

theRev

young pens are even mightier



A MAGAZINE BY CREATIVITYUNLEASHED



'When the Block Wears Off' - Cassandra Bond

As this project is driven by diversity, we use condensed typography to create as much space as possible. We aim to showcase as many of the students' voices as we can, promoting inclusion. If you require this booklet in larger print, please visit: www.creativity-unleashed.org and download our digital version.

THE REV

The Rev

a magazine produced by CreativityUnleashed
in partnership with Questar III's New Visions

Welcome to our 2024 edition of The Rev literary and creative arts magazine, formerly known as the Russell Sage College Review. This year we received an unprecedented amount of creative submissions across the Russell Sage College Albany and Troy campuses, including current students (undergrad and graduate), alumnae, staff and faculty, alongside students from the UK, such as the London Academy of Excellence Tottenham. This is why you will find a mix of British and American English throughout this magazine.

Inside these pages you can enjoy a wide range of creativity including: poetry, flash fiction, memoir, opinion editorials, photography, painting, digital artwork, illustrations and more. New this year is even the publication of a film trailer!

Our selection process was driven by the mission to integrate as many diverse voices as possible, focusing on what our communities celebrate, what they mourn and what they hope for in the future.

For a full list of titles and authors, please see the index in the back of the book.

We hope that by the time you get through these pages you too will agree that while pens are mightier than the sword, young pens are even mightier...

This Year's Partners:

Questar III's New Visions Visual & Performing Arts program, located at The Arts Center of the Capital Region in Troy, NY, is a specialized program for academically and artistically advanced high school seniors who are planning to attend college for the visual or performing arts. NV: VAPA students gain knowledge about the business of art and specific techniques through a curriculum that blends college-level education with practical experience. Topics of study include preparing the college application, audition and/or portfolio; filmmaking; song writing and recording; playwriting and performance; and an art show.

CreativityUnleashed is the face of a legacy project that began in 2014 as Haringey Unchained. What started out as a small collective of students aiming to showcase the creative talent of a school in Tottenham, London has now grown to become a not-for-profit working with young people everywhere. We promote social change, tolerance and diversity through community-driven art experiences. It has been our absolute pleasure working with the editorial team of The Rev at Russell Sage College and Questar III's New Visions for our 4th collaborative magazine.

Many thanks to local poet Hajar Hussaini for inspiring us this year with her poetry workshop. We also thank our very own Maverick Douglas for introducing us to the concept of fan fiction.

Thank you to Mark Mathews and his team from Bluekite Creative in Cornwall, England for the design of our magazine. And finally, we thank Brett Petersen for his invaluable support in providing final copy editing for the magazine.

Stipends for workshop presenters and the publication of the printed version of The Rev were provided by Russell Sage College's Carol Ann Donahue Endowed Fund. Thank you to the Sage College librarians and staff for their support, and to the English, Writing and Culture department from which the magazine derives.

Cover artwork: Sleeping Beauty, by Russell Sage College staff member and Rev editor: Ethan Alcee.

Follow CreativityUnleashed on Instagram: @creativityunleashed_org for notices regarding future creative workshops and submission windows, or visit www.creativity-unleashed.org to sign up for our quarterly newsletter to receive updates.

International Student Creative Writing Competition:

We are proud to introduce this year's International Student Creative Writing Competition produced in collaboration with Aralia Education. Our editors received over 80 submissions from middle and high schoolers studying in America, Canada and China. Of those pieces, 14 were accepted for print publication in the magazine, including our 1st place winner, Yitong Li, whose artwork: The Environmental Odyssey of Young Carlos Roberto Mejia, was unanimously accepted by all of our editors.

You can identify the international student work in the magazine by this symbol:



Please visit the CreativityUnleashed website for the long-listed creatives who were accepted for publication on our digital blog.

For further information about Aralia Education, visit <https://www.aralia.com>.

Meet the Teams

The Rev Team:

- Ethan Alcee: Flatplan Manager
- Ashley Busby
- Maverick Douglas: Copyeditor
- Victoria Harris
- Kathleen Muller
- Laurel Petersen: Submissions Manager
- Jonathan Reese
- Susannah Schools
- Angie Smith: Lead Staff from Russell Sage College & Founder of CreativityUnleashed
- Mariah Wright
- Aryanna Zeigler

CreativityUnleashed Team:

- Emily Boehm: Copyeditor
- Pamela Bryant: Intern
- Ozge Erdur
- Andreea Pavel
- Amina Yussuf

Questar III's New Visions Team:

- Zack Civerolo
- Peg Danner-Frank: Lead Staff from Questar III's New Visions
- Rachael DeMars
- Bella Gazzola
- Lily Strattman

Paralysis

Carlo Rossi Occeño Russell Sage College



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ARTWORK

Defining What it Means to be Human

Angelina Wang Phillips Exeter Academy

It's human nature to be curious.
Whether a fleeting wondering,
an urge, or your potent desires -
curiosity comes, wandering.

It's led our advancements,
a frontline warrior,
fighting our battles
and winning the war.

After all, if it had not struck,
would Newton have watched an apple?
Why would Edison think of light,
and could Franklin fly a kite?

But as curiosity is a blessing,
it also becomes a curse.
A path that winds down, everlasting,
from which some never return.

"What's the worst that could happen?"
Some say, whether out of hope
or delusion:
"I don't know."

In the end, some regret what they chose,
an ocean to drown in their woes,
the choir of anguish, betrayal, remorse,
because they reaped what they sowed.

So when you pry open Pandora's box,
have you thought it through first?
Can you bear the consequences
when the results turn out to be the worst?

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WRITING

The Peacocks to the South East Fly 孔雀东南飞

Alina, Xiai Pang George School

I let the river's water, unbridled,
surge across my body
to fill my eyes,
to mix with my tears.
It chews pieces of my skin.

A faraway chirp brushes my ear
gentle from the other side and
my lumbering body rises to
merge in colors of light brown.
Turquoise climbs around my neck.
The lurid bridal dress inlays against my flesh,
growing into wings.

Wantonly, I follow the chains of the golden knit
And have my first taste of freedom.

I fly towards the South-East and
the ties that bind, fall:

first, grace –
to be someone's wife

second, filial respect –
to be someone's dutiful daughter-in-law

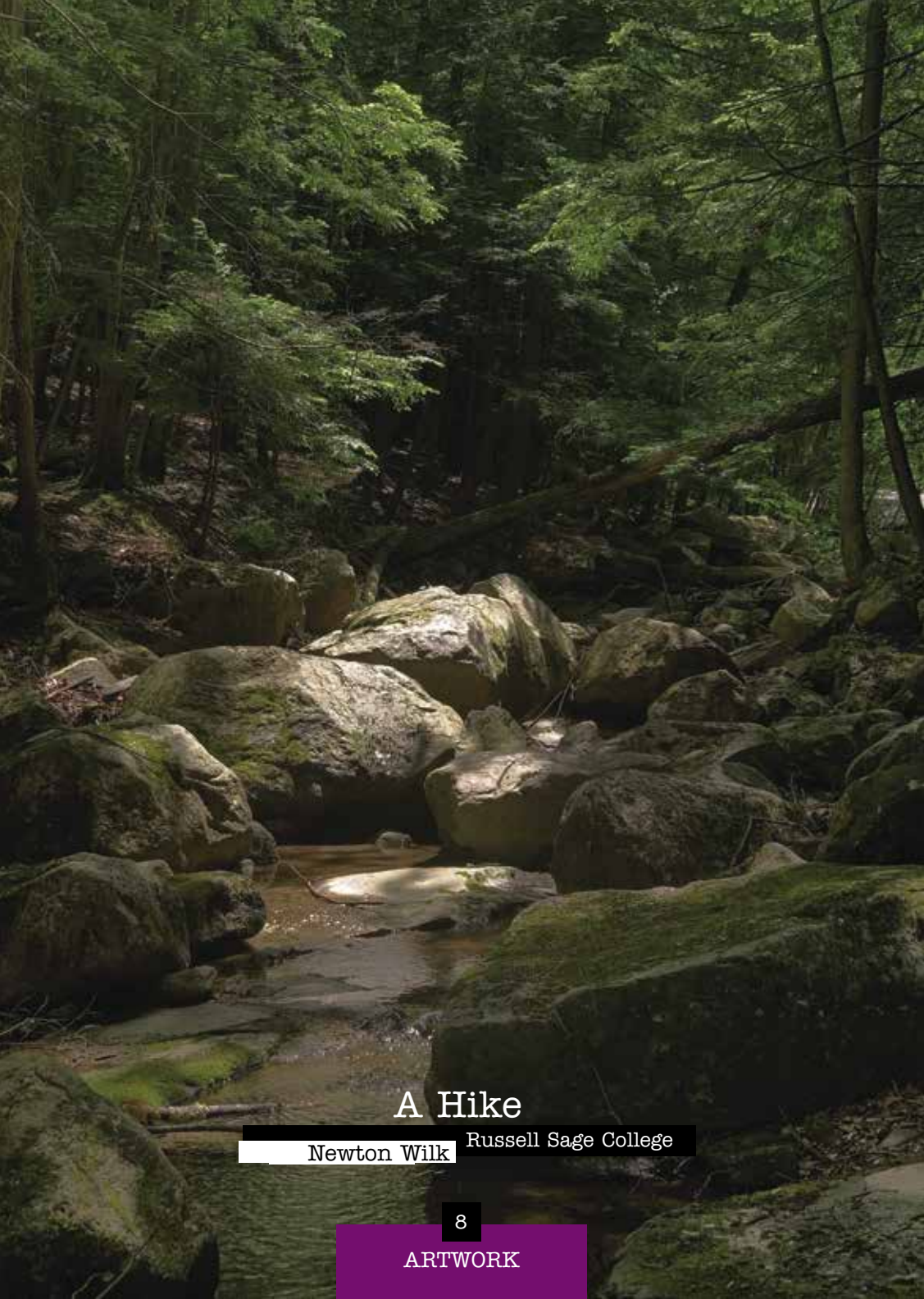
finally, infertility –
to be a barren mother.

Divorce, infamy, loss
made me disorderly,
irreconcilable.

Now, I fly toward the sun rising
under a sky dyed,
swallowing the freedom I can now

take for myself.





A Hike

Newton Wilk Russell Sage College

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ARTWORK

The Promise of the Rainbow

Alvin Su Edward Hynes Charter
School - Lakeview

September 17, 1925

She finds herself awakening in a sterile hospital chamber, the surroundings alien and disorienting. The subdued sunlight seeps through windows streaked with rain, casting a somber aura upon the hazy day. Gradually emerging from the fog of unconsciousness, she realizes that the accident has altered the course of her life.

As her senses slowly sharpen, the details of that day re-emerge. The routine of classes, and decision to board a bus with her friend Alejandro – all of which set the stage for tragedy.

Everything was operating smoothly, when suddenly, in a horrifying turn of fate, the bus attempted a risky maneuver to overtake an oncoming electric streetcar, resulting in a massive collision. The impact unfolded in a slow cataclysm, crushing the bus against the street corner. She could recall the clash of metal on metal and the ensuing chaos that left everyone injured, herself bearing the most grievous of wounds.

As she now struggles with the reality of her injuries, she painstakingly assembles the shards of the accident. An iron handrail had impaled her through the pelvis with the brutality of a sword piercing a bull. Here in the hospital bed, she senses the lingering echoes of that pain, the removal of the handrail etched in her memory as a harrowing ordeal. Her body, now a canvas of fractures and punctures, is the outcome of the collision.

November 4, 1925

The dim lights create an eerie mood throughout the hospital. The silence is broken by the furious strokes and resultant sounds of a paintbrush against the canvas. Touching her legs in agonizing pain, she seems to wander like an anomaly in this world. Ingrained anguish reflects on her face as a cascade of tears flows down. After the accident, Frida's entire life has changed. Her spinal cord has been damaged so badly that she has lost control of her entire lower half. Bedridden, she chooses to resume her career as an artist. Yet, discouragement from losing her legs and the thought of never walking again stifles her creativity.

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WRITING



November 18, 1925

The sky remains clear, the cool breeze carries a gentle touch, and the sunlight bathes everything it reaches, infusing even the air with a warm aroma. If not for the accident, this day would have been beautiful, yet Frida feels out of sync. The laughter and clamor around her persistently echo in her ears, filling her heart with gloom. Jealousy, resentment, and loneliness overwhelm her, and she feels a sense of despair as if abandoned by the world. The once divine brush in her hands, now seemingly soulless, can no longer produce the proud artworks she envisions. Frustrated, Frida tosses the brush across the ward.

At that moment, a slender 11-year-old boy strolls by, retrieving the brush and extending it to Frida. He stands out, unusually thin compared to his peers, with large, expressive black eyes that shimmer with unspoken wishes.

Frida, surprised by the boy's gesture, manages to squeeze out a smile. "Thank you, gentleman. What's your name?"

The boy, looking up with a shy grin, replies, "I'm Diego. You paint really well, ma'am."

Frida slightly warmed up, "Call me Frida, Diego. Do you like to paint?"

Frida hands him the brush, encouragingly. "Why don't you give it a try on the canvas? Express what's in your heart."

Over the weeks, as they paint side by side, Frida and Diego share their stories. One day, with a serious expression, Diego reveals, "Frida, I'm not like the other kids. I'm sick, really sick."

Frida, already aware that he was different, leans in beside him. "Diego, it's okay. Everyone is unique and has their own special abilities. You're no exception to this. Tell me, what are your dreams?"

Diego confides, "I want to see the sky outside these walls, to feel the breeze. Most of all, I dream of seeing a rainbow." After responding, Diego looks at Frida expectantly, who is thinking deeply, her expression wandering.

Determined, Frida says, "We'll make it happen, Diego. We'll bring the sky and the rainbow to you."

Despite Frida's intentions, the elusive wish remains unfulfilled for the time being as the weather conditions do not allow for such an event...

January 26, 1926

Frida gently picks up her most recent painting, an artwork created specifically for the boy. It portrays a glorious rainbow emerging after a turbulent storm, a symbol of hope and beauty. The creation holds great significance for Frida, who has poured tireless effort into every stroke, wishing for the boy to find joy in its colors. When outside her ward, urgent voices of nurses and doctors echo through the halls. Frida looks out, horrified as she witnesses the event she has dreaded. Pain revisits her once more with a layer of profound grief — mourning not just her physical agony but also the loss of the only rainbow in her storm.

February 1, 1926

On the day of the funeral, dreary grey clouds drape the sky, blocking out the sunlight as thunder roars above. Rain cascades down as if heaven itself weeps over his death. Frida, amidst the downpour, gazes on in despair as memories crash back, each raindrop echoing the collective sorrow.

As the funeral nears its end, a stillness envelops the funeral parlor. The rain ceases, and the once-crackling lightning falls silent. The clouds gracefully part, revealing a gentle ray of sunshine that descends upon his resting place, where a gorgeous rainbow emerges. Although he cannot witness it in person, Frida believes he can behold the breathtaking sight from the realms of heaven.


August 6, 1930

Years later, Frida stands in her studio, now illuminated by light as if shining through a prism, revealing the strength and power of her courage and of her friend.

Hanging on the wall behind her is a piece of her work, decorated with pride, titled "The Promise of the Rainbow."

Trapped

Emma Wrieden Russell Sage College



I'm trapped in a body
That is not my own
Hatred flows through its veins
Sadness through its arteries
Its heart pumps disgust
And each capillary is filled with hurt I breathe in air
But this body turns it to tar
I was not meant to look
Like this...
This was not supposed to be MY body
These hands are not mine
This face is someone else's
This is not me....
Please
Please
Fix me...

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WRITING

What Anxiety Feels Like

Lily Stratman New Visions



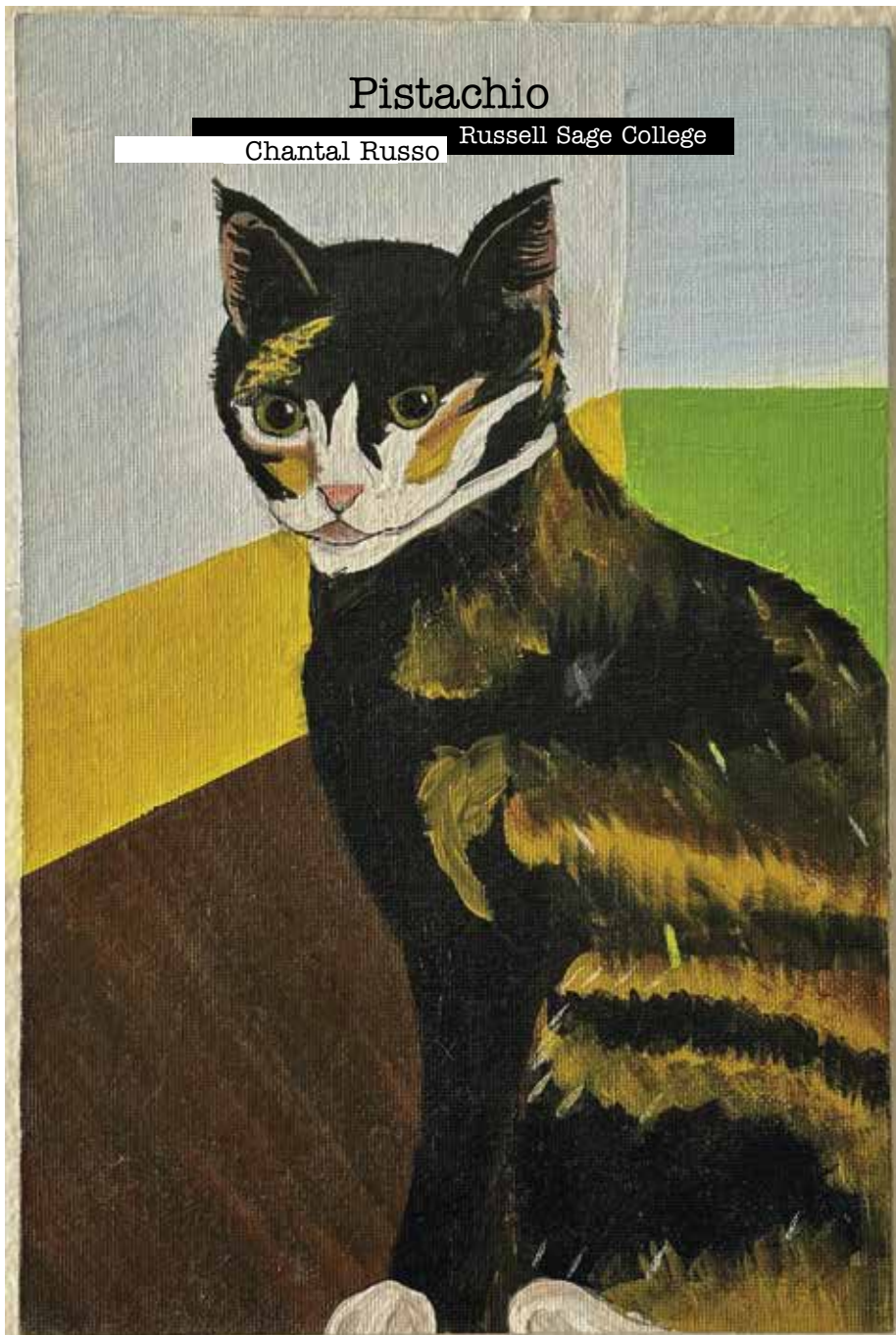
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ARTWORK

Pistachio

Chantal Russo

Russell Sage College



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ARTWORK

A Potential Poem

Susannah Schools

Russell Sage College



I could write with a pencil.
I could doodle in pen
and see how it goes...
but what then?

I could read some non-fiction
or talk to myself,
sit down for a while...
and what else?

I could look in the mirror -
adulthood begun -
to see myself better
as what I become.

Maybe a children's book next -
but not to go back.
To live in love
could be my plan of attack.

I'll huff and I'll puff,
and I'll be blown down,
and whenever it's time
I will have found

a little newness,
a bit of difference
solid in flux -
a hint or inference -

for when I'm older
to carry along
spots of right
to shine through the wrong.

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WRITING

The American Dream in 2023:

From the Eyes of a Chinese Immigrant

Krissy Yihan Zhu Rumsey Hall School

At age 12, I enrolled in a Connecticut private school, its setting adorned by autumn colors and striking sunsets. I quickly fell in love with its surroundings and teachers, presuming my parents to adore this school for similar reasons. But they actually fell in love with the hope that it would lead me closer to the American dream, the world where "streets glisten with diamonds."

During the Great Depression (1929-1939), the phrase "American dream" was memorialized by the book *The Epic of America*. It presented a life that would be, "better and richer and fuller for everyone." Surprisingly, more than 100 years later in 2023, this abstract notion still guides the cultural consciousness of the nation. Becoming repurposed by almost every generation, it has transformed from the wish of, "equality, justice, and democracy for the nation," to upward mobility for an individual from any class. Eventually, the dream would shift further to being about "...a focus on more of what really matters, such as creating a meaningful life...valuing nature and spending time with family and friends," according to The Center for A New American Dream. Yet this seemingly positive notion has begun to weigh down on the working classes of the United States.

During spring break, I walked through New York City, where dozens of homeless citizens lay in the streets, the constant smell of drugs wafting by; even children were living in tents. The glimmer of the American dream seems to have vanished in plain sight, becoming more like a nightmare.

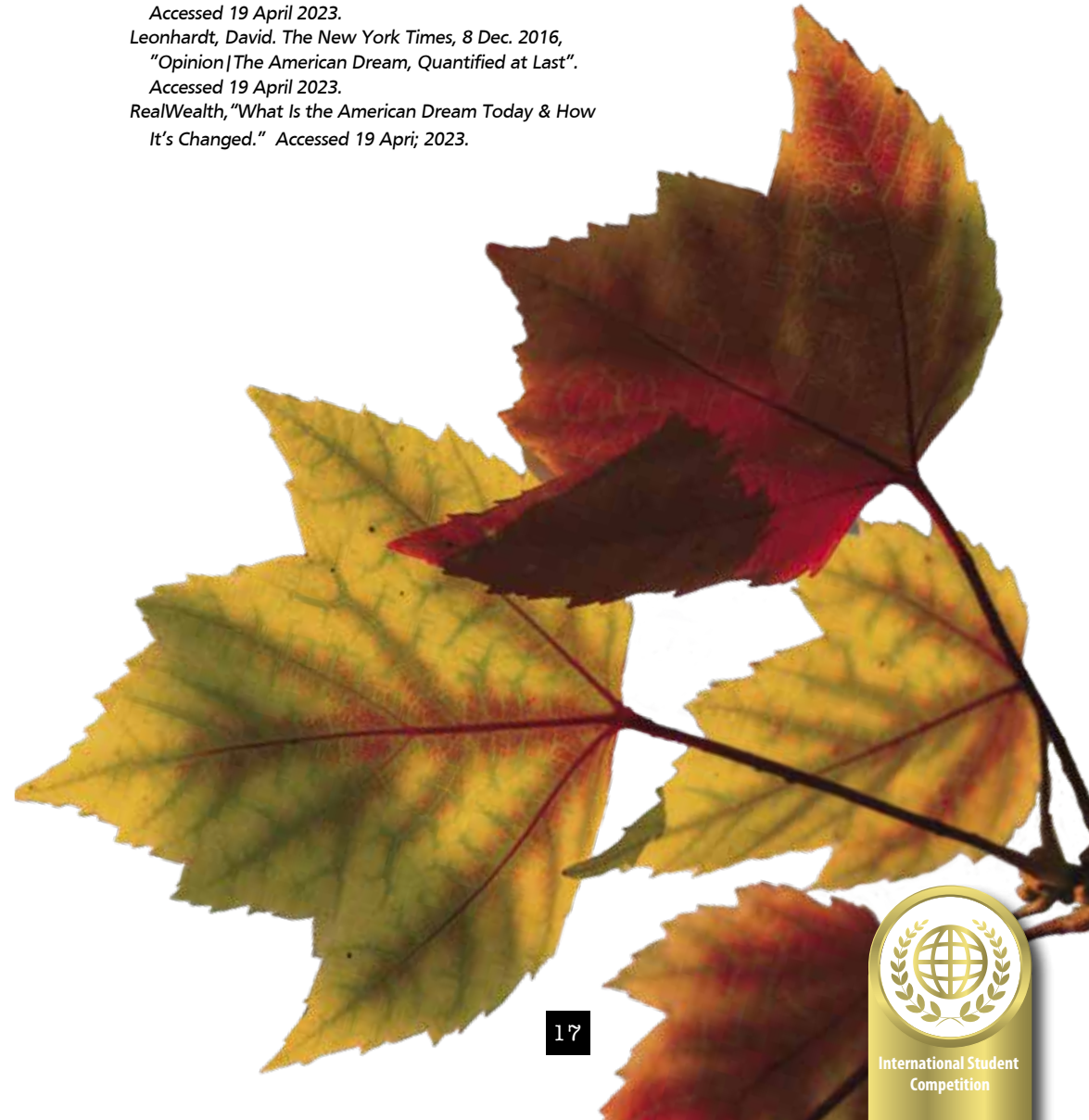
The data collected worsened my doubts. According to *The New York Times*, during the 1940s, 92% of the children born earned more in their thirties than their parents at the same age. However, an immense drop took place over the next few decades - only 51% of Gen X earned more money than their parents at the age of thirty. I find myself asking, is the attainability of the American dream actually realistic? And, will there still be a chance for Chinese Immigrants?

Making up the third largest immigrant group in the United States, many Chinese immigrate to the United States seeking a better education and access to more jobs. While Chinese immigrants hold higher median household income and higher educational degrees than the majority of U.S. born citizens, concepts of model minority continue to trouble the immigrants, giving them names such as "whiz kids" and "musical geniuses." Like the American dream, this seemingly positive stereotype only diminishes Asian culture and pressures the immigrants, including me. Now, we fight nightmares, along with the outdated structures of dreams that were never attainable.

So now is the time to put the phrase to bed. The real dream, your dream, is the one you want to achieve, not the one that a baseless and empty truism tells us you should. As I sit by my dorm window, watching orange autumn leaves slowly fall off their branches, I do just that, and I am elated by the possibilities of my very own dream.

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Primordial Goop

Coco Song Emma Willard School

The Herald

Christopher Bean CreativityUnleashed

Man used to fly, but no more; not since The Shift.

Then, am I not a man? Alone, naked, and illustrated in script, but a man all the same. As The Shift razed civilisation, I rose, a traveling man with only inks and an unshakeable task to record, but a man all the same.

I soar with the Trade Winds — sometimes the Jet Stream — and let them carry me over calico lands and beryl seas till I settle on foreign shores. They are foreign to me, at least; I've strayed in all quarters. In Zanzibar I've been fed by the Tumbatu; I've shared palm wine with the Wolof, and warmed overnight in the caves of the Thonmen. The natives marvel at a man who flies. I bid them write on me and then I'm off; inscribed, aloft to the next country, another settlement, witnessing a billion smiling faces tilted up to me and waving me on.

They write on me.

From shimmering oases to icy homesteads, emerald valley towns, and lapis archipelagos. Cuzco, Boston, Orkney, Lahore; the Qifan, Picts, Tawnee...tribes of Earth too numerous to count — multicoloured and multi-faithed — feed me, home me, love me and write their word, then send me off, with black calligraphy etched now in unfathomable layers. After all these years, it's more illustration than script.

And strangely — though benighted and without prompt — they all chose the same word. One word in a multitude of languages written in characters as diverse as the planet.

Peace.

A Place For Broken Souls

Chloe DeSilva CreativityUnleashed



Wonderland

Heather Gilchrist CreativityUnleashed

Down and down I go
further down the rabbit hole
a bottomless pit of my own design
I cannot control this land of mine

With windy paths, twists and turns
they all lead to the Queen of Hearts
and yet I am lost
I cannot control this land of mine

With tulips so fine
I sit and listen to their morning song
but I stay too long
and their soft rhymes turn into siren songs
I cannot control this land of mine

Run rabbit run, run
you're late?
I'm late –
what's today?
I cannot stop to say hello, goodbye
I cannot slow down, I cannot stop now
I cannot control this land of mine

A cup of tea will suit me fine
slow and steady wins the race
but I can't see a familiar face
a top hat above my head
looks like I've gone mad
I cannot control this land of mine

Who am I?
Sit and ponder, maybe the queen knows
but I need to go this way and that way
and all I want is home
I cannot control this land of mine

I sit and cry in this terrifying place
filled with friends saying I'm safe
drip
drop
drip
drop
go my tears, I cannot stop
I cannot control this land of mine

To and fro I get tossed about the salty sea
a pirate's life was never for me
maybe if I stop struggling, stop swimming
maybe then I'll be free
I cannot control this land of mine

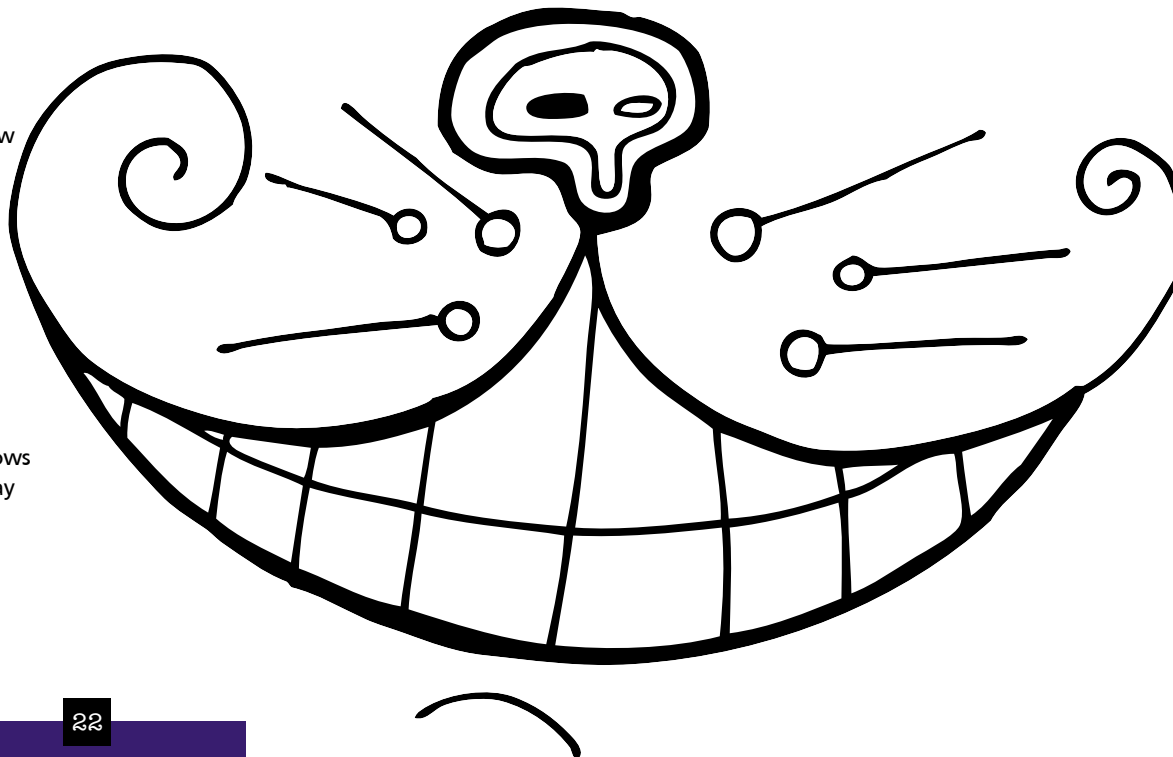
All this is, is a game of chess
but every time I move it is my chest that hurts
afraid that one wrong move
and my kingdom I have built will tumble into ruin
I cannot control this land of mine

Paint the white roses red
paint them whatever colour you desire
not a tear will be shed
because I know they'll cease to grow
in fact, they'll soon be dead
go ahead, paint the white roses red
I cannot control this land of mine

Off with my head!
but the queen lay dead
no sight or sound, just her on the ground
and I dread to think
what will become of me now?
I cannot control this land of mine

The queen is dead and I have a hat on my head
but not a mind to fit it
with friends as mad as me
telling me I'm safe
I still fear the Jabberwocky
and in the deepest parts of me
I start to believe
I am the beast that destroys this land of mine

So down and down I go
further into the rabbit hole
when all I want is home
a bottomless pit of my own design
I am the beast that destroys this land of mine



A Bird's First Sunrise

Kaylee Da
Rectory School



I awake
alone, alert –
conscious of my existence.

Perched on my branch,
I look down at the quilt of birds slumbering there
and wait and wait,
every morning
again, and
again.

I look through the stained void
of a life with no end.
The darkness stills in pitch-black.
I hear and listen for light.

A sudden thud, and
something calls:

Tou-tou.
Tou-tou.

A rooster stands beside me
grand and beautiful
with a radiating red crown,
and yellow fur that looks like stars.

Boldly, we climb.

GO-GO!

*The Tou Tou bird screeched
from the tallest peak until
the morning broke into
an enormous, burning red globe
rising higher and higher.*

*Just as that first morning broke into a prism of light,
two birds sang under the new-born sun.*

They had finally been given their voice.

Windham Peak

Cassandra Bond
Russell Sage College



Behind the Glass

Amy Pass Russell Sage College

The little palm tree in the
staff lunch room and I are both

pot bound.

We're pale.
Dried out.
Drooping at the edges.

Together, we look out the window
(which doesn't open)
at the giant pine trees bending in the wind.

We wish to be wind-blown, too.

I have a brief, wild fantasy that I'll smuggle the tree
out of the building after work and
plant it somewhere sunlit, warm and beautiful
in rich, dark earth
where it can spread its roots
and grow green and glossy again.

But

even though the pot is too small, the soil exhausted,

sometimes what pulls us back
and keeps us from thriving
seems like the only thing
that holds us together.

So for now
we both stay indoors
behind the glass,
watching the pine trees reach for the sky.

Josuke's Rhapsody

Carlo Rossi Occeño Russell Sage College



You Are What You Eat

Peyton Taylor New Visions



Born the Resilient Fire

Dalton Guan George School

Sweat runs profusely down Phong's face as she wields the sickle in her hand. The air is thick and full of humidity while the sun glares into the canopy of trees below. She separates the panicle from the rest of the crop and throws them in the pile, a pile she has been accumulating since this morning. Finally, she heaves the enormous pile of rice paddy over her staggering shoulder and walks back.

Entering the worn-down hut, Phong hurries to make supper for her mother. Carrying a small portion of watery porridge, she sets the bowl on the table. "Mama, are you awake?" She gently taps her shoulder. "I have made dinner."

Her mother slowly opens her eyes and coughs. She has been unwell for the past couple of months. Despite Phong's desperate attempts to cure her illness, nothing seemed to work. Even the village's bác sĩ dân dũ had come by, but he could not help. Phong tried all the herbal medicine she knew and used traditional healing practices, but still, nothing worked. Alas, her mother remained bedridden, leaving Phong in charge of the house. After she had lost her brother Mihn, Phong knew she had to do everything in her power to keep her remaining family together. But the war seemed very determined to deter her from this goal.

As Phong spoon-feeds the porridge to her mother now, she hears noises in the distance, like fireworks, and she can see smoke rising from faraway trees through the window. She dismisses them as simply the result of airplanes flying above.

That night, Phong goes to sleep holding the bamboo bracelet from her father. The bracelet had their family name encrusted within it and was the last gift he had given her before leaving for the war.

The familiar mangrove and teak trees stretched out their limbs and embraced ten-year-old Phong and her younger brother, Minh. The sun above struggled to shine through the canopy layer, casting delicate patterns of sunlight over the biodiversity throughout the jungle.

Phong had her hands covering her eyes, facing a hardwood tree while her brother squealed nearby, dancing between big leafy bushes and large veiny trees.

"Thirty-six, thirty-seven, thirty-eight...." Phong counted, making sure to drag out the numbers so her brother wouldn't say she cheated. "Seventy-one, seventy-two, se-".



Suddenly, there was a vague cry in the distance. Phong opened her eyes and looked around for the source. Confused, she called for her brother.

"Mihn? Where are you?" The only reply was the hum of insects and birds singing above.

At first, Phong thought Minh had found an amazing spot, but as the hours passed, she began to think otherwise.

"Minh!!" Desperation gripped her voice as she called for her brother. "Please, answer!"

Falling into a spiral of anxiety, she was hopeless. Where could he have gone? What if he got hurt? At last, Phong found her brother. He had fallen into a punji trap, impaled by the sharp deadly bamboo below.

The birds looked from above, mourning the tragedy as Phong sobbed below.

Phong is stirred awake by a maelstrom of shouting and arguing. When she looks outside through her window, she can see that the sky's still black and full of shining stars. Just beyond her front door, there is a loud commotion and many of the villagers are gathered.

As Phong gets up, she checks on Mama. The matriarch is still asleep, her breath loud and irregular. The worried daughter stares at her for a while, until a tear rolls down her face. For now, she must leave her vulnerable mother and hope that she will be safe here from the commotion.

Phong leaves the house and moves toward the group of people outside. As she gets closer, she can tell that these are not just the villagers, but also foreigners. There is a group of men in thick green clothing. Half of them are not much older than Phong, with short brown hair and pale skin. They have guns strapped on their waists with knives that stick out from their bulky vests. In the front stands a tall, stocky soldier who points at the old, rusty rifle that Bach, the village's butcher, had. It was the same gun he used to go hunting. The soldier keeps yelling and seems to be asking something, but they can't understand.

Phong watches as the villagers yell in tones of Vietnam:

"What are they saying?"

"Do they want your gun, Bach? Just give it to them!"

"They are thieves!"

"Who are these men?"

The rest of the soldiers look nervous, their hands moving firmly to their guns. Suddenly, their commander grabs the gun from Bach, but Bach holds on tight. Both men yell at each other. Though neither can understand each other's words, their body language says it all. The foreigners' faces turn red with fury.

BOOM.

A shot rings throughout the crisp night, ripping through the silence like torn cloth. Phong freezes with fear, unable to see exactly what is happening.

In a split second, everything turned into horror as the soldiers behind open fire, a sound of fireworks and smoke filling the air.

Mama!

Phong sprints back to her home, dodging bullets. Behind her, the sound of screaming almost pushes her on - don't let that sound be my Mama. An explosion knocks her off her feet, sending her scattering across the dirt ground. When she stops, she realizes how close to her home she is now, but what is left of it is not as she remembers. Beside her, the house is in ruins, flames engulfing the whole structure.

A pervasive buzz takes to the air, and time seems to freeze. The sound of death amidst piercing, terrifying screams fades in the distance as Phong's thoughts float into space. She tries to understand, truly understand, what has just happened.

"No, please, no," she begs. Memories begin to unwind and play, overwhelming her:
Mama surprising her with a beautiful dress for her birthday;
Mama soothing her after she had been bullied at school and came home in tears;
Mama coming to her bed and staying there for her after she had woken up from a nightmare;
Mama nursing her back to health every time she was sick.

Tears threaten to come out, but for the first time ever, they are suddenly cut off when the epiphany hits her hard: everything that she had left was now gone. What is left in Phong snaps. The dam holding the deadly rumbling ocean finally breaks, and Phong is filled with rage, rage so powerful that the earth would tremble in fear.

With little thought, she storms in the opposite direction, indifferent to the deadly battlefield ahead. "These invaders," Phong angrily thinks, "will pay. I will make sure they never come back."

Moving now in a full sprint, she charges at the first soldier ahead. He turns his head and raises his rifle but it is too late; Phong tackles his legs and sends them both rolling into the ground. The rifle falls out of the young soldier's hand and onto the musty ground. Phong, fueled with fury, tears and rakes her hands across the soldier's face. He is yelling and struggles to wrestle her off.

Just then, a blast at Phong's side sends the sky flying. Her side sears with pain and her vision blurs.

"No!" Ignoring the excruciating pain, she rises, but another blast sends the world flying. She tries to move but she is paralyzed. The fire inside her rages on as she falls victim to the war like so many others.

What seemed so far away was a figure walking closer to her. As Phong's world fades around her, the fire within, like so many others, would continue to burn brighter.

REPENT

Kami Perkins

Russell Sage College



32

ARTWORK

big eyes

Aryanna Zeigler

Russell Sage College

A child, a young Girl, looking ahead.
Not directly, but near.
Her hair blown back and to the side,
it flies up behind her and across her face.

There is a look of recognition
or horror
or both
she is in a field - corn.

She is grasping at stalks, pushing them
getting closer.

She is wearing a dress, puffed sleeves, and pressed collar, a
stringy ribbon around the neck.
Her eyes are largely off-putting
wide watery

her face is blotchy and haunted.
two large teeth in the front
draw your attention,
an upturned, rodent-like nose.

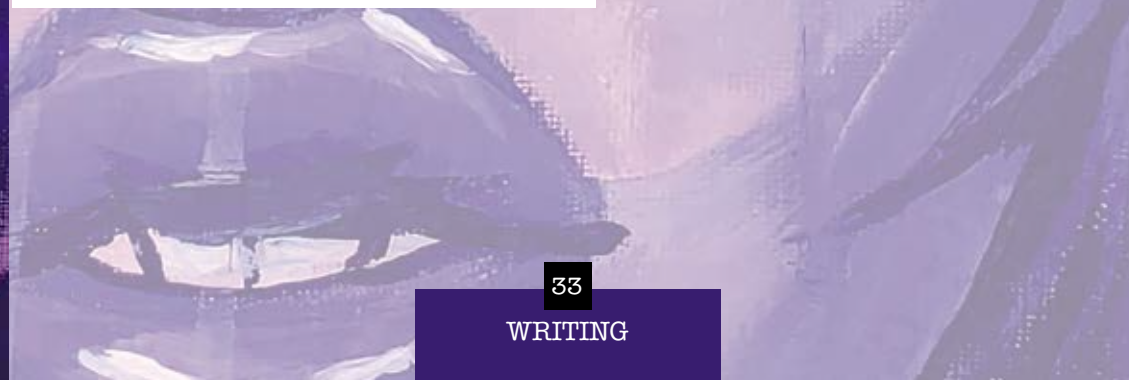
She isn't an ugly Girl, but
the look of terror across her face
gives an air of unattractiveness - or maybe the
impression that she was pretty

once.



33

WRITING



Locked in a Bootstrap Paradox Jar

Melody Zhao Deerfield Academy

(Inspired by Hajar Hussaini's "The Property of Being Separate"
from her collection Disbound)

Jam to jazz pickled in a jar of jelly. Stuck in the junkyard room. One lock. The key's stuck to the lock. WALSCO lock. Jack says go get it. Can't get it off. *We stuck!* Clark shrills. Real stuck, says Parker. Kick it. We kick. The junkyard room's gritty. Gritty like an oyster. *We stuck!* Clark shrills. We rail, we snarl, we scuttle, we growl. Pick the lock, *go pick it*. The key is stuck. Bootstrap paradox - can it circle? We dig into the junkyard room. Jack finds the 1999 HitClip. Let's play jazz! We let the jazz out. Out of the jelly jar. Out of the HitClip. It's junk. We hit it with CeCe Winans, the gospel singer. We get Keith Urban, Tina Turner, and Annie Lenox into the junk. We howl like wolves. A Tribe Called Quest joins. *Before this, did you really know what life was? Rock and roll to the beat of the funk fuzz!* Then the HitClip goes static. Real static. *We stuck!* Clark shrills. We kill the HitClip. We let its ichor ooze and leak. The music's gone. We chafe the walls. We grind our teeth. The red wallpaper rips and cracks and cakes. Parker picks out the can of black crude from the junkyard room. Our throats scream. We bleed blood. We crave the drops of black oil. We smear it on our lips. Go kiss it. Jack chugs the black liquid with his rock throat. *We stuck!* Clark shrills. We ball our fists, we shove, we fit like a snug glove. Jack's head goes flat. Does it crack? The key is stuck. The doors won't open. The walls have to cave. We are stuck in the junkyard room. It circles back. Then we all go flat.

When we wake, Jack is back. The red wallpaper - somehow never chafed, never ripped, and never cracked. We laugh. We are back! Clark goes digging into the junk. The HitClip works, as good as new. We've been revived! Jack panics. *It's a time loop!* Go check the lock. We check the lock. It's still locked. The key is still stuck. But it's been a week, has it not? Rusty nails, Chevy's old tire, chalk, motor

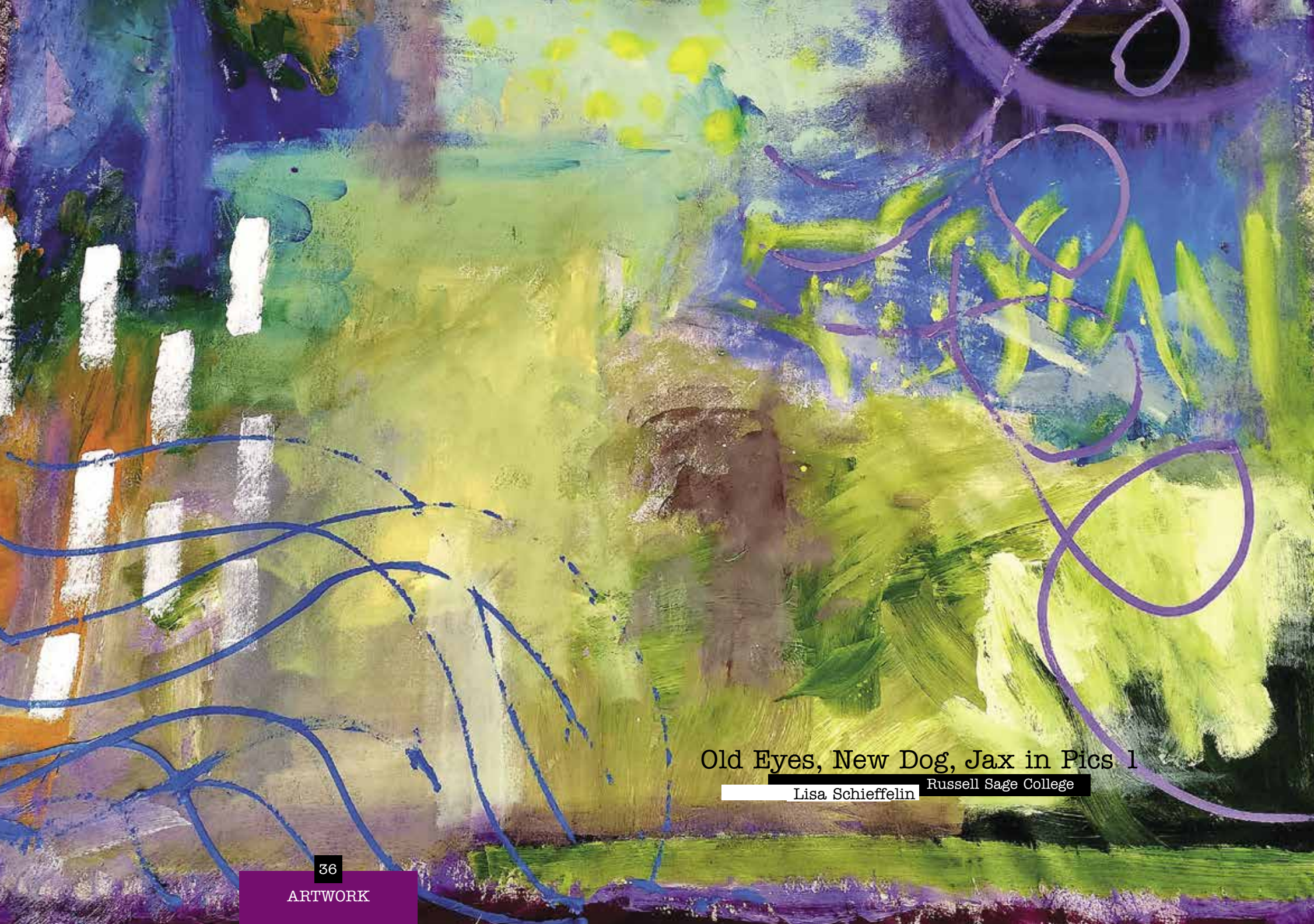
from a Chrysler PT Cruiser. We are in the junkyard room. It's a graveyard. Should we hit it with the HitClip again? Parker asks. Jack panics. *It's a time loop!* We aren't dying. We are stuck. WALSCO keys can't pick WALSCO locks. We are waste in a waste dump. But we hit it with the HitClip. Second round. Free your worries, Parker says. A Tribe Called Quest gives the real quest. *Wipe your feet really good on the rhythm rug! If you feel the urge to freak, do the jitterbug!* We rock to 2Pac, DJ Fatboy Slim, and jazz pickled in a jar of jelly. The HitClip's fun. Then it goes static. Jack panics. *It's a time loop!* We laugh. Our life repeats, it circles, it slaps. Just don't drink the oil. Make sure we don't drink so we won't wake up again. We drink the oil. The black trickles down and soothes our burns. Then our heads go flat.

We wake up. Same oyster junkyard room, same key stuck in the lock. WALSCO lock. The HitClip works again, like we've traveled back. Back in time. We've died twice, woke up twice, drank cool crude oil like cool kids twice. Parker screams. *Gotta think outta the box!* What box? We live in the box. The junkyard box. No windows - just junk. No, says Parker. *Gotta think outta the box!* We grab knives and rocks and bang, bang, bang. The lock does not unlock. Crude oil? HitClip? Grind our teeth? Rip the walls? We circle and buzz and howl and yelp. *Gotta think outta the box!* It reverberates like a tennis ball racket. Parker grabs a knife. We are thirsty. Parker fist plunges. He hacks the lock off. That simple? That simple. Break the loop. Break the jar of jelly.

Our minds mellow into soft clouds.

Dear Euphoria, are we floating?

*Some parts influenced by A Tribe Called Quest's Can I Kick it?



Old Eyes, New Dog, Jax in Pics 1

Lisa Schieffelin

Russell Sage College

The Missing Half of the Portrait

Nancy Wang The Ethel Walker School

Sitting on a wooden chair with fatigue heavy on his face, Juan takes off his protective gear and coughs at the smoke that emanates from it. He carefully pulls out half of a portrait. What he has left of it is the side he was on only; the other half has been lost for years. Every time he finds a moment to rest, he stares at that portrait, imagining the rest of it back in its rightful position. With a sigh, he hopes that he can see his daughter again one day.

In the center of Mexico City, brightly painted houses dot the winding streets, and market stalls outline the central avenue. In one little school not far down this route, children sit in a classroom. They make a poster, coloring and cutting, pasting and shaping. Within this group of careful creatives sits a girl called Maria. She is talented at art. She loves drawing people, especially her family.

The sunshine streams through the window, reflecting on every child's head. And as these budding artists concentrate on their creations, the classroom is warmly quiet. The only sound that can be heard is that of a pencil scribbling on paper.

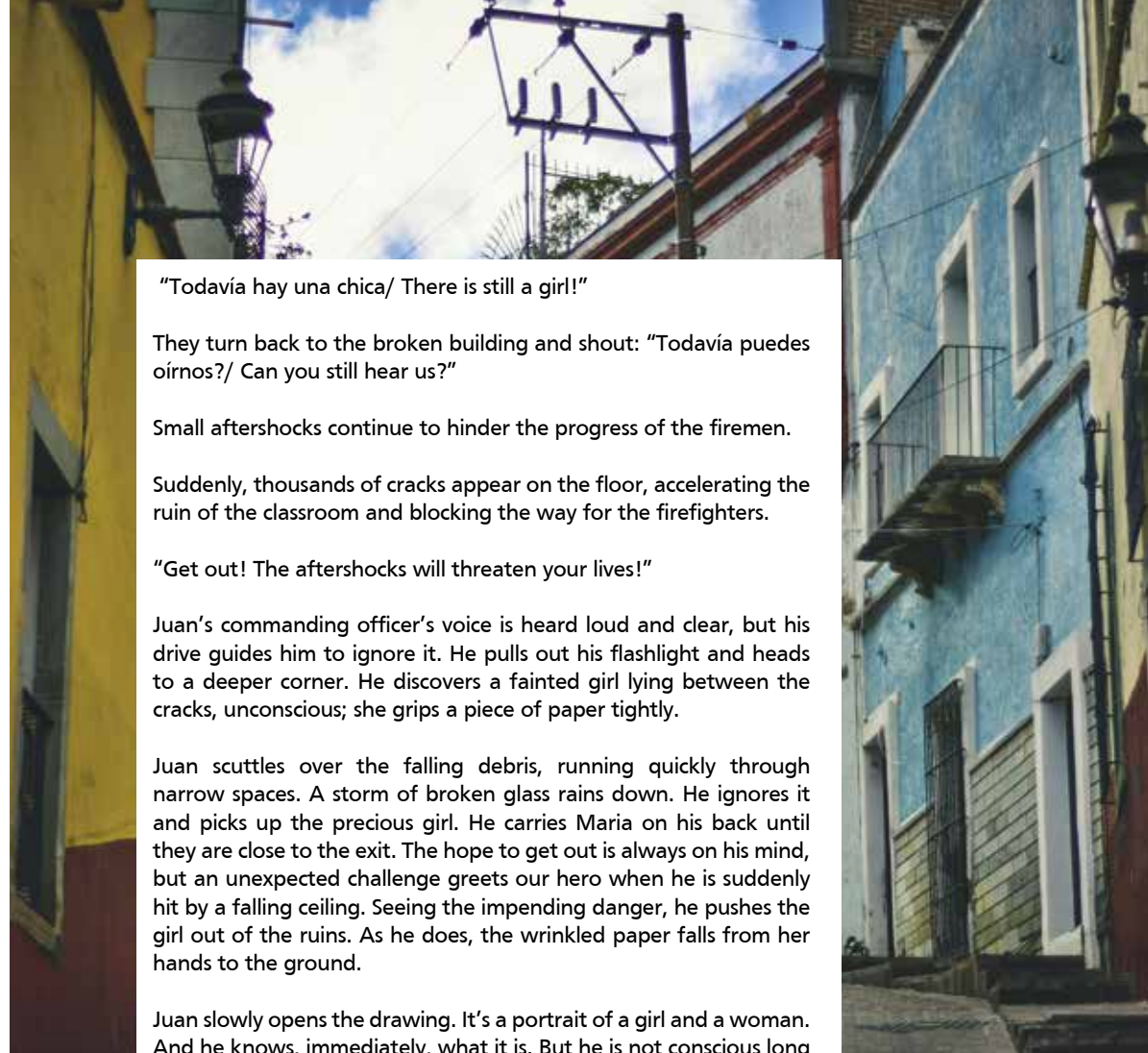
Suddenly, the floor of the classroom starts to tremble. Deep in thought, the children don't notice at first. When the books from the shelf fall off, hitting the floor, they can't help but stop what they're doing. Then the walls groan, and they are all up from their seats in panic. While some children make it safely to the public area, Maria and four other girls are not so lucky.

Trapped in a corner of the classroom by the falling debris of the building, they huddle there. Maria, having been told often by her mother about the heroism of her father, assumes the position of the protector. The four girls stay behind her as she sees the movements of the building, swaying in a terrible rhythm with the earthquake.

Juan and the rest of his company of firemen immediately gather together, the sense of mission revealed on their faces. They start a rescue operation and they know they will be at risk.

In the corner of the classroom, Maria's classmates scream, their echoes filling the space like people of their own. It is crowded there in the rubble.

Juan and the other firefighters climb into the ruins of the elementary school. As they do, four girls run out of it. Their moment of escape is small but effective. As they are greeted by the rescue team, they begin to beg.



"Todavía hay una chica/ There is still a girl!"

They turn back to the broken building and shout: "Todavía puedes oírnos?/ Can you still hear us?"

Small aftershocks continue to hinder the progress of the firemen.

Suddenly, thousands of cracks appear on the floor, accelerating the ruin of the classroom and blocking the way for the firefighters.

"Get out! The aftershocks will threaten your lives!"

Juan's commanding officer's voice is heard loud and clear, but his drive guides him to ignore it. He pulls out his flashlight and heads to a deeper corner. He discovers a fainted girl lying between the cracks, unconscious; she grips a piece of paper tightly.

Juan scuttles over the falling debris, running quickly through narrow spaces. A storm of broken glass rains down. He ignores it and picks up the precious girl. He carries Maria on his back until they are close to the exit. The hope to get out is always on his mind, but an unexpected challenge greets our hero when he is suddenly hit by a falling ceiling. Seeing the impending danger, he pushes the girl out of the ruins. As he does, the wrinkled paper falls from her hands to the ground.

Juan slowly opens the drawing. It's a portrait of a girl and a woman. And he knows, immediately, what it is. But he is not conscious long enough to position it beside the piece he has in his own pocket. Breaking under the pressure of the building, Juan closes his eyes one final time, but his daughter, now safely on the other side, will awaken completely unaware of their reunion. She'll grow up still waiting to meet the man who has the other side of her portrait. Though she lost it in the abyss of that earthquake, its image is forever stored in her mind.

The Things They Carried

Short Film: Rachael DeMars,
Painting: Satya Groff

"The Things They Carried" by Tim O' Brien is a collection of short stories about a platoon of American soldiers in the Vietnam War. This book describes the physical and mental struggles that the platoon had to endure. These stories express the grief, love, and friendship of war. I have created a movie trailer based on what I believe a movie created by Tim O' Brien would look like. I wanted to capture the emotional roller coasters that the soldiers had to experience. I was able to make this possible with the help of family and friends. One of my dearest cousins and an actor in my trailer served in Iraq, therefore this piece is very meaningful to me. I hope you enjoy my movie trailer.



40

ARTWORK

Mellified

Vanessa Cheung Hong Kong International School

Dipped in honey, sweet, warm gold
Tell me, tell me, why that's so
And if I move away, let my gaze turn cold,
Extinguishing our radiant light of old.

Starlit luster, tarnished time,
Waxed poetic by the gods
Reflects refulgent light-silvern swansdown shine-
To shed my sins upon your altar stone.

When your fingers brush over mine,
Live electric light does arise;
From lidded eyes, bereaved, comes a hymn of cries,

A solemn solace that I never knew.

First forgetting verdant fire,
Numb in all its rusted gleam,
A dream that wraps a cloth round a blind surprise,
I fall in your stead-
An eye for an eye is only fairness
When we're both dead.

41

WRITING





Pretty Bird

Ozge Erdur CreativityUnleashed

He loves me...
He loves me not.

I pick at the stem of a juniper tree.
It bleeds as I bite, chew and swallow.
Crunch. Crack. Pop.
I see my jaw on the floor,
the pretty pink hue of my lips.
I think it is blowing me a kiss.

She loves me...
She loves me not.

Her phrases live inside my head.
At times, I hear her voice under my breath.
I'm beaten, bruised, raw.
A rose petal falls onto the floor.
I plant strawberry seeds into the bed of soil,
my place, my home, and bed evermore.

He loves me...
He loves me not.

I take a stroll through the forest.
The shrill of a soft crunch underneath my feet
reminds me that I am hungry,
that I'm starving. It's grumbling.
I kneel.

She loves me...
She loves me not.

It sings a song,
that malevolent blue bird over there.

My tears fall as I fall as I fall.

It should be on the news,

42

WRITING



4 Shapes

CreativityUnleashed
Takudzwa Edwards

'Mother bird kills its chick!'
My neck stings; my tongue is missing.
I look back at the tree and hear it hissing.

My tears fall as I fall as I fall.

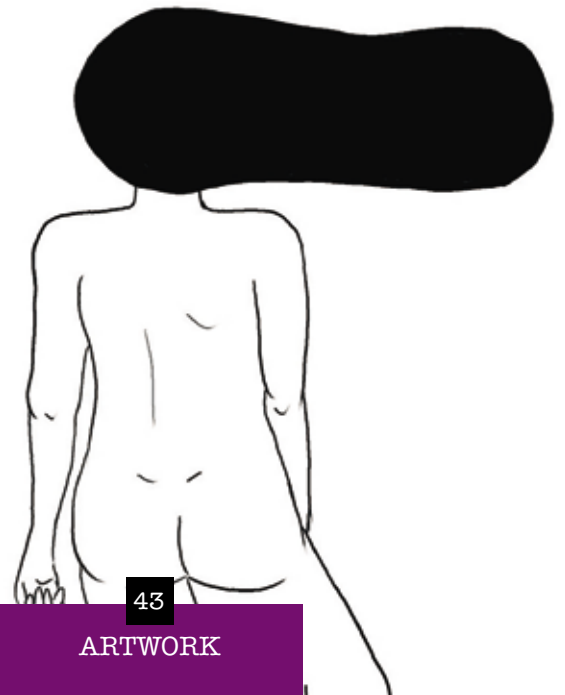
They'd say the mother regurgitated insults, such
vile words, she spoke ill will.
It was just too much to bear.
I heard the soft plop after the small body flew
out into the air.

My tears fall as I fall as I fall.

I try to move,
but I am locked, paralysed. I'm caged again.
My wings click at the effort.
My breath hitches at the thought,

He doesn't love me...
She doesn't love me.

I scream:
'Tweet, tweet. What a pretty bird am I!'



43

ARTWORK

The Royal

Mackenzie Gorman Russell Sage College



44

ARTWORK

Dear Believer

Maysoon Sheikh CreativityUnleashed



Dear Mu'min,
be still in your prayers,
as still as a tree,
and let your dry tongue
grow remorseless
in its denial
of stillness.

Don't let those whispers
pollute the chest
which harbours a life-key
that beats and quests
for its appointed time
without concession.
Don't let them deforest
the dense, green foliage
of your hard-earned *salat*
that stand tall,
oak-strong and worthy,
of an Almighty call.

Oh Mu'min,
don't let them hollow
the heartwood of your trunk
which is full and nourished
of sacred *kalam*,
rooted in rich soils
of unmoored *taqwa*,
trailing back
from the ground
to your words.

45

WRITING

Instead, *Oh Mu'min*,
moisten your tongue
with words from beyond
like the sap of the tree
holding soul and body.
A great canopy fixed
in time and space
So even if they cut
you down to a naked
stump. They'll marvel
at the many rings
that did not succumb
to the drums of ill will.
As something so young
could not hold so many
seeds for future dreams.

So extricate
that beating pulse
and place it in front
of the One who knows
the fissures that line
your truest intents.

As still as a tree *Oh Mu'min*,
and as private as psithurism,
as winds of guidance pass
through the leaves of your lips,
rustling,
whispering,
believing.



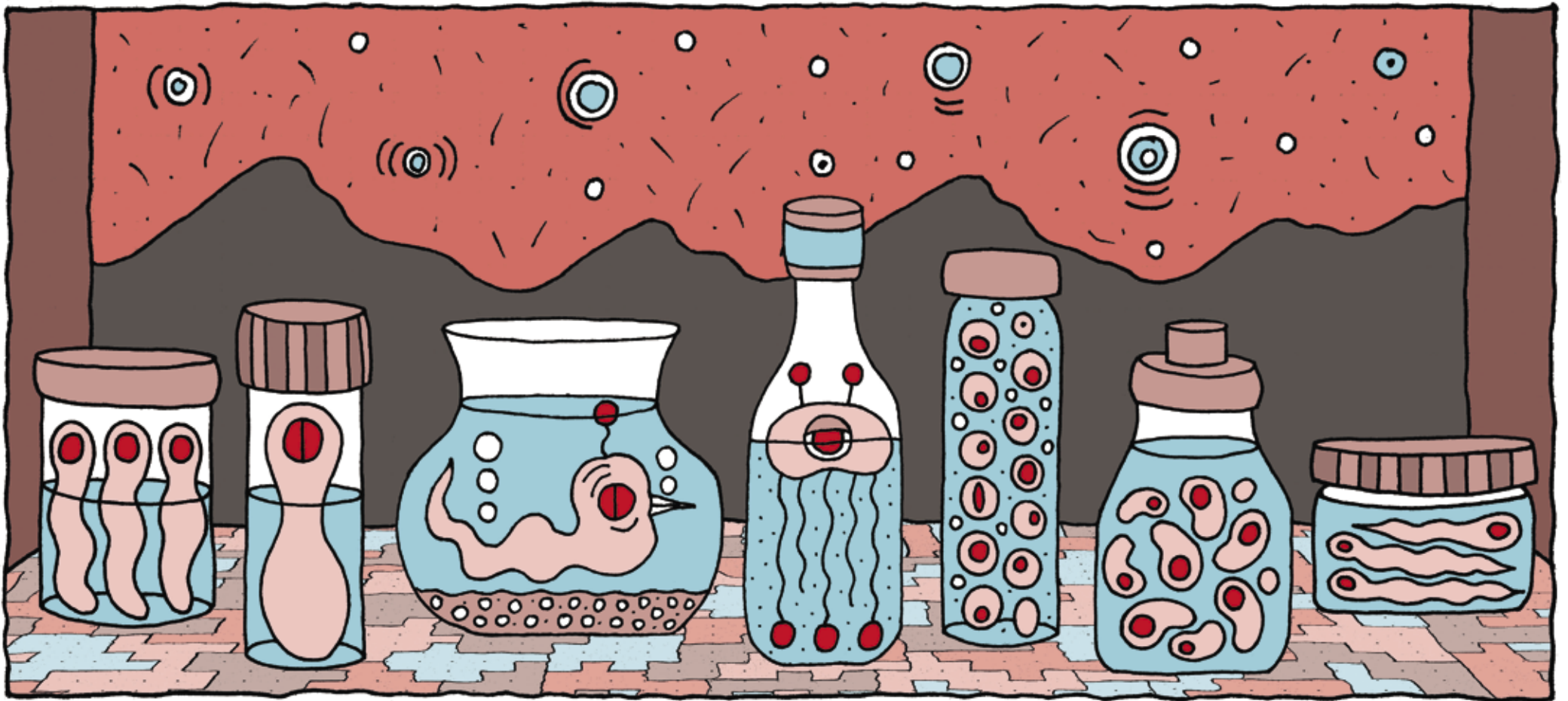
Praying Hands

Hannah Brigida Infantado Russell Sage College



Alien Pets for Sale

Laurel Petersen Russell Sage College



La Transformation

Xiaoya Du The High School Affiliated to
Renmin University of China

I am hideous. Decaying. *Dying*. It is clear to anyone who sets their eyes on me that I deserve this cruel fate.

Just a few days ago, I cuddled with my siblings. Peeking through my white, foamy jacket, I caught glimpses of their scarlet skin. They were pretty: a field of bloody tiger tulips; a burning sunset streaked with bold dashes of gold; a handful of fiendish fire racing its own flames to the last of the maple trees. Looking back at the small, mud-brown spot on my own skin, I flush with shame.

What am I but a pitiful excuse for an apple compared to them? No wonder the Humans never pick me. Granted, my siblings are younger, having only arrived the day before, but that is hardly a proper excuse. The Humans only throw away the most undesirable of our kind, and as the all-knowing supreme judges of worth, their decision is not to be questioned.

That leads me to where I am now, in a dumpster behind a supermarket in downtown Montreal, forgotten in all my spotted glory. I belong here, I try to convince myself: I inflicted this punishment on myself. A second rotten spot – only just starting to form – stares back accusingly.

Suddenly, the dumpster hatch is opened, and I'm staring into the face of another Human. With soil-colored hair and a ragged demeanor, he reminds me of myself. He rakes his eyes over the contents of the dumpster, wrinkling his nose at the smell of rotten food. When he spots me, however, his eyes widen and brighten, whether with excitement or relief, maybe even a pint of madness, I am not sure, and the sudden thought makes me nervous. Calm, I chastise myself. I should feel honored that a Human notices me at all.

"Guerrier-Homme?" Distantly, I hear another Human call out.
Guerrier-Homme? As in "Warrior Man?"

"Coming!" The first Human shouts over his shoulder. "I've found a nice bag of apples here. Some have brown marks, but that's fine. All are perfect for the transformation..." The rest of the conversation, spoken in rapid French, I can no longer comprehend.

A long truck ride later, I arrive at a neat kitchen: "L-A T-R-A-N-S-F-O-R-M-I-E, L-E-S R-E-S-C-A-P-É-S" (*The Transformation – The Survivor's Project*). Strange metal devices lie in the crowded room, like jagged mountains rising from the terrain. Hundreds – no, thousands – of my fellow fruits create a complex ecosystem in this new world.

Several of my companions start whispering excitedly to one another.

"Hey, I've heard about this place. My cousin had this deformity in his face, and he got picked up and brought here."

"You know, I've heard rumors that these Humans subscribe to a different definition of worthiness."

Indeed, I notice that the fruits here all have one thing in common: we are ugly. A group of half-squashed strawberries lay pitifully in the sink. A basket full of oranges is being tended to by Guerrier-Homme, who surgically removes the long scars that run across the skins of the fruit. Among the new arrivals are bags of apples that – I notice with a start – have brown spots, just like... me.

"You know, I've heard that the Human in charge is actually quite famous - won the first season of Radio Canada's cooking show *Les Chefs!*" I overhear one of them say.

"Quite interesting how such a high-profile Human takes the time to care for undesirables like us, huh?"

A warm, glowing feeling starts to unexpectedly swell in my chest, enveloping me with foreign senses. Hope, maybe? No, I try to stop my traitorous mind from even thinking that I – spoiled, imperfect, unsold, *abandoned* – could ever be worthy. However, even as I scramble to fix my mistake, the seed has been planted and the thoughts refuse to be uprooted. Maybe... just maybe... despite my imperfections, I still have love to give.

I am pulled out of my inner crisis by the warm hand that picks me up. Craving the precious Human contact, I lean into the embrace, satisfaction filling my heart at the realization that I am worthy.

Guerrier-Homme traces his fingers over my brown spots and settles deep into thought. I freeze. Oh my Human, how could I have been so stupid? I swore to never dare to even think that I deserve love, because I will always *always* be let down...

"Funny how I get used to the quantity, but the quality of fruits thrown away never ceases to surprise me."

He mutters so quietly that I almost don't catch his words, but I do. Oh. OH. Letting out a breath that I hadn't noticed I was holding – since when did I stop breathing? – I slowly acknowledge that Guerrier-Homme is different from the other Humans. Here, with him, I'm experiencing the first acknowledgment of my value despite my flaws.

Catching my own eye in the reflective metal surface of the table, I am startled to find myself able to look at my appearance for the very first time, to inspect my brown spots closely without feeling a violent urge to throw up. For once, I do not feel disgusted.

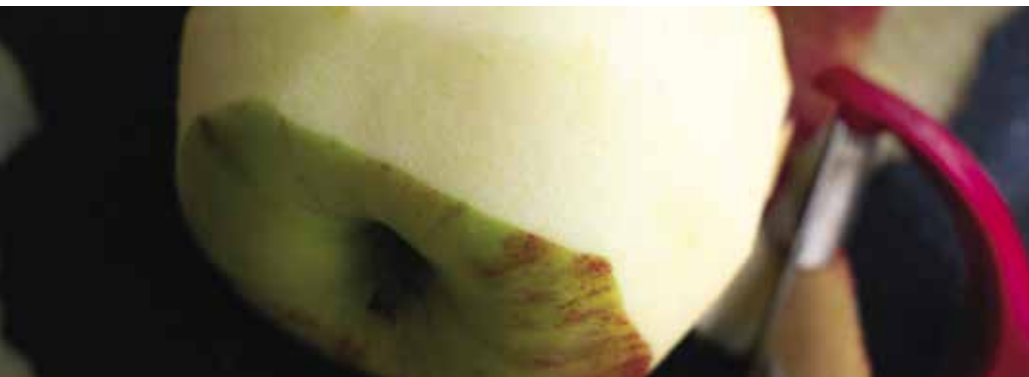
As it turns out, I'm not keeping the spots. Whipping out a fruit peeler, Guerrier-Homme carefully and skillfully carves away my red skin, erasing all traces of the brown patches on my body.

Glancing back at the metallic table, I am floored by how I look. A peaceful beach with pale, glinting sand; a pair of birds, their blond plumage fluttering in the slight breeze; an amber honeycomb dripping sweet nectar onto wooden branches. Now, without the stifling restraints of my marred skin, my true, pale self shines through. Has this beautiful creature always been inside me? I wonder and grin at the knowledge of the answer.

Hours of cutting and boiling later, I find myself in a new form. I am now apple sauce, fit snugly inside a glass jar. In a few days, I will be sent to the house of a family of humans to provide value to their lives. This is a much better fate than the alternative of rotting away and decomposing and releasing greenhouse gasses that will someday kill off my earthly relatives. Upon this thought, and facing the shredded skin lying just out of reach, I am struck by a startling realization. All this time, I was, and still am, beautiful. Regardless of my brown spots, I am useful, precious, and worth fighting for. Others have told me that I am useless, but only because they, themselves, are too shallow to appreciate the beauty of the natural. Instead, what do they prefer? Flimsy, short-lived signs of beauty and prosperity to entertain the fantasy that the world is everything they will it to be, and shunning any signs that so much as hint at cracks in their perception.

So, they lied - to others, to themselves, to me. Now transformed, I can see past the agenda of plausible deniability and temporary comfort. Reflecting back on my journey, I marvel at how much can change if nature simply were to be treated with dignity and respect.

It is a shame that only yesterday did I learn that I had been mispronouncing *Guillaume Cantin's* name the whole time. I hope you won't make this same mistake.



The Environmental Odyssey of Young Carlos Roberto Mejia

Yitong Li **Keystone Academy**



The Crumbs of a Has-Been

Dylan Scherillo Russell Sage College

"You are hysterically overconfident."

I am a magician.
Confidence is my best illusion.
Beneath the puffed-out chest and Herculean walk
are the crumbs of a has-been.
The bruises of failure sit atop my skin of success,
self-indulgent attacks for sins that never needed my repentance.
A raging war between thoughts and actions has taken over my brain,
with neither side willing to surrender, and it hurts.

It hurts to breathe and walk and talk like I matter.
But I live on a ball in the middle of nothing.
I do not matter,
no matter how loud I shout or how long I sob.

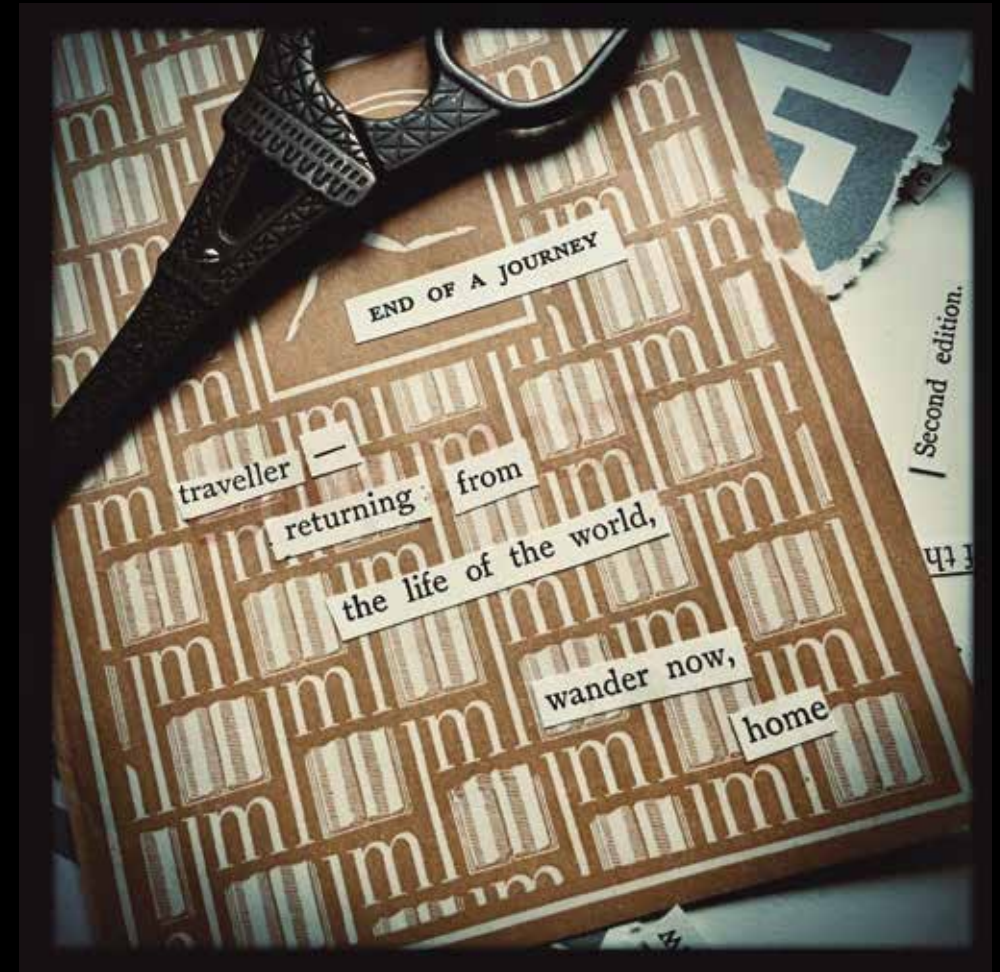
The crumbs of a has-been are what's left from the cake of false heroism.
Too bitter was the cake, so I threw it out. Tossed and forgotten.

The magician waves the wand of desires and
becomes all he's ever wanted to be:

seen.

End of a Journey

Amy Pass Russell Sage College



Art Room Chronicles

Maddy Delaney **New Visions**



56

ARTWORK

A Legacy of Light

Yuhan Wu **Middlesex School**

The cemetery lay shrouded in a veil of mist: a haunting tableau of shadows and whispers. Amidst this scene stood a figure, her stature bent with age, draped in garments that fluttered softly in the wind. Her eyes, hollowed on her face etched with untold sorrows, gazed at the weather-worn tombstone in front of her. It bore a faded inscription:

Grace Fryer, 14 March 1899 – 27 October 1933

Out of her shawl, Mae Keane's trembling hands, furrowed by the vicissitudes of life, drew out a yellowed little book— a diary. Setting it down on the grave, a bitter wind ruffled the faded pages, revealing blotches of green substances that dotted the ancient paper. Under the feeble light of the moon, the smudges seemed to emit an eerie glow.

TICK TOCK

April 16, 1917

Dear Diary,

My first week here has been a wonder. I can paint up to 200 watches a day and my employer, Dr. Hawthorne, is highly impressed by my work. And the paint glows ever so delightfully! Its light dances around our dimly lit studio, casting an ethereal glow, just like magic. It is not just a substance to me, but rather a siren's song, enticing me and drawing me closer to its irresistible charm.

"Do mine, Amelia, do mine!"

"And mine!"

"All right, Mae, All right, Grace. One at a time! Turn your face."

As they experimented with the paint, the brushes skimming along their clothes, their skin, and even their hair, the girls' laughter rang like bells, reverberating against the indifferent, sterile walls of the factory.

The paint instilled a sense of wonder in them, illuminating their once mundane lives.

I sort of find a sense of meaning through my work here.

I cannot believe my good fortune to have found such an occupation that earns easily and pays much. It almost seems too good to be true.

TICK TOCK

May 12, 1917

Dear Diary,

Dr. Hawthorne tells us we have to suck the tips of our paintbrushes.

"Girls, notice how your paintbrushes get frayed after a few strokes? Put 'em into your mouths and sharpen 'em with your lips and tongue."

The girls watched each other with apprehension, whispering among themselves.

"What's the matter? Radium ain't poisonous. It's been proven by scientists. In fact, it's healthy for you."

57

WRITING



Gives your skin a nice radiant glow."
Dr. Hawthorne watched as the girls tentatively met their soft, rosy lips to the brushes, tinting them with the ghostly green paint.

"That's the spirit! Keep up the good work, girls! Remember, lip, dip, paint."

Radium is safe. Everyone knows that, right?

TICK TOCK

"Amelia!"

December 9, 1918

Amelia died today.

The girls clustered around her; she was bent double with her eyes bulging in terror and disbelief as she clutched her mouth with quivering hands.

"Are you okay?"

Another girl stepped forward. A dozen pairs of eyes watched, curious, as she removed Amelia's hand and tried to examine her mouth. Amid gasps and screams, the curiosity in their eyes morphed into pure terror.

Her entire lower jaw fell off with the most delicate prod. I will never forget that macabre sight. Oh lord, what on earth is happening?

"How could this have happened?"

"Sir, the girls are quitting. They are starting to suspect that radium is causing them harm."

"Nonsense. The paint is undoubtedly safe; the scientists have told me that. We cannot let this tarnish our company's reputation. Alter the medical records and deny any responsibility."

"Yes, sir."

TICK TOCK

January 13, 1919

Dear Diary,

I haven't been myself lately. All day long I'm now shrouded in a haze of worry.

The light never seems to dwindle; at night, I lie in bed and gaze at my luminous possessions. They glare back at me, penetrating my eyelids and infusing my mind with an eerie glow. It is a haunting beauty that I cannot fathom.

Maybe I'm just thinking too much...

TICK TOCK

May 28, 1918

There is an inexplicable ache in my teeth that refuses to dissipate. It is as if something is constantly gnawing away at my body, engulfing me.

"What on earth is wrong with me, doctor?"

"Well, dear, to be frank, you're completely healthy. As lively as a child and absolutely nothing wrong with you."

"That can't be true..."

The doctor shrugged. It was as if he truly believed the fiction he was told to promote.

I don't believe I'm healthy.

TICK TOCK

July 9, 1918

I had a horrible nightmare.

The girls who died, their visages twisted into silent screams, their bodies contorted and gleaming with an unnatural light — they were back at work. One by one they dipped their brushes into the deadly paint and brought them to their mouths, licking them with insatiable hunger. One by one they fell, their bones crumbling and disintegrating.

Oh, I tried to stop them! I swear! Poor Amelia! Poor Ella! Poor Sarah!

I cannot bear this much longer...

TICK TOCK

January 15, 1920

I'm leaving.

"Mae, please, this paint is deadly. Radium is deadly. That's why our friends died."

"Be sensible, Grace. Calm down. Radium. Is. Safe."

"No! You don't understand! I'm begging you all, stop putting it in your mouths!"

"I—" Mae faltered, hesitancy and fear lingering in her eyes that had long lost their liveliness, "I don't know... I don't want to lose my job over this."

"Please..."

Why won't they listen? Why?

I'm scared. I'm never going back there.

TICK TOCK

March 18, 1925

I have decided to fight for justice, not for my own sake but for the rights of hundreds and thousands of women suffocating under the manipulative grasp of deceitful corporations. I am fighting for their future.

Four young women have stepped forward to join me in this losing battle: Quinta McDonald, Albina Larice, Edna Hussman, and Katherine Schaub. Together, we will be the Radium Girls.

TICK TOCK

May 24, 1927

Life is short and our remaining time to live is crumbling. We have just found an attorney, the only attorney, willing to assist us in this lawsuit.

We must hurry. The clock is ticking.

TICK TOCK

April 1, 1928

"The Supreme Court states that due to a violation of the Statute of Limitations proposed by the US Radium Company, the case is adjourned."

We were deceived, exploited, and abandoned like rag dolls. Now they are toying with us, dragging time out and dangling it tauntingly in front of our pathetic noses. They have years, but we don't.

The voices of my friends and family continually bang on in my battered mind—you don't have a chance of winning, they say. Over and over and over again.

I'm doing this, no matter what.

TICK TOCK

April 25, 1928

I've lost almost everything— my teeth, my youth, my life, but determination still remains in me.

TICK TOCK

October 27, 1933

Dear Diary,

I know I won't make it in time.

They're trying to silence us, but we won't submit. Every single one of us will keep fighting on our sickbeds until justice finds our feeble voice. We will not stop until U.S. Radium falls. We will win.

Grace's words trail off as the pen falls from her limp hand for the last time.

Mae closes the diary, melancholy and laden with heavy memories of the past. She was among the many girls who were convinced by Grace to leave the Radium Dial Company. Sadly, Grace didn't live long enough to see her lawsuit win. Yet her actions impacted the world, acting as a beacon illuminating a path for safer workplaces for generations to come.

Grace's bones still glow in her grave— a validation of her ordeals.

She is our legacy of light.

Jean Flower Bouquet

Grace Thurber New Visions



60

ARTWORK

The Colors of Silence

Tseng Jo Han Victoria Academy

In the domain of silence, a palette lies.
Whispers of banners, gently they twist,
A discotheque of hues that grace this quiet feeling.

Amidst the skillful illustrations, quiet sighs.
Azure intuitions in purplish blues shine
In the protected circle, silence's palette lies.

Indigo dreams, a supernatural disguise,
A screen revolved following puzzles divine,
A discotheque of hues that grace the quiet heaven.

Violet whispers harmonized lullabies,
A covering alternated in plum's design,
In the earth of the quiet silence's palette lies.


A muted band, their outline agrees, becomes an
Ethereal band, tunes touching. Their
Dance of hues grace the quiet vaults around them.

In the silence, calm never expires,
In shades of serenity, a religion we find,
In the rule of quietude, silence's palette lies,
A discotheque of hues that grace the quiet firmaments.

61

WRITING





Future in the Face of a Daffodil

Jacob Willwerth

Russell Sage College

the smell of cigarettes is intoxicating
i associate it with you,
your hands that reek of smoke as you cuddle me
your back to me as you exhale out the window
to be closer to you, i would cover myself in the same scent
the blue American Spirits,
burning my lungs to feel you beside me.

self-destruction

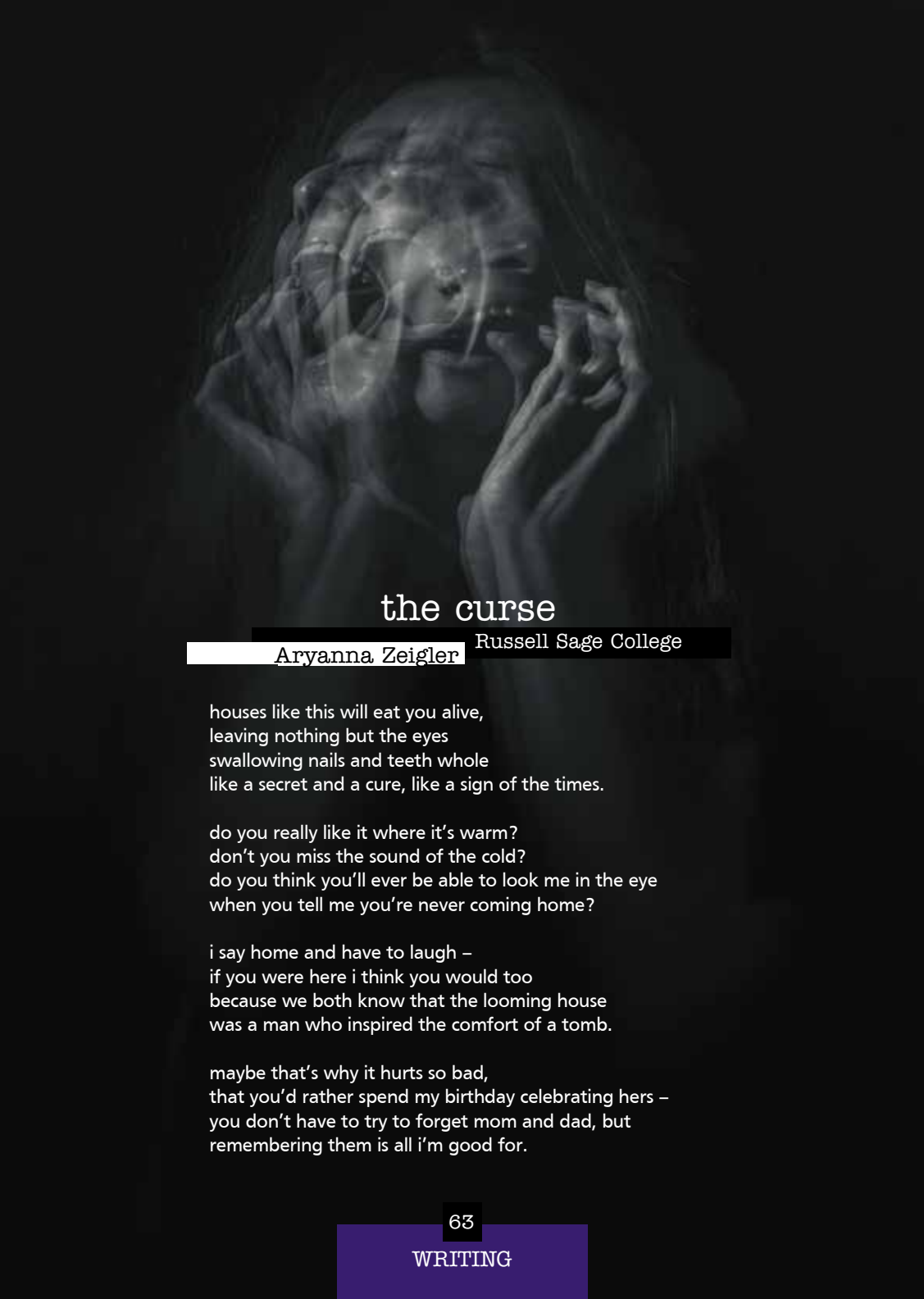
Cara Michaels

Russell Sage College

62

WRITING

ARTWORK



the curse

Aryanna Zeigler

Russell Sage College

houses like this will eat you alive,
leaving nothing but the eyes
swallowing nails and teeth whole
like a secret and a cure, like a sign of the times.

do you really like it where it's warm?
don't you miss the sound of the cold?
do you think you'll ever be able to look me in the eye
when you tell me you're never coming home?

i say home and have to laugh –
if you were here i think you would too
because we both know that the looming house
was a man who inspired the comfort of a tomb.

maybe that's why it hurts so bad,
that you'd rather spend my birthday celebrating hers –
you don't have to try to forget mom and dad, but
remembering them is all i'm good for.

63

WRITING



Phantom Architecture

Hannah Brigida Infantado Russell Sage College

Cultural Appropriation vs. Cultural Celebration

When Political Correctness Misses the Point

Yuki Wen **Bishop Strachan School, Ontario**

Gen Z wants society to embrace each unique identity, challenging harmful values to make way for a just society. With that, I am proud to be part of Gen Z ... sometimes. But what has followed this noble endeavor is a "trend" to hunt and eliminate 'cultural appropriators'. Instagram comments: brutal; cancel culture: devastating. Fashion seems to be the center of this hunt, but rather than serving as a unifying tool, it now cuts like a knife, segregating us.

I love seeing East Asians share traditions on social media; seeing others not of East Asian descent experience my culture is even better. I've witnessed a non-Chinese person wear traditional clothing with a taped-on beard (like the ones worn in Chinese Operas) - so stereotypical. Was it inaccurate? Not really, but people told him that it was: "insensitive because it's someone else's culture that you shouldn't be wearing as a costume." He then went to a Chinese community directly and met an elderly lady who said it was beautiful.

So am I offended by this man? Not at all. His critics are confusing cultural appropriation with appreciation. In a New York Times article, "In Defense of Cultural Appropriation," Kenan Malik argues that we should strive for equality where culture is equally valued, shared, and celebrated, and not barred off. I agree with him.

Beyond this innocuous YouTube example, our lens moves outward to the wider media – celebrities tread a thin line in this hunt by the woke. In 2019, Rihanna featured on the Bazaar China cover with an elaborate hairstyle, along with a modern version of Chinese clothing and a traditional fan in hand, posed by a folded screen. Twitter erupted with anti-appropriation criticism from many who were not actually Chinese. In their crusade to shame, they seemed unaware that this image was photographed by Chen Man and styled



by Xiaomu Fan both are Chinese. Surely had there been an issue, they would have chosen a different subject matter.

An NPR opinion article argues that celebrities are economically exploiting other cultures, while the people of the original culture get nothing. Sure, people like Rihanna may profit from expanding their branding this way, but what about the thousands of her fans now inspired to purchase similar garments from authentic creators, giving back to the culture that created it?

Having more people understand my culture and its complexities seems ideal, especially in a time when Asian people face increased levels of hate crimes from the media's damaging portrayal of the COVID virus' origins. Rather than being humiliated by others wearing my culture, I view it as a celebration, not a parody. This is what we actually call equity, right?

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The Fiddler

Jashton Gieser Russell Sage College



68

ARTWORK

Dancing for an Awakening:

How One Dance Theatre Troupe is Innovating
to Save the Planet

Neily Chen Huili School Shanghai

Hands raise high, lifting the sky gracefully; feet stomp vigorously, unearthing fresh soil. The ocean roars with animation, its waves foaming as it crashes upon the golden beach. Simultaneously, layers of torsos sway in unison, creating an ever-lasting cycle. Tuna and cod sprint along with rapids and torrents through a series of grand jetés that end with a pirouette. This is just one small scene in the astounding performance of the Tribhangi Dance Theatre, where dancers raise awareness of climate change through the recreation of nature; their choreographies depict a mixture of cultural heritages around the world.

Located in South Africa, the Tribhangi Dance Theatre is now 34 years old and has toured extensively, performing original choreography in Mauritius, Lesotho, Botswana, Germany, India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Started in 1989 by Jayesperi Moopen, the dance theater aims to: "explore and present dance in its complexity and multiplicity." And this mission has not changed according to their website – "As Tribhangi Dance Theatre celebrates 30 years this year, part of our legacy is to continue to inspire, educate and engage with artists and audiences towards building a South Africa that we can all be proud of. Social cohesion and intercultural dialogue will always remain at the forefront of our work," Moopen said.

Flora and foliage thrive, bringing vividness to the stage with an arabesque followed by développés. Gliding across the floor in piqués, deer carefreely stalk through the forest. At the same time, the forceful Indian dance steps depict torrential rain and sudden earthquakes.

This dance theater also partners with other artistic and cultural groups to maximize its impact. In celebration of three glorious decades of dance, the Tribhangi Dance Theatre collaborated with Dashinka Dance Company for three nights of classical-inspired contemporary Indian dance performances at an arts festival. This production, called Pancha Bhutha, takes inspiration from Indian culture and the five elements of nature. Through it, they spread messages of Earth's changing climate, emphasizing more positivity through multiple combinations of bold, innovative, and culturally sensitive dance genres.

69

WRITING





Petrified birds take flight in swarms, lynxes flee in packs just as a sudden shift of stage formation occurs. From gathered to scattered, not only does wildlife cringe and vanish, but so too does human civilization. After the chaos settles, the music fades, and lights slowly transform into a cool shade of gray, while the creators of this universe lie asleep on the stage. All is quiet along the seashore.

While feelings of desperation and melancholy saturate climate change messaging, the Tribhangi Dance Theatre is not consumed by doom and gloom. Even their staging is considered with care – lights are gray and not black – in order to represent hope and the chances of altering reality in the future. These dancers await an awakening they are helping to arrive, punctuating their performances with faith and hope.

The play ends quietly. A few scattered claps come from the audience, followed by a pregnant silence. Again. Lifting themselves from the cold stage floor, weary dancers stagger backstage. They open their mobiles to stare at their official YouTube account: a total of 5 subscribers. The theater's Instagram official account: 1499 followers. They sigh, worried about the future. It has now been 33 years since the establishment of this dance group, and through all these years of performing across the globe, they ask themselves: are we achieving what we set out to achieve? Are we being noticed? And if so, are we motivating our peers to save the Earth?

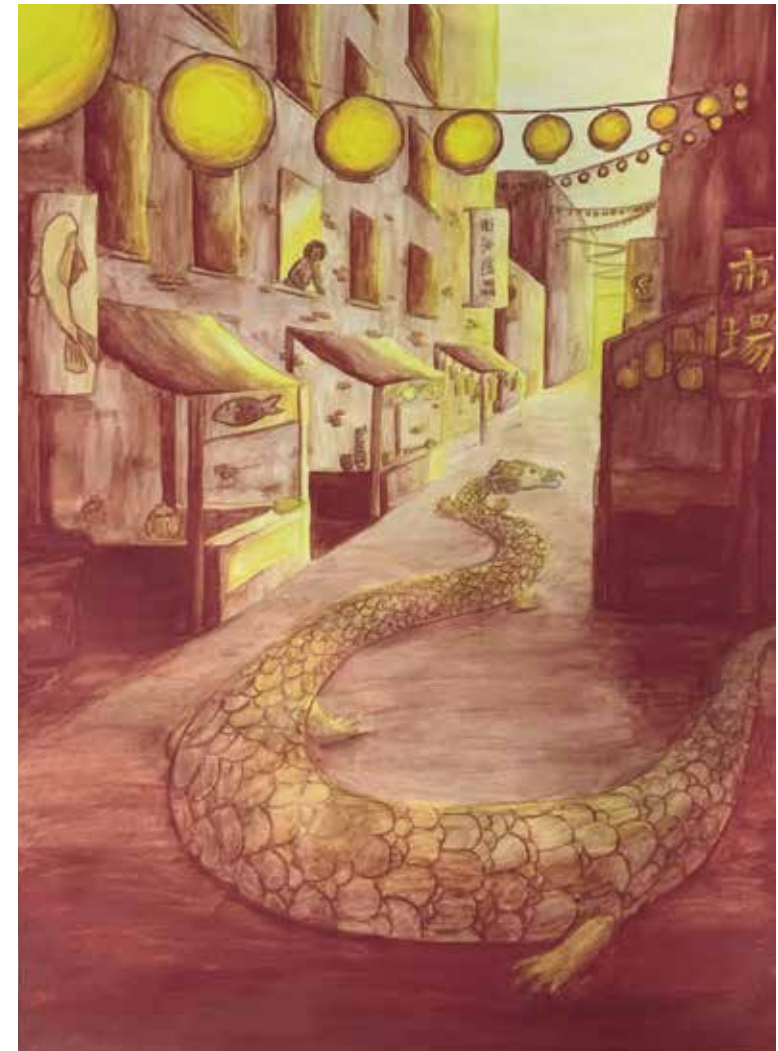
Not many people have heard of this small dance group located in South Africa. Despite being seemingly unnoticed, and sometimes even criticized for their boundary-pushing, alternative dances, they have kept going. Despite times when their future as a performance-based organization seemed unclear, these innovators continued spreading positivity while raising awareness of climate change to the public.

The dancers of Tribhangi Dance Theatre are climate heroes who continue to dance for our awakening. Wake up, everyone! And take a look at their performance.

Hands raise high, lifting the sky gracefully; feet stomp vigorously, unearthing fresh soil. The ocean roars with animation, its waves foaming as it crashes upon the golden beach.

Morning Stroll Through the Market

Bailey Bates Russell Sage College



Particles

Jingzhi Miao

Rumsey Hall school

The particles of life abound,
their pressure compounding
brick by brick, building.

The wind blows by your ears
as you run around the playground,
friends chatting in a circle,
playing some childish game,
a makeshift gun, take the aim.
The moments passed, the fun
returns, circle back 'round again.
You watch it like a film.
A particle: a memory.

How you wish to go back to five,
when life totally flips –
no worry, no hurry,
just playing, just enjoying.
Now, you wish you were dead plenty of times,
"Why does this keep happening?" you whine.
And maybe all those whispers in the ear
tell you to hurry.
A particle: pressure.

How you wish to be yourself,
to be able to at least learn,
and many tell you,
avoid distractions from stories and stupid sayings;
do what you're supposed to do,
at least, what they tell you to do.
A particle: bearing everything.

The future grabbed you,
lured you onward, onward,
promising rewards, false.
What greets you at the end of this path?
Boredom. Torture. Regret.
A particle: uselessness.

And there's more ahead.
It's not something so easy to depart from.
Our world is made to function this way.
Some live a life of fame and fortune,
While others are fallen and forgotten,
Whichever category we land into.
We're bound to accept it as life's way.

The stuff everyone's doing every second,
It's hard, it's more than difficult,
but if there's anything we humans
somewhat excel at it's perseverance.
Some of us just don't give in,
no matter how hopeless it seemed,
no matter the tons of interference.
A particle: continuing...

So favor small goals,
careful, calm stages of tomorrow.
Trouble will come;
but that's what we live for.
Precisely that, just...a particle.

A particle in life.

72

WRITING



International Student
Competition

Dizzying Daydream

Anna Campbell

Russell Sage College



73

ARTWORK

Solstice Serenade

Leo Feng Eaglebrook School



Heartbreak

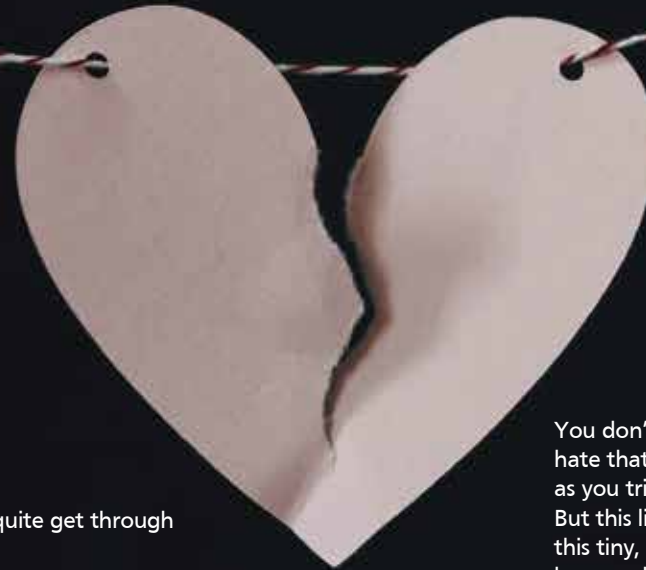
Newton Wilk

Russell Sage College

Here it is. Heartbreak.
The thing everyone sings, screams, and sobs about.
But break isn't the right word, is it?
The heart is a meaty, beating, fleshy thing;
it wouldn't break like china
well cared for through the ages,
it wouldn't break like a porcelain doll.
It's torn apart - sinew pulled from weeping chords,
set in the stubby fingered, clumsy hands of a toddler,
digging in, nails small and dull
Ripping, Tearing, *Biting* at the fatty bits that the fingers can't quite get through

And you are left with this bloodied pulp of
something you used to recognize,
Something Begotten and Destroyed all within
the flimsy little bones of your chest,
and you are left looking
at this dreadfully ugly, horrid little thing,

After all of this you're told that you must take care of this *thing*, this
stringy bit of roadkill torn from your body.
And, Christ, that's the last thing you want to do.
You look at this disgusting little thing and you hate it.



You don't hate a broken vase and you don't even
hate that mug whose shards sliced your fingers
as you tried to clean it up.
But this little thing,
this tiny, ugly, little thing,
how could anyone ask you to take care of something
so small, so worthless, so terrible
that hurt you so badly?

So you sit.
You hold this weeping, gushing thing close
and you won't love it.
How could anyone ask you to love something so
small, so worthless, so terrible
and so exactly in your own shape? You
won't love it, but you'll hold it close, until
its tiny, trembling body
stops shaking...

This is Your Brain During a Trauma Treatment

Tracy Gilbert
Russell Sage College



From You Know Who

Amy Tran
London Academy of
Excellence Tottenham

To the one I wronged,

It's been two years, hasn't it? Even now, I can barely hold my mind together. My pen wobbles, making illegible lines across the page. I cannot bring myself to fix the mess. My lip quivers. Perhaps from the cold outside, the breeze, a hauntingly warm blanket. Perhaps from inside instead, an unrelenting claw aiming at my chest, nonstop. I am struggling to breathe. I know the truth of what happened to you. I saw it with my own eyes. I traced the aftermath of it with my fingers, slowly feeling every bump of the cross in the ground. I'm in a sorry state, I know. You don't need to tell me otherwise as I wake up every night to the memories of that day. The claw seems to grip tighter, a reminder. I could have done more and I should have done more. You don't need to tell me otherwise. I can barely breathe.

I'm sorry.

♦ From You Know Who.

To the one I cannot forget,

For three years now I have seen the calendar in our kitchen. Well, in my kitchen now, the date flashes in front of me again. I am reminded of you. The claw is a heavy hand still in my chest. I can feel the tears, the ones that are rolling down my face; some are quicker than others, as light as feathers. Yet, at the same time, they are as heavy as the entire world, the weight of them carrying everything, yet nothing. My words are a mess; I know. I am reminded of you again. No matter where I go, I find memories of you, of us, even in the unlikeliest of places. Ha, why don't you try guessing what made me nostalgic and melancholic this time? The claw is like a visitor, knocking at my chest. Yet it won't stop. I keep being reminded of you.

I miss you.

♦ From You Know Who.



To the one I am in debt to,

It's been six years since that fateful day – the day when my whole world seemed to tumble down. Do you remember the claw I kept mentioning? It remains, scratching at me. Nowhere near as frequently anymore, I will note. Someone mentioned a day called 'Gratitude Friday.' I think that you would have loved such a day. We're supposed to write why we're grateful. And you were the first that came to my mind. Thank you for teaching me about the world. Ha, I had a pretty naive mindset before I met you. I was a stubborn one. I remember how teary my eyes get when it comes to this. Ah. Thank you for showing me new things. You opened my eyes to literally and figuratively new places. I preferred visiting some of them over the others - but they all are things I wouldn't trade for the world. Don't have that worried face, silly. It's just that claw again, being a little nuisance, pinching at me this time. Thank you for everything, truly.

I am so grateful.

♦ From You Know Who.

To the one I took time for,

Ten years. I still have not forgotten you; I will never be able to. It took me time, but I learnt a lot about people and about me through this decade. You ask about the claw? Well, it's gone, practically. Vanished into thin air like a magic act. My grief was long. Longer than a story that has been dragged on for far too long. Longer than a lesson that you find super tedious to sit through as a kid. It took me time, but I have finally been able to accept, accept that I no longer have you by my side. I know I took you for granted. I know I have so many regrets when it comes to you. I know that you - you will never be able to return. Ah. A final poke from the claw. It took me ten years to say that, to write that, you know? That you will never be able to return. It took time. My suffering was a difficult journey. One that many kindred spirits share with me. Some take much longer, some take much shorter. And it's okay, because it just takes time.

I will always love you.

♦ From You Know Who.

Realm

Davis Snyder Russell Sage College



Past Tense

Emily Boehm CreativityUnleashed

My heart bleeds for the one who broke it.

I guess I'd grown used to the way you hurt me. It'd be more comfortable, even now, to return to the folds of constant anxiety, of bruised souls, of getting angry only for it to all melt away at the sight of your face. That, at least, was familiar to me. It would be relaxing in contrast to the new constant of second-guessing everything I once thought to be true, the tears, the persistent ache of missing you. The sleepless nights spent staring at the ceiling fan and wondering just what I did wrong to deserve this. I spend days lost in a daze, dwelling on all the impossibilities of ever returning to a sense of normalcy. But hurt people hurt people, right? I guess that's what we did. I guess I really am a coward at heart, because it's down to the deepest recesses of me aching and crying out that I can't bear another day of feeling like this. I need to know when my life will begin to feel real again.

What do you do to regain your life, when you've lost the person who had become it? When that person may never have existed as you knew them? We were never anything more than the best of everything, but even so... breathing has become a struggle, without you. Every fleeting thought I ever had I once shared with you. There are secrets only known between you and I. There are memories, countless, years of them, that resurface every day just to ensure that I can never have a moment not spent thinking of you. Pictures that I can't bear to delete. What do you do when you lose a person you never thought you'd lose? When you never truly wanted to live, and lost the person you thought might make it worth it?

I wish the moon didn't make me think of you. I wish I could sit and stare at that faraway crescent without thinking of the one draped around your neck, of the tattoo on your shoulder, of the way your lips curl when you smile.

These backroads have your name painted on them in all the times I sped home, always faster than the last time, always half-blinded by the tears in my eyes to see if I would make it this time.

I'd like to say I would repeat the last years, if I were able. But it wouldn't be to forget you, no — despite it all, you were precious. There are so many things I think I could have done better, made myself better, more worthy of keeping around. Made myself harder to lie to. Made myself harder to lose. I could have been smarter, less easy to use. The ghost of you lives on in my passenger seat, lingering in the shadows of my every thought, in the notes of every song I hear, in everything that I do because I did it all with you, too. But all the unfinished business I had with you is what feeds my ghost, all the places I wanted to take you to and all the endless things we talked about doing. This story wasn't supposed to end on a cliffhanger, wasn't supposed to leave me turning all these blank pages in a blind hope to find an epilogue.

I talk to you still in the back of my mind, keeping you as the most private diary, trapping errant thoughts like a warden. I'm left to imagine all the things you might have had to say in response, imagine anything other than the silence I've been left with, thumbs freezing over the letters to: *I miss you*. Or, I miss the person I thought you to be?

Never forget the night we shared our traumas, shared tears together. How everyone in our lives always left us, in some form or the other. How we promised we would never leave each other. How I lay alone now, thinking of course it's happened again. Of course I've been a fool. And how I can't stop myself from thinking, no wonder everyone leaves you. But still, I can't help but feel broken for you, can't help the guilt and the worry, because I was the one who left, when left without another choice.

Don't ask me if I'm getting better. I'll never be better. I'm only getting bitter.





Back and Again

Davis Snyder Russell Sage College

Things that Happen at Panda Express

Coco Song

Emma Willard School

A white woman,
beyond middle-aged,
short, ashen hair.
Her spit flies everywhere.

Gross, I think, standing,
finishing the end of a short line.

*"Yellow bi***!" She calls me.*

Kinda ironic.

Her eyes, two of many –
weighty eyes stuck to me,
staring at me in anger,
and in shock.

"Go back to your own country!"

I didn't know people actually said that in real life.
Still, something bubbles
like unstirred curry,
and my hands curl at my side.

"We don't need your disease."

Like a child turning around
to find their mother gone
in a crowded mall.
I stood.

"Shut up, you crazy lady!"

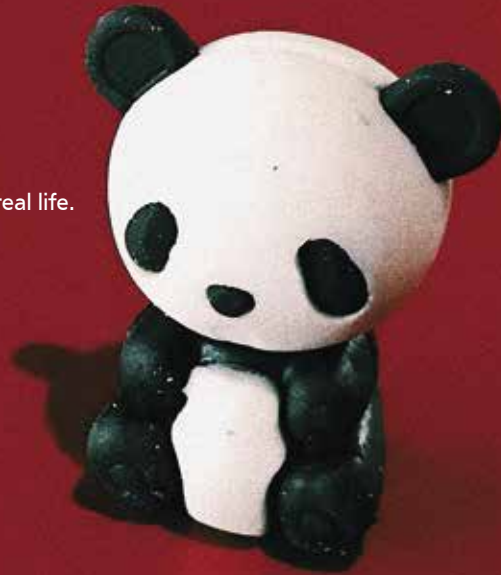
Another woman,
college-aged?
White tee and jeans,
stern eyebrows,
shouts through the crowd.

"Stop with your baseless racism."

"Who do you think you are?"

Voices, like small streams
converging and morphing
together, form a valiant river.

It pushes the white woman
down and away,
over the waterfall,
where her voice drowns.



I swim to the edge,
protected by the waves of
voices that surround me and
watch,

drifting in the currents...

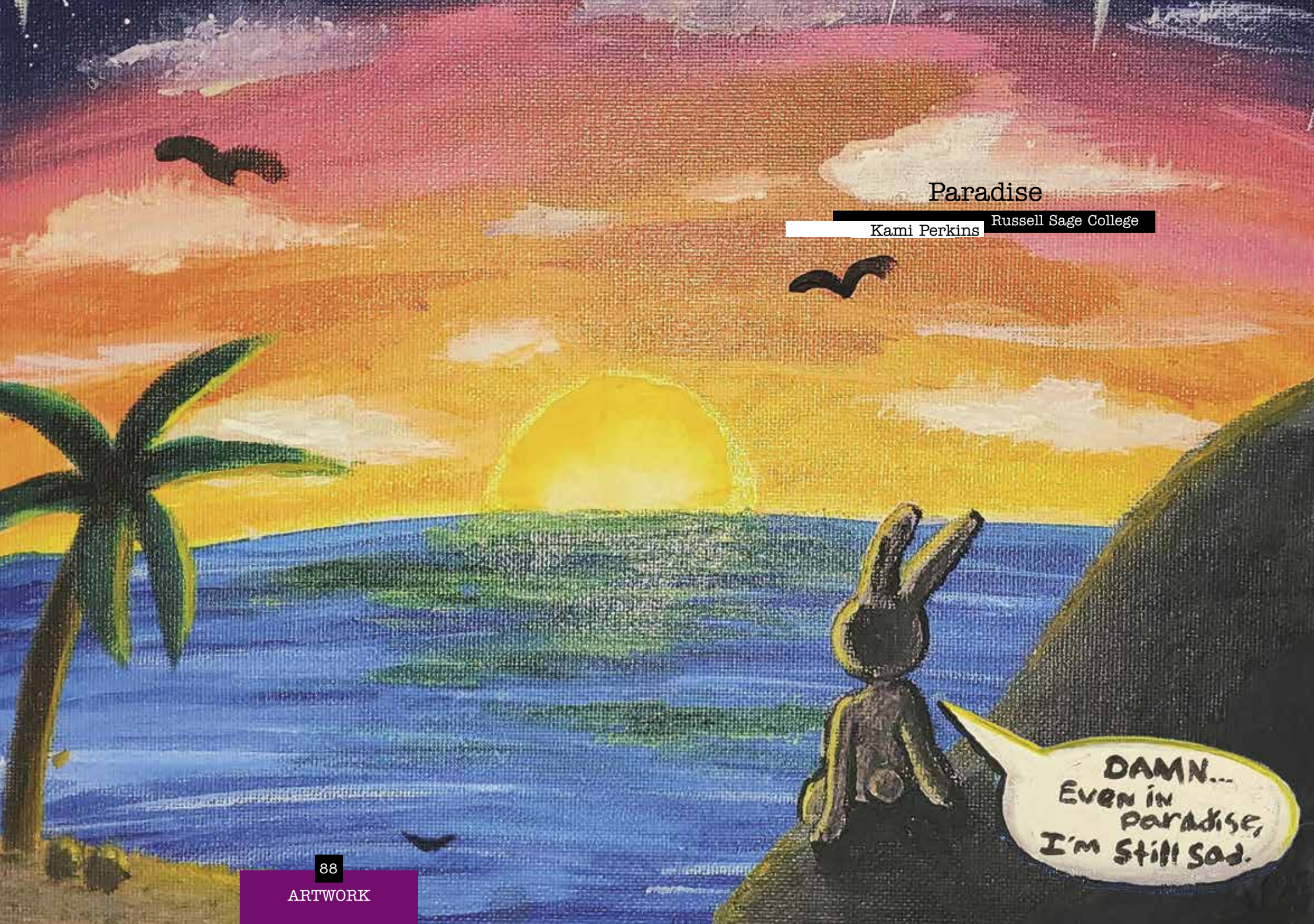
At Sea/Rubber Ducks

Cynthea Wang

Richard Montgomery
High School

Was joy once our companion on this voyage?
Now, chests swelling with swallowed sobs
never breaching the foamy white crests of waves,
life washes over us again, and again.
The air itself is weighed down by salt.
Our tired vessel, our lady of the sea flounders,
our hearts yearn for the safety of a faraway home.
Adrift in the water, we know not where we have been.
We have only our final destination in mind as we
sail in place, our anchor cast, buried.
Monotony has settled in our souls like sediment,
the delight of our journey lost in the current of time,
whispers fading in the winds of our sails,
imprisoned by the sea and a boundless horizon,
adrift in the vastness of the ocean of uncertainty,
forever bound between what was and what might be.





Paradise

Kami Perkins

Russell Sage College

Apple Cider

Jonathan Reese

Russell Sage College

Today I skinned an apple
Tomorrow plant the seeds
Yesterday they turned auburn
As of now fallen from trees

The cider smells lovely
Its scent wafting through the wall
Wonder if they smell it
Any sense however small

I return without haste
My knees creak, your trunk stiffed
May you rest in peace
May your pies be missed

90

WRITING

Originally

Jessica Kamimbaya

London Academy of
Excellence Tottenham

A tale of two cities
I talk the talk but taste the distance on the tip of my tongue
Miles stretch between me and my mother
The commute grows longer with every sentence
I swaddle myself in her love, I gouge at
My green and pleasant pupils, faith-full
Borders, lines smear on my skin like war paint
For I belonged to her, originally.

Welcome to the Yearbook Club

Russell Sage College

Ramasoj Williams

91

WRITING

ARTWORK



Dash

Ethan Alcee

Russell Sage College

When the seemingly endless
possibilities invade
be patient; there will be silence.

*Inspired by Warsan Shire's In Love and In War

Silence

Ethan Alcee

Russell Sage College

The Anatomy of a Loved One's Hands

Maverick Douglas **Russell Sage College**

If someone were to ask Magnus Bane what he loved most about his partner Alexander Lightwood, he would have been hard-pressed not to spout a novel-length soliloquy. From the gentleness of Alec's heart when he was interacting with one of his siblings or Magnus himself, to the straight-backed sternness borne of years of military training when facing down the Shadow World's governmental body, there were so many things about Alexander that Magnus felt should be acknowledged and appreciated. The warlock could admit though, that one thing about Alec which continued to hold his fascination was his hands.

Alec's hands were long and thin. Had he not been born a warrior and groomed almost from birth to run the New York Institute, Magnus could have seen him as an accomplished piano player. As it was, the warlock took great joy in watching Alec practice his archery for hours on end. The Shadowhunter's fingers were nimble as he plucked an arrow from his quiver and notched it to his bow. Years of training had left silver scars where the string of his bow had bitten into his skin, and hard work had left callouses littered across his appendages. Magnus had even once caught Alec pulling a hot pan out of the oven with nothing more than his bare hand when unable to locate an oven mitt, completely straight-faced as though the heated metal didn't burn his skin. Alec had raised an eyebrow and offered a shy smile when Magnus had begun to coo over his reddened fingers, using his blue magic to brush over them and heal away the burn gently.

What Magnus found most amazing about Alec's hands was that despite the wear and tear they had suffered through, they only ever felt soft to the warlock. Gentle fingers brushed against his jaw when the Shadowhunter leaned into a kiss. A smooth and warm palm against his own, when Alec would slide their hands together in a show of unity against those that would scoff at their relationship.

Perhaps, Magnus mused, he could write an entire book just on Alec's hands. The way that they were a direct representation of the man himself.

"What has you so deep in thought?" Amusement colored the familiar deep voice as those very hands he'd been pondering landed gently on his shoulders, squeezing comfortingly as he felt the brush of warm lips against his cheek.

"A great many things, Alexander," Magnus replied, turning and wrapping his arms around the taller man's waist, looking up into affectionate blue eyes and winking wolfishly. A dusting of red brightened the Shadowhunter's cheeks and Magnus nearly lost his breath.

Perhaps he could write a novel about Alec's hands, but then he would have to write an entire series to give justice to the unassuming man who had stolen his heart.

"This piece is inspired by Cassandra Clare and my favorite characters from the book series: The Shadowhunter Chronicles."



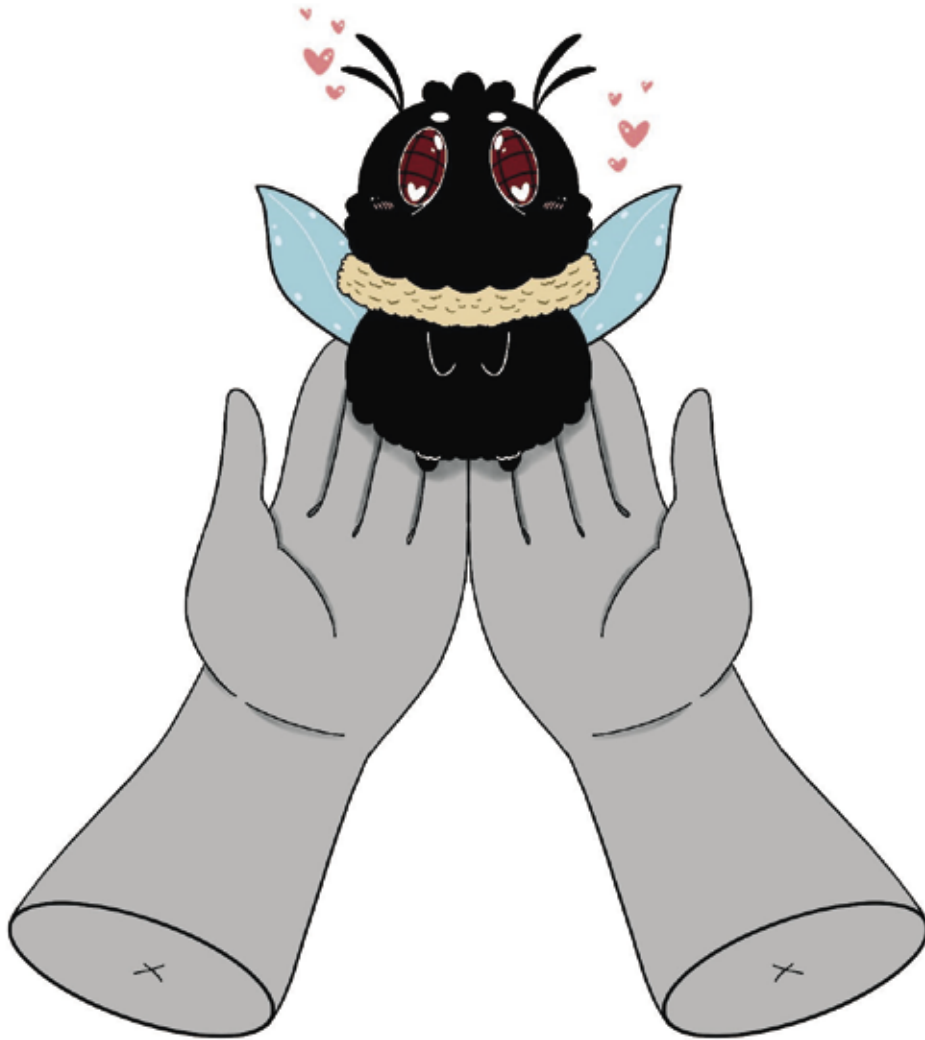


Ford Joy

Amanda Bastiani Russell Sage College

Little Moth

Victoria Harris Russell Sage College



A Lost Bet

Andreea Pavel CreativityUnleashed

I made a bet with the universe –
went all in,
placed my heart and soul in tokens
that this time I would finally find
peace

safety
home.

But I lost...

And how awfully I lost,
risking my whole being,
a soul, a heart, a mind,
without a safety net.

They fell.
Everything fell.
I fell holding your hand
thinking we would fall together

But then you let go of my hand.
You let go of me.

Maybe I didn't hold as tightly
as I should have -
I didn't think you'd let go so easily.

Even if I was wrong,
I didn't grab you
because it was a choice
I couldn't control.

You were led back to safety
while I fell further
in an endless abyss
of uncertainty and chaos.

Alone
with myself,
with my mind,
with my mania.

Since you've been gone,
I forgot how to breathe,
how to think,
how to smile
and how to mean it.

Trapped in a hell
of my own doing
cursed to feel everything.

My body forces every muscle
so I can continue to breathe;
the pressure in my chest
is too much to bear.

My tears coming down,
digging into my face,
leave traces more painful
than anything I'd imagined.

My heart continuously breaks,
as if it wants to be one with dust,
to be swept away, to end, to cease.

The future is not the same
if I can't see you in it.



Beautiful Day in NY

Kathleen Muller Russell Sage College

The Calmness of Dance

Madelyn Cotterill Russell Sage College

A girl stands on clear water
like a thin, sheer piece of glass.

Baby pink pointe shoes and
a soft lavender dress
balance her in the serene environment.

White clouds above the yellow,
an orange sunset traces the day's light.

The girl is frozen in time
and the calmness of dance
folds over her.

100

WRITING

ARTWORK

The Mammogram

Russell Sage College
Katrin Ramsey

It is only a flicker
of opaque lucency.
A tiny trickle
in my breast
determining Fate.

"Hold your breath
and don't move."
As if
I am already
not fear paralyzed.

The balance
of sickness and health
precariously tipped
in one direction
by a whirring magnet spin.

Mind panic floods.
The sip of bourbon.
Microcellular mutations.
Unattenuated stress.
Offenders in a line-up.

Crimes committed
against myself.
Punishment Pleasures.
A life of focused
Soul Nourishment Neglect.

Natural Instinct.
Bargaining prayer.
Steely acceptance.
Isolated processing
of futures unknown.

Atonement.
Hope infinitely remote
hidden heart bound
echoed in the bloodstream
elusive in the mind.

Willful acceptance
of woven fates
anticipated yet unexpected
intertwined and twisted
my tapestry of light.

101

WRITING

The Sunshine

Mackenzie Gorman Russell Sage College



102

ARTWORK

Just Listen

Kathleen Muller Russell Sage College

Flowers

Until they can breathe and nurture the Earth,
They stay silent.

Snow

The Earth needs to replenish itself and take a long rest.
We humans should follow suit, but refuse and keep working,
working, working, working...

Rain

Sometimes we all need a good cry.
The Earth has emotions too.

Fire

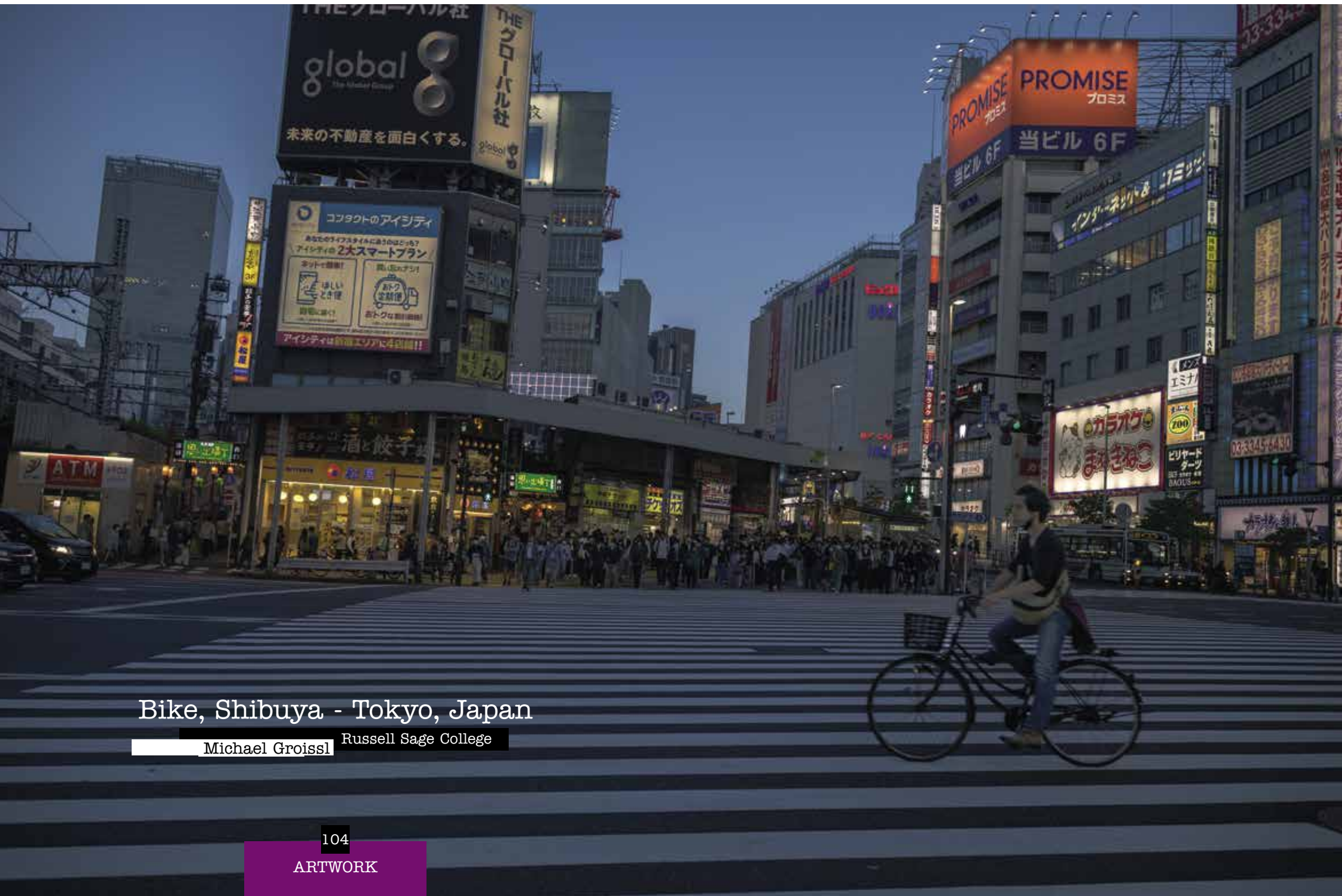
Anger, frustration, pain.
When will we learn that we must take care of ourselves
and our surroundings?

We have no time to ponder, for we are trapped in work and
always stay silent,

But our world is telling us
the truth.

103

WRITING



Bike, Shibuya - Tokyo, Japan

Michael Groissl Russell Sage College

Woven Words

Lilia Cauchemez-Turmanidze

London Academy of
Excellence Tottenham

I live,
tongue-tied
between languages,
drawn and quartered across lands -
the accents, phrases, expressions,
exist endlessly intertwined,
forming a tapestry of tangled words.
My will continues to expand, persistent to its capacity,
trying desperately to hold the threads in place.

I used to be unable
to comprehend the fast-speaking English around me,
frenzied children, unsympathetic parents
too impatient to speak again,
slowly,
for a shy, shameful child who struggled to keep up,
clumsily stringing sentences together
while carrying the weight of three countries
on her young shoulders.

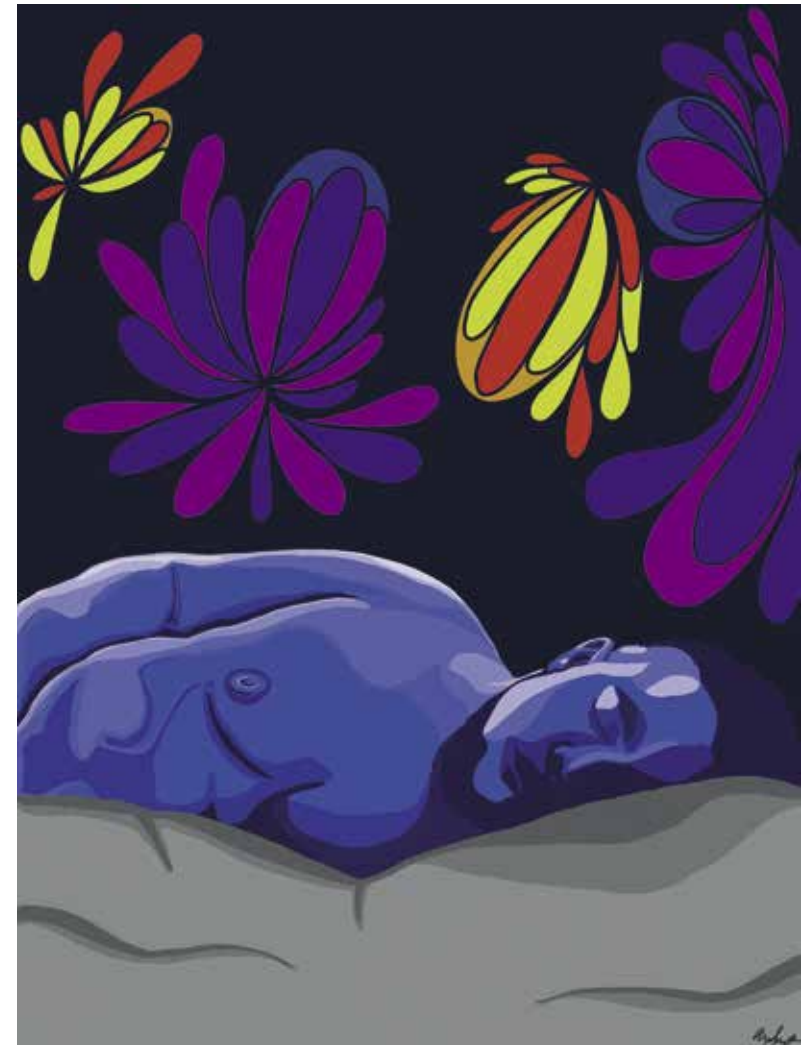
Now, older,
well-mannered and well-spoken,
I'm just like any other.
I roll my eyes,
I sigh, with impatience,
as my parents struggle
with my fast-flowing sentences
seamlessly spoken with the smug confidence
of an impostor.

What is now rich in ease,
was once thick with the feel of home.
My shadow of shame has, yet again, shifted,
from not knowing one tongue
to neglecting the other.
The native words
-anchoring my very being-
are now disjointedly drawn together,
and feel foreign in my mouth.

Ditzy

Anna Campbell

Russell Sage College



You, forevermore

Ayesha Khan

London Academy of
Excellence Tottenham

In the quiet chambers of her heart, she wept
in forlorn mourning, her sorrow kept.
Once entwined in love's gentle embrace,
she now faced a void, a desolate space.

Her sweet weakness, a beacon, a guiding light
had departed too soon for her to grasp.
Their love, a tapestry woven strong,
now unravelled, the threads all wrong.

Bleakness surrounded forevermore.

Each day dawned with a heaviness, profound.
Her words turned silent, without a sound.
Flooding through was a bittersweet wave,
recalling moments through the love they gave.

She traced his presence in empty halls,
his scent whistling gracefully
a whisper in the air,
his absence a burden she couldn't bear.

Exhaustion ignited forevermore.

Days blurred into a relentless stream.
Some days she wondered:
'If I had been the one,
would you have even cared at all?'

Grief, an ocean she learned to sail,
navigating its depths, amid the gale.

She sought refuge in cherished places,
seeking familiar faces
his belongings, a treasure on their own,
told a story no one could

Your eyes upon me, forevermore

As time marched on, a slow parade,
a complex blend of tears and smiles,
her journey had no clear end.

A woman resilient, though scars remain,
learnt to dance in the rhythm of her pain.

In Memory Of (letting go)

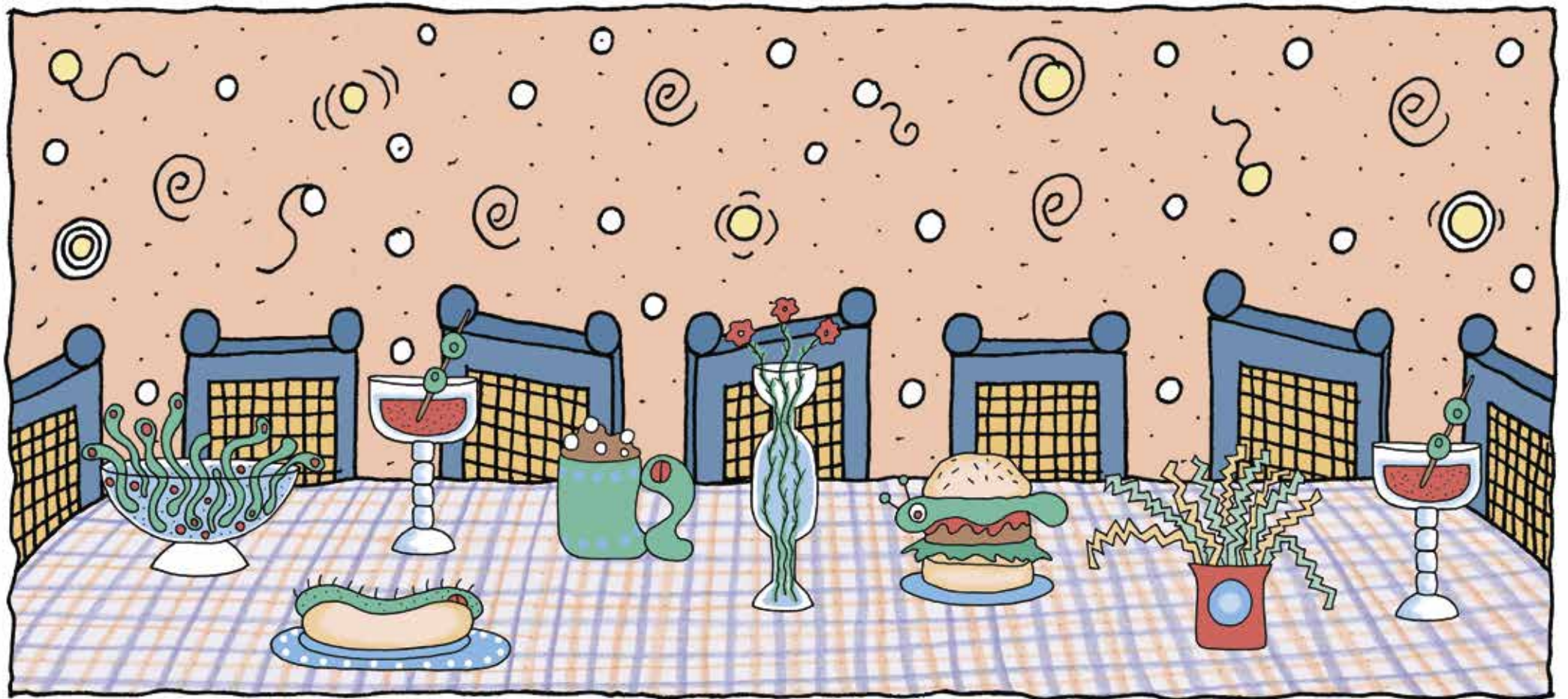
Ashley Busby

Russell Sage College



Alien Food Sampler

Laurel Petersen Russell Sage College



The Feeling in the Air

Neha Nair

London Academy of
Excellence Tottenham

The warm scent of tea and honey fills the air.
Flowers begin to erupt out of their bed,
exploding with all the colours the world must bear.
The bees begin their buzzing and the eyes of those allergic
begin to cry tears of itchy pain.
But it's never really been the same.
Your laughter fails to fill the air the way it used to,
erupting in the ways I was used to.
Now every time I hear your voice,
it is as bitter as coffee grinds.

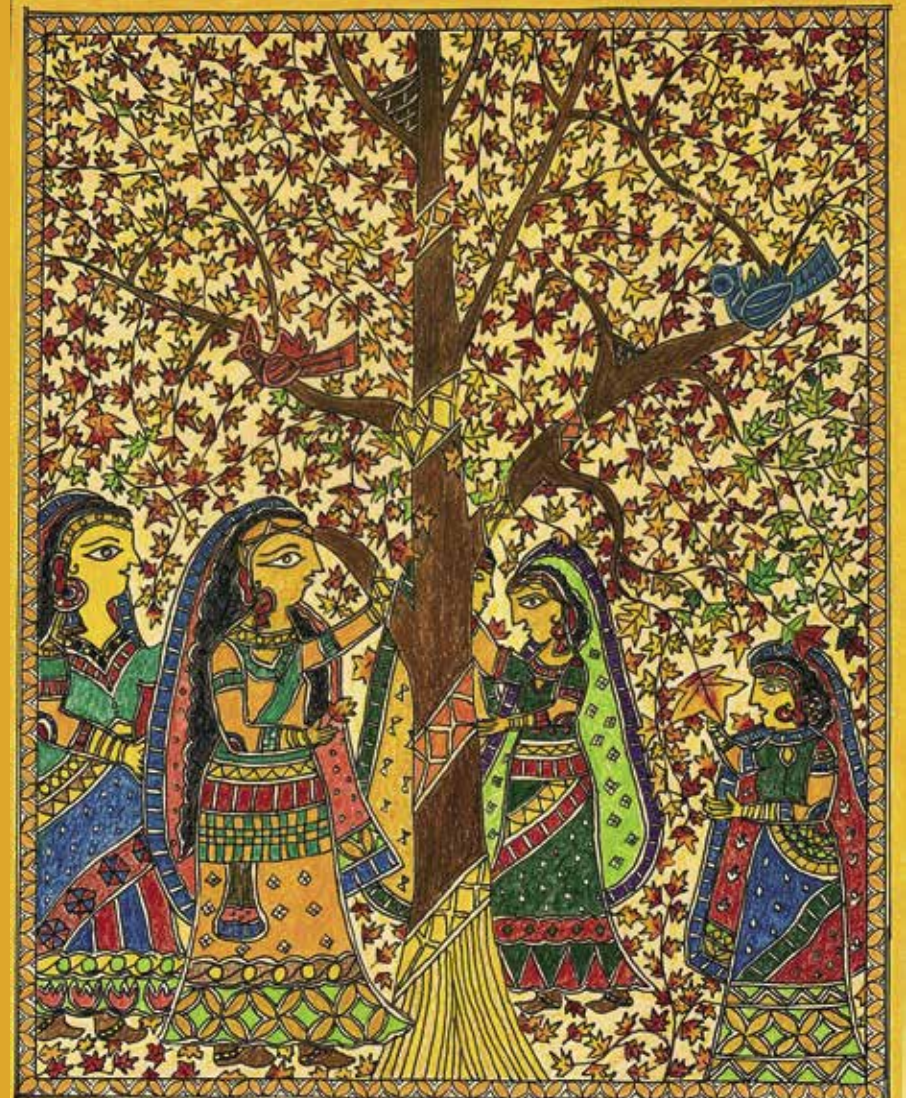
112

WRITING

Colors of Autumn

Soma De

Russell Sage College



SD 1.31.2021

113

ARTWORK

When Enough is Enough

Ashley Wei
International School
of Beijing

The small vineyard smelled of fresh rain, dewdrops glistening on the perfectly ripe grapes. Their leaves fluttered ever so slightly in the late, summer wind. Will Franks hustled around the vines, dark wine bottles clinking in his arms. Brigitte watched her husband from a distance, chuckling under her breath. Will was supposed to be retired, but that hadn't lasted long. After a career in the police force, he had set up a make-shift vineyard to relax his mind. The results of his labors had been so fruitful, that the community demanded to buy it. The result? A stressful retirement despite Brigitte's protests. That man wouldn't sit still! She smiled to herself, wiping a drop of sweat with her sleeve, and continued to prepare lunch.

Moments later, her reverie was interrupted.

"Is lunch ready? What is taking you so long?" Will sat down grimly at his usual spot at the top of the dining room table like an expectant king.

Brigitte sighed from the kitchen, thought here we go again and took the food to the dining room. He watched her as she positioned the plate in front of him, his face disturbed.

"This pork chop isn't even cooked all the way through." Will poked at the plate. "Anyways, I gotta go. Make sure dinner is cooked when I get back. I'll just buy something for lunch while I'm out." And with that, he left.

When the door swung shut, Brigitte sunk into her chair. Will was always coming and going for the wine. She had to admit, she

preferred the goings - they meant she didn't have to be party to his mood swings all the time. Her husband struggled to accept his ageing. That's what she told herself, anyway.

There were several dishes steaming hot on the table when her husband returned home that evening. Brigitte heard the lock open and hurried to the door.

"How did it go?" She breathed in the smoky smell of his leather jacket.

"Did you steam the fish I bought yesterday?" Will asked abruptly.

"Yes." Brigitte tucked his shoes under the cabinet. "Sit down, I've got something to ask you."

Will sank into his chair and lit a cigarette.

"I was at Josephine's this afternoon."

"Oh? Your useless little sister who never had kids?"

Brigitte took a slow breath. "Mother's Alzheimer's is getting more severe; Josephine does not have the capacity to provide the appropriate care. She has asked us to take her in now."



"Right, a retired nurse who hasn't recovered from her two knee surgeries can certainly take good care of a 90-year-old woman with dementia." Will exhaled, acrid smoke fuming out of his mouth. "I knew we couldn't trust your sister. Brigitte! There are a handful of nursing homes out there ready to take your mother in! Why us?"

Brigitte took a deep breath. "Let's leave this for another day." She lifted herself, bearing the pressure on her knees. Will stopped her. "No no, lemme make this clear. I don't want that crazy woman anywhere near me. Do you think that having a sick lunatic at our house will help with our already struggling social life?"

"She's losing her memory, Will! She'll not remember us soon! Besides, those nursing homes cost a fortune. We cannot afford that." Brigitte sat on the edge of her chair.

"Well, Josephine should be the one who's paying the bill. After all, we were the ones who gave your mother grandchildren and spent all our money raising two sons. We do not owe her anything."

The range hood above the stove hummed faintly and the meal sat on the table, cold, as Brigitte left for her room.

Later that night, Brigitte tip-toed out of their bedroom and headed towards the phone. She dialed the number in a hurry. Her sister picked up after three rings.

"Will said no."

"I knew it! That jerkhead. We need to talk about Will. I've kept quiet for years out of respect for you. I don't know how you've lived with him, but if I have had enough, surely you have too."

The clock ticked on the wall behind Brigitte.

"Listen, you gave him two sons. You gave your hard-earned nursing money to support his children. You cook for him every single day, and yet he treats you like a mouse."

"He's stressed." Brigitte sighed.

"If I were you, I would have left him the moment he gave me that side eye." Josephine's voice trembled. "Are you seriously going to spend the end of your life with him?"

It was grey and foggy as dragonflies soared above the mourner's heads. Through the crowd of relatives dressed in black, Brigitte's wet eyes landed on Will. He was off to the corner, still fuzzy after getting dead drunk from his wine the night before.

A month earlier, Will had rejected Josephine's request to take in their ill mother. In retrospect, perhaps he had realized it wouldn't have been such a big deal anyway. She hadn't lasted very long. Today was her funeral.

When Brigitte had received the call, she had worried: maybe mother wouldn't have died if we had taken her in... and as she sat in the front waiting to approach the podium for her eulogy, she couldn't help worrying about it further. A single tear slid down her wrinkled face.

Josephine suddenly placed her hand on Brigitte's shoulder. "She's watching down on us now with complete love, giving you the strength to do what you need to do."

Later, after Brigitte had finished her teary goodbye to her mother, she glanced in Will's direction again. She felt no worry when she strutted towards him. The guests had all left now, and so would not witness this second death.

"From now on," she told her soon-to-be ex-husband.

"You're making your own pork chops!"



The Yellow Wallpaper

Satya Groff **New Visions**



Artwork based on Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*.

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