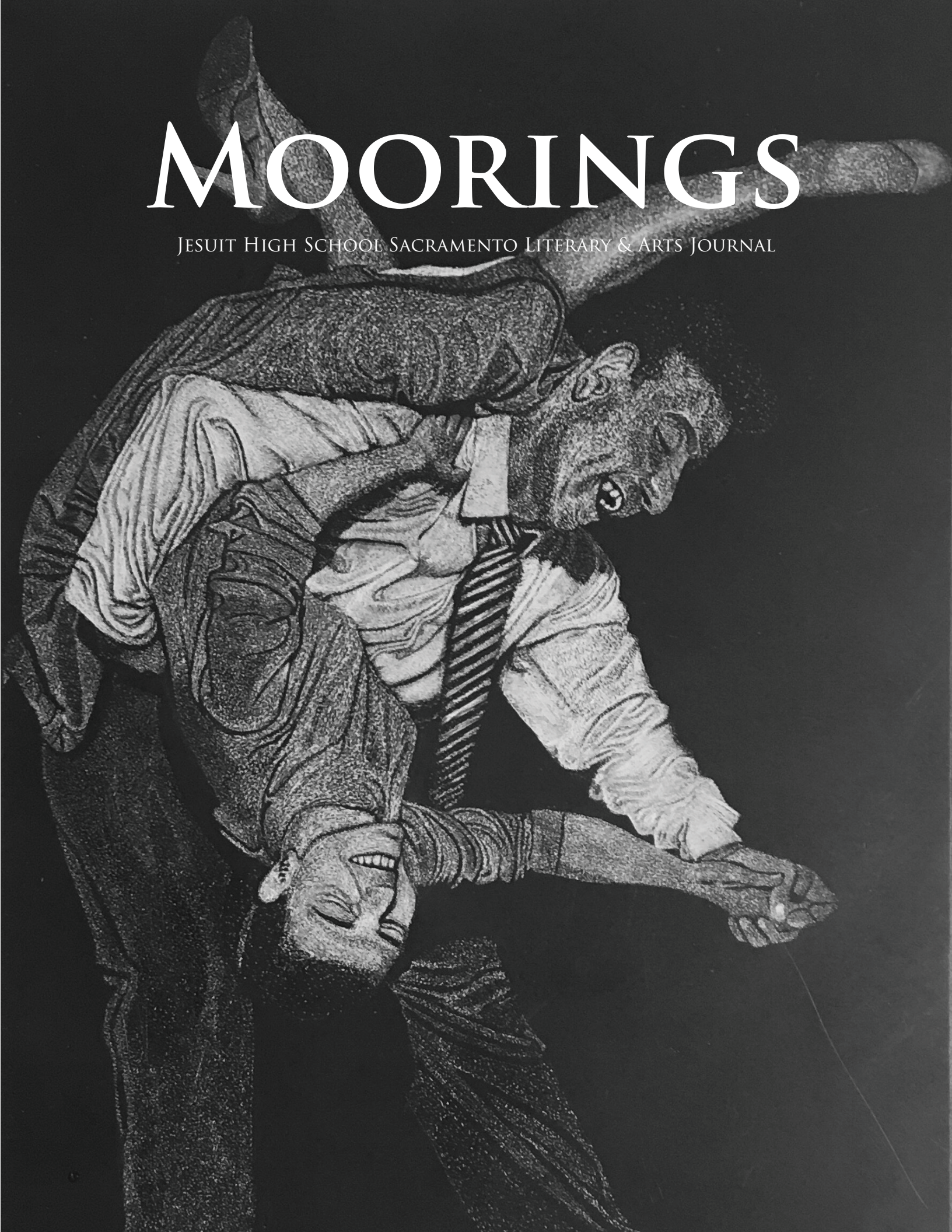


MOORINGS

JESUIT HIGH SCHOOL SACRAMENTO LITERARY & ARTS JOURNAL



From the Editors

Welcome to the Second Volume of *Moorings*, the Jesuit High School Literary and Arts Journal. This publication serves as a platform for student artists and writers to express their creative side.

Twice the size of our Inaugural Volume, this year's publication was gleaned from over 150 submissions of non-fiction, fiction, poetry, photography, fine art, and digital art.

The result is a diverse collection of pieces, to say the least. We explore the reaches of outer space and the depths of the human heart. We reflect on the violence of war and the tranquility of a deserted beach. We meet vicious monsters—both figurative and literal. We are horrified and inspired. We see the blood of conflict, but also the intimacy of lovers. We cower at the face of evil. We listen to the call to compassion. We behold vast landscapes that dwarf us, and we examine the intricate detail of the human being. We itch at the panic of an insomniac, and awe at the patience of a fisherman. We hear shrieks of terror and the beauty of song.

As Editors, we do not work alone. We would like to thank *The Plank* and Captain Blackbeard himself, Mr. Luppino. We would also like to thank our very own Brownbeard, Mr. Loverich, for steering this ragtag crew through some of the roughest storms on the sea, braving downpours of submissions and last minute edits. And of course, this publication would not exist if it weren't for the courageous souls who submitted their pieces to be judged by the crew. Thank you to all those who contributed, whether your piece was published or not.

We hope you take the time to relax and enjoy this year's volume of *Moorings*. It is sure to stimulate the mind and the soul, to instill fear and foster hope, to inspire and to challenge, and most of all, to get you thinking.

The Editors,

Nico Pedroncelli '18

Austin Weideman '18

Allen Chen '19

Garrett Emmons '19

Peter Grimmett '19

Hunter Hechtl '19

Steven Noll '19

Hunter Smith '19

Faculty Advisor: Mr. Jeremiah Loverich

MOORINGS



JESUIT HIGH SCHOOL SACRAMENTO LITERARY & ARTS JOURNAL
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Table of Contents

Fine Art

Dancers	Donovon Horst '18	Cover
Bob Marley	Kevin Zeller '18	17
Sitting Bull	Joshua Noll '20	18
Alaskan Night Sky	Josh Gilles '18	29
Astronaut	Aidan Pinkston '19	24
A Walk Through Space	Kevin Zeller '18	38
Liger	Aidan Pinkston '19	62
Sparrow	Preston Alaniz '18	67
Under the Surf	Josh Gilles '18	73
Self-portrait	Donovon Horst '18	74
Alaskan Bear	Matthias Milton '19	80
Hermosa Beach	Peter Grimmett '19	83
Morel	Josh Dolin '19	102

Fiction

True Losses	David Zingaro '18	13
Reverence	William Roush '18	19
The Rain (Ch. 1)	Max Christian '19	25
The Witch	Donovon Horst '18	33
A Sprinkle in Time	Ryan Walsh '18	41
The King's Ball	Brandon Hurd '18	49
The Great Escape	Joel Preciado '18	55
Footprints in the Dust	Chase Onodera '18	59
Da Nang	Benjamin Voelz '18	63
An Interview with an Artist	Jaden Fong '18	75
Monster in the Mirror	Lukas Kavanaugh '18	84
Insomnia	Donovan McGuire '18	93
Justice	Alexander Jacobs '18	99
Cracked Canvas	Samuel Schwartz '18	103

Poetry

Gum Stain Cowboy	Garrett Emmons '19	3
Cigarettes and Honey	Jaden Fong '18	11
Deep Desire	Randhir Singh '18	31
Variations on a theme...	Randhir Singh '18	39
What the Future Holds	Casey Gilles '18	47
A Fork in the Road	Preston Alaniz '18	57
Liar's Reason	Risheek Pingili '18	79
My Opinion on Blue	Carson Jones '19	88
Regrets	Marco Lemon '18	97
Suburbia	Ms. Tristine Zanotto	109

Digital Art

Horizons	Caelin Sutch '20	2
Yosemite Remastered	Carlo Pedroncelli '21	37
A Relationship Built on Anger	Edward Cabalona '19	54
Glitch	Josh Sellers '20	78
Untitled	Caelin Sutch '20	87

Non-Fiction

Seventy Keys	Jonathan Ahern '18	5
Distant Voices, Lost Intentions	Risheek Pingili '18	69
Machiavelli and Me	Patrick Stodden '19	71
Hooked	Peter Grimmatt '19	81
Black Sand	Austin Weideman '18	90
On Boredom	Chazel Hakim '18	95

Photography

Making Way for New Life	Joseph Rubino '18	4
Beyond the Clouds	Joseph Rubino '18	9
Eiffel Tower at Dusk	Kyle Young '18	10
State Capitol in a Circle	Damian Brunton '21	12
The Mist Trails	Chris Riffle '19	23
Vegas	Matthew West '18	30
Stormy Vineyard	Caelin Sutch '20	32
When the Rain Stops	Jack Bratset '19	40
Galapagos Nazca Booby	Soren Peterson '20	45
Cody	Kevin Zeller '18	46
Royal Splendor	Jaden Fong '18	48
Dragonfly	Matthew West '18	53
Hidden Path	Caelin Sutch '20	56
Sticking to the Road	Joseph Ryan '21	58
La Casa Del Cielo	Nico Pedroncelli '18	60
Bud	Trey Jacobi '21	68
Pudding Creek	Shane Lavery '20	70
La Paz En La Miseria	Nico Pedroncelli '18	89
A Still, Broken Night	Jaden Fong '18	92
Looking Back into the City	Jack Bratset '19	94
Lake Tahoe in Clouds	Kyle Young '18	96
High Hand Nursery	Damian Brunton '21	98
Depth and Light	Andres Stidger '21	108
A Quick Spin	Soren Peterson '20	Back Cover



Horizons

Caelin Sutch '20

Gum Stain Cowboy

Garrett Emmons '19

He rides a black-and-yellow steed
across sidewalk trails and pavement valleys
shadowed by skyscraper buttes
beset by Comanche traffic

He flaunts his Yankees Stetson
and his leather Colt with six chambers,
credit card debit card credit card
debit card credit card debit card,
in its stonewashed denim holster

He fells buffalo at falafel stands
and hares at hotdog carts

He spends his time at convenience store brothels
sipping sarsaparilla energy drinks
from flimsy plastic canteens
and lassoing smiling sundresses

He saunters into a five-inch pixelated sunset,
lost like one of
thousands of yellow skeletons in sun-cracked clay or
millions of black gum stains on endless concrete



Making Way for New Life

Joe Rubino '18

Seventy Keys

Jonathan Ahern '18

1ST PLACE, NON-FICTION
2ND ANNUAL MOORINGS
LITERARY & ARTS CONTEST

Seventy, that's how many keys I had collected by the time we had cleared out her house. I never thought that real life could contain the type of sweeping symbols that fill the pages of fictions, but as I type these words with the seventy keys strewn before me in loosely organized lines I seem to stand contradicted. Of course, any feeling that these seventy keys seem to represent is likely just another piece of my own mournful apophenia that constantly plagues my lifelong search for meaning, but the beautiful evocation that these keys have brought me is one that I would like to share.

I don't quite remember when I started collecting these keys. It must have been a week or so into the cleaning process. I remember that we had finished the downstairs and had begun moving on to the rest of the house. I remember that was the first time I had felt the strange realization at the life I was rummaging through. I remember that it happened in the living room.

While my Grandmother had lived in that house, the living room had been a place of fragile wonders, a room that a younger version of myself wouldn't have been allowed to enter, a room that, while I was sitting in it, was devoid of all of its previous life. In the center of the room, there was a mirrored glass table covered in multitudes of Swarovski crystal animals and Lladro figurines. Around that table sat white chairs and other smaller tables covered in Fabergé eggs and small empty ceramic boxes in the shape of flower pots, holiday figures, and decks of cards. Up until that point, I hadn't been allowed to touch any of the dainty knick-knacks that graced any of those tables, but on that day, the restriction was removed. It was a strange angry sad feeling, fueled both by the imminence of and aversion to the change that I knew was upon me. I stood on the edge of that room, 1999 Lladro price guide in hand, staring in like an outsider. I desperately wanted that moment to last forever, so that the memories of the parties that my grandmother

had held in that room could remain intact, so that I could pretend that she still lived there, so that I could continue to remember her as she used to be. That was when I started collecting keys as a way to hold on.

I remember an old VHS family movie of Grandma in that room. It was her birthday, I think. She was wearing the large square glasses that had always been a staple of her look and was dressed in a fancy evening gown. She was young. She was indulging in her hostly nature by making rounds from person to person, offering refills of mimosas despite numerous pleas from my mom behind the camera for her to sit down and open her gifts. After a cut in the video that I can only assume to be Grandma refusing to sit until she had ensured that everyone's stemware was full, the video shows her sitting and carefully peeling silver wrapping paper off a gift and folding it next to the box. She had a habit of that; she always felt that the wrapping paper was too pretty to waste. She, then, lifted the lid to see what I believe to be a grey blazer and continued into her typical speech about how generous and beautiful all of her gifts were. It's strange to think about. That memory isn't even my own. So many of her best years I was too young to appreciate her eccentricities while they were still endearing. Many of my pleasant memories are marked with coloring book pages and running through her huge backyard. My memories of her are a strange mix of past and present. They are second hand stores and home videos and old photos and faint, child-like recollections.

Much of what I know of her I amassed as a robber, a key collector, a thief; a thief who systematically worked from room to room emptying cabinets, organizing shelves, and packing boxes. I met her through a mink stole that was found in the closet of the office, and the drawer of ketchup packets in the kitchen. I met her in shelves of cookbooks and ornate Chinese landscapes painted on silk sheets amassed from a lifetime of travels. I met her through seventy keys that tell the story of a life that she can no longer recount.

One key is a key to the cellar. I don't know why we called it the cellar because only a small part of it was actually a wine cellar. It was the underground portion of her house. The wine cellar was a small, dark, wood paneled room with a sink that we later found out had been dripping slowly and steadily for years and latus

shelves made for holding wine. There were counters topped with bowls of dusty fake fruits and a carpet that, as a result of the sink, had to be replaced. It made up the left wing of the cellar. The rest of the cellar was made up of a nameless room that held her holiday decorations of which there were multitudes. She had what could be considered an almost feverish desire to decorate her entire house for every holiday, an addiction that was well and widely furnished by yard sales, synthetically colored plastic flowers, and biweekly trips to the local Dollar Tree. My earlier memories of her house are brightly colored by the fold-out paper turkeys and the red, white, and blue bunting that filled the shelves that hovered just above the dirt floor of this side of the cellar. It was a shame we had to throw it all away. The cellar took the majority of the time at that house. While the upstairs had only to be tidied up and priced for selling, the cellar had to be emptied. Her addiction to decorating ended in the same way that most addictions do, as a mess that was simply to be dismantled and destroyed. It is a strange memory. When I look back on the dumpsters filled with plastic Easter eggs, cardboard ghosts, and beautiful lace tablecloths eternally marred by mildew and must, it is hard to even believe that it was real, that the same place could have changed from organized rows to formless heaps and then to nothing. It's surreal to think back on the empty room that filled the space that a childish version of myself had seen as a cave of holiday wonder, but I know it's real. I was there. I saw it happen. I helped it happen. Even now as I hold the key in my hand as proof, it still seems so fake.

I wasn't allowed to keep the key to the china cabinet. It is in the hands of whomever ended up buying it. Everything in the cabinet was sold except for four things. Two sets of china weren't sold; one set went to my cousin and the other to my sister both of whom are living urban lives in San Francisco and are likely never using them. A silver ornament wasn't sold. My mom kept it and it now sits in a cabinet in her laundry room. The final item that was saved from sale was a plastic bag filled with spoons that went to my brother. These spoons were special. While their actual name is unknown, we call them "flaming spoons".

Her addiction to decorating ended in the same way that most addictions do, as a mess that was simply to be dismantled and destroyed.

They are silver spoons with two hooks coming off the head of the spoon so that it can rest on the lip of a mug or a tea cup. Once resting there the spoon would be filled with sugar cubes topped with brandy which would then be lit on fire. The sugar cubes would melt and then you would stir the mixture into the coffee. The process was called "flaming," and the coffee it was performed on henceforth known as "flamed coffee." I only ever saw it happen once. It was at a Saint Patrick's Day dinner at my grandma's house. It is a special memory because it is the only one I have of

eating a meal in the ornate dining room. We had corned beef and cabbage with my grandmother, my aunt's family, and my family. In that memory she is so lucid; she could follow the conversation and tell stories. At the end of dinner she offered all of her guests coffee, as is customary of a host of her breed and caliber, and after having counted the number of people who wanted any, she asked if anyone wanted it flamed. No one knew what that meant. She explained it and then proceeded to demonstrate. It is a tremendously convoluted process, but it is all together inductive of the type of person she was, over-the-top and all the more loveable for it. That is the funny thing about my Grandma. She was the type of person to serve Fanta in crystal stemware and dress for the finest company no matter where she went. She was the type of person to serve coffee flamed. My mother nearly cried when my brother requested those spoons. I think it was because she knew that what my brother really wanted wasn't a set of silly spoons. He wanted the memory behind them.

I collected several car keys while cleaning the house, many of which I wouldn't have recognized as car keys if it had not been for the logos on the top. The keys lacked the plastic tops that I had seen on every key throughout my life. One of the keys was to the vomit green Honda that she owned when she moved out of her house. One of the keys was for the Toyota that she owned when she and my grandfather moved to California. One key, a small gold key, was for the Cadillac. The Cadillac was the car that my grandparents owned while they still lived near Travis Air Force base. It was a gift from my grandfather to my grandmother because he was going to be deployed to Vietnam to help with the ongoing war effort. The

car itself was a canary yellow, white top convertible. The first time I ever heard about this car was in the context of an accident, a joyride sideswipe to be more exact. My aunt, at the age of fifteen, decided to take the new ride for a spin. To avoid being seen she donned one of my grandmother's trademark blond wigs and proceeded to try out the family's new car. As a result of her age, lack of driving experience, and general carefree nature that accompanied her childhood she sideswiped a parked car. She quickly drove the car home replaced the wig and hoped for it to pass. Unfortunately for her, it did not. Not long after my grandmother had gotten home from one of the many bridge parties that speckled her time as American housewife, there was a knock at the door. It was a police officer who came to investigate the hit and run that happened nearby. A witness had recognized the car and its driver. The officer insisted that my grandmother had hit a nearby car; my grandmother insisted not. To settle the argument the officer asked to see the car. Thinking that she hadn't done anything she obliged and proceeded to be astounded and confused by the incriminating evidence she had just given up. The story, when told, always ends there with the tacit understanding of the paperwork and punishment that must have followed. Other stories about cars normally involve my grandmother strategically breaking down in tears to avoid speeding tickets and riding a dune buggy around McCoy Air Force Base in Florida with the general's wife. The cars are all long sold and now all that's left are the keys.

I have no clue why it was keys; I suppose that they struck me then with the same emotional gravity that they grace me with now. The first few keys came from my Grandfather's desk. It was one of the first things I was tasked to clean out. My Grandfather had died long before, so very little of him and his personality actually remained in the desk. It was there, in the top drawer, that I found three keys. Each with a name written on them: Linda, Diane, and Larri. Those were her three daughters. No one was ever able to tell me what the keys went to. The best assumption is to some sort of lock box that Grandma no longer owned, but despite their pragmatic uselessness they held meaning as part of a life. Keys mark the watersheds of a life, a car, a house, and, in this case, a daughter. Such is the profundity of keys as hallmarks of a life well lived, a life that I remember through seventy of them.

I still visit her from time to time, not as often as I should I suppose. It's hard. She isn't herself, or, at least, she isn't the version of herself I want to remember. She seems so much less now, more like a shadow than my grandmother. She runs on hollow mannerisms of her old self like a stopped clock that still ticks and chimes. The overwhelming care she once had is now only seen in her constant repetitive questions about whether or not I have a girlfriend, and her hostile nature is shadowed in her constant offers for drinks. She is a lesser version of herself dulled by time, age, and disease. I hate who she is now because who she is now is defaming and corrupting my memories of the wonderful person she once was. I don't want to know her now for how she'll ruin who she was.

Now she only has one key. It's a blue electronic key with a blue rubber spiral wristband that she can wear so as not to lose it. It opens the door to her room at the facility where she lives now. The key is immensely unspectacular. Aside from her name attached to it in a shiny label it is the same as the keys of everyone else who lives around her. She only has one key that opens one door. A door that hides fragmented mementos of who my grandmother was. There is a glass figurine of an expressionless woman on a swing that feels fake because I never remember seeing it in her house. There is a shadowed frame of a fake violin atop sheet music that I'm told was a gift from a friend to my grandmother and grandfather on their wedding day. The song on the sheet music was supposedly their wedding song. At her old house it used to hang on the wall of her bedroom. I supposed that it still does hang on the wall of her bedroom, but all the same it feels lesser. It all feels lesser.

To tell the truth sometimes I want to remember the story of the seventy keys more than the story of the single one that came after. Not even the keys will let me do that. The more I try to hold them close the more they tarnish and remind me of the truth. I suppose it's for the best; after all this isn't fiction. This is real life. As I sit here contemplating the life that I have set in front of myself and stare at the tarnished keys, I find myself bemused by their simplistic profundity and by how completely they now define the person who once owned them. I guess that's all it takes, seventy keys to define a life.

* * *

I had to give three keys, a copy of the key to the cellar, the house, and the garage, away. They went to the new owners of her house. I hated it. Not just for the fact that I was giving away my grandmother's keys but more for how they bastardized her house, my memory. Before I even got it to the walkway of the old house I could tell that they had torn out the bushes in front of the garage. The ground was still scarred from their removal. The perpetrators had done their best to hide the wounds by covering the scars with a World Market statue of the Buddha and a brightly-colored mosaic dog. It was shameful to cover the property of such a traveled woman with such trinkets. The closer I got to the door the more I hurt. Her fine marbled dining room table was replaced with a monstrosity of green iron and faux alligator skin that shined like stain through her lovely white curtains. Her house, or rather the house that now stood before me, was an abomination of prior memories and present bastardization.

When I did finally, through a greater effort than such a walk had ever or would ever have given me, get to the familiar door and ring the familiar doorbell there was no answer. All I heard was barking and a stranger's cries for hush on the other side of the door. I held the keys to the very door I stood before, and I still managed to find myself unwelcome.

The doorbell stopped ringing. The barking behind the door stopped. The stranger's whispers for hush stopped. The door never opened. I left the keys in the mail box, looked back at the gutted corpse of that old house, and drove away. I would never go back. Even if I did go back it wouldn't have been her house. Her house was gone, in all places but memory, and a new house stood in its place.

* * *

She had to move once more since the writing of this paper. She was becoming far too much of a hassle for the first-floor staff of the plaza. She would, like a specter in her floral nightgowns, wander the halls looking to escape back to the life that she thought she still lived.

Her new room was on the second floor and brought with it no new keys. She, in all likelihood, would have lost it, and it was unnecessary because the doors of all the residents on her floor locked from the outside. She, along with the residents would wander

from room to room each of them living different realities.

It is often hard to look back on the few times that I did visit. I often became the lost nephew, son, or grandchild to any number of the residents. They would walk up and smile and mumble incoherently before walking on to the next living day dream. The hardest part was leaving. There was only one exit, a locked elevator with a painted bookshelf on the doors. Only visitors were given the code, and when we would use it, we had to rush to close the doors lest one of the residents breach containment, lest they be allowed into the real world.

* * *

I am writing now a year after my original composition, with the fine life that had originally inspired my work having ended. The story of her last year wasn't a happy one.

The longer she lived the more I, and the rest of her progeny, began to possess her memories more than she did. She would continue to care about me in as the abstract amalgam grandchild that her wisened mind had understood me to be. She would ask my brother, in front of his wife and while holding his child, whether he had finally found a nice girl to settle down with because she would love to meet her.

When I would visit, she would talk about how her landlords had raised her rent to the now exorbitant price of \$35 a month, about how she just needed to sit because she had been standing at Weinstock's all day, and about how she won games of bridge with a group that she was now too slow to play with. She would, of course, continue to ask me if I had met someone special. The last time I saw her, the last time I would ever see her, I was finally able to give a positive reply. I showed her pictures of her as she smiled and said that she would have to meet her at the next Thanksgiving. It was December 10th. While I did firmly intend to introduce the two when the far off Thanksgiving did roll around, I never got the chance. She died before the end of January; she was only here until she wasn't.



Beyond the Clouds

Joe Rubino '18



Eiffel Tower at Dusk

Kyle Young '18

Cigarettes and Honey

Jaden Fong '18

1ST PLACE, POETRY

2ND ANNUAL MOORINGS LITERARY & ARTS CONTEST

Voice like cigarettes and honey
Hearing the crackle of flames
As the fire flourishes to a dangerous crescendo
Feeling the intense heat on my dry skin,
Growing dull to the pricks and stings
Until it becomes a constant warmth
Always
The honey soothes the burns
Slathered over as a rich coating
Consuming the ashes left behind
As sweet as the words whispered in the wind
Blowing the embers back onto my flesh, what wonderful sins are the
Quick pangs of pain that patter the points of contact
Until the honey rolls over
Again



State Capitol in a Circle

Damian Brunton '21

True Losses

David Zingaro '18

The small diner's iridescent neon Open sign flickered and buzzed as it hung over the glass door. The hot muggy air blanketed everything and seemed to suck the life out of every living thing in the small sleepy drive-through town. The diner was a raised temporary building that the management seemed to have just forgot to upgrade. The bright red had faded from the walls and all that was left was a soft maroon color. All in all it looked quite pleasant. It gave off a very homey feel.

The cicada that had buzzed through the hot air quieted now as a new noise began to overpower them. The loud hum of an engine coming from down the road penetrated the sleepy stillness that had surrounded the diner before. A single car quickly came into view as it flew around the bend and came tearing down the road towards the diner. It was a bright red convertible of some kind but the body shape didn't instantly jump out at any onlookers.

Suddenly the car turned into the diner's parking lot much faster than necessary and the passengers of the car became visible to the single customer in the diner. The first one out was a shorter than average man with bleached blonde hair that was slicked back over his ears down to the top of his shoulders. He was wearing a baby blue Hawaiian shirt that was unbuttoned to the center of his chest and he wore a pair of reflective silver sunglasses. The next ones out were two young women who seemed to be incredibly close as they were both laughing to the point where one of them had to bend over on the hood of the car to catch her breath. They were both quite pretty as one was a short petite blonde and the other a tall leggy redhead. The blonde was wearing a pair of short denim shorts and a large oversized grey t-shirt while the brunette was wearing a flowing white sundress that reached down to her mid thigh and a large sun hat that seemed to flop down over her eyes every so often. The last one out of the car was the driver and he looked like a stereotypical all american boy as he was tall, broad shouldered, and held a strong air of confidence in his walk almost to the point of arrogance. He had on a blue polo and khaki shorts that came just above his knee. Pulling off his Ray Bans he tossed them into the seat before gesturing

towards the door of the diner and began striding purposefully towards it.

While all this was happening, the only person inside besides the staff was a tall skinny old man who was sat in the corner booth with a cup of coffee and a newspaper in front of him. Having just witnessed the events unfurl in front of him he simply shook his head and sighed deeply before taking a big swig of his coffee and turning the page he was on.

The hot muggy air blanketed everything and seemed to suck the life out of every living thing in the small sleepy drive-through town.

A light jingle sounded as the door opened and the new arrivals came into the diner. They were quickly greeted by the middle aged waitress in her ever cheerful tone. While being seated the old

man looked up at them briefly as they filed past to a round table two rows over. Seeing them more closely, he realized they were all either very tanned or quite sunburned. He figured they were just coming back from the beach or the music festival in the county over.

The next few minutes were quite normal as they ordered and got their drinks brought to their table. The trouble started as the time passed on and their conversation started to turn to more unsavory topics. The old man heard the blonde girl make a passing comment about how hard being a student is now a days and how they have to do so much more than past generations and how the professors are all old crotchety old men who are so anti-progressive they seem to not agree with any of the new changes. Then the other girl chimed in and started saying how when she was protesting for the pro-choice movement and for BLM, the only people who were angry were old white people. Finally the shorter man piped up and talked about how the older generations are always complaining about how lazy they are and how nothing will change because of them. The old heads are the ones who were on the wrong side of history through many of the biggest catastrophes in the world's history.

Finally not being able to withhold himself anymore he muttered quietly under his breath "freakin

kids...”

Not realizing his voice carried the table turned to his direction and seemed to notice him for the first time. The shorter man was the first to react, “What was that old man?! You got something to say?!”

The older man looked over again and stared into his eyes. “I guess he has a bit of a temper,” he thought.

“I was just getting a bit annoyed with your incessant whining over nothing.”

The younger man’s face turned bright red and his brow furrowed. “What would you know!? I bet you haven’t done anything in your life!”

Taking immediate offense to this insolent young man the old man’s face turned quite solemn. “Not done anything huh?...”

The taller man at this point had decided to step in and try to clear the air. “Hey, he didn’t mean anything from it. He’s just an idiot. I’m really sorry.”

But at this point the two girls piped up and the blonde said “No, Mitchell has a point who is he to tell us that we aren’t working to change the world.”

Turning back to the old man they all seemed to wait for a response. Sighing he hung his head and opened his mouth. “You are staring at a retired Captain in the US army. I have fought in WWII and am highly decorated. I was also one of the main planners in the civil rights movement. So, what have you done in your life?”

Speechless the table turned to look between each other.

“You know nothing of fighting for injustices and loss. I have dragged friends from mortar blasts and had to tell their family why I couldn’t save them.”

The air was filled with a noxious fumes that seemed to pour throughout the entire trench system. It was heavier than regular air so it collected in the trenches and made breathing incredibly difficult. It wasn’t condensed enough nor potent enough to kill a man but definitely capable of causing asthma attacks.

Suddenly a shudder of the earth and a spray of dirt and rocks came raining down on my helmet, pelting my face and shoulders. I had my back against

the embankment and my legs stretched out in front of me. The man next to me was shaking so bad he couldn’t light his own cigarette. Pulling out my silver plated lighter I reached over and offered it to him. After lighting him up I placed it back into my breast pocket and stood up. Placing a hand on his shoulder I nodded to him before heading further down the trench. Glancing at my watch I saw I only had two more minutes before the rush.

The orders were to rush the dead zone and try and get into the next set of trenches while pushing back the enemy at the same time. If we have to retreat our secondary orders were to retrieve as many bodies as we can.

Taking a long shuddering breath I peaked over the trench and towards a certain body I was intent on getting to. I couldn’t leave before retrieving him, for his mother. I really didn’t care about our first set of orders as long as I could get Isaac back home.

Looking back at my watch I saw ten seconds left. Nine, eight, seven, six.... a loud yell echoed across the battlefield and my eyes snapped open before scrambling over the wall and leaping to my feet. Looking to my left I saw that kid I lit up before charging forward with full bore, no longer shaking but pure determination. Racing forwards I swerved past barbed wire and old craters filled with rainwater. The soft soil made it difficult to sprint but I pumped my legs as furiously as I could and finally I reached my destination. Isaac’s body was slumped over a pile of barbed wire and had his uniform caught up in it. Pulling out my knife I easily cut through it and hauled him up onto my shoulder before looking up again. The rush wasn’t going well and we seemed to be getting pushed back. Turning I started the long run back to the safety of our own trench. Bullets whizzed by my head and mortars landed all around me. Dirt, screams, and blood filled the air as I returned. Putting my head down I just raced as fast as possible back.

Getting within 10 yards of the trench I turned back to look how we were doing just in time to see a private I knew from back home, Will, get struck by a mortar. He was launched forward and landed face first in the mud before turning and screaming for help. Immediately, I dropped Isaac and my rifle before sprinting towards Will intent on getting him to a medic. He was still twenty feet away when another

mortar struck to my left and launched me five feet. Scrambling to my feet and making sure everything was still there I stumbled forward as I couldn't hear anything and my vision was filled with black dots. Finally reaching him I grabbed him by the shoulder straps and pulled him towards the trench as hard as I could, the second I did his screams increased in volume and I finally got a good look at him. His legs were both held on by strands of tendons, both nearly unrecognizable. My rattled brain at the time thought nothing of it as I kneeled next to him and pulled out the same knife from before and severing the remaining threads all the while he was screaming and punching the ground. Getting through the last one I grabbed him again by stage shoulder straps and started dragging him back.

"HELP! MEDIC!" I screamed. "I NEED A MEDIC RIGHT NOW!"

Reaching the lip of the trench I was greeted by three medics all ready to take Will. Lifting him into their arms I turned and headed back out. I still needed Isaac.

The diner had gone deadly silent and the only noise was the buzz from the freezer in the back. The two girls had tears welling up in their eyes and the taller man was looking down at the table. The shorter man was staring wide eyed at the man he had just said had accomplished nothing. Gulping, he tentatively whispered, "...Did he survive?"

Looking to him the old man simply asked, "Will?"

The young man nodded.

"Yes, he did." The old man said and the short man's face seemed to uncoil in relief until the next statement "Until he killed himself after the government cut his welfare checks and food stamps"

The diner was once again thrown into an uncomfortably thick silence that no one seemed to want to break. The old man then turned to the young women at the table and said, "And you said that the older generation did nothing for equal rights, but several of the main proponents were from our generation. I was in fact one of the main planners of the civil rights movement. My hometown was in Birmingham, Alabama and that was an issue with everyone there."

Glass shattering above my head was what I walked in the door to. "WHAT ARE YOU DOING FIGHTING FOR THOSE PEOPLE?!?! THEY AIN'T NOTHIN BUT A PLAGUE!!!"

Looking in the direction of the thrown glass and the voice, I came face-to-face with my ma. Storming up to me she slapped me hard across the right cheek. Standing tall I knew just to let her blow through her anger before interacting. Looking over her head while ignoring her yelling I saw my pa sitting at the table with his hands folded across the table. He knew just as well as I did that when ma got like this to just let it happen.

After the final yell came about she broke into a bout of tears that came streaming down her face. It hurt to see her like this but in my heart I knew what I was doing was right. Pa seemed to know it was his time to step in and he stood up before coming down the hall and hugging Ma tight before sending her upstairs to their room.

"Let's go for a walk," he said before pushing the screen door open. "We seem to have a lot to discuss."

We came down off the porch and walked into the field that had just been harvested. We walked in silence for a good five minutes before he came to a sudden stop and looked straight up. The clouds were rolling by quickly today, as if they knew a change was coming soon "You're dead set on this, ain't ya?"

Not trusting my voice I simply nodded. My father sighed before looking me in my face. I saw tears in his eyes and I knew I wouldn't like what I heard next.

"You're gonna have to leave then." He choked out, "We've already gotten four death threats and with little Molly still here I can't risk anything happening. You understand don't you? ... please tell me you understand!"

I could feel hot tears streaming down my own cheeks. I nodded and said, "Yeah...Yeah I know. I knew what might happen if I did this but I didn't realize it might affect you guys. I'm ...I'm so sorry!"

We both quickly embraced in that field and weeped into each other's shoulders.

That was the last contact I had with any member of my family. I took my old truck and my life savings

before heading up to New York. I heard about my father's death not through my family but an old friend who still lived back there at the time. Not being invited to the funeral, I mourned from 100 miles away. Ten years later I visited his grave for the first time.

The two women were now crying hysterically and tears were even falling from the tall man's face, but the shorter man's face was frozen in a look of pure shock.

Pulling out his wallet, the old man placed a ten down on his table before folding up his newspaper and stood up from his booth before stretching and turning towards them. "I respect the work you are doing as politically active young people, but putting down the work of past generations is not something I can let slide. Just remember what we worked for and what we lost along the way when you compare the two of us."

Turning to the waitress he nodded smiled and said, "I'll see you tomorrow, Triss," before heading out the door and to the old beat-up truck parked in the corner of the lot.

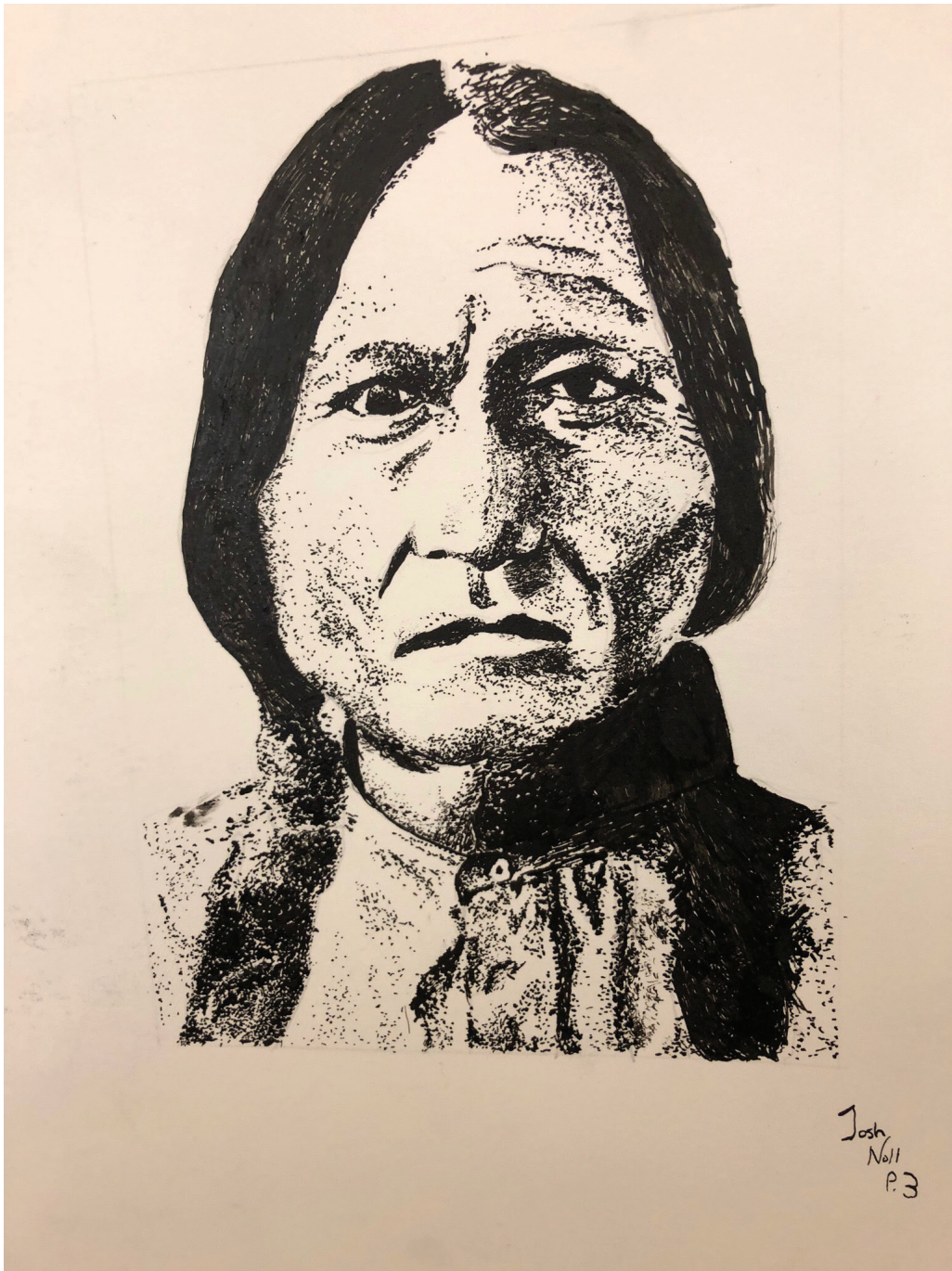
All eyes in the diner were on his truck as he pulled out and they caught sight of two things that sent chills up their spines, a pair of dog tags hanging from his rear view mirror and an Alabama license plate perched in his back window.



Bob Marley

Kevin Zeller '18

2ND PLACE, FINE ART
2ND ANNUAL MOORINGS
LITERARY & ARTS CONTEST



Sitting Bull

Josh Noll '20

Reverence

William Roush '18

"It's only for the day. You'll be fine. I know your grandfather is old but if you would give him a chance he's actually an intriguing man that has a lot in common with you."

"But Mom why do I have to go see him? I have a bunch of things I was supposed to do today."

"Your grandfather is trying to adapt to being in an elderly home. Please stop acting like you're the victim here."

We walked out of the house together. There was no way I was going to enjoy today. All my other priorities, and I was to be left with a man I hardly knew. I was not going to 'open my mind' to try and enjoy some stupid game of bingo. Despite my protests, I was dropped off at my grandpa's new home around 2 p.m. I walked into his room only to discover he was not in there, so I asked some faculty and found out that he was outside taking a walk as he does every day at that time. I decided to go meet him out there.

It was a pretty day out. The breeze left a cool sensation on my skin, the clouds were full and fluffy, the sky was a deep and hypnotic blue, and the clear air and flowers lacked even a lingering scent of smog. I walked over to the path my grandfather was supposedly on and found an old rusted bench to sit on while I awaited his return. The dirt path was enveloped on both sides by a variety of greenery. Old graceful trees swayed above me in the wind. I waited about fifteen minutes before my grandfather actually came into view. When he did finally arrive he took a heaving seat onto the bench.

"Beautiful day right?"

"Couldn't be more perfect."

"How are you doing today?"

"Much better now that you're here, Cameron." He chuckled weakly.

"Well it's nice to see you Grandpa. How are things going here?"

"Well, I suppose they are alright--mundane perhaps--but I fail to see a better alternative. How are

things with you youngster? I hardly ever see you."

"I'm alright."

"How's school going?"

"Its fine. Dumb as always."

"What do you mean by that?"

"My grades are fine. I just find it kinda worthless."

"Why is that, Son?" His posture shifted. He became more alert and inquisitive. His body went from facing out towards the nature to facing me with a tilted head. His bushy and chaotic eyebrows furrowed as he awaited a response.

"I learn pretty useless stuff. School is just a place where how good of a student you are is determined by how well you follow orders. Our creativity is forced into a small container that our administration never allows us to open. Meanwhile we are each placed into our own box where we become a cog in a machine designed to create ignorant people. No one cares about learning anymore and everything is about getting good grades, and who can blame us when our worth is determined by them."

"I agree that there are problems in the school system but I also think it is far more complex than you are giving it credit for."

"Highly doubt it. You wouldn't know anyway. Things are different now then they were when you were in school."

"Here let me tell you a story. It begins long ago as many stories do. So long ago that your grandfather was still genuinely capable of running." He laughed "1951 was my sophomore year in highschool. I remember because Eisenhower was elected the following year. Robert was my best friend. He thought of school much the same way you did. It was all stupid and unimportant in his eyes. He had amazing grades, but only got them in order to progress towards getting into college where he figured he could actually get down to learning useful things. I remember one particular time me and him were sitting in the worn wooden bed of his Chevrolet 3100 pickup truck after seeing *The Day The Earth Stood Still* for the first time. He told me about how badly he wanted to get out of town and go to college. He told me how he was going to study business and become a major executive at

some big company and wasn't going to let anything stop him from getting there. As a young suburban kid, that talk felt like a direct insertion of confidence into my veins. His certainty and motivation were intoxicating that I found myself hanging on his every word. I much like him adopted the idea that school was a game you played in order to reach your ends. I was not as successful as he was in school, but I still managed to follow him into the college he decided to attend. I studied English while he studied business just as he had always said he would. He was a killer once again. He got A's in every class and proved to his professors that he had a vision and the drive to bring it into existence. He earned his way to an internship at the headquarters of Kraft which was a Fortune 500 company at the time."

"The Kraft? Like the macaroni and cheese, Kraft?"

"Yes that one. Within years he was the companies' CFO. He begged, borrowed, and stole his way to the top, never hesitating to consider his path.

Just a breath away from CEO, Robert had just about made it. He was making all the money he ever wanted and seemed to have more opportunity at his feet than he even had time to attend to. Women threw themselves at him-- from secretaries to actresses. He had built a name for himself. Though we had a disconnect in our professions due to me becoming an English teacher, we still met occasionally. I remember the night he told me he had become CEO. It was 1960, and I had never seen him more ecstatic. 'All my work has finally come to fruition.' he told me. I was proud of him and still inspired by his pure stature and will. He seemed to have anything and everything figured out. I was quite envious of him, you know. Everything he spoke seemed to just come into existence."

"How could you not envy him. He had everything."

"So it seemed anyway."

"What does that mean?"

"Do you know what happened to my best friend

Robert son?"

"What happened to him?"

"He died at sixty-five after putting a bullet through his head."

"You're kidding." I said astonished

"I am not. My best friend killed himself in the year 2000." He swallowed. "Do you know why he did it?"

"I haven't a clue."

"He lost his job after a car accident ended his capability to work."

"He killed himself because he lost his job?"

"Proximally." He paused looking at the dark soil then back at me with a solemn expression. "But it is deeper than that. He spent his entire life doing instead of being."

"What does that mean?"

"A majority of his life had been spent with a single goal in mind. All he wanted above all else was to be a CEO. He always did what was required of him to attain that. But he realized something after the accident. He realized that his life was nothing without his job. Even worse, he was his job. All the sudden when all he had ever worked for was taken away from him by a senseless accident he had no justification for living. Who was he if not the CEO of Kraft? He decided he was nothing. He was no longer something that had reason or justification to exist, like an extra expense on a balance sheet. So be careful how you approach school, kid. It's not a prison nor a machine. It's a place you go to discover who you are as a person and to develop that being no matter how it is taught now. To treat school the way you do is to put the cart before the horse on the issue of your humanity. Don't place the eggs of your human worth into a single earthly basket Cameron, it can be fatal."

"That seems like a rather grand way to explain that you should take school seriously Grandpa."

"Do you disagree?"

"No. I wouldn't say I do."

"I rest my case."

He and I looked around at the nature outside as a pensive silence passed between us. I felt no tension or confusion about what he had told me, just a resolute feeling of wonder.

“Do you like chess, Cameron?”

“Love it.”

“Want to head inside? I can show you how to truly play.”

“Is that a challenge?”

“I can’t run but I’m still plenty quick, bucko.”

He rose from the bench resolutely. He seemed happy to have the chance to play against me and I was excited to have a chance to show him my skill. We made our way into a common room. A sort of meeting room that no one sane would ever hope to meet in. It lacked every risk that could even potentially bring about beauty. Classic brown drapes flanked the sides of rectangular windows that lined the back side of the room from where I walked in. Wooden tables covered by the same tasteless tablecover were placed in an orderly manner throughout. The unmistakable “old people” smell wafted throughout the room. My grandfather made a movement towards what seemed to be an island of difference in a sea of uniformity.

“I have done all I can to make this table a place that wouldn’t want to make me throw up. I have no idea how people tolerate this monochrome plainness.”

I chuckled. “I see that. Where’s your board?”

“Anxious to get started?”

“Absolutely.” I smiled.

He reached under the table to a drawer and revealed an old looking chess board and an even more ancient looking drawstring canvas bag filled with all the pieces. He took forever to set everything up. He placed each piece with a sort of purpose I never had.

“So you play a lot of chess?” I asked.

“Used to. People here don’t seem to play much.”

“Alright I will take it easy on you.”

“So you accept defeat now?”

“Oh it’s like that?”

“I’m old, not lame. Let’s play.” He had a conniving smirk on his face that made me want to beat him just that much more.

I began to play aggressively. I won the first four pieces sure I had the game completely in control. He seemed to only play in response to my moves. He was a passive player and it seemed to cost him.

“Checkmate,” he said nonchalantly with the conniving smirk making a return.

“No? I am threatening your queen right now.” I was alarmed and confused but found out after a bit of inspection that he did in fact have me beat. “How the hell did you do that?” I questioned. He chuckled in my face. I was determined now. “Let’s go again!” I said adamantly. I lost three more times before I got even more frustrated. “What the? How are you beating me everytime? I take the lead by four or five pieces and make threatening moves, and then when I think I have you beat everything switches on me and I lose. What’s your secret?”

“It’s obvious, isn’t it?”

“Clearly not or else I would have you beat.”

“You’re not bending.”

“Grandpa, stop being cryptic. What strategy are you using? Sicilian defense?”

“Nodd, Cameron, it’s not a chess strategy. Allow me to explain. My older brother was recruited to the army in 1941 to fight in WWII. I was six years old at the time. He was eighteen. Eleven months later my family received a letter. We had been so excited to hear from James until we realized the words of the letter began with ‘We regret to inform you. . .’” He paused. I don’t think my family ever recovered from that event, especially my father. Life is a chaotic and impossibly complex thing Cameron. There are two responses one can give to such a problem. You can choose to be like my dad and try dominate and control the world. Utilize force and will to shove yourself through life. Pick yourself up by your own bootstraps and tell fate that it can go screw itself because I’ve got crap to do. The second response is quite the opposite and was modelled by my mother. In the wake of disaster, she adapted. She bent to the will

of nature and of fate and responded as best she could. She loved those around her and mourned intensely. She relied on others and gave what she could to me and my other siblings. Have you ever read *The Old Man and The Sea*?”

“Yes, I have.”

“Man cannot force the waves into behaving the way we want them to, Cameron. Life is far too complex and far too much is left to chance for us to even try. Instead we must learn to navigate the ocean of life rather than attempt to control the tsunami. That’s what’s wrong with your chess. You play as though you can control everything and fall into the same habits. It is predictable, and I can adapt faster than you can try to force me into your preferred shape.”

“Man everything is a life lesson with you.”

“What other lessons are there?”

“Well I’m sure there are others but I’ll take your point. You know Grandpa you make me feel like I know a lot less than I thought I did.”

“Realizing your ignorance is the first step to wisdom.”

“Well hopefully the wisdom part is coming soon.”

“Pay attention and ask questions. A part of youth is finding out that you know nothing and that the world has so much more to it than you thought. Enjoy the discovery and engage in figuring it all out as best you can.”

“Thanks, Grandpa for...” My mom arrived at the room with a worker that had likely brought her to us.

“Hey, Cameron. It’s time to go honey,” she called out from across the room.

“Oh, okay,” I said disappointed and surprised. I looked over to my grandfather. “Bye Grandpa. I love you.”

“I love you too, buddy. Visit again sometime soon please. It was nice seeing you.” My grandfather smiled and waved as I walked away on the old themed carpet.

I shut the car door behind me as my mom said “See? That wasn’t too bad was it?”

“No. It was actually really cool. Can I go again sometime?”

“Of course, honey. I’ll take you anytime.”

“Hey, Mom?”

“Yeah, Cam?”

“Thank you for taking me. I think I get it now.”

“Get what, dear?”

“Reverence.”



The Mist Trails

Chris Riffle '19



Astronaut

Aidan Pinkston '19

The Rain

Max Christian '19

Chapter One

It began as a distress signal. The Company directed me to transport a small squadron of five marines to an asteroid that was being studied by a group of scientists. The distress signal was activated just before they had lost contact with Earth only a month into their expedition. The signal originated near the station that had extracted the colonists from the Mars mission. It was a week's flight to the location of the expedition from the moon base. I hated being away from my kids for that long but that job paid really well. We also really needed the extra money after Danielle passed just six months before.

When we arrived, I could understand why they sent all of those scientists to study this place. The asteroid was almost the size of a moon and gigantic pyramid structures larger than mountains covered the surface of the rock. It was so bizarre and otherworldly. As we got closer to the landing pad, I turned on our shuttle's lights to notice that the ground appeared almost gelatinous. The whole asteroid was covered in total darkness except for the station. I landed the shuttle next to a clear glass dome that was used to decompress the air and make it breathable inside.

As the soldiers gathered their gear and weapons, the leader of the squad, Captain Holland, said that he needed me to come along in case anyone got hurt as they cleared out the station. When I joined The Company, they made me take a brief medical course at the academy before I could fly anywhere just in case any of my passengers were injured on any of the flights. It was a mandatory class we needed to take before we could be certified as a pilot for The Company. I didn't think I would even have to leave the shuttle, but he said he "needed a medic and I was the closest thing to it." I went to my room to put on my glass facemask and reluctantly grabbed some morphine syringes and bandages. Holland was never really the nicest guy but he was my superior and orders were orders.

We piled out of the shuttle and stood in front of a door that would lead us into the station. I felt so impotent standing next to these marines with their intricate assault rifles equipped with tactical scopes and gun mounted flashlights. A young private named Lance gave me a flashlight and pistol from his belt. "Only use it if you absolutely have to." He cautioned. His demeanor gave off an aura of entitlement as he handed me the small pistol and flashlight. I wasn't very knowledgeable about guns, but even I knew that this little pistol wouldn't do much good in any emergency.

We stood in front of the big metal door and waited for one of the marines to unlock it. He input the code on the keypad and stepped back, then nodded to the group. They drew their guns on the door and waited anxiously for it to open. As the doors slowly slid across the floor, a thick, black liquid crept out through the opening.

I turned on our shuttle's lights to notice that the ground appeared almost gelatinous. The whole asteroid was covered in total darkness except for the station

"Um... sir? What's the protocol for this?" The radio crackled as one of the marines inquired. Captain Holland motioned for the group to get back as he cautiously stepped on the black fluid to see if it was safe. He nodded back to the group and everyone moved slowly through the doorway and scanned the room in their formation. They radioed to me that it was safe to come inside and I reluctantly joined them, stepping on the sticky floor. The liquid was up to my ankles and stuck to the bottom of my shoe like gum whenever I took a step. The room was completely dark apart from the light of our flashlights. As I looked around the room I saw one large hallway with about a dozen smaller rooms branching off. Holland told us to clear each room then regroup at the end of the hallway. I didn't know how to clear a room, I was just supposed to fly the ship.

I pointed the flashlight and pistol into one of the rooms and stepped inside. It was a small bedroom with two bunk beds and one desk in between with a folder on top of it. I opened the folder and saw a document with the words "Rain" and "Clouds" highlighted in yellow. I turned the page to see pictures of what looked like hieroglyphics taped onto the document. Before I could get a closer look, Captain

Holland radioed for me to regroup with the others. I stuffed the folder into my bag, and ran over to the group in their breaching positions at the next door. I tried to tell the captain what I found, but he said to show him once the whole station is cleared.

He signaled the breach and the doors opened. Again there was nothing dangerous on the other side, but I felt as if the liquid got a bit higher. Through the opening was a corridor with an open doorway to my right and a closed one with a keycard lock to my left. We scanned the room vigilantly, as we trudged in formation through the open doorway and noticed that there was a faint light radiating from the back of the room.

The room was a small cafeteria with circular tables and chairs. The light glowed from behind the serving area. It was a glass window in the wall with a small space to slide food through, and behind it was the kitchen. Holland signalled to the group to take cover behind tables as he moved toward the light. He slowly approached the glass with his hand on his holster and peered in.

I crouched behind one of the tables and peeked over it to see what he was looking at. I cupped my hands together and squinted to see where the light was coming from. When I looked closer I saw two white glowing dots shining from behind the glass. I gasped and was about to warn Holland but it was too late.

A shadowy blur jumped up from behind the glass and slammed its body against the window. The glass shattered and the figure came crashing through. It collided with the captain and crumpled him into the wet floor. It proceeded to frantically slam its arms against his head. The creature's arms seemed limp and it acted as if it had never used them before.

After a few hard smacks to his head Holland's glass facemask broke and the blackness flooded his helmet. I could hear him gurgling on it over the radio. The whole squad listened as he choked on blood, broken glass, and liquid darkness until his last struggle for life was replaced with silence.

It had all happened so quickly. It terrified me just how fast everything could completely fall apart. The whole situation was totally under control only ten seconds before. Then, simply because of bad luck I

suppose, our captain was brutally murdered in front of us.

The other four guys jumped up from their cover and fired at the creature. Its white eyes went out like a light had just turned off inside its head. The ringing from the gunshots still echoed throughout the station. The soldiers gathered around the captain's mangled body, but I stayed back behind the table, still terrified from what I had just seen. I heard their shocked reactions over the radio, then more shooting. The original light that we saw was still there, and it was another creature. It vaulted over the table in the kitchen behind where the glass used to be and then hopped through the broken window. It ran with limp arms swinging by its sides.

The four men shot relentlessly at the monster, but my instincts told me to run. Another door to the left of me swung open as I ran toward the hallway. I stumbled out of fear and hit the wall on my right. With my back against the wall, I lifted up my pistol and aimed directly between the two white lights.

The shot rang out in my head as the figure hit the ground. A burst of black and red liquid came gushing from the creature's head and splattered all over the floor and the wall behind it. I breathed a sigh of relief and slid down the wall. I sat on the floor and tried to process what had just happened. Four lifeless bodies hit that sticky floor in the same amount of time it took me to tie my boots that morning. My body was completely filled with adrenaline and I wasn't very accustomed to that feeling.

I felt thankful that Lance gave me his gun. He didn't have to give me anything, but he did it so that I could be safe. I am alive because of that small act of selflessness. The red that came from the monster's head mixed with the black liquid on the floor. As the mixture pooled beside me, I had a revelation. These weren't monsters, they were the missing scientists.

I got off of my feet and checked the creature's body, and sure enough, there he was. I wiped away the black sticky liquid and under it was a researcher's uniform and a name tag. His name was Ryan Patterson. I remembered seeing that name on the list of missing scientists. He looked relatively normal besides the bullet in his head and the lack of pupils in his eyes. He looked so scared and innocent, as if he was a victim of something awful. What struck me the

most was the terror in his expression.

I checked his pockets and found a keycard, probably for the other door in the hallway. By then the four Marines came over to see if I was alright. I told them what I found and they wanted to check to see if the keycard would work on the door in the hallway. I wondered if the liquid was what had turned them into those things, and sure enough, I was proven right.

One of the marines went over to the captain and grabbed his dog tag and ammunition. We were about to leave the cafeteria when we heard something behind us. We turned around and saw our captain, covered in blackness and staring us down from across the room. His eyes had rolled back into his head and the whites of them were glowing. It was the most disturbing thing I had ever seen. Shards of glass were stuck in his face and he bled black and red from his eyes, nose, and mouth. He started to run at us with limp arms at his sides, but was gunned down just before he could reach us. He collapsed on the floor in front of us as one of the marines put him down with a bullet to his head.

We all solemnly left the room and walked out into the hallway with the locked door. The men got into their breaching formation by the door as I took a deep breath and swiped the keycard. A green light flickered and the door opened. We flashed our lights into the doorway and saw at least ten black figures in mangled hazmat suits with glowing eyes. The suits had tears and holes in them and looked violently shredded. They were standing in one of the glass depressurization chambers that we went through on the other side of the station. The glass in the chamber was cracked in some places, letting the liquid seep in.

I had never ran so fast in my life. I sprinted down the hallway as gunshots echoed behind me. I kept running until I heard a door close behind me and a voice call my name over the radio. I turned around to see one of the marines. It was Lance, the soldier who had given me the pistol.

He had closed the door on the other three men and the horde of hazmats behind them. I yelled at him to open the door for our squad but he told me to keep running back to the ship. He bashed the little glass window on the door with the back of his rifle and told me that we needed to make sure that all

of these things are dead. I stood there confused, not understanding what he was doing, until he reached for a grenade from his bag.

He said that the men on the other side of that door were already gone and there is nothing we could do to save them now. He held the grenade in his hand and hesitated for a few seconds. I could see the reluctance in his face as his hand shook with trepidation. It looked like he knew that he would lose some of his humanity if he went through with this. Then he pulled the pin and lobbed it through the small window.

I dove under a table and hid my head in my arms. I heard the grenade explode on the other side of the door and just kept my eyes closed. I heard distressed breathing over the radio dissipate into silence.

I crawled out from under the table and found Lance laying face up underneath the door that he had blown from its frame. I couldn't bare to look at the carnage that lied passed the empty frame.

Lance wasn't awake, but I checked his pulse and he was alive. I could barely lift up the door that was on top of him, so I propped it up with one of the chairs from my table and dragged him out of the rubble. His right leg was completely gone from below the knee.

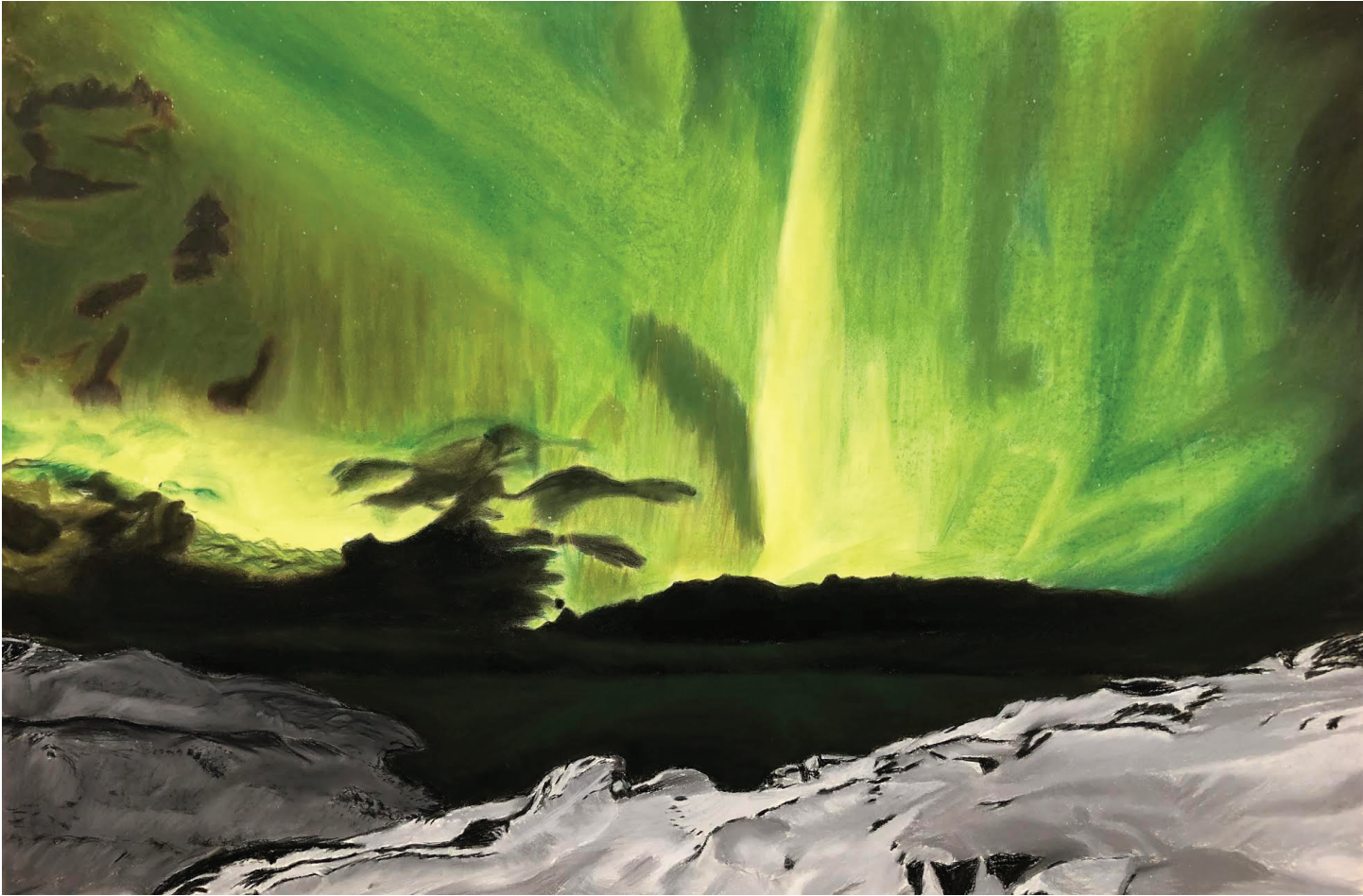
Blood gushed and veins protruded from his stump. I winced as I foraged through my bag for the morphine I packed. I pulled the syringe from my bag, lifted up his shirt a bit and injected it into his gut just like how they taught us in that medical course. Then I kept his exposed stump away from the blackness on the floor by putting it on a stool. After that, I took off my belt and tied it tightly around his thigh. I saw a first aid kit on the wall and looked for anything that ended with "cillin."

As I scrambled to find the medicine, I heard another sound. I looked through the doorway and saw our three dead men covered in blackness with glowing eyes and limp arms at theirs sides.

In one motion I threw the boxes in my bag and ran back to Lance. I grabbed his rifle, slung him and his heavy armor over my shoulder, and sprinted for our shuttle. I heard quick footsteps behind me that seemed to get closer and closer, and Lance's heavy body definitely wasn't doing me any favors. We got

back to the ship with the creatures only a few feet behind me. I plopped Lance's unconscious body down onto the ramp of the shuttle, turned quickly, and emptied a full magazine of lead into what used to be my crew.

Once I had Lance inside and in his bed, I got our shuttle off of that rock as fast as I could. Throughout this whole ordeal I had been a pilot pretending to be a soldier. Now, I had to pretend that I was doctor for as long as it took to get back to Earth.



Alaskan Night Sky

Josh Gillis '18



Vegas

Matthew West '18

Deep Desire

Randhir Singh '18

The truth of the matter is that I suffer,
for the place of my dreams is far away from me.
My grasp is not strong enough to hold on to desire
so I must rely on those around me for much.
The flowers will soon be in bloom this season
and bliss will reign eternally in this haven
as the scent drives me mad with absolute pleasure,
I can see myself lying back in this paradise.
The view from my raised, exotic balcony
is beautiful enough to drive men insane
for the sight is more tantalizing than all else.
The image of the deep water below my sight
shining bluer than any pure sapphire
the hills greener than any emerald could be
While the leaves and flowers shine a red
fierce enough to challenge the sun himself.



Stormy Vineyards

Caelin Sutch '20

The Witch

Donovon Horst '18

Prologue:

Once upon a time there were three powerful kingdoms. They were as grand as they were mighty. However, their greed led to bloodshed, and kingdoms fought each other ceaselessly. It was through this widespread death and tragedy, that the kingdoms grew to their most powerful: . The tyrannical leaders used their resources mercilessly to create more powerful weapons and excellent displays of their wealth at the expense of the people they ruled over. Children were forced to work in mines to reach the minerals hidden in small spaces, women labored all day dusting the palace's ornaments, and the men were drafted into the military.

The evil and hatred that each monarch held in their heart incarnated a pure malevolent being. It was a powerful presence that transcended death and had a lust for chaos. It cloaked itself in ominous black robes to represent the darkness that lay within. Standing proud and intimidatingly, the evil being chilled its victims to their core. The malicious being was notoriously referred to as "The Witch."

As the witch's power grew, it posed a great threat to each of the kingdoms' prosperity. Its evil spread village to village as the witch puppeteered people into killing each other in a mad rage. The monarchs had no other choice but to unite and face the great witch together. They attacked the witch from all sides using their vast resources and armies. However, their numbered armies had no effect on the witch; once again the witch drove the armed men mad with bloodlust and let them slaughter each other. When they realized that they couldn't overpower it, they offered it their most precious possession: gold. Their bribe did not work. The witch had no use for gold. Making a display of the monarchs pathetic offer, it transformed each of their entire treasuries into straw. The Kings were in utter desolation. Finally, they understood what needed to be done. Their own greed brought the evil into the world, so they had to leave the world with it. They all three confronted her and sacrificed themselves. The witch was banished for all except one day a year. People from each kingdom learned from their king's selflessness. They came

The evil and hatred that each monarch held in their heart incarnated a pure malevolent being.

together in order to survive the wrath of the witch that returned year after year.

* * *

It was a clear Sunday morning in the Black Forest Village.

People were harvesting crops to be sold in the market, bargaining for the best deal, and the little boys were running about. Amidst the disarray, Violetta stood, quietly, with a soft smile on her face as her rose-gold hair shimmered in the sunlight. She appreciated the discord of her hectic hometown; The free-for-all madness was beautiful to her. Her bright blue eyes followed all of the intricate moving variables that had mysteriously kept her village alive and thriving for the past ten years after the Great War. Violetta skipped along the cobblestone path as she made her way through the town center, dodging the hustle and bustle with ease. She slipped past a wide-load wooden wagon, made a left down an alleyway, a right, and then an explosion of loud banter and determined shoppers erupted before her. She moved along with the current of the crowd, still smiling.

The town of Black Forest had been her home from birth. Before the Great War, Violetta's parents would walk her along the stone roads daily to take her shopping in the market to teach her what shops are reliable and how to barter for goods. They strolled together through the crowded markets and the lush farming fields talking about how each of the parts played a role in sustaining the town. Violetta felt connected to her village. She knew each alleyway and corridor, she loved walking on the wet, mossy stones, and she even appreciated the reeking stench that lingered from the wildlife excrements. All of these alone wouldn't have an effect on Violetta, but together, it is part of what hundreds of people call home. And that was beautiful to Violetta.

After a short stroll through the market, Violetta picked up supper and her usual groceries. On her way back, she followed the same path, while dodging the occasional wagon and ignoring the typical overbearing salesmen. However, she was caught by surprise when she bumped into an old woman. She was short and her misty grey hair stood up on end as if she had been struck by lightning. She was hunched over as if shielding the world from something with her

whole small, frail body. The lady turned around with surprising speed with a look of bewilderment across her wrinkled face. "AHH! Be gone wretched Witc--" hollered the woman as she thrust a locket full of sacred protective spices towards Violetta.

Horrified, Violetta looked 'round in panic, "The Witch! Where?!"

"Oh you daft child, tonight's the cursed night! The witch's return! We're all doomed."

Violetta couldn't believe that she had forgotten. Tomorrow would be the most dangerous day of the year, and she hadn't made any of the necessary preparations. Astonished, she raced home and barged through the door. To her surprise, her uncle Albert had already made the preparations. He was a man of short stature and round features. His eyes were big and round seeming to always scan his surroundings for danger. He was deceptively handy, and made a living as a craftsmen despite his short arms and legs. In Violetta's absence, he made quick work of the defensive preparations and boarded off the windows of their stone hut. He even added beams to support the thatched roof.

"Wow Uncle Al!" Violetta said. "You really outdid yourself this year. Sorry I wasn't here to help, this crazy old woman yelled at me in the market. She scared me half to death."

"It's okay my darling, you know I feel better knowing all defenses are in place correctly." As he said this he wiped the beads of sweat running across his forehead. His cheeks were bright red and he was breathing heavily. He slowly climbed down from the rickety ladder and gave Violetta a long sweaty hug.

Ever since Violetta's parents were killed in the Great War, her Uncle Albert had taken care of her. After the loss of his beloved sister, he refused to let Violetta fall into the same tragic fate of her parents and desperately sought her out. He discovered her in the care of some villagers who found her. He raised her with a close eye on her every move. The short round man even liked to carry her in his stubby arms for much of her toddler years to prevent scrapes and bruises. Night-time stories were filled with fear mongering of the witch, and every injury or mishap would result in the same cursing towards the witch. However, Albert comforted her with long and tender

(and sweaty) hugs.

"Nice to have you home, dear," he said. "I need to go outside the walls to chop another support beam for the roof."

"Okay Al, just get home before sundown."

"Don't need to tell me twice."

Violetta embraced him warmly then moved to the kitchen to start supper.

As Violetta began supper, she once again forgot about the ominous storm brewing just outside the village walls. Her uncle's constant care had grown her into a dependent woman. She was oblivious to the dark clouds rolling in as a thick or the evergreen forest being suffocated by the ashy mist rolling inwards. The once prominent sun fell behind the horizon without leaving a trace of its presence. Creatures hid. Trees deflated. Villagers tucked their children away in their homes. At long last, the Witch had returned.

Immediately after Violetta realized the dark change that loomed, she heard a desperate cry for help. It sounded familiar but she couldn't place it. Brushing it off as a howl in the wind, she continued to set the table for supper. Violetta heard the voice again, yet it had become hoarse from the infectious ash. To her horror, she realized that the voice belonged to her uncle. Violetta flung herself toward the door, grabbing her scarf so she wouldn't suffocate in the smoke. The village gates flung open at V's first try, and a violent gust of wind nearly knocked her over. The surrounding forest was dark and dreary. The cold wind chilled Violetta to her core. She thought of waking her neighbors for assistance, but she heard it again: the shrill howl for help. She didn't have a moment to spare, and it would haunt her forever if she didn't help. Onwards she pushed, leaning forward against the wind as she searched for her poor uncle.

As she marched forward into the darkness she heard one last cry for help. She ran towards the sound and finally found her uncle.

"I'm here," Violetta said, "I got you." She wrapped her scarf around her uncle's face. His eyes were red and infected by the fog, and his lips were bloody. He didn't have long to live. Violetta hoisted him up putting his arm around her shoulders and walked him towards the village doors.

“How could you possibly do something so stupid?” her uncle raspily said. “You shoulda’ stayed inside. Don’t worry bout an old man like me.”

“You’re the only family I have. I can’t lose you.”

Just as they entered the the village Violetta felt her uncle slip under her arms and scream in surprise. She looked back; the witch was grinning and had her Uncle in her arms.

She got up to her knees and pleaded “Please spare him. He’s the only family I have,” said Violetta.

The witch’s shrill cackle echoed through the forest and sent a shiver down Violetta’s spine. She then looked deep into the eyes of Violetta’s uncle and turned him to stone. She laughed again and said with a shrill, high pitched voice, “Let-tt-t this-ss be a reminder of why you should never tt-t-take my prey away from me.” Her voice sounded like the jaring of a rattlesnake’s tail. It shook Violetta in terror.

Violetta screamed out in heartbreak. She got up and sprinted towards the witch in fury. The witch stood there smirking at her, and just when Violetta was only a step away the witch snapped her fingers and everything went black.

Violetta woke up the next day. Everything was a haze. She looked around trying to remember what had happened the night before. Horrified, her entire village had been destroyed to rubble. The town’s center hall was in ashes and the market street was consumed in the witch’s rampage the night before. Her home was rubble. Her eyes locked on her stone uncle. She rushed over to the gate and saw her uncle petrified with a terrified expression. His once rosy red cheeks were now stone grey. His wide expressive eyes, once bright blue eyes, were now permanently etched in horror. Violetta’s last relative had been killed. She fell to her knees.

“No!” she pleaded. “Please come back. Please.” Tears ran down her face as she faced the fact that her last living tie to her parents was dead. Her sadness turned to anger. Her jaws were clenched and her brows were lowered over her bright blue eyes. Violetta was determined to avenge her parents and uncle. Once again Violetta opened the village gate. They opened once again with ease, almost inviting her to venture into the forest. She marched into the woods. She made her way past old evergreens that

were scarred by the witch’s presence; their trunks were brittle and scratched. Bushes had withered away, the forest floor was hard and dehydrated. She stepped over ossified animals. Violetta knew the witch had been here. She followed the scorched path of death.

Soon after she found herself engulfed in dark, dense trees that she had never laid eyes on before. The sun was nearly completely blocked out. She felt an unmistakable cold darkness in the trees that she had felt the night before. The witch was close by. Her feet stepped over long winding vines and roots. The strange undergrowth seemed to cling to her feet. As she made her way through (the forest), every step became harder and harder. The vines began to move and slither like tree snakes. They clung to her ankles trying to restrict her movement. Violetta began to run. She jumped over the crawling roots and tried her best to dodge the vines. Suddenly she saw an opening in the forest. It was only ten paces ahead. She ran faster until at once she tripped. Desperately, she tried to get up from the ground but the vines had already wrapped themselves around her. Their thick, slimy green branches held her down tighter and tighter the more she moved. She realized that the forest only reacted with movement. She suddenly fell still; the branches followed. Violetta breathed softly, trying not to give any signs of life. After awhile, her convincing death act had satisfied the trees. The branches and vines retracted, confident in their kill. Once all of the vines had retracted, she popped to her feet and sprinted towards the opening. The trees had no time to react.

Violetta found herself in a vast opening in the forest. The ground was brown, cracked and littered with fallen trees and dead animals. As she looked around she realized it was a nearly perfect circle of death that encompassed one sole sign of life. The witches hut. It was made of mud brick and had a thatch roof. The immediate surrounding grounds were completely black and withered away. Slowly, she approached the witch’s confines. She stepped inside the ring of death surrounding the hut tentatively and she suddenly felt a cold chill that froze her very soul. Her anger had multiplied tenfold and she lost control of her emotions. Her eyes became bloodshot and she gritted her teeth.

Violetta broke through the door and found the witch leaning over a big iron pot. The creature

before her was clothed in pitch black robes. Its black eyes turned toward Violetta and it stood upright intimidatingly. The witch's skin was wrinkled and nearly opaque white.

With a lump in her throat, Violetta demanded, "Do you know who I am?!"

"Why yess-ss-ss," the witch hissed. Her tongue slipped out of her mouth violently to lick her lips as she looked Violetta up and down. "You're the pathetic creat-tt-ture whosss-ss-se uncle I k-kk-killed." She grinned and advanced towards Violetta, "Ahh ... I remember the otherss-s-s that I have k-kkilled." She cackled loudly almost drilling into Violetta's eardrums. "Your paren-tt-ts-ss-s." She laughed again.

Violetta was motionless. She couldn't move. She looked down at the bubbling red substance inside the pot. Its scent made its way near her nose and assaulted her nostrils, making her nauseous with its concoction of blood and death.

The witch stepped towards her again, slowly, and explained, "I s-sss-see you've met my ... "The vile creature paused to think of the correct wording. At once, her tongue lashed out again to licking her lips violently. "...friend-sss-s-ss," she said with a grin. "Don't-t worry child, their lives have not taken in vain. They are becoming a part of a great caus-ss-ss-se." Her tongue lingered on the last syllable. "They will fuel the evil that-tt-t lies within." The witch smiled and burst out with a wild laughter. All the while, she was staring at Violetta.

Violetta's shock had turned to anger. Although she couldn't find any words to retort, her body reacted animalistically. She broke free from her immobilizing shock, and she charged the witch. The witch stumbled backwards in surprise, but then composed herself and began to grin. Violetta wrapped her fingers around the witch's wrinkled throat.

Hoarse as Violetta's grip tightened, the witch began to roar with laughter. "Yess-s-ss my dear, let the anger take over."

Violetta's entire body tightened as her madness gained control. Her brow was lowered, hiding her bright blue eyes in darkness. Her rose gold hair took the shape of fire in the glowing red light of the substance in the pot. She stared deep into the darkness of the witch's eyes as she strangled the

squirming beast. She stood dumbfounded over the body of her lifelong enemy, dissatisfied. Her memory flooded with the stories of the ages before the Great War. She remembered the long nights that her uncle would describe the hardships he and his sister went through under the tyranny of the kings. She thought of the playful children of her village being forced to mine valued minerals for greedy kings; she thought of the death and tragedy that would come for the people of her town. Without the constant impending threat of the witch, the town's people would focus on their differences and split up into warring kingdoms.

Violetta's eyes then focused on the red liquid. She knew that it had the power to turn her into the evil witch. She could save the village from themselves by being their sole enemy. Her hands wrapped around the wooden spoon that rests on the edge of the iron cauldron. The wooden spoon plunged into the goopy scarlet broth. Her shaking hand brought it closer to her rosy red lips. Hesitant, she began to second guess her decision, but Violetta then thought of the suffering children her uncle described. She downed the spoon full while covering her nose and swallowed.

At first she didn't feel a change, but then she felt her blood begin to boil. Her heart began to rapidly beat and she felt the smoldering liquid flow through her body. Violetta's skin began to turn nearly white as it drooped and wrinkled. Horrified of her physical change, she rushed out of the hut in search of help, but the pain was immense. She felt herself becoming the witch. She fell to the ground as her rose-gold hair turned black. Her red lips and cheeks turned white. The bright blue eyes that once loved were now black and full of hatred. Violetta screamed out in utter terror and then fell silent and still. Violetta died; The witch was reborn.

* * *

The village folk moved on with their lives taking death tolls and rescuing people trapped under rubble after the attack from the night before. Violetta's disappearance had been written-off as another tragedy of the witch's wrath. They rebuilt their town only for it to be destroyed by the witch the next year. Salesmen pestered, customers demanded, and children played. The cycle continued with children taking on the roles of their parents. The Black Forest Village was united. United evermore.



Yosemite Remastered

Carlo Pedroncelli '21



A Walk Through Space

Kevin Zeller '18

Variations on a theme from “Disillusionment of Ten O’Clock” by Wallace Stevens

Randhir Singh '18

Every haunted house

Has a mad wife.

Not happy,

Not pleased by anything,

Or satisfied by her

New golden diamond rings,

With nice designs,

And kind precious words..

She does not want to dream

Of the glorious days of our marriage.

Only of the past, when a sailor,

With a handsome and great smile,

Caught a jaguar,

In her red heat.



When the Rain Stops

Jack Bratset '19

2ND PLACE, PHOTOGRAPHY
2ND ANNUAL MOORINGS
LITERARY & ARTS CONTEST

A Sprinkle in Time

Ryan Walsh '18

The funeral of Captain Robert Griffin cast a sorrowful feeling across the hillside. His entire fire station, Cal Fire Boggs Mountain, was in attendance, approximately thirty family members. In addition about fifty people in town were in attendance. Kevin Hart, one fellow firefighter from the fire station, spoke at the service.

He said, "This man would come to the station every day looking to serve others; he always put others before himself." Captain Griffin's grandson, Robert Griffin III, was in the front row at the funeral and had a very sad expression on his face. He looked as if he had truly lost a best friend. Sitting next to him was his wife, Kelly, and his two children, Sarah and Tom. At the beginning of the day, ten fire engines with their lights on from three nearby stations from Cal Fire conducted a funeral procession down highway 37. The engines followed the hearse containing the coffin of Captain Griffin. The funeral procession was very special for all the citizens of Boggs Mountain; people were standing on the side of the highway to pay their respects as the procession drove by. At the funeral, Robert Griffin III said, "He started a generation of firefighters in my family, including myself, as I will be joining Cal Fire in the upcoming weeks."

Frank Mont, a fellow firefighter said, "We welcome Robert Griffin III to our family at station #18, we also have a gift for you." He then handed Robert Griffin III his grandfather's picture and firefighting gear. Robert then broke down crying. The funeral procession traveled to Captain Griffin's final resting spot. Every person who attended the funeral dropped one long stem rose onto his casket. The cemetery workers then slowly lowered him into his final resting spot.

Robert Griffin III and his family headed home to their cabin on the top of Boggs Mountain. As they pulled into the driveway of the cabin, he broke down into tears with his family by his side. Reality finally started to sink in, and he realized his best friend was gone. He recalled how they created family memories living in the house that was built by his grandfather. They went inside and Kelly started to get dinner ready while Robert went to his bedroom to take a nap. His

children went into their rooms to play video games. One hour later, dinner was ready. They ate fried chicken, corn, and a caesar salad. It was a quiet dinner that night, there was not a single word said. It was Friday, so they had the whole weekend ahead of them.

Robert finally asked, "What do you want to do tomorrow?"

Sarah said, "I want to go skiing."

Kelly thought that was a great idea to get their family out of town for awhile.

Robert said, "That sounds like a great idea."

Robert washed the dishes and the children went back to playing video games. Robert tried going to bed early at 9:00 pm, but there was so much to think that he did not go to bed until 1:00 am. They all slept that night and woke up at 9:30 am the next day. Kelly made waffles for everyone.

Again, everyone was around the table eating quietly, but Kelly broke the silence by asking, "Does everyone have what they want to take ready?"

Sarah and Tom murmured quietly, "yes." Their children each had their own set of skis, and had been skiing since they were six years old.

The Griffin family took the long four hour drive in their Subaru and headed for Truckee, California. This was their first trip without their grandfather. Robert knew he had an old high school friend who lived up in Truckee. His feelings were uplifted knowing he is going to meet Tim Henry, a old high school friend. Robert had not seen Tim since they graduated high school 17 years ago. Robert called him on his cellphone and said, "Hey, Tim. My family and I are headed up your way, please give me a call." As they pulled into the ski resort, Robert coincidentally ran into Tim, is a firefighter for Cal Fire, too. Tim works for Cal Fire Station #34, and Tim had heard about his grandfather's passing. Tim wanted to meet them for dinner, so the Griffin family hit the slopes except for Robert, who stayed with Tim. Robert did not want to ski because he was starting his new job in two days, and did not want to get hurt. It was very healthy for the family to have some outside time, but Robert was surprised when got an email on his phone saying he had training starting Sunday. He did not want to let his family down, so he asked Tim if his family could

stay with him. Robert also felt he needed some time to himself before his first day. His family forgave him for leaving early while they enjoyed the fresh winter air.

Robert rushed back to his house, but while in the car, he received a phone call from Kevin at the station.

Kevin said, "Hey Robert, everyone at the station tomorrow morning is going golfing and because you are joining our family, we would like you to join us."

Robert said, "Thanks, I will be down there." Robert realized that Kelly not might like it that he left his family to go golfing, but he hoped she would understand.

The next day, Robert met up with his station buddies at the golf course. Kevin, Mike and Anthony were all there waiting for Robert in the parking lot.

Kevin said, "Hey Robert, we are over here." Robert found the group. Oddly, the first think Kevin was, "Have you gone through your grandfather's things yet?"

Robert said, "No, I have not really had a chance to yet. Why?"

Kevin said, "Oh nothing, there just might be some important items in there you should look for." Kevin, Mike, Anthony, and Robert all began golfing on the first tee.

Kevin asked, "Robert, are you ready for training tomorrow?" Robert was worried and did not respond as he was still thinking about what possibly his grandfather could have had that he did not know about.

He abruptly said, "Yes, at 7:00 AM I'll be there." They played nine holes of golf, then Robert decided to leave and call his wife, while the other three finished and played 18. He went home at around 2:00 pm, and he immediately called his wife, Kelly.

Robert first said, "How are you guys?, I will be coming to pick you up tomorrow right after my training at the station."

Kelly said, "Sounds great, the kids are having fun hitting the slopes."

Robert then said, "Do you happen to remember

where I placed my grandfather's belongings from the funeral?"

Kelly said, "I think you placed it in your closet, but other than that I have not seen it since. Why?"

Robert said, "Oh, the people at the station said I should take a look at it because there might be some 'important' items in there."

Kelly said, "Okay, see you tomorrow after noon honey."

Robert said, "See you soon." Robert headed straight for his bedroom closet. Inside the close he found his grandfather's firefighting jacket and helmet. Underneath both of those items was a black briefcase with a lock. The briefcase had Robert Griffin's name engraved into it. Robert had never seen this briefcase. He attempted to open it, but it was completely sealed shut. Robert gave up and decided to ask his coworkers if they knew the four number passcode to the black briefcase. Robert headed out to a pizza restaurant for dinner, and when he arrived, he ordered a small six slice pizza. Robert sat down by himself, and watched the rest of a NFL playoff between the Buffalo Bills and the New England Patriots on the restaurant TV. When his pizza was ready, he sat down and ate the entire pizza. Once the game on the TV was over and Robert finished his pizza, he headed home. It was about 9:00 pm and Robert wanted to get some good sleep for his big first day tomorrow.

The next day, Robert was awake by 6:00 am and started the pot of coffee for himself, all alone in the house. He took a shower then prepared a breakfast of microwavable waffles with some microwavable sausages. He quickly gobbled down his breakfast and slurped down the entire pot of coffee. He drank a lot of coffee so he would be energized for his first day at the station. Robert sped down the hill to the Cal Fire Boggs Mountain station in his Subaru, and was there by 6:45 am, ready for his first day.

Robert was starting fire training with four other men who were hired by the station. At 6:50 am, Robert walked into the station and Sgt. Wilkens was standing there, waiting for everyone. Everyone showed up on time, and Wilkins took them into a back room where turned on the projector and loaded up PowerPoint while telling the trainees a little about himself. He talked about how he was a father

of four and showed the new hires a couple pictures of his family. Robert was the only trainee who was actually paying attention. Robert had good listening skills from his prior job as a bank teller. The next presentation was about the Cal Fire Boggs Mountain fire house, and its history in Lake County. Wilken's first slide showed the station on a google map, then showed a map of the rooms inside the station. Sgt. Wilkens gave an introduction to the firehouse, and how employees are treated at the firehouse. He then brought the trainees into the main garage to meet the other firefighters, Kevin, Mike, and Anthony. There were also firefighters Robert had never met before. All of the firefighters congratulated everyone for making it to their station. Everyone was ecstatic, and mingled inside of the garage.

When Robert approached Kevin, the first thing he said was, "Do you know about the briefcase?"

Kevin confidently said, "Yes, did you find what was inside of it?"

Robert said, "No, I could not figure out the four digit code, do you happen to know it?"

Kevin said, "No, I remember seeing him opening it up. Man, you are never going to figure out the code. I think you are going to have to break the briefcase to get into it."

Robert said, "Do you think there is something that important for me to break the lock?"

Kevin said, "There is only one way to find out." The firefighters carried out a training exercise, that involved the trainees undergo a house fire simulation. Sgt. Wilkens lit a 200 square foot house on fire, and the trainees had to break open the door and extinguish the fire. All of the trainees successfully put out the fire; and everyone passed the exercise and were all welcomed into the fire station family. Robert was finished by 1:00 pm. Robert got into his car and immediately called his wife, Kelly, and left a message. He said, "Hey honey, I am done with my first day, I am leaving for Truckee right now to come and pick the kids and you up, see you soon."

Robert arrived at his friend, Tim's house around 5:00 pm, just before dinner. Robert's family and Tim were happy to see him and congratulated him on his first day as a true firefighter. The Griffin family headed home in their Subaru. When he arrived home the

first thing he did was open his grandfather's black briefcase. Robert used an axe he used for chopping wood for their fireplace to open up the briefcase. The moment Robert opened up the briefcase was very anticlimactic.

Robert said out loud to no one except himself, "It's just his old badge? Kevin had me thinking there was something of real importance inside here." Robert showed his family his grandfather's old firefighting badge. His children enjoyed it very much; his wife thought it looked like a piece of junk. The family got ready to go to bed and Robert was brushing his teeth to get ready for bed. He thought it would be cool to look at himself in the mirror with his grandfather's old firefighting badge. Robert pinned it to his shirt, but then suddenly he heard the sound of rain hitting the house.

His children, Sarah and Tom became scared and said "Daddy, what is happening?" Robert took off the badge and the rain stopped.

He ran to his children and said, "Everything is fine." Robert thought it was just a coincidence that a huge storm cell traveled above their house when he put on the badge. After the storm cell passed, everyone was tired and fell asleep. That night, Robert had a dream about his grandfather. The dream was about his grandfather working an average day until a fire broke loose, he was dreaming his grandfather was gearing up and headed for the fire truck. There was one odd thing about his uniform. His grandfather was not wearing a badge on his jacket. His grandfather was the fire chief and Robert thought wearing a badge was mandatory. Their fire truck went speeding down the highway, headed towards the smoke. Once they reached the fire, Robert's grandfather then did something that surprised Robert. Once Captain Griffin reached the fire, put on his firefighter badge and a huge storm came to help put out the fire, saving a family's house. In his dream, Robert realized that his grandfather did not own any normal badge. This badge was everything but normal; this badge had special powers; this badge had superpowers. This badge was able to make rain on command to put out a fire. The next day, Robert headed to the station with his grandfather's badge. The first person he saw was Kevin. Robert believed that Kevin knew all along that Robert's grandfather's badge had superpowers.

When Robert saw Kevin, he screamed,
“KEVIN!!!”

Kevin said, “What’s up buddy?”

Robert said, “I found my grandfather’s badge and discovered it had superpowers!”

Kevin said, “I told you man you should have looked through your grandfather’s things a lot earlier.”

Robert said, “Should we show this to Sgt. Wilkens?”

Kevin said “No, I already tried telling him and he doesn’t believe it, also if he catches you wearing an old badge that isn’t yours, you will be breaking the rules.”

Robert said, “Why would it be breaking the rules if this badge could be used for good?”

Kevin said, “Robert, we do not receive many fire calls during the winter so I would keep that badge safe and sound inside of your house. Then, when the wildfire season begins in the summer, bring it out and we could really use it for good.”

Robert said, “Sounds like a great idea, how many fires do we fight in the winter time?”

Kevin said, “We receive about one call a month if we are lucky, but even most of the time it is grandma’s recipe gone bad.”

Six months past quickly and it was the beginning of Summer. Life had returned to normal for the Griffin family and Robert was happy he had a stable job. One day in July, Robert reported to his firehouse shift at around 7:00 am.

Sgt. Wilkens came into the main office with the fire fighting staff who were there that morning, and said, “Boys, it is the beginning of wildfire season, I am telling you this so you guys will be ready to be called at a moment’s notice.” The way Wilkens said this triggered Robert’s feelings of his grandfather. In some ways this reminded Robert of his grandfather and his memories of him fighting wildfires. Robert then became happy as he figured out how his grandfather as fire chief was so successful in fighting fires using his magical badge. Two weeks later, a summer heat was in full swing. The temperature on an average day was 100

degrees. It was another normal day at the firehouse; Robert was playing solitaire on a computer. All of a sudden a loud siren went off; Robert was startled. Everyone began racing to their positions; Robert suited up in his firefighting gear and hopped onto fire engine #5. Kevin was driver of the fire engine at the time. Their fire station received the report of a grass fire on top of Diamond Hill. At the time of the fire, they were unaware of the size of the fire. They were also uncertain as to how the fire started. When they arrived to the fire, they knew the winds had picked up and the result was about a 200 acre blaze.

Robert was playing solitaire on a computer. All of a sudden a loud siren went off.

Robert looked towards Kevin and asked, “Should I go and get the badge?” Kevin looked and nodded. Robert sped to his house, driving the fire truck. The roads up to his house were very narrow and dangerous. Robert arrived at his house and rushed inside, and headed straight for the bedroom. He reached under his bed and there it was, the magical badge. Robert put it on immediately and the rain began to fall. Rain and mud began running down the hill and onto the roads. Robert jumped into the fire truck and drove as fast as possible. When he reached the fire, there were no firefighters in sight where he dropped them off, and the winds had picked up. The fire had spread to the entire hillside. Robert estimated the fire to be 1,000 acres now. He worried about his fellow firefighters. He got on the radio, trying to find where they had gone.

Robert said, “Engine #8, Where are you?”

Someone Robert did not recognize on the radio said, “Robert get back! It’s coming behind you, get out of there!” The fire was surrounding and spreading quickly. He drove as fast as possible out of there but the rain, triggered by his badge, was not doing much to control the fire. Kevin called Robert to head towards the town with the rain, to save the town from the fire. Robert made it just in time, the flames were about 10 feet from the first houses. Robert brought the storm and drenched the entire town with rain, preventing the fire from reaching the town.



Galapagos Nazca Booby

Soren Peterson '20



Cody

Kevin Zeller '18

What the Future Holds

Casey Gilles '18

Still; trapped in the grandest abyss
Seduction of comfort's sweetest kiss
Opposed by desire for the unknown
The idea of change all alone

Attrition is its effect,
A mental pathogen to my mind,
That I have never left subject
To the creator of my kind.

I cringe as I attempt in vain,
I wonder how to take the leap,
To find the hidden treasure of the game
While keeping sanity and adequate sleep.

I have toiled, but have never succeeded,
When facing the task only God can fulfill;
My curiosity's demise has proceeded
For venturing to peek at my uncertain will.

Anguish of the unknown causes trepidation
Re-entering humanity in each graduation,
A vermin and danger, it causes seniors distress
Do not intercede if you want to progress.

How ignorant, how ignorant, do I feel
This confusion is my Achilles heel
These four years have been incredible
Do I want one more, have I been indelible?

The next chapter is only a few months away
I pray I won't feel tomorrow what I feel today



Royal Splendor

Jaden Fong '18

The King's Ball

Brandon Hurd '18

"Dinner time boys!" the mother said as she peeked her head through the door.

"Just a few more minutes?" James asked.

"Go get yourself cleaned up," the father commanded. "We have been down here all day. We'll pick up again tomorrow."

The two were filthy and coated in grease. Working on clocks in the basement had become a ritual for the father and his son, and was the best part of James' day. He loved being active with his hands. As the afternoon sun began to set over the horizon, its rays sent an orange haze across the desert. When the winds began to pick up, the dust and sand blocked the sun's rays all together.

James eventually came into the dining room, where his mother and father were seated on opposite sides of the table. He sat down to the right of his father and proceeded to put his napkin in his lap.

"Honey, would you care to say grace?" James' mother asked.

"Sure, dear," replied his father, as he proceeded to tell the Lord's prayer.

The family had meatloaf that night, which was typical for dinner on a Wednesday. James' mother was not any sort of top chef, but managed to perfect the few recipes that she knew.

"And we mustn't forget that it is James' eighteenth birthday," his mother mentioned.

James was smiling ear to ear. He thought that his parents had forgotten his special day, but chose not to mention it.

"That reminds me," his father said as he got up from his chair. "I have something for you."

In the weeks approaching his birthday, James had not mentioned anything he wanted to his parents. He was content with the things that he had, and knew that his family was not able to afford much. After the large stock market crash a few years ago, a majority of the industrial plants were experiencing

huge drawbacks of production. As a result, his father was out of a job, and his mother was struggling to pay the bills by buying and selling homemade clothes to those who are also struggling and unemployed.

After a short time, his father entered the dining room again, this time holding a small box. The box was about the size of an orange, and was wrapped in a gold, smooth ribbon. It had a small card attached to it, which read:

HAPPY 18TH BIRTHDAY

LOVE, MOM AND DAD

The words were written in black ink and took up most of the space. James examined the box, running his fingers over the lid and the ribbon.

"Well, open it!" his mother said with excitement.

All eyes were on James as he began to open the gift. He closed his eyes and gently pulled one end of the ribbon through. The silk band unraveled and fell into his lap. He slowly lifted the top off the box and opened his eyes. He couldn't believe what he saw. James reached his fingers in and steadily pulled out a shiny, bright gold chain. At the end of the chain was a beautiful pocket watch. As James held the pocket watch up for everyone to see, the gold coating gleamed in the light. There were light beams shining off the cover of the watch. James clicked the cover open and observed an elaborate design. On the back side, his initials were carved into the metal.

James didn't say a word. The sight of such a beautiful piece shocked him in the moment. He was at a loss for words after examining the beauty of the mechanical masterpiece.

"At least say something to us," his father teased.

"It's incredible!" James replied.

"Your father has been working on that one for months," his mother mentioned. "It has been a struggle to get him into bed at a decent time every night."

"I love it!" James exclaimed. "I will cherish it forever."

The three of them finished up dinner and went

off to get ready for bed. James went in his room and turned on his desk lamp. Once again, he pulled out the pocket watch. When it was quiet, James could hear the “tick-tock” coming from the gears. He watched the hands of the clock go around and around for hours, fascinated with the precision and mastery in which the watch was crafted.

The next day, James woke up feeling a bit strange. His house was rather quiet for a Saturday morning, as his mother usually was running her sewing machine bright and early to make more clothes. As he went to check the time, he decided to begin using his new pocket watch. As he reached into the drawer on his nightstand to grab it, all he felt was the wood at the bottom of the drawer. He moved his hand around, but the drawer was empty. James’ heart skipped a few beats as he thought he may have misplaced the small clock.

He threw his covers to the side, and got out of bed to search his room. He looked in both drawers, under his bed, through his sheets, and around his desk, but the golden pocket watch was nowhere to be found. He began to panic. He dashed out of his room and called for either of his parents. There was no reply. The house was empty.

“Where are they?” he asked himself.

James rushed into the kitchen and saw that there was no sign of breakfast being made that morning, nor was there any sign of his mother’s sewing. James checked the living room next and his eye was immediately directed to the coffee table. The pocket watch was neatly laid out on a black, silk pad. As James approached the table, he noticed a small, yellow piece of paper placed beside the gold clock.

MAKE A WISH

James was puzzled. He was not sure if his parents were playing a trick on him or not.

“Very funny, guys!” he said aloud. “You can come out now! It’s not my birthday anymore.”

But there was no reply. He sat there in silence staring at the note and the pocket watch. He wasn’t sure what to do. His parents had never left without telling him where they were headed.

James proceeded to pick up the pocket watch.

His palms were clammy, given the unprecedented situation that he was experiencing.

“Make a wish?” he thought to himself. “What should I wish for?”

He thought for a few moments and came to a conclusion. James wanted to make sure that in case someone was listening, his wish would not sound silly or make him sound soft. After recalling his current economic state and wants, he clutched the pocket watch in his left hand and closed his eyes shut.

“I wish...” he mumbled. “I wish to live a wealthy, extravagant life.”

All of a sudden, wind started to pick up around James, whipping around him like he was standing in the eye of a tornado. He felt as if he was being lifted off the ground, but was not able to see more than a few inches in front of his nose. It was too dark to see anything, and the temperature dropped suddenly.

Within seconds, James found himself blinded by light. He attempted to shield the light with his hand as he staggered backwards, nearly tripping on a step in the marble floor. He then felt a gentle hand grab his forearm and hold his back.

“Woah! Are you alright?” asked a soft voice from behind James.

Blinking his eyes rapidly to gain sight, James replied, “Where am I?”

“Why, you’re here for the King’s Ball, aren’t you?” the girl questioned.

“Oh, but of course!” James said as he began to regain his balance.

He was greeted by the smooth smell of spice with a hint of lavender. As soon as James turned around to face the girl, he was astonished to see such a fine young woman. She stood just about the same height as James, but the heels she was wearing gave her a few inches. Her platinum blonde hair shined under the chandelier, and her pale eyes were as blue as the sky on a clear, summer day. James was drawn in by her velvet dress, the color of a fine, red wine, which complemented her light skin and hourglass figure. He couldn’t help but to stare.

She stared at James for a second and smiled,

waiting to see if he would say something.

“I love that dress,” James said nervously, still unsure of his experience.

“Thanks, I’m glad to hear at least someone likes it.” the girl remarked. “I don’t think we have met before. What’s your name?”

“James.” he said.

“Well, James,” she inquired. “Care to dance?”

“Of course!” James said with a smirk. “I didn’t catch your name.”

“Elizabeth.” she said. “But you can call me Liz.”

James followed Liz to the ballroom. As they left the foyer and walked through the main hallway, he noticed that most of the guests were adults. But something else had dawned on James in the midst of all the chaos. His wish had come true! It was all a bit too much for him to take in all at once, but he decided to go along with it.

The pillars and tiles that lined the halls were a lightly colored marble with Roman styling at the tops. There seemed to be a diamond chandelier every few feet, and there was a red carpet leading to the main ballroom. As James continued to follow Liz, he realized that he had completely changed clothes as well. He had on an Italian-made tuxedo and shoes so clean that he could see his reflection in his toes. It was all too much to believe. James reached into his pockets, and found his pocket watch in the left breast pocket and another small note in his front pocket.

WHEN THE CLOCK STRIKES MIDNIGHT, OPEN THE POCKET WATCH.

James stared at the note, almost running into Liz when she stopped at the door. He wasn’t sure where the note came from, but he didn’t want to take any chances and lose it.

As soon as he looked up and put the note away, Liz and James walked arm in arm into the ballroom. James observed what seemed to be a hundred people dancing, laughing, talking, and watching. There were

all sorts of couples swing dancing on the dance floor, or sipping champagne with their friends. There were waiters walking all around carrying finger foods and champagne glasses.

“What are you waiting for?” asked Liz. “Let’s dance!”

James and Elizabeth hustled onto the dance floor. They went through various dances, including the swing, tango, and waltz. The young couple were having the time of their lives. As the music went on, James’ connection with Elizabeth strengthened.

“What a night!” James said aloud. “I wish that it would never end.”

“Where did you learn to dance like THAT?” Liz laughed. “I’ve never met someone so light on their feet.”

“It must be beginner’s luck!” James said reassuringly.

The couple sat down at an empty table and waited for a waiter to attend to them.

“How are we doing tonight?” the waiter asked.

The waiter towered over the table, so much that his shadow stretched across a couple of tables behind him.

“We’re great!” said Liz as she smiled and looked at James. She grabbed his hand and asked, “What’s on the menu tonight?”

“The specialties tonight are a cold water lobster tail, lightly seasoned with cajun spices, sea salt and butter, and bone-in ribeye broiled to perfection and hand-cut tableside.” said the waiter.

“The ribeye sounds good to me,” said James. “I always love a good steak!”

“How could you pass up an opportunity for lobster?” Liz said jokingly.

“Alright. I’ll have that right out for you,” the waiter concluded.

The waiter left and another server approached their table.

“Champagne?” she offered.

*Within seconds,
James found himself
blinded by light. He
attempted to shield the
light with his hand as he
staggered backwards,
nearly tripping on a step
in the marble floor.*

Before James could answer, Liz said yes. As they waited for their food, James and Liz talked and laughed over numerous glasses of champagne and other wines. However, James did his best to avoid questions about where he was from, or how he got to the ball, for he knew that even he himself didn't believe the story. It all still seemed too real to James, but he was having too much fun to question it.

When their food finally came, James and Liz devoured their meals. *Time travel really makes you hungry*, James thought to himself. *Or whatever happened to me...*

As the two began to fatigue, they made their way up to the balcony, overlooking the city. It was late. James could only hear the faint beat of the music playing in the ballroom. James took Liz by her hand and walked over to the railing. The bright lights in the night sky was a sight that James thought to be one of the most spectacular he had ever seen.

"I have never seen something so beautiful in my life," James said.

"Neither have I. It's amazing," replied Liz

"I was talking about you," James said as he turned to face Liz.

Her eyes were glistening in the moonlight. They looked at each other with such passion that their temperatures began to rise. James' heart began to race as he slowly reached forward to grab Liz' waist. As he put his hand on her lower back, James took a deep breath. Liz gazed deep into his eyes as he pulled her in closer. She put her hands on his shoulders as he gently caressed her cheek with his other hand.

When James slowly began to tilt his head and lean forward, a bell tower began to ring.

ring, ring, ring, ring, ring, ring, ring, ring...

He paused for a moment and looked as if he had just witnessed a ghost. James began to pull out the golden pocket watch that his father gave him, along with the note that he had found in his front pocket. He stared at the objects in his hands and paused for a moment.

"This can't be the end," James muttered to himself.

"Is something wrong?" Liz questioned with a worried tone.

James acknowledged the note that said he must open his pocket watch when the bell strikes midnight.

"Nothing's wrong," James said reassuringly. "I'm truly sorry, but I must go."

Tears began to drip down James' face. In the short time, he had fallen in love with the extravagant lifestyle and the experience with Elizabeth. He wasn't ready to leave just yet.

In fact, James was having so much fun with Liz that he thought this moment would never come. He knew it would, but he had been keeping the idea in the back of his mind.

"I wish I had more time," James mumbled to himself.

"More time for what?" Elizabeth desperately asked as the distant bell rang for the twelfth time.

"I will never forget you, Elizabeth." James said as he opened the pocket watch.

"James! She pleaded. "Don't leave me! Take me with you!"

But it was too late. The air around James began to whirl, and the view of Elizabeth began to fade. The sound of Elizabeth's pleas slowly faded into silence as the view of her stunning eyes under the starlight disappeared. But as everything around him began to darken, he closed his eyes. All he could picture in his mind was Elizabeth, standing in her red velvet dress, with her blonde hair, and her sparkling blue eyes.

Elizabeth was left on the balcony with tears falling from her cheeks. She sat in silence on the cobblestone floor with her face in her palms, and her dress spread out around her. When she opened her eyes, she couldn't help but notice a shiny gold object lying on the ground. She slowly stood up and staggered towards it. Lying there was the golden pocket watch and a small note. Liz picked up the watch and read the note.

REMEMBER ME

-JAMES



Dragonfly

Matthew West '18



A Relationship Built on Anger

Edward Cabalona '18

The Great Escape

Joel Preciado '18

This wasn't the first time I had been trapped inside a Denny's, but it was the first time I had to escape in order to save a life.

Awful flashbacks of subpar food, poor service, and a wait so long you could watch the whole Godfather trilogy, immediately became pleasantries the moment I got caught in this sticky situation. The unkempt tables were glistening with stains that seemed to literally reflect the sun right into your eyes. It was as if the table was taunting me, knowing damn well I wanted to put my elbows down to rest. This was the first implication that I had to save a life: my own.

I didn't choose to be here; I had fallen asleep in the car, and my friends carried me to our booth before I could object. I had wanted to eat at IHOP down the street instead, and I remember adamantly stating so. With great misfortune, I was vetoed from my only desire.

After I regained consciousness, I began to squeeze my already shut eyelids tighter than I thought possible. But the lighting on the ceiling perforated my eyes and cast an orange shadow of the underside of the sitting booth in my pupils. I arose in disgust as my shoulder grazed a mass of chewed gum stuck right under the table. My eyes tried to adjust from the contrasted lighting throughout the restaurant--if you can call it that. My friends surrounded me and sat in silence as they looked at the menu. Apparently, my well-being was not even a topic of concern. Flashes of the fluorescent lighting on the stained popcorn ceiling followed every glance I took. Essentially, I was blind. Globes of dark and orange tint covered my vision and the whole place was a blur. However, from what I could perceive from my other senses, I was definitely in a Denny's. The smell of the food was only rivaled by prison meals, and even then I'd prefer the latter. I immediately heightened my senses, as if I was Spider-man. My only aspiration at that exact moment in my life was to get the hell out of there. I don't regret the children I pushed down to get through; the lack of automatic doors added a few unnecessary seconds

to the time elapsed. The breath of fresh air outside cleared my nausea and I suddenly didn't want to throw up anymore. I was finally free of the nightmare that is American chain diners--or so I thought.

To my dismay, I looked up at the shoddy construction sign above my head and read, "IHOP!"

I don't regret the children I pushed down to get through; the lack of automatic doors added a few unnecessary seconds to the time elapsed.



Hidden Path

Caelin Sutch '20

A Fork in the Road

Preston Alaniz '18

2ND PLACE, POETRY
2ND ANNUAL MOORINGS LITERARY & ARTS CONTEST

Miles spent traveling along one road
At times wry, winding, and warped
Other times smooth and undisturbed
Sometimes unpleasant, unsightly, and cracked
Now after years and miles spent, the road splits.

The road splinters into three,

The first is littered with familiar faces and people,
a homeless man holding a sign off the freeway exit.
Signs and billboards you've seen dozens of times before,
potholes you've instinctively learned to avoid,
fast food chains grouped together in the same three places.
The same wheat fields that extend for miles, fields that the sun shines onto,
giving off a golden glow every dawn in the Summer.

The second leads miles away to vastly different surroundings,
landscapes that encompass pine trees, deep blue lakes, rivers,
meadows of tall grass unfamiliar.
On both sides there are people that you don't know and don't know you.
New stores, restaurants scattered amongst the clusters of buildings.
You drive over potholes and dips that you've never seen before.

The third road leads to a mist that is shrouded with fog.
You can make out the gray shrouded silhouettes of people buildings and nature,
but nothing specific, only a vague outline.



Sticking to the Road

Joseph Ryan '20

Footprints in the Dust

Chase Onodera '18

Adam knew the psychiatric hospital was old, but he thought it just gave the place a certain charm, with its vines that crawled their way up the cracked brick and stone and ancient-looking statues in the front yard that were discolored and stained by age.

He had never really told anyone about his “issue”. He first noticed it when he turned twenty--he saw his long dead grandmother strolling the halls of his house--and it had been manifesting itself with increasing frequency since then. If he heard “Hey, who are you talking to?” one more time, he was going to lose it completely--if he hadn't already.

There were a few people milling about in the courtyard of the hospital, but they didn't acknowledge Adam.

The front desk lady was staring absentmindedly at the opposite wall, before noticing Adam. “Can I help you?”

“I--“ Adam paused. He felt stupid. “I'd like to check myself in.”

The woman raised an eyebrow. “We don't get that often. Name?”

“Adam Smith.”

“Alright, there's some paperwork I need you to fill out.”

Adam followed the woman into a side room. It looked like something directly out of the 60s, but considering that was when the hospital was built, Adam didn't think much of it. A lot of the packet were questions; questions about him and his life. It wasn't until the third page that he noticed the year stamped at the top of the pages: 1987

When he finished, he returned to the front desk. “You might want to think about getting new stationary.”

The front desk woman nodded absently. “Oh, yeah?”

“It says the year is still 1987.”

“What a surprise,” she quipped. “Well, you're in luck. We've got a few open rooms.”

As they ascended to the higher floors, Adam was surprised at how dirty the whole place was. The walls were stained black with dirty handprints and the floor was covered in dust. Piles of used cups and plastic bags had been swept into the corners.

Tossing his backpack on the bed, Adam turned to the large single window in his room. It was, thankfully, one of the unbroken ones. The view overlooked the courtyard and Adam breathed a sigh of relief. Sure, the place was a little dirty, but it wasn't like he could complain. There weren't many psychiatric hospitals around here and Adam didn't have the means to move. Besides, his room was clean enough.

Adam finished unpacking and waited around in his room for the nurse to show up. And, as the sun began to set, Adam grew restless. Did they forget I was here? He peeked out into the hallway and saw nothing but the barren dusty tile.

Unable to sit still anymore, Adam opened the door and wandered out into the hallway. “Hello?”

The walls were stained black with dirty handprints and the floor was covered in dust. Piles of used cups and plastic bags had been swept into the corners.

Silence.

The place had been quiet when he'd first walked through. But now there was nothing--not even the sound of the patrolling nurses' footsteps or the opening and closing doors. Adam felt his blood run cold. He moved to the end of the hall, and tried to see into the other rooms. But the glass windows had clouded over. He knocked on a few doors, but got no response. *I'll go check with the front desk.*

But when Adam reached the top of the stairs, he looked down and froze. There was only one set of footprints in the dust.





La Casa Del Cielo

Nico Pedroncelli '18



Liger

Aidan Pinkston '19

Da Nang

Benjamin Voelz '18

The moonlit sky directed its light upon the grave of my friend, where it read, "Here lies Billy Jones. Friend, husband...fighter." Despite the rain, I sat still, soaking in the muddy puddles. Footprints riddled the scraggly cemetery lawn, but none, besides mine, seemed to have lead to Billy's resting place. His family didn't live in D.C. anymore; the last time they visited the Veterans Memorial was ten years ago. I, on the other hand, visited every week.

"Grandpa, we're gonna miss the movies!" Linus said. After struggling to stand up from my knee, we went on our way.

My name is Reggie Gray. I am closing in on 80 years old. I have been diagnosed with terminal lung cancer and, apparently, will die within the next few weeks, but I have a story to share. The government made me sign the State Secrets Act, but I can't keep silent any longer. I haven't had a particularly long or happy life. I am ready to die. I just have to get this off my chest.

* * *

My bed was hard, not like the one I used to own. Constantly, nurses and doctors sprinted along the hallway, sometimes rolling patients along with them. Occasionally, you'd hear a laugh, but, for the most part, it's depressing. Fortunately, my grandson had just walked through the door. "Linus," I said softly.

"What's wrong?"

"Come close. You need to here this. Before I...go."

"Don't talk like that!"

"I've been keeping this secret for such a long time, and I'm finally ready to move on..."

* * *

On a mild spring day of '65, I chose to enlist in the United States Marine Corps. Americans, still hopeful of the war, signed up in droves. Nearly all my friends from high school had enlisted, yet this had not been why I joined the fight. My grandfather had been a soldier, and I felt obligated by my family to join the cause. I had college offers from a few schools in the

mid-west, certainly no Harvard or Yale, though. I wanted freedom and respect, but most of all, I wanted to experience something new. So I joined as a rank and filed private.

I found myself stepping off a classic C-130 into

*I still hadn't been
in combat yet felt
completely in over my
head. Daily cargo planes
replaced the new recruits
with a same number
of ungodly green body
bags.*

Da Nang, where the forest was dense and riddled with Viet Cong supporters. My unit, the Lima Company 7th Marines, were known throughout the area as the brutest, proudest Americans in the fight. In return, however, they took

many casualties. We hopped off the transport and were instantly met with intense heat. It felt like a microwave, and my underwear immediately stuck to my ass.

That first month, I thought I'd already seen the worst. I still hadn't been in combat yet felt completely in over my head. Daily cargo planes replaced the new recruits with a same number of ungodly green body bags. Sleep really never got any easier during my time at the base. Our rooms were riddled with mosquitos. Those little bastards (which was also our nickname for the locals) were everywhere, but the worst of all was the hourly barrage of artillery firing at who knows what. One night, I had been assigned sentry duty, which was supposed to be a good way to keep occupied, but, ultimately, I ended up just wishing for sleep.

Around 0100 hours, the door creaked open, followed by a tall figure. I noticed immediately that it was Captain Henry. There were rumors around the base that he had been a postman before the war. That goes to show you that anybody could become anything they wanted over in Vietnam. But no matter what he used to be, that man was a true leader. He had a personality that you'd gladly follow into a bad situation.

"How ya doin', soldier?" Captain Henry asked as he leaned comfortably against the fence to my left. His eyes stared off into the dark jungle.

"Doing great, sir!" I said a bit timidly.

“Cut the crap, Gray.” Captain Henry slowly unbuttoned his uniform to pull out a fresh cigar. With a soft smile he said, “I’m a man just like the rest of ya’ll...So where ya from?”

“Chicago, sir.”

“Aye, I seen it it before on a postcard. I’ve always wanted to see the lakes, but I can’t stand life in the big city. How’s it anyways?”

“I’ve known it my whole life. I got nothing else to compare it to really, besides here. The people are a whole lot meaner back home.”

Captain Henry chuckled and said, “There ain’t nothin’ nice about seein’ Martinez’s bare ass hanging out of his sheets at night!” After sharing a laugh, I had become far less anxious than when he first walked outside.

“What’s combat like, Cap’n?”

To my surprise, he had responded honestly, “When the time comes, Marine, you’ll have to see for yourself. There is plenty to be afraid of, and nobody’s blown up ego will tell ya otherwise. But when your buds are droppin’ left and right, you’ll be feelin’ some sort of way.” After slugging my shoulder, he continued, “We all got your back.” This was why I admired Captain Henry. He wasn’t the smartest, strongest, or even the best riflemen. Yet, he had a way with words..

The Captain blew long puffs of smoke into the hot, humid air. In this part of the world, everything seemed to slow down. Once the mortars stopped firing, there was a type of silence that hung in the air.

“I’ve got a reconnaissance mission tomorrow, so I should probably go and map out some paths. Keep your chin up Marine; you make us proud.”

“Aye, Cap’n!”

* * *

Word circulated about the Captain’s recon mission a few days later. I was in the mess hall meeting with Billy Jones, who, at the time, was a Lance Corporal. Like me, he grew up in Chicago, however, I hadn’t met him until the plane ride into Vietnam.

“Ay, Reg, you hear ‘bout the Cap’n?”

“I heard that he went on a recon mission. But I guess that’s not what you’re talking about?”

“He done and dee-dee’d to the bush man!”

“Serious?”

“Them mofos is M.I.A!”

“You gonna tell me what happened?”

“I don’t know nothin’. Only that they left a few days ago and nobody’s been able to track their asses.”

I asked around the base, but I couldn’t get a straight story. Either he’s back to life in the U.S....or a dead man.

That night, bored as hell, most sat in their bunks. Our minds were noticeably vacant, and the intense heat just gave us even more of a reason to stare into space. Some managed to find the energy to clean their guns or chew gum. I, on the other hand, chose to mimic the crowd and lie down in my grimey bunk. Once I finally settled in, our unit’s sergeant kicked the door open and disturbed the quietness of the barracks. Despite his incoherent accent, we assumed that he had given us an order. “Git yur bum asses atta da boonks raht nah!” Never had I heard him yell with such intensity, not even during field training. He pointed at rifles and tossed fatigues on the ground. “We gat er furst missin! There was no mistaking what he’d just said. All around me, soldiers’ eyes widened and faces paled.

Urgently, we boarded the helicopters. The wind from the blades kicked dirt into the cabin, caking everyone’s uniforms with gunk. As we lifted off, the commanding Lieutenant briefed us on the mission. Screaming over the sound of the ‘copter, he said, “Most of ya’ll know about Captain Henry. Although it ain’t too reliable, we have seen multiple U.S. flares shot into the sky tonight. We’re assuming it’s the lost reconnaissance team, and we have an idea of where they could be. So let’s go get these sons of bitches!”

“HOORAH!” screamed the platoon. The helicopter moved swiftly, and loudly, through the night sky. Jungle trees shivered as we flew by, and it no longer felt as hot or humid as before. This time, there was a vengeance in the air.

Quickly, the helicopter landed along the edge of the treeline to drop us off as it then flew back into the

horizon. The stillness of the forest was concerning, and the only sound was of the Lieutenant's hand swiping through the sky, commanding us to divide into groups of two, line up, and follow his lead into the sinister jungle. This was no ordinary place. The sounds of howls and screeches from the nocturnal animals of Vietnam left us men shaking in our boots. Only a few slips of moonlight penetrated the dense canopy which resided above our heads. Even though the darker time of night was approaching, the heat still caused some serious uncomfot. It had become increasingly more difficult to focus, and eventually, my mind drifted elsewhere. Why had I enlisted? What if I just listened to my mother...

The silence was disturbing, and some of the looks on these other Marine's faces, I'll tell ya, dreadful. My bang stick was set to rock-and-roll, and soldiers began to clip on their bayonets.

"Who the hell are you?" a Marine screamed from the front of the line, breaking the distressing lull. I stepped out of formation to look ahead, and, from a bush, a boy, no older than sixteen, was pulled out. He was wearing a white t-shirt and green cargo shorts with nothing but his bare feet. Judging by his typical rice hat, I assumed he lived in the nearby village.

"Xin vui lòng! Đừng làm tôi đau!" said the boy.
"Xin vui lòng! Đừng làm tôi đau!"

The marine who was attached to his arm slapped him in the face with the butt of his rifle. "Shut the hell up!"

"Leave him be! He's just a kid," said the Lieutenant.

"Rac roi nam o phía trước!" said the boy with a harrowing look in his eyes.

"Keep him close. We don't want him giving away our position," said the Corporal. After settling down, we got back into formation.

"Damn. He might as well piss his pants and get it over with. Look at 'em," a nearby soldier said with a smirk.

"I don't think we the ones he's scared of," said J.T with the same dreadful look in his eyes as the boy.

"How the hell is he not afraid of us?" said another Marine a few rows behind me.

"I'm sayin' there's somethin' else 'ere. You know what I mean," J.T. responded as he peered deeper into the darkness of the jungle.

"Quit being s**tbirds. You cherries ain't seen nothin' yet," said the Lieutenant from the front of the line.

A flash and bang had all us Marines ducking for cover. I jumped straight into the brush and put my head down to the dirt. Some others scrambled around and prepped their 16's. I thought we were under attack, but all I could see were some undisciplined Marines twisting around in circles.

"CEASE FIRE! CEASE FIRE!" yelled the Corporal. All that remain after the dust cleared out was the young Vietnamese boy, who laid in a growing puddle of his own dark blood.

Before the Lieutenant had time to address the situation, the marine who'd fired said, "He was about to effing' waste your ass!"

"That was a boy! I'll have you beat your face for the next month for that. I swear to god! You're lucky I don't send your ass out in the boonies and leave you in this hellhole to rot!" the Lieutenant retaliated.

"That was a grown ass man! You would've been chum!"

The Lieutenant had a look of pure disgust in his eyes when J.T. piped in and said softly, "He wasn't tryna kill any of us..."

"Speak up, trooper!"

"He wasn't tryna kill any of us... he was tryna kill himself..."

After sliding the boys body into a bush, there was a break in the canopy directly ahead. Since it was far too dark for any of us to see from here, the lieutenant ordered a couple Marines to search the opening.

"L T. You gotta see this," the Marine said from a distance. We all advanced forward, met by a single, bloody arm, torn off at the elbow. I could see the claw marks as well as what looked like the tip of the ulna bone.

"Still fresh," the Corporal said as he examined the surrounding area for the rest of the body. He found ...

nothing.

“Check your sixes and stay frosty! Every swinging Richard better have their rifles ready to go for them zipperheads!” the Lieutenant announced. Anxiously, we all tiptoed around the leaves and branches, making sure to stay silent. Despite keeping a keen eye, we managed to lose one of our men.

“Hey, we’re missin’ Pippin!” I said. I heard an atrocious scream nearby. My stomach sank, and soon the noise became two, then three, four...five! The screams grew in intensity and numbers until it sounded as if they were beneath me.

“What the f**k is this?” yelled one Marine. I cramped up, and the other guys near me began to vomit. These strange noises seemed to penetrate my mind. I couldn’t move. From the dark opening in the brush came two men in our same fatigues. Only, they looked like lifeless zombies.

“It’s Lance and Jensen from the missin’ recon team!” said the Corporal. They were communicating in grunts, and both their arms had been chopped off. But most disturbing was the look of their eyes, blood red with no pupils. something was behind them, following just as slowly as they moved. One by one, dark-colored demons left the shadows and entered our view.

“GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!” screamed the Lieutenant. The entire platoon dashed. Some tripped over themselves, and others started firing aimlessly into the unknown. The ground began to shake and eventually erupted, splitting the earth into two sides. From the crevasse arose thousands of demons, and after that, I never looked back. The Lieutenant called an emergency rescue, and then had ordered, “Stay together and hold your ground!” Most of the Marines, including myself, continued to run in the other direction. I wanted no part of this combat, and neither did my comrades. My heart was racing, and the hairs on my neck were on edge. When I turned around, I realized that I had been swallowed by darkness. I could hear screams and voices of the other Marines, but I didn’t know where they were. After a few minutes of running through the jungle, I saw my friend, Billy Jones, running through the trees nearby.

“Billy! Billy! It’s me!”

“Where are yo--” instantly, his body was ripped to shreds by a demon. I was paralyzed with fear until it looked me in my eyes with Billy’s intestines in its mouth. I dashed as quickly as I could until I eventually reached the moonlit treeline. About 50 meters away, our chopper was about to take off. I waved my hands in the air, and fortunately, my comrades signaled for the driver to wait up. The gunners opened fire towards the jungle as I dove into the troop compartment just in time for the lift off.

The Lieutenant broke down in tears, and we couldn’t help but join in, especially at the sight of the jungle from afar. Our heads hung low, some in their hands, and nobody said a word.

* * *

“After that, Linus,” I said, “they kept me isolated for weeks. I did not see or speak to anybody from my platoon ever again and was interrogated daily by our government. When they sent me back home, I was honorably discharged from the Marine Corps. They told me that the incident had been a Viet Cong ambush, and if I ever said otherwise, I’d be as good as dead. But I know what I saw...”

“Why don’t I come back later,” Linus paused, “You look like you could use some rest.”



Sparrow

Preston Alaniz '18



Bud

Trey Jacobi '21

Distant Voices, Lost Intentions

Risheek Pingili '18

2ND PLACE, NON-FICTION
2ND ANNUAL MOORINGS
LITERARY & ARTS CONTEST

Twenty minutes whiled away mindlessly in a car. A backpack slung halfway across the shoulder. Hours spent hearing, not even listening. It's almost scary. Hearing horror stories about everyday life. Distant voices claiming ten deaths in a bombing or a hundred in a hurricane. So many scourges plague the world, so much destruction, so many lives lost. But so many more people live on, either ignorant or callous to them. Myself included. Perhaps that's the scariest part.

I suppose it begs the question, "If someone else is hurting, do I have the right to remain happy, or must I hurt with them?" It's a silly question, but one that many face everyday. I find it hard to think like the former. I ought to do everything in my power to help another who hurts, my naive heart cries. Every life lost, or every person scarred, I find myself losing a piece of my humanity. Every second I don't spend trying to ease the suffering of the fearful, grieving, or dying, I know that my soul withers away, crumbling to ash as I grow more callous.

Yes, time has mended a few problems. A statistician or historian would say that the average lifespan has improved by thirty years in the last two centuries. But should I really be content when ten instead of forty out of a hundred don't live long enough to grow old, when another forty still only grow old enough to fear for their lives every day? The laments of a seemingly-sheltered, naive teenager hope for a solution to everything--a way to end war, to cure disease, to make every person on this earth at least a little happier. So he tells himself that he must become the change he wishes to see and rise like a phoenix from the ash of his crumbled soul as a symbol of hope and happiness. Yet phoenixes only exist in myth.

True, I spend some time out of my day making other's days brighter. But I know that hours at a

single service center and a couple of signatures aren't enough. Neither are days, months, even years of any single person's time, even a group's or school's. How can it compare to the literal millions of people who slowly or quickly rot, sicken or die every day? How can it compare to those who don't even have a community, let alone someone else to give back to? Somewhere inside me, I know that not devoting my entire life to service of some sort makes me worse than those who sit guilty in prison. Yet, What can I do? I don't fear for my life, yet billions of others do. And even though I can cry for their sake, my tears can't help them.

Generations upon generations have come before, and more than a few adolescents in each generation had aspirations like my own. But age takes few prisoners. Perhaps when they age, the cry of "live for yourself, and the hope for the best" takes over their minds. Casting their lofty ambitions aside, they soon live only for themselves. But maybe it's the only reconciliation for the reality that we have--the only reconciliation when faced with the reality that perhaps nothing one can do will change the horrors around them. Perhaps it may only be time before I succumb as well. Sitting in a car, mindlessly wasting my time. My backpack slung hallway over my shoulder. Hearing, not listening to, those distant voices.

*I know that my soul
wITHERS AWAY, CRUMBLING
TO ASH AS I GROW MORE
CALLOUS.*



Pudding Creek

Shane Lavery '20

Machiavelli and Me

Patrick Stodden '19

No math. No reading. No homework. My three simple ingredients to an ideal summer. I've disdained reading since the sixth grade, when monotonous book reports became just another assignment. Novels ceased to captivate me and my love for textbooks waned as they got thicker, heavier, and more complex. I fell into a rut, spewing mud from tractionless tires in the form of mediocre analytical essays. Books that I once cherished bored me to a state of despair. All this changed when I met Jon.

The summer of my freshman year I got my first job, and it was here that I met Jonathan. The two of us were staffed as lifeguards at my local country club. The position's laid-back nature and the pool's low attendance provided ample opportunity for a budding friendship, the foundation of which was built upon school. Majoring in philosophy, Jon had just finished his junior year at UCD, and his endless lectures on politics and morality made it obvious he was deeply impassioned. I was mesmerized by Jon's vivid storytelling and seemingly infinite wisdom, partially because I was excited to be accepted by someone so much older than me. One hot afternoon, the sun beating down on an empty pool, Jon devised a short reading list for me. I was eager to show him that I too was capable of maintaining an intellectual discourse centered on books and philosophy, but I still dreaded the idea of spending my precious summer minutes reading ancient pamphlets. Glancing at the napkin list Jon bestowed upon me, I recognized a couple titles, *The Prince*, *The Art of War*, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. I knew them simply because they're old, but with age comes wisdom, and I was surprised to find myself genuinely interested in what these authors had to say. Before I knew it I was outside the local used bookstore with Jon's suggestions in one hand and a sparkling new debit card in the other. I had no idea how important that trip would become.

Long before I came to resent reading, the smell of paperback novels and popent scent of laminated children's books sparked a desire to bury my nose in

pages upon pages of anything I could comprehend. Years later, standing in the doorway to LOGO Books, those same smells launched an assault on my nose. I hastily found several of the books on Jon's list, rushed to the checkout counter, and slinked out of the store. Carrying that bag down the street, I became to think of how long it was going to take to read all these books, and felt an inner conflict take hold of me. I lost all motivation to spend hours of my time reading when I could be working or out with my friends enjoying the summer months. Once home, I immediately tossed the books into my desk drawer. They sat there for two weeks practically untouched.

About a month later, my desire to impress Jon eventually overcame my fear of disappointment, and so I sought a quiet place to read. I reached into the plastic bag, stuffed in the bottom of my desk, and grasped the first book to skim my fingers. I remember that moment with striking clarity: "Really? *The Prince*? Wow! I can't wait for Machiavelli to teach me how to make the perfect 15th century lasagna." My sarcastic tone was unwarranted because I had not the faintest idea as to what this surprisingly short book would teach me. I knew Machiavelli was supposedly one of the brightest minds of his time, but that was hundreds of years ago. Surely we've expanded to

Long before I came to resent reading, the smell of paperback novels and popent scent of laminated children's books sparked a desire to bury my nose in pages upon pages of anything I could comprehend.

more profound horizons since then. Haven't we? Nevertheless, I unfolded a lawn chair and settled into my backyard for some afternoon reading. In that sitting, I read the entire book cover to cover, a feat I had never before accomplished with any kind of writing. Afterward, I sat there in bewilderment. Machiavelli's

dated syntax and articulate language surpassed anything I'd been exposed to before, yet it didn't dishearten me. I rather enjoyed the challenge, and I knew exactly who to talk to about it.

The next time I saw Jon we talked for hours, solely focused on Machiavelli and his words. I wavered in my step, somewhat ashamed of how little I was able to procure from the pages, but Jon was quick to reassure me, "It isn't a book you can read one time and understand the gravity of his words. I've read it four times so far." Jon taught me how to properly annotate, read at an effective pace, and when and why to revisit a passage. No English teacher ever held my

attention so well or for so long as Jon did that day, and I went home with a new determination to extract more from the text. With pen in hand, I read the book again. This time with a new intent and a slower pace, limiting myself to ten pages a day. Three weeks passed from my initial reading of *The Prince* before both Jon and I were satisfied with my comprehension of Machiavelli's craft, and in those three weeks I read more intensely than I ever had before. I fell in love with the pursuit of Machiavelli's knowledge, for it gave purpose to setting aside hours of my time to read. Today my bookshelf holds books of two varieties, the novels I have been assigned to read for school and the various works Jon suggested to me that summer. I have yet to find the time needed to devote my entire self to each piece, but I never skip on the opportunity to read a snippet here and there. The power of books is not in their words but in their ability to feed and spread the never ending hunger for knowledge.



Under the Surf

Josh Gillis '18



Self-Portrait

Donovon Horst '18

An Interview with an Artist

Jaden Fong '18

1ST PLACE, FICTION
2ND ANNUAL MOORINGS
LITERARY & ARTS CONTEST

White male. Five feet, eleven inches in height. One hundred and seventy pounds in weight. Short, dark brown hair, green eyes. He was twenty-six, wearing a plain black V-neck, and a pair of dark blue jeans, with two rips by the knees. A small, metallic necklace in the shape of a triangle dangled from his neck. These traits described Markus White, a man Agent Jack Leafan had been studying for the past three years. After quietly and inconspicuously stalking White, Jack finally apprehended him for the murders of seven people, two of which were children under the age of eleven.

Jack Leafan appeared extraordinarily average at first glance: a short, neat haircut to compliment his jet black hair, married with a five and a seven year old, and a suit tailored perfectly for his figure, which he wore daily. His face was wrinkled with age. He was only thirty-seven, but the years of work had aged his face to be stern, creased, and without a smile. Extremely devoted to his work, the sleepless nights left him with dark circles underneath his piercing eyes. His colleagues noted that the only time he ever showed emotion was when angered; he had a fierce temper, and could hardly hold back if provoked. Of course, this passion is what made him so skilled at his job—he could intimidate anyone he pleased with minimal effort. With the exception of Markus White.

Jack followed the standard protocol of waiting fifty-five minutes before beginning the interrogation. If he had entered immediately, White would be in control; so, by waiting, Jack could steer the interrogation any way he pleased. Most criminals began breaking down by minute thirty; they became anxious, demanding to know why they were being ignored. White, however, seemed oddly at ease, resembling a juvenile delinquent patiently waiting in their school's principal's office, amused at his new surroundings. He had taken the liberty of resting his legs up on the table, and by minute forty he was whistling a tune.

“Sir, maybe we should go in now,” one of Jack's team members started. “White doesn't seem to be—”

“Protocol calls for fifty five minutes. We'll stick to protocol. He'll break,” Jack interrupted.

“I know what protocol calls for, sir, but with all due respect I just think that waiting would be pointless—”

“He'll break down soon enough. We'll wait,” he repeated.

So, in silence, they waited, watching his every move, trying to detect even a hint of insecurity. Until, finally, minute fifty-five hit, and Jack charged towards the door, opened it, carefully closed it, and sat down across from White.

“Markus, my name is Jack Leafan. I'm leading this investigation and will be conducting this interrogation.” His cadence was robotic and automatic, honed from hundreds of previous interrogations.

“You know,” White started, looking down at his necklace, “it's rude to keep a date waiting,” he said with a smile. There was something oddly alluring about that smile of his. Something in it promised safety and loyalty; it said “You can trust me” without a single twitch of the lip.

Jack ignored him.

“Why'd you kill them, Markus? You had no reason to, there were no previous ties to them, they didn't provoke yo—”

“Did you know that most serial killers tend to have narcissistic personality disorder? They believe that everything revolves around them, and so they start to get careless. You know, Jack—”

“Agent Leafan,” he corrected him.

White popped a playful smile.

“Right, sorry, Agent Leafan,” he said slowly and sarcastically, testing the new words. “Like I was saying, you know that some people get so caught up in their crimes they start to believe they really are above the law? They start to think they're some sort of superman. But the issue with that is, see, that's not me. So, then, how did you catch me? I know I'm not

a narcissist. I knew I could get caught, I wore gloves, I didn't leave any trace behind, so what did I do wrong?"

"Your M.O. gave you away. Quite easily, might I add," Jack responded, staring sternly at White.

"Go on," White teased.

"The brutality used in each killing was matched only with your other killings. Next, I'd like to know wh—"

"Woah, woah, woah! Slow down. Let's go back to my killings," Jack said, leaning forward.

"There's nothing more to talk about. You killed, you got caught. As I was saying—"

"What do you mean there's nothing more to talk about!" White quickly snapped, "You said yourself I was brutal, I didn't limit myself to any demographic, I had plenty of victims lined up—"

White's face became pale, and his eyes widened, realizing what he just revealed.

Jack quickly followed up. "What do you mean by you 'had plenty of victims lined up'? You were specifically targeting your victims, weren't you?"

Silence.

"You deliberately chose to kill those children. Why?"

White perked up in his chair. "What did you just say?"

"I said that you deliberately chose to kill those children."

White smiled. "You only commented on the children. What about the others? The old hag, that prick of a businessman? Why only the children?"

"The children are what separated you from any other serial killer."

"Yeah, see, I don't think that's it."

Silence followed as White leaned back in his chair, gnawing on the tip of his thumb.

Jack broke the silence. "This is pointless. As I was

saying earlier, why did—"

"You have children, don't you, Jack?"

"That's not relevant to the case at hand. Why did yo—"

"Tell me, do they know their dad is such a prick?"

"Excuse me?" Jack asked, slowly becoming irritated.

"I'm just asking if they enjoy having such a drill sergeant of a dad constantly order them around like you do your little suits outside."

"How I treat my children has nothing to do with your murders, so the sooner I finish these questions, the sooner I can lock you up for life."

"Oooo, an angry drill sergeant," White cooed, "I bet they love it when you get so angry you scream at them, maybe even hit them when the rage boils over," White said with a smile.

"The only one to stoop low enough to hurt a child would be you, Markus."

"Exactly, which is why the only reason I'm sad I got caught is because I'll never get the satisfaction of getting to lay my hands on your children, Agent."

That taunt was the tipping point for Jack. He tried to resist the urge to jump out of his seat and end White's life right there, to shut up his smiling mouth, to stop the breath from entering his lungs. He slammed the table with his clenched fist, managing to make White jump.

"You have no idea how lucky you are that we're in this interrogation room. If we were outside, no limits, I would—"

"You know what's interesting to me about killing," White interrupted, changing the subject, "the way people kill."

Jack tried to compose himself. "I don't understand," he slowly said, exhausted from holding back his anger.

"I mean, one guy could just shoot someone,

He tried to resist the urge to jump out of his seat and end White's life right there, to shut up his smiling mouth, to stop the breath from entering his lungs.

and the other wants to slit their throat. Isn't that interesting? The different mediums they use?"

"They're not mediums," Jack said, "murder is murder, killers are killers, and so they deserve to be punished."

"But isn't killing basically like art?" White mused, talking to himself. "I mean think about it, everyone has their own style, different M.O.'s, different tools like knives and guns—those are their brushes, they're all the same, it's art!" White excitedly explained.

"Murder is not art. Murderers like you deserve the punishment that suits the crime," Jack responded.

But White wasn't listening.

"And... I'm the greatest artist of all," he said, looking up with a shy smile. "My murders are special, unique from the others. No one else took the care I did in selecting my victims. Manipulation in itself is an art, so the fact that I managed to convince every single person—total strangers, too—to come with me, just another face in the crowd, was brilliant!" White exclaimed, growing more excited and entranced in his own memories. "I think my fifth kill, Lucy Goldbach, that was her name, was my very own Starry Night. She was hard to convince at first, smart little girl, only six years old, took nearly three weeks to get her to come closer than a few yards away from me," White smiled, reminiscing on the moment, "but once I did, it was... beautiful! I was so careful in taking just the right amount of life from her once I got her, so she wouldn't tucker out too fast, but she could still feel it all, each cut of the blade, each stroke of the brush—"

"For the last time, you are not an artist. You are not famous. You are a murderer, and will suffer at the hands of the law," Jack sternly said.

"Jesus Christ man, do you ever stop with the damn rules!" White yelled, slapping his palm on the table. "Law this, law that, rules this, rules that, punishment this, punishment that! You're no better than the suits you boss around like you're some kind of high and mighty dictator!"

Jack stared, silent and still.

White composed himself, took a deep breath, and started again. "You're gonna get far in this world, you know that?"

"Why, because I caught you?" Jack said, trying to appeal to White's ego.

"Because you're a coward," White hissed, the last word spat out full of contempt and disgust. "Not because you think that you're 'motivated,' not because you caught the bad guy, but because you're nothing but a coward, and that's all you'll ever be. Hiding behind the rules and laws, it's pathetic! You're too damn afraid to even step slightly out of line, too afraid to break any rules, so you follow them word for word, syllable by syllable."

He took a short break to try and calm himself down, to no avail. And with Jack not intervening, he continued. "It's this damn society that's the problem, you know that? Society awards people like you, obedient little lap dogs like you. They give you a little pat on the head, maybe a little shiny piece of metal, just to say 'good job following my every word, keep it up and you might get another piece of metal!'" White said in a high, mocking voice. "Wouldn't that be great Jack! A second piece of metal! Bet the kids would be real proud of that one, huh?" he finished, huffing out a hot breath and slumping back to his seat, arms crossed.

Silence entered the room yet again. Jack was about to say something, when White continued with one final comment.

"Well then tell me, Jack, what happens when someone dies because saving them would violate protocol?" He began to get a little choked up. "What happens when a kid gets shot because protocol said to wait another five minutes for backup because he had a record? What happens then, Jack!" he yelled, spitting across the table in the process.

Jack sat there quietly, watching White. He knew that he had won. Protocol broke White; rather, White broke himself.

Silence permeated the room, tension as heavy as fog rolling over their shoulders, before Jack mechanically got up and exited the room.



Glitch

Josh Sellers '18

1ST PLACE, DIGITAL ART
2ND ANNUAL MOORINGS
LITERARY & ARTS CONTEST

A Liar's Reason

Risheek Pingili '18

I sat before, or next, to them
 on a plane or bus or train
A simple inquiry they presented to me:
 a question about my name
And the echo plays again:

They mustn't know,
They mustn't know
 The truth that lies beneath
For it's the truth that's harder to say
And the truth that's harder for them to bear

And I became a man of different age and merit
 5 years older, or younger, perhaps
I continued on, an illusion which couldn't even allude to me
"It's for them — It's for their sake"
Deception out of noble constraint
 For it's the truth that's harder to say
 And the truth will be harder for them to bear

The next time, the next day, next month, next year
The name may change, or age, or place
 or time, or merit, or purpose, or race
The only constant, the need to hide
The need to change, the need for my name to differ again

 The truth will be harder for them to bear
Yet this cycle ingrains itself so deep
My name, fluid: sinking deeper every time
Every move, every word, so carefully planned
So deep it sinks, so long it lasts,
That they and them becomes everyone I know
 and my name flows into them



Alaskan Bear

Mathias Milton '19

Hooked

Peter Grimmett '19

It's 5:30 a.m., and I have been paddling for twenty minutes. My kayak is the only thing disturbing the placid lake's surface, and no one else is awake. Forty minutes ago I awoke to the buzzing of my alarm and did not hesitate to leave the comfort behind and embrace the morning chill. Now my pants are half-soaked and my arms fatigued, yet I push forward with greater force. I have reached my favorite spot and know that the fish are down there waiting. Why am I here? Certainly there are better ways to spend the dawn hours.

Merriam-Webster defines fishing as "the sport or business of catching fish." This definition largely parallels the cultural understanding of fishing. It has been reduced to the simplistic scene of a father and son sitting on a boat for hours with the sole purpose of catching a fish. People have difficulty looking past the idea of slimy worms and long hours of boredom. It seems as though the fisherman's excessive labors are only to produce a smaller, less defined piece of meat which could have been purchased at the store in a fraction of the time. The payoff of waking up before the sun, exhausting the body, and spending hours at a time without any luck in the form of a slender, bony fish, seems to be worthless.

However, there is a fundamentally different outlook which resides in the minds of those who actually enjoy these efforts to the point of replication. The recreational fishing done by so many people is done for the process and not just the result. While it is true that fish bought from stores can never taste as fresh and delicious as fish caught the same day it is eaten, this is just the bonus.

The fisherman rises at the oddest of hours to enjoy the experience of having unimpeded adventure. When there is only one person awake, they are free to go in any direction, while focusing on whatever they find that is most interesting. I have not found another hobby which brings me so close to raw natural beauty at every turn. I am driven out of my cabin and onto the calm waters of Lake Tahoe at 5:30 in the morning because of the feeding times of the fish, but I return in the same fashion again and again, even after

much failure, because of the outdoor experience of adventure. There is no fresher air to breathe nor a more stunning place to watch the sunrise than from my isolated kayak with no one else in sight. As I jig my line up and down over and over again, my mind resets itself, and I am left with a clear presence of peace. No motors disturb my tranquility. No stress leaks into my calm existence. I am simply dwarfed by nature and its expansive beauty. The fish guide me to a place and time where I can truly absorb all that nature has to offer, which I am normally too distracted to ever notice.

Then something attacks my line.

I no longer tease the unknown depths; now I have contact with life at the bottom. A precarious struggle ensues between myself and the fish who both try to outsmart the other. When enough line has come in and the dark depths of Tahoe have given way to a shining chrome object ascending into view, frenzy turns into a state of euphoria. Some duels are won and some are lost, but the serene experience remains constant. A delectable, same-day meal sweetens the process; however, it is not the prerequisite in determining the next trip. There is an overbearing pull towards water which every avid fisherman feels when they have not been out in a while, and this pull steals one's focus towards acknowledging only the opportunities presented for another outing.

The payoff of waking up before the sun, exhausting the body, and spending hours at a time without any luck in the form of a slender, bony fish, seems to be worthless.

Fishing can be an addiction. After spending a morning searching for marlin fins amongst the rhythmic swells of the Pacific, watching dolphins jump and sea turtles rise, there is no other fix than going out again for the same experience. Likewise, an evening spent waist deep in a flowing river bordered with lush trees and a cloudy sunset has little hope of being recreated artificially in everyday life.

The fisherman becomes addicted to the hunt. Once the first tug of a fish is felt, it cannot be forgotten. The fisherman will pursue their target for hours at a time without any indication that it is out there. Technique development turns into an obsession as any one cast could yield the catch of a lifetime.

Fly fishing exemplifies this struggle for perfection as there may only be one trophy trout in a mile stretch of stream, but fly fishermen will put everything they have into each rhythmic cast just in case that fish happens to see their presentation. Once the casting of a fly line has been perfected, each cast rolls into harmonious existence effortlessly. Delivering a tiny fly to the other side of a river without spooking a potential fish is exceptionally difficult, making the successful execution so rewarding. People can be seen casting fly lines in grass fields or in seemingly fishless waters for hours at a time because the rhythmic cast is so peaceful. The catching becomes irrelevant while the execution becomes everything.

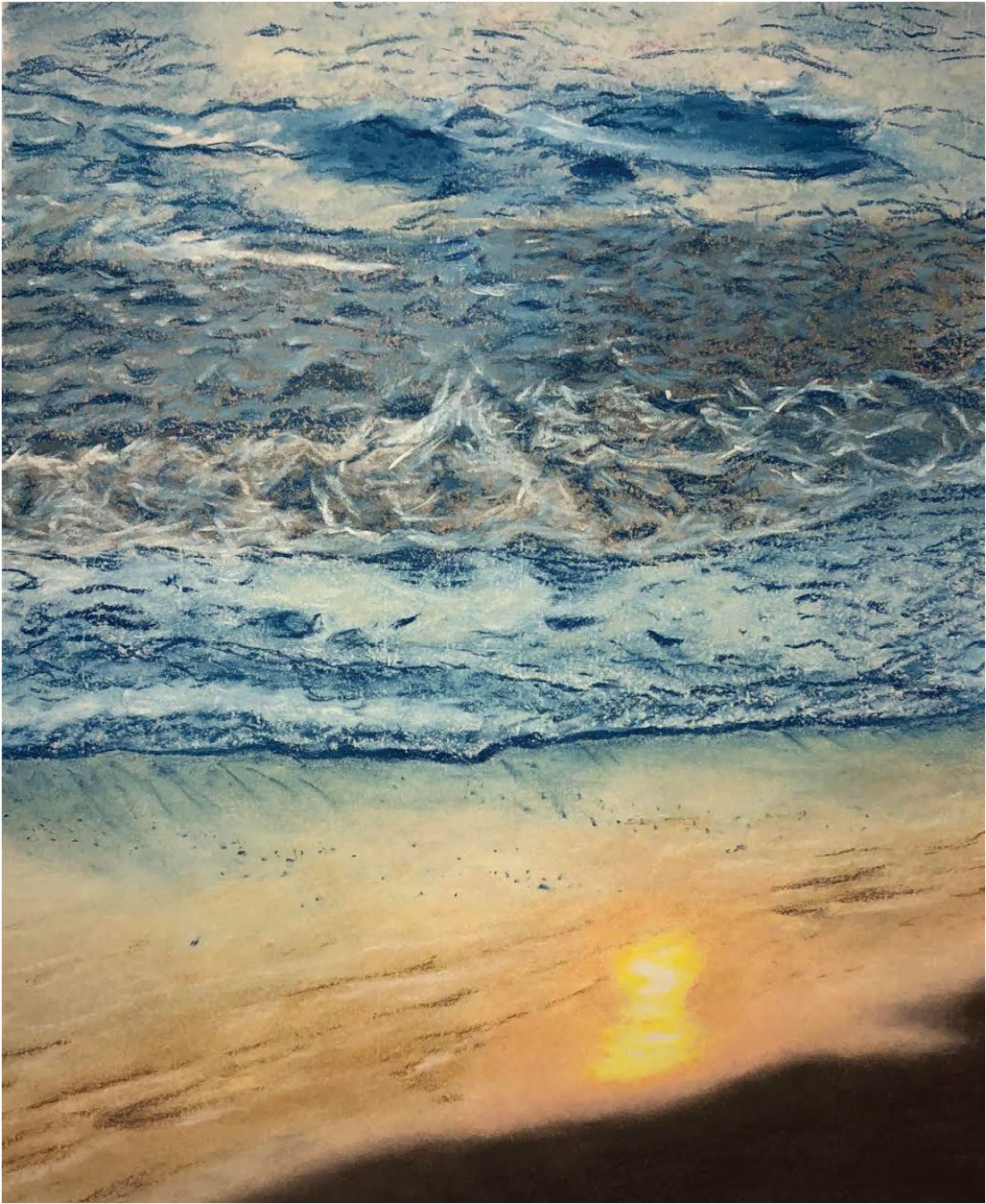
The endless hunt for secret holes and perfect technique develops patience and observation. I have spent countless hours on rivers, lakes, and the ocean in pursuit of various species of fish, and none of them have come easily. Along with each type of fish requiring a different technique, each location requires a different outlook. While on a trip in Mexico, my dad, my brother, and I desperately wanted to hook into a billfish. We had never caught one before and had five days to do so. Four days had come and gone without any sign of the giant creatures, and on the last morning of our trip we were not facing great odds.

Remaining optimistic, we trolled through large waves under dark skies, which brought a sort of energetic calm over the boat. After a short time the trolling line let out a screeching, clicking noise that announced the emergence of a huge fish on the end of our line. For what felt like two minutes we all just stood there, looking at the bent pole in amazement. No one moved. We had become so used to not catching anything that our patience and awe could not be broken. As the sailfish repeatedly leaped into the air, we sprang forward and started the fight, which would last about 45 minutes. After releasing the elegant creature back into the waves, all was silent once more in the wispy air of the open ocean. I was back to a state of silent awe.

Much of nature's elegance can only be encountered through patient observation. Fishing, with or without providing a fish to take home, enables this encounter. The chaotic world viewed by everyone is contrasted by the soothing niche of fishing only experienced by a few. It is amazing how quickly I have become close friends with those who share

my interest in fishing. Whether it is because we find the hunt thrilling, or because we somehow see the world differently as a result of our patient, repetitive ventures, it has been exceedingly easy to connect. We are willing to wake up at unreasonable hours in order to pursue something intangible that happens to sometimes grant us a stunning fish from another type of world. Somehow we recognize surreal aspects of settings which are normally left unseen by people living indoors or distracted by urban life. Fishing is our escape from the monotonous, mainstream journey that we face every day.

Night has just ceded to another day, and my alarm has broken the silence so that I can go fishing in the new dawn. What will I catch? While the immediate answer always materializes in fish, all I truly know is that I will be left needing more.



Hermosa Beach

Peter Grimmett '19

Monster in the Mirror

Lukas Kavanaugh '18

2ND PLACE, FICTION
2ND ANNUAL MOORINGS
LITERARY & ARTS CONTEST

Entry: #3

Date: XX/XX/XXXX

Operator: Victor Alfred Wilhelm

Object: SCP-Gemini-32B

SCP-Gemini-32B was secured today by Gamma two team. Research and Development had tracked the object over a six month long period, and discovered a history with SCP-Gemini-32B reaching back to 1987. Further history is unknown, but we suspect it dates back further than that due to its Victorian Era design and markings.

SCP-Gemini-32B was given the nickname "Ouroboros" due to its distinctive serpent pattern found on the object. The wood has been identified as Dalbergia melanoxylon, a black tree native to South Africa.

Entry: #4

Date: XX/XX/XXXX

Operator: Victor Alfred Wilhelm

Object: SCP-Gemini-32B

Further tests are scheduled to be conducted about SCP-Gemini-32B. Tests involving animals will be conducted first, as to see if the insanity effect applies to them. If the test is successful and the animals exhibit signs related to insanity in humans we will skip further research and move to containment. If the test fails we will move onto video recordings, and then present the videos to volunteer participants. If that test is successful we will again move to the containment phase. If that test fails we will have participants look into the mirror directly and study its effects. After gathering sufficient results we will move to the containment phase.

Entry: #5

Date: XX/XX/XXXX

Operator: Victor Alfred Wilhelm

Object: SCP-Gemini-32B0

Today the animal experiments will begin. We've acquired a sizable sample of white mice and will begin testing in the afternoon. They bear a similar complexion of the white mice my daughter has, however are much more tame. The SCP testing room will be completely secure to avoid having anyone unintentionally looking at the mirror. We aren't prepared for a human trial at the moment.

Entry: #6

Date: XX/XX/XXXX

Operator: Victor Alfred Wilhelm

Object: SCP-Gemini-32B0

The tests were a failure. It seems that the mirror does not affect mice. We will need to verify our results again of course and we will keep up any security measures in the meantime. The mice will be watched for 72 hours, and if deemed safe, will be terminated or given to a different department for testing. Perhaps I should fill out a D-16 form to keep one myself, my daughter's died a few days ago.

Entry: #7

Date: XX/XX/XXXX

Operator: Victor Alfred Wilhelm

Object: SCP-Gemini-32B0

Even after three more tests we have found that the mirror fails to produce attributed results in the white mice. Due to passing this phase we will now be moving to a second animal phase with chimpanzees. Given that this fails again we will move onto volunteer human patients looking at the video footage of the mirror.

Entry: #8

Date: XX/XX/XXXX

Operator: Victor Alfred Wilhelm

Object: SCP-Gemini-32B0

The chimpanzee test has also failed, despite a total of four tests and a sample size of 2 chimpanzee's per test. With this failure we will move up to the next stage with volunteers looking into footage of the mirror. In this stage we will be using testing rooms 101 and 103, as 102 is currently housing the mirror. While on the topic, the mirror is covered in a white sheet to protect personnel from looking into it. This will be removed by someone with blinders on, who will have had a camera positioned showing the camera. The footage will be shown to the test subjects and they will be monitored for 72 hours. Subjects will be volunteers from SCP, for now.

Entry: #9

Date: XX/XX/XXXX

Operator: Victor Alfred Wilhelm

Object: SCP-Gemini-32B0

Surprisingly this test has also failed. The subjects presented no signs of abnormal behavior associated with the mirror. It was expected for subjects to have rambling speech, as well as seeming agitated. Periodic bits of screaming were also associated with the mirror, as well as self scratching or mutilation. Every case of the mirror outside the facility has eventually resulted in death, however it may happen gradually depending on the subject. Suicide was a major cause of death, and curiously heart attacks. Some patients seemed to drop dead in front of the mirror, as if they died of shock.

Entry: #10

Date: XX/XX/XXXX

Operator: Victor Alfred Wilhelm

Object: SCP-Gemini-32B0

Live tests will be conducted tomorrow. SCP personnel will be obtaining volunteers for the tests. Patients will look into the mirror and will be studied for a duration of 24 hours. In that time if they are to

be considered insane they will be relocated to another SCP location for more permanent treatment. The mirror will then be contained and protected, as SCP protocol states. The public cannot know of the mirror or have it return to society.

Entry: #11

Date: XX/XX/XXXX

Operator: Victor Alfred Wilhelm

Object: SCP-Gemini-32B0

The mirror... oh God. I caught a glimpse of it when removing the cloth binding. My blinders slipped as I readied the mirror for examination. It must have been a second but I thought I was staring for hours. The mirror, it showed some creature inside of it. That's what must have driven people insane. Mice or chimpanzees may not have seen the creature inside, nor could it have been captured by footage. It was a large thing, with matted brown fur and strange piercing blue eyes. It was as if a buffalo had stood on its hind legs. However instead of hooves it had large claws. The thing was I couldn't just see it, I felt it was there in the room with me. It's eyes...oh god its eyes...they felt as if they were looking through me. At the end when I put the cover back

on...I could have sworn it smiled as it raised a claw to point at me. I thought it was still in the room with me, yet I couldn't see it anywhere in the room. I still felt it though... I could have sworn it was still in the room.

Entry: #12

Date: XX/XX/XXXX

Operator: Victor Alfred Wilhelm

Object: SCP-Gemini-32B0

The creature! The creature. I can't forget it. Why am I not dead? Will I die soon? It was horrible, an abomination fit to die. Yet I can't forget it's smile, and how it pointed at me. What did it mean? Did it mark me for death? I delayed the experiment but I haven't

told other SCP personnel about my encounter. I need to take notes. That way at least they can find out about what occurred...

Entry: #13

Date: XX/XX/XXXX

Operator: Victor Alfred Wilhelm

Object: SCP-Gemini-32B0

I can't sleep. I see the creature. More and more now. In my dreams, in other mirrors, reflective glass... it's eyes again. It's always looking at me when I look at it. It follows me. It's almost like it's always there. Why won't it leave? It followed me home. My daughter and wife haven't noticed anything off, even when I asked them. I can't understand the creature. What is it? I might find out before it's too late.

Entry: #14

Date: XX/XX/XXXX

Operator: Victor Alfred Wilhelm

Object: SCP-Gemini-32B0

The creature...it spoke in my latest dream. Rather it had some low guttural roar. I understood it though...I understood what it was trying to do. It's tormenting me. I no longer just see the creature, I see things...things that I've done or not done. It's eyes judge me. It wants me to see...to see everything.

Entry: #15

Date: XX/XX/XXXX

Operator: Victor Alfred Wilhelm

Object: SCP-Gemini-32B0

I understand the creature now. The creature is me and I am the creature. It was its eyes... its eyes were my eyes. It even walked like me, a slight limp in the left foot. That creature is me. It's unbearable. I'm that abomination of matted fur and filth. I'm an ape that only destroys. A demon in human skin ruining everything around me. Even when presented opportunity to do good, I fail like the wretch I am. I see everything...everything I've done. I've done so much. So much of it was horrible... and for what? I've

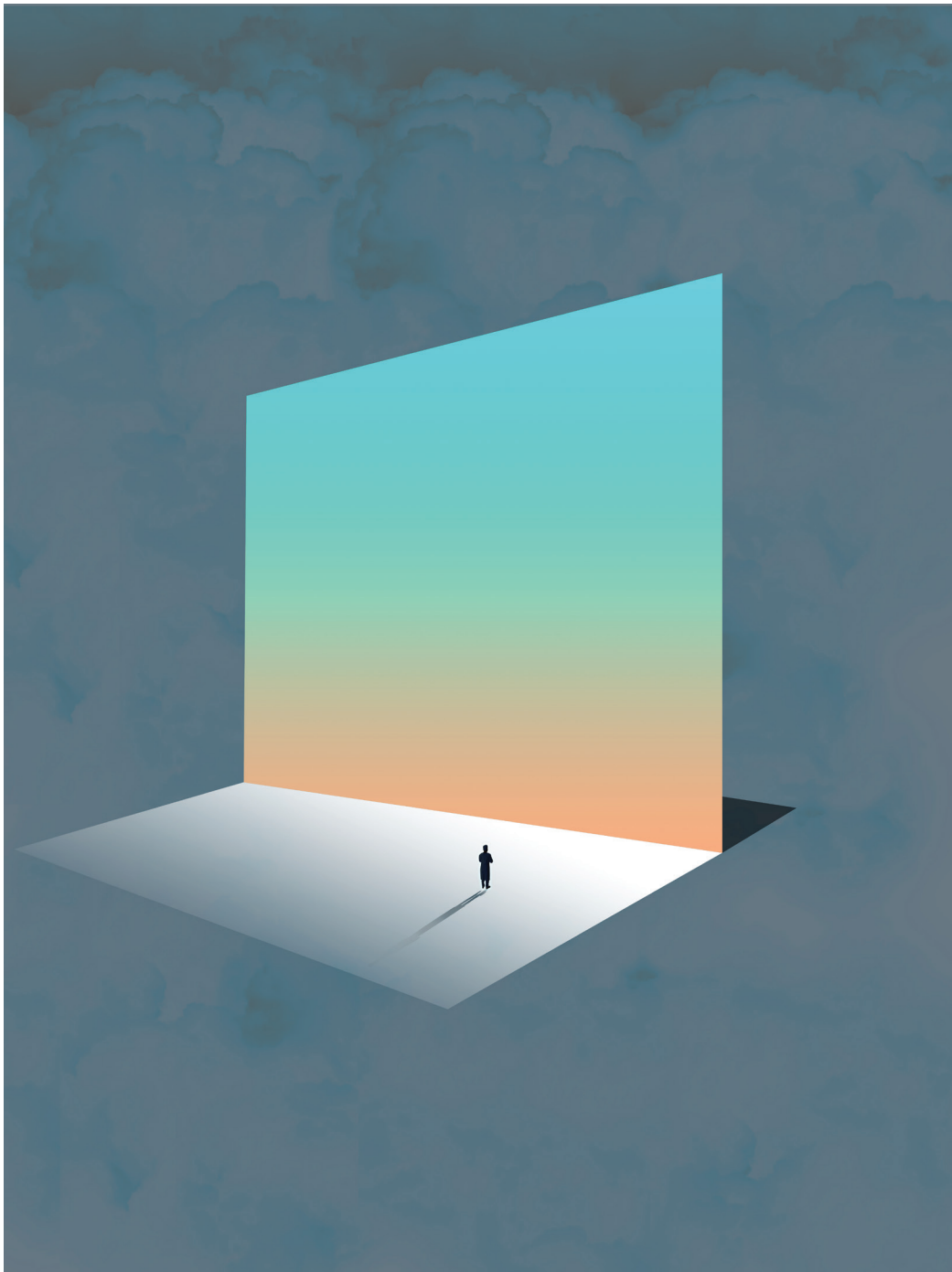
done nothing with my research. Nothing significant. Nothing worth what I've done. From the time I started with SCP in Dubai to now in the labs here. I've only hurt, hurt my friends, hurt my family, my daughter and wife, and those countless men women and children that SCP needed. I'm done hurting. I'm done being the monster.

* * *

The director finished reading the last sentence as Dr. Wilhelm pulled out his own pistol and shot himself in the head. The blood splattered over papers and the whitewashed walls. It was a short death, quick and effective. One bang and then silence. The director didn't even flinch as he took off his glasses and began to wipe the blood off of them. At least the doctor could have spared him cleaning up this mess. He was a useful researcher for many years. At least he had turned in all his reports as a final act of duty. This would give him the evidence he needed to contain the mirror for good. He would begin writing the letter to his family soon. They wouldn't know it was suicide of course. He died in the line of duty.

Secure Contain Protect

Finally the darkness closed on the mirror Oroborus. It's mouth devouring its own tail for eternity. The mirror had done its work one last time as the vault doors slammed shut on the mirror, closing it in darkness for the last time. It wasn't the monster that was locked up however. The monster was outside the vault. The mirror was just the best way to find it. After all, you can't look for a monster if you're looking for yourself.



Untitled

Caelin Sutch '20

2ND PLACE, DIGITAL ART
2ND ANNUAL MOORINGS
LITERARY & ARTS CONTEST

My Opinion on Blue

Carson Jones '19

Roses are red,
violets are...violet aren't they?
Unless the guy who named red onions also named them.
They could be cyan at that point.

Then why do we call violets blue?
It is common knowledge that violet is the last color in a rainbow
Fairly distinct from blue,

Even indigo is closer to blue,
 but when was the last time
 you heard someone
 describe something as this
 fancy dark blue?

It's one of those colors you only expect to see
in the huge packs of crayons meant to last seasons,
like lavender, dandelion, auburn, and aqua.

And don't get me started on cobalt
 cerulean
 Manatee
 turquoise
or teal.

At least green has only lime and yellow variations,
and red has orange and dark versions.

I remember coloring with blue.
So much to choose
when you only need it for

 the sky above
 and the ocean below.

It's a great life for blue,
being picked over its many shades for its simplicity.
Makes me feel bad for all the indigos out there, left unused.
Maybe that's why they call sadness the blues.



La Paz en la Miseria

Nico Pedroncelli '18

Black Sand

Austin Weideman, '18

On a recent vacation to Maui, my family resolved to drive to the lesser known east side to see the island's "natural wonders." I was reluctant. I wanted to stay at the comfortable resort in West Maui that my family rarely left. I wanted a snow cone and a decent picture to post online, but they gave me no choice. After three hours of driving the tortuous one-way road along the coast, I was finally able to see Wai'anapanapa, or "glistening water," State Park. I was confused by the park's name, but its origin became apparent when I first saw Pa'iloa, the Black Sand Beach, from higher ground. We parked the rental near a worn-down cemetery, and I caught sight of the sacred scene from a nearby cliff. The beach faces a restless ocean of brilliant blue and green hues, truly "glistening" as the sunlight bounces off the crests of incoming waves. The beach is flanked on either side by two long stretches of black rock topped with bright green patches of life, extending like the gentle arms of a mother cradling her youngest child.

I followed a dirt path down to the mysterious beach, which, upon closer inspection, consisted entirely of stark black pebbles. The pebbles, formed from ancient eroded basalt rock, were incredibly smooth under my feet. I scooped up a damp handful and studied it; indeed, the pebbles had no sharp corners, and each formed its own unique, perfect oval. As the waves crashed upon them, I noticed how the beach seemed to breathe. To my surprise, the water, after creeping up the shore, did not slide back down the surface of the sand as it would on any ordinary beach. Rather, the water seemed to sink beneath the pebbles and slowly return to sea. Fascinated, I walked into the shallow water, planted my feet into the black ground, and waited for a wave. When one wave crashed and scurried up the shore, my feet sank further into the dark sand. Inhale. As it receded, water flowed through the cracks and fissures around my feet and back into sea. Exhale. I stayed still a while longer, listening to the rhythmic cascade of water with the impact of every wave. I was connected to the ground beneath my feet and the ocean before my eyes.

Wai'anapanapa blossoms with life. I caught

sight of a blood-red shrimp population thriving in a rare, anchialine freshwater pool. Subterranean paths beneath the pool carried saltwater into the ocean, keeping the less-dense fresh water at the surface—Wai'anapanapa never failed to sustain life, no matter how difficult it was. Looking to the sky, I watched as a seabird colony hovered over the coast and landed in the lush vegetation below. But I could only imagine the vast coral reefs and sea life hiding in her deep, blue embrace.

The beach is flanked on either side by two long stretches of black rock topped with bright green patches of life, extending like the gentle arms of a mother cradling her youngest child.

Further along the rocky coast, I discovered a natural blowhole. Occasionally, a strong wave would force water through the stone hole and launch it several feet into the sky. The spray filled the air with the cool, salty scent of

the Pacific Ocean. A nearby child was startled, but it was only Wai'anapanapa letting us know she was still there, alive and healthy. I noted the colossal pillars of basalt rock, called sea-stacks, protruding from random places in the water. They stood tall and firm, like stone watchtowers jutting forth from the level earth. Waves broke on these gentle giants, creating more salt to be carried away by the ocean breeze. After thousands of years of erosion, the waves had crafted these silent guardians of the sea, who work together with the coast to defend Wai'anapanapa. The rugged towers guard her waters, while the jagged, unforgiving coast protects her land. No hotel can stand on the uneven ground, no dock house can stay afloat in the rough water, and no boat can pass through the rocky columns of the sea. She thrives in her seclusion.

I turned my focus back to the beach and noticed a narrow opening in Wai'anapanapa's right arm. It was just wide enough for me to squeeze through, and what I saw inside was nearly as beautiful as the beach itself. I found myself in a dark, damp cavern, illuminated only by a single ray of golden light shining through a gap in the rock above. Drawn to it like a moth, I approached the light and scaled the sloped cave wall until I could peek my head through the ceiling. At first, I was blinded by the sunlight, but when I observed the glistening beach from above, I felt a strange sensation. Cradled in the notch of Wai'anapanapa's warm arm, I was truly safe.

As the sun neared the end of its descent and the waters glistened a deep orange, it was time for us to leave Wai'anapanapa. I felt the same reluctance I had felt earlier that day; only this time, I was bound for the cold, breathless West. As I said my goodbyes to her valiant protectors and her humble pebbles, I thought, perhaps, that I would see her again one day, for I knew Wai'anapanapa, a true survivor, would live on, breathing in the ocean and exhaling the wind.



A Still, Unbroken Night

Jaden Fong '18

Insomnia

Donovan McGuire '18

Some people call it insomnia, but I know it as a disease that infects the brain and plants the seed of paranoia and sleep paralysis. I had been suffering from it since I was thirteen, and for the last five years I've spent half of my nights unable to fall asleep. After all the lavender, natural oils, and homeopathic remedies, I decided to finally go to the doctor's to solve my issue with the power of prescriptions. I sat down on the cold examination table, feeling the white emotionless paper beneath my thighs. The tiny, stout doctor came in glaring at my chart.

He cleared his throat saying, "So I see here, Alex Cane, that you're here today looking for some sleeping medication. Well, you're eighteen years old, in extremely great shape, and you appear to be an overall normal, healthy kid. We can take care of you no problem."

The doctor left without making eye contact and I left toward home prescription in hand. I popped two Ambiens and immediately fell asleep, it truly was a miracle drug. I thought all my problems had vanished and a good night's sleep was in store. However, at 3 a.m. my body had different plans.

I sharply awoke beading with sweat accompanied by an nauseating body ache. Hairs stood straight up across my body. My senses were extremely heightened as I peered across the room and strangely focused on the threshold of my door. My ear drums rattled as I focused on a small tapping against my door. A slow, hypnotic morse code type of tapping. My eyes darted toward the door as I tried to decode the message, but as soon as I looked over, the tapping transformed into aggressive knocking. I could feel my body tense and the primal fight or flight instincts flooded my brain. There was someone or something behind the door, and I felt as vulnerable as the day I was born.

In that moment I reverted back to childhood and the most logical way to protect myself was to

cocoon my whole body in blankets. Suddenly without warning, the knocking ended. Endorphins enveloped my body and I have since never experienced the same relief felt when the knocking ended. However, the facade of safety quickly dissipated. Whatever creature was behind the door was done toying with my emotions. The knocking ended but the rattle of the door returned with a vengeance. I could hear the figure struggle trying to maintain a firm grip on the handle and pawing at it to get it open. Finally after ten minutes of agonizing stress the door swung open slowly with an eerie creak and accompanied by a foreign spirit.

Although darkness surrounded me, a glowing white figure appeared before me. The spirit appeared to be an eight year old girl with lifeless doll eyes. She wore a stained and tattered white dress that matched her equally matted hair. Throughout her body were peeling scabs and pruny skin that resembled hands after hours in the pool. She began to move floating like a rag doll, her feet only slightly hovering a few inches above the ground. As she moved, her body flowed in a way that looked like it was trapped in a wind tunnel. Surely but slowly she moved to my bed as I remained paralyzed in fear. As grotesque as she appeared, the closer she got the more she smelled like a scientific concoction of baby powder mixed with lavender. She kept slowly floating forward until her face was a mere two inches away from me.

Her eyes rolled over white as she whimpered out a few words, "There is no eternal rest, there is only darkness."

She inspected me like a piece of meat as her eyes rolled over once again to doll eyes. Then she began to slowly float back out of the threshold, slamming the door behind her. I was paralyzed with fear and immediately threw away my Ambiens. I thought that was the answer, but it's 3 a.m. and I hear tapping at the door.

The spirit appeared to be an eight year old girl with lifeless doll eyes. She wore a stained and tattered white dress that matched her equally matted hair.



Looking Back into the City

Jack Bratset '19

On Boredom

Chazel Hakim, 19

I like it when nothing is happening. I like it when I'm bored. I can't dissect the word boredom like other words, though. I have to think of boredom as Boredom, a spiritual being like Mother Nature or Father Time. It's only obvious that she'd have to be the Aunt. She visits you sporadically and without notice. She squeezes your cheeks playfully but you think it hurts. She gives you random gifts, often times odd ones.

People give Boredom a bad rap. They say she's too drawn out or soul-sucking. They say she kills a lot of things—mood, productivity, excitement, happiness. But what people don't notice is what hides behind her. If you approach Boredom without prejudice, you'll meet her son Creativity. He always accompanies her, lingering behind her back like a shy child. Creativity won't let us see him if we disrespect his mother, but there are people who have managed to spot him and still loathe Boredom. They simply don't understand the relationship.

I was no exception. Back in elementary school, I had a lot more free time. Usually it was spent roaming around the house, searching for endless possibilities to turn nothing into something. But I never succeeded when I tried so hard to spot Creativity. When I tried to write a short story, quickly throwing together a plot never worked. I had to let the story form out of the thoughts of the dullest hours. When I tried to paint with watercolor, I never thought of what to illustrate after the utensils were brought out. The idea always had to come beforehand, every time out of the blessing of doing nothing. Even when I tried to find something to photograph, I would just walk around with my camera but not take a single picture. The idea had to appear slowly, as I observed my surroundings and played with my thoughts.

Boredom did all of it. She helped me write the cheesy mystery that I showed to all my friends. She helped me paint a flower with a heart-shaped head that gave to my grandmother. She helped me take the photograph of a ladybug which later appeared in a national magazine. And after all that, I still loathed her. I couldn't recognize when she fulfilled my ideas, but still used them for personal gain.

But the high school gang jumped me. They threw punches one by one

It was a change of environment that made me aware of Boredom. In elementary school, I actually wandered the house only if I had exhausted my time allotment for playing video games. Sometimes when I was bored, I played them to drain away the hours. Then in seventh grade, I got my first smartphone, and my social networking addiction developed. At the end of middle school, I was obsessed with social media and video games. I rarely ever experienced those times of Boredom ushering in new ideas. Boredom gave me Pleasure, and Creativity took the backseat for him.

But the high school gang jumped me. They threw punches one by one—the AP classes, the extra-curriculars, the lack of sleep. I knew I had to make some room to survive, so I bid a sad farewell to video games and social media. Although it was hard for me, I knew the sacrifice would keep me from reaching Weideman insomnia (See *Moorings*, Vol. 1 Spring 2017). Boredom was now spent with nothing. No phone. No game. No computer.

By ridding my schedule of those incessant distractions, I had stopped the constant visits of Pleasure. Now, during class, church, and car rides, ideas began to pop into my head. And unlike the elementary days, I finally realized that Boredom was actually helping me. I started doing nothing on purpose, just to fill my head with random ideas that, if written down, could inspire me later. My life started to reassemble into those times of Boredom without Pleasure, a time only with pure thoughts. I soon came up with an idea for new music beats. I drew a sketch of visual emotions which originated from a random session of daydreaming. And in a dreary homily I realized that I needed to fix the dying relationship with my grandmother.

Seeing Boredom from a different perspective, I notice how little thanks I have given to such a formative presence in my life. She has taken her own time to visit me. She has given many gifts through Creativity. She talks to me when I am lonely. I have always skipped her greetings. I have always misunderstood her as a burden. I have always seen my reward but never the cause. Next time she visits, I'll make sure to give her a hug. Thanks to Boredom, doing nothing has only kept me busy, and I like it that way.



Lake Tahoe in Clouds

Kyle Young '18

Regrets

Mark Lemon '18

The too quick words
Or the ones unspoken

The woman you adored
But the desire kept choked in

So often looked back upon
Regrets wandered through

What ifs and could bes
That could have changed what is true

They're all there in past
With no way to reverse

But yet we all dwell on
The alternate truth we rehearse



High Hand Nursery

Damian Brunton '21

Justice

Alexander Jacobs '18

“Go ahead boys, get anything you want. We’re celebrating tonight!”

Dave looked at the outer walls of the New York City convenience store. There were patches of off color paint that covered up graffiti. A single, fresh piece of graffiti had yet to be covered up. The block letters read “125” in black paint. The inside, however, was remarkably clean. The floors looked as if they had just been mopped. The walls were so clean that it seemed as though there was light coming from the white paint. The single, thick, black paint stripe that wrapped around the walls of the store was perfectly measured and perfectly painted. Dave and his friend, Mark loaded up on candy, soda, popcorn, and a variety of snacks they would never finish.

“Bobby!” Dave’s father said to the man at the register. “The Bronx Bombers did it again!”

“Was there any doubt? I mean the Mets?! Please, they never had a chance.

“Oh of course not! And what a series from Jeter! I mean with a .409 batting average, of course he got MVP. His on base percentage was almost .500!

“Yeah, he killed it. Hey, by the way, any progress working with the cops?”

“I think we’re getting there. I finally got them to up the number of patrol cars in the neighborhood. They’ve already busted a few guys they think are involved in some organized crime. It took a lot of letters and community support, but hopefully they will stick with it. They know I can be their eyes and ears around here, so they’ll actually listen to what I say now. There’s so many people here that want to just live a safe life and they deserve it.”

Dave looked through his leaning tower of snacks, pulling a few things out that would go to waste. He heard a bell and looked up. The door to the convenience store swung open quickly, letting in a cold breeze. A tall man with a black mask walked through the door.

“Hey--uh--can I help you?” Bobby said nervously. The man said nothing. He silently pulled out a black pistol from his waistband. Bobby started emptying the register.

“Take it all, we don’t want any trouble, son.” Dave’s father looked at Dave and Mark who were crouched behind some shelves. He made a slight gesture with his hand, telling them to stay put. The man looked at Dave’s father who had then put his hands above his head.

“Do you want my wallet?” Dave’s father asked. “I can get it for you if you want.” The man said nothing in response and looked back at Bobby who had just finished emptying the register. He picked up the money and turned around toward the door. Then he stopped. The room was still. He turned back around, staring at Dave’s father. He aimed the gun at him, walked up close to him and whispered, “I think I’ll take that wallet now,” and pulled the trigger.

* * *

“You know what we’re doing, right?” Mark checked with Dave.

“You know I know.” He responded with a deadly straight face as he put on a tattoo sleeve.

“Why do you need that, no one will recognize you.”

“They might, okay. They will remember tattoos, not me.

They sat in a dark alley across from a small grocery store on the corner. Dave could feel his heart racing. It felt like a boxer hitting a speed bag inside his chest. They watched a cop drive past the store and around the corner.

“Alright. Let’s do this.”

They threw on their black ski masks, ran across the street and Mark shoved the door to the grocery store open. Suddenly, Dave’s heart rate dropped drastically. Suddenly, he was at peace.

“Ladies and gentlemen! Please get on the ground, close your eyes, and put your hands above your head!” Mark yelled. “If you don’t, well, it won’t be an open casket. You can trust me on that.”

*The man said nothing.
He silently pulled out
a black pistol from his
waistband. Bobby started
emptying the register.*

"You shouldn't make a scene. Your uncle would not be happy with this," Dave whispered to Mark.

"Who cares, just do your job,".

"I know mine. I don't know if you know yours." Dave went to the register, opened it up and piled cash into a grocery bag. He through in a bag of peanut M&M's and headed toward the door. He noticed a woman with a phone in the corner of his eye. He sprinted over, grabbed the phone and spoke.

"Hi--uh--is this 911?"

"Yes, where is the woman I was just speaking with?"

"Some guys are robbing the store and--and--and they grabbed her so she slid me her phone. Please get down here soon, we're at the Fairway Market on 2nd Avenue," Dave said in a shaky voice.

"We have officers on their way now.

"Thank you--uh their coming over here, I have to hang up." Dave put the phone in his pocket and ran out of the store with Mark.

"What the hell was that?!!" Mark asked angrily.

"I sent them to the Fairway Market on 2nd Avenue, not 12th. We needed some time. We're good."

"Fine."

They cut through a few alleys, threw the masks and the phone in the Hudson and headed back to Mark's uncle's apartment. They arrived at the greasy-looking building. Like many apartments in that area, there was graffiti up the sides of it. There was a new one Dave had not noticed before. La Verdad Mata. A hispanic gang must've put it up there. Dave didn't know Spanish but he knew Mark's uncle would not like another gang tagging up his apartment building. Mark knocked on the apartment door. An eye peered through the peephole. The door unlocked and opened. It felt like walking into another world. The marble floor was pristine, the furniture looked like no one had ever used it, and the massive TVs on two walls lit up the apartment.

"Give me some good news," said a deep, scratchy voice coming from the couch to their left."

"Got it," Mark said as he handed his uncle the

bag.

"Looks good," the large, towering man said. "What the hell is this?" he asked, pulling out a bag of peanut M&M's.

"Oh uh--uh--that's mine. Sir." Dave said with his head down. I just grabbed it--"

"You're kind of a weirdo, son." Mark's uncle said opening the bag and popping a few M&M's into his mouth. "But you're a good kid. And a good worker, so do you," he said with a chuckle as he handed the bag to Dave. "And don't be so scared all the time. I know I'm a big guy, but you've known me for years. I won't hurt ya." He shot a wink at Dave.

"Mhm," Dave mumbled as he forced a small smile out of the corner of his mouth.

"Alright, I got another job for you. A bank job. Yep, You're big dogs now, time to give you a real job. Dave, go into the back room, in the closet, grab the briefcase in the closet. Make sure it's the right one, it has a little bonus in there for your guy's good work." Dave walked back. There were two closets in the back room so he went to the one on his right. He opened up a dusty old briefcase that was shoved behind some boxes. No bonus. But there was a picture of a familiar person. It was his dad. Dave's breath was taken away. His dad never knew Mark's uncle. He searched through the briefcase and found his old address, with a list of his dad's work hours. A note said "In or Off". Dave knew what that meant. Whenever Mark's uncle couldn't talk in person and he needed a job done, he would send a briefcase to a man's house. "In" meant, bring the guy in to "talk". "Off" meant kill him. He closed the briefcase and put it back. He went to the other closet, found the bonus, and headed out.

"Took you long enough," the uncle said.

"Sorry, um I looked in the wrong closet and couldn't find anything but I got it."

"Oh yeah, that's all Tony's stuff. When he got busted a few weeks ago, I had a few guys go over to his place and take anything regarding jobs he had pulled in case the cops do an investigation. The idiot kept info on most of his jobs, he should've burned it. That lack of attention to detail is why he got busted. Anyway, I got some people coming over, you guys take that home, go over it. If you have any questions, come

on down here.

“Will do,” Dave and Mark both replied. They started walking out of the apartment building.

“Is it cool if I just crash at your place tonight?” Mark asked. “We could go over the plan for this job.”

“Okay,” Dave replied.

They arrived at Dave’s tiny apartment. The inside looked like the outside of Mark’s uncle’s apartment. Beat up and dirty.

“I need to talk to you,” Dave said.

“What’s up?” Mark replied.

“When I was trying to find the briefcase earlier, I picked up the wrong one. It had...photos of my dad and looked like your uncle put a hit out on him. Did you know about any of this?” Dave asked eagerly.

“I...had heard about it, yes.”

“You knew?!!”

“Look, obviously I didn’t know when it happened, we were just kids, but my uncle told me about it a while back. He also told me that your dad was a threat to his business. I mean, going around talking to cops, he was a snitch!”

“Don’t say crap about my dad! You were there when he died, how could you talk like that?”

“Maybe he deserved it.”

Dave hit Mark and threw him across the room. He tied his hands behind his back.

“I’m not gonna hurt you anymore. But I can’t have you getting in the way right now so stay here.

“You’re insane. Stop this. You’re not right in the head,” Mark said to him.

“I know,” Dave replied, “that’s pretty obvious. Let’s see what your uncle has to say about that.”

Dave grabbed his pistol, and got going to Mark’s uncle’s apartment. For the first time in a long time, he was almost at peace. He felt like he found a way to justice. He finally arrived at the apartment and knocked on the door. An eye looked through the peephole and the door unlocked and opened.

“Dave, I didn’t expect to see you so soon. Is there an issue with the job?” Mark’s uncle asked.

Mark eyeballed the room. There were three men, including Mark’s uncle. “No the job’s fine, but I wanted to talk to you about my gun. It’s been malfunctioning, I might need a new one. Can I show you?”

“Sure, let’s have a look.”

Dave pulled out his gun, aimed, and shot the two other men. Then he pointed the gun at Mark’s uncle.

“I know what you did to my dad. I’m giving you one chance to explain yourself” “Dave, we had to--”

“You know what? Nevermind.” He pulled the trigger.

Dave grabbed a trash bag from the kitchen and threw in every piece of evidence about a job from Mark’s uncle that he could find, including the ones involving himself. He threw the bag over his shoulder and walked to the police station. He walked up to the officers who were searching bags before people could walk into the station. He placed the trash bag on the table and put his hands above his head.

Dave took a breath. “I just killed three men.”



More!

Josh Dolin '19

Cracked Canvas

Samuel Schwartz '18

There lay a cramped house on 611 West 41st Drive; Its stature was paltry and slight. The house looked like what an elementary school student would draw: box-like with a plain door centered in-between two windows, both shut tight. It was not the kind of house that you would take a second look at, other than to see how exceptionally unexceptional it was. It was seemingly dull and lifeless. The brown paint was slapped on to the sides of the house and blended in with the brown grass and the dying trees, whose roots had shriveled up years earlier. The front yard, as I mentioned, was all but barren. What was once a thriving lawn, one to even be proud of, was bereft of life. A broken walkway, filled with cracks and pebbles split the lawn in half. As you proceeded down this short path, you arrived at the front porch, which was overrun with cobwebs and more deceased flora, each in its own clay pot. It was obvious upon further inspection that they had not been watered for an extended period of time due to the dry, cracked plants and the fact that the dirt was stale, and now impenetrable by a standard trowel. Dust and dried dirt caked the face of the door, notably dulling the once shiny emerald coating. All of these exterior facets enforced the conception that the house was empty, abandoned by the previous owner. However, this was false. Inside the cramped house lived an old man, who, just like his house, had been weathered and diluted by years of neglect.

The inside of the house consisted entirely of a single room. In this room was a small kitchen in one corner, and a twin bed in the adjacent corner. The kitchen, with only a small gas stove, a mini fridge and a rusted sink, was filled with dirty plates, which had been unattended to for a matter of weeks, just like the unmade bed across the room. The rest of the space was occupied by a worn down, round table in the middle of the room, resting on top of an old Navajo rug, which was filled to the brim with midnight blue and blazing scarlet patterns. On the table sat thousands upon thousands of papers, some stacks climbing all the way to the ceiling. Within these stacks were notebooks, letters, stories and even news articles. Each piece was printed out or written on different colored paper, each signifying its own type of writing. News

articles were on yellow paper, letters were on blue, notebooks were on red and so on. The only pieces of writing on plain white paper were his stories. These consisted of three stacks which stretched to the ceiling, and one more that was well on its way. He kept them on white paper because they were his purest form of writing, the only things that came straight from his heart.

As you entered the backyard, you would see that it isn't really a backyard at all, but a small cement patio with a desk stationed at the center. On the desk sat three fountain pens, one of which was always leaking copious amounts of white out on the right edge, and two stacks of red paper in the middle, one stack blank and the other filled with furious writing. Inside the shelves of the desk were hundreds upon hundreds of pictures, each from a different time period. Like the papers inside the house, each of these were tinted certain colors depending on their subjects. Pictures of strangers were tinted blue, buildings were yellow, and nature shots were tinted slightly green, as the frames usually already contained an abundance of the color. Each of the drawers in the desk contained these pictures except for one at the bottom, which was sealed by a padlock, whose key was kept by the old man.

Behind the desk, asleep, was the old man. There is no better way to describe him than simply average. He is not tall, nor is he short. He is not skinny nor fat, he is not muscular nor weak. From a visual standpoint, anyone would agree that he is as average as they come. The only defining features of his were his hair and glasses. His hair was long and brown, starting at the crown of his head and winding its way down to his shoulders. Usually he kept it up in a ponytail as to keep it out of the way, but on windy days, he left it down as the feeling of the breeze flowing through his now thinning hair was one the few pleasures left in his life. As his hair whipped around his face from the wind, a few strands got caught in his old Carrera sunglasses, which he wore at all times. The rounded frame sat softly on his face while the blacked-out lenses impeded most light that attempted to enter. No, the man was not blind, and while most people wouldn't be able to see out of those sunglasses in the most well-lit conditions, he had used them every day for his 35 years of ownership, never once taking them off, even while sleeping and showering.

As the breeze steadily picked up, the man lifted his head and peered at the papers in front of him through his dark sunglasses. Slowly, he put his hands on the desk, one at a time, and shakily sat up, struggling to shift his weight back. He then put his hair up in a ponytail, telling himself that there was no time to enjoy the cool breeze, and that he must get back to work. He then reached into a drawer and pulled out a blue-tinted photo of a man looking straight into the camera, obviously caught off-guard by the sudden flash. As the old man studied this, he reached over and grabbed a bottle of white out, being careful as not to spill it while opening the top. He then wearily brought it up to his nose and took a whiff of the pungent, chemical aroma. Closing his eyes, he then lowered it to his mouth, took a few sips off the office supply, and put the rest in his pocket for later consumption. Then, in one quick movement, not characteristic of his age, he picked up the leaking pen, flipped over a new page, and began to write, leaving blotches and overflows of the black ink all over the page.

As the old man began to write, he hunched over the paper with a strange youthfulness, and expeditiously jotted down anything and everything that came to the foreground of his mind. He starts off by writing about cows and how their spots made them look like oversized Dalmatians. He had always found skin patterns on animals and humans interesting. Whether it was a Zebras stripes or a human's birthmark, he found curiosity in it.

Before completing that thought however, he began another tangent on how his weathered desk was on its last legs, seeming as though it would fall apart any day. He wrote about this for a considerable amount of time, exploring his options as to if he should or shouldn't get a new desk and if so, which one. Eventually, he concluded that he would wait for the desk to actually fall apart, at which point he would decide what he would like to purchase. After finishing this thought, he reached again for the white out and took another sip, focusing on how the paint trickled down his throat, coating the inside of it. The old man was confident that the inside of his mouth and throat were permanently white, but there was no way to check as he didn't have a mirror in the house. He thought about what that would look like for a few moments and then continued his work.

After multiple hours of writing, the man finally finished the papers that he'd been working on. As soon as he placed the final period after the final word on the final paper, he placed it under the rest and carried them all inside. Once inside, he walked over to his bed and sat down, setting the stack of papers next to him. He then reached under his bed to find an old hardcover textbook he'd found a few years prior in front of a school. He struggled to get this up on to his lap, but eventually did, huffing and panting afterwards. Slowly, his hand then reached over to the stack of paper beside him and he grabbed the top page, which he started almost a whole three months prior.

As he combed back through his writing, he slashed and cut things from single words to whole pages, showing that he must go back and rewrite said parts at a later time. This process took months until the old man could finally place the stack on his round table; Every piece of writing there was perfect, written and rewritten over and over again until there was literally nothing wrong with it. However, that did not mean that the old man actually liked his writing, it was actually quite the opposite. The truth is that the old man despised his writing, hated every word of it. As soon as he completed a piece, he was absolutely finished, the mere thought of reading over it one more time repulsed him. And so, he placed it on his beaten round table on his old, beaten rug, never to be read again.

This was how the old man lived. He simply wrote all day, every day. Nobody knew how long he'd been doing it and nobody cared. He'd never been seen leaving his house and nobody had ever seen anyone entering it. He was alone, and that was how he liked it. All he wanted was to be alone with his words, and he achieved, at least until the little girl came knocking on his door.

The little girl couldn't have been older than seven and just like the old man, was entirely and wholly average. If you can imagine what a 7-year-old girl looks like, then that is what she looks like. She carried around a backpack which contained a few tissues, a notebook, and a pencil. These were her only possessions. What made this little girl different was that she was far more curious than most children, curious to the point that when she saw the old man's house, she marched right up to the door, wanting

to know who lived in such a plain dwelling. Before she started knocking, she looked around the porch, noticing all of the dead plants and insects swarming them. She didn't think much of them other than in a very objective way. When she looked around and saw a place like this house, she didn't think about how it got there, she thought of how it was and what that meant. The little girl didn't care about the process, she cared about the result.

The old man jumped when he heard the knock. At first, he thought it had maybe just been a raccoon, but the knocking persisted; It was definitely someone knocking on the door. The old man decided not answer, but whoever was at the door just kept knocking. He hadn't spoken to anybody for decades, and he wanted to keep it that way. While shuffling over to the door, he grabbed a red piece of paper and began to scribble on it.

There was no answer but she kept knocking. She knew someone lived here. There was something mysterious about the house that she wanted to find out. She didn't know what it was but there definitely was something about it. After what felt like five minutes of knocking, she began to really bang on the door, winding up and throwing all of her strength into each knock. Just as she started doing this, a note was slipped under the door. At first, she didn't notice this but then, whoever was behind the door, kicked it. This loud response scared her and she looked down, noticing the note. She then picked it up and read it loud enough that the person behind the door could hear her.

The old man leaned against the round table behind him, sure that he'd broken his foot. Although it hurt, he was glad that the banging stopped. As he turned away to get peas from the fridge, he heard a voice from behind the door. "Turn away or forever regret it'... Very original, please let me in."

He flinched at the voice of another person, especially a child. He hobbled over to the door, pen and paper in hand, heavily favoring his swollen right foot.

After no response, the little girl kept banging away. Suddenly, another note was slipped under the door. She quickly picked it up and read again,

"Please leave, you are trespassing."

"No, please let me in, I just want to talk"

The old man was getting more and more fatigued now, he just wanted to sit down. He quickly jotted down another note, hoping to deter the little girl behind the door.

"If you come in, you'll never come out' What's that supposed to mean? You're not going to scare me off, I just want to talk."

The old man let out a frustrated sigh. He didn't know who this was and why they were so interested in his home. Never in thirty years had someone even stepped foot on his property, and now there was this little girl. He wanted to just go lay down but he knew that she would just keep knocking or even sneak around the side yard.

The little girl was about to start banging again when she heard a chain lock slide from behind the door. When the door opened, the girl looked up. Looming from behind the cracked door was an older man, obviously annoyed by her persistence. He was shaking, but not because he was angry; his foot had been shattered by the blow to the door, but the little girl didn't know that. What she saw was a flustered old man with long hair, strange sunglasses and the whitest teeth she had ever seen.

"Why are you wearing sunglasses inside?"

"Why the hell are you knocking on my door?"

"I asked first sir."

"Well it's my house, I don't have to answer you."

The girl paused. She was curious about his sunglasses but she would find out about them later.

"I like how your house looks."

The old man looked around at the things he could see through the crack. It was the first time he'd looked at his front yard in a few years and he wasn't surprised by the shape it was in.

"You like that?"

“Yeah, I think it’s interesting. I have a feeling the inside of your house will be too.”

The old man softened a bit. A part of him appreciated someone noticing him.

“What’s your name?”

“Brie. What’s yours?”

“... Charles. Would you like to come inside?”

“Yes please, Charley.”

The old man hesitantly looked at her, thinking about correcting her, but decided not to. He then closed the door and unhooked the sliding lock. However, before he opened the door again for Brie, he drank the rest of the white out in his pocket. As he swallowed it, he opened the door completely.

Charley looked even more ominous now that the door was open all the way, but she still wasn’t afraid. As she peered behind him, she could see stacks of paper towering high into the room, some even touching the ceiling. The two of them stood there for a few seconds until Charley eventually said,

“Make yourself at home.” And moved aside, allowing her to come in.

As Brie entered the room, Charley closed the door behind her. He then shuffled over to his bed and continued to ice his foot.

“What’s wrong with your foot?”

“Broken.”

“From what?”

He didn’t want to tell her the real answer. Charley was weary of the little girl. He didn’t trust the circumstances under which she appeared. He had been unbothered for years until one random day, a little girl came knocking on his door and insisted on coming in.

The house was fascinating to Brie. She had always lived in relatively orderly and clean houses with her brothers and sisters. Never had she seen a kitchen so dirty or a bed with sheets that hadn’t been washed in what looked like ever. What interested her most were the papers in the middle of the room. All she had was her notebook, she couldn’t fathom having all of that

paper to write on.

“How long did that take you to write?”

“I don’t know.”

Charley actually did know. Filling all of that paper had taken him 47 years. He had started on his 18th birthday and never stopped. As he said this, Brie’s attention turned to the desk outside. She then began to walk out there before Charley could say anything.

To Brie, the desk was nothing less than a throne for a writer. It was weathered and unkempt, just like everything else in Charley’s house, and she loved it. She imagined what it would be like to have your own personal desk—a place where your thoughts are private and nobody can stop your mind from running free. Studying it closely, she walked up and sat down in the wood chair. She then opened a drawer and pulled out a photo. It was tinted yellow picture of the Golden Gate Bridge. She had seen it before in other better pictures, but this one had character. Brie liked the grainy film and tilted position of the photo. As she put it down, she noticed the drawer at the bottom of the desk with a padlock on it. When she turned around to ask Charley about it, he was already standing directly over her.

“What’s in that drawer?” She motioned towards the padlock.

“More pictures.”

“Pictures of what?”

“Nothing. Let’s go back inside.”

Charley didn’t like her exploring his house, and was now growing impatient with her. As the two of them walked back inside, he took her to the door and opened it, motioning that it was time for her to leave. However, she wasn’t ready to leave yet. She still wanted to do something.

“May I please read some of your writing Charley?”

“It’s Charles.” Charley was being curt with her, hoping that she would catch the hint and leave.

“May I please read some of your writing Charles?”

“No.”

This caught Brie off guard. She was sure that

Charley would want her to read something, obviously nobody had done so in a long time.

“Why not?”

“Because, no.”

“But why?”

“Can’t you just take no for answer?”

“No.” Charley smiled at this. A part of him actually appreciated the persistence of the little girl.

“Listen, you don’t want to read any of that. It’s all junk, just broken thoughts.”

“I don’t think so Charley.”

“They are. The writing and punctuation and prose may all be great, maybe even perfect, but the subjects are all wrong. You don’t want to read about the spots on the cows or how I drink white out.”

“You drink white out?”

“That’s beside the point. Everything in there is trash. I keep those photos to inspire me but nothing does. It hasn’t for thirty years. You don’t want anything to do with that.”

This made Brie step back for a few seconds. She really did want to read his writing but didn’t want to push the boundaries too much. Charley really did interest her, he seemed to be living a perfect life, and she wanted to know more, but it would have to be later. She decided to give it one more try, in hopes that she could get him to eventually show her some writing.

“Well Charley, you may not let me read your writing but you can definitely read mine.”

The girl reached into her backpack and pulled out her tattered composition notebook.

“I’m just a beginner, and I would love to know what you think of it. If you want to never see me again, then that’s fine, but at least you’ll have this notebook. If you do want some more company, then my case worker’s number is on the first page. It was really nice meeting you Charley. I hope you like my journal.”

Just like that, the little girl walked away, leaving Charley astonished. Things had happened so quickly

that he forgot he even had the notebook in his hand. As soon as she exited his line of sight, he closed the door and shuffled back to his bed. He then put the frozen peas back on his broken foot, opened the journal and began to read. What he read brought tears to his eyes. It was not good writing by any means, but it was the best thing he’d read for as long as he could remember. They weren’t regular stories like what a regular little girl would write, but just her thoughts. It seemed as though everything that came into her head, she had put down in her messy handwriting, all over the pages. For example, one line said, “I love my siblings.” While another one said, “I miss mom and dad.” What she had written contained something that his writing lacked: heart. And so, with a new determination, Charley reached under his bed, grabbed some white paper, shuffled over to his desk, sat down, grabbed his leaking fountain pen, let his hair down and took off his sunglasses. Before starting to write, he unlocked the bottom drawer of his desk and pulled out a picture of his daughter. He softly looked at this for a few moments, put it back down, and began to write.



Depth and Light

Andres Stidger '18

THIS VOLUME'S FEATURED TEACHER:

Suburbia

Ms. Tristine Zanotto

The echo of the dog barking
after the midnight rain
Echoes against the stucco of suburbia and pierces my sleep
The coldness whips at the window pane
and the chill in my bones slides like a cacophony into my soul
Sidling out of the fog
into the brutal light of the 3am
Hum of the fluorescent lights
Squinting to adjust eyes and see nothing but whiteness
and then blue, now yellow
The dirty boxes remain on the table
Unwelcome reminders of the sickness within
Quelling the scream that seems to ricochet within the body
The cat scuttles across the counter emotionless about the whole scene
Comfort in a fetal position, wishing daylight would come to save the soul
Slowly slipping away from the reality
Gasping for air
like a wet sponge soaked through
there is nothing but the high pitched piercing
of air in the thickness



A Quick Spin

Soren Peterson '18

1ST PLACE, PHOTOGRAPHY 2ND ANNUAL MOORINGS LITERARY & ARTS CONTEST