



The Andean '18




literature

5	THE POWER OF A STORY DIANA HONEY '19	38	STARLIGHT MACKLIN FISHMAN '19
8	IDEALISM ANNIE ROACH '18	42	HELL OR LIFEGUARDING? WILL CAMMERZELL '19
16	MY LITTLE WHITE RAM* VINCENT CHEN '18	44	THE WATCH CHRISTINE CHEN '21
21	HAPPY SAMANTHA APRIL 3, 2010 NOELLE YOO '18	49	NATURE WILL CAMMERZELL '19
22	PIECE BY PIECE HANNA SOULATI '18	51	FAITH ON THURSDAY ALEX CAMERON '18
25	TOGETHER HANNA SOULATI '18	52	THIS WORLD KEVIN SUN '19
26	CEILING FULL OF LIES ELIZABETH LEVENGOOD '21	54	GROCERY LIST BILAL MORSI '19
31	FIRST DATE VINCENT CHEN '18	58	ONCE MORE KATE BUTCHER '21
34	LONELY DESPERATION SANTIAGO BRUNET '18	61	FIGHTING ZAHARA MARTINEZ '19
36	THE COLORS OF LOVE VINCENT CHEN '18	67	ADVENTURE KATE BUTCHER '21

works of art

cover	THOMAS CUNNINGHAM '19	34	CARA MCTAGGART '18
inside	ABBY SAHS '20	37	VINCENT CHEN '18
2	KATE BUTCHER '21	39	COOPER DEBUTTS '18
4	ABIGAIL HUMMEL '18	40	ROBBIE TURNBULL '18
6	YUHAN WU '20	43	KATHERINE GAO '18
9	ABBI TARBURTON '18	45	NADIA HOLCOMB '19
12	ALEX CAMERON '18	48	WILDER BERL '19
14	ABIGAIL HUMMEL '18	50	JESSE TUGLU '20
18	ELIOT THOMAS-HILTON '21	53	GILLIAN SIMPLER '18
20	GIGI PALACIOS '21	55	ABBY SAHS '20
23	ABIGAIL HUMMEL '18	57	SUE KIM '19
24	DRAWING 1 STUDENTS	58	SYDNEY WILLIAMS '19
26	JACOB ZIMMERMAN '19	60	SUE KIM '19
29	TENZING KUNSANG '19	65	EVAN MURRAY '18
30	GIGI PALACIOS '21	66	SAMANTHA MAYO '18





Dear St. Andrew's,

The act of writing requires tremendous courage and vulnerability. To write is to immortalize a story or poem, to preserve a fragment of one's identity, and to trust the readers with it. Each piece in the collection thus no longer belongs to individuals, but to the larger community to interpret and appreciate. The writers' distinct voices contribute to the larger singular identity of both the readers and the writers as a family. These works tie our school together and facilitate the counter-cultural vision of the future that St. Andrew's strives to foster.

This collection gives us a glimpse of what St. Andrew's is all about, and piece by piece, we can begin to hear the hidden voices of the student body being drawn out through their writing—the voices that would not normally be expressed, and a profound, mature wisdom hidden behind a seemingly basic community of teenagers.

The Andean is more than a literary magazine; it is an embodiment of diversity, creativity, and most importantly, an expression of vision: what it means to be a part of the human race. It emphasizes the principle that we as students can make a difference in the community and even in the larger society through our works of literature and art.

We dedicate this collection to both the readers and the writers of the St. Andrew's family who will craft the future of the world and guide the communities around them with their powerful voices filled with passion, courage, and individuality.

Love,
The Editors



ABIGAIL HUMMEL '18

The Power of a Story

DIANA HONEY '19

We always used to lay there, the two of us.
Transported by the stories we told.
We wandered through strange places.
We explored the ends of the universe,
kingdoms where dragons came to schools
and two siblings could be anything.
Fighting that monster underneath the bed
On a broken sailboat
We braved the storm
The pain of the world just another wave to crest
Lightning illuminating the night that closed in around us.
We were never on earth
and yet never lost.
We were guided by the simple presence of the others' hand.

We always used to lay there, side by side,
holding hands until we drifted into sleep.
In the morning, our parents would come in
and turn on the light.
In the morning, we went our separate ways.
But, I knew you would always come back
for another story.



聽鶴花

Yuehan
2018

Idealism

ANNIE ROACH '18

There are three women seated in a small café near the Chesapeake Bay. The lighting is dim, but every so often the sunlight flicks momentarily across their faces, one at a time, so that impressions of their faces are fleeting and periodic. For a long time I watch these three women, the anonymity of their faces thrilling to me.

The first woman is pensive, her hand cupping her smooth cheek, her skin the color of a pearl. Her eyes are stormy, sharp against her skin. She wears a sundress, yellow and lace. Every so often she reaches down to twist a simple silver ring on her finger, keeping her eyes trained carefully away from the other women. Every time she speaks she does so without any expression, without any eye contact, so that if someone looked at her from far away, they would not be able to guess the content of her words.

The second woman sits completely upright, her leg nervously swinging and tapping the table. A feverish anxiety surrounds her. She seems to have a habit of taking one single strand of her long dark hair and twisting it vigorously. Her movements are sharp, fast, and her voice booms above the others. It is clear this woman has an advantage, a type of control, over the other two. The words that spring from her round lips are magnetic.

The third woman balances all characteristics. Sometimes when the light flashes over her she is sober, reflective; sometimes she is animated, bright-eyed. Her hair first appears a silvery blonde, but then it shifts to a simple brown before it becomes glowing and red-streaked. When she talks, sometimes her lips are slow and her hands are folded and motionless in front of her. At other times she talks with her hands flying in every direction, filled with bare emotion.

The bond between these women is apparent but it is not visible. The recognition radiating from their faces indicates they have known each other awhile. However, the inconsistency of their chatter, the unsure and sometimes solemn nature of their expressions, indicates that something is lost, that there is a lull.

As I begin to imagine the lives of these women, creating my own stories about them inside my head, the anonymity of their faces starts to diminish and I begin to recognize each of them as if I have known them a long time. A long and elaborate daydream begins.

I imagine that the first woman is named... Cecilia. Her parents are both dead and she is left in the world defenseless and vulnerable. Her older sister cared for her for many years but then her older sister got married and decided it was time for

Cecilia to fend for herself. Now, Cecilia travels from house to house, from friend to friend, seeking someone to look after her and to provide her with support. Her face is constantly blank. When asked a question, her answer is as clipped as possible. She is hesitant in all regards.

The second woman is Karin. Her parents are harsh and controlling. Her whole life has been hyper-intense. She is good at everything. She is good at math, at science,



ABBI TARBURTON '18

at sports, at talking to people, at running, at writing. She is good at the simplest things as well. She can fold clothes perfectly, open tightly capped bottles, wrap presents immaculately. Her outward physique is so coordinated and so smooth but only to hide the constant trembling and precariousness of her heart and mind. She constantly feels as though she is going full throttle towards a 50-foot cliff. The full-

throttle is liberating, fast-paced, and satisfying. The impending reality in front of her is inevitable and promises disaster.

The third woman is Sky. Despite her initial chameleon-like appearance, I can now see that Sky has clear blue eyes and the type of brown hair that immediately turns blonde in the sun. As a child, she was exposed to copious amounts of literature. Through literature, she became other people. She became various heroes and heroines and pictured herself in different, more fulfilling lives. Sometimes she recognized herself in a villain and cried. Yet although books were her only insight to herself, she sometimes put down a book and watched the layers of herself peel away, leaving her bare, bland, and exposed in the reality of the world. Sometimes when she pictured herself she imagined clay, gray clay. She imagined the characters in books taking her—a ball of clay—and twisting her with their hands and forming her into something else. Then time would pass and the character would leave and she would become a simple gray lump of clay again. This constant image terrorized her. She wanted to be more than clay.

I imagine that Cecilia and Karin were there when Sky was born.

Cecilia was three months old and Karin was four months old. Throughout childhood Karin described to Sky what it was like when she was born, despite the fact that she obviously did not remember. “You looked like a baby doll,” Karin would say, and Sky would shove her. “No, no, you were really cute—you had this soft pink blanket and this little white hat. I was about twice the size of you. I remember I leaned my baby head over your bassinet and saw you. You had these beautiful pink eyelids.” Cecilia didn’t even pretend to remember this.

Throughout the years, they are inevitably tied to one another. Even when they grow older and they become more and more different, they are unable to extract themselves from their roots. Their high school selves went in completely separate directions, with Karin too embarrassed to talk to the others, Sky reclusive in the library, and Cecilia invisible to everyone. High school graduation came and went. Their parents took a picture of the three of them at their graduation, all three in white dresses, all three smiling at the camera, although they had not talked in a long time. Their connection was altered. They entered college and did not see each other for five years.

I imagine that the year after college they all traveled to New York, unbeknownst to one another, inevitably seeking to fill their blank, post-college worlds with color and excitement. Cecilia had an internship at a magazine, and she lived in a tiny Brooklyn apartment, shared with three total strangers, in which she had to take soft, quiet steps to ensure that the precarious floor did not literally fall through. Karin lived with

her college boyfriend, whom she had adored in college but now found increasingly dull and bothersome. He was a heavy sleeper and in the middle of the night she would inch him farther and farther away from her until he almost fell off the bed. Sky lived alone, jumping from one unsteady job to another. She rarely slept and some nights she would ride the subway back and forth throughout the city, without any destination. She would get off at random stops, walk down the dark streets as if in a dream, and then get back on the train. Sometimes she didn't arrive home until 5 or 6 am.

One night Sky found herself completely lost. Through her nighttime adventures, she believed she knew every inch of the city. But it soon became clear to her that she had no idea where she was. The floor of the subway was drenched with melted snow from the bottoms of shoes. The only other people in the train were two men with dirty work clothes, clearly drunk, chattering in what sounded like Russian. Sky felt herself shrink in her loneliness; she became tiny. She stared at the melting snow on the ground and wished that she, too, had the ability to disappear when she didn't want to feel solid anymore.

The temperature was dropping rapidly. When she left work it had been 25 degrees. Now she guessed it was below 15. She shoved her hands into her pockets, seeking warmth and desperately seeking cover, protection, concealment. *At the next stop, I'll get off and I'll ask for directions*, she thought, glancing fearfully at the drunken men across from her. They had stopped chattering and were now staring blankly, straight ahead, their eyes red and unblinking. Eventually the train stopped and she scurried out, almost slipping on the wet floor. She sprinted up the stairs and was exposed to the brutal chill of the night. She checked her phone. 3 am.

Three minutes later, she found herself inside a CVS Pharmacy, desperate for warmth. As she walked in, she caught a glimpse of herself in the reflection of the window, and her hair was tangled and windswept, skin chapped, and eyes bright and wild. She was frightened by herself.

The store was empty besides a single employee at the desk, who was bent over a magazine, straight dark hair in a curtain over her face. Sky rushed to the desk.

"Excuse me, I'm lost," she said, her voice shaking.

The woman looked up. Their eyes met.

"Sky?" the woman said.

At first, Sky did not recognize her own name and thought that the woman had said a word in a foreign language. There was a three second silence. She looked more closely at the woman's face.

"Karin," Sky said slowly.



“What are you doing here? At this hour?” They had not seen each other for years, and the familiarity in Karin’s voice startled Sky. Weren’t they strangers now? Sky thought that maybe if she saw Karin on the street and recognized her, she would not even say hi. But Karin’s immediate recognition of her jarred her, gave her an inexplicable and unexpected identity.

“Let’s go home,” Karin said, or maybe she said “Let’s take you home,” or maybe she said “Where’s your home?” Sky didn’t know. She heard the word “home” and nodded. And with that, the two women walked out of the store. Sky told Karin her address, but was unsure if she had told her the right numbers. As they headed home—whatever that was—, Karin’s steps were determined and purposeful. Sky’s were dreamlike, liquid and light.

It soon became clear that Sky had told Karin the wrong numbers and the wrong street name because they ended up somewhere that looked familiar but was not where Sky lived. Karin tapped her foot, frustrated. They were both freezing. “Did you tell me the right address?”

“No, I think I messed it up—the street name, the numbers. I can’t remember them.”

She doesn’t know where her home is? thought Karin. The danger of the situation suddenly presented itself to her. Two women, in the middle of night/early morning, completely lost.

“Please try and remember your address,” Karin said, pleading. “Please? I know you can remember.”

And Sky thought for awhile and realized that her street was Newsome Street and not Newton Street, to which Karin breathed a heavy sigh of relief. They began walking again, Karin with Google Maps on her phone, which was rapidly losing battery, her fingers swollen from the cold air.

Just then, there was a cry from down the street. They twisted their heads around in unison and saw a dark silhouette of a woman coming towards them, the first person they had encountered since encountering each other.

The silhouette came nearer and nearer. Her features began to be visible through the streetlight.

“Is it you?” Karin whispered. “No way.”

Sky said, with more conviction, “Cecilia.”

And the three women stood looking at one another, overwhelmed by this reunion. Illuminated by the street lights and shivering, their limbs numb, they were silent for a very long time.

~~~~~

The three women rise from their seats and I am startled out of my daydream. As they walk closer to me, their conversation becomes audible.

“So we’ll all chip in three dollars,” Karin says, slinging a red purse over her shoulder. “Mom will really love it.”

“I can’t wait to finally go home for Christmas,” Sky says, sighing, and Cecilia puts a hand on her back tenderly, unexpectedly. “Me too, sis, me too,” she sighs.

At this moment it becomes clear to me that these women are not, in fact, three lifelong friends. What they are, rather, are sisters. Their bond is not one of friendship but one of family. Perhaps these women are not as complicated as I thought. Perhaps they are just three sisters out to lunch.

A blank notebook has been open in front of me. I close it abruptly, startled by this sudden shift of my own narrative.

They walk out the door and the bell on the door rings. I watch them walk down the street until they completely disappear from sight.

I open the notebook again.







# *My Little White Ram\**

VINCENT CHEN '18

If I didn't know "Art" or the background story,  
I might only see a painting celebrating the life of  
The late little white ram, who once roamed the rolling hills,  
Looking for a hollyhock to decorate his head.

Blissfully ignorant, I would have guessed that he had those  
Spiteful "masculine" ram jocks who teased him  
For loving white hollyhocks  
For not getting any ewes to bang.

Still, regardless, he searched the desert, day after day,  
until he found a hollyhock!  
So white and lonely she was, that he thought  
to pinch the flower off her stem was to end his own life!

So, he stayed and let his soft fluffy fur shelter  
the hollyhock from scorching sun and fierce storms, until  
he wasted away. And still, his skull desperately sought to  
Accompany the tender hollyhock and the hollyhocks to be.

Unfortunately, since I "understand" "art" and searched on Wiki.  
I now know that the ram and hollyhock were  
Never friends. The ram actually symbolized men and death,  
And the hollyhock women and life.

But it was never about Feminism for the other me...

Thus,  
*Stolen!*  
was my hollyhock loving ram,  
Whom I would love to befriend.

\*Poem inspired by Georgia O'Keeffe's *Ram's Head White Hollyhock and Little Hills*





GEORGIA O'KEEFFE





ELIOT THOMAS-HILTON '21





GIGI PALACIOS '21

Happy Samantha  
NOELLE YOO '18

April 3, 2010

I tell her my body is sore again.

I tell her that I want to stop training.

Without notice, she grabs him from my hand and rips Happy apart. Head and body detached, lifeless and limp in front of my folded knees. The tattered plastic has green mold, formed from the times I snuck him in the bath. My hand now only feels the impression of the doll, and soon will even forget that feeling.

I continue on with the training.

Next morning, she leaves the house. Probably to buy cheap cigarettes and perfume on her way to pick up Jenny from the man's motel room. Routinely, I lay down on the floor mat of the Trade Room. Exhausted from last night. Tiger and Jada are dead asleep. Boredom sweeps, and I start to count my breaths: 442. Still laying down, my eyes gaze at the corner of the room where the light from the cramped window rests subtly on what looks like a piece of crumpled paper. I drag myself over to that spot. Up close, I notice it is a used green oil paint tube. I pick off some of the dried paint and squeeze the tube until my fingers start to shake.

The tiniest of green creeps out of the flexible metal, and I dip my finger in it and smear it across the side of my cheek. Smooth because it's wet. Rough because specks of dried paint are interlaced within. I wonder, will she get mad when she sees my face? Will she say it ruined my pale

skin? As the green grows from the tube, I rub some more on my face until my senses are overwhelmed by the chemicals.

I just lay there, green paint drying, waiting for her to rip me apart as well.

Samantha Candice Arle

Missing since March 25, 2003

Date of Birth: October 2, 1996

Last seen holding a plastic doll near the general convenience store



# *Piece by Piece*

HANNA SOULATI '18

hold me  
trace the creases of the scars  
scribbled across my body  
that outline my lips,  
my shoulders, my jawline—  
all carved with a finger's blade

reach for my sides  
and find the spaces atop my hip bones  
where flesh once clung  
fifteen pounds of skin,  
hope, confidence:  
a small price for his love

now dig deeper  
reach between  
the gaps of my crumbling rib cage  
until you grasp my heart  
(feel it?)  
it breathes, but slowly—  
cautious in your hands

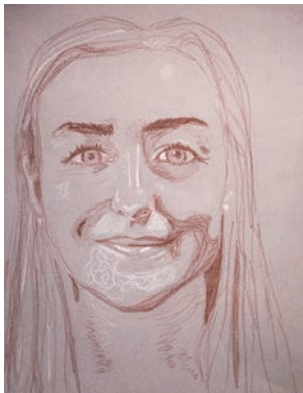
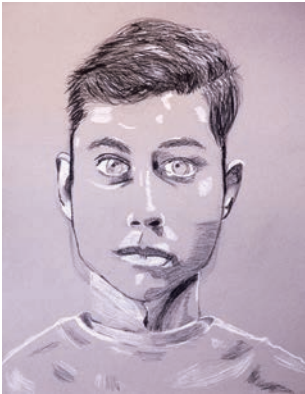
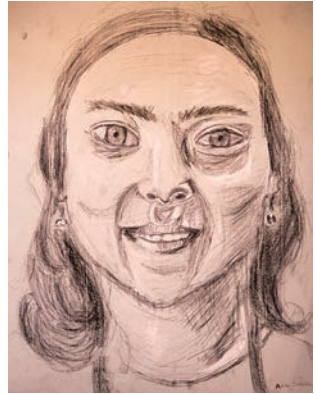
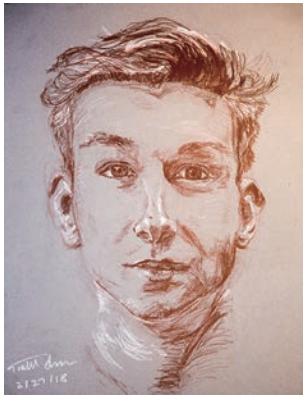
so hold still  
(don't squeeze!)  
and wait for it to mold  
in the shape of your fingers

let your calluses  
form to the sides of my heart  
and glue me together

piece by piece  
until I am whole again









*Together*  
HANNA SOULATI '18

Take me to the bridge  
where the children don't play  
where last summer  
drunk on Coors and the night  
we wobbled atop the rail —  
your hand my only link  
to the living world.  
Pull the veil of hair from my eyes  
and take me as I am,  
stepping with me, up  
onto the ledge  
the polluted breeze —  
hands on our backs  
We are alone.  
So have me and hold me  
watch me, and maybe we'll take a step  
together







## *Ceiling Full of Lies*

ELIZABETH LEVENGOOD '21

All I could see was darkness. My mind was foggy, like the night before a summer's rain, and it seemed as if it did not control my body. My hands were tightening spastically around what, I did not know, but they were warm and sweaty. The din of a scream echoed around me, but my mind paid no heed to it, and my hands just kept tightening. Never before had I thought myself a madman; never before had I gone into this great rush of adrenaline caused more by joy than by fear. I am not crazy, but I am an adventurer who longs for the company of someone else for eternity. The deed I was doing right now, was more of a task or chore that I had to perform before



JACOB ZIMMERMAN '19

I could continue on with my life. If this task was left unfinished, I would live forever as a mortal with no soul, wandering around in life like a fish trying to swim on dry land. If this deed was not completed, my life story would be a limitless void. Before I got this urge, I skipped through life without a care in the world. However, once it was realized, I could not move on until it was satisfied. The yearning was so strong I could not resist. I do not regret it.

My whole revolution started when I first attended university. I was a striving young chemist who had fallen head over heels for the world of science. My whole life had built up to that moment until it was swiftly taken away from me in the blink of an eye. During my first day at class we were all assigned lab partners. Mine was a young, audacious undergrad from New York. Over time, I fell deeply in love. I put my whole life on hold for her. Each time I saw her, I fell more in love, until it soon became unbearable. I knew I had to do something to rid myself of my despair. Each day after six we both stayed in the lab to work on assignments. I schemed more and more about what I had to do. I knew something had to be done to put me out of this pain and torture. I needed to make her mine forever. I schemed and schemed

in that lab, but it was of no use, since someone else was always there; we were just never there alone.

The lab itself seemed like something from a movie. It was the lab of a mad scientist, with bubbling beakers, and chalk that produced billowing white clouds. The lab was my safe haven. The place I went to escape the outside world. With her there it was almost impossible. I loved her so dearly, and every second of my thoughts were consumed by her. I had to make a grand gesture of my love, so that I could keep her with me forever and always have her by my side.

That Thursday I was in the lab by myself devising my plan when she strolled in. I knew this was the perfect time for my grand gesture. As she started working at the table next to me, all of a sudden the power cut out. I knew I had to act fast. I ran over,



and with a swift jerk, she was lying on the floor. I then needed to find a place that would be able to hide her forever.

I was a genius. I took down a tile from the ceiling above my lab table, and delicately hoisted her up into the pipes. I put the tile back on the ceiling and looked for a flashlight. All of a sudden the power turned back on. I cleaned up my workspace and left for the night, satisfied that my impetuous plan had worked without a hitch.

After the lab, I went to get a drink to celebrate, and then returned home with a huge smile on my face. My life was again normal, and I would be able to continue on with my work, since she was now always there, in the lab, with me. I was joyous about how brilliant and devious my plan was. I deserved a medal for how well it went.

The next day everyone was looking for her. I could not help but smile because I was the only one in on the dirty little secret. Police were scurrying around like rats, trying to find clues and hints about what happened to her, but they found nothing. I was so smart. They could not find a single trace of her. I even remembered to disable the security cameras, so no one would be able to find out. Ha! How they cowered and shook with fear because of their lack of power. She was mine now. My most prized possession. After a couple of days, the investigation stopped, and the police listed her as a missing person. Ha! How ignorant they were.

Everyday I went to the lab, and felt smarter because of my dark little secret. I then carried on with my normal life, however my work in the lab excelled. I knew this was because I had the comfort of knowing she was always there with me. I always had a companion; I was never alone. I began applying for jobs, and all of them accepted me because of her. I do not know how I used to live without her by my side, and I am forever grateful for her.

One day I was working in the lab when tiny red drops started falling onto my arms. They kept dripping, until I couldn't stand it anymore. I could feel the eyes of everyone in the laboratory burning into my back. They had figured out my dirty little secret. How dare they think me dumb! How dare they think me a fool! Their taunting eyes seemed to say, "Ha, look at that fool who thought he was so smart. He is just as ignorant as the girl he has hidden in the ceiling." The pupils of my eyes started flicking around with anger. They would pay for mocking me, and they would pay for laughing. I then screamed, "Are you happy? You found out! Open the ceiling and there you will find a bloody corpse!"





# First Date

VINCENT CHEN '18

He never expected to get a message so fast when he downloaded the app. But here he is, staring at the little red dot indicating a new message which is blinking tantalizingly. It just turned 00:00 am, the beginning of a new day, and a message hinting at a romance that's long overdue and desperately waited for. Everyone deserves a great love story. He has dreamed far too many times about cuddling with those who had no idea he loved them—he has always been too scared and terrified to pursue love. Now, now that he is 18, an adult, it's all different. He has taken a step, a bold one, and the possibility of love awaits him in that unopened message. His body trembles uncontrollably in the bed as he is about to open the message, filled with an excitement so loud that he almost misses the sound of keys turning as his single mother returns from work. When he realizes it, her deliberately soft footsteps are creeping dangerously close to the bedroom door.

In a series of swift consecutive, well-practiced movements, he takes off his earphones, sticks the phone in under the cover. Now, pretending to be asleep, he realizes that he is still shaking ever so slightly. In panic, he takes a deep breath, but the shaking only grows against his will when the door lets out a whining as his mom meticulously opens it. Moments later, he almost jumps up when her soft hands make contact with the cover, lifting it up to cover his shoulder. Then he hears a few clicks of buttons, followed by the buzzing of a starting heater. She lets out a sigh, plants a soft kiss on his forehead, and leaves.

After hearing her closing the bedroom door, he calms down a little and realizes that his sweat has made his skin sticky against the sheets. The panic has made him temporarily forget the unopened message as he laughs at himself for being so worked up, like a teenager, about his mom's random "night inspections" which have mostly been motherly and harmless. Well, except... Except for that time she caught him watching something he was not supposed to watch. He was 15 at the time, and the people in the movie were not even doing it. The cowboys were just pressing their lips together, taking in the scent of each other before having to return to their wives, to their normal lives. Still, she gave him the silent treatment for two weeks until she could bring herself to talk to him again. In those two weeks, her eyes changed from a mixture of bursting anger and unspeakable disappointment to disgust. A disgust he could not describe but to call it a feeling a mother should never harbor when thinking of her child. When she finally spoke to him, she spoke in a resigned voice. He had expected her to shout at him, maybe a few slaps on his face. Instead, her voice was



soft yet the words bordering on those of hatred made him feel that he had committed an irredeemable crime, one that called for the most severe punishments. He knew she had given up on him, and that if he were to jump off a cliff that very moment, she may even have let him. He wonders whether she would give him another three weeks of deadly silence if she saw the message he received just now on his phone.

A surge of resentment starts to rock his stomach and the rushing of the blood in his ears quickly rises from a whisper to a roar. *It's all in the past now*, he tries to talk himself out of it. And eventually, the rage, even though it does not recede, becomes more manageable. He knows because this carefully controlled anger towards her, and some others, sometimes towards almost everyone, has been the closest company of his life. All he wants to do right now is to bust into her bedroom, hold her by the collar of her sleeping gown, and ask her, *Why? Why! How could you treat me like that?! Your son, your only child!* He feels the urge to bash his ex-best friend, who told him to get away when he planted a light kiss on his cheek during their last weekly sleepover, a tradition since kindergarten. He imagines the exhilaration of beating up a stranger who happens to make a homophobic comment. Usually, the malice of such feelings is masked by the natural familial love a son has for his mother, a friendly smile, or simply the obligation to common courtesy. But now, that anger has been in the closet for so long, too long, that it, feeding on darkness and loneliness, grows into a monster; and he gladly welcomes it. The beatings at school, and the way sadness spilled out of her eyes when she heard someone else's son getting married to this friend or that friend's daughter. She knows why he comes home bruised from beatings, and she knows why those high school jock boys, including his "best friend," always pick on him. But she does NOTHING. She just cleans up his wounds, tells him she loves him and that he will have to wait for her to change, no matter how slowly it might be.

But NOTHING ever happens!

No more! No more!

He takes out his phone, almost dropping it from his quivering hands, clicks open the app and clicks open a blank profile where the red dot of an unopened message is still pulsing lustfully.

The message window springs open. And the line reads, "Wanna meet?"

Without thinking, he punches the screen with his thumbs, "Yes, where?"

A moment of desperate screaming silence, and another message, "Near the dumpster by the corner of Beck street and 8th AVE."

He rushes out of the door and slams it with a satisfying boom.

.....

When he gets there, the man is nowhere to be found.

In the 30 minutes he spends frozen, waiting, the pungent liquid from the dumpster readily makes its way into the puddle near him, and the smell gradually becomes more unbearable than his anger.

Then, his phone buzzes again, rekindling his anger, as he frantically taps open the blank profile to read the man's new message.

"Sorry, found another guy cuter than you."

He wants to scream or cry, but instead he just laughs. It is hysterically at first, but soon he feels the rage that fuels the laughter slipping away, emptying until a void in his heart threatens to make him collapse upon himself. In that moment, he thinks about his mom, who once told him, crying, that she was trying hard—really, really hard—to love all of him after he accused her of hating him. He remembers the romantic movies he watched for a sense of escape or for the sake of falling in love with the idea of love. Suddenly, he feels the weight of the time he spent—oh, so much time spent—in hatred, anger, and fear that his heart is no longer a place for beautiful emotions to dwell. His tears taste salty and bitter, and his whole body aches from the desire for something more.

*Am I capable of love?*

# Lonely Desperation

SANTIAGO BRUNET '18

How do I let the world know about my desire?  
I could tell them it's an unavoidable temptation  
or that I excuse it on my fondness on love  
for each woman is art and beauty.  
I fall into humiliating desperation,  
yet, I continue on this path alone.  
I'm scared of being left alone  
With my forever burning desires.  
For they drive me into desperation,  
and make me want more temptation,  
creating self pleasure out of universal beauty,  
adopting the devil inside and not Your Love.  
I truly am, only, seeking real love.  
Something which never comes alone  
for it brings into the world life and beauty.  
Love is what I eagerly desire,  
not these lustful temptations!  
(God, please rid me of this eternal desperation)  
I'm at an impasse: all creates desperation.  
I want pure, chaste, true, unwavering love,  
but instead I get sexual temptation.  
It appears that I am condemned to, alone,  
attempt to turn this carnal desire  
into admiration of docile beauty.



For women are the definition of beauty,  
throwing every artist into desperation,  
making their due resignation a delicate desire.  
Women have mastered all my love,  
with eyes that twinkle knowing that they alone  
can cast me into passionate temptation.  
I try to get rid of it, but the temptation  
is always there, defiling beauty  
and leaving me and my hand alone  
to fight off the mad desperation  
that complying with this evil feigned love  
creates; oppressing me with stupid desire.  
I will end the temptation and desire  
that corrupt the beauty of whom I love,  
for, with You, I'm not alone in desperation.





# The Colors of Love

VINCENT CHEN '18

This morning, my world turned red  
No trace of the sun shining yellow  
Or trees glistening green.  
My ears filled only with tunes of blues,  
And I knew my heart was black.  
What happened? I wonder.

Everyone knew what happened was not a wonder  
After all, I was pierced by a love so red  
that it turned my heart black.  
This love made my face sickly yellow  
And my skin bruised blue.  
I was a fool to fall for her scarf green!

Only I thought my time with her was a hopeful green.  
But I was just ignorant enough to only wonder  
About the kiss she gave me by the sea blue.  
Everyone noticed how her face turned guilty and red  
When I asked her about the man in yellow.  
Still, I refused to accept that my first love had rotten black.

This morning she left while the sky was still black  
Just as dews crept on the grass green  
In the taxi cab so disgustingly yellow.  
I had no time to wonder.  
Why shouldn't I have used the knife against my heart red  
When she abandoned me so hopelessly in blue?

Now, I am watching from the sky blue  
As my parents clothed themselves in black,  
Their face devoid of any pinkish red,  
And their silhouettes a ghostly green.  
Where is she? I still wonder.  
Why did she leave me for the man in yellow?



VINCENT CHEN '18

Why, why did her love for me wither yellow?  
Does she see me in the sky blue?  
Is she mourning for me? Suddenly, I do not wonder.  
She would never cry for me till her eyes go black.  
My stomach turns and my face iron green,  
Watching her dancing with him with her cheeks red.

Now, I close my eyes, and the world is black.  
I dream of a world with shades of hopeful green  
Because I am tired of love's sickly red.

# Starlight

MACKLIN FISHMAN '19

She always used to smile  
Even after the sun had disappeared behind the pine trees  
night draining the last flicker of light from the sky  
leaving the frigid darkness to swallow the world  
She would find that one star  
desperately grasping at still air  
fighting the empty coolness of the clouds  
working hard to illuminate the haunting laugh of the rivers  
the final breath of the trees  
She and that star would hold on to each other  
and shine as bright as they could

I liked to believe that she still smiled  
her cheeks flushing and her eyes bright  
beckoning her peers to show their teeth  
soften their eyes  
crinkle their noses  
I liked to believe that the star remained inside of her  
But when I begged her to lend me her star  
she told me that the brightness was gone  
The fire of the star had gone out in the night  
Dampened by shoe soles  
Drowned by tears  
The star had dimmed  
And then the star had died

and with the death of her star  
her heart turned against her  
piercing her soul until she emptied of light  
until everything left inside her disappeared into darkness  
I had caught her too late  
A single dark tear slipping down her face  
And her pleas flooding inside my brain  
*Help me, she begged*

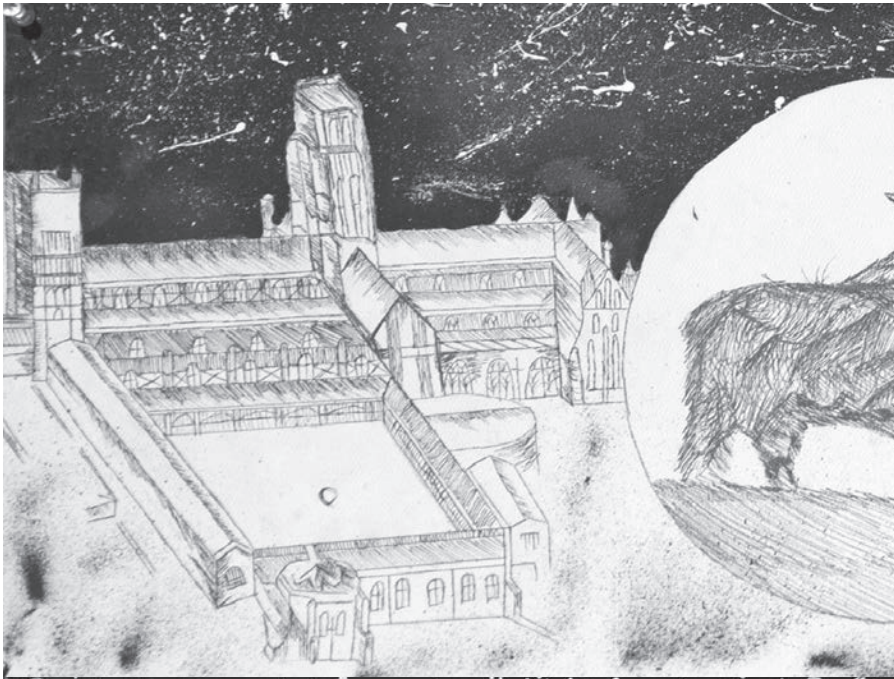
She always used to smile.





COOPER DEBUTTS '18







ROBBIE TURNBULL '18



# Hell or Lifeguarding?

WILL CAMMERZELL '19

The screaming, the heat, the smell of chemicals. Out of context, I could be in battle but, alas, I'm only lifeguarding. The awkward discomfort of holding the buoy around my waist, and then dropping it whenever my boss is out of sight, becomes painfully repetitive as I calculate the exact amount of time I have left.

My swing-thought for this ordeal is always, "Think of the paycheck, Will." The luxurious \$9.50/hr that gets me through this boredom is the only thing on my mind as I watch the kids run on the slippery dock and dive into dangerously shallow water. "Don't do that," I say, with no emotion whatsoever. "No diving," I repeat for what seems like the 100th time that hour. "Carli, I swear if you throw sand one more time you're done for the week," I say, secretly hoping that she does so I don't have to deal with her anymore.

When that glorious time of exit finally does come, my moped awaits me for my 20-minute crawl home. Once home, the lasting strength of the hot sun finally overtakes me as I collapse onto the couch and don't arise until mom finds me.

Who knew guarding lives was so unfulfilling.





KATHERINE GAO '18



# The Watch

CHRISTINE CHEN '21

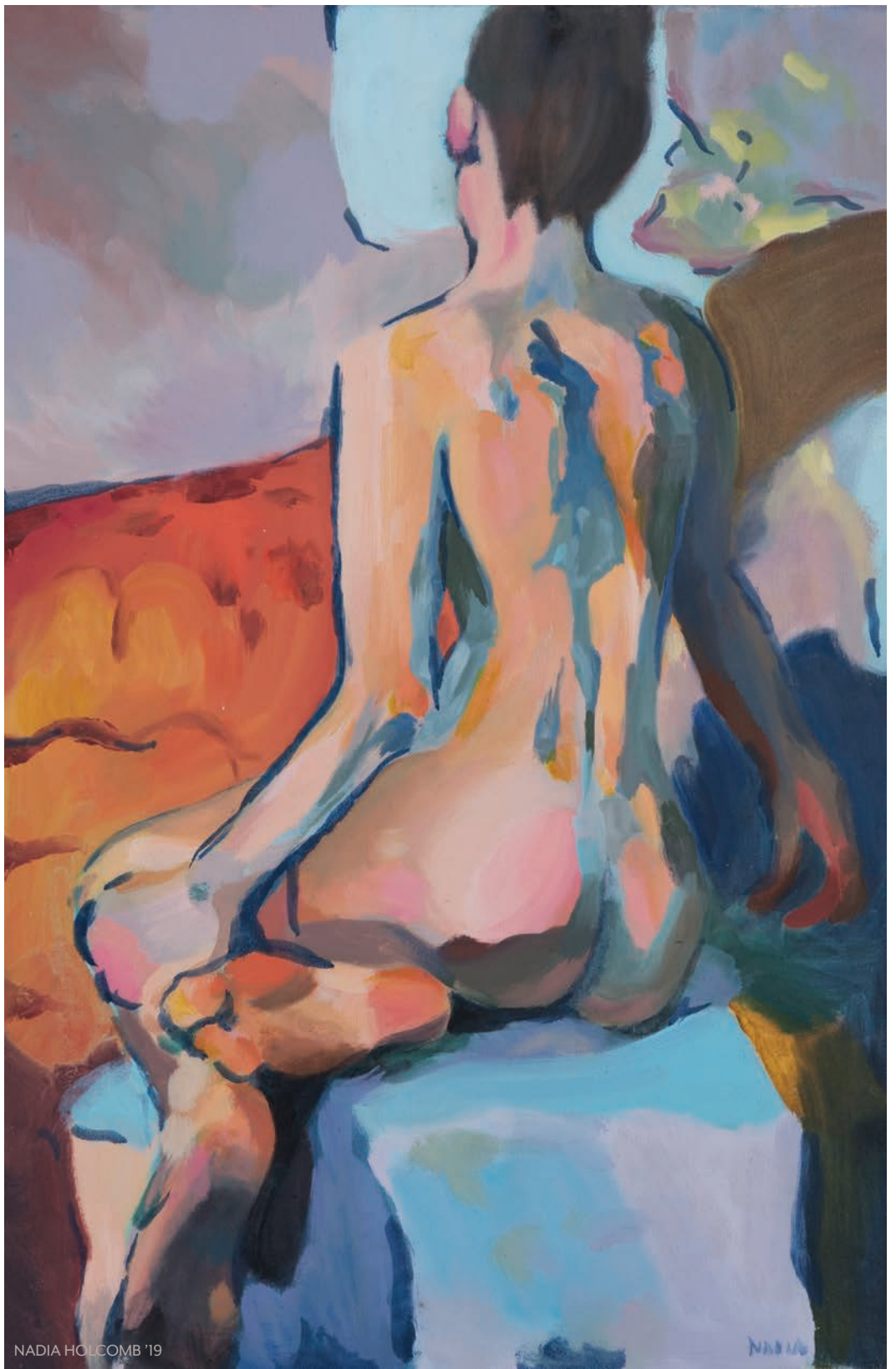
“I give you a new commandment that you’ll love one another, as I have loved you.”

The girl stands in the chapel among her fellow schoolmates, singing the refrain in her white robe.

“Jesus said to his disciples,” the soloist repeats after a verse retelling the last night before Jesus’ death. This is the first time she hears those exact words, read, told or sung.

She is a little uncomfortable. She is not raised in a religious household, and prior to her first Maundy Thursday chapel at the school, had no knowledge of its traditions. She is only there to sing, to contribute an alto voice to the sizable choir, all robed in white, standing behind the altar. She would never willingly participate in any service. She respects them, but only follows along passively, standing and sitting as the chaplains require the congregation, singing and responding when everyone else does. She reads some of the prayers, not all. Those that seem particularly devout and intense she tends to avoid. Rather, she mouths the words without making a sound, fearing that others might expose her non-Christianity while at the same time unwilling to betray her heart to swear on something she does not wholeheartedly believe. Of all the evil deeds in the world, she chooses not to lie about her faith, not even to herself, especially to herself. She knows Easter; she knows Good Friday. The basics, the famous. She knows the last supper from that painting she learned as a child when her parents took her to the Louvre for Da Vinci’s mysterious smiling woman. Not the lesser-known night before, not the foot washing on Maundy Thursday. She was embarrassed to ask her choir teacher what it was about the week before. She made her explain everything to her. Everything. Hearing the phrase “foot washing” made her giggle self-consciously before she realized her ignorance. So when she learns of the story from the Gospel of John for the first time she is first confused and intrigued. How odd of a tradition, having a stranger wash your feet! She felt awkward enough singing Jesus so many times in Mandatum. She never understood.

And when the psalm ends, she sits in her corner in the first row, watching. From her seat, she gets a perfect angle to monitor the foot washing. The elder chaplain faces her sideways, and she can perceive even the slightest detail of the person being washed. Having nothing else to do, she stares out in an attempt to relax, but her vision always fixes on the bare feet before the priest.



She is oddly fascinated. The minister first takes one foot, waters it, then gently rubs the wet foot, ridding it of soot as the receiver enjoys a brief massage. He immediately scrubs the foot dry with a white towel, then holds out the other foot, repeating the process. Such a loving old man. He looks at those feet—feet of different sizes, color, and even shapes, some sweaty, some dirty, some smelly from a day’s toil in sneakers—as if they were of a newborn, of his own children. How he must’ve blessed them.

His mild rubs remind her of her father, how he washed her feet when she was still little and her feet could fit in his palms. They had the same expression of love in their eyes. She remembers how it was their “thing,” a father-daughter secret deal. She wonders why her mother never truly understands. She seems to hear him telling her again, “I am the first man to wash your feet. And I should be the only besides your future husband. May that Mister Right be willing to wash your feet as I have washed yours.” She recalls now while she remains seated while other singers line up. She’s still not comfortable with having her feet touched and being vulnerable before much older men, one that could be her father and one that could father him. The deal is the more important reason.

She is suddenly reminded of how much she misses him. She is from a foreign land. As if living 14 hours (flight, not drive!) away isn’t tough enough for a teenager, work and extracurricular commitments take it upon themselves and divide up her free time. She barely has the opportunity to text her family, and only calls once a week for an hour reserved strictly and specifically for this matter. And the calls are getting shorter by the week. Whenever she visits, she is constantly annoyed by her father’s silly and unnecessary act of play. Somehow, watching others getting their feet washed in the night chapel, makes her homesick more than ever. She tears up watching them be cleaned one by one, in share of love.

She wipes her tear and starts to pay more attention. She bows her head down during prayers, and for the first time joins the communion. She’s not sure if she has done the right thing, dipping the bread into the wine chalice, but eats it anyway. It no longer matters to her what she is doing. She’s putting her heart to it, and her spiritual involvement makes this space even more sacred to her. She follows the rest of the program with much care, and as she exits up those stairs, she signs her name up for a vigil shift. She surprises herself without realizing that the decision is more than an impulse. She wants to be part of it, the peace. She wants to answer the call.

Three o’clock. After stumbling down the stairs, she knocks on the chapel door and utters her call. A faint yet firm response comes from within. She pushes open the heavy wooden doors and enters the dark as her predecessor leaves while trying to

refrain a yawn. Outside, the moon has just set and the sun has not yet risen. Faded stars twinkle a feeble light. The night sky is completely dark. So is the chapel, except for the flickering flame of the candle. She takes a seat as close as possible to the candlelight, in fear of the surrounding dark that will swallow her up any minute. She is alone now, left to conquer one of her greatest fears by herself in utter silence. She can hear her mind run wild, voices shrieking and hyperventilating in panic, begging to leave.

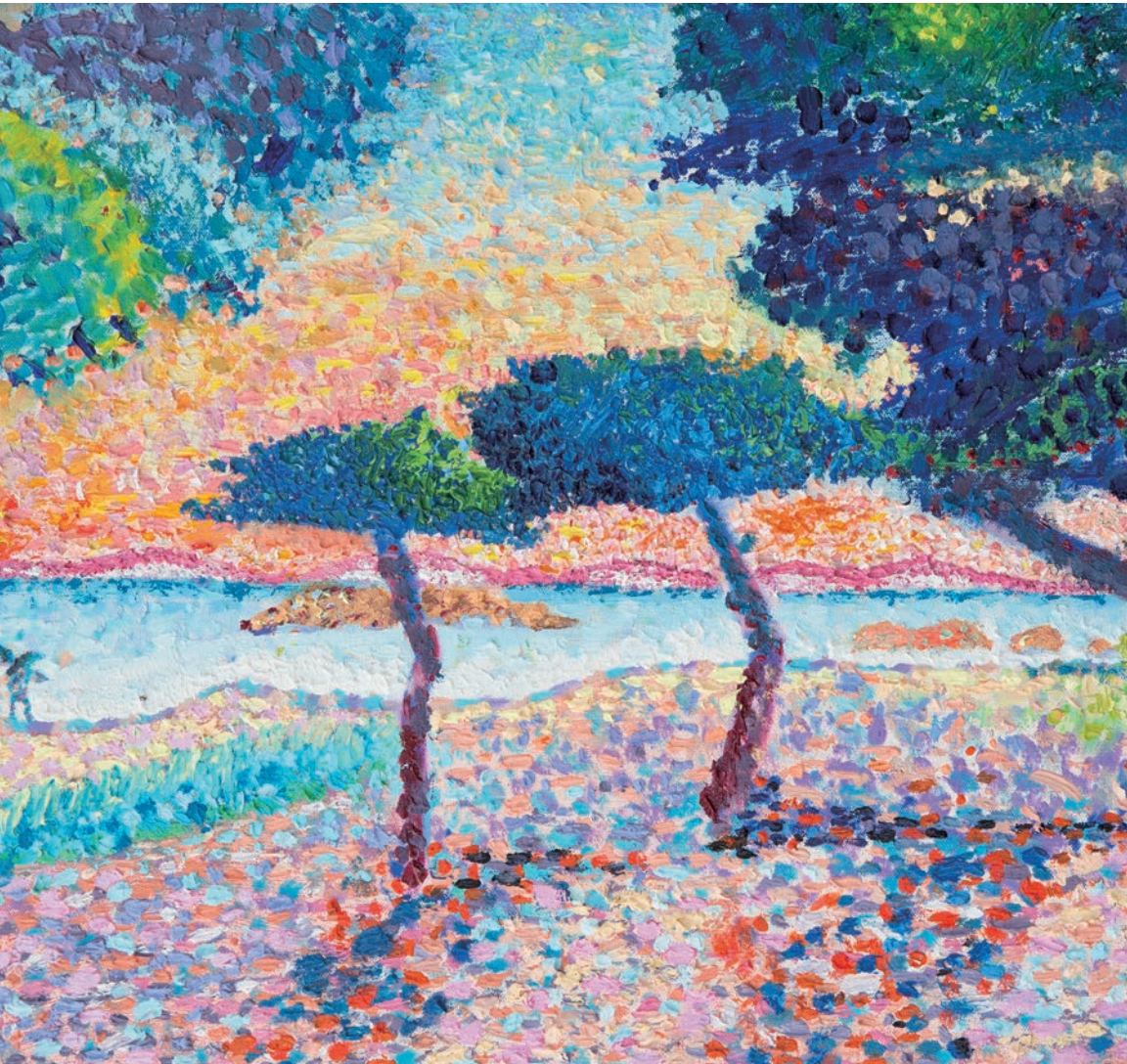
She sits; she prays. After her eyes get used to the obscurity, she watches over the garden while she tries to make sense of the floating words in her head. She stays that way. Half an hour passes like a flash in the silent dark, where she loses perception of time. When she answers the door, she is at peace.

This is the story of a girl on Maundy Thursday going into Good Friday, an international student, a teen still finding her faith in the chaotic world. Over that night she gains some serenity that she has long lost, watching, praying, thinking, repeating Jesus' words in a song.

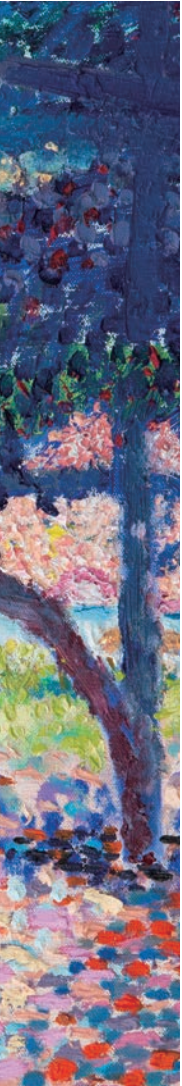
Except, I didn't stay for the vigil. I didn't get my feet washed because I was afraid, afraid of being touched. I didn't sign up for the 3 o'clock shift, not because it was taken, but for my fear of darkness. Without any light as guidance, I did not have the courage to stay awake alone with my thoughts. I feared that I would go crazy.

Yet I did cry. I did feel spiritually refreshed after the hour-long service. I did see myself from a different perspective, watching others be vulnerable. I would never partake in a vigil, but the watch helped me learn more about life than I've ever had.





WILDER BERL '19



## *Nature*

WILL CAMMERZELL '19

In the busiest of times we forget what we need  
Because of you, with joy and excitement I was once filled  
But now through work and meetings you've been killed.  
I remember you every day, but I don't have the time to appreciate you  
I want us to be together again, enjoying time together, although it flew.  
I wish I could apologize, and show you the respect you deserve,  
But alas my love I must reserve.  
From my window I listen to your trees  
Or maybe I'll hear the buzzing of your bees.  
A taste of once was true love  
Now can only be remembered by things like the calling of a dove.  
I know you remember me, and you have not changed,  
As you're always there although we've become estranged  
You are not dead however, you seem to be everliving  
I will come back to you whether or not you will be forgiving.  
You've given me memories that cannot be replaced  
And I know my priorities have been misplaced  
But I will be back, and better than ever  
For once I return, I will leave never.





JESSE TUGLU '20



# Faith on Thursday

ALEX CAMERON '18

On Wednesday, Mrs. Natalie told me I needed to have more faith. I am not usually the type who would believe a psychic, so I might just ignore it. Though, that seems just a little too ironic for my taste.

Mrs. Natalie told me that I needed to believe in things without seeing them. Though, I believe in zebras, and tigers, and pandas. I believe that there is a bottom to seemingly endless oceans. I believe that war and death exist. I believe in Mars, and Jupiter, and even Saturn too. I believe tomorrow will come. I can't see tomorrow.

She told me that I need a little more fantasy. Though, I spell magic I-S-A-B-E-L. Coincidentally, that is also that name of my best friend. She kept a jar of fairy dust in our room and believed that when she died her soul would travel back to the star it came from. She had a rose red aura, she thought. She told me mine was gold. Every once in a while she could predict the future, something she and Mrs. Natalie had in common.

Mrs. Natalie said I shouldn't be so close-minded to spirituality. Though, she doesn't know about that time I stood on top of a four-story tower over the marsh on the shore of the Rehoboth bay, feeling the wind under my skin and knowing for sure that there was no moment that I had ever been more connected to the world than this. She doesn't remember that huge thunderstorm from my first summer, riding in the back of an open pickup truck through the winding roads feeling the fiery rain on my skin and seeing the sparks of lightning through the trees like fireworks.

So yes, Mrs. Natalie. I am an atheist. I do not believe in God the same way I don't believe you can tell me my life story by the lines on my rough palms. But that does not mean that I don't have faith. I believe that the ocean ends at some point miles below the surface. While I'm not sure which star I'm going back to when it's all said and done on this fragile earth, I'll find out when I get there. And I know what it feels like when all of your insides are expanding and you're afraid your skin might be too small to fit all there is within. *That* is what I call faith.

I have faith. No more on Thursday than on Tuesday, though I think I'll be just fine.

# *This World*

KEVIN SUN '19

I spawned into this world not knowing who I am, or what I will become.  
My comrades surround me in a world of chaos, oblivious of where we're from.

Then the fall began.

I stare down at the world below me, sudden cold air rushing by my side;  
Destination in sight, I land in a lonely lodge.

Nothing is given at first, but opportunity, an unopened chest, awaits,  
thus I begin my stride.

Bullets come at me, I duck and dodge,  
The weak and undetermined, this world eliminates.

Through toil and pain I come to a stop,  
I hear a chest on the other side of a wall.  
I can stop now, and shun the dangers,  
But in this world you move forward or die.  
All around me are the faces of strangers,  
I will never to their sneerings comply.

Finally I open the chest, my first bucket of gold.  
I grow to hate those born into riches.  
But that's how this world is:  
Some are dropped surrounded by chests,  
Others choked by the cuckoo in their nests.

The older I get, the more intense the competition.  
As an invisible storm closes in,  
People fight for space to survive.  
No time for compassion within,  
The game of survival such tender feelings deprive.  
This world is a dark, wailing woods,  
Hunt or be hunted.



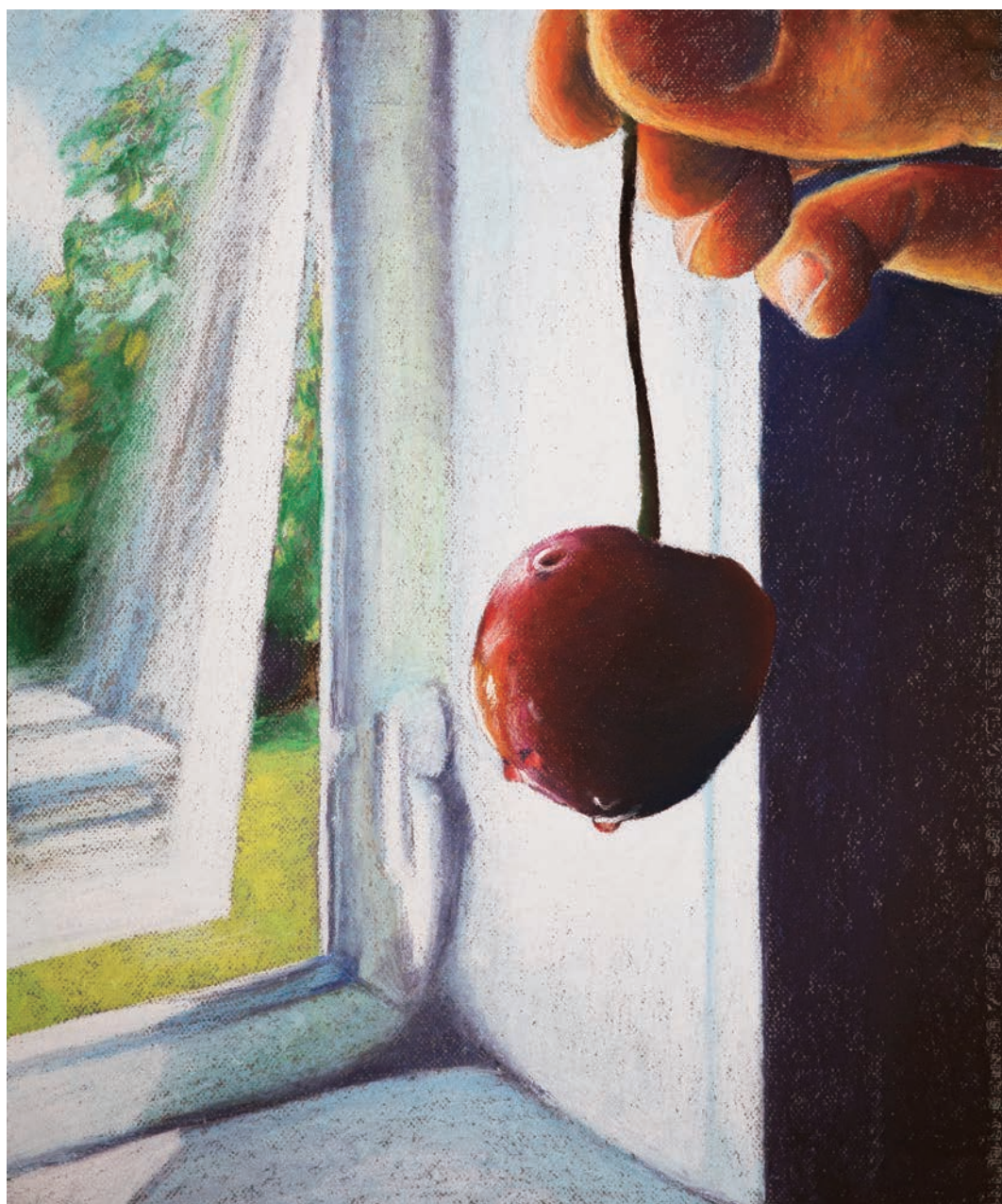
GILLIAN SIMPLER '18



# Grocery List

BILAL MORSI '19

1. Dozen Eggs. Ones on sale. Make sure none are broken.
2. Gallon of milk with purple lid. Check expiration date.
3. Activia yogurt for dad. Buy off-brand if cheaper.
4. Orange juice. Check bottle for dents.
5. Don't waste money on pears. Dad will get angry.
6. Remember to buy precooked rotisserie chicken. Don't be picky. They're all slimy and under-seasoned. Mom will be home soon.
7. If someone put their hand on beans first, let go and try to find another. Don't scavenge for food. We aren't animals yet.
8. Search for what's left of cereal aisle. Make sure box is sealed and cereal is untouched. Hope for at least an ounce of purity.
9. Check cell reception. Try calling mom by meat section. Pray for that subtle buzz to ring in your ear. Pray for phone to ring on other side of planet. Pray for some kind of proof that God can be a listener and a pursuer.
10. Hot sauce. Never forget hot sauce. If you can't find hot sauce, sriracha will do. Or any flavor of tabasco.
11. Gallons of water. As many as possible. Remember the anchorman's exhausted, monotone description about dangers of tap water. Remember the ways he pointed at spirals surrounding an eye of hope. Don't make that mistake.
12. Check prices. Check budget.



ABBY SAHS '20

13. Avoid physical contact. Bodies attached to shopping carts will levitate around you. Don't be alarmed. Stay away. Protect groceries for the sake of the family. Everyone's just trying to survive storm.
14. Go to detergent aisle and sniff detergents for right aroma. Try not to think of mom when you do this one. Hold your tears. Don't show weakness. Be ruthless.
15. Don't lose card for foldable shopping cart. Mom would be so disappointed. Hold on tight. Hide it from the bodies.
16. Dad needs diet coke. Find two liter bottle at front of sugar aisle. Ignore dents along edges. Ignore lack of fizzling. Learn to like the flatness.
17. Proceed to back of line. You will be tempted to skip the old lady in front of you. Don't be dangerous. Play by rules. Be safe. It's what mom would have wanted. Don't be angry at mom as she hides underneath clear Egyptian skies on other side of planet. She needed to see grandpa before his goddamn surgery. Know she never wanted to leave you.
18. It's okay to laugh when you realize Mom is living on sandy beaches along Mediterranean Sea as you live in a different kind of Sandy.
19. Tap your foot uncontrollably if anxiety pumps through your veins. Mom will be home soon.
20. You can go outside. Don't be afraid. Out of harm's way for now. Mom will be home soon.
21. Cover groceries with garbage bag to shield from rain. Hurry home. Dad waiting. Mom will be home soon.
22. Remember to pray when you get home. Mom will be proud. Mom will be home soon.
23. When you see eerie playground, stop for a moment. Feel growing wind gusts whirl your loosely-fitted raincoat. Remember smile on Mom's face when you learned to swing on your own. You saw relief dwell in her face. She taught you to



love yourself. You begged Mom to catch you when you slid down slide or carry you when you fell off ladder or kiss you when bigger kids pushed you down. Mom denied you of comfort. Mom told you to catch yourself or carry yourself or love yourself. She didn't tolerate constant begging and whimpering. Instead, she taught you what it means to love someone. Mom will be home soon.

24. Try not to wake Dad. Stare at world outside of tiny window. Embrace comfort of two bedroom apartment. Get comfortable on shabby brown couch. Stare. Just stare. Don't think. Don't fear. Don't cry. Don't scream. Just stare. Look at bending trees. Look at Egyptian flag fly away from strings attached to beam on window gate. Watch raindrops swirl in all directions. Listen to distant thunder. Feel vibrations become shudders. Hold your tears. Mom will be home soon.

25. Put groceries away.



SUE KIM '19

# Once More

KATE BUTCHER '21

Once more I'm lost,  
Out in the open air.

Wandering aimlessly.  
Stuck onto the freezing ground.  
Life whirling,  
At the speed of light.  
Patiently,  
At the edge of insanity.  
Giving up,  
On the route to success  
I am left unaware of other options.





Petrified of the destinations miles away.  
Not caring which path I'll stumble upon,  
For either is better than now.

But I've been tricked,  
I've been captured.  
I'd give anything  
For a second chance.

Now locked away.  
I saw an open window.  
And I leaped,  
Before I had a chance  
to look down.  
The door was locked  
I know because  
I have spent my life  
Pulling at that doorknob.  
It won't budge.

But I could have broken through the door.  
Hell, I could have broken down the wall.  
Then I might have  
Two rooms,  
Then three,  
Then four.  
And over time  
I'd build a house.

Repair the holes,  
But never forget them.  
I wouldn't be trapped,  
I'd be happy  
Truly happy.

But the door was locked  
And the walls held solid  
So, I leaped  
Without looking down.





SUE KIM '19

# Fighting

ZAHARA MARTINEZ '19

“Green and khaki, green and khaki, this is our theme song!” In my memories, I dance in my ugly school uniform with my big sister, marching and saluting like a soldier, chanting to the thump of our footsteps on the living room floor. My dad had convinced my family that it was best I go to this new middle school, different than the one my big sister was finishing up at. “Structure,” he said. “It will provide more structure.”

My elbow really hurts pressed up on my desk under the weight of my propped up head. But I can't help being painfully bored. One time last year I actually bawled my eyes out trying to tell my dad how bored I was until he threatened to spank me. Then my mom yelled at my dad for yelling at me, my dad yelled at my big sister because my mom yelled at him, and my big sister yelled at me for making everyone upset. Before I learned to cry in the living room when everyone was asleep, my emotions usually traveled around like that, returning to me amplified. That was before I came up with my motto: Get out of the hood, get out of the house, get out of here.

“And the push factors of the Great Migration were what, Laila?” Mr. Krantz's eyes bulged out like a rabies infected dog. And that says something considering how much he bulged in general. A tall, meaty white man with a thick veiny neck and forearms. Squinty blue eyes swallowed up by the chunky sharpness of his big head. His shirt looked tortured. He licked his nearly non-existent lips with his abnormally long tongue, hungry to reprimand me, to make some noise in a room filled with equally dead, disengaged children like me. He definitely sees me me daydreaming, the faraway look in my eyes, and focuses his eyes on me. But he doesn't know I have a superpower. I have always been good at putting one ear to my thoughts and one to the real world.

How sad he is, how sad most of the faculty here are. Early to mid-twenty years-old white college graduates recruited to an urban charter school by Teach for America. Eager to teach mostly black and Hispanic kids how amazing their history was, to be the mirror through which the kids can see themselves. Forgetting that they will never be able to communicate the subtle nuances and undertones of the situation to which they were born in. “This is how you fit into this picture,” they tell you, admiring themselves so much they don't notice you trying to do the arithmetic. What do I have to subtract in order to condense myself enough to fit in the space given?

“The resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and other violent terrorist groups, and the outward Jim Crow of the south, and the boll weevil.”

There, I say it, and the class slows down for a split second. Will anyone pick the little breadcrumb in the form of the word, “outward?” Will anyone understand that I am hinting at the fact that the North was institutionally segregated as well, just without the signs? Whatever. No one will, of course, because I’m the only one who thinks about these things that won’t help me on the test, that I do just to entertain myself. I’m tired of learning about this anyway. We spent half of this year and last year talking about slavery and Reconstruction. I get it, we’re oppressed. Can we learn about a year past 1950?

I swear I see his smirk fade and mouth twitch in disappointment. “Good,” he grumbles. What a mouth breather.

Before my head goes back to my hand, I scan the room for any change. Nope. The door to the classroom on my right is open. The shades drawn over the windows to my left are still lit golden yellow with the persistent sunlight. There is still the other window to my right, what I like to call the “observation window”: the plexiglass built into the wall of the classroom, crossed with thin black lines, looking out to the hallway. Used by teachers and administrators to give prospective teachers and visitors wanting to start more schools like this a picture of the classroom. It was also used by teachers passing by to spy on other teachers’ classes and reprimand the unruly kids. Still the ugly man standing in front of me barking behind the projector that was not now in use.

We lose a team dollar for lack of participation.<sup>1</sup> We sigh. I zone out again. I lose a dollar on my paycheck for not sitting up straight (commence giggles and gasps from the kids and a rise of anxiety in me). I shrug, slightly adjust my posture, and zone out again.

Minutes pass, and I detect a swift movement by the observation window out of my periphery. I stiffen with expectation. Assistant Principal Daniels appears in the door frame. My back relapses into a slouch.

“Hey Vince, I’m sorry to interrupt,” he addresses to the teacher and the kids at the same time, “but can I see Laila?” My head whips up from its study of the desk. My eyes widen for a split second before I catch myself, and squint them in composed skepticism. Meanwhile, a million things are flashing in my mind.

His voice does seem unusually amicable, and there is indeed a faint smile spread across his lips. But why does he look like he is trying to hold his bushy eyebrows back from furrowing in concern? Is it about the fight I got into with the girl I barely talk to at

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<sup>1</sup> The system of reward and punishment in many urban charter schools is a “paycheck” award system. It is a report given to children at the end of every week that shows every “dollar” the child “lost” or was “given.” There are specific categories on the paycheck showing the actions that warranted the dollars being taken or given away. There is a set “passing” paycheck. If you “fail,” you get detention every day of the week and lose certain privileges.



lunch, when she spontaneously called me a stuck-up bitch, telling me I wanted to be white? Did he find out about how I go to Dean Kelly's room to have lunch sometimes when I just can't force myself to tough it out? To keep sitting alone in the corner of a lunch table, listening to the loud voices of my peers? Just knowing that, based on experience and the unknowable procedures of social determinism, I will never be able to contribute to that noise? Do I want him to know all this? Would things be better for me if he did?

I stand up and already I cannot feel my feet or legs except for the sensation of little pop rocks going off. I fold over a little as my nervous stomach immediately starts to send knives into my abdomen. Fighting off diarrhea, I lift my chin up and continue to the door. There are whispers. A lot of people are smirking, most of which are not out of malice, I believe. I get it. Something interesting is happening. The good girl, the smartest girl in the school, the girl who doesn't hurt or bother anyone, is getting sent out of class by the assistant principal. I get it.

I follow him out of class and we walk down the right side of the hallway, until we stop at a stretch of tiled wall between the open door and the observation windows. He stops and turns to me. He's a balding man with a halo of brown hair, a big nose, and round brown eyes. He's short, barely taller than me. Generally, he's kind to me. A little annoying but kind.

My mouth is clenched. I make a conscious effort not to say anything out of sheer fear and expectation. That's how bad my now sinking stomach felt.

With wide-eyed, genuine concern, he begins cautiously with a sort of cadence, carefully releasing his words to me like sand flowing to the bottom of an hourglass, "Sorry to take you from class Laila, but I realized that in today's morning meeting that for the first time you were not a Diamond Reader this month. Is everything okay?"

That's it, Ladies and Gentlemen! I did not read 75,000 words in a book outside of school this month and that is his cause for concern! A meaningless award so specific leads him to ask a question so general. *Are you okay?*

I am stunned. So stunned in fact, that for a scary amount of seconds, I actually compose genuine sentences of response in my head. *My mom and dad are fighting more and more these days. Last night I could barely get my homework done because they were fighting in the room near the dining hall table. My dad is beating my big sister for more and more insignificant causes. Yesterday he beat her for not taking out the trash, a thing she asked ME to do so she could handle the laundry. I forgot because I'm so stupid. I deserved the spanking she got. I also deserved her yelling at me afterwards for it. But the worst part is that I couldn't cry during any of it. I couldn't show her how sincerely sorry I am because whenever I cry I hurt somebody.*

But then I have a revelation. *No one cares.* The thought comes like a whisper at first amongst all my passionate emotions arguing loudly. But it was like a lightbulb went off in my head the first time I picked it out in the riot.

He doesn't care. He's just an administrator doing a harmless check up on what seems like odd behavior from the school's star student. No one knows the half of what goes on in any of their associates' lives. What makes you think he should know about yours? And it's better that way, too. I am like Icarus in that painting. As long as I look like I'm flying, no one cares if I'm falling. That I succeed is more important than being heard.

I think, *just handle your business and move on. Don't take it personally.* So I open my mouth to give him the excuses that he wants. But instead of my tongue, teeth, and roof of my mouth making the necessary syllables to form words, I throw my head back and start to cry. Correction- I start wailing.

Shaking, gasping, the whole deal. Tears and snot all over my face. I am a mess.

*They can definitely hear me sobbing now,* I think, occasionally glancing up from my hands to look at the open door behind me. But I can't stop.

At first, Mr. Daniels looks like a person who broke something in the process of trying to fix it. The sight of the redness creeping up into his white face is actually fascinating, but of course I'm not thinking that now. I'm thinking about how disgusting I look. "Laila..." He trails off. Occasionally he timidly reaches out an arm out towards me, as if thinking, "Should I touch it?" Eventually his sympathy acquires hints of disgust, horror, and annoyance until he resignedly says, "Hey, you should go to the bathroom, okay? I'll let Mr. Krantz know. Just come out whenever you get yourself together."

Ashamed, I speed walk into the bathroom with my head in my hands. Luckily, it's empty. I start by blowing my nose and splashing cold water on my face. I sit on the windowsill of the big blurred windows of the bathroom. All I know is that it's light out. I make sure to sit upright so the fluid drains out of my face.

Thank God history was last period. When I feel my eyes are sufficiently depuffed and less red, I saunter out of the bathroom, shaky with this new weightlessness and surprisingly clear headed about my plan to weather the burden I know is to come. By the noisy chatter of the classrooms and rumble of standing feet, I know homeroom is almost over. I look down at the ground when I enter, not making eye contact of any kind. I shrug when people mouth "What happened?" I take the time to gather my belongings slowly while the class leaves.

I make a pact with myself as I exit the building. Mom cannot know about this. She will not know about this. For once I will keep my big fat mouth shut, okay?

The sunlight hits me hard at the exit. I squint to navigate the school parking lot and make my way to the sidewalk where kids crowd around, waiting for their guardians to pick them up.

“Get out of the hood, get out of the house, get out of here,” I mutter to myself. I think about how it’s me against the world, how I have to fight. How that’s not a healthy mentality to have but how I cannot afford to think about that now.



EVAN MURRAY '18







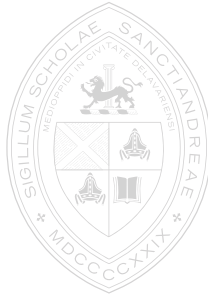
# Adventure

KATE BUTCHER '21

I gave up the one thing  
I loved more than life:  
To live the story  
Written by someone else.  
You've done so much for me.  
I'm not rich enough to pay you back.  
So, I'll live my life following your map,  
Each turn along your highlighted path.  
You give me a goal,  
And I'll chase it  
You set the bar  
And I'll raise it.  
You told me what I needed,  
The necessities you never received.  
You told me what I wanted,  
When all I wanted was my own control.  
I reached for success and from there,  
Perfection.  
Perfection is failure  
When you don't want it bad enough.  
I'd follow the path  
Without thinking  
Round and round I'd go,  
Until I'd reach a clearing.  
There I would find a castle  
Full of riches.  
The definition of success.  
I'd reach the point where there was no more.  
The end.  
Yet here I stand at a crossroad.  
I watch the others take their pick.  
I long for the strength they have.  
The courage to make my own choices  
The strength to stand and fight for what I want.

I know the path to follow.  
It's the one I have lived upon.  
My path has a destination  
My neighbors is an endless march,  
In search of happiness  
Along the way.  
So here I stand at a crossroad.  
I watch the others take their pick.  
I am stronger than you know.  
So, I disregard your map.  
I stand up for what I want.  
Put one foot in front of the next  
And embark on the endless march,  
For a life of adventure.





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