



MOORINGS

JESUIT HIGH SCHOOL SACRAMENTO LITERARY & ARTS JOURNAL



Cover Artwork: *Stacie and Julia*, Oscar Econome '19, Oil on canvas, Winner, Art

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Letter from the Editors

Welcome to the Fall Edition of the Third Volume of Moorings, the Jesuit High School Literary & Arts Journal. This publication serves as a platform for our student artists and writers to express their creative side and share their works.

Thanks to the overwhelming amount of submissions, Moorings is now able to publish two distinct editions, Fall and Spring. This year's Fall Edition features over 35 carefully curated works of Prose, Photography, Poetry, and Art compiled into a neat online publication for your viewing pleasure.

Like the season for which it is named, the Fall Edition reflects the quiet introspection which accompanies nature's retreat. This edition's contest winners reflect that spirit. In "The Call of the Accuser," we confront eldritch horrors and struggle with our inner demons. The poem "Autumn" inspires us to reflect on our pasts, and causes us to look out towards amorphous futures. We see the clash of anger

and apathy painted in the faces of "Stacie and Julia," and anxiously observe the jaws of a predator in "Great White". Reading "de_dust2," we exult in the thrill of victory alongside comrades. We observe the small things, like the delicate jellyfish of "Flowing, Content" or the quiet significance of "The Blue Towel," and stare at the dualities of "Parallel Worlds."

Moorings owes its existence to the support of many teachers, students, and faculty members. As the editors, we extend our thanks to Mr. O'Connor. We would also like to thank our faculty advisor, Mr. Loverich, for his tenacious leadership and generous patience.

So find a quiet spot, prepare a favored beverage, and take some time to peruse the works of this year's Fall Edition. Open your mind to contemplation and meditation. What you find within these pages may differ from the findings of others, but make no mistake—it is treasure nonetheless.

Allen Chen '19, Editor-in-Chief

Editors

Garrett Emmons '19

Peter Grimmett '19

Hunter Hechtl '19

Steven Noll '19

Dean Babb '20

David Dardis '20

James Eric Johannessen '20

Alfred Yu '21

Table of Contents

<i>Art</i>	Stacie and Julia	Oscar Econome '19	Cover
	Jhonny	Hunter Modlin '20	4
	Tyler, the Creator	Gustavo Villamil '19	7
	Great White	Matthias Milton '19	10
	Keating	Hunter Modlin '20	15
	Trail Warden	Peter Grimmett '19	16
	Basil	Oscar Econome '19	22
<i>Prose</i>	de_dust2	Alex Bonilla '19	5
	How to Handle Your Parents	Chazel Hakim '19	11
	Olivia Mika Dishno	Hunter Smith '19	13
	Strawberry Raven	Joshua Clark '19	19
	The Last Leaf	Deniro Gomez '19	23
	Everyone Dies and Then There is Peace	Jamieson Avila Da Rosa '19	31
	The Tree	Tobias German '19	35
	Just a Garage	Steven Noll '19	38
	Peace Be With You	Andrew Peters '19	43
The Call of the Accuser	Samuel Tumiaty '19	45	
<i>Poetry</i>	autumn	Charles Whitcomb '19	8
	Butterfly Propaganda	Nicholas Sottosanti '19	17
	The Aftermath	Andrew Sheleby '19	29
	falling asleep for dummies	Charles Whitcomb '19	41
	Last Dip	Austin Sutter '19	50
<i>Photography</i>	Sparkler	Damian Brunton '21	6
	An Ecuadorian Sunset	Soren Peterson '20	12
	Fireworks on Lake Tahoe	Jack Bratset '19	14
	The Blue Towel	Jack Bratset '19	18
	Deep Space	Soren Peterson '20	27
	Parallel Worlds	Adam Graham '19	28
	Fire and Steel	Caelin Sutch '20	30
	FronD	Damian Brunton '21	34
	Birdhouse	Elliot Lee '22	37
	Spirit of My Existence	Mason Czabaranek '19	40
	Trinity	Andrew Gannaway '21	42
	Calm After the Storm	Adam Graham '19	44
	Flowing, Content	Mason Czabaranek '19	49
	Dock	Avi Shapiro '20	51



"JHONNY"

Jhonny

Hunter Modlin '20
Apple pencil on Notability

de_dust2

Alex Bonilla '19

HONORABLE MENTION, PROSE

Waiting. The most tense forty-three seconds of the entire ninety minute experience. Against a blue-grey background, stands a six by five block grid. It compartmentalizes my collection of spray paints and weapon skins in my inventory. I've acquired my arsenal through trading in previous games. Tonight I'm packing an AK-47 engraved with a skull pattern, a Glock 18 with a silver slide and red grip, and a gold-plated Desert Eagle handgun. Suddenly I hear a serious voice in my head set.

"Ready," it warns.

A familiar high pitched beep rings in second-long intervals; filling my ears as I look up at the top left corner of my screen. A dark green oval "accept" button appears. I engage. I witness ten circles light up from black to green in succession; representing each player that comes online. The best part of the game reveals itself: the Counter-Strike community.

I've spent almost 900 hours in Counter-Strike: Global Offensive. Most of them on the classic map *de_dust2*. The goals are simple. Terrorists need to eliminate the counter terrorists or destroy the bomb site. Counter terrorists must eliminate the terrorists, run down the clock, or defuse the bomb. "A colossal time waster" my mother calls it. I disagree. Counter Strike is a place free from the stresses of high school life: grades, SAT exams, homework, and playground gossip. For ninety minutes, I'm not sitting at a desk in my bedroom. I'm fearlessly fighting in the desert terrain of a foreign country. It's my opportunity to be someone else for a little while. I have a confidence that I don't always feel when I'm Alex. *Rageface090* is my alternate persona. He is a super villain and a superhero. He views every play and learns from every mistake, something we don't always do in the real world.

I spawn on the terrorist side. My eyes look past the charcoal grey oil barrels and the brown dumpster blocking the dirt road lined by sandstone buildings. I quickly check my display: 100 hit points, \$800, my Glock 18, and four teammates. Each player is

assigned a color: orange, green, yellow, and purple. I'm Blue as always. The start timer counts down. Three, two, one. "Let us go my brothers."

Brothers. That's how I view my teammates. Most nights, I'm playing with my friends. Andrew Enmark, screen name "Billy the Beast," is my high school debate partner and the team's designated sniper. As in real life, we've had our fair share of losses. I've known Gabe Rogers, screen name "FatHippo_Kirby," since preschool. If it wasn't for Gabe, I wouldn't play classical guitar or be a gamer. Evan Putnam, screen name "HermesRocks," builds computers in his spare time and spends his lunches talking about politics with me. Austin Law, screen name "Pointless_Pigon," is my AP hook-up. I have four classes with him. Both in game and out of game, the five of us share a brotherhood.

Tonight however, I'm playing with four strangers. As we move forward, I jump from a fifteen foot ledge onto a dumpster and then to the ground, landing at the Upper Tunnels entrance. A teammate shouts, "one

Lower!" before being hit square in the head. With no helmet, he goes down instantly. The team feels the loss immediately. It's eerily silent and dark. I climb up onto a pallet of bricks in the back of

the tunnel to give myself a better position. I don't see or hear anyone. I'm so engulfed in the action that I can't feel my rubberized Razer mouse, my mechanical keyboard, or my wireless headset. I quietly walk forward, checking behind the only wooden crate in the room to avoid an ambush. "Sector clear," I radio to my teammates in a whisper. I move towards the center of the battlefield. Two counter terrorists jump over my head. They don't see me. I shoot. They turn around and fire back. In a matter of seconds I've been eliminated; taking one of the counter terrorists with me to the grave.

Between rounds, I meet the team. Orange is a college student in engineering school; Green just passed the Washington State bar exam; Yellow is active duty military; and Purple is the president of her high school's gaming club. These are just four of the hundreds of thousands of people I've met playing the game. We come from different cities, states, and countries. I've practiced my Spanish with people from Mexico, "Corres a B." The skins decorating

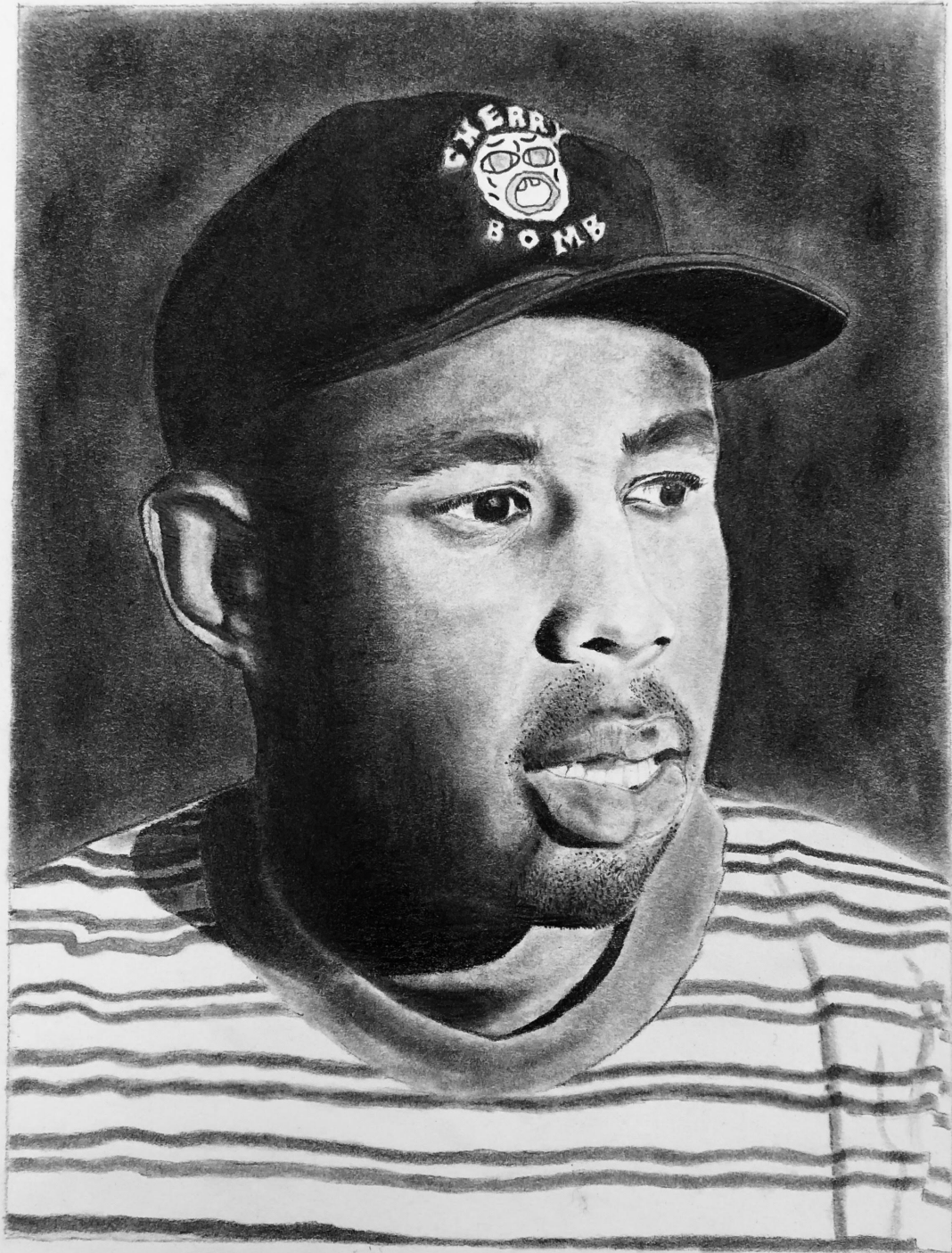
our weapons are all created by the players. Veterans of the game post tips and tricks for newer players on YouTube, sometimes offering free coaching. We don't identify ourselves by our race, religion, or political alignment. When we deploy, we become competitive in a cooperative way. We're willing to

sacrifice ourselves for the good of the team; an ideal that sometimes the world forgets. We can't take away all judgement: we're evaluated by our win loss record. But that doesn't mean that an expert won't play with a beginner. When we sit down for those ninety minutes, we're just happy to be in the game.



Sparkler

Damian Brunton '21
Digital photograph



Tyler, the Creator

Gustavo Villamil '19
Pencil on paper

autumn

Charles Whitcomb

WINNER, POETRY

for the past two years,
driving down the dry, brown road
out near the farms, where most people think
of when thinking of my home and the houses
are white, with brown doors and old cars,
and old people, and never any animals

at least if there were, i would never know
and every night, running slowly in a cut-off
and black pants

once or twice, too close for comfort, but
i've always considered myself adept behind
the wheel. never expected, looking back,
smiled, sometimes, less often, surprise

not fear, something simpler, more personal, more
intimate, more innocent, simpler simpler simpler

lying on the back porch, eyes closed,
flares flickering, and images fleeting, brake brake
brake, something simpler, it's still summer. it's june.
no, it's august and i'm tired. i want to go to sleep,
but it's august and the lights are always on and i've
taken seventeen aspirin in the last four days, but i'm
not running fever it's just a cold and it's no longer
simple. it's not a cold, but i'm freezing and
there's a projector in my head
spinning and spinning and spinning
it's black and it's an suv and it's cold and
it's so late and i really should get home soon

running on the side of the road,
warm, blonde, but november is colder, so
assume brown, or at the very least, it's dyed.
with black roots. the trees don't grow anymore
in the backyard like when we were kids, and there's
less to focus on. blending colours just isn't fun anymore.

home feels empty when you love your job and
there's not a chance in hell, static from the receiver.
you'll never make that same brown-green like how

you painted the pizza box and i split your guitar in two
i'm just guessing it's autumn, sunglasses like plaster to
the forehead and i'm sweating on the parking break
i'm sorry i broke your guitar, tape and glue spread thick
upon the swelling, beating, pulsing strings that hook
the heart to the lungs and it's not simple it's not simple

we sat in the bookstore, reading children's books, but it
isn't simple, "i wish i could still miss you," just hang up
but your basement is warmer than my floor
it's just a fight, the knuckles are covered in several coats
of adhesive, but just to display how all this, the pain too,
a cover-up, kept close, even with a broken, bleeding nose

walking away, calm, collected, as if on coals

there's always shows about addicts on television, so
keep an eye for the camera in the corner, bleeding red
light onto your bedroom floor, new carpet beginning to burn
calling and running, sitting, kitchen chair, softly speaking

cleanse me. showered in rose pedals and white wine.
talking like a dog that learned to speak.

distractions, everywhere. stop at the light. bottle
upon bottle, unopened on the freezer shelf of raley's.
spitting, screaming, thirteen minus twenty hours, but i
owe you nothing.

dust in the exhaust and the coolant is just murky

no palm trees. chipped glass. coors light
golden can. hotel room. run away, syracuse
water-proof, seeping through, spillway, crashing down.

and my head turns left every night,
but it's much too hard to make out
your figure, among the fallen leaves
and the black sun.



Great White

Matthias Milton '19
Scratchboard

HONORABLE MENTION, ART

How to Handle Your Parents

Chazel Hakim '19

Your parents are a pain: we get it, your friends get it, even your own parents get it. We know how much you struggle with your teenage troubles while your parents do nothing. You're practicing for two hours every day after school, doing too much homework at home, all while talking to your friends and your significant other, but your parents still have the audacity to ask you for your precious time. They come up and surprise you with torturing questions like how are you or did you eat or the dreadful how was school, and you are so tired every day that all you can mumble is "fine," hoping that they get the cue that you don't want to talk (but they never do).

Fear not, however! Parents can seem like monsters, especially when they take away your Xbox, your iPhone, or your car keys because you might have "bad grades" or were caught with something so harmless as a Juul. But here's a secret: your parents are easy to handle; you just need to know the right strategy when you encounter them. You have the power to rule your own life, even though your parents may think that they have control because they provide for your food, water, and shelter. You have the power to be the one who wears the pants in the family—not your dad and not your mom. You.

To handle your parents, you must first acknowledge that they exist. Observe them as they consume their steak and potatoes, talk about coworkers, family drama, and tax revenue at the dinner table. You can say, "What's tax revenue?" (because you likely won't know what tax revenue is). Your parents will look at you with shock, then a smile, and then your dad will give you a lengthy explanation. Then show that you're listening, and, voila, your dad will finally let you go out with your friends again! And when you are waiting after school and they pick you up in their minivan with your little brother, take your eyes off the latest Instagram post and look into their eyes when you jump in the car. You will then have acknowledged that they are, indeed, driving you home. Your parents will think, "Wow, my child actually cares

about me," and they will smile and perhaps give your own driving privileges back. Who knew it was this easy?

But don't stop there! You haven't exerted all of your potential power. You need to go one step further, and all you have to do is acknowledge that your parents, too, have a life. What? That's it? And not just a life either. Yes, they work in that cubicle office that you say you'll never work in, but, besides their job, they have interests of their own. Ask your mom to show you her Pinterest and see that she has 10,000+ followers! You will not only be fascinated, but your mom will be astonished that you suddenly care, and she now might even buy you that new Beats Pill you want (Keep asking her questions, and she might even show you her Snapchat Story. You didn't even know she had Snapchat in the first place. Your mom is cool!). Then, go over to your dad and ask him about that Metallica poster he keeps above his cabinet of records. He'll tell you that they are his favorite band, to which you must say, "Oh, I like their song 'One.'" Your dad's eyes will light up and he'll pull out every Metallica record from his cabinet of records to show you, and that's when you ask to go see Travis Scott in concert (bonus: you take your dad to the concert and you'll get more rewards).

And that's all you need to do to handle your parents. Just follow those directions, and they won't be a liability in your life anymore. In fact, you might actually like having them around for once. You might talk to them more, tell your friends good things about them, and even save some precious time just for them on the weekends.

But, keep in mind that this is all for your own gain and satisfaction. It won't work if you're genuinely interested in your parents' well-being; they would catch you in an instant. Besides, why would any teenager ever do that?



An Ecuadorian Sunset

Soren Peterson '20
Digital photograph

Olivia Mika Dishno

Hunter Smith '19

I don't know when I started counting the times I made her smile. It started subconsciously, I guess, fueled by a desire to make her happy, to see a look on her face like I had just told her that it was Christmas, her birthday, and the last day of school all at once. Sometimes, I can hear her smiling. It sounds like thousands of delicate, crystal champagne glasses clinking at once.

I don't think she notices what she does to the people around her when she smiles. She can't. Unless she stepped into my shoes (admittedly too large for her) and saw herself how I did, every single day, she can't understand. When she smiles it's like cherry blossom trees and freshly fallen snow on Mt. Fuji and my heart beating as fast as the trains rushing through Shinjuku Station. Her smile tastes like apple pie. Warm and sweet.

It started with the water park. Our relationship, as well as the game. I offered to pay for her vitamin water (she is very health-conscious, much to the gratitude of her organs), I caught her when she tripped on the steps leading up to the Ultimate Super Duper Slide of Death™. She looked at me and I looked at her. She's gorgeous, I thought. She smiled each and every time. Of course she did. Even though there were countless kids playing laser tag and mini-golf around us, I was having the most fun out of anyone at that water park. When she smiled I could taste strawberries like the ones she always had in a little bag in her car for a snack. Tart, sharp, and very much in your face.

One. That was the first time I started counting. When I first saw her as she stepped out of her car, sunscreen smeared over her cheeks and nose. Blistering asphalt and painfully blue skies and an unmerciful sun beating down on us and yet she was smiling. Even at two in the afternoon and the season of summer firmly entrenched in California, the world seemed awfully dark before she smiled. I didn't know if she smiled because of nervousness or if she was truly happy to see me or some other reason I couldn't

think of. A month later, and I figured out why she smiled. It was her natural state. She walked towards me, wearing a white top with flowers on it and jean shorts, a bathing suit presumably underneath. We hugged, looked at each other, and grinned. That was how we would greet, just like that, for the rest of our lives. Away from the struggles of school and a hectic dancing schedule that left her parched physically as well as mentally, she was radiant.

One turned into two and two turned into three and three turned into six-hundred, somewhere down the line. She smiles for all sorts of reasons, that girl. Olivia smiles when she sees me, she smiles when her dog George jumps on her back, she smiles when someone makes her uncomfortable and she's looking to get out of the situation, and she smiles when there wasn't anything particular to smile about. Just because. Smiling for the sake of smiling. Sometimes, though, smiling hurt her as much as getting stabbed.

Unfortunately, she smiles when she's hurting so much she can barely breathe. Olivia's life looks like this: school, dance, school, sleep (if she was lucky). Lather, wash, repeat. Her face lights up like bonfires when she sees me, and even though my room is pitch black I swear that I can't remember whether I turned off the lights or not. I don't know if it was sweat and grease in her hair that made it look sleek and shiny, or if it was just the natural vibrancy of her little lion's mane.

Even though she smiles a lot, she can't erase the bags under those golden-brown doe eyes, can't erase the vacant look she got while doing homework, can't erase how sometimes, her life yanked and pulled her in so many directions that she tore. She's not a bungee cord, God.

I don't get why she thinks she's ugly. I get that all girls feel something like that, deep down in their hearts, stemming from tightening, thick, thorny vines of social pressure and the seeds of resentment sown into us from the day we first go to school. God forbid acknowledging your own strengths in this day and age. But she isn't ugly. Not at all, no sir. It gets hard for people to tell, sometimes, how much they mean to someone else. Unless they're explicitly told, again and again, "You matter!" and "You're gorgeous!" and "I

love you!” people retreat into their carapaces of self-doubt like turtles. So I told her a lot of things because I wanted to, and because I wanted her to keep smiling. I loved her, naturally.

Olivia isn't someone who can be contained, even

in all of the pages my printer can print. But I can try, and hopefully make someone else smile. Smiles aren't gifts given to people, they're lent. The necessity to spread smiles was always implicit, at least to me. And when you smile with your entire body as Olivia does, it's the least you can do to pass it on.



***Fireworks on
Lake Tahoe***

Jack Bratset '19
Digital photograph



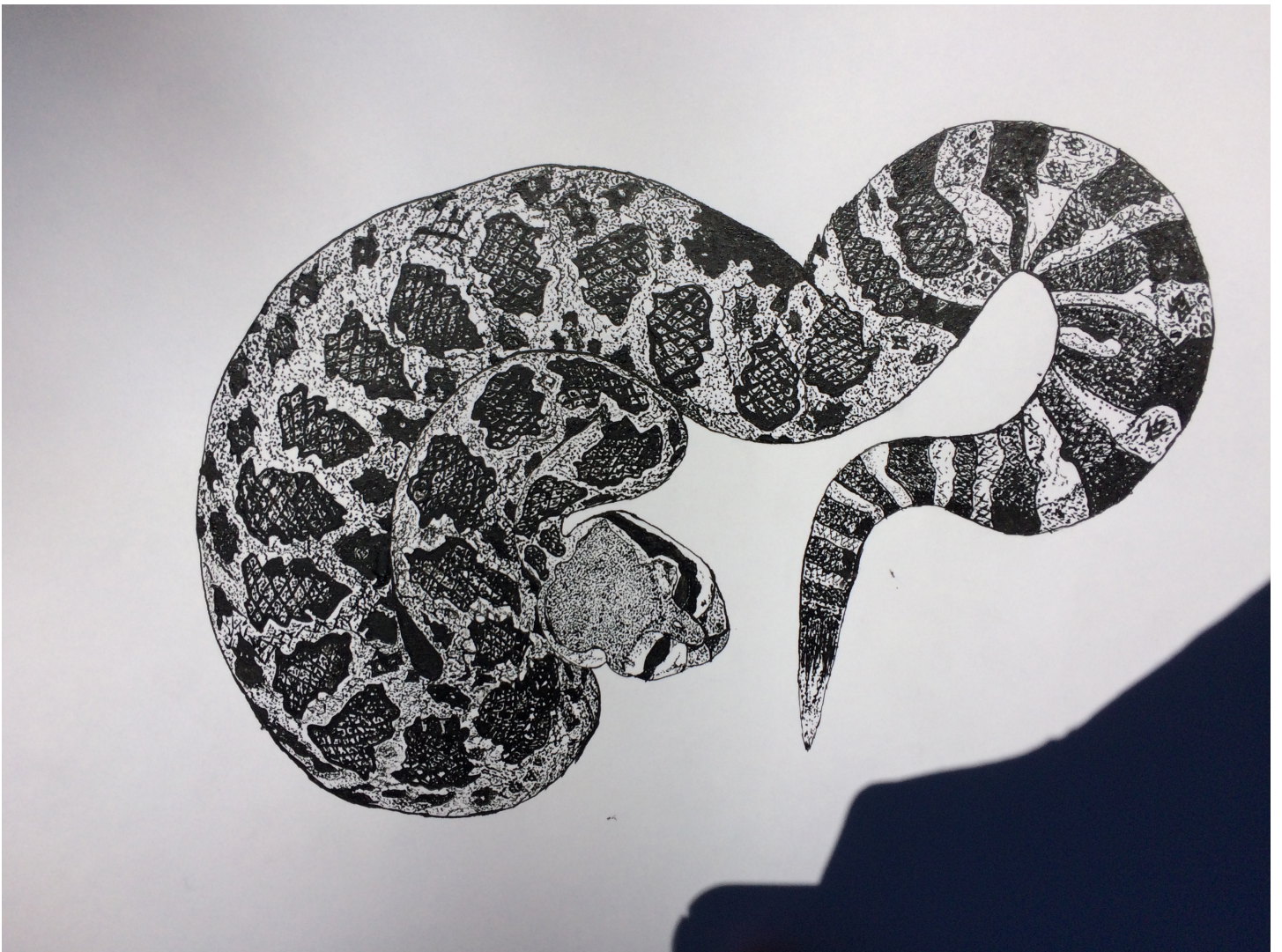
"KEATING"
H/M

Keating

Hunter Modlin '20

Apple pencil on Notability

HONORABLE MENTION, ART



Trail Warden

Peter Grimmett '19

Ink on paper

Butterfly Propaganda

Nicholas Sottosanti '19

Watch 'er flutter, watch 'er fly,
Smooth like butter, through the,
Violently gripping cold,
Crisp cut, splices with the colored star,
One succ, molasses sweet tar,
Full for now, mosquito gang, bout to pop,
Scamper now,
Please don't linger, please don't stop,
Land on finger, land on stump,
Murker water, don't peek,
"Croak, croak," but she don't speak,
For this life, she has already changed,
Violently gripping velvet,
Full for now, toad gang,
Watch 'er struggle, Watch 'er die.



The Blue Towel

Jack Bratset '19
Digital photograph

HONORABLE MENTION, PHOTOGRAPHY

Strawberry Raven

Joshua Clark '19

A soft white gold breeze travelled over the feathery grass hills. The tall, dry, tan grass gave life to the hillside, breathing with every gust. The mounds of cool, dry earth popping up here and there showed signs of gophers and critters living in the hillside, taking it over from the inside out. Roots from the grass and other plants piped their way through the ground, finding essential resources. Atop this hill was a bench made of wood from long ago, a small worn down sugar maple tree to the right, and a large boulder to the left. When sitting on the bench, all the surrounding land could be seen. In this case it was more of a mountain than a hill. Down below, was the city.

The city had shiny, futuristic trains running through it, giving insight to the future. The tall, glass clad skyscrapers stuck out of the city's base, puffing out hot air to cool their insides down, pulling all of the air through the city. The skyscrapers were where the people worked, and where some lived. They were what made up and ran the city. Below the well constructed roads, weaving in and out, were the electricians, gasworks, waterworks, steamworks. They strung themselves through the ground, delivering essential resources to the people. A miniature metropolis, it had everything.

Down there in the city, life was, well life. People got up from short and far between sleep, bidding adieu to their beds and rising to their morning routines. Some favoured a morning shower, hot water relaxing them out of their cool slumber, and revitalising them for their busy day ahead. Others preferred to shower before they said hello to their bed and pillow, hot water relaxing them into their cool slumber, preparing them for their still night ahead. As they got on with their routines, brushing teeth, doing hair, sometimes eating breakfast, they were soon off to the races. Loading themselves into their chic automobiles, getting on trains and trolleys, carpooling and whatnot, the clocks started ticking, the odometer soon ticking faster than the clock. Moving swiftly through the city, in and out of lanes and terminals, through lights and crossings until they

arrived at their second home, for it was the place where they spent the most time alongside their actual home. A place to park, a walk from a station, and finding an entrance in was the next option. They ran around looking for a way into the building and found it, shooting up the stairwells and elevators like their lives depended on it, for it really was. They rushed to their desks, the hum of lamps and computers and typewriters mucked the air. The office was on. They all sat there, working diligently and efficiently at accomplishing the same mundane task over and over again. Through and through again they went through paper pile after paper pile, request after request. Then lunch. Some worked through their lunch, crumbs occupying the real estate of their keyboards and pencil holders. Others dared to go back out into the road havoc outside. Workers joined workers down in the lunchroom, shying away from work and manic all together, trying to catch their breath. As they worked and worked, the day grew on. Soon, tired and unproductive, they retired to their autos again and shot out, for any way home possible. Trains and roads packed to the full, everyone seeking their bed and a nice hot plate of food. The ones who enjoyed a shower before bed were looking forward to that the most, something to help them finally relax after a long day of work.

They all sat there, working diligently and efficiently at accomplishing the same mundane task over and over again.

This process repeats itself for everyone over the course of the week. As they run through their monotonous schedules, figuring out what's what and what should go where and who should do this. They stress and overwork themselves to the point of tipping at the end of the week. Once there, everyone leaves on time and everything jams up. Roadways and tramways and everything is stopped still in their tracks. Once at home for the end of the week, however, they all begin to relax and forget everything of the madness. They deserve it, but of course.

One week, a man young in his spirit and great in his wisdom, took one of the trains to the hillside. From the station there, he hiked the long and overgrown path to this sugar maple tree. Nothing in his hands except a weathered wicker basket, and a hat, for his head had gotten sweaty. He hiked through the overgrown tall grass and traversed his way across worlds to the archaic bench. Silently, minus his breath, he sat down on the bench, letting it creak to its old friend. He sat there for a few minutes, taking the

sights in. He stared around at everything, all of the surrounding land, his breath worn from the short hike. Birds could be heard, softly chatting with each other off in the distance. The trees rustled in the wind and the sunlight gave the bench and surroundings a nice, low angle, blanket of light. The old man reached down into his basket, and pulled out an old aluminum container, wrapped in a damp cloth. He meticulously unwrapped the cloth and placed it back in the basket, placing the aluminium container on the bench seat beside him. Next, wrapped in a similar looking damp cloth, he pulled out a bottle of sparkling grapefruit soda, and placed it alongside the container, along with an old bottle opener. He popped the top off the bottle, the sparkling adding a nice crackle and grapefruit aroma to the whole scene. He placed the cap and opener into the basket. He reached out and carefully opened the container, which was full of sliced strawberries. Their glistening red and white made for a beautiful pop of colour against the otherwise earth tone environment, the tree being leafless at the time.

The man simply sat there and pondered about the unknown, thinking to himself, with the occasional slip of a chuckle when he thought of something funny or thrilling. He stared off into the distance and around at everything, unaware of what he was staring at for he was lost in thought. As he took small, guarded bites of the strawberries, savoring every bite like it was his last, a raven, black as could be, flew down from the sugar maple. It was funny how he had not noticed the raven there before, for it was of enormous stature, with a brooding chest, and lustrous black feathers. It must've flown up from the other side of the hill while I was gathering my drink, the man thought to himself. The raven hopped over along the beaten dirt patch in front of the bench. The two stared at each other for a while, watching how each reacted to a shift in the wind or the noise of a bug in the distance. They studied each other.

In a low, even voice, the man said

“Why hello there.”

The raven cocked its head and blinked a few times.

“Do you care for a strawberry?” he said again in the same low voice, making sure to definitively

enunciate every syllable and letter in the word strawberry.

The raven hopped closer to the left side of the bench, as the man was sitting close to the right, his food to his right and the basket to his left. The raven hopped up onto the bench and let out a soft caw, like it were sighing and the breath caught the vocal cords on the way out.

“That’s a yes from you if I’ve ever heard one.” He placed a strawberry on the bench to his left, the raven taken aback by the movement of his hand towards itself.

“It’s alright,” the man reassured the raven, “it’s only a strawberry. You did want a strawberry, did you not? ...I’m not going to hurt you. I tired myself out going up that hill. You probably saw me.”

The raven glared at the man and took small hops forward towards the strawberry, and lowered its beak to the fruit. The raven puzzled it for a moment, and then bit into it, swallowing it whole, eating to be full and not savouring it as the man had.

This of course was natural; the raven was merely a bird, they still knew a lot, just not enough. This thought perplexed the man.

“Why do we humans act the way we do, raven?”

The raven sat there confused, mostly because it couldn’t speak.

“Why do we get up every morning, go through our routines, no matter how hectic, or simple they are, and follow through the rest of our day working to relax only to again work? Why do we do that?”

The raven, still not knowing exactly what to do, stood there still in the breeze and stared into the man. An uncoordinated silence fell between them as they both stared there at each other, slowly moving their heads and eyes down towards the city. The man took a coordinated breath.

“I... I’ve just been so stressed lately raven. So much of the same monotonous task day in-day out has worked me to the bone. I used to enjoy my work and cherish it, it’s what kept me and the family going. People used to depend on their families, did you know

that raven?”

The raven looked down at the dirt patch on the ground, and at the man’s worn out shoes, covered in the tan dirt from the path.

“I used to come up to this glorious spot every week with her raven. This is the first time I’ve been here in months.” He took a breath. “It’s been months since she left the way the crow flies.”

The raven looked perplexingly at the man and rustled its feathers, making the sound of sheets of paper tumbling through the wind.

“Sorry for the joke, they’re the only things that keep me talking and laughing.”

They sat there in silence for a few minutes, the breeze drifted on, the grasses below rustled in the wind. It was almost noon time, the roadways and city would soon be flooded with all of the people daring enough to leave the office to seek food.

“I like to make jokes... A lot. I enjoy making people happy, making them feel something. It gives me joy in return. But it’s so hard to get that return joy when no one cares anymore. I’m old and retired now, the traffic down there doesn’t concern me anymore. Instead I have to find other ways to fill all of this time I have. Whether it be making jokes in the checkout line at the market or visiting all of the restaurants and parks that are used for food and pathways.”

The raven looked up at the man, then down at the container, then back up at the man. The man watched.

“I take it you want another strawberry. They’re very good, I grow them myself, on a vine in the backyard. Well actually, she used to grow them, but I’ve tried to keep them up. I’ve done a fairly good job, don’t you think?” The man gave the raven another strawberry slice as he was saying this, a melancholy moment between the two of them.

The raven took the strawberry delicately in its beak, and with earnestness, set it down on the wood

of the bench, making sure it didn’t fall between the worn wood slats. Once down, it stared at the berry for a moment, contemplating it, and took a small, triangular shaped bite out of it. It swallowed this, after a time, and took another. The man sat there through all of this, intently watching the bird.

“I guess you do understand me, raven. Look at you, savouring the strawberry. You care for all of the work that’s gone into it.” The man took a strawberry to his mouth, smelling its sweet aroma before savouring it as well. Another few minutes passed of them there on the bench, staring out over the city.

Now picking up, the light breeze from earlier could be felt on the skin now. A gust came by every ten or so. The dry branches of the sugar maple clattered every time.

“I think I’m doing all right raven, I’m finally getting back on my path to where it doesn’t hurt anymore. Things may not be well for everyone else, but I’m doing fine.”

The raven shifted on the bench, the noise similar to a small twig tapping the side of a house in the wind. The thought of this made the man chuckle a little, he didn’t quite know why. He just needed to laugh a little. After chuckling, the man looked down and took a sorrowful, but relieved breath.

“Thank you for that raven. You probably don’t know why I laughed, and I’m not entirely sure I know why either. But it feels good to be happy again.”

The raven looked out over the city. The man sat and thought, about her.

“Why do we get up every morning, go through our routines, no matter how hectic, or simple they are, and follow through the rest of our day working to relax only to again work? Why do we do that?”



Basil

Oscar Econome '19
Oil on canvas

The Last Leaf

Deniro Gomez '19

The night was overwhelming. The wind outside of the home where Mari spent most of his adolescent days was brutal during the dawn of the holiday season. He fondly remembered times where he would sit by the side of his grandfather's decade-old reclining chair like a dog would accompany its owner. The scratching audio of the television was loud, but the two had become accustomed to the sound. The New York Yankees led their all-time rival the Boston Red Sox into the bottom of the 9th inning of what was a close 3-1 game. The house smelled of Folgers dripped coffee throughout the first half of the day as it was Mari's grandfather's daily routine of consuming at least two cups. Mari became acquainted with the powerful odor as it grew on him like a weed that battled through concrete. Live instruments fill the void of the room as they were layered with the soothing voice of Elvis Presley singing "I Can't Help Falling In Love With You".

Standing outside the home, A now 19 year old Mari laughed to himself reminiscing instances where his grandfather relayed stories of the past like an audiobook of amazement. A blissful moment replayed itself in his mind while the veteran Major League Baseball announcer estimates the next pitch of the seasoned all-star pitcher Mariano Rivera and says " Now John watch here for the famous cutter we've come to love so dearly from Mariano over the ye-"

His grandpa almost instinctively replies with "No he's not!"

Confused by the statement, Mari wondered how the announcer could be wrong as Rivera is known for his cutter and said "Wait, why wouldn't he?"

Mari's grandfather looked to him intently and stated "Cause that's what everyone expects him to throw, he's sharper than that" tapping his repeatedly.

Rivera clenches the ball and releases it across the mound and the announcer shouts "Ooo he's got him on his heels with that changeup inside and out, and that's strike three. Yankees take this one."

His grandfather chuckled theatrically as he immediately turns to his left facing Mari and with a grin saying "I hate it when I'm always right."

Through the window near the reclining chair stands a larger-than-life Red Maple Tree that had stood to entertain generations of children and grandchildren that came before Mari with its vast array of color and intoxicating scent of sweetness. Five decades ago, the grandfather had planted the seed of his house's landmark. The tree was the popular choice for the younger family members with its playground of amusement. Mari harkens the moments of subtle patronization that were displayed by his elder cousins as he held the title of being the youngest of the clan.

Together, the kids would be there for numerous weekends, summers, and holidays. No matter where their lives would swoop them away during the week they would retreat back to their home base of the maple tree which hosted the youth's imaginary events from their Super Bowl to their World Series during the weekends. Along the trails of Mari's skin inscribed a map filled with scars and bruises from the rough housing of young boys as they flaunted their masculinity. Their most loyal supporter was none other than the grandfather himself, in attendance for every competition and presentation of talents that shined through his window.

The fluorescent flickering of Christmas lights disrupted Mari's stream of nostalgia. The rainbow hue reflected off the widespread scattered piles of red maple leaves. Normally, the grandfather attempted his best to keep the fallen leaves in a well-kept pile, but Father Time had caught up to him as they appeared more and more scattered with each year that passed. Mari admired every aspect of the maple leaves growing up as he respected the key differences in the ones he witnessed. From a distance the maple tree seemed to be in perfect harmony and unison, shifting and adapting to the harsh weather it was embellished with. However, Mari witnessed the variety in health, shape, and detailed patterns of multiple leaves throughout the years as they fell to the Earth. Some were completely remarkable in their visual and attachment to the tree branch while others were more separated and less appealing to the pupil of his eye. Nonetheless, no matter how dull or beautiful

Mari became acquainted with the powerful odor as it grew on him like a weed that battled through concrete.

the leaves were each season, Mari and his grandfather both were aware that each leaf would remove itself from the nourishment of the tree sometime within the fourteen weeks of winter. Mari's grandpa always felt attached to every generation of the Red Maple leaves, but was always optimistic for what would come in the next season.

The wooden frame of the door opened slowly as if it cried for lubricant. Mari and his grandfather exchanged mutual faces of joy before being formally greeted.

The grandfather in a playful manner says, "I almost forgot what you looked like it feels so long," causing Mari to fail in his ability to hold in a smile exposing his crater-like dimples. The dining table had been set for six but only the two of them broke bread that night. Mari's grandpa explained that the other family members who had been invited that evening had all been blown away by unforeseen circumstances. Cousin Charlie had a rendezvous with his new love interest that evening, which he had forgotten about. Aunt Estelle had the sudden urge to attempt to get ahead on a business project assigned to her earlier in the week. Mari's oldest cousin, Andy, had to take his son to batting practice and stay afterwards for an unexpected parent meeting. Aunt Linda wasn't able get ahold of a babysitter to take care of her newborn baby girl.

Just like the smell of brewed coffee, the pair had become acquainted with sharing meals amongst themselves over the years. The absence allowed them to catch up on Mari's insightful college experience. He shared the highlights of the warm weather that he experienced in the west coast and that even though it was pleasant, nothing compared to the comfort of where he originated. The grandfather discussed with a slight quiver in his voice that Christmas Day would be a little similar to the dinner of that evening as most of the family had committed to another event with friends or other in-laws for the holiday. Even Mari's parents would be stranded at George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Texas due to the high amount of air traffic. Mari was stunned since it had been a yearly tradition for the families to capture a family photo by the maple

tree and enjoy a morning brunch together. Ultimately, they were both disappointed, but not surprised as little by little the family had been straying from even the greatest of holidays and birthdays that were once instinctive to attend due to each becoming busier in their own personal lives.

Later that night, Mari laid his thick set of black hair to rest on the leathery couch he swore had shrunk since he was the age of five. He stared out the window seeing what was once a well-organized display of maple leaves transition into to a distraught display of isolation. Mari felt as if the moonlight was exposing the flaws of each leaf, as they were separated from one another. Slowly, the wind drove out the dried up runts of the piles as they ascended off to other lawns and streets.

Dean Martin kicked off the morning with "Baby it's cold outside" playing from the tiny stereo in his grandfather's room which awoke Mari at the prompt hour of seven a.m. Echoing the thin walls of the house was his grandpa joining Dino in singing his classic hit from the open doorway of the restroom.

Mari leaned his body by the side of the door glancing at his grandfather shaving his silver grey stubble with a single razor blade.

Jokingly Mari comments "Hey, I thought this song was a solo all these years."

The grandfather perks his eyes up at the reflection of Mari in the mirror and sarcastically replies "Woah I almost thought you were my grandson... but he doesn't wake up before noon." with a charming wink.

Mari goes back to his traveling suitcase to obtain his festive red button up Henley he had recently purchased from his nearby Macy's on campus. His grandfather, with a dust remover and a lint cloth, walked by the living room as he said "Merry Christmas Son! Let's make this place look better than those grades your mother has been showing me."

Mari laughed hysterically as the song in the background mixed with his grandfather's sardonic and witty humor illustrated remnant memories of his earlier years that seemed to still be apparent more than ever. The two partners in crime began assembling what would be their small, but ever-grateful, Christmas Day. Mari entered upon the front lawn

He stared out the window seeing what was once a well-organized display of maple leaves transition into to a distraught display of isolation.

with a chipped rake coercing the leaves to intertwine into the great pile he once knew. The grandfather measured nearly three inches under his grandson but Mari always would consistently feel watched over and guided by him.

The rest of the day was accompanied with an abundance of delicious food cooked by the two of them. The course ranged from steaming ham that smoke arose from like carbon dioxide leaves an unsmogged vehicle to warm chocolate cookies that overflowed the chipped jar like people at a retail store during Black Friday. Their presence were the presents that were exchanged between one another. Mari observed that the setting of Christmas had differed from when he was younger but the roots had stayed the same. Although the moderately eighteen hundred square foot home was mainly empty, Mari's attention could not reach further than the lovely senior citizen he was facing eye-to-eye with.

The end of the week came and Mari was set to departure back to campus as soon as possible to collaborate with a few colleagues on a special film project he had recently written. The taxi driver drove erratically to the side of the home, nearly striking the side of the curb. The driver honked twice and the dynamic duo knew at that moment their fun had come to an end, as do all good experiences. Mari lifted his traveling bag from the couch and hesitantly headed for the door. The grandfather walked behind his grandson traversing down the lawn with his right hand placed upon Mari's right shoulder just as he did on his first day of kindergarten.

The grandpa stopped Mari abruptly under the maple tree, turning his body one hundred and eighty degrees towards him saying "Son I just want to say this old man appreciates you coming out and visiting him, if you ever need anything you know exactly where I'll be standing. Whether there's a few leaves under this tree or a bus load of them, no matter the season, I'll be here and I'll always love you.

While gently grinning, Mari fills the space between them as they both reach out towards one

another for a hug, sliding their hands across the others back from what seemed to be an eternity.

With a shaky voice, a soft tone, and just enough volume to hear, Mari finally responded with "I love you too grandpa." His throat swollen with emotion

***While gently grinning,
Mari fills the space
between them as they
both reach out towards
one another for a hug,
sliding their hands across
the others back from what
seemed to be an eternity.***

Mari faced the dull yellow taxi cab as he continues his walk down the lawn over the crispy sound of crushed maple leaves. He enters into the cab, pulling one foot in after the other and shuts the rusty door closed. The quirky sound of the transmission is heard as the driver pulled away from the street while Mari glanced backward to see his grandfather with his right hand over his left standing beside the maple tree as a best man stands by the groom.

A few months later while sitting on his grandfather's recliner, Mari read the March issue of "Vogue" placed on a cherry wooden mantel his grandfather's home. The spring theme consisted of dark reds, bright oranges, and hints of yellows according to the magazine. Loud giggles and screams came from all corners of the home as Mari looked up to see his a few one of his younger cousins, Danny, teasing him in an attempt to gain his attention. Danny had been dressed from head to toe in multiple shades of black to match everyone else in the house of every age. The conversations held the grandfather at the center as they shared their little piece of his life with the others. It had been a quite some time since Mari had seen numerous familiar faces he grew up with in the same vicinity together.

Mari exited the home with glazed eyes, for the first time time in his short life he felt mute and overcome with raw emotion. He rested his spine against the dry bark under the newly bloomed red maple tree leave. Mari shifted his head to the right towards the front window of the home, the rocking chair still in sight. The train of toddlers crawled back and forth on the carpet floor being followed by his warm gaze. The loud smacks of a pigskin ran out through the neighborhood as the teens passed along the family football found in the garage. The elderly couples overlooked their new grandchildren as they rested their time away at the reception.

After a few controlled deep breaths and a half hour later, Mari worked his way toward the front door with the absence of excitement he had always felt before. His head is angled to the surface of the ground, step by step eventually meeting eye to eye with the glossy wooden-framed door. A gust of oddly warm and humid wind passed by the home letting free a single maple leaf, which kissed the side of Mari's cheek. Surprised, Mari gazed at the red maple tree before re-entering the home.



Deep Space

Soren Peterson '20
Digital photograph



Parallel Worlds

Adam Graham '19
Digital photograph

HONORABLE MENTION, PHOTOGRAPHY

The Aftermath

Andrew Sheleby '19

I walked upon unknown land,
Unrecognizable to the naked eye.
Like a new world,
Where the soil is black
And the skies are morbid grey.
As scorching wood pillars reach out
Towards the red Sun,
Strange memories lead me to streets of ash,
Pulling me closer to indistinguishable rubble.
Remnants of a neighborhood are all that is left
After a flame that follows the wind.
Three houses down Bleakview Dr.,
I halt to the nostalgia that crosses over my mind.
I could not help but cry as I faced my address,
Painted on the sidewalk in fading white.



Fire and Steel

Caelin Sutch '20
Digital photograph

Everyone Dies and Then There is Peace

Jamieson Avila Da Rosa '19

HONORABLE MENTION, PROSE

Manuel laid back in his lawn chair and lazily looked at his two grandkids who were playing tag in his backyard. He heard his chickens squawk and watched as a gentle breeze softly pushed the swing hanging from the giant pine tree in the center of his backyard. The grandkids were five and seven, and were running around the backyard chasing after each other.

He tried to think back to when he was a kid but failed to recall anything that far back in his life. He tried to think of his first memories and what came to mind was his draft notice. Manuel was only 17 at the time and had grown up on the island of Faial. He had been drafted to fight for the Portuguese military in Mozambique. He had remembered that at first, he was excited. He had never left the island and had wanted to see the world. He then recalled how foolish he was for thinking he would see the world.

Each day was spent marching through the thick jungle terrain with no real objective in sight. They were just marching, to the next camp, to the next city. It made no difference. It was marching all the same. The platoon had marched so much that socks would last a month at most. Manuel had seen no purpose in the war that he was marching through. After the war, Manuel had just gone right into working on his father's farm.

He looked at his grandkids running around and playing and he had wondered if he had ever lived as they did. His earliest memories were of working with his dad and marching through Mozambique.

Manuel saw his grandkids pick up two sticks and swing them towards each other like pretend swords. He also saw their mother reprimand them for such behavior. Manuel remembered the fights he had in Mozambique.

The war there was dirty. Both sides fought with Guerilla tactics. Both sides lost thousands of men.

Every fight was either ambushing an enemy base or defending themselves from the ambushes. Manuel was lucky to make it out alive. There was almost no difference between him and the next guy in his platoon. Each one armed with a standard issue rifle and machete. No man in the world was ever truly prepared for what happened during a war. No one is prepared to watch their comrades drop dead out of pure chance, or survive off of rations that taste worse than the mud they marched across. And nothing could ever prepare Manuel for the feeling of taking someone else's life.

No one is prepared to watch their comrades drop dead out of pure chance, or survive off of rations that taste worse than the mud they marched across.

The first few times he killed an enemy combatant, Manuel would wake up in the middle of the night with the dead man's blank-eyed stare etched into his mind. Then after a while, Manuel began to reason that it wasn't his bullet that killed him. It must have been someone else in his platoon.

Manuel drifted back into the present and saw his grandkids drinking from their glasses of water. Manuel wished he had water nearly as good as theirs in Mozambique.

The water his platoon would get would be warm and stale. Most of the time everyone drank coffee. They'd need the caffeine. They'd only survive if they had the caffeine. Manuel recalled the countless restless nights he had during that war. The combination of caffeine and gruesome imagery burned into his mind resulted in many late nights spent with a cigarette in one hand and a rifle in the other. Manuel and his fellow soldiers were always paranoid about being ambushed at night. It was bound to happen to his platoon eventually as he heard more and more stories of the Mozambique resistance fighters running through the jungle at night to ambush the camps of the Portuguese.

Manuel's grandkids had gone back to playing their pretend battle. It wasn't too long before younger one got hurt. The child had fallen over and scraped their knee. After crying for a little while the children resumed playing. Manuel recalled the injuries him and his comrades would get in Mozambique.

Bullet wounds, snake bites, gangrene, fevers—a range of rounds, injuries, and maladies. Most were

much more severe than a scraped knee. Manuel had never been hit, but his close friend Jose was not as lucky. It happened during one of the platoon's long marches through the jungle...

As usual, the group was whacking away at the brush with their machetes when they began to hear gunfire. Everyone took cover where they could behind trees, rocks, the tall bushes. Manuel pulled out his rifle and looked across the iron sights to see if he saw any slight difference in color that he could shoot at. All he saw was green though. All anyone could see was green. The resistance fighters had effective camouflage and would attack by shooting one man at a time. The bullet had found its target and Manuel saw one of his platoon members bleeding profusely on the jungle floor. The man didn't move or scream or breathe. He was most certainly dead. Manuel looked back at his sight and waited... for something...anything. Something had to stick out from the vibrant green before them. But the platoon saw nothing.

The commander shouted, "Alguém joga uma granada". One of the soldiers pulled a grenade out of his pack and pulled the pin. He lobbed it a good distance into the brush ahead and waited for some sort of sign that he had hit a person. No sort of sign happened. So the men sat there, their rifles trained ahead of them. For about 30 more minutes the soldiers waited. Until Manuel saw something that wasn't green. He fired and was met with a somehow joyous whelp of pain. Manuel looked to his commander who signaled him to ensure the ambusher was incapacitated. This was the worst part. If the enemy fought back Manuel had to kill him and if the enemy was still alive Manuel had to kill him. Manuel reluctantly walked towards the soldier who upon seeing Manuel began to speak in a native language. Manuel was about to shove his bayonet into the rebel's chest when a flurry of bullets whizzed past. Reinforcements. Manuel lept to the ground and kept his head down. He crawled to cover while bullets whizzed over his head and he heard yelling in Portuguese in what sounded like the commander's voice and yelling in some foreign tongue he couldn't understand.

After crawling over to a large tree Manuel reloaded his rifle. He figured he prepared to return fire. His plans were interrupted by a grenade landing next to his left leg. He quickly tossed it back towards the dense jungle and covered his ears. The loud blast made his ears ring despite the distance he had thrown the grenade. He regained focus and began to return fire. At first, he shot at where he thought people would be. After a while, though Manuel grew tired of shooting at shadows of trees and just sat behind his cover. After several minutes the gunfire had stopped and there was no more yelling in a language Manuel didn't understand, it was just Portuguese now.

Manuel got up and walked over to his commander. The commander told Manuel to gather his things and start hacking at the brush with his machete again. So the soldiers carried on like this until sunset. The platoon set up camp and began to doze off for the night. Manuel, with his ears still ringing from the grenade blast that afternoon, went over to the edge of camp to take a leak. While he was up, he lit a cigarette and took a couple puffs to calm his nerves. While he was lighting up he heard some rustling in the jungle. He had learned that paranoia was a man's best friend during a war and raised his rifle. During a war, he never left his gun behind, even if it was just to take a leak.

He aimed into the darkness and fired. He heard people sitting up in their tents confusedly, asking questions in Portuguese, while gathering their gear to prepare for a fight. He also heard yelling in the jungle. He rushed to the commander's tent and tried his best to convey that they were under attack, but the sound of gunfire cut him off. The two rushed outside and began to return fire into the darkness of the jungle. The Portuguese soldiers had light machine guns and mortars and began to fire into the jungle wildly. This seemed to be their most effective response to the guerrilla tactics used by the resistance fighters. Mortars would land in the jungle brush and would be followed with screams and wails of people being ripped into pieces. The screams were often louder than the explosions and much louder than the sounds of trees splintering and snapping in two after being hit with an explosive. Manuel made his way over to Jose during the commotion and the two fired into the jungle together. They could barely

The man didn't move or scream or breathe. He was most certainly dead. Manuel looked back at his sight and waited...for something...anything.

make out some shadows in the heavy brush and had to just shoot at movement. The movement shot back though, and at times it got close to Manuel and Jose. The two took cover behind some boxes and returned fire. The bullets that flew out of the jungle seemed like they were coming from the jungle itself and not the people hiding in it. The brush was so dense that Manuel couldn't see anything past a few feet of vines and bushes. All Manuel could see were bullets flying out of darkness. But he couldn't really see a bullet just where it landed. In the dirt creating a little cloud of dust, in a tree creating a little flurry of splinters, in a person resulting in a scream, or a wail and a small pool of blood. There weren't specific targets. Just things that could be hit and would be hit.

Several minutes of intense gunfire are followed by a few minutes of silence, and the two start to feel a bit safer behind the boxes. Jose takes off his helmet and pulls a cigarette out.

He starts to light one before...Manuel snapped back to his backyard. His grandkids were swinging on the swings laughing. Manuel wondered if he had ever thought about peace like this at a time like that...

A bullet punched through the boxes and went straight through Jose's unprotected skull. Manuel knew that Jose was dead, but he couldn't stop yelling his name. His closest friend had been ripped out of his life in an instant. Manuel finally stopped calling out to his friend. His friend was still. The only movement left was a trickle of blood flowing from his head. The shock had subsided a bit. Manuel pulled out his grenade. "Maria ore por suas almas, pois elas não sabem o que fizeram", he said to himself. He threw it into the brush where the shot had come from. He heard the loud blast that follows a grenade throw and heard distinct yelling. Manuel did not understand exactly what was being yelled due to a combination of a ringing in his ears and his inability to understand the language the enemies spoke. Manuel and most of his platoon made it through that night. Only a few of the Portuguese soldiers at that camp were killed, Jose was one of them.

"Hey Avô (Portuguese for granddad), what is war like?" the five-year-old asked. Manuel sat in his chair

and questioned what to tell a kid what war is like.

"A nightmare. A nightmare that never ends. You never understand what you do or why you do it. And neither side wins. They both just lose and lose until one has lost all it can lose", Manuel muttered in his heavy Portuguese accent. Manuel was worried that his words might have been too much for the youngster, but the kid was sitting there, wide-eyed, staring back at Manuel.

"Then maybe one day I can get rid of war", the kid said.

Manuel looked up at the bright blue sky. He listened to the clucks of his chickens and the creak of the swing in the gentle breeze. He imagined how much better the world would be if everyone could sit back like he was and appreciate the peace he was feeling.

"Maybe you will... maybe you will", Manuel said.

The kid nodded triumphantly and believed he'd found his calling in life, creating world peace, so that no one else would have to live through the nightmare his grandfather lived through, the one he sees his grandfather remember everyday.

The screams were often louder than the explosions and much louder than the sounds of trees splintering and snapping in two after being hit with an explosive.



Fron

Damian Brunton '21
Digital photograph

The Tree

Tobias German '19

Within a forest far, far away from here, there is a tree that I'll never forget. All around this one tree were beautiful, giant evergreens and oaks that tried to reach towards and grab hold of the bright, blistering sun. They were full of life and beauty, small animals scurrying up the trunks and tiny bugs crawling all about the leaves and branches. There were dark ferns that gave the earth a dark green color to mix with the deep, chocolate-like dirt that filled the forest floor. The bittersweet smell of decay wafted up into my nose in wisps of air.

The aroma told me that I was safe there, that it was a place I could call my home.

This tree, however, did not convey those same feelings as the rest of the forest. Its long trunk laid across the forest floor, dead. Its stump rose about ten feet into the air, no branches anywhere on it, and topped with dagger-like splinters, blackened by a once intense fire that this tree alone felt. Pieces of the tree were strewn about as if a part of it exploded in some violent trauma.

No other plant, not a tree, a fern, or bush seemed to be affected by this past roaring flame that devastated this tree. Not even the mushrooms, who required damp earth and shade in order to survive the harsh world, felt the intensity of the heat, for there were still five little brown lumps popping up out of the ground right next to the tree, just barely showing their stems.

I walked around to the other side of the tree to find a crack that stretched from the very top of the tree all the way down to the base, just wide enough for someone to crawl into the hollow shell. Much like the splinters above, black charcoal covered the walls on the inside of the tree. The rich fragrance of the bygone fire coming off the burnt timber permeated around the tree as I began to touch the inner walls. Pieces of charcoal silently fell to the ground as my hand grazed over its surface, leaving my hands coated in the fine, powdery, black soot.

I wiped the dusty substance from my hands on to my face, just under the eyes and down the cheeks,

and let the aromatics rush into my nostrils. The smell was initially sharp and stung the nose a bit, but as the moments passed, it mellowed out to an earthy aroma.

I stuck my hand out once again into the inside of the tree. The burnt wood felt smooth to the touch. Only by rubbing my fingers together could I feel the grainy powder the charcoal left. My hand soon became the same color as the inside of the tree as I continued to touch those walls, up and down, searching for any sign of new growth. I was not able to find a thing.

The perfume that rose from the tree sparked a feeling of pensiveness within myself. I thought, just maybe, the tree had no idea why it was the only one that could feel the fire that destroyed it. It could not understand why nothing else seemed

to understand the same pain it felt, the pain that was tearing it apart before it could finally no longer hold itself up and eventually fell to the ground, dying in the process. I wanted to give it a reason for dying, a reason for the extinguishing of its life, but nothing came to mind.

I crawled into the crack, just barely able to fit inside, and sat inside for an eternity. There was no floor, just a few thick splinters that made a "V" shape, contorting my feet at its angle. There was a slope on one of the walls that flattened out and then cut down again, looking almost as if it was meant to be a seat, upon which I sat on. There was no roof, just an open top where the giant black splinters acted as the walls to an unwelcoming fortress, and the sun and the elements rained down to the inside of the tree. The charcoal gave off a feeling of warmth that I'm still not sure was really there or not. I was completely and utterly comfortable within this broken being.

While I was there, I took the time to notice absolutely everything around me and the tree. Time acted differently, speeding up and slowing down as different sounds, thoughts, and feelings passed through me. I could hear the wind blow through the trees, the brush, the branches, and the leaves, on its rush to find somewhere cooler. Bugs buzzed and scuttled about trying to find a meal or making a home in one corner of the vast forest. I heard the nearly

Pieces of charcoal silently fell to the ground as my hand grazed over its surface, leaving my hands coated in the fine, powdery, black soot.

silent footsteps of a doe walk by and, as I turned my head to look through the crack in the tree, I was able to see her and her fawn grazing on the bushes and mushrooms found scattered around.

It was at this moment I realized that I could no longer smell the charcoal. It disappeared, no longer noticeable, and became my own scent. The tree and I have become one and the same. With that thought in mind, my eyes began to lower, and I fell asleep.

I had no clue when I woke up. It could have been minutes, hours, or even days. All I could tell was that it was dark, maybe even the middle of the night, and most other beings have succumbed to slumber at this point. I could hear the crickets nightly chirping and an owl calling out into the night air. I thought I may have gone blind before I remembered where I was, the inside of a hollowed out, burnt tree. I looked up to find stars shining in the sky, illuminating an otherwise dreary landscape. The bright moon was at a crescent and hung in the heavens above.

I managed my way out of the crack and looked up once more. The great green giants that once stretched out towards the sun were now dark silhouettes that attempted to grab hold of the stars, the moon, and the cosmos above. Their tips shivered in the cold wind that blew increasingly stronger as I gazed upwards. Upwind, I noticed dark clouds, which blocked out any light the moon or the stars gave, quickly creeping upon the area.

Not seeing much I could do about imminent darkness soon to reach me, I crawled back into the tree and waited to go back to sleep. The task was impossible, however, for the noises of the night echoed through the forest and deeply unnerved me.

As complete and total darkness fell upon me, a light drizzle began. The feeling of wetness crawled down my face and began to creep into my clothes. The pitter-patter of raindrops became more apparent as time went on, as the drops became larger and fell more frequently, and soon all sound around me was replaced by something almost like the static of a television with no signal. There was no more crickets

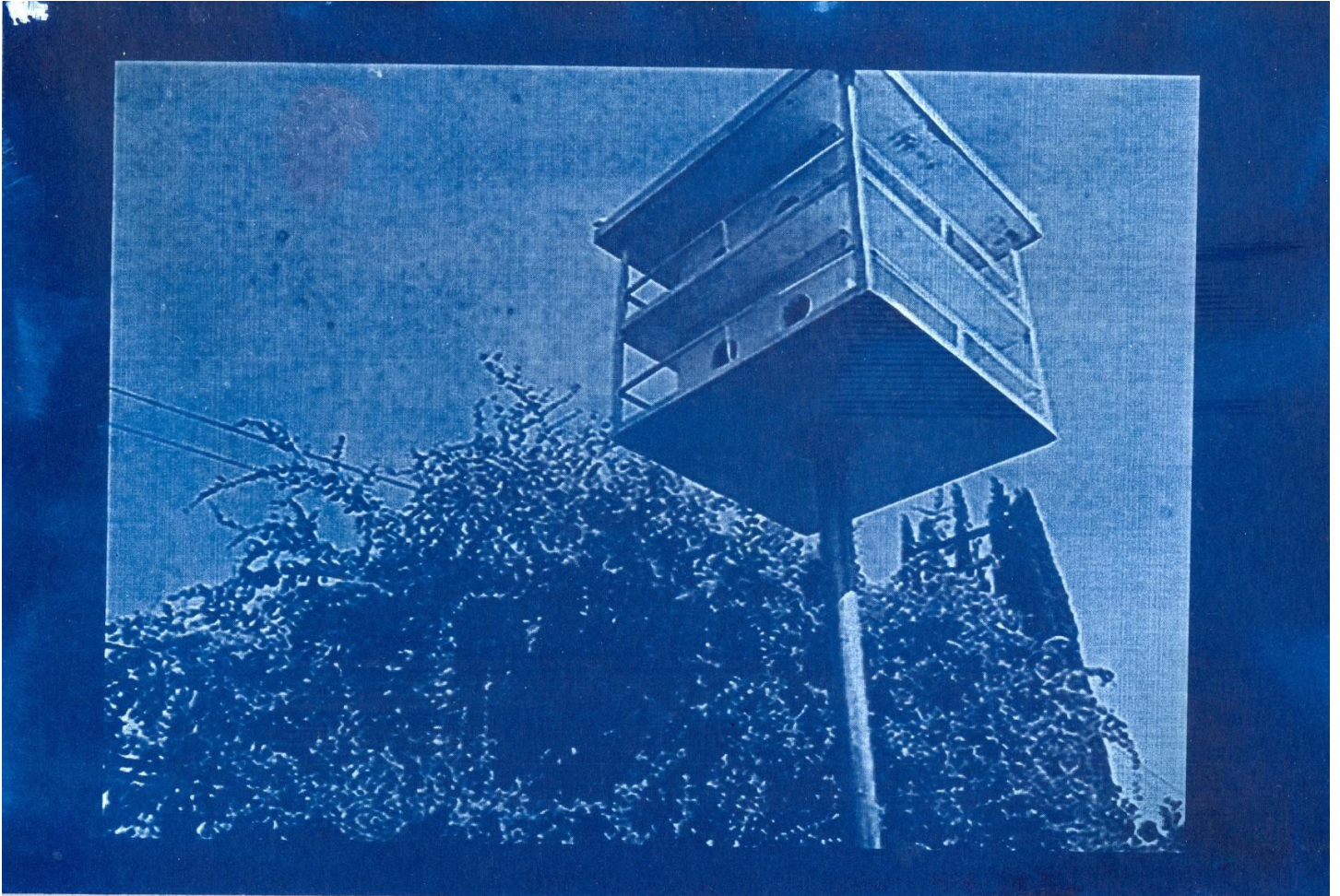
chirping, no more owls calling, no more nothing. Just the white noise of the rain.

I closed my eyes once more, finding it to be no darker than what I could see when they were open, and let all of my senses work at once. I allowed my mind to be overflowed with the sounds of the pounding rain slamming into the ground, the trees, the bushes, the animals, and everything else in the forest. The rain poured through the opening of the hollow tree and continued to run down my face, acting as if they were tears trying to wash away all the black charcoal dust that was wiped on before. The freshness of the rain brought the smell of the burnt wood back into my nose, rushing in through the nostrils in the same way they did when I first came upon the crack in the tree. It all overwhelmed me to the point I could feel a lump in my throat, a warm stream began to flow from my eyes, and my voice became an uncontrollable, quiet whimper.

I opened my eyes again and looked up towards the sky. Rain still pummeled down to the earth but there was an opening in the clouds that allowed light to shine through once more. It didn't last long, but within those few moments of light, I saw a small, green sprout, not even a few inches high, protruding from the top of one of the blackened splinters.

The overwhelming senses left me as I stared at the new life. Still fixated on the plant, my muscles relaxed, my eyelids became heavy, and I fell back to sleep for a very, very long time.

It was at this moment I realized that I could no longer smell the charcoal. It disappeared, no longer noticeable, and became my own scent. The tree and I have become one and the same.



Birdhouse

Elliot Lee '22

Cyanotype (early photographic printing process using photosensitive paper, a negative or object, sunlight, and chemical solution)

Just a Garage

Steven Noll '19

It's nothing special. Really, it's just like every other garage. It's crowded, cluttered, and anyone who dares enter to look for something always leaves carrying something else. And though its contents have changed over the years, relics I should have long discarded and treasures I should have better preserved still await the day a warm hand will brush off their coats of dust and take them elsewhere than the bottoms of creased boxes or lift them from the cold, concrete floor. Cabinets galore line the garage's stucco walls, each shelf choking with an odd assortment of belongings not important enough to take inside but "essential" enough to save. It's hard to imagine how a disfigured pogo stick, a single rollerblade, and space-consuming snowboards for snow I've seen once made the cut.

When I was younger, whether I ventured into the garage to grab my sneakers or slipped inside at darker, more sinister hours to convince myself that dull creakings and shallow echoes were just that, I remember being scared. Scared that the velvet black folding into the corners of the garage and lurking along the edges of grainy, coarse shelves would somehow swallow me as well. Scared that I'd get lost in the labyrinth of cardboard columns and forever breathe the stale air of things lost and forgotten. Though I still wield a broom to hack away at dangling spider webs, or worse—spiders themselves—now I'm less afraid of death-by-shadow than I am worried about, with the flick of a switch, what might be brought to light.

After hitting the lights, I don't have to look hard to find—or rather, considering its size and proximity to the garage door, look hard to notice—the shoe rack. Besides the fact that all I associate with that rusted scrap bit are pointless attempts at sorting its contents by color, size, and owner only for it to be ransacked, when I do notice the shoe rack, it reminds me that it wasn't all too long ago that I could comfortably slip my thin legs into those just as thin blue rain boots, or

wriggle my even smaller toes into those small, brown Crocs. I try putting each pair on again. As if I hadn't already guessed, I couldn't.

I'm not sure why I keep those shoes around. It's not like I really want them, because if I did I'd keep them inside. It probably has something to do with my insistence that when they're buried amidst the jumbled heaps of withered clothes and garish Christmas decorations and unplayed board games, they're close enough that I won't forget, but far enough that I won't always remember. That is, forget the times I would dash into the pounding rain in those same thin, blue rain boots only to retreat into the dry haven of the open garage again and again, or remember that those boots have faded in the garage for much longer than I spent wearing them.

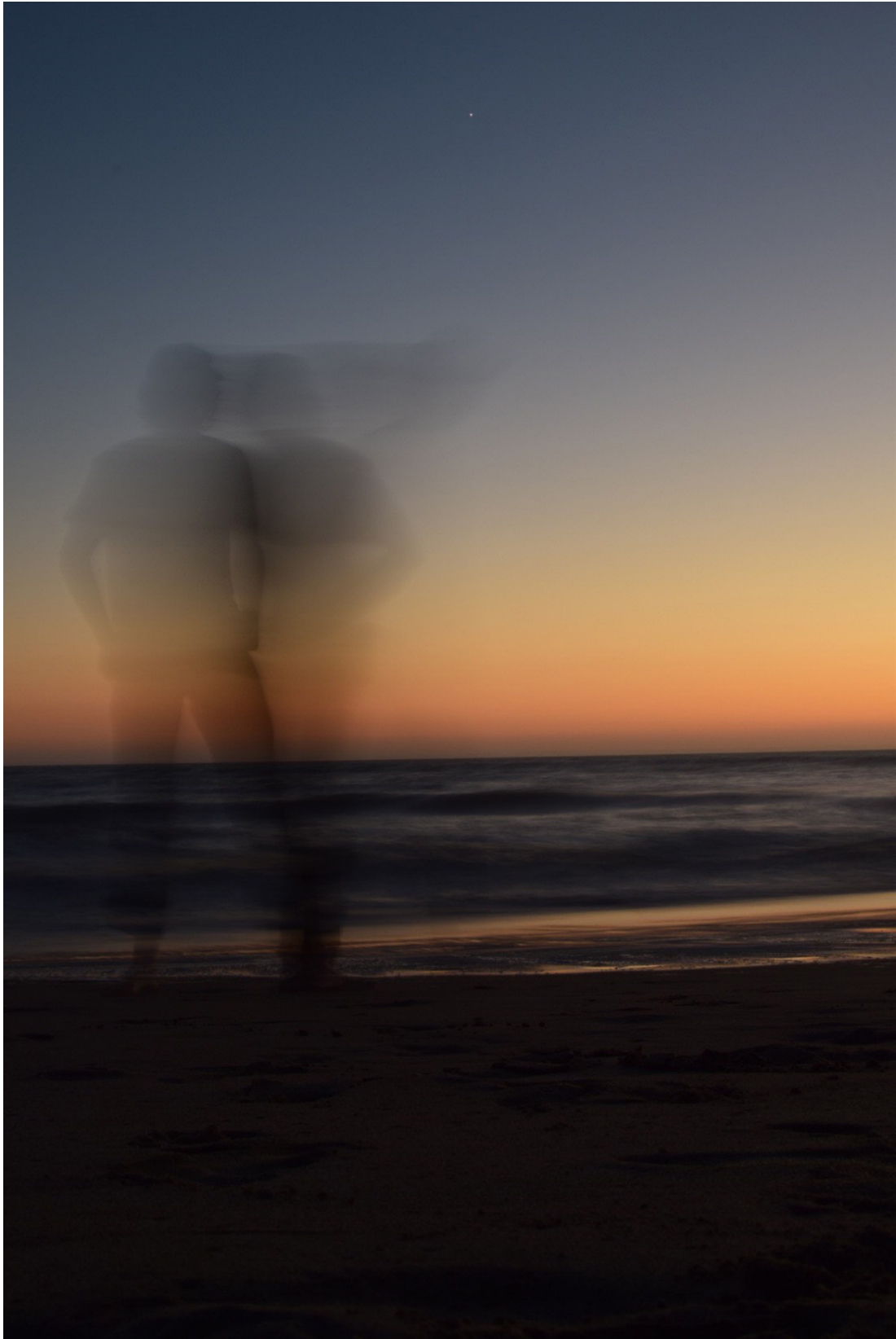
In the far corner of the garage, like all others, shelves are clogged with stuff: bright cones, deflated balls, paint cans rimmed with crusted flakes, a sampling of half-working emergency flashlights and lanterns, standard boxes. I'm just looking at the boxes, though, and one in particular. A box of books. A box of textbooks. A box of thick, medical textbooks that my dad referenced when he started practicing surgery and others my mom studied to become a dermatologist. I used to watch them, my parents, watch them with those books with dotting eyes and hushed whispers. I told myself when I was older I would pore over those textbooks until my eyes were red and scratchy. I told my parents I would pore over those textbooks so I would be just like them. But I am older now. I'm older, and I haven't touched those textbooks. But I hope that even if I never read them, someday I'll have my own textbooks in my own garage suffocated by my own stuff. I would like that.

I'm not leaving just yet—at least not until I find that cabinet of pictures. The issue isn't where the cabinet is, it's that the cabinet is surrounded by, blocked by things. With a frayed rocking chair at one end and a dark table my dad carved at another, along with little room for adjusting either, I barely manage to ease the cabinet open. A shallow gap reveals itself. Lacking any alternatives, I grimace, clench my teeth, close my eyes, and shove my wrist into the alcove

I used to watch them, my parents, watch them with those books with dotting eyes and hushed whispers. I told myself when I was older I would pore over those textbooks until my eyes were red and scratchy.

before me, praying to the Lord Almighty that all I feel are photographs. Afraid my prayer will expire, I grab the nearest stack of pictures and wrench my arm straight out.

As I sift through my handful of photographs, sliding each image behind the last, I'm relieved to have a good one (which spares me from another trip into the cabinet). So as I rub my oily fingers in hazy streaks across the picture, smudging my face and tracing my flashy smile, I can't help but return that smile. Because in the confines of this concrete storage room—in this garage—though I'm reminded of just how fleeting the past seventeen years have been and the next seventeen will be, as I stand here, in the present, clutching a thing of the past and wondering how or if it will matter in the future, if I want to remember, or if I want to forget, I need only unlock the garage door.



Spirit of My Existence

Mason Czabaranek '19
Digital photograph

falling asleep for dummies

Charles Whitcomb

drive further each and every day
call in sick to work five minutes before each shift,
but stay in bed and never stop feeling sorry for yourself

if and when invited to a social gatherings, fake
emergencies, and never establish close friendships

take the batteries out of your phone
throw your television out of the window
unfriend your family members on facebook
get rid of your mailbox

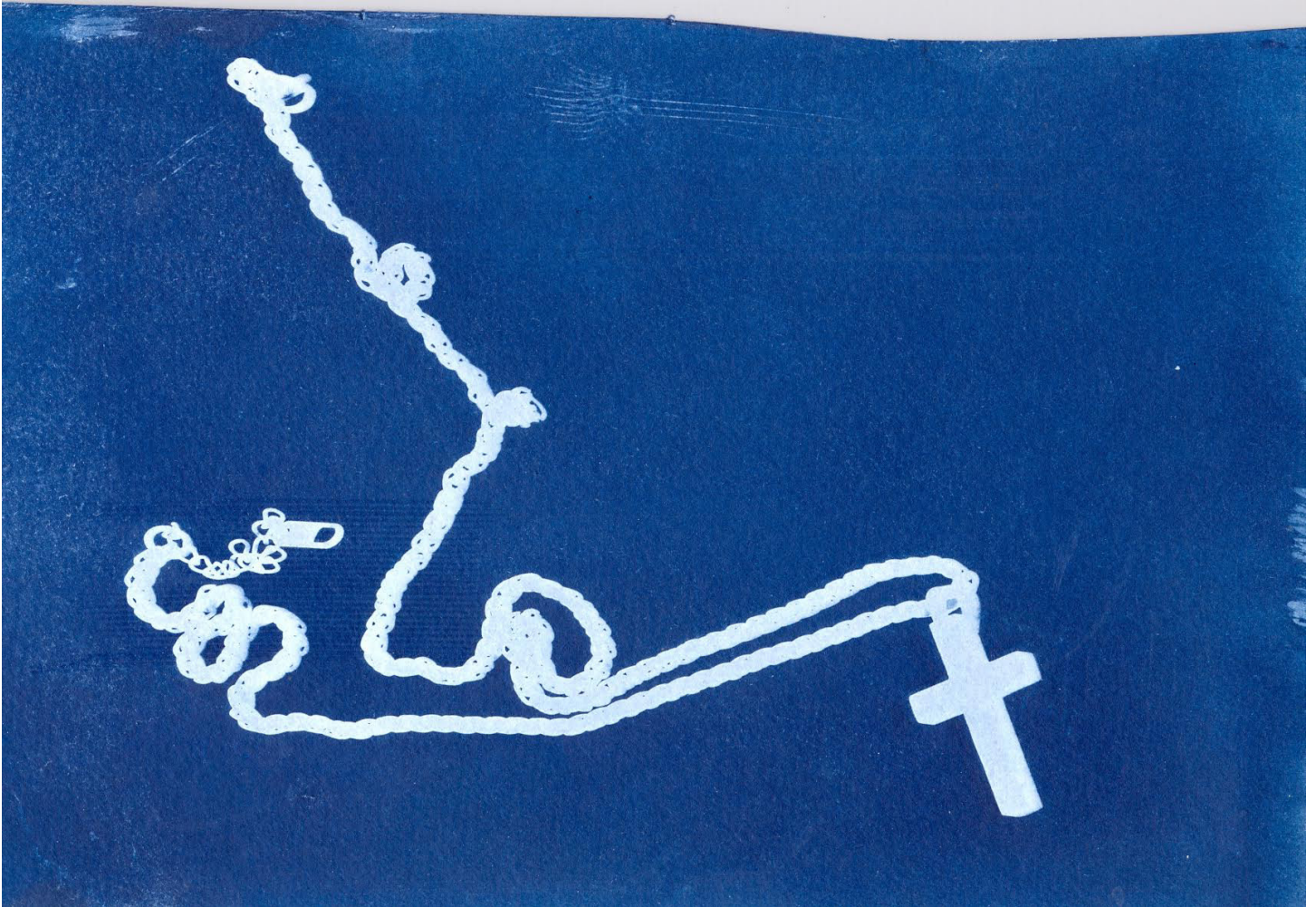
begin by taking every photo off your walls
then remove every piece of furniture from each room
and try to fall asleep on a stiff mattress in the kitchen

paint all of the walls white
and begin to write on every wall
use paint and sharpies and pencils

every letter of the alphabet
your childhood pet or every
word you could ever remember saying

just until every wall is black again,
but maybe, now it means something
board up every window and make sure
that the front door always stays locked

no one can hurt you if you never speak and
make no effort to do anything with anyone else
the devil's in the walls, they come alive at night



Trinity

Andrew Gannaway '21
Cyanotype

Peace Be With You

Andrew Peters '19

“Every time I visit this place,” Father Peter says, “I can’t help but think how much God is showing off.” From my seat on the itchy grass, I look up, past Peter’s face and toward the sun setting over the lake. The sun forces my eyes down to my toes and I let them close.

Father Peter Pabst says mass on the same lawn every year for a small group of friends. The lawn annually facilitates this gathering of my father’s friends: former high school teammates, college roommates, groomsmen, and bridesmaids. Here I am, at my place on the lawn, forming memories of my own, not yet reminiscing. During dinner my dad will tell me about a road trip to Las Vegas with his friends. He’ll recount the story about Peter sneaking him into a casino as a minor.

Tomorrow I will enjoy this place with Harry, my best friend since birth. I begin to design the next day in my mind. We will wake up late and enjoy an easy morning. To complete our process of waking up, we will walk to the lake and jump in. A coworker of mine calls the lake his “blue pill.” My dad describes the waters as being “healing.” I believe there is something magical about the water. The water’s coldness is enchanting—it tingles, then numbs your extremities while refreshing the core.

After enjoying our daily dose of the blue pill, we will quickly eat lunch and ride our bikes to town. This is the first time Harry will wear shoes since he arrived. Thankfully, when spending time here, shoes fall into the same category as shirts and worries: unnecessary. Harry and I will live without the unnecessary for the next week—most people do while they’re here.

While we walk around Tahoe City, I will come to believe that this place gets its loveliness not only from its sheer beauty, but also from the abundance of peace. Water flows into the lake from many small streams, and once the lake is filled, the excess water overflows into a river. In the same way, the natural beauties of this place fill it with peace. While walking further into town, I will see the beauty of the peace that surrounds me. I will see it in the mountains, I will smell it in

the pine-laden air, I will feel it in the raw sun beating down on my back, and I will hear it in the birds’ melodies. It will be impossible to ignore. And, just like the lake, when the surroundings can no longer contain it, the peace will overflow into all of its admirers—tomorrow, it will overflow into me.

We will continue our bike ride ten more miles away from the lake to a nearby valley and hike its summit. It will not be an easy trek to the top, but the view will be worth it. We would have done this at least once more throughout the week, but we didn’t want to wear shoes. The lake is equally, if not more, enchanting to a viewer at 9,056 feet than one with his toes in it. I share a friendly relationship with the lake of the shoeless, but the lake birds know is unfamiliar. The sunshine will reflect off the lake, directly into my eyes, and for a moment I will be convinced that

“Every time I visit this place,” Father Peter says, “I can’t help but think how much God is showing off.”

the lake was created solely for my viewing and enjoyment. Its immensity and remoteness will fill me with awe. It will appear to be separated from the world; a blue void in a bowl of mountains. My internal knowledge of the lake will conflict with what I am

now experiencing. I will understand that wind and boats mar the waters, but the lake will appear to be wholly congruous and constant. The opening remark of Peter’s homily will genuinely resonate in my heart: God made this place to be exceptionally special. The lake, this place, is truly blessed.

We will arrive home just in time for dinner. Unlike breakfast and lunch, dinner will be enjoyed with a crowd—the people sitting around me at Mass right now. After dinner, Harry, my brothers and I will sit on the deck and play dice. After two rounds we will shift our attention to the dimming sky. As the mountains steal the sun from us, I will imagine hoisting it back into the sky for a few more breaths. But then I will remember the stars; I will remember the night sky cluttered with glowing little lights. The stars will form a dome around my head that cannot be seen nor comprehended in their absence. The spherical nature of our world will become profoundly clear. In the same way that my extremities tingle then numb in the lake, my toes will tingle as I look at the stars. But they will not numb. The coldness of reality will not set in to numb me. Instead, my mind will stay suspended in a state of awe.

A sharp fluctuation in Peter's cadence interrupts my daydream and ends the planning of my own memories. The first thing I notice as my eyes refocus on Peter is a subtle grin that stretches his eyes toward his ears. Immediately, I know his next words. Peter invariably attempts a joke at the end of his homilies

and the proleptic smile divulges its proximity. The crowd will likely attempt to show some sort of affirmation and then Peter will continue with the prayers of the faithful. I will not snicker. Instead, I will sit here, at my seat on the grass, basking in the peace and blessedness of this place.

Calm After the Storm

Adam Graham '19
Digital photograph



The Call of The Accuser

Samuel Tumati '19

WINNER, PROSE

I.

In a land birthed by the fusion of the French, the Swiss, and my home Italia, I found myself in a countryside of alien wonders; as the frosted zephyrs that whirled around me burned my eyes, ears, and face, and my boots crunched through the fluff that coated the northward rock faces before me. Walking for days had burned away at the soles of my feet, but warmth was yet to be found within the blindingly white mountain sides of Valle d'Aosta. I traversed here in the midst of the warm midsummer sun, wrongfully unprepared for the bite and chill of this gelid gulf. But even with the hostility of mother nature, there was still beauty to be found in this landscape of pure grays and whites and dying embers against the rising sun. My hunger for further education in the arcane ways guided me here, and it is here that I found the archaic winter college of Inverno, standing tall and buried within the pillars of listvenite. The college seemed to emanate a welcoming incandescence, a 'vulcano della neve'. It was this school, aglow with volcanic light, that my mother's forefather had attended with great success.

Legend has it that after attending the school, her grandfather found imminent wealth and success in life, and was given plentiful knowledge of the mysteries of life and how to wield them to one's benefit. Not much was known about the school other than its rumors of studying the stars and the heavens; And equally distant was the actual livelihood of my great grandfather for that matter, but my mother had sent me away to this 'mythical' school in the hopes of receiving the best of educations. I paused in anticipation, glancing at the school in the distance, to see if anyone was awaiting my arrival. There wasn't a soul at the gate, nor even a moving shadow amidst the school grounds. There was only the roaring whirlwinds that were ravaging the lands at the moment. It was oddly quiet, but I paid it no attention.

An hour later, I passed through the frozen, rusted gates of the college. I summited the hill upon which

lay the campus: a large and flat acreage, obviously once being the home to some massive and beautiful foliage, now barren and blistered by snow. It felt almost sacrilegious traversing through the barren field, being devoid of footsteps and life.

I found my way towards the campus ministry, receiving no help from the students that were nowhere to be found, and met the Headmaster: a wrinkled old man hunched behind a desk. He wore oddly colored and patterned robes, with spectacles too large for his round jovial face. We spoke for what felt like hours as he confirmed my enrollment, my living quarters, and my family's involvement in the past. I felt a strange solidarity with him, as he reminded me much of my father. My father was a kindly old man, of whom I didn't know much of as he gave his life in the victory against Austria. What felt like a barren campus devoid of all life somehow morphed into another home for me. I was invigorated about my new education, and felt in my heart that whatever secrets the school held or taught, I was ready for.

II.

That night had turned to weeks, and those weeks turned to months as I became known across campus as the "grandson of Stello Fortunato de Civitavecchia", who apparently had such the reputation to make me an instant well known name. I got around exceptionally well, with my hunger for knowledge growing ever more as they taught us about the muses of nature and the stars and the strings interwoven between the heavens and the earth. The sciences and astrology that I was once told were unholy were now a common spectacle. I learned the ancient tongue of my Roman ancestors and practiced such real star gazing that the supposed mystici and gypsies in the streets could only dream of. We studied sacred texts were studied to our own discretion and learned of the magics of old and the eldritch powers still at play. At times the lessons delving into the magics and rituals of the Occult seemed quite foreboding, but I continued to reassure myself about how successful my great-grandfather was and how much knowledge I would gain about the world around me. To me the speak about the various spirits and eldric beasts seemed quite theatrical and hokey, as

they were simple urban legends and myths conjured by the feverish imaginations of man. I lived with setting this aside because the other skills I learned were invaluable. I was grateful to be under such wise magistri and teachers, and felt no stop to my curiosity, that was until one particular ritual. We took an oath of pacifism, stating that any magics used would never be in the intent of harming others, but it offered no solace for my now apprehensive heart.

What kind of ‘magics’ would we be utilizing to necessitate such an oath? We took an excerpt from the incomplete Liber Ivonis (Book of Eibon), drew a pentagram amidst the aged marble floor, spread the various salts and ashes, chanted such wretched words, and watched in bewilderment as the salts and ash melted to an amorphous substance and began to clump together into a sickly physical form of animal physique.

The now living beast slowly manifested before us, and cried out for the breath of life into its feigned lungs, still pooling with the oozing blackened slush. Its figure was lanky and malformed as it desperately struggled into a bipedal figure. As the others watched in mirth and joy at the creation of a new life, or the summoning of one in the very least, I staggered back in horror. As if the flip of a switch, my senses came to me once more, and I realized the blackened deeds I had foolishly committed in the pursuit of knowledge. I feared my soul had been lost. My fear became obvious to my classmates, as they began to peer at me with questioning and comicle gazes. That was until the beast turned to me. Its priorly nonexistent eyes suddenly burrowed out of its skull, and it began to release a bestial squeal that shook me to the bowels of my innermost being. The foul demon fell from me, writhing in pain as its flesh began to revert back to its lifeless state of slush and ash, and I realized that the crucifix my mother had adorned me with before my travels had warded off the wretched thing, and was now burning into my chest. I knew then that this was no mere astrological magics we were diving into, but witchcraft—devilish black magics of the Accuser.

I have no recollection if the others tried to calm my nerves or try to be diplomatic, for I flung myself out of that classroom at godspeed. I ripped the

crucifix off my chest, as it had heated to a bright red since coming into contact with the hellish creature, and I continued to escape campus. I made it past the gates, where I was met with the brunt of nature’s wrath: the blizzard that had set into the December air. I weighed my options in the snow. Dying now would spare me of any other horrors that the wretched school could offer, but would surely seal my fate as a heretic and sentence me to eternal damnation. I surmised that living was my best bet. Living to forever repent in the holy Lord’s name. The headmaster, pinching my crucifix between his forefinger and thumb like a hunk of excrement, wandered my way and beckoned to me with a gentle hand to return. I sensed no evil or ill will from the old man, as he simply wanted to save me from the wicked storm. But the blizzard would have been a much more welcomed punishment than the hell I would soon endure within the college grounds.

III.

After a feeble explanation from the Headmaster, and the persuasion of my astrology magister, I reluctantly stayed for the end of our semester, one more week. I was disappointed that I would be cutting my education of the sciences short, but I had seen far too much. The college magistri held the esoteric mysteries of the universe in the palm of their hands; at the cost of one’s soul to eternal damnation, and one’s mind to eternal madness. The more I looked the more I realized how lost some of these discipuli had become, insanity consuming their minds and evil consuming their souls. Every creak and groan echoed through the halls and in my mind. Every day the class would summon darker and darker monsters of the nocturnal abyss in the pursuit of knowledge and power. With the influence of the demons they would warp the world around them and open windows into worlds of strange pale lights and shapes unfathomable to man. Each preternatural demon I was forced to summon took its toll on my sanity. Each day I waned closer to the precipice of suicide. I absorbed what I could of the sciences and anxiously prepared my dispersal.

Until one night, Christmas Eve, the beasts stopped arriving and the school was at a normal murmur of voices for once. The ambiance felt

ordinary for once. I got a knock on my door, and the Headmaster informed me of a dinner that night. We began speaking about the strange college, and how I found myself here. Instead of disappointment like the rest of my magistri, he showed sympathy towards my fears. He told me that although I wouldn't be attending the rest of the year, I'd earned various awards for such thirst for knowledge. I had somehow both disappointed and impressed the school council. I felt that although there was evil afoot, it would be common decency to let them have their lovely send off.

The grand hall was filled with light and mirth, as if the pupils and magistri had forgotten what the curriculum consisted of. There was a great feasting of steak and pork and various other meats, as well as the grand barrels of wine. Candle light illuminated the grand hall in a spectrum of oranges and golds as it reflected off of the silverware. I would have enjoyed it greatly if I hadn't been so psychologically scared. After much meat and wine the celebration settled down, and I finally found ease and respite. The room began to fade as sound died out. At first I thought I was falling under the effects of high alcohol and a fattened stomach, but became uneasy when my limbs gravitated to the table.

I felt my insides burn as I stood to my feet. I could no longer hold my meal and became sick behind my seat. I finally came to my senses and was stricken with a sharp fear as all the classmen had fallen in a motionless unconsciousness. Magistri in strangely colored robes had taken formation around the lifeless youths and began to chant in the elder tongue of the Romans. Each teacher bore a mask of one of the constellations, each holding variously colored candles and chanting at a different octave. I reeled back in horror once the pupils arose to their feet and began writing more. As they rose, the consciousness of the student minds had been muted and the consciousness of bloodthirsty savages replaced them. I hid myself behind a nearby banister and watched in horror as the youths were now herded around into the center of the room, where the Headmaster stood on top of a table. In a loud voice he called out to all the "children of the stars", and instructed them to obey his master plan.

With the influence of the demons they would warp the world around them and open windows into worlds of strange pale lights and shapes unfathomable to man.

He bellowed out how our world was the domain of the Other Gods and of the stars, and how the defenceless village down yonder was the sacrificial lamb round up for the slaughter.

He began to ramble on about pleasing said gods and birth rights and communion with the beyond and other wicked things that soured my stomach and whirled my mind. Without thinking I flung myself through a cellar door under the stairs. It was a bad decision made out of haste as the entire hoard of rabid discipuli heard the clatter and came charging in. I found a back door and rammed my way through. The students even in their mindless state knew better than to follow me into the knee high snow.

Going into the night blizzard was suicide, but it was either dying to the hands of the pagans or dying to the elements. I was only concerned for the wellbeing of the gentle village down the mountain, as they had shown great generosity during my passing through months prior. Treading for miles froze my body stiff, but the passion of saving the innocent souls down below fueled me onward. After hours of stumbling through the mountainside I made my way to the outer village. I looked back towards the mountainside and saw the students and teachers making monstrous progress as they were bending the ice and snow around them. I made my way to the center of the houses and screamed at the top of my lungs the monstrosities that were to unfold. The natives of the land were all too familiar with the whispers of abduction, and easily believed my pleas.

Exhausted, I collapse onto a bench, and watched the sun rise. I slowly began to sob as I heard the raving and hollering husk of human beings tumble to the village. Screams of torment and rage blared as they found the village devoid of life, except for the likes of me. I braced myself as they charged towards me; some with poisoned knives and others with literal tongues of pale flames; until the a monstrous roar overpowered their rambling. The Headmaster appeared in front of the mob, turned his back from them, and shuffled towards me. With tears rolling down my face, I met his gaze, and found no rage, but sheer disappointment. As the others

raged for blood behind him, he questioned me for my actions, questioning how I could forsake my bloodright and heritage as so, how I could only reach my proper education half way. I had no answers for him, other than how I had entered in the hopes of wielding the mathematics of existence under my fingertips, but not life itself. What they were doing was against God and against nature, of which I could not be a part of. He sat down beside me and held my open hands. He looked me in the eye for an eternity.

He looked away, and motioned for the students to apprehend me. I was too exhausted to resist, as they dragged me over to a tree stump outside the village. They threw me to its side and bound my hands to its top. The Headmaster re entered my vision, with an axe. Sorrow shaking him deeply, he moved in silence, and hacked away at my fingers. One by one they were bludgeoned off, for the axe mirrored my sanity, being dulled and degraded. The pain of my joints crunching and mangling under the blunt force of the steel was unbearable, as I hollowed out into the early dawn. My screams traveled beyond the valley, beyond the mountains, and beyond the accursed heavens. I wailed and wailed until I could no more, and my voice cut out entirely.

I felt a cold hand grasping my throat, and a dark bewitchment silencing my lungs. A devilishly faced pupil used the tongues of green flame at his fingertips to cauterize what was left of my hands, and then cut me loose. The Headmaster reeled me in close and expressed his sorrow for having to do this, but the common world must never know of what magics are in practice in places such as Inverno, nor the rest of the winter mountains. He wished me luck in what pitiful life I might live now, and turned away from me. The lights of the sun over the horizon began to fade, as consciousness evaded me. Darkness enveloped my being as I was swallowed by the black hole in the center of the universe: the pit where all lost knowledge goes to die. I heard the distant, melancholy piping of a flute from underneath me, and wept as chaos consumed my mind.

I awoke in a hospital in Turin, my body as broken as my mind. The doctors told me that I was found in the village square half frozen to death.

The villagers came back to their homes armed and ready for a fight, but were met with the abandoned college that seemed as if it were devoid of life for centuries. The Swiss and Italian governments of the neighboring regions did further research, found nothing, and instructed the village to return home. I was declared a mad man, and I truly felt insane, as all that I had learned was useless without me being able to vocalize or document such wonders beyond human imagination, or such perverse and nocturnal societies as the college. With my incapacity to communicate, the only thing more maddening than the hellish demons that accursed school held at bay was my now dead and wasted potential. No matter how hard I cried out, only silence would remain. Such was life's agony. Such is the call of the Accuser.

***Going into the
night blizzard was
suicide, but it was
either dying to the
hands of the pagans
or dying to the
elements.***



Flowing, Content

Mason Czabaranek '19
Digital photograph

WINNER, PHOTOGRAPHY

Last Dip

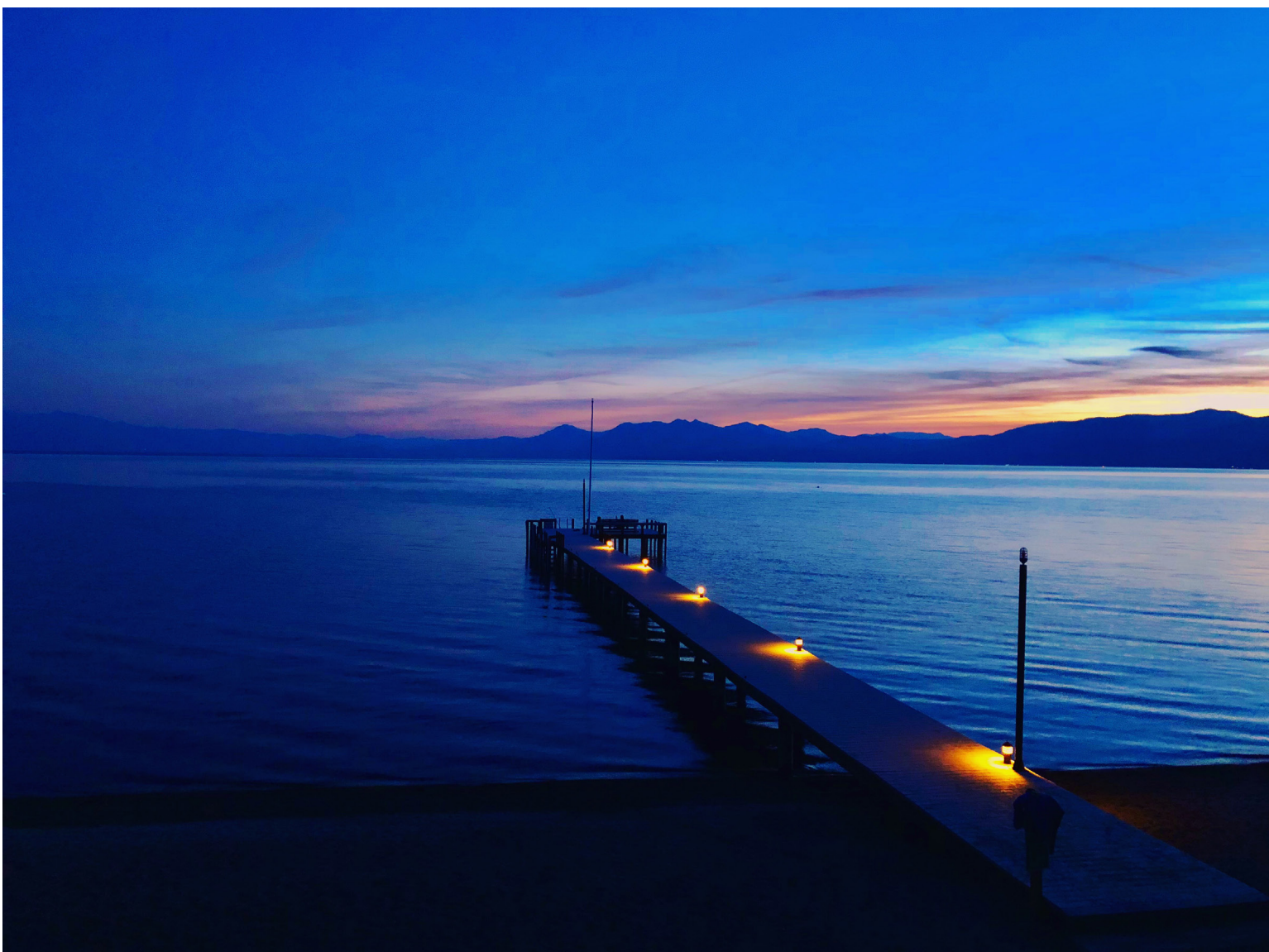
Austin Sutter '19

HONORABLE MENTION, POETRY

Never soaring sunward away from frothy crests
shimmering, refracting, mimicking at the surface,
Nor tanking like the sodden liner, resting proud
Among the stillborn mollusks and coral.

Rather we swim weightless in an effort to congest
The dank sewer, too limited, aged, isolated,
Already eroding into minute shards
Embedded into a dense blend of filth.

We envelop the feeble exoskeleton of the hatchling
And scope on its slit where panicked bubbles escape.
Hugging tightly until its writhing weakens and stills
And droops its head to join the rest.



Dock

Avi Shapiro '20
Digital photograph

