

# haywire

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John-F.-Kennedy School in Berlin



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"Never forget what you are, for surely the world will not. Make it your strength."

-- George R. R. Martin, Game of Thrones

Identity. Who we are and what we stand for are not always under our control or something we can determine. Even moderate life changes, such as a friend leaving, a relative dying, changing schools, or moving to a new city, can shake our understanding of who we thought we were and unsettle the foundations of our self-confidence. After one of these changes does occur, people often tread along uncertainly, disoriented and feeling lost, not sure anymore of their own personality.

In the metaphorical rollercoaster of life, this kind of doubting and questioning of one's own character is definitely one of the lows of the ride, and in some cases spirals into a period of melancholy before understanding retakes the place of disorientation. Everyone has some kind of experience with this cycle, usually of course not to such an extreme magnitude, and some have to deal with it more often than others do.

JFKS students are often of the latter category. With some moving as frequently as every two years, the typical components that make up identity, such as nationality, home city, or culture, are jumbled and

mixed into a mess of confusion. What does home even mean if one has lived in three or four different countries? Or cultural identity? How does one's identity become a strength, as George R. R. Martin advocated, if it remains so obscure?

Some JFKS students have asked themselves exactly these kinds of questions. The short stories and vignettes (another form of a short story) they have written in response are featured in this issue of Haywire, as well as many creative stories about belonging and dystopias, poems about places, love, nature, and emotions. In addition to this, an exclusive review of American-Berliner-Chinese author Brittani Sonnenberg's visit to JFKS can also be found in this magazine, as the author herself has written a book, *Home Leave*, documenting the trans-

formations of identity someone who has grown up in six different countries is constrained to experience. Apart from that, feel free to enjoy the amazing works of art students have created in the past year.

After reading this issue, you too may be asking yourself who you are and what identity truly entails. What do you stand for? Who are you?

Who are we?  
We are Haywire.

# Vignettes



## Home

by Henry Brown, 10d

As a person who has lived in fourteen different countries, I should agree with the notion that I am at home wherever I am. But somewhere down the road of teenage thoughts, I realized that I do have a place I will always come back to. And as boring as it may sound, I am at home in New York. I don't mind the smell of heat emanating from the crowded subways, and I don't mind the people handing out useless flyers at every turn. I find the chaos soothing and the speed invigorating. Not that anything will

change for me. When I see a globe, I'll still see a door. That door might lead outside instead of inside, but it will be there all the same. No matter where that door leads, I know where I will come from. My home is my anchor. Not in a bad way; in an important way. It might not be necessary for everyone, but I know that I cannot be a nomad, always on the move and in search of a place to sleep. Home is security and happiness, and I think I might have found it.

# Place That Is The Place

by Marc Auf der Heyde, 10d

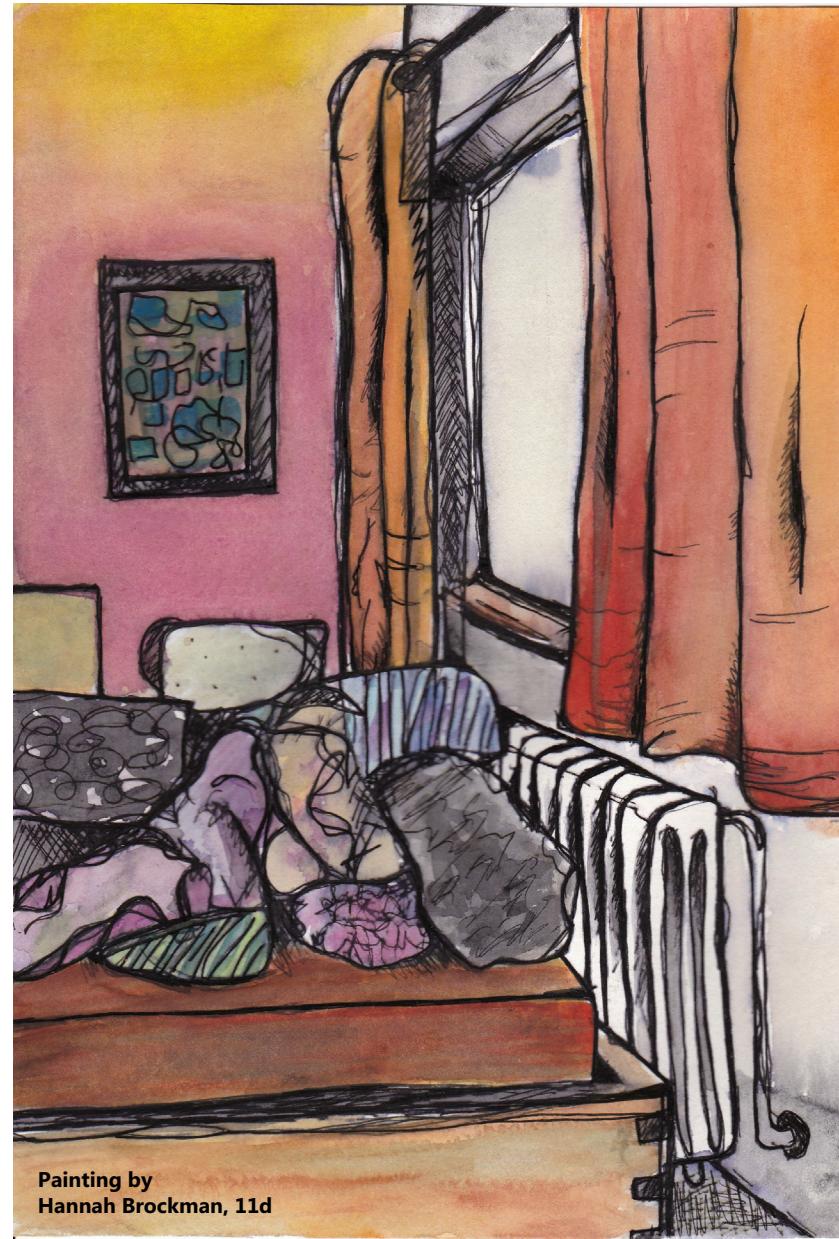
I like that place. You know that place, the one place of places where you can just be you and no one will bother you? Because it's your place -- the fresh linen pressed on your bed, the carpet smelling of only your scent. The kitchen alive with familiar beings. And it's your place, it's definitely your place. You know where everything goes, you know where the toilet is. You don't need to stop someone and ask like a lost child at an airport. You know where everything is and it knows you. It's like a safe haven, if

you're being chased, if you're being searched. You'd come to this place, I have no doubt whatsoever that you would come to this place. Because why wouldn't you? It's your place, it always has been your place. You lived there first, you knew it before anyone else. The walls know your secrets, the furniture knows your lies. The air stands still when you walk around it and the animals obey you, no matter what the size. Home. Home is the place of places of places.

## Little Machnow

by Anonymous

I have basically lived my entire life in the fresh and green, in Kleinmachnow. It has been a place where I have gathered all kinds of experiences that shape my life and my very essence. When it is spring, the trees blossom, the air smells like fresh water rushing through wind and the warmth feels like a comfy sleeve on my body. More and more people come out onto the streets in short clothes to reveal to the glowing, blazing sun. And there is my yellow house with the mellow orange roof. It sits back off the road with a small, colorful, fresh garden. My home is a haven in times when it is bad.



# Sometimes I Forget

by Madeleine Kelly, 10d

Sometimes I forget.  
I forget that all the people around me have lives.  
It sounds peculiar, but I'm sure you do too.  
I can think of a thousand things that are happening in my life, but in my neighbor's life... two?  
I forget that everyone has worries, and people who made them look forward to tomorrow.  
Or when someone hears my feelings, sometimes I hurt theirs too.  
I just forget.  
And I need to remember.



Painting by  
Lucie Lange, 11d



Painting by Zoe  
Matt-Williams, 10a

# Wake

by Henry Brown, 10d

I wake up and I am tired. pull out my clothes. I am I can hear my mother's being dragged through footsteps even though water by whatever part I shouldn't be awake. I of my body has the most am not awake. But I hear energy and I step out of her anyway. She opens the embrace of darkness the door and says Oscar into the hallway. My is taking the first show- mom is making my lunch er. My head drops like a and tells me to get in the rock back onto the pillow. shower. Like I am not al- My alarm rings again be- ready headed there. My cause I pushed the snooze body is one of the ener- button by accident. My gy-saving light bulbs that mother yells again and are four meters above my my brother comes out of head. I've almost woken his room without making up. I step into the shower a dent in my mind. I don't and welcome the heat. I know how much time wait for the water to soak has passed when I mo- my body and I fall asleep notonously sit up again, again. spurred by something I don't remember and reach for my drawers to

# Pools

by Marc Auf der Heyde, 10d

Do you know what really floats my boat, it's yours to keep and keep it you will. The feeling of particles, waltzing one by one, traveling through your hair like an invisible struggling entity. But it's just the water, you may think it's not spectacular just because it's water. But it's more and you know it, the scent of chlorine stings your nostrils, the taste of acid dances on your tongue. Dances and confuses you, you're not quite sure what it tastes like, it's like an eternal changing liquid and happiness. Water. It's just water really. Water floats my boat, water fills the pools.



Photograph by  
Malaya Takeda, 12d

# Football

by Anonymous

Football, as they call it in the US, soccer is the game that I love. It took over my heart since I was born. My father also played soccer when he was young and it's still his biggest passion. I will always remember these odd and wet days on the green field. No matter where - with friends in the neighborhood or at practice. I always have the most fun playing soccer. Sometimes I can't even wait one week until the next game with my team comes. Or what about the days in which I played 7-8 hours with my friends in the neighborhood and then I was going back home all wet and dirty, but most importantly happy. Football is what I live for.



**Painting by  
Violetta Jannes, 11d**

## Dreams

by Henry Brown, 10d

They have passed. You can't remember them. You might have understood what was happening to you as it was happening, but as soon as you wake up, your sense of surrealism leaves you and you ask yourself why you could have ever found that logical. Because your dreams take place in another dimension. No one knows how to reach that dimension, but it is there nonetheless. In this dimension, everything and everyone you know comes together to meld into a nonsensical, shapeshifting mass that, to your sleeping mind, makes perfect sense. People try to give it

all a meaning; they keep dream diaries and seek out psychics, but your visions are yours and only your subconscious can comprehend them. They are ink droplets in a glass of water. They are visible and can line up to form some kind of intriguing pattern, but if they are touched, they dissipate immediately through the fingers of the curious, rendering them incomprehensible as the glass is shaken more and more desperately. Slowly, the ink is absorbed into the water and no trace of it is left.



**Painting by  
Aline Mola, 11d**

## Tears

by Madeleine Kelly, 10d

I was in the car on the way to the airport. My granddad was driving. I was looking out of the window, seeing the pale blue sky that spreads all over this country in which I was born. As I pensively peered out of that frame of glass, I watched a dark blue Volkswagen drive by. Yet something about this car caught my attention. There was a young woman sitting in the front passenger seat crying.

Crying.

Almost desperately.

Almost gasping for air.

And then

she was gone.

This deeply saddened me, as I watched the little car speed away into the distance. Something in that lady's life was affecting her. Something touched her soul. Something made those tears roll down her cheeks and drop

one

by

one

onto her lap.

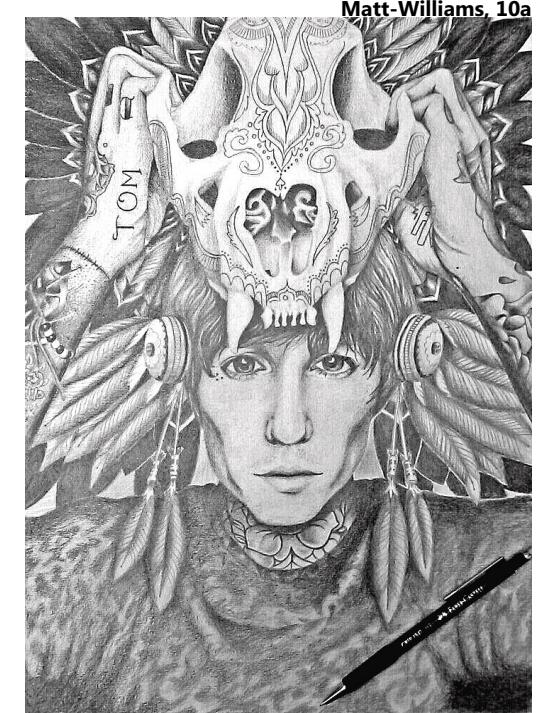
And I will never know what.

And I will never be able to comfort her.

## No New Messages

by Olivia Gallup, 10d

Wake up, turn on the soon and it's already dark, screen, oh, three new oh I hope those 14% last messages, huh, I better me the walk home, if my get ready though. Going mom calls and I can't pick to school without music? up I'm in trouble, I should Never. Time my step to have brought my char-the beat, wait did I bring ger, but wait a message. my charger? It'll survive Wow that really is pretty the day, I don't need it. funny... what why is the Check my feed, oh look, screen going - Nonono my it's a snapchat, better send phone went dark, like the one back. Now there was suffocating night around one thing I wanted to look me, what time is it even, up... Open my locker and would my parents call slip the phone into my now? I need a battery why bag, then dig it out again didn't I bring mine what before 6th period ends. All will I do if someone calls those pictures really took a me and I can't answer, toll, I'll have to watch the okay, fish out my keys battery closely. Friday lets and up these stairs, almost us out into freedom and there, okay I just have to precious weekend, let's plug it in now... Stare at get some snacks and go the phone, wait for the somewhere. My S-Bahn screen to light up... and... going homeward comes no new messages.



# Name

by "Anonymous"

Kreienbaum. It is a weird last name if you think about it. In German, "Kreien" doesn't really mean anything, but "Baum" means tree. Does that mean I am a tree with no leaves, a library with no books, a pen with no ink? Although it sounds like "Krähe", the german word for crows.

That makes it even worse. Crows darken the image of my name, it darkens the image and makes it worse. My tree which my own name defines, is alone in the

woods surrounded by loneliness.

Louis sounds happy, Louis sounds happier than all of that which Kreienbaum is. Maybe it's the three short vowels, that make the name flow off the tongue. Or maybe it's just because, it's French, and the french are known for their beautiful language. Louis, Kreienbaum. The clash of two complete opposites, one a tree, so naked and lonely, one so smooth as a clean and sharpened blade of beauty.

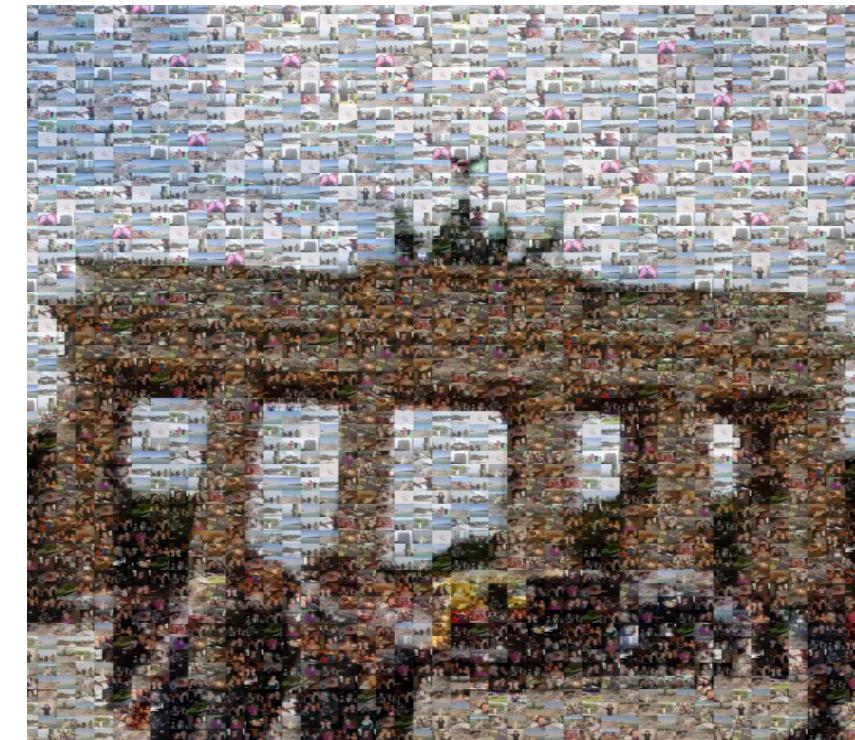


# Hair

by Tait Doeringer, 10d

I strongly detest my quill, stated my brother.  
It's ugly  
I could do nothing but agree  
It's unkept  
And greasy  
And looks like kelp right out of the sea  
Hisbola, my sister, had to be okayed  
never again, even if she was paid  
to touch his ever so awful hair  
Why doesn't he just cut it off?  
I will, he exclaimed  
So will I

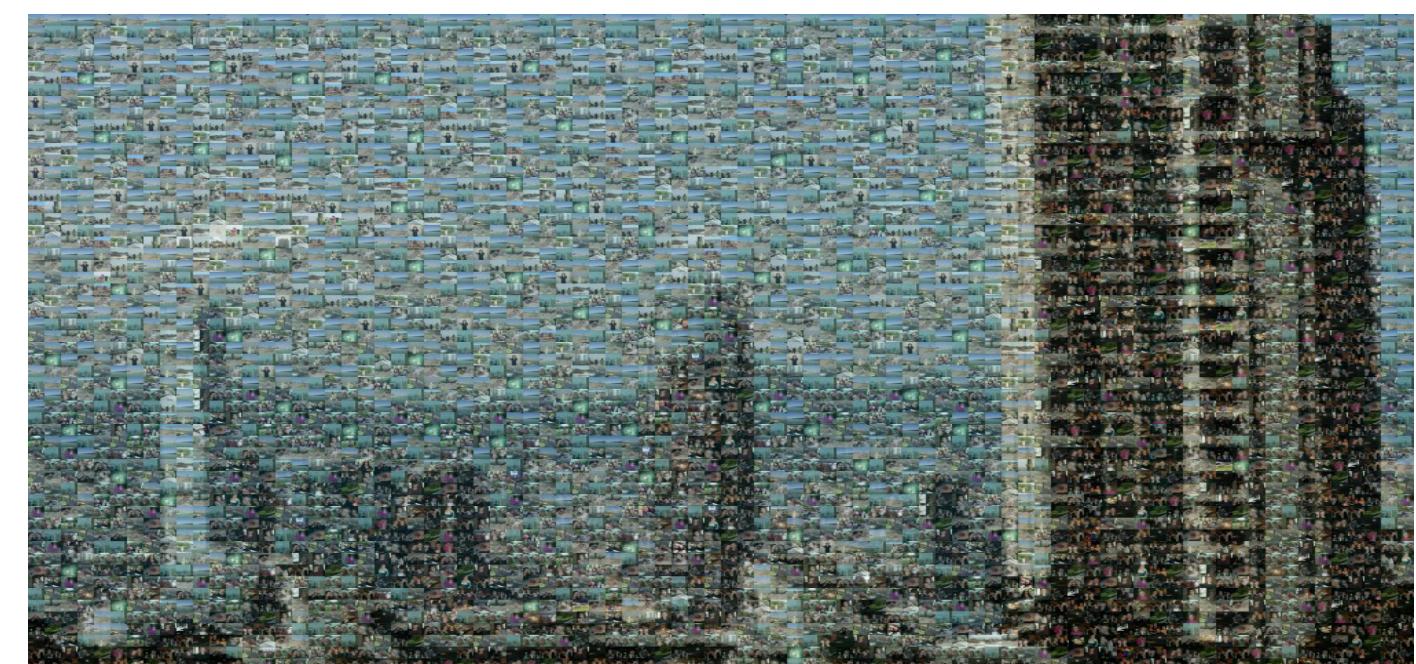
Not I, it's too oleaginous  
now stop making such a fuss  
He never uttered another word about his hair  
(maybe because it was no longer there)  
but that's okay. There are a million zillion  
other things to talk about. Our home, or the  
beautiful sky. All gray with illogic. It trips  
me up. And over. And off the balcony. As I  
fall, I remember to forget. Never again. Sky-  
gazing and rollerskating on a sixteenth floor  
apartment don't mix well.



# Imagine

by Tait Doeringer, 10d

Imagine. What a wonderful thing. And song. Imagine that there were no more clouds to fill up our sky. No more smog in the cities, no more grayness up high. Would people Never again get their fits of depression, always blaming it on the season? No or yes? I assume that they would find something else to despise, leafless trees, high rents, broomsticks or cowpies.



# Rude Manners & Tooth Clackers

by Lars Geers, 10d

Why do people chew with your mouths open? The view of little crumbs escaping. But they don't have any feet. Little armies of crumbles charging towards you. Some hopping, flying, and sliding. Slowly your body resists: the hairs on your arms grow in disgust. Step by step they come closer. The hairs are ready, ready for the moment. The mind asks if they will really attack: Yes, no, maybe so! Yes, no, maybe so! It becomes almost reflexive. But after the blink of an eye, the man with the elbow on the table, snatches the army and rinses them down the sink. Luckily... they were gone!

# POETRY

## The Us and the Other

By Zachary Mansell, 12d

The “in” and the “out”, the “us” and the “other”.  
 One’s outcries we heed, the other’s we smother.  
 One’s loss warrants sorrowful cries of despair,  
     While, of the others, many go unaware.  
     Many will convey, with stark sincerity,  
     “All lives’ worths are equal, them, us, you, and me”.  
 However, this notion must come into question  
 When foreign massacres meet mere pity upon suggestion.  
     Hollow voices ring out of their fate ill begotten  
     Till the next week, when they are naught but forgotten.  
     Thousands of the other must perish in a sea of



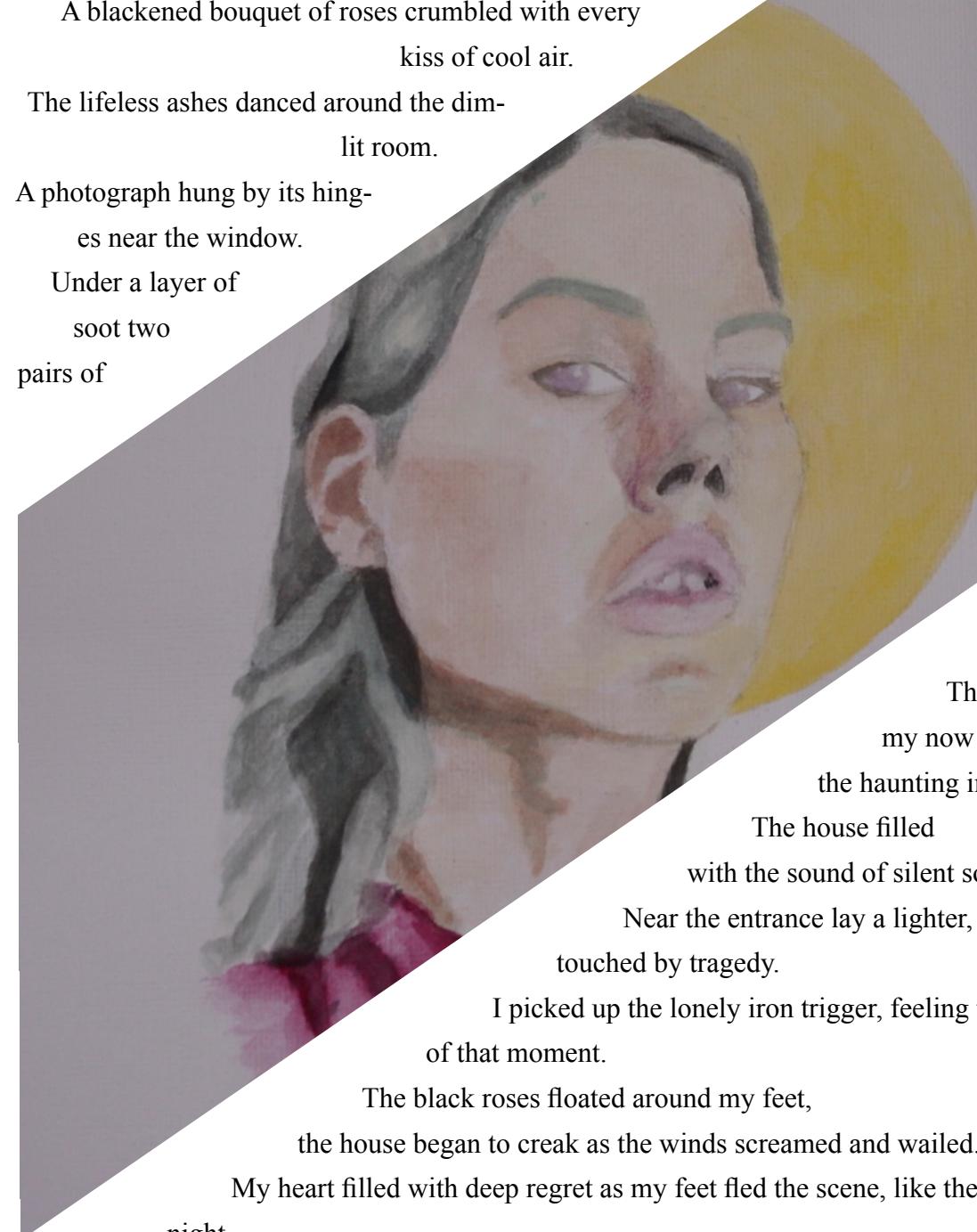
Drawing by Hannah Brockman, 11d

wasted potential  
 For it to be viewed as even remotely monumental.  
 Meanwhile, the deaths of our own leave all filled with zest  
 As the cries of those fallen resonate through the voice of the west.  
     A voice that booms at the loss of our own  
     And, of the other’s, merely whispers intone.  
     A voice that appears to be greatly askew  
     When the deaths of the many are outweighed by the few.

## Ashes

By Eva Maxwell, 12d

The bitter wind crept through the boarded-up window panes,  
     slithering through the ashes and charred glass.  
 The crunching sound of my footsteps filled the emptiness  
     with momentary awareness of life.  
     A blackened bouquet of roses crumbled with every  
     kiss of cool air.  
 The lifeless ashes danced around the dim-  
     lit room.  
     A photograph hung by its hing-  
     es near the window.  
     Under a layer of  
     soot two  
     pairs of



Painting by Violetta Jannes, 11d

familiar  
 eyes pierced  
 into mine.

The cold breeze nipped at  
 my now teary eyes reflected in  
 the haunting image.

The house filled  
 with the sound of silent sobbing.

Near the entrance lay a lighter, its metal body un-  
 touched by tragedy.

I picked up the lonely iron trigger, feeling the rage and impulse  
 of that moment.

The black roses floated around my feet,  
 the house began to creak as the winds screamed and wailed.

My heart filled with deep regret as my feet fled the scene, like they had that vengeful  
 night.

# Addicted to a Chain Smoker

Jacqueline Lucas

In spite of my racing mind,  
My stumbling tongue cannot navigate  
The pouring syllables so familiar from  
Tracing the insides of your mouth.  
My lips will never perfectly surround  
Those tumbling words and cylinder of disease,  
In the same elegant permanence,  
That you so naturally achieve.  
Never will my raw fingers tuck tighter,  
My forgetful tongue touch more sensually,  
My shallow breath and unskilled hands  
pull with such vigor  
As your ruthlessly efficient youth will.  
But never will your words dance across  
This blank page, weaving a smoky scene  
Of obsession, as mine master with ease.  
Never will your thoughts stream so fast  
In a river of desperation and tension  
Birthing a brutal current that leads my throbbing army  
Of thoughts to your doorstep.  
I am a poet in everything I do,  
And what are you? A chain smoker.  
A chain smoker who has hooked me,  
As your addiction has hooked you.

Photograph by  
Henry Brown, 10d



# Fall Into me, Please Fall Into me

by Anonymous

There are some things that people, humans, us homo sapiens, simply cannot explain, or give explanation to, no matter what logic or sense may support our reasoning. There is no explanation for some things, like why some socks get lost in the washing, or why there are people on this fine green earth who find pleasure in hurting others. All that kind of stuff, scary shit that we try to avoid.

There is no science, there is no evidence. And that's why it scares us, it is human nature to want to understand everything, to give a label to everything. And when we can't, we freak out, we realize that some things are meant to stay hidden from our sight, some things are supposed to remain unexplored and un-tampered with. Some things should stay in their Pandora's box and hope to god that they never escape.

But then they do escape, just sometimes but when they escape then everything comes crashing down. Like love, the greatest mystery since life even came to be. We can't explain it, we don't know why we're supposed to feel it, we only know that love is something inevitable that anyone can feel and not feel, it is something that surrounds us whether we like it or not. It is something that gnaws at the core of our soul, it is something that simulates the instinct of survival, the need to reproduce, the thrive of bringing life into the world. Yeah, that's



Photograph by  
Henry Brown, 10d

true, that's all good and dandy but what does it mean to fall in love with somebody? Not to love somebody, but to actually fall in love with them? And don't tell me there isn't a difference, don't tell me that you're in love with your mother and you're in love with your father. Because you're not, trust me. That would be weird, you don't want to be in love with your parents.

When you love someone, you love them, you feel very strongly about them and you'd probably do a lot for them. I love my mother and I love my father. But, just as well I also love my rabbit and my friends. Well, my rabbit is my friend but that's not the point. When you're in love with somebody, all other feelings you have become unimportant, all other responsibilities you have, disappear in the blink of an eye. That person is the only person, that person is whom you have fallen into. You have become them and your world slowly starts to wither, colors seem darker as they seem brighter, shapes seem to be part of a higher dimension and all your thoughts are directed to that one person. You feel love as a source of energy, you feel true love, only for that person.

She is real. She has always been real. And yes, yes you're right, I'm still in love with her.

# A Soldier's Elegy

by Avery Swarthout, 11d

A kestrel dips into an updraft  
thinking he knows the world  
tranquility gurgles  
through silent valleys,  
over mountains,  
around the earth,  
refracted,  
through the wind.

The creature soars ever higher  
in great swoops and dives.  
the horizon curves as it eludes vision.  
the stars pulse their siren  
but thrill denies,  
adrenaline overrules  
their ambient warning.



Painting by Olivia Albrecht, 12d

Gust to gust each fades  
quicker than the last  
whispers carry the weight of wings  
and their soulful song breaches sanity  
prayers of rightful good  
where petty purple banners  
crest twinkling hearts.

The last thermal ridden,  
last lyric dies,  
as flight's drone fades  
upturned wings alone  
the sky empty oblivion  
as the sun aligns its beady eye  
to the looping path of the bird.

Two brittle forms  
grapple in light  
which blots out the senses  
and protects  
what can never be touched.  
divine oblivion  
smites the naive bird  
an archangel buried  
in a crypt  
six feet deep.

# Which is to Say

by Emma Defty, 10c

You are my rock.  
You are my anchor.  
You are my North-Star.  
You are my mirror.  
You are the wind in my sails.  
rip the already taut fabric.

You are my friend.

You are the boulder my waves break on.  
You are the weight holding me down.  
You are the spotlight following me as I stumble across stage.  
You make sure I don't miss the very worst parts of me.  
The inhibitions you replaced my drive with threaten to

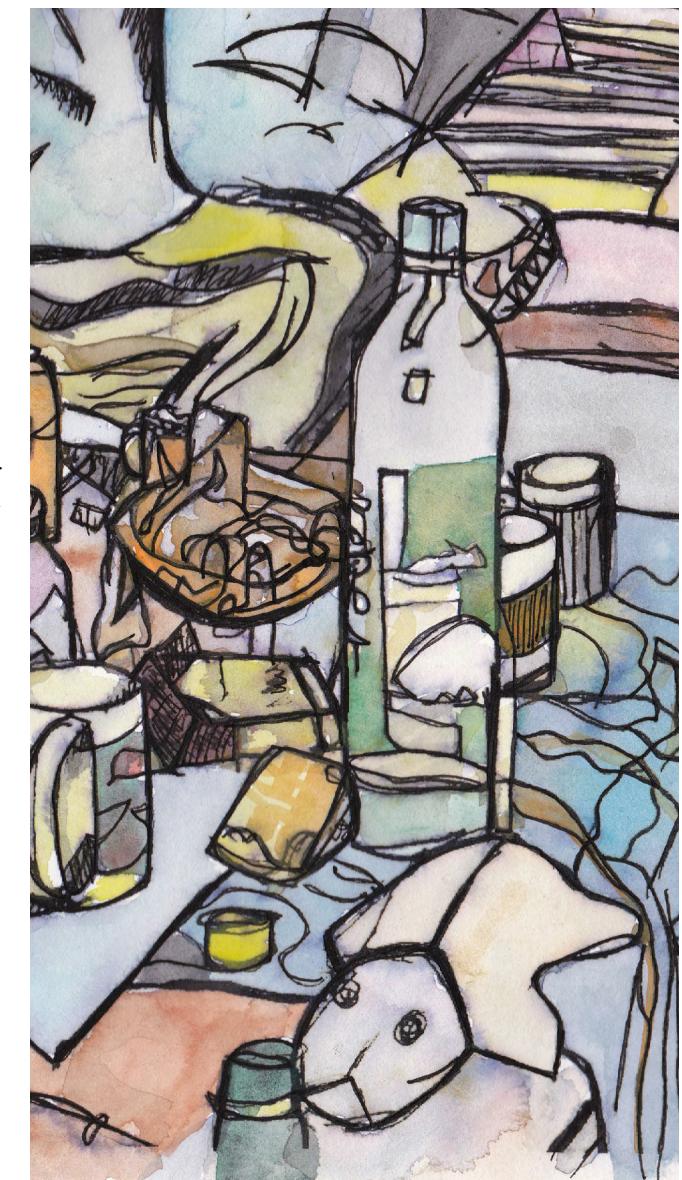
Please. You are my friend.  
But sometimes I can't remember why.

# Luminescence

by Anonymous

If my brightness blinds you,  
know that it isn't my own.  
Know that it's the light of brilliant stars,  
shining right through me.  
Know that you aren't looking at a sun,  
but a moon, illuminated by those who surround me.  
Know that the fire within me burns,  
only because someone bothered to strike a match.  
Know that my sky wouldn't make you look up,  
without each diamond, refusing to not twinkle inside it.  
Know that a lake's glitter at sunrise, is as much its own  
achievement,  
as the sparkle of my heart is mine.  
Know that my city lights up at night,  
because of the lanterns that do not go out until dawn.  
Know that my brightness isn't my own.  
But Understand,  
that the fact that it isn't,  
Doesn't make  
my moon any smaller,  
my fire any colder,  
my stars any duller,  
my lake less beautiful,  
or my city dark at night.  
Understand , that just because it isn't mine,  
doesn't mean that it isn't mine,  
To share.

Drawing by Hannah Brockman, 11d



# Hiding in Sight

by Hélène Day, 12d

One morning in a shadowed room,  
Their biting words assault my wispy state.  
As cloying fear fills the air,  
My shadow flesh goes rigid.  
Their barbed, piercing statements,  
Blow festering holes through my facade.  
As their inquisitions reach my ears, I wonder.  
Do they know?  
Fear, anxiety, betrayal, threatens to expose me.

When the bell sounds I flee slowly.  
A terrified disposition,  
Wears the same mask as illness.  
They can't know.  
Heat blistered asphalt, a facade of sand,  
My name on the door.  
When I reach safety, my facade fades,  
But the weeping holes remain.  
It is the price I'm forced to pay.



# Now

By Eli Goodman, 8f

The animal  
constantly evolving  
changing  
taking its prey by surprise  
tricking it into thinking they've seen a certain pattern before  
and then everything comes falling down  
and the tension builds...

release

and everything only exists for the ecstasy of this moment  
for this feeling  
pulsing on at the same rhythm  
and nothing else matters  
just the rhythm  
the changes  
the bends and twist of the fabric  
this animal of constant movement  
this joyous existence  
without the pressures of what's  
around us  
the pressures  
that we are immune to  
covered by this blanket of emotion  
until we peek over the covers  
and there it is  
that's when we remember  
the strings held so tight by our feelings of the moment  
loosen  
and the fabric  
stops  
and we  
stop  
and everything seeps through the holes  
the soons  
the laters  
the life  
that keeps on going  
past now  
and we lose now  
and we get soon

Drawing by Amalia Shipman-Mueller, 11d

# December 7th 1996 and March 10th 1998

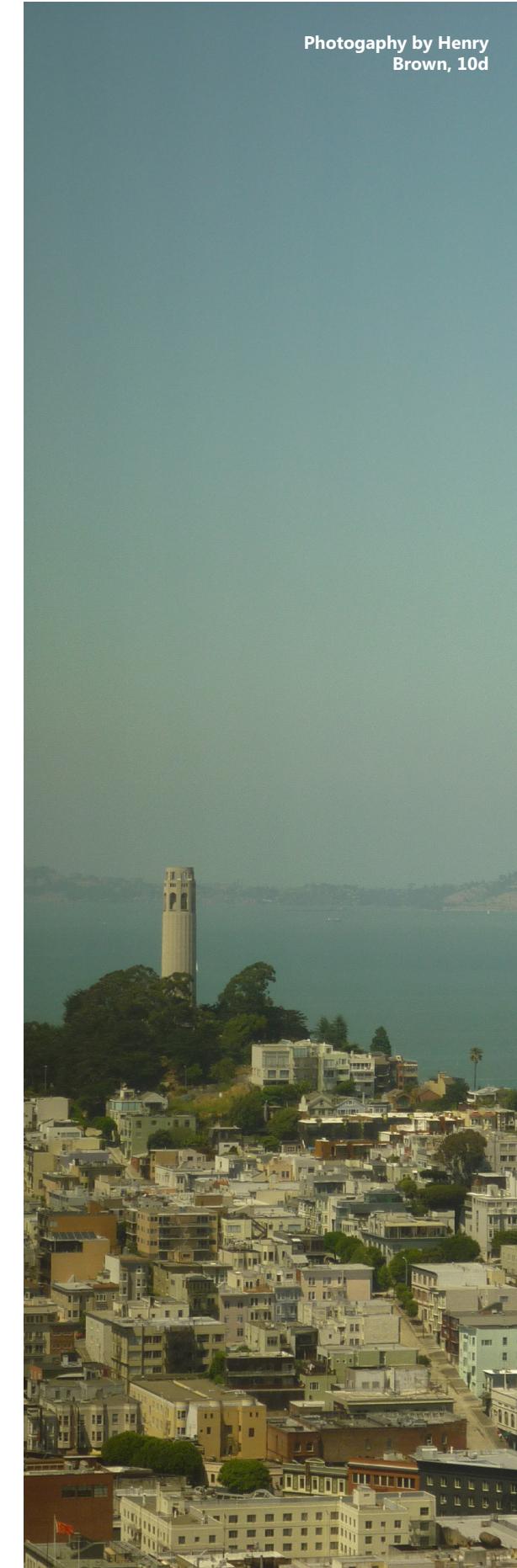
By Anonymous

A salty sea breeze kisses my skin,  
As the Florida sun yawns and buries itself  
Behind the eminent horizon.  
  
A cheap beer in one hand and the other  
Occupied with enveloping my fingers  
In an embrace ever so constant.

Years and oceans failed to separate.  
Since day one, streets of Prague  
The sun of our parent's smiles  
Beaming down on our tiny faces and  
Tiny entwined fingers, those same fingers  
That you hold now in your calloused grip.

A burst of impenetrable energy tries to escape  
My industrious mouth as I force  
Every fleeting experience I've encountered in my 17 years  
Into one bellowing scream  
But it flees as I utter meekly  
“I love you big brother”

Maryland, New York, Utah, Colorado,  
Prague, London, Tuscany, Berlin.  
They're all my home,  
Because home is wherever I'm with you.



Photography by Henry Brown, 10d

# Disillusioned Pantom

By Elsa Kienberger, 12d

“Going back home,” I say  
While I hum my childhood tune.  
After learning a new truth.

While I hum my childhood tune  
I am transported to the unalterable past.  
After learning a new truth  
Sometimes I lose the melody.

I am transported to the unalterable past.  
Singing faith and happy endings  
Sometimes I lose the melody.  
“Going back home,” I say.

# Lips and Hair

By Marc Auf der Heyde, 10d

Lips and hair, so definite and fair.

There's one thing, I've picked it up,  
It's the epiphany, my realization.  
Like the freedom birds can hope to enjoy,  
The sweet honeyed fruits of an endless nation.

The feeling, of two rivers meeting,  
Two clouds becoming just as one,  
An endless carousel, a freakish circus,  
Being blinded by the sharps of the sun.

The feeling of fresh tar laid down,  
Black and bitter to scorch your skin,  
You can't resist to test what it would feel like,  
The feeling of being, the other twin.

It pleasures as it does defeat,  
With every poison strand you take,  
You want it to last, you want it to stop,  
But whose heart will end up in aches?



# Short Stories

## Momentor

by Emily Dills, 9f

Intense anticipation and excitement had fallen upon our school again, just like it did every year in the month of June when the school year fizzled to an end. The speck of freedom and hope, fogged over on the horizon throughout the school year, had become the present. Summer break was almost upon us.

"Hey, June!" Had he really said my name? My name? He motioned for me to come talk to him. Ricky knew I existed. I silently got up and moved over to him. Why wasn't I nervous? How were my legs not jello? I should be nervous when the hottest guy in school wants to have a chat. I have a crush on this guy. Why'm I not nervous? "What's up?"

"D'you wanna sign my yearbook, June?" He showed me a page full of girls' names and scribbles of admiration. Did he like me a lot? He hadn't seemed to notice me all year. But then why sign his yearbook? We'd talked, what, three, maybe four times all year? And now we were friends. What? I didn't get it.

But I had already picked up the uncapped pen. My hand quivered over the page, searching for a blank spot. I didn't know what to add to all the colors and x's and o's. "You're the best! Love you so much! Let's hang out! xoxo June"? I didn't think that was very appropriate, since I really had no clue about him. Then again, it was a yearbook. Whatever that means. Probably not so much.

I think knowing that I wouldn't have to deal with my reputation next year made me speak: "Why do you want me

to sign this? We're not even friends."

"Okay." Ricky shrugged and walked away. He'd taken the yearbook but left the still-uncapped pen. I watched him do his weird, nonsensical handshake-thing with his buddies. Were they his buddies? I felt a pang of regret for having blown my one chance of getting closer to him. Why did I like him? He was a jock. A football-basketball-baseball player, depending on the season. As was his series of shallow girlfriends. I saw Ricky laugh about something. He stood barely a couple of yards from me, but he seemed miles away, in some other galaxy. And suddenly I felt again why I was so attracted to him.

My head didn't understand, but my body must have. Their world was so sunny. What if I realized, when I was old and gray, that I'd never gotten to be part of that galaxy, never really understood them?

Drawing by Pauline Grabski, 11d



My life would be so—

"June, what's up?" My best friend Destiny interrupted my train of thought. "Come on!" Slowly I returned to the last day of school. I hurried to catch up to my friends. In a way, I loved summer break. I absolutely loved that feeling of freedom. It was warm. You sucked on popsicles, went to the beach. Everyone just sort of drifted around. Some people might leave town for a while. Some classmates might happen to be hanging out just down your street. That's just it. I never knew what to expect. There were no rules, there was no schedule to summer vacation. Everything was left to chance, it seems. Or was it? I've never real-

ly known and it has always made me slightly uncomfortable.

This summer was going to be my last here. My family was going to move in a few weeks, just in time for the new school year. I wasn't psyched to uproot, which made these last summer weeks at home especially valuable. Shady and cool woods fringed our town. They were pretty close to my house. It had been the usual place to play and hang out with my friends when I was younger. Now that we were in middle school, we didn't come as regularly anymore, but every time we did, I absolutely loved it.

Today we were playing hide-and-seek. The smell of pine and earth and sticky sap in the breeze and sunshine engulfed us. "June, over here," Destiny whispered from behind a particularly thick, nearby tree. We squatted down among some bushes. All of a sudden Destiny leapt out from our hiding place and ran, darting from tree to tree. I followed, stumbling over roots and uneven ground. "This is perfect," she said, "They'll never find us here."

Whenever we played hide-and-seek these days, it became all competitive and the mechanics of it were such a big deal. A twig snapped behind me. I spun around. Through the thick trees a cottage was faintly visible in the distance. I'd never noticed it before. For some obscure reason it completely captured my interest.

I turned to Destiny: "You go, I'll catch up later. I'll meet you for pizza."

She tilted her head and looked at me weirdly. "Okay." She took off shrieking because someone had caught sight of and was chasing her.

As soon as the girls were out of sight, I resumed studying the cottage. I don't know why it captivated me so much. Slowly I approached it.

It looked weathered but sturdily built. The garden patch surrounding it was wild yet pretty, a variety of colors and flowers speckling the wavy and unevenly cut grass. The elegantly curved blade of a long and weathered



Drawing by Amalia Shipman-Mueller, 12d

oar leaned against the side of the house.

I knocked on the wooden door. An old, foreign-looking lady stepped out onto the porch. A heavy necklace lay on her chest and her long, gray hair was tied into a simple knot at the back of her head. Her accent was thick: "You have to let the moment seize you. To feel the present." She lingered on vowels and rolled her r's at the back of her throat. "You get caught up in the future, June. You worry about how your life will have been when you're old. You're not living it." "I might live it wrong, though," I explained, "I need to be sure that I'm not going to regret anything later."

She got really irritated all of a sudden: "No! You are wrong. There is no right way, you cannot control experiences!" Mrs. Meesora inhaled deeply and leaned back in her old chair.

She closed her eyes and smiled, as if savoring a beautiful moment of the past: "Imagine a rower in her rowing shell. Do you know how she is positioned?"

I shook my head. "Backwards. The rower moves with her back facing forward."

I'd visited Mrs. Meesora a couple times already and I loved talking to her and listening to her vivid stories. I never told Destiny what I'd found that day. Mrs. Meesora's thoughts always haunted me when I lay wide awake at night, breathing the cool and silent air, unable to go to sleep. That day, she'd also suggested that I go find Ricky. I don't know why I trusted her so deeply. I felt like she was a close and important friend whom I could have bonded with a long time ago. I exhaled. I guessed I would just have to go downtown tomorrow and hope to run into him.

There he was. Right behind me. I hadn't seen him walk in. I'd been distracted by the extraordinary kinds of candy

the shop I was in sold. I knew I had to act know. I recalled all the advice Mrs. Meesora had given me in the past few weeks. "Let go," I mumbled to myself. I unclenched my nervous and sweaty fists. I loosened my legs, making sure my knees weren't locked. "Let go. Lose control. Just let it all go," I murmured again.

"Hey, Ricky." He turned to face me. "Hey, can I still sign your yearbook? Please?" The words tumbled out before I could stop them. It occurred to me that that was a good thing. Mrs. Meesora would be proud of me. I smiled. "I was preoccupied in school, but I'd really like to now," I explained. My legs quivered. They felt like jello.

"Sure." He shrugged. "It's at my house." He looked down at his hands, as if making sure. I followed him out of the candy shop, jabbering about anything that came to mind. Ricky interrupted: "Why are you following me? Stop following me. God, you are so weird."

I stopped walking, my mouth slightly open. Ricky left, crossing the street. I was so confused. I didn't have a clue about what had just happened. What had just happened? It slowly occurred to me. I hadn't been aware of myself at all. Is that what being in the moment felt like? I'd been in the moment. Now I was sure that I'd been in the moment.

"I was in the moment!" I yelled, jumping into the air for joy.

During my last humid, lib-

erating week of summer break, Mrs. Meesora decided to move away. She wanted to take me out for breakfast before she left, though. I found it funny how both she and I were going to be leaving soon, but we were headed in such different directions, it would be impossible to visit regularly.

As the waitress brought a steaming plate of eggs and bacon to our table, a very warm and reassuring feeling suddenly came over me, making me clutch my stomach and laugh. I felt strangely safe. We were heading in the right directions. I recalled the last day of the school year... hide-and-seek in the woods... the candy shop... Ricky. Summer had passed. It was past. Not present anymore. I looked up at Mrs. Meesora and our eyes met. I realized that she had been watching me. "Mrs. Meesora, I think I'm gonna get Ricky to sign my yearbook."

Photograph by Kailey Sun Marcus, 10e



Photograph by Henry Brown, 10d

## Mockingbird in the Rye

by Madeleine Kelly, 10d

Marcie woke with a start. Panic spread from her fingers to her toes. She trembled. "It was just a dream. It's not real," she told herself. She looked out of the window to see the flickers of orange lights coming from the north, the east, and the west. "It's okay. All factions are at peace." She slowly closed her eyes again, and let sleep take over her body.

It was the year 2251. Since the Great Technology War, society had been split up into four groups, each following morals of one novel. There was the To Kill A Mockingbird faction, the Catcher in the Rye faction, the Secret Garden faction and the Much Ado About Nothing faction. Each faction followed the example of one character of major importance in their novel, an idol they modelled themselves after. Each faction had a "Merisa" which the civilians could visit in order to reconnect with their morals.

Before the Great Technology War, older generations would have called this place a church, where they would worship God. Yet God had vanished and in his place stood these four almighty characters.

Marcie had been born into the To Kill A Mockingbird faction. Her parents were both high-ranking lawyers and they were a very respected family. Marcie had fair skin and long, dark brown, straight hair which was always in a ponytail. Her big hazel eyes

watched the world with fascination, trying to gather magic from each day.

Colden was Marcie's brother, and was two years younger than her. He never quite fit into society, and leaned on the belief that almost all factions, and especially the To Kill A Mockingbirders, were inauthentic.

The members of their faction lived by the teachings of Atticus, speaking in truth and standing up for what is right.

Every day, Marcie visited the Merisa. There, she would sit and open the great work by Harper Lee and skim each page for some sound advice from Atticus. Although she was surrounded by people who pointed her to the teachings of Atticus, Marcie sometimes found it difficult constantly to be what society wanted her to be. It was not that she did not believe in justice and patience and kindness, she just sensed that she was meant to be something else.

It had been a tough night. They came now and again. Marcie would have these nightmares about something horrendous happening to their peaceful world. A feeling of loss encircled her, yet nothing was wrong. Her world was exactly the same as it was this time last week,

month, last year. But she still could not shake the feeling.

On the way to school Marcie decided not to let the past night get to her. School was located in the center of the factions, each faction connected to it by a tunnel. Marcie enjoyed having internovular lessons, and learning first-hand about the folk in the other factions. As wise Atticus once said, "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view [...] until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."

Marcie tried to live by this teaching each day of her life, yet found it hard to feel compassion with certain people from "Catcher in the Rye". Students from the other factions

were most pleasant. They were wise and true, with knowledgeable backgrounds. Much Ado About Nothings were astonishingly wise, and always wanting the best, yet with a hint of slyness. The Secret Gardeners were full of curiosity, but with an open and fresh mind. Adventures were one of their favourite pastimes.

School went by quite quickly and Marcie was just heading to her locker when a loud, piercing siren shrilled overhead. It was all Marcie could hear. Everyone was running and screaming. "The alarm", thought Marcie. Panic swept her away, and soon all she could hear was the voice in her head repeat-

ing, "alarm, alarm, alarm". She hurried home like everyone else, praying to Atticus that it was no one from her faction that had escaped. Running into her house, she found her parents with perturbed expressions on their faces. "Where's Colden?", asked Marcie. They did not reply. "Where is Colden?", she asked again, shouting this time. "Colden. Well. Colden has left,"



Photograph by Anonymous

answered her father. "He never reported to his Merisa appointment this afternoon. When the officials could not locate him anywhere, they signalled the alarm," stuttered her mother. Tears filled Marcie's eyes. Tears that were too forceful to keep hidden behind her blank expression. "Colden, gone? But where? Why why why?" she thought. "And where?". Although Marcie may have not always felt like she completely belonged in the faction she was born into, at no time in her life would she have thought about leaving.

That night the nightmare came again, but when Marcie woke her-

self up, during the time in which she usually would comfort herself she realised that her nightmare had become reality. Emotions swished through her. Hate, compassion, confusion, empathy, anger. Why didn't Colden tell her of his plans? She felt so lost.

The next morning, a meeting was called for Marcie and her family. They entered into a long room with a narrow wooden table stretching down the centre.

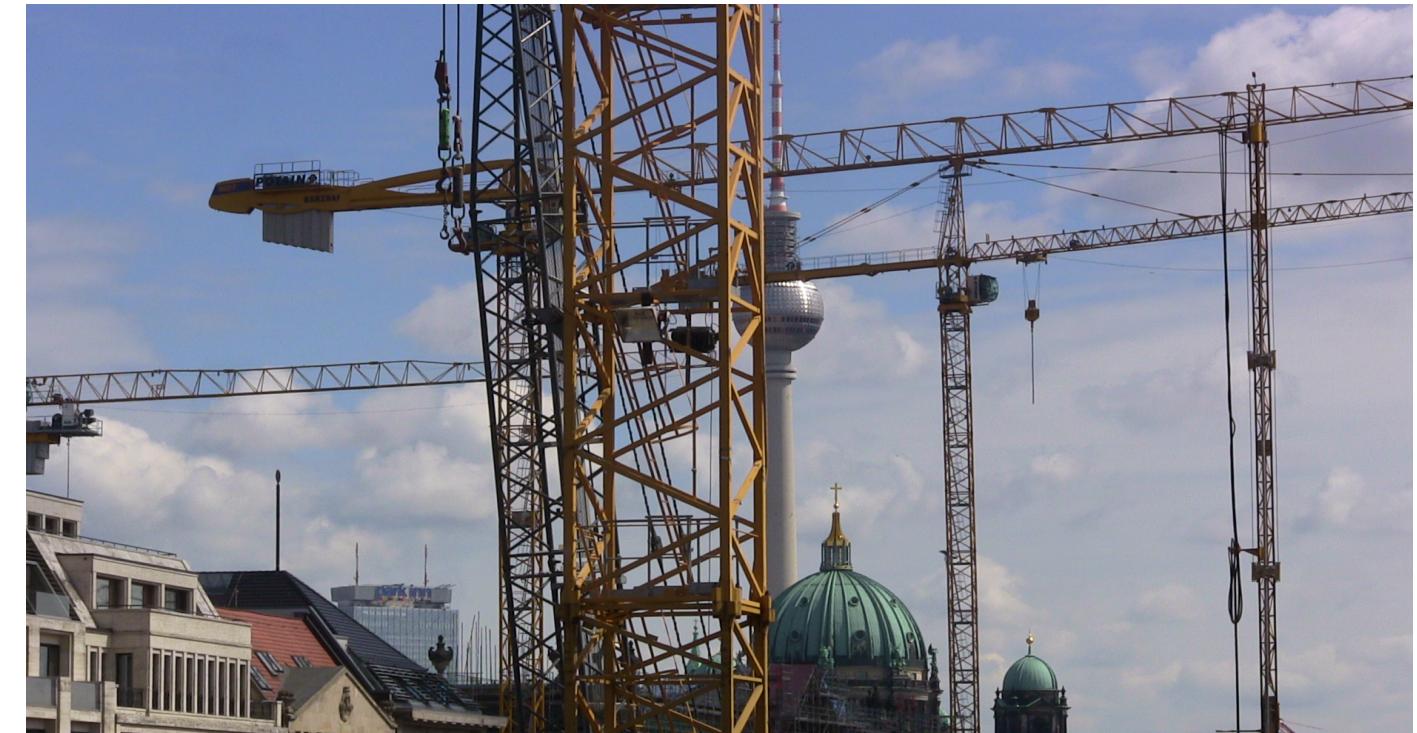
Two internovular officials sat at one end of the dim room. Marcie and her parents took seats across from them. "We regret to inform you that Colden has left your faction to join that of The Catcher

in the Rye. You have 48 hours to bring your son back or he will be put to death." That night, the To Kill a Mockingbird community gathered together to discuss how they should convince Colden to come back. It was decided that this should happen through reasoning with him. A hearing would take place the next day, and Colden's father would explain to him why he should return back to the faction that raised him.

Later, Marcie and her mother sat down for dinner. "Where's dad?", enquired Marcie. "He will be working late tonight. He's using every fiber in his being to try

to help Colden view this from our perspective. You know how much we love and care for your brother, and we miss him terribly. We need him here with us, at home," her mum replied. "It's funny isn't it, little Marcie, we can believe so strongly that our way of life nowadays is the leading and correct one. Yet when it comes to trying to fix a broken pot with glue, sometimes it just makes a bigger mess. I love our society, and love the factions dearly, but

wearing a hunting hat. "Colden," thought Marcie. She was relieved to see him there. At promptly 10a.m., an internovular official opened the hearing. Marcie could tell that her dad was nervous. "No wonder", she contemplated, "he has the future of his son's life in his hands, or rather, in his words." The lawyer walked to the front of the room, took off his watch, and laid it calmly beside him. Then he turned to Colden and speaking loudly and clearly, began, "Gentlemen, I shall be brief,



Photograph by Henry Brown, 10d

I value family and truth above that, and when the life of my son is jeopardised because of this, it becomes worthless. The truth that everyone tries to hide within these factions is that we cannot live peacefully amongst one another. Everyone has different morals, but you can't dictate people's beliefs. Some of us are made to wander. It's part of being human."

Marcie fell asleep that night thinking of her mother's words. "Maybe she is right. Maybe you can't constrain people." Marcie fell asleep thinking about a world of freedom. Where one could believe what one wished.

Marcie woke up nervous. It was the day of the hearing. Today, the fate of her brother would be decided. She entered a crowded court room. Near the front sat her father, and opposite him sat a boy

but I would like to use my time with you to remind you that the case of Colden is not a difficult one. To begin with, this case should have never come to trial. This case is as simple as black and white. It requires no minute sifting of complicated facts, but it does require you to be sure beyond all reasonable doubt as to the guilt of the defendant. Colden did something that in our society is unspeakable: he attempted to leave his faction. The defendant is not guilty, yet this courtroom is. I have nothing but pity in my heart for this present day state, but my pity does not extend so far as to put a man's life at stake. After the Great Technology War the generations before us realized that man could not live peacefully with each other. There were too many distractions, too many different beliefs. So they proposed a system which they believed would solve everything, namely dividing the population into sections based on

morals. Everything goes well until an individual like you, Colden, gets confused and tries to leave the faction which he is born into. It is only here that we realize how out of hand this society is..."

Suddenly Colden lets out a whimper and sprints out of the courtroom. Marcie races after him. He's running. Running fast. Marcie can barely catch up. He runs out of the justice hall, out into the open air, and keeps going. He runs through the gates surrounding their enclosure. Marcie stops. Should she run after him, and defy all the rules of her faction? "To Kill A Mockingbirders are not curious", she remembers. "But family over faction", and runs out. By this time Colden has quite the head-start. Marcie can tell he is heading to the rye field. She runs faster, she must not lose him in the field. "Colden! Wait! Stop! I need to talk to you! What are you doing?" she yelled after him. Glancing back over his shoulder, and slowing his pace by a tad, replied, "I can't take it anymore, Marcie. I want to do it for you, because you are my sister and I love you so much. But I can't be who they want me to be.

## setting: \_fakeworld\_

by Henry Brown, 10d

Avon opened the temporary storage cupboard. It was still there. He carefully removed the metal bowl and placed it in the sink. He set the water to 23°C and let it wash into the soil. He watched the bowl fill with water, as he had done every morning and evening for a week. To be honest, Avon had no idea how this was really happening, what was forming here; he was really only relying on guesswork, but whatever he was doing, something was happening. The idea of this unknown, this capricious and changing entity in this container filled him with such wonder and curiosity to the point of distraction.

He had left Karra some time before. Well, she had asked that he leave. The lingering sense of her had initially wafted in and out of his days, but he knew she was right; she couldn't take the risk. Their breakup was sealed from that first day when, out of pure curiosity, he had brought something home which he was required by law to destroy. On his shift in the wasteland, he had found this seedling poking through one of the countless cracks in the pavement. As a destruction worker, he would ordinarily have ripped out such an unsightly thing or dematerialized it on the spot, but something stopped him that day, an inexplicable impulse. With great delicacy, he plucked the seedling from between the cracks, hid it inside his uniform, and nonchalantly walked home. He placed it in a shallow bowl with its dirt and added the scraps of dirt from between the tread

of his boots. When Karra returned from work and he showed her his find, she was aghast and frightened by this foreign object sitting in a small mound of filth.

With that, Colden ran a few more steps forward, and then disappeared completely out of sight. "COLDEN? COLDEN!" screamed Marcie, panicked. She stepped forward and to her horror saw that Colden ran off the side of a cliff.

Complete devastation wrapped around her, like choking hands. Marcie turned around, only to hear the sound of mockingbirds in the distance. "Not one person killed my brother, but instead a whole society of people trying to impose an unworkable ideal killed him. I can never forgive them, and I can never go back."



Photography by Anonymous

of his boots. When Karra returned from work and he showed her his find, she was aghast and frightened by this foreign object sitting in a small mound of filth.

She couldn't take the risk of another day with him. They had had a long argument that night over how Avon could get killed over harboring something like this. She was right, it was universal law that all plants and animals had to be eliminated on sight, to keep the very thought of them erased from existence. It was what the Liman Law decreed. Still, Avon tried his best to convince Karra of what he saw in this inhuman life form. It was obviously harmless, nobody would have to know about it, and, after all, wasn't she curious, as well? It turns out she wasn't. In fact, she was terrified that she was dating an outlaw and kicked him out on the spot. Avon understood; she didn't want to be affiliated with anything of the sort.

After a couple of days, he saw the seedling's little leaves had perked up, it had unfurled and appeared proud, lifelike. And so it went. Somehow as this seedling took hold and changed and surprised, he got hooked. All his days and nights were now just something to be endured so he could race home and see what subtle new revelations this fascinating form had in store for him. He wasn't sure what was compelling the changes, but he felt sure he had some small hand.

He knew he shouldn't linger again this morning, but it was becoming harder to resist. He had also taken to drawing all the small changes he had observed in his growing plant because he wanted to remember every minute. He gave it a little water from his glass and then drank the remainder. He looked at his windowscape. Avon still hadn't changed it from its default "realworld" setting. He knew he should buy at least a few windowscapes

for his new apartment, but he didn't have a girlfriend anymore and didn't really mind the gray, squared-off, feel of the scraper next to him. Besides, destruction workers weren't very well compensated and a more appealing windowscape seemed an extravagance, especially with nobody but himself to please.

There were other things upon which he'd rather spend his meager savings, like a more appealing container for this growing plant. He glanced at the top right corner of his windowscape to see the time. The red numbers read: 12062049. 6th of December, 8:49 PM. He grabbed his all-temp sweater, hard hat and keys, ran out the front door and locked it behind himself. As he made his way through the hallways, he reached into his pocket for his iPhone 57 Z4 and turned on his behind-ear wireless head speakers. Reluctantly, he

heard the two-minute version of the Daily News (the minimum listening requirement for all citizens over age 14 internationally): "News for the 6th of December, twenty-four seven, transferred to you by Karra Claflin." Avon tried to divert his thoughts to anything else than the torture of having to listen to his ex-girlfriend's voice every day, but it was unavoidable.



Photography by Anonymous

He turned left into his local crossbridge, the 39th floor ultraglass tube connecting his scraper, A113, to the next one, A112. "President Davison has been re-elected into office for his 6th term!" No real surprise there. Even in Ireland, the 54th country in the world union, President Davison was revered as a hero for ending the war in Hawaii and had been in office since before Avon was born. Things would not change in any appreciable way. Otherwise, some movie had shattered box office records yet again, legendary pop artist Lucy Mathers had died after a long battle with lung cancer at the age of 71, and Correll Alcott and his wife Elsie had adopted their third Venezuelan child. Nothing that was of interest to Avon. As he pushed past

the mass of people exiting the 8:50 elevator from work, he heard the daily address from the president, barely making it to his express elevator. There was no one else in the elevator with him, but then again, there usually wasn't.

As a destruction worker, Avon was one of the few that ever saw the ground, that went below. Not that that was a special privilege, in fact, it was quite literally the lowest you could be, the nadir. But Avon didn't particularly mind; he enjoyed the feeling of the empty, barren wasteland outside, down below. It was a place where he could be alone with his thoughts. He didn't consider himself an introvert, he just didn't feel like he quite fit in with the fast-paced lifestyle of everyone else.

He leaned against the hard glass wall of the elevator and ran his hand through his long, black hair. "And with that, I conclude today's address. Thank-you for listening, America, and I hope you have a wonderWful remainder of your day." Setting his music to shuffle, Avon stepped out of the elevator into the wintry air. A group of his fellow destruction workers was already gathered at the other side. Avon jogged up to them just as General Rocca was handing out the materials, a flashlight and a dematerializer. The destruction workers were forbidden from using any gear more sophisticated than that. Rocca handed each of the fifteen employees their daily destruction routes, each one in a different direction amid the ever-present fog down below. For about a week now, Rocca had been scrutinizing Avon, observing his pattern of "slightly late to work by just a few minutes". However slight, his was so out of character after so many years, he had grown suspicious. Avon seemed to be preoccupied, the corners of his mouth turned up, as if in some private reverie. Rocca scanned Avon from top to bottom and, with a burning stare, draft-



ed him to circle only the perimeter of A113. It did not seem like much, but A113 was a housing scraper, and therefore fairly wide. He set off on his journey of searching for anything that was either green or that moved.

After a few hours of methodical walking and scouring of the ground, it seemed today there would be nothing. Avon was interrupted in the middle of his third lap around the scraper by a fast-moving Rocca. In an instant, Rocca was on top of him: "I have just been notified by my superiors that one of my destruction workers is keeping a plant in his living quarters," he spat, "do you have any knowledge of any such felonious action?"

Avon hesitated, praying he hadn't been discovered. "No, General Rocca, I do not seem to recall having been witness to such a brazen violation of our international laws, Sir."

On the inside, Avon was frantic, while struggling to present a calm exterior.

"Oh really?" Rocca snapped, moving in closer.

Avon could feel his putrid breath in his face. "Because, thirty minutes ago, the local surveillance patrol was called to the apartment of an 'Avon Peat', where they found a plant lying out in the middle of the table."

Every time Rocca said the word plant, he treated it like a poison to be puked from his mouth. Terror overtook Avon. There was no conceivable way he could get out of this alive. It was international law; anything natural had to be exterminated on the spot. His only hope was to tell the truth. "Sir, I was curious, sir, it didn't do anyone any harm, I swear." It was all he could do not to start bawling. "We'll see what the authorities have to say to that." With that, Rocca grabbed his arm, dragged him to his scraper, and yanked him into the elevator, pushing the button for the 70th floor.

"Avon Peat?" Avon stood up. "Come here please." He followed the man out of the crowded waiting center into a blank, white-walled room with only two chairs and a table. The policeman rummaged through his files, then finally looked up at Avon and declared, "You are to be exiled from Ireland for dealing with natural life. Based on my records, you do not have a history of interference or even slight noncompliance. Until today. May I ask you why you would blatantly disregard the fundamental code by which everyone in the world lives?"

"I was curious", Avon mumbled, barely audible. He could not believe he was being removed from the city of his birth, the only place he had ever lived, because of a simple, innocuous seed.

"You don't seem like a threat, and maybe you aren't, but you have to understand that this sort of behavior is and will not be tolerated on Irish concrete, not from anyone. The interaction of people with nature was outlawed for a reason, and we must respect that directive at all costs. It's for your and all our own good." With that, Avon was taken to the elevator, the chief of order pushed 220 – travel floor.

"A slight disturbance arose earlier this week, as a 24-year-old man, Avon Peat, was discovered growing a plant within the confines of his living quarters. The matter was quickly taken care of by the authorities and there is no need for further concern." Karra finally made it home after recording the two, five, ten, and thirty minute newscasts on floor 93 and poured herself some water. As she turned around, there, in the middle of the table was a small green seedling in a metal bowl. Ever so quietly, she lifted the bowl, breathing in the delicate fragrance of a tiny yellow flower just beginning to sprout from its center, and carefully placed the bowl in the temporary storage cupboard. She caught her reflection in the windowscape, catching the corners of her mouth turned up just slightly.



# Click

Frederick Leo, 11a

"So, what's your take on Geppetto?" He peered over his shoulder, eyebrows raised. Behind him stood a young woman, grinning eagerly. Her hair was messy and orange, piercings clung to her nose and ears. A dark, rough cloak hung loosely off her shoulders, dotted with occasional buttons and sewn-on emblems. He turned back hurriedly and spread out a few coins on the counter, grabbing a brown paper bag from the clerk's outstretched hand.

"What was that all about?" he asked when they had left the queue.

"Geppetto. Don't you know him?"

"I have no idea whom you're talking about."

"You've never heard of Geppetto?"

"No," he replied, holding the door for her.

"The serial killer. Come on, you must have heard of him before. He's the one who carves chunks out of his victims' backs. They found another one yesterday, on a dumpster. It was all over the news."

"I don't watch the news."

"Woah, you're missing out. That one singer died the other day. You know... Lizzy Cooper?"

"Doesn't ring a bell."

"Oh. Pity. Her music's great."

"I'm sure it is. Hey, I'm sorry. I need to catch my bus. Nice talking to you..."

"Fiona." He smiled tersely and picked up a brusque stride.

"Hey, wait," he heard her call from behind.

He didn't bother hiding his irritation this time. "Excuse me, madam, I've got an appointment to get to. Talk to some other stranger. Or maybe a therapist, if no one else'll listen to you." She didn't seem to have heard him.

"Which bus are you taking?" she asked.

"The 48, if you must know."



Photograph by  
Jakob Eckardt, 12a

This time, she laughed aloud. Her voice was layered with the oily smoothness which came only from old age or nicotine. "Wow, that's crazy. Did you know I'm taking that one, too?"

He ground his teeth, but said nothing. He managed to plant himself next to an elderly, talkative Italian on the bus and let out a sigh of relief. His freedom proved to be short-lived, however, when the man got off at the next stop, making room for Fiona and her toothy smile. He was sure, now, that he hated her.

"So, where do you get off?" she asked happily.

"Four more stops," he mumbled.

She laughed again, slapping him on the shoulder. "This is getting better and better! So do I!"

"Don't tell me you live here?"

"Nah, I'm visiting a friend." She grinned broadly and resumed jabbing at him with more questions, but he ignored her for the rest of the trip.

"By the way, what's your address?" she asked as the doors snapped shut behind them. He

played deaf for a while, but ultimately lost his patience.

"34 Devon Street," he growled, and left her standing there without turning back.

Walking away, he became aware that he had given his address to a total stranger. He scowled, then shrugged. At least he could breathe now, without the constant smell of marijuana at his side.

Two months went by without any peculiar incidents. He would have forgotten Fiona completely, had he not received a letter in the mail one morning. It was sealed in a pink envelope without a return address. He frowned at it for a moment, then he tore it open and pulled out a small, folded note. It was covered in messy handwriting, so much so that only one passage in the middle was legible.

"...know you're having trouble finding a job, know somebody good...offer...come over to my place on Thursday evening...dinner...Fiona..."

An address was printed below. He blinked, surprised. It was only a few blocks away from his house.

And so it came to be that he found himself outside of Fiona's apartment at 7:00 PM, two days later. The door flew open before he could ring the bell, and there she stood, shabby and happy. He followed her inside and tossed his jacket onto a chair she gestured to.

Her apartment was unexpectedly tidy. The wallpaper was pink and covered in pictures of flowers. They passed a few doors and he noted that the handles were made of brass.

"Here we go," Fiona giggled as they entered the kitchen.

She pointed him towards a low sofa.

"I'm sorry, I got off schedule. I still need to make the casserole. Go ahead, have a seat." He nodded and sat down. Fiona disappeared from the room.

On the table before him

**The serial killer. Come on, you must have heard of him before. He's the one who carves chunks out of his victims' backs.**

stood an ornate vase; he realized that the flowers inside were shriveled and drooping. Why hadn't she bought new ones?

Fiona returned and slammed two long square chunks of meat down onto the counter. She began slicing them mechanically into thin slivers. He was surprised at the strength in her hands.

"How did you know I'm in trouble?" he asked.

"Not watching the news is one thing. Not knowing of Lizzy is another. She was all over every program, most talk shows

discussed her contributions to the genre for weeks on end, her funeral was broadcasted live. And she was already huge before she died. Only someone who pawned their TV ages ago wouldn't know."

"That's mere speculation."

"Well, no offense, but

your neighborhood isn't exactly in the rich part of town, either. You can use the bathroom any time you want, by the way. Third door on the left."

The suggestion appealed to him; he felt uncomfortable talking to Fiona. In any case, it would be rude to excuse himself during dinner. He left the room and walked through the hall, counting the doors. He stopped at the third. A light switch protruded from the wall to his left. He flicked it and entered. Light-blue tiles greeted him, decorated with starfish and shells. Two rows of perfume bottles stood neatly arranged along the edge of the sink. A strange odor stood in the air. He realized that it came from where a curtain concealed a tub. He walked over to it and almost doubled over. The smell was much stronger now, and sickeningly sweet. He had to cover his mouth with his shirt in an effort not to vomit. He pushed the curtain aside and let out a short cry.

In the bathtub lay the shallow body of a woman, her skin wrinkled and spotted with age. She had no back; in its place yawned a deep, rectangular cavity. Pearly white vertebrae jutted regularly out of her back. Behind him, the door slammed.

His stomach plummeted. Time stopped. The grating of a key in a lock stood in the putrid silence. The muscles in his legs twitched and he threw himself towards the door. He was half way there when the rattling of keys stopped and the light died forever with a dry, unforgiving "click".

# Special Feature: Hiding In Sight

by Naomi Plitzko Scherer, 10d

*On May 22nd, currently Berlin-based author Brittani Sonnenberg visited members of the 11th grade English classes and the Haywire staff to answer questions on her recent debut novel, Home Leave, and discuss her path as a writer.*

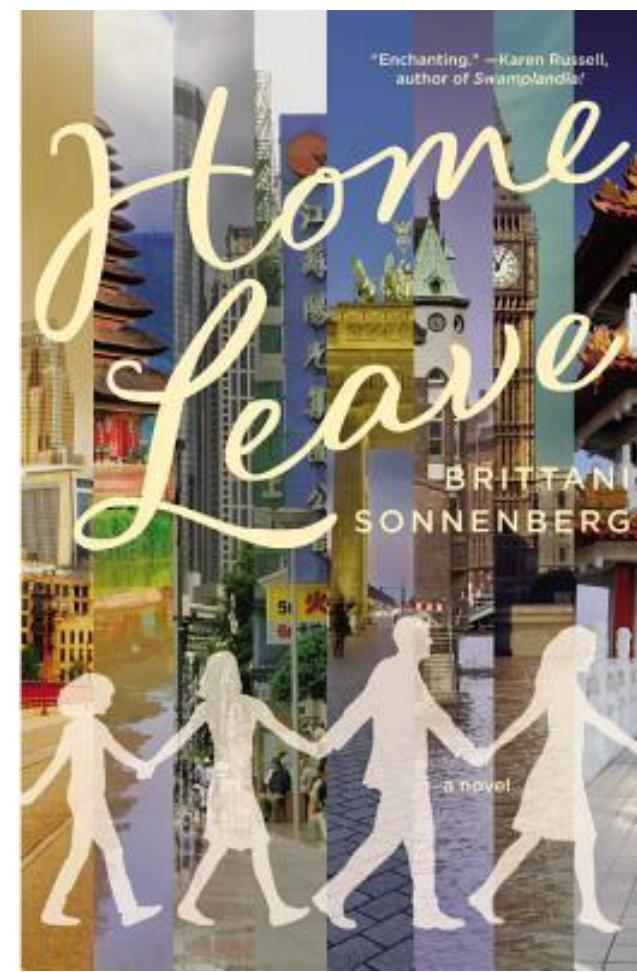
Brittani Sonnenberg's book details the nature of loss by chronicling the tumultuous life of the Kriegstein family and their gradual unhinging. While Sonnenberg stated the story was 90% fictional, her own family story provided the author with many of the underlying themes. Like many students at our school, Brittani Sonnenberg's multicultural childhood complicated her personal definition of home. Her father's job at an electrical company drove the family all over the world, from Hamburg (her "charmed, idealized" birthplace) to Philadelphia, Atlanta (the "throbbing homespace"), Minneapolis, Shanghai, and Singapore.

As a foreign child in Shanghai, writing took on a new importance as a tie to her home in Atlanta, as her disinterest in the local culture and her failure to identify as an international child complicated integration into the Chinese way of life. At age 15, language also presented an invaluable tool in making sense of her sister's death. What started with travel articles and excursions into downtown Shanghai in seventh grade led Brittani Sonnenberg to studying British history and literature at Harvard and later to graduate school at the University

of Michigan. There, she attended fiction workshops to overcome her initial sense of a lack of authority to create a setting for her stories. Sonnenberg made an effort to stay in touch with Chinese culture and missed her home in Shanghai, learning Mandarin and returning to Asia to write.

Eventually, Brittani Sonnenberg turned to fiction as a means to understand her own history and the struggles of a childhood dominated by travel, and finally exercised her agency to choose a home, claiming Berlin for its creative energy and her enjoyment of existence as an "undercover foreigner". It presented a place of death and mourning independent from her own grief, and Sonnenberg relished the romantic sense of missing as a kind of touchstone to the various places she had left.

While she does express a certain melancholy at lacking a stable personality, Sonnenberg accepts travel as an indivisible (and thrilling) part of her self and seems to believe the advantages of her international upbringing outweigh the drawbacks. The difficulty in maintaining relationships with people allowed her to connect to the landscape in a deeper fashion than most, and taught her the value of making an effort. Third culture kids, she declares, have different intuitions in foreign countries and instinctively attempt to settle and connect to



the local culture. This readiness to forge connections has proven itself a great advantage as a writer. Sonnenberg describes how her family became its own country, or "Heimat", and the humbling effect of her repeated cultural reintegration. Despite her attempts to avoid morphing her personality, she experienced a certain loss of her sense of self, and began feeling inauthentic in foreign and familiar cultures alike, like an actress, or an "undercover anthropologist". Sonnenberg faced difficulty in convincing others of her belonging, and turned to fiction as a space to make that part of herself a reality, present and inarguable. She pursued emotional truths with fictional endings and welcomed the chance to examine her own experience through different eyes.

Writing allowed Sonnenberg to make sense of her different conflicting personalities and process her family's moves and her sister's death, after which places she hadn't lived seemed to fade. While basing the book on her family story, the author gave her-

self the freedom to invent, governed by self-imposed laws to structure her creativity. Sonnenberg describes these regulations as rules to a game, allowing her ideas to flow more freely from one chapter to the next as she found courage in a set form. As a distraction from the daunting task of constructing a novel, she made her stylistic choices completely intuitively.

When asked for her personal definition of the word "home", Sonnenberg cited necessities such as close friends, places to seek for solace and comfort, and an engagement with the local culture. Brittani Sonnenberg conveyed her conviction that her existence will continue to be dominated by travel, but she trusts life's rhythms to provide her new geographies.

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