

LABYRINTH



2020–2021 | COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL

LABYRINTH

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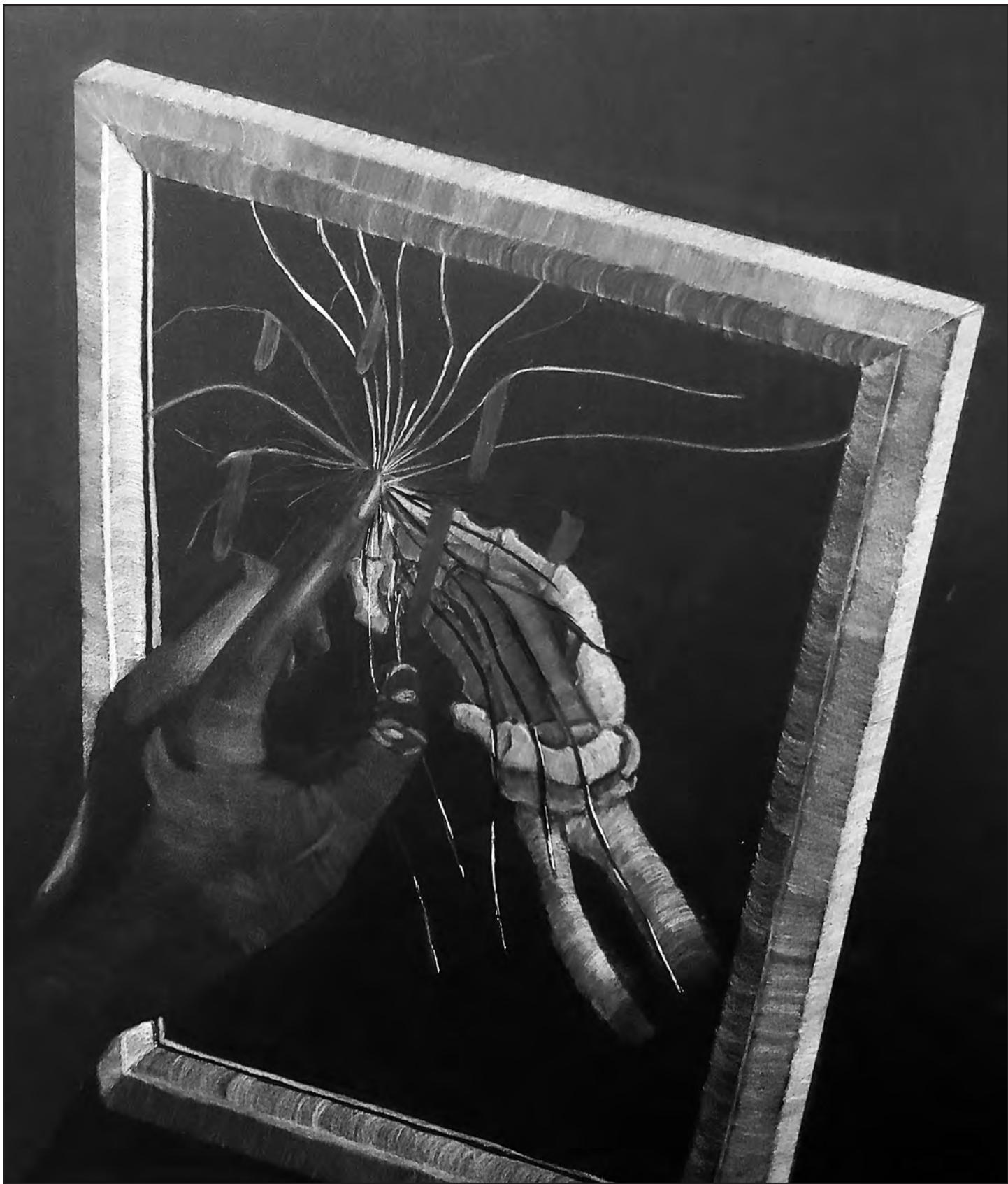
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Back Cover: ENVIRONMENTALIST — PAIGE JACKSON

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PRESENCE — KATELYN EDICK



BEAUTY STANDARDS — CARA LALLIER

MISTAKES

I've made several mistakes in my life from big to small,
 each one has an impact on my life.
 When asked if I would change anything if,
 given the chance, I would reply with "no."
 Simply because every mistake I've made
 has made me who I am today.
 It has taught me that it's okay to trip up every
 once in a while as long as I don't dwell on the past.
 I need to learn and improve myself for the next time I
 come across a situation where I could make a mistake.
 By dwelling on the past, you miss out on the present.
 You miss out on all the wonderful things life has to offer,
 just because you couldn't look past
 a mistake you made in the past.

RACHEL OSTIGUY

WHAT WRITING IS TO ME

A mind drawn by a child
 Crayons litter the floor
 Notes scatter the walls
 An explosive vision of color
 Thoughts playing tag, running after one another
 Paint splatters the table
 Ideas talking over each other
 Papers glued together
 Never-ending glitter fills the carpet
 A timer rings, craft time is over
 The puzzle is complete

ANONYMOUS

SUCH A UNIVERSE

Such a universe exists
Where the sky is a never-ending canvas
Of glittering crystals.
Mingling in the night like old friends.
And dancing together to create a most extraordinary show
Leaving each night sky different from the last
Such a universe does exist
Where no one can explain how the
Droplets of a galaxy came to be
These unearthly diamonds
Some say are impossible to understand
How they come back every night
And do their age dance
once again

DANIELLA MAHAR

HIKING IN THE HIGH PEAKS

Trails start at the Loj, the Garden and Lake road
Finding a comfortable pace, upward we strode
Quickly learning abundant water a necessary load

Higher and higher we climb, often taking rest
Do we have what it takes to pass this test?
Can't stop now, might never achieve the quest

Getting cooler now, the trees of lesser height
Breaking thru the clouds, the summit now insight
Trail getting steeper, mountain putting up a fight

Now only a half-mile more, why does it take so long?
Are we on the right path, could we have gone wrong?
Fading fast, gotta dig deep, need to stay strong

Just as our resolve is fading, body getting weak
Voices can be heard, have we finally reached the peak?
The last few steps and we'll find the benchmark we seek

It starts as a goal, one you doubt you'll ever realize
Cascade and Porter prove a pleasant surprise
Climbing all 46, the ultimate prize

MR. LANTZ

"IF YOU'RE OFFERED A SEAT ON A ROCKETSHIP DON'T ASK WHAT SEAT, JUST GET ON."

Every day, Jim got up, went to work, ate the same flavor soup for lunch, then went home. He ran through the same routine for years, with no thought or complaint. This routine also reflected on his spending habits. He wouldn't spend over \$100 on groceries per week and more or less, bought the same few items on each trip to the store. He had the cheapest used car he could find and never put money into it if he didn't have to. He was even conscious of his electricity bill each month and would sometimes sit in the dark if he didn't outright need the lights.

Naturally, the lottery was something he scoffed at. He couldn't imagine spending money on something that didn't have a guaranteed outcome of usefulness or gain. That was until his colleague came into the office one day and handed in his two weeks notice; he had won two million dollars off of a scratch-off ticket.

After that, Jim still couldn't imagine buying a lottery ticket. "What are the odds it happens to me? They are too low," he thought. So he went on with his life, he followed the same routines and habits and did all the same things. Later, he had children, then grandchildren, but as the days passed on, the image of his old co-worker coming into the office with a \$2 million dollar winning lottery ticket had burned into his mind. Why? He asked himself. Because something in him always regretted not asking his co-worker what shop he had bought the winning ticket in, so Jim himself could go buy one too. It wasn't about the potential earnings or losses of the ticket, it was about the fact that Jim

couldn't bring himself to take the risk, and it was such a small risk. This caused him to take a look at his life as a whole. He was much older now, and he scanned his mind for times in the past in which he took a chance on anything. Nothing was jumping out. He had never really taken a risk worth remembering, he wouldn't even buy a \$2 lottery ticket. Nevertheless, he went on with his life, that's all he could do.

Many years later, he was on his deathbed. As he sat in the hospital, he watched the news on the TV. NASA was randomly picking one person to be the first to walk on Mars. To enter, you had to pay \$2 and add your name to a list. Millions of people flooded to sign up. His grandson walked into the hospital room and exclaimed at the TV screen "isn't that so cool? I wish I could be the first one to walk on Mars." "Well, aren't you going to sign up, it's only \$2?" said Jim. "I'll never win," said his grandson.

So Jim took the initiative and signed his grandson up to possibly win the Mars walk. He convinced himself that he would win the prize as some sort of retribution for the lottery ticket incident some years ago.

Four weeks later, in the uncomfortable hospital bed, the news came on again. Someone in India had won the trip to Mars.

But to Jim, this wasn't heartbreaking or soul-crushing. He felt elated... like he HAD won. Jim spent the \$2 and took the risk.

It was a small risk, but he finally took one, and it was like his bucket list was complete.

SOPHIE MEYER



WEDDING — MORGAN MCHUGH



HOME — TATA SRINIDHI

HERE WE GO AGAIN

Late 2017 and no longer kings of the castle
Was nice while it lasted.
But let's ask ourselves, is this the truth?
We we?
All grown up with life figured out
All questions answered and resets for what's to come.

Yeah maybe by age.
Back in June, we were at the top
Just to be brought back down to baby freshman
Truly at the top we were?

That's what we were told
Sure, maybe some extra freedoms,
more rights as a student.
Sure.
But were we really more free?

Now that we're getting older, already in highschool
The world at our fingertips
It's crucial we get our acts together

Roll back to first day of freshman year,
you almost feel like a newborn walking through the door.
Much to learn, so much to experience.

That's for sure
Though we're older, there's still so much more to experience.
The question that often wraps by head around
Have I experienced enough?
Am I ready for what life throws at me?

Questions, questions and more questions
Make them stop!
How do I even keep coming up with them?
Am I ready for college?
There I go again.

I should probably be studying right now

High school sure was a new thing to he
experienced.
Walking in as a 5'5" freshman, you sort of feel intimidated
But that's not so bad when you get surprised, or bombarded
with over two hours of homework

Ohhh, so more rights just meant more homework didn't it?

More responsibilities, more stress and more homework
Most importantly more experience
Because without that, you won't get all too far.

BRADLEY BERLANTI

WATERFALL

Water is a colorless, transparent liquid
Water is the basis of all living things
Water has no definite shape
Water has no definite volume
Water is everything
Rain is water, snow is water, hail is water
The ocean is water, the river is water, the lake is water
60% of me is water, 60% of you is water
Now, water is limitless
I relax by my pool
With my friends, we go to the beach
Water is always within my reach
Now, water is clean
We are able to wash our hands when they're dirty
We can shower every night
We can pour a glass of water when we're thirsty
In the future, though,
Will I be able to take my grandkids to the beach
Will I watch my kids play on a waterslide
Or will I be denied
To wash my hands, to shower,
to get a drink when I need one
Will water be clean, I marvel
Will the next generation know water as I did
The way it came running whenever I needed
We are lucky that our water is never depleted
But, know now that it cannot be mistreated
The world is becoming warmer
Glaciers are melting
Water has a definite shape
Water has a definite volume
Water has a limit

ANONYMOUS

UNTITLED

Farewell, cruel Covid!
Yet a challenge awaits us:
How to heal ourselves.

UNTITLED

For some, spring is joy—
They exalt its energy
With rakish laughter.

MR. RUDOFISKY

A SENTIMENT TOWARD CHANGE

I lay in the shadow of a much bigger version of myself:
Hopelessly falling in love with the sounds of approval
She wears neckties and dresses
Sandals and a smile
Flushed cheeks accompany warm endearments
While I,
Lost in thought,
Gracelessly sprawl my shoes to the side
Yearning for complete metamorphosis towards this perfected rendition
Though the place in my chest where insecurity lies, delicate yet able,
Aches for actions,
Not simply sounds this time

KATIE ASENBAUER

WEEPING WILLOW

I am the weeping Willow Tree
Outstretched limbs opened across the cerulean sky
A blanket of comfort offered to the unforgiving air
I stand stoic, unmoving, only swayed ever-so-slightly by the swirling, sunkissed breeze or sometimes violent evening air

Whether jealous leaves or painful pellets of hail determined to destroy me
Whether frigid, icy snowflakes intent on further scarring my beautifully imperfect exterior
Whether fiery beams unwaveringly dart down, drying and burning my tired willows
I still stand stoic, unmoving, only swayed ever-so-slightly.

I am the willow tree.
My blanket of willows pours from my weighed down limbs.
Disguising hidden weeping as they remain outstretched against the sky.
Drooping willows, exhausted but present, they blanket the sky
readily embracing any passerby and offering peace
Peace offered, but not returned
Longing for the willows to fold into myself in a warm embrace
I am the willow tree.

No flowers bloom. No seeds emerge.
I stand, stoic, still.
My welcoming willows softly billowing in the warm breeze
Consistently hiding the weight behind endlessly holding these willows against the sky.

I am the willow tree.
I stand, stoic, unmoving.
My willows weeping against the breeze
Only swayed ever-so-slightly to the naked eye of a passerby.

MRS. DYER



AUTUMN SQUARED — PAIGE JACKSON



FLOWER OF HOPE — ISABELLA DUPONT



LONG WAY HOME — SOPHIA CULVER



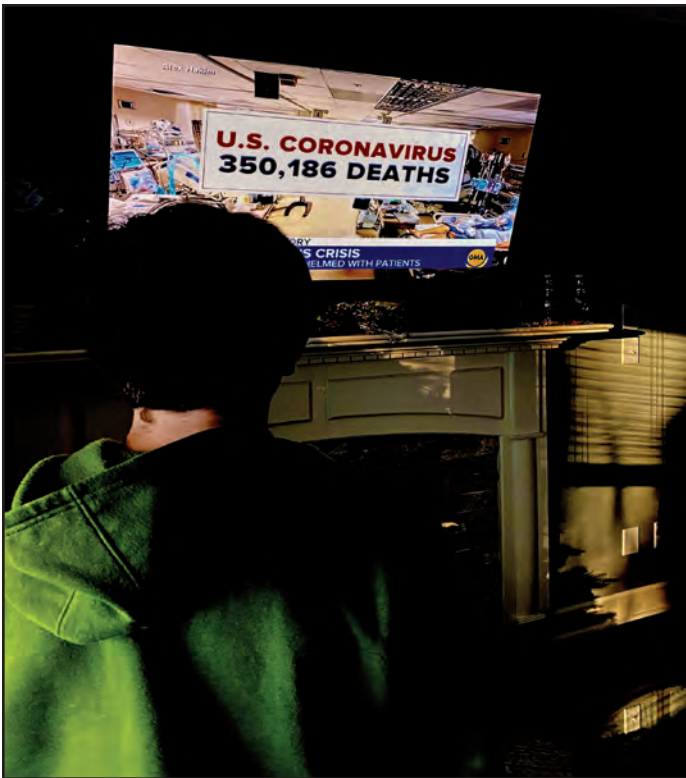
LOVE IN THE COSMOS — DANIELLA MAHAR



HUED APPARITION — ELIZABETH KROMER



NOSTALGIA — AMANDA CRAVEN



PAUSE — NATALIE HERKENHAM



REALISM — MICHAELA NEEDHAM



CREATE LANDSCAPE — TESSA BURKE

I'VE SEEN YOU LIGHTNING IS MY HOME

The crackles and pops of lighting in the middle of night sound like the sharp notes that bounce off your harp. The flashes of bright lights echo in my eyes when I notice the tips of your hair begin to lighten. The clouds glaze over in the skies, fluffy and soft reminding me of quiet nights around the fire, soft grass beneath our feet.

Unexpected claps of thunder hit me over the head, taking me back to the moments I saw the door close between us, once again he calls you away from us, from me, with the start of a storm. The look in your eyes when you were taken by him, the dull violet of your eye staring me down.

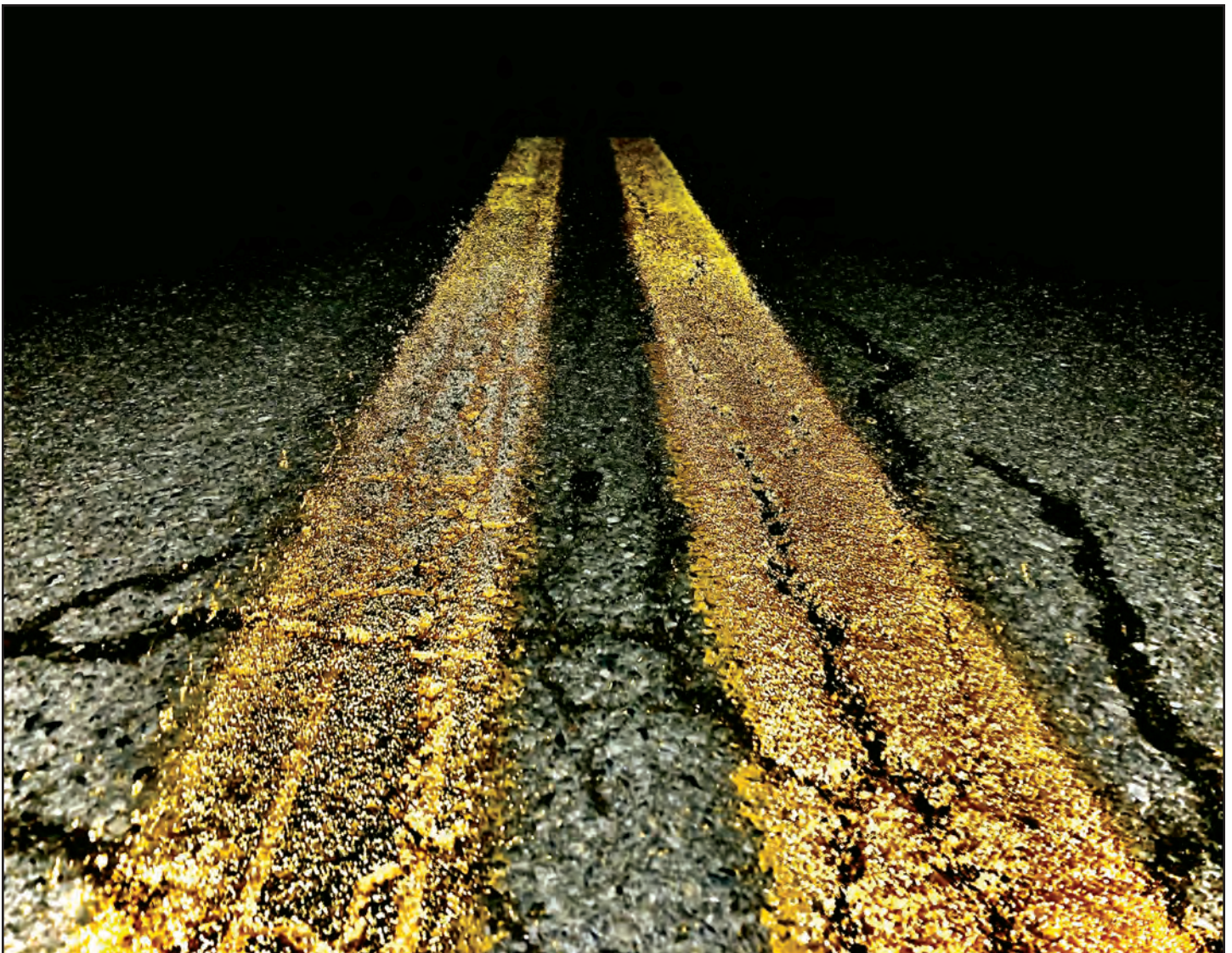
You came back, but not without a fight. The storm came down around us when you hit me hard, almost taking me as Molly was

taken from our little family all those months ago. I remember the nights I would lie awake, wishing for a storm, asking him to bring you back. He couldn't help you then, you had to do it yourself.

The squeeze of your hand as the rain poured down around us. The lightning cracked and you shook, but stayed and looked at our friend's grave with me. The others frantically dig and scary and yell, but we stood still. Hands clasped, watching our trauma and pain come unearthed along with his coat.

Now the lighting cracks hard, breaking apart the sky like glass, and you don't move. You sit idle. The sky now shines down on us as we travel along, and my home now lies in the oceans and midnight skies that fill your eyes.

MORGEN DOYLE



END OF THE ROAD — ZANE FERMON



CAULDRONS — ISABELLA DUPONT

13 WAYS TO LOOK AT SNOW

I.

Snowflakes begin to fall:
A bright, powdery, white flurry.
I am filled with joy looking outside.

II.

Zippering up heavy coats.
A whiff of gasoline and vibrations of the snowblower.
Scraping shovels on the steps.

III.

The white powder whirled off roofs
In the frigid winter wind.

IV.

A man and his boots
Are one.
A man, his boots, and snow
Are one.

V.

Our backs on the snow,
Eyes up.
Relaxed in a snowglobe paradise.

VI.

3..2..1 Go!
Two children grasping the plastic sled in fear;
Spraying of snow,
Faces covered in a blanket of white.

VII.

Fuzzy socks and a blanket.
Crackling of fire.
Hot chocolate warms the stomach.

VIII.

I contemplate,
Mushy brown roads, patches of ice
And apprehension.
Do I drive?

IX.

One inch?
One foot? Three feet?
When does it cease?
Who decides?

X.

No flake is alike,
Each creation is astonishing.
Each has its own personality,
Its own character.

XI.

Catching the snowflakes on their tongues,
Eating handfuls of snow
Turns into throwing snowballs;
Numbing water dripping down the backs of their necks.

XII.

When the sun comes back out,
Its rays reflect off the pure white ground
Blinding anyone who looks.

XIII.

Rivers of melted snow will soon gush down the gutters
But the snow will return.

KAITLYN BURKE

“I AM FROM”

I am from two quarters in my pocket for the payphone and long nights playing jailbreak
From blue raspberry slush puppies and Pizza Hut breadsticks
I am from the evenly distanced blocks of tightly built two-families
Cramped, tight-knit, neighbors' dinner conversations drifting softly in windows like a faint breeze
I am from the lilac bush growing haphazardly amidst mismatched bushes
I am from Jimmy's pizza nights on Sundays and pillow forts for “show time” at exactly 8 p.m.
I am from “Een” and “Jaque”
From the tendency to put on fake smiles and pretend, pretend, pretend
From “Treat others how you want to be treated” and “Just don't tell your brother and sister.”
I'm from half-hearted Catholics only on Sundays, dragging our feet into church to secretly read our own books through
the hallelujahs
I'm from the 'Burgh and the Mayflower,
Roast beef and macaroni, make-your-own taco feasts once a week
From my younger sister's missing bed from her bedroom at age 16,
The sold family home, split evenly between parents,
A tupperware bin of photos under my bed, the remaining relics,
Caretaker of the only mildly bitter, mostly sweet memories left behind.

MRS. DYER

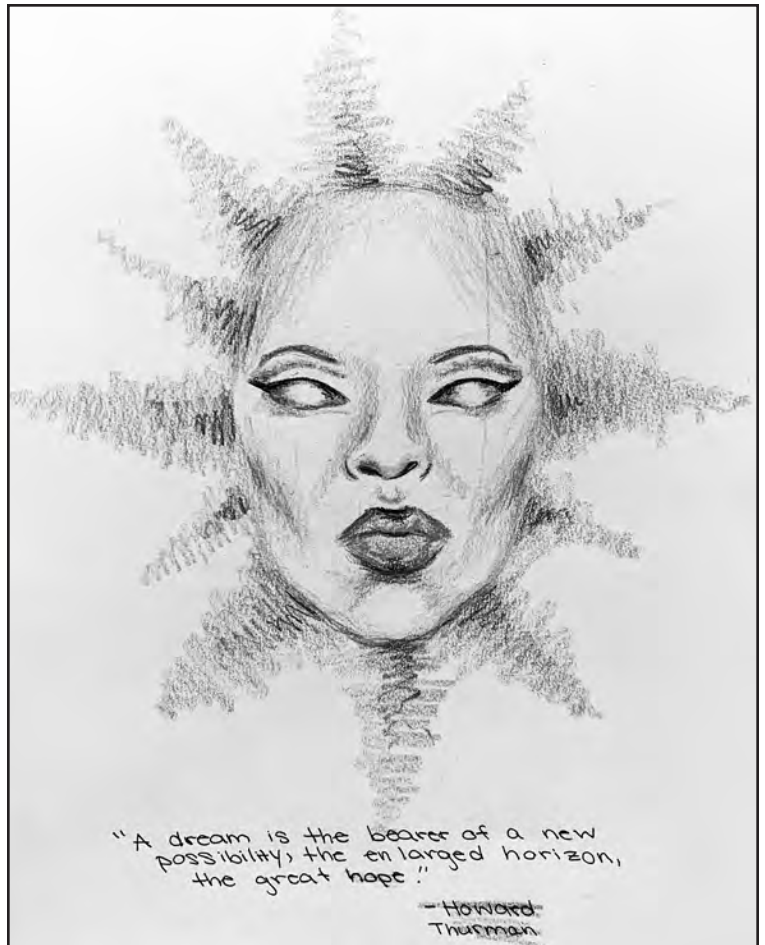


POSEIDON'S PALETTE — ZANE FERMON

NOTHING TO FEAR BUT FEAR ITSELF

Fear
Nothing to fear but fear itself
Fear
I try to avoid you
But you keep coming back
Like a perfectly thrown boomerang
Except I don't want you back
Fear
You're always there
Like a lurking parent
All up in my business
I love to hate you
Fear
Every movement
Every breath
Of every day
Of every week
Of every month
Of every year
You are constantly there
Fear
Walking into a dark room
You're standing there
Awaiting me
Fear
As constant as oxygen
You are always in the air
Fear
Why are you always running beside me
Screams; Gasps; Tears
Fear
You need to go away
This fascination you have with me
Must stop
It's not good for either of us
Fear
You make me feel like a shell of myself
Not able to go on with my life
Fear
I fear many things
But it turns out
the thing I fear the most is simply
Fear

KAYLEIGH KRUG



ELIPS — ISABELLA DUPONT

HOPE IS

Hope is four letters that have such a large impact on the world.
Hope is the one syllable that allows us to get through life-threatening situations.
Hope is what motivates us to feel alive during a pandemic.
Hope is what allows cancer patients to know that there is a possibility they could be cancer-free.
Hope is what allows us to chase our dreams.
Hope is what sparks joy in the world.
Hope is what lets us sleep at night.
Hope is the one thing all of humanity can agree on.
Hope is what brings us together.
Hope is what gets us closer to achieving equality.
Hope is what encourages us to do great things.
Hope is the one thing in life that you can trust will always have your back.
Hope is what keeps the clocks ticking.
Hope is what keeps the Earth spinning.
Hope is the glue that holds the universe together.
Hope is like oxygen because we can't live without it.
Hope is the light that takes away darkness.
Hope is the most beautiful thing to live.

BENJAMIN PAULI

HERE I AM STANDING

Waiting
Butterflies fill my stomach
Suffocating me
Stealing my breath
The lights shine
Bright in my eyes
A sharp pain that makes my windows to the world burn
Footsteps backstage signal the conductor
This music masterpiece begins with one note
I'm on
I'm on the butterflies flee my stomach and
make their way up my throat and out my mouth
My voice chimes and I hit the high note
Loud and proud
There I am standing
Heads still in the darkness behind the fog
Suddenly a loud noise begins
A roaring of sorts
A standing ovation
Appause showers me
I
Am
Home

MOLLY GRAIFF

HOPE IN TOMORROW

Hope is waking up in the morning
and believing today will be better than tomorrow.
Hope is knowing that the light is at the end of the tunnel
when your world has seemed all too dark.
Hope is smelling the clean air
and inspiring one another to keep going.
The world is very different for all of us right now.
Some are struggling more than others.
Hope is believing in a cause that you know will get better.
Hope is being there for others
and hoping that your peers get well.
This time is so difficult and different for everyone.
Being there for one another keeps some going.

I hope you get better.

I hope you are strong.

I hope you know you are important and worthy.

I hope you know you mean so much to someone.

I hope this gets to you when you need it the most.

I hope you know that one bad day is not a bad life and
you can do it just keep pushing.

I hope that you get through this hard time
and come out stronger than ever.

Keep pushing and have hope in yourself. You can do it.

Have hope in tomorrow.

ABBY SMITH

PROLOGUE OF ANGEL WITH A SHOTGUN

I gasped for air as I took in the scene before me. Looking around frantically, the orange fires lit up the night sky. Smoke circled the air and rode its way up to the stars. Broken car pieces scattered on the side of the highway. Red, white, and blue lights flashed as sirens wailed.

A couple of EMTs rushed over and hauled me onto a stretcher. One shaggy blonde guy hovered over me as he put an oxygen mask around my nose and mouth. He spoke calmly as he and the others began rolling me into the ambulance, "My name is Andy. Can you tell me yours?"

He took off the mask for a second so I could respond with a hoarse voice, "Nina Sapienza."
Then, they strapped me down and began poking me with needles. Andy spoke again, "It's nice to meet you, Nina. Can you tell me what happened back there?"

I took a second to recollect my memories. We were just coming back home from our trip to the Adirondacks... My family....

I bolted upright and started yelling, "My family! My family! What happened to them? Are they okay? Do y'all know where they are? My mom, my dad-"

The EMTs tried to pull me back down while Andy tried to shush me. "Everything's going to be okay. We'll find your family."

He whispered to another guy with short brown hair while they reopened the doors to the nightmare.

I guess he went to go search for my parents.

Suddenly, I started to feel woozy. I heard the monitors beginning to beep rapidly.

"She's crashing," Andy yelled to the driver, "Let's move!"

Soon thereafter, I blacked out with the feelings of shock on my heart.

EMMA SMITH



GENERATIONS — AMANDA CRAVEN

ALL I NEED

Hush my mind
Let my dreams take hold
The only thoughts that are kind
The colors are so bold
My eyes opened as they fade
From beautiful shades of ruby and jade
To an ugly gloomy gray
I wish I could just make them stay
But when I look at you
Your eyes of a brilliant blue
The colors come back to me
And now I finally see
That you are all I need
I'm done letting thoughts feed
Eating away at my soul
They've taken quite a toll
But the answer has always been you
And your eyes of a brilliant blue

JORDYN LANGLAIS



DARK AND DECIDUOUS — JAXON ARMSTRONG

UNTITLED

Fifteen minutes into the lecture, a girl walked in and sat down. Late. She had brown curly hair, but it was golden at the ends. Her hair was wet, curly and in a pony. She wore a mauve pink jacket which had water dripping down it — a nice touch of “pizazz” — from her sopping hair. She additionally had on white jeans and tan boots. With the first glance of her face, I could tell she had very pretty eyes. Almost like a baize green. I had never seen someone with eyes that color.

The teachers requested for people to raise their hands if they had known anyone else in the room. I raised my hand, I knew Ruth. Well, I had just met her. Listening to less than a sentence that

came out of her mouth, I already learned Ruth was a pathological liar. After this summer camp is over, I won't have to deal with her again. The late girl raised her hand and obviously, so did Ruth.

Later we all packed ourselves onto the cramped bus. “Two people to a seat”. I saw the Late girl, glancing out the window, hoping to go unnoticed. As a ticket away from Ruth, I asked to sit next to her. Softly, the Late girl said “yeah”. I asked her for her name to break the awkward silence. She responded with “Isabella, but people call me Bella”.

Four years later, the Late girl, now with short dark, even curlier hair, and those piercing green eyes is now my best friend.

BRIANNA LANGENBACH

THE LAST EMPRESS

The sound of metal hitting tile floors echoed, and those passing gave their bows to the woman, some turned away, looking disgusted. She looked tired, far too tired, almost as if she hadn't slept in a few weeks. "Your majesty? Earth to Empress Phonincia." and advisor spoke, and the woman, Phonincia, spoke with a certain heaviness in her voice, and rubbed one of her eyes "Hmm? I'm so sorry, what's going on?". The advisor looked slightly annoyed and repeated themselves again "The people grow more restless as the days carry on. More and more are rioting in the streets. The army is complaining about their funding, and the nobles are saying your taxes are unfair. The council is constantly arguing and falling apart at the seams. What are you going to do?".

The empress looked down at the floor and sighed "I don't know. What do you think we should do? I've tried everything at this point, and nothing appeases them. I'm afraid that mine and my family's deaths will be the only option left soon, and I don't want that, not for my children and their father." The advisor had a fire in his eyes "You had better figure it out." He walked away, holding his clipboard by his side. Phonincia kept walking solemnly, her head down when one of the aides came up to her. "You look unwell your highness. When's the last time you slept?". The empress answered, looking up at her "I can't remember. Every time I try to, visions plague me, visions of horrible, inhumane things." Suddenly an alarm blared loudly, and it almost felt like the palace shook with the wrath of hundreds of thousands. The empress shot up, and realized what it was, and began to speak, panic laced throughout her words "No no no, this can't be happening!" The aid looked around "We don't have much time Phonincia, we have to get out of here, the other aids are likely already grabbing your children and husband, but we need to go. Now!" The aid grabbed her hand and started sprinting and Phonincia followed.

They arrived by an exit, where her husband and children awaited, accompanied by aids. The empress spoke, calmer now and thinking a bit more clearly, "Wait, where is the babe? Cortia?" The aids all looked at each other and with one realization they all realized that she was forgotten, in the nursery. The

empress bolted away, and she ran faster than she had in her life, knowing that if she didn't it could mean the death of her daughter. She slammed the nursery door open, only to see a man standing over the crib cooing at the baby "Shame, did mommy forget about you little princess? Unfortunately, you can't live, we have to wipe your kind off the face of Lunaria". Phonincia hissed at him "Put. Her. Down." The man looked at her and spoke with a cruelty "Look at that! Mommy didn't forget her little princess~ how sweet. Unfortunately for you, you just made my job very, very easy your highness." He placed her down in the crib and walked towards her. "I'll give you 5 minutes to say your goodbyes, but no funny business else I'll cut this kindness short." Phonincia rushed in past him and grabbed Cortia and then with the man still looking away, teleported herself back to where her husband and children were waiting. The man turned around and yelled in shock "Gods Dammit!".

Phonincia looked around where she was standing and then to her daughters, son, and husband. "You won't get out alive if I go with you..." she said, sadness and grief in her voice. "her husband looked at her and spoke, "We have a small chance still if we go now!" Phonincia looked at him with tears in her eyes and said "They will hunt us down...If I come with you...I...Must stay..." Her son spoke up "Mommy? Are you gonna meet up with us later?" Phonincia looked at him and did her best to smile, "Y-yes dear, I will meet with you all later. Now come give mommy a big hug!" Her children clambered down and hugged her, and dark tears crawled down Phonincias face. She then placed them back onto the horses with their father and the aids, and kissed him goodbye, this time for good. "I'll see you in the library, my love." They set off, at a full gallop and Phonincia could hear the crowd of Lunarians approaching, chanting. She dropped to the floor, crying, staining the pavement black, and she cried till she choked on her own words, and as she was pulled to the throne room, she sobbed. When they chained her to her own throne and stripped her of her crown, her status she realized something, and she smiled through her tears and said "They are safe. You can strip me of my titles, but they never mattered to me. So kill me. I am content."

ANONYMOUS

FLAMES OF THE PAST

There it is... That apartment Clay had lived in for most of his childhood now reduced to a barely upright shell of its former self. Clay climbed out of the car as he stared up at the building in awe. Holes littered each and every wall showing the framework of the tower. Around each window frame was a gradient of blacks, browns, and tans from when the fire roared out of them. Clay could still remember that fire so clearly even though it was 10 years ago. He could feel that burning sensation deep in his throat and the shortness of breath as he crawled on his hands and knees to escape.

Clay shook his head trying to bring himself back to reality. The bun he had tied his dirty blonde hair up in loosened falling gently over his neon green hoodie. He looked down at the passenger seat of his car. His friend Nick laid fast asleep with his knees tucked up onto the seat and his face resting against the window. Nick's dark black bangs covered most of his face but you could see a line of stubble across his chin. His black hoodie was tucked over his blue jeans to keep warm. Clay quickly opened the door and caught Nick before he hit the ground "Good morning sleepy head!"

Nick snapped awake from the sudden movement "Wha- Clay what the hell!" Nick sat up and got out of the car slamming the door shut "I could have gotten hurt!" Clay laughed and leaned

against the car "You also passed out in my car so" Nick rolled his eyes and looked up at the building "So this is the place? Isn't it a bit dangerous to go climbing around here?" A devilish smirk pushed across Clay's face as he pulled out a duffle bag from the trunk "That's the fun part"

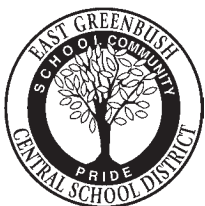
Clay smiled as he ran up the steps and to the front door. He smirked as he held the door out for Nick giving an exaggerated bow as he did so "Ladies first" Nick laughed and ruffled Clay's hair before pushing him back into the grass. The door fell off what was left of its hinges and landed next to Clay who glared at Nick. Nick smirked and shoved his hands into his pockets before walking inside. Clay stood up and wiped off his black jeans before grabbing the duffle bag and walking in.

The two looked in awe of what was before them. Walls lined with graffiti in bright neon colors that clashed with the sun-bleached wallpaper. The walls that weren't vandalized were broken beyond repair. Nick gently rubbed Clay's back "Hey it's ok man." Clay sighed as he stepped forward and looked around. "I know it's fine but it's just so... different. It's familiar yet so completely alien to me." Nick ran up in front of Clay "Well then let's keep exploring! Maybe we can find your old room." Clay smiled and nodded "I think I remember the way there."

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