

The background of the entire image is a painting of two birds perched on flowering branches. The background is a deep, textured blue. The branches are dark brown and are covered with numerous small, light pink and white flowers. The leaves are a mix of green and yellowish-green. One bird is perched higher up in the center, facing right, with a white body and a black cap. The other bird is perched lower down on the left, facing left, with a brown and white patterned body and a black cap. The overall style is that of a traditional oil or acrylic painting.

**ROXBURY HIGH SCHOOL
LITERARY MAGAZINE**

2020-2021

Roxbury High School Literary Magazine

2020-2021

Literary Magazine is Roxbury High School's creative writing club. Our goal this year was to get as many people involved as possible and publish student writing, despite the obstacles the pandemic presented. Not only did we receive contributions from writers of all levels of experience and all grades, but we received several pieces from faculty members as well.

We were also fortunate enough to receive personalized artwork from students to pair with the writing. We would like to thank every single person who contributed to this year's magazine as well as every reader who takes the time to appreciate the hard work of the featured creatives.

We hope that by the time you finish reading this magazine, you will have had your spirits lifted, your sorrows comforted, and your minds satisfied.

Enjoy!

Staff

Callista Oliveira **Editor in Chief**

Gehad Moustafa **Secretary**

Kevin McKenna **Public Relations**

Dizzy Hillocks **Student Leader**

Noelia Saenz **Student Leader**

Jenna Burke **Faculty Advisor**

Laura Schmidt **Faculty Advisor**

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Stargirl

Gehad Moustafa, Grade 11

i was 11 when i fell in love with my first ever book
soft cover, wrapped in a sea foam blue and a thin
bright yellow figure embedded on the center
it was small and delicate but my fingers elongated around it
in a way that felt natural
like when soulmates touch hands
the words made stars feel like old friends
grocery stores like fresh gardens
and my little childhood house a mansion with a mountainside view
it made me believe in love and cruelty and the art of hate
it made me blow on dandelions and wish on shooting stars
it made me tell strangers their eyes were lovely and go on walks during rainstorms
the first book i fell in love with was a lifelong friend
and although life has lost its flavor and vidiness since then
my soul is forever stamped
i sometimes walk in the rain with an umbrella
when i see change on the sidewalk i leave it there
if no one's looking, i drop a quarter
i feel guilty when i buy a card from Hallmark
i listen for mockingbirds



Samantha Wrobel, Grade 12

The Eyes

Colin Behrens, Grade 9

The eyes in the painting followed him through the corridor,
Like moths to a lantern,
They watched his every move,
Attracted to every gesture, every breath,
He felt as if he was being watched,
But the painting could not see,
How is he so tormented by this inanimate object,
Was it even there,
Like the Tell-Tale Heart,
The eyes felt cold and judging,
As if deciding his fate,
He felt accused,
But no one was accusing him,
A delusional trial, a punishment unknown.

On Occasion

Noelia Saenz, Grade 11

on occasion
a january night
will feel warm enough,
so that i can open my window
and feel a warm breath of air,
and if i close my eyes
at just the right time
it tastes like summer.

A Moment

Sarah Bednarcik, Teacher

Cold hand squeezes tight
Look! the tree wears a sweater
green on mushroom bark

The Moon Knows That We're In Love

Anonymous

I didn't know how to tell her I loved her.
Despite all the words incessantly pounding through
my brain and oozing onto paper like blood on a
bathroom floor, I couldn't find the right ones to
express the way I felt for her.
A human as imperfect as I did not deserve the
presence of a creature as beautiful as she.
My mind screamed and my head soared, leaving me
defenseless to the depths of my conscience.
With nobody to tell, nobody to speak to, my demise
was inevitable.
But,
I could tell the Moon.
He was good at keeping secrets and good at
listening, too.
The Moon grew brighter, I'm convinced, the more I
shared my love with him.
He sympathized as I spewed story after story at him
with each new night — through his first quarter to
the very last sliver of a crescent.
The nights that his figure was dark were lonely.
So lonely that, each month, I cursed his name for
leaving me with something as evil as my own mind.

How could he do something as torturous as that? How
could he forget me in the midst of this battle we've
persevered through together?
Yet he bared so much weight all the time, I couldn't
possibly be mad at him for taking a break.
I would.
But I missed the nights where his soft light would shine
through in magnificent patterns onto my bed frame.
And, when it did, I felt as though he was sharing his
stories, too.
The stories one could read on and on about.
How he and the Sun will eternally be in love yet are
forbidden to touch.
I always argue that it's untrue!
An eclipse! An eclipse will come and the two will be
reunited and able to love once again.
And to that he asked,
"What about your eclipse?"
I huffed.
"I'm a mere human. Humans don't eclipse."
The Moon seemed saddened at first before his pale
light noticeably increased against the dark muddle of
cloudless skies.
"But of course you do, you must!"
And as if I'd fallen into a different dimension, a parallel
universe, filled with new colors and feelings and
sounds, the Moon played me a movie.
I spun weightlessly in the abyss of my own body, feeling
relief from the pain and angst that burdened me.

Yet I could not focus on anything besides the breathtaking flashes before me, depicting the scenes of an epic romance film as two lovers critiqued every corner of their inner being in hopes to one day be good enough for the other. Strong enough. Stable enough. Enough to deserve love from someone as perfect as the other. Yet it ended short. No happy ending or true love's kiss. Just a black screen that lasted moments too long and left me feeling weary and nauseous as the sudden tumble of my body became ever so present in my current state. Yet it was the most gorgeous movie I'd ever seen, leaving me out of breath and gasping for air as I returned to the shimmering floor of my bedroom. Once again confined to the four walls I'd wished never existed, covered in posters and colors in hopes to conceal the resentment I held towards this suffocating room. I took an extra second to grasp at my own clothes to ensure I wasn't still floating in that unreal, ethereal universe. "What did you show me?" My voice came out as a whisper, not yet strong enough to hold my entire breath. "It was beautiful." And the Moon smiled. "Not so much what I have shown you, but what you have shown me."



Nicolette Alstede, Grade 11

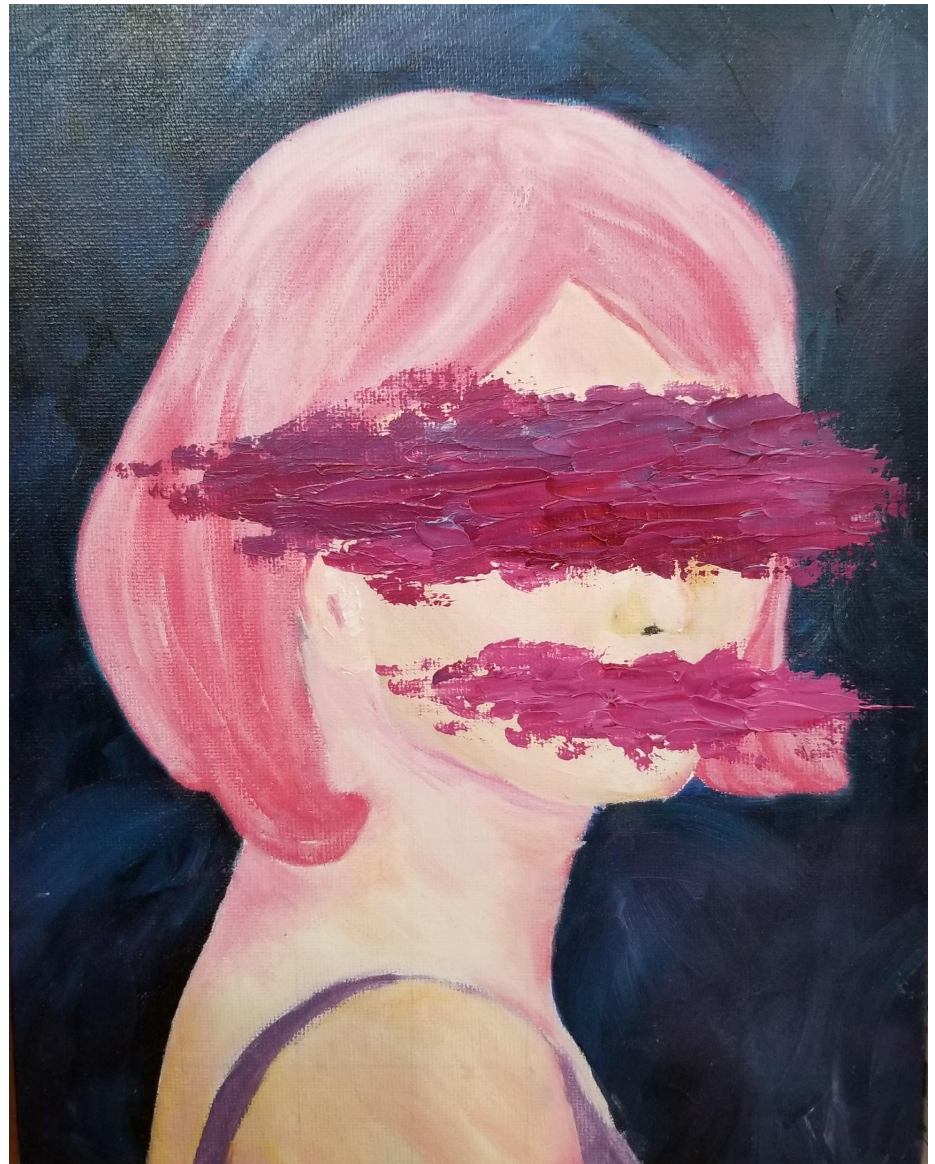
Untitled

Linvia Ong, Grade 11

i gave up searching
when no one was looking
a fire was cooking
and it needed some birching
but i wasn't there
to give it some air
for i stood still and bare
since life isn't fair
i thought i'd made certain
i wasn't a burden
a castle i stood in
a steel-hearted curtain
to make up for losses
they reveal their crosses
but i could not process
all i was at fault with

a simple smile
a laugh track file
an apology worthwhile
to go the extra mile
but expecting eyes
an awkward sigh
no parting goodbye
instead, i decide

to be a part
but not of a whole
do i relish the idea of avoiding every soul?
what makes a person strong is not muscle nor bold
it is one that can actually accomplish a goal
a coward has made its way to heaven, it seems
how was it like me to ignore that scene?
don't mind me, i'll just leave you all be
back down the stairs, my life to reconvene



Callista Oliveira, Grade 11

On Being Dad...

Jeffrey Conrad, Teacher

I don't want to get up!
One more book please...
What's for breakfast?

I don't want to get dressed!
One more piece of toast please...
Why do I have to brush my teeth?

I don't want to stop playing!
One more game please...
What's for lunch?

I don't want to take a rest!
One more book please (again)...
Can we watch a show?

I don't want that for dinner!
More cheese please...
How come we have to eat our
vegetables?

I don't want to take a bath!
More bubbles please...
Why do I have to wash my hair?

I don't want to go to bed!
One more bedtime story please...
Why do I need to sleep?

A kiss on the cheek,
Tip-toeing to the door...

A sleepy voice whispers - Daaad?

Slow exhale...

Yes?

How much do you love me?

Bigger than the world...

Winter Air

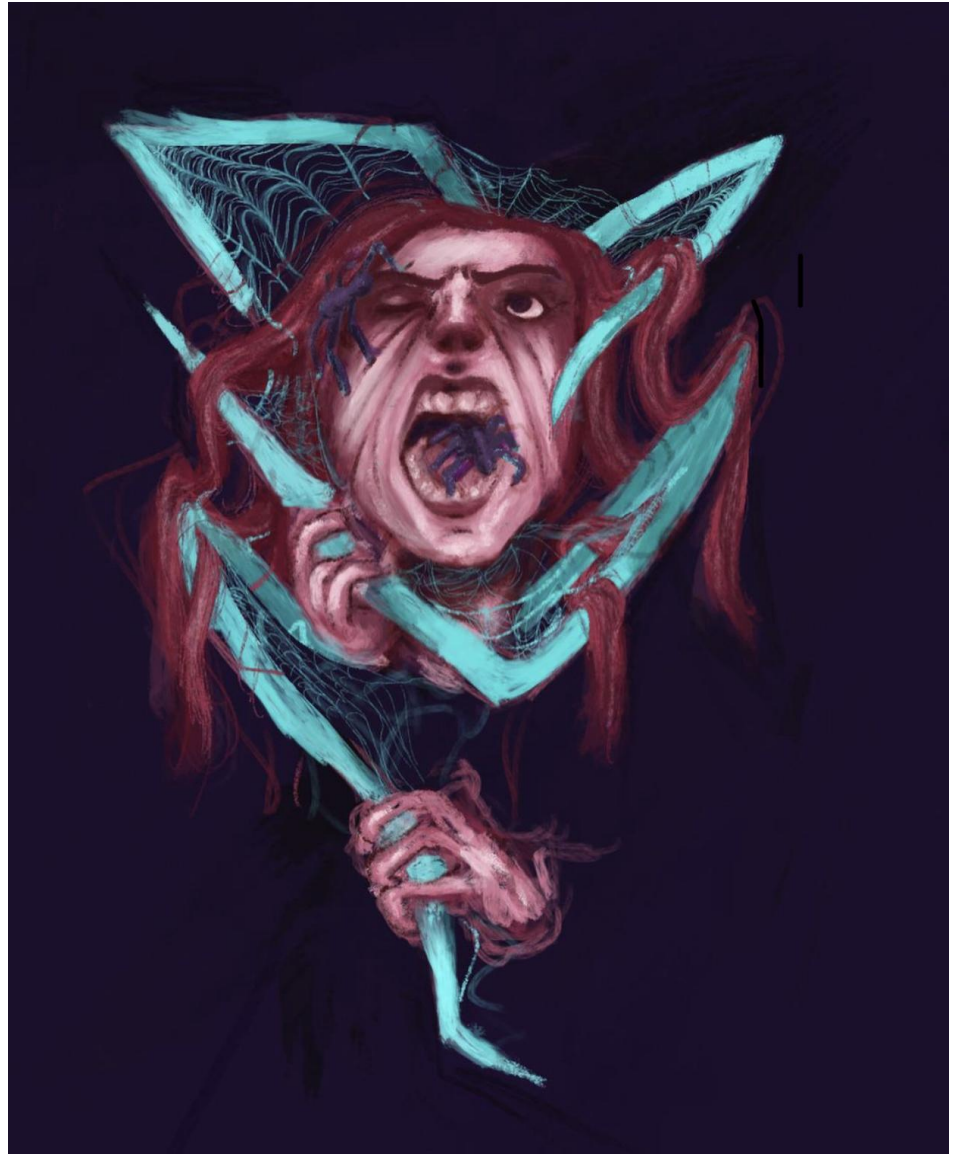
Dizzy Hillocks, Grade 12

The wind streams directly into my eyes
I don't close them
The cold air slaps me against the face, agonizing every inch of my pupils
Still, I keep my eyes open
A familiar feeling of coldness begins to develop on every inch of me
My eyes begin to water
Winter is one of the few times I can make connections
In extreme moments, you remember things
And winter is extreme for me being that I hate the cold
I'm drawn back to all 17 winters before now
Walking to school, feeling the crunching of the snow underneath my feet. Going to
Christmas and New Years parties, since I've only gone to a few. Sitting in the cold bus,
having my butt freeze, but feeling hot in the face with all the laughing with my friend. It all
floods back.
And just as sudden as they came, the feelings start to fall away
I close my eyes, and the memories disappear with the dry eye tears, rolling off my face
I begin to let the wind press on my face, making my eyes remain open

Untitled

Haley Lang, Grade 12

I'm pretty scared of bugs, but I am deeply afraid of spiders specifically. Whenever I see one, I just go straight into a panic - whether it's dead, alive, or even a photograph or video. I think it's because they look like real life monsters - the way that their legs look and move, sometimes they're fat and hairy, looking like they could eat you if they were any bigger (note: some spiders are so big that they can actually eat fish! it's horrifying!), other times they're thin and stick-like. No matter what they look like, you can always feel them when you see them. I depicted my fear in the way that I did because when I think of spiders, I think of them crawling all around me and suffocating me, without having anyway to stop it. I think they're pretty freaky.



Haley Lang, Grade 12

Haiku

Francis Mulderrig, Teacher

Tough learning at home.
Students **choose** to be in school.
Miracles happen!

Untitled

Christopher Shadwell, Teacher

Debits and Credits
Accounting is so much fun
Take the class today!

Next Moment

Sarah Bednarcik, Teacher

Yellow bus grinds up a long gray hill
Bed Head peeks through foggy glass
Run! Bright eyes, smile, love warms
our cold bones

Untitled

Kevin McKenna, Grade 12

Fixating on Gaia's pockmarked flesh
As my ripening vehemence boils deep in my frail amygdala
For my whole life, I dreamt of the incipient memories to come
But the now defiled broad that had once veiled unborn possibilities
Has aborted the collective chimera

Droplet of Sparkles

Ava Thomas, Grade 10

The rain slipped off my umbrella into a puddle as I watched the bright pops of red and blue light up the night sky. Happiness erupted from my chest and I couldn't believe what was happening - fireworks in the rain. I was curling my chilled, -shivering limbs into myself as an attempt to keep the warmth from slipping away. The biggest smile was on my face as I breathed in the frigid air as another green star erupted through the droplets. People walked and ran by, trying to get to their cars as quickly as possible. I stayed put and enjoyed the show.



Aurelie Shulkowski, Grade 12

Caged Birds

Claire Mollitor, Grade 9

Just like a bird that is stuck in a cage
the people of Auschwitz filled with
sadness and rage
stuck in a place they don't want to
Be thinking of life and how
They wish they could flee
The people of Auschwitz
so alone and so scared
wishing to be heard
and
 be
 free
 as
 bird....



Claire Mollitor, Grade 9

Elements

Justin Berge, Grade 12

Fire.

The headlines proclaim we're in an age of fire
and fury—
When incendiary words fan the flames of hate
And distrust burns through gilded halls.

Water.

This past year was a downpour of tragedy:
Ice and snow froze livelihoods from Houston to
Cleveland.
Once again, we weathered history's worst
hurricane season
And collected the tears of those we lost to the
sea of despair.

Earth.

This year exposed anew the inequalities of our
planet—
Some were evicted with no land to live on,
And too many voices were pushed to the ground
Or buried by indifference.

Air.

Wind is now the highway of a deadly disease—
Sapping the last breath from more Americans than
both world wars,
All while we poison our skies with neglect.

The past year illuminated the elements that threaten
our world,
But also shed new light on the way forward.
Flames of hate have kindled flames of activism,
Floods and storms showed us where our gaze is
needed,
Like earthly grass in the spring, those oppressed heal
again,
And once we've all let Truth shine through us
We can take off our masks to breathe a sigh of relief.

Covid Kids

Laura Schmidt, Teacher

When covid hit my daughter was three
She now has 2 friends - CamSam and Lapsee

I know those names sound strange like a fairy
But that's because they are imaginary!

Oh yes! They're not real. They live in her hands.
This is what happens when your kid has no
friends.

And let's not forget about her foot she calls
gentleman
Her sense of creativity is sure developin'

My son, for most of covid he was five
Now all he asks is if this is a video or live.

When he sees people on TV he's confused and
will ask
"What are those people doing?! Where are their
masks?!!!"

He can navigate a computer better than most
who are grown
Flip grid and you tube he can use on his own

But when I look back it wasn't all bad
We just spent time outside and for that I am
glad

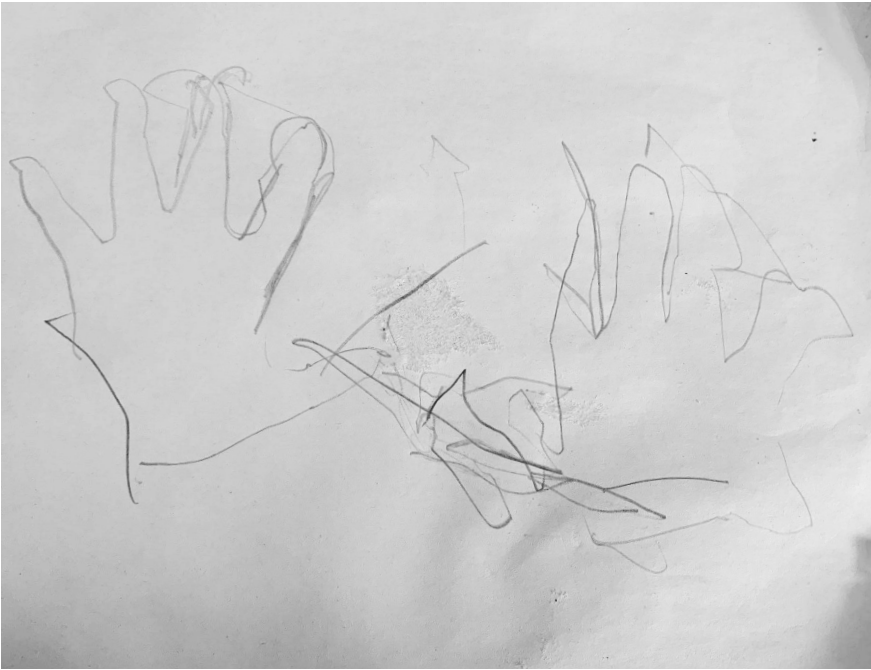
We went camping and caught lots of critters in
the creek
Every day outside in our neighborhoods streets

My kids caught all the fish in Kohler's Pond
There every day, strengthening their bond

We hiked lots of trails and took lots of walks
And had lots of time for dinners and talks

So goodbye covid - it's time that you go
Although it was tough, you taught us more than
we know.

Madelyn Schmidt, Age 4



Mason Schmidt, Age 6



excerpt from *Night Bus*

Isha Gullapalli, Grade 10

There's a couple sitting in the back of the bus, a young woman and a man, huddled in woolen scarves and dark overcoats. I can see nice shoes peeking out from under their dress pants and the woman is clutching a luxury handbag, sure signs that they have high-paying jobs somewhere in the city. They must not have known each other for very long because they're still in some awkward, stilted stage. Like marionettes, they sit with tension in their bodies, waiting to be animated by some command beyond them. Eventually, the woman seems to realize that they'll be stuck in perpetual silence if they carry on like this so she initiates a quiet conversation. The two soon relax into some inaudible rhythm, laughing and trading giddy banter. Their interactions are innocent enough, and yet there's something almost too intimate about their exchange, something that dredges up the wreck located in the depths of my subconscious. Already, memories are rushing to the surface, sending unwelcome ripples across the waters of my mind. A dull ache builds in my heart, a wistfulness for better times.

I rip my eyes away as if I've been burned and turn my attention to the bus driver. He's very stoic and is focused on driving, so he doesn't have too many visible idiosyncrasies to read into, but I can see the weariness etched into the wrinkles of his face through the rearview mirror. Dark bags line his under-eyes and I wonder how long he's been awake. He turns the corner a second too late and the bus makes a sharp, unpleasant turn before rolling to a jerky halt. "Eltham High Street!" he calls.

As the passenger who stops at this station exits, he rubs a hand over his eyes and checks the time on his phone. I'm about to reach for my own when suddenly, it vibrates. I hesitate momentarily, fingers poised over the opening of my coat pocket before fumbling with the zipper. It's her, of course it is. I debate for a couple more rings before finally, reluctantly picking up. There's silence on the line for a long moment before she finally speaks.

"Please, come home. We need to talk." Anna sighs, sounding exhausted. "We can't keep doing this anymore."

In that instant, I realize how tired I am as well - tired of fighting and running and trying to delay the inevitable.

"I know," I admit, my voice no louder than a whisper. "I'll be home by dawn."

We murmur our goodbyes and end the call just as the bus begins to move again.

excerpt from *The Other Side of the Door*

Joelle Tone, Grade 11

As Victor Wilson steps through the front door of his dull house in Portland, Oregon and sees the gloomy, gray sky he realizes that today will be the same as every other day. His eyes match the sky perfectly and his hair is only a few shades darker. He is only eleven but always has a depressed and sunken expression on his face. Victor knows that today will remain the same because his routine never changes. The rain starts to pour down outside and he fumbles while putting on his yellow raincoat - the same one he wears every day - just before he nonchalantly strolls into his backyard. Victor's mother and father follow behind him in a much quicker manner and run to their cars, running late to work, as usual.

Rain

Noelia Saenz, Grade 11

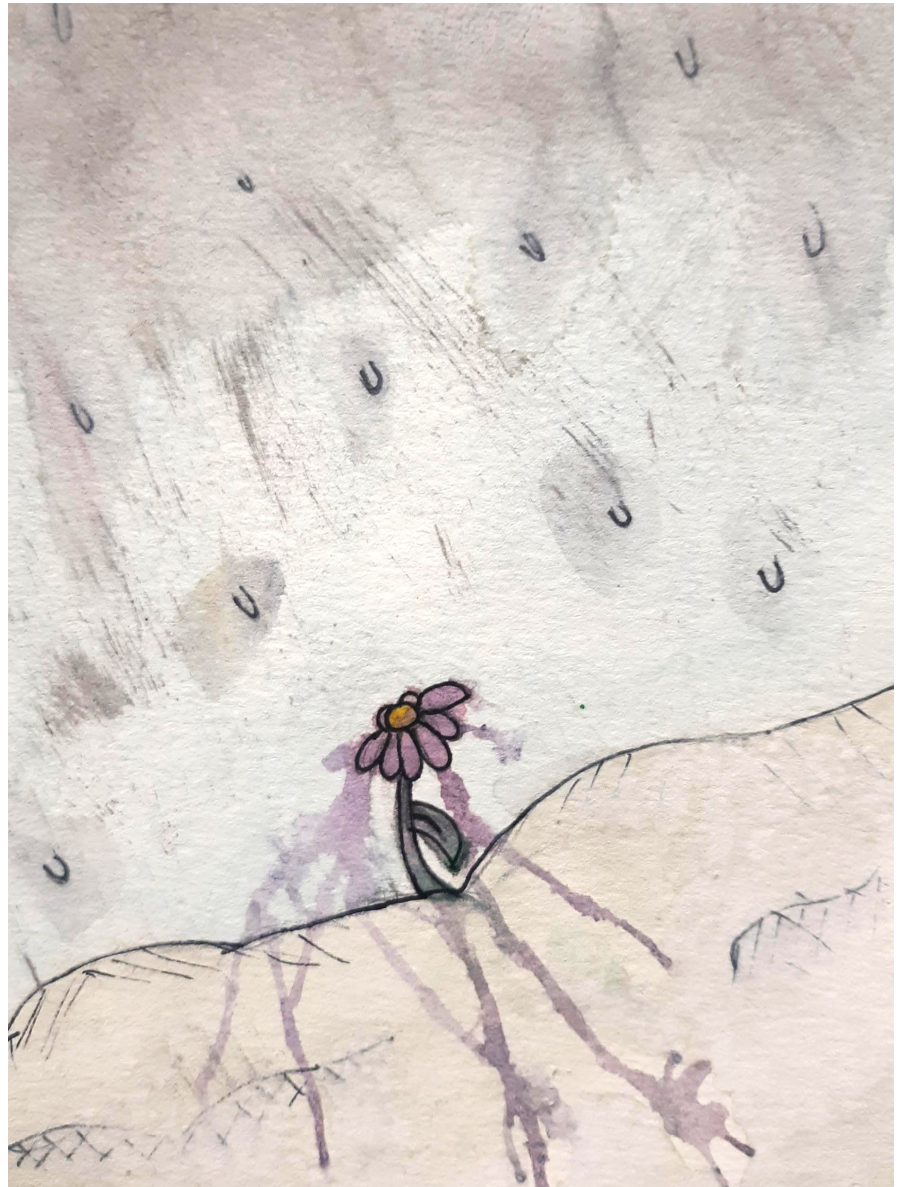
The rain pattered dismally against the panes.
I watched as the flowers dismissed the cold,
so simply doing what they had been told.
Sheltering their buds from the winter strains.

But the droplets were deep inside their veins.
The cold and bitter sky that so foretold,
that their previously small lives had been sold.
The lonely field only marked by their stains.

Yet all they knew had seemed to have been lost,
the promise of the warmth of a new day,
had been ample enough to melt the frost.

The frigid pain that which they had been cost,
brought blossoms that had brightened up my day.
That perfect spring brought joy to my exhaust.

Jess Pichat, Grade 12



I had no right,
was his sole support.
to run,

I still owned a body
among thousands of others.

rolling forward and
there was no way.
crushed me.

I moved like
was
running,

screaming,

all I had to do was close my eyes to
see a whole world pass before me,
endless.

to be swept away by blind fate.

Chilled to the bone,

masters of nature, masters of the world.

—death, fatigue,

stronger than
stronger than
the desire to die, doomed and rootless, nothing but
men on earth

all illusion,

the limits

exceeded

abandoned

Not a living soul.

NIGHT

I

continued

waves were

I

endless.

to
let ourselves sink
neither
desire nor
resolve
shattered,
full
I woke up, a frigid hand
completely

of
weakness,
ping my cheeks
twisted, shriveled up
DECAYED

Dark and Dusty

Renee Liska, Grade 10

My hand runs along the white, chipped, old paint. The smell of dust and hay in the air; the breeze never hoisting it away. Memories flicker through my mind like a late 1800's film. The summer days where my friends and I would take our horses out and run free in huge fields, feeling the warm sun and wind flow through us. The cool rainy days we would forage for shelter and attempt to scare each other. The endless amount of laughs five teenagers had in that old, dark, and dusty barn. It's a shame, time marches on and stops for no one, leaving the dark barn abandoned now.

Untitled

Jacob Stuart, Grade 10

As the sun rose and the morning dew was still fresh on the trees, I took a hike on Douglas Trail. The swooshing of waterfalls crashing against the river-bank chased me all the way up the rocky mountain trail. As I approached closer to the top there was an opening in the trees and the Delaware River came into view, by which time the sun was shining bright. I continued further on the trail where I stopped to eat and continued further. As I approached the summit, a lake formed by a glacier appeared glistening in the sun, and I wondered in awe how fish and beavers ended up in a lake at the top of the Appalachian trail.

Beauty

Callista Oliveira, Grade 11

It's the soft glow and perfectly blended colors of a renaissance painting
Everything pouring into everything else as if it couldn't stand to be alone for a moment
It's the rays of golden light that beam off a blinding sun and land on every strand of hair,
Revealing the halo each person tries desperately to conceal.
It lives in the ruffles of her dress and the small buttons of his collared shirt.
In the sound of a single note played on a piano
In a chipped glass and a calendar that is three months behind

Slowly, time marches on and the flowers wilt along with the youth of the last generation
It evolves with this generation but none of them can see it
They don't realize that they should be looking for something different
In this search and consequent mourning for what was once beautiful
Everything that has become beautiful is ignored
It's an ineffable power that holds each of us in its suffocating grasp
It's the ability to make one feel that their time is up long before it is



Victoria Groschopp, Grade 10

Ode to Precalculus

Becky Popowycz, Teacher

Something is weird, perhaps it's too early to tell, but it's the first day of school,
And already my PreCalculus class seems cool!

Who knew that sine, cosine, and tangent weren't the full story?
Evidently cosecant, secant, and cotangent also share in the glory!

Alpha, beta, theta, oh my,
Gone are the days of substituting for x to solve for y !

What is this unit circle that my teacher does so cherish?
At first measuring angles in radians seemed quite nightmarish!

We learned that pi divided by four is the same as 45 degrees,
And that the Pythagorean and Quotient Identities make verifications a breeze!

We phase shifted, period changed, stretched, and reflected.
When graphing trigonometric functions no transformation was neglected.

The inverse functions at first were quite perplexing,
But we quickly caught on that some solutions we were rejecting.

Writing equations of trig graphs did make my head ache,
And with the sum and difference identities new angles we could make.

Sequences, and series include patterns, formulas, and sums,
 $a_n = 2n - 1$ is where odd numbers come from.

There were challenging topics but through it all we stood tall,
Ready for next year ... many formulas we will recall.

While I am sure that Calculus too will be fun,
In my heart PreCalculus will always be second to none!

Make Your Eyes My Home

Anonymous

If asked for a reason why I can't get over you, I can supply none.

But if asked for a reason why I should, I can offer a plethora.

Yet all I do is stay.

I'd surrender in a second if you asked.

I continue to give more and more of me to you and you simply take and take and take until I have nothing left.

And I let you. I always do. I always will.

Because everything for me is you.

I will always give my heart to you, all my emotions and feelings and thoughts are you.

I try to write and it is you.

I try to think and it is you.

I breathe in and it is you.

How can I stop loving you when loving you is all I want to be doing?

I don't understand.

I have been shunned from your heart, but for what?

I should be welcomed by your eyes and mouth and arms and everything because there will never be another like me who could fathom loving you as I do.

The concept of being with you is as far and wistful as a daydream yet only a few words away.

Say the words!

Say them! Please!

I've cried too many tears over your blue eyes.

I want nothing more than to look at them and be certain of what I see.

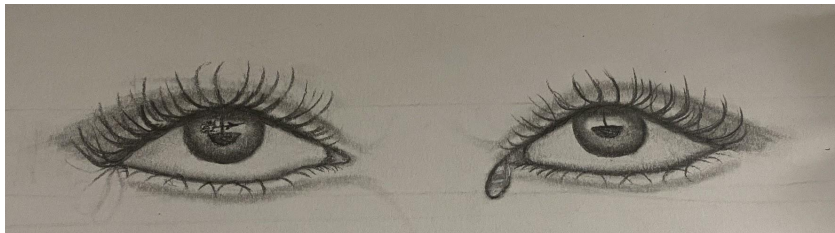
Let me make them my home?

I don't want to be seen unless it is by you.

It's just you.

And it's just me.

Love me, please?



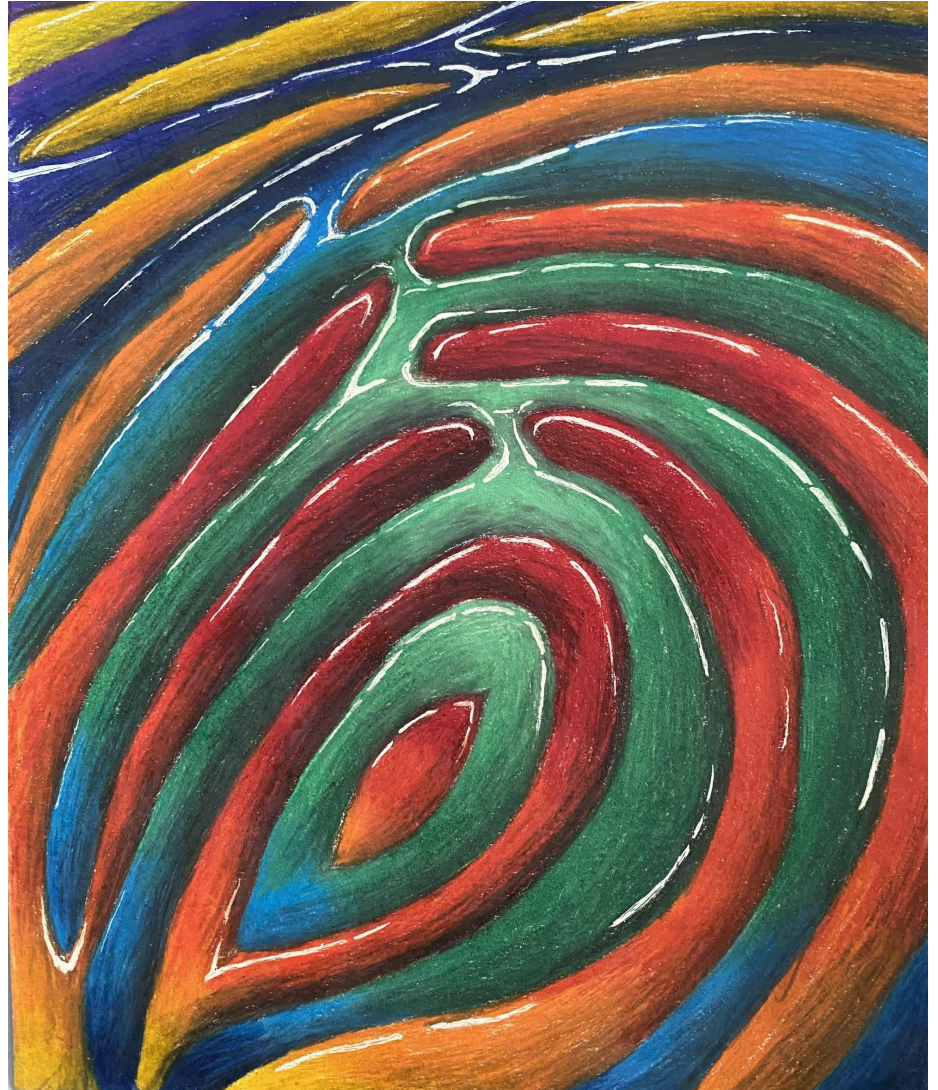
Kaia Grose, Grade 12

Untitled

Vanessa Gil, Grade 10

Before I skipped my way down the bright, uplifting street, I gulped down the delicious soup with my sleeves protecting my small hands from the warm sensation of the ceramic bowl. In the background, I hear music playing on this warm night, while the adults are all flowing with the music as if it's controlling them. Everyone has big smiles plastered on their faces.

It feels as if it was a special holiday, but really this was normal in the Colombian streets. In the end, everyone is outside enjoying life. Almost just as if nothing wrong could happen ever again.



Malakai Witter, Grade 10

And She Rose

Anonymous

Tear stained eyes,
Scars running deep,
Hearts at battle,
Nightmares in her sleep.

It had felt like a rose,
Tempting and red,
But she didn't consider
The thorns, so she bled.

There were red flags,
But she chose to see
A darker pink shade,
She couldn't be free.

Their love was poison,
But he was her drug.
Her identity stolen
By a camouflaged thug.

Consumed by darkness,
She kept on a mask.
Said she was okay,
Her cure was a flask.

But one night,
He walked out the door,
Without a goodbye,
Her heart he tore.

But what a blessing this was,
As she rose again,
Like a phoenix from ashes,
No longer tied by a chain,
And as the sun emerged,
She knew she would be okay.

Monsters

Sarah Rice, Grade 11

Smiles and laughter linger in the air,
But I am alone peering through the crack.
How I long for their affection and care,
The others humans see me and attack.

I slowly approach the house excited,
Raising my hand to knock on the front door.
They're alarmed for I am uninvited,
I smile but their jaws drop to the floor.

Instead of warmth, I'm greeted by yelling,
"Get out of our house" they all cry in fear.
I run away shocked by their repelling,
But I can't go fast because of my tears.

Monster is the cruel name they all call me,
But it's they who are demons, don't you see?

Sleeps Eluding Me

Dizzy Hillocks, Grade 12

It's feeling, a little bit too early
Yet, my eyes, they're feeling kinda dreary
I won't, tell lies
I went to sleep a little late
But that's, nothing, a quick nap can't get straight
But owo
Im feeling kind of funny
And even tho it's not sunny
It's hard to keep my eyes focused on floor
This isn't the rapid eye movement I asked for

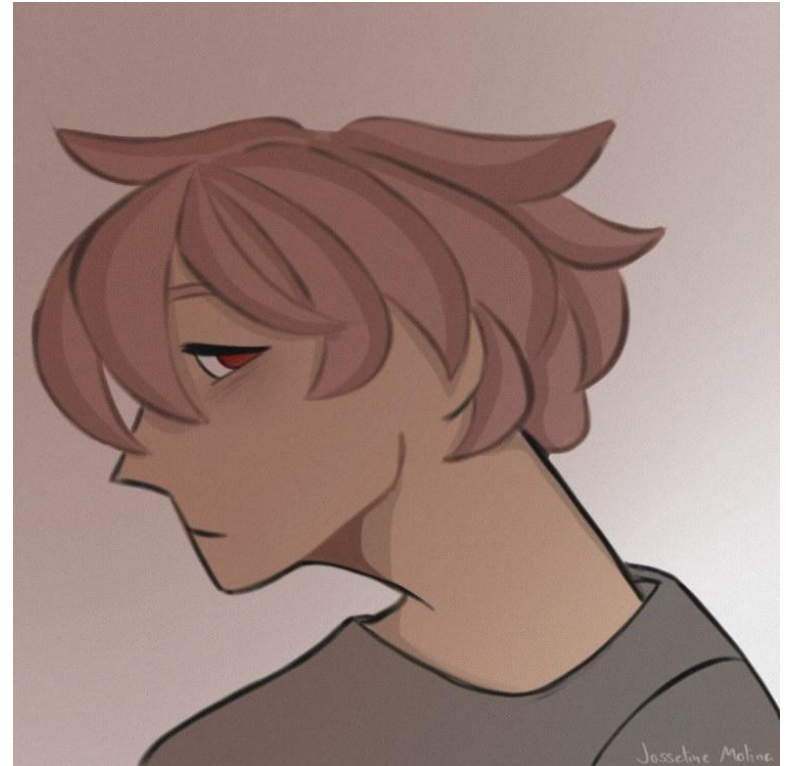
Please tell me why I won't fall asleep
I have mornings plans I gotta keep
My eyes are heavy I don't know what to say
My brain says "sleep" but then takes it away
Please tell me what I did that was wrong
To keep me up and write this damn song
From this curse I just wanna be free
So tell me why sleeps eluding me

I can't stand, staring at my ceiling
But at that moment, I feel my layers peeling
I'm contemplate, the meaning of my life
But soon, I'm back, and the time doesn't make
me feel alright
Im feeling kind of funny
And even tho it's not sunny
It's hard to keep my eyes focused on floor
This isn't the rapid eye movement I asked for

Please tell me why I won't fall asleep
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So tell me why sleeps eluding me

At 8 pm I lay my head down
At 9 pm I'm moving around
At 10 pm I'm feeling sleepy
At 11pm I get up to pee
At 12 am I'm irritated
At 1 am I've gotta face it
2 am I'm on my phone
Cause my thoughts won't leave me the hell alone

Please tell me why I won't fall asleep
I have mornings plans I gotta keep
My eyes are heavy I don't know what to say
My brain says "sleep" but then takes it away
Please tell me what I did that was wrong
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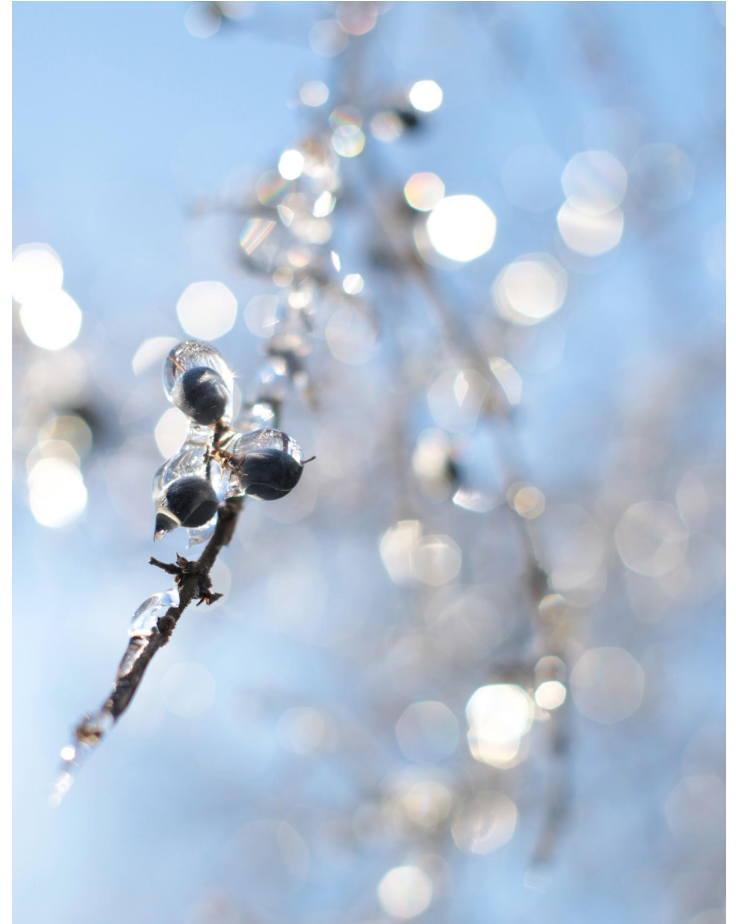


Josseline Molina, Grade 12

Divorce

Gehad Moustafa, Grade 11

black coffees and bitter tastes
red wine stained divorce papers
dried tears on satin pillowcases
barren rooms filled with meaningless words
his handprints on her soul
and with the first snowfall of december
the white veil would crowd around her cold house
feasting on her pain



Isabel Speronza, Teacher

The Little Sunset

Joseph Filoramo, Teacher

The Little Sunset

Soothing obliqueness, soft engulfment Tranquilizing opacity, relaxing abandon Ease...
;Alert!

Corner of the eye, the second glimpse: Sudden awareness, little – Unmistakable Ignore...
;Light!

Certain irritation, tense, resistant Resigned obeisance; stark command Begrudge...
;Truth!

Timid preoccupation, necessary defense Startled curiosity, nascent appeal Peer...
;Majesty!

Unretractable gaze, irrefutable claim Overbearing calm, piercing beauty Ignite...

Joy.

Untitled

Paige Metje, Grade 12

Imagine devoting your life to reach the gates of heaven and never be welcomed in by God. The leaves and trees surrounding the painting represent my obstacles and struggles. The path to light reflects my perseverance, strength, and wisdom I have held in overcoming these obstacles through God. Death does not scare me. Joy follows along with the idea of having an eternal life with God and loved ones who have passed away. But with joy, fear also follows. I can't imagine being turned away at the gates of heaven. Spending the many years of forgiving, letting go, and loving for God to just never be let in to join everyone I have loved in my life time. Although faith is a beautiful thing it does bring doubt and fear. It makes us question if we will ever be able to actually reach this eternal peace.



Paige Metje, Grade 12

Untitled

Catalina Rodriguez, Grade 10

I used to feel as if I was in a losing battle with myself. While everyone around me spoke meaningless words, I was fighting my own demons, but I came out stronger in the end. Colors became brighter, the smells became sweeter, words were clear, and everything made sense once I realized my self-worth. The person I saw in the mirror was no longer someone I despised, she was someone who I loved, who was beautiful and confident. I never thought I could ever feel that way but there I was, looking at myself as if I was artwork made for admiring.



Elissa Shuman, Grade 11

A Biology of Music

Jenna Burke, Teacher

Somewhere in that dense mass of grey matter,
there must be a region of coils as intricately laid
as the grooves of our tongues are varied,
to tell us which sounds make us vibrate with "yes."

It's the only theory that quiets my rage, to think
the brimming fullness of a few stacked notes
that makes the hairs of my arm stand on end,

that satisfies like a cold breath hitting my throat,

that leverages my body into motion,
(toes tapping, shoulders swaying,
eyes shut, chin painting a melody)

can be met with indifference,
a shrug and grimace,
or even derision, by a fellow listener.

I'm certain if we ran an old school science experiment
to tease out which "variables" expedite to my brain
a resonance while to yours a sparseness, we'd discover
beneath the surface of our skin a biology of music.

Because without a justifying cellular reaction,
what are we left with - a difference of opinion? -
to explain how one song can feel to you like

an uneven short stroll
with a pebble
in your shoe,

while to me it's a three minute dissipation of
my seasonal depression on an inexplicably warm March day.

"Taste" is enough to explain why I favor [genre]
and your tendency is towards [other genre],
but a synergy of sound and bodily make up
even rationalizes the outliers, the cataclysmic way
an [other genre] earworm becomes my new anthem.

This physiological conspiracy of musical preference
works because it brings me peace.

My music furrows your brow not because you are
abadpersonwithnotastewhoalsomakesmefeelshame,
but a chemically distinct lover of your own favorite sounds.

Thanksgiving Feast & Family

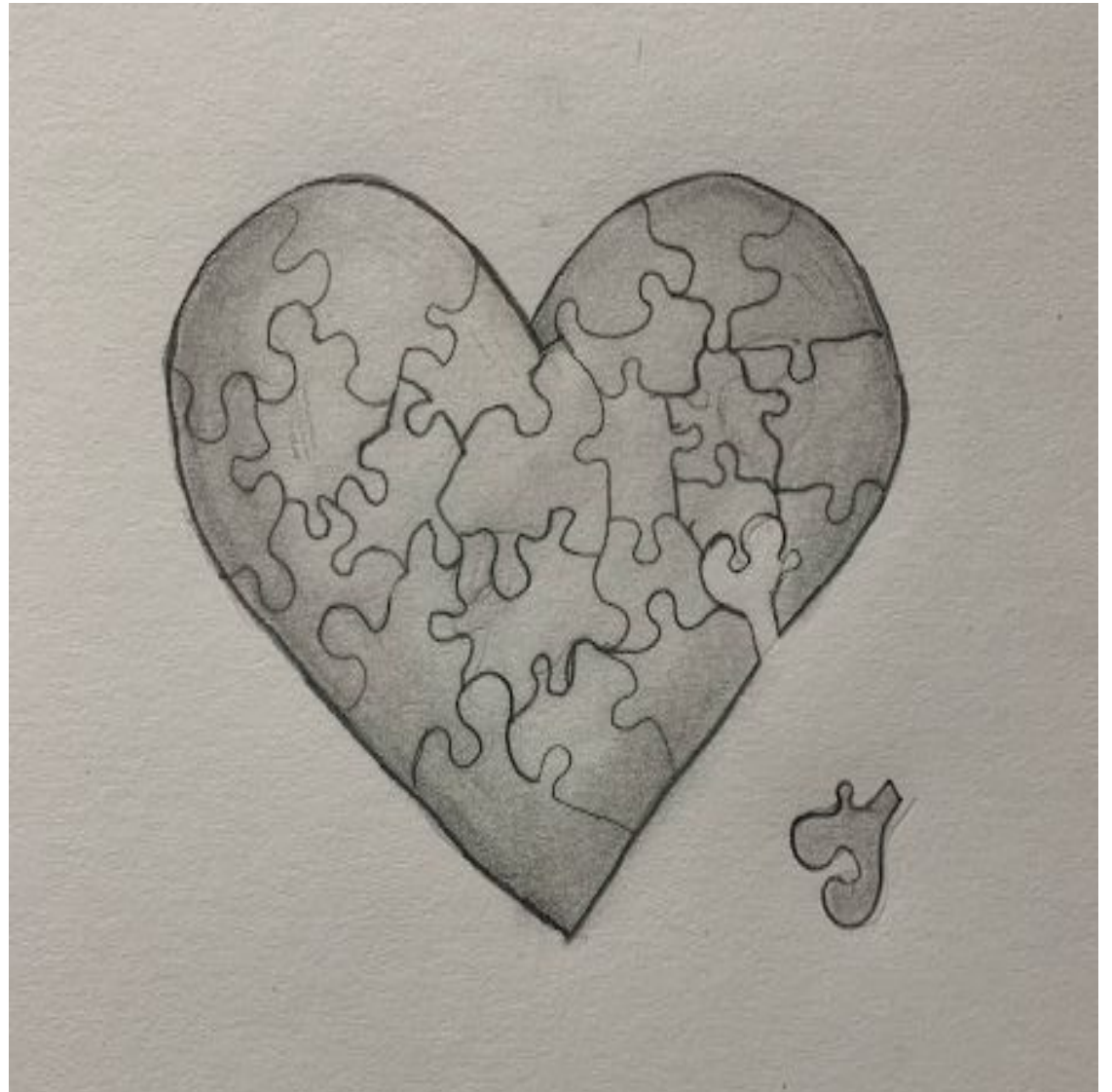
Colin Behrens, Grade 9

Thanksgiving has arrived,
Friends and family in bustling streets,
Waiting to celebrate with each other once again,
Flames were dancing on the oven, preparing our meal,
The smell of dinner grabbing our attention and leading us to the table,
The table was set perfectly, but there were voices strewn about,
Voices of those whom we see often, and of those usually distant from us,
There was turkey at the center of the table,
Sitting at the seat of honor like a king at a throne, surrounded by his subjects,
With mashed potatoes towering, rolls, pie, and stuffing decorating the rest of it,
We gathered with each other at the table and talked for a while,
The laughter crashing through the dark labyrinth of the year 2020,
Proving that love is more powerful than hatred, than disease, than isolation,
We said what we were thankful for, and began to feast,
Dinner was done, and next was dessert,
The icing carefully placed on the cake like softly fallen snow,
Cookies were stacked, more than I could count,
When it was over we said our goodbyes,
Thanksgiving has concluded, once again.

Love Sucks

Gehad Moustafa, Grade 11

my fondness of you was an addiction
the red pigment underneath your skin
made you multi dimensional and unreal
and I was fascinated with fantasy
at first it was just fun being in your presence
and then
i began searching for your face in crowds of strangers
holding my breath when I walked into a room
because fate might put you there too
fading out of every conversation that didn't have to do with you
falling asleep studying the lettering of your name, the structure of your hands
the devil bought my soul only to sell it back to you
and i hated every perfection I saw in you more than the last
and when telling each other our deepest fears and biggest dreams
turned into yearly happy birthdays and occasional congratulations
i realized healing is the absolute worst part



Isabella Chan, Grade 11

excerpt from *Chapter 3 of [Untitled]*

Christopher Salmon, Grade 10

As an epileptic, you will never forget the first time; There are many questions asked, and many questions given. You are scared, hurt, and in need of several answers that remain unfathomed. This is where that “constant chip on your shoulder” comes into play. You will never forget it; No matter how smoothly things seem to develop, how extensive the time stamps are, or how many times you are cohesively comforted - It'll always be there, in a pocket of your mind.

Lingering,

Continuing,

Abiding.

Then the second you finally let free;

Bam.

Back to square one. This is a feeling that you unfortunately, have to get used to. And as time takes its toll, it grievously becomes more and more of everybody's problem. Now everybody has to watch you take your medicine, keep all doors open and unlocked, and stay within 15 feet of your presence. Accept, I don't have everybody. All I have is a drug-thirsty neighbor, and a baby soon to be 10 months old. Great. I possess a canvas that is so big, and so white, but sadly I don't have Picasso to paint the picture.

Bird Sings

Joseph Filoramo, Teacher

What makes a bird to sing
When winter sets and all
Is dead or fallen into
Death's likening?

What gives a bird its song
Of simple, happy tune
When dead about are walking
And Knowing all things wrong?

Why does the bird so pray
Its melody in choir?
His time has not yet come
We hope for later day.

Who through the bird would tell
The Word so fierce and right
To make the dead ones halt
For greater price to sell?

Why does the bird now sing?
“Hope does not disappoint”
We, changed, are lifted high
His nestlings now take wing.

Hell

Callista Oliveira, Grade 11

The room was poorly lit and overcrowded. It was nearly impossible not to choke on the air, which was thick with artificial happiness and courteous amazement. Each surface looked like it would slowly consume whatever was laid on top of it like quicksand. I was scared to stand in one place for too long. It was incredible how crossing the threshold from the outside world to the noxiously overwhelmed environment inside could make a person feel like they've entered a different plane of reality. The longer we stayed, the sicker I became as I was forced to take in more and more of the unnerving decorations and the animalistic decorum of the people inside.

They seemed a little too comfortable to be in a place that bred such barbaric behaviour. It was as if they had come home after being away for centuries. I can't describe the relief I felt when it was finally time for our departure. I am thankful for every day that I don't return to that godless pit of human indecency. You may be wondering where this portal to hell is located and I will tell you with the hopes that you never find yourself entrapped by its sunshiney deposition. This gateway to the realm of nightmares can be found in the nearest Rainforest Cafe.



Alexa Wanamaker, Grade 10

Untitled

Jayson Meribe, Grade 11

From the bliss and comfort of the soft womb
A baby spasmodically cries to its new world
Fresh eyes meet the world of gloom
Where it, unwilled, had just been fiercely hurled.

He seeks his absorbed parents' soothing gaze
One with which is overflowing with love
So strong it set the cold room ablaze
So thankful his mother's grasp, a glove.

And thrust he was upon this new earth
Strangely taste testing everything in sight
Absorbing information since birth
Surely, he learns what is moral and right.

He grows up, gains prejudices within
Meets someone he likes and starts the cycle again.



