

# PHOENIX

Literary & Art  
**MAGAZINE**

# The Phoenix

## 2019-2020

Now, more than ever, we must recognize those who gave us an environment to speak our individual truths without judgment. That space, for many of us, is our beloved literary magazine. The teachers responsible for keeping the flame of *The Phoenix* burning are Mr. Trachtenberg and Mrs. Waldron. Our sincerest gratitude goes out to them, as well as Ms. Levin for providing the thought-provoking art and to Mr. Donovan for supporting us. Thank you to our readers, writers, and artists for making this possible. Be fearless in the pursuit of what sets your soul on fire, readers. Hope rises like a phoenix, from the ashes of shattered dreams.

### Members

Mark Harvan

Josh Acker

Cat Both\*

Sophia Ferrara\*

Ella Henderson\*

Emily Harris\*

Olivia Gilroy

Shoshanna Brody

Sabrina Resuta (front cover artist)

Lydea Sophy (back cover artist)

Olivia Graban

Magda Videva

Emma Meglio

Maddie Yates

Annie Tirone

## **Table of Contents**

Izzy Russo . . . Euphoria  
Josh Russo . . . The Hard Life of Cookies  
Lily Smulling . . . Steel Dragons  
Devon Stoots . . . The life of a puppy  
Izzy Russo . . . Love is Found in the Deli Meat Aisle  
Alexa Cotellese . . . Rooftops in Town  
Dana Zhang . . . Welcome to my grandma's house  
Julia Matthews . . . i can't recall her name  
Emily Harris . . . A Summertime Sonnet  
Sydney Nunn . . . Night Driving  
Isla Rowse . . . Failure to Fly  
Julia Matthews . . . Sonnet I  
Julia Mathews . . . A Warning to Bakers, Poets, and Mr. Trachtenberg  
Aiden Muench . . . Backyard  
Christina Cavalluzzo . . . Swim Practice  
Kelly Cressman . . . Old Shack  
Alexa Cotellese . . . Polaroid  
Emily Harris . . . A Sixteen-year-old's Soliloquy  
Hunter Goldhahn . . . A Life's Bond  
Shane Hickey . . . Not Angels Quite  
Emily Harris . . . Rashes from the ropes on my wrists  
Shane Hickey . . . Lindisfarne  
Annabelle Gonsiewski . . . Trash Jenga  
Kelly Cressman . . . Marble Can  
Ella Henderson . . . Hollow  
Hayden Moncada . . . The Comedian  
Aidan Niland . . . Jealousy  
Isla Rowse . . . Hillside Park  
Sydney Nunn . . . Fire Inside  
Ella Henderson . . . fragments  
Hunter Goldhahn . . . Nostalgia  
Katie Morris . . . What Now?  
Hayden Moncada . . . Rickety Old House  
Cat Both . . . Portal  
Riley Peterson . . . Time Changes  
Josh Acker . . . La Pelea Con Mi Diablo  
Cameron Blind . . . Old Woods

**Artists**

Ava Ogden

Riley McNair

Kate Delich

Emma Haring

Ella Henderson

Teagan Logue

Melanie Saul

Sarah Gery

Autumn Robinson Davis

Chloe Mordon

Julia Cullen

Marlena Lemm

Cat Both

Roman Katona

Valentine Modestine

Grayce Reimel

Emma Meglio

Naomi Woo

Audrey Hitchens

*Euphoria*

By Izzy Russo

We're a speck in a concrete sea

Glass towers sail to the clouds

Above our heads, dwarfing us

Holding thousands of secrets that

We will never know.

We couldn't have been less significant

In that moment

Yet we felt like we owned the world,

Running through the empty streets

The path parted when it heard us coming

The stars were our guide

We glided over crosswalks

Taking shortcuts we didn't know existed

Running later than expected

The clock was ticking

Yet time had stopped

A certain euphoria set in

Our power came from being meaningless

We wished we could just keep running

Towards the rising sun

To live out a life we'd just had a glimpse of

But reality was fast approaching

The moment my feet hit the

Station floor

I knew I would be chasing

That feeling

For the rest of my life.



By Ava Ogden

*The Hard Life of Cookies*

By Josh Russo

Batter snowballs

Small spheres that so gently

Drip

Down to their new homes.

Lying prone in the droning tone

Among their freezing clones.

The experience leaves them strengthened,

Resistant to the harsh outside world.

Though only babes in age,

They're forced to adapt.

Forced into unending labor

Giving each other shape

Trying to prolong their longevity.

They harden in silence.

Hoping their coldness is enduring

For their fiery tempering,

So they can flower

After blossoming adolescence



Bearing fruitful character.

They brave their torture.

Knowing pain helps growth

And they may outgrow the bubbles

They formed each other into.

Their emergence is triumphant.

Steam a glorious accompaniment;

Molted skin

Left after metamorphosis.

The timid dough balls have thickened

Now exotic beasts

Demanding the valor of battle

Waged with knife and fork.



By Naomi Woo

*Steel Dragons*

By Lily Smulling

Metal dragons twisted in the sky  
Their scales shimmering and shaking  
Just watching them makes my lungs squeeze  
Adrenaline flows through my veins  
The beasts let out screaming wails  
Sounds of voices roaring in unison  
A symphony of fear and fun  
The ground rumbles when they move  
Steely bodies caught in the star beam  
Making them glow  
I approach the great dragon  
In a crowd of those young and old  
Who wanted to meet him  
He stares for a moment  
Fierce eyes excite us  
He nods his great head  
A specific few can join in the journey  
We each occupy a great scale  
Feeling safe and secure  
With no fear of falling

The steel dragon shoots up

Into the vast blue skies

The people below watch in awe

As he lets out a screaming roar

The rollercoaster ride has begun



By Riley McNair

## *The life of a puppy*

By Devon Stoots

### In the morning

He wakes up at the crack of dawn, eager to play. He carefully makes his way to go wake up his humans. His tail catches a jar of honey and knocks it down to the floor, no big deal it was a pretty tasty clean up. How handy! The humans got all up on their own and cleaned up the rest of the honey that he didn't get to eat.

### Lunchtime

While the humans are away, he has to fend for himself. That kibble just won't do, he's been craving some brown leather dress shoes. Luckily, they just so happen to be in the humans' bedroom. For dessert to go with the main course, he gnaws away at a fluffy pink slipper to top things off.

### Late afternoon

He helps himself to a seat on the forbidden couch. There are no humans here to tell him to get down, so he assumes it's okay. He plucks some fluff out of the new pillows the humans just ordered and decides to redecorate the room. A little here, a little there. He hopes the humans will like what he's done with the place.

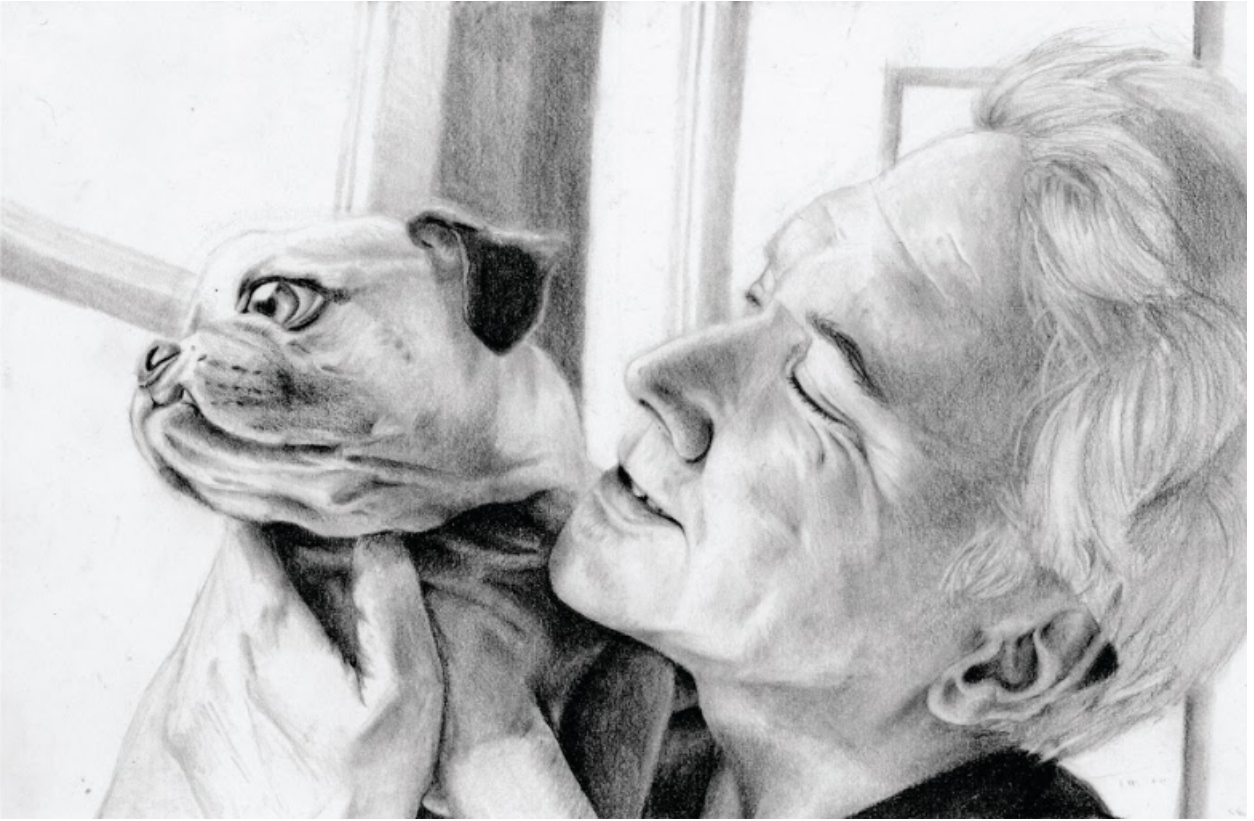
### Dinner Time

The humans have returned. He spends time in the yard as the humans undo his redecorations. He decides to use his time wisely and dig a hole to bury his bones in. He digs right in the flower bed

so his bones can be surrounded by beautiful scenery. The humans are eating inside and their food smells even better than brown leather shoes. He barks at the door so the humans will let him in and rushes over to the table. He sniffs next to their plates and cries in hopes of getting a little taste. The humans don't cave.

### Bed Time

He invites himself onto the bed and stretches out as widely as possible. He makes some paw prints on the white comforter with the dirt he had from digging earlier. The humans don't appreciate his art work.



By Kate Delich



*Love is Found in the Deli Meat Aisle*

By Izzy Russo

You talk too much and you never turn off the lights

When you leave a room

You sort of smell like ham and you love

Cheesy reality TV

You only eat eggs if they're hard boiled and I've never

Seen you eat a vegetable

You sleep with the TV on and always burn

The popcorn

Your outfits always clash and every sock you have

Has a hole in the toe

Despite the things you do too much or don't do

At all, we're perfect together

I love to listen to all of your ramblings and I've always

Been afraid of the dark

Ham is my favorite deli meat and I can't live

Without trashy television

I never have to worry about you stealing my scrambled eggs

And broccoli makes me gassy

The background noise helps me sleep and burnt popcorn

Has always been my favorite

Life is too short for color coordination, and best thing yet,

I know how to sew.



By Emma Haring

*Rooftops in Town*

By Alexa Cotellese

It could barely be viewed as a wine shop,  
hidden from all the vines and thicket that scaled up the wall  
glass dispersed among the gravel under my feet,  
the cracks in the broken window frowning.

An off-white 'No Parking' sign clung for its life by one screw,  
while the dying glow of the light above it buzzed sadly.

The alleyway to the far left was

narrow

and

claustrophobic,

but once past all the graffitied F-you's and F-that's

soaked into the bricks,

up the metal stairs that had been taken over by rust over the years

the stairs that resided up the side of another wall,

I remember feeling overpowered by the magnificent view

that the rooftop unlocked,

A sunset many people were experiencing right now,

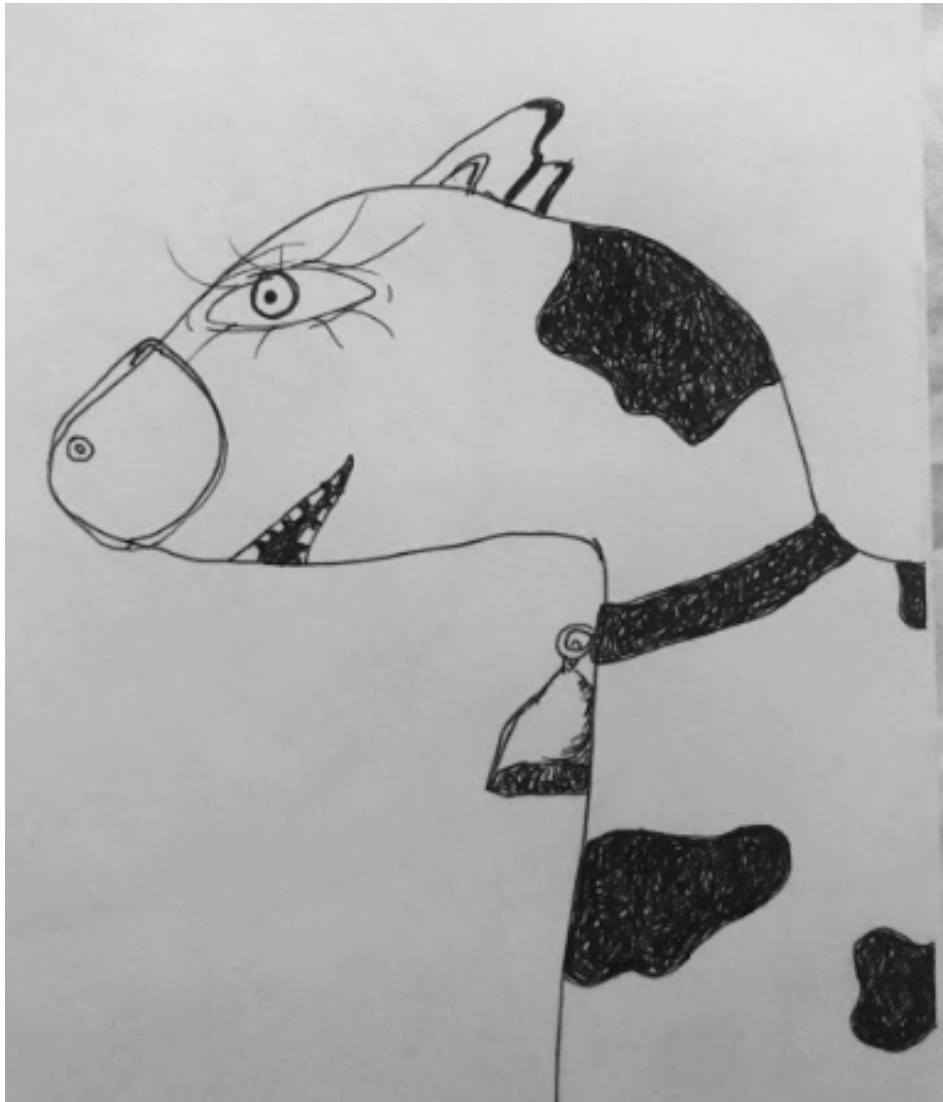
But it felt only I was able to see clearly

the fiery orb dipping over the crescent horizon,

filling every crevice and crack with an orangey hue

but for a few moments,

before night washed over the town.



By Ella Henderson

*Welcome to my grandma's house*

By Dana Zhang

At first sight

No more cavernous

Than twice my quarters.

Holding no less

Than eight decades of

Life.

Enter.

Pull the hanging string and

Activate that

Cracked lightbulb.

Blink once: 1939

Blink twice: 2019

At first scent

Pork oil mixed with...

Almond cookies?

Rice balls in the steamer

Like babies in an incubator.

“Come, child.”

Pass Earth’s gift,

Small clay teacup,

And let its boiling waterfall

Encompass the present.

Caught in the fabric

Of her peeling couch

I am glued to the past

As tightly as she is.





By Teagan Logue

*i can't recall her name*

By Julia Matthews

but her very presence was  
intoxicating

sherry eyes  
distilled to the very core  
of her humanity

the attraction was a  
blaze  
that spread from the  
inside  
out

engulfing admirers in  
flame,  
leaving no more than  
faint whispers  
in smoke  
and the grey ashes  
of promises



By Kate Delich

*A Summertime Sonnet*

By Emily Harris

A chance at happiness beyond the snow  
With white flowers and trees and midnight dreams  
Sits and sings atop the meadow aglow.  
Time spies, time lies, and time opens the seams.

Passerby eyes light up the summer skies,  
and doves flutter between my indigo  
bones, though I seek comfort in the capsized  
of the fanciest ships, a summer blow  
will not keep me from following the sun.

But the coral days fade to a dull gray  
as time wears thin and the tide comes undone  
I start to fall into the rainy day.

Summertime stirs the doves in my cracked chest  
only for a chance to be content at best.

*Night Driving*

By Sydney Nunn

We traveled for hours  
Embracing every twist  
In the road

Because these are the  
Nights, that live on  
Forever

In the contagious laugh  
Of my sister

In six flat voices belting  
“Yellow Submarine”  
From every car seat

In the force behind the  
Car wheels, hauling us  
Down familiar roads

In the trees that surround

Us, standing far above

The road before us

Acting like a shelter

In the stars above us

Like holes poked in the sky,

Letting light in just for us

And when we grow tired

The wind streaming in

Will sing us to sleep



By Melanie Saul

## *Failure to Fly*

By Isla Rowse

A 7-year-old-girl's birthday party should typically be filled with vibrant shades of pink. Confetti should dance in the air while glitter falls gracefully to the floor. Although when a chaotic 6-year-old girl is invited, the event can change unpredictably. Those pretty pinks shift into the darkest reds. Whimsical glitter on the ground turns to puddles of scarlet blood seeping into the floorboards. All that can be said is to this day I am banned from entering Jaime Patterson's basement. All because of her 7<sup>th</sup> birthday bash.

Chills of March day begun with my sister, Isobel, and I trapped inside. Dying of boredom with our child-like desires locked in mental prisons, we craved the key to escape. Until our Savior stopped by our home. A patriotic mail truck arrived with pink envelopes spattered with golden dots. Upon shredding the mail like it was nothing, an invitation shimmered inside. Jaime Patterson, Isobel's best friend had invited both of us to her birthday party It would be just us two and her as she previously had a separate party for her other friends. As the pesky younger sister, I leaped at the chance to be included at a big girl function. This was my chance to shine as one of them. Little did I know that my moments of glorious exposure would more so total to impending doom.

As VIP guests to Jaime's birthday, my sister and I felt like the most special friends in the world. We technically were the only guests, but that truly made us exclusive. Just us three tykes taking on a day all about fun. We ran around, sang a plethora of Disney tunes, and dance around like we



were popstars. Bakery dough scents and cheesy aromas dragged us into the kitchen. A tower of pizza looked down on us, but we were unafraid. We ate the ungodly amount of cheese pizza and the zesty tomato taste tickled our tongues. It was the time of our young lives and no one would stop us. Until our mom decided to crash the party. But the birthday girl had different plans.

Batting her ocean eyes, she begged for us to stay longer. Besides she had hid our goody bags in her basement and we just had to find them. Our mothers too tired to tussle, they obliged, and we strolled to the basement door. I skidded in my tracks once we arrived. I'd always been terrified by her basement.

Cellars were a thing of true nightmares for me. I was always afraid of even looking down into them. This stemmed from my own horrific basement. Coated with cobwebs, always hauntingly dark, I couldn't stand the monstrosities. Filled to the brim with storage that god knows what creatures they held. Little me was deeply afraid but I had to swallow my pride. It was my chance to be a big brave girl like my sister and friend. Shaking to the core, I accepted my fate but more than ever now I wish I had stayed a meek mouse.

Never had I been so mortified of a staircase. It was not the pristine white steps I'd grown and loved that would lead me to the start of my day. These were a murky and muddy brown that I thought would swallow me whole. They would creak at your every movement to tease the fear peering through your bloodshot eyes. But the scariest part of the dastardly stairs was the railings, or lack thereof. My baby palms had no motherly rail to guide me to the bottom. The elements were against me, but I could not lose so quick. I gritted my teeth and bared it; I had no other option than down. I needed to be courageous like the birthday girl. I had to fit the mold. I grabbed my sisters' hand tight and followed down.

Her eerie basement was crowding with spiders who desperately tried finding corner homes. A creepy cellar seemed to be no place for more spine-chilling additions. Jaime explained that she would hide our coveted goody bags, but we had to close our eyes and sit at the tippy top of her staircase. My stomach dropped but my pride rose. I couldn't let my girls down.

My sister and I sat atop, my eyes shut and drenched in darkness. I shook and was close to tears however big sisters always know when to save the day. She began humming and dancing in place. I recognized the tune, "A dream is a wish your heart makes", and I could feel light entering my heart. I no longer feared the darkness my eyes trapped me in. The stairs had no match for my cheer and my sister was right next to me to protect. I joined in her dancing and our seated hips glided to the beat of our own drums.

Utterly entranced in my new world, I felt as if I could do anything. I could cross mountains, I could swim all seven seas, I could even fly! But a silly six-year-old doesn't understand that the third option is impossible. I learned that lesson in one detrimental instant. My sister swayed inside her own world but grazed me in the process. She knocked my fragile being a little too hard and I suddenly entered the air. I felt my wings wanting to sprout.

My wings had other plans as they weren't quite ready to soar. Apparently neither was I and my wings broke. I began plummeting 10 feet and my conscious finally decided to wake and alert me. Awoken from fantasyland all I could hear were screams of terror emanating from my friends. Before I could even see my flight, the concrete floor caught me. I opened my eyes finally but only to see no light nor darkness. I saw just red. Crimson everywhere and I realized my fantasyland had spun into hell. Afraid I decided to allow darkness into my irises. Any sources of light were hopeless, so I willingly leaped into the blackness.

*Sonnet I*

By Julia Matthews

If only I could comprehend your smile  
The meaning hiding in your golden eyes  
I might then know the reason for your guile  
Or why I listen to your tender lies.  
These foolish sentiments that I yet hold  
Are only passing fancies of a girl  
I will regret such love when I am old  
No longer caught up in this dance's twirls.  
Now I recall my mother's aged refrain  
About the danger posed if one forgets  
Romantic notions only lead to pain  
And leave you with a different sort of debt.  
But as I find myself in your embrace  
I see the truth I've sought upon your face.



By Sarah Gery

*A Warning to Bakers, Poets, and Mr. Trachtenberg*

By Julia Matthews

don't overwork

your dough

some people

knead it

over and

over and

then they

wonder

why the bread

won't hold

its shape

or why it's lost

its flavor



By Autumn Robinson Davis

*Backyard*

By Aiden Muench

Just behind the house

Like a child behind his mom

Cowering in terror

Lies the yard

Potholes scattered

Like an old country road

Left by a dog gold

ready to pounce

Yet failing to escape

The towering wooden fence

Sure to give you a splinter

At the slightest touch

In the corner

rests an old drunken garden

Begging and pleading

For an ounce of charity

But none is received

And so it lies

With few veggies to show

Try hard as it may

It is never enough

Just a little ways away

You may sit under the shade

Trees cover us from the sun

While lantern flies attack

Vigorously digging in

Like blood

Leaving sap to spill

Bees begin to enter the fray

Vultures they are

As they suck up the sap

Showing the alliance

Between the two bugs

Just underneath the shade stand lawn chairs

Where one can watch the sun

Set on the horizon like a fire

Sputtering out

Its last few sparks





By Chloe Mordan

*Swim Practice*

By Christina Cavalluzzo

You're stuck in a whirlpool  
hallucinated by a single blue line  
that's connected to the bottom  
of your thoughts. Don't go through  
the journey blindly. Don't anger  
the two sea serpents that surround you.  
Don't hold up the other travelers,  
but don't get held up either.  
Beware the cyclopes, everywhere  
peeking their one eyes out of the water.  
Beware the invisible sirens, who  
make their enchanting calls  
in a warped, inaudible fashion.  
Don't get lost  
in your thoughts  
when you're traveling in circles.



By Sarah Gery

*Old Shack*

By Kelly Cressman

The clouds open by the hands of Him,

Clearing way for the heavens,

His reign controls.

The sun beams down on the mountain range that accompanies,

A little old shack with a musty smell, torn photographs and boards clutter the place.

With the rise and fall of a step, the creaks battle the ground.

The swing of a sign on the column indicates,

Vacancy.

Wind is slighted against the blades of grass that surround

The home,

like soldiers buckling from the heat,

Forcing the hills to roll ever so gracefully,

Through the days and nights.



By Julia Cullen

*Polaroid*

By Alexa Cotellese

There is such beauty  
in one flimsy piece of film  
Able to store an abound of stories within it  
A blow to the head  
with a bullet of nostalgia  
They smiled up at me  
as I picked the images up individually examining each  
Hugging them so close to my chest  
I feared they'd fall right through me  
And I'd not only lose the photo, but the recollection.  
I had forgotten how sacred they were  
But also spurious in a way  
Only manifesting the good times—  
The things only able to be seen  
after one glance from the human eye  
They deceived the onlookers  
And only the photographer can rip apart the polaroid  
to uncover the roots of each picture's story  
The ones behind each smiling face.



By Marlana Lemmo

*A Sixteen-year-old's Soliloquy*

By Emily Harris

Lemon buses

Full of sour students

Drive into the citrus skies

Of my daily daydreams

Because my eyelids are constantly closing

My freckles are pulling them down like

They're blankets as they snore

Silently on my cheekbones

Sucking the sleep from my soul

Like leeches of the American lycées

I go to sleep in ink stained clothes

And wake up without my sanity

The tendrils of my brain are

Untangled and stretched out like snakes

Until they're shredded mercilessly

And tagged with the glare of a red pen

I hold them in my hands, horrified

By the heresy of this hopeful religion

But apparently I only write poems

When I'm bitter



And bills always come with bad days  
My brother is bound to this earth  
By the same capillaries that keep him alive  
And my other brother is stuck in purgatory  
With one hand in the sky  
And the other in a flowerbed  
While I'm wallowing in the waters  
Of a poisoned pond of polluted perfume  
And the paint in my bedroom is chipping  
Because it's so hard  
To mesmerize the mind.



By Julia Cullen

*A Life's Bond*

By Hunter Goldhahn

A link form together

As we take our first breaths of our new lives, we make our first bond.

Time moves on and that bond grows.

Some we break, others we hold close.

Time moves on and those bonds grow.

Never alone. Never alone.

A constant swim across the shores of time.

Some give up and sink in the deep end while others force themselves to move on.

Never alone. Never alone.

Time moves on and we feel it.

Soon though, as the hourglass ticks and tocks, our bond with life will end with the final clock.

*Not Angels Quite*

By Shane Hickey

I see the stars upon that shore  
Which gives before the heavens. I see  
Not angels quite, but quite much more.

Their strong rusted thrones I sit before,  
Those ancients that look on past me.

I see the stars upon that shore,

The same ones men have seen of yore,  
For long live them, O them that be  
Not angels quite, but quite much more,

And thus they are with violent lore  
Of death by fire and agony.

I see the stars upon that shore,

Knowing not the burdens that they bore,  
Of worlds they carried for nobody.  
Not angels quite, but quite much more,

And I am only dark and poor,

As I stare to gods from across the sea.

I see the stars upon that shore,

Not angels quite, but quite much more.



By Cat Both

*Rashes from the ropes on my wrists*

By Emily Harris

I'm tangled in my lace curtains

but at least I can see the sky

Behind the glass

my mind runs fast

and my fingers melt on the wood

Don't tell me what I can do

because I'm only a piece of dust in your brain

like how somber sonnets about sinners

sink between the silver sleeves of choirboys

And it amazes me

how small your eyes are

and how green they can be

when shining in the right acidic light

Tell me once again

of the distorted doors

inside your head

The flowers that once bloomed bright

inside your bloodstream

are withering to blackberry bushes

and I thought I told you

to be careful,

but you

never

listened to me.





By Marlena Lemmo

*Lindisfarne*

By Shane Hickey

Holy men of Holy land

Whose bodies fell here in the sand

Have not quite yet to fade away.

You can smell their blood on a windy day,

Blood drawn from Normand hands,

Hands weathered by foreign sands,

In foreign banks and harsher bays

With far more wind on windy days.

*Trash Jenga*

By Annabelle Gonsiewski

The clutter begins to pile up

The hungry consumes.

The trash can

swallows its first victims.

Now the real test has begun.

A game of skill,

Difficult to master.

The jumbled ooze grows

As I approach

The tower wobbles

it peaks above the horizon

of the white fence

The only thing left retaining its form

I place another block

Carefully positioned

At the tops of the skyscraper

Desperately hoping it won't collapse

However,

The pressure is too immense

The waste tilts towards me

in anger

Like an avalanche it implodes

Cascading down in slow motion

it collapses to the ground.

Left in shambles and in shame

*Jenga.*



By Roman Katona

*Marble Can*

By Kelly Cressman

This marble can: a reflection of life, and everything between.

Damp cloths, that take my mask and purify my skin.

Broken scents of wax, a mixture of the smells that linger, those that burnt to the wick.

A collection of cups,

Contained with the liquid energy of a hundred running tigers.

Feeding my subconscious so I stay alert,

Ripped from that deep sleep where I am oh, so content.

For such an inconspicuous object,

My world revolves around little actions as mere as,

throwing out my trash.



By Valentine Modestine

*Hollow*

By Ella Henderson

I should have bought that striped sweater,

The green one.

The world is green and I should be too.

Do you remember who you were?

Before your friends filled you with pennies,

And your parents gave you clouds and told you to ride them to the sun?

Do you remember the width of the sun?

Yeah, me neither.

But apparently a lot of people do.

Don't buy the green sweater.

So your body is filled with pennies yet you're riding on a cloud?

Don't think about the logic,

Just memorize the dimensions of the moon.

"Keep the change".

I drop a quarter into the slot in your head and it falls to the ground.

"Thank you".



You shouldn't have bought the green sweater.

## *The Comedian*

By Hayden Moncada

### The Beginning

The comedian was born in a decaying brothel, in the center of the scum filled streets of New York. Cleaning up the bloody mess and passing on the crying burden to Kristie, who was on break, the mother laced up her knee-high boots and got back to work. Finally, the bump won't get in the way.

### A Customer Complaint

The comedian, who at age 6, got tired of the stink of sex and drugs that congested the air. The skinny boy asked his mother for some fresh air. His mother was busy with one of her stricter clients. Fortunately, the smell of ash and flesh covered up the smell nicely.

### Funny Man

The comedian is 16 now, but just as skinny. Still, he was a good boy, or at least tried to be. He didn't take to bullies much, but bullies didn't take to him either. A big guy, Franco, was hungry and while the comedian was no more than bones, he thought the guys meals were better suited for him. The comedian didn't agree. Franco thought he was some sort of funny man. Apparently, it hurts to laugh.

### Open Mic

The comedian, barely old enough to drink, takes Franco's praise to heart, and shows just how funny he can be. His breath reeks of vomit and liquor, but the crowd can't tell from on stage, and even if they could, their breath wasn't much fresher. The newfound clown tells his heartache with a grin, and that smile is all the crowd can see. The smoky room erupted in laughter. The comedian popped in a mint.

### A Pin Could Drop

The comedian, hair and teeth brushed, strutted on stage with the same tearful grin. He told the same jokes, did the same time, but the room remained silent. The broken man could hardly breathe in the smoky room, for each gasp of air would fill the drunken silence. The microphone slipped through his sweaty palms, and he walked off in his old tattered loafers.

## The Mic Drop

The comedian stumbled and shuffled through the city streets. The air had that same stink of sex and drugs, but the smell of home did not comfort him. His tie hung from his neck like a noose, as he opened the rickety door, bourbon dripping off his face. He slowly ascended the decaying building, the sinful odor still rich. He stood there with those tattered loafers, stared longingly at the trash-ridden ground, and stumbled one final time. Funny man's mint wore off.



By Grayce Reimel

*Jealousy*

By Aidan Niland

The poison Ivy to every heart

A smear of mayo on PB&J

I walk around with a loathsome feeling

In my stomach on those few bad days

Such unreasonable questions I ask

To myself or a higher power

Wishing for the life of someone else

(Not really, I'm just sour)

Yes sour, as a blue Sour Patch Kid wishing he was yellow

"I want this and that, these and those," my Jealousness will bellow

For just a starting soccer spot

Or a charm I don't possess?

So much potential joy has been plagued

By comments aimed to depress

The Voldemort to my Professor Quirrell

An evil chip lodged in my brain

If I were to live a life not jealous

I'd be uncloaked from rusted chains



By Grayce Reimel

*Hillside Park*

By Isla Rowse

The swing sucks empty

The slides have no purpose

No children at play,

Play date cancelled

Morning rain sobs

Mourning its absence of friends

Trying to cheer up the see-saw

But his heart lies on the ground

While his head is in the clouds

Cumulus cotton: balls

Usually quite cheerful

Snap and bikers with the sky

Rain begs the Sun to intervene

But he has much better things to attend

Downpour drowns me out

Rain drop cheeks teasing tears

Pale skin turns to cobalt

Battalion erupts on my face

Monsoon invites herself to my shoes

Introducing leaks and flooding.

She just wants a friend.

They all do.

No children will play today.

They all run from Rain.





By Emma Meglio

*Fire Inside*

By Sydney Nunn

Anxiety is like a fire

It burns from the inside out

As nervousness spreads

Like fire through the woods

Bright flames blind your

Sense of reason

The smallest twigs of fear

Only fuel the fire

The thick smoke starts to

Suffocate your mind

Burning through a forest of thoughts

Leaving them a pile of ashes

The fire will start to dim

When it can reach nothing more

And your vision returns to see

The landscape slowly heals

*fragments*

By Ella Henderson

during a walk at

five forty-five am

her skin melted away

revealing a warm heart and

broken bones

the sidewalk outside of the

dunkin donuts

a splashlet of exclusion and self doubt

with her body on the ground

could she still move around?

he asked his mother

a few years later

it happened to him

revealing untouched bones and a

shattered heart

the sidewalk outside of his

house in Avalon

a pile of inclusion and

he realized his dreams

were all lies

but he could not ask his mother

she was long gone so

he told his daughter

with my heart on the ground

you can still move about

and i cannot claim to know

succumbed to the west

are we all just crying out of the same eye?



By Grayce Reimel

*Nostalgia*

By Hunter Goldhahn

A droplet from the sky, we watch it as it hits the house window.

Another drop falls and a race begins, inevitably changing our pick to the winner.

with toys of old, we bash two sticks together in thoughts of a fight between warriors.

A doll house here, a torn notebook there, and the constant rise and fall of the sun's rays.

Oh, good night big sun, and good morning brilliant moon.

Staring at hundreds of stars, the fear of the dark we once grew up with quickly vanishes as we make all our wishes to the night sky.

Do you remember our wish?

"I can't wait to grow up and be an adult."

...

A child's mind really is funny.



By Naomi Woo

*What Now?*

By Katie Morris

Sat here constrained on this plane.  
With darkness amplifying the muggy air  
created by the breaths of the sleeping sane,  
Why'd I think this would be fair.

“welcome to your new life,  
where everything will be swell,  
if you maintain a confident stride  
then you'll have no reason to dwell.”

My eyes are fixed facing the screen  
misty blinks blurring my vision,  
remembering what could have been  
if I hadn't made that decision,  
that has me paralyzed up high  
afraid of what lives below the sky.





By Emma Meglio

*Rickety Old House*

By Hayden Moncada

I never liked that rickety old house  
The wood chipped like father's skin  
Steps noisy like mother's room  
Green engulfing the moldy walls  
Like the blankets I threw over my head  
The air that reeks of ash and moonshine  
Its paths, ill-trodden and rocky  
The weeds that snap underneath the wind's forceful blow  
A stain on the canvas that was the mountainous landscape  
Left to rot like an apple on the orchard floor  
I never liked that rickety old house

*Portal*

By Cat Both

The girl named Key approached the front door in the foyer. The portal to the outside world seemed to be undeniably open. Outside, lamplights hovered over the sidewalks of her suburban neighborhood. She used to think those lights were so pretty, like lanterns in autumn and guiding stars. Now, the amber shadows were broken glass bottles. They were artifacts from dogged nights. And then they ended, and all that is left is sunlight, such vacant and hollow sunlight, and the hollow brokenness of the shells of bottles on the kitchen tiles.

There were no obstacles preventing her from exiting her home. Her teeth gnash and grinded on themselves, fitting together like fingers intertwined. Like car keys in ignitions. The molars throbbed white, stringent acrostic poems. Her eyes felt sunken, and they itched from lack of sleep. Her gums were pink.

Pink.

Pink.

Pink. Pink. Pink.

The word sounds obscured after you look at it from a different way. She tried to make her own language once.

(You never liked that, yeah—the freedom of youth. I could never do that. Manipulate words to convey a specific meaning, like Key does. There always was a certain vagueness, and grinding, chomping pattern to the lies I told you, about the things that I do when I'm all alone and the lights in our little house are flicking, clicking off and flying like black arrows in the walls. And I remember thinking, as a key unlocks a locked door, was it really freedom that came with being alive, or was it a privilege?)

The only word she translated in it was “pink.” It was the only concept that seemed to matter when she was a child. The color makes her want to scream and break now. Colors often do. Key, for the second time, approached the front door, which was ajar, and in the very front of the house she took residency in, which had, in the very front, a big, brown door that was open with a small girl inside of it.

The bushes finely cut into shapes of animals, looked like a zoo, a circus, and all the animals danced on her lawn, bellowing “Come out, Key, and come dance with me!” All the forest behind the cul-de-sac swayed and bobbed their leaves and blew and blew until the clouds spelled, “Key.” The gate protecting the winding road to her house swung open and closed, open and closed it swung and creaked her name, “Key.” The streets erupted and shattered, through black lightning strikes in the ground. Through the chasms in the cul-de-sac, the whole neighborhood screamed, “KEY.”

In opposition to the back door, the front door was conveniently open. The back door was closed, shut, and unlocked. All the doors seemed to be that way. All the doors, except, of course, the front one. At one point in its existence, the door remained open. The back door of the house was in no way locked; however, it may have seemed that way, since it was, in fact, fully closed. If anyone specifically had tried to open the door and walk inside, it would be simple to do so. Three simple steps—walk, turn the knob, and walk again. The front door, however, only required one step to pass through it. Key found that one single step to be significantly harder this time around. The front door was not a particularly special or beautiful door—in fact, it was quite the opposite. If you stood in the exact position Key stood, in the foyer of her house, clenching her fists like chewing mouths devouring dust, you would probably say that nothing truly stood out to you about it. Except for the fact that it was open. The door was brown, like all

the doors in the house, except the refrigerator door. The refrigerator was tinted mint green.

(I know that in some way you are responsible for the color. And I always knew the color was a vessel for ghosts to live in. Mint smelled ominous and sour. Like eggs.)

Key, however, smelled like Earth---pure, vacuous Earth. Her house reeked of screens and pulsing electric signals. Like tests, and subject matters. It smelled like mathematics. It didn't smell like a home—it was a lab. The house appeared to have been smelled by many others before her, it was older than most in the neighborhood. Somehow, all the houses looked the same. All with brown doors. Each with brown walls, each with bleeding tile floors, and perfect punching black out plaster walls. Everything in Key's house glowed in a black out. The back door remained unlocked. The back door was unlocked.

No one really cares about that though.

Key attempted to walk through the front door of the house with as much fervency and ardor as if it were a slick, red apple representing original sin. Her shoes looked like capsules, or pills. With a large enough esophagus, swallowing them would be simple. Key is a human, though, and not a vacuum. She had on little white tennis shoes. They were not brown. They were white. The refrigerator door, her shoes, and her black hair, and her teeth, and her pink, pink gums

Her bedroom door was ajar too—So much so that you could see nearly everything inside from standing under the foyer. It was directly above the stairs, another portal. I think you would love it. It had pretty little things lying around. Her room had a gorgeous red carpet and gold and jewelry and blue and yellow and orange and nothing in it was brown. Pictures and images of other girls, of sweet posters, dogs and fruits and drama and thick femininity. Nothing there was out of its place. I think a girl should have a lot of pretty things in her room. You told me that, once, when you bought me that expensive suitcase. You spend a lot of money on things other

than suitcases.

Remember when you woke up early that morning? It was dawn and I was already awake. You went down the stairs to make yourself an omelet. I followed behind you, but you didn't notice. The house was dark, and cold, and blue like it always was back then—perpetually winter. I stood in the doorway while you greased the pan, and you got out the muted white egg carton and took out two brown eggs. And then you took them and broke them. Crushed them in your hands and made the yolk slime smear down through your fingers. And all the suns in space exploded with that. All the flowers died, all the fingers broke and all the green eyes bled black. You heard me gasp in the doorway. I saw your silhouette against the kitchen window above the stove and you looked like a big, black gravestone. You turned back to me and your face was stone too. Your eyes were closed. It was still dark out, but I knew your eyes were closed. I shut the door behind me. I wanted to hear your footsteps. All I heard as I leaned against the door was the sound of the disposal grinding eggshells. I stared at my painted pink toenails.

Do you remember that?

I hope you do. It's one of my fondest memories of you. I love that about you—how you can break the world with just one hand.

You are a prisoner in my mind, now.

*Time Changes*

By Riley Peterson

That old rotted cabin

That once brought joy to life

Filled a family with warmth

Which evolved into animosity

Shattered windows, broken glass

Formed from the bickering parents

As the green door mocks the family

With their old love

The little girl's family now torn

Ripped away like the idea of a perfect life

Bumps and turns around every corner

A house that is no longer a home



By Chloe Mordan



*La Pelea Con Mi Diablo*

By Josh Acker

Through night there is the moon.

As pale as it is, it seems to breed color.

That color

Spice of life color that pollutes your eyes.

That same color that distracts you from noise.

It feels good.

You don't feel the chilly wind.

You don't hear the sirens.

You don't taste the water collecting in the air.

You don't smell the ashes.

Everything is fine as it is.

Why care?

You miss 1/5th of the world, and it is perfect?

What have you done?

Serenity is like breaking the neck of a snake.

Short, comes fast, and when it's over, the weight of your actions pushes through the ecstasy.

Just because you ignored the world.

Don't enjoy yourself.

Don't be kind to yourself.

Do not let your world be safe.

Have you NOT seen judgement day?

Have you NOT seen the darkness that will become of your sins?

Thou hath not spoken clean!

Thou shall not be broken free!

Thou hath not remembered!

And thou shall live in fear.

For the fingers you tread upon, and the feet you trample.

For the pariah you have made!

The falsehoods, The murders,

The malicious games!

Does that mean nothing?

You have STAINED the world with your putrid blood.

And you have POISONED the grass with your sweat.

And you have STRANGLED the life of those you hold dear.

And yet you believe the world is clear?

Perhaps you can worry about that.

Or you can look at what is before you.

The promise of new hopes.

You see them off in the distance: your goals.

Walking along the dirt road, following the moon, there is nothing of value at your side.

The vision of true glory presents itself.

And yet you worry about what you have done, not what you can do?

Poised have you been in the position to change fate.

March onward.

Looking back now while the heat is still upon you will only molest memory with pain.

The world of fear is not one worth living.

But one of hope is one worth crafting.

There is no way to move back and fix things.

There is only diligence and courage.

So you can choose to pay attention to the devil.

But he'll just make sriracha of you.



By Audrey Hitchens

## *Old Woods*

By Cameron Blind

A forest of ever twisting trees rising into the void above, all light vanishing, save for the piercing white glow of the crescent moon. All noise gone from this dimension, this other plane of existence. This nightmare scape. A path winds through the forest, bending and shifting, always broken apart and never connecting to another path. Losing direction in a commonality. This forest was built by hands of the warped, the hands of the fallen. The moon glow shines bright, focused on a singularity, a fixed point in the shattered path. It is here where all who are lost find themselves, wondering about and desperately trying to find a way out. No such exit exists.

A figure, tall, slender, ominous stands across from the bright light, staring, waiting, but with no eyes to call its own. No mouth to speak and no ears to hear. It hears and sees. It was left behind, the ultimate instrument of insanity, designed to drive its victims wild, then feed on their despair and claim them as its own. Its long, narrow, spindly arms reach out, fingers as long as carrots, bent and knobbed, reaching towards that glow. It looks upon that spot, waiting, waiting. When it finds its prey, it'll disappear, swift into the void of night, beginning the chase, the hunt.

A house is all that remains of what is left behind, built of a burnt and rotten wood frame, glass windows blasted outwards, filling the inside with the outside tension and uncertainty. This house is wrong. No one will remember in time, to be afraid and alert for what is to come, but the being set its sights. It's locked on. It takes them who enter and turns them into its proxy. It has set them free, freeing mind from body, but It will never let them escape. It has filled the husk with something else. Something that hunts and craves and will never cease till death claims its heart.

Then it's all over. The nightmare, the chase, the hunt, the death. It all evaporates into a forest, green filling the vast blue ocean above, noise from insects, animals, people, filling the crisp air. Relief takes hold, replacing that dread and sorrow, placing them in the foreign background...for now.

You have heard the warning, the story and steps. Turn back now or lose your sanity. Turn back now, before he sees you. The Slenderman.

