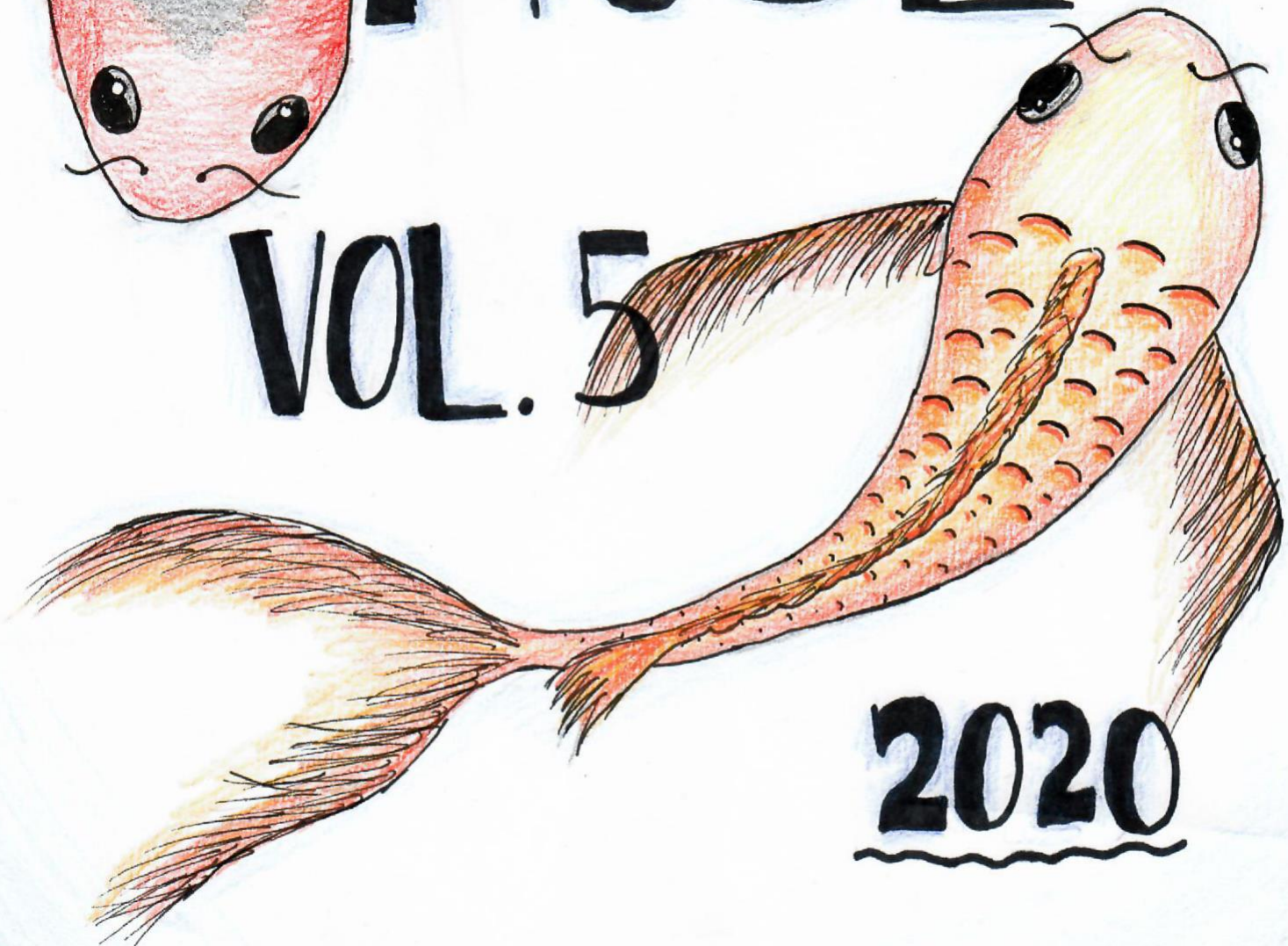




# MUSE

VOL. 5



2020

# Muse

Volume 5  
2020

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# Acknowledgments

*Muse* is the literary magazine of Lamar Middle School and Fine Arts Academy in Austin, Texas. Student editors reviewed submissions using a blind submission process in which the authors' names were hidden.

Due to the 2020 pandemic, this magazine was published online and authors' last names were omitted to protect their privacy. If conditions permit, the magazine will be printed and distributed when schools open in the fall of 2020.

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R.D.

Austin, Texas

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Lamar Middle School  
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# Into the Pages

by Alaina R.

I slowly slip out of my bed and tip-toe out of the room and down the stairs. I pull out my necklace and press it into an engraving on the wall. The stone slides away and I pull out a book. I set it down on the ground and open it. Automatically, beams of light shoot out of the pages and before anyone can wake up, I jump in. For one split second, my senses melt, my emotions bubble, and my mind races. Then, I appear in a small room, the walls covered in pictures and photos.

I sigh happily, and lay down on the soft pillows covering the floor. This room is my mind, my memory, and my emotions. Everything I have ever experienced, felt, wanted, was here. My own place. My own heaven.

# 5 Ways of Looking at Ramen

by Lily W.

The coldest mountains and  
Ramen is still boiling

A trickle of a stream means  
A bowl of broth is ready

Golden sunlight drifting into my room in the morning  
It has the same comfort as the  
Golden broth I slurp down

The colors of a color wheel represent  
Ramen in its true form  
A masterpiece

The ribbons wrapping up a gift  
Just like the ribbons of noodles  
Drifting about the bowl

# Broken Leaves and Childhood Memories

by Ahmory H.

We raced across the cracked pavement, worn down from years of the lake lapping at its edge, hands clasped tightly together. Our shadows danced, intertwined, water bottles swinging at our sides. The swans sliced through the water, tracing it with their midnight beaks. Echoes of the skyscrapers were reflected in the rippling mirror, while sunlight danced just below the surface. Her father gave us mints, colors held gently in his worn, scarred hand. Bright white, green, and red.

They matched her scarlet dress, and she told me it was her fourth favorite color. I asked what her first was. All of them, she laughed.

Me too.

She grabbed my hand and we ran to the swings swaying in the soft wind and the monkey bars creaking from the weight of the sky. The grass parted to let us through as we chased the wind, broken leaves and daisies scattered around cracks in the concrete.

We stayed until our shadows blended into the milky twilight and the secrets etched into the soles of our Converse faded away.



# Compilations

by Elena U.

The night

Is soaked in cold

It bites at my brain every second

Like veins

Spitting

We were freed in our confined innocence

Yet, Time had stretched his unforgiving hands  
and ripped open my chest to make his new home inside me

All the things that had ever been slipped off the universe  
And We didn't know how beautiful it really was

She cried at a painted open window  
she could not fly out of

As I touched

Time

Pondering the imponderable

She felt her words burst out of her like a flame  
Scratching and peeling her throat raw as they arose  
She was fire

Made of everything that had burned in her awakening

I have conspired

Every

Possible

Outcome

This life could give me

# Lost

by Haru T.

Not a boy  
But not a girl  
Lost in a world of man, and woman.  
Stumbling around  
Confused  
In total darkness.

Every reflected surface showing  
Someone else  
Someone I'm not  
Who I was  
Who I should be  
But never showing who I am  
Never showing my matted soft hair  
My chocolate skin  
My heart shaped face  
Not even my dark mirror-like eyes.

Who is this in my mirror  
Staring back at me?  
Their face smiles  
But I could tell  
They're not happy.  
Why were their eyes filled with sorrow?

They had  
Silky soft, curly hair,  
Beautiful dark chocolate skin  
And their eyes  
Dark brown diamonds.  
So why,  
Why were they so unhappy?  
I looked into their sparkling eyes

To see myself  
Was this really me?

No!  
It can't be!  
Was this girl me  
on the outside?  
In the pitch dark inside

I was a boy.

With lighter skin  
Nappy yellow hair  
Darker eyes, not diamonds  
My deep voice echoes  
in the darkness.

So how  
Could this be me?  
Did that girl become me  
Or did I become the girl?  
Lost in a world  
of man and woman  
Not a boy  
But not a girl.

# Lone Sock

by Rebecca H.

Here lies Lone Sock

He hides underneath The Couch  
Waiting to be found,  
Hoping a seeker will stop this never-ending game of hide 'n seek

His partner is gone, shredded by The Dog  
He didn't go to her funeral  
Because he was lost

He is all alone, like a sailor who lost his crew to the sea  
An Alpha wolf without his Beta  
He's useless, even if found

He has nothing to do  
So he waits  
Waits for The Dust to come and take him

Sometimes he dreams of the time he was with her  
The time that he was Left Sock and she was Right Sock  
But now he's neither Left nor Right Sock, but Lone Sock

Here lies Lone Sock

# Where I'm From

by Josie B.

I am from Band-Aids  
I am from music  
I am from deadlines  
I am from people  
I am from goat cheese  
I am from words  
I am from tears  
I am from the ocean  
And so are you  
I am from a tiny kitchen  
I am from rain  
I am from an icy puddle  
I am from doors  
Open and closed  
I am from sleep  
I am from welly boots  
I am from the sad sock  
On the highway  
I am from a thesaurus  
I am from my friends  
I am from what I eat  
And what I think  
I am from the very best  
Of what we live for.

# Tart

by Julia R.

I glared at the boy across from me. This was my moment. I flicked my sweaty ponytail off my back and onto my shoulder. I crouched, eyeing the four square ball. Finally, the boy grinned and said two words, making my heart drop to the bottom of my sneakers.

“Cherry bomb.”

If you don’t know what cherry bombs are, they are a type of pass in four square. It’s the hardest one to catch and recover from, and it’s almost impossible to stay in after one of those. BOOM. It was over. I was out. There was no way I could get that ball. I glanced over to our counselor, Conner, and he shrugged. Conner couldn’t care less. I turned back to the boy across from me.

“Hey! Not fair. There was no way I could catch that, and you know it.”

He dribbled the ball and wiped his forehead. “Hey now, don’t be sour.”

I pursed my lips. “I am not sour!”

He laughed. “Are too! Sour!”

I stepped out of the four square box, trying to control my anger, and went to the back of the line.

*I’ll get you next time*, I thought. After waiting for what felt like forever, it was time for revenge. I stepped into the first square, giving the boy a confident glare. Thank god, he gave me a normal pass. I was on top of it, practically lunging forward, slapping the ball back to his square. He wasn’t ready. In seconds, he was out. I was the one who got him out! Every kid in the other squares turned to me, eyes wide. As the boy took a

zombie-like step out of his throne, he looked at me, mouth open, eyebrows arched, ready to say something, but I stopped him.

“Hey now, don’t be tart.” I gave him a smile, and to my surprise, after a moment of hesitation, he smiled back.

That was the start of a friendship I’ll never forget.



# Things That Stop

by Luca B.

Time, when you are worried or bored, or anxious for something to come  
My skateboard, when I do not give it a push  
Me, when I am tired and sore  
Chairs, they never moved in the first place  
Airplanes, when they land and let people off  
Books, when you want them to go on and on  
My victory streak, in my favorite video game  
My sister's fish, because she rarely feeds it  
My bike, when I step on the brakes  
Cars, when we arrive at the destination  
My life, because boredom is stronger than ever right now  
My train of thought, because writer's block is taking over  
This poem, because it cannot be never-ending

# Where's That Fluff?

by Madeleine C.

Soft fur all around  
I wonder, can he even see  
Gazing at me from the ground  
His perfect poofy head appearing wild and free  
Looking like a big cloud from a whimsical dream  
Coat is like a soft orange creamsicle  
Hints of orange but mostly cream  
Tail spins like the wheel of a bicycle  
His fluff, like thread along a line  
Yet somehow knows when to wag  
Always at just the right time  
A perfect blend of neat and shag  
Then there are his puppy paws with just enough poof  
You might mistake them for a nice, soft Ugg boot  
Paws coming up each time he says “woof”  
Then after that big long “woof” he goes back to mostly mute  
Then came what seemed to be just a sunny summer day  
It appeared the day would be completely normal  
Little did that fluffy puppy know he'd spend the day away  
It was quite informal  
Minute by minute, time passed by  
What seemed like forever, slowly but surely  
The groomer thought that he looked fly  
But the truth was that he just wasn't curly  
The groomer said it was a summer cut  
But it looked like he'd mixed up his stuff  
The thing on our minds was, “*Wait, what...!?*”  
“WHERE'S THAT FLUFF?!?”

# A Reminder of the Past

by Alice W.

There's a town a couple of hours from the city. In that couple hour drive, there's nothing. Just foggy fields and the occasional, lonesome cow. The town, though, no one goes to. Not after what happened to the girl. It hit the papers fifty-odd years ago. The papers flew around the world, making it known. The little girl that once lived there got caught in the storm. The whole town had gathered in the safety of the church. It was a sturdy building, with the protection of brick and the God that looked over them. She wasn't there, though. As the rumbling church doors were closing, her fingertips brushed against them. But the wind slapped her back, just as the doors slammed shut. The town couldn't risk everything, just for a girl that wasn't there. The storm was at its worst and the church was sealed like a coffin. The girl was dragged by the storm and dropped like a kite. Plunging into the river and pushed down by angry water, her breath was taken away. Forever. She's not gone, though. If you look closely, you can see a glimpse of her shadowy face, being pulled under.

# Requests to the Expert

by Gabriela E.

I wish my hair to be brilliant  
But don't make me have a bad hair portrait  
Please paint my hair with a petite brush  
No immense brushes!

My face should be acne-free  
Like most cartoon characters are  
Almost as if you're drawing a smooth shape

The result should be unimaginable  
Something no one saw coming  
But not to look unintelligible

The body should look exactly like me  
Don't draw a stick figure  
It'll look like a kindergartener drew it

The background should be an eggplant color  
It shall have lavender clouds in the sky  
With violet birds flying and coming in  
And a vivid, dazzling purple sky

Also, add a llama licking limes  
In the light lilacs

Some final recommendations:  
I would like to look more appreciative  
Only use pastel colors on this canvas

# Girls

by Nella I.

The struggle of being a girl is real.  
Getting judged for whatever you do is inevitable.

You wear size large? “Fat. Eat less.”  
You wear a small? “Anorexic. Eat a burger.”  
You have normal body hair? “Filthy.”  
Acne? “Gross! Take care of your body.”  
You're confident? “Full of yourself.”  
You dislike yourself? “Attention seeking much?”  
You cry? “You're too sensitive.”  
You kissed a guy? “What a ho.”  
You're wearing makeup? “Extra. You try too hard.”  
No makeup? “Try harder.”  
You're not as muscular as some boys in your gym class? “Weak.”  
You tell that boy off who's making rape jokes? “Take a joke.”  
Shoulders are showing? “Distracting.”  
Your stomach is showing? “Slut.”  
You like girls? “Ew, you probably have a crush on me. That's gay.”  
You're moody? “Are you on your period?”

We have so many expectations. You can't be yourself. We're ugly. We're sensitive. We're rated. We're weak. We're judged. We're girls.

# 5 Ways of Looking at a Candle

by Soren M.

Burning, swishing  
The wick whistles  
A candle standing still

Burning brightly  
Red and blues  
A candle melting away

Burning softly  
Glimmering in the dark  
A candle leaning down

Barely burning  
A softer white  
A candle burning out

Burning no more  
Steam curling from the wick  
A candle on the ground

# Our Hiding Spot

by Farrah K.

They were here  
The Nazis  
They were coming to get me  
They were coming to get us all

My mom screamed,  
**HIDE!**  
But my legs couldn't move  
It was like I froze in time  
Like fear was my enemy  
Slowly consuming me

My dad picked me up  
And carried me  
    Down  
        Down  
            Down  
Into the cellar

I shut my eyes  
TIGHT  
Maybe it would help  
Maybe it could just make everything stop  
But it didn't

PAT  
PAT  
PAT  
Is the sound of my dad's feet  
The sound that might be my last  
If we don't hurry

Suddenly, a puff of cold air hits my face

I open my eyes  
We're outside  
The sound of my dad's shoes on concrete stop  
And I'm put back down on the ground

My dad starts to climb up a ladder, and my mom ushers me up  
I climb up  
Fear and pain are flooding through my blood  
My arms and legs ache  
I feel like crying  
A lump forms in my throat  
But I push it back down

I can't cry.  
Not now.

Finally, I'm fully awake  
And I decide to take a look at my surroundings:  
-I'm climbing the side of a building  
-The bricks are crumbly  
-Windows are broken  
I know no one lives here

But we might tonight

Then my dad's feet disappear onto the roof  
I'm finally at the top of the ladder  
My dad's hands come into view  
I grab them  
Knowing they are there to help me up

He pulls me up onto the roof  
The shingles are loose, and hard to grip  
Wet from the dewy night air

My dad tells me to lie down,  
But the roof is bumpy



I wonder if I'm ever going to find a comfortable spot to lay

Finally, I find a spot  
So, flat on the roof I lie  
While I watch my dad pull my mom up too

My mom comes to lie down beside me  
Struggling, as she crawls across the beat-up roof

My dad then unpacks a blanket from our emergency bag....

Again.

**Looks like we're sleeping under the stars tonight!**

My dad says with a small smile  
Which soon fades away in the crisp, sad night air

I imagine my home getting torn apart:

- Tables getting thrown across the room
- My bed, glued together from last time, getting torn apart again
- Clothes pulled from our drawers, everywhere

I don't think I even **want** to go back this time

The words going through my brain aren't happy ones

They are words like:

Fear,                      Death,                      Sadness,                      Blood,

.....Nazis

I drift off to sleep while listening to that horrible sound  
The sound of metal boots stomping below me.

# The House and Its Dwellers

by Josie K.

On a remote island, this house rocks in storms and in windless times. The house creaks with age and filth, its shutters bend with desperation to be set free from its rusty hinges. It's home to a monstrous person, who abuses the rest of the house's inhabitants. Its large and untamed vines wind around skeletons of whom we'll never know. Its hurricane cell gains must and dust with every second of presence. Its pointed terraces withhold a dark crimson handprint, screaming for justice.

A child known as Lana scrubs the wood floors of the house. She awaits for when she can be free once more. Her dirty blonde hair dulls each day that she is put to work. She sinks deeper into a pit of despair each hour. Her hands are encrusted in calluses and her muscles bulge from contorting to dust the ceiling fans that are no longer in working order.

“Let me out!” Lana rasps. She is met with an ominous silence and then as she reaches for the drapes...

“Don't you lay a finger on those curtains!” a sinister voice says sharply.

“Well, why not? Since I was two years old, you have kept me from the world with threats and the fear of your wrath! And to add to that, I saw a Missing Persons report laying on your desk, with MY face on it! So yes, I know that you successfully kidnapped me and kept me out of reach from the harbor officers, but now I simply can't take it anymore,” she fumed as she flung aside the curtains, and revealed blinding sunlight, that she still found beautiful even though her eyes stung from the sheerness of the raw light, nothing like the dim lights in the house. She was in shock and collapsed.

That night she found herself in the same place but with a large bump on her head. She quickly reconciled with the fact that The Person

may be lurking in the shadows, just waiting to pounce, and potentially kill, and then got up and grabbed a flashlight, tampered with some wires, for she had learned a lot about fixing things while she was a hostage, and then she grabbed some spare parts from a bin, and hooked it all up. She had created a blinding light, then waited for the night.

Once it was nighttime, she had previous knowledge about how to signal SOS using light, so she beamed it in the direction of land, which was only a hazy cityscape from where Lana stood. Then she sat there for a while, when she heard some people's voices echoing across the property. She then unassembled her mega-light, and made it a regular flashlight once again, and shined it at the people. She recognized the word Sea Patrol on their boat, and so she knew she was safe. The people looked up and one exclaimed that she was the missing girl from thirteen years ago in the paper, because they had an artist come in and draw what she would probably look like now. They knocked down the door and got a paramedic to care for her.

She was free at last.

# Soil

by Ahmory H.

Out of soil grows the seed  
Thirst quenched from heavy showers  
Leaves curl with the spread of green  
Little blossoms form a flower

Out of soil grows our dreams  
Shared dreams of light and hope  
Shaded by the leaves  
Out of the shade they must grow

To the soil must we return  
When the day is done  
To the comfort of the earth  
The soil where we are all one

# Where I'm From

by Amina R.

I am from a loaf of wheat bread  
From Big Shot and Great Value  
I am from the burnt orange cabinets in the kitchen  
(Dark, and dull, they looked a leaf on a fall tree)  
I am from the magnolias, the  
Spanish moss on the oaks in City Park

I am from the church on Easter Sunday and old southern roots  
from Charlene and Bruce  
I am from the stubborn as a bull and  
strong as a horse  
From Throw me something mister and  
Walk witchu' head up high  
I'm from church on Easter, Christmas, and sometime in between

I'm from the Big Easy  
Smothered okra and dirty rice  
From the alligator my grandpa used to have out back  
The bus my momma got on when she didn't want to fight

Under my bed was bins of shoes and clothes  
That couldn't fit in the drawer that me and my sister shared

I am from "down by the riverside a hanky panky where  
the bullfrogs jump from bank to bank  
I said a M-I-S-S-I-S-S-I-P-P-I bam bam boo"

# jumbled

by Lucy Z.

my brain works differently  
it's a mess of wires  
complicated and intricate  
people think they can organize it  
but they can't  
i like it  
jumbled  
i find the order in my chaos  
in the eye of my hurricane  
there is  
peace  
my brain is like a quiet fire  
calm and relaxing  
or the tranquil ocean  
docile and waveless  
until people come in and brew  
a storm  
and try to put out my  
fire  
but the fire keeps me going  
so don't put it  
out.

# McKinney

by Larkin L.

I drive for 4 hours  
We pull up in a long stone driveway  
I step out of the tall car  
My hands full of luggage  
I smell the crisp fall air  
It always smells the same here  
“Larkin, I’ve missed you,” I hear  
“I’ve missed you too, Sadie,” I say back  
“Come inside  
Make sure not to let the cat out” she says  
Yum  
I smell chocolate chip cookies  
I run straight to the kitchen  
A whole plate of fresh cookies  
I take a bite, as the chocolate melts in my mouth  
The sweet cookie makes a mess  
I run upstairs to my room  
What a surprise  
She remodeled it again  
Full of her beautiful paintings  
Made by her old hands  
I run to her closet  
Full of designer purses and jewelry  
I want it to be mine one day  
Another stop  
The backyard  
I run through the garden to the wooden swing  
I swing high but careful  
I jump off and head to the corner of the big backyard  
I run between a small secret place  
Between where two stone walls should meet  
But they don't  
I go through them

I run towards the huge green pieces of land  
The golf course  
I run around in circles tons of times  
Until I fall on the ground dizzy  
I rush back to the house  
“Suppers ready,” I hear  
And then I know for sure  
I'm at my grandma's house  
I'm in McKinney



# Light and Dark

by Samantha Z.

Subtle but not silent  
A song of peace  
The sounds of the stars whispering  
It smells sweet like a flower  
But dark, like it can taste the tension in the air  
It looks...

...At peace with itself  
Like the hope at the bottom of Pandora's box  
It is the dark and light  
And the day and night  
What could it be...

...You are shiny as gold  
Enveloping darkness  
Are you alive  
What is your purpose  
I feel safe when near you  
Have you come to heal...

...The forest

# Delusion

by Lennon C.

I walk down my house's creaking staircase. I check the time on my watch. It is 4am. I had woken up to get water, but when I get downstairs, there are no cups in the cabinet. I feel a shiver go down my body. My parents are out of town. Where could the cups have gone? I see a shadow. Hello, hello, hello, hello, hello, hello, my voice echoes. I decide to go back to my room. It was probably nothing, I thought, but the cups were still in the back of my mind, and then I hear something shatter. I sprint up to my room and lock my door. I hear my stairs creaking. Come out, come out wherever you are. I hide in my closet but hear my door open. How could they have... but then I realize I never locked the door. I had never run in my closet. I am sitting still on my bed in fright, looking into his eyes.

# The Numbers of My Life

by Zev Z.

Number of siblings: 0. Number of parents: 2.

Number of houses lived in: 2.

Number of pets: 4; dogs: 3; cats: 1. Number of pets sadly dead: 2.

Number of road trips gone on: 25.

Number of times pondering the meaning of life: 945. Number of times pondering existence: 1000.

Number of aliens seen: maybe 1. Number of friends: 27.

Number of tests taken: 200. Number of tests over 70: 195.

Number of hours on screens: 6,000. Number of T.V. shows finished: 56.

Number of hours reading: 4,100.

Number of sodas drunk: 50.

Number of summer camps attended: 25. Number of summer camps enjoyed: 20.

**Number of lives lived: 1**

# The Tall Man with a Scraggly Beard

by Scarlett L.

*“Stayin alive, stayin alive. Ha ha ha ha stayin aliiiiive...”*

The song blasted in her earphones, the rhythm flowing through her ear and drumming across her body. The beat guided her hand across the canvas, each stroke giving the artwork a new perspective and purpose. The colors were bold and unforgiving, colors like scarlet and maroon giving the canvas an intimidating structure as they dripped down the board. The bristles were either sharp, and on point, or messy and bold.

The beat of the music continued on, and she occasionally would hum the tune, the rhythm flowing off of her lips. That moment was all so...perfect. Just her, her music, and her paint...and the rest of Whole Foods.

Yep, you heard me right.

She’s painting.

In Whole Foods.

During her shift as a cashier.

Crazy, right?

Her Whole Foods apron was splattered with different shades of red, yellow, and grey, nearly covering its original pastel greenish color. She was so enraptured by her piece, it was so close to being done that she merely had one stroke left. She crouched, the bristles so close to the board that she could almost feel it touching the canvas...

**THWACK**

A fist collided with the countertop, causing her to jolt in fear and make an erratic stroke across the painting. It was ruined. Anger burned in her eyes, along with irritation and shock as she looked up to see who had frightened her so.

It was a man, a tall man. He had a white, scraggly beard and no hair. His eyes were a surprisingly soft brown, but the rest of his expression was stone cold and irritated. She gulped and slowly took an earbud from her ear, the music still faintly playing in the back of her mind. “Sir?” she asked while putting her hands on the counter and

leaning forward a bit, “How can I help you?” She tried her best to keep a smile and a friendly tone, but it wavered as the man hesitated to answer.

“I want to speak to your manager. No employee **ON THE JOB** should be doing something as useless as painting. You’re wasting your time, and now because you weren’t focused, it looks like crap,” he said, his tone so low it sounded like the roar of an engine.

This had set her off.

People can have their opinions, yes.

But nobody, and I mean **NOBODY**, insults her, to her face, without getting something right back at them.

Her palms that had been set on the counter curled into fists, and she took a low breath. Looking up, she made direct eye contact with this man, flames dancing in her eyes.

“Sir,” she began, her tone much bolder than she had attempted beforehand. “I’d advise you to be careful with your words, but it seems as though you’re too deafened by arrogance and stupidity to even hear what I have to say,” she seethed, her jaw clenched. “Now, I’m going to have to ask you to leave or I will call the manager, and I can assure you she won’t be happy to hear you’ve disrespected her employee for your own bitter, selfish needs,” she lied. The manager, in fact, was off-duty today... perfect timing, huh?

The man’s coffee-brown eyes hardened, and the vein in his forehead looked as though it was about to pop out at her. He was fuming, like a volcano ready to explode.

“I’ll leave once I’ve bought my lunch,” he snarled, his brows furrowed and his fists clenched on the countertop separating the two.

“And there ain’t nothin you can do about it little girl.”

Ryan snapped, she untied the paint-splattered apron around her neck and threw it on the ground... causing the leftover paint to stain the ground. “Sir, I’ll ask once more, until I call the police,” she sneered, slamming her palms against the countertop and meeting his gaze with just as much anger. Was she overreacting? Maybe. Did she care? Nope.

The man’s gaze wavered in surprise, and he took a step back... seemingly frightened by her sudden anger. “Fine, you animal,” he grunted, slamming what he had thought he was to buy on the ground before turning and stalking away. He shoved open the door with such force Ryan momentarily feared it was to break.

She watched, waiting until he got in his rusted, brown truck.... Then she relaxed, and chuckled softly under her breath.

She had won.

# Sister

by Lark T.

Hello, sister  
Sister of the cold and ice  
Sister who hides  
Hello  
You have hidden for so long  
And now you must return  
In a time in which we must be happy  
You come and  
Shove  
Yourself in...hello, sister  
~Agnimitra

*I'm sorry, sister  
You know my cold skin longs to be free  
For my ice to spread  
To not be happy  
To  
Be  
Free  
Your reign has gone Far, far, far, too long  
I'm sorry  
I have tried to make things equal  
But you took over when I finally found a way to finally be  
Happy  
And  
You  
Reject it!  
I'm sorry, sister  
It's my turn to reign  
~Frostine*

Sister, stop  
I banished you so she could be safe  
You tried to fill her heart with dread and evil  
You make it like ice

Like you  
I had to save her, sister  
You will be okay...  
~Agnimitra

*Sister, you  
Warm  
Her heart  
You try to  
Make  
Me  
Leave!  
You say "it's all okay!"  
But it's not...  
When we were close  
We used to play  
That we could rule  
Together  
But that will never happen now  
For you now know  
Now and forever  
The ice  
Is coming  
~Frostine*



# Ode To Rice

by Lily W.

Rice.

It goes with everything!  
Noodles, chicken, beef, broccoli,  
you name it!

It saves our phones  
from a watery grave

and makes perfect rattles  
and shakers for kids.

It can be made into pudding—  
although I think that's disgusting—  
and sugary marshmallow treats!

Rice can be sweet, sour,  
bitter, or savory!

It can be put into little  
rolls with seaweed and  
salmon or tuna.

Or you can eat it by itself!

It's Rice!

# Forget-me-nots

by Alix B.

I was walking in the forest, when I came across a circle of forget-me-not flowers in a meadow. *Where did these come from? Forget-me-nots don't usually grow around here*, I thought. I stared at them, trying to figure out how they could have gotten there. Then I felt a tug. Not someone, or anything tugging me, just an urge to go closer. I trotted into the clearing to examine them more. Then I tripped and fell face first into the circle of blue flowers. I felt a shock. I flinched and tightened up. It didn't hurt. It just surprised me.

I opened my eyes. I wasn't in the same place as before. A circle of winged humans surrounded me. I jumped back, but I hit one of them. They started closing in. One of them touched me on the arm with an indigo stone, my body went numb and I couldn't move. The creatures lifted me and carried me somewhere. I couldn't fight, or yell, or scream, I just laid there, helpless. Another one touched me, this time with a dark blue stone. My eyelids shut.

I awoke in a dusty cell with a small bed, and a bedside table, and a chair. I ran at the door. “**Ow!**” I grasped my arm. When I let go of my arm, I saw a dark purple bruise.

I looked in the drawer in my bedside table. There sat a light pink stone, a glowing, light pink stone. It felt warm, comforting. I touched it to my bruise. It felt so nice, so warm, almost healing. After a while I lifted the stone from my bruise. The bruise was gone. It disappeared, vanished! I paused, then threw the stone at the ground. I stood there confused. “How could a stone do that!?” I picked up the stone and placed it in my bag. I looked around for a way to escape. I spotted a small vent. It was too small for adults, but it was large enough for me. I easily kicked it open and crawled inside. It was dark, but my bag was glowing because of that strange, pink stone. The tunnel was long. My knees and palms ached, but soon I made it out.

I ran, just ran. I wanted to go home. Then one of the creatures stopped me. They held out a dark blue stone. I stepped back. “Wait,” the creature said.

“Stay back, you, you, you beast,” I stuttered.

“Beast? No, I’m a sprite.” She put the stone in a pocket of her leaf dress. “Are you Avileana?” the sprite said softly.

“How do you know my name?” I took another step back.

“Your eyes, your beautiful indigo eyes...”

“Who are you?!”

“Your mother, the queen of this magical land.”

“Does that make me a sprite?!”

“Yes,” the queen said as she handed me a glowing yellow stone and flew into the sky. Wings sprouted from my back, glowing, see-through, beautiful, indigo wings, the same color as my eyes. I fluttered them. I started to float off the ground. I dropped the stone and fell. I picked it up again, and wings sprouted once more. I put the stone in my bag, and my wings were gone again.

I continued to walk, still trying to find a way out of this strange world. In the distance, I spotted a band of armed sprites guarding a castle. I quickly hid behind a tree. “Did you see something go behind that tree?” one of them said pointing to the tree I was hiding behind. I could hear them coming, their footsteps getting louder. I reached into my bag and pulled out my yellow stone. My wings appeared. I leapt into the air. My wings started flapping uncontrollably. Suddenly my wings vanished, but I still held the stone. I fell from the sky and crashed onto the cold, hard ground.

I awoke in a cell, even dirtier than the last one. There was only a bed, a small bed. The walls and door were made of blood red stone. I touched the door. “**AH!!!!**” I let go of the door. A huge burn covered my whole hand. I reached into my leather bag. The pink stone was the only thing in it. “Why didn’t they take my stone?” I asked myself. I put the stone against my hand. I left it there for a while, and it only healed a little.

The door creaked open. The queen, my mom, walked in. She had an evil grin planted on her face. “Did you find the little secret in my stone?” I didn’t respond.

“What are you holding there?” the queen asked.

“Nothing,” I hid the stone behind my back. She pulled my arm. The stone was now right in front of my nose. “~~What invisible item are you holding?!?~~”

“Invisible?” I said quietly.

**“Tell me what it is!!”**

**“I don’t know what it is!”** She pulled out a pitch black stone. I scooted back all the way to the wall and braced myself. She pressed the stone to my arm. **“AHHH!!!!!!”** It felt like my skin was being ripped off and my muscle was being burned. I could barely hear her evil cackle over my screams. **“STOP!! STOP!!!!!!”** I begged.

I felt a shock. I opened my eyes. I was back in the meadow bracing myself towards the edge of the circle. I peeked in my bag. The pink stone was still there. My hand was still burnt, but I was home.

I awoke on the floor of my cell, still bracing myself. My body still felt like it was on fire. The door flew open. In from the soot came a short woman with pointy ears, just like mine.

“Hello, I am Syran, the queen of the elves. I have been looking for you ever since I lost you thirteen years ago when you were one. I am your mother, Avileana,” she said in a calm, commanding voice. It was too much to take in all at once. I was dazed. “And this is my son, your brother, Alvoi.” A short boy who looked about my age, with hair about my color strode in. He placed a light purple stone on my forehead. All the pain went away. “He is the healer of our tribe.” Alvoi ambled out. She took my hand, and we left the cell slowly.

Alvoi, Syran, and I all tiptoed through the hallways of the shimmering palace together. Me and my mom were in front, while Alvoi was following close behind. “The rest of the clan is outside,” she whispered.

We were almost out when we heard a scream coming from right behind us. We turned around swiftly. The sprite queen was there holding a bloody dagger in her hand. “Ayayayayayaa!!” Syran yelled. Other male elves came stampeding in. “Sahhhh,” she sprite queen whispered. A myriad of sprites flew to her side. “ATTACK!!!!” the two queens yelled. The elves and sprites all conjured swords and charged at each other. The sprites were being killed left and right. The two sisters were fighting each other. Everyone was fighting while I just sat there meekly and watched.

All the sprites were taken out, all but the queen. “Goodbye Titania!” Syran yelled and stabbed her in the heart. Syran fell to her knees, crying, and crawled over to Alvoi’s dead body. I joined her, sobbing at the loss of my brother, whom I barely knew. I knelt beside

him. After about twenty minutes of sadness, the queen and I both stood up.

“Would you like to stay with me and the rest of our tribe?” She gestured to the elves.

“I would like to go home, if that’s okay with you,” I said.

“Of course.”

She led me outside to a tree with a large hole in it. “Crawl inside and it will take you home. Goodbye, my sweet Avilinea,” she said softly, tears forming in her eyes.

“I’ll really miss you, mom.” I crawled inside. I saw a lovely swirl of colors, but it felt like I was falling. It only lasted a few seconds. I appeared in the circle of forget-me-nots. I crawled out and started walking home.

I still own that magical, glowing, pink stone.

# I Wish For You To Love

by Ava H.

Violence is forbidden. We  
don't allow swords clanging or needless deaths.  
In this grand modern era, we don't fight  
like beasts.  
We fight  
like beings.  
We allow words crashing and needless inconvenience.  
In this grand modern era,  
We fight  
through trade and words.

Much less dangerous, right?  
Only, that is,  
until shots  
sound off.  
They are forbidden,  
but continue.

People are thrown away,  
like paper dolls,  
because they don't like the color that was used.

As soon as the thunderous bang sounds,  
The cold rock, trusted as a protector and assailant for so long, takes  
flight.  
Then the scarlet sign of hurt pools out and the sickening scent of death  
wafts  
to our noses  
and into our minds.

This is what happens when we forget that  
people are flowers.  
They each bloom with their talents so  
we must respect them.  
We cannot trample the wonderful

bluebonnets.

We must let them grow and spread their seeds. Out, out,  
being the lovely, enlightened things that they are meant to be.

Like the birds that Darwin found,  
still finches,  
only differing a bit. But

this time they're not different enough to be separate species.

Remember that,  
though you've been told a thousand times already,  
We should allow them to be grown with water,  
that's not tainted  
with the salt that seems to penetrate all too often.

Some forget, during hardships, horrible or small.  
They look for someone to blame. They point their fingers.  
They shriek. They bully. They hurt as if they are children.  
They allow those deadly rivers to flow yet again,  
Dismissing their prey's cries as if they are  
nothing,  
for they can easily blame people who seem out of place,  
people who seem to be  
nothing.

Please don't blame the innocent flowers.

Please

don't

forget,

to keep safe the precious bluebonnets and let them grow.

Let the bright sun dry their tears.

Please

forget

and forgive, old enemies, old grievances.

Let the rain wash the pain away.

Then, emerge, renewed,

with beautiful,

working,

seeing eyes. Or

fix the eyes instead.  
Repair alliances,  
Don't fight over power.  
Fight for love, equality, patience.  
Whether your ideas come from above or not,  
fight like beings.

Beings with their own ideas. However,  
there is no need for you,  
or your family,  
or your religion,  
or your country,  
or your party to write the book of love alone.  
You must write it as a collaboration.  
Grow, change,  
then live off the fruits and feel the hard-earned juice pour from your  
mouth, like a calming river.  
We have been instructed,  
for so long,  
to stay together.  
It may take a thousand more writers to change the world or  
a thousand billion more people who believe them.  
Now, please, though you've already been told, remember to live by and  
radiate your example,  
whether absorbed or invented.  
It's not too hard hard and  
I'm not trying to constrict you.  
You may be free.  
You should be free.  
With all the others you shall be a free  
flock of birds, who fly above all prejudices and grudges.  
I'm only asking you to love.

If you don't love me for this,  
if you disagree with me, I'd like to know.  
Let us walk on this page or the tab of an email and speak our colored  
truths.

If the images of the world are printed in green



and red  
and blue,  
Let us bring them together to make a full image.  
Let us not draw our swords, for we could draw our cups of words  
instead.  
Let us taste each other's arguments and see if they are satisfying.  
Let us walk together  
and unhidden  
In the pleasant woods of love with the bees buzzing lackadaisically  
and the velvet roses blooming.

I'm only asking you to love,  
not telling,  
asking,  
pleading,  
you to be someone who  
**loves**

# Nervous

by Ahmory H.

*It's okay, it's okay*, you repeat to yourself. The mantra calms you, but only barely. You still say it, though. *Anything* helps. Your knuckles whiten from your grip on the handlebar, and the butterflies in your stomach threaten to escape out of your throat. You already threw up while waiting in the line, and you don't want to embarrass yourself even more. Your thoughts cloud with 'what if's'. For the millionth time, you think how this was a terrible idea.

The roller coaster lurches forward, beginning its ascent, and you squeeze your eyes shut. The track rumbles beneath you. You peek through your fingers, and see the drop approaching. *It's okay, it's okay*.

Suddenly, the coaster is flying down the track and the wind whips through your hair. A loud whistling fills your ears, intensifying with each sharp turn. You throw your hands in the air, and let out a loud scream of joy. Your head is jerked back and forth from the wind, and your dangling feet feel numb and prickly. Your body sways, synchronized with the roller coaster. Everything in front of you is a blur, a mirage. You can see flashes of the purple and green track go by out of the corner of your eye. The bright colors blend in with the blue summer sky. Whoops and yells fill the air, the screams summarizing the feeling of riding the coaster better than words can. The amusement park is filled with laughter and chatter, and the smell of cotton candy hangs in the air. You focus on the sight in front of you. Your grip tightens. You reach the giant loop, and your body feels weightless. You are floating, flying, as the coaster glides over the track. The ride shudders beneath you, and the coaster begins to lose speed. Too soon, the cars reach the start of the ride.

You climb out of the roller coaster, breathless and dizzy. One thought runs through your mind.

*Again.*

# What am I Missing?

by Gabriela E.

Why am I so surprised?  
Acting like it was blocks away  
Surprises have happened this year

But...

What am I missing?

That you went to someone so quickly?

You didn't tell me  
Or give me subtle clues

I just wish I knew...  
When we'd walk through hallways  
Brought out like an endless lovely void

When we'd smile to each other  
Made me feel like a bright light was in front of me

When we'd look at each other  
It felt like I was looking at your good soul

Even though that meant nothing to you

What am I missing?

That you went to someone so quickly

I just wish I knew...  
It would've saved me on tears  
For something that's worth crying

It would've saved me on sadness  
For something that's worth people to ask if I'm okay

Worth something to give up on

What am I missing?

That you went to someone so quickly

I just wish you knew...

How my heart felt when it realized it had to forget about you

How many tears dripped down to my phone screen

How heartbroken I felt as I was wiping my tears

How hard it is for me to hide my sadness from my family

How worthless I feel

I can't help but wonder

What am I missing?

# The Campfire

by Jane A.

The sparks catch the tinder  
and the fire explodes to life  
smoke billows and floats  
above the caged beast  
ever-changing forming  
mystical shapes  
only to be blown away  
by the breeze,  
the fire roars and catches  
at falling leaves burning  
them to ash then sighing  
and returning to a merry crackle,  
filling the air with the  
scent of the woods and s'mores  
slowly it dies down to a faint smolder  
and the coals glowed like eyes  
in the dark of twilight then  
with a hiss it's gone leaving  
only ashes and smoke in the air.

# For All the Grief

by Haru T.

For all the grief  
An empty doorway  
For love  
Leaning grasses  
And two lights  
Above the sea

A poem should not mean  
Just you and me  
So why can't you see  
Why don't you love me  
As much as I  
Love you  
Want you  
Your hate  
Your love  
Your disappointment

You jump into the sea  
And try to pull me free  
You made me this way  
Drowning in my own hate  
It used to hurt  
I used to scream  
But now I give in

I let the salt  
Fill my lungs  
It doesn't hurt  
Anymore

For that  
For teaching me

I should thank you  
Giving in to the pain  
The suffering  
Because in the end  
I am salt  
Inside and out.

# Options for Insanity

by Emmett B.

Grating grammar rules leading to:

Tyranny, litany- to oxford comma  
or not to oxford comma?

Fingers scroll across the bound  
pages of style handbooks, searching  
for that correct answer time and time again,  
which no sooner evaporates  
from muddled minds.

10 or ten?

“Quotes” or *italics*?

Stylebook or manual of style?

Etcetera ... etc. etc.,

Copyreaders’ sanity devastated by their  
boss’s strict style guidelines,  
whom they have to call up late at night...  
1 (800) or 1-800?

Screams of wordsmiths curating  
a civil unrest in the streets,  
above them all one supreme being observes.

The god, the holy one,  
purpose and reasoning personified,  
left untouched in the unrest.

The reader gazes at the madness,  
the reader- the final judge,  
fuel for the fire.



Savage publishers in the streets persist,  
waving their chosen flag under  
the sun's crimson red glow.

AP or Chicago?

# Tenma

by Amina R.

There are some things they don't tell you and they never will. Things before the war that could make or break our society. That would send us spiraling back to a time of hatred and separation between the human race. A time when color separated us and wealth classified us, and after the war we stripped the human race of this hatred and separation. By starting our own community. Tenma. A community that rose from the ashes of what was left of our dead world and strives to make the world a better place day by day. So give it up for the woman who made it all possible: Lilian Davis. The crowd uproared with claps of praise and screams of glory. Everyone but Kayla. She hated these stupid ceremonies, and most of all she hated Lillian Davis. People praised her like she was some type of queen or she walked on water, but Kayla knew the truth. Lilian Davis was a cold-hearted monster. She was the reason Kayla had to go to therapy twice a week. The reason she couldn't get that day out of her head. The sound of her parents' cries as they begged for mercy and screamed in pain. Kayla would get her revenge and end this once and for all.

# The Vault

by Charlie C.

*“Do we have everyone?” “Yes, I think we do. Wait, where’s 2778? We must open the vault!” “It’s okay. It’s just one.” “But he will die out there!” “I know, but I don’t really care.” “But h-” “NO.” “Fine. Let’s check on the rest of the survivors.”*

## Part One

Two years earlier: August 9th, 2378.

After the war, the world was peaceful. Or, at least *somewhat* peaceful. Air is still high on demand, which a lot of the time leads to small wars for more air. Cities have been wiped off of the map from the first and second bombings. The third bombing has not happened yet. The Subterraneans were forced to live closer together because of the building of the vaults. Vaults are large underground structures, some of them stretching down to the Earth’s midsection. New members have been recruited to the army team. Most of them human. Six more teams: 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, and 684. 679 crashed on last week’s mission. There were no survivors. I am one of the members on team 684, Soldier 2778. I am going on a mission next week. I hope we don’t end up like 679.

Getting ready for a mission is tough. You feel like you’re forgetting something. I didn’t forget anything. *Did I forget something? No, I don’t think I did.* Going to the ship dock is scary. There are a lot of loud noises. I found my ship, a small, white and gray colored 16-55, and climbed up the stairs. I was the last one there.

“Soldier 2778?” called the ship captain.

“Yes?” I replied.

“You forgot your uniform.”

Oh. I guess I did forget something.

I’ve been to space before, but not in a ship this small. It made me jump whenever a rock hit the ship. Our mission was to destroy the Kabiddian outpost on Venus. It was a short ride, but it felt like forever. I started to fall asleep. I suddenly awoke when the captain started talking. We had arrived.

“Alright, soldiers!” said the captain. “To get to the outpost, we must first break the shields. The shields are powered by the energy depots. Destroy the five depots located around the outpost.”

Venus is hot and unwelcoming. Unlike Earth, the sun does *not* smile back. The dry air in my throat distracted me as we flew laps around the outpost. We flew around and destroyed two depots. Then we were spotted by the Kabiddians. Kabiddian ships are small, bird-like ships that are covered in rusted metal spikes. We were being chased by seven of them. “Someone, get to the gu-”

The ships left wing was blown off before the captain could even finish speaking. We came crashing down to the hot ground of the planet. I blacked out. Next thing I knew, I was in a dark, humid room. I could see gaps high up on the walls, with light coming through them. I heard unfamiliar voices echoing down through the gaps. “Kjipan karrin, eghu dei loqhet!”. The words were clearly Kabbidian. I was imprisoned at their outpost.

# 13 Ways to Look at a Black Cat

by Abigail S.

1.  
When bad luck takes flight, the black cat is sure to follow.
2.  
Why are you celebrating on Friday the 13th? Do you not see the black cat and the full moon?
3.  
It glides like a shadow  
each bird it strikes is destined to die.
4.  
The black cat's eyes glow in the twilight  
You are sure to come to harm.
5.  
A black cat sleeps peacefully at your doorstep  
as ghouls and phantoms haunt your dreams.
6.  
I broke my leg tripping over a black cat.
7.  
I think I see a black cat  
on that shadow of the moon.
8.  
Black cats are rummaging through your drawer now  
searching for that good luck charm you bought last week.
9.  
It's tail whips into alertness.  
when it hisses, it releases a parade of ghosts.
10.  
Watch out for the black cat!!!  
When it crosses your path, death takes someone you love.
11.  
Cursed fools will buy the black cat at the marketplace  
while wise men do not mingle with them.

12.

When the moon wanes,  
the black cat vanishes.

13.

I teeter between life and death  
and the black cat nudges me to death.

# Where I'm From

by Haya A.

I am from a wooden pencil from my messy drawers and underneath my wooden shelves

I am from my backyard shack, luminous and empty

It looks like a haunted house ready to capture you

I am from the dandelions

The flourishing, light seeds

That break off into the reckless wind, ready to plant their good deeds

I am from the late-night drives, admiring the Christmas lights and the smiles

drenched in kindness from Mom and Dad

I'm from the greetings and the farewells

From the tooth fairy and Santa Claus climbing down my chimney

I'm from my connection with God,

that I give thanks for life's wonderful opportunities

I'm from Jordan and Austin. Fizzy Dr. Pepper and chicken in gravy

From the birth of my little sister at the hospital, with her miniature fingers and the wedding ceremony of my uncle and aunt in California.

Under my bed is a box of old toys, trinkets that I don't play with anymore, though the memories are still there each time I open it.

I am from the memories that I hold close to my heart

I will never let them go but only collect new ones from the future sky.

# The Burned, the Drowned, and the Eaten

by Mary W.

A tree branch crashes to the ground, torrents of flame turning the earth into ash. The girl's singed hair flies behind her like a cape. Her feet pound on the ground in the rhythm of her racing heartbeat. She gasps as smoke chokes her lungs.

Suddenly, she stops. Tattered sneakers skid on the lava-hot dust. Pebbles tumble down the side of a steep bluff and into the abysmal water. Silhouettes of drowned buildings peek above the surface. Shadows swim through the twisted Atlantis, teeth, tentacles, and eyes glinting in the light of the sparks that fly so high above.

The girl's back grows hot as fire breathes on the back of her neck. She swallows. The beasts of the city look up at her, glowing eyes captivating her in fear.

Torches of trees crash into the soil, counting down the time like the ticking hands of a clock. The girl steps back from the edge of the cliff, as close to the fire as she can. A horrible bellow sounds behind her and she jumps.

The wind doesn't catch her. She holds her breath and her heart nearly stops. She'll live as long she doesn't look them in the eye.



# Three Kinds Of Rain

by Anonymous

Real rain drumming on the roof, calming you, or waking you up. Rain that sprinkles itself down on you as you run, and catch drops in your mouth. Rain in your head, too many noises too many sounds:

Stress.

Rain that makes you sad and washes all hopes away, cancels a game or cancels a thought.

Ignore them, let your mental rain drain their comments away.

Ignore them, don't let them make you stop writing. Rain that drenches your clothes or your book. That makes you yell out in anger and rush back to your nook. Into your family and their loving arms. The rain wasn't real, but painful and heart-breaking; imagine a drain and let it disappear.

They have a storm of their own.

# Flower Boy!

by Haru T.

He awakes in the dark  
Not afraid for he's been here before  
Alone in silence  
The deafening silence he hates so much

He starts to wander around  
But soon realizes  
He can't escape the darkness inside him

He picks up speed  
Now running through the dark  
Out of fear he trips over himself  
Crashing to the floor  
Cold and pitch black  
Just like everything else

He starts to cry  
But through the tears  
The pain  
He sees a light  
Dim and fleeting  
He reaches for it  
Hope?

He awakes in the light  
Afraid for he's never been here before  
The sweet smell of green grass  
The echoing of bushes and trees rustling  
Birds chirping

He starts to wander around  
Seeing Flowers!

Pink, Blue, Purple...

All colors

No yellow?

He feels something warming his heart

He looks at his shirt

Pitch black

Except now there is a small yellow flower

Set perfectly on his heart

He's no longer alone

For this magical place

The nature keeps him company

With his yellow flower he is sunlight

He's no longer afraid of the dark

Instead he welcomes it with open arms

Arms of light.

# Blissful Hallucination

by Josie B.

He sees her  
Everywhere  
Drinking water in the living room  
Cooking him dinner  
Caring for him when he's sick

I miss you, Allison.

Her voice again  
Almost making him  
Cry

I know.

Why did you leave?

I didn't choose it.

You of all people

Should know,

I would never willingly

Leave

You.

Watering the plants in the back garden

Why did you,

Then?

He doesn't mean to get cross with her  
'Her'

I said,

I didn't want to.

He sighs.

I wish you

Were here

I wish I was too.

But you

Aren't.

No. I'm not.

Sleeping in their bed.

You're not here.

And it still proves a shock

When

The

Bed

Is

Cold.

# Attorney

by Carlos B.

“Well, guys with one of Earth's moons gone, I will need an attorney to help me in court,” I said.

“Why don’t you tell them about the Technological barrier and how they were opening a portal to the wrong place?” said Tickle Boots.

“Alright, yeah, smart, now let's go find a defense attorney,” I said.

\* \* \* \* \*

“I assure you, Mr. Tuk Tuk, these men are the best of the best,” and then Agent Rallison, head of the Department of Justice, opens the door and two penguins are shoving oranges into a water bottle, someone is playing whack-a-mole with pizza pans, there is a plate of pasta sitting on a camera spindle on a slowly spinning fan attached to the wall, two people are celebrating who knows what on top of a crate of toothpaste, and one penguin is doing the spaghetti on a poster of the solar system.

Then the spaghetti penguin looks up and says, “It may be totally out of context, but if you were there it would make sense.” Then Rallison looks over to me and says, “See, best of the best.” But because I am out of options, I choose Bob, The Spaghetti Penguin.

# Faceless

by Soren M.

Who do you talk to?

Who would listen?

No family to talk to

No friends to listen to you

There is someone, though

To hear you talk

It's the voice inside your head

Talking, forever babbling on

Pointing out your faults, pointing out your mistakes

Every

Single

Time

So you drift around

Being slowly forgotten

Never giving a name to someone

Never giving an identity

Never staying

Not wanting to be someone

But all the same being forgotten

Until you're nothing

Just another person in a crowd

Not memorable

Just a figure

No one remembers your name

Not even you

# Skyline

by Henry F.

The skyline's always changing.  
New buildings go up from the ground  
The cranes *creek*...  
In the sky.  
But if you went up,  
To something like the Space Needle,  
You'd say, "What a view!"  
With a glass elevator so high.  
There are more unique buildings, too!  
Like the Jenga Tower.  
It's *grand!*  
Even scary!  
A glass-paned building.  
Sitting there.  
And when will it stop going up? Aren't the builders  
becoming weary?

The cranes *creek!*  
As more of the millions of pieces  
Stack upon themselves  
Like mirrors.  
But in the sky.  
Then again, what happens if they  
*Tip?*  
Jenga blocks can't fly.

About to fall over  
As it looks  
I wonder what's inside.  
How did it get here?  
In the sky?  
And in the sky is  
A sunset, brilliantly hued  
With red and yellow.  
Have it still be shining,



In our rainy April showers.

Would it fall down

If you pulled at the levels?

Or would it stay strong?

Unlike a real Jenga Tower?

The Skyline's always changing,

Like how the Jenga Tower is still being built.

There will be "big"

There will be "small"

There will be "fine"

There will be "tall"

But the one that fits "is it about to fall?!"

Is the Jenga Tower.

# Mouths Gaping

by Patton J.

He could see mouths gaping in awe. He could see the cops, slamming on the brakes, not daring to perform such a stunt. His car, twirling in the air like a ballerina. And then the car came falling back to the ground. Something popped and he was sure something broke in the car but he just sped forward and it worked. He had done it.

# Smell of Smoke

by Luke B.

Have you ever felt like your dream is real, like you can feel everything that is happening or a dream that seems like the future ?

Once my friends and I were checking out a house on my old street. We mostly just went there to talk and hang out, pushing each other around. We decided to leave, until I thought, Let's burn this house.

My friends were confused. I wanted to burn the house, but I didn't care about their opinions. I got a match and lit it. None of my friends stopped me so I walked over with the burning match in my hand. I could feel the heat and see the smoke forming a cloud. Not thinking of the repercussions of this mistake, I dropped the match and walked away. I turned around waiting for the eruption of flames. The fire roared, our eyes mesmerized by the blazing fire until we registered the annoying signs of the police approaching. Blinking red and blue lights and wailing sirens. My friends didn't know what to do. Should we run or should we confess? But I knew what to do. **RUN**

We ran to a random house. The father of the family was ready to call the cops on us because we smelled like smoke, but the mother welcomed us into their home like we were her own. After getting a shower and staying in the house for a while, the police started to question people around the neighborhood. We didn't know what to do, knowing that we had no clothes and if we were to put on our clothes we would smell like ash, but we had to due to the lack of clothes. The police started to come into the house. We had to think of something fast. As police began investigating the rooms of the house. We broke the window and climbed out, The police banging on the door trying to knock it down as we did. We heard more and more police gathering at the door. As the last of us made it out, running like the devil was coming to take our lives and all that we cared about, we got to the road. Cars driving past, it was like Crossy Roads, except with police shooting Glock-17, 18, 22 and the old Smith and Wesson model 10 at you. One of the bullets hit one of my friends, blood dripping down his back. He screamed. Some of my friends tried to help him but their fates were the same, with three of us screaming, dying, and hanging on for dear life. We continued to run.

Making it across the road we had some time before the police caught up, but we knew we couldn't take a break, we had to continue to run. Knowing that the police would catch up with us on the road, we made it to the safety of the grasslands. We camped there for the night. But we woke up 3 hours later to the sound of police sirens. Upon getting up, the police told us to put our hands in the air. We did what we were told, for a time, but eventually, I tried to run. I was shot seven times.

I woke up curled in a ball on my bed and screaming. It felt like the bullets were buried into my back, with pain in seven different places. Then it stopped. no more pain, no more death and no more gore. It was finally reached. The end of it all.

# Forgotten

by Anonymous

We're surrounded by miles and miles of  
sand  
glistening  
in the  
blistering  
sun.

I'm content.  
We're content.  
I'm surrounded by my family--  
who loves me the most.

Tumbleweeds blow.

Intense winds make the sand rise.  
I feel the stinging on the  
back of my legs  
and neck.

It feels like  
a thousand needles stabbing my skin  
over  
and  
over.

There are  
no plants,  
no food,  
no water,  
no life.

Next to us we see a wooden picnic table--  
we all take a seat.

Suddenly, we hear  
sirens in the absence.  
A fire truck comes at us--  
practically flying.

We scream, we run.  
but  
I'm cemented to the wooden picnic table.  
It's as if my legs had been  
bolted to the bench.

My family,  
Who loves me the most,  
runs off without me.

I have been

left behind

abandoned

forgotten.

The fire truck crushes the table--  
with me on it.

Boom!  
All I see is black.

I wake up, panting.  
My 5 year-old self lays in bed,  
petrified.  
I don't want to go back to sleep.  
I don't want to know  
what happens  
next.

# Portal

by Stephen E.

## I.

The earth is a war-torn planet. Humanity needs a place to thrive. They turn to Mars as an alternate world for safety. Although space travel to Mars has not happened yet, there is ONE portal 10,000 feet below the earth's crust at the bottom of the Theologians', or extraterrestrials, headquarters. Only the mutated few can reach the portal because the depth is too deep for a mere mortal. Mutation occurs in a genetic mutation bay, but the war destroyed the one mutation bay to which mortals had access.

\*\*\*\*\*

The war is raging. The mortals only have one choice: fight the Theologians to reach the genetic mutation bay. Theologians have been training their army for thousands of millennia before the mortals even existed. To fight the Theologians, mortals must: build an armory, prepare defenses, and train their troops for the one main goal: uncover the mutation bay to be able to reach the portal for safety. They only have six days before the Theologians are going to ambush them, so they must work quickly and in secret.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Theologians are preparing a secret weapon and method of travel to give them a massive advantage during their ambush attack: atomic landmines that surround the mutation bay, hidden in secret in the woods surrounding the Theologians. While they produce the land mines, the Theologian scientists are busy working on a teleportation module to aid in the attack.

**December 5, 2050**

The ill-prepared mortals' headquarters are five days away from the battleground, and getting their supplies is time-consuming and difficult. Their very existence is on edge.

## II.

Alfred Beswick, a mortal scientist is working on Powerjuice, a concoction that will give strength and make the mortal army immune to any Theologian bullets that may come their way. He is working in a lab

not ten minutes away from the army barracks. To the army, this will be of great aid in the fight against the Theologians. Today is a Saturday and there are two days left to perfect Powerjuice, for the shipping company only ships on days that are not Sunday, so work must be done swiftly to make sure this gets to the army in time for the attack.

\*\*\*\*\*

Kneebo Kalach, a Theologian army commander, is training his troops harder than ever before, waking his troops up at dawn to train, 18 hour days. Training is not only physical in how to use the teleportation module, but also includes cyber attacking. Warfare in this realm is both physical and cyber, both informational and physical. This training includes cyber attacking skills, and how to use the teleportation module that is brand new and has not been tested before. The Theologian army is confident that their technology is far more advanced than anything the mortals have ever seen or could imagine. They will soon learn that this confidence is misplaced.

\*\*\*\*\*

The deadline is up. This is not an issue to skip over. This is a species wiping attack. The mortals had better take this seriously or their existence could be wiped out. This is a monumental catastrophe if this happens. At this point the cyber and technology battle recedes into the background while the physical battle starts to heat up. Both sides are waiting until they think that they have a winning advantage but the scientists are preparing for this tech war rather seriously.

\*\*\*\*\*

On the morning of December 10, 2050, as the wintery air and snow rise up from the horizon like a big white blanket of cold, the Theologians charge towards the mortals' headquarters. The mortals' headquarters is strategically located in rugged terrain among rocks as jagged as arrowheads. Physical combat will be slightly more difficult than the Theologians thought.

\*\*\*\*\*

It was only a few minutes before mortal sonar detected the attack.



“Commander, we are detecting a large storm of extraterrestrials in the near vicinity of the HQ,” sonar director Samuel Robison said. “Theologians we think.”

Commander Denzel Richardson, a mortal army commander, took a second to process the information, taking this time to look at the attack.

“We are going to fight to the death for this portal,” Commander Richardson said, determined to fight for the very existence of humankind. “We can win if we are smart and fight.”

\*\*\*\*\*

“Mortal sonar has detected us, sir. We may not be able to escape the wrath of their astounding sonar capabilities,” a lower ranking Theologian army official said.

Kneebo Kleebach paces around his captain’s den, thinking about what his plan of attack will be to dodge the sonar.

“How long will a potential maneuver to dodge the sonar take?”

“Five hours, sir. We will never have time to wipe them out before they drink their Powerjuice,” the lower ranking officer said.

“Go to the smart people in the strategy department, they can help you plan this out,” Commander Richardson said.

\*\*\*\*\*

“Attention all members of the mortal army, this is your commander speaking,” Commander Richardson boomed over the loud speakers of the mortal HQ. “We have picked up on our sonar what we think is the Theologian army. I hope you have all drunk your Powerjuice for the fight because they have also come prepared. We must fight tooth and nail for this portal, and our great mortal species. Now go kill all of those puny mutants!”

# Where I'm From

by Audrey S.

I am from water bottles from Hydroflask and Swell. I am from the big, tan house that is surrounded by lots of greenery. It felt homely and welcoming. I am from succulents, and Lilies of the Valley, smooth and sweet. I am from deep frying everything in our fridge on New Year's Eve, and brunette hair from Momlette. I am from saying "your face" and popping our fingers when we get nervous. I'm from broccolis are airplanes and your sister is your best friend. I'm from Christianity and the Holy Trinity. I'm from Austin and Ireland. I'm from sauerkraut and boxty. From the man who I recently discovered is my grandfather through Ancestry and from the woman who came from Poland to establish the oldest Polish settlement in Texas, which is Pannamaria. Under my bed are all the candy wrappers from me trying to hide all the candy I hoarded when I was younger. I am from German, Irish, and Polish descent. I am from eating pizza and watching movies in the theatre on Sunday night.

I am Audrey Anastasia S.

# How I Like My Nights

by Samantha Z.

Dark as my shadow  
Rain and clouds  
Cool as ice  
Warm under blankets  
Snacks at midnight  
Book to read all night  
Sketchbook to draw my thoughts  
Night to heal me

# Light

by Abigail S.

Light

The opposite of dark

A common term,

One that has deep meaning.

Sun=Light

Day=Light

Battery→ Electric current→ light bulb=Light.

Light

Also has an invisible spectrum

Radio waves travel across radio to radio

X Rays help you see the bones in your body

Microwaves can help heat up your favorite food.

Light is

The fastest thing in the universe,

The farthest reaching everywhere,

A large portion of the energy in the universe

Is light.

Even in the depths of the ocean,

There is still light from submarines

And angler fish

Trying to lure unassuming sea creatures

Into their mouths.

Black holes

Glow with the light they are sucking in,

The light brightens entire galaxies,

Never is the universe dim.

Because the void of space is always confronted

With light.

At the end of this dark pandemic  
At the end of the corridor,  
There is light.