

LITERARY MAGAZINE

2018-2019

NINTH EDITION



PENNED WITH HEART



PENNED WITH HEART

This edition of Penned With Heart is dedicated to Julia Cianci, a passionate and talented writer who knew how to captivate readers and convey her ideas beautifully. She will be greatly missed, but she lives on in the meaningful impact she had on literary life at Sacred Heart, and in the relationships she cultivated with all of us.



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Penned with Heart 2019-2

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LA LARME DE
CECILIA ET CELLE DE LINO. LE

Mirrors

by Isabel Blin, IVB

It was a late summer afternoon when I walked down the cobblestone path. I had just come back from tea with my aunt and mother and decided to have some time alone before the party. I was surrounded by an ocean of flowers of all different colors, shapes and sizes. The gardeners were out, keeping the flowers hydrated. Heat radiated against my skin and the small whispering breeze was welcome. The door to the huge castle blew open, inviting me, daring me to unlock its secrets. From my perspective this ornate door was made for giants, bejeweled and imposing, as I walked through like a trembling leaf.

The door opened its huge mouth to reveal a hallway made of dreams. Hand-painted ceilings framed in gold with beautiful statues and windows that shone multitudinous hues. But what caught my breath the most, was the mirrors. Along one side of the hallway were floor to ceiling mirrors: reflecting the identically shaped windows directly opposite. My footsteps echoed from wall to wall announcing my arrival.

When I had made my way about halfway across, I started to notice something in the corner of my eye and turned to see hundreds of my reflections along the wall looking at me from everywhere. They each seemed the same, yet had a slight difference from one another. The mirror in the far corner reflected an arm, fragmenting my form. One caught my entire left side and another my right. Some were swallowed by darkness and others by light. Some even had me showered in a kaleidoscope from the crystal windows. As I moved, so did my shadows and I couldn't help the color rising to my cheeks. Being watched by a sea of eyes was never my dream and these reflections made me restless. I wanted to flee but I was frozen by the stares. The sheer number of them made me uneasy.

They felt like millions of cameras catching me at every angle waiting to enhance my flaws. I started to wonder who would purposefully put mirrors in their garden entrance? Was it to catch the light and fill the entrance with the glow of the sun? Was it to see themselves the way others see them? Or was it to please with their own visual company? I pondered if perhaps there was a specific reason, like if it was intended to add dimension to the room. Maybe the people who owned the house had never even thought about it but just found it convenient. The reasons could vary from person to person and as I looked around this ever growing room, the sun started to dim.

What once had a golden aura was fading into an amber glow as I watched the sun slowly hide from the mirrors. The shadows started to wander around eventually following the darkness to a place they call night. I could hear the shuffling of feet as the guests started to arrive. A piano could be heard in the distance and I felt a stillness in myself. I was alone in a room of trickery that had faded away.

Those few moments of bliss dissipated when the moon came out. The moonlight hit the windows with a cloudy blue glow. Miniature reflections of my shrouded self could be seen but what now caught my attention was the starry sky. I could see the constellations all around me like sparkling diamonds. The shadows danced as I moved to get a better look at the bright round moon. The stars may have been there but the moon was the leading lady. It was very beautiful, the craters creating delicate spider webs across its radiating surface. None of it was hidden in darkness and she was out here to say "Here I am, look at me." I turned to the windows to find that she had a smaller twin. Each was shining down on me. The mirror made it feel like I was looking down at the world. Like I could reach out and grasp the moon and take it as my light bulb.

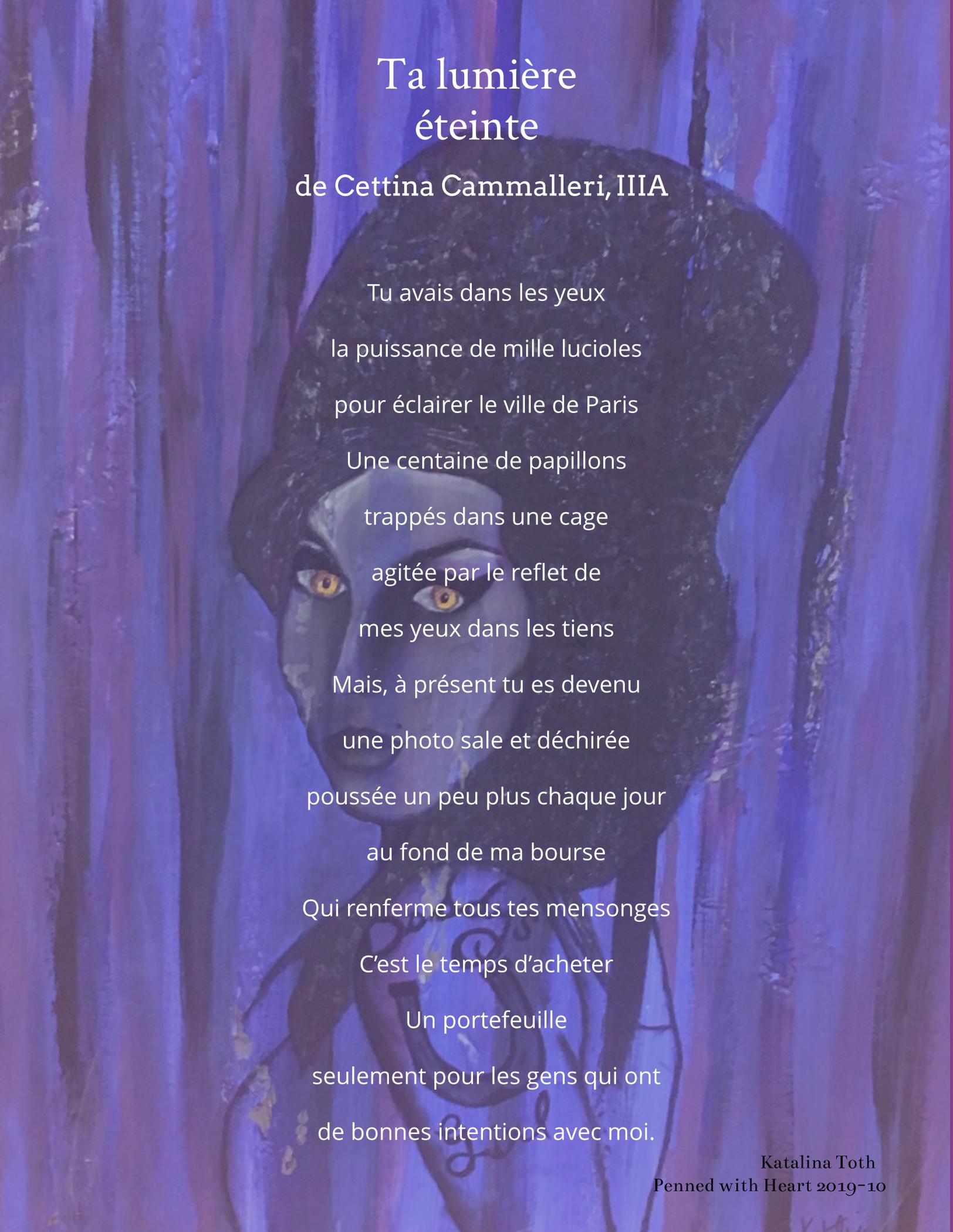
As I got closer to the mirror the moon and I grew. My breath clouded the mirror as I saw myself: wide eyes full of wonder and wisdom. I wondered if people saw me the same way. As I was walking down the cobblestone path I wondered if the gardeners had thought this girl sees the world differently than others. I wondered if they only saw a child or someone with great potential. And I as I thought these things I ran out the door wanting to meet life and their mirrors head on.



Katalina Couto

Ta lumière éteinte

de Cettina Cammalleri, IIIA



Tu avais dans les yeux
la puissance de mille lucioles
pour éclairer le ville de Paris
Une centaine de papillons
trappés dans une cage
agitée par le reflet de
mes yeux dans les tiens
Mais, à présent tu es devenu
une photo sale et déchirée
poussée un peu plus chaque jour
au fond de ma bourse
Qui renferme tous tes mensonges
C'est le temps d'acheter
Un portefeuille
seulement pour les gens qui ont
de bonnes intentions avec moi.

Summertime

by Nicoletta Pantazopoulos, VA

I sat on the balcony, the old chair almost giving out under me as I placed my feet on the white railing. It was late in the evening, and the sun was about to set. It glowed a violent orange behind the row of houses and seemed to set the neighbourhood ablaze. Summer, in all its humid, heavy splendour, seemed to choke me as I took a deep breath. The children were outside playing again. It had been years since I was a child, innocent and oblivious to the strict demands of the world and at the mercy of a parent's rules, though I found myself wanting to revisit those turbulent, not-so-forgotten days. Nostalgia, not so much a feeling as a state of mind, promptly panged in my heart, almost as a warning. I reached over to bring an almost empty glass of lemonade to my lips and winced as the liquid stung the open cut on my bottom lip. A metallic tang now rested atop my tongue, and it felt like a bloody gauze while I pursed my lips fixedly. At the same time, my eyes followed the children as they passed a ball to each other on the vacant street, laughing and hollering as the ball rolled into a nearby park. It was like this that I spent my childhood summers, free from responsibility but trapped by the oppressive heat.

A memory came back to me in slow waves as I leaned back into my chair, my arm draped lazily across my stomach. My eyelids fluttered shut after my mind decided to succumb to my restless thoughts. It was July again, and I could see that dusk was fast approaching.

I waved to my parents at the other end of the soccer field and I continued to run, feeling an inexplicable sense of freedom with the way my feet lifted from the ground. I stopped to gaze at the sky once the battered soccer ball was tucked under my foot. It was summer. I could see that from the way the sun peeked out from behind the long, rippled cloud. The moon caught the corner of my eye; its position seemed tentative, as though it was planning on filtering out of sight. It was hiding behind a larger, darker cloud, and its muted, ghostly shine followed my presence the further I walked along the field. By the time I finished contemplating the celestial body, my parents were sitting down in the nearby park, engaged in some mundane chatter.

I opened my palm to let what had started as droplets of rain land. I hadn't realized it was pouring severely, and an overwhelming sense of melancholy washed over me, as gargantuan as the bouts of rain that fell like boulders, heavy and inexplicably imposing, on the deserted field. My hair, which was tucked away behind my ears in a low ponytail, stuck to the back of my neck. The sky was limitless to me; it stretched beyond infinity and threatened to spill over the edge of the earth with its black, soulless colour, devoid of any scintillations associated with summertime. I thought to myself that this must be what the apocalypse, what the end of all life, must resemble. A fierce wind picked up once I knelt down to pick up the ball, stuffing it under my arm and tucking away the torn side of it, almost in an effort to hide the dilapidated state, as if it was something to be ashamed of. A torn pentagon that should've been sewn into the ball chafed against my bare arm, creating an uncomfortably raw sensation.

I chewed the inside of my cheek and continued my study of the world around me, like a professor analyzing a mathematical equation, as if this would determine the past, present, and future.

The full hackberry trees that circled and trapped the field were losing their leaves, which flew wildly in all directions, fiercely enacting their escape. It was a scene from hell, albeit beautiful in an awfully unconventional way. I inhaled deeply in an effort to save this moment, smiling softly as the cold, biting wind encircled and claimed me. I forgot myself until I turned to see my parents behind me, their expressions reading stern and authoritarian, ready to chastise me for my unbridled absent-mindedness. The ball fell from underneath my arm as I intertwined my fingers with those of my mother's, trudging after her as I was pulled back home. My wide eyes, unlike the rest of my swinging limbs, were fixated on the sun, finally visible after the stormy scenery which had clouded my vision moments earlier. The sunset was here, and the moon came back from her silent retreat. I, however, retreated into my room and allowed sleep to grip me as my head touched the frigid pillow: ever the child, succumbing to fatigue after a day of play.

I jolted up to the sounds of raucous laughter which came from the same children as they ran in circles, their arms outstretched to drown themselves in the pathetic drizzle that leaked from the sky, still limitless after all these years of living. With an abrupt heaviness in my heart, I realized the power of nostalgia.

No matter how much we try to push the past away, it always proves to be irrefutable in its ability to inspire and pave the way for the future. I brought a hand to my lip, where the blood was now dry, and I gulped down what was left of the lemonade. Its taste was sweet but powerful, like the memories of my childhood.



Secondary 1 class

Resumé

by Sarah Xie, IVB

I am an orchid,
Not as alluring as a rose,
But if I'm standing there,
My fragrance will delight your senses.

I am a reef on the beach,
Watching the tides ebb and flow,
Listening to the sounds of the sea,
Enjoying the feeling of peace.

I am the dew on the lotus leaf,
Clear as a crystal,
Decorating the pond,
Freely sliding, exploring where gravity takes me.

I am the pivot of the seesaw,
Always looking for a balance,
Between my weighing emotions,
And my hidden reactions.

I am Christ the Redeemer in Rio,
Standing on top of the mountain,
A stoic, noble, silent observer,
Ensuring a calm peace.

I am the black boy who sings
Pop music with his brothers,
Having a dream to *Heal the world*,
And a spotless *Neverland* inside of my heart.

I'm Sarah,
This is the way I am.



The River in Winter

by Rozanna Ralbovsky, VB

A lazy giant might have painted it millennia ago,
Brush swooping onto land, spilling placid silver
Between now-separate shores.

Besieged by ice from either shore,
It rolls on as it has for time immemorial,
Caressing the land in passing

I crane my neck to see it as it passes,
Imperturbable and ever-changing,
Calmly tolerating the city sown around it,
Like an old dog lets kittens clamber over her.

Between skyscrapers and construction cranes,
At the end of canyons carved by busy avenues,
I strain to catch a glimpse of peace,
And dream of the stories it tells if you stop to listen.

The Sweetest Aroma

by Winnie Zhang, VB

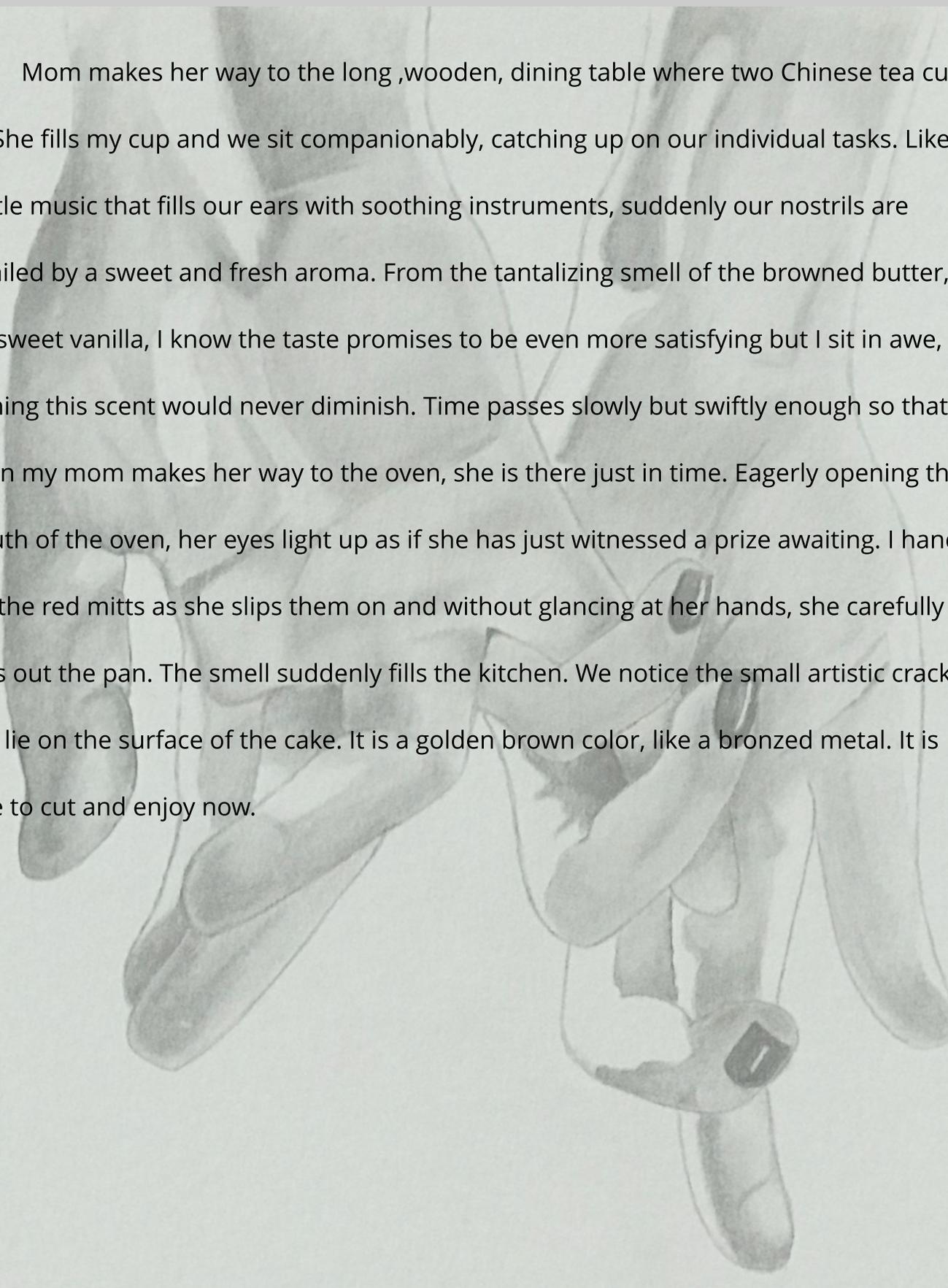
Soft music is playing from the classically designed, brown radio. The warm and steady melody comes from the corner of the room where the radio sits, and the music spreads, filling the open kitchen. Mom tugs at the refrigerator door, bending down, level with the shelves, to retrieve a few eggs from the yellow basket sitting quietly at the rear of the third block. She takes out two eggs and a stick of butter, and neatly places both on the wooden chopping board. She is wearing a brown fuzzy sweater and a pair of black jeans. I notice her outfit and on the corner of her blue and red plaid apron, there is a print of flour, leaving it powdered white and easily distinguishable from her outfit.

I grab an egg, releasing it from my palms to my fingertips, cracking it on the edge of the silvery sink and letting the yolk fall into a blue, painted, ceramic bowl. The cracking sound breaks through the peaceful afternoon for a second, then it slowly fades and is absorbed by the soothing music that flies in the quiet air and permeates the room.

Carefully pulling out the drawer, looking for a pair of chopsticks, I hold up the ceramic bowl with the eggs and mix them with a touch of sugar, butter and flour. The sugar flickers as I pour, shining and dancing within the light like small pieces of crystals raining down. The flour floats into the air, like those mysterious, glowing, morning hazy clouds, causing a slight mist in front of my eyes.

Mom takes out the cake pan and evenly greases it with butter. It is as if she has done this thousands of times, swaying back and forth, nice and slowly, with the brush caressing the dark cake pan, not missing an inch. The melted butter reflects the light from above, twinkling as she moves it, bright like stars taking turns shining on one of the midsummer nights. I sprinkle a layer of flour onto the pan, rotate it until evenly coated, then tap out the excess flour on to the table. I place the perfectly fluffy, risen dough onto the pan, pushing it outward from the center so it can fit perfectly. My fingers sink as I press, the touch is so soft, as if you are gently stroking a newborn's chin. I lightly drop the pan against the counter top to allow the air bubbles to make their way out of the batter. A few soft releases of air surface and the final step is to bake the cake.

Mom has already set up the oven to preheat, waiting ready to bake. I position the baking pan on the other side of the table and slide my hand into the shiny red oven mitts, preparing to send the fully loaded pan to travel on a journey inside the oven where the dough will rise as it bakes. The red circle with the flashing light on the oven starts to flicker rapidly, reminding us that the temperature is perfectly ready to start. Wearing the clumsy mitts, I take the pan with both of my hands, so carefully, as if I am holding one of my most precious objects. Yellow heat radiates from the top of the oven and covers the dough gently, like a mother softly patting her child to sleep. Mom sets the timer and I hang my familiar mitts on their hook, where they will wait patiently for 30 minutes.



Mom makes her way to the long, wooden, dining table where two Chinese tea cups sit. She fills my cup and we sit companionably, catching up on our individual tasks. Like the gentle music that fills our ears with soothing instruments, suddenly our nostrils are assailed by a sweet and fresh aroma. From the tantalizing smell of the browned butter, to the sweet vanilla, I know the taste promises to be even more satisfying but I sit in awe, wishing this scent would never diminish. Time passes slowly but swiftly enough so that when my mom makes her way to the oven, she is there just in time. Eagerly opening the mouth of the oven, her eyes light up as if she has just witnessed a prize awaiting. I hand her the red mitts as she slips them on and without glancing at her hands, she carefully pulls out the pan. The smell suddenly fills the kitchen. We notice the small artistic cracks that lie on the surface of the cake. It is a golden brown color, like a bronzed metal. It is time to cut and enjoy now.

I Am Full of Life and Love

by Lina Weiss, IVA

I am an actress

And my life is the greatest movie I'll live to see

I am the protagonist

I am the light that radiates positivity

Even when surrounded by the negativity the darkness brings.

I am the rarest red diamond

I spread love and laughter everywhere I go

I am the person who makes people laugh

When they're feeling down

I encourage others to be the best person they can possibly be.

As kindhearted as I am, I am often misunderstood

I am disappointed when others portray me as the antagonist in their movies

I feel discouraged when I am not recognized for my hard work and effort

I often feel underappreciated, with no one acknowledging the fact that

I never receive the love I give to everyone else

I am most hurt when people don't value my undying loyalty

I believe my greatest weakness will always be that I expect others

To do what I would do for them.

I am a determined perfectionist

I am curious, like a child with a finger in every pie.

I am creative and innovative
I am unpredictable like a storm
I will never have the capacity to control my contagious laughter,
My unstable emotions or my crazy thoughts
I experience life with energy and passion.

I believe it is always important to pursue what makes you feel most alive.
I am the kind of person who travels to where I feel most at home.
I do what makes my heart happy.
I need to be surrounded by people with the same fiery, lively heart as me,
who crave adventure and need love and attention.

I believe the world is a fashion show
Just like Cher Horowitz
I worry about what I'm going to wear
I am a fashionista, like Coco Chanel.

I am imaginative and dreamy
With my head lost in the clouds
I am only alert in my own faultless world.

I see the world through rose-coloured glasses, romanticizing everything
I can be blind to harsh realities
I realize that I can't change the world.

I decide that my dream world won't be a dream world anymore,
but my reality,
The only reality I know.

As optimistic as Olaf the snowman,
I am determined to be as happy as I can possibly be.
I am unrealistic at times,
I am not royalty and life won't always go my way,
Just like a snowman can't exist during summer.

However, I've learned that once you start to love life,
Life will love you back.
I believe I am destined for greatness,
I know all the obstacles I encounter are there to make me strong.
I now understand that not everyone deserves the luxury of my love and
affection.

And all the love I gave to the wrong people, I am sure it will find its way
back to me.



Immuable sous la neige

de Jaymie Sacchetti, IID

Si silencieux...

Mais il y a trop de bruit

Un son si strident

Que celui-ci fait vibrer mes tympans

Comme un tremblement de terre

Ma tête tourne

Aussi vite qu'une tornade

Je ne vois rien

Tout est noir comme la nuit

Le son est de plus en plus fort

De plus en plus proche de moi

Trois pas, deux pas, un pas...

Silence complet.

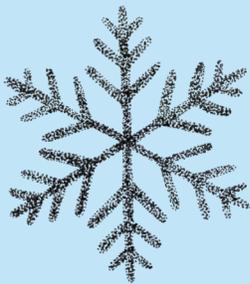
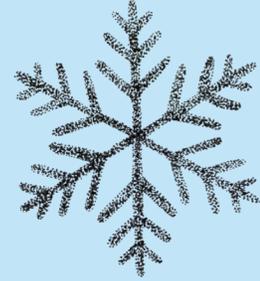
Je n'attends plus rien.

J'ouvre les yeux

Tout est blanc comme la neige.

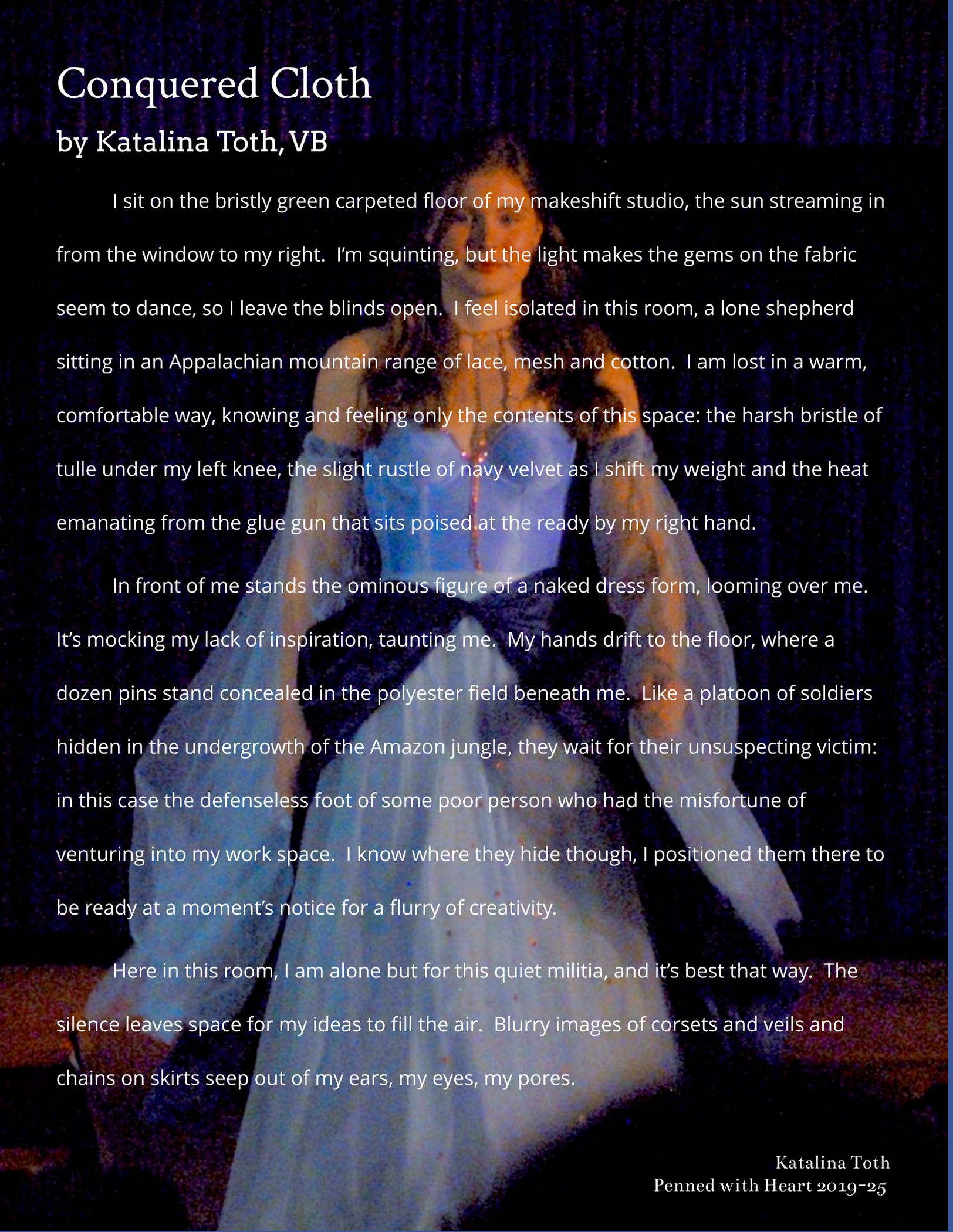
Je suis dans un monde nouveau

Je me sens libre.



Conquered Cloth

by Katalina Toth, VB



I sit on the bristly green carpeted floor of my makeshift studio, the sun streaming in from the window to my right. I'm squinting, but the light makes the gems on the fabric seem to dance, so I leave the blinds open. I feel isolated in this room, a lone shepherd sitting in an Appalachian mountain range of lace, mesh and cotton. I am lost in a warm, comfortable way, knowing and feeling only the contents of this space: the harsh bristle of tulle under my left knee, the slight rustle of navy velvet as I shift my weight and the heat emanating from the glue gun that sits poised at the ready by my right hand.

In front of me stands the ominous figure of a naked dress form, looming over me. It's mocking my lack of inspiration, taunting me. My hands drift to the floor, where a dozen pins stand concealed in the polyester field beneath me. Like a platoon of soldiers hidden in the undergrowth of the Amazon jungle, they wait for their unsuspecting victim: in this case the defenseless foot of some poor person who had the misfortune of venturing into my work space. I know where they hide though, I positioned them there to be ready at a moment's notice for a flurry of creativity.

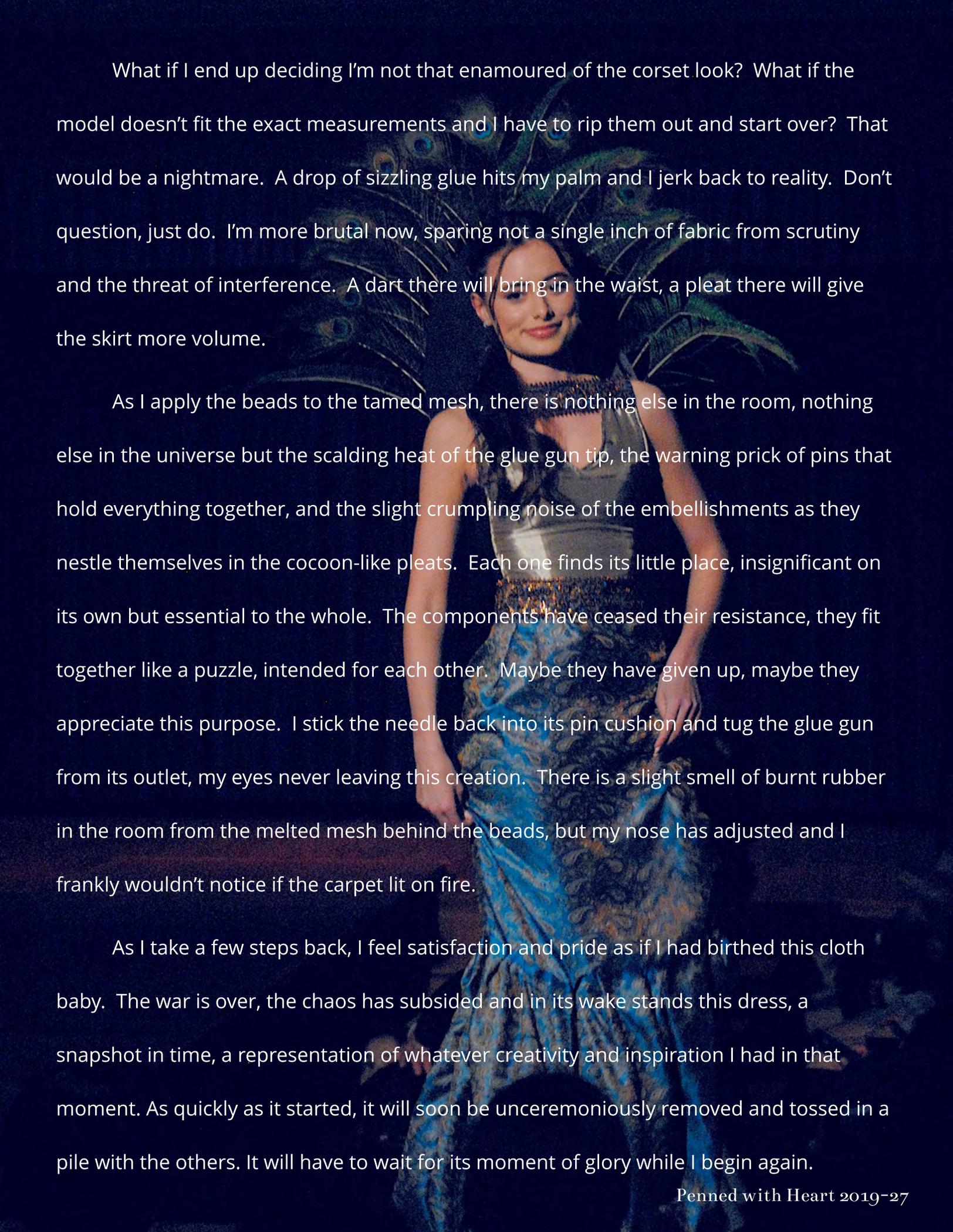
Here in this room, I am alone but for this quiet militia, and it's best that way. The silence leaves space for my ideas to fill the air. Blurry images of corsets and veils and chains on skirts seep out of my ears, my eyes, my pores.

They dance around the room, gliding past the grey-blue walls, putting on a show before colliding and assembling themselves into a sharper image. The design has become crystal-clear; I can see the way a spotlight would hit it as it glides down a runway. The battle strategy is simple now: in chaos the most beautiful things emerge from their hiding places.

And so, the frenzied foray into hostile territory begins. The white mesh is draped around the hips, pins fixed in place, a train? Yes that's it, and maybe some peach lace on top. The scissors make their first gash in the seamless fabric sea. A definitive snip, followed by the silent piercing of the needle. It weaves in and out of the mesh, its encroachment subtle but crucial. These textile swaths give way easily to manipulation, they know that there is potential in them. They sway sensually in the occasional draft from the open window, but otherwise let themselves be made-up and fussed-over: prima donnas before the opening night at the 1683 Vienna State Opera. Blissfully unaware of the impending siege.

When the cuts become too deep, they will begin to resist, crumpling and fraying, realizing the irreversible changes I make to them. But for now, they are the clay and I am the sculptor. There is no room for compromise here. More incisions are made. They are precise and thin, but significant. In them I will hide metal rods, sturdy enough to give the top some shape while flattering the model. I lift the glue gun to the aluminum. I need to work faster now. As the thin, translucent strand of adhesive seeps on to the fabric, I have a sudden moment of doubt, briefly questioning the merit of this decision.

Katalina Toth
Penned with Heart 2019-26



What if I end up deciding I'm not that enamoured of the corset look? What if the model doesn't fit the exact measurements and I have to rip them out and start over? That would be a nightmare. A drop of sizzling glue hits my palm and I jerk back to reality. Don't question, just do. I'm more brutal now, sparing not a single inch of fabric from scrutiny and the threat of interference. A dart there will bring in the waist, a pleat there will give the skirt more volume.

As I apply the beads to the tamed mesh, there is nothing else in the room, nothing else in the universe but the scalding heat of the glue gun tip, the warning prick of pins that hold everything together, and the slight crumpling noise of the embellishments as they nestle themselves in the cocoon-like pleats. Each one finds its little place, insignificant on its own but essential to the whole. The components have ceased their resistance, they fit together like a puzzle, intended for each other. Maybe they have given up, maybe they appreciate this purpose. I stick the needle back into its pin cushion and tug the glue gun from its outlet, my eyes never leaving this creation. There is a slight smell of burnt rubber in the room from the melted mesh behind the beads, but my nose has adjusted and I frankly wouldn't notice if the carpet lit on fire.

As I take a few steps back, I feel satisfaction and pride as if I had birthed this cloth baby. The war is over, the chaos has subsided and in its wake stands this dress, a snapshot in time, a representation of whatever creativity and inspiration I had in that moment. As quickly as it started, it will soon be unceremoniously removed and tossed in a pile with the others. It will have to wait for its moment of glory while I begin again.

A Symphony of Stories

by Eliana Pantazopoulos, IIIA

The olive trees watched us as we walked towards my grandparent's abode. They whispered to me the stories of my ancestors. They were the nearest thing to a flag that stood in the rolling landscape of the Peloponnese. The wind serenaded me with patriotic folk tales. The house stood, tall, stubborn and strong, like the people who built it. Walking towards it, I could almost feel the hope and struggle that stood with it.

The house was two stories tall with peeling paint covering the exterior walls. The balcony's wrought iron railings coiled and shaped themselves into the roads that my grandfather built when he was twelve. The interior transported me to 1987, like a time capsule to the year it was renovated from its former dilapidated state. I was expecting to be punched by a musty, old smell but instead I was struck by a fresh, well-kempt scent. The long windows displayed the awe-inspiring view of the cliff. They were like movie screens, slowly transforming the landscape into the biographies of my Yiayia and Papou. I stopped there and watched my grandfather's sister being taken away to work as a servant and his outrage when he found out where she was. I saw my grandmother, being forced to be a maid for her abusive godparents. I saw the determination in their eyes to make something better.

I continued through the house and came upon the kitchen. The bright lights mixed with the sunshine to illuminate the future, but the past continued to lurk in the shadows. The sombre cupboards opened and recounted the stories of the times they held nothing. The account was vivid, and in those jars of finely ground spices, I saw the dust from concrete flying through the air as my grandfather worked through the day with a broken and infected foot.

Up the creaky stairs were the bedrooms. I walked through the hallway peering into them and looked at the intricate, handmade lace blankets which enveloped each bed in a warm embrace. I walked into one and sat on the bed. The soft creak and aggressive springs spun a tune that recounted the story of my grandfather's homelessness in Athens. His lack of a bed, his cardboard shelter, his hunger. I sat on the bed thinking of these stories, and I pondered my own life, marvelling at how different it was.

I felt my eyes well with tears. How could a house evoke so much emotion? I realized that it was not the edifice that warranted this poignant reaction, it was my grandparents. Their stories shaped my family and gave us the opportunity to be where we are today. If it was not for their suffering and determination, I would not be standing in the four walls of a building that represented so much. It was not the walls themselves that stirred these emotions, it was the harmonies and hymns that they sang that made me cry.

I Am

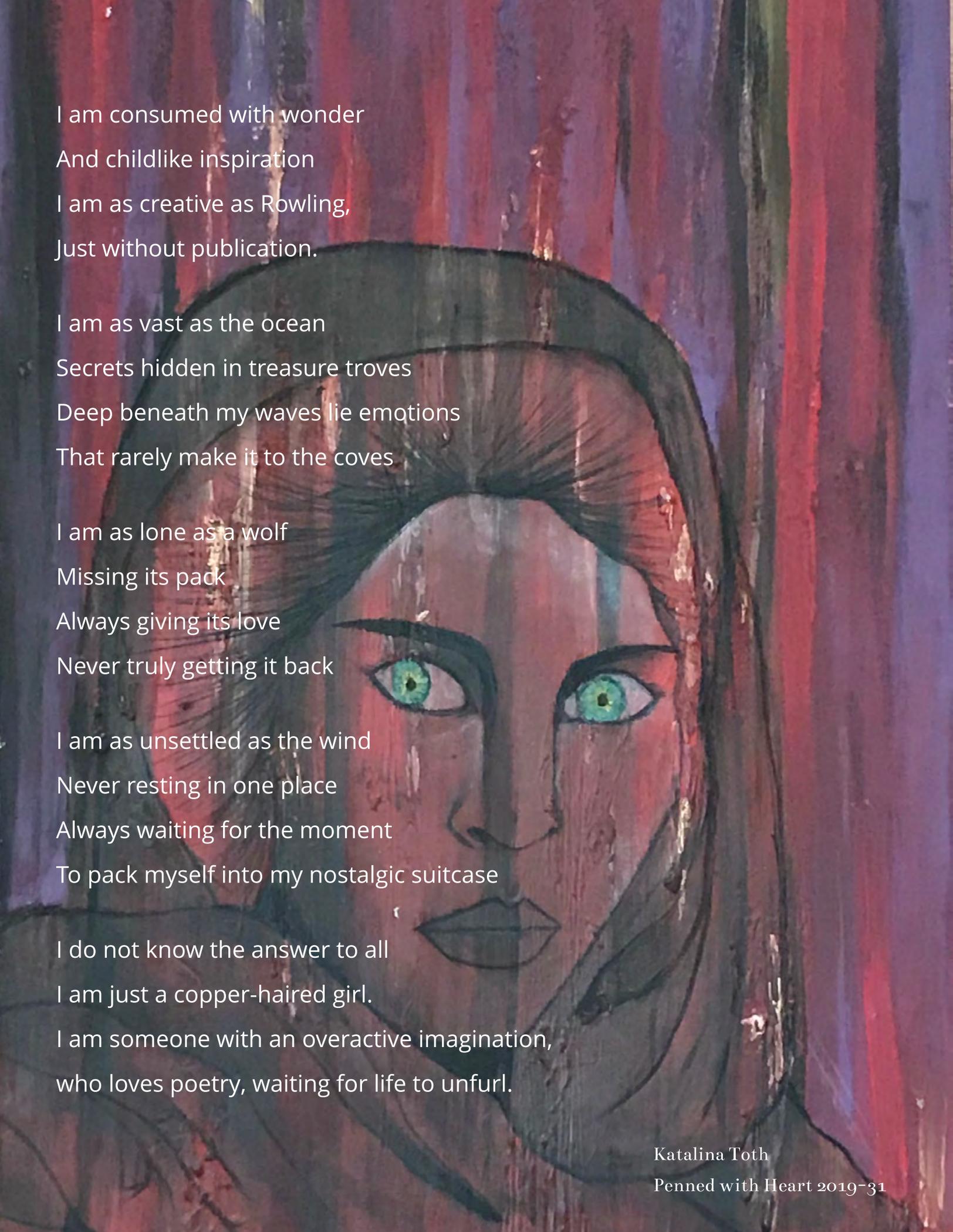
by Isabel Blin, IVB

I do not know the answer to all
I am just a copper-haired girl.
I am someone with an overactive imagination,
who loves poetry, so let's give it a whirl.

I am known to be red as fire,
As white as snow,
As purple as orchids,
Or as golden as the sun's glow

I am always falling down like raindrops
but rising up like the sunrise
Someone who is never discouraged
But always tries

I am a giggle
Leaking from childish lips
Hushed by a scolding age
Innocence taken in strips



I am consumed with wonder
And childlike inspiration
I am as creative as Rowling,
Just without publication.

I am as vast as the ocean
Secrets hidden in treasure troves
Deep beneath my waves lie emotions
That rarely make it to the coves

I am as lone as a wolf
Missing its pack
Always giving its love
Never truly getting it back

I am as unsettled as the wind
Never resting in one place
Always waiting for the moment
To pack myself into my nostalgic suitcase

I do not know the answer to all
I am just a copper-haired girl.
I am someone with an overactive imagination,
who loves poetry, waiting for life to unfurl.

The Unknown

by Amanda Emblem, VB

We live in the age of the impossible. An age where concepts that some might only have been able to dream of centuries ago, are now routine and natural. We travel in winged machines that propel through the sky. We've immunized populations through a tiny injection into the arm. We've seen man step foot on the moon and chimpanzees be taught sign language.

However, with these great discoveries, there will always remain the questions that even the brightest among us will never be able to answer. Questions no group of clean cut men in lab coats will ever be able to fathom. These are the profound, abstract, philosophical ones. But if we can figure out how to fly to space and cure the plague, why can't we figure out the meaning of life? Why we're all here? What are our reasons? There is no definite answer, yet in this day and age, that can't be accepted. The term "unknown" has become a foreign concept.

When we don't know something, we instinctively google it. And when that answer isn't readily available at our fingertips, when that answer isn't something that can be easily summarized in an online article, we're ready to accept any faulty explanation that will let us sleep at night and refute the idea that when it comes to an answer, your guess is as good as mine.

But why is the unknown such a strange and frightening idea? Why does humankind have this inability to accept uncertainty? This fear is ingrained in our species. Whether it be asking someone out on a date, waiting to hear back from an employer about a job, or presenting a speech to a crowd of people. They can be our worst fears all for one common reason. Their outcomes are unpredictable. The results can't be anticipated. There's no formula or manual. It's a small taste of the mind-boggling, perpetual, infinite world of the unknown.

There's no true mystery in any other aspect of our lives. We are assigned a name and gender at birth, with rough expectations for our future already decided by our parents while we're still in diapers. Once we're old enough to make our own decisions, most will strive to go to prestigious universities, pursue an impressive career... But then what? Well, we can start a family, with someone who makes our life feel complete... But then what? We can be selfless, kind to other, donate to charities.. But then what? This is when that fear kicks in. We can have everything seemingly sorted out, but there will always be the "Then what?" in the back of our minds. This is the point at which most would rather accept anything, than sit with the discomfort of not knowing. How much easier is it just to hear "your role on earth is to reproduce and be kind" than to have to find your own meaning? Now you may be asking yourself, well then, what do I do? What is my reason, my point? What is the answer? And frankly, there isn't one.

Any professor, holy book or encyclopedia can try to lead you in a certain direction but at the end of the day, that “then what” has more possible responses than any Google search ever will. It is yours to question and challenge. The day you start fearing the unknown is the day you enter a lifetime of ignorance, the day you step into darkness. Although that darkness may be comfortable, it will never bring you any closer to truly figuring out that “Then what?”.

In a world where nearly every question has an answer, shouldn't we grasp the opportunity of questions still left to figure out? But we don't grasp it, we fear it.



The Impossible Flood of Memory

by Tianxin Fu, IVA

The afternoon bus was crammed with passengers who had just ended their day of work or study. Eagerly sharing their experiences with their companions, the whole bus was brimming with casual tête-à-tête. The peaceful relaxation awaiting them back home seemed to have suddenly revived their souls tormented at work or school. A humid whiff of the stench of perspiration mixed with deodorant crept up my nostrils like a professional rock climber. The lingering smell bobbed up and down in this confined space, like the genie in his magic lamp, anticipating his day of release upon the arrival of his first master.

After just sacrificing my cosy seat for a pregnant lady, I joined the mob of standing passengers. As I grabbed on to the overhead “handle,” the discomfort from my grip manifested into a faint throb and for a split second I contemplated the possibility of my heart migrating to reside in my palm. The plastic strip served little assistance in maintaining my balance, so I gave up any form of resistance and swayed with the mob. At every turn of the bus, we swayed in unison, reminding me of the waving fluorescent wands at a concert. The gliding red letters announced the next stop. With still three stops until my destination, I decided to play some music. Letting the nostalgic melody of “Carousel” drown out the boisterous buzz on the bus, I allowed my thoughts to drift back to childhood times.

My first time riding on a carousel was when I was five. Even before approaching the turning pavilion, the ecstatic melody drifted into my ears. Small bobbing heads forming a long queue in front of the carousel, shielded my vision. Driven by this “supernatural” force later known as “mob mentality” I approached the carousel, enchanted, like the disciples being summoned to Jesus. Peering above the impenetrable human wall, my sight fell upon the canopy. With stripes of a wide array of colours, it was adorned with scintillating cartoon images. Though what really intrigued me were the children riding on the galloping horses. Smiles were plastered to their faces as they looked around with wide eyes, evidently on cloud nine. The display lights coated the children and the horses in a mysterious yet alluring glow of amber, exquisite like the Christmas presents behind the well-polished display windows. Children queueing in front gazed yearningly at the carousel, waiting eagerly for their turn. I joined the queue and anticipated the ride.

As the gate opened once more, children gushed in like a flood bursting through an embankment. I discarded any forms of resistance and allowed the swarm of children to sweep me inside. Loitering beside the carousel, I watched with a faintly amused gaze as others scrambled up, making a beeline for their favourite horses, like ants scurrying towards pieces of candy. I settled on the only vacant spot. With a high-pitched shrill from the command room, like the first bell signalling the start of class, the music began and the horses started to gallop.

A tinge of coolness coming from the saddle made its way up through my pants. The feeling resembled the school chairs children squirm on as a lecture drones on. Still, as I gazed around me, other children beamed with the same smile as those I saw before. Our horses galloped as one artillery, we were the cavalry boldly advancing on the "No Man's Land," our destinies unknown. I felt the corners of my mouth twitch upwards. The crisp laughter of children and the carousel music formed a soothing harmony.

Approaching the end of the song, an ominous feeling started to accumulate in my stomach. The carousel slowed its rotation and the horses slackened into a trot. As the music ceased the shrill call sounded again, like the last school bell signalling the end of the day. To my shock, the other children scrambled down as eagerly as they had arrived, without the slightest trace of hesitation. Chubby fingers pointed towards different equipment as they announced their next stop, written all over their faces was not nostalgia, but expectancy for the future. Their expressions were similar to those of my friends as they announced their transfer this morning. My lips parted slightly, the beginning of persuasion forming on the tip of my tongue, but no sound came out. The children followed on towards their different destinations. Soon the deserted carousel admitted new lively travelers. The familiar music played again and the carousel started turning. Still, my gaze followed the footsteps of the departing. The display lights still shone above, scalding my eyes and blurring my vision. A sudden jerk forward snatched me back from my ludicrous sorrow.



My head lurched forward, teeth snapping onto my tongue. Permeating my taste buds was blood like a melting metal armor, still telling tales of its master's legends. Gripping too hard at the plastic strip left two deep red streaks on my palm, like the trenches of a long-forgotten war. The front bus door opened, the chill of winter infused the room like mustard gas, banishing the remaining tinge of warmth. As I took a deep breath of the fresh air, the coolness penetrated my lungs, freezing my cells inch by inch. A gentle breeze caressed my face, making me aware of the wetness descending down my cheeks and disappearing into the curve between my lips. Nearby passengers stared at me, as if witnessing the reappearance of an extinguished species. The curve of my mouth conformed into a self-mocking smile as I shifted my gaze back to the descending passengers. Some got down at this stop while new ones came on. I glanced at the red letters; there were still two stops until I had to exit. "Carousel" had ended so I removed my earphones. The atmosphere on the bus remained boisterous with chattering. Yet I was alone.

J'ai peur des monstres

de Evagelia Rokas, IIIA

J'ai peur des monstres

Ceux qui sont invisibles à l'oeil

Plus silencieux qu'une montre

Ceux que jamais on n'accueille

Une molécule microscopique, une maudite mutation

Un nom que tout le monde craint

Un procès qui continue à répétition

Et finalement prend le contrôle du corps

Un dernier chagrin

Ce monstre, comme ses camarades, a un nom

Celui qui a tué mon grand-père

Un nom qui sent comme un poison

Et il s'appelle le cancer



Amanda Paterson

Penned with Heart 2019-39

Code vestimentaire

de Olivia Torralbo, VB

Madame, pardonnez-moi, mais je ne peux pas répondre à votre question parce que le t-shirt d'Antoine ne couvre pas complètement ses biceps. Monsieur le directeur, les culottes de Paul se voient et ma note finale d'algèbre souffre à cause de cette bande Calvin Klein. Voici quelques paroles que vous n'entendrez jamais sortir de la bouche d'une adolescente. Mais, alors, pourquoi est-ce possible de dire à cette fille que ses épaules ont le pouvoir de compromettre l'éducation entière d'un jeune garçon?

En 2019, c'est effrayant d'interdire encore aux filles de s'habiller comme elles le veulent dans un cadre où elles devraient se construire une identité. Comme jeunes femmes, nous sommes très influençables. Donc, comment pensez-vous que ces règles qui nous hypersexualisent à un très jeune âge nous affecteront dans le futur? Dès qu'on entre au secondaire, on nous dit que chaque courbe doit être couverte et que chaque signe de féminité ou même d'individualité doit être caché, et pourquoi enfin, pour l'éducation de nos camarades de classes qui ne peuvent pas se concentrer à la vue d'un genou? Est-ce que leur éducation vaut plus que la nôtre?

Il y a deux problèmes très évidents avec les codes vestimentaires des écoles secondaires. Le premier, est qu'il envoie le message que l'éducation des garçons est plus importante que celle des filles. Leur concentration et leur performance semble valoir plus que la liberté d'expression et la découverte de soi des filles autour d'eux.

Mais, pour quelle raison? Essayent-t-ils de nous dire qu'ils ont déjà priorité dans la société? Ceci nous amène, dès le début de notre éducation, un pas en arrière. L'autre problème qui se pose est que toutes ces règles semblent encourager la culture du viol. Il faut arrêter de dire aux filles ce qu'elles devraient porter pour prévenir ces actes odieux, et commencer à enseigner aux garçons, dès qu'ils sont nés, de ne pas violer. C'est simple. La longueur de ma jupe ne détermine pas mon consentement. Alors, si elle dépasse le bout de mes doigts ou pas, ce ne sera jamais de ma faute, ou de sa faute, ou de notre faute les filles, rappelez-vous de ça.

Une école jésuite avec laquelle la mienne est affiliée organise plusieurs danses, depuis très longtemps. Ce qui est surprenant est que, au courant des années, les règles vestimentaires pour les filles deviennent de plus en plus rigides. Une école de gars se donne la permission de dire aux filles ce qu'elles peuvent et ne peuvent pas porter. Cette année, les filles ont seulement le droit de porter des talons hauts d'un pouce. Je répète, un pouce. Tout ça parce que les talons plus hauts donnent l'illusion que nos robes sont plus courtes et que nos jambes sont plus longues. Il ne faudrait surtout pas qu'on ait des jambes. Comme filles, après notre torse vient tout de suite nos orteils. Il n'y a rien entre les deux.

Récemment, dans une école française, à Outremont, une fille de 16 ans s'est fait renvoyer à la maison car elle ne portait pas de brassière. C'était à peine remarquable mais elle s'est quand même fait humilier pour son corps.

The background features a collection of stylized, colorful female faces with various hair colors and styles. In the center, the text "THE FUTURE IS FEMALE" is written in a light, hand-drawn font. Below this text is a female symbol (♀).

Par contre, les adolescentes de cette école, ne pouvaient pas accepter cette atrocité. Elles se sont révoltées. Une étudiante a lancé son propre soutien-gorge dans une foule d'élèves pendant une cérémonie d'école. Les filles ont signé des pétitions, se sont exprimées sur les réseaux sociaux et ont même attiré des journalistes, ce qui a fait résonner leur histoire aux nouvelles. Les filles ont reçu une excuse de l'école et ont, toutes ensemble, eu le pouvoir de changer les politiques de leur école catholique.

Cette histoire inspirante nous démontre qu'en parlant un peu plus fort, en poussant les limites, et en se battant ensemble, tout est possible. Nous ne pouvons plus accepter des règles sexistes qui arrêtent notre progression non seulement en tant que femmes, mais en tant qu'humains. Alors, je ne veux plus entendre que ma jupe est trop courte, que mon décolleté est trop bas, que mes épaules sont exposées, et je ne veux certainement plus jamais entendre que je me ferai abuser pour ces raisons.

Snow at Dawn

by Rozanna Ralbovsky, VB

It is still falling.

It started last night, great wet flakes

Floating unhurriedly down to meet their sisters

On the sidewalks

On the streets

On the neighbour's car

The sun has not yet risen when I step out into the snow,

The city's buzz muffled under its fresh white duvet

Branches wear their new highlight like beauty queens

Knowing the sun will rise soon and strip them of their ephemeral finery

I take my earbuds out to listen to the silence

Lights come on in neighbour's windows

Soon they'll come out,

Warm up cars,

Rumble off to work,

But for now, my footprints are my only companions,

Following loyally everywhere I go

Dry Spell

by Apollonia Griffin, IVC

I am a peaceful storm washing away the bridges of hardship with my aggressive tears, a serene psychopath.

I wonder why the ambiguous Earth goes round and round, unsettled into motion by its submissive thoughts.

I hear thunder in the darkest corners of night. Not afraid but alive, liberated by the nadir.

I see a harbinger of lightning glittering in my room, concussed from what is to come next.

I want the umbrella held over me by a god, a pinky promise sheltered and unbreakable, to shadow heavenly belief, to protect her from the storm that I can't control.

I am a shy rain throwing down my love in whispered droplets of water, never ready to let myself pour.

I am a peaceful storm washing away the bridges of hardship with my aggressive tears, a serene psychopath.

I pretend to be a flower, so easy to break, held in a palm that holds the ability to crush life and beauty. If a flower, I am a fatal foxglove or warlike wolfsbane.

I feel an aurora of butterflies in my stomach: pink, blue, and grass-green winged.

I touch the twinkling midnight stars which once entrapped my dreams.

I worry that we drink up the sunshine thinking it's never going to be exhausted but eventually it fades away with no warning.

I cry at the rise of dawn knowing that Eos's rosy fingers will bring another day without my garden of life.

I am a peaceful storm washing away the bridges of hardship with my aggressive tears, a serene psychopath.

I wish to smell the blissful ignorance of a young girl: a fragrance of pure summer.

I concede that when morning comes and my dreams fade away I am left with nothing but a half remembered image.

I wait for the day when you remember what you've done to belief.

I imagine when I was sick in my mother's arms, hearing her mellifluous lullaby whispering in the wind.

I believe when the darkest day comes and no hope is found, the eternal light will shine where it all began.

I am a peaceful storm washing away the bridges of hardship with my aggressive tears, a serene psychopath.

I understand the day we think we are free of ignorance will be the day we are so far in the cave that we won't be able to see our reflections on the wall.

I say it's okay to be "weird" like a lonely boy who reads till sundown through the dusty books he calls his friends.

I dream of standing on the stage of judgement fearless, waiting for my guardian angel to send down my wings.

I try to understand the discussions of destruction that break us, if only to piece the heart of glass back together again.

I hope the day my first-born comes into the world the extraordinary love I have for them will forever be unstoppable. The smell of baby powder and sweet honey touch of them lying in my arms.

I am a peaceful storm washing away the bridges of hardship with my aggressive tears, a serene psychopath.

ONE IN A MILLION

I am

by Catherine Mourelatos, IVC

I am like a **lightning bolt, bold** and outspoken

I wonder who will become the first female president

I hear the thunder **shouting** at me

I see my business **growing** into an empire

I want the world to be connected like the **thoughts** in one's mind

I am like a **lightning bolt, bold** and outspoken

I pretend that I am an opera singer when in the shower

I feel the weight of **Asia** on my shoulders

I touch accomplishment and prosperity

I worry that I will be stressed by the **mountain** of work I will receive at the end of the school year

I cry when someone I care about gets their **heart** broken

I am like a **lightning bolt, bold** and outspoken

I wish for world peace and gender equality

I concede the separation of migrant families

I wait for my favourite artist to release a new album

I imagine myself demanding higher salaries for female athletes just like Malala Yousafzai demanded that girls be allowed to receive an education

I believe that in 200 years, **flying** cars will be invented

I am like a **lightning bolt, bold** and outspoken

I understand that life may sometimes be as dark as the inside of a cave

I **say** if you believe and put in enough effort anything is **achievable**

I **dream** of one day representing my country by playing on the

Canada Women's National Soccer Team

I **try** my absolute best to be a good daughter, teammate, friend and
student

I **hope** for a **world** without **violence**

I **am** like a **lightning bolt**, **bold** and outspoken



The Dark

by Rozanna Ralbovsky, VB

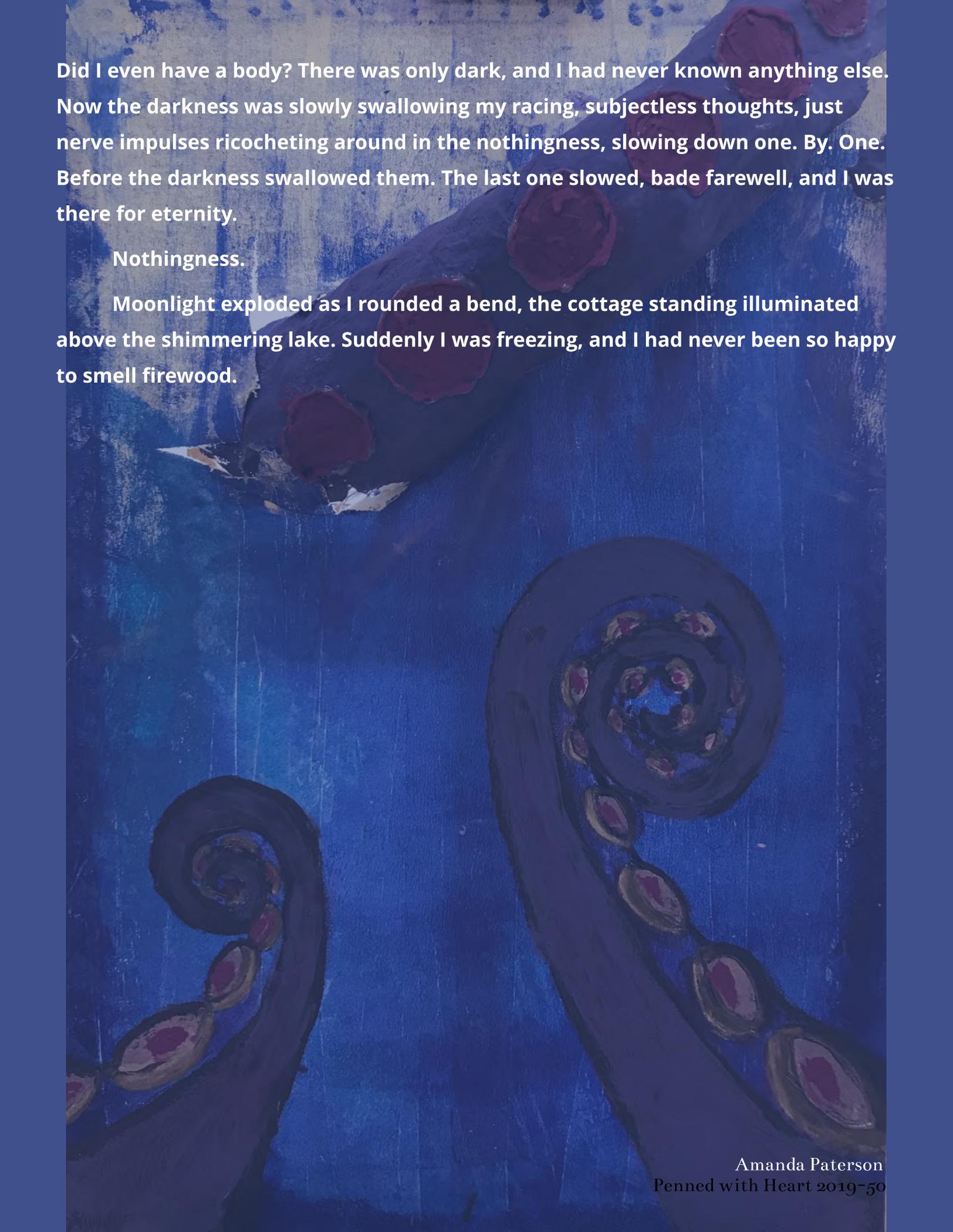
Maybe it was the way the trees bent over the rocks, like old people bent after a life of hard work has given them the posture of a question mark. Maybe it was the thought of not reaching the cottage by nightfall, and having to navigate the mountain roads that slithered up and down the forested slopes ceaselessly like snakes, each kilometer taking you further and further from civilization, in the dark. Then again, it might just have been that slightly suspect egg salad sandwich I bought at that *depanneur* right after the exit where I left the highway, leaving with it the reassurance of lights and road signs and plunging into the web of back roads. Here, the sun's dying rays stabbed the leafy twilight for a fleeting second before being swallowed by shields of green and brown and falling tamely to the forest floor, their exhausted light dappling the mossy stones and fallen leaves. Either way, an uncertain feeling was slowly taking hold of me as I dipped into yet another valley, where the sun no longer reached, and now it seemed like it had never known it at all. At one point, I paused to look up at the nameless peak before me, rounded by time but still shattered into grey cliffs here and there, like rips on its green jacket of undisturbed foliage.

The sun's last rays were retreating now, and it looked like they were burning the forest on their way, the trees on the top combing through the intense golden flood, giving the mountain a serrated halo. A few minutes of glory that would incur the envy of any fairy-tale king, before the sky bade its nightly farewell to the sun and turned to the moon, already visible in the darkening East, for guidance during the night. Here, in the valley, the trees already seemed to huddle together in the dark, and when you thought that you could not go any deeper, and the road must start climbing again, it dipped once more, as steeply as ever. Houses, already scarce when I left the highway, were now nowhere to be seen, and the only promise of life came from the mailboxes that popped up, by gravel offshoots further and further in between. Light from cabins, if there were any, was swallowed by the forest, as if it was in denial that it had ever been in contact with humanity.

Somewhere, though, there must have been people, as the smell of wood burning trickled in through the open window of my car, evocative of past winters spent in these mountains, somewhere further south.

This was the first time I had ever been this far north, and I would have preferred it to be daylight as I slowly made my way in the dusk, reality seeming to stretch further and further out of reach. The darkness seemed to fall not as it usually does in the city, gradually and gently, but rather wafted among the trees like wisps of smoke, slowly obscuring everything until the only thing I could see was the line of the road in front of me. My headlights, now on maximum brightness, barely cut through the thick, black, liquid darkness walling me in.

The uneasiness was growing, and the darkness seemed a living thing moving on either side, swirling and taking forms that disappeared before I could have given them names. I pulled up my window, not because of the chill of the early fall night, but because of the chill that was running down my spine. I knew that I was surrounded by forest and stone, and that all I had to do was follow the bit of road visible in my dimming headlights to get to the cottage. But this knowledge seemed less and less certain as time ticked by. There was no longer anything; all that was sure was that I was in my car. It felt as though I was not driving at all, but rather suspended in time and space, motor idling as I sat, hands on the wheel, a madwoman driving into the nothingness where time was of no consequence, if it existed at all. The silence was literally taking my breath, crawling into my ears, nose, and mouth, and I could feel it taking over my brain like a drop of black paint diffuses into a glass of clean water. It was gathering in my lungs, making it hard to breathe, and the only thing telling me I was still sitting in a car was the faraway sensation of the steering wheel under my cramping hands. Slowly, I could hear my heartbeat, growing louder and louder, and this was worse than the silence. I could have sworn that I could hear my internal organs, but there was no-one to swear to, just the darkness and the sound. Of. My. Own. Heart. I no longer felt the steering wheel. I no longer felt my muscles, hardened into place as I... sat? Stood? Floated?



Did I even have a body? There was only dark, and I had never known anything else. Now the darkness was slowly swallowing my racing, subjectless thoughts, just nerve impulses ricocheting around in the nothingness, slowing down one. By. One. Before the darkness swallowed them. The last one slowed, bade farewell, and I was there for eternity.

Nothingness.

Moonlight exploded as I rounded a bend, the cottage standing illuminated above the shimmering lake. Suddenly I was freezing, and I had never been so happy to smell firewood.

Twisted

by Sofia Buggé, IIIB

He is a madman on the loose

Impossible to catch

Or so he thinks.

He is used to it

It chases him every day

The phonies

The corny ones

The ones that twist your mind

Like a double knot

A knot that is so complicated

One that you cannot untie

And bring it back to its original
state

It drives him crazy

What does it take

For a person

To just be real?

Un accident dans ta pupille

des élèves du cours de français langue
d'enseignement, troisième secondaire

Tu avais dans les yeux
le torrent des cascades
l'étincelle du joueur
quand le filet est désert
le sourire mystérieux
des passants sur Sherbrooke

j'étais aussi conne
que mille chiots au son d'un
sifflet

mes mots rigolaient en
casse-tête
mes yeux dansaient sur la
transe à la surface
dans ton regard
comme les *glitters*
qui flottaient sur le lac
quand le soleil se levait
encore



à présent tu es devenu
une image de maison
incendiée
une photo de mon
coeur tombé
en pleine face sur
l'asphalte
mon coeur les dents
cassées
un *flat* mon coeur
rebondi

The Not So Near Miss Car Crash

by Clara Hilbchuk, IVC

My second behind the wheel lesson. Old, rusty car, squeaky brakes. Breathing in and out. Slowly, but at a good pace. Not too fast, though. Just in... And out... Calm. Just like my instructor Jack, sitting, or slouching, patiently, but slightly annoyed, to my right. In the span of seven seconds: scanning in front of me, 45 degree angle, just like I practiced. Next, check my mirrors. Two seconds for the rear-view mirror, two seconds for each side view mirror. Now for the blind spots. Tricky... Especially on the highway.

All of a sudden, Jack tells me to change lanes. I check my blind spots. First shoulder and second shoulder. Good. No one there. My indicator is on, green light blinking on the dashboard. Could anyone be stupid enough to zoom past me? Last few seconds to make my move. No hesitations here. Shift the steering wheel 5 degrees to the left. Great, done. Just gliding forward with traffic, approximately 78 kilometers per hour in an 80 zone. I look around outside, but still paying attention to the road. This is a milestone. I take another deep breath. I am aware of the bare, grey trees and polluted grass next to the road zooming by the old, finished Toyota Yaris.

The smell of stale smoke mixed with sweat emanates from Jack. I am in the zone but, again, he barks out an order. I get scared and my knuckles whiten their grip on the steering wheel. The car shifts a bit. "Sorry.. You scared me..." I say. He repeats in a monotone voice to get off at the next exit. I move to the proper lane, just in time to make my exit. Seven seconds. I check everything. Flashers on, I move the car. First second; red car to my right edging a little bit into my blind spot. How could I not see it? Second second; Jack isn't paying attention, but I don't want to bother him or make a fool out of myself. Third second; the red car scares me as we almost hit. Fourth second; it swerves. Left right left and now it just keeps coming left. Fifth second; I lose control, Jack jolts in his seat, looks around and realizes that the old car that he loves so dearly is out of control. He immediately pushes down on the safety brake on his side of the car and it takes exactly 14 seconds to come to a complete stop.

The smell of burnt rubber emanates from the tires and whooshes into the car like when you open an oven door and the smell of burnt cake overpowers everything else.

I look over at Jack; he is already looking at me. Eyebrows up, shocked, sweating like he just finished pulling an airplane to an emergency stop. I try to speak, but my mouth is very dry, and proper sentences don't come out. Random words. "I.. Umm.. S-s-sorry.. His f-fault..." He doesn't say anything. His head turns very slowly to look at the damage I've done. Horrible. We are in the ditch to the left, and the infamous red car is about 10 feet, to my right, just sitting there. I decide to open my door, while Jack tries to collect himself, and my lifeguarding instincts kick in. Go check if everyone is okay. I walk, or limp rather to the red car and see a young man, conscious, looking around as though ready to flee. Does he know it was his fault? He sees me in his rear-view mirror. I am just standing there, ready for anything in case he get mad or scared or something. I look back at Jack and see that he is on the phone. Could he be calling the police? I turn around, because I hear the red car moving. He leaves. What a jerk. I could've been killed. No instinct to pull out my phone to snap his license plate; I am in shock.

Jack comes and stands besides me. "It wasn't your fault" he says. I am not relieved whatsoever. I think to myself: I am happy I'm not dead, but what will happen next?



Mariana Aguirre

Fateful Day

by Lorena Migliorelli, IIA

What a wonderful vacation I had. I wish it had never ended, but I was so eager to get back home and see my mother. Oh, how I missed her and how bad I felt for spending my last week of Christmas break here in this heaven of warmth and sunshine. It was a lovely day in Florida, and we were moments away from being called to board. For some odd reason I was thrilled to see snow again. I could sense the excitement from my father and siblings too.

However, I also felt a dark premonition trying to tell me something but I just couldn't grasp what it meant. It just seemed like everything was going fine and so what could go wrong? Up until an odd sensation of the floor trembling just out of nowhere. Almost felt like a herd of rhinos was about to come flying by. Instead, it was a herd of humans. Each and every one of them with a petrified face. Women grabbing their infants and running. Everyone screaming, but I was baffled until I managed, out of a crowd of more than a hundred people to hear that one man say "Run! Shooter!"

All that happiness and optimism, all fell to grief and sorrow. Honestly, I didn't care about the pain and the despair, all I cared about... was getting out of there... NOW! The feeling of people stepping on your back and fingers, didn't really matter. All I wanted was home.

The moment we got outside, felt like exiting a war zone. The best feeling of relief creeping down your neck and then slowly down your back. Maybe it is the worst time to say this, but I had never seen my father cry in the whole entire 11 years that I have been alive. I tried my best to think happy thoughts, mostly to get my brother and sister to calm down. The best I could come up with was the one and only, Ariana Grande. I tried getting one of her songs stuck in my head and surprisingly, it worked. I had the lyrics to *Dangerous Woman* playing on repeat in my head. I was still afraid to leave my father's side. I could declare this day the scariest one of my life.

The Sea in the Desert

by Carol Qin, VA

My father always told me that the most terrifying thing in the world is the complexity and unpredictability of humans. I was too young to understand his words back then.

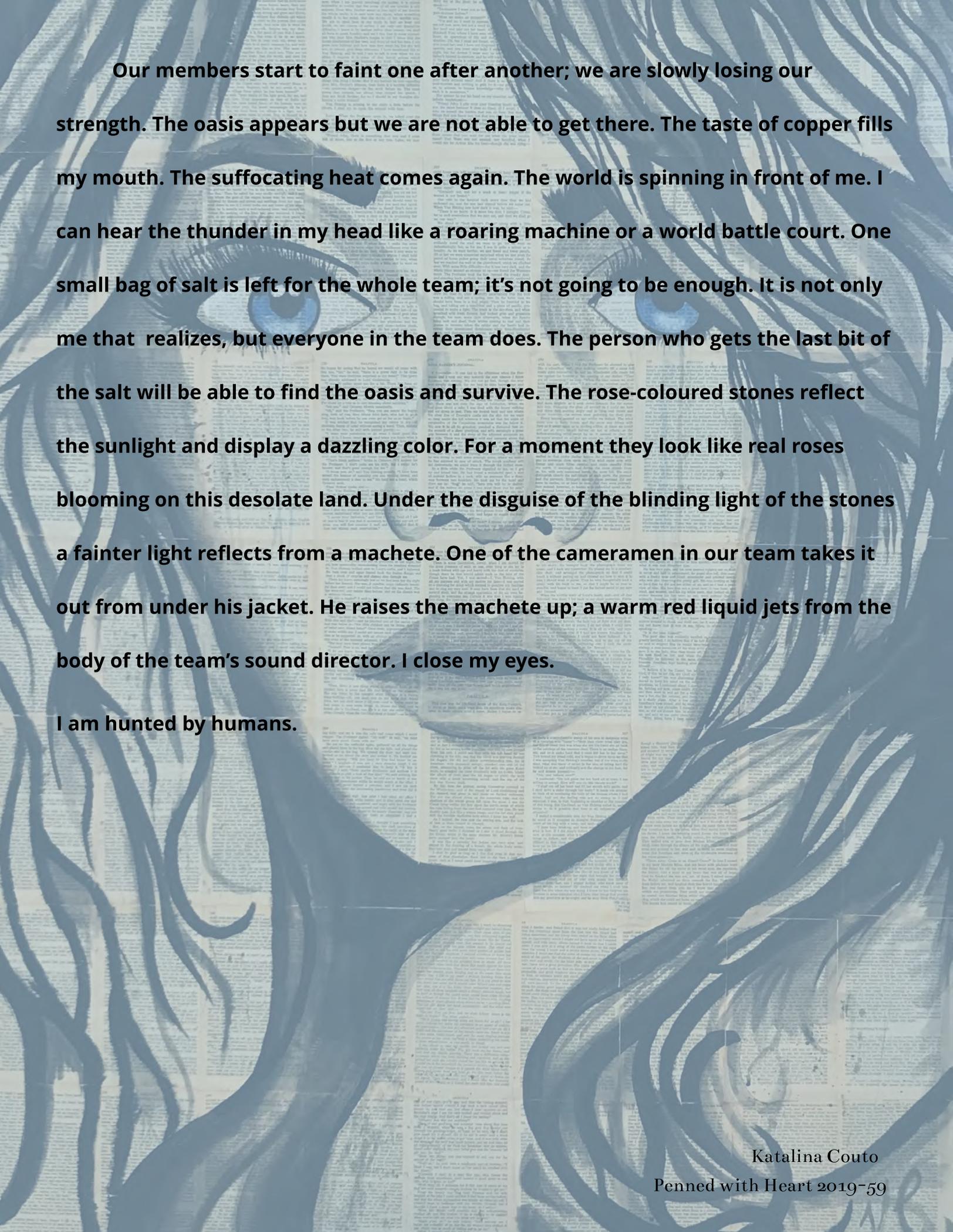
The desert looks endless. The sand stretches and seems to reach heaven, surrounding the unshaped crumbling rocks. A few plants are seen but I can only recognize the cacti, their leafless stems covered in prickly spines and sharp spikes that are not able to bring vitality to this desolate place. A huge canyon is formed in the middle of nowhere, hacks the desert into half and lies there like a scar. The sound of screeching eagles and baying wild dogs can be heard continuously, breaking the heavy silence of people who are tortured by the exhaustion of walking and extreme thirst and hunger. My team has been resting at the bottom of the canyon for two days. The severe weather and our emptying bottles are slowly wiping out our last hope.

This is the eighth day of being trapped. The wind is blowing over sandstones making a tearing sound that makes my ears bleed. It never stops howling and relentlessly gathers up the tiny granules, transforming them into dust devils. It feels like thousands of small knives are cutting open my bare cheeks every second and the canyon that we are using for shelter is unable to block the onslaught. The storm grows with an expeditious speed and power that can destroy the earth. I lose my vision for a moment; everything looks like a muddy blur through my goggles.

The dust devils consume everything in sight in a second, our tents, cameras, luggage and everything we have disappears in the wake of voracious wind.

Our team is left with nothing but a few water bags that we tied to our bodies when the storm came. The dust devils swirl across the canyon like rattlesnakes on the hunt. We lie down with our bellies deep in the sand, under command to wait for this disaster to go by, but still we lose two of our members. Accompanying the dust devils is an intense heat. The waves rise off the sand dunes like flames above a roof. Our bodies are roasted and my brain is fried like an egg from the blinding heat. The non-stop wind is also unbearably warm. I lick my lips but it's useless because my mouth and tongue are dry too. I can taste the copper in my mouth, but water must be saved for an emergency. All of this will end as soon as we reach the oasis, will our water be enough?

The rain soon begins to fall, the desert climate is so changeable that its visitors can never predict. It is not a heavy rain, but enough to relieve us a little. The rain beats a gentle tattoo on the dry creek and is absorbed in a second. The creek drinks like a newborn baby with insatiable thirst. We grab everything we have that can be used as containers and rush out in the rain. The dry creek soon starts to turn into a real stream as it relieves its thirst. The sea in the desert, the underground river is finally seen. We can even smell it, the cool fresh air that sends a gentle breeze from far away, the oasis. However, our fears do not disappear. We have enough water now, we can hunt desert foxes and other animals for meat, but what about salt?



Our members start to faint one after another; we are slowly losing our strength. The oasis appears but we are not able to get there. The taste of copper fills my mouth. The suffocating heat comes again. The world is spinning in front of me. I can hear the thunder in my head like a roaring machine or a world battle court. One small bag of salt is left for the whole team; it's not going to be enough. It is not only me that realizes, but everyone in the team does. The person who gets the last bit of the salt will be able to find the oasis and survive. The rose-coloured stones reflect the sunlight and display a dazzling color. For a moment they look like real roses blooming on this desolate land. Under the disguise of the blinding light of the stones a fainter light reflects from a machete. One of the cameramen in our team takes it out from under his jacket. He raises the machete up; a warm red liquid jets from the body of the team's sound director. I close my eyes.

I am hunted by humans.

L'Odyssée du coeur

de Sarah-Nicole Di Paola, IIIA

Comme une bombe rayonnante

Tu es venu dans ma vie
Plein d'émotions scintillantes
Qui me remuent l'esprit

Aimer comme je t'ai aimé

A pu me causer tant de souffrance
Je n'ai pu savoir l'aventure
Dans laquelle je me suis lancée



Joelle Abouserhal

Penned with Heart 2019-60

Amour Infini

de Liana Cianci, IVB

Ma belle, quand je scrute tes yeux,
Ta beauté m'émeut.

Et je me sens m'envoler,
Tu seras toujours à mes côtés.

Tu envahis mon coeur,
Il bat à cent mille à l'heure.

Tu incarnes mon rayon de soleil.
Tu es la raison pour laquelle je me réveille.

Tes yeux, ton corps et ton visage ravissant,
Avec toi, je me sens toujours vivante.
Mais c'est surtout ta personnalité,
Ta gentillesse éternelle et ta fidélité.

Chaque fois que je suis avec toi,
Je ne ressens que de la joie.
Tu es une étoile filante,
J'adore ton sourire brillant.

Je plonge dans tes bras,
Ton coeur entier me caressa.
Tu me prends par les mains,
Et me dis que ce n'est pas la fin.

**Mais que notre amour dure pour
l'éternité,
Il nous laisse tant de possibilités.
Je dévoue le restant de ma vie,
Pour nous deux, ensemble, unis.**

**Tout d'abord, nous étions juste des
amis,
Maintenant, notre amour est infinie.
Tu es mon astre du jour,
Reste avec moi pour toujours.**

**Je me sens morte sans toi,
Tu seras toujours une partie de moi.
Merci d'être mon oiseau du paradis,
Avec toi, mon coeur sera toujours
rempli.**

Orange Skin

by Emilie Shalhoub, VA

We didn't see it coming,

But come it did,

like a tsunami.

He was elected,

Shock,

Crying in the streets

The Apocalypse -

probably not coming

Still,

we don't trust the man

with the orange skin.

He says things.

Things that scare people,

not me,

You need to be a special

kind of stupid

to believe those...

LIES

Ivoire

de Isabel Blin, IVB

Il joue avec ses mains

Elle joue avec ses cheveux

Ils sont nerveux

L'angoisse les dévore

L'attente les tue

Un mystère découvert

Entre deux secrets amoureux

L'univers se suspend

Son fils s'approche doucement

Son mari tourne les talons lentement

Le temps s'arrête

Quand ils se scrutent

Ils savent que leur fantaisie est disparue

Ils ne se verront plus

Elle tient son souffle
Il regarde par terre
Leurs coeurs perdus dans la mer

Son fils est étonné
Son mari pleure dans l'autre chambre
La crainte les font taire
Leur condamnation flotte dans les airs

Le suspense éclate
Son mari a perdu raison
Il dit à l'homme de sortir de sa maison

La réalité s'installe
Son mari exige un divorce
Son fils ne lui parle plus jamais
La tension atteint des nouveaux sommets

Leur amour était comme de l'ivoire
Ça s'est brisé comme un miroir
Ils ne pourront jamais se sortir de leur mémoire

Cindy.Z
4.30.2019

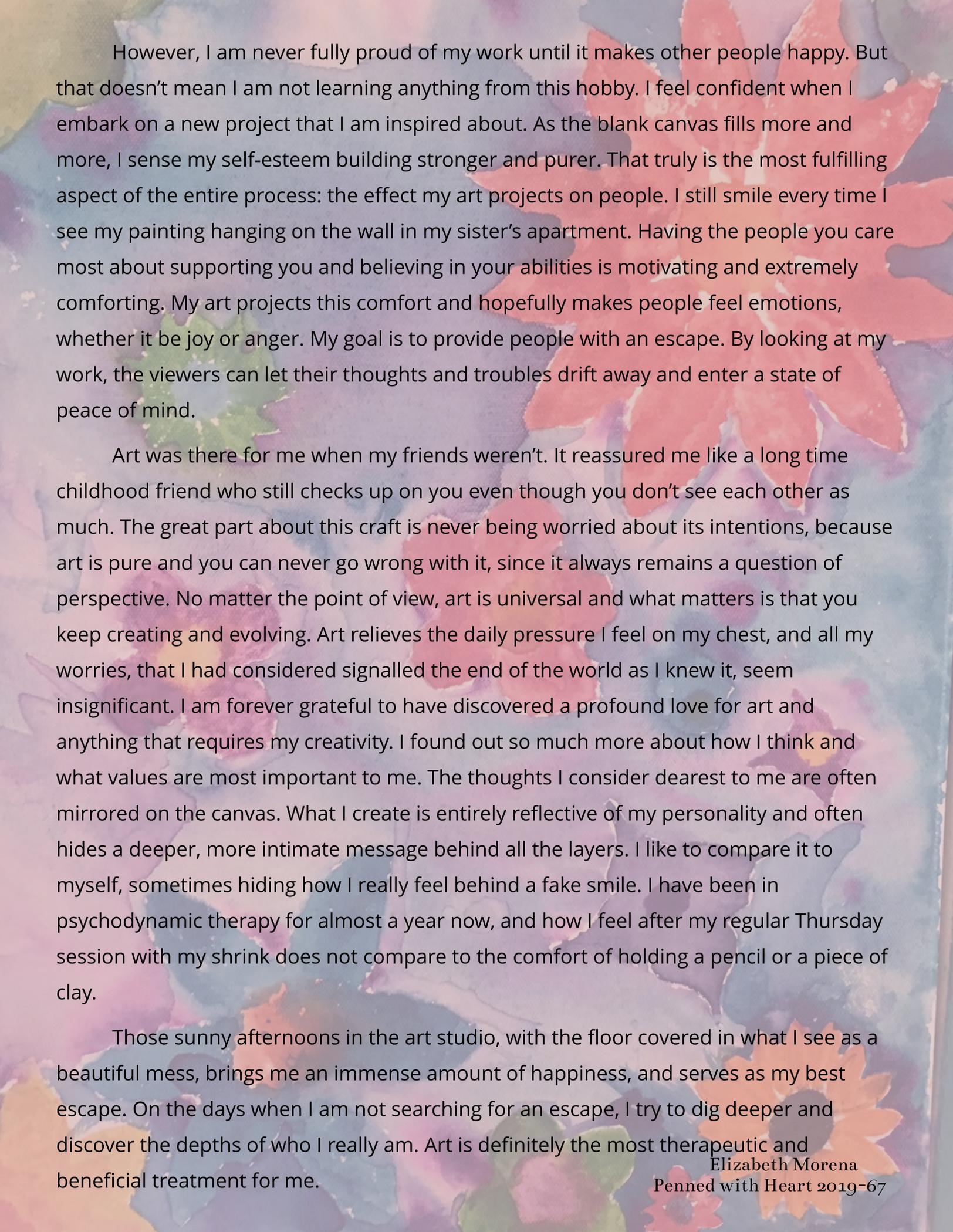
A Blank Page

by Laura Maréchal Houillon, VA

A blank page, like the one I am about to fill, is much like a blank canvas. At times it can be intimidating: not knowing how to fill the missing spots, worrying about how it will turn out wondering if it will be good enough. But it can also be the best way to express yourself, especially the emotions you internalize or the traumas you keep hidden, as if in a locked room inside your mind.

Art is like the key to that room. One day the room will not be able to withstand any more information that you tried so hard to keep hidden under the rug. This is where the blank canvas comes in handy, since you will indubitably need a new home for your soul. It is a fresh start, a free room, with zero judgement other than your own. Indeed my art reflects a better part of my soul, but that doesn't mean it won't be dark. Most people imagine that painting away your angst means a dark and gloomy outcome on the canvas. I can assure you that from the darkest thoughts circulating through my brain like a fast, freezing cold front, I have created some of my favourite and most colourful paintings.

Thus, as I look through old magazines ranging from the 1960s to the 1990s, I feel my mind making connections, seeing every detail in a photograph. The mind can be just as beautiful as the Head of a Woman by Leonardo Da Vinci. One's mind, unique as it is, can see one work of art in a completely different manner than someone else can. A message or theme that is so clear to one's perception, can be so blurry to another's. The good thing about it is that, no one can judge art, or say whether it is right or wrong, since it is entirely subjective. Yet I still always seem to want to make it good enough. But what does "good enough" even mean? Whose standards am I trying to reach? Art allows me to break those boundaries I call expectations, and just follow my mind and trust its visions. It is liberating, and incredibly exhilarating. It is like a rush of adrenaline, finding pieces of photographs or drawings and putting them together. The more magazine pages I flip through, the more ideas keep rushing through my mind. At times, I even find myself impressed with how creative the ideas I come up with are.



However, I am never fully proud of my work until it makes other people happy. But that doesn't mean I am not learning anything from this hobby. I feel confident when I embark on a new project that I am inspired about. As the blank canvas fills more and more, I sense my self-esteem building stronger and purer. That truly is the most fulfilling aspect of the entire process: the effect my art projects on people. I still smile every time I see my painting hanging on the wall in my sister's apartment. Having the people you care most about supporting you and believing in your abilities is motivating and extremely comforting. My art projects this comfort and hopefully makes people feel emotions, whether it be joy or anger. My goal is to provide people with an escape. By looking at my work, the viewers can let their thoughts and troubles drift away and enter a state of peace of mind.

Art was there for me when my friends weren't. It reassured me like a long time childhood friend who still checks up on you even though you don't see each other as much. The great part about this craft is never being worried about its intentions, because art is pure and you can never go wrong with it, since it always remains a question of perspective. No matter the point of view, art is universal and what matters is that you keep creating and evolving. Art relieves the daily pressure I feel on my chest, and all my worries, that I had considered signalled the end of the world as I knew it, seem insignificant. I am forever grateful to have discovered a profound love for art and anything that requires my creativity. I found out so much more about how I think and what values are most important to me. The thoughts I consider dearest to me are often mirrored on the canvas. What I create is entirely reflective of my personality and often hides a deeper, more intimate message behind all the layers. I like to compare it to myself, sometimes hiding how I really feel behind a fake smile. I have been in psychodynamic therapy for almost a year now, and how I feel after my regular Thursday session with my shrink does not compare to the comfort of holding a pencil or a piece of clay.

Those sunny afternoons in the art studio, with the floor covered in what I see as a beautiful mess, brings me an immense amount of happiness, and serves as my best escape. On the days when I am not searching for an escape, I try to dig deeper and discover the depths of who I really am. Art is definitely the most therapeutic and beneficial treatment for me.

I Am Tomorrow's Possibility

by Liana Cianci, IVB

I am a sea of sadness,
But a river of rage,
With a lake of loneliness,
But most of all filled with an ocean of love.

I am frightened,
Charged with the fear,
Of forgetting and failing,
Falling and folding.

I am a silent warrior,
Battling the ups and downs,
Goods and bads,
Pains and joys.

I am a champion,
Prevailing over my battles,
Embodying success, not failure,
Portraying victory, not defeat.

I am a bookshelf of fantasies,
Plunging myself into every story,
Every page turned, chapter read, book finished,
A new day goes by.

I am a powerful voice,
Unheard, but listened to by millions,
Unseen, but noticed miles away.

I am an ember in the ashes,
Not lost, but found,
Not in darkness, but in light.

I am not a finish line,
Every end of a race,
Comes with the start of a new one.

Every end of a day,
Brings about the possibilities of tomorrow.



Jasmine Lightfoot

Penned with Heart 2019/69

Is Racism Nature or Nurture?

by Chloe Miller, IIIA

Are you born a racist or is it something you learn to become? Can a baby be a racist or is it taught? These are all questions that come into my head when seeing headlines in the news like "White Supremacist Rally In Virginia" or "'Roseanne Barr's Show Cancelled After Racist Tweet."

People who argue that racism is something you're born with usually say it's the amygdala's effect in your brain that causes you to be racist, but that theory has been disproven on several occasions. The amygdala is a section of the brain that is responsible for detecting fear and preparing for emergency events. Psychologists have done studies that prove the amygdala only kicks in when you are fourteen years old and that having a diverse group of peers and cultural learning will outweigh the amygdala's effect.

Psychology Today reported that "In a famous study, both Caucasian-American and African-American subjects showed greater amygdala activation when shown black faces than white faces. The authors suggest that their findings implicate cultural learning rather than innate values as the cause of this response. In other words, African-Americans are taught by the dominant group to fear members of their own in-group."

In my opinion, racism is the act of being threatened by a certain group that isn't the same as you, so you try to oppress them to make you feel better. People are threatened by those who don't look the same as them or talk the same as them or who don't believe in the same things because they aren't exposed to them. So many different groups are oppressed such as members of the LGBTQ+ community, people of color, women and other minority groups. People of color are targeted by racists because racists are filled with this ignorance and hatred. However, you are taught to hate just like you are taught to love. If you teach people to love others for their differences and not to be afraid of them they'll usually not be ignorant and filled with hate towards different cultures, races and religions.

People often criticize the United States when it comes to topics like race, but Canada has its faults. In Canada, 1,409 hate crimes were reported to police in 2016, 48% of those were motivated by the hatred of a certain race or ethnicity group. The three cities that had the largest number of hate crimes were Vancouver, Quebec City and Montreal.

Another example is that people have looked down on Indigenous people since Canada became a country and we've made excuses like that was just the time period or they didn't know better. So don't you think that today we should know better? But how can we if we are never taught to accept people for who they are? **Another example is in war zones like Syria or Afghanistan, where young kids run up with toys that are actually bombs and kill people.** They do it because that's what they were taught to do, just like white supremacists and racists are taught to hate.

Racism isn't always these horrible newsworthy acts like a police officer shooting a black person for no reason, saying derogatory remarks towards a black person or the KKK attacking an African-American. It can be subtle like moving to a different seat on the bus because a black person sits next to you or assuming the thing you misplaced was stolen by the black kid because "he's black and they steal." Some people are taught to fear those of color and sometimes that fear develops into hate because you believe that they are a threat or they are stealing your job. These things are put into your head by parents, friends, family, teachers, political leaders, and the news.

Racism is real and alive; it's not something you just are, it's something you become after learning and observing other racists. I hope that when given the choice you choose to teach someone to love and accept rather than fear and hate. Racists feed on each other, but I believe that if taught acceptance and love most anyone can change.

The Day George Died

by Amanda Emblem, VB

Saturday mornings are an integral part of any childhood. They're a meticulously fabricated routine consisting of cartoons and cereal. With its artificial coloring creating delicate swirls of green, purple and red in the milk, I allowed myself to be immersed into the technicolor world of Fred Flintstone and Elmer Fudd. It was my moment of freedom, before my brothers woke up and came storming downstairs to change the channel.

I would always check on George during the commercial breaks. Today was no different. In the kitchen, daylight had begun streaming through the windows, warming the ceramic tiles under my bare feet. He was asleep, as he usually was in the early morning. I put my hand where a heartbeat would usually pound in a dull, but comforting rhythm. He felt cold. Too cold for a dog who had been lying in the sunlight, covered in a thick coat of black fur.

It's okay though, old dogs can be like that.

I continued with my cartoon marathon, trying to let the animated characters on screen drown out my thoughts. But one thought lingered, and it was one that couldn't be ignored. It was blatant and obvious, like a neon sign on the Las Vegas Strip. It filled my chest with a feeling of suffocating pain, like a cobra strangling its victim. It was a telephone that wouldn't stop ringing, its maddening sound filling every crack and void of my skull. *Ring, ring, ring.* It was tempting me to answer. Fortunately I didn't have to answer, as my mother broke the news to me.

I was never one to cry at movies, because at the end of the day, it was nothing but an imaginary world of invention. In this case too, I didn't sob and scream, or run into my room and curse the world, because this was a movie and I was just a viewer. Or so I told myself.

We choose to believe what we want. The facts are presented to us and whether consciously or not, we hand-select those that are easiest to accept. I knew perfectly well George's health was failing. His old age and daily suffering were no secret. But the truth that I couldn't manage to swallow was what I feared the most.

That morning, I didn't want to believe that I had lost George, because it was more than the loss of a dog, it was a loss of innocence. The bright, naive lenses through which I viewed the world had been ripped off and crushed in front of my eyes. If I were to acknowledge his death, it would be acknowledging that life wasn't all cartoons and cereal.

Life as a 9 year old had been fairly black and white to date. Each problem had been closely followed by a simple solution. When I was tired, I'd sleep. When I was hungry, I'd eat. When I was bored, I'd play. I hadn't yet encountered the grey area, in which a quick fix couldn't put any obstacle at bay. However, this simplicity and innocence that each child holds is fragile, like a crystal vase sitting at the tip of a mantle. As a child matures, the vase edges closer and closer to the tip, tempting the evils of the world to knock it over and decimate it. Mine had just been shattered, and there was no manual to fix it.



Apollonia Griffin, Gabriela Nicolau

Miseducation: from Cradle to Grave

by Katalina Toth, VB

A few weeks ago, I opened my New York Times app to discover that billionaires have been bribing college admissions officers to get their kids into good schools. In light of this discovery, it turns out that everything I've been told has been a lie. My teachers, my parents, they told me that if I worked hard, got good grades and developed my talents, I would succeed! Turns out, they were wrong.

But in the next 34 seconds, I'll elaborate on all the skills that I have discovered are actually important to excel in life. 1- Download photoshop. Who cares if you're really an excellent water-polo player, as long as you can pretend to be one! 2- Go yachting with people in high places. Maybe a renowned crew coach or a dean of admissions, you'd be surprised how much a boat can loosen up people's wallets. 3- Maybe you can't even be bothered to complete steps one and two, so just throw in 400 000 dollars to get the gears in motion, and you'll do great. The naive sucker that I am, I've been living my life under the false pretense that my hard work and determination were worth something in this world. How deluded I have been.

Now we all know that money doesn't necessarily buy happiness, but I'll tell you what money does buy: education.

For those who don't have the cash to begin with, many well-off schools offer scholarships for academically advanced, low-income students, but that's really just a band-aid for a bullet hole - essentially the equivalent of calling someone in prison and telling them that if they can break themselves out of their maximum security facility you have a birthday cake waiting for them on the other side of the barbed wire. A nice gesture, but it doesn't really address the main issue: in this case that from before they take their first breath, a person born below the poverty line is, in the vast majority of cases, barred from any upward mobility. The financial stress a low-income mother feels during pregnancy coupled with the impossibility of one-on-one childcare for economic reasons means that the child has a higher chance of having a learning or behavioural problem and of still being functionally illiterate by grade 3. That's the first problem, and here's the first solution: resources and mentoring programs for low-income families in the first 1000 days of their child's life. This has already been successfully implemented in South America, where poor, expectant mothers are given boxes of educational toys and books and are supported by a mentor who visits every ten days to help them and provide resources to expand the baby's fine and gross motor skills as well as their knowledge and creativity.

Unfortunately, early childcare isn't the only area that needs improving. Even though low-income youth have just as much talent and interest in arts, athletics and other extra-curricular activities as their richer peers, these fun and CV-building expenses are just too much for many schools in poor areas.

Thus, a child who could have gotten into a college based on participation in basketball, band and theatre now doesn't even have the opportunity to experience those pursuits. If you were a student at Spain Elementary and Middle School in Detroit, your gym was so full of black mold that all athletics were cancelled and gym classes consisted of walks around the hallways. Yeah. You get in a single file and walk the halls for an hour and a half every week. Next time I'm running 10 laps around our very un-moldy gym, I'll count my blessings. Not to mention, if you were educated at any public school anywhere in Colorado, your school week was reduced to four days because there simply wasn't enough money for that 5th day.

Now I know to a student here in Montreal, it might seem like 4 days instead of 5 wouldn't be so bad, but from the beginning of elementary to the end of high school, that adds up to 480 missed days of school, a huge amount of learning lost compared to students anywhere else in North America. So, if you went to an underfunded public school, you could graduate with little to no extra-curriculars, and over 2 and a half school years worth of catching up to do compared to wealthier college applicants, for reasons that were completely out of your hands. So, here's solution number 2: have the wealthiest colleges dip into their endowments which range from 15 to 36 billion dollars, and use even a small fraction of that money to support intelligent and creative low-income students who aren't getting the chance to exploit their own potential.

If each of the wealthiest 100 universities in North America gave 0.05% of their endowments to low-income youth instead of just investing it to preserve their title of affluence, that would be 245 million dollars for 200,000 mentors and boxes of educational supplies for low-income families, 3.5 thousand full time mental health specialists for kids with learning and behavioural difficulties, or over 1,000 gyms rebuilt and art programs restarted.

Maybe if we changed our priorities so that human beings became more important than capital, we could start living in a world where intelligence and integrity trump a yacht and photoshop.



Jessica Cristiano



Mariana C.

Mariana Aguirre

Penned with Heart 2019-78

