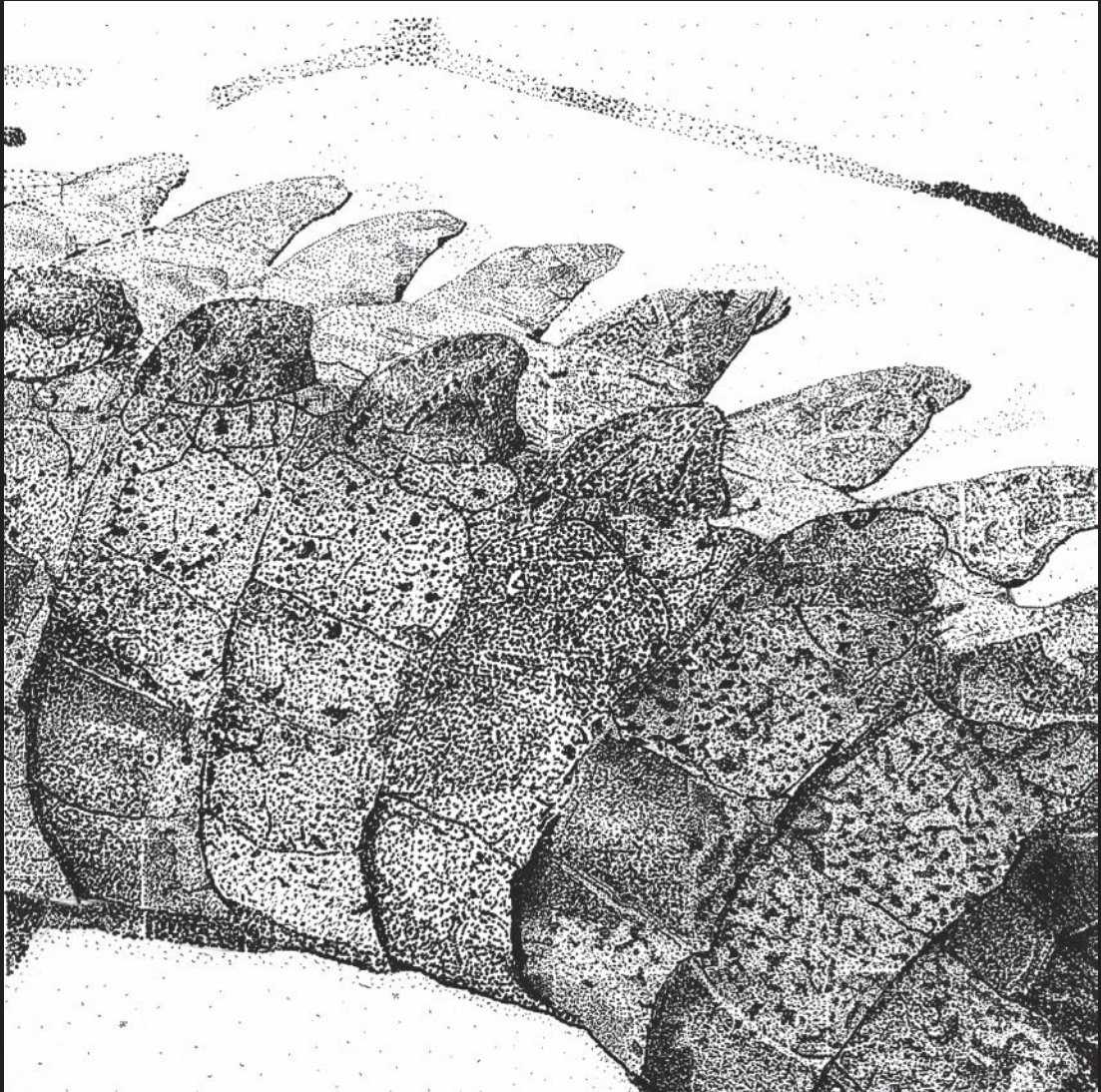


Pen
and
SWORD

A Brother Martin
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The *Pen and Sword* is published annually by students of Brother Martin High School in New Orleans, Louisiana. Each issue is gathered, edited, and produced by current students. The staff would like to thank everyone who contributed work to this edition, with special gratitude to Mrs. Yvette Tassin for her invaluable graphic design assistance.

Ode to a Fountain Pen

Nicholas Nail '24

A dull trinket in the hands of some,
yet a font of serenity blue in others.
With an inky cascade of fresh ideas that
fades like droughted well once realized,
it strikes a deal:
convenience for elegance.

Outdated and obsolete, but operated still
by connoisseurs and creatives.
A gilded nib dances atop the smooth blue and white paper ballroom
in rasping, scratchy glissades
substituting a midnight-coated sphere
stumbling across the college-ruled ladder.

The word-soaked feather has
traversed centuries of innovation,
adapting into a diamond edge that
rips through the silent cloak of writer's block to
gift a script of grace upon the world
from a snapshot of the mind's abstraction.



My Mother's Advice

Nicholas Nail '24

I want to run out of the open door
and claim the feats I'm certain will impress,
but I will check for any cars before.

I have been dreaming of this time since four
and saying, "Mom, I'm wise, don't ever stress."
I want to run out of the open door.

You know that I cannot wait anymore.
I have so many views I must express—
but I will check for any cars before.

My calls won't ease the ache inside ton coeur,
but it's what comes with flight, with my egress;
I want to run out of the open door.

So let me go and I'll begin to soar.
I will return back home before success,
but I will check for any cars before.

The miles between us I cannot ignore,
but they won't weaken our love to be less.
I want to run out of the open door,
but I will check for any cars before.

Not a Soul

Liam Enger '25

Not a soul will worry
while they mock my humanity.
My vision turns blurry,
gazing at a mob of vanity.

Not a soul will mind
when they spike my palms,
but they soon will find
the root of their qualms.

Not a soul will bother
as my countenance fades in hue.
Forgive them, Father,
for they know not what they do.



I Am Now

Andrew Taulli '24

I had a strange feeling. There always was one now. It wasn't quite a warm and welcoming one, yet it didn't give me a cold stare, either. I was at a party with some family from my mom's side. The party was bright and flavorful with different Hispanic treats, and piñatas adorned the rooms. I was eight at the time and attending the birthday party of my little cousin. While having the basic needs of a family birthday party such as cookies, cake, and a large Angry Birds pinata, the party also was filled with the distinct smell of the sweets present. My aunts and uncles were there, too, celebrating and having a fun time. One could see the joy within them through the smiles on their faces. It had been the most significant family gathering at the time since we hadn't gathered like this in about a year. My brothers were there also since I'm a triplet. I didn't know if they felt the same feeling that I encountered while attending the party. I hoped I wasn't alone in that matter.

The family members talked to me differently now from what they once did before. Ever since my parents divorced about a year ago at this point, things had started to feel different about my family. I wasn't upset by it anymore, but what was getting on my nerves was this new reality I had to experience because of it. The differences in this reality revealed themselves at this party, and it was bothering me that I had to deal with it. My family members had started treating me

differently, but not in a bad way. It was as if their warm embrace was a mandatory chore rather than something out of pure enthusiasm for my presence. It was as if they were being cordial with an enemy from my Father's family.

At the party, I still said hello to all my relatives, aunts, uncles, and cousins. I wished a happy birthday to my little cousin and eventually had a fun time. She was also turning nine at the time. I got some delicious chocolate cake and a cold soft drink. The cake, decorated with characters from the movie Frozen, wasn't exactly an appealing factor for my eight-year-old self, but I couldn't resist the gooey baked chocolate within. I was getting sucked into the excitement of the party, but my feelings were soon squashed as an aunt of mine approached me. She was a tall, skinny woman with black hair and a distinguished air who recently moved from Guatemala due to financial issues. She said something along the lines of, "Oh how are you doing, you've gotten so big, what grade are you in?" I should've felt glad that I was able to see her again and thankful she asked about me, but rather it was just another stark reminder of my difference. It reminded me why I hadn't seen her in a year and her questions were a reminder that I'm different now. I feel different because I have to experience a new world now. I didn't want to be different. I was now.

As I finished my conversation with short replies and moved to continue



experiencing my joy at the party. The party was a fun time, and I was able to fill myself with treats and cake, hitting a bright blue pinata, and barreling down a waterslide in the backyard. Along with this, seeing everyone despite all my internal conflicts and being greeted by everyone was still an intricate touch to the party. As we drove home in rainy conditions, I wondered why now, all of a sudden, I had started to feel this way. Why had I never fully felt this way until just now? I've felt it within the past year, but why is it all culminating right now? I assumed I was just overwhelmed by the many reminders of my difference in a new reality.

I understood though that my conflict was neither with my parents nor their divorce, but rather why I had to be in a new world I've never experienced before that treated me differently from the rest. As we got home, I plopped on my bed, continuing to think about the party. My room was blue with a DVD player and monitor, bunk beds for my brothers, and was decorated with two Skylanders posters. Even though I was in my safe space in my room, I still had thoughts circulating in my head. Did I have a good time? I think I did, but why do I feel like I didn't? I didn't think seeing loved ones would make me feel worse. I wanted to go back to the way things once

were, where I was normal again.

Later that night my grandparents came home from a meeting of a Guatemalan association they were in. My grandfather is an elderly, short man who is convinced he can still take on the world and care for his family's needs despite his physical fragility. He always wears a collared shirt with a taxi hat on, and every night to this day he takes one shot of tequila for good luck I suppose. My grandmother is an even older woman who despite having shakes can be seen wearing the shiniest most luxurious jewelry from Macy's. They are what you can imagine a typical elderly Guatemalan couple would look like. Our home was our grandparent's house since my mother and brothers and I had been staying there with them for about a year. Seeing them lifted my mood since they had not treated us differently. They treated us as if nothing ever happened and we had moved on in life because of them. I loved them for that, and I still do.

It was heart-warming seeing them come home, and we as a family sat at the dinner table together. Their house at dinner time was always a sweet time, but nighttime did always dim the mood. They eventually asked us about the party since my grandparents were not present at the party. My mother, brothers, and I were all together with them as they approached this topic. My grandparents bringing the party up was a lot for me to handle, considering all my previous thoughts and questions surrounding the party. I started crying and rushed to my room to feel safe and escape. Somewhat confused, my family opted to stay out of my worries assuming it was just a tantrum. My grandfather didn't, however.

My grandfather later came into my room to comfort me and discuss my troubles. It was comforting having his warm and wholesome presence there. We sat there on my bed talking about my day, my school, my life, my worries, my family, and my year.

"How are your friends?" My grandfather always asked me questions like these: "How are you doing in school? How is your father? Have you talked to him recently? It was comforting for him to come to check on me and ask about me during this time. I needed him at that moment and still to this day, he comforts me when I seek his help.

Later on, after our conversation was over with longer replies, it was time for bed, and I was tucked into bed by my grandfather. I lay there that night, pondering and feeling that I hurt. I was tired and aching from my adventurous day, but my head kept me up. I was tossing and turning, and my feelings were spinning all around me that night. Why was I hurt? What was this new thing? Why did it hurt me? Why did I feel different?

Because I am different. I wasn't different before. I am now. Years later I would learn and understand that I needed this. I would learn as well later on that my brothers had similar feelings growing up. I needed this, however, to teach me how to become a better person and discover what mistakes I should avoid. I learned who will always be there for me, how to persevere, and how it's okay to be different from the rest. I am now a different person, and I accept this change as a solution to my times rather than an issue or a challenge.

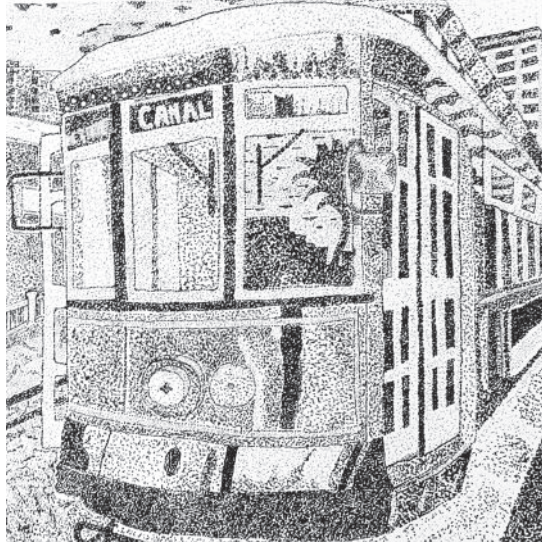
Remembrance

Grayson Lizano '25

It was just another game,
but I had everything to gain.
We got off the bus, all ready to play;
it felt as if nothing could get in our way.
As we stepped on the field, I greeted my coach,
and the other team started to approach.

It was just another game,
but I had everything to gain
As we started our warmup, I felt light as a feather.
My head and thoughts were as clear as the weather.
As my name was announced for the lineup, my brother
gave me a look;
he could read what was on my mind like an open book.

It was just another game,
but I had everything to gain
As the ref blew the whistle, the ball started to move.
I could feel it in my feet, I was getting in my groove.
My first assist, to my brother and best friend—
I wished that moment would never end.



Haikus



A candle needs wax
like a light bulb needs power
and a heart needs love.

– Joseph Bacino '25

Coming home from work
he eats with his family;
that's what he works for.

– Joseph Bacino '25

Cold-snapped garden plants
uncovered during winter
now lay desolate.

– Nicholas Nail '24

The wind in my hair,
the trees swaying back and forth,
I lie in the woods.

– Ian Normand '24

The Lord has risen.
Brothers, sisters, make holy
the Lord's Day, Sabbath.

– Ian Normand '24

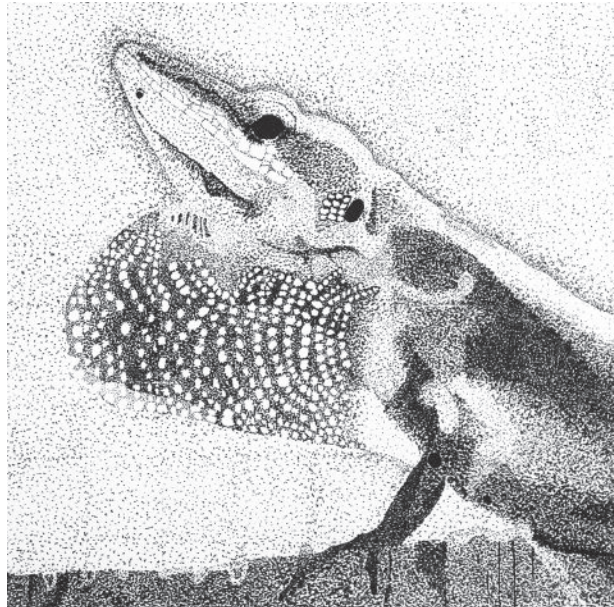
New York state keychain,
my name engraved on both sides:
I've never been there.

– Nicholas Nail '24

Fall Storm

Joseph Bacino '25

Celebration in the night skies, stars shining down on us,
the flowers dance along with the rock music,
five of us huddled around a fire,
jumping and singing songs we didn't know.
Our manner was tribal,
and romance flowed through the wind with bliss,
an evolution from a boy to a man.
The lush spring field of flowers flourishing,
a hurricane of paranoia crashes
into the city stuffed in our heads.
Checking our backs everywhere we go,
the once bright skies turn empty
like a house that has lost power.
Flickers of memories show a past life.
When Cupid's arrow touches a group of boys
they can become a pack of wolves,
tearing one down so another can rise,
turning on their pack.



A Fallen Hero

Jeffrey Lupo '24

The cold winter's wind blew through the streets of Jefferson City, Missouri. Sergeant Mike Fitzpatrick huddled beneath his old blanket given to him by his mother. A once decorated Iraq war hero who had the honor of meeting the president of the United States, Mike now found himself lost in between the tall buildings of the city, battling the horrors of war he wished to forget. Mike graduated at the top of his class at the service academy. Once known for his strong and muscular body, he was now a shell of its former self. His leg, lost to an undetected explosive device in Iraq, had left him physically disabled and unable to serve. The war had taken its toll on Mike, but what was really leading the soldier to his struggle was the battle within his mind.

His days after returning home were spent walking the streets, searching for an escape from the memories that haunted his every move. The faces of fallen brothers replayed in his mind. The screams from that failed combat mission were on a never-ending loop. The guilt of surviving that war in the Middle East nagged at his soul and mind. The city where he grew up, the city where he met his wife, the city where he watched his father grow a business, that very city now felt like a foreign war zone, with each pedestrian and city folk a potential threat, each corner an ambush waiting to happen.

Andrew Collins, a fellow soldier who had fought alongside Mike in the deserts of Iraq, now patrolled those streets as a Deputy Chief in the Jefferson City Police

Department. The two had forged an unbreakable friendship during the height of the war on a special mission to kill one of Saddam Hussein's top commanders, but eventually, their paths met a fork in the road upon returning to the norms of civilian life. Andrew, now a police officer, was happily married with four kids. Mike, on the other hand, crippled by both physical and mental wounds, had descended into the dangers of depression and PTSD.

On a chilly evening, as Mike sought comfort beneath a flickering street lamp, Andrew spotted his old friend. His heart sank in his chest at the sight of Mike, a once valiant soldier reduced to a man hooked on drugs and hating the world around him. This was a scene that Andrew had seen too often. His brothers of war, scarred from the nightmares of combat, come back to the states with absolutely no way to verge back into the rush of society. It was at that moment that some shame came over Mike. How was it that he was alright, while some of his best friends were struggling, or even dead?

"Mike," Andrew called out. "It's me, Andrew. Let's get you up. Let me help you."

Mike's eyes turned to meet Andrew's concerned look. Suspicion clouded Mike's every move, a symptom of the paranoia that gripped him like a wicked parasite.

"I don't need your help. I don't want your help," Mike muttered, his voice a raspy whisper. You could hear the dryness in his throat like the dryness of the desert he

once patrolled.

Andrew cautiously moved closer to Mike. “You’re not alone, brother. We can get you back on your feet. Come get some food with me, catch up.”

But Mike refused, the weight upon his shoulders too heavy to bear. “I don’t want your shameful pity. I don’t need anyone. Leave me be”

Unbeknownst to Mike, Dalila, his ex-wife, had coincidentally just left the office. Down the block, she had been silently watching from a distance. She was pained at the sight of the man she loved. She remembered the man she married: a good looking guy with an even better character, who could make her laugh at absolutely anything. Now, she saw a deranged man

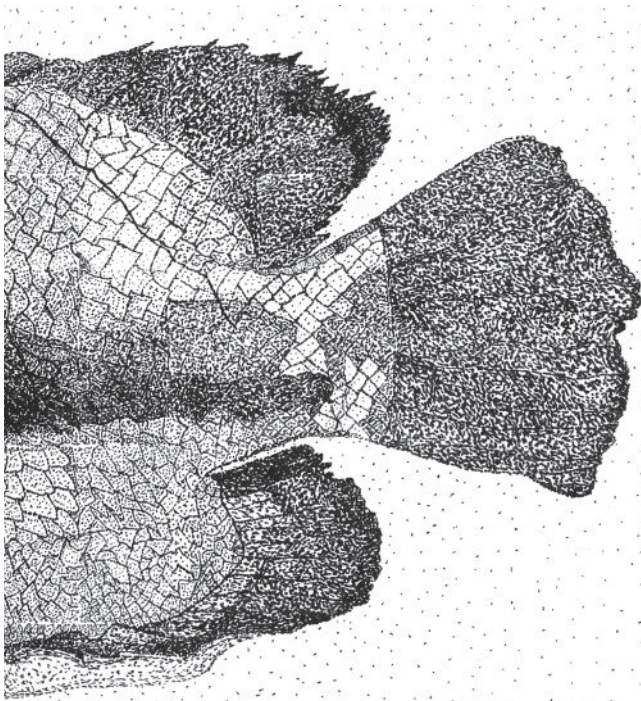
hooked on whatever drug he could buy from the money he panhandled. Dalila, the head of her own real estate agency with a past in modeling, had tried to bridge the gap between them, but Mike’s fiends proved impossible to avoid.

As Andrew continued to plead with Mike, Dalila approached. “Mike, please. Let us help you. You don’t have to fight this battle alone” she pleaded.

Mike’s eyes flickered with a mix of anger and despair. This time, he screamed. The rage rused out. “I said, I don’t need your help!”

Andrew and Dalila, distraught, left Mike alone. Later that night, in a desperate attempt to numb the pain, Mike resorted to theft. He stole from a convenience





store owned by the same old lady that babysat him as a child, trading his valor for a desperate escape from the horrors that clung to him. The stolen money went not to food, water, or clothing of any sort, rather it went to the drugs that temporarily silenced the suppressed war zone in his conscience. 4

Andrew, now aware of Mike's criminal actions, confronted him once more. "You're better than this, Mike. We can find a way out of this." But Mike, trapped within the hold of addiction and hopelessness, again pushed Andrew away.

As the days turned into nights, Mike's descent into the darkness of street life accelerated. His body, starved of nutrition, bore the scars of both war and, now, self-inflicted wounds. The streets became his only refuge, a harsh reality that offered

no reconcile or comfort. One cold Missouri night, as the city named after America's third commander-in-chief slept, Mike found himself standing on the edge of a bridge, the darkness of the Missouri River calling out to him like a siren's song.

At that same time, Andrew and Dalila decided to make one last attempt to confront Mike and get him back where he needed to be. They both went to that same street corner and back alley that Mike always walked. He was not there. The two rushed to find him. As dawn neared, Andrew heard over his radio in his patrol car that dispatch was reporting some sort of death near the Jefferson City Bridge.

As the sun rose, a chilling reality unfolded. Mike's lifeless body lay on the banks of the rushing river below, a silent witness to the war that raged not only on foreign soils but within the depths of the tortured minds of the men that raged it.

Andrew and Dalila stood on the bridge, their hearts heavy with grief and regret. Andrew became angry. Dalila sobbed, remembering the moment Mike had proposed to her. The echoes of war had claimed yet another casualty, and the bond of best friends forged in the deserts of Iraq had been destroyed by the merciless hands of fate.

Bubble Gum

Benjamin Levy '25

First, you unwrap it from its protective paper shield.
Then you chew it, releasing flavor perceived by nerve endings on your tongue.
As you chew, the flavor evaporates.
Eventually, all that's left is a flavorless, shapeless, useless glob of synthetic materials.
Despite this, we choose to continue chewing this amalgamation.
No matter how tasteless, no matter how pointless, we expend our energy to exhaust
this mass, until it is hardly identifiable, losing its characteristics,
perhaps in hopes of discovering more flavor, or even new flavor,
perhaps in hopes of discovering new meaning.



Mardi Gras in New Orleans

Seth Meyer '25

Mardi Gras in New Orleans, a wonderful sight,
floats and wild outfits under the bright lights.
Beads tossed with all their might,
in the spirit of Louisiana, partygoers take flight.
From St. Charles to Carrollton's beat,
every parade, on these lively streets.

Mardi Gras in New Orleans, a wonderful sight,
floats and wild outfits under the bright lights.
The music and fun, in every direction,
where the spirit of celebration is seen in every section.
Avenues decorated with food, a Cajuns delight,
king cake and jambalaya, throughout the night.

Mardi Gras in New Orleans, a wonderful sight,
floats and wild outfits under the bright lights.
As the night comes to an end,
shivering hands seem to mend.
Only in New Orleans, fun lasts forever,
Mardi Gras memories, to forget never.



The Bones of the Seven

*The following is a progressive short story written and translated by members of
Mr. Ed Merritt's Latin II class.*

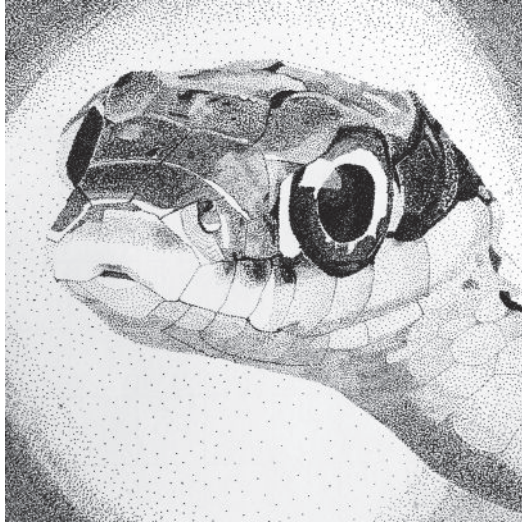
Benjamin Bonewitz '26, Gavin Cardoza '26, and Vincent Molina '26.

As the captain talks to the employer, Steve looks back on how he got to where he is now. One day, a simple chef on a cruise ship is suddenly kidnapped by pirates and forced to join them. Then the captain of the ship smacks Steve on the head, telling him to load the cargo and be careful because the cargo is precious, and if it gets damaged even a bit, he'll have all our heads on pikes. After Steve finished loading the cargo, he felt something pull him towards one of the boxes. He reached his hand closer as if to open it. Just when he was about to put his hand in the box, someone burst through the door to tell Steve to get dinner started. So Steve left the cargo hall still feeling something pulling him towards the box he left. As Steve is cooking, he finds it unbelievable that the pirates were expecting him to cook in the kitchen they gave him. All they gave him to use as an appliance was a stove and some meat and vegetables. He found it disappointing that they didn't give him any spice or seasoning. Late at night, Steve goes to make sure that everyone else is asleep and then goes to the cargo hall. As he enters the room, the feeling of something pulling him returns, drawing him towards one of the crates. After he opens it, he is left distraught by what he finds because the only things in the box are an amulet and a book. As he picks up the amulet and the book, he feels a flash of energy. After the flash of energy is over,

Ossa Septem Illorum

Cum magister ad domino loquitur, Steve rescepit quomodo fieret ubi nunc sit. Eo die, in nave coquus simplex a praedonibus subito rapta est et eos coniungere coactus est. Tum gubernator navis Steve sapit in capite, onerandum onerat et caveat quia merces pretiosa est, et si vel aliquid laeditur, omnia capita in contis habebit. Postquam Steve onerat complevit, sensit aliquid ad unam cistulam trahere. Accedit propius quasi aperiendum cum manu suam. Cum manum in cista positurus esset, aliquis per ianuam erupit ut nuntiaret Steve cenam incipere. Ita Steve aulam onerariam reliquit adhuc sentiens aliquid se trahens ad archam reliquit. Cum Steve coquit, incredibile invenit quod piratae eum exspectabant coquere in culina quod ei dederunt. Omnia qua dederunt ei in usum instrumenti erat caminos et aliquas carnes et olera. Frustra invenit quod nullum aromam vel condimentum ei dederunt. Nuper nocte Steve comperibat ceteros omnes dormire et deinde ad aulam onerariam pergat. Cum cubiculum intrat, affectum quod aliquid eum tractat redit trahens ad unum e cratibus. Postea id aperit, relinquitur amentem quod invenit, quia sola in capsula sunt amuletum et librum. Dum amuletum et librum levat, coruscantem vis sentit. Transacto ictu vis, amuletum examinat et scribentem in dorso invenit quod dicit "Kalaban". Haec, ut ille

he examines the amulet and finds writing on the back that says "Kalaban." As he says those words, a burst of light erupts from the amulet, summoning a knight wielding a sword. Steve, taken aback by the knight's sudden appearance, is taken aback even more when he turns around to see the captain looking at him with a look of pure anger



on his face, thinking of the profits he just lost. Steve goes over to apologize for what he's done. While he thinks to himself about what just happened, the captain pulls Steve out to the deck of the ship, telling him that he has no idea how hard it is to get an amulet from a monster, telling him that he is going to kill him. To get the amulet for himself, as he says that, he pulls out an amulet of his own, saying "Mega-golem." After that, a bright flash of light eruption summons a golem. He scolds Steve for bonding with the amulet, telling him that he has no idea how rare the amulet is. He then orders the mega-golem to go and crush Steve. Right when it seemed like the golem got him, Kalaban, the knight that Steve summoned, appeared again to stop and defeat the golem. Just then, in a sudden rush of adrenaline, Steve told Kalaban to go and kill the captain. After the captain is killed, Steve goes up to the body and takes the amulet. After picking up the amulet, he hears a voice coming from the book that was in the same box as Kalaban's

dicit, impetus lucis e amuleto erumpit, militem ensem accersentem. Steve, repentino aspectu equitis attonitus, magis etiam percussus est cum se convertit ad videndum gubernatorem intuentem eum cum vultu purae irae in faciem, cogitans de fructibus quos modo amisit. Steve accedit ad se excusando pro

eo quod fecit. Dum secum cogitat quid modo factum sit, Gubernator ad navem constratam Steve trahit, dicens ei se nescire quam difficile sit amuletum e monstro accipere, dicens ei se interfecturum esse eum. Ut sibi amuletum obtineret, ut ait, suum amuletum extrahat, dicens "Mega-golem." Postea, nitida coruscatio lucis eruptionem vocat golem. Steve obiurgat ligaturam cum ligatura, dicens ei nescire quam rarum amuletum sit. Tunc iubet Mega-golem ire et opprimere Steve. Cum golem superat ei visum est, Kalaban, eques qui Steve vocatus est, iterum visus est ut golem sisteret ac debellaret. Subito ergo in impetu adrenalini Steve Kalaban nuntiavit gubernatorem occidere. Postquam occiditur, Steve corpus ascendit et amuletum capit. Post amuletum lecta est audit vocem venientem e libro qui erat in eadem capsula ac Amuletum Kalaban. Vox gratulatur ei quod alium ligaturam nactus sit, et eum rogat, si alium velit reperire, ostentans sagittam quasi circinum. Mox igitur Steve piratas ceteros excitantes audit et mox in

amulet. The voice congratulates him for getting another amulet and asks him if he would like to go find another, displaying a compass-like arrow. Just then, Steve hears the other pirates wake up and just begin to emerge onto the boat, forcing him to quickly escape and head towards wherever the arrow was leading him.

Steve rows and rows until he feels that he can't anymore, but desire drives away all exhaustion. Such desire has not been felt by many men; however, the few men that do live sad and wretched lives. Eventually, Steve found himself on an island, the arrow pointing towards a coastal village. Upon closer look, it becomes apparent where the arrow was pointing: at the center of the village, a highly fortified area surrounded by wooden spikes and outposts. From the middle of this mini fortress came a light green light. "Enchanting," Steve thought, encroaching upon its location under the cover of brush and foliage. After closer inspection, he found an opening in the spikes, one that seemed to be unguarded and unwatched. He decides to wait till nightfall, so he explores the village trying to find some items he could buy that would be of use somehow.

Steve entered a small shop, mostly looking for some form of food. After looking around he found some potatoes, and he buys three. Steve also bought some peas, and even though he did not like them, he simply wished to have them. Steve never had much food when he grew up, and that is why he became a chef: free food. He sat down under a tree and nibbled on his potato; it was cold and bitter. Steve laughed at the ridiculousness of the situation. He thought that freedom would be warm and

navem emergere incipiunt, cogens eum ut celeriter elabit et quocumque sagitta ducebat versus est.

Steve remigat et remigat donec sentit se amplius non posse, sed desiderium omnem lassitudinem expellit. Quidem cupiditas a multis non sentivit; pauci qui sentit vitas tristes et miseris vivunt. Denique, Steve se in insula invenit, sagittam demonstrantem ad vicum maritimum. Iuxta magis aspecto, ubi sagitta demonstrabat, apparet: in medio vici, area valde munitissima spicis et stationibus ligneis circumdata. Ex medio huius minutum castrum levem viride lucem orta est. "Decantans," Steve putavit, incusans locum suum sub tegumento penicili et frondis. Iuxta magis aspecto, aperturam in spicis invenit, quam incustoditam et incustoditam videbatur. Statuit usque ad noctem exspectare, unde explorat villam quaerens invenire aliqua vasa quae emere potest quae aliquo usui essent.

Steve parvam tabernam intravit, maxime aliquam formam cibi quaerens. Post circumspiciens invenit quosdam pomos terrestre, et tres emit. Steve etiam pisa quaedam emit, quae quamvis ei non placeret, tamen ea habere voluit. Steve numquam multum cibi cum adolevit, et ob hoc factus est archimagirus: cibum liberum. Sedit sub arbore et in pomum terrestre arrodit; frigus erat et amarum. Steve ridet rei ridiculum. Putabat libertatem calidam et dulcem fore futurum esset; libertas tamen frigida et amara, sicut pomum suum, probaretur. Denique nox advenit, Steve autem ad arcem sub noctis specie itinerem fecit. Denique Steve causam luminis invenit, alterum amuletum nomine "Ornstein" inscribentem. Ille fasciculum

sweet; however, freedom was proving to be cold and bitter like his potato. Eventually, night came, so Steve made his way back to the fortress under the guise of the night. Eventually, Steve found the cause of the light, another amulet with the name Ornstein inscribed onto it. He snatched the amulet and began to walk away confidently when all of a sudden, an alarm went off.

Quickly, Steve ran away and the voice from earlier once again congratulated him with a new arrow, and guided Steve towards the deep forest. The faster he ran, the happier he felt; this was closer to what he was expecting in freedom: excitement! The arrow pointed north, so north he went. Steve stumbles upon a lone house of brick, quaint and welcoming, with smoke billowing from a chimney. He enters the building and sees an old woman weaving something in a rocking chair. The woman looks at Steve with sorrowful eyes, expressing that she knows what he has done. Confused, Steve asks the woman what she means, and she simply states that his fate is sealed: he is to live a sorrowful and wretched life. Upon closer inspection, Steve realizes that the woman weaves with hair, human hair. He steps back into a cabinet, knocking everything off it. He hears in particular the sound of two metallic trinkets; the woman pulls a length of thread and reaches for scissors. Instead of cutting the thread, however, she hurls the blades at Steve, who narrowly dodges. He summons with his newest amulet a knight of a taller and slimmer build than the other, who quickly decapitates the woman. As her head rolls onto the floor, Steve notices that the knight had accidentally cut the thread; he thinks nothing of it and

arripuit et confidenter abiret, subito tumultus discessit.

Cito Steve fugit et vox e pristino iterum ei gratulatur cum nova sagitta, et Steve ad altam silvam ducit. Citius cucurrit, laetior sensit; hoc propius ad quod in libertate exspectabat - incitamentum! Sagitta aquilonem ostendit, sic ab aquilone iit. Steve in sola domo lateres offendit, insolito et grata, fumo e fumario fluctuante. Ingreditur aedificium et videt anum textentem aliquid in sella gestatione. Femina maestis oculis Steve aspicit, exprimens se scire quid egerit. Confusus, Steve mulierem interrogat quid ea velit, et ea simpliciter affirmat suum fatum signatum esse: vitam suam lugubrem et miseram victuram est. In diligentiore inspectione, Steve animadvertit mulierem crinibus, capillis humanis texuisse. Regreditur in scrinium, omnia expulsans. Audit imprimis sonum duorum tricarum metallicarum; mulier longitudinem sequelae trahit et ad forfices pervenit. pro stamina secanda, autem, scapulas in Steve iaculatur, qui anguste fallacias. Novissimo amuleto vocat, equitem altiozem et graciliorem quam alterum, qui cito mulierem detruncat. Ut caput in solum volvitur, Steve animadvertit militem casu filum secare, nihil de eo cogitat et ornamenta intuetur. Non una erant, sed duo amuleta: unum nomine Havel inscribentem, alterum Fenrir inscribentem. Celeriter fugit et iterum vocem gratulantem ei audit et orientem ire iubet.

Relinquens silvam, Steve vagari coepit donec per montem ingentem venit Statuit adscendere cum consilio ligaturarum cum maximo auxilio ex Golem. Priusquam ad apicem perveniat, vir admodum pilosus, nomine Adolf, occurrit, qui ligaturas

looks at the trinkets. They were not one, but two amulets with one with the name Havel inscribed on it and the other Fenrir inscribed on it. He quickly flees and once again listens to the voice congratulating him and tells him to go east.

Leaving the forest, Steve wanders until he reaches a massive mountain. He decides to climb with the advice of amulet with the most help coming from the Golem. Before reaching the peak he comes across a very hairy man named Adolf, who tries to buy the amulets from him. Even though Steve has been battling with his mental health since getting on the pirate ship he eventually declines on the offer. "The offer still stands," Adolf says. But Steve doesn't care; he just keeps moving up the mountain.

After finally getting to the top, Steve sees a structure in the distance on the other side of the mountain. Steve looks out at the vast open world upon him, something inside of him is telling him to jump; be fearless, and see what lies before. Steve longs for the thrill he never was able to have in his life. He recollects himself; after looking where the arrow is pointing, Steve decides to travel in that direction. After getting down the mountain, he starts heading to the structure in the distance, but as he is walking, he gets the feeling that something is following him. After taking a look around he thinks nothing of it. After a while, Steve sees a small town that seems to have been abandoned. After investigating it for a little while, he searches the town for any supplies that could aid him in his travel in which he finds a new change of clothes, food, and water. After he is done with that he starts to head to the structure again.

ab eo emere conatur. Quamquam Steve cum valetudine mentis certatum est cum piraticam navem conscendisset, tandem oblationem recusat. "Stat oblatio", inquit Adolfus. Sed Steve non curat; sicut ille in monte movebat.

Postquam ad summitatem questus, Steve structuram procul in altera parte montis videt. Steve prospicit vastum apertum mundum in eum, aliquid intus de eo salire dicat; esto securum, et vide quid prius. Steve delectationem desiderat quam numquam in vita sua habere potuit. Se meminit; Steve, postquam quaerit ubi sagitta monstrat, iter in illam partem decernit. Cum descendisset in montem, incipit procul in structuram petere, sed dum incedit, sentit aliquid se sequi. Post circumspiciendum nihil de eo cogitat. Post breve tempus, Stevanus videt oppidum urbem quod desolatum videtur. Postquam id parum paulisper investigavit, urbem perlustrat ut quaerat commeatos quos eum adiuvari possent in itinere, in quam novum vestimentem, cibem, et aquam invenit. Postquam ea confecerit, iterum ad structuram contendit.

Dum ad structuram ingressio, Steve invenit eam esse castrum. Per campos sepulcrales ambulat, voces mortuorum audiens, sed una eorum prae aliis eminet: est matris eius. Cum ad eam accedit, illa interrogat cur fratrem suum occiderit. Respondens, ille dicit se fratrem non habere; mater ait illum habere, fuisse pirata. 78. Explicat matrona ei illum quaerere; explicat quia Steve solus omnes amuletos possidere poterat. Dabit ei suum spiritum, qui eum ad locum suum requiem aeternam ducet.

Postquam campos sepulcrum reliquit,

While walking to the structure, Steve discovers it is a castle. He walks through a graveyard, hearing the voices of the dead, but one of them stands out from the rest. It is the voice of his mother. When he goes towards it she asks him why he has killed his brother. In response, he says that he does not have a brother. The mother says that he does, he was a pirate. She explained that he was looking for him, she explains that because Steve was the only one who could possess all of these amulets. She gives him her spirit, it will guide him to his final resting place.

After leaving the graveyard, he follows the arrow and goes into a castle. While going through the graveyard, he stumbles into the courtyard, where he finds a giant fire-breathing dragon that was almost ten times the size of any of the creatures that Steve had. As Steve was observing the dragon, he saw around the neck of the dragon the last amulet; knowing that it was a long shot, Steve used all the amulets, ordering them to attack the dragon as they all charged. The golem goes first, pinning the dragon on the ground; as the dragon is breathing fire on the golem, trying to melt it, the knights start to attack with everything they have, until Steve notices that there is a large spike in the center of the courtyard. Telling the golem to let the dragon go, he orders the knights to try to herd it to the center of the courtyard until he can summon the golem above the dragon, crushing it to death. Finally, he gains the last amulet; now he starts to walk back to the graveyard.

Approaching the graveyard, Steve looks back at the gravestones, reflecting on his life. Before this journey, he lived an

sagittam sequitur et in castellum iniit. Hoc eunde per campos sepulcrales, hic incidit in plateam, ubi hic magnum draconem exspirantem flammam condidit qui erat fere decem magnitudines magis ullo animalium quae Steve habuit. 82. Cum Steve observaret draconem, ille circum collum draconis ultimum amuletum vidit; cogans esse longum ictum, Steve omnia amuleta usus est, imperiens ut draconem oppugnent dum omnes incurrebant. Golem primo movet devinciens draconem in terra; dum draco conatus id dissolvere flammam in golem exspirat, equites oppugnare cum omnes vires incipit, donec Steve magnum spiculum in medio areae observat. Iubens golem draconem relinquere, equites imperat ut congregare eum ad medio arenae conantur donec arcessere golem super draconem posset ut ad mortem contunderet. Denique, hic ultimum amuletum obtinet; nunc hic ambulare retro ad campos sepulcrales incipit.

Accessus campos sepulcrales, Steve revidet ad monumenta, considerans vitam. Ante itinere, hic impraestantem vitam vivxit: nullum uxorem, nullos amicos, et nullam veram divitiam. Hic casus vitae suae significationem dedit; hic magnitudinem aspexit et confecit, sed nunc nihil facere remanet. Voces narrat eum ut ad sepulcra quae nuper praetereat revereat, ubi hic legit sex nomina singulatim obitorum sodalium familiae suae. Post crepitantem omnia eorum nomina is septimam sepulcrum videt, foramen iam foditur, et sepulcrum suum nomen fert: Steve Smith. Voces amuletorum audit, omnes sui familiae sodales; ei dicunt se coire. Intellegit quid facere debeat, spiculum ferrugineum ex curia accipit et

unfulfilling life: no wife, no friends, and no real money. This adventure gave his life meaning; he sought greatness and he has achieved it, but now there is nothing else to do. The voices tell him to go to the graves he recently passed, where he reads the names one by one of six deceased members of his family. After rattling off all their names he sees a seventh grave, a hole is dug, and the grave has his name on it: Steve Smith. He hears the voices of the amulets, all of his family members; they are telling him to join them. He realizes what he must do, he takes a rusty spike from the courtyard and prepares for the inevitable. In a flash of clarity, Steve realizes the ridiculousness of the last few days and concludes that his life will go on, he is free to do what he wants, how he wants, and with whomever he wants. Such hope invigorates him to the point that he can feel the warmth gushing from his chest, onto his hands, and down his legs. This warmth is not of courage, valor, or liberty, but rather it is of his own blood spilling out of his chest as the cold, humiliating, and imprisoning spike pierces through his body. Realizing his fate, Steve died, never fulfilling the life he wanted, but with his amulet now glistening in the pale moonlight, maybe some other unlucky traveler can.



inevitabilem parat. In momento claritatis, Steve recognoscit deridicula ultimis paucis diebus ac concludit ut sua vita perget; liber est ut faciat quod vellet, quomodo vellet, ac quicumque vellet. Talis spes eum exhilarat ad punctum quam possit sentire calorem effundentem ex suo pectore, super suo manus, ac deorsum suo crura. Hic calor non est virtutis, fortitudinis, aut libertatis, sed potius est de suo proprio sanguine effluente ex suo pectore ut frigidum, humilians, ac vinculans spiculum perforat per suo corpore. Suo fatum intellegens, Stevanus mortuus est, numquam adimplens vitam quam voluit, sed cum suo amuleto nunc refulgente in pallido lunae lumine, forsitan aliquis alius infortunatus viator potest.

Family Resemblance

Nicholas Nail '24

“Jessie! Come on downstairs, or we’re gonna start the movie without you!” Jessie’s father yells, although a bit more abrasive than he wants to. Chris’s children, Natalie and Jessie, only just started visiting again. It’s the second Saturday of December, exactly six years since he’s last seen them. Natalie, a sweet and mature young woman of twenty-two years, sits next to her father and puts on *It’s A Wonderful Life*. It’s a favorite on both sides of the family. Jessie, with his wavy, dyed black hair and olive complexion, sits in the dark guest room of his father’s house. It used to be his, but too much time has passed, and now it belongs to no one. It serves as yet another reminder of the vacancy that occupies the residence. He hesitates as the voice echoes through his once-childhood home. Almost a young man himself at seventeen, Jessie fears that he’s lost the connection he’s been craving for his developing years, yet is more fearful of lighting the paternal fuse.

What if it’s just too awkward? I have no idea where to start. Maybe he wants to hear about my life plans? But is that sentimental enough? Good Lord, just give me an answer, dad . . . he begs.

In the other room, Chris contemplates how he can make this easier for Jessie. *A hug, maybe? No, he already tried that. As comforting as it is, a hug only does so much for conversation.* When Natalie first came over, everything flowed easily. Tears, yes, but also love. Natalie was more prepared when she reintroduced herself to Chris. She texted him one day,

then sentences led to paragraphs turned into calls transformed into weekly visits at home and at work. *It’s easy, Chris speculated, to be comfortable when you have the most control over what happens.*

“Natalie, could you go share a few words with your brother? I think he could use some help right now.”

“Sure, Dad,” Natalie said, picking her frame up off the couch. Her ankle released a “pop!” as she strode down the sand-colored tiles. Her soft socks met the fluffy carpet of the guest room as she turned into it. “Jessie? Are you in here?”

“Yeah,” he blurted lazily.

“With the lights out?”

“I guess.”

“What’s up?”

“Nothing, I’m fine.”

Jessie’s Streisandian bargain, whether purposefully or not, only brought more of Natalie’s attention to his feelings.

“No, you’re not. You were so excited to see dad again just an hour ago, and now you’ve locked yourself in your room. So c’mon, tell me what’s got you in a mood.”

“It’s not my room.”

“Huh?”

“I *said*, it’s not my room. It was, years ago, but it’s not anymore. It forgot me. I abandoned it and now it can’t even recognize me anymore. I shouldn’t even be here right now, pretending that everything is fine again. It’s been too long for me to keep up the act.”

“Oh, Jessie. Of course it’s been a long time, but look, all your stuff is still here.

Your bed, your dresser, your books, they've all been waiting for you."

"That's a lie. They're not waiting for me anymore. They're waiting for whoever walks in that room next and unpacks a bag into the hollow drawers."

"Is this about Dad? Do you think he doesn't love you anymore? That he hasn't been waiting all these years to see you again?"

". . ." Jessie's eyes welled up with tears.

"Poor thing," Natalie said, and pulled him in for a supportive embrace.

"I don't know how to talk to him anymore!" he shudders. "I'm so different now. Everything about me is wrong. I was cute and pudgy and I wore those khaki shorts with the polos and my hair was blond and short but now I'm all scrawny and wear ripped jeans and t-shirts and my hair is all long and black. I'm nothing like he remembers and I'm scared that I'm going to lose him again." he blurted out before he had time to think about it.

"Jessie. You know that's not true. Dad loves you. Not the kid you used to be, but the man you are now. Nothing as trivial as your clothes or hair could make him not love you anymore."

"But he hasn't even reached out. It's been years since we stopped seeing him, and nothing. If he wanted to see us, wouldn't he have called us or sent a letter? Anything?"

"The way he explained it to me is that he didn't want to reach out before we were ready. He knows how much effort it took for you to come back here, and he didn't want to freak you out. You're the



only one who knows when you're ready."

"That . . . makes sense."

"So, are you ready? The movie is waiting for us."

"Yeah. Yeah, I am. I'll meet you in the living room. You go on ahead."

"Sounds like a plan," Natalie said, and backed out of Jessie's room.

After Jessie wiped his tears and calmed down, he started down the hall toward the living room. He stood just before the threshold, and psyched himself up. At last, he was ready. He took two steps forward, and made sure not to trip over the small step in the doorway. The warm glow of the lamp in the corner illuminated his face for his father to finally see.

"Woah. You look just like me, Jessie!" Chris realized. For the first time in their lives, the family resemblance was obvious.

Agony in Shadows

Beau M. Stevens '27

Cold and dreadful described this particular night. The rain poured down like an artillery of angels from the heavens. The streets of Brooklyn, once crowded and busy, were now empty and disheartening. It was very late into the night. A couple, a man and woman, were walking down the streets, the rain soaking their jackets. The woman was holding a basket made of thin sheets of straw between her arms. The man was scanning the area they were walking in, making sure no one saw them. Inside the basket was a baby, wrapped in cloth and sleeping soundly, despite the sound of the rain being loud.

"We can't keep wandering forever, we have to hide him somewhere," said the woman. "There's a place I know nearby. We can bring him there and he will be safe."

The man turned his head towards the woman. "It's too obvious, dear, they will know where he is if we let him stay there."

They continued to walk and stood silent, both scanning the area around them. The woman spotted a place and stopped. The man continued to walk. "Lyla, come dear, we mustn't waste any time." He turned around to see the woman, now known as Lyla, standing idly in front of an alley opening. "Lyla," the man said again. He quickly walked towards her and touched her shoulder. "Lyla, we don't have much time, come on, we have to keep going," the man insisted.

"Here," Lyla said. "We can hide the baby here."

The man looked at the alley, which

looked the same as most alleys except there was a mattress in the alleyway leaning on the side of the wall. "Lyla, we can't hide him here. He won't survive," stated the man.

"What choice do we have, Milo?" the woman asked the man, the grief apparent in her voice.

"Someone will find him, and someone will care for him." Milo turned his head left-and-right, making sure no one was watching them, then sighed, "Fine, just make sure he isn't visible to any vagabonds that may come across this place."

Lyla carried the basket into the alley and placed it behind the dumpster. Suddenly, the baby began to cry. The baby was shivering. "He's cold, Milo," said Lyla, who thought for a moment, and turned to Milo. "Give me your jacket," she commanded.

Without hesitation, Milo took off his jacket and handed it to Lyla, "I wish this day hadn't come so soon," Milo said to himself. Lyla then knelt down and placed the jacket over the basket. The baby slowly began to stop crying. Lyla put her head down, and put her hands together. She began to make the sign of the cross and said a prayer:

"Lord God, please watch over this child
and protect him.

Drive all evil away from where this child
may be, and let your light shine through
him.

Give him the strength to go on, endure
through pain, and to take any challenge
that beholds him.

Let this child flourish like a plant in rich

soil.

Let your gentle hands guide his soul
towards the path of righteousness.

Let your love give him power, for your
love is greater than all of that which you
created.

I ask this through your son, Jesus Christ.
Amen.”

Lyla lifted up the jacket that was over
the basket. She leaned in and kissed the
baby on the forehead, and afterwards put
the jacket back over the basket, covering
it. Lyla stood up slowly and ran towards
Milo, and hugged him tightly. Her hug
was like that of an angel, it was warm
and comforting. It made even the saddest
people happy. But this time, she was the
weeping angel. She cried into Milo’s chest,
the tears caught in his shirt.

Milo embraced Lyla, his hands wrapped
around Lyla’s back. He lowered his head
gently on Lyla. A single tear shed from his
eye. Milo closed his eyes and imagined
a paradise of angels who would care for
the boy. They would care for his every
need, giving him the love and affection the
couple could never give. He imagined him
and his wife, Lyla, waving to the angels,
before falling from the heavens, and into
the darkness of the night. He returned
from his mind, and still closing his eyes, he
started to clench Lyla more tightly than he
did before.

Milo then noticed something. There
was a faint sound of metal scraping on the
concrete floor, slowly getting louder and
closer towards them. Milo lifted his head
off of Lyla, and turned his head towards
the source of the noise. Lyla began to
hear it too, and she lifted her head from
Milo’s chest, and turned her head towards

the source of the noise as well. They
both began to speed walk away from the
noise, which turned into running. The
sound of their shoes getting fainter and
fainter until they could not be heard by
the child. The metal scrapping, however,
got louder and closer until it reached the
alleyway. Once it did, the rain that was
pouring in the alleyway began to stop and
silence. Its presence was felt throughout
the alleyway, and through this presence it
found the baby. It began to walk towards
the dumpster and located the basket. Once
it found the basket, it knelt down, gently
lifted the jacket, pulled the jacket back so
it could see the baby. It touched the baby’s
forehead with its cold and dead fingers,
then gently placed its palm on the baby’s
head. It began to speak to the baby:

“The ones above have forsaken his child.

No other will be like this one.

Your cries may never be heard, but only by
those whose blindness guides them.
You will endure the corruption of man, but
will never escape it.

Your soul will be powered by those who
once forsake you, the same way the father
forsakes you.

Love will be not of you, love will be only
taken.

What’s left is a feast for sinners.

However, a Fallen one favors you

You will be guided by him

Then, and only then, may your true
purpose be revealed by the prideful one.

It then lifted its hand off of the child,
and lifted the jacket back over the basket,
covering the child once more. It stood back
up, and walked out of the alleyway and
back into the streets. Its footsteps could not



be heard by anyone, but once it had gone, the rain continued to pour just as much as it had before. The night would grow deeper, and the rain would pour less the deeper the night grew. The child had been told the truth, but one it would not hear until darkness consumed the faithfulness of man.

It was fairly early in the morning, 7 or 8 AM, and the baby was sound asleep. Still in the alleyway the basket lie. The light of the ascending sun flooded the streets, leaving darkness to creep and dwell in the corridor where the baby was left. The sounds of cars driving through the streets as well as the falling of shoes to the floor filled the emptiness of sound within the alley. No one bothered to look in the alley to see if anyone was there. Who would blame them, either? The baby was sound asleep, not even making so much as a peep, and no one would even bother to go into an alley when they had places to be. However, someone in particular had been busy,

and the alley was exactly where they were heading to. A woman in a black cloak and hood over her head had walked into the alleyway.

“This isn’t the right one. Why can’t I think straight today?” she mumbled to herself. “There’s a big sign that tells you exactly where it is.” She turned around and began to walk out of the alleyway, but she noticed something in the corner of her eye. She turned to the dumpster and saw a black jacket over something. Curious, she went towards it, removed the jacket from above it, and placed it to the side. Inside the basket she saw the baby, sound asleep. Now most would assume by now, without proper care, it would be dead. Despite that, by some miracle, the baby was still alive and well, but she didn’t know that. She checked the baby’s pulse. It was alive.

“Who would leave a baby here so carelessly?” the woman asked herself. She picked up the basket, and looked around. Realizing that no one was there to help the baby, she took initiative. “Surely there’s something in the basket that was left behind, they wouldn’t just leave it here without anything, right?” she said to herself.

She searched the basket carefully, so as to not wake the baby up, and found a baby bottle with milk in it. She also found a couple hundred dollars inside the basket too. She looked around to see if anyone was looking, then pocketed the money. There was also a pair of childrens clothes: a white shirt and some white pants, along with some underwear. She gave the baby his bottle, and he began to drink it.

After the baby was done drinking the milk, she pulled her sleeve up and looked

at the time, "Oh no, I'm going to be late!" The woman gasped, "Well, I guess I will have to take you with me," She took the basket, covered the baby back up with the jacket that was on top of it before, and the woman began to walk out of the alleyway and onto the sidewalk, where she maneuvered around the now noisy and busy streets. Eventually, the woman entered into another alleyway, and this alleyway had a door at the end with a sign above it that said in all caps, "DO NOT ENTER" written in dried-up blood and a red eye above it. The woman went through the door and down some stairs. Once down the stairs there was a room lit with two candles. There were black cloaks hanging on the walls as well as masks. In front of them was a sealed sliding door. The woman searched the room, moved a wooden box full of broken parts aside, pressed a button that was hidden in the corner of the wall. The sliding door began to open slowly, making a scraping sound. She went into the next room, which was a dimly lit room with 4 candles on the side walls. There was a pentagram in the middle of the room with 7 candles around it. The pentagram itself was a mix of black and red. There were statues of some unknown creature on each of the corners of the room. There was a stained glass window above the pentagram and some light source above it that made the room look very mesmerizing. There were also four pillars near the center of the room. There were a few men who were kneeling next to the pentagram with their heads down. Only one was standing up, and he wore a different mask from the others. He turned his head up and asked, "You are late for the

meeting. What were you doing?"

"I was heading towards the church, but I got sidetracked,"

"Why are you carrying a basket? What is in it?"

"While I was sidetracked, I found it. I'll show you what is inside,"

The woman carefully placed down the basket, removed the jacket, and placed it in the basket, revealing the baby. "An infant, that's what got you sidetracked!?" the man said with an aggressive tone, "Chief, he was left alone in an alleyway. I had to help him," the woman replied. The chief approached the baby, and began staring at it, "We must dispose of it immediately," said the chief. He reached for the basket, but the woman slapped his hand away, "Touch it and I'll break what's left," she said.

"Why do you care about this child so much?"

"It's an innocent child! How could you not care!?"

The chief stared back at the baby. Suddenly, an idea popped into his head, "Fine," he sighed, "You can keep the baby here, we will care for it in our quarters, and at night you will take it back to your residence."

"You promise not to hurt the child?"

"I promise,"

"Okay, I'll take it back to my place for the day and come back here in just a couple minutes."

"That's fine, but hurry. We can't waste much more time."

The woman picked up the basket and placed the blanket over it once more. She then turned around and walked out of the church toward her home.

American Ambush

Jeffrey Lupo '24

“Mr. President, the Beast was just pulled around. Whenever you are ready sir, we can head to the Embassy,” whispered an aide to President Jackson Callaway, the 50th American President, as he stood in the midst of the grandeur of the United States Embassy. That embassy, with its lavish drawing room and stately dining rooms, lay just fifteen miles from the Pakistani border in India. The president was meeting with leaders of the Republic of India not only to discuss India-U.S. relations but also to honor the Prime Minister as her first guest for a state visit since she won the election.

As President Callaway arrived at the Grand Hall for the dinner, just eight blocks from the Embassy, the air was filled with conversation and laughter. Back home, Americans tend not to really care if foreign dignitaries buddy up in Washington at lavish parties. In India, however, the idea that a President is visiting, an American President at that, is a momentous occasion.

“President Callaway, President Callaway, this way, sir!” shouted reporters from across the street. The young thirty-nine-year-old dignitary turned and smiled, showing off his pearly white teeth and slicked-back hair. Unbeknownst to the President, a dangerous night awaited. Amid the bustle of the President’s visit to India, and the multitude of security work devoted to the occasion, a clandestine intelligence report that had suggested an impending attack failed to make it to the desk of the Directors of National Intel-

ligence or Secret Service. With Callaway exchanging pleasantries with diplomats, an enemy set its sights on the figurehead of democracy and freedom. The President’s Secret Service detail, whispering into their sleeves on high alert, still failed to detect the disguised ambush.

Dressed as officers from the Indian Police Service, Pakistani Nationals from across the border infiltrated the hall. Gunfire erupted, shattering the elegance of the dinner and panicking the guests. Armed assassins swarmed the balconies, their target: the protective detail around the President. Shots rang out. Screams filled the air. Loud explosions molded the main exits impassable. The Secret Service had formed a barrier shielding the President and was able to successfully whisk the president out of a hidden escape constructed earlier by agents.

“Secure the President and get him to Air Force One. We’ve lost communication with Washington,” ordered Mike McDaniels, the head of the President’s security detail.

It appeared that the terrorists had also managed to jam the communications system of the region. The President of the United States and his whole team were left alone in India, with no way of communicating with the White House or the United States military.

Vice President Elizabeth Newellton, stationed in the Situation Room in the basement of the White House, received the concerning news. She was surrounded by Anthony Fabruzzo and Sarah Wallace, the



Secretaries of State and Homeland Security respectively. With the crisis unfolding and the uncertainty of the condition of the president, both of them, along with the Attorney General, believed that Newellton should take the oath of office.

The room was hushed. It appeared as if President Callaway, a popular and unifying figure from south Louisiana, had been killed in the worst attack on American Freedom since 9/11. Now, America's first female president had shattered that glass ceiling in a case of unfortunate circumstances.

"I, Elizabeth Claire Newellton, do solemnly swear, that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and that I will to the best of my ability, pre-

serve, protect, and defend, the Constitution of the United States. So help me God."

"God bless you, Madam President," uttered the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

It was at the moment that Kirsten Schaffer, President Callaway's Chief of Staff and a former intelligence officer, felt a sense of uncertainty come over her. She wondered why Newellton was expressionless when she was told the President of the United States was likely dead. She was so eager to take the Oath of Office. Even Lyndon Johnson, the arrogant man that he was, waited to assume the presidency on Air Force One hours after President Kennedy was killed. Technically America had no president for about two hours on that day in 1963. So

what was the rush? Because no body was found, many in the room believed that Elizabeth Newellton was really just Acting President Elizabeth Newellton until some more details emerged. Either way, she was still the most powerful woman in American History.

With her years of intelligence training still in the back of her mind, Chief Schaffer's uncertainty turned into suspicion. She left the Situation Room and headed back upstairs to her office. Escorted by her own secret service agent, the chief of staff needed to put her intuition to rest. Once getting to her office, she set up a secure call with one of her old sources from the Karachi Field Office in Pakistan from her old days at the CIA. The call would reveal

damning details.

"Mr. President keep your head down," ordered Mike McDaniels before directing his attention to the driver, "Head to the safe house, we will lay low there until we can get escorted out by the military." As the detail raced to the CIA black site, the agents strategically weaved in and out of roads and alleyways to erase any trace that could be picked up by the Pakistani Forces.

This black site, nicknamed "The Haven" had been used by the CIA since the Clinton Administration. Its disguise hid it from the outside world. The high-tech surveillance systems around the exterior led way to the cutting-edge interrogation rooms and communication systems on the inside.

Back in D.C., Kirsten Schaffer was deep



in conversation with her former intelligence source. It was revealed through a trace of emails sent from a secret server that the Vice President, now the presumed President Elizabeth Newellton, had given the Pakistani Nationals detailed instructions on how to breach the state dinner using documents from the United States Secret Service.

At that moment, Schaffer's source realized that the black site's signal in Pakistan had come back online. While telecommunications were still down for the region, morse code could still be used.

"VP Newellton is in on assassination. Get back to Washington ASAP. Find a way to call my office. She took the Oath." With the message sent to the black site, all Kirsten Schaffer could do was wait.

Within minutes, an old satellite phone on Schaffer's desk rang.

"Kirsten, it's Mike."

"Dear God Mike, is the President alive?," wondered Schaffer.

"Yes he is ok. We are here at the old black site in Pakistan, hiding from whomever the hell is trying to kill Callaway. What do we know?" The Chief of Staff proceeded to explain how leaked emails with the security plans for the event were sent from the Vice President's computer.

"We need to get the President back to Washington, let the nation know that he is alive and get Newellton arrested. Leave now, get to Air For..."

The loud signal from the emergency broadcast system interrupted the seriousness of the call. "The United States Government interrupts you to bring you an important message from Acting Presi-

dent Elizabeth Newellton " Schaffer's jaw dropped. Newellton was seizing the moment, addressing the nation, a solemn tradition reserved for her duly elected predecessors.

Sitting at the briefing table in the situation room in front of the Presidential Seal, Newellton condemned the attack as one on democracy and freedom and promised that justice would prevail.

"Get to the damn plane. Stay on the line," said Schaffer.

Unbeknownst to Elizabeth Newellton, the revelation of her involvement in the attack was imminent. With the President on the satellite phone, the Chief of Staff confronted the "Acting President" in front of the attorney general, joint chiefs, and the rest of the White House staff in the Situation Room.

The room fell silent as military police and U.S. Marshals apprehended Newellton, her face consumed with shock. Meanwhile, back on Air Force One and in the air, to avoid any legal questions or a constitutional crisis, President Jackson Callaway re-took the Oath of Office. As soon as his authority was restored, he began on his speech that he would give the nation once he returned to Washington.

"The strength of any nation lies in its ability to rise above the shadows of the time and push forward on a path towards better days," spoke President Callaway from the haven of the Oval Office. In that same speech, he announced his intention to draft a letter to Congress outlining his intention to nominate his steadfast Chief of Staff, Kirsten Schaffer, to become the next Vice President of the United States.

The Game of Baseball

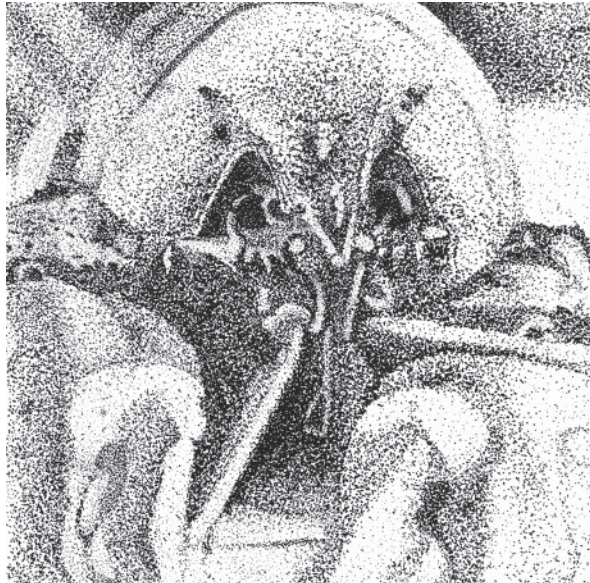
Bailey Anderson '25

Beneath the sky of endless blue,
on fields where grasses abundantly grew,
we gather underneath the sun's warm hue
to play the game love anew.

With a glove in hand and a bat held tight,
we step on the field of fight.
Each inning brings its own delight,
as we try with all our might.

In this game where friendships are made,
a game that offers limited aid,
together in our hearts, we find,
the joy of baseball within our minds.

No matter the result,
we all played our part.
There is no better way to finish
than hearing the final cheers of the crowd diminish.



The Unfortunate Delusion of a Promising Young Man

Michael Hymel '24

“Will I ever see him again?” thought Jim of his son Taylor. He had not seen his son in years, and these years had aged his appearance. He looked much older than most sixty-year-old men. His face had become wrinkled, his hair white. He sat and pondered about where his son was as he ran his frail fingers through the white hair of his beard. Their relationship had been strong only five years ago. That is when things began to change.

Taylor was a model son. He graduated valedictorian of his high school class while also playing on the football team. He was an athletic, healthy young man with a bright future ahead of him. He had received a full ride to Rice University,

which was close to where he and his father lived in Houston, Texas. He decided he would live at home with his father due to the close proximity to campus. He had done well in college the first two years and his father, Jim, was as proud of him as ever.

The summer before his junior year of college, his dad noticed some odd activity from him. Taylor would wake up in the night screaming in terror. Each time it happened, Jim was able to calm his son to return to sleep. Over time, these night terrors became more frequent, making Jim even more worried about his son.

One day Jim finally asked his son, “What’s causing you to wake up in terror in the middle of the night?”

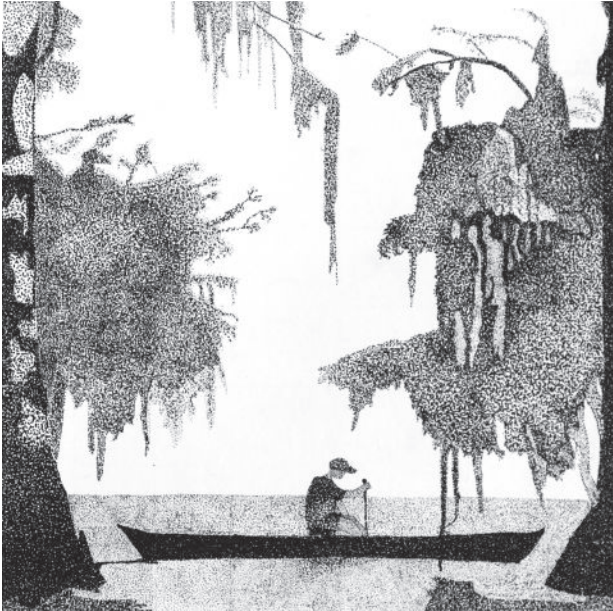
“I hear these voices, and they won’t shut up,” Taylor replied.

This response irked Jim because he knew this could mean something serious for his son. He decided to take Taylor to a psychiatrist to get his mental status checked. When Jim told Taylor about his idea to take him to the doctor, he lashed out against his father in opposition.

“There’s nothing wrong with me!” yelled Taylor.

“I’m just concerned about you. Your behavior has been odd, and I think you should get checked out. Do you not want the voices in your head to stop?” asked Jim.

“The voices have my best interest in



mind. They tell me what to do, and I listen. These voices are looking out for me more than you are.”

Jim was taken aback. He could not believe his son’s delusion. It was obvious to Jim that his son was not in a good mental state. He knew he would have to take more drastic measures to get his son help. So, he decided to call a psychiatrist.

“Hello, this is Jim Robinson, and I’m calling because my son has been showing signs of mental illness.”

“Hello Jim, this is Dr. Pierre speaking, what kind of signs has he been showing?”

“He’s been saying he hears voices in his head. When I tried to confront him about them, he said the voices in his head had his best interest in mind, even more than I do as his father.”

“Sir, these are some early symptoms of schizophrenia. If that’s the diagnosis, then these delusions and hallucinations will only get worse over time. How old is your son?”

“He’s twenty-two years old, about to go into his junior year of college. He is perfectly healthy and so young, how could he already be suffering from schizophrenia?”

“Well, Mr. Robinson, this condition is usually diagnosed in men from their early twenties to early thirties, so this could be what is going on here, but we can not be completely sure yet until I see him.”

“Okay, what should I do with my son now? He’s resisting me, and I don’t think he trusts me anymore.”

“You have to sit him down and tell him that you have to bring him to get professional help. That is your best option. If he resists, there’s nothing that we can

force him to do unless there’s a clear threat to himself or someone else.”

“I just don’t know how that’s going to go over with him based on how he reacted earlier. I can’t believe that this is happening to my boy. Thanks for your help, Dr. Pierre. I’ll be in touch.”

After he hung up the phone, the realization of the situation sank in for Jim: his son was likely dealing with mental illness and would never be the same person again. He began to weep knowing that his relationship with his son would never be the same. He loved his son so much, that he could not fathom losing his relationship with him. He hesitated to walk to his son’s room, but he pressed on and approached him. When he walked into his room, his son was holding a baseball bat in the corner of the gray-walled room next to his dresser filled with clothes.

“I heard you talking on the phone, Dad! I do not need any help from you! If you call that doctor again, there will be consequences for you! There is nothing wrong with me now. In fact, I feel better off with these voices in my head. I do not need you in my life anymore. I will just go on my own.”

“So, you’re just going to throw your life away, huh? What about finishing school?”

“I don’t need to go to school anymore, the voices told me so. The people there are after me, just like you.”

Jim wept, “Son, you need help. If you’re not willing to accept it from me, then there’s nothing I can do for you. I guess the only option for you now is to go live on your own.”

“I also think that is the best solution here, at least that’s what the voices say.”

“Put down that bat and get out of here, if that’s what you want, but always remember that I am your father and I love you. I can get you help if you want it.”

“Alright, that’s just what I’ll do. I’ll go and live on my own. I don’t need you anymore. I have what I need in my head, they know my destiny.”

After this encounter, Taylor packed up a bag of his clothes and a few personal belongings and walked away. All Jim could do was cry as he watched his son, overcome with a false sense of reality, leave him.

Jim was very worried about his son, but

he knew there was nothing he could do for him at this point. As the days turned to months and the months to years, he still had not seen or heard from his son. One day, a few years after his son had left, Jim looked in the mirror and was astonished at how old he looked. The grief and stress that his son had caused him had taken a toll on his appearance. It was tough for him to live a normal life after his son left him, although he never stopped waiting for his son to return. Taylor’s mental illness almost had as much of an impact on Jim’s life as it did on Taylor’s.



Remembrance

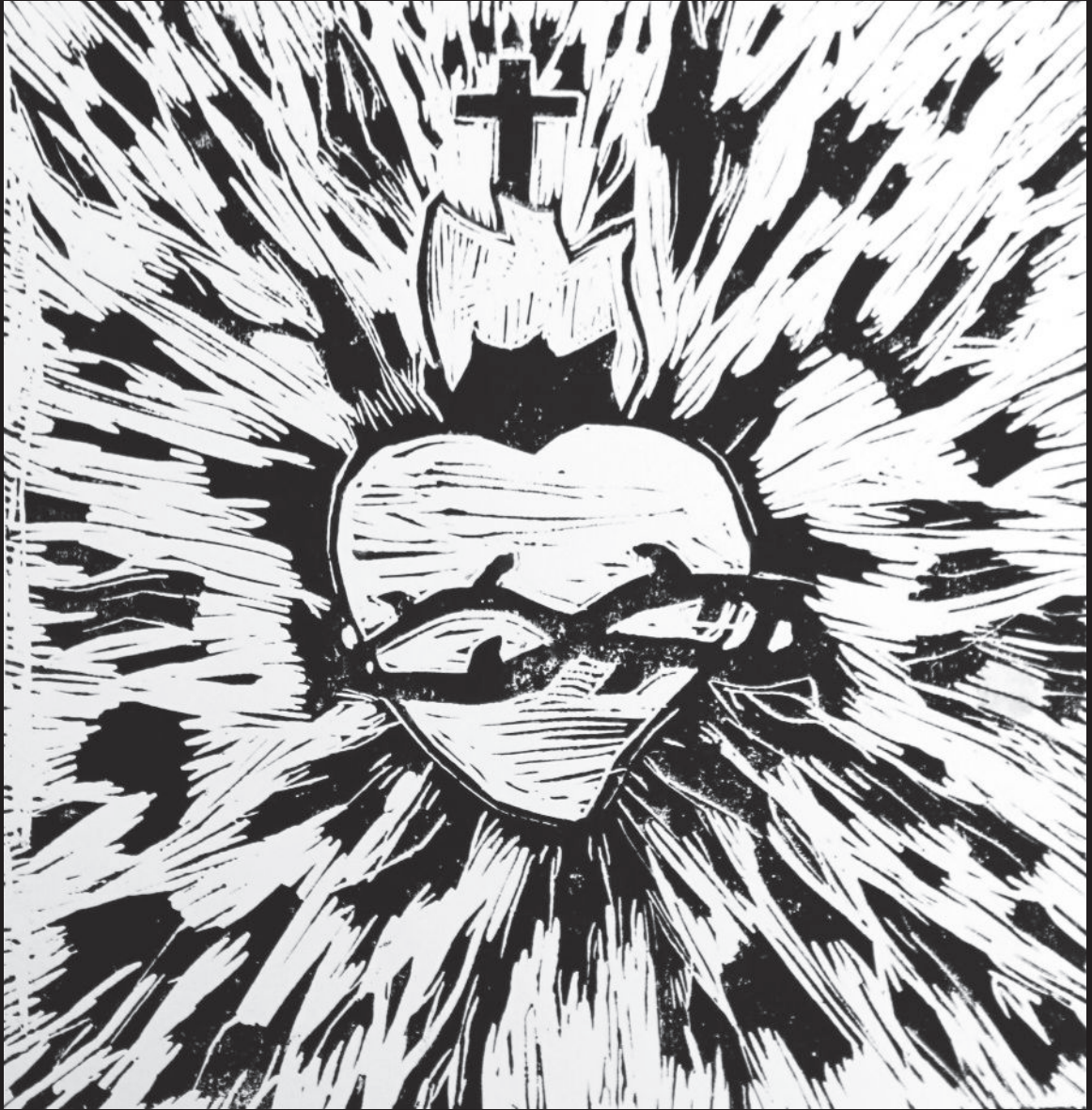
Grant Goings '25

We bleed crimson
We live gold
I walked onto the floor,
my heart feeling a little sore.
As our routine started
my fears departed.

We bleed crimson
We live gold
The loud music crashing,
the crowd thrashing,
my muscles aching;
I am shaking.

We bleed crimson
We live gold
Our routine hit zero;
everyone was a hero.
It was serene.
It all felt like a dream.





BROTHER  **MARTIN**
Religious Values Academic Excellence Personal Attention Friendly Discipline