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Alaysia Spruill

Writer of the Semester

We Are: Black Panthers

By Alaysia Spruill (11th Grade)

And I went up to his face and screamed,
“Hold me, Officer, my patience is thinning!
Hold me, Officer, whip me and I’ll withstand!
Hold me, Officer, you’ve done nothing but stand grinning!
Oh, Officer, while the people are forced to hold your red hand!”

We offered up our torches,
and my trench coat bustled like Autumn
My mind, like so, was changing with great force,
The madness of rage teared through it.
I cried sad tears for the dead ones of war.

Batons swung like swords in the twilight.
For my men, it meant our suffering was on the horizon,
the soot on our cheeks and fire in our breaths
created in an obsolete surge of fury.
All my men with whom I stood were like fearless knights
In that moment
In that place in time.
The black-skinned, sweaty, whipped creatures we knew ourselves to be
Held that whip, suddenly feral
And we growled our growl in their faces,
“Hold me, Officer, my patience is thinning!
Hold me, Officer, whip me and I’ll withstand!
Hold me, Officer, you’ve done nothing but stand grinning!
Oh, Officer, while the people are forced to hold your red hand!”

Review

Perla Limon

In particular, this piece stood out because of the meaning that came with it. The agonizing past does not simply fade in this piece, and the oppression is revisited and revamped in the face of police violence in today's world. Overall, it's a very strong piece, it evokes fury and a deep indescribable sadness as the black struggle is described in such detail. Similes also deepen our understanding of the meaning, all the while painting a scenic picture, as if you were watching a movie. It means so much, and expresses it beautifully, in a way that cannot be dismissed or brushed off.

Kaylee LaFon

This piece stood out from the rest for the strength and emotion that was written. The pain in each word really pays tribute to the struggles the community had been through. The piece flows very well especially with the technique of using the opening lines as your closing lines. But instead of simple repetition, Alaysia changes the first line of a single person shouting these words to an entire group of people growling these words. It tells the story that she intended it to and it brings power to the overall piece, ending it with a meaningful message.

Edward Estrada

We are in a time of political crisis where pieces like this are necessary. When many people would probably say that this piece harkens a time far in the past, we all know that instances of those police brutality is still present in today's society. Alaysia creates disturbing imagery that seems to be in the midst of a war, one that has been raging for centuries. Power dynamics are directly in play: white against black, cop against black, oppressor against the oppressed. The Black Panthers are here, mourning those lost, yet still continuing to fight.

Tips from the Editors to Avoid a Slip of the Pen

Perla

1. You may hate your writing, but that's probably because you've read it a thousand times, try getting outside opinions.
2. Try to dabble in different genres and forms of writing, you never know when you'll stumble on a new favorite.
3. Rhymezone is your best tool for poetry, it always knows what you want to say, even if you don't.
4. Share your poetry, it helps to get feedback and experience reciting it.
5. You'll catch more mistakes reading your pieces aloud than reading them silently.
6. Get to know your characters, the more you know about them, the more genuine and smooth your writing will feel.
7. Don't be afraid to procrastinate, a lot of great works are generated under pressure.
8. Always have a notebook or Note app handy for ideas on the go.

Kaylee

1. When writing poetry specifically, keep track of your tempo. Read it out loud and see how it matches up. Unless you make the artistic decision for it to be in no specific tempo, then make sure it flows smoothly.
2. Thesaurus.com is your best friend. Read through your work and make sure you aren't repeating the same word too much when there's an option to switch it. \
3. While it's good to just wing it and write whatever comes to mind sometimes, other times it's better to actually plan out what you want to write so you have a set goal and idea and can stray from inconsistency.
4. Reread, reread, reread. Even if it feels annoying, it's good to reread what you write so you're aware of the details and know the story like the back of your hand. This is helpful when writing books because it helps prevent plotheoles and improves character development.

Edward

1. Don't be afraid to confront your emotions in your writing, but don't insert unnecessary

thoughts.

2. Don't be afraid to write aimlessly without any plan in mind. You sometimes don't need a map in order to get where you need to go.
3. When you have writers block, make sure to relax yourself and come back to writing when you're out of your head and just let the thoughts flow onto another piece.
4. Treat yourself. Don't forget that you deserve breaks. You need to take care of yourself before you can fully immerse yourself in writing, because anything else is unsustainable.

Promise Me Your Soul in this Kiss

By Kaylee LaFon (12th Grade)

The vow of a valentine vixen, vivacious for one night,
Rose petals on the sheets and candles' dim light.
Expensive jewelry on bare skin and chocolate hearts,
Let you witness my materialistic parts.
Bodies set aglow from eyes flooded with bliss,
But can you promise me your soul in this kiss?

The commitment of a cabaret companion, complacent for a while,
Movements so fluid and a face graced with a smile.
Liquor-coated lips and taunting tongues,
Let you blow smoke into my lungs.
Bodies set aflame from a burning abyss,
But can you promise me your soul in this kiss?

The guarantee of a guileless gem, genuine for a moment,
Unspoken memories and buried secrets serve as a bestowment.
Private adventures and irreplaceable intimacy,
Let you observe what no other can see.
Bodies set afloat from what they reminisce,
But can you promise me your soul in this kiss?

The assurance of an alluring acquaintance, affectionate for a bit,
Trailing fingers and amiable traces persuade me to submit.
Soft caresses and gentle embraces,
Let you lead me to forsaken places.
Bodies set alive from the times they miss,
But can you promise me your soul in this kiss?

And you say, "No, dear, I cannot. For my soul is long gone; away with a lover of my past,
one who had promised me their own soul in our kiss."

A Skyscraper for the Tired Housewife

Inspired by "Fern Hill" by Dylan Thomas

By Alaysia Spruill (11th Grade)

Now I was young and carefree among the tall buildings
About its long neck and happy as the wind was light
 The day overhead the concrete jungle,
 Time let me rein and conquer
 Humble in the judgement of their eyes
And honored among skyscrapers I was queen of the tall
buildings
And once during a time of purity I daintily owned the big money and respect
 Cubicle with framed photos and funny chairs
 Down the elevator of the never-ending property

And as I was young and tough, superior over the men
About the frantic office and commanding as they were fraught
 In the daily condescending that is daily indulged
 Time let me tower and dictate
 Humble in the cruelty of their means
And young and tough I was boss-lady and commander, the
laborer
Sang to my whip, the abusive with families barked and protested
 And the gavel struck sharply
 In the chaos of the prophetic apocalypse

All the day long it was rejuvenating, it was beautiful, the power
Skyscrapers tall as the heavens, the money stacks from the safe, it was
freedom
 And conversing, in control and composed
 And moral as pure as gold
 And a voice as hot as flame
As I climbed the social ladder the gossip died with the upset,
All the day long I heard, peaceful among men, finally
a queen

The Writer's Pain

By Andrea Hernandez (11th Grade)

The ink falls in droplets on the paper,
Spilling over the writer's hand.
The writer sits at his desk, hoping for divine intervention,
His mind searching for thoughts, ideas, words.
His tired eyes stare down at his blank page.
The power that moves his pen has run out.

If I Wake

By Rahan Cadence (11th Grade)

Maybe when I wake up, I'll make my coffee, have some orange juice, motivate myself to read the paper, call in sick, hang out with the girl I like, remember I have an essay due, panic, watch review videos, sleep, dream, wake up, hang out with my other friend, write my essay, turn it in, apologize for it being late, have a snack, take my medicine, draw a bath, soak, and fall asleep all over again.

Maybe when I wake up, I'll make some orange juice, motivate myself, read the paper, call the girl I like, remember I have an essay due, write my essay, turn it in, apologize for it being late, have a snack, take my medicine, fall asleep again.

Maybe when I wake up, I'll make the girl I like write my essay, apologize for being late, and have my medicine.

Maybe I wake up, juice myself to read the paper, - the paper- remember I have an essay due? *panic* Review, dream up my essay, turn in an apology, and have a asleep.

Maybe when I wake up, I'll motivate myself to call the girl I remember, panic, watch, sleep with my other friend, write my apology, take medicine, draw a bath, soak, fall, and sleep.

Author's Note

If I Wake starts out with a very long, very obnoxious sentence that sounds like a stream of typical morning thoughts. The next stanza is still the same sentence, but a few things are missing or modified. Suddenly, the meaning changes- then it changes again, and again, and again. This is "found poetry"; it's wild, and it represents the flexibility of language and the important influence of context. Even though we often try to withhold judgement about others, impressions and prejudice still exists. I mean, who's thinking in the poem, a boy or a girl? Maybe neither.

Mango

By Rahan Cadence (11th Grade)

Maybe when I wake up, I'll make my coffee, have some orange juice, motivate myself to read the paper, call in sick, hang out with the girl I like, remember I have an essay due, panic, watch review videos, sleep, dream, wake up, hang out with my other friend, write my essay, turn it in, apologize for it being late, have a snack, take my medicine, draw a bath, soak, and fall asleep all over again.

Maybe when I wake up, I'll make some orange juice, motivate myself, read the paper, call the girl I like, remember I have an essay due, write my essay, turn it in, apologize for it being late, have a snack, take my medicine, fall asleep again.

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Maybe when I wake up, I'll motivate myself to call the girl I remember, panic, watch, sleep with my other friend, write my apology, take medicine, draw a bath, soak, fall, and sleep.

Artist Mindsets

By Kaylin Isidro (7th Grade)

Isn't it crazy?
Isn't it crazy
How we're not made to think the same
But rather
create our own way of thinking?

Dance routines, films on screens
Exist because of thoughts
Exist because of dreams
Poured heart
And feelings

We think differently
We create differently
But we are all artists

Several Shades of Beautiful

By Kaylin Isidro (7th Grade)

Christmas lights, banter fights
cuddling by the fire
Don't love one so much that
you are blind to the other

The roll of thunder, oh how I wonder
what it has to do with sunny days
They both have beauty but
its splendor grows puny
when people only focus on the rain

She's so kind, we know how she is inside
but another's got the pretty face,
yet their gifts they forget to embrace
Are they become so eager to make a change
and they forget everyone's made in a different way
because they think there's only one kind of beautiful.

the love that made all others pale in comparison

By Cathlyn Serrano (11th Grade)

just like fourteen years ago,
on a day where the skies were a brilliant blue,
shining in the distance was you.
here we are, in fourteen years time,
under the moonlight and a veil of a warm, yellow light,
as if love has waited for this very night, and—
granted a wish i didn't know i made.
even if you are not my first love,
right now,
only you have my whole heart.
never in this lifetime would i have imagined—
in your arms is where i'd be.
living the dream i had dreamt of since three,
living my life beside you,
as if love has been waiting for you.

—you are the person my heart has been waiting to meet

Author's Note

This piece was actually written about a very special person in my life right now, and in a surge of rather strong emotions one day, I wanted to write a poem to express their significance to me, though I've never personally showed it to them. Not yet, anyway. I tried to illustrate something like a journey between the narrator and the subject. In the line, "just like fourteen years ago," it's representative of how long these two people have known each other, and how they suddenly found themselves in this new relationship upon growing older. Although every person you end up loving will be completely different from the last and will have their own quirks and traits, whether loveable or not, this is about that one love that you could wait an entire lifetime for because it's that worth it.

you were beautiful

By Cathlyn Serrano (11th Grade)

your smile,
your laugh.
there was a time i thought it was the prettiest in the whole world.
the way you moved,
the way you talked.
adoration at its finest; who could love those little things more?
how your eyes closed,
and crinkled with joy.
all of that meant the most to me at some point in time.
every heartbeat,
and your sweaty palms.
i loved even the way you pushed me away at the end of the day.
any sadness,
and your scent.
it tainted my world; i was engulfed in you, intoxicated by your color.
when you looked at me,
and loved me.
only you, only you could make even tears beautiful—somehow.
as you said goodbye,
and that last fleeting moment—
you were beautiful.

—since when was goodbye so beautiful?

Author's Note

This piece is about someone I once knew who I despised for awhile when things ended. When I found myself growing angrier and sadder each day, I started trying to remember the beautiful days I shared with them in order to find peace and continue being happy, even if I had to be happy without them. When relationships end, I feel as though people may get so caught up in the break up that they forget how beautiful it was at some point in time. I like to consider the frame of this poem to be the last stage of heartbreak; like a refreshing rebirth, or cleansing of the soul. Goodbyes have always been connotated with sadness, but who said that goodbyes couldn't be beautiful, too? It was a pleasure and honor knowing her. She'll never see this, but I sincerely hope she's doing well. She truly was beautiful.

Body Parts

By Jenny-Angeline Cochon Corpuz (12th Grade)

My head moves like clockwork
My hand spasms these ink blots
My shadow keeps failing to run away from
the embarrassment
known as me
My heart is trying to jump out of my chest
it's in too much pain trying to keep up
with me

My brain is always sore
My fingers keep breaking from failed
attempts of successful writings
My legs burn from cowering
My veins keep pumping to keep me alive but
they always want to get clogged
hoping to cut life short-
to stop where I'll never know-
without being rejected

The cat caught my tongue to stop the
stumbling and stuttering
My lungs take limited breaths ceasing my
life and limiting the moments to live
The path keeps getting
longer, wider, narrower, shorter,
it's indecisive- is it life, success, tell me
Scars keep growing around my body unable
to dissolve they show my mistakes and they
enjoy being made fun of

Have you seen my fake smiles?
They left without me
I told them to wait for me, for when I need
them
Because I didn't want to disappoint you
or anyone else
I need them to return to me
So you won't see the tears or frowns

These panda eyes are beginning to look like
I fought for weeks
Soon they'll need frozen vegetables to
cover the sleepless nights,
filled with stress

Makeup should be used
But I can't
Too complicated
Too elevated
Too lazy
Too expensive

Beauty is most definitely pain
Beauty is most definitely opinionated
Beauty, true beauty, cannot be judged on
outward appearance
Mine isn't, but that's because I'm not
Beautiful
The others are though, choose them
They have what you're looking for

My brain's dusted, but it's moving
just for you
With a hand that's ready
to do your every beck and call
Ready to be consumed by you and follow you
to the letter

Hearts falling off of cliffs at every
opportunity given
Voices stuck in their throat because they're
always lost in your eyes
Eyes that entice the entire room
A room I'm lucky enough to be a part of
To be captive of your gaze

Author's Note

When I wrote this poem I couldn't get the very first line out of my head- as most lines of my poems tend to start out, lines that won't ever leave me until I write them out. As I proceeded to continue I looked at where I was going- focusing on certain body parts, hence the title. This piece is also mildly exaggeration of my thoughts and actions but a lot of it is still true of what I tend to think or believe. Towards the ending, I couldn't help but think of how I feel like I'm not good enough for anyone for whatever it is, be it friend, peer, or anything else. Even if it is depressing, we all tend to have dark thoughts somewhere.w

Classroom

By Jenny-Angeline Cochon Corpuz (12th Grade)

I take place in my seat
at my desk
just like I have
all year

But this time
Something decided to change

I should've known
it was coming

I felt this rumbling in my
stomach
and I knew

It wasn't because
of cramps
or starvation

But you
Who's taken place
by me
beside me
behind me
in front of me

I make little beats
with my hands
feet
pens
pencils

All to substitute
how fast my
heart beats
around you

Young Forever

By Jenna Ramiscal (7th Grade)

I lay in the hospital bed afraid
I reminisce of the times when I was a child
Young forever I wish I could have stayed

I would do anything for a trade
To return to a time when I smiled
I lay in the hospital bed afraid

Now I need a special aid
Back in the day I could run wild
Young forever I wish I could have stayed

I have a bunch of bills left unpaid
Back then the work never piled
I lay in the hospital bed afraid

I can't be fixed with a simple band aid
Instead I have my will compiled
Young forever I wish I could have stayed

I wish my death could be delayed
Rewind to when I was a child
I lay in the hospital bed afraid
Young forever I wish I could have stayed

Assimilation

By Ahnayah Hughes (12th Grade)

I was always taught to sit on my hands “Cross your legs at the ankle” “Smile when you speak” “Look adults straight in the eye”

So I sat on my hands My legs were never uncrossed Smiled brightly before I opened my mouth And always maintained eye contact

I was always taught to downplay my blackness “Fix your hair”
“Play with the white girls” “Don’t be so loud”

So I downplayed my blackness I straightened my hair Hung out with girls who didn’t look like me And always avoided raising my voice

The Angry Black Women stereotype is a myth Because I’m not angry
I’m fucking ENRAGED My aunts and mothers and grandmothers came in on chains
And over the course of 600 years nothing has changed

I am still shackled by these colonial beauty standards These blow dryers and flat irons make my hand hurt

It doesn’t matter if you’re dark skin or light skin because to them it will never be

the right skin it will always be the white skin

My features are only desirable on girls of pale complexions I hope their lip plumpers give them infections

I reject their attempts at assimilation I counterattack all their invasions
of my personal space of my body of my race

I am black and I am enraged

I am a woman and I am in pain

I am a black woman and I exist

I am a black woman and I will no longer be dismissed

Heranwachsende

By Zahra Linsky (9th Grade)

Original German/Deutsch:

jünger selbst,
bitte hören.

nicht nur eine person
sollte fühle genau so.

giftig personen sind aus
in der welt.

nicht aller sind deiner
besten freund.

wohlgemerkt was ich sage;
zu viele sind tödlich.

nicht jeden person kann
vertraut sein.

leben und lernen,
du hast deine personen.

lass sie nicht zurück.

Rough translation to English:

younger self,
please listen.

don't let a person
make you feel that way.

toxic people are
out in the world.

not everyone is your
best friend.

note what i say,
too many people are deadly.

not everyone can
be trusted.

live and learn,
you have your people.

don't let them go.

Author's Note

I wrote this for a few reasons. The first being that I needed a piece of poetry inspired by music or art for an application. I also wanted to throw of my German speaking background in there, and it just worked. I'm actually proud of how it turned out.

But there's another reason too. If one can't tell already, in this poem, I'm giving advice to myself. It was inspired by my experiences with toxic friends. I remember how I felt when I first realized what this one girl was doing to my friends, and I wanted to let myself know that it will all be okay. I had a toxic friend this year too. I thought she was a true friend, but then I heard what she was saying about me behind my back, and I realized it was all a lie. While writing this, I was in the midst of still feeling extremely angry and betrayed. This was a way to feel through these emotions.

The song 'Waldbrand' by Madeline Juno is pretty great. Juno sings about wanting a Waldbrand—a forest fire—under her skin. She feels like that would be the only way to start anew. The emotions and themes in this song did inspire me while writing this, and I had the entire Waldbrand EP on repeat.

Incog-negro

By Isaiah Lynch (12th Grade)

I'm OJ Simpson with criminal intention
Subliminal suggestions tell you run from my entrance
Menace but you won't feel my presence
No sentence, for the senseless murder of your parents
Shhh I creep in the room like a whisper
Come behind your back and slice your jugular
Hear your sister whimper while I'm killing her brother
Then dump your body in the depths of the river
Your mother might have skin under her fingertips
Panicked when her neck was stabbed with a syringe
I cut off her hands and place them in my fridge
No evidence, won't let a dead bitch snitch
Linger above your sleeping father
Improper to wake a man with boiling water
Make him watch me tongue kiss his daughter
Smile while he suffocates as I'm tightening his collar
I'm Patrick Bateman with more melanin
And much more adrenaline and just as intelligent
Dressed more feminine with the same aggression
Who left your sister alive to die from depression

Walk Out, Don't Sit Out

By Ashley Gishen (11th Grade)

We hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal. Are we, the students, not equal? Do we, the students, not deserve safety? We are the future. We are your future. All men are created equal. We, the students, are created equal. We the people. Who are the people? Are we not people? Do we not deserve a say? If you have ever been told that children must be seen and not heard, this is your chance. There is no legal age for having a voice. Rise up. Enough is enough. When it is our lives on the line, we will not hold our tongues, we will not sit quietly and let the adults handle it. When the adults do nothing and it is us being killed, we will make damn sure those who want our generation to be so silent that you can hear a pin drop hear us. Rattle the cage. Make noise. We will not be silenced. We will not sit on the wall dangling our feet. We don't need a megaphone. The blood of innocent children amplifies our words.

ode to innocence

By Elena Sanchez (11th Grade)

Innocence, incense
It cries out for a while
Slowly it begins to smile
And walks for the first time

Here they are
Bright and shining like a star
On the cusp of adulthood

People always say only a child is innocent.
“They haven’t seen the world.
They don’t pay taxes.
They haven’t experienced war
They have everything they need”

But innocence isn’t just being a child
Innocence is maintaining what you felt and saw as a child
Innocence is purity and a lack of corruption
Innocence is being morally free of any wrong
Innocence is a state of being

Adults could be this, too
But only if they stay true
To themselves and to one another
Maybe then they could see what kids see
And try to set their demons free

Attached to You

By Ruth Lubao (10th Grade)

Killing me with your sweet and loving attention,
slowly falling head over heels from your charisma
my knees weakening,
Attached to you.

Yearning for the love I crave from you,
feeding me with the slightest compliments
continuously going back to the one who made me smile,
Attached to you.

Laughter echoes through my room,
as each message turns my cheeks red
butterflies fluttering in the pit of my stomach,
Attached to you.

Every day you talk to me,
the moments I cherish
wondering how lucky I am,
Attached to you.

Too oblivious to notice,
the master of your ways
everything became a blur,
Attached to you.

Unknown to why you played with the most delicate thing I own,
my broken heart,
shattered to pieces,
Attached to you.

Lying in a pool of sorrow,
wondering what went wrong,
thinking back on our memories,
Attached to you.

Impacted by the pain,
needing to feel happiness once again
though I still miss us,
Attached to you.

Our connection fading away,
pushing it to the back of my mind
but will always keep you as a lesson learned,
Detached from you.

What He Was

By Cali A. Naranjo (9th Grade)

Wondering to myself I think about him more,
I couldn't help but wonder why he was always so sore;
Never cuddling, never getting too close,
When the midnight moon came he always rose;
Heading to his room alone,
At night, in bed, he would release a groan;
Until one night I went to his room,
Written in red on the door was the word 'DOOM';
I read it and opened the door,
Staring at a hairy heap on the floor;
Clothes were tattered on the ground,
It raised its head and looked around;
Golden eyes staring straight through me;
I turned around ready to flee,
But he grabbed my leg and pulled me down;
His mouth had turned into a frown,
As I peered into his light blue eyes;
I suddenly knew all of his lies,
Why he kept them hidden away;
How he always told me to stay,
His large muzzled mask;
Somewhat of a task,
When the moon was up high;
Glowing in the sky,
It would make his ears perk;
It would hide his sweet smirk,
His hands would grow claws;
And he'd have hairy paws,
He would grow twice his size;
He wouldn't stay wise,

He would lock himself up;
And he would startup,
Growling and biting;
It would be clear he was fighting,
I needed to break the curse;
Before it made things worse,
It was true of what he was;
I couldn't run only because,
I loved a man who wasn't this;
Leaning forward I gave him a kiss,
His furry nose began to shrink;
And he began to sink,
His claws turned into nails;
As he let out strange wails,
I grabbed a blanket and pulled it around him;
Outside it was barely dim,
And everything went silent as he stood before me;
Tears shed down my cheeks as I knew he was free,
I hugged him tight not letting go;
The world would, once again, finally be slow,
And life will be normal again;
For I knew I had my friend,
He will always protect me from danger;
Even though he was everything stranger

Author's Note

This poem represents the relationship between my uncle and our family. The way he seems to distance himself from the ones he loves and how he has time for his new wife instead of us. He's meant to be the werewolf and we're meant to be the lover, for she loves him even though he keeps mostly to himself. It's kind of a sad way to look at it, but that's where I got my idea. When I'm writing poetry, I need to absolutely be listening to music because it gives me a flow that keeps the beat going. I don't like it when my poetry doesn't rhyme, though I have tried to make it so. This is my style and I have many poems that I would like to share with the world.

The Trip of Three

By JD Obedicen (11th Grade)

This is the trip

The trip of three

And this is the prayer

From three little boys

Left in the heat

Forgotten they beseeched

O' lord up on the sky

We plea o' lord

There he fell upon them

And preached

The paradise they sought

The trip of three

And this is the Journey

With three little boys

Free and glee

Traversed they sought

Five glistening sols

Five glowing crescents

Free and glee

Traversed they sought

Vast baby blues Vast grassy greens

Towering stony cones

Free and glee

They sought

The trip of three

And this is the town

Arrived three little boys

There they preached
The paradise people seeked
Yet they receipt
Fleet of hicks
Hear their venomous hiss
Meet blazing heat
And spikey pitch-forks
Frightened they admit a word
Of defeat
The trip of three

And this is the Jail Cell

That imprisoned three little boys
In a tiny box
Tiny Critters chitter
Clicky tee clack
Ticky clee tack
Barks music through rusty iron
And cracked concrete
Singing through the shadows
Clicky tee clack
Ticky clee tack
Driplets dribble
Splosh splash splish
Struck against three pale faces
They sat
Waiting and praying
The paradise that awaits
The trip of three

And this is Paradise

The three little boys seeked
Dragged from the tiny box
Disdained and pitied
By plastic gazes
Burdened by wooden crosses
...
An Ocean's view

Serene and calm
Yet they dangle
Hanged from hands and feet
Raped by nails of man
Shredded by crowns of thorns
Dying breath
They preached
The Journey they seeked
The paradise they seeked
Having traversed
Slashes from whips
Torrents of shit
And blazing sun heat
Yet they preached
Take us to the paradise we seek
Forgive the people
For thou does not understand
And thou does not see
The trip of three

Author's Note

Even though I wrote this last year, I really enjoyed writing it and is one of my favorites. My intent on this was for one to find one's dreams which is how I interpreted paradise. How there will be hardships along the journey because that's simply how life works. But if you stay true during times of hardships and learn to move and reconcile with the past, you'll find yourself a bit more at peace with the world.

Faces on Chairs

By Isabella Miller (11th Grade)

I'm sorry that you never knew me
Face taped to a chair
I walk my steps and sing for you
Though you'll never have known I was there.

I didn't know you and never will
But your stories give me chills
Because you are us and we are you.

Your dreams were grand
And I'm really sorry that you didn't get the chance to live them.
We must dream and compliment each other now
Because we'll never know
If tomorrow we won't have a chance to give them.

I hope that maybe after this,
Stories like yours won't be broken anymore.
So we'll make a change and act on this,
And I'm sorry that for your sakes,
We didn't do it before.

Atlas is Special

By Isabella Miller (11th Grade)

A melancholy man sits up on a mountain
He pines after notions and sips from the fountain of pure clean stream water,
Purest at its source.

He stares sadly, forehead wrinkled profoundly at a flower.
He stays there for an hour,
And delights in the fact that all the people in the village below
Are not like him, of course.

They'll never understand
The meaning of the wrinkles in his hand
Or comprehend the vastness of a beach of sand
Because they don't think as big as him.
They call and laugh and shout and play and barely look within.

He pities those sad young fools who waste their lives away
Not like him, of course, because he was careful with his days
Made sure to keep his special thoughts untouched,
pure so like the mountain stream
And never let his grip slip into the kind
of simple minded dreams
That his classmates dreamed so base-ly.
How naive they were they'd one day see.

And then they'll come to him—Atlas—and tell him he was right
They'll all be sorry they avoided him and didn't spend all night wishing
that their thoughts were darkly spiraled, intricate as his
And recognise the philosophical burden he shouldered
Separate from them as he grew older
Because he had the integrity not to set it down,

A petulant child at last when they invited him to the fairgrounds
And ignored their simple minded hounding of him
To spend some time with them.
And he drinks that pure mountain water,
gulps and gulps it down
He staggers under the weight of maintaining difference,
Until he chokes on his pure water
and drowns.

Coffee Brown Eyes

By Perla Limon (12th Grade)

I was never really an observant person, but there was always one particular girl that I couldn't help but to watch; Alyssa Jenkins, with a short frame and coffee brown eyes that light up in the sun's rays like the horizon itself: pools of tranquility.

She doesn't talk in class much, preferring to jot down her notes. But sometimes I like to play through scenarios in my head--of how I'd start a conversation with her by bumping into her after class, or how I'd ask her for a pencil and joke about how forgetful I am.

Alyssa Jenkins, she gets straight A's but scarcely gets noticed. How can a girl so quiet leave my stomach in knots?

Maybe it's the full curls that sit atop her head, or the freckles that trail across her nose. It could be because of her cute reading glasses, or the way she purses her lips when she concentrates. It may be the way she picks at her fingernails, trying to remove the paint blotted on them from a long night of painting. Or maybe... maybe it's her reputation.

Last week Alyssa Jenkins confessed to the linebacker of the football team, Ronnie Dameron. I heard he rejected her. I heard that she offered him sex, money, passing grades, but I also heard that she had been stalking him for weeks now, and he threatened to call the cops.

She came to school with bloodshot eyes and pink tinted hands. She was quite the artist, Alyssa Jenkins. She could paint anything in its likeness, all she needed was a canvas and a paintbrush. She could do absolute wonders with a blank canvas, but what she really loved was finger painting. Every day it was something different; red, blue, maroon, white-tinted fingers.

The poor girl looked frazzled by the time lunch came around. She probably heard the nasty rumors people were spreading about her. But even though a part of me yearned to talk to her, to sit at her otherwise vacant table, I left Alyssa Jenkins alone. Ronnie Dameron didn't come to school either, that day. He was probably looking to avoid her saddened eyes, like a kicked puppy.

Like I said before, I've never spoken to Alyssa Jenkins; not directly at least. I've heard her mutter to herself in the library after school while she studies chemistry. I've seen her presentations in class, where she straightens her posture and struggles to project her voice. But something about her just confuses me. Her smooth movements make my pulse race, hands tremble, eyes shift downward. Her dark eyes are too much to bear.

Ronnie Dameron didn't return to school the next day, or the day after that, or the day after that. Girls pouted when his name was called in class, and no response was heard. Rumors went around that Ronnie Dameron moved schools, or that he moved to Florida with his parents, or that he got a girl pregnant and had to drop out to help provide for the child. His departure was just so sudden, he was there one day, and gone the next.

I remember last year Alyssa Jenkins tried to come onto a teacher, Mr. Sumner. I saw the way she looked at him, the way she actively sought him out when he was alone. I can't blame her for trying, I guess. He wasn't too bad looking, and he had a refined taste in clothes, but it's worth mentioning that Mr. Sumner was 27. He was a bachelor, though, so I suppose I can see the appeal.

I heard that Alyssa Jenkins confessed her feelings to him after school. He refused, but not before she managed to kiss him, hard. She even started fumbling with the buttons on his shirt, but he pushed her away and hurried out with his bag, leaving her there. I passed by his class on my way home from my study group, and saw her crumpled on the floor, shirt halfway unbuttoned and sobbing. Mr. Sumner disappeared the following week.

Nobody knew what to do about it, even the principal was at a loss. His departure was without warning, and our class was left without a replacement teacher for months.

Alyssa Jenkins has this way about her. She rarely asked for favors, and she never tried to make friends, but there was something about her that lead the teachers to fall in love with her studious attitude. And there was something about her that gave me goosebumps.

There was something about the graceful way that she walked that downright frightened me. Alyssa Jenkins's pink tinted fingers and bloodshot eyes haunted me. A part of me yearned to ease her loneliness, but the thought of her dark brown eyes watching me always stopped me; thoughts of conversing with her struck fear into my heart.

How can a girl so quiet leave my stomach in knots? That's easy to answer now. It's because I'm afraid of her, and perhaps I'm right to be. Every guy who has rejected her has disappeared, and whether her pink tinted fingers are connected or not, I have been avoiding her for years.

Alyssa Jenkins enjoys finger painting. Alyssa Jenkins studies in the library every Wednesday. Alyssa Jenkins doesn't have a lot of friends. Alyssa Jenkins is every teacher's

favorite student. But Alyssa Jenkins' brown eyes frighten me.

The library is empty now, my study partners left little over half an hour ago. I'm alone, but there's something different about the mood today. The door creaks open, but I dismiss it and continue typing out my English essay.

A quiet voice reaches me, "Um... Liam?"

I glance upward and am met with the probing stare of coffee brown eyes. The light streaming from a window nearby fill them with color, revealing small specks of rusty red. "I've liked you for a while," the eyes cast downward, "and I wanted to know... Would you go out with me?"

The Bird

By Arielle Santos (10th Grade)

A young child tugged at his mother's sleeve, much like how he always did whenever they passed by the pet store. They always walked in, but only to look around and admire the pets looking for a forever home. A mixture of the dogs' breath and hamster bedding was an overwhelming aroma that the child always seemed to ignore. All sorts of animal noises combined like a horrible elementary class choir. Despite the commotion coming from every area, the beautiful melodious music of the colorful bird made itself known to the mother and her son. The two jerked their heads over their shoulders, and their eyes widened at the sight of the vibrant creature.

"Toby, do you want this bird?" the mother suggested, motioning to the bird. Toby looked up at his mother, dumbfounded.

"Wait, what? You never let me get anything here... I thought I wasn't allowed to have pets!" he said in disbelief.

"His eyes are as icy blue as your father's were. Let's get him!" his mother said with full enthusiasm. They called over a worker, barely able to get his attention over the busy noises of the animals. After the tedious adoption process, they finally got to take the new member of their small family home.

Toby and his mother came hours after the sun began to set. Dinner that night was completely forgotten as they admired the gorgeous bird, sitting on the floor and swaying to its mellifluous whistle. Eventually the boy fell asleep in his mother's lap as they listened to the bird's lullaby. She rested her head on the couch behind her and slowly dozed off as well.

The next morning the mother slowly opened her eyes as the sun cracked through her window and shone in her eyes. She looked down at her lap, her eyes widening as she noticed the absence in her arms. A never-ending, thick cough was heard in the distance, and she jolted from her seated position, holding her back that hurt from the position she fell asleep in last night as she did so.

"Toby? What's going on?" she cried while slamming each door open. Toby was found hunched over the blood filled toilet bowl. Everything she said made it

seem like Toby was in a glass box; nothing was audible. She whipped out her phone and dialed the paramedics, yelling for a response from her son as they impatiently waited for an ambulance. Soon after, EMTs came and pried him out of his hunch to put him onto a stretcher. After what felt like hours, they arrived at the hospital and carried him into a hospital room.

Doctors surrounded him, raising their eyebrows at one another. It was like nothing they'd ever seen before. Lab tests, blood tests, and everything in between came back unresolved. Toby's mother weeped in the corner, wondering why this was happening to them. Slow days passed on that hospital bed. At the end of the week, the gloomy doctor came in and simply said, "I'm sorry, but our test results came back inconclusive. It would be better to just go home and hope for the best." He looked at Toby with eyes full of hope, "His condition hasn't worsened, maybe all we need now is faith." With that, they returned home with heavy hearts. Toby was still coughing, but at the moment, only the taste of blood in his mouth appeared when he did so, rather than actual liquid.

The bird's tunes were audible from the outside of the door as they were turning their keys to go inside. It was as though he knew what Toby's been through and wanted to welcome him back with open arms. Toby smiled at the singing bird before going to eat lunch for the first time at home that week. His mother prepared an old family favorite; beef stew. Toby loved the taste of beef stew, but the good memories associated with it never failed to remind him of how everything was different now. The scent made it feel like he could still hear his father humming to his mom while she made dinner.

"Mama, I miss Dad." Toby croaked, "Why did he leave us, and why haven't we got to play or sing together? It's been so long since we last did that."

His mother sighed and let the stew sit as she got down on her knees. She placed her hand on his shoulder and said, "Your father and I didn't really work out, so that's the first reason he left. I've told you the second reason so many times, dear, it pains me to bring it up again. Let's just say your father left to a land far, far away where he could use his beautiful singing voice whenever and wherever he wants to." She gave him a lighthearted, optimistic smile while she slowly stood up, "Now let's go eat this yummy beef stew. This delicious smell is calling my name!" They ate their meals with wide smiles while the bird sang like he was attempting to communicate his approval.

After the meal, Toby sat by the bird's cage. He stared at the bird's beautiful feathers, realizing that he's never gotten to stroke them. Without hesitation, the child put his little finger through the one of the openings of the cage and slowly traced the bird's feathers. Toby admired how soft the bird was, and continued to pet its back. Their intimate time was interrupted when he began to cough blood again, backing his hand out of the cage

to cover his mouth. His coughing had come back with full force; it was like an evil villain making sure its return was acknowledged. The mother quickly started a brew of tea she believed would help, but the coughing didn't stop, not allowing Toby any room to breathe. He curled up on the floor, his vision slowly fading to blackness.

The child later woke up back on a very familiar firm mattress. His vision didn't clear up completely yet, but the overwhelming smell of hand sanitizer was enough to give away that he was back on a hospital bed. He sighed as he stared at the ceiling, the sounds of patients coughing and wheezing in nearby rooms never failed to scare him. Toby always had a bad feeling about hospitals, and the atmosphere of the hospital never failed to feel spooky to him, possibly from a scary video he'd stumbled upon online. To his left, he heard a quiet tapping on the window. He slowly turned his head, noticing colorful feathers he knew belonged to his bird's. He scooted off the hospital bed and skulked towards the window, hoping to not attract the attention of a nurse.

"How did you get out, little birdy?" Toby asked, frowning. He examined the glass, "Do you want to come in?"

The bird seemed to give a short nod, which didn't baffle the young child. He looked at the window, then found a latch that opened the window just a slight bit, just enough for fresh air and the bird to come on in. The boy quickly scuttled his way back on the bed, the bird following after him. Toby jumped back on the mattress, and the bird stood on his stomach after the blanket was set down. Toby began to cough again, startling the bird while doing so. The bird began to make noise, although not like his usual melodious tweets. The bird was shrieking non-stop with the volume of a car alarm. The boy wasn't able to speak, and his coughing was quickly replaced with wheezing as his throat closed up. The familiar sight of his vision fading to black was returning, and he couldn't let out a single noise to call for help. The heart monitor's furious beeps were drowned out by the bird, and not too long after, nothing could be heard but the bird's shrill cries. The bird seemed to go silent for a moment, allowing the boy to hear the heart monitor flatline.

Toby awoke again, but this time not on a hospital bed. He was laying on what looked and felt like a cloud. A familiar tune the boy's father used to sing was heard to his left, causing him to slowly turn his head.

"Little birdy?" Toby asked, his voice as soft as a bird's morning chirps. "How are you here, too?" He looked around the new area, "Why are we here? What did you do?" He brought his attention back to the colorful bird, and he saw its feathers fall off one by one. As each feather dropped, a bright light shone from the bird's skin, similar to a spotlight. Toby squinted and attempted to block the blinding light with his forearm while still trying to find out what was happening. The light expanded to the height of a figure well known

to the young child. The brightness began to fade out, and a face Toby could never forget peeked through the light.

“Dad?” the boy said shakily.

“Hi, Toby, it’s been awhile since I’ve gotten to see you as myself. I’ve missed you so much,” his father said sincerely, opening his arms for a hug.

Toby remained seated, frozen in shock. The older man approached his son, embracing him tighter than ever before. Toby returned the desperate embrace, resting his head on his father’s shoulder. He silently wept as memories of his dad flooded his mind.

“I’ve missed you so much, dad.” the child said into his father’s shoulder, “Why did you leave us?”

His dad broke the hug and sat next to his son, wiping the child’s tears.

“They wouldn’t let me see you,” he started, “and I didn’t have the money to take you in anyway.”

“Why didn’t you just stay with me and Mama?” he questioned.

“I loved Mama very much, but after a while that love kind of went away. We had to do what we had to do. After a while, I got really really sick, and I couldn’t bear for you to see me like that. But after I passed, I knew I had to see you again. I came back as this beautiful bird, and I stayed around the area of that pet shop we all used to go to, hoping one day the workers would bring me in and you guys would adopt me.

“But I started getting really sick because of you! Why would you hurt me like that?” Toby interrogated.

“Just being around you wasn’t enough, and I had to be with you again, like how we are now. I hope your mother can forgive me for taking you away from her, but I’ve been aching to have you in my life again.” The father wrapped his arm around his son, “This way we can always be together... Forever.” Toby smiled in agreement, resting his head on the man he’s missed for so long.

“I love you, Dad, thank you for bringing us back together.”

Author's Note

My main goal while writing this short story was to practice foreshadowing and making every little detail in the story connect for the ending. It took me a while to figure out exactly how I wanted to end the story, nonetheless I'm proud of what I came up with.

Amnesia

By Lyka Luzano (10th Grade)

**I drove by all the places we used to hang out getting wasted
I thought about our last kiss, how it felt the way you tasted
And even though your friends tell me you're doing fine**

The same pathway she walked through everyday caused her heart to ache, passing by the shops Myra and Adam used to go to afterschool. Whether it was to study or go on a 'mini date' as he would call it. The kisses they shared, whenever she acted whiny and pouty towards him. How his laugh would ring through her ears and he would pull her into his arms, planting a kiss on her temple.

Her last kiss with him was only a few days ago, before they had broken up. They had just finished watching a movie, and he was walking her home as usual. Walking hand in hand, admiring the dark sky filled with bright stars. Adam's hand moved from hers and wrapped around her shoulders, pulling her closer to his chest. A smile rose to her face as her arms went around his waist, burying her face into his chest and breathing in the faint cologne she loved so much. His fingers ran through her hair and she lifted up her head to look up at him. He only smiled and leaned down to press his lips against hers, the faint taste of buttery popcorn on his lips.

Upon arriving to class, she was a mess; eyes puffy from crying and dark circles visible under her eyes. Myra's uniform was slightly disheveled since she was in a rush leaving the house. Taking her seat, her friend, Sam turned to look at Myra seeing her head against the desk. He only frowned, he pitied her heartbroken state while Adam had already recovered with a new girl by his side.

**Are you somewhere feeling lonely even though he's right beside you?
When he says those words that hurt you, do you read the ones I wrote you?
Sometimes I start to wonder, was it just a lie?
If what we had was real, how could you be fine?**

Myra began to question their relationship before he even ended things. Adam seemed so lifeless and dull when he said it, as though it meant nothing to him. The words “let’s break up” were delivered without an ounce of hesitation; bluntly. Days before that, he seemed a little bit off and distant but she had dismissed it. If he cared about her then why did he let her go so easily? It’s like it was nothing to him. All of it.

**'Cause I'm not fine at all
I remember the day you told me you were leaving
I remember the makeup running down your face
And the dreams you left behind you didn't need them
Like every single wish we ever made**

Adam could remember Myra’s face when he had broken things off, tear-filled eyes and her expression laced with pain. The hot tears cascading down her face that he wanted to wipe away for her but he couldn’t. He had hurt her already and he didn’t want to push his luck.

He recalled the days they snuck out at night to meet up and go to the pool or a nearby lake just to relax. How they constantly talked about the most random things. He missed that. How her head laid on his chest as she mumbled about how much she loved him. How she used to make wishes upon the stars, it always made him smile.

“I wish I could forget about the stupid little things,” Myra said while he looked at her with an curious expression.

“Why is that Myra?” he asked, his arm around her waist while she hummed, burying her face into his neck.

“So, I wouldn’t be stressing over everything, like getting my assignments done. Not having to constantly think about the past... You know what I mean?” she asked. He nodded in agreement, planting a kiss on her forehead.

The memories of them filled his head, his eyes burned with the hot tears streaming down his cheeks. He laid on his bed, scrolling through his camera roll. He could barely contain himself as he stared at photos of Myra and him. He wanted nothing more than to go back in time, wishing that all of this was just some nightmare.

I wish that I could wake up with amnesia

In Between

By Levi Del Refugio Burnett (9th Grade)

Everybody has this idea ingrained within them; the idea that you always have to pick a side. That it's always one or the other, not neither or both. You're either a boy or a girl, you're either rich or poor, you're either smart or stupid, you're either an artist or an athlete, you're either a killer or a victim. You're either with us or against us. I remember, during the years I was alive, I never really fit into any of those categories. I mean, even as I'm dead, I didn't make it to heaven or hell. I'm stuck here in purgatory, because nobody knows how to categorize an outsider.

If you're reading this, I'm gonna assume you ended up in purgatory, too, so since you have quite some time to sit and wait around, it's probably okay for me to explain my life. Not the whole thing, obviously. That would take years to read, and I don't want you to feel like you wasted your time. I just want to give you something to ponder while you're stuck here. I'll ask these questions now, and if by the time you're done reading, your answers haven't changed, you didn't get the point. Who are you? What are you? Why are you here?

God, I've never been much of a writer, and I know this is gonna read like some shitty teenager's bad poetry. So, from the beginning... I suppose I had a decent enough childhood. My parents weren't the best people, they were really forgetful, and on my 18th birthday they eagerly rushed me out of the door, two suitcases in hand. My highschool career wasn't anything short of typical. I guess, at least in the moment, I never thought of it as anything other than boring. I was never very smart, but I always had grades no lower than a C. My schedule consisted of going to classes, and, during lunch, beating up those faggy kids. Don't get me wrong, I never hit them, it was all my friends, but that doesn't make it much better, does it?

When I was 22, I realized that maybe I was one of those faggy kids. I never really spent much time thinking about my attraction to people, I was too busy absorbing myself in my mundane habits: sports, listening to music, trying (and failing) to play the guitar, and again trying but failing to please my parents. God, they were such stuck-up assholes. I guess I'm getting off track though... So, what I was saying was, when I was 22, I began to question my sexuality. I had been going to clubs

and parties, pretty much anything I could, just to distract myself from the overwhelming monotony of my life. Most of the other guys always ended up leaving with some girl or another, but I never really got that. I would always catch myself sneaking a look at some guy, and, shocked with myself, turn away and go to the opposite side of the room.

One night, I decided that I was gonna explore these feelings. Let me tell you from the start, that was a fucking bad move. Nothing really seemed to go wrong at first, it was kinda just me and this other guy whose name I've forgotten, so let's just call him Jeremy. So, Jeremy and I were just making small talk, one thing lead to another, and we decided to head back to his place. As we were walking, there was a group of guys ahead of us. I guess we just never really thought to notice them until it was too late. They seemed like they were deep in their own conversations, but as soon as they got to Jeremy and I, they threw him down against the concrete and started kicking the living shit out of him. Maybe the sight of us holding hands made them mad?

So, they're beating on Jeremy, and I'm screaming for them to stop, and they tell me that unless I wanna be next, I oughta "shut the fuck up and run along." I don't know what took hold of me, and I had never felt it before then, but all of a sudden I felt unbreakable. I stood my ground, I kept yelling, and, when they didn't stop, I threw one solid punch into one of their jaws. I felt something crack in his face, but also in my hand. I was temporarily numb to the pain, and I started kicking like crazy, breaking one of their legs, spraining another's ankle. Eventually, they decided it wasn't worth it, and they left.

Author's Note

I wrote this piece mostly out of nowhere, I just wanted to contribute something to the endless speculation about the afterlife, and what came out of it was the life story of a broken man, forever searching for something to complete him. This piece is important to me, because it's the only work that I am genuinely proud of, and it goes to show just how much we don't know about the universe. I hope to make people feel something every time I write, and in this case I wanted the readers to feel wonder, and to question their own beliefs.

Trash Bags and Best Friends

By Bella Nazur (9th Grade)

The shrill ring of her phone jolts her out of her book. She glares in its general direction.

Only one person has a set ringtone that high and annoying, Andre, and she never calls this late (or was it early considering it was 12:24?). She peels herself out of her castle of blankets, carefully setting down her book. Andre will just keep calling as long as she doesn't pick up, so she can't ignore her forever. Her hands fumble around the piles of books and loose papers on her desk, knocking off a few pocketbooks that land with dull thuds. Its under a textbook, and when she finds it, its still ringing. It's worse than her morning alarm.

"Yes, Andrea?" she asks, annoyed. She wants to finish her book--she has fifty two pages left--and maybe four hours of sleep. "Why are you calling? You should be asleep."

"Yeah, yeah. But Amelia, you should be asleep, too. Also I've told you before it's Andre, not Andrea," her tinny voice says.

"That's not the point. Why did you call me? You never call, especially not this late—or is it early?"

"You can hide a body, right? Because like, I sorta need that skill right now? I—" Amelia's stomach drops. She doesn't hear the rest of the sentence. What the hell?, she thinks. What the hell.

"Excuse you?" Amelia forces out.

"I need your help, dude." Andre doesn't seem like a cold blooded murderer, and never has, but she sounds too casual.

"Where are you?" It's a split second decision but she trusts Andre with everything she has. And, she knows, anyone who Andre killed deserved it. Andre is basically a saint. "I'll be there."

The tree they played around as kids looks ominous at night. Its dark trunk,

perfect for climbing, looks grotesque in the pale light of the moon. The small creek nearby brings fog, spiraling up the roots of the tree in soft wispy trails.

The thin flow of water usually leaves a smooth, soothing echo in the air but now it sounds like a scream. Andre's sitting down, legs crossed over each other. Three stuffed trash bags sit innocuously behind her. The guilty tears building up in Amelia's throat feel like acid. She can't believe she's doing this.

"Mimi, you're here!" She stands excitedly and oohs when she sees Amelia. "You brought shovels and flashlights! I didn't even think of that."

"It looks like you handled things pretty well. Are you sure you need me?" If she leaves now, she might be able to convince herself this never happened; that it was only a dream. Please say no, god say no, she thinks desperately. I don't want to be an accessory to murder. Her chest fills with guilt, feeling as if it might explode.

"Yeah, of course. You'll make sure I don't screw up." I can't change the past, Amelia wants to say, no matter how much I want to. She rubs her eyes with the heels of her hands, more tired than ever; not knowing if it's physical or mental exhaustion.

"Okay." Her voice is shaky but Andre doesn't notice. "Okay," she repeats with confidence. "You need to dig a hole, but I'll help."

"At the root of the tree?"

"No." She wants to be able to come back to this tree without wanting to cry, reliving her regrets. She shuffles across the creek to an area where the bushes are too thick and sharp for anyone sane to venture and Andre saunters behind her, two bags in hand.

Her fingers ache as they tightly grip around the handles of the shovels, whitened knuckles protruding. She pushes one towards Andre and its easy acceptance weighs down on her heart. She doesn't think she'll ever ask why, she wouldn't be able to handle it.

They start to dig.

The sharp echo of a shovel hitting a rock shatters the silence of the forest. Their attention turns to the ground in search of it. Its small and red and more of a pebble but she can't bring herself to care, because it's her shovel that hit it and it puts everything into perspective.

Her breath picks up, chest heavy as it moves up and down, and up and down, and the weight of her guilt is suffocating. Her stomach roars in disgust at her actions and her back aches when she looks down. It will take them hours to have a deep enough space. It's obvious to her, when she looks into the hole barely big enough to fit a soccer ball. Andre picks it up and chucks it behind them. She takes the moment as an ice breaker, "Have you finished the English project?"

This is not a normal day, Amelia wants to scream, don't ask me questions like it is. She bites down her scream but utters a dumb, "What?"

"Did you finish?"

Tears escape the corners of her eyes and her body jerks as she starts retching into the shallow hole. Andre starts scrambling in panic, hands going to support her.

"Holy—Amelia, are you okay? Crap, man, did you eat something funny?" If Andre says anything else, she doesn't hear. She sobs and pukes until she forces herself to stop.

"I c-can't help you. I-I can't. No, not anymore. You murdered someone, you murdered someone—you murderer." Her mouth tastes like vomit and regret but she feels lighter, less guilty.

"What? What the hell are you talking about?" She has the audacity to sound indignant. Uselessly she adds, "I wouldn't just throw away our future like that."

"We are currently burying a body—that's what I'm talking about. That is literally why I'm here, you can't just dismiss this," she spits back.

"We're burying Matt Doherty—"

"You killed Matt?! Killing him won't increase our—your chances of getting in an Ivy League." Andre looks at her disappointed and more than anything Amelia wants to smack that look off her face. She prys Andre's hand off her. She doesn't want the comfort of a murderer.

"We're burying Matt Doherty's science project," Andre says slowly. "He made this big anatomical figure of a person and he would be praised for it. He's a major jerk and deserves to be knocked down a couple steps."

She starts crying again but for another reason entirely; her best friend isn't a murderer. To her, the relief of the revelation is almost tangible. "Why couldn't you just tell me that?"

"Thing is, I did. I literally said it right after I asked for help."

She crawls to Andre for a hug. As Andre's arms surround her, she slowly stops crying.

What Remains to be Seen

By Cali A. Naranjo (9th Grade)

JULIUS...Father of CLEO, loves his daughter with all his heart

CLEO...Daughter of JULIUS, wants the best for father

DRIVER...Explains to JULIUS about accident

Scene 1 Act 1

JULIUS is a scientist, 42, and he's had to care for his daughter CLEO, 25, alone ever since his wife passed away. He is sitting in his chair, tapping his pencil on his chin as he tries to think of a way to end the story he's writing. He gazes out the window of the CABIN and shakes his head. He wears a black coat and white shirt that clings to his body. The clock chimes NOON and he decides to work on the piece later, pulling his chair towards the desk and peering through a microscope.

JULIUS

(mumbling to himself) Stupid. Stupid. Stupid. You stupid piece of-

(CLEO enters, hair falling in perfect curls at her shoulders. She has a beautiful blue dress that once belonged to her mother on and twirls for her father. JULIUS manages a smile and nods his approval.)

JULIUS

(Shyly) You look lovely.

CLEO

(Glances down at herself, smiling) Thank you... So, how's it going? (Peers over his shoulder and frowns) You know, wouldn't it be easier if you actually plugged it in? (Reaches for the cord and inserts it into the outlet)

JULIUS

(Groans) I'm an idiot.

CLEO

(Raises eyebrow and rolls eyes) No you're not. You're anything but.

JULIUS stands up and heads to the kitchen.

JULIUS
Is that so?

CLEO
(Chuckles) Hey, I was wondering if I should just get some take-out for dinner tonight.

JULIUS
(Frowns) Why? (Opens the fridge and rests his hands on his hips in defeat, seeing that they have nothing) I see...yeah that would be good.

(CLEO grabs her keys and starts towards the door, being pulled back as JULIUS embraces her. She plants a kiss on his cheek and leaves him to his work. The silence of the CABIN takes over him and he soon falls asleep.)

Scene 1 Act 2

JULIUS wakes to the sound of his phone ringing and he snatches it from the table, cursing under his breath. He freezes at the sound of whoever's on the other line and quickly hangs up, rushing towards the door and out into the driveway. He jumps in the car and starts down the deserted dark road.

JULIUS
(To himself) PLease. God, no. Please be okay. Please God, don't do this to me again.

(Rain starts to lightly drip upon his windshield as he drives down the deserted road. He spots an ambulance in the distance and parks beside it, tears rolling down his face as he sees CLEO on the hospital bed. Blood pours down her body, soaking her mother's dress.

JULIUS rushes up to the driver.)

JULIUS
(Panicked) What's happened?! Someone tell me- (Stops, seeing CLEO being carried into the back of the van) Wait! Wait, that's my daughter!

DRIVER
(Softly) Sir, please. We're taking her to the hospital. You can follow us there, or drive with her.

JULIUS
I...I...

(The DRIVER gives JULIUS a reassuring look and gestures to where his daughter is being led. Without another word, JULIUS follows CLEO and sits beside her in the back of the ambulance, holding her hand tightly in his.)

JULIUS

(Plants a tender kiss on her palm) I'm here, honey. Daddy's here.

DRIVER

(Climbs into the back and closes the door as the car begins to move) How are you holding up?

JULIUS

(Not making eye-contact with him) What happened?

DRIVER

Your daughter crashed into a tree down the street. She has severe tissue damage in her leg and we need to...to...

JULIUS

(Covers his mouth and nods stiffly, sobbing) Oh my God.

DRIVER

(Pause) I'm sorry.

Scene 2 Act 1

JULIUS sits beside CLEO in the HOSPITAL, his hand running gently through her hair. She opens her eyes and takes in her surroundings. It's dawn, and the sky outside looks gorgeous, with many colors mixing together.

JULIUS

(Smiling sadly) Hello. How are you feeling?

CLEO

What happened? I can't feel my- (Looks to her legs and quickly shuts her eyes) Where...

JULIUS

You crashed.

CLEO

(Whispers) And my legs?

JULIUS

I'm sorry, Cleo. It's my fault. I should have gone with you.

CLEO

(Peels lids open to look at him) No. It's not. Dad. It's okay.

JULIUS

(tear falls along his nose) But...without your legs...you won't be able to do anything...you won't be free to do what you want...

CLEO

(Shivers) Free? Dad, I'll always be free. Besides, I have you and that's all I need. (Takes his hand and draws circles upon his knuckles) Look at me.

JULIUS

(Looks at her and holds his breath) I just-

CLEO

(Cuts him off and shakes her head) I love you.

JULIUS

(Touched) I love you, too. (Kisses her forehead and starts to hum a familiar tune)

(It was the tune that her mother used to sing to her as she fell asleep in her arms. And after passing, she was cared for by her father, JULIUS. He would always care for her.)

The sun rises outside as the father and daughter hold each other close, never wanting to let go. Silence swallows them as they close their eyes and drift into a gentle slumber.

Author's Note

This script is based off of a scene from the novel I'm writing, which is about a pack of people who have the ability to turn into certain breeds of canines, depending on their personalities. One of the members falls in love with a woman, which is forbidden, and the story unfolds. It's a six book series and in the fourth book (which is definitely my favorite), there's a great scene that I decided to make a script. It means a lot to me because I started writing this story after my step-dad adopted me and I wanted to finish it for him. I wanted it to show the love between different human beings, which are realistic and moving towards the reader.



Contributors' Questions

Get to know the resident writers

Levi Burnett

What's your favourite genre to read or write?

My favourite genre to read is horror, and to write is anything fictional

Do you have specific tendencies when you write?

I normally have both headphones in, blocking out all outside sounds from distracting me.

What's your favourite quote?

“It has to start somewhere. It has to start sometime. What better place than here? What better time than now?”

Rahan Cadence

What was the last thing you Google searched?

"What is a politic and how many are there?"

Do you have specific tendencies when you write?

I write when I'm not supposed to, and I use it as a tool to further my procrastination. I always eat while I write because my mind is most creative when I'm multitasking and procrastinating.

Have you ever hated someone?
Did you ever grow out of it?

Yes, I have hated and I will never forget the several months in which Ajit Pai gradually forbade the approval of his terrible ideas. Goodbye, \$7.99 Netflix.

Jenny-Angeline Cochon Corpuz

Is there something you always have to incorporate into your writing?

I tend to use Tab, Enter, and change justifications to give emphasis to certain words and shape my poems

Favorite quote?

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."
— Maya Angelou

Favorite book character?

Perseus Jackson from the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series

Ashley Gishen

What was the last thing you Google searched?

"Where did 420 come from?"

Is there something you always have to incorporate into your writing?

There has to be LGBT+ representation

What's your favourite quote?

"Fight because you don't know how to die quietly."
— All For The Game, Nora Sakavic

Andrea Hernandez

Favourite quote?

“I don't want my life to imitate art, I want my life to be art.”
— Carrie Fisher

Favourite book character?

Hermione Granger

Have you ever hated someone?
Did you ever grow out of it?

I've never hated anyone because I didn't feel like it was worth it to dedicate time to hating someone but I have disliked people

Ahnayah Hughes

What was the last thing you Google searched?

"Washington D.C. Cherry Blossoms"

Is there something you always have to incorporate into your writing?

Shitty rhymes and ugly feelings

Have you ever hated someone?
Did you ever grow out of it?

I think I only truly hates one or two people, and as a Taurus, I will probably hold on to that hate forever.

Kaylin Isidro

What was the last thing you Google searched?

The last thing I Google searched was how tall Jesus was. (He's 5'1.)

What was the first password or username you ever had?

Buddy me on Animal Jam @ Sunshinebear333

Favorite quote?

"Today is going to be a good day and here's why: because today, at least you're you and that's enough."
— Dear Evan Hansen

Kaylee LaFon

Do you have specific tendencies when you write?

I really just need to be in the right mindset. I don't need music, I don't need silence, I don't need lighting... I think I just need coffee and patience.

Is there something you always have to incorporate into your writing?

For some reason, I always write unhappy poems, but my stories always have to have some kind of humor.

Favorite quote?

"I mean, I guess."
— no one in particular

Perla Limon

What was the last thing you Google searched?

"Preparing for poverty"

Favourite quote?

"She conquered her demons and wore her scars like wings"
— Atticus

Have you ever hated someone?
Did you ever grow out of it?

I once hated my neighbor and childhood friend for revoking my birthday gift (Barbie Jeep Adventure) after giving it to me.

Zahra Linsky

What was the last thing you Google searched?

'Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe sequel.' The answer is yes! There will be one called There Will Be Other Summers.

What was the first password or username you ever had?

It might have been that or something about aegean cats. No clue. Fourth grade was a whirl.

Is there something you always have to incorporate into your writing?

There isn't anything that I have to incorporate into my writing, but I do always feel like I want to write something in German.

Isabella Miller

What's your favorite genre to read/
write?

I like reading autobiographies, and
some children's books. I like writing
emotionally reflective but positive
poetry, and fiction/fantasy prose.

Matching or mismatched socks?

Mismatching socks at home.
Matching in public. Usually.

Favorite quote?

It changes all the time. Right now
it's: "To live in the past is depression.
To live in the future is anxiety. To
live in the present is peace."

Cali A. Naranjo

What are your preferred pronouns?

My preferred pronouns are he/him
[or] she/her.

What was the first password or
username you ever had?

The first password and username I've
ever had are Guinness and Irishman

Favorite quote?

"I wrote my first novel because I
wanted to read it."
— Toni Morrison

Bella Nazur

What was the last thing you Google searched?

Aztec Death Whistle

What was the first password or username you ever had?

I forgot what my username was and I can't be more grateful. I really don't want to remember.

Favorite quote?

"If you think education is expensive, try ignorance."

JD Obedicen

Is there something you always have to incorporate into your writing?

One person's name has to be Arc

Favorite quote?

"Life would be tragic if it weren't funny."

Have you ever hated someone?
Did you ever grow out of it?

I've disliked many people, never really hated [them]. They're not worth my time :).

Jenna Ramiscal

What was the last thing you Google searched?

The definition of 'euphoria'

What was the first password or username you ever had?

Xoxojennababy

Favorite quote?

“Teamwork makes the dreamwork.”
— John C. Maxwell

Elena Sanchez

What was the first password or username you ever had?

My first password has something to do with Zac Efron.

Do you have specific tendencies when you write?

I usually make a playlist every month on my Spotify and play one of those while I write. It's usually indie pop, folk, alternative, or 80s music.

Favorite quote?

"I would die for you but I wouldn't live for you."

Arielle Santos

Is there something you always have to incorporate into your writing?

I haven't thought about that, but I should start doing that.

Favorite quote?

"We accept the love we think we deserve."

— Stephen Chbosky

Have you ever hated someone? Did you ever grow out of it?

Yes, and not yet.

Cathlyn Serrano

What was the last thing you Google searched?

My last google search was:
“vocabulary i should know for the SAT.”

Is there something you always have to incorporate into your writing?

One of my favorite things to incorporate in my pieces are specific times and dates, like 1:31AM, March 22, etc... I like using these because it adds specificity to my writing and makes it more personal.

Favorite quote?

“It is only with the heart that one can see rightly. Anything essential is invisible to the eyes.”
— The Little Prince (Chapter XXI)

Alaysia Spruill

What's your favorite genre to read/
write?

Poetry: punishment, justice, romance

Is there something you always have
to incorporate into your writing?

Not really, the one thing I never want
to incorporate is rhyming, though.

Matching or mismatched socks?

Matching, I'm not a heathen.