

LABYRINTH



2024–2025 | COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL

LABYRINTH

2024 – 2025

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*Special thanks to Andrea Neiman and Chelsea Goodbred for promoting Labyrinth
and encouraging student artwork and creative writing submissions*



Alex DeMarco

BRAVERY

Eli Merritt

I have to be brave.
To absolve myself of pain
Quick and fast
So I can wash away others'.

Brave,
For every other hour
Someone seeks solace in my arms.
I find no solace of my own in anyone else's
I must make my own.
So I am brave.

Brave enough to scratch and rip and tear.
Brave enough to scream and to fight.
But that's not the bravery anyone needs from me
The bravery they need is for me to hide it
To be brave enough to smile when I bleed
Brave enough to laugh when I cry.
To be brave so they won't
To be hard and cold toward myself
But gentle and caring toward them

AN ODE TO THE WORD OINTMENT

Lena Bromberg

My ears ring when I hear your sound,
Never a dull ache and always a strong strum,
You make me want to stick my head in the ground
Or simply want to become numb.

My skin starts to crawl,
Goosebumps perking up on my skin,
a sinking feeling similar to withdrawal,
Causing my head to begin to spin.

My throat feels the need to gag,
A sound that I will never let be voiced,
The mere mention of you being a red flag,
I don't know how you do it but you are worse than the
word moist.

You claim to heal ailments,
However you only bring pain to me,
Causing my mind an instant derailment,
Though some don't mind you I highly disagree.

A WISH FOR THE NEW YEAR

Eli Merritt

I wish to heal and be healing
To let my love and caring
Flood the hearts of those around me
But also to fill my own cavities
With the same grace and dignity
To extinguish the flames of despair
Rising behind both the eyes I love
And the pair I see in the mirror
I wish to be helpful
I want to be helped
To heal and to be healing
Through this next chapter
And through the rest.



Kole James Hardy



Desmond Cooley



Tessa Santana

ALASKA

Anna Reilly

Alaska. I watched the green trees, gray mountains, and blue-gray bodies of water whizz by through the window. The engine of the cab seemed to scream in my ears. I felt the rough padding of the seats rub against my legs and the cold seatbelt through my jacket. We stopped in Anchorage for the night. I shivered as a gush of cold wind rushed into the cab through the two rolled-down windows in the front. I couldn't wait to get to the warm hotel room and lie down after a long day of traveling.

I felt the soft leather of the seats on my legs and looked out the large glass windows that went up to the ceiling. Sunlight burst through the clear glass and made everything look bright and cheerful. Large pine trees and long winding streams passed by in a blur of green and blue-gray. I listened to my parents yelling at each other in the seat across from my older brother and me, arguing about what adventure we should go on first when we finally got to Denali National Park & Preserve. I could hear the loud obnoxious sound of metal clanging against metal and the sickening sound of the loud horns tooting over and over again. My breathing became unsteady, my hands sweaty, and my right leg bounced up and down. I put my earbuds in and carefully selected a song on my phone. Gently, I laid my head on the fogged-up window and sighed, watching as the clear glass turned almost white after my breath hit it. I closed my eyes and focused on the sound of my fast-beating heart that seemed like it could rip from my chest at any moment.

On the third day in Denali, it poured all day. The large drops hitting the roof of our cabin gave me a pounding headache. My dad and older brother still decided to go on the longer hike, but my mom and I opted for a shorter hike through the tundra, where I almost sprained my ankle after getting my foot stuck in a hole. After returning to the lodge, we went panning for gold in the creek behind the lodge with a staff member while we waited for the guys to return from their hike. Even though the wind that brushed against my bare skin gave me goosebumps and the rain

ruined our plans, I still enjoyed the bonding time with my mom and the new adventure.

Many people were racing around in the cramped space of the bus, trying to find open seats. The blue velvet seats felt a bit rough but comfortable nonetheless. My hands shook vigorously, and my teeth chattered as I tried brushing my hands against my arms and cuddled up in my blanket, trying in vain to stay warm. With the rumble of the engine starting, I got comfortable in my seat and looked out the window as we pulled away from Denali Backcountry Lodge, where we had been staying for the past couple of days. The next part of our trip was only a 6-hour drive away. When we finally arrived in Anchorage, we took a cab to our next adventure.

The inside of our small rental RV reflected the liveness of its owners. There were wooden floors and cabinets, as well as a mini modern kitchen with a small stovetop. It also featured three sleeping areas: a large queen-sized bed with gray sheets, a full-size bed over the driving area, and a dining table that converted into a small twin-size bed. However, the bathroom in the corner of the RV felt as small as an anthill. My breathing was unsteady, similar to how it felt when we traveled on the Alaskan Railroad earlier in the vacation, and my hands shook like branches in a strong wind. I didn't know how my family was supposed to live in a small RV for a week when we could barely function at our large house back in New York. My mom said it would be meaningful family bonding time, and my older brother and I couldn't fight or the small space would feel even smaller. The RV brought us together and made us appreciate each other's presence, but we still fought. I had a massive headache from all the bickering along the way, so I was relieved when the end of the trip was only a few days away.

I learned a lot about my family during our trip to Alaska. We love and will do anything for each other, but at the same time, spending too much time together can have a negative impact. Traveling with my family has made me realize that I have to appreciate every moment with them.

GRADUATION POEM

Madeline Dobbin

A child has dreams we hold in our mind,
We will grow up and someday find,
As we stand on this stage, looking ahead,
With hopes and dreams.
The years flew by, and now we are here,
with memories of laughter, joy, and cheer.
Our futures are bright and just beginning,
with growing courage and strength.
Now we are grown up and a child no more,
We close a chapter of our lives
to open a new door where you will find your own,
Dreams don't just happen, it's the path that we follow,
The choices we have, the decisions we make.
Take one step at a time,
Dreams can come true.
Travel toward your goals
Soar to new heights!

Congratulations Graduates!

FREEDOM IS A COYOTE

Natalie Jordan

Freedom is a coyote
He lopes around lumbering pine trees,
His tufts of fur snagged in the claws of a bramble
Ears pricked at the roar of cars
In an unfamiliar, bright place
The ground beneath his feet is hot
And then cold,
Each place as unfamiliar as the last
He doesn't know where he is going,
But he begs for scraps no matter where he is
He trails behind the screech of cruel vultures,
Each doomed to die
He creeps in the bushes beside a grizzly bear
Wondering when he will find such a high kingdom



Fashion Sketches — Kole James Hardy

CLASSROOM COMPARISONS

Lena Bromberg

Don't put me on a pedestal.
Scratch that, don't put yourself on a pedestal.
You talk as if your pedestal is higher than mine,
the demeaning look in your eyes when I claw for help,
the disgust in your gaze as I can't do something you can.
Don't make me look foolish or inferior,
asking me questions just outside of my reach.
Don't turn around smiling,
only to ask what grade I got so you can reassure yourself
you are better than your "competition".

At the end of the day I work for my grades.
You do too.
I study and I learn and I practice.
You do too.
I can memorize and I can recite just as well as you can.
However, the difference between us is that when you sit
down for a test or an assignment,
your hand isn't the one shaking.
The words don't blur as you glance between the paper
and the clock,
you're not the one re-reading to make sure you didn't
miss one word,
you're not the one considering how much time it would
take for them to go to the bathroom and throw up.
I am.

POEM ONE

Trinity Ryf

Water comes in waves
Washing over my skin
My nose just above her
My hands playing in the wet sand
Laying in her path
Sometimes water rushes me
Just for a moment
I can hold my breath
Only for so long
Before i can't take it
Then she retreats
Most days she doesn't
I am forced to be under her
Suffocating from the mass of emotion
I stay still
She is hurting me
But underneath the feeling
And taking what she gives
Is easier than
Sorting them out
So i don't move
I stay under the tide

DADDY'S GUITAR

Sydney Mills

Hearing the strum of his guitar
Hoping it will last forever

But I know time passes by too soon,
and it will all be over,
And my heart won't be able to take it

I might as well cut that soft strum out of my heart
But it has already made a nest there
Clinging and wrapping around my veins
Its sound resonating throughout my body

For ages to come
His sound will still be deep within me

DAYBREAK

Nathan Garrigan

When day breaks, Night doesn't mend
Eagles fly, fish swim, do bears crawl?
Night falls yet day doesn't climb
Sometimes it is known while being unknown.
Can a bird fly as night falls?
Known or unknown, stick to what you believe is true.

DEAR OLD FRIEND

Sarah Rainville

Dear old friend,
I hate the way you left when things got hard.
I hate how you lied and betrayed
the trust I always had for you.
I hate how you prioritized the little things.
I hate how you only talked to me when I reached out.
I hate how our everyday hangouts
turned into distant memories.
I hate when people ask me what happened
to us because I am left speechless.
And most of all, I hate that I let our friendship fade.
Dear old friend,
I am sorry we are no longer friends.



Deidre Quail



Bloody Sunday – Ariel Gioia

PAINT CHIP POETRY

Natalie Jordan

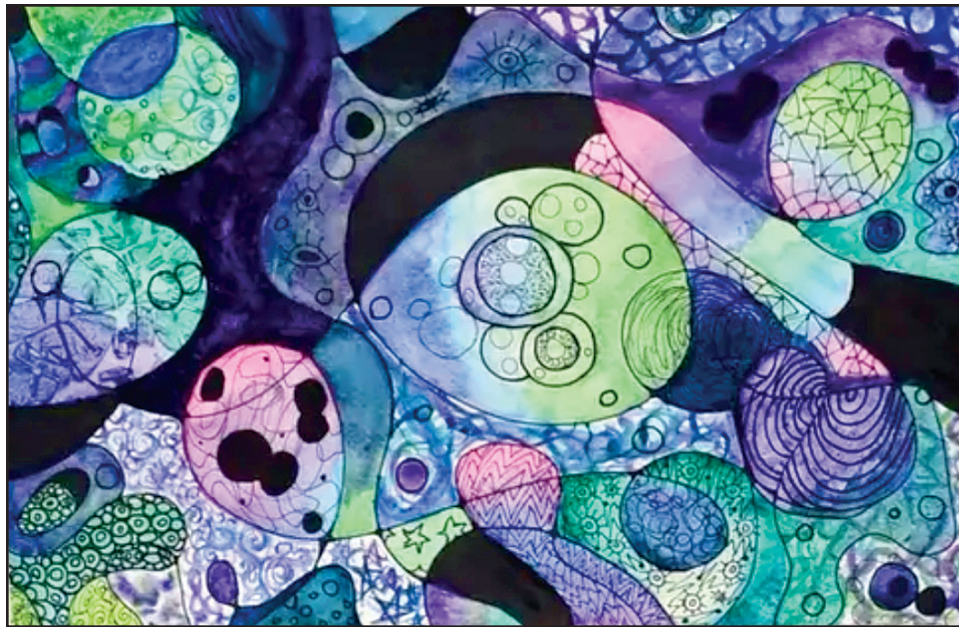
I stand beside shivering pines
the scent of alpine lingering
too strong and dizzying
a deity sleeps among these trees
in the dark of an untamed wilderness
I've heard he is **bittersweet**
like the world he lives
where **wild mushrooms** protrude
from unkempt earth
and **marigolds** warn of death
thistles prod at my boots
bidding me to travel further
into the palm of a god



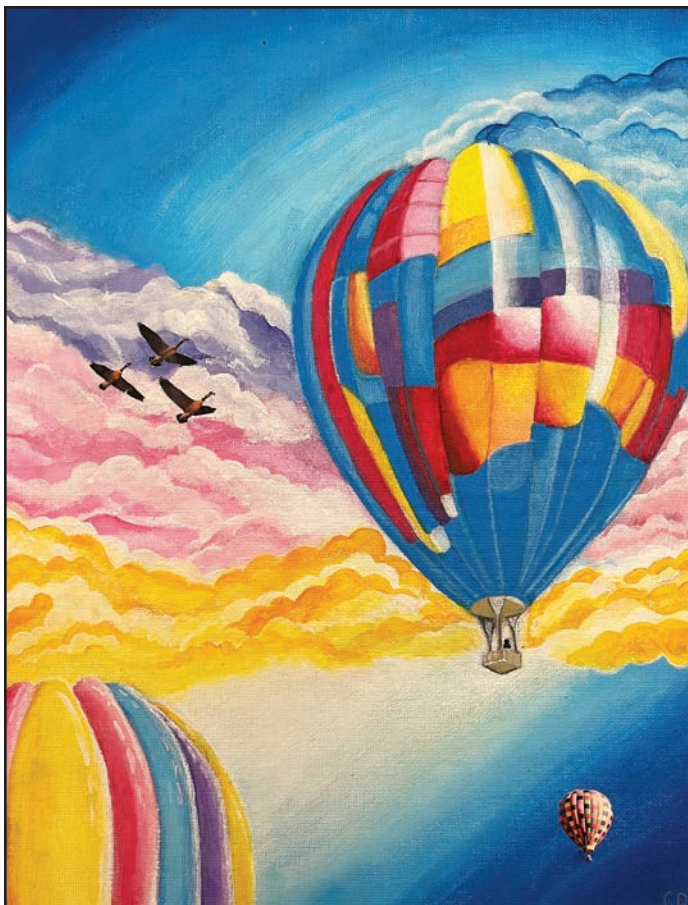
Emily Kamauff



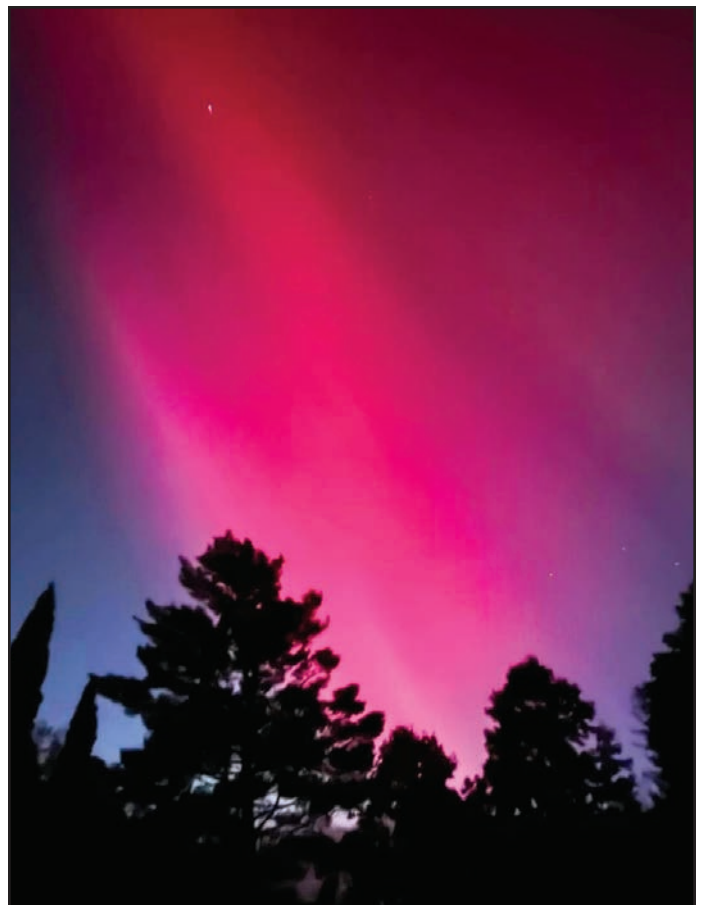
Hawaiian Medicine By Ariel Gioia



Snap Crescenzi



Corinne DiDella



Alex DeMarco



Self Portrait — Ariel Gioia



Darla — Andrea Neiman



Eco Flowers — Mrs. Gioia's Studio Art



Kieran Mounce



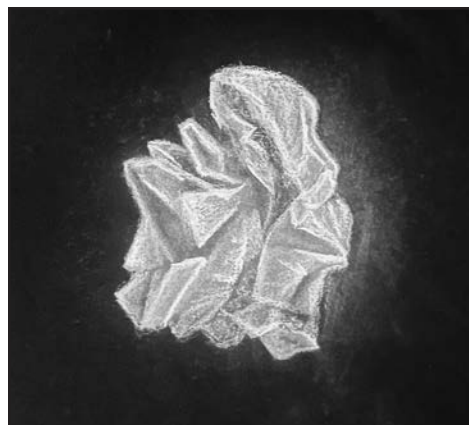
Katherine Hanna



Kayleigh Balls

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT:

Lena Bromberg



CLASS OF 2025 POET LAUREATE

Mia Williams

During one of the last episodes of *The Office*,
Michael Scott felt that his time as the
world's greatest boss was coming to an end,
And it was now time for him to start
experiencing a new life on his own.
And if you know Michael, you know
he can do (and say) virtually anything.
The hardest thing for that man to do...

It was saying goodbye.

We've known what it feels like to leave the office every
day – clock out at 2:03 – an extremely
EXTREMELY hard day at work
it's been clockwork for twelve years,
but it's a little different the one day when
you know you won't be coming back.

In Michael Scott's eyes, he wanted to
leave without anyone knowing,
But for us, I say we do the opposite.

We should embrace each other and everything
that we've accomplished because it's a great thing.
Let go of hate and judgment, and all things childish
because we no longer fit that category.
be proud of where we came from, how we've grown,
how we've failed, and how we sucked it all up and kept
going so that we could sit right here in these seats.
This is what it feels like to be the "World's greatest boss"
It's daunting to look back and think about who we used
to be,
cherish those moments for all that they are,
Because we all know looking forward isn't that easy.
You wonder what you're gonna do
without your coworkers by your side
Without the laughter, without the in-office gossip,
without this feeling of comfort
That we've known forever.
Instead of avoiding it like Michael Scott,
bathe in it, cry because of it
Thank the people around you for it
Because the truth is, it's over
The season is done,
but each of the episodes, each of the memories
will still be there
So goodbye may be hard, but it's easy when you know
You have it locked in
And as Michael Scott always says
Catch you on the flippity flip.



Natalie Tator



Micah Lever

GRADUATION POEM

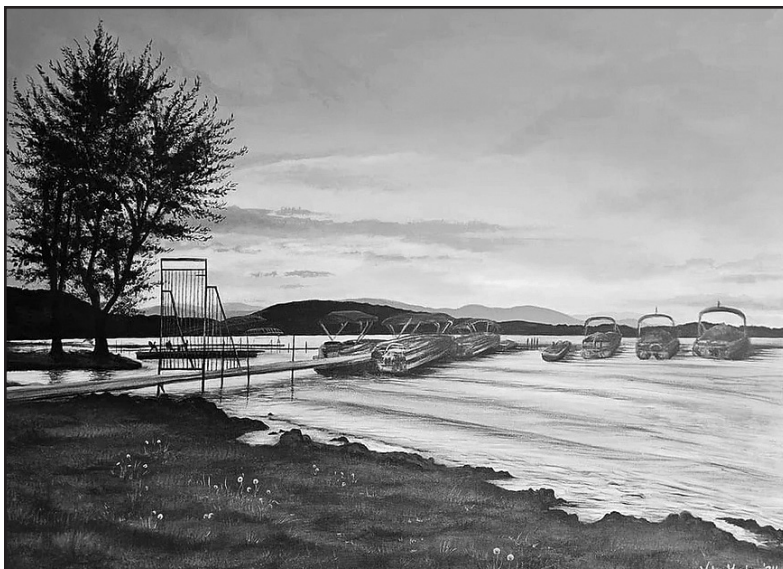
Kiera Mead

It's graduation day,
A time to celebrate.
We now stand here in 2025 with a cap and gown on to
recognize our journey
in not just school, but through this Amusement Park called
Growing Up.
We have been on quite the roller coaster ride
with ups and downs, highs and lows.
Our journey began in 2012, the year we started
kindergarten.
We were these little people full of excitement about what
was to come.
Would I make a friend, would I have someone to eat with it,
did my parent remember to pack my favorite treat?
We navigated these elementary school years as any little
kid would through an amusement park.
Running from experience to experience
No trepidation, only bewilderment and excitement.
Playing games, making friends, and learning along the
way.
We felt the love and security from our friends, our family,
and our teachers.
Life was fun and full of adventures.
Then we moved on to middle school.
Like an Amusement Park when you are finally tall enough
to ride the bigger rides,
we had those same feelings
Nervous, Enthusiastic, Fearful, Self-conscious, Delighted,
Unsure.
We entered into these years, we wondered, would my
friends be in my classes?
Would I have someone to eat lunch with?
Only this time around we had the Snack Shack to get
treats from.
Goff offered opportunities to join clubs and sports.
We made new friends from other schools and then...
2020, 7th grade, we experienced our first global
pandemic, Covid-19.
From March to the end of the year, we were kept out of
school.
No contact with friends, isolation, anxiety,
Middle school, a scary time made even scarier.
Classes on Zoom, no trips to Philly or DC
Things were looking forward,
Gone.
Life altered beyond our comprehension.
As 8th grade brought a hybrid schedule.
We packed our backpacks with books, computers, masks,
and hand sanitizer.
This was our new reality.

But we felt the love and security from our families and our
teachers
Supporting us and encouraging us.
Not a typical middle school because of the pandemic,
but we took from this experience and learned from it.
Most of us were happy to see each other again and
wanted to learn after being out for so long. For others, it
was a major adjustment that was difficult to get through.
But we made it through these hard times and came out of
it stronger.
We then entered Columbia High School.
A lot like the biggest and most thrilling of rides.
Yet, once again, will my friends be in my classes?
Will I have someone to eat lunch with?
They have way better snacks here.
A sense of normalcy.
We relished being with our friends and the opportunities
being back to school brought.
No longer separated by 6 feet,
Homecoming
Dances,
Spirit weeks,
Sporting Events,
Plays,
Concerts,
All this helped unite us.
Once again we embraced love and support from our
family, friends, and teachers.
Like a harness on a ride, they gave a sense of security.
Graduation is not just an event to symbolize finishing high
school, but it is a day to honor everybody's achievements
and success.
Congratulate others,
but also congratulate yourself for persevering through
hard times,
whether it was something major like a pandemic
or something minor like a hard math test.
You didn't give up and that is why you are sitting here
today.
You should congratulate yourself on what your future holds
for you.
Wherever you end up whether it's college, the military, or
straight into a job, is lucky to have you.
As we complete this journey together
never forget this great time of your life,
don't forget what you accomplished,
and know that you never gave up.
You make friends
You will find someone to eat with
and keep looking for the next big ride.



Jenna Snyder



Brown's Beach — Valerie Gordon

WHY MUST I LOVE YOU SO

Alexander DeMarco

You are the light at the end of a tunnel
 That I have denied for far too long
 Why must I love you so?
 For you bring joy to all those who care
 Your smile out shines even the sun
 Your beauty is far beyond the moon
 And your eyes are more beautiful than the seven seas
 Why must I love you so?
 I apologize for being indirect...
 For, it is that I'm to scared of being a regret
 I do not want to be the clouds that bring the rain...
 The darkness that would encapsulate you...
 Or the storm that shakes your vessel...
 Why must I love you so?
 Life is cruel...
 It reminds me of your grace when
 I am just about to forget
 It reminds me why I love you so...
 Why... Why must I love you so?
 I see you sad...
 I see you are lonely...
 I want to... I... want...
 I want you to love me as much as I do you...
 You fill my heart with joy
 My mouth with laughter
 And my soul a tender warmth...
 So...
 So why....
 Just...
 Why...
 Must I love you so?

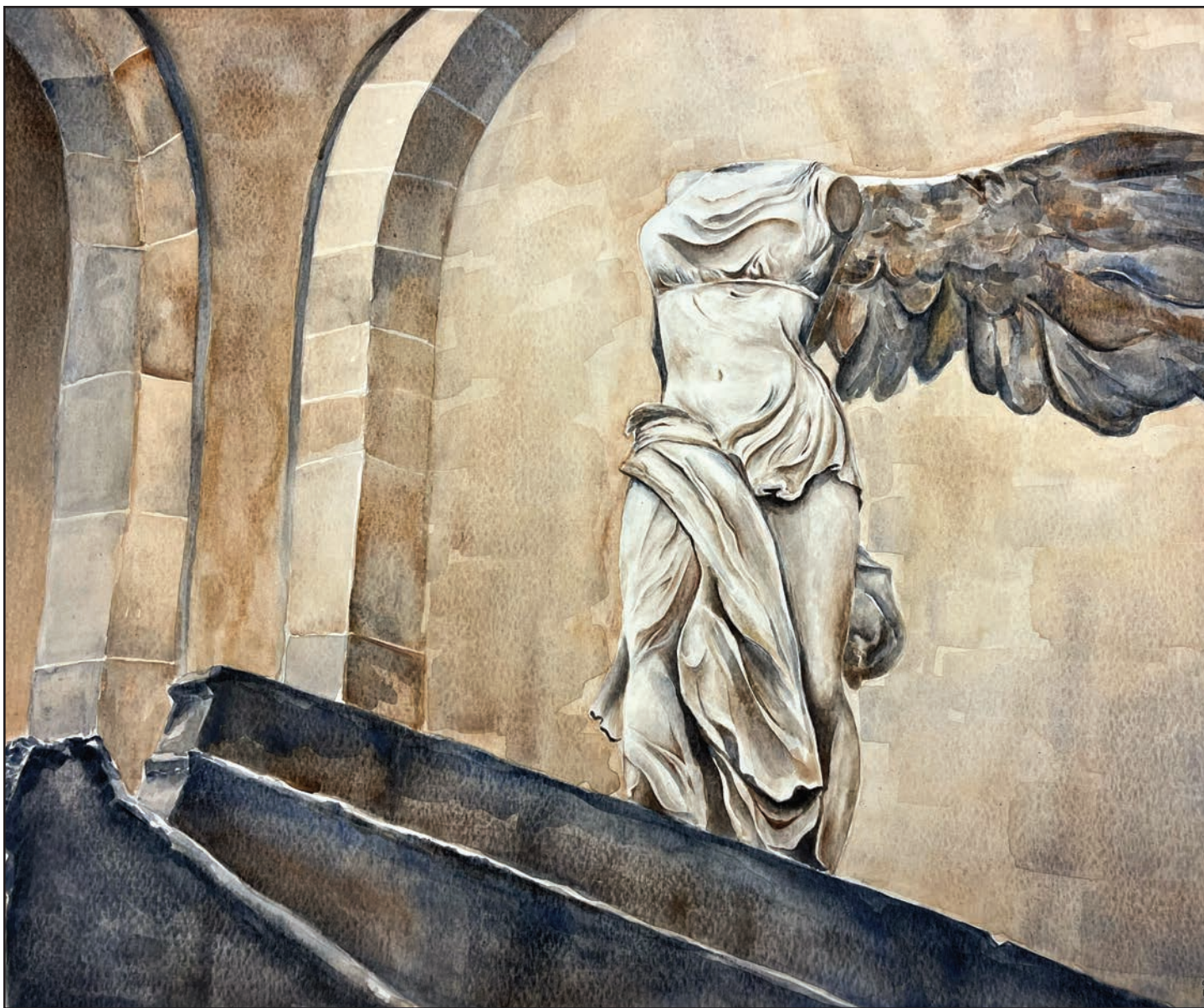
REVERSE POETRY

Sarah Rainville

I am a part of broken pieces,
 and I refuse to believe that
 I am healed.
 I understand this can be a surprise but
 Healing takes time
 It's a lie, and
 You need to forget, not accept
 I would be wrong to say
 Somebody cares.
 I have nobody.
 No longer can it be said that,
 I am okay.
 And I concede that
 I will live with this pain forever.
 It would be untruthful if I said,
 I have worth.
 I am not valuable.
 It is foolish to presume that
 I am perfect, and
 this pain is gone.
 I am lonely and less than beautiful,
 no one can convince me that
 I am where I need to be.



Nathan Terry



Columbia High School

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