

the WORKS

Literary/Arts Magazine

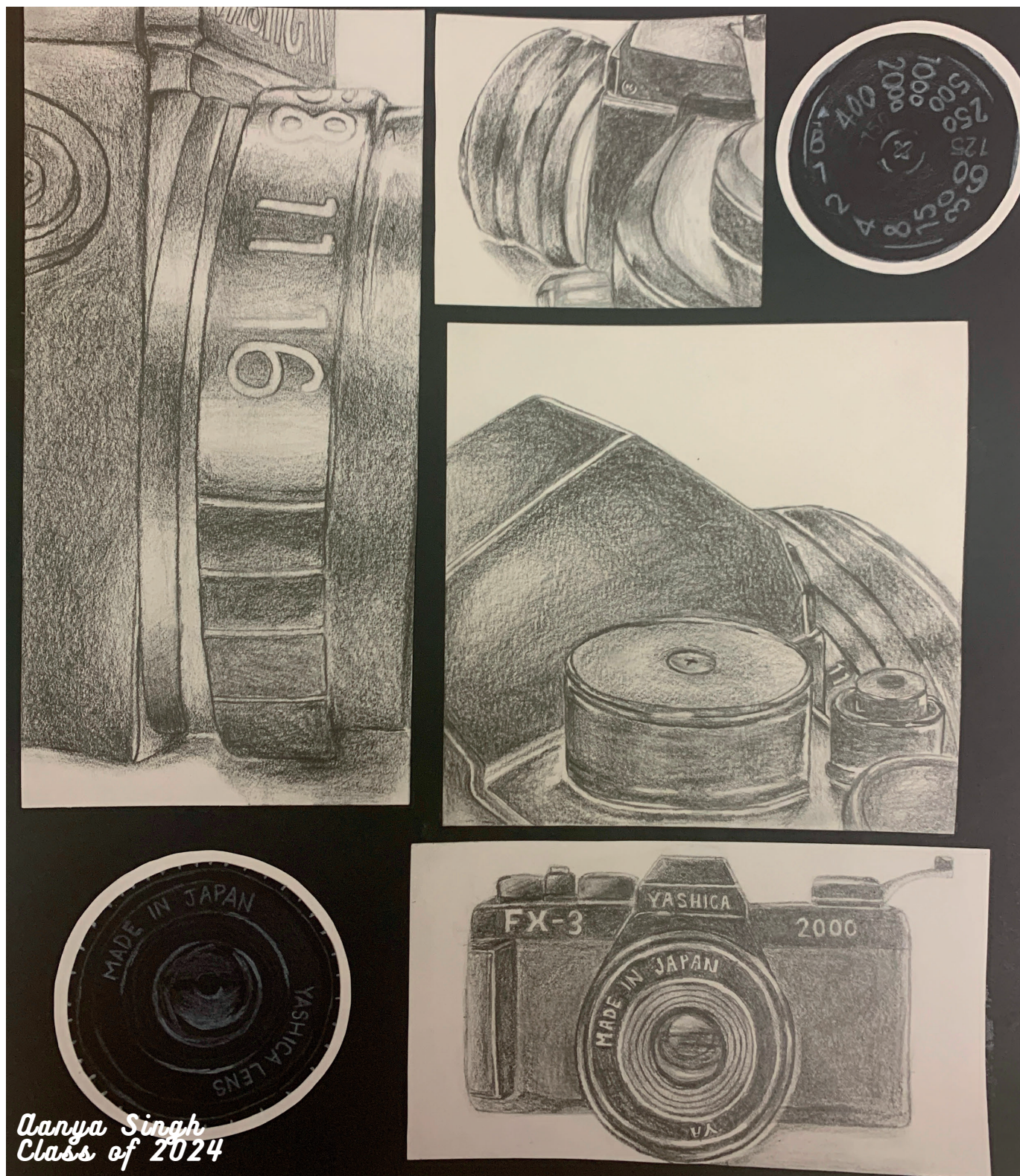


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Letter from the Editor

For all writers and artists, the process of creation is one that requires patience, diligence, and creativity. Through writing, we are able to reach people at a deeper and more intimate level. It is an artistic medium through which one can express sentiments, dreams, and fears that otherwise would be lost or internalized. The United States is a land of freedom and possibilities, where we as human beings are given the right to express ourselves through art and writing. I believe that creating art, our form of free speech, is an act of rebellion, for it has the power to convey such radical ideas in just a small area of paper. As students, our creation of poetry, stories, and art is the craft that feeds our souls. It provides a particular kind of nourishment that exists only when the tip of our pens meets the flat surface of untouched parchment.

The WORKS provides a unique opportunity for student voices to be uplifted through their artwork. By sharing this culmination of student creativity, we empower budding writers and artists who may feel that their work is not worthy of publication, and we empower those who may just be experimenting with new mediums of artistic expression.

-Seraphina Corbo, editor in chief



*Aanya Singh
Class of 2024*

Heartfelt Opposition Chapter One

Martin Pillot
Class of 2024

There was a crab in the road.

That might be normal sometimes, but Eric Merschel wasn't expecting to see one, seeing as Heartfelt City was so inland. There wouldn't be a way for a crab to get all the way over to the city unless it went missing from a farm or a seafood store, or whatever those places were actually called. Of course, Eric also wasn't expecting for a crab to dwarf the two cars it was standing behind, being nearly as tall as some of the single-story shops that dotted the non-park side of the street. The crab was colored a mix between orange and pink, which Eric also wouldn't expect, and it also appeared out of nowhere in a bright flash of light that had blinded him for a few seconds.

However, despite all of these expectations, the crab was, in fact, still there, scanning the street for something. In all of Eric's sixteen years of life, he had never been so confused. Eric's internal monologue was telling him that the best thing to do in the situation he was in would be to run, but a mix of intrigue and fear decided to rule his mind for that day, and so he stood there, watching as the crab watched him.

Wait, since when was it watching him?

The crab was now staring at Eric face-on, or whatever the crab substituted for a face. Eric realized suddenly that he probably lost the chance to run entirely now that the crab had its sights set on him. He glanced from side to side to see if there was any way out, but that proved to be a bad move as the crab suddenly reached out with one of its claws and jabbed it towards him. *Oh, I'm about to die*, he thought, just as the claw stopped just centimeters before his face.

He looked back up at the crab just in time to see it fade to white, along with the rest of the scenery around him. The cars, trees, hills, shops - everything simply disappeared except for him and what was now a disembodied, giant crab claw in a completely white void.

That void seemed to spread out forever, in every direction. Am I dead? Eric wondered. That would be the most likely conclusion, that he was dead and this was simply some sort of afterlife, because time couldn't just stop like this. That was something that only happened in bad fantasy books or those awful TV shows his parents used to watch. The white void that he was in was also very bizarre. There was no horizon, no walls, no ceiling, nothing.

"Hello?" he said, hoping that he would at least hear some sort of echo, but there was nothing. Just silence. As far as he could tell, this place was infinite.

That is, until a feminine voice cut through the silence. "Elizabeth, can you hear me?" Eric wasn't sure who this Elizabeth was, but if someone was able to talk to him, he might not be completely gone.

"I mean, I'm not Elizabeth, but I can hear you," Eric responded.

The voice seemed to pay no attention to that, simply continuing its speech. "Actually, why did I ask that? I know this broadcaster isn't a two-way thing. Come on, Charlotte, get your head in the game here. Anyway. Elizabeth! I'm just going to assume you can hear me because this broadcaster is linked to you and the monitor says you're Awakening right now. So if you aren't that sucks for you because what I'm about to tell you is going to save your life."

Oh, no, Eric thought. Since I'm in here instead, does that mean this Elizabeth girl is going to die? The voice once again cut through his thoughts, opting to continue on this strange monologue. "For some reason, you aren't in the list of the awakenings that should be happening. All of these are predetermined, and you somehow got one that wasn't, so I don't know how you fucked this up that badly. Anyway, I managed to pry some info from the Awakening machine, and all it says is that your primary weapon is a shield. I'm gonna be honest, I have no idea how those work in combat so you're gonna have to improvise. Fortunately, the steps to Awakening are rather simple for the most part, I think you can probably follow the general blade Awakening checklist. Ok. First, you have to -"

A loud static noise suddenly filled the void, before going silent. Eric was once again alone, and had no idea what to do. Thoughts raced through his mind. *Who is Elizabeth? Why am I here in this void in her place? Is she going to die because I'm here? What's an awakening? How do I get out of here?* His brain quickly flooded. His hest tightened, his breathing quickened, and his heart started beating faster and faster. Eric knew exactly what had happened, and he quickly tried to take control. Deep breaths. He started to flush every thought from his mind. Breathe in. His heart started to slow down. Breathe out. He'd done this so many times, it had become almost a second nature. Breathe in. He focused on easing the tightening in his heart. Breathe... out?

A bright light suddenly appeared from his chest. The source of the light burst out from a space just where he thought his heart would be, and quickly seemed to coalesce into a white, heart-shaped crystal - that is, the heart symbol, not the shape of a human heart. The crystal heart spun around lazily, as Eric just stared at it. Occasionally, it pulsed, as if inviting Eric to touch it.

So he did.

Fragments of the ground around him started breaking off, and a massive crack appeared and started racing towards Eric. It reached roughly a meter away before splitting off into a circle around him. The entirety of the ground sans said circle fell away, and small fragments of the ground spiralled into an orbit around the heart. Eric reached forward again, and the heart jumped to a spot on the center of his forearm. The fragments orbiting the heart began to form themselves into a cross splitting off from the heart, and then a circle connecting each arm of the cross. By the time all of the fragments had been removed from their previous orbit, a shield had formed, attached to Eric's forearm by two surprisingly comfortable straps.

The heart in the center of the shield suddenly changed from white to a light blue, and Eric's arm involuntarily went into a defensive state directly in front of the disembodied crab arm. It felt as if the heart was guiding him into the stance, yet it still felt natural somehow.

And then time resumed, and the claw smashed into Eric's shield, throwing him backwards, but not before completely vaporizing the crab's entire arm. As Eric got up from the hill he had been thrown onto, he saw the crab stumbling from side to side, out of balance from its newfound lack of arm. If crabs could glare at people, Eric was sure its eyes would be piercing through his skull. Unfortunately, all the crab could really do was look at Eric and try to jab at him with its not vaporized arm. Eric raised the shield to counter the crab's second attack, and this time he was braced enough for the attack that rather than go flying backwards, he merely stumbled back a few paces as the crab's other arm was completely annihilated. Now with no form of offense, the only thing the crab had defending itself was a thick shell. Without knowing why he did, Eric sprinted forward, slid underneath the belly of the crab, and thrust the shield upwards. The crystal heart made contact with the unprotected underbelly, and in an instant the crab had been completely vaporized.

The shield on Eric's arm instantly disassembled itself, the heart plunging back into his chest, while the fragments of the shield bits splintered apart and coiled into a bracelet around Eric's arm. Taking a glance at it, it looked oddly like his friend April's bracelet that she had worn ever since that one day she was home sick the previous March. There seemed to be a button on the side, and Eric was about to press it when someone grabbed him by his collar and yanked him off the street and onto the sidewalk.

"Jeez, Eric, what are you doing?" said a familiar voice. Eric turned around to see April. Her dark brown hair was tied into a ponytail behind her back, and it was obvious from her outfit of a tank top and shorts that she had just been going on one of her spontaneous runs throughout Heartfelt City Park. "I figured you'd be spending most of your time today sitting inside playing video games, not standing in the middle of the street without a care in the world!"

Eric didn't really know how to respond. On the one hand, he knew he could trust April, but on the other hand, she'd probably think he was crazy for claiming he fought a giant crab with a shield that could vaporize things at a moment's notice. Thankfully, April spoke up first.

"Wait, is that a..." she said, glancing at his wrist. "I might seem crazy for saying this, but did you just fight some form of oversized marine life?"

Eric nodded. "Does that mean you've done that too?"

"Well. That's strange. Men aren't supposed to Awaken. There's obviously something weird about you. Are you secretly a girl and you just didn't tell me?"

Man, I wish, Eric thought, but he simply said, "No. I think someone else was supposed to do that awakening instead of me. The person who was instructing me kept calling me Elizabeth. I think whoever this Elizabeth is was probably supposed to actually be the one to be awakened."

That is a possibility," April replied. "Maybe whatever powers govern who gets to be Awakened simply slipped up and gave the abilities to you instead. Doesn't really matter at this point, you've got the powers now. Now, when I awakened, no one even was like, 'hey April, we're awakening you', instead I just got 'hey touch this heart and then grab the dagger'. I don't even get why everything has to be about hearts anyway. Like, give me some other thing to embed on a weapon, like a spade or a diamond. Hearts just seem so cliché."

April had a tendency to ramble like this. Eric had just learned how to sort through everything she was saying. He figured her affinity for running had simply had an affect on how she spoke, and now everything she said was large in magnitude and direction. "Hey, can you explain to me what exactly this 'Awakening' even means?" Eric asked. "I'm still confused about pretty much everything going on, with the bracelets, and the weapons, and everything."

"Remember what your elementary school teachers always said, Eric," April said. Eric had a feeling she was dodging the question until she grabbed his hand and pressed a few buttons on her wristband. Eric's vision began to blur into a single color, before readjusting to a small, enclosed room with a single door at the end. April grabbed the handle, and finished, "Show, don't tell," as she flung open the door.


Hello Fruitmello

*Audrey Aranha
Class of 2024*



SHE'S THERE.

CLAUDIA
TAYLOR

 Class of 2023

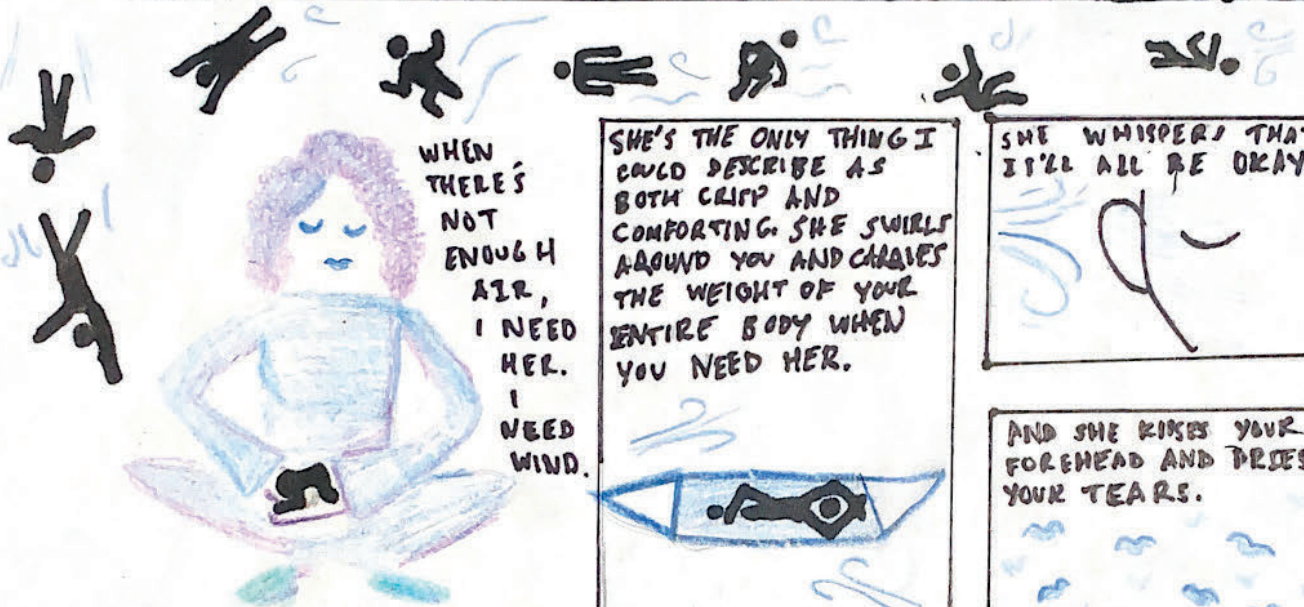
I NEVER SEE IT COMING.
IT SNEAKS UP ON ME.



EASILY AND OFTEN.

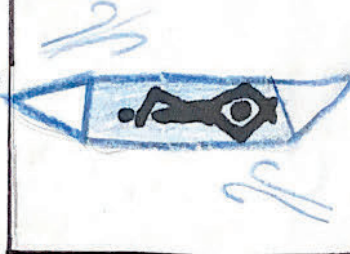


SOMETIMES THERE'S
JUST TOO MUCH NOISE OR
TOO MANY PEOPLE AND
THEY'RE STEALING ALL
OF MY AIR...



WHEN
THERE'S
NOT
ENOUGH
AIR,
I NEED
HER.
I NEED
WIND.

SHE'S THE ONLY THING I
COULD DESCRIBE AS
BOTH CREEPY AND
COMFORTING. SHE SWIRLS
AROUND YOU AND CHARGES
THE WEIGHT OF YOUR
ENTIRE BODY WHEN
YOU NEED HER.



SHE WHISPERS THAT
I'LL ALL BE OKAY...

AND SHE KISSES YOUR
FOREHEAD AND DRIES
YOUR TEARS.

IN THE SUMMER, SHE
LEAVES AND THE WORLD
TURNS HOT
AND STICKY.



IN WINTER,



SHE CAN'T HANDLE
THE COLD AND LASHES OUT.

SOMETIMES I JUST LOSE
HER. MY THOUGHTS CRASH TOGETHER
AND MY BODY FREEZES. OFTEN

WHEN
I NEED
HER
MOST.

WE HAVE A LOT OF FUN
TOGETHER. WHEN I
WAS LITTLE, I LOVED TO
STICK MY HEAD OUT THE
CAR WINDOW LIKE A DOG.



AT CAMP, I TOOK UP
SAILING TO BE CLOSE
TO HER.



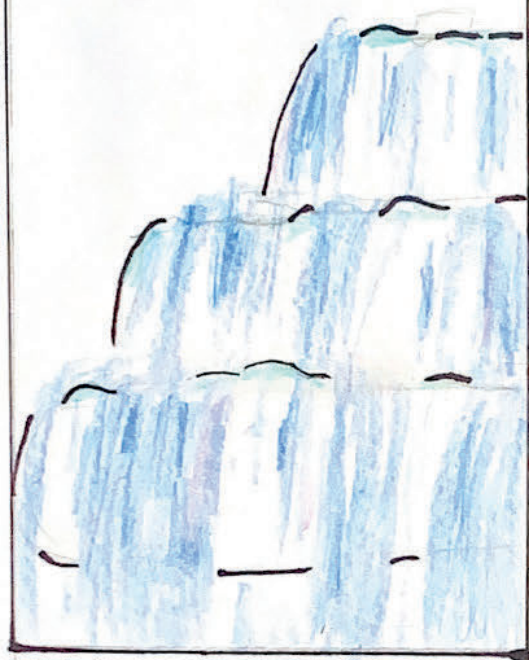
I LOVE ROLLER COASTERS.
ESPECIALLY ONES THAT
MAKE YOUR HAIR STAND
STRAIGHT UP.





I THINK I LIKE HER MOST WHEN SHE JUST WANTS TO SIT.

I LOVE HOW SHE FLOWS
THROUGH MY HAIR
AND OVER MY BACK.



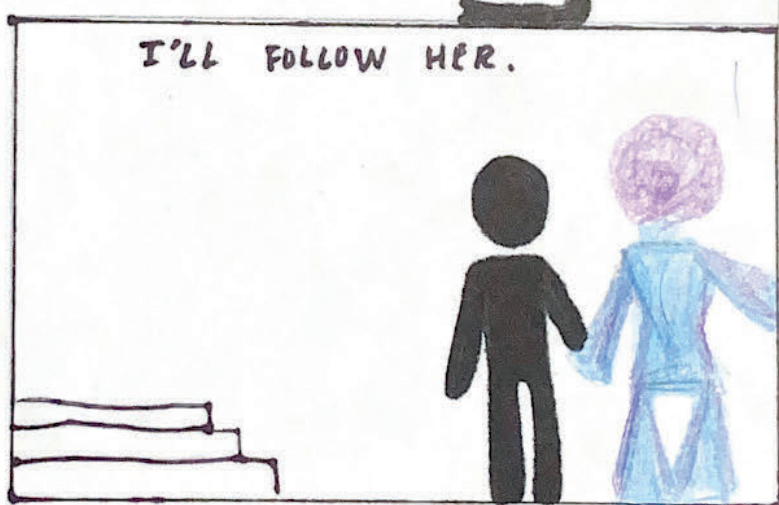
SHE'S SO BEAUTIFUL, EVEN WHEN SHE'S INTENSE.
SHE MAKES ME FEEL FREE.
SHE PUSHES ME IN A FUTURE DIRECTION.



I SHOULD PROBABLY FOLLOW
HER.



I'LL FOLLOW HER.



Nascent

*Seraphina Corbo
Class of 2023*

Veins flood with the soporific properties of nostalgia, inducing
a slumber.

This quiet contemplation is mere hedonism, regular adolescent
self-indulgence,

Thoughts of the future, of possibility, of reinventing oneself
and rebuilding

Confidence, which has been abused and slaughtered.

We believe that we are nascent;

Bathed in the sunlight of the future that beckons us run towards her
with reckless abandon.

With cherubic grace and innocence we fly to her kingdom
In madness.

The thought remains:

Is this garden of the future as Edenic as we are led to believe?

Or is this hope mere

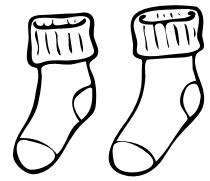
Self-deception?



*Rayna Everett
Class of 2025*



The House and Her Socks



There is a street, one of the many veins of a great and vast city. Cars rush along the veins, the pulse of the city sounding like tires on asphalt. On this street there is a house. Its breathing sounds like air conditioning blowing, its heartbeat like electricity buzzing. Its windows look down onto the street, eyes watching for her. She lives here, in the house, and her rubber-soled shoes step carefully along the cracked cement sidewalks every morning and evening.

The pavement knows her only by the bumps of worn rubber that walk along it twice a day, and it greets her warmly with pebbles and weeds, forcing their way through the cement. The grassy lawn in front of the house knows her by the sinking of her shoes into the soil, and it greets her with beetles and violets, poking out between the blades of grass. The house's floors know her by her socks- her many, many socks. Halloween and Easter, rabbit-tailed and cat-faced, knitted and cotton, sportswear and stockings. The house greets her excitedly each day, with the low creak of the door and the squeaking of the floorboards beneath her. Every day, once she has returned, the house takes inventory of itself:

This is an apple, it is a thing you find in her autumn socks.

This is a nightstand, it is a thing you find in her goodnight moon socks.

This is a chair, it is a thing you find in her classroom socks.

This is a window, it is a thing you find in her snowy day socks.

This is a laundry basket, it is a thing you find in her Little House socks.

The house is dutiful; it never misses a day's inventory. It is content. For days upon weeks, she leaves the house, pulling rubber-soled shoes over her lovely patterned socks, stepping down onto the lawn and walking down the sidewalk, admiring the beetles and weeds and pebbles they have given to her. The sun sets and the shadows grow long, and she comes back down the sidewalk, rubber soles tapping out a rhythm as she walks home to the house. The lawn gives her lightning bugs and dandelions, the house flickers the porch light and squeaks the door's hinges, and she returns.

Today the pavement outside tried to greet her, but its pebbles were kicked aside, its weeds bent in the wake of her flashing sneakers as she ran. The lawn made an attempt to say hello, but its dandelion seeds were scattered, its lightning beetles scared into flight as she rushed up to the house. The house welcomed her happily, creaking the door loud and low as she entered. Her shoes landed heavily next to its welcome mat, surprising the house with the thud. The porch light buzzed indignantly. Her patterned socks stepped quickly across the house's floors toward the staircase. It squeaked the floorboards lovingly beneath her footsteps. She dashed up the stairs, only her toes touching the house's wooden steps. As her light footfalls grew quiet, the house settled. It began to take inventory.

This is a bed, it is a thing you find in her Christmas Eve socks.

This is a couch, it is a thing you find in her cartoon socks.

This is a rattling locked door, it is a thing you find in her monster socks.

This is a broken window, it is a thing you find in her haunted house socks.

This is a table, it is a thing you find in her thanksgiving socks.

This is a bookshelf, it is a thing you find in her nighttime socks.

These are muddy footprints, it is a thing you find in her woodland socks.

This is a stairway, it is a thing you find in her M. C. Escher socks.

This is a shattered vase, it is a thing you find in her Amelia Bedilia socks.

This is a man dressed in black, it is a thing you find in her Spiderman socks.

This is a light overhead, it is a thing you find in her lightbulb socks.

This is her blood pooling on the floor, it is a thing you find in her Psycho socks.

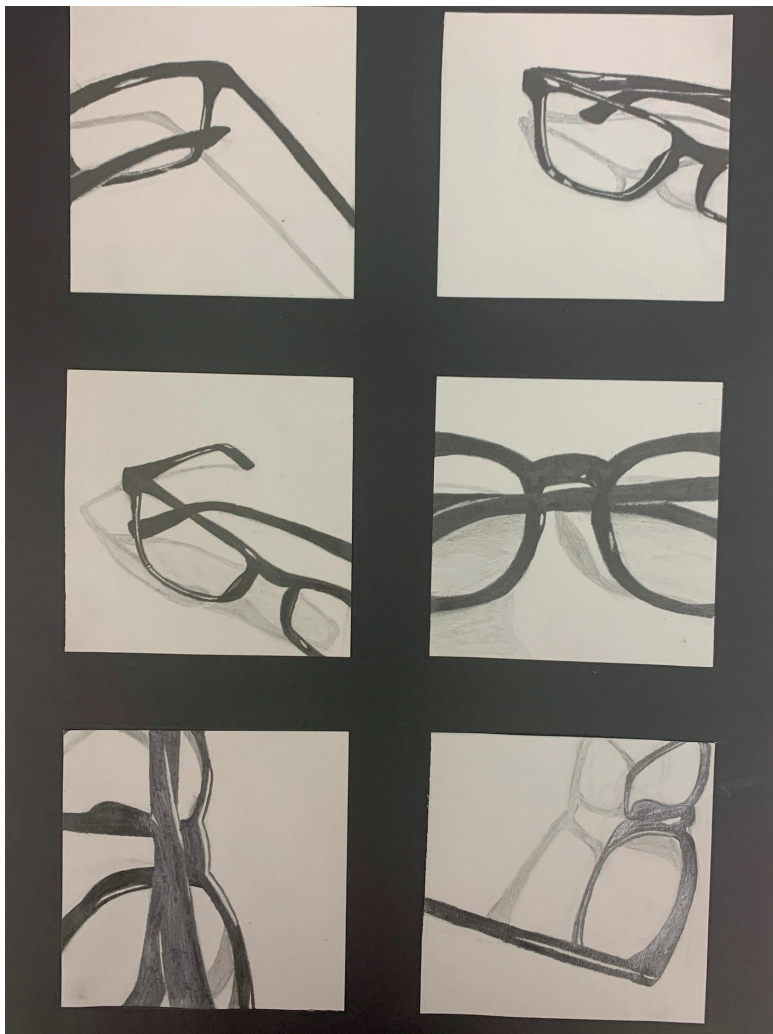
This is a knife buried in her, it is not a thing you find in her sock.

The house does not take inventory again for a very long time. It waits patiently, each evening, for her rubber-soled shoes and for her patterned socks to step across its floor and up its stairs. But they don't come. Other shoes come, big heavy thick-soled boots and hard, small-heeled clicky shoes, big floppy sneakers and plastic hard-soled shoes, but no worn rubber soles. No patterned socks.

The pavement outside had long since stopped growing weeds, and the lightning bugs didn't nestle in the lawn anymore. Every evening the house flicks on the porch light, gazes down into the street from its windows, and waits for her. The sunsets and shadows grow long, but no shoes return over the horizon. Eventually, the bulb in the porch light burns out, and the windows overlooking the street are covered with plywood. But the house still waits. The house did not know how long it had been. The sidewalk was no longer cracked, the lawn outside fresh and green, the sun shining orange and low through its windows and onto the dust-coated floor within. The shadows were long and dark. Its walls were crumbling, cracks snaking up to the ceiling. The stairway was broken in the middle, half its steps missing. Only the windows over the street let in light; all the others had been covered. But it had awoken, and why?

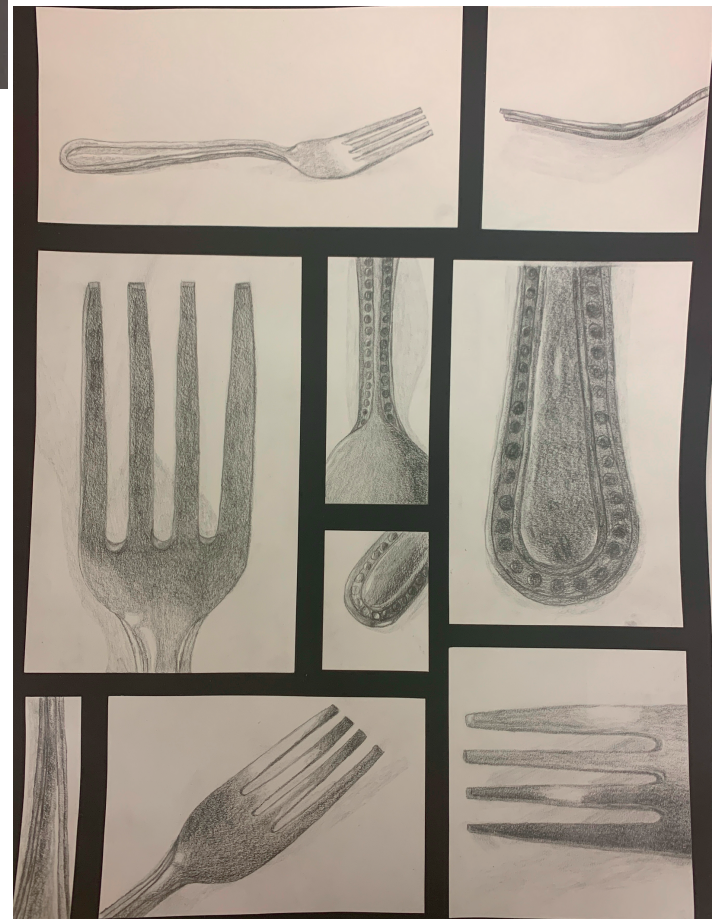
A light step on the sidewalk outside. Worn rubber soles tapping out a rhythm on the cement. Weeds begin to spring up, cracking the sidewalk. Pebbles break off, rolling into the street. Dozens of lightning bugs rise from the dewy green grass of the lawn, dandelion seeds drift off in the light breeze. The footfalls of two rubber-soled sneakers walk into the house. The door creaks like a sigh, like a sob. A thud sounds, and the light footfalls of her patterned socks pad their way to the stairway. They walk up, hitting each stair. When they reach the top, the house relaxes. It takes inventory.

This is a pile of rubble, it is a thing you can find in her quarry socks.



GLASSES & FORKS

Daphne Martino
Class of 2023



Zach Millner
Class of 2023

MY FRIEND

*An Mei Deck
Class of 2024*

My friend is a puppy dog
I watch her every move to make sure she's happy
If she's scared, I give her comfort
If she's hungry, I give her food
I'm a mother and a virgin.
Or maybe
I'm the puppy dog
And I sit and I lay down and I roll over
Just
To make her happy
To not upset the mysterious creature I can never understand.



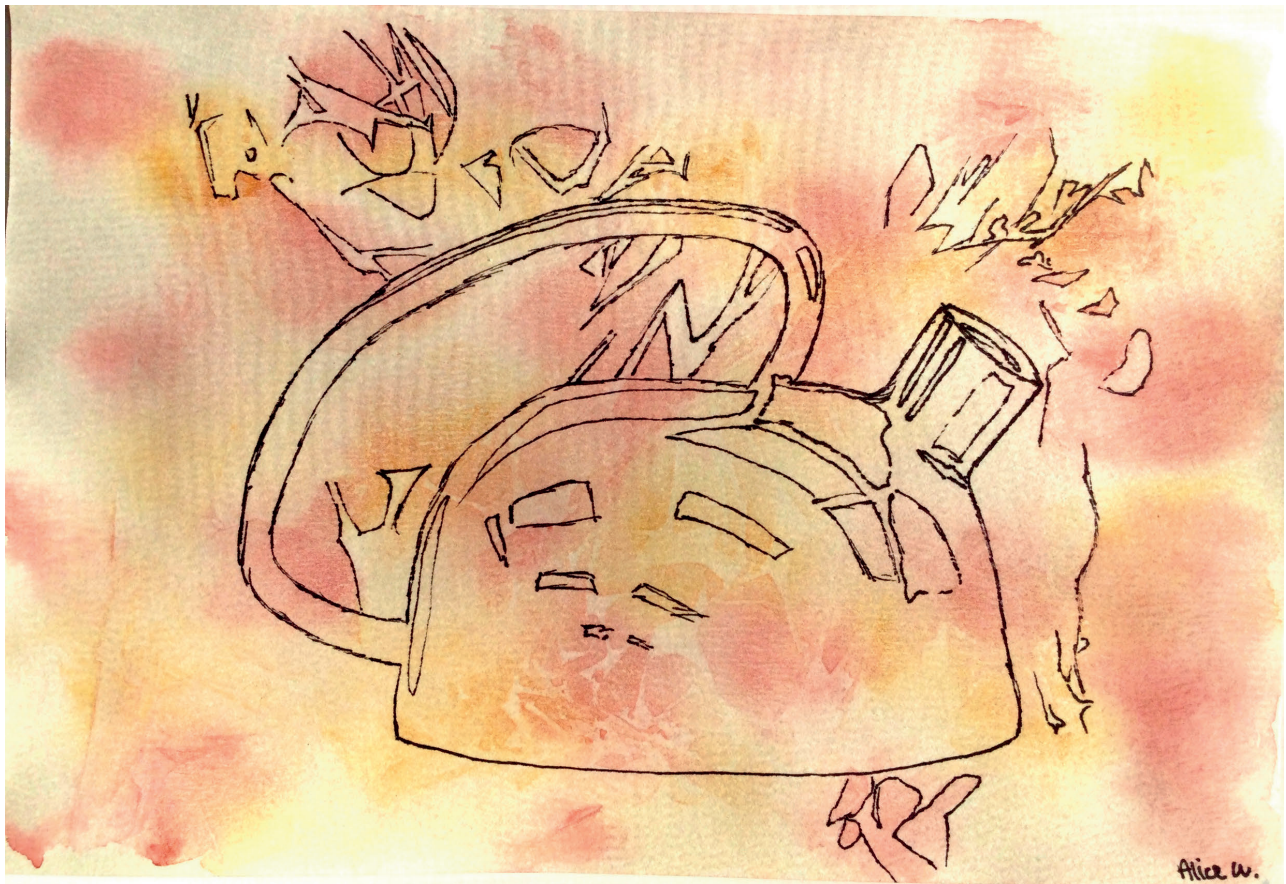
Marjorie

*Jai Li Deck
Class of 2024*

SOUP

*An Mei Deck
Class of 2024*

My mind is a soup
Slosh slosh
Make it stop
Chunks of chicken go clank clank clank
Selfish celery stalks my thoughts and
Crazy carrots cause mischief and confusion
Too much all at once
Essays and math tests and Chinese characters and busy weekends and
busy weekdays
My bowl is full
No more soup please.

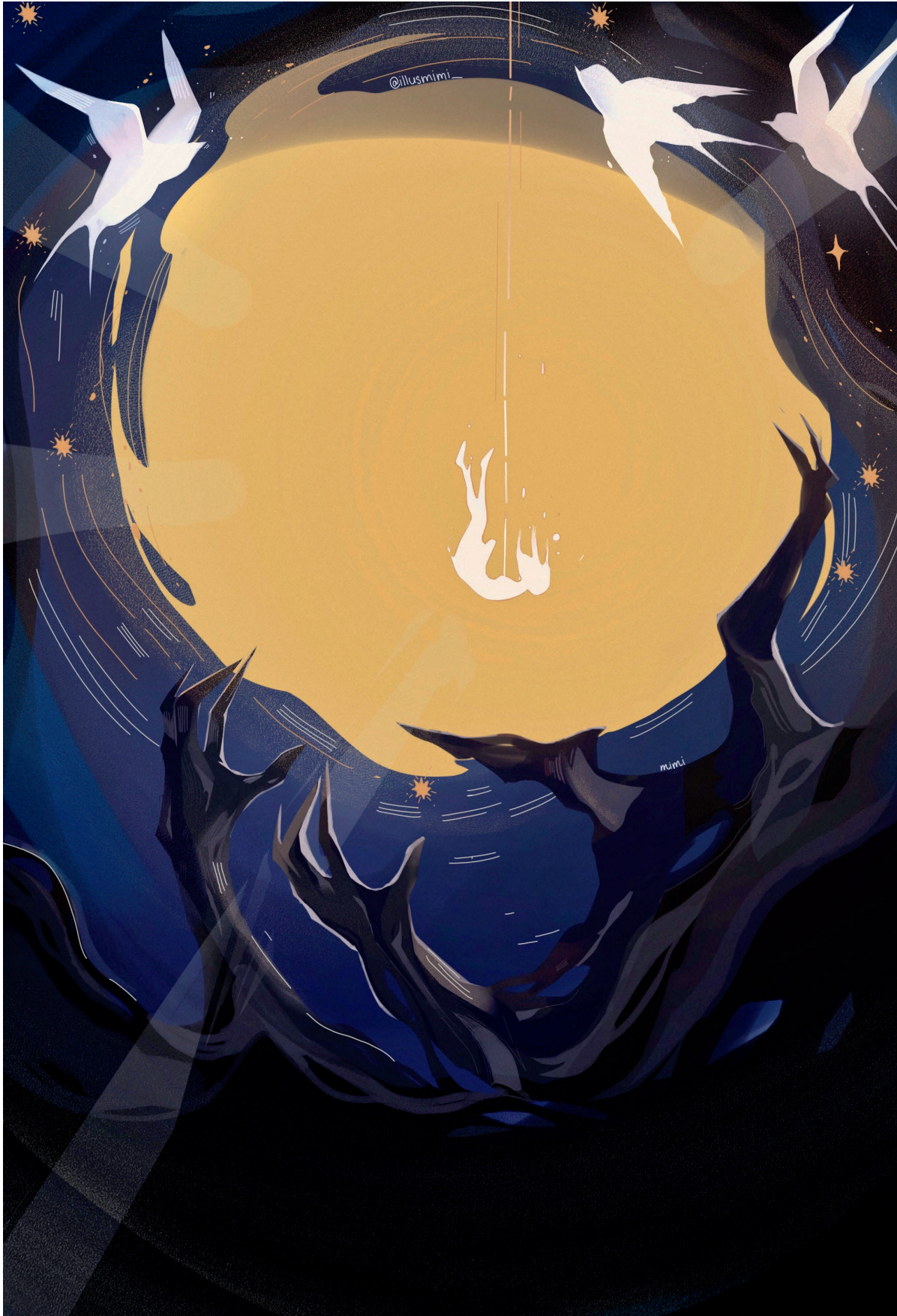


Untitled

*Alice Wang
Class of 2023*

REFLECTION

Jigjia Mae
Class of 2023



The Garden and the House

Farrah Nutt
Class of 2023

The Garden:

Every day is the same;
Wake up,
Como,
Get dressed,
Kiss *mi esposa* "Adios"
Onward to work.

Sounds of cars passing,
always looking over my shoulder,
anxiety rising,
hoping it's not the cops or ICE.

Sun blazing on a hot summer's day
Birds chirping
Bugs crawling
Blades of grass flying in the air

Mi equipo y yo working hard to clean the
white man's lawn
Too big to match the *casa de grande*

Every time is the same
I say, "*Dinero, nada más.*"
Every time they try to negotiate.
Every time I say "no, only cash."

Working hard every day
Hoping that soon I can make enough to
keep *mi esposa* from hard labor.
She's *un ángel*.
She shouldn't have to be
On her hands and knees.

I fear that we may both be like this
forever
running, hiding, settling, repeating.

Will this unfair game of life
always be the same?
Will we ever truly know
Freedom?
Or will we die
before the chance arises?

The House:

Every morning I look at *mi manos*
every day they look slightly more callused

I start the day by making breakfast
para mi esposo y yo
Yo quiero mucho mi esposo
I know he works hard for me
Pero I worry more about him being in the
open

I'm safer in houses
where I don't have to always
peer over my shoulder,
don't have to worry about being
dragged away.

ripped from society
ripped from *mi Amor*
ripped from life

I sacrifice *mi manos* with each scrub
back and forth
outweighing the option of being
caged or killed

Maybe one day we can enjoy the
pleasures of
living life
Be done with the endless darkness of
paranoia,
start living in the light of true freedom

Until then
I will scrub
And he will cut

Maybe
Until we die.
Maybe not.

Last Breaths of a Fallen Angel

Olivia Mutis
Class of 2025

My feathered companion
A shooting star
Your wings have withered
Your songs have ceased
I cannot be your savior
But I will stay
Until you are gone

A Belated Kuebiko

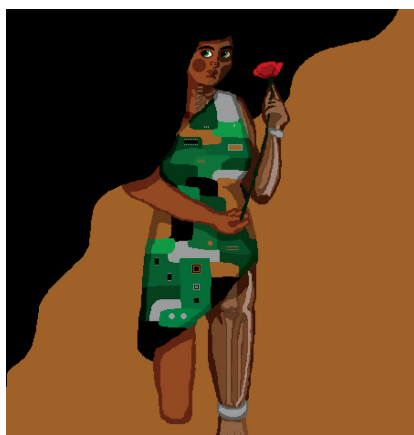
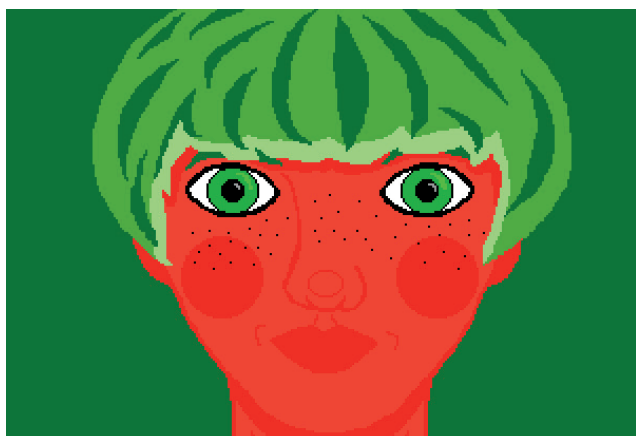
Chase Spees
Class of 2024

A star has peaked over the silver summit,
dripping liquid luminescence into the valley,
the tears of a somewhere-sun
touching argent fingers to the shadows below.
There in the starrise-caressed night,
crumpled stalks in the dust of fire
glint with the ruby ribbons
of soldiers fallen, two brutally pious armies,
shattered spearheads finally resting
even as their bearers cannot.

In the evanescence of a distant roll of thunder,
armies march out to the sky
having abandoned earth for the heavens,
there lies a great wide lacuna,
reaching for the horizons,
kissing the hills with the reverence
of a mother for her children,
awash in clinquant beams of galaxia.

The souls lingering, no one left to dig their graves,
refract tidal abhorrence in life to a wail in death
and wisp in collective longing from a rosewood chariot,
claret stallions pawing arcane scriptures into nothing
as War harvests its spoils from a barren scape.
Though seemingly solivagant in its wandering,
the choral susurrus is echoed back in Polaris's aubade.

But no vagary, no North Star, endows the ghosts their freedom
and thus the wind carries on the fleeting cry
of an ephemeral hate,
and upon the mount of dawn,
a quiescent sings out a sempiternal melody
to daybreak.



Sky, Watermelon
Girl, Penny,
Circuitbones, and
Self-portrait

*Stella Plein
Class of 2025*



School as a Means of Creative Exploration

*Kylen Crews
Class of 2023*

I have been given some time to shine in my areas of interest these past twelve years. I've discovered that I have a passion for history, particularly art history. I've learned so much about classical architecture, and now when walking past a building, I can identify all of the architectural elements. I've also found that I'm not too fond of math. I daydream about dropping my pre-calculus class and never solving an exponential function again. So there are positives to school and negatives. I do, however, greatly wish that I could deep-dive into specific courses that interest me, furthering from STEM. Senior year seems like the only time where you get a choice in your schedule, and it's still not much of a choice because a counselor will tell you the required courses to get into college. In a society where we are so individualized, with millions of career options, children should be able to explore what interests them from a young age, even if that means going in the direction of a job that makes less money. I find it vital to a child's well-being to explore creativity. No one person can excel at a career without the ability to think creatively.

We, as a society, are on the path to destroying creativity. We have become so focused on our careers and high-paying jobs that we've forgotten how to express ourselves. Children are not given enough real-world experiences to relate the content they're learning to what the actual world is like. "Students need more exposure to the way everyday things work and are made...we persist in a rigid approach that rewards those who 'get it' and leaves the rest—including those with the very kinds of mind our economy and our future most desperately need—with a sense of profound failure" (Grandin, *Against Algebra*). Learning geometry isn't of any use unless you can relate it to construction, art, design, measuring planetary movements, or interior design. The possibilities are endless as long as you can apply the learning. Children should be given the opportunity to take more field trips and excursions.

In my Art History class, we are learning about classical Greek architecture. That's great, but it would be even better if we could take a field trip to the WashU campus and identify doric, ionic, and Corinthian capitals. There are boundless opportunities for children to explore the world around them. It becomes even more engaging when they can make connections in and out of school.

We have not only crushed creativity but also failed to make school a safe place for students. Elementary schoolers are often excited to come to school, learn the alphabet, and do long division, so why is there a sudden leap where middle and high schoolers dread coming to school every day? In sophomore year I

would have the most painful stomach aches before 8:15 every day. I'd cry and beg my mom to call me out of school. That's not how school should be. As Lynda Barry describes a comforting school environment in *The Sanctuary of School*, it resonated with my similarly enjoyable elementary years. "I was with my teacher, and in a while, I was going to sit at my desk, with my crayons and pencils and books and classmates all around me, and for the next six hours, I was going to enjoy a thoroughly secure, warm and stable world" (Barry 168). School can be safe and vital to those children who don't have the best home lives. As Barry says, "But in an overcrowded and unhappy home, it's incredibly easy for any child to slip away" (Barry 168). Teachers and classmates can be the turning point in a child's day. A child may look forward to art class, where they might be painting, to science, where they can learn about plants, or to math, where they can solve complex problems. No matter what they enjoy, they should be able to pursue that interest. It could help them to not focus on negative home life.

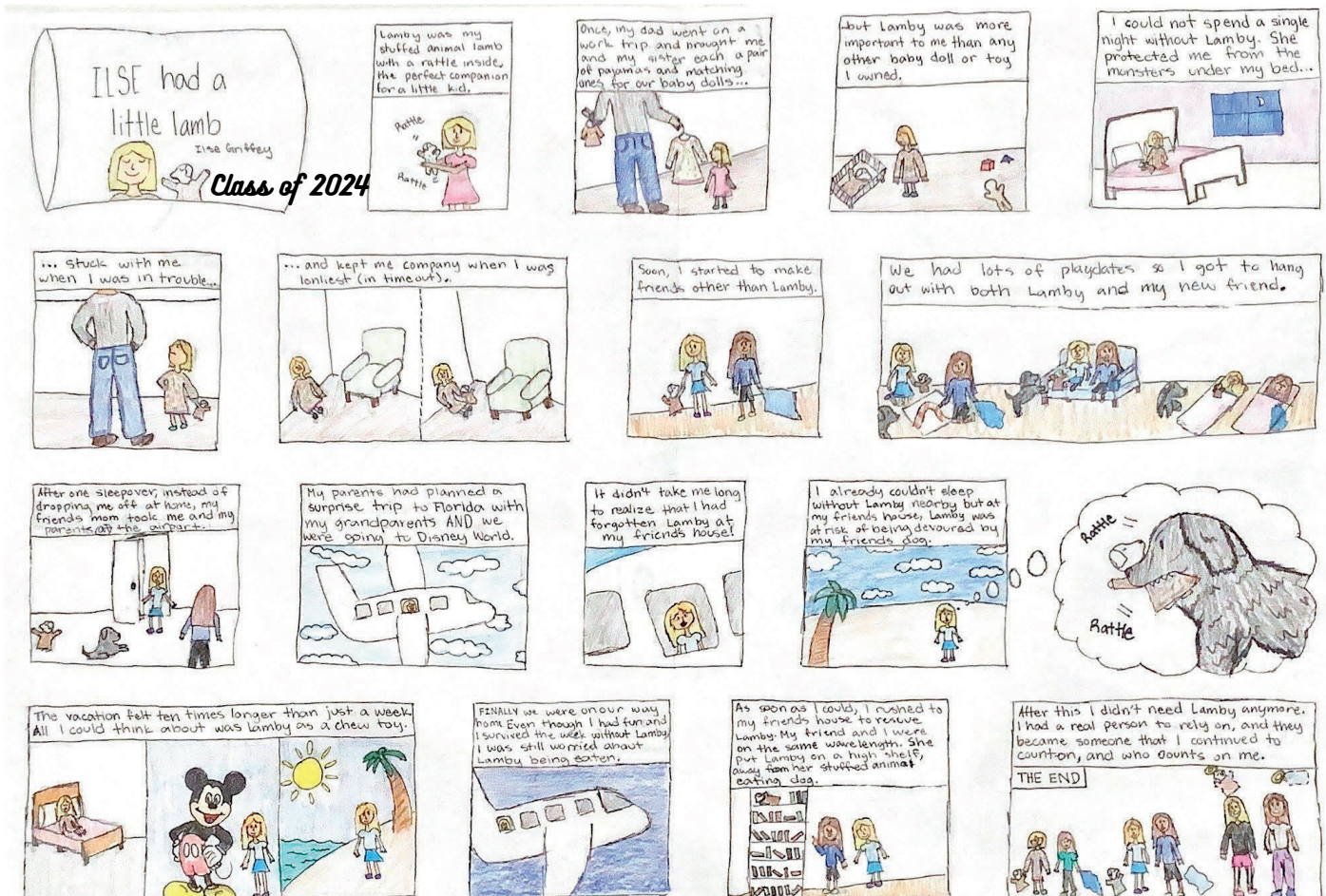
High school is the most significant issue. There's not enough opportunity for students, regardless of age, to explore their interests. Now, this doesn't mean the elimination of STEM or adding more arts programs; it's a balance of both in addition to a child's interest in a particular subject. Creativity is fundamental to a well-rounded individual. It can be just as important as critical thinking and vice versa. Many critics might not realize that many fields require both types of thinking. STEM as a profession requires excellent creativity. Steve Jobs didn't create Macintosh without a creative mind, did he? He could accomplish such great things because he focused on what interested him: technology. If we let each child concentrate on a topic that interests them, we could have thousands of extraordinary minds, just like Jobs.

There's simply something wrong with our education, especially in high school. There are significant discrepancies in schools. Some STEM programs are vital, and some fail to exist. Despite it being so valued in our society, we are failing our youth. As the National Science Foundation states in its 2020 Visioning Report, "Whether or not they become scientists or engineers, all Americans should have the access, opportunity, encouragement, and tools to participate in the innovation economy, and to succeed amid technological progress and change," (NSF 8). Improvement in education needs to come from all constituents. The key to success is a solid education in all curriculum areas. As a result, a foundation will be built for the child to begin branching out to other subjects.

Given the history of traditional schools, many people may disagree with my viewpoint on encouraging creativity. We've gotten very caught up in our traditional ways. The A-F grading scale, memorization, midterms, finals, arithmetic, and grammar. It may be better to keep things the way that they are. People are resistant to change because there is comfort in our old ways. There was an interesting case at NYU where a professor got fired for a multitude of complaints. When it came down to the fine line, however, these students weren't just failing an organic chemistry class; they were failing a class on their way to becoming doctors. As Dr. Kirschenbaum said, "Unless you appreciate these transformations at the molecular level, I don't think you can be a good physician, and I don't want you treating patients" (Sauv 5). As quoted, it is vital to have a grasp of specific topics in order to enter a specific field. In medicine, a doctor must understand molecular chemistry before someone's life is in their hands. Furthermore, it's much harder to specialize in a lecture class of 50+ students. So the professor gave extra resources. Sometimes, it's simply up to the student to do the work. So in cases like this, creativity shouldn't be a priority with a class so rigorous. Instead, students should prioritize their knowledge regarding a class that could make them a doctor.

It's now my last year of high school, and I feel very conflicted. I have had such an intense hatred of school in the last four or five years, but now that I'm almost at the finish line, I wish my time was better spent. I've been able to choose a few interesting courses, but mostly I was set on a predestined course of the four core subjects.

I have often talked with my mom (who coaches teachers) about how much I hate school and what I would change. Yet I never felt like harboring change. I planned to forget about K-12 education as soon as I graduated. As I write this essay, I realize how vital education reform is to me. I want to inspire change not only in Clayton but nationwide, too, because we most certainly need to dismantle the whole system and start over. It's hard to imagine how we would change things, but we can start small. Don't get rid of the arts in schools. It is paramount to a child's development. Playing the keyboard, making sculptures out of recycled materials, and even parties where we crafted boxes to receive valentines. These are all memories of my early education that shaped my creativity and social skills with others. These explorations could inspire a world of possibilities for one child, including me. It's time to put in the work to make America's education system one that enriches young minds and guides them toward a life that will become fulfilling. Each child is unique. School should be unique as well.





Nada Es Eterno

*Laura Murillo-Torres
Class of 2025*

Nos vemos hoy y mañana,
pero no en 10 años.
Ahora me preocupo mucho por ti,
pero algún día te olvidaré.
Ahora superaría mis miedos por ti, pero en el futuro,
ni siquiera el más pequeño de ellos.
Hoy adoro tu voz,
pero no importa porque algún día,
ni siquiera recordaré tu risa.
No es porque no te quiera en mi vida, si fuera por mí,
te mantendría en ella.
Pero todos crecemos, nos separamos y finalmente,
olvidamos.

*On a Moonlit Night
Courtney Lewis
Class of 2024*

The Rolling Hills

Claire Taussig
Class of 2023

Fogs lay low over a distant field. It is a crisp morning. The sun rises, casting cool shadows accompanied by brilliant warm orange and pink rays. The weather is cool as it is when fall arrives and brings gusts of goosebump winds. The air is clean and pure as the earth's secret untouched waters. The grass is green, tall, and luscious; it dances and sways in the wind- nature's natural shuffle. Rabbits jump about, crickets create the song of the land, singing their songs proudly so that even the distant hills can hear. A beaten path curves down a gently rolling hill and dense forest blankets the earth where the land turns flat. Water trickles down a lazy stream following suit. The trees create a sweet shade and nurture the life of the woods beneath. Sounds of leaves and twigs snapping create the vision of unseen life.

Mushrooms sit at the bottom of tall trees. Seeds travel in the wind to create new life. Saplings grow with youthful energy; their leaves point to the bright warm foreign sun, absorbing the spirit and zest of far away life. Light pushes its way through holes in the dense canopy creating a soft angelic glow. Near a grand tree, a great wise red deer turns the corner on its daily route through the forest. The red deer is large, dwarfing the smaller animals that dance about. Its earthy colored crystal eyes gleam; its antlers stretch towards the sky in a regal display. A gust of wind blows strongly, and a bird flutters and falls from above. It screeches and cries and its frail body tumbles helplessly to the earth below. The red deer watches as the bird hits the ground. The bird cries to the wise deer, "What is America if I am not?"

Woman With Clock



Angela Wirthlin
Class of 2023

Woman With Cats

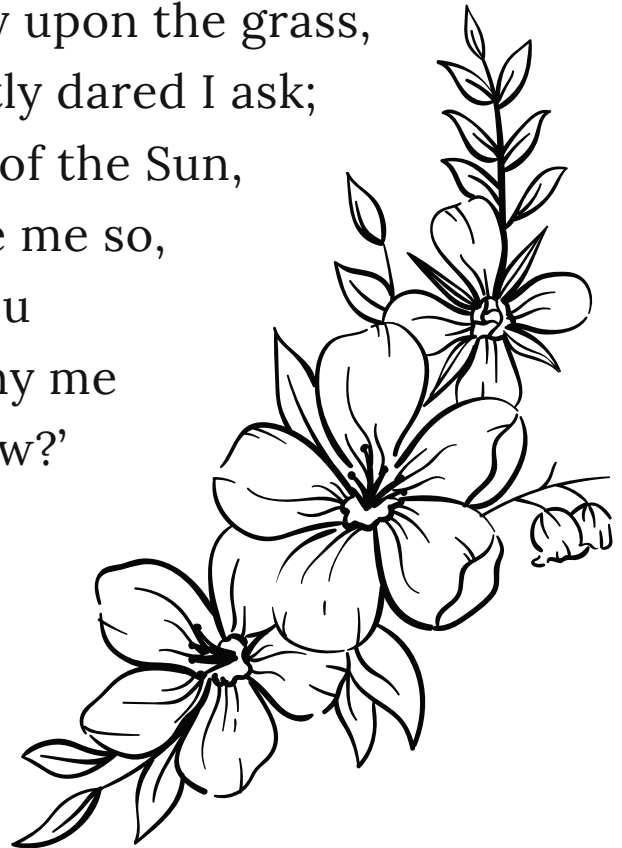
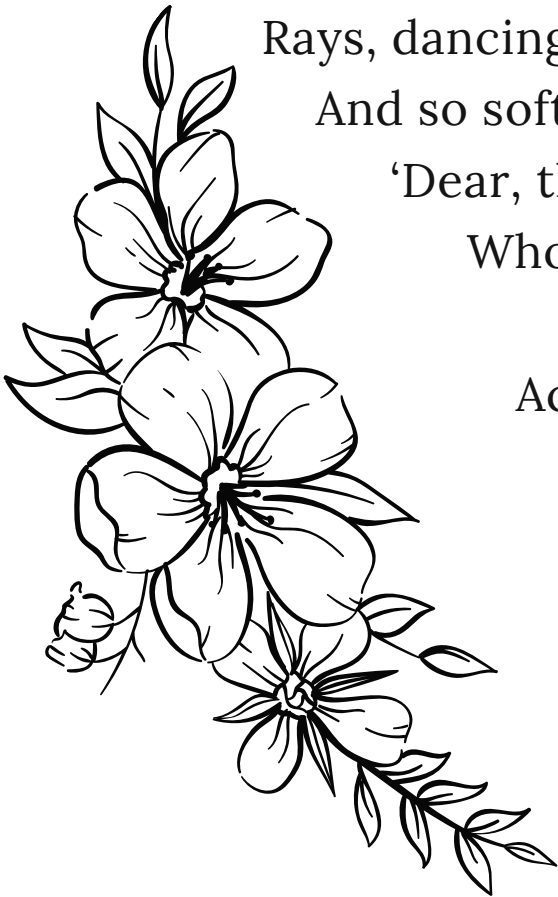


Photosynthesis

*Seraphina Corbo
Class of 2023*

Upon a swift autumnal breeze blew the
Faint Whisper of the Trees
Spoke so softly, She to me,
‘Please keep me company.’

And so I sat,
Long hours passed,
Quietly contemplating the
Rays, dancing prettily upon the grass,
And so soft, so softly dared I ask;
‘Dear, the Rays of the Sun,
Who beguile me so,
Will you
Accompany me
As I grow?’



The Big White House

*Samara Shaw
Class of 2025*

It was always great waking up at the same house, in the same bed, and with the same family. As I woke up, I heard my phone buzzing crazily, jeez who is texting me this early? It was him asking if I could come outside to play, I told him no one was awake yet. He said he would wait. As I sat patiently, I finally heard my grandpa. I knew it wasn't her because she never got up before 12. We walked outside to get my bike, and to see my friend. We rode away from the big white house, laughing as we raced past each other, both trying to win the race to the end of the street. The warm sun beamed on my skin as I raced down the road. Life was good, I was happy, I was with my best friend.

As we walked into the 7-11, I could smell the warmed up, day old hot dogs in the burner. I grabbed Skittles and Sour Patch Kids. The plastic wrappers crunched in my hand as I gripped the candy harder so I could carry everything. "There's no way you can get all that with only three dollars" He said while dropping his food on the counter. His bright blue eyes staring at me while grabbing a bag of hot Cheetos. "Shut up, I have 70 cents too! It'll be fine." My eyes went back and forth between him and our bikes sitting outside. We never had any way to tie them up, so we just left them there and hoped for the best. He finished checking out and started to walk to the door, "Wait for me!" I yelled while running to the counter. He nodded his head. "Four seventy five." The cashier said effortlessly. I thought of how boring this job must be, I felt bad for the guy. "See I told you that you wouldn't have enough money! Here's a dollar." He said while handing the cashier the money. We got our bags and started to ride home to the big white house. The trip helped distract me from her, how she barely spent time with me unless it was after dark. It was a good day.

"Truth or dare?" He asked me while smiling, our parents conversing upstairs. I smiled, "Umm dare?" He laughed and said, "I dare you to go upstairs and scream." I hesitated, but I did it. We rushed down the stairs and hid in the back room. The cold basement room was dark and scary. We waved our hands in the air, looking for the chain to turn on the light. When we found it, we sat on the pile of clothes and started to whisper

about middle school, and what we were going to do tomorrow when we got up. It was fun. We had no cares in the world. We were safe in the big white house. This was the best summer ever, I had my best friend back and we were closer than ever.

"I never want this summer to end."

The warm breeze flowing through my hair as I sit with him in our tree, he smiles at me as he plays our favorite song. I jumped down, "We should go walk around the block." I yell up to him in the tree, the 10 pm alarm going off on his phone. We walk around the block, the porch light gleaming in our eyes as we talk about us. How we used to play superheroes in the backyard of his grandma's house, how we played lego batman in the playroom of his cousins house, how we played tag in the backyard of the big white house. We reach a tire swing in the backyard of our neighbors house, they are nice so we know they won't mind. We take turns pushing each other back and forth, back and forth.

He looked at me and said "This is the happiest I've been in a long time." That was the last time I saw him.

I was at the big white house, but it was different. She was different. The rooms were mixed, the house was a mess. The friends we were used to, were barely acquaintances, as I watched them from the window I thought, "That should be me, I should be out there with my friends."

As I watched them play, I noticed that they didn't even glance my way. Not even a single thought of coming to ask me to play with them. It was like I wasn't even there. Watching your best friend slowly drift away isn't the best feeling. As we texted back and forth, I noticed he was being dryer than normal. The "Oh yeah I know right?" and the "Hey how are you today?" Started to turn into "Lol ya." and "Hi." I didn't want to say anything at this point, he was probably just having a bad day or something. He never facetimes me anymore and barely texts me. Is this because I wasn't there anymore? Was the big white house the only way we could be friends? I decided to look at the chat. "You can no longer respond to this person because they have blocked you." What? Did he really block me? What did I do? We were the closest we have ever been and he just leaves? Without an explanation, or any type of hesitation. My heart sunk to the bottom of my stomach, I felt numb. After the best summer of my life everything is going bad again.

Being sad around family sucks, you have to hold in the tears and the pain so you don't seem like a baby. As we drove to the big white house I thought about the things I left in there, the memories I had. When we arrived, I saw my neighbors standing outside in the yard. I looked out the window and saw it, my heart dropped. My eyes began to water, my hands felt shaky. The big white house wasn't big or white anymore, and it was barely a house.

Ashes everywhere, the whole garage was gone. The scattered wood all over the yard made me think about the times I had, the swingset I was way too big for, but still played on. I remembered the bike I rode with my best friends around the block that was now part of the ashes. My best friends were no longer my best friends, because of her, everything was because of her. I felt the people around me staring, we all know who did it, we just won't say it.



Goldenrod

*Stella Plein
Class of 2025*

To Live Without Definition

*Samuel Smith
Class of 2023*

I wish for all great mysteries to remain free without scientific constraints. For life without mystery, is life without curiosity. Curiosity that was naturally born by our nature to explore and to define. This pursuit of definition pushed us out into the open waters. That before the boat, used to be death sentences. No sooner than we left our shores were we trying to define what caused our ships to leave harbors and never return. How we made stories to try to define what simply refused definition. Now we rule the ocean with our iron lighthouses that extinguish the dark anywhere they see fit. Now we look away from the black voids that rest below our marinas and towards the empty nothing that drapes over our horizons. I wish for us to keep our heads turned to those empty stars, the vast black in the sky that will never give up her answers. I pray that means these ancient unknowns can live without explanation, so I can sleep with wonder in my head. Let us not try to define what used to fill our stories and what would keep the masses away from the ocean.

Though secretly I wish to remain as undefined as them. I wish to live in conspiracy and to bask in the shadows of the unknown. I pray that if I were to be uncovered my actions should be shadowed by the pure significance of my existence. I wish to remain tangible only in the margins of

tabloids and spiritual only in the minds of those who seek an explanation.

I envy the Kraken, who is only seen by the crazy and talked about by the delusional. For if I were to live in this non explained state, would it give me the chance to breathe without a storm? For then and only then, would I be able to glide, maybe fly through the great challenges of life. Would I be able to live without the constant gawk of those with mouths which only know how to scream. Those with eyes who only know to stare and with ears who only know the sound of gossip. Wouldn't you too envy the great saucers that seem to lay in the night air, who are only known by their silhouette? If I could sail through the waters like the great leviathans that live only in the echoes of old taverns. Taverns whose sailor stories remain as whispers in the memory of its rotten wood. If I could thrive in this state of resistance free living then maybe being undefined defines my plight.

So as I drift to sleep with the wondrous world of things I choose not to find, as my mind begins to abandon me in escape for quiet slumber, I wonder about the undefined. I pray for those beasts, I pray for them to remain unfound. For when we turn their silence to echos, their darkness to nothing, when we finally unearth the great mysteries that haunted us. I'm afraid the only answer we will find is that we were alone this whole time.



*Stella Bishop
Class of 2024*



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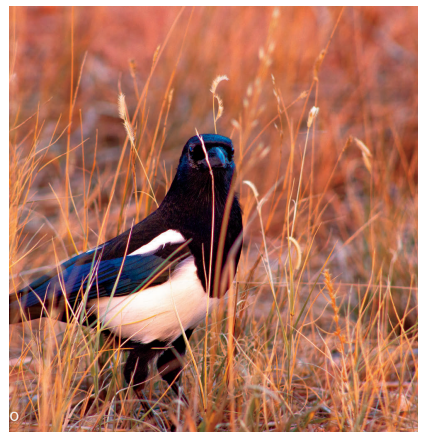
© Mason Barto



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Garden of the Gods

*Mason Barto
Class of 2023*



o

Untitled

*Anna Mitreva
Class of 2023*



Sitting by Myself

*Farah Nutt
Class of 2023*

As I sit there
Listening to music on the window seal,
I see the trees dancing
Ever so gently.

On the big trees,
The branches sway
As if a child was
Swinging on top of them.

On the small ones,
The branches and leaves tango
In the soft breeze.

As I look down,
I see the beautiful flowers,
So prosperous and wild.
With all of the bright
Pinks, whites and purples.

Bees hopping from
One flower to another,
Catch my eyes.
So busy at work.
Not noticing

The people walk by.

But something's not right.
There's plastics and aluminums scattered
Across the beautiful scene.

Why must people destroy
Such beauty that nature brings?

I try not to think
About the horrible
Things, nature goes through.

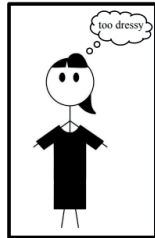
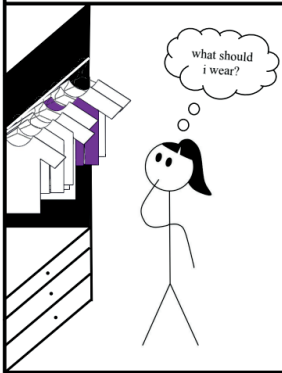
Instead, I see past
All of the garbage.
To stare at the
Pretty scene
Once more.

So calm.
So peaceful.
So beautiful.
So much
More that it's
Worth.

my purple sweatshirt

Medha Narayan
Class of 2024

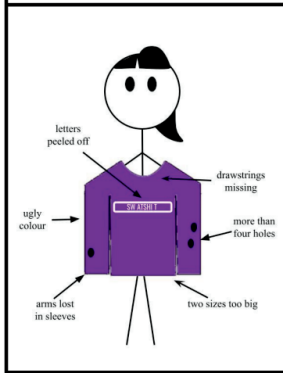
picking an outfit was hard...



but my sweatshirt was



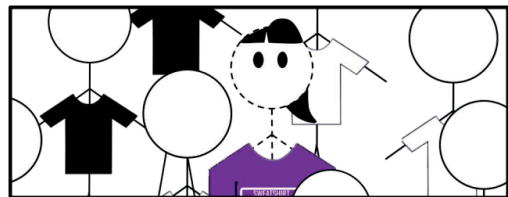
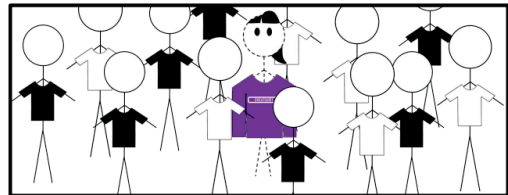
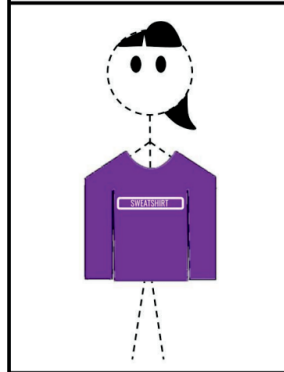
okay, maybe not perfect



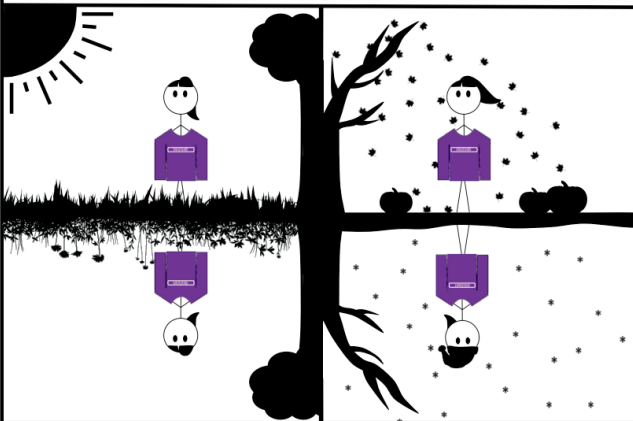
but it gave me the best
superpower of all time



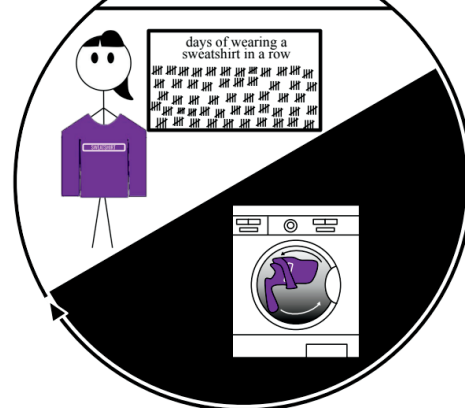
invisibility.



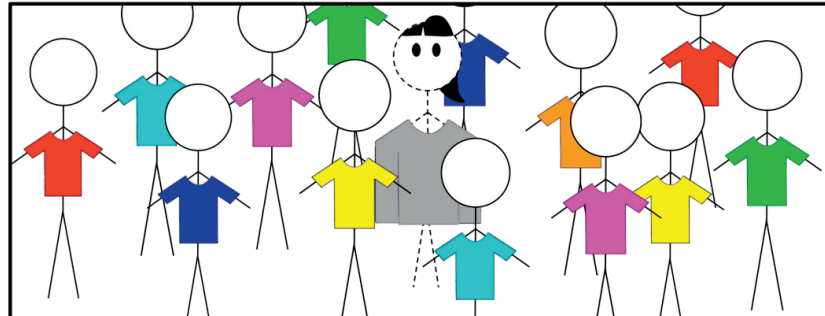
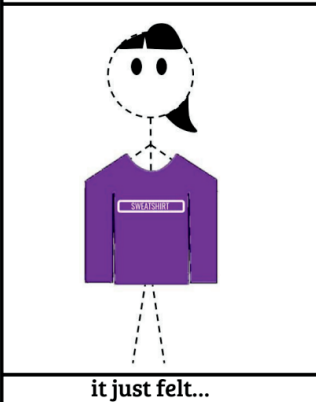
i wore my sweatshirt year round



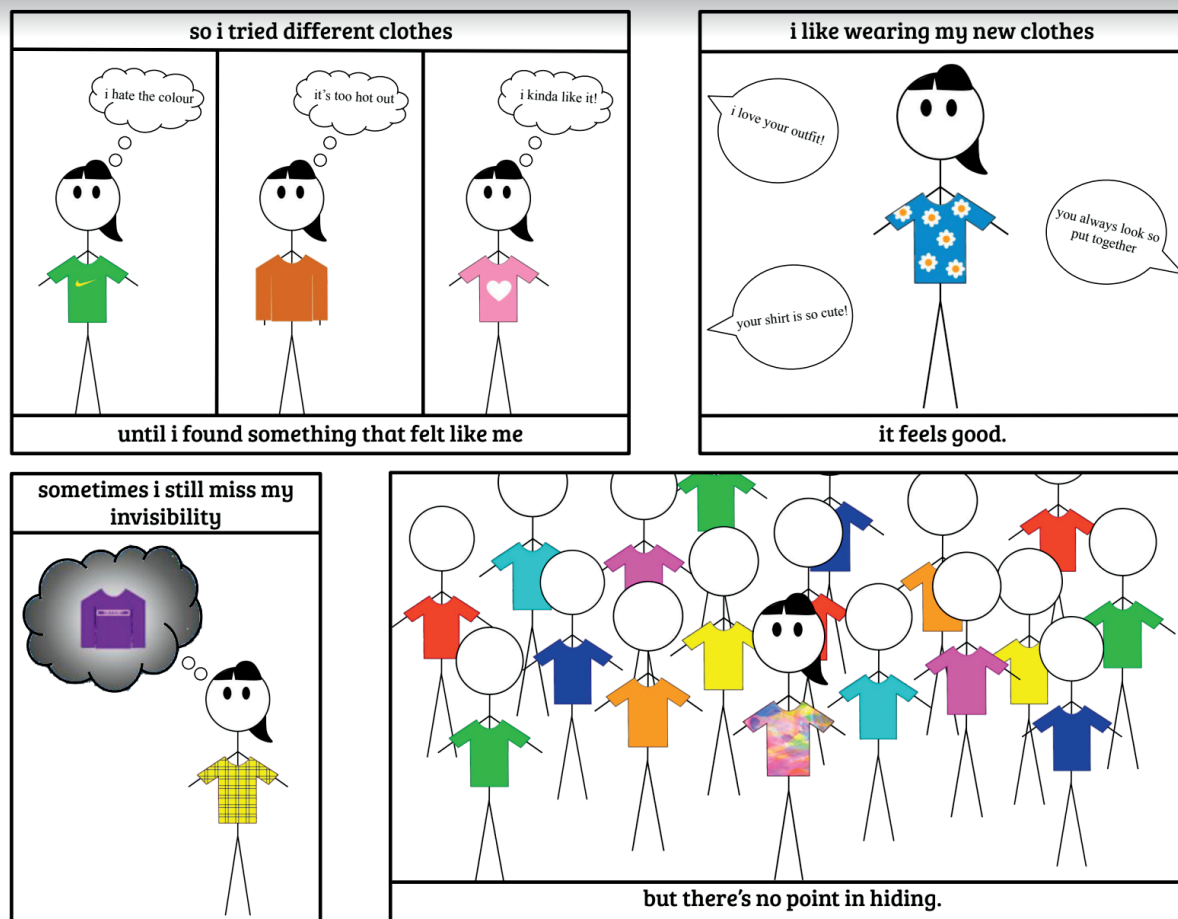
every. single. day.



but eventually, invisibility
didn't feel so cool



lonely.



In My Neighborhood

Joe Daniels Sankey
Class of 2024

I lost my keys
 homework
 There was a lot of traffic
 not me
 My car broke down
 hair
 The family cat ran away
 clock
 Sorry, my water pipe burst
 toilet
 I lost my badge
 glasses
 The weather was horrible
 outside
 My house got burgled
 classroom
 I had a car accident
 today
 I got splashed by a puddle
 hurting
 I couldn't find my shoes
 hurting

My dog ate my
 It was her
 My brush got stuck in my
 Water fell on my alarm
 My dog got stuck in the
 My grandma lost her
 It was too hot
 I couldn't find the
 I thought I was going to be sick
 My head was
 My knee was

I thought I saw a weapon - I was jogging with my ipod

Nintendo Went Down to Georgia

*Isaac Levine
Class of 2023*

A chilling breeze blew over the plains as a distant threat sounded “It’s a-me! Mario!” From closer still another demon announced itself: “I’m a-Luigi! Number-a one!”

The calls were followed shortly by the pounding footsteps of the things, jarring the earth around them. And the closer they got, the louder the music got, pounding away from the sky around them as if it were coming out of the brothers themselves. Mushrooms scattered in fear as Mario leapt through the air, crashing down on anything that stood in his way. The one which called itself Luigi jumped up in order to smack his head hard against a brick wall hanging overhead and out of nowhere popped a metal flower, which he grabbed, seemingly uninjured by the concussive force. Luigi smashed the flower into his chest and suddenly his clothes changed colors from green and purple to white and red. As a giant red venus fly trap shot out of the tall green pipe that Mario was standing on, Luigi violently shot out his hand and out flew a spinning ball of green fire, hitting the plant and incinerating it. Mario turned to face him and looked down from the pipe, triumphantly exclaiming:

“It’s a-me! Mario!” (Mario did not often say much.) Suddenly a strong wind hit and Mario was knocked over backwards, falling right down the tube behind him. “Here-a we go!” He shouted in terror as he plummeted farther and farther into the darkness and Luigi’s face faded quickly away in the spot of light from the opening now far above him.

“Mariooooooooooooo!” Shouted Mario as he continued to fall, terrified and confused. A light began to grow somewhere beneath him and Mario wondered with surprise whether he was coming back up the tube. Before he knew it the little man came shooting out the end of a downturned organ pipe and smacked into a cold cobblestone floor. Dusting himself off as he stood up and looked around, Mario found himself in a large room chock full of strange antiques- resting on tables, strewn across the floor, piled on top of each other, the room was filled with all sorts of objects from paperweights to the massive organ from which he’d just fallen. More than that, everything looked wrong. The world popped out from itself, as if someone had added a third axis to reality. Mario turned back to the organ, which he suddenly

realized was plucking the tune that normally followed him, but no one was playing it. “Wee-hoo! Just-a what I needed!” he muttered quietly to himself.

Mario wandered around the dusty old room, looking for a way out. It appeared to be a cellar, but what it lay below was still a mystery. As he walked, he examined the strange objects. Picking up a pair of glasses with four lenses stacked on top of one another, Mario tried them on, only to find that he could not see through them. When he tried to pull them off his head, they became stuck to his face. He promptly bumped into a wall, breaking the glasses and allowing them to fall off his face. He walked over to a small pocket watch sitting on a table and picked it up. The hand was moving very fast and it appeared to be broken. Mario turned it over in his hands, feeling the grooves and ridges- it was not flat like a normal object. In fact, nothing here was. It was all so... three-dimensional. When Mario set the pocket watch down, he felt very tired and his back ached. Flipping around to look in a mirror, he saw with a shock that he was old and frail. As he watched, his youth slowly returned. Then suddenly, the Mario in the mirror began to move on his own. His hand reached out through the glass and Mario leapt away. As he glanced around, Mario realized with a sudden shock what was going on here.

“Mamma mia!” he cried almost involuntarily.

Finally spotting the staircase, he dashed up it in terror and out the door into a small shop piled with similar antiques. Mario gasped for breath as he looked around. At the back of the store there was a small counter devoid of cash register or tip jar at which an old man stood. He wore a top hat and a red sport coat, and he sported a long handlebar mustache and goatee. His eyes were sunk back into his head in a permanently sinister expression. The man was addressing a customer.

“This scarf is pure mink, yes. Very fine fur,” he said.

The woman responded immediately with a “Fantastic. How much?”

“Oh, you don’t pay with money...”

“What??”

“Nothing,” he corrected hastily, “it’s free, you can just take it.” It was then that Mario stormed forward angrily.

“Hello!”

“Why hello there good sir,” the man drawled.

“It’s a-me! Mario!” Mario shouted in an exasperated voice.

“I... see.”

“Wazoo!” He fired in a unmistakably accusatory tone, “Here-a we go!”

“I take it you have a problem with the way I run my business.”

“O-ho yeah!” Clearly, Mario was upset that this man would take advantage of people in such a way.

“Perhaps we should take this outside...” he replied.

“Let’s a-go!” The man pulled out two long, thin, polished boxes and tucked them under his arm as he walked calmly out the door and flipped the sign, Mario storming after. The shopkeeper led him around the back of the building to a small grassy plot of land where a freshly downed tree lay. He sat down and opened the boxes. From one he pulled what appeared to be a fiddle. It shone in the sun and Mario realized that it was made from pure gold. “Wazoo!” He said softly to himself. From the other box the man removed a regular wooden instrument of the same kind and held it out to the stout plumber in front of him. He then pulled off his coat and removed his hat in quick succession to reveal a long pair of black horns and hairy red forearms. Mario stepped back in surprise.

“That’s right!” said Satan with a malicious gleam in his eyes as he resined his bow, “it’s a-me!”

Overcoming his shock, Mario set his jaw and held out his hand silently to accept the fiddle. He now understood the contest: outplay the prince of darkness to spare the souls of others, or lose his own.

The Devil plucked at the strings a few times before setting his bow against them, then he began. As he dragged the short rod back and forth at an ever increasing rate across the golden fiddle, a horrible, enchanting, musical screech arose from the strings.

The pace of the ungodly notes quickened as the music flared, and around the demon’s hands rose a horrible fire, and it crackled out the same tune, until his hands began to slow and he dragged the bow to a stop.

Mario was impressed but undaunted. He drew out a few long, quavering sounds on his fiddle as he plucked at the strings. It was simple but beautiful, almost as if it were played in 8-bit.

The Devil fired back immediately with a musical hiss across his metal strings.

raised his bow again and played out a quick succession of electric notes.

Satan returned with yet another ballad. As he pulled his fingers up and down the strings, his pace quickened until it was almost sickening, and smoke began to rise from the strings. The pace of the ungodly notes quickened as the music flared, and around the demon’s hands rose a horrible fire, and it crackled out the same tune, until his hands began to slow and he dragged the bow to a stop.

Mario stood once again shocked but unfazed. He set the instrument against his chin, closed his eyes, and began to play. From the strings the old plumber slowly teased the seven ancient notes to the only song he’d ever known, the familiar tune turned melancholy by the gradual whining of the fiddle.

Bum-bum-bum

bum-bum ba-dum

ba-bum ba-bum ba-bum bum-ba-diddle

The slow, churning music brought memories of simple things– green fields and gold coins and lost princesses. When Mario set down his fiddle, he looked up to see a tear streaking down Satan’s cheek and knew that he had won. He put on a confident expression and stood to shake hands with Beelzebub.

“Well-played, boy. I know when I’ve been beaten.”

“Mario time!” He called back triumphantly.

The fiend walked into the shade of the fallen tree and disappeared. As Mario headed back to the old pipe-organ to return home victorious, he wondered how many people that man had tricked with this shop. The old adventurer found himself muttering grimly with a pang of regret for not requesting more of him, “it’s a-me. Mario.”

hi, my name is Ugly

Madeleine Meyers
Class of 2025

She used to live day by day, rather than second by second. Her belly used to be full of warm treats and genuine smiles, rather than the imploding, nauseating guilt that rises in her throat each bite she takes.

“Dad, can we *please* order pizza tonight?” She begged her dad profusely.

“Maddie, can you *please* have a bite of pizza?” Her dad begs her profusely.

Every glance in the mirror was to check if there was something in her teeth, rather than to ponder on the fact that no guy is ever going to want to kiss her with her horse teeth, paper thin lips, and fat nose. The word “Ugly” never found a home on her tongue. Now, “Ugly” is imprinted into every thought correlating with the mental image of herself.

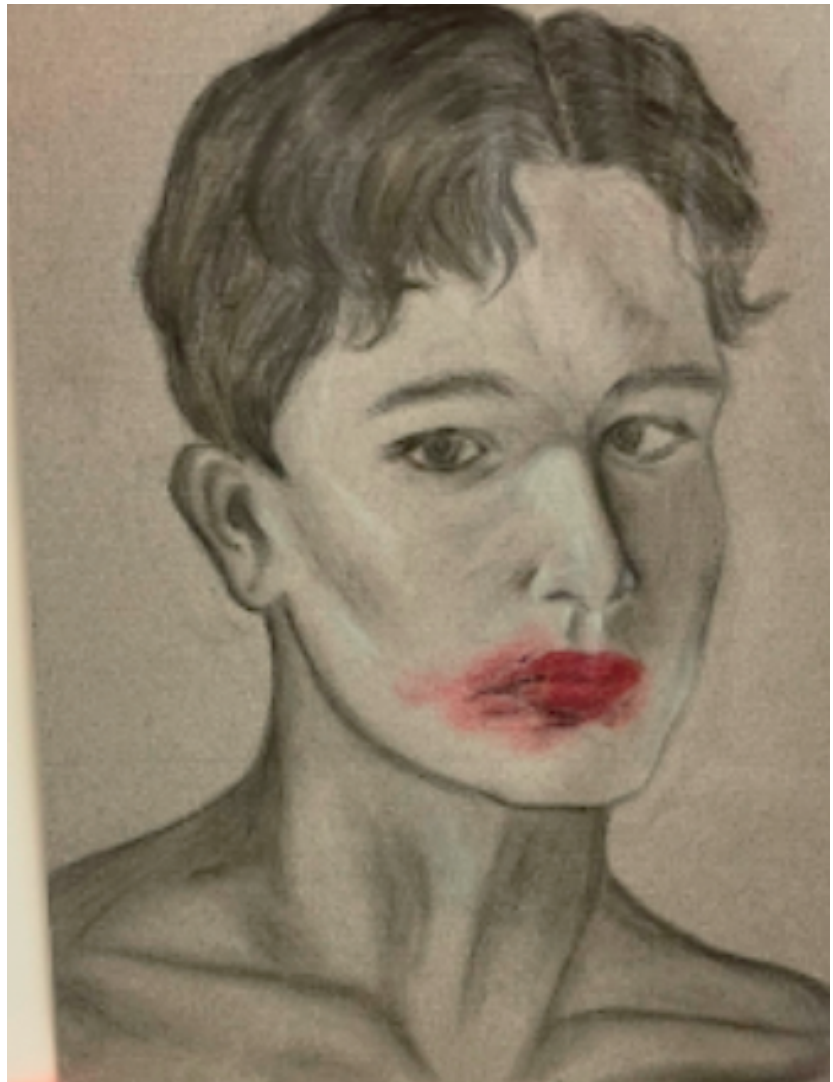
“Hey, ugly!” She turns to look at who called her. The reflection of herself echoes in her deteriorating mind.

Ugly
Ugly
Ugly

Oh my name?

I’m glad you asked, it’s

U
G
L
Y
.



smudged

By Ray Rollins
Class of 2024



Collage

Elisa Falsafi
Class of 2025

Sorries

Donna Do
Class of 2023

I was born April 25th 2007 in LA at 7:38 am. 2nd grade, Pennsylvania: I couldn't remember if my birthday was on the 25th or 24th. Asked on the spot, I decided right then and there on the worn out navy carpet that my birthday was the 24th. I adore the fresh crisp scent of autumn breeze. The scent I can only get on light days dances and twinkles around my room like fairies through the wide open windows; I wish I could bottle hints of the gentle aroma for later. In Boston my classmates asked me in disbelief why I moved to Boston if I was born in the glorious state of California with overarching palm trees and Hollywood signs. As if I had a choice. In a hot pink envelope I received a letter from Kyumin asking how life is in America. The letters U.S were written squiggly and unreadable in faded orange. I couldn't decide for days- Do I write back in Korean or English? My biggest fear is fire: Hannah wanted to show us a magic trick, holding a lighter to a piece of paper to slowly reveal a word. The next second my mom was sprinting to the sink to put the sudden blazing fire in her hands out- I stood frozen at my dad's work bag that had caught some glowing red. Beads of sweat swung from the peak of my nose with my fingers superglued to my side. A clumsy child: I crashed into cabinets, counters, walls; my dad picked me up as high as a skyscraper and pretended to make the wall say sorry to me. Even in my brilliant purple Dora pajamas I cried my sorries, knowing the wall was not to blame. In 5th grade, everyone raved about the once in a lifetime experience. An eclipse.

Curious, I glimpsed at the radiating halo illuminating our dim world (without protective glasses); I was lectured endlessly for 5000 hours that I would be robbed of my priceless sight forever. That day I burdened my mom asking teary eyed, “다 괜찮지?” (It's all okay right?) a million times. Cold AC blowing right above me, “Autumn breeze” by Dept, “Bad habit” by Steve Lacy, “Slow” by Sole...”. I hesitantly added them to my playlist as I brought one cold airpod to my ear. The familiar warm rush of rhythms and lyrics overtook my previous wonderings, but I kept pressing skip by habit to the newly added songs. 2011, Cincinnati: My family crowded into our tight closet for 5 million hours still smelling of fresh white paint. “Who's Mr. Hurricane?” My sister declared she didn't like Mr. Hurricane, so I figured I should pray, pray, pray. I lied about my favorite color countless times. Growing up, I told everyone my favorite color was every color. I wouldn't want to disappoint rich ruby red or leave out beautiful beaming brown. When I was 8 I wanted to be 13. When I was 13 I wanted to be 15. I'm 15 and I want to be 8 again. I want my troubles to be if I was born on the 24th or 25th. It's okay for an 8 year old to sympathize with inanimate objects. It's okay for an 8 year old to not be able to decide for themselves. 5 years from now I'll want to be 15 again. Behind a composed filter, I long for reassurance like a kid who suffered a boo-boo. I forget to take it slow and remember that I can express myself without edits. I am allowed to disappoint.

Xi Herculis

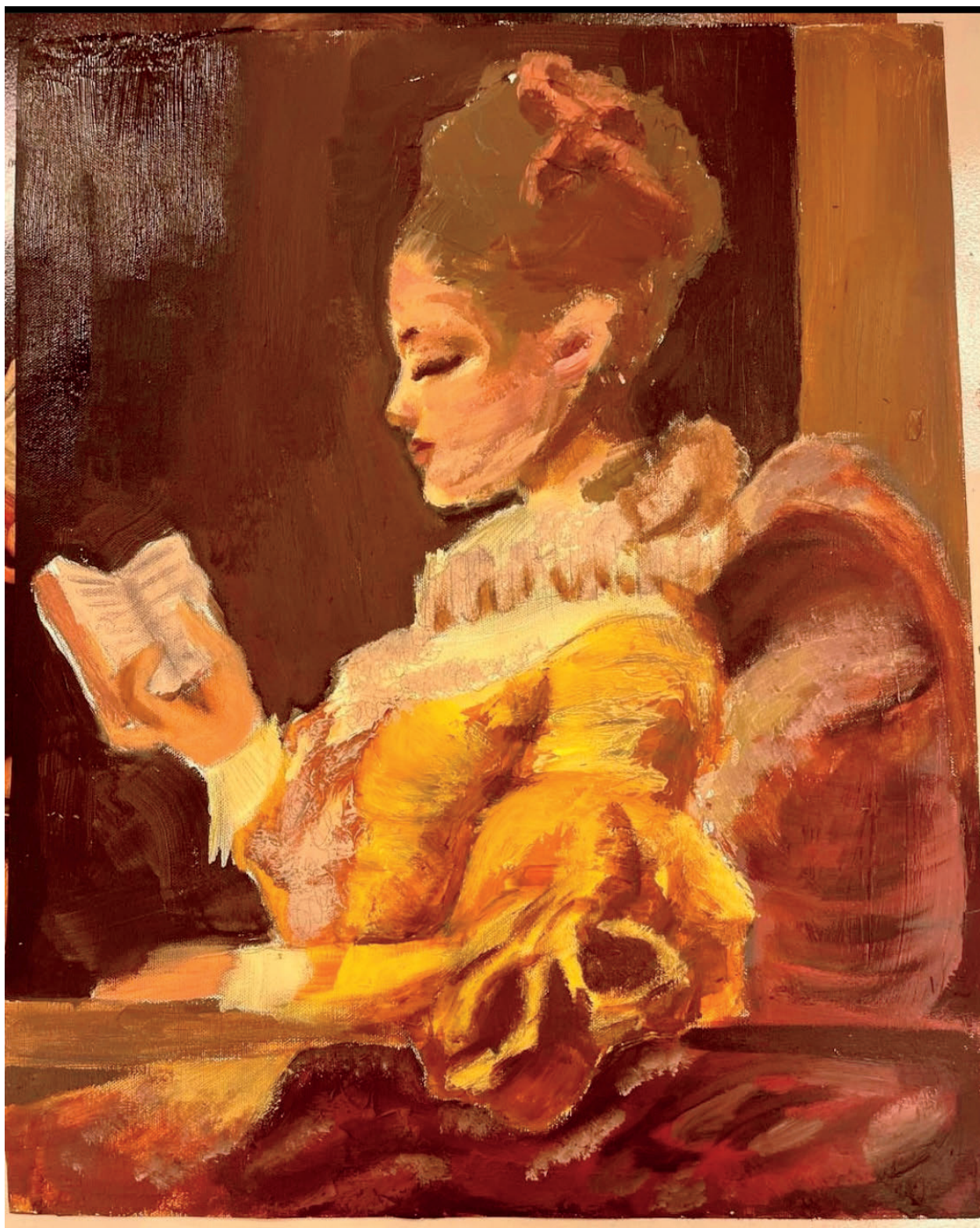
Bethany Lai
Class of 2025

“Angels glide in this country: believe me! You need boots: the airport is far. I don’t think you can walk that far. Mama will swaddle you like a little deer. We’re leaving at dusk. America! You know the bald eagle? And the dreams Ma has? If the airport’s far, imagine going to the other side of the world! There’s going to be guitars we’ll play and fine clothes made of silk, gossamer-thin. It will be heaven.” I hummed. “America is diverse. And I want to eat those peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.”

“Kids aren’t that friendly. So let’s ask Mama for some new clothes next time! Mama will find some. We’ll ask for new food too. Nobody will pick at us anymore.

“One day, Mama will become a doctor again. People will come to our clinic again. We won’t have to be all quiet, standing with our Ma in the restaurant! Or translating the recipes into English. We should work hard so that we don’t devalue our luck. I think that we should be more happy, about us living here.” I had a vast vision. I wanted us to look up.

“We’ll look at constellations and try to find Xi Herculis.” We were so young. We wanted to zigzag around the world.



Woman Reading

*Angela Wirthlin
Class of 2023*

Carbohydrates

*Ezri Perrin
Class of 2024*

Amino acids, carbon & nitrogen, hydrogen & oxygen
Protein chains, sugar & salt, starches & vitamins
All protons on neutrons, electrons on atoms
Energy & chemicals & enzymes & peptides
Digestion & blood, sugar & fat
You're alive, you're alive, you're alive
Folds of your stomach, cells upon cells
Carbon on carbon on carbon, my dear
Patterned like snowflakes, woven like thread
Crystalline & fluid & patchwork & fibrous
Organelles & cytoplasm, ATP & DNA
Tapestry of life, infinitesimal, infinite
Evil's nowhere to be found here;
The only toxins lie with starvation—
Only flowers grow here.
Starches & sugar & fat & salt
You're alive, you're alive, you're alive—
Isn't it beautiful?
The pinch of soft 'round your middle, your subcutaneous tissue?
All carbon on carbon on carbon again
Health is in thriving, happiness in indulgence, my dear
The world's in the toast crumbs on your chin.



Vellichor

*Susanna Boeyink
Class of 2023*

Something, somewhere is squeaking
a rhythmic, pointless sound,
a swing pushed only by the breeze.
Its movement hardly qualifies as such
a weak nudge forward,
an inevitable fall back.

Faintly, the wind carries laughter.
Shrieks of delight, fits of giggles
frozen in time.
Flashes of ignorance in the mist of the dawn
hands in the air, feet off the ground.
a stumble, a fall, a scrape
then, a pause, a rise, a dash -
without so much as a backward glance.

The dwindling twilight whispers
gentle nothings, empty comforts.
“There is a time,” it murmurs,
“a time for languid memories,
but also a time for stark reality.”

Night slips below the horizon,
leaving only an echo of an age
when everything was yet to be learned,
life was yet to be lived.
The echo fades with the moon.
Silence follows in its wake.

The adolescent sun swells idly into the morning.
Aurora sings with hope, beams with optimism.
Pillars of light lunge towards the heavens
into the promise of the azure infinity.

Flowers

*Stella Plein
Class of 2025*

Space Blue & Tangerine no More

*13 (Phoenix) Treitel-Knapp
Class of 2026*

October 21st, 2021

I
icy bays--
of indigo light & silver spades--
of sadness
freeze his gentle giant feet & memories--
of winter
& budding amethyst snowflakes slip from their fingers
glistening like glass bead teardrops exacerbating
smokey windows & elusive truths
hiding behind turtle scutes
lime like an inchworm
snuggling up with fountain mystic purple grass

January 25th, 2022 & June 1st, 2022

II
prismarine streams--
of paradise & laughter
playing with timeless sunset beaches
& running through *fluorescent* but *withering* fields
under *silky* skylines
with streamer-thin strands--
of moonlight
elegantly
cas
cad
ing
off whimsical rings--
of Saturn
&
m
u
d
d
l
i
n
g
with Neptune's seas--
of lavender papier-mâché
as whip cream doves
gliding like trident's
over citadel cities
electrifying bumblebee highlights
& mango rays--

from rosy Rome to
icicle Iceland

of northern light

The Politics of Women

*Ana Mitreva
Class of 2023*

Hope Clinic



Protestors



The Girl

Madiera Fernandes
Class of 2024

The girl you see is not who she is.
The girl you see is someone who she wants you to meet.
The girl you see is happy and unharmed.
The girl you see is calm and put together.
The girl you see smiles and laughs with friends and family.
The girl you see clings to her phone
The girl you see is smart
The girl you see is polite.
The girl you see seems fine.
Perfectly normal, perfectly happy.

The girl she is, hidden behind a facade, A never-ending illusion.
The girl she is, she doesn't want you to see.
The girl she is, is not de-stressed but distressed.
The girl she is, panicked and falling apart.
The girl you see smiles, but some days her eyes don't.
The girl you see uses her phone as a crutch.
The girl you see gives 200% in hopes to be 'smart', 'beautiful', 'kind'... almost 'perfect'.
The girl she is ends up stressed and numb inside.
The girl you see attempts to protect others from feeling the pain and suffering of being lonely, but petrified at the thought of reaching out.
She doesn't want others to start to climb out of the hole they've been trapped in, only to be thrown into a new one.
A deeper one.

She doesn't want anyone to feel like they're drowning when they aren't even underwater.

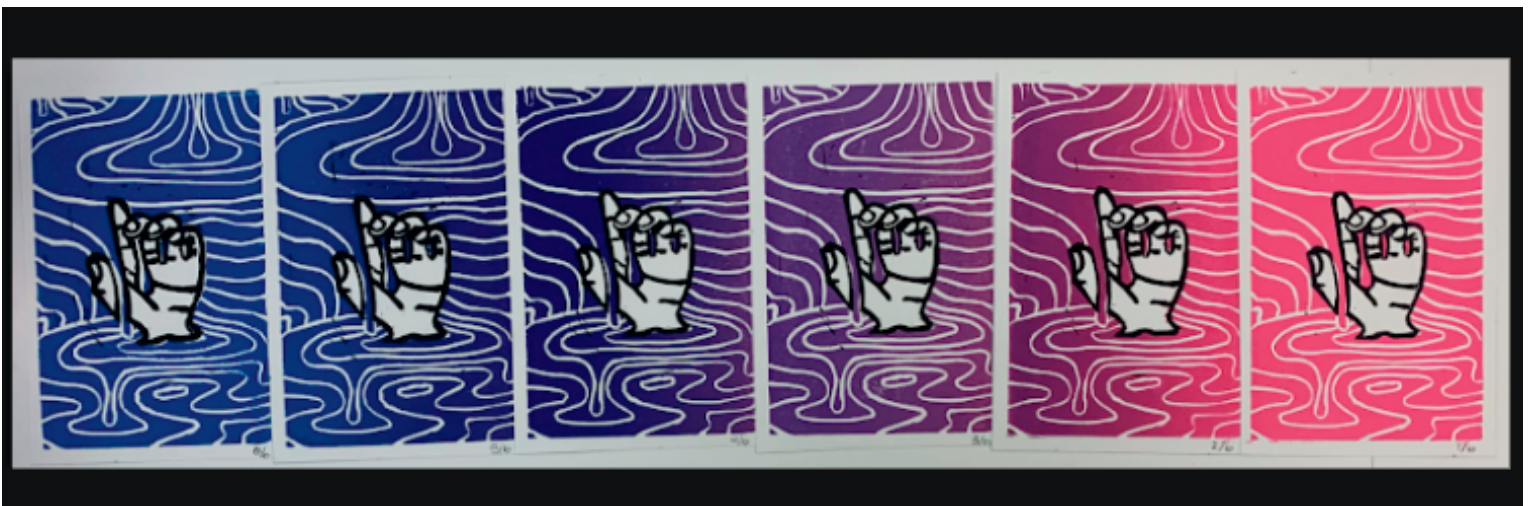
The girl you see isn't fine.
Perfectly flawed, perfectly imperfect, perfectly herself.

The girl she is can smile and laugh with her honey coated tone, restricting who hears it so the honey doesn't run dry.
When she's too distracted to be upset, when her eyes smile she feels at peace.
The girl you see isn't fake. She's just scared to let people care for her, the way she does for others.

The 'selfish' actions are actually selfless.

The girl she is, like a set of fine china.
Everytime it breaks it can be put back together but it loses a piece of itself. That piece is replaced with glue to hold it together, not to heal.
The girl you see is crying for help. She's screaming in silence.

Hand Studies



*Isabel Erdmann
Class of 2023*

Prejudice

*Iron Bell
Class of 2025*

Life,
Together
United
One and the same
Different together

I pledge you this,
Allegiance
One Nation
Inseparability
Liberty,
And Justice
For everyone

I pled you this,
Innocence
Reason
Thought
My life

I read you this,
I, I'ron Bell, a young black male, am innocent
I couldn't have even been able to do this in a sense
I was there doing something different so how did I get roped into this
Like all your glasses are fogged up and you can't see into the mist
Another young black soul belonging to a family, soon to be missed
So maybe I should sit there, bleed out and you should let me writhe
Wincing but it's nothing compared to how you made my slits
In my legs, on my chest, and even on my wrists
Not having any sympathy because you all have a knack for knicks
This prejudiced justice system never fails to make me sick

I said,
I, I'ron Bell, a young black male, am innocent
I couldn't have even been able to do this in a sense
I was there doing something different so how did I get roped into this
Like all your glasses are fogged up and you can't see into the mist
Another young black soul belonging to a family, soon to be missed
So maybe I should sit there, bleed out and you should let me writhe
Wincing but it's nothing compared to how you made my bones split
In my legs, in my chest, and even in my wrists
Not having any sympathy because you all have a knack for knicks
This prejudiced justice system never fails to make me sick

You missed,
I, I'ron Bell, am innocent and somehow it got replaced with me having a sense of
guiltiness
I couldn't have even been able to do this in a sense
I was there doing something different so how did I get roped into this
Like all your glasses are fogged up and you can't see into the mist
Another young black soul belonging to a family, soon to be missed

So maybe I should sit there, bleed out and you should let me writhe,
Wincing but it's nothing compared to how your pain to my brain made slits
Invisible in my legs, on my chest, and even on my wrists
My brain just cuts them off since there's no use for them if
Every time I try to use them, they're seen as a threat to you since
The power isn't the strength but the color of its skin and,
Not having any sympathy because you all have a knack for knicks
This prejudiced justice system never fails to make me sick

I pled you this
Innocence
Reason
Thought
My life

Each day, these same words came out of my mouth
Obligovexillo, I am bound to the flag
But this flag that I claim doesn't claim me
The people that look will look through it but surely can't see
A lens on glasses to delete those that look like me
Everyone's lens is connected like one large symphony
All because of the color of the skin that is on my knee
The knee that held me up when they brought me to the ground
Like the ground was where I was bound
Created to be pulled to it until it ate me up, my body placed in a box
No longer whole

I pledge you this,
Allegiance
One Nation
Inseparability
Liberty,
And Justice
For everyone
Is rare

Each day, these same words came out of my mouth
Iustitiaque omnibus, and justice to all
Justice
Does it truly exist in this twisted accursed world?
A world where your outside defines your inside
A world where it doesn't matter what you know, because they know
A world where your life was predetermined before you could start it
A world where you must die to live
A world where everything is separated by what should connect them
A world
Divided as one

We are different, but not together
We are one, but not the same
We are not united
We are not together
We don't understand life
But instead, they understand prejudice

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Darcy Cearley

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Clayton High School

1 Mark Twain Circle
Clayton, MO 63105

darcycearley@claytonschools.net
@theworksclytonhs

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