To all the students and faculty who believe in the power of the true written word.
To the art teachers and their artist students whose talent enhances this publication.
To all the Roaches, 8E and WPR for more than can be said.

Thank You
Dedicated to Three of Bryant’s Finest

Malik Wood
Class of 2014
Actor•Dancer•Singer•Dynamo

Molly Chernofsky
Class of 1965
Alumni Coordinator
Teacher of English from 1969 to 2006

Laura Brandkamp
Pupil Accounting Secretary
From 1986 to 2015
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**Cover Art**

Mitzi De La Rosa
Crescents

Ever looked out the window?
seen winds conserve
drifts of continuous clouds
scratching the sky line's curve
no matter how vast the azure is
countless stars scatter around
the sole purpose of fading away
gives birth to a new sound

Ever stepped on to the roof?
gazed up to heaven continuously
in the city that lights the darkness
shunning the moon strenuously
no matter how many dots you affix
caliginosity creates discretion
from afar we cannot tell
they’re exiled into solitary compression

Ever locked eyes with the moon?
catched before it surrendered
to secluded vacancy in twilight
lost on its way to be remembered
no matter how many tears fall
the moon and I tonight are the same
bound by the loneliness that grows
two can play at that game

SALVAA HASAN

The Night

Tonight the sea is still and so is the sky
or is it the night that is more calm
The owl on that thin branch is even quieter
The moon light brightening
Making the lifeless branches of a tree
look like arms of a shadow monster
The dark blue shade of the sky
with the moon’s beam mixing together
exhibiting the perfect starry night
The bats ready to take on their adventure
flapping their webbed arms going anywhere
not caring what awaits tomorrow
The night getting quieter every second
Every second a new life is born here
and an old one is dead.
In this night
and every other calm night
there is a roaring morning that we look forward to.

NOSHIN RAISA

Morning

At the crack of dawn
The flowers bow as we rise
Nature unraveled

ANTHONY LOMBARDO

MEHSINA MOO
The Tale of a Flyaway Leaf

It was a lovely March afternoon when I took my first breath of spring air. As soon as I opened my eyes, I saw hundreds of tiny white buds hanging in the arms of my mother. How exciting it was to meet everyone! Right next to me was a bud that had not sprouted yet; which was quite odd as most of us had already been born. I thought it might be a late bloomer. Anyway, my first few weeks were wonderful.

Everyday I’d wake up to the sun beaming on my face telling me it’s breakfast time. Sometimes the bright light in my eyes makes me sneeze. I’d always sneeze very loud and tiny white things would fly off of me. Humans call it pollen and it makes them sneeze too. As usual, I’d make my sugar sap and, through my veins, bring it to my mother who gave me all my water and nutrients she’d gotten from down below. I could barely see the ground as I was so high up. I saw what most people couldn’t see; but it was beautiful. I could see the sun coming up from the roofs of the houses, I felt the first few drops of every rain shower and I could see the occasional flock of birds soaring through the endless blue sky.

I lived in the midst of hundreds of siblings with my mother, Demitrea, and a few other neighbors. My mother was always open to housing other creatures. There was a family of blue jays who lived a few branches above me. Sometimes their son’s tweets would wake me up at night, but he was very cute so I didn’t mind. A squirrel made itself a home in the stomach of my mother too. In the middle of the night, I can hear him climbing his way up to his home to spit out all the acorns he had found. He offered me some, but my mother explained to him that I am a leaf. Around our family of birds, squirrels, and leaves, there was a row of houses that seemed all similar but were different in their own ways. One of them was made of bricks, another was painted white, another was yellow. It was lovely to smell the fresh fragrance of flowers from their windowsills in spring and the delicious smell of pumpkin pie in autumn (even though I couldn’t eat it). Not many people walked by, which was good since I’d heard that leaves get stepped on. But when people did walk by, it was fascinating to observe them. The soft sound of footsteps was always calming. Some of my brothers and sisters were very rambunctious and swung from their branches with no fear. I’d always get a rush of adrenaline every time I played with them.

A couple of weeks after I was born, the tiny bud next to me spouted at last. My mother named her Maple. Maple was very shy and rarely spoke, but she loved to watch us play and swing around from her branch. At night, she’d stay up to look at the stars until the sun came up. It was always calming to sit next to her; it felt as if the world went still. I liked Maple. Even though we didn’t speak, we communicated. I’d sit next to her while she’d look to the moon and the stars. It was okay to say nothing; the view always filled the silence.

I grew up to be a strong, bright leaf. My veins ran to the tips of my body, I was the shape of a big, round raindrop and had the color of a ripe, green apple. I couldn’t move very far but I sure had my adventures. I’d flip around my branch and swing back around and sometimes hang myself upside down and pretend I was flying. I was quite healthy too. The doctor would always say I had a great palisade and spongy layer. This is where I made my snacks. The doctor said it was called photosynthesis. Some of my other siblings had bruises and scratches on their epidermis from all the swinging around they did. Mother warned them to be careful but they didn’t always listen.

There were rough nights. Some with heavy rainstorms and others with strong winds. Some of those winds were real meanies. They’d howl with laughter as they swooped by us, trying to pull us down. One night, the sky suddenly dimmed and the air became crisp. My brothers and sisters shivered at the howl of the winds.

“Here they come, hold on tight!” Mother said. The screeches of laughter from the winds roared in our ears as they swooped through and between us. I could barely scream as my throat filled with air. Dirt flew everywhere and I shut my eyes, holding on for my life. My fingers began to lose grip and I heard myself scream. But suddenly, the branches began to settle and the leaves hung still; I sighed with relief.
“They’re coming back!” someone yelled, and I had seconds to hold on to my branch. It was the strongest wind I’d ever felt! I nearly lost my grip but managed to hold on. Even though my eyes were still shut, I managed to recognize the scream that pierced my ears. It was Maple. I opened my eyes and caught a glimpse of her as the wind carried her through the night.

It was November. The air was cooler and the days grew shorter. It was not long before Mother had to go to sleep. She usually began her hibernation around this time of year and we were all left to make our own food until we grew old and floated off to the ground. My siblings and I all began to change colors. My tummy was a golden yellow and soon, my whole body followed suit. Some of my brothers and sisters were bright red, others were orange, some were brown, and others were even a mixture of the sunset’s colors. We all had our different shades but together we made a lovely tree.

I was hanging upside down from my tree, swinging along with the breeze when I heard rustling. It was a lady. She was staring up at me and I stared back until she picked me off my branch and stuffed me in her bag. It was warm in there and I fell asleep until I woke up in a bright room. I was surrounded by a lot of my cousins and many humans. I saw a hand coming for me that took me out of the bag. The human was very strange. She began to stare at me and started to sniff me too. She scribbled in her notebook everything she noticed about me. She had brown eyes and dark hair. I heard someone else in the room call her Leslie. After she was done writing in her notebook, she put me inside and shut the book. It wasn’t very comfortable in there and there wasn’t much space, but I found it toasty inside compared to the freezing winds outdoors. There wasn’t much to do in there but read what Leslie had written in her notebook. At times, I still thought about Maple, my family, and the way my life used to be. I knew winter was coming soon, which meant that I didn’t have much time, but I knew that I could make the best out of what my life was now and make my last moments memorable ones. I am content with the adventures and the journey that I have embarked on as I have gotten a chance to catch a glimpse of the world and what it has to offer.

LESLIE ALTAMIRANO
Winner, Honorable Mention,
Queens Young Authors’ Contest, 2016

MEHSINA MOO
Winner, NYC Water Resources Art Contest 2016
No one told me it’d be like this at sixteen
No one ever told me it’d be like this at sixteen
“Life is perfect, things never go wrong”
This is not what we expected from the teenage dream

Teens become best friends with “mary jane” while drowning in codeine
Miserable every lonely night while making the days feel long
No one ever told me it’d be like this at sixteen

Never admiring real moments and instead staring down at a phone’s screen
Changing ourselves everyday in every way to feel belonged
This is not what we expected from the teenage dream

Mothers forcing us into churches to get our souls clean
Girls streaming tears while losing their minds over a boy at 2 AM
No one ever told me it’d be like this at sixteen

Forgetting about the future, busy with the intake of nicotine
Cold hearts built for protection, closing out the world
This is not what we expected from the teenage dream

We’ve become society’s robot toys following the everyday routine
Become too weak to fight against what is strong
No one ever told me it’d be like this at sixteen
This is not what we expected from the teenage dream

ERIKA ABELITA

Walking
Walking to face the bright
Leaves that rustle in the breeze
Hearing laughter, talking
Kind actions played out by ease

Holding onto the straps, smiling
Walking hand in hand
It was shorter than expected
My feet hold me to stand

But looking up to the trees naked
Leaves stumbled with dreams
Smoke buds lay lifeless
Next to the waterless streams

Walking back on the reflected road
It seems to be longer than before
Facing a change in myself
I can’t recognize who I am anymore

SALVAA HASAN

Illusions
Autumn gales blow swift
Green leaves now red, yellow, then black
Fracture memories

MICHAEL LIN

Walking
Leaves that rustle in the breeze
Hearing laughter, talking
Kind actions played out by ease

Holding onto the straps, smiling
Walking hand in hand
It was shorter than expected
My feet hold me to stand

But looking up to the trees naked
Leaves stumbled with dreams
Smoke buds lay lifeless
Next to the waterless streams

Walking back on the reflected road
It seems to be longer than before
Facing a change in myself
I can’t recognize who I am anymore

ERIKA ABELITA
Her Influence

I remember when I wanted to be in the NBA. Even though we was going right, things never went my way. That's why I listen louder than I play, and provide for where I stay. Even with melodies of felonies coming for the leads, I've stuck with the seconds; harmonic countermelodies keep my mama pleased. She said, “I know we not ‘ballin’ but we do got what we need so boy please, stay out them streets.” She talking ‘bout that thanks before the greed, a field instead of the street, legal ways to get the green, and peace instead of a piece “because we’re blessed before the sneeze and do not need enemies because they all more paranoid than Billie Jean and are crazier than me, as funny as it seems. Please oh please Stick to ya fades and ya seams. You know those rocks and them beams can ruin all of ya dreams. Raheem, Listen to me!”

RAHEEM WILLIAMS

But Mom Never Did Tell Me

But Mom never did tell me much about that day, when she met my dad and fell in love at first sight in the middle of May.

She would usually just say that he was handsome and on that day dressed all in white but Mom never did tell me much about that day.

One time she mentioned his name started with a J Aad that his hair was brown but resembled sunlight in the middle of May.

Another time she mentioned that I was named Mae because it reminded her of when she met her “golden knight” but Mom never did tell me much about that day.

Today I am reminded of this man whose name started with a J as I think of my now deceased mother on this night in the middle of May.

And I think as I walk along this beach bay: Maybe I’ll never know if my guesses about that man were right, but Mom never did tell me much about that day in the middle of May.

MEHSINA MOO

@Eighteen

A swift change in time, That sudden startling chime; The waiting has come to an end.

The girl is now eighteen The lilies bloom The bright ray of light in the raven sky Her Lily\(^1\) heart is now grown.

She is bursting with laughter. What are her absurd smiles about? Are those murmuring echoes or way too loud? The blue planet is tranquil, but the girl is not. In some corner of the world, two lilies fasten a Lily knot.

ZINIA MAHABUB

\(^1\) In Bengali culture, the lily is a sacred flower.
The Long Fall

I fluttered gently as Autumn Wind shook the branches, awakening the hundreds of leaves. I glanced at my petiole to make sure it was still attached to Mother Oak. Whispers grew louder as leaves asked each other how long they had until the end of autumn. Mother Oak would have to get rid of her leaves and acorns to ensure that she survived the cold, dry air of winter.

I looked at myself, pondering whether or not I would last until the last of fall. Most of my chlorophyll was breaking down. My blade was now a honey brown and my primary vein was a chocolate brown. My lateral veins were no longer a lime green, but a dull brown. The fog lulled the younger leaves to sleep, while the adult leaves started to photosynthesize in a comfortable silence.

I scanned the sky, as I heard a whoosh of wings. Sparrow landed on one of Mother Oak's many branches and turned his head in several directions. He examined the bark, looking for small insects. Sparrow ruffled an array of brown, black and white feathers. He hopped down the branch, bumping into leaves on his way towards me.

“Sorry about that, Crisp the leaves were barely hanging on,” apologized Sparrow.

“Why are you in such a hurry? Be more careful ...,” I replied, as I tried to resist Autumn Wind's strong current. Autumn Wind never replied to any of the organisms and modified itself according to the air pressure. He was mischievous, sending energetic gusts or tame breezes. Many oak leaves preferred Spring Breeze because of her gentle nature. Mother Oak's branches shook as her leaves gracefully glided away.

Sparrow warbled to catch my attention and flapped his wings impatiently. “Are you listening, Crisp? I need to build a nest before winter. My old home fell out of the tree after a storm hit.”

“Alright, no need to get riled—,” I halted. Autumn Wind’s fierce gust disconnected my petiole from Mother Oak’s branch. The wind whistled by me as my surroundings blurred into yellow, orange and red. The sky loomed above me as I fell with a faint thud at the base of Mother Oak. The firm ground felt cold as I stared at the canopy of Mother Oak's leaves and branches.

Sparrow flew towards me, circling around me. “Crisp, are you alive? That was a pretty long fall.”

I sighed in annoyance and answered, “No, I’m dead. Now can you stay still?” I felt a sense of freedom. There was a cluster of leaves at the base of other trees.

“I have a great idea!” Sparrow scooted closer to me and clutched my petiole with his toes. His sharp talons were clamped tightly as he gradually lifted from the ground. “I'm taking you to my nest, even though it’s not finished. You can keep me company.”

As Sparrow ascended towards the sky, I merely took in the scenery. “Where did you build your new nest?”

“It's the perfect place. There’s this park ahead and the humans are always throwing bread crumbs. It’s not too windy either. The tall buildings buffer the strong winds,” chirped Sparrow excitedly.

I smiled inwardly at his enthusiasm. Sparrow had always visited Mother Oak since I was a young bud and teased me because I was too uptight. But I was glad for his amusing antics. From the overview I could see the wide display of colors. Hundreds of auburn, maroon, and russet leaves scampered along the charcoal road. The branches swayed nimbly in the wind and the humans bustled about. The overcast sky
made the outline of tall buildings and distant skyscrapers obscure. The only reason I knew what a skyscraper resembled was because of Sparrow’s various reports. He always came back with stories about his sightings. The leaves on the branch would quiet down to listen to his eventful day.

Sparrow would stop now and then to greet another passing bird. He started to slow down as we approached an area with fencing around it. There were a few worn benches and a scarce number of humans taking a stroll. Sparrow circled around a young tree that didn’t grow to its full height. I spotted his half built nest secured on a stable branch and he landed on the branch placing me between various twigs.

“There, now you won’t fly away. And sometimes I can take you along with me to visit Mother Oak,” he said.

“I like tha-,” the Autumn Wind brushed past me, making me come loose from the nest. Once again I tumbled and hit the ground. Sparrow glided towards me, “Actually Crisp, let’s go on another journey.”

I agreed with Sparrow, as I wanted to see the beauty of autumn before it came to an end.

RAMISHA HIAH

Villanelle

True beauty lies within the soul,
beautiful lips speak the beautiful word;
A pure heart is what makes us whole

Faces come and go,
but a hand heals the wounds that inside us stir.
A pure heart is what makes us whole.

Time wipes away the beauty of the diamond after the coal,
but what remains is golden and pure.
True beauty lies within the soul.

Eyes that look beyond,
are those that truly see.
A pure heart is what makes us whole.

And you, my child, there at the edge of the goal,
hold on to your innocence—for it is bliss but not deferred.
True beauty lies in the soul,
a pure heart is what makes us whole.

LESLIE ALTAMIRANO
The Sink
Mama always tells me to wash the dirty dishes.
She doesn’t know that the dirty dishes mock me,
staring at me from the kitchen sink.
I am reluctant to touch them,
because the sink is rusty,
and the whirlpool beneath them scares me.
I’ve always been afraid of whirlpools,
and I think that the kitchen sink knows that.
Therefore, I am not strong.
If the sink knows my fear,
so do the dishes.
If the dishes know my fear,
so do you.
And, if you know my fear,
then so does everyone else.
And that will bring me down.
Down, down, down,
to the bottom of the kitchen sink.
But I will try to swim up.
Up, up, up,
because I cannot swim.
If I cannot swim,
I will sink.
The dishes mock me,
staring down at me from just above the water.
They block my way,
and I try to fight them.
Oh, do I try!
Suddenly,
right below me,
there is a whirlpool.
Down, down, down,
I go.
Because the sink knew
I am afraid of whirlpools.

My Solitude
Lonely
Not the word
Not the feeling
But the implication
The assumption
The flaw in character
The trait noticed
Something for my profile
Something that turns me into a project
Something you can label

FATIMA AZEEM
Winner, Honorable Mention,
Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, 2016

Failing Camouflage
I mimic the actors,
smiling and laughing as they do.
I attempt to blend in,
hoping it reaches my eyes.
There’s a flaw in my acting,
they can see right through it.
Every time I speak,
their attention is all on me.
I didn’t recognize the stares,
I thought no one would notice
my face would express truth.
They took the opportunity.
They slowly chip away at me,
beginning with simple conversation.
They make quick progress compared to others.
I regret opening,
now they know the real.
The concept of trust is foreign to me,
but I must learn.
Man in the Mirror

Evolution is not merely a science concept but a dilemma of my adolescence as well: one who adapts the best to his/her environment is most likely to survive. The constancy I strove for was in reality a veiled weakness; moreover, it was a fear that I was ignorant to. Belonging to a conservative culture, I had always tried to fulfill the stereotype set by my parents' society, completely ignoring that my life was an amalgamation of two cultures.

From the way I dressed to the way I spoke, I tried to imitate my cousins/friends from Pakistan. I abided by these models so much that soon they became part of my ostensible personality. A notion set by my native culture is that a man's beard is his transition from childhood to adulthood. A beard is also given much religious significance; therefore, a person who possessed this visage received greater respect. A "fortunate" event it was that I grew a beard before most of my friends had whiskers.

Truly, facial hair had myriad perquisites yet the snags were obtrusive. At the mosque, at family get-togethers and even in my house, I was no longer the kid whose voice sounded immature. However, in school and with friends, I felt alienated. They looked at me differently; it wouldn't be wrong to say that I intimidated them. Many even presumed that I had been left back: I was presumed to be an eighteen year old in ninth grade. At times, I would stand in front of the mirror holding a shaver for hours. Deviation from the norm was something that I approached with hesitation: What if I didn’t recognize the man in the mirror? What if I disappoint my family? What if I'm no longer given the same respect?

This hesitation was rooted in larger trepidation. The dilemma I faced was not only of facial hair but whether or not I allowed change in my life. The reality is that I was scared, scared that my life would start to take unplanned turns if I decided to change. I realized that every time I tried to do something new, worries about the present thwarted me which retarded my future. Finally, I gained the strength to shave off my beard and my fear: my appearance would be different today if this fear was invincible. Change was the key to learning who I am and what I am capable of.

Although the face I saw in the mirror was no longer that of an adult, it was one that I recognized. Although I was perceived as a child, I vindicated myself through my actions and words. Although I was deemed not to be religious, I proved to be a young man of high morals. I was no longer an imitation; I was genuinely myself.

WLI AKBAR

FARHAN RAZA
The Past Can’t Hurt You

“The past can’t hurt you anymore, not unless you let it.” — Alan Moore, V for Vendetta

“You sure this is our son?” Mr. Ainsworth asks, glancing down at the light blue bundle in his wife’s arms. It has the texture of her hair. The curls, the thickness. And that’s it. That’s all. Mr. Ainsworth furrows his eyes at his child’s strangely shaped nose, darker skin, and even darker hair.

“Oh,” says Mrs. Ainsworth, “he’ll grow out of it. Aren’t you familiar with those children born with brown hair that turns blonde?” Mr. Ainsworth brings his fingers up to press at the bridge of his nose, serving a dual purpose of pushing his glasses up and calming himself down. He excuses himself. Shoes clicking against the tiles, his hand rummages through lint, spare change, and store receipts. As he leans against the red brick wall of New Hall Hospital, he takes a drag.

In.

Out.

“Watch the smoke curl up, yeah?” like his pop always said. “Ain’t it a beaut. Just like a campfire. Remember when we went camping? A monster chased you up a tree! Haha,” a low, wheezing laugh bursts from his chest. Pop would shake his head and cough out smoke. “There ain’t no monsters, I told ya, but you were just too ‘fraid t’come down!” Mr. Ainsworth nods, smiles to himself, and the cigarette is crushed into the gravel of the parking lot, forgotten as he heads back inside.

No monsters.

—

He is one and a half. His favorite number is five and it's one of the only words that he says.

He repeats it and smiles. He looks to his mother and smiles. His father frowns at him.

“Dearie, he isn’t going to want to bond with you if you glare at him like that.”

“There’s something missin’ from him, Trista.”

“He’s just a toddler, Howard. Leave him be. I say if the boy wants to look at flowers, let ‘em look at flowers! This isn’t the 1800’s, you silly man.”

Howard Ainsworth decides to choose his battles. He doesn’t fight with his wife. Not this time. He watches as his child flips through the botany booklet. Watches as he gets up and shakily toddles over to his mom, a book in hand.

“And what color is this, my love?”

“Pink!” he says, smiling. He knows lots of things about flowers. He really likes the pink roses, is what he would say if he could articulate the words. Try as he must, however, the words are like lead weighing down his tongue. Speaking of which, he doesn’t like his. It’s hard for him to eat with this strange appendage in the way.

—

He is five and it is the big night before his first day of school. He curls up in his bed and smiles, clutching one of his books tight to his chest. Mom says he will impress all the teachers with the words he knows. He eyes the glow-in-the-dark stars on his ceiling and prods one of his loose front teeth with his tongue.

There's a shout. Skin? Something about a nose? Maybe he's getting a dog!

His eyes dart to his door and he inhales sharply through his nose—the floor is very cold! With a click! the door is locked and he’s back to being wrapped up in warmth. He squeezes his eyes shut, tenses his muscles up because he wants to sleep. He really wants to sleep, because everything is better in the morning—

He succumbs to the softness of his bed. Around one-thirty in the morning, the door knob turns. It does this twice and then stops.

—

He’s in awe. Everyone is so small compared to him. Eyes follow him and he doesn’t feel safe when he isn’t
holding his mom’s hand. Something must be wrong. A pair of black sneakers comes into view out of the corner of his eye, but he’s busy eating.

“Hi! I’m Noel! I like the color orange and the ocean!”

He glances up, apple slice in mouth. There’s a child, smiling at him. He’s missing a canine tooth.

“Hello,” he returns. “I like the number five and I like flowers.”

—

“Noel.”

“Yeah?”

“Why’d you come over here? The other kids say I’m scary.”

“You looked really sad. But you’re smiling now, so I’m doing something right!”

“I guess so.”

“Teach me more about those flowers!”

“I want another fact about stingrays.”

“Awww, come on! I already told you seven billion of them!”

“Silly, you don’t know that many.”

“Do too!”

“Pleaaase...?”

“Fine!” Noel huffs, placing a hand on his own cheek.

“Noel...”

“I'm thinkin’! Stop poking me!”

“Noel...!”

“... Didja know that the biggest stingray ever—Did you know it was eight HUNDRED pounds?!”

“That’s almost as much as your mom weighs,” he says in between wheezy laughs.

“Why do you always do that?! That’s mean!” Noel whines.

“You started it! You’re mean!”

“No I’m not! I gave you lunch!”

“So...? I didn’t need lunch!”

“You didn’t have lunch,” Noel mumbles.

—

He is seven and he sees Noel every day at school.

The accusation hits him like a bullet to the gut. He’s climbing the stairs to his room when it happens.

“I’ve had it, Trista.”

“Howard—”

“You aren’t in any position to say anything. You’re lucky I haven’t divorced you for what you did! Don’t you know the danger you’ve put us in?”

“What about him?”

“What about him? What indeed! You never told me who this man is!”

“He’s not important, Howard.”

“He’s got to be pretty damn important if—”

“Howard!”

He leaves the door to his bedroom open by a crack, wide eyes peeking out.

“Trista! How much longer do I have to lie?!”

“Can’t you just lie for him?”

“That’s not my son! I’m tired of lying!”

—

He’s at school.

“Oh, yeah,” Noel replies, patting his back. Noel then peers into his eyes. “Just wait it out. S’gonna
be okay. Don’t forget to lock your door.”
   “Noel, are they gonna stop?”
Noel furrows his eyebrows and it occurs to him that Noel always wears long sleeved shirts. That
Noel looks empty some days. That Noel sleeps in class.
   “I dunno yet,” Noel says at last. He decides to let Noel have some of his lunch.

The only monsters are human.

He starts sleeping in class.

He is twelve. He holds hands with Noel everywhere he goes. Noel has really nice eyes.

His bedroom door is locked every night.
   One night, there’s crying outside of it. The handle jiggles and turns, but then it stops. The door
doesn’t open.

The house smells. Noel warns him of second-hand smoke and says he should always plug his nose.

They are both sixteen. There are rumors.
   Noel tries not to laugh, turns and opens his mouth to tell him to move away or else he’ll get them
both caught. The light reflects in Noel’s bright eyes.
   His first kiss is sloppy.

The two of them are caught one Friday morning.
   They are both eighteen.

He catches his mom without makeup.
   “I'm sorry, I'm sorry,” she whispers. She touches his face. He stumbles back, foot hitting the bed.
   He wonders what, exactly, she’s apologizing for.

Noel doesn’t come to school one day.
   Noel doesn’t come to school again.

Mr. Ainsworth isn’t drunk, but his son wishes that he was. It would feel better, to know that he wouldn’t
treat his own kid like this when sober. He’s grown far taller than his father, but he still cowers when he
raises his hand. He still likes flowers. He’s started writing down his stingray facts.

He forgets one night. The door opens.

“We can fix him.”

He wonders if Noel is around.
   He starts planting flowers and the seed of a plan forms.
   He decides to tell his story.

If only Noel could see the fire he’s started.

LAUREN DANIELS
Pain in the Dark

Ready, dash, running into the darkness. You may hate it. You may be reduced to a black paleness. You may lose yourself.

The pain in the dark weighs you down. The scars, bleeding you out. The aching, within the mind. The anguish in your heart—caused by a world gone so wrong. The mind torn asunder. The dark revelation that the pain ain’t bad.

Broken—Beaten—Bleeding, body. The pain makes you feel alive. Alive and willing to take a stand. Take your pain, the clear sign that you still breathe… Take thy pain and run deeper into the darkness.

First came the dark. The light followed. Run into the void and embrace the pain from the dark. Where we walk, light follows. Our darkness paints the path so the light can walk. So it can wash away the pain of others. So it can usher in joy to a world that knows not the meaning of the word.

There are worse things than pain. The lies. The deceit. Unanswered prayers. Pain gives you a feeling. So long as there is pain, there is the ghost’s chance. “No pain is nothing gained,” is what they say. If it hurts, it means you live. Alive you are and fight on you must.

Darkness is natural. Night before day. Dark before light.

Within the dark can stars be seen. Within the dark can wishes be made!

Embrace the pain in the dark… The telltale sign that you have not died. That you can still… Breathe. Run into the dark.

We are the ashes the phoenix rises from. We are the end so a new beginning can rise. We are the cold that beckons the fire. We are the death so there can be life.

Where we go
Light follows.

DHANRAJ GIRDHARI, JR

MESHINA MOO
My Pride, My India

The Golden Bird of Asia
crowned of Himalayas,
the sacred river Ganges flowing,
A land of twenty-nine states and seven union territories
Where streets are full of multinational people — Punjabi, Hindus, Guajarati,
Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists
all practicing their different religions and traditions,
with love and peace—
That’s my country, India!

A land where people greet each other with love
in Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Guajarati, Marathi, Bengali, Nepali Telugu, Kashmiri:
A land where people celebrate Diwali, Holi, Gurpurab, Christmas and Eid
with love, colors and light
make our night
and day so bright
by forgetting all the differences—
That’s my country, India!

A flag depicting its great colors:
Saffron for the strength and courage,
white for the peace and truth with Ashoka Chakra,
green for the growth and fertility of the country—
A land with attractive Taj Mahal and the Golden Temple is standing,
A land with alluring dances: Bhangra, Kathak, and Bharatanatyam
A land of golden spices:
Turmeric, coriander, ginger, garam masala, cumin
where taste lingers on tongue and fragrance floats in the air—
That’s my country, India!

A person big or small
Loves this country after all.
Almighty God requesting you so high
keep the head of India always high
Let’s always love our motherland,
After all this is where we always stand.
Proud to be born on this prepossessing land—
My Pride, My India

HANEET KAUR MINHAS

MIRIAM CONTRERAS
My Pride, My India

The Golden Bird of Asia
crowned of Himalayas,
the sacred river Ganges flowing,
A land of twenty-nine states and seven union territories
Where streets are full of multinational people – Punjabi, Hindus, Guajarati, Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists
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HANEET KAUR MINHAS

To Wait

Daraw — to wait; to stand

I wait, unmoving
While I wait, I stand still, waiting for time
I long for the liberty to breathe
But time doesn’t falter. It never stands.

Protheekha — to wait; to long for

Patience.
I wait for abundance in time.
To alleviate matters,
that burden me

I wait, I stand, I long for.

RAMISHA HIAH

My Battle with the Sea

The waves crash,
pulling me under.
As I gasp for breath,
you stand tall and smile.
I struggle to join you,
as the foam rises,
bashing me.

I wobble on my feet,
seeing I’m farther from shore.
You’re a speck,
calling for me to join you.
Just as I stabilize,
an unsuspecting wave arrives,
pulling me deeper down.

I rise once more,
seeing nothing in sight,
my mind, blurry,
my bones, frail.
A massive consuming wave,
pulls me to the darkest pit of the sea.

I succumb to the sea,
no longer breathing.

I smile,
at peace with the lost battle.

BRANDI ALDUK
Winner, Honorable Mention,
Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, 2016

Capsized

Capsize not, keep floating, boat
Favor, I, your platform — these scanning waters
For your sight alone accords me bitter note

Gaudily flaunting when all I ask is you float
Son, I plead as your oscillating turns to staggers
Capsize not, keep floating, boat!

What effort do you set sail in to denote?
Hear this body’s prayers
For your sight alone accords me bitter note

You anear and sound can only promote
Yet you cease not; presence shatters
Capsize not, keep floating, boat.

But you are remote.
Only proves how scarce it matters
For your sight alone accords me bitter note.

And still only at your sight do I yearn to devote
Still where your brandish begins marks my inadvertent clatter
Capsize not, keep floating, boat
For your sight alone accords me bitter note.

FATIMA ALI
Never Deemed Lost

Never deemed lost, yet always unfound
Never quite alive, yet we have never died
Life on Earth is better than that underground

Is it though? When we live to please those who surround?
But who we are we don’t know through the years we’ve survived
Never deemed lost, yet always unfound

When we stand up for our thoughts they astound
They expect us to cover, they expect us to hide
Life on Earth is better than that underground

Is it though? When you know the true you has been drowned?
In the tears of sorrow through late nights you’ve cried
Never deemed lost, yet always unfound

Through looks and words you’ve truly been downed
Like you’re stuck and can’t move, to the ground you’ve been tied
Life on Earth is better than that underground

But is it? I ask myself when silence is the only sound
Realizing on this very day how hard I had tried
Everyday the same cycle going ‘round and ‘round
But the queen of fake smiles was all I was crowned

SHEREN DEYAB

Untitled

gruesome and desolate
I seldom confided in
the demons hiding in my closet
candle lit and
burning flame
slowly extinguishing
the last bit of
hope I find
in eerie silence
on Sunday nights
when cars? on
city blocks no longer
function and the clock
on my wall is shattered
by my cold lifeless hands
I am fatigued from counting
hours that are wired
in my mind that shout
“finish this!” or
“no this first!”
attempted and failed in
finding relaxation through
writing and
breathing and
taking walks in
crisp autumn air and
music dictating
words of my unspoken
soul because all
my wishes were
made from
nights lived on
worn out wooden floors
as I desired to be
someone who inhabited
all that was contrary
from that of her own

AIAT KOURANI

MESHINA MOO
Transience

Sophomore year
first day of school
first period
you came wearing baggy pants,
an oversized sweater and a bright yellow shirt,
Pikachu drawn in the center.
You entered ten minutes after the bell rang,
a grande cup in your left hand.
Your eyes, large and unblinking
like an owl's at twilight,
scanned the room for
the teacher by your side.

I liked you right away.

You sat in the back
by the windows, alone.
In January, I learned that
you're friends with the cold.

We became friends a month later,
when the tables were set
in groups of four and I
asked you to sit in one
of the three empty chairs around me.
By March, I already knew your birthday,
and that you own a horse in Honduras.
You are as chatty without caffeine
as when you've had coffee,
and you want to be a veterinarian.

One day I asked, What's the difference
between a turtle and a tortoise?
You laughed because I said tor-toys.

It's been so long since I made anyone laugh.

Before going our separate ways, you
bought me a pack of Hubba Bubba gum
with six different flavors inside,
surprised that I've never had it.
For two seconds I chewed on a
slightly smoother form of sandpaper.
It was the day I learned that gum expires.

Junior year, instead of classes,
Wednesday afternoons were all we shared.
Before going home, I waited with you
at Roosevelt Avenue for the E train.
We'd sit back to back on a black metal box
at the end of the subway,
then you'd sing Lean On Me
like a daily routine.

As they announce, “The next Queens-bound train is now arriving
on the express track,” I sigh,
but the breath released
is not of relief.

Engines grumble louder and louder,
my eyes on the trembling tracks,
shoulders slumped, legs languid.
I sit silently, secretly hoping
it's not the E.

Unmoving, I watch
and let it take you
to a place I never
know how to get to.

ALEXANDRIA SALCEDO
A Journey with the Wind

The year is 1930 and I patiently wait for my good friend Vidia to come and take me to my final destination. As I wait, I reminisce about the day I was taken on my journey.

I was the youngest leaf on Mama Maple. “Lennett, how is your first week as a leaf?” my brother asked me. Giggling, I replied, “There is nothing like the feeling of the sun, Adam.”

“Wait till Vidia comes to take you on your journey. I hear it’s the best!”

“Who’s Vidia?” he was surprised. “Oh, well she’s the wind of course, she hasn’t passed by for the past few days. She’ll come though. She always does!” Adam then turned to talk to the others.

My siblings were always talking about the way they want their journey to be, but I didn’t like the sound of it. What’s better than staying with Mama Maple, where’s it’s safe and warm. No one was chosen yet for their journey away from home, according to the rumors, leaves are chosen in September unless something happens to Mama Maple. Oh, I hope not. She was the largest, most picturesque and caring tree, as far as I could tell.

I wasn’t the greenest leaf in the bunch but I was the most aware of the human world, not as wise as Mama Maple though. I was the lowest leaf, where only a few rays of sun reached and only a few drops fell. But Mama Maple made sure I got all the food I needed.

Growing on the lowest branch has its advantages. I get to hear the stories the humans tell each other and the little boy on the corner shouting the day’s headline. “EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT! WOMEN CAN NOW VOTE! THE NINETEENTH AMENDMENT PASSED!” I looked across the street to a large clock to read the date. August 18, 1920. As the little boy shouted the headline, a roar of cheering and clapping filled the streets of New York. Some women were crying, others were screaming and jumping. I tried to look at all the faces. Some men were frowning and cursing under their breath. One man kicked all the newspapers from the boy’s newspaper stand. Well, that was not nice!! Why couldn’t humans be as kind as leaves? This is one thing I see every day that makes me question my journey. Why would I want to be part of the human world?

Vidia swiftly flew through my brothers and sisters, making them giggle and rustle against each other. She circled back and passed by me with a quick greeting, then made her way up the tree. She was quick and agile, strong, and soft. She was usually kind and funny, passing by to say hello almost every ten minutes. Vidia loved to move the leaves, and blow hats off the people’s heads, and rustle the bobbed hair of the flappers and the men’s suits. On cloudy days, she passes by telling tales of the leaves she has taken and the people that run after their hats. By September, she began choosing leaves to take: John, Mary, Adam, Jared, Jensen, and Emma. One after the other. It started to get lonely but with fewer of us to feed, Mama Maple us more energy, holding us tighter to her. But we all knew our chlorophyll would not last forever and it would soon be our last day with Mama. The weather became colder. Vidia never left and the sun ceased to reveal its delightful rays. Winter had just begun and the people scarcely came out, except for the rowdy teenagers that hated home.

It was January of 1921 and I was the last leaf on the tree. Mama Maple did not want me to go and fed me using her supply. I was now dry and colorful. My once green shiny surface had turned into a mix of red, orange and yellow and I was still small. She told me stories every night about my sisters and brothers and the crazy things they did before I was born. The weather was worse by the end of January, and I felt something was going to happen. Without a warning, Vidia appeared and carried me above and away from Mama Maple. There were no goodbyes exchanged, but as I looked down, Mama Maple was crying, because now she was all alone, her children lost in the wind. It was my turn going to places I have never seen.

“Don’t worry Lennett, I will be by your side every inch you move. You’ll love it, you’ll see people and hear news no other leaf has ever seen or heard. Mama Maple made sure that I will take care of you and I will.” Vidia was telling stories, but I wasn’t listening. I was moving fast, upside down, sideways, between people and then I hit a hard and cold surface. It was a radio store. Pressed against the store’s window, I took in as
much as I could. Each shelf had different shapes and sizes of radios. One was on, “Babe Ruth sets record of 137 career home runs!” What? Well, that was the least of my worries. Vidia took me all over New York City. I saw other leaves, some having better luck than others. There was one leaf named Steve who was stuck on a pigeon’s foot and the pigeon doesn’t fly, just imagine that. Luckily, Vidia always checked on me and usually she was my form of transportation. On April 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 1921, I was picked up a college student because apparently he needed a book mark. I was shoved into the book and put under his arm. When the book was opened, I was able to take a breath of fresh air. In front was a man with untamed hair who was speaking to the students and professors. The college student was whispering to the man next to him. “Can you believe this? Albert Einstein is talking to us.” Einstein talked on and on about this Theory of Relativity and to this day I still do not understand a word that man said.

Time passed faster than Vidia. It was already October of 1922. There was political unrest. Almost every radio broadcast was about Italy, Germany or Vladimir Lenin. October 30\textsuperscript{th}, Benito Mussolini formed a government in Italy. Vidia was with me when I heard this news. Vidia and I heard a lot talk about him as an inadequate leader. Oh the chaos he will cause! New York was in a frenzy as always. Everyone was shopping every day, going to the movies three times a week and listening to jazz. Every day was a different adventure. I saw Adam the other day, having the time of his life. A little girl picked him up when he fell from Mama Maple and made him her pet. He was a large bright red leaf, just like the one on the Canadian flag and was still in pretty good shape. But he looked older, more wrinkly and dry. I guess that’s what New York does to a leaf.

It was January and soon it was snowing again. I landed on a corner near a newspaper boy like the one when I was still with Mama Maple. “NEW TROUBLES ARE STIRRING! RUSSIA IS RENAMED THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS!” Vidia flew by quickly, making me fly off the ground and slowly spiral back down.

“Oh, I’m terribly sorry, but have you heard the news? Oh, these people don’t know what’s coming for them. You know I travel all around the world and when I was in Russia, oh sorry, the USSR I heard evil things, Lennett! EVIL!” I was surprised that she cared so much. She was just the wind. She could not do anything about it. But I couldn’t help but worry for the New Yorkers. They were so carefree. “Vidia, I am merely a wee leaf and you are only the wind. Yes you are capable of great things like pushing the sails of grand ships but they are humans and we are things that only get in the way. Oh the things you would do if you were human!” Once I said, what I thought was a compliment, her expression changed, from vivacious to grim and gloomy. “Why would you insult me Lennett? All I have done was treat you kindly, you saw Steve, I could treat you like that.” She was a drama queen. She turned away quickly and sped past the crowd.

1922 was over and the New Year was celebrated as usual, with fireworks and parties. The year barely began before a horrific attack occurred in Rosewood, Florida. I was pushed into a radio store by Vidia so I could listen to the news and tell her about it later, since it was a busy day for her. I was sitting on the rug, which smelled like dust and musty fur. There was nothing riveting said on the radios that day. A family walked in, overjoyed to buy their first radio. As I looked up at them, my view was blocked by a foot that was almost going to step on me but the little boy gasped and retreated his foot. “OH, a small leaf. I want to keep it,” the little boy exclaimed. Me? Oh well that was new. But this boy was so cute. A piece of the sky was trapped in his eyes and his hair looked like it was woven from golden silk threads. He was beautiful, a sight for sore eyes. He was just so cute! His hands were rough from playing. He put me in the front pocket of his dress shirt. His mother and father were talking to each other quietly. “Did you hear about the attack in Florida by the Ku Klux Klan?” the mother sadly told her husband. “What is today’s date?” he looked at his watch and continued, “January 5. Oh yes I have. The men were talking about it at work. The Southerners should wake up and stop treating the poor Negroes like that. It is truly upsetting.” You go, sir. That was the best thing I have heard all day. At least some people think like that. After all, it was New York, but then again he was only one of the few that thought that.
The little boy, who I learned was named Oliver, kept on checking if I was still in his pocket. The family bought the largest radio and planned to place it near their fireplace where they can listen to the stories broadcast in the evening. When the family left the store, I realized my fate was the same as Adam’s. I would be a pet. But I guess Vidia did not like the idea. She came quickly, blowing away the father’s hat and took me out of Oliver’s pocket and pushed me far away. “Why did you do that I could have stayed with that family and stayed safe for the rest of my life.” Vidia turned around rolling her eyes and pushing me higher up. “He’s FIVE! He will rip you to shreds. You have been away from Mama Maple for three years and you don’t have one scratch or rip on you and I want to keep it that way.”

The spring of 1924 was calm and beautiful. I ended up in Central Park for the last few months flowers grow and bees buzzing around them. Vidia came only a few times, taking me only short distances. On June 12th everyone was crowding in one area. Vidia took me to see, placing me on a man’s hat. There was a man suspended upside down 40 feet in the air wearing a strait jacket. It was Harry Houdini! I heard a lot about him when Oliver was talking about him in the radio store. He was crazy but he did it. He made it look so easy, making everyone whisper. When he completed the trick, everyone was cheering and clapping.

After three years I learned about the holidays people celebrated. July, August, September, and October passed. November came and everyone was overly excited. This Thanksgiving was different than the others. The first Macy’s Thanksgiving Parade was going to take place today, November 27th. Vidia took me into the dressing rooms of on of the dancers. She was dressed and about to walk out the door when I hit her face. She yelped in surprise, looked me over and placed me in her hat. I was going to be part of the first Thanksgiving parade! She made her way into the streets with the other dancers and began to dance. Every New Yorker was standing, cheering and watching the liveliest event of the year. People were waving and I basked in the glory. I pretended to wave back and blow kisses and I danced and sang. The parade came to an end, but no one wanted to leave. People came into the streets and danced the Charleston, Fox Trot, Texas Tommy, black bottom and the shimmy. Everyone was happy as they always were but this was different. The little kids reenacted the dances and sang and the adults talked.

1925 passed by faster. The only exciting news was that the Scribner’s publishing house published The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald. As a leaf I couldn’t read the story, even though I really wanted to. Maybe one day I could. 1926 and 1927 went by with no interesting events. Vidia took me to Queens, Brooklyn and the Bronx and brought me back to Manhattan. In 1928, I heard the grandest news. Amelia Earhart flew across the Atlantic Ocean becoming the first woman to do so. After that I realized I saw everything. I was now very old and fragile but Vidia did not allow any harm to come my way. She never left me on the ground and pushed me away from pigeons and garbage bins. There was no other way I could have ever spent my life and thankfully Vidia was my guardian angel.

Those long years made me weaker but happier. 1930 was the last year for me. I waited for Vidia to take me to the final spot she wanted me to see. She was late, which was unlike her. After ten years, Vidia was still funny and cheery. She was constantly telling me stories of the new leaves she took on their adventures, none of which had as great a journey as mine. She was planning this day since I told her I could no longer fly through New York City’s skies.

“Oh, Lennett! I am so sorry, but I had to get everything together.”

It was June and the weather was humid and hot. Vidia pushed me slowly towards our destination, careful to not rip my fragile figure. As we came closer, I saw a familiar scene, one that I haven’t for ten years. She placed me at the tree’s roots along with a few other leaves, one of which was Adam. My were filled with tears and the now massive and full tree said, “You came back, Lennett!”

I smiled and replied, “Yes Mama Maple, bigger, bolder and I know the world a little better.”

JIHAN ALSAHELY
Fortunate

I rose from bed as if I’d risen from a coffin,
Limbs stiff and mind foggy and I think I’m still groggy
But hey, at least I woke up.

I cringed at the sudden shriek of the baby,
Unsurprised this is the morning she cries like she’s mourning
But hey, at least she woke up.

I trudged to the bathroom, a lost battle as always
My cousin’s primping and preening and I’m about to start screaming
But hey, at least she woke up.

I sit through classes, present but absent
Ignoring the prominent rush of the crowd; is it so necessary, them being loud?
But hey, at least they woke up.

I glance around the busy and long corridor,
Does anyone remember, we can only be here today?
Anyone struck by the realization we aren’t permanent; we can’t stay.
But hey, at least we woke up.

At least we woke up.

JOSLYN PAGAN

11:11

In a world tearing at the seam
We tend to forget those that grieve
But at 11:11 we all stop to dream

Perplexed fish swim in waterless stream
A grown man cries because to them, he’s naïve
In a world tearing at the seam

Wounded heroes left to face nature’s extremes
And children won’t get presents on Christmas Eve
But at 11:11 we all stop to dream

Individuality is seen as defiance; blasphemy
People condemn others, once they achieve
In a world tearing at the seam

The poor fall victim to the rich’s’ schemes
Great ideas, buried too deep to retrieve
But at 11:11 we all stop to dream

To live, one must follow a meaningless theme
Because virtue is for dreamers; make-believe
In a world tearing at the seam
But at 11:11 we all stop to dream

MICHAEL LIN

Le mouton suivait
Maintenant il est capté
Sa vie est perdu

MATTHEW DIAZ
Another Sign

Another sign that you’ve lost it all.
Come to face with a dreaded dead.
You had your chance---now take the fall.

When push came to shove you fought to a crawl.
The words you said changed cuisine to bread.
It’s another sign that you’ve lost it all.

The dreams dreamt were very small,
Imbued by the despair and dread.
You had a chance, now take thy fall.

When day gave a call,
You took to the streets and bled them red.
Another sign that you’ve lost it all.

Oh, how grim, was the crow you mauled.
A final stand on feathers they spread.
You had a chance, now take your fall.

You wished to save the world by venture… by brawl.
But each step taken sealed a darker hell which left memories dead.
Another sign that you’ve lost it all.
You had –your– chance, now take the fall.

DHANRAJ GIRDHARI, JR

War Never Changes

War always starts with the people rising.
We will never stop fighting for food, water, land, and riches.
War is created by people who choose for changes.
War never changes.

War always starts with the people dying.
We will never stop fighting for anger, for peace, order, and protection.
War is created by people who choose for no changes.
War never changes.

War always starts with the people repeating.
We will never stop fighting for beliefs, liberty, happiness, and change.
War is created by people who choose for or not for changes.
War never changes. But, choices always change. People can change over time.

ERIC XUE
Ostensible

Creativity has been taken
By rubrics that circle my head
Meanings have been lost
By structures that count instead

Dreams have vanished from reach
By drilled productivity
Familiar faces have been lost
By papers charged with conductivity

My future is decided
by ink that inscribes circles
My past is judged
By formulated numerals

these false teachings broke us
but adulthood was passed down
unprepared for the real world
our unheard hearts make no sound

SALVAA HASAN

Untitled

Yovan got the whip, so the squad now rolls
Never in a rush, so we still move slow
Driving past the poe, boy we gotta lay-low
Huh, why we do that? Boy you still don’t know?

Damn...

Blame it on our age, where we go through a phase
And carry this rage,
I still don’t know how they know it’s us

Put our minds in a cage, and get trapped in a stage
But if we break out, then they know what’s up
Huh?

Click-clack...

We was never with the ones that had did that
Watch from the window and we sit back
Drive-slow by the cops, so they don’t mis-match

Blaow!

Drip-drop
The kids leak as much as albums
Hip-hop, tight-tux, and we speak like Malcolm
Flip-flop, grab-grips, they ain’t holding flowers
How the hell you gonn’ tell me we ain’t about it

Blaow!

Shells on the floor...(floor)
Bodies in the street...(street)
Violence is galore, shots went off
Now everybody in the street

Don’t lose yourself to this beat, though
I can’t blame you if you did
You haven’t seen what I seen, so
Thank God you here for this, thank God

Chilling w/ the homies never been as scary as this
No blunt passes, but we still might get smoked ya heard?

Lonerism inside of the masses, this ain’t in your classes,
They think that freedom won’t work
We don’t do much to get murked
I don’t want to die, I don’t think I need to,
there’s already hell on this earth

JUSTIN MARTE

MITZI DE LA ROSA
**Wail and Weep at the Jewels of Men**

Wail and weep at the jewels of men,
Lack of faith induces malice to rise,
As mountains rumble and angels hurtle in flight.

Tarnished themselves in the house of spooks,
Calling unto his mates to serve the table right,
Wail and weep at the jewels of men.

Lightning falls upon the land of the Divine,
Alas! Repentance is stopped as the ribs are rammed,
As mountains rumble and angels hurtle in flight.

O'Lord! Replenish their term so they may present virtue,
Make them faithful and turn their thirst into warmth,
As mountains rumble and angels hurtle in flight.

What have I committed in the midst of life?
No friends or foe to visit my dwelling.
Wail and weep at the jewels of men,
As mountains rumble and angels hurtle in flight.

**MD CHOWDHURY**

---

**A Wall**

A cry, a congratulations, a categorization
Accompanying us from the first to last whimper
Frail, sensitive, emotional, all present on our side of the wall
A wall which limits some
While freeing others
Smooth soft layers must cover our limbs
Soothing appealing words must leave our lips
Our arms cannot carry as much
Our bodies cannot endure as much
Our minds cannot comprehend as much
History books have forgotten to ink their pages
With stories of the other half
We have toiled the soil along side
The earth’s moisture and dirt
Soiling our cloth alike

**YASSMINE HUSSEIN**
Untitled

I’m in need, I’m in need of it
Onomatopoeia, find my Z’s in it
My bed looking real nice
I think momma seasoned it
Never heavy with the pepper count
So you know I never sneeze in it
Cocaine color shade of sheets
Comfy Quarter so I stayed in heat
Even if I didn’t pay for heat
Have you ever said you hated sleep?
Has it ever said it hated me?

Laying there thinking some bull-- -it
Has anybody been paid for free?
Mad city tiring good kids
Mad city don’t hire hood kids
Hoodie up, plotting a simple plan
Hope I don’t run into Zimmerman
Bullets inside me, he said self-defense
America built it but won’t blame the fence
Guess ’cause it helps out with herding the sheep

Too tired to talk, lol, I’m asleep

JUSTIN MARTE

Debt

We borrow from tomorrow to pay for today
Only one drop more in the bucket
But drop by drop it overflows

We poison waters
And flood our minds with ignorance
Taking for granted what’s precious
Precious not just to us
But all that lives and eats

We cut down trees
Stealing homes from the speechless
And ignoring that
They breathe, so that we can breathe
Their life ensures our life

We pollute the air
With toxins that mangle and kill
Forcing liberty away from the free
Clipping wings and drowning hope
Excusing ourselves with other priorities

We fail to realize that this is our home
Our one and only home
Where he can meet her
And she can protect them
But we cannot protect what no longer exists

So stop, think of what we’ve become
Consumed by greed, we s—— on the world
Without a thought in our minds, a care in our hearts
Poisoning her waters
Cutting down her trees
Polluting her air

We borrow… no
The bank of tomorrow has already run dry
We steal from tomorrow to pay for the sins of yesterday

MICHAEL LIN
Participant,
Champlain College Young Writers’ Conference, 2016
I opened my eyes to find myself on top of a desk, where I was being stared down at by some really huge eyes. I'm not so sure I should be scared. Maybe I should feel privileged. I think I'll share my story with these big eyes…

One cold night, the strong wind began making its rounds on my block. Slowly and swiftly, she got stronger and I could sense the worry spilling from my mother tree. Tere, my beautiful mother. She was the tallest tree on the block. The only one with leaves still dangling from her branches. Mother took pride in that and she'd even thank us and tell all 2,780 of us how brave we were. With every passing wind, she'd remind us to keep being brave and to hold on just a while longer because the wind would stop at any moment. She'd tell us that we had inherited our strong stems from Etre, my great grandmother. A beautiful tree that stood tall just like mother but that had been axed down as old age consumed her natural beauty. My grandmother was the prettiest tree down the block and all her leaves had been the last ones on the block to fall as winter approached.

My mother alone stood 24 feet tall and was only about to turn 26 years old the following week. Unfortunately, I couldn't celebrate that special day with her. Within seconds, I was falling onto the gray concrete. Some of my siblings fell along with me but just like we got blown off our mother, we got blown down separate blocks. My mother was soon out of sight and I was still being blown away with nobody in sight. I couldn't feel my face anymore so I chose to close my eyes and let my fatigue get the best of me. When I awoke, I knew I had been blown far away from my tree. But this time the wind had brought me some companions, a variety of leaves rustling around. I was surprised to actually see some leaves that looked almost exactly like me. Others were smaller and some were even bigger than me. This one group of leaves was a fierce red and apparently they all knew each other since they stayed together much of the time.

There was this one particular one that was actually really beautiful. Her edges were a neon green, and right in the middle of her midrib was a radiant yellow mark.

I think her mark had been spreading all throughout her leaf but couldn't complete itself because the strong wind had blown her off her tree before she could complete her fall color transition. I was the only one who didn't have any family with me. I was all alone. The loner in the group. The weather was nice and cool and there was barely any wind. I promised myself I'd try to make new friends if the wind didn't blow me away again. A breeze brought with it heavy air which made my eyes feel heavy. Slowly I entered another slumber. When I awoke, it was early morning and the wind had been carrying me away along with one other leaf. Within seconds, we were floating back down to a ground that felt much softer than the gray concrete. It was all green. The whole block seemed to be covered. I remember my mom talking about this type of ground. She'd tell stories of her younger years and how she'd been planted on it. As I was looking around, the other leaf snuck up behind me and almost gave me a leaf-attack.

"Isn't it so beautiful?" Her eyes were glancing far out onto the horizon. All I could do was stare at her beautiful colors. She turned in my direction and explained to me that our soft green surrounding was called grass. She told me that from high up above she would always observe the little boys across the yard from her tree playing soccer. When she spoke, her eyes sparkled with fascination.

"Pardon me, I forgot to introduce myself. My name is Lefa, nice to meet you." Her cheerfulness just vibrated right off her. "Hey! Are you listening?" She rustled around in front of me.

"Hi, I'm sorry. I was listening to you... I just... I... My name is Afel." This leaf made me too nervous. I was tripping on every word I wanted to say.

"Don't you think we're so lucky to have landed in this grass? It's so beautiful and it comes to life every afternoon and sometimes in the mornings too." She stared at the grass a while longer.

"Lucky? You think we're lucky? Lucky would have been staying attached to our trees. Instead we've been blown into the middle of nowhere!" I could feel my veins tensing up and my apex tilted down. Her mid-vein scrunched up and for five seconds she seemed a bit sad. The sun shined a bit brighter and a weak smile appeared.

"We are lucky... The wind chose us as her companions on her journey."
Her words stayed stuck in my mind for the rest of the day. How could someone remain so positive through the worst situations? My mind was becoming knotted. This leaf is definitely crazy. She must have hit her apex really hard when she got blown off her tree.

The afternoon came and suddenly I thought I was about to experience an earthquake. I was so lost in my thoughts that I didn’t realize children had come onto the grass. What had she called it? ...Oh yeah, soccer. The ball kept coming close to me and each time I was scared the ball would roll on top of me. Out of nowhere the sky became black and I felt immense pressure. And just like the darkness had come, it left. Lefa came quickly and asked me if I was okay. I stared blankly into space.

“I’m fine... yeah... I’m good.”

“You just got squashed by the ball, are you sure?”

“Yeah, my mid-rib just hurts though.”

She looked me through. “Well luckily, you didn’t get yourself torn, but your edge did bend.” There she went again. Choosing to look at the positives and ignoring the negatives.

“You’re so positive... Why?”

“Well because there’s no use dwelling on the negatives. It’s just a waste of time. Plus if you look towards the good side, you’ll be happier!”

Just as she finished talking, the blue sky transformed into a beautiful purplish-pink sky with a bright orange-yellow horizon. A small breeze picked us up and brought us to the corner. There were huge gray buildings almost as tall as my mother. Back on my block, none of the houses stood as tall as mother. Lefa noticed my fascination with the gigantic buildings.

“I think those are apartments.”

“What are apartments?” I inquired.

“They’re just big buildings. The apartments next to my mother tree always had all sorts of people coming in and out, at all times.” She smiled.

Just then I noticed some lady crouching down next to us. It was getting dark but I could still make out her bright red figure. Right when I was about to tell Lefa, I saw her hands come straight down at us. She picked us up and smiled at us. Panic was about to take over me when the lady just crammed us inside her brown plastic bag. It took me a while, but soon I realized that we weren’t alone. There was a bunch of leaves crammed up one on top of the other. It felt like we spent an eternity inside the bag. The following day I was finally picked out of the bag.

I felt something grab my petiole and then slowly I was pulled out of the bag and onto a desk. I tried keeping my eyes clenched but then I felt the need to open them and to my surprise, some really big eyes were staring down at me. “Don’t be scared... Just stay positive, I must be positive.” I tried to keep a smile on my face as I was being twirled around. Those big eyes remained all over me, observing me carefully. Is this what modeling feels like? Out of the corner of my eye I saw Lefa and as she was being twirled around, she continued to giggle. When our eyes met, she gave me a bright smile and I thought, “This isn’t all that bad. It’s just another journey.”

ABRIL RODRIGUEZ
Winner, First Place, Queens Young Authors and Poets, 2016

MITZI DE LA ROSA
The Horizon After the Sun Sets

You are an unfathomable mystery not even you can decipher despite your fondness for puzzles and psychological thrillers and daily habit of scribbling sincere unspoken thoughts on scrap paper and slightly crumpled tissue.

You remain enigmatic with all the truths you don’t reveal yet brave is all you aspire to be.

You think you are the darkness unnoticed for all they see is the splendor of cosmic constellations; underappreciated though you’re partly the reason why they are able to stare in awe at a shimmering night sky.

You believe to be all these things but I hope you know that to me you are the horizon after the sun sets: a beauty that seldom demands attention, that does not always seek to please, but elicits wonder, nonetheless.

ALEXANDRIA SALCEDO
Participant, New England Young Writers’ Conference, 2016

Do not live behind a facade

Do not live behind a facade
Waking up to sip the bitter embrace
Allow your identity to pervade

The tears are rusting for more than a decade
Alienation is suffocating, in the absence of grace
Do not live behind a facade

Why live life as a masquerade?
Remove your costume and leave it in outer space
Allow your identity to pervade

Open your treasure chest, time will fade
Ignite the past and leave no blueprint trace
Do not live behind a facade

A waterfall of gold will cascade
Over your once timorous, flower bud face
Allow your identity to pervade

Sis, you are not odd, be freshly squeezed lemonade
Curtain’s up, the show is on, own your place
Do not live behind a facade
Allow your identity to pervade

TATIJANA LONIC
Winner, Honorable Mention, City College Poetry Contest, 2016
The Lock and Key

Do you remember what we used to be?
We used to share our secrets and our dreams.
I was the lock and you were the key.

Like the stars, together we both were free.
Yet we didn’t know we ripped at the seams.
Do you remember what we used to be?

You were tranquil like the sea,
You claimed I was the hurricane, ignoring your pleas.
I was the lock and you were the key.

But sadly, I managed to see
The truth coursing through your bloodstream.
Do you remember what we used to be?

The promises you broke set the truth free
And suddenly, everything went downstream.
I was the lock and you were the key.

I gave you your chances: one, two, and three,
And then, I realized I was only a part of your schemes.
Do you remember what we used to be?
I was the lock and you were the key.

Fem and Feline

Our foreheads touching,
Our breath is perfectly out of sync
In (out)
Out (in)
Our eyelashes interlocked,
Forever
I’ll hide the key
1, 2, 3
We pretend to sleep,
knowing this can’t last forever
1, 2, 3
Your hand in mine, softly pulsing,
forewarning a storm
You purr out my name, trying to pick the lock
Your eyelashes swing upward, eyes now open,
I can’t help but smile
4, 5, 6
I am content trying to weave us into infinity
I hear the world calling I hear the world calling
I’ve run out of hiding places
We can stay
Where is the key?
I want to capture us in this moment,
stallions trapped in amber in chains,
The world grows impatient
I grow impatient
Their words entice you
Then
A crack in the amber,
Clatter of the chains,
You found the key,
1, 2, 3

BANDNA KUMARI

RAMISHA HIAH
Suddenly

walls go up,
firm borders planted
along the contours of your school,
your family, your job,
your circles of friends
in essence defining your world
then one day you meet her
your orbits tangle and
suddenly,
contrary to the philosophies
of a younger you,
she becomes your world
and you like it.

borders are renegotiated of course,
as the walls of you and she rise higher, higher,
higher til they bend
and curve upon themselves to form a roof
centuries go by,
within a five year span,
of tragedies and triumphs
bliss and misery,
of both your hearts tumbling
down and up these mountains
that seem to never lead to plains
and sometimes you assure yourself
that these are waves
and that waves are signs of life
and that at least this means you two are still go--

flatline
suddenly,
always with the suddenlies,
it ends.
the beeping tolls repeatedly in siren shrieks
the ceiling opens
and your world is torn to shreds between
the anchor that is you still loving her
and those cyclones they call
"irreconcilable"
The dust lets up enough for you to start
to at least see again, though your eyes still burn.
Time bends wisely at its knees to help you
lift away the rubble from the broken walls
brick by brick
memory by memory
And then one day the pile gets low enough
just barely enough
for you to see above it, past it
Light shoots in, above,
between the cracks
to kiss your face
and it's like
water flowing,
pouring on a desert tortured tongue
You tell yourself, smiling,
"Of course the world
was always bigger than these walls!"
And it's funny
because you used to mouth those words to yourself every day
lip synching wisdom you didn't really believe in at the time
This time you actually say it with your own voice
and believe it with your own heart,
and you truly start to grasp how big the world could really be,
suddenly.

LEFTERI KOUTSOULIDAKIS, Class of 1997
A Message to Future Owls

Your years here will pass you by
That’s what they told me
But I didn’t want to be here
So I paid no notice
Your years here will pass you by
That’s what they said
But I paid no mind

I couldn’t see past the negativity
The glass was always half empty
I walked the halls with my head down
Thinking of what could’ve been
Your years here will pass you by
That’s what they told me
But I paid no mind

So why does doubt now fill my mind
Why do I find it so hard to leave
The place I pushed away is pulling me close
These fleeting moments I’ll remember the most
But it’s too late to hang on
Your years here will pass you by
That’s what they said
But I paid no mind

The end has come
I must let go
My place is elsewhere
All I can do is cherish the little I have
All I can do is cherish this bittersweet parting
They’ll tell you that your years here will pass you by
Listen

HUZAIFA DORRIA
Fish

I can say so many things about you, like how you smile so brightly, and how your bubbly personality is disgustingly infectious, and how that cynical sense of humor twins mine.

And, how, awkwardly, you always make my day, although I'll never admit it to your face, since my pride is at risk (Though I probably already lost it around you).

I would say that you're the sister I never had, but I can't because— the word family is such a negative connotation to me and you— You're maybe one of the few positivities in my life.

And I know, I know, you'll make fun of me— next week and into next year but I need you to hear me say that once (Though you'll be reading this instead).

Honestly, seriously, because it's true, it's true oh boy, is it true. So thank you.

MITHILA MINTU

Trash Cans

As they say, “it’s trash can, not trash cannot.” Every day I walk past them, talk to them, give things to them: trash cans I make jokes with them, jokes about them, throw things out at them, they are trash cans But they’re my trash cans. They’re loyal; they don’t throw out things for anyone else They can make me laugh, while they cannot be happy, they smile at my jokes. They do the things trash cans usually can’t, ‘cause trash CAN. They’re my special trash cans, and no matter how much I kick ‘em I always come rolling back However much I deny it They make the day worth living.

SHAMIM PRINCE

YIANNA EVANGELOU & JUSTIN MARTE

Reassurance

Imagine if we went on a roadtrip in three years We could take the bus for practice until then but it wouldn't be the same up until then All these roads lead into each other anyway We wouldn't be able to decide what song would play on the radio As if we could decide the weather Perhaps but it's raining right now and you've always loved the rain Imagine driving in the middle of a thunderstorm then you would be at the wheel, and I would be staring outside the window. As if I didn't have enough of a distraction with you beside me Nope, we're waiting the storm out. But I've always loved the rain We're not waiting the storm out. We're not waiting the storm out, We'd become a part of it. What do you mean? Well, once you get submerged within something you essentially become part of it like bystanders to a growing riot So in other words, we are a traveling storm? Yeah, babe, a storm on wheels. But what if the rain stops? The rain doesn't stop, it runs out We'll run with it. And go where exactly? Anywhere, all these roads lead into each other anyway.

MITHILA MINTU
Napkins

She said “Meet me in Montauk”,
Oversized sweater, ticket in hand
Three years ahead

Tattoo map in the rain, it's leaves in the fall, the red in the sky,
Washed away in a littered tide
Nostalgia ages like wine, till you've drunk yourself dead.
Meet me in Montauk. You never showed up.

An old man at heart, a pointless compass the stars lead east.
The rain brought the cold, cigarette smoke in the air,
trembling with the waves.
Written on napkins, the scribbles of the sea.
Ripped through on the wood, stained in dark blue.
Nameless faces, the gray of the horizon, purple with green eyes,
wrinkled with nostalgia.

A silver cord pulling, I'm the puppet on a string.
Two years of sleep, I'm so tired
My wasted high school years spent chasing a girl,
climbing rooftops and walking to bus stops.
Counting every brick in each wall, laughing off reality.

This is every hallucination drowned with every story
and retold backwards.
Condemned by dyslexic authors with visions of black pages.

AHMED ELGUINDI

That Lo- BS

Same old story, the person I like
we joke around without any meaning
but internally, it means something
behind every insult, I guess there is lo-
no wait I don’t think it’s that

Sometimes I wonder how one person
can make another go so wild
as to lose themselves
with them or alone

I call him an idiot because he is
I can’t express myself well so
Idiot
My idiot
that's all I can come up with

I just have one wish
that one love story, I don’t want it
That ending is literally an ending
Romeo and Juliet died
I hope our lo-
I hope whatever we have won’t

SALVAA HASAN

RAMISHA HIAH
**Letter**

That first letter  
Is a seed,  
Watered by imagination  
As creativity shines above.

That first letter  
Grows into a word,  
Then a sentence, two, three,  
Four-  
And your seed slowly begins to flower.

Then a paragraph is formed:  
Two, three,  
Four-  
Soon enough, there is no space for more.

Another page is used,  
Two, three,  
Four-  
And then you see.

That first letter;  
It’s grown into yet another letter,  
One  
in the many never sent.

**Hand**

curious to explore the wonders  
it begins to touch  
grabbing and chewing  
thrown out with a loud no  
so it learns to

hinder will

curious to explore the wonders  
it ages to grab useless things  
building and discovering  
torn apart with a don’t  
so it learns to

destroy creativity

curious to explore the wonders  
it wants to reach out for  
understanding and care  
with nothing in sight  
it learns to

abandon hope

curious to explore the wonders  
it finds a job to perfect  
skill and passion  
with passages of betrayal  
it learns to

stop trust

curious to explore the wonders  
it tries to find  
purpose and reason  
only to be given files of work  
so it learns to

falsely prioritize

no curiosity to explore  
it’s grown tired  
wrinkled and damaged  
put under a cover  
then it understands to

not waste time

**RAYANE LOUHICHI**

**MEHSINA MOO**

**SALVAA HASAN**
Dude, What?

So I’ve been working on a poem for several days too long
The thoughts, they come and go and I’m not privy to stop them

My poems, spontaneous and strange
They’re words that pour out
Words I did not intend
My poems, erratic and wholly me
They never seem to make sense
Cause they’re created on the spot

They’re my thoughts expressed in words, and jokes, and sarcasm
They’re what I feel, what I hide in words, and jokes, and sarcasm

The poem was about love
—I think?
The poem was about loss
But aren’t they the same?
The poem, the words I didn’t finish
They inspired this

And whatever you think this may be
I wouldn’t be able to tell you
Because I never know myself

MITHILA MINTU

A Herald’s Verse

Have you ever composed ‘the verse’?
The verse on which our hopes emerge?
The mythic warriors are heralds of your sonnets;
They cherish your verse that triggers to connate.

Have you ever composed ‘the verse’?
The verse by which our loves emerge?
The mythic guardians are the heralds of your dreams;
They soothe your pain, and treasure life’s gleams.

Have you ever composed ‘the verse’?
The verse for which our smiles emerge?
The heralds of your verse daydream our peace;
They glorify and recite the paroles of ease.

Have you ever composed ‘the verse’?
The verse by which our destinies emerge?
The heralds of ballads treasure our dreams;
The verse of creation recites the odyssey of deeds.

RYAN AFREEN
Winner, Honorable Mention,
City College Poetry Contest, 2016

Definition of Art

You may say art is just an element of entertainment.
For me art is my enthusiasm,
Devotion and endeavor make it the most distinguished substance that no other chemical reactions could ever make.
From the blink of my eyes to the tippy toes,
From the way you look at me and the way I look at you,
From the colors that fade away and the colors that brighten,
Is art, the world of enchantment.

ZINIA MAHABUB
Spectrum

Riddled with meaning expressed in color,
A world born from nothing, established by variation
Faced with a different meaning each
I wonder.

The tree that grows ever so tall
Sprouting leaves ever so vibrant
Managing the world’s vitals and sustaining life
Die it will never truly
Giving and caring
Green

Ever so close but forever far
A tranquil haven for the stars
The free sky, where all is welcome
Sincere and lofty
Blue

And the moon so bright!
Essential yet empty
But a lone rock in a spread of nothing
Pure and straightforward
White… Black

Just around hails the sun
Rising in fierceness
Loving all with his shining light
Everything his domain
Setting slowly, a warm goodbye
Red, Yellow, then Orange.

The many colors in this vibrant world
All unique and specific
So I wonder
What color am I?

I am . . .
No, I transcend the spectrum
I am Colorless

MICHAEL LIN

The Keys

Deep breaths,
Forehead sweating,
My nerves show

As I tap on my keys,
And unlock a door
To uncertain destinies.

Soothing breaths,
Mind blank,
My inspiration flows

As the keys guide me
On an uncertain journey,
To a destiny revealing.

Shallow breaths,
Shaking hands,
All I want to do is turn back.

But the keys,
The keys urge me
To move forward.

So I do.
With all my courage,
And a final click,
My journey is complete.

MEHSINA MOO