

# Lexophilia

— Doorways —

Johns Hopkins Center  
for Talented Youth  
Literary and Visual Arts Journal

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## The Butterfly Girl

Alexa Zhang

*Like everyone else, we spent a lot of time being quarantined the past two years. I yearned to be free and be where I wanted to be. While I was confined in the house I thought the doorways to freedom and fresh air were to follow the butterflies and be taken to where they fly!*



# Our Mission

Kickstarted by brimming minds of creativity and fueled by a shared love for writing, the team of Lexophilia conjures doorways for readers to step through – each carefully constructed by CTY students worldwide. An origin or a landmark, Lexophilia allows contributors to make their mark on the map. Whether it may be a twisting, turning maze or a straight path, this literary magazine provides readers with a collection of pieces to share and to inspire.

# Selection Process

Lexophilia accepts writing and artwork from current Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth (CTY) students in grades 5-9 from all over the world. Students enrolled in CTY Online Programs Master Class II: Writing, Editing, and Publishing comprise the student editorial board and review committees that select a theme for the issue, then read, accept, and edit pieces for publication under the guidance of CTY instructors and staff. Student editors manage the design and layout elements of the journal. Information about each year's theme and how to submit student writing or artwork will be displayed in the CTY Online Programs website at least 30 days before the submission deadline for 2023. We hope to see your work!

[cty.jhu.edu/Lexophilia](http://cty.jhu.edu/Lexophilia)



# Our Team

**Editor-in-Chief:** Jocelyn Tay

**Layout Editors:** Chloe Bartmess, Makayla Massimo, Adeline Tay

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**Background Art:** Meg Bartmess, Scot Ehrhardt, Makayla Massimo, Sophia Su, Jocelyn Tay

**Staff Advisors and Instructors:** Anna Ball, Scot Ehrhardt, Sasha Franklyn, Andrea Hackbarth, and Robin Yelton



# Goodbye and Hello

*Margaret Howell*

*I decided to make this artwork about moving houses because I have moved a lot in the past. Moving can force you to say goodbye to people and opportunities, but it can also open doors to new experiences.*

# Letter from the Editor

*Jocelyn Tay, Editor-in-Chief of Lexophilia 2022, reflects on her experience and the process of creating the Doorways issue.*

Broken-white doors that slide open sideways, flower-embellished gates and imaginative portals that unveil a faraway world. In our lives, we encounter hundreds, maybe even thousands of doors. It may be the simple wooden door that leads to home and comfort, the exquisite once-in-a-lifetime gateway that you will never see again, or the invisible entrance that symbolizes change. As the doorway is opened, this year's issue of Lexophilia transports you to a place of turning knobs and unknown endings.

I've had the privilege of being the Editor-in-Chief for this year's issue of Lexophilia. Looking back at the last few weeks as I worked on this journal together with the Editorial Board and the CTY staff, it's rather surreal and bittersweet to see how this whirlwind of adventure has abruptly come to a close. Yet, I would always remember the memories of meeting everyone online as we began gearing up for submissions, watching as pieces streamed in, and finally tying up all the loose ends of the journal. This experience has certainly been a memorable one.

Getting to not only see the editors/managers and the four different committees (art, fiction, nonfiction and poetry) at work, but also reading through hundreds of wonderful submissions, I was surprised at what exactly goes on behind-the-scenes of a literary journal. Just like how each genre had their own dynamics, the committees too, had their distinctive vibes. Whether it was the passionate vouching from the Fiction Committee or the intuitive opinions from the Poetry Committee, I enjoyed listening in and reading the committee discussions led by the Content Editors. Moreover, the various designs and "bold" pages that were tested out by the Design and Layout Editors certainly shaped this journal into something that was truly ours.

I'd like to thank everyone, the Editorial Board (Content Editors and the Committees, Submission Managers, Multimedia and Publicity Managers,

Design and Layout Editors), CTY staff, instructors and publisher, who have worked tirelessly to breathe life and transform blank pages into this literary journal. Also, thank you to all the CTY students who have submitted their pieces and the contributors for sharing your writing/art with us! This literary journal wouldn't be what it is without all of your help and support. Let your passion for writing continue to bloom and flourish, and do not forget to submit your work to Lexophilia next year!

And finally, to the readers, thank you for letting us share this brand-new issue of Lexophilia with you. Hopefully, there is a piece or maybe two that gives you the courage to cross a 'doorway' of your own!



*Jocelyn Tay*

COLLABORATION:

# a Series of Doors

*Each Master Class II student was invited to write a short description of an important physical door in their life. The result is a collage of various entrances and exits.*

Only once I have and will ever come across it for the chances were too slight. It was plain and smooth, a broken-white opening that slid sideways to reveal rows of seats. It was unlike the tumultuous journey that I would soon have to embark on - days consumed by crystal tears and roaring laughter.

Even though the door seemed normal, snow white with square embroideries near the middle and a yellow golden door knob, I saw it as the door to wisdom. Though it was not used as often as expected to be, it was still mesmerizing to look at. The door led to any reader's dream of imagination.

There was a door that I had once opened hastily to escape from the pouring rain. It was plain and unadorned, but within that door, I found, again, my beloved sanctuary. Within that door, I played a game—a game that was, to me, the first time I had felt so impossibly free, even before the eyes of so many people.

It was the color of the ocean, a deep blue mixed in with hues of green, vibrant against the pale peach color of the house. It arched above me like a gate, and in some ways it was, black metal vines obscuring the shining glass behind it. The vines tangled themselves together, overlapping each other like snakes, silent yet alive.

The gate recoiled slightly when I pressed my palm against it, my other hand reaching for the latch to open the gate. The bottom edge scraped against the pebbles that had strayed onto the pristine stepping stones. The gate is embedded into my brain, renewed almost every day as I

open the gate to my best friend's backyard. The dark brown wood almost relaxes me: a reminder that, now, I'm not alone.

Dark spruce wood, tinged with gold. Those were the colours of the louvred door. The brown was not faded after years of use, no, and the gold was as shiny as ever. It let in the incandescent sunlight, a yellow glow filling the room where it led to, and illuminated the corridor—of which was filled with dusty pictures and beige walls.

Glossy wood panels, golden off-center doorknob, shining knocker that dear hands embraced. It won't command attention, but with one knock, a whole world is revealed. When the hinges glide open, there is a burst of Turkish color, and I am welcomed into Grandmother's arms. There are five bolts in the door, more secure than a bank. But I feel safe here, blanketed by the love of the family from which I draw all I am.

It's a simple door off an open breezeway, not much to anyone else. It's the door of the place we stay in Maui, where we go every year. The door is simple and dark in colour, with a small peephole and a welcome mat. Not much to discern it from the others, except for the numbers on the door: 308. To me it will always symbolize happy memories of warm tropical vacations.

This door has been there for most of my life but only in these years have I seen its true value. It's a white door, 6 feet tall. This is the door to my house. In these past few years, we all haven't gone out a lot. This door represents the longing for me, wishing to go out into the world. I feel the door represents the struggles that we have faced

and that we will prevail.

The gray wood, to tired eyes, is vaguely reminiscent of a leopard's coat. Small shreds of the smoky pattern are visible underneath the chipped white paint on the door. The doorknob is a dull silver, capable of twisting far past where it's supposed to be. Each usage is accompanied by a piercing shriek of metal on rusted metal. I can't lock myself in my room without everyone knowing.

One rarely comes across a door so ordinary yet comforting. A shade of smooth and glassy mahogany, the door was enclosed with a plain and unadorned frame. A pair of rusty twin angels, each clasping a gold, jingling bell in its hands, were hung dangling on the sleek black doorknob. And so, whenever my parents arrived home from work, a series of clear, ringing tinkles would chime by the doorway.

My bedroom doorway--an escape from the depth of my thoughts to the reality outside--is the structure on which my day unknowingly rests on. Without it, my routine falls apart like the blocks of a child's castle: tumbling until everything is scattered and gone. Perhaps in a few decades the door of my childhood room will become a faded memory, but for now it will encompass a unique meaning incomparable to anything else.

This door has stood for many things in the passing years. About eight feet tall, it's a doorway I have gone through almost every day for the past ten years. I've turned the handle and pushed the hollow, green metal away from the rusted frame feeling anticipation to see my friends, dread about the band concert that I forgot to practice for, stubbornness that I would rather stay in bed, and joy that I get to leave and spend time with my family or come back to start a new novel in literature. The place I've laughed, cried, read, vomited, prayed, and even danced at, I'll never forget the endless hours spent in school.

Thin netting stretches from the bottom of the door to the top, its small little handle smudged with years of fingerprints. It isn't much, but it leads to so many Summer memories that are

stored in my mind. Ones shared with family and friends. This door leads to a retreat from the world I know throughout the year, and into a world filled with laughter and the feel of fresh water on my face. It was magical, or it is to me at least. A door leading to Summer.

It was pretty unremarkable, plain glass with ugly frosted stripes running across. Big red letters sprawled across in an unappealing font: "Fire Exit." Anyone watching me would think I knew this place inside out, but at least that wasn't a lie. Every week, two times a day, I walked through this door. I knew I was supposed to use the front door, but they couldn't expect us "cool kids" to waste time walking all the way there. My backpack hung loosely from one shoulder, and the weight was really starting to act up. I looked to see if anyone was watching me as I walked through the doorway, a smirk on my face. I was too cool for school.

The door to my room is plain white. A small blackboard hangs from a nail; it has a bright pink border decorated with hearts and butterflies, and my mother had written "Cindy's Home" on it in white chalk. The board has been on my bedroom door every day since I was six. When I open this door and step into the room it leads to, I feel like I'm stepping back into my childhood.







# *Abstract Art*

*Even though I have not had a chance to attend art classes, I have always loved playing with colors. I watch my mom do art while she listens to audio books or when she needs to think, and I think I have developed the habit too. I love spending time like this.*

*Yash'al Ahmed Abdul Sattar*



# The Art of Drowning

Jonah Yang

don't be afraid. it isn't scary at all.

sinking into that bottomless void of beautiful, shimmering blue, life encasing you,  
ablaze with the fire in the water.

it's peaceful, drowning is.

struggling to find that last bit of oxygen,

the feeling of suffocation engulfing your every limb.

that's the easy part.

but the memories are just too much, aren't they?

all those times, where you breathed in and out, and yelled to the world because you truly meant it,  
all those times you stood in the rain, staring up to the god above and wondering why he was  
crying,

all those times you tucked into bed at night, having the reassurance that you would wake up the  
next morning to a noisy Charlie Brown alarm clock.

and yet you still sink, because, wow, you're going pretty far down,

hey, look, it's one of those anglerfish things, the one you were scared of in first grade,  
remember?

as the blue fades into black, and you lose sight of the surface, of the sun,  
which had smiled at you just hours before,

you know it's time to open your eyes,

walk out that bedroom door,

and get on with yourself.





# *Through My Own Eyes*

*Chelsea Yan*

*The doorway between the digital and the real world is a powerful one, one that can distort, simplify, and glorify.*

*I wanted to share my thoughts and views on what happens when Asian-American identity is passed through this doorway, through the lens of social media and everyday life.*

# The Door That Sets You Free

Tori Kim

when you stand at a halt  
arms hanging slack by your sides  
pausing, waiting,  
feet planted firm

when your eyes fall upon the  
silver doorknob  
glinting, enticing  
like the stars you once stood beneath

when you take a measured breath  
outstretch your hand into the ether  
fingers hovering  
over the time-worn door

when you steel your heart  
pushing past the wooden frame  
eyes closed  
anticipating,

I hope you recall with fondness  
sun-speckled sidewalks,  
mornings by the sea,  
grinning visages,  
lilting laughter

I hope you uncage your sorrows  
undo your hair  
and dance in the moonlight  
with an exulting holler

for you are not the child you once were  
crouching in the corner  
dragging your nails through  
infinite grains of chalky cement

no,

you are a bird  
spread your wings and  
fly

through the worn door and  
away from your sorrows

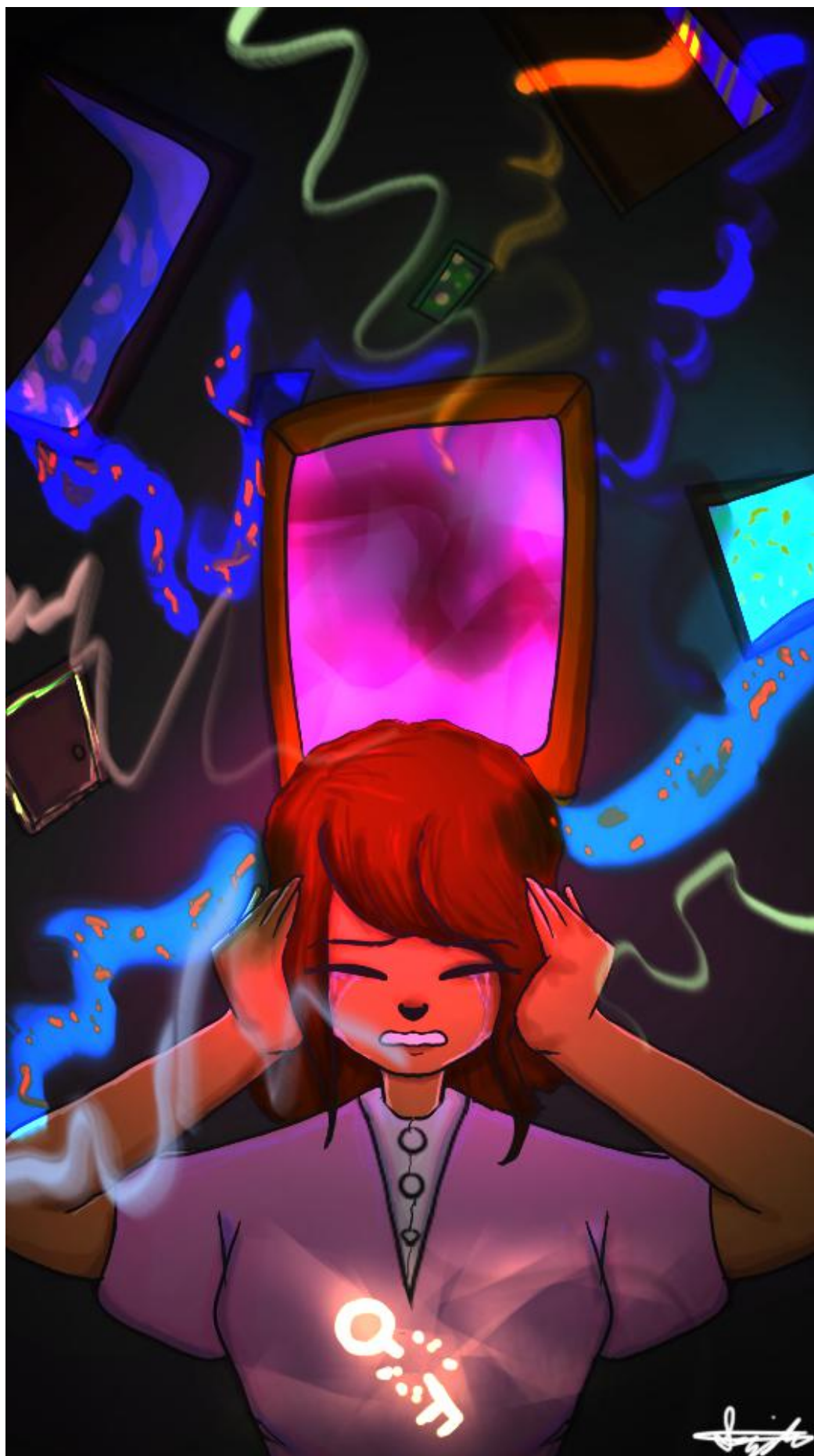
into the limitless blue  
you dreamt of.



# Too Much! TOO MUCH!

Sophia  
Marsha  
Gaurino

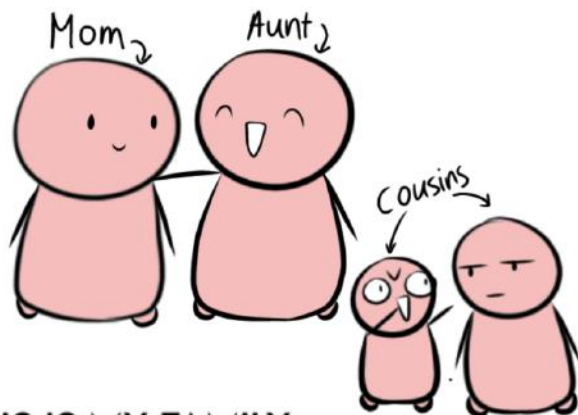
*I want to combine doorways with overthinking. To do that, I drew myself because I tend to overthink and a ton of doors and doorways behind me, which represent thoughts, unnecessary and necessary, mostly the former. As for the cherry on top, I added a key that snapped in half to kind of represent my ability to keep all my thoughts in check and failing to do so.*



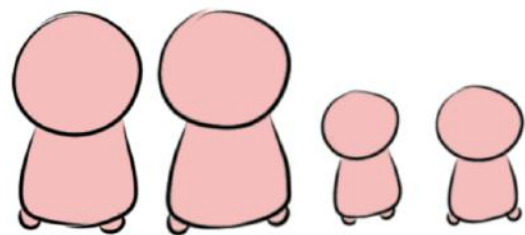
# The Last Alexandrite

Rachel Xu

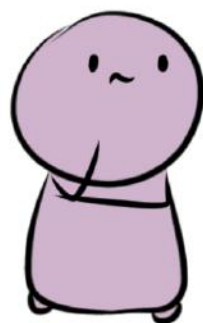
*This work is to describe a world filled with Crystallians on a planet called Diona. The main character, Lily, is an Alexandrite, born into the world filled with red, green and blue Crystallians as a purple Crystallian. As she grew up, she was shunned from everyone around her because she was purple while others are either red, green, or blue. She fights internally within herself to find where she belongs.*



THIS IS MY FAMILY



THEY ARE ALL RED



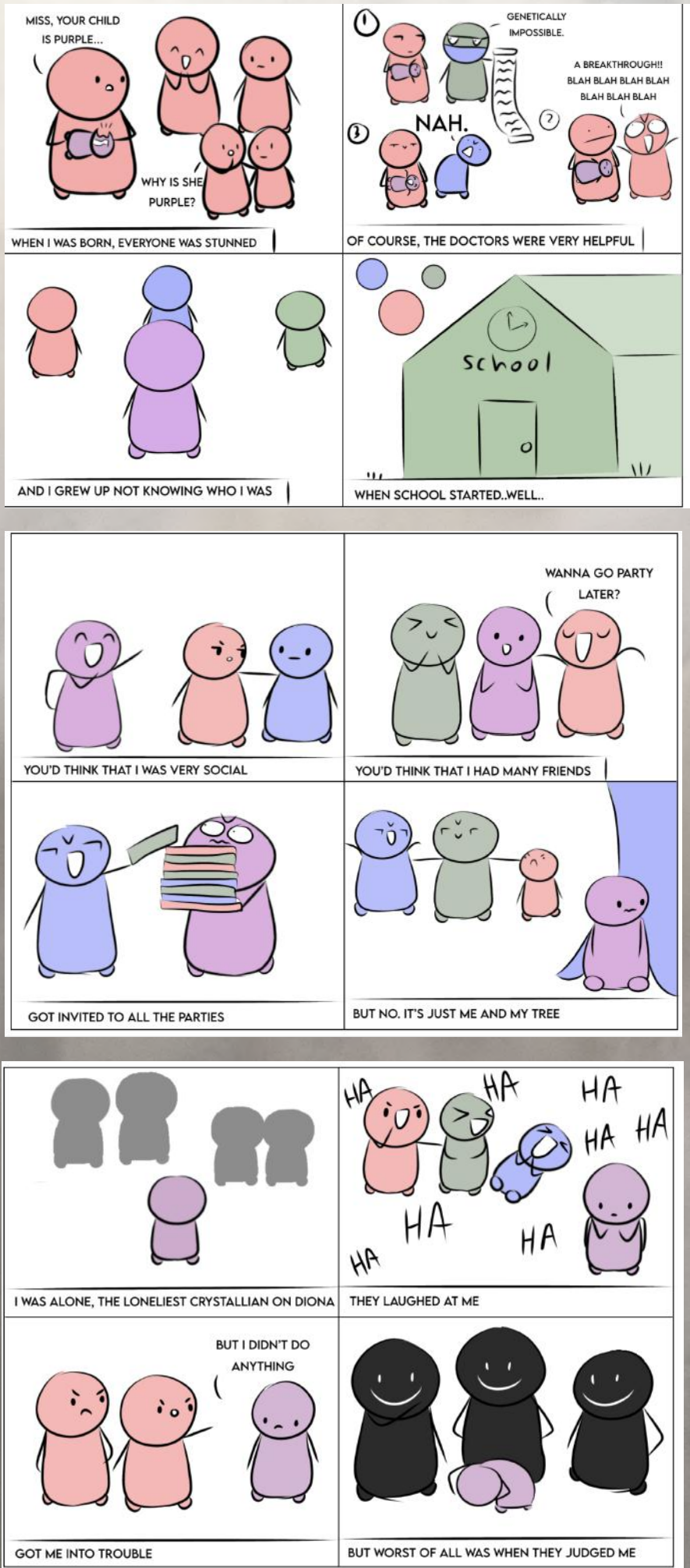
UNTIL I WAS BORN

IN FACT, I AM  
AN ALEXANDRITE.

THE LAST ALEXANDRITE







# Entering

## Mollie Mei

I lay on the ground, my back flat on the carpeted floor of my room. My mind is sitting on a bedrock of thoughts, envisioning all the memories of the past, all about to be washed away.

My Doorway appeared in the room early this morning, waking me from my troubled sleep with a brilliant flash. The unremarkable wooden door is shut tightly a few steps away. It reassures me, somehow, to know that all the other sixteen-year-olds out there are facing this too.

Dana comes into my room, eyes puffy and red. Glancing ruefully at my Doorway, she snuffles and lets out a humorless chuckle.

“Waiting until midnight?”

I sit up and nod. “I don’t want to go.” Dana sits down on the floor beside me and sniffs again. “I know, sweetie. Nobody does.”

Although she’s trying her best to hide it, I know what she’s thinking. What if I end up at the Station? It’s a cold, dark place with all the other never-aging sixteen-year-olds, stuck there because of their crimes, unable to leave because the Doorway has put them there. Sometimes, there’s a glitch. A few teenagers have landed in the Station even though they’re perfectly nice people, simply because their Doorways malfunctioned. If I’m unlucky enough, I will join them in the dungeon.

“You know, you don’t forget everything once you Enter,” Dana says suddenly.

“You don’t?”

She shakes her head. “No. I still remember a bit. Not much, though. Just a few names. And feelings.”

I sit up straighter and look her in the eye. “Like what?”

She shifts uncomfortably and coughs. “I remember someone called Steven. No idea who he was, but it was the only name that came to mind once I came to this side. I felt pain, too. Just thinking of the name Steven-- it took away a lot of that pain. I don’t know.”

**“I’ll be in a new life...one where I know absolutely nobody.”**

We sat in silence for a while, staring blankly at my Doorway in the middle of my room. The clock has ticked away, from 11:30 to 11:55, as hunger and fatigue disappear behind my overthinking.

What if I do end up at the Station? My Doorway could very well malfunction, leaving me in a jail cell rather than the regular life I have been promised. And what if that regular life isn’t good enough? I’ll have no one to remember, everyone lost, the special people of the past 16 years forgotten. That’s how the Doorway Effect works. The moment I step across that line, the memories of my past will be erased,





never to be found again. I'll be in a new life, one where Oscar and Dana are different people with different names, one where I know absolutely nobody. Like a fresh start in a twisted way.

I hear Dana crying next to me. I don't dare look at her, because I'm sure I'll start sobbing too. It's only a minute from midnight, and my Doorway is starting to open in front of my eyes. It's a dark black hole, peeking out from the sliver in the door that's becoming bigger and bigger as each second passes.

"I'll miss you, June. I really will. I'm never going to get over today," Dana says, wiping her tears. "Now, get up. I can't promise you that you'll remember me, but whatever happens, I'm always going to remember you."

I nod, tears welling up in my eyes, my throat becoming scratchy and sore as I stand with her.

This is it, I think to myself, I'm really Entering.

My Doorway is more than half open now, right in front of me. Dana wrenches it fully open, making the hinges rebound on the door itself. It's a black hole on this side, but the moment I walk through, something will be waiting there.

"I'll miss you," I try to tell Dana, but I choke on my own voice. She's pushing me towards the door faster than I can react, so I take one last look at her face before I step through. Her watery hazelnut eyes, strawberry blonde hair, and kind yet sorrowful smile. I see her mouth open but no words come out as I slip into the darkness. The cold embraces me like drowning in icy waters.

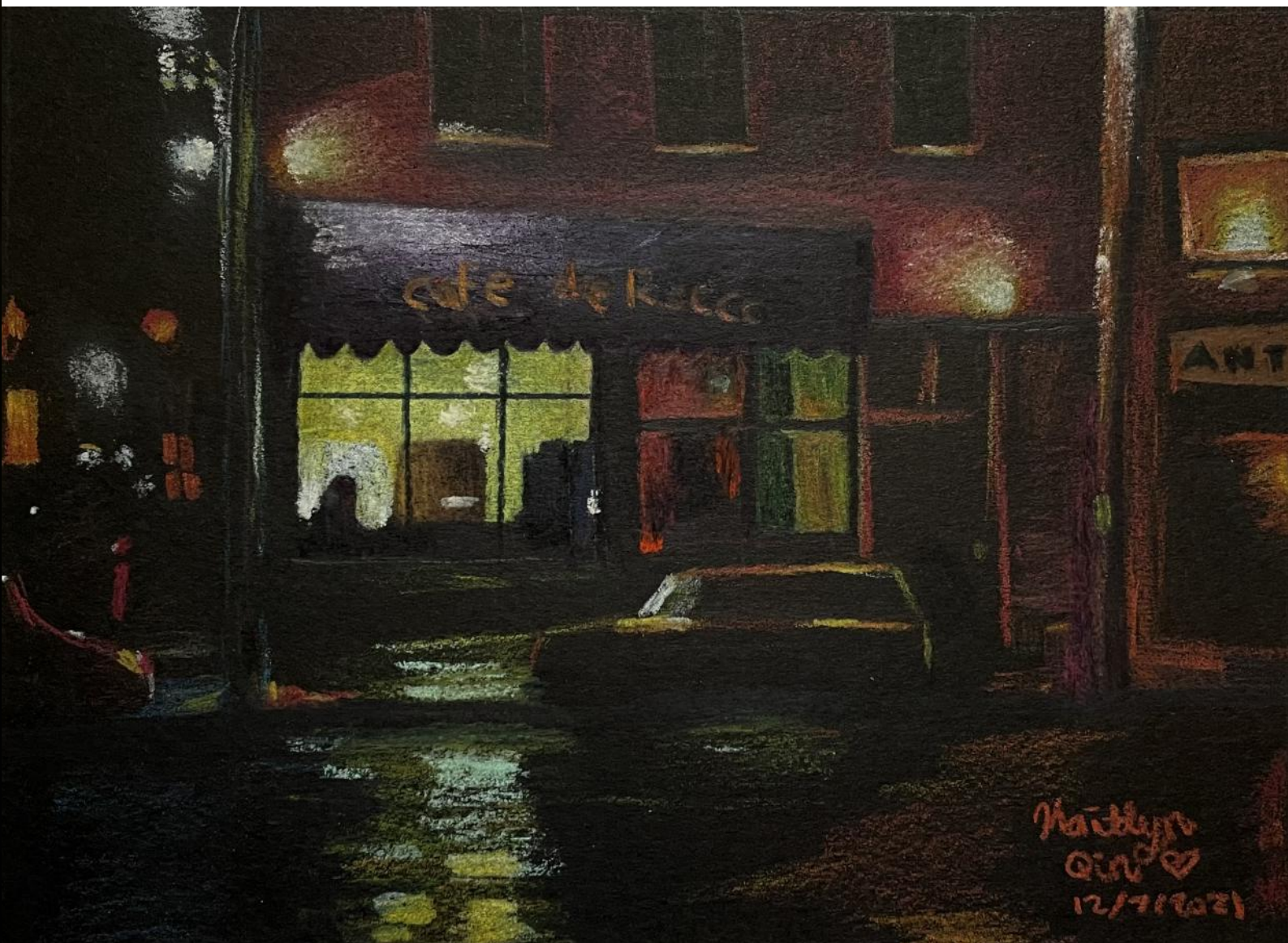


# Longing

Isabella Hill

*Amidst the destruction and violence in the world, I began to feel trapped and overpowered by fear. The COVID-19 pandemic perpetuates feelings of isolation and hopelessness, and I started to reflect upon the chaos in society while creating this piece of artwork. Painting is a means through which I can express myself when it seems as if words cannot convey my message. In this painting, the bird remains hopeful although trapped in a cage; it represents the resiliency, strength, and perseverance embedded in everyone despite their obstacles and challenges. The blooming flower, although faded, illustrates how hope can help someone triumph over the darkness that surrounds them and ultimately overcome their dire situation. No matter how many doors appear to be closed, one can still find hope.*





# *City Night*

*Kaitlyn Qin*

*I wanted to portray the beauty of a peaceful street corner with a quiet cafe in a city night.*

# A Promised Door

JooHa Roh

Today, I am changing my name. For the past 8 years of my life, my name has been Gyeo-ul. According to my parents *Om妈* and *Appa*, Gyeo-ul means 'winter' in Korean.

*Om妈* says the day I was born, the first snow of the year fell. She says that's why my name is Gyeo-ul. And I like it. I like winter, and I like the snow. I think of my name as a special weapon because I win every snowball fight match against *Eun-ni* and *Oppa*, my older sister and brother.

But from today on, my name won't be Gyeo-ul anymore. They will change my name.

I'm not exactly sure why, but *Om妈* says I can't go to school if I keep my name. *Eun-ni* and *Oppa* tell me if I don't go to school, it's a big deal, but the only thing I will miss is seeing my best friend Da-Eun. *Appa* says school is much more than seeing friends. He says it's about e-d-u-c-a-t-i-o-n.

I just don't like that they're taking away what's mine, what has been mine since the day I was born. Besides, I'll probably never win another snowball fight match again.

I mouth my name a thousand times, wondering if I'll forget it when I get older.

\*\*\*

Today, *Oppa* is leaving for the army. I don't understand why he has to.

*Oppa's* name tag glints in the sunlight, and I wonder what it feels like to

fight for a country not his own. How he might die under a name that will never truly be his.

He tells *Eun-ni* and me he'll be fine, and I almost believe him, but seeing *Om妈* and *Appa* cry makes me doubt.

I wonder if he's scared. I imagine him charging towards some other little girls' big brothers, getting hit by their bullets, dropping down on the ground, and booted feet running all over his cold body. *Om妈* tells him: *sarang-hae*. I blink, unsure what I just heard. Then I remember: 'I love you.'

My native tongue has been banned since I was 6 years old. I can't say I remember any of the alphabets or pronunciations.

Even before losing my name, I lost my language, and small fragments of myself were lost along with them.

I look up at *Oppa*. *Sarang-hae*, I mouth clumsily, imitating *Om妈*. For some reason, it feels right to say it, as if I have never stopped speaking Korean.

*Oppa* smiles at me. *Na-do*. He mouths back. 'Me too.'

Then he turns his back on us, takes a deep breath, and steps out the door.

The only thing I can do is helplessly watch his retreating back and wish I will see him again.

\*\*\*

*Eun-ni* has been acting strange lately. I hear her sneaking out of the house during the night. She has turned secretive nowadays, and she hangs out with friends she has never mentioned before.

*Om妈* and *Appa* worry about *Eun-ni*. *Eun-ni* says they are overreacting, and I don't know how friends can be worrisome.

One night, *Eun-ni* wakes me up. I rub my eyes and blink, trying to focus.

I start to speak, but she motions at me to be quiet. I notice that there is paper all



over the floor. *Eun-ni* lights a candle.

"Sit," *Eun-ni* says, patting the floor. I sit down. She hands me a piece of paper and a pencil.

"*Ga*," she says, drawing something on the paper. I stare at it and realize there's something familiar about the shape.

Then it hits me. *She's teaching me Korean?*

She points at my pencil. I grasp my pencil firmly and hesitate. *Eun-ni* nods her head encouragingly.

I slowly and deliberately copy down the first alphabet. *Ga*.

"*Na*," *Eun-ni* says, writing the second alphabet next to the first one.

"*Na*," I repeat after her, as I also write it down. I'm surprised by how sloppy it looks since my usual handwriting is decent.

"*Da*," *Eun-ni* says.

\* \* \*

"*Gyeo-ul*," *Eun-ni* whispers. It's been more than three years since I've heard my name being said, and I'm surprised by how unfamiliar it sounds.

"*Gyeo-ul*," I repeat.

I copy it down, my hands shaking. The letters look beautiful on the paper. *Gyeo-ul*.

I peer outside to see snow falling. The first snow of the year, just like the day I was born. *Eun-ni* beams at me, and I find myself smiling back.

*Gyeo-ul*, indeed.

## December 1943

"A new vocabulary," *Eun-ni* tells me. I lean in, eager, my face lit by the dancing candlelight. "Hmm." *Eun-ni* scans the room. Then, she points to the door in our room.

"*Moon*," says *Eun-ni*.

"*Moon*," I repeat. 'Door.' *Moon*. *Eun-ni* writes moon on the paper and I copy it down as she watches me. I glance up at her

and see her staring dreamily ahead.

"You need to remember *moon*, *Gyeo-ul*," *Eun-ni* says suddenly.

"Why?" I ask, confused.

"Because *moon* means the future," she answers.

"Future?"

"Yes. When you open *moon*, even a simple *moon* leading to a room, you're stepping into a new future. And as you get older, there'll be more *moon* to open." She pauses and smiles at me.

"So, *Gyeo-ul*, promise me something."

"What?"

"Promise me that you'll open every *moon* that comes across your path without fear."

"What do you mean?" I ask, befuddled.

"Because, outside of *moon*, there will be new futures, new possibilities, and freedom." She whispers, her voice getting stronger with each word. "And one day, we'll be free. But the door to freedom will be scarier and darker than you could ever imagine."

*Eun-ni* holds out her pinkie. I see something flash across her face, and I wonder if it is determination.

"Promise," I whisper, entwining my pinkie with hers.

"*Moon*," I murmur, smiling.

*Moon*. Door. *Moon*. Future. *Moon*. Possibilities. *Moon*. Freedom. Freedom.

"It's been more than three years since I've heard my name."





# *Cradle in the Sky* Emily Hsu

*My brother perceives doorways in the mistiest clouds, sees doorknobs in the roughest walls, figures directions in the most convoluted mazes, and detects majestic beasts in the profoundest lakes. Cradled with an eye and a heart and an imagination, he sees sparkles in the darkest zone of humanity and creates smiles in the most morbid metropolis, dreams the impossible, and unfolds the inevitable. I want to ride on the Cradle with him to change the world for the better.*



# Monarch

Anya M.

The hill rises high, like the back of some ancient, slumbering beast. The last few rays of sunlight brush the blades of grass, outlining a curved spine in pale, jagged gold before receding entirely.

I hang from the rusted pull-up bars at the bottom, watching it fade. The bar was just short enough that I could reach it easily, but just tall enough that my feet still glide over the ground—despite occasionally drifting lower to kick up puffs of fine, reddish dirt.

The yellow paint peels away around my hands, revealing cool metal underneath. At any other time of day, the blazing Hawai'i sun would've made it scalding, but now, it was bearable.

I drop down only when my palms begin to ache, still resting my hands on the bar above me. The sky is a cloudless, dusky mauve, still bright enough to justify staying at the deserted school, but not for long. The only sound was the soft whistling of the wind, which tossed strands of hair in my face. I free one hand, brushing hair out of my mouth and eyes, too preoccupied to feel the whisper of insect legs on my other arm. It takes me almost ten full seconds to notice the butterfly that landed there.

I'd drawn my fair share of butterflies. I knew well enough that the only part of the butterfly we really admire are the wings. However, being faced with a real, live monarch, all I could focus on was the body. I stared at its little curling tongue with a combination of horror and fascination. Whenever a gust of wind hit particularly hard, it felt like its long legs were hooking into my skin, and I cringed.

It was as if my right hand was glued to the bar above me, my arm forever frozen in a vertical position. I wasn't sure whether I didn't move because I wanted it to stay, or because I wanted it to go, and was somehow afraid it would crawl further if I jostled it, even slightly.

Eventually, after what seemed like hours, I had to leave. The color was draining from the sky, which was now a flinty gray. Only then, when I was forced to bring my arm down, did the monarch slowly flap its wings—trying to balance itself. Only then did I notice that the striking orange and black pattern was broken. One of its wings was shredded. It had only landed on me because it couldn't fly any further.

I blinked. So it wasn't luck at all. Fate had nothing to do with it.

I looked around for a place to return the butterfly to. A crown flower, sometimes called a giant milkweed, was a favorite of monarchs. One stood behind me, just a few feet away, leaves rustling, branches dotted with flowers that looked like hard, lavender stars.

Gently, I nudged the butterfly onto one finger, then, walking over, placed it back on the same rounded leaves it had tried to fly off of. I felt almost guilty for undoing the progress it had fought so hard for, for setting it back on its attempted journey.

It was a miracle it had made it anywhere at all. I knew the butterfly wouldn't last long, but the butterfly didn't. I tried to leave it somewhere I hoped was a good place to die, but the butterfly still lifted its tattered wing to catch the breeze. It only knew how to live.

# A Sprout of Hope

Zihan Xu

Early in my life, when my parents were away working, I always stayed with my maternal grandfather, *Su Ming*. Those mornings with him, he would run his coarse, lukewarm hands across my face and hum a very distinct melody, then lift me gently onto his shoulders, and we would open all the doors to allow the passage of the fresh, brisk Canadian air. Every time a door was opened, a zephyr would blow past me, tickling my tiny neck and enticing me outside.

*Su Ming* had a green thumb. It seemed that anything he put into the soil would bloom magnificently. He kept a curious little garden in his backyard. Each flower had its own unique place: carnations in one wooden box, tulips in another, daylilies in one corner, and wild rose bushes near the gates. On one side, there were lodgepole pine trees with luscious green pines and dark oak-colored bark, bearing the brown-tinted cones that contrast with the bright green background; white spruce trees, with a palette of darker colors than lodgepole pines, and slick slender cones; and a tall, gallant sugar maple, with a coarse dark-brown bark and a gloating crest of vivid maple leaves, the Canadian national icon. Each spring, the sap began to build, marking the time to harvest the sugary liquid; during the fall, the leaves of the sugar maple turned crimson with hints of orange and yellow. The garden was magical. During the morning hours, there was the constant buzz of insects coming and going paired with the sharp, yet elegant chirping of any birds that might come to stay. During

the night, the duet continued with the chirping of crickets followed by the serenade of birds.

On my third birthday, *Su Ming* gently handed me an odd gift: a sapling. I was rather disappointed, expecting instead to receive a toy.

“It is a white-poplar,” he said in his smooth voice, “an extremely special type of tree.”

I arched my brows—I saw nothing special in this tree. Seeing my confusion, *Su Ming* promised to reveal the secret of the tree once we were in the garden. I carried the sapling as tenderly as possible, sensing its great value to him, if not to me. We strode past the evergreens and the sugar maple and continued until we found an empty spot, where the damp, rich, brown soil awaited its companion.

As time passed, I felt inclined towards exploring the tree. Each day when the sun slowly rose from its slumber and enlightened the dim world with its warm orange glow, I sat by the tree, scrutinizing it. Later, when the sun began to hide behind the hills and a hue of crimson and purple tinted the sky, I peeked at the tree through the backyard doorway of my house.

When the tree grew to just about my height, my grandfather encircled the plot of land with stones and meticulously picked out any weeds that could potentially harm the tree. Whenever we were in the garden, *Su Ming* would either be relaxing in his old rocking chair, which creaked and groaned with every movement, or moving actively about, plucking out all the intruders. He would always smile to himself, no matter how demanding the work. When he caught me looking at the tree and feeling its tender leaves, he would emphasize that it was “my” tree, though I did not fully understand the meaning of this until later.

Gradually, the sapling began to grow taller and taller, its crown of branches



reaching like little arms towards the wide open sky.

Then, when I was five, everything changed. *Su Ming* had been hospitalized with a severe form of cancer. The thought that my extremely active and loving maternal grandfather was lying in a hospital bed hit me like a punch in the gut.

Not long after our last visit, he left the Earth. Just before he left, he reminded me of “my” tree and made me promise to care for it. A final smile sprouted across his ashen face, almost the exact color as the underside of my white poplar. I held his coarse, calloused hands against mine for the last time.

Back in the garden, something was amiss. All the flowers bent over as if weeping from remorse, all the trees stood there, tall and straight, unwavering, as if paying respects to the man who had tended them. Dead silence. Nothing dared to move. No birds sang in the trees, no insects buzzed about. No wind, not even a slight breeze, as if the world were suddenly holding its breath.

During first grade, I always did my homework beside the poplar, comforted by the same sense of safety and intimacy I had felt with my grandfather. Every time I leaned against the tree, I saw my grandfather rocking placidly in the rocking chair that still sat on the redwood porch. I saw him slowly turning the yellowed pages of his newspaper, the pages crinkling against the silence of the evening. From the end of the lit cigarette held firmly between his lips, the scent of freshly rolled tobacco, the smoke wafting, forming gray diaphanous clouds. From the little table that stood beside the rocking chair, the aroma of newly brewed green tea floated dreamily in the air.


Time passed, but not a single day did I forget about the tree. Each morning I would look at it. I would feel the wind that passed

through the leaves blow across my face.

When there were flowers, I rubbed them gently with my hands and felt their bittersweet touch. From these flowers, I sensed the tenderness of my maternal grandfather’s heart and the callous contours of his hardworking hands.

Now, during summers, when the flowers turn to cotton-like fruit, I sit against my poplar, spontaneous, fanciful shadows of the overlapping branches dancing across my face; and I, staring up through them, seeking the doorway to light.

**"I carried the  
sapling as tenderly  
as possible,  
sensing its great  
value to him."**



# Doorways

By Aadya Pandita

The door's been slammed  
so many times  
it's always taking place after  
yells, screams,  
deafening fights, shattering dreams

because no one ever cares to listen  
in the midst of all the noise  
I'm sitting there alone  
with my ears covering my hands  
and eyes as dry as sand

they say silence speaks volumes  
and after everyone's done blaming each other  
mother, father, sister, brother  
locking themselves up in caves of anger and guilt  
I stand in the doorway, body wrapped in a quilt

a quilt sewn with patches and pieces of what we used to be  
a quilt made with the loving hands of my mother,  
fabric bought by my brother,  
stories woven by my father,  
the humming of his favorite daughter

for in the coldness of this lonely home  
where all I feel is isolated and alone  
I watch as the newborn baby cries  
I listen as my sister's weeping slowly dies  
and all that's left is broken promises and empty lies

it's like I'm floating every day, drifting off farther into the sea  
at times I'm drowning in the silence  
at times I'm rising above the defiance  
still all the while I'm floating  
with no one to seek, no one to ask for guidance

the roar of the waves that surround me  
they try to remind me I'm not alone,  
keep me from giving up  
but there's only so much that can be done  
when I'm stuck behind a door to a dark world with no sun



there's nowhere to run  
when your only solace is the four blank walls of your room  
those four walls that drive me insane  
the four walls that'll be everyone's doom  
for even flowers could wilt in here, they have no reason to bloom

one night I find my brother curled up on the kitchen floor  
his head touching his knees, hands covering his ears  
i don't say anything, just simply sit down and rub his back  
watch his breathing slowly come to a normal pace  
then leave before I can see the expression on his face

it's the small acts of kindness that are the most impactful  
and I guess it's true because now I watch as my brother talks to my mother  
their words giving reassurance to one another  
they end their conversation with a hug  
happiness flowing through them like a drug

so after what feels like forever, I find it getting better  
no longer are doors being slammed by one another  
instead we all leave them open  
the whispers of apologies filling the house  
waiting for the hope that can finally arouse

and then a single tear escapes my eye  
I finally feel something that's not numbing and dry  
this time I step out of the doorway and come to see  
mother, father, sister, brother, the baby  
all sitting there alike, cascading tears falling from their eyes

at last the baby smiles  
the sunlight that shines for quite a while  
the melody that hums from beneath  
the feeling that rises from above the deceit  
and the happiness we now chose to believe

so, no, it's not a happy ever after  
and at times our house seems deprived of laughter  
but at least now we all can see  
that behind the doors of our greatest fears  
lies something so beautiful, something so dear

hope

# The Maze

## Johji Nakada

Finally, I walked through the door and looked up. Hands out to the side as if I were holding up the sky, I took a breath of fresh air and opened my eyes. *So this is what it feels to be free*, I thought. Yet when I opened my eyes, all I could see were four more white walls, identical to the first room. So I walked out the door again, down the hallway, and opened another door.

Finally, I walked through the door and looked down. I put my hands together and left my eyes open and whispered to myself, *God, I know you're not real, but I'll ask you anyway. No point in not trying, right? No harm, no foul? Well anyway, I just wanted you to liberate me from this endless maze, this endless puzzle of rooms.* But when I looked up, nothing had changed. The room was identical to the last, four white walls forming a cube.

Instead, I opened the door once again, the hallways lined with red carpeting greeting me once again. But this time, I sat down. I sat down in the dead center of the hallway and closed my eyes.

I brought my mind back to the first room. Back to the very first time I entered that white box. Back to the very first time I walked out that door and into the hallway I was sitting in. Back to the very first time I had opened a door into another room. Back to the very first time I had felt free. So I found that freedom and fixated on it. I imagined holding my hands out and looking up to the blue sky. I wanted to feel the wind try and knock me over, only to fail. I fixated on that feeling long enough that I didn't remember what that white box felt like anymore.

So I opened my eyes again. But this time, there was no hallway. There were no doors, but instead, the blue sky I had once yearned for pressed down on me. *This was here, right next to me. It's been taunting me this entire time, reminding me of what it felt like, knowing I couldn't feel it ever again. What a cruel joke.* My head remained tilted to the sky, hands out to the sides. I lowered my head and looked forward. And there you stood.





# Reconciling with Janus

Anika Chakravarthy

3000 BC.

The invention of doors.

In a block of wood or steel,  
we take refuge from the elements  
and bask in its protection.

Without its existence,  
we would not exist the same way.

Conceived as a new beginning,  
a metaphor of opportunity,  
and a view of what lies ahead.

We are wrapped in their power,  
putting our lives in the hands  
of a passageway;  
on our knees  
for insight it cannot convey.

A doorway does not give us answers,  
as we are not the ones  
to see where we are headed.

The double headed  
god of doorways,  
Janus,  
whose heads slide like  
sliding doors,  
provides passages that cannot always be  
controlled.

The space between the door and room.  
The space of unabashed thoughts.  
Transitions to “you never really know quite what.”

We cannot frame what we know,  
enveloped in unknowns.

The whims  
of a doorway  
whisper in our conscience,  
hymns of what we do not know.

If only Janus could show  
us how to see  
the sublime nature  
of the constantly changing future.

When dawn is birthed  
from past mistakes,  
and life cradled in authenticity,  
could the things that truly matter  
have more power  
than the double headed  
god of doorways?





# *Through Life*

*Hailey Tsai*

*I chose to draw a traditional Chinese doorway, and a character stepping through it. The circular shape of the doorway represents life, so the character is passing through the door of life in order to move on.*



# There Comes a Day When Life Subsides

By Zihan Xu

There comes a day when life subsides,  
When the eternal darkness comes unwaveringly without delay.  
For even the smoothest of streams bear turbulent tides.

As the gold and warmth of autumn hides,  
Winter comes, and the darling buds of May turn gray.  
There comes a day when life subsides.

The frosts of winter bring deceits and lies,  
When the glorious summer grace fades away.  
For even the smoothest of streams bear turbulent tides.

When all the world is black and white astride,  
The cloak of winter snow veils the sun's last ray.  
There comes a day when life subsides.

When the chilling hand of death comes by, no one abides,  
For they know nothing gold and green can stay.  
For even the smoothest of streams bear turbulent tides.

There comes a time when the kindled fire slowly dies,  
And we wait, we wait in silence for the Final Doorway.  
There comes a day when life subsides.  
For even the smoothest of streams bear turbulent tides.

*Note from the editors: While the first villanelle appeared in France during the Renaissance period, it was not widely written until the 19th century. A villanelle is a nineteen-line form poem with two rhymes throughout, consisting of five tercets (three-line stanzas) and a quatrain (four-line stanza). The first and third lines of the opening tercet recur alternately at the end of the other tercets, and both of the lines are repeated at the close of the concluding quatrain.*







# Stuck in a Rotating Door

Charlotte Hull

## "I don't like shutting doors."

"Why is it spinning?" I asked, clinging fearfully to my grandmother's bony hand. "It's a rotating door." She smiled. "Don't worry, it's supposed to spin."

"What if I don't know when to get off?"

My grandmother gave me an odd look.

"You know," I said. "What if I just keep going around and around, and never stop?"

My grandmother laughed. "Then you'd spend your whole life in a rotating door, wouldn't you?"

Little did she know quite how deeply her words struck me, or how long they would remain with me.

\*\*\*

"Close the wardrobe door, please," I said.

My mother looked at me curiously.

"In case there are monsters," I explained.

My mother laughed, kindly. "If there are monsters, I'm sure they'll know how to open a door!"

"Well, at least I'll have some warning," I replied.

My mother thought about this. "But if the door is open, you'll see them coming for you."

I stayed quiet, pondering this for a second.

"And anyway," my sister chimed in, as she casually filed her claw-like, pointed nails,

"The monsters aren't in your closet. They're under your bed."

Sometimes my sister is a monster.

\*\*\*

I watched my sister clump together a ball of snow in between her pink gloved hands. I shivered and retied my scarf.

"Look," she said, as she sent it rolling down the hill.

The snowball got bigger and bigger. As big as a bunny. As big as a cat. As big as a dog.

Bam! It hit a tree and crumbled into a pile of frozen lacy fluff. My sister laughed gleefully.

I watched in horror. "Why did she do that?" I mumbled.

My sister misheard me. "It gets bigger because it accumulates more snow as it rolls. Big doors swing on small hinges."

I watched numbly as she moulded another snowball. Unlike me, she never worried about how they might feel when crashing into a tree.

\*\*\*

My sister paced back and forth in anger. "I cannot believe she is still being so awful! I thought she had changed."

My mother hugged her calmly. "I know, sweetie. Maybe when someone keeps behaving like this, they're not a real friend."

"But if she's nice again, what should I do?"

My mother thought for a minute. "Well, you should be polite, even friendly, but otherwise keep your distance."

My sister nodded. "That's easier said than done."

"I know, but some doors are meant to be closed. And if you reopen them, you might

get a shock when you remember why they were closed before.”

My mother meant this as a piece of sage advice, but to me, it sounded more like a sinister warning.

\*\*\*

“The promotion went to someone else,” my father half-sighed, half-grumbled when he got home from work.

My mother hugged him. “Oh, honey, I’m so sorry.”

My father shrugged, but I knew he cared. “If the door doesn’t open, it’s not your door,” he said.

“Even so,” my mother sympathized, patting him on the shoulder. “Come on, let’s take your mind off it with a film. Your pick.”

My father smiled despite himself and gave her a kiss on the cheek.

“I’m sorry, Daddy,” my sister said, and we both gave him a hug as well.

He smiled, and ruffled our hair. “Not to worry. When one door closes, another door opens.”

\*\*\*

Today I try to avoid doors.  
I don’t like opening doors.  
I don’t like shutting doors.  
I don’t like walking through doors.  
I don’t even like looking at doors.  
But I do think about them.  
A lot.

I think about doors when I turn down a job I do not want. Would that door have led to another open door? Should I have

**“Some doors are meant to be closed.”**

walked through the first door to get to the second? What if there was nothing through that door, and then it shut behind me and locked me in?

I think about doors when my children argue, seemingly for hours on end.

“Stop it!”

“No, you stop it!”

I imagine them stuck in a rotating door. How will they get out? What if they never get out? I worry about my children being stuck in a rotating door for all their life.

I think about doors when I hear gossip.

“Perhaps some things are better left unsaid,” I say. “Some doors are better left closed.”

\*\*\*

“Why are you so frightened of doors?” my grandmother asks me as we sit together.

“Because they are scary,” I reply simply.

“I am scared something will jump through one. I’m scared one will lock me in and I won’t be able to get out. I’m scared one will open to reveal something worse than the door itself.”

My grandmother nods.

I lean in. “But most of all, I am scared I’ll be stuck in a rotating door forever.”

My grandmother pulls me into a hug. “Maybe you should be scared,” she says, and I’m relieved that finally, someone understands. “Because... well...” She pauses. “Are you always scared?”

“Yes.”

“And have you been scared forever?”

“Yes.”

“And do you think you will be scared forever?”

“Yes.”

“My dear, I’m afraid you may be stuck in a rotating door already.”



# Doorway to the Past

Tvissha Pilani

*Constant neglect, degradation and pollution has led to our planet slowly dying. Nature is our most important asset and we have taken it for granted. Soon irreversible damage will be done and we won't be able to go back. However, right now there is still a tiny ray of hope. This is exactly what we artwork depicts, it shows that in a doorway filled with pollution and waste we can still go back. The keyhole shows what our planet used to be. The keyhole is the ray of hope, hope for a better future.*







# Bright Doorway with Spring Blossoms

Julianne Yang

*Omicron might mark the end of Covid-19's pandemic phase. All this will pass, we will be fine, if we take care of ourselves and others. We're here to support each other. As children we can lead to our capacity, so stay safe by adhering to the preventative measures. Each day will pass; we will walk together in love, no matter what comes our way. There's a doorway of the bright future waiting for all of us.*



# King Tut's Tomb

Kate Leetaru

“Details of the room emerged slowly from the mist... strange animals, statues, and gold – everywhere the glint of gold” (Howard Carter, upon discovering Pharaoh Tutankhamun’s tomb, November 26, 1922).

A dull whirl of noise echoed through the tomb, as bits of rock came clattering to the ground. There wasn’t any time to waste; King Tut’s successor of 2023 BCE demanded the tomb be completed, with any remembrance of the recently deceased king sealed away with it. The chiseling continued, execration curses grinded into the stone entryway. It was hoped these texts would prevent the unwanted from entering the tomb, yet ultimately, they failed to uphold their purpose.

When traveling through the doorway and into the antechamber, you would have found yourself in a pale, stone box, ceilings looming dangerously close overhead. Inside, the cramped chamber preserved daily objects the pharaoh required in his afterlife. Across the room laid scattered wheels of dismantled chariots, black-lined chests filled with pre-prepared foods, and tables sculpted into distinct animal figures, all equipped to serve Tutankhamen. Amongst the maze of doors, hid the annex, an even more cramped room storing furniture and larger items.

Taking a right out of the antechamber, away from the furnishings and necessities, was the burial chamber. Upon entering the room, an oil lamp would have flickered light onto the walls, scattering an uneven glare onto numerous

paintings stained onto the stone. The life-size portraits represented King Tut’s impending “life,” with vivid depictions of him in varying stages of the afterlife. Amongst the Pharaohs, stood a vibrant portrayal of Orisis, the Egyptian god of the afterlife, commonly known for his olive-green coloring. Between the rich colors of the walls, stood the young King’s sarcophagus, his body laid to rest within his three coffins.

Eventually, the burial would be sealed, the execration curses bared on the door, trusted to protect the deceased king and his possessions.

Yet, eventually, tragedy struck King Thutankomen’s tomb.

After King Tut’s death, there were possibly two grave robbers who managed to ransack the burial chamber, astonishingly few for a Pharaoh in the East Valley of Kings. Due to the lack of footprints beyond the corridor, they were likely caught, forced to leave the tomb and pay a heavy fee.

While he basked in his afterlife, civilization continued. The first ever Olympic games were held in Greece, the Aztec civilization rose and fell, the black death decimated Europe, the Taj Mahal was built in India, Isaac Newton explained the universal laws of motion and gravitation, and one world war just ended.

Almost 3500 years after King Tut had died, British archeologist Howard Carter and his team were working on finding a historic breakthrough they desperately needed, with just little time and budget left

1922 had marked the fifth year of failure in Carter’s fruitless exploration throughout the sandy planes of Egypt. Carter had to prove to his sponsor, British Lord Carnarvon, that his search wasn’t a waste of his time – and money. Ultimately, Lord Carnarvon settled with one more chance for Carter, just one more year

for a discovery.

In the end, Lord Carnarvon's gamble provided him with riches and a legacy that would be talked about for many years to come.

On November 4th, 1922, Carter and his team stumbled across the breakthrough they had been hoping for. They had found a piece of rock, possibly the leading step of a staircase. Three weeks later, they had cleared away the rubble and debris, which led the crew down a short stairway and to a door, the handles bound together with ancient rope. Engraved into the stone was an undeciphered text, one ultimately ignored by many. Following this door was yet another entrance. Lingered behind it was something everyone had hoped for, but no one had expected.

Whether it was fate, skill, or pure luck that led Carter and his crew to the long-isolated king, is not known. If Carter would have given up after his five years of misfortune, we wouldn't understand essential elements of the ancient Egyptian civilization today. His uncovering of the tomb changed not only his own life, but the lives of his team, scientists, and ultimately the entire world around him.

"Can you see anything?" Lord Carnarvon asked Carter, not able to bear the suspense.

Carter was unable to believe his eyes, let alone manage to get any words out. In the end, he could only produce an astounded mumble. "Yes," he answered, "wonderful things."

What Carter did not yet know, was that he was peering through an ancient doorway, that would eventually lead to one of the utmost preserved time capsules known to mankind.

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# Unlocked

*Annalise Huang*

paint peels off the wooden surface  
crumbles down the edges of scarred skin  
scratched with broken claws  
sealed with futile attempts  
of healing

my hand clasps around the door handle  
cold metal beneath my fingertips  
frigid and still  
as if no one has opened it  
for a lifetime

what could be inside?  
i knock lightly on the battered wood

silence

i stand fragile on my tip toes  
peering for a window

nothing

this time  
i neglect logic  
shove the door open  
ignoring the awful creaking  
as it opens for the first time  
in what must feel like forever

and something  
somewhere inside of me

drops

milky white snowflakes dot the twilight sky  
dappled lilac melting to a coppery bronze  
fading to an ashen black  
and each frosted spot gleaming determinedly  
refracting  
a million broken dreams  
on a pale  
blank  
canvas

how could such a shattered door  
such a cracking exterior  
hold a view so breathtaking  
so broken  
but so beautiful?

i want to stay here forever  
grasping the shooting stars in my hand  
feeling the gentle breeze beneath my fingertips  
but if i stay too long  
i know  
the door will close behind me  
and lock me  
trap me there  
forever

i leave the midnight sky  
close the door behind me  
turn the handle shut  
and lock it  
but in my heart  
i never let it go



because that's the funny thing  
about doors  
isn't it?

you never know what lies beyond  
until  
you dare  
to open it.

# *The World Out There*

*Guo Ru*

*Inspired by the great  
Belarusian artist Mark  
Chagall, The World Out  
There is a stained glass  
window design that conveys  
the theme of home  
encouraging one to explore  
the unknown world and  
providing support for success.*



# Beyond

## Alexis Kang

The doorway is dimly lit and dark.  
Dust floats around her like a miasma.

It is all she has ever known.

She idly traces her hands on the  
floor under her, dusty with stagnant air.

The soft sediment has settled  
around her, cementing her down. It  
swirls like dust clouds, deep and dark and  
defeating.

She wonders how she got here. She  
is happy to pretend to be ignorant.

She wonders what lies beyond, to  
take the brush and write her story in bold  
strokes of stark black instead of letting  
the ink bleed out.

She will always wonder. Her mind  
whirls like a hurricane of opaque dust  
and thoughts, obscuring the sun's heavy  
gaze.

She is safe in her thoughts.

Fear lives with her, in this house  
made of a doorway and a girl and a  
thousand judging gazes at her back. But  
the unknown lies behind the doorway  
and that is a demon worse than  
fear.

(Fear is predictable. Fear is a  
bearable pain, a thorn in her side. But the  
unknown lurks just beyond where she  
can see, waiting for her to make a  
mistake.)

She disturbs the dust with a  
thoughtful finger.

Why do we falter?

Why do we never walk through?

Why is she cursed to never know if  
she'll step onto solid ground or empty  
space?

The girl never walks through the  
doorways presented to her.

*The door's handle is worn from  
being opened, the result of years of being  
torn open with exhilaration and cautiously  
inched apart by careful hands. Thousands  
of fingertips have been on its surface. She  
has never touched it. She fears her dusty  
hands will dirty the beauty of purpose*

The girl is lonely. (She is alone,  
with dirt choking the "please, wait" on  
her tongue. She pretends that the rising  
fear is just the dust in her airways.)

*She is so tired of indecisiveness,  
with only the dust in the air to accompany  
her.*

Breathtakingly, searingly tired.  
She fears if her eyes close they will never  
reopen.

But there is nothing worth  
opening them for anyway.

*A girl--*

*A girl stands and watches--*

*A girl is alone at the doorway-*

*She does not move, but tears carve  
rivers into the stone of her face.*

*She is not brave enough to open the  
door.*

*She never has been enough.*

*Why, is what she wonders, and she  
is stuck between two choices.*

**"She does not move,  
but tears carve  
rivers into the stone  
of her face."**

She is too scared to make one.

The dust between her fingertips swirls into patterns in the dull light. They circle little puffs in the air, lazily flitting through the space like fireflies.

Her mind has quieted from the storm. The horizon shines in a clear dawn.

(She wishes for a person to depend on. She never needed one.)

There is no one left but herself.

*Her hands have never touched the doorway.*

Her own hands, upturned, stare up at her.

*A girl stands at the sill of a doorway. She is alone. She is enough, even if it is just for one person.*

*(She is enough for herself)*

*She turns the knob, and finally walks through.*

The doorway stands ajar and welcoming, a warm light streaming through. The dust has long floated away.



# *To Enter the Mind*

## *Maya Edwards*

*There are many different things that make up who someone is. There can be many doors that lead to one room, just like how there are many ways to learn who someone is. I tried to portray this in my art, in a surrealism type style, providing several "doors" leading inside of the girl. Showing there are many ways to try and understand the ins and outs of someone's mind.*



# Through the Doorway to Poetry's Hall

Guo Ru

O Poetry! My fair lady!  
You dress yourself in a million ways.  
Epics, haikus, sonnets, and nonets,  
You silence the nightingale with every phrase.

O Poetry! My dainty lady!  
You dance to your own feet and forms.  
With the changing meter, tempo and beat,  
You led me through the doorway to the Hall of  
Poems.

We sailed across the ancient Aegean Sea,  
And led by Homer to the epic Trojan wall.  
Eagle, armor, ships, fire and blood,  
We saw the gallant heroes' rise and fall.

We paused at Elizabethan Stratford-Upon-Avon.  
Acquainted we with Shakespeare in the town.  
Each time our bard did lift his magic quill,  
We saw a billion pearls of love poured down.

Then, we took a walk in an Eastern wood,  
With Matsuo Basho on a rainy afternoon.  
He opened our eyes to nature with no rhyme,  
By turning everything into flowers and the  
moon.

Soon, we came across the two diverging roads  
And took the one that was less traveled by,  
But Robert Frost did tell us with a sigh  
That the road not taken was also worth a try.

On the edge of the wood, there was a poison  
tree,  
Under which stood William Blake's foe.  
We snatched the apple from his hand,  
Before he knew from wrath this tree did grow.

Suddenly, we were attracted by a thistle field,  
And heard Robert Burns singing his nostalgic  
line,  
Which invited us tak a cup'o kindness  
For days of auld lang syne.

We drop by the Ducal Palace of Mantua,  
Monteverdi amazed us with boundless power.  
When Orfeo sang with his blessed lyre,  
Callous Pluto relented before an hour.

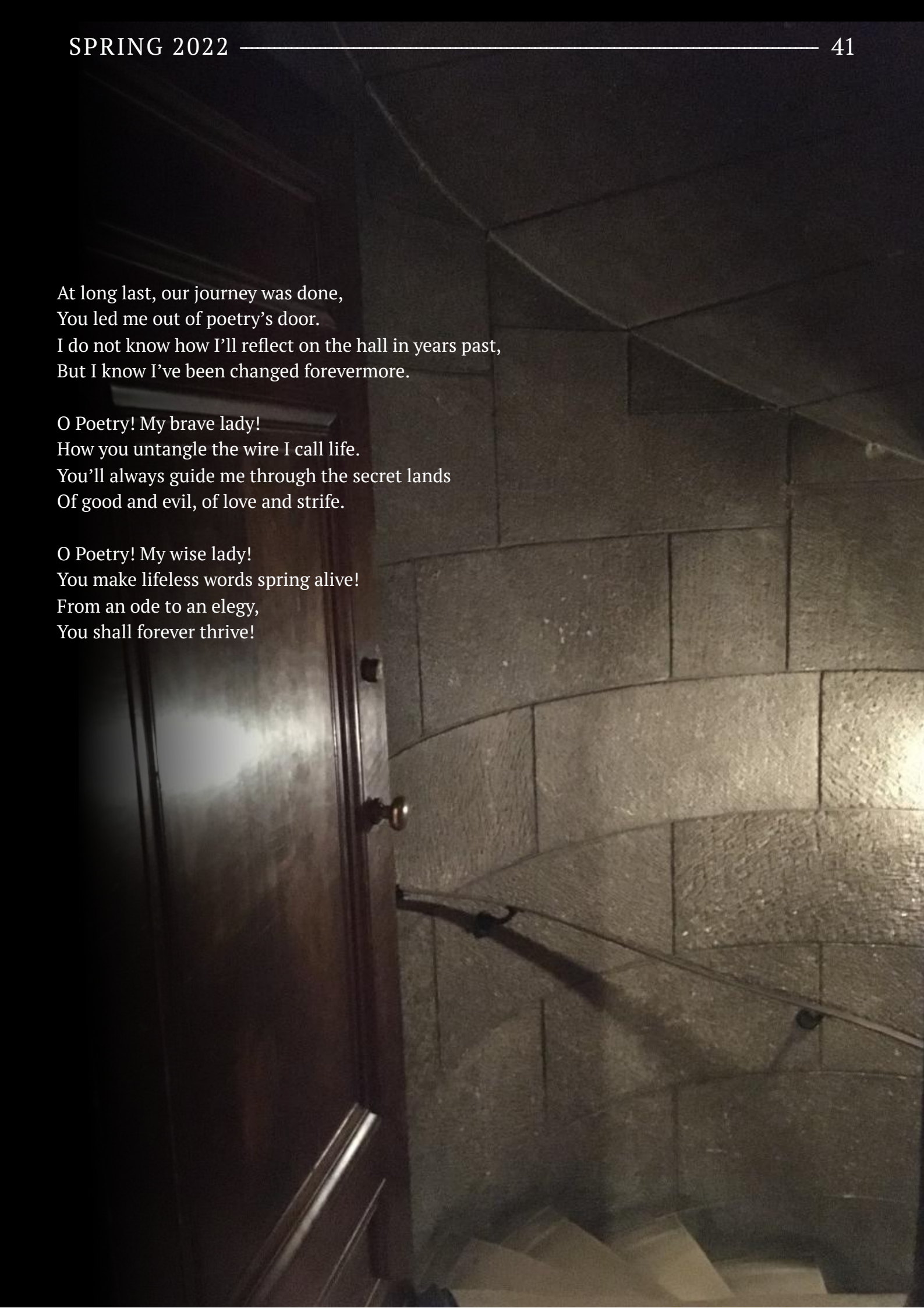
Curiously, we peeked into a gothic chamber,  
Where in the dark sat Edgar Allan Poe.  
with the Raven echoing "Nevermore,"  
He made us shiver with woe.

Escaping, we flew over the vales and hills,  
Where Wordsworth wandered lonely as a cloud.  
He cheered us up with the golden daffodils,  
And filled our hearts with the bliss of solitude.

Following Emily Dickinson's singing in the gale,  
We conquered the chilliest land in a storm.  
She defended us against the cold,  
And hope in its feathers did keep us warm.

With warmth, we entered the Harlem  
Renaissance,  
And condemned injustice without violent fights,  
Along with the darker brother, Langston Hughes,  
Who fueled our dreams of equal human rights.

Finally, we settled in the land of the free,  
Where we celebrated late into the night.  
We sang the "Song of Myself" with Whitman,  
And planned a new adventure in the moonlight.

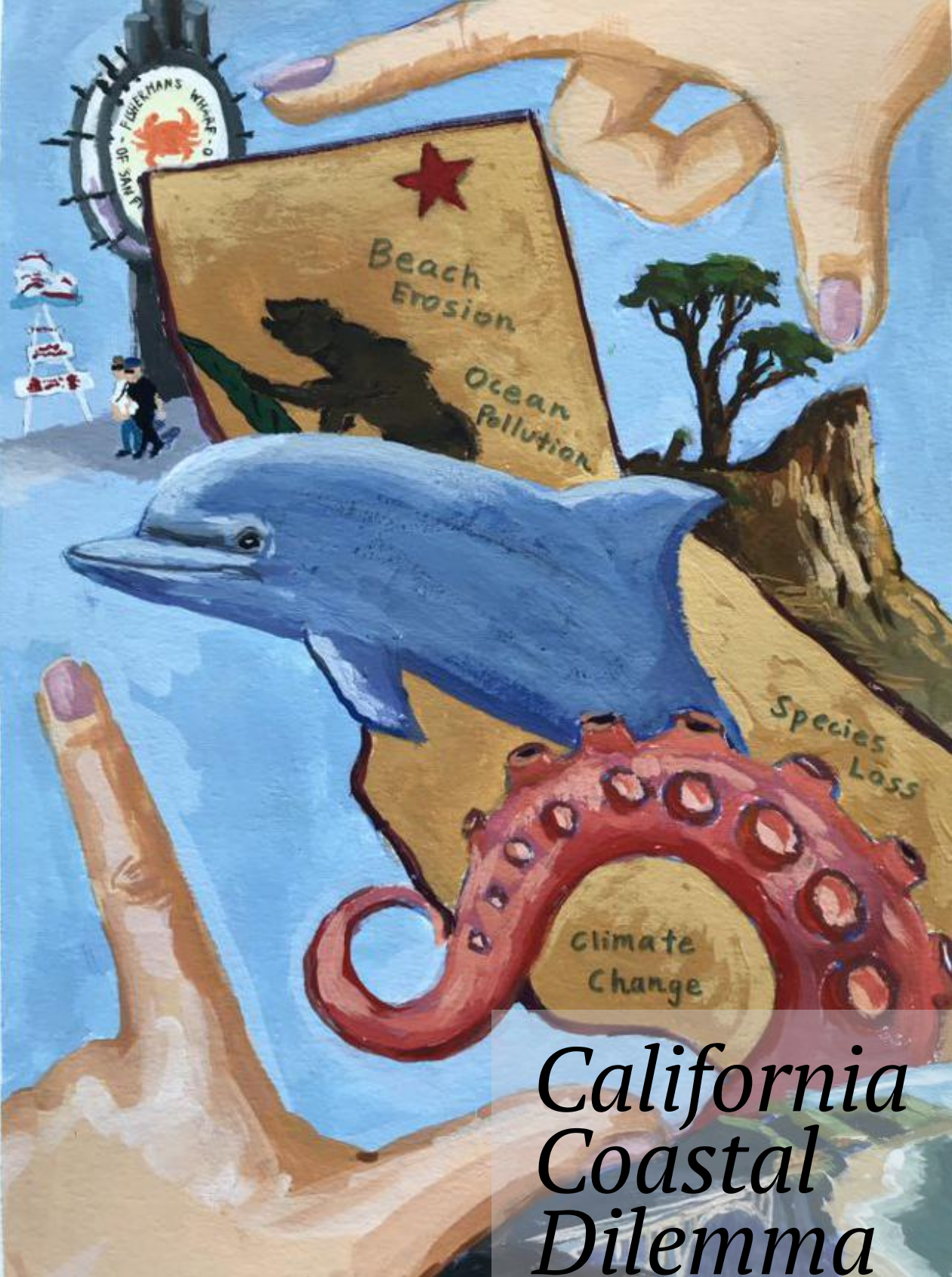


At long last, our journey was done,  
You led me out of poetry's door.  
I do not know how I'll reflect on the hall in years past,  
But I know I've been changed forevermore.

O Poetry! My brave lady!  
How you untangle the wire I call life.  
You'll always guide me through the secret lands  
Of good and evil, of love and strife.

O Poetry! My wise lady!  
You make lifeless words spring alive!  
From an ode to an elegy,  
You shall forever thrive!



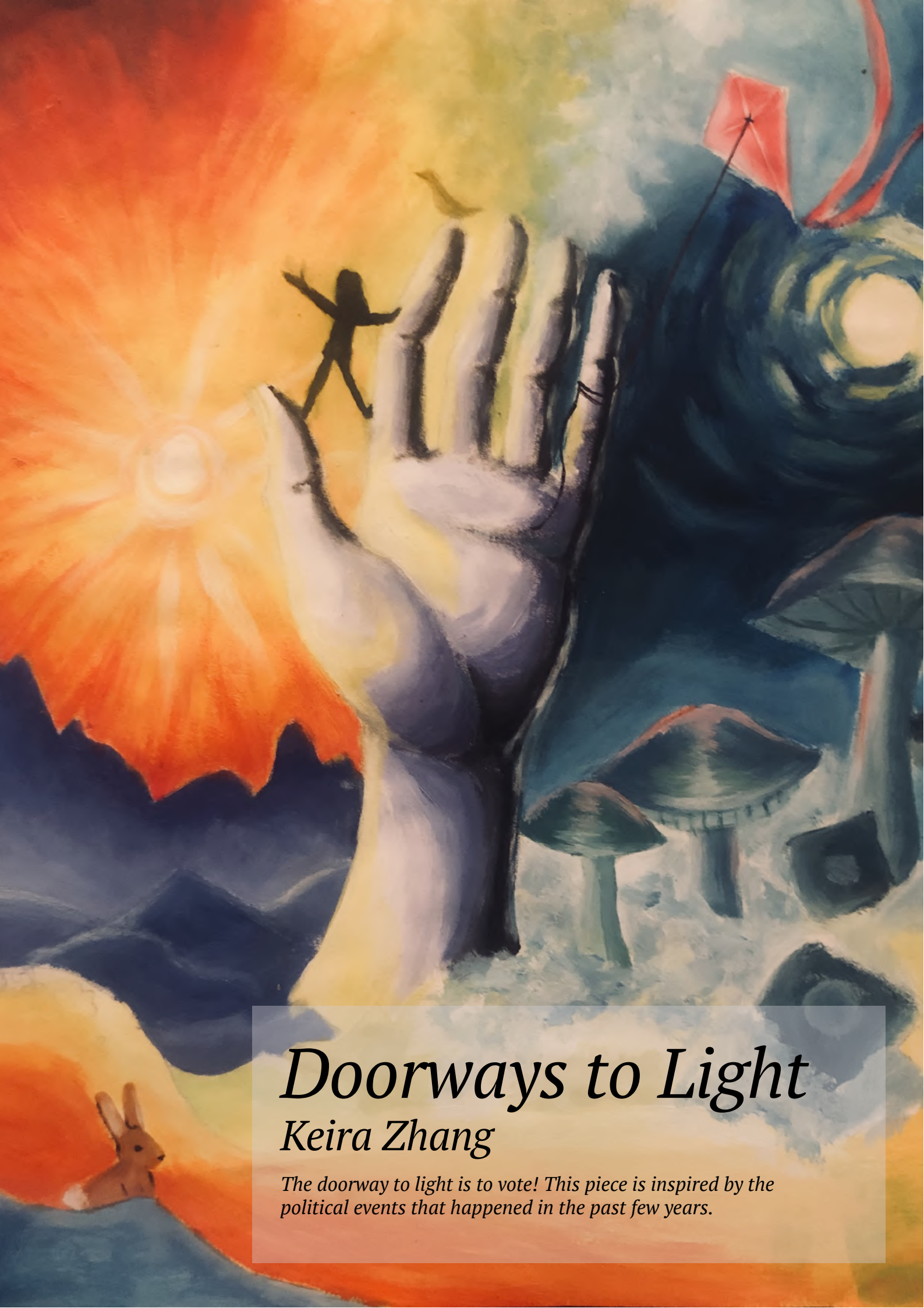


# California Coastal Dilemma

*Lucas Du*

*I live in California. One of California's specialties is their beautiful beaches. Unfortunately, California's coast is facing many problems, including beach erosion, ocean pollution, species loss, and climate change. My artwork is my inspiration to raise awareness for people to take immediate action on these problems. We need to continue preserving and strengthening California's coast and ocean for future generations.*





# *Doorways to Light*

*Keira Zhang*

*The doorway to light is to vote! This piece is inspired by the political events that happened in the past few years.*



# Watch

## Presley Kuo

The sky is overcast with grey nimbostratus, a gloomy blanket of Jupiter's apathy and a familiar adornment in the lives of people in the city. Tucked amidst the webwork of London, there lies a humble and unremarkable street by the name of Beech Avenue—a plain name for a plain road. Like all the other roads, Victorian-style buildings line the sides, each somehow greyer than the last. They all sport the same rain-streaked brick walls, rectangular windows, and black metal-rimmed balconies, making it near impossible to distinguish one building from another.

The black asphalt is slick, the last vestiges of the previous night's rainfall slipping away down iron-clad drains. Tourists only come to travel from one place to another, hovering over their devices in eager anticipation for the destination ahead. Some children might peek out the windows of their tour bus, but they always turn away in disappointment after some time.

Residents of the avenue hustle to and fro, eager to flee before the impending storm, bunching up on the sides in hopes of sheltering under the fletching wings of overhangs. It's quiet in the mornings, the chronic rumble of traffic serving as a muted accompaniment to the dull play of these citizens.



In house 315, the only adornment is a small picture on the bedside table. Crowned with a frame of black plastic, a little girl laughs at the camera. Her bright smile lights up the bare bedroom, casting her golden light over the dimly-lit space. A hand brushes over the glass cover with a cloth, wiping off imperceptible specks of dust. Outside, smooth grey steps lead down to the sidewalk, shot through with cracks that no one has bothered to repair.

A man emerges from the house, shutting the door with a click before descending down the stairs. Black loafers tread carefully on the concrete, wary of slipping before the day had even begun. The man is dressed in grey, like his peers—a slate grey coat, ash grey scarf, smoky grey tie, and a freshly-pressed, silver-grey collared shirt—typical attire for a

**"The man walks slowly, each step pronounced and weighted."**





morning at work. He blends in with the crowd of office workers; his features are plain and unmemorable, and his height is average.

It is the keen mind, however, that can pick out his curious gait. The man walks slowly, each step pronounced and weighted. There is a strange gravity about him, in the way his coat is tightly buttoned, but his scarf lays askew. In the way that his apathetic gaze rests on the path before him, the faint markings of dark circles beginning to form under them.

Another thing sets him apart—his empty hands. Around him, people shuffle off with briefcases, files, or purses in hand. One man carries a bouquet, and another wrestles with an overstuffed case, but this man carries nothing but a set of invisible weights.

At the bus stop, the crowd disperses as they board. The man stops, making no move to take a seat or enter the vehicle. People taking the next bus huddle by the benches, anxiously checking the time or watching the skies for signs of more rain. The more sensible ones carry umbrellas.

One by one, the people depart, casting not a glance at the man in grey, watching as bus after bus passes him by.

Back at house 315, the walls are bare, and silence hangs over the rooms. The kitchen counter is clean and empty save for one sheet of paper that lay abandoned. In large, bold font, its title reads: JOB LAYOFF.

Rain-streaked brick and black metal balconies line the streets, dominoes just waiting to be knocked down by a giant's hand. As the remaining pedestrians shuffle onto their rides and duck under cover, the suffocating stillness of apathy breaks. The man looks up as the heavens begin to cry. Rain falls from the sky, a light shower dusting the old street in sparkling dew.

*Plink.*

*Plink.*

*Plink.*





*Midnight  
Dreams*  
Hailey Q. Yap



# Fisherman: 2068

*Andrea Dao*

The snow fell outside of his window upon the neon-lit skyscrapers. Slowly, as if time were to stop. He wasn't one for snow. It looked too familiar. Like a reminder of a dream he desperately wanted to forget. His phone's holographic screen radiated a dim, blue light, saying that it was *2069, December 15th, 12:18 am*. It cast a shadow upon his face, pale like a ghost, for it hadn't seen sun in a while.

The light drew out the curve of his jawline, the tip of his nose and cheeks that now looked so gaunt. The apartment was cold and the transparent desktop screen with lines and lines of never-ending assignments made him lose interest. How long would he have to sit here doing homework? He didn't know. All he knew was that his eyes had to stay here. Right here. Or else tomorrow would be busier. Maybe it was better that way, better that he was so busy his mind was blank. Was what he often thought. But for whatever reason, it didn't matter anymore.

The boy couldn't remember if today was Monday, Tuesday, or Friday. And he would have cared less. The calendars made him inexplicably angry for no reason, and the hair that grew to poke the nape of his neck was his preferred way of knowing time

had passed.

His eyes would often dart to the corner of the room, a fishing rod resting upon his windowsill, alongside dying cactuses smothered in dust. Through the rumbles of the city outside his window, the pitter-pattering of the snow-turned to rainfall reminded him of a day when he was with his friend. Laughing on the street with crowds of people during this time of year.

He recalled a time when he saw his friend with chocolate brown eyes and dark skin somewhere on the sidewalks down below. He was wearing that stupid red beanie that made your eyes hurt and a thousand-watt grin that never disappeared from your memory.

"You wanna be a what?"

"A fisherman," the boy remembered replying. His tone sounded too confident then, audacious even.

"It's 2068. The robots are fishing now," the red beanie had muttered, sticking out a single arm while mimicking the stiff motions of an AI.

"I guess you're right."

"I wanna be a chef."

"Really?"

"Yeah, but the robots are doing that too," he answered weakly.

He could recall their unanimous sighing. The small glint of childish ambition in the reflections of their eyes. It was something that he replayed in his mind, over and over, because he was the only one alive to remember it. The only one that could validate its existence somewhere in the past. His pale hands met the air behind his holographic phone screen, a finger

*My art is a doorway into my mind. I gravitate towards surrealistic graphite drawings, taking inspiration from artists like Mark Justiniani and Aykut Aydoğdu. "Midnight Dreams" takes inspiration from a book by Matt Haig. In my piece, the bubbles around the girl represent the outcomes of different life choices. The airplanes represent the unpredictability and wonder of life—it shows how fate can take you to unexpected places. This piece makes me remember that life isn't simple. Life is full of regrets, and that's perfectly fine. Sometimes, all you can do is go with the flow.*

going through two kids making ridiculous faces in a photo. It wasn't magic. He could ever go back to how things used to be. Not after that day.

He could recall school almost a year ago, 2068. The two sat slouched at their desks, enjoying the haze of the afternoon sunlight and the tranquil sounds of the birds still alive and singing.

"You and me, we're going to open a restaurant on the beach," the boy in the red beanie said, fingers drawing out an invisible blueprint.

"Yeah, and we'll have a counter where the customers will eat," he answered, grinning to himself thinking about how there'd be a bell at the door so you'd hear people walking in.

"I'll cook the fish, and you'll catch them."

"Yup, and we'll also have an apartment above the restaurant with two rooms and a kitchen where we'll have pancakes for breakfast."

"With extra syrup," the beanie laughed.

"With extra syrup," he repeated.

Sometimes he'd make his way down to the beach they used to walk on. What used to be a somewhat clean, sandy beach was now a junkyard strewn with scrap metal and dismembered robots. He'd sit in the remaining sand, feet buried into the cold grain to think.

*You and me.* He kept thinking. Thinking about the way they were different from the other kids who had dreams of doing practically nothing. And if he was being blunt: those weren't even dreams.

"Y'know, the both of us," the red beanie would've begun, "we actually have cool dreams."

"Yeah," he'd giggle back, "you and me." Smiling like an idiot who didn't

know what was coming.

He was often told stories of ghosts who hovered over the water in search of a new life somewhere across the ocean. The boy had the urge to call out to the pitch-black waves, scream, shout something, anything. He did it in hopes that maybe on the other side of the sea, in another life, that the red-beanie would yell back. Call out his name and ramble about their little restaurant on the beach like he used to. Like he would've had life been a perfect fairytale.

The sirens went off one day in December, the shots of a rapid-fire gun in the hallways. In a world where kids who looked like him were no different from robots, did a door really exist for them? For him? Their tiny mechanical hearts beat for a life wasted on things they were told would make them happy. They didn't have what he did. His summers spent daydreaming about the beach, the afternoons he'd soon spend fishing, and the mornings with pancakes drowned in syrup. He could recall when a robot, its voice a metallic melody, told him the news.

He'd stood face to face with it in the school office one morning, the air conditioning leaving chills throughout his body. There was no forewarning, no comfort, nothing. Just the sounds of a resounding gunshot, memories that hit like speeding bullets, and the ominous silence of the birds.

And now, as he sat slouched in front of his desk thinking about the past, he knew was no better than the kids he used to scorn.

Sometimes he'd scroll back to look at the message on his phone, glowing in its dim blue.

*If anything happens, open that restaurant without me.*





# *End the Violence*

*Lucas Du*

*Society faces many actions of violence and racism every day. It is escalating very quickly. We have to fully stop the malicious intent of humans and spread the word to everyone.*

*This issue is important to me because I don't want anyone to get hurt. I feel depressed to see that more people are suffering from the violence and racism. Old people are getting pushed and shoved off the streets. No one should experience this. We need to spread the word so that more people will get involved to terminate violence once and for all. My work represents the social issue of violence and racism from the streets and the people trying to cease this criminal behavior.*

# Danger:

# Beware of Cat

## Elliot Karyo

The doorway stared him down.

It was a choice.

It was a reality.

A glow hummed, bright and sour, making him blink, before deepening into a soft golden glow.

The handle was in reach. But would he reach out to turn it?

He never quite understood the concept of leaving. Perhaps after he left it would improve. Perhaps then he should want to return.

He had no way of knowing if the doorway could be used from both sides.

Around him, dark green trees deepened, blurring together in a soft call against the blaring light of the door.

The door.

Why was the door so bright?

The dangling vines surrounding him were ropes to grab should he fall off this ledge of possibilities. Ropes to stabilize him. But could the ropes follow him through the door?

He had spoken to his family before departing.

He'd spoken with his older sister at midnight.

Years ago, she chose to stay, her wife beside her.

A respectable choice.

Common.

There must be someone left to use the door for it to be of any purpose.

No one ever crossed back. No one knew if it was possible.

Perhaps they forgot.

He'd spoken to his father.

His father was stubborn in his choice.

His mother had left already, leaving memories like fireflies lit by the harsh glow of the door.

If he went through, would he remember? He was young when she chose.

The family cat was still by his feet, weaving between his legs like a snake. Would there be snakes on the other side? He couldn't imagine a world without snakes. He couldn't imagine a world without anything he knew.

He couldn't imagine a world without a door.

Would a door wait on the other side?

The door's harsh glare intensified, but he gazed at it fondly now, ignoring its attempts to scare him off.

He had made many goodbyes to his friends over the years. It was difficult at first. Wistful. Sharing memories around the bonfire built on the little cove their parents warned them away from. There was a door there, too. He wouldn't take that one. It seemed nice enough, but the cat wouldn't approach it. She desperately despised water. If he were to leave, he'd hope to have someone walk the path alongside him. And the cat was as good a companion as any, if not a little needy. Her old collar marked her as independent. He had half a mind she put it there herself.

She was always a rather prideful feline.

The cove's door was therefore out. He'd seen many of his friends travel through it. Like the doodles and memories on the beach, they vanished with the tide and without second thoughts.

Yet he wasn't the only one to deny that door. Others went to the mountains. There were those who felt a calling to trickling rivers, and even those who took the simplest exit: behind the ancient statue



in the town square.

Still, as the years went on, and he failed to leave time and time again, the gatherings became awkward, rushed.

Skeptical.

He understood it. Most of the time he didn't believe in himself. It was only fair that his friends would wish to get the painful - though now more so painfully tedious - task over with. To return to their lives, the lives they chose.

While he continued pacing at the crossroads.

At the door.

He had given up on leaving as the months wore on. Why leave this place he knew, this place who had done him no great wrong?

He still called the gatherings. For the attention he supposed. They were all too busy for him otherwise. To gather and revel like before.

This time was real, though.

He had said goodbye to his sister, to his father.

He had packed a few of his belongings, as he only did in the very beginning.

He had brought the cat.

The cat would kill him if this trek was for nothing. She wasn't much for unnecessary exercise.

The door continued humming, as if a swarm of hummingbirds were poised to swarm him once he opened the door. Perhaps he shouldn't open it. It could be dangerous.

It could be more dangerous than the cat.

The cat hissed at him, as if she could read his thoughts. The cat clearly believed him pathetic. She had no right to.

She was terrified of mice.

When the butterfly came, he snapped at it, telling it off for its mockery aimed towards him as it leisurely fluttered through

the door. It acted full of itself, as if the choice was easy. It was not. Perhaps he could just make a life for himself in the jungle.

The cat though – her obsession with flying creatures stemmed from her secret longing to fly – decided to chase after it, bounding through the gateway to the other side.

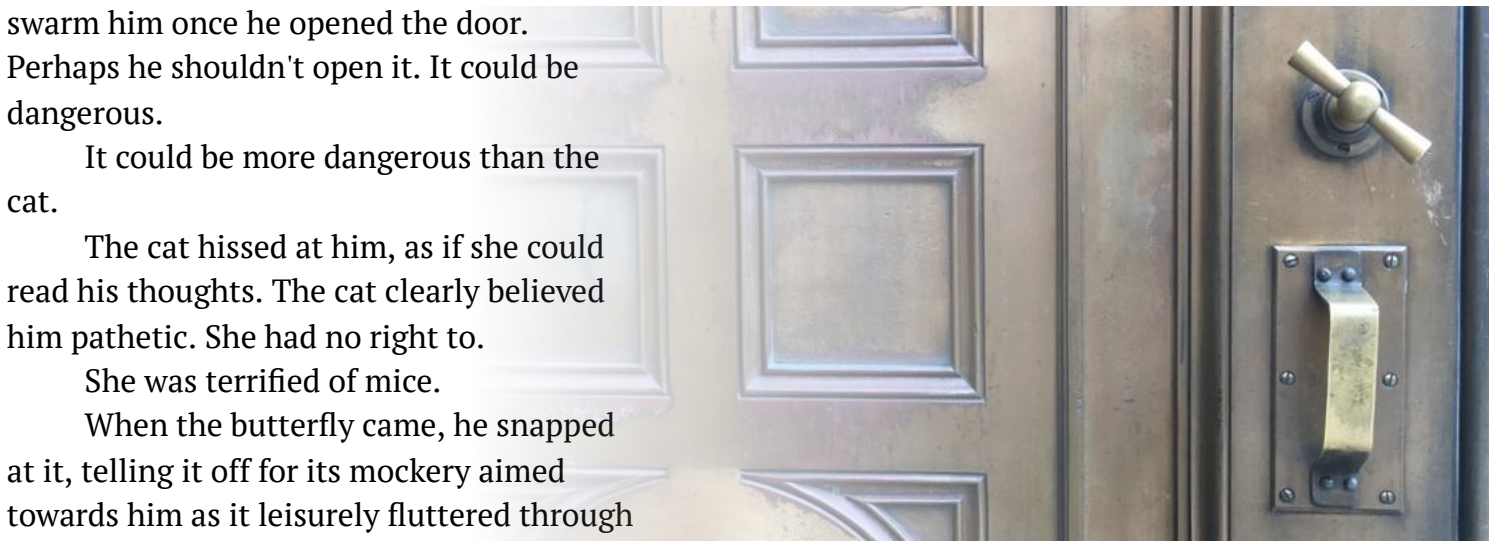
It was one thing to mock him – he was used to the teasing from the younger children in the village – but to take his companion, his prized cat? To steal who would accompany him in this new life he'd dug for himself in the jungle? This just added injury to the insult.

He made up his mind with a scowl set in determination for revenge. He would go through, he would take his cat, and he would come back. Perhaps he'd even take a look around, stomping on a few butterflies. There would be no harm in that.

He needed a head start. This meant he had to back up far – very far – and sprint towards the door full speed. As he barreled past the fifth vine, his breath caught. What if he had made the wrong decision? He halted, promptly snagging his foot on a tree root and stumbled, fell, and rolled through the door.

And onto his cat.

She would be miffed.



# It's Not Over

## Laurel Aronian

I've been playing chess for YEARS, but it was a tournament a few months ago in Albany, NY, that taught me an important lesson. It was a large tournament with about five hundred people, and throughout it, I played six games, each lasting over two hours.

While milling around in the conference room hallway, waiting for my last round to start, my mom and I met a man named Vladislav, whose son was also playing the tourney. My mom is very extroverted, so she immediately lassoed Vlad into a conversation.

**“Let’s start over/I’ll try to do it right this time around/It’s not over.”**

Vlad mentioned that his older daughter had progressed quickly with chess and become a highly advanced player but dropped the game entirely after a challenging tournament.

Vlad turned to me and said, “When are you planning on quitting chess?”

I shrugged. “I’m not planning on it.”

I didn’t have time to wonder whether his words affected me because my next round had started. If I won this game, I would win my section.

I sat down at my board and found

myself, a high school freshman, facing a boy around the same age. The game was intense from the start. I played the Alapin response to his Sicilian, which generally results in two strong queenside pawns. However, he was a strong player, persistently preventing the progression of my pawns. After about an hour and a half of painstaking attempts to convert the game in my favor, I saw a brilliant tactic that would allow me to exchange, get out of danger, and potentially queen.

I eventually had to trade my two strong pawns for his in the endgame, but my efforts had granted me a passed pawn on the “B” file. It was a clear win, and then, with a minute on the clock, the boy threw in a benign check. I moved my king one square down, then realized with a jolt that it was the wrong square: my pawn was hanging. My face grew hot, my palms began to sweat, and I felt sick. With a quizzical look, he moved his king forward and captured my pawn.

I was done; I had thrown away my chance of winning the Tournament with one brainless blunder. I could see Vladislav standing on the side of the playing hall, watching my game. He turned away and left the hall. I was at the point of forfeiting when a completely absurd song entered my head.

Generally, songs and phrases drift in and out of my mind during chess tournaments. It’s a sort of “color” my brain adds into the picture, keeping me engaged during the black and white of the game. At this moment, the song playing in my head was “It’s Not Over” by Daughtry.

“Let’s start over/I’ll try to do it right this time around/It’s not over.” I could hear





the band in my head. The lyrics fed my hope. I was losing, true, but this boy had his own time pressure; maybe he would make a mistake.

I tried to direct the boy's attention to his vulnerable passed pawn by attacking it with my rook. He retaliated by bringing his rook alongside his piece, defending it. Quickly, I moved my king over to join the fight, and he followed suit to protect his passer. His central pawns, blocking my own, were no longer protected by his rook or king. I swiftly moved my rook behind his central pawns, and he had no adequate defense. I captured the two pawns, leaving my own free to queen. The game was over. He resigned.

Outside the tournament hall, I found my mom and Vlad. "I won!" I said, "I'm going to go mark my result."

My mom walked with me over to the wall chart. "Vladislav said you were losing. He was giving commentary the whole time: 'She's winning! She's losing! One of them is going to come out crying from this four-hour game. Ahhh, she was winning, then she blundered; she's going to need a lot of tissues.'" My mom looked at me. "How did you do it?"

I shrugged. "I didn't resign."

Coincidentally, on the way back from Albany, "It's Not Over" by Daughtry came on the radio. Vlad thought that a single disadvantage could determine the result, that a single slip-up could even end a chess career. Perhaps that was his experience. Yet, in my view, he was wrong, absolutely wrong. In chess, to win is to know: the game isn't over until it's *truly* over.





# Naag: Conquering Fear

Rishi Nair

*Naag in Hindi means "cobra." This oil painting was inspired by Vava Suresh, an Indian wildlife conservationist, and snake expert. He is known for saving snakes that stray into human-inhabited areas in Kerala, India. The painting depicts the fearless Vava Suresh walking through the "doorway" of the cobra's mouth. Vava Suresh is famous for his rescue and release of endangered snake species, and for raising awareness of snakes. He has captured and rescued more than 30,000 snakes and is often referred to as "Kerala's Steve Irwin."*



# Attic Hunting

*Luke Zhang*

There was something that I had feared and yet wished for years to do. The opportunity came with a squirrel footling around on the roof. We had a sneaking suspicion that it might be chewing holes into the side of the roof to access the attic. Drone surveillance around the roof yielded inconclusive evidence, leaving us with only one choice.

Turning the doorknob, I slowly nudged the bedroom door open. Waiting for me grimly was my mother, the commander of the whole operation, with my tools and hazard suit. I had one objective: Infiltrate the attic, explore and search for signs of life (squirrels), and escape, preferably alive.

In my rubber boots, dust mask and plastic poncho, I looked like I was going to hunt down a radioactive sludge monster. In retrospect, this wasn't far from the truth.

I slowly stepped into the closet and looked up towards the ceiling-mounted trapdoor. A single, round lightbulb hung from the ceiling above my head, casting shadows among the shelves lining the closet. Even the shadows seemed to lean away from the trapdoor, as if terrified of what might lie beyond. The shining steel ladder towered over me, daring me to climb up and see what lay above.

*Suck it up! The attic isn't gonna explore itself,* I told myself.

I mounted the ladder and slowly began my ascension, my heart thumping like a caged animal. Finally, reaching the final rung, I inhaled deeply, placed my palm on the blank, handle-less trapdoor and

forced it open. Squeezing through the opening that would only allow a small child to pass, I rose into the attic and into stuffy, oppressive darkness.

Drawing myself to my feet on the insulation-covered floor, I clicked on my flashlight. Taking a deep breath of the sweltering, dry air, I gazed around the empty, arid wasteland that was the attic. Powdery, knee-deep insulation powder concealed the floors, brown dust swirling through the air, and blackness so thick it swallowed up the beam of my flashlight like a fog.

I took an unsteady step and almost fell. I was standing on a wooden rafter which was concealed by insulation. A misstep onto the plaster on either side could break a hole in the ceiling. Fiddling nervously with my flashlight, I carefully tiptoed deeper into the darkness.

I checked left and right. I watched for anything that might signify squirrel habitation, like a den, droppings, or nuts, but there was only me, the dust, and the darkness. The insulation filled the air with a stuffy warmth that thickened it into chunks. It was a struggle to draw it into my lungs, and disturbed dust littered the air like fallout.

Then, my eye caught something. Nearly jumping off my rafter, I shone the light at it. It was a dusty, greyish colour and was lying quite flat on the floor. I crept towards the object carefully, but it still defied any attempt at identification. Was it a squirrel corpse?

I sniffed at the air through my mask, trying to ascertain the smell of rotting flesh. Not detecting anything, I inched forwards. I was just close enough to touch it, but I hesitated. What would I do if it was a corpse, or if it was still alive? A faint shout rose from the still-open trapdoor, and a sense of duty jolted me back to the present. My mother, the commander, probably heard

me jump back, but I was too far away to shout a coherent answer. *Just touch it!*

I pulled myself together and nudged the object with my foot. It didn't move. With my heart in my throat, I picked it up. It felt crackly, like old paper. Then I realised it *was* paper. It had long since faded, but the oblong ball of newspaper still had text on it.

Looking more closely at the walls, I noticed that there wasn't a single hole for a squirrel to enter. If there had been, I would have seen the light from outside. Another inquiring call echoed through the cave-like crawl space, which began to look a lot less sinister. Glowing inside, I grinned and turned around, headed for the trapdoor.

# History

Arianna  
Rahmathulla

we hold it in our hands, mold it  
holy and sacred, shapeless  
sketched across a scorching dawn  
balanced upon the tip of a tongue,  
words spilling from lips, pens,  
ink dipped and sharp like blades  
thrust through the bloody depths  
of history,

cast in glow and shadow alike  
upon papyrus and parchment and  
printer paper  
marked by hands kneading, fighting,  
writing, driven into air fisted,  
grappling to hold on to another  
through struggle and strife

forged by voices vying to be heard,  
vociferous and stretched by strain,  
screaming and fighting against  
constraints and cruelty  
preserving culture and forcing heritage  
to be forgotten, wavering  
against the harsh current of time

oh history,  
how we held you in our hands  
caressed you and shoved you aside  
scorned you and rewrote you and  
renamed you all anew  
searching for answers, redemption,  
reality,  
molded you into the shape of  
industry and artillery and artistry,  
alabaster sculptures, carvings,  
stories whispered,  
lit by fire and candle,  
oil lamp and lightbulb

our hands and voices  
framing a doorway,  
from past to future  
to preserve and forget  
but to weather the trials of time  
nonetheless

oh history,  
you are ours



# Escape

*Chelsea Guo*

<p>She stands with tears blurring her eyes,          She stumbles and sinks          from the heavy weight          and from the decay          She cannot fit anymore          can't smile anymore if          the candle that lights          her joy is extinguished          She plunges, dives, flies          wishing on stars that          she'll have the courage          pursue infinite dreams          In the cruel confines          in her mind, she is          looking, searching for          a solid clear pathway          to steady, support her          in the churning tides          Oh! She is digging for          an open doorway,          An open doorway to lead her out of the fear of voices and constraints of dreams.</p>	<p>jiggling the locked knob,          and begs to be set free,          of scary expectations,          of wilting dreams.          in the boxes of society,          she is shriveling inside.          her spirit, her heart,          trampled by whispers.          in fantastical worlds,          she'll break free of rules,          cross echoing chasms,          to but really she's ensnared,          of her tears and sorrow.          grasping for a beacon,          a piece of driftwood,          of stone, glass, anything          in the ocean she swims,          in the icy, crushing waves.          an escape, an exit, a path          out of the darkness.</p>
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*Note from the editors: "Twin cinema" is a poetic form indigenous to Singapore. The twin cinema poem features two columns of text; each column is a standalone poem. However, when one reads the lines continuously, across the white space that separates the columns, a new meaning arises. This combining of columns produces a third poem, with more nuance and complexity than either of the columns alone.*



# *Path to Pistil*

*Alexa Zhang*

*I was into microphotography a little bit and took quite some flower photos. In this photo, I imagined myself from an ant's eye, that it was following the path into the very inside of the flower pedal: the pistil and stamen.*



# The Silk Road: The Doorways of Eurasian Civilizations

*Atticus Wei*

A doorway doesn't have to be a door. It can be a route of cultural exchanges by which civilizations are made. The Silk Road stands out in history as one such doorway, which consisted of the network of highways that connected the east and west ends of the Eurasian landmass, stretching for over 4,000 miles, from China, Korea, and Japan, through central Asia, India, Mesopotamia, the Middle East, to Europe. Over the past two millennia, merchants, soldiers, priests, musicians, and artisans have traveled through these intercontinental routes, transporting goods, religions, music, ideas, and technologies. The Silk Road has profoundly shaped the contours of Eurasian civilizations.

Despite the name, silk was not the only good traded on these routes. East Asian porcelain, tea, rice wine, paintings, furniture, jade artifacts, and other products traveled along the Silk Road were highly prized by the Westerners. In fact, these routes had never been called "the Silk Road" until the 19th century when German scholars coined the phrase. Nevertheless, silk has remained one of the major commodities traded on the routes.

Since 2,000 B.C., the Chinese have monopolized the silk industry. Silk is made from the *Bombyx Mori*, a silkworm that only

thrives in the Chinese habitat. It feeds on mulberry leaves only, and it takes months for these worms to mature into cocoons. A special technology is needed to exact the silk thread from the cocoons. The silk thread is then turned into silk fabric with sophisticated machines and dyed with beautiful colors. A strong fabric, silk cloth can be used to make clothing, curtains, flags, and even sails that last for decades. As a marker of social status, silk products have been highly sought after in Eurasian civilizations beyond China.

While silk traveled westwards, new crops, new technologies, and new ideas have been imported into East Asia as well. For instance, the Chinese learned the technology of horse chariot from Central Asia, which revolutionized the ways of warfare during the Shang dynasty (1600-1046 B.C.). Wheat was introduced to China from West Asia and rapidly became the dominant crop in northern China during the Han Empire (202 B.C.-220 A.D.). The Chinese also learned how to grow cotton from the Central Asians, and it permanently changed the East Asian textile industry. New breeds of war horse and cattle were also brought to China through the doorway, allowing the Han Empire to build a cavalry to defeat the nomadic peoples outside the Great Wall. Glassware, rare metals, sugar, spices, and medicine from the West became popular in East Asia, enriching the everyday life of ordinary people. Various religions found new converts along the doorway. Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Nestorianism, and Buddhism thrived in the vast area between the Roman Empire and Japan, leaving numerous monuments, relics, and sacred cities admired by people today. For example, Buddhism, a native Indian religion, was spread to China through today's Afghanistan during the 2nd century AD. From there the new religion was further promulgated to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, reshaping the cultural landscape of these

societies. When tourists appreciate a gorgeous Buddhist pagoda in Kyoto, Japan, they should remember that it used to be a “foreign” religion that arrived through the Silk Road.

The West has been reshaped by this doorway. Even before Marco Polo’s era, the Orient was a source of cultural inspirations and the imagined land of wealth. New knowledge, lifestyles, and technologies imported from the East have greatly changed what is known as “the West.” One of such imports was gunpowder. Before the era of gunpowder, Europe was a feudal society, where wars were waged with swords and armor. The advent of firearms in 12th century China changed the way of war forever. The firearms brought to the West through the Mongolian expeditions during the 13th century destroyed medieval castles in Europe, leading to the downfall of Feudalism. The use of firearms allowed monarchies in England and France to unify their countries with absolutist governments, laying the foundation for modern nation-states. Without guns and cannons, the Spanish, the English, and the French would not have been able to establish their colonial empires in the modern era.

The Silk Road is a product of a geographical advantage that Eurasian civilizations had. In his book *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, Dr. Jared Diamond points out that Eurasian societies share the same

**"A doorway doesn't have to be a door. It can be a route of cultural exchanges by which civilizations are made."**

latitude and seasonal climate, which allows rapid transmission of technologies and cultures between the East and the West. The American continents, by contrast, spread over different longitudes, making it difficult to travel between civilizations. Even when diseases like the Black Plague were brought to Europe from Asia, the contact with new germs eventually led to the development of immunity among local populations and more advanced medical technology—an advantage other continents are short of.

Located at the heart of Eurasia, the Silk Road has been the artery of this landmass, constantly pumping new blood to its variety of civilizations. Central to this doorway is the open-mindedness that welcomes economic exchanges, technological innovations, and cultural diversity. No civilization could thrive without learning from one another. It is mutual cultural exchanges through the doorways like the Silk Road that created great civilizations in human history.

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# *Doorways through Time*

*Khoi M. Bui*

*This was in our photo album of a rainy day at the Natural Museum of Science in DTLA with Grandpa. When you pause or take a snap shot in time, you can see life moments in front of you. These are doorways into the present and the passage of time from the past. Reflection on your day off leads to insights of time.*

# Heirloom

Anya M.

You once asked me if I thought the world was too big, Grandma.  
Over the phone,  
the metallic echoes almost as gray as your hair  
and the color of the sky trapped  
in the window behind you.  
Sure, you meant our country,  
but our country's the world to you.  
I said,  
I didn't know if the world or America was too big,  
because I'd never seen it all,  
and the world to me was this faraway island with the  
waves that I don't go to see  
eating up all the coasts,  
sinking us in years and salt water.

*But I can't find us together on a map.*

You once showed me your collection of jars,  
tiny painted things with delicate hinges of gold.  
I thought they were porcelain,  
at first.  
*They don't make these like this anymore, you told me*  
while I  
ran my fingertips over the  
wonderland on your dresser.

*I wish there wasn't anything cruel in  
thousands of miles of distance.*

The last time I visited you, Grandma,  
I was older and so were you and  
those same jars  
felt like a graveyard,  
the death of your mother clinging to the bone-white,  
lonely in the creases of your hands.  
Heirloom just meant haunted  
as you  
made me choose the jar I liked best,  
a sliver of my childhood overwritten,  
one piece missing from wonderland.



And in that crushing room you  
gifted me the pale, shivering creature of your mortality,  
huddled in the not-porcelain.  
You said,  
one day I would get them all  
—after you were gone.

*Tell me,  
is this  
lack of wanting  
selfish?*

So I  
picked up the one wrapped in  
a loosened map of  
everything I know and don't,  
pressed the pad of my thumb  
over borderless America and  
engulfed it entirely,  
willed my hands to stop  
shuddering because I am no Atlas and the  
intricate compass pointed nowhere—  
beautiful and useless on the lid.  
Continents were more ideas of continents,  
sea monsters and ships floated and sank in the  
ocean that I should visit more  
before I  
die and press my little graveyard wonderland  
into the cold fingers of my daughter,  
fold them closed over gentle ghosts and  
tell her,  
maybe by her time  
our world will be small enough  
to see completely.

# Master Class II: Snippets

The Master Class II students are the core developers of Lexophilia. In addition to completing 15 weeks of writing lessons, they organized and evaluated over 250 submissions. They assembled acceptance lists and designed and proofread the journal. To celebrate each student, the instructors selected snippets from their work during the course to publish.

## Aadith Kacholia

Even if we die out, our thoughts and ideals  
Will forever echo throughout  
our universe  
Etched into gold encrusted  
paper, forever

## Adeline Tay

Secrets are fickle things. Some flit about the mind like bees during the spring—not the dark sort, but a fantasy that burns bright and feather-light and yellow. They might have not ventured to more tangible realities, but they are very much alive (at least, in the minds of their owners).

## Anna Prihodko

You'd think stars wouldn't be afraid of heights, but the idea of smashing into a pancake against the earth isn't very thrilling.

## Anya M.

Kal picked her fights in public places for the same reason she dyed her hair a bright, shocking silver and kept me as her only friend. Whether she knew it or not, she wanted to be in the spotlight, to show everyone else that she was in a league of her own. I would never stand up to her, and we both knew it. Instead, I mindlessly flitted near the outskirts of the growing crowd, like a butterfly circling a tornado.

## Pranav Sathish Kumar

I darted away from him like a gazelle trying to escape a cheetah and tried to hide, but like most gazelle, I was caught.

## Arielle Fam

The darkness from under the stairs was caught in an endless, halfhearted struggle against the grey light from the single window.

## Chloe Bartmess

The gate is worn metal, arched beneath a canopy of leaves and flowers, leading out onto the empty asphalt road in front of it, where a single black car loaded with suitcases sits. A twisted olive tree gently sways beneath the searing sun, its light green leaves fluttering in the wind.

## Christabel Cheah

But there's no one there to hear her words, to question their meaning, only the ancient stars and the moon that stare down from the dark sky.

## Cindy Yang

My sister, though? That's a whole other story. Blair doesn't only love change, she loves to cause it. She was the one who pressured Mom to let her try new hobbies, and she even supported our parents—I recall with a stab of anger—when they first told us we would be moving from Texas to California. I sometimes feel dusty, if that makes any sense, sitting back and watching her whirl through the world.

## Claire Welton

I couldn't even think straight anymore — the doorways had crept their way into my mind, feasting on my thoughts like vultures.



**Fosina Zhao**

In the giant yet empty universe,  
someone stands at the crossroad of  
fate. Looking for the momentary  
excitement from another soul, they  
glance around anxiously, hoping to see  
someone who catches their eye,  
someone they might consider to be the  
bearer of their brittle heart.

**Jillian Dillow**

But is our path a road?  
Or is it an ocean,  
Rumbling and shifting  
Pulled up,  
Only to come crashing back down

**Jocelyn Tay**

The sun's rose gold sheen reflected off  
the plastics, creating a kaleidoscope,  
but its glory was a fragment, a sliver of  
what it had once been. At that, the  
stench of chemicals and other foreign  
substances hit her nose, causing it to  
wrinkle and scrunch up. What had  
happened to that revitalizing aroma of  
seawater and flowers that had once  
infused the air?

**Kai Hsu**

Some things aren't meant to be said,  
Enshrouded in darkness and mystery.  
Although the secret is plain  
to be read,  
It's better to leave it to  
history.

**Leona Cyster**

Cold, but refreshing, like when you eat  
ice out of a lemonade drink in the  
blazing summer. That's what returning  
home feels like, after years and years of  
traveling far away.

Watchful eyes scrutinize me as  
I stand still in the way of the garden  
paths. The gardens still look the same.

**Paige Edwards-Hulko**

The bright orange flames licking at the  
other treasures, then devouring them. I  
kept one[.] I should not have, but I did.

**Luke Zhang**

Catching sight of the white spots on its  
face, the ruffled fur like a rat and the  
bald patch on its flank, I was struck by  
the bedraggled state of the animal. I  
had a feeling he needed my offerings.  
"I'll call you Scruffy Joe."

**Makayla Massimo**

The open space was pitch black and  
smelled of dust and the electrical chose  
very few days to cooperate, typically  
causing any guests to avoid stopping by.  
But on the occasion where the room  
would finally illuminate, you set foot  
into a whole new world.

**Manuela Rodriguez**

A building once populated by thousands  
of cheering crowds and hundreds of  
gladiators was bare as a field after the  
harvest. She imagined what it looked  
like during these times. Broken, not just  
by the lightning and earthquakes that  
harassed all of Rome, but by the loss of  
purpose. Something so big and  
wonderful shouldn't feel so lonely.

**Maya Fowler**

A nomadic wind chimes through the  
trees and whistles by the buildings,  
stirring up the air and whispering of  
what's to come.

**Mollie Mei**

Windows are the keys that uncage  
nature  
Connections to the world that  
we so nonchalantly ignore,  
All of us too comfortably  
embraced by our petty  
inconveniences  
That we sometimes forget about  
the wonders outside

**Presley Kuo**

The sky is overcast with grey nimbostratus, a gloomy blanket of Jupiter's apathy and a familiar adornment in the lives of people in the city. It's quiet in the mornings, the chronic rumble of traffic serving as a muted accompaniment to the dull play of these citizens.

**Samarth Kaashyap**

My eyes drifted to the usual mulch and leaves growing on and along the sides of homes and buildings, somehow still standing. As if by muscle memory, I stepped over the burrows made by the rats who chittered and chattered in the shadows along the road. I heard honking as Old Man Jeffery hollered in his new black hotwired car.

**Shiv Patel**

The lake shone with the reflections of the gems in the water and as I looked deep into the water, I noticed something that shook me to my bones. Those gems that shone like stars were now like meteors, crashing into my world.

**Shiyu Zheng**

Like a shimmering blanket, the light draped herself gently over the dusty wooden chair and landed lightly on the woolen rug. She spun in elegant, pirouetting moves across the silvery-white walls, glowing with her very essence. The vibrant fragrance of spring blossoms waltzed through the room, picking up the edges of the silky bed quilts and tossing them into the air like dandelions in the wind.

**Zohan Subhash**

There was an intense green gradient off to the corner of her left eye, almost as if there was a tinge of spirulina mixed in with the blueberry.

**Sophia Su**

The lonely car, passing the bright red light. Water drops, racing down the car window. Which one will win? Leafless trees, simply just dark coffee-colored branches, swaying back and forth, along with the wind. Now, it was pitch black, only loud hooting noises from owls.

**Trevon Mercer-Hursh**

A blanket of cold darkness coats the motionless room, but the silent digital clock emits just enough flickering light to make the first few feet in front of me visible. I then reluctantly carry myself off of the creaking bed onto the carpet, silently wishing to return to the unpredictable world of dreams that lies within my once closed eyelids to escape my paranoia.

**Venice Parnell**

The sound of metal dropped on the concrete echoed through the empty neighborhood and thundered in everyone's spines.

**Vihaan Reddi**

For the billionth time, I open my eyes to a white room, on the same planet, always in the same few thousand miles. I will be born again. Always . . . burnt . . . built . . . killed . . . inspire . . .

**Zoe O'Brien**

What Lillian didn't realize, however, was that she wouldn't have to make a scene or spit lies about her father to get what she wanted. Fate would play out in its cruel and malicious way, for better or for worse. And everything was already beginning.



# Contributors

Laurel Aronian likes to write all genres (poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and songwriting) and is currently working on a novel. She plays guitar and sings, debates avidly, and can be found playing competitive chess on any given day. She has received Scholastic Writing Awards, and was a finalist for the New York Times Coming of Age Award. She ranks nationally in the top 100 chess players for her age bracket.

Khoi M. Bui is a fifth grader at St. Timothy's in West Los Angeles in the United States. He recently won second place in the school science fair with his project, completed Certificate of Merit Level 3 for piano, qualified for the UCLA Math Circle for the summer program, and scored a goal as Right Winger in the SoCal State cup Finals to help his team win the Elite Cup Division of 2011 Age Group.

Anika Chakravarthy is a 9th grader in Newton, Massachusetts, who deeply loves writing and creating art. Her many passions include swimming for her school team, being a student of classical piano and performing in recitals, reading, and traveling all over the world with her family.

Andrea Dao is a 9th grader from Southern California. She enjoys writing short stories and is a big fan of Ray Bradbury.

Lucas Du is a 9th grader living in Millbrae, CA. Drawing is his passion, and he has won many competitions in his community.

Maya Edwards is in 8th grade in Oradell, NJ. She has a wide range of interests from sports to art. In terms of art, she has a particular interest in creating surreal artwork, and has won a few awards in the PTA reflections contest.

Sophia Marsha Gaurino is a grade 7 student studying from Davao City, Philippines. She likes drawing, writing stories, and browsing through the internet.

Chelsea Guo is a 7th grader who attends Diamond Middle School.

Isabella Hill is a 9th grader from Massachusetts who loves painting, writing short stories and poems, and jujitsu. She is obsessed with psychological thriller novels, hot chocolate, and rainy days!

Margaret Howell is a 7th grader from Maryland, United States. She likes using art to communicate, imagine new possibilities, and bring people together.

Emily Hsu, an ardent artist from Edison, New Jersey, aspires to yoke art with slam poetry to enact powerful dialogues across boundaries. She adores nature, loves food, and wishes to make an impact.

Annalise Huang is in 6th grade and loves to write. In her spare time, she also enjoys reading, drawing, and spending time with her family, including her puppy Millie.

Charlotte Hull has been creating stories for as long as she can remember, and often sees and hears fairies or other fantastical imaginings. Her cats and dogs have given her writing their seal of approval, as marked by all the fur on her books and computer keyboard!

Alexis Kang is a 7th grader from Fairmont Private Schools in Anaheim, California. She enjoys reading and writing during her free time. She is currently a member of the National Junior Honor Society and the captain of her school's debate team.

Elliot Karyo is in 8th grade in Seattle, WA. Elliot enjoys sports, music, and math. He loves to write and enjoys adding humorous context to interesting themes.

Tori Kim is in grade 7 in Hong Kong.

Presley Kuo is an eighth grader at Austin, Texas. She enjoys writing and reading in her spare time, and she also plays the piano. She participates in certamen competitions

as part of her school team and has won several awards in these Latin competitions.

Kate Leetaru is 14 years old and lives in Bern, Switzerland. When not aimlessly writing, she often finds herself crocheting while listening to true crime podcasts.

Anya M. is a student in the 9th grade.

Mollie Mei is in grade 7, from Hong Kong.

Rishi Nair is an 8th grader at Blacksburg Middle School. He likes to play chess, tennis, and oil paint.

Johji Nakada is graduating from 8th grade at The Speyer Legacy School and will be entering high school at The Dalton School next year. When he is not writing poetry, he enjoys chess, math, basketball, track, and playing the guitar. While on the Speyer chess team, Johji placed 9th in the country individually, and contributed to six team national championships. Johji also placed 12th in the world in the Math Kangaroo competition.

Aadya Pandita is a 7th grader living in New Jersey. She likes writing, listening to music, and doodling triangles on the margins of her textbooks.

Tvissha Pilani is currently in grade 8. She is studying at Aditya Birla World Academy in Mumbai, India.

Kaitlyn Qin is a 7th grader from Greenwich, Connecticut.

Arianna Rahmathulla is a 9th grader. She enjoys reading, writing, and performing.

Jooha Roh says 'hello' from South Korea. She is currently attending Korea International School and is in 7th grade. She enjoys spending her time reading novels and exploring new ideas.

Guo Ru is from Australia.

Yash'al Ahmed Abdul Sattar is in 6th grade. He is from Maldives, and currently lives in Malaysia.

Hailey Tsai is a 7th grade student living in New York. She enjoys music, art, reading and writing, and has a 2nd-degree black belt in taekwondo.

Atticus Wei is currently a freshman in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He plays piano and swims for his high school, and likes to read in his free time.

Rachel Xu is an 8th grade student at Gale Ranch Middle School, San Ramon CA. She likes to read, play piano, and write. She has been studying with CTY since 4th grade.

Zihan Xu is in 9th grade at T.C. Jasper High School in Plano, Texas. Zihan received a Silver Key in journalism titled "The Dying Dead Sea" for the Alliance for Young Artists and Writers Scholastic competition. He acquired a gold medal for four consecutive years in the National History Day Regional competition website division and got 4th place at State and a Naval Order of the United States Award. He qualified for AIME and received First Class Honours on the Royal Conservatory of Music Level 10 for piano.

Chelsea Yan, a 9th grader from Newton, Massachusetts, has been drawing since she was able to hold a pencil. She enjoys mathematics, programming, and music outside of art.

Jonah Yang is a 6th grader who lives in San Ramon, CA. He enjoys playing Minecraft and swimming, and has a keen interest in music.

Julianne Yang, an 8th grader from Alameda, California, loves arts indeed!

Hailey Q. Yap is an 8th grade student in Manila, Philippines. She enjoys creating art, whether that be through music or drawings.

Alexa Zhang is in 8th grade at Crystal Springs Uplands School in California.

Keira Zhang is in 8th grade in Atherton, CA.

Luke Zhang is a 7th grade student in Ontario, Canada. He likes to write, re-read all the books in his house, and procrastinate.





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# Lexophilia

Aronian  
Bui  
Chakravarthy  
Dao  
Du  
Edwards  
Gaurino  
Guo  
Hill  
Howell

Huang  
Hull  
Hsu  
Kang  
Karyo  
Kim  
Kuo  
Leetaru  
Mei  
Nair

Nakada  
Pandita  
Pilani  
Qin  
Rahmathulla  
Roh  
Ru  
Ahmed  
Tsai  
Wei

Xu  
Xu  
Yan  
Yang  
Yang  
Yap  
Zhang  
Zhang  
Zhang