

Ergo

FALL 2020



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ERGO is the literary and artistic publication of Alfred State. It is funded by the Student Senate and is freely distributed each semester. Students, faculty, and staff of Alfred State are invited to submit their original works of art, poetry, and prose by e-mailing their submissions to Ergo@alfredstate.edu.

Our thanks to everyone who participated this semester and keep the submissions coming!

Sincerely, The Ergo staff

- Susan Perry

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When I was little, I got a black dog beanie baby in a McDonald's happy meal. I don't know why I became so attached to it but I did. I named it Nightingale and pretended that the little stuffed black dog would find himself in a series of strange silly predicaments. Once we moved, Nightingale got packed into an unmarked box that very easily could've contained anything from old sewing supplies that we'd never reopen, to the dismantled segments of Dad's drum set. Our new house had a lot more property to play on, more for a young boy to explore and keep himself occupied, so at this point Nightingale had almost entirely slipped from my mind. I spent most of my time away from my toys exploring the wilderness (the woods in front of my house), making houses (stick teepees) and hopping ravines (little ditches dug by little trickling streams). As I grew into my early teens, it became building fires, exploring the woods beyond the road, and camping out. When I turned eighteen, I spent a few months backpacking across Europe with my friends, and later traveled around California. When I got home from my travels, I learned that Mom had been going through some old boxes and found Nightingale. When I picked up that toy again, it was like holding my childhood in the palm of my hand, like time travel. The contrast between the history of that toy, and where I was then was significant to me. I now keep Nightingale in my desk drawer, right alongside my passport.

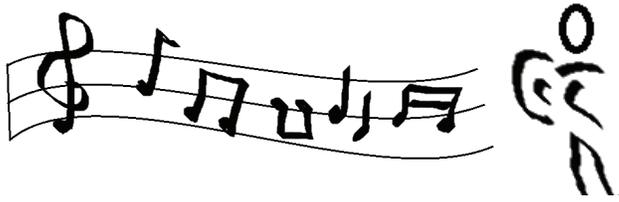
- Aidan Lindamond

Light Still Shines

- Bryce Warren

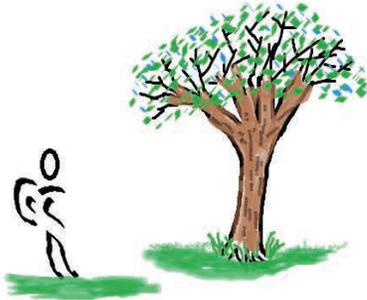
He starts his day as he normally does
Feeling sick and awful
His throat is sore, his muscles ache, and his stomach
hurts
He knows why he feels this way
He has been asleep
He hasn't had anything to drink and his throat is dry
His muscles are sore because he might have slept
awkwardly
Or he isn't as strong as he thinks he is
And he hasn't eaten in 12 hours
Of course, he should feel hungry
But his mind
The home of his demons
His Anxieties
When he wakes, so do they
And they twist his thoughts to those of darkness and
despair
Turning an otherwise smart person
Into a stuttering fool
His mind tells him that he is sick, he has always been sick
And it is only a matter of time before that sickness
finishes him
But, out of apathy, or perhaps courage, he rises himself
He takes a shower
He gets dressed
He takes his temperature at least ten times
In a futile effort to quell his fears
He then pushes through the day
Not wanting to eat for fear of his self-imposed illness
Not being motivated to work
Yet out of apathy, or courage, he pushes himself to do the
best he can

This is his normal
This is his every day
Fleeting happiness
Endless sadness
All Anxiousness
But that all changed one day
For him, another normal day
Sickness
Darkness
The clouds were dark and grey
A light rain was falling
It was soon turning to night
And he was walking home
Wishing he hadn't forgotten his raincoat
And he looked to the horizon
Despite the sky being full of inky clouds
The sun refused to be snuffed out
Its radiant light turning the otherwise bleak clouds shades
of orange and pink
And into the darkness
The horizon where the sun was leaving, and the moon
was rising
A complete rainbow stretching from one corner of his
vision to the other
And at that moment he realized
Even in Darkness, Light Still Shines



A Wanderer's Tale

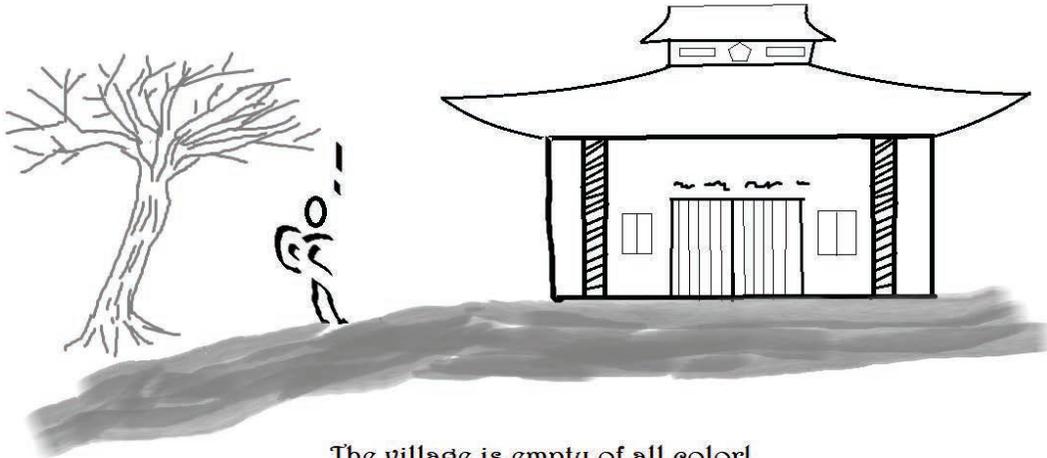
By Richard Acomb



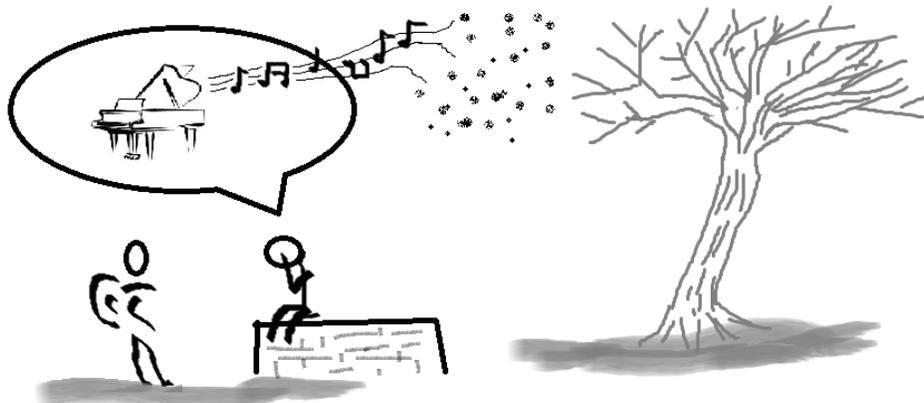
Once upon a time in a distant land, a lone wanderer admires the beauty of the landscape. The vibrant trees, the soothing fresh air, the warm sun. But the sweet melodies of singing birds go unheard as the wanderer can no longer hear.



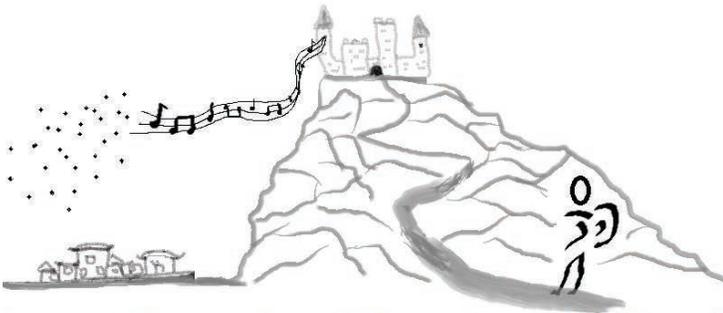
One day, the deaf wanderer comes upon a distant village, and notices something is not quite right.



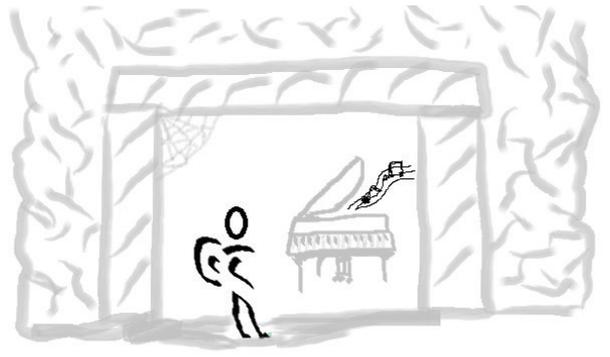
The village is empty of all color!
How could this be? asked the wanderer.



The wanderer then comes upon a villager sitting in sadness. The villager explains to the wanderer that there is a curse on the village which was placed many years ago by an evil witch. The witch had hexed a magical piano to play an evil song over the village for all of eternity, taking away all joy and color.



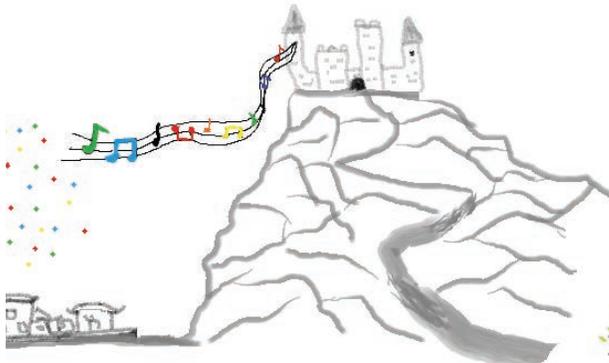
Immune to the cursed sound, the wanderer follows the path to the castle on the mountain, where the magical piano was said to be.



After searching and searching, the wanderer follows the vibrations and finds the magical piano.



At first the wanderer was unsure how to break the curse. The wanderer then remembers playing the piano as a kid, which brought happiness to everyone around. The wanderer begins to play the magical piano with joy and passion in every note.



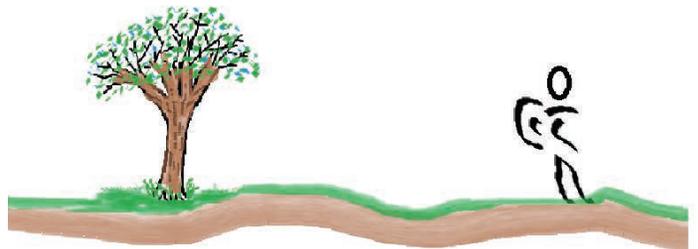
The wanderer kept playing and playing with compassion and joy.



Little by little the joyful sound makes its way across the land, returning happiness to the villagers who can barely stand as they whistle along.



Though the wanderer can no longer hear, determination and passion for music still prevail to break the curse.



The long wanderer wanders on, now hoping to share music and joy with the rest of the world.

Tears fall so slowly,
My heart is in two,
I look so expectantly,
To just seeing you.

But you disappeared,
Again, you go dark,
I am left crying,
The pain is so stark.

My heart is breaking,
My soul is a mess,
I'm filled with deep aching,
Inside of my chest.

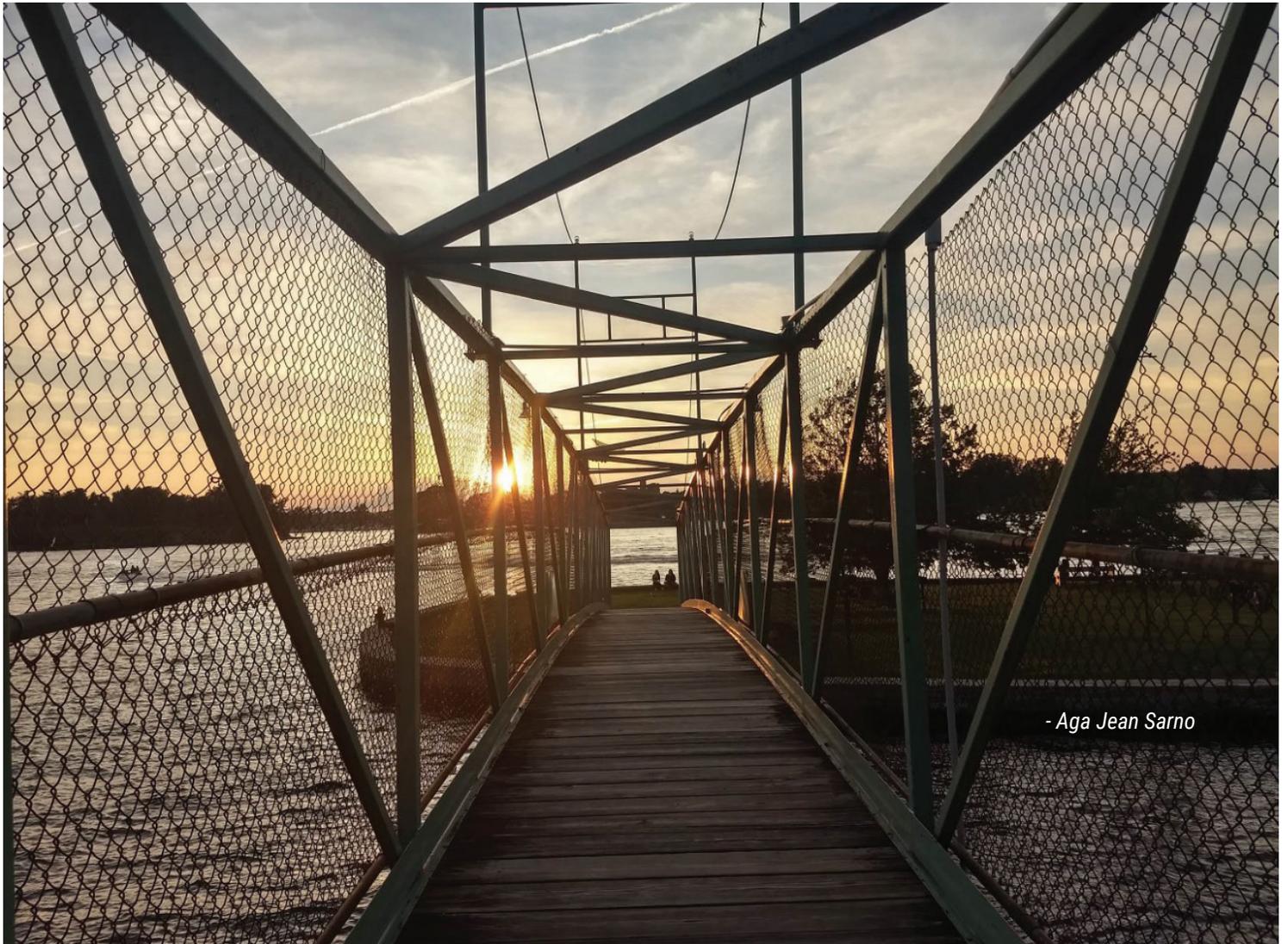
Somewhere you are sitting,
And I'm left alone,
Grieving a loss,
Of the love I have known.

- Mary Hribar

Brown Jacket

I got my brown jacket from the thrift shop, I didn't think of it much. It was a jacket to keep me warm, but it did more than that. My mom left me the summer before my freshman year of high school. I got evicted and lived all by myself in an apartment for two-ish months. I got a suitcase full of clothes and some essentials and was living in the streets. It was chilly, but the jacket was there to keep me warm, and it became my home. I still went to church and got help and lived around some of my friends' houses for a while. I kept moving around and the only thing that stayed constant was my brown jacket. Every time I moved to a new house, it seemed as if whatever family I lived with ended up leaving me behind. Whenever I get a house to live in, it never felt like a home, unless I wore my jacket. I never truly realized this until I noticed that I never wear anything other than my brown jacket. The families I lived with hated how old and ugly my brown jacket was and always tried to make me wear something more "fitting of myself", but I felt as if I was more myself with the jacket on than with it off. I am grateful for the families who took me in, but I'm sorry that their houses weren't my home. This jacket is what I eat in, sleep in, go to school in (of course I washed it), and lastly let it consume my sorrow and turn it to the compassion I needed to keep going with my life. I have many stories I could tell about how this jacket kept me going, kept me warm, not leaving me behind, but that's for another time. My jacket I don't wear so often anymore, but the jacket is still there hanging on my bedroom door in a house I call home. I walk by it every day, and it seems as if I'm walking by a friend who will be with me till the very end.

- Arnold Saint-Phard



- Aga Jean Sarno

INSOMNIA

Do you ever wonder why the depressed are so tired?

It is because sleep provides the only respite from an assault of the mind
A time where their thoughts are not bombarded by vulgarities unmentionable
A time where they cannot act
A time where they are at peace

The battle of wakefulness rages throughout the day
Fighting against their own minds whilst they carry out their duties
Pushing through a pressure that no one else feels
After their day is done
They have fought the battles of two soldiers
And have the pains of two widows
All centered on one soul

Sleep is their only respite
Their only way to combat their horrors
Their only way
To Survive

- Bryce Warren



I tend not to be a very sentimental person, but to this day I cannot get rid of my childhood stuffed doll. This faded green doll is stained and matted from years of attachment, and some might say it should be thrown away as I should be too old to care about stuffed toys. This stuffed doll, which I have always called "Dolly", has been a source of comfort for me throughout my childhood, and now I can say that my Dolly was my childhood guardian. Dolly has comforted me through surgeries, protected me from the scary darkness of the hallway, made me feel safe from the monsters in my nightmares, and helped me calm down after being grounded by my parents. I can't say that I still see Dolly as my guardian, but I recognize that she has once been such an important part of my childhood and is associated with many happy memories. Currently my Dolly lies unused in a bin under my bed, but I still can't bear to part with her, and I'm not sure I ever will.

-Anonymous

In a second life can change,
A heartbeat falling flat,
A second is all it takes,
And there's no going back.

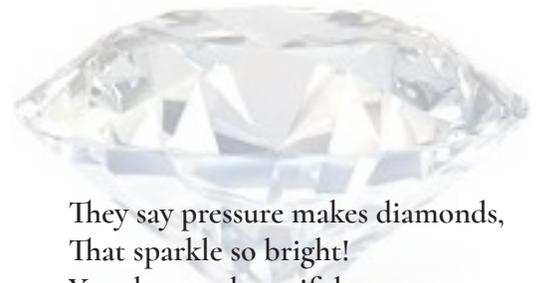
So much that is ended,
So much dies within,
But then the sun rises,
And a new day will begin.

So many tears will fall,
So much will come to pass,
But you will not bear witness,
You weren't meant to last.

A voice silenced forever,
That boomed and carried far,
A mind that was so brilliant,
So much lost and that is hard.

We'll forever remember,
You blessed us in our space,
And hope that you are happy,
In an even better place.

- Mary Hribar



They say pressure makes diamonds,
That sparkle so bright!
Yes, they are beautiful,
But their beauty needs light!

If you are diamond,
That's stored in the dark,
The true shine in your beauty,
Cannot leave its mark!

- Mary Hribar

I imagined sitting outside this wall,
For over fifty years,
My back against the roughed bricks,
My face a mess of tears.

Inside this tiny fortress,
Lives a frightened tiny thing,
A master of masonry,
Of peace the bricks would bring.

The first bricks laid so early,
In her tiny little life,
As she attempted to shut out,
Those she knew would harm her life.

Not being very worldly,
She slapped each brick to the ground,
Survival, she was certain,
Needed bricks laid all around.

The forthcoming layers,
Made the walls so much higher,
But still they tried to hurt her,
Always in the line of fire.

Alone did not seem to scare,
This frightened tiny waif,
The bricks she began to cling to,
To help her feel more safe.

When I arrived to find her,
In her fortress made of pain,
I tapped gently on a brick,
And softly spoke her name.

From inside the walls,
I heard a tiny sob,
Go away was all I heard,
Saving me is not your job.

My heart began to ache,
As I had endured half,
Inside that tiny prison,
Was a piece I needed back.

So, I set up shop,
As I began my adult plea,
I know what you have been through,
You are a lot like me.

I understand your fear,
That laid every single brick,
I understand your terror,
Of learning love was just a trick.

A trick to use your body,
A trick to twist your mind,
But if you give me a moment,
I can help leave it all behind.

You see, I've been a witness,
To all you've suffered through,
I silently screamed in horror,
As I watched what they would do.

Inside your tiny mind,
Are the memories I couldn't erase,
I'm so very sorry that I couldn't,
Put them any other place.

I saw the walls were building,
Around your tortured heart,
I saw that you were lonely,
As each brick drove us apart.

I know you housed the terror,
Of the monsters who were real,
I watched as you were tortured,
And I felt the pain you feel.

I know I had to be "normal",
No one could know the truth,
So, I shoved all my emotions,
Into your brick-encased youth.

Resting forehead on the stone,
My hand against the wall,
I willed my tiny victim,
To want to hear it all.

My mouth began to open,
As I tried to form a sound,
To let her know I understood,
As I slid slowly to the ground.

A tiny sob I heard,
Coming from within,
Yet still she remained quiet,
As I willed her to begin.

I'm sorry – I whispered,
What I did was oh so wrong,
I'm ok, she whispered back,
But I've been alone so long.

At first, I thought you'd come for me,
I waited every day,
But only monsters visited,
And my hope slipped away.

I willed you many times,
To hear my cries and pleas,
But moments turned to hours,
As pain drove me to my knees.

I ran out of bricks – she cried,
There was nothing left to save,
So, I closed my eyes, sank to the ground,
And I began to pray.

I prayed that I had endured,
Enough to bring you peace,
I prayed the horrid monsters,
Would only stay with me.

If I could not have sunlight,
If darkness was all I'd know,
I prayed you would have happiness,
As you continued to grow.

I'm tired – said the waif,
From in her roughened shell,
I'm scared, and I'm lonely,
And I'm really mad as hell.

From both of us stolen,
Something good and pure,
Replaced with pain and suffering,
We will never forget, I am sure.

From a place of love and trust,
They chose to inflict great pain,
They chose to paint a picture,
Of a world that looked the same.

The same as those around us,
Told us to never tell the tale,
Made me wear the silence,
Of their sick and twisted veil.

The terror left you outside,
To create me from within,
A place to shove the burdens,
Of their nasty evil sins.

You did what you had to,
And I hold no regrets,
That I stayed within my bricks,
And stored what you'd rather forget.

I thought you would be happy,
Live happy and so free,
But here you are now,
What do you need from me?

I only hold your pain,
I only hold your fear,
The sins of the past,
That you did not want near.

So now you are sitting,
Outside of my walls,
But if I take down the bricks,
You'll be swamped with them all.

The tiny prisoner stopped,
And silence filled the air,
And then I heard a frightened voice,
I hope you are still there.
Yes, I'm here, I whispered,
I've heard every single word,
I agree with everything,
Our life seems so absurd.

Together we feel everything,
But bricks keep us apart,
I'm mad because they stole my youth,
And a big piece of my heart.

We've lived in shame and sorrow,
Hiding from the truth,
I am now an adult,
But you are trapped in youth.

You see, you and I together,
Would make an awesome pair,
But here I sit outside these walls,
While you are trapped in there.
The tiny waif let out a sob,
Are you sure you want to see,
The scarred and broken version,
That is all that's left of me?

Yes, I want to see you,
I cried without regret,
I want to reunite us,
To make the best us yet!
You see, I am ready,
To see each tiny little flaw,
Because while mine aren't visible,
I've already got them all.

I want to join together,
We can hold our heads up high,
We are warriors, survivors,
And together we will shine!

Suddenly I felt a hand,
Pressed upon my back,
I turned my head and saw my eyes,
Tear-filled staring back.

Outside one would only see,
A woman in the dust,
But inside were two spirits,
Learning how to trust.

Amazed to see her before me,
I turned with careful ease,
And slowly I embraced her,
As she fell down to her knees.

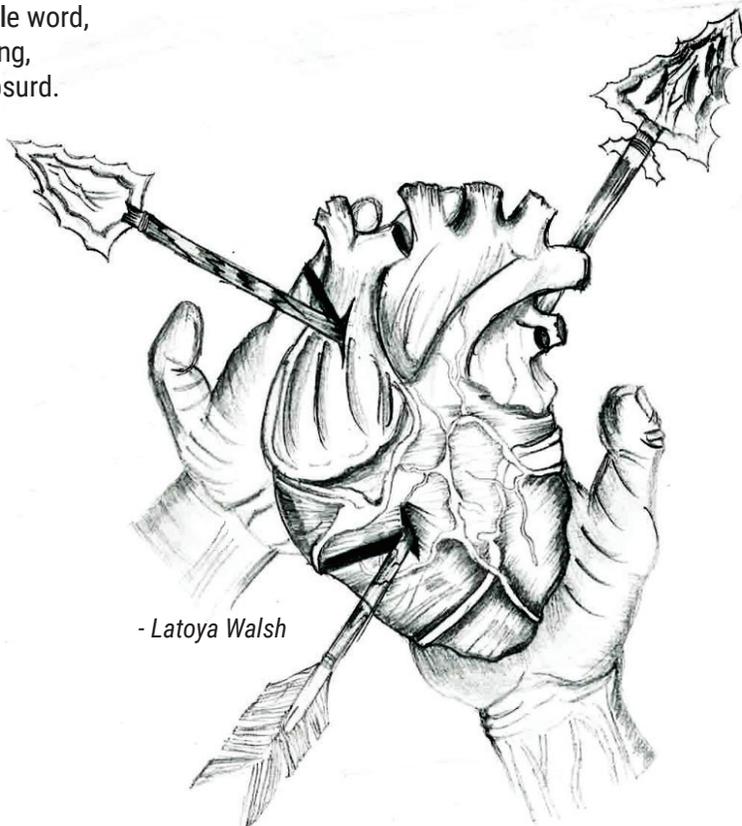
She squeezed so very tightly,
As I placed a kiss atop her head,
And we both exhaled together,
I love you we both said.

And suddenly I watched,
As a smile crossed her face,
I took her hand, grasped it tightly,
And together we left that place.

Since finding my missing piece,
My heart is now at rest,
The good, the bad, the ugly,
All mixed to form the best.

I am strong and vibrant,
The sparkle in my eye,
Comes from knowing I am whole,
My tiny waif and I!

- Mary Hribar



- Latoya Walsh

One of the greatest fictional heroes in the Marvel universe is Spider-Man.

He was never the strongest hero, nor the fastest, or even the smartest -- instead he was a great guy always trying his best to stand for what is right. So why would someone generally unspectacular be constantly revered and admired? He was so famous because of his underdog-like qualities, sense of righteousness in using his newfound spider powers for the good of humanity, and the ability to achieve the impossible even against all odds, so in truth he was everything a little boy wanted to be growing up. I especially thought that about him growing up, and I still aim to do that today. To me Spider-Man was the best hero ever created and I was such a fan that, at the age of four, my family gave me a Spider-Man stuffed toy that I held hands with everywhere I went inside the house. When I was young, I had social and physical issues in my life; I had a hard time with moving properly and speaking the way kids in my grade would speak, so in general I never had any friends. I really was angry at the world for giving me a difficult personality in a seemingly tough world, but when I looked at my Spider-Man toy I asked myself do I really want to grow up as an angry person or do I want to be like Spider-Man? The answer was obviously Spider-Man because to be him meant creating my own versions of good characteristics that I wanted for myself, to help others when they need help, and to not beat myself up too much whenever I felt like a failure. If I had stayed the way I was then I most likely not be where I am today. As I grew older, I knew I could not carry Spider-Man around the same as I used to, but no matter what I still had the same attachments to the toy as I had in the beginning, so instead of putting Spider-Man next to me in my bed I started to place him on a shelf-like mantle to look up to and remember the man I want to be. On that day I let go but will always remember something important to me. When I placed it on the shelf I made a promise that when I have a son I want to give him my Spider-Man stuffed toy in hopes that it will help him in his times of need -- or whenever he needs a hero's guidance -- like it did for me.

- JJ Solano



- Aga Jean Sarno

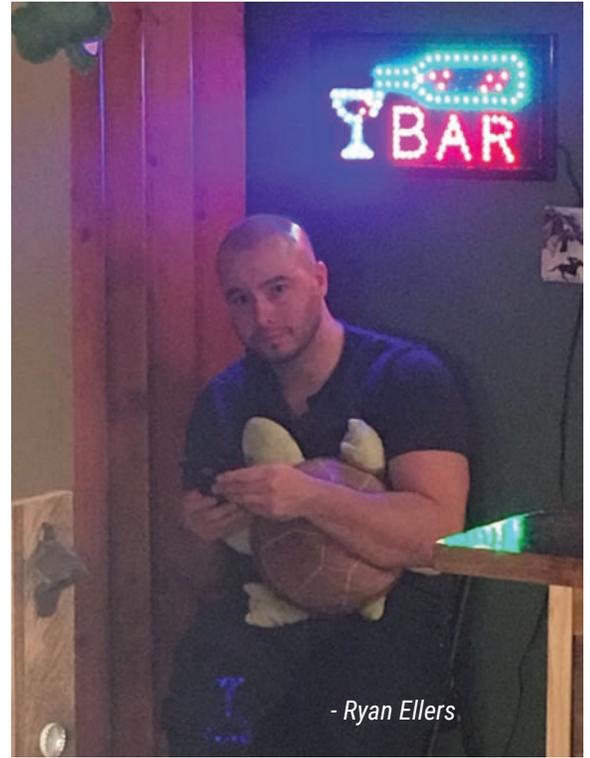
Where I'm from

I am from tree forts to outback adventures with friends
From a community so small that everyone knows everyone
From a place so remote you can hear the faintest sound
(As the moon begins to glisten,
The coyotes begin to howl through the night)
I am from dogs and cats to animals on a farm,
To free roaming bears in our backyard
(Which is scary to see one in your own backyard..... True story)
I am from a town,
Once home to the first settlers in America.

I am from the tippy top of the mountains,
Where thousands of people come to enjoy themselves.
Tall pines moving in sync with the wind.
I am from tall maple trees, to wild grape vines
I am from One of the infamous Finger Lakes,
Known for its clear and almost bath like water.

I am from a time of change,
Where things from the past begin to fade into distant history
And a new future is being created by our generation.
I am from a family heavily present in my birth place,
Known by the last names Hass, Woshclegel.
That's where I'm from.

- Zach Hass



- Ryan Ellers

Perhaps the greatest gift I have ever received was also the most practical one.

I have never been an avid car fan, nor can I reiterate extensive knowledge about the different models or parts that make up the mechanical invention, but I have never loved a material object more than my car. My grey 2009 Toyota Camry was a gift from my father after I had earned my driving license at seventeen. It came into my life about eleven years ago when he himself needed a new car, secretly planning my inheritance to the vehicle when I was of age. I grew up with this car; it drove me to my softball games, monumental school functions, vacations, and all of the places that would change my life. I shared my first kiss while sitting on the soft carpet of the back seats on a hot July day, the sun closing in above our heads in a childish wake. When I inherited that car three years ago, it became more than transportation; it became the only sense of stability in my life, the one factor that remained consistent when my life began to rapidly change. My car is the only piece of memorabilia I have from the era before my parents' divorce. It became a place of comfort I would go to in times of panic or sadness, as curling up in the back seat to cry or taking a long drive with no destination in mind helped me cope with heartbreak and the grief of a recently broken family. When I made the choice to attend a college three hundred miles away from the town I had known my entire life, my car was the only sense of guidance that took me through highways and mountains, perilous snow and sun. Though the definition of where I belong has constantly changed the past couple years, I have truly considered my car home no matter how many miles traveled.

- Julianna Elwood

In Hornell, New York, just off County Route Sixty-Six, stands a church building. On the front of the building that faces the road, the name of the church is displayed in big brown letters with a large brown cross above it. Many who pass it by undoubtedly see just another building or church. However, to me, this structure with its stone and metal siding and beautiful interior is so much more than a simple building. It is the church which my then girlfriend, now wife, and I found before I even moved up to the area. We knew after the first time visiting the church that it was the church which we wanted to attend. When I look at this church I see a place where we go to worship God and where we meet with friends. I see the place where my wife and I made our vows and said our "I dos" to one another and am reminded of all the smiling faces which were gathered around us on that special day. I see the place where I watched my wife get baptized and where my now almost two-year-old daughter attends along with us and loves to go and sing with us and play with the other children in the nursery. Even now as I write this, I am saddened that it has been a number of weeks since we have been able to go and gather together there with others due to the recent pandemic. To me, this church is a place I love to go with my family and a place that is filled with memories of the past and is a foundation for memories of the future.

- Matthew Yager



The Scars I Should Have

The scars I should have
 For being so naive
 Thinking someone could love me
 For my true self
 No one loves a damaged soul

I should have cut myself
 But I didn't
 Why?

The scars I should have
 For being so kind
 To others
 But I harass myself daily
 I shouldn't be this insecure

I should have cut myself
 But I didn't...
 Why?

The scars I should have
 For being so lonely
 Isolating myself
 But I have friends
 Or are they really?

I should have cut myself
 But... I didn't?
 Why!

The scars I should have
 For being so scared
 Scared of everything that comes my way
 Literally making excuses for not doing anything
 I am going to get nowhere

I should have cut myself
 But I didn't!!

I did not!!

The scars I should have
 Aren't there...

Why?

- Ashley Miller

The Medal

I received the medal in the 2019 Class A New York State Baseball Championship. It was my last attempt to earn such a medal after four years of hard work in two sports. I only wore the medal once, on the same day that I got it. Runner-up is printed on the back of it. Now, it hangs in my room for me to stare at every day. I was never sure on whether I should be proud of the medal, hate it, or simply forget about it. I know what my teammates think. Most of them see it and only think about failure. They believe that we were so close and falling one game short will always leave a lasting impression in their minds. The others see success in their medals. They look at it and see the effort it took to make it to that game and how the season was an overall win. However, my medal is different. It is a journey. I look at it now and see pain and regret. I wonder if I could have done anything different to make the medal say champion. However, as I stare at it, I also have appreciation towards what I accomplished. Also, what my team accomplished. I replay the season in my mind and realize that those were some of the best days of my life. The wins, losses, and nail-biters. They were all perfect. I think about the story of the Maine-Endwell Spartans. How we were underdogs in every game in the playoffs. Nobody off the team believed we would make it out of the section. We proved everyone wrong. In the regional and state playoffs we faced the best of the best and won on walk-off after walk-off. Those were some insane and amazing moments. We made it to the state championship and put up a fight to the very end. The journey was remarkable. If that is what I get when I see the medal, then that hard work and dedication I put in was worth it. I guess I have something to be proud of.

- Rylie VanFleet



An Offer of Silence

I don't have words to offer you.

Cat's tongue, throat closed, eyes shut in processing. All the things I could have said, would and perhaps should have said.

My mind's crowded with words to spew but none of them feel correct.

I can't tell you the things you want to hear.

I can't tell you that I agree with anything you said.

I can't tell you that we can still continue and be alright.

And I can't tell you things that I want to say in comfort either.

I can't tell you I'm not sad.

I can't tell you that I'm not hurt.

I can't tell you that anything you said was correct or valid.

I sit in my voiceless, flooded mind of reactions and sift through them like a deck of cards, fingering for the correct response.

Do I tell you how wronged I feel that the connection I thought we had was false?

Do I tell you how you've killed my confidence?

Do I tell you how I will regret everything I don't say today, every day, for months?

Nothing fits, nothing is helpful.

I sit with my mouth shut and my eyes wet and think to myself the days of mourning that are to come.

Is it fair to tell you that I will lose sleep over what has been said?

Is it fair to say I will sit on memories and fondle each word and action that I can recall?

Is it fair to tell you how my heart aches and the guilt I feel for you?

I don't have words to offer you, because none of them are fair, or right.

None of them should be said because none of them should have even been thought.

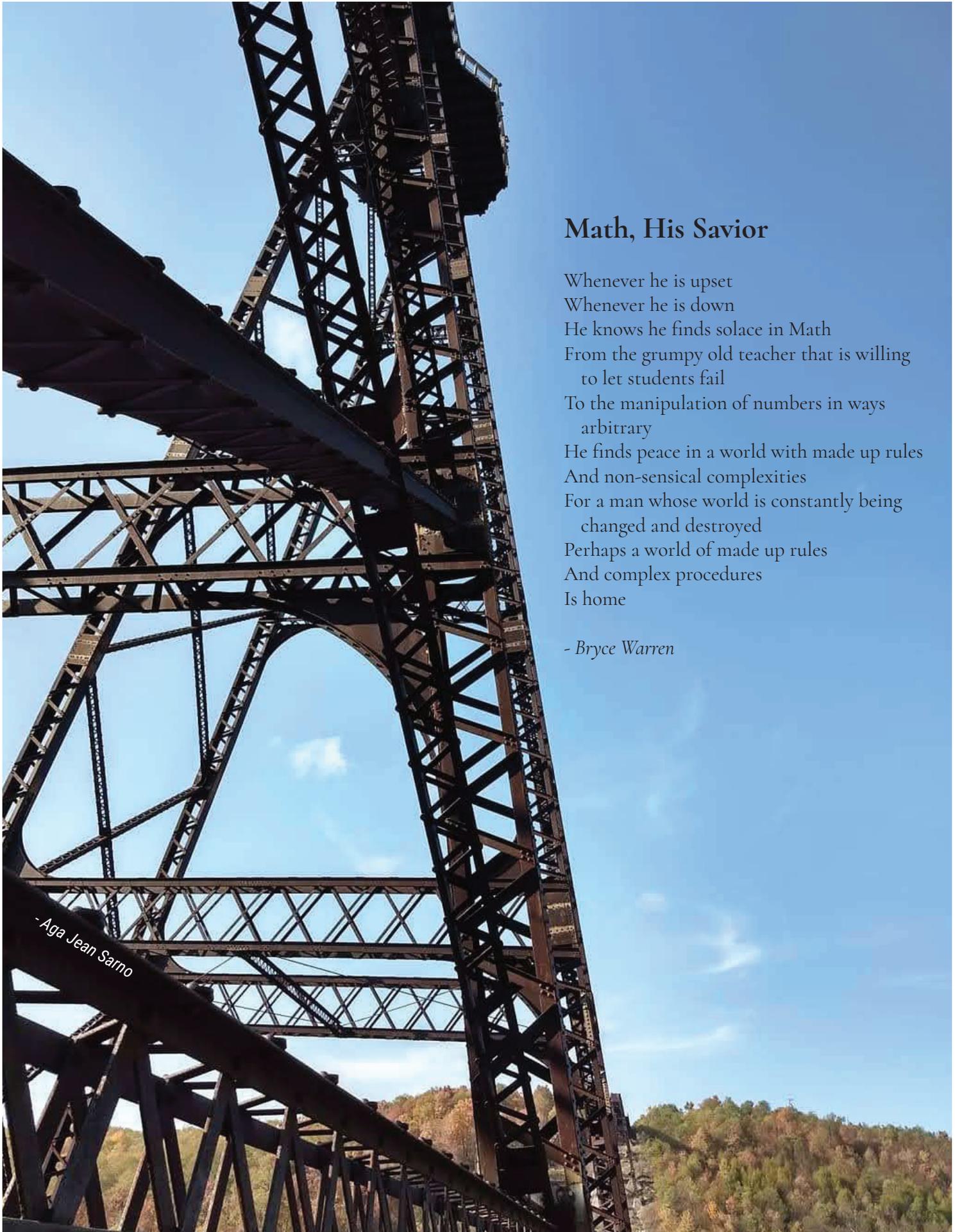
So instead, I offer you silence.

And I hope it says everything that I cannot ever say.

- Mikayla Riachel



- Xavier Luis Sosa,
Alone Yet Together



Math, His Savior

Whenever he is upset
Whenever he is down
He knows he finds solace in Math
From the grumpy old teacher that is willing
to let students fail
To the manipulation of numbers in ways
arbitrary
He finds peace in a world with made up rules
And non-sensical complexities
For a man whose world is constantly being
changed and destroyed
Perhaps a world of made up rules
And complex procedures
Is home

- Bryce Warren

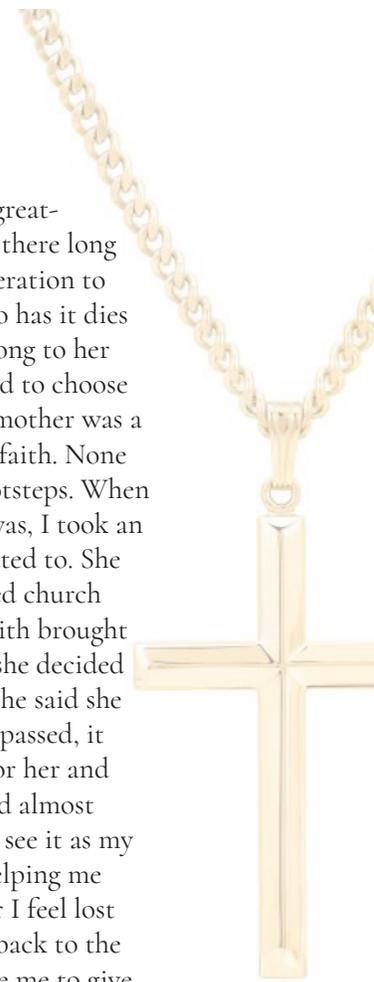
- Aga Jean Sarno

Every year during the month of May, I take a look outside my front window to see the voluminous lilac bush blooming outside. Each glance I take reminds me of my great grandma Jennie. Lilacs were her favorite flower, and she always had them planted in the yard around her house. I remember the sunny days when I would stay over her house, and she would ask me to help prune the bushes. Grandma Jennie would always cut clippings of lilac and tie string around them. She would send them in bundles and give them to my grandma and my mom, so they could have their own bushes. Even though my great grandma has passed she still lives in the lilac bushes outside my window. When I look at them I am reminded of all the time I spent with her. Every time she would cook mac and cheese with tuna for lunch, or big bowls of fresh pasta for dinner, the hours of attempting to teach me Italian, and telling me to finish my dinner by yelling “Mangi! Mangi!” (Eat! Eat!). While others may look and just see pretty flowers, I look and think of the lineage those flowers have in my family, I can smell the times we would stand outside and pick the lilacs together, and most importantly I see her in her big bifocals and sun hat pruning those bushes.

-Sarah Rivet

There is this gold cross necklace that my great-great-grandmother got from Israel when she traveled there long ago. It has been passed down generation to generation to the women in my family. When the woman who has it dies or simply is ready to part with it they pass it along to her daughter. When my grandmother had it, she had to choose between four daughters to give it to. My grandmother was a very religious woman who was indebted to her faith. None of her five children decided to follow in her footsteps. When I was old enough to understand what religion was, I took an interest in what my grandmother was so dedicated to. She taught me everything she knew, and we attended church together. Our shared interest and love of our faith brought us closer together. Some years before she died, she decided to pass along the golden cross necklace to me. She said she wouldn't want anyone else to have it. After she passed, it became a symbol for me, a symbol of my love for her and the faith we share. I wear it around my neck and almost never take it off, it hangs just above my heart. I see it as my grandmother being always close to my heart, helping me and guiding me along the way of life. Whenever I feel lost or I have strayed from the path, I always think back to the necklace I wear and how my grandmother chose me to give it to instead of following tradition.

- Erin Cole



I enjoy wearing a chain around my neck with medallions of Saint Sebastian and Mother Theresa on it. I just got a new set this past Christmas from my loving mom. I lost the first set sometime during the first semester, I don't know when or where. In the time between losing the first set and receiving the second, my life became noticeably more difficult. During this period my social life took a rocky turn and I totaled my first car, which I had loved very much. I had gone on my first date in that car. I wear my new chain almost every day now. When I look at this simple and plain piece of jewelry, I see more than just a sterling silver loop with 2 small medals attached. I see a sign that there is a higher power watching over me and keeping me safe. This chain represents the faith that has helped me stay positive through hard times since I was a little boy.

- David Bubb

Princess Bear

I loved my Aunt Jeanette and she said she loved me more.
I was special to her because she didn't have any grandchildren.
She devoured me with love and affection.
When I was six, I had to have my tonsils out.
It was very traumatic for me but Aunt Jeanette knew how much I
loved Build a Bears.
So, off we went to the mall and together we picked out princess bear.
We watched her get built and had a special heart put in her.
When you squeezed the tummy, she said, "I love you."
Aunt Jeanette told me my bear could go to the hospital with me,
keep me safe, and help me from being afraid.
When I was 11, my Aunt Jeanette went into hospice because she was
dying of breast cancer.
I knew what I had to do.
I took my princess bear to Aunt Jeanette's bedside to keep her safe
and so she wouldn't be scared.
When I first saw Aunt Jeanette, she was so frail looking.
I pressed princess bear's tummy.
When Aunt Jeanette saw the bear and heard, "I love you" she started
crying.
At first, I felt terrible but then I realized her tears were of joy.
She kept princess bear with her until she passed away.
Princess bear now sits on my shelf but I know when
I see her that Aunt Jeanette is watching over me and saying,
"I love you."

- Bree Kus



- Karl Platt

BECOMING A PARENT CHANGED ME

- Matthew Yager

Growing up, I took my parents' love for me for granted and did not always show my gratefulness for it. I was not a horrible child or anything like that, but I had my shortcomings. I feared my father more, so I showed more respect toward him. However, I did not always show my mother the respect she deserved, probably because she was not as tough as my father, and she just took it. Usually, my intent was not to hurt, to be mean, or to be unkind to her. Sometimes it was just a bad attitude in general, toward her and the rest of the world, especially as a young teenager when I thought I was "all grown up" and that my mother "was not cool." I did not realize at the time that behind every one of my unkind words or actions was a mother who still cared for and loved me. I did not fully appreciate or understand the love which parents have for their children until I became a father myself.

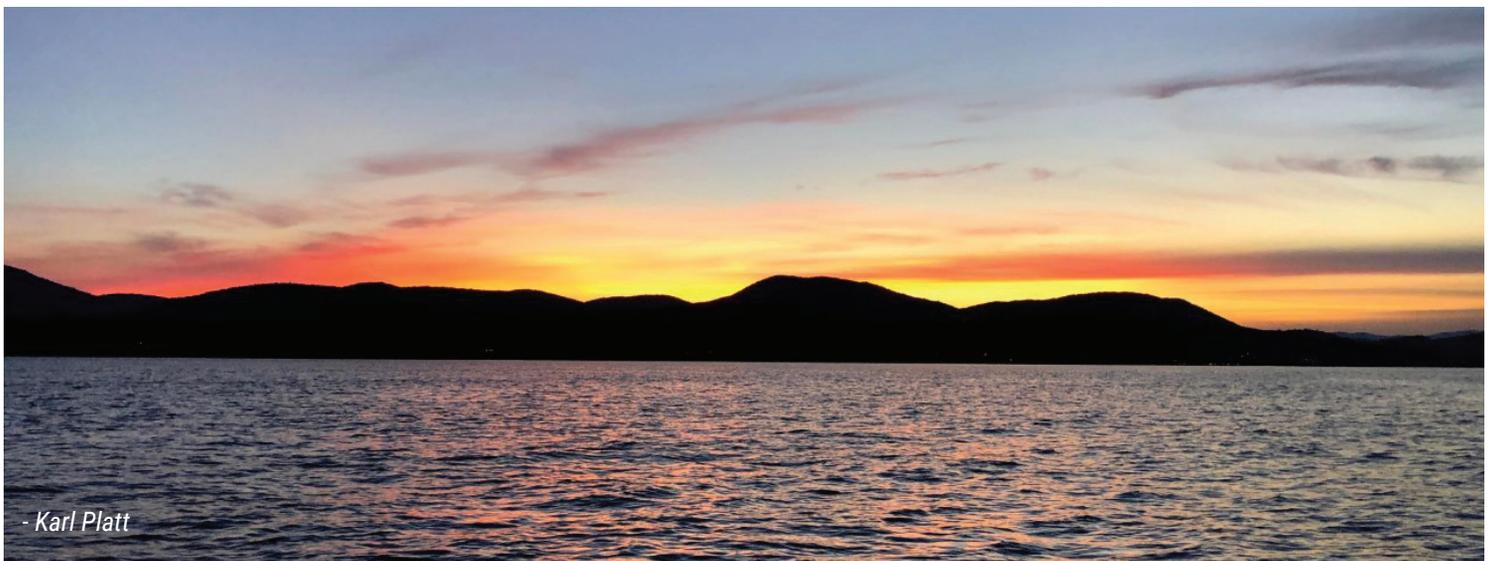
It was August 2017. It had been a couple months since we started looking for a house to buy. I came home from work and was kind of annoyed, and maybe a little upset, that my wife was not home. We were supposed to go and check out another house that night. I texted her and asked where she was, and she replied that she had gone to town and that she "would not be too much longer and would be home soon." While I waited for her to come home, I got to thinking, maybe she is at the doctors; you see, we had recently started trying to have a baby. My anger went away after that. I understood why she did not want to tell me where she had gone. When she came home, she did not say anything, right away, about where she had been or why she had gone to town. Consequently, I said, "well, are you pregnant?" and she replied "Yes!" My heart was stirred with both excitement and fear. Having a baby was what we wanted, so it was exciting that it was going to happen, but it was also scary to think that I was going to be a father and would have a baby that I would be responsible for.

May 2nd, 2018, came around quickly. My wife woke up in the middle of the night having contractions, and after she woke me up, I helped her with timing them. Within an hour, the contractions suddenly dropped from over five minutes apart to less than four minutes apart. Subsequently, we grabbed her bag, which she had packed for when she would go into labor, and off we rushed to the hospital.

We got to Noyes Memorial Hospital around 3 a.m. We hurried inside, through the metal framed plated glass doors, into the emergency room waiting area and talked to the receptionist. She told us to go up to the labor and delivery department. Therefore, we took an elevator up and told nurse at the desk that we thought my wife was going into labor. The nurse led us to a room where I had a seat in the chair in the corner, wondering, *is it really finally time for my daughter to be born?*

Meanwhile, my wife climbed up into the hospital bed. A few minutes later, another nurse came in and did a check up on my wife. The nurse told us that my wife was, in fact, going into labor and that it was just a matter of waiting for my wife's body to be ready to deliver our child. There we were in the hospital, at the early hours of the morning, just waiting for our daughter to make her appearance. I looked outside through the big plate glass window and saw the bright orange sun rising up on the horizon, its rays reflecting off the hospital roof top. We had woken up very early, so I was tired, but I was also excited and scared; it was almost time to finally meet my daughter! Hours passed while nurses and doctors came in and out of the room to check on my wife and to see how far along she was.

Finally, the time came for my wife to deliver. I remember, as my wife was delivering, worrying about my daughter and praying and hoping that she would be healthy and that nothing would



- Karl Platt

be wrong with her. I remember seeing her head come out first and the feeling of excitement that rose up in me; I was finally going to meet my daughter. Immediately after she was born, the doctors gave her to my wife to hold. As she lay there in my wife's arms, I saw her little hands, little feet, and little head, and I knew in that very second that my life would never be the same.

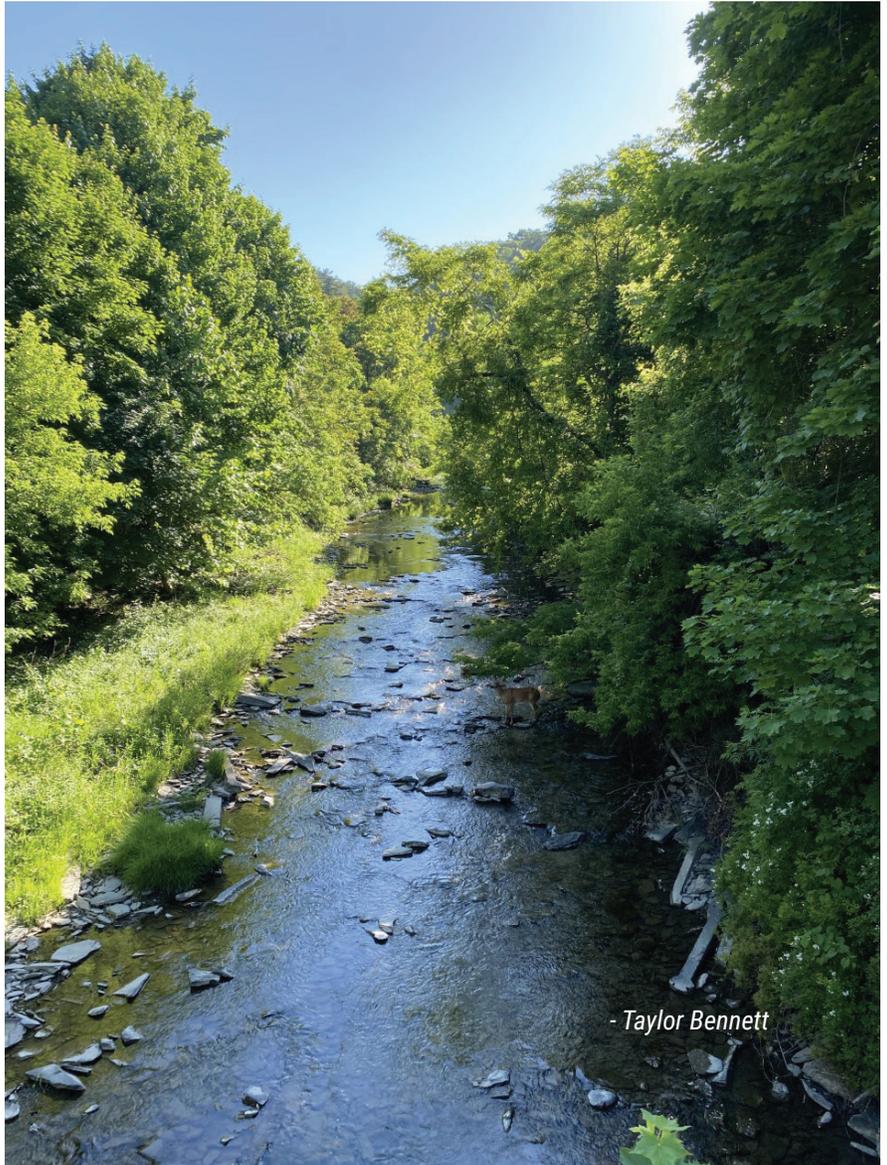
After the nurses got my daughter all cleaned up and weighed, they gave her to me to hold. As I held her in my arms, she wrapped her little fingers around my finger, and I felt so many mixed emotions. I felt a love for her which was so deep that I cannot fully describe it. I knew in that moment that I would do anything for her; I knew that if it came to it, I would die for her. I felt fear about how I could be a father and wondered how I was going to take care of this beautiful gift of life. I did not know how to be a father or how to take care of a baby. I also felt happiness and gratitude that God had blessed me with this baby girl and that she was healthy.

Now that I am a father, I understand the love which parents have for their children and how much my parents love me. Specifically, I now realize the depths of my mother's love for me and how much I must have hurt her with some of the things I did and said when I was a child. I wish, so much, that I could go back in time and take back my bad attitude toward her and my poor treatment of her. Sadly, some things cannot be undone. The best that I can do is say "I'm sorry, Mom! I'm so very sorry for treating you poorly, for not respecting you the way that I should have, and for not recognizing and appreciating your unfailing love which weathered all my unkind words and actions.

*YOUR LOVE NEVER WAVED
OR FAILED, BUT STOOD FIRM
THROUGH EVEN THE TOUGHEST
STORMS." TO THAT I SAY, "THANK
YOU AND I LOVE YOU, MOM!"*



- Serena Gritten



- Taylor Bennett

My life is a filing cabinet.

It has been structured by society's expectation of me.

This cabinet that contains these documents of my life seems to be unorganized.

As I look at it now, this aura I receive from it just gives me a lot of stress.

My mind is cluttered with this bunch of mess.

I ask my mother for advice since she's the one who gave me this life.

She sits there in silence, more silent than a bat when it sleeps during the day.

What should I do?

I came to a discomfiting answer to clean up the mess myself.

I began to look through the papers, trying to file them correctly.

As I took a trip back to memory lane, I began to reminisce of the stories from these sheets.

They portray a reflection upon me.

They teach me a lesson, the lesson of reflection and how they make me a stronger person.

And so now I see the picture, the picture that has set my mind free.

- *Chris Solano*



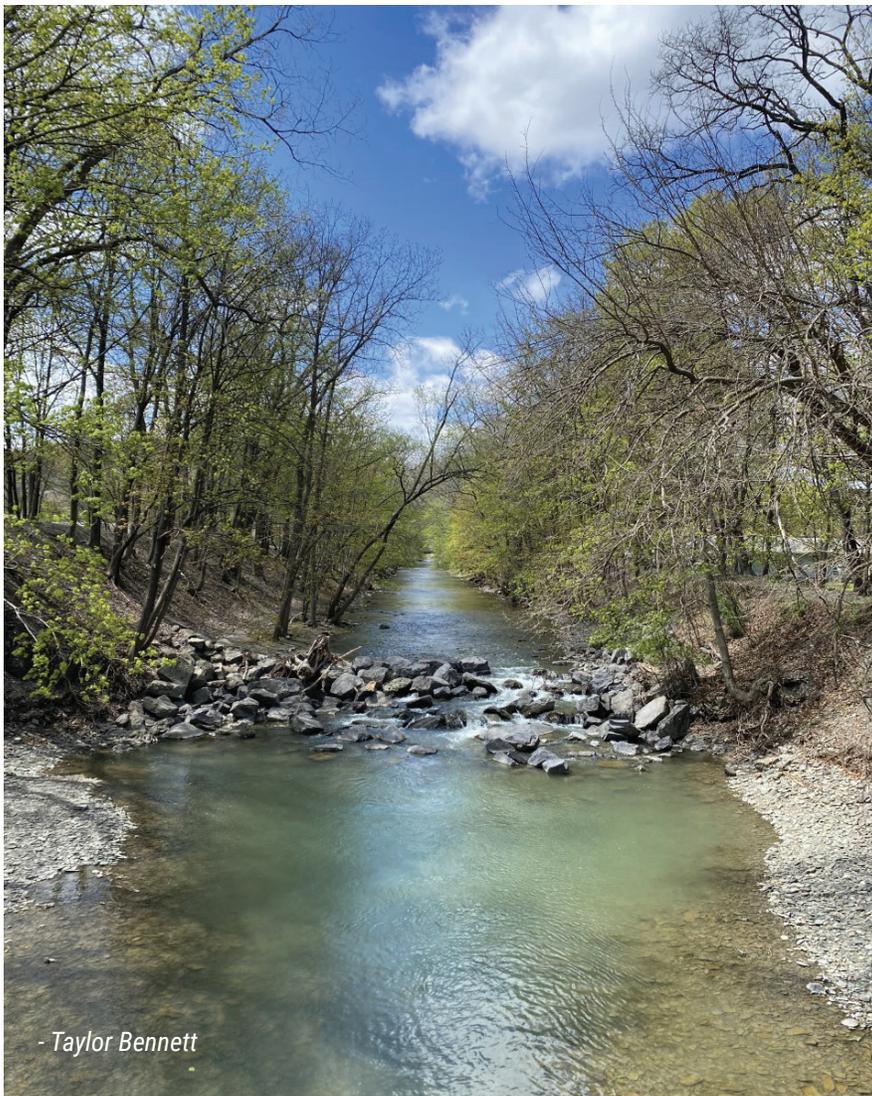
- *Taylor Bennett*

My car – her name is Pearl – is very special to me. I first laid eyes on her in the tenth grade. She was all white with black rims. I knew I had to have her. When I saw her it was like love at first sight. Every time I see her, she reminds me of the rewards of hard work. She wasn't easy to get. I did my research on her history, how much she would cost to get and maintain. I had to work two jobs every day for two summers - junior and senior year. When I was finally ready, I had to look for her, and she wasn't easy to find. But now that I have her, she's mine, and I know what it takes to keep her. She does a lot for me and takes me wherever I need, most importantly to work, and she sometimes takes me to Alfred. In the end, she has been consistent with me because she hasn't ever broken down on me, and she's been running smoothly. I'm very thankful for her, and without her, I don't know what I would do. My car symbolizes hard work and dedication to me; it's not just a car.

- Kyiam Boyd



- Karl Platt



- Taylor Bennett

Some say a car is the reflection of its owner. I drive a car twice my age. It's laughably simple, with its solid rear axle, Lucas electronics, and Malaise Era engine. Yet I still love it. Most repairs can be done by a tree shade mechanic in an afternoon. Sure, it's high mileage at 76,000 miles. That may not sound like a lot, but trust me it is. Most of them didn't see 50,000. It stands out in the modern worldwide glut of anonymous cars with its wedge shape, green color, hidden headlamps, SU carburetors, and distinct noise. It was hated at release, but it drives to its own tune; it was "out to steal the American road" they said. It was optimistic with the slogan "the shape of things to come" to say the least. Between the union sabotage in the factories, and its British Leyland management, it may have been doomed from the start, and that's OK. It doesn't have any badging to tell you what it is, but it doesn't need it, it doesn't brag about its trim level or engine size, it stands out in its own way. If a car really is a reflection of its owner, I would say I have a pretty good fit. A little slow by modern standards, perpetually broken, but different in a good way, and fun.

- Ian Evans



- Karl Platt

Quick! Quick! Move your feet.
Something's moving Beneath your seat.

Now hush, Calm. Fright not no longer.
Ease your movements, Cease to ponder.

Quick! Quick! Move away.
That sluggish form
Won't stay that way.

Sit, fall.
Close your eyes.
Allow your mind
To soothe its ties.

Quick! Quick! It's rising now.
You need to go, But don't know how.

Quick! Quick! Your final chance!
Make your move, Might be your last!

Run! Flee!
It's up and after! How could you trip?
It's evil laughter!

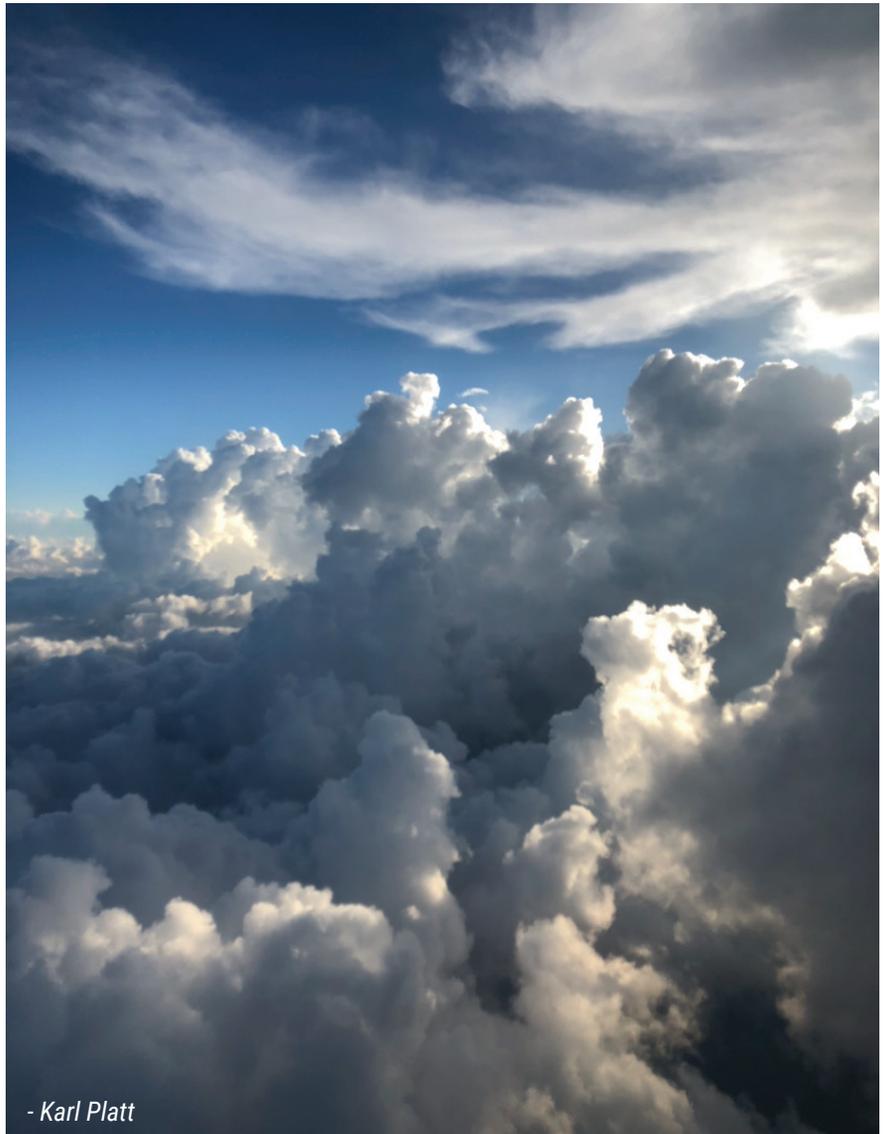
Crawl, Cry!
It's grabbed hold. You're frightened now,
That shock of sudden, lasting cold.

Breathe, Soft. Take's breath.
Take it slow, Shall be your death.

Quiet, Lifeless.
I leave your side.
Off to another, I set off to find.
Beneath their seat, I shall remain.
Consume their tears, Enjoy their pain.
Then cease it all, With a frightening warning:
Their thoughts may be Their final earnings.

Quick, Quick!
I claim another.
How silly humans are, I'll always wonder.

- Mikayla Raichel





Traveling Diary

Unknowingly, I grew attached to the faded green military poncho liner that had earned itself one too many holes. It was handed down to me by my step dad and mother who live in California. I was more than happy when it started to accompany me on flights coast to coast twice a year, since I was 13. If a blanket could talk, mine would tell stories of naps in the backseat on fourteen-hour road trips. It would tell stories of its honor becoming our beach blanket when we made spontaneous trips to the ocean, just in time to grab a coffee and watch the brilliant orange halo melt behind the horizon (I believe it would also inform you that this memory would be its favorite, as it is mine.). It created the perfect camping companion around a fire, and the confidential friend I needed when emotions got too heavy. But if you asked, it would refuse to speak of our shared secrets stored between every nylon fiber – unreachable.

- *Cheyenne Heath*

IT IS TAN WITH TWIN PEAKS SEPARATED BY A VALLEY.

Its rim is hooked up on each side, and the middle is wrapped with a black band with a short pheasant feather tucked underneath it. Behind the band you can see its age with a ring of a sweat stain and its years of wear and tear. To anyone who sees it, it's just an old cowboy hat. But to me, it is hard work, dedication, and love. My grandfather passed away in 2009. From the days I could barely walk, I remember seeing him wear that hat. Whether he was sitting in his old rocker, in the shed splitting wood, or out in the back yard shooting off his old Remington 12 gauge, the hat was always there. As a child, it was just a hat. After he passed away, I was given the hat, and it had a whole new meaning. From that day on, it has hung on my wall. It is a reminder to live life to its fullest. It tells me to be humble, kind, and to always work for everything even if it means making sacrifices. My friends come over and make fun of me for having it, but little do they know the significance. I lie in bed at night and mourn the loss of my grandpa and reminisce on the happy moments we shared. I can remember sitting on his lap eating black licorice, keeping it a secret from my mom. It brings me back to our riding together in his old 71 Chevy C-10. Even though Grandpa John isn't here with me anymore, in the hat he is. I can hear him, telling me to be brave, to love my family, and to be the best man I can be. When I see that old hat, I remember everything he instilled in me.

- *Caleb Maier*

THE Quinceanera DRESS

-*Ashley Rosario*

As I was walking by the glass window in the Palisades Mall, I saw this lavender gown. It was stunning! I loved every detail from the neckline to the end of the dress. I couldn't wait to get into the fitting room. As I came out every diamond sparkled in the light, I felt like a true princess, but I knew that wasn't the correct representation of it. This dress meant a new chapter for myself, transitioning to a young woman. This dress constantly reminds me of everything my mother sacrificed for me and my family. This dress proves that my mother trusts me into becoming a strong and independent woman.

In a corner of my room, I have a purple bag with a white drawstring. The bag has no name on it just a few shapes and a teddy bear. As a child this was my other home away from home. Inside there are many small colored plastic Cowboys and Indians. This bag was my portal to the western skies of the Wild West. I would spend my days fighting the battle of Little Big Horn and defending the towns from Indian raiding parties. I was not always alone in my adventures; in fact, my partner-in-crime, my nemeses, and my damsel in distress, was none other than my grandmother. My grandma seemed to be the only one who took the time to see the world with my eyes and to hear the drumbeat of the savage tribes. She would spend hours and days with that purple bag and me. It seemed to be a never-ending adventure and I thought it would be forever, until the western skies called and grandma rode off into the sunset and left me behind. But she did not leave me empty-handed, she filled my purple bag with our adventures and memories. That purple bag is more than just an old bag; it's a gift that my grandmother left me and one day I'll share that gift with my children and by doing so my grandma will always live on in my memory.

- Andrew Mehmel



Many people view bedrooms as a place to sleep and get ready in the morning. My bedroom is that but more. My room is where I feel most alive. The world is not a nice place for me. People are mean to me; people judge me. I put on a brave face and show it does not get to me. I am able to do this because I know I have a place to go back to where I can take off the mask. My room holds my secrets, tears and fears. It does not judge me.

It accepts me as I am.

My mom gets upset when I spend my days cooped up in my room. She thinks I will get depressed. She does not realize that this place is where I am happiest. This room is not just a place for me to sleep; it is a place for me to live. People expect me to look after them and help clean them up when they are a mess. My room does not mind when I have no time to clean it up. I accept its mess as much as it accepts my mess. When I want to be sad, it lets me be sad. The blue walls and gray dresser help me feel sad. When I want to be happy, the orange sofa and pink comforter help me feel happy. Some people want to travel the world, and some people want to go to parties.

All I want to do is be in my room where I can be myself. Some may call me lazy, but I am not lazy.

I am trying to survive just like everyone else.

My room gives me life; it gives me comfort. It is my safe place. My bedroom is my escape from a cold world.

- Marie Kirkwyland



- Jenna Schweigert - Two Point Perspective



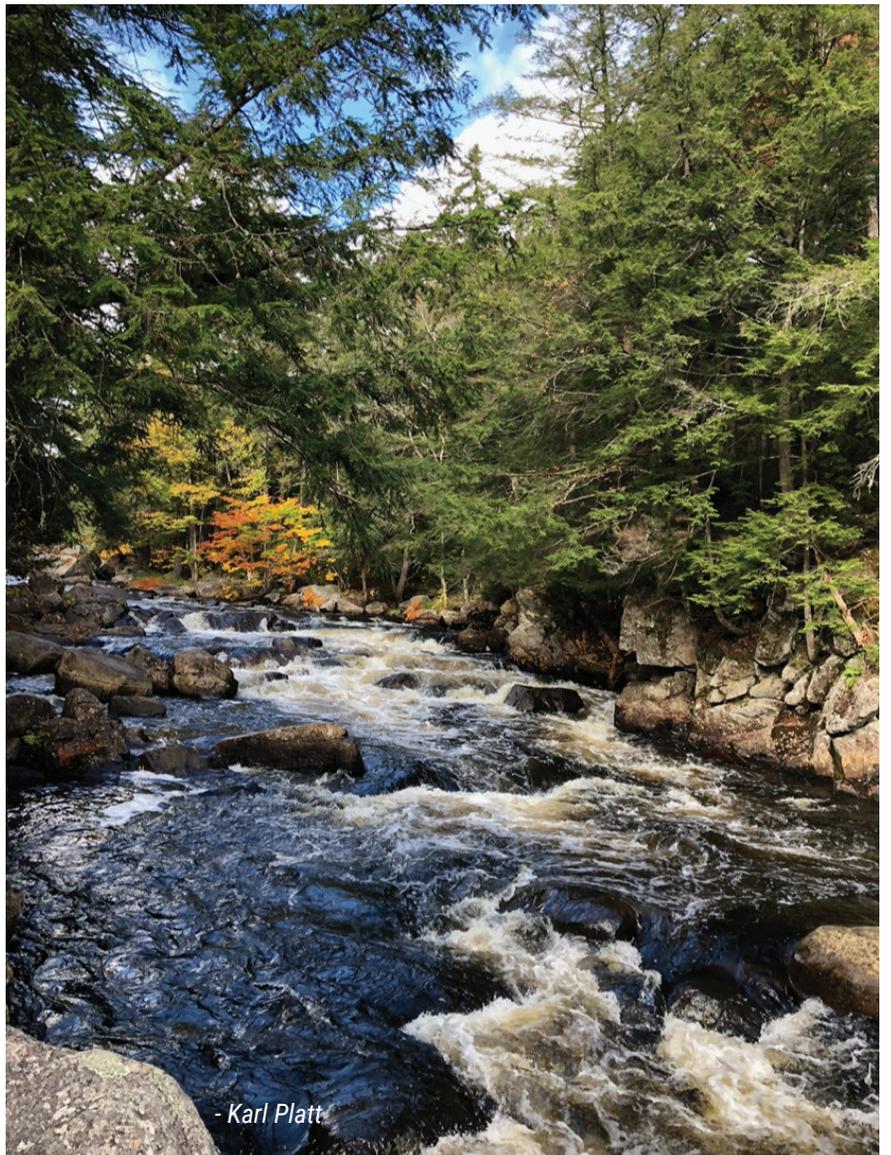
The Monopoly game needed at least four players willing to sit for a long time to get to the finish line. Because of its playing requirements, it sat in the pouch on the side of Memaw's couch and collected dust until the next year when it was time for my family to play it again. Playing the game became an annual tradition and soon followed with a trophy to recognize the winners' names on the back of it. I never took much interest in playing considering the time frame it took to complete the game and I was too young to understand the concepts of buying property, upgrading apartments to houses, or even getting out of jail for free. But when I was old enough to understand the game in its entirety I then was also old enough to understand that it was not about who understood the game the most to win and have their name posted on the trophy. It was about spending time with your loved ones and putting reality aside for a moment to do just that. The games often ventured into the evening hours and breaks were critical for consistent attendance.

In Memaw's memory, there is a section of the board with her playing piece, the thimble, and a few other pieces in a shadow box that the family created. I would give anything to have that game board in one piece again, but until then a section of the board is hung. Every time I glance at it, I think of the joy, peace, and entertainment that game brought to the family. Some days I like to think of it as Memaw's secret way of holding us all together at times of hardship.

- Brandi Mealy



- Taylor Bennett



- Karl Platt



- Serena Gritten

When I was younger I always wanted a pair of sneakers made by Micheal Jordan called “bred 11s” but I never had enough money to be able to buy it. I found that the bred 11s were coming out again and I was in 8th grade. I was eager to get these sneakers no matter what it took. I saved up all of my money and begged my parents to add additional money so that I could get these sneakers. But my parents told me that if I really wanted them I would have to do chores to get the remainder of the money. I helped with everything around the house to try to get enough money to get the sneakers. When the sneakers finally came out my parents gave the money that I needed to get the shoes and I ended up buying the shoes. The day that I got the shoes I was so excited and nothing could ruin my happiness. I would only wear the sneakers on a special occasion and every time I wore the sneakers to school, I had a big smile on my face and I would be even happier when others were upset that they were not able to get the shoes that I had. Until one day I wore my Jordan sneakers to school for picture day and I also had gym that day so i brought a change of clothes and sneakers in my book bag because I did not want to dirty my clothes or mess up my sneakers. When I changed I stored my things in my locker and someone stole the sneakers out of my book bag. I was devastated and I cried the whole day. Nothing could cheer me up: I was just torn. A few years passed and I am now in college and the shoes came out again and I had to get them not because they were one of my favorite sneakers but because they meant a lot to me.

- Bradley Delvois

Though I live in New York now, this was not always my home. My home was the sound of waves crashing and the smell of saltwater lingering in the morning air. It was the feeling of sand between your toes and view of California poppies dancing upon the hilltops. My home was beautiful. The connection one has to a place is stronger than no other. That place holds the memories of the people I once had loved, the tears that once were cried, and the things that once were cherished. When people bring up my home, I feel a sense of pride knowing that that once was mine. The mornings spent watching the sun as it awoke with me, the afternoons spent chasing the horizon on surfboards, and the nights spent losing myself in the sound of singing and guitar under the stars. That was all once mine. When the pride subsides, the pain creeps in to say hello. The cold pain of regret and the fiery pain of nostalgia combine to form a lightning bolt of emotion that electrocutes my whole body, leaving me blind to my appreciation. The pain never wins though. There will never be a day that I will not crave the place that I came from. Till the day I die, I will always be searching for pieces of my home.

- Samantha Scanlon



- Serena Gritten

Each semester starts bright,
Online or in class,
Students so eager,
To gain what I'll pass.

The days keep on going,
I try to keep bright,
But some students are fading,
And losing the light.

I try and I fail,
To pass it along,
That it's more about right,
Than what you got wrong.

That test grade won't sink you,
But your attitude might,
You must show me you're trying,
So we can both make this right.

Just ask when you're drowning!
I'll throw you a rope!
I'll do what I can,
To bring back that hope.

This is not over,
It's your fight to win,
But no matter what I want,
You have to want to begin.

Begin reading that chapter,
And show up for class,
Turn in your paper,
And believe you can pass.

It's all in the effort,
I know is deep inside,
You can climb this mountain,
But you have to try.

If something is happening,
To put you off track,
Come and talk with me,
Maybe we can put it back.

Back on the track,
Towards a better grade,
But much more than that,
Towards you're feeling ok.

I want you to succeed,
I want to give you straight A's,
The help is out there,
I'll show you the way.
To bring back your confidence,
To learn what you've lost,
To help you get through,
And soon that stage you will cross.

Your grades and your future,
Aren't determined by me,
They are determined by effort,
By dedication, you see.

You must want what I offer,
No excuses and no time,
To sit here in sorrow,
If you choose to fall behind.

This time is so short,
I know it seems slow,
But I have so much to teach,
There's so much you should know.

To be the best nurse,
Graphic artist, designer,
Mechanic, construction,
Whatever your heart desires.

There are a million careers,
And a zillion different paths,
There is so much to learn,
In the time we have left.

So yes, I'll be hard,
Demanding and on task,
But I'm also a human,
I've been where you're at.

I understand there is life,
There are things we go through,
But I cannot help you,
If I don't hear from you.

If you mess up,
A bad grade or a fail,
Just know that I've been there,
It's not always smooth sails.

I am your ally,
Your mentor and more,
I want you to succeed,
To walk out these doors.
Ready to work,
To dream and to play,
Know I've done my best,
To help along the way.

As you sit there today,
At home or in class,
Remember the power,
You hold in your grasp.

Make me work hard,
Match me in effort,
I promise I won't stop,
We'll do this together!

Give me all you've got,
For a few short weeks,
Let's work this together,
To gain all that we seek.

The most I can teach you,
Is what you're willing to learn,
The brightest you'll be,
Is how high your candle can burn.

So let's fan that flame,
Let's do it all the way,
If you make a mistake,
I swear it's ok.

Just dust yourself off,
Don't blame anyone else,
Accept you are ready,
To begin again with my help.

Come to me. Talk to me.
We can come up with a plan,
To get you moving,
Toward diploma in hand.

I may be a professor,
But inside my heart,
I look at each day,
As a fresh, new start!

- Mary Hribar

**It's not the down that defines us,
But how we rise up,
I'll be the first hand you see,
As you begin to look up.**

Fall of God

An orange and green lacquered frame with two solid rubber wheels was the chariot of a 5-year-old god. From mountains to plains, all obstacles acknowledged my claim. The tithe for my passing was awe. With my training wheels, my reign knew no opposition. They were the source of my power, and with their loss, all that remained was the fall. Rebellion descended on all sides. The terrain shifted beneath us, and my chariot refused to stand. Battered and bruised, I fought to retake the heights I once ruled. It was here, at this moment, I encountered the most devious foe of all. Here I came face to face with my mortality. Here was the shattering of the grand illusion; I would learn to be more than I was, but I would never be a god again.

I recently visited the mountain, where I first learned to ride my bike without its training wheels. I didn't recognize it at first. In my memories, it was almost a sentient thing. Tall and treacherous, attempting to harm me at every opportunity. In truth, it is no more than a small hump. Hardly a foot or so in height, with perhaps a single barely visible tree root halfway down. In my mind, at that time, I couldn't conquer it. So I made of it a monstrous thing, naturally beyond my depth. Since that day, I have encountered many such challenges. At the time, I was unable to understand them, much less overcome them. They became demented and tortuous figments, one and all. I was adding credence to why I could not surpass them. With time, however, many of these trials are revealed for what they indeed were. Trivial things, but unstoppable beings in the overactive imagination of a child. For better or worse, they each had a hand in shaping me into who I am today. I learned to be more than I was, but I would never be a god again.

- James Winston



- Serena Gritten

Outside

Outside is where discovery lives-
With freedom, space, and boundaries unknown-
No burden of duty or care it gives-
But room for our souls to burst from within-

Outside of ourselves is where we Begin-
Our thoughts no longer imprisoned by walls-
Our minds free to wander and explore on a whim-
With no obligation to return to it all-

Outside is where new life starts its crawl-
Toward uncertainty, light, and air untouched-
With no turning back for remorse or regret-
But freedom and space, for our hearts to rest-

- Matthew McCarthy