

# Et Cetera

# Literary Magazine

2017-2018



Huntington High School

# **Et Cetera**

Huntington High School's  
Literary Magazine

2017-2018

Editor

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Dear Reader,

Thank you so much for picking up this year's edition of the magazine. This production is incredibly special to me, as it is the culmination of a year of club meetings and hard work from everyone involved. Since it is my second year in this club, I felt honored to be passed the editor baton.

I am an anxious and reserved person by nature, and I feel I can only be myself in certain environments, where I can be comfortable. I have always loved writing and creating stories since I was a child. My 9th grade English teacher Ms. Molenko, and her student intern Page, noticed this passion and tried to get me to join *Et Cetera* my freshmen year, but I couldn't. I felt nervous about being surrounded by new people. However, I decided to give *Et Cetera* a try last year, after I realized how much I missed Ms. Molenko over the summer. I knew from the first meeting I attended, that I made the right choice in joining. I immediately felt a home with everyone, and soon after the first meeting, I finally shared my work with other people. I felt so relieved when it received praise. That gave me the confidence to continue contributing to the magazine.

I always felt excited to share my stories and poems with the club last year. Now that I'm the editor, I feel a different kind of joy seeing the other members share their own work. It's refreshing to see those who are passionate about writing willingly share their work with the club, knowing that they are the next generation of authors and creators.

As you can see, this year has been amazing. Our club is expanding and that magazine grew to 100 pages in length! I cannot wait for what's to come for next year.

Yours truly,

Julia Collins  
Editor of *Et Cetera*

## **Members**

|                   |                         |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Ashanna Archibald | Lea LaPonti             |
| Rory Bocelli      | Fionnán Malone          |
| Megan Caramico    | Isabellarose Malone     |
| Julia Collins     | Lizbeth Loeza Mendoza   |
| Dariana Cruz      | Sahar Nadi              |
| Mia D'Alessandro  | Jeraine Nieves-Morales  |
| Joey Dammers      | Jorge Parada - Cisneros |
| Irtana Deslouches | Jessica Pulizzotto      |
| Kenny Flores      | Diya Rai-Gersappe       |
| Jesse Henning     | Patricia Reyes-Canales  |
| Hannah Hughes     | Sarah Siegel            |
| LJ Kindall        | Cori Thomason           |
| Anna Koulakova    | Elvis Torres            |
| Sasha Koulakova   | Emma Vaughan            |
| Maddy Kye         | Colette Wagner          |

## **Art Credit**

|                           |         |                         |         |
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| 1) Jessica Quintanilla... | page 5  | 19) Grace Kenny...      | page 54 |
| 2) Rachel Moss...         | page 8  | 20) Emely Lopez...      | page 56 |
| 3) Alliy McKenzie...      | page 10 | 21) Quinn Blackburn...  | page 59 |
| 4) Brigid Hannon...       | page 11 | 22) Cailan Polishook... | page 61 |
| 5) Josafina Fasolino...   | page 14 | 23) Angelina Larkin...  | page 62 |
| 6) Maggie Giles...        | page 17 | 24) Julia Giles...      | page 66 |
| 7) Yasmin Khilji-Neal...  | page 19 | 25) Christina Varady... | page 69 |
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| 9) Quinn Blackburn...     | page 22 | 27) Aniyah Toro...      | page 75 |
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| 13) Julia Segal ....      | page 33 | 31) Vivienne LaVertu... | page 82 |
| 14) Rachel Ross...        | page 35 | 32) Christina Varady... | page 83 |
| 15) Brigid Hannon...      | page 36 | 33) Alliy McKenzie...   | page 88 |
| 16) Emely Lopez...        | page 44 | 34) Alex Bonilla...     | page 93 |
| 17) Ava Brosnon...        | page 46 | 35) Grace Kenny...      | page 94 |
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**-Jessica Quintanilla**

## **My Page In A Magazine**

Hello!

This is my page in a magazine you're reading.

I'm proud of this page.

It may not seem like much, after all it's only ink on paper in a magazine, out of dozens, and out of those dozens hundreds of older editions of this magazine. So in reality this is only a tiny piece of the long history of Et Cetera. This page, however means so much to me. It represents my passion, it represents my persistence, it represents all of the club meetings I went to and the new people I meet, and the memories of all of those unique individuals. This page represents my growth. I would have never been here a few years ago, but I am now. This may not be the best thing I will write, but I'm learning. It represents more though. It represents one person's ambition to start a magazine for the high school and represents all of the people that kept that magazine alive. The countless people that have written for the magazine, they are part of it too. It's not a simple magazine, it's an exclusive tradition that only those with the courage, creativity, and tenacity can be a part of. Having this page is an honor. The fact that it even exists is a miracle. This page may not be much, but to me, this page means the world.

**-Tyler Campo**

## Entropy

Is it too steep of an order  
To ask for a shoulder to cry on  
So I do not find my face shining  
In residue  
As I neglect to wipe my own eyes and mouth bare.

I am my whole family  
Friends  
Lovers and Companions,  
But also not actually

I have those.  
I love everyone of them.  
But there is distance,  
Those who are close to me left their kindness at home,  
While to contrast  
Those at home would coddle me.

I hope

I am all of what I have  
Past 10 at night  
And there is a certain exasperation that is generated  
From acting  
In the messed up tale  
Of my own life

How many more days will I pretend to be a lover  
Wrapping the towel around each symbol of  
My loss of control  
Washing away the blood and holding me closer  
Than I have ever been to this

Intangible Reality.

I am my own parents,  
I kiss the back of my palm  
Which becomes the crown of my head  
And tell myself I am proud  
It is not self confidence.  
It is pathetic.

It is a mammoth searching for a horse.  
It simply won't be found in any.

Reality.

I become  
What I always wished my sibling would be  
Swatting away my steamy tears  
To tell me  
I am beautiful  
And logical  
Someone who can make it.

I think they said something like that.  
Like that, once.  
But, they do not have great lives either.

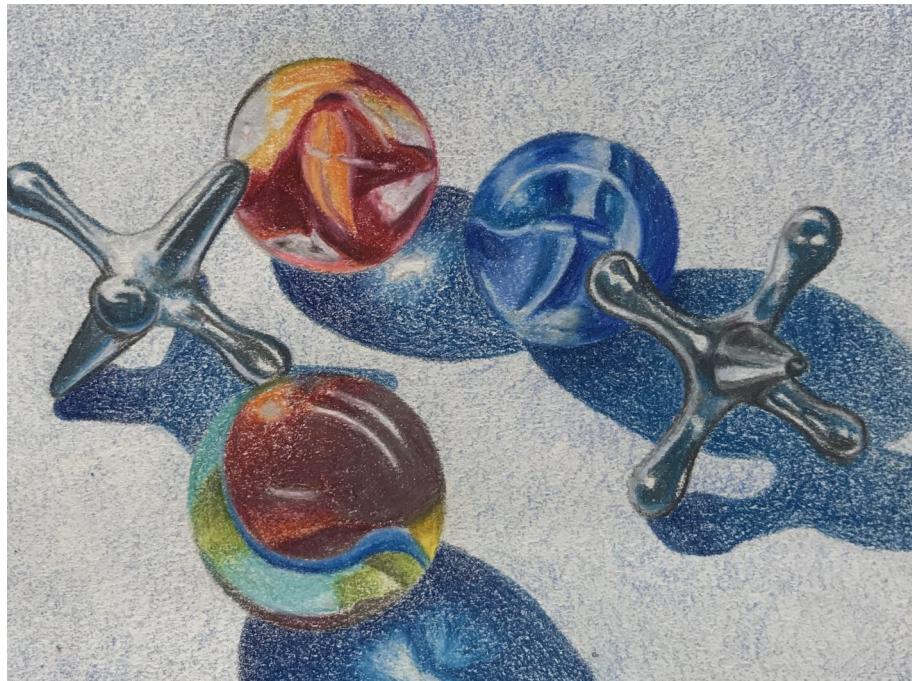
It's Reality.

-Rory Bocelli

### **Ghost Town**

He stood waiting underneath the bridge, waiting for her to arrive. He wasn't sure what to expect, he never went back home after graduation, and hadn't seen her since then. He couldn't help but feel nostalgic, for both the good and bad memories, as he walked the tracks he walked in his youth. Except he walked alone now, expecting her to come eventually. Eventually never came, as he found himself waiting under the bridge for hours. 'I should've expected this...' he thought. What he didn't expect was a train to come racing towards him, from down the track.

**-Julia Collins**



**-Rachel Moss**

## Valentine's Day

Valentine's day. A day that is celebrated by many couples. It is a day filled with love, candy, and sometimes a bouquet of flowers. But as for me, I despise valentine's day. I have no reason to be happy about a holiday that celebrates love. I hate the love and sweetness on this holiday. I may hate valentine's day now but I know there was once a time that where I didn't hate valentine's day. In fact, I used to love valentine's day. It was a day where i got to express my love for someone in the most gallant way possible before that one day that ruined everything for me.

On February thirteenth, the day before valentine's day, it was just like any other day. I was awaiting the next day so eagerly. During this time, I had a wife and one newborn baby. She was going to be one year old. Her birthday was on valentine's day. On that day I had not only one person to show my love to, but instead two. My baby was a beautiful girl. She had the most prettiest brown eyes and she had a beautiful smile. Whenever she smiled or laugh, it would make my heart fill with joy just seeing her that way. I loved my daughter. She was my pride and joy until one day. That day was and will always be the worst day of my life.

I was at work when I got the call, and I was told my wife got into a car accident with the baby. I was in such a shock. When I finally snapped out of it I rushed over to the hospital. Not caring about anything else, I drove as fast as I could. I was mumbling to myself and praying that they were okay. When I finally arrived I ran to the room screaming "Where are they?" "Where is my wife? Where is my kid?" I couldn't pay attention to anything else but finding them. I was panicking, sweating, hoping that they were alright. I was going crazy until I felt a hand on my shoulder. I turned around and saw a man in a long white coat. He looked at me profoundly and asked me in a discerning voice "are you the guardian of the two girls that recently got into an accident?" "Yes I am. Are they alright? Is my wife and kid alright?" The man looked at me with concern in his eyes and said the most horrifying and awful words I have ever heard in my entire life. The accident caused my wife's head to break and my baby was too fragile and took a hard hit to her body which led to a terrible scene that they could not bear to describe to me. When I heard this my heart stopped. I will never forget his final words, "I'm sorry. Your wife and child could not make it." Those words, those simple words pierced my ears. I didn't believe it. I didn't want to believe it. "I'm sorry" the man said. "We did everything we could." I felt numb. I fell on my knees. Tears started to fill up my eyes. I couldn't breathe properly and in my mouth I kept repeating the same words over and over again, "my family is dead. My family is dead." I couldn't move my legs. I continued to cry in the middle of the hallway. The man was still there. He kneeled down beside me and put his hand on my back. He kept apologizing but I continued to cry.

As soon as I had a moment to speak through my distorted voice I asked the man "where are they? Where is my wife and child?" I got up and the man showed me to the room that they were in. They were covered in a sheet from head to toe. I couldn't bare to look at their faces. I stayed in the room for hours crying my eyes out. I couldn't believe that my family was gone. I was distraught. I couldn't think. I couldn't do anything but sit there and cry. On February thirteenth my wife and child died right before my child's birthday. When they left my life I knew on that day I had nothing to celebrate, no one to love, and nothing to be grateful for. Because I knew that one day would haunt me for the rest of my life.

**-Irtana Deslouches**



-Alliy McKenzie

## Drip

The rain begins to fall on the hungry earth.

Drip.

Light laughter fills up the sky.

Drip.

The plants hum with joy.

Drip.

Children stomp in the puddles.

Drip.

A couple run through the drops with excitement.

Drip.

The people inside, enjoy the time they have to relax

Drip.

The rain, she begins to sing a sweet and soothing song.

Drip.

Knowing that most let their pain show within each drop that falls.

Drip.

The smell of rain grows and stilling the noise of busy life.

Drip.

The animals are tucked away, and watch the rain.

Drip.

The clouds begin to fade.

Drip.

She sings her goodbye, and whispers her promise.

Drip.

The sun begins to peak through the clouds.

Drip.

All that's left of the rain, are her rainbows

**-Patricia Reyes-Canales**



**-Brigid Hannon**

## **ARE YOU READY?**

I walk to the octagon and see my opponent standing across from me. As the announcer is calling out our names and the crowd cheers, I walk to the center. As my opponent walks towards to me, we both stare with the intent of a winner. The announcer asked us a question, the most common question I have ever heard, “Are you ready?”.

“Am I? OF COURSE I AM!!” I yell out to the crowd.

My opponent smiling, yelling out, “I'M READY AS I EVER BEEN”.

The announcer leaves the stage and with all his strength, he hits the bell and yells out, “START!”.

We both go all out and don't hold back. With every strike I lay, I have the intent to win. Right, left, down, counter, trip, STRIKE! I have him on his last stand. That's what I thought till he revealed the ace he had up his sleeve.

He had his foot in a position I have never seen before. Right before I can react, he kicked me to the fence. I drop to my knees out of breath, thinking of how much of a great shot he gave me. I look up. I get uppercutted, but who said I wasn't ready for that? While he shot me up with his punch, I look at him and pivot to the ball of my left foot, putting all of my weight there. I smash my right foot to his shoulder!

Three hours have passed since we starting fighting, or so it seems. The crowd screaming negative and positive words, I look at my opponent who is out of breath, as was I. His eyes meet mine! Rushing to each other, putting all our strengths in one punch! BAM! CRACK! Bones are breaking, and it was my right hand turning to mush. He stares at me, his eyes saying he won. I headbutt him. “LIKE HELL YOU WON!”. I caught him off guard. I surprise myself. I didn't expect that from me. My opponent falls to the ground knocked out. “I won!!”, is what I thought till everything turned dark. I fall to the ground. Conscious but I can't move my body.

Then the crowd goes wild! The announcer declares the winner while we're both knocked down to the ground. “LADIES AND GENTLEMEN WE HAVE OUR WINNNNNN-NEEEEEERRRRR!!” “BOTH OUR COMPETITORS FOUGHT BRAVELY, BUT ONE WAS STANDING WHILE THE OTHER WAS ON THE GROUND...” Raising my broken arm... “OUR WINNER IS SILVET!”. Half conscious I heard the announcer. I won! I'm ready to wake up.

**-Elvis Torres**

## **Music**

It is silent.  
It is boring.  
A car ride.  
A walk down the street.  
A school period.  
Same car.  
Same trees.  
Same classroom.

You reach for your phone.  
Pick up your headphones.  
You press play.  
You hear a sound that's hard to describe.  
But whatever it is, you like it.  
The sound is overwhelmingly pleasing.  
The beat gets loud, then soft.  
You've never felt like this before.  
Such a joyful feeling throughout your body.  
You begin to move around and dance.  
You feel like you're in another dimension.  
You feel you've awakened with life.

Everything around you seems to come alive with light.

In the car, you dance in your seat wildly.  
You look outside your window while a song is playing; as you watch the world zoom by, you're deep in thought with a smile on your face.

On your walk down the street, the trees look lively and beautiful. The houses tell a story. And the sun shines down as you air drum to an upbeat song playing in your ears.

During school, your boring period becomes a fun experience as you lip-sync in your seat, in another dimension, away from all the stress and dullness.

These songs, or beautiful rhythms, and melodies and words with instruments in the background or beats, are called music.

Music brings the mind to its happy place.

**-Lea LaPonti**



**-Josafina Fasolino**

### **The Grinch**

Furry and Green  
Like moldy bread  
“I hates Christmas” he said,

He pretended to be Santa Claws  
Because he was sick and tired  
Of all the Whos being stupid-happy.

He should have been arrested for intruding on private property  
But a communist dandelion prevents this!  
There is no private property.

In the end he dies from falling off his front lawn.  
It was a cliff.

But then the grinch came back super nice and was infected by the little Whos  
in Whoville

He then tried yoga and screamed a lot.

Jorton herd a joo

**-Emma Vaughn**

## **Why is Snow White?**

Why is snow white? Surely you know why... what, you don't? Well I'm here to tell you, so listen carefully. One cold breezy winter day, Jack Frost was looking out the window, thinking. After Jack was done thinking he went into his kitchen and had a nice, hot cup of steaming hot cocoa, he called up his very good friend Eirene, who was the goddess of peace. They talked for awhile and decided to meet up to discuss more of their plan.

After Jack and Eirene said their farewells, Jack bundled up and quickly finished his cocoa and walked swiftly out the front door and walked down to the public library in the brisk, cold air. He arrived first, he decided to go quickly get a reserved study room for him and Eirene to discuss their plans a little more privately. Shortly after Eirene had arrived and she was looking beautiful as ever in her white fluttery dress. Jack frost walked toward her and took her hand and escorted her to the study room. They both sat on the couch and started discussing their plans. They were discussing how in the winter, nothing looked peaceful and it was always brisk, cold and cloudy. Suddenly Eirene came up with a plan she started writing things down on a piece of paper after 5 minutes she was done she passed the piece of paper over to Jack Frost. Jack Frost then read it and smiled and gave Eirene a mischievous grin and then said "let's go to work!" before they did the plan they needed to go see someone very special, Mother Nature.

Eirene and Jack Frost exited the building and ran down the street and went to the mayor's house and said "we need to see your wife ASAP" and so the mayor got his wife, Mother Nature. Jack and Eirene talked to Mother Nature for about an hour and Eirene said "we should make snow and it should be peaceful and look relaxing" and Jack then said "Yeah. we should make the snow white because the color white resembles peace and snow should look peaceful". Mother Nature agreed to do this and set off to do her work, Jack and Eirene went home to go to bed and they both slept soundly and the next morning they woke up to soft, fluffy, white snowflakes falling and the ground covered in heaps of snow, they also realized how everybody else was outside with smiles on their faces and how happy they were to see something different than cold, gray clouds and rain. Mother Nature had succeeded and so did Eirene and Jack Frost.

**-Kaylee Dammers**

## **Just Talk**

Are you afraid of me?  
Are you scared?  
Do you not like me?  
Do you not care?  
What am I to do?  
You don't even try to approach me,  
You expect me to know what you're feeling, but  
you don't say anything to me.  
I'm not a mind reader, I can't see your thoughts.  
All you have to do is talk.  
I'm not a bad person at all, you can talk to me.  
Don't be a mute, just speak up.  
Don't be a fool, just stand up.  
I'm not a person who will bite you afterwards.  
Come on, you can tell me  
Just open your mouth  
Don't be a mute  
Don't be a wimp  
Speak out.  
You don't have to shout or scream  
Just whispering's ok.  
Just come close to my ear and tell me "I've got  
something to say".  
I can't take the suspense, just tell me right away.  
If you still want to be close, and want to keep  
being my friend,  
Then don't be a wimp, just tell me the situation.  
Cause if you don't, then we won't be friends  
And soon you'll be a distant memory,  
And with that memory fading away,  
I'll always remember and say  
that I had a wimp for a friend who couldn't  
tell me anything in the end.



**-Maggie Giles**

**-Irtana Deslouches**

## **My Alter Ego**

Let's leave this place for a minute.  
Go to a new world where I am free of judgment,  
where there are no boundaries and where I can blossom into the beautiful flower  
that  
I am

The woman you see today is not the woman you will see tomorrow.  
My actions are imminent  
My mask is infinite  
I can be anyone I choose to be  
But I just wanna be me.

The radiant halo that shines above my head  
Reminds the devil horns to be wary,  
for I can be a beauty and a beast all in one snap.  
The woman that you see today is not going to be here forever.  
The identity that you see, me go by, is not what it really seems  
Everything is an illusion and the things that you see do not define me as a person.

I am not a woman who should be labeled

Because those labels  
I will just rip them right off and burn them in the fire of lies and despair.

Let my knowledge astound you  
Let my art allure you  
Let my structure be defined by only me and no one else.  
My personality and emotions are not a toy for you to play with.  
My righteousness is not for you to justify.  
My mood can vary but that is for me to deal with and for you to butt out.

The other side of me shows no mercy.  
If you hunt me,  
I will capture before you can do so to me.  
If you hit me,  
be prepared for the hardest slap you have ever had in your entire life.  
If you defy me and ridicule me and show me no compassion whatsoever,  
then no one will soon remember your name  
cause for someone to strike so low is just not meant to show their face in the world  
until they learn what they have done.

My crown is a symbol of godly presence  
My pride is a symbol of my honour  
My strength is a symbol of the power that has been bestowed upon me.

I am not a woman to be looked down upon.  
I am a queen.  
And if you can't accept that,  
Then you are not worth having in my life.

**-Irtana Deslouches**



**-Yasmin Khilji-Neal**

## **General Hernando's Journal Entry #151**

JULY 19, 2022

Boom! The cannons carved through the earth while the bullets streaked against the sky. Countless corpses lie on the ground. The pain, the smell, the fear and the misery that hung in air made it unbearable to breathe. I couldn't waver, I couldn't show weakness. I'm the general. I'll always hate myself, I am the cause of painful violence. Yet I don't regret it. I had many peaceful protests, strikes, walkouts; I tried to talk to others politicians to get support to end the misery that runs deep within this soil. The world sees my people, my comrades, my ancestors as vicious animals, only driven by bloodshed from the start. I knew from the beginning I would die in battle, but I know it's not this one. I know who I am, who I was destined to be from my birth.

I remember being a small little girl, hearing the whispers of God, the angels, from the land, and of my ancestors. I've always heard their pleas, often times I cried. I could hear the pain and misery in their voices, hearing how desperate they were for change. I was aware of it all, I've been training all my life, most of it in secrecy. I learned how to endure pain, like when handling death, losing a battle, and handling weapons and riots. The spirits prepared me, with guidance sent by God.

I now realize that it doesn't matter how much you prepare, cause nothing can prepare you for your own emotional response. I was given a purpose and I don't plan on letting it pass me, even if this hate for myself gets me killed. I can't show mercy, I must hide my guilt and doubts. I'm the general. I mustn't let my guard down! If I hesitate, I'll be killed for sure. I've already accepted my fate, and I'll put my entire soul in this war, I'll free them all! I'll free Latin America from hell even if it kills me!

My pistol is locked in my hand and has taken control. At the battle field, I stared at all the life lines that seem to coil around my very soul, it was almost completely strangled. Each one that snaps and fades to nothing means someone died in battle. Tears broke down into waterfalls, it blurred my sight. I could sense their families' fears, hoping that they'll come home alive. I sensed these soldiers fears, misery, sorrow and regrets as they dropped to the cruel ground. Part of me still wishes that God chose another, but to start a revolution you need to spark the fire. Only afterwards it will grow until it shines like the sun itself. Many won't understand, but that's perfectly okay with me. I know deep within my soul what I'm doing is right. I won't let millions of innocent people suffer anymore. I'll do it for the people who suffer, my family, my ancestors; I'll do for all Latin America! As the general, I'll lead my troops to victory!

*Ramona Athena Hernando*

**-Patricia Reyes-Canales**

## **A Seemingly Boring and Uneventful Day at Work**

*Tick... Tick... Tick...*

The man stares at the clock blankly, left hand drumming against the wooden desk. His eyes dart across the bleak room, making no contact with anything or anyone. *They're all buried to those computers, huh?*, he thinks. His left hand continues to drum, while his right is occupied with a pen, absent-mindedly drawing circles. There is barely any sound except the ticking of the clock, and the occasional ring of a distant phone. All of a sudden the man's silence is broken, with the sudden sound of footsteps and the sudden whisper of "Kelly, in my office now."

*Tick... Tick... Tick...*

"Well, we have to let you go... from considering the closing of the east branch, and the higher ups worrying about the failed merger we've decided that we need to be downsized... Kelly? Are you listening?" The man quickly snaps out of his haze, replying with a quick "Yes?" There's also something else. There's been some rumors in the workplace, and we got back the results. You failed the drug test."

"Well boss, you kind of sprung it up on everybody and I'm pretty sure it's some screw-up or I just ate something that fudged the results." He replied, eyes darting away. *Damnit did he forget to toss out something? He swore he was alone and the smoke detectors are broken in the men's room.*

"I'm really sorry about this Kelly. You'll be receiving a severance package within this week..."

After a long, quiet drive the man returns to his home. He shoves the key in the lock, and soundlessly enters. Immediately, something catches his eyes. It's a note on his coffee table.

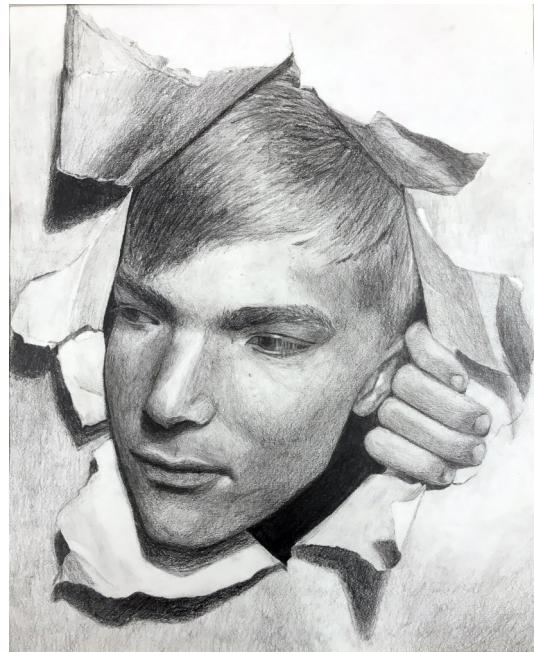
*Adam, I can't do this anymore.*

*You need help. I'm sorry.*

- Angela.

He runs his hand through his hair. *Well, this is great*, he muses. He sighs into the empty apartment, looks out his window quickly, and shuts the blinds. He returns to his couch and stares at the table. He then gets up, thumbs through his bookcase and opens a small book, a small baggie filled with colorful pills. He sits back down, runs his hands through his hair, takes the pills out and raises them to his mouth. As he's about to swallow them, he hears a faint voice. *Hello. I'm here to get you high again.*

-Fionnán Malone



**-Grace Wildermuth**

### **The Choice**

I chose them over you. I chose my closest friends over you because I thought that was the right thing to do. To choose friends over a crush, but the thing is, I'm already over you. Yet I still miss you. I miss the arguments, the laughter, even your terrible jokes. But I don't miss your arrogance, your careless words, and harsh eyes. I miss my friend, not my crush, I miss the friend that treated me as an equal. The friend who made me laugh. The friend who knows my deepest darkest secrets. I don't care for you as a crush, just as a friend. Because I know we'll never last as lovers but we can last a lifetime as friends. We'll walk like equals as friends, not a crush, and acquaintance. No one looking at the other on a pedestal. I want you as a friend, no more no less. Those romantic feelings are gone, and that's okay. The only problem left is the aftermath of the distance. Now when we see each other we look the other way, back to square one. Strangers, yet I can tell you still care,. You were always easy to read, and a terrible liar. We're acquaintance again, but we know too much about each other to not care. My name is Monica, I made a promise to you, and I'll make sure we're friends to the end.

**-Patricia Reyes-Canales**



**-Quinn Blackburn**

## **Everything We Never Said**

Your laughter is a cliffhanger to my question.  
I ask you again,  
"Was her breath more sugar than mine?"  
Your eyes grow wide enough to see I want a reply.  
With all my being, I try to forgive you.  
But my heart breaks with the earthquake of your answer,  
"Her breath imitated life itself.  
Her eyes were those of a mirror to mine,  
Reflexive to a dimension of another kind."  
I say,  
"Was the museum of her mind a better exhibit?"  
And you start to remember all the paintings.  
I'd drink away these problems but it'd just feel like a swing to the gut.  
You say,  
"You've got me wrapped around your finger now."  
But what about my ring?  
Like a true artist, with lines under my eyes like the centuries of a hanging tree,  
I tell you I can paint masterpieces exceeding anything you've seen from her.  
But I reconsider what my time is really worth.  
You promise you'll stay loyal as long as I try,  
Although each of her brush strokes seemed so precise-  
You tell me,  
"She was carved from marble, each edge smoothed to flawlessness,  
But your faults are filled with gold."  
I ask you when you started to become so materialistic,  
You once marveled at my disposition.  
"As soon as I met her, I learned the best things are what you can touch."  
You suffocate my breath with your bare hands.  
I tell you I think we hit a dead end,  
But you remind me of all the times I've stayed-  
Not with your words but with your eyes,  
Which almost scream about how this should be no different,  
All the while whispering words I wish you'd say out loud.  
Memories of faded happiness come flooding back when I wish they wouldn't.  
I tell you,  
"It wouldn't be easy to stay."  
You tell me,  
"Nothing is, here."  
I desperately search for reasons not to love you,  
But I'm hit with all the reasons I do.  
"Do you still love me?"  
The words seem to be weights sinking you into grief.  
"I do. But she took half the love that used to be yours."

I say,  
"She didn't take it. You gave it away."  
You tell me,  
"It wasn't a donation."  
But I remind you, it was a choice.  
Did you see me in her eyes when you were with her?  
"Seeing you in her eyes would be seeing the honey in tea.  
Except, she'd be sweet enough alone."  
It seems as if all the sugar inside of me is melting away,  
And what is left but a skeleton exposed to harsh, boiling air?  
You open your arms almost as far as the distance between my heart and expired  
sentiments,  
As if I'll fall right in, and back into love again.  
But I am bigger than forgiveness,  
And you drop them like the belief I'll come running back.  
You ask me if I'm afraid of her,  
Because her name is a curse in my mouth.  
I say the only thing I'm afraid of is how I'll be after this.  
You ask,  
"But what about me?"  
You chose this.  
You say you chose her for a moment, not my abandonment,  
And I tell you it's part of her package.  
You start telling me words that you only wish would travel to her ears,  
Begging me to stay all the while keeping her like an ornament without a tree.  
I ask you,  
"How many secrets did you exchange like currency?"  
You tell me,  
"None that you don't know,"  
And I remind you not to lie,  
Please don't lie like you did with her.

**-Mia D'Alessandro**

### **A Peacock's Tale**

Her tail was glistening in the light. The colors popped out with the reveal of the design. The circular shapes go in order, in a row. The green was isolated in the light. It shined like an a bright emerald. The blue complimented the green well. It was a sight to behold. Every feather was an image of its own. Each one told its own story. The patterns repeated itself, but at the same time it brought out a beauty of its own. All those feathers on her that made up the beautiful tail, that belonged only to her. The tail took my breath away. I wanted that tail, I NEEDED that tail. I wanted a tail just as beautiful as her's. My tail was nothing compared to her's. I didn't want to do anything rash. I didn't want to steal, to steal her tail or anything. I just wanted it for myself. Is that so wrong. I just wanted to be pretty just like her. I already tried everything, painting my tail, putting fake feathers on it. I did everything I could but nothing worked.

**-Irtana Deslouches**



**-Rachel Moss**

## **An Adventure Gone Wrong**

1890

It was a cold and windy night. The wind was howling and there was no sign of wildlife. It was 8:00 pm when Sophie asked her friends if they wanted to take a walk in the woods nearby. Her reason being, what group of teenagers wouldn't want a scary adventure? On the one hand, she made an accurate point. On the other hand, what Sophie failed to come to terms with were the possible injuries and outlying dangers which were likely to occur in this case. All plausibility ceased to exist in her mind.

"Please be careful out there, girls! I do not want anyone getting hurt. Sophie, please make sure your compass is working and bring a lantern. Oh, and don't forget a map!", Sophie's mother said in a worried tone.

"Stay away from the ghosts!", her annoying little brother added jokingly.

"Yeah yeah, very funny but, we will be fine.", she claims.

With complete disregard and utter disrespect of her mother's concerns, Sophie didn't check her compass, left the house without a lantern, and didn't bring a map. Off they went!

The girls walked unknowingly, traveling wherever they pleased, rather than following a trail. Considering the hills and rocky terrain located within the woods, their walk quickly turned into a hike. In the midst of their journey, the clouds faded gray and there was a sudden, loud cry of thunder and spark of lightning. It began to downpour. Sophie's friends were no longer happy. Their "walk" was rigorous, especially with the cold and terrifying weather conditions.

Nina, a worrier, asks, "Where are we? Sophie, did you check your compass and bring a map like your mother said? This is scary. I want to go home."

After a number of cries and complaints, Sophie finally decided to check her compass, hoping it would work and give her direction back home. The compass however, did not work. Clara, being the brainiest of the bunch, noticed that the magnet controlling it was gone and therefore, Sophie had no sense of direction. Sophie decided to keep walking with her friends until they came across any sort of civilization.

After an hour of hiking, Sophie and her friends came across a large, stone edifice with pointed arches, columns, and complex works of art. It was gothic piece of architecture, located in an eerie setting.

"Woah, it's a castle!", Lisa, Sophie's girliest friend exclaimed excitedly.

Sophie and Rebecca, being the two biggest daredevils shouted, "We should go inside."

Desperate for warmth and shelter, nobody objected, not even Nina.

Inside the vacant, worn-out castle, the girls found a dusty couch to sit upon, surrounding a vintage looking coffee table with a ouija board, covered in dust, sitting on top.

"We should play", Rebecca said.

Back home, Sophie's father asked, "Where are the girls?"

"As long as she has a compass and map, there's no reason to worry." her mother added.

Sophie's younger brother turned pale and made a confession, "I removed

the magnet from Sophie's compass! I was only trying to mess with her."

Her parents' jaws drop, in complete shock. Their father left the house immediately to find his daughter and her friends.

Sophie, Rebecca, Lisa, and Clara start to play despite Nina's reluctance.

"Come on Nina! It's only a ouija board.", Rebecca scolded.

"Yea, seriously! Ouija boards are lame. They are controlled by magnets, not actual ghosts.", Clara claims.

Sophie and Lisa nod in agreement. Still, Nina refused to take part in such a spiritual extravaganza. The ghosts embedded within the "game" were well aware of Sophie, Rebecca, Lisa, and Clara and their false accusations of the Ouija board:

"It's only a ouija board,' 'Ouija boards are lame,' 'They are controlled by magnets, not actual ghosts.' "

Therefore, the ghosts decided to plot revenge.

"Hey, does anyone want to help me find a bathroom in this place?", Sophie asked the group.

Rebecca and Lisa decided to come along. Within two minutes of looking, the floor cracked open and there was a sudden BOOM. The girls let out a loud screech as they were caught and entrapped by ghosts in the underworld. Their screams could no longer be heard, they were muffled. Curiously, Clara left Nina who decided to run away because she couldn't handle herself being alone, especially sitting front of a ouija board, and started looking for the others. All of a sudden, there was another BOOM and Clara went down, into the underworld as well. The girls were never to return again.

After hours of looking for his daughter, Sophie's father came across the creepy, gothic looking castle himself and said, "It's been a long night and I don't know where the girls could possibly be. I think I will spend the night here and start my search again in the morning"... "If I make it out alive!", he added mockingly, unsure of his daughter's fate.

**-Natalie Ciccone**



**-Erika Varady**

## **The Route to My Grandfather's House**

When driving in a car, a person is nearly 890 times more likely to die than they are while taking the bus. I didn't have a car, but the risk of owning one didn't seem as high once I had stepped into the dilapidated vehicle that had just screeched to a stop in front of the dimly-lit station in the dull night.

Earlier that week I had received a letter from my grandfather telling me he had returned from his travels in the east and would like for me to visit him at his home not too far from where I was currently residing. Though my grandfather had his faults (as evident by his refusal to use a more up-to-date method of communication), I quite missed the old man and almost felt excited to see him after a 4-year hiatus.

That was, of course, before I sat on the frigid bench at the downtown station. I was travelling to a place much warmer than my hometown, but I should have brought a thicker jacket for the ride. By the time the bus door opened out towards me, my hands had gone almost completely numb.

"Sorry for being a little behind schedule, we don't usually get many passengers on this route," The driver explained to me, as if a 3 and a half hour delay could be described as "a little behind." He was a small man who was either 29 or 59 (somehow I couldn't tell) with a fading blue cap on his head and well-worn brown gloves on his hands.

I turned and started to find my seat before we drove off, and I found that not a single one of the decaying leather cushions was occupied by another person. The underlying feeling of uneasiness made finding a place to sit on the completely vacant bus harder for me than it would normally be on any of the more popular routes. I eventually sat down on one of the seats in the very back, as I didn't have the greatest respect for the driver, and I wouldn't want to turn and walk all the way back up the aisle even if I did. I started to let my mind drift and my eyes relax when the engine started rattling louder than any noise I had heard before, each turn of the wheels shaking the entire vehicle as if it were being struck by lightning every second, but a look out the window and a view of the dark, open sky confirmed that was not the case. I looked at the mirror above the odd driver to see that his expression had not changed, suggesting that the sound was insignificant. Still, I could not shake my overwhelming anxiety and rest for the ride, so I stared out the window for a while, watching the buildings transition into tall trees and the sky grow darker as the moon fell behind the leaves. I must have fallen asleep somehow because I suddenly found myself at my stop with all my belongings.

"That driver must have let me off at my stop," I said to myself as I comprehended my surroundings. "I guess he wasn't all that bad."

I had vague memories of my grandfather's house because my last visit was as a boy, but I remembered the surrounding woods, the isolation, and how the dark building had always appeared to be decaying since its construction only twenty-two years ago. I found myself in a familiar forest setting and decided to follow the only visible path and hoped that it led to my destination.

After only a few minutes of walking the cobble path I found the old place and was met with feelings of remembrance, yet for some reason I was still uncer-

tain about ringing the doorbell next to the wide front door. As I was standing in front of the steps, I heard a screeching noise from somewhere in the woods that sent a chill down my spine, followed by a loud crash that made me jump and gave me the encouragement I needed to run up and ring the bell. Only after ringing did I remember that my grandfather greatly enjoyed his sleep and would definitely not be awake at such a late hour, but I was surprised to look through the window and see an old man walk slowly over to the door and unlock it for me.

"Hello grandfather," I greeted him. "I'm surprised to see you're still awake so late, I thought for sure you'd be asleep by now"

"Ah, you think I wouldn't stay up to wait for my only grandson?" The old man replied. "Of course I'm awake! Come in, put your bags down by the stairs. I'll show you to your room."

Once I went to bed, I was unable to sleep. I continued to hear very faint noises coming from downstairs, but I knew my grandfather's door had not opened because I would have heard a loud creaking sound. After an hour of rolling over, the noises increased in volume and frequency, and I thought I could make out voices.

"Two people, one young and one old," I heard one whisper.

"One's already dead," I heard another say, and instantly I became paralyzed with fear as I concluded that my grandfather had already been killed, and I would be next.

More noises began to arise from downstairs. I heard crashes and bangs that sounded like the two interlopers were destroying my grandfather's house, and there was nothing I could do about it. Outside, the wind was howling and I again heard the screeching coming from the woods. I began to feel overwhelmed with fear. Outside my door, I heard clear footsteps and again heard the petrifying voices.

"Here he is," one said. It was over.

As one of them stepped back to prepare to kick down my door, I pulled my covers over my head. Once my door was down, I learned that there were more than two threats. Five people walked into my bedroom and surrounded me on my bed. I could faintly make out the shadow of one of them reaching over me and I accepted my fate, when I heard him yell:

"Clear!"

All of a sudden I snapped awake in an ambulance. I was surrounded by paramedics who looked relieved when I started talking.

"What happened?" I asked.

"You were in an accident," one of the men replied. "Unfortunately, your bus driver didn't make it. You were lucky to survive."

I'm glad I wasn't in a car.

-Andrew Knowles

## **What It's Like To Fly**

I take your hand.  
Sweep you off your feet.  
Literally.

We take off into the sky.  
The magic starts as we gain feet.  
Planes pass by us.  
We look at each other.  
Eyes glimmer and hair flowing.

We head towards the clouds.  
Walk on them, feet as light as feathers.

Fly down to the water.  
Ocean glistening in the sunlight.

Go back in the air again.

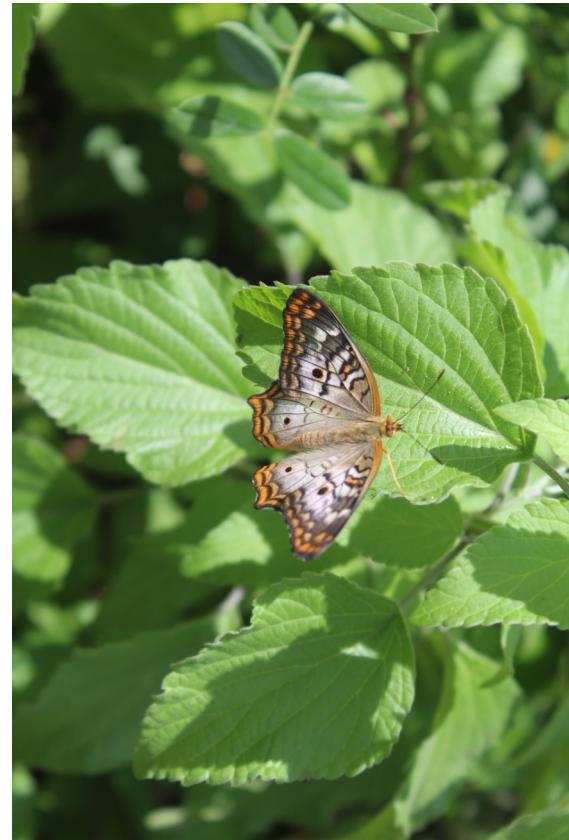
We see lights below.  
Cities filled with action and noise.  
Horns blasting, music booming,  
Bright screens, pigeons chirping,  
Millions of people, shouting men.

Cities have passed.  
Plains are in view.  
Soaring through the grass.  
Soft bristles against our bodies.

Feet increase even higher than before.  
The ground gets smaller and smaller.  
It then disappears down below.

Clouds pass us as well as the earth.  
Stars are all around us.  
Complete darkness and space dust.  
It's only us floating.  
No need for oxygen.  
We have each other.

**-Lea LaPonti**



**-Brigid Hannon**

## **Magnolia Manor**

It was a dreary and frigid night when I first started my journey to the provincial town of Sparrowsbrook, a hamlet tucked away in a particularly dismal section of Western Pennsylvania. I was off to visit my grandmother's estate, a dilapidated old manor nestled in an expanse of barren magnolia trees. My grandmother was sick, with some form of dysentery, I suppose, and I had decided to go pay her a visit for the first time in I don't even know how long. She was a frail old woman of about ninety-three, weathered by years of working in a seamstress's shop in the heart of her village. She had inherited the estate from her father, a benevolent man who had earned his living working as a doctor who made house calls to the sick and poor.

From a young age, my grandmother had revered her father, making it nearly insurmountable for her to handle his death when she was in her early thirties. Ever since then, she had developed a melancholy demeanor and a cold and distant façade.

On my voyage I brought with me a modest serving of peasant bread, a small wedge of brie cheese and a red handknit blanket, all carried in a straw-woven basket which I had bought for a mere 34¢ in my village square. Along the way to my grandmother's I encountered many things that were of a strange sort. A waterfall, spilling water that looked more like a red and gushing stream of blood. A trail of mushrooms that I followed for about a half-a-mile, over the undulating hills and through the looming forest until I reached an even stranger sight- the mansion where my grandmother lived.

It had deteriorated exponentially in the decades since I had last seen it. A cloud of ominous smoke seemed to surround the structure, almost as if it were protecting it or keeping something out- or in. I ascended the large brick stairwell outside of my grandmother's estate. It was covered in ivy and its crumbling bricks made it apparent that it had withstood many years of use. I took another step forward to knock on the large maplewood door in front of me but before I could even reach for the brass knocker, a man of about forty or

fifty years swung the door open. Out of surprise, I took a step backward, nearly tumbling off the stairwell in the process, but caught myself and was able to further observe the gentleman in front of me. At a closer glance, I was able to discern some of his other features. He had only a few wisps of hair left atop his head. His complexion was pale, only slightly offset by his bright green eyes and crimson cheeks. It was made obvious by the stolid expression on his face that he was not nearly as surprised to see me as I was to see him. My confusion at seeing this stranger in the doorway of my grandmother's house must have been apparent, and the man suddenly realized that introducing himself would be the appropriate next course of action. He clarified that his name was Rolf and he was hired to serve as my grandmother's butler and in-home nurse right after she had fallen ill. He then invited me into my grandmother's home.

The inside of the grand estate sharply contrasted it's decrepit exterior. The walls were adorned in portraits of my grandmother when she was a young woman, not yet depleted by her years of loss and illness.

"Why must time take this toll?" I thought to myself and was suddenly overwhelmed with feelings of sadness and regret.

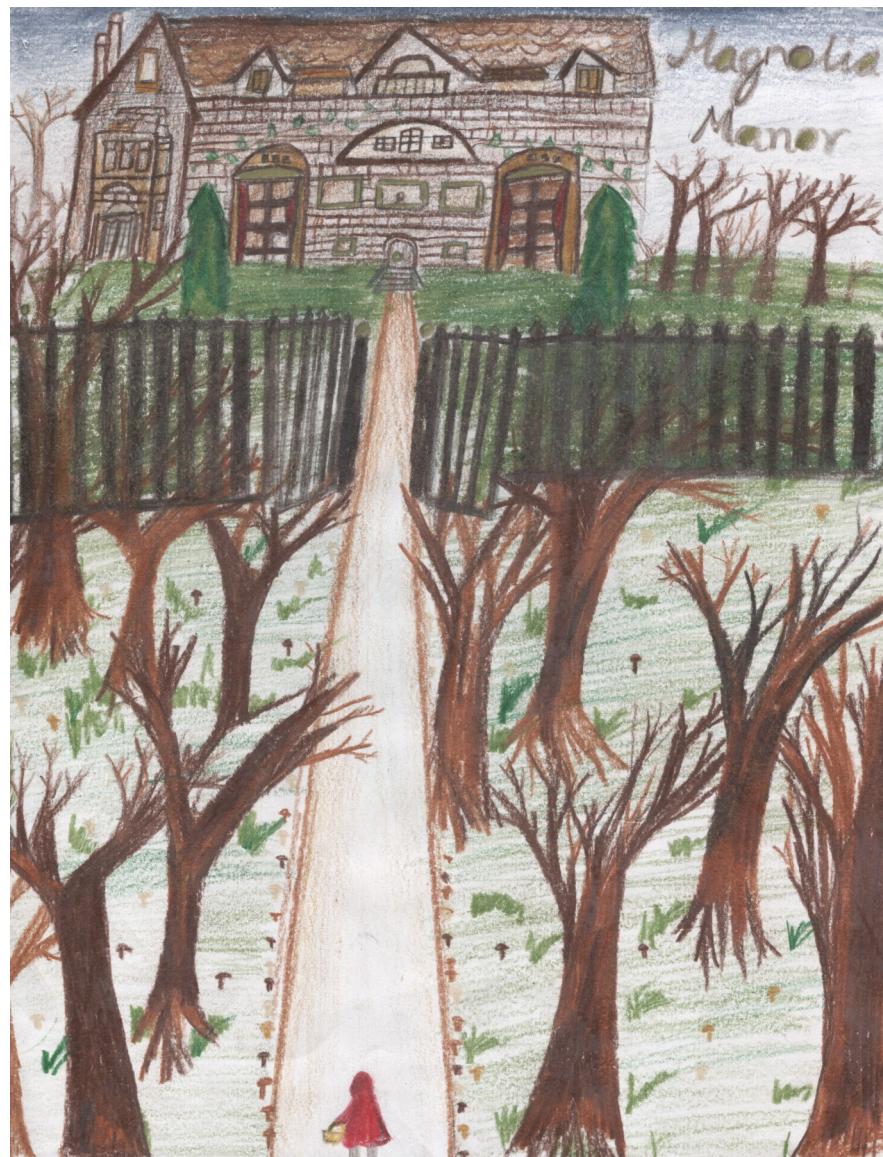
A large chandelier hung from the ceiling in the parlor and the fireplace below it was blazing fiercely.

"Would you care to sit down to tea?" Rolf asked me, clearly sensing that I had already made myself comfortable in my grandmother's home.

I declined reluctantly, quickly remembering that I had come to see my ill grandmother. I removed my cloak and set down the basket that had been carrying the small portion of food I had eaten hours before. We made small talk on our way down to my grandmother's room. He asked me about my journey, the folks who I had met along my way and my hometown. As we descended the wooden stairs, I suddenly began to feel as though the warmth was leaving my body and the air was leaving my lungs. The room suddenly began to spin and I came to the realization that the man that had brought me down to the cellar was not a butler at all, but a wicked man who had not the slightest in-

tention of caring for my ill grandmother. As I came to this epiphany, I slowly collapsed to the cold cellar floor, turning to the wall to the right of me. Only then did I realize my grandmother, a lifeless figure beside me, lying inert on the cellar floor. The peaceful look on her face was the last I saw before blacking out completely, not even having had the chance to give her the red hand knit blanket, folded neatly in the straw-woven basket.

-Julia Segal



-Julia Segal

## **Your Hedonistic and Schizotypal Optimist**

My morning routine is fairly simple.  
Yet, with that being said  
A good semblance of my health hangs  
via the shoestring  
of a white pill with green lines.

While I obviously will not go berserk  
[Similar to that of my hungry pup at 5 am  
begging for kibble]  
Forgetting does bring complications  
which I can only assume are similar  
to that of a drunk man.  
[Yet, I only like plum wine.]

Moving on sans medicating  
Brings sleepiness  
Loss of balance  
Irritability  
And rough to control  
Indigestion  
“And I thought this was an anti-depressant!”

Being said it can be taken with a swig of water,  
or whatever beverage of your choosing.  
[Great, now I want wine.]  
Taking it in a dry means  
Leaves a cylinder lumped up in your esophagus.  
And, while I feel like I am going to choke,  
I still put on my everyday shoes and walk to my bus.

Food is imperative as well:  
Sweet peanut butter cakes to microwave sliders  
[My waistline seems to have kicked outward since the doc' handed this off.]  
So I eat the raspberry cheesecake my odd job family and siblings  
Left behind  
Only using my hands.

And while I notice I am the only one  
of the 5 of us nuclears,  
[In family structure and personality]  
The only one to swallow a pill each morning  
Where my parents take cigars and siblings off to work  
I note something else.  
While I have my moments,  
Whining under my blankets because the AC is too loud  
But turning it off would make me sweat,  
Yes I note something else.

I don't mind the little things.  
Yes, the freezer went off last night  
And now all the ice cream sandwiches have turned to mush.  
My stepmother wants them thrown out,  
But I will eat them anyways  
It's still sweet  
And cold  
And the cookie is still chewy  
I don't mind the little things.

I don't mind that the dog chases the cats  
Like a game of cops and robbers  
While my stepmom screams that her playfulness  
Is somehow me doing something wrong.  
I don't mind wearing necklaces  
And painting my nails  
Even if the lady of the house rejects it  
"Do you hate your stepmom?"  
Okay maybe a little.

That's not bad right?

I don't mind the little stuff.  
I have bigger problems,  
And a pill that makes me able to handle  
The minor ones.

**-Rory Bocelli**



**-Rachel Moss**

### **Fading into Freedom**

The vibrant lights breaks against you  
I start to fade into your complexion.  
The amount of sorrow I have seen in you  
makes me more overwhelmed than I have ever been before.

Let me take your pain,  
All the burden I will bear,  
All the happiness we will share,  
Make my day and come with me  
So that we can be one and we can be free.

The colors that I see in you  
Shine brighter than ever before  
While I watch you grow into the new you.  
My colors will fade as time goes on,  
I will become nothing more than a mere memory.

Let my happiness flow into you  
While I disappear into the darkness  
The memory of you will make my day.

Let me take your pain,  
All the burden I will bear,  
All the happiness that we have shared,  
You have made my day and you came with me  
We became one and we became free.

**-Irtana Deslouches**



**-Brigid Hannon**

## **The Dark Side**

2 a.m.. A pulsing fluorescent light seeps under the doors making its way into every crack and crevice. One might think it impossible to sleep in such an obtrusively stimulating setting; however, if you've been trapped in such a place for over 42 days, sleep is your only solace. While hospitals are typically viewed in an ameliorative light, our setting, Sunnyside Hospital, is unique in that its innovative, and sometimes questionable, approach to helping patients mirrors torture techniques rather than palliative care. Our protagonist sleeps peacefully to the rhythmic lullaby of heart monitors and respirators, unaffected by the sound of the nurses scuffling to and fro. All at once, the hall was pitch black. For a moment, the first moment in 1008 hours since Patient 9784's admission, there was silence. The door to Room 202B inched open with a whining creak taking its time to reveal the intrusive being behind it.

The silence was broken as supernaturally scintillating white shoes stomped into the room. Patient 9784 was abruptly woken by a blue scrub clad night nurse shaking her by the shoulders. Horrified by this strange occurrence, Patient 9784 assumed something was terribly wrong. Preparing herself for the worst, she cried, "What is it?!"

With a fraudulent smile creeping over her face, the nurse sweetly replied, "Oh honey, no need to be frightened, I just thought you could use some extra tissues."

The nurse executed a military-grade about face and exited the room without another word. Prior to Patient 9784's stay at Sunnyside Hospital, referred to by patients as "the Dark Side", such an interaction might have kept her tossing and turning troubled over the night's affairs. However, facing the unrelenting regiment day after day left Patient 9784 hardened to the invasion of privacy and she was able to fall asleep instantly.

Though sleep had come to her easily, it was over just as quickly. She awoke to melodious sounds of a blue jay singing at her window. Though the windows were sealed from the inside, Julia knew that she would soon breathe in the fresh air unrestricted by her hospital band. After all, today was her release day! In just three hours time, Julia would be able to rush out the hospital doors without setting off the Patient Alarm System. Sitting up in bed, she began to fantasize about the adventures she would embark on once freed from her captivity (falsely advertised as treatment). First on her list, Julia would treat herself to an ice cream without fear of reporting her extra calories back to the Nutrition Committee. Her favorite, mint chocolate chip, would surely taste better than the prefabricated gruel served by the minimum wage attendants of the Dark Side. Next, Julia would be able to reclaim her love of swimming pools. Here, her physical therapist's idea of a pool party was forcing Julia to swim lap after lap even when she could no longer feel her limbs. Just as Julia began imagining the fun she would have seeing her friends and family again, the sunshine at window darkened suddenly and filled the room with an oppressive gloom. Julia's dream turned to a nightmare as she was awoken

by the hospital's lead physician blocking the light that had filled her doorway moments before. Her greatest fear became a reality as Dr. Vieni glared at Julia with daggers in her eyes.

"Oh, I see the princess is still in her bed. Trust me, Patient 9784, after today, you'll never sleep through your alarm again," Dr. Vieni threatened in low tones.

Stifling back a cry and unable to imagine the horrors that awaited her, Julia thought to herself, "Maybe I will need that extra box of tissues, after all."

**-Abigail Holmes**

### **Misunderstanding Diamonds**

Tears,

they're so common, most people view them with disgust.

Often glaring at the drops with so much hatred. Seeing them as a sign of being weak and being too emotional.

Tears,

become so salty sometimes, we choke on them. At times it feels like we have little control, drowning in them.

Tears,

they're so common, with the ability to hold bliss with each drop. Those rare moments, the tears of joy. Filled with so much warmth and sincerity. These drops reveal care and love in each. They're the tears when we laugh too hard. They look like diamonds when they're hit by light.

**-Patricia Reyes-Canales**

## **The Truth About Edgewood Academy**

Ruthie Scott paced, back and forth, back and forth. She was absorbed in her own mind, consumed by her worries. Every possible negative outcome flew through her thoughts, and there was no calming down. The candles in the dimly lit hall flickered as she walked, and she resisted the urge to blow them all out and let the darkness hide her. She did not want to go to school today, or any other day, for that matter.

“Ruthie,” her brother James called. “Where are you?”

“I’m in the hall,” she replied.

“We have to leave for school.”

“I’m not ready,” she said.

“Yes, you are,” he responded, glancing at her brushed blonde hair and neatly laced shoes. When she didn’t budge, he snapped, “Let’s go, we’re running late!”

Ruthie took a deep breath and tried to focus on the sound of the rain hitting the grass, letting it calm her. She pretended that school would be fine, and walked out of the house with James.

The siblings left their home just before sunrise. “I hate this place,” Ruthie declared as they arrived. “I don’t understand what’s wrong with the public schools. Everything here is impossibly difficult.”

“It’s just what mother and father want, Ruthie. This school is fine,” James sighed, “if you think that this school is impossibly difficult, then consider this your chance to be impossibly clever.”

“No. There’s something off here, and I don’t know why you don’t believe me. I’m never going to be smart enough to excel here, and this place is creepy. You don’t get it.”

“Whatever, Ruthie,” he said. “Just go to class, you’ll be fine. It’s not like there’s anything to be scared of.”

To class she went, silently remarking to herself everything peculiar about Edgewood Academy. It was an old building, but not very pretty, at least not in her opinion. Rather, it was gothically styled, which Ruthie supposed some might consider classically beautiful, but she had never liked gothic architecture. The gargoyles and dirty stained glass windows had always just been frightening to her.

She arrived to class just on time, sitting in the middle in hopes of blending in. Everything went cold, and she tensed and tapped her fingers on her desk. She thought of James’ advice, but couldn’t seem to calm down. The academy was always unpleasant, but that day it felt menacing.

Suddenly, the door creaked open. She glanced up to see if it was one of her classmates, but it was an ominous creature. Ruthie noticed its green, scaly back as it turned toward her, then noticed its eyes black as coal. It crept across the room; she wanted to get up and run away but found her legs immovable.

Ruthie raised her hand. “Ms. Jackson,” she paused, voice shaking. “Turn around.”

Ms. Jackson turned around. “Ruthie, I’m not in the mood for one of your childish

games. What is it?"

"There's something behind you," Ruthie said as her classmates giggled.

"There's nothing there. Are you feeling okay?" Ms. Jackson asked, brown eyes widening with concern.

Ruthie's thoughts were running through her mind so quickly she couldn't focus on her conversation with Ms. Jackson. How could she not see it? What was wrong with Ms. Jackson? "I—" she stuttered. "I need to use the bathroom."

The monster stopped moving away from her, and began creeping towards her. She ran out of the room and down the hall as fast as she could, yet when she met the doors of the school, the monster was waiting.

"I'm glad it's just us now," it said in a raspy voice.

"What? Who are you?" Ruthie asked.

"All you need to know is that I know exactly who doesn't belong at Edgewood," it paused, then began to repeat an enchantment of sorts.

*"She lost her mind, became a different kind.*

*Of what they weren't sure, but they knew there was no cure.*

*Madness wreaks havoc from here to there, but what happens if there becomes everywhere?"*

Ruthie knew it was real, she was sure. She wasn't crazy. James would believe her now, he had to! She had proof of the horrors of Edgewood! They could transfer schools.

Suddenly, she lost her train of thought. Everything was foggy, and she felt panicked and scared, just as she had in the hall that morning. The pounding of the rain on the pavement had soothed her this morning, but this time it failed to ease her anxiety, and instead fuelled it. She shrieked, telling the monster, "Go away! If you just leave me alone, I'll do whatever you want!"

"Leave Edgewood," was its curt reply.

"Okay," she agreed.

However, when James saw Ruthie, all he saw was her crumpled on the floor, with her once neatly combed hair tangled, and her eyes reddened by tears. But the oddest part of what he saw was that clutching a piece of paper with the most peculiar rhyme on it.

He read it to himself, scrambling for answers. "She lost her mind, became a different kind. Of what they weren't sure, but they knew there was no cure. Madness wreaks havoc from here to there, but what happens if there becomes everywhere?"

He grabbed Ruthie, screaming. "Ruthie! Ruthie wake up," but it was hopeless. Ruthie would not- could not wake up.

Needless to say, Ruthie Scott would never return to Edgewood Academy.

**-Maddy Kye**

## **The GO FISH Game Gone Wrong**

I dreaded the move. I stared out of the window, as the morning sun illuminated the woods at the edge of our yard, covered in autumn leaves. Virginia was so beautiful in the fall. How I wished that I didn't have to move! I loved my neighborhood, friends, and even my high school. At least I wasn't moving far, just about 30 minutes away, but enough of a distance to have to change schools. I'll have to assimilate to a new schedule, teachers, and classmates, not to mention 3 months into the year, a high schoolers' nightmare!

We arrived at our new house, and at a glance I could tell it was strange. It was a very dark, hideous grey, with tattered windows, faded brick, and a large archway around the front door was noticeably crumbling, with dark ivy growing through it. It had a broken black gate at the beginning of the driveway that required a passcode, and loudly creaked when it opened. Great, even worse of a house than I was expecting, I thought.

The moving company unloaded all of our furniture, as my family unloaded my dad's truck. I immediately rushed to my new room to check it out. I heard my little brother Todd calling out behind me as I entered the house, "Can I come with you? Can I Emma? Please? I'm bored!"

"Fine, Todd. But I'm gonna be in my room unpacking," I responded. I entered my room, only to find it was the same dark and depressing color as the house's exterior. One window was cracked, and the other had a torn curtain. The floor had cracks that ran through it, up into the walls which were crumbling in the corners. What must have been white paint lining the windows was now an ugly tan color. I tried to turn on the lights, but as expected, they were broken as well. This must be the worst room I've ever come across, in any house, ever, I thought.

I spotted a small, wooden brown box, sitting in the corner of my room. I picked it up, examined it, turned it over in my hand, and I tried to unlatch it several times. It wouldn't budge, almost as if someone didn't want it to be opened. I found the box very strange, but set it aside, for I had to start unpacking. I began to unload my things, and once again laid my eyes upon the mysterious brown box. Just as I inspected it again, I heard a bang on the door. I jumped in surprise. It was only Todd.

"Emma, open the door! Can we play something, please?"

That question gave me an idea. "Todd, can you get your tool set?" He came back with the big yellow tool box he seemed to always carry with him. I took out the screwdriver, and began to pry open the box, and sure enough, the box had been glued closed. But why?

It finally opened, and a deck of cards spilled out, along with a faded note. I picked up the note, which read "PLAY THE GAME, IF YOU DARE. IF YOU DON'T WIN, BEWARE." Beware of what? Before the message even sank in, my brother started to deal out the cards to the both of us. An instruction card was included. It sounded like the exact rules to "Go Fish." I looked at my cards. They were all different colored ghosts.

"These cards are really creepy!" exclaimed my brother.

"I'm sure the note was just to scare you, Todd. It doesn't mean anything."

He calmed down, and we played the game. He wound up winning, losing his

cards that consisted of a full moon, spider, witch hat, and ghost.

“Come down for dinner!” I heard my father call.

We ate, and I looked out the window, spotting a full moon. “Did you guys hear that howling?” I knew I heard it.

“Emma, I know you didn’t want to move here, but don’t scare your brother with made-up stories,” my mother responded. I cleaned my place setting and headed back to my room, knowing for certain that I heard howling outside.

When I entered my room, I froze in my tracks. I wanted to scream, yell for help, but I just stood there, silent. In the corner of my room, a large creature, covered in dark brown fur, wearing a torn up, tattered shirt, looked me in the eyes, and growled. Before I even had time to let what I just had witnessed sink in, the creature leapt straight at me. I jumped out of the way just in time, rolling onto the floor. It hit the wall and grunted, what would’ve been me if I wasn’t quick enough.

I looked around the room, and spotted my softball bat from when I used to play, sitting near my nightstand. I lunged for it, and the creature recovered and leapt at me again. This time, I turned around, screamed “batter up!” and, to my surprise, slammed the creature with my bat so hard that it was launched off my window and into the forest surrounding the house. It howled, and ran out of sight.

I stood there, in shock at what had just happened. I knew, without question, that the creature was a werewolf, and that it came from the game. What frightened me even more, I realized the other cards played were yet to come. I quickly put the cards away and noticed a back to the warning card. It read, “IF YOU ARE IN DANGER, YELL ‘END GAME’ TO SEE SOMETHING EVEN STRANGER.” Without second thought, I screamed “End game!” at the top of my lungs. The wooden box began to shake, and to my disbelief, the cards were sucked into the box, all on their own. The werewolf came back through the window, and sure enough, a giant spider, a witch, and a ghost, the exact cards played by Todd, were also sucked through my window, and into the box, which closed by itself.

I looked up, and found the window to be fixed and the bat to be back in the place it was before I used it. I ran downstairs and glued, taped, and sealed the box closed with whatever items I could find, and put it in the very back of my closet, where no one would find it. I knew telling them about the box wouldn’t do any good, I wouldn’t have even believed that story, and since my room was exactly how it was before the game, there was no evidence I was telling the truth. And so, I left it there, in the back of my closet, for years, never to be opened again.

-Kyra DeSalvo

## **The Peculiar Case of Thomas Flaherty**

Despite being surrounded by countless adults, no one seemed to notice when little Thomas Flaherty slipped away from the family barbecue and into the dense forest that surrounded the park. You see, Thomas (or more commonly known as Tommy) had not been enjoying himself that day. Even if he was surrounded by the aromatic smells of food wafting of the grill, the warm sun making its last welcoming appearances before the coming season, it did little to comfort him. A shy boy, he tended to gravitate towards his parents out of habit, even if everyone at the park was technically family. To his dismay, his parents paid little attention to him, more preoccupied with bragging about his siblings' accomplishments in an effort to one-up their relatives as "the best parent". Pulling at his mother's skirt, he tried to beg her to let him stay in the car, his gameboy was there and if she just let him play with it, he'd never, ever bother her again. To his chagrin, she waved him off, mumbling something about playing with the big kids and something about "socializing".

So, he made his way to the outskirts of the field, quietly wandering towards his brothers, currently deep in a game with his fellow cousins. Before he could even make out the request, only making out a stuttering plea to his oldest brother , he was dismissed, once again dumped off to another party, only this time it was his sisters, only for one of them to yell that they didn't want that crybaby of a brother to bother them either. It seemed like everyone had a place, except for Tommy, preoccupied with someone or something else, leaving him the sole person isolated the large fields of Zone 5.

Fed up, Tommy distanced himself from the rest of his noisy clan, and soon found himself crossing the ivy-covered entrance of the surrounding woodlands. He knew he had to stay in his parents line of sight, but did that really matter anymore. He didn't feel very loved at the moment, considering how mean everyone had been passing him off like some threadbare hand-me-down.

So, he began strolling down the forgotten clearing, overgrown with roots and various foliage. Looking up he observed the skinny trunks of pine and birch, noticing how they seemed to reach up forever, scraping the skies and piercing the clouds above, and how it smelled different here. Instead of the clear smells of freshly mowed grass and wafting smells of meat, this place surrounded him in the cool, crisp smells of early autumn. It was so much more quieter too. No screams of the older kids who laughed in his face when he asked to play. Only the tranquil sounds of the wind, caressing the branches of those skyscraper trees , and the occasional chirp from a nearby bird. Invigorated by the almost mystical environment he walked into, Tommy continued to skip through the littered path of broken twigs ,scraps of cloth, and ancient garbage left by people who had walked this very trail, eagerly hearing the crunch of dead leaves littering the path, watching with glee as his light-up sneakers spoke up with every step. He walked on for what seemed like ages, wondering if his parents were still talking his uncle that smelled funny, or his aunt with the frizzy hair, or what game his cousins were playing when *-thump!- he was face first into a pile of damp leaves. Scrambling up, he looked for the offending object that had stirred him out of his thoughts. His ankle ached slightly, and upon inspection he found out that it had been a rusty handle of a small, rotting trap door. It reeked of something the boy had never smelt, but had stirred his stomach like a whirlwind, and groaned (the door? A monster lurking inside?) in pro-*

*test as the frail boy shifted his weight. Unbeknownst to him, Tommy had been its literal breaking point, as it gave out from under him, plummeting the little boy into darkness.* It had been some time until the rest of the Flahertys noticed little Tommy's absence, as it had been hours later until Tommy's family had begun to pack up, right as the sun had begun to set. Panic immediately ensued at the end of their headcount, and after frantic calls to the park ranger, it took no time for the police to reach the scene, as the town had a proclivity for missing children. Search dogs in tow, a local search party of committed neighborhood watch members and anyone with nothing to do on this cool Saturday night began their descent into the full forest. Nearby, a rookie officer, fresh out of the academy and equipped with lackluster people skills, tried to console Mrs. Flaherty, of whom was consumed with guilt.

"Ma'am.. When was the last time you saw, Thoma-"

"Oh, Tommy! My poor baby...he was trying to get my attention earlier, pulling on my skirt crying, 'Mummy! Mummy'..God, if I only actually paid attention, then he'd be safe in my arms...not-not snatched up by s-some, some child predator!"

"Ma'am..please remain calm, I'm sure your boy's fine, probably just wandered off..now when was the last time you saw Thomas...."

Surprisingly, the search itself ended almost as fast as it had been called on, lasting only about an hour. It turns out, Tommy had somehow wandered into the epicenter of the forest, an amazing feat for someone so young. The fall itself did little damage besides shaking up the already skittish boy, leaving him with only a couple of scrapes and bruises. However, what the search party found had shocked the small town; Tommy wasn't the only thing recovered that day. Little Tommy, only aged four and a half, had stumbled upon the cellar in which Mary-Gaile Peters and Ailis Browne had been kept for twelve years following their abduction on their way to school, opening buried deep in a forgotten file cabinet of the small police station on the other side of town.

**-Isabellarose Malone**



**-Emely Lopez**

## **The Best Day of my Life**

The day was January 13<sup>th</sup>. I woke up and rubbed the sleep out of my eyes. I glanced over at the clock, it was 8:00. My mom didn't wake me up, I was going to miss the bus. I peeked out the window to see if my Jayden and Ally were still waiting at the bus stop or if they had been picked up already. But instead of my friends, all I saw was a thick blanket of snow. Finally, the snow day I had been praying for! I walked downstairs to the sweet smell of pancakes, a snow day tradition in our family.

"Mmm, snow-day-pancakes! What kind?" I said as I sat down.

"Blueberry and banana," my mom answered.

Blueberry and banana was always my favorite, but my little sister hates them. "And for Ada?"

"I made a few plain for her." My mom put a plate of blueberry and banana pancakes on the table in front of me, and another plate with plain pancakes next to me.

I started to dig into my delicious breakfast when Ada, my little sister, appeared. She's got blonde hair, blue eyes, and a smile that could melt just about anyone's heart. She was wearing her favorite Ariel nightgown, which was way too cold for a night like last night, but she had refused to put on anything warmer. Ada meant everything to me. My parents were busy people, so we spent a lot of time together whenever I babysat her. I love her more than anything in the world. I can't believe she's already seven, I can remember the day she was born clearly. I was four-and-a-half, and I was playing cards with my aunt in the waiting room when my dad called us in to see Ada. It was the most exciting thing to ever happen to me.

Once we finished breakfast, Ada and I got ready to go out in the snow. I helped her put her pink mittens on and we were off. We started our fun by making snow angels. They all had footprints in them though, because I couldn't get up without stepping in them. But it was okay, since we stepped through them again when we were gathering snow for our snowman. He was a little bit sloppy, but we didn't care. Next, we decided to have a snowball fight. So we each picked a home base and started making a bunch of snowballs. Ada picked a spot near the back door for her base, so I took behind the garage. It was kinda dark, but I didn't mind, 'cause it kept Ada out of there.

We started throwing snowballs at each other. Aiming for the shoulders and below, of course. I ran back behind the garage to get more ammo, but I fell and felt a quick pinch on my ankle. It wasn't a big deal, so I got up and kept running. A little while later, when we went back inside for hot chocolate, my ankle started to really hurt. But I didn't want to say anything in case my mom needed to take me to the hospital. We'd have to leave Ada with the neighbors since Dad wasn't home, and she hates it when she goes over there. They always feed her these weird healthy snacks and stuff. I was sure it was nothing, anyways. I suffered through the pain while we watched *The Little Mermaid* and played Candy Land. Then we went to bed. *It was the best day of my life.*

I like to think of that day whenever I'm feeling blue, which is pretty often. Everything has been so different since then. Nowadays, I spend my time wandering around, hoping someone will pay attention to me. Before, I didn't have a single care in the world. I passed most of my time with friends and family, just having fun. But when I woke up the next day, everything was different and nothing will ever be the same. Now, everything is covered in a gray sort of hue. No one notices me. Ever. I follow Ada and my mom around, try to help them out, but they never acknowledge me. Now and then, when I take a walk to clear my head and try to figure out what's going on, a dog will bark at me, but nothing

else ever happens. I sit with Ada every night and watch her fall asleep. She cries a lot. She never used to do that. She has more nightmares, too. I try to calm her down, but it rarely works.

My parents are more upset now, too. My mom never makes blueberry banana pancakes anymore. And Ada stays with the neighbors more often. I try offering to watch her, but it's like I don't even exist anymore.

It's weird, ever since that day, I never sleep or eat. And I never get hungry or tired, either. I don't know what's worse. That, or the fact that no one knows I'm here...I lied. Everyone ignoring me is worse. I just wish someone would wave at me, say hi, or something. That would mean everything. Two days after that snow day, I walked to my bus stop to see if any of my friends would notice me. They just said the normal stuff you say when someone isn't at the bus stop.

"Hey, where's Caiden?"

"Must be sick."

I haven't gone back since, but I think I'll go back today, just to see what they say now that I've been gone for about two weeks. They're playing pinecone soccer, that was our favorite game to play while waiting for the bus. It made me smile for the first time in a long while.

"Score!" Jayden calls after shooting the pinecone past Ally.

Ally picked up the pinecone. She was my best friend, and the best pinecone goalie our school has ever seen.

"All, you okay?" Jayden looked really concerned.

"I'm fine." Ally wiped away a tear. "I've just had a hard time concentrating ever since...never mind. I'm fine."

"It's okay, I get it. We've all been like that." Jayden walked over to Ally, and patted her shoulder. The two of them sat on the curb, so I joined them.

"I just can't believe Caiden's really gone...and from a stupid snake bite, of all ways to die."

I sat there, paralyzed with fear, thinking about what I just heard. Everything around me started to fade away. That's when I realized why no one ever noticed me, why everyone has been so sad. I'm dead, a ghost. January 13<sup>th</sup>, the best day of my life, was also the last day of my life.

**-Livia D'Anna**



**-Ava Brosnon**

## **Historias a Fantasma**

Twas the night before Christmas in the city of México. Caroling is in the air. Cigarette smoke filling the dark clouds and the night is lit only by the spirit of Christmas. A tradition in the house of the Garcia's, where they visit their Abuela's home. But this holiday will be different, more so than ever. For Abuela is no longer with us and her tradition is too much to bare. Jack misses Abuela the most, especially her tradition of telling ghost stories (Historias a Fantasma). The Garcia's pull up to Abuela's house to spend Christmas with the altar they built on El Día de Los Muertos, which was created in her memory. However, Jack sees a tree that he doesn't remember being there before...

"Why is Abuela's house in a neighborhood that's surrounded by a bunch of Jews?" Justin stated sarcastically.

My little brother is so annoying and immature. I just want to throw him into that pothole. Instead of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles saving his butt, he'll be eaten by the disgusting black coal of water, filled with dark spiritual movements in the sewers. The dead whose legacies aren't remembered suck the living life out of his soul to leave him in the sea of forgetfulness.

"Jack!" said my Papá."

Awakening me to reality and leaving my deep dark thoughts behind.

"You better behave yourself and apologize to your brother."

I didn't even say anything out loud, yet my father knows of my tendencies to think very darkly. It's only a joke yet he gets very angry.

"Honey it's okay" said Mamá forgivably. "Your Papá wasn't the biggest fan of Abuela's ghost stories."

"And Justin, there's only one Jewish home on this block and it's only an investment home, so please Cut It Out!!" Mamá raising her voice.

"Lo siento Mamá" said Justin.

I apologized too, "Lo siento Papá."

They both nodded their heads in acceptance as we pulled up to Abuela's house.

"Boys get out, take out the food, and help your Mamá." demandingly.

But I couldn't move, there was this random tree towards the back of Abuela's house....

I thought Tio was supposed to clean Abuela's house, but it looked abandoned and broken. There was a bunch of broken stone statues of goblins and vampires in her front lawn. Someone must have traveled back into time to bring those creepy old looking statues to Abuela's lawn, I didn't even know those existed anymore. It looked like kids had played baseball across the street and hit 5 home runs into Abuela's 5 windows. The windows looked so shattered it reminded me of back when the iPhone 4 was popular and kids used to put fake cracked screens as their wallpapers. It was still very dark and smokey, but out of nowhere I jumped out of the car.

"Papá how did my howl sound, I've been practicing all day so I can tell

my own ghost story” said Justin.

“Very good hijo it sounds very loud and realistic.”

I was relieved to know it was just Justin being Justin and not an actual coyote. Mamá is very quick and she had already started heating up the food for Christmas. As I walked into the house alongside Justin and Papá, I could smell the delicious food Mamá had prepared. But as I turned my head toward the stove I couldn’t even see the flame. I didn’t understand how this was happening, but I continued on into this creepy house.

Somebody definitely destroyed Abuela’s home. As I walked along the lonely hall every step I took these bloody figures would be drawn, worst than any horror movie, but each drawing would erase itself as I continued walking. I finally reached a door, the bathroom. There was no electricity, no shower curtain, and half the wall was missing. No literally, I was able to go outside of Abuela’s house from the bathroom. As I looked to her neighbors’ homes they were full of life and color. I turned around to see a ghost staring at me, the ghost was so close our noses touched.

“JUSTIN!!! HELP ME!!!” “THERE’S A GHOST.”

I continued screaming and running for my life. Reluctantly, I looked back and saw Justin enter the bathroom, but then he ran back out into the hallway. Justin finally came outside, but began to spray me. I finally stopped screaming to see a huge bump on my nose.

“What did you have, a jar of honey with you?” Justin began laughing hysterically.

“What do you mean there was ghost right in front of me!”, I asked in confusion.

“Yeah, a ghost of bees. Looks like you took their entire hive and got stung by Beyoncé.

I began to feel dizzy, seeing double of Justin.

“Beyoncé?” I asked as I began to lose feeling in my legs.

The same bloody figures on the wall now began to draw around me in black.

“Yeah you got stung by Queen B! Ahhhhh, that was great.” Justin laughed continually.

But his voice began to fade and get lower. Before I knew it the entire ground was black, eating me alive. I couldn’t see anything and I blacked out.

I don’t know how long I was out, but I woke up still in my Abuela’s yard really close to some broken bushes. I touched my nose to feel no bump, to then look up and see that same ghost. It was behind that tree that looked unfamiliar when I arrived here. The ghost looked to be a woman, an older woman with long straight hair and an arched back. Her eyes weren’t there, but filled in as tanned cotton balls and it seemed as she was wearing a bata. I don’t know how hard I hit my head but that ghost seemed as my Abuela.

I called out nervously “Abuela?”

And with a soft response the ghost called, “Nieto.”

I almost passed out again, but I caught myself. I then began to ask Abuela what had happened to her house. She didn't really have an answer, but just told me someone went in when she passed and felt the need to make it seemed haunted.

"I don't know who it was, but what can I do?" she sounded so sad. I quickly changed the subject.

"Abuela I miss you so much, this Christmas will be so different without you."

"I know Jack, but this is why I left this tree here for you, so you can always come here to talk to me."

"The next time you return here Jack, all the dark scary skies, the hardness of the ground, the screeches of the animals nearby, the feeling of other spirits around will all disperse."

"For this is just a dream, moreso a nightmare. I brought you here to this time period to combine it with your life today."

My mind was racing with all this information Abuela was telling me, could it be true?

"You've completed your training and it's time to return to your life. I love you nieto and can't wait to talk to you under the tree."

I was still shocked at everything nothing made sense. But Abuela got up, and the floor began to sink again. It opened as a dark portal, like a black hole, to take Abuela back to her ghost home. She gave me a kiss and disappeared. My mind was still racing as I left the tree to return to Abuela's home. I walked toward the bathroom that was open to the outside, but taking my second step I tripped falling.

"ABUELA? HELP!", but it was too late the figures that appeared on the ground before came back and ate me again.

I woke up to find Mamá and Papá shaking me. I turned my head in one motion realizing I was in the hospital. I was actually in the waiting room though, as if I fell asleep. Papá told me the most confusing and devastating news I've ever heard.

"Abuela is dying, hijo and you have to say goodbye."

My mind was still trying to understand what I was just told. Wasn't Abuela already dead, I just spoke to her under that tree? Wait.... Justin didn't see Abuela, he said I got stung by a bee. He didn't see that the bathroom wall was broken to the outside either. As my heart beated a million miles a minute, I realized what Abuela was telling me was true.

"Honey do you want to come with Papá and I to say your goodbyes, or by yourself?" I could see the tears in Mamá's eyes and the pain in Papá's face.

"Where is Justin" I asked.

"He said his goodbyes already and is going to go home with Tio."

Papá stared into my eyes and told me,

"We want you to do the same."

So I went to Abuela's room, alone to say my last goodbye on her

deathbed. I grabbed her hand and looked at her beautiful face. I rubbed her hands and felt my eyes filling up with tears. The last thing she told me was something I will never forget.

In a whispered voice she said, "Nieto remember the tree and the ghost stories."

Looking at me with a smile she closed her eyes to rest her pain. I gave her a kiss on her forehead never to see her again.

Exactly two weeks after Abuela passed we returned to her home to create her altar. Even though Día de los Muertos is celebrated the end of October and the beginning of November, we made her an altar anyway.

Everything I had seen before in my dream was now the opposite of my reality. The house was beautifully vibrant in color and a touch of love was felt as I entered the home. As I walked toward the door alongside Papá and Justin, there were no goblins or vampires, no darkness, but light. Not haunted or scary, but beautifully beautiful. There I saw Mamá heating the food she had prepared to eat. Except this time I could see the flame heating the stove. I walked toward the hall where vibrant photographs were placed of our family, whole and happy. I reached the first doorway to my left, the bathroom. This time the electricity worked, the bathroom curtain was there and a beautiful window. There is where I saw the tree I had talked with Abuela in my dream, it wasn't as big for it had to grow. But I could see Abuela's ghost smiling at me. Ready for me to sit there and begin to dream about the Historias a Fantasma, I was suppose to preach in the near future. For Abuela was the one

who told the best ghost stories, but I Jack Garcia, is the one to fulfill her beautiful place.

**-Caitlyn Palermo**



**-Grace Kenny**



I woke up with a jolt as the car hit a pothole in the middle of the road.

“Aw shoot, hopefully the tire is all right.”

It wasn’t all right. The tire quickly flattened and we were forced to pull over. My dad was always an extremely cautious driver so it was odd that something like this happened. He got out of the car and grabbed his tools and a spare tire from the trunk. He put the cigarette he was smoking out and signaled me to come out, too. I sighed and got out of the car.

“You have to learn this for yourself, kid, so help me out here. Hold my lighter for me.” I

put the lighter in my back pocket and watched my dad loosen the bolts of the car. His hands shook with every turn and he seemed too sweaty for changing a tire. His pain in his lower back was apparent so I took the wrench out of his hands and started at the tire.

“Thank you Paul.” He responded.

“I’m sure this school will be a wonderful fit, kiddo. I know it’s been hard for you to find a good fit with my job but I have a good feeling about this place,” my dad explained as I took the flat off the car.

“I don’t,” I replied. “This place makes me feel...uneasy. All I can see are trees.”

As I finished my sentence I felt some entity about to pounce on my shoulders. I turned my body as fast as humanly possible with now a pounding heart and desperately looked for something amongst the rows of pine trees but, to no avail. There was nothing but the wide trunks of the trees with my breath uneven and my hairs standing up straight.

“Hey Paul, are you saying that my childhood neighborhood is creepy?” I was forced out of my trance with my father’s words. “You know, your mother and I first met here,” my father stated.

“Right here, in the middle of the forest?” I replied as I tightened the bolts on the spare.

“No dummy, at our high school.” He stopped in the middle of his sentence to swallow and paused before saying unsteadily, “Northern Massachusetts High School.”

“That’s a super clever name, dad,” I replied as I crawled back into the car. My dad sat back in the driver’s seat and started the engine. “Good as new,” he stated. He pressed the gas and we were back on the road. This was the third time we were moving because of my dad’s work. This time we had to venture into the deep rural areas of Massachusetts. As we moved farther and farther away from the industrialized cities, the scenery became more and more the eerie. The woods became thicker and denser to the point where it felt as if I was being swallowed by the trees. The pine trees towered over me and shielded most of the sunlight. What seemed as the worst part, was the “beast” I felt before. It seemed to lurk in the background of the forest, waiting for the perfect time to attack its prey with a murderous intent.

The car came to a gentle stop and before I knew it we rolled up to Northern Massachusetts High School. The building was made entirely out of concrete with little to no color or even windows.

“Have a great day kid, I’ll be home moving everything in and I’ll be here about

3:00. Try to make some friends okay? Sometimes you look a little unapproachable. Maybe look up from that phone and try to smile. A-and stay safe, please."

"Okay dad, I'll try."

I shimmied out of the car and opened the door to the main entrance. The building was lit up by plain fluorescent light bulbs giving everything a gray color. The security guard looked grim and had heavy bags under his eyes, looking straight down and muttered something as I walked past him. I took my schedule out of my back pocket to look at the only room number of my first class. "Room 6," I said to myself. I looked up to start to move my way towards the classroom. Suddenly I noticed. There was no one else in the school except for me. I looked behind me to find no other students and picked my pace towards my next class. I found it quickly after a little searching and opened the door.

"Oh good." I sighed as I found three other students sitting in their seats looking down, with faces almost identical to the security guard before.

The classroom was filled with seats, however, there was only three students present.

"Hi, my name's Paul, I'm new here," I said.

They all gave me a brief glance, and continued their conversations.  
"Hello students."

A titan of a man entered into the classroom with a looming presence. I quickly took a seat, the closest one to the door.

"As you can see, we have a new student joining us today. I'm Mr. Beel. Make sure you make him feel welcome in our family."

"Yes, sir" they all replied in unison.

The day continued as normal. Mr. Beel taught every subject, like we were in elementary school again. The day worked in 5 period days. Only covering the four main subjects: Math, Science, Social Studies, and English. Math was first period, science was second, with a lunch break during third period, Social Studies during fourth period and finishing with English.

My dad didn't pack me any lunch so when the lunch break hit I just pulled out my phone and googled "How to make friends with introverts." As I hit enter, two of the three student walk up to my desk.

"Hello and welcome to Northern Massachusetts High School. My name is Jude and the guy behind me is Kane." Jude explained in an almost pretentious tone.

"Nice to meet you" I say as I extend my hand for a handshake. They ignore the invitation and just nod and sit down back into their seats.

Mr. Beel watches the boys return to their seats with a small, somewhat deviant smile on his face. His eyes slowly move to the other girl in the classroom, shivering with a nervous look in her eyes. His face quickly moves to a serious expression and then moves to one of anger.

"Sapphira. See me after school is over." Mr. Beel demanded.

Sapphira nodded her head slowly with a pained look.

The last two periods of the day passed relatively slowly. The things we studied were incredibly gruesome, however. In social studies we studied ancient torture methods used in medieval times, where the lungs were cut out and stretched outwards. This technique was called the "Blood Eagle." In English, we were reading the book "A Child Called 'It'" where a young child was starved and beaten by his own mother. I gave a couple of quick glances towards Sapphira, with her unchanging, desolate de-

meanor as the rest of the day went by. Before I knew it the final bell rang and the school day was over. I gathered my belongings and started for the door.

"Paul." Jude stated. "How about we head to the arcade?"

I noticed behind them, Mr. Beel grabbing Sapphira by the arm pulling her out of the classroom. Through the window of the door I could see them go towards the back of the school.

"How about another day? I have to help my dad move in." I said with a sheepish smile.

"Is this guy serious? We offer him a perfectly good opportunity to hang out and refuses. I'm about to hit him over the head with a bat."

"Hey chill out, Herald." Snapped Jude. "Well if you have to I suppose it's okay."

Jude suddenly leaned in and whispered:

*"But whatever you do, don't get yourself killed." Now with very human and sincere tone.*

Jude stood up straight and walked out of the classroom along with Herald and Kane. I immediately walked towards the back of the school as soon they left the school. I played back all the street fighting techniques my father taught me in the past and loosened up my arms as I walked. As I got closer to the back of the school, it got darker and darker, and I noticed that roots grew from the cracks and seams of the building.

"He looked scary! I was too nervous. I never talked to anyone else except for the boys."

"That's no excuse for making him feel isolated! We need him to trust us."

I hear loud voices down the hallway. I hid behind the corner around the voices were coming from.

"I don't want to do this anymore. We already killed so many people."

"We need to. To survive."

"Why can't we live off of something else!"

Suddenly, an inhuman sound echoed in the school



(“BECAUSE I SAID SO”)

An ear piercing scream that followed and I repeated to myself the words:

*"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."*

I sprinted around the corner to find a horrid scene before me.

I fought the urge to vomit as the red liquid contrasted from the gray walls.

My eyes couldn't comprehend the horror that laid in front of me. Vertigo suddenly hit me like a 18 wheeler as I fell backwards onto the ground. A beast rose up, his mouth overflowing with blood and gore. I rose up quickly, my body filled with adrenaline and ran away from the enemy.

Like something came over me, I stopped in my tracks and turned. Reaching into my backpack. The father of lies now crept from the darkness and was now right in front of me. I took the Bible out of my books and spoke a prayer:

*"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will*

*strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”*

“Begone! For I am a Child of God!”

The beast crumbled before me but managed to maintain his form. The roots made their way towards my feet and neck. I pulled my father’s lighter out of my back pocket and set the roots aflame.

The foundation of the school suddenly started to fall apart as the roots burned. I dropped everything and made my way to the main entrance.

“I won’t let you!”

Jude and Kane blocked the main entrance with both their arms open. “You come here and destroy our home and kill our father and think you can just leave?



(NO WAY) They exclaim in unison.

The security guard tackles the two with a new found vigor in his eyes.

“I’ve seen what you kids have done. All those innocent children dead. The school is abandoned thanks to you devils. And I was too afraid to do anything, I was a coward. So why don’t you burn along with me!”

I take this opportunity to run out the door. As I look back the school a safe distance away, I see it crumble to the ground in flames.

My father’s car pulls in and he runs out of the vehicle and embraces me.

“What happened? Are you okay?”

What in the hell happened?”

I reiterate the events that occurred to him. He recoils in horror to the events that passed.

“Oh thank God you’re safe.” He sighs.

We both go limp in relief as we watch the school burn.

**-Gabriel Medina-Jaudes**



**Grace Kenny-**

### **Dear Miss Mary Jane**

Dear Miss Mary Jane,

Ah, Miss Mary Jane, it's been awhile, hope you're in hell. Always sticking your nose in everyone's business, constantly creepin, in the shadows, listening. Always with the latest gossip. Usually surrounding yourself with your latest client. I've known you since I was a little girl, I still remember you're signature perfume. I never saw you, but I knew you were always watching, and listening in every shadow you crept upon. I've only heard rumors about you from bolos on the streets. My parents didn't let me and my siblings out to play much cause they knew you were lurking in the streets. They knew you could ruin my life with just one move. I ended up being a caged bird, stuck. Only reason was because you always hung around. Years passed and you finally got in. Latched yourself on a 14 old boy, my older brother. He came here to see us, not you, he came to escape you, but he never knew that were you just down the block. My papa finally got his boy back from 11 years of looking, but then you peeked your head in the yard. That's when I saw you web. You're disgusting. I first saw you when my brother was on couch, morning sleeping and Miss Mary Jane, you were in the cup, you were in the cigar. You kept reeling in my brother into trouble. I was so happy before you showed up. I thought some of the pressures on my back would disappear but no, you came and took my brother away. You left me with so much pain. Years passed, made sure I was wary as I walk with my sister down the corridors of life. More years passed and it was painful to smile, faked each one. Years later I finally had a real smile, real laughter. Then you showed your face again! What else do you want? I made them promise me to never go near you. I made them promise to not take a sip, nor take the pill, don't go near the devil. Even with the warning they went crumbling down. One day, they took it, behind my back, and you captured a part of their soul. I knew because I could smell your perfume mixed with their cologne. And every time I confronted them they would lie to my face, but we both knew that the promise and friendship was broken. Miss Mary Jane, I'll see you in hell.

**-Anonymous**

## Abstract Basilicata

Everyone is familiar  
With sentiments of love  
That vary through flashy clichés of sought after gifts  
Concern and pampering to some  
Or just saying hello  
When one has to grasp and claw for these sentiments  
Like a child fetching a toy from under the bed  
They notice some things.

<<Your arms are a bit too short.  
You are a bit too attached to the rabbit doll  
whose foot someone else cut off>>

Everyone wants attention  
If they vibrantly deny it or not  
Cause not everyone wants to be seen by everyone  
Tourist and civilian alike in New York  
Certain people offering certain kindness  
Truly makes a happier world  
For someone who's dirty sweatjacket  
Flaps past their hands  
And matches their jeans and cleats.

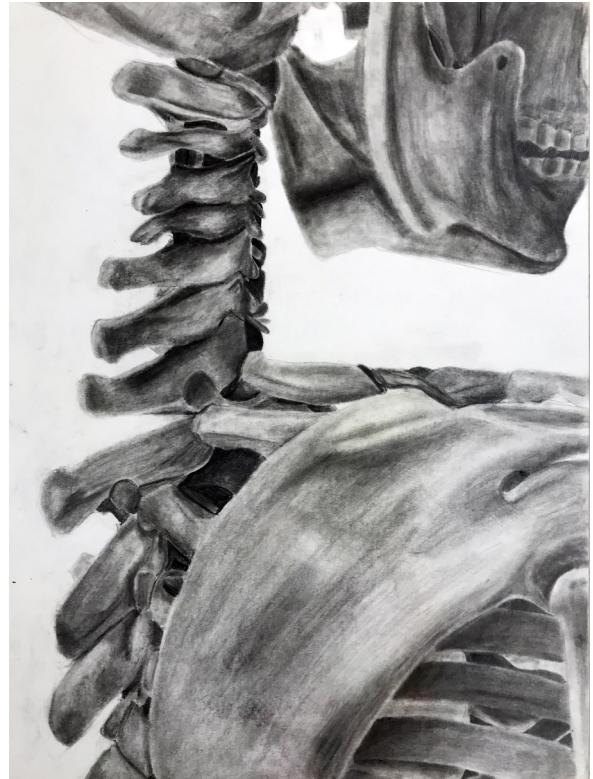
<<You are going to start to get pudgy,  
If you try to indulge in being worthy to others  
who don't care for your shabby looks>>

It is an unfortunate fact of life-  
While we all hate to admit it, it is a fact of life-  
That normally the most conventional  
Takes the grail of admiration and wins  
But honestly, just what did we expect  
How can they win such a brawl?  
They're too stocky to run, but too lanky to fight.  
Lacking even money to bribe a faux judge.  
And the crowd seems to boo their namesake.

Then there will be some point that  
Failure  
After failure  
Brought on by the contrived and popular  
Will make their loved ones leave them  
And they will still be musky and murky  
Poor Ciccio, lurking with the lost  
But even so, they stay around  
Wishing those who left the best

And the question can be asked:  
Do they offer love,  
Or is this a ploy for soothing  
sentiments?

-Rory Bocelli



-Emely Lopez

## The Wife's Torment

Parvati grew more and more troubled as the day went on and on, the hot Bengali sun shining harder and brighter. It was Devdas' birthday. It was today she remembered her childhood love more than most. Her head began to pound more and more, she couldn't deal with the pain. She remembered running around, roaming the papaya gardens, to when he disappeared from her life, without a trace. She never felt more alone. She missed him more than anyone else. Parvati could practically remember when she cut off ties with him, the night she was to marry her now current husband. The anguish on his face, the heartbreak she suffered leaving behind the only person she truly loved, it was too much for her to relive. After looking at herself now in the mirror streaming tears, slowly flowing down her sallow cheeks, she screamed. Her relationship with her husband was strictly professional. They never got intimate, they slept separately on the right and left sides of the bed. Parvati missed the closeness and intimacy of a partner, one that Devdas provided. She was tired of her mother's letters, complaining about a child not being brought into this world yet, and she loathed the fact she was not a mother. In fact, she scorned herself, slowly breaking her apart even more, piece by piece. Her only best friend was Badi-Ma, her mother-in-law. She helped her through her pain and eventually brought Parvati to the high status of "Lady of the House" or "Chhoti-Ma". But having that power and respect, it didn't fill her. She still couldn't wander outside the house, she wanted to leave this prison and find her Devdas, her Dev Babu. Being married into the Bengali family meant strict *purdah* or exclusion of women. She never could roam out of her house, she never could go explore places where she once played in as a child, she never could venture to the bazaar, she could never go out to find her Devdas.

On Devdas' birthday, she began to hear the screams. When simply putting on her jewelry, she could hear softly

"Paro, find me, I need your help," between the soft *chinkles* of bangles.

She knew it was him, she knew he had to be calling her. But she immediately dismissed the idea.

Again, while admiring herself in the mirror, she heard a voice, his voice, saying, "Paro, you must find me. To ignore me would mean the end of me." Suddenly, Devdas appeared in her reflection, behind her. He seemed to be looking over her shoulder, with his usual smug look. She turned, but he disappeared.

Soon she put on her sari, slowly wrapping herself intricately, and threw the palla or ends of the sari over her shoulder. When the cloth brushed past her head, she heard again, softly, "Paro." She gasped, and looked around scared.

Her husband turned and grunted, "What's wrong Wife? Why must you act so childless, you are to produce a child, not become one."

She barely took the insult, she became used to her husband's sharp tongue. She instead ran down her to private office, and tore it up, looking for a single letter. And alas, she found it!

It was from Dev, to her, written the night of her marriage. After she told him to end their affair, the night of her marriage, he stormed off. He had been so angry she chose to marry and leave him and end their little affair. He had said, "Paro. You cannot do this. This will end me, and you." He grabbed her wrist, "You are my soulmate."

Paro then pushed him away, saying, "You cannot be with me. I love you but we cannot be together. I'm to be married, you too. Goodbye".

Running off, she heard Devdas' soft weeps. Little did he know, tears flowed down her cheeks as well.

She remembered it all and the old emotions flooded back. The love, the undying love she had for him! She knew it could wreck everything she had built up in her life, but she felt she would risk it for him. Then she heard a scream , "Paro, come, arre o paro!"

She was sure it was Devdas, she just knew it had to be. She ran down the main hallway, but instead found her 23 year old stepson, Mahendra. She was only 27.

"What? What is it Mahendra?" she asked urgently.

Mahendra asked, out of breath from running,

"The villagers sent a message to you. A man named Devdas is outside waiting outside, what do we do Chhoti-Ma?"

A single tear of joy flowed down Parvati's cheek. She ran, screaming

"Devdas, my love, Devdas!!", ignoring Mahendra.

Mahendra ran after her, yelling, "Ruk jao chhoti-ma! Stop Parvati!"

Parvati ran down the main hallway, the end of her sari streaming like a sail. She heard her husband scream,

"Paro! Stop!! Someone stop that mad-woman!"

She didn't care, she had to escape from this bleak lavish prison. She had to be with Devdas. She kept running. A group of ladies, her sister-in-laws, came out and tried stopping her. She screamed and fought like a wild lion, until she broke away. One of her sister-in-laws dropped sacrificial goat blood as Parvati fought them. Parvati ran right through it, standing her porcelain feet and white sari. She finally then ran outside, near the gate. She ran, with her sari still flowing, screaming,

"Devdas! Devdas!!!"

Her husband then commanded the guards,

"Close the doors! She is not allowed to leave!"

She kept running, one arm outstretched as if to stop the doors and him, and then she saw him. He was laying down, almost as if he was on the brink of death. It was too much, she ran even faster, still screaming. As she was about to reach outside, he coughed blood. And then the doors closed with a resounding thud.

**-Zubair Ali**



-Quinn Blackburn

### The Sun is a Light

The sun is a light that gives hope to all,  
Except for those of us that build up our walls,  
For those of us that have storms in our heads,  
Those of us that battle to get out of our beds.

The sun is a light that we tend to see rise  
After another restless night, it stings our eyes.

Yet we still have to go about our days,  
Even if we're tired and trapped in a daze.

The sun is a light that some of us miss,  
Our last goodbye said, our very last kiss.  
Some leave friends and family all the same,  
Some leave without anyone knowing their name.

The truth is harsh, and to some this is news,  
But depression is a fight that anyone can lose.  
So please tell people that you love them dearly,  
Or one day you could have to visit them yearly.

-Jesse Henning

## **I Am Not My Father's Daughter**

Quiet, like him,  
Calm.

Same lines and valleys  
Running through my palms.

Same eyes and hair.  
Tell me I haven't seen hell;

Do you dare?

I do dare you,

The cowardly boy at the party  
Who assumed I've lived so easily,

As if he's smart, he  
Didn't even know.

Do you know?

Do you know where the good girls go after their fathers break their souls?

Stranger, look at me.

I am not a thing.

I am not my father's daughter,

Neck hanging on a string.

I survived and I have tried,  
So stranger, look at me.

Quiet, like him,

But they say, "how you've changed,"

Now I'm louder and reckless and dark and a mess, it's so-  
Isn't it so strange?

I thought by now I'd be dead, but I'm around,  
Stronger than before-

Look father, aren't you proud?

Where do the good girls go after their fathers break their-

**-Mia D'Alessandro**

### **Thank You Mrs. Carone**

Thank You Mrs. Carone,  
For teaching us very well.  
You taught us fun things,  
Like the nucleus in cells.

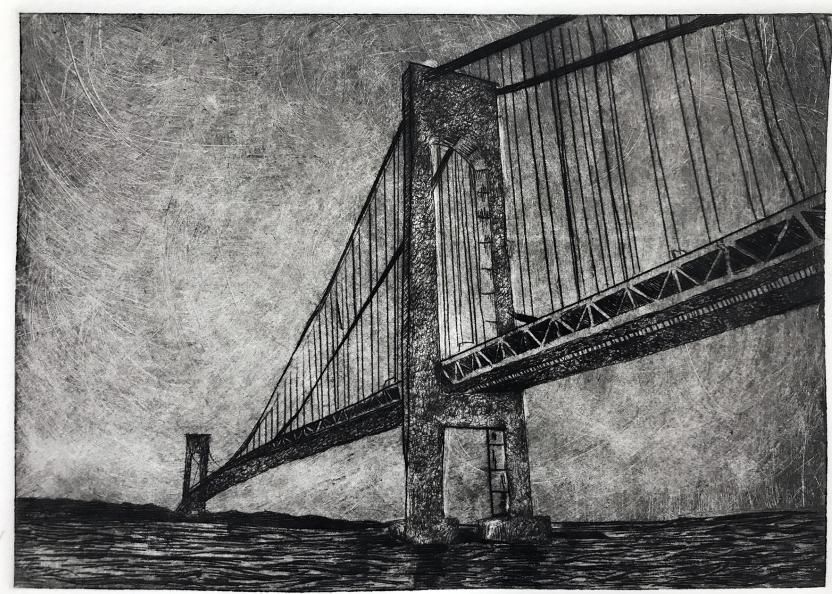
Thank You Mrs. Carone,  
For being happy and bright.  
You never gave up,  
Until we all got it right.

Thank You Mrs. Carone,  
We all love you very much.  
But then you got sick,  
That's why you don't keep in touch.

Oh Dear Mrs. Carone,  
We want to know how you feel.  
Please come back to school,  
At HHS you are a big deal.

Thank you Mrs. Carone,  
In March is when you'll be here  
I hope when you're back,  
we will smile from ear to ear.

**-Jelani Idrissa**



**-Cailan Polishook**

## **UwU**

“You’re an angel to me.”  
I give out a nervous laugh,  
butterflies in my stomach.  
No you’re the angel.  
With the cutest smile...  
With the beautiful brown eyes...  
I love the way you laugh.  
The way you look at me.  
The goofy things you say that remind me of myself.  
My heart skips a beat whenever I see your face.  
I could see we were both nervous,  
when we first met in person.  
I knew we both liked each other.  
It was awkward, but of course it would have been,  
meeting someone like you  
and you meeting someone like me.  
As we talked the pressure came off.  
You gave me a fist pump before saying goodbye.  
Who knew I would have these feelings  
For one of my friend’s best friends?  
But sometimes it’s hard.  
All the sweet things you say to me,  
it makes me speechless.  
What words should I say to you  
to let you know that I feel the same way?  
That you truly make me happy.  
You put a smile on my face.  
You never leave my mind.

**-Lea LaPonti**



**-Angelina Larkin**

### **The Depths of Sadness**

It is a frigid, dark night in Lake Placid, New York. Snow is falling, the wind is howling, and you can hear the trees tapping against the windows of my cabin, almost like door knocks. I look out over the lake and see the foreboding mountain peaks in the distance. The floors of the cabin are wood, creaking with each step I take. The window panes are cracked and the door sometimes swings open, unexpectedly. As I am making tea in the kitchen, I think of Alina, my yellow Labrador that recently passed away. I had so many fond memories with her swimming in the lake, playing fetch, and scratching her belly. She was such a sweet, loving dog. As I am daydreaming, the lights begin to flicker on and off a couple of times and finally they go out, like wind to a candle. I get up to grab a flashlight, the Sony portable radio, and throw another log on the fire. The static-filled radio speaks as though it can barely finish a sentence.

"12-18 more inches of snow on the way, high wind gusts of up to 40 mph. Schools are closed. Stay indoors where it is safe and warm".

I decide I should settle in for the night, grab a blanket, and get comfortable on the couch. I hear the constant howling and tapping, howling and tapping. It begins to play like a rhythm in my head. Howling and tapping...

It's now twilight and I decide to set out on a little walk to the village and the frozen lake parents are out for an evening, so I am left by myself. As I am walking, I am keeping close watch of what is in front of me. However, it's hard to keep my eyes open because the snow and wind are stinging my face. I reach town, and it seems to be exceptionally quiet, businesses mostly closed and very few restaurants open. I take the small stairway down to the lake, feeling as though I may slip at any moment! I continue to walk along the dark, snow covered lake, looking down as I go and shifting the weight on my feet by kicking the snow. Looking up, I see the moon has a large glowing ring around it. I try to focus on the dark spots on the moon, attempting to count them to pass time. Shifting my gaze across the lake, I notice a yellow lab that looks very similar to Alina! I keep trying to get closer and she seems to continue getting further away. Now and then she stops and looks back, with her snow covered nose. Running toward her, the cold air forces me to slow down. As I glance across the lake, I see another "clone" of her, thinking to myself, "What the heck is going on?" A quick glance over at the other side of the lake and there she is again. In an attempt to stop her, I run in front of her. She jumps up onto my chest with her slobbering mouth and sharp nails. As she falls back to the ground, her paws lightly scratch my face, which adds to the already stinging, cold feeling on my cheeks. She escapes again and every time I get close to her she disappears, then reappears wherever my eyes focus next. I begin to yell her name.

"Alina, Alina! Come to me! Stop running away and stay put!" But I am too slow to catch her.

I repeat this a couple of times over the howling of the wind. I feel tears are racing down my face like water droplets on a window but it's too cold to even think of wiping them away. A cloud has covered the moon and it is so dark I can hardly see a foot in front of me. I'm scared. Scared I can't get off the lake. Scared that I won't

find Alina. She will not be able to last long out here. I start screaming please, please..... please come to me Alina!

My eyes suddenly blink open and I sit up straight away. I realize I'm not on the lake and in reality, I'm still in my cabin. The power has been restored, the static radio is still playing and as I lay back down, I hear the door rattle. It's my parents returning from dinner. As they are taking off their hats and gloves, my mother approaches me.

"How was everything sweetie?

"Alright. Just took a little nap."

"You sure you're alright? We heard you yelling or something as we were getting closer to the door."

"You seem a little upset as well."

"Yea, just a bad dream"

"Okay, just making sure. You should probably start to get ready for bed. It's close to midnight."

Reaching my room, I realize this was all really a nightmare. I think to myself,

"Why do I have to lose Alina repeatedly? Or maybe Alina was really trying to see me again?"

I can't seem to get over the fact that she's gone. The reoccurring thoughts never go away. I feel a burning sensation and notice something on my face, a scratch perhaps. It is a scratch! I feel as though I can't move from the mirror. How could this happen? Dream? Or something else? A shiver runs down the length of my body, knowing there is only one way the closely spaced lines of broken skin could occur. As I look out the window, the trees are still dancing in the wind. And the wind is still howling or maybe it's something else.

**-Keenan Lyons**

***This piece won second place in the Huntington Youth Writes Contest***

### **Tic-Toc**

Tic-Toc. I check the clock, everything has become dull and grey. Tic-Toc. I can hear the winds howling through the afternoon till night. Tic-Toc. My mind and heart are racing, matching each other's speed. Tic-Toc. I'm trying to block out everything that surrounds me. Tic-Toc. Phantom tears start to prick my eyes, slowly dripping down my face. Tic-To- suddenly no sound, I look up at the clock. Frozen in time. The painful wails of thunder and sudden bursts of anger, caused by lightning, leads the tears to get heavy and large for poor rain. With that the light begins to flicker. I look at my bulb, praying it wouldn't lose it's shine. Soon through cracks and leaks in the windows, the door, the walls lets the darkness wander in. With that comes insanity. Real tears start to fall as I hear demons scream out in joy as they reveal themselves. They're no regular demons, they're my inner demons. I don't have enough energy to keep them at bay; they're going devour me whole. The screams, the tears, the fear and the pain are now unbearable. Someone make it stop, someone make them stop! They're slowly trying to take over my body. Deep booming laughter brings me out of my demons' grasps. I'm more terrified of *her* than anyone else. The lady with no room in her heart for compassion. The lady who enjoys the pain and suffering of others. The lady who doesn't fear criminals, they fear her. The lady is more of a demon than a person. My heart and mind increase their speed, neither crossing the line yet. I can hear her scratching against the bars that keep her prisoned. The prison I built within my soul. I hear her growling at me like a bloodthirsty animal. I hate her, she the reason I attack, the reason I hate, the reason I no longer have control over my very own emotions or actions. Yet she's the reason why I'm still alive. ...Slowly my body gives out. My vision was already blurred, but now I'm seeing different colored lights. Everything else has already faded, it was about time I fade as well. I heard in the distant a voice "Get up before I make you". I wake up. I quickly realize that I'm no longer in my room. I don't have a clue where I am. "This is gonna be a long ride" I tell myself. " You have no idea." I didn't expect *her* to respond.

**-Patricia Reyes-Canales**



-Julia Giles

## **Shadow Hill**

A long time ago, deep in the heart of upstate New York, there was a small town. A dark town. A town that people forgot about when they left, and they tried very hard to keep it that way. It went by the name Shadow Hills.

Our mystery began on a cloudy Saturday morning, in the month of October. Nobody was around. Only teenagers wandering the streets, scattered from parties the night before.

Thirteen Gallow's Lane was a small white house at the end of a long and winding road. Surrounded by dried up grass that hadn't been mowed for months. It was obvious to the neighborhood that the people who lived there put little effort into the outside appearance.

In this house lived a husband, a wife and their two daughters Jessica and Tess. Jessica was 13 years old and Tess was a mere 7. They had developed a close bond and developed a relationship unlike any other.

They woke up that morning knowing that the day ahead of them would be unlike any other, but they were unaware of how eventful it would truly be. Both sisters had a deep interest in the supernatural. They had decided, that later that night, they would at last take a trip to the place they had been reading about in the newspaper for weeks. A place that people were always whispering about. People who had gone and experienced some unsettling feelings. People who had been inside and had seen broken lights flickering, and old machines creaking and moving mysteriously by themselves.

This place was one of the only things that people talked about in this secluded town, and it was the Shadow Hills Sanitarium. The grounds consisted of multiple buildings such as a main hospital (as well as a couple of smaller hospitals), a laundromat, a food market, a tiny school and several apartment buildings. Decades ago, inside the walls of this facility, disturbing things had happened. Patients in this hospital had been suffering from struggles and diseases that you can't even imagine and the doctors in this center performed unspeakably creepy and abusive experiments on their patients. The people in charge of this hospital didn't want any of their dirty secrets getting out and forced the doctors and their families to live in the apartments that they had built on the property. Once the government discovered what was happening in this facility, they immediately shut it down. It has been abandoned for nearly 80 years and only the bravest of the brave dared to step inside. And when the buildings started to crumble, all of their secrets were buried by the rubble.

Jessica and Tess had been so excited to go into the sanitarium and experience some creepy feelings for themselves. Today was the day they would pack a bag and go see what was really going on inside the walls of the psychiatric hospital.

A couple of hours later, Jessica and Tess headed for the front door. Their parents couldn't have cared less where they were going. They had spent so much time fighting, rather than paying any attention to where the girls

were going. They weren't the kind of parents to go to any of Jessica's band competitions or Tess' soccer games. The girls often felt like they didn't matter in their own home and that if they disappeared, their parents wouldn't have noticed.

To get to the front door, the sisters would have to walk right by their mom and dad. They said goodbye and didn't expect to get one back. And they didn't. So Jessica and Tess left the house, ready to take on whatever came their way. On their own. Sisters. Together.

"I'm starting to get a little scared. I've got this eerie feeling in my gut, like butterflies, but after eating a lot of sugar." Tess said.

Jessica could understand why her sister might have been feeling a little scared, but she wanted, needed to let Tess know that she would be by her side no matter what. That she would be there to protect her if anything dare come near her little sister.

"Everything is going to be fine Tess. We've been looking into this place for weeks. And we have enough supplies with us in our backpacks to last us a couple of days if anything comes our way. Don't worry, I won't leave your side. I promise."

Walking down the road, in the opposite direction, they disappeared into a thick fog. When they turned around to look at their house, they could no longer see it. It's like it never even existed.

They had been walking down the same road, nobody in sight for hours. They had stopped two times to have a quick snack, which consisted of some stale cereal bars and a couple of old yogurts. Their parents hadn't gone food shopping for at least two weeks.

After a couple of hours of walking, talking, and the occasional snack, they had turned a corner off of the long road they had been traveling. And there it was. One of the biggest buildings they had ever seen, couldn't have been anything less than 30 stories tall. They hesitated as they walked closer to the main building. Both of them having the same thought, that it was way creepier than the pictures in the newspaper. Must have been some kind of sister telepathy thing.

"I can't do this. I want to go home." she pleaded with her sister. "I thought I could Jessica, but seeing it now ,right in front of me..... I... I just can't do it. I'm sorry." Tess' head hung heavier than the moon, like it had just woken up without a good night's sleep.

"Tess please. I know that seeing it might be a little scary. But once we go inside and see all of the interesting abandoned tools and beds and rooms, I guarantee you that you are gonna be glad you came. And like I said, I won't let you out of my sight. I'll even hold your hand the whole time." Jessica knew that the only way Tess was going to take one step inside that center, was if she was completely by her side and not an inch further.

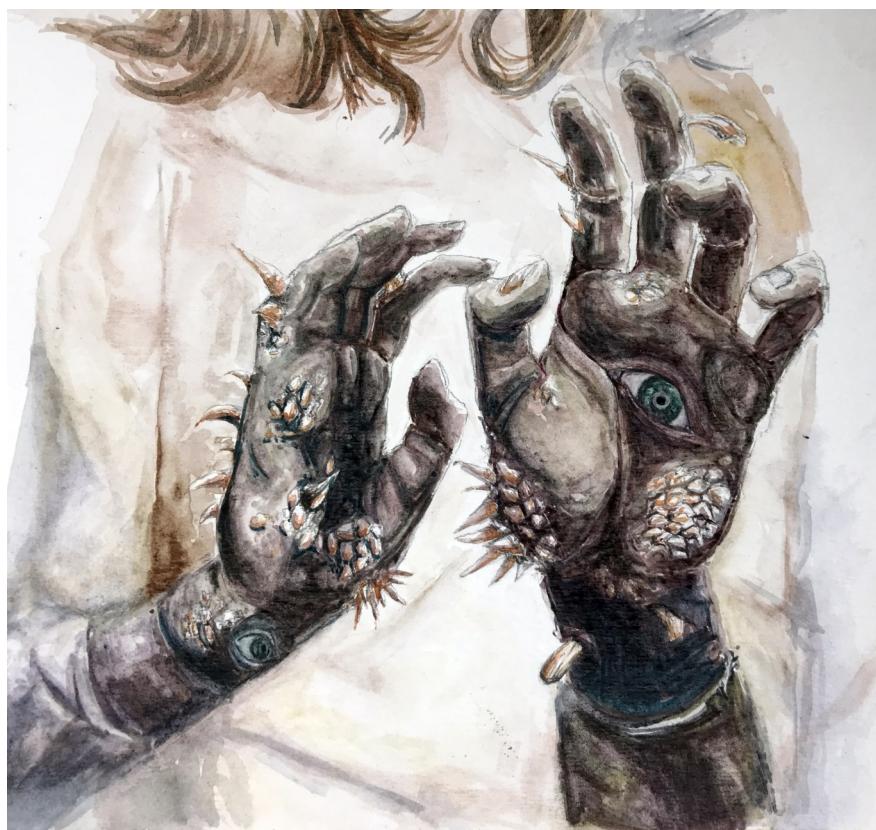
Tess got over her little butterflies after a hug that had lasted a couple of minutes from Jessica. She wanted that hug to never end. She loved the comforting hugs from her older sister so much, maybe because Jessica was the

only one to ever give her a hug. Tess knew that she would never feel as protected as she did in that moment, and she also knew that she would never feel that same sense of protection from her parents. That is why Tess loved Jessica's hugs more than anything.

After looking at a map of the whole center for a couple of minutes, just to get a feel for the place, they started for the front door of the main hospital. To get to it, they had to walk up a staircase that was covered by dirt and secrets. Jessica and Tess got to the top of the stairs, and there it was. The door. Huge and dark. Covered with about 10 different kinds of locks. Jessica thought to herself, that whatever these people wanted to keep inside, was never getting out.

The girls worked together to get the door open. They spent 15 minutes picking at all of the locks and suddenly the door flew open. They felt a cool wind blow in their direction, like they had been the first people to open these doors since they shut decades ago. But they knew that they weren't. There was nothing in front of them but darkness. They were all alone, just the two of them. Jessica reached her hand for Tess' and they took one step into the main building and the door slammed shut behind them. Little did they know that their time in the sanitarium would ultimately lead to the end of their days in Shadow Hills.

**-Peyton Klab**



**-Christina Varady**



**-Christina Varady**

## **Bittersweet Dreams**

Oh America, how bittersweet you are.  
You claim to stand by our natural rights, yet your foundation is built on slavery. You  
say "Everyone is welcome to America", yet never in your contract was it stated  
that we'd  
be discriminated against and looked down upon.  
Your soil is tainted with the blood of the innocent.

How many people did you murder to keep your secrets hidden?  
Corruption thrives in this land, drinking up the wealth and crippling the poor,  
leaving them to die in the streets alone and cold. For many, their health here  
is a passing thought. There's no free health care, nor is there paid maternity  
leave,  
forcing people to suffer quietly.

Most are overweight, dying from heart disease,  
or dying from the pills they swallow to make the pain and the sluggish feeling  
go away.

People must be wary in some parts of America 'cause who they're in love with  
could get them damned by the masses.

The women are still looked at as inferior.  
Racism is still chaining people down and brewing fear in our hearts.  
Violence waits for its victims around every corner.  
No one is safe anymore, living with panic and dread hanging over them like  
fog.

We have hired a clown for a president.  
America is a hate buffet.  
Yet it carries itself as the only beacon of true freedom and  
where dreams can purely take flight.

America, yes, you give some of us our dreams,  
depending on the circumstances.  
Most times, we become your puppets,  
and you have little care to who get their strings tangled.  
When the puppets are broken, they're simply tossed away as the scapegoat,  
never to be played with again.

**-Patricia Reyes-Canales**

### **How The Creators Came To Be**

One day in North America, a long time ago, the Indians were fighting over land and resources. The Algonquians and Iroquois would not stop fighting for days and many lives were wasted. The battlefield was a bloody muddle. There were human remains and debris everywhere. The creators (gods) were watching the whole thing happen and were trying to find a way to solve their dilemma. Finally Nike came up with an idea. It was a very abstract game for the two tribes to play to settle their differences. He called the game “The Creator’s Game”. The objective of the game was to score on the other opponents net with your team using the sticks that the gods made from salvaged wood from the forest. The style of the game was very different from anything else the Indians were used to. The game was played on a field that was divided into two halves. On each half there was a goalie, three defenders that had six foot sticks, and three attackmen. The defensemen’s purpose was to create a deadlock so the attackmen couldn’t score. There were also three midfielders for each team that would line up at midfield for the face off. Who ever wins the faceoff will take possession of the ball. The face-offs happen at the beginning of the game and after a team scores. Nike explained how the game is played, along with the rules of the game, and the tribes prepared themselves for the first game to ever be played. The two opposing tribes put war paint all over their faces and gathered for a pre game feast. After the feast they got their sticks and went on to the field. The gods had to monitor the game to make sure the Indians played it fair and correctly. From the god’s perspective they had a very good view of the game because they had their own floating seats in the sky. Other tribes came to watch, such as the Onondaga and Cherokee Indians. There was a pretty big audience that was eager to watch the game. The teams got into their huddle and started chanting that they will conquer the other team. Nike then blew the whistle and the teams diffused onto the field and onto the sideline. Now it was time for the face off. On the Iroquois team a midfielder named Avonaco was taking the face off. He was the top hunter in his tribe. He was as fast as a wolf and had the strength of a bear. On the Algonquians a midfielder named Sahale was taking the faceoff against Avonaco. Sahale was an eagle when he was hunting, and had great eyesight so seeing the ball; catching it would not be a problem. The second whistle was blown and the faceoff started. The Algonquians came out with the possession. During the first possession, they were a little cumbersome when passing and throw-

ing, and they dropped the ball. The Iroquois defenders all raced for the ball to scoop it up. The defender, named Maka, got the ground ball, saw two attack men in his way and lowered his shoulder to run through the players. He knocked them down on their back and kept running. Hermes blew his whistle and admonished Maka for knocking the players over and gave the other team the ball back. The rest of the first half both teams were very circumspect, so they would not break the rules and cause more turnovers. Both teams ended up holding themselves together and using teamwork to persevere and score a couple of goals. At halftime the two teams were tied three to three. Both teams had high hopes until the Iroquois breached the Algonquians' defense and scored another goal with five minutes left. The Algonquians wanted to relinquish the game, but didn't want to give up their land so they kept fighting. Then suddenly Sahale ran down the field and shot the ball from midfield which made the two teams tied again. The game went into overtime and was becoming perennial because it was taking so long to finish. Finally an attack man on the Iroquois team named Tuwa scored the game winning goal. The crowd was unbridled and went crazy. Lots were very happy for the Iroquois, but others very were strongly opinionated and said that they did not deserve to win the land and resources. The Iroquois had avenged their fallen brothers with a win. The Algonquians effaced themselves from the land of the Iroquois and found other land to stay on. The creator's game became part of their culture, and they would play two games a month that were monitored by the gods and watch by other tribes. The other tribes that were watching adopted the game into their culture. The Iroquois lived on that land for hundreds of years until a man named Christopher Columbus came along with his men and commandeered the land for use of colonizing. The men that Columbus brought with him were watching the game and started playing on their own. Columbus saw them playing and joined in. He renamed the game "lacrosse". The Indians thought they were brigands for stealing their game and moving them off of their land. From then on lacrosse was played throughout history at the youth, college, and professional level and still is today.

**-Steven Queen**

### **In Relapse**

I beg you to stay with me.

I have muscle memory of the person I used to be,  
the circles that formed on my body are burn marks,  
my eyes are sore from looking at shadows in the dark that only I can see.

And you think my life has color and meaning,  
but the only vividity is when I am dreaming.

I want to be able to turn my lamp on and believe it is the sun,  
but my mind keeps harvesting thoughts worth nothing but two cents until there is  
only one.

And in an envelope rests a few hundred dollars,  
saved for when I ask myself why I even bother.  
But you remind me I am not the only one alive,  
this is no ghost town with echoes of broken families and tired wives.

No children here are scarred,  
no skinny mental bruises faced with disregard.

To you,  
I am perfect.

But I have loose stitches you've yet to learn the severity of,  
you don't think about how bad it is, in the name of love.

But in my room,  
in relapse,  
I beg you to stay with me.

**-Mia D'Alessandro**

### **The Shout Out**

Hey, now I know this isn't the best way to reach you. But it seems like it's the only way. I haven't talked to you in so long. And although the last time we talked it was a fight, I still couldn't help feeling the positive vibes while being near you. Anyway, the reason I'm writing to you is to tell you the truth. The real truth. I have lied many times. I thought it would be better to hide the truth, I thought there would be less pain, but it ended up creating more. It wasn't until late September when I fully understood the truth. He told me that he really didn't love you the same way you loved him. He told me that he was just gonna "do ya, and leave ya". He said he didn't really care about the breakup. I understand that it was my fault. All our fights, it was my fault. I have no other words to describe me than I was a ass. I was an idiot. But I promise you, I am not that way anymore. I learned, and changed, I am becoming a much better person. I feel better, more alive, but not fully. There is still a patch of darkness inside me. This patch only your friendship can fill. I miss you, and want nothing more than your friendship.

Thank you.           **-Anonymous**



**-Aniyah Toro**

## Gratefulness

I shamefully approach my new boss, my head hangs low as he offers me his hand. “We’re happy to have you on our side.” Maxon smiles “It’s an honor for your kind to even meet here, much less be a part of the organization.” He’s right. I *should* be proud, but I’m not. “From now on, you live in the superior’s dorms, and you must now identify as human to the outside world.” Maxon says, I roll my eyes. What’s the point of identity when it’s inaccurate? “The position of supervisor is overwhelming, but someone of your kind should do it easily.” Maxon continues, he pays no attention to me. Maxon drones on and on about “superhuman” this and “superhuman” that, the word doesn’t even sound real anymore. “I need a moment.” I say, disrupting Maxon. I push past him and leave his dreary office, and walk into the hallway. I had to clear my head and make sure I was doing the right thing.

Chief Collector, a title no one of my kind as held. This time *I was* giving the orders to *them*. I can change things for the better, I can show more people what the world is really like! The opportunities are limitless, yet there is still something holding me back. Maxon rushes towards me, flustered that he didn’t notice me walk off. “I’m sorry about that, Mr-?” Maxon’s confidence leaves when he realizes I don’t have a last name. “I’ll assign myself a legacy name after everything is settled.” I say, trying to keep things from being awkward. “I’m just thrilled you’re with us now.” Maxon sighs, and gives a smile that seems genuine. “I’m going to my dorm now, this is a lot to take in.” I say, his feeling of delight is not mutual.

Maxon talked my ear off all the way to my room, then tried to continue conversation when I got fed up and slammed the door on his. Maxon finally received the message when I started to blast music to numb his dull voice. I collapse on my bed, it’s much softer than the one I’ve had. I shuffle to get comfortable, but that seems impossible. What’s wrong with me? I should be grateful for this, yet all I feel is empty. The light to my eyes has died out, Bren-

don and Leo are gone. They're out there, somewhere, alone. My only family, I sold them out. I'll have to hunt them down eventually, but I don't want to. I want them to be free, I want to be free. My body grows heavy, then I slip into sleep. Even still, I'm as restless as ever.

**-Jessica Pulizzotto**

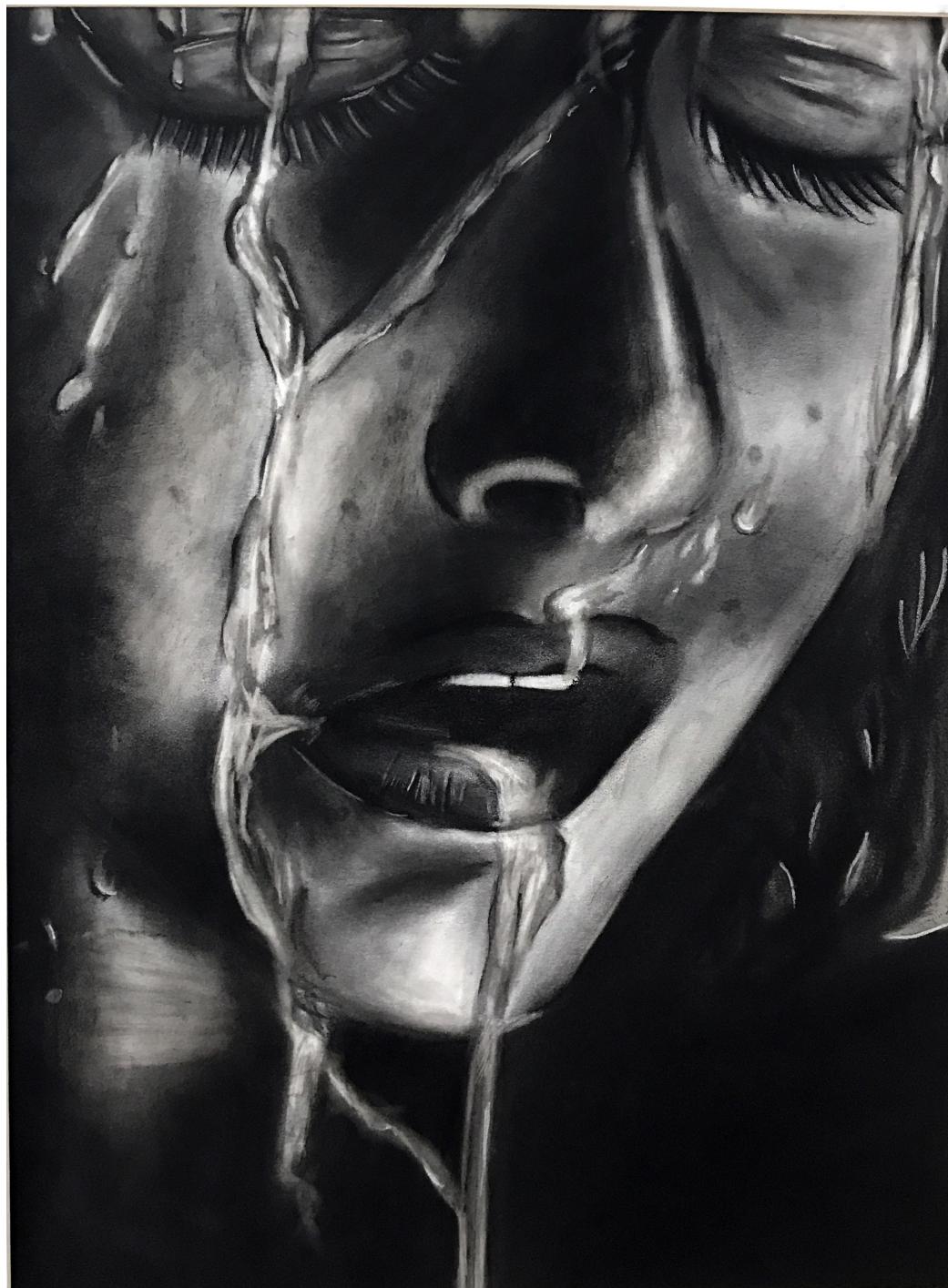
### **True Friends**

Trusting and is  
Ready to confront you, and is  
Understanding  
Even through rough times.

Friend always  
Right by your side  
In good and bad times  
Especially  
Never forgetting the  
Days together  
Smiling

A True Friend

**-Joey Dammers**

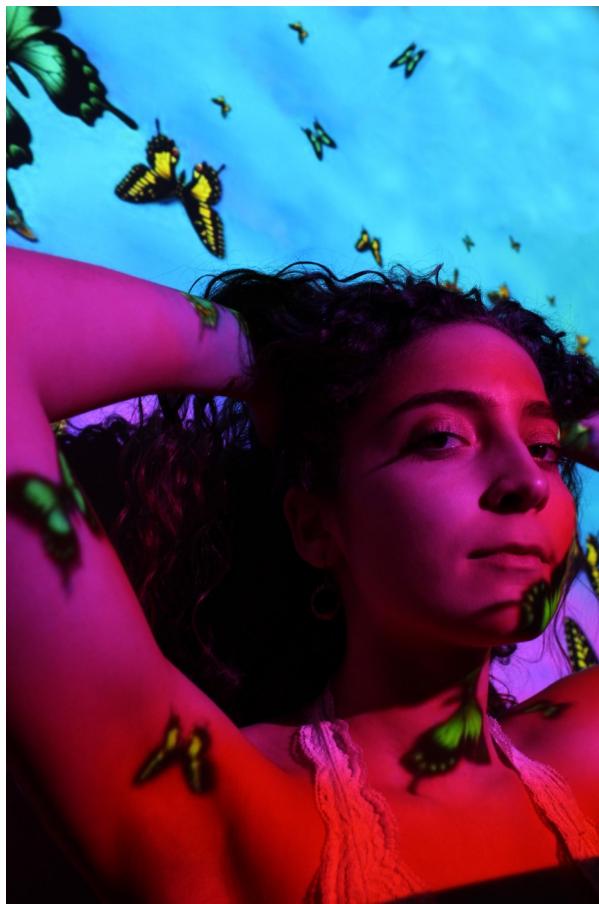


**-Josue Serrano**

**If I was...**

If I was brave, I would be able to write more for you. As the year went by, I have forgotten you as you probably did with me. If I wasn't afraid, I'd hand you my heart and never look back. If I wasn't afraid, I'd hold you close and consider you family. If I wasn't afraid I would have a place to sit with you, rather than in cold isolation. I watched you smile, I watched you grow up, I watched you no longer need me. I was proud, but afraid. I didn't want to hurt you, I didn't want to get hurt. If I was stronger, I would be able to love you for who you are. If I was kinder, I would've given you a chance rather than leaving you behind. If I wasn't afraid of the pain, we'd be one. But we're not. Now I leave, all I can think is "if I was... if I was..."

**-Jessica Pulizzotto**



**-Quinn Blackburn**

### **Wings**

Your wings are present in front of me  
The beauty that is shown in each glistening feather  
Your arms come around me and hug me, as well as your wings.  
The soft touch of each feather is like pillow upon my back  
The light radiates upon your wings  
The glow that is inside the barrier  
The shield that protects me from the world  
I cherish it so much  
I never want to leave the comfort that is your wings.

But alas, those beautiful wings that defend me from the world cannot protect me forever.  
The feathers will fall and soon there will be nothing there.  
But just because there are no wings does not mean there is no you.  
Let me protect you from the world  
Let my arms give you comfort when nothing else will,  
Let my presence be known to you more and more.  
Let my broken wings give you the love that you truly deserve.

**-Irtana Deslouches**

### **If It's Love, You're Mine**

Death doesn't want you like I do.

There's a light in the tunnel if you just look behind you,  
But you'll stay in here with me because the light might blind  
you.

I say, "I was so lucky to find you."

I say, "Death doesn't want you like I do."  
I say, "Ghost hugs should always remind you."  
But the sharp teeth of fate might grind you,  
So you do whatever you're assigned to,  
And I tell you to stay,  
I bind you.

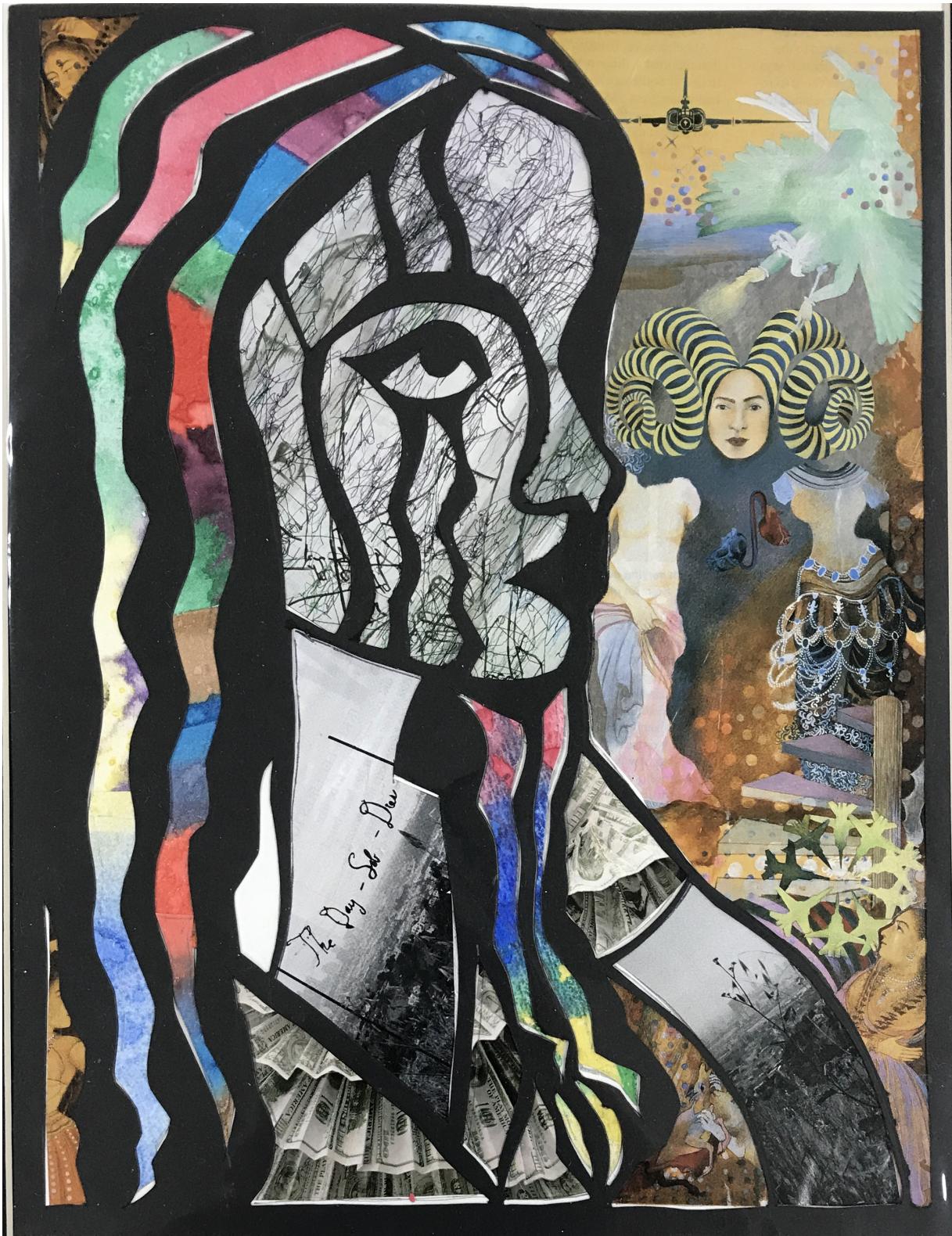
I ask, "Would you be so kind to?"  
Because death doesn't want you like I do.

I promise, I will never mind you.  
But my promises break and unwind you.  
But still, you don't leave until it's past the time to.  
But love,  
Death doesn't want you like I do.

**-Mia D'Alessandro**



**-Quinn Blackburn**



-Vivienne LaVertu

## Violets

You don't see  
What I see.  
A psychiatry  
Case, to you,  
Holds immense beauty,  
To me.  
My sweet,

Now I plead  
For freedom.  
Well, that's clearly  
Displayed to you.  
Take a break from escape,  
For me.  
For me...

Love, I have seen violets bloom  
From out the mud puddle.  
And while you only think of doom,  
You are so beautiful.  
Even the concept,  
Would make me miss you more.  
Because, I adore  
Violets.

How can I prove,  
The truth to you!  
It's not crazy  
For you to grieve  
In suffering.  
Oh please  
Dear, breathe.

It'd be too soon  
For this is youth.  
The wrong one is he!  
Love, you have me!  
And together  
We'll keep  
Living...

But, I have seen violets bloom  
From out the mud puddle.  
And it would be too fucking soon  
For someone so beautiful!  
Forget your regrets.

Our whole life is left in store,  
And I can't ignore,  
Sweet violets.

**-Rory Bocelli**



**-Christina Varady**

## Untitled

We'll die longing for the feeling of our past lives, but it will never come back.

Like a long-lost friend, we will forget for some time before being reminded

by the houses that look much smaller now,  
and how quiet everyone has grown.

We will try to drown out the white noise of laughing and playgrounds  
now filled with kids we'd never be friends with.

Tear down the old wallpaper of our childhood rooms in our memories,  
wash away the pastel bed sheets with dark amber bottles.

We will go to work in the morning, and forget for a while.

But for now, we have too many hours to spare.

Like the lights in the town houses, the sun has been turned off,  
and the ghosts of our childhoods come out to play.

We used to be afraid of monsters under our beds.

Now they're sleeping next to us, keeping us company,  
so we don't have to wander our old streets alone.

Still, the only things that keep us from visiting the times when every-  
thing was more beautiful,  
our worlds one neighborhood wide,  
are the things we once never thought about.

We live our lives with the words we had explained to us,  
or didn't.

Maybe some of us have friends, so we can think in groups of people  
who latch onto each other, like the mothers that no longer cradle us,  
maybe some of us sleep with bottles.

We all live under the same sky.

Maybe somewhere there is the hill we used to lie on to look up at the  
stars after chasing each other,

before it became a game of who could get nicer clothes,  
or softer imported rugs.

We might not be lonely,  
but at the same time,  
we are hopelessly alone.

We are not the same as the children who jumped on our beds and  
helped set our dinner tables.

Most of us are not who we vowed to be,  
but have no one left to disappoint.

Our past dreams are now our regrets:

what if we married our first loves, what if we chose that job, what if  
we didn't ignore the girl in our science class with the blurry face,  
what if-

To clarify, some of us are happy.  
To clarify, some of us are dead.  
None of it matters.

Who are we,  
who are you-

If not the ghost of your former self?

We broke out of our shells some years after we were told to, and now we play alone.

We each believe our problems are like no other, as special as our veins,  
as strict as our religions we follow to hope there is some life after this.

Maybe if we are good, we will die and float with the saints,  
the only tricky part is  
all the other saints are gone.

We wonder about how our grandfather would think of us, if he were here,  
as if  
remembering his eyes will bring him back to life, but our pets have been  
dead a while.

We're waiting now,  
spending the time stressing over taxes and real things until we stop and  
hear the cries of our inner children.

But it's probably the neighbor's baby.  
These apartment walls are thin.

Sometimes, we imagine tearing them down, like the walls of our past homes  
were when the young couple moved in.

While we were in grade school, they were probably thinking like we are now.  
And now, hopefully they're dead.

We can wash out our dirty mouths with spirits, as if we'll regain ours.  
We can share our beds.

We can talk.

But we'll know, somewhere in the back of our minds,  
that we will die longing for the feeling of our past lives.

But it will never come back.

**-Mia D'Alessandro**

### **Down The Hall**

It was very unexpected when my father died. He was a doctor during the plague, one of the very best around. He was very cautious with his patients, and he usually wouldn't even touch them. Not only that, but he would never take off his mask. The long, hooked beak, the metal rims along the tinted glass eye holes, and the black top hat that finished off the look. The plague was almost gone when he got it, he was barely treating anybody when he got it ironically. The black bubbles covered his body and exploded with pus leaking out. With him dead, it was my duty as the only man of the house to take up his position and make money for the family.

Once I put on the mask, I could never take it off. I felt paranoid, sick, whenever I took it off. I used to be afraid of it. Not because of the eerie look, but what it meant. If you saw a doctor wearing the mask, it meant the plague was near. And if the plague was near, death was near. Whenever a neighbor would get sick or die, the mask was on my father. The very mask I was wearing. But I felt fine about it. I can't see the mask if I'm wearing it.

I received a letter, from a girl, it was barely legible. It was wet, the ink bled across the paper. The only words readable was a sentence stating, "the second coming of the plague," and an address; 1 Widow Lane. I was afraid, I'll admit. The plague that killed so many of the people I knew, the plague that killed my father, coming back. I couldn't believe what it said. I left my small apartment, and I walked toward my destination.

The ground looked as it was covered with blank sheets of paper, just dying to be written on. Pine trees ascended from the ground, standing tall above me. The sun reflected light off the snow into my eyes, blinding me, but in the distance, I saw the house. It was a log cabin, made of the trees that surrounded it. Smoke was rising out of the chimney, into the endless sky. I knocked on the door and was greeted by a young woman.

"My mother... she is in the room down the hall...." she said.

"This room?" I asked. I didn't receive a response. "Is it this room?" I said. I turned around to see her not there. "Ma'am? Where did you go?" I entered the room to see a body in a bed. Next to the bed, there was a stand with a candle lit on it. I walked

over to the bed, and there was a man, passed out on the bed. It was the first sign something was not right. It was a man, and I didn't recall that a man could be a mother, but maybe I heard wrong, or she said mother instead of father. But I checked the body for any signs of the plague. The second sign was when there was no bubos, no signs at all that the plague was occurring on this man. "Ma'am! What is going on here?" I screamed. As soon as those words came out of my mouth, I heard the bed screech. The man woke up and stared at me.

"Are you okay?" No response. "Do you have the plague? Are you going to die?" His body was still, stiff, frozen. I was shaking him, trying my best to end his paralyzed state. When I finally gave up, he started to move. His arm started to slowly rise. A cold air entered the room as soon as his arm froze. His finger was pointed towards the closet. His arm then fell, as if he used all his energy to lift up his arm. I started to slowly tiptoe towards it. I felt the hairs on my neck rise and lower as I took each step. My finger touched the closet door, and I paused. I thought about if I wanted to see what was in there, if it would be better to just leave instead of stay. I heard footsteps coming from down the hall. My hand pressed hard on the knob. I heard laughter from down the hall. I pulled the door open. I heard someone enter the room. What I saw was a mask, many masks. Different colors, variations, but all the same type of mask. The mask I was wearing. I realized why she really invited me here, the reason why the man who was in the bed was in it, to be the replacement for the person before, to trick the next doctor who would enter the house. I only realized this as I felt a sharp object enter my back.

I fell to the ground and used most of my strength to kick her in the leg. As she fell, I rose. I walked to the bed stand and took the candle. As she was coming off the floor, I threw the candle at her. Her dress engulfed in flames, and I heard screams that I would never hear. As I crouched on the ground and crawled out of the house, my blood stained the white floor of the outside. The house was still letting smoke out of the chimney, and every other part of it as the log cabin burned and collapsed. I laid down, tears running down my face, blood dripping down my back. She should have known better, I thought to myself. She had so many masks, and where the masks are, is where death is.

**-Nicholas Rowley**



- Alliy McKenzie

## **Hanahaki Disease**

I am a flower boy.  
I clutch my throat and cough until my feelings show.

It starts off blue and eventually it'll turn red,  
Forget-me-nots all fluttering in the wind.

This isn't what I meant when I said your smile was dangerous.

Please don't look at me, I'm sorry.  
I don't know how to say I love you.

You say it all the time, but the thorns covering my heart tighten with every  
word, every glance you offer me.

How can you love me so much and I still can't believe it?

The roots of the flowers of my love are twisting, turning, churning my insides  
into a garden i just hope you'll appreciate.

And when i am dead, and the vines have crawled their way up my veins and i  
am a beautiful tree, flowers of all colors surrounding my corpse, my shell,  
I just hope you'll pause and  
smell the roses.

**-Jesse Henning**

### **The Penitentiary**

A dreary and desolate November day greeted me as I rose from my hotel's uncomfortable twin bed. Reluctantly, I walked to a window and peered out. As raindrops trickled and intertwined against the glass, I watched a sea of umbrellas form a lengthy line outside of the Philadelphia State Penitentiary. Built in 1829, this penitentiary is notorious for its rich and somber history; it held extremely infamous inmates such as Al Capone and Willie Sutton. However, the penitentiary is known mostly for its occult atmosphere. Many visitors have reported seeing and feeling incredibly eerie apparitions that have haunted them for the rest of their life. Being a skeptic, I was instantly drawn to this prison to explore and hopefully answer the timeless question of whether or not ghosts are real. Little did I know that this was the biggest mistake that I've ever made.

The next thing I knew, I was standing directly outside the penitentiary. Rain harshly splashed against my hood as my eyes scanned the massive building. As rain poured down onto the turrets, I noticed how abhorred yet castle-like this building looked. Floodlights were harshly illuminating the exterior walls, and crumbling brick and barred windows seemed to be all that this prison was made of. As I entered the penitentiary, I was stunned by how badly the inside had aged. Paint was peeling off the wall, huge bars blocked off some cells, and everything looked rusted and hideous. As I cautiously made my way through the narrow and seemingly endless hallways, a hostile feeling crept throughout my body. "This isn't going to be good," I muttered to myself. It was apparent that this place housed evil.

I ducked into a couple of cells and noticed that the majority of them had the same objects; a corroded bed frame, a shattered toilet, and occasionally a wooden, filthy nightstand. However, one was different. One cell, which was known to be Al Capone's, was beautiful. Soft light danced around the room, which contained a beautiful rug and a number of delicate antique furniture. A sense of ease overwhelmed me as I examined the cell, but then a giant bang snapped me back into reality. I frantically looked all around me attempting to find the source of the noise, but nothing was there. Then, another bang. Rhythmic bangs began to

bounce off of the walls and echo throughout the narrow, lifeless hallways.

My brain was screaming “Why aren’t you moving?!” at me, but my body was ice, stiff and fragile. I was frozen. Eventually, I mustered up the courage to speak. “Who’s there! Hello?!” I shrieked into the empty cell. The once beautiful furniture began to shatter and crash, and a series of jumbled and unrecognizable whispers snapped back. “Hello?!?” I hopelessly cried out one last time. Eventually, a voice bellowed out, overpowering the rest. Amongst the crashing and banging, someone, or something, was screaming at me, telling me to get out.

I ran the fastest I’ve ever run in my entire life. I sprinted past the peeling walls, the rusted bars, and the crumbling brick. As I threw open the doors to the sidewalk, all the noise stopped. I was safe. I sighed a sigh of relief and made my way back to the hotel as night swept the sky. I eventually climbed back into my bed and instantly fell asleep. Later on, I abruptly woke up.

Groggily, I looked at my nightstand and read the time. It was 3:24 am. BANG! I immediately sunk my face into my pillow. “It’s just a dream,” I whispered to myself. The horrible noise got louder and louder, petrifying me. After the bangs finally stopped, I decided to try and rest. I slowly turned over on my side facing my alarm clock. I opened my eyes to check the time, however I was met with Al Capone’s face, directly next to me. Too terrified to scream, I closed my eyes and prayed that he would disappear. I opened my eyes again, and he was gone.

**-Grace Tyrrell**

### **Noche de Aventura**

As I am on the dance floor all alone, everyone is around me having fun, being careless and not thinking about anything or the night. Yet I can't have fun or be careless because I'm in my suit in the middle of the dance floor thinking about you. I can't. I just can't. I can't stop thinking about you. You meant so much to me, then you left without telling me anything. My mind was almost about to fall in to a dark and bottomless hole, till I start singing.

*“Nights full of adventure that I've dreamed about if it won't be with you today, I'm not leaving from here”.*

I see a hallucination of you, right here on the dance floor, and I know it's not you. It's my brain trying to save me. I went with it; I kept singing and I started dancing with a hallucination of you.

*“This is not normal, you have made me think. You are giving me a mental breakdown I want to begin, to see if forgetting helps me escape I can't fool myself I'm not with you but I feel that I love you”.*

Everyone around me stopped and looked at me, even the DJ stopped the music, but I kept going; I kept dancing and singing. Right when I thought everyone was going to point and laugh, it was the opposite they looked with awe and kept looking. Some cried, I bet they felt pity. I kept dancing with my hallucination, singing, and although everyone was staring at me, they wanted me to keep going because although I'm dancing with someone in my mind, I was dancing alone under the moonlight, dancing like no other, beautifully.

*“I see it, I read it in your eyes. All that desire inside of you is killing you. It's the same for me and I do not deny it. I see it, I read it in your eyes. All that desire inside of you is killing you. It's the same for me and I do not deny it”.*

As I dance you're smiling, but it's not you, it's just a hallucination of you. I'm going to end this dancing and singing now before I burst into tears.

*"Nights full of adventure that I've dreamed about it won't be with you today, I'm not leaving from here. Nights full of adventure that I've dreamed about. If it won't be with you today, I'm not leaving from here. If it won't be with you today, I'm not leaving from here".*

I've done it. I'm done singing and dancing and my hallucination gives me a big smile and says, "I'm right here now don't cry." The hallucination disappears and behind is you. On your knees balling your eyes out, apologizing. You look to me as if I was going to say no. You thought wrong. I cried and cried, and I was glad to see you the real you. I grab your hand to pull you up to hug you. Everyone around me claps and whistles in celebration, even the DJ was balling his eyes out. You hold my hand ever so tightly as if you never want to let go. Then I ask you this question "Can I have this dance?" You smile with your eyes tearing to say "yes". We danced the night away carelessly and having fun just like everyone and the end of it I say "I love you, but will you leave me again?" and you respond with, "I love you and this time I'll stay with you and I'll never let that happen again." That was my noche de aventura. The End.

**-Elvis Torres**



**-Alex Bonilla**



**-Grace Kenny**

## **Faith in Your Heart**

I don't know what I'm doing right now, but I'm writing this because I feel like it and I must put all my tears on this paper that I have in my hands. At this moment it's 11:34 p.m. and I'm sitting here near my bed thinking about what to write, okay, I really don't know what to write about! Let me start by saying my name. My name is Luis and my last name is Hernández. My mother's name is Rosalinda and my dad's name is Luis like me. I have three siblings, and their names are Miguel, Rosa and Roberto. Miguel is my little brother, Roberto, my older brother, and Rosa, my oldest sister as well. We were born here in the United States, but my mom and dad are from Mexico. My mother came when she was 29 and my dad when he was 30 years old. My parents got married in 2001, and they formed the lovely family that we are today. My parents don't have degrees, my mother is a cleaner and my father a mechanic, but I don't care, I'm still proud of them, and you know why? Because they work hard every day, so that we can have a good life and a successful future. They only want the best for me and my siblings. I love them so much with all my heart. We go to a Christian church every Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. I don't go on Wednesdays or Fridays sometimes because I have many things to do at school, and I also have many clubs after school. Saturdays is youth service; I love Saturdays, they are the best!!

I still remember that it was a Saturday that we were going to church when everything changed in one second. I remember that I was getting ready for church, my mom and my dad were waiting for me outside in the car, we were late. I was taking my time. All my siblings were in the car also waiting for me. When I was in the bathroom brushing my teeth, I heard something outside, like a ambulance sound, but I didn't pay attention to that because two miles from my house there was a hospital. I thought maybe it was ambulances from the hospital. When I was ready, I was heading outside, I checked my packets and and I realized that I had left the keys of the house in my room. I went back to my room and I couldn't find my keys. When I was under my bed looking for the keys, I heard a worried and panicky voice outside. Something went through my mind, it was bad thoughts. My face turned red and my hairs of my hands were overanalyzing the future, I ran quickly to the living room window and saw two patrols of ICE outside my house, they were surrounding my dad's car. My mind immedi-

ately started overthinking and assuming the worst future. I ran downstairs to get to my dad's car like a tiger, and that's when I saw three ICE officers asking questions to my dad and my mom. My mom spoke little English. Fortunately, my dad didn't speak any English at that time.

One of the three officers had a list of people's names, address, and phone numbers. My mom called me so I could help her translate. When I joined my parents on our front porch, one of the officers asked me for my parents names and last names. My parents gave their full names to the officers. The officers asked me if my parents had a green card, meaning papers. I told him that my parents were applying for the green card and that they were waiting for the green card. After they put my parents names on a computer, one officer said "Mrs and Mr. Hernandez you are under arrest, and you will be send back to your native country. If your children don't have a documented family member here in the United States, the government will take them away from both of you and you're not going to see them again." When I heard this, I said to him, "why are you doing this? My parents don't have a bad record. They're not criminals; they didn't do any crimes or illegal things in this country. Why do you think that all immigrants are bad, why do you think this of all hard working immigrants like my parents? They are people like me, you and everybody, why my parents are NOT considered an AMERICAN? We all are AMERICANS no matter what color of skin or race we are, what makes you AN American, Me AN American, but not my parents?" The officer respond to me "I am just doing my job, and what the government told us to do with all immigrants without status", and I replied, "but the government doesn't think about us, and families getting separated". The officer just looked at my face and at my siblings and said "That's not my business, it's not my problem that dirty undocumented immigrants come to MY country". I respond to him saying "In the first place, this is not your country, is the people's COUNTRY, and also this country is made of immigrants and Immigrants are not dirty people, WE are strong and brave people that never relinquish" our spirit. My mom told us that everything was going to be OK to calm down my siblings.

The officers put handcuffs on both of my parents as if they were criminals.

In front of our faces, we saw our parents were taken away from us like criminals; my siblings started crying, and I also started crying too. At that moment everything was happening fast, but time went slowly. The grass of my front porch was like my heart, dead and damaged. My parents were sent to an Immigration Center and we were sent to a Family Center. When we got to the FC I called my parents' immigration lawyer. I told him what was going on with my parents and he told me not to worry about it, that everything was going to be okay. After six hundred four thousand eight hundred seconds, meaning a week, the immigration lawyer called me saying that my parent were sent back to Mexico, that he couldn't do anything because the Immigration Center had denied my parents' green card. After a month, we were sent to a Foster Family Center. We used to talked to my parents just on the phone from Mexico. Every second that passed, the less my little brother remembered my parents. I graduated from high school, and all my friends' parents were there, except my parents. My little brother graduated from kindergarten, but the chairs where my parents had to sit were empty. My big brother and big sister graduated from colleges and my parents weren't there. But you know what was there, the memories, the love, and the hope that my parents left in our heart.

It has been six years and we haven't seen our parents, now they're coming back and it is like a dream. I prayed to God and he answered my prayers because I had faith that one day I was going to see my parents again, that day is tomorrow, in 12 hours, 20 minutes and 3 seconds. I am going to see my parents again. The bible says that "And all things, whatever you make request for in prayer, having faith, you will get" (Matthew 21:22). I thank god for everything. That's why I'm going to say to you that no matter what problems you have, if you have faith God will respond to you. God answered me, and he will answer you as well because he loves you. There will always be obstacles, but because that, don't let your fears stop faithing in what you faith. In the end there will always be a light of hope. And for all immigrants there will be a bigger light of hope in the end of the journey. God will always be with us until the end.

- Jorge Parada Cisneros

## **Industrialization**

the nature of nature  
is the earthly ambience of -  
construction noises

**-Julia Collins**



**-Brigid Hannon**

**1-800-273-8255**

I answered another call, beginning with the usual introduction all volunteers use at the call center: “Hello, this is the National Suicide Prevention Hotline, this is Ella speaking. How can I help you?”

“What do you think I need help with?”

I felt my breath hitch when the caller answered. This caller sounded familiar...

“We get all kinds of calls, sir. I just want to know if you’re-”

“I just want you to convince me *right now* that I shouldn’t shoot myself in the head, that I shouldn’t jump off the roof of this building, that I shouldn’t swallow an entire bottle of pills. Go ahead.”

Alarmed, I said, “Sir, if you are in any danger right now, all I can do is ask if you want me to call emergency services. My job is to simply listen and let you decide not to kill yourself.”

“Ugh, really? But if it makes you feel better, I guess I’ll talk about me. In case you haven’t noticed, I don’t see a point of living anymore.”

“I’ve noticed, sir.” My head was spinning at this point. *If this is really him...Am I to blame?*

“Yeah, I’ve been feeling absolutely miserable lately. I work a job I hate, I have friends who don’t care about me, and my entire family is either dead or ignoring me.”

The caller and I talked for almost an hour, which was well over the time limit we were allowed for calls. He went more in depth, his friends only called when they wanted to drink. He also went three years unemployed after college before settling for a temp job.

“I spend four years and thousands of dollars for an education, and I have to take a fucking temp job.”

“Did you ever have anyone in your life that you could talk to?” I asked at one point.

“Yeah, I was friends with this girl in high school. She just sat down next to me at lunch one day after she noticed I was sitting alone and was like ‘Hey, what’s up?’ She listened whenever I wanted to vent about, whatever teenage angst I was dealing

with. We even went to prom together. She really was my world.”

“...What happened?” I asked, even though I knew what he was going to say next.

“We had a huge argument right before graduation. I don’t even remember what it was about. Definitely something stupid. But it ended with me just storming off and blocking her number. Sometime during that summer I realized I made a huge mistake, but I... I just couldn’t bear to contact her again.” He sighed, and I stayed silent for a moment.

I remember that fight. It was over whether to go to a graduation party or have dinner with my family. It was such a stupid thing to fight over, but it just escalated badly. He just got up and left. I didn’t chase after him, thinking he would come back soon, or call, but he never did. I knew we were through when he ignored me during graduation.

“All I will say, is that time’s passed, and you two are both grown now. I’m sure she’ll be happy to talk to you.” I finally said.

“...I just don’t know. I’ll think about that. But this has actually been really helpful, thank you.” He said sincerely.

“It’s just my job.”

“Before I go, what was your name again?”

“Ella.”

“Okay, I wanted to know for when I call this hotline again. You’re the first person in a long time to actually listen to what I have to say, and for that I can’t thank you enough. I’m Micah. I’ll hopefully talk to you soon.”

“Goodbye, sir.” I say, as I held back tears.

I hung up and sat back in my chair, and just started sobbing. I couldn’t believe I had never attempted to contact him after that summer. If I knew he would end up feeling like this, I would confronted him at graduation. I couldn’t dwell too much on my predicament though, my phone rang again. I dried my eyes, and answered the call.

**-Julia Collins**