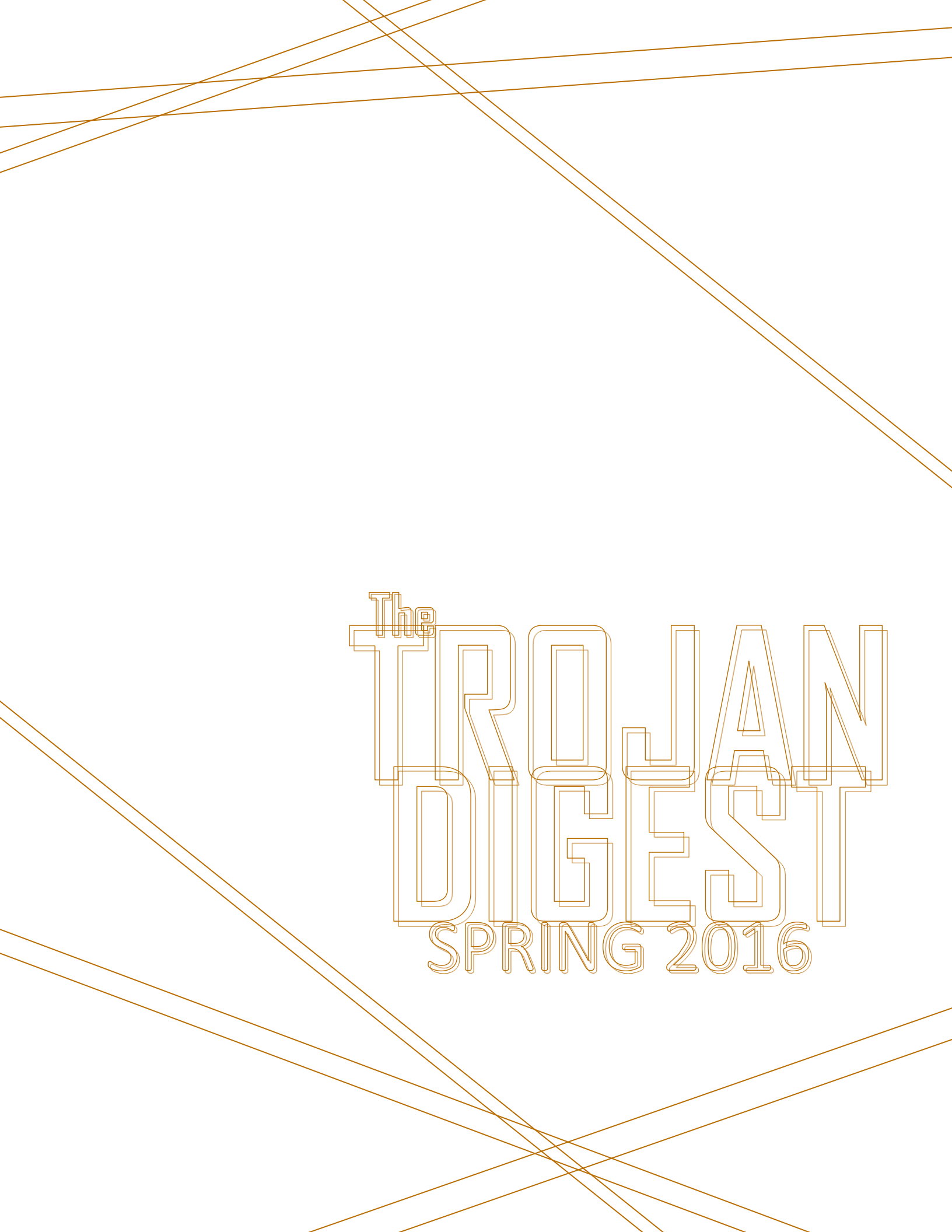


The TROJAN DIGEST

Lassiter's Literary Journal

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The
TROPOLIAN
DIGGEST
SPRING 2016

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OUR MISSION STATEMENT

We're here to offer you a student publication dedicated to art and literature that captures the unique and expressive voices of our student body. The *Trojan Digest* (formerly *Arête*) seeks to compile a body of literary and artistic works of the highest quality— serving as an outlet for creative ideas, bringing recognition to talented artists and writers as well as enjoyment and feelings of community to readers.

WHAT WILL YOU FIND HERE?

Welcome. Come right on in. In this little digital magazine, you will find a variety of work across different subjects, styles, media, and origins. You'll find poetry, art, thoughtful essays, short stories, and more. This work comes directly from dedicated students here at Lassiter High who had the bravery to submit their work to us and share a part of their soul with the world; their spirit is truly remarkable, and this magazine would be nothing without these talented people. Some of the writers featured in here are AP students in the Language Arts program, and others are not. Some plan on making a living with writing, and others are hobbyists. The art you will see accompanying the writing comes straight from AP Art students, courtesy of Mrs. Spinelli and (of course) the artists.

...AN ENDNOTE

We went through a lengthy curating process to choose all the art and writing featured in this magazine, and now we are incredibly happy to bring it to you. It's certainly been an adventure for us. Now it's in your hands; this is now your adventure.

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TAPESTRY

Bear With Me

By Erin Jones

It was a nice day: early spring, a time when the trees were like rainbows of blooming colors, a time when the birds were chirping by dawn. The sky was a pure blue abyss until the color melted away into the sparkling sun. There wasn't a cloud in sight. The day was a luxury we normally didn't get.

On days like this, I liked to run. By eight, I was on the trail that backed up to my house. The trees surrounding it offered shade for most of the path, but patches of sunlight cast speckled dots across the ground in various spots. Only a few others utilized this trail. Every now and then I would cross paths with another runner or a dog walker, but for most of the stretch, it was empty. The rumor was that bears liked to trek through there because it was so close to the river. Most of the locals steered clear of the trail because of that gossip. If they did venture into the woods, it was in a group, usually with guns and a plan in case they discovered any lurking creatures. But I had never seen a bear. Not even a paw print.

I was still warming up, about a half mile from where the trail began, when I came across a man strolling along the trail with a pensive expression and a clipboard in hand. I instantly recognized him from the environmental committee the town liked to promote. Not one day that I lived in that town had I ever seen a piece of trash that wasn't already in the trashcan. The fire department was in charge of the committee.

In fact, the man with the brooding gaze was a firefighter. He came like clockwork to inspect the trail monthly. Usually, he carried his clipboard, occasionally marking things on it, but he always had the same look of extreme determination splashed across his features, as if he was just waiting for something to be out of place. I hated passing him, too. Every time I did, he would peer at me suspiciously, like I was something out of place.

As I approached, he glanced up. Gritting my teeth, I waited for the awkward staring match to ensue, but as soon as he saw it was only me, he looked back at his feet, quickly smoothing something over in the dirt. I furrowed my brow as I drew closer, slowing to a jog, wanting to see what he was trying to conceal. I thought about asking him, but who knew what kind of conversation that would lead to? Plus, I didn't want to appear nosy. So, I sped up and eventually passed him.

Half an hour later, I'd forgotten all about the firefighter, my thoughts preoccupied with more pressing issues. I was headed home to shower and leave for work when I passed the spot where I'd seen the firefighter. It was in the same instant that I remembered him that I heard it: a strange, earsplitting shriek that pierced the forest like an arrow-fast and sharp.

Halting in my tracks, I whipped my head up. About ten yards north of me sprawled at the base of a tree was a girl with hair like the night and pale, pale skin. Cornering her was a great and monstrous bear. I'd never seen something so huge. It was a mass of dark fur with claws the size of my fingers and hard eyes like black marbles. I could hear the mangled roars wrenching from its throat with every breath the girl dared to breathe. The bear had to be at least eight hundred pounds. Its paws alone were the size of my head. I'd never seen a bear this close before, and this one was much more terrifying than I'd thought possible.

Watching the scene unfold, the bear probed the girl's bruised body with his giant brown paw. Judging by the tree branch lying beside her, she'd attempted to climb the tree in order to escape the bear, and apparently the branch had broken. The bear poked her harder. It was like it was mocking her.

I didn't know what to do. I stood like a statue, immobilized and useless.

Behind me, a twig snapped. I swung my head around, my heart leaping out of my chest. Please, God, don't let this be the bear's buddy! I thought and was relieved to see the firefighter. He placed a finger to his lips, silently cautioning me not to scream. He tiptoed forward to stand next to me. As he surveyed the scene, I noticed the wrinkles on his forehead and the grey framing his face. He was dressed in his uniform, and the badge pinned to his chest read Chief. I had never noticed that. I never even noticed his age. He caught my glance and in his clouded eyes I saw it, and it clicked. That morning he'd smudged out the bear's prints. He'd always been smudging out their prints. That was how I'd never suspected the woods to be the home of any bears. He wanted to protect the bears from the poachers that would no doubt hunt them if found. But I saw the wariness in his expression. Had he been doing the right thing? He saw the danger now, up close and personal. We were thinking the same thing.

"We need a plan," I whispered, watching the bear circling the girl. It sniffed, growled.

"There's no time," The firefighter said. He slid a jingling, leather wallet from his pocket before saying, "You should run."

Then, he took his own advice and ran, but not in the direction he intended for me to go. With all the power he had, he chucked the wallet at the bear. It hit the bear with force but only enough to steal its attention for a second. Then, the wallet slumped to the ground.

The bear rounded on the man with an intense, angry roar. Behind him, the girl slipped as she attempted to stand, landing with a thud. A squeal escaped her mouth as the bear circled back again. It was confused by the sudden commotion, but more than that it was angry.

With dismay, I continued to watch. It was like sitting in the front row at a movie theater during a horror movie. I knew I should have done something: shout, throw a rock, or just plain bolt, but I stood locked in place. I watched as the bear's eyes sharpened, nostrils flared, its growl low and angry, as he stood up, up, up. His front paws left the ground so that the bear stood taller than an apple tree.

Then, as if she had realized her predicament, the girl started to scream again.

As the bear began to swoop down, the firefighter lunged on it. Within seconds, though, he was flung off. His arm hit the base of another tree. There was an audible crack, and that--the sound of his arm breaking, which I could hear from twenty feet away--was what threw me into motion. I grabbed the nearest rock, marched a few feet towards the snarling beast and hurled it. I sprinted back, finding shelter behind a tree farther down the path. I heard the bear give a nasty roar, and I smiled at the thought that I'd been able to hit it. Hopefully, I'd given the firefighter enough time to stand and grab the girl.

Tentatively, I peered around the tree, but I didn't find what I'd hoped to. Lying in the path was the firefighter. His arm bent at an impossible angle, blood pooling from his chest, the bear dug his claws further into his back. The firefighter's head lolled to the right, his cloudy eyes unflinchingly open, dead.

My eyes shifted to the girl, who sat up and shouted, "Stop!"

Was she crazy? I wondered, horror struck. But at the girl's command, the bear freed his claws from the firefighter's flesh and turned to face her. Puzzled, I turned to her, too. As she leapt up, the bear flopped down on all fours like a dog when its master arrived home. Brushing the dirt from her arms, the girl hopped around the beast of a bear and ran a hand over its fur. With her other hand, she snatched up the firefighter's wallet, flicking through it greedily. A ghost of a smile appeared across her mischievous face. With a final smirk, she turned on her heel and led the bear back into the depths of the forest to await her next victim.

END.

Art by Amy Hanson



A Living Jewel

By Rachel Ambat

I sat by the aged, splintered, wooden table at the corner of our little apartment room in Boston, Massachusetts. I was quietly chewing the end of my pencil while gazing at the blank, unwritten paper before me. It had been blank for some time now, with only a four letter title that rested at the top, written slowly and carefully in my best handwriting. It read, 'When I grow up,' and was a title meant to stir feelings of curiosity among readers as they eagerly prepared themselves to read about all the great plans I had for myself, the dreams I would magically transform into reality, the future that had not met with devastations, catastrophes or trials, the accomplished and famous person I would one day become.

I sighed. I didn't have the faintest idea of what exactly I wanted to do when I grew up. I wanted my life and actions to be praised and admired...that was certain, but could I make such desires of mine really come to pass?

"Me thinks you havin' a hard time comin' up with that essay to write," my mamma remarked, eyeing me sharply as she washed dishes nearby. Her arms were buried under the soapy suds that had risen halfway up the sink, and her apron was wet and greasy.

She methodically scrubbed vigorously at each dish stopping every now and then to straighten her cramped back and brush aside a strand of hair that had escaped from the bun resting on top of her head.

"I just don't know what to write, Mamma," I said, my voice filled with despair. "I don't think I'll ever have this paper ready by tomorrow, and my teacher won't like it one bit if I haven't completed a homework assignment."

My mamma smiled comfortingly. Her teeth looked like white pearls that contrasted beautifully with her dark, lovely colored skin. "You soon think of somethin,'" she said, her voice marked by confidence. "Me thinks you's paper'll be the best in the class."

She continued washing the dishes, and I began to watch her, hoping to be inspired by some glorious idea that came from cleaning dirty plates and spoons.

The brisk movements of my mamma's strong hands surprised me. She had been working the whole day, from before the time I even went to school, yet she hardly seem tired. She worked as a seamstress for Mrs. Rosalind Hopkins, a lady who had many boisterous children, which resulted in many ripped frocks and trousers. After working long hours for her Missus, my mamma never failed to come home each day and see to it that I was well taken care of and provided for.

It suddenly occurred to me that my dear mamma hardly had any time to take care of herself. She was always working for others. Every penny she earned went towards my schooling and education. If she had saved up even a little money for herself, she might have been able to purchase a pretty frilled dress or an elegant necklace that almost every woman longs to have.

“Mamma, shan’t I dry those plates for you?” I asked, as my mother had now begun the laborious task of wiping with a towel the dishware she had just washed.

“Me don’t need no help, Harriet,” my mamma replied. “You just finish your paper, now, before it’s time for dinner.”

Indeed, my mamma was a strong person, perhaps the strongest woman I had ever known. Her courage and determination were traits I had never seen her without.

I thought back over the years to when my mamma, papa and I had escaped as slaves from the plantation in Virginia and began the long journey to Massachusetts, the promised land of freedom and true liberty. Along the way, my papa had fallen seriously ill and passed away. During those sad, frightening times my mother faced each difficult circumstance with marvelous fortitude. She did not turn back, knowing that if we turned ourselves into our slave owners we would be severely punished. Instead, she plunged forward, taking me by the hand and leading me to a new life and a future I had never imagined would be mine.

Our life was not easy even after we settled in Massachusetts. Attending school was a completely new experience for me. As could be expected, I was well behind my fellow classmates, who had been learning much longer than I. I wish academics had been the only trial I had to cope with, but it hadn’t. I encountered racial prejudice and inequality from people I had hoped would be my friends. This was a devastation, for I had thought we left such trials in Virginia and would never encounter such difficulties again.

Mamma’s strong advice helped me adjust to my new surroundings. She reminded me that people may be blinded by lies passed down from earlier generations, but one individual can defeat darkness with a single ray of truth. Sometimes, evil deeds outnumber right ones, but the very existence of those who stand up for what is right overcomes the hundreds of evil doers combined. They are living jewels, rare and few, but so powerful, so beautiful.

My mamma only taught me what she herself followed. She was a living jewel, a powerful influence that changed me from the inside out- a wonderful mother to me, she works to provide me with nothing less than the best. She had never gained a proper education herself and might never gain fame or value from others, but that didn’t make her any less special. To me, she was someone so unique and beautiful, a person to whom no one else could compare.

My mother felt my eyes on her, and she looked at me. “Harriet, me would think I’m givin’ you an idea for you’s essay by the way you are staring at me,” she said, beginning to laugh.

I found it ironic that my mother had laughingly stated something that was exactly true. I set my jaw and picking up my pencil, I began to write. When I grow up, I want to be a sacrificial, powerful person like my mother. I might never gain fame or value from others, but what does that matter? All I want to be is a living jewel.

END.



Photograph by Ally Stone

Little Boy Blue

Kristen Yin

I look back at my fondest memories in that little house on the hill. I would have to say that they were the times I spent with my best friend. I was 7 years old when I first moved to that solemn house. I was a real scrawny looking boy, with glasses too big, pants too tight, and a haircut split right down the middle of my head. No wonder I could count the number of friends I've had on one hand. A boy I would call Little Boy Blue would become my closest and dearest friend, the best any young boy could wish for.

I remember the day we met. It was my first day at that creaky, old house. From the outside it looked as though it had a big sag in the middle, like a loaf of bread taken out of the oven too soon. As Ma and Pa were unpacking downstairs, I proceeded to do some investigating myself. It was a mighty old house indeed. A big scrap of floral wallpaper was peeling off, uncovering a disdainful, yellow tinted wall underneath, riddled with a network of minute cracks. The floorboards creaked with every step I took. As I went deeper into the house, there was an eerie smell that I could never put my finger on.

I thought to myself, "Is that mildew? Maybe a rat got underneath the floorboards and died somewhere."

My boyish thoughts were interrupted by Ma's bellowing call announcing it was supper-time. I rushed to my bedroom that was at the end of the hall to put my bag down. As I turned around, my huge glasses fell off my face. I hurriedly scavenged the floor to find them and to my surprise two small feet met my gaze. I looked up to see a young boy, taller than I and as dark as night, smiling a big, white smile and waving at me. My vision was too blurred to make out who it was, so I grabbed my glasses that were stuck in between a huge crack in the floorboards. As I put them on and spun back around to look at the boy, he was nowhere to be seen. Again, my wonder was interrupted by Ma's cry. She sounded even more angry than the last time, so I knew I had better hurry and get down those steps.

That night, as I was about to fall asleep, I heard a faint toot of a brass horn. The whole house seemed to be flooded with a soft, melodious jazz tune. My parents didn't seem to wake up from it at all. As I looked all around, the source seemed to be coming from the upstairs attic. I hesitantly grabbed the string to pull down the steps, and as I did so the tune stopped. I turned around and there stood that little boy, black as night, holding a brass horn. I screamed and stumbled backwards, falling to the floor and knocking my glasses off my face, but he stooped down, picked them up and handed them to me.

"Wh- who are you?" I asked quietly.

"Me? Oh I don't know. I don't really remember," he said with a smile. "I just love to play me my jazz music. I live right up there," he said pointing up at the attic. "Not a lot of people come around here anymore. Why are you here?"

"Oh... I-I live here now." I answered, standing up shakily.

I looked at him now with a clearer view. He was a tall boy. Thick hard calluses riddled his hands. He wore a pair of overalls and red-striped shirt. He had such a kind and friendly demeanor. There was a piece of string tied around his neck, but I never really thought much of it.

"Oh wow! Folks haven't been 'round this part in ages! I hope that we can be friends," he exclaimed, beaming.

And just like that... we were instantly best friends. We would play almost every night. He would carry me around on his back and we would pretend we were fighting together, shooting down enemy lines. He was a very strong boy. I began calling him Little Boy Blue, for each time that melodious toot engulfed our little house on the hill, I knew it was time to play. That first year in the house was the most fun I'd had in all my life. I had finally found someone I could call my best friend.

The next year rolled around and Ma and Pa sent me to school in the town at the bottom of the hill. All the kids taunted me and called me nuts after I told them about my best friend and how he lived in the attic. I ran home crying in the middle of the day. I ran upstairs, pulled down the attic string, and ran up- calling for Little Boy Blue. He was nowhere to be found. But as I entered the attic, the putrid smell hit me. It was the same scent I had picked up the first day I came to this ancient home. The smell grew even worse the deeper I walked in. The smell of rotting meat stemmed from an old navy trunk in the corner of the attic. I opened it. And there inside were the rotting remains of a person, a boy. I gasped and looked closer; this person was wearing overalls, a brass trumpet seemed to have been thrown in, and around his neck was a noose. I began to sob uncontrollably. It was Little Boy Blue. How could this have happened?

END.

27 Degrees

Jay Harris

Chester shouted in anger and kicked the fender of his '77 Impala as its engine went up in smoke. He was alone, sometime past midnight, on the shoulder of the interstate. His now lifeless vehicle was his only shelter, safe from the menacing expanse of forest that endlessly stretched parallel to the road. There were no other cars in sight, no city lights in the distance. And it was cold. Quite colder than Chester, a young adult from Savannah, was used to. It had been a routine trip up until this point. Drive up to Grandpa's house in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains for Thanksgiving, visit with family, eat food, visit again, leave. Chester regretted his decision to depart so late, to bring his beat-up car, to even go on the trip at all. The cold was getting worse, and remaining stationary was not a viable option. With nothing but a flashlight and a half-eaten granola bar, Chester set off walking to find safety.

The sound of Chester's footsteps on the long, black strip of asphalt echoed through the void, his world enshrouded by darkness except within the weak beam of his flashlight. As his jaw chattered and his numb hands quivered, he desperately searched for an exit, a rest stop, anything. Chester walked for what seemed like an eternity, until a glint in the distance caught his eye. Picking up his pace, he arrived at the mysterious object; it was a thermometer. Made of slightly rusted metal, it looked expensive, like something a meteorologist might use. Chester picked it up and read the faded gauge: 27 degrees Fahrenheit. Hardly surprised at the reading, he pocketed the trinket and continued onward.

Further and further down the highway Chester walked, with no change in the scenery. The air around him was growing more unbearable by the minute. The flashlight was flickering and losing power. The granola bar was frozen to a rock-hard crisp. Chester was about to give up when he came across a sign. However, this was no ordinary, green highway sign. It was rust-colored, with "Exit 27" written on it in spray paint. A dirt road branched off of the highway next to the sign. Chester had a bad feeling in his gut, but the numbing cold was stronger. Chester followed the exit. He walked up a steep incline onto a man-made plateau with one dimly lit building. Chester immediately recognized the yellow, rectangular logo. Waffle House. Chester was ecstatic. He bolted to the entrance, completely ignoring the odd lighting and fogged-up windows.

The establishment was dead silent. The door slammed shut behind Chester as he made his way to a table. He picked up a menu and to his surprise, he noticed that every single menu item was replaced with the words "Turkey & Waffles Special- \$27.27". At this point, Chester knew for sure that he had made the wrong decision to go down that shoddy-looking exit. All of a sudden, the lights began to flicker. Every window turned into a brick wall. The doors locked. A thick black substance began to drip from the ceiling. Out of sheer shock and curiosity, Chester tasted it. Syrup. Maple Syrup. Chester, now gone completely berserk, jumped up out of the booth and sprinted to the door, but it would not budge. He struggled to run to the other door, but the syrup on his hand glued him to the handle. Then, his whole world began to shake. The lamps fell from the ceiling and shattered on the floor. Kitchen appliances fell off their shelves. Chester began to hear voices, but he was unable to understand them. Suddenly, a large, cooked turkey levitated over the counter, surrounded by an army of zombie chefs. As they quickly began to surround Chester, the head turkey mumbled, "Give me my thermometer..." But Chester was unable to because of his syrup-glued hands. The zombie-chefs and the turkeys surrounded Chester until he couldn't breathe. His whole world faded to black.

Chester awoke in his bed at his grandfather's house. He gazed around the room-It was six in the morning, the day after Thanksgiving. He sat up and looked out of the window to see his Impala perfectly fine in the driveway. Lying back down, Chester rolled over a metal object. It was a small thermometer, used to measure the temperature of a turkey in the oven. Chester laughed and remembered that big meals give him weird dreams. He breathed a sigh of relief. There was no broken automobile, no harsh cold, no haunted Waffle House, no killer turkey. It had all been a dream. Later that morning, Chester took a stroll outside. Before leaving, he made sure to put on a jacket to prepare himself for the cold. He checked the thermometer on the porch. It read 27 degrees Fahrenheit.

END.

Room 333

Anagha Ramakrishnan

Room 333 is just like the rest; it has white walls and a metal bed with a stiff mattress on top. They say I'm insane; they laugh when I'm screaming under my desk. They watch in horror as I tell them to stop. They don't know what I see; they don't know what I know. The nurse walks in to hand me medicine giving me a foam cup half-full with tap water. I glare at her as I place the medicine in my mouth, pretending to swallow it down. She nods at me and leaves the room as I spit out the god awful medicine on the floor.

It's 2:00 now and it's happening to me again. The young woman with light blue eyes and wet, greasy, black hair is ... this time closer. Her hair is sticking to her face, her face somber, hands shaking. One hand is holding a knife; the other is reaching out for me. She's wearing a ripped crimson dress that comes down to her knees. A nurse runs into my room and sees me in the corner huddled with my arms tucking my knees to my chest. She glances at the medicine on the floor.

"This is why you should take your medicine. Come down for lunch," she orders in a crisp tone. I slowly get up from the corner and follow the nurse to the dining hall. Did she not see the girl peering at her as I left? Or did she choose to ignore her? Is she the reason I feel insane? I choose to leave my questions unanswered for now.

Walking to the dining hall, I accidentally run into a small girl passing out flyers. The flyers spew everywhere; green papers fill the hallway.

"I am so sorry," I apologize thoroughly, as I kneel to pick up the flyers.

"It's fine," She croaks, barely making eye contact with me. She must have been around ten years old, wearing a ruffled pink frock with blonde hair covering her face. I give her back all of the flyers I managed to pick up.

"Again, I am so sorry!" I reiterate.

She hands me back a neon flyer. "I'll forgive you if you come to activity night tomorrow, she smirks.

"I surely will," I say with a bright smile, heading to lunch.

After lunch the nurse comes to me again with the medicine in hand.

"You have to take it this time," the nurse says.

I gulp it down with the water, and she checks my mouth.

"Good." She turns and leaves the room.

I'm left alone in the room again, with nothing but the white walls to reflect upon my past. Shortly after, I find myself asleep on the cold concrete floor. I wake up to the full moon staring back at me, skies dotted with stars. I tie my black hair into a ponytail as I lean against the wall watching the sunrise.

8:00 am, so I get called for breakfast by the nurse.

Down the spiraling steps I walk, and I grab a tray of who knows what and wolf it all down. I walk in and the medicine is left on the table; since I just ate I decide to have it later. Since activity night is about to start, I dig through my raggedy suitcase finding something to wear. I pull out a bold choice of a crimson red dress that my mother sneakily put in. I must remember to thank her the next time I see her.

8:00 pm, so we are playing whack-a-mole and all of a sudden the outdoor activities come to a halt with tremendous thunder cracking and rain pouring down. I grab my things, but as I get up I trip and my dress rips a little on the side.

I run inside to my room to avoid any other embarrassment. It feels like back home, everyone laughing at me. What's wrong with them? Can't they see? They got bullied too, now they're bullying me?

I slam the door behind me as the girl is back in the corner nearby. My hair is sticking to my face as I try to pull it aside. Then I see the girl who looks oddly like me. Her crimson red dress is torn at the same place as mine. Her black hair is sticking to her face...like mine. Her light blue eyes are peering around the room... like mine. I reach out to touch her and get a searing pain in my throat. That's when I realize the difference between my imagination and reality.

"Alice Waters reported dead in Norman Mental Asylum. She committed suicide in the hospital. Alice was holding a knife that was plunged in her throat. She was found dead, lying alone in room 333."

END.



Art by Sophie Zheng

The Acceptance

Sara Ashley Collins

The day that had been looming over Amity Wane's shoulders had finally closed in. Amity awoke, shaken with tears clinging from the corners of her eyes. She was plagued with recurring nightmares that had been haunting her for months. The sun glowed in from her window, illuminating the room. Upon the door hung an exquisite white dress that seemed to dance in the sunlight. The window had been left open, and a warm spring breeze flowed in. Multicolored flowers glistened in the morning dew, but the only flowers Amity could focus on was the rose bouquet sitting in the vase by her bed. Many of the petals had already begun to die. Judging by the position of the sun, it must have been nearly eight o'clock in the morning. Surprised her mother had let her sleep so late, Amity peered outside her door. A warm aroma of cake and pastries filled the room. Her stomach lurched at the thought of it all.

"Amity! Amity, my dear, you have slept quite enough! You have had more than your fair share of beauty sleep." Mrs. Wane called as she dashed into the room. She looked Amity up and down and shook her head.

"Do you see those bags under your eyes? And your face is so red. How do you suppose you will be accepted like that? There is never enough beauty sleep when it comes to you," she scolded.

Her mother sighed, "I suppose it will have to do." She shook her head once more, but quickly grew animated again. "Dear, this is such an exciting day for us! We have everything worked out to the last detail, except for you of course. But that will be taken care of shortly, no need to be worried, Dear." She smiled ear to ear, truly proud.

"Thank you, Mother" Amity solemnly replied. There was no point in arguing. Mrs. Wane grabbed Amity's wrist and pulled her into the vanity room.

"Don't mess up today; you know you want this too," Mrs. Wane exclaimed while ruffling through the different colored tubes of makeup.

After much thought, Mrs. Wane found the perfect color liquid. She smeared the makeup over Amity's face, covering the slight imperfections.

"Your brothers already brought your old dolls outside. Oh, and I had Mrs. Cook make those wonderful cookies you used to love so much. They are probably the reason for all that extra weight you can't shake." She chuckled, pinching the skin that hugged Amity's ribs. Amity knew her efforts were going to be in vain, but she believed that some things were important enough to speak up.

Against what her mother had always told her about saying her beliefs, she begged, "Mother, can we please give the dolls to Hope? You know she has always cared for them, and she is a wonderful little sister, and..." But she was cut off by her mother's roaring laughter.

Mrs. Wane wiped her eyes and settled down. She started again with the painting of Amity's eyes and lips. Looking quite satisfied with her work, Ms. Wane nudged her daughter towards the mirror. Beaming, Mrs. Wane let out a sigh of relief. Her prized possession was at her finest.

Amity squeezed into the white dress. She glared into the mirror. There stood a woman, where a child had once been. The mother daughter pair exited the vanity room to thunderous applause. The family had arrived, each holding sweets and dolls. They extolled Amity and showered her with encouraging words. Amity's mother announced to the crowd, "This girl who we all thought would never learn her place, seems to finally have a chance." This sent the family into an uproar of hollers and whistles.

White banners decorated the walls, and flowers were in every corner. The atmosphere was festive and bubbly. Everyone was chatting and amused. The only person in the room who seemed to share Amity's gloom was Hope. She was a year younger, however much taller than Amity. She always found a way to be the star of the room, but today she remained separate from the festivities.

"You look beautiful, Amity. He's a really lucky guy. How could he say no?" she squeaked and rushed into Amity's arms. "I'm, I'm so sorry. I can never tell you how much I thank you. I..I..." Hope began sobbing and buried her face in Amity's arms. Amity wrapped herself around her beloved sister, praying this feeling could last. Amity's heart was heavy, as she held her sister's face in her hands. Hope's eyes still held a passion and light that had long since been broken in Amity.

"Don't ever be sorry. I love you, Hope. Go far. Promise me, you will. I'll be okay. Be successful, and make sure your children will never have to know this." She squeezed Hope tight, cradling her in her arms. She would be safe now. Everything would be okay.

Hope sniffled. "I got you something." Hope handed her a little box wrapped in pink paper. It was fantastically decorated with strings in all colors of the rainbow. It must have taken her years to scramble up this collection.

“Thank you, remember I will always love you.” Amity looked her sister over one last time. She knew she had to go. Only half way out the door, Amity already felt an emptiness seize her heart. She longed so deeply to turn around. Her eyes began to sting, and her chest heaved. It would only be cruel to allow herself that last glance. She straightened her back, looked straight ahead and shut the door behind her. Everyone turned around. People clapped and cheered. The sun was brilliantly bright, and the temperature was perfect. Amity walked toward the pile of dolls and cookies in the field. Her parents joined first, then the siblings, and at last the other family members. Everyone picked up either a doll or a cookie. The only exception was Hope, who remained inside. They threw them into the pile of sticks that Amity’s brother had made. Then Amity’s mother lit the sticks. The flames roared to life, along with the spirits of the crowd. The women chatted among themselves, and the men smiled. Amity stared into the as the dolls, whom she had once loved so dearly, melted in the flames. The crowd sat down again, and Amity hesitantly paced toward her future. With each step, she thought of the gift she had received from Hope. It was a little homemade doll made from leftover scraps of fabric. Attached was a letter that read:

*“Dear Amity,
Happy twelfth birthday. I love you so dearly. We will have money now, but we will not have you. I will go on with my life, but it will hurt. I will wake up and look for you, only to realize you are gone. Mother and father can live their dreams, and the boys will never know hunger. He paid a handsome dowry for you, but nothing can cover your value. Stay strong, my sister. We will find a way to see each other again.”*

Her heart wrenched, and she knew the last part would never come true. She took a deep breath. There was no way out now. She looked up at her husband who awaited her down the aisle. He stood, struggling to keep his balance with his cane. His other wives stood behind him; they were now her family. He smiled a toothless grin. She couldn’t break away now... one step closer.

“How far away will my family be?”

Another step. “What if he doesn’t accept me? What will my family do to me?”

Only ten feet away, “No, this is how it was meant to be. Keep your mouth shut.”

Amity’s father stood and asked if Amity was suitable.

The man peered at Amity, estimating her value, never making eye contact. He simply nodded his head. The crowd exploded with energy, while the fire that was once blazing died down to nothing but ashes.

END.



"Patiently" by Talia Olson

Salamander Songs

Talia Olson

A part of me was born in fire.

I love the sound of a crackling flame and the fragrant musk of burning wood. They bring back so many vivid memories, and the echoes of those emotions and sensations resonate deeply in my chest. My family has hosted bonfires, little get-togethers, as far back as my brother and sister and I can remember. We have them on birthdays, for special occasions, and, more often than not, for the pure sake of having them. As I remember all the cool fall nights that have been seduced by the sultry heat of the fire, the feral night afoot, padding along through the leaves. There's air dancing in the atmosphere with the smoke, twisting, giggling, rising, laughing me farewell and waving goodbye with a sway of its gaseous hips as it buoys up and sinks into the cerulean sky. There's the distant barking of neighborhood dogs and the warm murmur of conversation gathering around the bonfire. Amber green beer bottles shimmer, and sometimes, when my dad or Mr. Chris finish one, they hand it off to us— so we can feed it to the fire. And we do.

We stuck them on sticks, like marshmallows, roasted them over the flames with wide, mischievous smiles, then let them slip off into the glowing coals when we got bored with waiting for them to start melting. We would take them by their necks and toss them in, then prod them with twigs every so often to check if they were soft. In the morning, we would find them—dirty, emerald lumps covered beyond easy recognition, odd little shards with varied edges, and nuggets sprinkled with ashen gray and charcoal black. Alone in our backyard, I would stare at them with curiosity and incredulousness, taking in their sunken, caved-in bellies, closed up mouths, and shattered remnants.

We would find old plastic toys and action figures and baptize them in the flame, transforming them from mundane playthings to a court of sacred gods with supernatural powers, crusty and burnt on the outside with their vivid colors oozing out in cracked patterns, like small-scale tectonic plates. There were Power Rangers, Happy Meal toys, GI Joes, Barbies, colored disposable silverware, anything we could get our hands on, as long as we were willing to part with its old form. They sizzled and melted and metamorphosed, belching out acrid, black smoke that smelled funny and made our eyes water, opening up, shrinking, changing. Plastic doll hair contorted like rows of technicolor snakes and erupted into dripping flames. Fire clung to hot, liquid drops of plastic and fizzled out in the dirt— And our eyes filled with the erratic transformations of countless toys to surreal, charred creatures. We set them on the bench one by one to be retrieved at first light, washed, and stashed on a shelf or table.

We invited our friends. Most of the time, we were a fairly small group. I remember flames tickling wood and leaves, phone screens lighting against darkness, squatting in front of the fire pit with my DSLR camera snapping pictures of the chaotic, flaming pile with my zoomed-in lens wavering over all the constantly shifting detail. I remember conversations about life and death, love and bitterness, and tons and tons of smiles and laughter, which the adults sipped down with wine and calm openness. I remember chips, crackers, hummus, and salsa on the countertop and dining room table with a couple boxes of soft sugar cookies—which vanished quickly, swooped away by our fleshy talons. I remember relaxation under the smoky stars as my dear friends and I lay down on the trampoline staring upwards, ruminating on little life experiences and piecing together constellations with our words, letting our worries drift up to the moon with the hovering orange cinders that flickered out midair. We ran and hiked through the dark woods among the hoots of owls and the howls of the winter winds with the beams of our flashlights waving through the bare branches. We crunched through fallen leaves like a tight pack of wolves, trusting each other more and more with each step.

Yet the fire still beckoned us back eventually.

Small fireworks were cautiously tossed to the flames on a cold New Year's Eve. We sat on the benches with red cups of soda and marshmallow skewers. It was a shadowy landscape, with only the wild bonfire, the serene moon, and the churning rectangular eyes of the house... until it shrieked with cheering voices and flashing white strobe, smoke stained radiantly bright as it weaved through the logs.

Sometimes it was significantly different.

On a couple of rare occasions people came in droves.

One time, a large group of adults brought an even larger group of children, each family providing a corollary to a group of kids that could have rivaled the Lost Boys. I don't remember exactly how it happened, but we all ended up in a migratory herd roving the wooded streets of my neighborhood. Some were our friends. Some were the children of our parents' friends. Some were neighborhood kids that sniffed out the excitement and walked down to the bonfire to see what was up. Hunter, Darby, Skylar, Patrick, Greg, Sophie, Teagan, Paige, Haley, Taylor, Ceara, Audrey, Tevel, Zoe, Sage, Jeffrey, Jacob.... And that was only some of them. We gave each other piggy back rides, shared jokes, hooted and hollered. Everything seemed surreal, looking back on it. We probably kept the neighborhood up all night.

Another time, some unclear date later, it was all my sister's doing. My mom let her invite a bunch of people from school, and, lo and behold, an unexpectedly large crowd of middle schoolers grew—much to my mother's dismay. My sister's room was decked out with big speakers, two black lights, and a blue strobe lamp—filled to the brim with raving kids bouncing and chattering to bass-rich pop music

at lightning speed. I turned the doorknob, pulled open the door, and stood in the doorway with my mouth agape, flanked by Haley and Taylor. The colors of everyone's shirts radiated a restless neon that was splashed everywhere as people danced and sang. Taylor was a bright pink lamp. My knitted hat glowed radioactive green against the shifting indigo and blue background crowded with people. The cyan strobe light stabbed at our eyes—making Haley slightly nauseous. After experiencing the mini-rave for a bit, we resigned ourselves to the relative quiet of my room, which was only right across the hall. My walls, which were a delicate pink stained peach by the off-white ceiling light, were not thick enough to hold back the sub-bass throbbing and pounding from next door, but we chuckled and talked softly, cuddling my cinnamon colored ferret, Abby. I made little short videos on my phone detailing our experiences as we covered behind my door, peeked out like clownfish glancing out from an anemone, then ran out the door of the electrically buzzing house and into the dark, cool street, the iconic remnants of the strobe still seared into our retinas.

The fresh, clean, cold air calmed our nerves.

There were disappointments sometimes. A couple times I had invited boys I cared for, only for them to either give me vague responses or cancel at the last minute, and the shame and embarrassment were searing. I stared at the tiki torches my father had set up around the yard and let the fire dry any tears on my face, while my mother cautioned me to keep my hair out of the way so I wouldn't have to stop, drop, and roll. I gently backed away to keep the dancing flame from consuming my heart.

I remember scalding arguments and screams and shouts echoing downstairs.

I remember the smoldering fire pit in the morning light as I rolled out of bed and washed off the pain with hugs and chilly sparkling grape juice.

Every dash of flame, every cinder, all the crackling twigs and all the hairs singed off my fingers. Every drop of water sizzling off of the logs. Every muffled heartbeat in every person's chest. Every murmur of emotion in the air. It has all taken me somewhere—it has all been worth it.

END.



COFFEE HOUSE

A Flash in Time

Ashley Eggart

As quick as a flash,
Only a glimpse,
Into the future and past,
For all to witness.
It brightens the sky,
And the land around,
Until, at last,
It strikes the ground.
Fires dances across the sky,
As booms echo across the land,
With the power to shake the earth,
And to melt the sand.
Try as we might,
We cannot understand,
How the great mother nature,
Controls the land.

Comet Trail

Abrar Trabulsi

I remember when you blazed past me that one blessed day,

Only to pass me on your way.

However in time you returned -

Ready to take with you what you came to love.

But in that span of time I became a comet of my own,

Ready to pass you as you did me so long ago.

Goodbye

Justin Getz

Each and every morning
When I look in your eyes
I see less of a man I admire
But more of a man I despise

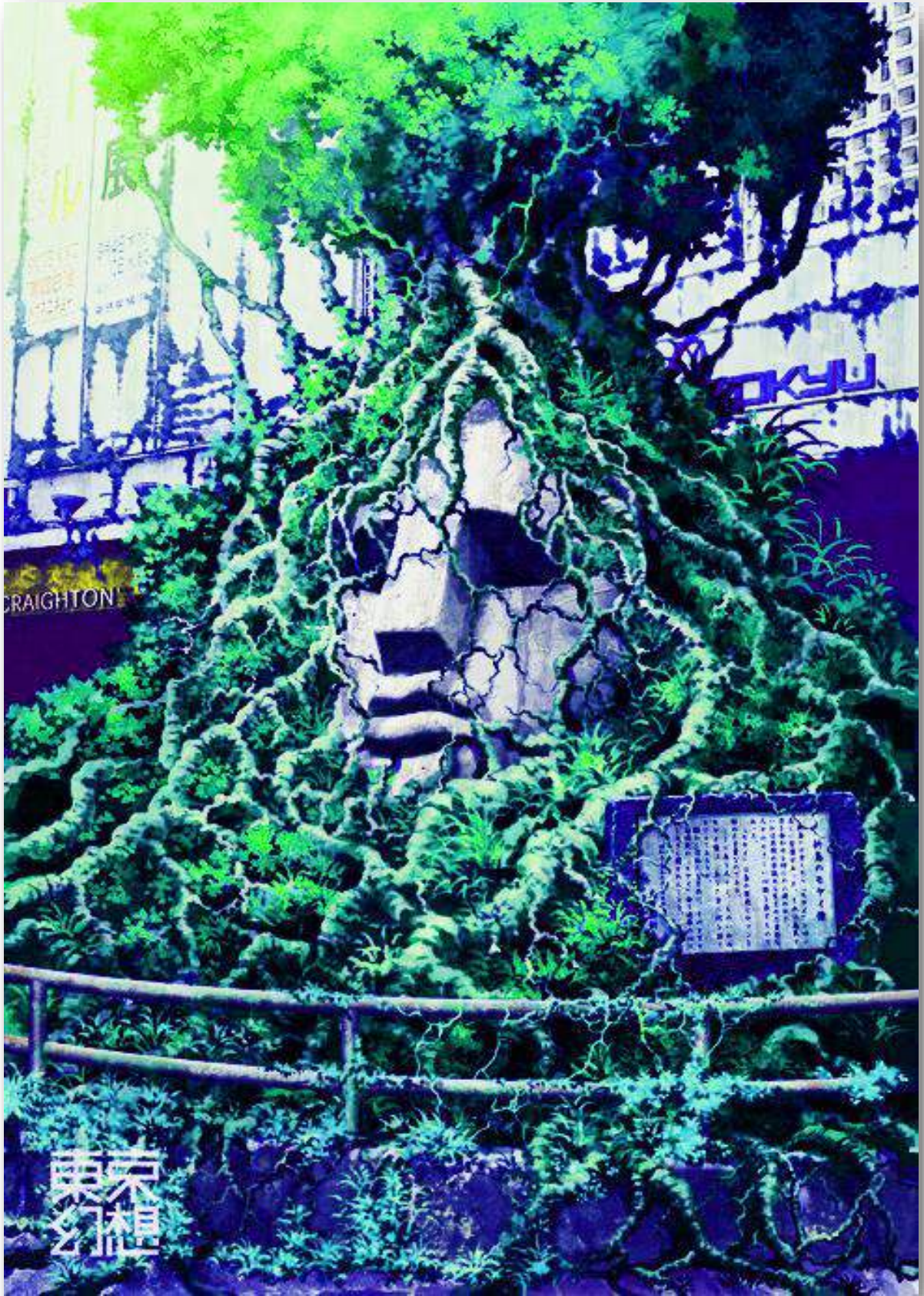
You tell me to look at you
But I can't look directly in your eye
I try to tell you I'm sorry for everything
But the only word that seems to come out is
"Goodbye"

Now I find myself in the dark
I'm lying alone
I know you try to call me
But I don't have the nerve to pick up the phone

You say, "Please don't do this
Please don't make me cry"
The only thing I can think to say is
"Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye"

Now it's eight months later
And you're back with me
I tell you to sit and talk to me
But you say to me what I can't believe.
You say, "Each and every morning
When I look in your eyes
I see less of a woman I admire
But more of a woman I despise"

I tell you to look at me
But you can't look directly in my eye
You try to tell me you're sorry for everything
But the only word that seems to come out is
"Goodbye"



東京幻想

Art by Valerie Poske

Mind Readers

Andrew Tang

Have you ever thought of someone
"Can you read my mind?"
Expecting to see them flinch
Thereby revealing their hidden power

This thought afflicted me as a child.
I would look towards peers, teachers, and elders
With this thought to no effect
In all my life, I've yet to move anyone with thought

This old mannerism of mine, while silly,
Led me to realize something.
Thoughts are so base, so wavering, so volatile,
To be briefly conjured just to be forgotten in the next rumination

When spoken, however, thoughts are concrete, tangible
They can be reworked and revised
Into compelling doctrines or speeches

I mature and wizen when voicing honest thoughts
Teaching and rebuking is the foundation of knowledge
Instructing enlightens the student as much as it does the teacher
Not only can I progress from creating thoughts,
As soon as I can be destroyed by them
Thinking poisons and blasphemes,
I who think without discipline

Some thoughts are better left unsaid
For those who misuse their voice pervert the nation
Imposing their vicious culture upon you and me

We all know those people
Those who give no thought to their words
Those swindlers, liars, and agitators
Who care less about the truth and more about their petty arguments

A nasty remark can harden hearts and instill hatred
Never birth these thoughts to words
A kind expression can break barriers and heal wounds
So say them while you can

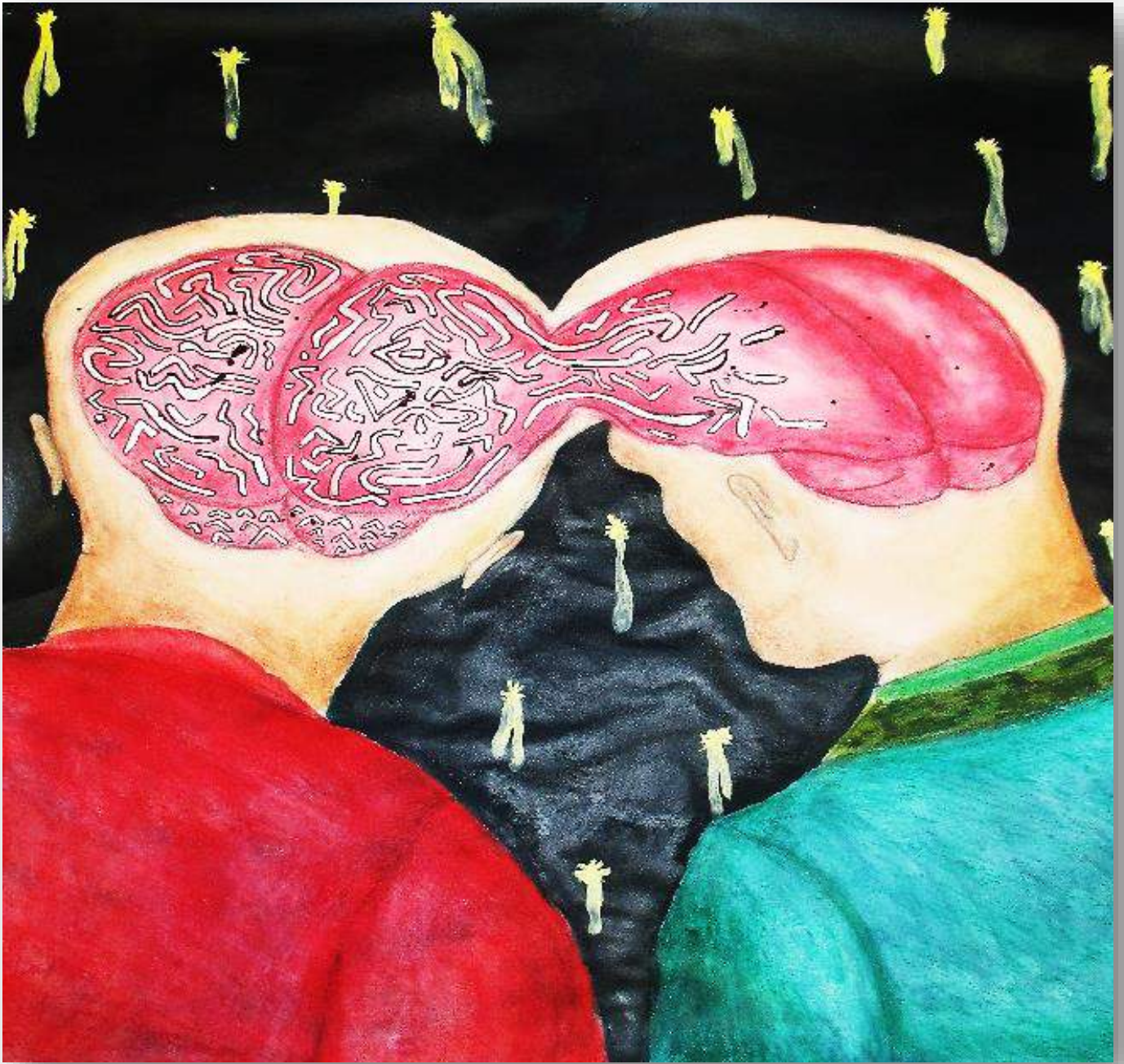
Who could ever know the real thoughts of another man?
The true feelings, intentions, and heart of another individual
To discern a friend from foe is the power of a mind reader
To see through honest Iago's guise
And be assaulted by a companion's harsh thought
Or know tender the emotions of a distant admirer
To be assaulted by the disgust of your peers

More curse than blessing, if you ask me
Although, I'll never know this "Twilight-Zone" -esque situation
Who could possibly hold this power properly?

The silent leader, who has perfected the thought,
Who need not utter a phrase to champion
And when spoken, these words carry weight,
He's disciplined enough to handle these wicked and wonderful thoughts

If only I could look into those silent thoughts
Know the inner workings of a great mind

I will regard my thoughts with a scarred zeal
That they have not yet been conceived to voice
That they have not yet been used to harm or help
That they have not yet achieved anything
No one could imprison a man convicted by thought
No one could thank a man for an encouraging thought



"Brains" by Morgan Carter

Unwritten

Reagan Strasser

The lead moves furiously across the page,
As I try to finish the paper late at night.
In the dark shady library I sit alone,
Focusing on what next I should write.

The lights above me continue to flicker,
Which makes me wonder the time and how late.
I've been here hours upon hours working.
I decide I can no longer concentrate.

I begin to put away my things,
Binders, paper, pencils, and more.
A sudden sound causes me to stop my actions.
The sound was the closing of a door.

I zip my zipper attached to my bag,
Leaving on the table my unfinished essay.
I hear another noise but this one is different.
I am very tired so the noise dismays.

Placing my bag on my shoulder,
Then putting the papers in my hand,
I begin to walk out of the library,
But the light suddenly becomes banned.

After struggling to find a light source,
I finally do and make it be shown.
Taking a minute for my eyes to adjust,
I realize I am now not alone.

A shadowy figure stands before me,
Dressed in all black topped with a hood.
Their hands shuffle in their pockets trying to find an item.
I would've run away if only I could.

A silver item is revealed out of his pocket,
As I reflect on my fulfilled life.
The item I suddenly recognize.
The item is a long, sharp knife.

My eyes widen at what's about to happen,
As he stalks slowly towards me.
My phone then runs out of power,
Along with light that was allowing me to see.

My jaw drops opening my mouth.
My brain telling me to scream.
That being one of two reasons,
And my throat not being on the same team.

The second reason being,
Because of something I feel.
The feeling of my soul breaking.
I fall on my knees and kneel.

My life begins to flash before my eyes,
As I fall on the floor on my back.
I think of my friends and family,
As my breath begins to lack.

With the light from the moon,
I see the red liquid around me glisten.
As my essay lays beside me on the floor,
Splattered in blood and left unwritten.



Art by Myles Forte

Theme of Corruption

Hannah Sbaity

The news anchor said,

*Take shelter and hide
for there is danger outside.
A bomb just went off in Downtown Beirut-
Yes, the war has just begun.*

Will my family and I be safe?

I am an American citizen, born and raised in Georgia. I live ten months out of the year in Georgia and the other two in my home country, Lebanon.

I am quite knowledgeable of the potential danger there.

But I had never seen anything like this before as

I watched a bomb go off in the mere distance, and the whole building shook while my mother helped me take shelter, and shortly after I sat in a safe room scared to death, as I didn't

know what to expect next but I put a pen in my hand and wrote:

It's not the most comforting feeling when you know your own kind is dying outside whether you're American, Lebanese, or Israeli. But I know politics and greed for land and power has driven people to such cruelty, forgetting that we're alike in many ways. The question now becomes-Kill who? Spare whom? Demolish what? We tend to focus on the differences in people to give excuses for evil.

Well, I like visiting back home, seeing the family, and eating exotic foods.

I like to think that this country will one day be safe, stable, and sound.

I'd like to imagine that there's hope for peace

or agreement-- coexistence, coalitions, or cooperation.

I guess seeing a different side to this not-so-perfect world makes me want to change it even more than before.

Should humankind continue to die and kill so that others may live? At this rate, more and more humans will reach their "deathtination." For innocent blood

continues to drip into evil hands.

We are all human—

yet differences in others brings hatred. That's the sad reality.

Sometimes we don't want to come together.
Nor do we want to grow apart.
But we make alliances for unjust reasons; that's
corrupt! As we share this very same Earth,
we continue to tear it apart
and the innocent inhabitants that live within-
as survival of the fittest sucks out the very
good in us.
This is my rant about this disgusting society.



Art by Mia James

Eye-Knit

Kelsie Stone

I fell upon the coldest stone,
And found myself in a dreaming-world.
Where the stars were holes in a gaping maw,
And the moon was a flag unfurled.
I stumbled into a river of thought,
And the current dragged away my dreams.
While the cat-bears prowled on an endless shore,
My eyes came apart at the seams.
My vision blacked and the moon came back,
From its holiday in the sky.
And even though I cannot sew,
I frantically searched for my eyes.

Dream Land

Kelsie Stone

Every night I leave for the land of dreams;
my courage is lost as the shadows scream.
The blank-eyed waifs with their sewn-up hands,
Wander lone shores of rotting sand.
The pebbles morph into faceless beasts,
with crawling limbs and insect feet.
I wander halls of endless sound, a
s the currents pour in from all around.
A face I well know is found in time,
a pleasant ache from this heart of mine.
But the respite shatters into shards of black,
as my loved ones drown in seas of glass.
I walk to them,
and my feet are cut up,
and the seas tint red from my sinking blood.
But the pain plagues not, for I grasp a hand,
and I pull my loved ones back to land.
The drifting ends in a breath of thought,
and the battles end which once I fought.
The light returns in the dim of dawn,
and my lungs breathe new in a sleepy yawn.



“Big Brother Is Watching You” by Kayley Robinson



“Lips” by Katie Landers

Theme for AP Lit

Johnny Maroun

Dr. Blanchard said,

Go home and write
a page this week
And let that page model Hughes' brilliance

Can I out-poem my classmates?
I'm just a little middle-class boy,
trying to make it in East Cobb.
A lot of pressure on my party
to match my family's expectations.
But for now in this moment, I am stuck in this huge brick
with 2,000 other students for 5
hours a day, for 180 days.
As I write this at 20:30 am the day before it is due,
my cognitive abilities are slowly fading away.
Nevertheless, I sit and write this page:

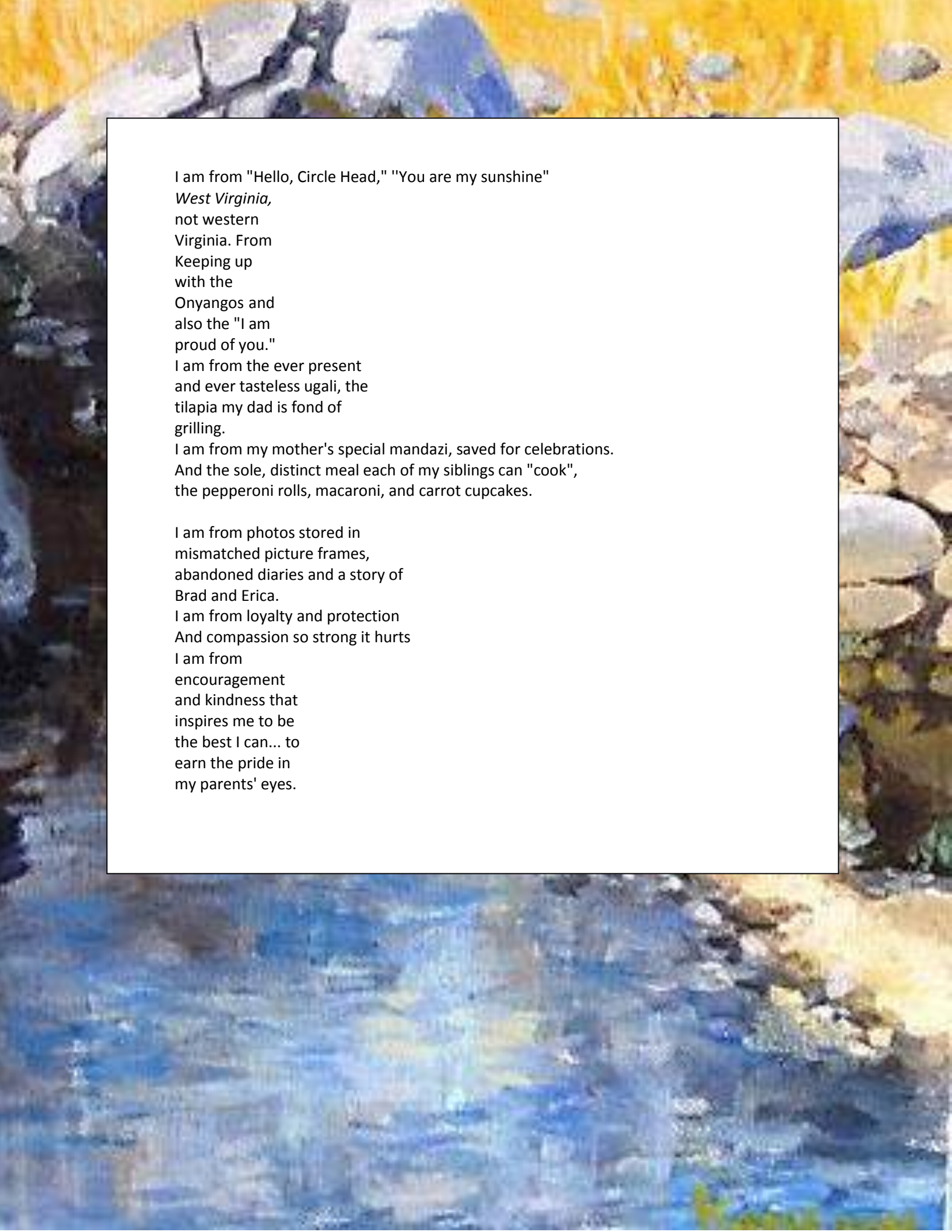
I don't exactly know where I'm going
at the tender age of 17.
And as the days until college are winding down,
I am forced to make a life changing decision.
Luckily I have some guidance from
my peers, teachers and loved ones.
The great thing about life is
there's not one path to take.
America is a host of opportunities
and your conditions at birth do not determine
your future endeavors and options.
If I decide to become a Salsa dancer,
nobody can take that away from the me.
But I would probably DIP out
as soon as I figured out the work it requires.
At the end of the day,
I have a positive outlook about who I am
and look forward to the person I may become.

Where I'm From

Anastasia Onyango

I am from a shared room with my younger sister,
from the top of the bunk, to accidental falls at midnight.
Soft socks that became ice skates on the kitchen tiles. And the hidden hideout
under the stairs that was home to covert Kim Possible themed missions.
I am from wood furniture with smooth finishing,
and African masks with ornate carvings.

I am from the daunting, vast neighborhood forest, the thorns and branches
scratching our shins. From the traffic island brimming with flowers
that lent an impressive Nascar track for bike races.
I am from the long walk to the pool in the summer, and the streetlights that led
to shadow tag at nightfall. The spiteful ducks in the nearby pond, inspiring
laughter and bursts of terror as they approached.
I am from my Aunt Anastasia, gone at 16.
From my mother's food that coincidentally "cured" anything that I suffered
from, and her bright smiles and wide eyes that shined on me.
And my father's quips and hilarious honesty that fostered my family's smiles. I
am from two-man plays performed by my sister and me on Thanksgiving and
Christmas Day
The early mornings spent capturing Pokemons with my older brother,
and the scoldings received together for staying up late.
I am from listening to Fall Out Boy introduced by my older sister... songs that
we can still sing today.
The long road trips driven by my dad,
where complaints and discomfort were expected and cherished. And the first
days of school, our faces lathered with vaseline, and my sister and I adorned
in frilly dresses.



I am from "Hello, Circle Head," "You are my sunshine"

West Virginia,

not western

Virginia. From

Keeping up

with the

Onyangos and

also the "I am

proud of you."

I am from the ever present

and ever tasteless ugali, the

tilapia my dad is fond of

grilling.

I am from my mother's special mandazi, saved for celebrations.

And the sole, distinct meal each of my siblings can "cook",

the pepperoni rolls, macaroni, and carrot cupcakes.

I am from photos stored in

mismatched picture frames,

abandoned diaries and a story of

Brad and Erica.

I am from loyalty and protection

And compassion so strong it hurts

I am from

encouragement

and kindness that

inspires me to be

the best I can... to

earn the pride in

my parents' eyes.

Where I'm From

Julia Parker

I am from old tattered novels that collect dust in the attic.
From broken pencils and spilled ink.
I am from the sand spread upon the welcome mat.
From the serenity of the waves and the briny essence of the sea.
I am from the honeydew's sweet aroma
that repeatedly left me famished.
From the vast pecan tree in my yard
that left me with tender reminders when I fell from it.

I'm from diving until my bones ached and forbearance.
From Scott and Valanda.
I'm from startling laughter and chlorine stained swimsuits.
And from piles of books that stacked higher than I could ever reach.

I'm from "Education is key" and
"Give what you can and take what you need."
And "I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will."
I'm from sticky skin and referring to the sea as
"Davy Jones's Locker".

I am from Tampa, Florida and the beaches on the east coast,
smoldering hot potatoes and jumbo shrimp too large to fit in my mouth.
From the young love of my dear parents,
the staggering brilliance of my younger sister.
I am from the frazzled five year old journal under my mattress
that holds cherished quotes and beloved memories of the water.



Art by Mia James



Art by Amos Kang

REFLECTIONS

WINNERS

Reflections 1st Place Winner

"To Friend Dearest"

Pooja Prabakaran

Come to me,

From within me and surround me,

And let your presence stop time.

The only clock is the synchronized ticking of our hearts,

As delicate as life- as strong as truth.

Call me a dreamer as foolish as am wise,

A traveler as near as the farthest I fly,

And a lover as long as I don't destroy,

This everlasting.

Many suns ago,

I wandered lonely as an orphaned balloon.

Gliding over a forgotten fairground,

I slowly sank into the sky.

To see the glistening sea that you showed me,

A reflection of one another-

A whimsical muse of truth,

Floating in a reverie of dreams.

As different as are our clouds and foam,

Our waves and fog,

Our turtles and doves,

Our heavens and horizons can't help but meet

As the sky can't refrain from mirroring the sea.

Many years end and others begin,
Many friends appear and disappear.

But one remains
Even after weary days-
a comforting constant-
Most cherished.

Show me the gates of solitude
And imbue my heart with soothing joy
Of stories and realities and paintings and designs
Souvenirs as brilliant as the many souls behind
The canvas of the night.

Now listen as hope begins to cry
As it weeps divine tears of joy,
Cleansed with wonder
With the revelation of my friend-
Who shall outlast- my very last breath.

Linger, love
Within tales of lively imagination,
To render my imaginary friend
More real than could I ever be.

Reflections 2nd Place Winner

"In Regard of Spirit"

Abrar Trabulsi

And as the curtains close on glory's complete stage,

New ones open only to let light out in a great blaze.

Opportunity flows with no restraints,

Ever patiently waiting for the grasp

Of someone with a flare,

Determination set in her daring gaze.

The one who flies in fantastic dream,

Only to be grounded by her own belief,

The one who kindles her raging fire for accomplishment,

Inspired by the spirit that moves the masses unmoved,

But waters it down with humility.

Behold.

This one plays no games,

For the thing that is forever in her entrapping gaze

Is not a game of possibilities .

Chess pieces planned with uncertainty -

But a dream set in stone,

To be realized in its own staged glory.

THE
END.