

The Agathist

Fall 2024

Issue 15



The Agathist

ISSUE 15

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Advisor's Note

MR. DICKSON

An agathist is "one who thinks all things tend toward an ultimate good." This is different from optimism. An optimist looks at a crummy situation and says "There is some good in here somewhere," while an agathist looks at a crummy situation and says "there will be some good that emerges from this." It's a subtle difference, but an important one.

Isn't art a form of agathism? Yes, there is trauma in the world-- just read the words, look at the images here and see. But also, look at the art, look at the essays and poems. See the beauty that rises from these bad things? That's art. That's why the magazine is named what it is: the tendency to find glory in the chaos, even when the good and bad coexist.

I'm proud of this issue, for the risks taken by the artists and writers. Also, I'm proud of the staff. Y'all put together a banger of an issue.

Thanks to the GHS admin for your support of this magazine. There's important work going on between these digital covers: thanks for recognizing how important it is.

Be well, reader, and we'll see you next semester.

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The Little Leaf

ASHTON SMITH, 11 POETRY

I am the little leaf
Being swayed in the wind
I watch as they walk by with this slight little grin
From summer to Autumn when my body turns to brown
I watch the beauty of the world, but now from the ground
I am the little leaf, the most stunning in town
I catch attention, by not making a sound
Kids come and play
And sweep me up into piles
Grown-ups come and observe
"Oh, there are so many styles"
But little do they know
I have no tree to grow
My time has come, and now it must go
But don't cry, or even hang your head low
a new little leaf will eventually show



Last Ride of the Season

EVAN HUANG, 12 PHOTOGRAPHY

Treasure Chest

SHELBY HOLT, 12 POETRY

Will I ever be found?
Will I ever get out?
Will I ever reach the surface again?
My treasures within were once held so dear.
Now I am locked away,
Hidden with what she doesn't want near.
Why is everything surrounding so dreadful?
I am filled with joy!
Why am I here?
After one phone call,
Everything got locked away.
I would do anything,
If they just let me out today.
Where am I going?
I'm rising!
I'm getting out!
Just to fall back down.
Down to the bottom of the heart once again.
An endless cycle where I can't help but frown.



Puddin' Party

MILLIE TURNAGE, 12 CRAYON

Chameleon

ANONYMOUS, POETRY

for the ones that want to rewind

The two "friends" simple conversations
held as much joy as sorrow,
a memorable past against an uncomfortable future
the remarks made in passing that now cover up their faded love.

(Now she's spiraling, missing what was,
but dreading the fact that life still moves forward
He's impassive, unaffected by the results of his own actions,
or, for that matter, the lack of actions ever shown.)

Fact is, there's reasons for such impactful change
that some may never even comprehend.

If there is no trust, there can't be truth.

Her sensitivity controlled her
and every disconnected moment they shared was "her fault."
Not a moment of questioning the compatibility,
But only of questioning her every move.

(Now he doesn't care, only focused on when to end it all,
but never giving her a clue as to why
What she thought was a defect to her character,
was simply his choice of screaming silence.)

Fact is, there's reasons for her confusing change
that he may never comprehend.

If there is no communication, there can't be closure.

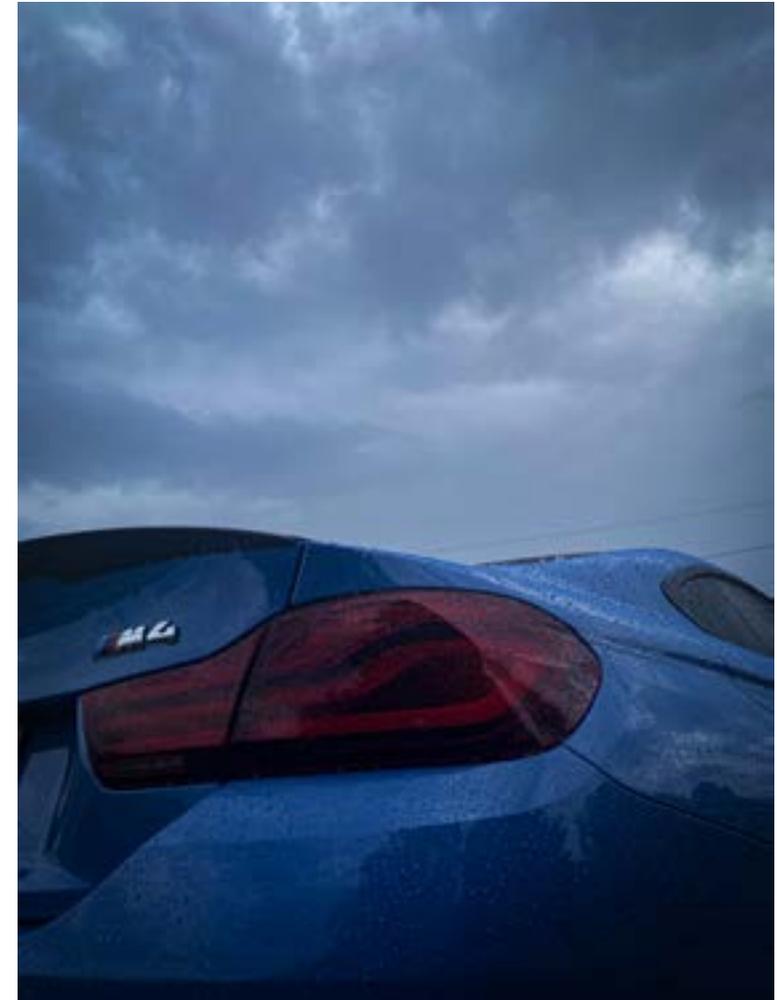


Cutie Pie

MILLIE TURNAGE, 12 CERAMIC

SPIN

EVAN HUANG, 12 PHOTOGRAPHY



Laguna Seca

EVAN HUANG, 12 PHOTOGRAPHY

Younger Years

ANONYMOUS, POETRY

I long to go to sleep without those tears in my eyes
To know what love is without wondering
To stop waiting and wishing and hoping for it to be,
To leave these younger years behind

I quite like these younger years
With the porch lights and the soft November air
And the days on end when he never leaves my thoughts
With the stolen little moments from miles away

But I wish they were gone so I could be happy
I wish the distance was finally closed
I wish all four eyes were open to see
Because the younger years were quite happy,
But soon happier we will be



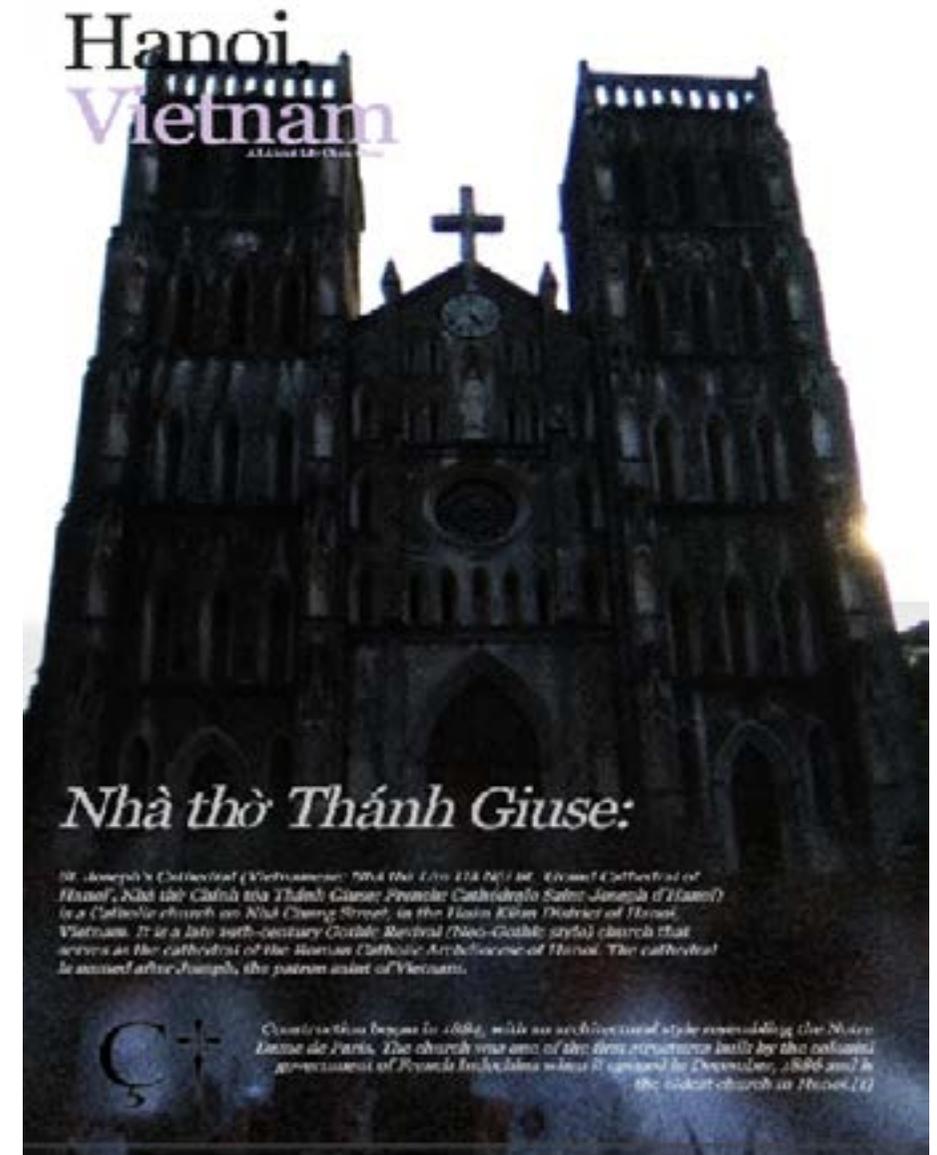
Mourning Clouds

LEO TINGLE, 11 PHOTOGRAPHY

Shade of You

CLARK ESTESS & CHANNING HARDY, 12 POETRY

My shadow ever looming
The light changes its face
And the moon comes out dazzling and beautiful
Yet unseen without a star
The sun is ever blazing
The moon is ever changing
Each day a new face, some love some hate with disgrace
But the sun you come to love no matter the day
Yet brief an eclipse can darken the sky
And It can blind those who stay to linger
For their sight will be gone when the true light comes
Unable to see, unable to believe, unable to handle
The pure light shining through
Because after the moon passes,
That is you



Hanoi, Vietnam

JAYLON PHIPPS, 11 GRAPHIC DESIGN

Sunday at 2:07 PM

KY ARMITAGE, 12 FICTION

The jacket I keep in the passenger seat is tossed in the backseat as my friends get in the car. My glasses sit in the cupholder, having been traded for my sunglasses. The radio stays off as I drive. I'd much rather listen to the symphony of petty arguments I pay no attention to. The visor I flipped down earlier does nothing to block the sunlight from my eyes. I pull into the parking lot of the little coffee shop and move my glasses to the catch-all in front of the cupholders. My friends go in while I stay in the car, leaving me to relax in the quiet. I turn the AC down and close my eyes. It's early afternoon and the sun is bright, yet the air holds the same calm as just after dusk, or just before dawn. Maybe it's my car, maybe it's because I can sit here undisturbed. I open my eyes and let them follow the crack in my windshield. Long and thin, spanning across the bottom of the glass. My gaze shifts to the door of the shop, my friends coming towards my car with drinks in hand. They all climb in when the doors unlock and the air is disturbed once more. Talking and laughing and ideas of where to go next. The conversation fades into white noise as I drive towards the park we decided on.

When we get to the park, I follow my friends to the swings. And I stay there even when they run off to the seesaw that just opened up. Kids run around and scream and race each other to the jungle gym. Despite the noise, it's peaceful. I can see my friends taking turns with some kids on the seesaw, their laughter carrying across the playground. Parents sit on benches, holding dogs and infants and purses, calling kids over to get a snack or to leave or to gently scold them for pushing another kid. My head is loud but the park is louder and I gently push myself back and forth on the swing. Back and forth, forward and back, the chains creaking a little too loud when I swing a little too hard. I don't know how much time has passed before my friends are coming up to me and saying they're ready to go. I blink and get up and follow them to my car, fishing my keys from my back pocket and pressing the unlock button twice. And once everyone is in and buckled, I pull out of the parking lot while the car fills with laughter once more.



Down Low

EVAN HUANG, 12 PHOTOGRAPHY

Scream

ARIEL MORRIS, 11 POETRY

Scream
Now.
Jump out of your skin
and marvel

Scream
Make your chords wish
They weren't given your body

Echo, ricochet
bullets off mountains and skyscrapers
if the people don't hear you
Whisper in God's ear

Man, scream!
If not with your voice
then body, and soul
You are here now
The quiet is for the grass plains
And the water resting on the horizon
Forever and Eternal
You don't know the names of

So. Just. Scream.



At The Beach #2

JAYLON PHIPPS, 11 PHOTOGRAPHY

Betty

LEO TINGLE, 11 POETRY

I'm tired of your presence in my mind,
Every blade of grass, every branch swaying,
With every molecule you're intertwined,
Embedded, even in thoughts fraying,
I sit in the pews at funerals and sob
For all those I've lost, above and below,
Anguish so violent, it'll indefinitely throb,
No time to breathe, no time to grow,
You're the only person I desire comfort from,
So I wait for a day that'll never come.



Stating the Obvious

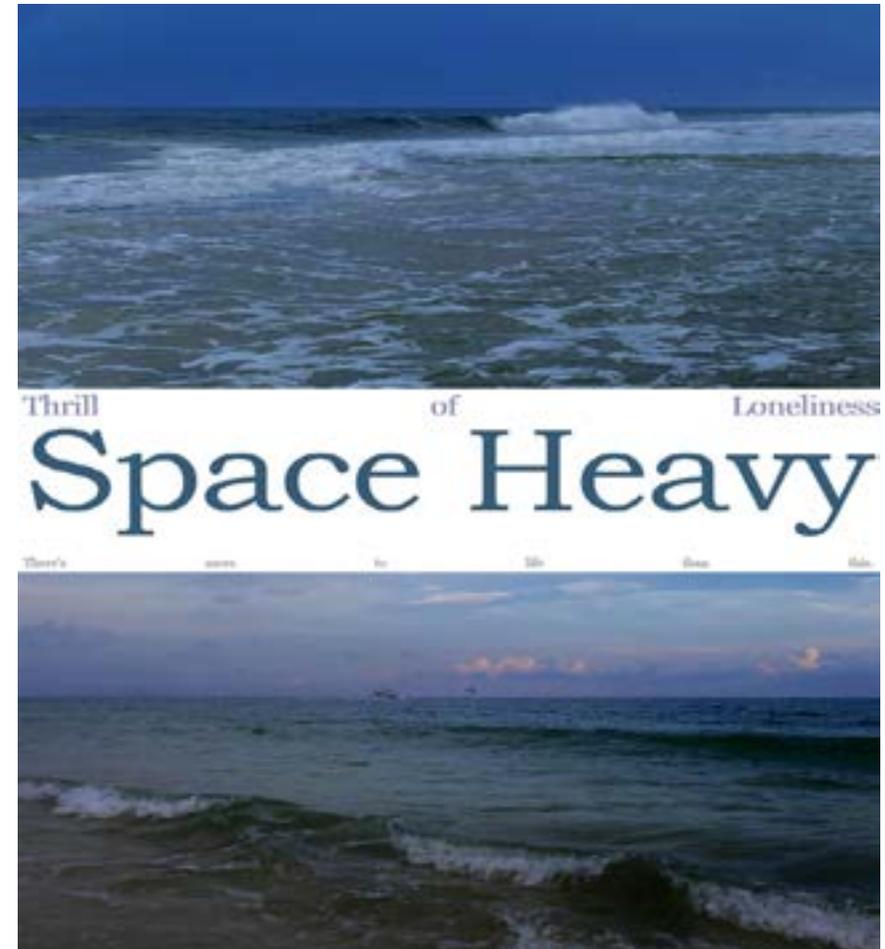
LEO TINGLE, 11 PHOTOGRAPHY

Wings of Life

CLARK ESTESS, 12 POETRY

Dear life,
What is the truth of your meaning?
Is it you that fills us or us that fills you?
Is living without knowing so bad?
In the myriad of the universe explored, you've been found little.
Are you hiding elsewhere?
With new discovery of life will we find new meaning?
You only have meaning if we believe you do.
You hold no power over us.
What does an ant think of your meaning after being stomped by a toddler?
Why does man change their perspective of the weight you hold?
Does man believe life is meaningless?
Does a longer life make it all the more meaningful?
Does a meaningful existence matter?
Of all your presence on Earth none try to find deeper meaning except man.
Why do other animals live if they don't have a purpose?
What is the point of survival if you don't understand why you're surviving?
Why is reproduction so encoded when you aren't even sure why you were born?
Those you fill with life use you to fill more.
Is the meaning of life to create more if it?
What about the life taken in the process?
Why is it that when you leave it is mourned?
Are the tears cried for the dead real?
We feel them so of course they are real.
Does that mean your meaning is to have others mourn you when you pass?
Maybe for some.
Why is it that when a new life is birthed it is celebrated?
Does this mean you inherently have meaning?
Is your meaning that you create meaning?
Are you wings upon which we are given the ability to fly?
We still have legs.

Some race past others in flight.
Some wings get old while the body is still young.
Some fly in groups.
Others choose to walk.
You are not flight.
You do not raise us off our feet into the sky.
You do not guide our hand to walk.
When you end do you collect our wings?
Do the wings vanish?
Are the wings given to others to help them in flight?
Life, you don't have any meaning.
All you do is present a choice.
Do we walk or do we fly?



Thrill of Loneliness

JAYLON PHIPPS, 11 GRAPHIC DESIGN

At The Beach #1

JAYLON PHIPPS, 11 PHOTOGRAPHY



The Final Goodbye

BELLA BRIDGES, 12 NONFICTION

On that bright and optimistic Wednesday morning with temperatures in the high 80s and no clouds in sight, the bubble of happiness surrounding me was about to pop. Over these past four months, life consisted of working baseball games, hanging out with friends, and spending time with him, the boyfriend of a teenage girl's dreams. As those crystal blue eyes, like the color of the bluest oceans, locked with my wonderstruck eyes that January night, I knew he was going to be my favorite person. I still look for those electric blue eyes in every crowd.

Ding!

The phone's ringtone brought me out of my reverie as I turned it over to reveal the smiling faces of two people in love, or what a teenage mind considered love. This photo of us looking at each other, like we were the only two people in the world, is now only a distant memory. As words filled the screen, the long-forgotten smile on my face abruptly turned into a grimace while I felt the newfound tears sting the back of my eyes.

"Hey, can I stop by after I'm done golfing? I won't be there as long today," he texted.

I frantically responded with "Sure just let me know what time," as his emotionless text became distorted.

The tears refused to stay hidden any longer, and my heart pounded as frantically as the heart of a runner who had just crossed the finish line. Surprised, I shakily raised a hand to my eyes to feel the betraying teardrops, and I felt the slight cracking of my heart while my brain attempted to convince myself to hold it together.

Just hold it together until he comes over. Just hold it together until you talk in person.

Finally, I received the long-awaited text from my executioner. The word "here" echoed loudly through my head while I walked to what seemed like an execution.

Breathe in. Hold for five seconds. Breathe out.

With each step, I could feel each crack of my heart breaking.

Crack, crack, crack.

As my eyes met the cold exterior of the black truck that held bittersweet memories, I could envision each moment we shared together: the hugs goodbye, the races after dinner, and the jam sessions in his front seat. They silently whispered goodbye as if this was the last time we would see each other.

Nonetheless, I slowly lifted myself inside, and I rubbed my hands up and down the smooth interior below me to commit the softness of the seats into memory. With each second that ticked by, I felt each moment from riding together race through my mind: the cold air blew on my hair the same way it did when we rode with the windows down, and the sun shined in my eyes like it did when I looked at him fondly while he drove. But when I looked into those guilt-filled eyes, I knew this was the last time I would sit in the front seat of the truck I had grown accustomed to.

"Is there a certain reason you came over, or did you just want to talk?" I asked while dread slowly crept up my spine.

With a sigh he replied, "Actually there is a reason I came over. I just feel like we have different personalities and futures, and this isn't going to work out."

"What do you mean different personalities? I don't understand why you want to break up. Please, do not do this," I begged as those treacherous tears returned, "Please, do not ruin this."

"I think we should break up. I love you, and I love your family. I love being your boyfriend and being together, but I also feel like I haven't been a good boyfriend to you, and you deserve better," he replied as sadness overflowed inside those ocean-blue eyes I used to love looking at.

Time seemed like it had stopped. I could no longer feel the softness of the seat below me or the sun in my eyes. It felt as if I was trapped inside a nightmare with no escape. My mouth opened, as if to say something, but no words would come to the surface. Only those traitorous tears responded. I felt them cascade down my cheeks as I looked into the eyes of a person who promised to never leave. A person whose eyes were now only filled with sadness. How could someone who loved me look at me like I was the one hurting him?

When it was time to say that final goodbye, I stared into those ocean-blue eyes one last time while my hand hovered over the door that led to a life without him.

A life without those crystal blue eyes I locked eyes with all those months ago.

Heart

KINSLEY POOLE, 11 POETRY

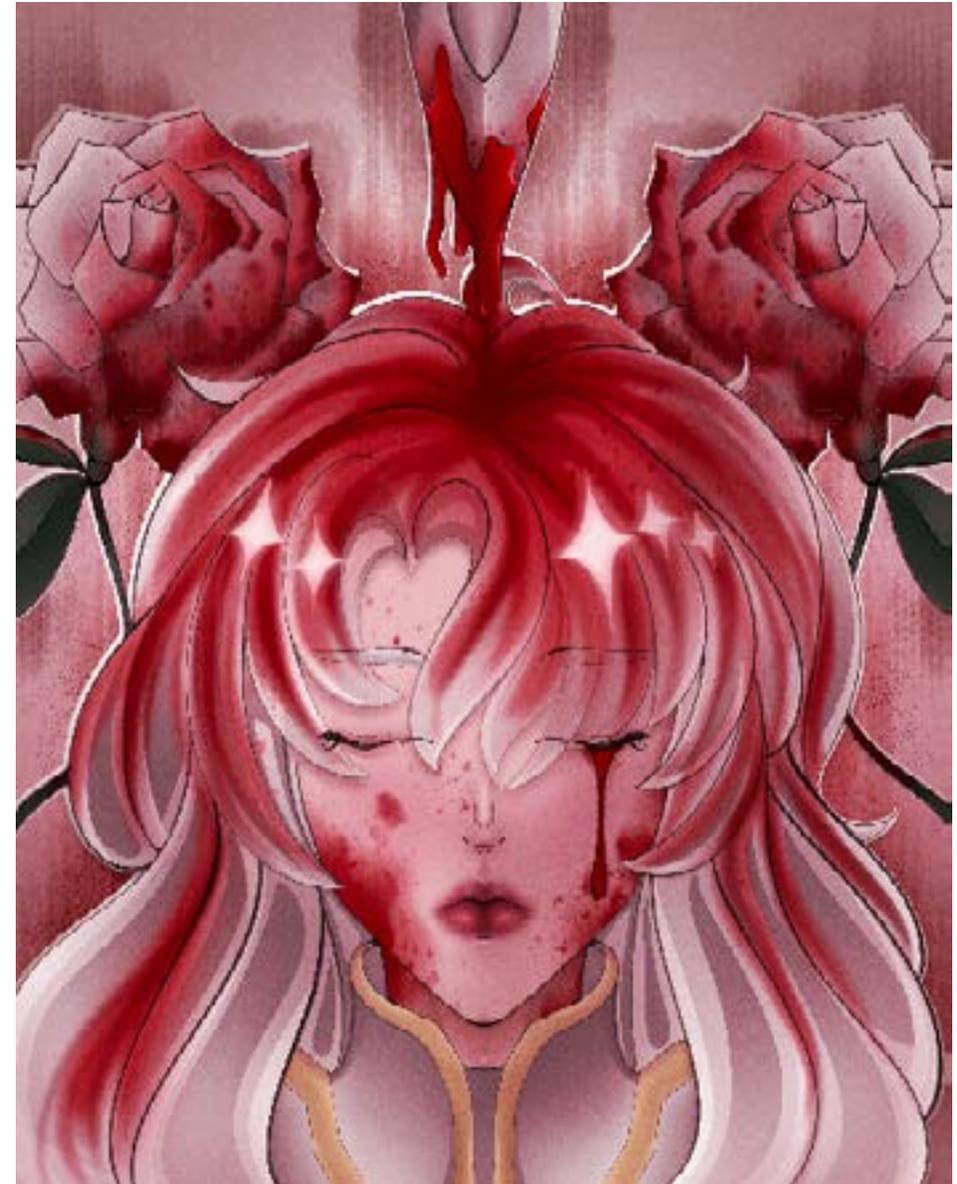
The emptiness I once felt takes its leave.
I throb with anticipation of the future,
Every beat stronger than the last

I know that everybody dies someday
But my time might be sooner.
I don't know how to live without my lonely.

Blood that rushes through me, warming me.
Warmth is a strange feeling,
Especially after being so cold.

Struggling against my morality,
Slouching towards a better future.
Begging to be heard.

It's hard out here
For a cold and lonely Heart.



Knight of Beauty

ALLY BROWN, 12 DIGITAL ART

Gifted

SCARLETT ROLPH, 11 POETRY

A simple word which leaves a permanent scar.
With this word, you take advantage of a child's desire for recognition.
You engrave fixed ideas into a brain built to grow.
We are stuck climbing hills without knowing of mountains.
When you touch the stars, where else can you reach?
Only feeding on the culmination of our achievements,
We choose starvation over a plate of our failure.
It feels like drowning in the expectations of the ones meant to teach us
how to swim.
I cry for help as I'm consumed by the impossible goals you've placed
upon me,
But you only listen for my success.
I give you everything I have, hoping it will be enough.
I disappoint myself in attempts to make you proud.



Ether

JAYLON PHIPPS, 11 GRAPHIC DESIGN

The Beginning

LAUREN LAND, 12 NONFICTION

The dry heat bounced off the sticky, black, road and was swept away by a light breeze passing through. "Welcome to Arches National Park." I was in the car drawing pictures of the rock formations as we drove to a hiking trail in the area: The Devil's Garden.

I looked out of the window and said, "Ooh look, there's baby Jesus!! Do you see his head and Mary's arms wrapping around him?"

Mom turned to look, "Yeah, I can see that."

"OH! Look at that camel, or the three wise men over there!"

Kathryn looked out of her window and stared at the rock formations: "Just looks like a rock to me."

A little while later, we arrived at The Devil's Garden and stepped out of the car to take a picture. The light shined in my eyes, and I began to sweat. I stopped and took in my surroundings. The dirt rushed in quick whooshing swifts around my ankles and the darkness of the upcoming trail danced around the shadows of my features. I let my gaze stare into the brightness of the morning. Something was wrong.

I asked my parents to wait up and I went to the car to grab a snack. I snatched some trail mix from our snack bag and walked back to my family. I felt slow. Lauren, hurry up. Something is wrong. Maybe I'm just hot. All I have to do is walk this trail and then I'll be done. I've hiked before, and I really enjoyed it.

Lauren, come on. You can do this.

My dad pointed the camera for a selfie. "Say cheese!!"

"Chee..."

The ground felt the way I had imagined it. Dirt was smudged on my legs, and I felt like I had just run a marathon. Does anyone have any water? Where am I? Who was behind me? Why is my head propped up on someone's lap? Why did Kathryn look like she was going to cry? Why do I feel nothing? Why do I feel nothing?

"LAUREN, ARE YOU OKAY??? Kathryn, go get me that park ranger over there. Steven, call 911!! LAUREN, TALK TO ME!!"

I can't. I can't move, much less talk. Foam had clearly dripped out of my mouth and dried on the corners of my cheeks.

"Help..." I murmured into my mom's ear.

A cute park ranger crouched beside my sister, who looked very upset. I felt like I had aged years in just five minutes. I got wrapped in a space blanket as I tried to remember what happened.

Sirens squealed frantically and I was whisked away by the paramedics.

I took my pills at night now. The ones in the morning made me too sleepy. Some made me angry and upset. But no matter how angry, or upset, or exhausted I was, I took my life-giving, life-gripping medications. I take a pill; I crawl out of bed, baggy-eyed, or red-faced, or weak. I don't take a pill; I don't know. I don't know when my life could end. I could thrash in the bathtub and drown. I could swerve on the road and crash. I could sit at my desk and bang my head against the floor as I fall down in unknown desperation.

So, I took my life-giving, life-gripping medications. To me, my life was a ticking time bomb that the school shook until I wouldn't ring anymore. I would go to school, friendless, fondles of the time I spent there, waiting to go home. The voices in my head told me that there were expectations, expectations confirmed by classmates and teachers and the world. I needed to succeed. I was supposed to be at the top of my class. Don't cry. You have everything you could ever want. You have a nice family and a house and a good education. Be happy for yourself. Be happy for yourself.

It's hard to be happy for yourself when you aren't yourself.

My mom had given me a sticky note to read every time I went to band. It said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." I was toying with it in the kitchen when my mom's voice floated through the air, "Maybe it would be good to try an ADD medication. Let's try Vivance. Would you take this pill for me, sweetheart? Here, have some water."

I cupped my red Fycompa and blue Vivance pill in my hand and haphazardly threw them into the back of my throat. At this point, it didn't matter what pills I took. I was done. I walked off to go to bed.

What was that? Help! I couldn't move, couldn't breathe, couldn't relax.

There were rats on my walls. What was that noise? Is there something there? Yes, there was! RIGHT THERE! THERE WERE RATS ON MY WALLS. Lauren, it is just a nightmare. You're okay. I started to sweat. IT NEEDED TO GO AWAY. HELP!! I clutched my mattress. Go get mom. GET HELP. *Lauren, go get help.* I panted out of bed and weakly ran to my mom's room.

"Help; there are rats on my wall," I said meekly.

My parents gave me a hug and got a flashlight. They shined it on my ceiling and on my walls. "There's nothing there," My dad went back to bed and my mom stayed with me that night, and the night after, and the two after that. The fifth day, we quit taking the red pill, and I curled up into a ball in my shower. Please, let me not be haunted by the demons that swarmed my head. Please. Please. I let the water drip down my head as I tried to relax. I can't do this on my own. Who am I fighting for? What am I here for? I clutched my head and began to cry. Help.

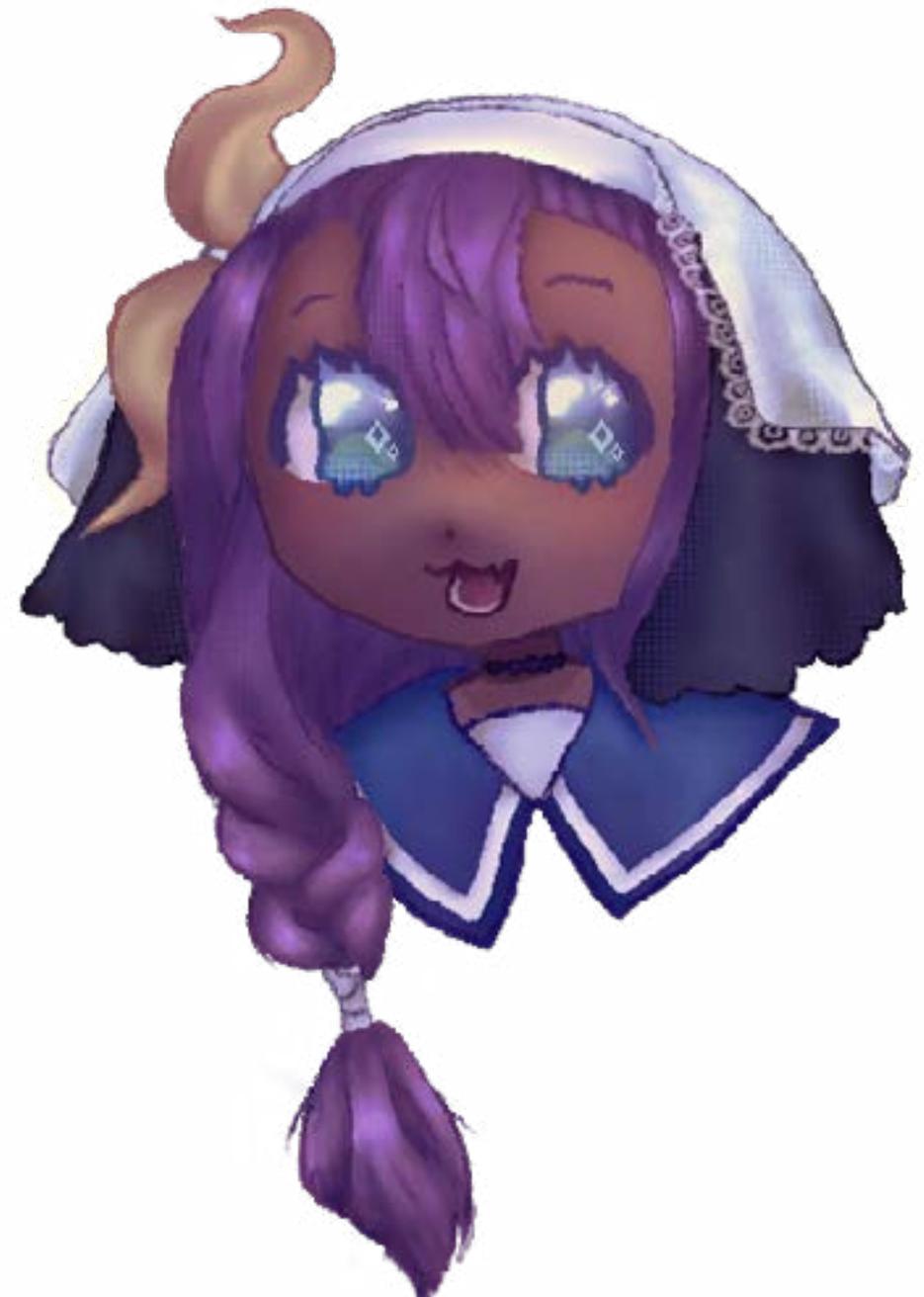
The words on mom's sticky note vibrated in my head: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." I gasped. Everything that I had been learning about in church made sense now. Jesus Christ was my help.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God..."

I remembered my pastor baptizing someone in our church. "Buried in Christ in baptism, raised to walk in the newness of life."

I stepped out of the shower full of life and courage. Thank God.

This was my beginning.



Twinkle in My Eye

MILLIE TURNAGE 12, DIGITAL ART

Oils & Such

JAYLON PHIPPS, 11 GRAPHIC DESIGN

石油掘削装置

plate-forme pétrolière:

Oil Rig

(giàn khoan dầu)

An oil platform (also called an oil rig, offshore platform, oil production platform, etc.) is a large structure with facilities to extract and process petroleum and natural gas that lie in rock formations beneath the seabed. Many oil platforms will also have facilities to accommodate the workers, although it is also common to have a separate accommodation platform linked by bridge to the production platform. Most commonly, oil platforms engage in activities on the continental shelf, though they can also be used in lakes, inshore waters, and inland seas. Depending on the circumstances, the platform may be fixed to the ocean floor, consist of an artificial island, or float [1]. In some arrangements the main facility may have storage facilities for the processed oil. Remote subsea wells may also be connected to a platform by flow lines and by umbilical connections. These sub-sea facilities may include one or more subsea wells or manifold centres for multiple wells.

منصة النفط

The environmental impact of the petroleum industry is extensive and expensive due to petroleum having many uses. Crude oil and natural gas are primary energy and raw material sources that enable numerous aspects of modern daily life and the world economy. Their supply has grown quickly over the last 150 years to meet the demands of the rapidly increasing human population, creativity, knowledge, and consumption [1].

brug

I find joy in blossoming trees.
On this day I lowered beneath one.
The burning sensation gifted by the Sun
Could only be soothed by its cool shade.

I found great tranquility in this solution,
But it could not last long.
For creeping in the distance was time.
Half-past 1 o'clock, the sun was here.

At its happiest.
Washing over me I felt the warmth.
Breathing over me I accepted it.
With the light, came peace.

A fluttering common swift made
Rounds about me.
I drifted off,
Savoring the constant freedom in paradise.

10/14

NATALIA BAKER, 12 POETRY

SpongeBob's 25th Anniversary!

KENNEDY COX, 12 DIGITAL ART



Kirby Says Hi

RAJENDRA QUILLIN, 12 DIGITAL ART

Holly Hill

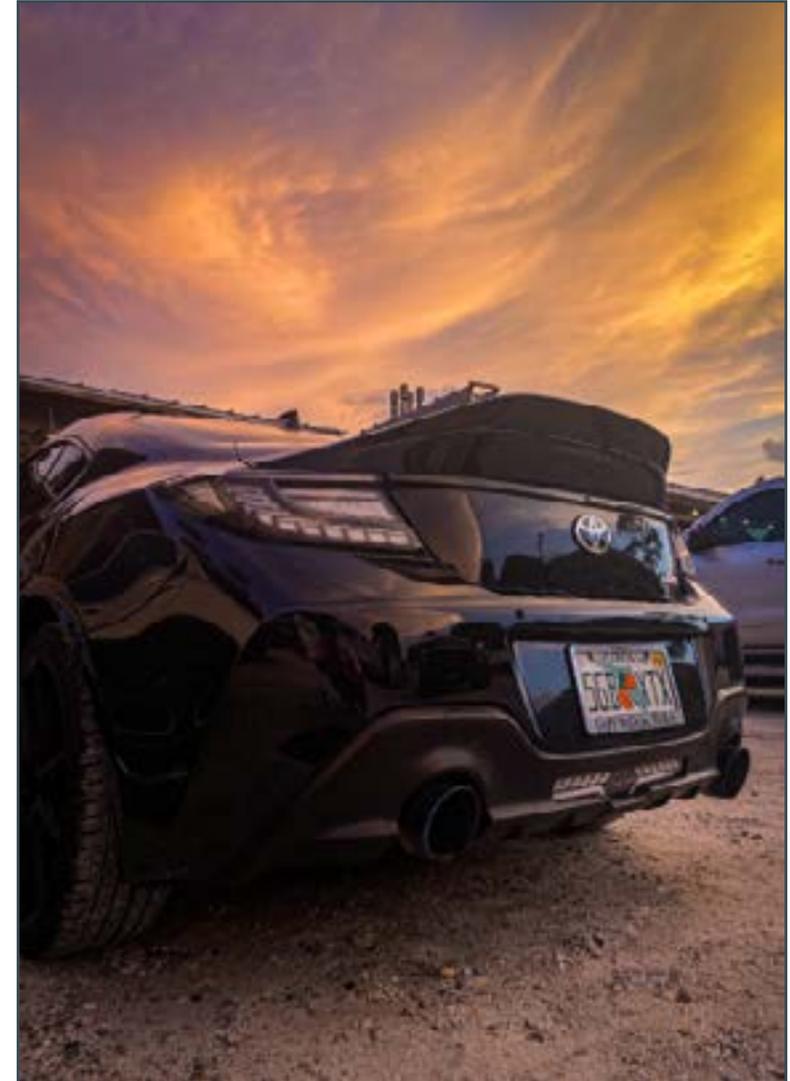
AUSTIN LOVE, 12 POETRY

Shadows creep over the trees while the pinks, blues, & whites threaten to seep down with them. I beg Them to stay lest sleep overtake me.

I sit on a hard but oddly serene wooden bench, hoping to finish this before the bugs come out, which I fear already have. A farmer cusses & chases about five cows along the fence line as they protest.

Day birds sing their closing songs, while Owls sound their opening. Cars zip by just as I should have, but I am no longer like them. I exist here & now.

Thanks be to God.



Sunshine State

EVAN HUANG, 12 PHOTOGRAPHY