

Issue 30

June 2023



Growth

Editor Note By Molly Hill

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Editor's Note:

No writing is a waste of time— no creative work where the feelings, the imagination, the intelligence must work. With every sentence you write, you have learned something. It has done you good.

Brenda Ueland- *If You Want to Write*

Dear Readers and Writers,

Welcome to our June Issue — Issue 30! Not sure we imagined this way back in 2015 when we first started brainstorming the idea of creating an online journal just for student writing. And we're in great company— there are many other lit mags for students both online and in print, some backed by academic institutions, and many that are both created and run by student volunteers. We're in favor of sending your creative work to MANY places, to increase your chances of being published. Some great resources:

www.newpages.com/young-writers-guide/young-writers-guide-to-publication/

www.duotrope.com

www.pw.org

When we started Blue Marble Review, we pictured this online space as a repository for creative work that would both showcase and inspire student creatives. In our eight years online we've seen the way creativity mirrors and speaks to cultural change. Students still write about family, school, sports, graduation, college, jobs, love, hobbies... but all of these themes are colored by where we've been (covid, isolation,) and what's up ahead— environmental changes, inequality, political change, inflation.... Wait — also HOPE.

Writing has always been about connection, and whether a piece seems relatable or leaves you feeling riled, well maybe both are okay.

Enjoy the issue.

Molly Hill

Editor

Poetry

cicada avalanche By Althea Downing-Sherer

august
stretches
out before me
like dirty kitchen tiles under my feet

hope
is whistling
from the mouth
of a ceramic teapot

the scrape of chair legs against tile:
foreshadowing
i sit down
and

my name fades
like phosphenes
behind
rising eyes

i hope
that the moon
tugs at my
feet

and i pray
until
the trees outside tremble
with heat

august braids my hair
with paper crane
hands

i anticipate the collapse
inward;
the lions

gaping jaws
but i am only met with
silence

and then
cicada avalanche

Althea Downing-Sherer is a high school junior from Iowa. She is an alumna of the Iowa Young Writer's Studio, and reads for Polyphony Lit and The Dawn Review. She is forthcoming in The Origami Review, and Coexist Lit. She has also been recognized by the Scholastic Writing Awards. When she's not writing, she can be found creating elaborate Pinterest boards, listening to Taylor Swift, or preparing for Mock Trial competitions.

overflow of a mailbox By Mikul Adaval Wyer

dear abba,
enclosed find two weeks pay.
i'd rather you didn't ask how i got it.

please don't be mad.

dear abba,

it's raining today. do you like the rain?

i like the rain. sometimes the sound
reminds me of you. cht. cht. cht.

dear abba,

i saw a car drive off a bridge and
got jealous of the passengers. have you
ever wanted to be an emergency?

dear abba,

enclosed find two weeks pay.
thank you for not asking how i got it.
i appreciate that. really.

dear abba,

i was playing poker half asleep.
i gambled myself on a straight flush
and lost. unlucky, i guess.

dear abba,

i'm sorry if my handwriting's been messy.
my wrists are just a little sore.
i wish antiseptic didn't sting so much.

dear abba,

enclosed find two weeks pay.
i think you know how i got it now
but still, don't ask. please.

dear abba,

i still like to exhale gray clouds
on park benches at night
and watch them rise with the embers.

dear abba,

i just want you to know i've been trying
to forgive myself for what you did.
is that okay? i hope so.

dear abba,

enclosed find two weeks pay.
i think this will be the last one because
i just can't do this anymore. sorry.

dear abba,

can you call me sweetheart again?
you only did it once, but i still
remember. you meant it, right?

dear abba,

it still hurts, just not in the way it used to.
was it really for my own good? you can say
no. i won't be mad.

dear abba,

enclosed find everything.
i love you, by the way. always.
you don't need to respond

Mikul Adaval Wyer (he/him) is an Indian-American writer born in Hong Kong and currently living in Cincinnati, Ohio. He edits for Abstract Magazine TV and Mollusk Literary Magazine, and is working on a play, a novel, and a poetry chapbook. On the rare occasions he is blessed with free time, he regresses into his inner theatre kid and begins singing extremely loudly and without care. You can find him on Instagram at [@mikulwyer](#).

It's nice to see you, despite the circumstances By Connor Donovan

says my quarter-life-crisis cousin
that is caring for her eight-month-old—
the only right way to solemnize death is
to pray a new cherub into the world.
since the last funeral procession
I've pirouetted around the sun once
in all its transformative glory,
hysterically curling back into myself.
with reluctant greetings, family draping
like some kind of proscenium.
a slight feeling of ambiguousness
saying *look at you, all grown up*
through the meaning of any of this.
as I give them reason to celebrate
as I give them reason to grieve

through all painstaking preoccupation
currently gnarling & dribbling drool.
to kneel to the hung wooden crucifix.
I suppose it has exceeded a year
and I've practiced how to fall in line
like a curious bead of water
ribboning around unsound boundaries
I still hate these neo-romantic functions
arms overtop my shoulder blades
sweat slicking below my midriff,
through all semblance of jet-black wash.
curtailing my ability to reason
a tangle of elegy through scratched speech
the manifestation of beauty in breath,
the inevitable beauty in death.

Connor Donovan is a student from Southeast Pennsylvania attending Ursinus College. He is a Healthline Zine Ekphrasis Contest poetry winner and his work can be found or is forthcoming in The Blue Route, and Free the Verse, among others.

poem for palm pressed upon pane By Morouje Sherif

"These aren't people. These are animals."

—Donald Trump

i am in the backseat. my father driving. from mansoura to cairo. delta to desert,

heliopolis. a path he has traveled years before i was born. the road has changed but the

fields are same same. minty green.

hazy green, when i say: this is the most beautiful tree i have ever
seen. and he says, all the trees in masr are the most beautiful. this is how i learn to see.

we planted pine trees. three in a row. for privacy. for property value. that was
waterloo. before nour. before people knocked on our doors, spilled slurs.
before
masr was ever my own.

but after my mother tells me to stop asking her what is wrong
whenever i see her staring
out of the living room window. this is how trauma learns to behave. how i learn to push
against the page. i always give mourad the inside seat.

so he can sleep. on the bus. his warm cheek against the cold
window. when i am old enough to be aware of leaving. it is raining hard.

5000 miles away, there is a palm. in a pot. its leaves
pressed. skinny neck bent. a plant seeking light in an animal kingdom.

Morouje Sherif is an Egyptian-Canadian writer and artist. Her work has appeared in The Poetry Society of the U.K., Foyle Young Poets of the Year, the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, Dust Poetry Magazine, Cathartic Literary, Plum Tree Tavern, INKSOUNDS, among others. In her free time, she enjoys gazing at the horizon.

New Love By Sophia Zhang

This morning, after the rain, as I ran
along the sidewalk, I fell in love with a small snail
crawling along the just-wet concrete, and later in the day,
with a young green onion sprouting in my garden.

And after I transported the snail to safer earth,
away from the drying path and giant steps, and
weeded the glazed dirt, nose filled with petrichor,
I had a fresh tangerine,
electric orange and dripping with juice.
I could feel myself falling again
as I held its weight in my hands.

I don't need much, just
the love of butterfly stickers, of
warm freshly-laundered socks, of
steamy evening showers, of winter sunrises, of
late night rides blasting Cigarettes After Sex.

That's the best kind of love:
without suspicions or unbearable expectations,
without knife-like words or heavy silences,
without tears or slamming doors.
Just peace and beauty.
I am glad to exist.

Sophia Zhang is a high schooler from the Bay Area whose been awarded by Scholastic, Youngarts, and Women on Writing for her work. Apart from writing, Sophia is also passionate about Taylor Swift and pickles!

thoughts and prayers By Yuyuan Huang

in this dream
I live in
all I know
are the lives
of the dying
another one
hundred people
were shot today
and all I can
remember is
being four
and already
knowing how
to listen for
death
learning that

nothing but
violence is
certain
before I knew
how to
tie my shoes
I watch the
politicians
fabricate
their *solemn*
condolences
thoughts and
prayers
and remember when
I was eight
and buried
a sparrow in
our backyard
how she careened into
our home like an
arrow piercing
a heart
mistaking
plexiglass
for freedom
how the night
suffocated her
cries like silence
stifles injustice
how my wandering

fingers latched
onto her quivering
broken body
and tucked her
into the concrete
like a rose
as yet another round
of bloodstained
legislature
sweeps the floor
I close my eyes to
mourn the sparrow of
my eight-year old self
still hoping for the day
she can be eighty
and unafraid
palm unwrinkled
by tragedy
still marveling
at the feel of
death in her hands

Yuyuan Huang (she/her) is a poet, dreamer, artist, nerd, and everything in between. Her work has previously been published in the Ice Lolly Review and Chinchilla Lit. Yuyuan has been recognized by the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards for poetry since 2020. When she is not writing, she can be found rambling about her newest obsession or listening to Taylor Swift. Yuyuan lives in Boston, MA.

Grief By Eliongema Udofia

It hasn't always been like this.

Once, this home flourished like a bush of sunflower. You know what I mean,

Each room held a ray of love like a glass mug. Clear.

But now, mother is a labyrinth of thoughts, haunted by the beauty of her past.

And, I am what remains of a crippled union.

I am what is left to hurt on the shards of a broken home.

It is not my fault that I am the souvenir of my father's desertion.

Or that my smile bruises the scars of my mother's hard buried sorrow, because it reminds her of his face.

But I have taken it upon myself to share in her sorrow as much as I can. I hope it wears off.

And you don't know what it feels like. I mean torment. I do. I have tasted first hand of what torment is.

I see mother in pain everyday. A pain she feels I am the blame.

Being the propitiation for my father's actions,

I am the prey,

And my mother Her tongue, an arrow poisoned with my father's name.

Eliongema is an eighteen year old from Ika in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. He schools at Christian Standard Science College, a school in his hometown. His works have been published or are forthcoming in Brittle Paper, Eboquills, Salamander ink, The Muse UNN, Afritondo and elsewhere. You can connect with through his Facebook account @Eliongema Udofia.

Arrival of Dawn By Okoronkwo Chisom

As a child, my grandmother taught me
to crochet hopes from the yarn of dawn.

To enter each day exhaling yesterday's pains.

In this poem, I crop out the lines that have the images of men,
who yesterday, gave their bodies to the sky & got folded into night.

Once, a teacher told us to reinvent our country's ruins into rainbows,
to graffiti our fatherland on the hearts of strangers without spilling
our vulnerabilities.

Each day, I, a patriot, break into the aurora with my mouth
harboring songs for my country.

I'd shape my eyes to see the beauty in sunrise
& my legs to walk into the day, without fear of
treading on roads paved with blood.

Okoronkwo Chisom is a young first-class graduate of English Language and Literature. She is the International Advisor–Nigeria, of the African Writers Summit–Afwrites. She is the winner of the Delyork Creative Academy writing contest 2021, and a joint winner of the Sound of Unity spoken word poetry competition 2023. She was longlisted in the Nigerian Students Poetry Prize 2021 and has been shortlisted in the Eriata Oribhabor Poetry Prize 2022, Splendours of Dawn Poetry Contest, August-October edition 2022, YouthHubAfrica FGM contest, September edition 2022, and African Feminist writing contest 2022. Her works have been published or are forthcoming in PoetryColumn, Isele Magazine, Blue Marble Review, Icreatives Review, World Voices Magazine, New Man Gospel Magazine, Shuzia, BPPC anthology, and elsewhere.

my backpack ate my homework By Kat Falacienski

I hated the way my cursive sagged when I got tired, how the loops of the letters became either bloated bags or sad smudges. I hated the milky skin of correction fluid, how it clung to the tip of my pen and I had to pull it off with my fingers. I hated when my papers couldn't fit perfectly i eraser dust stuck to the page instead of blowing off. I hated the crumbly detritus at the bottom of my pack, the leaves of paper and pine needles of lead and twigs of snapped-off pencil clutches and pebbles of pink-black rubber. I hated my broken protractor, even though there was no point in fixing it once I got to high school. I hated that fifteen-year-old me picked "Incunabulum6" as my College Board username, not realizing that I'd never be able to change it. I hated that Google Docs were always, always set to 11 pt Arial when the only proper font is 12 pt Times New Roman. I hated how my planners were filled with scratches and scribbles. I hated that I lost my copy of *The Things They Carried*. I hated how curled up I was, a moth refusing to emerge from the cocoon. I couldn't remember the exact moment when my messy multilegged self had decided to hang dormant, to be blown but never detached by the wind. Now, even my messiness was neat the eraser or a flip of the page.

Kat Falacienski is a student at Colorado College. She has been published in Teens Resist, Affinity Magazine, the

Paper Planets By Em Townsend

Venus (*planet of love*) landed on my face last night. The only falling star within these four walls, flimsy & decorated with 25-cent swirls. The last of her kind. She's held onto the ceiling for dear life since I was 6. As a kid I'd wake up with glow-in-the-dark planets sprinkled on my bed, uncovered by the rustling of sheets.

With time, memories peeled off the walls, entire years that once burned with life now fainter than a cloud of dust. Neptune was buried under photos of homecoming dances, Pluto dim next to faces of friends I don't speak to anymore. The day Mercury's clump of sticky tack finally gave way, I didn't bother hanging it back up. Nobody lives in that bedroom anymore, but the solar system kept burning.

I used to worry one would fall out of orbit & I'd accidentally swallow it stickers would flicker out and go dark forever. My body would be celestial in its own way. I would be glowing from the inside out.

Em Townsend (they/she) is a queer nonbinary writer and student from the Washington D.C. area, currently attending Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. An English major, college radio nerd, and nature enthusiast, Em enjoys watching '80s teen movies, reading, and looking at trees. Their work has previously appeared in *Club Plum Literary Journal* and *Hika* magazine.

Fiction

Paradise Pharmacy By Julian Riccobon

Cashback, the magic word. Like wishing for more wishes.

In Paradise Pharmacy, you buy yourself a toffee, thirty-three cents, and then you ask for twenty back; those bloody bloody Andrew Jacksons. You swipe Mama's card, that blue plastic genie, and the cashier simply gives you the cash. No questions asked.

It's like stealing cajeta from a baby.

Every Sunday, you come back for more; Mentos gum and jelly nails and those fake eyelashes that *fwip-fwip-fwip* like butterfly wings. You keep wishing for more wishes till your pockets are stuffed and you've got lollipops sticking out your mouth, and you walk out of the store, happy as a clam till Mama comes up with her nostrils flaring...

"No más tarjeta para ti," she snaps, swiping the blue genie right out of your fingers. "Not even food stamps."

Ah well, it was fun while it lasted.

Next time, you go to Dollar General and try to look eighteen. You ask for a pack of Newports and the cashier simply raises his eyebrow, and then rings you up.

En serio. It's really that easy.

Outside, you hold up the little yellow sticks and you wonder what to do with them. Too late, you realize, you should've bought a lighter, too, but now your courage is gone and you can't screw it back to the sticking place.

Aw, screw it. You just stick the unlit cigarette between your teeth and walk down the street, thumbing your belt loops and trying to play it cool. Como los jets y los tiburones. Like a rumblefish, playing pool. All the while, you know you look stupid, but you don't really care.

What were you thinking! Mama says, when you walk in the door. It is an exclamation, not a question. She snatches the cigarette from your lips and stamps it out on the floor, even though it wasn't lit. *You trying to kill me, huh?* she says. *Trying to break my poor heart?*

All you can do is shake your head. The shame will catch up with you later.

The final time, you don't even bother with the card. You just snatch the painkillers right off the shelf.

Mama is gone now; long gone, and she took her blue plastic genie with her. Her poor heart broke, just like she always predicted – though it was the cholesterol that killed her.

It wasn't *your* fault. You know it wasn't.

All that she left behind was the apartment with its peeling paint and the hole that you kicked in the wall. The apartment, and the car with the busted muffler, and the debts that she'd collected over the years, like stamps.

They are *her* debts, that's what you like to think. Inherited. But sometimes you wonder if maybe they are your debts, too, from all those jelly nails you bought, all those Mentos. Maybe they are *your* debts, shaped by your grubby fingers, by your ravenous mouth.

You were all mouth as a kid; just a monster with braces and teeth. Like Charybdis, always gnashing and hungry. Sometimes you would open the fridge and find only milk inside. Sometimes you would find Mama crying outside the drugstore, gripping the Marlboros that she quit years ago. You would find her eating candy in the bathroom – at least it *looked* like candy – those pale-colored Mentos from the bottles on the sink.

Don't you ever grow up, mija, she would say. Prometeme.

Once upon a time, you used to believe in genies, but now you just believe in bottles.

On the way out of Paradise Pharmacy, you walk past the liquor store and the security guard waves to you. You don't wave back. On the way out, you pass Solo Shoes and the Taco Bell and the Shell station with its sickly yellow light. You take those painkillers down to the tunnel under the 8, rattling the pill bottles like maracas, as you go. *Vamos a bailar, mijita. Tiempo de bailar.*

You sit down, in the drifting tornado of litter, in the piles of pigeon shit, and you pop the pills one by one, but you stop at the recommended dosage – you always stop, because you don't want to end up like Mama. Nah, you don't want to roll off the deep end, ¿si? You just want to daydream for a little while. Maybe you will fly to an oasis in the Mojave

Desert. Un oasis en el paraíso. Maybe you will sleep in the shade of the palm leaves. Maybe you will wake up to find a genie standing over you: *Your wish is my command.*

It is dark in the tunnel, and the cars scream overhead like a migraine.

When you hold out your hand, the pigeons flutter down to peck the pills from your palm. They cock their heads and shuffle sideways and they stare at you with goo-goo eyes as if to say, *Carajo, this ain't bread.*

Closing your eyes, you try to imagine stoned pigeons flying over San Diego; they would wobble and bobble like drunken drones. Stumbling into skyscrapers. Careening into streetlamps. The thought, in itself, is enough to make you laugh.

“So this is it,” you say to the pigeons. “This is what paradise looks like.”

But the pigeons are gone now – too far gone to answer, and even if they weren't, you'd be too far gone to listen. There's nothing else left to do, so you give the pill bottle a little kick with your toes and you watch as it rolls away down the tunnel, a runaway maraca. *Escucha el ritmo, hija. Que ritmo bonito...*

It is almost funny – the frenetic way that it rolls – as if it can't get away from you fast enough.

Julian Riccobon (he/him) is a writer, editor, and artist of Italian/Panamanian descent, and the Managing Director of Polyphony Lit, an international literary magazine for teen writers and editors. His work has been published in The Acentos Review, Rumble Fish Quarterly, and F(r)iction Lit, among other places, and his favorite genres to write are

contemporary fiction, magical realism, and historical fiction. He is currently drafting a magical realism novel about a bunch

This is How You Die By Eva Rami

This is how you smile: Cracked lips pulled back, cheeks flushed, the corner of your eyes crinkled. You were always told you had a beautiful smile, but it is your biggest insecurity. You may have perfect, cupid-bow lips, but your teeth are crooked and disjointed, and your grin always seems too big for your face. In your bathroom mirror, you practice smiling modestly, stretching your lips minimally, squeezing them shut. You cry with frustration as your features refuse to configure into that of a stranger's.

This is how you cry: Heaving breaths, wailing. You've always found it difficult to express your emotions with words and maturity. Your hands move as you weep, pulling at your hair, scratching at your arms, before wrapping themselves around your chest and shoulders, holding you tight. When you grow older, you learn how to cry softly, holding your breath before exhaling a sob into the crook of your elbow.

This is how you grow: Quickly. Sprouting up, taller than your mother now, but without any of the eloquence that she carries herself with. You aren't sure what to do with your gangly limbs. You groan in disgust as you run your fingers over the pustules that litter your face. You spend an afternoon squeezing them between your thumb and index fingers until they pop. You go to bed with the remaining scabs littering your face. You spend your days poring over photo albums with pictures of little you, face smooth and soft, running your hands over the pages with reverence. You are no longer a child. No one treats you like one anymore.

This is how you hug: Tightly, and with fervor. You are terrible at articulating your emotions, good or bad, and so you scream, you cry, and you hug. You pull people close, wrapping your arms above their waist, inhaling into their shoulder, and squeezing tight. You hold them close, feeding off their warmth like you need it to survive.

This is how you kiss: With the slight air of someone who doesn't know exactly what to do. No matter how many times you've done this dance, you can never quite get it right. Your lips are too eager and your limbs are too long, and no one ever asks you to stay out past curfew, so you sit in your room instead, avoiding the mirror as you scrub your makeup off.

This is how you leave: With a ring on your finger, in the arms of your lover. You ignore the urge to run back into your mother's arms as you walk down the front steps of your childhood home. This will be good. You are an adult now.

This is how you love: Properly. You've always found it difficult to express your strong emotions, but you're always able to keep your calm with your husband. You don't feel strongly about him anymore, you know, but you stay anyway, for now you have children who need you to love them too. Your motherhood has taught you the art of patience and an ability to put your children first. You love your children, as they rush through the door each afternoon with stories of their elementary classrooms. And you love your children, hands clenched at your side, as they scream in the grocery store aisles, anger in not getting a toy painting their faces redder and redder. You learn to love as a sweet woman should. You learn to love everyone.

This is how you die: In a hospital bed, heart monitor near your left ear, beeping away in a steady rhythm. Your eyes are closed, and you see purple stars against your eyelids. You breathe, inhaling shakily and exhaling with a croak. Your children sit on either side of your skinny little hospital bed, each holding one of your skinny little hands. They say words that you don't quite catch, that you don't quite care to. You feel peace. It's a new feeling, one you're sure you haven't experienced before, but you like it very much. Inhale with a stutter. Exhale.

Eva Rami is fourteen years old, and is currently a freshman at Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, where she studies creative writing. She has been published in the Silly Gal Magazine and Cathartic Literary Magazine, among others. Her work has been recognized in the Scholastic Arts & Writing Awards. When not writing, Eva enjoys making herself laugh, attending poetry performances, and trying to get inspired.

Telling Tales By Ksenia Martynova

Beads of condensation crawled down the side of Anya's half-empty plastic cup, pooling in the bottom of the cup holder. She picked up the drink with a delicate hand, the liquid transferring to the pads of her fingers as she sipped on the peach-flavoured tea. She did not like the sensation and quickly wiped them on the hem of her shirt. Sitting in the passenger seat, her best friend, Talia, smiled at the passing cars, sometimes even earning one in return when traffic came to a hold.

"He stomps his foot against the break, face creasing with impatience," Talia narrated, procuring a small smile from Anya. "A velvet ring box weighs down his jean pocket, the feeling causing a string of nerves to tangle themselves around his limbs. *Please say yes*, he thinks, as the light turns green."

Following along with Talia's commentary, Anya pressed her foot against the gas pedal, pulling ahead of the well-dressed man tapping his pale fingers against his leather steering wheel. She wondered what it was about his expression that made Talia plot out a proposal for his story. When she had looked at him, all she had managed to notice was a faint tracing of stubble grazing his jaw and a scar beneath his right eyebrow.

"I think you may have been wrong about that one," Anya stated. "I doubt he's on his way to become engaged."

Talia sighed, dreamily, the back of her head meeting the seat's headrest. The passenger-side window was slightly ajar and a frigid breeze blew into the car. The wind whipped around Talia's head, sending strings of blonde hair into a whirl. They fluttered and looped around the crown of her head, occasionally tangling on her earring backings. She looked like an angel. "Your imagination cannot be wrong, merely too prolific for the confines of reality."

Anya wondered where her seventeen-year-old best friend got these ideas from. She considered voicing the thought, but they had encountered another red light and Talia's eyes were already roaming around the scene beyond the window. Her gaze stopped on a silver minivan, filled with three rambunctious children—all younger than the age of eight—who appeared to be fighting over a takeout bag. The lady driving the car pressed a palm to her temple.

"The rarest treasure money can buy—a strawberry-glazed donut larger than the size of a kitten—is in reach, but who will be the one to outsmart the rest and claim the prize?" Talia deepened her voice as if she was recording the introduction of a drama. "The three competitors each try to pry the paper bag from the other's grasp, settling on the same strategy: force. But little do they know that their own mother is plotting the betrayal of the century, and, in time, will take the delectable treat all for herself."

Anya watched with intrigue, wondering if, this time, Talia's tale would come true.

It did not.

Her green eyes burned through the window of the van, only to see the woman sigh before speaking a set of exasperated words. She must have asked the children to share the contents of the bag because they each reached into the crumpled bundle one by one and obtained a greasy paper container of fries.

"I liked your version better," Anya said.

"It was more exciting, wasn't it?" Her best friend beamed, folding her knees up to her chest. They were nearly at their destination: a small cottage-style home on the outskirts of the city.

The GPS navigated Anya to take a left, then a right, until the cars previously crammed into traffic had dispersed. Anya wondered if Talia could feel the emptiness settling throughout the car, even if nobody had left, yet. It was a sort of ominous feeling, one that made Anya want to suddenly stop thinking about the future.

They pulled into the newly-painted driveway of the house—the lawn flourishing with brightly coloured roses—but both girls remained rigid in their seats. *I will miss you* hung in the air, but neither Anya nor Talia made a move to grab it, fearing the finality of the four words.

Instead, Talia whispered, "I'm going to tell you a story."

Anya forced a half-hearted smile. "Is it fictional?"

Talia shook her head, eyes glimmering. "It will be the truest tale to fall from my lips."

"Go ahead, then."

"Okay," Talia breathed. "A girl sits beside her best friend in a beat-up Toyota Camry. *Change* looms ahead of them in the form of a red brick house with a bold *SOLD* sign sticking out from the lawn. She stares at her best friend with fondness, and remembers all of the thrilling memories they have together. With certainty, she swallows down words of farewell because she knows this moment is nowhere close to the end of their friendship. And she hopes her friend—whom she loves so dearly—agrees."

Tears pooled in Anya's eyes. "She does."

Ksenia Martynova is a self-proclaimed bibliophile from Canada. She's currently a student at Emma Willard School and enjoys spending her evenings writing stories of her own or enjoying the works of others, alongside a glass of iced tea or coffee.

Son of a Fish By Nicolas Barbieri

Filho de Peixe, Peixinho é¹

'*Bem-vindo à aldeia do Rio dos Juncos*²' read the dark red letters on the driftwood sign at the entrance to Reed River Village, which was a small settlement consisting of forty brown river mud homes. Named for the mountain tributary that ran through its center, the village's inhabitants were sustained by the cool water and its fish. A bed of round glistening stones resembling ancient eggs bordered the wide river of pristine water, which grew and shrank with the seasons.

The typical 20 Celsius temperature of Reed River valley sharply contrasted the biting cold of wintry Antarctica which lay all around the valley, and its surrounding, slightly colder prairie lands. From the river marched a neat military-line of creamy-capped mushrooms, starting from their nestling place between the rocks and leading from the summery valley to the colder prairie, a vast expanse of frozen earth and frost-tipped grass. The sun reflected off the mirror-like plain, almost blinding the rare visitor.

Isaque's grandmother lived in a small hut, right where chilly plains yielded to frigid mountains. Its walls were tightly woven from long, thin straw and sun-dried reeds from the river, the cold was kept at bay by its insulation. The salty, smoky aroma of freshly cooked *bacalhau*, cod caught by the rare ice fisher that ventured past the valley and sold as a delicacy, wafted through the air and Isaque swore he could smell it half a mile before he arrived at her home. The tangy smell was of the sea (or so Isaque had heard – he'd never visited the sea which lay many miles north of the valley), mixed with the citrus tang of sumac and the earthy undertones of mushrooms.

Tall stalks of wildflowers, as colorful as the sunset, dotted the outside of the hut, gently swaying in the breeze, seemingly waving hello as Isaque rubbed dirt off his shoes against his grandmother's seal-skin welcome mat. He opened the door which made a slight scratching noise as the cold straw moved for the first time in days.

"Isaque? Is that you?"

His grandmother was a determined, tenacious woman. Before reaching her 80s, she was a renowned hunter, and well respected by the Reed River denizens. The walls were lined with spears and hunting weapons of all kinds. Of them all, his grandmother was most proud to own a harpoon, tipped with a black rock and carved with stories of fishermen.

Now slowed down by age, Vó Cida maintained a respected position in the village, but was less able to move about outside the hut. Short, and with a matted thatch of thick black and gray hair that Isaque shared (minus the gray), her face was scarred with a lifetime of stories.

"*Sim vó*. It's me." Isaque responded, taking off his fur-lined shoes before walking over to where his grandmother cooked the cod in her cracked stone oven, removing the sizzling *bacalhau* from between the heated rocks with practiced hands. The sweltering kitchen warmed Isaque's frozen skin, and he removed his coat to drop it onto a stool.

When his grandmother turned, she gave him a wide smile, a scar stretching her top lip. Vó Cida had gotten it from a fishing incident decades ago, a story well-known and frequently embellished as time passed.

Isaque knew the story behind every one of her scars; in fact, he knew them twenty times over. He knew she had a bite mark on her leg from a shark, a damaged ear from falling into the rocks bordering Reed River. Most of all, he knew she had a deep scar on her leg, never to heal and never to discuss, from a sailing accident sixty years ago.

“Do you think you’ll leave soon?” His grandmother asked.

Isaque prevented himself from blubbering his response. He couldn’t bear the thought of leaving her alone, though his heart yearned to see the sea.

“I don’t think so, vó.” He replied, taking a seat on one of the driftwood stools his grandmother had set up around the table. “I don’t want to leave you.”

“I see,” murmured his grandmother, pausing long seconds before she asked: “Do you want to hear a story?”

If they had been discussing anything but the possibility of Isaque leaving, he would have practically yelled his eagerness to listen. Now, he simply nodded, hoping her tale would give him clarity in his decision.

“Centuries ago, our ancestors were unlike today’s insular and incurious folk of Reed River. They were sailors, explorers from a far-off land. Their captain had hoped to traverse through a stormy strait so that her crew could be the first to discover and categorize new lands. But the spirits were against our noble forebears, and they found the seas treacherous. The changeable winds blew their entire fleet into the Antarctic rocks; they survived only by happening upon the warmth of Reed River Valley—a total

anomaly. But years passed, people got comfortable and fear grew of leaving the protection of Reed River. Our once-respected forefathers were forgotten, or worse, thought of as fools for having the urge to traverse the globe. Rediscovering a world outside of Reed River was deemed impossible. Some, the more adventurous, tried. Including me.

“When I was young like you, I was determined to show everyone that there was a world outside our valley. One day, after months of working on my father’s fishing boat with my best friend, we felt we were ready and sailed down the Reed River. Soon the river became an angry mess of waves and winds and we were scared. We forgot who we were and panicked. We came to a raging sea—we had chosen our timing wrong in the middle of winter’s nasty storms. Our bright curiosity of exploring new lands soon faded as before we were two days into the voyage, my friend fell ill. We turned back; I had foolishly hoped we would make it back in time to save her.”

At this point, Vó Cida fell silent, the memories of decades past behind her wet eyes. With a tremble in her lip, she continued haltingly. “I couldn’t sail the ship alone. My friend was sinking into fever. The ship crashed into the coastal rocks, just like our ancestors had done before, and splintered into a

thousand pieces. My friend disappeared under the crashing waves. When I came back to, I had lost everything but my will to survive. Bleeding and battered, I had limped my way home, days passed and I don’t even know how I made it. My foolish childhood dream had transformed into a nightmare.”

The room fell into absolute silence except for the crackling of the fire.

“Are you telling me not to go?” Isaque asked.

“No,” his grandmother said. “I’m telling you to go prepared. Leave knowing what you’ll face, and be ready for it. I wish I had tried again—my friend would have wanted me to. But my courage and leg are too damaged. But you, I want you to go if you feel it in your heart, which I think you do.”

“I do feel a pull that I find hard to ignore,” said Isaque, almost in a whisper.

“Do you believe in that phrase of our ancestors? ‘*Filho de peixe, peixinho é*’. The son of a fish is a little fish. This may seem obvious, *meu neto querido*, but know that it also means that the grandson of an adventurer is also an adventurer. Follow your heart and return with stories.”

¹ A Portuguese saying: ‘Son of a fish, little fish he is’; essentially, like father like son

² ‘Welcome to the village of Reed River’ in Portuguese

Nicolas Barbieri grew up in São Paulo, Brazil, until he was seven years old. His dad is Brazilian and his mom is American. He has always felt a part of the two cultures, but somehow his writing always includes a piece of his Brazilian core. No one can tell a story like a Brazilian and he is working on always making his better. When he’s not writing stories, he is the Opinions Editor of the school newspaper, running or playing soccer for

Weston school sports or reading books, usually fantasy or fiction. He is a sixteen- year- old and a sophomore at Weston High School

The Dove and the Pigeon By Nina Collavo

While we sang hymns, a fat black spider spun her web over the holy dove's wings. It was painted at the crest of the church's vaulted ceiling, haloed in buttery light where it hung above the congregation. In those delicious moments when the reverend's voice would rise, *shine, for thy light is come*, my neck would tilt back in feverish rapture. I would gaze into the dove's open wings and feel that I was protected under its gentle wingspan.

It had taken me a while to notice the spider, since the church's ceilings were so high. They arched over the pews like a massive stone ribcage, shielding the soft, warm bodies of the congregation. Each Sunday, I remembered my own smallness. The spider didn't seem to care that the holy dove was five times its size. It scuttled over the sacred olive branch clutched in its beak.

The freshman soprano standing next to me missed her note, and the chord hung sour in the heated air before our director cut us off. The congregation gave polite applause. I couldn't stop watching that spider. It was a scalding summer day and I was drenched with sweat. I couldn't tell if anyone else was sweating as much as I was, not with our choir robes hanging like stiff black shields over our bodies. In the yearly youth choir pictures, we always looked like a group of floating heads. Busts displayed on a pedestal of black fabric, all variables of body erased.

We started singing the next song. *All Creatures Of our God and King*. The spider's spindly legs formed dark cracks over the dove's white body. I imagined the cracks spreading out until the whole ceiling was webbed, ready to crumble under its own weight and squish us all flat. My skin prickled, phantom spiders skittering up and down my spine. The holy dove, once a constant source of beauty and comfort, suddenly seemed hideous to me. Those hulking wings, those cold, beady eyes pinning me down. I had never experienced

such a betrayal of my own senses; to have the beauty of a beloved thing vanish seemed much worse than immediately judging something disgusting. The heated air sliced down to my lungs with each breath, drying my tongue until I couldn't sing, couldn't speak, couldn't breathe.

We still had two hymns left, but at the end of *All Creatures*, I stepped off the stage and headed to the back door. I could imagine the director, chorus, and congregation staring after me, blank-faced with surprise. In a few seconds, each face would begin to settle into individual expressions of pity, judgment, or suspicion. I didn't turn back to see it.

Outside, the heady thrum of crickets and distant cars. My own breaths, wheezy with panic. My fingers scrambled for the clasp at the back of my neck. I unclipped my robes, and they fell to the ground in a dark pool, revealing my damp clothes. I took gulps of rotten air. I was standing next to a dumpster, pressed snug to the back of the church. Next to it was a pile of trash: a battered AM radio, an empty sleeve of crackers, a flip flop, and a puzzle box warped with water and time. This collection of objects, unrelated and dream-like in their proximity, nearly brought me to tears. What kind of incomprehensible logic had brought these things together, rotting in a pile behind a Presbyterian church? I felt nauseous, off balance, like something solid at the center of my being had been ripped away. Inside, the choir started back up again, perfectly functional without my voice.

I thought of calling my mom for a ride home. Then, I heard a noise coming from the thicket behind the church. My body tensed. The trees were close knit, and I couldn't see anything in the darkness.

"Who is that?" I called into the woods. No response. I wiped my face with shaky hands. I wasn't scared by the woods, or the strange noise, but I was terrified by the way my voice vanished into the trees. "Anyone there?" I called louder, hoping for an echo.

A blur of gray came hurtling through the branches and I leapt back. It settled on the dumpster's brim – a common pigeon. It hopped down, poking at the sleeve of crackers. The bird was mottled brown, like a white bird that'd been mud-splattered by a passing car.

“Hello,” I said. The pigeon tilted its head at me, crumbs stuck to its grimy beak. Then, it continued hunting in the plastic sheath. The pigeon kept pecking at the wrapper. I watched its dogged persistence of this simple task, the importance of finding each crumb. My breaths evened out. Faintly, I could hear the choir singing the last hymn we'd rehearsed. Eventually, the churchgoers would file out and leave the hall to the spider, who would patiently weave in the dark. The church would be strewn, wearing time like fine silk.

Nina Collavo is a senior at Binghamton University. She is an English Literature major with an affinity for weird nature, especially deep-sea creatures and carnivorous plants. She has edited with Harpur Palate and is the founder and editor-in-chief of Maenad, an online literary magazine.

Forcing my eyes to stay open, I watch Mr. Conn's face while I hold my stomach. I should have called in sick today. The artificial lights in the classroom blast the space with annoying brightness. Everything in here shines like a waxed apple, including the faces of the thirty-five students in thirty-five wobbly desks. We're crammed close enough that I smell everyone's deodorant after PE.

Why do I feel this way? I did nothing wrong. What happened to Jason is not my fault. Or is it? I didn't even know him that well. We were on the same robotics team in middle school. We carpooled twice.

"Discover your self-worth," Mr. Conn says. He's wearing his usual blue polo shirt and gray sports pants. He's giving his weekly lecture on mental health in "Advisory" class, which is weird since he doesn't offer specific advice. He just monologues in strange metaphors. He's a nice guy who's great at teaching, but if I hear one more metaphor...

"Take care of your body," he drones. His subway sandwich lies half-eaten on the desk.

The pickle smell of his turkey on wheat saturates my nose hairs.

Don't think about nose hairs. Think about homework. I should be working on the three hours of homework he assigned today. God, it was much worse for Jason. What did he say to me the last time we talked? Why can't I remember? Does depression make people forget things?

What am I wearing? I glance down. My typical black sweatpants and random free T-Shirt. This one says "2014 Mini Golf Champion."

I peek at my friend Matthew. Unsurprisingly, he's wearing the same red jacket he wore yesterday when we ditched to avoid three tests. He stares at the corner of the wall, his fingers

fidgeting. No doubt, he's mentally writing the *Lord of the Flies* essay that's due tomorrow. He's a procrastinator like me. It's an underrated art form.

Behind me sits Aiden. My body blocks his entire shape from Mr. Conn. Aiden is likely dreaming about the French Revolution after the all-nighter he pulled studying for the History test. He owes me one in English class later, where I'll bury my head in my arms and dream of fish.

"You are all young. Take this time to discover your acorns. What do you want to do in your life?"

Acorns?

One kid coughs and another sneezes.

But I wonder, what do I want to do with my life? When I was little, my older sister took me to Saratoga Creek. We hiked under the bridge at Wildwood park, and she pointed at the invasive trees and exclaimed, "Look! It's an Ash tree!" She pointed at the butterflies: "It's a Cabbage White!" When she spoke about the environment, she was like an auctioneer. Her words slurred together into one incomprehensible jumble. She loved the environment. One time, she picked up a guy's empty Starbucks off the ground and speed-yelled, "Hey loser, you dropped your brain!"

But my sister has run off to study environmental science at Emory. She sends me pictures of taxidermy bugs and Chipotle burritos. Even though our parents are divorced, it doesn't affect how we interact. If anything, we're closer. After my mom became a travel nurse, I started spending nights in "my room" at my dad's house surrounded by his Coca-Cola bottle collection. He always asks, "What are you gonna study in college?"

What will I study? What are my interests? My Rubik's cube and those pressed quarters? I have one from the MET, the Smithsonian, and Pearl Harbor. My problem is that I lack

motivation. My perfect day is being left alone in my room, my left cheek pressed into my memory foam pillow, my left arm underneath it, and my eyes closed. God, it's heaven. Some days, I'm so lethargic from staying awake all night worrying about meteorites and tests.

Basically, I wish I were a cat.

The thing is, I wasn't always like this. I used to be so curious as a kid. When I met new people, I'd tell them random facts: *Owl's don't have eyeballs. Caterpillars dissolve into a liquid in the cocoon. Cockroaches can live up to one week without their heads. President George W. Bush vomited on Japan's Prime Minister.*

But what do I want out of life? I want a fancy pencil collection with Spoke model 6's and IJ instrument model 9's. I want to eat Margherita pizza every day. I want my sister to come home from college and tell me how much she missed me. I want to be an astronaut floating in space while watching the Earth spin. I want to determine the meaning of life—well as close as my sixteen-year-old brain can come to it. I want to know what went through Jason's mind. Was it sudden or did he think about it? I want this hour to end.

"It's like I always say: be like a cactus..." Mr. Conn continues, walking back and forth on his metaphorical stage, his forehead wrinkling with thought.

A cactus? Let's be logical. We aren't in the desert. Well, maybe, considering how school goes on and on forever and ever like the Sahara, or like an ultramarathon ... Could I survive alone in the desert?

"You need to be able to survive in any circumstance..." Yeah, like being overworked, sleep-deprived, and bored!

“...and push through tough times, rebounding stronger than before. Be patient and bloom brightly when your time is here.”

Bloom brightly? Are we flowers now? I thought we were cacti, or was it acorns? How does he change metaphors so fast? He’s like Usain Bolt with figurative language. While he is talking about mental health, why isn’t he mentioning Jason? Doesn’t he know?

“Daniel!” Mr. Conn shouts, his fist clenching as if he had a spear in his hand and I were a fish.

“Yes!” Oh god. What did I do?

“Stop mumbling, face forward, and pay attention,” Mr. Conn growls. His nose hairs stick out as he crinkles his face. “Not just you! Everyone! Eyes up here and listen!”

Matthew loses his staring contest with the wall and blinks blindly at Mr. Conn. Aiden’s desk jerks behind me, and I imagine him rubbing away the fatigue from his eyes. Everyone knows Mr. Conn is going to single one of us out, and no one wants to hold the microphone.

Mr. Conn throws his hands in the air. “Why is it that nobody cares about these meetings?

These are real problems people deal with.” Mr. Conn’s eyes slowly pan across the room. Is he expecting one of us to answer him?

Unfortunately, I have that terrible problem where my lips move without saying anything.

It's a disorder. I looked it up once but forgot what it was called. Who has time for that? "Pardon? Did you want to say something, Daniel?" Mr. Conn snaps at me. "Go on, here, grab the mic." He unclips the tiny rectangle off his collar and hands it to me.

The whole classroom stares at me like I'm suddenly a car crash on a freeway, the kind with a car upside-down, two detached wheels rolling down the highway.

I hold the tiny mic with one hand. "I was just thinking about Jason. Nobody mentioned him," I say as my eyes roam for support. All the faces in the room look down at their desks.

"Jason?" Mr. Conn asks.

"Yeah, ever since I heard, I've been thinking about the culture of our school," I continue. "And uh, sure, nobody here has an empty stomach or shoes with holes, but people are suffering. It's like everyone is stranded on a boat in the ocean, and no one is coming to get them." Oh god. I'm beginning to talk in metaphors too. Mr. Conn is rubbing off on me.

"Who's Jason?" Mr. Conn inquires as he straightens his back, making himself taller. "He's a student who passed away yesterday," I reply.

"I'm sorry to hear that, but I'm sure the school did what they should have done, so let's move on," Mr. Conn answers.

I click my tongue.

Mr. Conn folds his arms and glares at me.

"I just think it's ironic," I say, holding the mic closer to my mouth, "how we are supposed to be talking about mental health in this class, so why aren't we talking about Jason?"

What did I care if I made Mr. Conn angry? What could he do to me? Give me more homework? Kick me out of class? Besides, wasn't this a time to talk about our feelings?

"What are you talking about?" Aiden whispers and jabs at my back with his finger. "You should shut up. Jason is fine."

"What?" I say.

Whispers travel around the room: "*Who's Jason?*"

Mr. Conn storms over to me and snatches the mic out of my hand. "That's enough."

For the rest of class, Mr. Conn continues as if I had never spoken. He drones on about cactuses being an excellent metaphor for mental health as they are resilient and can carry on in harsh conditions. I know he's just doing his job, and most days, he's pretty cool, but on a day like today, it's not enough.

After the bell rings, Aiden follows me out into the hallway, where yellow-tiles point arrows towards the school office. We pass the math mural where the faces of famous dead mathematicians look down on us. Sounds of banging instruments come from the band room. In the hallway, everyone moves together as if drifting in a river.

"What the hell, dude? Where did you hear that Jason died?" Aiden asks.

"It's everywhere. Have you not checked Instagram? I'm serious. Ask anybody." We pass by a group of Jason's friends. "See," I say, pointing. "They look depressed."

"No, it's gotta be a prank," Aiden smirks. "Look, I'll message him right now." Aiden pulls out his phone and texts Jason a simple "wya."

“Dude, that’s so rude. You can’t say that to someone who literally just passed away. What is he going to do? Be like ‘I’m in heaven?’”

Aiden says, “I swear I saw him yesterday in the Safeway parking lot with his mom. He was holding a box of Oreos.”

“Parents are talking about it on WeChat.”

“No way, man. Unless he died, like, today morning, he’s perfectly fine.” Aiden is always like this. He never believes until he sees it with his own eyes.

“People do these kinds of things on the internet all the time,” he says. “Don’t take it seriously.”

We turn the corner and continue walking.

Heads bounce down the hall and locks spin on lockers. Backpacks float. I want to believe Aiden is right. I want to be that kid again whose biggest worry was if my sister would take me to the park. I want to believe in a future filled with pressed quarters, Rubik’s Cubes, Social Security, jobs, and picket fences.

We squeeze through the edge of the hallway and approach Jason’s locker. He won’t be there. I just know. The world is too cruel for happy endings. But maybe Aiden’s right. It’s just a rumor that got out of control. Rumors can happen. It happened to Taylor Swift.

Is that Jason’s red North Face jacket or is it just wishful thinking? The owner gets swallowed by waves of people. Shoes squeak and kids talk about chemistry tests. Is that Jason’s voice? Maybe if I imagine enough, if I just concentrate hard enough, I can bring him back to life. We are only ten steps away.

A future with Jason flashes in my mind. I'll invite him out with my friends to the nearby food court for spicy miso ramen. I'll tell him that everything can only get better. I'll remind him about the time he shot the judge in the face with the robot's foam ball and how we couldn't have made it to the Worlds competition without him. I'll ask him to tell me that joke again about fish that can break dance. I'll remind him about the future, filled with college and jobs and Social Security.

As we walk through the hall, I mindlessly nod at Aiden's small talk. The closer I get, the more the anxious feeling builds in my throat. My phone slips out of my hand and I bend over to pick it up. I know when I rise I will have my answer.

But why am I so afraid?

Bryan is a junior in high school who recently started creative writing as a hobby. He likes doing math, hiking with friends, and watching cute cat videos.

Nonfiction

Kayaking (There is no Metaphor) By Celia Shinn

The clouds are still in. They seem to always be for the first third, if not half of the day. Summer mornings in Western Washington State linger in the low 50s, climbing only to the mid-70s with spots of afternoon sun. I crunch down the rocky beach of Camano Island, about fifty miles north of my parents home, carrying one end of a kayak down to the water. My godfather's brother supports the other end. His wife and my mother are half a mile up the hill at their house, preparing to stroll down and sit on the beach while

we row. He pushes my kayak into the water and retrieves his own from his truck as I make my way out to the buoys that mark the deeper water.

Seagulls dip in and out of view, looking for fish and landing on the shore to peck at crab shells. One swoops down to a crab buoy next to me, pecks at the red plastic for a few seconds, then leaves. As it swoops back up the hill towards the house, it occurs to me how differently birds must understand distance than humans. It makes no difference whether they go up, down, or back and forth – it's all just like how we walk down the street. It'll take me a few hundred feet of rowing, labored beach-walking, kayak-heaving, and a short drive back up the hill to get where the seagull could be in the next minute. I wonder if it'll fly by our porch. I wonder if it's supposed to mean anything to me, if I'm missing some sort of lesson in my comparison, but I can't think of what it could be.

My godparents lived on Camano Island for about seven years before my godfather died three years ago. I've searched for messages everywhere since then, but I look especially hard when I'm here. I scan the land across the water searching for a glimpse of something mundane that I can make a sign out of. I believe this is one of the most naturally gorgeous places in the country, but I seem to want more out of every beautiful thing. I think about the way the morning fog covers things up and then rolls away in the afternoon. I think about the way the sunset comes every night but is always beautiful. I think about what could be hiding in the evergreen trees and whether people should disturb it. None of it resonates with me; none of it means any more than the obvious, and it feels almost demanding of me to want more out of the beauty that I love so much on its own. I watch as a jellyfish floats under my oar. Could it kill me if I reached out and touched it? I'm only a few feet away, yet my little vessel of shiny blue resin keeps me safe.

When I was twelve, I agreed to take a ride on the back of my godfather's moped along the winding, woodsy roads. I visited him for the last time in the summer of 2019, after his stroke, and sat on the deck and looked at the roads along the island and thought about how scared I was when we rode along them. Now, I squint up at them from my

kayak and imagine what we would have looked like from this perspective, how small I must have looked and how grown up I felt. I was terrified. I had always scoffed at the way girls in movies clung to the driver's waist when they rode on motorcycles, thinking that it was some kind of performance of helplessness and that I was tougher than that. But as I felt us tilt as we went around the slightest of turns, I held onto him so tight that my arms hurt. I want a moped of my own now, though that was the only time I ever rode one. Both of my parents hate the idea. I could probably take that fact and spin a tale of psychological reasoning behind it, like how I feel that he would be proud of me for conquering my fear or that I would have a part of him with me if I learned to do it on my own. It's probably much simpler than that. I think I would look cool in a helmet. I like to wear leather jackets.

I have always believed in ghosts. I believe that people who have unfinished business linger on the earth in the form of spirits, but I don't think they're happy. I don't think that my godfather is a ghost now – he was a happy person, enlightened and intelligent and full of love. Even so, I know it wouldn't take much for me to convince myself that I saw his ghost everywhere on the island. I would look up at the clouds and wonder if I saw his face, or look at the houses from my place in the water and convince myself that I saw his form on the beach, waving at me, only to disappear when I rubbed my eyes. I would look at the picture of him that I carry in my wallet and stare at it until I could believe that it smiled back at me. I might even smile at it first, sitting alone in my room waiting for a photograph to smile at me. As a younger child, I did so with a painting of Paramahansa Yogananda that sits above the fireplace in my godparents house. I stared and daydreamed for so long and so often that I can almost convince myself that the image of the painting winking down at me is a memory.

The clouds make it hard to see with my sunglasses on. I slide them to the top of my head to try to make out the dark water swirling under my oar. It looks the same. I see nothing but the tiny waves I've made as they disappear. I knock my sunglasses back down to the bridge of my nose, blinking the water's reflections away from my vision.

I sometimes think that I look like my godmother. I'll occasionally; walk by a window and glance at my reflection and the way my hair lightens and curls in the summer sun will remind me of hers. We're both partially Jewish, but my Chinese-Indonesian mother's features are too present on my face for most to assume we'd be close relatives. I've never looked particularly like either of my parents, and obviously someone I have no biological relation to wouldn't be any different. I don't understand what it means when I see her face in mine. I can dream up many psychological explanations, like something about my desire to resemble my actual parents, physically or otherwise. I could even chalk it up to thinking of her so much that I start to see her in places she isn't. My face in the Puget Sound is distorted by ripples and my blue-tinted sunglasses as it stares back at me from the water. Right now, I could easily convince myself that I see her face in mine. I remember her and my tween self, around this time of year, walking up the island and picking blackberries on the side of the road. Maybe someone who only saw us from behind as we faced the bushes would think we were blood related. Perhaps aunt and niece.

Loss, as much as we hate to think it, is horribly universal. Everyone that I know has experienced some kind of grief, even if on different scales. Still, it is common practice to offer the comforting phrase "I can't imagine what you're going through". I have no bone to pick with it – it's kind, it's considerate, it doesn't overstep. It's comforting – to some extent, to both parties.

I used to pride myself on never getting sunburnt. I bragged to my more Caucasian friends in the summers that I would only ever tan in the sun, even without sunscreen. They'd complain of the pins-and-needles effect on their noses and ears, and I'd

obnoxiously remind them that I had no idea how it felt. The first real sunburn I ever got was at my godparents house, here on the island, after sitting sunscreen-less on the deck for the entirety of a summer day. My left bicep was searing red by the evening. I remember how confused and alarmed I was when I felt my skin radiating heat and itching, how I had to soothe it with aloe vera so that I could sleep, and how miffed I was to go through such a universal experience that I had somehow convinced myself I would never, ever be affected by. Today, I have SPF 45 on my arms, chest, and face, even under the clouds. I press two fingers to my left arm to make sure I haven't burned.

No one needs to be reminded of how badly you miss the dead when they've gone. There is no metaphor, simile, or analogy I can make to convey the way it feels. The literal, too, can't manage to communicate. Anecdotes about how I go to my godfather's grave cannot capture the way I wish he was here in his body, and everyone knows that. His grave is underneath a tree, perfectly set so that one can sit on a root that sticks up out of the ground if the grass is wet and be protected from the sun if it's hot out. I sit on it and talk out loud about whatever he's missed since the last time I stopped by. I bring flowers and a wet paper towel to wipe off whatever has collected, but it's usually clean from others who love him doing the same. I think about what it could mean, what it could represent – I come up empty. Wiping the dirt off of someone's grave and talking to them as if it's their body with their ears and their voice. Everyone who sees it knows what it means. Taking it at face value, choosing not to dig deeper for a literary device – what do you miss? What can it be like that it isn't already?

This is the first time I've kayaked on the island in three, maybe four years. The last time I did was with my godfather, my godmother on the shore waiting for us. These kayaks used to belong to them. The water from my oar trickles up my wrists and drips onto my lap every time I row and the salt from the water has crystallized. It leaves a thin layer of white powder on my skin, just too sticky to brush off. I will have to shower to be

completely rid of the remnants of my kayaking trip. There is no metaphor, not this time. I cannot always find a greater meaning in every little thing that appeals to my eye. Death is far too big to link to something small, like the way that the whirlpools on the end of my oar disappear into the water, or the empty space at the table. Death will never be small. It does not have to be. There is nothing I can say to make it smaller; I cannot say anything new at all. I do not have to. I row back to the shore, climb clumsily out of the kayak, oar in hand, and keep my sunglasses on. The clouds have cleared.

Celia Shinn is a student at Bard College, and native to Washington state. Her other writing has appeared in [The AutoEthnographer](#). She sincerely hopes you enjoy her work.

How to be Homesick: A Brief Guide By E.M. Wittlock

The first time you hear about homesickness, you'll wonder why the hell everyone is crying.

You'll be at an all-girls church camp, sitting on a log that seems to sweat from the previous day's rain, trying not to breathe in the campfire smoke when the wind blows your way.

The girls will be taking turns standing up and sharing their faith, their witness, their testimony, whatever they've chosen to call it this year, and every damn one of them will be crying. They'll say that God is real and he helped guide them through this trialsome week as they ached and shook and groaned from this "homesickness." You'll wonder, at first, if that's what they're calling the camp stomach bug, but you'll soon realize that's not quite right.

"I miss my brothers," One of the girls will say, sniffing and quaking, "And my mom, and my dad, and our dog. I love camp, but I just get so homesick."

"Oh," you'll think, *"are we supposed to miss them?"*

And you'll gather that the answer is yes, but you won't know why. A week away from your brother's fists, your mother's yelling, and your father's punishments has been the best week you've had all summer. You'll wonder what that says about you, what that means, but then you'll turn your mind to more important matters. Such as the fact that the s'mores have been brought out now that everyone has finished crying, and Jessica from cabin four is clearly taking far more chocolate than she needs.

The second time you really think about homesickness, you'll be freshly fifteen in an overfilled minivan whose motor hums like a fat June beetle stuck on its back.

Your sisters will be crying, saying they miss everyone so much, that they're already homesick. They'll start this conversation over again every time you pass a state border sign, and you'll wonder how they're staying hydrated enough to keep it up.

This, again, will make no sense to you. How are you supposed to be homesick when your home is currently following you in a box truck? You will not miss the fields that made

your throat swell when they were cut, or the boys you used to be friends with, who stopped talking to you once everyone else with your sort of body began to wear lace and chains, and fickle alliances around their throats. You will not miss, either, the woman who would tap your head with her pen in church when you dozed off, and the girls in the locker room who would snicker at your “boy clothes” and that extra bit of flesh that clung to your middle despite how you tried to run it off.

You won't get to wonder about it very long, however, because out the window you'll see a sign proclaiming, “Welcome to Tennessee!” And your sisters will be back at it again, answering that proclamation with, “I never got to give Bryson my number,” and, “They're all going to forget about me. They say they won't but they will. I was going to be on cheer team this year, I just know it. We were all going to be on cheer team.”

When you begin to understand homesickness, it will be too late.

You'll be holding your phone in your lap, turning it just barely so the glare from the plane window doesn't catch on the finger prints smudged across the screen. A cursor will blink at you from the end of the most damning thing you've ever written, and when it finally winks out it will feel like a gavel blow. Like some judgment, some fate, has been decided. You'll allow a few seconds for the message to send, and then you'll hesitate over the airplane mode button for far too long while your best friend reads that you're in love with her. She will be typing, three dots stalking you like the heads of Cerberus, when your thumb hits the screen and delays the inevitable for however long it takes to toss that winged tin can from Virginia to Utah.

You'll cry as the plane rises, and you'll hate that you're crying because it's a wonderful view and now you'll remember it blurry. You'll try to hide your tears from the middle-aged man beside you, but he will see, and wordlessly pass you his extra napkin. The pain

in your chest will grow tight and aching like the pressure building behind your nose, but you can't pop your ears to relieve it. Instead, you'll take out the pen you stole from a job fair, and to the napkin you'll say:

"I miss her so much already. I think I was a little too truthful a little too late. Hopefully the distance will help. Hopefully my chest refills, it's so empty right now I think I can hear it echo. I've never missed somebody like this. I think my throat will always have this lump, now. I think I'll choke to death on it."

And the man beside you will continue to say nothing, but the napkin will respond the only way it can with: "Thank you for choosing Southwest!" and, "The drinks are on us!"

The day you understand homesickness, you will have come full circle.

You'll be back in Missouri with a hospital bracelet scratching at your wrist from the way you're holding your phone, and your best friend will be on the other end telling you funny, and mundane, and terrible things.

"I can't walk by your house anymore," She'll admit with what you hope is a laugh, but know is a sob, "Every time I see the porch light on, I think I should go knock on the door and ask if you want to come walk with me. The family that lives there now has a teenage son. You should see him. He's got the most god-awful salmon colored shorts."

And you'll respond through sobs that you hope she thinks are laughter.

"Sorry I couldn't be there," And you'll beg your voice not to shake, "I— I planned to come back, at some point," Because you feel like you might be lying, "It's just, well, they moved

before I got the chance. I wish— I wish you were here. You and Alex. We have a new trampoline, and this time it's not under an oak tree."

"I hated those acorns," She'll sniff, "They always managed to roll right under the ball of your foot. Pretty sure one cut me once."

"Yeah," You'll quake, "They were the worst."

And when you hang up, an hour later, you will realize three things: One, you're still in love with her. Two, you now understand what it means to be homesick. Three, you wish you had more practice. You wish that you'd learned how to do it sooner, because tonight it feels impossible, and your chest is still echoing like it did on that plane, and you don't know if you'll ever be able to offer it something in the shape of home again.

E.M. Wittlock is an emerging author with an interest in all things beautiful, terrible, and especially, strange. She produces a variety of fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry belonging to a wide array of genres, but especially realistic fiction, surreal fiction, and creative nonfiction.

The Unsent Letter By Jingyi Liang

Mom, it's so difficult, almost agonizing, to write about you. I have not the slightest idea what this will turn out to be, these feeble words you will never read. A reconciliation? A self-deception? A bitter-tasting love story? I do not know. But words are my only salvation, so I will write on.

Your love for me when I was still very small was inscrutable. You loved me profusely, showered me with stylish little clothes that matched yours in color, shelves of Barbie dolls that sparked envy in my friends, piles of picture books promising fantastical worlds that I could visit any time. Your love was measured by material abundance.

Dad was away, and when he occasionally came back, he got drunk and then hit you. I used to hide every bottle in the house. I learned at too young an age how that pungent liquid turns his sober reticence into intoxicated violence, liberating the monstrosity in his repressed subconscious. I remember the shattered TV table and bedroom door. On many Kindergarten nights, those fights smothered by a frenzied, dipsomaniac heat were the waking nightmare before I could submit myself to sleep. I now understand how you must have felt, Mom. Your dear, familiar life was fast disintegrating like shreds of paper caught in a whirlwind while you sat crying at the void in its center, the black rivers of ruined make-up running down your pretty face.

And so your anger welled up in you. You had to redirect it or you would have exploded. And there I was, only three, a willful, vulnerable existence. Me spilling a small spoon of porridge onto my white, exquisite little top would infuriate you so that the air in the living room would congeal like clotted blood. I would wake up with bruises, and you would be sorry all over again. In fact, so sorry you would seem a little lost, as if you had not yet been acquainted with the maternal facet of your fragile being. Sharing a bed with you, my nights were overshadowed by your volatile moods. On your jovial days you would hold me, but sometimes when I had trouble falling asleep late at night, I could once again smell the blood clotting in you, despite subduing my breathing and minimizing my bodily movements. There I lay, like a miniature corpse beside you, so you would be tricked into thinking that I had fallen asleep, so you would not start waging wars against me.

As I grew up, I read voraciously, became the best in school, and retreated into my inner, private space. I stopped being that ebullient child you did not know how to love. I

scarcely talked to you, fleeing instead to faraway realities in books and music. The impenetrable wall between us started growing then, while our realities fast became two separate, detached realms veiled from one another.

You did not care for my reticence – you said it was cold heartlessness. Maybe it was. You said I felt ashamed of you for not knowing as much as I did. Maybe I did. You said I wished you dead so I could get rid of you for good. Maybe the thought flickered for an instant before extinguishing itself, but I had long lost the desire to defend myself against your irrational temper and your incomplete heart.

Yet you were much placated by the taming passage of years. Seeing your wrinkled face in the mirror, you felt melancholic for my lost childhood which had soundlessly slipped through your fingers, no longer to be grasped, impossible to be rewritten. So you redeveloped your language of love into a continuous, substantial presence in my life. In those deep, nightly hours when my only salvation was soaking my mind in the melancholic waters of gentle rock songs, you would always, always break that spell, bringing with you the reality that I was running away from. You seemed intimidated by my ruminative nature, as if it were my deep thoughts, inaccessible to you, that sundered our unity. You feared that I would study literature and become a writer, using my weaponised pen against you, writing words you couldn't decipher. How ironic. You don't know English, yet here I am, documenting us. You will never read it, Mom, this is a letter that drowns in its unsent, rotting solitude.

Perhaps you already know this too well — when I went abroad for high school, I was also running away from you. As I left, my silent absence at home became a final statement of our failed relationship. Yet in those first months when even a glimpse of strange families dining or walking on the street would make me break into tears, pained as I was by my rootless state, I would call you at night. Calls interspersed with silences that neither of us knew how to fill. I tried to get to know you, the person you were. But you uttered sweet nothings that reverberated feebly in my mind before dissolving away. You

sounded hollow, lost, as if words evaded you. So I realized, with sadness, that I could not know you. You were a stranger even to yourself.

How could you love me properly, then?

But what defines love, multi-dimensional as it is?

Our love is more genetic than learned. It is the bond of heredity and unconditionality that bridges our chasmic disparateness. On those quiet afternoons at home where neither of us spoke much except for some innocuous small talk – under that spell of banal stillness – we are restored to being, simply, mother and daughter.

Perhaps someday, just perhaps, I will see your brokenness in a loving light, understand you without judging you, and we can bridge that chasm between us by doing something we both love. Gardening, perhaps? In the glow of floral radiance and the refreshing smell of rain-washed soil, maybe we'll understand our flawed nature. Maybe I can even help you find the pieces of you that you don't know are lost. Maybe.

Jingyi is in her last year of high school in Singapore. She is a lover of stream-of-consciousness narratives, particularly *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf. She can often be found dreaming of a parallel reality, caught in minor existential crises, or wondering what movie to watch on Friday night. She aspires to be a nonfiction writer in the future.

Ode to My Summer Camp Nemesis By Annie Wyner

I met Amy in the place where many great love stories blossomed: a Jewish overnight camp. She was ten years old, the kind of person that radiated confidence in a way I never could. She was a dancer and an actress; she loved animals and music and books; she had every color of nail polish, and she could french braid anyone's hair. At eleven years old, I decided that I had to hate her. I hated how effortless she was, how gawky and unwieldy my body felt next to hers. I hated the way she always knew the perfect thing to say in every situation, the way she never yelled or cried. I hated the way she always talked about boys, the ease with which she understood herself and the world around her. I hated her, and even so, she was the kindest person I'd ever met. She took my scowling in stride, asked to braid my hair and paint my nails, grabbed my hands and danced with me at song session. She taught me how to make friendship bracelets and caught lightning bugs for me, cradling them in her small hands. She was kind, generous, beautiful, and I had to hate her, because the alternative was too terrifying to think about.

Looking back at that first summer, it is obvious now that my hatred of Amy was more about me than anything else. I was young and awkward, so deep in the closet that I didn't even know that I was in the closet at all. I realize now that I didn't ever hate Amy or her braids or her friendship bracelets – hatred was simply more digestible than what I felt for her. I couldn't put a name to the pang I felt in my stomach when she grabbed my hands or the ache in my chest when she talked about the boys in the other cabins. It was easier to call these things disgust or jealousy than to see them for what they truly were because if I admitted that those feelings were love, then what did that make me?

To this day, I still struggle to describe what I feel for Amy. I don't understand why, 8 years later, I still feel the indent of her in my life. I don't know why I think of her when my friends talk about their first kisses, their first relationships, their first heartbreaks when she was none of those things to me. I think of that summer, of that blur of mosquito-bitten legs and nail polish and the hum of cicadas, and I am an eleven-year-old girl, afraid of her own shadow once again. Maybe these feelings are girlhood; maybe to become a

woman, we all must feel that pang in our chest at another hand in our own, that unspoken longing. Maybe love is as simple as lightning bugs and french braids.

Annie Wyner (she/her) is a student at Oberlin College, where she is pursuing her BA in Comparative Literature. She is originally from Cleveland, Ohio, where she lives with her parents, twin brother, and dog.

Memorable: The Evanescence of Memory in an Artist's World By Yike Zhang

In Bruno Collet's film *Mémorable*, the protagonist Louis holds a gun to his head in a moment of resigned, existential despair only to pull the trigger and realize that he holds instead an ordinary hairdryer. Collet's film is not a comedy, however, but a tragedy: a sobering and melancholy portrayal of the devastation of Alzheimer's disease. Collet was inspired to produce this resplendent animated short by the suffering of artist William Utermohlen, who, after having been diagnosed with the disease, documented the gradual decay of his cognition through self-portraits.

Mémorable, however, transcends the tragic nature of the disease and becomes a beautiful love story. Despite Louis' difficulties, he retains an unflagging love for his wife, Michelle, and for art in general. Even when his memory for her fades, his love remains and is expressed touchingly in his portraits of her – a love that matches Collet's own clear reverence for the arts.

Indeed, his adoration of the arts is apparent throughout the piece, be it through elaborate homages to surrealist artist Salvador Dali, or to the raw and unsettling style of figurative artist Francis Bacon. Collet's precise and nuanced approach to the subject is enhanced by his use of stop-motion animation and claymation techniques, which enables the audience to better empathize with Louis' condition. Louis eventually becomes unable to recognize himself. He regards the bathroom as "occupied" when seeing his own reflection in the mirror. In an increasingly abstract and twisted world, Louis's love for Michelle and art becomes pure instinct. He paints for Michelle, who now appears to him as a translucent figure composed of fragmentary paint strokes. They then dance seamlessly, until Michelle, Louis's last piece of memory, vanishes into a swirl of drifting pigment granules.

Such romantic tragedy alone is inadequate to make *Mémorable* a magnum opus, however the core of the film lies in its ingenuity in venerating earlier artworks. The most obvious expression is Collet's transposition of rough, clay-textured brushwork to Van Gogh-styled strokes. The scene thoroughly divorces from reality, juxtaposing Louis's restless, illusionary world to that of Van Gogh. In fact, Van Gogh can be construed as Louis's prototype: his lunatic mentality and abounding artistic creations provide the film with more space for aesthetic interpretation. Similarly, the psychiatrist character borrows from the manner of Alberto Giacometti's sculptures: he is volumeless, weightless, and close to disintegration, a physical manifestation of the psychic affliction of Alzheimer's disease. This film will surely resonate with those who have a passion for art and the courage to stare into the face of human agony and yet admire the beauty and dignity of it all. At the very least, Collet's transcendent artistry will surely be memorable.

Yike Zhang is a sixteen-year-old sophomore from China currently attending school in Boston. She has a deep passion for international relations, creative writing, and debating. In her free time, Yike immerses herself in the world of song and dance. She

finds particular delight in musicals, with “Hamilton,” “Dear Evan Hansen,” and “Six!” being among her favorites.

My Irrational Fear of Grocery Stores By Lyndsey Kim

Because I am scared of grocery stores, I find comfort in grocery lists. Whenever I enter a grocery store, my anxiety peaks, looking at the chaos of all the shoppers trying to get out of the store as fast as possible. Avoiding the hoards of people that crowd sale items is like navigating a labyrinth, unsure of which aisle will leave me trapped in a dead-end of owner-less carts. As I try to get through this jungle, I cling to my only solace: the list of items I came here to retrieve. A direct plan amidst all of the disorder and disarray, a sliver of certainty that encases me in a blanket of comfort. As I grow older, I realize that life is kind of like a grocery store, filled with people, opportunities (to save big), endless distractions. The difference between a grocery store and real life, however, is that life is infinitely more complex.

In the 8th grade, I had my whole life planned out: I would get into a good college, then a good medical school, then a good residency, and ultimately be a successful doctor. I dedicated myself to this, like it was as easy as walking down the aisle picking between apples or oranges. I made to-do lists for everything: projects, homework, summer plans, weekend plans. These lists flooded my notebooks and calendars. Every time something new popped up, it would be added to a list and later checked off. I began to rely on lists for everything, and felt helpless without them. I began setting unrealistic expectations of myself, and when I was unable to check things off my list, I felt unaccomplished, losing sight of reality. As my mental health and motivation deteriorated as a result of these unrealistic expectations, I began questioning the point of lists in the first place.

Reality came crashing down when my older sister was first diagnosed with primary sclerosing cholangitis. The news temporarily cleared the fog I was experiencing as a result of my mental health deterioration, and I was forced to learn to grapple with the scary truth. The odds of getting primary sclerosing cholangitis, also known as PSC, at a

young age are extremely slim. On top of that, because autoimmune disease is so rare, there are very few research and treatment options for PSC.

All of these factors made me realize that my lists could never take into account all of the obstacles life presented, and that not everything was a matter of checking off a box to symbolize completion. Though lists may be helpful tools while grocery shopping, it is impossible to organize the chaos of life in such a way. The scary truth is that there are much larger obstacles than crowds of shoppers or grocery carts between you and your goals, and sometimes there are things that you can't expect to complete.

So instead of focusing on the things I couldn't control, I began putting passion and effort into other areas of interest, like STEM. Like a grocery list, many STEM problems can be solved through a routine checklist. They have predictable outcomes, but also strive to predict obstacles. In fact, scientists are taught to expect obstacles during an experiment. They are taught to take these into account and record the same data at different times to minimize error. Through STEM, I have learned how to manage my expectations, allowing room for problem and error, which are essential aspects of experimenting and learning.

The world is as chaotic and evolving as a grocery store. Many shoppers are all striving for the same item on sale, pushing their way toward the product they want the most. Instead of only focusing on the items on your list, learning to take your time to explore other options can lead you to new items you never considered before. Grocery stores used to scare me, but now they've become just another place for me to discover something new.

Art



Recess

Recess: As the two boys scale the towering letters of “Pismo Beach”, their determined expressions and outstretched arms speak to a sense of adventure and exploration. The bold, vibrant colors of the letters stand in stark contrast to the muted, lowkey tones of the surrounding landscape, emphasizing the excitement and joy that comes with discovery. Yet there’s a sense of nostalgia too, as if the boys are reaching back into the past and pulling something timeless and treasured into the present. Perhaps this artwork speaks to the idea that, no matter how far we go or how much we change, there will always be a place for us in the familiar landscapes of our memories.

Arihant Jain is an artist and writer from the San Francisco Bay Area who melds his passions in engineering and writing to create poetry. He is Teen Sequins Top 5 Featured Poet and his work has been recognized by the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers and National YoungArts Foundation. When not creating, he enjoys solving algorithmic problems.

Seasonal By Isabella Dunsby



Seasonal

Isabella Jia Dunsby is a high school student in Seoul, South Korea. Her work has previously been published in The Daphne Review and Cathartic Literary Magazine among others.

Connected By Ananya Jain



Connected

What happens when two people fall in love? They become interconnected and fully twined together. Sometimes being in love is suffocating as two people overcommit and feel stuck. I wanted to portray a negative aspect of falling in love and how it can leave two people feeling like they have to be together at the expense of their own happiness. Commitment, connection, attachment; falling in love draws two people to a state of obsessiveness.

Ananya Jain is a senior in high school at Parish Episcopal School, Dallas TX, who discovered her love for art at a very young age. Expressing herself through color and mark making has always been a part of her. Today, she enjoys creating realistic pieces with oil paint and acrylics, often depicting her friends and family.

The Art of Serenity By Fariha Zaman



The Art of Serenity

Fariha Zaman is a high school student from India. She is an Author, Poet and an Artist. She drew this Art Piece to express the serenity found in the mountains and the hills. She believes in expressing emotions through Art and Writing.

Missing the One You Love By Katie Terrell



RT

Missing the One You Love

Katie Terrell, an undergraduate junior at Stanford University majoring in Art History, creates art as a form of stress relief. Her art is characterized by a unique style of abstract geometric forms, featuring crisp lines and sharp angles that enable her to communicate intricate feelings and concepts. Each artwork reflects her inner world, giving viewers a glimpse into her thoughts, emotions, and experiences.

Metropolitan Lines, Dominalgorhythms By Huan Gu



Metropolitan Lines



Dominalgorhythms

Huan (Joy) Gu is a student at the Cheltenham Ladies' College, UK. Her artworks are inspired by her city walks and restaurant hunting around Shanghai. She focuses on the dynamic and fluid lines of infrastructure from her photography of buildings in both London and Shanghai. Together with these lines and an antique background, she created "Metropolitan lines". Her interest of food prompts her to ponder about the relationship between diet and mental wellness. We live in a world where everything is easily accessible, but the knowledge of harmful effects due to these conveniences is concealed. Through her pieces, Joy hopes to reveal problems related to health and wellbeing for the society to discuss and improve. At the same time, she desires to inspire those encountering her work to focus on loving themselves as a

crucial goal in life. She has initiated this process by informing more communities of the health effects of fast food by publishing an art piece called “Cezanne’s Takeout” through the Celebrating Art contest in 2022.

Wish, Growth By Jenny Zou





Wish



Growth

Jenny Zou is a Junior at York House School. She enjoys acrylic, oil, and watercolour painting and suffers from existential crises about her artistic career. Jenny appreciates greek column orders and can be found cooking up bizarre recipes in her spare time. Jenny also loves cats and hopes to own one after she leaves for college.
