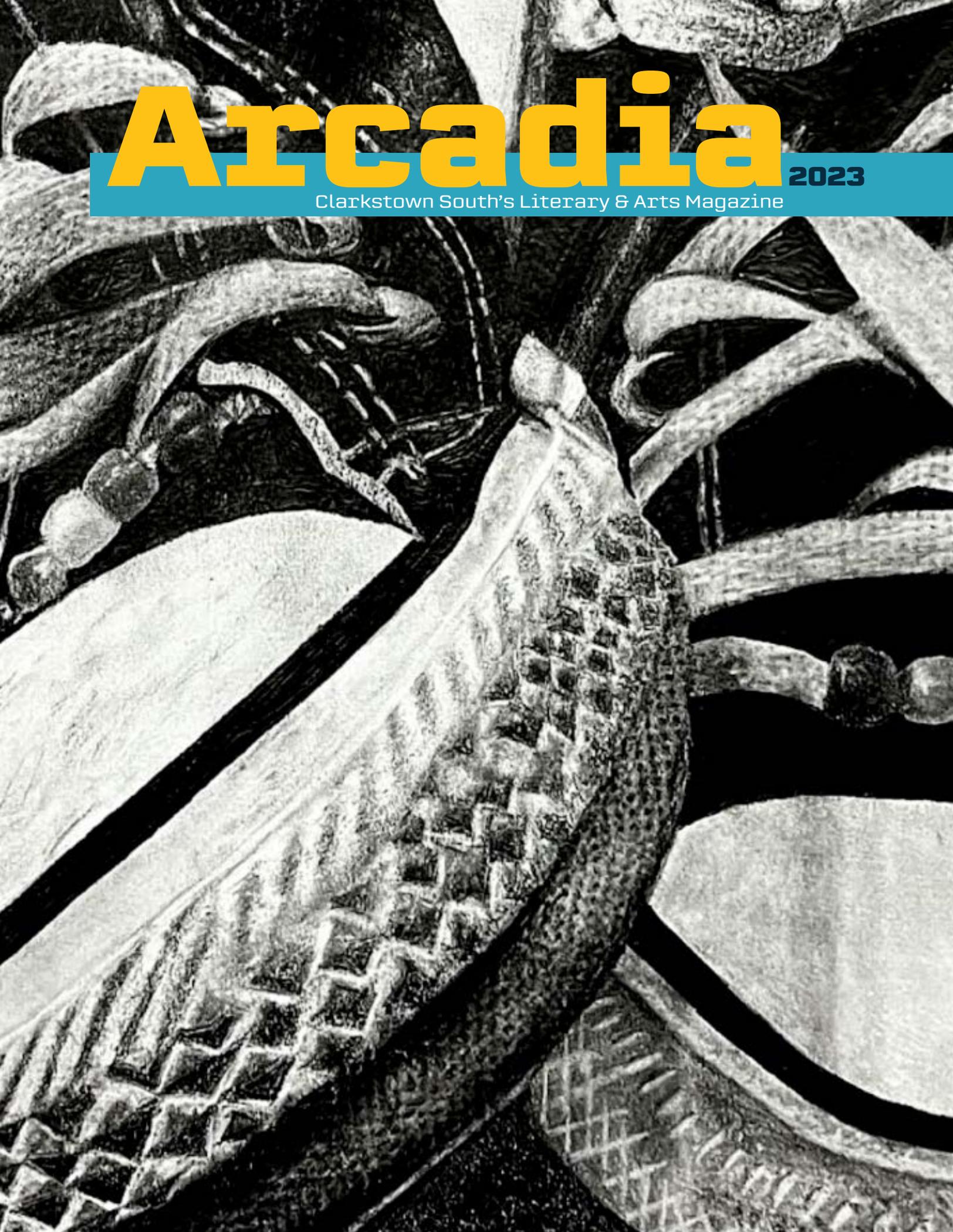


Arcadia

2023

Clarkstown South's Literary & Arts Magazine



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EDITOR'S NOTE

I have been involved in editing and producing Arcadia for four years, and I continue to be amazed by all the talented students we have at Clarkstown South. Observing artists and writers blossom and find comfort in art is a beautiful thing. None of this would be possible without Ms. DiSavino, Mr. Sandomir, and the consistent effort of our members.

Thank you to every student, teacher, and contributor who helped create a safe space for these artists to express their feelings and unique perceptions. Readers will recognize a complete range of emotions in the literature and art featured here; everyone deserves to experience the worlds these students have created.

Melody Vanichpong, *Senior Editor*



SARAH PASSMAN



KYRA PENN



DAVID SAMSON

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Front Cover Art - Nicole Pisetzner

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WHEN THE CLOCK STRIKES MIDNIGHT (AN HOMAGE)

JORDAN SHEER

1 o'clock: A dumpster fire. As ash floated through the air, all was suffocated with thick black smoke. A media melee. Her worst nightmare was brought to life. I watched helplessly as my hands tick-tocked in a circular motion, day in and day out. I felt her pain radiating through the glass as strong as the sun's rays beaming down through a skylight. But now it was dreary and the rain came pouring down. That August of 2016 will forever stay lodged in my memory.

2 o'clock: Tribeca, New York City. How beautiful a place, how tragic a time. Her life's work had been pleasing others, catapulting her around the globe, held together by a string. It stung to watch. I have seen her slave away, playing the bars, plucking the strings, and watching her pencil dance on her song sheet throughout sleepless nights.

3 o'clock: She is 27 now, but I've known her since she was a teenager. One who had no idea if she would make it. But she did make it, and the work she put in to get there was unmatched. She reached a level of success that she had not even considered being part of her wildest dreams. And through it all, she was loyally supported.

4 o'clock: From the curly-haired girl in country boots, to the household name music industry icon, she thought she had been through it all. Tabloids stalked her down like a cat on the prowl, desiring any and all they could use against her. Hunters with cell phones. Pitted her against other successful icons and criticized every move she made. Intruded into her personal life and relationships calling her life's work "oversharing." Claimed she was calculated. Accused her of deceit. The unfortunate reality: you're on your own, kid.

5 o'clock: the 7 Grammys stood on the shelf next to me as the TV blared. She walked onto the stage to accept numbers eight, nine, and ten. But she was a mirrorball and still on the tightrope before it broke into a million pieces.

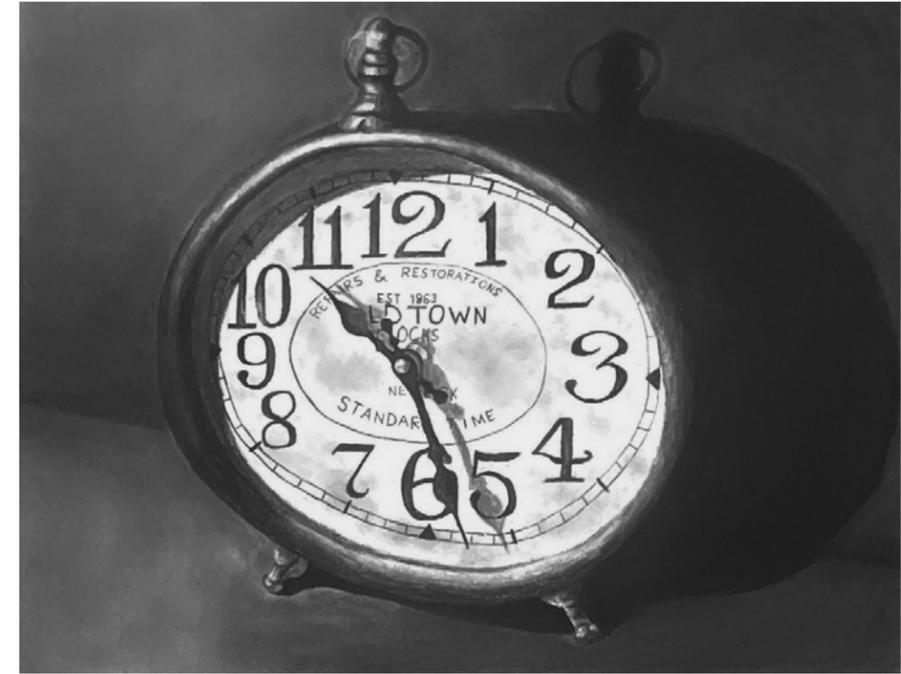
6 o'clock: The downhill spiral commenced. One man ignited it, but his views are what lit up that dumpster fire. This was a narrative she had already asked to be removed from. The manipulation made her out to be the hunted. Applause and cheers fueled her, but they were no more. Boos and curses echoed through the walls. Every phone dinging, every hashtag, they were the hunters, we were the foxes, and we run.

7 o'clock: We arrived in 2016. Her cats were her best friends. The key had turned, and the lock burned in the hole her heart once occupied. The love she thought she had was no longer, and the sky turned black like a perfect storm. What would you do when the whole world you once held in the palm of your hand turned against you without knowing the truth? Not allowed to tell your side. Made out to be the villain. No choice but to turn into one.

8 o'clock: Lies deceive, but truth burns blazing red. The tilted stage cursed her name. Karma and vengeance became her mode of attack. Look what you made me do, the snake hissed. Her Reputation at stake, she ignited the one weapon in her power: her words.

9 o'clock: No one thought she could come back. But as it approaches midnight, we know the truth. She is dressing for revenge: a dish best served cold. Cold was when those who left her in the dust fought tooth and nail in sold-out stadiums to watch her strum her guitar. Cold was every record broken with her hard work. A well-deserved slap in the face to her doubters. She proved she will persevere.

10 o'clock: She began to see the daylight. It was golden and peeked through the purple-pink skies. The invisible string of fate tied them together. Paid no attention to the whispers in the hallway. Running away from expectations, their getaway car pulled away from the train tracks and closed them off from the world. Call it what you want, but painting dreamscapes on the wall in those Windermere peaks gave them peace. Passed down like folk songs, their love lasts so long.



11 o'clock: The second dog fight, not out of the woods yet. Her life's work was pulled like a rug out from underneath where she stood. Her eyes stung, numb with pain. She knew she had come too far to watch some name dropping sleaze tell what her words were worth. But karma is sweet like justice. Little did Spider boy and his evil thieves know her enemies defeat themselves before she gets a chance to swing.

All at once, it was quiet. I struck Midnight. "Truth is out," blared the headline. All was right in the world. Her name was penciled into the top 10 spots on the chart. I knew she could do it, I stood by her side the whole time. Because as they say, "Once upon a time, the planets and the fates and all the stars aligned, I laid the groundwork and then, just like clockwork, the dominoes cascaded in a line. What if I told you she was a mastermind?"

I knew the whole time.



BEAUTIFUL ENOUGH

CAITLIN FITZGIBBONS

my body is like a flower -
not one that just simply exists,
growing effortlessly in a field,

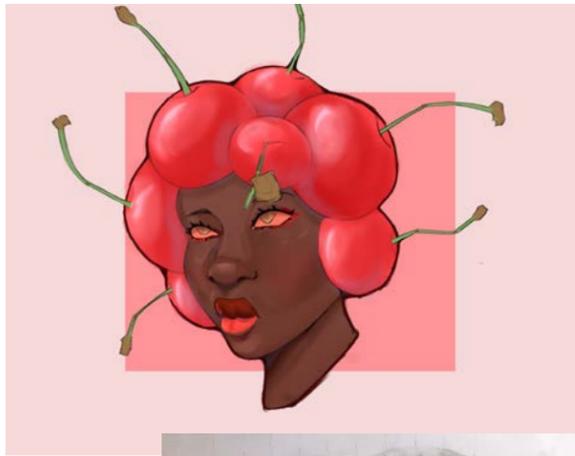
but one wrapped up and displayed in a store
waiting to be deemed
beautiful enough
to reflect endless love for the person it is meant for.

that is a lot of responsibility -
reflecting endless love.

i don't think my petals blossomed with that delicacy
the way others did.

or maybe we were all here hoping to be chosen
so we could find the love
we could never give ourselves

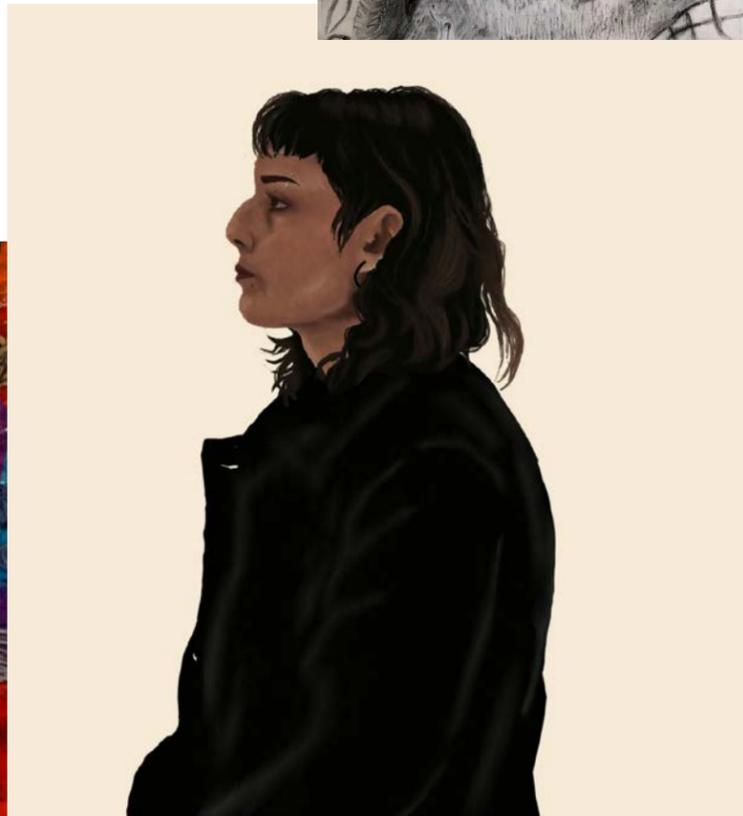
and the only flowers with true endless love
were the ones dancing in the fields
without a care in the world



KAZIA ADJEI



AMREEN TALED



KYRA PENN



JANNAH HAMPY

THE DOOR

AILISH O'SULLIVAN

Before you know freedom

you must learn the darkness of confinement -
four walls of fear
constraining you in a small box.

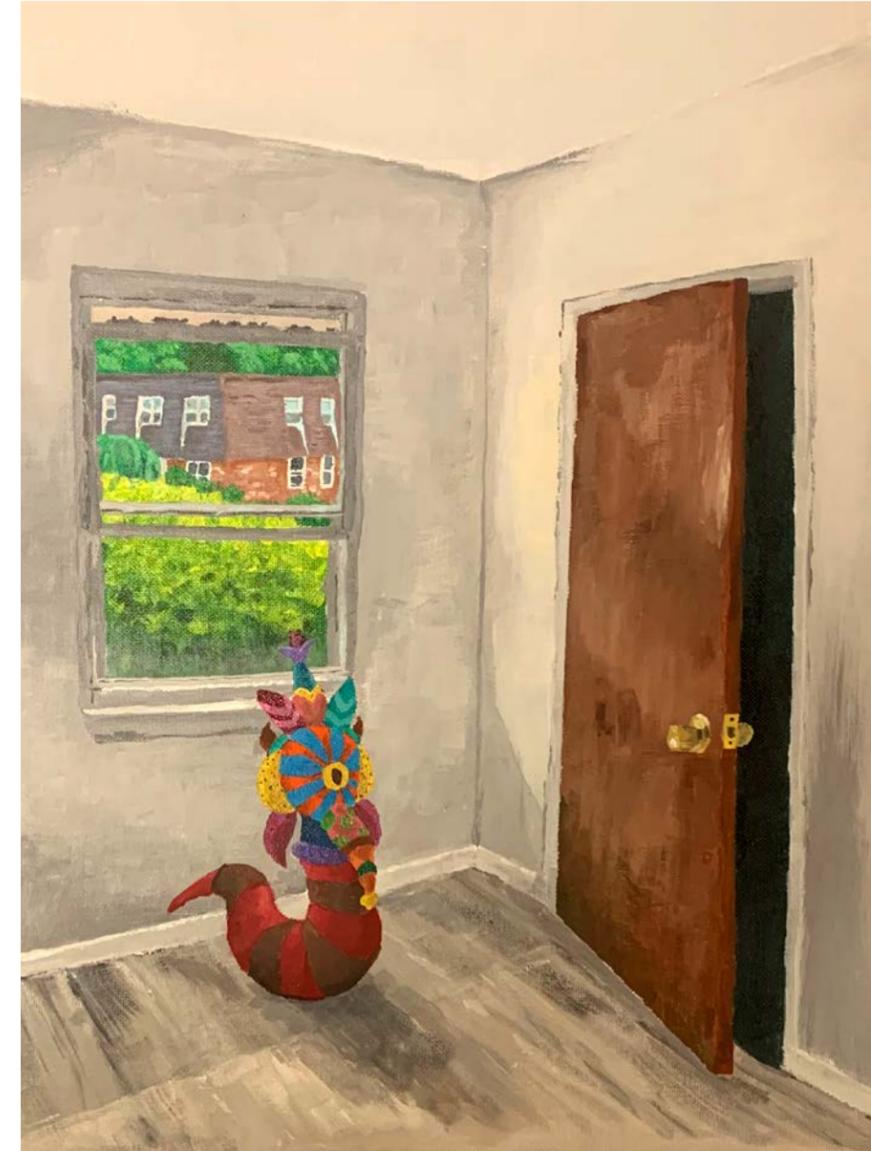
You are scared of what could be outside,
an exile more excruciating than this one?

You must endure the risk of being alone
to escape true loneliness.

You may find contempt between coat hangers,
and prayer cards in pockets
may give you something to pine after
and yet,
you will yearn for so much more.

You will find yourself
claustrophobic.

You can only be everything you are,
everything you love,
when you unlock that worn down door
and close it behind you.



JAYDEN FITZGERALD

FIRST GENERATION

KRISTIN LIZETT TOLEDO URGILES

My name is a river,
its length returns me
to my roots.
It's the river my mother crossed,
a path that created me.
There is nothing more calming
than the flow of my name
uttered in Spanish.
It represents my faith, my heritage, my upbringing.
A connection that keeps me
grounded and stable.

My name is the mountains,
the Andes my father crossed
for me to exist.
It is the strength my father taught me to maintain
when crossing my own mountains
with my beliefs guiding me
as I reach closer to the sky -
closer to where the white snow blankets the earth.

My name -
the color white;
it represents calm
like quartz that brings clarity and
spiritual awakening.
White as the dress I was baptized in.

My name is my parents' struggle,
where I come from
what I believe.



MADELEINE WILSON



GALINA PETERBURGSKAYA

BEAUTY

CAITLIN FITZGIBBONS

i felt inspired today

maybe it was the way
the sun's angle illuminated my face
spreading warmth
without blinding me.
or maybe it was the post on pinterest
that made me think of the beauty in life
like how you can make your brain
do anything -
how it can create art
out of a cracked sidewalk
because i could've sworn i saw a dog
carved into the pavement
this morning
and how birds serenade back and forth
professing their love
how sometimes
if you look at the sky
just at the right moment,
you see the sun and the moon at the same time.
even the earth had its days
when it wasn't quite ready to wake up yet
and that is so comforting.

i want to always
choose
to see the small beautiful things
to remind me
beauty is in everything
and everyone,
sometimes
just overlooked.

DEAR WOMEN

A SPEECH BY JULISSA VEGA KADOSH

Since the beginning of time, we women have faced an ongoing battle for parity, opportunity, and freedom from cruelty and discrimination. For centuries women's roles were to serve others: nurses, midwives, housewives, cooks; we were objects merely obeying a husband's commands.

As women, we continue to combat the stereotypical representations of women viewed purely as subjects to stun the male eye and objects to satisfy desires. Although our journey towards equality has not come to an end, we have put our foot down to stop these deeply rooted standards that have been passed down every single generation.

Who can we thank for taking our first steps toward societal change? We thank all our sister advocates: Susan B. Anthony for earning us the right to vote, Betty Friedan for leading strikes to fight for gender equality, to Malala Yousafzai, who fights to this day for female education worldwide.

We thank all the women who have stepped out of traditional grounds, choosing careers in "male-dominated industries": policewomen, construction workers, athletes, and vice presidents. Thank you to the women who are willing to face every battle, advocating for our rights until we get what we deserve. I know we will continue to progress, as I know that we women are strong, but tender hearted.

We women are educated and determined.

We women are bold and compassionate.

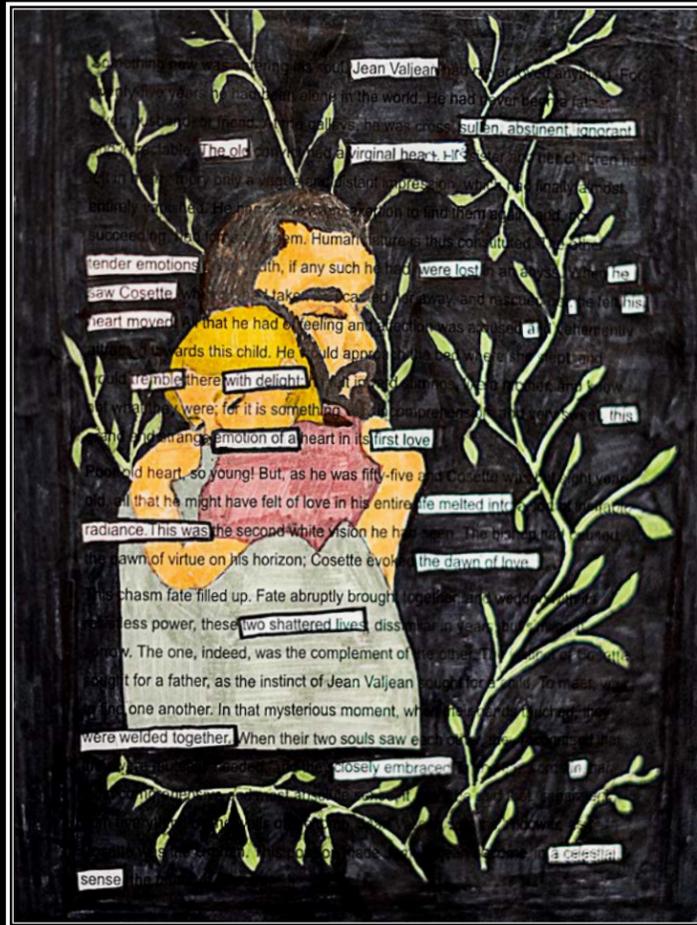
We women will NOT give up.

We women will win.

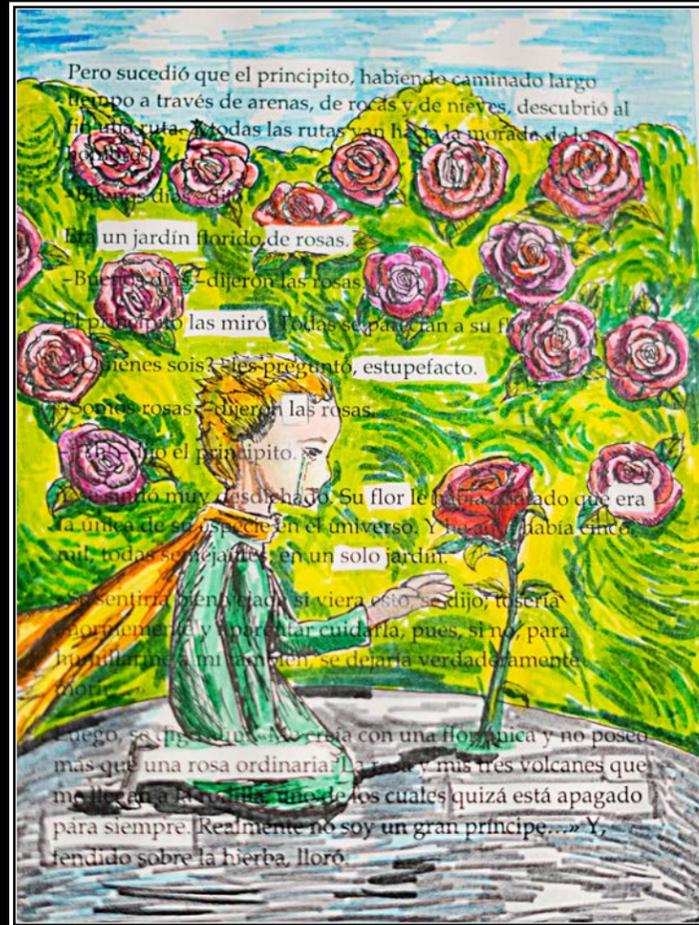
GALINA PETERBURGSKAYA



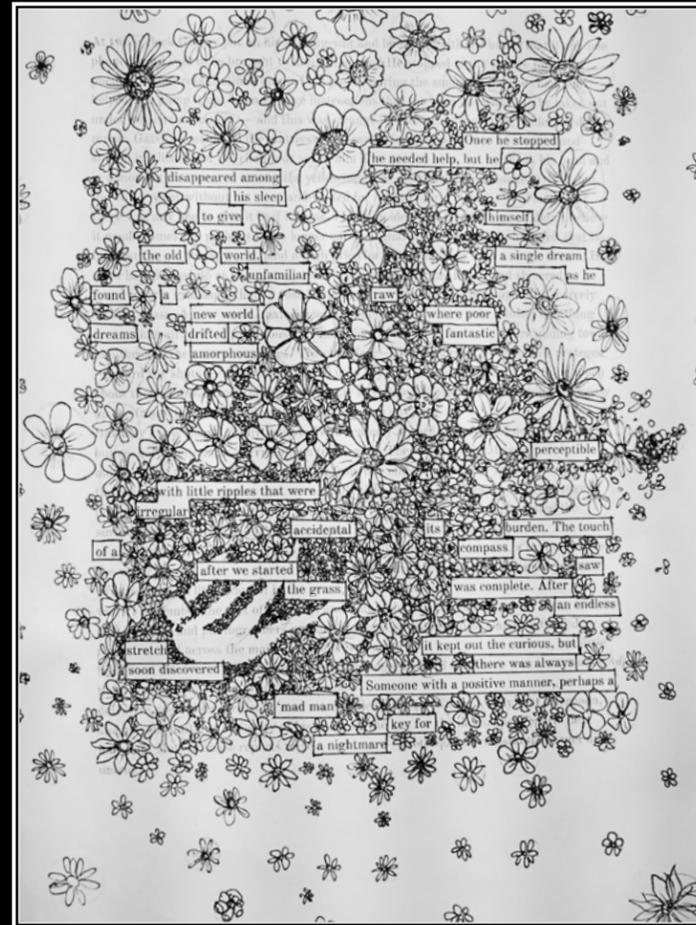
BLACK OUT POETRY CONTEST WINNERS



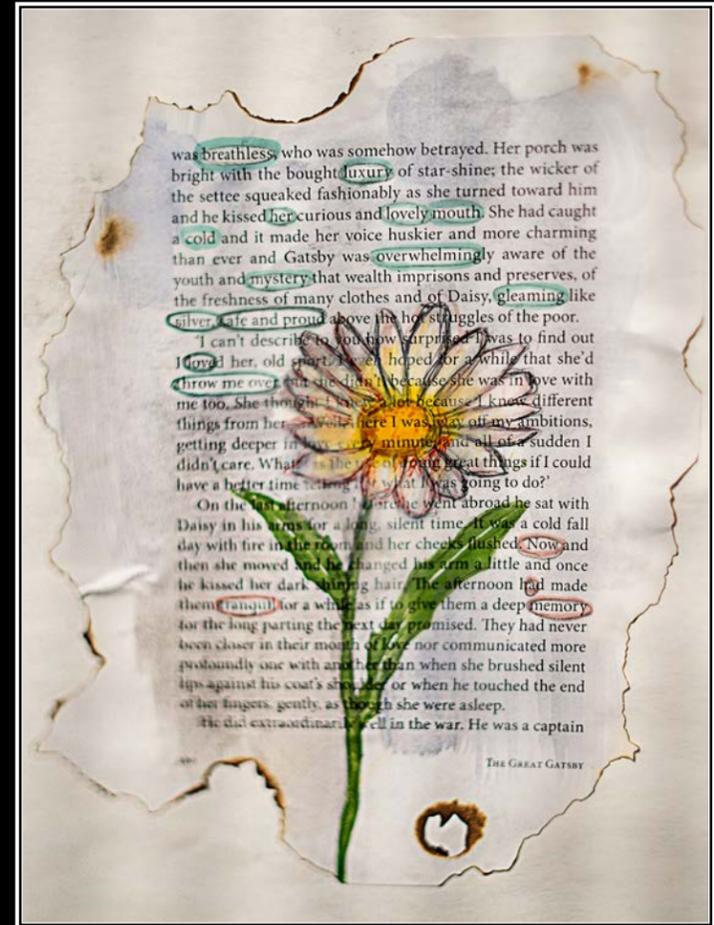
"LOVE MAGNET"
NICOLE PISETZNER



"UNA FLOR ESPECIAL"
YUEMENG ZHANG



"MAD MAN"
SAGE COLLOPY



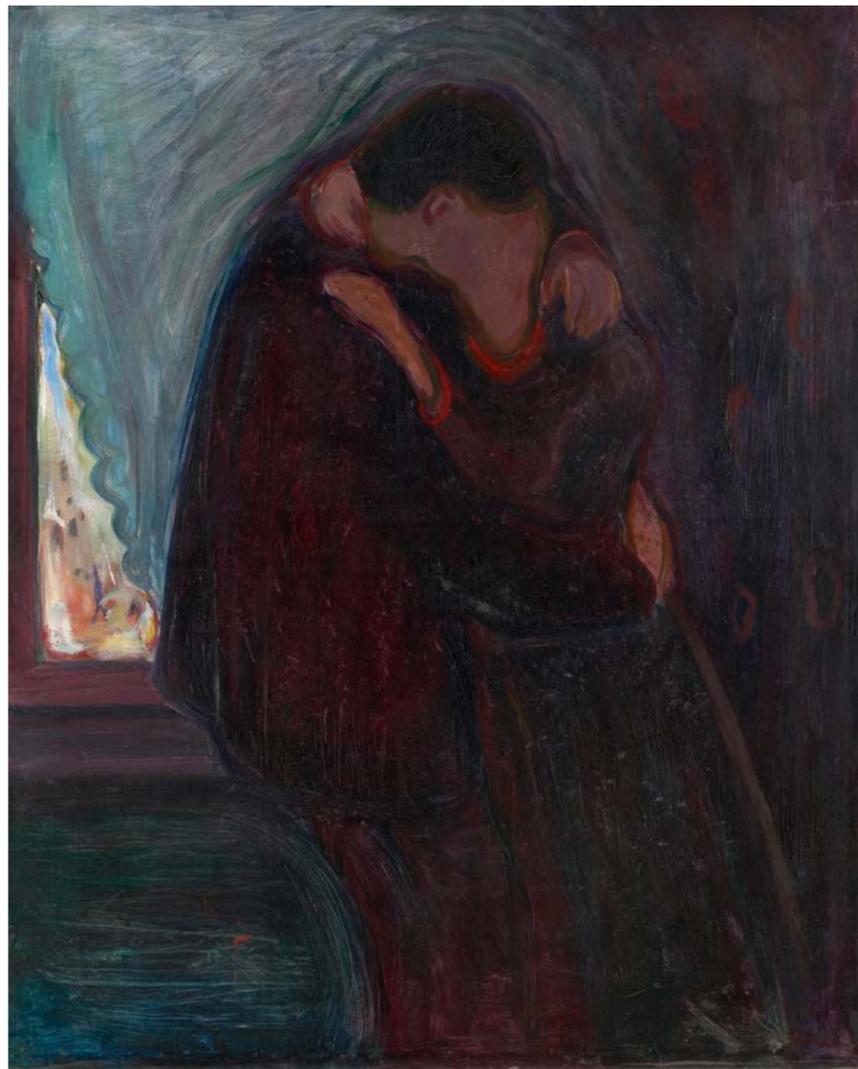
"DAISY"
SAMAIKA SALMAN

HEAT OF THE MOMENT

(AN HOMAGE TO THE KISS BY EDVARD MUNCH)

AHLA BOMMAREDDY

limbs strewn across limbs
fingers woven into fingers
clinging to the idea
of each other
that dream, that fantasy,
that sweltering heat in their veins
that little white hope filtering
through the crevices of the window
illuminating their darkest hues,
the sultry red collar nestled into his chest
face blurred like lust
melting their faces into one inseparable being
unrecognizable —
a secret love.



I am a beggar
starving for any remnant of myself
holding out my arms,
sore from waiting there
so long
like a statue.
Not a beautiful renaissance sculpture
crafted by hands laced with creation.
I am the rubble left
after destruction so catastrophic
it makes what once was
unrecognizable

as you look at me with disgust
throw me spare change
rattling in the very same back pocket
where you hold my heart.

RENAISSANCE

MALLORY DINSAY



LEAH CHOU

WARM BATH

AILISH O'SULLIVAN

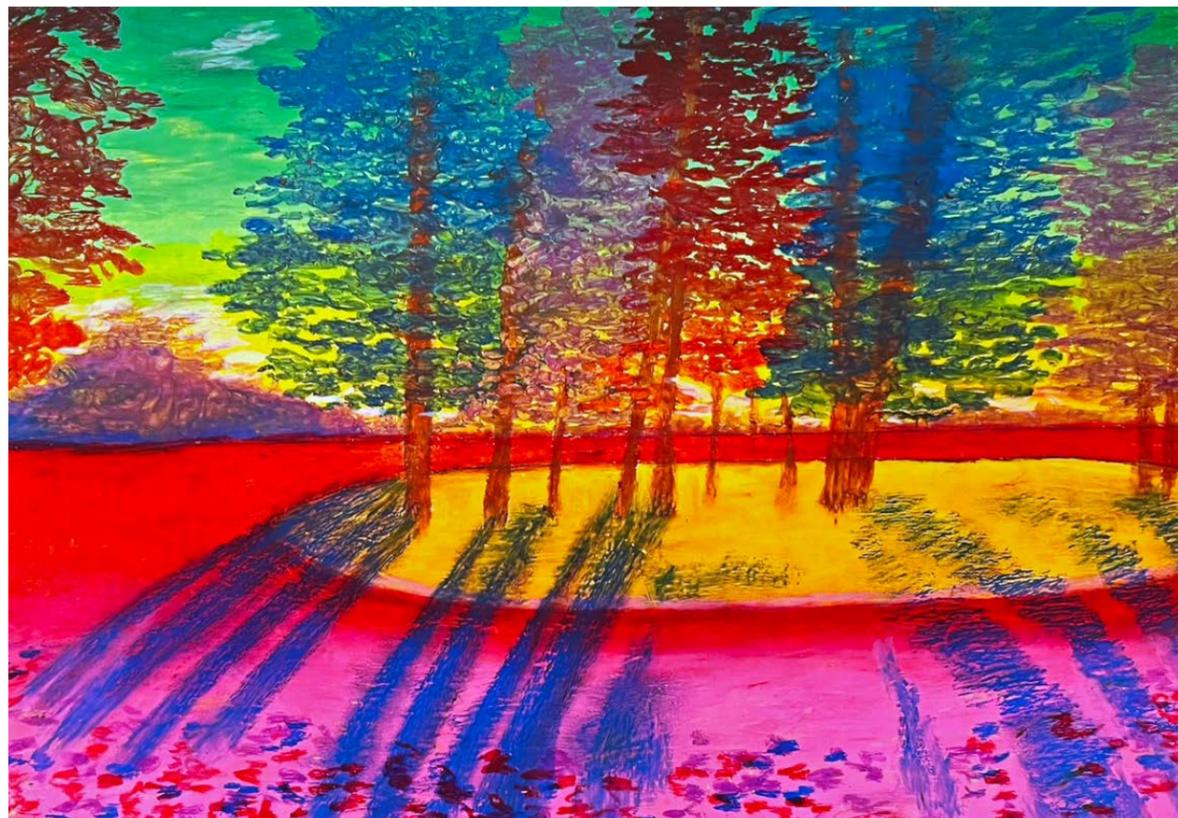
Stepping into the softness of crystal water
tranquility places me in a trance,
I lower my limbs
slowly and cautiously
submerge myself in its embrace

It's so foreign to me
after being used to
freezing rain -
rain that seeps through my shirt
stealing warmth
leaving me shivering and dripping.

Sweet lavender scent soothes me
welcomes me with open arms
holds me and tells me
everything will be alright.

The faucet consoles
quiets all my doubts
I find peace
searching for
my sore muscles and bruises
that led me here

I am grateful for cold rain -
without it
I wouldn't know
the comfort of warmth.



NICOLE PISETZNER



YUWENQ ZHANG

FLAGGED

MALLORY DINSAY

I am well aware
sympathy runs out
for the girl who's always broken.
I exiled my voice
screaming for relief
a long time ago.
Sewed my mouth shut to block in
the soldiers of my soul
who have died in the wars
I lost against myself.

Although I think now
I might find comfort
in others giving up on me;
it's all I've ever known.
A quiet mouth,
a white flag.

JUST A PIECE OF GLASS

AILISH O'SULLIVAN

no matter how many times
I turn you between my fingertips

or you prick my skin as I pick you up,
(we both know you do)

I am still dazzled by
the way light beams
through you

creating illusion
an array of colors
refracting my light,
deflecting any transparency

I'll never know which side
is truly you -
 sharp
 smooth

but I know
no matter what
you'll still find a way
to glisten

GALINA PETERBURGSKAYA



SUMMER JAM

AHLA BOMMAREDDY

The sweet nectar brimming to the top of the Mason jar
Sweet aftertaste of jelly melting and
Warmth spreading, glistening on your palate.
Jam lathered generously on toasted beds of bread
Crust trimmed by your mother's gentle hands
(you never liked crusts, even as a kid.)

The jar adorned with a pretty little bow
Mango marmalade dripping down your tiny tanned arms
Leaving a bright trail on the sidewalk
With tiny white flowers sprouting from the cracks
(those aren't there anymore.)

You remember the music of tumbling strawberries
Dancing in your basket
The melody harmonizing with
Crescendo of young giggles
Flip-flops chasing flip-flops in patches of oniongrass
(your new place has a graying lawn.)

You lock away those jars of saccharine summertime
Deep in the recesses of your heart
But you cannot bring yourself to toss away the key
And so you simply pocket it for now
(you'll fish it out and savor the jam again some day.)

SARAH PASSMAN



HEALING SINGS A SONG

SAMANTHA KILLEEN

Let this breeze pass through your body -
a tender song I bring to you.
I want you to know this:
my voice will always be here
next to you.
Sing with me
and remember the times
your heart smiled.
When the wind is blowing again through the windows
you'll feel the warmth of the wind
you are hugged
by the melody of one who loves you
and cares for you
singing with me.

JAKE TERMINE



Allow me to tell you this story...
perhaps it can offer a lesson or two.
But be aware that any throne in the sky is not reserved for you.
There is no divine wisdom, only the strings of fate.
See for yourself:

THE STRINGS OF FATE

JOHN RESHOFT

Eons ago there was once a period of enlightenment in this multiverse.
...The time of the explosion that created this multiverse had finally come.
...The furious flames beneath began to flee, while the growing greenery germinated into being.

What is this mysterious phenomenon? And why does this happen?
...As more greenery grew, so too did higher beings.
This makes us think much more. What is the meaning? Is this fate, or something else?

...As the phenomenon expands, lore and knowledge come to existence.
There it seems that a new being has come from chalk to flesh.
Is this the new beginning of an everlasting era?
And if so, what is this meaning?
What is life? And is it a place or a being?

...The creature has finally come with a name, human.

The knowledge they possess seems to make them powerful.
But is that the "truth" of this world?

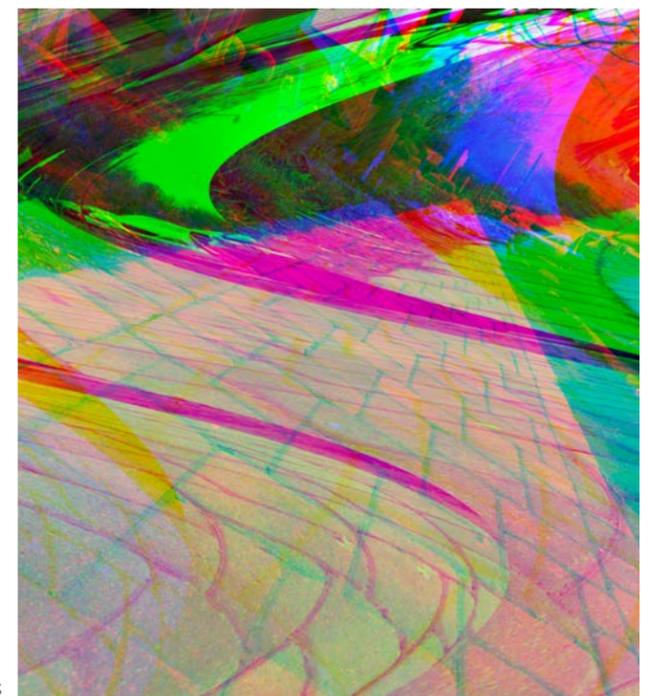
...As more humans are made, so too, chaos grows.

Humanity begins to argue over knowledge.
Especially the ones who were thought to be the "source" of all wisdom.

All things come to an end, even wisdom.
But so too, knowledge can have its own demise.

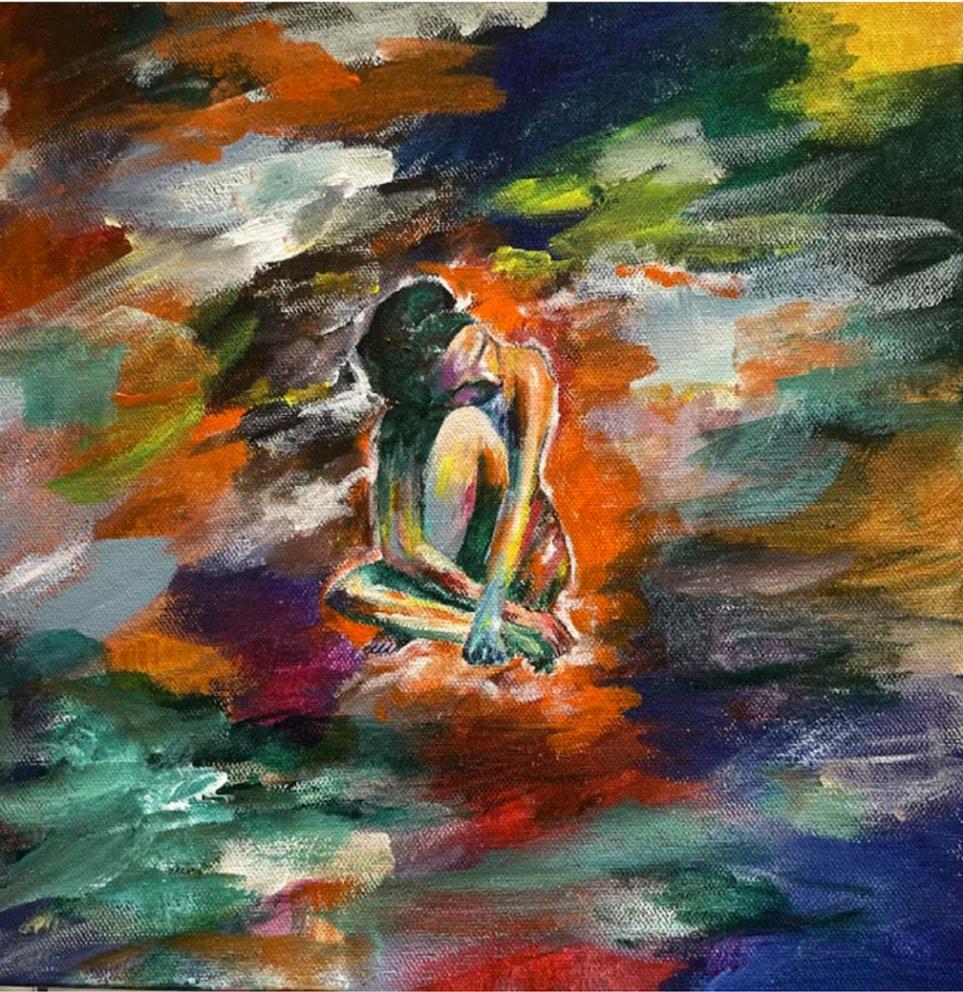
One thing you must remember...
all the strings of fate
are in your possession,
yours to weave through this world
of all possibilities,
in this multiverse of all existence,
past
and present.

SARAH WEISSBERG



FLICKER, NO BURN

MALLORY DINSAY



SAHAR ABASSI

My happiness only seems as bright
as the flicker of a candle
even when it feels like an inferno.

An unreliable flicker
vulnerable to the soft breath
in and out of pursed lips.

Yet in those moments when my flame
dances upon hot wax,
you say I'm too bright for your eyes.

You put the flame out with
the palm of your hand
with no fear of being burned;

perhaps you knew I would
let fires erupt inside me
before ever burning you.

ACCEPTANCE

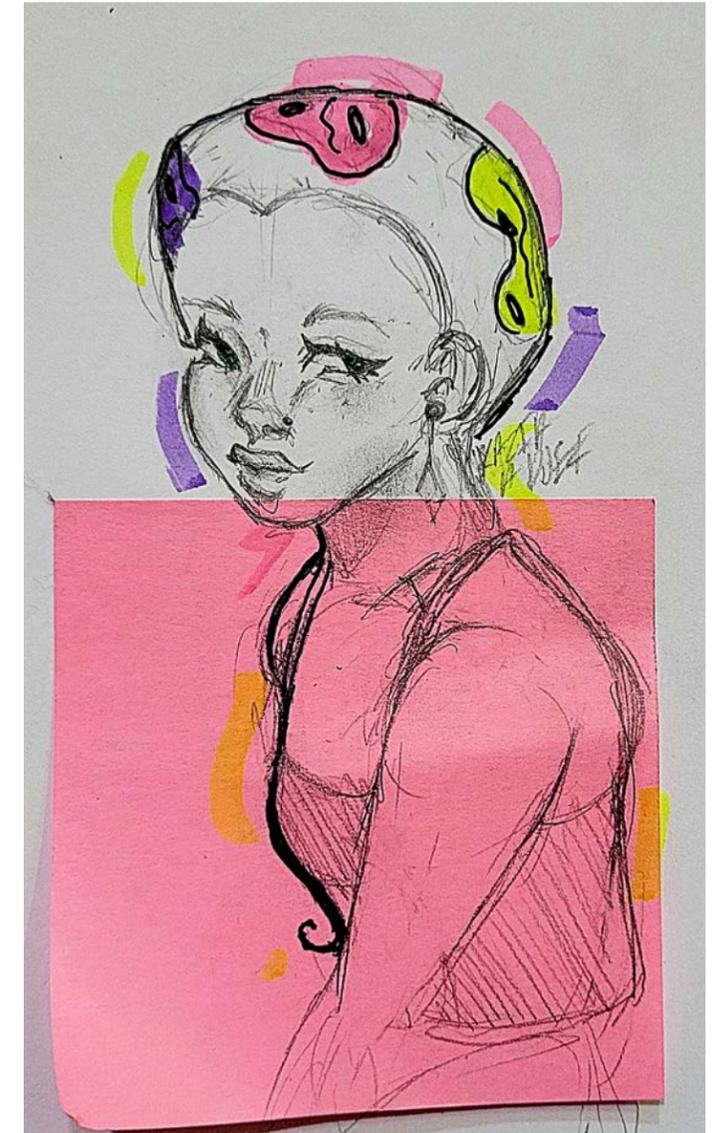
CAITLIN FITZGIBBONS

before you know acceptance
you must dwell in self doubt
you must bury yourself in hatred
six feet under
thinking that's what you deserved
you must feel the burning decay of your teeth
from every poisonous word you've spoken
about yourself
taste the bitterness of your anger
you must cover yourself in dark paint
blend in with the background
burn yourself to ash
a useless pile on the ground

before you know acceptance
you must bathe in the realization
others are imperfect just like you
you must tear down your disguise
and look at yourself in the mirror
you must notice the beauty and uniqueness
in every detail
you must fetch the crumbled poem out of the trash
and frame it

before you learn acceptance
you must rise from your grave
rid yourself of the weight that diminished your grace
you must cry a river of truth
and watch as it becomes
a oasis to countless creatures

acceptance will surround you
when you must realize your singularity
love it
unapologetically.



KAZIA ADJEI



JOEY AMODEO



HAILE BYERS



**Clarkstown High
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