

# Cabin in the Woods



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**Stargazing**  
*By Kara Fisher*

**“Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined.”  
-Henry David Thoreau-**

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## **Memories Of Brazil**

*By Giovana Abdo*

The place that I was born and raised,  
The place that my happiness is contained.  
It is my beautiful home,  
I can't imagine what I'd be without it.

I remember waking up one day,  
The sun was smiling down at me  
And we went to the farm  
Me and my cousins.

The grass was dancing,  
The birds were singing.  
It was the perfect day  
To go out and play

Oh what a perfect day it was,  
Just me and my cousins,  
My cousins and I.  
Oh what a perfect day it was.

I remember waking up one day,  
The clouds were angry,  
The streets were empty  
But at least I had my grandma.

Her cake was warm and tasty,  
It gives you the feeling of comfort.  
She gave me hugs when I felt down,  
And took care of me when I was sick.

Oh what a perfect day it was,  
Just me and my grandma,  
My grandma and I.  
Oh what a perfect day it was.

I would never want to forget  
The most wonderful moments,  
And the most wonderful people  
That I know love and care for me.

Although they are far away,  
They will always be right there,  
They have their very own special place,  
In my heart.

## **The Snowy Tracks**

*By Adam Aldacushion*

One snowy January evening, a little old woman was sitting at home, watching the news. She was on her couch with a warm cup of tea with her two cats by her side. She enjoyed a cozy, relaxing day inside. Her son had come over to enjoy a nice lunch. They chatted and talked for a while. He shoveled her driveway, but the blizzard's snow kept piling on. His work had disappeared by night.

At around 11pm, the old woman went to bed. She grabbed her heavy blanket and fell asleep. Her cats started prancing around in the hallway. "Be quiet! Mommy is trying to get some sleep!" she hollered. And with that command, the two cats scurried up the stairs, and up into their favorite chairs in the old woman's room.

The snow was still falling at 3 a.m., but not as hard. The old woman and the cats were sound asleep. The whole neighborhood was silent. It was as though the snow was absorbing all possible sound, except for the occasional curious deer. No snowplows, cars, or trucks on the road. But as it turns out, one man may not have been asleep. Suddenly, there was a loud banging at the front door, much louder than a usual knock. The woman's eyes opened. *What could that be? Who would be banging at my door at 3am when there is a foot of snow on the ground,* she thought? The banging started up again. The old woman was now wide awake. She was very scared.





**Surrender**  
*by Patricia Hwang*

## Thoreau's Version of Jingle Bells

*By Sara Becker*

Sprinting down Thoreau,  
I know I'll arrive late  
Down the hall I go,  
Gasping all the way!  
The school bell fin'ly rings  
Making students sigh  
What fun it is to start the day,  
Oh, I wish it were July.

Oh, jingle bells, you're expelled,  
Jingle all the way  
Oh, what fun it is to fail  
In a high-school-credit class, hey!  
Jingle bells, you're expelled, jingle all the way  
Please don't let your brain explode  
Have a very good school day!

A day or two ago  
I thought I'd take a doze  
And soon Mr. Christoff  
Was standing by my nose!  
You failed your English test  
Your math quiz was a bust  
I have an F in everything,  
Oh, middle school's unjust!

Oh, jingle bells, you're expelled,  
Jingle all the way  
Oh, what fun it is to fail  
In a high-school-credit class, hey!  
Jingle bells, you're expelled, jingle all the way  
Please don't let your brain explode  
Have a very good school day!



## **A Story of a Cloud and a Seed**

*By Nathaniel Borrowman*

Cloud was on her daily stroll and she decided to take the long way home  
She was caught up in thought and then she was suddenly lost.  
She called out for help where she hovered  
Then seed saw the spot of the sky she covered

Seed called out, "Come over here." Cloud heard seeds voice and hurried over  
she looked around and she realized not a plant in sight not even a clover  
Then she saw the little seed with two browned flowers by his side  
Seed had a sad expression on his face he was about to cry

"Our field is all dried and my friends have all died" seed said  
Cloud looked at seed sharing his sad expression  
The ground was so dry and cracked without a drop of water in sight  
"I'm sorry I can't help I hope things will get better" cloud said as she went her own way

As she went to bed she couldn't sleep the seeds voice rang in her head  
"Why this little seed, things like this just happen there's nothing i can do" cloud said  
But she knew deep down that she wanted to help... she needed to help  
The next day cloud went on her walk she took the long way home

Not To her surprise seed was still there mourning his friends but he didn't speak to cloud  
She thought of speech she wanted to recite but she just couldn't say the words out loud  
And so went home the little cloud with her head held down.  
And she wept and the seed wouldn't leave her mind, she loved the seed she just didn't know it yet

She went out on her walk the next day and saw the little seed.  
The seed turned around and said, "I wanted to be a great big tree"  
"But the sun stole my dreams from me." She realized the sun the bringer of life,  
For the seed the sun was a bringer of strife

And his dream was lost but the clouds dream was discovered  
She wanted to help the seed and bring him and his friends together  
She loves the seed and she knows it

She went home pondering the thought would she lose her current form for this seed  
Yes her love was to strong she was going to help  
So the next day she went straight to seed and said, "Tell me what was your dream again"  
"To be a great big tree with scraggly bark and big green leaves" seed said

"Then I'll be your wishing star" cloud said  
"I love you seed" and she called for her friend's river and sea cloud grew bigger and bigger

And cloud started to cry... and the downpour begin and the cloud saw the glittering in seed  
eyes she saw him dance around and dig into the ground and start to live his dream  
The ground was no longer cracked and it flourished with life and seed began to sprout he made  
new friends .... But one was lost... cloud was gone, she rained herself away for the seed and  
seed, he loved her for it

## **The Pumpkin**

*By Celia Bredehoeft*

“Karli your up.” astonished I walk slowly down to the front of the dungeon like classroom. The whispers of my peers get louder and louder as they talk over one another. Louder and louder as if they were trying to let the whole school know. Know that the one girl about to be kicked out of her back up school had been picked. The worst, meanest teacher in the school picked the girl failing her class.

“Move with a purpose, we have a small window of opportunity here.” Professor Kandace Ruffing says, silencing the whole class. Ghost quiet, the thumps of my feet as I walk towards what will be the death of me fill the room. “Why me? Out of everyone you choose me?” I think to myself. I was a tree swaying side to side, ready to give way at any moment.

\* \* \*

Beep. Beep. Beep. My rambunctious alarm awakens me, pulling me out of my deep slumber. Rubbing my groggy eyes, trying to adjust to the blinding light of the morning. Having been kicked out of all my past classes, I only had one class left to attend. Professor Kandance Ruffings’s class, the one teacher who refuses to give up on me. The ghost quiet dorm room creeps me out. Knowing my roommates were on fall break already, made it worse. I felt as if someone would pop out at any moment, did they no. But the chills up and down my spine gave me a feeling today would not be good, especially with the dream of getting picked during class frightened me even more.

Walking out of my dorm the crisp autumn breeze sent a shock of cold air throughout my body. Hands in pockets, hood up, head down, dreading going to class or even going to college in the first place. As I made my way to the dreaded classroom, to my dreaded seat in the back of the room. Instantly dropping my backpack to the floor and collapsing into my seat, the class begins. My eyes slowly coming to a close, I must wake myself us once again by just giving myself a small pinch on my arm. That one pinch sends a wave of pain throughout my whole arm. The nails on my fingers digging into my soft, flexible skin, causes instant pain. Little did I know getting pinched wasn’t actually that bad.

“Earth to Karli, Karli!” Professor Ruffing yells, “You’re up.” As I snap out of my once peaceful trans, I slowly look around the room. Everyone’s eyes are glued to me, until they’re not. As I stand up, everyone’s eyes immediately turn the other way as would a mouse hiding from a cat.

“Let’s go Karli!” Professor Ruffing says getting more annoyed by the second. I can tell because the wrinkles on her forehead are getting tighter and stiffer as the seconds past. Quickly shuffling down the stairs, I think to myself, “There’s no way my dream is coming true.”

“Enjoying your slumber?” she says greeting me.

“Sorry,” I respond not knowing what else to say or do.

“Save your apologies for later, when you actually need them. Now hold this.” she tells me handing me an icy cold rust covered tongs that someone would use for grilling burgers. Oh, the thought of the warm juicy burger makes my stomach growl. My thought once again interrupted by a loud thud. The thud of a pumpkin, I look up and there it is, a pumpkin.

“Now, take the tongs, grab the stem, lift over the liquid, and don’t move or let go of the pumpkin.” she says. I do exactly what she says and respond,

“What’s the liquid?”

“You’ll find out later, just don’t move or everything will go wrong,” she says slowly backing up putting her safety glasses on. “Just stand there” I think trying to reassure myself that everything will be ok. “Will it though?” I think in the back of my head.

I stand there on my toothpick legs, ready to give out at any moment. Using all my strength to focus on staying very still, one twitch and everything could go wrong. Professor Kadence Ruffing left me in charge of this project, she could’ve chosen anyone in the whole class, yet she chose the one failing the class. Failing this project would get me kicked out of this class and failing this class would get me kicked out of the school. The nerves were spiders crawling all over me all the time, ready to attack at any moment.

My hand, it can’t be, not at this moment, I could not let this silly cramp end my career, or could I? Rubber bands cutting off circulation, the more I think the tighter it gets. Moving my spare hand slowly up and down the cold, rigid, pulsing hand. Putting slight pressure on the cramp, making sure this cramp would not hinder my ability to do the simple task of staying still. As I thank God for making the cramps disappear in the flash of a light, my eyes go right back to the pumpkin. The luminous, lustrous, polished, diamond pumpkin catches my eye. My eyes focus so hard on the glowing pumpkin, trying to block out the deafening, murmurs of the class behind me. That didn’t help though, my eyes were focusing so hard that a booming sensation erupted within my head. She approaches, each foot thumping on the ground as she gets closer and closer. “Please no not again,” I say to myself, preparing for the worst. I think to myself, “Could it be the worst?”

## A Witch's Revenge

*By Harper Carrier*

"Please I'm not a witch!" The year was 1603, the year it would say on my grave. I screamed, begging to be spared. Thick ropes singed my wrists, binding me, preventing me from escape. "I've already told you, I'm not a..." No one was there to hear what I said next. The faint laughter of the men on the boat stung my ears, it made my heart sink in my chest, heavy as a 100-pound weight. I knew this was the end, or so I thought, because I was in fact, a witch.

The ropes binding me to the chair easily slipped off my wrists. I jumped into the water and made my way to a deserted beach, probably somewhere off the coast of Newberry. I dragged myself onto the shore, what now? I had managed to get out of the chair, and wasn't dead, now, it was time for revenge.

I was in a room, a dark room, like someone had taken a black marker and colored all over it. There was a door to my right, and a bed the other way. There was a sleeping figure in the bed, and I walked steadily towards it. As I leaned over to get a better idea as to who it was, the figure twitched. He rolled over in his sleep, and when he did, I caught a slight glimpse of his face. Sure enough, it was one of the men I remembered from the boat, and he was going to pay. I held up my knife, right above his heart, the tip shining like a drop of dew in the moonlight.

That night I took not one, not two, but three innocent lives. One other crew member from the boat and off course, the captain. Now I was a murderer, and I was enjoying every second of it. "Three dead, all in one night." The cops had arrived, and I had left.

"I know, it's terrible."

"Who did this?"

"Well, that's just it sir, there are fingerprints on the knife, but the fingerprints are Captain John's."

"Who did John kill with the knife?"

"A man named Thomas Parker, part of the crew."

"Anyone else killed?"

"Jonas Linch. We found Parkers footprints in his room."

"Then who killed John?"

"A piece of Linch's hair was found on John's body."

"So you're telling me that John killed Parker, Parker killed Linch, and Linch killed John?" The cop shivered, remembering the ruby blood, shining like a golden coin. I had left them with evidence, but the evidence, well, it only led them in a circle. Around and around they went, searching for something they would never find. Every night I took three lives, leaving a piece of evidence near each body, that only led to the next. The police were going crazy, thinking that they were missing something that was right under their nose, and they were. They soon began to realize something mysterious was going on, and after all this time, I was in danger of being discovered. After weeks and weeks I could be caught, but how? I had thought that my plan would lead to more, something that

wasn't being put on trial and sentenced to death. But that plan had long ago backfired, if the police found me, I was as good as dead.

That night, I took three more lives, and then walked down to the deserted beach, the same beach that had saved my life just weeks earlier. I took my dagger in hand, I finally got my revenge, now it's time. I flung myself out into the relentless waves, foam sizzling all around. I said goodbye to the world while remembering the day I had thought was the end. This is for the better, I told myself, I would have just been sentenced to death anyways. I felt the dagger penetrate my skin, deeper and deeper until everything went black. The last time I felt the world touch me was with its glacial fingertips, skimming over my skin as my body was swallowed by the ocean.





**Still Life**  
*By Patricia Hwang*



## **Ghost Town** *By Natalie Castillo*

“We need more food,” Carl said in a raspy voice.

“We know, we know. But there aren’t any humans for miillles,” Charles groaned.

“You know, we’ve been feeding off of human blood for all these years, but we’ve never tried animal blood,” said Connor.

“Ugh, I hate this empty ghost town,” chimed in Cooper, ignoring Connor.

“I agree. We’re going to go hungry if we don’t find blood soon. I got it! We should lure the humans to our ghost town, maybe with a rumor of treasure. And then we strike,” Carl said with a devilish smile on his face. All four ghosts agreed upon Carl’s idea. They set their plan into action right away.

It was 1860, shortly after the Gold Rush. There was word that there was treasure (not gold, treasure) located in a ghost town in Western California, far away from any civilization. Four brave people heard the rumor and decided to go find the treasure. Their names were Richard, John, Philip, and Lewis. They lived in a small town in what is now Colorado and were eager to find the treasure. They were poor compared to everybody else, and desperately needed the money the treasure would hopefully bring.

“Do we have everything packed?” Richard asked the group.

“Yes, we checked and triple checked,” Lewis replied. “You’ve only asked us ten times.”

“Okay then, let’s go!” Richard was sort of the leader of the group. With that, the four of them headed west to the railroad station.

They arrived at the railroad station an hour later, tired from the walk. After forty minutes at the station the train still hadn’t arrived. The four of them were getting aggravated.

“Umm....I’m starting to wonder when the train will be here,” John said.

“Yeah, I wish it would come already,” Robert agreed.

Just as Robert hoped, the train finally came. It came roaring down the tracks, slowing down to pick up the passengers. The train screeched to a halt, the loud noise still ringing in the passengers’ ears as they got on the train. They happily settled in on the train, eager to get going to California.

Richard, John, Philip, and Lewis got to California the next day. They didn’t know where the ghost town with the treasure was, so they started heading west, hoping to find the ghost town by luck. They walked and they walked, the hot sun burning their skin. They’ve walked for an hour now and haven’t seen any civilization yet. They already drank all of their water and felt like they might crumble to the ground soon.

“I’m getting tired, when do you think we’ll be there?” Lewis asked wearily.

“Don’t worry, I think we’ll be there soon. I can feel it,” Richard said confidently.

“Hey, look guys, I think I see something in the distance,” Robert said ten minutes later.

“Yes! That looks like it could be a ghost town,” John said happily. They started running, seeing something glimmer in the distance.

“I think that’s the treasure!” Lewis said. They started running faster, not wanting to live another minute without the treasure.

They entered the ghost town and realized the rotten smell. The moldy fumes filled their noses, which they wrinkled in disgust.

“Yuck, it smells awful here. Also, is it just me, or do you smell blood?” Robert asked. But no one was really paying attention to Robert. They were too busy trying to find a way to open the golden treasure chest. Robert decided the smell was probably nothing to worry about and went to help his friends open the treasure. Victory was sweet, and when they opened the chest it would be even sweeter. Richard, John, Philip, and Lewis were so happy that they finally found the treasure and were imagining all of the things they could do with the money that might be inside the chest. While they were fantasizing about living in a mansion, Robert heard a noise behind them. *It’s probably just my imagination*, he thought, and kept trying to open the treasure chest.

Suddenly, the four of them were grabbed from behind. They were dragged into one of the abandoned stores but didn’t have a chance to see who was dragging them. Each one of them was thrown into a chair and tied to it. The people who were dragging them finally came into sight. But they weren’t people at all. There were four ghosts standing right in front of Richard, John, Philip, and Lewis. They were milky white and hovered slightly above the ground. Their creepy smiles and red eyes looked like something out of a nightmare.

“It’s time,” the ghost Carl told the other ghosts. They slowly nodded their heads in agreement.

*Boom*

## Suspense

By Eva Chan

Strange, swirling, black clouds crowded the sky. As I turned towards my phone, I realized that the nearest tornado shelter was 1.35 miles away. That was out of the question. While the sky grew darker, I attempted to run home. Soon, I became aware that Charlie's low barks weren't following me. I turned around hoping to see the dim white outline of Charlie.

"*Oh no where's Charlie?*" I thought. I was going to search for Charlie when the wind lifted my hair. I realized that the wind couldn't have picked up my hair a few moments ago. Each moment passes, the wind's speed increases exponentially (movement). My choices were slim: save mine or take the chance to save us both. However, I had made my choice. Betrayal.

"*The darkness is above us... and it will not stop until it has every one of us. I felt the darkness pulling on every piece of fur on my skin,*" thought Charlie. Just when the darkness peeled apart on another living thing beside me, the thought of my owner crossed my mind made me attempt to warn my owner of the darkness ahead.

Clumps of untamed grass brush against my skin as the cold, burnt-tasting wind fills my panting mouth. After a couple minutes of running, a house emerges over the horizon. From afar, it seemed like a fancy house. When I drew nearer, I realized it was an old peeling house. Paint from the house blew away with each strong gust of wind and shrill whistles came from within the house. I could only assume it was the wind blowing in the cracks. Nevertheless, the house didn't appear to rock by the wind in any way. The planks moaned as I stepped on them (sound) to get through the sea of spider webs. Once I got through the spider-infested doorway, I went to the nearest window to search for Charlie. Worriedly looking through the window, it felt as if an eternity has passed and yet, I have not seen a single trace of Charlie. Surprisingly after waiting awhile, I see the sleek, ghost-white figure of Charlie running in the distance. But, when he gets closer, he appears to drag his rear left foot through to untamed lawn of this old abandoned house. He draws nearer, the horrific clash of thunder erupts nearby. A bush nearby explodes suddenly as if by invisible lighting. A withering black leaf slips to the ground away from what was left of the bush (movement). Charlie attempts to back away from the leaves the wind was tossing. Heart beating, I rush outside in an attempt to protect Charlie. Sadly, my attempt was not quick enough, for a leaf had touched Charlie. Charlie stood deathly still as black spots covered his body (sight). With the appearance of the darkness taking over, I'm paralyzed, in twisted horror. His skin loosens around his belly as he appears to become skinnier. After it looks like he was drowning in his own skin, the skin begins falling off, as if someone was skinning him with a knife. Followed by large chunks of flesh and organs that vaporized into thin air, his bones were picked clean. Charlie's beating heart falls, first of the internal organs, still beating as it falls to the ground. His lungs wheeze out one last time before they plummet to the ground too. Then, The rest of the organs fell like dominos. This was getting too gory for me; I covered my eyes to preserve them. Simultaneously, the crispy touch of a leaf brushed against my leg.

## Love for Coffee

*By Neil Dahal and Jack Eich*

So I was walking down to the park and what do I see.  
A new coffee shop down Main Street.  
I walk inside and order a tall joe  
Yeah  
Once the coffee was done, and I had to pay  
I spent my wages I earned today  
Yeah, I need that coffee, yeah I need that boost.  
Yeah I need that caffeine overproduced  
Uh, My milk is fat reduced  
Once I got my coffee and I went outside, yeah  
You could spot the delight right in my eyes, yeah  
I move the cup towards my mouth and take a sip  
Yeah, I could feel the warmth inside my lip  
The coffee is hot, like my drip, uh  
It tastes like layered bean dip  
But then suddenly, my grip slips  
I drop the drink and I burn my hip  
Yeah, I yell out a yip  
I turn so fast I hear my pants rip  
I try to stand up but I trip  
Uh, a man who works there came over  
Yeah, he came with a mop  
He dropped it to the floor with a mighty plop  
That's when I ran out of the shop  
Yeah, I was running, but I hit a cop  
Uh, he yelled for me to stop  
But I kept running never coming to a halt  
It was my stupid hand's fault  
I made my way to Boardwalk, tears streaming down my face  
Yeah, I feel light, like I'm in space  
Yeah, I feel like a disgrace,  
Sadness runs through me straight to my core  
I feel like I shot, but I didn't score  
I see another coffee shop, on the shore, with a sign on the door  
It says we're closed till tomorrow at 9, waiting that long would be a bore  
Yeah, so I told myself to snore  
So tomorrow morning, I could enter this store  
Yeah I swore  
I slept in like a boar  
When I woke up, I felt strong like Thor  
I looked at my watch, and I couldn't believe the time  
Yeah, it was a little past 2  
Uh, when I looked at the store something gave me the blues  
The shop was closed, yeah I wanted to sue  
Just before I lost my mind  
Yeah, a guy in a blue car drove by  
He gave me a coffee and I asked him why  
Uh, he just said, "Bye."

## **Pink and Yellow**

*By Kara Fisher*

Corinne is perfect.

Her nails pink and prim, brunette hair freshly trimmed, her skirts rather slim.

She keeps her posture confident and poised,

An ideal girl to all of the boys,

And with her attention-grabbing nature, you would think she enjoys it, but

It meant nothing to her.

See, Corinne was familiar with all the guys,

The losers, the schmoozers, the shrimps, and the flies.

But her heart, she kept hidden, and not on her chest.

She wanted it to be perfect when she finally confessed.

Diana was magical.

She loved mango flavored gum and flowery tunics.

Her favorite colors were yellow and orange, since she couldn't choose, and her favorite movie was *The Sound of Music*.

Her dyed honey curls would bounce when she walked,

She was a talker, and whenever she looked at Corinne,

The corners of her mouth would turn up in a smile.

It was cute.

And Corinne liked her.

Now, her stomach was tied up in a knot.

It was the Valentine's Day dance.

The dance floor stank of pizza and sweat, like a bowling alley birthday party, even better yet,

The bowl of punch had clearly been spiked.

It was sharp and bitter and took a drunkenness to be liked.

The sleazy quarterback on her right that served as her date was a sorry excuse for her desired soulmate.

Stumbling forward on her heels,

Corinne gagged.

She stooped to the floor and heaved up a mixture of cheap soda and chips.

The room was spinning.

Before she could speak, Corinne was whisked away,

A warm hand on her shoulder, into the cool air,

Ears ringing, she heard someone ask, "Are you okay?"

She looked up and gasped.

There was Diana, in a sunflower yellow dress,

It had gold accented trim, with subtle finesse.

And her thundering heartbeat she had to suppress.

"Fantastic," she slurred out of intoxication,

She covered her mouth and groaned in frustration.

"I grabbed you some water," Diana laughed, handing her a cup.

Corinne nodded, flustered, but her spirits lifted up.

Her cheeks were turning a pink as her gown,

"You know, the two of us look like we've been hitting the town."

Diana was radiant.  
She almost glowed in the moonlight. Or maybe Corinne was just dizzy.  
She gathered up some misplaced courage and took a chance, reaching out her hand and ask,  
“Would you like to dance?”  
A lazily slow melody from a sappy pop song floated out the doors  
Until Diana beamed, brushed off her dress and said, “Why not? I’m all yours.”  
Her hand on Diana’s hip felt strangely right,  
Like the best fever dream ever that lasted all night.  
And even after when they waved a hazy goodbye,  
Corinne was drunk on love, her chin to the sky.



**Canary Yellow**  
*By Patricia Hwang*



## **Scare**

*By Kara Fisher*

Pin needles.  
Bite.  
Eight arms.  
Smile.

I let him out sometimes.  
I hear a song or feel a tug.  
I see his grin.  
Sometimes, I let him out.

Crunch.  
Stretch.  
Crawl.  
Smile.  
His fingers scraping inside my throat.

The church organ sings of a ghost, and I let him out.  
I feel his joy, he laughs.  
He smells like a fire hitting my nose.  
His face is close to mine.  
His pincers twitch.

The darkness swallows him.  
Then it pulses.  
I can only see in short bursts.  
Crawl.  
Scrape.  
Crawl.  
Scrape.

Smile.

I taste iron.  
I know he's had his fun.  
I call for him. The walls shake at his laugh.  
There's a skitter in the dark.  
I let him out sometimes.

Six voices.  
An iron stake.  
Flame.  
Twitch.  
White iris.  
Black sclera.  
Smile.

Sometimes, I let him out.

## Frozen at Sea

By Jesse Gerber

Bright light shone through the window, creeping up my blankets towards my face. A small ray of morning sunshine went into my eye, forcing it to water. A small tear dripped from my bottom eyelid, running down my cheek where my sheet absorbed it immediately. I rolled over in bed, the wrinkling of the bag of Doritos that was stuffed under my pillow was a reminder to take the trash out.

Within a couple of seconds, I drifted back off to sleep. About an hour later, I woke up and breathed in salty mist that was coming through my open window. The mist came in, unwilling to stop. It smiled, almost satisfied about settling on my face in a most unpleasant way. *What's with all this mist?! I know we live on a beach, but this is just relentless!* I thought. I sat up straight in my bed and got a little headrush. I was fading, yet again, when a weird rocking of my house brought me to my senses.

My eyes followed every crease, corner, and every piece of paint that's chipping from my wall. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary. The sailboats on my wallpaper hadn't gone away, and every ordinary object in my room was still there. My closet was open. *Ugh, why can't she just close my closet door after she's been in there like a normal person?* I thought. "Mom? Are you there? Can you please not leave my door open?!" I exclaimed. No response.

There was ruffling behind me, so I whipped around, but while doing so I lost partial control in my arm, and it plopped down and knocked my phone that was sitting on the edge of the bed, onto the floor. "It better not be cracked, or mom is going to kill me," I said to no one.

Something didn't really seem right though. When my phone fell, it didn't make the same pitch that it normally would when I dropped it on my hard-wood floor. This time, it was like my phone hit water.

I yanked the covers off of my body and felt a cool breeze go over my legs. I shivered, wishing I had a sweatshirt. I crawled to the edge of the bed, wondering what I would find. Below me, my phone was underneath what had to be one foot of water. "Mom?! Where the hell are you?! Something really weird is happening!" I yelled into what seemed like my empty house. I was beginning to panic. *Why won't she respond?* I wondered.

I started to become dizzy, so I laid back down and closed my eyes. "Take a deep breath. You're fine. Mom is fine. Everything will be fine," I said to myself.

I sat up and took a deep breath. I was trying to visualize happiness and a sandy beach, when I realized that there was one right outside. I started to notice that some more mist was coming through the open window, so I decided to get up and check it out.

When I hopped off the bed, water swirled around my knees. The water level had risen. I trudged through the massive amount of water over to the window and tried to close it, but the water-covered pane was too slippery. I looked through the mist and saw waves that extended for miles and miles. It was nothing like my hometown in Cambria, California.

Just then, the stuff on one end of my room shifted upwards. My bookshelf fell over with a thud. A humongous wave splashed up against my window, coming in and drenching me with freezing cold water. The crashing of the waves on the sides and

bottom part of my house were like banging drums. The banging intensified, and my panic grew by the second. Water was flowing into my room by gallons and gallons at a time. The water was around my torso, and my clothes clung to me. I could barely feel my fingers, and when I looked down, they were turning the color of a dark royal blue.

The white caps on top of the waves seemed to be like snowy mountains, tall and majestic, but horribly intimidating at the same time. The house shifted again, but this time, the bed started slowly sliding down towards me. Right before it was about to pin me to the wall, I dove out of the way. When I submerged under the water, its frigidness engulfed me. I opened my eyes to see where I was, but the salt water stung and I had to close them.

Once my head came out of the water, I quickly got up onto the bed. I grabbed the towel that was hanging on my closet door. I really needed to dry off, I was going to get hypothermia, and I knew it.

I was counting my breaths, trying to calm down, when the sound of something huge echoed off of the water.

“WOOONHHHH!”

*What the hell?* I thought. I stuck my head out of the window so that I could see what it was.

“WOOONNNHHHHHHHHH” It went again.

It was getting closer. Whatever “it” was. I could feel it. I couldn't make out what it was the first time I checked, so I decided that I should check one more time and try to figure out what it was. When I looked out the window for the second time, a massive crater ship was barreling towards me with huge bright lights. I knew that there was nothing I could do, so I sat down on my bed. To think about all the things I love. *Goodbye, mom. I love you so much*, I thought. The ship rammed into my house. It happened in a split second, but I was lost, frozen at sea.

## The Difference Between Courage and Strength

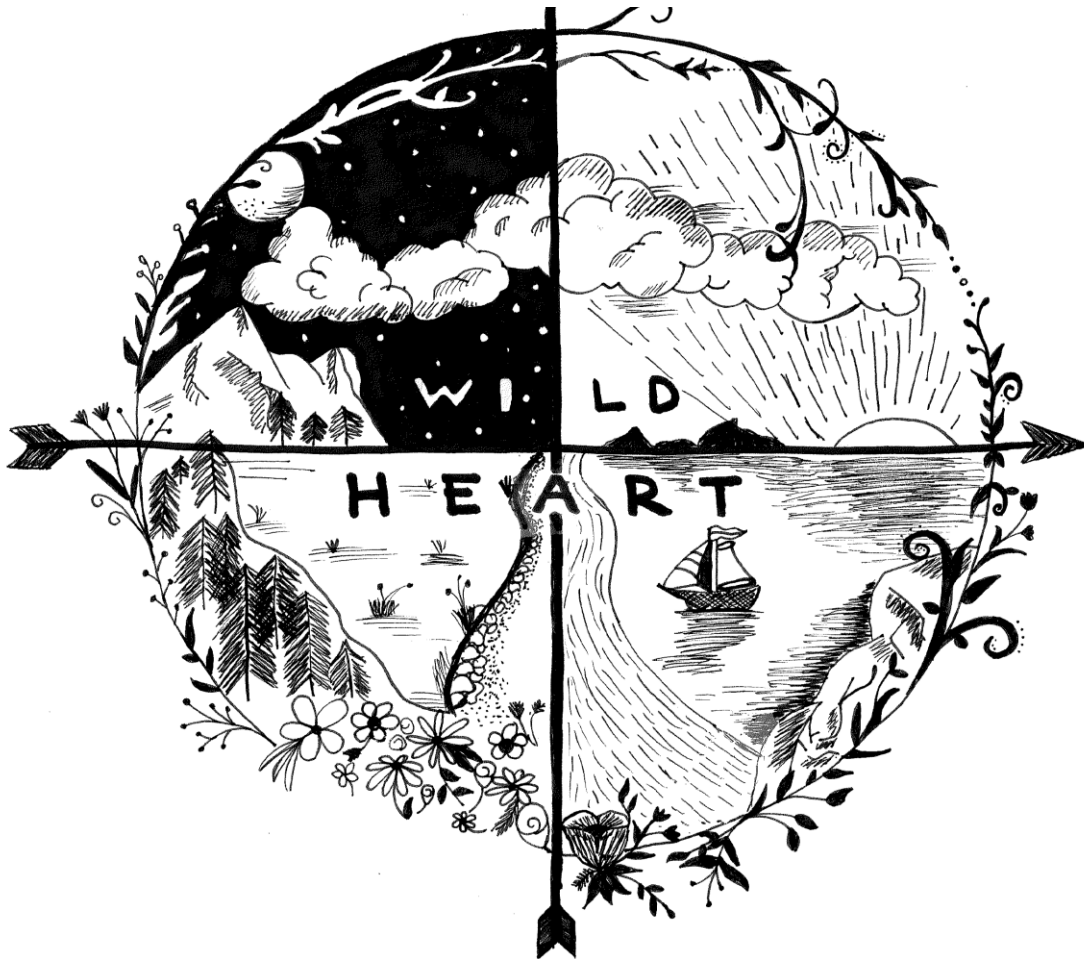
By Jesse Gerber

It takes strength to be firm, it takes courage to be soft.  
It takes strength to conquer, it takes courage to surrender.  
It takes strength to be successful, it takes courage to fail.  
It takes strength to fit in, it takes courage to stand out.

It takes strength to be alone, it takes courage to depend on someone else.  
It takes strength to be the same, and courage to be different.

It takes strength to love someone, it takes courage to be loved by someone.  
It takes strength to be in a relationship, and courage to be single.

It takes strength to survive, and it takes courage to live.  
It takes courage to laugh, courage to be me.  
Courage to accept that I have courage,  
This is proven to be;  
The hardest courage there could ever be.



Wild Heart by Neha Parameswaran

**Dead Man's Run**  
*By Annabelle Hallworth*

I'm panting, my breath catching in my throat. Glancing behind me, I check to be sure that no one is following me. Not looking where I'm going, I sprint smack into a tree, one of many in this moonlit forest. Dazed, I lay on the ground gazing at the beautiful sky, blanketed with stars. The full moon provides a dim, almost non-existent glow that illuminates Dead Man's Run.

I suck in a breath quickly. So quickly that the frosty air pains my lungs for a millisecond. Movement in the corner of my eye dashes in and out of my view, causing me to freeze over my lungs yet again. Flipping onto my side to in order to face the movement, my eyes scan the leaves that hide the natural soil. All of a sudden, a jet-black blur flashes between two bushes as fast as a bolt of lightning. Motionless, fear takes control over my body. Hesitant and frightened, a feline pokes her head out, around her hiding spot searching for any predators lurking in the night. I release the breath I didn't know I had been holding. Convinced by my acting skills, the kitty eases herself out into the open. Fully revealed, I identify this cat as a bad omen in Dead Man's Run. Her coat is black as coal, and her eyes are poisonous green, piercing into my soul, listening to my out-of-control heartbeat. Bounding away when she realizes she's not alone, the cat disappears as quickly as she arrived. I push myself up to a sitting position in the leaves, frightened, realizing tonight is going to be more haunted than most October 31sts.

As I attempt to tiptoe away from my temporary bed, leaves crumble and crunch under my feet, disturbing the silence. Crackling, like a fire sending embers flying, erupts from the depths of the forest. Dashing behind the nearest tree, which happens to be a scrawny sapling, my heart is exploding out of my chest, beating at light speed. In order to make myself as thin as possible so that I can hide behind the twig tree, I suck in my stomach. Shinnngggg. A sound like a sword being pulled from a sheath echoes into the inky black night. Too nervous to peek at the source of the sound, I decide to move hiding spots in order to not get found. Cautiously, I place one foot down on the popcorn blanketed ground, successfully and silently although it takes quite a few seconds. Butterflies are doing the cha-cha in my stomach. Taking a deep breath, I am ready to leap out into the open in order to switch spots, without getting caught.

Earlier that day...

"Ari!" Mom howls up the stairs, like she has a surprise for me.

"What?!" I growl down in response, groggy and annoyed since she just woke me up on a Saturday morning at 7am. That's way too early!

"Come down here! And I don't like that tone you're using with me young lady!" She snaps back, no longer in a positive mood.

"Coming." I practically fall out of bed, not wanting to be punished for taking too long, especially with "Haunt and Seek" tonight. Tramping down the stairs, well, tumbling down the last few to be exact, I finally arrive in the kitchen where Mom awaits, tapping her foot and glancing at the clock on the wall.

"Finally, so do you want to do "Haunt and Seek" at Dead Man's Run tonight? You're thirteen this year, the minimum age to do it. The sign ups close in ten minutes." Of

course, I agree. Crawling like a sloth, time doesn't seem to want me to go to Haunt or Seek tonight. Finally, at the end of a day spent lazing around, it's time to play the "deathly" game. Once I arrive, the skeleton masked adults direct all of the kids to the center clearing in the forest. There are probably fifty of us, prepared to take part in this eerie evening. The woman in charge explains the event,

"This is a tradition held only once a year, on the spookiest night of all. Halloween. Now, to get you in the spirit of the evening I'll set the scene." The woman's voice quivered and quaked to appear spooky, "All of you are hiding from the serial killer who is loose in the town. If you are caught, you are dead and come sit back here. But beware, for the killer wields a deathly butcher knife, so don't cross her path. Now she will be arriving in five minutes, so go hide within the boundaries. Remember, at Haunt and Seek we put the "eeee" in Halloween." Everyone joins in when she recites their motto, and then we disperse into the woods.

I find myself sprinting in a random direction, and search for an inventive hiding spot. I pass wheelbarrows, tree stumps, and piles of leaves, not satisfied with them. However a deafening, bone-chilling shriek reaches me before the perfect hiding spot does. Usually, people don't shriek when they are found, but just plod off to the center clearing. Nervous, I look behind me to make sure I'm not being followed, and crash into a tree. Bruised and sore, I recognize a black cat as a negative sign, along with the full moon, it being Halloween, and a serial killer chasing after me. Suddenly, a crunching of leaves makes me aware of someone else near me. I dash behind a tree, but it doesn't cover me enough. Determined to not get caught, I begin to move hiding places, stepping one foot carefully down on the bed of leaves blanketing the forest floor. Holding my breath, I prepare to sprint out into the open. Making up my mind, I leap out of my hiding spot that didn't really hide me and lengthen my strides so that I arrive at my destination in five bounds. Catching my breath, I'm confident that my out-of-control heartbeat, thrumming in my ears will give my position away.

The footsteps wander closer to my hiding spot, but they are still at least fifteen yards away. The forest remains as silent as a graveyard at midnight, too silent. Not a single motion disturbs the tension. Not even a squirrel dares to twitch its nose. All of a sudden, a force knocks against the other side of the tree, not hard, but enough to alert me to the presence of a creature pressed against my hiding spot. My instincts to run take control of my body. Fleeing the scene, I don't dare glance behind me. All of a sudden, I stop. My body won't move no matter what I do. This will be how I die, won't it? A force tackles me to ground. Expecting the worst, I'm surprised when silk brushes against my arm. "Meow". The black cat from earlier has "attacked" me. Stroking her head, I reminisce. The scream was probably someone getting found, but the sword sound was most likely this kitty just scratching her claws on a tree trunk. And she probably jumped onto the tree I was hiding behind. Oh well. I guess I got a trick instead of a treat (and a new cat).



## **Korea**

*By Joshua Hong*

You are a five-thousand-year-old handkerchief.  
You are folded thousand times to hold the endless splendors.  
You are stuffed to share endless stories in minute handwriting.  
You are ceaselessly wrinkled and tramped but no tearing was allowed.  
You are divided into two, awaiting stitches to be a seamless one.

You carried rocks so many citizens hurled at enemies to keep the land.  
You wiped tears when so many citizens were starving and lost families.  
You carried messages so many citizens were missing each other apart.  
You stopped the blood so many citizens were shedding in countless wars.  
You wrapped newborns citizens in the land and wiped the mother's sweats in pain of birth.  
You cheered dancers and accompanied celebration as a dance scarf.

I dream of lifting you high as a banner of beauty  
and endurance. You are a color guard flag of  
wishes for everlasting stories to continue.

I always had pride in being Korean.  
Because, even when they were used as a  
guinea pig during Korea under Japanese rule by Troop 731,  
our beliefs never changed

An independent country, with our own language,  
with pride, even when the times get tough and  
rough we stand like common hibiscus that grows  
even in the harsh weathers.

Korea is  
beautiful,  
colorful,  
wonderful,  
thankful,  
and delightful



**Geometry**  
*By Danika Pflughardt*

## Love

*By Miriam Hutchings*

A breath  
A pause-  
Suspended in waiting.  
Raised arms  
Tapping baton-  
Then,  
Sound.

Pulsing through the air,  
Pausing slightly,  
Full to the brim with  
Bittersweet memories

Music speaks,  
I listen  
Tells her stories  
While I remember  
Speaks of love  
And hopes  
And wantings  
Brings back old dreams  
From the depths of her sea

I float on a cloud  
Of spun sugar and dreams;  
Notes pure and sweet,  
Higher than the stars

She wavers  
And shakes,  
Grows louder  
Then softer.  
Crescendoing through  
As if riding life's storm

Music speaks,  
I listen  
Tells her stories  
While I remember  
Speaks of love  
And hopes  
And wantings,  
Brings back old dreams  
From the depths of her sea

I dream  
All vibrant hues  
The sky,  
The wind,  
The sun,  
The sea.

Creation quivers  
At each chord  
As she drifts across  
The thin lines  
That separate

Music speaks,  
I listen  
Tells her stories  
While I remember  
Speaks of love  
And hopes  
And wantings  
Brings back old dreams  
From the depths of her sea

Motivating  
Inspiring  
Uplifting  
And bold,  
Powerful her grip is  
Her spark of imagination

Music speaks...  
It's love she speaks of,  
Of old favorites  
And new beginnings  
She sighs her melody  
Balances her harmony  
Sings about life  
And love  
And joy

Now I speak  
And music listens  
I tell my own stories  
While she remembers  
I speak of love  
And hopes  
And wantings,  
Singing of the music  
From whence I came.

## Fairytale

*By Miriam Hutchings*

I used to  
Live in a fairytale  
Looking for magic in every  
Hollow,  
In every river,  
In every grassy meadow.  
I was whoever I wanted to be-  
A princess, a fairy  
An elf, a spirit.  
The world was  
Billions of stories  
A different one to live each day.  
I used to  
Wait for the day  
The Green Wind would come for me  
On his Leopard of Little Breezes  
And take me off to Fairyland-  
Wait for the letter  
To tell me there was a  
World of magic-  
Wait for the day when I could  
Speak to wind itself.  
Wait for my story.  
Time wore itself thin  
Trying to get me to grow up  
And now,  
Three years after  
My friends have  
stopped joining me in fairytales,  
I still look for magic in the world

And I find it.  
It's in  
A sunny day  
Blue skies  
Sprouting plants  
The shade of a tree-  
Autumn leaves-  
Crashing waves  
Gusts of wind  
Breathtaking views of  
Mountains and  
Oceans.  
It's in  
The way I can breathe  
Music or  
Poetry  
The way words encircle me  
Crowning my head  
Their stories taking root and  
Ripening into the golden of sunset.  
The way I can dance.  
The way I can run barefoot  
And be wild and free-  
The way adulthood  
Is so far on the horizon-  
So far,  
I can barely see it-  
For I would like to be a child still  
A wild child  
Who lives in a fairytale.

## The Door

By Zara Javeri

Slowly she stepped towards the door. Her memory forgotten, but she knew all her life she had waited for this. She looked around her, what she would never see again once she stepped through the door. The walls were white. They had a greyish tint to them. Like a new snowfall, but then some kid with dirty boots stomped on them. They felt like sand, but frozen. The temperature of the room was chilly. She had goose bumps on her arms. The white dress she was wearing did not cover her arms or keep her warm for that matter. It was made of silk with lace, thin as paper. A design of flowers was embroidered at the bottom. As she looked at the bottom of the dress, she noticed the floor. It was dusty, nobody had been here in a long time. She was the first, somehow she knew, she wouldn't be the last.

A feeling of dread settled on her as she guided herself to the door. She stumbled a little realizing how much this place meant to her. Tears of nostalgia dripped down her face like raindrops, as they hit the floor a tiny *splash* bounced off the walls, echoing. How could she let this place go? Realizing the tears were staining her dress, she wiped her eyes. All of a sudden, this new place was not somewhere she wanted to go. She could not turn back now though.

Deep breaths in and out were taken. No windows. Only one door. That door only led to the new world she was destined to go to. She stopped. She was halfway through the door. This room, whatever it was safe. The path the door led to was unknown. The unknown was always scary. Could this be better than being safe? Questions formed in her mind about this new place. She knew she could simply open the door, but not step through. That would ruin her mind though, like salt instead of sugar in cookies. Should she make the choice to follow through or not?

As those thoughts turned in her mind, she glided herself to the door. She had not bothered to look at it. Like the room it was white. Made of wood. She felt the paint peeling off the door, rough like bricks. The handle was made of metal. Staring at it like a mirror, it made room look bigger. It wasn't a big room to begin with. She stared at the door for a moment. Then out of the corner of her eye, she was an envelope, blending into the door like a white glove in snow. She walked toward it. The paper was stiff and smelled like starch. Her hands rested on the flap on which it open. As she took it off her hands hesitated. Was this a good thing? Overcome with curiosity she started to peel. Halfway through she stopped to wonder for a moment. Then before she could stop again, she ripped it off, like a Band-Aid. She pulled out a collage. It had pictures of nature.

Suddenly lightning struck her though. It was a world that she had grown up in. The trees were tall and broad. Flowers were sights of joy in this dull, depressing room. Butterflies were in the sky like balloons floating away. Animals were across the collage as streaks on a canvas. As she flipped the paper over it caught her hand, giving her a paper cut. The heavy liquid dripped across her hand falling. The blood fell on her dress, staining it. That didn't matter. She was going to be here forever.

Walking around the room she decided this wasn't helping. She was going to walk through that door. This was it. The last few times she had turned around debating if this was a good decision. Well, it was better than waiting in this room of nothing. Walking to the door, her footsteps echoed. The door was a few paces away. The old dust scattering as she went further toward it. The walls blurred together as she sped up. As she reached the door, she put her hand on the handle. The cold metal sent shivers up her spine, giving her adrenaline. As she pulled down on the handle, a slight *crunch* gave way and she closed her eyes. A crack formed in the door as she pulled in open. A soft breeze blew on to her as she opened it further. She opened her eyes, there was a *gasp* from her. She stepped out of the room into the new world, starting her unknown adventure.

## **Poems**

*By Lara Juskalian*

### **Love**

Love is a sizzling warm fire  
Love is a red blossoming flower  
Love is like crystal snowflakes, no two are the same  
Love is a bright moon in a dark night  
Love is stronger than titanium.

### **Rays of Gold**

Golden rays cover the earth  
Look away or you might get hurt  
You can't touch this golden ball of fire  
Heat radiates, shines down, covers space  
It ripples in the air  
It lights up  
The earth  
our hearts  
The darkest hours  
With the sunrise comes a new day  
With the setting sun it fades away  
I'm left staring at the sky  
I'm left wondering why  
How could such a beautiful thing be dangerous

### **Bright as a Star**

She casts a bright glow over everything she touches  
The way she laughs, like a little sparkly fairy  
The way she walks, head held high, unafraid  
Her personality shines as bright as a star, glowing forever.

### **The Path**

There are a lot of paths that will lead you in different directions  
But the decision should be yours,  
Because once you go down the wrong path it will be very hard to turn back  
You might never find your way through the twisting turns and surprises  
So when it comes time to choose this path the decision will be yours,  
Your fate is in your hands  
Don't let someone chose that fate for you, because you may go down the wrong path.



### **My Girl**

Golden waves of hair swirl like ocean waves from her head  
Her chocolate brown eyes shimmer like the sun  
Her skin is the color of shimmering copper  
Her personality is unique and strong and beautiful  
Our love is strong and sturdy and keeps us together  
A bond so unbreakable it may never shatter.

### **The Mask**

Don't let your origins hide in you  
Tell their stories  
Tell their history  
They will only be seen if you show them  
They will only be heard if you let them speak  
People will only see one thing if you only show them the outside,  
Never let your origins hide behind the mask of your outer appearance.

### **What is Love?**

What is love?  
Is it an unbreakable bond?  
Or a whole in your heart.  
Is it like the rising sun?  
Or the rising moon.  
Is it holding your hand?  
Or crying as you go.  
Is it a small kiss on the cheek?  
Or a wound that will never heal.  
So we ask, what is love?  
Love is what we make it.

### **Silver Ball of Wonder**

Hidden behind the trees  
A silver ball of mystery and wonder casts its small white glow over the world  
The crows and sparrows all gather beneath it  
The stars that light up the night, shine so bright when they see its light  
The lost black cats who sneak around the small alleys  
illuminated by flickering streetlights  
The grey-haired woman who just shut her book and turned off  
her warm bedroom lamp light  
Don't have to worry about the earth's glow at night.



**Silent Scream**  
*By Kara Fisher*

**Falling Apart**  
*By Maia Kalbag*

War.  
That's what started it all.  
It was the worst war the world has ever seen.  
It was called World War III.

Money and politics are what the world is about.  
No one cares about the Earth.  
No one cares for society.  
We are falling apart.

You can't walk three steps without seeing trash.  
The sky is turning black.  
Animals are dying, and some people are trying-  
But those few people will never be enough.

The world gets worse every day.  
No matter what we do, it will never be the same.  
Not with all these greedy people.  
We are falling apart.

Happiness is hard to find  
Because life is bad and people are unkind.  
People work all day and night  
Every three seconds there is another fight  
And others say it will be alright...  
But we know it won't.  
Because we are falling apart.

Laughter is never heard.  
Old friends walk by without saying a word.  
Old people tell stories of when they were young,  
And from what we have heard, it sounded like fun.

The Earth can't return to its original state,  
But it's getting worse at a scary rate.  
We are falling apart.

I used to be happy and healthy.  
I was beautiful once.  
But now I am ashamed of what I've created.  
Ashamed of what I've become.  
Now I'm falling apart.

I am ugly and sad.  
My people are bad.  
I miss what I had.  
I'm falling apart.

Every time someone drops a piece of trash  
The hole in my heart gets bigger.  
Now I can barely stand.  
I am so weak.  
I am falling apart.

I have no one to talk to  
No one understands  
That I need help.

I gave them everything, and now you can see  
They took advantage of me  
They weren't thankful for what they had  
And now I'm getting mad.  
But I will not punish them  
Because I am falling apart.

I want to ask for help.  
I want someone who will try.  
Someone who will die  
Just to save me.  
Because that person  
Is the only one worthy of my love.

I need help fast.  
I'm about to die.  
I am falling apart.

I walk to school like every day,  
And notice the dirty roads.  
Every time, I want to help  
Before the beauty fades away.

I always have felt bad for the Earth.  
For all we know, she could be human too.  
She could be in pain right now,  
Sitting in the middle of the world,  
Dying.

We all are going to die someday,  
But she needs to stay here forever.  
To keep the rest of us alive.

I get to school and I walk to class.  
We sit and learn and then go home.  
Life is too short to waste time at school  
We need to clean up this mess we've made.

I sit down at my old, wooden desk  
And pull out my work.  
But I can't focus.  
I can't stop thinking about the Earth  
And how beautiful she used to be  
How happy we were  
Before World War III.

After a while, I decide to go to sleep.  
After all, it is 12:03.  
I get ready for sleep and fall into bed.  
I'm ready to escape to a beautiful world.

I can't take this treatment any longer.  
I'm about to die. I need to ask for help.  
But who in this world will help me?  
I desperately search for a sleeping child.  
Children are more powerful than they seem.  
I find a girl, and she seems right.  
I crawl into her dream.  
She has to help me.

I open my eyes.  
This is not the beautiful world I wanted.  
It is black.  
It is dead.  
All I can hear is screaming.  
I run as fast as I can, crying.  
I want to escape this horrible world.  
I want to go back home.  
Is this what it has become?

I look around  
And see her.  
A girl covered in ash.  
She looks beaten and broken.

I run over to help.  
I ask if she's okay,  
But she doesn't say a word.  
She looks me in the eye and I understand.  
She is the Earth.  
And she needs my help.  
She is almost dead.  
She has fallen apart.

## **We're Sure the Dinosaurs Thought They Had Time, Too**

*By Maia Kalbag and Angelina Remondino*

We both have a theory. The world may be ending  
The grass is turning grey and the oceans need defending  
There are people who help, and there are people who ignore it  
But we all know the world doesn't deserve it

The Earth has supported us since the beginning of time  
But with what we're doing, the Earth now asks why  
"Why all this effort? Why even try? We all know that I'm soon going to die."

If we don't act soon, we'll lose all-natural beauty  
It needs to be our generation's duty  
We know it's not completely our fault  
But if we don't do something, the world will come to a halt

We can no longer stick our heads in the sand  
We have to take a stand  
We are young  
We still have time  
Storms are getting stronger and we have to fight  
When the dark closes in, you need to turn on the light

Stop using plastic bags  
Too many hamburgers are bad  
The animals are now sad

There once was a time when...  
The grass was green  
The water was clean  
The plants were healthy  
The world was happy

You could wake up to the birds chirping  
Wake up to a blue sky  
It was so beautiful, it brought tears to our eyes  
You could take in the fresh air  
But now we pollute it without a care  
Food took longer to make  
But it was always worth the wait  
Because it had a better taste

People weren't on their phones  
People weren't so alone  
But now our actions turn the world's heart to stone

Animals roamed free  
But now we even hunt them at sea  
We're not trying to be sassy girls  
We're just trying to save the world

If we don't mend the pain  
We'll have more acid rain

The Earth is getting mad at us  
And now it could get dangerous  
The Earth might fight back  
We're not ready for that attack

We know we didn't start this war  
But we should know what we're fighting for  
This world has its rough edges  
But we all have our imperfections

We're not trying to call you boomers  
But you should have helped sooner  
Not all of you are bad  
But what our generation does is sad

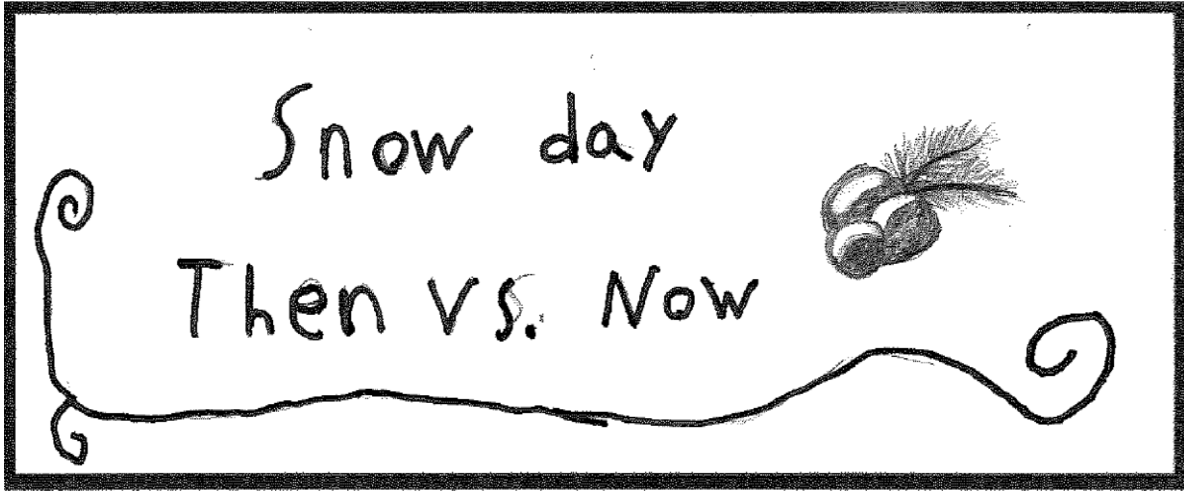
We eat, sleep, and then repeat  
When we used to play with our friends on the street  
Life was less complicated  
Now look at this mess we've created

Nothing is the same  
But we have no one but humans to blame

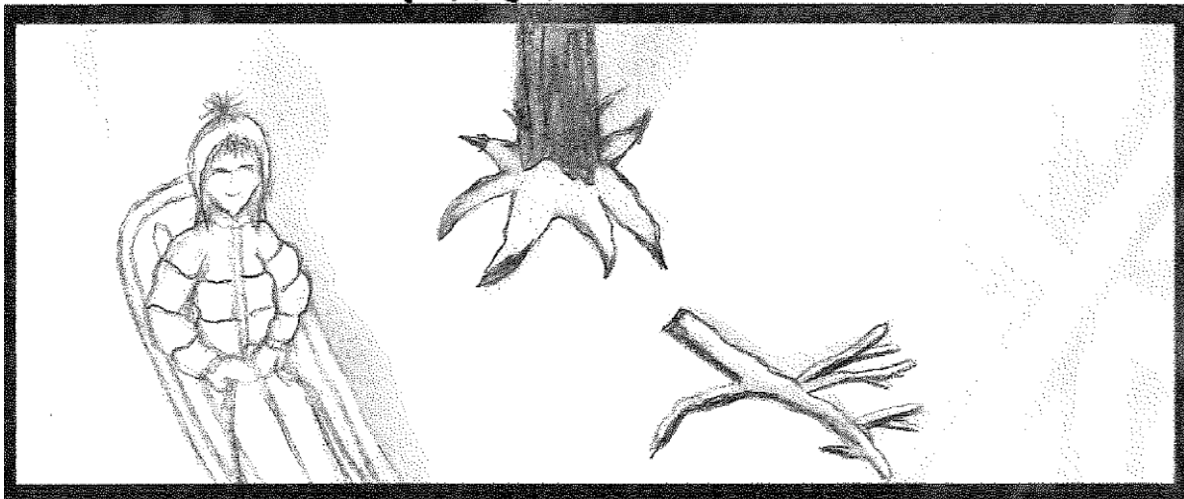
So speak up!  
You have a voice  
Now it's time to make the right choice

The world is coming to its doom  
So we have to act soon  
We're sure the dinosaurs thought they had time, too.

Snow Day  
By Nora Van Valkenburg



then...



Now...





## **Every Night**

*By Abby Nguyen*

Every night the same routine,  
Brush our teeth and go to bed,  
When we fall asleep, a land of our own,  
But where exactly do we go?

Every night we fall asleep in our own imagination  
Dreams and horrors of our brains own making.

You start by simply laying down,  
Wrapped up in soft warm covers, nice and cozy.  
Eyes soon get heavy and your brain fills with thoughts  
Everything goes dark.  
Our dreams and nightmares tell us what we need to know  
They tell us who we are and what we want to be.

In our dreams they give us exactly what we want,  
And the deepest desires of our hearts.  
(Just like the mirror from Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone)

But in our dreams we must be careful of what we see,  
Horrors and nightmares come and go for everyone  
Our nightmares never good as you can see  
They can represent PTSD.

When you see an animal in your dreams  
Don't you worry  
They symbolize who you are

While in your dreams you can just go about anywhere, or do just about anything  
Crazy things can happen like pencils can go swimming.  
To the past, present, or future you can be  
All around the world from Australia to Tennessee.  
You're as free as a bird just let your mind run free.

## **A Murder**

*By Danika Pflughardt*

The damp grass laid beneath me and the sun shone above. When I relaxed in the sun, my skin slowly rotted away. My insides were burning. Suddenly, the sun disappeared and my whole world turned dark and gloomy. There was a burly man wearing overalls leaning over me. He hoisted me up and put me down. His hands were coarse and encompassing. I wanted to run so badly. I just couldn't. Meanwhile, my entire body was filling up with anger and despair. What was I supposed to do? He lifted me up, held me securely and strolled away. I wanted to scream and yell for help, but I just couldn't.

The distant man forced me down into the back of his pickup truck and strapped me in tight with ropes of all different shapes and sizes. He sat in the front leather seat and revved the engine. We were off. The truck took a sharp turn to the right and then to the left. All that was visible was the glaring sun being coated in a thin layer of clouds. *Where could he be taking me?* I tumbled all around in his truck bed. We suddenly veered to a stop. I slid and banged my body hard against the black rock-hard metal. There was a dent in my side.

While I was in extreme pain, he strutted around the side of the dark gray glistening truck with a big scowl on his face. His black cobweb strung house towered over me. He lifted me up and carried me through a creaking door and down the heavily slanted stairs into his eerie basement. There was a single glowing light bulb partly shining in the corner of the darkroom. I was forcefully laid down on a solid blemished wooden table. There were many knives and sharp objects surrounding me. He lifted the filthiest knife and chopped down with one swipe.

After all, I was a pumpkin, and this experience was what pumpkins lived for.

## **Life is Grey**

*By Danika Pflughardt*

Black is the absence of color.

Black is not a color.

White is the blending of all colors.

White is a color.

Between black and white resides a spectrum of colors,

A rainbow of possibility,

Of appropriateness,

And choice.

Choosing black and white, or rather choosing either black or white, comes with risk.

If we choose black – are we choosing nothing?

Are we saying no, to possibility?

If we choose white –are we choosing everything?

Yet, in choosing everything,

Do we also stand for nothing?

On the flip side – we want things to be black and white.

But that is not how life works.

Anything is rarely a world of black and white.

Rather, conflict lives in the spaces, the colors, between black and white.

Between black and white is your story, your imagination.

The black and white photograph draws its power from your imagination, in all its' greyness.

Between black and white, truth is held up to our imagination.

Between black and white is acceptance,

That each of us is unique, our own shade of human, deserving of respect and attention.

The grey road is the joyful one.

**Remorse**  
*By McKay Pradawong*

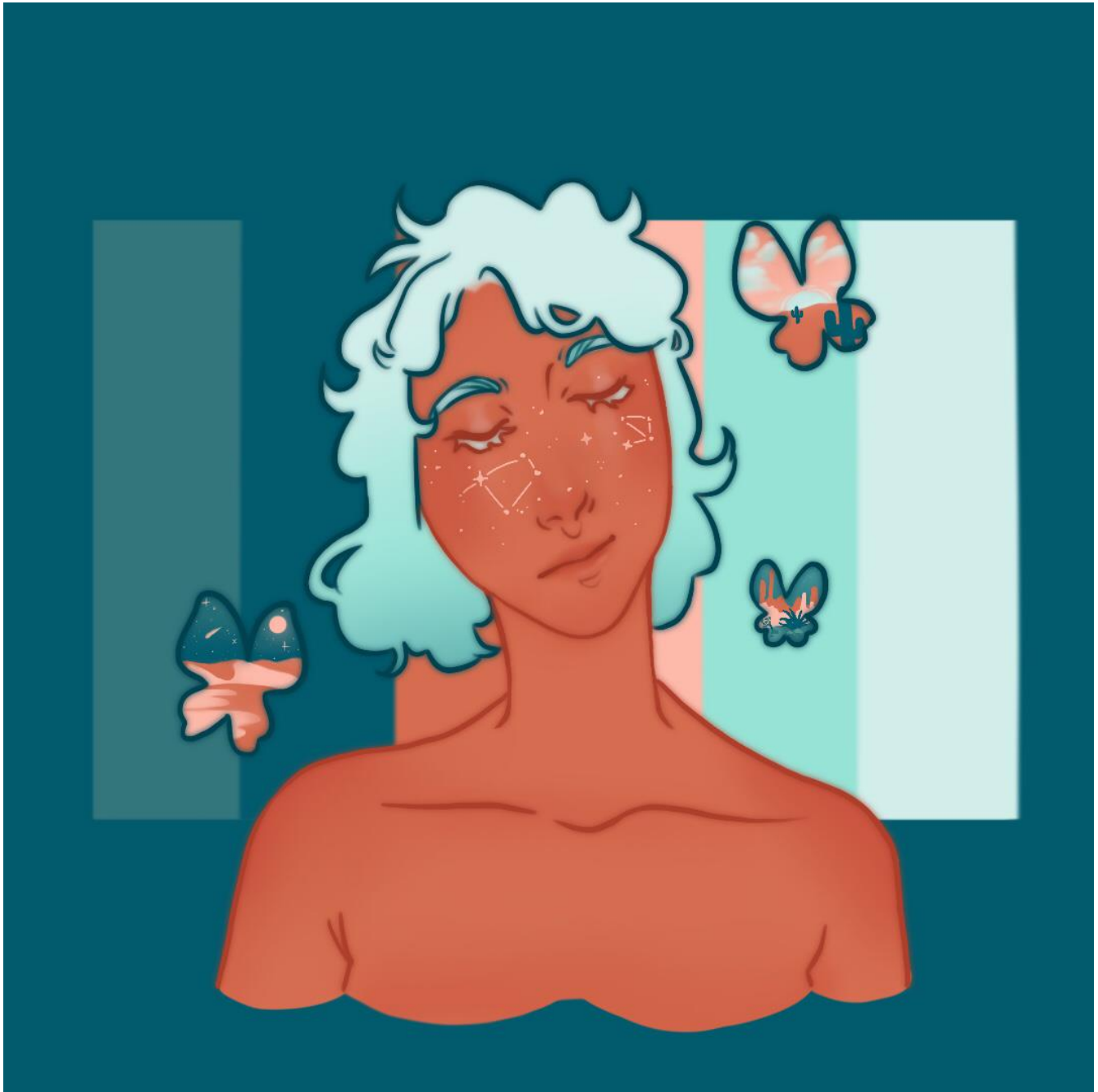
On a recluse lighthouse in a vast sea, far from any civilization lived an old man and a boy. For nine years they opened the light everyday hoping to find ships. Every day of those nine years no ships were found. The next morning welcomed them with a storm. The old man watched the waves hit the shore and swish back. The old man then spotted something that would change his life forever.

Barely in his sight was a British cargo ship, The S.S Henry. It was stranded. Its hull looked as a wrecking ball went through it, the iconic British flag, now just a colorful rag. In joy the old man called the boy. They ran up to the light. They were about to open the door leading to the light but something was wrong. The noise of loud thumping footsteps was approaching. Followed by that was the cracking of lightning and the boom of thunder. The boy, now hiding behind the man terrified of what is to come. The old man opened the door, leading to the light and stepped as silently to the light. He found no one. Wet footprints then lead to a smashed window. The man saw three men dragging a large barrel of oil, his oil. Enraged, the old man stomped downstairs, opened a box, and pulled out a rifle. He ran to the light with dashing speed. By then the three men were near the hull of the S.S Henry. The old man took aim and stroked the trigger of the rifle.

Three cracks shot through the air as they hit the three men dead. The oil barrel rolled toward the ship. The old man looked in horror as the oil barrel collided with the ship. A large explosion erupted, one that he will never forget. The scent of smoke smothered the old man with guilt. The boy comes up and watches in terror. Cargo containers lay in the water, the hull was smashed to pieces and the people burned. An hour passed as the smoke wrapped the sea.

**76 Years Later**

Once a vast sea, now a desolate canyon. The SS Henry's remains laid at the bottom of the abyss. With the following of many droughts the water drained. The old man took his own life, the boy now an old man living with sorrow. The time when the ground sprouted with life, now it turned into history. Their remorse was never forgotten.



**Constellations**  
*By Kara Fisher*

## Polluted Planet

By Victoria Reyes

The world is dying  
While people ignore it  
They go on with their day  
Our future's terrifying  
People keep producing plastic  
The machines keep whirring  
While the fish are stirring  
Swimming away from the oil spills  
The planet is dying  
And few people are trying  
To save the earth before it ends

Our earth is changing color  
From green to brown  
From life to death  
It's improving a little  
While everyone's inside  
But after quarantine is over  
We still have to try  
The planet isn't fully restored  
It can easily go back  
To how it was before  
With oil spills and forest fires  
Endangerment and extinction

Few people care  
But soon enough  
It'll be too late  
The planet will die  
The oceans will dry  
And will leave a plastic wasteland

If we don't try to help  
Bring our planet back to life  
It might be too late

Our planet is dying  
And few people are trying  
To save it before it ends  
It's our future  
If we don't fix our ways  
Future generations might not know  
what the roar of a tiger sounds like  
They won't be able to go into the zoos  
And admire the animals we can today

Our planet is dying  
And few people are trying  
To save earth, before it's too late

## **Catfish Soup**

*By Jack Shinkman*

“Good evening,” said our server, leaning down to greet us. His tuxedo was an endless hole of black. The dimly lit restaurant was silent save for quiet laughter, pleasant conversation, and the distant clang of pots. We chatted politely while our server treated the other guests. The soft velvety tablecloth brushed my thigh. The server strutted up to the table smoothly and took our order. I ordered the fresh catfish soup. It was quite a while until the food came.

Finally, the server placed before me a metal dome, and gracefully removed its lid. It shone like a million fireflies and revealed an elaborate china bowl with a beautifully engraved lid. I admired it for many minutes until I brought my hand to the lid. I sensed the cool glossy china on the pads of my fingers. I lifted the lid and set it down with a soft click. Warmth radiated along with a rich aroma from the hazel soup. I enjoyed the smell for a brief moment but was interrupted by a thrash in my soup. A ripple of the delicate liquid raced to the edges of the bowl, and a catfish emerged from the center.

What a pleasant surprise! I adore soups with live fish in them. I excused myself as I eagerly dipped my whole hand into the dish. My fingers surrounded the fish, and it threw itself left and right as I pulled it out. I placed it in my glass of water and watched it panic with great satisfaction. I carefully pushed my hand into the water and pulled the fish out by its tail. I locked my teeth onto its neck. My teeth rushed through its body, the chewy texture impressing me. A delightful flavor overwhelmed my senses. I quickly devoured the head and threw the tail into my awaiting mouth. It had the perfect texture, and a unique thrashing in my throat. Its fishy flavor grabbed me and pulled me to heaven. It smelled of dead fish serenely floating on the water, like the ones I pick out of the water and eat whole. I quite love that smell. I just sat there in complete awe of the flavor, texture and smell. Soup dribbled down my chin and stains my pants. But I didn't care. I left the tail in my mouth, slapping my tonsils as it thrashes again and again. I tilted my head back and the tail slides down my throat.

It was so delightful and appealing that my stomach roared, demanding more. It seemed to shake the world, a low rumble of desire. But it wasn't quite like a hungry stomach growling. It was more like the plop of a catfish swimming in a pool of stomach acid.

It was quite an odd sensation. I was seriously worried for my life. Fortunately for me, I just so happen to have a fishing rod in my car. I politely excused myself and fetched my rod. I threw it down my throat with a hook and bait for catfish. I waited calmly despite the pain in my esophagus where it was cut by the fishhook. Suddenly, I felt something grab the bait. Instinctively, I pulled and pulled and pulled with all my might. Before long, the hook was at the back of my mouth. I pulled just a little harder and finally the job was complete. Through pain, I took off my catch. But it wasn't a catfish. It was my whole small intestine.



## **Traveling to the Beach**

*By Abigail Siddon*

I love to travel.  
Looking at all the sights  
Trying the unexpected.  
Traveling with friends and family

I hate security  
The long lines  
Waiting for hours thinking that you will never get on a plane  
Being hungry and carrying your heavy bags through all the checkpoints.

On the plane people sleep  
I look out the window at the view below  
The flow of the water from up above  
All the lights shine bright

When you travel the food taste different  
A good different with spices and flavors  
The tanginess of tropical fruit  
In the morning the birds sing

The beaches cold water smacks into by legs  
The soft sand trickles through my fingers  
Sandcastles are made  
The surfers surf in the wind

The birds fly through the sky  
Sun beaming down on the people  
A kite soars through the sky  
There is laughing and giggling

People diving in the water  
Others laying in the sun  
Kids playing in the sand  
Everyone having fun

Dogs run around  
Children all play  
Fish are all swimming  
Down at the bottom of the sea the coral lays still

The salty air fills my lungs  
I love that sent as it's all I can smell  
I think about what it would feel to become the waves out bellow  
The dolphins jump out in the sea

Outside people walk looking at the sunrise  
They pick up seashells on the shore  
Looking at the animals the tide brought in  
A ball is thrown for a small black and white dog

I devour a muffin I look at flowers  
There are so many flowers  
With different color petals  
There is red, pink, and yellow too

People come and people go  
When they come they are fresh and new  
When they leave they are tired and worn  
From the excitement down by the shore

The beach chairs are so colorful  
With the umbrellas people use to protect themselves from the sun  
Some have towels with cool patterns  
One lost flip flop sits in the sand waiting for a pair

If you pack up to go you smile or cry  
The fish may jump to say goodbye  
When people leave they always come back  
That is truly a fact

**my essence left untouched**

*by Norah Vaudo*

You can't depict me with a pen  
You will fail at portraying me with a paintbrush  
Your words will break when you try and describe me  
My essence will remain untouched  
You won't repeat my sentence  
Your mouth will slip and falter  
You're unable to duplicate my independence  
No matter how skilled an author  
You won't succeed in drawing me  
Every dip and every curve  
Is inimitable  
And impossible to learn  
So don't try and sing my sonnets  
Don't attempt at understanding my mind  
Because I know that if you do  
The real me will be left behind  
Please leave the page blank  
My essence left uncaptured  
Because if you do  
It won't be me that's there after  
You will twist me and you will replace me  
With something that I'm not  
Into something that the world wants to see  
Just another thing that it has bought  
I don't want to be a part of your game  
I don't need any glory  
I'd prefer not to be just a pawn  
In a broken society's story

## **Taking Off the Lens** *By Norah Vaudo*

Our world is permeated with views and opinions on the state of society and those in it. And from what I have heard the prevalence of negativity present in the views of today's world were anticipated by myself, yet still inordinate and overwhelming. Pessimistic beliefs seem to be all that is left and optimism is scarcely present. And although this bit of evidence is only collected from those in my small nook of a vast world, I think that it is enough to substantiate my conclusions.

Right now, the world is on hold. Everyone is struggling to remain afloat in this time of severe uncertainty. We are all wrestling with the intense animosity towards our world and our society. People are dying. Blame is being cast and suffering is ubiquitous. "Alone together" is the phrase being used to depict what we are all enduring. The manifest irony present in that statement I feel reflects the profound irony of the entire situation. The world is more technologically advanced than ever before. We have been to the moon and back, we have created self-driving cars. Yet now, our streets are barren. Grocery store shelves are empty. Touch has turned to taboo in a matter of days. As I stated previously, the world is brimming with opinions. Everyone possesses them and it is inevitable that they express them. And as of late, all of the opinions I have heard concerning the pandemic sweeping the globe are casting a negative light on the circumstances. They have good reason to. Loved ones are being lost every day, mental health is deteriorating from the isolation, and people just want their lives back, myself included. With this being said, I believe that this is a very partial way of viewing the issue.

The world is viewed in many different ways, but even in my minimal experience I have come to believe that the lens used to look at the world, utilized by so many has become faded. People are still formulating opinions the same way for everything. Right or wrong, good or bad. But I feel that it is time to take off the lens. Look at the world through a naked eye. When doing this you no doubt will see what ruins this beautiful creation has altered into. Though there is a chance you might see something else as well. You might see the beauty behind this disaster.

Panem et circuses is a phrase that I would use to describe today's society. Translated, it means bread and circuses. Food and entertainment seem to be the core of life in the twenty-first century. Materialism is present in every nook corner of this earth. That's the disaster. But with this time of self-quarantine, and isolation, that has been ripped from us. This is no doubt a time of hardship. I believe that hardship learning to live without and struggling as a result of that.

What we are learning to live without right now is everything that made this world so mundane. These things seemed to matter to us. Though, when you lose all of that you find that it is much simpler to take a step back and look at everything that you have and sort out the things that matter and the things that

you have been holding on to that are surprisingly irrelevant. This is the good that has come out of this time of hardship. You learn that some things you are better off being without, and others vice versa. You might even find that there is a way for you to make your world more than just Panem et circuses, and forget the materialism and mundane obsessions that have infected your existence.

In order for this to happen though, the first step is not the step back, the first step is taking off the lens that I mentioned previously. Looking at the world with a bare eye, not tinted by preceding difficulties and right and wrong, good and bad. Because there is no clear-cut line that defines this world. It's full of opinions and different perspectives, and I think that it's time that we use them to see the world in a way never seen before, especially in the face of affliction.

## **The Waves**

*By Harrison Willens*

The waves crashed down hard, slamming through the air. A rumble echoed from the bottom of the deep ocean, sending vibrations to the top. The boy gasped for air as he was pushed up to the surface. The water, pushing past him effortlessly, whispered through his ear, as if telling him that this was the end. He took this short moment to find something, anything that the hurricane swept away from his house. He looked around, only finding water, and waves. Right before the water pulled him under, his eyes contacted an old chair, wobbling up and down through the waves like a toddler standing for the first time in his life, still intact despite the harsh surroundings. The boy was underwater again, and he fought to get back up again. He opened his eyes, looking for the chair, something he could grasp, his only way to make it out of here. Another surge of water hit him from behind, and he was pushed forward, flying through the water, salt stinging his eyes, water clogging his nose, debris crashing into him. The boy could hear the chair, barely making noise over the roaring waves. Like a Black Marlin, the boy pressed his hands ahead of him, sucked in air, and went under again, kicking his legs harder than he had ever done before.

The boy reached out his hand, desperate to grab any part of the chair. His arm sent ripples of salt water into his eyes, but he couldn't care less. The boy felt his heart jump as his hand contacted the chair. The old chair was from his attic, covered with unnecessary splinters. The brown, hard chair roughed against the young boy, and the corner struck him across the arm. A gash formed from the boy, and blood quickly started to pour from the wound. Pure pain formed quickly, and the boy flinched. Desperate for survival, the boy stretched his body, and collapsed on the chair. He clutched his hands around the chair, seasickness dawning on him. The salty aroma of the sea was dissipated from his nose, as his nostrils were clogged completely, causing pain to erupt from the area. He screamed an ear-splitting yell, calling for help. The boy let out one last scream, as the chair was forced underwater. The cold water brushed roughly against his body, no stopping.

The boy squinted his eyes, peering through the freezing water. A chill slowly climbed up his spine as he heard a low growl. The boy shakily turned from his position to see what had made this frightening noise. The boy clenched his fists, until they turned white, as he turned. He swallowed as he looked around, into the deep, rough waves. The boy saw nothing, yet, he still had a feeling that someone was out there. Something. The boy slipped and almost fell from his position as he tried to turn back around. The waves crashed over him and the chair, and he went underwater again. This time, the chair didn't float back up again. It slowly sank, going deeper, and deeper into the unknown depths of the ocean. The boy wanted to scream, but the water prevented that. The boy felt something collide into his chair, hurling it through the deep sea. The boy felt his heart stop as he heard the low, deep growl again. He wished he could be out of here, in his bed, inside his nice, and comfy house. Where he would wake up at 7:00 each day to go to school. Where he watched the last seconds on the clock before the bell. Where he would run out of the building, escaping another day. He opened his eyes, and they met a black figure. The black figure disappeared the instant the boy opened his eyes, sending layers of terror into him.

The boy hummed as loud as he could, doing anything to make noise. He thrashed around, as he went deeper into the ocean. His breath faltered for a second, and he almost opened his mouth. His feet hit a ledge of a cliff that led into darkness. The growl entered the boy's ears again, and he spun around. Something was out there, watching his last moments before the water took his precious life away. He faced the cliff again and stared into the darkness. He tried to jump, swim, push up to the top of the water, but he couldn't. A glimpse of a black figure flickered in the darkness, the very same that smashed into his chair. The boy watched with wild eyes as the figure disappeared. The boy looked around, not knowing where the figure went. He felt his heart rate slow down, as his lungs slowly ran out of oxygen. He jumped as slimy hands were placed on his shoulder. "Goodbye, Mark," a voice whispered, and the boy was shoved off the cliff, hurling deep into the unknown darkness so far beneath him.



**Hope is a Thing with Feathers**  
*By Neha Parameswaran*



**Joy**  
*By Hanlin Zhang*

I watch the girl  
Her dark brown hair sways  
As she chatters  
With her friend.  
Her eyes are soft,  
brown circles,  
Partially hidden  
By the curtain of bangs  
That sit at the edge of her forehead.  
Her teeth glint in the light  
As she doubles over,  
Laughing.  
Dimples flash at the corners  
Of her smiling mouth.  
Her friend joins,  
The two of them seeming to share  
The same sense of happiness.  
I smile at the sight of them,  
Who seem to be  
A never-ending bottle of delight.  
The little girl glances at me  
And as our eyes meet,  
I know there is only  
One word to describe her:  
Joy.

Write a better future.



**Write a Better Future**  
*By Kara Fisher*