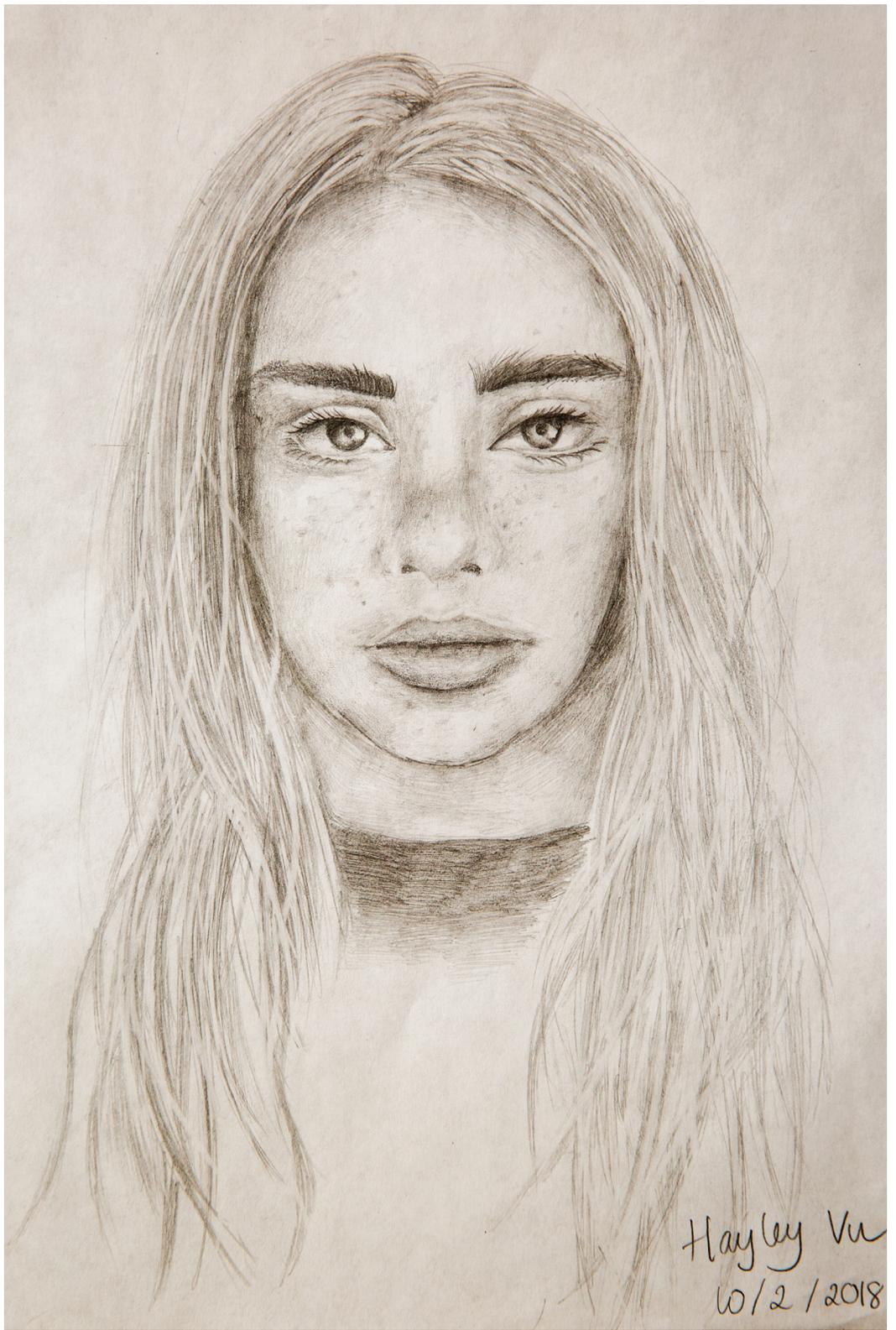




{ the andrea '19 }



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Dear St. Andrew's,

It's easy to say exactly what *The Andean* is: a collection of work by young writers in the SAS community. But this fails to fully capture what this journal offers its writers and readers. For writers, *The Andean* presents the chance to share a talent that, for much of the year, remains hidden. *The Andean* gives students the opportunity to show off these creative talents, and rewards their effort and ingenuity with consumption by *The Andean's* readers. For the teacher, parent, family member, or peer, *The Andean* provides a place of connection between reader and student writer.

It takes immense bravery and dedication not simply to submit to *The Andean* but to place your work on public display. This year's submissions are truly the strongest and most insightful the School's writers have to offer.

We hope that you find the same enjoyment in these stories and poems that we did in discovering them. We're proud to wish you happy reading.

Love,

*The Editors*





This is Jim. Jim taught me how  
to live without a father.

This is Joseph. Joseph taught me  
how to fall in love. He also taught  
me about self-discipline, self-  
respect, and how to listen to  
ska. I had my first kiss at 18  
and I'm glad I waited. Once,  
he made me try egg-drop soup.  
It was bad.



This is Evan. Evan taught me that my sister is capable of finding nice boys. Evan is a little new, so I don't have many stories yet. I gave him a tattoo of a random face once. It was fun. I like Evan.

This is Joey. Joey taught me how to feel free. He also taught me about substance abuse, hardship, and how to get into trouble. Joey is like a brother. When I was 13, we snuck out, walked to a gas station, and bought popsicles. We paid in pennies.

NADIA HOLCOMB '19

# The Interpreter

IRIS HWANG '20

The Japanese family looked at Shunji with fear.

“Our daughter is sick,” Mrs. Tanaka said. She spoke in clear but trembling Japanese. In her arms was a small, thin girl of around three, pale and breathing heavily. “The medical facilities in the camp cannot help her.”

Shunji Nishimura, a young man who appeared much older, turned away from her and toward the older general on the opposite side of the table. He translated, “They want to leave the camp.”

General Johnson scanned them with cold, blue eyes. “Until the war is over, we cannot release any Japanese.”

“As I have said, no Japanese are authorized to leave,” Shunji told the family.

Mr. Tanaka turned to Shunji pleadingly, grabbing his hand. “June will die without proper medicine.” Mr. Tanaka’s face flickered like a candle on the verge of guttering. “We promise to come right back.”

Shunji withdrew his hand from Mr. Tanaka’s desperate grasp. “As I have said, no Japanese are authorized to leave.” His words fell like nails to the floor, hard, pointed.

Mrs. Tanaka cried out, “I don’t understand why you are helping them. You are like us, not them.”

“I am not Japanese,” Shunji said.

“What did they say?” General Johnson demanded, his eyes narrowing.

“Not anything of importance,” Shunji said.

General Johnson opened his mouth, then paused. He turned to Shunji. “What do you think should be done?”

A pause.

Shunji turned to them. The Tanakas stared back at him, hope emanating from them like a fever.

The choice had already been made. General Johnson stared at Shunji, face intent. Yet another test.

His voice, both in English and Japanese, was flat and emotionless.

“Request denied,” Shunji said.

As Shunji walked out of the meeting with General Johnson and the Tanakas, he heard whispers.

“General Johnson is a fool for trusting a Jap to guard the Japs.”

“How do we know he’s not plotting to help his countrymen when he does his ‘translations’?”

“Once a Jap, always a Jap.”

One of the officers sauntered over to Shunji. “How ya doing, Officer?” Officer Lewis asked. He always seemed to say ‘Officer’ as if it were a private joke. He smiled at Shunji in a way that seemed friendly on the surface but was entirely without warmth.

“Very well,” Shunji replied. He knew Officer Lewis looked down on him as much as all the others. “And you?”

“Ah, well, these Japs,” Officer Lewis said, stretching the word, “these Japs are getting awful restless, don’t you think?”

The past few weeks, there had been a sense of rebellion rustling through camp. More and more attempts to flee, to climb the barbed wire fence. The sun-baked land was so flat that Shunji could see all of the perimeters from a single glance, like a bowl. The makeshift camp was hastily constructed in the wasteland, people herded in, and shut in from the outside world. A ghost land, filled with real people.

“They should know they’re in here for their protection. I mean, who knows what’d happen to them if they were outside?”

The threat was not lost on Shunji. If the camp and guards were to protect them, Shunji thought darkly, why were snipers pointing their guns inwards at the internees and not outward?

He shrugged off Officer Lewis’ further attempts to talk to him and walked toward his office. He saw sparse splotches of flowers outside the internees’ barracks. Shunji felt an unexpected twinge as he imagined the internees’ attempts to pretty up their bare, tiny barracks.

In his office, he looked at the framed paper that shone proudly from his desk. He turned it around to look at the glossy paper. It read: Presentation of Commander Field Army Commendation to Shawn Nikimara. Both first and last name were wrong.

The first person Shunji met in the army was Raymond Hernandez. They ate cold sandwiches outside on the beach overlooking the grayer than gray sea. Third day in the midst of the War.

“Say,” Raymond had said, “why do you go by Shunji?”

“That’s my name,” Shunji’d responded. “What else would I go by?”

He laughed. “Oh, cute, like my real name is Raymond. You wanna give them another reason to pick on you?”

Raymond had died without fanfare within a few weeks. That night, it occurred to Shunji that he never knew what Raymond’s real name was. He wrote “Shawn

Nishimura” on a scrap of paper and signed every identification form since as “Shawn.”

In the end, the army had ended up misspelling his last name too. Shunji received a paper with a stranger’s name on it. Now, he turned the frame back so it faced the door away from him.

There was a knock at the door. “Shawn?” someone called out. “Your mother’s here.”

Shunji’s mom stood at the entrance of the camp. She’d never visited Shunji since he began working here. Secretly, he had been glad she never visited. When he walked among the internees, Shunji was keenly aware of his immaculately pressed officer uniform. Because he was Japanese, he stood out among the others who were as white as their uniforms. And an interpreter, he stood out among the fearful internees because of the power he held amongst them. A sheep among sheepdogs, growling and snapping at the herd of sheep.

She looked lost. She held her purse tighter, as if she were afraid someone would take her to the barracks.

“Mom,” Shunji hissed. He grabbed her by the arm. “What are you doing here?”

“Your otou-san,” she began in Japanese.

“Speak in English.”

“Your father,” she said with a bit of difficulty, “your father is missing.”

Shunji felt the blood drain out of his face. “Wh—why did—what happened?”

“I don’t really know what happened. He went to the supermarket to get some ginger to make shogayu. He thought you seemed a bit tired lately. And then—it’s been hours and—”

Shunji suddenly thought of the anti-Japanese crimes in the neighborhood recently. “I’m an officer, Mother,” he said, smiling forcedly. “Nothing would have happened to Father.”

Shunji burst into the police room. It was bland and institutional. A couple of police officers sat typing, clicking their keyboards.

Shunji saw his father, sitting in a chair, gripping a plastic bag of carefully skinned ginger tightly. He had a bruise blossoming on his right cheek.

Suddenly, Shunji realized how old his father was. His father used to stand ramrod straight and had never let anyone talk to him disrespectfully, much less detain him in a police station. But ever since he’d returned from the camp, he had become smaller, a shadow of the proud man he once was.

“What is going on?” Shunji demanded. “Why is my father here?”

His father turned his head, startled. He had never heard Shunji speak English in front of him.

“Someone reported suspicious activity from this man,” the cop said.

Shunji became furious. “What kind of suspicious activity?”

Mr. Nishimura’s head went back and forth, like he was watching a tennis game but couldn’t understand the language being spoken by the announcers. “He seemed to be starting a fight with some young boys,” the officer responded, unblinking. “And of course, we did wonder... why exactly he—”

And you, Shunji could almost hear. *Why exactly he and you—*  
“—isn’t in the internment camps.”

The cop let the question hang in the air. Blood thumped thickly in Shunji’s ears and temples. “I am an officer at Kipborg Internment Camp.”

The cop’s brows knitted. “But...” he stopped.

Shunji swallowed his rage and explained, “I work as an interpreter. Please contact General Johnson.” While they waited, Shunji spoke with his father and pieced together the story.

Mr. Nishimura had walked to the store and bought some ginger. A couple of people looked at him and whispered. He didn’t pay much attention to them. However, a group of white teenage boys followed him out of the store. Mr. Nishimura had stepped aside, but they kicked him and called him ‘a dirty Jap dog.’ As Mr. Nishimura had fled, he called the police. Instead of taking the boys into custody, they took Mr. Nishimura.

Shunji could feel the strain all over his body as his nerves grew tighter and tighter.

Finally, the officer held out a telephone receiver to Shunji, and Shunji was relieved to hear General Johnson on the other end of the line.

“What’s all this?” General Johnson asked.

“They detained my father. For walking.”

No answer. Shunji tried again. “The cops asked why he wasn’t in an internment camp so I asked them to call you—”

“Yes. Well. What do you want me to do about it?”

“He really didn’t do anything wrong. They made a mistake.”

An excruciating pause sucked all the air from Shunji’s lungs. What if all the sacrifices he had made were for nothing? But then General Johnson chuckled as if it was nothing. “It seems like you’re always getting yourself into some kind of trouble, huh? I’ll order him to be released, but just tell him to stay out of trouble.”

“Yes, sir,” Shunji replied.

Shunji left the police station, his arm around his father’s frail shoulders.

At home, his father said wearily, "Another family got rounded up today. We must be the last left in the neighborhood."

Shunji's father had always blended in with the crowd to belong, to be among a sea of familiar faces. But Shunji, he knew what it felt like to be the last one standing.

On his second week of general training, the head officer had stood Shunji in front of the other soldiers. "Look," he had said, smirking. "This is a Jap. This is what the enemy looks like."

The other soldiers howled with laughter. Shunji stood there, fists clenched. The soldiers' derisive laughter had bounced off the ground and ricocheted between his ribs. It lodged deep inside his chest. He would remember this moment when he killed his first man. His eyes, frozen open as the life leaked out of him, reminded him of his cousins. The boys he'd played with as a child. More like him than the men on his side.

He had joined the army like a good American, but his face, eyes, and body had betrayed him as Other, as something inherently unAmerican. The enemy.

Something deep inside Shunji ached. He wished that he could cry.

The night was dark and cold. Shunji was doing patrol. Since his father's arrest two weeks ago, he'd stayed for longer shifts. The moon was bright and everything was illuminated. Shunji would later wonder what would have happened if the moon wasn't quite so bright that night, if he couldn't have seen it. Would he have felt better?

However, Shunji could see everything. Two figures were struggling to climb over the barbed fence.

He ran over and pulled one down to the ground. It was the Tanakas. They were running away after all.

"Please," Mr. Tanaka said. His face was pale. "Please let us go. I can't let my June die. You're Japanese like us, aren't you?"

As he saw Mr. Tanaka's face, Shunji was reminded forcibly of his own father in the police station. Tired, afraid, knowing he was utterly disposable. A shrunken down version of himself.

Shunji blew the whistle, calling the other guards over. He watched the horror and betrayal play out on Mr. Tanaka's face. The other guards ran over and moved to grab the Tanakas, when Shunji stopped them. His head flooded with memories.

*"General Johnson is a fool for trusting a Jap to guard the Japs."*

*"How do we know he's not plotting to help his countrymen when he does his 'translations'?"*

*"Once a Jap, always a Jap."*

*"You are replaceable."*

*“This is a Jap. This is what the enemy looks like.”*

All of these words rattled around Shunji’s head.

“You dirty Jap dog!” Shunji screamed out loud. He punched Mr. Tanaka in the face. Mr. Tanaka collapsed to the floor like a broken folding chair.

Mrs. Tanaka screamed in horror, but the guards pulled her back. They stared at Shunji with an odd look: confused, astonished, but with the slightest trace of acceptance.

Mr. Tanaka’s head lolled to the side, his open eyes on Shunji. He raised his arms to protect himself from Shunji’s punches. Shunji heard bone snap. He could distantly hear his daughter screaming, “Otou-san” over and over again from her mother’s arms. Mr. Tanaka’s broken glasses lay next to him.

He couldn’t really remember what happened after that. Mr. Tanaka, bloodied and unconscious, was dragged back to the barracks. He, his wife, and daughter were under heavy surveillance. Officer Lewis clapped Shunji on the shoulder and told him to go home. Shunji left the camp for his house, face numb, hands cold.

Shunji walked straight toward his room. He couldn’t look at his father without seeing Mr. Tanaka slumped over on the ground.

When Shunji had come back from the war, he had seen the executive order nailed to every telephone pole. In a panic, he’d rushed to his house and found it ransacked and empty, windows punched in. As he clutched a paper commending him for his service to the U.S. with his name misspelled, he realized that his family had been whisked off to an internment camp.

It was only when he put on this uniform that his parents were restored to their own home. The second he stopped, that would be the end of them and him.

Shunji knew all this. He stared at his hands, still wet with blood. He couldn’t recognize himself. He was so, so tired. He wanted to stop. He wondered if he could take his entire family, and just—run. Leave this country that broke its promises to them, that always, always treated them as the enemy. He couldn’t wash Mr. Tanaka’s blood off of his hands.

At dawn, Shunji quietly put his officer uniform on. It was time to go to work.



SU BEE KIM '19

# Bruce

RILEY BAKER '21

My grandfather's leg has swelled up like a balloon, and now hardened  
With pus. He shows it off to us proudly at the breakfast table,  
his skin red from the Midwestern winter cold, crisscrossed with blue-gray varicose  
veins.

Lately, he has become obsessed with the buckthorn bushes that grow  
scraggly along the backside of our yard.

*It's not like this in New Hampshire*, my grandfather laments, slurping his coffee,  
leg extended forward, delicately.

I think my grandfather hates it here.

I think he hates it in the same way he hates the fact that his 2001 red Dodge Neon  
doesn't heat up fast enough,

that it plays his old *Les Miserables* CDs even when the radio's off,  
that it once sent my sister and I and him down into a frozen ditch last winter  
when it slid on some ice pulling out of our driveway.

My grandfather hates Illinois in the same way he loves New Hampshire.

In the way he loves to tell stories of his life then,

how he writes me long letters with five dollar bills tucked inside, cuts out newspaper  
clippings and leaves them at the table for my mother to find and read and  
cherish.

It is in the way that my grandfather pours gasoline into the long-abandoned fire pit  
dug in our yard and burns all the brush at night, when it gets dark early.

He sits with my dad, watching the flames, as they sip a few beers.

Sometimes, when I wake up in the cold morning and go to brush my teeth,  
eyes still burning with sleep,

I look out the window and see an eighty-year-old man, face obscured by a fleece  
hat and neckline of a down jacket, steadily hacking away at those damn  
buckthorn bushes in the frigid morning air.

You were not who I thought you were.

# Marinade

IZZY NIELSEN '21

Make me a marinade of childhood  
and let me feel it seep in for a while.  
It's sweet  
like those perfect cookies in the plastic case at the grocery store  
the pink frosting and the rainbow sprinkles and "please mom can we?"  
and like  
Milk with chocolate syrup still settling in,  
straw stirring making little whirlpools  
a chocolate ocean all for you and you can have a sip,  
and it's not sour like  
scraped knees and alcohol-wiped arms before shots,  
scary like  
movies where kids die  
because that could be you  
and maybe when mom's not looking someone could take you away.  
You were always cautious at the playground  
but not careful enough,  
always tripping over your own two feet—  
a big kid now.  
This marinade seeps in so close you feel it in your bones  
like standing at the top of a treehouse and looking down,  
what if you were to fall and who would be there to catch you?  
Running too fast,  
never slowing down.  
Why wait for anything?  
Days were eternities within seconds  
and what was time?  
Hours were confusing and which hand on the clock was the minutes again?  
Your brother knew all the answers,  
never not cool,  
3 grades older but still playing pretend—  
nerf guns and wrestling and absolutely no princesses.  
Who wants to sprint in a ball gown?  
Let me absorb that feeling of innocence and taking risks and not caring,  
let me feel it for a little while again  
and let it marinate.



# Thick Air

DIANA HONEY '19

Stuck in that space between waking and sleep, the birdcalls you hear through the windows pull you towards waking. Opening your eyes, you find yourself lying in your blue leather armchair, your three-month-old daughter asleep in your arms. You smile at this rare sight, knowing once you put her down, she will not rest until you return to this armchair in 12 hours to rock her to sleep. You walk upstairs to the room she shares with her brother. You pull his covers up over him, lay his sister in her crib, praying they will both sleep for at least another hour. Your wife's best friend, Erin, is pregnant with twins, and you thank your lucky stars you didn't have two babies to rock to sleep. The nursery door creaks as you close it. You put on your suit, black



socks, and black shoes, brush your hair, give yourself a wonky smile in the mirror, and walk downstairs. You can't be late for this interview. You need this job. You grab your keys and your briefcase, lock the door, and walk to the train station. The watch on your wrist reads 6:06.

"This is Amtrak train 117. Next stop, New York Penn Station."

You read on the train, glancing out the window on occasion, watch rows of uniform townhomes turn to rolling fields and then to factories. You arrive at Penn Station, then take the 1 train downtown to the World Trade Center. When you climb the stairs outside, you can feel the warm air. When you reach the top, you blink at the

too-bright sun, you put your sunglasses on. It's not supposed to be this warm in September. You walk towards the shade of towers one and two. You walk through the revolving doors of tower one, show your ID at the desk, and take the elevator to floor 97. The clock in the elevator reads 7:16.

The interview runs short. You walk to the subway station underneath tower one and are waiting for the 1 train when you feel a shake in the ground. People are murmuring and looking around for the source of the tremor when a crush of people enter the subway station, screaming and hollering for everyone about something that happened outside. You run up the stairs against the crush of traffic, and barely register the crackling voice over the loudspeakers: "In accordance with emergency procedures, all trains are canceled until further notice... In accordance with emergency procedures, all trains are canceled until further notice." You feel the air grow thick



THOMAS CUNNINGHAM '19

as you ascend the staircase. You can tell something is wrong because the sun is no longer as bright and the air seems to be clogged with smoke. People are running from this thick air in every direction. You look up. A wave of nausea rises in your chest. Your mouth falls open. Every atom of your body heats up. Your face turns red. Every atom of you wants to break free. To run away. You realize you aren't getting back to New Jersey anytime soon. The watch on your wrist reads 8:49.

A woman knocks into your chest. Continues running down the street without apologizing. You watch her run away. Recognize the glisten of her hair. The way it falls down her back. You call out her name but she doesn't respond. You cry out for her again. She doesn't even turn around. You run after the woman. You push through crowds of people crying and running in every direction. When she finally turns around, you realize she was not who you expected. Your wife is still back home in New Jersey. She is safe, not stuck in crowds of people watching buildings fall. She is at home. She probably doesn't even know what's happening. You take out your phone to call her, to tell her you are OK, that you got out. The top left corner of your phone reads NO SERVICE. The clock reads 8:50.

All you can look at is your feet. Looking up is too horrible. You try to call your wife again. Turn off and on the cellular data on your phone 10 times. Pray you will have at least one bar of service. You ask anyone, "please sir, can you get me back to New Jersey?" All the bridges and tunnels are closed. The trains have stopped running. The watch on your wrist reads 9:00.

You are on your way to buy a ticket to a boat going to Jersey City when the screams start fresh again. You turn around. See the South Tower. People around you fall to their knees, sob. You can only stare. Your eyes are fixed on the embers. A second cloud of smoke begins to cover Manhattan. The blue sky you saw entering the north tower is gone. Even the sun seems to be covered in a layer of dust. The watch on your wrist reads 9:03.

You have been waiting for almost an hour when people start screaming again. They point at the South Tower. You can no longer see what they are looking at. The entire area has been covered in thick, black smoke. You can only see the outlines of the people around you. You wait for the haze to clear. Little scraps of paper fall like snowflakes. It's almost like a dance. You become entranced, and don't realize what has happened until you look up. You never knew something so stable could fall so easily. The bells in a nearby church ring 10 times.

You finally get to the ticket desk for the Jersey City boat. It seems everyone and their sister are trying to leave New York. You finally reach the desk: "I need to get to Jersey City, please. My wife, and my babies..." "Will be fine without you for the next

few hours,” says the police officer behind the desk. “Please sir,” you say. “I was in the Trade Center.” This gets you on the next boat to Staten Island. It’s not Jersey City, but it will have to do. You think of a plan to get home and watch the smoky skyline from the boat. You check your watch, see the glaring 10:27, and wonder how long it will be before you see your wife again. You blink and suddenly the entire North Tower engulfs itself in smoke. You choke back a sob. It’s worse this time—you know what is happening. You wonder how many have died today. You think of the woman who interviewed you. You find out later that floor 97 was the impact site of the plane. You turn to face the inside of the boat. The clock on the wall reads 10:28.

You walk to the road from the dock, hoping some sympathetic trucker will pick you up and drive you back home. Sticking out your thumb becomes too much effort to sustain, so you just stand for what seems like hours, until your back is drenched with sweat and your legs cannot seem to hold you up anymore. You have one bar of service, so you call your wife and pray she picks up. When she does, you both choke back sobs at the sound of each other’s voices. “I thought...,” she says. You don’t let her finish the sentence. You tell her you weren’t even in the building when it happened. That you will be home soon. Then she says the last thing you would ever expect: “Honey, Erin’s about to give birth. The babies will be here by the time you get home,” and the first rays of sun break through the hazy sky.

# Dear Anticipation

ELLIE BEAMS '21

How do you intoxicate me still  
When you've taught me again and again not to trust you?  
Is it because you make my heart wrench when your  
Sweet voice worms into my mind?  
Last time you visited, you convinced me that maybe  
He was the one. In my ear you murmured "beauty"  
And you showed me white sparkling teeth  
Shining through one of those smiles that can make a heart melt.  
I saw that smile, I felt my heart sink through my body,  
But all that I found in that cheap restaurant off Ninth  
Was a knock off suit and receding thin hair.  
But, you make my heart melt.  
You, my desperate friend, are more insistent  
Than my fingers on my phone as I wait too long  
In a restaurant, at the movies, a park. You kept me up  
All nights, filling my mind with too many dreams for sleep.  
You've led me, blind, through brown eyes and blue  
And, just that once, hazel.  
Yet through all the time by my side, all that you ever told me was lies.  
Men are inherent liars, but you aren't a man  
So how can you as well deceive me so easily?  
You keep me company on long bus rides  
And late night shifts.  
You entertain me while I lie alone  
In bed, but you give me no true comfort.  
You never last.  
This time—walking down some other street to some other coffee shop  
To meet some other person desperate for something—  
I will not listen to your whisperings,  
And I will not call for your reassurance while I walk  
Once again down Ninth.  
This time, maybe it'll be better without you.



CHARLOTTE OXNAM '19

# Where Were You?

SPENCER MCKENZIE '20

I was here when the climate was changing.

When the chance of there being a “White Christmas” or any more family ski trips  
became less

And less and then suddenly disappeared.

I was here when people wore short sleeves in the winter and the summers were filled  
with Continuous rain,

When the change that was occurring around us was so slight and spread out over so  
many years That it typically went unnoticed by the average person.

But it was there and it affected us all.

I was here when there was no such thing as complete safety.

When people fled from their homes every few months; away from hurricanes that  
decimated

Entire communities as well as dreams, tornados that transported people to lands of  
utter Destruction, earthquakes that made the ground underneath of us unstable,  
and rampaging fires

That consumed everything around them for miles, like an infection that could not and  
would not

Be contained.

I was here when people wore masks because the air that was supposed to sustain  
them, that was Supposed to be an essential ingredient for life, had become  
disgustingly toxic.

When social media accounts were valued more than trees, animals, and to an extent,  
more than

Our own lives.

I was here when human lives were put in danger every day so companies could  
continue to make Money, in order to power our buildings, heat our homes, and light  
the world, selfishly sustaining

Our own existence at the cost of the very world we live in.

During that time, the earth attempted to kill us, every day of the year, out of revenge for  
what we Had done to it, but we had it coming to us.

What we called natural disasters were just the earth’s powerful attempts to defend  
itself from its Invaders that were causing it excruciating pain.

Although, constant danger and worries were just a part of the game, invented by  
generations of

The past, played by generations yet unborn.  
It was a game played by every human who has ever set foot on this earth, but as the  
human race Slowly severed its connection to the natural world, the rules became  
obscure and then eventually Non-existent.

I was here when people attempted to make a change,  
When there was hope that someday we would come upon a solution to the biggest  
crisis the  
Human race has ever faced,  
When I attended marches, pleaded with representatives, and wrote articles,  
attempting to make  
My voice heard, trying to scare the world into action.  
Now it seems like most have given up,  
I hear “there is no solution” more often than I hear “there is one”.  
Now, instead of thinking about what my future will be like one day, I ask myself if I will  
even  
have one.  
And if somehow, I make it out of this phenomenon unharmed, what’s next?  
Well, if I was to follow the ongoing trend,  
I would sit my children down one day when they are still young and still very  
impressionable,  
While their brains are still soft and ready to be shaped by the world around them.  
I would look them in their innocent and unknowing eyes, which do not yet understand  
the harsh World that they will soon be thrown into, and I would tell them: “this is  
your burden now” and  
Then continue on as if none of it ever mattered.

Because none of it ever did matter.  
I felt alone.  
I was here, defending something so precious to our survival,  
Trying to return what we never had the right to steal in the first place.  
The earth required us to stand up for it in its time of need.  
I showed up, but where were you?





JACOB ZIMMERMAN '19

# What is Love?

MESSIAH DESSISO '20

Is love her being an abandoned house,  
empty,  
her walls thick and unkept  
yearning for love.

Is love how her first man balled his fist and swung heavy hands like wrecking balls.

Is love how her walls wore down with every swing,  
how with every “Fuck you” came a broken window in that house she called her body  
until one day,  
it was all gone.

Is love how he turned his wrecking ball hands into wings and flew away?

Is love the man she’s with now?

Is love them holding hands as the sun touches the water?

Is love how they used each other’s ears as lockboxes for their deepest secrets?

Is love him building her from the ground up, how he caressed her like a newborn  
baby?

Is love his gentle touch, trickling his fingers down her face?

Is love the constant butterflies in her stomach when she’s around him?

Is love the constant alcohol in his?

The alcohol, that been in his system ever since his mom died.

The one he picked up at her funeral and hasn’t put down since.

Is love the climax in this all?

Is love the many Advil bottles to supplement the fighting?

Is love the cupid arrows turned glass bottle that they shot at each other?

Is love the arguments that echoed through every room in their hollow house?

Is love the calm in the storm that he was for her?

Is love the fact that he is now the storm with no calm?

Is love the aftermath of it all?

Is love the birds that chirp in the trees after?

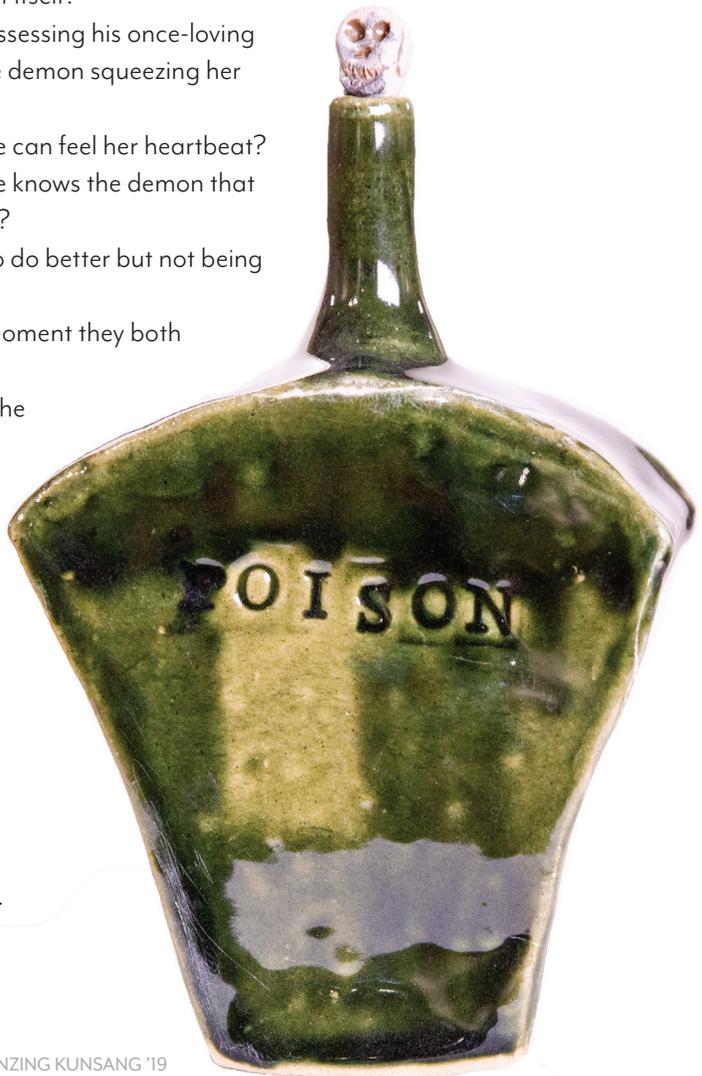
Is love the sirens that overshadow the birds?

Is love going to see him in prison, even though she’s the reason he’s there?

Is love her pressing her hand against the glass, yearning to hold his hand once  
again?

Is love him not putting his hand on the glass back?

Is love her driving home alone?  
Is love her thinking she wants him home?  
Is love her thinking that even when he had his hands around her lungs, he still took her breath away?  
Is love her thinking that even with the minefield they created with shattered glass, and the hurtful words that sliced the air like bullets, that they were in that war together?  
Or is love the moment itself?  
Is love the alcohol possessing his once-loving body, creating the demon squeezing her neck?  
Is love the fact that he can feel her heartbeat?  
Is love the fact that he knows the demon that overtook his body?  
Is love him wanting to do better but not being able to?  
Is love the peaceful moment they both experience?  
The moment before the birds chirp,  
the moment where they are both just staring into each others eyes.  
And again they are with one another.  
Like the old days,  
before prison,  
before the alcohol,  
before the fights.  
Just with one another.



# Orion

AUSTIN BRANNAN '19

My stomach drops as I look in the mirror naked. My towel is on the floor. My husband and two daughters are in the kitchen, cooking dinner for Mommy's birthday celebration.

All I'm thinking about is dinner. Not what I'll eat tonight or tomorrow, not the boxed chocolate cake with nonpareil sprinkles that my daughters ate before their bedtime yesterday.

I'm thinking about the tray of leftover lasagna pushed to the back wall of the refrigerator, three days old, weighing down the crinkled tin foil that's painted with a thin layer of dried marinara. The lasagna that my dad scoops for his own plate, first, before sitting at the head of the kitchen table. The lasagna I scoop for my brother while my dad mumbles a hollow-hearted prayer, elbows resting on the cliff of the table, his hands folded into fists at each temple. This is the lasagna we eat every Thursday and finish every Friday and Saturday. I forget who makes it for us, but I know Dad hasn't cooked in months.

"Amen."

Dad makes the sign of the cross. He gently presses the side of his pointer finger to his forehead, his heart, his left shoulder. Father. Son. Holy... he never makes it to "Spirit." Olli, my brother, and I hold hands and say our own prayer once we find our seats. Olli speaks out loud and closes his eyes. I mouth the words and make sure to keep my eyes open. I see too much with my eyes closed. He probably sees nothing. I think Dad wishes he saw nothing.

"From thy bounty, through Christ our Lord."

I squeeze Olli's hand before he lets go. He lets out a giggle and I smile for the first time in a while. But, he looks confused as I release his hand. There is no sweat dribbled along the valleys of his palm. My hands are dry, cold. That never happens. Dad's eyes remain glued to the empty seat at the dinner table. My eyes remain glued on Dad. Olli eats the lasagna for all of us. My mother told me to take care of him when the cancer ate too much of her. But, she didn't mean Olli. Dad rubs the four black dots inked into the already freckled surface of his bicep. The four dots are connected with lines, making the shape of an hour-glass. Except it's not an hourglass. This hour-glass can't turn over. It's stuck. And the freckles that fill the area of the hourglass, the stars that burn less prominently, don't move. The sand is still and time is permanently misplaced. His Orion tattoo. He stops rubbing and covers one of the dots with his pinky.



LIZA READ '19

I start thinking about Orion. That constellation my mother used to point out when our family went camping during the mid-July summers. The four brightest stars, resembling each of us—me, Olli, my dad, and my mom. Mommy and Daddy would send Olli and I out of the tent to see which one of us could catch twenty lightning bugs first. They thought I didn't know what they did in the tent when we left. But, I knew. Mommy's big blue eyes would dilate when Olli showed her his final captured lightning bug. I saw the intensity of true love in those eyes. Whoever won the lightning bug game got the biggest, slobberiest, Strawberry kiss on their belly button. I always let Olli win because I got a Strawberry kiss either way. After everyone fell asleep, Mommy would hold me tight because she knew I was still afraid of the dark. The lightning bug Olli had captured escaped by this point, our personal lantern now cooling in the summer breeze. Mommy played with my "lucky" blonde curls and brushed her nose up against the circular birthmark between my eyebrows. She called it my beauty mark because it made me different from everyone else. I don't have that beauty mark anymore.

"See Daddy's tattoo, baby?" she whispered.

He slept with his arm around my mother's waist, his fingers tracing letters in my mother's stomach, his bicep shaping the hill of her hip. I nodded my head.

"Now look up. See those four big, bright stars?"

She extended her arm towards the sky, but I saw the reflection of the stars on her bald head. Her breath smelled hot, alive.

"Follow my finger, baby. That's Orion, the fiercest hunter of all evil lingering in the darkness of the night. If you ever get scared of the dark, know that you have three other stars around you, helping you fight off anything evil. We're your Orion."

She grabbed one of my sweaty hands, tapped Daddy's bicep and then tickled Olli's little toes that had buried themselves between the earth and my legs for warmth. Olli slept sideways, his head resting in what was left of Mommy's breasts. I stared at the slick terrain of her skull, a crystal ball reading a future I thought I knew was coming, purple, black, the reflection of Orion protecting the Milky Way, as she whispered—

"I love you, too much."

I'm thinking of her body. A body that rises and crashes like waves, points and stabs like daggers. A body that looks absolutely nothing like my ripples and spoons. I think of the body that felt like home in the bathtub after a late-night gymnastics practice. The hot water running and bubbles shooting through the air as we splashed and swam and explored our infinite ocean. Her palms pink from the warm and her fingers wrinkled from the wet, she would pinch her ears, puff out her cheeks like a blowfish, and spit a stream of water into my face. But, I always thought of her as more of an angel fish with her short, curly blonde hair that stuck to the tops of her shoulders

when it got wet. Her skin, perfect, silky, and slippery when she soaped us both up with Pantene shampoo. Daddy sat along the edge of the tub as I served him my specialty bathtime cocktail: hint of lime tea. Olli was in Mommy's tummy. The fourth star to our Orion burning more and more yellow each day.

"How are you feeling? About the salon tomorrow?"

Mommy stopped laughing, but kept running her fingers through my hair. She held my cheeks in her palms and brought her forehead to mine.

"I'm okay."

She looked me in the eyes and smiled real wide. She saw me and I saw her. Her teeth were whiter than snow. And much warmer, too.

"Can I come to the salon?" I said. She frowned again.

"You have school, baby. Besides, you don't want to get mommy's haircut this time. I'm trying something different. Something... like daddy's haircut!"

"But, mommy. Daddy doesn't have hair!"

I stop thinking.

I look at myself. I'm forty-nine today, the age my mother's throne at the table became nothing more than empty space. I look at a shiny head, a tired body, two breasts that aren't mine, lumps collecting in areas where lumps shouldn't be, and an Orion tattoo on my ribcage that is barely distinguishable from the ripples of fat that have faded the dots and lines away over the years. I see surgeries around my chest area. I see chemotherapy on my skull where there used to be those shiny blonde curls. I see a scar on my forehead from the beauty mark I got removed after my mother died. I see aching in my arms that used to fling under a blanket of stars on mid-July evenings. I see blisters on my swollen toes that would run barefoot in creeks and swamps and beaches with Olli. I see—I feel cold.

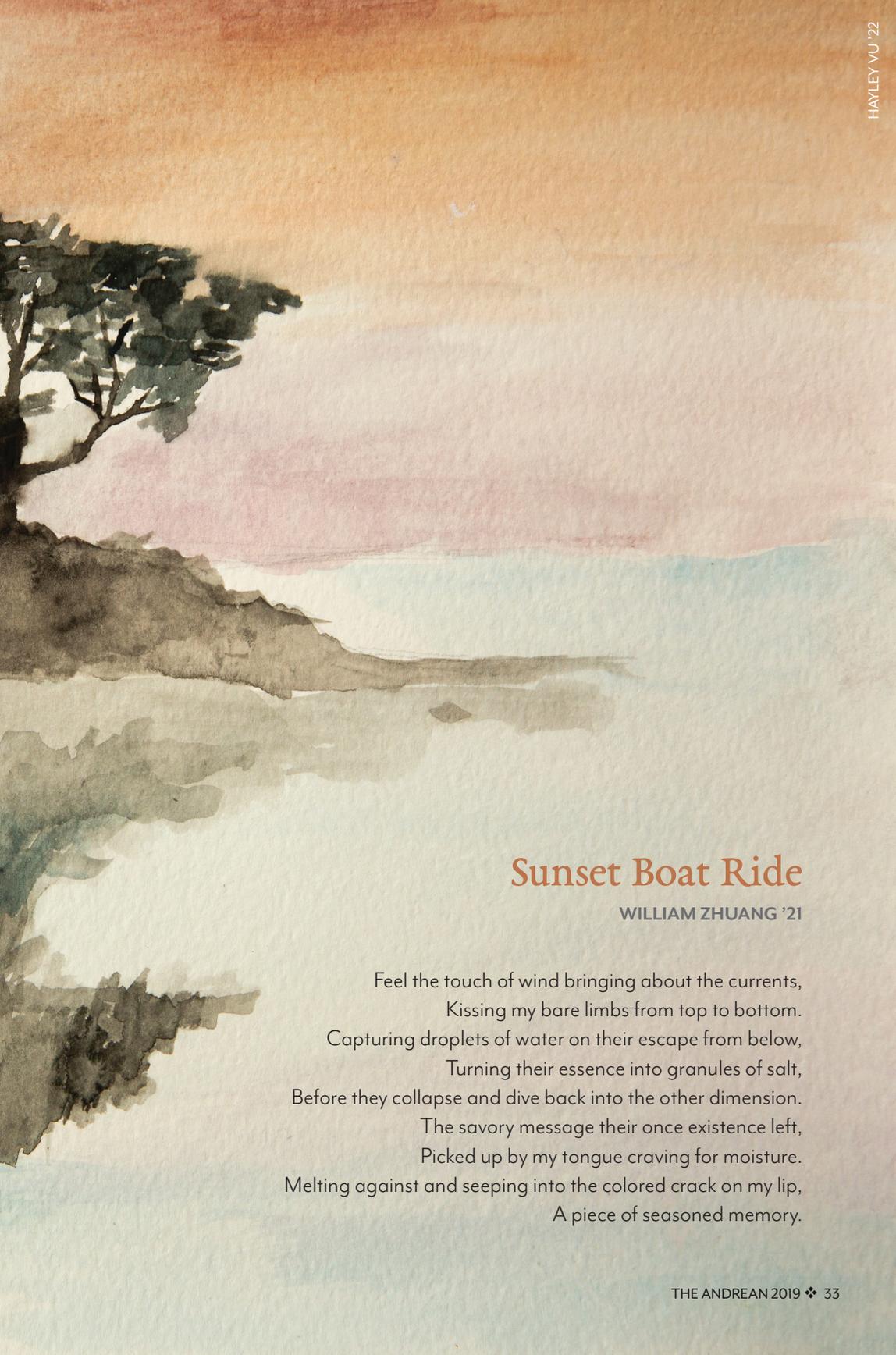
Then, I feel my mother. Standing in front of her own mirror, afraid of the darkness, with no one to hold her close to their chest. I feel her naked body, her longing for prayer but failure to find the words. I feel her slipping away from her children, even though they are fast asleep in the bedroom down the hall. I feel her slipping away from her husband. The man who has loved her entirely, fiercely, warmly. She holds on, but time forces her to let go of everything all at once.

I close my eyes. Now, I see my daughters. I open them. I slowly collapse to my knees and a tsunami of tears well up at the bottom lids and escape when I blink. I fold my hands, and look up to Orion, hoping my babies never have to do the same, hoping they never have to look in this mirror. My heart races and time stays.

"Babies, honey? What's for dinner?" I call out.

"Lasagna, mommy!"



A watercolor illustration of a sunset over a body of water. The sky is painted with soft, blended colors of orange, pink, and light blue. The water below is a pale, muted blue. On the left side, a dark, silhouetted tree with dense foliage stands on a rocky outcrop. The overall style is soft and atmospheric.

## Sunset Boat Ride

WILLIAM ZHUANG '21

Feel the touch of wind bringing about the currents,  
Kissing my bare limbs from top to bottom.  
Capturing droplets of water on their escape from below,  
Turning their essence into granules of salt,  
Before they collapse and dive back into the other dimension.  
The savory message their once existence left,  
Picked up by my tongue craving for moisture.  
Melting against and seeping into the colored crack on my lip,  
A piece of seasoned memory.

# For the Dumpsters Outside of Junior Dorm

CIERRA MARTINEZ '20

The dumpsters are too ugly, I guess, so they stand behind  
Green fences in front of the trees near the health center.  
They are the first thing you see coming up from the gully steps. They continue to be  
The topic of debate for our campus environmentalists,  
Consumed by guilt. They're mad because the dumpsters are only here  
Because they're here, because we're here.

I would burn my hands if I touched some of the things I put in the dumpsters.  
Things that come from the inside of my body,  
Things that I tear from my skin. Or even,  
Stale oreos,  
Moldy apple juice,  
Freezer-burnt ice cream I stole from a Stewards meeting.

I need them for my health, my safety,  
So I return to the dumpsters, week after week, in  
Flip flops and a polka-dotted robe,  
My new old plum jacket and my sister's brown shoes,  
A striped dress without stockings,  
And they always are how they always were,  
Tall and black and imposing,  
with big stickers to distinguish trash and recycling.

But in the end, I must say.  
I've dumped more than I own with reckless abandon.  
And the dumpster doesn't scrub its hands if it accidentally touches me.  
It doesn't swear at me after a long day,  
And it doesn't curse my existence because of my effect on the environment because  
(it knows better than I do),  
That wherever it is, I will be,  
And I could never live without a dumpster.



BEN HORGAN '19



# Look on Down

HEIDI COBB '21

I see,  
yet it is my mortality  
which fools me.  
You cannot hide  
from me.  
I see.  
Whether you spit on my grave  
or in my eye  
I see,  
yet it be the heavy beats  
(of my heart)  
which I fall for.  
I chain myself,  
not for any fear you inflict,  
but from my strength  
I bear my heart  
upon my sleeve  
for daws to peck at.  
You see who I am,  
for I see who you are.



10/27/18

Hayley Vu

# Ride on the Subway

BILAL MORSI '19

50th Street. Another graffiti-ridden breast augmentation ad. Ikram decided to decipher the graffiti as a monochromatic rainbow oozing out of upside down hearts. The hearts pointed to the glaring feminist rhetoric covering the breasts of the woman in the ad. A simple word with an air of reclamation: slut. Ikram couldn't see the frozen silhouettes of the night owl men who like their women free.

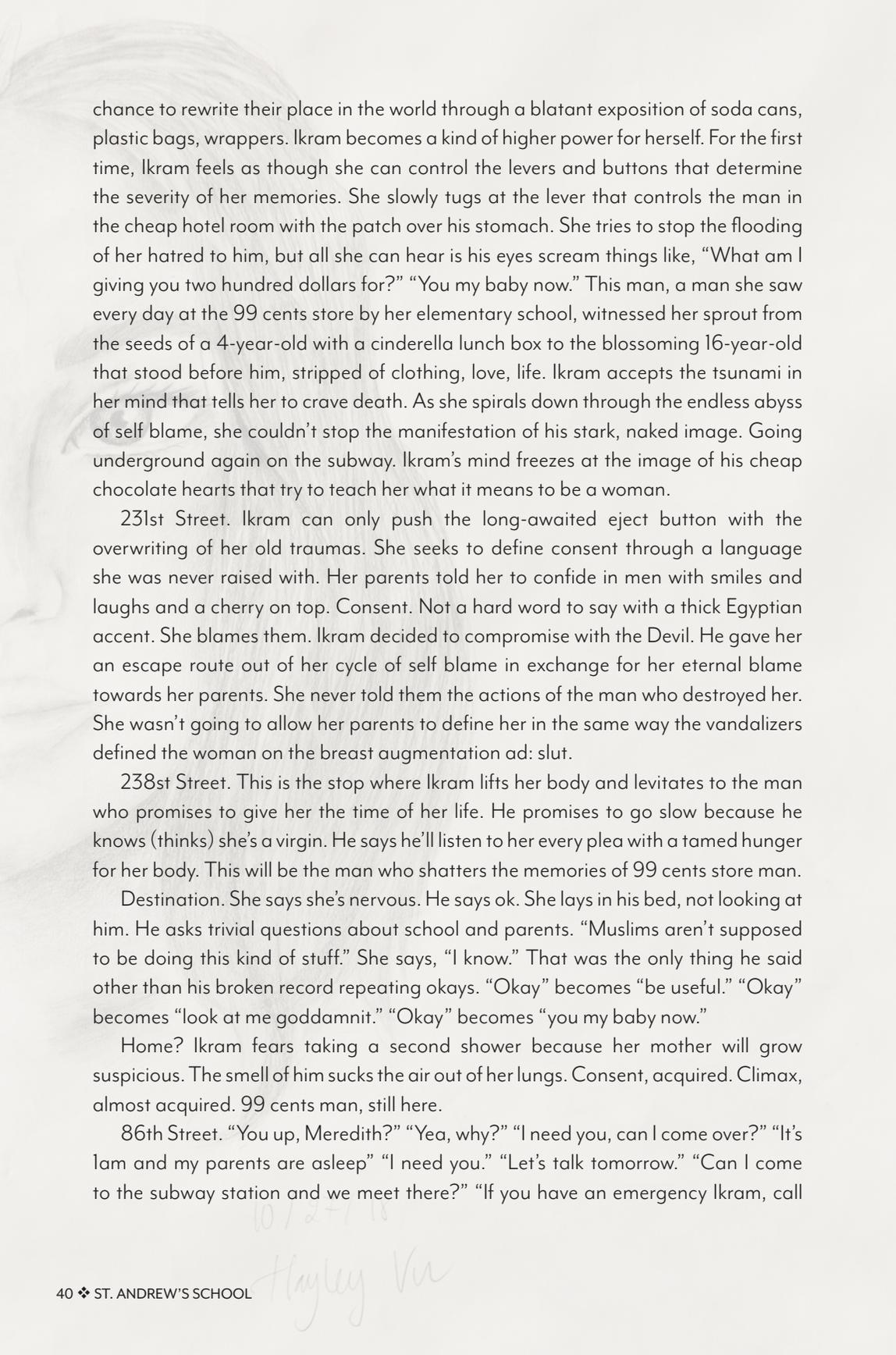
86th Street. This is where Ikram could find her best friend's apartment. The journey to the apartment would involve an exodus across Central Park with blistered feet and an overbearing cup of defeat. Ikram suffers from a rare condition called subway paralysis. She can't abandon her original destination. As the doors slice through air and the engines rumble, Ikram feels that apartment she could have called home, dissipate into the sands of time.

125th Street. The unexpected appearance of light permeates through the subway window into Ikram's squinting eyes. She was flying above ground. The lack of railings on the sides of the tracks gave the illusion that the train could fall at any instant. Ikram begins to envy the improbable miracle of falling into a realm of the insistent questions of her grief stricken parents, "Where could she have been going?"; "She never goes to the Bronx."; "She was meeting a boy?"

168th Street. Elevator installation. She tells herself she would have gotten off at this stop. She thinks about fate. Why couldn't she become the goddess who flies away from the ashes of dark oblivion? This could have been the cure to her subway paralysis. Skipped stop. Too bad.

215th Street. A man is kicking a pole while staring at his folder. Ikram envies the white woman sitting across from her with the flawless skin and bright blue eyes. This woman sits, bobbing her head to the beat of the song blaring in her headphones. Her posture proves to Ikram that she lives her life without an ounce of doubt for her safety. She doesn't so much as glance at the insanity of the man sitting next to her. She twirls in her fantasy world where her bubble-wrapped white skin can make this potentially dangerous man invisible. Meanwhile, Ikram exists in the confines of a time loop where she constantly glances to the man kicking that pole. Her mind jumps to the fantasy where the pole splits in two and the now furious man asks for her help and when she respectfully refuses, he throws the pole through her skull like a harpoon. She can't help herself.

Broadway Bridge. Entering the Bronx for the first time in years, Ikram looks at the harmonious litter atop the glistening Harlem river. The sun gives humanity another



chance to rewrite their place in the world through a blatant exposition of soda cans, plastic bags, wrappers. Ikram becomes a kind of higher power for herself. For the first time, Ikram feels as though she can control the levers and buttons that determine the severity of her memories. She slowly tugs at the lever that controls the man in the cheap hotel room with the patch over his stomach. She tries to stop the flooding of her hatred to him, but all she can hear is his eyes scream things like, “What am I giving you two hundred dollars for?” “You my baby now.” This man, a man she saw every day at the 99 cents store by her elementary school, witnessed her sprout from the seeds of a 4-year-old with a cinderella lunch box to the blossoming 16-year-old that stood before him, stripped of clothing, love, life. Ikram accepts the tsunami in her mind that tells her to crave death. As she spirals down through the endless abyss of self blame, she couldn’t stop the manifestation of his stark, naked image. Going underground again on the subway. Ikram’s mind freezes at the image of his cheap chocolate hearts that try to teach her what it means to be a woman.

231st Street. Ikram can only push the long-awaited eject button with the overwriting of her old traumas. She seeks to define consent through a language she was never raised with. Her parents told her to confide in men with smiles and laughs and a cherry on top. Consent. Not a hard word to say with a thick Egyptian accent. She blames them. Ikram decided to compromise with the Devil. He gave her an escape route out of her cycle of self blame in exchange for her eternal blame towards her parents. She never told them the actions of the man who destroyed her. She wasn’t going to allow her parents to define her in the same way the vandalizers defined the woman on the breast augmentation ad: slut.

238st Street. This is the stop where Ikram lifts her body and levitates to the man who promises to give her the time of her life. He promises to go slow because he knows (thinks) she’s a virgin. He says he’ll listen to her every plea with a tamed hunger for her body. This will be the man who shatters the memories of 99 cents store man.

Destination. She says she’s nervous. He says ok. She lays in his bed, not looking at him. He asks trivial questions about school and parents. “Muslims aren’t supposed to be doing this kind of stuff.” She says, “I know.” That was the only thing he said other than his broken record repeating okays. “Okay” becomes “be useful.” “Okay” becomes “look at me goddamnit.” “Okay” becomes “you my baby now.”

Home? Ikram fears taking a second shower because her mother will grow suspicious. The smell of him sucks the air out of her lungs. Consent, acquired. Climax, almost acquired. 99 cents man, still here.

86th Street. “You up, Meredith?” “Yea, why?” “I need you, can I come over?” “It’s 1am and my parents are asleep” “I need you.” “Let’s talk tomorrow.” “Can I come to the subway station and we meet there?” “If you have an emergency Ikram, call

Hayley Va

911.” “I just need you” This time, Ikram takes a route to the East side of Central Park instead of the paralyzing West. She exits the almost completely empty train and sees her best friend in a floral bathrobe. Meredith doesn’t allow her waves of annoyance to be painted onto her face. Instead, she and Ikram fall into an embrace under the shadows of a hanging breast augmentation ad. Meredith tries to slowly pull away from Ikram, but Ikram asks her to keep hugging. “Meredith, I can’t stop smelling him.” “Is this about—” “No, a new guy” “Did he—” “No.” “Why—” “I just wanna forget.” The graffiti of the ad was coated with an opaque spray that covered the “low” \$3900 price that has the power to amp up a woman’s breasts. “NOTHING CAN PAY FOR A WOMAN’S BODY.” The screaming calligraphy of the bold all caps letters was able to permeate through the muck of 99 cent store man and the junk of the new guy. The words paved a path through the jungle of Ikram’s calloused skin, her exhausted body, her panting blood. Ikram stared into the eyes of Meredith and saw a woman who voyaged through the darkness of Manhattan at a time when rapists and crack heads were lurking in their prime. Meredith did this to remind Ikram of her infinite value. As Ikram continues to stare at her best friend’s lam smile, she sees a human who gives her a “no strings attached” kind of love. For the first time, Ikram realized that the chambers of her heart can beat effortlessly without being suspended by love strings that constrict her humanity.

Brooklyn Bridge. Ikram puts in her headphones, applies her bubble wrap, and dances in the empty subway car to the beat, a beat that mirrors her heartbeat, of Gloria Gaynor’s “I will survive.”

# Anxiety

MIA NGUYEN '20

Please don't.  
Please don't ask me why I'm being so  
clingy.  
I only feel safe when I'm around you,  
but I'm afraid you won't feel the same.

Please don't.  
Please don't ask me why I'm being so  
quiet.  
I may only be saying a few words,  
but there are a thousand thoughts I can't  
shut out in my mind.

Please don't.  
Please don't ask me why I'm breathing so  
rapidly.  
I haven't been running from anything  
but myself, but you shouldn't know that.

Please don't.  
Please don't ask me why my hands are so  
clammy.  
The temperature isn't too hot,  
it's just the anxiety.



JACOB ZIMMERMAN '19



# Don't Leave

DIANA HONEY '19

Idlib, Syria, September 23, 2018

A small group of men in white helmets pulls up to the ruins of what was once his home. He runs up to them “please sir..., my daughter...” They saw concrete apart, pry slabs of ceiling from the ground. They dig through the rubble, look for signs of a human inside. He does everything he can to help them. The rubble from the ceiling feels chalky under his fingers. He drags piece after piece of fallen concrete from the heap, desperation fueling his aching body. He digs under the debris of hopelessness and pain to find hope. He digs because he knows the life of his daughter depends on it. Sweat sticks to his new white helmet. He digs through the concrete to all those below, to save them. Almost miraculously, he sees a tiny hand. It is crushed under the concrete. Was the owner of this tiny hand dead? Alive? Dying? Was it too late to save her? He calls for help. Other men in white helmets rush to him. They pry concrete from the ground. An arm emerges from the dust. They crowd around this miracle of an arm and dig, scrape, and shovel to expose the human underneath. They heave the final heavy slab from atop her small frame. She is covered in gashes and scrapes. Her eyes are closed, unmoving. Crushed by the immense weight of her home, she has been destroyed by the place she loved. Pull her from the rubble. Blood flows from gashes in her cheeks and shoulder. He falls to the ground.

Before they lay his daughter on the stretcher, he hugs her body close. Her brown curls fall in front of her face. He hopes they shielded her eyes from the horror surrounding her. He holds her not for her sake but for his own. He looks into her eyes. They used to be the color of coffee. Now they have grown dark. His tears leave a trail of moistness against the dust that coats him. He can't see anymore. He yearns for the beating of her heart, light and frantic against his chest. Dust swirls in the air around them. He doesn't feel it filling his lungs. He can no longer even feel the heat of the sun on his back. “Please...,” he says, “don't leave.”

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Days later, he hears that same sound again. The one he dreads. This time, he runs to it. The sound gets louder, it rings in his ears. He doesn't turn away this time, instead gets into his truck, puts on his white helmet, and drives with the other men towards the thing he fears most.

He recognizes the pain of everyone around him. Anguish is bottled here, used like currency, traded and distributed for personal gain. The voice in his head pounds that he will not get to them in time, that they cannot escape the hatred, reach the hope that lies above the rubble. He jumps out of the truck, runs towards the collapsing building. His legs pump as he runs; every muscle burns. Fatigue runs through his chest, his lungs heave, they pump air until they are exhausted. It is a matter of survival; he forces his lungs to pump harder, his heart to beat faster, his legs to move quicker.

Again, he finds himself climbing the remains of a broken home. He digs through the dust, through the piles of concrete. They move pieces of wall, ceiling, and floor. They continue to work until sweat flows down their backs. They are sure they will not find anybody else. Miraculously, they hear a tiny cry, see a hand through the dust. They dig and scrape. A little girl is pulled from the rubble. The tears sliding down her face glisten in the dusty afternoon. She is bleeding, broken. She crumples to the ground. A cloud of dust forms where she lands. Her tears flow like rain. Grief shines in her eyes. Her cries echo through the buildings, flow down each block, fill up the world.

He rushes to scoop her off the ground. His hands work apart from his body. The world is spinning. He cuts the bandages unconsciously. Blood spreads over his hands. He rubs alcohol into the wounds. Liquid runs between his fingers. He pours it over the rift on her shoulder. Lays the bandage over the scrape. He looks into the girl's eyes. He can see the pain deep within them. And, suddenly, a hint of brown. The color of coffee. He does not know this girl, yet all he can see is his daughter's face, covered in tears. In this moment, the girl becomes his daughter. A single tear streams down his face. He hiccups and chokes down his sorrow. He cradles the girl's delicate body. Strokes her hair. He wipes the dust from her face with a cloth, runs his fingers through her curls to remove the debris. He holds her close. Feels the heartbeat of his daughter in this small child. He recalls that moment. "Please," he thinks, "don't leave."



# Her

LILA FELDMAN '20

She walks on the wind  
Her toes dip down and change the breeze  
Pushing the leaves from trees into clusters on the ground  
Each one to remind someone that she is there

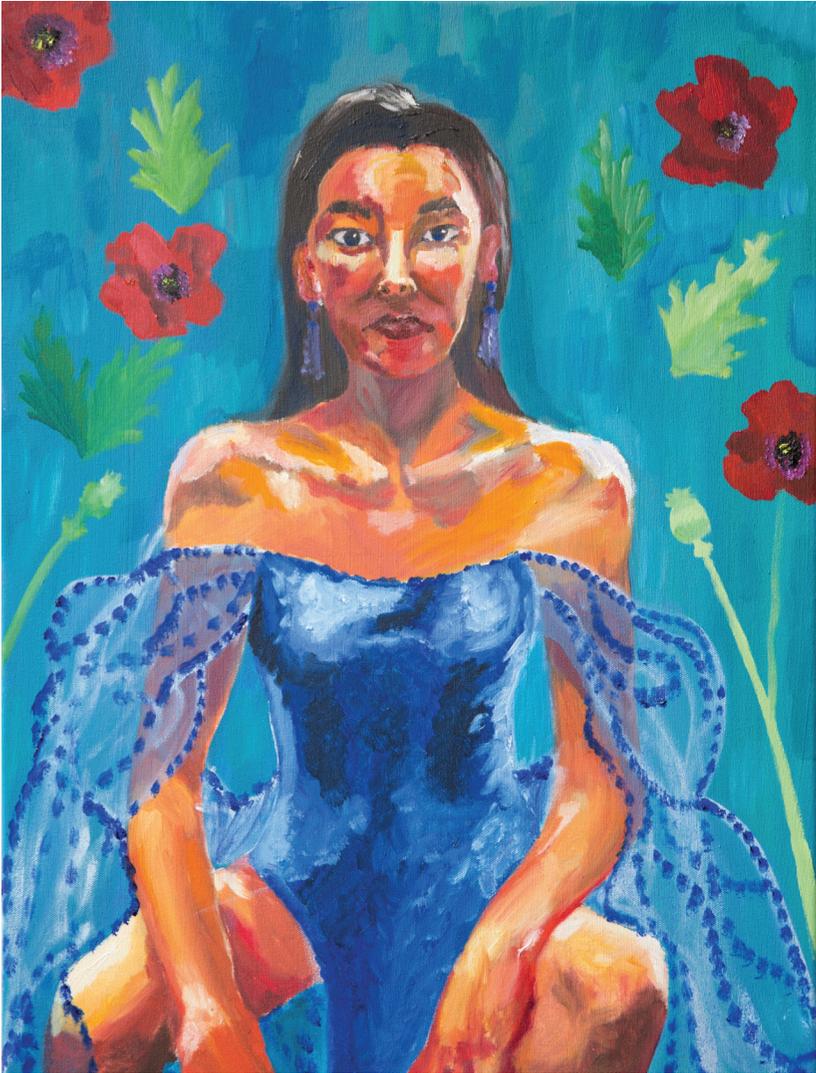
Her eyes are the ocean  
With every tear that drops they send waves tumbling,  
Cresting white over the rough shoreline and tipping ships back into them  
She cries so that something she created is within her

She sleeps in the clouds  
As she turns in her lonesome bed they shift grey  
Her nightmares shape the storms with every smash of her fist  
Until her knuckles bleed red and the rain turns to acid

Her hands are the mountains  
The cracks on her palms draw the rocks that break the skyline  
When she digs her bloody knuckles deep into the earth she starts an avalanche  
She makes her people feel her pain

She writhes in the sunlight  
It blisters her shoulders as she awakens  
She sits by herself and cradles the wounds  
Using her tears to cool the burns

But as the oceans wash over her shoulders the salt water seeps in  
With every twitch the burn grows stronger  
And she cannot stop herself  
Her fists ball even tighter  
Avalanches rain down  
She smashes the clouds  
Another storm starts  
She stomps her feet  
A hurricane begins



TAD SCHEIBE '19

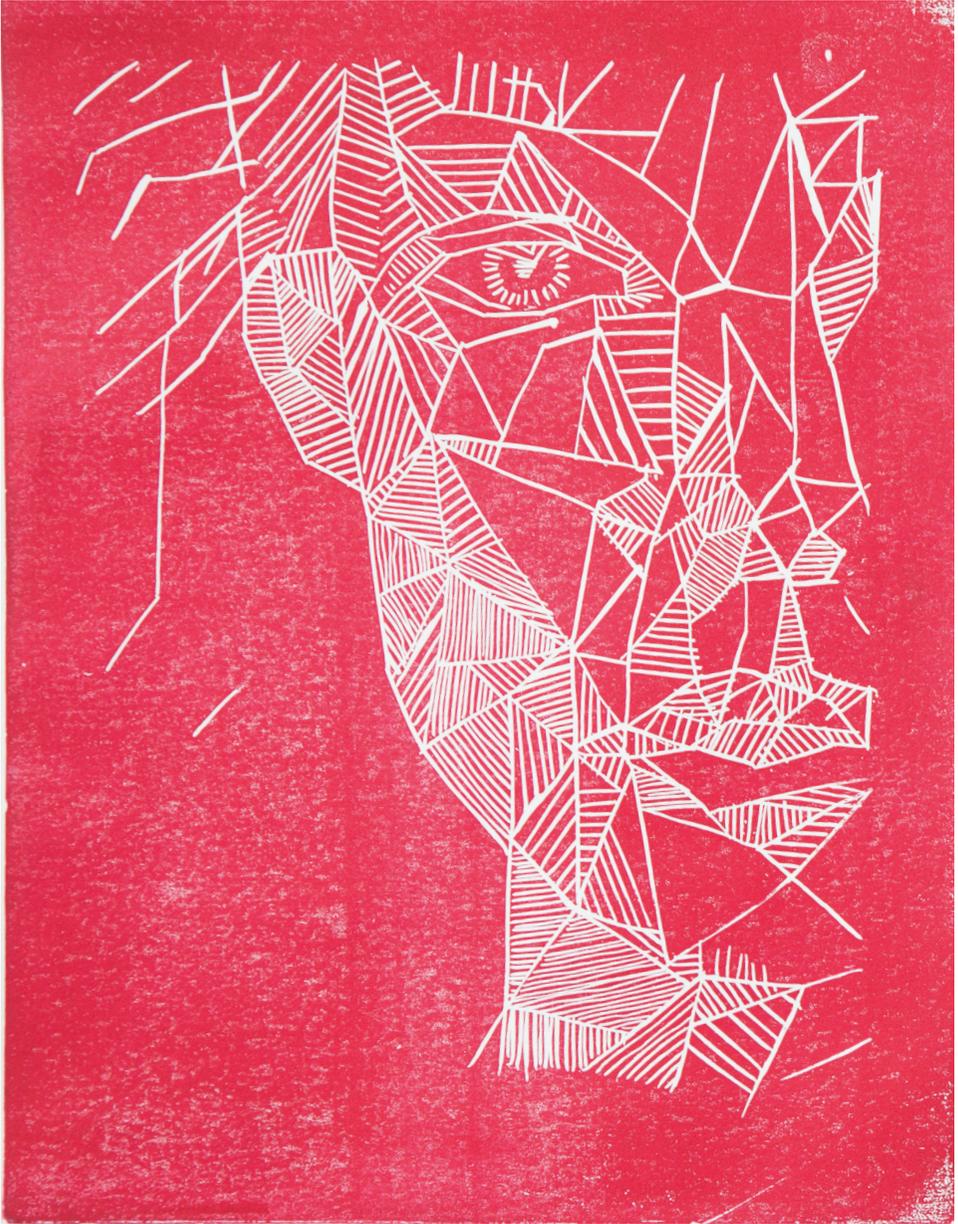
She screams for help  
But, her throat is hoarse,  
Eyes bloodshot,  
Her voice goes nowhere,  
She is alone.  
Because her people don't worship her.  
They worship him.



# I'm Stolen at Peace

HEIDI COBB '21

I don't know what compelled me,  
But the wind definitely whispered in my ear.  
One moment I had my eyes set,  
and the next,  
the stars held them.  
But it was the moon that lit the path,  
to where I didn't ask,  
the wind was too busy  
Sashaying through my hair.  
My fingers yearned for words,  
But the storm on the horizon tangled them up with links of light.  
My feet found restful sleep under branches that moaned and  
creaked the worries of the world away.  
My nose was blind to the storm  
For the sky snuck into my soul  
and stole it all away,  
Filling the void with the ocean's gleaming slumber.  
I am told I know not the path,  
But my being  
has become  
Nothing,  
but,  
The path.



HENRY ESTERSON '19

# A Soldier's World

ELLIE BEAMS '21

Hearing the low, fierce barking, the small head stopped squinting through the woods and crouched. After the fit of howling and one high yelp, the noise ended, and, crouching in the lull of bushes bordering the woods, he fought his limbs to keep from shaking. Afraid to move, at the risk of rustling leaves, afraid to breathe, for fear of giving away his position. Pulling his camouflage army helmet—bought using his allowance money at the dollar store—more securely over his head, he could feel the danger of battle rushing through his blood.

Finally rising on stiff legs, he left his bunker and crept towards the area of commotion, trying to remember that one swear word that his sister had taught him two months ago during that huge thunderstorm. They had crouched under her wool blanket on her bed and she whispered stories to him to distract from the bright flashes of lightning silhouetting the trees against their bedroom wall. If he could only remember that swear, he could sound like a real soldier, like she was. She didn't have the helmet, but he knew that anyone would believe it if she told them so. She never flinched when the dogs barked, or cried when she fell. Even the sixth graders wouldn't pick on her. Sometimes, watching her walk barefoot down their gravel driveway, Walt could swear she didn't feel any pain at all, not even from those small pebbles jabbing the dark undersides of her feet. He always cried when he walked barefoot home.

He felt like crying now, too, approaching his fallen comrade. Matted, tangled fur, caked in dirt and blood lay in a mound on the ground. He felt the stinging heat rising in his throat, and he stared hard at what he thought must be the dog's head. He was not entirely sure which parts of the mangled heap on the ground were what. He was almost sure that the enemy had fled, and Mama did always say that coyotes liked to leave people alone. But Mama also said that coyotes rarely attacked bigger dogs, and if they attacked a dog, why not him too? He picked up a large stick just in case. After all, every soldier needs a weapon.

But there was so much blood. Which part should he touch, if he should try to touch it at all? Unable to decide he felt the tears pushing their way up again, all too aware of the blood rushing in his ears, of his heart still pumping, when there was clearly no movement coming from the ground. His sister would know what to do. She never would have failed a fellow soldier that was relying on her. She would have stood by him, instead of embarking on a solo mission. She would have fought for him, instead of cowering in the bushes. That's probably why the dog used to follow

her everywhere and never once bit her; the most loyal animal recognizes loyalty in others too.

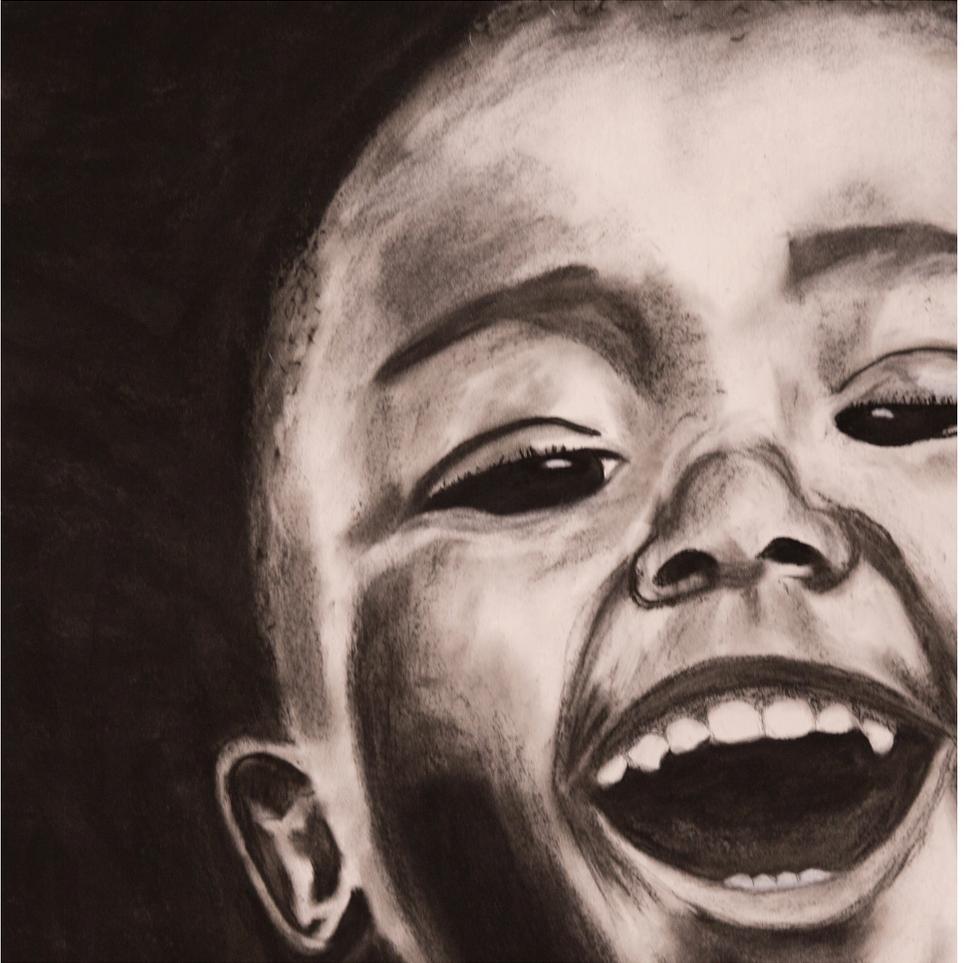
Is it possible that his sister won't notice the absence of those adoring eyes, following her every step? The lunch scraps he spread behind him not-so-discreetly along his walk remained in a half eaten mess, the dog's last meal. Perhaps his sister would assume that the dog had stolen those scraps and, in a daze from his full stomach, wandered away and gotten lost. Maybe she wouldn't suspect her brother of any involvement. She would be so angry if she knew how he lured him to the woods to be his search dog and left him to sniff out the enemies on his own. She never understood his world.

Picturing the devastation on his sister's face when he would have to break the news, he finally began crying. His world, his constant daydreams and imaginings, had finally come true. He was experiencing the blood rush, he was becoming a fighter. But he had no glory, no sense of pride. All he had was a fake helmet, a stick, and a dead dog.

"Fuck," he finally remembered. He tried to feel the bravery and the fight of the word, but couldn't find it. It felt wrong in his mouth, fake, so big that it stuck to his cheeks trying to get out. How do you sound like a soldier if you don't feel like a soldier? Taking the helmet off, he placed it over the dog's body and followed the trail back towards home, leaving the dog at rest behind him. Better not to look like a soldier if he couldn't be one.



HENRY ESTERSON '19



## As the Shadows Consume Another

LOGAN BROWN '19

Thick red blood seeped through the holes  
The puddle is drowning him  
Or maybe it's coming from within  
His breaths trying to find another escape from the lifelessness  
Either way, he is gasping for air  
He looks up and asks why hast thou forsaken me  
But no answer  
none that I can hear

So he maintained the small gulps of air  
In and out, in and out  
I now understand the black rhythm  
The struggle sang about in those blues  
Because I hear it now  
The symphony of staggering breaths  
Its same tune  
In the beginning,  
only the dying man was covered by shadows  
But as gunpowder infested the air  
And the metal bullet pierced through skin and bone  
The shadow soon swallowed the man behind the  
cold combination of plastic and metal  
It's funny almost  
The ring of the bullet sounded so familiar  
Sounded like dead heroes  
Like black boys and girls  
taken away from their mamas too soon  
Like the unattended wounds of the past  
And it was so easy  
Just the simple squeeze of a trigger and soon  
Everything was lost  
All the memories and prospects of the future consumed by the  
Blanket of blackness that hides them  
together  
And their eyes  
Their eyes were being sucked of the color they possessed  
And that is when I began to believe in the supernatural  
The things that cannot be explained by earthly means  
And I'm trying to see  
Trying to get a better look  
But, I can't





MEB

# Mrs. Ainsley's Baby

CIERRA MARTINEZ '20

They chose a home delivery because every Ainsley baby was born at home since the acquisition of Ainsley Manor in 1719. Mrs. Ainsley's chest rose and fell slowly, and though she sweat profusely, no noise escaped her. The walls were filled with portraits of mothers and fathers with their newborns. Generations of Ainsley babies who grew to be Ainsley lords and ladies. They looked down at Mrs. Ainsley, and she stared back, silently.

Mr. Ainsley stood frozen. The nurse held the baby in her arms, and stood peering into its eyes. The screeching sobs were over, and were replaced by chirps. Blood slowly crept into Mr. Ainsley's face, and he walked over to the bed in which his wife rested. Their eyes met and wrestled until the baby let out a yelp. The nurse was swaddling it with linens that Mr. Ainsley's mother left in a chest with other childhood belongings. He opened this box only once before: at his mother's funeral.

"Was it forced?" he whispered.

"No." Mrs. Ainsley responded quickly, and with her full voice. She focused on the portrait that depicted her husband with his mother and father. She wondered if there would ever be a portrait of herself with her own baby.

"Then why?"

"He was gentle. He spoke to me kindly. Like a person."

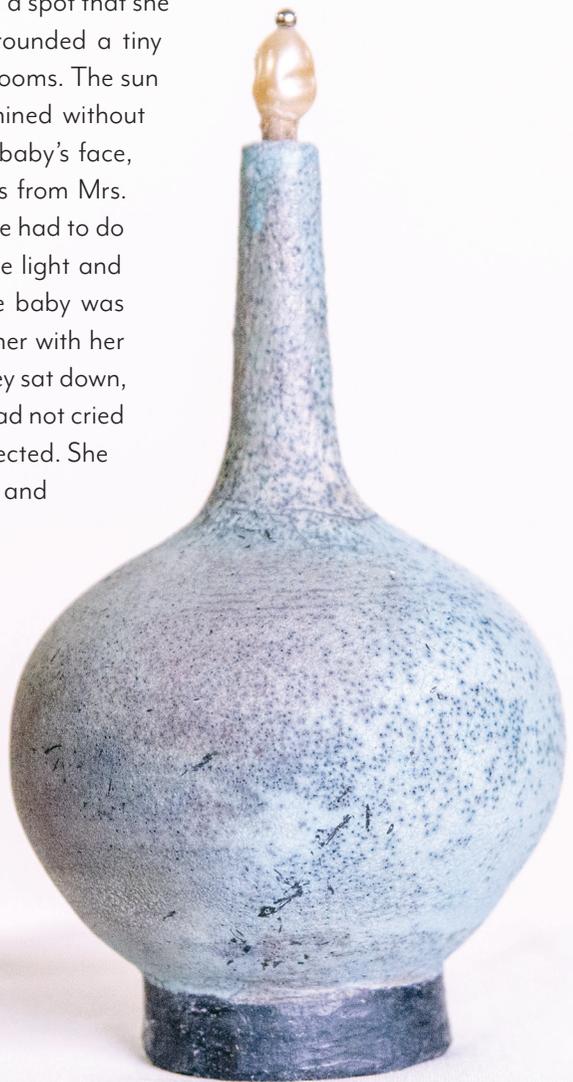
"He wasn't a person himself." He wiped his face in his hands and looked at his feet. He realized that he was an exceptionally good man. A good man would have the baby drowned and tolerate his wife. An average man would make a scene, kill the father, and kill the baby. He wasn't sure what an evil man would do, but he knew that at least he was willing to forgive her.

He made it her task. It was her fault anyway. She dressed herself and approached the nurse, who grudgingly gave the child to its mother. It was asleep. Finally, she grabbed two earplugs made of wax and set off into the outdoors.

All of the workers except for the nurse had a day off for the delivery, so when she went outside, she did not have to worry about running into anybody. The sun was waking from its daily rest and stretched its rays onto the rolling fields and the tops of trees, waking all of the tiny woodland creatures that Mrs. Ainsley heard but never saw. She'd been listening for them since she met the father. He seemed to know everything about animals—how they behaved, how they communicated, what they ate. What they wanted and why. He himself wanted to go north, and maybe even find a place where he could study creatures for a living. Mrs. Ainsley

noticed how, even with the firm muscles in his arms and legs and the fluidity in his walk and gestures, he was too distractible, too delicate. He was not enough of an animal to survive being hunted, not for that long. She trekked out into the wilderness behind the estate, where generations of Ainsley men before her had gone to hunt and lost themselves for hours, days even. Through these woods, natives had retreated in defeat and runaways had escaped to be captured in faraway towns.

It took her over an hour to find a spot that she liked. A ring of trees tightly surrounded a tiny ditch covered in moss and mushrooms. The sun was fully awake by then, and shined without discretion. When it reached the baby's face, it took away all of the inhibitions from Mrs. Ainsley's mind. She knew what she had to do and why. She moved between the light and the dark, and into the spot. The baby was awake by then, and it stared at her with her own hazel eyes. When Mrs. Ainsley sat down, it yawned and closed its eyes. It had not cried as much as Mrs. Ainsley had expected. She placed the earplugs into her ears and placed the baby into the ditch. It squirmed, uncomfortable. Mrs. Ainsley pushed the earplugs deeper into her ears, and watched as the baby opened its mouth to cry. She turned away and began her journey back home.



# Escape

LILLY EGAN '19

Stillness

I edge the door open slowly and creep outside, careful not to wake the sleeping world

Darkness

Even the stars seem to have taken a vacation from their obligation of illuminating the lives of beings insignificant to them

A rush

The wind picks up, whipping through me like a cheetah darting after its already doomed prey

It explodes through me, making strands of my hair stream away from me, as if they want to join the chase

This is not its final destination but simply a stopping point on its journey

It tugs at my hand, pulling me gently, as if coaxing

“Come with me. We can escape back to the sky by morning.”

A fire

In the distance, is just beginning its long destructive reign

From here it is just a subtle warm glow, another force luring me away

I can feel myself being lit too, my disheveled hair and trembling hands the first signs of a building flame

A light

Flips on in a house nearby

A glaring reminder that reality is not that easily escapable

Hesitance

By the wind

It hovers, suspended in space, asking me

“Are you coming with us?”

I wait too much time to answer, and it rushes on, leaving wild grass and wild hearts in its place

I edge the door openly slowly

Rejoining the world of people tossing and turning in their dreams

Outside, the fire has been extinguished

Stillness



CHLOE TUNG '20

# Fishing Trips

IRIS HWANG '20

“Daddy,” Leah said. “Miss Taylor gave me a gold sticker for my drawing, see?” She handed Michael a scribble of four blue blobs, presumably their family.

“That’s wonderful, honey,” Michael said.

Leah grinned at him, chin sticky with jam. Amanda reached out to wipe her chin with a napkin. Michael knew it bothered his wife that Leah wasn’t as pretty as she was: her stringy hair was a plain brown, and she was more than a little chubby. But Michael didn’t mind.

Jay tugged at Michael’s sleeve. “Can we go fly my new plane?”

Michael smiled tiredly. He checked the watch on his wrist, the one his father had given him the day he’d married Amanda six years ago in 1979. One day, he’d give it to Jay. It was 7:28 a.m.

“After school,” Amanda said, pointing her finger at Jay. For days now, Jay had been trying to find ways to make his parents forget that the school bus promptly arrived in front of their house at 7:30. Michael suspected Jay, small for his size, was being taunted by larger children. But he knew it was wiser to let Amanda handle those childhood pains.

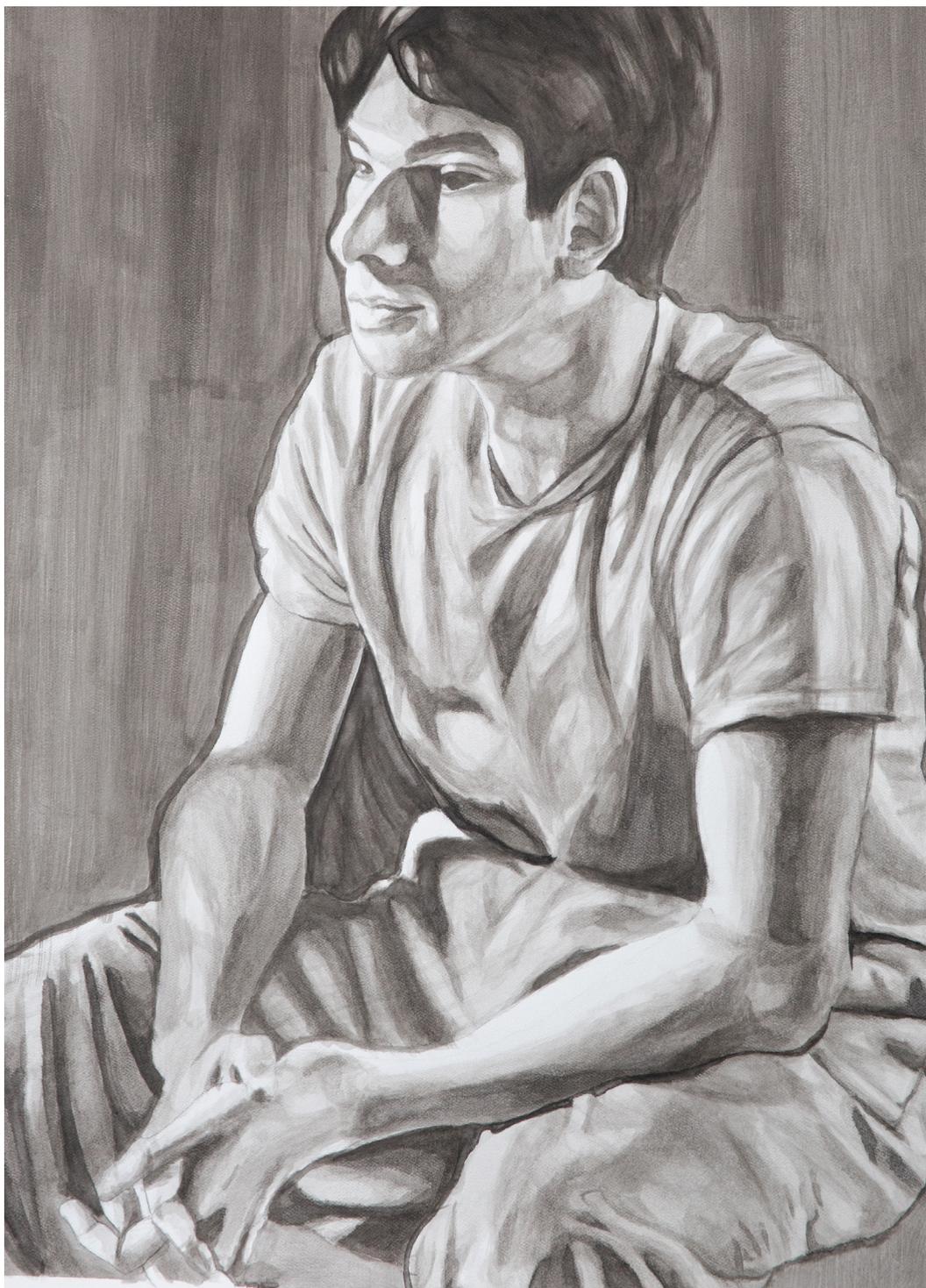
The bus’ arrival was Michael’s cue to go to the garage. And, like every day, it arrived on time. Chaotically, jackets were zipped and backpacks secured. Michael pushed his half-eaten breakfast to the side. Amanda was still sitting in front of him, mouth pursed. Usually, they moved like the fancy wooden people in German cuckoo clocks, mechanically stepping out of each other’s way. But, today, with the children gone, her posture seemed to radiate a certain passive aggressiveness.

Michael knew it was about last night. Over the years, they found they’d run out of things to say to each other besides in tangent to Jay and Leah: “Your father and I think you should...” “Why don’t you and your mother...?” One Saturday, they had run into each other in the kitchen when the kids had gone to sleepovers. They had nodded at each other as if they were neighbors living in an apartment complex who knew each other’s minute foibles: the vacuuming at 2 in the morning, the clunking of their laundry, the smell of their garbage, but had never interacted with each other.

Michael picked up his fork of scrambled eggs and set it back down. He only then noticed that Amanda had made his eggs too runny. Just to spite him, he suspected.

Amanda sat eyeing him, eating her toast, chewing with excessive care. The sunlight made her eyes shine like blue ice.

“So,” he finally gave in. “What did you want to say?”



LIZA READ '19

“About last night,” she started, and he winced. Seeing his grimace, Amanda made a deliberate attempt to smile. Michael could see every one of her teeth, like a dentist’s ad, but there was no sincerity in it. She hadn’t really smiled at him since Leah was born.

She continued, “I don’t quite understand why you never seem to want to...” Michael could practically hear the dotdotdot in her voice. The deliberation in her voice irritated Michael more than anything, the circling, endless allusions.

For a moment, the only sound in the kitchen was the refrigerator hum vibrating against the cheery linoleum floor. Michael offhandedly wished there were birds chirping, or the constant yapping of Leah and Jay that he could focus his attention on instead of Amanda’s probing questions. The green walls seemed to press in on him. Amanda kept smiling.

“Two children are enough,” Michael said. It was the safest excuse, after all. “Any more would be a handful.”

“Even so...,” she said deliberately. Michael willed himself not to blink. She leaned toward him, earring bobbing, hands kneading. “I heard that there are doctors men can see...” Michael’s face remained frozen and immovable.

She stopped herself. Her chin tightened. “Are you going fishing this weekend?” she asked abruptly. Her shoulders were excessively tight, as if they were rubber banded back.

He froze for a second, eyes fixed on hers. His stomach seized, and his throat flushed with acid. He wondered if she knew. He wouldn’t put it past her to know and keep smiling. No, he decided. That would break even Amanda’s practiced composure.

“No,” he said, rubbing his watch. He would never fish again. “Not today.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Michael knew that he’d get in trouble for missing the weekly sales meeting without prior notice, but he had only learned about the funeral’s time and location the night before. He had held the newspaper obituary in his hand until it crinkled. T had been sick for some time.

He was surprised that there was a casket. It was glossy black, the sort that looked like it would collect smudged fingerprints if anyone touched it. It was ridiculous. Everyone knew there was nobody in it. He couldn’t imagine anyone wanting to handle T’s body without a hazard suit. Michael wondered if the doctors gutted T open like a fish, disassembling him to see the sickness inside like careless children playing with Legos. Popping out a liver there, a still-beating heart there. Bile rose in his throat.

The cloying smell of funeral flowers lingered in the room, suffocating Michael. White lilies. T had never liked them; he had loved the riotous color of springtime flowers, the daffodils and poppies and tulips. If T were here, Michael thought suddenly, he would have wanted the room to bloom with bright color, and he couldn't understand why they didn't pick any of those for him. T had always looked best in vibrant colors with his fair complexion and bright hair. The lining of the casket was probably white, Michael imagined, and suddenly he was glad T wasn't trapped in there.

It didn't surprise Michael that the funeral wasn't in a church. But he felt a twinge at that. T was religious, one thing Michael had never really understood about him. He'd always worn a little gold cross around his neck. Michael wondered if he was burned with it. The place was sparse and unattractive. He guessed Rachel, T's sister, had rented the area out. She was a receptionist, and she couldn't afford a nicer place on her own. All of T's money had gone toward bogus treatments he'd thought would help. Flying out a shaman from Los Angeles who was rumored to have blessed Rock Hudson and extended his life by two years. Michael imagined the stubborn tilt of T's chin. He would have spent every day before dying trying to find any way to get better, even though he knew in his heart there was none to be found.

Michael instantly recognized Rachel. Although he'd never met her, Michael could tell who she was from T's descriptions and anecdotes. Tall. Short red hair, which looked shockingly bright against her black dress. As a teenager, she had tried to dye her hair blonde like T with disastrous results. Michael's lips twitched in an almost smile. He knew everything about her but he had never met her. His mind spouted now-useless facts about her. She had a horrible boss whom she always complained to T about. She had winced in sympathy every time their stubborn parents had tried to introduce T to the nice girl who worked as a teller at the bank. Michael felt a sharp pain. She had loved T too.

Rachel sat alone. Michael had also never met T's parents. They hadn't spoken to T ever since they found out about his preferences. T had pretended not to care that his parents rejected him. He had never let on how hurt he was by it, but Michael had known that it had cut him deep. "They'll give in one day," he'd said. "They can't stay mad at me forever, especially Mom." But they had. Suddenly, Michael imagined them, two old people sitting pudding-like in their armchairs at home, too proud to show up to their only son's funeral, checking the clock endlessly. And he felt sorry for them, and then angry at himself for feeling sorry for them. They didn't deserve it. He hoped they regretted it for the rest of their lives.

Michael tore his eyes away from Rachel. Michael's eyes kept shifting toward a few men scattered in the pews who looked frail. Sick. Even with the faces of twenty, thirty

some things, their skin was as rosy with blue veins as old men. Thin. They looked like the zombies in Jay's comic books, Michael thought suddenly. He wondered if they went from funeral to funeral, knowing not many would show up.

Pneumonia. Suddenly Michael felt hot anger surging up, bumping into his ribs. He could not remember the last date they'd been together, could not know whether or not he was ill then, too. He imagined himself, eyes open, laying on a cold table, body decayed to nothing. Amanda. Would she even have a funeral for him? What would she tell Jay and Leah? He felt like a ticking time bomb, like any day now he'd collapse into a shell of himself with hollow cheekbones and brittle bones.

If the guys at work found out, he could imagine exactly what they'd do. Suddenly no one using the communal silverware, flinching when he touched the same pen. The eventual resignation... we just don't think you're a right fit for the company...

He wondered whether or not he had a moral obligation to tell Amanda. It wasn't like they slept together anymore. He'd pushed it back for years after Leah was born, even as she kept hinting she wanted more children.

After the service, his sister approached him. Michael had wanted to sneak into the back, and hide among people to see his last departure, but there weren't enough people where he could hide successfully. She had pink pads beneath her eyes, and Michael could tell she'd been crying.

"Michael?" she asked. Her hands twisted around the folds of her dress.

Michael felt a strange combination of happiness and nausea. So T had talked about him to his sister as well. He wondered what he'd said. "I'm Jonathan," Michael stuttered before walking away.

As he stumbled into his car, he was aware of the goddamn fishing rod in the trunk. Every Sunday, he'd pack his fishing rod and gear to see T. The fishing rod still had a tag on it.

Treacherously, horribly, Michael was glad that T had died. He had been afraid that T would go to Amanda, tell her about them. T had been threatening that for



years now, to run away together. Start a new life. Michael had wanted to laugh at the inanity of T's statement. New life where? How? Where would they work? Who would take care of Jay and Leah? What would they be, confirmed bachelors living together? But T had remained stubborn, insisting on his hokey dream. When T died, Michael knew it was a sign that he was right all along: They could never have worked. Nonetheless, he felt an aching in his throat, chest tightening as if he'd secretly hoped T could have been right.

And whenever Michael would miss T, miss being with a man, miss being away from Amanda and Jay and Leah and their suffocating green-papered house, he would flip through the memories like a colorful child's book.

It would be enough.

He stepped inside his house, bracing himself.

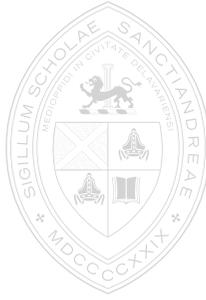
Jay and Leah were on the carpeted floor. Leah was playing with a doll quietly. Jay was doodling with crayons, smearing them against the carpet, which Amanda would later yell at him for. Right now, she was too busy to notice him.

"Is anything wrong?" Amanda asked, brows furrowed at the desperate look in Michael's eyes. She set the pot roast on the table. The sweet-smelling steam from the oven lingered in the air. Her salmon dress matched her gleaming nails. She looked perfect.

"Nothing," he said, smiling. "Everything is perfect."



ABBY SAHS '20



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