

AGATE

2023



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ON THE COVER

“Serenity” by Cabrina Simmons

Agate (ág-it): a fine-grained crystalline mineral that forms in cavities in volcanic rock. Agate is prized for its beautiful patterned colors, and its hardness makes it ideal for delicate carving.

2022-2023
STUDENT WRITING CONTEST WINNERS

First Place:

“Hungry Wolves are More Gentle...” by Sophia Terrell

Second Place:

“My Name?” by Alexis Pumarejo

Third Place:

“Wooden Pencils” by Veronica Coe

2022-2023
STUDENT ART CONTEST WINNERS

First Place:

“Realm of Magic” by Rafia Umar

Second Place:

“Unbothered” by Juliette Garcia Suarez

Third Place:

“Spiral” by Sierra Snell

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Heather Hilson for her expertise in laying out the magazine, and to Dean of the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences Joyce Shim, Provost Thomas Jordan, and Officer-In-Charge President Mary Bonderoff for their continued support of *Agate*.

We could not have produced our magazine this year without the continued support of the College Association at Delhi (Cadi), website support from Kenny Fass, and the collegial and financial support of the SUNY Delhi Honors Program.

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They Lifted Me in Joy

By Robert Mazzei

They lifted me in joy,

Held me when I was afraid,

Walked with me when I was a child,

Stroked my head when I was in pain.

Now I see them, carefully folded across your chest,

Their touch no longer there,

And as I smooth out your shirt,

I see my father's hands.

Holding the Center

By Rhonda Harrow-Engel



Wooden Pencils

By Veronica Coe

I've always liked writing with wooden pencils.
I feel as though I'm writing with the strength of a tree;
being able to stand tall regardless of any season.
I enjoy how even when they aren't as sharp as they once were
the words can still be as powerful;
comforting the disturbed,
and disturbing the comfortable.
As the pencil gets more dull,
the words become more strengthened,
as for when I'm deeper in thought
for I am a thinker and a believer,
and not a talker and a doer.
As I write and write,
sometimes the pencil breaks,
which can sometimes indicate the end...
but who's stopping me from resharpening that pencil
just for it to be a new beginning?

Tree Close-Up

By Jacqueline Madden



Reflecting

By Sophia Terrell

They lived parallel to each other
within a box

Hearing their thoughts
their wants
their needs
their desires
their sins
their lies
their mistakes

everything.

They stared at each other
within a box

Seeing what they did
their actions
their scars
their conversations
their life
their family
their friends
their enemies
their blood

nothing went unseen.

They talked to each other
within the box

*You've become a killer
cold, icy fingers that gripped the handle -
The knife went straight to her throat
you saw the color drain from her eyes
cascade down her face as her blood ran
still.*

*You've become a killer
liking the way it felt;*

*you took that life stopping mechanism and
put it to work even more
Every wall in that room -
Every tile saw what you did
they became victim of your crime
the blood smeared itself against the walls
Or did you do that too?*

*You've become a killer
skinning her alive
piece by piece
you stripped her of what protected her innards
like a home cooked meal, you unpacked her
body
Letting the tiles watch her tremble and beg for
mercy
but you didn't stop there.*

You love killing her
*proving a point to her
showing her just how strong you truly are
you shoved your own ideologies down her
throat
And made her swallow.
She had no choice in the matter.
Pure ecstasy rushed through your veins
as you stood over her
soaking in every last minute of her dying
breath
We were the last thing she ever saw.*

The reflection only stared
silence filling the box.

Not So Different
By Sierra Snell



Our Answer

By Will Groetz

“One second before midnight,” the newscaster spoke grimly. A time that I never thought would occur, but it did anyway. In my younger years I believed this phrase would never mean anything, with world wars fresh in history, and more and more people calling for, asking for, peace, not war. All this in mind, but political unrest, inability for people to compromise, and the resulting divisions of society, all covered under a political scope of “Everything is going to be fine. Actually, we’re doing better than fine, we’re doing amazing!” These words continue to fill me with dread. Not because it is a blatant lie about what’s actually occurring; everybody knows that. But, because of how eerie such calmness is amongst such panic. I let out a sigh at all these thoughts as I slide by hands across my forehead and hair, proceeding to then rub my eye lids.

My focus suddenly came back into view as my friend and fellow scientist shook me back to reality. I must have been daydreaming during my lunch; however, it was now time for work to begin once more. We began to move back to the lab, through security to our research block, into the cleaning room, then into the changing room, and back into the cleaning room. A process that I got tired of way too quickly, but if that is what it took to make the experiment succeed, I would tolerate it. The final doors opened with a smooth metallic click, and inside was the lab, a space similar in size to a football stadium, filled with a variety of metal structures all connected together. The main structure being a gigantic metal dome in the center used to house a miniature star; particle accelerator ejection chutes could be seen connected at every cardinal direction around this structure. Other devices were also connected to the dome at varying angles in order to stabilize the star, with the largest one hanging from the ceiling right over the dome’s center where the star would sit. Aside from these marvelous structures, people were quickly working away as well. In one direction as I walked towards my workstation, engineers and physicists could be seen discussing the final calculations for the experiment. Looking across the floor a variety of workers could also be seen doing maintenance, refueling, charging, and fine tuning the

machine for activation. All of them working in harmony to make sure the experiment is successful.

The speaker system suddenly blared as the head director spoke. “The 11,983 test is scheduled to occur in 5 minutes, everyone proceed to your designated locations.” My friend and I quickly headed to our stations, and the machine began its start up. The accelerators were carefully loaded with classified particles and charged to an optimal efficiency. At the same time a miniature star begins to form and stabilizes within the metal dome under dense magnetic fields, while a frigid temperature envelopes the area around the star keeping the metal dome from vaporizing. Finally, I activate the charging sequence for my device. A device that had made the experiment successful only once, and everyone expects it to work this time as well. I swallow hard and wait for the timing to be just right. The star finalized its consistency and the particles from the accelerator are launched in at speeds I personally cannot calculate. “People truly are amazing,” I think to myself. The star begins to grow rapidly, magnetic field strength is increased, but the star continues to grow and destabilize. Charging for my device has finally completed, and I press the two activation keys. The device shoots out a beam of light into the star, causing the growing to stop. “So far, so good,” I think to myself. The star then began to glow more and more brightly instead, as if it was about to explode. The AI begins to take over the job from here though, as it adjusts the frequencies of the beam of light to match the intensity of the star. The intensity of the star continues to rise, higher, and higher. “Now!” I slam on the stop button, killing all operating devices. Magnetic fields collapse, and the last few particles fly into the star as it expands now uncontrolled. In this moment, a final device activates, firing an enormous magnetic field at the star, collapsing the star into itself. A fifth of a second after, a much stronger field is applied to break the singularity. The star begins to fall into itself uncontrollably, losing its lustrous glow and darkening. A pulse is fired almost instantaneously after the last field was fired. The remnants of this star, only a few inches in diameter remaining, had fallen into stasis, as if time had stopped for it. The experiment was once again successful.

Cheers, clapping, and all sorts of celebration filled the room.

I joined in this celebration, as I congratulated my colleagues and friends, but I soon fell silent once more. I looked at my watch, 19:59, only a few minutes till our first experiment would reach its destination. I hurried out of the lab quickly, past the cleaning room, and the changing room. I didn't care anymore about procedure and protocol; my work was done and I must witness what will come next. I continued moving till I reached a set of windows lining the hallway. I looked out the window to see that pale white crescent in the sky amongst the stars lighting up a cold and desolate desert night. Peace had once again been achieved, but at what cost... 20:02 my watch read, one minute to go... I sit in silence thinking if it will actually work or not (45 seconds). How it had come to this point, a point where we once again used a stick over a helping hand to mediate peace (30 seconds). Oh god if you can hear my prayers, if you exist at all, please let this be the final lesson humanity must learn (15 sec). Let us realize that we all simply seek happiness and fulfillment with one another, not death and destruction of those we don't understand or dislike (5 seconds). This might be our answer, but please the next generation don't let it be yours (0 seconds). In the following days the tides would change, and peace across the world was made, but in the blink of an eye that pale white crescent hung in the sky ceased.

Corruption

By Tyler VanDeWal



Running

By Devi Muscarella

When it started he was young.
Freezing cold feet finding the burning ground,
It was his duty he used to spurn.

He turned and ran, tail between his legs.

As he got older, he got used to the heat,
On calloused feet,
When his body took on a similar burn.

He remembers plummeting to the dregs of sin.

Now with horrid black wings,
And charred black skin,
It's for his old life that he yearns.

His legs shook from exhaustion,
Looking to the sky as he begs for redemption.

Looking over his domain,
In the same way his people were seen.
Disdain, disgust, detestation.

For thousands of years it's been this way.

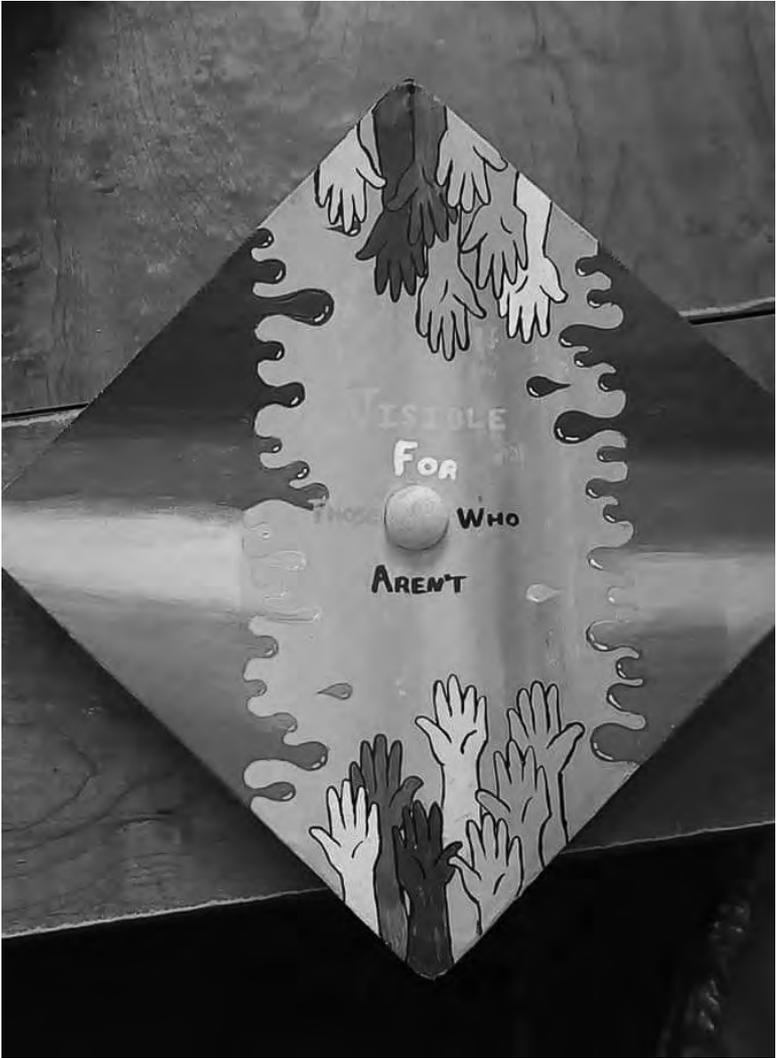
People feared his name,
His idea.
Even the brother he left behind,
Hates him purely by design.

Still, he gave his people hope, and their loyalty never swayed.

He helped rule, side by side,
Greed, Gluttony, Wrath, Envy, Lust, and Pride.
Their Lord entrusted him with sloth.

He swore to run no longer.

Graduation
By Sierra Snell



An Ode to Long Brown Hair

By Isabel Horan

Where there is now Long Brown Hair,
Once sat a curious child.
They yearned to grow that frizz atop their head,
Not quite knowing why.

When I met them, the light, cotton-candy-like cloud hid under a
winter hat.
(It hadn't yet grown to its full potential, but then again, neither had
its vessel).
Even at that length, I would find:
a strand in my mouth after a kiss,
Fuzzed vision during a snuggle,
and a tangle between my legs after an evening spent tangled up
together.
That Brown Hair was at home in every corner of my body.

Until I learned better we would
Strip it,
Cut it,
Shave it,
Or otherwise disrupt that Brown Hair.

All at once, however, the opportunity was presented to grow.
The hair and the person attached to it.

A gentle young woman grew from the scalp down.
And as they flourished,
We both learned how best to care for Hair and love her.

I couldn't help but say good-bye to my own long, mostly brown hair.
Dying, delicate threads fell to the floor
in a flurry of buzzing, giggles, and kisses right to the scalp.

As this hair leaves, so does its selfish action.
Just as the Long Brown Hair cultivates honesty.
Where my favorite Long Brown

(or is it black?) Hair now sits,
I can't help but be drawn to her flourish.
Tenderly, I care for those locks
and the beautiful woman who sprouts them.

Stained Glass-North Kortright

By Jacqueline Madden



Blazzy

By Nouha Semmar

My mom has always wanted to move out of the city and have a big house in Westchester. I was so sad to leave my friends, but I guess it was for the best.

“Honey, could you hand me more of that wrapping tape?” demanded mom.

“Here you go,” I said, giving her the tape.

“Sage! Did you finish packing?”

“Almost!”

I wasn't excited about packing. I would very much rather go and play outside instead of wasting hours and hours inside of boxes, but I had to because no one else would pack for me.

We moved into our new house; it was huge and picturesque. It had three floors, a backyard with a swimming pool, a home theater and lots of stairs. My mom is an interior designer, so she decorated it very beautifully. She chose a rounded rectangular glass coffee table with nesting stools for the living room. As for the rooms, she selected contemporary style bedrooms with emphasis on cool toned colors and matching wooden bedside tables for us. As for the master bedroom, which was hers and dad's, she picked a more coastal style with sea-life inspired furniture and warm tone colors. The rest of the house was a combination of exotic, like the décor of the backyard, and modern, such as the contemporary kitchen with the marble counters and the black cabinets. My sister Nayeli finally got the cat she had been dreaming about for years, and my brother Axel got the biggest room. You might be wondering what I got; well, we have a pool and a huge backyard where I can play soccer as much as I want to so I'm not complaining.

Two days later, my Uncle Sam came by to congratulate us on the new house. My mom was so happy to see him, and so were

we. He got us a gift from Switzerland. It was a tiny Swiss doll with brown doe eyes, red hair, and a white dress. Her dress had detailed vintage floral motifs on it, and her hair covered her entire back. Half of her face was covered with bangs, but you could tell that it had some human features like dimples, which I thought was fairly strange. Her hands were very small, but the nails were painted in a velvet red color.

“Thank you, Sam, you shouldn’t have bothered yourself,” said mom.

“Hey, why don’t you all go play with it.”

I took it to my room and Nayeli came along. I read a label on it that said: “NEVER PISS ME OFF.” We exchanged frightened looks and laughed at the end.

“How...oh my god is this like one of his jokes or something,” said Nayeli laughing so hard. “Probably,” I replied.

“Come on, let’s try to scare Axel.”

“Hey Axel, check this out!”

“What’s this? Oh no, don’t tell me you’re going to play with this creepy doll. Put it away!”

“No, you shouldn’t be rude to her. Are you insane?”

He laughed and kicked us out of his room. I looked at the doll straight into her eyes, and they started turning red.

“Nayeli...this thing is real.”

“What do you mean real? Don’t tell me you got scared, Sage.”

“No, seriously look at her eyes, they’re turning red.”

“What? Look at her beautiful blue eyes! Come on, let’s go

find Uncle Sam.”

I was shocked when I saw her eyes turning back to normal. How come? We ran to find Uncle Sam, but he wasn't there.

“Mom, where's Uncle Sam?”

“Oh, sweetie, he just left. He's hoping you'll take good care of Blazzy.”

“Who the hell is Blazzy?”

“The doll he got you, her name is Blazzy.”

“Perfect, now she has a name.”

“Hey Sage, she's going to spend the night in your room.”

“So not happening. You're keeping her, not me.”

“Guys! You're not gonna start a fight again about this. We can keep it in the basement, and you can play with it tomorrow,” answered mom.

“Yeah, sounds good.”

We all went to sleep, each of us in their new room. It felt so good to sleep alone in my new room, but also a little scary. It was quite perfect; everything was seamlessly polished. I hadn't set up my Xbox yet because I still needed a new cable and a couple of games. As for my desk, it was still empty, I would probably fill it with some stationary before school started. I slept fine that night and hearing those noises didn't stop me from having a calm, serene night of sleep in my brand-new bed. Unfortunately, something else did. A nightmare had prevented me from that peace. I had a bad dream about Blazzy. It was as if she was an evil doll trying to kill us. I heard noises coming from the basement, so I got up and went there. On my way there, I saw blood stains on the floor, and I proceeded to walk downstairs and saw Nayeli and Axel tied up

in chairs and Blazzy holding a bloody knife. I jumped out of bed terrified. I hurried to the basement anyways just in case. Rubbing my eyes from sleep, I looked downstairs for my flashlight, then checked out the area. I studied everywhere but she wasn't there. Going back upstairs to Nayeli's room, I stood there in shock. I was staring at Blazzy right at her spooky red eyes. She was sitting on my sister's rocking chair, playing quietly with her hair. Feeling terrified, I couldn't move or shout; I felt paralyzed. The second I felt blood circulating again, I raced to Axel's room and tried to wake him up:

"Axel! Axel, wake up something's going on."

"Sage, don't start again please, I'm trying to sleep here."

"So am I! But please, just come to Nayeli's room now."

He followed me and saw the doll sitting still, looking pretty in her bouncing chair.

"What?"

"But...she was just..."

I was speechless, but everything got back to normal the second he got there. I knew he didn't care about Blazzy and didn't even know that mom put her in the basement last night. Full of confusion, I decided to let it go and try to sleep. Maybe mom didn't put her in the basement like she said; perhaps Nayeli is the one who took her upstairs.

I felt out of control, I didn't know what was wrong with me. Then again, I chose to let it go.

The next morning, everything seemed normal and Blazzy was still in her chair inside Nayeli's room. We had breakfast and then headed upstairs.

"Sage, come on, let's play with Blazzy."

"Uh, no thanks."

She walked into her room holding the doll. I watched her from afar; she was playing with her then she put her in the box.

“What are you doing?”

“Oh, there you are! Uncle Sam told me that after playing with her, we should put her back in the box so that she can't see us.”

“She can't...what?”

“You heard me. She can only see when the light is on. That's why the darkness in the box is perfect to keep her still.”

I was mind blown. How can a doll see? And then suddenly, all the memories from last night came back; how her eyes turned red and how she was playing on the rocking chair. “Is that thing alive?” I headed downstairs to talk to Nayeli about it; she believed what I said about last night and confirmed that she didn't take her up to her room.

“What should we do now?”

“No idea, probably get rid of her?”

“But how? You know evil dolls aren't that easy to get rid of.”

“Oh, stop it, we're not in a movie! Let's tell Axel to get rid of it when he goes out.”

She took Blazzy, gave her to Axel and told him to throw her out as soon as possible. He responded, “Okay I'll do it later,” and put her aside. As we all know Axel never does anything right away; if it's not his priority, he'll leave it for weeks and weeks without caring. He did the same with Blazzy by leaving her in his room for days. This was a priority, at least for us, because we knew she'd be angry if she found out that we wanted to get rid of her, which for the record, she did.

Three days later, I heard Nayeli screaming in her room. “What’s wrong?” I asked the second I got there. And as soon as I got to her room, I saw her standing in front of the opened box in shock. When I looked closely, I saw Blazzy lying there. “Oh my god! She came back,” I said bewildered.

“Do you want to play?” said Blazzy in a very scary tone

“I... told you evil dolls were not easy to get rid of,” whispered Nayeli with a shaking voice. “What now?”

She silently grabbed Blazzy from her arm and dragged her to the stairs with an angry look on her face. I followed her to figure out what she had decided to do with her. She threw her from the second floor to the basement, and quickly entered dad’s office room and closed the door behind her. I heard him talking on the phone, so I left to alert Axel. I heard a crashing sound, so I tried to take a peek. I saw Blazzy laying on the ground with a cracked face. I felt somewhat relieved. A few moments later, we were all gathered downstairs around the kitchen table to eat. Nayeli joined us later on; she looked very pale and was holding the doll. We silently had dinner, and Nayeli whispered to me: “She’s insane, I’ll tell you everything later on. But now, we should act normally and be nice to her.” I shook my head in confusion. Once we were done, Dad and Axel went upstairs to finish some work while mom was baking bread and talking on the phone. We heard her say, “Yeah, Sam got them a really cute doll. They named her Blazzy. Yeah, she is lovely, they play with her all the time!” “No, mom she kills, MOM!” Nayeli squealed. She smiled at her and gestured with her hand thinking that Nayeli was joking and continued her conversation. Nayeli turned to Blazzy and tried to play with her. The doll gave her creepy and furious glances. Very furious, Nayeli yelled with anger: “YOU! DON’T YOU DARE TALK TO ME LIKE THAT AGAIN, I’M YOUR OWNER, I’M BIGGER THAN YOU, SO YOU EITHER TALK POLITELY TO ME OR SHUT UP!” Leaving Blazzy with mom, she asked me to follow her. But why was she yelling at her? I was dazed again.

Arriving at her room, Nayeli told me everything that has happened with Blazzy. Well, when she threw her downstairs and locked herself inside dad's office room, she heard knocks on the door; it was Blazzy forcing the door open. Nayeli grabbed her again and threw her, but the doll came back upstairs, which was super weird. And this didn't end. Plus, when we were at the table and I was wondering why Nayeli was yelling at her, it was because she heard Blazzy talking to her. Nayeli mentioned that Blazzy told her that she was sent to this house for a reason, that her mission was to kill all of our family so that she can live here with her army of dolls. She kept giving Nayeli orders like "Give me food or I'll kill you." We tried to figure out a way to get rid of her before something else happens. But for that, we needed someone else to believe us: it was hard to deal with her on our own. I thought about Andrew and the boys, but I was afraid they'd make fun of me. Nayeli decided to call her two best friends Nia and Mary, they knew a lot about that stuff and could possibly help us. That night, mom and dad were going to a sleepover at Uncle Sam's house. He was having a party and only adults of the family were invited.

"Sage, you be a good boy, okay?" said mom.

"Nayeli, keep an eye on your brother."

"Yes, dad I will."

"Have fun."

Waving to us, they left the house.

"Okay, let's do this. Go grab Blazzy."

"Did you call them?"

"Yeah, they'll be here any minute."

A few minutes later, we heard the bell ringing.

"I'll get it," said Nayeli.

“Hello, come on in.”

“Nice place. I was dying to see all the decorations your mom did.”

“It’s beautiful!”

“I know! She did a great job. Now come on upstairs, I’ll show you around.”

“Where’s this mysterious doll? I really wanna see her.”

“You will, and trust me, you’ll probably regret it.”

She showed them the house, and said arriving at my room:

“Finally, Sage’s room.”

“Oh! Hi Sage.”

“Hello there.”

“As you can see, Blazzy is here too.”

Nia awkwardly waved at her; Mary grabbed her and started examining her.

“She’s kinda lovely, you know.”

“Yeah, sure she is.”

“Now everyone, you know what to do, as we agreed on before. Sage, come with me for a second.” She explained to me the whole plan, then we returned to my room. They took Blazzy with them and left. “We will take care of her. You should get some sleep, I know last night was a rough one for you,” said Nayeli. I closed the door behind them and tried to sleep. Nayeli and her friends were going to sleep in the basement. I had nothing to worry about

because they were going to watch Blazzy the entire night.

“As we agreed, we will sleep in turns.”

“Yes. Nayeli, you can go first. We got this.”

“No, are you insane? There’s no way I’m sleeping while this creepy doll is still here.”

“Oh, stop it, you know we’ll watch her till 3 am. It’ll be your turn then”

“Okay, wake me up in two hours.”

They both nodded. After moments of peace, I woke up to the sound of glass breaking.

“What happened?” I asked them after running downstairs.

“I don’t know, they were supposed to be watching the doll.”

“We were until it was your turn, but you didn’t wake up.”

“Yeah, we knew you were tired, so we decided to continue to watch her on our own, but we fell asleep. We couldn’t help it. Sorry.”

“No don’t be, it’s not your fault.”

“Wait, where’s Blazzy?” I asked.

“Oh shit!”

“Guys, you might wanna see this,” said Nia.

“Oh no, it’s mom’s favorite vase. Broken!”

“Now that’s where that sound came from.”

“Look at this, (DON’T MESS WITH ME),” read Mary

on a piece of paper.

“She might’ve gone this way to the backyard.”

We all went there and saw Blazzy floating in the swimming pool.

“She has the same red eyes,” I noticed.

“And the same creepy looks,” confirmed Nayeli.

“We’re screwed.”

“Wait! The book says: never treat a wicked doll the way it treated you,” said Mary while reading a page from her book, *Your Guide about Dealing with Haunted Objects*.

“This probably means we should be nice to her.”

“Okay, but this doesn’t mean we won’t stick to the plan, right?”

“Of course not!”

“Yeah, how?”

Nayeli seized her and cleaned her up with a towel. We all went inside, but Nayeli stayed outside, and that was part of the plan.

“Wait, what is she doing?” asked Nia.

“She’s playing with her I guess,” replied Mary, spotting my sister brushing Blazzy’s hair.

“When should I bring her that hammer?”

“Um, now?”

“Yeah, go ahead. The longer we wait, the more complicated it gets.”

Mary slowly tiptoed and handed Nayeli that hammer from behind. “Here you go, little beauty,” said Nayeli, slowly sliding it

under her back, keeping her eyes fixed on the doll. With a light smile on her lips, she slowly put her down on the ground. Swiftly, Blazzy blew into little pieces the minute Nayeli crushed her with the hammer. We helped her pick up the broken pieces and hide them away before someone found out.

“Look, there’s this truck over here,” noticed Nia.

“Yeah, so?”

“Hey, we could throw the bag there, you know, to make sure it will never come back again.”

“Smart, I’ll take care of it.”

“Hey, check if the driver is in there, just in case.”

She nodded, took the bag, and ditched it in that truck. I noticed that it was the truck that moved the stuff from our old house. No worries, the most important thing is that we got rid of it. Finally, this nightmare came to an end. Or maybe not. I took some time to reflect on what happened. I realized that if we had followed what Uncle Sam told us, all this wouldn’t have happened. Maybe if we treated her well and took care of her, we would’ve had the stability that mom wanted when we moved to our new home. It’s just sad that moving into this stunning house had to start this way.

A few days later, Nayeli asked me to join her on the balcony. “Sage, look over there,” she said, pointing to the truck parked against the neighbor’s street. Blazzy was sitting in the passenger’s seat, all covered in blood. She was holding a note reading, “You’ll pay for what you did to me!”

“Oh no, not again!” I said, shocked.

Holding Scissors

By Aidan Gates



Healing

By Sierra Snell

When you get hurt,
you change, they change...
you might not see it,
but other people will.

When you get hurt,
the world around you is different...
your days drive on,
and the nights feel cold.

When you start to heal,
your smile starts coming back...
you feel again,
you want to love again.

When you start to heal,
they want to come back...
but you push that side away,
then you fly.

Covid Classroom-Ian
By Rhonda Harrow-Engel



Hungry Wolves are More Gentle...

By Sophia Terrell

*To die by a wolf,
ravenous
starved
Broken by the forest
would be Peaceful*

*To die by a wolf,
sharp teeth shining in the moonlight
claws tearing through my skin
howls filling my ears
would be Gentle*

*To die by a fellow man,
hands calloused by rage
fury so hot it would burn
lustful for blood
would be Torturous*

*To die by a fellow man,
insulted
raped
Left without any dignity after he used me
would be Hell*

Rise and Fall, Rage and Grace

By Tyler VanDeWal



To Be a Cat

By Griffin Sholtes

Oh,

To be a cat, with long and golden fur
One whom no mortal master do you serve
To sit around all day, to nap and purr
And still get all the pets that you deserve

And if your owner thinks that she's your friend
It gets to be your job to tell your mind
Attack her in her bed until night's end
Protect yourself and strike her from behind

Yet once in a blue moon you can be nice
Give notice to the one who gives you food
And as a special treat, you give her mice
And throwing that away would just be rude

And once your day is done, it's time for naps
What warmer place to stay than peoples' laps

They Like the Taste of Copper

By Emma Bonita

Bile spilled from his blistered lips as he gasped into the freezing damp air; curling onto his knees he choked another hacking cough to rid his mouth of the foul tang. He shivered and attempted to press himself further into the rough soaked wall; inching away from the puddle of his own sick was shockingly the highlight of his day... or night...?

He honestly didn't know anymore, but he was more than thankful to be out of the coffin sized box and crammed into this short stone closet. While he couldn't fully sit up, at least he could crawl a few small steps and work feeling back into his thinning legs. Hunger seemed to punch a hole into his stomach nearly unbearable in the beginning, now just a dull ache. Looking at his filthy calloused feet in the dim light he gave a wheezy sigh remembering the chemical taste of his leathery boots, but at least it had made him feel full for a while. A rattling came at the door; instinctively he jumped. Looking up he almost chuckled to himself—he couldn't see them if he tried.

The rhythmic thudding of footsteps continued past his cell before a set of new ones seemed to stop at the sealed entrance. He clapped a gritty hand over his mouth cursing his earlier noises. A slow scraping sound reverberated throughout the room as the rusty latch pulled the heavy door from its hinges and dropped it carelessly onto the ground. He shrank back with an undignified yelp as a massive taloned hand wrapped around his arm and dragged him stomach down out of the cell.

Shutting his eyes tightly he was tossed out of his confinement onto the adjacent wall only for a moment as the creature set the door back into its frame. He gasped, limbs frozen at the creature's back in the dim light; it seemed to shine with its shimmering mirror-like scales though a jumpsuit. Turning its great hairless head it stood towering above him squinting its black bleeding eyes as

he made a move to run down the empty cage-lined hall but was stopped by the iron grip of the thing. Trying to free himself he tried to rip his bicep out of its grip only to cut it on the sharp scales of its hand. Once it had grabbed his skeletal shoulders it twisted his arms roughly behind him and pushed and dragged him a few steps across the concrete before shoving him through a the only well-lit doorway at the end of the hall. No amount of fighting seems to break its steel grip on his wrists as it threw the man onto the ground before turning to swiftly lock the door.

Scrambling up from his position on the ground he looked down at his now soaked chest and shrieked at the thick coagulated red that decorated his front. Shaking, he looked up only to lock eyes with the mirror-like creature as it pulled a large carving knife from its belt and began its slow walk towards him. Stumbling back he bumped into something cold; flicking his eyes sharply around he saw a thin young woman dangling upside down, skin grey and eyes dead, face coated bright red from the large slash wound at her neck slowly running over her cheek and forehead, matting her hair and dripping steadily into a bucket. Whipping its head at the creature, he now realized that the chilled room was lined with dozens of bodies dangling limp and unresponsive.

This was planned, this was organized, this was a farm.

Returning his gaze to the creature no—no the demon! He had to escape! He was the last one alive. Someone needed to know! He reeled back as the thing raised its blade above its head and swooped down before

drip

drip

the quota was met.

Light up the Darkness
By Elizabeth Longueira



When?

By Veronica Coe

I've lost slight inspiration to write.

Like the moon loses its light through the various nights.

My mind is the waxing crescent;

days away from the new moon.

I do love to compose these works of art.

But why do I have to play the part of the one who picks up the pen

To write about who fills my heart again and again

Just wondering when I am going to be the poem.

And not just the poet.

Untitled
Cabrina Simmons



Enemy's Tears

By Sophia Terrell

A knife to the heart
you killed me
twisted that blade
pushed it so deep
I could taste the metal

Sobs filled the room
tears falling to the floor
staining the carpet,
along with my blood
dripping down my chest

But I wasn't crying

Your hands were shaking
like you regretted it
your eyes burned into me
hoping to take it back
You can't

feeling the warmth
it was peaceful
being held in your arms
slowly falling asleep
you cried for me

Rendered Contour

By Ryan Hunter



Dead End

By Richie Burke

The view from my dorm window looks familiar. It's like I'm looking into the street I grew up on, only from a different perspective. This is the place where I would play basketball when I liked basketball, whiffle ball when my dad would pitch to us, kickball when our neighbors would come outside and play with us (when we liked our neighbors), or where we would ride bikes. We all liked to race. Well, most of us did. Those who did not would be our referees, but they would be our referee because they were too slow, and we all knew they would wind up in the back of the pack. What good is a referee from the back? But the more the merrier. We'd race up and down that road protected from the world by a shield of trees that towered over our heads. Sometimes we'd crash on that road; it wasn't always as even as it is now, and it is by no means even now. We'd get up and pretend like we weren't hurt, even though we were, to avoid getting hurt. Unless we were bleeding. In that case, everyone would make sure to not be seen with you to not be punished by our parents. So, that's when you could cry, not because you were hurt, but because you had gotten hurt. Life was a series of competitions. Instead of brothers I often only saw them as rivals, people whom I'd never been better at in anything, even if I was in fact better. So, I never had brothers, I had rivals. I suppose that as a kid when we would reside on that grey, dry, gravel-covered, dead-end street, it was fine. But now, as old as we've all gotten, and as far away from that street as I am now, I don't think we've ever stopped competing. Those endless wars between foes continue in my mind; a winner has yet to be determined and the road still lay dry underneath the dead.

I learned a lot about life on that street. I learned that games without rules never worked out. I learned that when playing games with solid rules, people would always cheat to get ahead. I learned that if you did not agree with the pack then you'd become an outsider. I learned that if you ran headfirst into your mom's car and dented it, it would hurt, but more importantly, it would make the others laugh. I learned that if I really tried, I could throw a ball as high as the top of a pine tree, but at the same time I learned that car windshields break easily. I learned to stay out of sight because,

at a moment's notice, you could be strapped to a pine tree. I learned how to stick together, and how to take one for the team. I learned that I don't like football, even though all my brothers did. I learned that I don't like lacrosse, even though my brother did. I learned that I was good at things my brothers never thought to try. I could paint, I could try at school, and I could get good grades. I could write, and I was good at it. I could do things on my own without becoming an outsider. I could be happy doing things for myself. I could live a life for myself.

Now, looking out this window, the sun sets in the sky as it did on all those warm, summer nights riding up and down that street. Watching people move back and forth along the path outside, I know that this is not the street I grew up on. It is too clean. No bikes strewn along the side of the road. No tennis balls laying as obstacles for us to avoid, no blood, no tears. I lay down, turn myself away from the window, and rest.

Sparks

By Sophia Terrell



Dreamer

By Tyler VanDeWalt

Grow up and get married, and settle down,
Soon you'll have to support children with your career.
Don't stand out, don't be restless, hide that frown.
I couldn't possibly make this more clear.

And so I tried to do as I was told.
After all, chasing dreams is outright
Childish, and since it's easy to see naivety when you're old.
It's fine for us kids to throw our dreams out, right?

Well I got tired of restricting who I was,
And I lost patience for traditions and conventions.
Maybe I didn't have to do it the way
Every other person told me was "correct."

Oh, what a world it is when you stop worrying
About every little thing!

A stanza with two lines is crazy,
And, look, I'm doing it once more.

Sure, this could be great your way (but honestly it's such a bore).

Who's to tell me what's right
And what's wrong?
You claim to have the answer,
So why are you unhappy?
I just need my heart and mind,
Your routine just doesn't belong.
It's no fun living how you're told,
So I'm content being a dreamer

Unbothered

By Juliette Garcia Suarez



Song of Sailors

By Gabrielle Blake

I was once alone as I am now but the way it feels now is changed
I'm writing to you to tell this will be our last
as I've found I do not have the wherewithal to endure
as solid and steady as those stone statues you are so fond of
I've grown dark and terrible inside
The things I want too horrible to stay in the light

Do you remember the night crawlers
Those things that were shadows in the dark
Nothing but shades of gray moving
They never had much to say
The secret of their past as incomprehensible as our future then
They never tell and even now we may never know

Yet the way they bend crawl along the skin of a passersby
Was that unnerving attraction that seated itself in the soul
looking out into the dark just to glimpse and grasp at
things that would make my mother weep

Yet this desire for that power, the invincibility
Yet I desire the power, the invincibility
They acquire just by stepping out into a world of darkness
By being what we had called distasteful
what others had called abominable behaviors deserving of the street

I write to you to say goodbye because they call to me sometimes
Like the sailors and their call to the sea
I want to throw it all away and leave

Become that gyrating shape in the dark

The Battle
Tyler VanDeWal



The Curse of Wolves

By Devi Muscarella

The wind rustled wistfully through the trees, tickling the leaves with its gentle whispers and cooling the morning dew that played happily on the ground below. It danced across the fur of squirrels and boars. Even through the hair of a tall man with dark hair and his excited daughter, each with pointed canine ears and fluffy tails to match. The older one held a small, handwoven basket filled with berries, while the young girl ran and played around in the tall grass off the trail.

“Don’t wander too far now, Luna,” Bowen called out to her as he picked some red berries off of a tree branch, sniffing it, then tossing it to the side as he deems it unsafe to eat. The girl didn’t respond, fluffy dark hair bouncing as she hopped on fallen logs. Examining the mushrooms that ate away at the rotten bark. Their bright orange hue made her giggle, poking the tough outermost layer, so focused on the way it bounced back from her touch that she hadn’t heard the pawsteps of her father growing in distance from her.

“Papa! I found a chicken!” she yelled out and kept poking the mushroom. His attention grabbed, he walked back on the trail to where his daughter played with a piece of nature.

“A Chicken in the Woods mushroom! Very good job, Luna.” The young man smiled and ruffled her hair, picking off the mushrooms and putting them in the basket. “And how do we cook Chicken in the Forest?”

“Chicken in the Woods Papa, and you use it to replace bird meat!” she corrected and crossed her arms with a huff, tail thrashing behind her.

“Yes, yes, very good, you want some for your birthday dinner?” He finished picking them off and took his daughter’s hand, leading

her back to the trail as she shouted excitedly. She danced and skipped along excitedly, singing “Birthday food, birthday mood, I can give anyone the birthday ‘tude!” and even Bowen couldn’t help but to laugh along, swinging her whenever she jumped and earning an excited yelp each time. Though, when an ivory glint caught her eye, she tore her arm away with little hesitation and ran over to the site. “Luna!” She began to dig, brushing away the dirt and grime covering what she found to be a skull, gasping with delight and rushing it back to the tired twenty year old, tail brushing low against the soft grass beneath them.

“Papa! Papa I found a skull, you like skulls right? What kind of skull is it?” Carefully he examined it, looking at the cavity filled molars from the shape of the eye sockets, running his hands along the canals that would lead to two short, pointed ears. “It’s a wolf skull.” He went along the lower jaw, to the holes for the nose, when a shot of fear pierced his core. This skull was fresh, the brain decaying only recently, and the bullet hole he found in the back of the skull only served to increase his worry.

He felt panic bubble up from his exhaustion, but he had to quell it; he couldn’t afford making any rash decisions. Bowen hurriedly stuffed the skull in his jacket and grabbed his basket, sniffing the air with urgency. Humans were here, though the scent was faint, and he needed to see how far they dared go in his forest. He couldn’t run anymore, with Luna being older. She needed stability, and he was tired of running from these barbaric beasts.

“Luna, we’ve gathered plenty of berries and mushrooms. Can you do Papa a favor?” He continued when he received her eager nod. “Take the basket home, okay? You know how to get to the cabin from here?”

“Yes Papa...”

“Tell me.” He needed to be sure she wouldn’t get lost, especially with human hunters around.

“You follow the trail until you get to the oak tree with a heart in it, then follow the sound of the river, then follow the river backwards until the pawprint stones we made, and we follow those home!” Puffing out her chest with pride, especially when Bowen smiled at her efforts.

“Yes, perfect, now go! Papa needs to go look at something, then I’ll get home and make your favorite for your birthday, okay?”

“Even the berry pies?” she tested cautiously.

“Yes, especially the berry pies,” he gave a reassuring grin and booped her nose, “But you gotta be a good girl and run home now, okay?”

Luna took the basket and began her own little journey, walking as fast as her little legs could carry her. Bowen knelt down, taking the skull from his jacket and looking into the holes where its eyes would be with sorrow. He was going to need a long wash after this, he already knew as he pressed his forehead to the skull’s own, uttering one small word. He took a deep breath in “Release,” and with his exhale, a faded smoke came out, forming an almost ethereal shape. It started with the large paws, up muscular legs and haunches, up to the body where skin and fur ripple as its muscles flex and stretch underneath. The tail came next, resting perfectly relaxed, as the head that came last finally let out a large yawn. Bright amber eyes stared back at Bowen’s deep crimson ones, and the wolverine man smiled at the spirit.

“Go on, meet my father, rest from what they did to you.” He bowed his head and the wolf spirit walked over, giving him a ghostly lick on his cheek before backing up and running off into the forest, leaping over the river not far from their position. Bowen smiled as he watched it disappear on the other side, before hardening once more. He looked out onto the trail with a glare before unsheathing unnaturally large claws and slashing the trees, marking them. A warning to any who pass by, or to any hunters

that arrive on his soil, that he knows they've been encroaching. In his anger, in his threat, the flowers and grass under his paws began to wilt; even the trees he slashed began to rot, though they remained standing. With one final billow of the long black cloak he wore, he turned around and headed home.

Realm of Magic

By Rafia Umar



My Name?

By Alexis Pumarejo

I am a girl that looks like she has her life put together, yet is
crumbling on the inside.

I am a waitress that works for the satisfaction from others.

I am an Atheist, one who doesn't believe.

I am an extrovert in everyone's eyes, but mine.

I am everywhere, yet nowhere.

I am the 'You Only Live Once' kind of girl.

I am being tested every day.

I am a singer, yet no one here's my voice.

I am known for my smile.

I am great at hiding my pain.

I am an empathetic person, who doesn't receive empathy.

I am making sure EVERYONE is okay, before I am okay.

I am struggling to meet the expectations that were set way too high
for me.

I am trying my best.

I am living every day like it's my last.

I am trying not to cry.

I am tired, and I'm growing older.

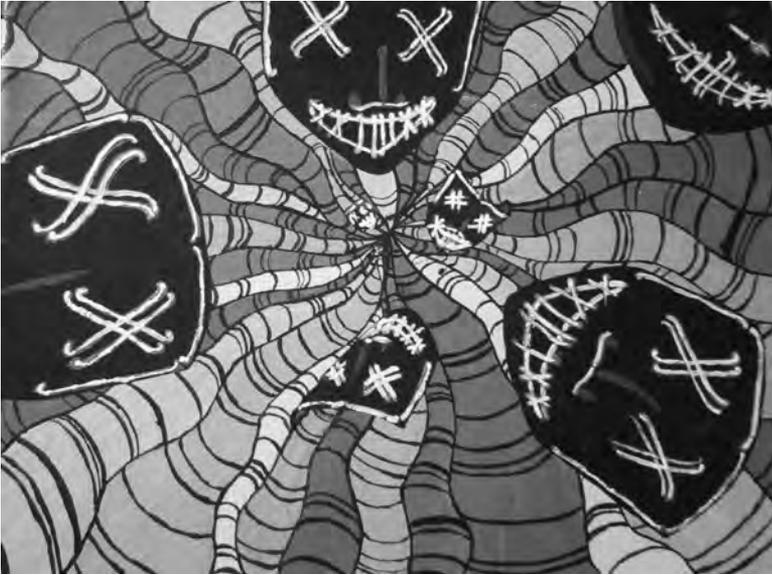
I am getting weaker, as time goes by.

I am carrying the weight of you.

Oh..... you wanted my name?

Spiral

By Sierra Snell



Together Secretly

By Sophia Terrell

We're best friends.

We're together all the time.

Morning.

Afternoon.

Night.

We're never far apart.

We do everything together.

Eat.

Sleep.

Work.

We're attached at the hip.

He just doesn't know I'm there.

Waterfall-Grand Gorge, NY

By Jacqueline Madden



CONTRIBUTORS

Gabrielle Blake is a Humanities & Social Sciences major.

Emma Bonita is a classy writer making a classy horror piece.

Richie Burke is 18 years old and the youngest of four brothers. An undeclared major, he is planning on making a video game. He would like to get lost in the woods one of these days.

Veronica Coe is a first-year Elementary Education major.

Juliette Garcia Suarez is a Veterinary Science Technology major.

Aidan Gates is an Architectural Technology major.

Will Groetz is a SUNY Delhi sophomore student currently enrolled in the Mechatronics program. During his time at the college, he has participated in the Residence Hall Association, the Society of Manufacturing Engineers, and Student Senate. He is also a Resident Assistant.

Rhonda Harrow-Engel is an Arts Instructor at SUNY Delhi.

Isabel Horan is an avid creator who produces writing, digital art, a plethora of fiber arts, and more. Drawing inspiration from the likes of Kate Bush, Patrick Nagel, and Dovima, Isabel has an unmistakable style in all they create. Isabel's long-term goals include a BA in Chinese Studies.

Ryan Hunter is a Mechatronics Design major.

Elizabeth Longueira is a second-year Veterinary Science major.

Jacqueline Madden is an Office Assistant in the Facilities Department at SUNY Delhi.

Robert Mazzei has been a member of the SUNY Delhi staff for 20 years, has been married for 30 years, and has been writing all of his life. Robert's poem is an ode to his father when he passed away.

Devi Muscarella is a first-year college student with a personal adoration of all things fantasy and mythology related. While Devi mostly writes short stories, they are in the midst of a passion project involving the characters from the story published here.

Alexis Pumarejo is a Sophomore in the Early Childhood Education major. Alexis is the Vice President and Stage Manager of the College Players and is a Student Ambassador on campus.

Nouha Semmar is a first-year student majoring in Biology. She has been a writer since she was 15 years old and still enjoys writing.

Griffin Sholtes is an aspiring writer who isn't really into poetry yet. A Mechatronics major, Griffin will be graduating in 2023.

Cabrina Simmons is busy as a bee in SUNY Delhi's Office of Marketing & Communications.

Sierra Snell is a 17-year-old student who doubled up in high school to attend college for Architecture. Sierra has been through a lot in life and uses art and writing as an escape. Sierra feels one with every work she creates.

Sophia Terrell is a first-semester student at SUNY Delhi and wanted to take another step in her writing career by sharing their poetry with the campus. Sophia has been writing mostly poetry for almost six years now and hopes to write professionally in the future.

Rafia Umar is a senior Architecture major.

Tyler VanDeWal is a Mechatronics Design major. He notes that he likes the band The Offspring, and that he does not want to grow up.

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