

The Bluebird's Voice



Seeing the Light—Semester 1

Being the Light—Semester 2

Compilation for 2020-2021

Kenwood High School Writers & Artists

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THE BLUEBIRD'S VOICE

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The works included in this volume were offered through emails, messages, Jamboards, Google Meet chats, journalism articles, and assignments. They span the experience of a solid year when the paradigms shifted in a way no one expected. They are the bold and the brave. They are the ones who persisted in “Seeing and Being the Light.”

Seeing the Light—Semester 1

1 FOUND POEM

By Neveah Baker

The not so much beauty of love

They won't tell you about how love actually is
Why? You may be wondering
Who knows, I used to stay up all night seeking for the love
I was told about in "Cinderella"
Crying. . .waiting. . .obsessed with
I used to love the thought of growing up and getting
 a boyfriend
Or a girlfriend if I was gay
They don't tell you about that either
If this short poem doesn't sum up that
LOVE isn't easy for everyone I don't know what will

From Blythe Baird "When the Fat Girl Gets Skinny"

2 STORY MIRROR

By Sidney Fowlkes

In the moon light, I wish on the stars that you were here instead of being there. One day I will feel your warm embrace and no more tears will fall down from my face.

Save me from depression and sadness, insanity and madness, save me from this shell created by fears, save me from this pain that is eating away my years, save me from dying . . . because I'm done trying. . . I know I'm silent and shy but hear my cry, please help and don't ask why. Everyone has that one friend, they'd choose over anyone. To talk to, hang out with, it doesn't matter. They're always the first choice.

I get an empty feeling in my chest, when I realize I'm not that friend to anyone. You just sit all alone somewhere, where it's still dark in the day, sheer silence and your screaming demons which now have become your best friends. Darkness is now what you seek hoping somewhere, it'll fill your creeks, but daily as you sit and not break those self-created walls, life goes by while you just fall and fall.

It hurts when you have someone in your heart, but you can't have them in your arms. I remember the way we argued, but still remained glued. I think about the way we shared, and for each other how we cared. I remember all the promises we made; I hope that our friendship never fades.

Those we loved don't go away, they walk beside us every day. Unseen, unheard, but always near, so loved, so missed, so very dear. I hope you find a reason to smile, I hope you stay happy all the while, don't lose hope as things would change soon, don't give up to your pain, if you don't lose hope, things will be fine, everything will fall into place on time.

Thank you for being a perfect friend who fills my life with wonderful things. For your kindly deeds and gentle ways. The joy and comfort your presence brings. Thank you for sharing my problems when nothing in my world's going right. With your cheerful and sunny outlook, I can view things in a different light.

Many friends have come into my life but there are none more precious than you. So thanks for your love and loyalty. May God bless you in all that you do.

If you always try your best then you'll never have to wonder about what you could have if you summoned all your thunder. And if your best was not as good as you hoped it would be, you still could say, *I gave today all that I had in me.*

Inspired by Jyoti Arora's Story Mirror

WORK 3



By Comfort Ikejiani

4 SISTERS

By Sidney Fowlkes

We are all so different,
and yet so much the same.
Everyone, in some way or another,
will experience a kind of pain.

We are a family,
we take and face every next,
with love and care,
helping calmly.

We hope and pray
for every step,
altogether,
for we are family.

A piece of my heart
A pillar of my family
A portion of my life
Literally—a slice of me
Not just a sister
My BFF, my bestie
You've always been
And always will be.

A sister is there when life is low,
A sister is a place where you can go,

A sister is a friend, a friend that is true,
A sister is precious
And my sister is you.

A friend is someone we turn to
When our spirits need a lift.
A friend is someone we treasure,
For friendship is a gift.
A friend is someone who fills our lives with beauty, joy, and grace.
A friend makes the world we live in, a better and happier place.

Life is a sunshine,
Life is a rain,
Life is a start,
Life is an end.

I realize that to be
more alive
I had to be
less afraid,
so, I did it.
I lost my fear
and gained
My whole life.

You brought me sunshine
when I only saw rain—
A sister is a friend, a friend that is true,
A sister is precious
And my sister is you.

A friend is someone we turn to
When our spirits need a lift.
A friend is someone we treasure,
For friendship is a gift.
A friend is someone who fills our lives with beauty, joy, and grace.
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Life is a rain,
Life is a start,
Life is an end.

I realize that to be
more alive
I had to be
less afraid,
so, I did it.
I lost my fear
and gained
My whole life.

You brought me sunshine
when I only saw rain—
You brought me laughter
when I only felt pain.

5 SEEING THE LIGHT

By Kelvin Ganesh

Seeing the Light

At present, there are individuals
Everywhere in the world
who are much the same as you.
They're either desolate, they're missing
someone, they're discouraged, they're harmed,
they're scarred from an earlier time, or they're into private
issues nobody thinks about—they have experience
and insights you wouldn't accept.
They wish, they dream, and they trust.
Also, at the present time, they are staying
here, perusing these words. but I'm composing
this for you, so you don't
feel alone any longer.

Coda

The beauty of new beginnings is as soothing as great endings.
Life is never-ending mourning for a loved one,
that cannot come back,
A serene bridge of cheerfulness flashing through our eyes,
As we experience the struggles in our daily lives.
Love seems to conquer all, but we end up falling
to our destruction.
Holding onto these ornamented moments until our deathbeds.

Hope

We all are hoping for a better year of 2021
A year filled with miraculous moments
A year of hopes and dreams
A year of no more entangling in distress
A year of love and friendship
A year of repentance from the things we regret
A year of no grudges for society
A year of making the 21st century
The year when people are united
standing up against injustice in society.

Arachnophobia

Spiderwebs, droplets of crystal water. Such art comes to the weaver but sometimes fright, fear, and bloodshed.

Nature has many surprising creatures. Among those there comes the tale of how spiders originated. It is said these stories about spiders evolved around the time when Greek mythology began unfolding myths of nature.

There was a girl that went by the name Arachne she was a talented weaver but with such talent there comes pride she even challenged the goddess of knowledge making Athena furious warning Arachne in the form of an old woman that she should never challenge a goddess as it might lead her to her downfall. When Athena accepted the challenge Arachne made a mocking tapestry of the god Zeus the ruler of Olympians.

Athena became furious ripping her tapestry and transformed Arachne from a girl to what is classified as an Arachnid, a species known as spiders. She still has her talent, but people would fear her. Her eternal agony and anguish made it a warning for the people of Athens to never be prideful as it might lead to eternal destruction.

WORK 6



By Julianna Jones

7 FOUND POEM

By Riley May

Feeling in Your Own Mind

*My happiness is a fever that will break
my depression always drags me back in isolation.
The feeling of alone is the explanation of me
But people tell me "I'm so good at making something
out of nothing"
I am confused on my repetition
I want to help people from falling through the cracks
but I can't speak for anyone but myself
Everything or anything starts with a question*

From "The Question" by Rachel Mvokoro

8 DEAR FUTURE

By Natalia Obrebski

Dear Future,

In this letter, I am going to talk about the mob or rioters that swarmed the US Capitol and where America is at today in 2021. It is important for the future and who may come across this letter to understand my perspective because our country, the United States, is hurting, and this is a time of history that shows chaos and a weak handling of unlawful issues.

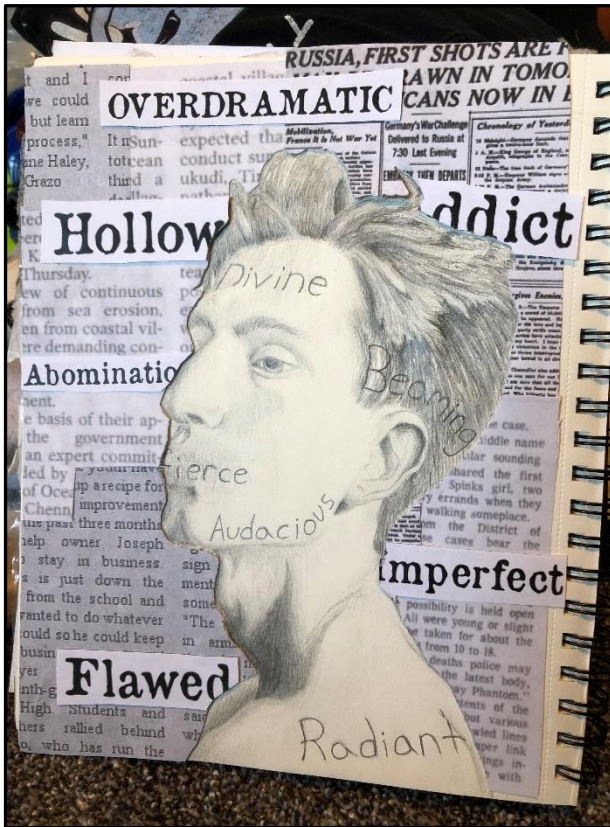
On January 6, 2021, people who were upset about the election results of Joe Biden winning the presidency believed it was rigged and stormed into the Capitol, climbed the scaffolding of the Capitol looking for a way to get inside, chanting “Storm the Capitol.” Most were not wearing masks which is dangerous in today’s world where a pandemic (Covid19) has affected the health of many. Armed police tackled the protesters although many protesters also dashed through security barriers, getting away with being in offices and the Old Supreme Court Chamber. When it was over, a woman had been shot in the neck, and the nation was in shock.

This shows that the American people were careless, putting their lives and others at risk during the pandemic, hard-headed because they did not accept an election result, and displayed an action of “terrorism” which is not what America was made out to be back when the Constitution was written. The American people should’ve handled this situation better, and I am beyond hurt to see the American people not treating each other with respect. Being a teenager right now and seeing this event unfold makes me think America is turning into a country of hate.

I sincerely hope the future will be different, and everyone can be united and respectful of each other's beliefs. I hope my generation somewhere down the path towards the future is more open minded and accepting of each other. I hope violence doesn't become an option anymore, and my generation will shape America into a safer environment with peace. I believe my generation will lead differently by valuing love over hate in society and make change, so everyone is equally treated, equally charged with a crime, and equally heard. This generation will become doctors or chemists making cures or vaccines, government leaders, teachers, etc. that can bring about positivity. Our voices matter now, and in the future, we will grow into leaders making change.

Sincerely,
Natalia

WORK 9



By Tyler Melka

10 WHO AM I?

By Sarah Okome

Who am I?

Who is the real me?

What defines me?

Do I actually exist?

What makes me who I am?

I think I'm just a replica of online social media personas

A collection of ideas from other people's identity

Lacking originality

Constantly beating myself up for not having a specialty

Punishing my mind through words

I'm merely a coward

I sit here like a dog tied to a leash

Without trying to set myself free.

Disintegrating

**Crumbling down
Piece by piece
This built configuration
Of my identity
Day by day
I struggle to conceal
The outward persona
That I unveil
When will the day come
when my face reveals
The absence of
My picture-perfect ideal?**

By Sarah Okome

11 HOOD

By Abigail Overby

Suck in your stomach and hold up your head,
That's what the girls at school said,
You have to be pretty,
You have to be perfect,
Trust me honey,
It'll all be worth it,
That's what the girls at school said,
Chained down with expectations,
I hide in my hood,
If only the girls at school understood.

There once was a girl who wore black pants and a hoodie. You could always find her standing proudly on her path. No one knew what was beyond the girl and her path, but no one dared ask.

One day a young man came up to the girl and asked, "Little girl, why do you stand on this path?"

The little girl smiled and placed her hands on her hips, "Because I must protect my kingdom!"

"What kingdom?" The man asked.

"My kingdom! Where I can walk with the wise. Where I can be at peace. Where I can escape this world if only for a moment."

Moral~ A child's imagination is one of the most precious things in the world and should be protected.

WORK 12



By Elise Autry

13 IMAGINE

By Emily Overby

Imagine

Imagine that you were them.
Those people in the halls.
The ones with the smiles and laughter and all.
If only you were them, then finally you would see,
the laughter is a facade, soon the smiles leave.
Imagine you were them,
in their clothes so fine,
wishing you had what they had in their light of lime.
If only you were them, then you'd truly see,
the sharp shattered pieces, in the cage where they sit,
wishing to be free.
Stop wishing to become someone else's broken life,
pick up your own pieces, be your own light.
Remember, toxic waste is green,
that limelight may not be what it seems.
Maybe one day, someday, you will see,
once you love yourself, you'll find who you're meant to be.
Then, after that day, where you have finally grown,
then and only then can you help more than your own.
After that day, you can pick up a piece,
a shard of someone else and help them truly see.

By Emily Overby

Snowflake

A singular snowflake. So small, so insignificant to others. Its journey is heart wrenching. The snowflake, born only seconds before is now thrown from its home, plummeting towards the ground. As the snowflake falls it comes to life. Terrified it sways through the air, searching desperately for somewhere to land. For what seems like hours the snowflake falls occasionally bumping into his brethren, but never able to get a firm enough hold on them to stay together. Finally, he hits the ground. He's one of the first to make it. Pain shoots through the snowflake's tiny body as his siblings fall over him, blocking the sun. The more snowflakes fall, the colder it gets. For days he lies there, shivering in the cold. He dares not speak to the snowflakes around him for fear of wasting dearly needed energy. Slowly the load atop him begins to feel lighter. Soon he can again see the sun and finally he feels its warmth. He gets warmer and warmer until he is no more.

WORK 14



By Kiera Jones-Dollinger

15 OP/EDITORIAL

By Emily Overby

Look Back at 2020 Through a Teen's Eyes

This was supposed to be my year. My first high school dance, my class rings, piano, journalism, everything. I am in my junior year at Kenwood High.

Last year (my sophomore year) was my first here. Before that I was homeschooled. Last year towards the end of school we had heard about COVID-19. There were students who didn't seem to care, others were scared to even breathe around people. I wasn't too worried at first; I mean we heard stuff about Ebola, too, right? And we never really had to deal with that here. That's when they started talking about closing school for two weeks. I kind of wanted schools to close; lots of the kids did. That's when worry started to set in. I would clean down all the desks with Clorox wipes when the teachers allowed it.

School shut down for two weeks, or at least it was supposed to. We had little to no work during those two weeks, so it was fun. That's when they told us, we weren't going back that year. School at home was easy enough, we didn't have online meetings yet, and most of the work was reading a power point and doing the work to go with it. In English I had to read more and such but that's expected in English. Masks became a rule, a law even. If you didn't wear a mask in the store you weren't allowed in. People began buying them like crazy. Other people used bandanas or made their own. But a lot of people, including me, were faced with the thought... do masks even work? And if masks do work then why do we have to stand six feet apart? If masks work, then why are so many people dying?

People began buying all the food and supplies to prepare for a lockdown. You can still hardly find enough toilet paper or cleaning supplies for one person. They put limits on how much food and supplies you could buy because people were buying so much without leaving any for others. COVID-19 was spreading to the point that we were discouraged to leave the house for a while. My father is an essential worker, so he didn't have much choice but to leave the house. Some of the jobs he works, it's really hot and difficult to breathe at, even more so because of these masks we wear. My mom babysits, so she didn't have a job for the time being because of her

employers being out of job also. It's hard to know who and what to believe. Some people say it's a rat or a bat that escaped a lab in China. If so, why were they creating this virus? Other conspiracies say so many other things, but each answer only poses more questions. All throughout our summer we were mostly kept inside, with nothing to do, and when we did go out, we had to be as careful as ever. We all were troubled at the thought of school. Everyone was passed through the grade they had been in, but it wasn't going to be the same this year. This school year, if you didn't get good enough grades, you are repeating. The beginning was hard. We had lots of kids who couldn't get on their computers, who didn't know how to work google meets, who couldn't find their work, etc. And we missed out on a lot too. I missed my first homecoming dance. We all missed it. We didn't get to make pep rally happen, we didn't have any spirit weeks or holiday spirit weeks in the halls and rooms of the school.

My sister isn't able to understand the full experience of culinary class because we do school online now. My youngest sister isn't able to get the help she needs with her work in her first year of middle school, because we do school online now. I will be taught piano over a computer. Concerts will be recorded on a screen rather than done in our auditorium in front of an actual audience. Students who wanted to play in a sport did not get that chance this year. We will not get to bring an adult to school and try to make them proud, we will not get to see each other's smiles in person because of masks. And then, when things were finally becoming "normal," if any of this CAN be normal anyway, we had the ransomware attack on our school. School was shut down again.

Once again, we didn't know how long we would be out. Not too long later we were back at school with a new site to learn, so now everyone has to learn how to get on school again. And that was after having our computers checked for viruses.

At first there were some bonuses. We got to sleep in, and pjs were our uniform if we wanted. But after a while, we began to miss having a reason to get up and get dressed. For me, getting up for online school is way harder than getting up for in person schooling. Pjs don't feel as fun during the day, sleeping in is the norm, and staying home on the weekends is no longer relaxing.

Then, there is the talk of this vaccine. But can we really trust it? They're still testing it and people are already buying it. We don't even know if it works.

And what about our seniors? This year was supposed to be amazing for them. We don't even know if we're going back. There might not be a prom or a graduation where the seniors get to walk across the stage in a cap and gown. And then us Juniors, will we ever get a prom? I have never been to prom and may never be. Will we get to have a normal graduation next year? Will I ever meet my classmates and put faces to those names displayed across my computer screen? Even though we deck out in blue and send photos in it just doesn't feel the same. The yearbook will feel lighter this year, while our hearts feel heavier. We don't know when things will be better. We don't know if they WILL get better. We all put on these brave faces and do what we need to do during school, but you'd never see the cracks in the children's smiles over these screens the way you could in person. You can't be there when the child panics during their presentation because instead of stepping out of class with the kid they turn off their mic and camera, they disappear from our world online, and they become beyond our reach. Yes, this year will be hard and yes it will be different, but shouldn't we be doing more? More to make this the best year for the seniors, for the freshmen, for the people who live for pep rally and school spirit, those who live for sports? So, we can't be in person, there still has to be more we can do. This can't be it for our year, it just can't.

WORK 16



By Comfort Ikejiani

17 WE THE PEOPLE

By Jasmine Ramos

“WE THE PEOPLE...”

Everyone has heard it before but who are “the people”?
Are they the happy people with the great family?
Are they the people who are making good money?
Are they the people who downgrade you for living on their street?
Are they the people with all the great lives,
With too little time to think about us, the other people?

By, “the people” what do they mean,
Is it they who speak on politics and have no time to give up for “the people” below,
who work just as hard as they but don’t get paid nearly as much
Are they part of “the people” you speak of?

But is this who we are, or is this who we want to become?
From the wise ones we once were, we are now showing the next generation how we’ve changed compared to those before.
It’s a downgrade of self-love.
From constant conversations about our looks, and how we act, we are proud people of color who only want to be as equal as you and be a part of “the people” you speak of

For we are no people, rather a minority to the eyes of society for “the people” who are wanted are the ones who hold the wealth.
When “the people” you speak of, come into the capitol on a completely normal day and raid it horribly
and violently, the nerve you have to say, “it’s okay.”

Shame on you for letting this slip through, with no hesitation, they walked in from room to room,
but if it had been us, the other “people” what would you do?
Start shooting us down?
Maybe rubber rounds,
while we wait around,
no physical threats, just sounds,
maybe a pound or 2 on the door,

but we'd be beaten on the floor,
left with our drained dignity, we would have no more.

The days when we are pleading for equality, when we would
peacefully walk the streets,
We'd get beaten and bashed mentally and emotionally for our so
called "freedom of speech".

Why should we roam with signs in our hands
just to fight for "the people" of color,
just to get pushed down time and time again,
What happened to America?
Is this really "the land of the free"?
For our "people" that is not the case
because in speaking freely for us, that lock has lost its key.

As "the people" we must unite, and come as one, not clash.
We must not take what we've got for granted,
rather give it a new dawn, shake hands and give up the bash
because it's useless trash.
No more need for constant pain when we can change the world
again,

better than before, we can rise and stand,
together as "we the people" for once.
It's time to sync in unison as we once did before,
it starts with "the people," never less, only more.

WORK 18



By Mariam Bankole

19 DEAR WORLD

By Priya Samaroo

Dear World,

We are done.

First, you closed our schools for two weeks, then closed them for the rest of the school year.

You've taken away our sports, forced us to isolate ourselves then expected us to act normal.

You've ripped us away from our achievements and deprived me and millions of other students of their senior year.

No one has ever asked if we are okay.

You've completely stripped us from our personality, as young people we are supposed to socialize and be around people our own age.

This is the year we were planning big things, not only for ourselves but our future lives.

We feel like failures.

Feeling as if we didn't accomplish much this year.

It's not our fault, we are just eighteen years old, some of us are still minors.

It's not only the pandemic's fault, but it's the fault of anyone who failed to realize that our mental health is depleting.

Failing to realize that most of us are up at night, crying to finish essays.

Failing to realize that talking on the phone isn't enough.

Failing to realize we are at our breaking points.

Failing to realize that we are trying our best with virtual learning, that isn't helping us much.

We as young people seek you all for help.

Our mental health does matter.

Take time to talk to your children.

Listen to what the students have to say.

Take time out of your day to attend to their needs.

Dear world,

We are the future, but there is no future.

20 DEPRESSION

By Yariel Rodriguez Cabeza

Depression

Who defined depression as “a homie hurtin”? You can cry now.
To the ones that said “this ain’t it” and was talking about breathing,
Sometimes I wake without enough tools to handle the day.
I hate the ground. It holds me up when all I want to do is fall.
I hate the wind for it takes me places that I am not always
ready to be.
Them n#gg#s your brothers, but ain’t nobody family until they see
you cry.
Sometimes this body stops feeling like my own.
Your homies ain’t homies till they feel what you’ve been through,
But I love myself too much to be a victim.

21 TWO-FACED WAVES

By Priya Samaroo

Two-Faced Waves

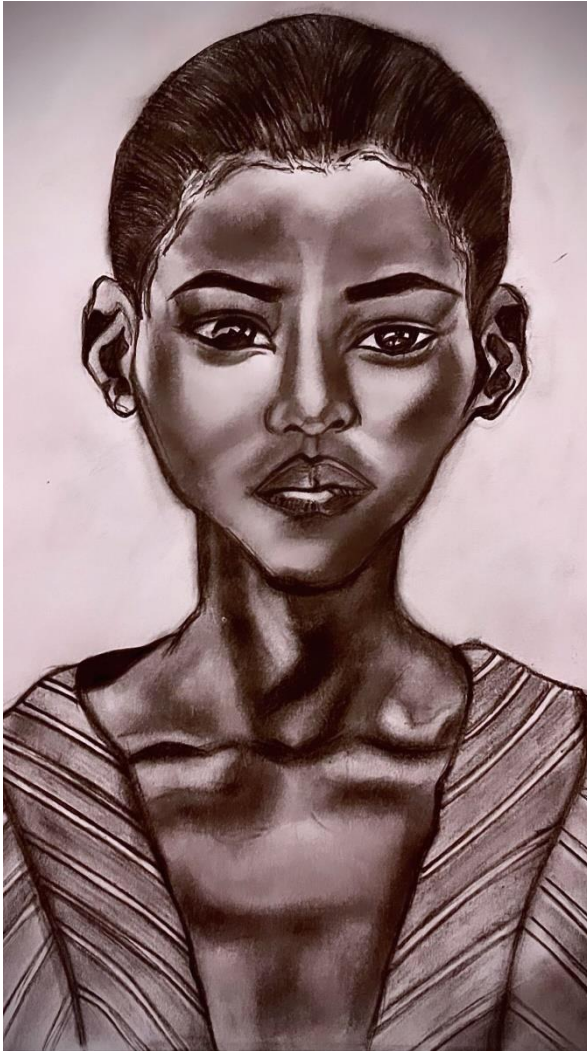
Deep and blue
Shallow and brown
Clean and clear
Dirty and disgusting
That's what you are
You're two faced.

A part of you is beautiful and mysterious
Breathtaking
While the other side of you is
Disgusting and ugly

You've killed the innocent
Animals and children.
But it was mankind that made you like this
Ruined your spirit
Destroying your beauty.

They've corrupted your soul
Then gave you a bad reputation.
They continue this abuse
Your arms are home to many
Animals that love and need you,
Stay strong for them.
My beautiful ocean

WORK 22



By Mariam Bankole

23 ALL GROWN UP

By Amiyah Spraggins

All Grown Up

I'm almost 14, but I'm all grown up
I do the things you do
You support your family--I support my family.
You count your money--I count my money.
You pay your bills—I pay our bills.
It's actually funny. We are so different yet very much the same.
This is really all I know.
I work in a factory all day then come home but not to stay.
It wasn't always like this—I use to go outside.
But now everything just seems to move so slow.
Like a rollercoaster that only goes up.
Only difference is you don't want it to go down.
It's not the same--there's no thrill, just chills, just pain,
But it's alright because grown-ups don't mind, so why should I
After all, I'm all grown up.

Again and Again

It was a Thursday night, and I was home alone, as usual. It was about 2:05 AM. I was sitting in my room on my bed watching my favorite series, Hunter x Hunter, when I heard it. It was a piercing scream. It was so loud that it felt like someone was sticking a needle through my eardrum. The ringing in my ears started to ease after about 4 minutes.

I sat there. I sat at the edge of my bed staring in the direction the scream came from. My ears were still slightly ringing, but that was the least of my worries. At 2:12 AM, I turned towards the TV, but it was off. Did I turn it off? A chill ran down my spine. That wasn't the only thing. . . I felt a breath.

The feeling of hot breath on my neck and a whisper, “the scared ones taste the best.” I was in shock. I was overtaken with fear.

I immediately jumped and ran in the closet. The area around me was too small. Nothing but a file cabinet to the left of me and a long shelf stacked with bags above me. It had only been eight minutes, but it had felt like an hour had passed. I sat there watching, waiting, staring at nothing but an empty space. My breathing was heavy, but something was off. It had seemed as if I wasn't only hearing my breathing. I did a full 360 turn around but no one else was there. Something inside me then said, "look up" and instantly threw my head back.

What I saw was beyond terrifying. This wasn't a creature; it was worse. It was simply a "no name." Circling around the mid-point of the head, where it looked as if an eye should be, were rows and rows of sharp, decaying teeth. Its long, black, burnt up hands were gripping the rails on the shelf, just waiting to pounce at me.

I was horrified! I didn't have time to think—I ran. It was still there. I could still feel its breath; it whispered "run!"

With every step, the creature repeatedly yelled... "RUN...RUN...RUN!!!" I looked back to see "No Name" crawling on all fours, the body looked burnt. Its decaying skin was leaving a trail of blood and flesh each time he took a step. I had been so scared I forgot the direction I was running in . . .the balancer. I came to a halt, but the force threw me off balance, propelling me over the edge. As I fell, I let out a scream so loud it snatched my soul out with it. I hit the ground, breaking my neck.

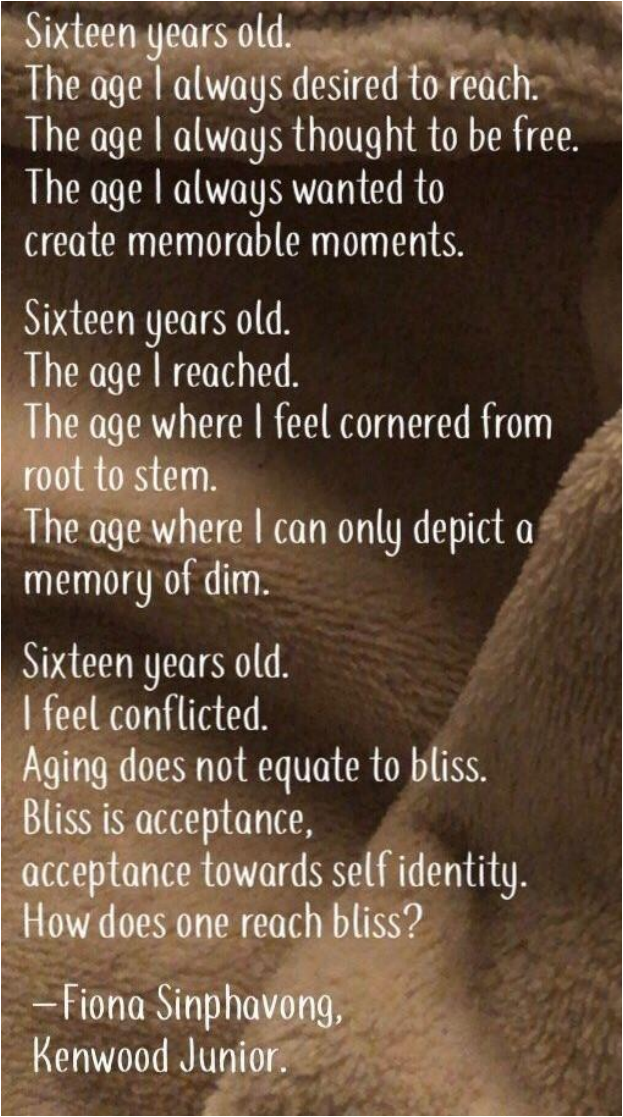
At 2:05 AM, sitting on my bed, watching my favorite series I heard it, a piercing scream.

WORK 24



By Kelvin Ganesh

WORK 25



Sixteen years old.
The age I always desired to reach.
The age I always thought to be free.
The age I always wanted to
create memorable moments.

Sixteen years old.
The age I reached.
The age where I feel cornered from
root to stem.
The age where I can only depict a
memory of dim.

Sixteen years old.
I feel conflicted.
Aging does not equate to bliss.
Bliss is acceptance,
acceptance towards self identity.
How does one reach bliss?

—Fiona Sinphavong,
Kenwood Junior.

By Fiona Sinphavong

26 HELP

By Lilianna Chavarria

Help

Help

Help

Help

HELP

Who is she? Where am I?

Please just talk to me and pull me out, pull me out

PULL ME OUT. I'M SCARED

I'm sinking deeper. I need you.

Everything around me is sinking in, my mind is cloudy and dark.

Every time I move, I can't feel a thing. I'm not here. Who is this?

"It's ok. I'm here. I love you."

I'm trying to listen, trying to grasp hold of reality.

She is my light pulling me out of the darkness.

Just focus on the light, just focus on the light.

You're ok.

I'm ok.

WORK 27



By Jainsong Cedillo

Being the Light



The Bluebird's Voice

Semester 2

Kenwood High School Writers & Artists

2021

28 THE BROKEN CHAIN

By Zyheir Linton

The broken chains . . .

Fairness can act as a tool that identifies right or wrong.
Standing strong, provoking your demon will be the outbreak.
They hold us back because they are scared,
They know we have the key, and we can break free.
Just like the blue bird with one wing, we will still take flight.
This is our home, our land. When will the oppression will end...
fighting for our freedom is something that we have done for years.
It ends now; it ends for our children.
We die so they may live. We strive, so they don't have to . . .
we come in peace every time, but yet someone dies.
Why do they hate us because the color of our skin?

No one said we had to be friends. Please stop the violence
and make amends.

The day quickly becomes night.

Afraid to walk because if we reach too far in the dark,
Boom--shots fired.

Now the policemen has become a liar . . .

"he was reaching for a gun." That child's life had just begun
now it's gone,
gone like the wind.

We're in a never-ending cycle where we're called the villain.

Treated like equal is never something for my people.

This world is corrupt, and even the blacks are giving up,
surrendering to the knowledge that we are doing wrong.

Yes, I know you want to live, but we all have to hold on.

Stop the violence

I'm tired of seeing my people dying.

I know we're not the only ones,
but it's a target on our faces, and these criminals
don't have the patience.

They're trigger happy.

We die by their bodies like it's hobby,
killing our families like we're nobodies.

29 FOUND POEM

By Gabriella Reckley

"We are striving to forge a union with purpose" --From Amanda Gorman

**As we try to find a way through these tough times,
We strive to find equal grounds,
We strive to find each other,
We strive to find purpose in our tireless efforts,
Our mission is to find a way to makes ends meet,
For people of many races to come together,
And communicate to solve our nations' conflicts.**

30 OPPRESSION

By Cevaya Smith

I am here to live.
They are here to live.
WE are here to live.
WE are not here to die.

WE are not here to be pawns of this game you play.
I want to feel safe with the way I am.
I want to feel safe when I walk outside.
I want to be happy with the way I am.

I hate that I am afraid to do anything because of my race.
I hate that I see people of any race killed by the white man.
I hate that the white man controls us and rules over us.
I hate that people of any color and race are scared for their lives.

The things I want to do to stop oppression I cannot do.
The things I want to do to help those oppressed, I cannot do.
The things I want to do to save people of color, I cannot do.
And it is all because of my race, all because of my race, I cannot help.

31 WITHIN

By Dakota Rowe

Within, a subject nobody talks about,
But everyone searches for
Within, a place of the unknown but so familiar to so many,
Within a difficult subject but satisfying at the end.
Everyone tries to find what is within them, feelings, motivation,
power, sexuality, just about everything.
They all come up with a conclusion that isn't always from
within, they hide what's within due to fear.
Fear, the one thing that holds us all back from finding
ourselves.
Fear, a feeling so powerful it overcomes happiness or sadness
or really any other feeling.
The question is how you get rid of the fear, answer is . . . you
don't.
To find who, you truly are within, you must face those fears,
straight on, and it's one of the hardest things to do.
You must do the things that scare you the most and find what
you love about those things. You must be willing to let go of the
fear; many don't do that.
To find what's within yourself, you must be willing to take
risks and take chances to find what you really want.
People don't do that; they find an in between of fear and
comfort and stick with it, not knowing what they could truly
want, or what they could really do.
What's within you is something amazing and if you never find
it, you will be stuck in the same spot just like every other
person living in the middle of fear and comfort.
That's not enough and that's why, what's within, is so
important.

32 EPIC STORY SELECTION

ROSE PETALED WINGS

By Azriel Williamson

Archia, June 15, 2024 was one of earth's most advanced civilizations, so advanced that nobody could find their little island. Here's the story of a man who lived here--Leon Piochete.

“Man! You guys never cease to amaze!”

“Heh, you want another bowl, Leon?”

“Nah, I'll be alright. Here's the money plus an extra tip, I gotta bounce.”

“Come again!”

“Will do.”

As Leon left the little ramen shop in town he was thinking about what he can do next. He finally remembered why he was outside in the first place. He face palms and rushes to the store to buy groceries. He made a mental checklist in his head, “Ice, milk, cereal, juice, eggs, meat, and uh... What was I going to get? I don't know I'm just going to buy a bunch of tv dinners,” he said to himself while strolling around the supermarket. He finally finished getting all of his groceries. The cashier scanned his cart and gave him his total before someone stopped him.

It was Gianna, his friend from college. He hadn't seen her in while, so he stopped to chat. “How are you?”

She looked pretty shaken up by something, “Yeah it's nice to see you again Leon... Um I have something to ask you.”

“Yeah what's up?”

“I know it's my job and all, but my boss told me to throw out the trash and uh...”

“And?”

“It's really dark and creepy, and I heard something fall out there! There might be a murderer or a mutant cat or a robber or racoons with rabi-”

“Okay, yeah, yeah. I get it. I'll go.”

“It's dangerous to go alone. Take this.” She handed him a broom.

“What am I supposed to do with a broom?”

She shrugged and sent Leon off to take out the trash. But as he approached the alleyway, he knows first-hand what she was talking

about. The alleyway looked as if it led to another world almost, but luckily Leon threw his fear of the dark away a long time ago.

As he moved deeper into the darkness, he suddenly saw a light. He thought maybe it was a lost puppy, or some racoons or something. But he finally moved close enough to find out that light was a little girl.

Leon rushes towards her and shook her to wake her up. The girl looked about 8 years old and was wearing a torn up tee shirt and denim jeans.

“Hey, wake up!” Leon started yelling desperately. When that didn’t work, he checked if no one was looking, which no one was and resorted to magic. He grew a rose from his hand and put it in the girl’s mouth. Leon learned a while ago that if people ate his roses they would regain their strength although he couldn’t use it on himself.

And soon enough she woke and glowed with a bright light that lit up the alley and scared off the rats and stray cats.

But before Leon could introduce himself, she screamed, “AHHHHH!”

“Hey hey hey! What’s all the screaming about?”

“You’re one of them! Don’t hurt me!”

“I’m not going to hurt you I promise.”

“You pinky promise? Because if you don’t I’ll have to hurt you mister demon.”

Leon was shocked. How did she find out about his secret? There was no time to ask these questions because he had to get her to safety.

“I pinky promise I won’t hurt you.” He put out his pinky.

When their pinkies interlocked, a halo shone above her head.

“That explains it.” Leon says in his head.

“Well, what’s your name mister?”

“ I’m Leon. What’s yours?”

“I... people call me Subject 4163, but I know that’s not a real name, so I don’t really have one.”

“I see... Where are your parents?”

“I don’t have those either...”

“I’m sorry, well you can stay at my place for a few until I figure out what to do, would you like that?”

Her eyes lit up. “Yes please!”

As Leon chuckled and held her hand to lead her out of the alley, he felt something... cold. An icicle suddenly darted past his head. “Go hide!” he said to the little girl, panicking.

“I notice that stench from anywhere... that's the smell of a demon I'm guessing.” a shadowy figure whispered under his breath, his voice was soothing but at the same time very menacing.

“And I'm guessing that's the stench of someone who hasn't showered in days.”

“You think that's funny?”

“It wasn't a joke.” Leon clenched his fists ready to fight.

“I know you have the angel back here, hand her over.”

“You're gonna have to kill me to get to her.”

“Exactly the plan.”

“Oh yeah, I didn't introduce myself. I'm Leon by the way.”

“They call me the Ice Cold Killer of Archia.”

“I'll make sure to write that on your grave!” Leon's horns come out of his head while he rushed toward the figure.

Leon dodged his icicles and hit him with the broom so hard it broke “So much for sweeping his floor huh?” Leon thinks to himself.

The man, angered, released a blizzard in the middle of summer. Everything became hard to see in the alley once again.

Leon looked around to see where he went, and then the figure jumped on top of him. Leon struggled to get the Killer off, but he eventually won. He threw the Killer onto the ground and spread his wings and grabbed him by the shirt. Leon slammrf him into the wall at full force. He got ready to get one last hit until...

“Hands up this is the Archia Police Department! You're arrested for illegal use of magic!”

Leon complied and put his hands up until he saw it was an old friend.

“Hey hey! Settle down boys put down yer guns.”

“Claude!”

“Leo!”

“Hey man how's it hanging?”

“Good good, who's yer little boyfriend?”

“Well he tried to kidnap this little girl-” and then Leon hears her voice.

“Mister Leon? Mister Leon? Where are you?” she called.

“I'm right here.”

Claude smiles at her, “Hello lil' lady.”

“Hello! Are you Mister Leon's friend?”

“Why yes I am. Aren't you a sweet lil' pea?”

The girl starts giggling, “What's your name mister?”

“You can call me your Uncle Claude.”

“Okay Uncle Claude, hehe.”

“Hey Leon. Let's talk back at the station.”

“Alright man.”

The Ice Cold Killer suddenly got up,

“LEON!!”

Leon suddenly felt an icicle pierced his shoulder, and he let out a small groan before standing up to his feet.

“Leon! You’re going to die! You will die a horrible death, and no one will remember you!” the Killer roared. As the man rushed toward Leon, Leon just sat there, motionless lie he was about to accept his fate.

Suddenly Leon took his wings out. They were a beautiful red color. As the icicles collided with his wings, the ice shattered like glass. Leon slapped the Killer aside with his wings and then he looked at Claude.

They both looked at each other. Claude knew what Leon wanted done. Claude stepped his foot into the ring. When the Killer got up, Claude took out his police revolver, and shot him in the legs.

Leon got ready for the final blow but suddenly, he stopped. He knew if he pushed any further, he would kill the man.

“Leon! What are you doing?” Claude asked in confusion.

“I can’t kill him.” Leon responded with regret in his voice

“It’s him or us, we don’t have a choice.”

Leon stopped for a minute, and looked into Claude’s eyes.

“I’d rather die than kill again.”

Leon quickly got rid of his serious mood. He put a smile on his face and walked out of the alleyway, saying, “So, let’s get to the station.”

Claude looked at Leon in confusion. “I can’t figure you out sometimes.”

As Leon, Claude and the girl arrive at the station, the girl looked up at Leon.

“Hey, Mister Leon?”

“Yeah? What’s up?”

“Can you give me a name?”

Leon had lots of thoughts racing through his head. “Now she wants me to name her?!? I’m not a fatherly figure I don’t know!” Leon tried to think of a name desperately, and he thought of his favorite actor at the time.

“Eliza?”

“I don’t think that name is good...”

“Oh I’m sorry I-”

“I think it’s fantastic.”

WORK 33



By Aubrenesia Tomilinson

34 I CARRY

By Brian Rose

I carry sadness in my heart:
 goodbye old middle school friends, hello new ones

I carry more books in my bag:
 thank you for welcoming me high school, time to learn more

I carry old memories in my thoughts:
 memories that will never be forgotten
 but now new ones that will be added

I carry more work on my shoulders:
 more classes & more work, middle school days were much easier

I carry more opportunities and freedom:
 no more walking in lines or sticking with our grade level

I believe in myself:
 I will get through school no matter how hard it gets

I believe that time will get easier:
 I just have to follow and continue with what's ahead of me

I believe I will succeed:
 schoolwork is a force but it will not make me give up

I believe that every day is a challenge:
 a challenge that is helping my mind get stronger each time

I believe in me:
 Thank you high school for being tough on me
 Even though we drifted apart from others, it was worth it.

Being able to start fresh at a new school,
 with new people, with new opportunities.

35 QUINTESSENCE

By Sarah Okome

Quintessence

I'm slowly losing myself,
trying to become better than her.
To be a better person, a better daughter,
a better friend
To be what she said I could never be
To have what she said I would never have
To be the opposite of what she said I was
To have a better attitude, a better mindset
Although it's pointless (and I know it).
Maybe I've lost myself a long time ago,
I lost my smile
I lost my happiness
I lost that innocent cheerfulness
But I guess that's a part of growing up.
Now I'm slowly crumbling down
I feel worthless.
And I can only hope that someday,
that I'll feel normal again.
Without thinking of her
Without looking back at the past
Wishing things would have been different.

36 FREEDOM

By Kayleigh Bottomley

Freedom.

What exactly does that word mean?

Does it mean to be able to live in America peacefully
and not feel in danger?

Or does it mean fear for your life on a daily because there's always
people that are going to be coming after you?

Freedom, what does it mean? Does it mean living
in a beautiful home
with a perfect family
with no worries?

Instead, does it mean not being able to live
your life as a black person without the fear of dying?

Freedom, it seems as if it doesn't apply to everybody.

Freedom.

Freedom is something we'll never understand.

37 EPIC STORY

By Claudia Perez-Rodriquez

In a dark and foggy land where the only colors shone in brightening flowers, where time wasn't in existence, lived two sisters, who grew and loved each other to every depth the universe They would do anything for each other, die, live, be. These sisters were Destiny and Faith. They grow up to be powerful and gifted with wonderful magic, both good and humble beings. They would help others when they needed it and were treasured by many.

As the universe started to evolve, they met a doll-maker, a man who shared their passion for life. Both sisters fell in love with him. Fighting for him, they both grew distant and unsupportive to which point at the end, Faith ended up winning him over and had two children with him, Ena and Orchid, both wonderful daughters with immense spirit. Meanwhile, Destiny grew colder and much more distant from her sister, locking herself and her heartache away in the abandoned castle of the West Forest.

Destiny focused on her practice to become the greatest witch of all time. She became colder and meaner to a point where she had no limits on who to hurt and what she had to destroy to get what she wanted. On one of the cloudiest days, Faith heard that Destiny was harming people, destroying villages and taking souls for her own sick pleasure. Disappointed and in denial, Faith knew that she was the only witch in her time that could stop her sister before she grew too powerful.

So, in pain, Faith found Destiny at the Void of non-existing truth preparing a new spell. The Void is said to be a place where all things that fall in, are never heard of again. There, they both fought until Faith beat Destiny, tragically making Destiny fall into the drop of nothingness, where she screamed an unbreakable promise that she would come out, become the most powerful witch to exist, and destroy all the things Faith loved.

Witches can change or get sick when they feel overwhelming emotions and their wall of balance can crash. Faith grew so overwhelmed with sadness that she became ill. She was o ill that she

didn't know how to handle herself, and she slowly spent more time in bed as the days went on.

One night, when Faith could barely open her eyes, Ena and Orchid came close to her side, along them her father, encouraging Faith that she had to keep going, for them. Faith ended up turning over, after saying her goodbyes and leaned towards Ena saying, "You have to do what's right, for the justice of the universe, and most importantly, the souls that have been torn and lost." She waved her arm, casting a spell while she gave her last breath. They watched Ena begin turn into a pale, white doll before she fell into a void of nothingness.

And then came an angel named Castel.

"Why did I come to this." Castel groaned, his broken wing supported only by his back, dragging his feet on the ground. He was watching all the autumn-colored leaves fall off the trees, they asked for a drink of water with their old and slim branches. Castel stopped and hydrated the trees with his thoughts.

Ena, looking up, and navigated the floating map with her eyes. "It's not my fault that you decided to fall on my roof." She said, still focused on finding the quickest route to the Void.

"It's actually not my fault, it's Fate's, I don't know what they do up there, but it's something that has to happen. It's not my decision." Castel said with a slight mumble still paying his attention to the other energies in the woods.

"That's ridiculous, why do you have to do something that you don't want to do just because this so-called fate says it." Ena moved her finger across the many paths she could take.

"It's not up to me, it HAS to happen, if I try to change it, something really bad can happen, plus I have to respect my superiors." Castel spoke softly, growing a couple of flowers and restoring some that have lived too little.

"Good thing you did, and you came close to my trap, or else I would still be stuck inside that doll, not being here right now."

"Witches aren't supposed to be so powerful, at least more powerful than angels."

“I know they aren’t, but being stuck doing nothing for so long, really gives you so much focus and, you with that broken wing really gave me a big advantage.” Ena said. She stared at the map wondering if she should go towards the Flower Forest or the Enchanted Caves.

“That way is stupid.”

She thinks to herself, “I thought you said you were too weak to use your powers, but let’s go.” Ena finally noticing what Castel was doing.

Getting up, Castel said, “A wing is an Angel’s vulnerability, if it’s hurt, Angels are not able to access all of their powers, especially it’s most important ones, and I would’ve gone somewhere where I could heal, but I’m stuck here.” He said in disappointment. “How are you planning to defeat Destiny? She represents Destiny itself, she is the strongest witch in not only your world but the universe.”

“I don’t know just yet, but now that I have you as my helper, and I’m expecting the best from my magic, that’s all I can do to get my sister back, I don’t care if the world falls apart.” Ena looks at Orchid’s necklace, shinning with delight as it smiles at her. *She’s doing the right thing*, she thinks to herself.

Castel said, “You know about the prophecy, right? Only the eldest can defeat the most powerful witch, and I think eldest it means you right? Castel walked on, swiping all the fallen leaves back in place.

Ena stayed quiet, trying to think if it was true or not but decided to joke around instead.

“You are like the king of the butterflies,” Ena chuckled.

“Like the king of butterflies? I could turn into a butterfly, but I could never disrep. . .”

“Just be quiet.”

Castel and Ena reached an empty field, flat and with no sides of life surrounding it.

“Well, it isn’t here.” Ena raised her arms and slapped them back down to her hips in frustration. “And it can’t be that my map lied, it’s

an accurate version.” Ena mumbled. She could only think of a spell that could work to find out what was really going on.

Ena needed Castel to hold her things, and she was hesitant to give him her sister’s necklace, but she gave it to him anyway. “Hold this for me.”

Castel grabbed her necklace.

“Guard that like it would end your existence; it means a lot to me,” she said as she put her bag on the ground.

“What is it?” Castel asked.

“It’s one of my mom’s treasures. It’s said to be as old as death. People think it’s been lost forever, but my mom had it, and she gave it to my sister, and it means a lot to the both of us.”

Castel nodded, staring curiously at the piece.

Ena stopped and stared at him. “I will be doing a history spell. It will tell me everything that has happened here and how recent it is.” She spoke as she reached her arms up to start searching for answers.

Ena sighed. “Why isn’t there anything? There has to be something, it’s not like there’s no history here.” She reinforced her spell. She had done these as a child, so why couldn’t she do them now?”

She focused more. “Am I not good enough? Have I gotten worse with magic? How am I supposed to beat D-“ A twig snapped in the background.

“Wait, Ena. There’s someone else here.”

Ena stopped, turning behind her, watching some bushes shake. Ena ran after the movements, thinking there had to be something there. Following its path, she could hear Castel running close behind her when suddenly she could finally grab something... A tiny foot?

Then there were the tiny screams. Those agonizing screams. Tiny but so much more harmful to the ears than normal screams. It shrieked, trying to free its foot from the witch’s hand. It said, “PLEASE WITCH, LET ME GO I HAVE SO MUCH TO LIVE FOR.” And then it paused when it saw the being with wings.

“Oh Thank god, an angel, you guys are fine.” The creature was a fairy.

“Where is the Flower Forest?” Ena asked.

“Oh! right this way follow me.” A sudden portal appeared behind them where they had just been standing. The three crossed it and it disappeared behind them.

“We had to hide. There was a very powerful witch coming to find us a while ago. We were scared but Lisa, the princess of the flower forest and two other angels made a barrier. No witch or being can find us if we don’t want to be found.” He continued, “But it’s been so bad, ever since Lisa’s friends left her, she’s been so cruel, our girl, so, so cruel.”

Castel stumbled. “Why is it so dark?” he asked.

“Oh, I’m sorry, just extra precautions.” The fairy snapped his fingers and suddenly they were blinded by colors of all hues, painted on ginormous flower like trees, tiny flowers surrounding them, a light blue sky, real fluffy clouds and a tiny town of tiny houses and buildings. Fairies flew up and down, carrying miniature boxes and books and talking, but they all looked incredibly sad.

“What happened to your wing my friend?” a fairy asked Castel. “My name is Xavier, just if you were wondering. A-” he said.

“ALEXANDER XAVIER? WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?!?! HAVE YOU BEEN OUTSIDE AGAIN?! I TOLD YOU NOT TO GO OUT LIKE THAT ANYMORE IT’S DANGEROUS!!!”

A female-like fairy flew fast towards the group, but suddenly stopped, fear starting to wash over her face.

Xavier said, “Mother it’s okay. It’s just a good witch and an angel.”

Unfortunately, the anger in her tiny body did not stop there. Xavier’s mother shrieked, **“SO?? ARE YOU CRAZY?! IT COULD’VE BEEN SOMEONE WORSE, IT COULD’VE BEEN THAT WITCH!!!”** she looked towards the pair who had blank expressions.

“I’m sorry my dears, I’ll deal with him later.” She laughed nervously.

“What can we do for you?”

Ena spoke softly, "We would like to get to the other side of the forest. We are traveling in that direction." She pointed forward. The fairy put her head down.

"I'm sorry, but we can't do that, unfortunately, Lisa our princess isn't allowing any fairy or being to cross the forest on forward, in fact you guys shouldn't even be here." Ena sighed.

Castel asked, "Is there anything we can do to cross it?" The fairy nodded.

"We need help well- guidance to stop Lisa, it's getting out of hand she's using sinister spells and violence on the fairies that disagree with her, we don't want to hurt her no, no we want to put her to sleep and heal her rage until she feels better, and then we can wake her up." Xavier hummed in agreement.

"Come with me, we need to talk to someone."

The pair came to a large cave with twinkling lights decorating all the rocks, lighting up the place. In the center there was a chair, an old fairy sat on it surrounded by people.

"Hello Mr. Light." The two fairies greeted him at the same time. The old fairy nodded and smiled.

"There's an angel and a witch here, they want to cross to the other side of the forest, and I think they can help us out with Lisa." She spoke softly, showing her respect for the wise elder.

"I see."

He finally spoke, "Show them the wand."

"This is the wand." Xavier said, "It's a special wand. It can't harm or kill. We could never do that to Lisa."

Ena watched the wand shine in her hand.

"You would just have to put a sleeping spell on Lisa, and you could leave. You know how to make the spell?" Xavier turned to Ena.

"Yes, I can."

Xavier started flying forward. “It’s made of our magic. Once you use it, we’ll all be powerless until you break it.”

Ena just nodded.

“She lives up there, in that castle behind all those trees.” Xavier led them to the very back of the forest. He suddenly stopped and said, “I can’t go on from here. I wish you two the best of luck.”

Ena and Castel walked past the trees, where a smaller castle stood. It was not too big, but they could still get inside. They were greeted by a long hall, separated by tall walls. It was decorated with lavender, glass panes layers over vines. A single armchair right in the middle. Castel stopped Ena, not knowing what could pop out, so before Ena could protest, Castel took Ena to hide behind a large vase.

Out of the corner walked a woman, Ena was shocked, she was not the size of a fairy, she was the size of a normal person. The princess was taller than the average woman, mid-length, ashy-colored hair with flowers covering her forehead. She wore a purple, layered dress with ruffles. Her green eyes were wide and full of fire. She walked toward the single chair, carrying a tiny glass cup. A small pair of wings appeared, reaching the room where she handed a princess an envelope.

“Nothing new.” She spoke watching the pink-colored letter fall on top fairy, which caused her to lose her balance. The princess’ expression was nothing more than blank canvas. She slowly turned to taste her tea when her expression worsened. “Did I not tell you that I only wanted two spoons of honey?!” She spat as she threw the hot liquid on the floor. “You are useless you can’t do anything right!!”

Ena realized that the princess was Lisa. Lisa screamed as she sat up and rushed to the fairy, hitting her, and sending her towards the floor, where a squeak could be heard. “Maybe I should just turn you into a bug, since you’re so useless.” She raised her arm, but just as the spell was going to be sent towards the disheveled fairy, Ena broke it, causing reactions of shock from the flower heads and the fairy, who was shaking in fear.

“Who are you?!” Her eyes growing a lighter green shade. “How dare you go against me?!, DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM??!!” Her attention now fully on the pair.

Ena stopped for a second, she had to act quickly, but she didn’t know how much power this woman had, so she took out the white wand.

Lisa used a spell to disarm Ena by throwing the wand out of Ena’s reach and started laughing hysterically. “Did you really think that would work? This is my world; I control and power everything here and you part of this now.” She screamed, “You are quick-witted like a cat, but not quicker than me.” She twisted her fingers in the direction of the vines.

At a quick pace, the vines slithered towards Castel and Ena likes snakes, wrapping themselves tightly against their bodies. “And now, I will have to do deal with you two, you shouldn’t have stepped here, you are both going to die now.” Her giggle followed a snap of her fingers, and the castle disappeared.

They stood in a circle surrounded by dripping, dark colored flowers. The only light came from the glow of the flowers, and Lisa’s green eyes. “I feel bad for you, angel. Are your sad little powers gone? Are you not going to save your little witch friend?” The vines grew tighter around Castel body, hurting him even more.

Ena tried all the spells, all the curses she could think of, but none of them worked. All her magic was taken from her. She started panicking, worried over Castel trying to find a way to save them because she didn’t know if she could get them out of this situation. She was starting to lose hope in coming out of this until she screamed in desperation; “Why are you doing this?!” The vines around her body tightening.

“Why do I do this? Because I’m tired of you beings, coming around and saying you’re my friend! At the end you treat everyone like garbage, so I don’t see the reason why I should treat everyone nicely when they’ll just leave me when they find better opportunities!”

Ena stood there in silence. She had no idea what to say.

“It’s not my fault you guys act this way. All I’ve done all my life is support others, cherish them, trust them, and this is what I receive?!”

My two friends from birth, they were always here, and one day they said they couldn't be my friends anymore and left, they left me like I was nothing!!" She screamed as the vines around Castel got tighter and tighter, making him grunt in pain.

"But it's not the fault of the fairies." Ena said softly "They've been here since the beginning, and it's not fair that you think it's right to do something like that to them."

"Who are you to say anything? You don't understand!" Lisa screamed back at her.

"I do understand," she whispered. "My mother cursed me. I was stuck inside of a doll for my entire childhood and being in that doll made me doubt her actions and filled me with rage as I grew. I hated her so much for making me doubt myself, for asking myself If I had deserved it. I grew cold towards everything. I hated people. I hated everything. Now, all that is left of me is doubt, all I do is doubt myself, every day, every hour and every minute." She continued "But that's okay, you are right, it's not our fault if people hurt us, but it's not the fault of the good people to take the hit for that. It's taken me all my life to realize that."

"It's the leaves!" Lisa cried, "those leaves, the silky ones, the ones that fall and fly, the speak to me, they tell me it is my fault, that I'm worthless, that I don't deserve anything other than misery. She threw her arms up in the air and swayed them out of an emotional outburst.

"Lisa, leaves don't talk, that's just you. Those are your doubts that have gotten out of hand for so long." She turned her gaze to Castel who crashed his teeth together to bear the pain. "Listen. Not everyone is the same. There's more good in the universe than bad, trust me, they're not all bad."

Lisa stopped and stared at the fairy on the ground, blue tears coming out of her eyes. She heard the witch whisper, "Please let us go." Her voice weak as the pain from the vines started consuming her.

And then it all stopped. She let go of the veins, the fairy, the darkness, all of it. Her eyes turned a doe brown as she crashed onto the ground. Ena ran towards Castel, grabbing his face and analyzing his closed

eyes to see if he was alive or not. “Castel?! Are you there? Wake up,” she shouted.

“Stop pinching my face,” Castel replied.

Ena released a sigh of relief and turned to Lisa, who was on the floor, passed out. The fairy that she hit was at her side, bringing a pillow to place under her head. Ena turned back around and broke the white wand.

A bundle of fairies appeared, including Xavier. He said, “I can’t believe you helped her without using the wand.”

“Well, I guess I don’t believe it either,” Ena responded.

“We should take Castel back to village, I believe we can do something about that wing,” Xavier said.

Ena realized she had zoned out, looking at her bare feet inside the stream. She looked up, glaring at Castel surrounded by fairies who were mending his wounds. She moved closer to the rock Castel was sitting on and joined in on the conversation.

“Alright my dear, as you know, as fairies, our specialty is healing, but we will need you stay here for at least a couple of weeks, not including the recovery time.”

Castel nodded and thought for a second. “Actually, it’s okay, I can take it, thank you for all your help, but I have to keep going and continue my journey with Ena.”

Ena shook her head “No it’s okay, you can stay here, thank you for all your help, but I don’t want you to get seriously hurt again, especially when it was my fault. I made you go through this.” S

Castel interrupted Ena saying, “No. You are going through something you still don’t know how to defeat. You need all the help you can get, and I will help you.”

“Was this Loyalty?” Ena thought. She always thought loyalty was picking a side, or doing the right thing, but she never expected it to be this. She has never expect anyone else but her sister to be loyal to her.

“Ok.” She replied.

Xavier appeared beside them. He said, “How is Castel?”

“He is fine. We should get going now,” Ena said.

“Wait. Mr. Light wants to talk to you. Come with me.”

Ena and Castel looked at Xavier with confused expressions on their faces.

They walked to the cave again, where the oldest fairy in the village sat in the chair. “I was told that there would be an angel and a witch coming to our village to help us.” He said, “I didn’t know if it was true, so I waited a long time and guess what? Here you two are!” He smiled. “I was told to tell you something important.” He got off his chair and flew closer to the pair. “The eldest is the oldest. It’s been there since your beginning. It holds power too big—it can’t be seen, yet it’s been seen by all.”

“What do you mean?” Ena asked, her voice rising. How would this fairy even know what she was going to do in the first place? Was he going to help? What does that mean? It didn’t make sense.

“That’s all the leaves told me,” his voice crackling a bit.

“Does that help?” Ena asked as she bandaged Castel’s wing.

“Does a lot, and I’m so much more comfortable,” he spoke softly, staring at the necklace that he had the duty to protect. When Ena finished, Castel looked up and saw that he had been caught staring at the necklace, “Do you want it back?” He asked.

They stood in silence for a while until Ena finally spoke. “You can watch it, you sap.” She laughed in a teasing manner. She needed to learn to trust, she said to herself.

They continued to walk to the path that led them out of the lower forest. In the back of her head, she agreed with herself—not everyone was the same. There were some really good people out there.

38 NEVER TOO LATE

By Nora Jillianos

I saw the fighting
I saw the fussing
I saw the toxicity
We were never the perfect family
I grew up
I realized that what I knew as love wasn't
I realized love is about communication
We as a family could never realize that
I did though, with or without you
I realized
I moved from a cold and broken heart
to a full glowing heart filled with joy and love
I realized it all on my own.

39 OPPRESSION

By John Carter

Oppression
Time is precious,
As I clasp my hands and cry
I try to take flight
As I clasp my hands and cry
My chains become oh so tight,
As I clasp my hands and cry
I shed a tear goodbye
Freedom is only a memory
Oppression is supremacy.

WORK 40



By Julianna Jones

41 EPIC STORY

By Dominick Dabecco

In a galaxy far from the Milky Way, space terrorists from other galaxies and planets began moving into the home planets. The true problem was that due to these terrorists and criminals, there was more starvation to the point where urban areas were not as safe as usual. Other planets and galaxies had set high rewarding bounties and treasure, if and only if, the specific terrorist is found dead or captured then sent to the republic jailhouse. So that concludes the background story, now the tale of a puny bounty hunter on his quest and the way he received his treasure.

“Let’s see here,” says the bounty hunter, looking through the criminal catalog looking for an easy but well-paying job. “Hm, OK. Let us do this one. Looks pretty easy.” The bounty was a 12-legged horse with very severe illness of evolved HIV that is contagious. The reward was 1,200,000 ryo. “1,200,000?! I could buy a new house and weapons with that kind of money.”

But his family was starving—that was the point of signing up to be a bounty hunter. “To feed my family. I could save my family, or I can get some amazing equipment and to claim even more bounties with that money.” So, he journeys off to the signed planet which was signed on the catalog.

The planet was dark, stormy, reckoned, withered, but nothing stood against the bravery of the bounty hunter. There were bats and crows, and some weird kind of slime?

Anyway, the bounty hunter had just begun entering the atmosphere, and he was greeted with bats and crows all over his aircraft. They were blood thirsty, looking for food. And they were hungry. Soon one of the crows had entered the engine and had bitten off a very important wire. A wire leading to the aircraft power was cut off.

The aircraft was spinning and spinning and then. . . fell on a tree. Hanging onto vines, he almost fell off into the mysterious bubbling goo. “Welp, we have landed into a weird looking place.” Withered trees looked as old as a rotten planks.

There were little lamps along the trail, and from his aircraft, the hunter could see a little hut with some light coming from inside it. "Maybe someone is inside, and I can ask them what this place is." He then made a giant leap toward the trail. The little hut had a strange smell and looked quite weird. There was an old man inside waiting at his desk. The hunter entered.

"Hello young man, may I ask why you are here?" said the old man.

"Ah, hello sir, may I ask where this guy is?" He shows the bounty catalog to the old man.

"Uhm, we haven't seen that man for quite a while, but he is from a little village far out from here." The old man helps the hunter out with his quest on finding the strange person. "There it is, the old hometown of Gobbletown, but it is a wreck. But as I said, this place is abandoned. At least I think so."

"OK. Thank you, sir. I will be searching around right away," says the hunter.

"OK, young one, take care." The old man had a smirk, almost a suspicious face, but the hunter ignored him.

So, the bounty hunter searched and searched through the houses. There was one, last house he had not searched through. He entered. All the furniture was burned and withered. "This place looks like it's 1,000 years old." The hunter started to give up, grunting with boredom. As he walked into the living room, he slipped on a rock and hit the old couch. The couch moved, and he saw a small-sized, underground bunker door.

It was locked. He was very suspicious. So, he went back to the old man to ask him what a bunker was doing there.

"Sir? I slipped and fell on a couch and found a bunker door on accident."

The old man paused, staring at the hunter. "How could you have found that bunker door? No one had found it in 1000 years." The old man went pale.

“Uh, sir. Is you ok? What is the problem?”

The old man said, “Just do not worry about the bunker, don’t enter it. Or there will be serious consequences.”

The hunter agreed with the old man and started walking toward his ship. But he then thought, “Hey wait a minute, I came here for that bounty, he said he was from that town and then found a secret bunker. I have to check there. That is the only place that I haven’t checked.”

He tried to sneak past the hut, but the old man heard the hunter, and started to chase him. Run, Run, Run is the only thing that the hunter was thinking about. He finally made it safe in the abandoned town at the bunker. He found a handy crowbar inside the closet and tried to pry open the latch. It finally opened.

The hunter went inside the bunker filled with darkness. He tries a light switch and it turns on. “Oh my!” He sees a board with a bunch of pictures and addresses,. Comparing it to the looks at the bounty catalog, he is shocked. “All of the bounty targets are here. But why?”

On the desk to his right, there was some weird looking items, an hourglass, a necklace, a diamond, and a picture with a male and female. He decided to take those items for evidence. It was getting late, and he had decided to come home.

“Hey sweetie! Did you find the bounty?” asked his mother.

“No. I haven’t, but I found a hidden bunker underneath an old couch.”

The mother said, “Hmm, weird, but quick question. What was the planet called?”

The hunter told her mother about it but then stated the name of the town.

The mother froze in shock. “Why did you go there? Not that place!” The hunter was confused and tried to calm his mother down.

“Why? Why? Why would you go there?”

He showed her the picture with a male and female because he was confused about the picture.

His mother was extremely pale. “Where did you find that? How did you find that? I thought I burned that years ago.” The mother was shaking, “You were not supposed to know the truth, I just wanted to raise you as a happy kid. But now you know.”

She went upstairs to get some rest, but the hunter was very suspicious. So, he planned to go back to the planet and ask the old man about his mother.

A week later he arrived at the small hut. The old man asked, “What are you doing here?”

The hunter said, “I’m here to ask a question, what is this?”

The hunter showed the picture of the male and female. “That, my friend, is a picture of the rulers of the galactic roadmen. They create schemes and cause serious trouble.

“Well, my mother reacted in a weird way to the picture.”

The old man said, by any chance, is your mother’s name Martha Henkins?”

He said yes.

“So, she was the queen of the roadmen.”

They both gasped. The old man said, “You do know that she has been hiding these things to you.”

The hunter said, “I bet so, so what do we do now?”

The old man said, “There is an old bounty catalog that is stored here. I want you to look at it.”

Inside that catalog, the most expensive one, the highest bounty, was the bounty hunter’s mothers. Worth 9000000000000000 ryo. She was wanted for mass murder and an attempt to rule the galaxy.

The hunter soon ran to his ship and went home in a rush to confront his mother. He arrived and his mother is waiting for him at the landing dock.

“Mother, what are you doing here?”

His mother said, “Do you know the truth now?”

“Yes, I know the truth, you evil queen”

His mother got angry, furious. “Why do you have to do this to me? I want to change.”

His mother tried to hit the hunter, he countered and dropped his mother to the ground.

“Mother, do what is right and turn yourself in.”

She was very angry and was threatening her own son to kill him. They brawled it out at the docks, but the docks were at a ledge of a huge cliff. They were fighting close to the very edge. The hunter’s mother slipped and fell, but at a grasp, she was hanging off.

She cried out, “Son! Do not do this to me! I took care of you. Please.” Mother was crying.

“I’m sorry mother. I can’t have you here anymore. You hid your past but you can’t take back the truth. You have to go.”

He stomped on his mothers’ fingers, causing her to her falling off the ledge.

He claimed the bounty because the evil queen was defeated. So who was the male in that picture. The old man back at the hut. . .

42 SPRING POEM

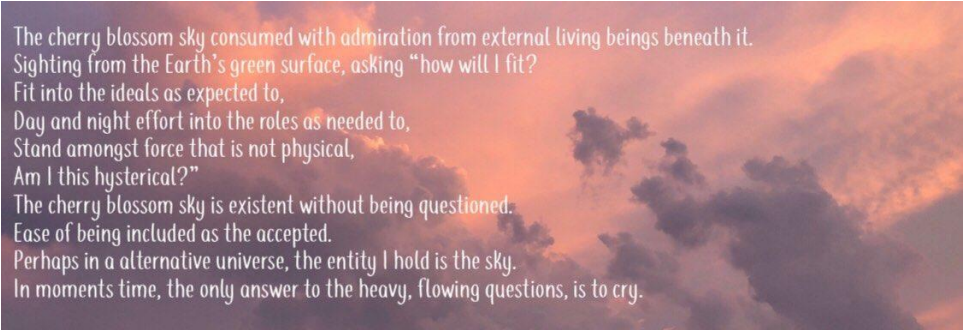
By Fiona Siphavong

Comfort

Fixated gazes to the white ceiling above me,
Keeping me warm along with blankets that conceals my body
for comfort,
The comfort that I desperately crave to feel internally,

Desperate enough to camouflage amongst others for
validation,
Desperate enough to be dishonest for attention,
Desperate enough to be a disingenuous character for external
confirmation.

The white ceiling grew more irritating,
The blankets' warmth became cold,
The loss of my physical comfortability does not seem enough,
Am I enough?



The cherry blossom sky consumed with admiration from external living beings beneath it.
Sighting from the Earth's green surface, asking "how will I fit?
Fit into the ideals as expected to,
Day and night effort into the roles as needed to,
Stand amongst force that is not physical,
Am I this hysterical?"
The cherry blossom sky is existent without being questioned.
Ease of being included as the accepted.
Perhaps in a alternative universe, the entity I hold is the sky.
In moments time, the only answer to the heavy, flowing questions, is to cry.

43 I CARRY

By Tre'vyona Jordan

We carry all of our family dinner memories
We carry all of the memories of Christmas mornings
We carry all the movie night memories
We carry the first nights with our new puppy
We carry all the lessons learned
We carry all the mistake made
We carry the taco Tuesdays that was really on Wednesdays
We carry the summer vacations
We carry the memories of the first steps of my little brother
We carry the trips to the grocery stores every Sunday
We carry the time we had no power
We carry all of the sad moments

44 SPRING POEM

By Eliza Brown

The smell of fresh flowers and grilling food fills the air.
The sound of bees buzzing past our ears.
Birds singing in the blue skies
With green grass glistening
The smell of rain fills our nose
Spring is here. Spring is here.

To Fit In

What does it mean?
It means to stand out.
Blending in doesn't take that much effort.
But standing out takes courage.
Make the most of yourself.
Don't be afraid to look different.
Be You.

WORK 45



By Mariam Bankole

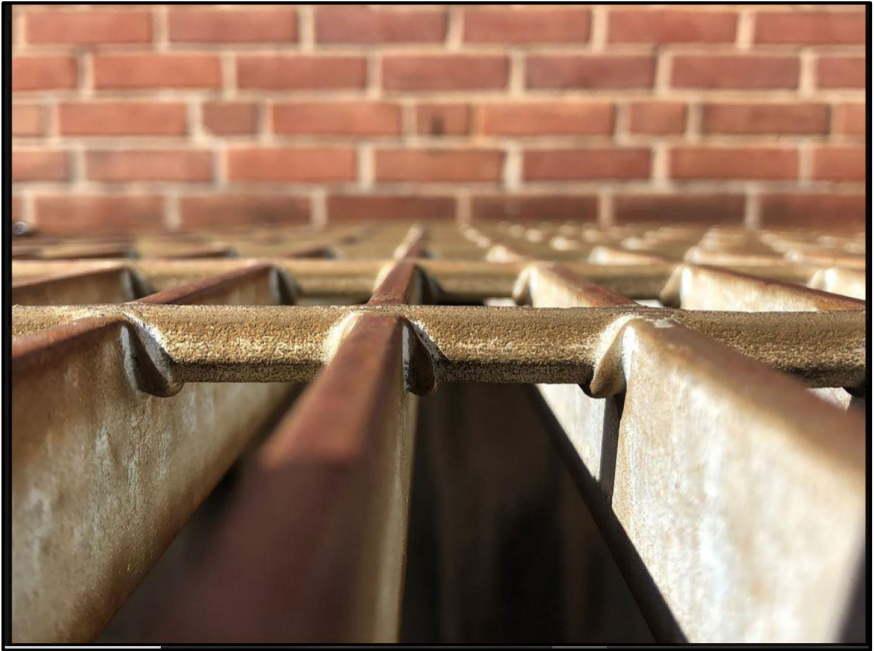
46 HAIKU

By Cheyanna Boone

**The wind blows softly,
Moving the flowers and grass
Shifting the tall trees**

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Haiku Anthology 2021*

WORK 47



By Abigail Overby

48 LIFE

By Zyhier Linton

Life is but a bundle of joy.
That is the thought you get in your head.
Happy to be here on the inside it seems,
but deep down there is fear,
Living, loving, and laughing is a disgust I wear best.
Torturing myself because of the deep stress,
They say, "you can't; stress you're just a kid,"
but work on top of work
argument on top of argument,
deep down inside is the abandonment
And you're the needles forcing it.
Sometimes I'm not perfect but I know I deserve it-
your love, your time, and your encouragement.
I'm amazed how you stand so tall,
how you never give in
you bend but do not fall.
Sad to let them go but the family issues grow,
Pain is your real beauty
that you must know.

49 SKIN

By Laila Lucas

A problem with my skin is what a lot of people
 have a problem with--
Police take innocent people's lives
And sad to say, the victim didn't even know
 they were going to die.
Black bodies dropping--
Why can't anybody see a problem with it?
But when we retaliate back, we
 just another person wanting to kill.

A child goes missing, nobody talks about that.
Mothers and fathers are looking for their kid
while the police do nothing—
 all because of their skin.
Now we aren't supposed to be too mad
 because a "black man already does that,"
You know, the killing and fighting
we have no choice—
 fighting and losing every battle
 trying to get a job, but don't nobody call us back,
 feeling like we can't even walk down the street,
 go to the store, go jogging,
 can't even live in our own house in peace.
But the police take no responsibility of why
 we are mad,
Don't even ask me to talk about the school--
 defunding black schools in bad neighborhoods.

So when people ask me why I feel scared of doing
 something,
it's because of not knowing if I will die or not
ONLY because of my skin.

50 DEPRESSION

By Angel Majors

Depression, depression is my day, my day is as grey as it can be. My nights are too long, my words are so wrong, there's nothing good to say... As I lay at night to rest, no dreams come I guess that's for the best. Daylight becomes boredom, so sometimes I wonder why I even bother to get up so soon. Depression I stay in bed all day crying for help but no one hears, I write all night hoping it could help

the tears,

Im sad

Im hurt

Im angry

Im alone

Im lonely

Im dying

Im a mess

Im stressed

Im confused

Im misunderstood

Im depressed

Im screaming, but it is still silent

Im in pain, but Im still smiling.

Depression.

51 BRAIN

By Jade Cheatham

**My brain is a broken time machine.
The forest fire raged over me years ago.
The burn of his touch long gone,
It is monuments built over bruised skin.
It is tears on Holy Ground.
I am still sifting through the ashes,
Still following the scent of burning wood.**

52 HUMAN

By Haleigh Rohrman

Human.
No matter what
No matter the color of your skin.
The color of your eyes
The color of your hair
No matter what
It depends on what's inside
Or your actions.
That's what people see.
That's how someone can put you
Together.

WORK 53



By Kayleigh Elliott

THE BLUEBIRD'S VOICE
2020-2021



*Many thanks to our contributors and readers.
KHS Creative Writing meets on Tuesdays.
Join us and get ready to write!*

*Contribute artwork and creative writing
to The Bluebird's Voice magazine
through email or message
to Mrs. [Cooper—jcooper5@bcps.org](mailto:jcooper5@bcps.org)
or to [Ms. Glenn—aglenn@bcps.org](mailto:aglenn@bcps.org).*