

Canticles 2024



CANTICLES

From the Ordinary to the Extraordinary

Volume 50

**The Catholic High School
of Baltimore**

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Foreword

Our perception of importance is traditionally based on what others have determined for us; what becomes objects of value reflect our environment, culture, and the people surrounding us. But, what is often overlooked is the true source of value: within ourselves. Something that appears miniscule to one person may, in fact, hold significant worth to another. The ordinary becomes extraordinary. Likewise, importance is determined by the individual, something that we should decide for ourselves as we grow into the people we will become.

Jessica Wescoat '24

This year Canticles has been revived. To encourage students to submit their creative ideas in poetry, art, photography, combinations, short story and essay, a contest was held in February. The judges of this contest were Mrs. Leddy, advisor to Canticles; Mrs. Lovejoy, retired English teacher and Mrs. Lazzelle, '66. Thank you to the many students who entered. Judging was difficult.

The Winners are:

Short Story: Sofia Schisler '25

Essay: Toni Tan '25

Poetry: Leah Wentworth '24

Photography: Samantha Minnerly '24

Graphic Design: Jessica Wescoat '24

Art: Charlotte Acks '24

Combo: Leah Pompanio '26

Love, Nature, and Sentiment



-Isabella Steinmetz, '24

First Date & Fish (haiku)

the aquarium
kissed you, blinked, now celebrate
us, one year later

-Marielle Tambong '24

Bits of Love

you're my peanut butter
my morning sun
the notes in my desk clutter
the sigh at the end of a pun
my grass stains on my jeans
the smell of a new book
the hands over my eyes during scary scenes
oh, how my life you've shook

-Charlotte Acks '24

Something Somewhere

Many years ago, before I was born

And you were born

And any of us were born,

Something somewhere came to be.

Something with big, powerful hands.

Something with a heart.

Something with taste so exquisite it managed to make

You.

Something with a loving touch

Something with patience so boundless it could tolerate

Me.

Something so lovely it let us cross ways and become

Us.

Something somewhere loves us all, makes us all,

Feeds us all.

Something somewhere made of love.

It sounds just like mourning doves.

Something Somewhere made me fall for you.

-Maddison Dennis '24

give thanks and show appreciation for
those you do not initially love
unconditionally, they choose to be in your
life and you choose to be in theirs

-Charlotte Acks '24

Autumn

you're as beautiful as the autumn

the golden sun

red and orange hues

slick sidewalks

street lights reflecting in puddles

hot dry breezes turn to chill damp storms

leaves on trees and weather will continue to change

and you may too

but never will my love for you

-Charlotte Acks '24

Love, Panacea

You have given me so much in the time I've known you,
But please give me just a moment so I can tell you
How deeply and wonderfully I love you.

There are times I wish we had met when I was little,
When the world was warm rays of sunshine in my favorite window,
Or waking up early at sleepovers with friends to soak up the quiet safety and happiness
Like a little sponge, and recall the last night's fun and games.

When I could try on an outfit and not mind my body,
When makeup was for fun and not part of a routine.
When the stars in my eyes didn't feel so gritty,
And the only things to set off my anxiety were vocabulary tests and running in gym class.
I used to smile a lot, and I've been told my eyes sparkled like diamonds when I was happy.

That's the me I wish you could have been introduced to.

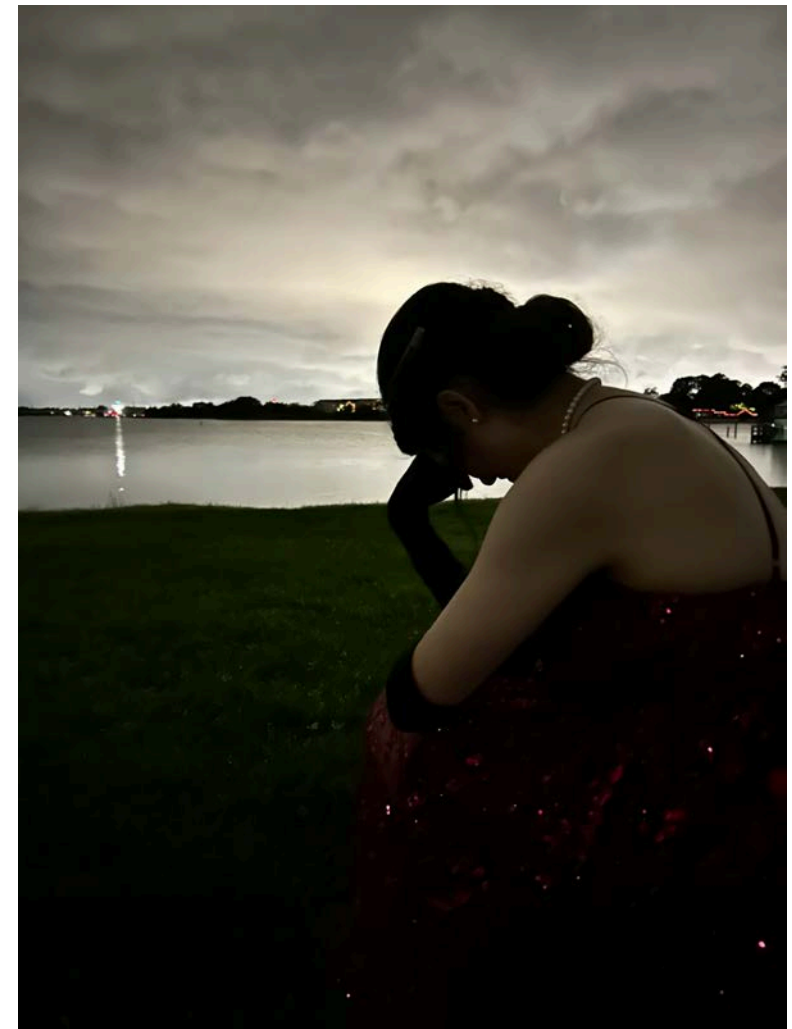
But time goes by and changes happen, some big and some small,
Some good, quite a few bad, and we change accordingly.
We grow, but not always in a good way.

The inner candle starts to burn out, and the lights can fade.
I came into this world a porcelain doll,
And came to you a chipped up and shattered mess.

But you didn't judge or hurt me.
You sat with me and held the pieces while I glued myself back together.
I was afraid at first, but fear grew to calm.
Calm grew to love.

You felt like all those old things I used to feel, along with so many wonderful new things.
Each day I look forward to talking with you,
And all I have to worry about is if I chose a good outfit for the next time we hang out.
In a word you're ineffable, in more words you're amazing,
One of the best friends I've ever had, one of the sweetest people I've ever known.
And if there ever comes a time where you aren't a part of my life you'll still shine in my memories like a star in the night sky, my guiding light and wish come true.

-Maddison Dennis '24



**Maddison Dennis;
Taken by Emily Virgilio**

Petrichor

Step outside after it all.
Feel the cool air around you soothe
Hot, reddened skin.
Allow rain to mix with and wash away
The burning salty tears,
see it drip off the leaves and trees
And be let go.
Let the fresh air fill your chest
And calm your shorting lungs
And pained heart.
See the birds sit in the branches
And let the raindrops roll off their backs.
See squirrels prance and run and trip
As they retreat to the bushes and trees.
You can be like them,
Simple, free, happy.
Humanity can hurt
But nature nurtures all.
Be quiet, hear the rain fall
And let it speak to you.
The puddles tell you to love yourself,
The drops hitting the trees tell you

You are loved.
The birds chirping tells you tomorrow
Is another day.
The smell of the rain tells you to be kind
To yourself and others,
The glaze of the moisture on the rocks
Tells you not to listen to those that mean harm.
Dandelions grow through the toughest concrete
And tell you to be like them.
The droplets continue their song as the sky
Is wrapped in a rainbow embrace.
You're going to be ok, you can do it.
See the moon rise, silent and graceful
Like ringlets of soft smoke on a quiet
Black canvas.
You can rest now.
Go back inside, it will all be here tomorrow
And so will you. Sleep and heal, and come back
Shining and beautiful like the sunrise.
As you always do.

Breathe.

-Maddison Dennis '24

Chaos

Chaos was first in this world,
And Order was born from it.
Order rose from the ashes of Chaos
Like a mighty phoenix.
But Chaos came first.

The world is often in Chaos,
And from it Order rises.
We control what we can
And leave the rest to the universe.
But Chaos came first.

Is the world not to return to Chaos?
Will Order overall prevail?
But in all the old legends
One thing is certain:
Chaos came first.

Chaos was first in this world,
And Order was born from it.
The dark and the light battle
To see who comes out on top.
But Chaos came first.

Will the End of the World come?
Will the Universe return to old ways?
No one seems to know,
But one thing stays the same:
Chaos came first.

-BookDragon



Untitled by
Eserine

Her
since nothing
she breathes life into all things known and
forgotten
since birth we know her by scent and feel alone
unseparated from our own being
cradled in her valleys
bathed in her rivers
placed high atop her mountains
fed fruit of her flora
swayed to sleep by her winds
this rock
our mother
why have we taken her for granted?

-Charlotte Acks '24

Stars - A Tanka Poem

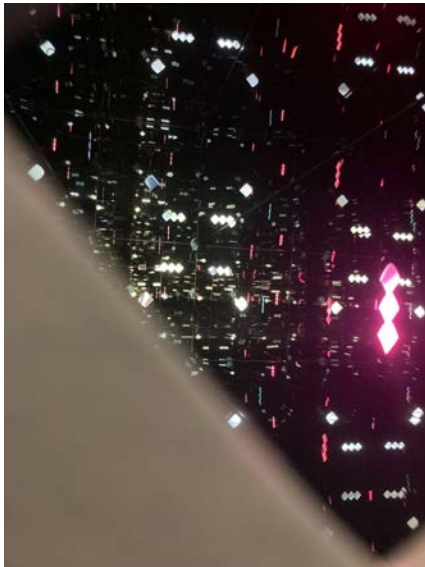
To lose someone close,
A piercing stab to the heart.
But growth takes pain's place.
My house may have burned down, but
My view of the stars is great.

-Maddison Dennis '24

Copacetic - A Haiku

Opposites attract,
Dark and light do their dances,
And life is vibrant.

-Maddison Dennis '24



Untitled by Eserine

Moon Dance - A Tanka Poem

The stars glow brightly,
I walk the rings of Saturn.
I hold hands with the
Pillars of Creation now,
And dance across the night sky.

-Maddison Dennis '24

Constellations

Little pictures in the sky,
Drawn in stardust.
The stars are galaxies away,
And yet connect.
Even though they are far apart,
They are still one;
A bigger picture,
As are we all.
We are apart in time and space,
But connected in a bigger picture:
The picture of our world,
And the better place it could be.
We are all constellations,
Little pictures around the world
Drawn in love.
-BookDragon

Take A Breath

I crack open a window,
a temporary relief from the hot room.

I hear the wind whistle,
the leaves rustle.

Over the sounds of nature,
I hear the sounds of people.

Pages being flipped, the scratch of a pen—
whispers and laughs and shouts.

A comfortable silence.

I listen.

And I take a breath.

-Jessica Martin '24



"Even in the Harshest of Places, Life Can Prevail," Wescoat, '24

Spring - A Tanka Poem

Magnolia leaves,

Green, glossy, and beautiful

On a tall, strong tree.

In my yard, springtime draws near.

Nature's blessing flowers now.

-Maddison Dennis '24

Snow

Turn it into a man,
stomp on it,
throw it,
whatever brings you pleasure.

The snow will not mind but it sure will remember

-Charlotte Acks '24

For this is the winter of
shadows,
The angels are scared to come
out
And monsters taking all who
sorrow
Leaving only distraction and ruin

Who once stood tall, now are
cowering
Who once burned bright, now
barely flicker
Who once fought, now tremble
The flame of hope that all had,
now fading
-Anonymous

Furies of Flurries

Fractal beauty, hidden amongst a sea of
competitive chaos. A clustered army of
aggressive little soldiers, all with the same
goal. In that, they are uniform.

They pelt the ground with veracity, bodies
piling on top of bodies. Features lost in the
masses. Their display is hostile, frigid, and
beautiful.

They come in waves. Sometimes they never
come at all. Many cheer them on, advocating
for their cause, while others whine and
protest - hiding in their homes, afraid of the
onslaught.

A million tiny soldiers, falling into line. A
million tiny dancers, losing their individuality
to the army they serve.

A soundless death.
-Wescoat '24

Snow - A Haiku

Winter snowflakes fall,
Well, at least I wish they would
It is too warm here.
-Maddison Dennis '24

i wish i knew (2020)



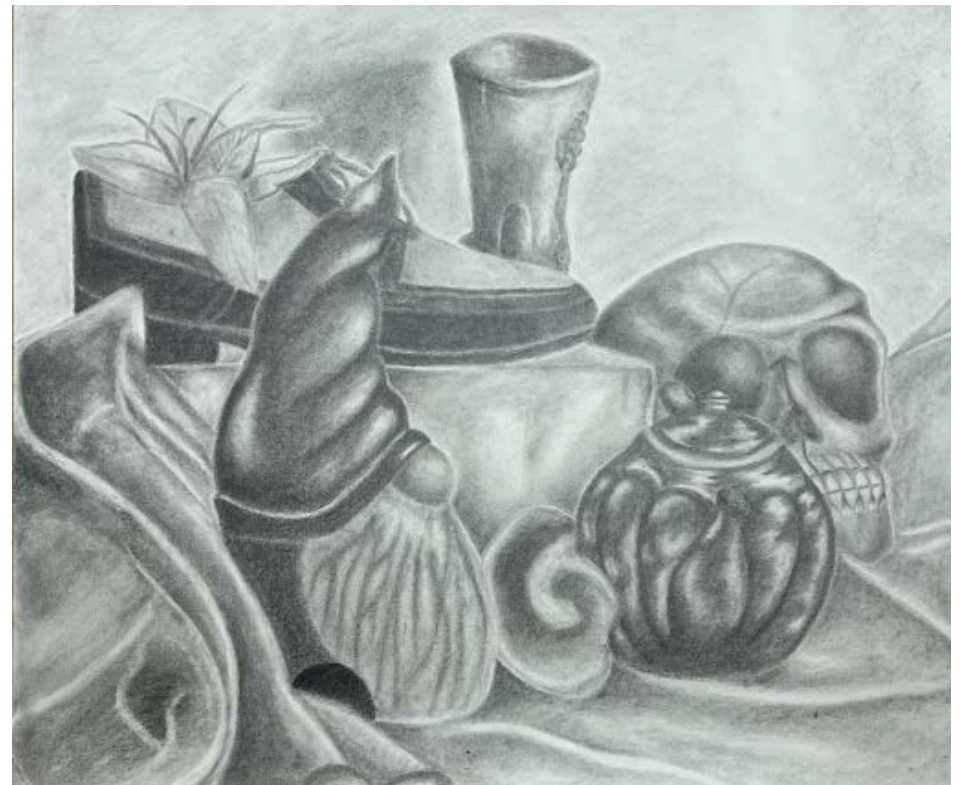
If I had known then
What would happen later on
I would've hugged them tighter
Before they were gone
-Marielle Tambong '24

10 years

in 10 years i hope i still know these curves in the road and the same people i knew in high school and that my parents still love me all the same.

that i don't lose touch and i no longer struggle to wash my hair.
and i sincerely hope the same pets are alive and i continue to love the same eyes kindly and they return it with joy.
i hope i'm happy when i get there and that i'll remember all of those 10 years.

-Charlotte Acks '24



Leah Wentworth, '24

Bird

You make me feel like a bird. Small. Before I met you I had just learned how to fly, and for a while we flew together. Until I saw you for what you were. You weren't a bird like me, but rather a hawk. You preyed on me because compared to you I was small and weak, easy prey. But no, you weren't exactly a hawk either. You were a bird watcher, you liked to think yourself a bird expert. You watched and admired me from afar. You admired my beak, my feathers, my wings. You liked them so much you couldn't let anyone else see them, otherwise they'd want me too, and no one could have me but you. You told me the world wasn't safe for a little birdie like me, that I was safer with you. You held out a cage and told me to fly into it. I didn't know that would be the last time I flew. My wings that once attracted you started to scare you, you thought I'd try to fly away. I promised you I wouldn't, I couldn't in a cage. But you persisted, so I let you clip my wings. I would never fly again.

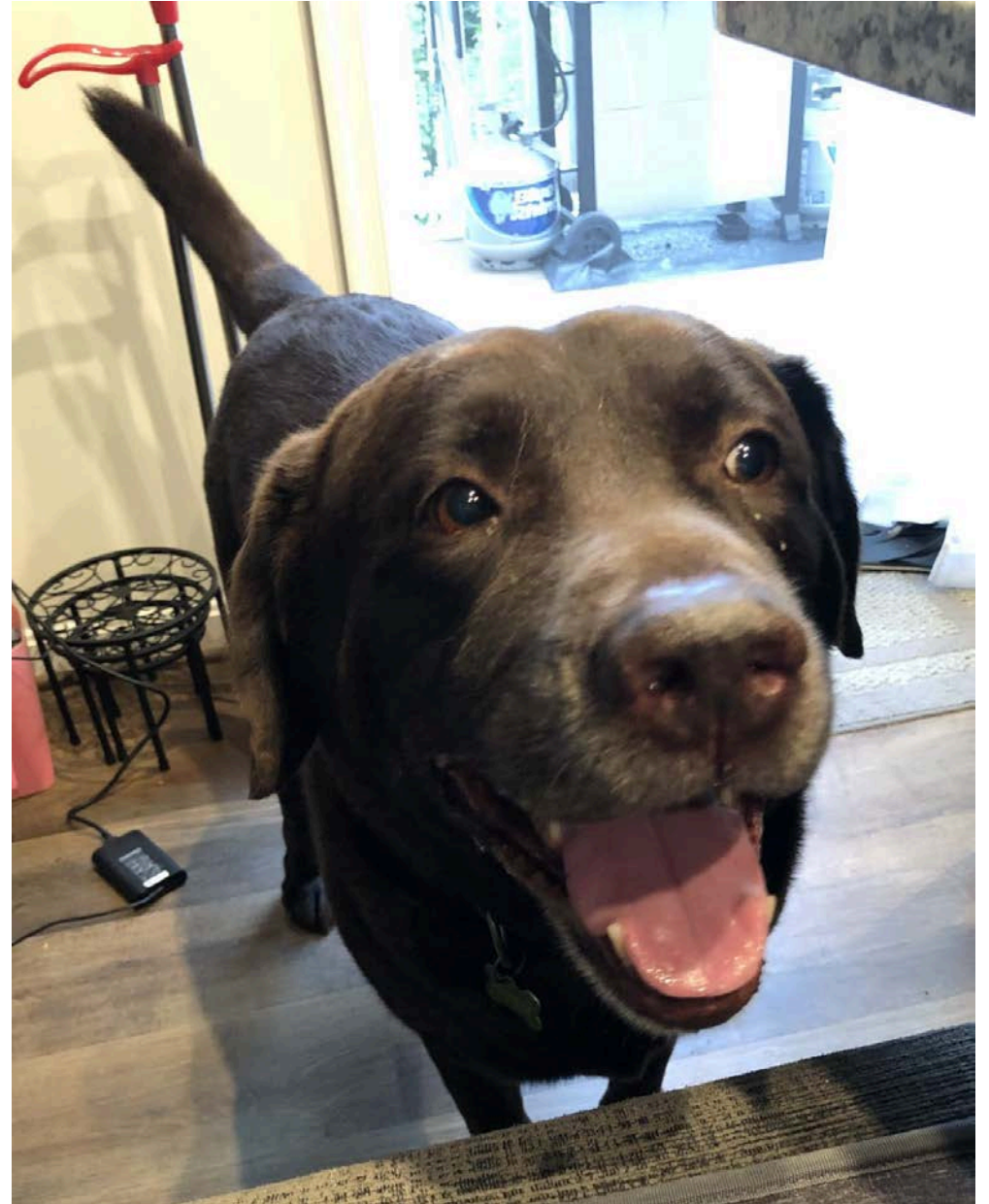
Other birds came looking for me, worried about my sudden withdrawal from the world. I sang, happy to see them, but that made you angry. My song was reserved for only you. Day and night you begged me to sing for you. And so I sang, but it was never enough. I didn't put in my all, you'd say, I must not love you anymore, you'd say, I must be singing to other birds, you'd conclude. I stopped singing- I didn't know how to be around you anymore.

Without my wings and voice I had nothing, so I slept. But even sleep wasn't something you allowed me. You reminded me of how well you take care of me, and said that the least I could do was stay awake for you. I can't remember the last time I really slept.

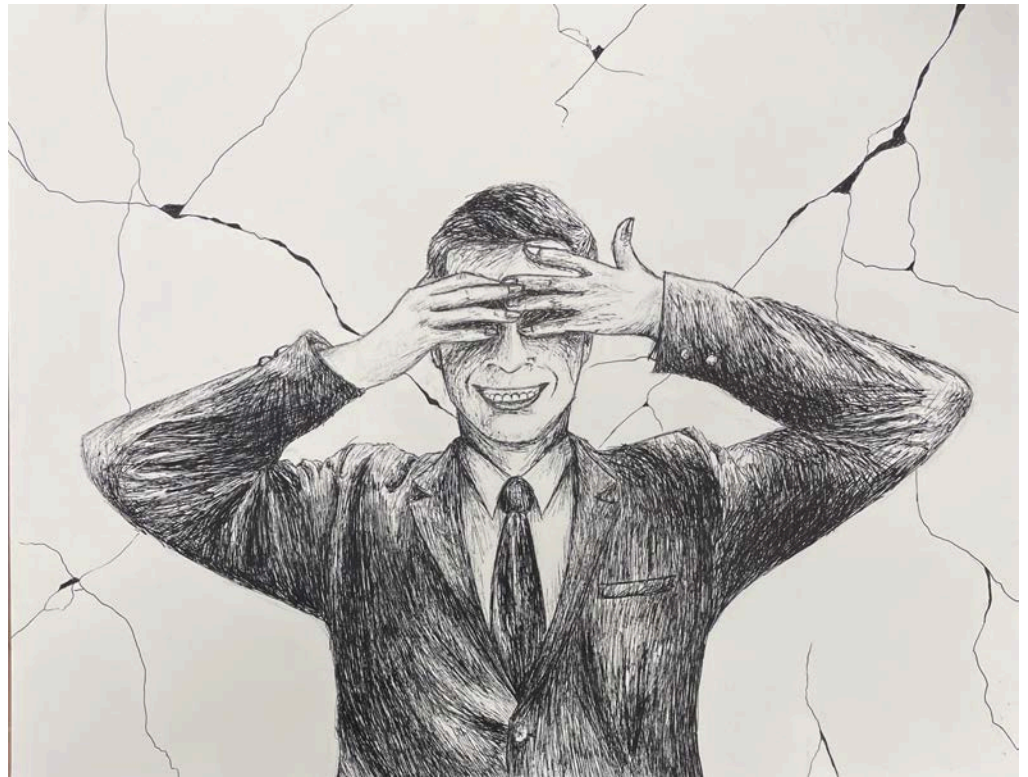
Oh how much I wish I could sleep, sing, and fly away from you. But I've come to love you more than I love myself.

-Isabella Steinmetz '24

Untitled Dogs by Lady Roxane



Crows, oh crows, so dark and wise,
I always see you in the sky,
with dark black feathers,
and a piercing beak,
I dream about you in my sleep.
I wish I may,
I wish I will,
see a day where you don't kill.
Day after day, night after night.
When will you ever give up the fight.
You're so beautiful, black angels in the sky,
how come I only see you when someone dies
your pitch black eyes pierce in my soul
I always hate to see you go.
Just another minute to sit and talk
another hour to hear your song.
another day gorgeous,
another day with you.
Hopefully we cross paths sometime soon.
-Danica Dunevant '24



"Ignorance is Bliss" Wescoat, '24

Adopted

My tiny unwanted children
You follow me in spite of my wishes
And I watch with unwanted interest.

You crave my nourishment, invade my space
I hurt you. I force you away.
I am mad at you.

And still, you come back.
Parasites of comfort.
My unwanted children.

You, my black garden ants, I am forced to take in as my own.

-Wescoat '24



"Letting Off Steam" Wescoat, '24

Jackalope

and if you'd listen i'd ask you
where the stars put their
loose change and why
caterpillars have so many legs
but no arms and how people
can go their whole lives
without holding someone's
hand.

but you keep your ears shut.
so i keep my mouth closed.

-Charlotte Acks '24

Free Writing



"The Hand That Feeds You" Wescoat, '24

Oranges

I would give up my kidney for an orange

O, oh so amazing

R, really really delicious

A, awesome in every way

N, not hyped up enough

G, grateful for lovely oranges

E, extremely orange

S, simply one of the best fruits

That is why I would give up my kidney

For the best fruit

Oranges

-Lauren Alkins '27

Pickles - A Tanka Poem

I love garlicky pickles

Crispy little flavored cukes

Tangy and spiced

They enhance every sandwich

Butter or dill get your fill

-Charlotte Acks '24

I Can't Believe It

You glisten in the light, a pale beacon of beauty.

Smooth, sleek. Persuasive, charismatic. Tempting, flavorful.

Honeysweet, even.

A compound of many faces. Infused with vitamins of craving. You take many forms, each of which suit your object of desire. Your target.

You sweat in the heat of the light, mushing and melting.

Slippery, rigid. Deceptive, unsightly. Greasy, repulsive.

Your beauty is subjective. Far from sweet.

Alone you stand unsavory to most; your appeal is found within only the ability to blend with others. To be codependent on a myriad of ingredients. Your traits are solely of what others have provided you, a churned material of waste.

Alone, you are a mess of oily, disgusting filth. It is in your nature. I am ashamed to have loved you.

Fried,
dried,
lied.

Salted with fraudulence.

You have wronged me. You have sickened me. You have poisoned me. Filled my veins with gunk, my heart with sludge.

And your worst trait? No matter how hard I try to leave you, I can't. Your briny charms woo me, as I am drawn to what others find detestable. Your versatility, compatibility, adaptability.

In spite of my shame,
I can't deny,
that I really do love you, my stick of Land O' Lakes salted butter.

-Wescoat, '24

I Dressed Wrong for a Spirit Day

Boy oh boy! A dress down day!
I sure am happy to be wearing
My favorite school shirt and **pants!**
I'm in the line now, waiting to get out
Of my mom's car and into the school!
Wait...why does no one else have pants on?
Strange...
Oh no...it's my worst school nightmare!
It's only half dress down today!
And I'm in sweatpants!
No level of sweat pant comfort
Can console me, as I walk with
Panted legs in a sea of skirts and bucks.
My heart has never known such embarrassment.
Maddison Dennis "24



Untitled by
Eserine

Oscillating Fans

4 blades sculpted in a cage
Standing watch throughout the night
It's like time; steady
Don't we all wish to be motorized sometimes?
A push of a button is on and off
So simple
But so complex
A simple working
But so intricate
And yet our worst enemy in the winter
Nobody wants the blow of cold in a wishing time
Of only warmth
But when we want warmth
We can cold
Never deciding which to have
Only going with whatever blow the fan gives
A restless tool
Watching us rest
And when it rests
Nobody is home

Her Estate

She was the parties that she threw,
Full of elation and people she thought she cared about, but
She always locked herself away in her room.
She never thought she needed to organize it better.
Each event was so busy and short and
No one cared if it was poorly planned.

If the cake was too dry,
If the pool was too salty,
Or if the wine was too sweet, and
They couldn't care less if she was even there.

The only thing they cared about was
If there wasn't enough cocktails,
If the balloons weren't inflated enough,
Or if there wasn't enough music.

They left her estate trashed.
When the last person had left, she cleaned up and
Prepared for its destruction again the next night.

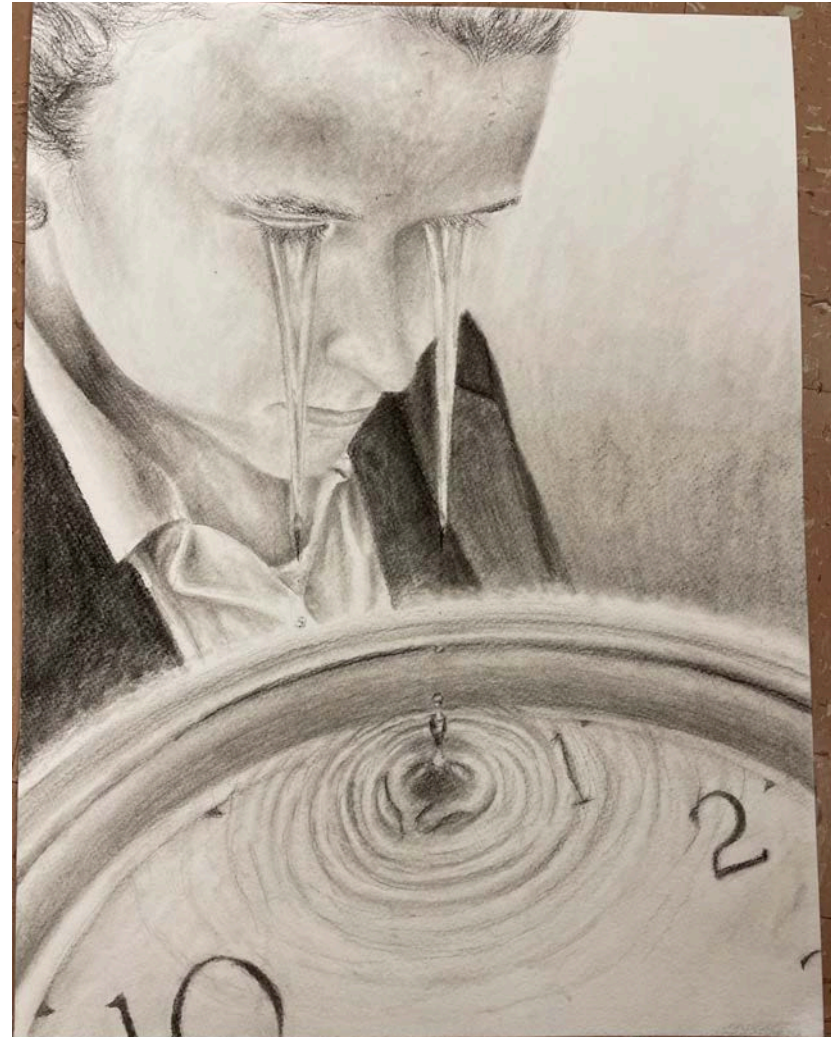
If only she would realize she didn't have to throw these parties.
The majority of people invited themselves, let alone even knew her.
She didn't care enough to tell them to leave.
She knew they wouldn't anyways.

She didn't need to please the guests,
She could have stopped at any time she wanted, but
She persevered.

Even though these guests were the pickiest,
Who always complained about there being too much of something,
She didn't mind too much that they stayed too long.

She kept throwing her parties,
Unsuspecting to the fact that by this, she, like a flower, was slowly withering away.

-Rosie Marinaro '27



"Reflection," Wescoat, '24

Surprising Similarities: Swimming and Playing the Violin

"This is the Women's 200 IM." *whistle blows* (step up on the block). "Swimmers, take your mark..." BEEP!
Good dive! Okay, let's pace ourselves because it's butterfly. We can't go too slow, though. How is the person next to me so good at fly?

"Welcome to auditions! I see in your application that you'll be playing The Four Seasons by Vivaldi for your solo piece. You can start whenever you're ready!

Don't forget...lots of expressions in this piece. You can twist the tempo in the beginning a little. Use a lot of vibrato. Save space in your bow, so you can hold the note longer.

Don't forget a two-hand touch! Okay, good. Now, we're on backstroke, thank god. This is your best stroke, so let's pick up the pace. There are the flags! Don't forget your stroke count, so you can flip...1, 2, 3 TURN...okay...that wasn't bad, but it was a little too close to the wall.

Here comes the high notes. Shift to sixth position! Okay, that shift was a little sharp, but don't worry. Now you're in the high register. Be careful when going over to the E string. You don't want to hit the other strings. Use bigger and faster bows for a nicer tone.

Rotate your shoulders more, pull the water, and follow through! Yes, we are halfway done! Now, we're on breaststroke. Take your pullout nice and easy. Do not take too many strokes, just glide! Don't get disqualified.

This is the big moment of the piece! Slowly get louder and louder. Keep the vibrato going. Use your wrist more to save some energy. Now, for the next movement. This is a fast movement, so make sure the difference is noticeable. Keep up with the tempo. Make sure the sixteenth notes are even. Use short bows. Be careful with the accidentals, and make sure the notes are in tune.

I'm so tired, but we're on the final two laps! It's freestyle!

We're almost at the end of the piece. Slow down to make it dramatic.

Use up any remaining energy! Kick faster, pull the water! Let's finish strong. Keep your head down, and slam your hand on the board!

Take your time. Last note...use lots of vibrato and slowly taper to the end of the bow...

I've been competitively swimming year-round and playing the violin for as long as I can remember. Growing up, it would be school, hours of swim practice after school almost every day, swim meets that take up the entire day for 2-3 days, and violin lessons with my private teacher every week. In middle school, however, I quit year-round swimming. Now, I swim in the winter season for Catholic High, practice 3 times a week, have orchestra rehearsal every week, and still have private violin lessons. These two hobbies are drastically different. Besides the fact that one is all **SPLASH, WHOOSH, SWOOSH**, and the other is DO, RE, MI, I have distinct and contrasting sides of myself for the two. Although I'm fairly serious during both a race and a recital, I am more strict with myself when it comes to swimming simply because there is less room for error. For example, if I false start or not do a two-hand touch when I'm supposed to, it will be extremely noticeable, and I will easily be disqualified. With playing the violin, however, if it's a solo piece, I can make slight changes to the tempo, or if I'm playing with an orchestra, one out-of-tune note won't be noticeable, as there are a lot of sounds to cover it. Ultimately, playing the violin allows me to be more flexible, which is one of the reasons why I have a greater passion for the violin compared to swimming. I don't want to blatantly demonstrate favoritism, as both hobbies play an immense role in my life, but I like how the violin allows me to make choices, be attentive to detail, and be expressive. I am able to learn and interpret a composer's piece, play it in a style that either displays the composer's original intention or conveys my own perspective, and then move on to practice another one. With the violin, there is a long list of new things to learn, such as techniques, styles, positions, fingerings, bowings, and rhythms. Even when you think you've got all these things down, you'll end up looking at your next piece thinking "What is this?" Swimming, on the other hand, acts as my comfort zone. I don't need to try new things or be adventurous with it, since I know the rules, strokes, techniques, and drills. Instead of learning something new each practice, I build upon and practice the same four strokes to increase speed and endurance. In this sense, swimming is safer and more comfortable. Although I'm more serious with one more than the other or more expressive with one over the other, swimming and playing the violin end up balancing my lifestyle.

Aside from my personal feelings between the two, they are fundamentally and naturally different. In swimming, you can use a kickboard, pull buoy, snorkel, fins, or paddles, depending on what you want to strengthen, but with playing the violin, it's just you, your violin, and your bow. However, the point of using a kickboard or pull buoy is to focus on exercising and critiquing the form of a particular body part (legs for kickboard, arms for pull buoy). This technique can also be used with the violin. If you are confused with the fingering of a piece, you can just focus on your left hand, or if you are confused with the bowing of a piece, you can just focus on your right hand. Furthermore, in swimming, it's common to practice a stroke at a comfortable speed before sprinting, which is analogous to the way you slowly work up to a fast tempo when playing the violin. Lastly, in swimming, you practice the same four strokes in order to strengthen endurance and form. This concept is similar to the most effective drill with playing the violin: repetition (playing a small section over and over again). If you want to spice things up, you can even play it in different and more difficult rhythms, so the original rhythm appears easier. For instance, if it was something like LA DI DA DI DA, you can practice it as LA DI DA DI DA.

All these examples were to demonstrate how the two activities have similar strategies, despite the contrasting ways in which they're applied. In a broader perspective, an athlete needs to train to improve their skills similar to how a musician needs to practice regularly to improve their technique. Both individuals must stick and dedicate themselves to either a training or practice schedule in order to achieve their respective goals. The point is, although the two hobbies are clearly distinct from one another in terms of specific details, they do overlap in aspects that can be seen from different angles.

Another example of this: teamwork. Swimming is more of an individual sport, but the points you gain depending on what place you earn contributes to the overall goal of the swim team...to win. Playing the violin, on the other hand, typically involves being part of an ensemble or orchestra, where you play with other musicians to display a beautiful performance together. Technically speaking, the two are different, but both involve teamwork and collaboration, nonetheless.

The most common similarity I have between swimming and playing the violin, however, is my love-hate relationship with them. Though I love the adrenaline you get when you're in the zone, the struggles to stay there, like adding time in a race or disrupting the flow of the piece, are equally as frustrating. Same feeling, different situation.

Nevertheless, they both take a lot of time, discipline, and patience. Continuously adding time, being unable to play a certain spot in a piece, and working so incredibly hard to drop merely one second or to make little improvement can easily spark a mental block, a mentality in which you start to believe you can't do something when you know you can or when you believe all your efforts are wasted when they aren't.

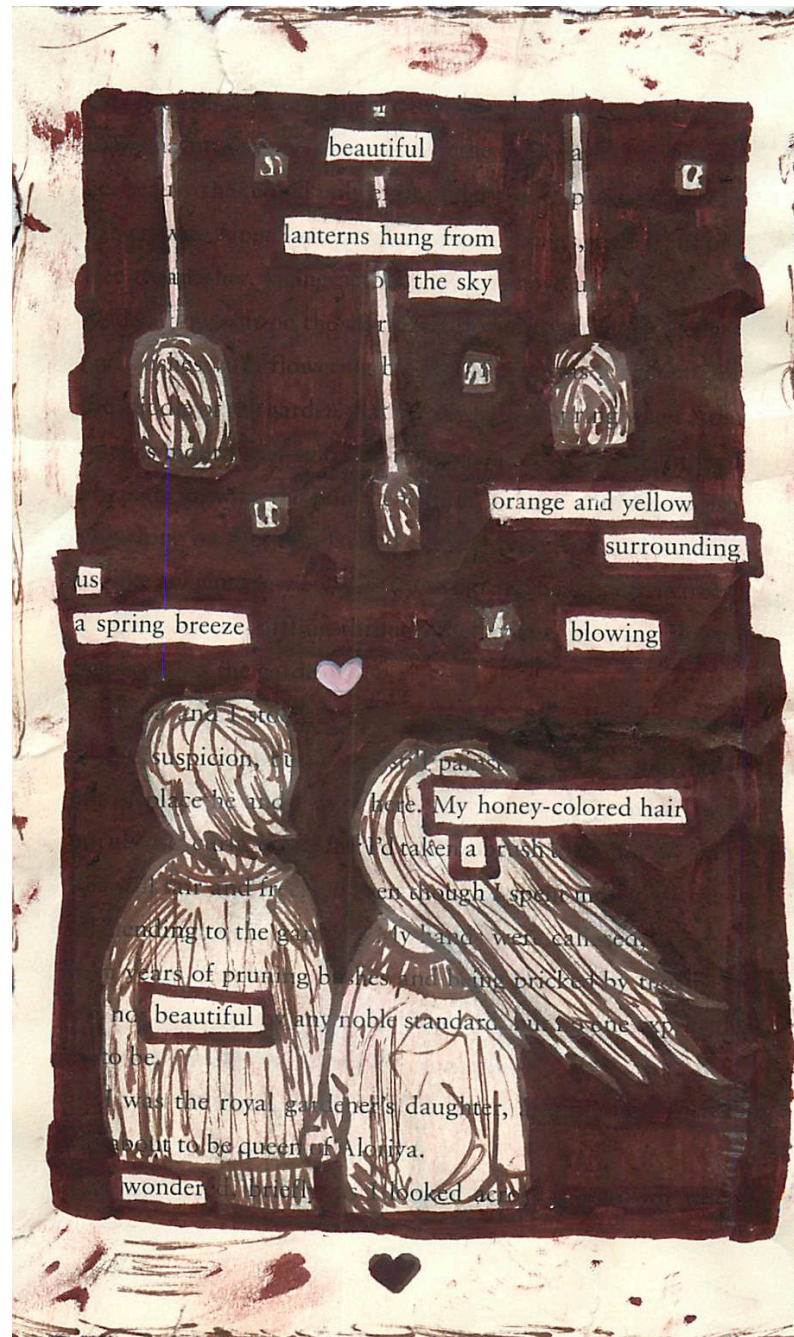
Both hobbies are physically tiring, but playing these mind games or wrestling with your mind to get it in the correct space are on a different level. Swimming and playing the violin both require focus, concentration, thinking ahead, a positive attitude, and the healthy kind of pressure. Keeping this mindset despite the unsatisfying results is, in my opinion, the most difficult part of it all. It is easy to fall into pessimistic pressure, as a commitment to a sport or an instrument directly connects to this endless cycle of winning and losing, where unpredictability exists, and inevitability ceases to exist. The good news is that it is always possible to recover from a slump, but that means that it is just as possible to lose a winning streak. There is never a guaranteed chance of success, and how you choose to respond to this fact is what's ultimately important. Maintaining a balanced level of passion and frustration, as well as confidence and humility is equally as critical as maintaining a good physique or form.

I admit that there were and are times that I wanted to give it all up for good. In fact, in middle school, the love-hate relationship I had with year-round swimming was no longer balanced. I hated how I kept hyperventilating, how I kept worrying and stressing over a time, and how affected my eczema was due to the chlorine. In practice, I couldn't be more thankful if I got 10 seconds of rest between sets or if there was a thunderstorm and everyone had to get out of the pool. This build-up led to me quitting something I used to love and taking a 1-2 year break. I didn't think I was going to get back into it until I became part of the Catholic High swim team. The love I had for swimming regenerated, and the ratio became even again. I never quit playing the violin, but I've definitely had experiences where my patience was fleeting: not getting the chair I wanted in an orchestra, not seeing any signs of progress, spending weeks on one piece, spending hours recording for an online audition, and pretending like my back and shoulder aren't in pain until the end of the performance. Clearly, swimming and playing the violin has its ups and downs, but it simply feels good to continue to do something I started when I was young. Thankfully, swimming and playing the violin end up being more complementary than interdependent, and with the incorporation of balance-between the two lifestyles (and with other priorities), my love and hate feelings, and my passion and frustration-I won't give up.

To tell you the truth, my original idea for this story was to exemplify the two very different and separate lives I live as a swimmer and violinist. To my surprise, however, I found that most of the differences I discovered between the two activities ended up connecting to a common similarity. It became easier to think about what they had in common as opposed to what they don't, especially when I reflected on not only the fundamental aspects of the two, but also on the challenges that got me to where I am and the challenges that continue to stick with me.

Toni Tan '25

Beautiful Lanterns



-Sloane Brown '26

The Journey of Journaling

I have kept a journal for the past 6 years. Since middle school, I have felt a continuous need to record what happens in my day, my feelings, random anecdotes, etc. Some people document their life through photos—I choose the more time-consuming route of writing everything down. In a book I recently read, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* by Joan Didion, I was struck by one essay called *On Keeping a Notebook*. Didion writes about the purpose of journals and why she keeps one. "Keepers of private notebooks are a different breed altogether, lonely and resistant re-arrangers of things, anxious malcontents, children afflicted apparently at birth with some presentiment of loss," she says. I feel the same as Didion—born with a need for permanence, a calling for analysis and contemplation.

A neurotic perfectionist.

She sometimes lies to herself about why she keeps a notebook, saying she "imagine[s] that some thrifty virtue derives from preserving everything observed." While she writes about things that seem arbitrary, like the conversation she overheard between strangers in a hotel or a lesson someone told her about failed fashion models, she believes the point of her writing these anecdotes down is to remember what these seemingly arbitrary instances mean to her. Didion says that writing in a journal is inherently egotistical, as it is a private record of our own perspective.

Egotistical usually has a negative connotation—one of selfishness, vanity, and narcissism. However, in this instance, I believe that the word means self-determination. A journal is a place where one can examine their actions, or the actions of others, and reflect on their decisions. It is a place where one can offer gratitude for the positive things in their lives, scratch down the argument they are dying to open up about, or record an otherwise boring day that can later be looked upon with nostalgia. A notebook allows us to have a dialogue with ourselves from the future—to look back on the "good old days" or "worst days of our lives"

exactly how we experienced them at the time and examine them through the point of view we have now. As Didion puts it, journals help us keep in touch with ourselves.

Anonymous



Lady Roxane



Lady Roxane

Sensation par Arthur Rimbaud

Par les soirs bleus d'été j'irai dans les sentiers,
Picoté par les blés, fouler l'herbe menue :
Rêveur, j'en sentirai la fraîcheur à mes pieds.
Je laisserai le vent baigner ma tête nue.

Je ne parlerai pas ; je ne penserai rien.
Mais l'amour infini me montera dans l'âme ;
Et j'irai loin, bien loin, comme un bohémien,
Par la Nature,—heureux comme avec une femme

Sensation translated by Gina Marie Brennan

Under the blue summer skies, I will take the road
Prickled by the wheat, trampling in the grass
Look, I feel cool dew beneath my toes
I relent, the wind my bare head wraps

I will no longer speak, I will no longer think
But love comes and I rise from the brink
And I will go far, beyond far, scorning rules from above
Under nature, whole as if with my love

Gina Marie Brennan '24

Translator Notes:

To me, we are all translators. We take abstract sensations and mold them into something palatable and savory. Pen scrapes against paper as our minds swim with ideas, discarding a phrase here and adding another there; with it, we quantify the immeasurable. Even in personal relationships, simple speech is oftentimes a meticulous picking through of emotions. The chilling, heavy weight of fear against one's bones is decompartmentalized into a simple phrase: I'm afraid. Nuance being a luxury few can afford, we scramble for the right words, silently begging others to not turn their backs as we expose our innermost feelings. This translation, in a sense, is a taking back of this eloquence that subjectivity has stolen.

When I first read *Sensation*, I had to sound out each word in order to capture the rhyme scheme (ABAB / CCDD, for those wondering). No other translation of this poem has put this at the forefront, and while rhyming is often viewed as elementary today, it was integral to this specific piece, and I had to make many concessions to fit it in (see Line 7, in which the literal translation of the latter half is "like a bohemian"). That being said, most phrases are more or less accurate to the original French and capture the pure love for nature that Rimbaud puts out. Ironically, though, his most famous work, *A Season in Hell*, completely abandons this simplicity, instead opting to focus on the large, existential problems that had plagued him, such as suicide and alcoholism.

In addition to this, certain words in the original French would not resonate in the same matter to this audience as was intended. For example, the final line literally means, "Content, like with a woman." In order for it to resonate with an adolescent, all-female populace, I wanted to invoke a more platonic and cyclical idea, so as not to alienate the audience. Thus, I changed content to whole and woman to love.

If nothing else, I hope you can sense the love between these lines. Rimbaud's life was filled with anguish, pain, and fear, but still much good remained. Friends, family, and complete strangers gathered together to publish his works after his death at 37. This piece, though lacking the complexity of his more famous works, instead illuminates our human nature to love and appreciate beauty, whether that be the sun shining against our face or simple, good poetry.

The True Treasure

Finally, after years of searching, she had found it. The only known way to save the human race was just inches away from her face. The fruit of her labor was within reach. She examined it, ensuring that her eyes had not deceived her. Her entire life had led up to this moment; she would finally be envisioned as the hero she had always hoped to be.

She knew it was very likely that this treasure was the last of its kind. Its orange flowering buds, it seemed, were reaching out just for her. Its bright purple thorns promised more hope than danger. It was tightly wedged between the sapphire blue stones that made up the cave encompassing her. This planet of fluorescents was the last planet of many that she had set out to search; perhaps it should have been the first.

"The flower," Polly said, barely believing the words that were about to escape her lips, "has been detected." She continued into her two-way radio, "I will now begin the extraction procedure." Her crew, back on the spaceship, remained speechless, most likely shocked by the words they never thought they would hear. Polly knew there was no longer time to gaze at the dazzling flower she had just discovered.

The procedure went smoother than expected, and Polly quickly began to make her way to the spaceship, precious blossom in hand. She stepped briskly but carefully as she knew she would never deliver a more priceless package. She had to get to the ship to plant the flower in the nutrient rich soil that would keep it from withering away on the trip back to Earth. Once the plant arrived, scientists would reproduce millions of the same flower and utilize all of its healing properties. Without the flower, humanity would be entirely wiped out by disease over the course of the next two years.

Her feet sunk through the fuchsia slime-like surface with every step. She watched for the colorful spikes that were underfoot. Some spikes were only an inch tall, others were taller than Polly herself. One particular ruby red spike caught Polly's eye as it twinkled with the light of the many moons surrounding it. Luckily she didn't step on it, as that ran the risk of puncturing her space suit and sending poison through her body. Despite the planet's welcoming colors, it was a place of danger and potential demise.

She was only 100 feet from the spaceship when Polly's life changed forever. Polly was so focused on the mission at hand that she almost didn't notice the teal slimy creature blocking her path. The creature's lime green knuckle-hair reached the floor, and its golden antler-like horns pierced the humid air. Although the creature looked considerably odd to Polly, she knew her bubble of a spacesuit must have made her look unusual as well, threatening even. A local of this beautiful planet was not something commonly seen by interplanetary prospectors.

"What is that creature doing there?" Polly wondered, "Shouldn't it be hiding like the rest of them? Why isn't it afraid of me?" It was only then that Polly realized how malnourished the creature was. She noticed how fatigued it was. She knew it was in no condition to attack her.

The shuffling behind the creature only confirmed Polly's concerns. A smaller creature, almost certainly the offspring of the first, stepped out from behind, revealing that it was even more emaciated than its mother. These creatures weren't just hungry, they were sick. Sick with the same disease that had spread to much of the galaxy. They were infected with the same disease as the humans, and they would need the same antidote; the precious flower.

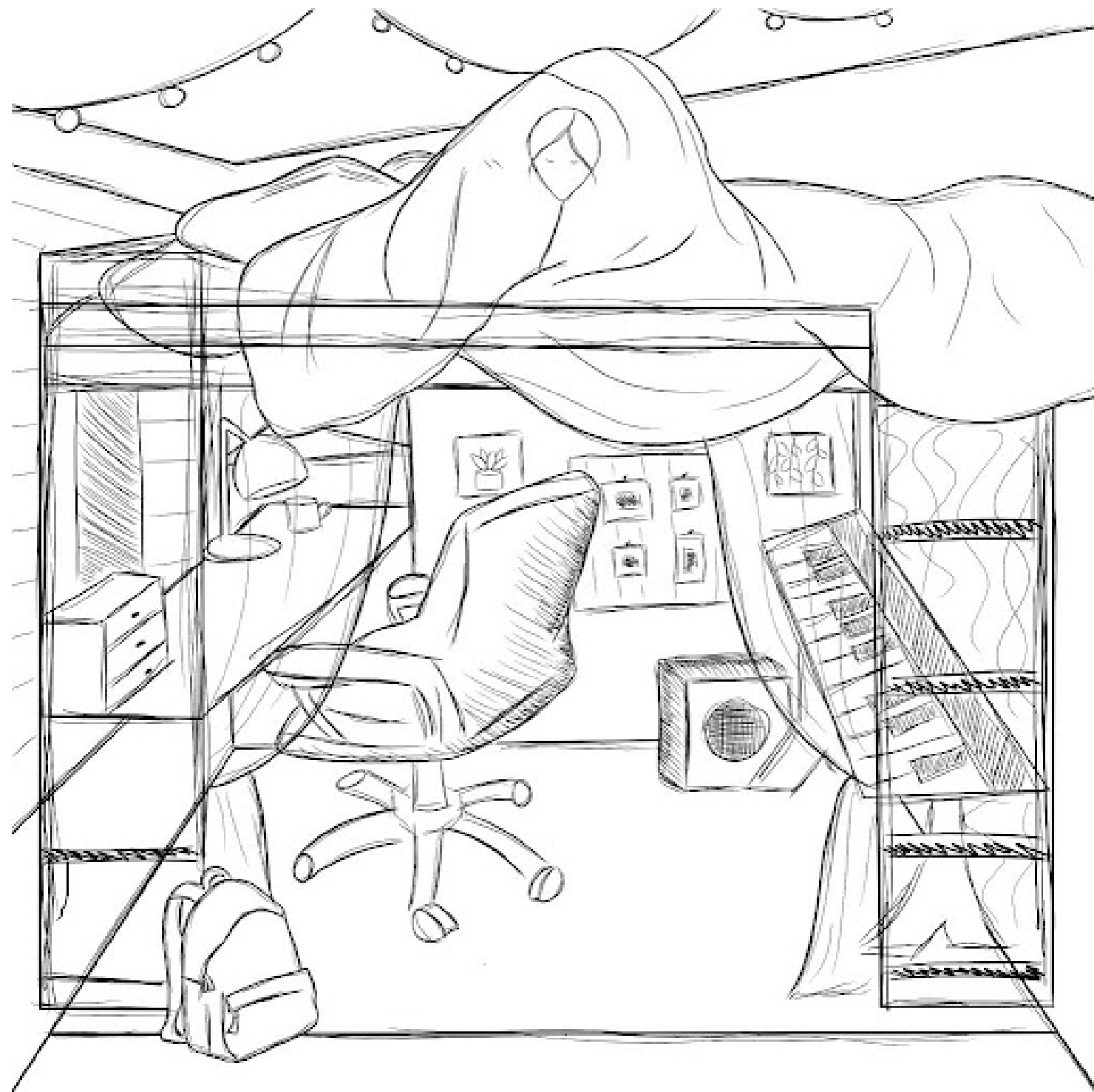
Now Polly knew why the creatures remained before her. They had nothing to lose. Their kind had obviously had the disease for much longer than humans had. Without the flower their species would likely die before the end of the month. The aliens were not here to fight, they were here as a last resort. They were here to beg.

Polly had a decision to make, and it would be the hardest thing she ever had to do. She could easily take the flower selfishly back to the ship, and continue on as if nothing had happened. She could save the human race at the expense of, arguably, the most unique species alive. Or, she could save the creatures and hope the humans found another way. She could cross her fingers tight and hope for the best for her species, assured that she had saved another. It was only guaranteed that one species would survive, and she had to decide which.

Polly found her way back to the spaceship deeply saddened by the consequences of her decision. She opened the door, inspecting the excited faces of her crew. She climbed aboard, and the crew's smiles melted as they noticed Polly's expression. Her face was gloomy, but her eyes remained hopeful. "False alarm. Mission failed. We'll get it next time." Polly spit the words swiftly, as to make the blow as quick as possible. With small sad smiles, the crew got ready for takeoff.

Back on the beautiful planet of fluorescents, the creatures stood watching the spaceship exit their atmosphere. The bright orange flower was held gently but firmly in the smaller creature's hands. They finally had the antidote, thanks to the most selfless interplanetary prospector alive, and the true treasure of her kindness.

Sofia Schisler '25



"Comfort Space" Toni Tan, '25

Split Beginnings

"Hi, I'm Hannah, do you wanna be my best friend?" a small girl with fiery hair and a loud Irish accent said to Merian.

"Umm... sure, I'm Merian," Merian replied, wondering why this girl was approaching her, the shy one out of all the rest of the kids.

Twirling her hair into a messy bun, Hannah says, "OK good, my mom says that I should use some of my extroverted-ness and be friends with shy kids like you... I can't wait to be your friend, I don't have many friends, people think I'm too energetic. How about you? Are you from Ireland, you don't sound like you have an Irish accent. I don't like school, do you? You look like you are smart, do you get good grades?" Hannah asked, not realizing that she was asking questions and never allowing Merian to answer.

"Um, no, no, yes, yes," Merian answered, trying to hold back a laugh. She caught Hannah's eye and they both laughed as Merian said, "I think we will be good friends."

Fast Forward 8 Years...

"You ought to get going now, dear," Hannah's mother shouted from the kitchen.

"Wa- what? Is it time to go? Am I late?" she asked, frantically searching through her disaster of a room to find her phone. Checking the time, Hannah realized that the taxi they arranged to take her into the city was due to arrive in 2 minutes. She ran to the bathroom, yelling through a mouthful of toothpaste, "How long would it take for you to drive me into the city?"

Hannah's mom walked up to her daughter's room and gave her that look of annoyance when a child makes life way too difficult for their parents. "About the same amount of time that it would take for a taxi. If you had not pulled that prank, you would have been able to drive yourself. Ah, but never mind you never would have gotten up early enough anyway," Hannah's mom said as she taunted her with the car keys.

Pulling on her boots, Hannah emerged from the bathroom saying, "Way too harsh, Mom. It was only a little spray paint," but she cut off as her mother narrowed her eyes at her. "Ok, fine, I just need to get my phone charger, and then we can go."

However, her mom grabbed her hand saying, "No time, we need to leave now if you are going to get there on time." Seeing her daughter roll her eyes, she said, "No excuses from you, this was the deal. If you do not get this scholarship, you are going to get a job and pay your way through college- and yes you have to go to college. You can't just go to the skate park every night, you have to get an education, a job, and move out so that I can maintain some of the sanity I still possess." Her mom paused for a second and then said, "Now get out there and crush it, sister!"

2 Hours Earlier...

Merian felt a hand on her shoulder as the flight attendant told her, "We are landing, welcome to Ireland!"

Rubbing the sleep out of her eyes, she looked out the window, trying not to freak out that she was on an airplane thousands of miles above solid ground. As they landed, Merian closed her eyes, trying to not think back on the last time she was on a plane from Ireland, 3 years ago. For the past 3 years, Merian has been in England, attending secondary school and taking care of her father, who got sick during her time in Ireland. However, as of a couple of days ago, she has decided to go and live with her aunt and attend university in Ireland at the University of Berlin City. But Merian is very afraid that her dad will get even sicker and she will not be able to take care of him. Pushing these thoughts aside, Merian focused on the goal at hand: conducting an amazing interview and getting the scholarship. The hospital bills for her father's treatment had been piling up and the small amount of money her mother left them was quickly running out. The only way for her to go to university was to get this scholarship; if not, it was back to London to get a job and take care of her dad. Lost in her thoughts, her anxiety went away as she was too distracted to notice the plane landing. Merian retrieved her bag from the overhead bin and exited the plane, walking into the terminal. After going through customs and retrieving her bag, she walked outside the airport searching for a taxi that would take her to her aunt's house.

35 Minutes Later...

"Hello child, skirt down, shoulders up," her aunt snapped at her as soon as she got out of the car. Merian walked up to her and gave her an one arm hug, embracing her as if she were an infectious disease. She quickly let go and hurried Merian inside, saying, "You should put your hair in a bun, it is more professional and as of right now, you look homeless." Internally groaning, Merian followed her upstairs as she directed her to the guest room she would be staying in until she was notified of the results of the scholarship.

As her aunt left the room, Merian said to her, "Thank you for allowing me to stay here, Aunt Marlene. I am truly grateful for your hospitality." Exiting with only a small nod in response, she watched her aunt and wondered how the two sisters could be so different. Merian's mother had been a kind, warm person who only ever expected the best of everyone. However, her sister, Marlene, was the complete opposite - stern, cold, and believing that everyone would eventually disappoint her. Following her aunt's suggestion, she did her hair and got dressed, hoping to channel her inner totally-deserving-a-great-university-scholarship-because-she-has-great- grades-and-personality-self.

Even though it would only take 45 minutes to get to Dublin City University, and Merian's interview was at 10:00 am, she left as soon as she could to avoid more pleasant conversations with her aunt.

9:45 AM...

Running up towards the main entrance of Berlin City University, Hannah bumped into a girl around her age who was dressed as though she were a 50-year-old professor. Shouting, "OUT OF THE WAY, SORRY, EXCUSE ME," to several concerned college students, Hannah threw open the door to the university and ran up to the secretary's desk, breathing heavily and asking, "Here- for- interview, -which- way?" The secretary simply pointed to a door behind her where a man stood there checking his watch and tapping his foot impatiently. Mentally preparing herself for a lecture, Hannah thanked the secretary and walked over to what she was sure was impending doom.

As she approached the man, he said to her, "Five minutes late, not starting off well now are we Miss Dale?"

"Yes, I think not," Hannah replied under her breath, rolling her eyes. This interview was a waste of time, she was not the student for which these people were looking to pay for college.

The man smiled at her and said, "I was only joking, Miss Dale. After all, I did not bother to even show up to my college scholarship interview. I am Mr. Miller, I will be conducting your interview. Please follow me."

Hannah's mouth dropped as she followed Mr. Miller. She sure had not expected that kindness.

15 Minutes Later...

Merian had been sitting in the lobby for 10 minutes panicking. Some other girl dressed in ripped black jeans and combat boots had run into her and knocked her to the ground, causing Merian to rip her tights and break a heel in the process. Trying to hold back tears, Merian had walked (as well as one can when only wearing one shoe) into the lobby and was greeted by a kind secretary who helped calm her down until a man and the very girl who had run into her emerged from an office. The girl shook the man's hand walked over to the lobby and sat down, ignoring Merian.

She was pulled from her thoughts as the man said, "Merian Fitzgibbons?"

Getting up from her chair, Merian walked over to the man, but as she was entering the office, she turned around and found that the other applicant was staring at her in shock. Pushing her thoughts away, she walked into the office putting on her best game face.

Meanwhile in the lobby...

There was no way that Hannah had heard Mr. Miller correctly, that girl's name could not be Merian Fitzgibbons. Even if it was, Hannah assured herself that "Merian Fitzgibbons" was a very common name and there was no way inarnation that this girl was her childhood best friend that she hadn't seen in 3 years, right? Finally, after 10 minutes of reassuring herself, Hannah concluded that it couldn't be her. However, as the girl emerged from the office, there was no denying it, the girl was Hannah's former best friend. Walking over with Merian, Mr. Miller stopped in front of Hannah and addressed both of the girls saying, "I will get back to both of you by Tuesday of next week, letting you know the results of the interview. Good day, ladies." As Mr. Miller turned to leave, a mysterious young man walked in and approached the professor, who then ushered him into his office. Distracted by what had just happened, Hannah turned around to talk to Merian, but Merian had left the lobby. Running out of the building, Hannah desperately searched for Merian, but could not find her.

One week later...

There had been no response from Mr. Miller and Merian had started to freak out, believing that she had not gotten the scholarship and the other girl had received it. But Mr. Miller had told her that he would email her, either way. Merian decided to search through her old emails and find the other applicant's email to ask if they had heard from Mr. Miller and if so, congratulate her on the success. Merian emailed the other applicant thinking that it was just a mistake that Mr. Miller had not emailed her.

5 Minutes Later...

Much to Merian's surprise, the other applicant emailed her back right away, but as she read the email, she gasped and dropped her computer in surprise. With shaking hands, she picked up the computer and reread the email. There was no way, she had to be hallucinating. The other applicant was Hannah Dale, her best friend from when she was living in Ireland. Merian could not believe the chances that they were both interviewing for the same scholarship. She wondered why Hannah was even interviewing for the scholarship, as Hannah was set on not going to college. At one of their weekly sleepovers, Hannah had confessed to Merian that she was not going to go to college as her mother wished because she was going to go to Culinary School. Nevertheless, Hannah had responded that she had not received an email either. Merian sent another email including her number and asking if Hannah would want to talk on the phone to decide what to do.

45 Minutes Later...

Hannah and Merian had been trying to decide what they should do about the situation over the phone. Merian had wanted to just wait it out, assuming that Mr. Miller just forgot to email them and Hannah had agreed to this. Despite their agreement, Hannah decided to email Mr. Miller, demanding an answer. Hannah had always secretly thought that Merian was too shy and passive, and from their past friendship, she knew it would just be easier to not tell Merian what she was planning to do. So Hannah sent the email and waited anxiously for an answer.

2 Days Later...

Hannah did get an answer to her email, but not from whom she expected. Instead of Mr. Miller responding, his wife, Mrs. Miller had responded asking Hannah to meet her at the Art Cafe so that she could talk to her. Hannah sent back an email agreeing to go, but, not wanting to go alone, Hannah invited Merian. However, she told Merian that she wanted to catch up with her, and did not tell Mrs. Miller or Merian that the other was going to come to the cafe.

The Next Day...

This was a problem, Merian was thinking to herself, trying to not completely abandon Hannah and call a taxi to take her back to her aunt's house. However, Hannah pushed her towards the table, cutting off Merian's chance to escape. After they sat down at the table, Hannah apologized to the woman and Merian. She then explained about the email and that Merian was another one of the applicants for the scholarship and so she felt that Merian should be involved as well. Mrs. Miller agreed and then told them why Mr. Miller had not emailed them with the results of the scholarship decision.

Choking back tears, Mrs. Miller told the girls, "I believe that my husband has been kidnapped. On Tuesday he interviewed you girls, but he didn't return home. The next day, I called the university and they told me he had taken a leave of absence. I just- I don't know what to do. I filed a missing persons case with the local authorities, but no one can seem to find him."

Taking Mrs. Miller's hand, Hannah, who had watched Sherlock way too many times, said to her, "Merian and I would be happy to try to find out where he was last and look for him."

Merian's mouth dropped and she said, "Oh I'm sorry, I don't think this is the best-."

But Mrs. Miller had embraced the girls, and said to them, "Thank you, girls, so much, you have no idea how much this means to me."

2 Days Later...

Merian's phone was going off, she groaned, grabbing the phone and checking to see who the heck was texting her at 5 AM. It was Hannah with the message, "We start today, 8 AM at DCU." The girls met at the school just as planned and learned from many professors and students that they heard Mr. Miller say he was going to go to Spitalfields to meet a few friends. So, the girls went to Spitalfields and asked the manager if he heard about or saw Mr. Miller going somewhere. They were directed to Marsh's Library, Cut & Sew Barbers, AIB Bank, and then finally to the back alleyway of Dunnes Stores. It was in this alleyway in which the girls met a roadblock, as there was no one around to help them. Hannah sat down on the sidewalk and put her head in her hands. Seeing her old friend's dejection, Merian asked,

"Are you alright? You look exhausted."

Looking up with tears in her eyes, Hannah said, "No, you know what, I needed a friend. No one understood why I acted how I did, you promised to be there for me, but you weren't."

"What, where did this come from all of a sudden? You know I wanted to be, but I had to be there for my father. We've already had this discussion," Merian answered, spluttering in surprise.

Pointing her finger at Merian, Hannah yelled, "You know all I needed was a phone call every few days, and don't say that you didn't have a choice you know you did. Even if you wanted to, you wouldn't have spoken up anyway."

"Don't start with me, Hannah. you don't know, you wouldn't know, because you never listened. It was always just about your problems in life," Merian replied, turning away from Hannah.

"Oh so now it's my fault. Your dad begged you not to come back to London. But you didn't listen, that was your choice. You promised you would come back, you said 2 weeks at first, then 2 months and now 3 years later and you still are one phone call away from hopping on a plane and abandoning me all over again," Hannah cried, tossing her hands in the air. For 30 minutes the girls sat in silence, then they looked at each other and broke into simultaneous apologies. They agreed that after they were done with the investigation, they would catch up on all that had happened these past years and try to rekindle their friendship.

Looking behind her, Merian said to Hannah, "Have you noticed that the other guy from the interview has been at almost every location we visited?"

Realizing what Merian was saying, Hannah replied, "Yeah I felt like he was following us, but I just thought it was a coincidence."

With this encouragement, Merian said, "That seems a little suspicious, right? I think that we should stay here and see what he is doing."

Bewildered at Merian speaking her mind, Hannah said, "Ok, good idea, you should speak your mind more often." Laughing, the girls waited until they saw the guy across the street. They ran across the street and approached him. As they caught up to him, Hannah asked him, "Hi, you were the last applicant for the interview right?"

Looking up from his phone, he replied, smiling, "Yeah, sorry I never introduced myself, I'm Dylan."

Slyly smiling in return, Hannah said, "I'm Hannah and this is Merian. Sorry to bother you, but we recognized you and wanted to wish you luck. OK bye!" The girls quickly hurried away, crossing the street and walking into a market. As soon as Dylan started to walk away, the girls followed him, keeping their distance so as to not be discovered. Finally, after following him for 15 minutes, the girls followed him into an empty warehouse. Standing at the entrance, they watched as Dylan walked up to and embraced a woman.

Realizing who it was, Hannah gasped and said, "That's Mrs. Miller! What is she doing here?" Merian shrugged, but also having watched too much Sherlock, pulled out her phone and began recording the conversation.

They broke apart and Dylan spoke, "Mother, the plan has succeeded, he is now in America and it has all been transferred to your account. Although I do believe those girls are on to me."

With a grim expression, Mrs. Miller said, "I knew I never should have answered the email, I was just having too much fun. You know, being a criminal is so very fun." With this newly gleaned information, Hannah left the warehouse to call the authorities.

Grinning, Dylan replied, "It's OK, they will never be able to find out what happened. I mean, who would guess that you would steal small increments of your husband's money? Get me to deliver a letter to him telling him to go to America to take care of his "sick" relative, and drain the rest of his bank account, thereby causing him to be trapped in America with no money and no idea what happened. Whereas you and I get off with a pretty sum of money and flee to England where nobody will ever find out."

But to their surprise, Mrs. Miller and Dylan heard, "Hands up and turn around. You are under arrest for fraud and theft. You have the right to remain silent."

Eyes wide, Mrs. Miller said, "Haha, what a funny joke Dylan, sorry we were just rehearsing for our play."

However, Merian emerged, playing back the recording.

Realizing they could not talk their way out of this, Dylan said, "Well played, Watson," as he and his mother were handcuffed and taken away.

5 Days Later...

"I would just like to thank you girls for all you have done for me. So, I have decided to split the scholarship between the two of you and pay out of pocket for the rest of your tuition," Mr. Miller said, giving each of the girls a hug.

However, to everyone's surprise, Hannah said, "Actually, I will have to decline, I am going to live out my dream and go to Culinary School. I told my mother about wanting to attend and she was so happy she even offered to pay the tuition."

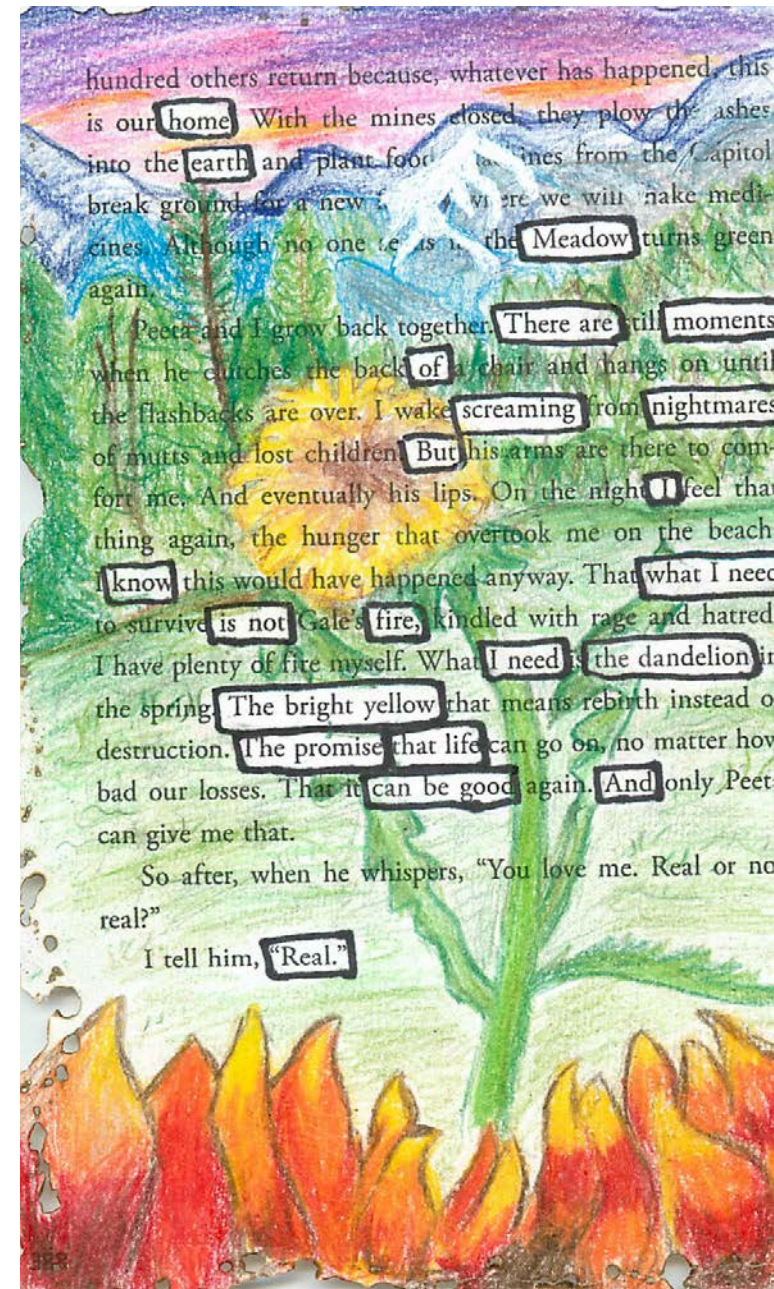
"Well you know, I would still like to help Hannah, so when you get your book list, send me an email with the prices. Merian, that means you get the entire scholarship! Congratulations girls!" Mr. Miller said, waving goodbye to the girls, with them shouting their thanks in return.

Together they grabbed each other's hands, jumping up and down, yelling, "WE DID IT!"

Meg Rothschild



-Melissa Huynh '27



-Leah Pompanio '24

☆
A Byrd in the Stars
☆

I hear the bell at the entrance to the store chime.

"Hi, how can I help you?" I ask, looking up.

They tell me they're fine, that they are just browsing.

I offer my assistance, and that's it. The same routine no matter who walks through the door. Sometimes they come in knowing what they want and are too proud to ask for other recommendations, and other times they come just to prove they have some knowledge left in their crowded brains.

That's the thing about working at a bookstore. Being surrounded by fantasy and stories full of hope doesn't change your life. If anything, it makes it more bleak.

"Come on, silly!" her curly red pigtails bouncing with excitement.

"But Byrd, the story just got really good!" I countered with desperation.

"Oh my gosh stop being so boring! Let's go play. I hate it when you read about unicorns and ponies and Princess Sparkle Pants."

"That's not even what it's about dummy!" her look only egged me on. "Oh, no you didn't!" I jumped up and ran towards her, giggling hysterically.

We chased each other around the room, the occasional pillow flying past my head.

Exhausted from laughing, we collapsed on the carpet, breathless but content.

"Tag!" she proudly declared.

"No way! I hit you with a pillow first," I argued back smugly.

"Oh yeah? Well guess what? You're not reading!" her electric blue eyes stared me down with fierce determination.

"Fine...what should we play?" defeated, I gave in to her playfulness.

I flip the sign at the entrance of the store, and it no longer reads Open. I carefully set the alarm system, grab my bag, and lock up.

During these moments, I feel at ease and allow my thoughts to drift to times when Molly Byrd was still in my life. I remember vividly her contagious laugh and the way she just belonged outside. How she would yell at people when they littered, or her nervous habit of humming loudly.

A car obnoxiously honks at me, and I realize the light has changed. Thanks for the wakeup call reality.

Once I arrive at my apartment, I find myself drifting towards the fridge. Out of sheer nostalgia, I make blueberry pancakes, a childhood favorite of mine.

As I sit alone in my kitchen, I desperately try to think about where she might be. Similar to the other times, my detective skills fail me.

We had gotten into a fight months before graduation. I always felt like she knew me inside and out, but there was a part of her life that she kept hidden from me. All I wanted was to understand her and she shut me out completely.

I tried to make amends a week after the argument, but she was gone. She left, and no one knew where she went. That was 3 weeks ago.

These days, I've found it harder and harder to fall asleep. Have you ever noticed that the world we live in is never truly silent? Under the covers, I hear the hum of my refrigerator and the dialogue between the couple that live under me. The beeping of the traffic outside and the gentle roar of planes flying overhead. Every day, I am more desperate for an escape. To taste the fresh air and finally be able to breathe.

Perhaps she felt the same way. Perhaps she disappeared just to hear the silence and feel the sun on her face. But why does no one know where she went? What am I missing?

"Where did you go, Byrd?" I whisper to myself, not expecting an answer, but still hoping for one.

The crickets chirp, the wind gently whistling through the vents in my tent. I sigh with content.

Something nudges me and I turn, only to see Byrd grinning at me, mischief in her smile.

"Psst! Get your sleeping bag."

"What for? Hey! Don't poke me!"

"Just grab it!"

She leads me out of the tent and tells me to look.

Stars dot the entire sky, the light vibrant and bursting with color. Nothing blocks the huge stretch of dark blue, and I can't help but wonder what it would be like to see this everyday.

I gasp in amazement. "Wow..."

She sticks her tongue out at me. "I told you!"

"Oh whatever. But look! I think I see the big dipper. And there's Orion's belt!"

"It's so beautiful."

I turn to her and tell her with raw sincerity, "Don't you feel so free here? There's nothing to block the stars, and we're so close to the sky."

"I always feel free."

"How?"

"Nothing weighs me down. I don't let anything stand in the way of my imagination and thoughts."

We sit under the blanket of the sky, not saying a word, but content in the moment, trying to understand the secrets the stars hold.

"Hey Josie?" she's the only person who's ever called me that, and I smile.

"Yeah?"

"Let's leave. Once we graduate, let's just run away, far away from here. Then I can show you what it's like to be free."

"Where would we go?" I ask longingly, the dream seeming so far away.

"France," she tells me blissfully.

"France," I wake up with a start and think it over.

"France," I say again, the word holding more beauty to me than I had ever imagined.

I pick up my phone and check the date. The words read June 19, and I form a plan in my mind. With the money I've saved working at the bookstore, I could actually make it. My heart swells with hope, and I can't help but smile the same way Byrd did.

"France," I say one more time, the word tasting sweet and promising on my lips.

I drift off to sleep, relaxed and at ease for the first time in weeks.

During school, I was the quiet girl in the back of the class who never bothered to talk to anyone else. Byrd was the only one who saw a different side of me. After she left, it was too hard to start all over.

Miraculously, once I started working, I opened up. Socialized. Met new people. And I must say, it's as amazing as I remember.

"Brooke?" I ask, the beating in my chest causing my voice to quiver.

"Yes, sweetie?" The invitation in my boss' soft voice was evident. I relax and explain my dilemma. How Byrd's disappearance has been tearing a hole in my heart and left me feeling sad and lost. She nods, and the encouragement keeps me going. I ask if I can take a few weeks off, and drop my gaze, waiting for a refusal, the same answer I've been given all my life.

"She sounds so special Jo. Why did you never tell me about her before?" She places her hand on mine, and I lift my eyes, only to find empathy and kindness. It takes me a moment to process her question.

"I, well—it was just too hard. She was my only friend and then when she left...I didn't talk about her to avoid the guilt. We got in a fight before graduation and I thought I would at least hear from her again," tears slowly break free from my eyes. I wish I was stronger than this.

"Yes," she meets my eyes and tells me sincerely.

"Really? Thank you so much," I stand up and hug her, the warm embrace giving me hope.

"Now boarding flight 7693 to Paris," the airplane intercom alerts me. I pick up my bags and hand the flight attendant my boarding pass. She nods and I stroll down the terminal, an unusual pep in my step. I am not an adventurous person, but I really do think I am starting to understand the appeal. The uncertainty of the unknown gives us adrenaline to keep going.

After finding my seat, I lean my head back and let out a sigh. I hope to whatever higher power there is up there that this is the right thing.

"Good morning ladies and gentlemen, this is your Captain speaking. The crew and I would like to welcome you to Charles de Gaulle Airport. We will be arriving at the gate momentarily. Please remain in your seats with your seatbelts securely fastened until the aircraft has come to a complete stop at the terminal gate. Thank you for flying with us today, and enjoy your stay in Paris," I open my eyes. Right away, I feel the fluttering excitement in my stomach growing. I can do this. I've dreamt about it for so long and I'm finally here.

An hour later, I arrive at my hotel and collapse on the bed, exhausted. Who knew sitting on a plane for 7 hours could be so exhausting. But the fatigue is so worth it. I'm in France.

When I sat at home, dwelling in sadness over the loss of Byrd, I was making things worse. Addressing my unhappiness, however—it does crazy things. Not only does it inspire you, but it relieves your problems, even if you haven't yet found a solution. I fall asleep with no ugly reminders of what's been lost.

I wake up, tangled in sheets and breathing fresh air for what feels like the first time in years.

Figuring it might be a good place to start, I take a cab to Bibliothèque publique d'information, the Public Library of Information, only 10 minutes from my hotel, the Grand Hotel du Palais Royale.

Once I arrive, I search for her name. Interestingly, I find two addresses.

The first one is crossed out, in what looks to be West Paris, near the Arc de Triomphe.

The other is from outside the city in a place called Vézelay, Burgundy. After some research, I discover that it's a small town in the north-central region of France. The town is also one of the smallest in the entire country with a population of only 434. Looks like this is where I'm headed.

The village is beautiful. Crowded cobblestone streets are surrounded by closely packed but elegant stone buildings on either side. Vibrant flowers give the hilly landscape a pop of color, and sunlight streams in from all directions, making it seem like a fairy tale.

I briefly step into Café du Cosette for information and immediately am met with a strong blueberry scent. I inhale deeply and smile. A break sounds nice.

"Bonjour!" the hostess says to me.

"Bonjour," I reply and she seats me at a table in the front of the café.

I take in my surroundings and am stunned to find the Vézelay Abbey right outside the window. While at the library in Paris, I learned the main attraction here in Vézelay was La Basilique Sainte Marie-Madeleine. The beauty of the exterior alone astonishes me. I can only imagine what it must be like inside.

After ordering my coffee and blueberry croissant, I find myself watching the people. It seems that in a town as small as this one, everyone knows each other.

My gaze drifts to the ceiling and I gasp.

Brilliant purples and blues cover the entirety of the space, and dotted along the rich colors are bursts of white.

I close my eyes. All of a sudden I am a high schooler again, lying under the canopy of the stars, dreaming of a bright future with the only person who has ever understood me.

I study the painting closer, and notice names written inside the larger stars.

I stare at one in particular, uncertain if it's someone else. But no, it is hers. Byrd, handwritten in beautiful calligraphy.

I look at other names, my stomach twisting into knots, my brain not understanding. What does it mean? Why would her name be up here? This is information no book or public resource can explain. I suddenly feel so lost.

"Excuse me, Mademoiselle?" heavily accented English breaks my train of thought, and I glance up to see a boy, no older than 16, staring back at me.

"Um, hello," I respond, not sure why he's analyzing me so closely.

"Do you know her?" he asks, and it takes me a moment to realize he's referring to Byrd.

"Yes, actually. We're old friends."

"Oh. She was such a nice lady. She saved my life, you know," he looks almost remorseful, and I can't help but wonder if there is more to the story. There must be.

"That sounds like her," I reply, trying to lighten the mood. "Do you know where I could find her? She has a new address and I'm not sure where it is," I'm so close. I can feel it.

"Mademoiselle?" The sudden pause unnerves me. I encourage him to continue. "Would you like to see something?" There's something about the way he's looking at me.

I nod hesitantly, and he leads me out of the cozy café and down the street. It seems to be the same one that I walked on before, but I can't tell. I feel so overwhelmingly disoriented. There's a strong gut feeling I have but I don't know what it's telling me.

We turn the corner and my thoughts disappear.

Lying before us is an old cemetery. It carries an odd sort of beauty, and I'm instantly curious. Drawn to it.

He continues forward, and I have no choice but to follow him.

No. This is some kind of joke. Her name isn't on that stone. She's just playing some kind of trick on me and any minute now she'll start laughing. Only Byrd.

I look around—waiting for her to come out from hiding and start giggling hysterically. But the boy is staring at me. He's staring at me, eyes so full of guilt, features heavy and devoid of color.

I feel a weight come crashing down, light at first but growing heavier as it reaches my stomach. Gravity has never been so unkind.

I drop to my knees

and I cry.

I look up and wonder how he knew her. I'm wondering so many things right now, but I only manage to ask one question.

"What—what happened?" tears escape my eyes and I can't stop them. I can't stop thinking about how something managed to kill the most free and joyful soul I've ever known.

"It was only a few weeks ago. She moved to town just a little before that - but everyone knew her right away. She told me that she didn't like Paris because it was too loud. I remember being so surprised, no one had ever left Paris. But she told me she wanted to hear the crickets and see the stars. She was there when the accident happened," he swallows hard.

"Accident?"

I was walking to school, excited, because it was the last week before summer break. I wasn't focused. I was so stupid. I wasn't looking, and stepped into the street...she called my name, but I didn't hear her. I felt someone push me and I fell to the ground. I heard some people behind me—shouting and screaming for help. I was so confused. And then I saw it—she saved me from being run over. She saved my life, but ended up losing her own," the silence between the two of us is deafening. "I wish she knew how grateful I am," he starts again, softer. "I live every single day trying to make up for the loss. I was the one who wrote her name on the star because she was brighter than the brightest star in the sky. She was actually the one who painted the ceiling. She said it reminded her of a wonderful friend of hers. I always tried to ask her about the friend, but she wouldn't answer me. The only thing she ever hinted at was how she made a mistake. I could tell how sad she was about whatever happened. You're here now though." He looks up at the same time I do, and I smile ever so slightly. Because that's what she would've wanted me to do.

She would've wanted me to take a deep breath and comfort the broken boy beside me.

So I do.

In everyone's life, there's someone whom they admire. Look up to. They're our hero. We strive to be just like them. Not all heroes don't just wear capes and fly around. They are everyday people. Strong, kind, bold, considerate, and driven everyday people who think of others before themselves.

I work everyday to be that person. I do so by modeling her strength, her affection, and her perseverance everywhere I go. Fantasy doesn't solve our problems. Facing them with those we love is what gets us through the bad days. These are the words I tell myself every time I wake up.

And I feel so free.

Lizzie Jo

The Realities of Perfection

I'm obsessed with cubes. Their 12 edges, 8 vertices, 6 faces, and right angles, measuring 90 degrees- I love it all. If you know me, you would think that cubes are my motivation because of their perfect qualities. That's true; they are my motivation, but not for the same reason... actually, for the opposite reason. I'm not obsessed with the perfect cubes you see on the Internet. I'm obsessed with the cubes in my notebook.

I rarely miss a class in which I don't draw a cube(s) on the side or maybe even the middle (depending on the class) of my paper. This is what usually happens: my mind is relatively blank, my hands veer to an empty area, and the lead that is supposed to be used for writing ends up being used to quickly sketch before the next slide on the board is presented.

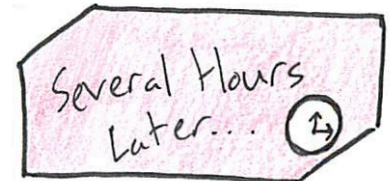
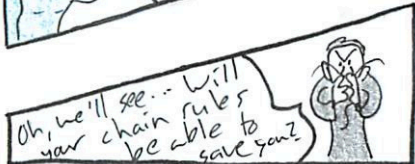
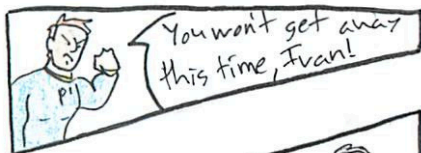
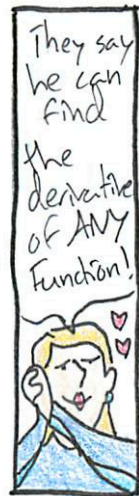
Do you know how satisfying it is to draw a cube? It's something so simple to draw, consisting of two squares and 4 lines to connect them, yet it looks so complicated. It can look even more complicated when I draw additional cubes within one larger cube, or when I draw connected cubes in a disordered shape. Occasionally, I would "quiz" my friend next to me and ask how many cubes they see. What's interesting is they would have a number but quickly change it when they spot another cube they didn't see originally, or they would hyperfixate on counting but ignore the fact that all the small cubes are enclosed in a larger one. This has been a consistent pattern, and to be honest, I rarely keep count of it myself. To me, it's just a matter of perspective. Even as the one sketching it, there would be times where I find a cube I didn't purposefully draw but just formed as a result of the adjacent ones. I find that so intriguing. This just goes to show that planning and perfecting may not always have the most satisfying outcomes...what you're looking for may just lie in something unexpected. All the more reason why I love cubes.

Of course, the cubes I sketch are far from perfect. My lines are not perfectly straight, and my angles are not exactly 90 degrees. That's the beauty of it all, however. If I take the time to take out my ruler and protractor to make a perfect cube, where's the fun in that? Yes, I can strive to make it perfect and therefore look really obvious that I'm not taking notes, but why? Even after all that effort and brain power, I know it won't be perfect anyway...because nothing is. Nobody is, I should say. Crooked and unaligned lines exist, and that's okay. In fact, I prefer it that way. Right now, I find more joy in letting my right hand take control of the pencil and let it and my imagination run free in all its mistakes and imperfections. Disclaimer: I'm not trying to discourage anyone (I rather not have the title of "dreamcrusher" under my name), but I am emphasizing the fine line between perfection (or what society deems as perfect) and reality. Over the course of my life, I've realized that it's pointless seeking out something that doesn't exist, but what's not pointless is being the best you alone strive to be. Who knows? You may even find pleasure in your inevitable mistakes along the way.

So, what are cubes to me? Some sort of entertainment? Decorations to my notes? Yes and yes, but more importantly, they exist as an underlying reminder that mistakes are normal and can actually be prettier. Sketched lines tend to look more professional and artistic, meaning they make me look like I know what I'm doing. Jokes aside, mistakes exist. Perfection doesn't. Why? Because we're human. This doesn't mean we shouldn't work hard to achieve our goals. It just means that we shouldn't put unnecessary pressure on ourselves. You don't need a ruler, protractor, and TI-84 calculator to draw a cube. Just draw it, and make it something you are proud of.

P.S. to any of my teachers reading this, I promise I pay attention in your class.

-Toni Tan '25



Wescoat 2024
-Jessica Wescoat '24

Staff Contributions



-Camilla Navarro '25

Shadows of a Fading Heart

In a village by the river, where willows softly weep,
Lived a lad named Benjamin, with secrets buried deep.
His heart, a captive songbird, sang a lonesome tune,
For in the shadow of her smile, he danced beneath the moon.
Oh, the echoes of his yearning, a melody apart,
A ballad of unspoken words, the shadows of a fading heart.
Eleanor, a maiden fair, with eyes like morning dew,
Captured Ben's affection, though he never knew.
Her laughter, like a river, flowed through the summer air,
But the river of his longing met a love that wasn't there.
Oh, the echoes of his yearning, a melody apart,
A ballad of unspoken words, the shadows of a fading heart.
Through golden fields of sunlight, he chased her fleeting smile,
Yet, in the garden of his dreams, love lingered for a while.
The petals of affection, he scattered in her wake,
But the winds of her indifference left his heart to break.
Oh, the echoes of his yearning, a melody apart,
A ballad of unspoken words, the shadows of a fading heart.

One eve beneath the starlight, with courage in his eyes,
Benjamin spoke his truth, beneath the moonlit skies.
But Eleanor, she faltered, her words a bitter frost,
Leaving him with memories of the love that he had lost.
Oh, the echoes of his yearning, a melody apart,
A ballad of unspoken words, the shadows of a fading heart.
As seasons changed like costumes in a play,
Ben wandered through the ruins of love's disarray.
In the ballad of his sorrow, through valleys dark and deep,
He learned that love's sweet music could be a song of sleep.
Oh, the echoes of his yearning, a melody apart,
A ballad of unspoken words, the shadows of a fading heart.
Now the village by the river holds a tale untold,
Of Benjamin and Eleanor, and a love grown cold.
In the echoes of the ballad, through time's unyielding art,
Lingers the haunting cadence of a slowly fading heart.
Oh, the echoes of his yearning, a melody apart,
A ballad of unspoken words, the shadows of a fading heart.

Mr. Scott Derosier

PRAY THESE WORDS WITH ME

There is nothing I can be,
to make our God stop loving me.
There is nothing I can say,
to make God turn God's face away.
In God's image,
I am made.
By God's mercy,
I am saved.
I am a unique gift,
Given to the world.
And God will never, ever let me go.



Untitled by BookDragon

When your sin's so great that you think God can't forgive you,
Pray these words together with me.
When your friends desert you for what you've said or done,
Pray these words together with me.
When you're feeling worthless with nowhere else to turn,
Pray these words together with me.
Lyrics and Music By Mr. Greg Malanowski

Alumnae Submissions



"Untitled," Carol Ciarapica Toth '73

Lighthouse

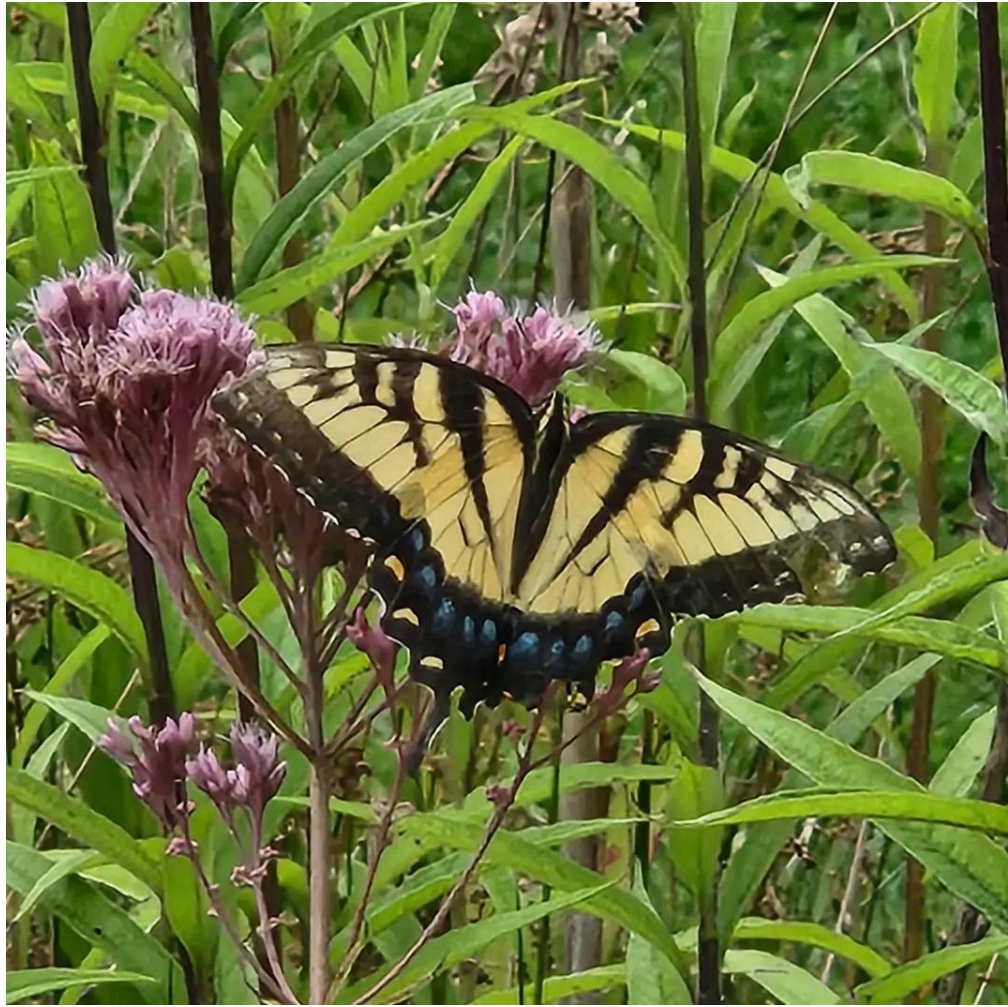
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Light
slices sky and sea,
ships
reroute
or stay
on course.

Through
intermittent
darkness the
flame still burns -
offering safekeeping
to those who will follow.
Deborah Smith, '70



"Untitled," Ellen Yannuzzi (Fram), '69



"Untitled," Jeannie Dunphy (Sikorsky), '99

Hope

Earth seems unbalanced, listing heavily
in my direction. Fears like matted veils
hang, obscuring my optimistic view;
wearisome weights of despair ever press,
until my spirit weeps like willow leaves
and sweeps the dusty ground seeking relief.

Yet I dare to dream of open airy fields,
flowing streams of living water, and time,
infinite time to quench my thirsting soul
- for I recall Heaven has no sky.

Deborah Smith, '70



**"Untitled," Ellen Yannuzzi
(Frain), '69**

Eucharist

The bread is raised.

All eyes behold:

"This is my Body."

Mere words - unless I consume them,
absorb them into my soul:

*Along with your body, Lord, I offer
my desire to do your will...
my sense of humor...
my good writing week...*

- nutrients for which I am thankful.
And God will see this, bless this,
make me stronger.

The cup extends for all to see:

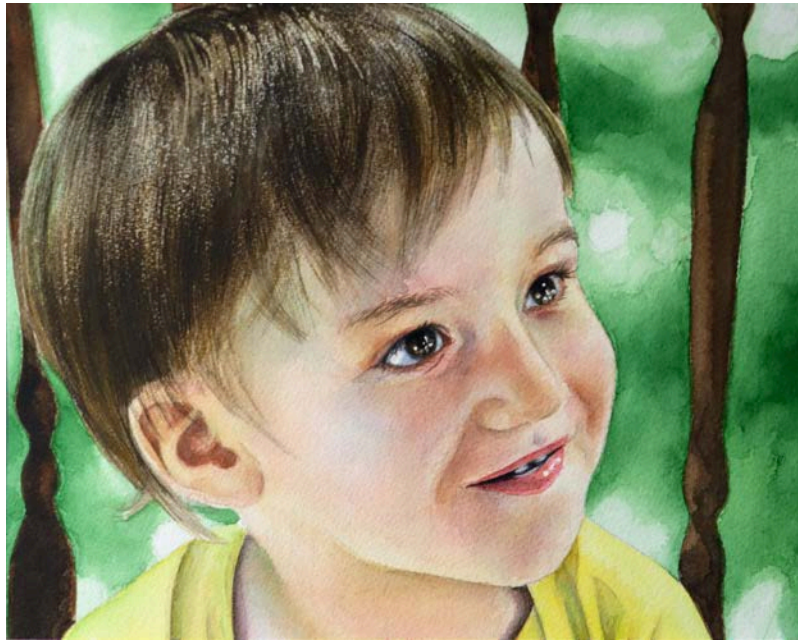
"This is my Blood."

More words - until I swallow them,
feel them coursing through my veins:

*Along with your blood, Lord, I offer
my quick temper...
my busy-ness...
my lethargy...*

- weaknesses I wish to overcome.
And God will see this need, bless it,
extend His grace to set me free.

This is Jesus -
receive him again
- for the first time.
Deborah Smith, '70



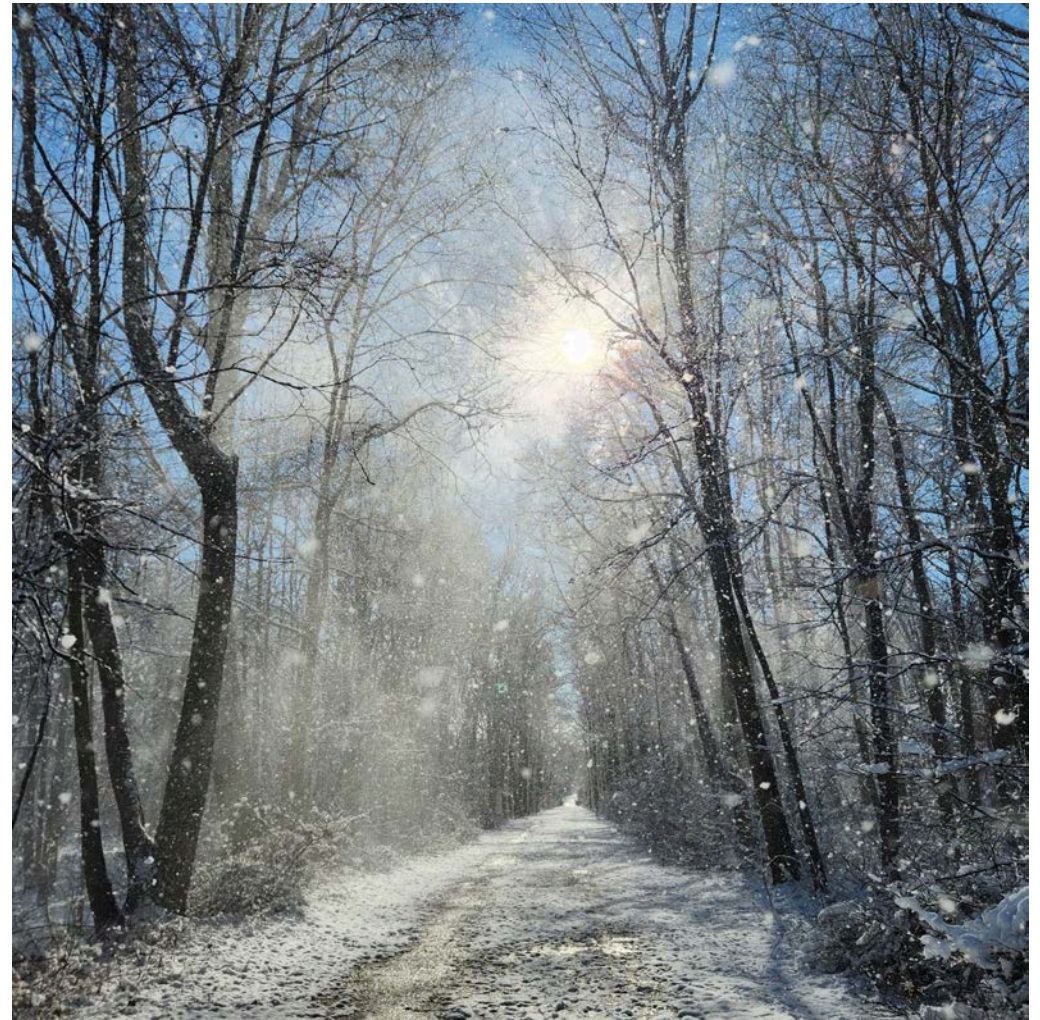
"Eric" Mary Elizabeth Dickman (Sattler), '01



"Emily" Mary Elizabeth Dickman (Sattler), '01



**"Untitled 1 and 2,"
Jeannie Dunphy
(Sikorsky), '99**



I attended Catholic High as a freshman in 1961. Since I lived quite a distance from the school, I left home 6:20 am - it took two transit buses to reach Catholic High. I chose Catholic High because my Aunt Alice had graduated from there in 1947 just a few months before I was born. Since my mother was hospitalized shortly after my birth, my Aunt Alice helped my paternal grandmother care for me while my Dad worked. No doubt that is why I felt especially close to her and wanted to follow in her footsteps to Catholic High. Many years later, I established The Alice Miller Runkles Scholarship Fund.

While a student there, I took the academic program and was a feature writer for the school paper. What I loved most was being involved in school plays. I had a lead role in Jean Anouilh's play Antigone in my senior year. I graduated in 1965.

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"Untitled," Carol Ciarapica Toth '73

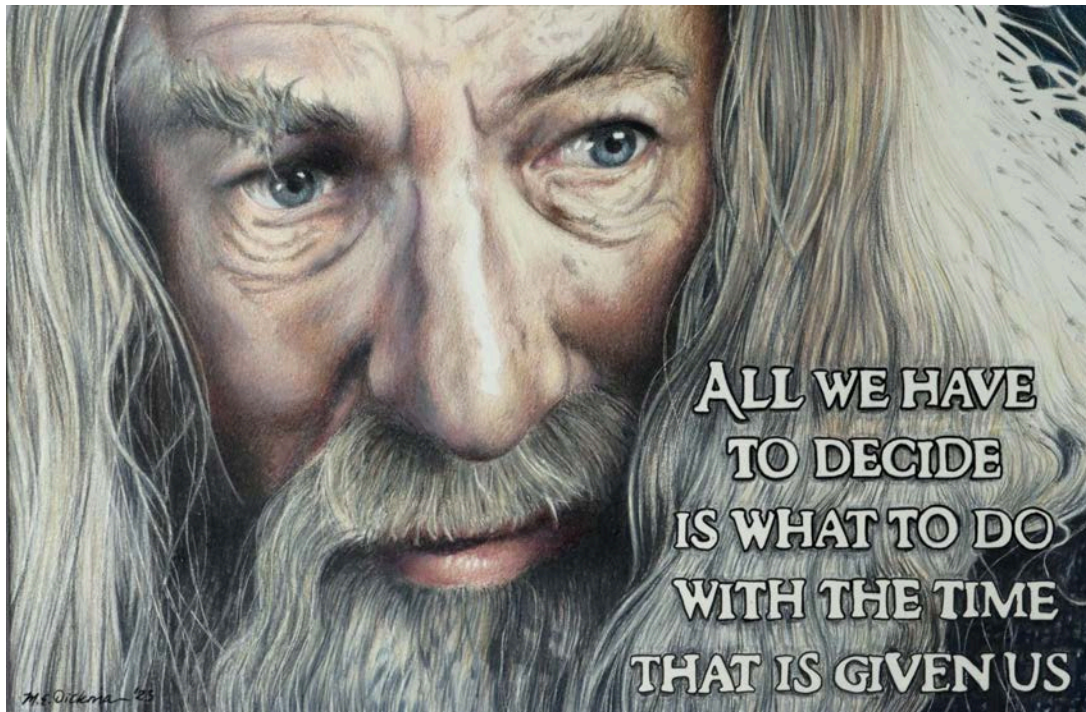
I carried this love of drama and theatre into my college years at Mt. St. Agnes (all women's college which later merged with Loyola College) where I was an active participant in plays. In 1967 I responded to a request posted in MSA Student lounge to volunteer to tutor a child from the inner city of Baltimore. Being an aspiring teacher, I jumped at the opportunity ~ especially since a Loyola College student would be driving the 4 of us who volunteered. The driver, Joe, and I were engaged in 1968 and married in July of 1969.

Since Joe was to start medical school in September of 1969, he would have no income, so my having a job was imperative. That is when I became a teacher at Catholic High. I had no experience as a teacher but was determined to be professional while keeping the students engaged and as excited as I had been to learn great literature. My first class of students was the Class of 1973 and I taught many of them for 4 years ~ including the 1971-1972 school year during which I was pregnant. (The students surprised me with a baby shower one afternoon in Sister Arnoldine's cafeteria. I was deeply moved and passed some of the gifts on to my grandchildren years later.)

When the Class of 1973 graduated, I was happy that some of them stayed in touch while I went about raising a toddler (who, 8 years later had a baby sister) and working from home for a time editing textbooks.

Paths crossed again when a few of my Catholic High Students enrolled in Villa Julie College (now Stevenson University) when I was the Director of Student Activities - or later, faculty.

Year after year, my heart was given the sweet surprise of receiving a Christmas card from one or more of my former Catholic High Students.



**"Gandalf" Mary
Elizabeth Dickman
(Sattler), '01**

In 2022 I received an invitation to attend the scheduled October 2023 reunion of the Class of 1973! I responded immediately "yes"!

When the Class of 1973 reunion day arrived, I wondered how many of my

former students would be there. Would they remember me? Would they even recognize me

with my white hair? It turned out to be one of the happiest, most memorable days of my life! Ninety students of the Class of 1973 attended ~ and to my surprise they remembered me and recounted dozens of detailed stories about things they remembered which I had taught them. When I asked them how they remembered all that in so much detail over so many years, several of them said the same thing to me throughout the afternoon, "You loved us and we knew you loved us! And you were passionate about what you were teaching. Thank you for all you taught us."

With a heart overflowing with honest gratitude, I said to them, "Thank you - you taught me how to be a teacher!"

Linda Miller Ciotola '65



"Untitled 1 and 2", Maura Bair, '18



Triptych

Baptism

begins the dance
the Father leads.

Circling the floor,
I falter with the steps.
The Son strides forward,
dying for the dance with me.

Along the promenade,
the Spirit enters.
Gracefully we glide,
our delicate footwork
keeping perfect balance
-Deborah Smith, '70

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Thank you to the alumnae and faculty for your submissions!