

Pen
and
SWORD



2015 - 2016 - A Brother Martin Publication



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Ode to a Key

Jack Neelis '16

Key, along your side the snowy, stone peaks
rise and fall
among the peach-colored sunset
that ignites
the kindle of curiosity and wonder
felt by every man.
Which horizons do your mountains open?

Your side is a mouse,
turning and scurrying
around the maze of a keyhole.

An ironclad hand to reach
through and
ask walls to swivel,
revive mammoths of oil and steel,
open metal vacuums of time
and man's treasure
to settle his curiosity.



The New Me

Sam Lucio '16

This story earned a regional Gold Key Award in the 2016 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

“How long will I be in the hospital?” I asked in a faint voice, shaking with fear.

“The doctor said you’ll be out by the end of the weekend,” my dad said as he drove the car.

My parents and I were on our way to Children’s Hospital for surgery on my stomach. I had to wake up at five in the morning in order to be on time for 6:30 am. We drove by the levees, down Audubon Boulevard, and past the zoo. For the entire car ride, I could not stop thinking about missing school that Friday. Only three weeks of school had passed in my first year at Brother Martin High School, and a major event in my life already stood in the way. I’m not sure why, but I hoped that I wouldn’t miss the eighth grade retreat the following week, that I could return to school quickly and not be left out of any school events.

That Friday was gloomy. Rain drenched the entire city, and darkness engulfed everything the eye could see. From inside the car, drops of rain that dotted and splashed the windows distorted the outside world. I was sad, depressed, and uneasy about going through with this surgery. When it comes to going to doctors or receiving medical treatment, I always fear the worst. I barely said a word during the car ride to the hospital. My parents understood my panic, but I think they, too, feared the

worst and knew they couldn’t lift my spirits.

The rain turned into drizzle as we drove into the hospital parking lot. The sun still didn’t show itself yet. The parking lot sat empty and dark except for the street lights. I ran into the waiting room, trying not to get wet. My parents followed, and my mother sat in the chairs next to me. My dad approached the front desk to sign us in. The lady working at the front desk said we would have to wait about half an hour before we could go upstairs for my surgery. While I waited, I played games on my mom’s iPhone. I didn’t say a word the entire time, instead letting the sound of rain tapping the windows fill the silent waiting room. I sat there, already exhausted. My mom kept trying to give me words of encouragement.

“You’ll do fine, don’t worry.”

I didn’t say anything. I just sat there in silence and disdain.

“Don’t worry,” she repeated. She kissed my head.

About two hours passed until we moved upstairs into a separate, private room with a bed. There, a nurse took my blood pressure and temperature. She left, and about five to ten minutes later she came back with a bottle of anesthesia. Before they gave me the anesthesia, I undressed and put on a hospital gown.

The anesthesia tasted horrible. The bitter, medicinal liquid poured down my throat for what seemed like an eternity. I gagged

and wanted to throw up. The anesthesia did its job, though. I started to grow tired and could barely speak or keep my eyes open. Next thing I knew, I was lying in a rolling bed with doctors all around me, parents included, heading towards the operating room. I kept coming in and out of consciousness. Flashes of bright, white light in the hallways hurt my eyes. The bed came to a halt. My parents told me they loved me, and then the doctors brought me into the operating room.

When the doors to the operating room swung open, a blast of intense cold hit me like a truck. *It's freezing in here*, I thought with what little consciousness and mental control I had left. The doctors lifted me up on to the operating table, and I heard others gather equipment behind me. A gas mask appeared above my head, slowly making its way to my face. The gas mask sped up the process of me falling asleep.

When I had the gas mask on, the world

felt calm. My nerves were eased and my sense of judgment cleared. About a minute later, a numbing sensation encompassed my entire body. I felt a sharp pinch in my left arm; it actually felt wonderful. I looked down and saw the doctors insert a needle into my arm and wondered why it didn't hurt.

The drugs' effects grew in strength.

"Did you go to St. Catherine?" a nurse asked. "My niece went there."

"Ye..." I struggled to say.

"You're doing great, Sam," the nurse continued to say.

Click clack, the doctors still shuffled and moved equipment behind me. *Hummmmm*, the monotonous hum of the gas mask grew louder. The drugs made everything move in a rhythm, like it was kept on repeat.

"You're doing great, Sam."

Click clack.

Hummmmm.

"You're doing great, Sam."



Click clack.

Hummmm.

The room started to spin now.

“You’re doing great, Sam.”

Click clack.

Hummmm.

“You’re doing great, Sam.”

Click clack.

Hummmm.

My eyesight was reduced to tunnel vision.

“You’re doing great, Sam.”

Click clack.

Hummmm.

Click clack.

Hummmm.

Then everything turned black.

“What’s your name?” a mysterious, disembodied voice asked.

“Wha- what?” I managed to croak.

“What’s your name, sweetie?”

“Sa- Sam.”

“And how old are you?” she asked.

“Th-thirteen.”

“Good. Listen, you just woke up from surgery, and I’m gonna go get your parents. They’re waiting outside.”

I tried to look around, but I couldn’t turn my head. I could tell that I was in some room where people coming out of surgery stay. The room was bright, too bright. My parents walked in and kissed my head. The nurse asked if I wanted any Gatorade, and I said yes. I could barely take a sip out of the straw. I fell asleep and later awoke in a room only occupied by me and my parents.

The next day I could comprehend dialogue and understand my surroundings. The food at the hospital tasted delicious. The nurses were kind, and I just watched

TV all day. But every time I tried to move or reposition myself, an intense, burning wave of pain developed around my stomach. This kind of pain was something that I had never experienced before. For the entire weekend I never moved, scared that I would aggravate the pain again.

On Monday I could now go home. While we waited for the doctor to finish filling out all the paperwork to send me home, my dad told me to sit up. I sat up like I always had for my entire life. When my body swung up, the pain in my stomach persisted, even worse this time. I nearly fell off the bed because of how stunned the pain had left me.

“I can’t do this, Dad,” I said, writhing in pain where I sat.

I knew you shouldn’t have laid in that bed the whole weekend.”

By then, my brother had brought in a wheelchair to roll me out of the hospital. The pain didn’t stop. With every second it grew in intensity. I needed help getting into the car. The car ride home was even worse than the car ride to the hospital. With every bump along the road and with every jolt of the car, a fire scorched my stomach. I concealed my pain from my family during the car ride. We finally made it home.

“You got the keys, Dan?” my mom asked.

“Yeah,” he replied.

Everyone left the car except for me and my mom.

“Mom, I can’t walk,” I said.

“I’m sorry, did you say something?” she answered, fooling with her purse.

“I said I can’t walk!”

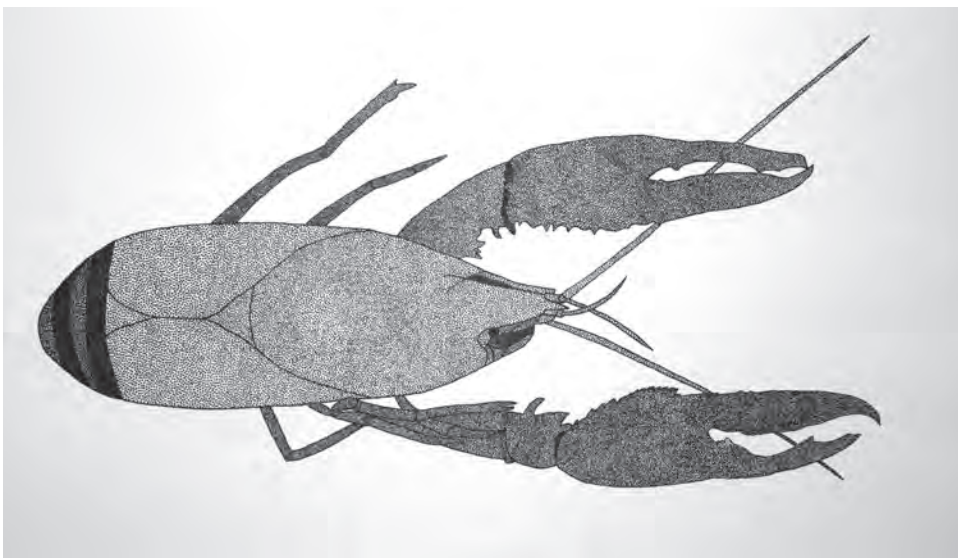
I tried to hold back a tear from my eye.

For a moment there was silence. No one said anything. My family only tried to understand the ramifications of what I had said, considering the reality that I might never walk again. My mom and dad had to lift me into our house and onto our sofa. Just sitting on the sofa, the pain was unbearable, rendering any form of movement impossible. The shock of losing my ability to walk still wasn't settling in yet, but I began to fear for the future. Everything from here forward suddenly came into question. I later learned that the surgery had taken a significant toll on my body, and I had lost the ability to do much of what I was able to do before.

What was supposed to be only a weekend of recovery, turned into a month of being homebound. The pain didn't subside until about a week or two later. I kept myself busy during the whole month of September by playing Xbox and lying, sometimes sitting, on the sofa on the first floor of

our house. I slept on that same sofa for about a week before moving into our guest room downstairs. I never slept in my own bedroom again.

Life became horribly difficult with each task that came my way. I had to learn how to cope with the fact that I just couldn't do things in a wheelchair that I would have been able to do when I could walk. I had to learn how to adapt to a life of not walking, but operating a scooter, which meant much less mobility than before. I lost a lot of independence, instead relying on my parents to always be around to help me. Even simple things became a struggle, like getting dressed or moving in and out of a bed. I couldn't go to some family members' houses anymore because of the number of stairs it took to enter their houses. The only thought keeping me going was that it didn't matter what I was able to do before. What mattered was improving my new life, focusing on the new me.



How Breaking a Phone Made Me Start Writing

Robert Laurent '16

This story earned a regional Silver Key Award in the 2016 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

For about a year I had a dumb phone. It didn't do much of anything, but it made calls and didn't break. I became content with it. However, my little brother, Richard, who had a similar phone, didn't much like his. He wanted a phone with more functions than simply making calls. More importantly, he was tired of feeling embarrassed when he had to call someone. Everyone had the latest iPhone 5, or 6 or whatever number they were on, and he, stuck with an old, no-name-brand phone that couldn't connect to the internet, didn't fit in.

So, one day during a holiday break, we made the long drive out to Slidell to trade in the old phones. While my parents talked about the pros and cons of trading in an old phone and getting a shiny new one, my brother and I looked at what they offered.

I chose the Samsung while my brother chose the iPhone. My parents exchanged old for new. We left the Best Buy and drove home, where I tried to install a few apps to use when I got bored. However, the app store was miniscule, whereas Richard was able to download a great many, some of which I wanted. I decided to exchange mine for the type that Richard had.

That weekend, we drove to Slidell again,

and I exchanged my Samsung for the iPhone. I waited until we arrived home to check it out. My joy quickly turned to disappointment when I found out that in order to purchase any app, you need an Apple ID. For over an hour, I toyed around trying to figure out how to accomplish this.

Nothing is more infuriating than when technology fails to work the way you expect, and I was lost. I figured since my brother, Richard, knew how to operate these things that he would be helpful. As always when it comes to my family, they disappointed me. Richard was busy and refused to help, and the rest of my family didn't know what I should do about it. I should have just stopped right there, but I had already wasted over an hour of my life and did not want to put it off now just to become frustrated later. So I kept pestering them for help, but they refused.

I stood in the middle of the kitchen after the latest round of rejections. I hated this new phone, and I hated my family. The phone did not operate the way it should have. It was worthless, dead to me. So, I chucked it as hard as I could across the house. It crashed into a metal coffee table and landed near the TV, shattering to pieces.

“Do you think you should be here?”

“Not really, Doctor Randazzo,” I shrugged.

“But you threw your phone. Your mom seems to think you need to better control your anger.”

“I know, Doc.”

“Were you angry?”

“When?”

“When you threw your phone.”

I thought about it for a second. “I was frustrated, but not really angry. I knew what I was doing.”

“Then why did you throw it?”

“It’s useless, and I wanted my old one back.”

“But you can’t get the old one back, and now you have to pay to get it repaired.”

“I know.”

“Now, do you still think it was a good idea?”

“Probably wasn’t my best.”

“What about your family?”

“What about them?”

“Do you get mad at them often?”

“All the time.”

“Why?”

I thought about it: *Where do I begin?* “The main thing is probably the noise. They’re constantly running around fighting, yelling, and listening to bad country music.”

“What do you do to try to get away from it?”

“I usually try to go on walks.”

“Do you try to write down your feelings?”

“Like a diary?”

“Or a journal.”

“No.”

“Well, maybe you should. I know it probably sounds like a girly thing, but I’ve known it to work.”



“Maybe I could try it.”

“I think you’ll like it. Anyway, I think your mom’s waiting,” he said as he rose to open the door.

“Alright, thanks Doctor Randazzo,” I said as I walked to the door.

“No problem, feel free to come back if you need anything.”

My problems started when I forgot my sweatshirt at school. When my mom pulled up to get me, I realized that I had left it inside the library. I ran back to pick it up before running back outside to climb into the truck. When I sat down inside, my mom got angry with me because I had arrived late. *Yes, because everyone knows you can’t spare two minutes.*

“But I had to get my sweatshirt,” I added pathetically, which only gave her more reason to get upset with me.

After she finally calmed down, she explained how she had to go to JCPenney for some reason and we, naturally, had to come along. *Yaaaaaaaay I love going to*

JCPenney after school for no reason instead of doing my homework. On the way, my siblings started clamoring for a drink from the gas station. *You know when the best time to ask mom for something unnecessary is? Right after she just finished yelling at someone, and it’s obvious she’s had a bad day.* My mom caved in and went inside to buy the drinks.

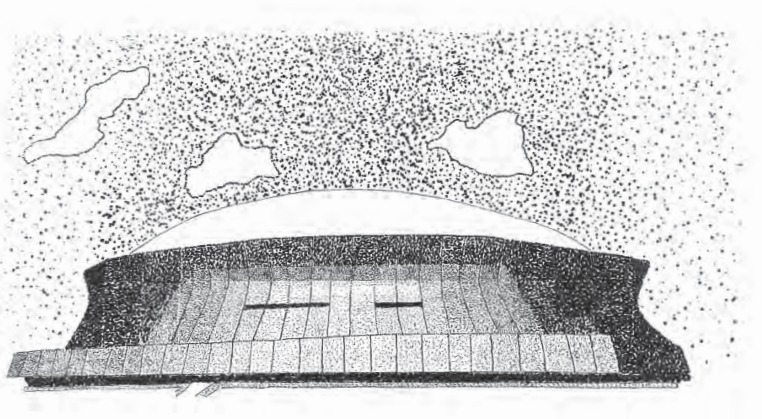
When she came out, she only had two 60 oz cups. My little siblings started moaning. They knew what was coming. My mom planned to pour some of the drink into small red cups that she had in the truck just for this occasion.

“But, moooooom,” began Buff Boy, one of my little brothers who was stuck with a bad nickname.

“It’s not *fair*,” added Beast Boy, another one of my little brothers with a stupid nickname.

“We wanted our own cup,” they both demanded.

I facepalmed. *Here we go again. Did you really think you would get your own 60 oz soft drink?* My mom proceeded to pour the drinks, then accidentally spilt some, which only made her more frustrated.



“I don’t *want* it now,” Beast Boy complained.

Sigh.

Once we arrived at JCPenney, the situation didn’t improve. Mom had to return an article of clothing that didn’t fit. We then went to look at Easter clothes, a chore nobody enjoyed. My mom tried to convince everyone to try on Easter outfits that nobody liked, and it escalated from there. After half an hour, she just decided that shopping for Easter clothes with a bunch of whining kids was pointless; she put the clothes back on the rack and stormed out.

She started the truck and shouted at everybody to load in. At this point Richard, who is a neat freak, chose this time to complain about how the other siblings messed up the car with their hyper drinks. He ran out to go throw one of the giant drink cups away. *Not now!* Mom had enough. She threw the last drink out the car door. It would have simply crashed on the ground harmlessly if it hadn’t been for Richard who chose that exact moment to try to get back in the car. It hit his head and promptly exploded. Richard, a neat freak, did not appreciate to having a huge, sticky soda explode on his head, and after a few minutes of chaos, I was treated to a ride home in awkward silence.

Once we reached our destination, as soon as Mom opened the front door, I rushed inside, grabbed an old book, and walked outside to the pond. I did not live in a normal suburb. The land was a mixture of suburban and rural, so there was a lot of empty space. The backyard bordered

a large pond full of algae, alligators and nutria. I walked around the pond until I reached a broken bridge. It used to be a beautiful gazebo, then Hurricane Katrina happened. Now, all that remained was a broken, mauled bridge that doesn’t even go anywhere, a sad reminder sticking out into the water. I walked up onto the makeshift pier, quickly checked for snakes, and sat down.

As I sat on the pier, I examined the book that I held in my hand. It was an old *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Do it Yourself* book. It was half activity book, half journal. I had received it for Christmas about five or six years ago but had never completed the journal section. I remembered how, about a month or two ago, Dr. Randazzo recommended I take up journaling. *Well, I guess this is as good a time as any to start.*

It’s been a long time since I started this journal. It’s funny how this all started. I’ve learned that writing can provide a solace from my troubles. My family is annoying, but that’s never going to change. I’m not going to change, either. I’m always going to get annoyed by their loud shenanigans and chaos, but it’s not so bad. I am lucky to have a peaceful place by my house where I can escape it all. Maybe by recording my life as it happens now, I can, someday, look back and think about how stupid we all were. It’s amazing how things can seem so important in the moment, but, in the end, are barely footnotes in a much larger story.

Everliving Contrition

Dustin Mayer '16

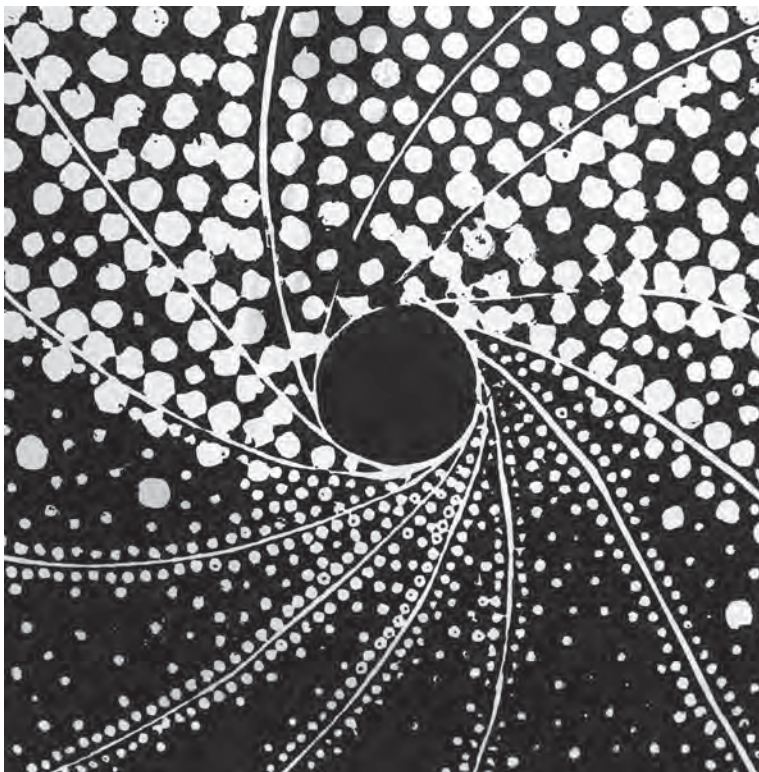
The ghosts of dead memories haunt my mind;
They sleep inside the tombs of past mistakes.
These restless souls escape their graves aligned
When night's alluring moon again awakes.

Like winter's cold embrace, their hands caress
My face and sting my eyes like icy wind.
Despite protests they still progress to jest
About regrets and sins I've kept within.

They whisper wisps, beckoning madness inside
My ears until my head is filled with shame
(The pain forgiveness deems mundane) implied
By wrongs for which I hold the blame.

Bewitched by guilt my heart will wilt away;
In its absence remorse, in place, will stay.





The Numbers Game

Jeremy Baier '18

Everyone keeps trying to quantify things,
assigning all these senseless labelings.
From grades to Snapchat score,
I can't take it anymore.
I will not stand and allow you
to give me a numerical value.
From class rank to likes to weight,
my worth is not up for debate.
We've played the Numbers Game again,
but we can stop it here with some discipline.
So quantify me now with hesitation
because I'm more than your enumerations.

Ode to a Brick

Vincent Soldano '16

You are the art masons.
You wear a square,
built as solid
as the buildings and bridges
you form.
Three and five eighths
by two and one fourth
by eight inches.

But you are more than standard size and shape.
Crafted from wood, concrete, clay, sand,
glass, stone, plastic, or mud,
you're formed long or short,
straight or curved,
flat or jagged,
smooth or rough,
plain or rusticated.

You possess a character, I tell you,
extruded solid,
formed hollow,
or pressed with holes;
sanded, painted, glossed
to form a stretcher, header, shiner,
rowlock, sailor, or soldier.

Like Atlas
you hold up the world
or weigh things down,
bearing weight
without complaint,
faithfully fulfilling your purpose.
Laid in the ground,
you show where to walk,
like when, dressed in yellow,
you led Dorothy to Oz.

Villanelle

Nicholas Foster '16

At times, I wish I could reverse my past.
What my future hold fills me with fright.
Days turn to minutes; time passes too fast.

In embarrassing times that have amassed,
My purpose feels like fog on autumn nights.
At times, I wish I could reverse my past.

As years pass by, I have learned at last
To face loved ones faded from my mind's sight.
Days turn to minutes; time passes too fast.

The world rotates, and mishaps leave me aghast,
Regretting unsaid words that cloud my sight.
At times, I wish I could reverse my past.

As my life begins to change, I lambaste
The feeling as time speeds to light.
Days turn to minutes; time passes too fast.

Surrounded by emotion, I outcast
self-pity. In the rough, I am ready to fight.
At times, I wish I could reverse my past.
Days turn to minutes; time passes too fast.

13° F and Dropping

Charlie Long '16

My eyes struggled to stay open as I trudged slowly through the snowstorm toward the military base a few miles away. The wind howled, and the freezing air bit my covered face. The two pairs of gloves I wore began to crack, and I could feel the frostbite slowly kill the feeling in my right hand. My vision was so impaired by the blizzard that I could only see a few feet in front of me. My snowboots dug about eight inches into the snow with every step I took, slowing my pace. I knew that if I didn't reach the military base, I would surely die in the strangely serene blanket of ice.

I thought back to the beginning. I had travelled with my best friends Johnny and Sarah to a small scientific research center called Karanu in the Northeastern tip of Canada on the border of Greenland with our professor, Dr. Corgin, in order to study the effects of global warming. Dr. Corgin asked the three of us to come with him to the Arctic to collect data on the rising temperature. When we made it to Karanu, the scientists studying the Arctic region greeted us and explained how cozy the small base really seemed.

Sarah, Johnny, and I started to feel at home by the second or third week. Johnny always whined about the awful food, saying it reminded him of our experience at Boy Scouts camp with how bad those cafeteria meals were. I usually told him nothing could be worse than his cooking in our dormroom freshman year, and that usually shut him

up. I had known Johnny Arlond ever since childhood- dating back to the playground in kindergarten. We did everything together, from sitting on the bench on our high school varsity basketball team to hanging out almost every weekend to watch movies or play video games. Sarah, I had met in college, and very briefly. She was considered the teacher's pet because she did a lot for Dr. Corgin. So when he decided to take a couple students with him to the Arctic Circle with him, her name was first on the list.

Being away from regular society for so long felt almost peaceful. There wasn't any stress, arguing, or bad attitude; we were just a group of college students, a crazed hippy professor, and a group of scientists learning more about global warming issues. However, in our valiant attempt to save nature, nature tried to kill us.

I woke up to silence, an unusual occurrence in Karanu. I jumped out of my bed, yawning. The clock read 9:42 PM. My afternoon nap accidentally turned into an eight-hour slumber. I sighed, wondering why none of my friends had told me to wake up. Turning the doorknob slowly, I cracked open the door and yelled down the hallway.

"Dr. Corgin! I'm sorry I overslept. My alarm didn't go off."

My words echoed down the corridor

of closed doors. My ears were met with nothing in response. I rubbed my eyes and trudged down the corridor.

“Sarah?”

No response.

“Johnny?”

Nothing.

“Dr. Corgin?” I yelled a little louder.

Silence.

My sleepy mind started to wake up. Lights were flickering on and off above my head as I stared down the long corridor. I walked down to Dr. Corgin’s office at the end of the hallway and stood at the closed door. I put my ear up to the door, hearing nothing. My hand slowly turned the knob, and I creaked the door open.

I sighed in relief. Dr. Corgin’s head lay down on his desk on top of piles of paperwork and statistics we received from our month of study. He was only asleep.

“Dr. Corgin, I’m sorry I overslept. Did we collect any new data today?”

He didn’t move.

“Dr. Corgin?” I asked puzzled.

I approached his still body behind his desk, and tapped his shoulder. I again received no response. He didn’t even flinch.

I decided to pull his body back, so that his head rested against his chair, but there was nothing. There wasn’t any blood, any bullet hole, or any sign that he was dead. I shook him slightly.

“Dr. Corgin, wake up, sir.”

My slightly overweight, middle-aged professor sat absolutely still and silent. I went to check his pulse on his wrist when I saw something that puzzled me. A yellow

blotch discolored his right wrist. Slight boils lay on the blotch, and his whole right arm had turned a greenish-yellow. His face was expressionless with no sign of pain or struggle. He looked unusually content.

A wave of nausea came over me, and my lunch landed on the floor. I ran out of the office, and back into the hallway. I began sweating and panting uncontrollably.

“Sarah! Johnny!” I yelled out.

Still no response.

I ran down the corridor to Johnny’s room. I quickly turned the knob and walked in to see my childhood friend lying silently on his cot. His long, amber hair fell just slightly over his black eyebrows. His eyelids were shut, concealing his emerald eyes. Very similar to Dr. Corgin, his face was absolutely expressionless. Shivering, I slowly walked over towards his body. Once again, I found no wound or sign of any type of struggle. But there again was the yellow blotch on his



wrist. I screamed and dashed out of the door back into the hallway. In the halls, I heard my voice called.

“Chris!” a voice croaked.

Down at the end of the corridor, near the kitchen, stood a human-shaped figure. I stared in absolute terror at the silhouette.

“Para.... parasite,” the voice struggled before turning into a vicious cough.

Those were the final words I heard before the figure collapsed.

My confused mind dashed to crazy conclusions. I ran back into my room, throwing on whatever excess clothes I had in my closet. I had to get out of here.

“You gotta get out, Chris. Get to the military base a few miles away! You can make it. Just get out!” my mind screamed at me.

I obeyed, throwing on layers of clothing before running towards the door. On the way out, I got a better glimpse of the figure trying to warn me about some type of parasite. Sarah’s face lay stone cold on the floor, expressionless. I yelled and ran out.

My breaths were slowing down. I could feel my legs reacting to a step slower and slower with every motion I made. I had a raging fever, and a stinging pain in my right wrist. I decided not to look at it, understanding that my morale would slump even lower if I did.

“Where is this damned military base?” I tried to yell.

The snow was rising. My boots were sinking almost a foot into the snow every

step. Pink blood began seeping from the yellow patch on my wrist. I felt a harsh fever inside of me, causing my insides to burn as I froze in the blizzard. I reached the point where sweat even dribbled down my cheek behind my ski mask. My pace slowed. In all my confusion, I experienced a thought.

I felt like I was in purgatory trying to reach heaven. My vision began to slowly blur, and I thought back to my friends who I presumed were dead.

We all just wanted to make the world a better place, and we got punished for it. My eyes fluttered once more and I fell to my knees. My inevitable fate began to hit me. I thought back to my best friends and professor, wondering if there was any possibility that they were still alive. I finally looked down at blotch on my wrist.

“What the hell is this?” I yelled angrily.

My shouting ended up only being a whisper in the howling Arctic wind. I sighed, understanding that my body was slowly freezing. I didn’t know how much time I had left in the snowstorm.

I stayed kneeling for an eternity. My gloved hands rested on the powdery white sheet of ice, and I stared up towards the gray sky. The falling ice landed on my goggles, obstructing my vision slightly, but through the downpour of snow and hail, I noticed a small pale light in the distance.

I squinted to try to see what the light originated from, but fatigue overcame me. Through my dry, freezing lips, a smile met my face before I gave in, falling face first into the serene blanket of ice. The soft powdery snow embraced me, and I felt at peace.

Mystical waters,
roaring over weathered rocks,
sparkle into mist.
- Nicholas Foster '16

Sunlight penetrates
through the transparent windows,
lighting a dull room.
- Charlie Long '16

Under the low bridge,
Along a glistening bank,
I strum my guitar.
- Jack Neelis '16

Orange-colored skies,
the sun roaring above,
the city awakes.
- Vincent Soldano '16

Frozen winter crypt:
a blanket of ice covers
the desolate land.
- Charlie Long '16



The milky clouds
loaf above me as I lay
on cool olive grass.
- Vincent Soldano '16

The torch light dies now,
the night ignited with stars:
insignificant.
- Jack Neelis '16

Villanelle

Jack Neelis '16

I drive beside my fears and dreads tonight
with music to distract from lucid thoughts.
(Forget the past. These words I must recite).

I pass beside the pools in pale lamp light
and hear the splash and crash of days I forgot.
I drive beside my fears and dreads tonight.

But then, I remember nights we spent despite
our curfews, not caring if we were caught.
(Forget the past. These words I must recite).

I pass the houses, parks, and malls from bright,
damp summer days where we laughed and fought.
I drive beside my fears and dreads tonight.

And years we spent to form the lists of nights
we would never forget are no more sought.
(Forget the past. These words I must recite).

Now, I recall adventures we could write
and all that we, in our young age, had sought.
I drive beside my fears and dreads tonight.
(Forget the past. These words I must recite).

Singers and Dancers

Grant Strohmeyer '17

The date was August 25, 1973.

Alexi worked a job as a bartender at a place called *13 Druzya*. He often convinced his friend Erik to come to work with him, to sit in the back and make sure everything stayed calm in the bar. Erik sat in his corner booth where he could see everything. He had a grizzly white beard and dark brown eyes. He kept his white and black hair buzzed short, his face tanned to leather and back sore from years of overwork. His right leg had been shattered thirty years ago during the second world war, in which he and his friend Alexi had fought before immigrating to America.

The day seemed like any other. Nothing out of the ordinary happened until a girl walked in. Erik couldn't stop looking at her, his eyes filled with tears as his mind drifted to the past. She had pale skin and green eyes with short, red hair. Alexi looked at Erik and could almost see the thoughts passing through his head. Erik hobbled over to Alexi with pain in his leg and said,

"Give me that bottle of Jack," Erik said.

Alexi poured a shot glass and handed it to Erik.

"I said the bottle," Erik said bitterly.

Alexi handed him the bottle, and Erik went back to the booth, where he sat the rest of the day taking shot after shot. He ate nothing, and he drank nothing except for whiskey. He looked around the bar and listened to the piano music playing over the speakers. He liked the tune, and slowly

the piano faded, and he heard the sound of an accordion. Soon he began hearing the voices of Russian men singing Russian folk songs-- songs he hadn't heard in decades from men who were now dead-- songs Erik knew well from his home village, Velikiy, near Stalingrad. Erik's mind drifted back to the present, and he heard the piano playing again. He looked around and saw only three other people in the bar and the day had turned to night. Erik grabbed a bottle of Smirnoff from Alexi along with his brown coat. "Be careful." Alexi bade him.

Erik started walking down the sidewalk and covered his head with the hood of his coat. He did not feel pain in his leg now, but he felt the *chorts* in his head. Erik didn't head home, but instead walked to the park near the bar where he could see the skyline of Seattle. He sat down on a bench and finished the bottle, then threw it behind him and looked into the bleak night. He saw nothing but rain drops.

He stroked his beard and gazed upward to the lamppost across from him. He reached into his coat pocket and pulled out an old, warped picture of a young man sitting in a pile of rubble looking at a city in flames. Seeing this picture hit Erik in a way no fist or kick ever had. He stuffed the picture back into his coat pocket.

Erik started to get up when he saw a figure in the night. A young woman wearing a white dress and long, bright red hair approached him. She remained just as he

remembered her, just as she did in 1940. Her eyes squinted as she smiled, and every part of her gleamed with radiance.

“I need you back. I want to hold you in my arms again,” Erik said with tears swelling in his eyes.

“Don’t cry, I am with you,” she said back to him. Erik reached out for her petite ivory hand but felt nothing as he grasped for it.

Erik sat there waiting for her. The rain soaked his clothes as his head rested in his hand. His eyes filled with tears, and he quickly wiped them away. *No, No I’m not, she told me not to. I won’t cry.* Erik stood up and straightened his back. *She wanted me to be strong.* Erik

heard the sound of footsteps behind him, and he turned around slowly. A group of three boys in their twenties began walking towards Erik. Their hats and hoodies covered their faces from the lamppost in front of Erik, who slipped his hand into his pocket, and clutched his keys in between each finger.

“Hey, old man, whatcha doing out here?”

“*Ubir-aysya,*” was all Erik could say.

“Oh, we got ourselves a rusky! I think you’ve had a little too much to drink. Heck, do you even understand what I’m sayin, Commie?” said the boy with the red hat. Erik had heard the name hundreds of times before. When he first came to the country in the 50’s, it was nearly impossible for him to



find a job. If not for Alexi, he wouldn’t have a job now.

“I-I... understand,” Erik said now standing up straight.

“Good, then maybe you can understand me when I say ‘give me your money.’” And at that the red-hatted boy flipped open a butterfly knife. The boys on either side of him brandished beating clubs along with the boy on his left.

Erik took a long deep breath and focused on the knife.

“*Davay srazhat’sya,*” Erik whispered to himself.

Erik lunged forward, swiping his keys across the face of the leader with his right hand. With his left Erik grabbed the knife

hand and forced the blade into the boy's arm. The other two threw themselves on Erik and began beating him. Erik grabbed one of them and threw him into the lamppost, but the other boy cold-cocked him in the back of the head. Erik fell unconscious to the cold wet ground.

Erik looked up at the red and black sky over Stalingrad. He saw his friends lying next to him, dead in the mud. These were the men and women of his squad. These were his friends and his wife. Erik saw his wife Vela dying next to him. Her bright red hair had turned black in the mud and her once emerald eyes now blackened by the smoke of war. Erik took her bloodied hand, which still held a wedding band. He told her, "Don't be scared, we'll get out of here."

Before the war, Vela had been a dancer and an artist in their small town of Velikiy. He would play music for her, and she would dance with a passion and warmth that challenged the sunrise. But she was also an artist whose pictures brought hope to people. They married before the war when she turned twenty-three and he was twenty-two. They stayed together throughout the war, and days before she had passed, she had drawn one last picture: an image of Erik sitting on the rubble, staring into the battlefield of Stalingrad. Now she would never dance again, never hear another song, and the world was robbed of her art. The picture was the last piece of her, and it now belonged to Erik. He leaned over and pulled the paper from her coat and clutched it in his hand. He lay in the street with a bullet in his leg and another in his shoulder, unable to move, clutching the drawing to

his chest. Around him lay the bodies of men who sung the night before about freedom from the German invaders. Women who danced in rejoice of surviving one more day. Soldiers who had talked of their homes and why they fought. Ivory faces lying in the mud covered with soot and dirt. Eyes that once held laughter and light now were dark and empty.

A man ran over and picked Erik up, dragging him off the bloodied street. The man once commanded Erik and his squad. "*Vse normal'no*, it's okay, we're out of the street. The Germans left moments ago," the man said. They waited in a burning building in an attempt to avoid the Germans. The man was Sergeant Verni, Erik's squad leader.

"Wait here, private. I'm going to check the area and make sure we're clear. Be careful comrade." Sergeant Verni ran out into the smoke and left Erik there. He looked at the drawing and closed his eyes. When he opened them, he was back in the park, gazing towards the Seattle skyline.

Alexi Verni was carrying him through the park toward an ambulance. He no longer wore the uniform, but this man who carried his friend from the muddied street was the same man who had saved his friends thirty years ago. He still carried Erik when he couldn't carry himself.

"It's okay, I've got you," he said.

- written by Peter Davis '18, Jonathan Loga '18, Shane Jordan '18,
Adam Schwarzenbach '18
- translated by Mr. Merritt's Latin II class

The Shadow Man

Est vetus quassa taberna in prasina silva quae omnes peregrini aliquando inveniet. caupo ibi diutius aliquibus possit meminisse vivit, tamen nemo meminisset quod fuit primus: Caupona aut caupo. Parum pertinet, nam hoc est perfugium illorum qui errat. Aliquis qui in taberna sedeat aliquando audit cauponem narrantem fabulas quas incenderent cordem, utrum eae fabulae amoris sunt, virtutis, irae, miseriaeve.

Uno die, vir in hac taberna venit, sed hic erat novus. Vir vinum poposcit, et caupo vinum viro davit. Caupo rogavit, "Quid est nomen tibi?" et vir dixit, "Dracus." Caupo tum dixit, "Tu me admonuisti de fabula magna." Omnes populi tabernae circa cauponem audire congregit.

Caupo inquit, "Longe ante nascebas, alius vir offendit in hanc tavernam. Vestis eius lacererabat, barbas eius incultus. Is in idem locum quem tu nunc sedes occidit, et inquit, "Da mihi quidem ut cenarem." Synoditae aliquam panem votivo, quem essuraliter manducit. 'Narra tuam fabulam mihi', inquit. satiatus ad me meditabunde intuerit, et dixit "mihi nomen est Dracus. Meam fabulam tibi dicam si solum id ad alios erroneas repetes ne errores meos repetent. Meus iter coepit quom decrevi relinquere meam familiam in inquisitione fati mei."

There is an old, battered tavern in the dark green forest that all wanderers eventually find. The innkeeper has lived there for as long as anyone can remember, yet no one remembers which existed first: inn or innkeeper. It matters little, for this is the refuge of all those who wander. Anyone who sits in the tavern eventually hears the innkeeper tell tales to set the heart on fire, whether they are tales of love, of heroism, of wrath, or of woe.

One day, a man came in this tavern, but this man was strange. The man ordered wine, and the innkeeper gave the man wine. The innkeeper asked, "What's your name?" and the man said, "Dracus." The innkeeper then said, "You remind me of a great story." All the people of the tavern gathered around the innkeeper to hear.

The innkeeper said, "Long before you were born. another man stumbled into this tavern. His clothes were ragged, his beard unkempt. He fell into the same seat that you are in now, and said, 'Give me something to eat.' I offered the traveller some bread, which he devoured ravenously. 'Tell me your story', I said. Having been sated, the man stared at me pensively, and said, 'My name is Dracus. I will tell you my tale if only you repeat it to other wanderers, so that they might not repeat my mistakes. My journey began when I decided to abandon my family

“Olim habui pulchram familiam, et stabilem negotium quam ferrarius fabrem; cum haec sit magna vita, tamen ego eram non felix. Volebam me esse similis puer iterum, et mundum explorare, et omnia relinquere.” Caupo respondebat, “Habes illic iucundam fabulam, sed cur relinqueres omnia pro nihil sed somnium?” Dracus inquit, “Volebam caece invenire quae mea significatio vera erat, meum fatum verum in vita. Ac aliquem aliquidve stare in via non permisuram sum; ista erat mea ruina.

Decrevi exquirere perditos thesauros aut fortunae superare grave periculum ut gloriam famamque mererem. volebam esse similis eram in mea adulescentia.” Caupo, attentissimus fabulae, mansit tacite tamquam Dracus continuit. “Multas vias atque missiones cessi quas multi viri utinam conquiniscit in timor cum sententia. ei essent rectus ut ita faciant inquit. “Enim casus in quibus irem carissime mihi constarent.

Multam famam crevi, numquam satis erat; semper magis desideravi. Vulgus etiam mea familia, magnam cupiditatem in me mihi percepit atque persuaserunt nobiles ut me de civitatibus eicerent. Verba describere erga omnes iram quam sensi non possunt. Nocte, coepi occidere populos, proscindo fauces eorum ut meum indicium modus operandi. Sic est quomodo merui nomen meum, Dracum. Faciebam hunc usque OCCIDI!” Dracus stetit sursum et suum orem mortuum cauponi ostendit, et protinus disparuit sicut numquam ibi erat. “Vero domne,” caupo inquit, “illud erat formidolosissimum quod umquam visi.”

in search of my destiny.”

“I once had a beautiful family, and a stable job as a blacksmith; although this was a great life, I was not happy. I wanted to be like a kid again, and explore the world, and leave everything behind.” The innkeeper replied, “Interesting story you have there, but why would you leave everything behind for nothing but a dream?” Dracus said, “I was blindly wishing to discover what my true meaning was, my true destiny in life. And I wouldn’t let anything or anyone stand in the way; that was my downfall.

I decided to go searching for lost treasures or chances to overcome grave danger to earn glory and fame. I wanted to be like I was in my youth.” The innkeeper, very interested in the story, stayed silent as Dracus continued. “I went on many quests and adventures most men would cower in fear at the thought of. They would be right to do so,” he said. “For the adventures I was to go on would cost me dearly.”

“I got much fame and fortune, but it was never enough; I always wanted more. The common people, even my own family, saw the great greed in me, and convinced nobles to banish me from every city. Words cannot describe the anger I felt towards everyone. At night, I started killing people, slitting their throat as my trademark killing method. That is how I earned my name, Dracus. I kept doing this until I DIED!” Dracus stood up and showed his dead face to the innkeeper, and immediately vanished like he was never there. “Yes sir,” the innkeeper said, “that was the scariest thing I’ve ever seen.”

All the other people in the inn looked

Omnes alii populi in taberna cum horrore observarent. Caupo conspexit secum mirans quod factum sit. Tum agnoscit ne primum homo cognominis “Dracus,” monitus eum fabulae, alicubi visus esset. Caupo de Dracus admiratus est, et cur convenerat tavernam. Dracus iam fabulam narravit quam non obliviscit; placuit cauponem narrare haec fabulam vagi aliis qui pergebant ad tabernam.

Caupo prosequitur fabulam suam narrare ad aliquos advenientes magna cum spe ut prohiberet aliquem facientem quod Dracus fecit, vitaret tentationes vitae et potestatem alterius recreantis miseriam Draci negaret. Maximus pars auditorum fabulae terrentur et historia Draci cum eis manent. Alii dicunt id esse mere fabulam, sed bonam; alii modo narrata est. Omnes conveniunt ut ipsi non fuerunt umquam eidem.

Fabula Draci et eius nuntium verbo osti multis generationibus ab quibus audiverunt fabulam cauponi praepanditur. erudit multos qui, quasi Dracus, desideraverunt delectationem pueritiae etiam ut pro quod habent et tranquillam vitam quam agant essent gratum. Nam si descendant eandem viam ut Dracus, angorem cognoscant, et ipsam vitam tranquillam quam amiserunt cupiant.

on in shock. The innkeeper looked around, wondering what had just happened. He then realized that the first man named Dracus, who had reminded him of the story, wasn't anywhere to be seen. The innkeeper wondered about Dracus, and why he came to the inn. Dracus had told the innkeeper a story he would never forget; the innkeeper decided to tell this story to other wanderers who came to his inn.

The innkeeper continues to tell his story to anyone who comes, to hopefully stop someone from doing what Dracus did, to avoid the temptations of life and to negate the chance of another recreating the wretchedness of Dracus. Most listeners to the story are terrified and the story of Dracus stays with them. Some say it's just a story but a good one; others say it's the way the story is told. All agree that they have never been the same.

The story of Dracus and its message was spread by word of mouth from those who heard it from the innkeeper for many generations. It taught many who, like Dracus, longed for the thrill of their childhood again, to be grateful for what they have and for the peaceful life they live. For if they go down the same path as Dracus, they will know pain, and long for that peaceful life they lost.

Jane's Dreams

Gage Kott '16

Jane and Steve stood together anxiously. They waited for the flash of the camera to capsule the night that Jane hoped would last an eternity. Jane had been anticipating this night since Steve had asked her earlier that month. After their photo was taken, they ventured to the dance floor where they met up with several of Steve's friends and each of their dates.

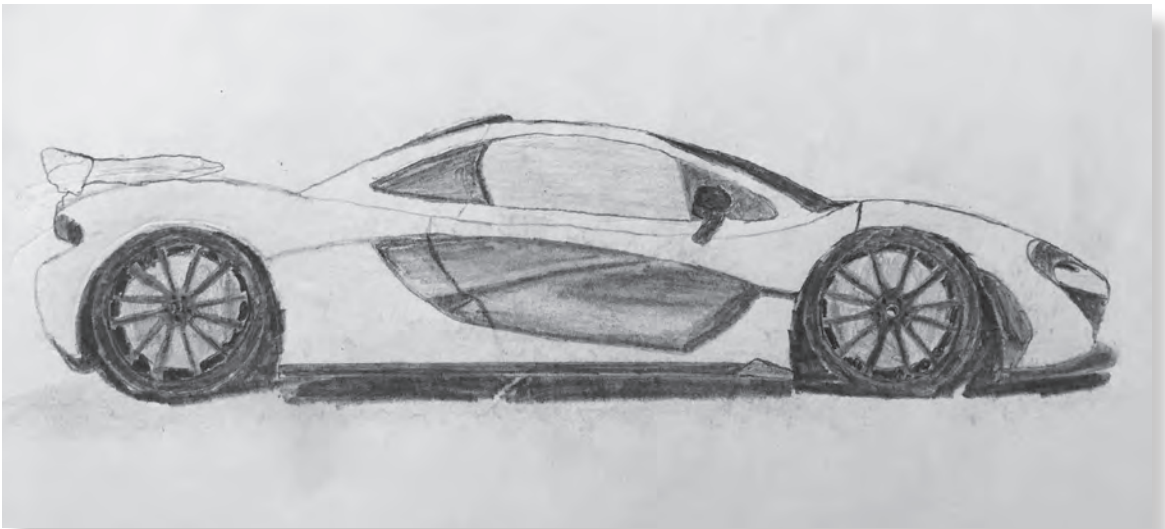
Steve was a well-rounded young man. He was easily the most popular guy at his school because of his sociable nature. Steve had been Jane's crush for as long as she could remember, she was attracted to him because of his ability to fill a room with a certain charisma. A major problem surfaced when she realized that he was never really alone. It was extremely difficult for either of

them to make any progress on their distant relationship. The dance proved to be a way for Steve to finally make a move on Jane.

As the night neared an end, the couple finally had their slow dance, and it met all the expectations Jane had harbored since she was a little girl. After the dance, the feelings between the teenagers had become evident to one another.

They stayed at the dance until the very last song, trying to bleed every minute out of the night. The couple, believing that the night was still young, snuck into City Park. They spent the rest of the night lurking around the park while incessantly giggling like school children.

Steve finally decided it was time to take her home. On the car ride home,



he mentioned his plans for life after high school. His intention was to enlist in the U.S. Navy, but he only planned to serve one tour.

Steve's plan spoiled the night for Jane. She had finally gotten the date she wanted with Steve and now he planned to leave her, along with everything else, behind. The near future of her companion constantly crept into the back of her mind. As they pulled up to her house, Steve turned to Jane and asked her if she would like to be his girlfriend. She chuckled at how cliché it sounded, but didn't hesitate to say yes.

Jane's finest memory was yanked away from her when a small girl interrupted the daydream.

"Mommy?" the child said with anguish in her eyes.

"What, princess?"

"Are we still going to Outback?" she asked because it had become a tradition whenever Steve came home.

"Yes, sweetie. As soon as daddy gets home."

"He's staying for good this time, right?"

"I don't know, baby. That's his decision."

Steve had strayed from his original plan to complete only one tour and left Jane to deal with everything back at home. The last time they spoke, he promised her that the next time he came home would be the last. He was scheduled to come home the day before, and he hadn't called yet.

Jane sat at the wooden table while an awkward silence grew in the room. Jane missed Steve even more because she knew he would know what to tell their daughter.

Just as she thought of the absence of her husband, there was a knock on the door. All of Jane's problems suddenly evaporated.

She dashed to the large, chestnut-colored door with her daughter chasing behind her. She reached to turn the doorknob, and her hands were shaking from excitement. It had been ten months since the family had last seen him. She swung open the door with a type of childish elation.

She saw the same shining, black, finely-polished shoes he had worn when he departed. He had the same royal blue pants with a crease ironed on. He also had some new additions to his ribbon bar. As she scanned the rest of his uniform, she realized that he was a different rank as well. Finally, she looked up and saw that it was a different face.

The man presented Jane with a letter as there was a sudden uproar of confusion. Jane turned around and asked her daughter to go upstairs. She promised the scared six-year-old that she would come talk to her in a couple minutes. Her daughter complied, but it was easy to tell she wanted to stay and find out what was going on.

She took the letter from the soldier's hand while a mixture of fear and agony brewed inside her.

"I have been asked to inform you that your husband has been reported dead at 0400 on August 26, 1980. He was lost at sea during a severe tropical storm. On the behalf of the United States Navy, I extend to you and your family my deepest sympathy in your great loss."

Jane broke down immediately. The soldier

had clearly been notifying military families of deaths for a long time, so he felt very little sympathy. He repeated his sorrow and began to walk off. Jane ripped the letter and walked after the man as if it was his fault.

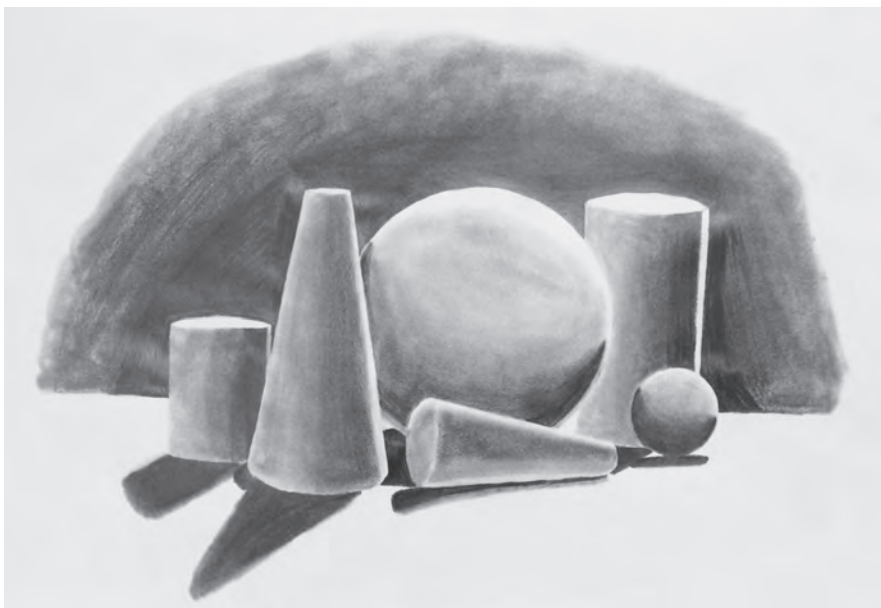
“So that’s it? My husband gives twelve years of his life to you people, and all I get is a letter?” she barked as tears ran down her plum-red cheeks.

“I’m sorry, ma’am,” the man said as if he were reading from cue cards.

“That’s not good enough!” she yelled as

maliciously as she could as she ripped the letter to pieces.

The soldier entered the passenger seat of a black car with fully tinted windows. The car pulled away as Jane crossed the street while wiping the tears out of her eyes. She sat down on the concrete steps at the end of a brick walkway across the street from the family’s home. She pressed her face against her hands in heartache. She looked up and saw her daughter in the doorway of their house.



Just Listen

Alex Lucas '16

I was fed up with hearing everyone else's problems. Recently, everyone had approached me to ask for advice, pouring out their troubles and issues for me to hear. I could not comprehend why everyone thought I cared about their difficulties. After all, I faced my own slew of complications: my girlfriend recently broke up with me, my best friend and I were angry at each other, and I fought with my parents and siblings daily. The list continues on and on. Every man for himself, I thought. As a result of the stress caused by my own problems, I looked forward to the family mini-vacation over the upcoming Labor Day weekend. On my last off period of that Friday, a fellow classmate approached me and asked what to do about his girlfriend.

I roared, "Does it look like I care? I have my own problems! Do I look like a therapist?"

The student stormed off angry and upset at me, but I did not care. The school day ended soon, and then I was free to go on my carefree beach getaway vacation, where I could relax and not worry about any personal problems for several days.

My family and I arrived at the beach resort in Gulf Shores, Alabama, after three hours of driving straight from New Orleans. Exhausted from the long day of school and three-hour drive, I teemed with excitement as we pulled into the condo complex. The smell of the salty ocean engulfed the air as I rolled down my window. The stunning view of the setting sun reflecting golden rays onto the gulf and beach prompted my sister and me to discuss all of the beach fun we could

have on this beautiful landscape. My stomach filled with flurries of excited butterflies as the prospects of sandcastle building, swimming, and crabbing danced around my head. The lazy river curved around the back of the towering thirty-two storey, bright peach colored resort, teeming with people relaxing, the feeling of excitement encompassing the air. We unpacked the car, settled into our luxurious condo, and capered down to the crystal pool. I could finally relax and enjoy the beach.

As I hopped into an inner tube in the lazy river, the warm touch of the baby blue inner tube upon my back loosened my tense muscles. The crystal blue water of the river relaxed me in itself. As the salty ocean breeze swayed the emerald branches of the overhanging palm trees, I took some long, deep breaths to calm myself. I floated around the river with my eyes closed, taking in the crispness of the evening breeze.

After about four trips around the river, I continued to just float around with my eyes closed when someone tapped my tube and said, "Hello! How are you?"

"I'm doing just fine. Thanks for asking," I said. "Just enjoying the evening breeze. Have a nice evening."

I closed my eyes, but the young boy kept going. "My name is Jacob. What's your name?"

"Peter."

"That's a cool name. Well, I'm fifteen years old, and I'm from Birmingham, Alabama. My grandma took me on this trip so I can meet new people and make friends. My dad left my family when I was nine, and my younger

brother never met him. I'm not that popular at school, but I do my best. I'm a straight ABC student! Also, one side of my chest is bigger than the other, but the doctor told me that if I build up some muscle, no one would notice. I like Superman. What about you? Oh, and I like to play baseball. What sports do you play? I've never had a girlfriend. Have you? And what about ... "

I felt completely overwhelmed and did not know what to say. Frustration and aggravation consumed me. *Why, of all people, did this boy have to interrupt my relaxation to start talking to me about his troubles?* While I was frustrated, the boy's life story seemed like a tough one, so I continued to listen to him politely, replying and answering his questions as simply as possible. He persisted to follow me around the lazy river, and I resumed to listen and briefly respond to his questions.

"And have you tried beer before? I have. It is nasty. Same thing with smoking. Yuck!"

"No. I have not, and I do not plan to. Both of those things are not healthy for you. I would not recommend that you ever try them."

"Well, if you say so. Well, I like to play video games. What video games do you play?"

After forty-five minutes of this questioning, I had had enough. I told him, "Well, I think I am going to join my family in the condo now. I enjoyed meeting you and wish you the best of luck. Here's my email if you want to stay in touch."

"Thank you so much. It was so nice talking to you. Bye!" Jacob said enthusiastically.

I trudged up to the hotel room, ready to just get some sleep.

The next day, I wanted to try again just to relax. Since floating in the lazy river seemed not to work out the first time, I decided to

try something different. As I settled into my pool-side chair, an older woman caught my attention. The silver strands of her hair reflected sunlight into my direction.. The wrinkles and drooping skin of her face made it appear as if she were eternally frowning. She sat all alone, staring off at the beach, gazing and frowning blankly into the distance.

When I sat down next to her, she turned and smiled, saying, "Hello, young man. It's nice of you to come sit next to an old geezer like me."

"Yes ma'am, but I won't bother you," I replied. "I just came down by the pool for some quiet, me time. My name is Peter."

"My name is Sophia, but just call me Mrs. Sophie."

"That's nice. Well, I won't bother you if you won't bother me."

"Sure, sonny. I won't say a word. Thanks for your company."

I prepared myself to lounge in the pool chair and closed my eyes to sunbathe. Just as I finished positioning myself comfortably in the chair, the woman began talking to me again.

"I live in one of these condos by myself. When my husband died eleven years ago, I moved to this resort since we used to vacation here. I have so many fond memories of us staying here together."

The woman rambled on about her husband along with personal anecdotes about her old-time fun and the activities they used to participate in together. Annoyed and frustrated, I almost rose and left mid-sentence as she spoke. I thought to myself: *Lady, I have my own problems. Don't tell me yours. I have enough issues myself.* I almost said that out loud when I remembered how angry my classmate at school got when I told him that same statement. I did

not want to make this old lady feel bad, so I decided to just sit and listen.

“There was this one time when we were walking on the beautiful evening beach. As we were walking along, he noticed a little five year old girl crying and screaming along the shore. George urgently turned around and ran to her, asking what was wrong. He continually asked, but the little girl was so distraught that she couldn’t speak. He persisted in asking and finally the girl spoke through a whimper that she had lost her parents. He listened to her intently and calmed her down, immediately flagging for a lifeguard to assist in locating the girl’s parents. He spent his entire evening searching the beach with the lifeguard to locate the girl’s parents. That’s one of the most precious memories I have of him: his ability to listen and help others.”

After about thirty minutes of listening to Mrs. Sophie and her stories, I could not take it anymore.

“It was nice meeting you and hearing about your husband. I wish you the best,” I told her.

“Nice talking with you, too. Thanks for listening,” she said.

I walked off to escape having to hear another story, laughing at the fact that *I never said a word the entire time*, yet she enjoyed our so called “conversation.” I had had enough of hearing other people’s problems for the weekend. I joined my family in the pool and recounted to them what had happened with both Mrs. Sophie and Jacob. I asked them, “Do I look like a therapist to you?”

They just laughed at me. I simply could not comprehend why two strangers began telling me all of their personal problems in one weekend. After hearing all of this, my cousin Beth said to me, “While you may not

have enjoyed listening to those two people, you never know the difference you could have just made in their lives.”

Astounded, I nodded in agreement. Beth’s statement sparked a significant memory within me: Just like Mrs. Sophie’s husband George, I must learn to “listen and help others.” I did not realize it until afterward, but Mrs. Sophie and Jacob simply needed someone else to talk to. I had been ignoring people expressing their issues to me since I was so worried about my own problems. I acted so selfishly that I had completely disregarded others who needed someone to listen to them. I resolved to no longer be selfish and to listen to others when they have problems. I vowed to become as considerate and thoughtful toward others as I possibly could. After all, you never know the impact you can have in another person’s life simply by listening to what they have to say.

After that vacation, I returned home and continued my routine of daily life: school, extracurricular activities, homework, sleep, repeat. After several weeks, I received a shockingly heartfelt email that made me break down into tears.

Dear Peter,

I very much enjoyed meeting you at the beach last month. Talking to you has made me feel so much better about myself. Before I spoke to you, I felt that I had no one to turn and talk to. I just wanted to let you know that the day I met you, I felt so empty and alone, that I was considering ending it all by jumping of the balcony of the thirty-second floor of the resort. I thought I was a nobody and that no one cared about me. When I met you, that all changed. I was thinking of ending it, but I realized someone actually does care about me. Thank you for caring.

Sincerely, Jacob Hall

The Only Thing

Daklan Randolph '16

The only thing in our history that remains unstoppable crawls when watched
and soars when forgotten. In my youth I abhorred you. When the yellow
street lights signaled us inside from rough sport and carousing
I loathed you. When digital neon displays showed 9:30, and
mother turned off my television, I despised you. Then at
six when you announced the sun's arrival,
I reviled you, but as a man I needed
you. When those bills formed
a mountain next to
my wife's
engagement
ring I
hoped for more of
you. Stuck in the rush hour
chaos of the interstate, rushing to
see the birth of my baby girl, I begged for
you. In hospice, holding my mother's cold hands, I
prayed for you. In my old age I marvelled at you. When I saw
how fast my little boy became a man, I admired you. When my
bubba called me paw-paw, I appreciated you. Looking back on all my life,
pondering the lessons that you taught, and precious memories kept, I thank you.

Android City

Sam Lucio '16

It was late evening on a Saturday in the city. The sky was overcast, and

puddles of water still topped the streets from a rainfall the previous night. A crisp breeze scattered wet leaves around the sidewalks. Skyscrapers soared above the clouds, dwarfing the city's inhabitants. Flying cars zoomed over pedestrians' heads, and more car lanes appeared in the sky miles away. Even though the sky was dark, neon signs illuminated everything. Everyone walked the streets and kept to themselves except for two men returning home from their work as security guards at the Company. They wore white and black jumpsuits with security badges still dangling from their chests. They also struggled to prevent the wind from throwing the white hats off their heads. As they walked, the two men noticed an advertisement scrolling on one of the neon signs:

*New Model Available Now! The NS-300.
Manufactured By The Company. The World's
Leading Android Provider!*

"Looks like they're at it again," one of the men said.

"Seems like it."

"They get more lifelike every day."

"It's not right."

They continued to walk down the street until they came upon a mass of people eagerly

gaping into the storefronts through the

windows, and even more inside shopping in willful ignorance of the bad weather.

Many were purchasing robots from window displays. Water trickled down the windows, and the street lights, along with the neon signs, shone off the water. *Buy now*, the windows said. Several versions of the robots stood inside, looking obedient yet observant. Shoppers eyed the robots, deciding whether to buy one or not, a sight that bothered the first man. Inside the windows, the robots looked like average humans. If someone swapped one of the robots with a real human, probably no one would notice or care. The second man could tell what his colleague was thinking, and it aggravated him. The two men continued on, unnoticed within the crowd.

"Those stupid machines bring nothing but trouble to this city," the second man said.

"They might cause political problems, but they help humans."

"One of these days, one of 'em will escape and try to live like one of us."

"What do you mean?"

The two men turned a corner onto another street. There, they awaited for their ride home

at an airbus station. The terminal, which covered an entire block, was almost filled to capacity. Benches lined the back edges and were completely filled by people calmly

waiting. Others stood shoulder to shoulder. Soon, a magnificent white bus with blue horizontal stripes glided over to the mass of people. The doors slid open with an irritating hiss, and everyone crowded in, trying to find a seat. The two men found seats near the back of the bus. As they sat down, a line of robots marched in. The designated android area was at the back of the bus in a small room with a pane of glass dividing them from the human passengers. The robots had to stand the entire ride. All the human passengers chatted among themselves, collectively creating a deafening noise. The androids, however, stood silent and stared blankly. They never broke their perfectly straight line. The first man stared at them, studying their behavior. The second man noticed this.

“See that one there?” the second man asked, pointing to one of the robots in the back of the bus.

“Yeah. What about him?”

“Don’t call it him. It isn’t a human.”

“Your point?”

“My point is that they aren’t *real*. We humans created them. We tell them what to do and

how to do it. You tell them do this, they do it. You tell them do that, they do it. You tell them grab this, they grab it. You tell them you like this prepared a certain way, and they bring it to you on a silver platter. I don’t understand why some people think they deserve to be treated like you and me. Just because you can’t tell the difference between them and humans doesn’t mean

they deserve rights.”

“Maybe they become human when you can’t tell the difference anymore.”

The doors slid open with a hiss. All the passengers swarmed out and into the rain, which had started up again. The two men never liked this bus stop because of the neighborhood where it was located in. Nevertheless, they continued to walk back home to their apartments. The rain did not stop people from strolling about. The first man noticed that the majority of people had androids carry their umbrellas for them. Some even forced the robots to haul shopping bags. Further down the street, as the two men approached, a large crowd gathered to protest against androids. The protesters held numerous signs, and each sign insulted androids in numerous ways.

Androids aren’t humans! One sign read.

Go back to the junkyard! Another stated.

We are your gods!

The number of signs and propaganda was too much for the first man to handle.

Everywhere he looked, people were spewing hate towards something that never harmed them. The roar of the crowd continued to grow louder. More people joined in the protest. As the two men walked by, an unsuspecting android walked passed the protesters. A heavy set man wearing a grey beanie, brown hoodie, and baggy navy blue track pants decided to confront the android. He grabbed the robot by the collar, shook it violently, and screamed into the face of the machine. The first man looked away as the rest of the

crowd circled the android, intensifying the confrontation. The first man tried to block the sound of screaming out of his ears.

“These protests have been getting pretty heated lately,” the second man said, observing the crowd.

“Protest? Looks more like a riot to me.”

“They have every right to protest.”

“Not if they’re destroying the robots.”

“Do you want the androids coming into harm’s way?”

“No.”

“The people that are pushing for robot civil rights are only making matters worse.

Remember back when everyone agreed that androids were a tool, and no one saw them as sentient?”

“Yeah.”

“Those were peaceful times. The sooner we all come to a consensus that androids shouldn’t be treated like humans, the sooner everyone will have peace of mind.”

“You’re probably right.”

“You see?”

“I just don’t want this city to be split into two forever.”

“Just because it walks and talks like us, doesn’t mean it’s one of us. Remember that.”

They arrived at the first man’s apartment. The two men split up, and the

second man continued walking to his own apartment. The first man approached the front door and studied its wooden design. He walked into the front room, where he always kept a single lamp turned on by the window. Sometimes he liked to sit

at the window, and stare at the world from inside. Droplets of rain created mesmerizing patterns as they slowly slid down the glass. The apartments across the street were empty. Darkness engulfed his entire street. His lone lamp created some sort of beacon, inviting travelers. The first man’s thoughts were suddenly interrupted by a man running down the street. He couldn’t tell what the man was running from. The man stopped in the middle of the street in front of the first man’s apartment, and the two men met eyes. At that moment, the first man could see the fear and helplessness within the other man’s face. His expression amounted to a cry for help. An armored car drove up to the man in the street, and soldiers piled out from the back. In a flash of lightning, the first man read the bold, white letters on the side of the armored car. ARB, the Android Rehabilitation Bureau. The first man knew what came next. The man in the street gave one last look of desperation. The first man did nothing. He hung his hat on the coat rack, turned the lamp off, closed the blinds, and went to bed.

Anchor

Nolan Bourgeois '20

Anchor

The

calm

during a story. The

strength

that

won't

let one

down.

Fastened

with

unwavering

loyalty.

faith.

strength.

anchored with depth and

Jacky, Jacky, Scaredy Caty

Jack Neelis '16

This story earned a regional Silver Key Award from the 2016 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

Everyone at school knew about the haunted statue of the Virgin Mary on the second floor. According to legend, the statue would creep down from its pedestal and search the hallways at night, roaming the school in search of children left by their parents. Many had heard of the camp counselor who ventured to the second floor on a dare became another nameless legend of the school, and what a horrid way to disappear that is: to leave only a legacy of yourself without so much as a name. So naturally, when I heard the chanting, I felt both fear and bravado churn inside my eleven yearold body. Jacky Jacky, scaredy caty. What an unoriginal but effective chant. I stood before a group of my classmates, utterly terrified and completely speechless. As a swirl of thoughts whizzed through my head in that odd way thoughts fly when one faces a decision without a feasible right choice, I accepted their challenge with a faltering resolution. This ghost is not real. No way is it real. But what if... What if the ghost is real and I survive the night? I would be a legend at this school.

My classmates Chase and Derrick decided to join me in this dare, so, within a single recess period, we devised our

plans to sneak into the school that night. We needed to prepare by snatching Mr. George the janitor's keys from the main office, so Chase and Derrick stood watch as I silently sneaked into the back door of the office and crept past the door to the vice principal's office. I noticed the keys hauntingly dangling from a hook next to the various bulletin boards posted on the walls. Will these keys unlock a future of being another nameless legend? Or will they open the way for Jack, the boy who survived the ghost? My eleven-year-old hands shook, and my mind swirled as I reached up for those snickering keys. My heart raced almost as fast as my feet as I dashed through the office to the outside where I could forget the fate in which I had found myself neck-deep, at least until that night. I hid the keys under a bush outside the main building so that I had no ties to the keys if someone noticed their disappearance.

Some part of me wished someone would notice, but another part of me knew that, even if someone did, I would never truly disqualify myself from this dare. I knew that, back then, the faculty would normally leave at least one door to the school unlocked at night, so, realistically, even if the adults found the keys, the dare would never disappear. My class would never let me live this down. I had to sneak in, with or without those keys. Later that night Chase,

Derrick, and I met in the school parking lot. Our scheme had finally been set in motion.

“I’ll go get the keys,” I greeted them.

“We’ll hide the bikes,” Chase spoke with a relaxed voice. He grabbed my bike and disappeared behind the old church building with Derrick.

After reaching the bush, I swallowed my fear and snatched up the keys that determined my fate. I was going to live through the night, and the kids on the playground would see I was no scaredy cat. As I walked back to greet Chase and Derrick, I couldn’t help but feel something was awry. Why had the janitor not noticed the missing keys? Surely he would have needed them at some point after recess

during the afternoon. I pushed the thought in the back of my mind as I remembered I had far more important business at hand. I trudged up to the back door where Chase and Derrick waited eagerly. They both radiated bravery and eagerness, and, in that moment, I wished I could find the same eagerness to meet a ghost. But I couldn’t let them see me trembling when I unlocked the door. I took a deep breath and started trying keys on the door to find the right one, my hands trembling. *Clunk.* The door handle suddenly gave way. Chase and Derrick zipped past me to the stairwell as I started an unconfident stride to catch up to them. However, once we reached the stairs, Chase and Derrick began to slow. They must be



waiting for me... Or maybe they're scared as well? My mind, finding much more keen interest and odd solace in questions of how we could escape if the ghost found us, swirled too quickly to answer the question at the time. We plodded up to the second floor.

The hallway stretched into a black hole. We stood on one side, too scared to leave the comfort of a single, fluorescent light over the door to the school library. The light bathed a small portion of the hallway in an ominous, buzzing glow. We could see only the first few doors of the hall: classrooms, bathrooms, closets, and a stairwell. Before us, a void of fear tugged at our curiosity and pushed away our feet. What was a hallway full of children coloring in books and learning to read that morning become a dark image of terror by the night. We knew a ghoul of the night sat, waiting to pounce on anyone foolish enough to venture too close, just within the shadows of this vaguely familiar hallway. I thought of the statue sitting there on its pedestal, a dead plant on either side and the unused bathrooms next to it. We are helpless.

Chase spoke first: "So . . . Uh . . . What should we do now?" his voice breaking a little.

"W-where's the ghost?" Derrick croaked.

"I don't think we should go down there," I added, speaking a little too quickly.

"Yeah," they both chimed, sounding relieved.

"So what do we do now?"

"Well, we've come this far. We can't leave

without doing something," Derrick added with a regained courage, drawing a few coins from his pocket. "Maybe we should try this."

"N--" was all I managed to let out before Derrick flung his arm back like a bowler and sent the first quarter hurtling down the hall, its friendly metallic ring slowly disappearing into the void. The ring vanished completely, leaving only the faint buzz of the fluorescent lights and the rapid pounding of my heart. I held my breath as I counted. One. Two. *Clank*. The sound seemed to shake the whole building. We froze. That's it, we've angered it. I stared down the hallway, waiting for the sinister stone form to appear from the shadows. Instead, I heard something, a low *whish-whish-whish* sound. A sound I would normally disregard as the pipes or the building drew closer with every second.

"Footsteps," Derrick whimpered. The word pierced me like an arrow, and I sat frozen in fear. Chase bolted and Derrick followed almost immediately afterwards. But I remained there, hypnotized by the *whish-whish-whish* and the heavy footsteps. I shouldn't have taken this dumb dare. I don't want fame anymore. I just want to go home. As my fate neared, my hands shook.

A gentle rattle that must have been the keys, still in my hands, began. As the sound grew ever closer, the shadows knitted a familiar silhouette. My mind froze for a second as Mr. George, the school janitor, shuffled through the shadows.

"Hey lil' boy, thanks for dat quarta. You

seen my keys ‘round here?” he spoke in the way that only a man of his age could, as if he had known you all seventy-something years of his life. His eyes fell to the jingling keys in my hands. “Oh well, thank ya, brotha.”

I extended my hand to him in an ecstasy of relief and regret. “I’m sorry I took them,

“Nah, don’ worry ‘bout it,” he said with a faint wink. “I been there too, brotha, now go home. Ya momma proly worried ‘bout ya.”

He turned and disappeared into the shadows. I stood there for a second, then turned towards the stairwell to go home. Mr. George’s faint wink and my regret stuck in my mind. The next day, Chase and Derrick asked me all about how I had escaped the clutches of such an evil fiend as the ghost. A part of me told me to devise a story of my valiant attempt to buy Chase and Derrick time to escape while planning my own daring escape, but another part of me remembered that wink from Mr. George.

“I left right after you guys,” I said. “I never even saw the ghost.”

The jokes of my cowardice disappeared into the constant stream of drama and agitation of the fifth grade, and it began the next morning. Although Chase and Derrick left with nothing but a story of ghost hunting, I found myself with something more valuable. I learned in that one night that what my peers think of me means nothing in the end. It meant nothing in the

face of what I had thought certain death looked like, so it should not matter in any other circumstance.

What if one day I found myself in an truly dire situation because of my self-conscious attitude? Mr. George knew the value in the lesson, and I would learn it just as well.



My Generation

Jack Neelis '16

I stare at the sunset,
memorizing each stroke
of the burning oranges
and golden yellows
that plume the sun's
ferocious mane.
I close my eyes
and still see crests
of rolling hills of clouds
and a sea-glass horizon,
and with each breath
I feel the rush
of the cold evening wind.
Then with a deep, fulfilling sigh
I click to the next page.



After the Departure

Ryan Mayer '16

I know that you are here but not in sight,
As if hidden by my deceiving eyes,
Following like shadows within the light.

The air presents a scent which then incites
As sense of your presence, again, to rise;
I know that you are here but not in sight.

And just as phantoms in the black of night,
You stalk me using darkness as your guise,
Following like shadows within the light.

At times your voice inside the wind alights
Within my ears. Does the wind whisper lies?
I know that you are here but not in sight.

The times I think I see you grow so trite;
I see you more in crowds than clouds in skies,
Following like shadows within the light.

What's right for you, my brother, is a plight
For me, as I'm now haunted by your goodbyes.
I know that you are here but not in sight,
Following like shadows within the light.

