

Chez Nous
XXXVIII
Wonderland
//
Through the Looking
Glass



Wonderland Through the Looking Glass

**A study in the striking and beautiful contradictions between
who we know ourselves to be, how we are perceived, and
what we see when we look in the mirror.**

The 2026 edition of *Chez Nous* is dedicated to

Annette Markowitz

**And her dedication to cultivating the artistic
talent of all who pass through the Red Doors.**

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can you see me?
no
like really see me
as we are enveloped by the moonlight
and the artificial glare of passing headlights

in this unnatural light
i feel more exposed than ever
as if the stars are whispering
share your deepest secrets to all who will listen

look into my eyes
what do you see?
judgment, most likely
or envy, maybe
for you will never wear my skin as your own

i cannot tell if you are looking at me
or through me
like an apparition
never really there, haunting the alleyways
of your hometown
or the hallways of your childhood home
or even the back corners
of your very own mind

i doubt you will ever
know
see
or understand me
but for now, let us allow the darkness
to encompass the two of us
let traveling cars illuminate
what we have been too scared to share in the daylight

"What Only the Midnight Sky can See" - Emma Greenwood '26



"Monet Rework" - Marley White '27

I am a wanderer.
Following my heart through nothing.
Lost, unknowing, missing.
Inevitable.

Somewhere hidden away shrouded by nothing I could feel it.
And it wouldn't tell me what it was, but it was there.
I knew.
I knew I needed it and it needed me and I *needed* it.
Inevitable.

There were whispers, found only in light by people of dark.
Whispers of this need and I knew.
We, the dark, found in the light, followers of whispers.
Looking for something in nothing.
Inevitable.

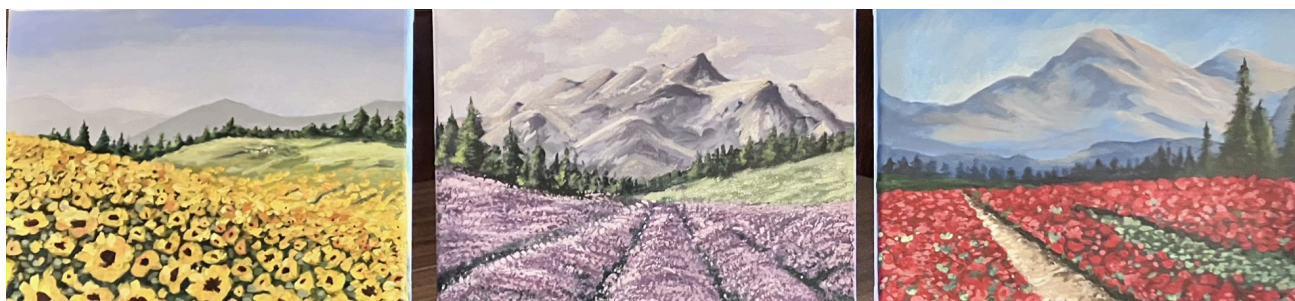
You were the something.
Hiding a nothing.
Running from whispers.
The light found in the dark.
Something never meant to be found by those like us.
Inevitable.

I felt you.
You heard me.
And we saw.
We saw each other.
A truth meant only for those who searched for something in nothing.
Meant only for those who found nothing in something.
Only for those who are inevitable.

"Dark, Light, and the Inevitable Truth" - Nora Horstmann-Allen '29



"Maggie" - Julia Zelahy '26



*"Assorted Works" - Mallee Lambert '27
First Place in the Chez Nous Art Contest 2026*

I think the warmth of my breath that crystalizes on the air
Is finite proof I have a soul
As spineless as I may be,
Madness has not yet taken its toll

These words are splintering cascades,
Crescendos falling like these November leaves
But my pen still scribbles nonsensically, not for accolades
Nor for a blind coward's reprieves

When the snowfall comes, I will wish that each angelic flake,
As I did with a thousand loves before,
Kisses his cheeks for me as I cannot,
And then I move on to all I have in store

Many arms encircle me
Binding me together
And they persist, they dare resist
The changing of the weather

Heartache can be such a bore
Last November I wrote of blushing cheeks and heartbreak
And I have far stronger trees to fawn o'er
So I pine no more, no more

"Words from a Sleepwalking Session" - MJ Stanley '26
Poet's Work Published in
DePaul's Blue Book Best High School Writing 2026

Years of love compiled into one
I stare into the looking glass and smile at my face
The carving of my ancestors is reflected in that space
Thousands of years of love crafted into one
A wonderful child whose life has just begun
If an exact chain of events hadn't conspired
And God wasn't so divinely inspired
I wouldn't have been created
Any thought of me would be dissipated
The human feeling of love
The connection, the tug
Led to a canvas being painted
And the young girl was created
Two blue eyes from a grandmother who fell in love
With a man whose smile is a replica of
The one I shine upon others
Brown hair with a splash of red covers my shoulders for
My mother's genes are strong and true
Blended with my father's who
Dominate my stubborn brow
And inspire my musical brain somehow
My gentle, manicured hands
From a grandmother who understands
How to care for all
Even when the ask is tall
Loyalty to family
That I echo equally
From a quiet man who loved his chair
That always showed up and cared
Thousands more generations span from them
A love that began at the making of men
I stare into the looking glass once more
And admire the love that sits in my core

*"Years of Love Compiled into One" - Anna Gill '29
Second Place in the Young Poets Delaware County Poetry Contest*



"Chagall Rework" - Sofia Maselli '27

Her snout pushes dirt beneath evergreen pines
while trailing the scent of a nest left behind.
To the ravens and sparrows, she feels strangely blind,
for without them, the fox is alone in her mind.
While the peek-a-boo fledglings are not to be found,
the underbrush fox gathers thorns for a crown.
Then a bellow, a gunshot, a bang that resounds.
A trembling tail and a drool that drips down.
Her thoughts slip to silence, her eyes are a blur.
She steps, but she sweats beneath matted brown fur.
And the oaks, with the wind in their branches, confer
that the mind of one's prey is no stronger than hers.
Four crucified paws dig tracks in her wake,
and the wire snaps taut like the nature of fate.
Her hind leg is yanked and she thinks it will break
but the snare is aware of the predator's state.
She thrashes—she doesn't know what else to do.
The metal is braided, the metal seems cruel.
The trees titter blithely and the fox acts a fool
as she tears at her leg until rivulets pool.
A match meets its maker, teeth dig into flesh,
not a whimper is heard as her hunger is fed.
The birds cry in horror as blood sticks to her chest,
but their comfort is naught when she ought to confess.
The ravens, the sparrows, they never had left—
prey pities the predator in hunter's caress—
and the plunderer gags at the bone of her leg,
but the fox doesn't know that the trap hadn't set.
The wire's just vine and easily snapped;
it took but a memory for the fox to be trapped.
Her tongue's coated crimson with appendage to match
or to lack, if the future is much like the past.

"The Fox's Snare" - Sam Shea '29
Third Place in the Chez Nous Writing Contest 2026

You live a thousand lives,
Reflecting and imitating millions of faces,
But do you ever get tired,
Wishing you could swap places?
You hear the complaints of the diffident,
Watching helplessly as the tears pour.
Do you long to comfort these sobs,
Telling them to fret nevermore?
You get to host the likeness of movie stars,
Ethereal beings in the eyes of many.
Do you ever find yourself jealous,
Or do you bask in the false praise of plenty?
Millions of faces,
Each one differing from the other.
Does this broaden your perspectives,
Or is your blurred identity smothered?

Your surface is gleaming,
Not a crack or a scuff,
But when the pressure comes crashing down,
Is your strength a phony bluff?
Your surface starts to shatter,
The remains of you sharp and ragged.
Did the tears get to you,
Your reflection now spewing acid?

But maybe it is their fault.
The world is a heavy curse, one even painful for Atlas,
But is your bitterness from within,
Or has the world cast upon you its malice?

*"The Face of Nobody" - Devon Wagner '29
First Place in the Chez Nous Writing Contest 2026*



"Pumpkin Head" - Jane Rix '28
Second Place in the Chez Nous Art Contest 2026



"Trees" - Kara Simpson '26

we all see you, you know.
you with your pin-straight hair,
your curled eyelashes,
your iron-pressed skirt.
trying your hardest,
and doing the best you can,
and asking all the right questions.
we see you,
pretty girl,
good girl,
silly, stupid girl.
we see you.
i've been you, before.
you'll give and give and give your all,
and it won't be enough.
you'll run as fast as you can,
and you'll still be in the same place you started.
you can ask all the right questions,
but there is no answer.
it's never going to make sense.
so if i were you
- the girl in the glass -
i'd stop preening,
and smile with my teeth.
because this world is harsh,
and bright,
and fleeting.
and we're all mad, here.

"to the girl in the glass" - Magdalen Keller '27



"Summer Bliss" - Safiyat Muhammad '26



"Unnamed" - Sophia Kehoe '27

They call me alien
The papers, the pamphlets, the police, the public
But the cartoons, the comics, they show me otherwise
My skin doesn't shine silver or glow green
My eyes aren't boundless black beads
I have five fingers on each hand— I can count all ten, I checked
Surely you're mistaken
I labor just like you
I learn just like you
I love just like you
I'm human just like you

They call me alien
But I didn't abduct you, I swear
My wrists are still shackled
Red half-moons imprint my skin
Gravity has always held me down
You say, "Go back to where you came from"
But I came from here
I was raised in your classrooms and culdesacs
But you won't claim me

Careful, don't look too long
I'll prove you wrong if you do
But you won't hear me out
You've already chosen what I am
Was I born into the wrong kind?
Wrong place, wrong time?
Or just the wrong story in your head?

I wish I was an alien
My saucer in the sky
The beacon bringing me higher
Slowly, slowly, just go- they don't want me here anyways
I crave the freedom above

"From another universe" - Joslyn Ho '27



"System of a Down Rework" - Grace Press '26

Beauty is steady like roots under soil,
bold like flowers through cracks in the sidewalk
It is not simple or soft, but real and raw
Growing stronger with every storm it faces

Beauty lives in the light that lingers
On a face that is etched with struggle
sitting in the silence of survival
as dawn lingers toward the end of night

Beauty blossoms where history made its marks,
In gasps after the pain,
Eyes that have courage to face the next day
Even when the nights were neverending

Scars settle like ripples in a still body of water
Reaching out, touching unseen but known places
And blooming where hope forbids to vanish

*"The Strength of Beauty" - Izzy Iannucci '27
Second Place in the Chez Nous Writing Contest 2026*



"Spring Symphony" - Sydney Driscoll '28

I am the scent that clings to your childhood toy, the scent that reminds you of home, of a better time. I am the feeling when you find that toy and squeeze it close to your chest, feeling a renewed sense of calm and warmth. I am the feeling that overwhelms you when you catch a whiff of that same scent in a crowd somewhere, hoping that you would find it again. I am the hope that you can finally find that scent and bottle it up, never to be forgotten again, and the crushing reminder that you can't. I am the fear that fills you when that stuffed animal gets thrown in the wash, praying that the smell will come back, and it always does. I am the feeling when you hold the toy close and experience instant relief as that familiar feeling of calm rushes over you. I am the weight lifting off of your chest as you collapse into your bed after a long, tiring day and take in the familiar scent of safety and comfort that surrounds you as you slowly drift to sleep. I am the sudden clarity when a big decision is finally reached, and the joy of knowing that the solution was in the back of your brain all along. I am the nostalgia that you experience when someone mentions again that familiar feeling of being overcome with memories of a different time. I am safe, I am sad, I am loving, I am loved, I am remembered, I am forgotten, I am the scent that clings to your childhood toy.

"I am the scent that clings to your childhood toy" - Katie Marshall '27

*Back Cover - "Maine Road" - Maisie Rix '29
Third Place in the Chez Nous Art Contest 2026*

