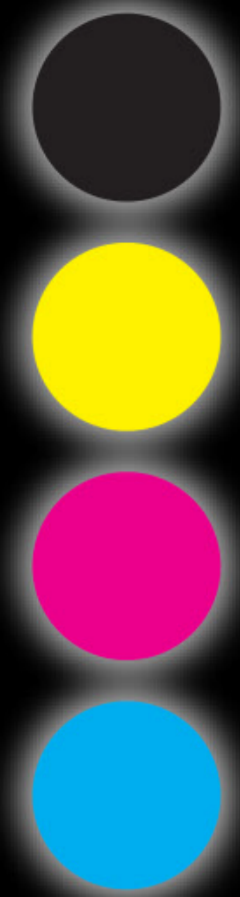


GRAY MATTERS



SALT LAKE TEENS WRITE

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# GRAY MATTERS



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The Salt Lake Teens Write (SLTW) program is a series of comprehensive writing workshops throughout the year intended to help teens develop their skills and passion for creative writing, and to provide a platform for teen writers and artists to further develop their writerly voices and artistic endeavors. As a collaboration between the SLCC Community Writing Center (CWC) and The Salt Lake City Public Library, SLTW is facilitated by the CWC's Youth Programs Coordinator and Associate Director with support from librarians.

All teens entering grades 9-12 this fall are eligible to participate in all of the cohorts. At the end of the year, all the writing cohorts come together to collaborate on an anthology publication and public reading to celebrate the different texts they have created during the year. This current anthology is a representation of the works that several cohort members created over the course of 2022 as well as works from other teen writers and artists across the Salt Lake Valley. For more information, visit [www.sltwcommunity.weebly.com](http://www.sltwcommunity.weebly.com).



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## A LESSON FROM ROSES

by Arwen Rasmussen

On the surface you feel delicate.  
Your pretty petals easy to  
rip, easy to  
smash, easy to  
make into a gooey paste.  
You become a pesto of pinks and reds.

You fall apart.  
You scream at the pain of  
your petals being plucked.  
“He loves me, he loves me not, he loves me...”  
Over and over.  
He loves her not.

You look delicate.  
People grab at you just to  
destroy you,  
ignore you.  
It hurts.  
Ignored and your petals dry and crumble.

A delicate rose.  
A delicate rose with a  
strong stem and sharp thorns.

You’ve been plucked before.  
With every petal  
dropped,  
ripped,  
made to paste,  
you grow taller and pointier.

Your petals are gone but  
you stay rooted to the ground,  
expanding your tendrils of leaves  
further and further  
reaching like a beautiful weed.  
A better you.

Come spring and your petals return.  
The winter attacks but  
the sun comes back and heals you.

This time your petals return with the thorns.  
This time you are more thorn than petal.  
This time you don’t share as much.  
This time you only pretend you’re delicate.

You can pluck my petals but  
I still have my stem.

A lesson from roses.

## FALSITY

by Chloe Bouton

I'm not skilled at beginnings. It would be easier if I knew when it began. I'm left with truncated glimpses, snapshots of what might have happened. When you're young, you don't think too much outside yourself. I plead my age.

I suppose I'll start with the 'where.' A small village up in the mountains, a land of rolling hills, impossibly bright flowers, roaming animals, and rivers. The house where it all began: A purple-painted cottage not fifty feet wide with a roof that always leaked. I spent my summer there, swinging my legs off the edge of Lucy's kitchen table.

Lucy was a witch, and we all knew it. It didn't matter, because she was good at it. Needing something to cure your seasonal cough? Lucy had it. Hoping for a charm to prevent rabbits from pilfering your crops? Lucy had it. Seeking a ward against wicked spirits? Lucy had it. She was six years my senior, and I thought the world of her. Every evening, she had two batches brewing: something to eat, and something to hex. I still remember how she seasoned pork chops, and the precise method she used to dispel poltergeists.

All of the boys in our village loved Lucy. I suppose they couldn't help it. She was lovely and enchanting, always dressed in draping cloths of a dozen different patterns and colors. She wore scarves in her endless brown hair. Her face looked like a fairy's with a crooked nose, uncountable freckles, and shrewd purple eyes. Every Sunday, she strode barefoot into town to peddle her wares, trailed by a group of admirers.

Lucy ignored them. All she cared about was Jasper.

I never thought much of Jasper. He wasn't handsome, and he was easily irritated. He always dressed in dismal black and did his hair like he'd stuck it in a puddle of mud. But Lucy loved him from the day he started coming around. My

nights with Lucy became nights with Lucy and Jasper. Once a month, twice a week, then every day.

He ran his hands down her hips as she stirred her different pots, and whenever he thought me preoccupied, stuck his tongue in her mouth and kissed her. I didn't like him much, but you must remember, I was young. I thought every teenager I encountered hung the moon and stars.

Once, I asked him if he loved Lucy. "Doesn't everyone?" he'd said.

Yes, everyone did love Lucy. "Do you?"

And he only smiled, some half-quirked thing that excluded his eyes. I figured I must have been too young to understand what it was like to love someone.

Then there was Henry.

I loved Henry best. He was clever and gentle, with the sweetest smile. He wore white shirts and never bothered with his hair. He was a fisherman, taking over for his aging father, and he was very skilled at what he did. I spent all my nights with Luce and Jasper, but my days were reserved for Henry. He told me stories from his travels at sea, helped me forage for unique insects to play with, and showed me how to skin and filet river trout. Time with Luce and Jasper felt illicit and dangerous; time with Henry felt like the warm sunshine by the pond.

Jasper and Henry were very close when they were my age. Incredibly skilled knife fighters, they'd defended one another from ruffians that climbed up our little mountain and terrorized our sheep. Now, they barely spoke to each other.

Henry came to visit Luce sometimes. When he did, Jasper would quietly leave. I thought little of it, assuming he was jealous to lose Lucy's attention. I was wrong about what caught his eyes.

On the fall equinox, Lucy asked Henry to bring around some fish bones for her harvest spell. When he arrived, Jas and Lucy were wrapped up in each other like eels, blind to his entrance. He watched them for a moment, his eyes impossibly, horribly sad. It was like watching one of Lucy's summoned demons wither and die.

He thrust the bag of bones at me and ran.

The next morning, I asked him if she loved Jasper. “Doesn’t everyone?” he’d said.

No, I didn’t think so. I didn’t love Jasper. Jasper was too hard to love. “Do you?”

And, just like Jasper had, he smiled. But in place of an empty gaze, when I looked at him, I realized with a start that he looked about to cry.

We kept on fishing.

On a Thursday morning at the blissful peak of autumn, I was hiding from my friends in Lucy’s five-foot dining room. She was burning a quarter pound of incense and chopping up a quarter pound of turkey. I licked my fingers clean of the sauce that I’d eaten more than mixed. Lucy was humming, and I was happy.

Then we heard the shouting. I went to the window at the first sound of it, peeking my head out over the too-tall panes. It was Jasper and Henry.

Henry sounded awful; sick and weak. “You want me to say you’re insane.”

Jasper’s raspy voice was practically a snarl. “Don’t start with me-”

“I don’t understand why you’re even asking. You won’t even listen to me!” Henry exclaimed.

Lucy unseated me at my post, throwing open the door and marching outside to face them.

“What the hell is going on here?”

Henry froze up immediately. I pressed my face up to the door, desperate to be part of adolescent drama. “I was just leaving,” he said, much quieter. “Good-night, Luce.” He stared at Jasper, and I thought in wonder that I had never seen someone look at another person with so much visible regret.

He did not say goodnight to Jasper.

I realized suddenly, unpleasantly, that I’d never heard Henry raise his voice before.

Lucy whirled on Jasper. “The hell is the matter with you?” she asked.

Jasper lifted his arms in mock surrender. “Damnit, Luce, calm down. It was just an argument.”

“Don’t be ridiculous.” Lucy said while spinning around, laughing bitterly. “Look around. We all know what you want. We all know who you want. You can lie to yourself as much as you like, but you’re not fooling anybody.” Jasper’s face twisted. Lucy shrugged, and to my utter confusion, a tear slid down her perfect face. “Do as you like, Jasper. Just leave him alone.”

She stormed away, past her house, away from the meal still simmering on the stove, away from the flaming incense filling the air with lavender. Jasper chased after her, a meaningless cascade of apologies and pleas escaping from his lips. I went back inside. Somebody had to mind the dinner.

After that, Jasper stopped coming around.

The night that it happened, I was drunk.

I used to say I would never drink, but there was a girl. Her name was Marie. She was more than half of my waking thoughts and all of my unconscious ones. We snuck her out of her house, my friends and I, and she held my hand, and someone brought out the beer. I thought stupidly that if I drank enough to drown my nerves, she’d kiss me.

Instead, I threw up within an hour and left the clan still knocking them back, stumbling my way through the forest near Lucy’s cottage. Maybe she’d be home. Luce could cure anything. Surely she’d have some tonic to combat a hangover.

I heard them before I saw them.

“You can’t tell me it didn’t mean anything,” Henry said.

I ducked behind a tree. I was too drunk to face him, and I wasn’t eager to trade places with whomever he was yelling at.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Jasper said.

I snuck a glance, confused to see them together without Lucy. Henry was

dressed all in white; there were grass stains on his pants. Jasper was in some kind of black cloak. They looked like enemy ghosts, a thought funny enough to my drunken mind that I almost laughed aloud. I missed whatever Henry said in response, too amused to focus.

Jasper was angry. Of the few things in the world I was truly frightened of, Jasper's anger scared me most. "You're lying," Jasper said. "No, I'm not. And I know that you feel what I feel. You insult my intelligence," Henry said.

Jasper only stared at him. Just like Lucy had, Henry let out some kind of pathetic laugh. "God, you think you're so clever. You use Luce. You hurt her, you hurt me, you hurt Verity. You've hurt yourself. You'll hurt anybody to save your own damn dignity," Henry said as he walked towards Jasper, impossibly close, a mere inch between their faces. "You're a coward."

It seemed to me that the whole world went silent in an instant, like everything and everyone on earth unanimously ceased to breathe.

And then Jasper pulled out a knife and brought it down on Henry's shoulder. I couldn't stop my horrified gasp, but the noise went unnoticed. Henry had been too quick; he was only grazed. Perhaps Jasper would calm down, his dangerous burst of fury soothed by the show of violence. But Jasper swung again, and Henry drew his own blade and swung back, and my heartbeat grew so loud that I couldn't even hear their blades clanging against one another.

Henry's face dripped with sweat. "Jasper, please—" Henry exclaimed.

Tears poured from Jasper's eyes, heavy and thick. He was yelling things, horrible things, words and phrases that I don't dare to repeat, things I've tried desperately to forget.

"Please," Jasper said.

Henry stabbed him right in the chest.

Jasper stumbled and fell to his knees. I let out a pitiful squeak of surprise.

White blood cascaded from his wound, dripping over the blade of Henry's knife as he pulled it away. It was thicker than real blood.

Real blood didn't make a noise.

"You've sold your soul to the devil," Henry whispered. "You stole Lucy's charms, and you made that dark deal. You've cursed us all forever. And you'd rather do that than face the truth."

Jasper choked.

Henry was crying even harder now, loud enough that even the thunder overhead couldn't smother his sobs. "I'm sorry," he said.

And he brought the knife down.

I couldn't take it anymore. Stumbling toward them as fast as I could, I screamed, "STOP!"

Henry froze, his knife inches from Jasper's neck. "Verity? Where are you?"

"Henry, don't!"

I knew the second he saw me, from the way his face dissolved into a pool of pain and misery. He dropped the blade, white blood stark on his fingers.

But he made the mistake of turning his back on Jasper, only for a moment.

Jasper picked up the knife and plunged it into Henry's back.

I screamed so loud, the whole world must have heard me.

Henry, my beloved Henry, my brother, my friend, sank helplessly to the ground with lifeless eyes.

I ran to him.

Jasper was faster.

He seized me by the arms, pushing me back, mumbling nonsense like he was comforting a cat. Had his eyes always been so horribly white? "Shh, shh, Verity," he soothed. "Stop. It's okay. Nothing's wrong. It's okay."

But he was a liar, a horrible liar. Henry was dead, and Jasper was wicked, and with a sickening, disgusting run of gooseflesh, I realized Jasper's hands were wet with Henry's blood.

Jasper was coating my arms with it, trying to hold me still. Bright red, human red, clearer than roses and darker than rubies. I still see it sometimes, in my



dreams. I sink in it. Drown in it. Henry's red, red, blood.

Jasper turned me away from the body, but it burned incessantly in my mind, a grotesque, miserable image that will never leave me. I struggled to wrest myself free from his painful grip.

"How could you?" I asked.

That was the last thing I ever said to him.

A branch broke behind Henry's graying corpse. Jasper glanced up, tensing, and there was Lucy.

She was barefoot, just like always. She was clothed in pink, her hands trembling. Her frightening, beautiful face was as determined as I'd ever seen it. She looked like a goddess.

"You have angered the spirits of this world, and you have angered me," Lucy said. She didn't sound like herself. Louder. Wiser. Something else.

Bestial.

Jasper released me. I crumpled to the ground in a pathetic, wailing lump.

Lucy was floating. Her feet hovered above the forest floor, her hair flying in nonexistent wind. Her lips glowed blue. "Because you are cursed, because you have killed him, you have doomed his soul to purgatory. He can never enter hell nor heaven. He can never again live," she said.

"Henry," he mouthed soundlessly, and there was a fraction of the Jasper I wish I could have seen in him.

"Lucy," I pleaded, shaking, but she didn't heed me.

Her voice was merciless. "You will share his fate," she said.

And then Jasper began to convulse. I screamed again, too many shocks to my system; drunk, scared, irrational and grieving. Jasper shook and made unholy noises as his bones cracked and melted. That was the only word for it. Jasper's broken body melted into the ground. A pit opened up beneath him, and his putrid remains were swallowed up by merciless earth.

The gaping maw of the forest floor sewed itself neatly shut, as though it had never moved.

There was silence again, the painful, curious kind wherein you can't even hear your own mind speak to you. My clothes were stained with a pinkish mixture of Jasper and Henry's blood.

Lucy knelt before me. I don't remember how or when she got there; she could have been there before me for hours, or years. Her feet were on the ground again, grass against bare feet, and her lips were peach and pale.

"Come," she whispered. "Let's go home."

She held my hand as we walked to her house.

Her fingers glistened royal blue.

## SOUNDLESS SILENCE

by Sadie Akin

I can't say I remember it clearly, for the greater part of the day I was in a breathless daze.

Her sculpture of wooden blocks was seconds from falling as her name was called from the audiologist's doorway. With a sweep of his hand, the doctor led her to another room, empty except for a lonely chair. Gazing at the sound-proof walls, she felt her mind slip into a rabbit hole— spiraling down into oblivion. The man wired a contraption up to her ear and muttered, "I'm going to play you some beeps. Just raise your hand when you hear one."

At first, it was easy and she thought maybe she wasn't supposed to be here after all. But as the exam continued, her confidence wavered. Seconds of silence lapsed between each signal, but soon the sounds stopped. She sat suspended, utterly alone except for the blood thrumming in her eardrums. Vibrations of previous tones reverberated in the desolate hollow of her skull. Had the beeps started again? Or had she just imagined that they did?

Her albatross of an arm pricked her skin with each hesitant twitch of her fingertips. She was Orpheus—wandering through the desolate darkness of the underworld, comforted only by a flickering lantern to guide the way. She could turn back, but could she ever forget the truth this exam was forcing her to accept?

Soon the test was complete. Her legs carried her from the devouring cell. Led into another room, she was given barely a moment to process before the doctor delivered the news.

Orpheus's lantern slipped from her hand and it shattered onto the floor, shards of glass piercing her legs. Isolating darkness encapsulated every pore on her skin. She could hear the sound of a rushing river beneath her, but with no light to find her way, she slipped into its current. Icy water drowned her lungs and she scrambled, wishing for nothing more than to find the surface. Her foot caught on something solid, and she hastily leaped for it— and as her beaten hands clasped around the branch, she welcomed the sharp pain as it cut into her palms. Heaving herself up, she staggered until she saw a light up ahead: the gates of Hades. Orpheus had finally arrived, but the question was whether or not she could return to the over-world alive. Who would she be when she escaped?

She was seventeen, and, even now, she still detested the silence of those soundproof rooms, but it became more natural to expect it— the lapses of uncertainty.

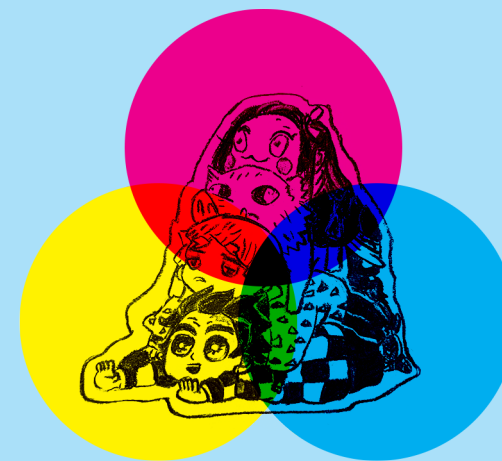
I try my best to find something to live for every day, for it's the only way I prevent myself from slipping and drowning in the raging current of my own mind.

I love the booming chaos of thunder and the gentle patter of rain; I love the sound of laughter, and the low groaning of the ocean waves. I remember going to the beach three years ago, standing awestruck in front of the waves, just listening. Before I had my hearing aids, I hadn't truly heard the beautiful intensity of the ocean.

People take for granted the things which are easily given to them. Living through my disability forces me to savour what privileges I have. I try to notice ev-

ery sunset, every patch of clovers, every pile of leaves. I stop and stare at the wonders that my peers miss, and I'm thankful for my ability to notice them. I think that my hearing— or lack thereof— tore me away from living trapped inside my head. I try my best to notice the world now and appreciate each little feeling I have for I know: I might not have this privilege forever.

I'm not that innocent child with the blocks anymore, but I don't know that I want to be. I am stronger now because of what I've endured.



## LIGHTHOUSE

by Eszter Vizhanyo

Meet me at the lighthouse  
And stand with me at its peak,  
Where we look one way and see the ocean  
And another to see the cliffs...

Meet me at the lighthouse:  
Salt-chewed ship, tattered flag, weary sailors  
Or high horse carrying wounded traveler...

Meet me at the lighthouse  
When come a blindness over your eyes,  
Hands reached out in front of you to find home,  
When come fog and high tide and screaming wind,  
You will see its light and make it there, at least...

Meet me at the lighthouse  
And see the lonely soldier from far away,  
Staring down with crown of twirling light...

Meet me at the lighthouse,

Find solace from the dangerous world  
Of frothing hills and rolling waves,  
From where you can look out and see the cliffs,  
See my path and yours...

Come meet me at the lighthouse  
And find your way home.

## SOCCKER- IT'S MORE THAN JUST A SPORT

by Callie Hanson

It's not enough. We have to spend every minute, hour after hour practicing until our legs give out, aching with pain. It's not just a sport called soccer, it's a way of life. The countless seconds, minutes, hours, and days spent training. Will it ever be enough?

Will it ever make us the soaring champions and unmatched team we strive to become? All of the many, many late nights, all the tears shed, all the sweat dripping, all the battle scars. Will it ever pay off? I walk out of practice, feeling my body ache with pain and tiredness. I feel my muscles shake and tighten with every step I take. I think so deeply, wondering why I put myself through this, day after day. Feeling physically and mentally drained until I can't give anymore.

This sport drains us just as much mentally as it does physically. One of the hardest parts of soccer is mindset. Being able to bring yourself back after a mistake. You have to have confidence in not only yourself, but just as much in your teammates. You must have the mindset of a champion. Failure is only a reason to work harder. Never, under any circumstance, should you quit over a bad season. Quitting is for the weak. I hear my coach saying, "push harder! I know you can give more." I force myself to go the extra mile even when my body tells me I can't. But at times, I begin to question myself. I hear the voice in my head asking over and over. Why do I spend countless hours pushing myself further and further? What is it all for? Will I ever be good enough?

But just then, I remember. I remember the little girl who fell in love with the sport, and the dream that she wanted to make into a reality. I remember the feeling of being on the field, and your mind is as blank as a sheet of paper, only thinking of the game. Nothing else matters at that moment. The vibrating feeling after an amazing game played, after a win well-deserved. I remember my team. The girls I call

family. From the most outstanding games and practices to the very worst days. They stand with you, holding your hand so tightly that you could never let go. Nobody is ever left behind. We are a team, a family. "We are all in this together," they say. I play for them. I play for the little girl who fell in love with the game and never looked back. That is why no matter how draining and exhausting this sport may get, I will never let go. That is what pushes me when I feel like I can't go any longer, how will I ever hold on? Never, ever, stop. Soccer is many things to many different people. But to us, soccer is home.

## FATE OF ASHES

by Eszter Vizhanyo

She creeps through the rubble pillars of the temple, amber sconces gasping faint lights in her path. They smear fuzzy shadows across the floor of the main room as she looks out, trying to find him beyond the pools of dark blood stretching out across the tile. The temple is all cold stone and empty eyes, the thick black rugs meant for repenting hands and knees torn to ribbons underfoot, and gilded silver paintings averting their gazes on the wall.

The Cup of Kings is gone from its hallowed place on the main wall, its delicate silk placement shoved aside and crumpled. Six or seven guards lie silent in the hall, drenched in the shadows, fighting for their last breaths in silence.

She can see the blinks of cold starlight, through the vast domed skylights in the ceiling three floors above. The light isn't strong enough to peek through, and the only thing that illuminates the other breathing body in the room are the torches, dying fast.

It occurs to her that she hasn't seen Talur in seven years.

He doesn't hear her footsteps whispering from behind him, coming closer and closer until she towers over him in her army-sanctioned uniform, sword strapped to her belt. Talur is crouched on his knees, the pulse mumbling in his ears the only sign that he hasn't yet died.

The same pulse leaks sluggishly from a wound at his thigh, though he can't feel it.

He had never had to kill before, but now the only thing he regrets is letting the last guard of the temple run to get reinforcements. They'll be here any second. "This is how I die," Talur Lendcrest thinks.

Chosen one of the land, light of the kingdom, outmatched in the magic I was supposed to be the greatest at. It should have been a simple mission, too... the

Cup of Kings would have granted him power that the Priest said he needed. It didn't matter that he had killed nearly all of the guards, because he couldn't fight back against the rest.

"I didn't think you could bleed," she says behind him, and Talur lets out a strangled scream, dropping back against the floor and trying to scramble back from her, but the ground is slick and he slips, landing hard on a bruised rib. Something far back in his consciousness cringes, but his hands had been covered in blood before, what did it matter if he was now lying in it?

She steps forward to meet him, face marred by shadow. "You know, between the magic and the monks by your side all the time, I used to think you were indestructible."

"Perra?" the traitor asks, his face upturned in shallow hope. "Perra Tabris?"

She kneels, eye level with him. "That's me."

It's true. She looks different now, having exchanged her little patched dresses of their youth for the forest-green Army Guard uniform, a simple sword strapped to her belt. He supposes his surprise is in the fact that she has risen so far in the ranks—he never expected anyone besides him to leave the quiet little village, filled with simple people. He didn't know she was different from all of them. But when he remembers the last day he saw her...

"I thought you were dead," Talur breathes, a crooked smile breaking over his face.

—  
*"He's the one," the Priest says, wind scattering ashes around her pristine robe.*

*Around them the screams of the village are drowned out. Talur doesn't break his stare into her eyes, not even to blink at the homes collapsing around him, but he is sure he recognizes that cry for help. Thick smoke rolls around them, pricking at the eyes of the two monks pinning his arms to his sides.*

*"Save them," he whispers, but the Priest's gaze does not waver.*

*“You are the Prophesied One,” she says. “I cannot let you die in some village fire.” She turns, sweeping the ash in a flurry around herself. “We must go. Quickly.”*

*Talur flinches as one of the monks settles a heavy grip on his shoulder, guiding him. His protests die on his tongue but he looks back even as he walks away. Mother Tabris has collapsed, sobbing over the charred skeleton of her house, her daughter’s screams echoing forever in Talur’s memory.*

“Sometimes people learn to survive even if they’re not the most powerful human in a hundred years.” Perra says, an icy bite creeping into her voice. “Even if they’re too unimportant to be saved.”

Talur’s lips quaver. “It wasn’t my fault. I didn’t ask for any of this...”

The last embers of the temple’s torches cough and turn paler and paler.

Perra’s fingers slip into her uniform sleeve. “You killed my sister.”

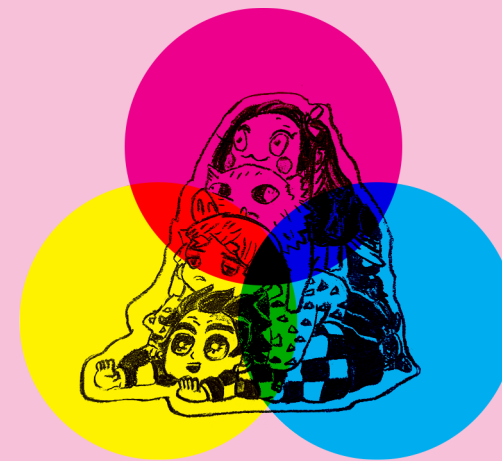
“I couldn’t control it!” Talur shouts. “It wasn’t my fault!”

“She was just a kid,” she says, but her voice breaks into a whisper. “So are you.”

Talur nods. He has come too far, but even as the shape of I’m sorry forms in his throat, he breathes, “Help me...” Other people’s blood quietly soaks into his shirt.

When Perra meets his eyes, she is crying from smoke long gone. “I will.”

A dagger slips from the sheath at her wrist, fitting into the space between his ribs like a pin on a map marking a target, a puzzle piece, destiny snuffed out. The torch sconces grapple for a final breath, then plunge the temple into darkness.



# NUCLEAR FUSION

by Evren Lilla

Nuclear fusion is the act of fusing two atoms together to create energy. This is not to be confused with nuclear fission. Nuclear fission was invented by Lise Meitner and Otto Hann in 1938. Fission is the transmutation of elements or isotopes. An example of transmutation is  $N_{14} + \alpha \rightarrow O$ . In fission bigger atoms will be broken apart. For example  ${}_{92}^{235}\text{U} + N \rightarrow {}_{36}^{92}\text{Kr} + {}_{56}^{141}\text{Ba} + 3N + e$  (what is not shown in this equation is the decay of  ${}^{235}\text{U}$  into  ${}^{238}\text{U}$ ). Fission is significantly worse than fusion. This is due to the radioactive waste as shown in the equation above. Also because of explosions. Fusion reactors are not as prone to explosions as fission reactors are. This is because the neutron shown in the above equation is used to heat water.

This water generates steam which generates pressure. This will then explode and spread all the nuclear waste everywhere. Nuclear fusion is when two atoms are fused together to create a new atom and energy is released. In order to get the nuclei to overcome the coulomb repulsion, high heat (at least 10 million degrees Fahrenheit) and pressure is used. In nuclear fusion, the two atoms that are fused together are usually deuterium ( ${}^2\text{H}$ ) and tritium ( ${}^3\text{H}$ ). The equation goes like this:  $D + T \rightarrow {}^4\text{He} + N + 17.6 \text{ MeV}$  where D is the deuterium and T is for tritium. One gram of fuel can produce the same energy as 80 tons of TNT. The problem is igniting it. The problem currently is getting out more energy than you get in. Ignition is the point where you get more energy out than you put in. To reach ignition, Lawson's criteria must be met. The equation is as follows:  $n\tau > 3kT/\eta/4(1-\eta)*(\sigma v)\Delta E - \alpha T^{1/2}$ . n is the density of the plasma and tau is the confinement time. T is the temperature. Eta is the efficiency. Sigma times nu are the efficiency parameters. Alpha represents the bremsstrahlung coefficient. From this equation, we can conclude that the lawson criteria are satisfied at  $10^{20} \text{ m}^{-3}\text{s}$ .

There are many ways to do fusion. One of them is inertial confinement. In this experiment, fuel pellets that contain both deuterium and tritium. These are then placed inside a gold tube. A laser is then shot at both ends. The laser vaporizes the outside of the pellet which causes the pellet to collapse on itself. This fuses together the fuel and makes the reaction happen.

Another way to do fusion is magnetic confinement fusion. In magnetic confinement fusion there is fuel in a donut shaped reactor also called a tokamak. Then this fuel is heated to 10 million degrees. Then a magnet is turned on. This then causes the fuel to spin. When the fuel spins it causes molecules to be pushed together. These interactions are enough to overcome the coulomb repulsion.



## MY MEMOIR

by Jonny Huntsman

My life flashed before my eyes... this summer when I went to Alaska with my friends and family. We stayed on a little private island with just us and we would fish for, like, six hours and then come back, eat dinner, then have free time. The things I would do in my free time were to explore the island with my cousin, but later I would know that things would take a turn for the worst.

The first day, we got there kind of late, so we had to eat our breakfast fast. I made a horrible decision getting a breakfast taco with pork, and about 15 minutes later we packed up and got on the boat. We were fishing for about three and a half hours when I started to feel nauseous and needed to puke. What set me over was someone catching a fish and blood going all over the boat. Then my insides just started to come out like nothing I have ever experienced. When we got back, my cousin and I went hot tubbing and then had dinner. After that, we went to take some photos on a rock, but then it was getting late. We had no idea that in Alaska the sun only goes down for, like, five hours.

On the second day of the trip, I went on a fishing boat with my cousin and we probably caught, like, 75 fish combined. We decided to sit in the front of the boat on the way back to the island and got absolutely soaked. When we got back, we did the same thing; we hot-tubbed, ate dinner and explored, but this time when we went to explore it was a little different. The reason that it was different was that it was low tide so we could walk to a nearby island. We wanted to walk around the perimeter of the island when we got to a steep grassy point. My cousin went first and slipped a little and then grabbed onto a tree for balance. When I knew where the slippery point was, I thought I passed it, but I didn't. I ended up falling about 15

feet down but then caught myself on the rocks below. I was not ready for the force, so I ended up falling over. After I got up, I found a little trail and ended up meeting up with my cousin. We decided to start heading back and thank my lucky stars that I was fine. I had a bunch of bruises the next day but didn't feel it at that time due to the fact that I was in shock. I was a little muddy but changed and went to bed because I was leaving early the next morning.

In conclusion, my family's trip to Alaska this summer will always be in my cousin's and my memory. We will always have a special bond for that reason, and I'll never go hiking in the rain again.

## EKPHRASTIC POEM FOR LES SALTIMBANQUES

by Aaliyah Zurita

As I lay here dying

All done up in paint

I will cling to my mother's blue

I am too

With my blues

Painted faces

White with sorrow

Red with regret

White; don't cry for me

Red; you will ruin your paint

Blue: I will be back

With our paint

We will be a catastrophic melody---

Paint Worn Blues

Bloodborne Reds

Holy Thorn Whites

# CHIBI DEMON SLAYER

by Addelynn Hogan



## A VIVID SKI DAY

by Ayden Hendricks

When you ski, you have one intention: not to fall. And if we do fall we must pick ourselves back up and keep going on or else we will be lost and alone for eternity.

I went skiing at Brighton Ski Resort in Utah in the beautiful mountains one day in the winter of 2016. At this time I was 8 years old. I was with my dad and younger brother, Logan, who at the time was four, on the hills out and about, skiing in the cold, yet stunning, mountains. I remember that day it was very empty on the mountain. The rails to direct lines were almost as bare as the Sahara Desert in the heat of the day and there were no waits in lines to the lifts. There were still groomed trails un-skied, freshly groomed from the night before, and while riding down these trails the crispiness and crunch from beneath your skis while speeding down the empty hill was the best feeling ever at the time. After skiing on the easy trails for the first part of the day, I was ready to try something more difficult. I had suggested to my dad that we try a black diamond which neither me nor my brother had ever done. It felt like something that I could never do. When I heard my dad say ok to my suggestion, my heart began to pound, my legs began to tremble, and my stomach felt as if a brick had been dropped into it. Logan seemed perfectly calm, even excited. My dad, Logan, and I sat on the lift to get to the trail. As we were heading up to this black diamond, the air began to feel colder and the wind had begun to rush past my face. I was scared. We exited the lift and made our short journey to the black diamond trail head. We had made it. Not even one minute after I started my descent down the steep treacherous mountain, I had fallen. I looked up the trail and my dad was gone. There was no one to help me up. I began crying for help, but no one could hear me. I saw one ski patrolman speed by with a swish and whoosh with

## I WONDER

by Sarah Garcia

no intention in stopping. It felt like an eternity as I was sitting there crying until my dad finally came to pick me up as he always would. When I was sitting there on the ground right before he picked me up, I screamed, "Why would you leave me!" He told me that Logan had fallen. I accepted it, and we went on to finish skiing the black.

When we fall, one time or another we might realize that the ones who are always there to pick us up are not there to help us. We have all experienced this like I first did in this story. We have to be able to pick ourselves back up or we will be stuck for forever and be trapped for eternity.

I wonder if I would've told him if

he would've liked me too.

Oh and I wonder a lot.

If I would've told him, would he have liked me too?

Would we be here today?

Or was I led askew, by his flirting, his words, by his lies?

"I love you."

I still wonder

what could've been if I had just uttered a word,

a sentence. Or even a verse?

No.

Despite myself, I never told him.

I had my chance but it drifted out of my grasp.

This is confusing.  
Though life is confusing too.  
I could've told him and even now, I am in a world of regret.  
"Why did this happen to me?"  
Feeling sorry for yourself...  
"He did this to me."  
"He made me like this."  
Blaming...  
"No, you did this to yourself!  
You once more let someone in."  
Hatred...  
Why?  
Why would I do this to myself?  
To be candid...

I don't know.  
I'm hurt.  
Our hearts are too precious and fragile to do this.  
Never again.  
Never again will I let someone in.  
Though I still wonder.  
What could have been?

## PRETTY UGLY

by Arwen Rasmussen

“You should really suck that gut in more”

With love - Grandma.

I’ve always wanted something more.

Something more than love.

More than good food.

More than a lovely home.

The more I wanted was actually less of something I already have plenty of.

“Why don’t you take up running?”

Kindly said - Aunt Nat.

When I check the mirror the front is nice.

With the slightest shift and a glance into the glass I see something unsightly.

Something I’d rather pass.

“That shirt isn’t really for your body type”

From your dearest - Mom.

The prettiest girls are not made of sticks and stones but moldable mush.

My sturdy frame will not be blown down.

This is not celebrated.

The wolf is mad.

Insults are covered with kind tone and sugar so it’s deemed love.

I want to feel it, experience it, know that I am the one that made it.

I haven’t won it and that’s alright.

Right?

Maybe I’m not pretty in any sense of the word, but I know I can be pretty in all the other senses.

One day I’ll feel that feeling I’ve been waiting to feel.

When I do feel it maybe I’ll finally feel free.

Maybe I’m just that ugly kind of pretty.

The one with a good soul.

The one with cool clothes.

Maybe one day I’ll be pretty pretty, but for now I’m pretty ugly.

# THE VOICE I'M FOLLOWING

by Heath Ison

Somewhere deep down  
From the blood cells to the white

There is a voice I'm following  
Guiding me on the yellow brick road of life

A consciousness.

Not yelling

but whispering.

I don't know if it's  
Good or bad

Because right now

Its guiding me away from  
Myself

But yet making a short cut to the

one and only

Pieces of myself

Hidden for me to find.

# INTHE DISTANCE

by Addelynn Hogan



## PROCRASTINATION ISSUES

by Khalid Abdullahi

Around 80% of high school students procrastinate to some degree. Growing up, most of my assignments were digital and my parents couldn't afford a computer or a desktop. So instead, I used my mother's phone to do all my projects on my email on Google Classroom from fourth to sixth grade, especially during the pandemic. I was struggling with my assignments a lot because I would always get distracted and procrastinate all the time. My mother noticed this and said that I would act like a five-year-old that would tell his mom he would clean his room but would clean it last second. After elementary school, my junior high was giving students a laptop to borrow. It's not as good as the one I'm currently using right now, but it did the job.

One day, I had a big project due the next day. I did  $\frac{1}{3}$  of it, but it wasn't finished. While working on the project at around midnight, I went to sleep while working on it. When I woke up, I saw that my project was not done and I was late for the bus. I decided to do the project on the bus and during Teacher Advisory. I could tell people could smell the computer overheating because it was charging all night while it was on. I started to type quickly and rushed it. I double-checked the project to make sure it fits all the standards. After one week, I got the grade. It was 27/28. I messed up on some grammar, but other than that, it was perfect. I did an extra credit assignment and got it back to a 100% grade in the class. That was one of the instances I got really lucky. Most of the time, I do not get lucky like that, especially in math.

One time in eighth grade, I had a bunch of math homework. We never had midterms in junior high so I would just do all my work the night before the end of

the term. I know the teachers would hate this but as long as I had a good grade in the class, that's all that would matter to me. As I said, I had several pages of math homework due tomorrow. I would keep avoiding the task and every time my math teacher asked me if I had finished the assignment, I would say something along the lines of, "I will do all the homework soon." I realized I had forgotten everything we were supposed to learn and that night, I had to watch all the Khan Academy videos on all the lessons I missed. When I was done, I could already see some imperfections and I knew I would get a bad grade, but it was 1:00 a.m. and I didn't think about the consequences at the time. I walked into the classroom expecting a decent grade. The teacher handed that creme-colored paperback. Big red writing stated 12/30. Disappointment immediately went to my chest. What was the worst part about it, you might ask? I could've prevented all of it.



## FALL OF A GOD

by Cody James

Life seemed to pour out of everything here. Not in the sense that the place was lively, but that everything in it was drained of life like a gourd of water. Plants that ventured to take root here immediately withered and turned to ash. Creatures that dared cross the borders sang a silent song of terror, writhing and twitching as if struck by lightning. Great fires became but a candle, snuffed out by the icy malice of the wind.

As the darkness consumed the land — or, rather, the lack thereof — nothing about this place changed. Always darker than dark, and yet always somehow visible, Talen’s home was not a place to be trifled with. How any being could make a home here was unfathomable; the impossibility of the place itself couldn’t be comprehended by the most genius of human intellect.

But then, Talen wasn’t quite human.

“Thick” didn’t describe the darkness that swirled around Talen’s cloak as he approached the temple; it was quite tangible, rippling like water and sticking to anything it touched. So vast and overwhelming was this sea of shadow that it seemed almost to force out any breathable air — not that Talen needed such frivolous things. He could breathe anything he wished.

When the not-quite-a-man reached the temple, he sensed something wrong. This confused him, as he didn’t know what it was; he had always known when something was amiss, and which piece of his world he needed to eliminate.

He trod carefully upon the crystalline steps of the temple, reaching out in the darkness, searching for that ripple that didn’t fit. If his mind was aging again—causing him to only think he was sensing things—he would be annoyed; that would be the sixth time this millennium. A few more moments of searching and he would—

“Taking a stroll, are we?” A voice said, just behind him. He turned and prepared to strike the intruder, but saw nothing outside of the normal darkness. Strange. He stayed alert, righting himself and continuing on his course.

The temple was more of a decorative piece than something meaningful. Talen enjoyed the worship that mortals so eagerly gave him, and he celebrated it by making replicas of their temples and altars for himself, though he used them rather differently. The temples were used as resting places or party houses; the altars, dining tables and display shelves; the sacrificial pyres, coat hangers and outfit stands.

The others thought that Talen’s indulgence was wasteful and disrespectful; he hosted many parties that ended with the occupied temple in ruins. Just as well, he supposed. The ones who disagreed with his hobbies weren’t to be invited.

The bathing chamber Talen entered was spectacular. The crystalline walls were adorned with all sorts of trinkets and knick-knacks from his visits to the mortal realm, colored with bright blues, deep crimsons, and the occasional violet. All of Talen’s favorite colors.

The walls had lights strung up around them as well, though they weren’t lit; the darkness wouldn’t allow much light to penetrate. The light that poured off his skin was plenty.

Talen undressed and started a warm bath, slipping into the large bathing pool and relaxing with a sigh. The water was hot enough to steam, but not hot enough to burn; the perfect temperature.

Time went on at a much less noticeable rate for beings like Talen. He was millenia old, and hours felt like seconds to him, so he let the time slip by like it was nothing.

To a mortal, he would have seemed to spend weeks in the bathing chamber — to him it was a few hours. He did get bored eventually, and took a moment more

before stepping out of the bath and drying with a towel. The bath had been enjoyable, but now he had more important matters to attend to.

He redressed and departed from the temple, gathering shadows in his wake. When mortals were granted safe passage to this plane of existence, they often noted how unstable and fragile their steps felt upon the unseen floor. Talen didn't get it; the ground seemed perfectly solid to him, aside from the pooling darkness that came to his ankles.

He groaned internally as he drew near to his destination — the Council was overbearing and far too proper for his tastes, but he had somehow been added to it. Against his will, in fact. The councilmen were among those who disliked his parties and overindulgence, and had decided that it would do him justice to be witness to (and involved in) important decision-making. He disagreed heartily.

“You should really watch where you're stepping, godling,” a voice said. The same voice, the one he'd heard earlier. He spun around, bracing himself for whatever was to come.

A tall man, dressed in a pure white military suit and a wide-brimmed hat, was giving him a toothy smile, which was as white as his clothes. He was brandishing a pale red sword, seemingly covered in blood, at Talen's face. Talen summoned his scimitar, using it to block the man's blade.

“What is your purpose, intruder?” Talen asked, raising his curved weapon to meet the man's face. Something was wrong with that face, something vital. Even so, Talen couldn't place it. He had a pointed chin — not uncommon for a mortal of Verizian descent — and lightly tanned skin, as if it were naturally pale but had been soaked in sunlight for too long. His smile seemed genuine, though it didn't quite reach—

His eyes. That was it. The intruder's eyes were a black void, with a pinprick of white in the center of each one. The man's sword, Talen also noted, wasn't covered in blood. It was made of a completely blood-red substance, pulsating with deep scarlet light.

The dark-eyed man stepped closer to Talen, his low-hanging coat making ripples in the shadow at his feet. He maintained the smile, and it became unsettling. Although, his personage was unsettling regardless. “Talen the Great, betrayer of oaths, the king slayer. What an honor it is to finally meet you face to face! ‘Great’ certainly describes your stature, godling. One look at that midsection of yours is proof enough.”

Talen looked down toward his belly, his face flushing and heat rising in his cheeks. He was unaccustomed to witty jabs such as this. “I ask again, intruder; what is your purpose? Have ye an excuse for treading on sacred ground? Or have you come here without admittance, bound to be damned to Dephlin's domain?”

The man laughed, as if at a joke. “That old coot? I took him out of the equation years ago, friend. Fury has been kind in allowing me to seek justice.”

Fury. Talen eyed the blood-red sword once more and it clicked. His eyes widened and he raised his scimitar to strike the creature before him, in the hopes that he could end its terrible, horrifying existence.

A flash of movement caught him off guard, and he froze, his chest numb. He looked down to see what had happened.

His opponent's blade had run him straight through to the hilt.

Talen staggered, daring not to touch the blade, though he already knew what was to come. Fury hadn't risen in millenia, since he was but a child, though he knew the horrors it could sow, and he couldn't stop those horrors from descending upon him.

He lurched violently and coughed out blood that had pooled in his lungs. That glowing golden ichor ran through his veins and those of his kin, giving them life tenfold. It steamed wherever it fell, and he could feel that heat rising in his entire body. His muscles turned to slop; he could no longer hold himself up, and his bones were soon to meet the same fate.

That hideous creature in the shape of a man cupped Talen's cheek in one hand, and then tugged the sword out of his chest with the other, twisting it as he

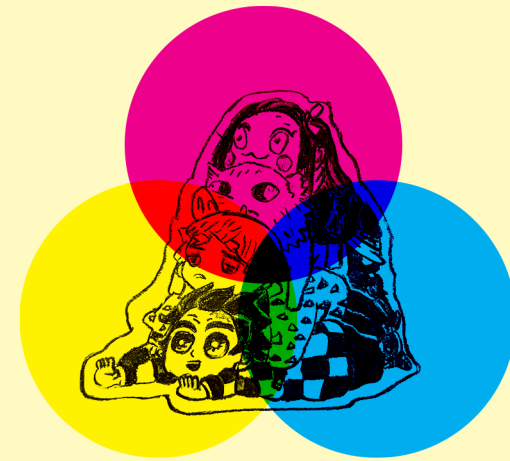
pulled. The dying god groaned in agony.

“No matter what you did, you could not have prevented this. Die quickly, and carry my name to whatever monstrous afterlife you find yourself in. Remember my name, betrayer of oaths. Fury has granted you this mercy, and has sent none but I, Kashikk Eiachor, the Godslayer, to deliver it.”

Talen let out a gurgling sound, his agonized whimpering unable to be sustained by his formerthroat. He tried to move, tried to stop this Kalashk as he drew near the Council’s meeting hall. His efforts prompted his limbs to fall from their joints and spread their dissolved contents across the unseen floor.

The not-quite-a-man’s last breath was choked and bloody, his person not much more than a puddle on the ground.

He thought he could hear the Council members’ horrified screams as his life fled him.



## THE STAGES OF NATURE

by Heath Ison

With the thickened hides on my feet

I sense the crickle and the crackle  
Of the leaves on the crisp  
autumn day.

I hear the crickets chirp and sway.

But really it's the oaths  
they say  
to the earth

To remember or forget

Yet

The morning of the winter with the  
Frosty white snow and the  
Sugary clear lakes glistening  
Like the mirror to the sun.

The flower will blossom and the icicles will  
Melt from whence they came.

The burst and loving loss of life  
Has never been so great to  
Me than Spring.

To summer we go from such independent and powerful freedom

Has never made me love sunscreen so much.

The predictable yet unpredictable seasons  
Are the foundations  
Of my life.

## NOT QUITE FORGOTTEN

by Hailey Wootton

One day we'll no longer walk the streets  
When the moon hangs in the sky  
The roads will no longer belong to us  
the morning sun will rise over our graves

Our ghosts would meet in the night  
Singing the songs of sorrow and joy  
we once knew long before the earth took us  
To our new homes deep below the meadow

Our body's had long gone  
But our spirits would never fade  
Our lives reduced to nothing  
But a box of memories

Our stones lined in a circle  
Like we used to sit  
On nights when life was speeding by  
Each moment following beside us

As we had faced life head on  
I knew you'd stand beside me  
Even as the wind and seas  
Tried to push us down

And on the day I died  
You smiled to the sky  
And watched clouds cry the tears  
I used to love

So when our time is up  
And we're buried beneath the ground  
Our tight-knit group of friends  
Will be what the forest never claimed

## SORTED INTO TWO PILES

by Alayna Heddlesten

forgotten and grudging

Forgotten, to forgive and forget  
what could be exponential, is more acute,  
not consistent but simple.

Grudging is an obtuse pile reaching  
to the sky at a consistent rate,  
getting higher and higher.

To put forgiveness and regret into two piles.  
To separate them like there's no in between is incorrect.  
Nothing is in black and white.  
Nothing is in one pile or the other.

## I'LL MEET YOU THERE

by Joaquin Arellano

If you want to play the game of life  
I'll meet you there  
If you want to stay gated in your feelings  
I'll meet you there  
If this plague consumes your thoughts  
I'll meet you there  
If you find yourself wicked  
exiled from your place  
I'll meet you there  
If you want to tear half the sky and live in darkness  
I'll give you the sun  
Against all hope we must rise we must not live in fear  
But live for what fear can do for us  
So be prepared for rapture  
Practice your moves  
Are you experienced?  
Because at the last stand I'll meet you there

## TEAPOT WITH ME

by Kellen Hunnicutt

Sit here  
 On the burner with me  
 Feel the fire or defeat  
 Feel your porcelain redden  
 Breath heavy  
 Politely try  
 So desperately  
 To stand out  
 With handmade  
 Stalks of lavender  
 And sunflowers  
 And deep green trees  
 With a shine-gold  
 Edge  
 Still overflowing  
 With liquid so  
 Scorching  
 Over steeping  
 Intended to be still  
 Gravity calls and we  
 Could all cackle  
 And crack to the  
 Floor shatter like  
 Nothing at all  
 But a scream.

## CAFETERIA

by Arwen Rasmussen

In elementary school we sat at the lunch tables by classroom up until 4th grade. Once we hit the 4th grade mark we got to sit by grade -- we finally got to mix. The cliques could finally form. The football kids who only played football at recess (the cool girls would briefly join this group as an early act of feminism), all sat next to the door leading outside. The nerdy book kids who only read during lunch all gathered near the trash cans. The “popular” kids who started puberty before everyone else and let that get to their heads, avoided the teachers table so they could quietly curse (saying “shit” made them think they were cool). We took those cliques seriously and so we took them into middle school and high school. In college we will have to start over again, mix ourselves up again.

...

There was always trading going on in the cafeteria. The administration told us not to share because of allergies, but we always did anyway. The snack to have were Takis. A bag of Takis was equivalent to gold. Everyone loved them. The girl that always got into trouble, always promised a bag of Takis as an apology. She owed everyone a bag. And then she moved. Laura, the girl who had to go to the hospital to get her stomach pumped because of her addiction to Takis, ate at least one big bag a day. The spice ripped a hole in her stomach. The spice tried to kill us, but we all ate the chips anyway. Now we search for the spice in gas stations, supermarkets, and our parents’ pantries. Addicts of the spicy chip.

...

I’ve stopped eating the cafeteria food. I’ve eaten it for years. The food rotation has always been the same, but it gets worse each year. In 1st grade I stopped liking the orange chicken because I got a frozen piece of the oven cooked meat. It was crunchy and raw and disgusting to my tongue. Then in sixth grade, I stopped

eating the burgers after I saw a kid throw it up. The meat made their stomach turn and I decided I didn't want my stomach to do the same. In eighth grade, I stopped drinking the always chunky chocolate milk. It tasted like dirt, but not in a good way. Then in tenth grade, I stopped entering the cafeteria all together. My body is made of the cafeteria's pantry, but it's time to move on and feed myself better foods. Goodbye cafeteria, I'm going to raid my fridge now.

...

Orange chicken, teriyaki beef, teriyaki noodles. Chicken sandwich, burger, cheeseburger, pizza. Spaghetti, alfredo, chicken parmesan. Fries, tater tots, curly fries. Fruit and dessert. The best of all though? The rolls. They are delectable. You can smell their butteriness from a mile away. Any school you enter you'll smell them. Elementary, middle, high school. Their smell is almost as good as their taste. If I could make a school roll scented candle, I would. Ripping into a roll at lunch is like ripping into a cloud. Ripping it makes it taste better. Bit by bit by bit. It is the way to eat a cafeteria roll. As it touches your tongue you can almost forget about the test you have in chemistry or math next period. It's almost as if the school makes the rolls that good on purpose, as a kinda suicide prevention, an anxiety and stress releasor. The saddest part of graduating will be leaving those rolls behind. Who cares about friends when you have rolls?

...

One time in elementary school, I was threatened with a knife. It made me tremble and cry. The scene was horrific to my tiny 3rd grade eyes. I faced death at the hands of a boy meant to be my friend. Looking back now, the possible murder is far less terrifying.

Firstly, I do not remember the boy's name but I do remember his twin brother. His brother's name was Liam, he was a plump boy with red hair and freckles, his twin looked the same. Liam was somewhat of a bully (like brother, like brother I guess) and I only remember him because he wasn't the one to get expelled for threatening young me with a knife. Secondly, the knife was flimsy plastic and in the

event of being stabbed it would have snapped against my rosy skin before making even a tiny cut. Although I was defenseless I would have survived. Thirdly, the teacher stopped him seconds after my cry at the sight of his weapon. In the end, I lived. The kid got expelled and knives were banned from the lunchroom, making country fried chicken very hard to eat.

...

During the years of COVID, my kitchen slowly morphed into my new school cafeteria. As my mom was off working at the hospital (saving lives or whatever), me, my sister (Aria), my brother (Dane), and sometimes my dad (depending on if he was working at the office or not) would all eat lunch together. Our meals all consisted of different things. Dad would have a fancy-looking sandwich that he would make while on a work call that "could've been an email." Dane would have ramen, the same ramen he'd eat everyday for the year he had to do online school. Aria would have a weird concoction of a meal that for some reason always had raw onions in it somewhere. Then I would have whatever felt the most balanced (or what my dad was having). After making our food, we'd all go our separate ways or some days we'd all gather at the kitchen table. Our glass plates were our lunch trays and our barking dogs were the school Janitors ready to "sweep" up our dropped crumbs. We'd sit together (or go our separate ways) until we all somehow finished eating at the same time, all of us getting up, walking to the trash, then promptly dropping our dishes into the sink. As if the bell had rung, we all headed back to our classes (or job), eager for the day to be finished.

...

"I've got a Golden Ticket! I've got a Golden Ticket!" I bragged. On a trimester basis, I'd brag to the world about my outstanding ability to suck up to my teachers. Golden Tickets were the prizes won by the elementary students that were "outstanding." They were leaders of their fellow students, the teachers' pets, and lovers of books. I won one at least every school year in elementary. To win a Golden Ticket meant something amazing, something special, you were worthy of



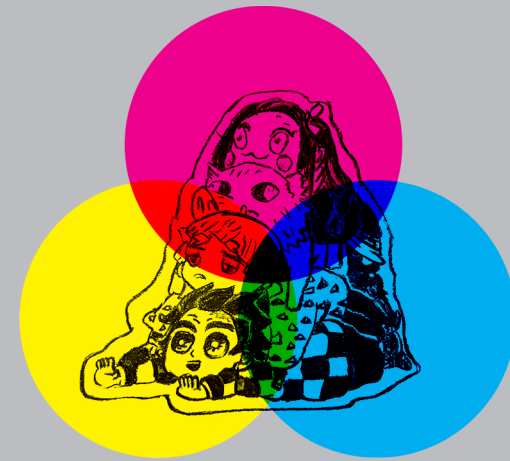
lunch with the one and only Mrs. Red. Mrs. Red was our school principal and with these amazing Golden Tickets you got to go to the front of the lunch line, get an extra thing of dessert, and sit at a table with a golden table cloth and fancy (plastic) golden plates. At this table you got a free notebook and stickers, nothing special now that I think about it, but it was when I was in the 4th grade. Mrs.Red, with her brownish, reddish, Karen haircut and wrinkles, would go around and talk to each of us individually. The questions were generic “Why did you get a Golden Ticket?” “What do you want to be when you grow up?” I liked them though because once again I was a teacher’s pet.

Everyone in the lunchroom was jealous of you when you were at that middle table with the golden table cloth and the fancy (plastic) golden plates. You were special, better than everyone. It inflated your ego like a balloon. Turning tiny students into monsters full of pride and the need to brag. I feel guilty for yelling “I’ve got a Golden Ticket! I’ve got a Golden Ticket!” into my little sister’s face as often as I did. It hurt her feelings.

I hope they stopped doing Golden Ticket lunches. It made the other students feel bad for not being liked enough by the teachers, for not going the (pointless) extra mile. That’s how it made me feel when in 6th grade I didn’t get a special lunch. That year Aria was the one to yell in my face. It’s funny how something meant to motivate students actually just hurts the ones that weren’t quite perfect enough.

...

I grew up in a cafeteria. In a cafeteria I found myself, found who I wanted to be friends with, found out that some people suck (threaten you with knives and call you names). I got taller in a school cafeteria. Now that I think about it, leaving the school behind will be really bittersweet not because of the friends I’ll miss, or the teachers I loved, but because of the cafeteria. I hope they hold graduation in the cafeteria. That’s where we really grew as students.



## TAPESTRY

by Heath Ison

Shedding off the layers  
Of the past.

To drop it off in the  
Recycling for another to wear

The torn quilt of my life.

It is warm from all the people who I  
Dropped  
For its warmth.

The tapestry of my future  
Has a strong Godly  
Presence of  
Potential.

Yet crowded with the homeless  
For some warmth  
With not a glance of the quilt  
And my shedded past  
Nor the tools that made  
My very tapestry.

For a time that I live I will  
Think that people

Are just using my warmth  
To walk in life.

Although I am wounded  
In this scary  
Storm of life.

There are others buried.  
Melting  
With snow  
In their tears.

## SEE YOU AGAIN

by Lauryn Swanson

I wish you could see me now  
How far I've gone and grown  
See me taking my big grand bow  
Show you all of the awards and trophies that I own  
All the big important times for me  
How I won them all I don't know how  
The big wide smiles I wish you could see  
Oh how I wish you could see me now

But none of that really matters  
I wish I could just hold your hand just one more time  
Then I could sew back together my heart that was ripped to tatters  
That would really fill me with sublime  
My big white smile would touch from ear to ear  
My arms wrapped around you would never let go  
Both of us holding onto each other so dear  
Last time I hugged you was so long ago

And I know that it won't happen at least not any time soon  
So for now I can keep you in my heart  
And wait until it is my time to have my opportune  
It sure is hard being two worlds apart  
I love you and miss you so very much  
And when the missing gets hard I can just think of that day when  
The day where I'll be so filled with emotions such  
On that day when I will finally be able to see you again

## ARTIST'S STATEMENTS

by Addelynn Hogan

### IN THE DISTANCE

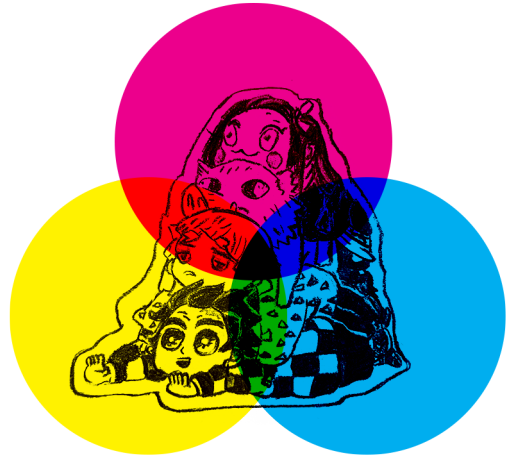
This is my graphite drawing of Hayan from the Webtoon “Unholy Blood” by Lina Im and Jeonghyeon Kim. This is just an exact copy of a scene from this Webtoon, but drawing this helped me with my patience and helped me look for smaller details within the artists creation.

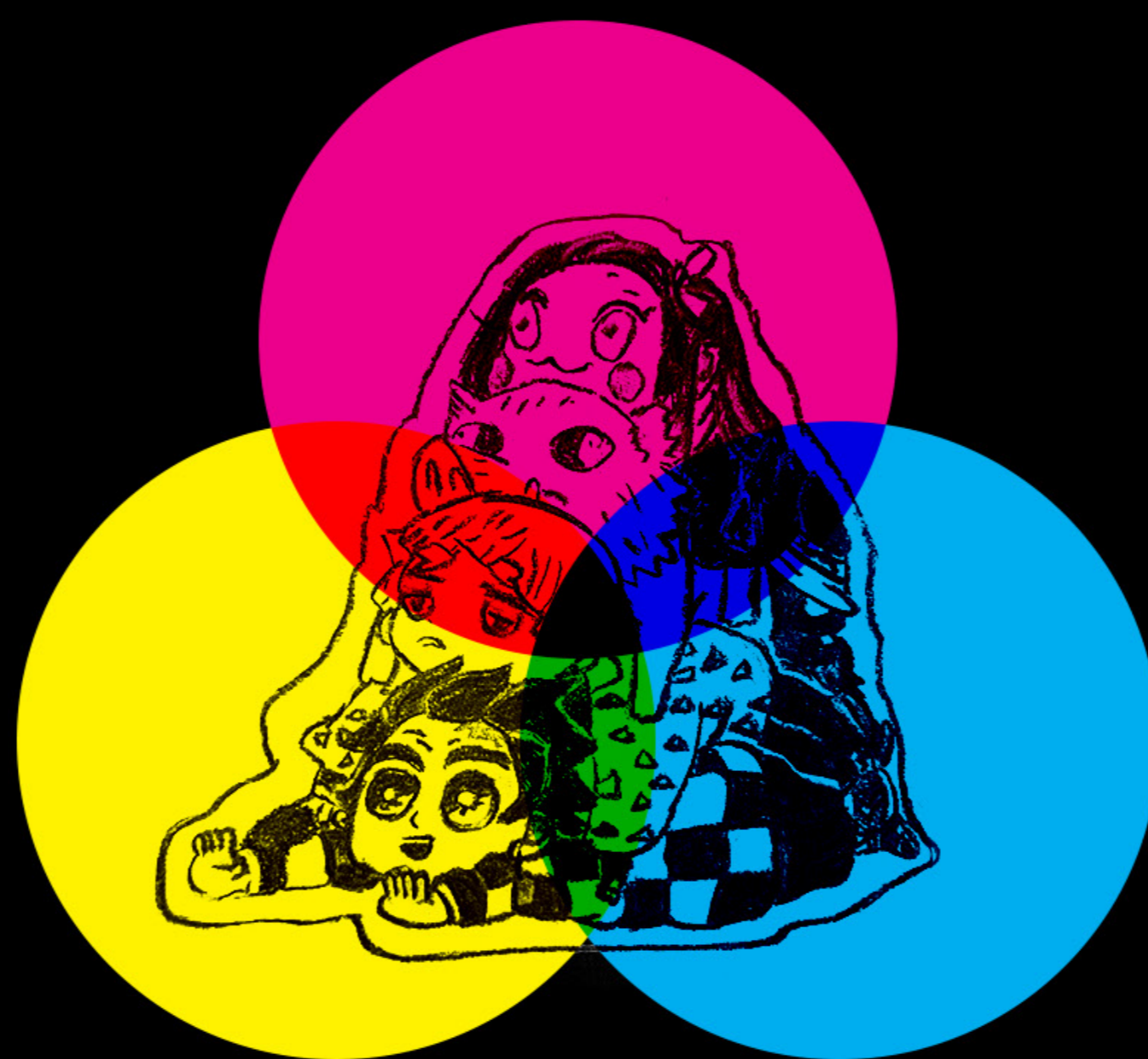
### GWENITH

This is my ink drawing of the character Gwen from the video game League of Legends. This character is originally a doll, so I wanted to take the small aspect of it to the next level by making her into a fairy. I had so much fun making this, and because this was my first ink drawing, I feel more confident to try new things.

### CHIBI DEMON SLAYER

This is my charcoal drawing of characters from Demon Slayer in a chibi style. I just copied this picture from the original artist, Koyoharu Gotouge, and had lots of fun making these cute little characters. Creating this drawing reminded me that the small details do not always matter, because without them, the big picture will still be there.





SALT LAKE TEENS WRITE