

Bonfire

Spring 2024



Orange County School of the Arts
Integrated Arts Conservatory

Bonfire

spring 2024

Cover Art By
Macy Wong

Orange County School of the Arts
Integrated Arts

Editors

Art Department

Evan Gutierrez
Shab Ghaffari

Poetry Department

Ciara Tadeo
Sonali Dhanidina
Kaila Gibbons

Miscellaneous Department

Bella Nueva
Galya Ramos

Fiction Department

Eesha Tangirala
Marina Kibota
Sophia Kim

Table of Contents

The Lonely Tree by Logan Navar	1
Remember That Edge by Catherine Boland	2
Being California People by Ksenia-Eve Jenkins	3
What is love like? by Kaia Wang	5
Sweet Dreams by Zihui Ye	6
Reflection (Part 1) by Ella Beaver	6
My True [Insert Christian University Here] Essay by Anonymous	7
Simplicity is the Ultimate Sophistication by Sophia Kim	9
Peaches by Macy Wong	11
Frog by Jessica Yang	12
Fading (based on “Clouds”) by Kaia Wang	13
[untitled.] by Sasha Zaree	14
Beyond Life by Eesha Tangirala	16
We Are OCSA Lightbulbs by Aliena Sutcliff & Brigitte Thompson	19
Survival Games by Ella Beaver	20
Dead or Alive by Ella Beaver	20
One Non-Zombie by Ella Beaver	20
July Moon by Aliena Sutcliff	21
What are you? by Ksenia-Eve Jenkins	22
[untitled.] by Allyn Richardson	26
Frog by Macy Wong	27
Requiem for Banana Bread by Haley Kleinman	28
Swirls by Macy Wong	29
Painting a Canvas by Rachel Sung	30

Brown Back by Emma Rhodes	30
[untitled]. by Jodi Hou	31
sundrop by Anonymous	32
The Sound of Silence by Anonymous	33
[untitled.] by Jessica Yang	34
The 12th of September by Daniel Garza	35
[untitled.] by Sasha Zaree	36
Looking From the Inside Out by Anonymous	37
[untitled.] by Anonymous	38
[untitled]. by Fanny Kim	39
[untitled.] by Cailee Copeland	40
Columbidae by Jessica Yang	40
Untied by Anonymous	41
[untitled]. by Ksena-Eve Jenkins	43
[untitled]. by Sasha Zaree	44
Hope by Anonymous	45
[untitled]. by Jessica Yang	46
The Porcelain Oasis by Anonymous	47
The Ferris Wheel Effect by Sonali Dhanidina	48
Entry 27 by Olivia Han	52
Snake by Nino Raimondo	53

The Lonely Tree

Logan Navar

The solitary green tree,
Her slender branches framed in delicate green leaves
Is confined in a white wooden box
On the school's blacktop.
A wooden post runs parallel to her body
Prevents her imbalanced weight
From toppling her to the ground.
Her roots are itchy and uncomfortable,
Stretching to the edges of the whitewashed crate.
Reaching for water but finding only factory soil and woodchips
Have they forgotten to water me again? she says to no one.
The question hangs there in the air, ugly and unanswered,
Because everyone forgot how to talk to trees.
She sighs as a stampede of children hurtles past,
Taller ones carelessly tear off her leaves,
Ripping them up slowly as they scroll through their phones.
Their eyes cannot be torn from the soft glow of the screens,
Minds chained there, imprisoned,
Like her in this box.
The white sun, hovering in the midafternoon sky,
Hurls cascades of blazing white light
Rippling across the featureless concrete.
The tree embraces the mighty surge of warmth,
Pulls strength into her leaves and trunk.
Better days ahead, the sun reminds her,
And she stands a little straighter.

Remember That Edge

Catherine Boland

the waves roared over the jetty
smashing into darkened stones
slick and salty
dangerous yet endearing
pelting water
seeped through our raincoats from both sea and sky
the wind grew arms
and a single gust had me falling into misplaced shells and sandy dirt
we were at the midst of it all
laughing and shrieking
at the top of our lungs
every bit of sound, drowned

now i am here
in a bedroom darker than our sky
as water droplets splatter on concrete
just outside
this time, you are the wind
pushing me down
leaving me shaking under soft blankets
while a long-ago storm
reemerges in my mind
take me back to the tidepools
hold my hands and walk with me in the shallows
buy me a burger and fold my toy car
i know that i am better
without you
but it is hard to feel good
when i am missing you like this

Being California People

Ksena-Eve Jenkins

I can't imagine having never been to the beach

Never taken flip flops off to run towards the water easier
And then immediately regretted it because the hot sand slowly baked your feet

Having never dove into the crystal waves and accidentally inhaled the salty water

Never accidentally picked up a cigarette butt or bottle cap, mistaking it for a seashell in the sweltering sun

Never having stepped in sticky black tar that firmly cements itself between the ridges of the fingerprint-like skin of your heels, impossible to remove

Never having no idea how it got there, and no clue when it'd leave

Having never come home with pockets full of seashells and hurriedly washed them in the bathroom sink And having never permanently had sand stuck in the little corners of jacket pockets from carrying all of them

Never being sprayed by the ocean mist while trying not to slip and fall over at the tide pools; trying to get a closer look at all the little creatures, yearning to touch one, while simultaneously terrified of one touching you

Having never tried to fly a kite in the windy evening but it being too hard to focus because the wind keeps whipping your hair in your face and the sand in your eyes

Never ran back to the waves before leaving to wash the sand from between your toes, inevitably attracting more sand on your way back up than there was to begin with

Never having walked forty-five minutes to the water from your friends' "beach house" because they insisted it was the faster route

Having never bit down absent-mindedly, your teeth scrapping across the granules, leaving your mouth gritty,

Never having your nails invaded by tiny grains of sand that never really leave, stuck between skin and keratin,

Having never perfectly lain down a towel or picnic blanket just for someone to run up and spray those tiny particles of crushed shells and sea salt all over it

Never tried to rinse off in one of those god-awful showers up by the bathrooms that are always cold and full of screaming toddlers

Having never felt your soft warm hand in my sweaty calloused one, wet from the rain and rough from the sand, while talking about everything and nothing forever on those concrete benches by the road that the bikes always ride on

I don't even like the beach

That's what I tell myself

But I pity anyone who never gets a chance to visit it

What is love like?

Kaia Wang

What is love like?

Well, she thinks love is fleeting.

It never lasts forever, just like memories.

Inevitably, you forget everything, as if the memory never existed.

He said love was like a flower put into the harsh and dry desert,
all alone with no one to rely on.

Love to them, before they met each other, was like a tragedy waiting to happen. A let down... a lie.

Maybe if they had crossed paths of course,
They would have thought that love was like sleeping in on a rainy day,
Warm and comfortable.

But unfortunately, their paths were never meant for one another,
So I guess love is like waiting in the cold rain, short-sleeves and no umbrella.

Sweet Dreams

Zihui Ye

There is a place that I venture to everyday. I go when the sun glows pink above the horizon, or when the dawn nears and crickets chirp towards the star hung from a pole. I don't know whether I am conscious when I go, I just end up in the clouds and start to imagine. Imagining a life where maybe I wasn't a twelve year old child. Maybe I was an old grandma knitting a scarf, or maybe I'm a fish that swims in the sea, through dark caverns and through the reefs and eventually into the jaw of a destined predator. "Oh no," I would say, and lose my train of thought. Then become swallowed whole and never to be seen again in the vast, wide, deep blue ocean where the vibrant reefs lay and old fossils decay.

That is where I lay now: on the clouds. Thinking of when I shall be able to drift into the night and maybe even a cinema where my dreams shall unwind in front of my eyes. I cannot sleep, I cannot see, and even more, I cannot wait until tomorrow comes.

Reflection (Part 1)

Ella Beaver

"I've had a recurring nightmare where I look in the mirror and my reflection breaks through the glass and grabs me, but I never found out what happens after that. When I woke up with glass shards embedded in my skin, something told me that my mind was more powerful than I thought."

My True [Insert Christian University Here] Essay

Anonymous

Each time a Catholic attends mass, they are expected to leave rejuvenated with holy intentions set for the week—that is until said intentions are forgotten afterwards while munching on the complimentary church do-nut. Who would have ever believed that fluffy dough and mouth-watering icing would become a detrimental sin? Or that within ten minutes of completing their weekly subscription to God, they break one of his rules when scalding coffee (to drink with the donut of course) spills on their crumpled cotton clothing.

3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Now, the devoted parishioners are forced to wait until next week's mass for the ritual spoon-feeding of temporary inspiration (a.k.a. the sermon) all over again. While my fellow brothers and sisters trek home satisfied with a full stomach, I just wander confused. But that does not mean I stop following.

A noteworthy part of a Catholic mass is the Preparation of the Gifts and Altar. This is when the bread, wine, and donations collected from parishioners are given to the priest and the altar servers. When I was younger, my older siblings and I were always chosen to bring up the Eucharistic gifts because we were the perfect number needed: three. I carried the wooden collection basket, the least fragile compared to the metal bowl containing the circular pieces of the Body of Christ and the glass chalice waiting to be filled with the Blood of Christ. But even then my worries were not eased. It was the walk down the center aisle with everyone staring at you that was the most anxiety-inducing thirty seconds of my life. I was always worried that I would not be able to match my siblings' longer strides or that I would forget to bow to the altar before returning to my pew. We probably did this same task twenty times from when I was four to twelve years old: basket, walk, bow; yet I never understood the importance of it in the first place. I was just content that I could contribute to the mass in some way.

One bread, one body, one Lord of all... We are one body in this one Lord.

In the first two years of high school, I elected to be Confirmed. Confirmation is when a baptized person affirms their beliefs as a Catholic and fully becomes a member of the Church. It is usually a two year journey that ends with a formal ceremony. During the ceremony, you reaffirm your Catholic beliefs (like the "I dos" during a wedding), you announce the saint that guided you throughout the journey (St. Catherine of Bologna <3), and to seal the deal, you are anointed with chrism. In addition, I attended Confirmation classes twice a month. Each session had a theme pertaining to Catholicism (the Holy Spirit, Saints, etc.), and we were separated into small groups to discuss it—in my group, we would just play four corners instead. The leaders would ask questions about our faith, and we would go to the corner that aligned with our answer. The questions would be along the lines of "Why did you choose to do Confirmation?" and "Do you actually believe in God?"

...the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

But surprisingly, they were actually helpful because the gray area was suddenly not as blurry anymore. I was able to form an idea of where I stood within the Catholic community. The traditions that would guide me throughout life and the outdated ones I would leave behind.

Even though I am missing fragments of beliefs, I still consider myself a Catholic. Not because I am hopelessly devoted to Jesus Christ, pray the rosary four times each day, and have holy visions while staring at a Virgin Mary-shaped McDonald's chicken nugget (I have picture proof) but because I try—I try to feel that spiritual energy that makes visitors faint when they see the Sistine Chapel for the first time which prompts passionate tears from the faithful during Adoration. And, I hope to Him that this is enough to get me into heaven.

Within our own eyes, we see salvation. Within our hearts, we are set free.

Simplicity is the Ultimate Sophistication

Sophia Kim

For the past few months, I've been obsessed with this simple game called Bee Swarm Simulator. The basis of the game is the same as every "click-to-collect" experience: collect pollen to buy more bees and tools, which will help you collect more pollen, and the cycle repeats until the developer decides to stop pushing out updates. Due to the addition of events, quests, gacha, AFK farming, and multipliers, serious players take full advantage of intricate mathematics involved in the process to progress even faster. As a serious player myself, I can't tell you how many hours I could have spent doing something useful have instead been poured into sitting at my desk, staring at what is essentially a block game, clicking at decals to get...

A coconut belt.

Truly, this game is the highlight of my day.

Yet, while it boasts complex mechanics, the appearance of the game itself is almost rudimentary, using cubes and pre-made models to make up the majority of the map. Additionally, where other simulator games shout at the user on the homepage, "2x XP Weekend!" or "New Update!", the thumbnail of Bee Swarm Simulator has remained the same for years: a picture of the NPCs and bees and a charmingly handcrafted title. It's a gentle beckoning toward this humble game, telling the user, "Look at these cute bees and bears. Give our game a shot?" I had overlooked this factor, attributing it to the fact that the game was still in its early development. However, almost five years have come and gone, and nothing has really changed, and the eccentricity of it all simply became normal.

While skimming through tips and tricks on how to progress through the game, I came across a video of the developer, Onett, speaking at a convention, to reveal how he attracts the attention of an average player and keeps them engaged in the game. I clicked, mainly because I was curious as to what this developer looked like, but I found myself watching the 30-minute video all the way to the end. I was particularly invested in the amount of thought that was poured into the seemingly basic game. I had once believed that all the effort was invested into the mechanics of this game, and the primitively-built map was merely an afterthought. Yet, as it turns out, the simplicity of the game was a deliberate move. Onett had stated that giving the game a handcrafted feel made it stand out in the midst of all the other money-making machines on the platform. It signals to the player that genuine care and attention was paid to the creation of this game, perhaps even more so than in a visually-pleasing world with no complex coding behind it. When I thought about this concept more, I realized how true it rings for the things that we create.

Some of the best-selling games are, obviously, incredibly well-made in terms of aesthetics and user engagement. The Legends of Zelda: Breath of the Wild, is a revolutionary open-world exploration game with nuances and lore in every nook and cranny of the 140 squaremile map. I myself have played a few hours of this game, and I remember being blown away by how you can interact with every inch of the map. Rather than following the main storyline—defeating Ganon and saving Princess Zelda—I had the freedom to dedicate my time to collecting apples and turning over rocks in hopes of finding little tree creatures called Koroks. As of 2023, it's sold 30 million copies, which is not a small number, even for a company like Nintendo. Another fan favorite, The Last of Us, is praised by its players for its immersive storytelling experience, combining action-packed zombie killing with a sweet, developing father-daughter relationship. The series did well enough to release a TV series, which even features an OCSA alumni we all know and love, Pedro Pascal.

But hidden in the depths of the internet, there are a few games that choose to stick out like sore thumbs, a striking contrast between the fine detail found in games created by huge companies and teams of developers. Indie games, despite how simple they can be, are some of the best-selling games of all time. For instance, the entirety of Stardew Valley, a farming game, was created by one person, Eric Barone (AKA ConcernedApe), from the programming down to the pixel art; whether out of spite or passion, we may never know. It's sold over 20 million copies. One person was able to make $\frac{2}{3}$ of what a \$50 billion dollar company made on a game that took five years for their dedicated team to create. On a much larger scale, Tetris, a game about putting

shapes together, is the third best-selling game of all time, boasting over 100 million games sold!

Everybody knows about Minecraft. It's a game about building with blocks and surviving in a randomly generated world. It started as a side project for Markus Alexej Persson, who believed his game would only serve to raise more money to make the next one. As of now, it's the best-selling game of all time by a long shot with 238 million copies and counting. What puts these games on par with, and even above thousands of more technologically and visually advanced games? Why are millions of people so drawn to simplicity, even amongst the exponentially growing market? The answer, despite its deceptively complex question, is a simple one. We are drawn to the authenticity of a creation rather than its evident quality.

Simplicity plays a huge role in portraying authenticity. Think about it this way: take a concept or object and strip it down to its simplest form. In many cases, what's left isn't as good. In many cases, it's the accessories, the graphics, the beautiful art that really immerses you in the game, not the concept of the game itself. That's not to say that pretty games aren't genuinely good, it's just that it's much easier to get away with a terrible game when it's all dressed up. Now, take Bee Swarm Simulator: Remove all the fancy graphics and beautiful storytelling. What's left? The entire game. Nothing is really overdressed or hidden. The game retains its immersiveness even when it's nothing but blocks and decals. That's what makes it feel authentic; it doesn't strive to sugarcoat anything at all, and it's still such an addicting game.

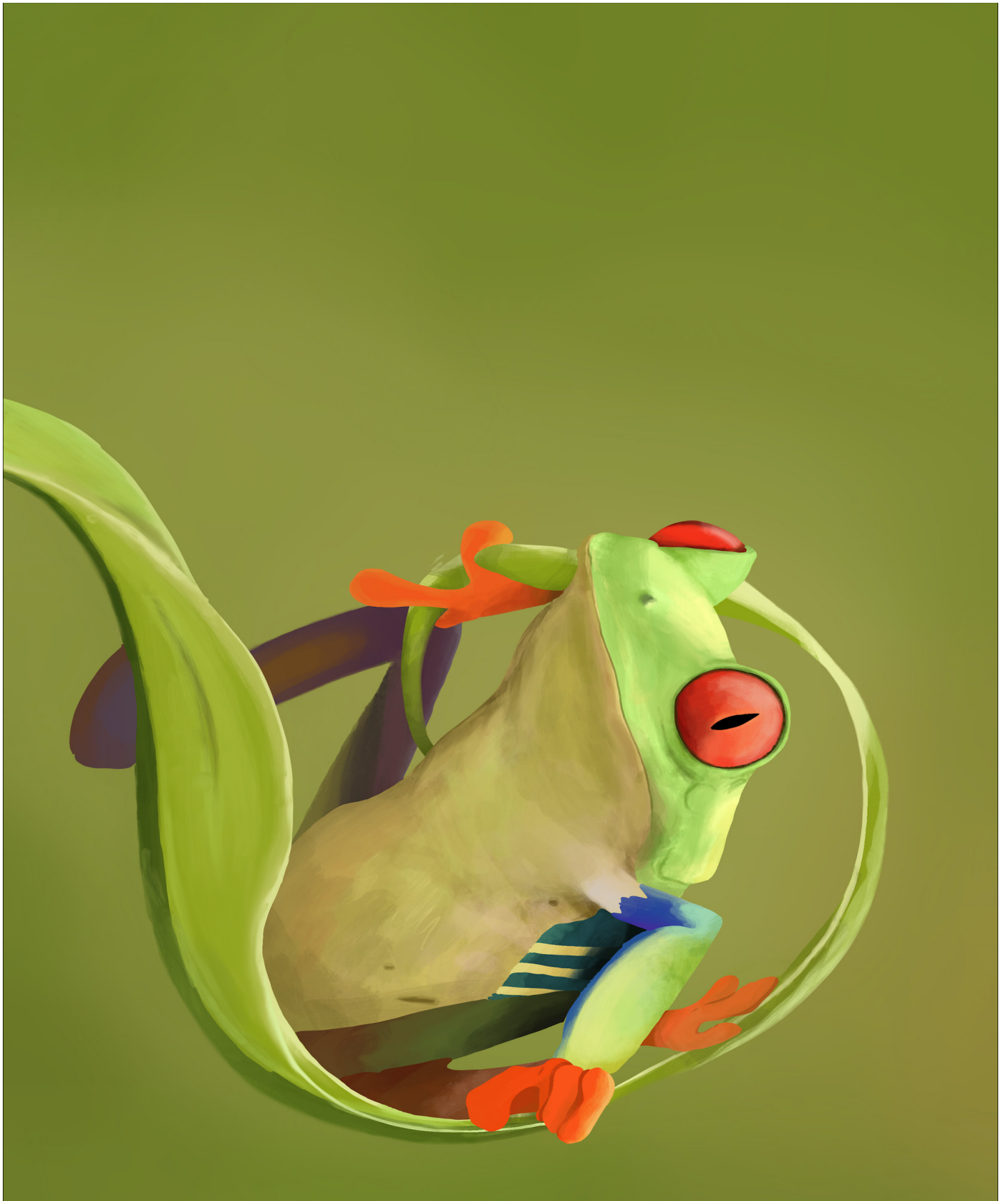
Take a look at Stardew Valley. Keep in mind that I am a very biased author and I will not hesitate to talk very highly about Stardew Valley. This game has taken hundreds of hours of my life away, and I would gladly let down a hundred more if I was given the time. Not only is it extremely satisfying to progress in the game, it's also incredibly easy to fall in love with the game itself. Sure, the game is merely a 16-bit, 490 MB game (for context, Minecraft is 1 GB), but never have I played a game that so easily calms me with its fun, janky music, the activities of just farming, fishing, and foraging, and the loveable yet well-written characters that I can interact with. There is something so magical, so peaceful about playing Stardew Valley, a vibe that I have yet to find within any other experience. I'm doing a terrible job at show-not-tell, but really, I'd hate to ruin your experience of Stardew Valley with spoilers. You'll have to play it for yourself, and I know you will. You have no choice now.

Minecraft is a game that embodies the concept of freedom. As revolutionary as BOTW was, Minecraft truly reinforces the "open" in open-world exploration. The player starts in a randomly-generated world at a random location. That's it. No pesky tutorial, no companion that guides you through the game. There's no storyline, no quests, no characters—it's just the player, mobs, blocks, and simple physics. The player begins to move. They begin to break blocks. They learn how to craft with the broken blocks to create items that will help them progress further. They learn to fight off mobs and to find or kill their food. They venture deeper and deeper into the world, discovering wonders in every natural biome, and biomes outside of this world. They are constantly faced with the threat of losing it all, or at the very least, temporarily losing it all, but they play anyway. Why? Because this world is now theirs. Out of the trillions of worlds generated, this is the world that they were given, and they now understand it's their world to shape. Sure, you'd be able to find an oak tree in this world just as easily as in another world, but nothing is ever completely the same. Their experience in this game is completely unique, and they have the freedom to go about it anyway they want. The magic of Minecraft is something difficult to describe, but so much has stemmed from the concept of this game. Whether it's building, fighting, or creating stories, Minecraft is the perfect catalyst for players to do something unique each time they click play.

Finally, there's Bee Swarm Simulator. As a seasoned veteran of Bee Swarm Simulator, this charming game will always have a place in my heart. Besides, the game has yet to die out completely, as the player base only gets more and more creative given the empty platform to shine on. No longer do I sit at the computer for hours, because I utilize an outside script created by a fellow player to automatically farm for me. I'm well-aware of the best bees, the most effective buffs, and the tips and tricks that truly dedicated players have passed down. The road before me is well-traveled and paved by the thousands of players before me, which is something that could not have been possible without the charm of this small, blocky game that they have decided to love. Even as the player base dwindles due to limited updates and becomes saturated with hardcore, endgame players, I'll look back fondly on those lazy days where I happily frolicked in flower cubes and collected pollen with my army of bees.



Oranges Macy Wong



Frog Jessica Yang

Fading (based on “Clouds”)

Kaia Wang

Before the rose in your cheeks disappeared like the color of an old photo
You were a cloud, quietly swimming across the sky.
You were the tiny flowers in a garden who’s fragrant aroma made visitors sigh in delight,
But that memory of you seems so distant now.
You became a rainbow void of its colors.
Your smile flickers and wavers like a candle about to die.

When you were a bird though, you flew higher than the others.
You were the battery charging everyone’s happiness and joy.
You were the sky, seemingly endless and beautiful.
You were the light in our dark.
A beam to carry heavy burdens and hold everyone up. .
A bright red strawberry, the only strawberry everyone wanted a bite of.
A warm, thick, knit cardigan wrapping around our arms.

But then your battery died and everyone else’s was fully charged.
Your candle was out but everyone else’s was still lit.
No one seemed to notice when your light was dimming,
because they were too busy trying to shine as much as you did.

Maybe your wick had been running for far too long...
Perhaps that’s why you began to fade.





[untitled.] Sasha Zaree

Beyond Life

Eesha Tangirala

An animated screen with the words “Business Pitch Presentation” written in neon pink stared back at an inquisitive guy with glasses. One could see the words of the presentation reflected on his silver lenses as he stared intently at the computer screen.

“Hey man,” he called to his teammate, “What do you think about this? I think it could use a little more pink.”

Maze stared at the screen in silence pondering the questioning. Without a word he grabbed the computer and clicked on a few keys before handing the device back.

“What matters is how well we pitch ourselves, not how well we can decorate a title page.”

With a lopsided grin Maze pushed against the table leg back to his seat as Jareh’s laughter echoed in the background. What stared back at Jareh was a blank screen that read The Business Pitch Presentation: How to tell what’s real and what’s fake.

As the duo continued to work in silence Maze heard someone call out his name as they hollered the usual your orders ready! Maze silently stood up as he continued to rub his left ear as he felt a soft ringing sound fill his ears. With a playful hit to Jareh’s back he made his way up front to where his food was waiting as Jareh’s murmured something about needing to borrow Maze headphones once he came back.

“One cheese pizza with chicken tenders. What sauce would you like with that?”

“Can I have ketchup please?” Maze asked as he looked down to grab his sound canceling headphones as he felt the ringing sound in his ears intensify. I need to get earbuds. These things are too big to carry, he thought as he handed the cashier his card.

“Sorry no ketchup, but we have hell fried with a side of death,” a darker voice slurred in a raspy tone. Maze tensed up at the familiar voice and dropped his headphones and card midway, but made no move to grab it. Instead Maze clutched his ears as the ringing sound grew louder and louder. Loud enough to drown out every other sound in the room except for the person before him chuckling at his discomfort. Maze felt everything shift out of focus for a second as he stumbled on his feet, but snapped back to reality as a sense of urgency filled him. And so carefully avoiding her gaze, Maze grasped onto the counter and pushed himself off of it before making a break for the door. He barely registered the sound of footsteps behind him. Maze almost dropped his phone in his haste to hail down a cab watching as it leisurely drove down the road into his line of vision. Maze felt his breath getting heavier and as he looked around unseeingly through the tears that began to build.

What the hell? Why is this happening now? I thought I had a few more years. Shit.

Without waiting for the car to slow down Maze wretched open the car door and shoved into the tiny backseat and gave the driver instructions while putting on his belt, missing it a few times before hearing a subtle click.

“My bad. I meant, would you like hell fried in death? It’s a package deal.”

Maze felt his breath escape his chest as the car gave an abrupt start and a familiar face entered his peripheral vision. Her. Sitting next to him with her cheek resting on her hand in a brown paint suit and her hair pulled into a neat bun, Jini looked just about ready for an interview - or murder.

Jini pushed into Maze's personal space, sweaty breath hitting his face as she began, "Hello Maze, I have a polite favor to ask of you. Cooperate or I'll give you a matching scar," she giggled and pointed to the jagged and torn scar that decorated her pale cheek.

Maze could feel himself going lightheaded as he pushed himself up against the car door.

"No no no," Maze replied while clutching his chest frantically. Not again, he thought before exclaiming,

"NO! I've done enough!"

The car abruptly swerved left and the sound of furious car honks attempted to break their conversation. Attempted to.

"Not nearly enough. Your mother wants you back, hope you don't mind the early homecoming present," a voice upfront chuckled.

Maze looked upfront with a start. Only now noticing the alarming rate the car was moving at as tree branches crashed against the windows. There in the driver's seat sat a girl with a similar scar and voice, but with her hair down and makeup down heavily. A clone?

Maze latched onto the door handle, nearly ripping it off in his attempt to escape his confinement. He much preferred the chaos of the traffic outside than being stuck with not one - but two Jini's. But the door wouldn't budge and Maze could only helplessly watch as the bright downtown setting around him slowly transformed into a desolate forest shrouded in darkness.

Without warning a sudden torrent of thoughts raced through his mind. The one face he had blocked from his memory for so long was forced into the forefront of his memory. A woman. A woman in red. A woman in red dragging him by the feet. A woman in red dragging his ten year old self by the feet and throwing him to the pits of death—home to hell's worst demons. His mother's own play toys.

Too good for hell you are. Be gone angel child.

Maze shook his head frantically as the humming grew louder and a broken cry tore through his throat.

"Stop it! Leave me alone!"

As the thrumming numbed out his senses and left Maze gasping for air he resorted to his last option and yanked at a piece of Jini's hair. He watched her briefly chuckle at his action before she and her duplicate disintegrated into smoke. So they were clones. Suddenly the car was swerving wildly through an empty back country road with no end in sight. Through a daze of adrenaline and panic, he could make out the faint outline of a woman in the middle of the road. She wore a shiny black gown torn on the left side with ruby red hair brushing against the veiny black scar on her left cheek. In a rush Maze grabbed the driver's wheel and attempted to reroute the car's path without success. Unable to hear past the buzzing sound Maze could only watch as the front of his car met a tree trunk in a burst of silver and brown pieces.

The buzzing sound cut out as the approaching click of heels bled into the silence. Through the smoke Jini emerged with a devious glint in her eyes. The real pale eyed and bloody Jini. With her unseeing eyes, she scraped her calloused nail across Maze's bloody chest before plunging into it and ripping out his heart. And as she predicted he disintegrated into smoke.

Jini watched the smoky fumes with a crooked smile, "Maze, you hypocrite. What happened to becoming a better man? Hell, is that even your real name?" she chuckled into the silence, letting out a screeching laugh of mirth.

From the other side, in his low recliner seat sat a shaking Jareh as he watched his clone fade into a cloud of foggy smoke before fading to nothing more than air. And as his vision began to cut out, Jini's parting words filled the still silence around him.

“Hell wants its angel back.”

And then it went black.



We Are OSCA Lightbulbs by Aliena Sutcliff & Brigitte Thompson

Survival Games

Ella Beaver

“Ever since the government found out that the aliens could take the form of any human, doppelgangers were being killed left and right. Dr. Medina was horrified when she found human organs during the autopsy.”

Dead or Alive

Ella Beaver

“I just got this new ghost detector app, but there seems to be a glitch. It’s not supposed to detect the living... right?”

One Non-Zombie

Ella Beaver

“I never wanted the zombie apocalypse to begin. You must admit though, when else do you get the chance to eat someone’s brain and be told that it wasn’t your fault?”



July Moon Aliena Sutcliff

What are you?

Ksena-Eve Jenkins

You don't know what it's like to go through life
With people who think it is their right
To know who you are
What you are

That's what they say,
what you are
What are you?
Not, who, or how, but what

Oh, but you just look so exotic
No, it's not rude, I'm just wondering
Their mindless, spoken aloud thoughts
Blundering
Where are you from
The subtle condescending chuckle
No, where are you from

What are you?
To live in a country where everyone is "free"
And by everyone they mean the white majority
I'm proud to be an American where at least I know I'm free
Unless I'm a minority
Or gay
Or poor
Or an immigrant
Or anything
That's not a straight
cisgender
able-bodied
man

The American Dream of a white picket fence,
a two story suburban home,
and barbecues on Sundays,
This crap that we're told is attainable if we just work a little bit harder

The dream people fight their whole lives for,
across deserts, oceans, barrages of bullets, just to have a chance at it

This land that struggles so hard to stay afloat on the backs of immigrant workers

Labeled as aliens on their own land,
Stolen from them,
Rebranded,

What are you?

What I'm asked in this nation meant to be a place for all who want to be able to breathe without being persecuted for what they believe

Where our bodies aren't ours anymore

Instead dictated by regulations and government

America the great

With teens sleeping on every street corner, tossed away for their identities

It seems kids only matter when they haven't been born yet,

they love to argue about abortion and the right to forfeit

But when any one of us comes forward with a plea for help in the torrent,

They like to sit by as we fall into more debt.

Abortion

Prejudice

Racism

Suicide

The unwanted children they hated,

They threw aside,

Poverty

Flashbacks

PTSD

Panic attacks

Depression

Homophobia

Rape

They say it'll all be okay, don't hide your face,

But it's not, and it won't be,

America isn't a safe place

What are you?

I am a child of my ancestors

The ones who fought to be in this country full of people who hate me in so many ways and kill the ones brave enough to speak out

I am a queer woman of color in a nation of blank white canvases

While they carve their molds of normalcy, demanding we comply,
That's not how it unfolds, we were born to defy
For in our jagged edges and the stars we draw to cover our scars
Lie the colors that we proudly bleed from our pulsating hearts

I am one of countless who yearn for change, for justice, but can't bring themselves to be heard

I am a voice

Scratch that

I want to be a voice

A voice in the suffocating void of blank stares and deaf ears

A voice who doesn't just devolve into hot and silent tears

A voice to speak out against injustice in the howling mass of society's din
As if conformity were virtue and fitting in the ultimate win.

What are you?
The first time I heard the term imposter syndrome I thought,
Finally,
Someone who gets it

Born into a body that's too perfect a fit
And yet just wrong enough to make me not submit

Too pale to be Mexican
But too brown to be white

Too queer to be one of the girls
But too girly to hang with guys

You're just an imposter

Words said to the bathroom mirror

You're just an imposter

Words dripping with venom

You're just an imposter

Words sobbed with bitter tears dripping from my eyes
You're just an imposter

Words told like pretty lies

But actually, I'm not my size

I'm not the clothes that I wear
I'm not the money I have
Or how much I swear

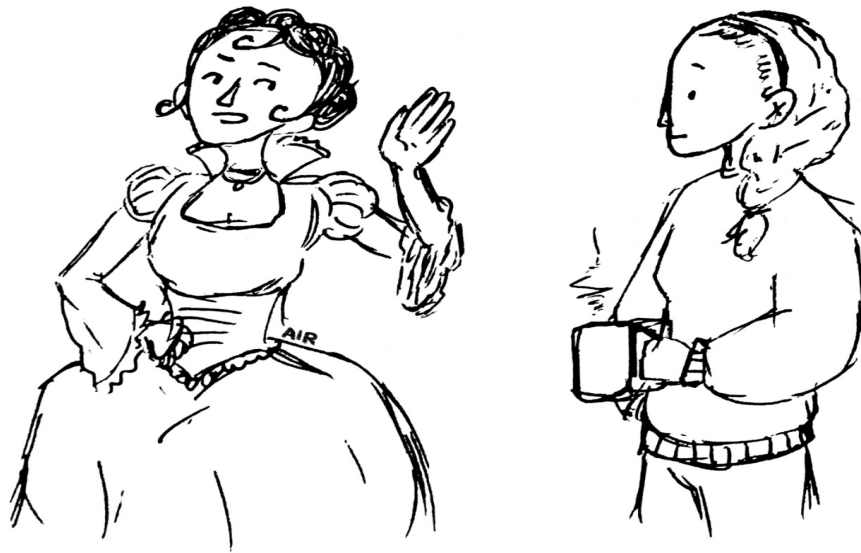
I'm not my grades
I'm not my gpa
I'm not how well I wing my eyeliner
Or my gender display

I'm not who I love
I'm not the color of my skin
I'm not my race
Or the place in which I live

I'm not my sexuality
I'm not my thoughts
I'm not the words I never speak
I'm not
I'm not all these things
I can't be

I can only be me

But what are you?



"ugh, your outfit is so next century."

I JUST WANT TO BE WHIMSICAL AND
SILLY BUT YOU'RE LITERALLY BEING
SO MEAN TO ME



[untitled] Allyn Richardson



Frog Macy Wong

Requiem for Banana Bread

Haley Kleinman

The paper is old and wrinkled
Tapered along the edges like a fairy's carpet
Billowing outward, flowering, creases unfolding in waves.
Rising off the words is the scent of brown sugar, old parchment dancing on the kitchen island. It remains
vibrant in every house it travels through
Crunched into loving pockets,
Pocketing
The whispers of eager tongue
Secrets of the newborn generation
Time tests its durability
But memory is stronger
This recipe proudly crossed the border,
Lit up with the promise of new opportunity
It glistened in the palm of Abuela's hand as she stepped into the next life But it remembers
As my mother and I stick bananas in the blender, laughing at the cursive that urges Una taza y media de
azúcar,
—O una taza, written discouragingly in parentheses, we melt at the charming voice that Rises from the paper
And survives another day
In our hands, as we mix the butter into the bowl and pull out the bread pan I know it's her warmth that
spreads through me comfortingly
The soft echo of her giggle I hear when I fold my hands together at the dinner table Her heart that I hold in
mine when I unfurl the words she wrote,
Press them to my lips like gumdrops,
And watch them come to life



Swirls Macy Wong

Painting a Canvas

Rachel Sung

Reaching towards the glowing stars
Feet grounded in the cool earth.
Breathing deeply,
Letting air out.
Steady hands brush the air.
Complete silence.
Wandering thoughts.
Far away from noise.
Stillness.
Frozen in a moment of time,
Tricking the eye.

Blown Back

Emma Rhodes

If wind could bring you back
I'd make sure to push everything aside
I wouldn't withhold your favorite snack
And we could move as if we were in a pack
Stay in the places you've taught me to explore.

If wind could bring you back
The unforbidden couch will be your new spot
I would make your bed up of what it did lack
Even allow you to make your own dirt-track
You were clearly the best mascot.

If wind could bring you back
Then I'd take another photograph, frame the videos we do have
I wish I could take it all back
Thinking of the things that are now missing, gave me a flashback
You always made me laugh

Only if wind could bring you back



[untitled.] Jodi Hou

sundrop

Anonymous

i stare at her golden hair as it glows in the daylight
i listen to her sing like a flower soaks up the sun
her voice, her words are the sugar supplying me with life

i look into her eyes—bright and green like fireflies
they light up my soul each time she looks at me

her hand embraces mine
her touch, soft and gentle, providing me with an everlasting warmth

we breathe together
pulling each other closer with each inhale and each exhale
in this moment we lay together
grasping each other, never wanting to let go
in this moment we know that our lives, our beings, are forever tangled

The Sound of Silence

Anonymous

The landscape seemed painted. It might as well have been; Life and light were so still he seemed not to be alive, to blend in with the whispers of the shadows streaking the dappled forest floor. Only his eyes moved, taking in the single violet flower perking up weakly from a small spot of sun to the canopy of leaves tracing the sky from above.

He stood, not really sure where to go, not worried enough to care. He had tried to compensate for what he had done, the bloody memories slipping through his fingers, hanging to his thoughts by just the taut pull of his heartstrings. He wanted the strings to snap. He wanted to forget. He wanted to let go.

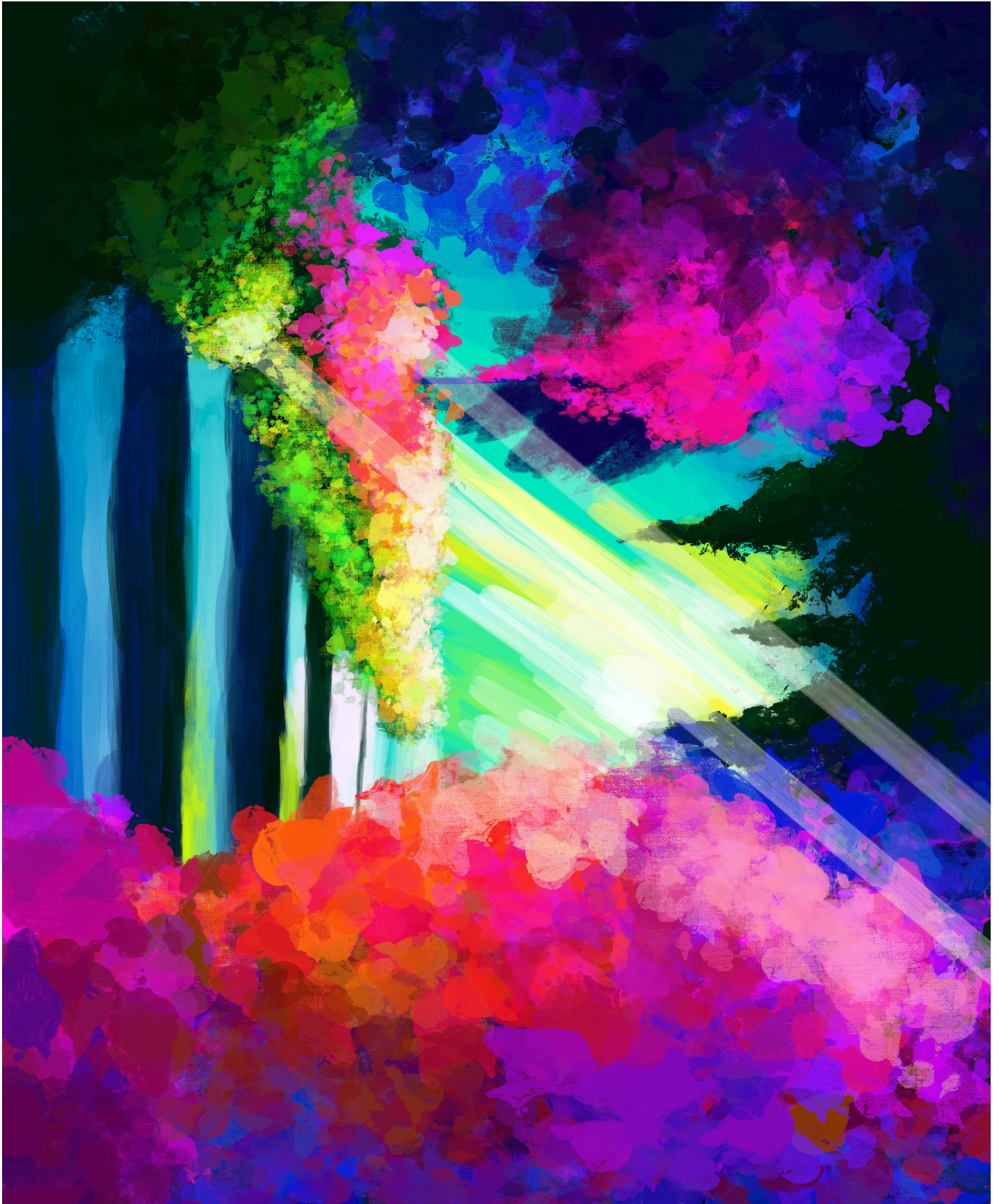
There is no dead silence. It is always alive, expanding and growing and charging the air with the stench of blood and madness and regret until there is so much it consumes with a ravenous hunger. Its prey rarely escape its unrelenting grasp.

When time passed, nothing had changed. Seconds, minutes, hours, unending circles around the clock. No sound was emitted save for the infrequent rhythm of his breathing once a minute. Maybe more, maybe less. They were desperate signs of life, fighting their way from his chapped lips through the waning rhythm that is his heart. He tries not to blink, to see any movement, a whisper of a leaf, a hiss of the breeze, or maybe just a light.

His eyes grab hold tightly to the image of a small, red bird sleeping peacefully above, and they hold on tightly, unwilling to let go. And the strings that still hold on tug violently at his memories as they come rushing back, the words on the tip of his tongue, the blood still wet on his hands. It was all too painful and sick and red, so red, he thought he'd be blinded forever by the color.

All of his memories are tainted yellow. The hue of yellow that was her personality, her vibrancy, her love, her life that is still living in the vague past of his mind, but not here. Not now. The yellow that he can only see again in his memories.

And it's already fading.



[untitled.] Jessica Yang

The 12th of September

Daniel Garza

They tell us we need to grow up
How I wish they weren't right
Who says we can't stay kids forever
Ride our bikes throughout the night

We're used to living life without care
What happens when those days come to an end
Reality is gonna to catch up to us
And she's not someone I want to befriend

I never want to take you for granted
Our love has proven to be unbound
You're all I've ever known
So please say you'll always be around

Our dreams are too big for this world
Maybe we should try Mars
Life has felt like a rollercoaster
I'm just trying to hold on to the bars.

We're so young
There is still so much more we need to be taught
We've already experienced so much
Yet I hope we're able to experience tying the knot

Our future, what a daunting thought
You've been my best friend for as long as I can remember
Although we might go our separate ways
I hope you never forget the 12th of September



[untitled.] Sasha Zaree

Looking From the Inside Out

Anonymous

Most people are aware of the fact that the older we get, the more our thoughts, feelings, or opinions change. Whether or not change is something we choose, it occurs at one point or another. Change creeps up on you. It hits you when you least expect it. Out of the blue, you find yourself in its quicksand—the more you try to escape it, the more it consumes you.

It's where there is an unbalance. In adolescence, there is a tendency for our naive little minds to believe that we have everything planned out in our future—which is SOME confidence from such an unsophisticated perspective of the world. Obviously, being this young, you're not as prone to the pressures of needing to have these things all figured out. The unbalance that change introduces comes from this innocent delusion you had as a child, masked by the mysteries of tomorrow.

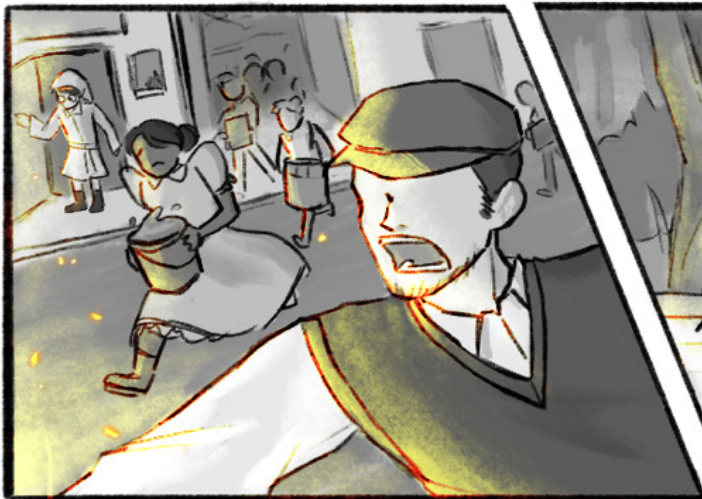
It's when this unbalance reveals itself. You start to realize how much of a blend there is between the things you mask in your life, with the things that actually characterize you—the real you. Not having to genuinely question if doing something was for you, or the person you were trying to be. By this time, your options are killed, going back and alarming your past self isn't one of them.

It's how these subconscious changes surface. When a part of you is slowly being detached from the childhood you were once so familiar with and connected to. There is just no control over it. And even with the self-recognition or attention you try to bring, in a desperate attempt to unlock these mysteries, it hides away even further than before.

People like to say that “change” is okay and all, still, they're not wrong in any way shape or form. I wish I would've at least proceeded with caution—so I wouldn't have lost a bit of myself in the process.



[untitled.] Anonymous



[untitled.]

Cailee Copeland

To the author of my story
How are you?
I know its hard; my story is a mess
But I'm here to listen if you need to decompress
Tell me the flaws and beauties of the story your illustrating
Because I'm sure the story would be much better if we were communicating
I'll tell you how I'd like it to be, even though I know you won't listen
Because I've learned that you would like for me to hide while I desire to glycine
And I get it; I'm a writer too
We write to release, but lately I feel like I'm intercepting your grief
So let's sit down and talk it through
You can tell me how it feels, even though I'm the one who really needs you
So if you get this, know that it would be nice to have a friend
Sincerely the life at the end of your pen

Columbidae

Jessica Yang

The ball in my stomach unfurls until its tendrils stretch through my ribs and wriggles in my throat
Cold steps echo, entangled intricately between exposed wiring and naked lights
Industry smells like dust and metal, and like linoleum reflections
When we took our first steps in, I saw a beautiful mourning dove on the high ceiling rafters
She was fragile and round. Rusty red feathers floated down from her frantic flying
Wing beats fluttered throughout the pipes and fans, industry met warm flesh
We both flew in of our own volition. Now we don't know if we can get out.
My eyes burned up at the lights and she burned up crashing into the lights
She would settle silent in exhaustion, watching us scramble, planning her next helpless flight
I would settle silent in hesitancy, watching them accommodate us, wondering when I can leave
My eyes hurt
She's panicking
Every word sets into my stomach like stones
I look up to the rafters and spread my wings,
Only to fall dead onto cold, shiny floors

Untied

Anonymous

Place your shoe on a flat surface
Thread one lace over the other and take it under
 Pull tightly
Make a loop with one of the laces
Be sure to hold the lace between your thumb and first two fingers
Have your other hand wrap the other lace around the loop
Move it toward you rather than away
Pull the shoelace through the hole to form another loop
 Pull tightly

We learn to tie our shoes at a young age
There's the bunny method
standard knot
tying the bow
circle method
and more
People learn how to tie their shoes one way and stick with it for the rest of their lives

It is easier to untie your shoe than to tie it
What once took so much brain power we now do in seconds
It's become part of the routine
Thread one lace over the other and take it under
 Pull tightly
Make a loop with one of the laces
Wrap the other lace around the loop
Take it through the hole to form another
 Pull tightly

The pattern follows you day by day
Evidence of your accomplishment at your feet
But it is easier to untie your shoe than to tie it
No matter how many times you tie your shoe
You have to come back and undo your efforts
Just to return the next day
And repeat

Tie a standard knot
Make a loop
Make another
 Pull tightly

Caught under the chair, stepped on by your right foot, trapped under someone's shoe
You tie your shoe multiple times a day
Because no matter how many times you tie it
It comes undone

You can either leave it or tie it once more
Either way you know you'll be back again
Accept the fact that you must interrupt your routine to repeat what should've sustained
Because I refuse to double knot

Hope

Anonymous

Hope is a word that is always one step ahead
Jumping in front of Focus,
Outrunning Reason.
You chase it in wonder,
Wind in your hair, worries gone
And you don't wonder where they went.
Hope leaps over Truth so fast you forget to look down
To remember Truth is still there
To ground you.
Hope c r a s h e s into you swift and strong and overwhelming
Like a tidal wave on sand
Disrupting the careful lines the ripples left behind,
Rolling over and over and faster and higher—
Until you are caught in its undertow.
Until you are soaring so high you forget
Forget Caution and its strong safety line
Forget Judgement as it whispers in your ears
Forget Truth, who you side-stepped so long ago,
Who still awaits you, miles below,
Staring you in the face with cold eyes and a merciless grin,
Making you wonder how you were ever so blind as to believe you could fly.
You never were flying,
Feeling light and free with that smile on your face.
It was just one second in the air
Weightless
And then you are fall
 Fall
 Falling,
Tumbling down the same spiral of a wave that Hope used to sweep you off the ground.
Hope is always one step ahead, but you've fallen a step behind
Face first into Truth.
Truth, who will not carry you above the clouds to feel free
Or bring you within an arm's reach of a future so bright it is blinding.
Truth, who remains stiff and unforgiving as you free-fall into its heavy weight
Body b r o k e n, heart torn.

And after that fall, you wonder whether you will ever fly again...

[untitled.]

Ksena-Eve Jenkins

They're watching a movie—she's not really sure which—it all blurs together now, time and denial will do that to the things you once thought would never leave you. Her father prepares dinner in the cramped kitchen, the stuffy feel of it gave off the effect that it was never quite ventilated enough. The girl stares out the window at the despondent streets of East Kizer. The dusk shrouded alleyway with the dingy green dumpster on the corner. The one with the crooked lid. None of this bothered her though.

She runs her fingers through her dark hair, her soft waves brush past the tips of her nails. She always kept them short, liked them that way. Besides, she never could break that habit of biting them, so what was the point of trying to grow them out? The girl glances over at Jamie. Her polar opposite. Their wide emerald eyes totally entranced by the film. A joke is thrown out and Jamie grins along with the stilted laugh track. That Cheshire grin, that's the thing about Jamie, the girl doesn't think she's ever seen them when they weren't smiling, even in their sleep, the corners of their lips are always lifted upwards. And it's always the same smile, their signature Cheshire smirk. They just seem to radiate light.

The movie ends and her dad hands her a steaming styrofoam cup of ramen noodles. Her parents share a look, and in that single moment the girl was completely certain that even all the love in the world could not compare to the fondness being shared between them, glistening in their eyes.

"Dig in!" Her dad says as he brings a heaping spoonful up to his cracked white lips. The girl turns to her mother to ask her a question, or to comment on how nice her hair looked that day, for it really did, and she hadn't said it, or to tell her she loves her, or anything, but a blinding flash of white light ignites, stopping her forever.

She's thrown to the ground, the old couch careening to the left, she lands on the stained carpet with the once cheery yellow flowers, now worn and faded to a dull tan. The fibers of the rug tickle her nose and the side of her face buried in it stings.

Her leg is twisted under her small frame, she glances up, trying to get her bearings, to see pieces of the third floor apartment ceiling crumbling down to meet her there on the ground. Large chunks of cement and drywall rain down from above. One such piece plummets downward and smashes into the left side of her head.

A searing pain echoes through her skull, she can't think of anything besides the pain, pain. And with that, the girl blacks out.

When she opens her eyes, the girl doesn't know how much time has passed. A minute? Five minutes. An hour? She has no idea. She knows she should hear crashes, screaming, anything, but there's silence apart from the dull ringing in her ears. She reaches up to her left ear and her fingertips come away red. She looks around, devastation everywhere. She can't see her mother—or her father. Can't find them anywhere in her field of vision, no matter how hard she desperately searches with her gaze.

There. There's a figure in front of her, a frail child's body. *Jamie*, laying in the dust and rubble that was formerly their apartment. Their face holds a blank expression, their lips are still, set in a placid state of unmoving, emotionless nothing. They're out cold.

Or dead.

The girl is crying. She knows because of the hot liquid that streams down her face in murky bursts. Or maybe it's blood. A bit of both? She doesn't know. She doesn't care. Her ears are still ringing. She calls out for her Mom—her Dad—anyone, but she and Jamie are all alone, or maybe they have already left her too. She's laying in the broken shell of her old life. Cradling her throbbing leg. Imagining what she must look like right now. This scrawny kid. This bloody frail mess, all alone in the dust that just hours ago was a home.

She was a smart kid, she knew her parents weren't coming back. The bomb destroyed them. The bomb destroyed everything. *The President* destroyed everything. Took everything from her. Now she had to



[untitled.] Sasha Zaree



[untitled.] Jessica Yang

The Porcelain Oasis

Anonymous

I often find myself paralyzed at the forefront of the sacred portal that is my bathroom. A ceramic chapel tapered with eggshell paint and floorboards, frosty to the touch. As I unleash the door, the same chilled atmosphere and the aromas of post-lit vanilla candles, cotton paper musk, and dried coconut conditioner remains on the walls surrounding me. The porcelain throne greets me first as I comfortably slip into the familiar curvatures of the lid. Though the back of my head is poked by sharp containers, that one decoration basket, and other miscellany sprawled at the top of my seat, the view from down below is always worth the discomfort. From my throne, my eyes wander to the well-loved rug beneath my foot. It had since lost any mention of warmth or fuzz years ago, and all that was left was a muddled pattern with discolored edges. Still, my feet snuggle back into the comforting dent I've been carving out all my life. I knew I was missed.

This has been my bathroom for nearly 17 years. It may be shared by the other four people living at home or the randoms, but no one else ever notices the cracked wood beneath the counter, the splintered corners of the sink, or even the absurd water collecting behind the toilet, likely developing a fresh biohazard. Only I. From the moment I paint my face in the morning, to the time I pry dirt off my face in the night, the bathroom has been my savior. It feels forbidden to admit that you do anything in the bathroom besides your business. But this is a misunderstanding. As I've discovered, the bathroom is a holy promised land for those who are ready to accept it. What has been foretold is a lie, for the bathroom is my truth.

The paint-dusted sink positioned next to the throne baptizes my hands of any filth while adding another harmony to the surround sound experience. I slightly flinch at the chilled stream, like always it's much too cold for 6 a.m. For my hands to be thawed, I wait at least another five minutes before the self-installed water system kicks in (all the while cursing at my father's reluctance to call the repairman). Another five minutes is spent relishing in the now steamy water as the divine stream gently scorches my frozen fingers. In this time, I make internal check-ups about the state of the bathroom. An array of dried water spots on the mirror, misused layers of ripped toilet paper, coupled with water trapped beneath the hand soap. What a vision she was. I'm brought to tears thinking about how the randoms treat her, as if she were some measly public necessity only serving to fulfill three basic tasks. Little do they know the historical significance of this eternal battleground. Armageddon of the Bleeding Nose, The Battle of Stomach Flu, and the famous Floods of 2009. The bathroom was a veteran to the ancient horrors it had seen, and it clearly had the scars to prove it. Yet it was I, the bystander, witnessing these almighty deeds time and time again.

I know I've completed the daily process once I've entirely lost track of time, yet I'm still unable to remove myself from the floor nook I've settled into. How am I to say goodbye? At this point, the porcelain oasis is worn and warm with me. The toilet finally silent after the initial flush, the sink water warm enough for human contact. My heart aches so much I can barely hear the harassment of four randoms from the outside. Slowly prying myself off the floorboards and crawling to the other end of my temple, I take one last look upon my love. The spotted linen shower curtains tremble knowing it is time. With one swift movement, I'm met with the treacherous hallway and the life I must retreat to. Outside, the sin washes over.

The Ferris Wheel Effect

Sonali Dhanidina

It starts with the lock of a door
keep ur arms and legs inside the ride at all times
hang on tight this one's a rocky one kid
kid
strapped in a one way sally
tally the times you want to get off on the sole of your shoe
the two beneath your feet
brand yourself with the pity of self sympathy that rots on the ground
You're too far up now
Swallow that pill
Loose your will, the overspill
Don't fangirl over conspiracy.
A theory
define it with empty promises and broken pinkies
Are you the headlight or the deer
No gear changes in wonderland
The mad hatter wants his hat back
Kid
Stealing is wrong
Kid
Watch the rabbits clock
Tick tock
Cheshire teeth
On chalkboard
Whiteout
Scratch your eyes
Pry your eyelids wide
Hide behind a sensitive psyche
Condole one's sense of self
The joker
Fake a genuine happy
Slap me
Blackout

The lights are dimmer at the top
Carnival at your toes
Nosebleed seats at your own show
Present yourself
Platter yourself
Lay, gray, flower
A wilted display.
Silhouette yourself
Your body
Your Skin
Play your role
Stop, your strings
SNAP
A laugh
From your puppet master
Porcelain face
BREAK

You're at the top
But its slower here
It's harder to breath but the squeezing of your lungs
The crushing of your heart
Bones
Like the tone of an Orchestra
Beethoven
Crescendo woven al niente
HUSH
The stars are prettier tonight
Did you look at the sky kid
Look at the sky
Do you feel the breeze
The wind is kissing you
Biting you
Your cheek is bleeding kid
Or is it blush
The rush of silence
HUSH
Whisper your prayer
Gods deaf either way
Mind your tongue
Knot your airway
Hush kid
The sky is staring
Is it better here or just quiet
Red herring.

But the wheel starts to spin
Kid are we falling
Up and down
Roar to tranquil
Whiteout
Blackout
Around around
The merry go round
The Ferris Wheel effect
Neglect the thoughts of wild
You child
Your life
A ride
A circle
Repeating and repeating
getting better
getting worse
High, low
Good, bad
A seesaw of sensation
Withdraw
Get out youre sick
You're losing at your own game
Card trick
Grid split
Did you step into this cart
A ride
Or did you trip
Ring master
House of lies
Kid
Get out
The three blind mice
Their knocking
Sleepwalking
Wake up and open the door
Get out of this ride
Is the Ferris Wheel tipping
Fingernail the lock
Cuticles burning
Their bleeding kid
Open the lock
POP

You did it kid
Mock this joke
Your scaring your folk
Step out your free
Get out of this ride
Your Free
Can you Breath
Your free
Shoe off cart
You leave
Stop kid
Wait kid
Your cart was at the top
Did you look at sky kid
The stars are extra bright tonight

Entry 27

Olivia Han

And as we sit under the damp overhang of cement that falls drop by drop, we sing a song of home. The sound echoes through to the black in front of us. It was anything but bleak. The sun so gentle, we had to squint to feel and see the warmth from her embrace, the pins on the floor offering protection every step we took, no matter if it pierced our ankles and made us cry. And every night, the voices of a breathing engine sounded over us like a lullaby, no matter if we had to stuff our bleeding ears with crushed paper and stone. The next morning, we sing our song of home, the place we reside back to before we wake up and start again. We sing our song of home, the place where we would laugh so hard that the heartstrings in my chest would tremble and rip so I would have to sew them back up every night. The place where the screams of birds and trees through wind sang songs so beautiful I broke my teeth from biting at stones that made my mouth dry and my eyes flow salt water. And as we sit under the cold concrete overhang, made of sand and love, my knuckles snap to each drop of dew falling over us, snap, snap, snap. The black dot in front of us grows smaller and smaller, my hands sweaty and my lips dry. But as I sit with you, the pins on my feet and your broken smile offers us both a home that is nothing like the surface but much more than anything I could ever offer.



Snake Nino Raimondo

Editor Bios

Bella Nueva. Bella Nueva is in her senior year at OCSA. She became passionate about writing during quarantine, where she would write out her feelings in poetry that didn't make any sense. In her free time, she enjoys spending all her money on boba and building Lego sets she doesn't have space for. She would like to thank her mom for always supporting her endeavors and Galya for being her Game Pigeon and Sporcle Quiz buddy.

Ciara Tadeo. Ciara Tadeo is a spirited artist and writer. She has enjoyed all corners of the arts since a young age as she spent most of her childhood obsessed with theatre, animation, and creative writing. She loves to write about her amusing life experiences. Her writing leans towards comedy more to replicate a more conversational kind of writing, one that is based in everyday conventions. In addition to writing she enjoys performing, science, and time with her friends and family.

Eesha Tangirala. Eesha Tangirala is a junior at the Orange County School of the Arts. She is an avid lover of fantasy-dystopian action films and novels. Her favorite shows are Attack on Titan, Train to Busan, Bahubali, & Anohana. She wrote her first short story in third grade about the struggles of a farmer's favorite pumpkin fairy and since then has explored various writing genres such as coming of age, realistic fiction, songwriting, and much more before deciding to pursue a new genre she loves Fantasy-Dystopian. And so with that goal in mind, she brings to you "Beyond Life."

Evan Gutierrez. Evan Gutierrez is in his Junior year at OCSA. His primary interests as a student in the Integrated Arts Conservatory include performing, and visual art. A few of the things he does in his spare time are playing video games, cooking/baking in the kitchen, going on walks, and watching Sunday night football with his dad. Typically, he likes to experiment with writing poetry and fiction.

Galya Ramos. Galya Ramos is in her senior year. Her interest in writing began in middle school when one of her friends would have her proofread fanfictions. She enjoys wearing too much jewelry and speeding up her hearing loss process by listening to music way too loud. She would like to thank Bella Nueva for getting her through classes with Game Pigeon games and Sporcle quizzes.

Kaila Gibbons. Kaila Gibbons is an Integrated Arts junior, songwriter, and avid Taylor Swift and Gracie Abrams fan. In her free time, you can find her at any concert in the country.

Marina Kibota. Marina Kibota is a senior in the Integrated Arts Conservatory who finds great joy in books (especially when they are color coded), drawing, music, crochet, coffee, the rain, cheese, and lovingly bullying her friends. No matter what the conversation is, she will find some way to bring it to the subject of the How to Train Your Dragon soundtrack, and will make sure you leave knowing she is a top 30 lifetime listener of the composer's music. She would like to remind all the dinguses out there to have faith, trust, and pixie dust.

Shab Ghaffari. Shab Ghaffari is a Junior in IA who spends almost all her free time inside a dance studio. She competes with her local dance studio in Anaheim Hills and is also the vice president of IA's hip-hop team, ManIA. Aside from dance, you can either find her at the beach or on the couch watching movies with a tub of chocolate ice cream.

Sonali Dhanidina. Sonali Dhanidina is a vibrant actor and writer. Her love for spoken word began at a young age where she was inspired by important social issues like social justice and feminism and has had work published. She loves being able to use her voice and speak up in an attempt to make a change in the world with her words. She is also a working actor and model, where she has worked professionally many times. Her

most recent spoken word is titled “The Ferris Wheel Effect,” where she touches on the overwhelming effect life has, hoping to relate to many.

Sophia Kim. Sophia Kim is a junior in IA. She loves writing, drawing, playing video games, and singing. Her pieces of writing are usually opinionative and focus on movies, games, books, and music. She is in love with green milk tea with boba, Twice, animation, and her guinea pig. Bye! :)

Contributor Bios

Aliena Sutcliff. Aliena is an IA Senior. She’s involved in IA leadership and loves to go see OCSA plays and musicals. Outside school, she enjoys reading a variety of books and learning about space. Next year, she will be attending Northern Arizona University to major in Astronomy.

Allyn Richardson. Allyn Richardson is a senior in IA and loves to draw in their free time. You can find them frequently doodling in class. They especially love to draw plants because plants are the best.

Brigitte Thompson. Brigitte is an IA senior who is involved in IA leadership. She enjoys production, design, and visual arts. She has a cat that looks like Garfield.

Daniel Garza. I am in tenth grade. I am interested in acting, singing, and dancing. I enjoy these areas because I have done musical theatre since I was 6 years old. I love making people laugh, so I really love doing comedy acting where I get to be funny. Making others laugh brings me a lot of joy. I am also passionate about listening to music and dancing to the music that I really like. I love dancing hip hop because I enjoy that style of dance and music. My most recent interest is writing poetry and songs.

Cailee Copeland. I am a returning 8th grader and fell in love with writing in 7th grade (specifically poetry) when I had Intro to CW with Mrs. Knox. I also love Musical theatre.

Cate Boland. Cate Boland is an Integrated Arts senior who loves writing and ceramics. Her favorite genres are YA fantasy, historical fiction, and poetry. In her free time, she enjoys reading the news and drinking tea.

Ella Beaver. I am a 7th grader who enjoys writing, dance, and visual arts. During my free time, I enjoy playing with my dogs and hanging out with friends. I love writing horror stories because I am able to be creative and get ideas that I wouldn’t be able to use in any other genre.

Emma Rhodes. Emma Rhodes is a junior at Orange County School of the Arts and a cross conservatory student with Creative Writing. In her free time, she enjoys spending time in nature and going on late-night ice cream runs.

Fanny Kim. Fanny Kim is a senior at the Integrated Arts Conservatory. She loves writing horror or science fiction stories and creating visual art. Her biggest artistic passion is making comics, which combines those two interests. She used to lead the comics section in the OCSA newspaper. Currently, Fanny is working on a horror graphic novel about a cult built around a portal to a world of otherworldly entities.

Haley Kleinman. Haley Kleinman is a novelist with a background in performing arts. Recently, she published her first novel, *A World of Shadows*, and is currently working on her second in the genre of realistic fiction. She’s been recognized by the Wilbur and Niso Smith Foundation and Scholastic Art and Writing and published in *Feral Poetry*, *The Borderline*, and *Cathartic Youth Lit*. When she’s not writing, she’s quoting her

favorite movies or impulsively buying new books.

Jessica Yang. A wayward frog king moves through the rivers, unperturbed by the burbling creek. I have an affinity for banana bread and all creatures amphibious, and if you listen closely, I'll spin you a tale.

Jodi Hou. I sketched this in my (conservatory) art class (I used a reference drawing), and I used peacock designs to make the human eye pop. I was so excited about the result because I don't usually do art, and I was surprised at my own talent. I love the colors and the patterns on this piece of art.

Kaia Wang. Kaia Wang, 9th Grade. A writer who dabbles in all aspects of art and plays with her three cats in her free time. When she's busy, she's either out and about or at her desk, figuring out her next big masterpiece.

Ksena-Eve Jenkins. I'm a 10th grader and have been writing for five years. I'm an aspiring author and poet and an avid sushi enthusiast. I really appreciate Ms. Knox for helping me foster my writing ability and Ms. Brady, who continues to do so. I love to write, and I hope that my work will not only bring people joy but make them think about what often we choose to ignore.

Logan Navar. Hi, I'm Logan. I'm a 7th grader who aspires to be an author. I grew up in rural Southern Utah, but for the last year, I've lived here in Orange County. I'm so excited to see where my OCSA journey will take me, and delighted to participate in things like Bonfire magazine, to share some of my talents with those interested and hopefully bring some smiles to peoples' faces.

Macy Wong. Hi, my name is Macy Wong. I have been taking art classes since I was about seven from Marilyn Brame, a ninety-five year old local artist based in Mission Viejo. I enjoy working with different mediums and materials and hope to spread joy and happiness through my art. For the past year, I have also been taking ceramic classes at Muddy's Studio and really enjoy creating art with clay. In my spare time, I like to crochet stuffed animals and spend time with my two cats.

Nino Raimondo. Nino Raimondo IA 9th 27'. Been in OCSA and IA since 7th grade, loves art. Wants to proceed with a career in acting or visual arts.

Olivia Han. I love to write and ramble in my journal sometimes, no matter if it makes sense or not.

Rachel Sung. Hello! My name is Rachel Sung, I am a 10th grader and have been in the Integrated Arts Conservatory for the past 4 years! I love writing, singing, acting, and more!
I am submitting a poetry piece.

Sasha Zahree. Since a young age, I've been drawing. I've always had such a strong connection to it, and having gotten into digital art over the pandemic, that solitude has helped me in my artistic development greatly. I'm so thankful for the people who have nurtured my passions and supported me along the way.

Zihui Ye. I wrote a prose that's separated into two sections, the first one is of me in bed, and the second is at school. Both sections represent the thoughts of what I think about in each setting. My interpretation of the prose is how a worry-less life is not possible; however, I would like readers to think about the prose in their own way because people with different experiences might think differently about my writing.

