

ÉCLAT



***Éclat* is the literary magazine of
East Catholic High School
Manchester, Connecticut.**

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Maya Gopal '20

Averted Vision by Katie Green '22



Eric Wilson '19

The gravel driveway, surrounded by dark pine trees, crunched loudly beneath our SUV's tires as it pulled in front of the sprawling wooden house. The noise almost drowned out my mother's mind-numbing conversation with my father. I didn't know what they were bickering about, nor did I care; I knew the reason they were sniping at each other was most likely insignificant as it usually was.

"I know, Karen, but we can't just *ignore* the other side of the family," my father said emphatically, summing up in one sentence the endlessly stupid discussion. Instead of listening to that, I looked out the window. All of the windows of our cabin ahead of us glowed yellow onto the snow-covered yard and I could see the shadows of people moving around inside. Desperate to leave the *wonderful* three hour car ride behind me, I yanked on the car door handle and kicked it open, grinning as I stepped outside the car. I loved no place more than our cabin in the mountains, covered in a dusting of snow, surrounded by stands of tall pines. I sprinted to the front door, the sounds of my parents' argument following me on the wind, and used my key to break up the ice around the lock, throwing the door open. I was immediately tackled by my favorite person in the world: seven-year-old Leah, the youngest daughter of our family friends, the Geringers, who visited us here every Christmas. She dragged me inside and announced to the entire household, "Virginia's here!" She pulled me into the living room, where she'd nearly covered the floor with Christmas ornaments as she decorated the tree.

As we hung ornaments, laughing and joking, my mood lifted. I was so excited to be here with my family, I couldn't stop smiling like an idiot. After a while, my parents left to drive towards the town to get some groceries, and the Geringers went with them. Mr. Leo, the oldest Geringer and the only adult now left in the house, came in and turned on the news, asking me about school and sports as he watched. He was like an uncle to me; my father had spent a lot of time with Mr. Leo's son at his house when he was growing up. Both of my paternal grandparents had died when my father was young. Mr. Leo's grandsons, Eli and Peter, came racing down the stairs and threw themselves on the couch just as the weather report came on.

"The storm will intensify into a blizzard overnight, and snow accumulation will be around a foot. Skiers beware: the temperatures will be just above freezing and will then plummet again, and this could-" I couldn't hear anything else the meteorologist said, because Peter and Leah started screeching at each other after Peter had started throwing popcorn at her. "Guys, cut it out *right now*," Eli said darkly. Peter started making disgusting faces at him behind his back. Just then, the front door opened and my parents walked in with Eli's. I could tell by the way my mother refused to look at my father, the stiffness of her footfalls on the wooden floor, the way she slammed the groceries on the counter, that the car ride had not been a peaceful one. The laughter died in my throat. Eli and I shared a look, and I rolled my eyes, angry that they couldn't go *one* holiday without being at each other's throats. We went upstairs with Leah and Peter and played

board game with them, talking excitedly about tomorrow's ski trip, but I couldn't shake that feeling of frustration at my parents. It was like a vice around my throat that night as I heard them in the next room, hushedly arguing and slamming cabinet doors, on the brink of breaking into a screaming match.

We all woke up early and ate breakfast in a hurry, eager to get on the slopes. My parents had decided to stay home together today, but they wouldn't make eye contact with each other. My father muttered something sarcastic as my mother told the Geringers to be safe. I finally snapped, my resentment towards them erupting like a volcano. "Why can't you guys at least not ruin this week for everyone else? Why are you *incapable* of getting along? I don't *care* about what is *so upsetting* that you won't shut up about it! Do you think everybody else is enjoying this? Do you think I'm enjoying this? Do you have any concept of how everybody's tiptoeing around you? This is not how a family should be. I'm so damn sick of this."

My mother's fury manifested in a severe scowl. "Give me your phone and get out of this house," she muttered, cold anger dripping off her words like venom. I stood up straight, staring her down, and I chucked my phone into the living room and walked out. I regretted nothing. Yet.

Even after a few deep breaths, my blood was still humming with fury. *This shouldn't be bothering me, just ignore it, their stupid fight doesn't concern you, they've done this before and it always turns out fine.* I tried to calm my anxiety and frustration with these thoughts, but a little voice saying, "*But what if this is the time that it doesn't?*" solidified the icy, knotted chain in my chest.

We all piled into the Geringers' SUV and drove to the mountain. "Everybody okay back there? Virginia, what's with the frown?" Mrs. Geringer asked with a concerned smile.

"What are you talking about? I'm about to go skiing with my favorite people," I said, leaning into Leah with a smile that just barely hid the rawness I felt. When we arrived, I raced Eli, Leah, and Peter to the lift at the bottom of the mountain. Weirdly, the place wasn't crowded. Normally the lodge would be a zoo, everyone milling around like bees wearing their brightest, most obnoxious ski jackets. I got on the lift between Eli and Leah, Peter sitting to her right. The Geringers were on the chair behind us. When we got to the top, we skied over to the wall of pine trees behind the lift, waiting for Eli's parents so we could tell them what trail we'd be on. We all turned right, down a winding, tree-lined, quiet trail that I loved, and the Geringers turned left down a slightly less demanding one. I genuinely liked Eli's parents' personalities; they were the perfect mix of relaxed and practical, trusting us enough to let us decide which trail to take but making sure we knew to meet them at the bottom and check in before getting on the lift. Sometimes I wonder if my parents would have me harnessed on a leash if they could. They would never let me go down a trail without them. I shoved my parents to the back of my brain and instead took in the drop-dead gorgeous scenery, laughing with Leah and Peter when Eli came close to face-planting as he went over a bump. I didn't worry about everything else when I was with them. They made that impossible.

The next time we were on the lift, Leah and Peter begged to go down a trail that led to the other side of the mountain, one I wasn't familiar with. We all consented, and on the way down I noticed that my skis would occasionally skid on the thick sheets of ice, making my heart jump into my throat as I lost my footing. I made a mental note to be extra careful. I wanted to stick closer to the Geringers, but no matter how much we shouted to Peter and Leah ahead of us, they would not slow down or stop. Mr. Leo had to ski slowly, and the Geringers fell further and further behind us to stay with him. When Eli and I stopped, we saw that Mr. Leo had fallen and the Geringers were helping him up. He seemed unhurt, but after ten minutes ski patrol came and he got on one of the snow mobiles with Mr. Geringer. They went back up the incline, and Mrs. Geringer caught up with us. "Kids, my father fell, and he's probably fine but he couldn't have gone on skiing. Do you know where Leah and Peter are?" We shrugged, and continued on. This would be our last trail because the lifts were closing soon; the twins could not have gone up again.

The sheets of ice on the trail only grew in size. They were harder and harder to see as the sun started to set.

The trail diverged, and Mrs. Geringer cursed under her breath, muttering, “God only knows where they went. Peter could’ve gone left and Leah right, knowing them. The trail map says that one path ends on the opposite side, while the other ends on this side. Should we split up? It’s been fifteen minutes since they’ve gotten ahead of us; they can’t have gotten too far. I can’t call ski patrol - my phone just died. Do you guys have power?” I realized where my phone was, and I sank my incisor into my lip to keep from screaming.

“No, Mrs. Geringer, my phone’s at home,” I choked out while Eli told her that his was dead.

“All right, we have to split up. Listen to me. *Stay together. Do not go fast. Meet me at the bottom.* Promise me to be careful. Don’t do anything stupid.” We promised her that we would meet her, safe at the bottom. And then we left.

We went down slowly, yelling out their names as loudly as we could. We lost control on the ice several times, spiking my heart rate. I strained to hear a reply to our calls, and after a while I heard the faintest echo of *help*. I swore, asking Eli if he’d heard it. He nodded, struck dumb as he realized who had said it. We increased our speed, listening to the cry get louder. I knew for a fact that it was Leah. I was absolutely certain, and now I know that there is no greater torture than uncertainty and helplessness.

We skied to the edge of the trail, where the ground tumbled down sharply into a steep ravine. There was bright orange tape lining the trail here, marking the boundary of the resort. I could see the bright scarlet of Leah’s jacket far back in the shadowy woods, and I could hear her calling to us. I could also see the lime green of Peter’s jacket, but it was still. Eli ripped off his skis and started running down the incline. I stabbed mine into the snow so ski patrol could see them if they passed by, ripping off the orange tape and tying it around them. We ran to them as fast as we could in our ski boots, screaming to them that we were coming. When we reached them, Leah was shaking violently. I hugged her tightly as she told us what had happened, that Peter had been going so fast he couldn’t see the ice and he’d come around the bend but was unable to stop and catapulted himself down into the ravine. Eli was talking to Peter as he moaned softly. “Leah, did he hit his head? Has he been saying anything?” I asked her softly. Her voice shook badly, and her words were barely intelligible. “He-he said h-his head hurt, and his a-arm.” I wrapped an arm around her shoulder and we walked back towards Eli. Peter was lying with his back against a tree trunk, his eyes blinking slowly like he hadn’t slept in days. His face was devoid of emotion.

Eli whispered into my ear, “All he does is nod and moan, he won’t even say anything, dear God. He won’t say anything, Virginia.”

I held Leah closer. “Leah told me that he hurt his head. He could have a head injury.” This one sentence had exhausted what mental capacity I had left.

“My mom will be able to get the patrol at the lodge, but I don’t know how long it will take that to happen, if she’s even there yet. Virginia, what if she never made it there at all? What if -” Eli couldn’t finish his sentence. I’d been holding Leah’s hand the whole time, and she’d been hyperventilating. I needed to get Leah to calm down before she passed out.

“Leah, listen to me. Peter will be fine, we won’t let anything bad happen to him or you. You’re safe. Here, breathe like this, long and slow and deep. You’ve gotta be as brave as you normally are. You teach me how to be brave. Show me how again.” Gradually, her ragged breathing slowed down into some semblance of normal.

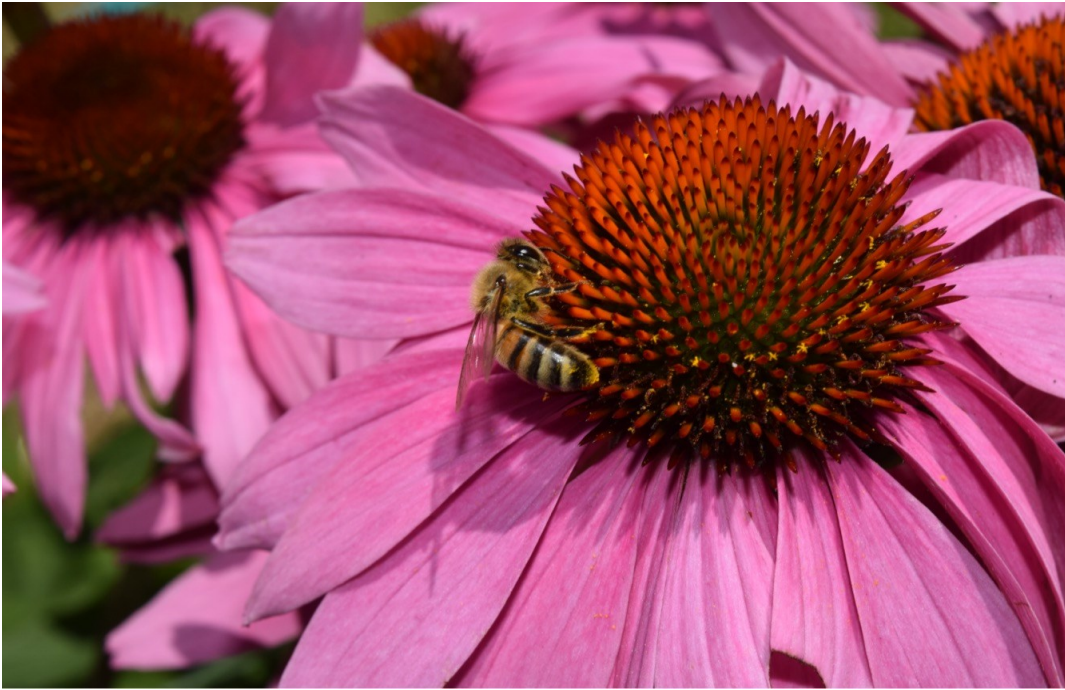
“Is Peter light enough for you to carry, Eli?” At my words, Eli gently, slowly walked over to his brother and picked him up. When he touched Peter’s left arm, he screamed and Leah’s resolve splintered. Eli scrambled to shift his grip. I tore off my fleece and tied it up so his arm had more support. Peter’s howls could’ve woken the dead. The cold bit into our skin like barbed wire. I remembered something my father had told me: your armor is your mentality. I repeated this, over and over again.

I didn’t let our phalanx stop hiking up the incline until we reached the top. I rearmed myself with my father’s words but the undercurrent of crippling anxiety was threatening to break down my resolve. My brain would generate delusional fantasies, but deep down I knew that Balto wouldn’t actually show up to take us back home on his sled as he ran back to Nome. We stared straight ahead, never down at Peter. I had to help Leah over the edge of the ravine, but she remained on her feet, her eyes fierce. I hoped they were mirroring mine. Eli gently lay Peter down, and I took the trail map from Eli. I figured out where we were and traced the long path down to the lodge. *No, that can’t be right. We’re a mile and a half away from the lodge. We’ll never make it. What if the patrol missed us, what if they missed my skis, what if-* I realized I was on my knees in the snow. I remembered that we wouldn’t even *be* in this situation if my mother hadn’t been so petty and felt the need to take my phone when I needed it most. This was her fault. This disaster was all her fault, and my resentment swirled like a hurricane. I would never forgive her if something happened to Peter; I swore this to myself, but it felt like a lie. Holding on to anger was exhausting. I looked up at the sky, and I saw that the thick, ever-present clouds were gone. The moon was full, lining everything in a thin silver. The stars were visible, thousands upon thousands of them, shining because there was no light pollution out here. I stared up at a cluster of three stars that shone brightly. When I only focused my eyes on one, every other star all but disappeared.

I looked over at Eli, who was hobbling over to his little brother, and I grabbed Leah’s hand again. “It’s dark and icy, and it’s a forty-five minute walk to the bottom at the pace we’ll be going. If you slip, Eli, he could get hurt worse. I think... I think I need to take Leah to the bottom and get help, but you’ve gotta stay here. Are you comfortable with that?” Eli nodded, the result of this plan sinking in: he would be alone with Peter in the frigid dark. I grabbed Leah’s hand and we began our walk without looking back.

We were jogging down the trail, the moonlight suddenly illuminating the ice. My desperation increased by the minute, but we ran on. I choked on the freezing air as it knifed through my lungs. My ski boots were like fifty pound weights, making it almost impossible to maintain speed. In forty minutes we were at the bottom, and I could see the lodge, brightly lit up and crowded. My throat was closing up, and I could barely get air into my lungs, but I screamed for help over and over again, running all the while into the lodge. The concierge turned white as I burst through the front door. “Call for help, my friends, they’re at the top of the trail, please, he’s really hurt...” Leah was laying on the floor, huffing and puffing, and the room started to spin, my legs collapsing under me. I dragged myself over to her and put her on the squashy leather couch by the fire. People were staring, someone claimed to be a doctor and started ordering people around, but my eyes wouldn’t focus, every sound was fuzzy, and I still couldn’t seem to breathe. “Look for my skis in the snow, go up the trail right behind the lift, please *go now*.” I gasped out. The only thing I remember of the next fifteen minutes were the lights on the snow mobiles that I could see through the windows, racing up the trail toward Peter and Eli.

EMTs came in, offering to put me on a stretcher, but I walked to the ambulance without help. They listened to my breathing and put a breathing mask on me. Mrs. Geringer showed up, and after we were cleared to go home, she took us back to our cabin. I limped in, and my mother wrapped me in a hug, on the brink of hysteria, and I hugged her back. I looked out the window, and I thought I could see that same cluster of three stars, shining brightly because I looked at all of them instead of just one.



Samantha Nadeau '19



Sophia Choi '20

Hidden Smile

Oh how I wish the starlight could reach
this darkened world
How I wish it would shimmer off the
bright souls that still exist

Dimples from ear to ear shadowed
in the midnight reality
Please, smile for me
Hello
I know you're in there
Somewhere

It's the best medicine,
or so I've heard
My word, what's real and what isn't
What will I do without a smile

Hello
Please
Just a smile
Please smile for me

Skylar Blackman '19



Emma Daly '20



Clara Marler '19



Alivia Mountford '19

America the Beautiful,
America the Free,
America the Bountiful,
Oh! Land of Liberty.

Her stars are shining brightly,
Her stripes wave in the breeze,
Her colors are so sightly,
And rarely do displease.

Her golden fields are growing,
Her mighty mountains soar,
Her boundless rivers flowing,
Shall flow forevermore.



Maya Gopal '20

America the Powerful,
America the Bold,
America the Dutiful,
Oh! Mighty to behold.

How strong are her defenders,
How well do they protect,
How admirable are their splendors,
Which deserve our great respect.

How great are her citizens,
How resilient are their deeds,
How strong is their significance,
In the hour of her needs.

America the Steadfast,
America the Strong,
America the Unsurpassed,
Oh! Glad that we belong.

Patrick Roth '20



Serena Wang '19



Photography by Tony Cai '20

FLICKER

By Sarah Loomer '20

A flicker is all it takes to light a fire
embers charged by fury
fueled by pride
sparked from an ego
ignited by a moment burnt in crimson

heads filled with steadfast ambitions
oblivious to honesty
glowing with avarice
camouflaged in a disguise of pure white

an instant veined with burgundy
white blackens to wine
a flare ignites
the roaring flames lick the edge of the sky

a fire urged with intensity scorches a swift red
soon to fade into a hollow skeleton
clinging to the remains of what once was
realizing far too late
a flicker is all it takes to light a fire



Angel Gong '19

Musings of a Ten Year Old Before Supper

Lily Moseni '20

I have a hollow head- it echoes when I knock.
Adults claim I will learn when I am older,
but what if the stork drops the baby, I told her.
Her eyes go pink and her cheeks are wide- she stammers when she talks.

They call this ignorance, but I missed the bliss
 down
 the train set
 my mother threw out.
Choo Choo Choo! Goes the stale bubblegum in my mouth.

I triple dog dare that adults don't understand
where I stand when they ask

“How can you sell drinks for hugs at your lemonade stand?”

I fear their 3D glasses are paneled in green,
but I see a kaleidoscope fractured rainbow in HD.
Movies are an escape for them,
but a reality for me.

My pop is proud of his promotion
so I'm hesitant of telling him this notion.

I was a penny pinching pirate by two,
a purring Persian poet at four,
a prime factoring prodigy by five,
a petulant pianist playing at six,
and over my obsession with p's by seven.

My father must have lost his imagination
at the very same train station
my mother discarded in the trash can adjacent
to our castle
(Or in adult terms, our house).

What if we all returned - not from dust to dust,
but magic to magic?

Do not misunderstand!
I am no idle child, idolizing idyll lies
In Sunday morning cartoons.
I have goals to immortalize.

Newton let the apple fall,
yes, that is what I call sloth!
Instead, I reach for the forbidden fruit.
But I never take a bite,
for I spend my sunday mornings in Church.
With effort, I strain and today
I finally reach double digits.

Adults lied about being ten- how cruel.
Imprint me on a tarot card,
for I am a fool.
I am no pianist or poet anymore.
Just a person at the core.

However, I exist simultaneously
in two states: reality and fantasy.
Adults understand me like quantum physics-
not at all.
Adults are foreign entities-
aliens trespassing on my territory.

How to overcome this language barrier?
How to relearn the speech we once all
knew?

Reader, I am aware of my fate.
The oracle at Delphi was quick to state
What my mother already revealed
(after her fourth glass of wine).
I will grow up like you.
Forget my imaginary friends like you.
Consume too much wine like you.

I am the tragic hero of a Greek play I wish I could
write.
Where is my catharsis?
Instead I write poetry awfully trite.
I leave the fourth wall to tarnish.

Adults focus on what is- money and possessions.
But I possess the intellect to covet the
fantasies of what is not.
That is why my hollow head echoes when I knock!



Erin Carbonell '21



Maddie Lee '21

EVE

by Maya Gopal

I picked up a book, and began to read. Suddenly, she grabbed it out of my hands, and started to flip through the pages. It was the game we played every night. She chose a page and made swirls in the air with her index finger like she was casting a spell. She pointed her finger any which way the capricious winds of the day blew it. She wrote down each word her finger landed on in her notebook for safe keeping, the one that He gave us. With a lovely, satisfied smile, she laughed, handed the book back to me, and fell asleep. And I, holding her small head adorned with strings of silver, sat there in awe.

To her, every word was a stream of notes. There was no droning, symmetric chug-a-chug on this locomotive procession, but the spontaneous hisses of twirling fire and the whistle of a colorful coal-man, whose tunes traveled miles of cars back and found their way to her singular ears.

Every day was a fresh surprise to her, like she never picked up on the rising eastern sun, but never failed to bask in its light. Stretching out her arms, the wind was drawn to her and brought along every spare crumpled leaf and dandelion fluff, circling around her and enveloping her in her own column of seasons that led straight to heaven.

She was undeniable when she wanted to be, like a hurricane coming your way. And she had a blazing fire in her eyes, one that passionately burned in her soul and left an indelible mark.

~

Quite simply we had come to be in existence. The plants and the animals and the sky and the Earth came before us, and would forever stay with us. Everything was in perfect harmony. What we saw was our world, and was all of the world. We had access to almost all. And I never felt that anything could threaten us.

But one day, she did.

~

Brick by brick she laid a wall around our heavenly garden. It was a fortress from the visible ground up, protecting us from something we had never known. But snakes voraciously destroy the soil beneath our feet, tunneling under the defenses we build to protect our divine humanity. These temptations came in all forms. And the fruit fell like drops of bloody shame from her hands.

Yes, Eve was one of a kind.

I could not fathom a wife more innocent than her.

A Love Letter

Skylar Blackman '19

*It was your piercing kindness that
Poked its way through me
Straight to my heart
And sent me to a new utopia*

*I'm lost
I don't know my way out of
This kingdom of hypnotic eyes
And technicolor dreams of my fantasies
But I'm not sure I want to leave*

*If I leave, will you see me
Like you did in my dreams?
I can only hope so, but
I'll just stick to observing
Just in case*

*You're easy to talk to
Only I don't really talk
Because I get nervous, you see?
Nervous about saying the wrong thing.
But thank you for the small talk.
It helped more than you think.*

*I hope you'll see me one day,
But for now,
Thank you for being great
For saying my name in a way
That it should always be said.
Thank you for brightening my days.*



Daniel Pan '21



Patrick Roth '20

Spiral Jetty

by Eleanor Mund

The crescendo of my classmates' chatter reaches a peak as the clock ticks seconds away from releasing us out for the weekend. Finally, the shrill voice of the bell screams as we push out the door. Well. Of course, not me. I would never shove around like those animals do, just to get out of class. Then the teacher knows you're desperate, giving them more power. So I sit, with my finely manicured hands planted primly in my lap, until the room has all but cleared out. My minions wait for me at the door, and I rise out of my seat to make my way over to them. I plaster a smile on my face and trill a sickly sweet goodbye to my teacher as I link arms with the two girls waiting at the door, and we stroll into the hallway.

As we pass through, I bask in the sounds of the girls' praise. I know we're being gawked at by the others, and I know it's because I'm untouchable. How did two losers like them end up on my good side? Well... every master needs her right and left-hand men. The one to my left is Callie. She's the one who copies everything I do. I wouldn't really mind, but she's appallingly ugly, but for her two redeeming qualities: her eyes are a gorgeous emerald green, and her nose is absolutely perfect. Anyway, Callie does my dirty work- coffee runs, homework, and more. The other oaf to my right is Aria, my right-hand man. She's gorgeous, almost being able to match my own good looks. I feel bad for Callie walking right next to us; it's a tragic sight to see, since she pales in comparison.

After I get my things, I say goodbye to the girls and step outside. I close my parasol as I get into my car, and drive home in silence. Once there, I get out of my car and flounce into the mansion, ready to retreat into my room with a smoothie and my homework. I'm greeted by the new maid, Manon, who is nervously finger-combing her silky blond hair. As I approach, Manon cowers. Pathetic. "H-hello, Miss. I j-just wanted to w-warn you, in your r-room, there's a loose board-"

"Fine." I brush past her and climb the two stories to my room, flopping on my bed. The room is decked out in periwinkle and blush colors, with frills all over. There's one corner that sticks out, shrouded in black. Two eucalyptus candles burn next to a small memorial of my father. I get up and walk over, picking up a picture of him and me.

"Hey Dad. Look, I know you might not be happy with me right now..." I laugh at myself, a little choke in my voice that I erase with a scoff. "Y'know what? You're dead. You can't talk back." I set the picture back down angrily- a bit too hard. The glass shatters all over the small black table. A few tears form in my eyes as I realize what I've done, but I wipe them away angrily as my cell phone starts ringing. Seeing that it's Mom, I consider just hanging up, but I know she'll be on my back about it later. I answer the phone call with a heavy sigh, making sure she can hear.

"Lilith?" Her reedy voice grates on my eardrums and I grimace. I respond with silence, so she decides to go on. "I just wanted to check on you." Fury builds in my chest. *You could have thought of that this morning. Or yesterday. Or the past few months.*

“Look, just because I lashed out the other day doesn’t mean you have to start ‘caring’. It’s really fake. Bye.” I hang up without remorse, indignation building in me. I gave up trying to get her attention a *long* time ago. I glance around the room angrily and notice the loose board. In utter disregard of Manon’s warning, I jump on it with all my might, releasing my fury upon the disobedient piece of wood.

Everything goes dark and my stomach turns, roiling until I feel like throwing up. It’s not until after a few seconds that I realize that air is rushing past me. Upwards. I’m falling... Suddenly, a sharp sting makes its way up my back with a thud, and I’m on solid ground. Where I am, I have no idea, and my vision is too blurry from my dizzying fall to discern much. I struggle to stand, and lean against some sort of wall behind me. While I’m still in a daze, a small, soft voice comes to me.

“Hey there! Are you Lilith?”

I drop my gaze to see a small boy about half my height. He must be only 12, based on his stature, but his face bears the maturity of at least 18 years, closer to my age. He wears a small bell around his neck, with tiny wooden clogs and a tunic of a color I can’t tell-every second it seems different. Platinum blond hair curls around his ears, and he gazes at me with warm brown eyes. Basically, the exact opposite of me.

“W-who’re you...?” I stammer, disconcerted.

“I asked a question first. No fair!” He crosses his arms and glares at me.

“What? I don’t even know where the hell I am, and you’re refusing to tell me who you are?” I give him another once-over. “Look, y’know what? I’m dreaming. There’s literally no way on earth I’m talking to a weird little dwarf dude-“

“ELF-“

“Elf, whatever. Leave me alone so I can wake up.” I shoo him off and shut my eyes closed as hard as I possibly can. There’s a moment of silence, and I think I might be just about to wake up when-

“*Fine*, I’ll go first. I’m Clarence. And of course I already know who you are. You’re pretty much a celebrity down here-and I get to be your cool bodyguard!”

I gape at him, then finally decide to look around me.

What even...

We seem to be standing on a long strip of land that spirals down into a long funnel, with no end in sight. Wacky, colorful houses, forests, and all manner of ecosystems flood the terrain. Neon pinks, dusky blues, and flaming vermilions scream at me from all directions, overloading my visual senses in about two seconds flat. I turn back to Clarence to keep my sanity.

“What IS this place??”

“The Spirealm.”

“Fitting name... it sounds familiar, though.”

Clarence twiddles his thumbs. “Well... yeah, I guess that makes sense. Your dad always told you stories of us when you were young. Or have you forgotten?” His jolly, flushed face suddenly drops, and I grasp for something nice to say. I honestly can’t remember my father telling me about this place, and yet something is niggling me in the back of my mind. Clarence recovers quickly, however, and finally decides to announce his mission. “We’re going on a journey! C’mon, Lilith!!” As he tugs on my arm, I open my mouth to protest. He goes on. “To get you home, don’t worry.” I shut my mouth, glaring at him.

We begin walking down the spiraling hills and meadows, and I notice something-the hush all around us, like a blanket. This utter quiet causes unease to prickle on my skin. The bright, obnoxious colors all around me don’t seem so inviting anymore, but rather menacing and strange. Something feels very off, but I can’t quite place it. It’s like a smile with too many teeth. Clarence darts ahead without warning, coming back with a stick covered in what looks to be dark pink cobwebs. He glances sheepishly at me. “Sorry, I had to clear the way up ahead.” He tosses the stick down the middle of the spiral, a loud crack sounding once it hits bottom. “How are you doing?”

I turn my nose up at him, offended that he thought he needed to ask. “I’m fine. I’m not a little kid, you know. I don’t need a chaperone, especially one like you.”

He gazes at me with defeated eyes. “Y’know, you don’t always have to be so nasty. It’s kinda... not...” My withering glare dries up the rest of the words in his mouth.

He opens his mouth to speak again, but I cut him off. “Why is it so quiet?” I ask coldly, trying not to show any of my earlier unease.

“Oh. Everyone’s inside. There’s been a bit of trouble recently. You see, our king died rather recently and suddenly.

Nobody knew why... the queen disappeared as soon as he was gone, and their son has been holding his reign of terror over us ever since. None of us ever saw this side of him when he was a little boy..." Clarence shudders, and I hate to admit that I'm becoming a bit invested in what I'm hearing. "He's sent his dark creatures all across the land. They seem to have some sort of... control over him. He's so different now... They're nightmarish, and nobody wants to run into one." He motions to the houses, most of which have doors that are firmly boarded up. I grimace.

"That... but what if he just wants power? That's everything, right?"

Clarence looks at me woefully. "No. Not when he's hurting us with it like this. A good king- like King Farvald- would use his power for the good of the people."

"I guess... but maybe he was just too soft on you people."

Clarence gives up and we continue walking, with him chattering about useless subjects. It's nice-although Clarence is obviously extremely daft, or at least airheaded, his babbling is filling the silence of before. Still, that feeling still crawls under my skin. We're almost to the bottom of this weird spiral, and I can't settle down.

"Hey, Clarence...?"

He perks up, excited that I initiated conversation with him. "Yes?"

"Something seems... just... not right."

"Of course it isn't, silly! I just *told* you how everything's been going wrong here recently. How else do you think it would feel? Like rainbows and puppies?"

My face flames in embarrassment for not realizing this, and I thank God for my dark complexion so that Clarence can't see. "W-well, you act like it's all rainbows and puppies. Hell, even the houses d-"

Clarence stops in his tracks, horror in his eyes. Before I can register what's happening, I catch a glimpse of some infernal beast dragging him away. I can't see its face, but its body sends a shiver of terror up my spine. Its eight legs join to a wolf-like body, like some mad scientist hacksawed them off of their original places and then sewed them up. It has a long, slithering tail that lashes at me as it moves away from me, down and down until I can't see it anymore.

"Clarence!!!" My heart pounds in my ears. He's my only way home... and perhaps the only one who's ever been genuinely nice to me. I dash after him, my skirt snagging on sticks and debris that begins appearing as I stumble down the levels after Clarence and the monster. As I come closer and closer to the bottom, I see the same strange, cottony, cobweb-like structure that was on Clarence's stick before. Ignoring it, I brush through it.

I instantly regret it, as I'm tossed into a world of white. I careen headfirst into a fall, smashing on my knees from the sudden sensory change. I can see nothing, feel nothing, hear nothing, until...

"Lilith... What are you doing? Get up."

I look up to see my father bending over me, his kind face radiating like it did when he was here. I reach out to touch him, but my hand passes through.

"Lilith. There's no more time. Get up."

Indignation rises in my chest. "No! You can't just come here and then tell me to get out. I finally get to see you again and-"

"Lilith. Get up."

"No! It's not fair that you're gone. It's not fair that Mom doesn't care, and it's not fair that *nobody* cares about me! You were the only one and then you abandoned me! So no, I will NOT get up. You don't have the right to tell me what to..." He bends down and embraces me. Although I can't feel it, I know he's there. "To..." I break down into sobs for what feels like hours. This is all in my head. I'm in hell. This is payback for everything I've done since he's been gone.

"Lilith. It's time for you to get up."

I struggle to get out a few words. "Yeah it's time to get up! It's time for me to wake up from this dream-no, this nightmare. I'm done with this, I'm done..."

"No, Lilith. Get up. Keep moving. Your friend needs you."

"Wait, no, come back, you can't leave again!"

His voice fades and I'm back in this hellish white abyss, alone. I sit in the suffocating silence, my dry eyes burning. I try to get up and keep moving, like he said, but I can't feel my limbs. Still, slowly the white walls around me begin to dissolve, and I'm at the bottom of the Spirealm-at least, I think I am. It's almost indistinguishable. All color has vanished, replaced with dusky grays and harsh, forbidding blacks. Before me is Clarence and the monster.

Its face is shrouded in darkness, cornering Clarence and rendering him defenseless. I notice that his arm is gone, but instead of blood there's only a thick black liquid dripping from the wound.

He doesn't see me, clearly woozy and disconcerted. Adrenaline pumps in my ears as I panic, looking around for something to attack the monster with. I see a stick. It's broken into two pieces, and one side has the pink cobwebs bundled all over it. I don't know, but I don't have time to contemplate. I pick up both and advance on the beast, terrified. It swivels its huge head to look at me, hearing my breathing. Its face comes into the light, and I gasp.

It's my face, but with an evil, sadistic smile and teeth sharper than I've ever seen. It has rich, dark skin and vibrant green eyes, but the eyes are dripping like candles, waxy tears tracing a track wherever it goes. I stand stock-still, unsure what to do. Unfortunately, the monster has other plans. It rushes at me, my own face snapping at my throat. I gasp and brandish one of the sticks, but it catches the stick in its mouth and with a quick snap splinters the damn thing. I'm only left with the cobwebbed one. With almost no time left, I think I have an idea. My mind darts back frantically to my previous experience with this strange substance, and I know what I have to do.

I smack the monster in the side of its head with the stick, giving me just enough time to get out into an open area. Once it turns around, I rush it, getting nicked on the neck by its teeth, and I narrowly blunder out of the way of another lethal snap. I slash forward with my stick towards the face, but find myself meeting thin air and falling forward. I catch myself just in time to swing around once again towards the monster with my stick, but this time I aim for the eyes. My hit finally makes purchase over the eyes, coating them in the strange, threadlike pink substance. The creature howls, making blind attacks at me, but all it takes is one more hit with the pink residue to send it skittering away, whimpering. As it moves, it slowly transforms into a tiny spider, crawling through the grass.

I dash over to Clarence and shake him awake. "H-huh?" His eyes are cloudy and vague. He looks to his left. "Oh. My arm is gone." He says this with an unfocused, matter-of-fact tone.

"Clarence. I need to get out of here." My voice breaks. I want to help him, but I can't stay here any longer. I have a feeling that with that monster gone, they'll be fine.

"Lilith...Did you do it? You killed the monst...the monster controlling the prince, right...?"

"Yes. Yes, I did. Clarence. I need to get out."

He offers me a weak smile, still quite dazed, and points up.

"Thank you, friend." I utter the foreign word and give him a quick hug.

Following his finger, I notice a square of light shining down in the shape of the loose board in my room. I take a running leap and, without looking back, push the board up and climb into my room. I feel my cheek to find the nick still there-it wasn't a dream. Even so, I'm ready to start over. And this time, no more downward spirals.



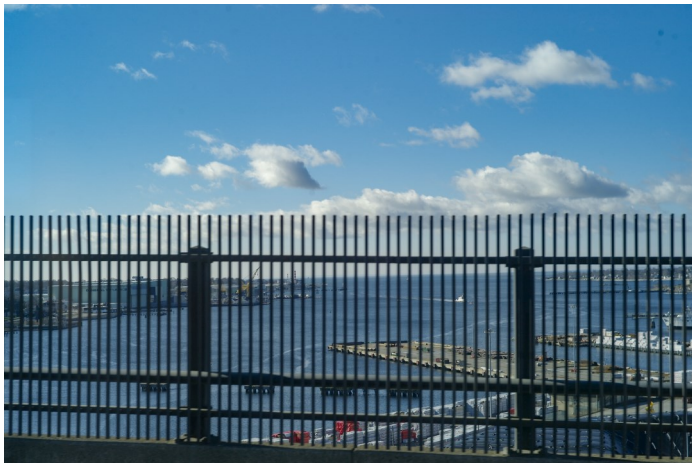


Maya Gopal '20

Patrick Roth '20



Tony Cai '20



Brendan Truman '19



The Magician

The man weaved numbers with his fingers.
His wand of a dully-sharpened pencil
Casting spells in the margins of newspapers.
He laid before me an equation for the sum of numbers,
Yet I could only understand by taking it one step at a time.
He laughed, and together we wrote out each number, taking
Our time until I could do it on my own.
But that fantastic man was not an immortal one,
And as Time got to him, I saw him lose his magic touch.
What a cruel lesson it is to a young girl for this illusion to fade away.



Angel Gong '19

Now I understand the mechanisms behind such tricks, and find glory
In the intricacies of all the base tens.
Looking back at those newspapers, which are like ancient manuscripts
Of a jaded magician who could weave digits with his hands,
He would be proud to know the sum
Total value of my memories of my grandfather
Are accumulated in me,
In my delicate fingers and my fiery incantations.

Maya Gopal '20

HEROISM

**This was the fourteenth time.
The villain saw a hero, poised to stop him.
Enhanced with new abilities,
Trained to be a warrior, confident in her skin,
Arms raised in a fighting stance.
She was ready to fight.**

**The hero defended herself, reminding herself of her confidence
And the villain let her,
Watching how she fought.
She would end up like the others, he decided.**

And he *raged*.

**She braced herself against the anger before her
Then realized it missed her entirely,
Shooting past her and into the skies
As he cursed the names of the good.
Those good, righteous people**

**Who found a child, no older than fifteen,
And gave her those abilities
And put her through training
And changed her mind
And made her fight
Because they could not face him themselves.**

**Our hero was stunned into motionless silence,
Staring at a sky newly awakened by rage
As our villain approached her.
She drew back in fear as he extended his hand,
Before she found herself moving closer
As he gently took her hand in his and whispered,
“You should go home.”**

Jenny Kirsche '20



Samantha Nadeau '19

The Return of a Summer's Day

by Adeline Cordier '22

Long has it been since I've heard the birds speak,
And once dreary and sad the skies finally smile.
Stepping out of the walls that shielded me from the bleak,
I take in a sweetened breath that hasn't graced me for a while.

A kind atmosphere kisses my face,
And hazy afternoons glaze the naked eye.
Oh, how I've longed for such an embrace!
The once solemn nights have extended to the sun's joyous cry.

With light that stretches over the plains,
And hushed fires that die out late.
The champagne tinted twilight is all that remains.
I close withered eyes and reminisce over winter's date.

Far behind does the frigidness linger.
Until the next solstice, when it lifts an awakened finger.



Maya Gopal '20

Windswept

by Rebecca Villanueva '19

On an average Saturday morning all the regulars were in their seats. They absentmindedly flipped through the morning paper and absorbed warmth from their mugs of coffee. Billy Joel sang about ambitious juveniles from the vintage turntable in the corner of the small diner with a few caffeinated customers humming along. Wyatt Jones hunched over the counter with a pencil in his mouth, hands folded under his chin, waiting to feel the world turn.

At exactly 6:23 he perked up to see a woman open the door with her usual careless grace and head to the booth in the back of the diner. Her hair was dark with streaks of purple and her gold nose ring caught the morning sunlight. She blessed him with a quick glance and he melted under her gaze. With his best nonchalant stride, Wyatt approached her table. He'd been psyching himself up for days now; today he'd finally ask her out.

"Hey, top of the morning to you." She was unimpressed. Wyatt felt like an idiot. He continued, "Uh, may I take your order?"

"The Usual." It was the name of an item on the menu. She hadn't been there long enough to actually have a regular order, though she'd gotten the same thing each time so far.

"Alright. What about your name?"

"What about my name?"

Flustered, Wyatt explained, "Oh I meant... Well, I asked to take your order and I'd like to know if I could have your name too."

"You don't need my name to take my order."

"No. But I would like to know it. Your name, that is."

She sighed and looked up at him. "Genevieve."

"That's different from yesterday."

"Is it?" She smirked, entertained by his confusion.

"Yeah, well yesterday you said Sarah but before you'd said Sophia. I asked again today to try to figure out which day I heard you right but now I think you're just messing with me?" Wyatt was embarrassed, he felt like he'd rambled too much.

"Ah, I apologize for confusing you." She stared at him. When it was apparent she had no intention of clarifying, he nodded and, forgetting to ask her if she'd like to go out with him, ambled back behind his counter and gave the order to the chef. The buzz of sunrise chatter swarmed around his head and he poured steaming coffee for another customer.

Wyatt returned to her table with a plate stacked high with blueberry pancakes and drizzled organic maple syrup. He started to say something to her, but he was called away before he got the chance.

She didn't notice- all her attention was drawn to the masterpiece on her plate. She adored this meal and its taste resembling countless mornings started off right by her mom's kitchen magic. No one in her vicinity would've known, but as the young woman in the corner booth devoured her pancakes, she made a decision. She finished her meal and paid in cash. Wyatt asked her something like if she was busy Wednesday night, and she said something about how she would be somewhere else by then and that she was sorry because he seemed like a nice guy. When the door swung shut behind her and the bell rang one last time, she knew she'd never be back. *Well, she thought, it was nice while it lasted.*

As she heaved herself into the front seat of her truck- it was the only thing the rental company had available- and fastened her seatbelt, she thought back to a time, a lifetime ago, when she was flying a kite with her dad. The wind was strong that day and the kite shrunk smaller and smaller as the atmosphere absorbed it. They wanted it to go higher.

“Here, I know a trick,” her dad said conspiringly, “I’ll go get the extra string from the garage and splice it together with this one-“

“Splice?” She interjected.

“Yeah, I’ll tie it to this one. We don’t even have to lower it down first, you just have to hold on tight while I tie the ends together. I’ll be right back.” She waited in doubt until he returned. When he did, he assured her, “Don’t worry Nell, I’ve done this before in college. It’ll be fine.”

She held on tight to the original string, just like he instructed, and let go when he told her to. The kite went a bit higher, and then kept going up and up and then away. Nellie realized the new knot hadn’t held and the two grounded humans chased it all the way across the neighborhood, getting to it just as Nellie’s mom, who had been watching from the window and taken it upon herself to join the chase, pulled up in her car.

Afterwards, Nellie thought about what it would be like to be a kite, free from the ground. To soar with no one to hold her back and pass through every land that the world had laid out for her. She got through middle school, graduated from high school, and took a job at a local retail store until she turned 21 and became a flight attendant for a commercial airline.

She thought she’d be a kite and that taking flight would give her purpose. Her wanderlust, she decided, was a stronger drive than any idea of settling down and planting herself in the same small town her parents had.

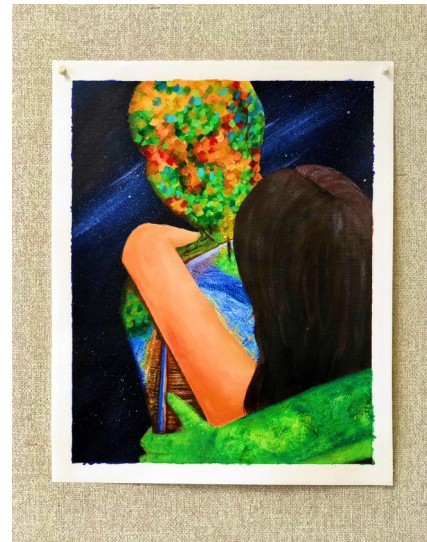
Or so she thought. She thought her string had been cut, leaving her free to roam, but she realized more and more that it remained tied to the knob of her front door, where her roots had sunk into the earth long ago. Yes, Nellie thought as she shifted the truck to drive, *it’s time to go home.*



The Arrogant Woman

My eyes, a sea of endless ocean blue
My hair, rolling locks of the purest gold
My fair complexion has made hundreds coo
And still, thine heart I ever fail to hold
My heart lies pure and wide to all who roam
My actions, wise and eternally just
My voice runs ever smooth, like hair and comb
Then why whilst in my grace, wait still I must?
My righteous spirit and mind of justice
Tranquility and knowledge is my key
And hence, thou continue not to notice,
The perfection Mother Earth gave to me,
Your mistress, although as lovely as sky
Could not content with the beauty of I

M. J. Kirsche '22



Angel Gong '19

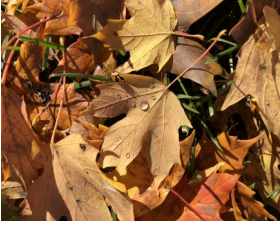
Video Games by Jake Crowley '22

When the day is looking grey and grim,
I turn to a small box with the tv brights up as the sun.
As it turns on it sounds like a beautiful hymn,
Playing on hours on end, the fun will never be done!

Whether it be a red plumber who collects mushrooms or coins,
Or a fast blue hedgehog that can move at the speed of sound.
Maybe a battle royale where a good friend joins,
A new adventure will always be found!

They can unite people like a metal chain,
It changes the future for what's to come.
Although the difficulties in games might bring pain,
But it will keep on expanding like a piece of bubble gum.

So if people are having a very rough day,
Turn on the console and let us play!



Maya Gopal '20

Garden of Forking Paths by *Jenny Kirsche*

Abbey didn't expect very much from the fork in the path. There had been other forks before this one that she had breezed through without much hesitation. This place was full of them. It was a sort of forested area, but the rich foliage surrounding it hinted at an untidy garden. Flowers wound throughout the trees and bushes, intertwining across the diverged paths she now found herself in front of. Both forks wound through the garden-ish forest, but appeared to be going in very different directions. It was a fairly mild day, nothing very interesting had happened so far, and she figured the choice wouldn't impact her greatly in any way. She pondered for a moment, then made her decision. She stepped forward as she said, "I'm going to continue on the left path."

Nope.

Abbey was wrong. She was not going to go on the left path, she would take the right.

"What?" Abbey looked up, but didn't necessarily know where she was supposed to be looking. "Why shouldn't I take the left path?"

Abbey didn't know that there was something very dangerous on the left path. Something that she would never ever have to cross paths with because, of course, she would choose the right path.

"What is this 'very dangerous' thing and why am I not able to handle it?" Abbey pressed. This, of course, was none of her concern, since the very notion of danger could easily be avoided if she simply chose the other path.

"And why should I listen to you anyway?"

She was indignant, but-

"Why are you narrating in the past tense?"

She *is* indignant. There. Now will you take the right path?

"Not until you tell me why I can't take the left path." Abbey begins to creep closer to the left path, and if she doesn't stop *right now*, she's going to get hurt.

"How do I know you're not tricking me?"

God above, Abbey.

"I'm serious. You could be manipulating me into choosing a path that suits your own desires."

Again, Abbey doesn't quite know where to look, but decides eventually to look up. "You probably don't even care what happens to me. You just want to make me do something stupid or dangerous in order to make your story better, by telling me it's the right path."

That is absolutely not true-

"The right path...oh, you did that on purpose, didn't you? What, is that supposed to be symbolism?"

Abbey, stop. This is not a trick. Don't take the left path. You don't understand what's down there and you're going to get hurt.

You're moving toward the left path again, and Abbey, you better not move an inch closer.

"Nice. You said please."

Well, it got you to stop.

"It did, didn't it? Now tell me what's down that path."

I can't.

I'm serious, I'm being serious, please stop moving.

You really are tricking me.” You don’t know where to look and yet you’re looking right at me.
“You have no reason to hold things from me, this is just manipulation. I can go wherever I want.”
Abbey, I can’t tell you what’s down there. I can’t describe things that haven’t happened yet or places you haven’t gone to, but there’s something there and you’re going to get hurt. You have to stop, I need you to stop.

You shake your head. “I’m not stopping. I don’t care why or how you’re doing this-“
Please listen to me, Abbey. I care about you, I need you to be ok. You’re fourteen years old, you have everything you need and everything you could want, you have a best friend and a dog and you love nature and you have your whole future in front of you, all of it, but you’re going to fall and I can’t let you fall-
“Stay away from me!”

You’re running down the left path and I’m begging you, Abbey, I’m begging you to come back as you run farther away, but you keep going until-



You fall.
The cliff blends into the forested path completely. The foliage hides the 70 foot drop, almost as if it had been hidden there on purpose.
You’re screaming.
And I watch as you fall.
God, Abbey.

Maya Gopal '20

*I would tell you I love you,
but I can't.*

*I am a tiger.
That stalks my prey,
And remains on my haunches.*

*I am a nature observationalist.
Studying with my camera and my note-
book.
And I make assumptions.
Remaining at a distance.*

*So I would say I love you,
But I don't.*

Maya Gopal '20



Maya Gopal '20