

# Welkin

Fraser High School 2009





wel-kin

- noun, chiefly literary  
the sky; the vault of heaven

cover photo by :  
Shane Devuono, 12

# Featured

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Shane Devuono  
Julie Gallo  
Alex Hannon  
Paul Karas  
Amanda Lawson  
Katie Leonatti  
Shauna Malesh  
Nicholas Mardis  
Chancellor Monnette  
Alexsis Mual  
Mike Paola  
Matt Romanski  
Jesse Speelman  
Morgan Stovall

## *Writers:*

Gabriella Alcamo  
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Teasia Bingham  
John Butler  
Sean Delisi  
Brian Dionne  
Brianna Dionne  
Julie Gallo  
Craig Geldner  
Michael Girard  
Aleshea Groce  
Emily Horodko  
Amanda Mayer  
Kara Mitchell  
Cameron Nuss  
Heather Rigby  
Becky Shroyer  
Kathrina Skurda  
Jesse Speelman  
Jonathon Tostige

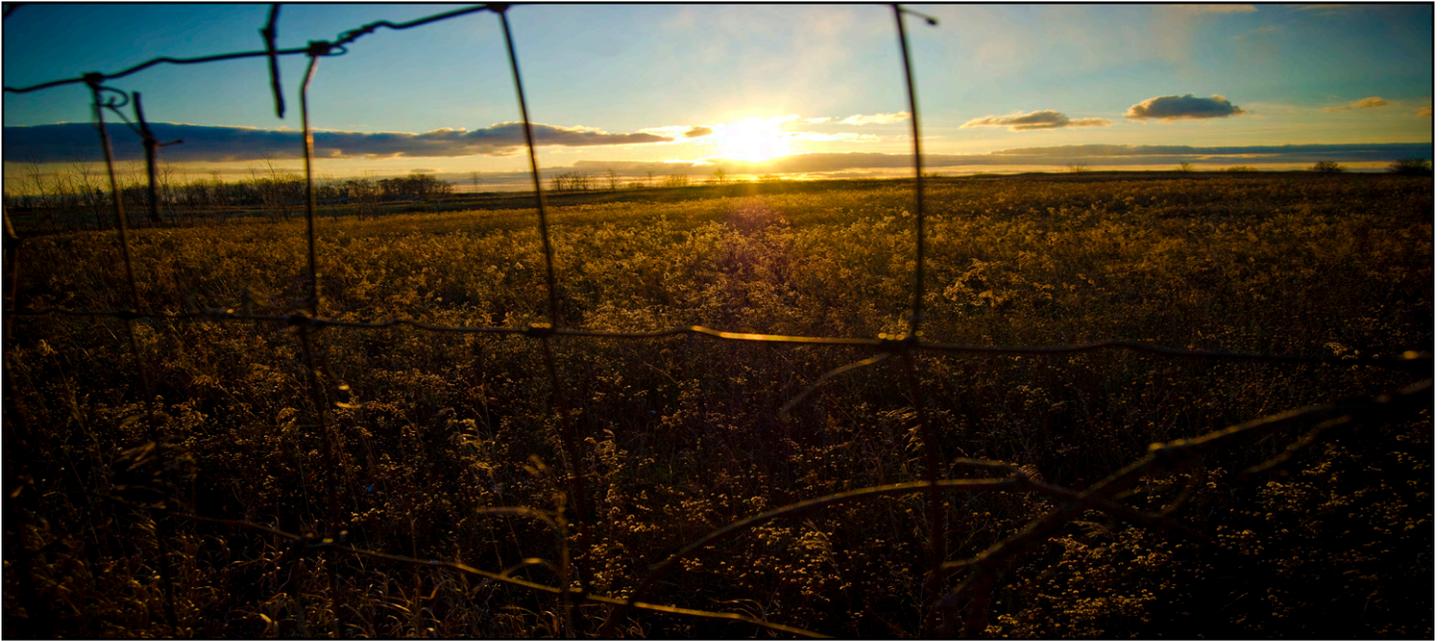


Photo By: Jesse Speelman, 12

## *Two Pillars*

Cameron Nuss, 12

*Two Pillars stand together alone,  
with stolid envy imbued on each façade.  
One with Ivy weaving and coiling,  
the other cracking and spoiling.  
Time has gone but beauty,  
it remains.  
And they glisten  
In the gold heat of the day.  
The wind passes by, crying for heresy  
from the Mother it knows,  
For the Ivy to grow  
and the cracks to slow.  
But all in vain it seems,  
because it is that force  
which takes out our breath,  
that spends and extends our limits,  
and that controls and contorts us,  
that the Pillars bend to.  
But the sun sets, and  
off on the horizon,  
Two Pillars stand true,  
until time runs through every crack  
and wilts every leaf.*

## *Bird, Sun, Wind, Sea*

Kara Mitchell, 12

*If you were a bird,  
Would you fly above me?  
Would you nest in the highest branches  
Out of my reach?*

*If you were the sun,  
Would you blind me?  
Would you shine too bright  
So I'd never see you leave?*

*If you were the wind,  
Would you blow me away?  
Would you steal my breath  
So I had nothing to say?*

*If you were the sea,  
Would you sweep me away?  
Would you strand me on your shores  
For the rest of my days?*

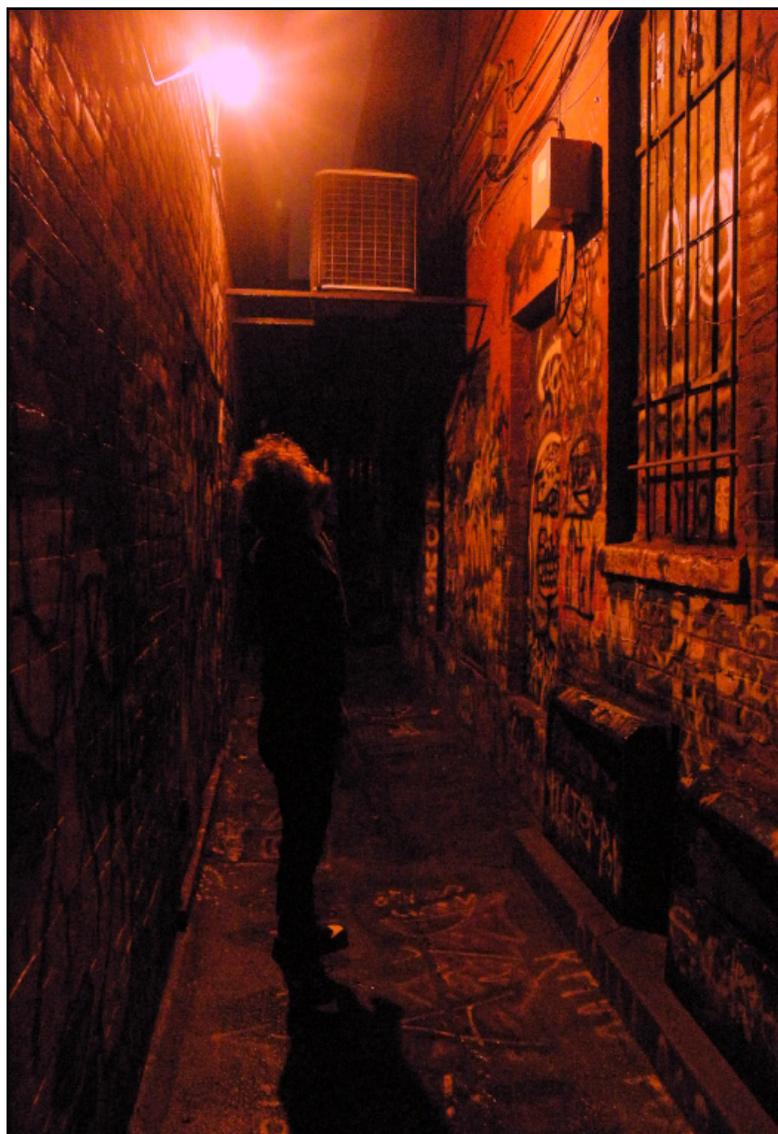
*If you were mine,  
Would you stand by me?  
Would you love me more than  
Birds, sun, wind, sea?*

# The City That Never Sleeps

Gabriella Alcamo, 12

The frigid air, the neon lights, the endless traffic in slush filled streets; it was New York City in the mood for Christmas. The everyday sound of car horns now a melody. Each honk, beep, and 'screw you' was practically sung. On the sidewalk, last minute shoppers press through the crowds, heels clacking against iced concrete, poise held completely. The diverse city crams thousands of people on its streets day after day. They fill with well-dressed women with up-turned noses; rushed businessmen clutching briefcases close; homeless men wrapped tightly in blankets. This fantastic mess of a city was now my surrounding. I sit in the backseat of a rusting, aging cab. Its cracked leather crinkles under my thighs as I shift impatiently in my seat. The cab rests idle at the curb.

My attention is drawn back inside when the driver clears his throat. I glance at his reflection in the rear view mirror. He had a woeful sort of aura about him: his eyes, dark and lonely; his face, weathered and slightly wrinkled; his dark hair, flecked with grey. "Have you decided whether or not you want out?" He turned in his seat to face me. His thick accent served as a reminder of where I was, as if I needed reminding. "Eh, lady?" I looked out the window again. High above the bustling streets stood The Four Seasons, menacing and obelisk like. Its light white structure cut the dark winter sky. "No," I said. He sighed. "Arrright, it's your money."



In truth, I knew that I needed to get out and face this city, stand alone...or run out of money. Since the latter was much less appealing, I shook my head. "Erm, I mean yes." He raised his eyebrow at me animatedly. I pulled my bag up on my lap and got out my wallet. "Thanks." I said, as I handed the cash forward. Stepping out into the bitter air, I jerked my carry-on bag onto my shoulder and slammed the door behind me. The man poked his head out the window. "Have a great holiday, yeah?" With a sideways salute, the cabbie pulled into the wreck of traffic and left me alone in front of the hotel. I took a deep breath, the air icing my lungs. A man begging for money stopped in front of me. His clothes were near rags on his frame, but he couldn't have been a day over 20. I looked into his lonesome green eyes and reached into my pocket. I smiled, handing him what little change I had. Instead of putting forth his can, he took my hand in his. "Welcome to the city that never sleeps, love," he said, his voice rough, "welcome to hell."

Photo By: Matt Romanski, 12

# Love Letter

Teasia Bingham, 12

*Every day I could feel his stare,  
He sat behind me quietly  
Watching, and I wasn't scared.  
He was just a boy, and it was just one class.*

*His brown hair flopped across his face  
Obscuring his vision for a time  
Phoenix wasn't on my mind...  
But he thought of me.  
He was just a boy, and it was just one class.*

*One day later in the year a folded paper sat  
perched upon my desk, waiting.  
Inside the words screamed.  
He was just a boy, and it was just one class.*

*But, he loved me.*

*My heart hammered in my ears,  
My face paled, I couldn't breathe.*

*His imperfections suddenly jumped out.  
He loved me but an oil covered face repelled.  
He loved me but his nose flared as he breathed.  
He replied he'd wait.*

*I told him no,  
He pressed his case.  
I told him no, I told him yes...*

*The bruise on me has faded,  
But it will never fade from him.*



Photo By: Alexis Maul, 12

# Black Hole

Alicia Dias, 11

*I am black when he looks at me,  
A black bottomless pit,  
Filled with spears and swords,  
An invisible nuisance,  
A black hole like a big pile of nothing.  
I am as black as the night sky,  
Except when he looks at me,  
The stars aren't allowed to shine.  
When I see him,  
I must listen, I must look and it is simply  
unconscious.  
Not that he ever noticed,  
Or maybe he has, either way it doesn't matter.  
He only sees black,  
He looks up at my empty sky,  
And he sees the nothingness I have acquired.  
And in him, I see the colors of the world.*

# Groesbeck Bridge

Amanda Mayer, 12

*There's a rushed wind blowing  
through the strong, almost spiritual bond  
that joins the chain linked fence that  
encloses  
the whole rigidly perfect structure  
silhouetting the golden sky.  
Over the blur of traffic it towers throughout  
snow and rain,  
the cars flowing pass it  
not even noticing*

*but it's been there for so long  
a path way for childhood play,  
connecting bike rides and aimless strolls.  
bringing truths out into the cold  
air between friends.*

*What a serene scene at times  
where long talks and good peers happen.  
When dramatic moments linger in darkness, a  
faint breezing is all that talks.  
staring at the closing dollar store  
a calming feeling fades out the rush right after the  
hush one gets  
awed by the larger than you lights conducting  
their rhythmic riffs.*

*but at anytime, on any day getting caught in the  
moment, the first thrill when you've  
staggered up there, is like floating almost;  
feeling the vulnerability while I trust this urban  
landmark with my weight  
the cars flash by  
faintly sensing someone,  
me.*



Photo By : Nicholas Mardis, 12

# *Mammoth Video*

Kathrina Skurda, 11

*Cold,  
Mid-winter with snow up to our knees.  
Jeans soaked through to our thighs.  
Feet numb so that we weren't walking anymore,  
Instead we'd stumble, fumble and fall into each other.*

*"I can't believe we're doing this."  
Her voice was far away. Miles away.  
Distance the barrier between us,  
Growing with ever misstep towards Mammoth Video.*

*"We were bored, remember?"  
I was shouting, the sidewalk was lost still,  
I could only make out her face, redder than the  
Ominous sign screaming "Stop!"*

*"No one else is walking."  
No one else was as stupid as we were.  
Desperate for "Sky High" and Steven Strait's acting skills  
Feet making up for lack of licenses.*

*"Risking our lives."*



Photo By: Chelsea Deskins, 11



Photo By : Mike Paola, 12



Photo By: Julie Gallo, 11

## *Flames*

Julie Gallo, 11

*Orange, a fire  
Full of ambition and power  
Against the dark night sky.  
Reaching up and up  
And up; soaring.*

*Down below are the embers  
Hiding unnoticed in safety  
Glowing, smoldering  
To fluffy powder  
And fine grains of dust.*

*In the middle  
Are your ordinary flames  
Igniting, incinerating  
The creators of your crackles and  
pops.*

*From above and below  
Orange, a fire  
Hidden ambition and power.*

## *The Fort*

John Butler, 12

*It's a place where, in the morning air  
I can hear the trees whispering  
A place that's incased by vegetation  
A place hewn out by my own hands  
A sanctuary for my secrets  
Where the wild flowers dance in the breeze  
Kicking up a heavenly aroma  
It's like a room with no ceiling  
And the earth is the floor I walk on  
It's a kingdom and I am the king  
A domain of glory and pride*

*At night a fire keeps me warm  
I am stretched out beneath the heavens  
The vast universe lay out above me  
It's a place where hidden creatures emerge  
To conduct their symphony of chirps and squawks  
It's a place I call the fort  
A place only for my eyes  
My home away from home.*

# Nylon Strings

Micheal Girard, 11

“You must know a couple of songs, why would you buy a guitar if you didn’t want to learn anything on it?” I asked.

“I guess I didn’t know what I wanted,” answered my father.

As we prepared to exit the dimly lit storage cell, miles from our home, my father slowly looked around the small room. Gripping the guitar by the base of the neck, John gave the decrepit scene a final look. His deep, hazel eyes glazed over, as if every stick of furniture and piece of china held a memory for him. He turned to leave, me following. The weary way he strode was the result of years of experience; each carefully placed step stressed his calm nature. As we climbed into the truck, my father placed the guitar carefully in the right captain’s seat. The dull gray key turned in the ignition, and the engine roared to life. Its monstrous hum rang in my ears, making everything else insignificant.

The truck’s engine continued to roar, and the vibrations tinged my lower back. I harassed my father about his ill-fated attempts to play his guitar while in the storage cell. He gave nothing but lame excuses, no matter my pestering. The guitar was, simply put, very old. The shining black pick guard had all but fallen off and cracks webbed underneath the wood finish. Dust plastered the small spaces under the nylon strings, which dug into the near-rotted base. It seemed as though the strings were the only preserved part of the guitar; I reached forward and plucked one. The low hum that emanated was, strangely, in perfect tune. My father kept his eyes on the road, but failed to hide a small twitch of the head in my direction. The painted rosette was worn and tired, like the ornate decorations of an ancient chapel. Sitting next to my father in the front seat, it seemed to match him. The way it was turned towards the open road gave the guitar a wizened look. The picture gave it the impression of a personality, or even a longing to be played. “why did you want to take me to come and get it, dad?” I asked. “No reason,” he said. He looked straight again, gripping the steering wheel. I just sat there, my eyes drinking in the guitar’s aura. I thought of the years it had seen and the places it would go. The driving snow of mid-winter made the stretching road seem unfinished, and all that could be seen ahead was the glaring red face of a stop-light. My mother and sisters would be waiting, I thought. Though my father seemed set in keeping the guitar at the house, I wondered whether or not he would concede to the rest of the family’s opinion. I didn’t understand my mother’s reluctance at the time, and it didn’t matter in the end.

Pulling into the driveway, the car left ridged indentations in the soft layer of snow. We paced together up the walk and through the door. Each step left a small shoe-shaped picture of the brick patio beneath, like a minuscule window or a layered painting. Inside, my mother waited for us with my two sisters. They glared at the guitar, as if it were a diseased thing, unworthy of attention or even ownership. “Oh, I haven’t seen that old things in ages. Why did you bother to go and get it?” my mother said. I stared into her eyes. Glancing back at my father and seeing the stony inflexibility of his expression, I knew, at that moment, that my father had won the unspoken argument. Mother simply sighed with exasperation, deciding the situation wasn’t worth the effort. I walked alongside my father into his room, where he stowed the instrument inside his closet.



Photo by:  
Amanda Lawson, 11

Later in the day, when the sun glazed the first layer of flakes of snow and the horizon was iridescently shrinking from view, I heard music coming from my father's room. Curiously searching for the source, I followed my ears down the stairs and into the hall. Silhouetted against the yellow-pine floorboards, I saw my father sitting on the floor, the guitar in his lap. Not noticing me, he continued to play. As I watched him, I discerned the different chords and notes, all of them played clearer than tempered glass. The speed with which his fingers moved up and down the perfectly preserved nylon strings made my eyes widen with amazement. His skill, it seemed, had always been kept as potent as the instrument he played. After several minutes of watching and waiting, I crossed the threshold into his room. He immediately stopped. "Why did you tell me you didn't know how to play the guitar?" I asked. The look on my face must have hurt him somehow; his demeanor changed from passive to defensive within a second. His eyebrows furrowed and his mouth flattened. "I didn't think that I would be able to remember enough to impress you," he said. The interest overwhelmed me, and I asked, "What made you put the guitar in the storage shed in the first place?" As if a cloud were over his head, his face lost what little light it had left. For a few moments, he sat in apathy; it was as if he wouldn't answer. But then he looked up and reassuringly grinned at me, "I had a family to take care of." With that he handed me the instrument and walked out of the room. I felt the taugt nylon strings and brittle wood, and tried to remember the music my father had made with the guitar.

Photo By: Jesse Speelman, 12





Photo By : Alex Hannon, 11

## *Digital Clocks at Midnight*

Becky Shroyer, 12

*The alarm clock read 12:00,  
Casting the room in red.  
The ad-hoc nightlight and  
Doomsday countdown to the morrow.  
To another day, another dream,  
Another chance to write anything, which ends up  
Wasted when the sun goes down and  
The red glow says, "Time's up! Maybe  
You'd have more done if you hadn't  
Re-re-read that Avengers fan fiction you like."  
It nags like a mother.  
But the best ideas come in the carmine glow of  
Midnight; the dust and dregs form and shape and grow  
Until they need to burst out into notebooks and onto keyboards.  
Then the alarm clock says:  
"It's too late – red means stop – go to bed."*

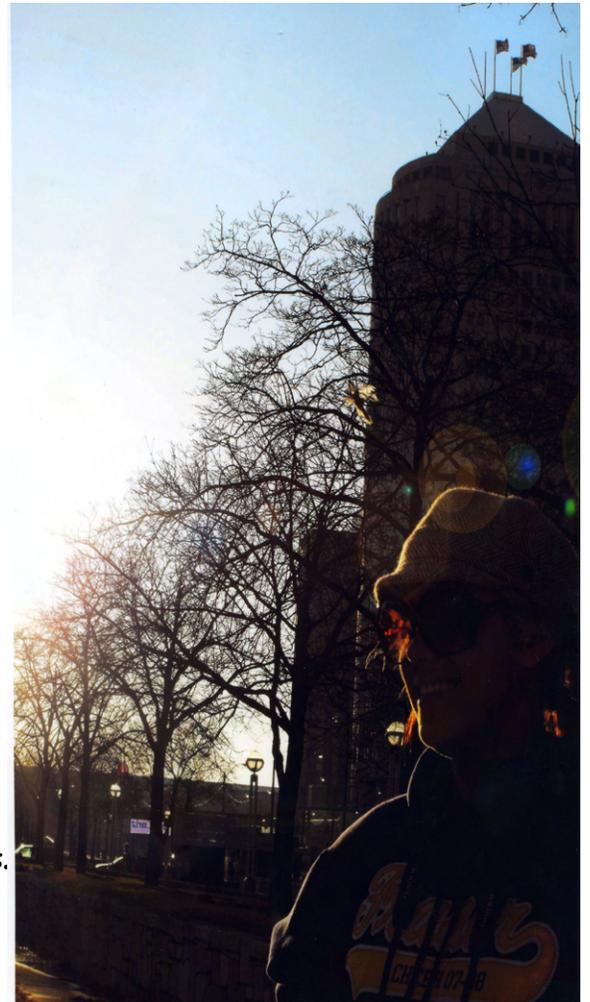


Photo By: Shauna Malesh, 11



Photo By : Nick Mardis, 12

## *Colorless Shade*

Emily Horodko, 12

*Raining gray of tame-less thoughts,  
An emotion of shift and sight.  
Ebbing and flowing  
Like the waves of the restless sea.  
Captured essence by the hues of gray;  
A color ever changing,  
Yet subtle in transition.*

*Solemn spectrum,  
Engaging both eye and mind.  
A mimic by nature.*

*Though a seeming bleak shade,  
'Tis a traveler of the world.  
Running through the night,  
Slinking from the day.  
Unappreciative ghost of color –  
You are more than you seem.*

## *Fisher Body 21*

Jesse Speelman, 12

*As the morning sun touches  
Its tainted green windows,  
The rooms illuminate  
With an aquatic glow.*

*The shattered windows  
Allow a subtle breeze  
To sweep over the floor.*

*Walls coated in grim;  
The ceiling, in lead-filled, cracking paint*

*It's strangely silent.*

*A police siren rings  
in the distance*

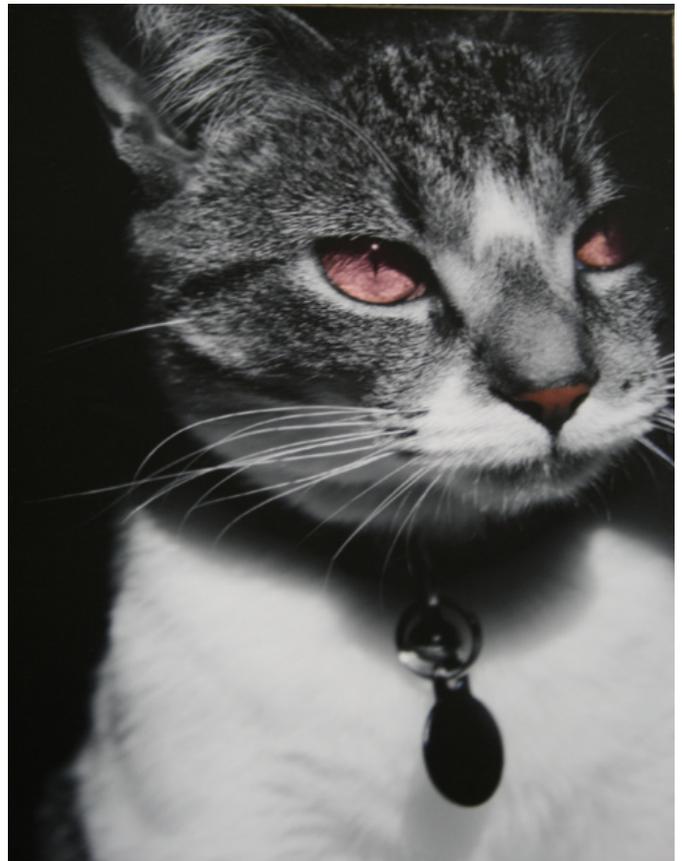


Photo By : Natalie Butsinas, 12

# Beach

Sean Delisi, 12

*The ocean water  
Calm yet full of vexation  
The sky holds beauty.*

*The perfect blue sky  
Vast thinking-ground above  
Through which the sun burns.*

*Beating, burning sun  
Fiery hot ball of light  
Heating the sand below.*

*White hot sand shells  
Scraps from traveling waters  
The child stands alone.*

*Innocent toddler  
Standing before paradise  
The world is brand new.*

# Ocean of Love

Jon Tostige, 12

*There's an ocean that flows, a mystical sea,  
It doesn't give out its secrets for free.  
White foam roils on the crests of the waves  
And in the sand he sees the patterns they shave.  
This mysterious ocean runs boundless and deep  
Enigmas held in its watery keep.  
Some spots are warm, others are cold  
And some spots glitter and shine like blue gold.  
Certain waters are treacherous, others calm  
Some lap softly, a soothing balm.  
Yet this ocean is one, one of itself  
This ocean is an ocean of infinite wealth.  
Pleasure, pain, fear, and joy  
Glisten wetly around the curious boy.  
He knows not what he looks at, he has had but a taste  
He wished to explore this ocean with great haste  
Leaving everything behind, his heart soars like a dove  
For this is the ocean, the ocean of love.*

Photo By: Katie Leonatti, 11



# Lester's

Craig Geldner, 12

"BLAHHHH!...what's wrong with these people?" Randall spit his coffee back into the chipped white mug, and pushed it away with a disgusted look on his face. He was the type to pick at anyone he could for his own gratification. Coffee that was too hot for him was a perfect example. The diner is always filled with the regulars and the sour looks on their faces always gave Randall a warm welcome. He was known for being a scrooge. Lester's was always running strong with greasy food and healthy conversation, and certain people never appreciated that. Randall shook his head and patted himself down for his cigarettes. It was a maze to find them with the generous amount of pockets on his overcoat. Lester's was not the greatest diner in the area but it certainly seemed to be a hang-out spot for most.

It was pouring rain, and everyone bolted to the entrance the second they slammed their car doors. Randall's boots were still filled with mud while he was waiting for his breakfast. Some people were kind enough to wipe their feet off in the front, but most tracked filth throughout the whole diner. This made it horrible for the young boy that was trying to make a couple of bucks doing odd jobs around the restaurant. Randall yelled into the kitchen,

"Hey Julio!...How about some breakfast here?" Julio replied, "Relax, relax, you'll get your breakfast." Julio was the head chef and basically took care of all the orders. His stained white t-shirt and his greasy hair made it hard for regular customers to take another bite of their meal.

The two boys that were sitting next to Randall were bored out of their minds. They dressed tough with their bandanas and skateboarding logos all over their shirts. Both of them had to be in junior high, but acted like they were six. The boys were in the diner after school since they were too scared to bike home in rain. Spinning quarters on the table and shooting spit wads at the pinball machine helped them pass the time. "here you go, here's your breakfast," the waitress said. She walked away as quick as she could to wait on other tables. Randall tuned out those little brats until something else finally caught their attention. Soon enough they were back to finish eating their cold, salty French fries. Randall was eaves-dropping in on their conversations, since he was very nosy. The boys giggled and snickered back and forth and Randall was dying to know what was going on. The boys could not quit laughing since they managed to stick ketchup packets underneath the toilet seats in the men's bathroom. Whoever went in that stall had another thing coming to them. Those two boys were always around causing problems in the diner. It's their goal every time they walk in. Randall let their little prank slide for the meantime. He smirked, shook his head, and let it go. Nothing mattered anymore to Randall. He balled up his napkin, threw it on the plate, and walked over to the cashier to pay his bill. On the way out he was reaching in his coat pocket again for his cigarettes. Julio noticed Randall walking out of the diner and yelled through the kitchen window,

"hey, aren't you going to say good-bye?" In a monotone voice Randall replied, "Bye Julio." Julio shook his head and said, "Just a reminder, those are going to kill you one day!" Randall didn't respond to him. He put his hood up, walked to his car, and drove off. Julio and Randall were good friends, and both of them were constantly giving each other a hard time. A few days later Randall drove back to the diner. It was too convenient for him, and it was on the way. No matter how bad he felt about himself he couldn't quit eating there. As he walked in he realized that not that many people were around, and no one was very talkative.

"What's going on? Are you guys having a slow day today or what?" One of the waitresses that was sitting and drinking coffee explained everything to Randall. She said,

"Listen, Julio had a heart attack two nights ago and he didn't make it, I'm really sorry." She got up and went back to the kitchen. The waitresses were mopping the floors and wiping table tops. The boy doing odd jobs was cleaning the men's bathroom and trying to get that orange tint of ketchup off the walls. Everyone knew Lester's diner would never run again. Julio's wife would not keep the business running. With three young kids to take care of, the last thing she wanted was to run a greasy diner. Lester's diner wasn't worth anyone else's time anymore. Randall slowly put out his cigarette in the ashtray and threw the rest of the pack on the table. He was staring at the broken teal tile, and everyone knew he felt guilty for how he treated Julio. Randall had nothing else to say. He then grabbed his coat, and walked to his car while leaving tracks of mud from where he was sitting.

Photos By: Morgan Stovall, 12



# *A Wish*

Kara Mitchell, 12

*If I could force the stars to form your constellation in the sky,  
If I could plant our seeds and cause our trees to grow and intertwine,  
If I could give all my mumbled, mixed-up words a reason to rhyme,  
Would I then have the power to change your stubborn mind?*



## *Imagination of Thought*

Heather Rigby, 12

*I'll open up my head  
Get into my thoughts  
With the imagination  
Of a book, like a wonder  
Land made for me,  
And only me  
As I get lost in the pages  
And open my eyes to a different view  
Surprising myself, surprised  
By the beauty, the  
Enchantment of a  
Single book.  
I myself get to finally take my head off  
And get rid of my own  
Thoughts  
And be somewhere else  
In a world unknown to all  
Even to me  
It's nice sometimes to  
Be on your own  
Open your head  
Open your thoughts  
Open a book.*

Photo By: Jesse Speelman, 12

# BROKEN

An ETERNAL RAIN side story

Brianna Dionne, 12

Shuichi stares up at the dark red building. Its new paint sets it apart from the dull gray skyscrapers, rundown factories and ratty houses around it, which are covered in graffiti, their windows boarded up, their shutters falling off. Shuichi glances over each of his shoulders. Seeing nothing out of the ordinary aside from the groups of peasants huddled under blankets on the street corners, he enters through the building's glass doors. Already, several children are scattered around the play room, two sleeping, two others coloring, and another three playing with a Lego set.

"Mrs. Phillips," Shuichi calls, "are you there?"

A short, fair-skinned woman with a bag of first-aid supplies slung over her shoulder emerges from the small room on the right side of the play room. "Good morning," she greets Shuichi. She holds out a basket of fruit. "This is for the kids," she explains. "Can you please put it in the office?"

"Sure," Shuichi replies as she slips the basket off of her wrist and into his hands. He takes the basket into an office to the right of the entrance and sets it down on the desk next to his computer. As he grabs a clipboard from the desk drawer and scoots in front of the computer, a slip of paper drops out on to the floor. Shuichi reaches down to pick it up and inspects it. "This letter...Kazuma ..." he murmurs as he stares out the window.

Shuichi stood in the aisle next to his friend's desk; Kazuma slouched forward over the desktop, frowning. "But now the commanders are forcing me to go on an espionage mission to the Kaita village. I have no choice...but to do as they say," Shuichi murmured.

"When are you leaving?" Kazuma asked, his brown eyes wide with worry.

"The day after tomorrow."

"I have something you should take with you," Kazuma said. He dug around in the backpack slung over his chair and pulled out a bag with a spare set of clothes.

"Please, you don't have to give me that," Shuichi refused.

"No, you can take them. They're too big for me, anyway." Kazuma handed the bag to Shuichi. "These were my older brother's. He...died in the war." He paused for a moment, looking down sadly, then continued, "They'll help you blend in; the Kaita natives don't wear a whole lot of hot colors." Shuichi bowed to Kazuma. "Thank you."

"No. Thank you for being there for me." Kazuma smiled at Shuichi. "You'd better come back, you hear?"

Shuichi clutches the armrest of his wheelchair. *If I came back this way, I wonder how Kazuma fared.* Shuichi frowns at the thought. *He never replied to any of my letters.* Shuichi sighs and lays the letter he'd written to Kazuma on the desk, then sets the clipboard on top of it. He rummages through the drawers for a few special forms, then turns on the computer and starts pounding and clicking away.

After he's been at it for a while, he hears the door open, then footsteps approaching the office. "Hey." His friend, Reka, a short boy about 14 years old with his red hair tied back in a ponytail under his orange bandana, steps in holding a paper bag, which he sets on the desk.

Shuichi turns to face him. "Hey, Reka," he greets him back. "You didn't have any trouble getting here, did you?"

"Nah," Reka answers. He steps behind Shuichi and peeks curiously over his shoulder at the computer screen. "What are you working on, Shuichi?"

"The usual," Shuichi replies. "Just typing up reports and such— boring official stuff that we've gotta do if we want to keep this place running."

"Aren't your folks supposed to do that?" Reka asks. He grabs a piece of fruit from the basket that Mrs. Phillips had given Shuichi.

"They're at work right now— hey, that food's not for you," Shuichi says playfully, snatching the basket away. "Anyway, Reka, what's in the bag?"

"Just a little something for the kids." Reka leans against the desk and takes a bite out of the apple he'd snagged. "Where are Danny and Ken? Not here yet?"

"They're doing some fund-raising on the side. They'll be a little late, but they're coming." Shuichi pounds away at the keyboard, then closes the document and rolls his wheelchair away from the desk, suddenly looking serious. "You know, Reka, it's not easy to get funding for this daycare center anymore. The protests keep coming and no one's supporting us. Add to that the fact that we're not pulling in any more help around here and we can't depend on our parents to give us the money we need, and we're up a creek."

"Add to that the fact that we're just a bunch of kids struggling to protect lower-class kids from a bunch of doggedly-prejudiced upper-class adults," Reka adds, "and we're over the waterfall, is basically what you're getting at. And it's never been easy to do this, in case you've forgotten."

Shuichi sees bright-red bruises on Reka's arms. "Don't tell me your dad's still..."

"Is my dad ever not causing trouble?" Reka snaps. "That's all he's been doing since he got home from the war. He thinks 'cause he's a general and all, he can go stepping on everybody he disagrees with, including my mom and me. It's because of people like him that Llanian is such a mess. Now we have to watch our backs 24/7 and worry that one of the kids is gonna be carried off and beaten to a pulp."

"You're not answering my question," Shuichi presses. "Are you and your mom all right? Is the general still picking fights with you?"

"What do you think?"

"All right, all right. Don't get snappy," Shuichi mutters. "I'm sorry."

Reka sighs and shrugs it off. "No harm done." After Shuichi rolls his wheelchair to the door, Reka finishes his apple and reaches for the fruit basket again while his friend's back is turned.

"Get your hand out of the cookie jar and go get some orange juice out for the kids," Shuichi tells him.

Reka grunts and crosses his arms. "Do you have eyes on the back of your head or what?" he complains as he follows Shuichi out of the office.

“I know you all too well for you to pull that old prank on me,” Shuichi laughs.

“Hey, Shuichi!” A blue-haired boy races to Shuichi and Reka with a tall blonde teen behind him.

“Hey, Danny; Ken,” Reka greets the boys. “What’s up?”

“There’s somebody outside who says he wants to talk to you, Shuichi,” Danny reports.

“I don’t know about you, but it makes me nervous to just say, ‘Come on in,’ you know?”

“What does he look like?” Shuichi asks. “Did he tell you his name?”

Before Ken can reply, Shuichi notices their guest inviting himself in through the glass doors. The young dark-haired boy limps in, what appeared to be a pair of crutches under his arms,— or rather, his one arm and a stub where his right arm was supposed to be— the left side of his face covered in bandages. “K—Kazuma...?!” Shuichi cries. “Is that you?!”

“You know this guy, Shuichi?” Reka inquires.

Kazuma gives Shuichi an awkward smile. “It looks like circumstance hasn’t been kind to either one of us,” he murmurs, his eyes trained on Shuichi’s wheelchair and the nearly-useless legs that dangled limply over the edge of the seat.

“Kazuma...what are you doing here?” Shuichi asks. “And after all this time...?”

“When I heard about this place,” Kazuma replies, “I just had to come see for myself. Word on the street was that you were involved. I guess I shouldn’t be surprised. After all, you’re one of the only people I know who gives a care about the lower-class.” His face betrays a hint of disdain despite his words.

Shuichi glances at Ken and Danny. “You wouldn’t mind getting breakfast ready for the kids, would you?” he asks. “The basket on the desk in the office is for them...”

“We’ll handle it,” Ken says.

“Thanks,” Shuichi says.

Ken disappears into the office, then comes back out a moment later with the basket of fruit; then he, Danny and Reka stride away, leaving Shuichi alone with Kazuma. Shuichi gestures toward the office. “Come with me,” he says. “We’ll talk in there.” Kazuma limps into the office after Shuichi, who rolls his wheelchair up to the desk, then faces him. “So what did you want to talk about? I’m a little surprised that you came all this way...like that. No offense.”

“None taken,” Kazuma replies. “Honestly, it’s a bit of a shock to see you like that.” He smiles wistfully. “But in any case, it’s just good to know you’re still here, I guess.”

“I couldn’t get in touch with you after they forced me to go to Kaita at the beginning of the war,” Shuichi explains. “I wound up like this after Ken and I were discovered. The folks who found us out weren’t too forgiving toward spies.” He tries to paste on a smile, but it quickly melts from his face. “So how did you...?”

“Let’s just say I’m not too forgiving, either,” Kazuma breaks in. “I’ll cut to the chase. What makes you think that this is okay?”

Shuichi notices the coldness in Kazuma’s eyes and squirms uneasily. This was not the same Kazuma he’d known only a short while ago when they had been in boot camp together. “I don’t know what you mean...”

“This here,” Kazuma says, glancing around the office. “After your kind put us peasants in the fix we’re in, how could you be so doggone condescending as to act like you’re our saviors? It’s sickening. And you of all people had to have a hand in it when you claimed to care!”

“I don’t understand,” Shuichi says. “Kazuma, you know that’s not what this is about–!”

“Don’t give me that!” Kazuma yells.

“I thought we were friends, Kazuma,” Shuichi pleads. “You know that my friends and I aren’t trying to put ourselves ahead of the peasants! I don’t know what you expect me to do. The kids we’re taking care of don’t have anywhere else to go. Would you rather we left them to fend for themselves out on the streets with nothing but the clothes on their backs? Why can’t you see that we’re just trying to help?”

“We don’t need any help from you! It’s humiliating!” Kazuma argues. “So just stop it, okay?!” He slams his good hand on the desk; the bag that Reka had brought in that morning topples over, the contents spilling out on the floor. “I thought you were different,” Kazuma says. “But you’re not. You’re the same as all the other upper-class bigots who just want to save their doggone reputations at the cost of whoever they have to step on to get to the top– just like those soldiers who forced us to fight against Kaita and sent kids out on the front lines as decoys so that they could save their own hides and take the glory for the battles we almost got killed in! You’re no different, Shuichi!!!”

Shuichi frowns and looks down at the floor, unable to face Kazuma. He hears him limp off, the soft pad of his crutches on the carpeting. “Kazuma,” Shuichi calls softly. The footsteps pause. “When I couldn’t get in touch with you after you left for the front lines straight out of boot camp...I thought you were dead. I’m glad...to see you again. And I’m sincerely sorry for what happened.” The footsteps start off again until they fade away. Shuichi hears the front door open, then close softly.

Reka hurries into the office and stops just inside; he shoots a concerned glance at Shuichi. “Shuichi? What happened?” he asks as he takes another few steps in. “You and your pal have a fight?” His foot hits something and he glances down to where his gifts are strewn across the floor. “Aw, what a mess. I’ll clean it up...” He kneels down to pick them up, then glances up at his friend from under his mop of messy hair, his eyes wide with worry. “You okay...?” Reka asks. Shuichi nods, but doesn’t speak. Slouching in his wheelchair, he stares at the spilled gifts: a set of loose marbles, a few bouncy balls, three small books, and a now broken glass doll.



Photo By:  
Jesse Speelman, 12



Photo By : Amy Pavlichek, 12

## *Soul Song*

Kara Mitchell, 12

*A specifically selected piece from Carnegie Hall,  
Written in German, my grandmother's native tongue,  
My fingers clutch its pages, hold it poised,  
Open, ready to be sung lovingly.*

*The notes spatter the page in a mess,  
The lines blur and wave like a rolling sea.*

*I would blink, I would cry.*

*My fingers clutch its pages, place it in my lap.  
My mind holds the melody in trembling hands  
And delivers it from within me.*

*I rein in emotions but I can't erase your face.*

*You are whispering in fluent German,  
Your crinkled paper hands fumble around curlers  
In your barely graying sleek black hair,  
You are holding my face while yours swims before me,*

*You are flipping thin, crepe-like pancakes,*

*You are begging me to sing,*

*And I am bashful and refusing.*

*I hope you see me now.*

*I am singing for you and only you.*

# *Holding Waters*

Emily Horodko, 12

*Bellowing waves crash amongst the wind,  
Defining frame – only to take it away;  
Most indecisive elemental.  
Never submissive,  
None can break you.  
Like a lion, you roar at tamers,  
Scoff at advancers.  
So, what can I do against your might?  
The thrill of your waves cannot quench my fear.  
Unpredictable – God alone holds you at bay.*

*Yet...  
There's comfort, console – clarity;  
You wash away the greatest of pains.  
Running through my soul –  
Sifting my existence,  
Always repairing the damage wreaked –  
You bring healing to my wound.  
Strange that you bore witness and made not a mark.  
No – it was God's deciding.  
I was torn, so I could be mended  
Ravaged, so as to be whole.*

*Great sea you bore witness to both beginning and end  
Your once admirer has gone  
And left his entrusted shell to you.*

Photo By : Paul Karas, 11



Photo By : Julie Gallo, 11





Photos By:  
Chancellor Monnette, 12

# *The Whole Thing*

Aleshea Groce, 12

The road glistened with the wet grease of rain, the curbs piled with snow. Not the kind of snow they mass produce on 99 cent postcards, all white and sparkly. Snow isn't like that, it never is. Bob stopped at the light and rubbed his hands together, blew in them like they do in movies. He wasn't sure if this really did anything at all.

He arrived at the first stop and opened the door. Five or six teenagers stood at the street corner, talking and laughing, spitting. Kicking snow into one another's faces. The grey slush that was stepped on and pushed over and grabbed. He used to drive elementary school kids. The young ones always made him laugh, with their silly questions and jump rope games and awkward steps. The older ones made him feel uneasy. They were restless, full of adrenaline, anticipating the real world. The real world. The teenagers always made Bob think about the world. He wasn't sure if this was a good thing, or not.

Sometimes Bob went to the gas station and bought postcards. His wall at home was covered in them. The wall behind his bed. Bob wanted to live in a postcard, sometimes. He never left Illinois. His bed was twin sized, the only living thing in his home, other than himself, was a goldfish on the kitchen table. The fish was named Marco Polo, because his world was the fish bowl, and, unlike Bob, he explored it freely. The whole thing. Sometimes, Bob wished he was a fish. A goldfish's memory only lasts as long as it takes to reach the other end of its tank. This is why they swim back and forth. Nothing is ever old or boring or repetitive. Life is always an adventure.

Bob drove back to the bus garage and made a cup of coffee. All of the other bus drivers talked and laughed. About parties. About their children. About their snow blower broken in the middle of yesterday. Bob's snow blower was broken. But he didn't contribute to the conversation. He rinsed out his mug and left.

The next morning, which was a Friday, Bob put all of his postcards into a suitcase. The snap of tape breaking free from the walls was liberating, somehow. He folded one blue shirt and one white shirt and one pair of brown corduroy pants. He put in two pairs of underwear, 3 pairs of socks, red mittens. He shut the clasp. He has to sit on the suitcase to do this. In his pocket, he put his green hat with the earflaps, and in his other pocket, a can of fish food.

He grabbed his keys, the suitcase, Marco Polo, and left.

Bob went on his bus rounds as usual that morning. He arrived at the first stop and opened the door. Five or six teenagers piled in. One boy with long brown hair paused and looked at him. "Why do you have a goldfish?" he asked, through a mouthful of muffin. "He's an explorer, my goldfish." Bob replied. He was about to tell the kid his plan, but the boy only laughed and retreated to the back of the bus. He whispered to the others. They laughed. Bob was not the hero, clearly.

He stopped at the light and looked up at the postcard on the dashboard. He'd missed this one. It was an Illinois postcard. It said "Wish you were here" in cursive. Bob did wish they were here. Everyone else. He wanted them to be brought here. To experience the way that Bob felt trapped. The way Illinois could reach out and grab you, from birth, and never let go of you, even as you struggled and kicked.

Bob picked off that postcard, with a last snap of breaking tape. He didn't go back to the bus garage. He didn't get coffee, or wish that he could talk about his broken snow blower. He drove until he reached the ocean.



Photo By: Nick Mardis, 12



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