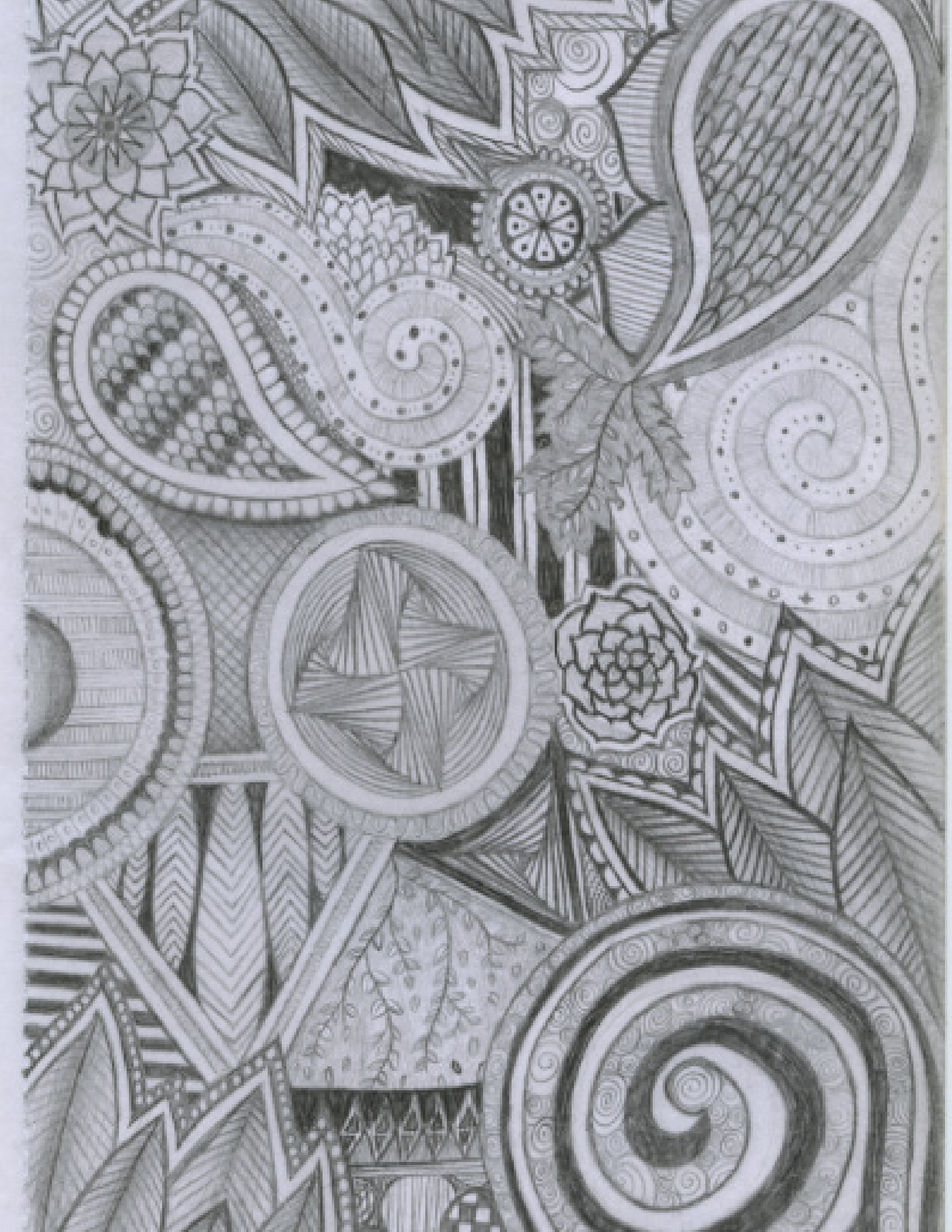


# SCPA



# LYRICAL



**SCPA  
LYRICAL**

**Creative Writing  
Literary Magazine  
2018**

**Editors-in-Chief:**

Perla Limon  
Edward Estrada  
Kaylee LaFon

**Advisor:**

Susie Strasser

*Acknowledgements*

**English/Creative Writing Faculty:**

Lindsey Ten, Susie Strasser, Lynda Young

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*Lyrical*

2425 Dusk Dr

School of Creative and Performing Arts

San Diego, California 92139

scpalyrical@gmail.com

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# The Exchange

By Perla Limon (12th Grade)

Jeanette Simmons sat in the passenger's seat of her 5-year-old pickup truck, mulling over the ending to her letter. She'd imagined every instance of the exchange since she was just a child, writing letter after letter every year in anticipation for her twenty second birthday. She stored them away in a box in her room, each ending with, 'Sincerely, your soul mate.' The rules were clear: there was to be no aid for the soul mate inhabiting her body by anyone. Nobody was to mention her name, nor bring any attention to the exchange at all. Just to act normal. Though the exchange was a bit iffy at times, so a close eye was kept on the soul mate throughout the 24 hours. This also meant that no weapons were to be allowed near the soul mate, in case they attempted to break the bond by ending their lives. Jeanette was not one to go against regulations, so she made sure her family agreed and swore to follow the rules as well. She locked the truck and headed upstairs to her room, walls covered in her latest photography project, a collage. Hopefully that would help her soul mate discover who she was the following morning. She couldn't stop smiling giddily as she lay on her bed, eagerly awaiting midnight.

*“Unintelligible shouts melded together to form a symphony of anguish.”*

Jamar Surah awoke atop her small cramped cot, skin coated in a thin layer of sweat as she gasped at the sudden sensation of electricity crackling through her skull. She took deep breaths absorbing every detail of her surroundings. The walls were bare and dull, like the unfurnished hall in her own home; this wasn't going to be easy. There was the sound of pounding echoing through the cemented walls, but it could have easily been her headache. She got up and sifted through drawers, checking every inch for anything to identify the body she now inhabited. 'Jamar,' read a messily written sticky note that fell from her forehead. Within Jamar, Jeanette giggled and whispered the name to herself quietly. "Jamar, her name is Jamar." There was nothing else incriminating to make the image of Jamar clearer, but she couldn't give up. The girl practically turned the room upside down in her searching until she found a small spoon on the table. She considered her reflection, smiling in awe at the freckles dotting across her cheeks. "I only have until midnight... lets hurry this up." She dropped the spoon and looked around some more until she found old velvety cloth covering a wall. Pushing back the makeshift curtain she gasped at the prison bars that hid behind it. The pounding was clearer now. Unintelligible shouts melded together to form a symphony of anguish. Sounds of panic, anger, and pain only made her headache worse. Two guards covered her view in an instant and unlocked the

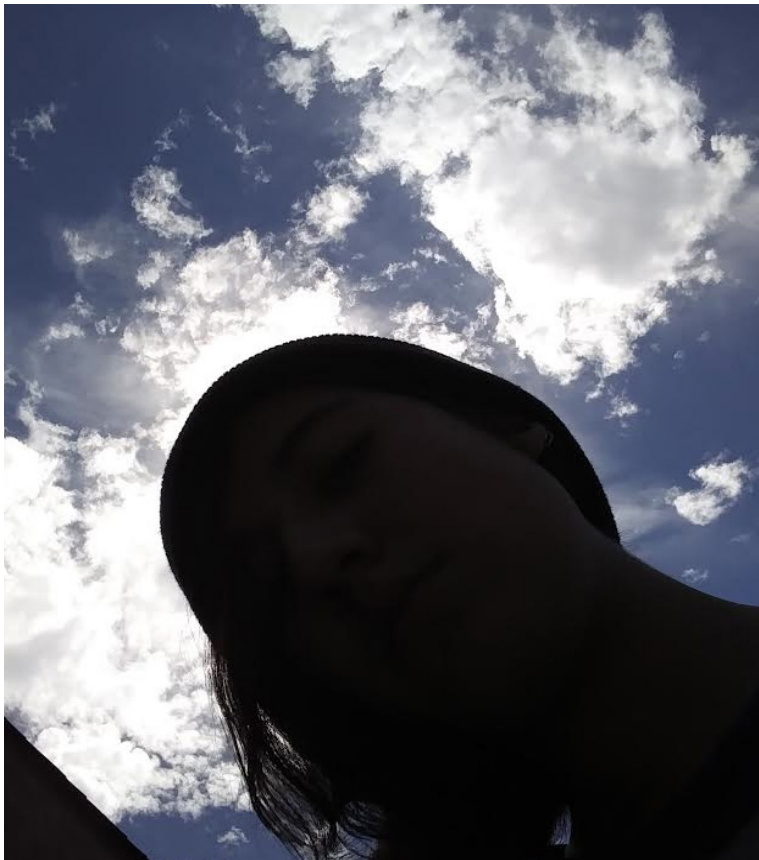
door only to haul her away.

“Where is your soul mate? Where is Jamar Surah? Where did she take your body?” As they shouted questions she began to regret leaving the stranger to roam in her body. And most of all, she regretted leaving the real Jamar the keys to her truck, and her life.

Jeanette Simmons stirred into consciousness suddenly, jerking off the bed in her panicked state. She zipped through the room, collecting every item that seemed to have sentimental value for close inspection. She was running out of time the longer she dilly-dallied. While digging through the closet in hiking boots she scavenged from the laundry pile, she stepped on something harshly and the sounds of ripping startled her. She slid back quickly, raising her fists as if to fend off an attacker. She waited for a moment before bending down to inspect the source of the noise that had scared her. Under her foot lay a crumpled letter, signed with “Sincerely, your soul mate.” Jeanette tossed it aside and hustled to the truck, accelerating down the road with one thing in mind. Escape the prison sentence. And the only way to do that: death.

As the truck flipped down the side of the ever-flowing freeway, the girl in Jamar’s body gasped and collapsed in the guard’s grips. She shivered at the feeling of the bond shattering, and went silent. “I’m stuck here, aren’t I?”

The guards didn’t answer.



*"Untitled" by Perla Limon*

# The Regular

By Michelle Solis (11th Grade)

---

Will the intelligence storm into the prone wild?  
Will security ever seep into the landslides?  
Tsunami's will seize cities

Will freedom reign earthquakes?  
Will courage conquer hurricanes?  
Dependence is weighing down on the scientists.

Citizens among cities,  
Exercising their daily:  
Stubbornness, distress and pity.

Warnings of rising temperatures,  
Harmful chemicals pervading and  
While the world is annihilated by nature,  
Us humans will continue the regular:

The cycle of empathizing, sympathizing and staring at destruction  
Will remain everlasting, as we complete no instruction.  
Will the intelligence storm into the prone wild?



# Growth

By Michelle Solis (11th Grade)

---

For eyes that engulf and remain enchanting,  
A certain admiration continues to be planting.  
From distressed ranting,  
To playful chanting.

As the stars connect as the day evolves,  
Paths integrate and emotions are solved.

With one another lies the solution,  
Our growth is the revolution:  
And has become our constitution.

With one touch that has grown darling,  
Our path is traveling like a flock of starlings --  
To the mounts that must be upheaved daily,  
Up to the fields that promise serenity.

# Discovery

Jd Obedicen (11th Grade)

---

It was at the peak of dawn that snow fell from the heavens and scattered throughout the landscape giving the earth a blanket of fuzz. It was also the time that two souls linked together with a string, unbreakable by all other forces which tugged at each other. Calling for the two souls to touch and feel the warmth of one another.

JC awoke flat on his back, lazily looking at his wooden ceiling with deep thoughts running through his head. 'What was that feeling?' JC thought, slowly rubbing his temple with his hand. He felt an indescribable feeling as soon as a glint of light reached his eyes and he was able to see. It was like a feeling of longing from two distant worlds and it was simply

*“They were addicted to the aroma, the attractive essence...”*

- wonderful. He didn't know how to explain it, but he wanted to feel it once again. He slumped to the side of his bed, glancing at his table with anticipation in his eyes.

In the distance yet not so far, lived Devin who awoke as well. It was like his heart was pierced with an arrow tipped with the poison of love. It made his heart beat, boom, boom, boom. He wasn't having a heart attack was he? He jumped out of his bed and looked at his window and into the distance desiring more of this essence from the unknown that pulsed throughout his body.

The two reached out their cold shivering hands and placed it on the thin ice sheets covering their window. And it was if their hands were no longer cold. Like a goddess of love watched over them and deemed it so that their presence they felt from one another could be found wherever they went. The two simultaneously placed their hand on their cheeks with care and felt the heat surge once more throughout their bodies. They were addicted to the aroma, the attractive essence they seeked, not wanting to waste a single second of it..

And as the feeling disappeared from their hands they looked once again out the window, resolution filling their eyes.

“I have to find the source of this feeling.” They both thought, running to their dresser. They quickly dressed in their winter clothes and bolted out of the doors of their home. JC wore a scarf wrapped around his soft neck and a fluffy sweater he got last christmas. While Devin ran out with a winter jacket and a beanie on his head to keep the frigid winds out.

They faced the early winter winds as they ran through the cobblestone street. Running in the direction in which they felt more lively and and joyful until they could feel the

tenderness enveloping them, and they could no longer feel the winter winds. They stopped and faced each other. A single willow tree behind them swayed with the wind covered in frost and snow, an ambience of serenity and recollection falling over them. The universe stood still as their eyes met, the string that tied them together bound them tighter than they had ever been.

Their eyes locked unmoving from one another as they strode forward. It was like two tides colliding with one another into one single being - they touched. Their bodies wrapped one another, and the string knotted into one and the world stopped and watched in awe. It was a scene from a movie, from a tale of love that was meant to be found and aspired to become something much more.

“I found you.” They both said snuggled in one another’s embrace.

# Goner

Sage Clements (9th Grade)

---

She was running so rapidly that the sound of her footsteps pounding against the polished tile blurred together into one solid noise of her squeaking sneakers. Her breathing was getting heavier and harder to release from her lungs, making her head feel jumbled, like it was about to break open. She glanced behind her every few strides, horrified that they would be trailing close behind, but only darkness met her eyes. The tears making their way out of her deep brown irises started to fly off of her pale cheeks and into the air like cold raindrops. She continued to lift up her sleeve and wipe the red river slowly seeping from her fresh wound.

She heard a crash behind her, causing her legs and heart to come to a sudden stop. She slowly turned her head, seeing that commotion was caused by... Her heart clenched in her chest, like a rope was tied in a tight knot around it, and it only continued to hug it tighter every millisecond. The hall was dim, but she could see that he was lying limply on the icy floor a few feet away, crimson flowing from the hole in his temple.

Her silent cries turned into sobs, into chokes, her face contorting in despair. She knew who did this, and she knew that they were going to do the same thing to her. The world around her came in and out of focus, making it hard for her to stay upright. She could hear noises in her vicinity, but the pain pulsing through her veins was too overpowering. She could feel the presence of someone behind her, but her legs were shaking too much to move an inch. Her limbs gave out, sending her crashing to her knees. Grimacing through the pain, she placed a cold hand on his lifeless face, brushing his greasy bangs from his forehead. "I'm sorry," she forced out through her throbbing throat. She shut her eyes tight, concealing the salty tears behind her eyelids and bit her lip hard, causing a dot of red to appear on the pink. She heard a click, and as fast as a shooting star, her head met the floor.

# In Your Eyes

Cathlyn Denise Serrano (11th Grade)

---

A slow, careful waltz.  
You took my breath away that night.  
We were showered in the stars,  
Adorned by the sweetness of your voice,  
And—it was dark.  
But that's only because the light was trapped in your eyes.

One-and-two,  
One-and-two,  
One-and-two,  
The sound of our gentle steps,  
Or could you hear my heart, too?

Had I looked into your eyes,  
Would you have known?  
Brown eyes were never the brightest,  
Not until I met you.

So, I hid.  
I hid in the darkness,  
For what reason unknown—  
But with you, I found that light moves at the speed  
Of one,  
Two,  
One,  
Two.

No matter how much I hid for,  
I could only see you.  
A light that lit up the night,  
For once,  
Did I allow myself to see ahead?

This feeling was—  
New.

One,  
Two,  
One,  
Two—  
As much as I had once  
Enjoyed the darkness,  
The more hope I saw,  
The beauty of those lights and dreams  
Made me fall for you.

One, two—  
The music stopped,  
The stars were shining,  
But your eyes were enough guidance—  
Though just as easy to get lost in.

One:  
For once, I saw a path,  
And you were the light at the end.  
Two:  
The breath you took,  
And breathed right back into my heart,  
The life you gave—

One-and-two:  
At that moment I understood that  
There can't be light without darkness;  
You—  
There's no me without you.

# Street Crossing

Cathlyn Denise Serrano (11th Grade)

---

The wind is blowing at that same street corner,  
    at the edge of Shibuya and away from the dazzling city lights.  
At this road where you had left me alone,  
    a whistle has been calling my name and,  
    with a heavy heart, today, I finally return it—

but you're too far away to hear it now.

# The Cycle of Empathy

Alaysia Spruill (11th Grade)

---

Let bruising bloom  
darkness bloom  
memories stimulate.

Find pain through evidence  
what can be seen, what cannot be  
Is affection  
Blindness to emotions kills.

Let madness flourish  
Time bringing age  
Bruises fading  
enough to forgive.

Try denial for acceptance  
Try reciprocity for duplicity  
Sacrifice, or empty basket,  
whether starvation or fullness,  
The end of time is momentum  
a pendulum

When pain is longing  
Eyes bleeding emotion  
When you are aged  
A mural blooms.  
From self-abuse.

For your nature.  
For constricting darkness  
to let in light  
Which takes time to reach us  
which ages and kills.

It gets easier to look  
directly at the source  
To find hidden meaning  
in the cycle of empathy.



# Dear Love

Alaysia Spruill (11th Grade)

---

This overwhelming urge to revel in what is beyond me  
and pinpoint the only unlocked door in your palace  
(Behind this door, a throbbing chamber).

Not very well guarded, as for one like me you hold on  
to dear love.

Because galactic sound waves hum and purr, believing in dear love also;  
in the void alone, every entity ought to.

We may indulge ourselves, by simply leaving stardust behind  
Every step, it settles  
calmly  
like the waves.

To us they toast, some white, foamy froth sloshing—  
bluff crumbling, vanishing faster than ruined arousal,  
too intimate for boundaries between the binging and the indulgence,  
too vast for a key to its chamber, and those sad secrets,  
two halves of a heart cracked to dust, longing to be reunited....

Senses go mad until inevitably, all I ache for  
is you

With the last of my conscience reconstructing that urgent arousal,  
us

as dragons in the sky; Hell far away, forgotten.  
And does this mean we aspire for The Beyond,  
for what we cannot see?

What else will we ache for, other than dear love?  
(The wildest beasts, the most savage hunger  
we have been denying.)

Breath, blood, and warm flesh to hold, that is what you crave  
For that single door to feel the touch of a human hand,  
(behind this door, a throbbing chamber),  
feel cobwebs unsticking, hinges groaning aloud.

For two hands, all-seeing eyes, and equal darkness to touch the tenderness  
deeply penetrated in your heart,  
my forgiveness  
as you are sucking the love from all things

and you are convinced that the fallout will be sustainable, nourishing.

Yet

as we dance together, my body aches quite terribly,  
conscience ensnared between the eroding bluff  
and mortal blood leaving me

Perceiving it—

(drip, drip)

—as black in the moonlight.

Your heaving chest tightening, slimy, slippery

Now I hold onto dear love!

If we should end in Dragon's wrath, let it be glorious,  
my savior,

Let me be Pawn!

As the pianissimo trilling in my throbbing chamber

(Beyond this chamber, a rusted lock and key)

(That was thrown into the sea)

sounds sick, sounds tired, ready to rest.

Tomorrow is a darkness, you see, and nothing more.

Tomorrow is a darkness, raging storms relentless on the world,  
for regrettably...

your forgiveness could not change my heart.

Hold on for dear love.

# Reaching To The Stars

Jenny-Angeline Corpuz (12th Grade)

---

“Reach for the Stars!” The young boy whispered to himself as he laid against the park lawn in navy blue shorts and a cerulean shirt that poked the grass blades. He stretched his small hand to the night sky; unseen by the city night lights, “I’ll make sure to reach for them, for you. I will.”

“An ‘A’, huh? Not enough. Not enough for the Stars, anyway,” the boy in a navy blue high school uniform mumbled and let go of his paper; he gazed to sunlit clouds from the window he sat by.

“Why do you care for the stars?” One of his peers asked him as he repeated the same exact line after every test.

“It’s where all new starts are. That’s what she told me,” the boy responded to them flippantly since he did not care about everyone else or what they thought.

“She?” They questioned, it had been the first time anyone ever heard the boy talk of anything else beyond the Stars.

He nodded, a faint smile grew on his face, the subject piqued his interest, “Yeah she taught me the Stars.”

A girl in a maroon uniform that differed from everyone else’s walked through the threshold, her eyes filled with glee, “Tell us about her, will you?” His eyes became unfocused as he reminisced about a precious memory, not realizing the crowd grew with bated breaths for the recluse finally showed the first signs of life, “I met her when I was younger sometime during summer while I played at my local park, by then the sun was setting. It was supposed to be a quick drop on the slide yet I saw her. She laid on the merry-go-round adorned in a maroon summer dress and stared at the same crimson and gold splashed across the horizon as the one from last summer.

“I couldn’t understand why she would look at a stagnant, boring painting. There wasn’t anything pleasing about the polluted fog covering whatever glowing lights she went on about-- it was depressing, all honesty. Yet she just stayed on that little circle, and gazed above. She told me that she was waiting. I thought she meant she was waiting for her parents, or her ride, or something; not the shooting star that came that night.”

“You saw a shooting star?” The student who started the conversation asked in disbelief.

“I saw her,” he said pointedly; making sure whomever was listening understood what he tried to convey.

“But the star?” The student continued.

“It was there, yeah, I guess you could say I saw the star.”

“You sound more invested in this girl than the Stars,” the girl in maroon retorted.

“She introduced me to the Stars,” he started once more and nodded his head; the crowd understood where his focus was aimed towards, “she spoke of the beauty they produce. She taught me that while to us they appear to be stagnant, the reality is that they are ever changing luminescent celestial bodies. To me, the Stars became the singular most interesting topic that exists. I swear the rest of the world is a pale comparison to the Stars. Yet she will always be above all else, because she is the one who has showed me life can contain interesting aspects and yet all I could ever hope to achieve is to reach for the Stars as she exists beyond.”

“I’m touched that you’ve learned something from me.” The girl announced suddenly, as he finally recognized it as the one he longed for from that fateful summer memory.

The boy whipped his head around and jumped out of his seat in disbelief, “You’re here!”

She smiled playfully before she moved away, towards the hallway with a subtle haste in her step, “And now I’m gone.”

“But--” he called out and ran after her although she already vanished. “She’s left me alone, again.”

“Who is she?” The other students asked after they reached him.

He let out a sigh, “That’s what I’m trying to find out, but I’ve got all the Stars to chase her with.”

# Nature's Dreams

Elena Gonzales (7th Grade)

---

Looking up to see winding vines  
All curiosity in one sight  
Such beauty in unnoticed signs

Nature made of beautiful designs  
There was a spark of moonlight  
Looking up to see winding vines

Next to me, steady porcupines  
Not one flame shall ignite  
Such beauty in unnoticed signs

Nothing read between the lines  
It must be quite the night  
Looking up to see winding vines

Flowers set, many kinds  
Nothing but loud starlight  
Such beauty in unnoticed signs

Everything mute, but a wolf's whine  
A bird and its wings, taking flight  
Looking up to see winding vines  
Such beauty in unnoticed signs

# Festival

By Isabella Miller (11th Grade)

---

He opened his eye, the sunset spinning the mist of the bayou into lavender and honey colored plumes. He yawned and stretched his little beak open, breathing softly through it in puffs of cool February air.

Festival stretched his purple wing, then leapt from the reed, scooping the air.

The sun had almost sputtered out when he caught hold of the reeds of the circle of bog where the fireflies held their dance.

The lightning beetles could sense it when Festival awoke in the Bayou. They swarmed to him, and danced around him in chaotic rings. They exploded out in spirals, powered by exploding heart beats like lightning. They danced to the song of the crickets and the frogs. His eye twinkled at the sight of it. The firefly dance would give him their strength, wild and true, to carry into the city.

Sleep came for Festival, but he rested well knowing what he had brought his people.

When the sunrise tickled his eyelids he looked sadly at his home and thanked the fireflies before he took flight into the mist.

In the weeks after his arrival, the people could feel the air crackle with something, like a seething storm of melodies as thick as paint and preparations for costumes baked out of colorful cloth.

When he flew through the streets, people smiled, and couples broke into dance. When he alighted on a lamp, a trumpeter would ooze sweet caramel colored music into the streets. He gave them his purple and green feathers to wear and to dance with. He gave them the buzzing in their souls so they could move.

Then it was the night of all nights. He sang his throat raw and he flew into the throngs until he sat panting in the streets. In the distance, the people exploded out in spirals, powered by exploding heartbeats of color and music. On this night, Festival's people were wild and true, and he had given them everything, and he was happy.



*Illustration by Isabella Miller*

# Little Things

Lyka Luzano (10th Grade)

---

Everytime I'm with you, I notice everything  
But most of all, I notice the little things about you  
Those things that I've grown to love  
From how your eyes crinkle when you smile  
The little freckles on your face that you say you hate  
How your hair falls on your face naturally  
To your contagious bright smile When you laugh it's loud and genuine

Aside from your features, I love the little things you do  
From how you constantly play with my hands  
Messing with my rings and bracelets I wear  
From cupping my cheeks and running your thumbs over them  
How you look into my eyes that are filled with affection  
To when you plant little and playful kisses onto my cheeks,  
With a bright smile on your face  
When you brush my hair away from my face when I'm studying  
And when you scold me for staying up too late  
Bringing me food when I say I'm fine,  
Encouraging me  
And overall, telling me you love me  
You smile when I say it back with a hue of pink that rests on your cheeks.  
I love the little things about you



# Golden

Isabella Nazur (9th Grade)

---

you are gold  
your legacy will last throughout generations  
you are beautiful and always will be  
do not listen to them as they are  
rusted copper  
they are twisted and have outlasted their use  
do not listen for they are rusted and you are gold

# Seattle

Isabella Nazur (9th Grade)

---

She had dreams  
He thought  
He knew  
They were stupid  
She dreamed of running  
She never thought of the cold nipping at her  
Of the full places empty of potential and  
The memories that would be the only thing she owned  
They'd stopped talking  
She'd moved schools  
It only happened  
(They only talked)  
Sometimes  
Rarely  
She worried him  
He told her  
He told her  
Told her  
Told her  
Fuck  
He didn't know if she would listen  
He wished she'd stop dreaming

# Assure

Rahan Cadence (11th Grade)

---

I have a friend. My friend's name starts with an A. I often find myself being beckoned to the house at the end of the street; to the second room up the stairs to the left, specifically. Thick walls. Solid, sturdy, and quite unusual for a house like that to have. The serene, dark blue and black, hand-painted walls encase a memory of the two of us painting them. They compliment each other, like best friends, while the bright, traffic-light red ceiling loomed overhead like impending doom. The organization of the room contrasted to the eyes when A stood in the center of the room, internally scattered. Problems were solved here. Others were made here. Resolved or to be resolved, they are here. They will stay here.

The architectural designs in the bordering of the walls' seams echoed archaic shapes and fine designs, delicately confusing against the warring colors. As I would occasionally lay down on the short black rug in the center of his room, the colors and designs would seem to revolve around the red ceiling. By design, the ceiling is not even half as rigid as the four supporting walls. As if all the good in the world contorts itself to accommodate and contain alarming ruin; maybe for a balanced ratio of good and evil.

A faint press of anxiety is weighed down by fact. Anxiety of the ceiling suddenly collapsing and falling on you, crushing you. A quick and comical death, though not one you might expect, but certainly a tragedy you have considered or day dreamed about at a point in time. Though these pensive moments are rare, as if on cue, A will lean on the door frame like a wise relic, smirking at the embodiment of his reflection before him, without fail. To stifle my melancholy, he loved to say, "Safe much?" And after a light, hearty chuckle cued in, "The sturdy walls will keep the weak ceiling up."

"And the ceiling holds the walls upright," is my rehearsed line.

# Run

Rahan Cadence (11th Grade)

---

Run. That's all you have to do. It's that simple. Don't look back, don't hesitate, and please don't trip. Just run like hell.

My cumulative sentence could be for the rest of my life if they caught me. With a maximum sentence for 30 days in prison for each time a store reported something stolen, that's a lot of theft reports.

I'm lower class, Muslim -or colored- in my mid-twenties. I would have been shot on my first robbery if I'd worn my traditional robes and wrappings. I occasionally switch to American-styled jeans and jackets. No matter what I chose to wear, I would never hide my face. Each time I bolted out the store door, I'd flash a smile at the camera, and sometimes I'd even stroll out the front entrance, or strike a pose, if the heavy guard chasing me was struggling.

The reason I've never been arrested is because, quite frankly, we all look the same. To clarify, of course it's fact that no two humans can actually be exactly the same, but many people in my culture, or my faith, dress similarly and often have identical features. We're not always seen as people, as individuals. We're a demographic. I've laughed many times while watching the news, or reading a headline that has the words "Indian," "Black," "thief," "arrested," and my personal favorite, "by mistake" in any order or variation. We're so identical, the policemen in this country couldn't identify me if I hijacked their car and dropped them off at the station. We're so generic, news reporters from various channels can't differentiate ethnicity from religion. They've blurred that line too.

**"Instead of blowing up skyscrapers, we blow up front covers and careers."**

Jokes aside, the truth is we're not identical. Our faces are very different, our style of clothing could be similar or astronomically contrasting, our physiques come in a wide range, and surprise: we don't need to have tan skin. Surprise: we don't need to be wearing robes. Surprise: we're not all male.

A supermodel on the back cover could be Muslim; shirtless and decent. The postmen who walk up to your box six out of seven days a week could be Muslim; tired and jaunty. The blondie at the top of your class could be Muslim; pale and ultra-religious. The beggar who sits outside the old coffee-beige church could be Muslim; living so close to another God,

enduring the temptation of converting to another faith where they would bathe him and feed him.

Instead of blowing up skyscrapers, we blow up front covers and careers. Instead of smuggling drugs across borders we defend them with the guns you issued us. It's funny how you'd hold your purse closer to you when my hands are under a large robe, not even able to scratch my nose because it would expose my hand. You wouldn't take me seriously unless you walked into an elevator as I was folding the cuff of my pressed white dress shirt and brushing my ego off the lapel of a powder blue blazer. This is not a hood, just because I live in one.

People are prone to making assumptions, that is simply the way we are conditioned. We can only control how we act upon our premonitions, because the way we are taught doesn't have to be the only way we think, and it doesn't have to be the way we act.

I don't steal to have... I steal to serve.

# The Recruiter

Wesley Jalipa (12th Grade)

---

A recruiter for the army came to my class today  
Just to say  
That there are a lot of benefits to enlisting.  
He found it prudent to begin listing  
The good things,  
The ski trips and discounts and  
The tendency of patrons to cover your meal when you go out.  
But he left out something.  
But he forgot about...  
Something.

When he was telling us about the paychecks,  
About the waived debts  
And the way that  
The idea of deployment is often a misconception;  
When he was telling us about the respect and  
About the discipline  
The experience of being men  
With a purpose,  
He forgot about something.

He had brought some friends for the presentation,  
Brave soldiers protecting the nation  
To inspire the youth  
To carry on the tradition.  
And all three of them told us how  
The army got them out  
Of confused bouts  
Of angst and  
Rank dorms and group houses.  
Trouble with the banks.  
But they forgot something.

The army could get us out too!  
If you're confused, poor, or starving, the army's for you.  
The sales pitch  
Seemed most fixed  
On the attempt to convince  
A group of young dark kids-- artists--  
This:  
That the way to escape their impoverished state  
Was to enlist.  
But they forgot something.

We know the army is not a club.  
It is not a way for young poor kids to rise above.  
It is not a free education,  
Or job application,  
And it is not about friendship or love.  
The army is not a plane ticket.  
It is not a route to a house or to a white picket fence.  
The army is not a way to try and make sense  
Of how to get your life clean.  
They forgot but we remembered what the military means.

Outside,  
It means bullets and bombs.  
A hundred thousand faceless fires raining from the sun.  
The flag on the recruiter's shoulder--  
It means it's over--  
Duck and cover.  
Look out.  
Here the Americans come.

Inside, it means PTSD.  
It means the squalor of people who look like me.  
It means a vet homeless in the rain,  
No limbs  
And demons in his brain,  
And they sell it as an end to poverty.

The recruiter told us we'd be first class,  
A hall pass  
To eat free and live cheap and school fast.  
His poor ass  
Didn't realize  
The minute they were done with him  
He'd be another one for them  
To throw out and deny  
The benefits of GI life.  
The army uses young and yearning men and boys of color  
Like me and my brothers, like northerners and southerners,  
For making profit for the rich,  
Then throws them in a ditch.  
So when the he asked what my plans were,  
I said not to enlist.



# Track 17

Ahnayah Hughes (12th Grade)

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an orange boy in a world of blue  
floating effortlessly but  
still remaining true  
to himself, to his art  
one look  
and I fall apart

a master with the pen  
wrote love letters but tried to pretend  
that his words left people unaffected  
I was resurrected  
by his vivid descriptions and  
sun-drenched images

In fields of flowers he lay,  
dreaming of the future where one day  
everyone would know his name  
he knew he'd be invincible,  
yet he remained humble  
so I stumble  
in the presence of someone so magnificent  
so beautiful

I watch as flowers grow from his fingertips  
and honey drips from his lips  
he is full of so much light  
the glare is often hard to bear  
but I find it hard to care  
because when he's around  
I too, feel like orange  
in this world of blue

