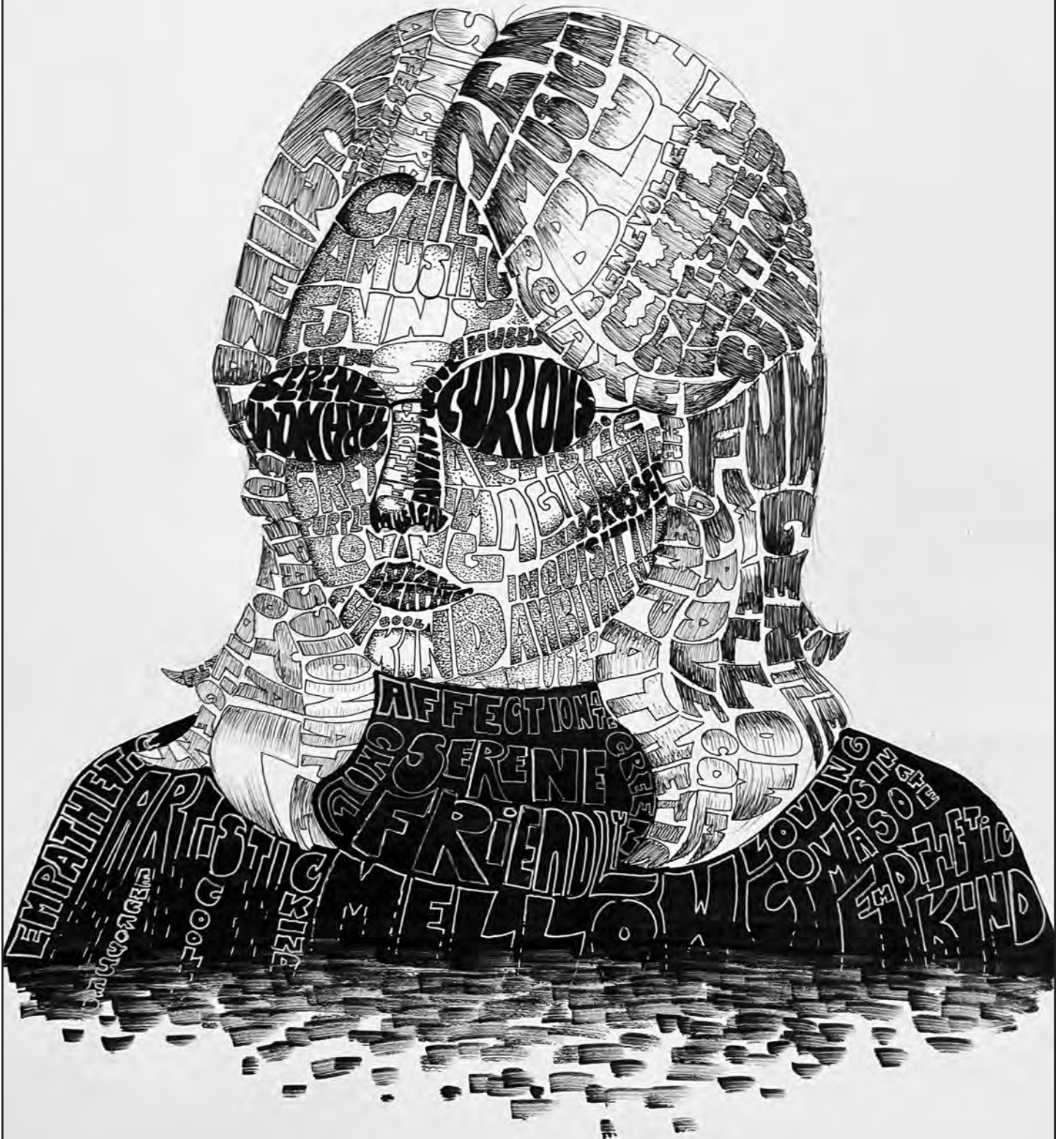


LABYRINTH



2022-2023 | COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL

LABYRINTH

2022 – 2023

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CONTRIBUTORS:

Front Cover: Zoe Allen

Teacher Spotlight: Patricia LeRoy

Back Cover: Anonymous

Authors:

Alexander DeMarco
Allison Hedgepeth
Brianna Hanks
Sophia Pioggia
Caitlin Weinheimer
DJ Dugan
Elle Hutton
Henry Collins
Izabella Temkin
Jada Tabron
Jemel Davis-Huggins
Maile Wargacki
Mary Weinheimer
Mia Williams
Molly Graiff
Neveah Prugel

Artists:

Abby Maung
Allison Beatie
Alyssa Sentz
Avanna Lee
Charlotte Coalter
Collin Eveland
Cray Eh Ni Htoo
Emma Gentile
Gabriella Couch
Hayden Brady
Jocelyn Falaro
Jocelyn Galligan
Jonathon Columbus
Kaitlin Bogucki
Kamryn Cioffi
Leigha Thorpe
Madison Wagoner
Mallory Echevarria
Max Wingfield
Michelina Rowny
Nick Adams
Reid Schiermeyer
Riley Mensing
Saturn Pierce
Sean Boniface
Sophia Xiao
Sydney Mills
Trevor Gully
Zakijah Gori
Zoe Allen

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SENIOR POEM

Maile Wargacki

Look to your left look to your right the people by our sides will be strangers in just a little while
The people we've called our best friends for the past 13 years
The people we've seen in the halls but never said hi
The people we've awkwardly laughed with when forced in a group
These are the people who will remember you
You may not know all your classmates by name but you are the reason one of them smiled
A simple comment or gesture you made impacted this person in such a positive way
So, how do you want to be remembered?
In high school reputation seems like everything
Spending all your time trying to change it
Forgetting others are affected by our actions
Our struggle to rise, leaves others in the dust
We don't always realize the ones we may hurt
Choosing our words and being thoughtful of others is important
Because, how do you want to be remembered?
It's exhausting being someone you're not
A smile painted on your face just trying to please others
Only to disappear when no one is watching
Do you want to be remembered as someone you're not?
As we move onto the next chapter we will meet new faces
Your attitude towards others will determine your future
It's ok to make mistakes
But the simple interactions are what matters
So, how do you want to be remembered?



Patti Leroy

MY LITTLE BIRD

Anonymous

Oh... Fly, fly, fly away
Fly away my little bird
Keep flying through the wide blue sky
And I know it's greedy to want more...
'Entwined for life'
'Never apart'
So my wish remains for you to soar
All those views you've seen
Just so beautiful,
It's really a dream of mine...
To be there with you
Right in the moment
Maybe someday
I hope it happens...
This wish in the back of mind
But really...
I should just be happy for you,
My little bird



Emma Gentile

COLORS OF THE FLAME

Jemel Davis-Huggins

All the colors of the world pass through
our bodies like strings of fire.
encasing our souls in a brilliant blaze of golden life.
We burn the heavens above and freeze the hell below
till only black remains.
The color of the infinite yet finite void we walk with only
our blazing souls and untamed dreams to light the way.
Walking endlessly with every step creating its own world
of dreams held by the soul of the void walker to have
dreamed it.
In the end all the colors of the world pass through our
bodies like strings of fire.
So the endless cycle may begin anew.

WEAVERS OF THE VOID

Jemel Davis-Huggins

From the moment your time begins you're a weaver.
One that creates, reshapes, and improves.
We all walk the path of creation...shaping our person
and life with the string we have.
Some are born with the best string made of silk like gold.
Others may have strings made of old rags.
We weave our own tapestries of life with what we have.
Some rise above while others stay where they can.
But for one day...one minute...one...second.
The weaving stops...and blissful silence
and peace take hold.
And for a moment you see what you've weaved
and how much more you can weave.
Looking out to see your mistakes, your successes,
all of what you have ever done and are soon to do.
Then the moment stops...and you weave once more

GRAY SKIES OUT

Caitlin Weinheimer

Blue skies in.
I'm driving home.
Gray skies out.

I miss my brother David. I pull into the driveway, cut the engine, and let myself into the house.

Blue skies in.

I lower myself onto the piano bench and tap out an arpeggio. In the quiet of the house, the ring of the first sound is almost overwhelming. I wish I knew how to play more than a few scales and simple pieces. I have time now--I always have time--but somehow I never have time to learn. The instrument is David's, anyway.

Gray skies out.

The front door eases open. The hinges have never been cared for in all the time I've lived here and they make enough noise to show for it. I keep thinking I'll get to it, but I don't even know how to go about doing that.

My best friend and roommate Cara wipes her sneakers on the doormat as she steps in. She drops her messenger bag on the sofa when she enters the living room.

Blue skies in.

My hands fall to my lap and she asks, "How was your day?"

"It's been alright," I tell her.

Her only response is to take my hand and draw me off the bench, twirling me around once. I exhale--it's the closest thing I'll get to a laugh right now. "I'll go preheat the oven." It'll probably be another night of frozen chicken nuggets for dinner.

Gray skies out.

It's late Saturday morning and Cara and I are at the bagel shop. We try to do this every other weekend, and on the ones that we're not, Cara and our other friend Alicia do yoga. Alicia usually has brunch with us too, but she's visiting family this weekend. David sometimes joins us when he's home.

Cara takes a sip of her coffee as she sits down, and I stir my tea. "It's been a hard week," she guesses. I know she means me. That's the thing about Cara--when she says things like this she's always talking about me. Thoughts of herself come second.

"Yeah," I say, more to my mug than to her.

She reaches across the table for my hand. "You're doing great, you know." I purse my lips in what was supposed to be a smile.

"Thank you, Care."

"Believe me, we'll be out of here soon!" she says. "At least one of us will have our big break and we'll split the wealth and we'll travel the world and be on our way."

"I think we'll be old ladies by then."

"Old rich ladies!" she exclaims. "But no one will know." She pauses, then adds, "The goal is to be rich, not to have the whole world know it. Remember: we'll have cape cod-style houses right next door to each other with elaborate gardens. Maybe we'll both have families, or maybe we won't, and we'll spend every day on each other's porches waving to the neighborhood kids and baking cookies for them, and we'll use our immense wealth to support their dreams and fund the arts." She's talking with her arms waving now, the

way she always does when she gets excited. "And we'll have porch swings and matching six-foot-tall sunflowers. And we'll think about how when we were younger we filled our mornings with bagels and yoga and our evenings with open mics. Maybe I will have produced a record by then and maybe you'll have a whole book series out, with a fandom and a movie franchise and the whole world absolutely in love with both of us."

At this point our waiter, Logan, stops by our table to deliver our bagels: mine is plain with strawberry cream cheese and Cara's is everything with plain cream cheese.

"And everyone else too," Cara continues. "Logan, for example, will wake up one morning to find that he has everything he's ever hoped for, and it took him longer to realize than it should have. He's in his favorite place with his favorite people. He's not where his teenage self pictured his future self, but he's in the right headspace and he's never been happier. Maybe his YouTube channel will have taken off or something, I don't know."

"Is he a YouTuber?"

"Doubt it. But that's not the point. The point is that things work out, and Logan won't be waiting tables at a small bagel shop forever unless he wants to, and we won't be living on sheer hope and on the hunt for luck forever. Just give it time--things work out. All you have to do between now and then is breathe."

"That's all."

"Exactly. Blue skies in, gray skies out. One thing at a time. We'll make it."

"I love you, Care."

"Love you more."

HER.

Sophia Pioggia

She is the rain.
The kind that wakes you up in the depths of the morning,
With a soft pitter patter on your window.
Humming and waiting patiently,
For you to wake.

She is my breath of fresh air.

She is the color "orange".
Clever, dynamic, and bright.
Running rampant through life,
With quiet steps but a vivacious presence.

She is the light in my life.

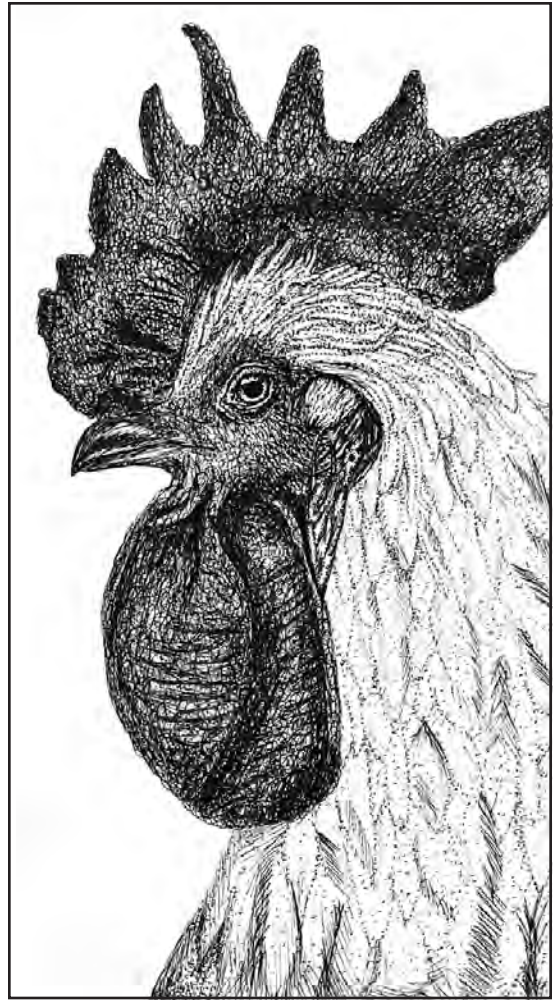
She is a bad decision,
In the best way possible.
A memory you will always hold.
That feeling of being young and wild.

She is in every memory of mine.

She is the late nights that seem never-ending,
But at the same time, fading into the distant mornings.
She is the brightness that shines through my window.

She is a royal flush.
Set in front of poker face eyes,
With hands that always hold the winning card.

She is my lucky number 7.



Alyssa Sentz



Allison Beattie

THE SACRED SOUND OF SILENCE

Alexander DeMarco

We live in the world of the loud
The world of the proud
The world where followers follow
And leaders lead
No rest
No sleep
Between the Sacred Silence and sleep
There is disorder, ruin, torture
There is the cutting of throats
And the stabbing of backs
That is why I live in
The Sacred Sound of Silence
Where someone will one day find me
And join me in our Sacred Silence
Where Serenity grows
And where Equity shows
While Toxicity and Impossibility
Are but mere figments of imagination
In the Lethality of the Sacred Silence



Elle Hutton



Eh Ni Htoo

CANNIBAL UNBEKNOWNST

DJ Dugan

Your blood is the wine
I serve at every banquet
So even in death
You are savored as something
You are not
Nothing makes my guests quite
as intoxicated as your facade
Next, we feast on your flesh
You told me pheasant
In reality, 'tis a mere hen
Wrapped in gossamer
My company knows not the difference
And they never will,
As they call for a toast in your unruly name
I, too, raise my glass
Wondering if the circumstances would be the same
Upon my audience's learning
For I understand more
Than all will ever acknowledge

**MODERNIST POETRY:
13 PROBLEMS OF DECISION**

Henry Collins

I

There are two people:
The dichotomy is simple,
Those who can decide and those who struggle;

II

Those who can't decide face a unique problem—
Their problem is far from solemn
Because they all fall under one column.

III

The problem is that they sit
Frozen, unable to continue toward, bitten
By the bug of indecision, unfit

IV

To continue forward,
They must break from the word
That locks them in their own ward;

V

A ward in which there is no movement—
Far from thriving, unable to enjoy any amusements
And far from improvement.

VI

But all it takes to fix this
Is to allow yourself to miss!
Allow failure and what you can find is bliss.

VII

Those who can decide
Also have a problem that resides:
Their fear stems from inside

VIII

That they made their choice,
But the little voice
Tells them they shouldn't rejoice;

IX

And that they went down the wrong path
Or that a little bit of math
Would have shown them a better class.

X

Fear of mistakes
Agonizes the mind of those who take
A way of life where decisions are made quick

XI

Human problems that plaque,
Though they may seem vague
Maybe we all just need a little break.

XII

Despite the causes
The sufferings are mirages;
For their mind watches

XIII

Both subjects
To the rule of their own minds
Bound by the same chain.



Jocelyn Falaro



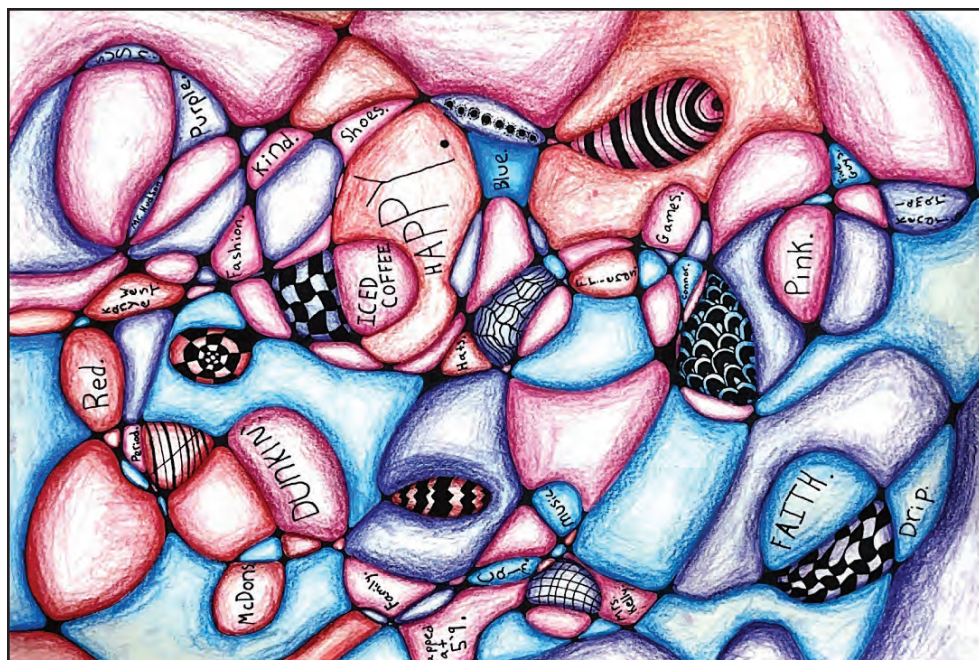
Jocelyn Galligan



Leigha Thorpe



Michelina Rowny



Colin Eveland

I AM A LADYBUG

Molly Graiff

Ladybugs are my spirit animal
 Tiny, True and Tangible
 In the flesh
 A real version of who I am
 Ladybugs represent me
 Sleeping with eyes awake
 No time to waste
 Dreaming of opportunity
 See, it's not a matter of their appearance of simplicity
 It's authenticity that makes them who they are
 Spotted, savvy, and spectacular
 That's the vernacular associated
 with these bodacious beetles
 Ladybugs are omnivores
 Just like I want more
 Luck to sweep believers
 If you're the kind of person
 Who trusts dandelion wishes
 Butterfly kisses
 And rain on a summer day
 Then you too are a ladybug
 Ladybugs protect plants
 Give everyone and chance
 A loveliness of luck
 A red-riding hood cape
 Decked with endless black holes of Possibilities
 Everyone knows the evolution of butterflies

Stages you can't deny but
 Ladybugs
 They have a history just as rich
 European farmers would pray to them
 Have faith in them
 To save their crops each year
 I'm not saying I'm a superhero
 But my energy levels are definitely not zero
 Because ladybugs protect all they love
 Ladybugs believe in themselves
 Trust in their surroundings
 And stand up for what's right
 Because ladybugs too have wings
 And ladybugs too can fly



Trevor Gully



Emma Gentile



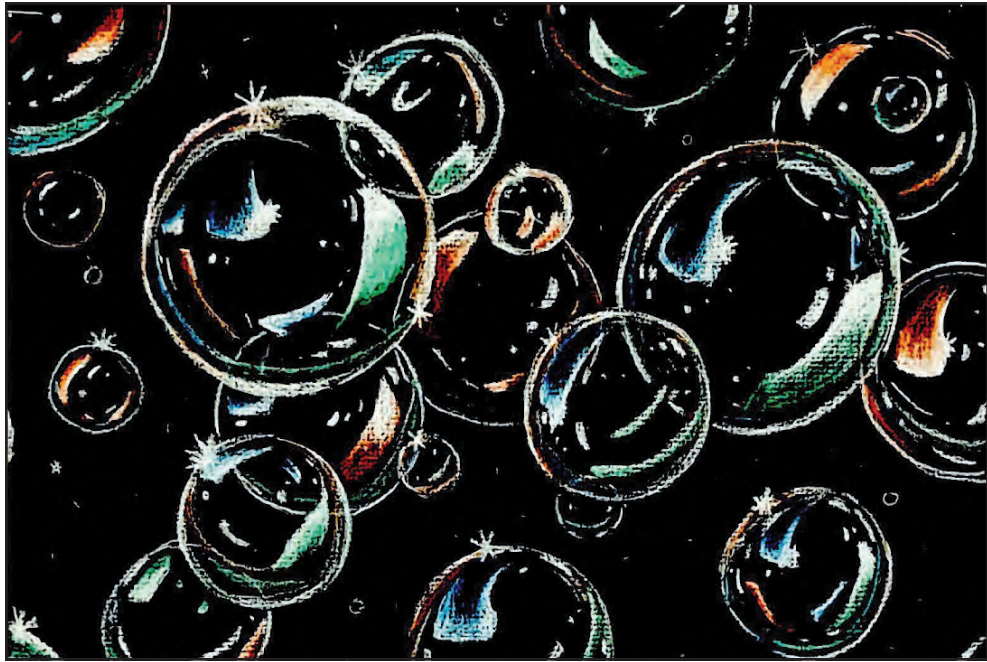
Saturn Pierce



Alyssa Sentz



Emma Gentile



Eh Ni Htoo



Thomas Coleman



Sophia Xiao



Sydney Mills

**ODE TO PINK FLOYDS,
BREATHE (IN THE AIR)**

Anonymous

Breathe, breathe in the air

The sugar coated dew hits my lungs with a sense of
endearment
Almost as if saying, "You've finally arrived"

The dark soles of my feet embrace the damp land
Guarding her against my once deathly manners

Long you live and high you fly

Free from the cage we call home
Miles on miles wrapped like a silver ribbon
around my heart
A winding road that leads back to you

Smiles you'll give and tears you'll cry

The aging lines on the shop keeper's cheeks
form a picture of your face
A dial tone tying us together
I sigh a hearty grin through the speaker
Knowing you'll feel it too

Run, rabbit, run

Amongst the robins and squirrels, I ponder for reasoning.
You,
Hidden beneath the trees
your warm eyes
Watching over me,

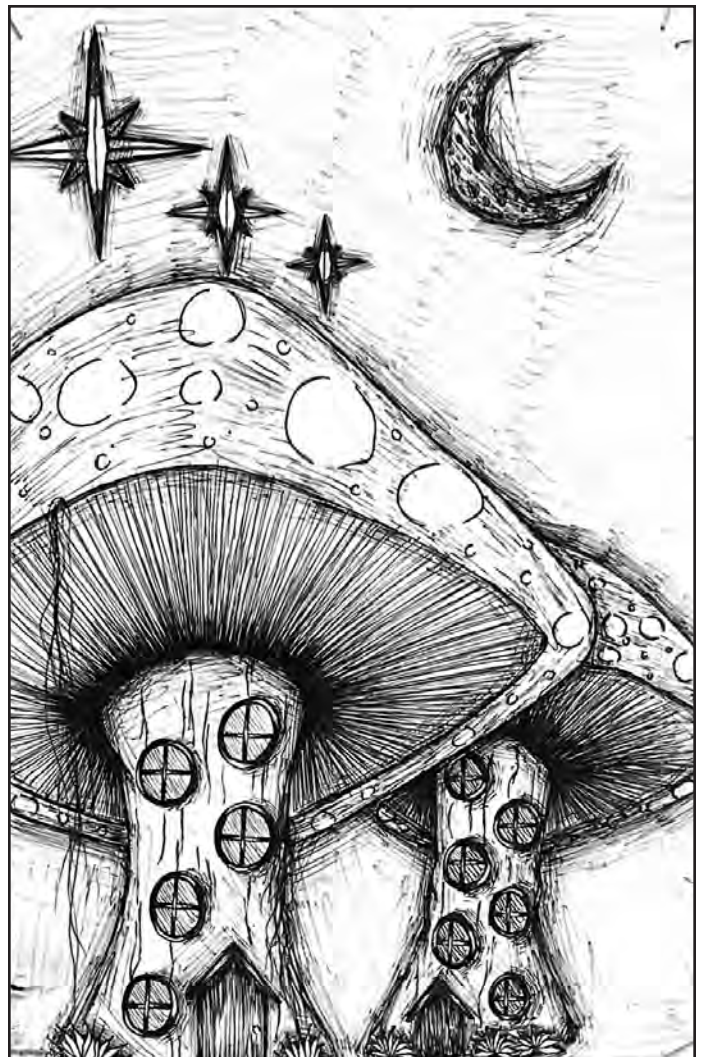
Even if I left you first

Balanced on the biggest wave
You race toward an early grave

I'll keep my life tucked within me
Stitched into the veins of my heart
For I've found my meaning
Deep within the road of independence



Kaitlin Bogucki



Max Wingfield

TIL DEATH DO US PART

DJ Dugan

Til death do us part, you said
And here I am
My body lying on the ground
Growing cold, with no signs of life to be found
Yet you are still by my side
I knew you were never one to run or hide
But even I didn't see this coming
Everyone else runs away while they still can
As the terrors close in on the living
You know that you will meet the same fate
As I or worse if you just sit and wait
Instead, you choose to stay here with me
You bleed
And fall onto my ruined corpse
Til death do us part, you said
Yet here we are, lifeless together

SHE SAW MORE THAN THE WIND

Nevaeh Prugel

She saw more than just the wind
All but a glimpse of peace,
A sense of comfort,
Home

Something that she never felt,
Never felt completely at peace
Never felt a sense of comfort,
Never felt like home

She saw the wind like the world never saw her
She saw the happiness it gave
She saw the emptiness wash away
She saw what no one else did
She saw home

Home is always perceived as an object
but it's so much more

It's a feeling
It's a feeling of comfort
It's a feeling of safety
It's a feeling that you don't have to see
But just admire

I AM A PUPPET

DJ Dugan

I am a puppet
I am a marionette
I am a worn-down doll
I am vacant
I became an empty shell long, long ago
He played with me
I was his delicacy
Until I became his ragdoll
He threw me in the trash
And tried to burn me
But the gasoline
Was water to my porcelain body
Now I have another owner
She found me
Chose me
For what, I do not know
I was not made for her
Or anyone of her practice
But yet she took me
To play with her friends
And pull the strings
Of my arms
My lips
My waist
With this, I shall reiterate
I am a puppet
Nothing more
Without a master
To manipulate me

"JUST BREATHE"

Brianna Hanks

My therapist says to take it day by day
But i honestly feel like I'm not okay
How many more hospital stays until this madness ends
I feel like my problems will never mend
I feel like I'm drowning
But they say to just breathe
All this trauma is never right
I wish the memories can fade in just one night
When i am sad they tell me to just breathe
But all i can do is panic and freeze



Sophia Xiao

THE LEAVES, THEY SING

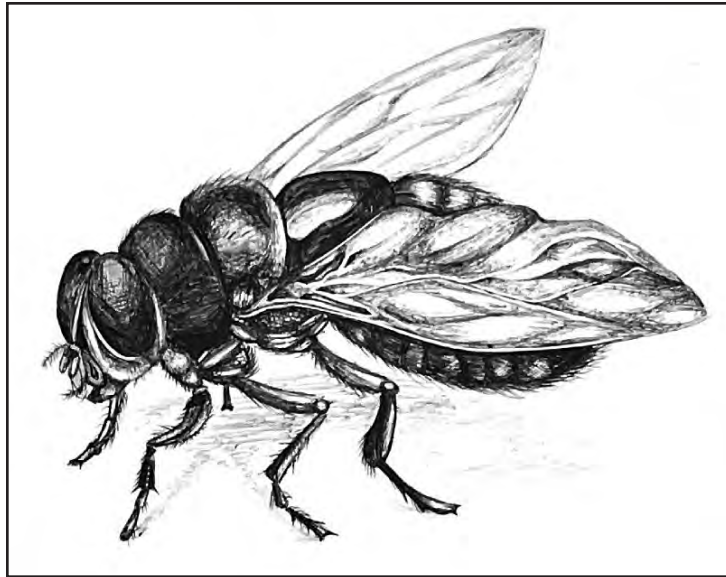
Jada Tabron

Tall trees tower over all that approach
or roam through their forest.
Old trees, senior to all who visit their greatness.
Waterfalls violently crash into the waters below them
dragging with them the ancient spirits
of those foolish enough to oppose them.
Jutting rocks whose harshness fights the peace
of the world around them.
Silence rings out.
Most say silence rings out,
But the leaves they sing
They scream out a ringing pitch
Not heard to anyone but themselves
Yet still
The leaves, they sing

NOSTALGIA

Izabella Temkin

The smell of honey and stale potpourri lingers
Within the badly sewn chairs
Secrets cake the concrete walls
The guidance counselor looms over her desk
Grin cracking her face in two
She talks about you future
In the past tense
As you wish to sit
Upon the warm red clay of playgrounds
Sing rhymes with teachers
And forget about school as you lose
Yourself
In the past
You wish to return to.



Zoe Allen

THE STORY OF A BREATH

Mia Williams

When each and every one of us was born, our mothers, fathers, or whoever is in the room at that point in time wanted to hear one thing and one thing only.

A breath. A cry perhaps.

When we breathe, we don't know it, its involuntary. We didn't know it then and we certainly don't recognize it now.

Only when somebody mentions a breath, does breathing become a task. It now becomes a job, and if you cease that breath, you are in a load of trouble.

Our breath is something that sticks with us throughout our lives without us knowing it. When we come into this world, breathing is a celebration of life and fullness. But, now Breathing has become yet another task.

Somebody has reminded us that the air we take in is poisonous and no longer similar to that of the first breath of life. We are reminded that a youthful breath must be clouded and scented by watermelon nicotine and God forbid you breath air while you learn geometry.

Kids are taught to hold their breath to avoid making noise when someone thinks the wrong things during the school day.

We are taught to stifle and even cease each breath in order to have the ability resume living the following morning.

There are people in this world who enjoy the sight others breathlessness.

In order to speak, we need to breathe.

In order to think, we need to breathe.

But the supposed story of a breath has been torn apart, stapled and stitched back together, both metaphorically and physically, in an attempt to resume its proper storyline.

The story of a breath should be filled with triumph and obstacles and eventually, a happy ending.

But our story isn't there yet.

And we only have so long until our time runs out and the world falls unconscious.

Just breathe

If you ever want to take a break, to pause life for a little while, all you need to do is breathe.

Just breathe.

Find someplace you feel safe, welcome, and free.

Don't think about yesterday, or tomorrow, or anytime other than right now, and the crisp autumn air flowing in and out of your lungs and everything that comes with it.

Just breathe.

Notice all the smells on the air, its temperature. Disappear into a world far away from here, letting your mind flow with the current of the wind. Don't think about where it will take you, or where it takes you from. Just that you are in peace with yourself, and the world around you.

The colorful leaves falling from the trees and doing a dance in the wind before they hit the ground. You lay down in the leaves, feel yourself sink into them, while other stray leaves join the pile.

The crisp grass crunching beneath your feet with each step.

Dew slowly dripping from long evergreen branches swaying in the wind

Just breathe.

And when you exhale the crisp fall air, don't say goodbye in sadness, but in happiness that there is still beauty in the world no matter what.

Just breathe.

SOMEONE OUT THERE

a response to 3/30/23

Allison Hedgepeth

someone out there
is entertained
by the elderly woman crouched under her desk
arthritic knees aching
bony hands shaking
“Should I call my daughter?
tell her I love her?”

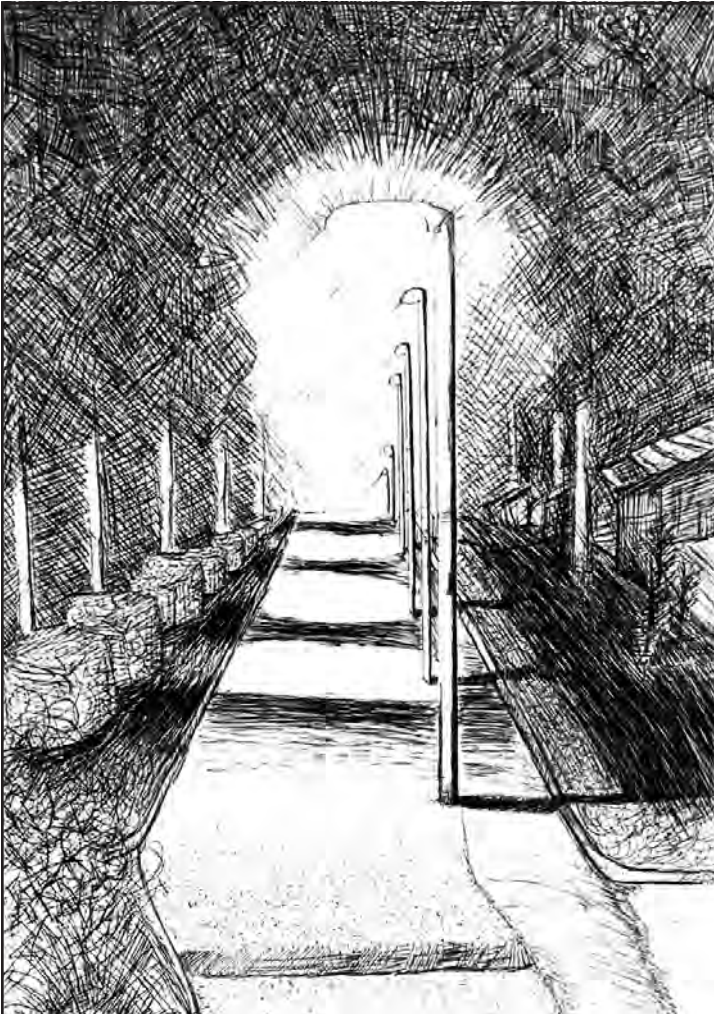
someone out there
has to laugh
at the middle-aged man herding children
ready to take a bullet
knowing that he would do it
“What will my wife tell the kids?
how will they let me go?”

someone out there
enjoys the thought

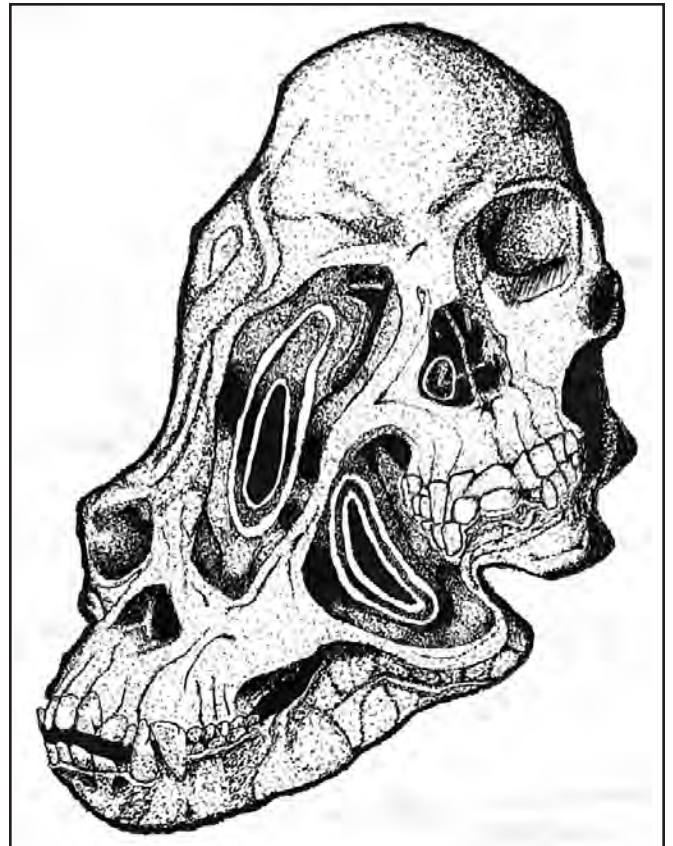
of the fifteen-year-old boy in the wheelchair
aware that his wheels make a squeak
aware but unable to speak
“How do I thank my teacher?
will she know the difference she makes?”

someone out there
chose this
the kindergarten girl in pigtails
two fat tears on her cheeks
this is the third time in weeks
“Why are we hiding again?
does Mommy know where to find me?”

someone out there
whoever you are
we have some questions for you



Nick Adams



Reid Schiermeyer

AFTERTHOUGHT

Anonymous

i do not exist
i am a figment
of imagination
lost, forgotten, unnoticed
only thought about
as an afterthought

i sit in the backseat
my voice lost
trying to speak
the words permeating the air
humid
like warm summer rain
but ignored
and vastly unnoticed

i try, ive tried, im trying

im tired
anesthetized
numbed
like the frigid rain
of autumn

i cloud the air
the vibe
the feeling
of normal conversations
like spring rain
muddy and dense

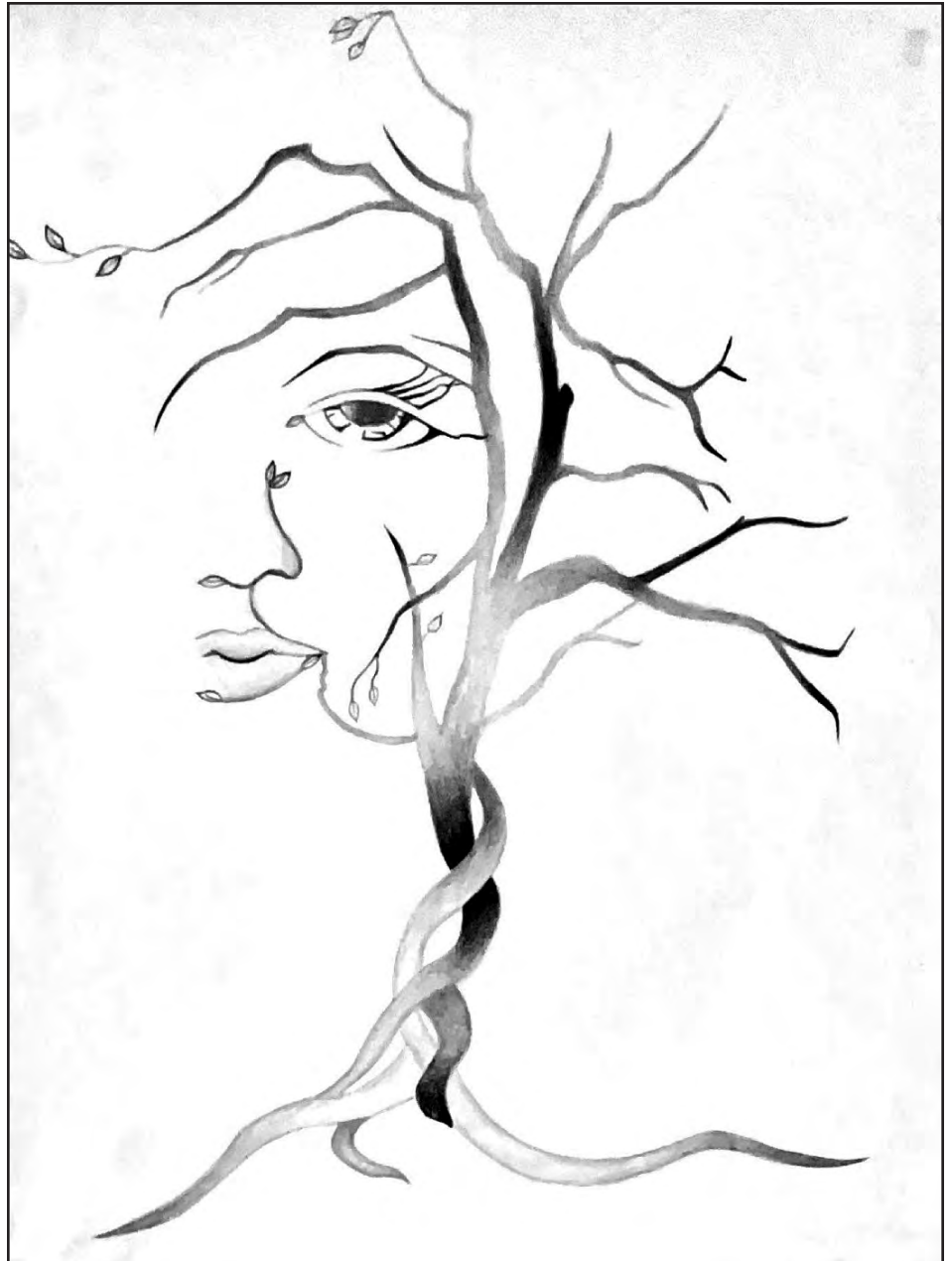
im an afterthought
like after the rain
only a remnant that
once touched this earth
remembered

im an afterthought
and i can do
nothing

but leave an imprint
on this earth
like the smell of rain
after rain

and perhaps
after im gone
like the rain
they might remember me

someone
who once was



Kamryn Cioffi

AUTUMN

Anonymous

You know all my dreams, you were one so it seemed
And your love is a curse but it's what sets me free
Because although I am trapped in your finger cage
I thrive in this lonely being out of your way,
You were my dream, my love, can't you see?
This fictional tale was just that – a fantasy.
You gave it your best efforts
Trying to dethrone your queen.

LOVE, REBECCA

Mary Weinheimer

Serenity: Peace. Stillness. A state of being where nothing can get to you. Not even the girl who used to bring peace to you; the girl who left you behind.

The world blurs back into focus around me as the subway slows to a stop. People pour out of the train like liquid and carry me with them. Like every day for the last ten months, the messages on my phone weigh on me like lead in my pocket. There's her voice, bright even through the phone, "Em! Meet me at my apartment in ten, I have SO MUCH—"

The edges of my vision start to fog and I blink rapidly, forcing the thoughts to the back of my mind. I pause to savor the breath of cool February air that I'm met with above the subway; I can't afford to be lost in my head, especially while walking alone in the city. I do this every day.

"Rebecca Aniston—found—asking for—" my best friend—no. don't think.

"Hey!" I'm suddenly stopped short, my inner monologue silenced by spilled sugar and caffeine. With a sharp inhale, I face the offender: a girl about my age with a half-empty plastic cup and wide eyes I can practically read, a blue-gray reflection of her own nonstop stream of thoughts. They dart around, looking everywhere except at me. She stammers in a terrified voice, "Oh- my god, I am so sorry, I was not looking where I was going—"

"No, no, you're fine," I laugh it off quickly. "I'm sorry, I wasn't looking either."

I don't move. Neither does she.

Cold coffee drips from my coat and off my fingers, droplets forming a pattern in the pavement.

"Um. Is... your drink okay?" I add. Is your drink okay? God, how stupid could I be?

That earns me a nervous but real laugh from her. "Forget my drink, I just threw it all over you — and your gorgeous coat."

I don't do this every day.

"You think my coat is gorgeous?"

"My best friend has one just like it."

So did mine. "That's nice." Emma, stop it.

But "Rebecca Aniston was found in her car off the side of the interstate. At the hospital, she was asking for you." she was asking for you.

I do remember serenity, you know.

Serenity was two in the morning, next to Rebecca Aniston under blankets, drinking mochas with marshmallows - "hot

cocoa on caffeine" - while watching old Disney movies that we'd loved since forever. It was the letters she'd written every single day the summer we were apart, signing each one in her perfect cursive, Love, Rebecca. She may as well have signed this entire city, the way I see her everywhere. It was falling asleep on each other's shoulders and waking up sore the next morning, but it didn't even matter because we were together.

Rebecca Aniston and I could have been the world.

There was no warning. No goodbye. It was four in the morning when I slept through that phone call. She'd left my apartment an hour before, despite the freezing rain pouring down. She didn't want to wake me up, she didn't want to go — "she had to".

She didn't have to. Not if it cost her her life.

I miss her. God, I miss her so much.

"I'm sorry, again." She says it in one quick exhale, like she can flush her anxiety out with the apology.

"No worries," I say, forcing an even tone. Rebecca Aniston has left me breathless once again, memories of her playing a movie on repeat so I can't hide from them anymore.

It takes me a moment to realize I don't mind them so much.

The girl is fidgeting with her fingers while we stand in awkward silence. I don't really want to go, I notice — magnetically drawn to this character who spun into my way on the sidewalk, to she who added a moment of chaos to my careful routine.

I've been alone for a while. Maybe it's time I started trying.

Before I can try anything, I hear her say, "Hey, I could buy you a coffee sometime. As, um, an apology?"

Yes. I don't say that. What I say is, "You don't have to."

"I know. I want to."

And her words string new lights across the screen of memories, bring the movie to a pause. My mind falls silent, focusing in on just the two of us. I know I won't have another Rebecca Aniston in my life, but I could find a new serenity, couldn't I?

That's why, slowly, I say, "Okay."

Her eyes light up when she smiles. "I'm Nora, by the way," she says, reaching out a hand.

And in that moment I feel like for once, the world can be more than me and Rebecca's ghost.

So when I take her hand, I can't help but smile back. "Emma."

WELCOME TO THE UNITED STATES

Elle Hutton

Welcome to the United States,
In here there's only too much hate,
When it gets even worse, we separate!
Where a virus has reproductive rights
but a woman doesn't,
Where laws are unjust by the dozen

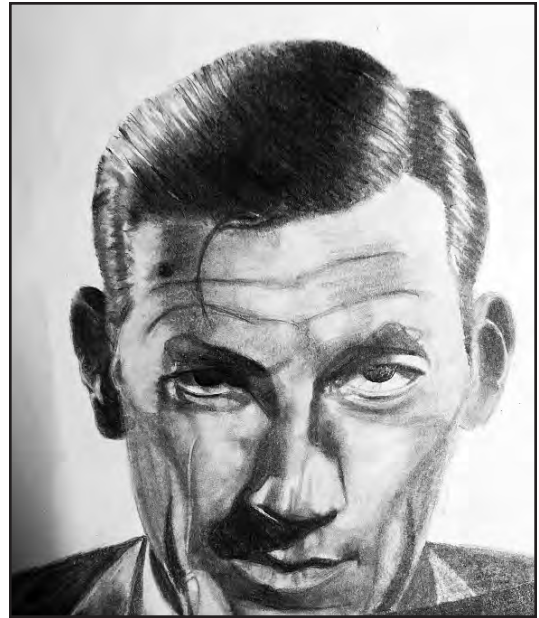
Protest signs still state
Keep Roe V. Wade!

but when religion intertwines with the voices of our mind
in the government we despise
why should a belief system trump the
fundamental rights of a victim!

While rapists are freed, politicians make tweets
It's not always intended nor always planned but the
prevention of accidents should never be banned.
So keep your rosaries off my ovaries!
And keep your bans off our bodies!

"When injustice becomes law resistance becomes duty"
RBG once said
But when forced to have a baby
some would rather be dead.

so Pro-Choice is Pro-Life!
And I'm not going down without a fight!
If your knife of justice is never used,
the abused and I can only refuse.
Refuse to live in silence!
Right by right taken away by our own tyrants
But we don't want violence...
only for a pair of ears to listen
So respect existence or expect resistance!
Without such our rights only reduce!
So no more "I dissent" but only "I refuse"!



Zoe Collins



Abby Maung



Columbia High School

962 Luther Road • East Greenbush, NY 12061