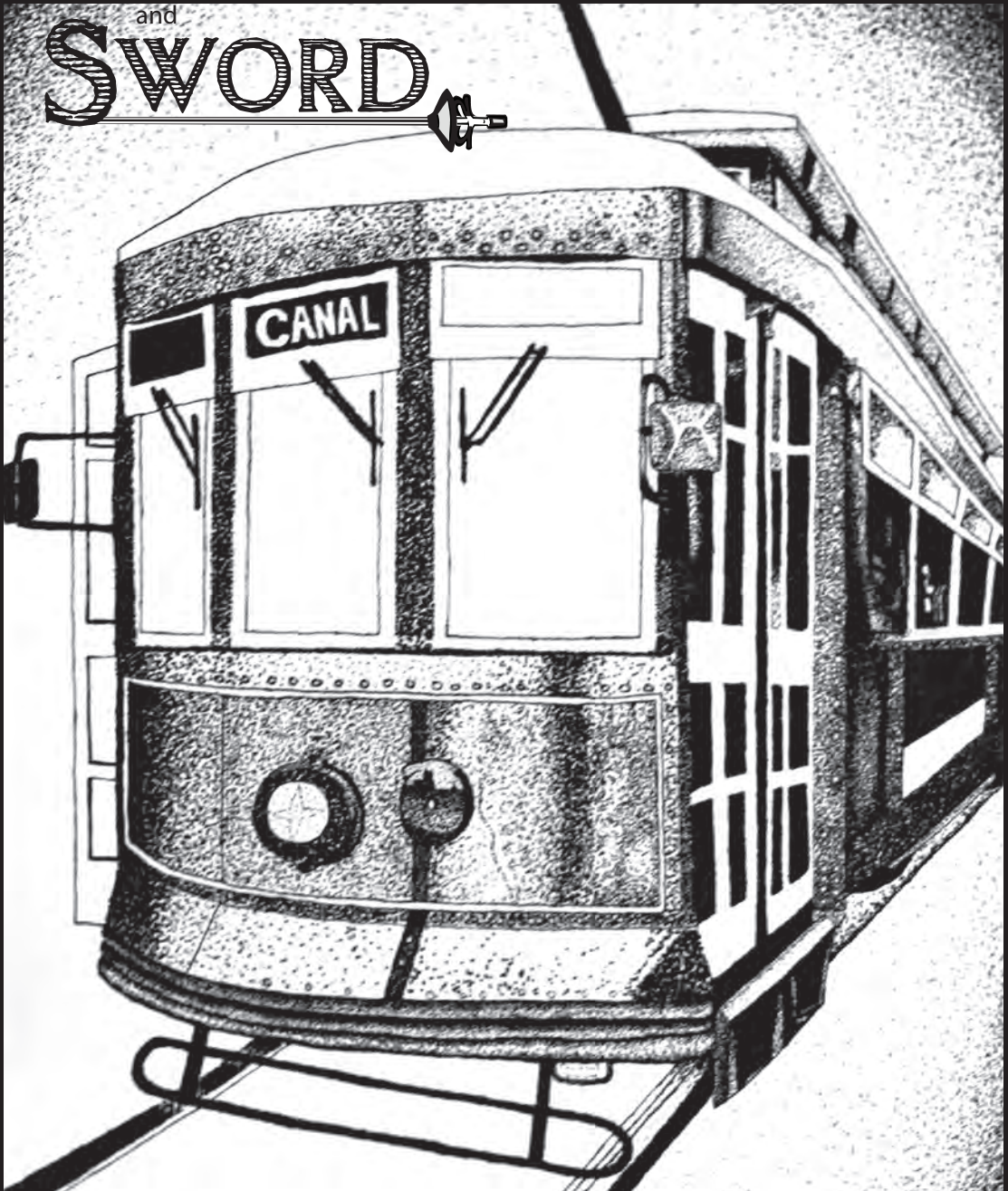


Pen 

and

SWORD 



2020 - 2021

A Brother Martin Publication



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The Monster of the Ocean

Jason Arena '21

Nearing 19,000 tons when submerged, her long, raven steel slithers above the navy Atlantic ocean as foamy waves slam into a brick wall. Ahead of the bow, playful bottlenose dolphins race against the 25 knot-fast war machine powered by explosive uranium atoms, like a volcano ready to erupt.

With each equivalent to eight Hiroshimas, she carries twenty-four Trident II missiles prepared to launch and rip apart anything in its path like a Category 5 hurricane. She lugs several emerald MK-48 Torpedoes that glide through the water with a cheetah's precision.

Men in camo-blue uniforms stand above in the ominous Darth Vader fairwater with two hammerhead shark diving planes on each side. Soon, the alarm rings signaling for a dive. Then, they will not glimpse the peachy sky again for months, other than through a cyclops eyeball as they operate a monster lurking in the ocean:

U.S.S. Louisiana, a part of the Ohio class, terrorizing the sea since 1990.



The Simulation

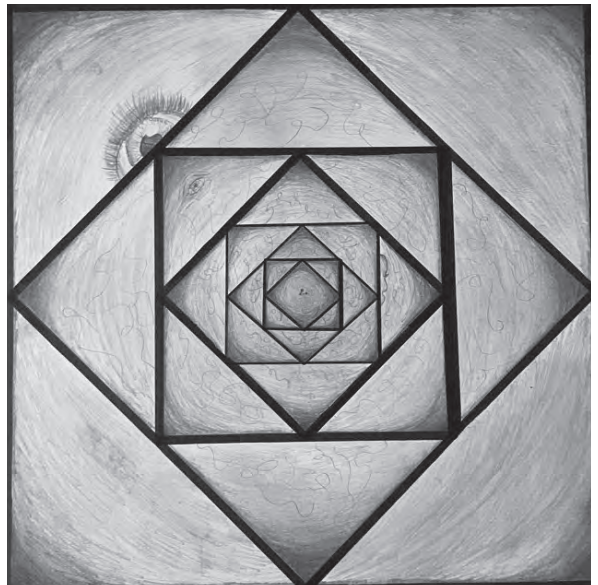
Addison Wilberg '22

Suddenly, water was all around me, my arms were flailing, and I had no sense of direction. I couldn't breathe, my heart raced, and I desperately tried to remember the events that led to this untimely predicament. As my brain racked through my memories, I stumbled upon the last thing I remember, eating warm mac and cheese with my family. It was a normal day, just like any other. I woke up, ate a not-so-healthy breakfast, went to school, struggled to stay awake, then took the bus home. That's when things took an unusual turn. I remember an intense headache and unnatural stomach pains. I pushed through and got my homework done, and that's when my mom called me down for dinner. We ate like usual, and I ignored the pain. After my fourth bite of macaroni, I felt my fingertips go numb and my vision blurred. I slumped over on the table, and as I was blacking out, I heard my dad say, "I think he's having a heart attack."

Well, that wasn't helpful. I'm still in this water tank, or what I assume is a water tank based on what I've kicked. I still

can't breathe and now I hear a piercing, periodic noise ringing throughout the water. That's when I felt a rush of water and suddenly I was on the floor of a monstrous, empty room with bright lights. A crew of people rushed towards me. I hear them laughing and asking me how it was. "How what was?" That's when the memories came flooding back. These weren't a crew of people these were my friends. One of them said, "You were in there for almost three minutes longer than any of us." Then the huge, bright, gymnasium-like lights shut off, and a large LED screen came on and read, "The Simulation Is Over. We Hope You Enjoyed Your Experience, User 623,428."

"Back to the real world," I whispered to myself.



The Redoubling

Marc Graffeo '22

It was late midday as I walked into the embassy suite. The secretary was almost robotic in her greeting, pointing a sharp finger at where I was supposed to find him in the directory. The elevator squealed up to the top level with a sound as though it was having convulsions. The metal door drifted open. A very dim and barren corridor lay before my eyes. There was a plain crimson carpet with a dark brown wallpaper that adorned the walls. Little lamps with halogen bulbs mounted the walls of the corridor. At the end of the corridor stood a tall, slender man. He was leaning against one of the walls of the corridor. He wore a black vest with a black tie. His hair was clean-cut; definitely military in make-up, he was. As I walked down the hall his head turned to my direction. He called out to me in something Korean, but on closer inspection of my own personal features he called out in an almost perfect English accent: "Are you here to see Mr. Hopley?"

I was. I took a few more steps and gave him a subtle nod which he picked up on rather quickly as he was opening the door to the suite within seconds of this. Soon an exchange of Korean bawling and shouting occurred in the suite. This was silenced with the introduction of an English voice. "Is he here?" The voice was soft but methodical in tone.

"Yes sir," the military man responded.

"Well, please let him in and take Chui out of here so that we can have some

space." He had a sort of rhythm to his voice which made him sound like a smooth saxophone that was well-tuned.

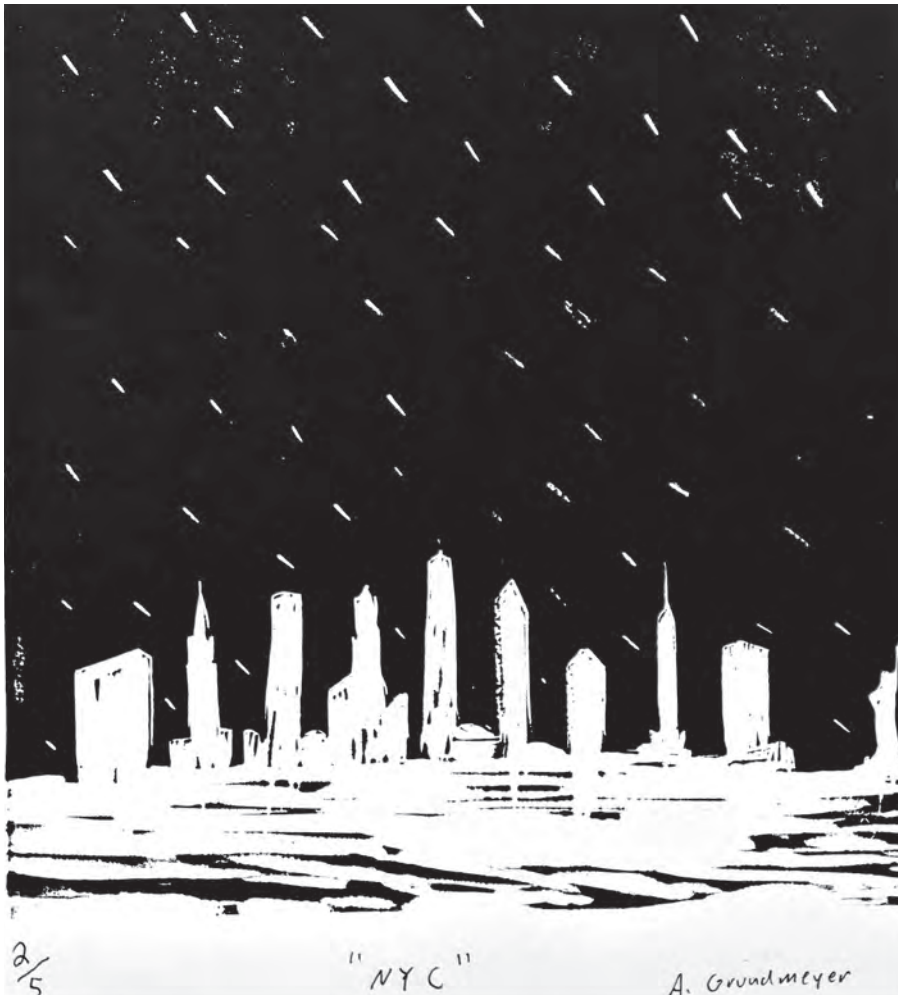
"Yes sir," the military man said as I heard the shuffling of feet. I turned the knob and opened the door.

As soon as I glanced into the door, what stood before me was absolutely indescribable. An office even the most arrogant and flamboyant of various dictators would not even dream of. Firstly, a huge Queen Ann desk sprawled before the wide and expansive opening room. Behind this, stood a huge mural of Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*. The frame was encrusted with gold, and the wallpaper emulated the same color of the crimson carpet in the corridor. The carpet on the floor was of a crisp cream color with flower accents. There were two other side rooms. One could assume that the one on the left was his bedroom and the one directly adjacent to that one would be the kitchen. Both, even with the doors closed to them, had a sense of enormity to them; as though those rooms were their own separate entities or worlds hidden inside of them.

He sat lounging in his fairly small leather chair. He was young and fit with a healthy glow about his skin that only could've been gained with hours spent in the sun. He wore a New York Islanders varsity jacket with a white polo underneath. Teamed with a pair of Adidas and some American Eagle

jeans, one could mistake him for one of those pedestrians found at Central Park watching the pick-up games. His face bore a sort of contradiction. He had sharp, defined cheekbones with a soft and craggy jaw. His lips were shallow, and his fair hair wore with a stimulating shine to it. He, first, glanced at me with his steely blue eyes and reassured me, with the glance, that he was of another tier to me. His smile didn't hold back

either. It contained a story within: one of comfort and warmth to which, it seemed to me at least, no other human I had ever met had the near genetics to replicate in any meaningful way. I watched as his lips made the first movement with the extension of his jaw. "Ah Mr. Cartersby! What a pleasure it is to see you!" He motioned toward one of the small leather chairs in front of me. He didn't move his posture as he said this. One could



only imagine that he had lost the habit of greeting guests, not because he was arrogant, but because the guests already felt welcome whenever he was around. I sat down in the soft chair. He spoke, this time, with an air of professionalism in his voice: "I believe you are here to tell me of a lucrative business offering that you envisage me partaking in. Coffee, tea or anything?"

I declined the offer and began to pull out the file. He was ready for it when it came; the code. "Yes, Mr. Hopley. And I think that the Wall Street eagle will finally swoop down this time," I said with a degree of loudness in my voice. "Hard to catch those birds this time of year." Bingo. Shaw was right, the cable reached him and he was willing to talk.

"Before we proceed, could we get a little coffee?" I said as I pointed to all of the visible listening devices in the room. These North Korean's didn't even hide the things. He swiftly disabled all of them as though he had been through this routine before.

"So this business offer? What is it exactly?" He said in order to make the ploy seep in a bit. He knew the techniques, the protocols, the nomenclature. Army intelligence officers always do. So he played the game with me for a couple of solitary minutes. Finally, I broke in with the classic: "How's Ann?"

"She's fine," he responded. Of course, a reference to *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier,*

Spy got the message that I wanted to talk somewhere private and away from the unwanted press of North Korean intelligence.

He brought me out to the balcony as he fashioned a pair of Ray-Ban aviators, with the serial numbers scratched out, to his gleaming face. We walked out to the modest veranda where the fading Pyongyang sun could be seen in the distance, holding vigil over the afternoon. He glanced up at the sun and messed with his hair for a second. "How are things, Matthias?" he asked as though I had seen him only a week ago. In fact, it had been twelve years since I had ever seen him.

"Not bad, you hanging in there?" I asked subtly.

"Hanging? Sure I'm keeping up my end," he said casually. We sat in silence for a moment as the spring breeze kicked up his hair.

I broke the silence first. "Do all defector's live so handsomely?"

He chuckled as I said this. He looked about for a moment with a smirk on his face. "Guess what they gave that State Department guy who said he would give them blueprints for the RHINO drone? Gave him a cottage in the North Korean countryside." At this point, that was old news but I didn't want to tell him what happened to him after he moved into that cottage. He might've known him and I wasn't willing to risk a cry session. "Why are you here?" he said very bluntly.

"Oh just odds and ends."

He scoffed when I said this. "Odds and ends? You are here to kill me aren't you? Tie up some loose ends for Jimmy Edenborn down at DIA. *That's* why you are here." He kept his seemingly perpetual smirk as he said this.

"No, no I wouldn't kill you, Paul. I was

your classmate, how could I?"

Paul looked up at me with a sort of agitated look, now. "I could kill you, Matthias." I knew he could, but at the same time he couldn't. I was too much to him, and he knew that.

"Just like you killed General Foster, Major Knox, Senator Langley, and should I keep going down the list?"

The smirk returned. "Piece of cake, and Edenborn was none the wiser when I left on that plane for Taiwan." He cackled at the end of his prideful confession. "I had you all fooled: Edenborn, Rubin, Desmond, the whole eighth floor was none the wiser. Even the old man Lipley didn't have a clue what a charter flight to Taipei was doing other than some

normal errands." He kept chuckling in a blank way. "And you know," he said with an accent of excitement, almost ecstasy, "My crowning achievement was you, Mattihas. I had you. You were dead in the water. You were once unstumpable, but I got you. You were my apex and I had finally done it."

He patted me on the shoulder with this exclamation. I looked at him and saw his warm eyes turn into a sort of fire. His knees tensed up, and a visible squint could be seen behind his shades. I let him linger in his ecstasy, an ecstasy that admittedly lasted for twelve years and had sustained him. This energy that animated him through all of his defection, I knew I had to extinguish. I finally let him collapse.

"What if I told you I knew, Paul?"

He glared at me with a sort of death stare he was accustomed to giving when he was still on the sixth floor. So familiar, but yet there was nothing to him. He was cardboard, an empty and solitary figure riding out his dreams on some Marxist-Leninist currency. "I knew actually once you entered in that file on Operation Nashville. Defector's leave the spare keys around, don't they?" The Pyongyang sun was still there looking down upon Paul. Sadly, it glared into Paul. He looked at it and something deep died inside of Paul.

"That's how I knew," I



concluded as Paul wiped the soft water emanating from his eyes. He had taken off his shades as dusk approached. I say he took them off; he smashed them on the ground once I told him that Edenborn knew about the defection before the plane even took off.

Paul looked down in a deep despair. A whimper emerged from his soft lips. "Idiot, such an idiot." I saw this figure, this master of destiny, die within an enigma of himself. I let him simmer there for a minute as I stared off into the city lights. I contemplated Paul. I was him in many ways, and Paul also knew this. I was the reason Paul could never master his destiny because he could not master himself. I didn't want to cut in, but I had to.

"Now it's time for you to do some work for me."

Paul glared at me with a pale face. His stimulating glow had faded and a grey, flat persona approached me with a sort of frankness. "Tie up my own loose ends?"

"No," I responded. "I want you to come back, Paul. Not to the sixth floor. You can stay here, finish what was started. But I want you to meet my good friend." I produced a small recorder with encryption key and one-time pad. "Paul, there's always a way to work out your own salvation."

Paul nodded and glanced off into the



city lights. "I...I guess that's the end of it, isn't it?" he said as a sort of obituary to his defection. "Yes, yes it is, Paul."

I walked downstairs. The elevator advertised a little too much for me. As I went to my car, I heard an unmistakable sound. The thud of a body falling to the ground. I then heard a bunch of commotion in the street below with screams and yelling. A police officer tried to court the hollers and commotion from the crowd, but it was futile. I glanced up to a window adjacent to the hotel. There, through the window, sat a young military man with a black vest and tie. He held below him a sniper rifle. He sat there contemplating the dead body of Paul.

The Game

Vide Reyes '21

The day was Saturday October 10, 2020. I woke up at 9:30 a.m. and I said to myself, "We're gonna win this game against Jesuit today." I went to the kitchen to look for some cereal, but there was no milk. I lumbered back upstairs to lie down until my mom woke up and asked me what I wanted from McDonald's.

"The big breakfast," I replied. As the day progressed I started gathering my clothes together for the game while listening to my Soundcloud playlist. My mom walked in to use my mirror, and I said to her, "Today doesn't even feel like a gameday, probably because we don't have school and we play at 7." Oddly, I would feel a similar way several hours later.

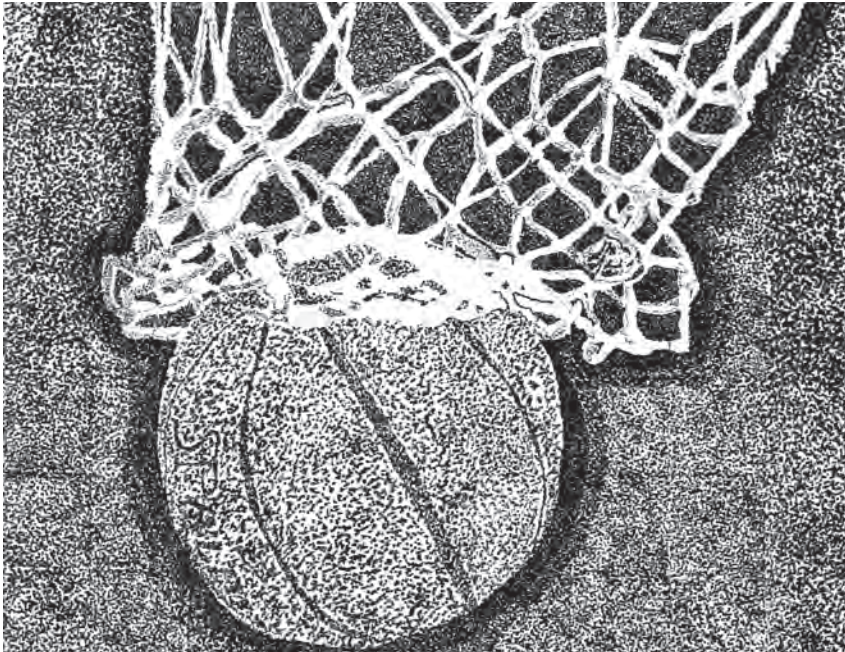
At 1:30, we left to go to school, but first I got a medium chocolate hulk from Smoothie King. When I arrived at school, I greeted my friends with a "wassup" or a "wazzam." As we entered the chapel for our prayer service, I noticed that a lot of people weren't wearing what they knew they should be wearing. I saw my teammates with hoodies, black shorts, and Adidas track pants, and I thought to myself, "Coach Bonis gon' be mad that we're not dressed the same. Plus, it's not cold at all."

Eight minutes passed us waiting for the priest and the coaches to arrive, and Coach Bonis walked in and told everybody with a hoodie to take it off. We had our prayer service and meditation with Dr. Melito, and once that was

finished, Coach Bonis lectured us about how we should be dressed. Then he talked about how diverse of a team and school we are, but he pointed out how little we know about each other. He said to us, "As teammates, you are brothers. How can you trust each other if you know so little about your brothers?"

Around an hour later, we boarded the bus to travel to Hoss Memtsas Stadium on the West Bank. The lights were glistening off the bottoms of my silver cleats. I was calm and felt prepared for the game. The song "All of the Lights" by Kanye West was playing in my head. After the national anthem, the rest of the kickoff unit and I got ready for the opening kick. With a mighty burst of speed, I ran as fast as I could, and I saw the returner muff the ball at the seven yard line, but he picked it up, gaining an additional 13 yards. For the first drive, nothing came my way, and they scored on us. Thankfully, the offense came out right away to score on their drive to even it up.

We trotted back on the field, and the second play in, the quarterback broke two tackles and gained about 12 yards. The next play, they threw the ball to their number one wide receiver, and Emilio missed a tackle, and then I missed a tackle. At this point, I was furious at myself because I knew I could've tackled him. As the game went on, I was driving my coaches insane and letting my teammates down.



I kept making the same mistakes, and I wasn't learning from them. The entire first half, I just did not play how I should have and did not do what I was supposed to. My eyes weren't in the right place, so I wasn't reading what was going on. At halftime, we jogged into the locker room, and Coach Paladino was infuriated with me and the defensive backs, but mostly me. He walked over to me and yelled, but he also constructively criticized all of us. We knew we weren't playing with our heads in the game, and Coach called us out. I took his words to heart and faced the rest of the game like a soldier. As the third quarter went on, it was evident that those wise words were working, and now my head was in the game. Although I was playing better, football is a team sport, and everyone needs to contribute. Jesuit was still easily moving down the field on us and scoring. Even though I trusted

that my teammates would make the right reads, it was obvious that not everyone was buying in. With Jaylon Spears' God-given talent and the other contributors on the offensive side, we were able to hold out with only around 38 seconds left in the fourth quarter.

When the clock ticked down to zero, we had barely won the game against Jesuit. That said a lot about our defense. It was time for us to grow up and wear that name on our jerseys with pride. What Coach Bonis said at the chapel became evident that night. We had to find it within ourselves as a unit to dominate the opponents. Most importantly, we had to trust our brothers to do their jobs, and vice versa. It's the little things like lining up right that we needed to fix, and also to execute the game plan properly, and that amounted to trusting in each other or working together as a team.

The Ominous Forest

Tyronne Burrell '22

I just woke up in this dark forest while being bewildered about how I ended up here in the first place. After waking up, I heard a noise that is tough to describe. It was a mixture of a growl and a scream. It came from this utterly dark area, and it was behind me. Darkness stretched in both directions, and I couldn't see what inhabited the area.

Compared to the dark perimeter behind me, there was a fog that remained barely visible ahead of me, which was better than what was behind me. The Darkness started to move closer and closer to me. I had to run to escape the sinister creature or being that inhabited that thing. As I started to run, the fog grew thicker and thicker to the point where my visibility was hindered. I reasoned that if I stopped I would be able to see where I was going.

The Darkness was moving faster, hence, moving faster was the only way. Faster and faster and faster I ran the fog got thicker while the Darkness moved quicker. The howls, the screams, and the growls grew louder as I tried to escape the inescapable. The vivid green color that the trees exhibited was no longer visible but rather was a grey haze as a product of the fogginess. A stream was up ahead. I pondered if the stream could be used to escape the fog or will my inability to see the stream be my downfall to the Darkness. My cold, moist, and bare feet felt the ground change from dirt to rocks. I began to hear a

stream. I moved as fast as I could across the stream and ran past it. I kept going and going, and the fog got denser and denser as before.

The Darkness seemed to disappear behind me after turning around. I had been running for so long that I hadn't noticed where it went. I ran back, acknowledging that my curiosity was to be my downfall. I found the Darkness that was hunting me like an ominous predator looked to be hindered by the stream itself. You can see the arms, legs, paws, and claws sticking from the field of darkness. It seems that they are trying to escape the Darkness themselves but were consumed by the Darkness and the stream. As their limbs were protruding the new wall of darkness, I saw faces emerge. The faces were tricky to distinguish. They were just as black as the Darkness because they did not know how they got there or how they will get out. They were simply runners from the Darkness like as I was, a runner. That is all I know of myself that I am just a simple runner who doesn't know how they got there or how they will find safe haven. The fog began to clear, and I saw a cabin just on top of a hill that towered the trees of the forest. I make my way up to the cabin. I ventured up the hill to know who inhabits the cabin, so I knock on the door of the cabin and find that it is a man that is quite old but is familiar to me.

"Charles, I haven't seen you in thirty years!", said the old man. "You look the

same as the day we were separated."

I responded with confusion and an inquiry, "Separated? What do you mean separated?" The elderly man looked at me with a grin on his face. He seemed euphoric about the whole situation.

"You really don't know what took place, do you?" the old man also stated, "We were hunting in woods similar to this, but when we went to sleep, I woke up in this forest away from camp. A black field of darkness was chasing me from behind me moving faster and faster until I crossed the stream. The fog affects your memory, Charles. You will remember everything once its effects clear your head." We heard a scream from the distance where the Darkness originated. "Another one has woken in this forest," said the old man.

"Who are you?" I asked. "I am Tom, your brother." Once my brother said that, it all

came to me: the hunting trip, the camp, my previous life, the bear attack.

"Tom, we have to find a way out of here," I said.

"There is no way out of here. I think this is the afterlife, Charles. The afterlife!" Tom said this in a more sinister, deep voice as he turned into black smoke and disappeared. I don't think that was my brother, but rather a being from the afterlife. The Darkness rapidly moved around me until everything was pitch black.

I just woke up here out of nowhere in this dark forest. I heard a noise coming from behind me. It was a growl that sounded menacing. It was this darkness that stretched in both directions, and I couldn't see what inhabited the complete darkness. It started moving faster toward me, and I began to run.



The Stars of Night

Preston Powell '24

During the night, so brisk yet so dry,
the old seaman waits for the stars to bring light,
glittering and shimmering, the stars in the sky
giving form and life to constellations across the night,

the Ursa Minor, its North Star so bright,
and the great Hercules
to its right
along with the furious Aries,
his boar, so full of might.

The ancient stars, showing true direction,
the compass of the sky,
but with more perfection
than any map or eye.

The sky is a canvas, so big and bold,
filled with pictures of their presence
from times long ago,
the ancient gods resting in the heavens
looking down at us, far below.

As dawn begins anew, the greatest
star will ascend,
and the rest will cease to shine,
waiting for day's end
so that once more the night can rise
and they can shine once again.



Unity of Youth

Peter Baier '21

"Can I just take the picture?" John mutters.

"Shut up," Emily retorts, "there's a sharp pebble jabbing into my back."

"Move it. Let's just finish this stupid project. I got practice in thirty minutes."

As Emily attempts to contain her frustration, she thinks back to a week ago when her teacher introduced the assignment. Initially, Emily felt excited because she could finally exercise her brain's creativity, a scarce occurrence in the first four months of her junior year. However, her anticipation for the assignment soon vanished as she heard the teacher had paired John and her together. It's not that she hates John. John personally has never done anything to her. He has never even talked to her. Just the thought of John, though, made Emily's teeth clench, her hands turn to fists, and any sunny day turn gray. If anyone asks her why she hates him, though, she doesn't have a good reason. She only knows something isn't right with him.

Emily will admit John is attractive-his 6'2" stature, muscular build, and silky blonde hair made most girls go crazy for him. His outfit complements his looks- he usually wore white vans with jeans, a long sleeve flannel, and sports a MAGA hat, an accessory half the white boys at her school tote. Just like her opinion on John, Emily despises all those boys, though she rarely interacted with any of them.



She really doesn't interact with a lot of people in the first place. She has a small group of close friends with whom she is content. Frankly, she can't have many friends because she is just too busy. Emily is a good student. In the top ten percent of her class, possessing an ACT score of 31, being president of the book club, and being co-captain of the debate team, Emily has always been driven to succeed.

However, right now, she isn't doing well in Civics. She received a C- on her last test because she was so busy all week preparing for a debate competition that she didn't adequately study for the test. She knows it will be difficult to ace the project with John as her partner, but she needs to try to be friendly with him if she



wants to raise her grade in the class and maintain her near perfect GPA.

Emily glares at John. "So what if he has practice? I have things to do too," Emily thinks to herself. She is already in a bad mood from an argument she had with her friend earlier that day. She can't help but snap back, "Can you just be nice for two seconds? I know it's hard for you and your Trump supporting friends with your big egos but c'mon."

John says, "At least I don't support a socialist who wants to kill babies and get rid of guns."

"You're just mad Biden won, and Trump's done. Oh wait, or was the election rigged and Trump's illegally not turning over important presidential information to Biden?"

"We'll see what happens when the

ballots get recounted *correctly* this time."

"I can't deal with people like you. You're so ignorant."

Emily knows she was been right about John. "How can someone be so stupid?" she thinks to herself. I can't do the project with him. I'll just do everything after we take the picture on my own. He probably won't help that much anyways.

"Hold on, do you hear that?" John asks, interrupting Emily's impassioned thoughts.

"Hear what?" Emily replies back, annoyed he interrupted her ill-natured plans. "I can't hear anything with those dogs barking so loud," she complains after John doesn't respond.

The dogs stop barking, and a distant but clear cry for help is heard by both of them.

"Hey! Someone help! My baby is choking," a woman screams from her car.

Emily and John exchange a tense glance, and then run over to help.

John asks, "So what's happening?"

Emily raises her voice in annoyance, "She just said her baby can't breathe. She's choking. Do something."

"What do I do?"

John thinks. He tries to remember back to freshman year health class where it was mandatory to learn the Heimlich maneuver. John scolds himself under his breath for not paying more attention. He knows the maneuver is different for a baby than an adult because of the baby's weight. He vaguely recalls something about the teacher saying turn the baby over and apply force while she's on her back. In one motion, he takes the baby from the weeping mother, and positions her so she lay over his forearm, her head facing away from his body. He gives the baby four quick pushes to the back with the heel of his hand. Nothing. He needs more force. He repeats the action, but this time he strikes her back with significantly more force. A small, yellow toy duck flies from the baby's mouth. Everyone freezes and waits for the baby's lungs to fill with air. Two seconds later, the baby takes a big gulp of air. In minutes, her face returns to its normal color, and her breathing steadies.

During this time, Emily consoles the mother. Though the baby was breathing, the mother's cries were still heard and tears were still flowing. Emily hugs her and retells a similar story that happened to her little brother when he was a baby, except they had to rush him to

the hospital. With Emily's story and her comforting words, the woman soon realizes it could have been worse, and her tears are wiped away with nearby tissues. She profusely thanks the two strangers for helping her, and stated how lucky she is because she usually never sees people in this secluded part of the park. The two teens receive the praise modestly and just say they were glad to help. They wish her well and start walking back toward where their project was set up as the woman straps her baby into the car seat. They can both hear her tell the baby, "With kids like that, your generation is gonna be in good hands".

"Well, I guess I'm gonna miss practice," John says to himself as they walk back.

Emily overhears and says, "Go to practice after we take the picture, I can just finish it by myself anyways," remembering what she told herself earlier.

Nah, it's cool. We aren't doing a whole lot today cause we just had a game yesterday."

"Oh ok. How'd it go?"

"We won 28-21. I actually caught the touchdown pass to put us in the lead at the end of the game."

"That's cool, congrats. All my friends went. I should've gone but I have another big debate competition this weekend so I had to prepare for that."

"Oh yeah, my friend Alex is on the team, and he said you were amazing. He said you'd be a great lawyer when you grow up."

Haha thanks, but I probably want to do something more creative."

"Like what?"

"I don't know. Maybe a writer or something."

"That's cool, I think I want to do something with cleaning up the environment. Our world is gonna be so messed up for future generations if nothing changes soon."

"Yeah, I know. It's kinda scary."

"It's really scary. Oh, and sorry for being mean to you earlier and starting a whole political debate."

"It's alright. I shouldn't have said you weren't nice in the first place. After all, you did just save a baby's life so you can't be that bad".

Hahah, yeah. You comforted the mom pretty good though. I could save a baby, but I couldn't have done that. When a female cries, I never know what to do."

As they arrive back to where the camera was set up, Emily goes back to lie down as she had before. She lies perpendicular to the camera, her body positioned straight up as her eyes gaze towards the sky. Her legs are crunched up and her hands lay on her stomach. Her black jeans, black and white flannel, black shoes, and black earrings contrasts the yellow evening background. John squats down, steadying the camera and adjusting its settings to perfectly capture the sunset in the background.

Emily turns her head to look at John and blurts out, "You know I've hated you since freshman year?".

Caught off guard, John can only manage to stutter, "Why?"

"I get a bad vibe from you and

all your friends."

"Why? Just because we support Trump doesn't mean we're terrible people."

"Yeah, I just can't get over that, though."

"Well, you gotta if we want a good grade on this project, huh?"

"Is he really threatening to sabotage my grade?" she asks herself. Anger quickly rises in her as she thinks this is exactly why she hates people like this. She pauses. Wasn't she just about to do the same thing? She concedes she's being hypocritical. "Nothing is gonna get done if we don't work together," she admits to herself.

"You're right. Let's just finish this part right now and we can work on the rest at school tomorrow."

"Okay. You may run into some of my friends." He winks. "Are you sure you can handle that?"

"I'll manage," Emily replies with a smile. Maybe John isn't so bad after all.



Haikus

Andy Biehl '22



Frozen in midair
I strain, for the pleasure
of all these who gaze.

Lush, curly locks, pulled
into a bouquet atop
a tanned, blushing face

Steam pours forth from pools;
the leaked voice of the Arctic
whispers them softly.

Contact through the air
feel squinted through the owl eyes,
tightened in a smile.

Crisis averted:
cigarette in shaky hand,
coffee on the floor.

The squeeze of a heart
leaping into a strained neck:
salty beads emerge.



The L.C.

Marc Graffeo '22

The line was long, going outside of the check-up station. Outside, most people were attempting to brave the cold, huddling close together as their government-issued jackets were very thin.

"Next," a young soldier said as another family shuffled toward the large, black desk filled with military personnel. "State your name," the officer asked the father of the family.

"David Styler," he responded.

"Date of birth?" he asked.

"August 2, 2024."

"Okay, Mr. Styler, I need for you to head down that way," he said, pointing toward another long line.

"Will my family come with me?" David asked.

"No, they need to stay here," the officer answered as he shuffled the papers of the next family. David headed down toward the next slow-moving line. There were only men in this line, all of the husbands. One was on his phone. "No, it won't take long. I can't talk about that on the phone, I'll take a hit. Just wait til they check me. It won't take long." He was clearly very distressed. The hallway was filled with various military posters. One remarked: "Join. You'll never reach the limit."

The line was very slow, besides one point when it suddenly picked up quickly. At this time, a soldier with a bright orange folder was seen walking out from the beginning of the station. Finally, it was David's turn. "Next man," a young sergeant

said as another husband walked out of the station with a look of relief on his face. "Ok," the sergeant looked at his tablet. "Come with me, Mr. Styler."

They both walked through the black-tinted glass doors. The room had no windows and was brightly illuminated with eye-straining blue lights. The walls were all one, bright white, color. Three figures were sitting at large desks on three sides of the room. All were wearing black suits and wore black sunglasses. None were military personnel. "Mr. Styler," one of the shaded men spoke, "I have a couple of questions to ask you." In the middle of the room, there was a gray metal box that had a small screen at the top. "How much would you say, you have contributed to society this year?"

"I believe I have done all of my duties as





a responsible citizen and a father," David responded.

"David, we know you were talking poorly about your local representative."

David's jaw dropped. "It was closed off! I meant no harm!" David pleaded.

"Calm down, David. Now, how much carbon monoxide did you use this year?"

"10 metric tons," David responded as the man wrote something down on his sheet.

"Okay, and how many work points did your boss give you this year?"

"2,300 points."

The man wrote something else on the sheet as he spoke. "Alright," the man said as he rose from his desk, walked toward the box and inputted a combination into the keypad on the side. Suddenly, the screen turned on and three, bright flashes emitted from it. The suited man saw this

and took off his glasses. He inputted the key code again, this time squinting at the screen to make sure he saw what he saw. Yes, it was three bright flashes again. He walked over to another one of the men in suits, in the middle of the room, and whispered something into his ear.

"Um, Mr. Sty--Styler-- come over here, please."

"What's the problem?"

The man in the suit took off his glasses with a grim look on his face. "Mr. Styler, please take a seat." As David took his seat, the man at the desk looked through his drawers to find an orange folder. The other man who had interviewed David barged out of the room, heading straight to his superiors. He found them in an office outside the main hallway. "What is the issue?!" His superior yelled as he dashed past his secretary.

"John, when did this become intolerable?" He showed the boss the form he had filled out while interviewing David.

"Oh," the boss sighed, "Yes, that's a new regulation from the state. I can't do anything about it."

"Come on, John, can't we just grandfather the guy in? I mean he passes most of it!"

"No Chris, I can't do anything. We all took that oath, to the LC."

Back in the room, David opened the folder and immediately knew what was going on. He started yelling. "What is this?! You mean I--, no I passed the standard! I passed the standard!" He threw the folder in the man's face.

"David, I understand how you feel. Just ust calm do--"

"No, you don't!" David interrupted. "You don't know! You and your government job and your perfect record! I got to go out there and raise a family with my family record, which I've been trying to rectify since I was twelve! I bet you never had to deal with that!" David started kicking the metal box.

"David!" The man stormed up from his desk, "David, stop kicking the Leadership Computer!" By this point, Chris was back in the room and both men were trying to restrain David.

"It's not right! It's not right!" David screamed, now in tears. The young sergeant came rushing into the room.

"Is everything okay?"

Chris shook his head and made a motion with his hands as he struggled to restrain David. David saw this gesture and knew what it was. He began to struggle even more violently as one of his shoes ripped into the dress pants of one of the men. Suddenly, two soldiers barged into the room wearing riot gear. "Back away!" They yelled as the two men yanked themselves away from the rabid David. The soldiers wrestled David to the ground as a doctor came through the door with a tray. The doctor caught one of David's arms and quickly inserted a syringe from the tray into the vein. David's face turned pale and his violent movements were becoming fainter. Soon, there was no life left in him.

The sergeant peeked through the door. "Everything over in here?"

The doctor responded: "Yep, send in the next guy."

Outside the station, in a waiting area, a mother and her daughter were sitting on the gray plastic chairs. A soldier approached both of them.

"Excuse me ma'am?" "Yes," she responded. "Are you the wife of David Styler?" "Yes," she answered. "Well, ma'am, and I know this is hard, but your husband--" Immediately, she knew what had happened. There were no tears, no screaming, and no pain. There was just a plain nod from the woman. "Now, while I understand that this is tough for you, I can already give you some options." The soldier knelt down. "Here are some single men that the Leadership Computer or LC, deems much more beneficial to society than what your former husband was." The soldier scrolled through images, on a tablet, of single men about the same age as her.

"I want him," she pointed.



The Snows of Venus

The following is a progressive short story group project written by Hayden Bosch '23, Ashton Catalinotto '23, Daniel Hartmann '23 and translated by members of Mr. Ed Merritt's Latin II class.

On a cold and dreary day, there was a lone man wandering through the dense taiga. The winter cold was starting to get to him, with his entire body aching from hypothermia. He could hear animals in the distance, and he could swear voices were surrounding him, yet he didn't know if it was the wind or auditory hallucinations. The only thing the frail man could see was a small group of stars through a gap between the leaves. The man thought to himself, how he got here, where he was going, how much longer he would wander, but there were no answers to be found.

The next day a group of indigenous people found the man and brought him back to their village. The people left him with the village healer to be healed. A few days passed before the man regained consciousness. When he woke up, the healer started to ask him questions, but the man said the only thing he remembered was him walking in the taiga and hearing sounds and possibly voices around him. The healer seemed to know something the man didn't, so he ordered the man to rest more. Several days passed before the man was able to get on his feet again. The first thing he did when he got back on his feet was explore the village. The village stretched as far as the eye could

Nives Veneris

In frigido et triste die, erat solus homo vaga per densa silva. Hiems frigida incipiebat superare eum, cum eius totum corpus dolens ex frigore. Posset audire animalia procul, et posset iurare voces circumdare eum, tamen non scivit si esset ventum aut auditorio alucinationis. Solum fragilis homo videre parvum coetum stellarum per spacium inter folia poterat. Homo sibi cogitavit quam hic perrexit, unde iret, quanto amplius se erraturus esset, sed non erant responsa inventa. Ut adspectus viatoris vanescere incipiebat, rem dissensae quam ante iuretur posse audire, sed ut eius mens sonorem conabat cernere, conscientiam amisit.

Proximo die, decuria indigeni populi virum invenerunt et ipsum vico attulerunt.

Populi ipsum cum medico vici liquerunt ut curaret. Pauci dies meaverunt antequam vir conscientiam recuperaverunt. Cum excitavit, medicus quaesitum rogitare coepit, sed vir dixit res quae memoravit exceptus ipsum ambulare humido et sonorem audire et fortasse voces circum ipsum. Medicus videtur scire aliquid quod nescivit, igitur virum quiescere imperavit. Multi dies transierunt ante vir iterum procedere



Etjab Williams

see and seemed vaguely familiar to him, but he didn't know why. He thought since the village was so large he would stay near the healer's hut, and so he went off into the vast village.

The next day the man woke up in a hut that the people let him borrow. This hut was familiar. However, so was everything else. The people, the surroundings, and their materials. A few hours passed and while the man was walking through the village the Roman Goddess of Love appeared to him "Acrisius, you know this place and you know the people who live here". She then disappeared into thin air. Now knowing his name Acrisius' curiosity of this place grew immensely. Did he live here? Was he born here? Did he fight this village in war? Many questions that he had to find the answer to.

After going to sleep for the third night in a row, he was awoken by a strange metallic noise. He soon found out that the native who had helped him regain his energy was mixing strange substances

eius pedes potest. Prima res quae egit ubi procederet vicum exploravit. Vicus tetendit quoad oculum videre posset et incerte familiaris ei videtur, sed nescivit cur. Cogitavit, cum villa sit ita magna, manere proximum pergulam medici posset, itaque in vicum vastum abiit.

Postridie vir evigilavit in casa quod gentes eum mutuetur. Haec casa erat nota. Autem, ita erat omnia alium: gentes, locus, et eorum rerum. Paucis horis praeteritis et dum vir erat ambulabat per oppidum dea Romana amoris apparuit ad eum "Acrisie, scis locum et gentes qui vivunt hic." Dum in tenuem aerem evanescuit. Nunc sciens eius nomen, Acrisii curiositas de eo loco vehementer crevit. Hicne is vixit? Natusne sit hic? Pugnavitne hoc vicum in bello? Multae quaestiones quas explicatio eo reppertura est.

Post ad somnum per tertiam continuam noctem euntes, vigilabatur novo metallico strepito. Mox invenit indigena quae eum recuperantem eius



nearby, he had learned that the healer's name was Sino the day before, and when Sino noticed him he bowed, seemingly out of apology. Since Acrisius was already awake, he decided to step outside to feel some fresh air. Once he stepped outside, he saw the mountains on the horizon rising above the distant clouds, while the numerous stars in the sky glimmered, seeming to communicate with each other, or even Acrisius himself. He thought about the strange hallucination he had seen the other day. Was it an omen? A sign? Who was it? He cleared his mind of the thought and figured to make himself useful, and as he walked back in he saw the strange healer mixing herbs together, so he tried to gesture to Sino that he wanted to help. Sino misunderstood and gave him sleep medicine, thinking he was having trouble sleeping, causing Acrisius to go to the bed until the next morning.

When Acrisius was fully awake he

vim adiuverat novam substantiam prope miscebat, superiore die nomen medici esse Sino didicit, et cum Sino eum animadverterit, obtemperat ut videtur de excusatione. Cum Acrisius iam vigilaret, decernit gradi foris ut aliquod recentem aerem sentiat. Olim foris, vidit montes in finientem orientem supra distantes nives, dum creberae stellae in caelo sublucere, speciosae communicantes cum invicem, aut etiam ipso Acrisio. Cogitavit de nova alucinatione quae altera die viderat. Erat prodigium? Signum? Qui fuit? Liquebat animum cogitati et conatus factum se utile, et dum inambulavit, vidit mysticum medicum intermiscemtem medicinam, itaque conatus est signum ad Sino volentem adjuvare. Sino perperam intellegit et debuit somni medicum, cogitans habendum tribulationem dormientem, facientem Acrisium ad lecto usque tunc mane ire.

Cum Acrisius erat omnino vigilans, sentivit quam sero dormiverat et iit inventum Sino. Quod inventit Sino, loquitur apud quid vici principem videtur. Acrisius eos profectus est accedere et, ut proximo habuit, is poterat comprehendere quod dicebant tamquam eius linguam nativam erat. Senex Sinoque de reditum unius qui amissus erat loquebantur. Post Sino dicendum cum sene exegit, Acrisium vidit et dicere profectus erunt. Sino Acrisios audivisse eius sermonem cum sene celeriter intellexit. Is Acrisios quantos audivit rogavit. Deinde Sino narravit Acrisio omnia - excepto vicem dedicare Veneri et populos appellari Nives. Acrisius dormivit illa nocte confusissimus et etiam cupiens responsam.

realized how late he had slept and went to find Sino. When he found Sino, he was talking with what seemed like a village elder. Acrisius started to approach them and, as he got closer, he could understand what they were saying as if it were his native tongue. The elder and Sino were talking about the return of the one who was lost. After Sino finished talking with the elder he saw Acrisius and they started talking. Sino quickly realized that Acrisius had been eavesdropping on his conversation with the elder. He asked Acrisius how much he had heard. Sino then told Acrisius everything including about how the village belongs to Venus and the people are known as the Snows. Acrisius went to sleep that night very confused and still longing for answers.

He woke up the next morning to the sounds of the hustling and bustling village. He now knew the people of the village, who were called the Snows and he did in fact have some relation to them. He was determined to unpuzzle the mystery of his past and this village. Acrisius thought the best time to think and ponder about his situation was at night. It was a snowy, peaceful, and perfect night. The snow especially calmed him down as he was overwhelmed with his current situation. After an hour of thinking, a glistening star sort of pointing in the direction of a hill was glaring at him. Could this be a sign? If so, from whom? Could it be the same person who appeared to him earlier? He wondered of all of these possibilities while hiking up towards the hill.

With the beautiful scenery around him, and a place to call home, he seemed

Evigilavit mane postridie sonos actuosae discurrentisque urbis. Nunc novit populum urbis, qui appellabatur Nives, et recognovit quidem esse aliquam necessitudinem sibi cum eo. Volebat explorare arcana sui praeteriti et huius urbis. Acrisius puterat tempore optimo quid aestimat et cogitet esse noctem. Nox erat nivea, pacifica, et perfecta. Nix autem sedat deorsum ut usitate situ opprimat. Post horam cogitandi, astra percandida intendens directionem collis ad eum fulgit. Signum esse poterit? Si sic, quo? Possit eandem personam quae ad eum primo oriat? Miratus est de omnibus his facultatibus dum ambulavit tenus collibus.

Cum formoso specie regionis circum eo, et loco quem domum appellaverit, vidit esse contentum. Sed nonnulla eum vexavit, facientem eum sibi cogitare, "Si ego habeo aliqua cognatione cum his populis, cur circum silva primo vagabar?" Hic fecit aliquod metum de populis vici in eius cordem, sed illud nunc nihil interest. Dum is tamquam perrexit sursum culminem honestis magnitudinis tumuli, constitit futurum esse bonum debitum ad defectus volaru, et quam prope erat ad summitatem. Arborem invenit quae erat partim incavernis quae possit sufficere ad ille operis, itaque ipse firmem sursum ibi nocte se fulcivit, tum oculos premet. Tamquam suus aspectus confundit, audire sonnantis sibilum avesque gryllus pipius poterat, in somnum defluxit.

Cum vigilaverit, non scivit ubi erat aut quid factum sit. Sentivit mirum tractum prior collis ante eum. Lente coepit surgere ex arbore sub quo dormivit

content. But some things bothered him, causing him to think to himself, "If I have some relation to these people, why was I wandering around the woods in the first place?" This caused some paranoia about the village people in his heart, but that didn't matter now. As he continued up the peak of the decently sized mound, he decided it would be good to rest due to his tiredness, even though he was almost to the top. He found a tree that was partially caved in that he could use for adequate cover, so he propped himself up there for the night, then closed his eyes. As his vision blurred, he could hear birds whistling and crickets chirping, as he faded into his sleep.

When he awoke, he didn't know where he was or what happened. He felt a strange pull to the hill ahead of him. Slowly he started to rise from the tree he was sleeping under and started again to the top of the hill. As he was walking he saw some of the best things one can see. When he reached the top of the hill he could see the whole world and realized he was on Mount Olympus. As he walked around the top of the hill he was welcomed home, which he found strange. While walking to the center of the hill he started to feel power rushing through his body. In the center of the hill was a palace with power flowing out of it. He walked through the doors and was greeted with celebration. The celebration lasted for hours, but he was still confused about everything. He asked around and most thought he was crazy, but one person told him something that really confused him: You are Acrisius, a hero made immortal.



et instituit rursum ad crescem collis. Dum ambulabat, vidit nonnulla quam optima. Cum he pervenit ad crescem collis, poterat videre omnem mundum et ad exitum perduxit esse in Montem Olympum. Dum ambulavit circum crescem collis, benigne domum exceptus est, quid novum percepit. Ambulans ad medium collis coepit sentire vim festinantem per suum corpus. In centrum collis erat aula cum vis ex eo influanda. Ambulavit perforas et congressus celebritate erat. Celebritas horas duravit, sed adhuc turbabatur de omnibus. Interrogavit de aliquo et plurimi putant eum esse insanum, sed unus homo nuntiavit ei aliquid quod eum turbavit. Tu Acrisius, heros fecit immortalem.

Insignificant Teenager Problems

Journey Harris '22

Memories from the past still haunt me.
I don't want to move on yet; the future is daunting.
It seems I have no satisfaction.
The love wasn't real; it was all an abstraction.
My feelings were steadily falling.
I had good intentions. It gets so exhausting.
Maybe I just lost my passion.
The adults that I spoke to said sometimes that happens
--They say--
"You'll understand when you're older."
And though I've grown, I still can't make sense of it.
I can't recall what I told her.
I just know she's sad, and her dad? He says he won't miss.
So I didn't want to go over.
I didn't want to find out. I didn't think it was worth the risk.
But that was last October.
And a whole year has passed since last I felt her kiss.



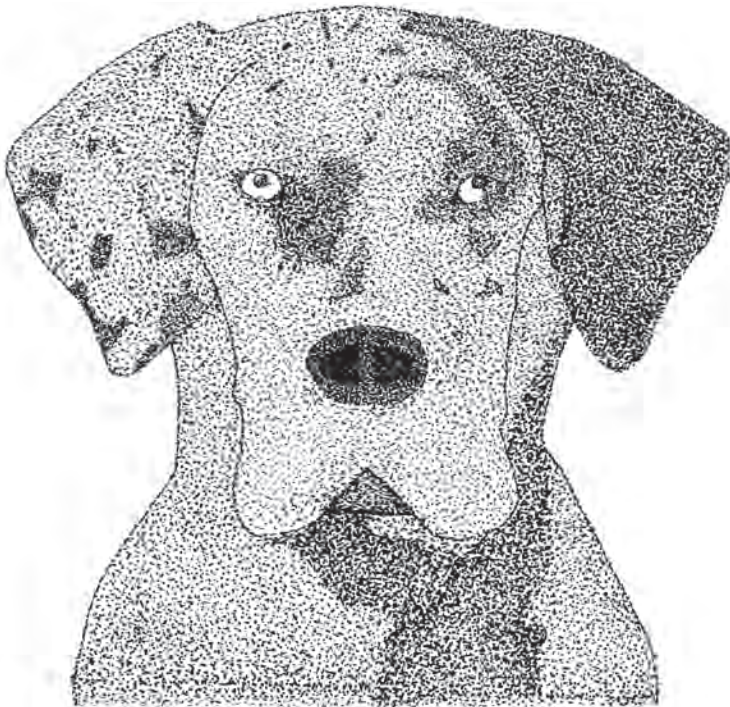
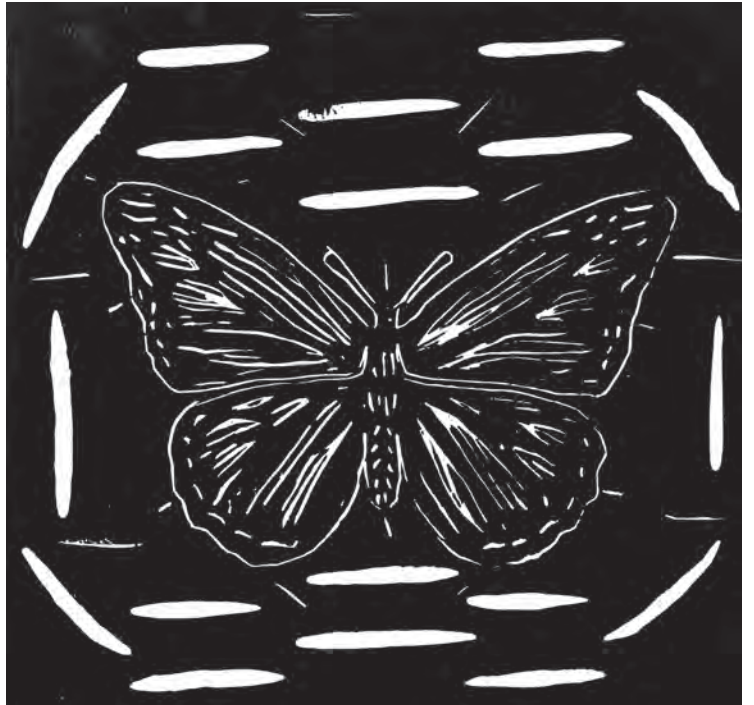
All the Forest Sees

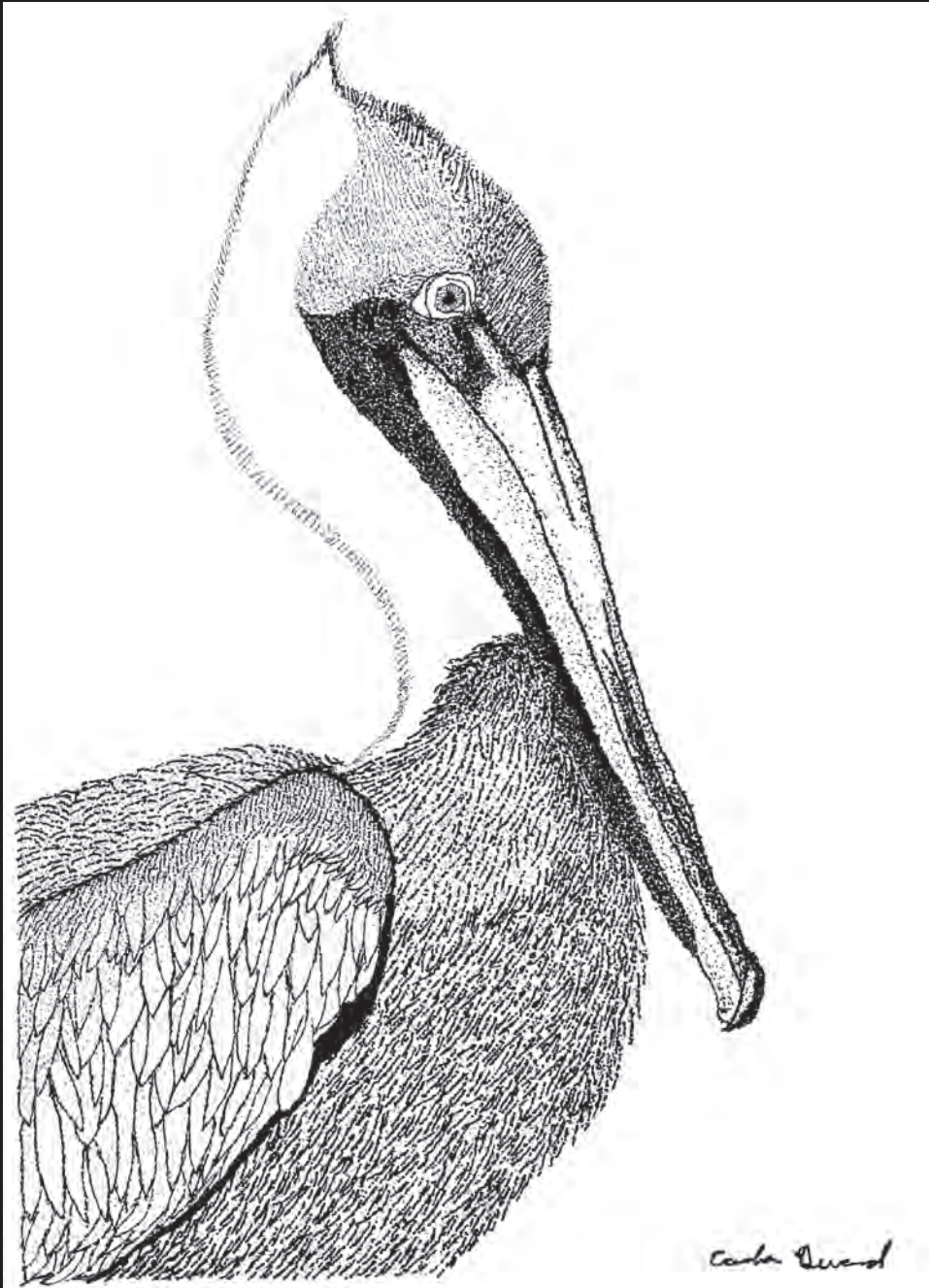
Chase Lormand '22

These auburn eyes carry tones of an aspen,
the peaked dome of a lens sheer, like that of an unctuous bubble.
Each pupil reflects a soul, settled up high on a window,
a secret treasure-trove buried 'neath these spangled clovers,
and the forest spirit chatters with the songbird,
rides on its tailwind, watching farmers separate the grain and tallow.
Tangles of tubers and knots of wild onions all head down the river.
Spattered wildflower tufts burst, wild with seed and spore, driven
down braiding winds, all hushed and tumbling
as a farmer breaks acorn-meal bread, cracked and crumbling.
The blued and blotted mountain mirages on the horizon, I scout
parallel to the farmer's silo, his life's surplus.
In us, the denizens of wood, the forest wisps and garden thistles,
there is a line of wisdom, encrusted in the night
in pine chips and autumn topsoil, mint bushels and trickling saltlicks,
and so it is:

"The land is tilled, earth upended like icebergs of the northernmost sea
revealing a waft of petrichor, once-buried
microscopic bones, water once out-loaned
borrowed and burrowed
nestled and furrowed
down under, a spring wells up,
the farmer's oil from the tallow he drug,
and so the forest whistles through
hollows, and olives are delivered by doves
a twilight southward front does blow all
this history on above."







BROTHER  MARTIN