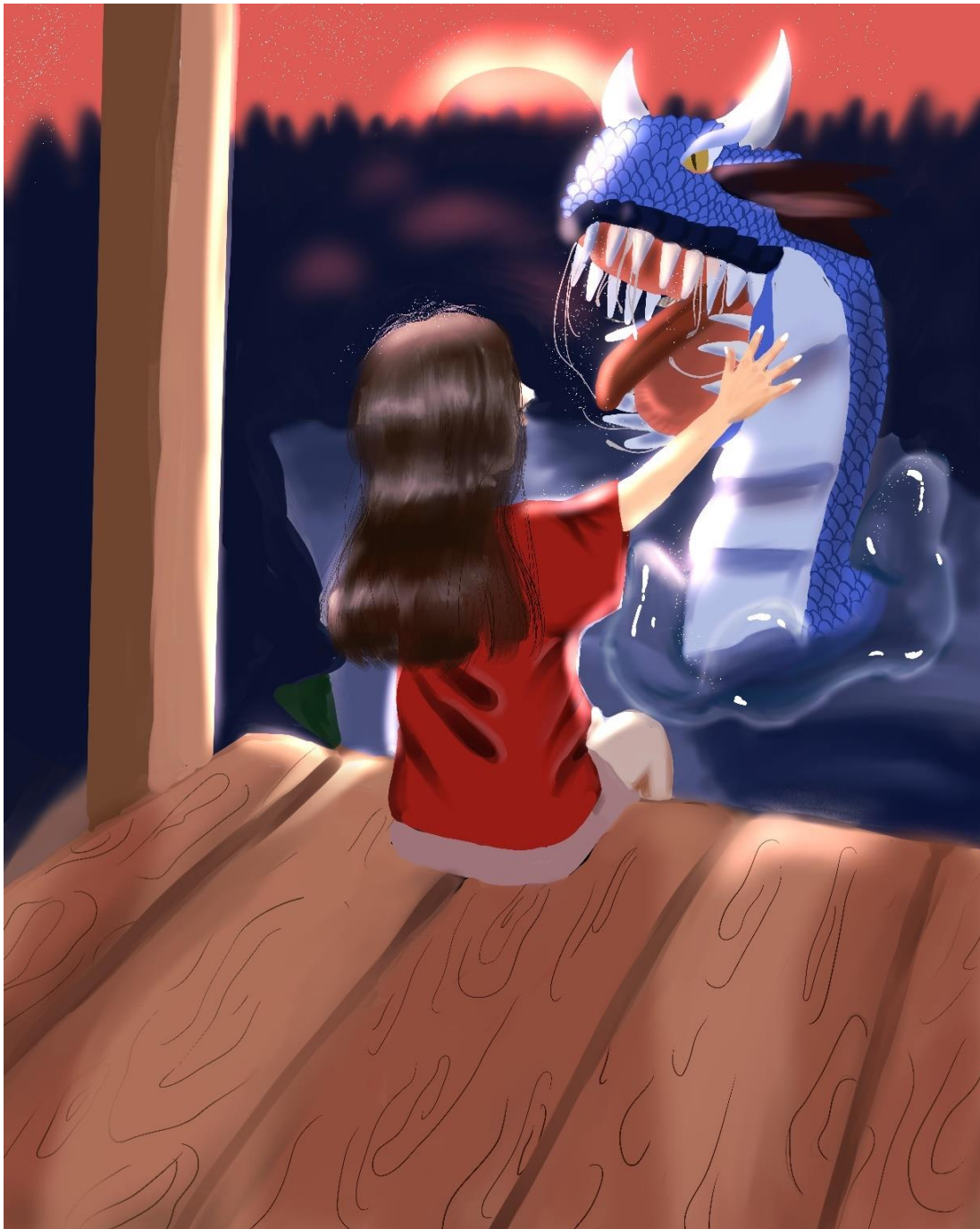


Cabin in the Woods



**Thoreau Middle School
Literary Arts Magazine
Volume 32 Summer 2021**

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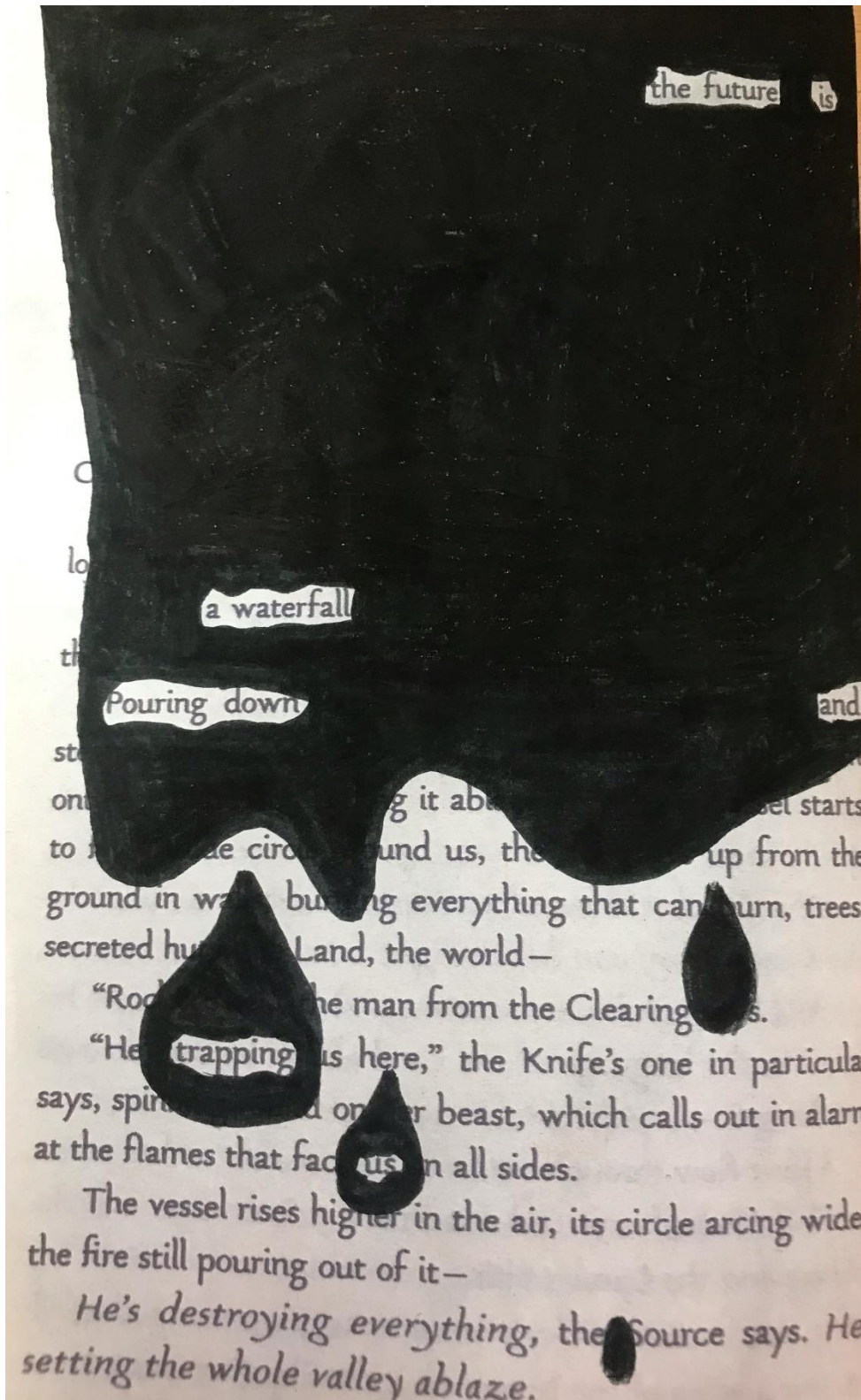
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***“Go confidently in the direction of your
dreams. Live the life you have imagined.”
-Henry David Thoreau-***

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The Future
by Darius Bagherian

Online School

By Jenna DiSciullo

September is here, school is about to begin
School isn't opening, we are not going in
Thousands of students sitting at a desk
Seven straight hours of screens without rest

Eyes are strained, headaches are common
No social activity, our classes forgotten
We're trying our best to make it all work
Classes disconnected by poor internet network

No lunch with our friends, no new ones to make
It's not all that easy, this is too long of a break
We want the school doors open, but not at this risk
We want Covid to end, no more getting sick

Sure it's "working," but this isn't our school
Kids drowning in work in a never-ending pool
Yes, this may be the only safe way
But we miss our school, it's just not the same.

A Disease Too Far

By Edward Fadel

When the virus struck
It was like a wave of destruction
Hitting one thing after another
Country after country
It was terrifying.

After staying inside for so long,
People truly forgot what the world really felt like
Before this almost surreal experience.

Months ago, the world was great.
We weren't scared of going outside,
Or feeling our mouths covered in sweat
At the end of the day because of our masks.
But you can feel the difference with how Covid 19 changed people,
Such as me and many of my peers.

I thrive on excitement and running around
But how can I do that inside a home?
I thrive off of fun with my friends.
How can I do that
When the only way to see and talk to them is through a screen?
I thrive off of exciting things in the world.
How can I do that
If everything is shut down and close off?

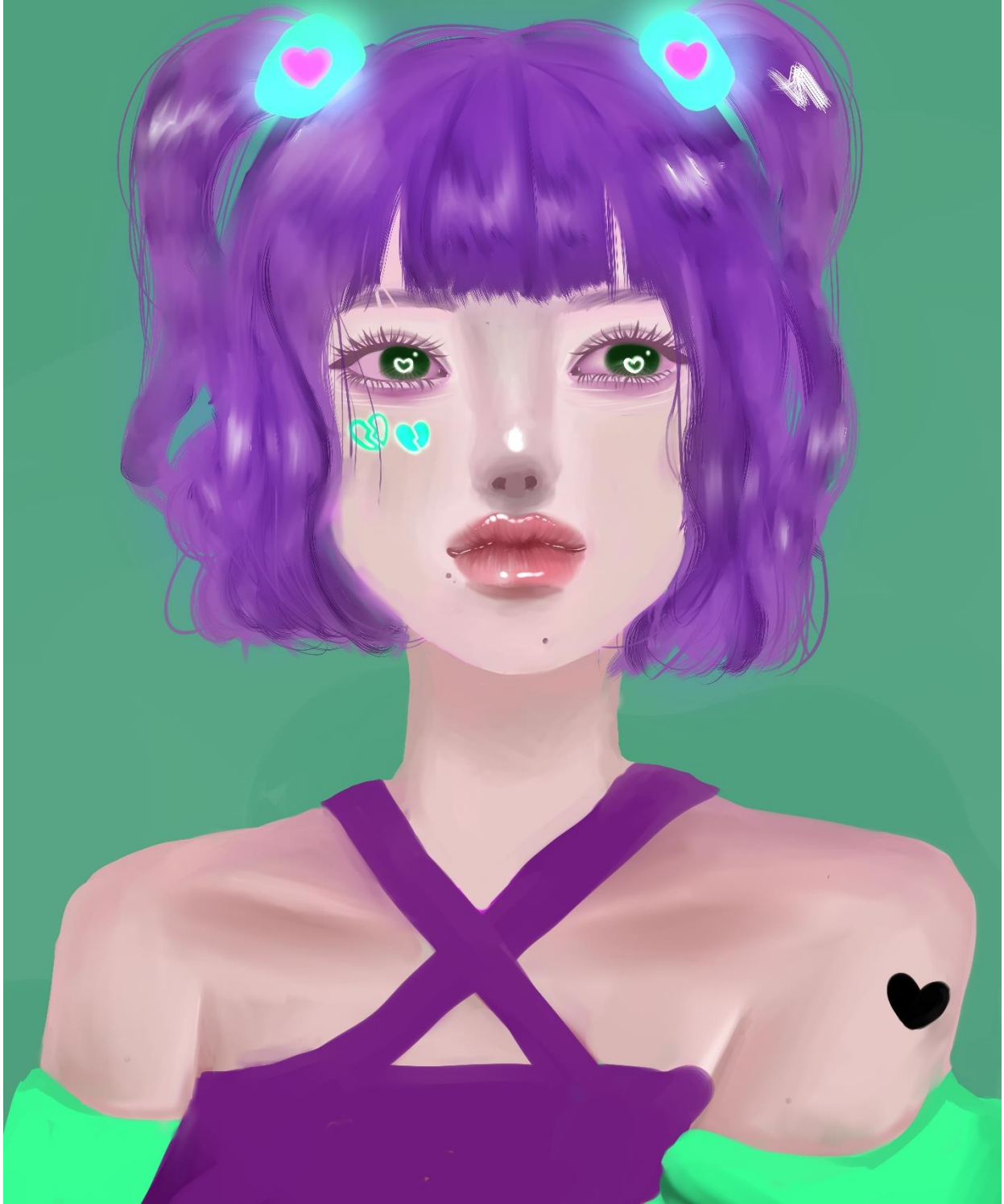
This virus changed me and a lot of other people
But the change on the next generation of the world was too far.
So when the world was backed up in the corner, the world came together.
And only then did the virus come to a close.

One Star in the Sky
By Lillian Fitzgibbons

I'm unnoticeable
I seem to have no purpose
I'm one in thousands
Why would you need to care? Why would you need to see me?
But if the clock in Times Square on New Year's Eve
Was one second off, people would notice
If a grain of rice falls to the floor, no one would care, no one would notice.
If you have one second left in the Super Bowl, you would care and notice
I'm just like that grain of rice just one lost in the sea of trillions
But if that light inside of me and that grain of rice just simply ceases to exist
You would care.
You would notice.
You would see me.



Seahorse Monster
By Rebecca Barber



Neon Girl
By Sophie Yewon Kim

The Rain

By Nora French

Heavy drops of silver rain descended from the sky and landed on the rusty old window with a plop. William turned on his side, away from droplets tracing their way down the polished glass, toppling a stack of golden bound books that were precariously balanced on the end of his bed. He reached for the one nearest to him and studied the cover: it was worn, and the dusty red binding boasted tears if you looked carefully enough. William delicately opened the cover and was promptly surprised by a little paper knight protruding from the pages, *a pop-up book how dull*, he thought as he shut the book with a snap. *What a dreary existence*, William thought, *I suppose the rain has got something to do with it*, but even when the pounding rain turned to drowsy fog and his mother called him down for dinner his dismal mood had never paused, not even once.

William drudged down the creaky stairs; dinner was his least favorite of all the meals due to the constant berating of his parents. He moved a piece of charred broccoli around his plate, sighed, then looked up at his parents. Even though he knew well enough that they never paid any mind to him, he couldn't help but seek even the smallest shard of attention from his mother and father. William traced the wood grain on the broken old table and sighed again,

"William," his mother began, "stop that dreadful noise."

That is when William decided he needed a change of pace. So, when his parents left for unknown reasons (William hadn't quite caught that part) he put on his father's charcoal grey cap and made for the doorway. You see, he wasn't quite allowed to wander the streets alone, but he had decided that now wasn't the time for rules and was bent on taking a walk, perhaps for a while. William opened the door and stepped into the misty night air, that was his first mistake.

William looked up at the heavy night sky and frigid wind clawed at his face, leaving it rosy. The wind seemed to have ignited the clouds for a grueling rain had started to descend. But even still, he trudged on boots sloshing through brackish puddles and mind fueled with negative thoughts. The weather appeared to be holding him back but just about when he thought he should turn to home, the rain ceased, the wind halted, and William had a feeling he should stop walking.

He sat on the pockmarked curb and observed his new setting, and new as it was, William had never seen this part of the city before with its houses painted with a grey that beyond him faded into a lush field of glittering grass, luminous stars blinked above he breathed the misty night air and felt unexpectedly calm. After a while he thought *maybe I should walk a little while more*. Eventually, William found himself standing at the edge of the field of grass, it felt different here as if electricity was floating around him, it felt like laughter, excitement, and all his best moments mixed into one, it was the best he had felt in a very long time. He stepped forward wanting more of the wonderful feeling and just so happened to close his eyes, when he opened them, he was in an entirely new place.

Touch

By Rebecca Gomez Colindres

One touch

Sometimes we forget how much we need to hug or feel others

But when that touch was gone

It was one of the things we missed most

We all tried to evade loneliness at some point

But it always managed to pull us in and drown us deep into its poisonous waters

There was no escaping the fact that we need each other

“Ring, Ring!” “Buzz, Buzz!”

Listen to the sound that surrounds us

Our desire for technology is like a moth drawn to light

Instead of seeing one another and feeling one another

All our lives, we have been slowly inching towards a “more evolved world”

We no longer run on green grass

with wind blowing through our hair and the smell of pine

Why would we do that

when we have video games or tv shows that are way more important

We’ve gotten so used to just staying home that we forgot how important it is to go outside and be with our friends

To feel content with something more than a screen

Is there a way out?

An everlasting light that could even out the darkness

Like all of this was just an awful, twisted dream

Then the brilliant question came along

Can technology be used for the greater good?

The answer quickly came when we started using Zoom, Google Meet, and BBCU

Even though it isn't exactly the same as hugging each other

It is a great start to communicate and use technology wisely

Because one way or another,

we have always needed each other, just as our lungs need air

One touch

The Virus

By Katie Johnson

The journey had just begun. Hold on, I need to go back to the beginning of the story for you to understand. It was a disgusting, cold, winter's day, and it was wonderful! Oh! Where are my manners? I'm Covid (C for short), and I'm nineteen. I just graduated from Hard-virus College last spring, I'm a bit of a prodigy, and I just got my first job being a nationwide virus! I didn't think I could get this as my first job, but I did! I only hope I could someday be as big a virus as Strep or the Flu. I don't know if I'm good enough. Anyway, it was my first day on the job, and I was kinda nervous. I walked in the office when I saw people I never thought in a million years I would meet: Strep and Flu! I thought to myself that I could go talk to them later on my break because right now I needed to get to work! So, I went to my desk and did all my work. Yes! I'm finally done! Now I can go talk to my idols! As I walked up to them, I heard them begin to talk to each other, so I hid behind a door and waited for them to finish.

"Did you hear, that Covid kid got the job?" said Flu, sounding annoyed,

"Oh! He took the place of Smallpox! They have been trying to fill the position for years! No one was good enough," Strep exclaimed.

"But apparently Covid is..." Flu said sarcastically. "I heard they are developing a cure though, so he won't be here much longer!"

I couldn't believe it! I ran into my office, crying. I thought Flu and Strep were people to look up to, but I was wrong. I was in my office when my boss came in. He asked if he could talk to me, and I knew exactly what he was going to say. He told me that he needed a sample of my DNA. He took what he needed and walked away. The next week, he came back to my office, and told me wonderful news. He told me that I saved someone's life! They used my DNA to make a cure for the disease I was spreading! I walked out of the office that day, so proud, and everyone was jealous that I got to save people's lives and they had to hurt them. I saved someone's life that day, but I knew that, like I had said before, this journey had just begun.

Birthdays

by Beren Kasimcan

“Oh, it’s my birthday,” you say
But it is a usual Friday
Cakes, friends, parties
Gifts and all the fun
Don’t forget it is only for one day

It is sad that it’s only for one day
But that’s what makes it special, I guess
But be grateful it is that way

“What do you want for your birthday?”
They will ask you a million times
You will of course say,
“No, it really doesn’t matter,
you don’t even have to buy me a gift”

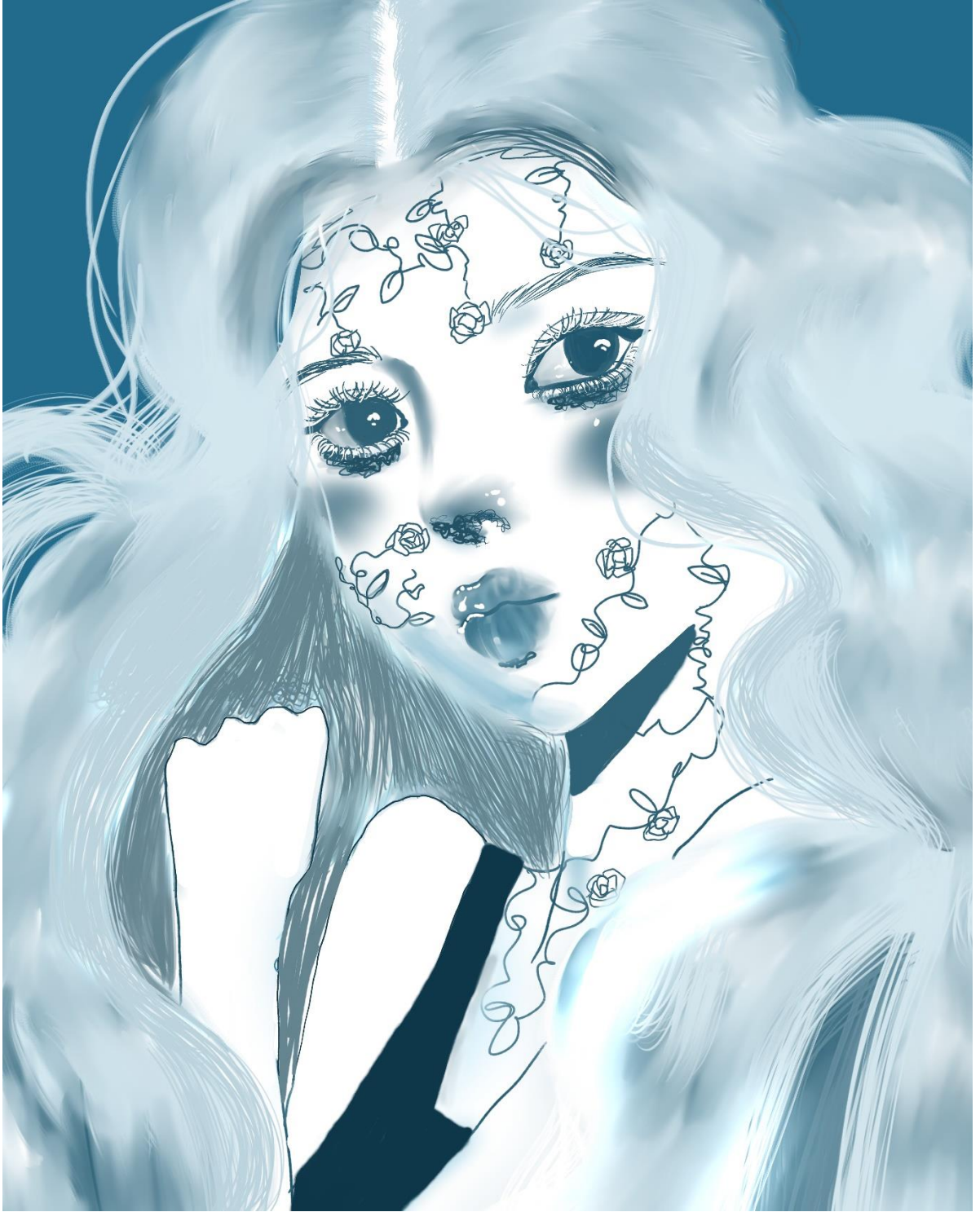
But we both know that it’s not true
And when they tell you that your gift is ready
And know you will keep asking for a clue

Do not forget to choose your cake
Chocolate, vanilla, funfetti, caramel,
Red velvet, lemon, banana, mint
Or maybe a cookie cake
But you can only choose one
But they all taste AMAZING
And that is why it’s so hard to choose a cake

“Ahh, one month left until my birthday!”
You will suffer all of that time
Oh, wait, it is the first of May
Time will past so easily

Do not forget the song
THE BIRTHDAY SONG
All of your friends and family will sing
“HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!”
Clap, Clap, Clap, now blow out your candle
And don’t forget to make a wish

Maybe 5, maybe 10, or even 30 gifts
But over the time, you will forget about it
In a month you will ask,
“Who is this from, MOM did you buy me this?”



Cloud
By Sophie Yewon Kim

The Storm in the Night

By Melissa LaRue

The sky is blank and emotionless,
The clouds are a blanket of brokenness.
The wind is filled with rage, spreading it through the air,
And the raindrops are the clouds' tears of despair.

The sky blinds the trees, while the wind beats them in its tantrum,
And they hurt, 'til the feeling begins to go numb.
The clouds start to bawl, then the thunder screams,
The rain soaks me through, and puddles at my feet.

I do nothing to stop it, after hiding all day,
I just sit there as my mind drifts away.
The trees try to cover me as I lull off to sleep,
Then I wake up and find the sun smiling at me.

A new day has come, the storm has passed,
But I fear what I know, and the sun will not last.
For soon, the darkness will newly begin,
And the outside will show the storm from within.



The Edge
By Melissa LaRue

Distance Learning

By Jaeyoung Lee

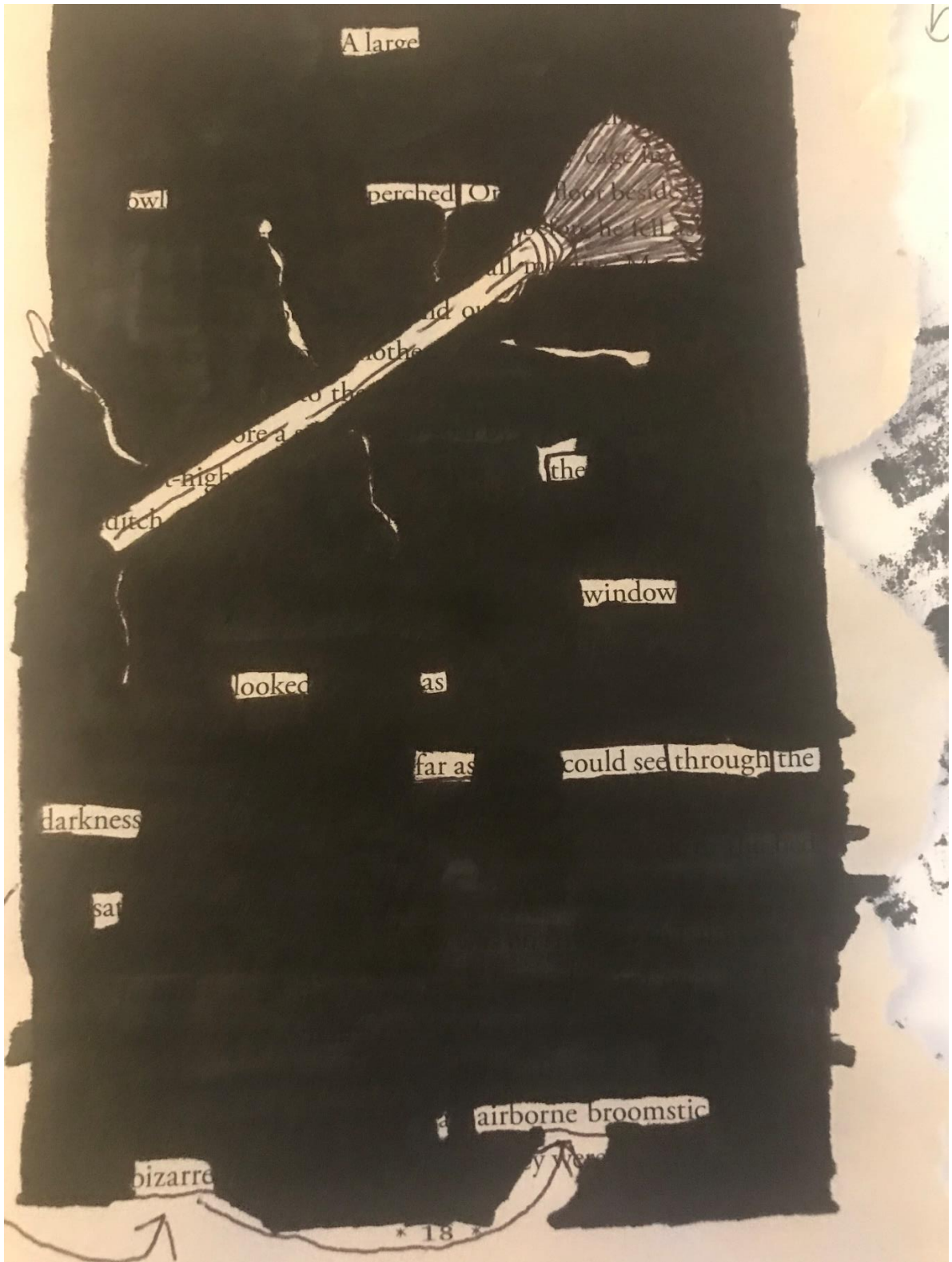
Distance learning is a new type of fun,
But when it comes to gym, I don't want to run.
I hear keyboards clicking in my mind during the day,
It's really hard to wake up and stay that way.

Would it be possible to just go to school?
Meet people in person again,
Wouldn't that be cool?

When technology doesn't work, I get kind of mad.
When it takes forever to reconnect, I get kind of sad.
Time is interesting, especially for lunch,
It's so early these days, I just call it brunch.

It's a bit hard to focus,
Throughout the whole class.
I don't want to be distracted,
Or else I'll be last.

Although distance learning isn't all that bad,
At least we stay connected,
At least we have that,
At least we have each other,
So that is that.



Airborne Broomstick
By Nicholas Manic

The Classes of Virtual Learning

By Sandi Maung

Virtual classes in session
Everyone enters silently
There's a mic,
Yet no one wants to speak

Each class is the same
Silent avatars listening, watching, waiting
An occasional *ping* of the hand followed by a short voice to break the silence
It's so lonely

Teachers try their best
They ask a question and wait
Noiseless hesitation
Will anyone speak up?
It's so quiet

Breakout sessions?
An awkward fog has thickened around us
No one speaks
We simply listen
But with no one speaking
Who are we listening to?

End of class
All of a sudden, multiple voices speak up,
"Bye! Thank you!"
The chat is exploding with farewells of all kinds
Why is it this way?



Light
By Sophie Yewon Kim

Straight Tracks Ahead

By Nicholas Miller

I remember going to Rehoboth Beach
And going to Raystown Lake
And playing games outside with friends
Laughing and telling riddles and jokes
and chugging along the straight train tracks
in the brightness of the sun
Then one day all of that came to an end

That cheery song we were learning on the cafeteria floor together
For the sixth-grade school play
Evolved into a quiet moan on the computer screen

Then they told us we would be out of school
For only about two months
Yet here I am a year later
Wondering if that was the truth

Going to the grocery store
Evolved into a tap and a click on a screen
That essay we were supposed to write
Evolved into a clickity clack on the computer keys
And the eraser we used to get rid of mistakes
Evolved into a simple push of the backspace button

What has happened
School goes online
Home becomes a learning place
Vacations delayed and cancelled
Friends follow you online
Rather than giving a fist bump
Or even a high five

What has happened
We are isolated alone at home
With nothing much better to be
Than to be negative
And to be bored

Nowhere much better to be than to be
Online which we now live and rely on
logged into school on weekdays
Having to activate your voice to speak
And having to activate your camera to become visible
Visiting online stores and sites on weekends
Playing online games when bored
Rather than games outside
Or playing with friends

What has happened
Coronavirus is covering the world
in a blanket of darkness
Quarantine is separating families
and breaking traditions

What has happened
This train we are on headed straight into
The darkest tunnel of them all

While some are in the train looking down at their feet
Others are on top of the train
Looking for even the smallest glint of light
In this dark tunnel we got trapped in

When a beam of hope shines down from the sun
The passengers stare at the end of the tunnel in awe
With mouths dropped open while
The train is slowly moving towards the light
And the light is slowly moving towards the train

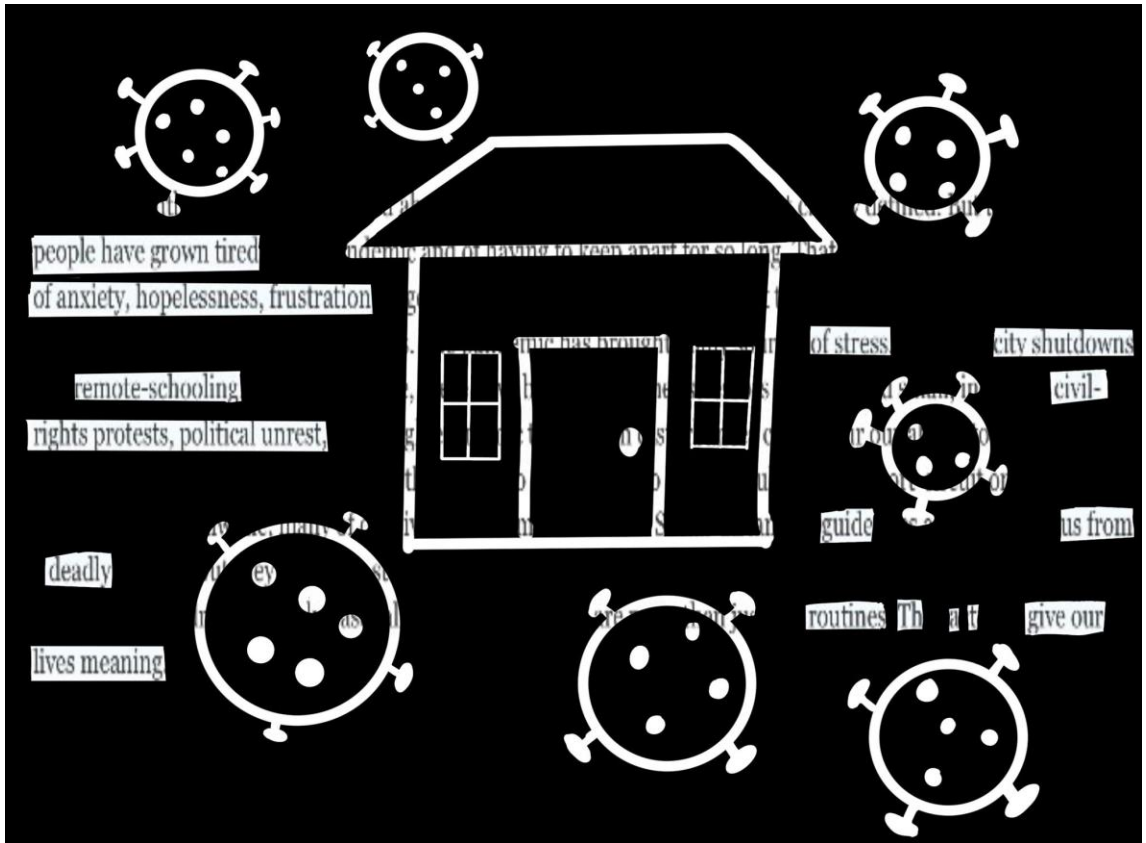
But the wind will push heavily on the train
And try to blow the train back
Keeping it away from the light
Knocking passengers off their seats

And it will try to blow you off onto the tracks
Of this empty and dark tunnel
And deafen you with its scream
To the point where you can't hold on

However, if everyone holds each other's hands
Tighter than ever and stronger than the wind
And all of the dust, rocks, and debris that it throws at you
Like a barrel of monkeys hanging on for dear life
You will make it there

With the engine of perseverance on your side
Pushing forward against the howling wind
And staying strong even when rocks
Dent the train and shatter its windows
But if the engine moves fast enough
The train will be unstoppable
To the point where not even a hurricane could stop the train
And the unbreakable chain of passengers on board

Because of this the train can make it out
To see the brightness of the sun again
And to get back on the straight tracks ahead



People Have Grown Tired
By Victoria Reyes

Dystopia
By Adrianna Rodriguez

Blistering heat causing them to sweat from every inch of their body. The screams echoed through the halls. As the doors locked and the rooms became smaller, the cold metal walls caused them to shiver the chains scratched the floors as they ran far. Looking for a way out, yet the only way out was the way back in. Running in circles to finally see the exit as the doors open, they are greeted with nothing but the one and only...

remember

I

the

eyes



I

feel.

the

splash of

the memory

fade

I remember

waiting for you, who will

not come.

Waiting for You

By Laini Ware

Terror at Pearl Harbor

By Cohen Molder

The journey had just begun. BOOM! It was the night of December 6th in Pearl Harbor, and Jeremy was having his favorite food, roast beef. He scarfed his dinner and went to his bedroom to go to bed. He threw on his pajamas and jumped in. The next morning, he woke at seven o'clock and got ready for school. It was 7:55 a.m. He was headed for school. Suddenly, he heard a loud buzzing sound and he looked around and saw a giant sheet of planes coming towards the harbor. He was mesmerized at this site. Then some of the planes started to dive for the humongous ships in the harbor. BOOM! A bomb had struck the ship, a huge cloud of smoke expanded over it.

Jeremy was standing there watching chaos unfold in front of his eyes. And he heard the ear-piercing sound of the air raid siren, people started to scream. The guns on the huge ships started to shoot as Japan's planes swarmed them like bees. He started to run and find shelter.

"Hop in, the safest place is the airfield!" said a man. He got in the man's car and they scrambled over to the airfield. People were running in front of the car. They didn't know what to do. Finally, they arrived at their destination and approached a hangar. A plane was diving toward them. They jumped out of the car and sprinted toward it. The plane started to shoot. They were almost there until the man tripped and fell in front of the plane's guns. The man was gone, but Jeremy was still sprinting toward the hangar until he finally made it in through a side door. Even though the huge hangar doors were shut, he could see through the cracks. He saw chaos. American planes were getting gunned down before they could even take off, ships were being sunk. Jeremy was terrified. He was wondering how sad the man's family would be when they heard the news. Then he wondered about his family. He started to break down. The thought of losing his parents was glued inside of him. He ran to the back of the hangar and hid behind some crates. He heard the explosions and smelled the smoke. He wanted all of it to be over. Then they started to bombard the hangars Jeremy ducked and put his hands over his neck, bracing for the impact. It never came. Then a small bomb burst through the roof of the other side of the hangar and exploded. He was knocked back against the wall. And several more bombs were dropped which made the hangar door fall with a bang.

He was curled up in the back of the hangar thinking that it was over. He sat for a while and suddenly realized that he didn't hear the buzzing of planes or the BOOM of the bombs. He exited the hangar and saw that the island was obliterated. The planes on the airfield looked like piles of scrap. He went to the harbor to locate his parents. But all he saw was sadness. The huge ships that once had been mighty were now sunk or in flames. He heard the sobs of his mom and dad and hustled over to locate them. Jeremy ran into their arms. He was bursting with joy, but he knew America was entering the war.



Light Yellow
By Sophie Yewon Kim

Around the World and Back Again

By Grace O'Connor

All my life I have been
Around the world and back again

I've lived in places many dream to be
New Mexico, Arizona, South Korea, and Italy

I feel the plane rumble beneath my feet
We soar above earth's highest peak

Around the world and back again

The plane touches down and we're in a new place
I look around and don't recognize a single face

Our new squadron comes to meet us like bees flock to honey
It's a really kind gesture, but I don't know anybody

Around the world and back again

We rush to the hotel so we can go to bed
For the next morning mom and dad will house hunt 'til their dead

We find the perfect house, but it feels foreign to me
Until my stuff comes, then my home I can see

Around the world and back again

As the first day approaches, I prepare for the awkward
No friends, just small talk, this is literally absurd

If you moved around, you would probably see
Just how hard finding a real friend truly can be

Around the world and back again

But when that friend comes along, the world finally feels right
And you talk, gossip, and laugh all day and all night

I finally settled down and this place feels like home. And then...
I have to freaking pick-up and move yet again!

Around the world and back again

Virtual
By Jia Patil

Middle school used to be a place to meet new people,
Not a bunch of black screens looking deceitful!
There is no telling who is who because we have to stay home to not get the flu.

Blank avatars aren't enough for me, all I want to do is see,
All the new people in my classes, but we're all under the circumstances,
Of COVID19, but people can't seem to keep their hands clean.
The virus is spreading, the numbers are ebbing,
And I just...

I want to raise my hand in class, not press a button that is flat,
I want to talk to my teachers in person, sending emails is such a burden,
I want to write about the Tropic of Cancer, not click an answer,
I want to walk through the hallways to get to my next class,
maybe play some bluegrass.
I want to perform with my band, instead I'm sitting at home, flute in hand.

As I click the next link, I am on the very brink,
Because just think, of all the things that went down the sink
Before you could blink.

All those days in gym, where you were so tired you couldn't move a limb,
When you sat at lunch and conversed, just about anything in the universe,
The laughs in history, about a bad photo of John Dewey,
The presentation days, when you would receive lots of praise,

The holidays, and birthdays,
Remember them, because nowadays,
you just have to hold onto yesterday.

Dream Asleep, Dream Astray

By Jia Patil

Fantastical fantasies and nerve-racking nightmares,
Why do we forget them all?
In the light of a new day, we are either relieved or resentful,
And the recollection of the dream,
Seraphic or sinister, is consigned to oblivion.
Do I want to forget?
Do I want to forget the pictures and memories,
That I myself have created while asleep, nonetheless?
The pictures that my imagination has created on its own,
Beautiful beasts and capricious creatures.
No! No, I will not forget.
I refuse to forget these moments with my mind-
So, when I wake up, I will choose.
I will choose to push the thoughts of the day ahead away,
And instead remember the stories of the night.
I will remember every last detail of every last dream,
Because I believe they are a window to my mind.
A path to understand,
All my thoughts and feelings when they are most vulnerable.
To know my deepest desires.
To truly understand myself.

RIP My Leg

By Benjamin Polillo

This poem is about D&D,
And about that time,
A fish gnawed off my knee.

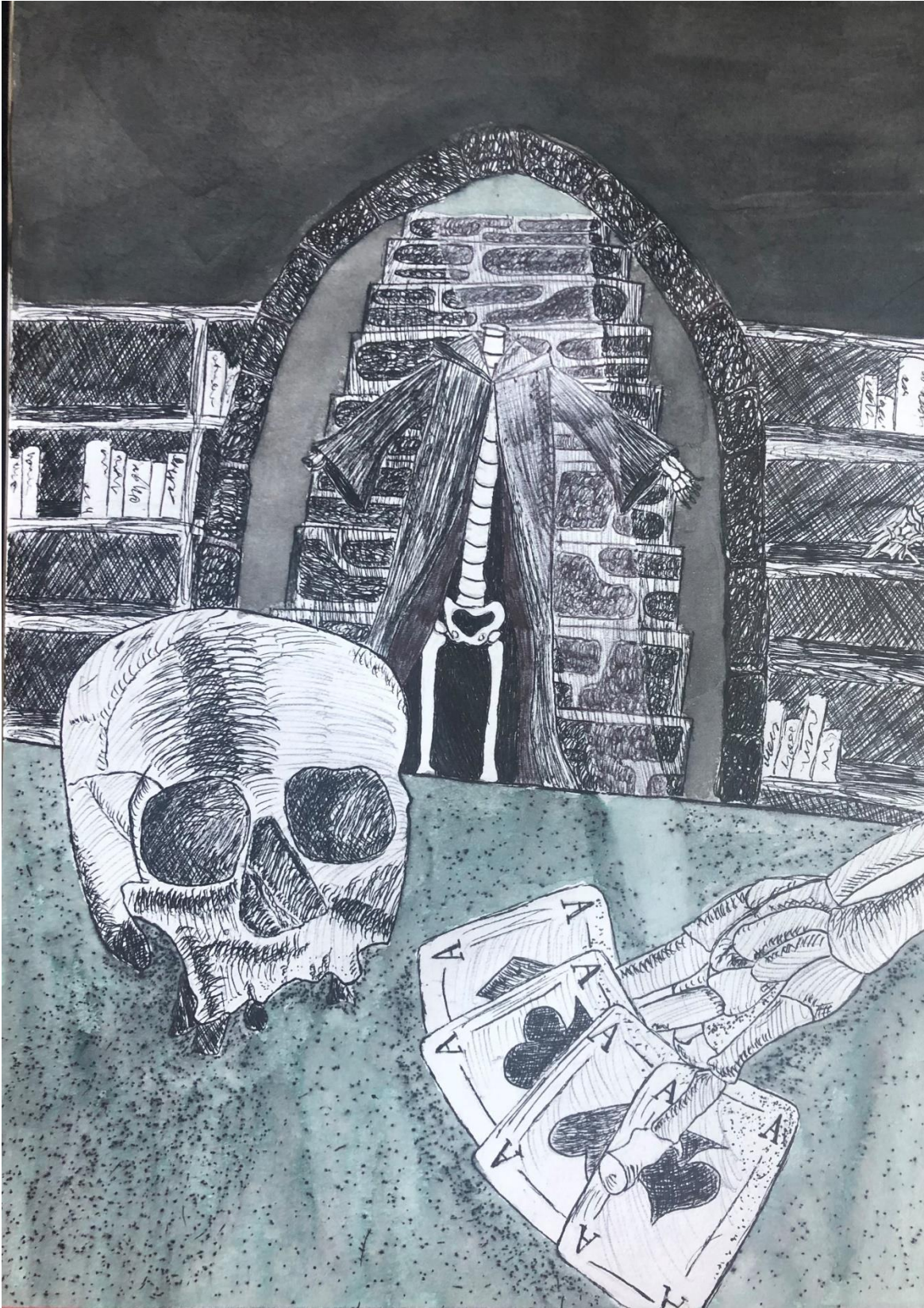
“Roll for stealth,”
Our DM said,
We still got caught and I lost 13 health,
I play as a bard,
It says on his card,
A dwarf with many ballads,
Who can make a mean salad.

Back to the story,
The guards are dead,
The bodies are gory,
Thoughts filled my head.
What happens next?
Too many thoughts for text.

We walked through the caves,
Hoping we don't see graves,
Will we find a dragon?
Maybe a treasure filled wagon?
We entered a cavern,
Is there a monster?
A tavern?

A lake sits in the middle,
Water a black night,
I drank a little,
Our fire losing light,
A fish jumped out,
Maybe trout?
Stole my leg,
Tastes like egg?

That's my story,
No need to worry,
I stole a leg,
His name was Greg,
If you see me later,
Please say hi,
But for now,
Goodbye.



Skeleton Playing Cards
By Liam Walsh

That's a Rap
By Nhan Vo

I wanted to thank you
but was unable to explain.
What it means to have a friend
to share life's joys and life's pains.
It's good to know our friendship
is one of endless devotion.
Forged out of respect
and every kind of emotion.

It's patient and forgiving
never failing or forsaking.
When a hand is outstretched
or one's heart is breaking.
It's ever faithful
even when the world condemns.
And sparkles in the darkness
like fireworks and gems.

It does my heart good
at the end of the day.
To know that you will never
be more than an email away.

He could not think of an argument against it; after all, McLaggen had certainly performed second best in the trials.

"Excellent," said McLaggen in a satisfied voice. "So when's practice?"

"What? Oh... there's one tomorrow evening."

"Good. Listen, Harry, we should have talked beforehand. I've got some ideas of strategy you might find useful."

"Right," said Harry enthusiastically. "I'll hear them tomorrow, then. I'm pretty tired now... see you..."

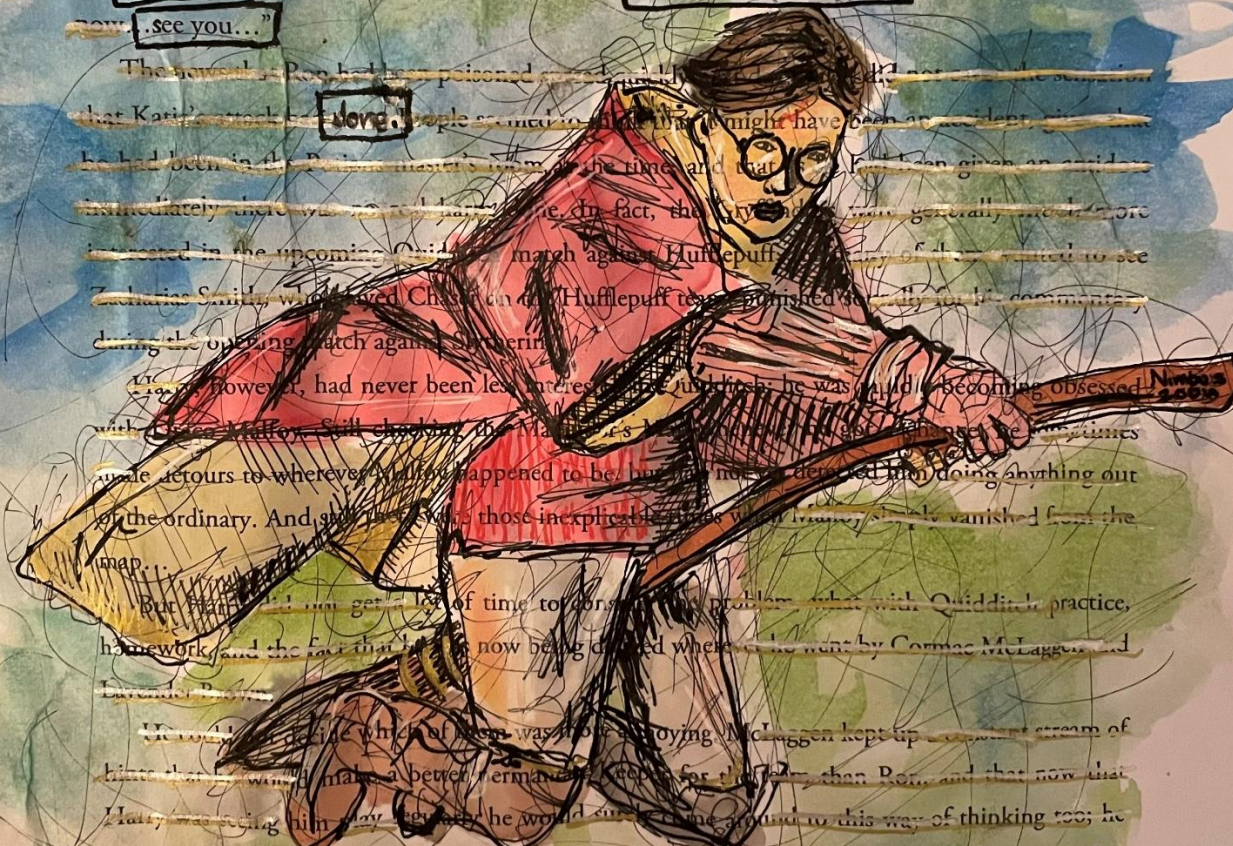
The news that Ron had been poisoned struck Harry like a lightning bolt. He had given an affidavit that Kari's attack on people seemed to have been an accident. He had been in the Room of Requirement at the time, and that had been given an affidavit. Immediately there was a red herring. In fact, the attack was generally considered more interesting in the upcoming Quidditch match against Hufflepuff. One of the things Harry wanted to see was Zacharias Smith, who had scored the winning goal in Hufflepuff's previous season, commenting during the opening match against Slytherin.

McLaggen, however, had never been less interested in the match; he was quickly becoming obsessed with Clive Mallow. Still, checking in Mallow's Muggle newspaper was a last resort. The sometimes made detours to wherever Mallow happened to be, but it was not a derogatory thing doing anything out of the ordinary. And still, the way those inexplicable things were usually simply vanished from the map.

But Harry did not get a lot of time to consider the problem, what with Quidditch practice, homework, and the fact that he was now being drilled where he went by Cormac McLaggen and Lavender Brown.

He would decide which of them was more annoying. McLaggen kept up a constant stream of hints that would make a better permanent record for the future than Ron, and that now that Harry was facing him anyway, he would surely come around to this way of thinking too; he was also known to criticize the other players and provide Harry with detailed training schemes, so that more than once Harry was forced to remind him who was Captain.

Meanwhile, Lavender kept drilling up to Harry to cheer Ron, which Harry found almost more wearing than McLaggen's Quidditch lessons. At first, Lavender had been very annoyed that nobody had thought to tell her that Ron was in the hospital wing. "I mean, I am his girlfriend!" — but unfortunately she had now decided to forgive Harry this lapse of memory and was keen to have lots



The Flight

By Anika Vaz

Who Do We Blame?

by Limpho Watae

It's no coincidence that in the past 400 years, more damage has been done to Our Planet than in the last three billion nine hundred ninety-nine million nine hundred ninety-nine thousand six hundred.

Our damage surpassed mass-extinction, for they allowed a new start to the planet.

Who do we blame?

The rising global temperatures, the people dying?

Who do we blame?

When we huddle into corners, hoping an intruder into our schools doesn't hear us, who do we blame?

When there comes a time we must wear gas masks to go outside, who do we blame?

When there is no more natural vegetation on our planet, who do we blame?

When cultures are disappearing at the hands of imperial colonialism, who do we blame?

When the sea levels rise so far, millions of people would die-when diseases begin to spread, but no one can contain them, who do we blame?

When we struggle to embrace each other, regardless of what we look like, how we talk, and how we think, who do we blame?

When people are put in reservations with running water as dark as mud, who do we blame?

When people are hurt when just walking outside, like any normal citizen? When people must worry about confrontations with others, who do we blame?

When people cannot live in a place, and constantly, are in terror of when the next bomb will drop, who do we blame?

When we're faced with the disappearance of an entire planet with no chance of rebuilding, who do we blame?

When our children are born into a mess that we failed to fix, much less listened when faced with the chance to prevent it, who do we blame?

Now, as we stand on a planet deteriorating, the control at our fingertips, who do we blame?

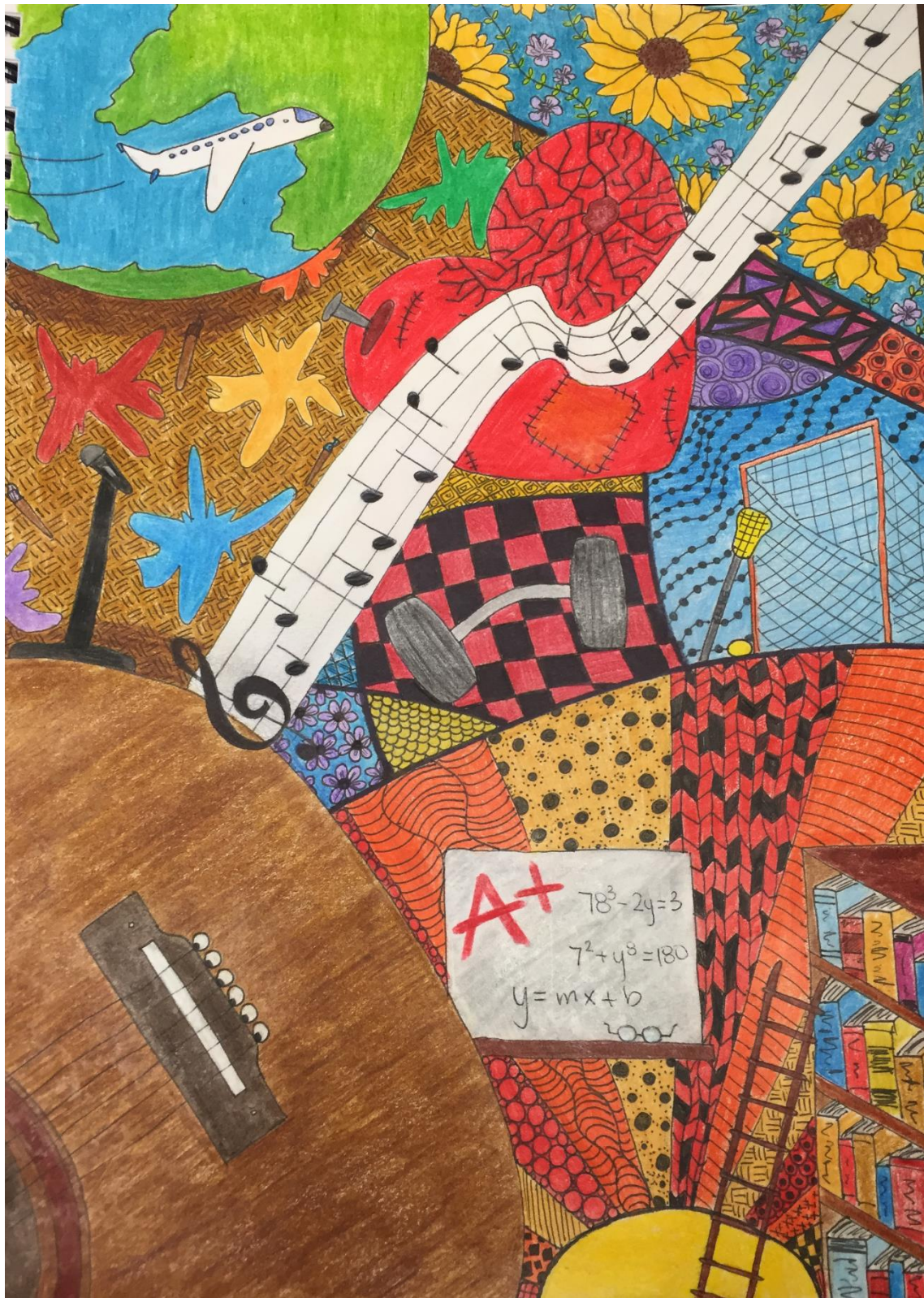
For, it is not my Earth, or your Earth, it's the Earth of us all.

I pray there may be a window to fix it, but it is slowly creaking shut.

Hold it open, for we're to blame.



Monster
By Chloe Dehn



Transformation
By Isla Scruggs

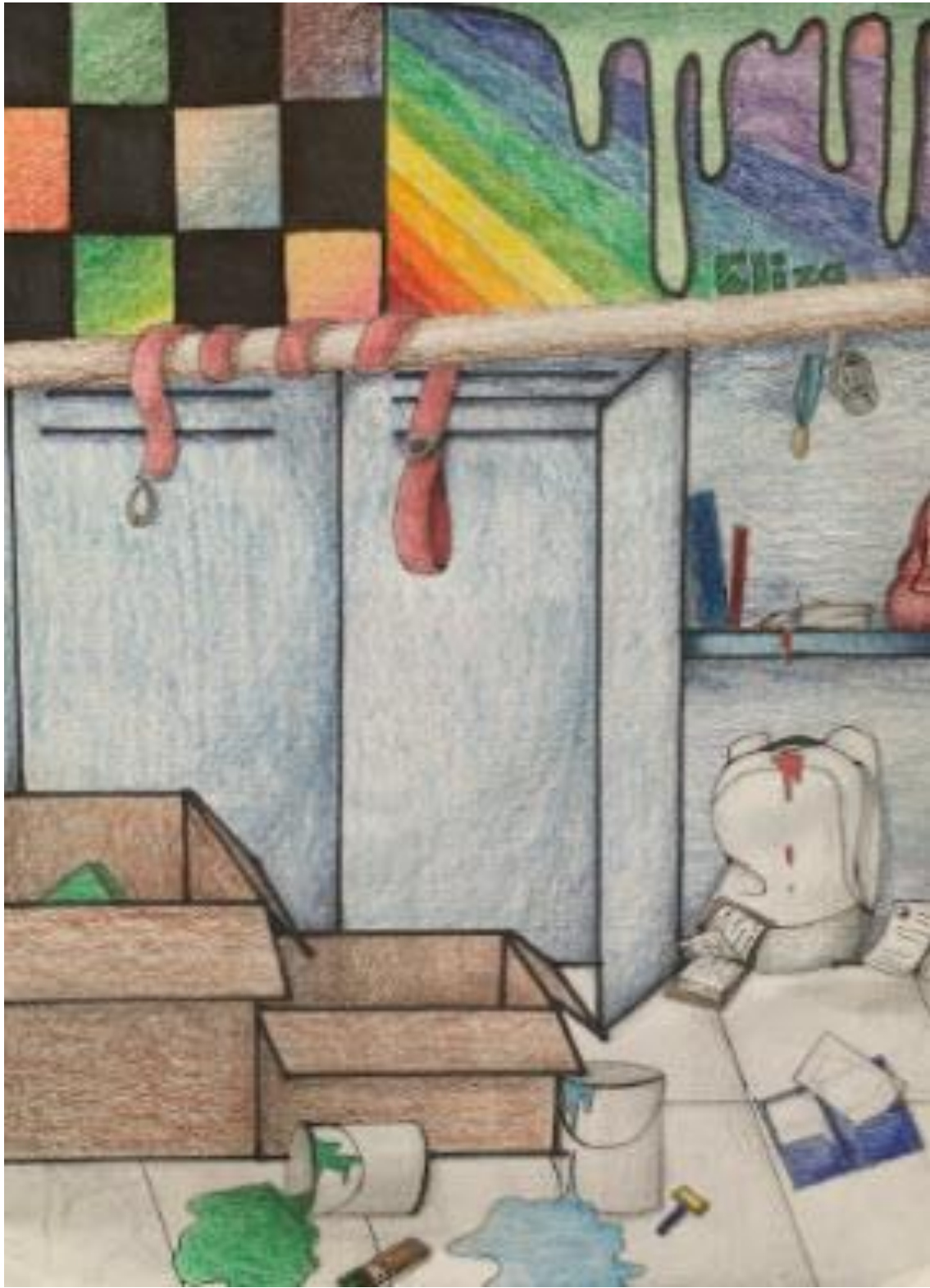
Middle School Challenges

By Limpho Watae

Middle school. I can assume when you hear of the large building, you think of pre-teens and early teenagers, about a thousand of them, and too much drama for such a stressful environment... am I right? Typically, the middle school experience is described as the worst experience known to man, and often memorable for several reasons. However, this 2020-21 school year has been anything but ordinary for me, one might even say extraordinary. I remember bracing myself for all the drama in early sixth grade, but today, all we ever do is wake up and stare at a computer screen. Our version of learning. Middle school was very different for me, and different from what I sought after. I hoped for my roaring 20's, but instead, I had a roaring 20 assignments due on Google Classroom. Because of this uncharted way of doing school, the way I am as a person changed for the better. To wake up that March morning and receive the news that we were going to be confined in our houses for nearly a month was startling, but not as startling as what it *truly* was.

Quarantine was a struggle that everyone endured no matter where you lived in the world, but for me personally, it revolutionized me. It was the February after a trip to the U.K in December of 2019 when I first heard about the Coronavirus. Mistakenly, I called it "*canoravirus*" until corrected by my mom; she explained that this strange disease had come from a lab in Wuhan. She told us it was very contagious and that we should be careful about surfaces and interacting closely with people. None of that bothered me until Friday, March 13th, when the first COVID cases were found in Fairfax County. I worried as the cases began to rise. "Why is this so bad?" I thought to myself before remembering my mother's warning. My dad, at the time, had recently returned from a trip to South Africa right before the borders closed. He told us it was worse than we thought, and that everyone was required to wear a facial mask. Strange. Whenever someone had the flu, we never quarantined or wore face masks, so what was this? On the outside, quarantine changed me. I never thought it would change me on the inside as well. I began to comment less on group chats where I used to be the star of the show, and occasionally told to "go sleep" or to "touch some grass." I was silent. I kept only four friends close and dear to me, and sure enough, these four people were people I knew from second grade, when I first moved here. I surprised myself how much less I talked. As the time progressed, my sudden anti-socialness began to astonish me less, but in the end, it wasn't all that good. Keeping conversations going became a burden and talking too much made my chin hurt.

Despite the pains of becoming less social, I began to know who I am, and who *truly* lived inside my head. Although COVID was a curse to many- with a death toll over 9,371 tonight only, I managed to unveil a positive, in the midst of all the negativity. Often, we are asked the question of who we are, and most of the time, we're quick to say our names but who you are isn't in a name, and I managed to realize that in these past nine months. My middle school challenge was change. How did I change over time, and was it for the good? All I can say is, "Yes I changed, and I'll change again."



Transformation
By Elizabeth Brown