



GALLIMAUFRY

**WINTER
2021**

LAUREL SCHOOL **2021**

GALLIMAUFY

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

Dear Reader,

2021 has been a strange time for many of us, an odd in-between that's neither the quarantine and stay-at-home orders of 2020, nor the more carefree world we knew before the COVID-19 pandemic. This year's strangeness has allowed us one thing in particular: introspection. Many people have taken the time to examine and truly get to know themselves in a way they never did before, and that thread of self-examination and identity runs through many of the pieces featured here.

The common link between each of these pieces is *identity*. Whether it's forming new connections or examining oneself, these authors have explored their characters' identities and how it fits into the world around them, crafting wonderful pieces in the process. As such, this edition of Gallimaufry's theme is "identity".

We hope you enjoy the pieces collected here, both written and visual. They've been created with the utmost care.

— MAEVE VASKO, '22

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Starlight, Starbright

Liliana Embrescia, '24

Wish upon a star

We've all heard that before

Saviors of the night,

The stars bring along

Hope you may be missing.

But what do you do,

When they are locked away?

Covered by clouds

That don't want the stars to stay.

So what do you look towards,

If the stars are trapped up there?

What do you do

When all hope disappears?

One Awful Party

Claire Sheeler, '25

"I want to have a party."

Leonidas looked up from the book he had been lazily half-reading. His younger sister Pippa (adopted after a long chain of events none of us have time for) stood in the doorway to the great study, her cheeks tinged pink from running.

"I want to have a big party with cakes and honey and the good tea you brought back from Jamilus and I want to have it soon, because Emmy said storm season is coming, and Emmy's always right about storm season. Can I please, please, please do it, Leo? Please?"

Leonidas swung his lanky legs off the desk, a dark oak beauty that did not deserve to be used as a footrest, and went to guide Pippa to one of the many plush seats in the giant study. For though Phillipa Prince was magically gifted and incredibly vivacious, she could not see, and the study had all too many tripping hazards for Leo's liking. Sure, she *probably* would be fine (in that she most certainly would be fine), but Leo would be an awful big

brother if he wasn't horribly overprotective at all times. In two long strides he was next to Pippa.

Pippa was not one of Leonthas' dazzling blonde beauties, their pale curls and bright smiles a sign of the gods' favour, nor did she in any way resemble the resplendent and dragon-blessed people of Al'Terra. Her curls were dark and simple and often tucked away in a bun, and she didn't bear any subtle marks of inhuman blood like many others in the Middle Kingdoms. Her eyes, however, were a different story. Clear lakes was one way to describe them, or two full blue moons, rare and shocking. The narrator also feels that all readers *must* know that Phillipa Prince has the most wonderfully expressive face, and that even if she tries to lie her expression will always give her away.

Leonidas, while not a dazzling blond beauty, did have trace amounts of nonhuman blood through his mother's side that granted him startlingly blue eyes and an easy, unnatural grace despite his sharp features. If it weren't that Pippa were all soft edges and gentle curves, the two looked similar enough to pass for biological siblings. The narrator knows this is two paragraphs of useless information, but it is imperative that you imagine these characters correctly.

Pippa's mile-a-minute talking didn't cease as she allowed herself to be guided to an armchair emblazoned with tiny gold roses and somehow tinier golden bees. "And I can wear one of the dresses you got for me last summer, y'know the one with the cape, and the one you said looked like the sky, and the one with the funny thin fabric that felt like what I think butterfly wings feel like. Have I convinced you enough? Please?"

Leo sat, or rather laid, in the chair across from her, his feet dangling over the arm of the silken chair. Though Pippa couldn't see it, a look between interest and calculation hatched across his face. "Why just have a little party? Gildmore Hall has the space for something bigger if, you know, you wanted to do something memorable? Like, I don't know—"

The narrator wants you to take the time to remember that Pippa has a very expressive face, and that "very expressive" can include completely deadpan.

"What poor soul are you seeking petty revenge on this time?"

Pippa didn't see *why* her brother had to be so petty. All day every day, all he did was go to parties, come home annoyed over some breach of Leonidas's Special Rules at said party, and plot revenge for whatever tiny thing had irked him, usually by throwing another party. Sure, he was fabulously rich, and could do whatever he wanted, and had no authority figures to discipline him, but Pippa was like 98% sure that one day petty revenge would backfire.

She sighed. Although it was early spring, snow still sprinkled the ground, turning her snug iron armor into an icy prison no number of scarves could warm (gods know she tried—she was currently wearing three brightly colored scarves layered one on top of the other).

Slash, parry, strike.

Pippa didn't see why she had to pretend to parry against a practice dummy when she couldn't even see where her imaginary opponent was striking. She had a shield for these things. Still, those were the drills knights did, and Pippa wasn't *not* going to do the things asked of her.

Slash, slash, strike, parry.

And why did Leo have to hijack her party? She just wanted a tea party! With her friends! But now they were having 200-some annoying rich people over because someone had insulted Leo's "honor" or whatever.

Strike, slash, strike, parry, slash.

It wasn't even the cool rich people, like Pippa's knightly mentor Lucian and his father Godfrey. Noooooo. It had to be all the pompous weirdos who were getting ready to leave their extravagant winter homes. Of course, by all accounts Leo was also a pompous weirdo, but the people around here were *awful*. They all ogled over Pippa because she was a knight, and trained by the famed White Knight at that, then turned and gossiped about Leonidas' strange little sister who played at knighthood when they thought she was out of earshot.

Slash, slash—

Pippa's sword hit air where the hay-stuffed target should have been. She silently began poking at the floor with her sword until she found the top half of the target, which had landed several feet away. Oops.

Leonidas simply *adored* balls. A chance to dress up *and* a chance to show off his wealth? It was like they were made for him. Well, in this case it actually was a ball designed to reassert that no one in all of Leonthas was wealthier, more extravagant, or more important than Leo, because recently SOME PEOPLE seemed to have forgotten that CRUCIAL fact. He was a duke, for gods' sake, an exclusive club of three that none of these viscount posers

could ever even aspire to! It was ridiculous that CERTAIN members of the nobility thought they were as special or amazing as him.

These were the egotistical ramblings of Leonidas' inner monologue as he oversaw the final preparations for the ball. It had been nearly a month since Pippa had first asked about throwing a party, and Leo was oh so very proud of how much he had set up in that time. Due to the lingering cold among the rocky slopes Gildmore Hall was situated in, guests were told to usher in spring with the most elaborately floral garments they could muster. Of course, Leo and Pippa would *obviously* have the most beautiful and elaborate garments at the ball, but it would be fun to see everyone else try and compare. Leo had spent... more money than was appropriate on spools of gold thread, but it would be worth it for his somewhat petty revenge on that AWFUL and QUITE FRANKLY EVIL marquess.

Leo vaguely wondered where Pippa was. It was unusual for her to not be in the center of things like this, carrying things or telling stories or helping in any way she could. When Leo thought on it, actually, he hadn't seen Pippa since last night, when he delivered the necklaces and earrings Pippa would wear to the ball.

Oh, well, it was odd, but Leo had things to attend to—

"LEO!"

Pippa careened through the hall, only coming to a stop when she nearly collided with Leo. Sticks littered her hair, and she had a few small scratches on her arms. "LEO ARE YOU LISTENING? Ok so first of all I think some of your trees are haunted, which is fine, the ghosts were very cool, but also there's multiple unfriendly animals out in the woods and, uh, I think it may be good to deal with that, because they were NOT nice. One of the tree ghosts said they

were very big wolves, and that he would scare them away, buuuuut I don't know how a ghost in a tree can scare a big angry wolf. So yeah."

Multiple servants had stopped their work to listen to Pippa's rapidly-delivered tale, dumbfounded. Tree ghosts? What were tree ghosts? Why would a ghost haunt a tree?

Leo's long, graceful fingers drummed the hilt of the gilded sword ever-present at his waist. *Tree ghosts?*

Oh.

Oh no.

Pippa, unaware of the confused glances being sent her way, added unhelpfully, "Oh. I also said that the tree ghost could come to the party."

Gods give Leo strength.

Pippa invited a Fae to the party.

"It's not that Fae are evil, it's... complicated."

Pippa sat on the floor of the citadel, an imposing structure built many years ago by one of Leonidas' equally lavish ancestors, rather childishly sulking in the position she still called criss-cross-applesauce as a twentysomething. Sister Rosaria, the elderly nun who had practically raised Leo, had been telling her about the "important things" that she "should know" for at least twenty minutes, and Pippa was getting a bit tired of it. So what if she didn't know the first thing about the plethora of godlike creatures that controlled the world? She hadn't died yet. When she spoke, there was a hint of a yawn in her voice.

"The Fae I met wasn't evil *or* complicated. He was very polite and I don't think he'd like being called a 'folkloric trickster'."

The tap-tap of the old sister's boots stopped for a moment as she groaned into her hands. "Lady Phillipa, I am telling you that of all the gods and spirits in this world, the Fae have a reputation for a few things, and those things are trickery and revenge! Usually both at once! You must be careful! The elder Fae— cherry-laden Silínus Flúr, rosegrown Rós Sythil— their power rivals the Gods."

A tiny golden bird began to chirp from atop a now-empty hourglass, signifying the end of lecture time. The bird and hourglass had been one of the first fine things Leonidas had made as a child, and he had gifted it to the sister as a way to keep time while she lectured in hopes of putting a time limit on his daily scoldings. Of course, that never worked, and the sister would ignore the tweeting until she was finished with her point, but the thought was there.

Pippa jumped up the second she heard the bird. "Thank you, Sister Rosaria. If this comes back to bite me, you can lecture me as long as you'd like, BUT it won't, so you can't lecture me again." After a brief pause, she added, "You're a wonderful lady, thank you for caring about me, ok bye."

As Pippa bounced down the hall to get changed, the old sister returned to her desk. A small bough of cherry flowers rested on the corner. *Funny*, the sister thought, *I don't remember putting this here.*

Pippa's dress was stunning. Or at least, that's what she was told. All she knew was that if she moved her shoulders too aggressively the top button of the dress would pop open, and the seam on her stomach was itchy, and she sort of wished she could have hung out with the palace guards instead of being here, drinking tiny bitter drinks and pretending to laugh at conceited jokes. Sometimes, she thought of running away to a little cottage in the woods where only the people she liked could ever find her, but sadly that was a wish that would never come true (she tried it. People she did not care to see found her anyway.).

She couldn't even enjoy the "amazing" and "breathtaking" decorations, on account of her, y'know, not being able to see them. Hopefully Leo would assert his dominance over the Marquess through this stupid show of wealth, and then Pippa could forget this stupid party ever happened. Apparently, she had also invited some "malevolent nature spirit" to the party, even though he was very polite and Pippa did not think he was malevolent at all. Oh well. If things went south, she had a sword.

If you would like to read the rest of this story, please hunt me down in the halls– there's about 2,500 more words in this tale.



"Hell's Fifth Sun", Ezra Reindel-Swan, '24

History

Anonymous

Growing, moving on

From one time to another

Places that are seen and left to another

World

The scratching of chalk

The pictures built from powder

The works found in building

Erasing

And building again

Has been rubbed on my hands

From start

To finish

Chalk is

A powdery stick

A dusty stick

A thing you buy from the

Corner store

For less than a drink

A thing you can use without fear

Of waste

Of extra

Paper

Shavings

Dried out pens

Garbage

Chalk on a wall

Building a sky

Chalk on the ground

Building a guy

Chalk on a board

Building

A different world

A place to be

Yourself

What will happen

When the scratching

Blowing

Rubbing chalk

Is replaced with pens

Electric pens

Things that don't scratch

Blow

Rub

And change with friction?

When I move

From Scratching,

Rubbing,

Blowing chalk,

To

Pushing,

Dragging,
Pulling pens,
I go back
To when I could
Rub
Blow
Scratch
My way through the world

Would we had never changed

Will the past repeat itself?
Like a clock
Winding
And Winding
And Winding again
For the things that we build in our minds
With our hearts
By our hands
Are torn down
Rejected
Ruined

But what of the powder

And scratching

And rubbing

And blowing

Change?

What of the history and

Building

Layer on layer

Of chalk

Layer on layer

Of history

Of true past

And life before ours

The scratching of chalk

The pictures from powder

The worlds found in building

Erasing and

Building again

Has been rubbed on my hands

From start

To finish

Masks, Shoes, Keyholes, and Empathy

Nicole Samala, '24

Everyone has problems hidden behind a mask,
But we don't know what they are because we never ask.
We just assume that they are not there,
That we are the only ones that suffer and despair.

Yet this is obviously not true, most can agree;
We all fight different battles that others fail to see
There is more to everyone beyond the surface,
Yet we go about serving our own self-purpose.

But you have nothing to lose
If you step inside another's shoes.

Look at the world through their own lenses,
And finally come to your senses.

Discover the good, the bad, and the ugly,
And only then can you kind of see
Why a person acts the way they do
And believe their personal views

Empathy is what I am trying to say
And should be the key takeaway,
So before you go on judging other people,
Open the door and look beyond the keyhole.



Szabo, '22

Joker's Litany

Lily Blitz, '24

Here I'm unfurled
In a place between worlds
Lonely and sad and resigned
To this terrible fate
Oh, what terrible hate
For this rift in which I am confined.

Such sweet melodies ring
And such sweet birds do sing
Up where I've not been in so long
I have yearned long to fly
Up to that new world; why,

I can hardly remember its song.

Trapped in this cell

With its wet, musty smell

Dreaming of sky I'd once known

With no future to hold

In the dark, only mold

And sadness and anger, alone.

Kindly traveller, do hear

My despair and my tears

And listen to this sad tale unfold

This one favor I ask

Just the simplest of tasks

For this poor, lonely prisoner of old.

Long locked away

"Here you'll sit, here you'll stay"

Cried the mighty, benevolent king

Well, that's how he's described

By his followers, and, oh my,

Is it quite an inaccurate thing.

There the other king stood,
In the shadows, he would
Not have said anything if called out
Yes, quite shy for a ruler
And a bit of a fool, for
He'd heed not my plea nor my shout.

"I am innocent," I said
To the pair, newly wed
Desperate for them to stay near
I tried to hope, but nay,
Hand in hand, walked away.
My, how tender. I squeezed out a tear.

Oh, don't fear, I'll not harm
You, dear traveller, far from it!
But you see, I am still a tad bitter
My crime, you may ask?
Played a game! Set a task!
For a jester? It couldn't be fitter.

A game of what sort?

Just an act in the court!

I danced, I performed, as I do

But you see, such a play

Doesn't quite bestow fame

On the one who has carried it through.

But of me? That's enough.

Now, my friend, you look tough!

I am weak, I am poor, I am frail

If I can ask one thing,

I at last may take wing

You and I will make up for my fail!

Take my hand, through the bars

Victory soon will be ours!

We will play a quick game, you and me

Come a bit closer, now,

We can both take a vow!

I promise you've no need to flee.

Now then, bend down low

Hear the rules of this show

That's it, lean in more, must I coax?

There's but one key to win!

Now hold tight to that grin-

For you see,

Not all jesters tell jokes.



Maeve Vasko, '22

Saturday Mornings

Finn D'Alessio, '22

It's Saturday morning

You wake up early and race over to the TV

You hear the familiar crackle as you flip through the channels

Searching for Cartoon Network

It's your favorite sound

You sit with your face no further than 6 inches away from the screen

It burns your eyes

But that's okay

Years go by and Saturday mornings become less and less exciting

You outgrow cartoons

You have homework to do

Your headaches drown out that familiar crackle

Your favorite sound

It's Friday night

The week before finals

You open your laptop and search for Cartoon Network

Theme songs bring back memories of that familiar crackle

Your favorite sound

Memories you thought had faded away long ago

Tears run down your face

Tears of mourning for an easier time

It burns your eyes

But that's okay

love letter to my best friend

Anonymous

let's buy peaches and go down to the lake. i've been dying to see you. i've been dying to eat peaches.

i asked – what it's like to have a crush on someone and she said it's wanting to be with them all the time. sometimes i wonder what it's like to kiss you.

yesterday i was afraid you'd died in a car crash. i didn't cry when we buried my grandfather but i cried for you and your imaginary ending, and when you texted me it was like atlas took the world off my shoulders.

i miss you. i miss you. i think you are the most beautiful thing.



Cici Cao, '25

City in the Sky

Lily Blitz, '24

The air shimmered, giving the night a mystical feel. Thin streams of purple and indigo and copper, invisible to the human eye, twisted across the sky, interconnected, as if keeping the village afloat. The moon, a beautiful silver crescent, shone down upon the many homes and the islands they sat upon, their bridges swaying slightly in the soft breeze. Above and below and around them, stars glowed, ever on guard, keeping the inhabitants of the village safe as they slept. Every night, they appeared in the sky at dawn and slowly faded at the tail of dusk. But tonight, in the peaceful, quiet darkness, the largest star began to flicker, then died.

The silence was broken by a crack. The colored strings embracing the village trembled and shattered, flying away into the blackness one by one. Within moments, the steady breeze turned into a raging hurricane. The bridges shook and began to crumble, the houses and their islands shuddered and bobbed up and down, dislodged from their resting places by an unseen force.

The townspeople were wide awake now, awake and terrified. They leapt from their beds and raced to the open windows, watching the chaos with open mouths. Snapped out of their shock by another, louder crackle, they rushed outside, nearly tumbling off of their floating islands as the tremors grew in force. They reached for their bridges, desperate to get somewhere, anywhere else, perhaps the town center, but the ropes snapped, and the logs they had kept together dropped down into the unknown. The villagers yelled for one another, but their voices were lost in the howling of the wind.

As the stars below began to disappear, the last ribbons of color unfurled, and vanished. Another tremor, the largest yet, caused several villagers to tumble off of their islands, difficult to spot through the flying rubble of houses torn apart. The largest island, the town center, shuddered once more, then slowly began to sink. A figure emerged from the house it held, spread their arms, and leapt as high as they could. They paused mid-flight, captured by a current. They began to writhe as, one by one, the scarlet feathers covering their body and wings were ripped from their skin. They howled, then dropped back to the ground beneath, which was picking up speed as it fell. The house imploded, its many bits and pieces flung in all directions, destroying any last withered remain of the person who once lived there. Another island plummeted, and another, their inhabitants releasing shrieks for help that would never be heard.

Abruptly, the wind stopped. For a moment, everything rocked, settling back into place in the newfound silence. The few remaining villagers held their breath, waiting to see if the threads in the sky would knit themselves back together, if the stars would return to comfort them with their light. Seconds passed, then a minute, then two. Still, everything was calm. Five

minutes. At last, dozens of lungs released a rush of air as the townspeople smiled shakily, embracing those they could reach.

And then the moon shattered, and the night filled with screams, and the remains of the village fell, and fell, and fell.

Like Frost on Silver

Maeve Vasko, '22

Please note: this contains implications of violence & parental death.

It goes like this:

A small door in a cellar wall. A child, somewhere between nine and thirteen.

Soldiers' boots on the road beyond, and a father that loves his daughter.

This place has been many things. Currently it is a tiny house, but there are echoes of the things it once was: an inn, a temple, a tower at the gate of a prison. Hidden beneath the steps to the cellar is a tiny door, indiscernible in the darkness unless one runs their hands over the stones, and this is where a weary father, who has already lost so much, carries his young daughter.

She may be asleep, or awake. All that matters is that a necklace hangs heavy round her throat, and it is made of silver. All that matters is her father kisses it when he places her in the cubby behind the door, and a trace of his lips lingers on the metal.

The cubby is not big enough for the two of them. It is barely big enough for a little girl that is not so little and the doll that she cradles, a remnant of her past.

Her father loves her dearly. He kisses her forehead and strokes her cheek, and then he closes the door.

It goes like this:

A man hides his daughter in the cellar. She huddles in the dark, and listens as he climbs the stairs.

She listens as silence passes, unending, for minutes upon minutes.

She listens as the door opens. Listens as soldiers infect the home above and draw their swords, and speak and then shout, the volume but not the words carrying.

When her father begins to scream, the girl does not listen anymore.

It goes like this:

Hours and days and minutes and weeks pass. When she is brave enough, the girl takes her hands from her ears and listens.

She hears no soldiers, no thumping boots. She does not hear her father's screams. All that can be heard is the creaking of a tiny house that has been many things before, shifting in the wind.

When she is brave enough, the girl pushes the small door open and climbs out. She may take her doll with her. Her dress may catch on the door's hinges, and she may sob a little as she tugs at it. All that matters is that she is free, in the end, and climbs the cellar stairs with silver around her neck.

This place that is now a home has been many things. It has known sorrow and joy and fear and anger and ecstasy and so, so much death. But all that matters is that a god died here once, so long ago.

No one knows its name anymore. But this house remembers every life that bleeds upon it, from the god so old it is forgotten, to the father that loved his daughter so dearly he gave himself for her.

The earth does not forget as easily as humans do.

It goes like this:

There was once a god honored in blood, and silver, that was slaughtered upon the soil.

There was once a girl weighed down by grief and silver, who knelt at her father's side and, unknowingly, cried out in a language unspoken for centuries, a dead god's name upon her lips.

Where gods' blood is spilled, the ground turns holy.

It goes like this:

Give me silver. Give me grief. Say my name, and winter's shepherd will walk the earth again.

It goes like this:

There is a house that has been many things, and is built upon holy ground. There is a father, murdered in its front room, and his daughter's knees are wet with blood as she weeps beside him.

When you scream a god's name, it listens, even if it died millennia ago.

Deep in the earth, a god wakes. Gods do not crawl, but this one does, digging its nails in the soil and dragging itself to the surface, to the cold floor of an empty cellar. When it ascends the stairs, the wood creaks beneath its ancient feet.

It goes like this:

A child, kneeling in blood. Silver at her throat.

A god as grateful as gods can be.

The child may be shaking. She may be clutching at her father's shirt or at her own. She could be begging him to wake, but she is not that stupid.

All that matters is that in her grief, she has called a god of frost and death and silver, and that god would move stars and sun for the girl that cried its name.

The god kneels, and takes the girl's face in its hands. It is as gentle as a father. The girl sniffles and wipes her eyes, and a cold kiss is pressed to her forehead.

Half a mile away, a soldier with fresh blood on his sword tastes the smell of winter on the wind.



Ruby Li, '22

Oaken Memories

Anonymous

Please note: this contains mentions of suicide & a homophobic hate crime.

October 20, 2020

Olivia,

I know it's been a year since I last wrote you, and I miss you dearly. Do you remember when we used to climb that old oak tree in your backyard? The times when we would just sit up there for hours, rewriting the universe in our own little world. Those were the days, weren't they? I haven't picked up a pen and paper in months, this pandemic really strains the edges of the human mind, doesn't it? I promise I will write you more often, my dear Olivia. I just... I needed some time.

Forever and always,

Terra G. Steilmet

October 29, 2020

My dearest Livi,

You used to always act like you hated that nickname, but I know you liked it. The tensions are high, the pandemic is raging, there are protests in the streets, and a looming election. I know you never got into that political stuff, but it is so different from how it used to be, at least where I am. I do wish you had stuck around long enough to see our world as it is now; it's changed so much Livi and I think you would love it, I truly do.

With all the love and good wishes in the world,

Terra Germain Steilmet

November 2, 2020

Olivia,

The sun to my moon, the light to my dark, the crazy to my calm. I can feel you wanting to respond, I will give you the materials to write back this time. I miss you intolerably, this seeping darkness eating away at my soul; I truly wish I could join you. I know we will see each other again, I can feel it in the air. The stories in the media, the rumors and warnings they carry, they scare me. I might not be in a good enough place to write you for the next few weeks, I hope you can understand. I will write you again when it is safe, the election is

tomorrow. I promise I will see you again soon, and with all that is happening, it may be sooner than I initially thought.

Love and wishes of well-being,

Your Terra

I set the last paper down and search the box for another, the crisp autumn wind blows across my face and I breathe in the smell of the trees. I hear a voice from behind me,

"That's the last of them. We counted them all up, that was the last one she wrote." I turn to see my cousin Conner.

"Do you know who Olivia is? I can't figure it out from any of these letters"

"Nana had a friend from when she was younger, she used to tell us stories about her, remember?" Conner says.

"Yeah, they used to go hiking together."

"If I remember correctly, that friend's name was Olivia, and I think that's who she was writing to."

"Well, then where is she? If she was Nana's best friend, shouldn't we at least video call her during the service?" I ask.

"Kayla, Olivia took her own life 50 years ago."

"Wait, so who was Nana writing to? A different Olivia?"

"No... that same one, just, her ghost..."

"Oh..."

"Kayla, you know how Nana was never married? To our knowledge at least."

"Yes..."

"And how she always wore that old blue stone ring?"

"Yeah, where are you getting at with this?"

"Well Kayla... Nana and her friend Olivia got married when they were younger, we found the legal papers in her fire box."

"But... that's not possible..."

"Well, it wasn't legal so I don't know how they did it, but they did. Nana was married, for a while at least."

"I'm confused about her letters though, she kept saying that she had a feeling that she was going to see Olivia again soon... but Olivia was dead, was that just Nana being Nana?"

"Kayla, how did Nana die?"

"She fell down the stairs, that's what Aunt Lorissa said."

"Kayla, she was shot..."

"What? How? Why?"

"You remember what happened after the election, right?"

"Yes but-"

"Nana was one of those people, Kayla. She was shot because someone found out she was a lesbian."

"But... how... why... what...?"

"I know, it's messed up, this whole thing is just one huge mess."

I sit with Conner in silence for a few moments before I speak up again.

"Conner, do you think... do you think she's with Olivia now?"

"I have no doubt about it. They're up there, in the sky. She's happy I think she's with the person she loved more than anyone else in this world, up to the last minute."

"They're in a better place now, they're in their world that they created in the oak tree."

"Yeah, I suppose they are..."



"Raven's Reign", Ezra Reindel-Swan, '24

The Abyss

Nicole Samala, '24

I run and run, but there is no hope,
No happy ending like some literary trope.
That is not the way my story goes,
Whether it be told in rhyme or prose.
I knew that ever since the start,
I would live a life with a broken heart.
A life constantly on the run,
A life where it is never done -
The same steps over and over again, left and right,
One after the other all throughout the endless night.
My feet are in immense pain,
And I must be going insane.

I know that I cannot win - that's just the way it is,
But I can at least delay the coming darkness.

Suddenly shivers run up and down my spine
Because I have reached the end of the line.

I have finally reached a dead end,
And I will soon be dead, my friend.
Beyond me, there is nothing left
Except silence ringing out deaf.

A decision I began to make:
What path should I take?
Do I succumb to the dark
Or into the unknown do I embark?

Maybe that is what I truly fear:
Not knowing what is near.
Though being chased is pretty grim,
There is a familiarity in my limbs.
I feel a certain comfort in the certain,
Content with not finding what is behind the curtain.

But now we are back at present day.

For the choice I make, the consequences I will pay.

Suddenly, without a thought in my mind,

I jump ahead, not looking behind.

I fall

and fall

and fall

The gap never seems to close at all,

Until I seem to pick up speed.

I began to worry in this time of need:

What will be there on the ground?

Will there be anyone around?

Will I come crashing on my feet?

Will my life end in defeat?

I brace myself for the worse,

But what happens is the reverse.

Instead of meeting Death,

I feel another's breath.

A warm body pressed against mine -

The first in such a long time.

Someone is there to catch me,

And I land comfortably.

Now, it is finally done.

I am no longer constantly on the run.

Not watching behind my shoulder,

Getting colder and colder.

My feet no longer ache,

I finally get a break.

My story finally found its happy ending.

Growing Up

Liliana Embrescia, '24

Sometimes I wonder

If Peter Pan had the right idea.

Responsibilities and stress pile up

Until you are a bridge with too little support,

Ready to snap in half.

Everyone expects great things of you,

Unaware you doubt your abilities.

So maybe I'll move to a magic island

Where age is nonexistent,

Taking worries along with it.

What a wonderful life that would be.

If only it were true.