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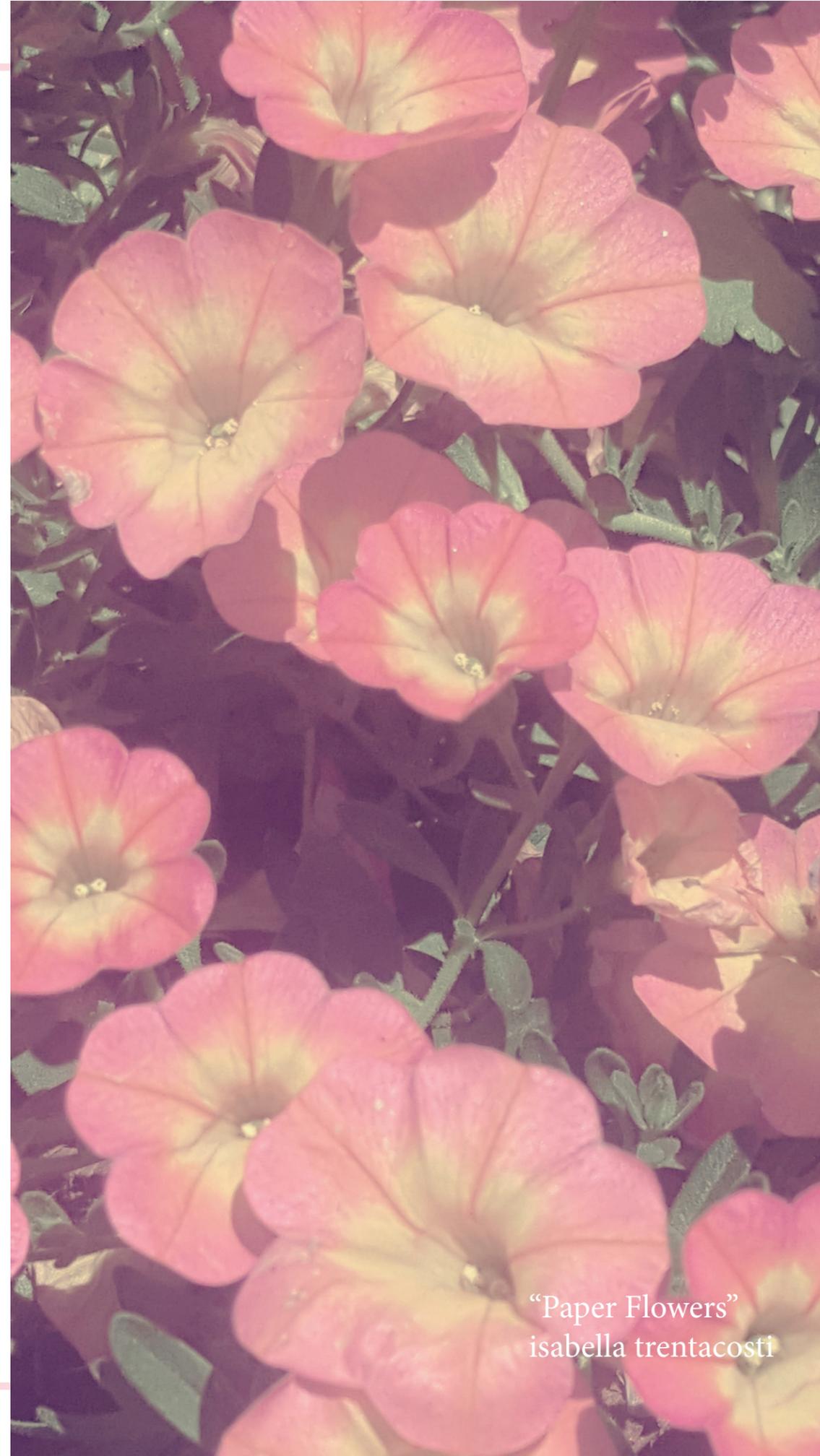
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by: joshua brambllett

taste of summer stings
 and honey feathered wings
 with dripping gold and light
 it flows untouched by man or
 men
 and all this seems fragile
 it could all fly away
 shrivel in darkness
 and die alone one day.



“Paper Flowers”
 isabella trentacosti

“sonder”

by: abby durkin

the realization that each random
 passerby is living a life as vivid and
 complex as your own- populated
 with their own ambitions, friends,
 routines, worries and inherited
 craziness- an epic story that
 continues invisibly around you
 like an anthill sprawling deep
 underground with elaborate
 passageways to thousands of other
 lives that you’ll never know existed,
 in which you might appear only
 once as an extra sipping coffee in the
 background, as a blur of traffic in the

“oh to be as i once was, of whole and happy mind”

by: ryan lowery



by: joshua brambllett

and they wouldn't stop applauding
at the slightest sign of light
maybe they're right.

so, I'm a minute in flight.
I brandish my wings as the wind
picks up my height.
then the speed of the night
seems just right.
and the sun melts my face,
I'm a crying mess of wax
and my wings stay intact.
so, I make it to the sun,
gripped by solar flares,
with no eyes to see the fun.

irasci (latin) - verb: to become irate



“Irasci”

by: avery scifres

Darling Charlie Holliday

short story competition 1st place

by: piper doyle

What do you call a girl with minimum vocal use, maximum facial expressions, an affinity for the chilly hugs of water, and a lingering sense of warm childishness that trailed behind wherever she went? Well, to most, she was Charlie. To some: Holliday. To her mother: Darling. And to a man with an accent as rich, sweet and Southern as his ink-black mustache, she was Darling Charlie Holliday.

That's what he called: "Darling Charlie Holliday!" His hands cupped his cookie-duster. There was a moment of silence filled by seagulls and crashing waves before he repeated himself- he said the three names as if all of them were on her birth certificate.

No response.

The man's hands dropped to his pale side. Had he been laying down, they would have seemed to pass straight through the soft sand to leave him wondering when or if they'd ever return.

He took a breath- Christopher Holliday took a breath. "Charlie! Darlin'! Come on in!" Chris squinted into the sun that dared to outshine his flesh; he was barely able to see a bobbing blur of brunette pop up to split the horizon. He relaxed into a chair. "Thank you!"

Chris ran a hand through his curls decorated by blown-in white speckles. It was as if the stars snowed into the sky every night. And from it, he brought down shades. They secured atop his nose. It, by the way, scrunched away the light leaks.

As the water swayed harder, Charlie gave it competition- her father seemed not too concerned; she was an avid swimmer. She swam with needle-point precision and strength, things not typically expected of a girl her size. While she wasn't tall, she was particularly thin. In fact, her arms looked as though they were tan-colored water balloons stretched over bones, and that every crease of the elbow would pop them.

She abruptly stopped. Charlie allowed the whitecaps to jump and kiss her face while she treaded. Then, resembling her father, she took a deep breath and then, resembling her mother, she disappeared under the surface.

Christopher's thick brow twitched. Yet, he remained otherwise the same. That is, except for his gaze, which intensified on where his daughter had last been.

He calmly began to count as he became more and more aware of where he was- it was never quiet here. Someone was always laughing, umbrellas were always behaving as if they were laminated paper being shook. At least one towel kept trying to ride the wind to a more private cupboard, the gulls consistently had screaming matches and the sandpipers were anxiously awaiting the call to their little bird divorce firm, and if you listened close enough, you could make out each particle of sand brushing past the others with thousands of tiny 'excuse me's... However, above all that, Christopher could hear the waves' crests and crashes the loudest as if they were shushing him. As if they were urging him to keep their horrid, awful secret! -That they had taken his daughter. As if they were taunting, "You will never see her again."

Christopher hadn't realized he'd darted to the sand that tried to swallow his feet whole. But, he suddenly became aware that he'd been relocated and that sweat dripped down his forehead. Not from the sun.

"Charlie!" He called.

Christopher leapt into the seashells' home, dragging his legs as fast as he could through the most welcoming part of the ocean. In fact, that's what he hated about it: it appeared so kind and harmless. What, with its ripe, blue demeanor and shallow beginning? But, Chris knew how it deepened and ended, and he passionately, actively loathed the selfish hungriness of its core.

"179," Chris said to himself. "179- 180. Charlie!"

He splashed about, the water circling his torso, but not letting him move any faster than before. God! How horrid of it. If peanut butter gained liquidity, a teal color, and a salty texture while not losing its density, it'd be unable to be told apart from the ocean.

"194, 195, 196! CHARLIE!"

Chris was breathing in air, but not letting any out. He was infected by the murderous idea that his girl was doing the opposite on the other side of water.

"199, 200!"

He let out a cry and dove down, form almost as impeccable as his child's.

Through muffled, reverberating bubbles, "203, 204, 205."

His hands clasped, then parted. Clasped, then parted. His feet wobbled. He propelled forward, then to the left. A jerk to the right. Next, in a spine-popping circle.

The silverfish that had the audacity to peacefully pass by had just learned what the word 'frantic' meant.

Chris' eyes burned fierce, but the fire in his heart seemed to cool and dim. Both were against his wishes. And so was gargling the water with a sharp pain- before he knew it, he was sinking fast, but pushing off the loose sand even faster.

His head broke into the air.

Christopher took such deep a breath it sounded like he was, in turn, choking.

"231, 232," he murmured. He treaded. He looked forward. Left. Right. Then, spun. "234," his voice creaked. "235." It quieted. "236..." It trailed off.

Fear had never been so loud as to drown out all the noise before.

"237."

And just as the coast's radio began to tune to the empty kind of silence-

"238."

-There was a distant and inimitable laugh whose echo let a warm childishness linger and trail behind

"239."

Darling Charlie Holliday.

"240."

Christopher's eyes darted to the shore. And there was a fragile, glass girl who tumbled around unaware of how easily she could be broken.

Mister Holliday waded in with relief- the waters seeming slightly less aggressive now. More... protective.

When he finally stood looking down at her, out of breath, scorched by textured waves, and fear-stricken, he still shielded her from the sun. That was the thing about good parents: that title could never be scared out of them.

Charlie looked up at him with a squinty-eyed smile that shone brighter than the sand her legs had been covered in, the beams upon her freckled face, and Christopher's ghostly complexion.

After the longest time of his life, that two second moment of absolute glory was the reason why he'd willing suffer it all again. And again. And again and again.

Charlie tightened her lips, still in a grin as she wiggled down. She lightly tapped seashells as if she were giving them each one-fingered high fives.

Christopher took a mature breath. He, composed, set this hands on his side, saying, "...240 seconds, huh? Since when are you able to hold it longer than 180?" Within a pause of silence, he seemed to remember another face-one similar to his daughter's and former. "You scared me, Darlin'. You know that?"

Eyes open wide with ashamed regret and a hint of sorrow, Charlie looked to the ground. She whispered, "I've been practicing."

Chris knelt with a sympathetic chuckle, "Why?"

Charlie quickly glanced at him, then away. She let herself fall backwards into the sand.

"Oh, don't let your hair- " Christopher stopped himself. Instead of finishing his sentence, he slowly laid beside her, watching her watching the clouds through a wrinkled nose and lines for eyes.

He took the sunglasses off his face, wondering how they hadn't fallen off in the water. Perhaps they had tried, but the waves pushed them back up... Christopher fixed the shades on Charlie in turn.

She looked at him briefly with a lopsided grin. Back to the sky. Then to the sea as she sat up; naturally, her father followed.

Charlie sifted through the sand with fingers attentively. "...It felt like her." Her voice was always timid and wispy. Like a draft.

"It felt like her?"

"She was always cold-skinned. She was like a human popsicle."

"Ah," Chris swallowed hesitantly. Then, he returned with optimistic spirit and a weak smile, "Your mom."

“And she always suffocated you with her hugs. They were cold too. Tight and long.”

“Yeah, yeah,” chuckled the husband who held it all together. “Your mother was definitely someone who showed her love through touch... I know it was a little overbearing at times, but it was with the purest of intentions.”

Charlie nodded ever so slightly. She briefly pondered. “It felt like her... The water just held me. Like I couldn’t float away, or at least, it wouldn’t let me... I didn’t know for how long, but I knew it was a while. And everything was so cold against my skin that it felt warm. And I felt safe. And it felt like her! And I almost wanted to- to...” Charlie suddenly became scarily still.

“To?”

“...I almost wanted to drown. Just so it wouldn’t have to end.”

Christopher opened his mouth to say something, but his lips just hung chapped.

Very quickly, Charlie removed the sunglasses from her face and put them on her father’s before turning away again.

Mister Holliday adjusted them.

With a sharp inhale, Charlie said, “I’m sorry- I’m sorry. I didn’t- ...I’m sorry.” She began to press her thumb to the seashells again. “I guess I just thought maybe I could get some of her back from where we lost her is all.” She sniffled and gave a half-smile.

Chris finally collected his words as he peered out to the ocean. “We didn’t lose her entirely, Darling Charlie Holliday. I think you did find some of her right here.”

Charlie looked up.

He continued on, “These things weren’t meant to withstand currents were they?” A gesture to his glasses.

Charlie shook her head.

“So, how the hell did they survive all my thrashing about looking for you?”

Charlie shrugged.

“Well, I’d like to think the waves had fingers. And they took one of them- just like this-” He held up his index. “And pushed ‘em right back up the bridge of my nose before they even had the chance to fall down. What do you think? You know who else did that?”

Charlie nodded.

“Mhm. Mhm.” Christopher hung his arm around his kid, pointing forward to the sea and beyond. “Your mom.

“Whale and Girl”
by: yeeun cho

“Friendly Spirit”
by: connor elwell

Glistening waters
And dancing seaweed
Of talking fish
And sirens I dreamed
A lonely life by the sea
Staring out
She set me free
Salt stained my window
Water flooded the air
I saw her head and then her hair
Shining brilliantly
like a light from the sea
It sparkled of blue
and flashed of green
Her friendly eyes called
The beckoning waves softened
And she drew near
Holding my hand
We dashed in the waves
Air bubbles forming
Every which way
She breathed me life
Shined a light through my eyes
Filling the pockets of air
with joyous cries
We often danced
And played and laughed
However I grew too fast
A trip with a spirit
Now in the past
Her hold on me
Will ever last



“Project LAI”

short story competition second place
by: emma jacoway

You never expect the day to start off running for your life. However, my day began that way. Me dragging best friend, Alene, by the hand as men in black suits yelled at us to stop. It felt like a movie. Except real. And terrifying.

It started when I went out for lunch with Alene. Her gaze was more weary than usual so I knew immediately something was wrong. Yet no matter how much I pushed, Alene insisted everything was fine. It irritated me with her refusal to talk but she was stubborn like me. I ordered my usual salad from a handsome waiter and Alene insisted she wasn't hungry so she didn't order anything.

I was munching on a crisp piece of lettuce when they came. Who? I wasn't sure. They approached us quietly, so quietly I didn't notice them at first. The sun caught the shades the burly one was wearing and it drew my attention to them. Immediately, I could tell they weren't there to eat. While it was a pretty nice restaurant, it wasn't nice enough to warrant a suit and tie. There were the guns resting in their holsters. The waiter letting guests in must have seen the guns but there was no concern as the waiter continued to let guests inside. 'Surely,' I thought to myself, 'Surely, they must be cops here to try to quietly arrest someone.'

Still, they continued their approach to our table and Alene was getting noticeably nervous the closer they got. I kept my eyes trained on Alene, pretending the two men didn't exist. A trick I learned to avoid social interaction, people were less likely to talk to you if you didn't make eye contact. My chest constricted as the men stopped by our table and turned to look at us.

“AI-L713? We require you come with us.” The taller, more intimidating one with a rather large nose said. I silently called him Nosey in my head.

“Are... are you talking to me..?” I asked, barely pushing the words out. I had no idea what they meant by AI... R 723..?

Alene stood up abruptly and Nosey grabbed her arm as if she was about to do something rash. But Alene wouldn't do that... right? Right? Confusion ripped through my mind as I tried to pull Nosey away from her.

“Get away from her!” I shouted, drawing some attention from passing bystanders. Nosey looked upset over the sudden draw of attention as he pulled something from his coat. He flashed an official looking badge informing me Nosey was actually Nick. Eh, I was close enough. “I am a cop ma'am and it is for your safety I remove this thing from the premise.” Rage cut me deep as I shoved Nick away, “Get away from my friend!”

Now, I've never run away from a cop but I wasn't exactly trusting this guy. After all, this was Alene he was accusing. Alene for crying out loud! She would never break the law or do something insane enough to warrant getting arrested. Yet, in that moment, my flight or fight instinct kicked in and I chose flight. There was no way I was about to fight a man twice as big as me. Grabbing Alene's hand, I dragged her out of the restaurant and into the crowded street. I led Alene through the crowd, never once daring to let go of her hand. Nick and the other guy shouted after us but we quickly lost them among the sea of people. Making an abrupt turn, I dragged Alene through an empty alley and into a secluded parking lot.

I panted heavily, regretting my lousy decision to cancel my gym membership. Alene paced the lot with a nervous expression which was so unlike her normal composed expression.

“Soooo... um... what was that about?” I asked.

Alene stopped pacing, “I'm not sure how to explain it. I didn't think they would come after me in a public setting like that.”

“Just tell me what you can because I am lost as to what just happened.”

Alene dropped her gaze to the ground, “I'm not human.”

“Excuse me?” I ask, unsure if I heard her correctly.

“I'm not human.” She says louder and a bit more confidently, “I was created as an experiment to make more advanced AI. An AI that could interact and socialize like any other human being. A spy who could gather information but not betray its country. I am a product of the LAI experiment.”

“The... lie experiment?” I asked in bewilderment.

“No, the LAI experiment. The learning artificial intelligence experiment to be more exact.” Alene peers down the alleyway nervously. “I am a system created to blend in with normal humans all while recording the behavior of surrounding humans. You were my first 'target.'”

“Your first target?” My alarm increased as I stepped away from Alene.

“Don't worry, you were randomly picked from a pool of candidates.” Alene assured me, “My interactions with you were to test my believability and see how accurately I could record and predict behavior. However... they decided recently to shut me down.”

Concern stamped out my confusion as I approached Alene. “Why?” I asked softly.

“I have to be... too believable. I understood human emotion to the level I began feeling a degree of emotions myself.” Alene dropped her gaze, “I didn't want to obey, and they had no use for a disobedient AI. So I ran. I didn't know what would happen to me... and...” she shuddered, “I'm so scared of the idea of not existing.”

My mouth clamped shut as I process what she's telling me. I don't want to believe it, surely it's just an elaborate prank? I mean, yes AI are very much apart of our daily lives but none of them are believable. I had no chance to confront her when a shot rings out.

Have you ever been in a situation like a car crash where it seems like time slows down? Everything seems fine for one moment and you're safe but the next moment you see the car out of the corner off your eye coming towards you. You want to react but you seem freeze in place as you watch the events proceed. I saw the man come in the corner of my eye. I wanted to react when he raised the gun. But I just froze. And Alene fell.

It was my fault. I could have saved her. I should have saved her but every muscle in my body froze as I watched her crumpled. I fell to my knees and the world went quiet. Someone touched my shoulder but I ignore them, clutching Alene's hand as if I could bring her back with sheer desperation. I don't know how much time passes, people surround me but none of them make a move to drag me away. I even catch Nick looking guilty. Finally, after an eternity somebody drags me away and confirms Alene's story. Though one look at the wires that

were where blood should have been already confirmed it for me.

“Oh, I had no idea.” I lie with a plan that already half formulated in my mind.

It took me seventeen years. I graduated college with a new motive to pass my classes. I got a job at New Robotics Advancements as many people call it. The tricky part was waiting. Waiting to earn my superiors’ trust and get access to Alene. I had been wiped from the files regarding Alene which played right into my hands. After I had graduated college, nobody remember Tina, the sappy girl who was upset over her best friend’s death.

My heart pounded with newfound anticipation as I plug in Alene’s outdated charger into the wall. A year ago there was a cyber attack that everyone was calling the Data Wipe of 2057. A group of cyber terrorist wiped out over half of the internet’s data causing a crisis to recover the information we lost, information that foolishly had not been given a physical copy. I convinced my boss we could possible recover the data which was lost since Alene was not connected to the internet or anything digital at the time. It took me a year to fully repair Alene. The bullet ended up hitting a lot of important wiring that was difficult and almost impossible to replace.

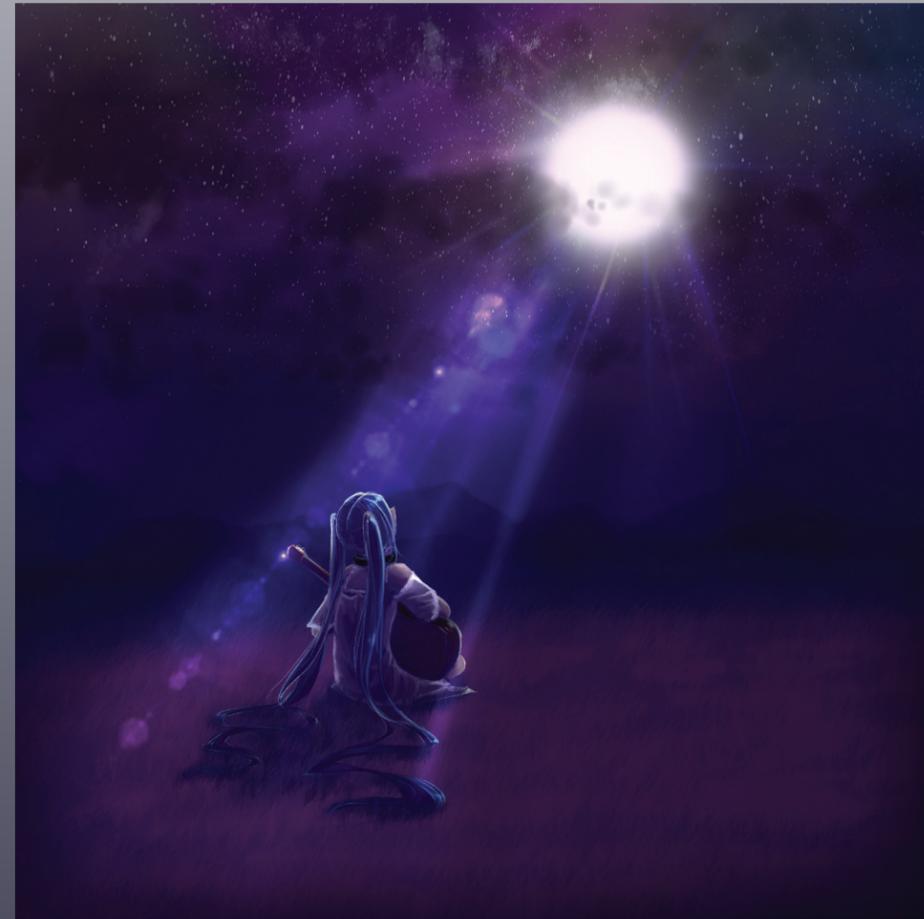
Alene’s eyes suddenly lit up slightly, giving the small hint of her resurrection. Her head moves up slowly, looking at me with a frown. “Tina..?”

My face breaks out into the biggest smile I’ve had since Alene was shot. I tackled her into a bear hug while big tears run down my cheeks, “I did it. I finally did it!”

Alene hugged me tighter. “You did... you brought me back! I... thank you so much! Its feels great to exist again.”



“Warm Eyes”, by: isabella trentacosti



“goodbye astronaut”

by: grace he

by: josh bramblett

though the weather changes
even as the days go by.
as weary as the sun at dusk
and chilly like the moon’s pale crust.
while phases go about their way,
when moments seem to pass each
day.
something deep within me
or something right between us,
you know,
something’s got to stay.

thoughts dwindle in the night light’s
offers,
even as fresh black coffee cools.
as brutish, freakish, sounds like rust,
fade like bluish stars we touch.
while many carspass our way,
when leaves die and fall each day,
something deep within me
or something ripe between us,
I hope on
“something’s got to stay”.

“Violet Crime”
by: sarah pace



“Briar-Leaf”
short story competition 3rd place

by: isabella trentacosti

As soon as he stepped out of the courtroom Victor was surrounded. Hundreds of people had flocked to the steps of the courthouse to watch his trial with an almost grotesque intrigue. Hideous smiling faces leered at him from behind police-posted gates. He had gotten used to the never-ending onslaught of insults and threats but, stepping out onto the marbled staircase, he was sickened by the jeering crowd of civilians lined up to watch him like he was some grotesque monster being taken to its execution. There was an air of enjoyment as they watched him trudge toward the awaiting police car. Even his parents could not bear to sit next to him in the courtroom. They've abandoned me, he thought to himself. Suddenly, something hard smacked him across the face, and he could feel blood running down the side of his forehead down to the nape of his neck. One of his surrounding guards yelled into the crowd at the unknown assailant but it was halfhearted. Victor knew the guards could care less about his safety. Along as he got to where he was going, it did not matter if he had a few bumps and bruises. He was guided into the car at the end of the path, sat down on the cold leather seats, and with a slam of the door the car began to drive away, leaving the rambunctious crowd in the past.

When he finally got to the institution, he was astounded by the sheer size of it. He and every other kid had grown up seeing pictures of this place, but now as he stood at the foot of the entrance, its ominous Victorian columns and looming roof, seemed unknown to him. The car passed through the large, winding gate, the words *Sortes Qui Facit* decaying above it. He stepped out of the car, still flanked by two guards, and walked towards the entrance. A tall lanky man, with a balding head of wispy hair, strutted out of the entrance to meet him. The man looked down at Victor with contempt and introduced himself.

“My Name is Albert Voorhees, but you will address me as Warden Voorhees. Briar-Leaf is my institute and I intend to run it without any disruption. You will do what I say, when I say it, and any resistance will get you

thrown into solitude.” The man stared long and hard at Victor, trying to pour obedience straight into him through his eyes. Victor unconsciously shivered. Albert began to speak again. “At Briar-Leaf inmates are divided into sections. Red is for our most dangerous and violent inmates and where solitude unit is located. Orange is for the mentally unstable, and purple, that is you, is where we keep our day-to-day offenders. You will always stay in your building section and are prohibited from mingling with the other sections. You will stay here until you are 18, at which point you will be re-tried as an adult and sent to a new prison accordingly. There is an allotted 30 mins for lunch and one hour for physical recreation. Oh, and I expect you to be on your best behavior with your cellmates. We do not tolerate fighting among inmates. Now, let us get you registered. Welcome to Briar-Leaf.” The warden stepped to the side as the guards' lead Victor into the dark building. Victor heard the gate at the front shut close with an ominous clang and with a dark realization, he knew he would never walk through those iron-wrought gates again.

They processed Victor through the prison system, handed him his uniform with a little purple sash, and I.D his wrist before showing him to his cell. When he arrived, Victor was stunned at the size of the cells. They were no bigger than a simple apartment bedroom, with two small bunks stuffed into the corners and a grimy toilet seat on the left wall. As he stepped inside, he was greeted by three boys. The first was a thin-as-a-whistle blond-haired boy with a shy look in his eye. He introduced himself as Liam before pointing out the other two boys. There was Alex, a short little Asian kid with an un-kept mop of hair, and Blake, a large muscular boy who barely even acknowledged Victor's presents. Victor looked the three boys up and down. These do not look like the types of kids who should be here, he thought to himself. Well, that Blake kid might... At the same time, the other three boys had similar revelations about Victor. All except Blake looked at him with sympathy. An awkward silence filled the small room until Liam finally spoke.

“We've, um, been waiting for our fourth member, although I can't say I haven't enjoyed the extra legroom.” He laughed nervously. The other two boys sat silently. “Anyway, um, let me show you which bunk is yours. You will be under Alex. Sorry, it is so close to the, um, lavatory. No one else wanted it.” Victor simply nodded and made his way to the bed. The three boys exchanged

questioning glances.

“Why are you here?” Victor looked towards the deep voice that had spoken. It was Blake, looming eerily over the side of the top bunk. Both Liam and Alex seemed shocked at the other boy’s outspoken comment.

“...”

“Well?” Blake questioned again, hopping off the top of his and Liam’s shared bed to come face to face with Victor. “I worked with my older brother in a drug cartel. One night a delivery went bad, shots were fired, and the rest is history. Alex here is an arsonist. Burned down his neighbor’s house a few months ago and got caught with the gasoline still wet on his hands. And Liam? He stole 20 thousand dollars from his rich friend’s dad, who, when he found out bought the jury so hard, they would have convicted Gandhi. We have nothing to hide here. Sooner or later someone will beat it out of you, be it me or that crack-head they call a therapist. So, tell me. Why. Are. You. Here?” Victor looked the menacing boy straight in the eyes as he spoke.

“I killed my older brother.” Blake continued to stare vacantly at him. “Or at least that’s what the jury thinks. The truth? My brother was shot by some low-life intruder. We lived in a nice neighborhood, so my parents trusted we would be safe while they went out for some alone time. We were upstairs when we heard the back window shatter. My brother went and grabbed my father’s gun from the safe and brought it out. We sat in silence for a moment and once we were sure someone was in the house my brother went downstairs to confront them as I tried to call the police. I barely had time to type the 9 before I heard gunshots. Somehow, during a struggle, the intruder had gotten a hold of the gun and shot my brother. I flew down the stairs and came face to face with my brother’s dead body lying in the living room. When he realized what he had done, the intruder fled, but not before that bastard looked me straight in the eyes. He left me alone with my dead brother and our father’s gun. When the authorities arrived, thanks to the call of a concerned neighbor, they only saw what they wanted too. DNA on the gun was a no-show and they barely investigated the break-in, which they chalked up to damaged done by a struggle between my brother and me. I was labeled the murderer while the real culprit runs free.”

“So, what you are saying is...?” Blake prompted, chuckling slightly under his breath.

“I shouldn’t be here! I didn’t do it! They should be out there trying to find the real culprit not putting me in this insane asylum like I’m some sort of freak! I’m innocent!” He and Blake stared each other down before Blake turned away shaking his head and muttering, a smile on his lips.

“Good luck with that...” Blake lazily climbed back onto the top bunk as Liam walked towards Victor trying to diffuse the tension in the air.

“Um, let’s all just settle down. It doesn’t matter why we are here, only that we are. So, um, let’s try to get along. If you would like Victor, Alex and I could show you the best way to avoid the guards or how to get the best rations at meal time.” Liam said eagerly, wringing his hands together worriedly. Victor gave a half-hearted smile.

“Thanks, but I think I’m just going to be alone-” A deafening bell began to ring overhead, splintering into Victor’s ears like tree bark. Hundreds of kids shuffled out of their courters and began filling into lines headed out of the building. Victor instinctively covered his ears to block out the sound. At this, Alex let out a small laugh and yelled over the persistent sound.

“That’s just the dinner bell! Do not worry you will eventually get used to it! Come on!” At that, the two boys headed down to meet the rest of their peers in the cafeteria. Victor followed hesitantly behind, as Blake thundered after them. As he walked, he danced with the idea of simply not going along with the boys. It wasn’t like he was here to make friends, and Alex and Liam certainly didn’t seem like the type to have your back in a fist fight, and Blake gave him the creeps. Yet, when he heard Liams voice call him over to their spot in line, his feet instinctively followed suit. Maybe some allies won’t be bad...

Read the rest of
“Briar-Leaf” here!



red spell by: joshua brambllett

in darkest clouds
of winter shade
a withering night
caught in the rain.
and summer’s gone.
why, all will fade.
sing a song like
sweet refrain.
a hellish braid
of tethered stains.
in blood and bone
like crying glades.
fog is low along
my brain.
I can hardly see
what your grin hath lain
what hellish sights
breathe out grey.
so blind my sight
my sweetest grain;
so, hide my hands
though warmth remains
to help me see what I refuse.
oh, devilish bane: help me lose.

“sad memory”, by: ryan lowery





“Betrayal of the Ancients”

by: beck hall

Wind dances and giggles
At the chaos they cause,
While icicles bawl
As they shrink and they thaw.

The oak pridefully scorns
At reeds sweetly singing,
Their roots furrow and keen
At echoes loss of all meaning.

Fire rages and demolishes
With a cackle and hiss,
With the purest intention
As it is a great gift.

Gravel speaks in susurrations,
The gurgling creek with incantations.
Speaking in the ancient language,
A vernacular near lost.

This utterance unspoken,
This utterance unknown.
By snakes under bedrock,
And the snow-hidden voles.

Spoken to bears
To kittens, to bees,
By the gravel, the rivers
The wind and the trees.

Spoken to falcons,
To bulls, and to breams.
By wind and ice
And fire and reeds.

Spoken to horses to newts
And to boars,
But to especially humans,
Who destroy and want more.

They listen and perceive,
But can't possibly fathom,
From birth unto death,
The life all around them.

I know and I listen ,
Forever grievance therefrom,
With pity and condolence,
At what the elders 've become.



“Just Thoughts” by: autumn brevard

It's hard to say this when I don't know what to feel-
Your kisses still linger on the touched nerves But fade
with each meaningless phrase.

Do you feel how I feel?
Do you feel the tight chest and pulsating beat of a
broken heart trying to feel again?
I bet you don't.

I want to seep inside your brain,
Caress each wrinkle and read each memory to make
them my own.
I want to know each little thought you have, even the
ones not about me.

Do you purposely drift away from me?
Leaving what was said undone, breaking foolish
promises.

Sometimes you make me reconsider my choices.
But why would I leave something that gives me joy,
But leaves me questioning my morals?

The smell of you lingers in my clothes.
Not wanting to wash them so I don't forget the few
short moments
That made me happy.

I trust you too easily.
Not all the way but enough to be hurt by you.
You would hurt me; they always do.

I don't want you to hurt me
But if you don't then I would have to hurt you.
But who am I kidding? You don't care enough to be
hurt anymore.

I was made to be shown off like a first prize award
But you treat me like a participation ribbon,
Mentioned once but left on the shelf to be forgotten.

You don't need me
And you're not the one crawling back to the other for
attention.
You wait there knowing I come back
Because I always do.

I wish you cared for me, how I do you.
Maybe then I wouldn't regret you so much.
Maybe then you would treat me like the first place
prize I am.

“A Trip to the Grocery Store Might Help” by: connor elwell



art competition first place

“White Ibis” by: estela munoz



photography competition first place

art competition second place

milan yancey-kidd

“Marie Joseph Sanson”



“Red Opium”

“New Orleans on Film”

audrey young

photography competition second place



“Icarus”
by: claudia mattingly

“Euphoric Dreams”
by: genesis bailey



art competition third place

photography competition third place

“My Dear”

by: ava milenkovitch

Escapist that's what you are
 I locked you away in a cage
 With unpick-able locks
 And towering walls
 But you escaped my prison
 So I had to hunt you down and lock
 you away
 But not today
 Today someone came
 Under the pretense of a visit
 They stolen you right from my
 dungeons
 Now I feel free but caged
 Filled but empty
 Light but heavy

I quickly stole you back and locked
 you up

My escapist are you still there?
 After locking you away
 The world is such blues and grays
 My escapist I am sorry
 But I know not what to do with you
 but lock you away
 I know not how to give you parole

You've slowed your beating
 My dear escapist
 My dear stolen
 Are you dying?
 It feels like it

Someone asked me where you are
 today my escapist
 I told them I locked you to far away
 I told them no one had the time to
 steal you away
 I told them you are toe old to
 escape
 I told them I lost the key to your
 cage
 They asked if they could find you
 I told them if they did they could
 just reach through the bars

My dear escapist
 My dear stolen
 You stopred today
 You stopeed your beating
 You started again
 But the doctors said to release you
 to let you beat
 I loeked at them sadly
 I know not how I said

My dear escapist
 My dear stolen
 Caged you still beat for me and with
 that light coming I found the key
 It had hid in the corner
 Waiting... covered in dust and grim

Right where I left it

My dear escapist
 My dear stolen
 My dear heart

I'll set you free

If you do me



“In Mourning”, by: avery scifres



“The Wild of The Fae”, by: sloane (asher) cherry

Stay clear of the woods
 It mothers monsters and magics that appear in the moonlight
 But the wild never hurt children.
 It was love, blocking them from burns
 and hiding them from hurt
 It was imagination, making kings from leaves
 And a knight's sword from sticks

Never give thanks or apologies
 It will become a debt you must fulfill
 The wild, however, has no use for debt.
 The wind whips through windchimes
 Bells ringing at the perceived sin
 The forest says, ‘The most I will ask for’
 ‘Is a name, a story, and some company.’

They're inhuman, but bear no claws nor hooves
 Instead, they're angels, beautiful beings that don't feel quite right.
 But the wild isn't a villain.
 It saves lives with its healing ferns
 And provides food for those in desert
 It gives a grave to rest, for nobles to thieves
 It's a haven, to you, from war and conflicts

It's a demon, a beast from mythologies
 It knits lies and disease that fall you ill
 The wild scoffs, ‘I only want a duet
 ‘A dance partner to waltz through time,’
 ‘One to take my hand and spin’
 ‘Like the leaves that whirl to nature's score’
 ‘To love in a moment as eternity.’

Never give thanks or apologies
 It will become a debt you must fulfill
 The wild, however, has no use for debt.
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 The forest says, ‘The most I will ask for’
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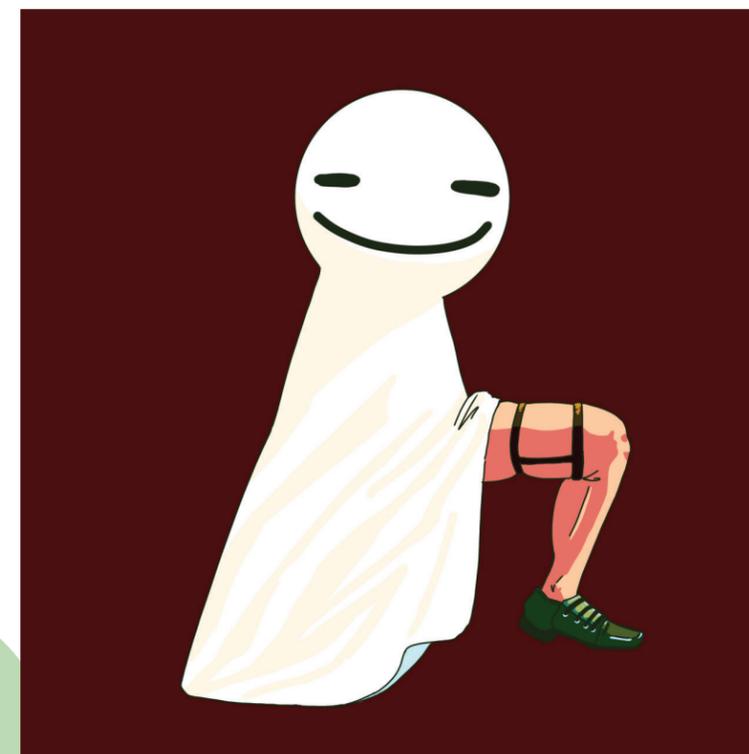
If the forest leaves you a gift, do not accept.
 Leave some butterscotch and regret at its feet
 But the wild has doors that lead to dreamland
 And portals that guide you to delusion
 It lures you into a labyrinth of cloves
 The breadcrumbs are eaten by desire
 And your judgment is clouded by desperation



“Maroon Sunset”
 by: isabella trentacosti

“Amongst the Stars”

by: si qing ni



“Dream”
 by: bethy tameru

“Our Bleeding Vase”

by: piper doyle
poetry competition first place

We made a vase together.
Carried it through any weather
With my grip tight
And yours secretly light.
I thought you were everything. Crash!
One day it fell and shattered,
Chunks of glass scattered,
Mirrors of what I wanted to see,
Fractals of what I wanted us to be.
So I picked up the pieces and put them back
With accidental cuts, never attacks.
And down it went again. Clang!
The fragments are smaller, but I don't mind
Because I love our vase, so I make the time.
Old wounds reopen, but that's quite okay.
Yes, I fix, but I love the broken anyway.
There it goes. Clink!
...It's alright. I haven't had time to heal
And sometimes there's glass in my meals,
But at least I have part of you with me.
And I won't leave, so you won't have to miss me.
But, I do think stitches would be good.
You see, my fingers can't do what they used to could.
Oh. Tink!
Some scars have found me, others are trying.
If I said this smile was real, I'd be lying.
So why do I scrape the minuscule remnants
With my elbows like I'm dependent-
Bink!
-On pulling all the weight, but not being about to hold it,
Like my fingernails have been cut so thin they could fold in?
Of course, I'll stomach every slit, every slice of pain
Through sharpened winds and pricking rain-
Whish!
-Because that is what you do when you love someone
You're also terrified to leave. It's less about who's won
And more about sanity. I'll keep our unbroken vase
Fondly on the mantle next to a frozen clock face-

And apologize profusely while shaking and retreating,
Not to you, but to me, who is tired of bleeding.

“in the big steel city”

by: sofia foradori
poetry competition second place

in the big steel city
a flower grew in between the cracks of the sidewalk
taking up space.



“Aloe View”, by: nathan hooper

“Sally?”
by: bethy tameru



“Daughter of the Diaspora”

by: timia amerson
poetry competition third place

The day I arrived and set my toes in the sand, I had purpose.
The way I walked, talked, laughed, smiled, and wore my hair all had purpose.
When I pray, I call a higher being; when i meditate, I enter a trance that leaves my mind beautifully erratic.
My curves created by the sweet soul carried within me. My womb created the life around, within, under and above we.
I am Daughter of the Diaspora.
How I rock these clothes and jewelry allow stories to unfold of who I be and who I'm from.
I explore myself in all walks of life. My intellect, my voice, my vision, my authenticity.
I know things to be clear now- now that I see me for who I be.
My love's so mesmerizing, I have 'em dreaming about my kingdom floating in the air. A kingdom that only invites those with peace mentality. Those who are free.
My hair so diverse, only them with coils like mine can experience the stress and time, and I'm wondering if I could only chose one for next lifetime.
I am Daughter of the Diaspora.
My brown velvet skin. High cheek bones, dark brown eyes, dark brown hair that sprouts from my crown, hair that simply defies gravity.
I may not know exactly where I come from but I feel it and somehow I just know by the way I dance and the way I yearn to go to the motherland.
The ancestors divine spirits guide, as well as tend to my needs, They deserve and receive honor immensely as I feel it is my duty to do so.
I create to educate and live in a truth that allows me to know who I be and why I want to be free, I am the life this soil needs to summon butterflies from their cocoons.
I am Daughter of the Diaspora.

“Baseball Babe”
by: isabella trentacosti



“Under your skin”
by: bethy tameru



Sheet Staff Special!

To close out this edition of The Sheet, we would first like to thank you for reading and looking at the wonderful pieces the students of Auburn High School have made in 2021-2022.

We'd also like to give a special thank you to our club sponsor, Ms. Carley Muschara!

During this year, the staff of The Sheet played a little game- it's essentially a game of telephone, but with writing and art. We started with a photograph from our only photographer, then got a writer to describe the image. Then, an artist drew a picture based off of that description. This image was then sent to another writer and so on and so forth. If you've ever played Gartic Phone, this should sound pretty familiar. We're very proud of everything that came out, so without further ado, let's begin! We hope you enjoy!

1. rae nawrocki - photographer



2. emily biaz - writer

I am a genie
With nine wishes and three rounds for you
Yet there are rules to this game

I am a genie
(You've never had a teammate like me)
Yet unlike a genie I have a shirt a jersey on

I am out of the lamp I am off the bench
I am in the game
Yet I mostly serve

I am free i am pure
I am flying in triumph
Yet I am still cuffed

My hair is in a whirl
Flying like a butterfly
Yet it is in a braid

I have the power to set up any wish you want
I have the power to send the ball right over to you
Yet the ball is in your hands

We have won against the Snakes team
I hold my hands in the air
And yet the game goes on

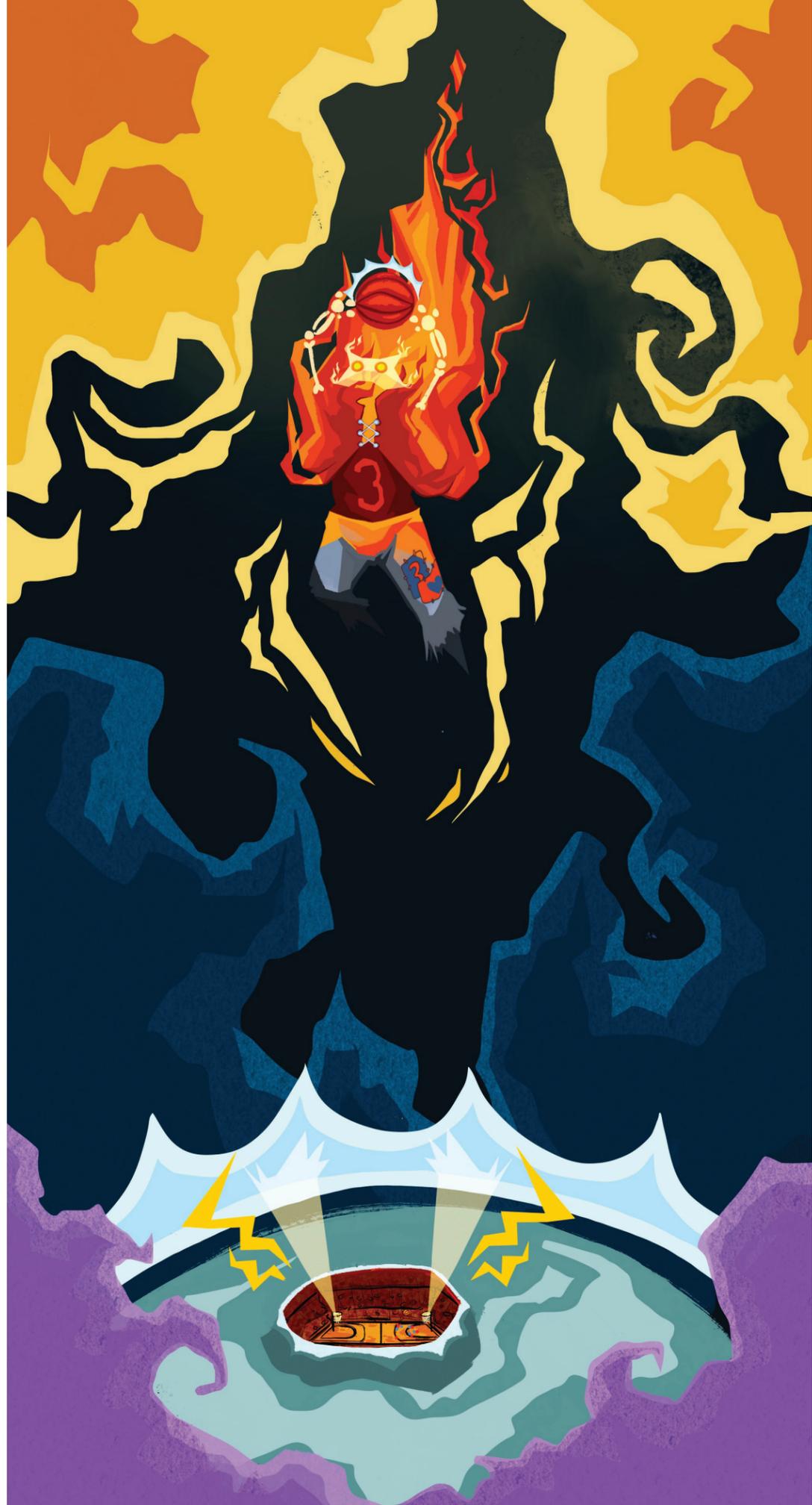
3. audrey cauldwell - artist



4. kourtnei blackmon
writer

Beyond adversity and trial, their whole world is at stake. This winning shot could be the difference between a new chapter and old tribulations returning. Wearing their mothers favorite number 3 on their shirt means a lot, when the whole crowd is depending on them to make the winning 3 pointer. They step back to jump, everything freezes. The only thing that matters in this moment is that basketball in hand and that net 6 feet in front of them. The weight of the straight back braid in hair can not even hold back this picture perfect moment of excellent execution in its final form.

5. kellie davidson - artist



6. abby durkin
lead writer

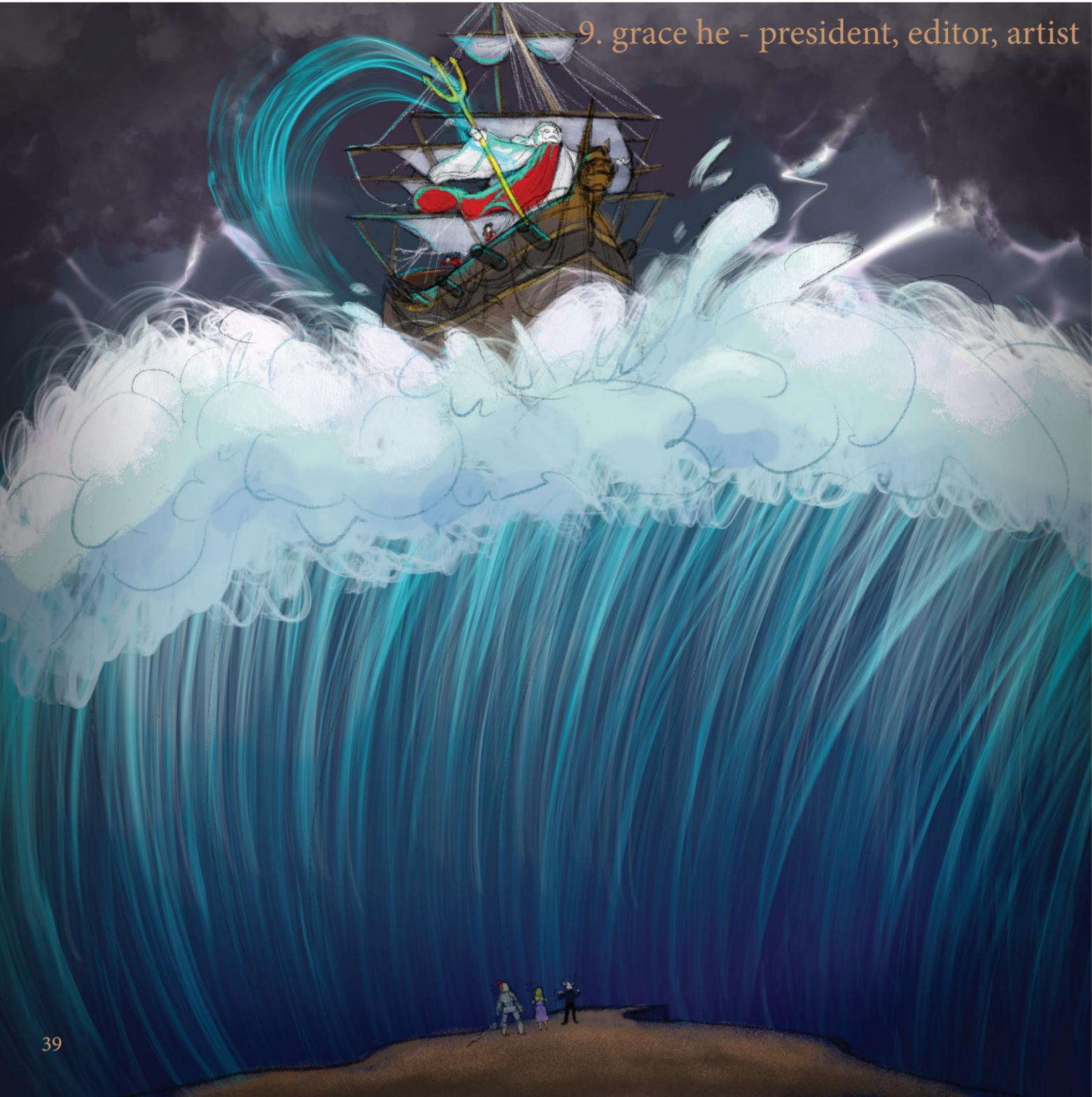
the olympians have won the battle in a glorious game of brain and will power.

7. angela fan - vice president, artist



8. aubrey o'bryant - writer

A god shrouded in red commands a tidal wave and calls forth his ship from the crest of the wave. Together, he and his ship descend upon their enemies who are frozen with an unplaceable emotion; fear, shock, awe? The enemies (a knight, a demon, and a human woman) are facing the spectacle, looking up at the tremendous sight before them. The god, who seems to be made of marble, is striking a commanding pose with his trident, and even in all his glory, is dwarfed by the sheer size of the wave and ship he has summoned. There is an air of divine majesty and terror to this scene.



9. grace he - president, editor, artist

10. vicki wang, writer

Behold the white-robed, red-caped god
Aboard the teetering galleon,
Outstretched arms like wings of a halcyon
With gleaming gold trident in hand.

The wave crashes against the cliff
Where three dwarfed figures stand on mud,
Sending a threatening tower of azure flood
Rising high in forceful rebound.

He rides the foamy crest of sea
Towards the sky-bound lightning and thunder,
Even pitiless pirates that pillage and plunder
Would tremble with fear at his might.

Time stills as if to catch the scene
Of helpless knight, princess, and viking,
Their gazes to the water wall cling
As it swallows the sky, earth, and all between.



11. corvin lee - artist

12. delacey wilkerson - writer

Dark, murky waves crash against the banks of the cliffs. The lighthouse sitting atop one of these hills blares its loud siren. Flashing lights and warning sounds signal that the land is finally being punished by the gods. Lightning strikes the water, and out emerges the angry Sea Lord. He rose from the depths of the ocean, blue eyes blazing with rage. Although he came straight from the sea, his robes and skin did not show it. The waves became even more intense wherever the creature moved. If there had been any boats out sailing that night, they were flipped over and drowned at this point. The sky declared the anger of the other gods, sending more and more lightning even after the God of the Sea appeared. The thunder shook the ground, almost throwing me from my position on another cliff, directly in front of the figure. I knew this was my father's punishment for creating the human race, as Zeus hoped to wipe them out with a massive flood. I also knew they were looking for me after I fled to Earth to help preserve my father's creation. Some part of me felt like I was betraying my own kind, but after what they did to my father, Prometheus, I did not care. When Poseidon spotted me, I felt the anger within his eyes flare up even more. If I did not know any better, I would say there was a moment where time stopped, and Poseidon understood my grief. However, I do know better, and he would never choose my father's side over Zeus's. He began to trudge on through the frenzied waves. In this moment, I, Deucalion, would either save my father's legacy, or perish with them.

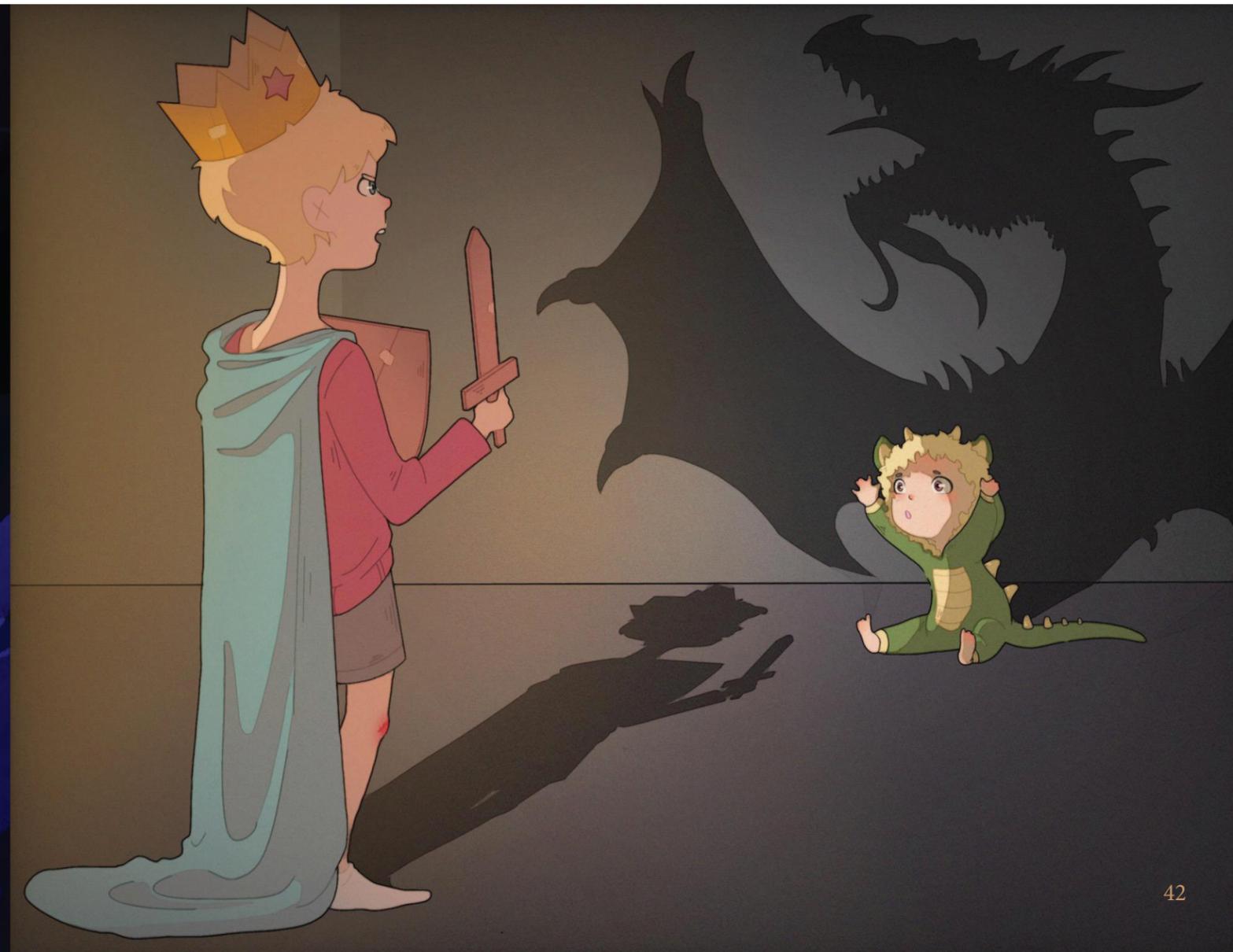
13. avery scifres - artist

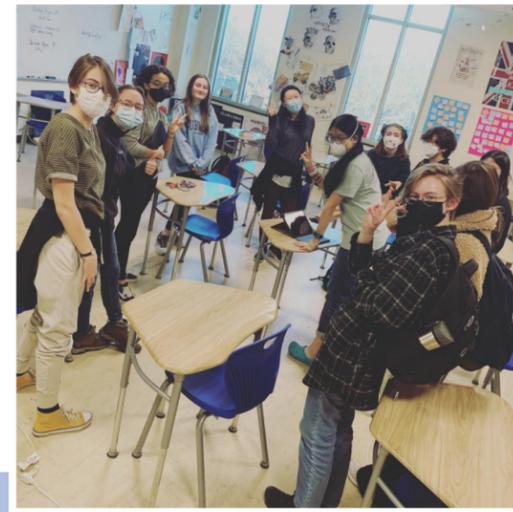


14. abby durkin - lead writer

he looked up and down and was filled with dread, but raised his sword nonetheless.

15. isabella trentacosti - artist





Sheet Sherarrigans
 THANK YOU FOR AN AWESOME YEAR!



HOMECOMING PARADE!



