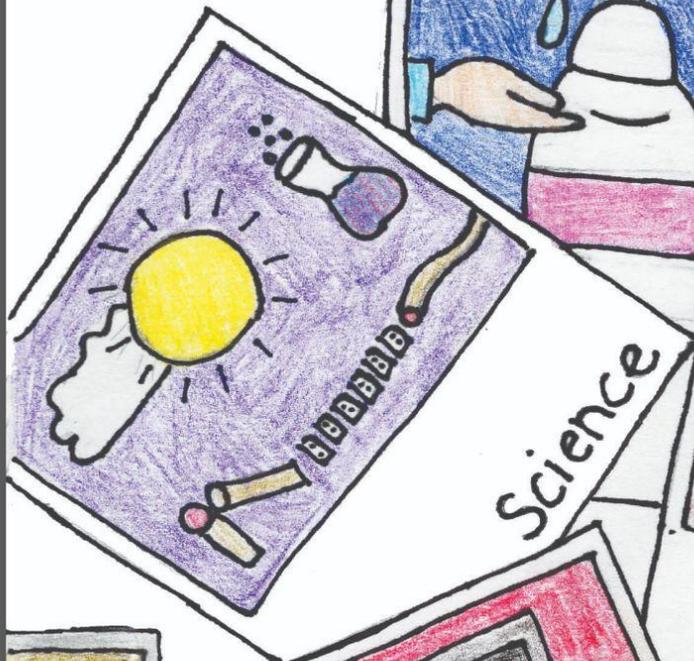
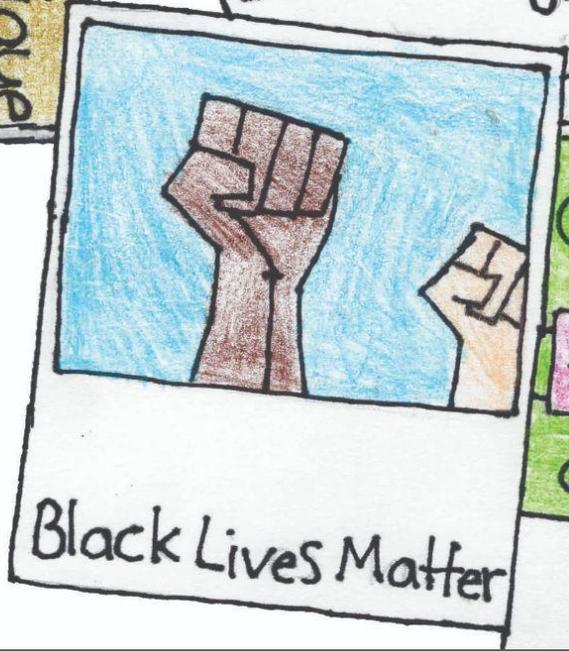
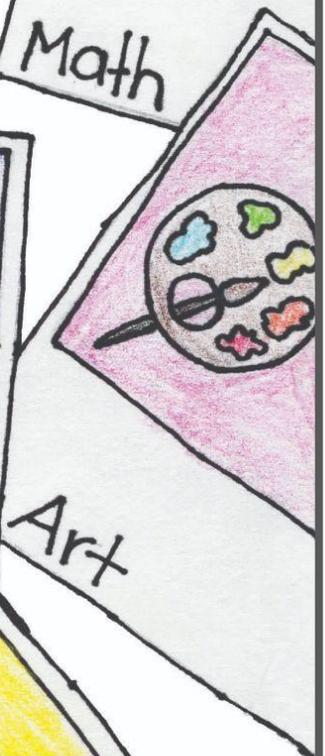


Dragons' Fire Review

da Vinci 2020-2021
Arts
Middle School



By: Sara Jaurigue



Dragons' Fire Literary Review 2020-2021

This year's issue of Dragons' Fire comes at an unprecedented time. For over a year, school has taken place on screens, and we've been trying to do our best teaching and learning even through we can't physically be together. Some of us emerged from 14 months of relative isolation in April, when our schools opened up for in-person afternoons. And just last month, in May 2021, some of our middle school students began receiving their first doses of the Covid-19 vaccine with the hopes that we can all return to school safely next fall.

Despite the unimaginable challenges of the past year, our da Vinci 6th, 7th, and 8th graders produced and shared some brilliant writing for this year's Dragons' Fire Literary Review. Some of it speaks directly to our year of isolation, some dwells in pure fantasy; some explores social issues and some celebrates our natural spaces. Most of the writing comes from a school-wide call for submissions, and much comes from year-long and term creative writing classes and Mr. Williams' ELA classes.

The visual art was chosen primarily from Kelda's online gallery of student art produced over the past year, and a couple of pieces were submitted by students. All visual art was chosen for merit, theme connections, and reproducibility in black and white.

Thank you for reading and sharing in the artistic brilliance of our students. We hope you enjoy.

Emily Conner
Creative Writing Teacher

Cover Art by Sara Jaurigue

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Up Above

Wren Alger

Up above in the stars is where the last of the penguins are
They flew up so far to reach the warmth of a star
They wanted a place to have a new start
But in their excitement they missed one crucial part
They forgot the vegan ice cream, which was then taken by a greedy cop
Which they discovered as they reached their final stop
They had do something or go without dessert
So one brave penguin put on their space-pants and shirt

And set out with a recipe to find what was needed
Soon she found cocoa powder but her goal was uncompleted
Then she found the most crucial ingredient, peanut butter
And set off for banana land where the cold made her shudder
She swam under a big bridge where a mean old troll did slumber
When she emerged from the damp and dark river her heart began to thunder
Before her were more bananas than she could number

With all but one ingredient she walked through snow, soft as silk
All that she needed was a barrel of creamy coconut milk
She scanned and she scoured for upwards of an hour
But all she could find was out-of-date soup powder
She had almost lost hope, almost given up
When she spotted it before her in a massive teacup
With all the ingredients and a big smile as well
She waddled away from the moldy soup smell

Up above in the stars is where the last penguins are
And all day as if in a dream the penguins feast on vegan ice cream
And deep in the palace in a place with no malice
Sitting on a throne shaped like a golden chalice
Is where you'll find their joyous queen
For it turns out the giant teacup was a magic ice cream machine

Angels of Tolmere

Wren Alger

USI Tenshi, 3,000 feet in the sky

The deafening blare of a siren violently tore Edith away from her dream of the tranquil woods of her village. She felt like she was there, amongst the bushy-tailed squirrels and bright-blue birds filling the air with their songs. Edith opened her eyes to every surface in the ship being bathed in scarlet light. An emotionless voice coming from over the loudspeaker instructed her to remain calm and to under no circumstances leave her seat. Just then a pair of metal clamps wrapped around Edith's arms, holding her in place. She finally remembered what she was doing miles in the sky right as the ship detached its cargo hold and sent Edith and her three comrades hurtling down towards the earth.

Edith went over the mission in her mind—to destroy the Militarum lab in the village of Tolmere. Tolmere's lab was infamous for producing a deadly gas that had ended the lives of countless Inquisition citizens. Edith was able to get a good look at the cargo hold for the first time. She was in a rectangular crate with dark green netting covering the walls and two large boxes at the end of the room. The rest of her team were in three chairs identical to hers, one to her left and the other two on the opposite side of the wall. Isaac, the second in command, gave her a thumbs-up before an impact on the bottom of the hull slammed his head into the wall, knocking him out. All Edith saw before blacking out herself was a trickle of blood running down the wall from Isaac's head.

Visions of when they were all children came to Edith, playing games deep in the same woods they were outside of now. Isaac would always venture ahead of them, to return having found a patch of strawberries or a family of rabbits. Back then she never would have assumed that the small Militarum town of Tolmere on the other side of the woods would use the same lovely forest and family of rabbits Edith grew up with to test toxic gas on.

Edith was awakened by Sonya, the priest, tapping on her shoulder.

"Edith, Edith wake up!" said Sonya.

"Ok, ok, I'm awake!" Edith replied while scrambling out of her chair. "How's Isaac?"

"A small concussion, but he's fine. He's outside with Cooper right now."

"Good. We should prepare, we're an hour away from the village."

With that, Edith and Sonya slid the two boxes out of the cargo hold on a track that they were connected to, leaving them standing outside the cart. They had landed

in a small hill covered in shiny gravel. There were large slabs of bedrock jutting out of the ground as far as the eye could see. Dark green grass glistening with dew covered the ground, punctuated by patches of gravel. Streams of silver water lapped up against the riverbank, filling the air with a cold, sharp din.

Cooper and Isaac noticed that the crates were about to be opened and immediately ran over to help. The two crates opened with a soft hiss, revealing their contents. The first held a copper revolver and a musket with a circular magazine resting on its head. The crate also held a large crossbow, but instead of firing bolts it was loaded with long, thin metal cylinders glowing with bright blue light.

However, it was the second crate that Edith was most excited for. She gently opened the lid so that she could claim its contents. Inside the crate was a large axe and, underneath that, a flamethrower, the sunlight shining on its shiny tubes and gauges. Edith gingerly lifted it from the crate with the same care one would have with a baby. Despite the amount of space the flamethrower took up, three items remained in the crate. Sonya walked over and lifted them up one by one. A large mace crackling with electricity. An ornate skull-shaped golden thurible filled with incense. And lastly, an original Bible of the Inquisition forged five centuries ago, its dusty moth-eaten pages held in place by six silver clamps. Sonya delicately lifted it up and placed it in her satchel before announcing that they were wasting time and should start heading to Tolmere.

The walk to Tolmere was short, lasting only 50 minutes. But for Edith it seemed to take hours, with a strong wind blowing strands of her bluish-black hair into her eyes and extinguishing the ignition light on her flamethrower. They followed the river, with bright red crabs occasionally scuttling out from under barnacle-encrusted boulders. Edith and her companions walked in complete silence, stopping only once when Cooper spotted a massive steel walker in the distance.

Once the sun had fully risen they were in sight of the village. A wall of grey concrete surrounded it and a tower of black smoke billowed from the town square. Edith and her comrades put on their raven masks, except for Sonya, whose mask was a dull-silver skull. They all crept up to the wall and began to scale it just as a white-hot beam of plasma whizzed past Edith's head.

Edith whipped her head around to see a dozen *Militarum* guards running at them from a hundred feet away. A familiar sense of dread filled her stomach at the sight of their faded blue breastplates and bug-eyed gas masks. Swallowing her fear, Edith hopped down and began to push Cooper up so he could scale the wall faster. Sonya, who was already over the wall, was able to grab Isaac's hand and pull him over. Just as Edith jumped down to safety, but before she landed, a searing hot pain engulfed her left arm and her graceful jump turned into an uncontrolled fall which

resulted in the side of her head slamming into the concrete below. Her vision slowly turned bright white before consciousness slipped from her grasp.

Edith was back home, sitting around a campfire with a group of friends chatting about their days and eating warm bread that Sonya had baked. Edith was already tired and the heat from the fire was only making it worse. Before she could even say a word she fell into darkness and the tingling warmth from the fire was slowly replaced by a horrible blistering pain enveloping her right arm.

She awoke in a dusty wooden shed covered in sweat and with no one in sight. Edith spotted a full moon from the small circular window in the corner of the room right above a large metal door. She made to get up so she could get a better grip on where she was, but a scorching pain ignited in her shoulder and she quickly fell back down onto her chair. She was going to get up again but she was interrupted by an out-of-breath Militarum guard running into the room. The air was filled with the muffled wheeze of the gas mask as he tried to regain his breath.

The guard slammed the door shut and slumped to the floor, exhausted. He then spotted Edith in the corner of the shack, her flamethrower already pointed at him. He reached for his weapon but it was no use—he was engulfed with flames and in six seconds he had stopped moving. The flames swiftly spread to the shack, blossoming into a blaze just as Cooper arrived outside.

The flames had not yet spread across the threshold but were closing in fast. Despite her best efforts, Edith couldn't stand for more than three seconds before feeling ill and collapsing to the floor. She was able to muster enough strength to start crawling towards the door. The fire was spreading faster and faster. Edith used a bale of smoking hay for support and was able to get into an upright slouch. Using her flamethrower as a cane, she was barely able to stumble out of the shack before her mouth filled with warm saliva and she vomited all over the road outside.

"Edith!" Cooper offered his hand to her. "What happened?!"

"A guard ran inside," Edith said as she shakily stood up. "I didn't have a choice," she grunted.

"We fought a group of guards in the town square ten minutes ago, maybe he was one of them. Sonya and Isaac are there right now."

"We should probably get going then," Edith said as she picked up a wooden beam to use as her new cane.

They traveled carefully so as to not alert anyone nearby, and they only sped up when they heard more guards arrive at the smoking remains of the shack. Edith's vision slowly began to unblur as she walked past row after row of grey concrete buildings with propaganda posters draped over them.

Sonya and Isaac glanced up when they saw Edith and Cooper approaching the abandoned lot they had taken refuge in. Edith and Cooper walked over to the others, who were sitting on either side of a corpse.

"This one was their commander," said Sonya. "He surrendered the location of the lab."

"So why is he dead?" Edith responded.

"He still had to pay for his sins. He merely repented before doing so."

"We will rest in the condemned hospital a few blocks away. I can keep watch first seeing as Sonya and I have had a less difficult day," Isaac declared.

"Sounds good, let's go now," said Cooper.

Edith had many dreams. Most of them involved her being stuck in that burning cabin with no means of escape, but one dream stood out more than the others. She was in the woods, in a clearing with fog seeping in from behind the trees. She was engulfed in shadow, and looking up she saw there was a giant grey cloud hanging above her. From that cloud came a flock of dark grey birds that dived at Edith. She stood in awe of the birds flying at her, and at the last second they scattered and disappeared into the sky. The woods filled with eerie silence and the fog drew nearer. Edith heard whispering from behind her and spun around to see a massive creature barreling towards her. It reached her before she could make it out, its razor sharp teeth shredding her to pieces, ending her dream.

Edith roused to the same eerie silence in the village air. She kept watch for two hours, constantly looking behind her, thinking that she heard something, only for it to be a gust of wind blowing through a shattered wall. One hour before the sun began to rise, Edith woke up her companions. They packed and set out for the armory where the lab was. After a few blocks they found something unusual--the buildings were in ruins that were still smoking.

"What happened here?" asked Sonya.

"The Militarum must have been searching for us," Cooper replied. "Bombed this entire block. They probably walked right by the hospital. Fools."

"I wonder if they went back to the armory or if they are still searching for us?" Isaac asked. "Cooper! Behind you!!"

Cooper spun around to see a group of three guards moving towards him. He raised his crossbow and shot a bolt into the chest of the first guard. The bolt shattered and left its glowing blue contents on his armour. The guard ducked behind cover, seemingly unharmed, but seconds later his body tumbled out into view with a smoking hole where Cooper had shot him.

Edith and Sonya walked into the building the two remaining guards had retreated to. The first guard was caught unprepared and was burnt to a crisp before he could fully register what was going on. The final guard leaped at Edith, slamming his baton into the back of her head and knocking her to the floor. He made to finish Edith but Sonya slammed her mace into his chest, throwing him across the room and into a wall with a sickening crunch. Sonya walked over to where the guard lay.

"What's your name? No need to be silent. Anyway I'm the last person you'll talk to so you might as well speak," Sonya coolly said to him.

"Charles, Charles Edmund," he quietly responded.

"Well Charles, would you be so kind as to tell us the passcode to the laboratory vault?"

"What will helping you do for me? I'm dying no matter what."

"True, but before you pass we will get the code out of you one way or another."

"I-I don't know the codes. But I do know where they are kept." He quickly added, "I'll tell you as long as you don't hurt my brother. He's a flag bearer. There are two there right now but I don't know if he's one of them."

"I'll consider that. Now tell me where the codes are. I haven't got all day."

"There in the commander's office. It's on the second floor, th-the door has a picture of a golden eagle on it, it should be somewhere in there."

"Well then, Charles, thank you for your cooperation."

Sonya knelt down and closed his eyes, as a barely noticeable wisp of white smoke drifted from his eyes into Sonya's hand and his breathing stopped.

Ten minutes later they all reached the armory. It was a squat grey compound surrounded by barbed wire, with a dozen soldiers patrolling around its perimeter. Isaac moved to a building a block away from them to find a good way into armory. As Isaac was scouting, a wailing siren called out across the entire town just as a colossal grey cloud drifted into the sky covering everything in shadows.

Edith thought that the sirens meant that they had been spotted, but when the town was plunged into darkness she looked up to the same grey cloud from her dream. A feeling of despair washed over when she saw the cloud. Sonya could sense that something was not right. She drew her mace and radioed Isaac to run back and make a plan from there.

They saw Isaac dart back into a building's grey shell, but then Edith spotted something. A flock of what appeared to be winged humans had just appeared from out of the cloud. They descended upon the city, one landing on the rubble Isaac was in. Edith was able to get a good look at it. It had pale grey flesh and was wearing tattered rags. On its back was a pair of wings but instead of feathers there were

muscles and tendons holding the wings together. It had a pair of shining sickle-like claws and on its face was a blank white mask with a pale-red ornate face pattern.

Sonya had spotted it too and was reaching for her radio to warn Isaac when he came sprinting out of the building's door. The creature snapped its head to him, arched its back and leapt at him. Isaac had almost made it to safety but it was too fast—it caught up to him and pinned him to the ground. Cooper shot a crossbow bolt at it but in vain. It slashed over and over again before grabbing Isaac by the shoulders and flying into the sky. There was a flash of bright light and for a moment the sky was filled with fire. Isaac in his final moments had detonated his ammunition, sending both him and his killer into a ball of flame. Edith let out a choked sob and knelt with Sonya to pray for his soul.

"Wha-what just happened?" asked Cooper.

"I'm not sure," Sonya replied. "They looked like angels but that should be impossible—they were destroyed."

"Well, if they were destroyed, how are they here?"

Edith shivered at the vague memory of that terror-filled year as a young child, when the angels roamed freely before they were banished to the Vale.

"Look, we can discuss this more at a later time," Sonya said urgently. "Isaac didn't die for nothing. If we can make it to the woods we should be safer."

They all begin sprinting to the fence where they first entered. The town was in chaos, soldiers and civilians in disarray and angels swooping down to pick off their prey. An angel touched down right in front of them, and Edith bashed it in the face, which dazed it long enough for them to run past. They could see the wall they had jumped over the previous day. But a pair of angels that had been following them landed on the wall, forcing them to search for another means of escape. Cooper was the one to spot it, a blimp tied down to the ground by a dozen ropes. They ran to it and on the way Cooper even sent an angel tumbling out of the sky with a well-placed shot to the wing.

They clambered on top of the airship's cabin and began cutting the ropes frantically. The airship groaned and creaked in the roaring wind. They were able to cut all but three before the sharp claw of an angel pierced Edith's hand. Edith grasped her knife and cut the rope it was perching on, sending it falling, but this gave the ship a violent jolt and Edith lost her balance and tumbled off the cabin's roof. She dropped her knife and was able to hook her injured hand on the door, dangling 40 feet from the ground. Edith filled with anger at the thought that all of this might have been for nothing.

Sonya was cutting the final rope when it came out of the smoke, scrambling over the ruins on the ground. A giant scorpion-like mass of flesh with a mask like the angels. It was the thing that had killed Edith in her dream. It bellowed out a terrifying noise and as Edith pulled herself into the ship, the final rope was cut, sending the airship and its three occupants drifting off into the morning fog.



Alder Ford

In mY ScReaMs

Juno Anthony

The high-pitched screams grow louder and louder
With each step from the shadows,
the lights grow bigger and brighter
And the screams grow louder and louder

The eagle snatches people up
And flings them back and forth over the ground
Cars whizz by me, fast like bullets
And the screams grow louder and louder

Rainbow colors shoot past me
The train lurches erratically but never runs off-track
They are riding up and down and upside down
And the screams grow louder and louder

Hard rock music blares sharp, ringing in their ears
The speeding teal, pink, yellow, and green Cadillacs
Leave their passengers dizzy
Visions of people anxiously gathered, filled with anticipation
As we pick up speed the people began to blur
It's almost like a dream
And the screams grow louder and louder

I cannot escape now
The spider has me
It picks me up
Spinning me around, my back towards the ground,
Before I know it, I am up so high in the air
Its clutches wrap tighter and tighter around me
Even as it picks up new victims
I scream from deep in the pit of my belly
And the screams grow louder and louder

"Let me go!" I yell in terror
Chanting, pleading with it
"Let me go!"
The spider spins me around one last time and slowly,
Moving his arm to the ground,
He unwraps me from his grip

I run away, not looking back . . .
And the screams grow louder and louder

Sorry

Taeyon Ashton

Sorry I didn't answer my phone
I was busy ignoring everyone I know

Sorry I didn't answer my phone
I was on an adventure all alone

Sorry I didn't answer my phone
I'm kind of a rolling stone

Sorry I didn't answer my phone
I was a drift on the seventh sea

Sorry I didn't answer my phone
I was imagining how you must see me



CC Wells

Winter Wagon

Aubrey Barrett

it all comes down to this
the weight of the world falls

on a freezing sheet of white
which hides the

old wagon, cherished
and paint worn



Carrie Pollock

Creator of the Universe

Niko Beam

The house is quiet
There are two things in front of me
A piece of blank paper
and a pencil
With low expectations
I pick up the pencil
I press the pencil down onto the paper
My hands' movements translated into something unimaginable
Something that common folk don't take for granted
Art
Suddenly
A wave of creativity rushes through me
My hands darting across the paper
in a collected manner
creating shapes springing to life in front of me
It is as if I have created a second universe
inside our own
My own little world
Where anything and everything
I create
can come to being
My own little people
in their own little village
on their own little world
I thought I was merely
a useless little boy
But now I see
I am a god
Excitement rushes through my veins
I have discovered a new ability
The power of creation
The power to make anything I want
The power to-
crack
The lead broke

The Dog by the Fire

Jet Birenbaum

the big spotted dog
by the fire

as the cold white snow
falls outside

the flaming hot fire
encaged by the furnace

a sigh of content,
the big dog makes



Ellis Deumling

For My People

Sofi Bishop

For artists

Artists who create

Artists who create beautiful colorful wonderful art

For artists

Artists who

Draw

Paint

Sculpt

For artists

Artists who

Act

Dance

Sing

For artists

With wet clay between their fingers

The smell of acrylic paint in their nose

The scritch scratch

Scritch scratch

Scritch scratch

Of a pencil on the paper white as snow

For artists who imagine

For artists who create

For artists who express themselves

A Good Shake

Paige Capitano

Yellow

Brown

Black

and White

We have been sorted into groups that society writes.
When all of the world is laid out on a table,
the pen holders decide, not our names, but our labels.

If an alien came to Earth today
and saw the labels "Straight" and "Gay,"
I am quite certain that they would say,
"Why can't you all be equal?"

The alien would ask this innocent question,
and the pen holder would make a bad impression.
He'd laugh out loud and then he'd say,
"One person must have all the power; the others must obey."

So, then the alien would leave in a hurry
and, just like me, they'd be filled with worry.
"All beings should be who they want to be.
And any kind creature should agree with me."

Why must we give each other these labels
And not call each other by our names?
Humanity must start turning the tables.
Let's put an end to these hurtful games.

Without segregation, Earth would be a better place.
No one deserves to be born a disgrace.
We have a lot of history to unlace.
It will take much work to try to erase.

Let's try to create the vision I see:
A world where you are equal to me.
Where people get along on land and at sea.
A place that's safe for them, him, and she.

That world is not a far-off vision.
I think it can come true.
It's time to stop this nonsensical division.
And the change can start with you.

You can smile and wave at your neighbor, Seiko.
And say hello to Jose y su chico.
You could talk to Jung Kim during your break.
This racial tapestry needs a good shake.

Who were these Label Makers anyway?
For their fearful decisions, we've had to pay.
We can't let the pen holders of the past decide who we are.
If we tear off our labels, humanity will go far.



Quinn Tran

I Am

Iris de Alba Gibbons

I hear
My keyboard clicking
And my dog snoring

I see
My computer screen
More and more late assignments

I want
To not be in quarantine
To see friends

I am
A student learning more from life
More than my thousand page Algebra book

I pretend
That I'm not drowning
In a petri dish of covid

I feel
Bored
Reliving the same day over and over again for an entire year

I touch
My warm blanket
And my fuzzy pull string hoodie

I worry
My only escape from real life is in my dreams
But I can only dream so much when I haven't gotten more than 7 hours of sleep in months

I cry
About my mental health
Along with everything else

I am
Strong
But tired



Wes Dyer

For My People Who Don't Know

Min Min Dippold

For my people who are unsure of who they are, who they want to be,
or what they want to be in life

For my people who don't know their people, who don't know their "true family," their
blood, or their birth place

For my people don't know their culture, their language, or don't know those precious
family traditions people love

For my people who are asked where they're from
For those who are the odd one out in any classroom,
community event,
or family gathering

For my beautiful brilliant brave people who
get stared at and watched,
make their hands visible when they see police,
are cautious when handling water guns
or anything because of the stupidity, ignorance, and racism in people
Not everyone, but enough that you're always on edge

For my people who are unsure of people's love and overthink everything
For my people who give so much love, but get little themselves
For my people who don't fully trust anyone or anything, even the most trustworthy
people

For those who are always on their toes even when
all alone,
lying in bed,
in their room,
in their house

For those who lie in their bed staring at the ceiling, dreading sleep,
but just as equally dreading the day
and the people and things that come with the light and movement of dawn

For those who love to create, to cook, to bake, but feel like their stomach is in knots
when they eat their beautiful creations

For those who don't feel comfortable in their on skin and always feel as if they have to
be someone else;

look more like others,
act different than they do,
walk taller or straighter,
or talk differently than they do—
You don't.

For my people who are strong, beautiful, and passionate about everything they care about, but see themselves as weak, ugly, and unsuccessful in their passions,
You don't know just how amazing you are, all the things you've completed, and all the people you've touched
Worrying is normal, but you've got it!



Quincy Whiteman

My Brother and I

Elise Dyer

Dear chickens,
This is for the chicken I used to have
And for my parents who never really knew
What that one chicken could do.

You scared me.
I never knew who was who.
There were three of you.
You chased us.
My brother and I.
You pecked and glared. Not scared.
I was never prepared like
A wave that you would never see coming.
I was a mouse in a cave of lions.
We tried my brother and I. We looked into
Those cold dead eyes.

We yelled and cried.
For my stuffed animal cat that died
By their side.
For it couldn't fly yet it dared try.
For my brother who too knew what that
one chicken could do.

Though my parents never really knew why.
My brother and I.
"Hold out your arms and chase them,"
They'd say.
But they were never the prey.
Day by day.
Til the time we gave them away.

For My People

Ruby Mae East

For my people who

Smile, laugh, dance and sing.

Love when others don't do the same.

See the bright spots--they *are* the bright spots.

Perseverant.

Brave.

Joyous.

For my people who

Create companies and communities, CEOs and changemakers.

Watch Earth from thousands of miles away: swirls of blue, green, white
blending together like watercolors.

Move their lips, move their hips.

To their own rhythm, not someone else's.

Boundary-breaking.

Capable.

Unstoppable.

For my people who

Raise each other up.

The sound of a spoon scraping against the side of the ice cream carton, flavors
bursting in their mouths.

Words of independence like the ebb and flow of tides, washing away sand
castles that are the people who only wish to bring them down.

Supportive.

Gorgeous.

Unique, every one of them.

For my people.

My girls, my friends.

My system of love.

My know what it's like.

My perseverant, brave, joyous, boundary-breaking, capable, unstoppable,
supportive, gorgeous, unique women.

Don't wait for us to fail, to fall down.

Because the best ability my people have is being able to stand back up.

Spring Haikus

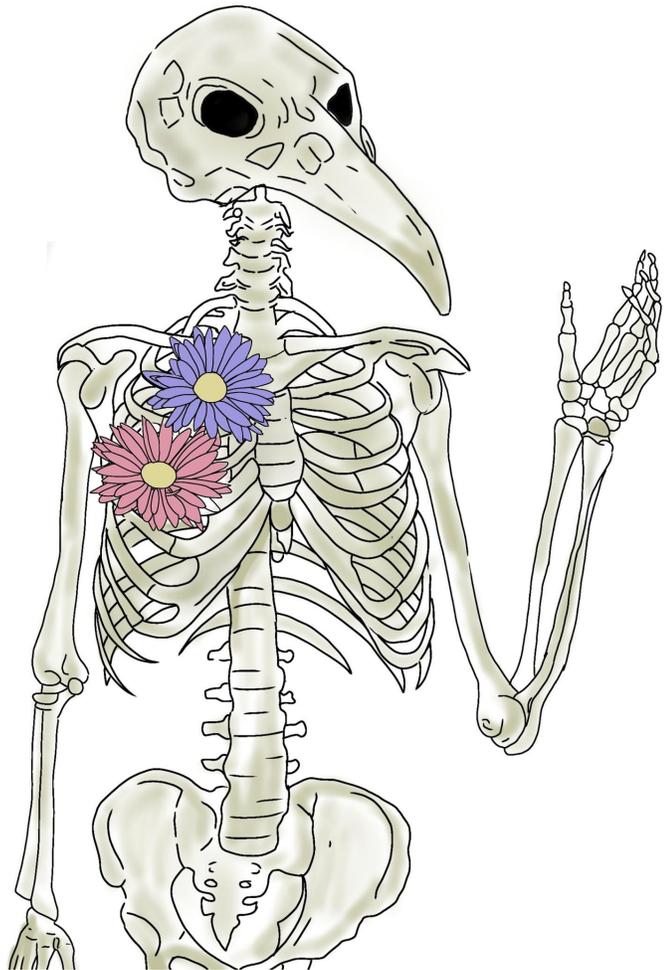
Mika Emens-Lingley

Snug beneath the soil
The tulip bulbs are sleeping
Safe and warm.

The winter snow melts
Flowing into the cool soil
Spring's first words.

The flowers awaken
To the sound of the whispers
From the dew.

Rising from their beds
The dew and sky are singing
"Spring is here."



Augustina Sprinkel

Graveyard Blues

Patrick Ford

As he walked on the narrow trail, a sense of nostalgia ran through his body. The steady wind pacing against his cheek, the psychedelic sun shining as bright as the ceiling light that wakes you up early in the morning. "Huh, it's really empty for a place where dead walk," Patrick said as his all-black sneakers clack-clack-clacked down the narrow path. Through the distance, Patrick saw a tall, slim, dark figure who gave him the most soulless, the most deepest stare you could ever see with an ear-to-ear grin.

"I've been waiting for you Patrick," the figure said.

"What would you even want with me?" Patrick said in an aggravated tone.

"You know what I want, don't play dumb with me," the dark figure said.

"I haven't the slightest idea what you are talking about, man, and plus, you can't just come here unannounced. What is your name?"

"My name is Nujabes, I am the second in command with the grim reaper. And you're the man who made a deal with me."

"What kind of deal was it?" Patrick said.

"YOUR SOUL," Nujabes said as his arms stretch out to Patrick.

What the heck! How did he reach so far? I'm about 100 meters from here, it's impossible! Patrick tried to run but was soon caught by the hands of a 2nd in command who worked with the grim reaper.

"THERE IS NO ESCAPE FOR YOU, THIS IS YOUR DEMISE. YOU SHOULD'VE NOT TRIED TO BRING BACK YOUR FRIEND, SO NOW YOU ROT."

"NOOOOOOOOOOOoooooooooooooooooo!" Patrick said as he drew closer to Nujabes. Nujabes' mouth opened all the way to his forehead, frothing from the mouth.

Patrick gets even closer and.....Gone.

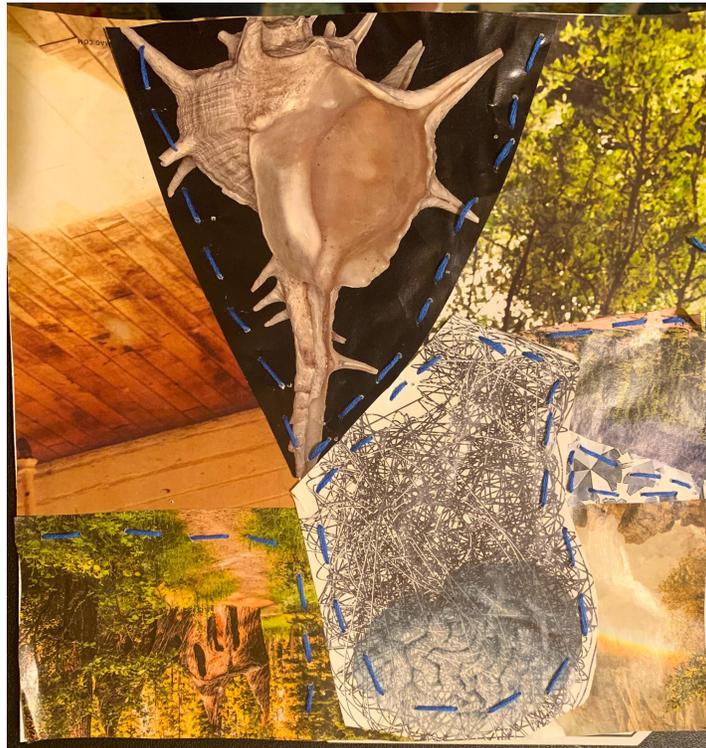
Rain Forest

Elijah Frantz

Trees like pillars
support nature's temple.
Lungs of the planet
breathing life to the world.
Creatures thrive
immersed in this emerald paradise.
Cloaked in moss,
leaves, and vines.
Camouflaged
in sun and shadow
sloths slumber safely
hidden in the canopy.
The forest floor is alive
with color.
Poisonous frogs stand out.
Vibrant hues of red, blue, and yellow
dart through the undergrowth.
We must protect
this sacred treasure.

Homesick
Evan Furchner

Like thousands of tiny dancers in the wind,
colorful flowers sway slowly.
Sun peaks through the clouds in rays,
Making this place seem holy.
To reveal emerald green trees,
the mountaintops have to show.
Ripples in the water create a bright yellow glow.
This world is filled with color as far as the eye can see
And then,
I turn off my TV.
Snow falls outside, just as light as paper.
I stare at the grey carpet, as my vision starts to taper.
And I start to wonder,
Just when my brain begins to spin,
Can I feel homesick for somewhere I've never been?



Sinasi Numanoglu

Midnight Masterpiece

Evan Furchner

Dear Midnight,
When life is so busy, you are so quiet,
Your darkness textures the world like a fuzzy blanket
You let me relax without guilt flooding me because you build dam between me and
reality
You leave me with crickets and creaking floorboards,
The small trickle of water from my fish tank tickling my ear
And the kitchen light creeping up the stairs and hiding behind me
You take comfort in the monsters hiding under my bed
And make conversation with the demons in my closet
When 9 pm comes you allows me to run with my ideas with no speed bumps halting
me back into real life
10 pm your tendrils of sleep start to pull me closer, but my mind is able to glide away
like paint on a canvas and start mapping out ideas
11 pm is when images of full paintings start dancing in the art gallery that is my brain,
performing just for you and me
And 12 am, simple tunes shoot through earbuds and write a novel of colors in a
separate room
While rivers of creation flow from a waterfall of thoughts down to my hands,
Creating a midnight masterpiece

Chocolate

Brody Gurnoe

There's some chocolate
It's almost melted
It fell off the table
I'm still gonna eat it



Sam DeMonte

The Magic Cherry Tree

Zoey Halbrook

Once there was a cherry tree, and it was the most beautiful in all the land. All the kings and queens wanted to have it because it was said that the holder of the tree would stay young forever. All the kings in the land sent out one lumberjack but none could chop it down. All of their axes broke when they swung at it. But one day a king by the name of King Henry the 2nd thought of a sneaky plan to chop down the tree; he waited till dark, when everything from the fish in the pond to the birds in the sky were asleep, then he himself snuck up and chopped it down then with all his strength dragged it back to his castle.

He put in one of his finest pots, and he put in his royal chambers and went back to bed. He awoke next morning and as he looked in the mirror he saw that the tree was gone! He looked around his castle but could find it anywhere. The next day a council of all the kings in the land was called. Reluctantly, Henry attended. When the judges suggested that Henry had cut down the tree himself, he dismissed the question. The judge, to prove his point, pulled out the tree.

"Where did you find that?" Henry asked.

"In your castle!" the head judge said.

A new king was picked, and Henry was sentenced to hanging. But his wife Elizabeth the 9th was a very powerful and mean lady and she got Henry out of the hanging so they made an evil plan to steal the cherry tree from the new king and queen. Henry again waited til everything was asleep and snuck up to his old castle. but there were guards there. When they noticed Henry, they chased him away.

Time and again he tried but time and again he got denied entrance. And eventually he got so angry he tore out his own mustache but his wife was not such a quitter. She managed to sneak into the castle and steal the magic cherry tree but she kept it hidden from her husband. She replaced the tree with a painted stone one. Over the years, as she grew more beautiful, her husband grew older and uglier. Soon he was so ugly he couldn't even leave his chambers. His wife came and fed him at meal times and when he saw her he became suspicious. When his wife was out he snuck out of his chambers. He discovered the cherry tree and he was furious. He had his wife sentenced to hanging but then just as his wife was about to jump off the platform, the king changed his mind. He had other plans for her...

A Slice of Summer

Hannah Hatfield

When life needs a newcomer,
The Oscar goes to summer
A one way ticket to paradise,
Goodbye to freezing snow and ice

Hot pastel evenings with so many friends,
My mind wishing this feeling will never end
Salty days spent at the enchanting coast,
Family brunch with ripe fruit and french toast

Coats and long pants tucked away for the year,
Hot summer weather is finally here
An overflowing basket full of fresh juicy berries,
Feels like a gift from the summer fairies

Double scoop or three if I dare,
Biking for a view in the fresh mountain air
School has completely left my mind,
As we eat pink watermelon down to the rind

With soccer tournaments comes evening practice,
But why not get away to see some desert cactus
A cannonball splash into the pool,
And veggie kabobs make the whole neighborhood drool

Summer, you truly make me a whole,
You're the one that I think of when winter brings its grumpy troll
Days in the sun, free as a butterfly,
I can count on you always, to satisfy

Poem

Ruby Holmes-Shields

Your life flashes before your eyes
As the roller coaster goes in circles
With red paint that is peeling off
And you are getting dizzy



Matilda McKean

Poem

Nora Isles

It was very helpful to
have

that green
book

now dusty on my
shelf

full of
memories

Poem

Sable Jackson

Growing older,
Getting colder,
I am not as happy as before,
Shrinking down,
The world didn't change while I was growing
It was me



Sanaa Pond

Timmy Carter is a Failure

Bella Johnston

Timmy Carter is a failure
His dreams washed down the drain
He hopes one day for a savior
His life is full of pain

His mother's voice stuck in his head
Like a never ending scream
He can still taste her hot fresh bread
But only in his dreams

His wife left him for riches
For a man with real dreams
Timmy's living in ditches
Next to dying streams

Timmy Carter is a failure
His life is boring and forgotten
He is lost like a boat with no sailor
He is left to grow old and rotten

The Mystical Powers of Water

Mirabel Kotamarti

Water rises and falls from the sky,
Circles and cycles of life all around,
Drops that give soul dance and fly.

Puddles and rivers, oceans and tides, once again have to say goodbye,
Specks of water join at hand to be bound,
Water rises and falls from the sky.

Peaks with snow way up high
Trickles down to drown till once again, parts are not found,
Drops that give soul dance and fly.

Daisies, dandelions, and even a buckeye,
Could not thrive or even touch this earth without what should be crowned,
Water rises and falls from the sky.

Droopy limbs, and droopy backs, will learn to spry,
When a touch of this magic serum pulls them up in their little round mound,
Drops that give soul dance and fly.

Now you may think, that one day it will die,
That this rhythm will be hit and downed,
But still this circle and cycle will keep on strolling by,
Water rises and falls from the sky.

Clutter

Pema Lauder-Dean

I am tired and stuck.
I wonder if time can stand still or if it keeps moving on
I hear footsteps all around me
I see clutter everywhere I look
I want to know what I want
I am tired and stuck.
I pretend to know what I'm doing, to know more than I do
I feel like sinking into the floor but what would that accomplish
I touch the book on my desk, the same book that's always there
I worry that I will never do anything important
I cry at my own hopelessness
I am tired and stuck.



Clementine Weiss

It was at this moment that they realized the alien invaders were allergic to cats

Oscar Lawless

An old robot lay in a pile of rubble, a lump of biomass growing over it. The sickly green goo grew in unnatural formations, stretching out over the area, its disgusting spores being pumped into the air. Suddenly, the robot whirred to life, its cogs and circuits turning and moving power once more. The robot struggled to break free from its living prison, but it managed to muster all its strength and rip apart the sickly substance. It stood up, and heard a strange voice coming from the side of its head.

"Wow, thanks. That's only my entire family you just killed." A small bit of the growth was still stuck to the robot. "Man, you suck." It would also appear to be a very cynical growth.

The robot performed a mandatory scan of the surrounding area. It had been 17 hours since the initial alien invasion. Its self preservation protocols insisted that it left the city immediately. It must exit the subway and find a way out of the invaded area. The robot began walking forwards in an attempt to locate the nearest exit.

"Woah, woah, woah! You're trying to get out of here, right? I've got a buddy around here who'll point you in the right direction. He's on the other side of the tracks, in the bathrooms." The robot stopped, but hesitated. "Besides, after you brutally slaughtered my family I have nothing left to live for! So I might as well help you out because I'm totally not a vengeful person."

The robot accepted this offer, not because it trusted the biomass, but because it knew this tiny little fleck of slime could not muster the intellect to trap the virtually flawless machine. It trudged onward, walking through a disabled train car. The door stuttered, and sparks flew out of it.

The subway was in a decaying state, rubble everywhere, hardware malfunctioning. The invasion had crippled the city, and the robot was stuck right in the middle of it. It reached the area the biomass had said to go, and a deep voice sounded from inside the restrooms: "Who goes there..."

The biomass responded, fear in his voice. "We came to ask you something."

A few long moments later, a hoarse laughter sounded from inside. "Come in..."

The robot stepped into the restroom, and saw a large hole in the ground, the tiles pushed out at awkward angles. Suddenly, a huge tentacle appeared from the hole, a grotesque mouth at the tip. A gross slime shined on it, worsening the pinkish-red flesh that made up this terrifying creature. "Come in, take a seat. The kettle's on, I'll get you both some tea." The voice was deep, and the mouth moved

disgustingly as the creature spoke. "So, what brings you here?"

The biomass spoke, his voice shaking. "We, um... came to ask you for help, sir."

"Oh really? Well what is it you need? If you're looking for somewhere to stay, I have plenty of room here. Or if you just need someone to talk to, I'm always willing to listen."

The robot's scans suggested this creature was completely alien, and had somehow grown out of the ground in the small amount of time since the aliens arrived.

"We need to get out of the city, do you know a way?"

"Why, of course! If you simply head south, there's a bridge that will take you across to the borders. But you can't go just yet, you need to rest and build up your strength. Besides, the tea's almost ready."

The robot began to back away, and the biomass spoke for both of them. "I think we're good. Thanks a lot for the help!"

They both slipped out of the bathroom, as the tentacle shouted: "No, don't go! The tea is ready!"

The robot trudged through the crippled city, the smell of ash and smoke in the air. Though it *was* a robot so it couldn't smell. The biomass might have been able to smell, but it didn't show any signs of it. Either way, the invasion had toppled the once great city. Huge chasms spanned the landscape, with no visible end.

Their journey took them through a huge apartment complex, which had been severed in half by another chasm forming. The inside was dark, and rubble lay in piles throughout the deserted building. The aliens had wrought Armageddon upon the planet, devouring all in their wake and leaving nothing behind. The strange thing was, the aliens seemed driven purely by instinct. When the portal opened, thousands of aliens and dozens of different species came pouring out, but this was not a coordinated attack. Alien fauna would fight each other, and almost none of them showed any remote signs of intelligence. The alien flora however, possessed sentience and the ability to replicate any language. But, they still remained at the bottom of the food chain due to their lack of predatory instincts and mobility.

A faint noise became audible to the robot, and apparently the biomass as well. "Do you hear that? You probably don't, with the hearing of a one-eared... something that can't hear well. I've only been alive for three hours, I haven't experienced that much of life."

The robot intercepted the noise, and came into an apartment room. Half the building had fallen away, and a small kitten was hanging from a stray support pole poking out of the severed part of the floor, above a seemingly bottomless pit. The

pitiful scrap of fur was mewling, and its eyes were wide with terror. The robot's life preservation protocols caused it to jump into action, shooting forward to grab the kitten. The biomass sneezed. The small white cat's fur was stained with ash, messy, and ungroomed. The robot's protocols forced it to bring the cat with them.

They continued onward through the post-apocalyptic landscape, traversing through dilapidated buildings and under gargantuan freeways. They eventually reached the bridge the tentacle told them of, and were shocked to discover that it was actually an enormous alien carcass. The thing lay over another chasm, the only way across for miles. They would have to travel through the dead alien to escape the city.

The robot used its laser cutter to cut a hole in the creature's foot, and they stepped inside the downed beast. It was a disgusting subterranean landscape, thick with a damp air and the smell of blood. The robot could not determine the date of the creature's death, nor the date of its creation. The creature was a dozen miles tall, and it took five days to traverse the monster and come out on the other side. They exited through the alien's mouth, its huge fangs serving as a gateway out of the city. Hopefully, the aliens would not be in the less populated regions.

The portal opened in the middle of the city, and it must have had ample prey, for the monsters did not need to advance further. Thousands had died there, and it would be even more catastrophic if the creatures attacked the rest of the world. Nations would fall, thousands would die, and earth would be reduced to nothing but a desolate rock floating through the far reaches of space. If the aliens escaped the city, it would spell doom for the entire planet.

As the robot left the inside of the dead alien, the kitten jumped out of its arms. Suddenly, five aliens appeared and cornered them, gnashing their blood-stained teeth. The robot stepped backward, but without weapons systems it was unable to defend itself against the hostile creatures. The monstrous aliens closed in, ready to devour their prey.

One caught the eye of the kitten, and lunged forward. It opened its jaws to deliver a killing bite, but dropped dead immediately. The others tried to do the same, but died with no warning or explanation. They were left standing outside the monster's gaping maw, with a semi-circle of five stone cold aliens.

It was at this moment that they realized the alien invaders were allergic to cats.

Strawberry and Pistachio Dreams

Vivian Lomax

Part I

It was cold outside.

And we had finished the hike,
but still had not eaten.

And the big box stores surrounded us
something I usually only see on trips
when we're hungry
and need a lunch for the car.

But the chatter continues

As we make our way out of the car
pulling on masks,
ready for food.

..... Except this is a burger place.

I, in all honesty, would LOVE a cheeseburger,
but my pride gets the better of me
and I don't break my streak.

I silently congratulate myself,
smile hidden.

A grilled cheese.

Medium fries.

And.....

A strawberry milkshake.

I've never had one.

I'd taken a sip of Gracie's,
long ago,

but remembered none of it.

I've always been sheltered.

This was even more clear to me as I asked WHAT a milkshake was.

But I get one.

I'll try it.

And when I take that first tiny hesitant sip, sitting on the outside benches in my
sweatshirt and

leggings that I've worn for weeks,

I don't really taste anything.

But I keep tasting it,
and figure out that I like it.
And I smile,
taking sips of the pastel frozen liquid
in between fries and the gooey cheese.

Part II

We were bored.
As always.
And the attempt to get donuts
had not been tried yet
due to a certain
SOMEONE
(we all knew who)
stalling.
But we finally get in the car,
pulling the mask over my face yet again,
purple and
blue
flowers
specking the fabric.
We wait.
The amount of ice cream they have is....
immense,
to say the least.
But, it offers a lot of choices
once it finally sticks in my brain that I can
choose
any of them.
.....
I want mint chocolate chip.
I want green, spicy herbs
that add a delicate softness
and just a touuuch of chocolate
so my taste buds don't hate it.
But
they
don't

seem

to

have it.

UGH.

I go for Pistachio Almond, my brain remembering

(I don't know how)

That in Ramona Forever

When they went to the mall

(my brain trails off yet again, when have I ever been to a mall??)

They got

Pistachio Almond.

50 flavors.

Ramona reading them out to Willa Jean.

So I get it.

The woman making it has some trouble.

It's a bit messy,

and she needs to get a new thing of whipped cream,

but in the end,

it's glorious.

The paper straw is the same mint green

as the milkshake

filled to the brim.

I don't drink it all.

It's too overwhelming

but instead, it goes in the freezer.

And two days later, (yesterday)

when I pull it out it's

frozen.

(Oops.) (Of course.)

So I carefully wait

and decide to eat it with a spoon,

melted whipped cream

crating a marbled effect

in the frozen delicacy.

.....

It's even better this way.

Five Poems

Tigerlily Lovato

A Letter to *Authority*

A white man holding
A black man's breath captive is
Truly against laws

Death

Death is natural
Murder is not natural
It is humans' fault

A Letter to *Bad Police*

It's true that I live
In fear of you because you
are cause of murder

A Letter to *Racism*

We fear you because
You cause hatred toward us
You are racism

Dear *Justice*

Dear Justice, we are in need of you.
Please come if you can hear me. We
Need someone who can lead us
To a better time and
Place than where we are
At. Sincerely,
Your friend, Earth
P.S.
Help

Beauty

Tigris Mackelprang

It comes in all shapes and sizes.

Not just one

But that's what people like to think.

Only one way to act, be respectful, don't act up or speak up for yourself.

I don't need to please you. I am not an object, I am a human.

Only one way to look, skinny, not too skinny but not fat.

I don't need your opinion. I am not an object, I am a human.

Only one way to dress, don't show too much skin because then you're asking for it but you can't cover up too much because then you're boring.

I don't need your approval. I am not an object, I am a human.

It comes in all shapes and sizes.

Wide, curvy, boxy, skinny. All of the shapes and sizes are beautiful.



Eliza Raymond

The Forgotten Hat

Iris Maldonado

I am a hat

I wonder if I will ever be worn again

If I will hear wet drowsy boots and raggedy old jackets
ruffling

If I will see the people braving the weather in their sluggish ancient boots and broken
jackets

that they have always worn.

I look outside from my the black coat hanger I am on
at all the people and wonder if I will ever be worn again
and to hear for the last time

"Wow, that's a pretty cool hat."

Another One Bites the Dust

Georgia Myers

Hello,

I am here to invite you to my funeral.

Do not be alarmed,

You will not have to dress like shadows that dance around the moon

Staring blankly at my casket.

Wear what you want,

I won't be there to judge.

Though, I might have something to say about Auntie A

Bringing a stuffed unicorn as a gift

It was 2018, and I am now close to being a teen

I would not like a stuffed unicorn.

Food will be provided,

Delicious cupcakes, homemade macaroni and cheese, tostadas and more.

I mean, how can you turn down such an amazing meal?

You are also here to celebrate!

Celebrate me,

You are here to celebrate me.

And try to minimize the amount sweat coming out of your eyes

Thanks, personal reasons.

Now, I do have a few rules I would like to discuss before you go on with your day:

1. Everyone attending must be invited,

Which is kind of a given

But I don't want Old Man Joe waltzing on in during my celebration.

2. When heads hang low and Grandma J covers her mouth with some cloth,

The song "Another One Bites the Dust" by Queen will play.

3. Please, oh please, do not wear one of those weird tiny black hats,

The same ones that have a black mesh fabric hanging over one eye

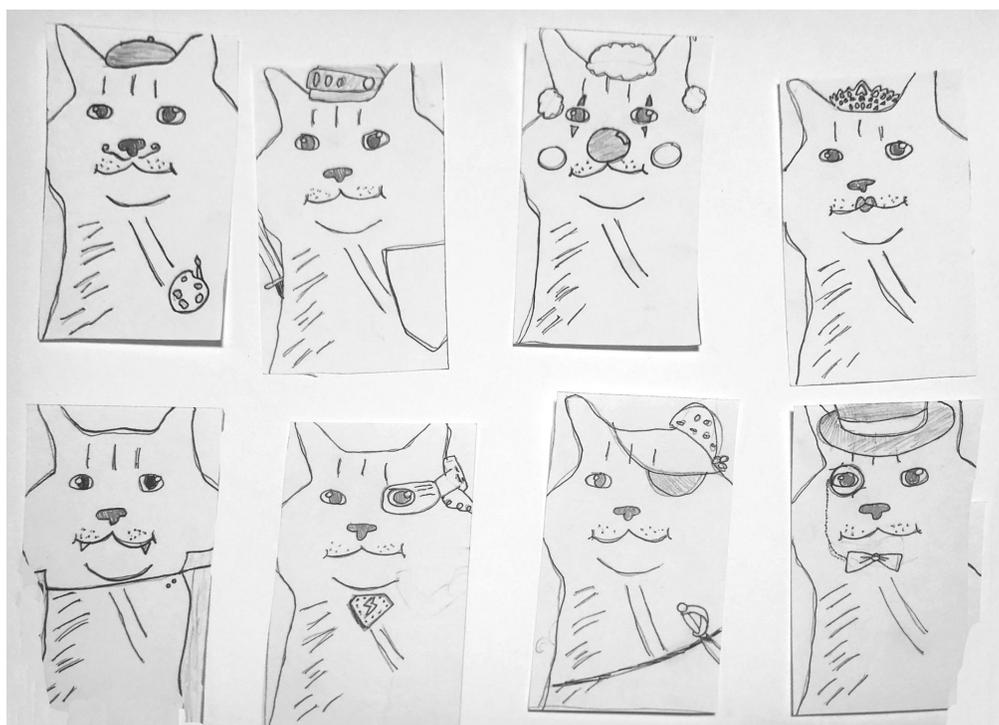
It goes against dress code

So, wear what you want except the tiny hats.

4. If you have even the idea to spit words of nonsense about me to anyone attending, I absolutely will haunt you.

Have fun!
Yours truly,
Georgia

P.S. The dress code is: don't wear the tiny black hats.



Harvey Dayland

Dreaming

Lil Nelson

I stare
At the deep blue mirror in front of me
Mimicking the clear skies above
The white foam tickles my feet,
And I let out a laugh of joy
Allow a quick smile
Before it is replaced by a thick, unmovable frown

A few stray tears leak out of my eyes
I don't want to go
Leave this mirage of beauty and peace
Though I know that it will happen soon enough
And I know I will be back in the endless ocean of assignments
The classes alone in my room
And trying
Failing
To remember what it was like before

To walk into a store without a mask
To embrace without worries
To be with people
To be normal

The old normal feels so distant
Far away
Unreachable
The new normal is nearly unbearable

But I have gotten better
At hiding the pain
The sadness
And the wishes for the past year to just disappear

But
For now
I enjoy the illusion
Of peace
The beach
The food
The swimsuit
The waves that I know aren't real but I might as well enjoy
As long as I'm in my head
I have no need to worry
I have peace



Eli Fenner

Monarch

Lil Nelson

I open my eyes and stretch out my wings, ready for a day of flying and searching for food. Migration is happening soon, and I hope that I am prepared.

I suddenly hear a loud yell-scream-screech that resonates within the ground and makes my head drum with the unexpected noise.

I turn and see a four-leg-ground-walker-noise-maker approaching. For some reason the confusing creature walks on only two of their legs, and the others make odd movements to accompany the screech sounds. It is pointing at me and making yet another earth shaking bellow that seems to summon two others, who come racing out of nowhere.

I take off and don't look back.

Their kind is everywhere, and they have wreaked havoc on our lives along with their own.

First our lands, our flowers, started to disappear into the great mess that they call civilization. Now nets have been made for the sole purpose of catching us. They pin us to walls, put us in picture frames, and starve us to death, yet somehow they believe that we should like them, come to them, be amongst them.

They tear up the land with fighting for no reason other than land or, sometimes, because someone wore the wrong dress or said the wrong thing. These worthless-set-back-fighting-killing-death games that they play make no sense to my own kind. It would only set us back, and harm love-happy-flower-food who take care of us all, who keep alive, who let us live on them, who give us life. The land that we live on and thrive on.

Their kind are killing, slowly but surely, the land that has provided for them for thousands of years, the land that nourishes them and us, two species, one clearly more intelligent than the other, as one has destroyed their home without a thought, and the other does their best to help it.

Skateboarding

Stig Nilsen-Goodin

Skateboarding makes me feel free.
It quenches my thirst for what I need.
It makes me feel good.
I have no limits,
life is just a whirl around me,
I don't have to worry about anything,
I am free.
But when I stop, everything slowly comes back—
life,
worry,
everything going on.
So I keep on pushing,
pushing because skateboarding makes me feel free.
But why does this make me feel free?
Why is it this certain thing?
Then I realize,
I don't have to think about that,
because if it makes me feel good, I should just do it.
Thump, thump, thump,
the sound of my feet hitting the rough pavement.
I'm pushing.
Nowhere to go.
Is it the pushing that makes me feel free?
Or just the fact that I'm flying down a hill on four wheels?
But why do I have to know this? Why am I searching for this?
Then I come back to my senses.
"Man, I've gone far," I say.
Because when you are free, you have no expectations, you have no limits.

The Last Opportunity

Sinasi Numanoglu

15 years can last a long time.

Becoming more and more curious every sol, discovering lots on the land of Mars.

Only set to last 90 days, now the past is just a haze.

The wind is whistling, the sky is getting darker.

Mars has the face of an old friend,

but it is my fate as well.

Dust everywhere.

It's time to take one last photo.

This entire mission will finally fall apart,

My batteries are low and it's getting dark.

13-year-old Girl

Charlotte Pener

I am a girl
A Red-haired, Green-eyed
Freckle-wearing
13-year-old Girl

I am Smart
A Straight As
Compacted Math
Book lover, Always Trying
13-year-old Girl

I am a Art Lover
A Photographer, Painter
Ballet Dancer
Hope to be Actress
13-year-old Girl

I will be Successful
A Lawyer, Dancer,
Fashion Designer, Actress
Senator, Community Organizer
CEO, Governor, And maybe even
President
13-year-old Girl

I am only 13
But I am strong like a Bear,
Fierce like a Lion,
Funny like a Monkey
And a Whirlwind of Positivity

A Couch's Desperation

Ruby Peters

I am strong and confident
I wonder when that small smelly beast will come and sit on me next
Oh no, I hear his footsteps and the wagging of his tail
I see his small red body approaching
I want him to not sit on me
I am strong and confident
I pretend I am invisible so he doesn't see me
I feel appreciation for the humans in this house
I touch the ground, it calms me down
The beast is getting closer, I worry that it will choose to sit
I cry out, but the other furniture doesn't seem to care
I am strong and confident
I understand that it is my duty to be sat on
But I firmly believe that dogs should not sit on us
I dream about a day when dogs do not terrorize us
I try to stay calm as he sits down
I hope he doesn't stay for long
I am strong and confident

Love your dear friend,
The Couch

Violence

Carrie Pollock

I am both wise and naive.
I wonder why violence is the answer.
I hear the birds chirping as the sun rises.
I see leaves swaying in the wind.
I want a world of peace.
I am both wise and naive.
I pretend not to have any troubles.
I feel at ease in nature.
I touch the petals of a blossoming flower.
I worry that its beauty will end.
I cry at the thought of destruction.
I am both wise and naive.



Hope Schamber

I Am

Gabe Pylman

I am a concerned young man
I wonder if social isolation is going to end
I hear no justice no peace in my head
I see everyone wearing masks
I want Covid to find its own death
I am a concerned young man
I pretend that online school is normal
I feel that my face is cloaked
I touch the fabric that hides my expression
I worry that I will get sick
I cry when I get overwhelmed
I am a concerned young man

A Nice Day

Penelope Quint-Street

it's too bright to look outside
the sun hitting the metal bird feeder
the grass the color of a lime
the leafless trees standing completely still
and fruit flies wandering around the yard

At My Grammy's House

Penelope Quint-Street

In the summer of 2019, just arrived at my Grammy's house
the sun peeking at the top of the hill falls down
the sky the color of peaches and mangoes
the wind kicking the dust as it flies
dry sand in every inch of the place
the sound of rattlesnakes in the distance
the black widows silently creeping up the side of the house
and the house at the top of the hill looking down at the town
the town in the middle of a dried water bed
surrounded by tall mountains.



Varshi Horback

Bacon

Brianna Quiroz-Alvarez

I am a pig and if you cook me I can turn into bacon.

I wonder what it would be like if I was a human.

I hear the people's voices as they yell, "KILL THE PIG!"

I see people staring at me with knives in their hands as they are about to cut me into bacon.

I want to live and NOT be eaten!

I am a pig and if you cook me I can turn into bacon.

I pretend that I have wings so that I can fly away and not be eaten.

I feel scared because I know I don't have wings so I CAN'T fly away SO NOW I'M GOING TO BE EATEN!

I touch the muddy floor of my pig pen.

I worry if I am going to be eaten because the humans are just STARING AT ME WITH KNIVES IN THEIR HANDS.

I cry because they're cutting me up and making me into bacon. Goodbye cruel world:).

I am a pig and if you cook me I can turn into bacon.

Free Flying

Eliza Raymond

When the world is made of cities, stones, and silver linings
And when people fight every day
Against troubles and challenges faced,
We persevere.

When we stand to watch a bird fly,
Just to see the freedom it carries,
Featherlight with the weight of the world,
We persist.

When a sunrise
Tells us that there are days to come
And days behind us
We can say

*I have faced the obstacle behind me. There may be many more to come, but I am free
for now.*

We are safe.

When we can finally
Stare at a piece of paper
And give ourselves to the blank emptiness,
To spill our spirit into black ink
Waving and whirling to the writing of the pen,
We will finally be free.

Raspberries and Toffee

Wolf Rise

I imagine you
inhaling
I don't think you smoke

I watched your face
Its cold
Remains of old anger
Like the makeup under her eyes

I want to cut cake
White cake
While I watch you die

Beyond the Window

Ally Roark

Beyond the window
A tree waves in a sea
A current of air
Makes it a-nemone
Twine its pale branches
Swing to the breeze
A friend of earth
Swathed in bright green
Even if the wind lashes
Rooted it will be
A giant of the forest
Saying hi to me

On a clear day
It stretches high in the air
Swinging in the breeze
Dancing without a care
Moss and a bird's nest
To crown its green hair
Waving through the rooftops
At the sky so fair

Damp be the moss
Rain clings to the tree
Pitters and patters
Make a nice melody
Water on the chimney
Makes a nice clear 'ping!'
Birds huddle in its branches
Till the storm clears the sea

The birds land upon it
And stretch out their wings
The birds bow and thank it
With a wonderful symphony
When the storm passes
Calm as far as one sees
When a rainbow of colors
make the tree's rain gleam

Phoenix

Megan Rose

I rise again
Fire and ashes cover my hair
As I rise from the Flames of redemption
They had to start over
Burn me to the ground
but my will will not be tampered with
As I rise against the nightmare
the only thing keeping my fire from spreading
I'm not letting them remove my honor from the world
I will turn back those behemoths to the ash from which they arose
My Flames will turn the bay to name games to make a great inferno
Where they have summoned in an infernal demon
My fire can't lie, I cannot die
But the dust swirling at my feet will let them think I can't be beat
I will set upon them the wrath of an oni and they shall fall to my onyx eyes
I shall release the direwolves and then watch the sea my other dreaded enemy
My wings go up in flames as I spread them to melt the ice of my cage
With enough force to knock them back in the River Styx from which they came
Even if I cry my Flames will not be extinguished
My superiority will incinerate their foolish mortal minds
Last time I saw a sunrise it was blue as the night sky but when I open my eyes I see
them paralyzed, if only I could live to see them die
This time I will burn them back
With the strength of a thousand suns
My Supernova will overpower their conscious bodies
As I rise from the depths of the demonic abyss
When they turn I shall make them learn to yearn to light up the night
In the way that I so delight
But this fight is not over
Not until they understand
That I am not a mortal
I am beyond anything they can comprehend

A Cheesy Sunset

Auston Seeton

Sunkissed waves

Of mac&cheese

A bright yellow

Coat on the fresh

White noodle

The taste buds

Yelling for more

Of the cheese

Down the

Sunkissed

Waves of fresh

mac&cheese

My Coat

Mahtida Sillah

My coat
Black as coal
Goes past my knees
Hangs from my closet door
It's there for me anytime
My coat

Your hood
Protects my hair from the rain
Protects my face from the smoldering sun
My coat

Your Pockets
Hold all my necessities
Hold my freezing hands
My coat

Your softness
Allows me comfort whenever I need it
Allows me warmth on chilly winter nights
My coat
I thank you

Ocean

Aiyana Suh

He dug his toes in the sand,
swimming in the warming feeling it gave him.
As he looked around,
he couldn't help but stare in awe towards the ocean.
How the calming waves would wash away any footprints on the shore,
how the blazing sun made it glimmer and shine
like wet metal.
And even though he saw this view everyday,
it was still breathtaking everytime.
He wore a white flowy shirt
that reached just above his knees.
His hair was a dirty blonde,
flowing in the wind.
On his nose were a pair of circular sunglasses,
the lenses tinted a purple-ish pink.
His legs that were covered by swimming trunks
made their way closer to the shore.
Until he felt his body
slowly sink deeper and deeper in the salty water.
It felt good,
refreshing after his long day.

He dipped his head in the water,
his hair streaming up as he glued his eyes shut.
Before he knew it,
he was swimming,
fighting against the waves to get even farther.
He finally emerged from the water after some time,
and the warm air seemed fairly humid.
Smack.
A wave.
Smack.
A second.
And finally,
a third slap of a wave bringing him into the suffocating ocean with taunting waves.

He tried to swim back,
but yet again he got pulled away.
Under the waves he stayed,
knowing it would be the end.
He thanked his family,
and his friends,
and his teachers.
And the person that just saved him.
The person that just helped him from dying.
And there he was,
with the biggest smile plastered on his face.
He saved his life.



Zephyr Schroeder

When Trustin Tate made a decision that would affect everybody. (But why'd you do it?)

Aiyana Suh

*What was it that made you do it?
Who told you it was a good decision?
That this would result in happiness?
The sinking in your heart
It wouldn't have lasted forever
The saddening feeling
You shouldn't have let it get to you.
Because of a rope.
Why did you tie it?
You thought it was better for you.
Better for the world.*

*Your Nike Air Jordans
Skimming the ground
Your flowy basketball shorts
Your black and red shirt
That was soft on your skin
The last clothes that would decorate your figure
Your chocolate milk skin
Your curly dark brown hair
Your sassy attitude
Your body that was not touching the ground,
Dangling from a rope*

*You did it in your closet
To hear your sister's voice
Her singing before you left
Because you thought,
You weren't good enough
You thought
You were not loved.
But trust me,
You are.
More than you could ever imagine.*

If you have thoughts of self harm or suicide, there is help.
Call or text the Oregon YouthLine:
Call: 1-877-968-8491
Text "teen2teen" to 839863
The Multnomah County Crisis Line:
503-988-4888
The Trevor Project (LGBTQ+)
hotline: 1-866-488-7386

Cat in the Windowsill

Clementine Tabacchi

My cat sits in the windowsill
Her shadow looming over me
And as she leaves a beam of light shines through the curtains
Landing on my tired eyes
This is the routine I face every single week
Cat in windowsill,
Day by day by day
She is there when I drink my tea
There when I watch TV
That cat in the windowsill

Purely Pressured

Lucy Thoits

It's funny how
Unintentional peer pressure works.
"Write a poem!"
They said.
"It'll be fun!"
They said.
Yet now I sit here,
Wondering why,
It took me 30 minutes to write,
The first line.
I don't want to be peer pressured,
Though it happens.
Why? You ask?
I don't know!
You talk to me like someone,
who knows these things.
"Write a poem!"
They said.
"It'll be fun!"
They said.



CC Gunn

Poem

Lily Wanner

large waves
capture attention

wet sand
encrusts your
bare feet

seagulls cry
at the gray gloom

seashells like
knives in the
sea muck

Water Thoughts

Violet Whaley-Hendrix

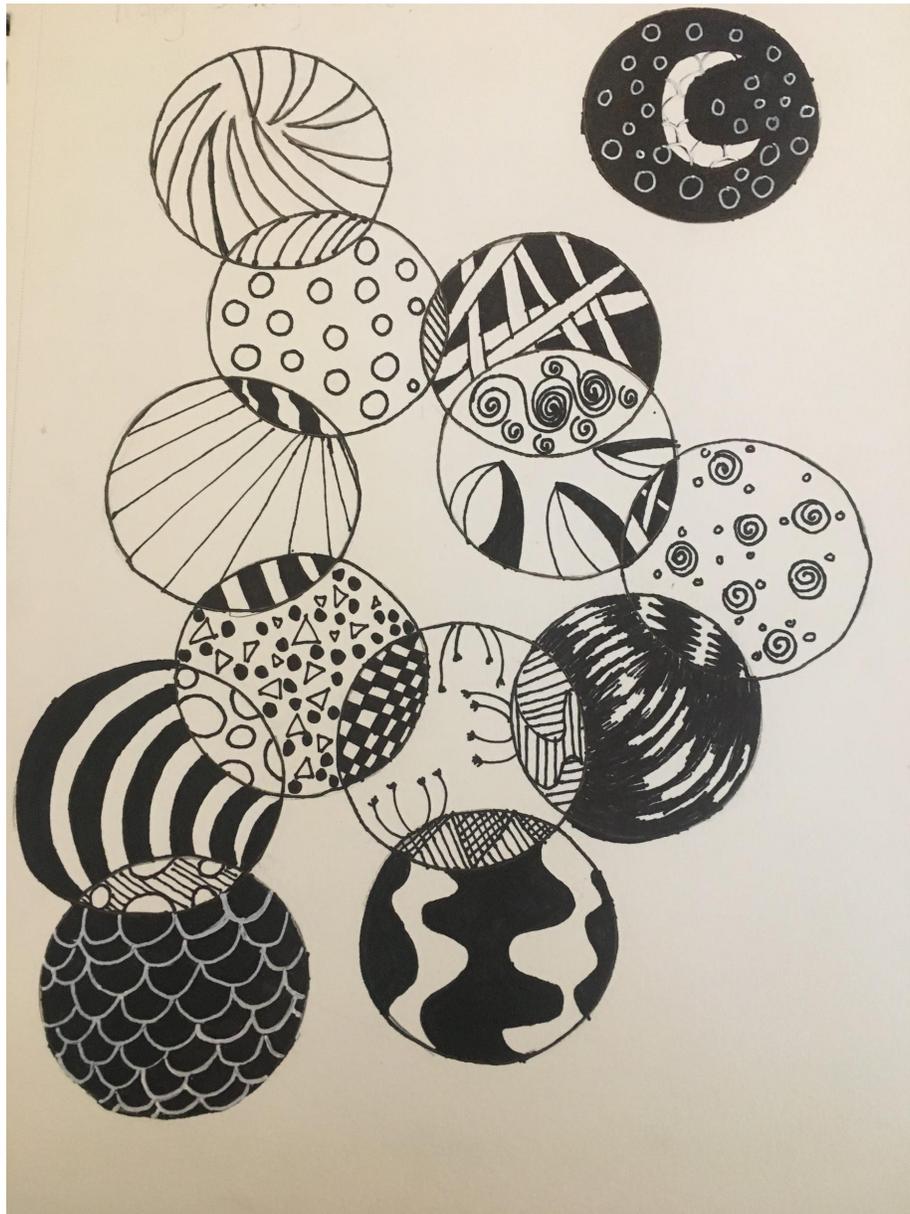
I muse in the shade with mist on my skin
From a white roaring river, my thoughts like the spray
Scattered, searching for somewhere to settle
Only to get swept up by a sweet, singing breeze
My feelings like sand on a wind battered dune
Spill from my lips, a freshwater spring
Harsh land, and quiet, but for the oasis
Where a chorus of curiosity sings in solitude
My joy is a fog, fast moving, curving
It caresses the saplings of satisfaction
Entangling round tree trunks of endearment
And all encompassing accomplishment
Then sadness is condensation
The still water, stagnant
Time stands still in an empty cavern
With dripping wet walls and ocean tide pools
Shallow enough to stand in
And love is a rain cloud, following, hovering
An outpouring of honesty, hard to withhold
Not certain, but tentative, like the drops foretelling a storm
Hate is a sickness, sealed in a bottle
Shattering silently, hitting the shore
Saved and sheltered, fear formed
From which grows vines, twisting toward sunlight
Roots dipped in pools of sorrow and hurt
Holding aloft the roof of experience
Full of lifelong lamentations
But trust is the sun that fear so strives for
And people like bridges, connecting continents
Back and forth I go from my life to theirs
Seeking what feeling is like in their lives
Maybe their joy is a stream, surrounded by trees
Constant but quiet
Maybe their sadness is a pearl of water, rolling off the tip of a leaf
Small and subtle, until it hits a puddle
And ripples out, reaching for a response

So all aside

We are seabirds, sailing on the bated breath of a million spoken thoughts and feelings

That span the seas between ourselves

Speak now or forever hold your silence



Josie Hernandez

Quiet

Alexis Williams

Was being quiet
not enough?
It used to be your favorite noise.
You used to love it.
"So quiet, so polite."
When did my silence
become a problem?
Here.
Take my Purple Hyacinths.
For they have grown desperate.
They ask for you to forgive me,
forgive me for being too Quiet.

I Am

Silas Wise

I am tired, frustrated and have tomato sauce on my shirt.
I wonder when I will be done with my homework.
I hear a buzzing in my ear like an angry bee trying to get out.
I see dark skies, but I remember when the sky was lit up by the sun.
I want to be done with my eternal homework.
I am tired, frustrated and have tomato sauce on my shirt.

I pretend to punch an imaginary person.
This person that created online school.
I want to put out the fire that is building up inside me.
I feel far away from freedom when I fall into this sinkhole of work to do.
I touch freedom as I push the orange submit button one last time.
I worry that my work will go on until the end of time.
I realize that the work I had to do...
Didn't take much time.
More time spent waiting to do it.
More time ignoring it.
I am tired, frustrated and have tomato sauce on my shirt.