? It’ll be misread, and you’ll miss the mark. We agreed to be honest, or that's what I gathered from the “mastodonic metaphors.” Don’t judge me for being too harsh on your ideas.

How about a song? Songs are stupid and repetitive. How about off-putting meta-commentary? Yeah, that will work. So how to get over loneliness?

It’s abusive... You are a perfect example, the only example. You are why you are lonely. Self-doubt barricaded by an ironic cluster of bravado, but I hope you understand the healing process.

You dug the Trench... Why don't you get to the point? I’ll do it for you. You are alone because you don't know how to love. You have plenty of love in and around you. You have flashbacks to those excessively basic “live laugh love” signs that your aunt hung in her kitchen. *You* are alone after all. So how do you love? Scented candles – no; red wine, no. That's all circuitous. Repetitive, recursive and stereotyped. I would say you're looking for a white horse to save the day upon, but you hate riding horses, and not because you hate horses. (They are wonderful animals.) You are a control freak. Those aren't your legs to walk with and you hate it because you aren’t in control. (You lied about the metaphors.)

It's hard for you to carry on when there's pauses in conversation: unexpected phrases that are tossed away, but nevertheless make you feel alone. From what I've heard, this doesn't go away. You are alone. How does it make you feel? It doesn't feel like anything, other than a brushed knee and a bruised head. I hope you loathe it. But at the same time, I don't, because in a “profane” sense of philanthropy, I love you. But that's not the love you want to talk about.

You hate repetition. Every day it’s the same, and the same, and the same and the same. Is that love you’re looking for different? No, it only makes the same bearable. You don't know how to start. You’ve tried, you’ve failed, but you never gave up. You're not alone in that regard, so you’ll start with that.

Wrong. It’s basic, contrived and the same. Ah there it is again: “the same.” You hate those two words already. You want to be more than alone. And I recommend that you don't cling to the past. You need to dream better; live now and live in the future. Ghosts should never get in your way, especially since they aren't real. (Just being honest; remember?)

So, you are angry. Hardly, anger is a secondary emotion. And it's destructive. No matter what you do, no matter where you go, and no matter who you see, you've been alone. Like one and two is three.

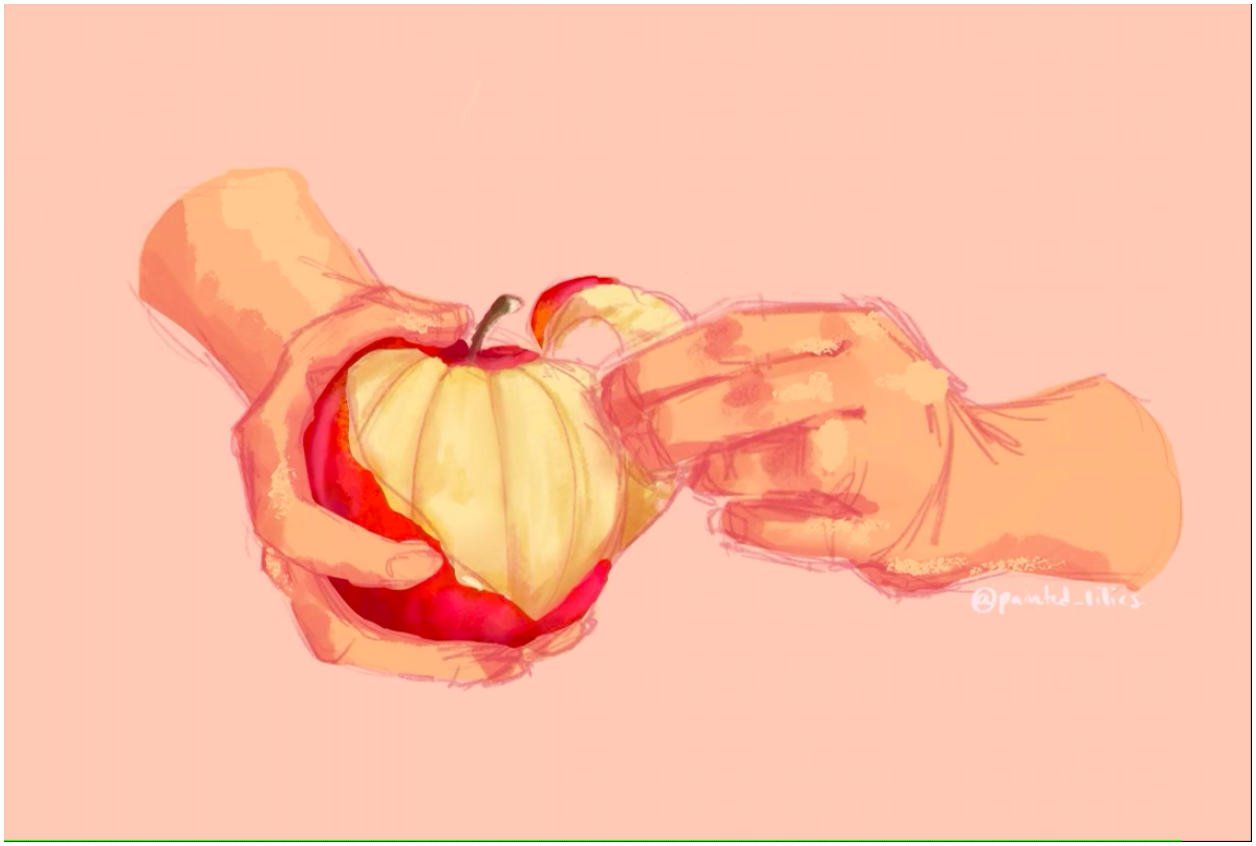
Flavors

By Brooklyn Phillips

Every day has a different flavor
Some are sweet like candy
Some as sour as a lemon
And some may even leave an astringent tang

The taste one day left
Must not taint the flavor of another
Take life day by day
And one thing at a time

But always remember to
Learn from the sour
And to savor the sweet



Nooooo, That's Not How You're Supposed to Peel an Apple - Bethany Marble

Wake Up
By Michael Richardson

"*Wake up!... Wake. Up!*"

I jolted awake to the shrill voice that almost seemed to shake me. I was in a bed, but it wasn't mine. Where was I? I looked around and surveyed my surroundings. The only light in the room mysteriously came from the roof and surrounded me and the bed, but this light was strange. It didn't seem to penetrate any of the darkness that started immediately at the foot of the bed. Confused, I sat up and muttered, "h-hello?"

A voice from what seemed like right behind me began to bellow, "*Do you know why you're here, surrounded by this darkness, in a bed that you don't remember?*"

A shiver went down my spine at the sound of the piercing voice. "Um… n-no. Why am I here?"

"*You are here because you need to be taught a lesson. One that you already know but need to be taught again.*" The voice seemed to continuously travel around the room. *"You are here because you put yourself here.*"

Did I put myself here? Why would I put myself in a place that I did not know? Why would I come here, of all places? I started to think of all of the lessons that I had learned in my past. I quickly sifted through my 19 years of life experience and came to no conclusions as to why I would ever be in a place like this. "What did I do and why would I come here of all places?" I asked.

"*You came here because this is the place you have spent most of your time. This is your home. Don't you recognize it? Don't you recognize me? Well, I guess you wouldn't recognize me anymore. You used to come around so often, but now it seems like you do everything in your power to stay away.*" The voice started to get small and almost inaudible as if it was sad. It sounded very far away now, almost so far away that it seemed like it was running.

"How would I come around? I don't even know how I got here. I don't recognize this place at all." I said in a shaky voice.

"*I guess that makes sense. I haven't seen you in years, not since you were a boy. You were about 10 the last time you saw me. Ever since then, you have blocked me out. When you stopped coming, this place started going bad. This place used to be bright and colorful. You used to be here all the time, but ever since you left, this place has slowly gotten darker. Now all that is left is the light that you are currently in.*" The voice started to become stronger and more passionate. It started to come closer and closer until I felt like it was right next to me.

"When I was 10…? That was so long ago. If I was always here, why would I stop coming?"

"*Don't you remember what happened during that summer? Maybe you don't– you were so upset– I would understand if you blocked it out of memory. When you were 10, our grandpa passed away–*"

"Wait… Did you say 'our'?! Who are you? How do you know me so well?!" I started panicking. How did this figure know so much about me? And why would it say "our"?

"*You will figure that out soon enough. As it is, you have some time to get to know me again. I've always wondered what you grew up to look like. You have changed so much since the last time I saw you."* The voice became sad again as it continued. *"I've been so lonely here. We used to be best friends until you disappeared. I thought you disappeared because of me, so I started to become bitter. I stopped maintaining this place, and as you can see, it is terrifying. I find it jarring how quickly something that you spent all your time and effort in can deteriorate so quickly.*" The voice started to trail off. "*This place is not what it used to be. I hate the dark.*"

Suddenly, I felt sympathy for this voice as if I could feel its pain. I moved back to the headboard of the bed. I found a place that was comfortable, and I started to think. The voice was right… I did lose my grandpa when I was 10. I was so heart-broken that I seemed to lose all value of who I was. I remember figuring this out a few months after his passing, and I immediately blocked all my feelings about it out so that I could live my life and be happy. I kept finding myself picking fights for no reason, ceasing to eat, and cutting off my connection with the world. Wow… It had been so long since I thought about that. I can feel the emotions that I felt at the time and a tear formed, rolling down my face. "I remember now," I said into the darkness, "I remember my grandpa's passing. It was so hard for me. But why would that be a reason why I am here now? That was 9 years ago."

"*For a short time after the incident, it seemed like you were here even more than you used to be. One day, I could tell that something was bothering you, so I asked you what had happened. When you told me, we started to cry, and you started getting mad. You were so upset that you walked right past me and out the door. Until now, that was the last time I saw you.*"

I looked around, trying to peer into the darkness and make out what looked like a door but all I could find was more and more emptiness. "So… there is a door in this place…?" I asked.

"*No, not anymore. Shortly after you left, it disappeared.*" The voice trailed off.

A short silence went over the room. I took this time to think. I thought about how much I missed my grandpa. I thought about where I was and why I was here. Why would I put myself in this place, especially when I am scared of the dark? I found myself staying as far away from the edges of the bed, making sure that I was completely engulfed in the light. After a few more minutes passed, I lifted my head to the darkness and spoke, "Where did you go? I have more questions."

From the distance, I could hear a shuttering. The voice almost sounded like it was crying, "*I am still here. You have changed so much. You aren't who you used to be. Nothing here is what it used to be. I can feel your pain: the pain you try to hide. I-I want to try to help. Will you follow me?*"

I thought about the proposal and wondered what wrong it could do. I mean, if I used to be best friends with this voice, then I should be safe… I hope. As I thought

about the potential consequences that could come from following a voice into the dark, my mind was suddenly made up. “Yes, I will follow you.” I moved to the edge of the bed and hesitated.

“*I know you’re scared of the dark, but trust me, you will be safe.*” The voice calmly persuaded.

I took a deep breath. I stuck my arm out into the darkness and as it entered the emptiness, the pieces that were not touching the light were no longer visible. “I-I don’t know if I can…” My body began to shutter.

“*Once you step into the void, you will know your way, I promise. You’ve been here before, remember?*”

I closed my eyes and made my decision. I stepped off the bed and into the darkness. When I knew I was fully engulfed, I opened my eyes. What I saw was incredible. I looked down and I saw two, fluorescent blue shoe prints on the ground only 4 feet away from me.

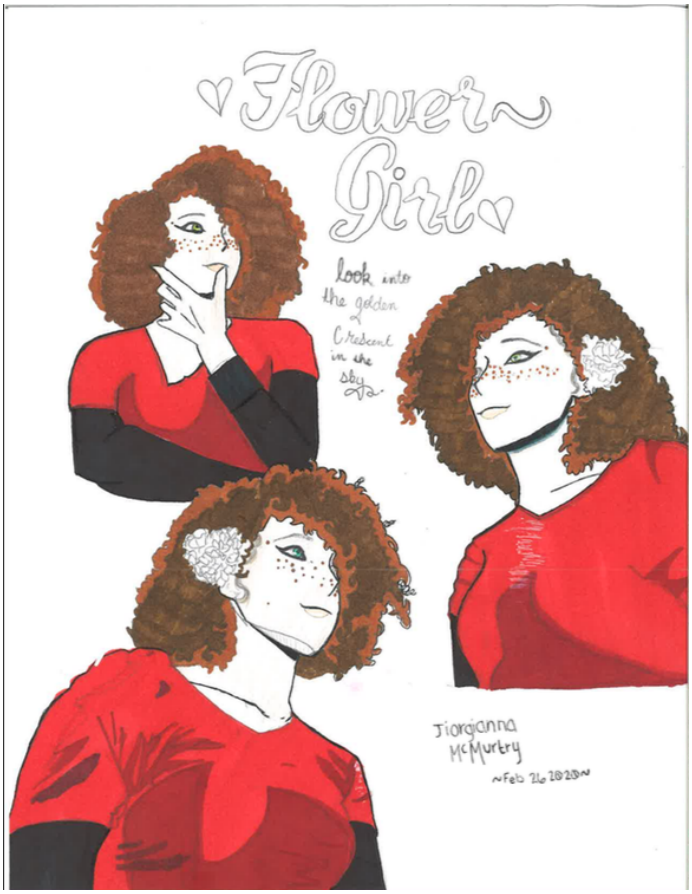
“*That’s it. You made it. Now, follow me.*”



Untitled - Brooklyn Daveys

Unexpected Beauty
Free verse poem
By Corinne Wilder

Have you ever seen someone head to toe in freckles?
Other humans, like a blank sheet of paper.
Some people with freckles may repent this part of themselves.
They cover each one with foundation,
scratch them off their bodies,
Like a horrendous trend of random polka dots.
To hide their speckles of golden brown sparkles,
Placed perfectly to complement the sharp, round edges of a face.
When you see them your eyes remember the stars.
It's like a walking galaxy.
Each speckle unique of s p l a t t e r paint,
The canvas, a human body.



Flower Girl – Jiorgionna McMurty

The One
By Carlos Mabrey

The other day someone asked me how they would know if their girlfriend was "the one." They'd been dating for two years now, and he was starting to think of the possibility. He wanted to know if how he felt around her was what "true love" felt like. "I've been in love many times," I told him. "I've loved a Jewish girl, a Mormon, a Christian, a Hindu, a Buddhist and an atheist. I've loved musicians, writers, athletes, movie fanatics, computer scientists, illustrators, and doctors. Each one of them was a different kind of love, but I loved them nonetheless." I could tell he was confused, so I continued. "Love has come and gone many times in my life; sometimes it was more intense, like a beautiful sonata. Other times it was like it was barely like that at all. You see, the true test to love isn't how you feel when you're around it, but how you feel when you are absent from it."

"So tell me friend, you know how you feel when you're with her, but how do you feel when she's gone? Do you feel slightly unwell, not enough to pain you, but just enough to know something is wrong? If you feel nothing, you probably don't love her, but rather only lust for her. If you feel too much, you will feel the feeling fade over time because you only miss the feeling she brings you, not her. The key is balance, you two need to be a team, yet independent. Love both each other, and yourselves. Live in both individuality, and unity. There is only one person you'll ever find who will enable this kind of love. And it creeps up on you, like when you hear something on the radio, and that something becomes your new favorite song. True love comes unexpectedly; it isn't perfect, and it isn't always beautiful, but it's there, and you never see it coming."

I knew exactly what love looked like… in 7th grade. Love was mysterious and outgoing. Love had a beauty mark perfectly in the center of her soft chin. She had long, dark, curly hair that only grew darker in the winter. Love smelled like fresh lavender and being around her felt like a warm hug after a long day. There was something about… love. In the autumn, love wore a white sweater with blue stripes, and she glowed in my eyes brighter than the snow. In summer, she wore a beautiful maroon off the shoulder fall dress with a cream white cardigan. In the winter, she dressed in an oversized hoodie modeling various bands; of which I would always listen to, just to understand love better. In the spring, love liked to wear ripped jeans and a crop top. Love didn't always sport the same clothes, but whatever she was wearing, no matter what season, she looked beautiful. Love was the reason I learned cheesy Vance Joy songs to play on my guitar. Love was the person I'd practice writing songs for, so I could impress her. Love was the reason I never played in band: because I was too busy talking to her. Love took a trip to Europe for school; I followed. "This was it," I would tell myself. "This is the moment where I finally ask her out." I schemed an elaborate plan and prepared myself for the big moment. When the time came, I failed to bring the words out of my mouth. It was truly the perfect moment too. The waterfall glided off the rocks we were on, we were alone, and I stared into her big, starry brown eyes. I asked nervously, "love… can I ask you something?" "Sure, anything!" she replied with a gleaming smile.

I froze. “What do you think about the trip so far?!” I thought of myself as an idiot. As those words escaped my mind, so did all my hopes and dreams. Love was gone. I had missed my chance; I was too scared to ask her then, and I was too scared to ask her later. Eventually, love found a love of her own, and she was happy.

It’s now four years later, and I’m more accustomed to love. By now I had dated four girls, two of whom broke my heart further than I thought a heart could be broken. I knew love could make you feel joy, but I never realized love also brought pain. A pain that makes you never want to love again; but after a while, you try again. And again, love breaks your heart. After enough broken hearts, you begin to learn and accept that love isn’t perfect. Love has its flaws. One day love will come back, but this time, you don’t see it coming. Love sits next to you at a McDonalds. Love drives past you on the interstate. Love can be anywhere. Love can be waiting at your door, or halfway across the world.

At this point, I hadn’t found my love yet. But I knew I’d come across her. Somewhere, sometime, she’ll show up in my life. It may be in the Fjords of Norway, or my hometown bar. My love is hiding, her clock is ticking, waiting to align with mine. Still different clocks, but ticking at the same time, lost in the same moment forever.

My friend looked at me, puzzled. “Love is confusing.” I said. “The truth is, no one truly knows what love is until they experience it. I cannot answer your questions, friend, because I am not experiencing your love. Each person’s love is their own; there is no base formula, no recipe nor guide. Each person must find their own way, and it will feel like you’re stumbling through a forest blindfolded. You’ll run into things, scrape yourself up, and get lost more than once. But at the end, you’ll find the way. You’ll hear a beautiful voice singing, and when you feel your heart grow, and your body content, you’ll know you made it. You’ll be fooled, not by false love, but by the wrong love. You’ll fall in love your whole life, but only match with one person. Love is silent, but love is strong. More than anything, Love is always there, waiting.

“I think I understand,” said my friend. “I do truly feel the most myself when I’m with this girl. She makes me a better version of myself, rather than trying to make me better by being someone else. She loves me for all my flaws, and never tells me to change. We are a team, and we build off each other.” He turned his head to me and stated, “If this isn’t love, then I don’t want it.”

A few months later, my friend proposed, and love was happy. Love bound them together and held them close. Love gave them a family and provided them with joy. Everyone has their own true love, but they have to experience heartbreak as well. I’m glad I met love so many times: In middle school, high school, college, the restaurant down the road, the Lion King Play. I’m glad love taught me all throughout my life, preparing me for this one person, because now, I really know what love is supposed to feel like. After debating in my head for so long, I realized that I had love right in front of me, so I married her, and, as it turns out, she was the one after all. All I needed to do was talk to myself.



Untitled - Alex Osborne

Autumn

By Mikael Corona

The fog creeps upon its little feet,
Ending the stifling summer heat.
The wind starts to blow
And soon it will snow.

A cold drizzle pours down,
Making puddles on the ground.
Fiery leaves swirl in the air
Covering ground everywhere.

A season of pumpkins, turkeys, and a whole lot more,
A beautiful world lies just out the door.
Cinnamon and pumpkin spice,
And many other things that smell quite nice.

Candy and costumers, with scares and fun.
It makes you sad when it's all done.
Then fill up your plate with steaming hot food,
It sets a warm and happy mood

The trees blaze with fire
Like the flames of a pyre.
Red, yellow, orange, gold,
A beautiful scene to behold.

Hunting through these flaming woods,
Trying to kill animals to get food.
Tasty, warm and fresh meat,
Juicy and tender and so good to eat

Hiking through amazing forests
Like many others that came before us.
Viewing nature's simple beauties,
Hidden in and amongst the trees.

What an amazing time of year,
Nothing that there is to fear.
Happiness is everywhere,

An amazing feeling hangs in the air.

Pumpkin pie and tea,
Hot chocolate streaming pleasantly.
Family with you over holidays,
If only this season was here to stay.

The sun's cold light filters through the clouds
Then gives way to darkness's shroud.
A cold wind starts to howl
Like a pack of wolves, on the prowl.

Dark ominous clouds start to draw near,
Bringing cold with, and also fear.
Then with a massive thunderous roar,
The clouds break and rain pours forth.

Bitter cold and blinding wind
Make you want to stay in.
A stinging white power flies in the sky
Blowing in the wind's massive sigh.

Get ready to light the fireplace,
Gather the wood and make haste.
For the cold has finally arrived
From a malevolent power it's been contrived.

Now the days of being outside are gone,
Signaling winter will come anon.
This wonderful season is coming to an end,
It has been a rather glorious friend.

Farewell beautiful time of year,
Your days were crisp and always clear.
I will miss the many things you had,
Your passing will make me quite sad.

And now wrapped up in winter's embrace
I will remember your uplifting grace.
I will see again, just not very soon,
But now it's time for winter's dark gloom.



Paint Me Like One Of Those Sky Kids By Breezy Anderson



My Addiction By Bethany Marble

Water
Free verse poem
By Corinne Wilder

Mist, muggy grog
Like a blanket over a grass bed-
I think I can hear the ticks of a bird's soft tread.
Birds flicker their wings in the cool granite birdbath,
Rain falls, the heartbeat of people begins to s l o w
Dark red flowers of hatred remake and grow,
Hope begins to lift
The seed, take flight ... blow,
Water flushes out and replenishes the soul.
Moldy, white chipped paint from a window,
Falling off as the wind blows
Above the little girl who tiptoes
In the rain.

How the Voice in my Head Became my Landlord

By Caleb Mitchell

(Trigger Warning: Schizophrenia)

I am done. I cannot take it anymore. I have seen countless psychiatrists, every single one telling me the same things: "It will get better" or "Give it time." All of them say the same. I have seen at least fifteen all across Colorado. The schizophrenia is only getting worse: the voices, the thoughts, the ideas, all of it. The symptoms are progressing to an unhealthy extent. I've named the voice Jack, and he will never leave. I am in an endless loop of pain and suffering. The second it stops, I feel better, but it never lasts. Not even a minute later, Jack comes back and degrades me even more, ripping my mental and physical state to a spec of what it used to be. Every episode is so much worse than the previous one. I can't even sleep anymore. I tried falling asleep in bed, but nothing happened. The next night I tried the same thing, and the exact same event transpired. I got up out of bed and screamed in the mirror, "Jack, leave me alone or pay rent for my headspace!" In the bathroom, the medicine cabinet held 50-milligram tablets of melatonin. I decided to take three to force my body to fall asleep. My bed was welcoming, and Jack seemed to be quiet for now, so I decided to put my head to my pillow. Within minutes I was asleep. The next morning, I got up, brushed my teeth, showered, and got ready for work. My hair was greasy and tangled but I didn't have time to fix it or wash it completely. I rushed into the kitchen and grabbed the usual cup of strawberry yogurt and whole grain oats. As I sat down and started to eat, I noticed that there was an envelope sitting on the table. It wasn't in my mailbox which was weird to begin with, but it didn't have a name written on it either. While holding the spoon of yogurt in my mouth I grabbed the knife from last night's dinner. Hygiene has never been my friend, especially since my diagnosis. I didn't care about the dirty knife, so I proceeded with the letter. It happened with one slice from the knife. Hearing the paper rip was satisfying and gave me chills all the way down my back. There was a note and 1,000 dollars inside the envelope. The spoon fell out of my mouth as I read the letter. "Consider this the first two months of rent." My body went numb and I fell down, almost hitting my head on my marble table. To make the matter worse, Jack decided to show up. He kept telling me "Don't go to work. Stay here. Go lay down. Stay here." Goosebumps covered my arm as I realized who wrote the infamous letter that laid dormant on my dining table. How? Why? What? None of it made sense. Jack's not real. Jack is not real. He's in my head. The floor had never been more comforting than at that moment. Jack kept rambling trying to get me off the topic. He was screaming "You told me I could be here if I paid! You told me I could stay, Caleb! Don't lie to me, don't betray me!" One leg at a time, I stood up off of the cold linoleum floor. My yogurt spilled when I fell down. The money was fine, but the letter was covered in pinkish-red stains. It was my final strike at work; I had to leave. As I was running out of my house, I kept thinking about what just happened. Did it actually happen? Was Jack pulling tricks on me? I didn't have time to figure out that question. My carpool arrived at 8:30. I looked at my watch and it said 8:45. Jen was the one driving today and as I sat down

in the back of the car, she turned to me and said, “Are you ok? You look worse for wear.” I tried explaining to her what had just happened, but she didn’t believe me. No sane person would. She politely put the car in the park and told me, “Honey, stay home you need it.” I didn’t want to be home. I pleaded to her. “Take me to work, take me with you,” but she insisted that I stay home. The walk up to the porch never felt longer. Fall was right around the corner and the summer breeze softened the ambience of the walk. Jack, angrily but cautiously, tried speaking to me. I tuned him out. I had to focus on walking into the house. Every breath I was taking became slower and slower and slower until I finally approached the door. Before entering, there was a faint sound of someone or something painfully wheezing, coughing every five seconds or so. I had nowhere to go, I had to run, I had to open up the door, I had to know what was in my house. Jack was gone. No noise, no conversations; it seemed like he dissipated into nothingness. It felt like the door was leering at me as I grasped the handle and slowly turned it. No lights were on and the curtains were closed. All I could see was an endless abyss of darkness except for two little lights that remained. I had never seen these lights before. They suddenly turned off and turned back on again. It’s like something blinked at me. I rushed for the lights and as I turned them on it stood there. With lanky arms and a skinny waist, it stood up, peering at me as it towered over my head. The arms were the length of my body. All it did was stare at me. Its mouth opened, dripping thick colorless saliva. The wheezing continued until it finally stopped, looked at me directly in the eyes and said, “When is next month’s rent?”



Forest Pixie By Spencer Medved

Con Gái (Vietnamese translation of "daughter")
By Vy Nguyen

Keep with your back straight, to have a good posture. Don't frown in public, just act natural and happy. Stop slacking off and procrastinating; get off your phone already and stop taking so many naps, it's wasteful; act productive, unlike the lazy girl you're becoming. You should've done those assignments already; *I will get them done, but I just need a break*. This is how you should fold clothes; this is how you sweep the floors; this is how you should mop the floors after sweeping; start folding that pile of clothes you've put off for days now; don't complain too much, like the lazy girl you're becoming. Stop sleeping in, it makes your brain stupid. Get your work done and stop going out with friends; pick up a book instead of that phone; you're wasting your time and stop being the lazy girl you're becoming. This is how you should drive a car, instead of that stuff you call "driving"; this is how you close the door to not create a slamming sound. Call your family members, so they know you still care; join me and watch these Vietnamese shows, so you don't forget to speak our language; this is how to make appointments, because I won't be there forever. Cover your unused items, to prevent them from getting dusty or dirty; clean the bathroom and stop being the lazy girl you're becoming. Don't overdress or dress up for a boy; don't get distracted by boys, they will drag you down. This is how you should cut vegetables; this is how you prepare the chicken, so it won't have that weird taste; always boil your meat first, to prevent them tasting weird or overwhelming the dish; watch me when I'm teaching life skills and stop acting like that lazy girl you're becoming. This is how you should approach your life; this is how you save money; use credit cards instead, and cash for situations that don't accept credit; always be prepared for the worst and remain calm. Act confident and don't be shy; don't forget your lessons when you're in public; when a man approaches you, make sure you're the one in charge; *but what if a man never approaches me?* You mean to say that after all you really are going to be the kind of girl that a man won't approach?

Inspired by "Girl" written by Jamaica Kincaid



Untitled By Abigail Cid

You Broke Me
By Anonymous

(Trigger warning: Sexual abuse, Cohersion)
The funny thing about innocence and love is that you took a little bit of both from me.
The day I met you I gave you a hug and with that I passed on my love,
But you looked at my love and just reached for a glove.
I looked at you with hope and joy
You turned to me and said, "take it off," annoyed.
There was no love or joy or hope in your eyes
The only thing they carried was shear animal carnage like most guys.

And at that moment I realized without a doubt,
I would never get to the level of the girls who look at you with the pout.
I will never be the girl who falls at your feet
I am a princess, a queen, not just a piece of meat.
But you made me feel small, you made me feel broken,
I've been stripped of my clothes and thrown out in the open.

Society has taught me that love and lust are the same
But in my brain all I see is pain.
In my heart all I feel are the silent sputters and cries of a lowly girl
A girl who once had excitement when dreaming of this big wide world.
Now my heart has a little less love and a little more yellow tape,
A crime was committed when you took my innocence and escaped.

For legal reasons you did not physically harm me,
But to god I whisper at night, "You broke me".

Among the Stars
By Riley Smith

If I could…
I'd go to Mars
Or all the planets among the Stars

If I could…
I'd sure traverse
The entire Universe

If I could…
I'd fly through Space
Beating the Meteors in a race

If I could…
I'd touch the Sun
Bring all my friends, they'd find it fun

If I could…
I'd walk the Moon
But that won't happen anytime soon

If I could…
I'd dry those tears
Because you've been hurting for all these years

If I could…
If I could…
If I could…

The Lonely Blue Rose
By Amber Smith

The last blue rose on Earth gracefully sways in a lilac and lavender filled meadow as a young boy with blue and emerald eyes looks around a small nearby village, his still developing soft, sensitive wolf ears rotating as he listens for any noise other than the quiet, gentle breeze around him. The boy quietly stumbles into the meadow, as his ears slowly lay flat, parallel to the ground below his small feet. He glances around the meadow, searching for any signs of another presence, but again he finds nothing. He soon walks over to the graceful blue rose, and he examines the beautiful, yet lonely, rare rose. The boy carefully picks this rose, and ice forms a small sphere around the flower, preserving its beauty for many years to come.

The blue rose still resides, preserved in its ice sphere, in the young man's room. The flower still looks as beautiful as the day the young man picked it. The young man with blue and emerald eyes smiles gently at a young woman sitting and talking calmly with him. Her deep ocean blue and pale icy blue eyes seem to glow a soft, gentle, cool light as she glances over at the very well-preserved single blue rose. The rose seemed to be the only thing the young man kept in ice from his lost childhood, and he speaks in a gentle manner with the young woman in the presence of the lonely blue rose. The woman seemed to be very different, as she wasn't a normal werewolf. It was obvious to the young man; her soft fluffy wolf ears were black with red tips, not dyed. Her aura seemed to be different from the young man's own aura; the blue rose was the young man's only real safety blanket throughout his lost and wandering childhood.

A small boy and girl run around the home of the man and woman. The small boy had one deep ocean blue eye and one emerald green eye just like his father does. The small girl had two icy pale blue eyes that seemed to give off a cold glow when she would walk into the shadows. The woman still had her black with red tipped fluffy wolf ears out listening for her children's little footsteps as the man sat in his room, carefully studying the blue rose he had preserved when he was his son's age. He feels a bit of sorrow whilst remembering those days. The more he studies the still preserved flower, he begins to feel the small bit of sorrow he had felt whilst remembering his past starting to fade into feelings of safety.

The young teen boy was talking to his father about the perfectly preserved blue rose he noticed when his father was on a short trip to another kingdom. The older man told his son the rose was, and always will, be his safeguard. The boy looked puzzled by the answer he had been given. The man simply smiled and told his son to be on his way; his sister and mother were waiting in the garden with a gift. The boy hugged his father and went on his way to the garden, where he saw a blue present in the hands of his mother. The girl smiled and gently pulled the boy closer to their mother so he could open the gift. Inside the present was the preserved blue rose; the last blue rose on Earth was a gift from their parents. The two teens eventually married into respective families. Their proud parents lived on watching the world around them pass whilst their son kept the preserved blue rose safe and their daughter became the new protector of the newly found rare special werewolves that they thought were gone forever. The lonely blue rose had been found by a small, scared, and lost boy, which then guided him to happiness.



Library Date By Breezy Anderson

How to Exercise
Inspired by “How to Write a Poem” by Laura Hershey
By Collin Koonce

Don't be afraid.
Don't use roids for muscles sake, or to show-boat
your skills,
how thoroughly you have trained
your muscles, the gains.

Don't try to grow
as good as your favorite athlete.
Don't even try gain
like a pro.

Just strain the fibers deeper and deeper
and let it grow into
the strongest in the west
from your trap muscles, or to the calf tendons.

Whatever begins to burn forth from there,
whatever pains and aches
swells up, makes your eyes
fill with painful tears,

whatever fire is lit under your butt, burns the pain,
If you feel too much—

use that.
Take it in quickly with rest
mold it with your diet
before you lose it
and it hurts you.

Don't think about
gaining like an athlete, or exercising 24/7,
or to gain that break possibilities.

Exercise
the way you need to grow,
exercise the way you need to be healthy.



Unnus Annus By Spencer Medved

A Meal Fit for a King
By Devin Caldwell

(Trigger warning: Blood and Gore, Starvation)

A hollow scream echoed in Olodagh's young mind. He couldn't worry about it now though. His mind stayed focused on one thing: food. He hadn't eaten in days and he was starting to feel the effects of his involuntary fasting. He moved down the street quickly, keeping his eyes low. He didn't want to make eye contact with someone who was having a bad day. The orc had grown accustomed to all of the sounds of people moaning in pain and slowly freezing to death in the streets. He was only thirteen at this point. He was growing and yet he was starving.

He went by his favorite bakery. He never went inside, of course. He was far too poor to be allowed inside. The owner was an old man who cared little for the many starving children on the streets. The orc still loved that bakery though, because of storage clearing day. This was
when the baker would throw out all the bread and treats that had gone stale or just weren't up to par with his requirements. All of the children in town had gathered around the bakery like rats that were waiting for their next meal. Not one of them had bathed in months, maybe even years.

They all waited outside with lust in their eyes: a lust for just the smallest bit of bread. Finally, the back door to the bakery swung open and the fat old man came out holding a bag. He looked at the children with disgust. "Here ya go, ya damn animals." He threw the bag to the ground and all the children lunged to it. Olodagh couldn't stop himself. His hunger overtook all sense and thought. He just needed to eat. He lunged with the others. Most of them had already taken all the good stuff. The orc's eyes spotted only a single piece of moldy bread left, a simple loaf that was gods only know how old. As he lifted the bread from the ground, he was suddenly struck in the back of the head.

He fell to the ground and let out a huff of air as he scraped his hands. and looked up as his head began to throb from the hit. An older kid, probably in his late teens, stood over him. The human smiled at the starving young orc with a look of longing. The human was clearly starving as well. He was covered in dirt and grime. He was just as desperate as Olodagh. "I'm taking that. So just make it easy and hand over the loaf." Olodagh held the moldy bread close, keeping it away from the human. "It's mine, ya b…….d!" Then, the older kid snarled at him like a wild beast and lunged. He tackled the orc to the ground. Olodagh's vision began to blur as his head was repeatedly slammed into the ground. He still held the bread close, as though it was the only thing keeping him alive. Blood ran from Olodagh's nose and spilled from his split open head. He reached out, searching for anything that he could use as a weapon. In seconds, he found it: a small broken piece of glass.

In one swift motion, he grabbed the piece of glass and shoved it into his attacker's throat. His heart was racing, and he didn't make the choice to kill this man. He just did. It was his natural survival instincts. The teenager didn't die instantly. Blood

began to run down the piece of glass and dripped onto the moldy loaf of bread. The human stood up and began to slowly back away while holding the piece of glass. He was choking on the blood that had begun to pool in his throat. He grabbed the glass and pulled it out of his throat, only having a moment to look at the glass before he coughed and shot blood all over Olodagh. Finally, the human dropped to the ground with a thud. He was dead. In just one moment, his years of life were taken away from him. The orc quickly stood up and began to run from the baker's shop. As he ran, he heard a guard yell out "Stop, you there, orc!" Olodagh just kept running though, his heart racing as adrenaline pumped through his body. Though, he couldn't help but smile. He had his meal and he would survive another day. For that, he could only be happy.



Blended Montage By Katarina Corona

In this Tiny Little Universe
By Riley Smith

On this little speck where all the lights converse,
In this tiny little universe.

With short summer nights and long summer days,
At least I can still throw down my rays.

The winds begin to howl, leaves, all colors diverse,
In this tiny little universe.

Although this planet, a little speck,
All the stars look to see what comes next.

“Come now stars, there’s much to rehearse.”
In this tiny little universe.

The nights grow long, the days become short.
Once more, the stars perform for court.

As strange as it sounds, things start going in reverse,
In this tiny little universe.

The sun wakes up, she’s back from vacation.
She gets closer to the earth without any hesitation.

We smile at the earth, though she is quite disperse,
In this tiny little universe.

The snow melts once again, and leaves turn green.
Plants burst from the ground, excited for suns sheen.

Though the world seems large, and hard to traverse,
Here we are, In this tiny little universe.



RELEASE by Alyssa Sears

Death Angels
By Noah Rivera

They came from the sky singing their death march. Their voices sounded like someone smashing an electric guitar with a sledgehammer. I was only 12 years old when they filled the sky with noise; the last thing I remember is my parents calling me their 'little girl'. Every person they heard and smelled they killed and brought to their nests. I call them gospels. It's been 15 years since they came, and they have taken 75% of the world's population. The world is only cults and scavengers.
I'm a scavenger. I'm not a part of those crazy Jesus freaks. I would join if I didn't have to cut something on my body, though free food and a bed sounds nice. Too bad I'm here hiding in every other building I see to avoid the angels. I'm alone. The people I was with died days ago. I still hear their screams being drowned by the distorted electric like screeches from the angels. I still have their dried-up blood on my converses and button up shirt.

I shuffle into the annex building lobby. It's bright here because of the big dome glass roof. A shadow zooms over. It might've been a bird but I can't be sure, so I start looking for a pipe and scissors to make a weapon. I walk into the emergency stairs going to the work cubicles, looking for the scissors first. I sneak around the cubes trying not to make any noise. I find the restrooms first so I might as well get the pipe. I crawl under the nasty underbelly of the sink with decades old grime and find the perfect pipe. Since the bathroom has no windows, I'm fine to just yank out the pipe. When I do dark, green slime slips out onto my shirt. I'll have to wash it now at the closest river. First the blood and now the slime. I go back searching for the scissors, but all the cubicles are empty. There's only one place to look: the executive office. The doors are covered in long gashes by the opening, and it's blocked by something heavy. I slam my body into the door a couple times before something inside falls loud and shakes the whole floor. Then I hear several sets of feet run down the hallway towards me. Without looking, I run and duck into a cubicle before 3 people burst into the room. All loud and proud not caring about the angels.

"Be careful, might be one of those little things that made the noise."

One of them chimes, "The whole city probably heard that too. We need to hurry before someone, or something comes too."

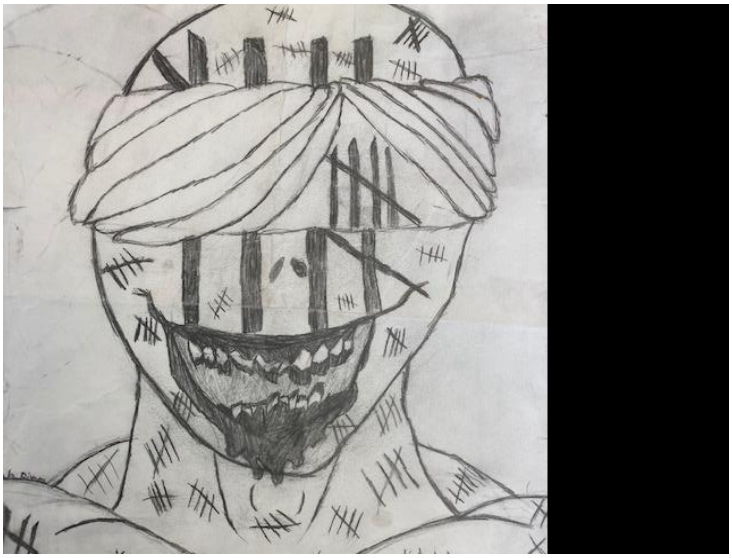
I hear one of them load a shotgun; from the sounds of it it's a double barrel. I flank them quietly without being noticed. I'm 4 ft away from the one with the gun. I ready my pipe. I swing, hitting the gun. It goes off and chews and rips the person's leg ahead of them. The one I hit yells something at the person I grounded. But I can't hear over the screams of his friend and the heartbeat in my head. I swing again hitting him in the jaw. I could feel it shatter and be ripped away from his head. The last one grabs me by my hips and tosses me into the cubicle wall. It breaks apart from the age like crackers. She gets on top of me and starts pounding me into the floor. Then the glass shatters behind her. I don't even have to look at it; I know what it is. I rolled us under the desk in the cubicle I went through. I hear it stomp towards the guy I crippled, and I

put my hand over her mouth. He starts screaming again you can tell he got picked up from the sounds of the blood dripping from his leg. I could feel tears fall down her face onto my hand as the angel chomps into his collar more tears. Suddenly, she bites my hand. I let out a yip and start choking her out. The angel drops the body and lets out a distorted wail. It walks slowly towards the desk.

"I was gonna let you live." I whispered as I kicked her out from the desk. She rolled out and the angel shrieked. Before she could finish screaming it picked her up and broke her neck, a crack resonating through the room. It dragged her to the window and flew away, probably to the gospel. I crawl out, covered in dust and blood. My eyebrow stings from being cut open when she socked me in the face. I'll need to patch it up in the next building. Luckily, it's a hospital. I walk towards the stairs almost forgetting the room that was barricaded. I turn back around and climb over the fallen trophy case that covered the door. There left a decayed body with a suit on. In his hand a 9mm, and 3 packs of bullets on the desk. You could tell he shot himself by the hole on the bottom of his chin and the bigger hole coming out of the top of it. There's dried, brown blood covering the ceiling and floor behind him. I grab the gun and shove it into the back of my pants and put the bullets in my backpack. While doing that, I happen to glance down and see a note. I picked it up. It read: "***I write this as three of them try to rip the door down. I shot one of them in the head three times. It did nothing. They've ripped my side up with their metal teeth and nails. I'm trying to keep my insides in. I've also pushed my display over to keep them out. I hope my three children find this. My two sweet sons Trevor and Kaine and my strong little girl Cindy.***" My hands start to tremble when I realize who I had killed. The guy I had hit with the pipe had yelled "*Kaine*". I start to break down. This note was for them and I had taken that away from them. The last thing will be branded in my thoughts forever.

"***The world will change, my children, but whatever happens…***"

"YOU MUST SURVIVE."



Untitled By Noah Rivera

Jackets

By Blake M. Johnson

Come home to dogs, drool.
Throw the bag down, lay down, down.
Look at the phone, for no reason.
For a long time. Dad's making dinner now.
Sleep now.

8:46PM. Lights are all out.
The window is open. The nausea that proceeds
this unscheduled sleep. Eyes ache.

Stare at the dresser to wake up.
Two jackets hang from there.
Put shoes on without socks.
Feet feel cold, head feels spun.

Put one jacket on. Feel warm, held.
Snoring from the other room. Feel warm,
held. Stare at the dresser to wake up.

2:55AM. Sit at the island bar. Let the eyes water, tears.
Feel them run. Running. Peel an orange.
Throw the peel away. Don't eat.
Stare at the refrigerator to wake up.

Pull the drawstrings. Feel warm, held.
Squeeze the orange. Let it drip.
Don't clean it, it's not for you.

Get some water.

My Prince

By Aubree Vecellio

The night was calm and beautiful, with no noise outside or in the house. I sat by the candlelight and read a love story. I had not noticed the time until the clock chimed midnight. I looked from my book and as I did, my candle went out. “How strange,” I thought, for there was no breeze going through the room. I grabbed the matches and lit the candle again. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door, and once again I thought it was strange that this occurred. I set my book down and wrapped my shawl around me tight.

"Who is it?" I asked. There was no answer, and I slowly opened my door and peeked my head out. There appeared a carriage, covered in black, and lined with vines of silver. A dark figure stood by the door into the carriage and black horses stood tall at the front of the carriage. The dark figure opened the door, and though he had no eyes, I felt him looking at me.

I stood in fear, not knowing what to do. My feet moved towards the door of the carriage. I looked at the dark figure, his body still in the direction of my home. My hands started to shake as I entered. A voice came out of the darkness.

"Hello Catharine." My heart stopped at the voice of the man that was sitting in front of me. My head turned to face the figure. He was a distinguished gentleman, with a black velvet top hat and a red velvet coat to match. Jewels covered the pockets and seams of the coat. In his hands, he held a cane with a skull with ruby eyes on it. "Do not be too afraid of me, my love." I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. I slowly opened my eyes and looked at him. This time I took a good deep look at this man. He had a pale face, long black hair that reached his shoulders, and a handlebar mustache. His eyes, though; his eyes pierced into my soul and sent a chill up my spin.

"Who said that I must be afraid? Who are you?"

He gives me a big grin. "I have been here since the beginning of time and will be here till the end of time. I come and go as I choose."

"Where do you come from?" Before he could answer my question, the carriage started to move. I looked out the window and saw the world going by in a flash. I felt the carriage slow down. I looked outside to see a desert. I was more than confused because my home was surrounded by green luscious trees, and this land was foreign. Yet, the air was cooler and thicker than before.

"What is your name?"

He sat up a bit straighter and crossed his legs. He was silent for a moment.

"You know my name,” he said.

"What name would that be?"

Again, he did not answer. As I looked into his eyes, my own got heavy and before I knew it, I was in a deep sleep. Feeling his eyes on me, I opened mine. I was still in the carriage and it was still dark outside. I tried to remember how I got there, for it seemed like a dream.

"Will you tell me where we are going?"

"To an old friend's house; I believe he is anxious to meet you."

"Have I met your friend before?"

"A few times, I believe, but I do not think you remember him too well." I tried to think of all the men I had formally met in my life, but of course, I truly do not remember them all.

"Surely, we must be close to his home then, for it feels we have been riding for hours."

"Indeed, we are...look." He pointed his cane out the window, and I quickly looked to see a brilliant castle.

I still had the questions running in my mind. Lost in my thoughts, the carriage pulls to a stop. The man in the red coat and black hat got out and extended his hand for me. I took it, feeling that I have known him for eternity. I would soon find out how right I was. I breathed in the air, but it is not fresh. It smelled more of death than anything. As we got closer to the door, my body began to shake. When we reached the entrance, the front door swung open. A dark figure is illuminated in a red light.

"Lucifer," the shadow says. I am frozen in fear, my breathing hitched in my throat. I slowly turned to see that the man who holds my hand is now the Prince of Darkness... the Father of Lies, standing beside me.

"My love, meet Death." Darkness enveloped me.

I woke from my darkness again in a large, ominous, four poster bed. I sit up and see that I am redressed in a rave black sequined gown. I hear footsteps approach and Lucifer stands at the doorway.

"Good morning, my love. Welcome to Hell." I want to scream but nothing comes out. I cradle myself in fear. "You must be wondering why you are here. You fell asleep reading your love story and accidentally tipped your candle over, setting your house ablaze. You died in the fire. God was not fast enough to get to your soul like I was. Now you will be part of the greatest love story ever!" As he walked towards me, a wicked grin came across his lips and I fell under his spell. He slowly caresses my cheek. "I have loved you through many lifetimes, my bride. Now you are forever mine."

I would soon become his bride for eternity.

My prince, my love!

The Door
By Drea Williams

There is a door in my basement that shouldn't be there. The door itself isn't anything out of the ordinary, but there is no reason it should be in my basement. It sits in the back corner of the room, with the doorframe in the drywall, but it doesn't open to anything. In fact, the door isn't able to open at all. At least, it doesn't open enough for it to serve any practical purpose as a door. It was installed as if it were supposed to swing outwards, away from whoever was opening it, but the only thing on the other side of the door is the concrete foundation of the house, which stops the door before it can open even an inch.

I think, in the original floor plan of the house, there was meant to be another room where the door is. However, when the house was actually built, the room was neglected from the plans. The door was still built though. For some reason, the door still existed in my basement, completely and utterly useless. Sometimes, I consider having the door taken out and replaced with a wall, like it should have been originally, but I always decide against it. Really, it would be far more work than it would be worth; the door doesn't take up any space in the basement anyways.

So, there is a door in my basement that shouldn't be there, but I pretend that it isn't. I go about my life as if there isn't an architectural mystery in the lowest floor of my house, putting pictures on the walls and filling the room with furniture. My basement is completely normal in every way, with the exception of the door, and I use it as such. Most of the time, I forget the door is even there. It has become a part of my normal life, so I don't think about it.

I had gotten so used to the door that when I walked downstairs and into the room, I didn't notice that the door was open. It took me a rather abashing amount of time to realize that something was amiss, but when I finally did, I was astounded. I didn't believe what I was seeing. I have to emphasize again that there was *no possible way* for the door to have opened; there was nothing but solid concrete behind it. Yet, as I stood there staring at it in shock, the door was open, nonetheless.

I knew it was stupid to approach the door the moment my feet started moving towards it, but my curiosity overtook all of my other rational thoughts. I had to know why the door was open, and what was behind it. In my head, I knew that it wasn't possible for the door to be open. Still, it stood right in front of my eyes, swung open wide, back into where the concrete behind it should have been. And I had to know *why*. So, I walked to the door.

I walked slowly, hyperaware of any sound or shift of movement in the air, but there was nothing there that I could sense. When I was about a foot in front of the door, I stopped and peered into the opening. A long, dark, empty corridor stretched out in front of me. The walls were smooth and slightly reflective in a way that reminded me of black glass. There was no way for me to tell how far the corridor stretched out in front of me. I don't know how long I stood there staring down that hallway before a wave of disorienting dizziness washed over me. I clutched my head, trying to refocus

my vision, but the black spots were swarming in my eyes and I felt like I was falling. With a start, I realized that I was falling– forward, through the door, as if some unseen force was drawing me in. I tried with everything in me to step back from the door, to pry myself away from the influence of this dizzying, enigmatic passageway, but it was too late. My head was splitting with pain, my vision was swirling with nauseating colors, my ears were ringing, and I couldn't tell which direction was which anymore. I stumbled and fell to my knees, willing my brain to form a coherent thought that would help get me out of this situation.

Nothing came. I did the only thing that I could do in the situation, the only thing my body would let me do. I sank down to the smooth, glassy floor, brought my knees to my chest, shut my eyes, and pressed my hands against my ears until the ringing stopped.

I finally opened my eyes to see the last sliver of light fade away as the door latched shut. There was nothing but darkness around me now. I don't know how long I sat there, waiting to see the door open again. I sat there even longer waiting to see the signs of anything else in the dark void besides me. No one else was there, and the door never reopened.

I don't know how long I have been in these dark hallways. There isn't any way out. I lost track of time a long while ago. There is nothing for me in here, but there is nothing left for me out there, either. These corridors distort everything about the person. I don't exist to the real world anymore. I don't even remember what my name used to be. Sometimes, though, I can't help but wonder.

Is there still a door in my basement somewhere?

Inspired by the Magnus Archives.

Singularity
By Logan Gravatt

Scaling infinitely upwards

content with interbeing

all until your love ruptures

the brain intensely filtering

Small with a big burst

romanticism of calm words

your infant self is nursed

ever so free like birds

Repressed with infinite rest

why are feelings gone

happiness put to the test

so much blood drawn

You escape the sane

inner self torn in two

injected into your vein

you slip right through

Forbidden puzzle of limbs

numb from the shame

hiding in pseudonyms

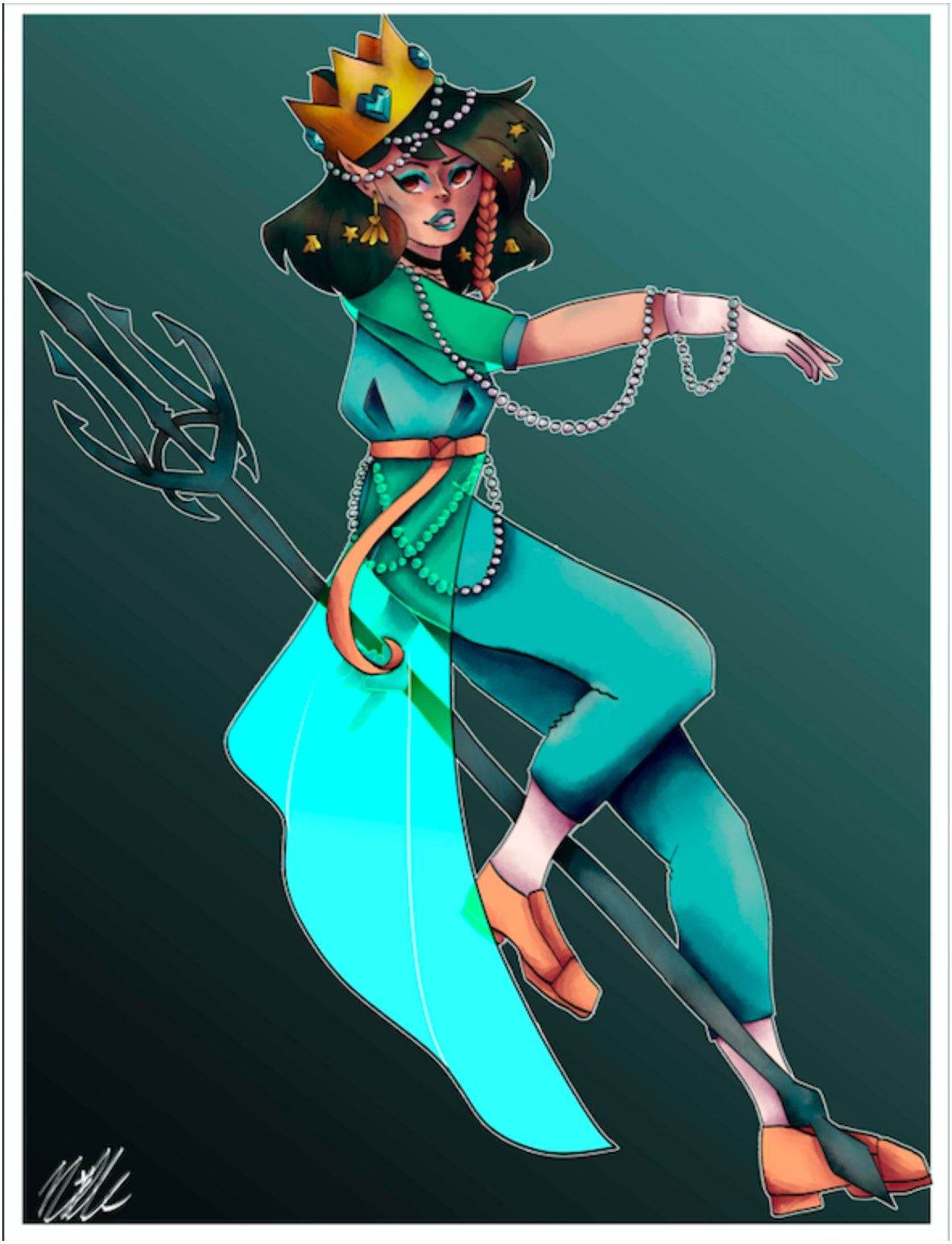
you will never be the same



Captured Memories By Spencer medved



Guiding Light By Spencer Medved



Character Art By Adalia Nile

Ridged Rails

By Jade Mitchell

I smashed the pink, poem-patterned picture frame in the middle of the road. The shattered pieces used to wipe away the tears that flow.

The only gift I got from you while I was living with the stranger;

I swept the remaining glass into a bag, cautious of endangering the car tires.

I still remember the used needle I found in your room that you blamed on Granny's shots of insulin

It's not her fault you were constantly gone, I can still smell her warm breakfast toast sprinkled with cinnamon.

I miss the times Grandpa and I yelled "I see the bridge on the way to the farm."

The purple monkey he got me fourteen years ago is still the first thing I see prior to my wake-up alarm.

I tried mom, I tried reaching out but was left with unreturned calls about their funeral details,

At least I know they're not suffering, for too long they've held onto life's ridged rails.

There are countless reasons you should have tried better,

But the drugs mom, the drugs were what stumped up the weather.

-

I still think of the time I woke up in the darkness from a bad dream,

I still picture the smoke and the lighter flame gleam.

You said go back to bed and all the strange people stared,

Sometimes I feel that way now, like no one will care.

-

The promises about how you're doing well, staying clean,

You've taught me not to *ever* expect anything;

Trust itself now is thought of as a mind tormentor,

Tell me how many kids have spent months in a "child friendly drug addiction rehab facility center"?

-

Through everything you put me through, though, I stand strong because of you.

I still here, I'm standing steady,

And because of you my heart feels heavy.

But with heavy heart and racing mind,

Comes strength in myself I've still yet to find.



Eye By Jolie Iler

Ocean
Form Poem, villanelle
By Corinne Wilder

Seasalt breeze, a fresh unreeling feeling.
Tiny baby shells with pastel orange seams.
Crashing waves calm you as if you're dreaming.
A recess of children souring on curling water queens,
Scads of crabs burrow through sandy streams.
Seasalt breeze, a fresh unreeling feeling.
Seashore lined with colorful rock kings.
Towels blow in the wind like party streams.
Crashing waves calm you as if you're dreaming.
Tiny piping plovers scatter like pom poms running.
The birds take flight with their gentle wings.
Seasalt breeze, a fresh unreeling feeling.
Fat seagulls fly with Cheeto cuisine.
Jellys lay dead on the seashore seam.
Crashing waves calm you as if you're dreaming.
Bright neon moon glowing evenings.
The sunset like a bright orange highlight in the skies.
Seasalt breeze, a fresh unreeling feeling.
Crashing waves calm you as if you're dreaming.

"Truths of a Traveler"

(After "Confessions of a Transplant" by Angela Narciso)

My third visit to Vietnam,
the scent of intoxicating orchids
made me tearful. My eyes

surveyed the somber streets,
seeking familiar colors. I devoured
the cup of brown liquid,

a wire tied with red and green twine,
the puddles of rambutan skins
on a sidewalk. The memory

of juicy grapes made rivers
in my mouth. At the market, I picked
the greenest jackfruit, dredged it

in chile salt that stung my chapped lips.
Words that I collected like various teas,
Disappeared down my throat

like my poor pronunciations of accents.
Nằm, năm, nấm, nam. I practiced
into the ears of empty glasses,

reciting words to my glass brick
of digital memories. The walls
echoed with voices.

Lying orchid-still in the dead
of night, I drank the barks
of nameless dogs.

Loneliness Lingers
By Gabriel Ososco

There is a glove holding his fingers.
It's hard to wake up when loneliness lingers.
It's harder to sleep,
His soul will just be there.

Are you kidding me?
A joke will just be there.
He thinks of himself as when he breathes air.
He's super impulsive,
Acts on what he thinks fair.

Reality is falling
He's the only one that sees there.
He's lonely, he's cold,
It's twenty-degrees there.

But no one will go, when loneliness lingers;
He's there with no home,
His soul growing weaker.
It's hard to control this world of either.

I better just go,
Gloves cover my fingers.

Demons
By Colby Kleven

"Silence, you jewel-encrusted buffoon!" barked Esteem, jabbing Fieri once more in the stomach with a cattle prod. Esteem's breath reeked of deodorant and curdled milk. After a seething, green-eyed stare, Esteem turned around and vanished into the cold dark of the dungeon.

"Son of a meatball!" Guy Fieri groaned as he crumpled to the floor of his cell.

"It's no use, my obtuse friend," wailed the ghost of Benjamin Franklin. "All of us together cannot break these bars, and even if we could, we'd never be able to overcome Boredom and Loneliness, let alone Esteem." Bill the Ogre, Devourer of Overage Trick-or-Treaters sighed in agreement. Ms. Woelfel sat silently in the corner, deep in thought. Once more, Fieri slammed his fist against the rusting cell door, echoing in the empty quiet. Suddenly, another figure materialized at the door. It was Loneliness, thin and tall with ash white skin, long fingers and piercing eyes. His breath smelled like garlic and feet.

"Boredom!" Loneliness shouted, his voice like a knife scraping against concrete. "The rotund one needs to be taught a lesson." Fieri pounded the door even harder. In an instant, Boredom appeared, drooling slightly from the side of his mouth, and without a word, snatched the large ring on Fieri's hand and swallowed it.

"Not my chili cheese!" Fieri cried, but as quickly as they had appeared, the two demons evaporated into nothing. While Fieri repeatedly threw himself against the freezing, unyielding bars of the cell, Ms. Woelfel concentrated hard on the one thing she knew could save them: the flame-feathered, black and silver striped mace that always sat by the door of her classroom – and the boy that had once wielded it.

***

I almost couldn't believe that in just a few days, I'd no longer be in Ms. Woelfel's class. To make matters worse, she had been out for the whole week with some mystery illness, leaving us with the Transylvanian. I liked the Transylvanian, but she wouldn't tell me where Woelfel had gone, and she just couldn't make up for the fact that in our last few days here, our esteemed English teacher was nowhere to be seen. In fact, she wasn't the only one missing; Benjamin Franklin had been oddly silent, Guy Fieri hadn't made an appearance in a little over a month, and I hadn't seen Bill the Ogre since last Halloween. To tell you the truth, I'd been quite lonely, and each hour felt like it was dragging itself through syrup. One rainy Tuesday morning, I found myself sitting in English staring at a blank word document. The rain seemed to get louder, and with every drop, my head sunk lower to my desk.

"Hey, wake up!" Riley whispered as she grabbed my shoulder. I turned to thank her, but I realized, with a start, she wasn't there at all. In fact, I was entirely alone in the room. The Transylvanian and all of my classmates had vanished, and the rain kept getting louder. The lights began to flicker, and the pressure dropped, causing my ears to pop. The rain was getting to be too loud to handle and the lights shined so brightly, I feared they might burst. In a panic, I ran for the door. The floor seemed to move back and forth like a treadmill. When I finally reached the door, the handle would not budge. In a last-ditch effort, I grabbed the nearest object, a flame-feathered mace I had made the year before, and struck the handle with all my might. In

that instant, a voice in my head shouted, *"Find us!"*, and with a flash of lightning, I found myself outside the Wolf Estate, Ms. Woelfel's summer home. In my hands still, was the mace, but it glowed like a lightbulb and weighed twice its normal weight. The Estate looked rather unusual, too. The normally cheery and serene looking home was now dark, foreboding, and crumbling into ruins as if it had been left abandoned for a century. The wind howled overhead, and the storm continued to rage, the occasional flash of lightning illuminating the cracked and withered gate just a few feet in front of me. I used the light of my mace to find my way through the desolate courtyard to the front door. My breathing became short and as I slowly reached out to knock on the door, the house seemed to pull me in like a magnet. I lifted my fist to knock on the door, but before I could knock even once, the door violently crumbled to pieces, gravity turned ninety degrees, and I fell through the threshold as if it were a pit. The fall was surprisingly short, but when I looked up, there was no evidence that I had just fallen from an opening in the ground, just the wet ceiling of a cave. When my eyes finally adjusted to the low light of my mace and a single blue candle mounted to the wall, I saw that in front of me were three doors, and behind me, was a narrow ledge overlooking a black abyss. Deciding I would rather investigate the doors rather than jump senselessly into yet another pit, I continued to the doors and could see that they were labeled "Esteem", "Boredom", and "Loneliness". As I approached each door, the mace got heavier and seemed to flicker as if it were dying, and the blue candle grew larger and larger, seeming to grin at me. Though there was no breeze, and the air began to close in around me, I thought I could hear a whispering. *Choose. Choose.* The mace began to grow dimmer and the voices got louder. *Choose! Choose!* they whispered harshly. I gripped the mace tightly and with all my might, I turned away from the doors and ran to the precipice. As I approached the cliff, the mace brightened again with an encouraging glow, the pounding of my heart overcame the whispering voices and as I hurled myself into the pit, I felt a long-fingered hand reach out as if to take me, but too late.

When I reached the bottom, I landed, to my surprise, on a soft fluffy mass that shouted, "Mamma Mia! Who in *flavortown* is that?" When I came to my senses, I held my staff aloft and in the light of the mace, I recognized the face of Guy Fieri. "I've never been so happy to see you, brother man!" he exclaimed. Bill the Ogre woke up from his nap and began to grin, showing all six of his ogre teeth. The light of the mace now illuminated a dingy jail cell, complete with tattered cots and a rusted dumbwaiter.

"Greetings, young one. I apologize for my absence as of late," said Ben Franklin as he rose from his ghost bed. "Let's have you use that lightning rod of yours to get us out of here!"

"Absolutely, Mr. Franklin!" I replied. I pointed my mace at the door and with a flash of fire and a G major chord, the door was reduced to ashes. Without hesitation, the four of us bolted from the cell and entered a large chamber with a ceiling so high, the light of my mace could not reach it.

"Wait just a moment, lads," gasped Franklin, "did any of you gentlemen happen to see Woelfel on our way out?" No, in fact, I hadn't even seen her in the cell. We turned around to go back for her but to our surprise and horror, three hideously disfigured demons stood waiting for us, weapons drawn. The three let out a cackle, each sounding identical to the other and charged full speed. A jazz band began playing boss battle music. Fieri summoned a tornado of Mountain Dew and bowled over Esteem in a flurry of flavor. Franklin drew a cutlass and began hacking at Boredom, shouting revolutionary slogans at the top of his lungs. Bill began to club Loneliness's long toes while I sent a beam of fire straight for his head. It seemed we had the upper hand, but to my surprise, Loneliness perfectly deflected my attack with a guitar riff and redirected it in my direction, knocking me to the ground. Meanwhile, Esteem had recovered from the Mountain Dew blast.

He snarled to Fieri, “You and I both know you’ll never be the best chef in the world. In fact, your restaurants are awful!” Fieri began to cry, his Mountain Dew flurry growing weaker. Boredom sneered to Franklin, “You’ll never be content with your political career; no one will remember you.” Franklin began to stumble over his own words and lose his footing.

Loneliness scoffed to Bill, “You’ll be feared and rejected for as long as you live!” Bill began to weep again. That was all Loneliness needed to complete an 8-hit combo and disintegrate Bill into dust. The battle looked ill with one man down and three at critical health, but suddenly, the ground began to shake. At that moment, Ms. Woelfel, twenty feet tall and radiating classic rock, entered the battle. The jazz band broke into full-band, double-time improv. Enraged at the loss of Bill, Woelfel grabbed Loneliness’s stick-like body and crushed him into powder, prompting a high-pitched trumpet squeal. She then moved on to Boredom, who was occupied fighting Franklin and his incessant rambling. Woelfel raised her foot and flattened Boredom into a pancake, prompting another trumpet squeal. Esteem was the only one left. Woelfel swung her mighty sword down upon Esteem, but impressively, he parried the block and maintained his attack on Fieri. Ben Franklin was out for the count – after all, a 200-year-old ghost can only do so much – but with another G major chord, I unleashed another bolt of flame at Esteem. He was finished. The band let out a final trumpet squeal and was silent. Woelfel and Fieri vanished, too. To my surprise, Esteem now knelt before me, badly burned, but alive. He looked up at me with his green eyes.

“You know,” he rasped, “I’ll always be with you, haunting you at every corner. There is nowhere you can go where you will be free of me.”

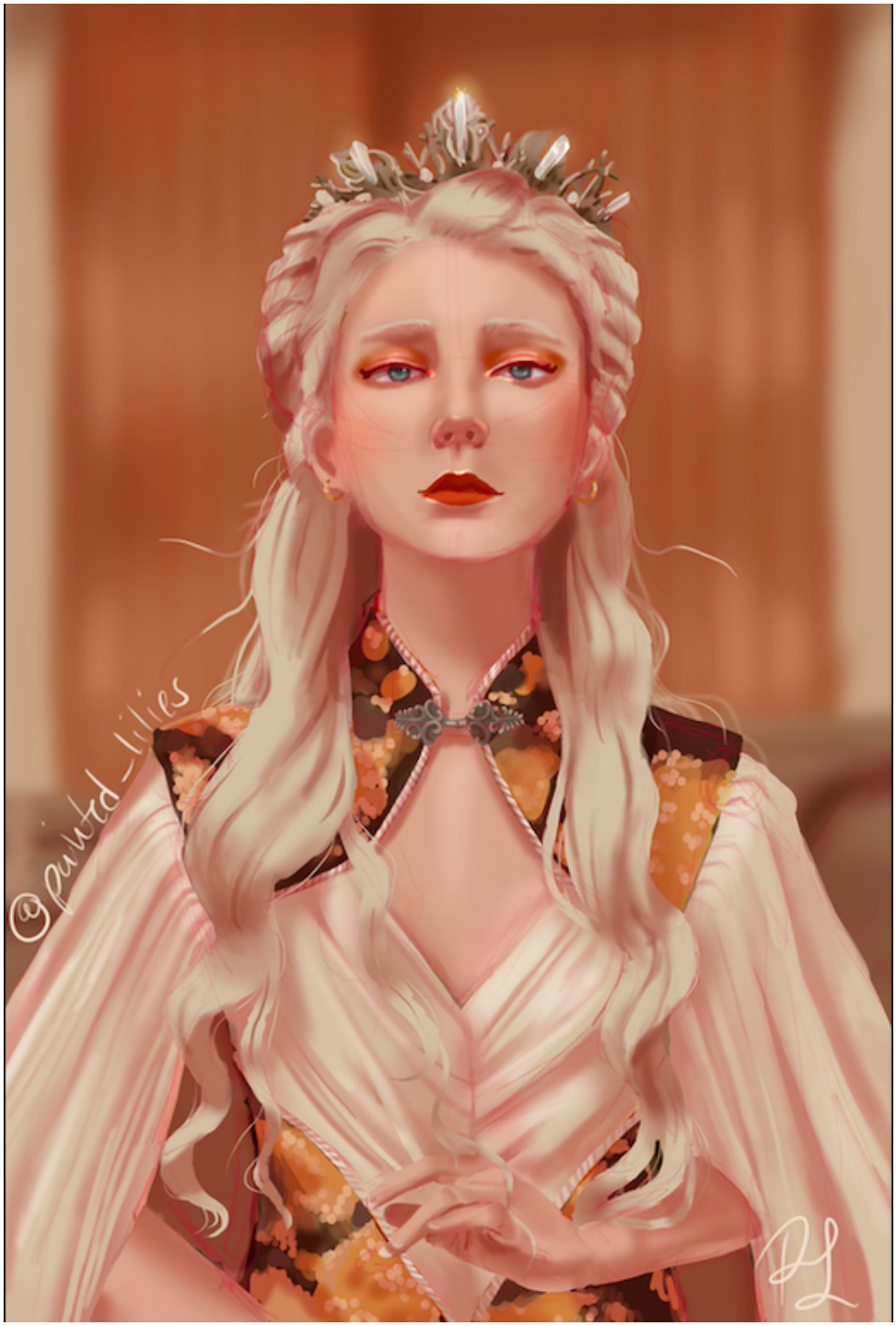
“Somehow”, I replied, “I believe you’re wrong. I don’t have to let you control me.”

“Indeed not,” Esteem cackled, and with that, I vaporized him into dust.

***

“Hey, wake up!” Riley whispered as she grabbed my shoulder. I awoke with a start. The rain still poured outside, and the word document was still blank. I looked for the Transylvanian, but she was nowhere to be found. Instead, I found Ms. Woelfel standing at the microwave, happily awaiting her vegetarian breakfast burrito, as if she had never left. I stood speechless as the bell rang. Without a word, Ms. Woelfel smiled and placed a note on my desk that simply said:

Thank you.



Mind Your Business By Bethany Marble



Eye of the Storm

Pueblo West High School, 661 West Capistrano Avenue, Pueblo West, Colorado 81007
https://pwh.district70.org/