



Snapshot

Poolesville High School Literary Magazine

2018-2019

# Table of Contents

The cover art is a collaboration between Allie Hoy, Amulya Pattaraju, Andrea Rentel, Angela Engle, Angelina Sachar, Anjali Murthy, Anna Akdag, Ava Checkan, Brooke Corpuz, Divya Mathur, Eva Kung-Bi, Mandy Hsu, Pallavi Battina, Pamela Kramer, Pragya Kumar, Raenya Sharma, Sarah Patch, and Tanya Jha

Photos by Allie Hoy, Sarah Patch, and Andrea Rentel.....1	Red Nail Polish by Darshini Babu Ganesh.....19
Something Like by Fiona McCue.....2	Her Favorite Flower by Sarah Patch.....20
Under the Lamppost by Allie Hoy.....3	Billy Bodair by Rachel Pepper.....21
My World by Brooke Corpuz.....4	The Day my Parents Divorced by Abby Fisher.....24
South Cove by Andrea Rentel.....5	Saying Goodbye by Ava Checkan.....25
Remember by Angela Engle.....6	Sincerley, Me by Anonymous.....28
Moments in Love by Anonymous.....8	That Photo of My Aunt by Medha Kotti.....30
Jukebox Hero by Divya Mathur.....12	The Death of Suicide by Pragya Kumar.....32
Words by Mandy Hsu.....14	Getting out of Bed with Depression by Anonymous.....34
Photos by Mandy Hsu, Tanya Jha, and Pamela Kramer.....16	
Photos by Amulya Pattaraju.....17	
The Interview by Angelina Sachar.....18	



Photos by Sarah Patch, Allie Hoy, and Andrea Rentel



**something like**  
**By Fiona McCue**

**It was beautiful.**

**Sitting on a wooden handrail,  
Under the shadows of the palm trees,  
The sky the clearest, purest blue.**

**I sat there undisturbed,  
A warm breeze passing me,  
Not a person in sight, in mind,**

**And I almost thought  
It was paradise.**

*Photos by Tanaya Jha (left) and Abby Fisher (top and right)*

# Under the Lamppost

by Allie Hoy

They stand, snow swirling around them, looking into each other's eyes under the dim, fading light of the lamppost.

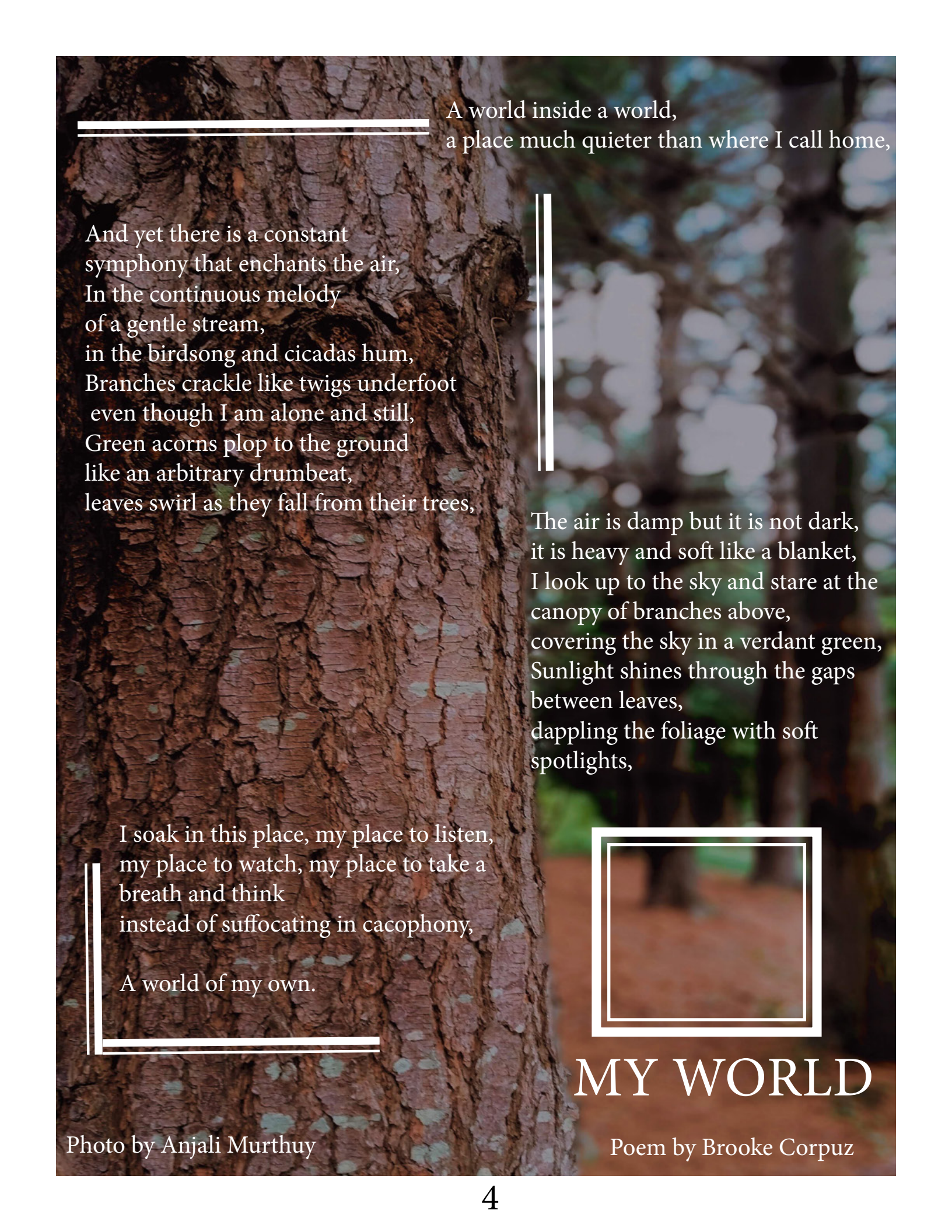
After years of not speaking, a gap has been formed. A gap that now sits between them, filled with an unsettling silence.

There are things to be said, arguments to be settled, love to be rekindled, but neither knows where or how to begin.

Out of nowhere, one pulls the other into a much needed, long overdue hug. And though there are still layers of pain, years of hurting, and an overwhelming need, they've never felt closer.



Picture by Mandy Hsu



A world inside a world,  
a place much quieter than where I call home,

And yet there is a constant  
symphony that enchants the air,  
In the continuous melody  
of a gentle stream,  
in the birdsong and cicadas hum,  
Branches crackle like twigs underfoot  
even though I am alone and still,  
Green acorns plop to the ground  
like an arbitrary drumbeat,  
leaves swirl as they fall from their trees,

I soak in this place, my place to listen,  
my place to watch, my place to take a  
breath and think  
instead of suffocating in cacophony,

A world of my own.

The air is damp but it is not dark,  
it is heavy and soft like a blanket,  
I look up to the sky and stare at the  
canopy of branches above,  
covering the sky in a verdant green,  
Sunlight shines through the gaps  
between leaves,  
dappling the foliage with soft  
spotlights,

## MY WORLD

Poem by Brooke Corpuz

Photo by Anjali Murthuy

# South Cove

By: Andrea Rentel

Photograph By: Angela Engle

The small New Hampshire town I lived in for a large portion of my childhood surrounds a lake. There are four coves on the North, East, South, and West sides with small beaches at each that residents often visit. My house was closest to South Cove, the activity center and hub of activity in the community.

Much of New Hampshire is covered in trees and virtually the only places without them are roads, buildings, and bodies of water. At South Cove, the sun shines brighter than anywhere else. The trees give way to the lake where sunlight bounces off the water, scattering it everywhere. The sun feels different there; never hot enough to burn me. The rays shine through the clouds and are absorbed by my skin spreading through each cell and warming me from the inside out. I spread my towel out on the grass and lay down on my stomach. My head falls where the edge of the towel meets the ground. I watch grass and clovers sway in the faint breeze. Light trickles through the blades creating small shadows in a variety of green tones.

I close my eyes listening to the quiet chatter of the people around me. Laughter rings through the air as people drifting by on a paddle board pedal faster and faster attempting to increase the speed of the slow boat. Most adults around me gossip about family members or friends or talk about the lives of their children or their jobs. Others sit in lawn chairs, heads tilted up at the sky, possibly asleep. I know the names of almost everyone on the beach. Those I don't know, don't live here. I hear them talk about their homes in Massachusetts. They marvel at how beautiful the lake is. My home is a vacation destination.

I hear pages of a novel rustle as a woman reads. Her children squeal gleefully from the water as they splash each other and discuss the colors of their mermaid tails. A young boy swims to the floating dock near the edge of the swimming area with his dad. They climb up and cannonball in together. Two girls in elementary school attempt to teach themselves to dive and, many belly flops later, cheer after succeeding.

I decide to join the people in the water. I jump across the small stretch of hot sand, then take the first step down the stone stairs. I immediately tense up as the cold New England water touches my feet. Wading in slowly, shoulders shrugged high and voice quivering I maneuver my way past the initial rocks into the sandy area a few feet from the shore. I take a deep breath and make the leap, diving under the still water. The temperature changes almost magically once my entire body is engulfed. It becomes comfortable, no longer cold. Under the surface, the sounds of the people around me are erased and my ears are filled with muffled silence. I feel calm and safe. I run my fingers through the sand as I swim along the bottom. It feels so much softer under the water. The light bends as it passes through the surface creating a dreamy glow. My hair cascades behind me swiftly like a waterfall as I move. As my breath runs out I emerge, head tilted up, my wet hair plastered to my head. I rub my eyes and open them to the landscape in front of me. There are mountains in the distance overlooking the lake. They weave through each other and drape over the Earth like soft blankets. The clouds create shadows like a cloak over the trees. When dusk begins to fall, pale pinks, oranges, and blues peak over the mountains. They reflect onto the water and fill the sky. Hair wet and smiling, the families begin to head home for dinner. As do I.

# Remember

I stand on the deck, looking out. The steep hill drops off below. Far away at the bottom, a gravel road winds its way up. Past the road is the treeline, the front line of a seemingly endless army extending as far as the eye can see, soldiers standing shoulder-to-shoulder, covering the landscape. Four hundred acres of undeveloped forest, hillside, and meadow separate us from the rest of the world. In the middle of rural Pennsylvania mountains, this retreat center is a peaceful getaway steeped in nature. The serene place is the home of my church youth group's annual trips of growth and learning. We escape from the pressure and noise of daily life by relaxing, rejuvenating, and connecting with family and friends.

Following the road, I watch it snake its way past the tall grass, the gravel leading to the bathhouse and five cabins, the bunkhouse, kitchen, and tented dining hall, one of the swing sets, the gaga ball pit, the volleyball net, finally ending in a rough parking lot to my left. Wooden stairs lead up to where I am leaning on the railing, breathing in the fresh air. I can jump off another set of stairs in front of me and land on a harsh cement pad, a known culprit of skinned knees. Then, I can run down the hill, flying, hoping my feet do not give out from under me. Or, I can lay in the soft grass, heat from the sun beating down, warming my body from head to toe as insects buzz about and the cool breeze rustles the tree leaves. Or, instead of turning around and only seeing my mirrored reflection in the wall of windows, I can go inside the building: the location of the most enjoyable event of every retreat.



Opening the heavy metal door to the far right of "The Modular," the nickname we gave this meeting place, I step inside. The door squeals, thudding behind me and notifying others of my arrival. I kick off my shoes and they join the growing, haphazard pile. Consisting of one long room, split in half by a dividing pillar, this is where the majority of our indoor time together is spent. Typically, the calmer, more serious activities happen on the far side, while the area before me is known for its rambunctious memories.

On some occasions, the various objects sitting compliantly are devoted to their intended purposes. Frequently though, they are subject to answering the odd impulses of teenagers, including accommodating for legendary games of "Crazy Legs," my favorite competition by far. Directly in front of me stands a worn pool table, earning the title of well-loved after surviving countless hastily rolled billiard balls. The pool table's sole defense is to bruise our legs as we sprint around it and hope the pain is worthwhile. If not their turn,



bystanders additionally make victims of the near ping pong and air hockey tables. The former's dividing net is falling apart from constant removal, its scratchy surface struggling to hold as many teenagers as possible. They sit perched on the edge, anxiously watching the action and awaiting for their time to play. The latter also remembers the shouts, peals of laughter, groans, and chants, each and every loud exclamation betraying the fickle emotions of its occupants. The abused knobs of the adjacent foosball table have had their share, retaining the feeling of being rammed as innumerable bodies make their way through the crowd, people hurrying to update their score on the neighboring chalkboard. These hastily written letters and erased names are not the blackboard's only contents. Chunky, broken sticks of chalk leave their mark on our hands and the floor, vibrantly colored dust filling the air whenever we draw absurd doodles and write abstract messages.

Where they are not covered by chalkboard, picture frames, or storage cabinets, the coarse walls peek out. Their greatest achievement is absorbing the cacophony: voices piling on top of one another, various conversations taking place, but everyone always with one eye on the action for at any moment there will likely be a wild new development in the game. Nevertheless, typically someone forgets to pay attention and does not realize it is their turn. Time for the battered, dingy gray carpet to take part. The flooring endures a surge of harsh movement due to the frantic shoving, bounding feet, and crashing objects. A lucky result generates stomping and excited jumping as we celebrate a competitor's last minute feat.

Playing late into the night, everyone is sure to work up an appetite. Whenever we crave a bite to eat, we venture over to the plastic tables set up by the entrance. Providing a break from the stench of sweaty, tightly packed bodies, the scents of scattered chips, brownies, fruit snacks, and occasional clementines as the feeble nutritious alternative waft through the air as another person indulges. The flickering lights above serve to illuminate the entire spectacle. Eventually, someone wins "Crazy Legs" and wearily we file out into the darkness, ready to go to bed.

I walk over to the windows and look outside, reminiscing on the cherished memories etched into the room's miniscule details: the smiles shared, the contagious laughter, friends bonding, and joy remembered. I take in the distant fog drifting in mysteriously, rising up over the mountains fading into the horizon. The currently crystalline blue sky is renowned for its incomparable sunrises and sunsets: fiery colors streak across it, watercolor paintings witnessed nowhere else. But on nights when we play "Crazy Legs," as we head back to our cabins after a long game, gazing up into the pitch-black void I feel I could get lost in its vastness if not for the twinkling blanket of stars. In the absence of city lights and pollution, the galaxy is unveiled, the universe at my fingertips if only they could reach that far.

Writing By: Angela Engle  
Images By: Mandy Hsu & Angela Engle

1. 10/8/18

there's something comforting about  
melting under a burning hot shower  
letting yourself evaporate  
and learning to fall in love with yourself  
again

11. 10/13/18

last year,

I convinced myself that I was in love with a boy  
because

he was cute,

and

we were both air signs,

and

we sat at the same table in math,

and

he smelled like cotton candy.

which! to be fair, I don't like all that much,

but one time an astrology post assigned

cotton candy to my horoscope sign.

and I told myself that meant something.

yesterday,

I realized he probably only smelled like cotton candy  
because of the vaping

and suddenly

his new haircut just made him seem

a little less

cute.

III. 10/15/18

today,

someone held the door open for me  
and they were cute

(or so I remember),

and I let myself fall in love

for

five

total

seconds.

I don't even remember

what they look like now.

IV. 10/24/18

Instead of doing homework,  
I'm imagining what it's like

to be wholeheartedly

in love with someone

V. 10/29/18

I'm in love with someone new

VI. 10/31/18

okay,

so I'm not

like

in love

in love

but

he's pretty cute



vii. 11/12/18

Welcome to another episode of:  
is he really cute?

or

Am I just lonely

viii. 12/10/18

I don't have the courage  
to say more than "hello"

so I make up  
memories of us,

shut it tight,

and tuck it away by my heart  
nestled among all the others.



IX. 12/11/18

the way you smile  
lights up my night sky  
better than the brightest star  
I join the others in teasing you  
so I can see it again  
and pretend it's directed to me

I hope you know  
you don't fall under any of my types  
and that's a good thing



# Jukebox Hero

by Divya Mathur

I place my fingers on the fretboard, the strings cutting into my sore skin.

My right hand hovers over the neck, poised in position, ready to play.

I raise my hand, about to slide my fingers along the metal wires, fully aware of the potential that this beautiful creature holds

This astonishing beast can sing, its thin vines stretched like vocal chords

With the ability to craft a single note

That single note that emanates from the amplifier and rings true, vibrating all the walls with each story it tells

Power thrums through my veins, for this one incredible sound can send a million thoughts and convey intention without anyone having to open their mouth

And how the endless possibilities blossom when you combine the notes

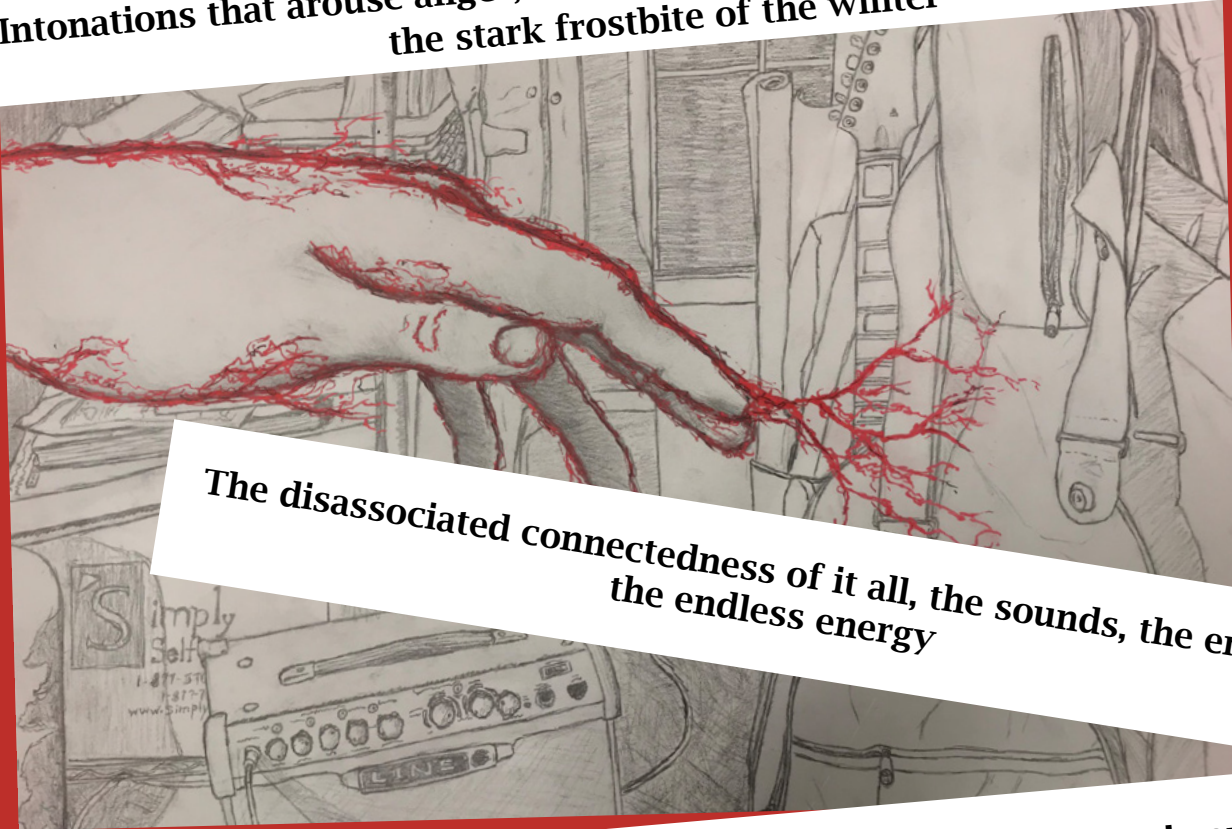
Together, still one sound, one chord, but one of its own, one of a kind.

Every individual note intertwined to create the different levels of a singular chord

All building upon each other until the sound waves that come crashing against our eardrums cannot be classified as a single note any longer

The crashing that can make you feel lost at sea or right at home

Intonations that arouse anger, unite a group, bring you the warmth of a fire,  
the stark frostbite of the winter



The disassociated connectedness of it all, the sounds, the emotion,  
the endless energy

How do we refer to this wondrous piece of magician's art?

The English language has but one word for it

And we call it -

*Music.*

Photos by Anna Akdag and  
Divya Mathur  
Art by Mac Gallagher



## *Vivacious*

*Some summer nights,  
We lie in your backyard,  
Lit up by fairy lights.  
I tell you my secrets, despite  
you already knowing them.  
You grab my hands, and  
we are woken by the sun ris-  
ing.*

## *Waning*

*A sliver of a silver crescent  
moon,  
As the dark waters rock us  
and sleepily you trace the  
stars.  
I feel the water below us,  
Lapping at my fingertips  
while you tell me stories of  
days long past.*

## *Allure*

*The vibrant reds and oranges  
of the sunset light up your eyes  
in a way I haven't seen in  
years.  
You pull me in, surrounded by  
the million flickers of fireflies.  
I watch you laugh, and  
take a snapshot with my mind.*

*Written By: Mandy Hsu*



## *Kaleidoscope*

*The crystals in your room  
catch the sunlight in a  
peculiar way—casting curious  
displays on your walls.  
We read our palms, and  
laugh about love in the  
swirling smoke of heavy incense.  
I watch your eyes  
flicker like the lights.*

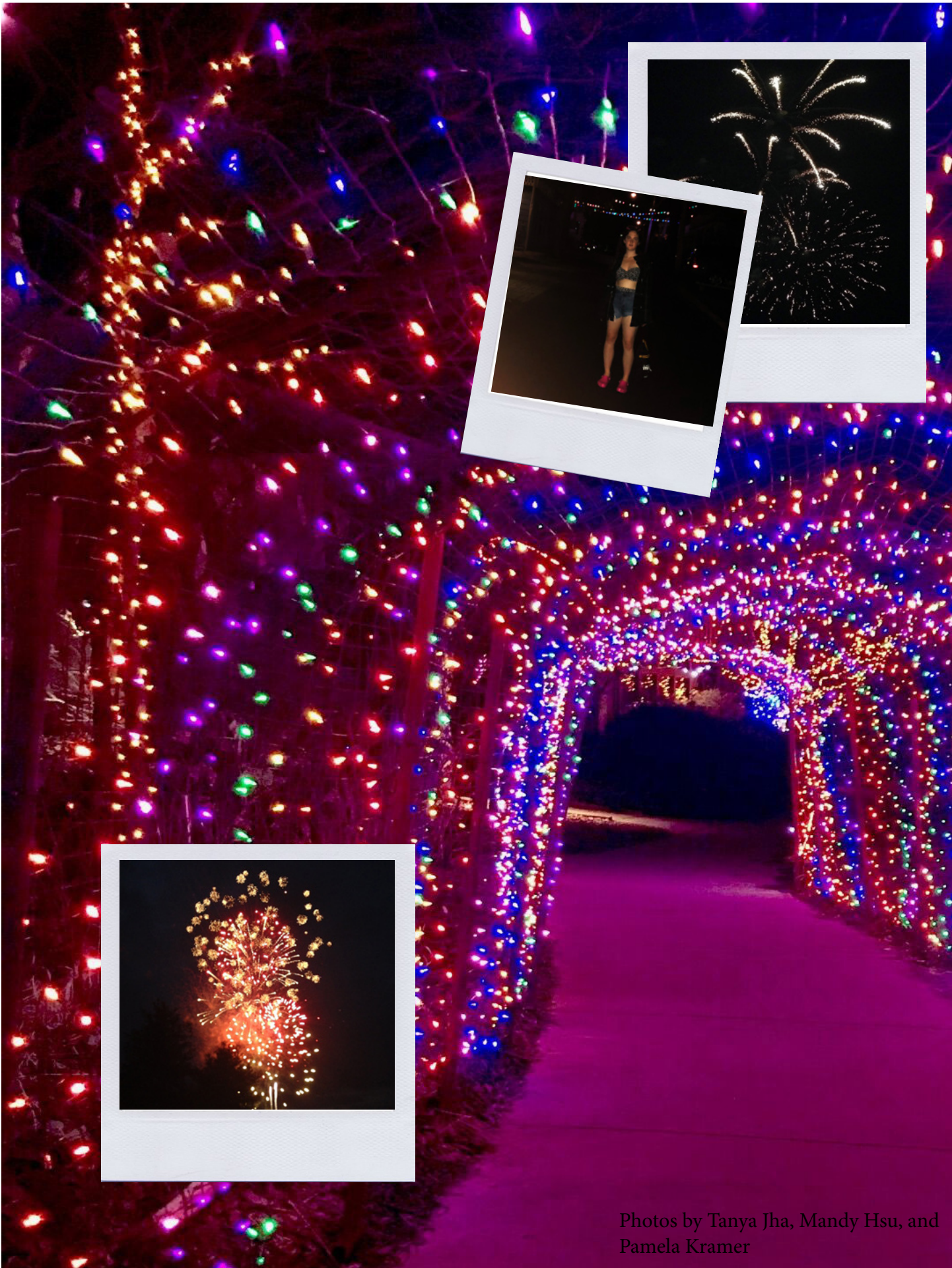
## *Cobalt*

*Every time you cry,  
I search for stars in your  
eyes.  
I count constellations  
until I reach the edge  
of the great unknown.  
Lately, your skies have  
been clouded,  
And the only hope I find  
is in the light reflecting  
off your tears*

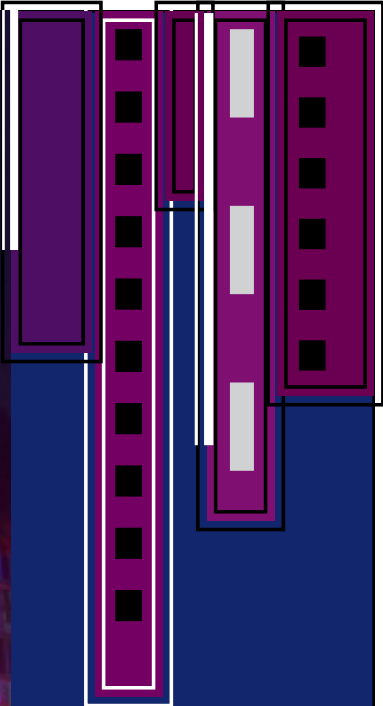
## *Stars*

*“This town is too small for us,”  
You always say, but you and I  
stay fixed to our earths. We  
are still young. Should be out,  
Finding our golden thrones.  
But we have the hearts and  
souls of old men. “We should  
leave,”  
I always tell you, but  
the world moves on  
without us.*

*Picture By: Abby Fisher*



Photos by Tanya Jha, Mandy Hsu, and Pamela Kramer



*Photos by Amulya Puttaraju*

# The Interview

I won't forget Tuesday in the city,  
I shivered in the cold October air.  
I was dressed to the nines, pretty as could be,  
It was an opportunity so rare.

I looked up and saw buildings oh so tall;  
They consumed me as my fate drew closer.  
Interview at Vogue? I wanted to stall.  
Countless thoughts, but I was no composer.

Palms grew sweaty as I waited to ask  
The questions that I had prepared for weeks.  
I needed to find answers and unmask  
The advertising secrets and techniques.

Despite my worries, it went well that day—  
My newfound confidence is here to stay.

By Angelina Sachar



Photos by Abby Fisher and Mandy Hsu

# Red Nail Polish

By Darshini Babu Ganesh

A unfamiliar woman walks into the room.  
She sits down in front of me and takes my wrinkled hands into her own.

I compare her hands to mine.

We have the same complexion. My fingers have road maps etched onto them while hers are smooth. Her nails are coated in red polish. I once knew someone who loved red nail polish; who was it?

She looks at me for some time, then her eyes flick downwards, and she says nothing. It occurs to me that I don't recall having ever seen this woman before. What is she doing in my house?

I take note of her hair. Dark like mine. Or at least like mine was. Was my hair ever that dark? I remember braiding hair like hers. I think.

She looks at me again, deep into my eyes. She seems as if she's trying to remind me of something. But what? Just tell me. Please.

"Do you have a daughter?", she asks, lips quivering.

Her questions surprises me. A total stranger, wondering if I have a daughter.

Suddenly, I'm not too sure. I have a bottle of red polish, but it isn't mine. For years I've had it on the windowsill near my bed, wondering who left it there. Sometimes I hear laughter echoing throughout the house, but I could never pinpoint whose voice it was. Why had they left me?

"No", I answer. "I don't have a daughter."

Tears instantly sprout from the woman's eyes, threatening to spill over. She cradles my face in her hands.

"It's me, mom. I'm your daughter. Don't you remember me?"

My daughter?

Her name. What is her name?

Yes, I remember now. Long, dark hair swishing like a snake down the back of a young girl. I'm chasing her around the house. She's laughing and the halls seem to capture our happy time. I finally catch her, swing her around. Her tiny hands cradle my face, red polish on her nails.

No.

No it's going away now.

No she's leaving me everything is turning dark the shadows they're catching up to me grab her from behind her face that beautiful child's face I don't remember that face now

Reaching for her now her image slowly disappears from my mind i need to know her name my fingers are so close to hers just out of reach

Her name on the tip of my tongue this frustrating feeling of not knowing this secret everyone else in the rooms knows but me

"Daksha? Is your name Daksha?"

Her face falls and she slowly gets up.

Leaves me in my rocking chair.

Leaves the room.

Leaves me in pieces.

Where are those cherished memories?

The one thing all people my age hold onto so dearly?

An unfamiliar woman walks into the room.

I take note of her hair. Dark like mine.

Photo by Darshini Babu Ganesh

# *Her favorite flower*

*by Sarah Latch*

*Puffy rose cheeks,  
Dyed scarlet red in the chill of winter.  
A white calla lily clenched in a tight fist.  
He kneels alone, his body shivering and  
His eyes  
Closed.*

*The wind whips around him, nipping at his bare hands and rippling through his fluffy coat.  
His spare hand grips the soft fur, playing with it between numb fingers.  
Tears become rivers,  
Become splashes,  
Become puddles,  
Become ice.  
His mind is frozen.  
His world is frozen.*

*Dull gray eyes open without  
Thought;  
Thoughts that were once so overwhelming have reduced to static.  
His eyes focus on the small stone in front of him,  
Words engraved deeply on its surface.*

*A name.*

*Numbers etched in the remaining space.*

*A date.*

*He loosens his grip around the gentle flower,  
Laying it down on the frost-covered grass.  
It will die, in this weather.  
But that is of no consequence.  
This is the same day,  
The same time,  
Only a different year,  
Of her passing --  
Someone he once held so dear,*

*Ripped so easily from his life,  
Completely without reason.  
His tears cease.  
Mom loved calla lilies.  
And on the anniversary of her departure,  
Even if he is all alone,  
He will preserve her memory.*



*Photos by Angela Engle*

## Billy Bodair

by Rachel Pepper

Annie had moved to Roseton, a town her mother called quaint and Annie called ancient, only three months ago. At twelve, Annie had already moved four times and figured this time would be no different. She'd win everybody over with her strawberry blonde hair, freckles, and snub nose, would make some friends she cared about, but not deeply, and would finally move away again, forgetting as she'd be forgotten.

But Roseton didn't seem to like her as much as other towns. It was the smallest place she'd ever lived in, and everybody seemed to know each other already, not wanting or needing any more friends. Annie, unused to sitting alone at lunch, felt as though the air had been sucked out of the world when she saw people looking at her or giggling behind their hands.

About a week after moving to Roseton, Annie noticed a boy with pale porcelain skin and fine black hair watching her. Not like the girls did, with snickers and sidelong glances. But shyly, as though he was trying to work up the courage to talk to her. Annie decided to save him the trouble.

"Hi," she said, slowing down to match his pace on the way to lunch. He started, jerking his head back and staring at her with wide blue eyes. "I'm Annie," she said. "You're Billy, right?" He was in a few of her classes, and one of the talents Annie had picked up from her many moves was remembering names and faces.

He swallowed. "Yeah." His mouth turned down at the corners, even though he was trying to smile.

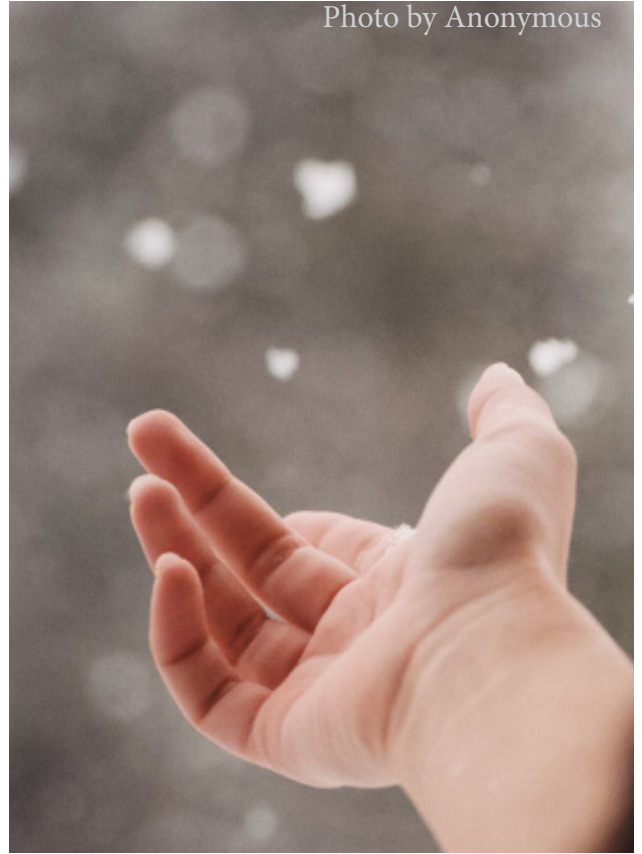
"Want to eat lunch with me?" Annie asked. She didn't particularly care if Billy took this in a way he shouldn't. She'd be gone in months anyway, anyway.

"All right," he said in a voice like a cat walking on velvet.

Over the next month, Annie developed a connection with Billy Bodair unlike anything she'd had with another kid before. She didn't feel like she was using him as a prop to make herself look good. She almost liked him.

But something was off. Almost every time she talked to him, Billy seemed to have trouble looking her in the eye. She didn't think it was because he didn't want to talk to her, since once he got over his shyness he conversed animatedly and laughed at her jokes. He also refused to talk about dogs. Annie had recently gotten a puppy--the first pet she'd ever had--and she couldn't stop describing Max's soft golden fur and glittering dark eyes, the way his pink tongue lolled when he leapt up and down, begging for treats. But whenever she brought him up, Billy's brow would ripple and he would change the subject. There was, in general, something not quite normal about him that Annie couldn't put her finger on. He often took half a second too long to react to things, and Annie wondered if he just needed extra time to process events. She had never had a friend quite like him before, which made him very interesting.

Photo by Anonymous



One Tuesday, Annie invited him over for a movie.

"When?" Billy asked, his eyes, though still not quite meeting hers, brightening.

"How about Friday?"

Billy narrowed his eyes and swallowed. "I can't."

"Anytime over the weekend, then."

Billy shook his head. "Can we do it tomorrow? Or Thursday?"

"Mom wouldn't let me have you over on a school night," Annie said. "Are you sure you can't make it any time this weekend?" Billy nodded.

Annie sighed. "Maybe next weekend, then."

Billy wasn't in school on Friday. Annie called him to see where he was, but he didn't answer.

Annie tried him again on Saturday and then Sunday. He didn't answer once.

At school on Monday, Annie was fuming. Even if Billy was sick in bed, he could at least have picked up his phone and let her know. She stood by the school doors, ready to tear into him when he appeared.

Her anger mostly evaporated when she saw that he was on crutches.

Billy propelled himself into the school, his backpack pushing on his shoulders and making him hunch forward. His face was wounded as well. Purple bruises and angry red scars covered his face.

Annie ran to him. "What happened?" She took his backpack and stared at him. Nothing like this had ever happened to any of her friends.

I got hit by a car on the way to the bus stop on Friday,” he said in a raspy voice. “I was in the hospital until yesterday afternoon.”

“I’m so sorry,” Annie said. She wanted to hug him but didn’t think, wounded as he was, that he would appreciate it.

“Come on, let’s go inside so you can sit down.”

When the bell rang for their first period to start, Billy, leaning on Annie’s shoulder, marched through the hallways. He ignored the horrified stares he drew from students and teachers alike.

Annie couldn’t concentrate throughout her science class--which wasn’t unusual, but unlike most days she wasn’t doodling or reading under her desk. Something was off about Billy and his accident, but she couldn’t figure out what. She also didn’t understand why he kept staring across the room at Caroline Jacoby.

When the bell rang at the end of class, Billy packed up very quickly and tried to stand up by himself. He fell back into his chair, unable to keep his balance.

“What are you doing? Take it easy,” Annie said. She picked up his backpack and helped him stand.

“Hurry up,” Billy muttered.

“There’s no rush,” Annie said, just as an uproar came from the other side of the classroom. The only people in the room besides Annie and Billy were Caroline and three boys. Even the teacher had left for his next class.

“Stop it,” Caroline was saying, but one of the boys pulled her thermos out of her lunchbox and poured its contents on her. It looked like soup, and from the way Caroline screamed, Annie guessed it was hot.

“Hey!” Annie shouted, but the boys were already out the door. Annie took a step forward, unsure if she wanted to chase the boys or comfort Caroline, but before she could do either Caroline rushed out as well, running down the hall in the opposite direction as the boys.

Annie turned to Billy in shock. Her eyebrows lifted when she saw he was just standing there, leaning on his crutches, staring at the floor. Beneath his mass of bruises and swellings his face was pained, but there were no traces of horror or surprise. He simply looked as though he wanted to be somewhere else.

“That was pretty awful, huh?” Annie said cautiously as she led Billy to their next class. “Does that kind of thing happen a lot around here?”

Billy shrugged. “Those guys have always been jerks,” he said in a voice that Annie had to lean in to hear.

Annie spent the next period thinking about Billy. Like how he had never looked as nervous as the rest of them when waiting for a test grade--he’d be either cheerful or gloomy right from the start. And how he sometimes gazed sadly at other kids--like Caroline today before the end of science. Annie had always known there was something strange about Billy, but not this. Not what she was considering now.

Annie sat like a block of ice, slowly becoming more and more frozen, through her next three periods, waiting desperately for lunch.

When the bell finally rang she raced to Billy’s fourth period and met him just as he was hobbling to the door.

“We need to talk,” she said. Billy nodded. He didn’t seem surprised. But then, he never did.

He’ll probably laugh at me, she thought. Was she really considering this?

She led Billy to a quiet hallway. He leaned against the sickly green lockers, an aged look on his face.

Annie realized that she had no idea how to begin this conversation. She stammered for a few moments before deciding that if what she suspected was true, it wasn’t necessary to spell out all her thoughts.

“You know what I’m going to say,” she said.

“Don’t you?”

Billy nodded, letting his head fall and dragging it up again as though he hardly had the strength to do so.

“Of course,” he said.

Annie shook her head, her mouth opening slightly. “Just...how, Billy? How do you know things? And how have you kept it a secret?”

Billy shrugged. “It’s because I live here. Everybody’s known me my whole life, and they just figure this is how I am. They don’t bother noticing things. But you, you’re new and you see things old friends can’t.”

“But what exactly can you do?” Annie asked. “Are you a psychic? Can you read my palm? Can you read my mind?”

“I’m not a circus performer,” he added. If I was you’d have to pay to gawk at me like that.” Billy sighed. “I’m sorry.” He took a deep breath. “I can see the entire future. Of everyone. Of everything. I know what’s going to happen to each and every one of us, every minute of every day and throughout our lives. I know who I’m going to marry and when, and how we’ll never be able to have children. I know that my wife will die of cancer when she’s sixty-three, and I’ll spend the rest of my life alone. I know that one of my old friends will start selling drugs for a living, and will make a fortune before being executed by a rival kingpin. Another will have a miserable job and never do what he wants most in the world.” He took a deep, shuddering breath in. “I know that one of my best friends will be kidnapped for ransom money and murdered. I know that Caroline Jacoby will die at eighteen in a mugging in New York. I know what the principal is going to have for breakfast tomorrow. I know the result of the next election, and the next, and every election to come.” His voice shook, and dropped to almost a whisper.

“I know when the world is going to end.”



Annie couldn't take her eyes off of Billy's battered face. All the knowledge in the world, knowledge that could never be shared, was contained within this one boy. She couldn't imagine the burden.

"Caroline," she repeated. "You knew what was going to happen to Caroline today, with the soup.

And you just stood there! You wanted to leave early so you didn't have to watch it, but you weren't going to do anything to try to stop it?" Another thought struck her. "And your accident! When you were hit by the car! You knew that was going to happen, didn't you? That's why you didn't want to come over this weekend. You knew you wouldn't be able to."

Billy nodded. "Yes, that's right."

"Well, why didn't you prevent it?" Annie was practically screaming, and she forced herself to lower her voice.

"Why didn't you make sure you didn't get hit, or stop those boys from pouring the soup on Caroline?"

Billy stared at the floor. "I never change anything I see. Not anymore. If I know that by doing what I would normally do, what comes naturally, I get hit by a car, then that's what needs to happen, no matter how hard it may be."

"Why?" Annie asked. "Why couldn't you just avoid it?"

"Sometimes when you try to prevent an injury, you end up with a death," Billy said, his blue eyes looking almost black. Annie suddenly wondered if this had anything to do with his refusal to talk about dogs. "I've learned not to mess with things, all right?"

"So you just have to stand back and watch everything happen?" Annie shook her head. "Oh, Billy..." She jerked her head up suddenly. "What's my future? What's going to happen to me?"

Billy shook his head. "I can't tell you."

"Why not?" Annie asked. "Why am I allowed to know Caroline's future and yours, but not my own?"

"You shouldn't know your future," Billy said. "You aren't used to dealing with it."

Annie scowled.

"Hey," Billy said. "Why don't you come over today? We could have cookies." His voice sounded as though he was reciting lines for a play he didn't like.

"No thanks," Annie said. "You should rest." And she needed time to process this. And to devise a plan that would make Billy tell her her future.

Billy nodded, and Annie realized he had already known what she was going to say. Did she even need to talk, then, since he knew without hearing them what her words would be? But if she never said anything to him then her speech wouldn't be in her future, so he wouldn't know it. Her head was beginning to hurt. They spent the rest of lunch in silence.

Three days later, Billy's face was looking better and Annie, though more used to the idea of her clairvoyant friend, was still desperate to know her future. Billy remained obstinate, however, refusing to talk about anything nearer in the future than the upcoming period. As they said goodbye outside of the school at the end of the day, he looked as though he wanted to say something else, stopped himself, then turned and walked in the direction of his house. Annie walked towards her street, and out of the corner of her eye she saw Billy stop and stand stone-still, appearing to be making a decision. Annie wished he would talk to her about it, but knew he wouldn't.

She turned onto the street before hers, listening to the birds and squirrels chatter. A black car drove slowly up the lane. Annie looked at the garish lawn decorations in front of her mom's boss's house. Another black car rolled past, in the opposite direction as the first. Annie caught a glimpse of Max waiting for her in her front yard at the end of the block. His yellow tail wagged furiously, and Annie waved to him. She hummed to herself, her shoes smacking the pavement and springing back up. A chipmunk skittered across the sidewalk. Another black car, following the first.

Suddenly Annie stopped cold, almost falling over. Was that the same black car that kept driving up and down the street? Just as her heart was beginning to pound, Annie felt strong hands grip her arms and cover her mouth. As she looked at the outside world for the last time, Annie glimpsed Billy Bodair watching in the distance, apology mixed deeply into the bruises on his face.

## The Day My Parents Got Divorced

By Abby Fisher

One Sunday morning in Spring, towards the end of my eighth grade year, my brother Luke and I were eating our chocolate chip pancakes at the peninsula in our kitchen. My mom was watching the news in our adjoining living room with our black Australian Shepherd, Ziggy. My dad walked downstairs and greeted us, asking us how we had slept. Everything felt calm and peaceful, a refreshing break from a stressful week at school. I loved it; I loved the normality of the situation and knowing that I could relax all day.

After we had finished eating, my mom asked if my brother and I would come sit down because she had something to tell us. As soon as she said that, I knew something was wrong. Her tone was flat, empty, void of almost any emotion. My dad's expression was similar to my mom's, they both looked somber. I was scared to death. The only time my parents acted like this was when something seriously bad had happened. Thoughts and questions of what might have happened raced through my head. Was my mom sick? Was my dad sick? Was Ziggy okay? Were they getting a divorce? No, they couldn't be, why would they be, maybe someone's sick.

I hesitantly approached the couch, feeling the small rays of bright sunshine peek through the dark red curtains covering our windows, letting a little light into the otherwise dark room. Once we were all sitting down, my mom uttered the words I had been dreading, "Your dad and I are separating." My parents tried to explain why they were tearing apart our family and ripping each of us to shreds. They claimed they were not in love anymore and were not happy together, but I could barely listen as tears streamed down my face like small rivers flowing from my red eyes. There was nothing I could think about besides the confusion on what my parents had been struggling to justify.

My parents tried their best to console me and Luke while revealing the reasons behind their choices. My mom called Ziggy over, and he lay down in between her and I. While it did not help much, having Ziggy there to hold onto made me feel a little bit better. My mom then stated she had been looking at new houses and found one that she was going to be settling on.

My parents never fought. Even amidst the long and painful process of separating, they were always amicable towards each other. While we were all crying, my parents' tears revealed how hard this was for them; they knew this decision was painful for Luke and me, and they never wanted to hurt us.

After that, I slowly trudged upstairs to my room, still trying to fully comprehend what had just occurred. All I could do was lay on my bed, hiding under my layers of fluffy blankets, staring blankly at the white ceiling and trying to remember every memory of my once happy family. All the trips to the beach, family visits, lacrosse games, fun dinners were all going to be changed, and I was not ready for that to happen. I never expected my parents to get divorced, naively believing they would be in love forever.

To this day, I am still completely not over all of the events that occurred. What has always been most important to me is that my parents are happier now and we have all grown. While most of the time I feel that I have moved on, I will occasionally have a memory that makes me wish everything was the way it was before my parents got divorced.

Photo by Mandy Hsu

# Saying Goodbye

By Ava Checkan

My sneakers clapped against the concrete, echoing loudly as I stormed down the street towards my house in a blind rage. Red and orange leaves spiraled furiously from their branches while hostile winds yanked the trees every which way. Coiled in my fist were my brand new earbuds, ones I had saved up for by dog-sitting over the summer. They were practically split in two, wires exposed and frayed. I knew Gracie had done it; my older sister was always destroying my things. I envisioned myself marching inside the house, shoving the earbuds into her face, and forbidding her from borrowing anything from me ever again. My mother would scold her, my father would ground her. Gracie would beg for forgiveness, crying profusely. Now imagine my confusion upon walking through the front door, seeing that she was already crying. Gracie was sobbing on the dining room floor, draped over our oldest dog, Lager. Her entire body shook with each gasping cry, and my mother was in tears, talking on the phone in the next room. The broken earbuds fell from my hand as a single tear escaped my eye.

“What’s going on?” I asked, already knowing the answer. I held my breath, gazing into the deep, melancholy eyes of our fourteen-year-old family dog.

“He’s dying, sweetie,” my mother answered me softly. “Lager’s dying.”

I collapsed to the floor, suddenly unable to breathe. The room grew darker and darker until my eyes were open but my vision was black. Deafening static flooded my ears, only interrupted by the sound of my own choking sobs. I felt my mother’s arms around me as my consciousness faded. My father gently shook me awake the next morning along with Gracie and Thomas.

“Mommy called the vet,” he told us, his voice breaking. “She says that Lager’s in pain. They’re suggesting we put him down today.”


I wanted to cry, but I didn’t have any tears left in my body. They were all gone, leaving me a dry and shriveled heap.

“Would any of you like to come?” Gracie and Thomas both shook their heads but I nodded immediately, sickened by the thought of Lager passing without me there to hold him.

“Go get ready for school,” he told us. “Ava, I’ll pick you up early.”

A little dizzy, I walked to the bathroom to assess the damage from the night before. My eyes were red and swollen from crying, my clothes were covered in dog fur and my hair was sticking out on all sides. It seemed as if I had never seen the hopeless girl in the mirror before. She looked broken and defeated, like she had no fight left in her. No, I decided, I did not know this girl at all. I dropped my eyes, unwilling to meet her pitiful gaze.

I sat through school that day, focusing all of my energy on not crying. Internally, I was screaming at the hands of the clock to stop ticking, screaming at the leaves to stop falling, screaming at my classmates to stop laughing. There was nothing to laugh about. There was nothing to smile about. Lager was dying and I was just sitting. Tick, tock. Tick, tock. I watched the hands of the clock circle ‘round and ‘round, running in circles, taunting me until I was called up to the office for dismissal.



Walking out across the parking lot towards our silver minivan, I looked up at the withering winter leaves. A brown, shriveled leaf broke off of its branch and hit the ground, dead. Squashed bugs littered the concrete. The horrifying realization that death was all around me began to set in. Starting to feel suffocated, I jogged the rest of the way to the car, receiving unconvincing smiles from both parents upon my arrival. I opened the side door and stepped inside.

Tears that I didn't even know I had began flowing from my eyes when I caught my first glimpse of Lager. The seats were moved back so that he would have room to lay on the floor, wrapped in a blanket. His eyes opened slowly when he saw me. With the remaining strength he had, he wagged his tail; Lager was always happy to see me. Between his paws was a small stuffed animal, which served as my brother's proxy for the occasion. Thomas wanted Lager to "have another puppy that could keep him company." All I wanted to do was throw myself on top of my dog and hold him tightly, yet I was afraid to touch him. His brittle bones were quivering and his stomach was distended. I feared that I would break him if I touched him. I settled for lying on the floor next to Lager and stroking his soft head. My tears collected in a puddle on the blanket. We reached the veterinary clinic in ten minutes. It wasn't enough time. I began to panic when we pulled into the parking lot. My crying escalated, and Lager slowly reached his head up to lick my nose. I laughed, tears still streaming down my face. I took his furry face in both my hands.

"I love you, buddy," I told him several times. "I love you. I will always love you."

When we entered the room, the veterinarian greeted us with a meek, sympathetic smile. My father had to carry Lager because he could no longer support his own weight. He laid our dog down on a metal bed, but not before I spread the blanket on top of it to make him more comfortable. I was crying so hard that it became difficult to breathe between gasping cries.


"Now would be a good time to start saying your goodbyes," suggested the doctor.

"Lager," I walked up to the table, holding up the stuffed dog. "Thomas wants you to have your little friend for this part." I placed the stuffed animal in between Lager's paws and wrapped my arms around him. "I love you," I whispered into his floppy dog ears. I stood there hanging onto him for several minutes.

"Ava," my mom spoke quietly. "It's time to let go." I didn't listen to her. My arms would not leave his body. Eventually, they began to pull me off of him.

"No!" I cried. "Wait." I pet Lager a few more times, gave him a kiss on the head, and looked into his kind eyes. He looked tired. More than anything, he looked extremely tired. I stepped back to allow my parents to say goodbye. He had been their dog for longer than I was alive. My mother and father whispered their goodbyes, stroking his back and supporting his head.

"It's okay," my mother told Lager. "It's okay, you can go." She turned to the doctor. "We're ready." The veterinarian picked up a needle and injected Lager with anesthesia in several places. She told us that he wouldn't feel anything, that it would be peaceful. A larger needle went into his side. I heard his breathing get slower. His eyes began to flutter shut and his muscles seemed to relax. I stood still, peering at the body that had just belonged to my beautiful Lager. The sweetest dog in the world was finally free of pain.



I saw a teardrop splatter against the floor in front of me, and I was shocked to look up and see that it belonged to my father. I had never seen him cry before. My entire life, he had been there to comfort me, not once showing that kind of vulnerability. I grabbed his hand and he squeezed mine back. More tears fell to the floor.

The car ride back home was a quiet one. I stared at the blanket where Lager was lying just an hour before. My knuckles began to hurt, and I looked down to see that I was squeezing the stuffed animal so hard that my hands were turning white. My father eventually broke the silence.

“You wouldn’t remember this Ava, but Lager was so careful with you and Gracie when you were toddlers,” he began. “Gracie was too aggressive with him. She would grab his tongue with her hand and pull on it.” My mom started laughing knowingly as my dad continued the story. “Any normal dog would have bitten her hand, but Lager stood stone-still, whining and waiting patiently for one of us to notice.” A smile slowly began to spread across my face.

“Do you remember how we used to lay Ava down on her favorite blanket in the middle of the floor?” my mom asked. “Lager was always so careful not to disturb her. If he was wandering around, he would carefully tiptoe around the perimeter of the blanket. He always made sure not to bother her.” My mom wiped the tears from her face, but they continued to trickle down. “What an extraordinary dog.” This is how the rest of our ride went. We took turns recounting stories and laughing through our tears.

I will never forget the look on Yogi’s face when we returned home. At first, he seemed normal, standing excitedly with his head cocked to one side. He whined impatiently, because this was usually when he would be showered with treats and affection. But as soon as he saw me carrying his big brother’s worn out leash in my hand, he knew. His tail stopped wagging and he shifted his gaze from the leash to my face. “I’m so sorry buddy,” I whispered. Yogi’s ears drooped from their usual perky position as he walked towards me, his paws clicking against the hardwood floor. I wrapped my arms around him and he rested his head on my shoulder. He was trembling and whining incessantly. I thought it was the closest thing a dog could get to crying, that is, until the howling started. It began that night, but progressed into regular behavior. Yogi would stretch himself out in front of the bay window, the place he knew to be Lager’s favorite resting spot. Then, he would let out long, sorrowful howls that resonated throughout our quiet, dark house. He never stopped watching the road, waiting for his brother to turn the corner and come running back home.

Lager’s death had a major impact in my life. It was the first real family death I had ever experienced, and I had absolutely no idea how to cope with it. The dog who had always protected me, who climbed into my bed during thunderstorms and whimpered every day when I left for school-- he was gone. It felt like the walls were caving in on me. Since his death, I have thought about him less and less frequently, but I haven’t loved him any less. He brought an incredible amount of joy into my life, and I can’t help but smile whenever I ponder the time he spent here on Earth. I know he is still there somewhere, keeping me out of harm’s way. Sometimes, I can feel him nuzzling his head under my arm, protecting me from a distance.

Sincerely Me

I'm so, tired.

Tired of you,

The collective

Picking out photos from my vast album

Pulling out polaroid pictures  
of my pain, my wrongs, my sadness,  
And judging without context

All while you, the collective,  
Are living a lie

How can you can me  
A fifteen year old,  
Different, wrong, a fake, a lie,

Questionable.

when you yourself,  
The amalgamation of the  
worlds fanciful facade  
Sit on a mountain of lies?



Dear Collective,  
I truly wish you well,  
But if you mean well,  
Then you must dissolve.

you are nothing to me  
But if you must exist

Then join me in this recollection  
Come here  
Flip through my album  
Judge my glorious moments,  
My magnificent wit,  
My dazzling charm  
And admire me  
For all I am  
*Sincerely,*  
Me.



Poem by Anonymous  
Design by Eunice Lee

*That Photo of My Aunt*

*That photo of my aunt  
Right there  
It's my favorite  
I just love it*

*The way the sun  
Kisses her  
Eyes  
Hair  
Face  
Glowing*

*It's so beautiful  
It's my favorite  
I just love it*

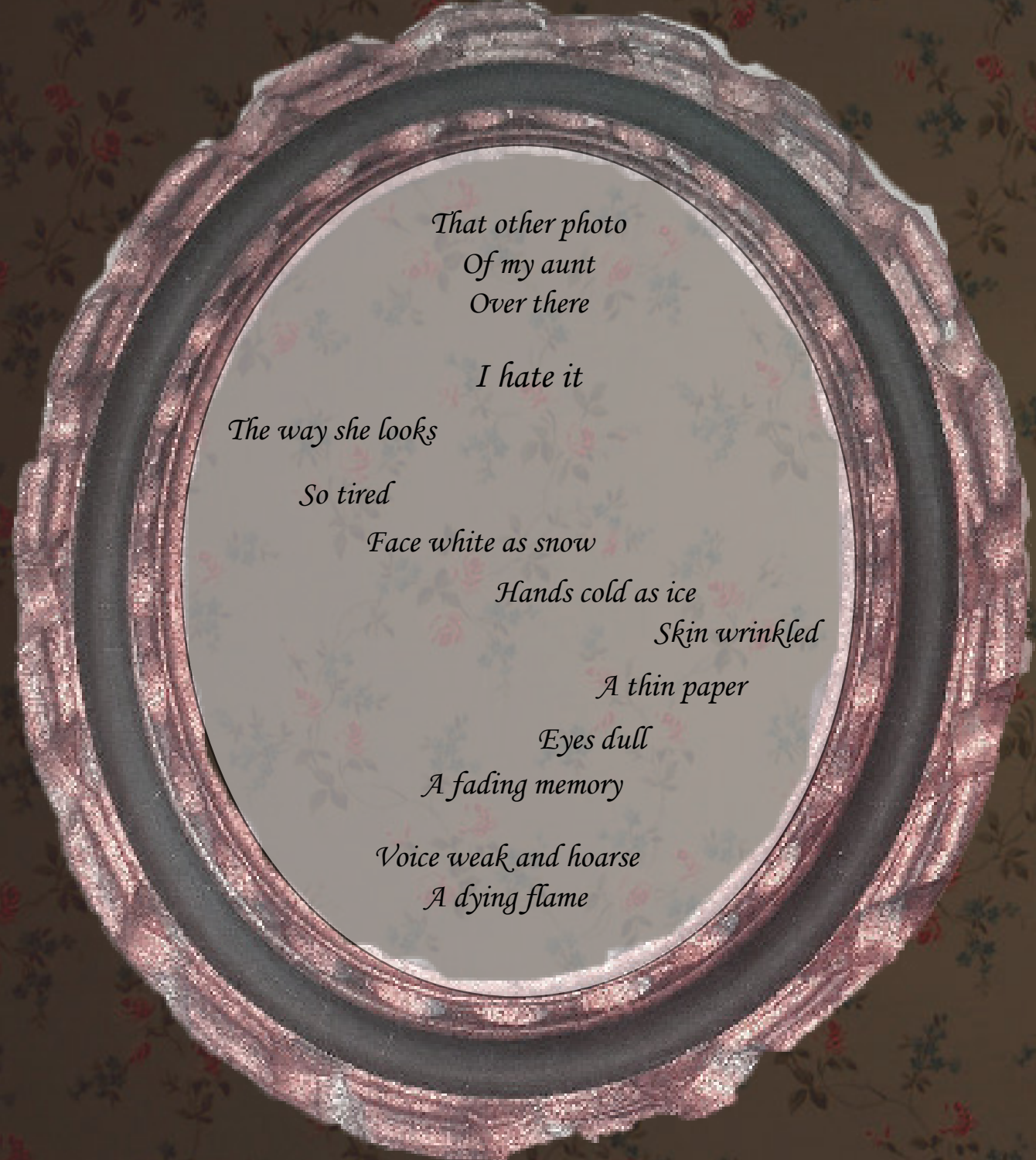
*The way the breeze  
Caresses her  
Hair  
Clothes  
Face  
Smiling*

*It's so pleasant  
It's my favorite  
I just love it*

*The way the life  
Radiates from her  
So carefree  
No worries  
Everything is good*



*A poem by Medha Kotti*



*That other photo  
Of my aunt  
Over there*

*I hate it*

*The way she looks*

*So tired*

*Face white as snow*

*Hands cold as ice*

*Skin wrinkled*

*A thin paper*

*Eyes dull*

*A fading memory*

*Voice weak and hoarse*

*A dying flame*

## The Death of Suicide

By: Pragya Kumar

The scars were there. And they were was a constant reminder of the pain, sorrow, and despair. The single feeling of hopelessness had consumed and left another innocent child bleeding alone, scared. The fear coursing through their veins only heightened their senses before they dulled out, eyes closing, mouth opening, and screaming. Screaming because of the emotional pain, and physical limits they set for themselves. Fear won out death, life was suddenly worth much more as the little number of happy memories they had flashed. And as they were raced to the hospital, only shock was left. Numbness coursed through their veins, and for the first time, they began to rethink what they had done.

She was so sick of standards, expectations, and feeling useless. She was sick of being the punching bag of her family, sick of being told that she ruined people's lives. She was tired of the voices in her head, constantly degrading her and telling her she wasn't enough. Words were thrown at her, and she couldn't do anything about it, outside and even within herself. She was tired of always being the wrong one. She was done with feeling anger. She wanted to feel each of her cells bursting with adrenaline just to feel like she was important. Something, anything to take away the pain. And now here she sat, plugged into an IV and feeling even worse than before. She began to think twice. Was the few seconds of bliss worth being put to bed for days?

Her first answer was yes.



And he was tired of his colorless life. Done with the numbness, and constant sadness. As he walked into his home, he was constantly reminded of the lack of family and love. He was tired of plastering on a smile, pretending that everything was okay and that he was the best child a parent could ask for. But he never had the opportunity to be a child. He never understood what it was like to be given a surprise on his birthday, or even celebrated when he passed an exam. He wanted to run away from feeling ignored. And so he landed a place on a hospital bed, people still giving him pity but never enough to make him feel better. He was confused. The more he did things that would take away his emotional pain, the more people pitied him. He was hurt, and it only seemed to escalate.

But the scars were already healing.

What she didn't realize was that she had already survived the trial of voices. Her time was not over. All the times she put herself on the edge of death because of others meant nothing except realization. As self-pity flooded in, tears fell again. Only this time, in determination. She would not let the thoughts of other people bring her down.

And what he didn't realize was that only he had the cure to make himself feel better. He could be his own lover, his own savior. At each drip of the IV, each teardrop fallen, he made a promise to himself. He would not allow himself to be the cause of his own destruction.

Everything that could be enveloped within layers of feelings was tucked neatly into a small discolored nick, and it was a memory, a snapshot even, of a time where hope broke through despair. And they knew, grasped through pain and learned: Life was worth more than death could ever be.

## Getting Out of Bed With Depression

by Anonymous

And all of a sudden- weight- heavy, sinking, pulling; it was drowning her. Clenching her teeth she resisted the weight-heavy, sinking, pulling. Her feet, as though they were surrounded by molasses, began to move, and she was walking! Walking was not the right word- dragging, trudging, more like it- but a small victory nonetheless. Small victory but alas, as soon as it had come it fled. She had relaxed, her teeth unclenched and that sudden- weight- heavy, sinking, pulling; it came back.

“God!” She sobbed with frustration, her arms flexing, her calves burning. “Nothing is ever easy is it!”

Those poor, battered legs of hers lifted again, her feet an inch off the ground, toes pointing, as if she were going to point turn, then leap, then land- all in one flowing motion like ink off a brush- toes preparing for battle against that- weight- heavy, sinking, pulling. Her eyes closed; her body was ugly in this fight. Covered in bruises- dents in knees, chest, head- small hairline scratches across her soul. Her feet were an inch off the ground and she moved, walking! She shook her head, not allowing herself to celebrate until she had escaped that sudden- weight- heavy, sinking, pulling; no sooner had the thought sprung into her head, she fell.

Her fall was but an inch, but to her poor, desolate body she had fallen from an inch up through the crust of the Earth all the way into its blazing core-how a pen must feel when it's dropped from a desk. As her body burned away, lying on the Earth's red hot center, she cried, her tears like safety pins, desperately trying to stitch her melting flesh back together again as she was crushed by that seemingly insurmountable- weight- heavy, sinking, pulling. She was perfectly content to keep burning there until even her white bones went up in flames, but one of her tears was successful; the safety pin clipped a soft, exposed ankle back in its place.

“Darn,” Her back arched, pushing her torso off the hot rock. “Nothing's ever easy.”

And yet again, her ankle flexed, the safety pin straining to hold against a rush of molasses as tired muscles slowly, aching, began, once again, to move. Walking! Walking against that horrible- weight- heavy, sinking, pulling, she was still walking! Gritting her teeth, mustering any possible drop of energy left, she walked through the molasses, her feet hitting the floor. Groaning- walking on a safety pin- she crossed the wasteland towards a dresser, and clenched her teeth as she began to choose a top to wear.

Photo by Pallavi Battina

Picture by Julia Pavlick

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