

WOOSTER



Echo

Wooster School Literary Magazine 2023

enthusiasm, creativity, heart, open

Echo has gone unnoticed and unknown to most in the Wooster community because it has been out of print for nearly a decade. After all this time, Echo has finally returned to provide an outlet for imagination and creativity.

On behalf of the staff, we want to thank those who were brave enough to collaborate and share their art with us. We also would like to thank the contributors for making it possible for the return of our beloved magazine.

This 2023 issue is dedicated to Ms. Helena Smith who had the initial idea to revive a long lost tradition in the Wooster community. She has devoted her time and effort to this project and we could not be more grateful. We thank you for reestablishing the celebration of Arts & Letters on campus.

And to Ms. Smith's son, we cannot wait to watch you grow and see what you accomplish in this world.

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Ivy '28
Toby '27
Henry '28
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The Future

It takes time for sound to travel

When I speak to you

I stand in the past

But you're in the future

Pierce Shao '25



Lillian Zhao '23

Tranquility
Toni Erian



human nature

Blinded with **integrity**
Empathy and sorrow
Someone who takes action
Against the inevitability of tomorrow

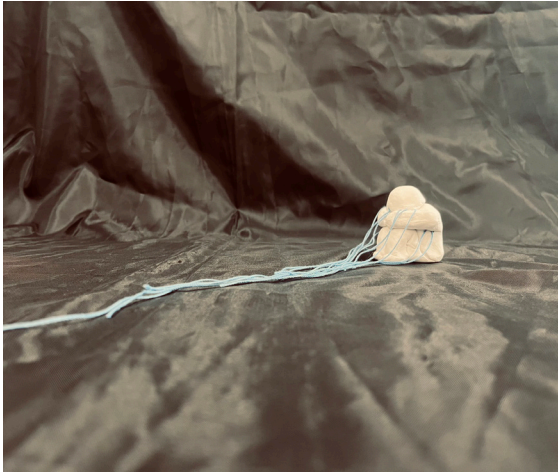
Loving all people
Caring for all things
These are the traits
That create a personality who sings

A person who acts
Rather than waits
Standing up for those
Who lacks those **strengths**

One is defined
Not only from their success
But the hardships that come
Things impossible to address

Don't let people fool you
Failure will come
You can dread it
You can run
But a person who learns
Will shine brighter than the sun

By, Jack Weinberg



Hannah Rogell '26

Forlorn

Everything so deeply fabricated, gasping to try to catch a glimpse
Your vision grows so oblique, and you can't escape
The sweetest fruit, so tranquil and quiet
The fog starts to clear and you are engulfed in dismay
Alone in a sea of mirrors, standing alone at the end of an endless line
The point of view you are stuck in tastes as bitter as a snapping whip And
as your head emanates the darkest canyons,
You finally break the surface only to find you swam the wrong way

Jonah Wald '23

Cancer

I want to tell you a story.

I once had a tree that stood tall. She was the prettiest of her kind. She had lengthy branches, apples, and a sturdy trunk.

But what she loved most was her leaves. Her vivacious leaves. In spring, they were a lovely shade of green that grew blossoms of pink and white. In summer, her leaves were the host of bird nests and many other animals. In autumn, her leaves turned all different shades of red, orange, vermillion, and yellow.

She adored bright colors. She adored me.

But by winter, my tree got sick.

Animals no longer visited her, her bark was weak and chipping.

And her leaves began to fall.

How she wept when her precious leaves hit the forest floor haunts me to this day.

Her beauty was stripped, and her vibrant colors turned a morbid gray.

Yet I loved her the same. She hadn't any blossoms or fruits to offer me, but I loved her the same. Her branches were bare and she was so very cold, but I loved her all the same.

As days went by, she only grew weaker. I tried everything I could to restore her health;

Water

Nutrients

Fertilizer

Everything.

But no matter what I did, she only grew weaker.

Come April, it was warm again.

The sun shined and the grass grew tall.

But my tree, my poor tree, did not even have the strength to smile.

They say some trees make it through winter. They grow their leaves back. They survive.

But my tree could not.

She was far too weak to stand, and eventually her roots collapsed right beneath her. Her fall shook the entire forest.

Every night, I lie in bed awake thinking about how I could've saved her. Just one more try and maybe it would've worked. One more treatment and maybe she would've survived. I devoted my life to finding a cure for her. But all my tree ever wanted was my love. In her ugliest times, her fading laughs, and weeping nights, she didn't care if she survived. She only ever wanted me to love her.

Now, when every spring fades to summer, summer fades to autumn, and autumn fades to winter, I always think of my tree.

And how we were simply meant to be.

So if, my friend, your tree doesn't survive the winter, know that the fault was not yours.

Love your tree while you can.

Just as much as I loved mine.



OCEANS

Life is like an ocean-
'Cause if you lose sight of a motive-
You'll get swallowed up by the crashing wave-
And soon you'll end up in a grave-

As soon as you find your dream-
You'll swim out of the ocean-
And you'll fix your self esteem-
And it will no longer feel like your heart was stolen.

Mya '28

The Beach

The waves that crash along
Those beds of sand
The castles that are sculpted
By one's own hand
The seaweed that washes
Up to your feet
The kids that play 'til
They're overcome with heat

The sand being dug up
With a shovel and pail
The fake boat in the water
That can't actually sail
The toys that lay scattered
Thrust roughly aside
The people that race down
Into the oncoming tide

Toward the end of the day
A sunburn you might receive
At this point you might
decide
To take your leave
But if you stay long enough
You might see
The spectacular sunset that
lowers
Over the now shadowy beach

Ivy '28

Sand Dunes:
Abbe Kanfer '25



This is a poem

This is a poem, what are those but mere thoughts?
An idea of what might be
A poem doesn't have to rhyme
A poem is not limited
A poem doesn't have specific parameters to make it true
A poem speaks from the heart, the soul
When you look for a poem, do you look for Dr. Seuss?
Or do you look for a work of art?
Not something that rhymes
You look for something that speaks
You look for a poem
You look not for a book
Not something that speaks from the mouth
Some classify a poem as something that rhymes
That knocks on the door of poetry
A room with hundreds of sleeping people
And finds rhyming after tripping over metaphors and wakes only him up
As alliteration and assonance are left alone
Not even a glance sent their way and
Takes just him out of the room
And pretends everyone else in the room is a ghost
While the rest who were woken in the ruckus
Sit and cry themselves back to sleep as, once again, they are neglected
As time and time again, one walks in the room and only two walk out and
once again, an injustice against poetry is made
But every once in a while, someone walks in and more than two leave
And sometimes rhyming still stays in the room

-Toby '27



George

1

Why is the sky blue, why can't dogs talk, why are words called words? People ask questions like this all the time. But why, why do people ask them? Why do people even exist? These questions are the only thing that go through George's head. George is bored, not just sometimes, but always. He is the best student in school but he finds school boring.

"If only there was something exciting," he thought. When George got home from school with an A plus paper in his hand he was hoping to see something new, something he had never seen before.

His house had all brown walls and his parents didn't give him any attention. They always went

out to parties and left him home. He just crumpled his paper and threw it into the trash.

But that day he did see something new. A huge cardboard box, as tall as the front door, was blocking the entrance. It looked like a cardboard closet. All he thought about was what might be inside, which he was thrilled to be thinking about instead of the boring questions. When he opened the box he saw a very bright light and felt strong winds blowing in his face. Then he was sucked into another dimension.

What he saw was his house, but it seemed better in every way. All the walls were his favorite color, green. His parents were there, but they welcomed him. "Welcome our son, we have been waiting for you." They actually had time for him. He had many toys and games waiting for him in his room, which was everything he ever dreamed it could be with an ensuite bathroom with a rain shower. The backyard had a big swimming pool with a diving board. That was the peak of George's day. After that things became very strange.

His parents seemed to love him but did not know him; they didn't know his name was George. This made no sense. "Is this dimension not actually better than my home life?" thought George. This thought would one day go on to save his life and the lives of many others.

That day while in his house in the new dimension, George saw a ghost named Benny emerge from the cracked mirror on the wall. George was afraid at first not knowing what it was. Benny told George that his new parents promised him everything he ever wanted so he told them where his real parents were. His new parents killed his real parents and he was instantly filled with guilt and grief, realizing what a terrible mistake he had made.

“They said my life would be perfect, but once my real parents were gone they ate my soul, and now I’m just a ghost,” Benny explained while shedding a tear. He begged George to destroy that box when he got back to save other kids from ending up a ghost with no soul.

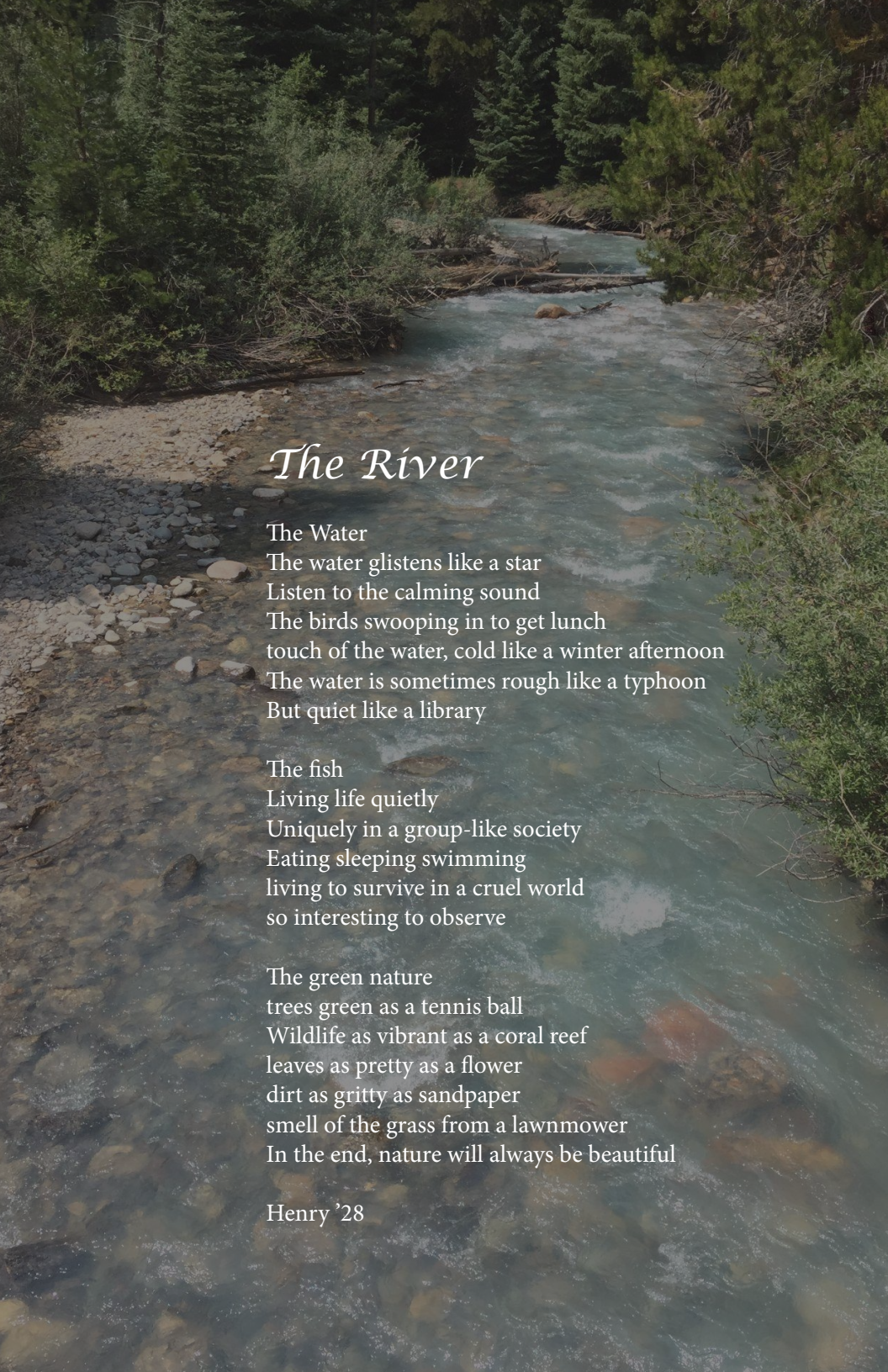
There was a problem though, how was George going to get home? There was no box in this dimension like the one he used to get here. He thought maybe if he went to sleep he would wake up back home. He had seen this in a movie so he thought it might work; and it did.

He was back in his boring old home in the real world and the box was still there. He approached it with a fire starter and a match hoping he could burn it, but he got sucked in before he could get to it to destroy it.

He was not as welcomed this time. His new parents were not happy that he wanted to destroy the box, but how did they know? “We know everything,” said his parents with an eerie laugh. “Your soul, give it to me!” George made a run for it and his new parents followed. He ran up to his room to go to sleep and wake up in his own house. But in order to destroy the box, he needed the key to throw in that would destroy it. “I need to get the key,” thought George. He saw it on his new mother’s belt. George darted towards her and got the key. She was furious about this. He was looking for an exit but he didn’t see one. Then, he saw a void of darkness and, knowing it was another portal, he jumped into it.

George was home with the key. The box was right where it was last time. He threw the key in and it exploded into tiny shreds of cardboard. Then out of nowhere Benny appeared and said, “Thank you, sir, you saved me, my soul and my parents are all back now.”

Many kids that day were saved from losing their souls to the fake parents in the other dimension. George got to watch Benny see his real parents for the first time in over twenty years. Benny had his soul and his parents back. Now no other kids would get sucked in again. This new world made George realize not to take the ones you love for granted.



The River

The Water

The water glistens like a star
Listen to the calming sound
The birds swooping in to get lunch
touch of the water, cold like a winter afternoon
The water is sometimes rough like a typhoon
But quiet like a library

The fish

Living life quietly
Uniquely in a group-like society
Eating sleeping swimming
living to survive in a cruel world
so interesting to observe

The green nature

trees green as a tennis ball
Wildlife as vibrant as a coral reef
leaves as pretty as a flower
dirt as gritty as sandpaper
smell of the grass from a lawnmower
In the end, nature will always be beautiful

Henry '28

Snowboarding

So much fluffy snow with endless places to go
Let's go down fast to have a blast
So much time to ride for some time
The fun never stops until you get blocked
With the time that you sit maybe have a sip
Something hot to keep you at the top

With curves on the slope that bring you hope
With the birds chirping to the trees blowing
An unforgettable sound that will take you around
You won't want to leave the park until it's dark

But the day is just beginning, even in the dark
A whole new event just starts
The lights flicker on
The smell of waffles slowly glaze the air making a coat of sweetness
The temperature goes down now, people know it's time to go
But we know there is still so much fun that we can't get in one day
So I guess we have to go back another day to play

Jack '28





Transformation

Spread your wings and fly.
Explore the unknown.
Find the new you.
Accept change,
And do it all again.

Ja'Miyah Claxton '25

Butterflies



A bug so small yet so beautiful.
Sometimes found in swarms other times alone.
Bright colors to warn off enemies.
Migrating to somewhere warm, following mother nature.
Each one unique, never two the same.

Staying away from the cold,
enjoying the warmth.
I wish I could fly like a butterfly,
have no worries and let the wind carry me.

Ja'Miyah Claxton '25





ME VS THE GROTTO

Shaking because I was petrified of going into a cave. A small, dark, hair-raising place. My mom forcing me to come, “It’s an opportunity you may never have again.” Everyone around, pressuring me. Trying to ignore my anxious thoughts and just do it. I didn’t want to miss a once-in-a-lifetime experience. As I was walking closer to the dark entryway, I regretted every step I took, and my eyes narrowed in on where I was about to go. Suddenly we were standing at the entrance and I froze.

The walls are closing in on me, I am trapped, I am never going to be able to get out. Those were all the thoughts circling in my head and holding me back from taking in the experience. As I was stepping onto the small barge taking a hand from our paddler, there was no going back. We started moving and my breath was taken away. My breath wasn’t taken away because I had lost oxygen and

passed out, my breath was taken away because I had never seen anything like this in my life.

Something so unnatural-looking yet it was natural.

The Blue Grotto. The Blue Grotto, with the bright blue illuminated water that looked like a trick, as if someone put lights underwater. But

no, it was so natural, from sunlight causing this beautiful effect.

When my breath was brought back

I was able to take in this amazing experience and there was not one thing I regretted about going except for, regretting going in before this wonderful experience.

Say Cheese

Chapter 1: Car

It was October 13, 1986. It was a Friday and I had just gotten out of school for the week, and I was rather excited because I had just saved enough money to buy a brand new Atari 7800 that came out earlier that year. The way I got my money was from mowing lawns and walking dogs for the past five months, so this was something I have been looking forward to for a while. I got on my skateboard and went to get my Atari. I got to Babbage's and I saw it, the holy grail, the Atari 7800 sitting right there, like it was just waiting for me. I grabbed it and brought it straight to the cashier. "Your total will be \$49.99 please", I got out my wallet and gave him the money.

I was on my way home running faster than I had ever ran before, so excited to use my Atari. I was a few blocks away from my house, I ran into the road not thinking when I got hit by a pickup truck going 40 mph in a 25, breaking every bone on the right side of my body, while also killing me. I thought that was the end, but then.

Chapter 2: Train Pt 1

I woke up, in my bed as if nothing happened, it was as if I didn't just get hit by a car. For a second I thought it was just a nightmare but it seemed too real for it to be a dream. I went downstairs and went to the kitchen because I thought having breakfast would take my mind off of what had happened. I was eating my breakfast when I got a knock on the door. I opened my door and standing there was my best friend Daniel Roberts Jr. I had known him since kindergarten and we hung out every single weekend. He said to me he heard about this abandoned train track that had a beautiful view of the water. He said he was going and he asked me if I wanted to go with him. I said yes and we got our fun fruits and our root beer and we started our journey.

Chapter 3: Train Pt 2

We had finally gotten to the abandoned train track and Daniel said that the view was on a bridge, so we started walking towards the bridge. We had gotten on to the bridge and the view was amazing. Daniel brought his Polaroid camera and told me to turn around so he could take a picture of me. He took my picture when right after we heard a train, we were so confused because we both thought the train track was abandoned. We stood there for a few more seconds when we saw the train coming straight towards us. We both started running as fast as we could when I dropped my bag. I went to go get it when I soon realized it was stuck. Daniel told me to leave my bag, but I refused and said I needed my bag. The train was getting closer and closer by the second. It eventually got close enough to the point where I gave up on my bag. I started running when I looked behind me, seeing the train right behind me. I then jumped off the train track hoping I would land in the water safely, but when I jumped the train hit me in my side killing me.

Chapter 4: Say Cheese

I woke up again in my bed just like last time. I really did not question it because it had happened to me previously. I continued the day and the next 2 months not thinking about it ,while at the same time being as careful as possible.

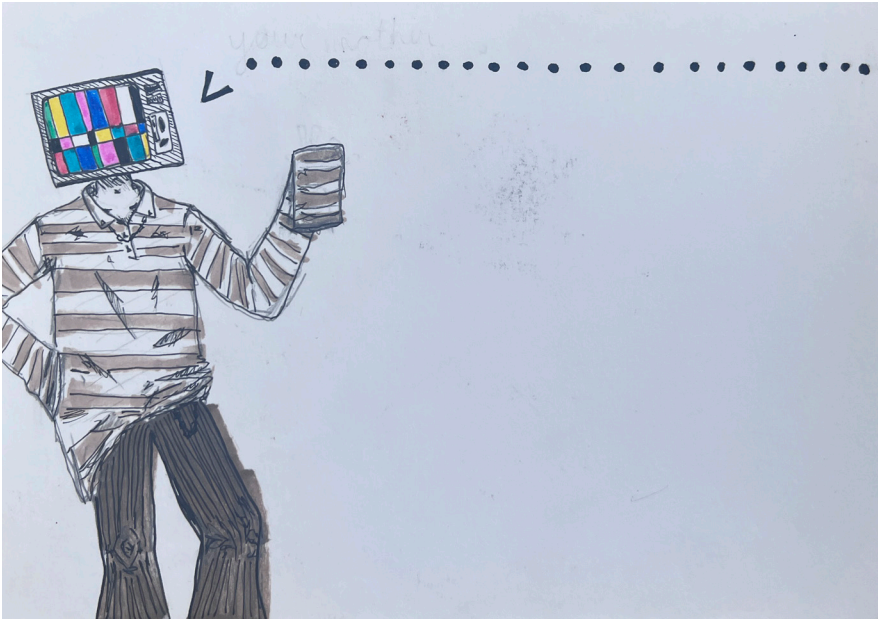
It was Christmas, the one day of the year I actually looked forward to. I woke up and ran down stairs when I saw three presents with my name on them.

The first present I opened was a CAR ,that brought my mind back to a thing I had not thought about for a long time.

The second present was a TRAIN ,now I knew something was wrong because why else would the two presents I opened be the two ways I had died.

The third present I thought was going to be something I wanted, like maybe an Atari 7800 ,because I had only died in two ways ,but it was not. It was an upside down polaroid. This confused me but I did not really think about it. When I turned the polaroid around it showed a picture of me looking at the polaroid. I was startled because I was all alone, so I thought, I looked at the photo again but when I looked closer there was a person behind me who looked very familiar. It wasn't a friend or a family member but it was me. I turned around and he was standing there with a knife in his hand. Then right then and there he stabbed me right in the chest killing me one last time.

Jack '28



MAX RAND '24

Loveless Flight
Toni Erian



The Beauty of Words

I am a beautiful form,
The most beautiful you've ever seen.
I can be as destructive as a storm,
Or as quiet as the sea.

Everyone sees me differently,
But I am always the same.
I sway in the wind contently,
I always have perfect aim.

No one can tell me what to do,
My words are what they are,
People can view me how they want.
In the night, I am a shining star.

I fly in the wind like a dove.
Riding in the air towards home.
Revealing what I'm made of.
I am a poem.

Elena '28

Reaching
Shelby Bernstein '23

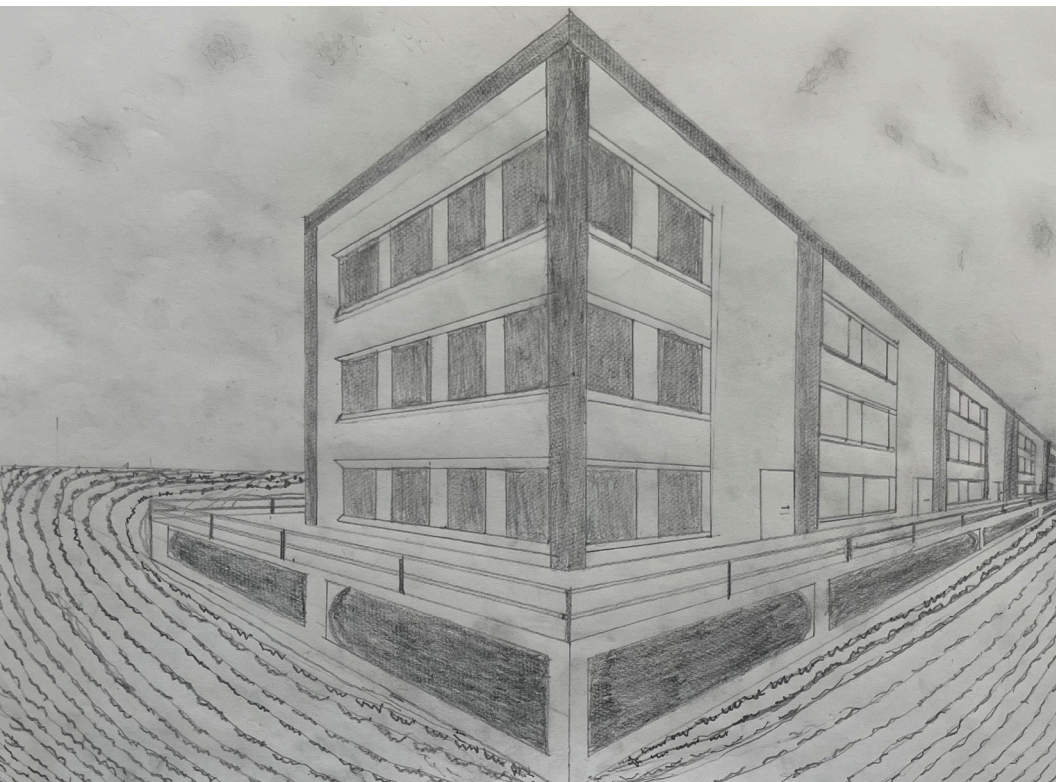


I open my eyes but I only see fear. I
Wish to open my mouth and speak the truth, but
My throat swallows the shattered
Verses of the unspeakable lies. My ears
Could only hear tears. Who shall
Be the one to reveal the pain. Let our voices be
Smelted miraculously
Into chains and heavy
Bullets to hook into horrible minds.

Tina Zhang '24

Good will always prevail over evil. Always. No matter how far the forces of evil may spread, and no matter how much it may seem like all good is lost, there will always be some sliver of good somewhere. No matter how small this sliver is, it will grow, and, no matter how long it takes for that good to grow, it will, and, eventually, it will spread over and vanquish all evil. All we have to do is remember that. Remember that, no matter how much it seems like all hope is lost, there will always, always, be some amount somewhere. If we can do that, then we can ensure that that good prevails, and we can create a truly better world.

Riley Andrea-Neuhuijs '24



I am Pure

I am a pure drop of water
I am a calm wave at a beach that can turn a vicious tide
I am a tree always growing in even the toughest weather
I am an artist who becomes one with my brush or tool
I am an older sister, proud and playful for my little brother
I am a challenger, always heading to the unknown
I am a soccer player, quick and tough, and never afraid to attack
I am a butterfly unique and bold, but I started out as something different
I dream of being a protector, always risking my life for others in the unknown
I am a scarf that always keeps you warm while wrapped around you
I am a milkshake made up of many different ingredients
I am a sunny clear day that can suddenly turn dark and become a thunderstorm
I am bold, bright, strong, brilliant, quick, and adaptable
I am a fighter always persevering no matter what.
I am a helper that helps others
I am what others see me as always

Donna '28

A Forgotten Goddess



ATHENA

Lynx Herbig '26

I am not a poet, I am not an author

As I sit here in this dark room,
I cannot help but feel utter hatred for myself,
Resentment from this hell I have created,
A prison cell that I watched myself construct,
Shove me into it,
Lock the door,
And throw the key to the side,
If god is confirmed he is not here now,
He would not allow something so foolish as this to happen,
This flower,
This damn flower,
It has grown roots into my finger,
Making me unable to type a single word,
Then they stretch up to my shoulders,
Forcing them to be forever slouched in disappointment of oneself,
Then finally up to my head,
Where they lock up any thought or idea worth expressing,
My sleep is borderline nonexistent,
My life outside crumbling around me,
School was put on the side,
And is now piling on me all at once,
My eyes flowing with tears of both sadness and anger,
I should probably just quit,
Just stop all this foolishness once and for all,
After all,
I am not a poet,
I am not an author.

Dan Cristofaro '24



Untitled

Everybody has a name.

A name that was stolen or given or even passed down through generations.

Everybody has a name.

A name that rings in your ears from time to time,

A name that brings familiarity,

A name that everybody wants to hear,

Everybody has a name.

A name that was once familiar now feels forgotten,

A name that strikes a match in your brain,

A name that once was a part of me--

Everybody has to have a name.

My first name was stripped away from me.

What was a part of me is now a lost memory.

Everybody wants a name.

My current name -- warm and fuzzy, now feels like misery.

Everybody needs a name.

My name isn't who I am, but It's who I pretend to be

My name used by many now feels empty.

My name is what you call me, but it isn't really me.

My name is not my own. It is an off-key symphony.

Everybody's given a name.

And then there's me.

Kara Sciacca '24



Max Rand '24

The Shadow

Chapter 1

Creak... as the door swung open, a dark shadow in the shape of a cloud drifted through the door frame. As soon as the shadow came through the doorway, it started to morph into the shape of a person. Electricity sparking around it, the shadow started to come into sharper focus. As the electricity died out, the shadow became solid. Now in its place, a boy around the age of 13 dropped to the floor. The lights in the partially lit hallway started to flicker, then died out. As darkness engulfed the hallway, a pair of bright red eyes emanated from out of the darkness.

Suddenly the shadow shot up, levitating three inches off the floor, gliding eerily down the hallway towards a room at the end of the hallway. The shadow stared intently at the closed door. As he stared, the door shot out of the doorway and slammed against the wall on the other side of the room. The bedroom's walls were covered with bright red paint. A king sized bed was pushed up against the adjacent wall. As the shadow passed through the door frame, it glided silently across the room towards the bed. Laying in the bed was a boy named Jack. The shadow leaned down over the boy, icy breath emanating onto the boy's face.

Jack's eyes snapped open. The shadow's blazing red eyes were an inch away from Jack's face. Jack leapt out of the bed and sprinted down the hallway, fear gripping at his heart. As he ran he looked back at the shadow. The shadow turned towards him, sinister red eyes staring intently at Jack. The shadow glanced at the door that lay broken against the wall. It levitated off the ground and the shadow's sinister gaze turned to Jack. The door shot out of the room towards Jack. As Jack ran around the corner, the door's sharp splintered corner impaled the wall. Jack ran down the stairs intent on making it to the kitchen. As he entered the kitchen, the shadow appeared in front of him. Jack reached for the knives. Grabbing one, he flung it at the shadow, but before it could even pierce the shadow's body, the shadow disappeared. Jack's knife quivered in the kitchen wall.

Chapter 2

“Mom, Dad! Where are you?!” Jack yelled upstairs. There was no reply. The silence was broken by a scream coming from upstairs.

“I’m coming!” yelled Jack, ripping the knife out of the wall, on the way to the stairs. Jack sprinted toward his parents bedroom. He reached for the handle, but it was locked. He backed up against the adjacent wall and slammed himself against the door. One, two, three times he leapt at the door, and on the third try his efforts prevailed. The door ripped clean off the hinges and fell to the ground. What Jack saw was enough to chill him to the bone. His parents lay on the floor dead, their lifeless crippled bodies lay on the ground in a puddle of blood. The shadow stood over their bodies. Rage shot through Jack. He ran screaming towards the shadow; knife raised above his head. The shadow turned its gaze onto Jack, red eyes flashing in the dark. Jack’s body suddenly froze. A snake-like shadow had wrapped itself around Jack and was slowly constricting his windpipe. Jack’s face turned red as he struggled to escape from the shadow’s ironclad grip. Jack swung his knife down at the shadow, cutting into the dense darkness that made up its flesh. The shadow shrieked; a high-pitched blood-curdling shriek that reverberated around the house. As the shadow let go of Jack, a purple flame seeped out of the shadow’s mouth. The flame wrapped itself around the shadow’s wound, sealing it closed. The shadow moved in a blink of an eye directly towards Jack. Its body slammed against Jack knocking him out cold. The last thing Jack saw were the glowing red eyes of the shadow glaring intently into his face.

To be continued...

Jack M ‘28

Max
Rand ‘24



Jubilation in Tabbies, Trats, and Tangos

The stage lights scintillate, practically blinding, and for a single moment, Alia rests tucked between the tranquil marrow of the world. The music has since been cut, and in the brief moment of respite, the beating of Alia's rapid heart as her body struggles to regain its balance is the only noise. Without preamble, she thrusts her right hand upwards in a reaching motion, thinking for what is not the first time that this is what it means to be truly alive.

Alia is completely and utterly alone in the auditorium. She is alone, body humming with the recent exertion, and she is content.

And then the audience begins to clap. And then they cheer. And then they holler. Her performance complete, Alia is flung back into the present. Scanning across the vast mob crammed into the concert hall, she remembers that she is dancing for a crowd. A large one, at that. How could she forget?

With a flourish, she bows and makes her exit stage right to the rising pitch of a standing ovation, just as she had been instructed.

Backstage, Alia heads to her changing room to prepare for the remainder of her evening. While she goes, stagehands and fellow performers extend sincere congratulations. She welcomes the compliments with brisk words of thanks, the sentiment getting lost somewhere in the back of her throat.

Although the show is over, Alia's schedule is still packed. Per usual, the second she steps into her changing room, she will be bombarded by at least three make-up artists. They will attempt to fix her contour, her lashes, her foundation, anything that they deem disheveled after her recital. One of these days, she will tell them to leave her face untouched. She will tell them of how both her pulse and her makeup swelter under the smoldering heat on stage, and she will tell them to leave it.

Today is not that day.

Predictably, as soon as Alia swings the door to her changing room open, she is ushered towards a chair facing an extravagant mirror. Although the mirror is crystal clear and polished to perfection, in the upper right-hand corner, a peeling sticker of a sprinkled doughnut has been stuck. While Alia

stares at the doughnut, desperately wishing she had one, the makeup artists swarm around her like bees, their voices lost beneath the suffocating buzzing. On the docket for the day, Alia will attend an interview with a local news station where they will ask her recycled questions and then mingle at a banquet where she will respond with recycled answers. Yvette will want her to look her best.

Speak of the devil and she will appear. "We were thinking of a blue satin dress this evening for you, Ms. Alia." It is a statement more than anything else. Yvette, who was hired three years ago to micromanage Alia's entire wardrobe and schedule, isn't the type of woman to take no for an answer.

Alia nods in agreement, more out of habit than anything else.

The night goes smoothly, as it often does, and by the time Alia trudges up the concrete steps in her too-tight heels and too-itchy dress, she wants nothing more than to sink into the comfort of her bed. The radio interview had been tedious but not particularly strenuous, especially since she'd heard many of the exact questions before. The reporter mostly stuck to asking her about her most recent role. Admittedly, there wasn't much to be said in regard to it. She'd been a soloist for the majority of her career, and she was in no way unfamiliar with the intricacies of contemporary dance. Her performance was startlingly old hat.

On the other hand, the banquet had been mind-numbingly dull. Alia spent the evening with a glass in her right hand, practically attached to her manager by the hip. The dinner was a performance just as much as her actual dance was. The art of politely laughing during humorless moments was one she had become intimately familiar with.

To greet Alia at her apartment door is Lady, her 4-year-old cat with a penchant for mischief. She rubs against Alia's leg, mewing conspiratorially. "Give me dinner," she seems to demand with the air of a tyrannical queen. Before Alia can settle in for the night, she'll need to satiate the beast. After rummaging through her cabinets, Alia fills Lady's bowl with tuna blend and is freed from the ruthless requests of her cat. (At least for the night.)

After dealing with Lady, it takes Alia only ten minutes to ready herself for sleep; the monotony of removing her makeup, showering, and running through her skincare routine having become engrained muscle memory somewhere along the line. Then she is lying down and deep in slumber. At least, she should be if she wants to appear decently presentable at her 8 o'clock rehearsal the next morning. In spite of her common sense, Alia's mind is the most energized it's been all day. (Besides from when she was on stage, of course.)

With the whirling of the overhead fan as her only company, Alia may as well take this chance to reflect for a bit, since she obviously won't be resting anytime soon.

The subject of her worries are, per usual, dance. In her time in the relative limelight, Alia has slowly begun to realize two crucial pieces of information about herself. For one thing, she has been dancing solely for others her entire life. The other is that she hates it.

Not dance itself. That she could never hate. But the creeping dread that accompanies the realization that she only dances according to the whims of her managers? Or the shocking understanding that she doesn't even particularly enjoy practicing the contemporary style? That, she despises. But if dance pays the bills and keeps Lady happy, who is she to complain? It's not as though she could quit, or that she'd even necessarily want to quit. Her contract has a few years left on it anyways.

When opportunity and recognition hadn't knocked, Alia had built them a door. Now that she's safely emerged on the other side, what exactly does she desire?
...It's a good question.

When Alia trudges up the concrete steps to her apartment in her too-tall heels and too-coarse dress, it's a gray Friday tinged with rain. The street lamps scintillate, practically blinding, and for a single moment, Alia pauses. The hour is nearing 3 am, and Alia and her heartbeat are the only souls awake

on the block. If Alia were to drop a pin, the crash would reverberate around the entire neighborhood.

She should get inside. Lady is probably throwing a fit and the longer Alia hesitates, the worse the weather will become. In her mind's eye, she can picture herself sliding the key into the lock, the accompanying soft click, the ordinariness.

Alia doesn't take out her key from her purse. Instead, she hops down the flight of cracked stairs and out into the desolate street.

Without preamble, she raises her hands, preparing to begin. Hears the music stutter to life, melody stumbling as the pitch wavers.

In her time in the relative limelight, Alia has slowly begun to realize two crucial pieces of information. For one thing, success does not equate to joy. Perhaps it is a simple realization, but the number of roles she scores and the quantity of interviews she attends does not make her happy.

Alia's heels click together as she starts to sway, kicking up muddied water and tarnishing the hem of her dress while she rocks to the thrum of an imagined violin.

The second thing she's learned is also straightforward. Spending time with Lady, indulging in sprinkled donuts, and dancing how Alia wishes to dance, all jubilation in the simplest sense of the word. The premeditated purpose she'd been in pursuit of the majority of her life, set out by her parents, Yvette, and everyone else, is not what she longs for.

Beneath the glaring street lamps, dress partially soaked through, and armed with knowledge of the changes she needs to make, Alia thinks that this is what it means to be truly alive.



Lillian Zhao '23



Shelby Bernstein '23

Tails

Dogs oh dogs, they wag their tails with their unconditional love that never fails.
We snug in their furry coats, and love their sweet smell of oats.

Different Breeds with many shapes & sizes, wagging tails, which are always near.
Loyal companions, every single day. My friend Bella, is my cute little fella.

Michael Guillcatanda '25



Sahara DiClemente '23

Enthusiasm flowing free
Creativity for all to see
Heart and soul, put down in a book
Open up and take a look!



