



GALLIMAUFRY

LAUREL SCHOOL 2020-2021

LAUREL SCHOOL **2020-2021**

GALLIMAUFY

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

Dear reader,

Perhaps it is apt that the theme of the 2020-2021 literary magazine is *solitude*. A common thread links all submissions: in written pieces, the narrator is alone, whether they are physically by themselves, they stand alone in their opinions, or they have withdrawn themselves from a situation. In illustrated works, the subject is often depicted in isolation.

This has been a strange year, and a lonely one for many. But the tone of these pieces is not overwhelmingly melancholy—they convey joy, passion, horror, righteousness. As much as we ourselves remained isolated this year (something we are only beginning to recover from) our lives were not simply doom and gloom. There were pockets of happiness too, as well as anger, and curiosity, and satisfaction.

The artists and authors who showcase their work in this year's magazine are all immensely talented. It is the prerogative of a talented creator to reflect the world in their work; we hope that in reading Gallimaufry, you may recognize elements of your own experiences in our stories and art.

Enjoy.

—MAEVE VASKO, '22

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CANDY JAR

SHALIZ BAZLDJOO '24

Well. The world was ending.

It wasn't in the figurative sense of a bottomless grief. It wasn't in the fanatic, mystical sense either, like the warnings given off by fortune-tellers and buried kingdoms. Neither had a war just begun, nor a famine, nor a plague. It wasn't a missile or the slow, dawning creep of death that came with new leaders and new times. It wasn't even zombies.

Thin, adolescent muscles strained against Max's arms as he tried to pull the cork out of an old Santenay bottle. Stop that, Holly had told him, at three in the morning when neither could sleep anymore. The room had been a fuzzy sort of dark, and the world restless.

I won't get another chance, he'd said. Live a little.

She rolled her eyes. Your brain'll turn to mush.

My brain'll be mush when the sun lands.

It's not landing, idiot. They said it was a flare.

Sure.

He then returned his focus to the bottle, and Holly pushed her earbuds back in. Her fingers were shaking, but it was too dark to tell. She forgot what she had been watching. Something careless, pointless, stupid. No nostalgic tapes or fond movies. Nothing familiar, nothing warm. If it was possible to forget, she'd do whatever she could. Screen light wrapped around her like a crying embrace. Holly moved a numb finger across the tablet, past new videos of celebrity announcements and delirious, weeping livestreams. She was in a weak trance, eyes open and shut and open like window blinds.

Do you know where that corkscrew thing is? Max asked.

She sighed. Check the drawers.

I have.

Then shut up.

He grumbled something and Holly heard the hinges of a cabinet groan. They weren't the only ones awake, she knew. News articles pinged up every second. Her phone had already overflowed, then died, and she didn't care to recharge it— instead flocking to movies on her tablet. People were pouring old secrets onto forums, filming stunts, rambling goodbyes, airplanes booked, records leaked, loosened at the break of a single stitch. Leaders had made statements, companies freed their goods, churches rambled, wars had ended and bombs went off and still the world slept, still her sister was upstairs in a dream. Holly turned the volume on her tablet all the way up.

Found it! Max said.

No one cares, she muttered. In fairness, a cancer cure wouldn't have fazed her.

Seconds and minutes and hours and centuries passed. More good-bye videos. An email from a camp friend she hadn't seen in eight years, more attacks and truces and confessions. Someone was offering a million

dollars to anyone who came up with a solution, a miracle escape, a working bunker or space shuttle. Someone else pulled the number up to a billion. Then a trillion. Then all the money in the world. Their savior would be a god among men, if only existent.

Want some, Holly?

She sighed. What does the wine even taste like?

Not much. She heard a knock of glass. I'm not drunk yet, at least.

Stay that way, Holly said, but she couldn't bring herself to true concern. It was a dream, a terrible, railless dream, and it made her numb.

Seconds and minutes and hours and centuries passed. Daytime came, tinted red, though she didn't pull the windows to look closer. She didn't want to see. Max stashed the Santenay bottle and their mother came down, rushed, shorn of makeup and spirit. Then arrived their father. He was slower, sluggish even, as if he could prolong the day by letting it filter in step by step. Holly heard their voices through her earbuds.

We're going to Portland, she said. I need to see my mother. You guys are coming with me.

She had said the exact same thing the night before, when the news first flashed over sports games and buzzed on phones, when the world was still alive and happy. She had been calmer then, shocked, hands weak around the handle of a blue coffee mug. It was a little different, back then. The end hadn't been right above them. Holly had barely believed it.

Their father looked exactly the same, though, and he responded exactly the same. We can't go to Oregon.

Don't start.

The airports are full, Jane. We all have places we want to go—

My mother—

Jane—

I just want to be with my family. My whole family.

Holly didn't turn around. She pushed the volume buttons again, as if she could force the video past its brink. It was clear from the weepy tone in her mother's voice that her parents weren't going to be the same today, and why would she want to see that? There was no leverage to gain at the end of the world.

I want the same thing, their father said, It's not possible. You can call her—

And their lifelong caregiver let out a wail. Holly saw reflections in the dark parts of her screen, saw a mother crush her son into a hug. Max's face was still flushed from alcohol.

Seconds and minutes and hours and centuries passed. Di came downstairs at last, still in her slippers. The silent house turned to her collectively, and the gloss receded from their mother's eyes. Holly stared as if her little sister was a mirage, and Max rose from the kitchen, almost shamefully, and walked out of view.

You didn't wake me up in time for school! she said.

Holly scoffed, then had to bite her lip, though she wasn't sure what the gnarl in her throat was, whether she was holding back a laugh or a sob. She turned back to her videos.

No school today, dear, their mother said.

Really? The little girl's face lit up. Why?

They just decided to cancel.

Holly couldn't see her mother's face, but she imagined it blank, full of wrinkles that hadn't been there before. It was better this way, she agreed, because Di had been asleep upstairs when the announcement came, and she was so small, she would be asleep again tonight when the end arrived.

Di was still gawking. What?

Yeah, their mother said, Only for today, though.

That's cool, she said, and Holly imagined her twisting in her nightgown without a care in the world.

Would you like some candy? Their mother spoke with too high a voice now, too sweet to believe.

For breakfast?

Yes, dear.

No one protested. The jar of ornate, twinkling candies that sat on the counter was opened scarcely once a month, but now Jane Forster pried off the glass lid and dumped half the contents into her daughter's palms. Holly watched them both beam as if nothing was the matter.

Seconds and minutes and hours and centuries passed. Mr. and Mrs. Forster grew more agitated, and muttering turned into hissing turned into yelling. Di was sent to play in the backyard, but they pulled her back again, because it showed on Holly's news sites that things weren't safe anymore outside. Now Max was in the basement, and their father had locked himself in the office, and Di was upstairs playing with plastic dolls. Every time she came down, their mother gave her another candy and coaxed her back upstairs. Holly sat on the couch until her legs ached, and even charged her phone, listened to the onslaught of pings and didn't check a single one. She didn't want to think about her friends' faces.

Seconds and minutes and hours and centuries passed. Someone killed a president, though she wasn't sure if it was her own president or someone else somewhere she'd never go. People were angry, she reasoned to herself, and it was those big federal facilities that had announced the flaring before it came into view—before people worried, before they woke up to the fire in the sky. It didn't matter that no one could explain it. Of course, the assassination didn't really matter either. None of it mattered, not today.

Seconds and minutes and hours and a hundred long years passed. She didn't know where Max was, or if he was even awake, alive, and she just kept finding whatever nonsense she could, trying not to think of the fact that they would all be gone when the sun set and the flare hit. Their mother and father were yelling again, louder now, which drew Di down, and their mother gave her more candy from the jar and pushed her back upstairs. Neighbors came but no one answered the door. Holly watched the figures come and go morosely. When the sky began to darken, lit up again by a ghostly, ruddy light, she couldn't take the shouting anymore. Her tablet ran out of battery and she tossed her things down and went upstairs, and took the candy jar with her.

Di! She waved her hand at her sister's bedroom. Come to the roof with me.

Mommy said to stay in my room.

Holly shook the candy jar.

They reached the top of the house together, broke into Max's room, stole through his window and out onto the shingles that blanketed their happy suburban home. The sky above was a flush of orange and red, fire instead of darkness, and all the stars were gone. Twenty-three hours to hit the Earth, the broadcast had said, seconds and minutes and hours and centuries ago. And the twenty-three hours had turned an eyeroll of a conspiracy into the end of times.

Holly knew it was close now. The knot in her stomach twisted and writhed, all the things she hadn't gotten to see, all the people she hadn't said goodbye to, all the laughter and movies and family vacations. Her nausea had gotten better since the start of the day. Now, looking up at fate, everything was hollow. She was too scared to be afraid.

Woah! Di stepped forward, eyes fixed on the sky.

Careful. Don't fall.

What's that? The light framed her little pointing finger into a silhouette.

Holly swallowed. It's just a nice night, is all. Have some candy.

I can't have candy after eight.

You can today. She shook more sweets out of the jar, let them all pile onto the narrow decline of the roof.

Everyone's really nice today, Di remarked, but didn't seem to take any further suspicion, and began to unwrap a piece of gemstone plastic.

Holly glanced back at the window. There was a chance her mother would forget to put Di to bed, and Max's disappearance could distract what was left of her parents.

She turned back to the little girl. Want to sleep out here tonight? I can bring blankets.

Nah. It's cold.

Seconds and minutes, hours and centuries. Eventually Di went back inside, and Holly could hear yelling when the window opened, cut off like a broken record when she drew it back shut. She had trouble lying down against the shingles, thinking of her hair getting dirty—but who was going to care?—and the bugs crawling around, who would go with her in t-minus ten, in minutes and hours and centuries. Eventually she managed to turn her head to the hazed stars. Alone with an empty glass jar, candy packets sliding off the roof, and the end of the world.

She wanted to stay awake for it. She wanted to see the flare hit the earth, to think as much as she could before she couldn't. She wanted to be there when all became none, when she turned to ash and her house turned to ash and the candy jar and Max's wine bottle and Di's plastic toys all went away, when her friends on her phone and the neighbors down the street and what presidents lived and the doctors and priests, soldiers, warzones, oceans, housewives and killers and singers and actors and

history, cars and towers and books and the grass on the ground, all melted and withered and became nothing. She wanted to feel herself disappear with the world.

Or maybe a buzz would come on her phone downstairs. A flash on the tv, on her parent's devices, and they would summon her down to see the alert. *FALSE ALARM - Our Bad*, it would say, or something of the sort, and the world would be angry but the world would be alive. Holly would cry and shriek and whip her phone into the roadway, but it would all be okay, it would all be okay because the day wouldn't be real.

Or Holly could blink, look down at her hands, find them fuzzy and mangled and then she would wake up from her nightmare and her perfect, unscattered mother and father would call her down for breakfast. In retrospect, the day would look silly, the way dreams always did.

Or maybe they would all get cinematic powers or transcend to a new realm. Maybe, maybe, maybe. Something was going to happen, whatever it was, in centuries or hours or minutes or seconds. Tragedies or victories, rapture or armageddon. But something else, something weary filled her up, and Holly fell asleep before the anything came.



RUBY LI, '22

[LAUREL] MUSIC'S MIRROR

ANONYMOUS

Ah, middle school. The time before high school, filled with fake drama, cringeful phases, and petty bullying. Though my middle school was slightly different: filled entirely with girls. And this story begins in 8th grade, the top of the pecking order, foggy with a self-deprecating viewpoint that doesn't dissipate throughout the time alive--at least so far.

Lo-fi, the music barely classified so, only composed of samples and chill beats to study to or when you're depressed; one side of the sadness spectrum. The other is fuming, internal rage encapsulating everything that you feel about the pathetic excuses for perambulating sacks of muscle, bone and skin. From Fall Out Boy to Celldweller--an artist for industrial and nu metal--your rage is sealed into a comprehensive 5 minutes 14 times on one album--a wonderful little miracle amongst the otherwise cumbersome existence that was placed upon you. This tight little bubble you comfortably placed yourself into has prevented you from even thinking of others and their viewpoints that could possibly help you escape from this mindspace. Teachers offered their ears, if only to hear your story and yet, you rejected them for fear that your self and perspective isn't

worth it to them. Friends lended their assistance. Parents acknowledged your difficulties. You fumed in your bubble for too long, and the escape was something that is humiliating to the normal ear, some of the most stupid shows and events in your life. But good job, you finally escaped and now the next task is freshman year, rumored by teachers to be even harder than 8th grade.

Some of the social scene was changing due to the 20 new people added to your miniscule grade, along with it, you broke out of your bubble of arrogance. You adopted all forms of celtic music, indie music and some American macabre folk music to keep your angst in line. Each explored the themes of outside perspectives and living freely--either linked with friends or nature's twisted humor--broadening your perspective bit by bit. You try to talk to more people, you become friends with some vibrant personalities--though, when breaking out of the arrogance bubble, mild social anxiety coyly joined your side. Spoken word artists such as Hobo Johnson and samsa, AJJ and Harley Poe--the aforementioned macabre folk--wonderfully articulate what angst and social anxiety feel like. Let's just hope this phase dissipates quickly.

Sophomore year is the year most people forget. On your first day of school, your mom said to you, "Be sure to have fun this year. It's just a good year to be a teen; no one really pays attention to you." You don't think you lived up to that well. You attended a couple homecomings, hung out with my friends often, participated in speech and debate for the first time--still was attached to school life though. You attempted BBYO, tried to go to more social gatherings and overall you think it was a marked improvement compared to any prior years.

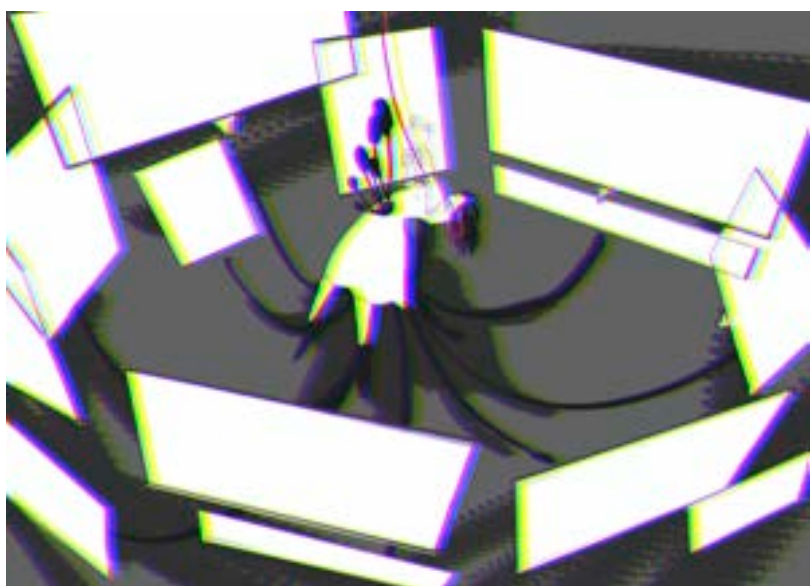
Japanese indie pop, pirate shanties and metal, bluegrass, and ballads accompanied with the forever angsty synthwave and speedcore categorized your sophomore year: a new blend of simplicity. Of course, you always have to store those natural teenage hormones somewhere; maybe one day they will go away, maybe they won't. There were still

eccentricities to the novel discoveries--as there always has been a pattern of--though it was beginning to reach into the range of normalcy. Your comfort around other people became apparent: you were starting to listen to others more despite not particularly appreciating the person; it was a step in the right direction.

When quarantine hit, all your social progress halted and your regression to primal monkey games and time-wasting activities began (you were restricted from any in-person contact with your friends for most of the 5 months). Opportunities reopened and you refused to leave your house, shriveling into a molted form of your prior self. You broke into breakcore to try to keep your spirits up by random blurts of electronic noise with incomprehensible vocals. Nero's Day at Disneyland was the first artist you listened to, then came the onslaught of hour long mixes on Youtube of whatever you could find--breakcore is not common under any meanings of the word: the arrogance bubble returned. Before starting your junior year of high school, there was some mild progression to the sophomore version but not enough to prepare yourself for a semester abroad.

Dread. Dread is what swallowed you whole, no ledges to grasp onto within its cavernous void of a throat, slathered with mucus, the stench of bile slyly curling upwards for salutations. One whole month you endured this, slowly crawling out as much as you could but that mucus slathered esophagus was dastardly. "Regret" by Everything Everything was incessantly replaying in your mind, the haunting lyrics an echo of your own wishes. Everyone received their iPads, immediately you opened Spotify and played the song, greeted with the accuracy of your thoughts. You devolved into speedcore, nu metal and breakcore again. It was only until after the first expedition did you return to indie music-- your normal choice. You are starting to get the hang of social scenes again; all you needed was a shove in the right direction.

So here we are, present day, October 14 of 2020. Five days after your 17th birthday. 6 days after receiving our phones. 3 weeks after the first expedition. 2 months after arriving to the semester away's campus. 7 months after COVID-19 quarantine. Not a typical story, couldn't really be classified as a story either--just the tellings of a high school girl's life.



RUBY LI '22

3:13

MAEVE VASKO '22

The woods are covered in a light dusting of snow. The date, by your count, is July 3rd.

You lift your eyes to the sky, You cannot remember the last time these trees were not white, the last time the great oaks had leaves on them and when the pines were not the only source of green. It is twenty-three degrees outdoors.

“It was warmer yesterday,” you say to the sky. Naturally, the sky doesn’t answer.

You pull your coat closer to you. You may be used to snow all year round, by now, but that hardly means you have to ignore the slighter changes. Hardly means you can’t feel the shift when the temperature drops.

You stamp your way through the snow to the car, half-covered with drifts. Your hands fly over the metal. You wipe the snow away in minutes, hissing when your chapped skin comes into contact with the cold. Your gloves are ripped. You do not remember when you bought them.

The car doesn’t start. It hasn’t started for thirteen months, you believe. You’ve tried most days.

You turn and face the wood. It's silent, most animals gone or dead. The only ones you ever see are resilient little birds and squirrels, pawing or hopping through the snow. The next day, pawprints cross the same paths. You've never met a wolf or fox or coyote, but metal weighs down your coat pockets all the same. A precaution.

Your breath is white in the frozen air. "What is the way home again?"

You can never remember the way home. You always wander your way through the woods until you happen upon the tin-roof cabin once again, smoke trailing from its chimney. A fire burns inside and it always scares you, because you don't know how to start a fire, not really, and the cabin is always empty of people.

(It has been eighteen weeks since you saw another human being. It has been thirty-six weeks since you saw another human being alive.)

The only place you can ever remember is where the car sits, burrowed in the snow.

A root. A rock. You don't know what it is but something catches your foot as you step forward and then you're on your knees, snow soaking through your layers. The gloves on your hands are turning to threads and your coat is falling apart. You brace your hands in the snow, trying to push yourself to your feet, and you gasp at the influx of cold.

When you fall again your body turns, so your face looks to the sky. It is gray, cold. Ready to snow again. You crane your head to look at your watch, and it reads 3:13. It has read 3:13 for the past eleven minutes.

It is going to snow. You must stand. You cannot be buried like the car beside you, another body lost to the woods.

But your eyes close, and you make no attempt to open them.

When you wake, your body has been propped against the car, blanketed with a fresh layer of snow. There is no imprint in the drifts around you, not that you can see, and there are no footprints but your own.

You wipe your watch clean. The time is 3:13. It is July 3rd.

You tip your head backward, breath frozen in your lungs. The trees rustle pleasantly.



DENIZE TOTONCHI '22

BRAVE NEW WORLD

MADELEINE MALBASA '24

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley is set in a shining, beautiful future, where everyone is happy and content. However, behind the glimmering sheen of the World State, something darker lurks. As embryos, citizens of The World State are given a differing amount of oxygen depending on their future station in life (the more oxygen, the more intelligence). As a result of this conditioning, the occupants of the Brave New World are obedient, gleeful, and docile, so they never take action or disagree. People function as parts of a machine, living and dying in a society where humanity does not matter. Although some in the Brave New World have knowledge of the past and of things greater than themselves, their numbers are few. The wheel that is the Brave New World continues to turn, never halting at the death it is conditioned not to fear, nor the injustice they are taught not to see. For stability and peace, the populace has given up intelligence and free will. In *Brave New World* society has given up far too much for stability and happiness, because there is no pain to learn from and there is no point in the lives of the people.

The World State has eradicated pain and suffering, but without failure, there can never be true success. With the help of *soma*, the Brave New World's inhabitants can erase their pain; however, by erasing their pain, they cease to learn from their mistakes, thus they live out their lives as adult children, never growing or changing. When Bernard is talking to Helmholtz, toward the beginning of the book, Helmholtz expresses his sense that there is something missing in their world: "Really, and at the bottom, he was interested in something else. But in what?" (Huxley 67). This shows how the more intelligent can feel the absence of suffering, through the lack of substance in their world. Helmholtz is a perfect example of this, as he is constantly searching for something more in his writing. Toward the end of the book Mustapha Mond says, "God in the safe and Ford on the shelves," (Huxley 231). God is how many people learn to grow from their mistakes; the absence of such a being shows that no mistakes are made, or at least if they are, they are whisked away by *soma*. On the contrary, Ford made people into machines, and machines do not have feelings.

In *Brave New World*, as each person is degraded to a machine part, life does not matter. People are discarded like broken gears, to be replaced by shiny new ones; the only difference being that this machine does not pause to be fixed, it continues on its perpetually-turning wheel, never moving forward or back. Yet the people are placated; as Mustapha Mond says, "They're well off; they're safe; they're blissfully ignorant of passion and old age... they've got no wives, or children, or lovers to feel strongly about..." (Huxley 220). Without anyone to care about, or anyone to care about them, the citizens of the World State have nothing to drive them except their fleeting happiness and the illusion of perfection. Happiness and perfection have no substance, no emotional grounding. Without substance, without passion, life has no purpose. Not even death receives a reaction, for everyone accepts death, that their time is limited, that their life is fleeting. They live knowing they are part of a machine,

knowing their lives have no worth. But they do not care, they cannot care as they are too conditioned otherwise. This sentiment is expressed when describing an attendant's reaction to John's distress at the house of the dying, the nurse was "Startled by the expression of distress on his pale face...(Not that there were many visitors anyhow: or ant reason why there should be)..."(Huxley 199). Following the attendant's distress, a group of children enters the room for death conditioning. The children are perfectly comfortable surrounded by the youthful dying, they run around and play games, exactly as they were conditioned to do.

In the Brave New World, peace has been achieved, but at far too great a cost, now the World State can never escape this mirage of perfection. The most disturbing part is how the people ushered in the machine, and welcomed it with open arms. Those who welcomed The World State must have been in a perilous condition to willingly give up humanity for stability. If it ever came to pass that we as a people choose peace over passion, humans would become infantile adults, unable to feel anything but ignorant placidity. In our day, as technology creeps ever nearer to the point where a Brave New World could exist, we must be careful with the way we use our resources. As the day likely approaches that we will be able to eradicate pain, and passion alongside it, we must remember pain and suffering are what make us human, and without them we are but a machine ever chugging along, never going anywhere.

Huxley, Aldous. Brave New World. New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 2006.



RUBY LI '22

BLACKOUT

MAGGIE CHEN '23

“Isabel, Mr. Bennett’s ready to see you now.” The secretary emerged from around the corner. She watched with a poorly disguised smile, her taunting eyes magnified by her prescription glasses.

Isabel stood hastily and shuffled past the woman, who moved aside half a second later than she should have. The girl kept her head down and focused on the tiles flashing beneath her feet. *One, two, three, grey. One, two, three, white. One, two, three, grey. One, two, white. Oh, no.* The door to her left stood ajar. She turned to face the room and peered inside cautiously.

“Come in, Ms. Ramirez.”

She stepped inside. Mr. Bennett, although on the other side of the office, loomed over her. With one hand, he held a slightly crumpled paper, and with the other, he gestured towards a chair. He crossed the room and shut the door with a resolute thud as she sat. After what felt like hours, he took a seat across from her. The chair screeched miserably under his weight.

“Why don’t you tell me why you’re here?”

Isn't that your job? The voice in her head spat, and she gripped her armrests, taken aback by her own audacity. Isabel shook her head, then cleared her throat and answered, "I'm not sure." Lies. She knew exactly why she was here. What she didn't understand was why it was such a big deal. Mr. Bennett's eyebrows, or the space where they would be if he had any, shot up in surprise. He smoothed the paper out on the desk between them and leaned forward. It was hard to ignore the headline in size twenty Times New Roman, especially since Isabel had written it herself. *Athletes smoking only the tip of the iceberg: Addressing Jefferson High's drug use.*

"Do you remember writing this?"

"Yes."

"Tell me why you thought this was a good idea."

Isabel swallowed. Any student at Jefferson could name which of their classmates were drug users and what they were on. Wasn't it obvious, especially to the principal?

"Well," she began, making herself look up at him, "I heard about how the coaches discovered four football players using...marijuana in the locker rooms. They were kicked off the team, but I noticed there were a lot of other students on stuff as well. I've heard about it a lot, too, and I thought this was a pretty big problem, and I wanted to write about it for the March issue."

She saw Mr. Bennett tense and inhale deeply. It was silent for a long moment. A clock ticked from the corner. The sound of a girl shrieking followed by several voices howling with laughter came from somewhere outside. Finally, he planted his palms on the table and spoke.

"Ms. Ramirez, you are an outstanding student. Your grades are looking great, and I saw on the website that you placed third at the robotics competition last weekend." When it was clear he was awaiting a response, Isabel muttered a thank you.

"With that being said, it is a shame that I have to call you in today and that you have decided to say such things about our school. Any issues

have either been resolved or are being handled right now. If a teacher sees a student using drugs, he or she will see me immediately. We do not, as you say,” he lifted the paper and dragged his finger along the surface, “‘fail to understand the severity of the issue and acknowledge it.’ The administration is doing everything it can, and your classmates are beginning to understand the dangers of using.”

Isabel fought the urge to scoff. Before the board of education members came in to inspect the classes, Mr. Bennett gave a long speech about how, instead of being suspended for a week, students would be suspended for two if the visitors saw them smoking.

In her classes, the teachers chewed out the female students for using too much perfume when the saccharine odor from the vapes floated from the back. Students popped pills left and right, slipping Addie onto their tongues and slapping away outstretched hands as if it were the most casual thing in the world. Just two weeks ago, Isabel walked into the second floor bathroom to find a group of girls taking turns smoking out the window. One would lean over the ledge, barely clinging to the frame, until her friends grew impatient and grabbed at her fingers. A few of them glanced at Isabel as they bickered but mostly ignored her as she found a stall. There was no fear of being caught. After all, what was the worst that could happen? Whatever remained of your stash confiscated, a few days at home, and then business as usual?

“If I may ask, how exactly are you dealing with this?” It was a risky question, and she knew that, but she needed to know.

“Well, we’re suspending anyone caught using drugs and alerting their parents.”

“Is that it?”

“We believe we are doing everything in our power right now, and it is not your place to criticize us,” he shot back before pausing and clearing his throat.

“But I wrote about what you’re doing right now. I thought it would be better if the readers could decide if that was sufficient or not... sir.”

Mr. Bennett slid a hand over the paper, balled it up, and dropped it in the waste bin beside him in one swift motion. “You’re a smart girl, Ms. Ramirez. You know if it gets out that a few outliers are making bad decisions, it will be blown out of proportion. The public might even think we have a problem, and is that what we want?”

He stared expectantly at Isabel, forcing her to keep her eye contact and respond. She noticed he was scowling, and she wanted to do so herself. She wanted to reply that yes, it would be best if people found out the school was putting on a charade, so maybe they could *finally* do something besides just handing out little blue disciplinary slips. But she didn’t.

“No, sir.”

Mr. Bennett clasped his hands together, finally satisfied. She watched as he took a painfully long time to rearrange the picture frames on his desk.

“Good. Now, I know the deadline for this month’s issue isn’t until the 20th. As you know, our varsity football team made it to the state finals. Their game is this Friday, and since you’re the main writer for the ‘student activities’ section, why don’t you write about that instead?”

“But Mr. Bennett, I thought the game was called off? Because...” She trailed off, expecting an awkward silence, but it was cut short.

“Regarding four of the members, we chose to take a gentler approach. They’ve made it this far in the season and have amazing potential. They and the coaches have already expressed remorse, and the entire city is looking forward to this game. It’s the first time we’ve gotten to the championship game since I went here, you know?” He chuckled, his eyes glazed from whatever youthful memories now washed over him. “Anyways, we felt it would be best if they continued playing.”

Isabel dug her nails into her chair, scraping away at the plastic. She wanted to open her mouth and scream, but she knew it wouldn't do any good.

“Do you have any questions?”

She shook her head.

“Good. The theme is blackout. I expect you'll enjoy the game.”



MAEVE VASKO '22

WRITER'S BLOCK

NICOLE SAMALA '24

I don't know what to write,
so a poem is, I guess, alright.
I just have writer's block,
like the absent ticking of a clock.
My creative juices won't flow,
and I just want to know
why I have no thoughts,
when others have lots.
I do not have creativity to make a story,
not deep enough to write an allegory,
My brain is as lethargic,
as an army without a sergeant.
Let's hope this won't happen often
because my brain lies in a coffin.



RUBY LI '22

BEYOND THE ANCIENT FEUD

NICOLE SAMALA '24

Romeo and Juliet is all about love,
but the story is more than what happens above.
The entire plot started with a long feud
between two families who always act rude.
The Montagues and Capulets had always been like this for years,
but I wonder if their lifelong argument was less than it appears.
Sure, they could be fighting for a murder or a war,
but for all we know, it could just be ancient lore.
Their reason of argument could be a trivial one,
yet the effects of it will never be undone.

MY LOVE, MY LIFE

ANONYMOUS

The first time
I saw her,
she was reading a book
in the coffee shop.
So immersed in the story
her tea left beside her,
cooling and forgotten.

The second time
was at the public market,
this time she was with two boys.
This time I caught her gaze.
She smiled at me
before being pulled off
in the other direction.

Now I see her,

sitting on the chair
across from mine.
Reading, in that same way
as the first time I saw her.
My love,
my life.



OLIVIA SZABO '22

LOVE EPIPHANY

NICOLE SAMALA '24

I used to believe in "love at first sight,"
but how can I, when the world isn't so bright?
I've always loved a fairy tale ending,
but now it seems like everyone's just pretending.
The heart and brain are not one, but, instead, fractions,
and love at first sight is more like our eyes' attractions.
They say beauty is on the inside,
but how can you see it, when it has been thrown aside?
Beauty was in the eye of the beholder,
but now it depends on how well you smolder.
Today, love seems to be fleeting
and many have turned to cheating.
This all came from reading Romeo and Juliet,
where both characters had a fractured mindset.
In the end, I still want Happily Ever After,
but I want to share it with someone who can give me laughter.



RUBY LI '22

CIRCLES

ANNA BECK '22

Empty pools of water fill
the space between my two worlds
where time seems to slow.

I could be forever here,
going in circles along
my great spiral of vanity.
Waterfalls dripping down
weak and weary from the time
it takes to go from here
to there, but curvy roads
come back where they began.

My circles are all in vain,
they reveal the time passed
without a ray in sight.

Think on the good old days
what was soon to be looked,
where the sun rose on us
and slowly closed its eye
with comrades dear and the

memories clear in the rain,
snow and wind, memorized.
The time had raced on as
forests and fields were crossed
breathing breaths of heat and mud
as we formed a circle
a circle that stays in mind
through the winter storms
and flows down the waterfalls.



MAEVE VASKO '22

UNITED WE FALL

ANONYMOUS

After the rain. Before the sun. Caught in the mist between the past and the present. Day in, and day out, I wait to be released from the Earth's crushing embrace. Evermore, they call me, everlasting. Fingers of soil claw at me, I cannot stay here. Gone to the winds are my brothers, my sisters, torn down by those too many in numbers, the ants of the Earth. Help us, save us, we plead, we are dying by the hundreds. I wait, it will be my turn soon, the sharp blade of an ax, or the burning fires of the bellow, I do not know. Just you wait, we will be gone, and you will have no one to save you. Killers, the lot of them. Long have I stood here, watching and protecting these murderer's ancestors. Must I go now? Now, when all is changing, might I see this Earth a thousand years more from now? Only, only the wrath of the mother herself could bring such devastation. Please, what have we done? Quaking in our souls, we stand strong, we lasted so long, it cannot end now. "Reap their souls!" Small ants of the earth seem to chant. Together I stood with them, my family. United against all. Very well, I allow myself to fall. Waters will come again, the sun will shine down. Xanthins, yellow tears scattered around me. Zealous ants surround me, goodbye mother.



RUBY LI '22

THREE GRATITUDES

NICOLE SAMALA '24

Every night before I go to sleep
I do something other than counting sheep.
I say out loud three things that I'm grateful for,
All the significant, insignificant, extraordinary, ordinary stuff, and more.
It's a small, humble practice that does not take a while,
And yet, I find I sleep with a smile
Holding what lightens and softens my life
Ever so briefly without any strife.

The sunshine and warm weather,
My family that is always together,
A cookie jar that is consistently filled to the top
Because my mom's new baking craze will never stop.
An actual phone to keep me entertained,
And friends to text who say things that cannot be explained.
I always have a roof over my head
And more to eat than just stale bread.

A bed that I can sleep in all by myself,
Although my sister sometimes sneaks in like an elf.
A library book that has too many pages,
So to finish, it will take ages.
Actually waking up to the alarm,
Instead of pressing snooze with my arm.
A big collection of colorful string
Because making bracelets is my new favorite thing.
The new screensaver on my phone
That has Doctor Strange and the Infinity Stones.
Music that constantly fills my ears
And memories that will be made in later years.

And after three thoughts,
More often than not,
I just keep on going; more things come
Because the list is never done,
Until I lie grinning,
My consciousness thinning,
Awash with fascination
As sleep comes with anticipation.



RUBY LI '22

1 AM DEPRESSION

NICOLE SAMALA '24

People all around me, but I feel so alone.

The only thing I have are texts on my phone,

Yet it is still just a digital screen,

And there is so much space in between.

The world is crashing down,

And there is no hope around.

I am trapped by the walls in my room

That confine me inside, like a tomb.

My eyes are not a window, but instead, a mirror,

And no one can see what is in the interior.

It feels dark and cold with just the thoughts in my brain,

And the tears keep coming, like pouring rain.

But all of this happens inside my head;

No one can tell that I'm hanging on by a thread.

A candle gets hotter and hotter,

But is easily extinguished by the water.

Give me an umbrella to shelter me from this storm,
So I can finally feel safe and warm.

All I need is someone to hold, someone to embrace,
Someone to laugh with and put a smile on my face.