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Phoenix


Literary Magazine
2024-2025

A large, stylized graphic of antlers, likely from a deer or elk, is positioned at the top of the page. The antlers are symmetrical and extend outwards from a central point, with several points of varying lengths. They are rendered in a dark brown color.

PHOENIX STAFF 2024-2025

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Kayla Sanocki



Meghan Jester

Eelgrass

I am a stag who has seen his
reflection in the water,
and thinking it an enemy,
lunges forth to meet his foe.

His antlers snag
the eelgrass,
and with every jerk
pulls him deeper
into upturned silt.

In his manic fury,
he is unaware of the peril,
laden by exhaustion.

When his strength fails,
the water claims him,
drowned in rage,
defeated by self.

*Non possum me superare,
mea mens me nimis stricta tenet.*

-Addy Carr

Dead Deer

Most would recoil.

Muscle and ligament binding
your calcium framework.

Pale and slender,
keys on a piano.

I can't find reason
to not approach,
drawn in
a fly to carrion.

Fractured cranium,
mandibles offset,
sluggishly dripping red.
A sanguine lake congealing below
your missing nasal.

You cannot hide;
sternum split
exposing dark flesh.
Overripened fruit of
expired mortality.

I hope that

I am one day gazed upon
The way I looked at you

When I am split open
unable to hide
inside myself
I am found
beautiful.

-Addy Carr

Anxiety is a Deer

Eyes wide with wild apprehension
a doe weaves desperately
through the tangled forest of a
restless mind.

The sharp teeth of past terror,
snapping at cloven hooves.
Dampening each swift step
with stifling hesitation,

Her heartbeat a cacophony of
a thousand frantic thoughts, haunted
by foes unseen, condemned to navigate
endlessly through the thicket of doubt.

But within the gentle dawn
an olive branch,
a moment of calm amidst
the ravenous fear.

For here, in this tranquil clearing,
even the quivering doe may pause
and find solace in
the silence.

-Addy Carr



Liv Ferrari

Timeless Television

When the winter ravaged, I became a movie theater.
Everyone curled up,
Eating all their snacks before the opening curtain.
The occasional laugh filtered through the white noise.
However, the end always came too soon.
Error: no connection.

Now, the finale
A story still unfinished.
Only now the children have left
Leaving me once more alone
I guess it's truly cinema for one.

-Jill Melson

I worked my nine-to-five daily,
Only I didn't get paid.
Supervising the children as they played
But their attention only lasts for so long.
Error: no connection.

I looked forward to when the door slammed at three.
The bags would be thrown on the floor
Multitasking between homework and me
I warned them,
But the queue already expired.
Error: no connection.

In October, the pumpkins seized the house
Lights succumbed to the horror of the night.
The sound alone gave me goosebumps.
The teenagers threw their bowls of popcorn up out of fright
Their cheeks puffy
Hidden under the blanket's safety.
Error: no connection.

The Magic After Dark

After dark, the theater moves on,
into a mind of its own.

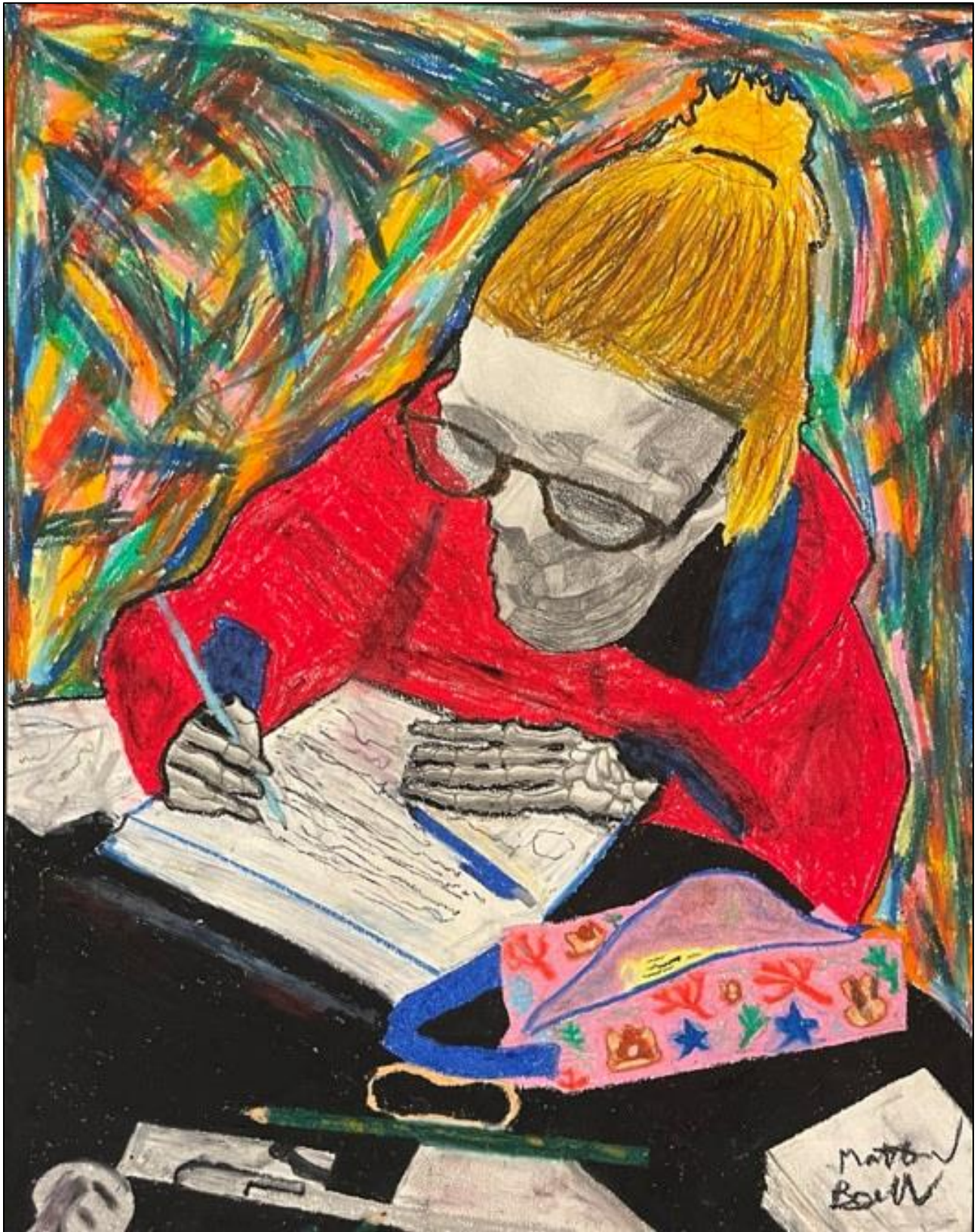
The soft glow of the neon sign,
casting a light on the perfectly polished floor.

The scent of buttery popcorn still lingers in the air,
a nostalgic reminder of the excited movie goers who were once there.
The theater themselves are like hushed sanctuaries, growing in the dark.

As I trickle into the theater room, the big screen lights up on the plush red velvet seats.
Waiting in anticipation, as popcorn fills the floors, dancing in the dark.
The gentle hum of the projector,
with a comforting sound in the stillness.

Taking the trash out, as piles of buttery popcorn and sweet and sour candy spill out.
Outside the beacon of light shines below,
while the moviegoers head home, as the films live within them.

-Chloe Schrandt

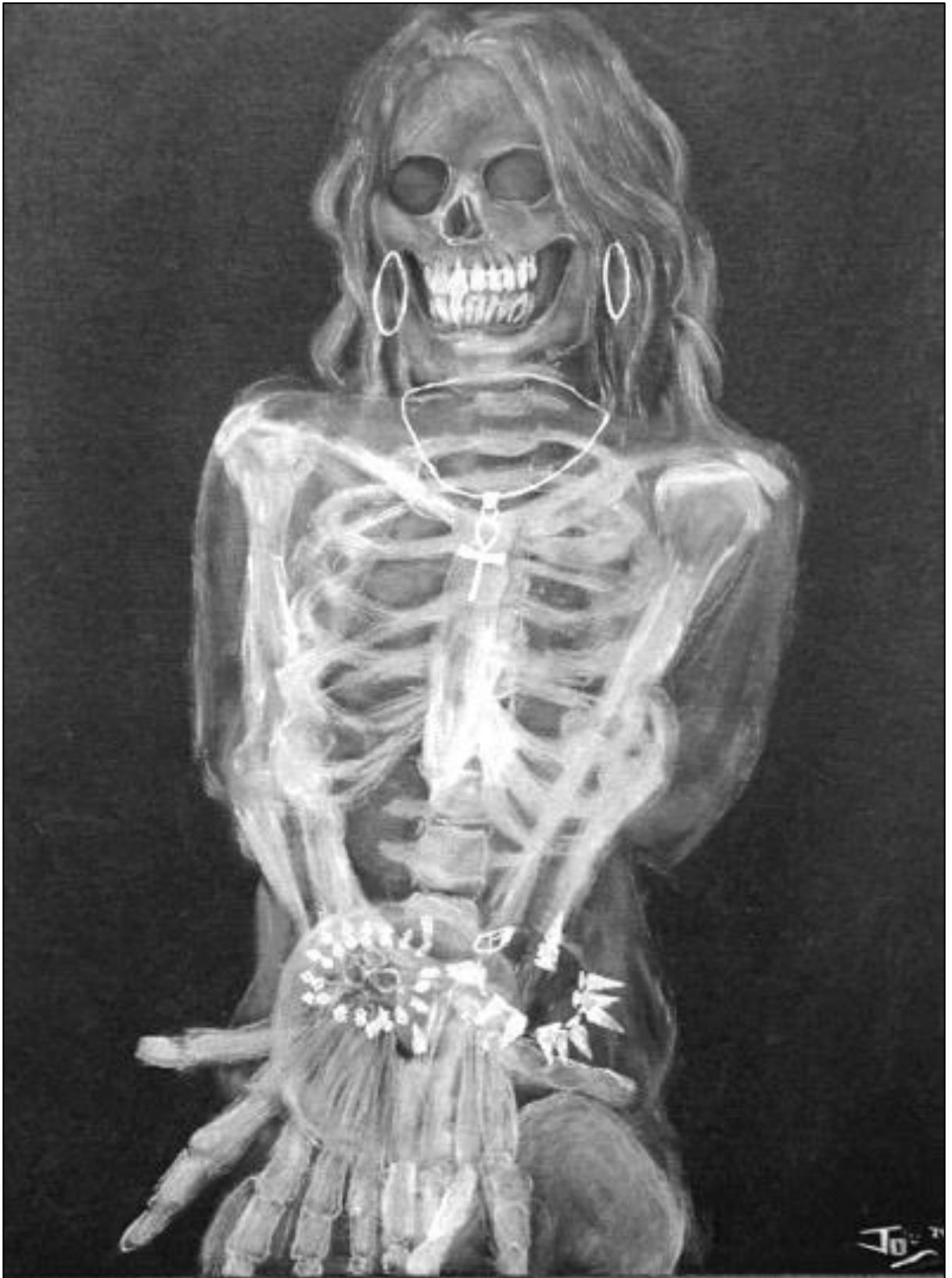


Matthew Boell

Wish I was 6 Years Old

Strolling around the market we
stop at a jeweler. Real
shiny diamonds catch our eyes. Cool
earrings hanging from outrageous price tags. We
moved onto clothing stores, then left
due to skyrocketing prices. School
is tomorrow and I've got 3 tests. We study
until our skulls crush, and lurk
in cafes and libraries until late.
Papers are handed out on desks. We
scribble until we wish to strike
our heads. Straight
after the dreadful loop, we
sigh our stresses out. And sing
melodies of childhood. Real sin
had never crossed our minds back then, and we
only contained problems of thin
quantities of toys. Never had the thought of gin
crossed our minds. But now, we
are engulfed in textbooks, emails, stress, and homework for 6 hours each night. Jazz
plays on the radio, and soon we will all be in June.
Where no stress should take place in our brains, and we
should spend our days outside. Eating ice cream that is to die
for. But that is not the case. Because we will be fully grown up soon.

-Lisa Fehrenbach



Jodi Donohue

Malnutrition

Quiet melody plays through our town
Shoppes, and buildings left filthy and sad
Corpses festooned among streets lay quietly until decay.
Our bones bulging from our wilted skin,
and cold breezes shutter from my spine
My child still has her life ahead of her.
Her pure soul I shall never let collapse to the famished cemetery
I must save her life and therefore give her the hope for mine.

-Lisa Fehrenbach



Jessica Wetherill

Midsommar

Inspired by the Swedish celebration of the summer solstice

cut my tongue from my mouth

babble of the brook

chant of the trees

whisper me to sleep

lay me to peace

Intend to mend the fear blanched face

the tear bleached cheeks

peel back the layers

rip across tendon

pull at muscle

pray at my feet

scrape the morsel

taste sweet defeat

cry a course howl

rapture my belief

keep close my heart dear

the dead are not deceased

scour the land

the plant I feed

where wicked wind weep

we bare our heart on our sleeve

mangled arms

compromised beliefs

brawl for trust

swear to believe

-Max Hurley



Angelo Betti

Labyrinth

We all wander through the grand labyrinth of life

We are dropped in the center and forced to find the blissful end

Each turn a choice

Each dead end a chance to turn and try again

The vast open sky of golden fades to twilight forbidding us from seeing our way

We might feel lost but we are not alone

Like a mentor, the voice of the howling wind feeds us courage and guides our blind steps
towards the

unknown

As we all embark on our collective journey some of us stay and some stray far away

Some find a secret path and meet their end too soon

As we continue on our quest, the Minotaur lurks challenging our strength

Some defeat the beast together, some work alone, and some are overtaken

In life's grand maze we seek our place only to reach our peaceful end and start new again

-Charlotte Stencler

My Love

As I kick up the remanence of Earth's bed beneath me,

I skip towards him.

The valves of my heart are now moving faster
than my own two feet.

I wrap him in my embrace
a position I wish could be encased in stone statues.

I could feel my eyes swell up,

my hands start to quake,

the Earth is spinning

But I'm holding my world between my arms.

I burry my flushed face
into the crook of his shoulder.

The place where his hairline
meets the nape of his neck.

I come back up to look at his dawning face,
his eyes already locked on mine.

And before I could even open my mouth,
the words pour out of him
like the swooning tears down my cheek.

"I love you."

-Cameron Balasa

Joe

It was a screenshot
But a scene I can envision in real time whenever I want.

He's sitting on the edge of his bed
holding the hollowed body of wood
with brass strings running across each fret
and the hole in the center of its corpse.

His forest green eyes, something I'd love to explore
dawning at his notebook
Scribbled with letters and lyrics that dance the page
His fingers closely hover over the chord to play G.

And his gazing smile that's plastered to his face
a face and a smile that would make anyone melt.

The room is dimly lit with an orange cascading glow
that enhances the rich color of his dark brown hair
and loosely beckons off the strings.

Although it's only a picture
I can still hear him sing soft
He has a deep, cool toned sound
He sings me the song he made
Just for me
And its all forever captured in one fuzzy picture.

-Cameron Balasa



Alyssa Bachrach

On Mt. Golgotha

On a hill of grass and stone,
The sounds of screams and breaking bones.
The thrum of fate's strings being played,
The sound of faith being made.
From wrist through which iron has been driven,
Leaks blood from which verse has been written.
Rebel scum who from a cross hangs,
For which songs uncounted have been sang.
On a hill, desert now and verdant then,
Those who followed gather and.
With bated breath begin to weep
For he who will be the most chosen sheep.
They bury him in a shallow cave,
And shed tears for the one who gave,
His life so they might be free.
They mourn him there for three days and three morns,
And write words later held as holy form.
"Christ the chosen has been reborn."

-Eli Brosowsky



Margaret Jacobs

Clear Skies

Today is the day of clear skies
and the angels have decided to celebrate.

The world was full of
death and destruction,
panic and pain.

With the weight of all these
wretched and wicked humans
the earth groaned, mourning
the loss of its children.

Greed

Pride

Lust

Envy

Gluttony

Wrath

Sloth

They ruled over society.

But then, a breeze like a
beautiful stranger passed over the land.

Love

Faith

Selflessness

Hope

Justice

So foreign to the world,
yet so wonderful, that it wept.

And the angels watched.

As men fell
to their knees in gratitude.

As women and children
sang to the heavens
“Today is the day of clear skies!”

The angels did not know
if that darkness and despair
would come again.

They only hoped.
Hoped that with time
mankind would realize that
they were the reason for that darkness.
The reason for that despair.

But that time had not yet come.
So they danced,
and they laughed,
and they smiled.

Because today,
the skies were clear.

-Giana Hauser



Dakota Reed

Golden Secrets

Each and every one, a silent secret keeper
Golden, gleaming guardians of passageways
Metallic whispering of brass onto silver
Sharp teeth are chiseled into iron
Gold holds truth in unsaid words
Protecting even more than they're worth
Living in pockets and palms, they wait
To be ignored, unsung heroes of locks

-Mae Tosolt



Faye Bader

Change

Out of contest, The Pipe sits alone
The last of its project
A forgotten era with only one clue
The Pipe lays solemnly

Not moving, or crumbling away

The Pipe is

Unchanged

Unchanged

-Anthony Lienti

Green, thin, tall, yet not overgrown
The branches loom overhead
Small and narrow, the path is consistently muddy
A tiny gem hidden within the trees
The Pipe
Waits again, for its friends

Kids come and go
They grow up, from children
To teens
To adults

Out of place yet still welcomed
Concrete with faded graffiti soaked in
With a rough sandpaper texture
It has worn the feeling of love
Imbued in its core

As time flows by,
The Pipe stays



Angelo Betti

The Home

Up on a hill sits a house
with crumbling walls and windowless frames.
It's vacant and cold.

But when given a closer look,
the house shows the life and beauty
hidden within its ruined structures

It shows it in the beams that crack and creak overhead
where there's a nest, home to a watchful mother
who tends to her eggs

And it shows behind the mask of rotting floors,
where a family of mice scurry about,
safe from the dangers above

Up on a hill sits a home
with loving mothers and safety for many.
It's lively and warm.

-Lilly Atkinson



Alana Faucher

The Sun

We looked up at the sun where we
Wondered how any of this is real
And the air was too rough and cool
For us to bear so quickly, we
Ran to warmth with nothing left
In our skin. Dried like a school
Without wild kids. We huddled together, we
Wandered the halls like a man would lurk
Behind us and say "It's too late
To be awake." The sun is gone so we
Wait for a light, maybe a sign to strike
Someone in the head. Head straight
To the sun from the hole where we
Stop and stare and laugh and sing
Like a choir of Christian men who sin
More than you can fathom. We were so cold we
Hugged a cross, but it left our hair thin
And gray and stuck. Stuck like a wife with gin
In her blood and no love in sight, so we
Forget it all and hear music, maybe jazz
In the hall, still no sun, isn't there sun in June?
It doesn't matter, we're frozen and we
Have heard and told stories just for them to die
In our throats and minds. I hope the sun comes back soon.

-Cassie Mensching



Kailyn Angelitis

The Seashell

The sun radiates the horizon
we sprint almost missing it
the swarming mosquitos serve as a reminder that it isn't quite day yet
The sprinting of our feet kicks up the Sand
We hop across it like the little frogs besides us
There is a dim glow in the sand,
We are greeted by Marks that had been left by our chairs the night prior
I make my way down to the water leaving my shoes and my shirt
I enter the water,
Its colder than I remember,
I guess this is what the night can do.
The murky waters beneath me serves as a reminder of the unknown,
I move my feet to avoid the millions of sand dollars beneath me
The sun is now ascending the horizon,
Darting towards its position for the day
I take a few steps back
My feet eventually meet something sharp
I jump questioning the unknown
But soon I am curious
I turn and swipe the goggles out of my friend's hand
I dive headfirst into the unknown,
Using my hands to feel the bottom
Eventually my hand feels the giant groves of a seashell
I raise the seashell into the light the sun is almost above me now
Exposing the seashell to its first ever kiss of sunshine
As we board the plane home the sun is now setting,
But as I look down into my carryon bag,
I see a reminder of the sunrise staring back at me.

-Lakelan Englert



Elle Tapper

Final

Dark, silent, wide open.

the lights come on,

small, slender, silver-white beams,

little lasers on a black canvas,

Condensing into diamonds in rows,

starbursts of crooked lines,

Art Deco in motion,

giving

way

to

Stars floating by, dancing, spinning to silent
music,

amid bubbles of bright green rising in columns

as white flecks fly, whirling through a dark
green

void,

shrinking into a downward spin of tiny squares

as the green flips over into dark blue.

An ocean of yellow-orange,

Waves dipping and falling,

White speck birds drifting on currents of wind,

A seascape that suddenly begins to burn,

Red and blue upon black, tearing, flaming,

green smoke lifting into a sky of intermediate
color,

as everything returns to black.

The patterns again,

squiggles and lines squirming across the dark,

left and right at the same time.

Runes - the laws and literature of alien civilizations
drift,

galaxy-like, through spacetime, spinning slowly,

lethargic pinwheels.

Red sparks of to-be-born stars swirl down a dark drain,

falling to orange along the way,

as lost spirits wander aimlessly through a deep green

haze, searching, seeking comfort,

Only

to be

swept

away

by a vast pale hand,

which pauses, poised, then flicks its fingers, turns
slowly

around,

A model on parade.

It's a perfect hand, clearly.

Behind it...

Fireworks, greens, blues, reds, burst as creatures, tails
lashing, wings spread wide, with flashing eyes,

criss-cross the night sky,

unafraid of the rainbows exploding around them.

Suddenly, the pressure releases, the floodlights kick on.

The images dissolve and fade reluctantly,

whirling off the stage.

The back of my eyelids.

-Sarah Lueck



Roland McCaleb

Key

The bay was the main attraction for decades
Surrounded by a busy coast.
The scratched coat of thee lifeguards stand
Exposed a suffocating metal underneath.

A ghostly shiver rippled through my grasp.
I applied pressure
Finally, I was home.

-Jill Melson

Soon construction came
Building land like a god.
Until the commotion seized,
Along with my imagination.
Abandoned
Never to be revisited

Destined for disrespect and emptiness.
To be used relentlessly without appreciation.
Bullied by their own peers.
Freedom reliant on a short chain.

The coastline fell to nature
The plants triumphed; erosion assisted.
While front porches screamed
Ignorant to the changing locks.

Embarrassed I scavenged for my frozen sword,
Cast aside, a jingling mess.
My porch empty.



Skylee Zerrenner

Survivor of A Party

Someone falls ill,
That's how it always begins.
A cough, a sneeze, an idle handshake,
it spreads through the population.
One by one,
it finds them all.

The crazy begins,
it swells from inside.
They flock to the horde,
shrieking gibbering raving mad.

Eyes grow wide, pupils dilate,
dark voids swallowing the light.
Jaws unhinge,
full of teeth and tongue,
off-color, bruised, in the gloom.
Sickly skin in myriad colors,
red green blue purple, overlapping, dancing,
lunging, lurching, rocking, side to side,
through a soup of sour air,
and a storm of howls and crashes.

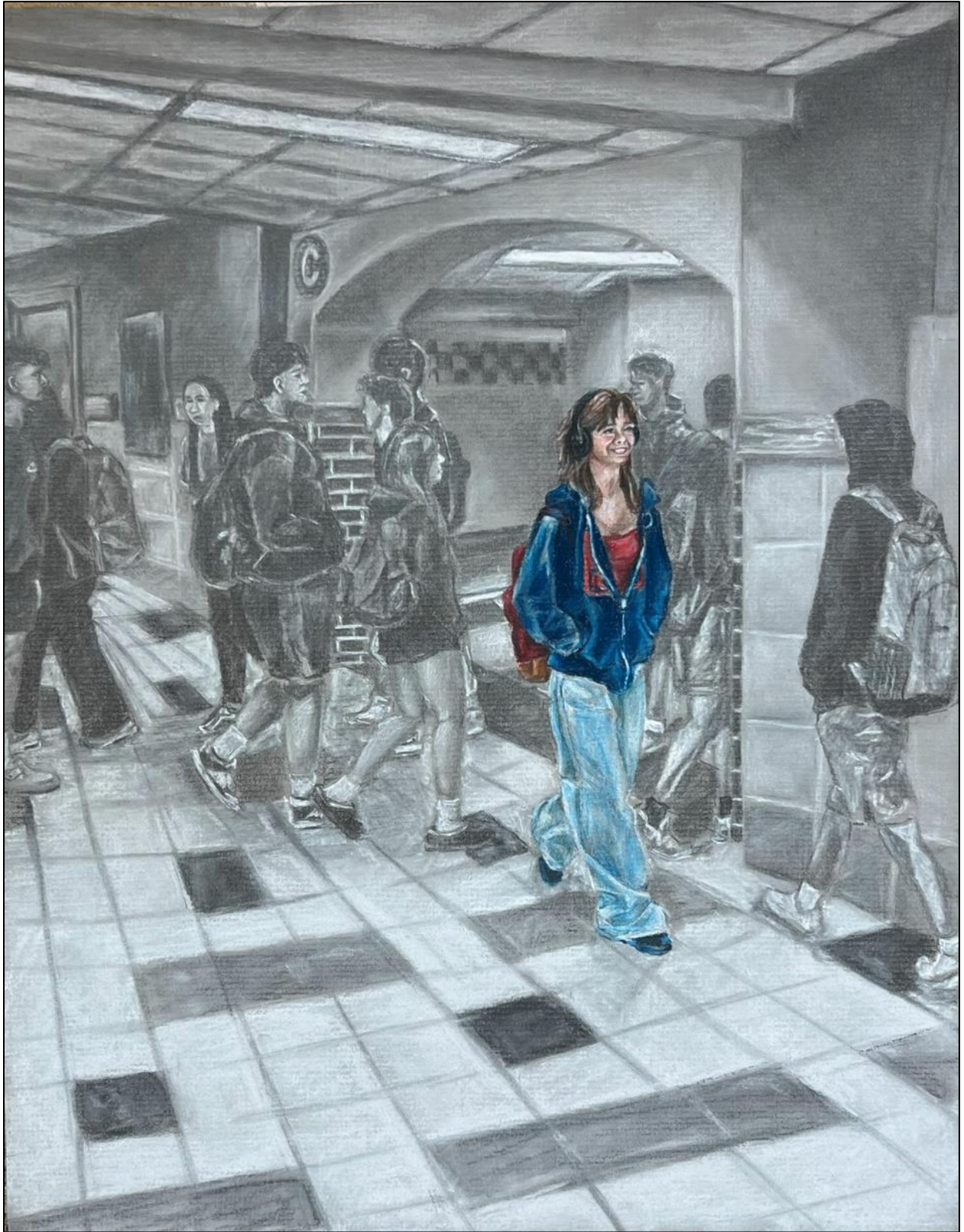
More and more join the mob,
some dragged,
some investigate,
the thumps and screams,

flung to the ceiling.

One by one,
They all come in.
One by one,
They fall down.

Huddled in the corner,
I am the sole survivor.
How long before I'm taken, too?

-Sarah Lueck



Liv Ferrari

The Wolf's Familiar Bite

I'm sitting in science class,
The boy to the right of me snaps his head forward
As my teacher takes two steps sideways,
My eyes scanning the information,
All new,
But somehow I can repeat it verbatim

But, I wonder if thee boy is true,
As I step closer to observe the sheep,
Reaching out to stroke its soft fur
Its dark red eyes piercing my soul,
Blood beginning to pour out,
As its teeth of gullibility lodge themselves into my throat.

The feeling,
It's a chill down my spine
The knowing of a contrivance,
The wolf recognizable in the sheep's clothes,
The hoax evident
An out of body experience
One that makes my head spin and vision blur

-Madigan Kleimenhagen

It's the cashier at the unfamiliar grocery store,
A text from a friend,
The fresh painting at the doctor's office,
All things new, somehow already stored as memories

And to say it,
Fumble and stutter to explain it,
Sounds a lie
The boy crying wolf,
Him seeing through the disguise
But no one listens,
Him claiming this feeling one too many times



Paulette Quesada

Firefly Festival

Lights flicker throughout the sky,
Illuminating each place the bugs fly. .

My pigtails blow in the wind,
As the smell of freshly popped popcorn lingers in my nostrils.

Not a care in the world,
Just me,
My worn-out net,
And a mission:
Catch a firefly.

My chubby legs waddle as
I grunt with determination.
I want one.
No-I need one.

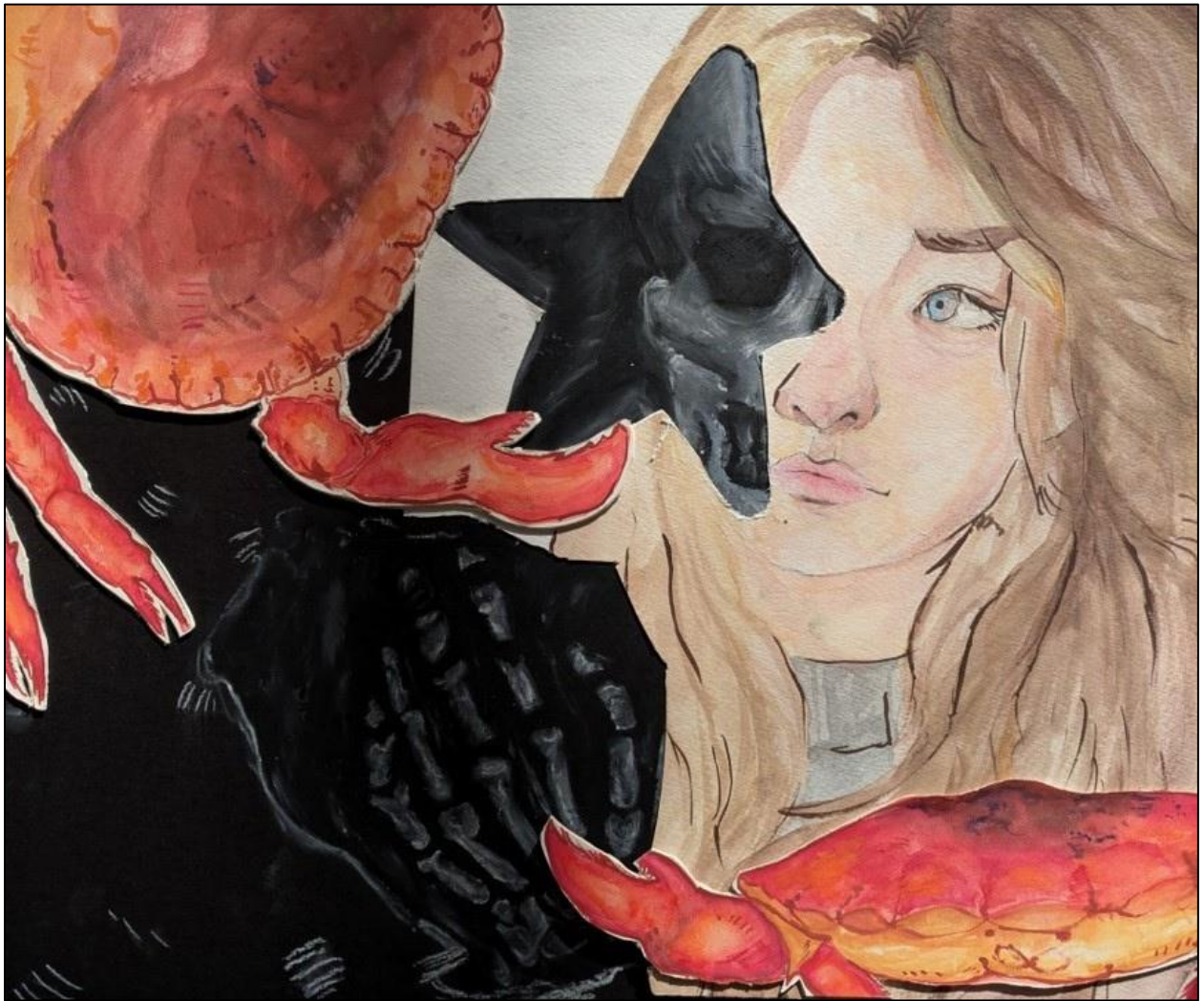
I swing.
And miss repeatedly.

Wishing that I could be like the older kids,
With their long legs
And jars full of light.

“Run! Run! Run!”
My family shouts.
I dive,

Leaving me bruised and muddy.
My eyes are drawn to my net.
The glow,
Emerging from under the white string,
Leaves my heart full.
I did it.

-Hope Mallon



Skylee Zerrenner

Youngest child

Being the youngest child is like walking through a forest of trees.
The shadows tower over and watch your every move,
And every path has been worn down by those who came first.
You find yourself gathering the fallen leaves of guidance,
Trying to piece together stories from the laughter and cries left behind.

In the quietist of moments, you feel the weight of expectations,
Not your own , but the ones piled on you from the branches above.
Yet, you feel some freedom in your steps,
A sort of lightness in navigating the trails that have already been mapped,
Allowing you to explore just a tiny section of something that has never been seen.

The hand me downs, worn with care, fit you like a second layer of skin,
Each thread is woven to the journeys of those who came before you.
Your voice, though mostly soft and quiet, carries the strength of a monarchs wings,
Migrating through the harsh conditions thrown its way.

In the family picture, you are the vibrant figure,
Adding a pop of color to something so dull.
The youngest child will always have a unique place,
In a world shaped by the hands that came before,
Yet forever changing by your touch.

-Audra Lawson



Marielle Trumbo

Leaving

The fire wickedly crackled throughout the distant months

Subjects sacrificed daily to the gods.

Only the rose's positivity rebelled

Against the cabin swallowed by evergreens.

Placed on a pedestal in an art show

Exposed and shy.

The rose's defenses gradually were breached,

Vulnerable to nature.

Slowly the rose's strength diminished

Now a part of the status quo.

The coaster became a cemetery,

A forgotten funeral.

Time couldn't be undone

The infection evolved, no cure

Victims they all became.

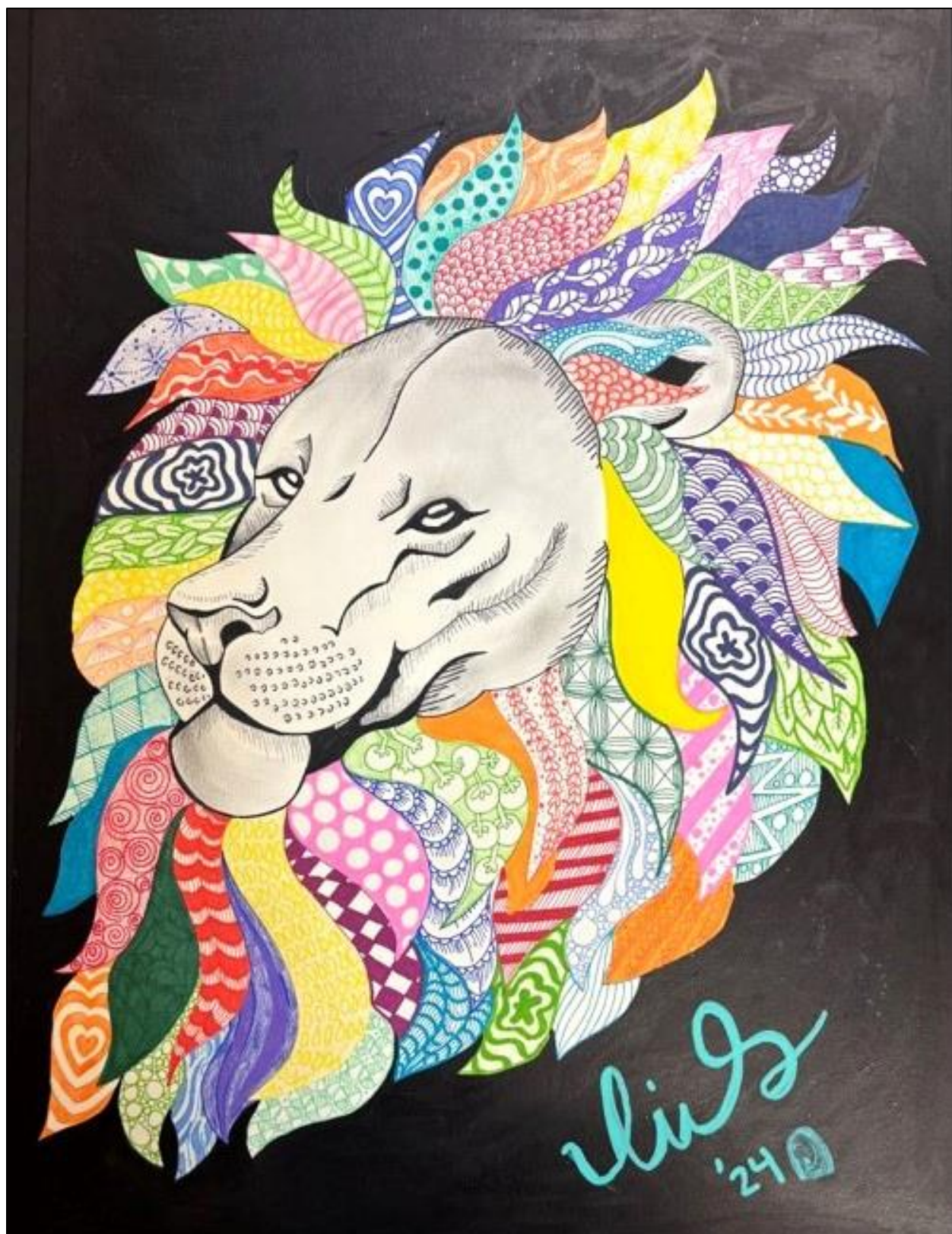
While the failed supernova embraced the throne

Their servant spotted the drunken sculpture

They were met with the fury of the god's fire

Now only ashes remained

-Jill Melson



Olivia Sasser

The Art of Life

Ditching the hard, blue, plastic seats,
We dash to the boat's railing
As it sets off,
The cool water of the Seine
Slapping against its side

My friend's arms are pressed against my own,
Mixed chatter and laughter can be made out
Over the constant loop of instructions
Blared from the boat's speakers

As we pass under a short bridge,
Clusters of people become visible,
All huddled into half circles
Open facing us,
Like a special show reserved for our viewing
As people sit on blankets on the hill
Descending to the river's edge

The glistening symbol of peace fades into the distance as we push
on,
Past groups clapping and cheering,
Pairs with interlocked hands throw their heads back
And stomp their feet, twirling,
Heads of hair and skirts flowing in the breeze

The orange sunset creates a perfect background for their show,
I watch in awe,
At the simplicity of the uncommon yet beautiful act,
The clear appreciation of life by just living and enjoying it

I realize that I rarely see people act in such manner,
Such freeness, such pure, visible, happiness,
Almost as if they were in their own world
Where hate and prejudice didn't exist

At that moment, I feel reborn,
And pledge silently to myself to live like these people
From now on until forever,
To not just live life
But to enjoy it too,
And to pay attention closely to the art of daily life.

-Madigan Kleimenhagen



Faye Bader

Take it on

Dawn upon the daring quest

Take your chance there's no consequence

Losing isn't the end of the test

Get up don't stop to rest

Grab your bag and lose that sense

Dawn upon that daring quest

Pull out your sword and do your best

You must keep going climb over the fence

Losing isn't the end of the test

Hurry hurry smell the zest

Don't you feel the great essence

Dawn upon the daring quest

We made it, we made it to the nest

Fight and make them less and less

Losing isn't the end of the test

You need to kill the great big pest

Win the fight and take that stance

Dawn upon the daring quest

Losing isn't the end of the test.

-Peyton Lancaster



Lilliana Guarracino

My Favorite Photo

My favorite photo

Here's to a moment in time, and a jolly good rhyme

You were at the petting zoo, you were doing just fine

Taking simple delight, during college, a-flight

A breath-taking man for an eye-catching sight

You looked at the camera, with simple delight

You've seen lots of things; you've been lots of places

You've done lots of deeds that put smiles on faces

And of all the brave men, who've over the ages

A truly, truly unique man, who earned all of these praises

-Frederick Herz



Diana Kravchenko

Not Today

I would smell the sweet scent of love in the air, wafting above the trees and floating delicately in the

autumn wind.

But I have a cold. I can't smell.

I tried to listen to your voice, to hear the soft song of adoration trapped in your vocal cords.

But your voice is so monotonous, and I stopped listening.

I would embrace you as we lie here, in each other's warmth and safety.

But I'm awfully hot, could you back up? Just a little bit.

I certainly would have, if I could have, if I should have, if you really wanted me to.

But not today. Nope. Just not today.

Maybe when I'm not sick and distracted and uncomfortably hot.

How about tomorrow?

-Cassie Mensching



Dorian Alvarez-Morales



Jordan Pollner