



# The Looking Glass

Lauralton Hall's Literary Magazine 2017

**A Parody Poem of Robert Frost's "Fire and Ice"**  
**"Ugly and Pretty"**

Anonymous, '18

Some say I look as plain as quire  
Some say I'm nice  
From what I've sampled, to be hired  
I see no one favors plain quire  
So we bear society's vice,  
And know that ugly faces hate  
Thus I flip burgers, not so nice  
As for the pretty's fate  
Wall Street will suffice



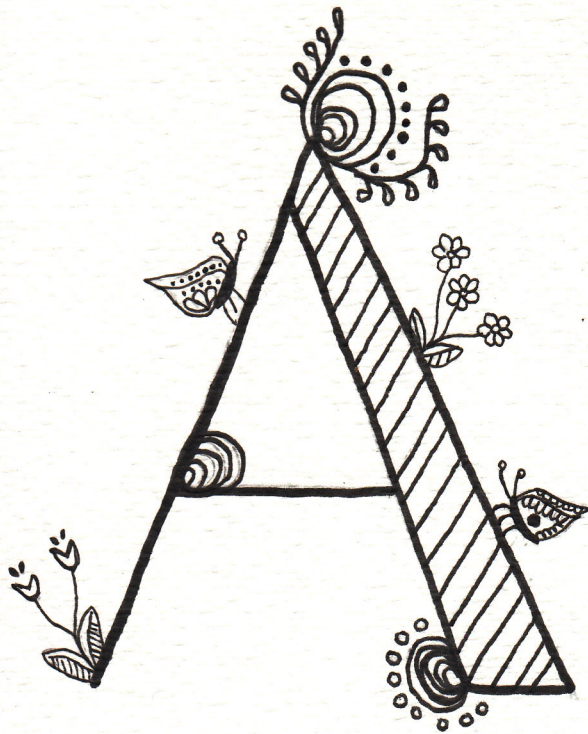
*Artwork by Johanna Angele-Kuehn, '18*

**“Student to Teacher”**

**A parody of Langston Hughes’s “Mother to Son”**

Anonymous, ‘18

Well, Ms. Boynton, I’ll tell you:  
AP Comp for me ain’t been no easy A.  
It’s had F’s in it,  
And pop quizzes,  
And papers torn up,  
And argumentative essays with no direct quotes in the reading proof—  
Weak.  
But all the time  
I’ve been a-writin’ on,  
And reachin’ time limits,  
And turnin’ in decent assignments,  
And sometimes studyin’ in the dark  
When there ain’t been no Common Time to cram.  
So ma’am, don’t you turn back.  
Don’t you set down that red pen,  
‘Cause you finds my paper makes no sense.  
Don’t you fail me now—  
For I’ve still goin’, Ms. Boynton,  
I’ve still writin’  
And AP Comp for me ain’t been no easy A.



*Artwork by Jessica Sanchez, ‘18*

## Watching

Charlotte Kaylor, '17

As the door creaks opens to what is known as my second bedroom, I can smell the musky scent of the old dresser and aging leather books. Outside, the wind skips through the trees and the crickets chirp a staccato beat. Bright red sheets rest on the beds, all nicely made for our arrival. The old floors creek with every step I make. The room is littered with pictures of my mom, uncle, and aunt, full of memories of my Mom's childhood— and my own. Even though my second bedroom is replete with priceless mementoes, the best treasure lives in the walls. These walls are older than my mom, and even older than my grandfather. They have lived in this second home for as long as it has stood on the rocky shores, and as I stare at them, they stare back at me. The knots in the pine wood paneling are the eyes of the household. Each pair of knots reminds me of the eyes in the family, watching over me, keeping me safe.

When I was younger, I was terrified of the dark and the creatures that crawled in it. My vivid and wandering imagination created images of a beast waiting and watching for me to fall asleep, and I would panic. My head would become ten degrees hotter, my hands ten degrees colder, and my thoughts would tumble down the rabbit hole of horrors. The only thing that put me to sleep was the loving eyes of my family.

The two biggest knots symbolize my Grandfather's eyes, Umpah's eyes. They look down at me with a gentle glance, but there is no doubt in my mind as to his strength and courage. His eyes reflect his support and mantra "Tomorrow let's dig to China." Umpah's powerful eyes tell me that I can do anything I set my mind to.

On the other side of the room are my Mom's eye knots and right next hers, my Dad's are personified. My Mom's eyes epitomize kindness and thoughtfulness. Blazing brightly, they are always the first pair I look at. Her eyes talk to me, "Love you to the moon and back, forever and ever and always." In contrast, my Dad's eyes swirl with wild dreams and crazy adventures. They tell crazy stories of daring dragons, pretty princesses, and big-hearted bears. They weave in and out of focus—from reality to cloud nine. Through his eyes, I envision soaring with the birds, skimming the water with the seals, and walking on clouds. He is the imaginative dreamer and always weaves me into his fantasies.

The room where the eyes live, encased in knotty pine, rests in a cabin on the far reaches of the Canadian province of Ontario, a summer retreat amidst a wet bog and pine trees, a place where I have grown up. As they have watched me, I have watched them. I've matured, wanting to be gentle yet strong and courageous like my Grandfather; passionate, caring and kind like my mom. Finally, I want to be like my Dad—a dreamer and adventurer who could make anything possible with a little imagination and the family motto "Kaylors never give up." But ultimately, I want to be myself and add my stormy blue-grey eyes to the wall: eyes that will look back with a celebration of life and a respect for who I am becoming.



Artwork by Brynn Conrad, '20

In the style of Emily Dickinson  
Sadie Semrau, '18

Summer Day-  
Cool breeze-  
They are-  
Gone-  
But Clouds-  
Dissipate-  
And sweat Begins-  
To fall-  
They are in-  
The Air-  
They are-  
Everywhere-  
Diving-  
Olympians-  
Going for the-  
Gold-  
Precise and Antagonizing-  
Into Your-  
Eyes-  
And Mine-  
Hardly seen-  
Smaller-  
Than a-  
Lima bean

*Photograph by Asha-Gaye Lewis, '19*

## **An ABC Story**

Lexi Brinkmann, '20 and Maura O'Brien, '20

A n original chicken noodle soup can, takes on the world.  
B ritney, is my name. And everyday I sit on the shelf waiting for a family to adopt me.  
C ampbells is my brand. And I am right in the front row, waiting for my time to come.  
D an is my best friend and he is scared to get chosen, but not me! I'm ready.  
E veryone starts filing into the supermarket.  
F riendly looking faces search the aisles back and forth.  
G rabbing at food and tossing it into their carts.  
H ands come towards me.  
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!!! I was finally chosen, it is my time to live in a new home surrounded by people who will love me.  
"J ust when exactly are we gonna drop this off?" a bratty little girl says to her mother while picking me up.  
"K athy, I said I will do it today, now stop whining and put that soup in the cart," said the older woman.  
L ater, the mom and her daughter get into their car, putting me and the rest of the groceries into the trunk.  
"M ommmmmm are we there yet?" the girl asks with a bored and irritated tone.  
"N o sweetie," mom replies, trying to squelch her frustration.  
"O k.....How bout' now?" The mom doesn't respond. "Mom are we? Mom? Mom!"  
P ulling the keys out of the ignition, mom says, "Grab the bag we need to bring it inside."  
Q uickly the child scurries to the trunk and grabs me along with another other non-perishable food items..  
R andom piles of non-perishable items surrounded me.  
S oon, people gather at tables and line up for their dinner.  
"T hank you" an older homeless man says to a volunteer.  
"U hhh, you are very welcome" she says with a genuine smile to the man.  
V ery eagerly the man took my lid off.  
"W hoa, hey stop! I DON'T WANT TO DIE!!! " I say with fear in my voice.  
X yloid is the surface that I was placed on.  
Y uck, I was headed straight towards his mouth.  
Z uppa is fish soup, and I am chicken soup. I died—a proud can of Campbell's soup.

### **A Riddle**

Haylee Crowle, '18

I am Infinite and Mysterious,  
I Surround you—no matter where You go,  
You know very little about Me—or what I hold,  
It is no Secret, I am incredibly Old.

You cannot Live—without Me,  
But I can also take Your life away,  
I have great Power—that no one can control,  
There are many parts of Me—that make up a whole

No one knows how far I go or what I Hide,  
You can either Travel over me or Drown within me,  
I can be dark or light- cold or warm,  
I can be Calm and Peaceful- or I can wield a Storm,

I hold many Secrets and much life,  
They live and Flow within Me,  
I am one of the world's greatest Beauties,  
I have a great History.

(answer: the Ocean)



*Photograph by Maeghan Stacy, '19*

## My Turning Point

Sarah Harris, '17

It is our last day in Tijuana. My service group just completed four days of building one small shack for a different family - each day. After a week of driving on dirt roads, hammering planks of wood, and meeting such loving families, unforgettable memories were created. Little did I know that my last mission trip in high school would be the first time I truly opened my eyes - and my heart - to the poor of the world.

"Now remember, these are peoples' homes that we're bringing lunch to. Allow yourself to connect with them. It's hard, but you can do it." My mind is deep in thought as I listen, from the back seat of the van, to the words of one member of my group. The sympathy I feel for the families living in the Tijuana Dump, who we are on our way to visit, moves and excites me - I am proud to be helping them.

How can I call the home of these poor families a dump? I don't, that's its name. The Tijuana Dump has served as a home and an income for families who have lost their homes and jobs or have been deported from the U.S. The men living there rummage through garbage atop a large hill every day in search of plastic, hoping they've collected enough to garner a miniscule income. The women and children stay in the "village" at the bottom of the hill, holding onto nothing but each other.

The van comes to a jerky stop. My eyes examine the new perimeter as I climb out of the vehicle. The air is thick with smoke from the piles of burnt garbage everywhere. Sudden gusts of wind waft toe-curling scents of decay and sewage into my nostrils. Grabbing a dozen hot dogs, I follow the rest of my group.

The ash-covered villagers shuffle one by one out of the rubble of their homes. Greeting them with a friendly smile, my warm hands embrace theirs as I pass each of them two tin-foil-wrapped hot dogs. Their faces express looks of gratitude, reinforcing a stronger kinship and a deeper yearning within me to help.

Trekking down the dusty path, I feel a sudden tug at the backside of my shirt. I turn around to meet the eyes of a small, precious child named Jacky. The shoeless, sunburnt, two-year-old gazes up at me, "Uno mas, por favor?" The sweetness in her voice draws me in. I kneel down, smiling, and extend my arm. Her tiny hands grasp the warm lunch from mine. Looking back into my eyes she lifts her hand, "Por favor." I carefully unwrap the hot dog, but before I can pass it back to her, she throws her arms around my neck and kisses my cheek.

Standing with Jacky in my arms, tears swell in my eyes. A connection that no word could ever describe had formed between this angel and me. Through our emotional bond, I realize that serving others is more than a deep passion - it is essential to who I am.

The time comes to return home, so I give Jacky the most loving hug possible. She clings tightly around my neck as I lean over to place her in the protection of her brother's arms. Neither of us wants to let go of one another, but knowing I will never forget her or the philosophical shift she caused inside me, soothes the pain of saying goodbye. As a child, I dreamed that one day my life would accomplish great feats. Yet I never imagined that a small child living on the outskirts of Tijuana, Mexico, would prove my turning point.

## **Epic Simile**

Stephanie Paulsen, '19

High school is like drinking cough syrup as a child  
Despite the best intentions, some will always refuse  
The action can be bitter and painful  
Tears flowing during every swallow  
But the aftertaste is sweet to ones who follow through  
And as time goes on, the pain lessens,  
Your cough weakening every minute  
When the night comes to a close, you always are grateful  
Grateful to the ones who forced you to take a sip



*Photograph by Asha-Gaye Lewis, '19*

## **My Love is Real and it is Alive**

Katie Arpino, '18

you watch us when you're  
left to your own devices  
your only advice is  
to show a little more skin  
when we are already stripped bare  
in the videos you share  
made for your pleasure  
and you dare tell us we  
are the dirty ones

--

Insist on prying our brains apart with scalpels and saws  
scrutinizing  
looking for yourself in our thoughts  
wondering how we survive without  
your male gaze  
we are not your science projects  
we are not zoo animals  
made for you to gawk at

--

your opinions on my love should not  
dictate what I feel inside but  
when you say  
I belong in a dreary  
burning hellscape  
and not on the street  
when all I am doing is holding a hand,  
I cannot help but wonder if I can  
withstand the agony  
of half the world rooting against my life

--

someone once asked me why I can't just "be normal"  
I have never really understood the meaning of that phrase

--

But when I am sitting next to you  
arms intertwined  
the pads of fingers tracing  
figure eights down my spine  
sending me to cloud nine  
my head a feather on your shoulder  
it feels beautiful and it feels right  
and I don't need it to fit the definition of your normal

—



*Artwork by Cristina Ludwig, '19*

you smell of sweet petrichor  
the last raindrops twinkling and tickling  
your nose as eyes squint  
laughter trickling out of your mouth  
loud enough to drown out dregs of the thunder  
growling just outside of our windows  
--

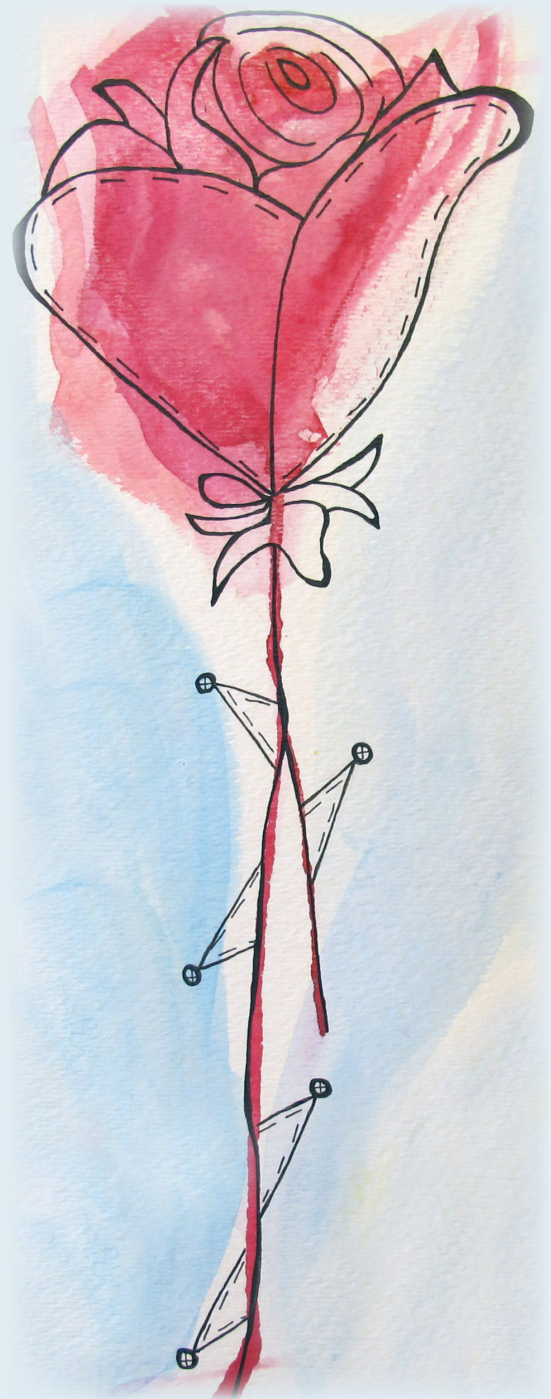
you are more becoming than a bolt of lightening  
a thunderstorm -  
hair falling in ocean waves down your back  
eyes brimming with a river of melted chocolate  
so brown they are almost black  
but still glistening like mist upon a creek  
my hand traces the path the rain made down your cheek  
you press your palm to mine  
and I smile  
--

I want the life of toothpaste flavored kisses  
of adjusting your bangs so they fall like they should  
of not thinking straight  
I want my life to be full of you  
whoever you are  
You remind me that life is worth the pain  
--

my love is beautiful  
and it is not something for me to be ashamed of  
It is not yours to take away  
it is certainly not something you can make me hide  
in closets and dressers  
--

there is a fire in my heart  
and it burns for you  
you might try everything you can to douse it but  
your advances are futile  
the flame will live on for as long  
as I am alive to keep it  
you will not trample it beneath your feet  
you will not pigeonhole the sparks into a stereotype  
crackling inside a cage  
I will not allow you to ruin me  
--

you will never block the sun  
from shining on the ground  
and dancing on my shoulders  
because the rain cleared up  
from my eyes  
and I can see the beginnings  
of a rainbow peeking through the clouds



Artwork by Cristina Ludwig, '19

Haiku

Hope Hottois, '17

night sky sewn by God,  
silvery spouse to the morn—  
casts man's sorrows yond



Artwork by Caroline Oman, '19

## Beautiful String Instruments

Isabella Kang, '20

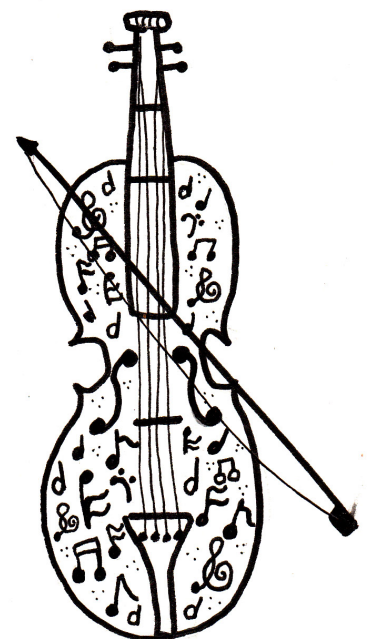
Imagine that you are in a middle of a delightful and beautiful concert. The orchestra is playing Symphony No.5 in C minor by Beethoven. The harmonious sounds from the string section lead you into a magical world of sounds that rise and fall. The dramatic changes in the music express Beethoven's feelings and thoughts. While you are experiencing Beethoven's life, what you might not notice is that there are many instruments that you are not familiar with in the string section, such as viola and cello. They all look surprisingly similar, while they are actually really different. Viola is one of William Shakespeare's most delightful and beloved feminine heroines, while cellos are called "boyfriend" by some cellists because of their deep gentle sounds. These two wooden instruments have similarities and differences in their appearance, playing methods, and roles in orchestra.

Every instrument in the violin family has the same shape in their appearance — beautiful curly sides, wooden material, and artsy F-holes. They all have fingerboards, scrolls, and four strings. They all need bows to play. Players might have different sizes of instruments depending on their heights and ages. However, violas and cellos are distinguishably different in size. Most of the violas are from 15.5 to 16.5 inches in length, quite larger than violins. Yet cellos are dramatically different. The 4/4 cello is a full-sized cello, and the size is suitable for teenagers and adults. The 4/4 cello is 48 inches long. Cellos and Violas are not only different from their sizes of the instruments, they also need different sized of bows. Normally speaking, 29.3 inches-bow is used the most common for violists, however, 4/4 size cellos require bows at the length of 28 inches. Besides these two differences, violas and cellos also have distinctions in their strings. Even though violas and cellos are tuned in 5th (A, D, G, C), cellos have thicker strings than violas.

The size difference of cellos and violas leads into the different ways to play these two instruments. Even though both of the instruments have the same original principle method of playing—using the bow to make the strings vibrate to produce sounds, and changing the positions of the hand to change the length of strings that are vibrating. Yet there are many different ways in which to perform. Firstly, the most obvious distinction is that the musicians stand while playing violas but they sit while performing cellos. Violas are played almost the same way as violins—they are propped up in between of chin and chest and held by the left hand. However, cellos are played while sitting down and rest in-between the knees of the musician. There is an end pin stuck in the floor for balance, as the cello should slant away from the musician like a ski slope, at about a 45-degree angle during the performance.

The difference of appearance causes the distinctions in the ranges of notes. Even though they are both in the string section of the orchestra, there still are key differences. Violas have a wider range than cellos. C3-E6 is the range that a viola could play, while C2-C6 is the range that a cello could reach. Therefore, cellos and violas have different roles in the orchestra. There are usually 8 to 12 cellos in an orchestra and they play both harmony and melody. There are usually 10 to 14 violas in an orchestra and they almost always play the harmony.

General speaking, appearances, playing methods, and different roles in orchestra make violas and cellos different. Despite these similarities and differences, each instrument is unique and beautiful. They make the music world lively and full of magic.



Artwork by Jessica Sanchez, '18

## Sand Angels

Maureen Morris, '18

One of my first memories is a sound: a ceaseless muffled roar, as if all of the noises in the world were overlapped and layered until they became one cumulative din. The waves at Silver Sands Beach, on Long Island Sound, are not powerful or towering, like true ocean waves, but they produce the same pounding hush, paradoxically both uproarious and soothing. Living in a house on the beach, the drum of nature is constant. Although I need to exit my back door to officially be on the beach, the clamor of it is always there, floating through the windows and doors, even when they are shut in mid-winter. As a toddler, I napped on sandy towels to the music of seagulls and easy conversation, comforted more by this harmony of sounds than I would have been by any lullaby. Even now, I sleep better at night with my windows open, the familiar chorus of the sea easing me into dreams, the breeze carrying the scent of low tide.

As a kid, I spent my summers on sand. My brother, our neighbors, and I practically lived in our bathing suits from June until August, playing with hermit crabs in tidal pools. We spent hours clamming in the dark mud of low tide, immune to the briny smells of sulfur and seaweed. At night, we built bonfires out of the driftwood found on shore and talked around them until our eyes stung from smoke and exhaustion. The distinct oaky scent lurked in our clothes for hours. At high tide, we swam like fish amidst the white caps, squealing when our toes brushed seaweed and jellyfish. Doused in freckles, hair sunkissed and tangled, I watched the sailboat races every Thursday night. Drenched in sunscreen that smelled of coconut and sunshine, I made sand angels in the fine gray dunes. The high tide brought in many treasures: oyster, mussel, and clam shells, crab husks, and sea glass, all encrusted with salt and sand. They sat at the water line, waiting to be admired. I love all the seasons, but a special piece of my heart is reserved for summer. Author Jenny Han puts my thoughts into words: "For me, it was almost like winters didn't count. Summer was what mattered. My whole life was measured in summers. Like I don't really begin living until June, until I'm at that beach, in that house."

About a half-mile off of the shore sits Charles Island, connected to the mainland by a tombolo, or a sandbar, that appears at low tide. I have spent many summer days walking the circumference of its rocky coast, not a sound to be heard but waves and my feet kicking up pebbles as I walk. Every once in awhile, I'll walk there in the winter, when ice crystals are forming in the water, and snow is lodged in the treetops. Although summer is my favorite, there is truly nothing quite like the quiet that winter brings. For some reason, when I tell people that I live on the beach year-round, the question that I'm asked most is, "What happens when it snows?"

I have made more memories on our tiny stretch of beach than everywhere else on the earth. It has been the heart of every summer I've lived; to me, the beach is a friend I've known forever, the sea and I have grown up together. It is both constant and fickle: forever changing but here until the end of time. Christopher Paolini, author of *Eragon*, describes it perfectly, "The sea is emotion incarnate. It loves, hates, and weeps. It defies all attempts to capture it with words and rejects all shackles. No matter what you say about it, there is always that which you can't." It is my first – and most treasured – memory.

*Photograph by Maeghan Stacy, '19*

In the Style of Emily Dickinson  
Poems by Maggie Wilcox, '18

**A Heart needs Blood**

A Heart needs Blood—  
Just as I need You—  
But Time passed—  
And you Grew—  
A person once known—  
Gone—  
So I moved On

**Past Curfew**

Past curfew—  
Feeling Wild and Free—  
While she drove in shot gun —  
Surrounded by trap Songs and the people that she  
Loved—  
Looking at the Sky—  
While the stars reflect on her eyes—  
We made Memories—  
That will never leave my mind.

**When I saw Cupid**

When I saw Cupid—  
He made my Heart smile—  
The look of Him—  
Was Gentle—  
His armor shined like a knight's—  
When his Bow Struck me—  
My Love—  
Was Extraordinary—



*Artwork by Sarah Li, '20*

In the Style of Emily Dickinson  
Maggie Wilcox, '18

**A Place of Peace**

A Place of Peace—  
Where Water dances along the Shores—  
And we Live by the Tides—  
Where the Sun is a golden ball—  
And there are—no—worries  
No cares at all—



Artwork by Wendy Zheng, '17

The vast majority of three year olds cannot tie their own shoes. Their short fingers clench the laces too tightly in greedy fists, and they fail to loop bunny ears into bows. The skill is something they will achieve, hopefully, on a day that is not today and probably isn't tomorrow, but maybe next week, month, year. I discovered in my after-school job at a local preschool that learning to teach children is like learning to tie shoes - except with more caffeine and crying, and with 15 moving bodies rather than two moving laces. It was my own skill to be learned, to be perfected and developed, to see how fast I could create an intricate knot out of string.

I thought it would be easy. Tying shoes is physics - one force stronger than the other creates an imbalance in the size of the loops, the friction of string on string keeps the knot tight. Childcare is science, too, albeit a social science, for it is psychology - a great mind game joined by both knowing and unknowing participants. I hoped it would be easy. It wasn't.

There were many days of tantrums and time outs, each sliver of help from my advisors more of a paradox than the last. Each attempt at reverse psychology reversed back on me until I had become as disillusioned as a three year old staring at her shoes, willing the laces to tie themselves, wishing the children will somehow, miraculously, know the rules today better than they did yesterday. Every day at closing, I wondered how many more days I would put up with what I then saw as unfulfilling work.

Yet I remained. I stayed.

I stayed because I came to understand children are not science projects, much like they will come to understand the mechanics of shoe tying. Children embody the dreams and ideals held by every good engineer. They offer an unimaginable wealth of creativity and potential. Who can tell where the next president, innovator, or philosopher could come from? They are a symbol of hope and promise in a society in dire need of innovation. They are unpredictable in every respect, and while the mathematical function:  $f(\text{scraped knee})$  always equals "scraped knee plus bandage," and the limit of crying as a child approaches naptime does not exist, they cannot be defined by one formula or equation. They are dependent variables attempting to react to an infinite number of stimuli in the lab of life.

I tried again, the unsuccessful attempts becoming my own learning experience in the Pre-kindergarten classroom. I continue to try new things, to puzzle out how a child will respond—what worked, what didn't, and why. And at the end of every day, when I wave goodbye to the last toddler and return home to my own schoolwork, I remember childcare is engineering. It is dynamic, forcing me to think creatively and respond quickly to every emergency regardless of magnitude. I have learned to accept the advice of specialists, those teachers who have worked with children for years and can better predict the outcome of any experiment. My communication with my colleagues can become the difference in the approach we take when dealing with one student as compared to another. I have become accustomed to seeing every detail, every small choking hazard that must be swept away, every sign of development worthy of praise.

I have learned to teach my kids, and my kids have learned - for the most part - to tie their shoes. And for those who haven't, there's always Velcro.

-JC, '17



*Photograph by Maeghan Stacy, '19*

## 6 WORD STORIES...

“Why can’t I be four again?”

Emily Plumb, ‘18

“When love finds me, I’m ready”

Anonymous

“What my soul wants is hope”

Anonymous



*Photograph by Aimee Turcotte, '19*

## Write Something Good and Deep, They Said

Laurel Marie Pham, '20

Teenage girls are often generalized into one large, angst-ridden conglomerate of easily-dismissed hormonal complainers. Although there is much to support this tired, oft-perpetuated theory, it simply isn't true. As a generation, we are too quickly cast aside, too easily overlooked: our thoughts deemed immature, ill-informed, and treated as something akin to a joke. It's become a cultural norm to giggle and smile, brush off the ideas we can't yet even attempt to understand instead of contemplating them with heavy words like Logic and Reason. It's become our standard of living to worry about little things like dimly lit parties and the slow easy smiles of the impossibly attractive human being we met the other week; we are capable of so much more.

But what happens at the end of these wildly packed four years? The ones we said would change us forever? What happens when it no longer matters who was friends with whom, who was invited where, and how many thin papery tops our mothers let us buy? If we suppress our deeply ingrained curiosity and the intelligence that lies sleeping beneath the glossy surface of our shallow desires and needs, then who's to say we're not the ditzzy, stupid idea of an adolescent girl as portrayed by Disney shows and saccharine smiling posters? Does nobody remember what it was like to be the Young and Powerful? We are the brightest minds on this planet: the perfect blend of brash, unpolished cheek, tottering and hesitant naïveté, and raw, untapped potential. Even within our small, sheltered New England college prep school, we have the power to drastically affect what will happen to us: the ability to carve deep, lasting marks into the face of the world we see today.

Realistically, it's a good thought, but often, we don't muster the focus or the drive to act. Why are we not the young women in those inspirational Snapchat Discover articles we read on an everyday basis? We are stopped by the very omnipresent and powerful need to conform to societal pressures and our own straight-up laziness. As teenagers, the constant desire to belong is overwhelming. Sure, being independent and to do "you" is great and wonderful, but to do so much seems to equate ridicule in today's culture. We tend to make fun of the ones who are living lives without judgement or hate, even though we secretly covet the way they walk so freely through the world. If we could only just shed this stupid, irrational need to taunt those who are really and truly being themselves, then we can have a safe space, even if it's just within the walls of a school, the walls of our own homes.

So a judge-free environment? Swell! But then comes the constant persistence of our own laziness. Too many of us have the potential to do great and wildly incredible things with our lives, but end up mediocre or forgotten simply because only a small fraction are willing to put in the work to achieve everything we truly can. Continuing life at our usual pace is just easier for us in the most practical sense. But you know what? We should toss that idea out too, actually. True greatness and achievement only happen when we push ourselves, make ourselves uncomfortable and squirm a little, not when we're merely coasting by.

Just imagine.

Just imagine a clean slate within our grasp on which all of the seemingly monumental teenage issues will dissipate, and we'll be faced with all new possibilities and decisions. Just imagine directing that energy towards things of merit that will last and count for the rest of our lives, instead of the immature and insignificant. You really have no idea what good you can do.

## The Pumpkin-Spiced and Limerence-Laced Life of the Coffee Shop Creep

Victoria Elise Soqueco, '20

"I hate him. So much." A voice declared.

It belonged to my co-worker, Janine. On Tuesdays, a man would always, without fail, come in at 4:29, a minute before Janine could clock out, thus spoiling whatever plan she had for that evening. Or so she complained to me. It seemed that every Tuesday at 4:31 she had a plan to go to the Met, MOMA, on a blind date, or something similar and had to be there on time or else she'd never be able to do whatever it was ever again. This time it had been cocktails at a new bar that had opened a few blocks away.

She claimed that the regular customer was in love with her, although, frankly, I couldn't for the life of me figure out why he would be. The only remarkable thing about her appearance was that at the end of her shift, her hair would always go from pulled back in a sleek ponytail to covering most of her face.

As for her personality, she seemed bland. It seemed as if, except on Tuesdays at 4:31, she went straight home from work and did nothing in her apartment but exist. Besides working—that was the only thing I could picture her doing. I couldn't see her singing along to a musical being performed at the Met, nor could I imagine her gazing at art or at a date from across the table.

Over the course of the time that I had spent working at the coffee shop, I had learned more about Janine than I cared to, which was comprised of events that could be taken from anyone else's life.

While quietly and slowly picking up a croissant to eat at home (though I couldn't imagine her doing this), she was focused on the 4:29 Man. B, as she dubbed him after an ex with whom she endured a nasty breakup. This 4:29 Man seemed to captivate her. He sloppily ate a scone (one that had been left out for about a week and purposely chosen by Janine) while reading the Times, sometimes grinning at himself. Oftentimes while reading, he would glance at Janine, who would be preoccupied with another customer. But that didn't happen that day.

"God, look at this, there are crumbs on his suit! Do you see that? Did you know that he tried to ask me out once, that creep? I told him that I wasn't interested in him, but he still has the nerve to come back every Tuesday!" Janine loudly whispered to me, as if I were actually listening. "I don't even know him! And besides, he's so old, and I need someone my age, and someone, like, I don't know, funny, and nice, and smart, and..."

I know what you're thinking. No, Janine wasn't in love with me. At least, I'm pretty sure that she wasn't. A friend of mine once brought this to my attention, saying that we have been "together" for four years and it was bound to happen, but while I knew about her, we both didn't know how one another acted outside of the coffee shop. And as average as she was, I was a bit more common, so why would she fall for someone like me?

I had been suffocating in that dreaded coffee shop for four years, blindly and indifferently concocting lattes, cappuccinos, tea, and the occasional and hated drink on a supposed "secret menu." The only spice in my life was that of pumpkin spice, and that was only a seasonal thing. Clearly, this wasn't exactly how I pictured my post-Juilliard years, to say the least.

Sometimes suits would come in: doctors grabbing coffee before presentations, lawyers reviewing court cases, Wall Street brokers checking stocks... the Mayor even came in once. They too seemed bored with their jobs and lives (or lack thereof), but still, I longed to be the one being served coffee rather than the barista behind the counter.

But one day something incredible happened.

When I first laid eyes on her, a song by Radiohead was playing. It was "Creep," I believe.

When she walked in, the song started. The ubiquitous coffee shop band, clad in red and black flannel, ironic printed t-shirts, and unneeded glasses, was on the first verse. "When you were here before / couldn't look you in the eye / you float like a feather / your skin makes me cry..."

She truly was like an angel, at least to me. She was wearing yellow. A bright yellow short-sleeved shirt over a navy-striped long-sleeved shirt. Black jeans with a red belt. Faded orange Converse, as orange as the leaves outside. A small, black lace beret sat on her hair. There was an air of confidence about her, but it was also strangely warm and inviting. She was a breath of fresh air in what I inhaled as mere coffee shop-smog.

She wasn't like me or the suits. She seemed carefree; she even had a bounce in her step. It was as if her clothes acted as an anchor, keeping her from floating away. She had a smile on, too. Her playful-looking eyes darted from one corner of the shop to another, never quite resting on a person or an object for more than a few seconds.

"Hi, can I get a pumpkin spice latte?" the angel asked. Her simple request sounded musical, and yet, she wasn't even singing a song.

When she came closer, I realized that her brown eyes had a brightness about them that pulled me in.

I prepared her latte for her. I had done it multiple times before, but then my hands started to shake. I might have put in too much syrup.

I handed her the latte. Her hand touched mine as she reached for the cup.

"Whoop, sorry!" She said, somewhat embarrassed.

"No problem."

We looked at each other for a few moments, her hand didn't move from mine. Her embarrassment seemed to lessen and was replaced with another emotion...

But then the moments ended, and she paid me and, sheepishly smiling, told me to keep the change.

She walked towards a booth that was right up against the glass that separated the dark coffee shop from the windy world of colorful stray leaves. While the other patrons around her talked, laughed, and even sang, she silently sipped her coffee and watched cars pass outside. A red one. A blue one. A silver one. Another red one.

The band was still on the same song, reaching the chorus now. She didn't seem to hear them.

In that moment, I wanted nothing more than to jump over the counter and talk to her.

She looked at peace with everything that was going on. She didn't even bat an eye when the band that you have probably never heard of changed songs. Most patrons usually clap or at least acknowledge the band, but she seemed sort of spaced out. Like she didn't belong there. Like she was just waiting to be transported elsewhere.

She seemed to return back to earth, and glanced directly at me, as if she felt me looking at her from earlier. Our eyes met, but I quickly averted my gaze. The next time that I saw her, she was doodling on a napkin.

"...Anyways, I'm outta here. Gotta catch that new Scarlett Johansson movie at the mall," Janine told me.

And then Janine was gone. I foolishly signed up for small "filler" shifts on Tuesdays at that coffee shop, telling myself that the extra thirty minutes would be worth the barely legal wage that I would be awarded. Even more foolishly I decided to tell my boss that I would be able to do the shift alone to get more barely legal wage since Janine and I were the closers anyway. And so I was there for another half-hour.

B, Janine's customer, was out the door maybe five minutes after Janine left. Within fifteen minutes, other patrons left. The band was almost finished with their set and thanked the customers for being a good audience.

The world outside grew dim and cold. It didn't seem to bother her.

Time passed, and she left too. Soon it was just me cleaning up.

I reached the booth where she sat. I was about to throw a napkin away until I realized that there was a drawing on it.

It was a uniform. My uniform. Well, the employees' uniform.

And I took it as a sign.

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She had come in every day that I worked for more than a month now. During those times, I had assigned her a name: Philippa, after another song by Radiohead.

Including the first encounter, I had seen her fifty times. Fifty smiles. Fifty PSLs. Fifty amazing doodles, all of which I felt had to do with me: a man with a radio for a head (after she caught me singing a Radiohead song) and a latte with a steamed milk heart on top, among other things. Fifty yellow clothing items. Twenty-three red ones. Thirty-eight hand grazes. Twelve that almost were.

Fifty times that I could have talked to her.

The fifty-first time was different, though.

She was laughing, wearing a yellow dress.

Laughing with another man.

She got a PSL again. So did he.

No hand graze that time. Not for me, at least.

They left immediately, and she didn't come back for two weeks.

I foolishly thought that maybe during that time he swept her off her feet and took her to some foreign land to marry her or something. I thought that they were happy and that she had forgotten all about me. But then there was the fifty-second time that I saw her.

Philippa was wearing a bright yellow trench coat, one reminiscent of Jubilee from the comics that I used to read when I was a kid. It was extremely windy that day, but not a hair of hers was out of place.

She didn't have the same spark that she had the days before, but I still felt drawn to her.

"Just a pumpkin spice latte, please," she said.

I noticed that there was a hint of exasperation in her voice, as if she had just come from or was making her way to work. Or maybe it was me.

I wanted her to say something else. Maybe her name. Maybe "Hi." Something that would tell me that it wasn't me, that it was just the day she was having.

But she said nothing, pulled her sleeves up, took her coffee, and paid in exact change. Her hand didn't graze mine.

Philippa sat down in one of the booths. She looked out the window. On some days, she'd breathe against the glass and draw something on it, but on that fifty-first day she looked as if she wanted to shatter it.

She left a doodle of a Volkswagen Beetle that day. And I took it as another sign, a sign that she wanted me to follow her and make her feel better.

I told Janine to cover for me.

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47 Wilkes Drive. I pass by it every day. Sometimes, I can still see her shadow on the window.

Her car was a VW Beetle. Yellow. On the window hung a necklace with a heart on it. It was engraved, but I never got around to seeing it.

It was a Tuesday that extremely windy day, the day that her spark seemed to be extinguished.

Her house was a Cape Cod-style one. Bright yellow, as usual.

I didn't get out of my car. Instead, I watched Philippa get out of hers. I stayed there, in the shadows, for what felt like forever. I watched her through the windows, tracking her silhouette as it moved from one room to the next. It looked like she was crying once. But I couldn't comfort her.

How could I? I loved her, yes, but I respected her.

And so, I waited there for hours, even after the lights in her house turned off. Typing it now, I feel like I was a complete fool. But, no, I wasn't. I truly loved Philippa; she was a pop of color in my otherwise gray world, and she made the four awful years at the coffee shop worth it. She was the first and last thing that I thought about, day in and day out. I know that it sounds cheesy, but she made me want to go outside and live my life. She made me believe that I could be happy... That I could just go outside with my guitar and make a living by singing. But then I snapped back to reality.

But once I didn't.

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Two weeks later, I decided that I didn't want to carry on in the shop. I didn't even know what I was going to do for a living, but I knew that I definitely wasn't going to make coffee.

Philippa had come in every day for those two weeks, and I felt as if every day her eyes were begging me to run away with her. She was happier then, and she was back to her old self.

The day before she had drawn a couple in space, above the earth. It was the final sign.

She walked in, smiling, with yellow boots and a red cloth rose pinned to her hair. She walked up to me.

"The usual, please." She said. And then she stopped to think.

I was about to turn around to make her coffee when she said something else.

"Isn't it kinda weird how we see each other every day but I've never even, like, greeted you? I don't even know your name. Well, I read it on your name-tag, but it's not like I actually know it, you know? You don't even know my name," she said, still smiling.

My heart started to beat quickly. Philippa said something to me.

"Well, yeah, I find it kind of weird too. I know that you're pretty good at drawing, though," I said, trying to see if she was leaving them on purpose.

"Oh, God, those? I'm not an artist, not really, I want to be, but that's not gonna happen anytime soon." She laughed, though her laugh seemed to be tinged with sadness. "I went to an art school for college but, uh, I had to drop out. Um, but, yeah, I hope that you've enjoyed those little sketches!"

"Yeah, they're... really good. Wow, I just learned more about you than I have since you started coming here."

"Yeah, but I still don't know anything about you."

She wants to know more about me.

It was now or never.

"Uh, well, maybe we could get to know each other better. Do... you... want to, uh, go out with me sometime? I mean, like, you're really pretty and I've kind of been wanting to ask you for a super long time" I asked, heart pounding louder than the Tell-Tale Heart.

"Um, I have a boyfriend."

And that was it.

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I'm a suit now, no longer the server but the one being served. But now my life is more insipid than ever. Instead of new drink combinations I create the same exact salad at the buffet where the other suits and I eat lunch every day. No one wears bright yellow or red or anything besides black, gray, and white.

I have a wife, but there is no Philippa in her. She wants kids but there is something stopping me from wanting them too.

It turns out that Janine did do things other than work and exist; singing was also a favorite pastime of hers. I must admit that Janine is quite good at it; she's been on Broadway twice and I listen to songs that she sang and wrote from time to time. One song is about a girl pining for her love to be returned by a co-worker, so I guess that maybe Janine was in love with me. These songs are now performed in coffee shops everywhere, or so I hear.

The coffee shop closed down a while back, and ever since I quit my job there, I haven't set foot in another one.

Philippa and I never cross paths, but I still see her often. I see her in the leaves in fall. I hear her in Radiohead songs. Sometimes I hear her singing those songs to me when I can't sleep. I see her in the sun. The smell of coffee transports me to a time when she was in front of me.

I like to think that her life isn't like mine. Maybe she married someone she loves. Maybe they have kids that they love even more. Maybe they live in a nice house in the suburbs. Maybe she gets a new engraved heart necklace every anniversary. Maybe she's married to a suit. Maybe she tries to look for me. Maybe she can't find me.

Maybe she switched to tea.

## Walks

Jordan Vasilko-Parlato, '17

Colorful, tiny, and simple— dandelions are much more than a weed with bright yellow heads and long green stems. To my vibrant cousin Brayden, they were God's greatest gift— and we would vigorously snatch them into our grasp on our daily walks.

In my cozy neighborhood, the houses are small and relatively close to each other. If you had an aerial view, it would look like a patchwork of different greens—fenced-in yards accessorized by pools, swing sets, and pets roaming around. At the start of each walk, Brayden, dressed in his work boots and overalls, would stroll down the paved driveway with me, his right hand tightly grasping onto my index finger. The mere sight of this child immediately lifted my spirits. Lagging behind us like a streak of red is the classic Radio Flyer wagon, full of dried dandelion heads, his treasure of gold. We arrive at the end of the driveway— look left, then look right. As I glance down at Brayden, his face shines back up at mine. He shows me how happy he is, as the two of us continue our walk, and I follow him in whichever direction he chooses. I want him to be happy, and his happiness instantly transforms into my own.

So we continue to walk and walk— cousins on a mission— while our goal waits ahead. I find comfort in the quiet atmosphere but I quickly adapt when that silence is broken— by either a ferocious dog barking at us or airplanes flying above our heads. No matter what, I insist that we continue to walk and walk, until serenity is restored. We turn right onto Hotchkiss Road and Brayden's crisp blue eyes quickly widen— overwhelmed with the meadow of dandelions, peaking above the green grass. Running at his side, we get our hands dirty and strategically grab at the root of the dandelions, joyfully tossing them into the red wagon. Continuously grabbing every patch of yellow that he can see, Brayden looks like a bumble bee, harvesting nectar from a flower. I quite often stand back to watch him grasp each and every last one, and that is when I experience true happiness. A goal of mine is to bring a positive impact to Brayden's life, but I soon realize that he brings one into mine. You may ask how could someone possibly learn anything from a two year old?

I am an open-minded person and Brayden taught me to see the beauty and find happiness in the simple things, like he found his in the dandelion weeds. On these walks I noticed that life in its simplicity is a beautiful thing, and we should always feel a sense of accomplishment at the end of the day, just like Brayden felt after grasping onto a dandelion. Our meaningful walks continued for many weeks, but soon after that, Brayden's life was tragically taken away from us.

Even though he is no longer with me, when I stroll around my neighborhood, I am constantly reminded of all that he taught me. I am aware that death is a morbid topic, but I strive to see the positive in it. Everyone struggles with the aftermath of losing someone close to them— now I not only value the memories Brayden has left me but also the learned lessons that I will remember for the duration of my life. When spring comes and those colorful dandelions sprout, it is a refreshing reminder of the impact that I had on Brayden's life—and concurrently, the one he had on mine.



Artwork by Lily Mulin, '19

# The Looking Glass

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