

Inception Staff

Cover Artist
Ashley Sorto

Grade 8
Daniel Casciano
Michael Papadopoulos

Grade 7
Wooreen Choy
Deja Rose Fernandez
Ruby Hong
Chaerin Kim
Esther Kim
Yenni Myung
Camela Pena-Marte
Dren Sapunxhiu
Ashley Sorto
Ryan Tiliouine
Kelly Wang

Grade 6
Victor Amaritei
Ashley Gomes
Sofia Martinez
Noor Mohamed
Samuel Yun

Advisers
Mrs. Teresa Becker
Ms. Courtney Goch
Mr. Matthew Mulholland

INCEPTION

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Slocum Skewes School
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Principal: Mr. Angelo Bellizzi
Vice Principal: Mr. Michael Lennox
Vice Principal: Mr. Timothy Yang

Inception Literary Magazine is designed to showcase the amazing talents of Slocum Skewes' young writers and artists in grades 6 through 8. It's a place where emerging writers and artists create and collaborate.

This issue would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of our talented staff and the encouragement of our entire school community. We owe a debt of gratitude to the teachers who assisted with the editing process and we appreciate their level of expertise and advice.

We would especially like to thank Mr. Angelo Bellizzi for his unwavering support.

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The Leopard

In the Amazon, a mysterious beast stalks her prey. She creeps forward silently, carefully, patiently. Razor teeth gleam in the filtered sunlight that shines through the canopy. Claws like hooks are sharpened and ready to attack. Her roar is heard for miles, instilling white panic in any creature that hears it in the vast jungle. With a mighty leap, this monster pounces from the tall jungle brush into a small clearing, and right onto its victim. What is this beast, looking so calm and wise, yet so deadly? She is the majestic leopard!

The sunset creates a deceptively peaceful aura as the leopard drags its prey to her guileless little cubs. After fighting over who would get the chunkiest thigh of the succulent tapir, the cubs contentedly gnaw on some of the smaller bones. Birds twitter and insects chirp as the jungle tucks in for the night. Not being aware of what is to come with the sunrise, the mama leopard

and her three cubs wander off into their dreamland.

Chimps and baboons wake the jungle with their grunts and screeches echoing off the robust trees and over the pounding waterfalls. The stars still twinkle gently as the sun creates a picturesque image of the valley below. Without a known reason, the leopards awake with a feeling of tension that hangs off trees like vines. They hear in the distance a sound that cuts the silence like her hunting roar. The shouts of a strange creature fill the air. Then she sees them, the unknowns that will do so much damage to her and her family. They stand on two legs with two arms sprouting from their sides. They walk upright holding sticks that make loud exploding noises. “*Who are these beasts?*” the leopard thinks.

The new “animals” thunder through the valley, wreaking havoc on whatever they touch. The cries of animals are heard over the wicked thunderclaps of the sticks. Their exploding sticks kill animals 100 feet away. On the back of their vehicle, are the skins of leopards just like her. Right there, at that very moment, the leopard understands that these new creatures are harming the jungle. To survive, she realizes she and her family must leave. The mighty leopard flees with her cubs to the one place she knows is safe—Leopard Cave.

She finds a congregation of hundreds of leopards at Leopard Cave. She even recognizes a family all the way from the other side of the jungle. She sees anger, fear, weakness, and hunger in the eyes of the others. They wait out for days, without food and only drinking small portions of water from the minute creek that runs through the cave. Finally, she ventures out to see what is outside the cave. She sees fallen trees dot the forest around their cave. The new creatures are gone along with many leopard families. At last the “Great Oppression” of the leopards is over. Many find new homes near Leopard Cave.

Alas, the leopard’s cubs (Dotty, Silent Feet, and Hushed Pounce) are all grown up. They wander off to find mates and live a life of their own. Over time, some leopards die, and new ones are born. However, no leopard will ever forget the “Great Oppression”. The evil and sadness of that dark day will be with them for the rest of their days.

Note from author: This story is not real. It was written to show the harmful effects of poachers throughout the world. For many years, poachers have been killing these majestic beasts for their spotted skins. Leopards symbolize strength, power, and much more to the human race than exquisite furs. Help keep leopards and their close relatives, the jaguars, safe and far from extinction.

By Victor Amaritei
Artwork by Samuel Yun



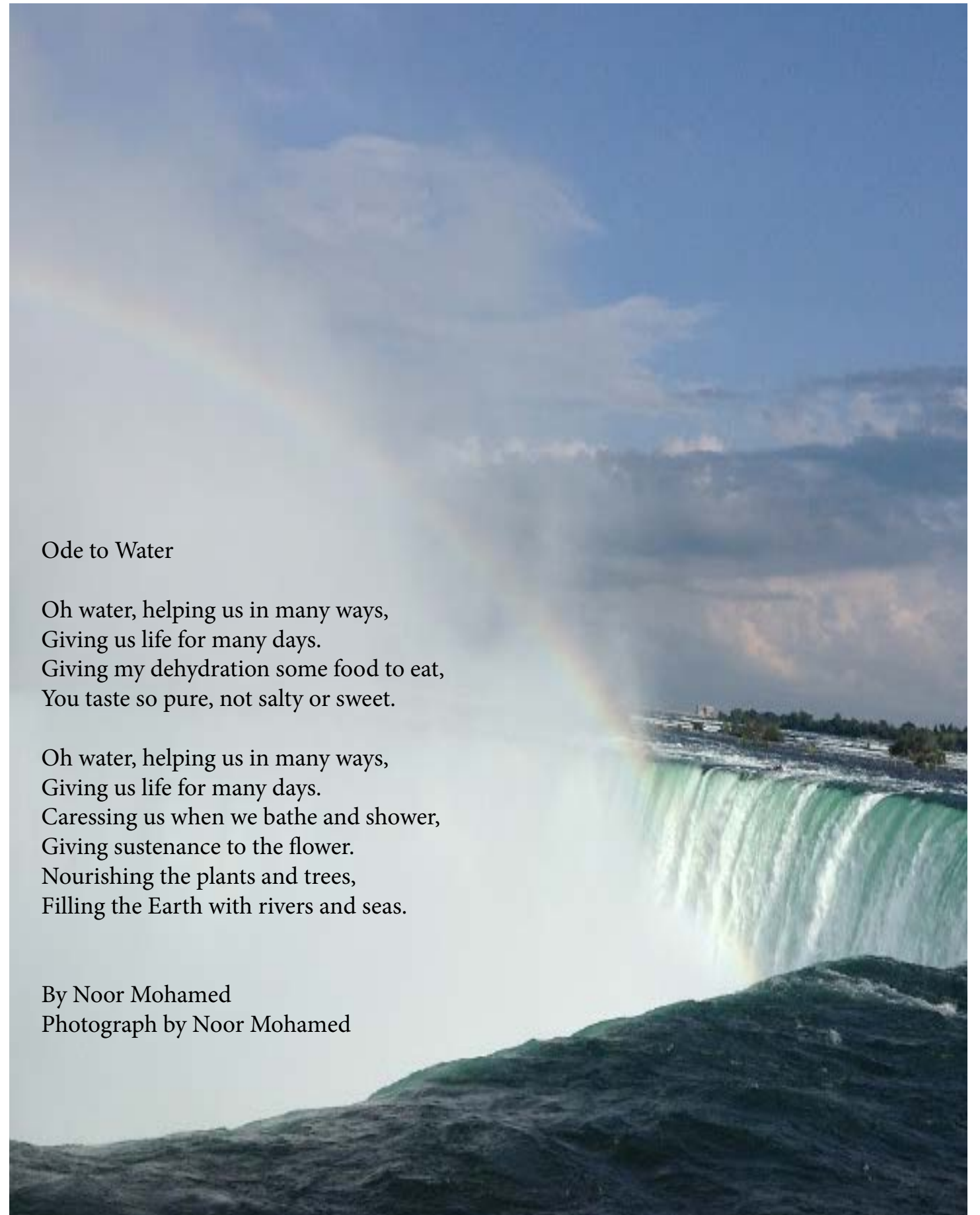
Goodbye

From that one fateful morning
we had met,
Under the shade of a cherry tree,
To the day we would depart for beyond,
I wished to love you with all my heart,
To hold you, to stay with you.

But all things require action.
“Shall she reject me?”
Is what I asked myself.
I am not enough, is what I thought.
I delayed, I hesitated,
And I lost my chance.
For it is far, far too late now.

So for those with undying love
in their hearts,
Embrace it, care for it, and accept it.
Don't make my mistake,
Lest you follow my path,
Walking down a road no man wants to,
And seeing your beloved there,
As you mourn and regret,
Sitting under the shade
of that same tree– alone.

By Michael Papadopoulos
Artwork by Ashley Sorto



Ode to Water

Oh water, helping us in many ways,
Giving us life for many days.
Giving my dehydration some food to eat,
You taste so pure, not salty or sweet.

Oh water, helping us in many ways,
Giving us life for many days.
Caressing us when we bathe and shower,
Giving sustenance to the flower.
Nourishing the plants and trees,
Filling the Earth with rivers and seas.

By Noor Mohamed
Photograph by Noor Mohamed

As Sam entered his new house, he felt something ominous in the century old home he had just purchased. Nevertheless, he began wandering the spacious rooms filled with antique furnishings and forgotten knick knacks. As he strolled by the lonely, dusty corridors, something caught his eye. It was an old painting. This particular painting sent chills down Sam's spine. Was he imagining things? Was this house getting to him? He walked over to peer at the old, weathered painting and quickly noticed that the eyes in the painting had been following him down the corridor.

~~~~~

Since his parents had died, and he had no siblings, and no girlfriend as of yet, Sam had the house to himself. He was spooked by the old painting, but as he got closer to examine it, he realized that the eyes had suddenly stopped following him. Once again, a feeling of apprehension came over Sam. He was sure there was something there and no matter how hard he tried, he could not shake that ominous feeling about this old house.

Never being one to just sit and wait

for things to happen, Sam decided he would research the house and find out who had lived there before him. As he was pouring over old newspaper clippings he found in a box in the attic, Sam discovered something interesting.

"Hmm," Sam said as he looked at a

picture in an article, "this guy looks just like the portrait in my hallway."

He continued to look at his pile of newspapers, convinced that he was onto something. It was then that he found an article whose headline read: Bank Robbery at Madison Ave. *Hey! That bank is across the street!* Sam continued reading the article. It stated that the robber had been suspected of robbing multiple banks and museums in the area. They were calling him the

"Bank Street Burglar." The article also said the robber had never been caught. *Is that painting him?* Sam wondered as he made his way to the hallway where the painting was hanging. However, to his amazement he discovered that the painting was gone!

"Wait? What? I'm sure it was here!" Sam was becoming alarmed. He went through the other rooms in the house looking to

see if anything else was missing. He thought that perhaps he was robbed. He swallowed the panicked feeling that was slowly rising inside him. As Sam was in the process of returning to his study, he realized that he was being followed. He was certain that he heard soft muffled footsteps behind him. He quickly turned around and right behind him was a complete stranger.

"AH!" Sam screamed. Then as quickly as he could, he ran down the hall and rushed outside hoping to escape the intruder. While Sam was desperately trying to catch his breath, the man ran out and disappeared through the back of the house, leaving no trace of his intrusion.

Later that evening, Sam regained his courage and decided to continue his investigation. He was now certain that he was onto something, so he decided that his best plan was to check all the paintings in the old house. As Sam was checking the paintings he found a dark passageway behind one of the larger paintings in the study. It was then that his eyes began to get accustomed to the dark and the piles of money, jewels, and artifacts came into focus. They were all stacked along the walls of the passage. Sam noticed a light switch on the farthest wall and when he flicked the switch, a sea of light covered the room. It slowly dawned on Sam that he had discovered the hiding place of the "Bank Street Burglar." Just as quickly, he realized he could be in danger. He began to rapidly make his way back to the study where he found a phone and called the police.

After what seemed like hours, the police

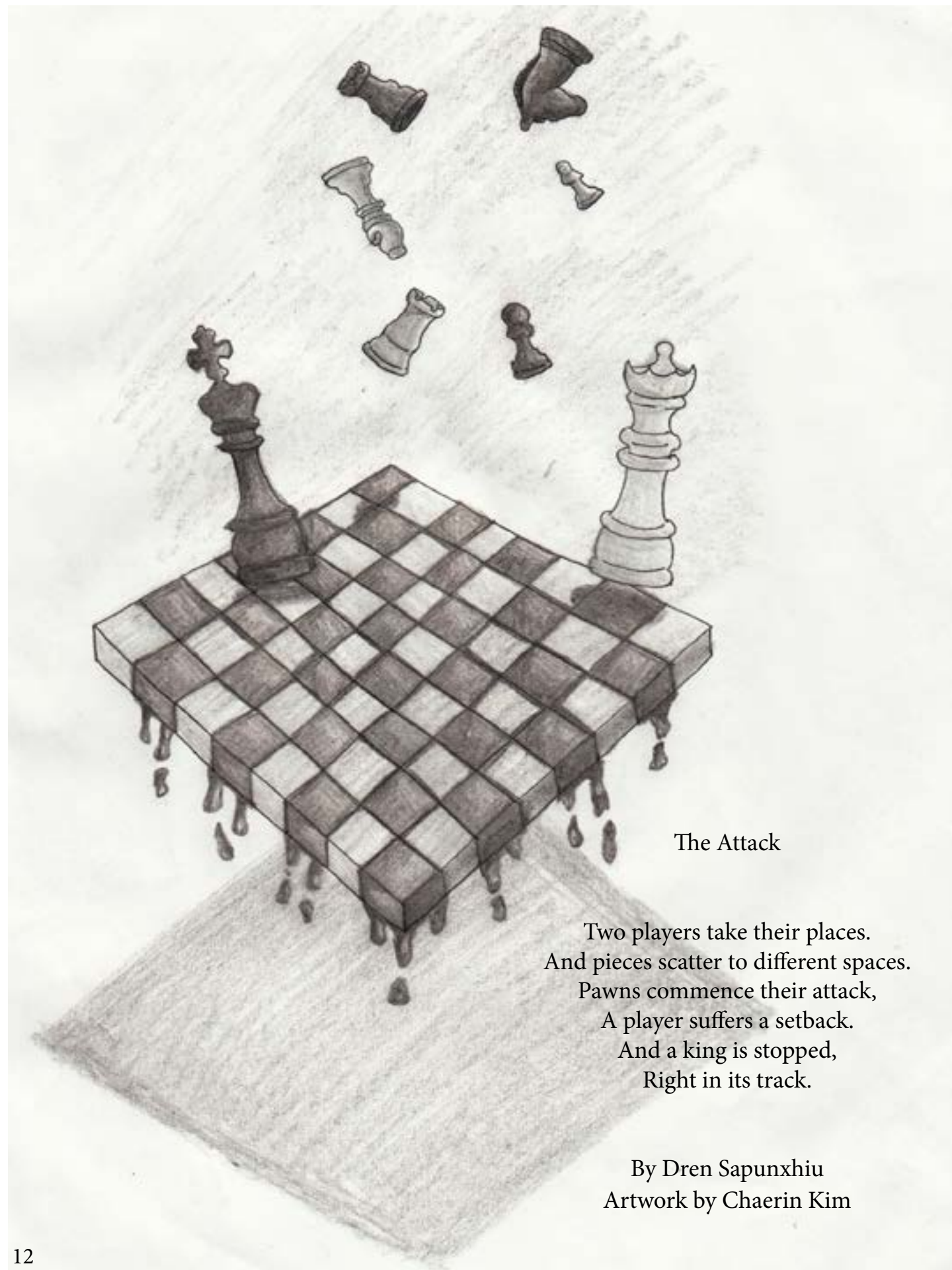


investigators and even FBI had finally finished sorting all of the loot hidden in Sam's secret passageway. He was hailed a hero for helping solve the mystery of the "Bank Street Burglar" and was given a substantial reward.

After years of feeling lonely and dejected, Sam was now a hero. He decided to take some of the reward money and use it to redecorate his home. His first order of business was to buy all new paintings for his hallways and study. However, every now and then Sam would get an old familiar feeling that he was not alone in his home and he remembered that even though they found the money, jewels, and artifacts...they never did find the "Bank Street Burglar."

By Kelly Wang  
Artwork by Camela Pena-Marte and Samuel Yun







## Hoodwinked

One o' clock, p.m. Not a common time to get a call in my office, judging by the fact no criminal in their sane minds would rob someone in broad daylight, but nevertheless my phone rang. I picked up the receiver. "Hello?" "Mr. Monroe?" a squeaky voice cried out through the phone.

"Yes, what is your problem ma'am?" I quickly responded. She, a young lass by the name of Ethel Smyth, gave me the run through. Three days ago, she had left her house to take a vacation in the neighboring state. Upon returning to her home, she had found "multiple accounts of vandalism and theft..." She seemed very concerned, so I decided to take the case.

I dialed the sheriff's office and alerted the first person that picked up, Deputy Sherman. Not the sharpest knife in the drawer, but he'd suffice. We drove out to the house, both of us anxious for different reasons. This was, in fact, Deputy Sherman's first real investigation, something that couldn't apply to a well-seasoned private detective like myself. Parking in the driveway and walking up to the front door gave us the rough perspective of what we had to work with. As my client met us at the front door, we took in how the formerly pristine-white house had fragments of shattered glass, broken pieces of furniture, and more litter on the outside.

"How are you the first to notice this?" I asked her.

"Well, I live in such a remote part of town. Nobody ever comes by here. Well, except for the garbagemen. I always felt safe here," Ethel Smyth said anxiously.

I pulled out a bag and gloves, quickly trying to take note of everything I could. The glass had fallen mostly outside the house, so clearly

that had been the criminal's mean of escape. Sherman beckoned us to the porch. "Ma'am, I think you have a hole in your door."

"Yes, Deputy Sherman, I am well aware of that fact," replied Ethel curtly, annoyed at the obvious observation.

The door was in shambles, and an ax-head was still in it– that was the way the criminal got in. I collected it as evidence, too. We entered the house, and were absolutely shocked. Everything including the kitchen sink had disappeared or been relocated, according to Ethel. Thus, it wasn't hard to find evidence. A spray can was left lying under a table, a knife was embedded in the wall, and a lamp was in pieces. I collected everything carefully.

"So, what did you find? Who did it?" Deputy Sherman and Ethel pelted me with questions.

"Calm down! Especially you, Sherman," I replied. I explained that since there were no witnesses and there were no suspects, the best I could do was check the evidence for fingerprints, and I had left my dusting kit at home.

"The police can handle it from here, sir," Sherman told me. He wanted me gone but I refused, especially since Ethel had promised a handsome amount of money for my services. However, I had all I needed from the crime scene, so I asked Sherman to drop me back at my house.

"What will you do with the evidence?" Sherman asked.

"I need time. First, I need to fingerprint it, then send it to the city where they can match it up to common perpetrators... It could take weeks," I replied somberly. Sherman drove off, but not before asking me to keep him updated on the case. I stayed outside until he was out of view and then went back inside.

Once I was sure I was safely alone I laughed. Idiots. I fitted the ax-head back on its handle, tossed most of the "evidence" across the house, and placed the knife and spray can on my desk. I expected better of Sherman– didn't he know his own office carried fingerprint records? Didn't he know that I too had said records? I guess those were the perks of having an idiot policeman by your side.

I pulled out my fingerprint records. Who to pin the crime on this time? I grabbed the fingerprints of a teenager in the town who had been arrested for vandalism. Perfect. I then took his fingerprint and stamped it onto the spray can and knife. My excuse was already forming. The boy was destroying the house for fun, and brought a knife in case... but he cut the glove with the knife, left the knife as a calling card, and then used the spray can. But he couldn't dispose of it, so he threw it away! Yes, a perfect story. I just needed to wait.

And wait I did. A week passed before Sherman started pestering me. I gave it another week, then relented, as he called me for the umpteenth time that week and told him the results were in. He hung up. A minute later, a sound like nuclear warfare emitted from my door. I looked outside. It was just Sherman's knocking. I grabbed the "evidence" and brought it outside. We jumped into the car



and I explained to Sherman my process – how meticulous it was to search the can and knife, how a glove from the crime scene that I assured him he found had a hole in the thumb, how the spray can and knife had thumb prints, how I waited for weeks for the evidence to return...everything. He was in awe, as was every single cop as I explained the crime. Even the most clever couldn't argue. Call me, the most well-educated, established detective in town? "Justice" was swift– the boy was sentenced to a year of probation, Ethel paid me very generously, the police gave me more money, and the people of the town chipped in some more. "The Town Detective Does It Again!" the newspapers read. I almost laughed. I really did do it again and I have no intention of stopping.

By Michael Papadopoulos  
Artwork by Samuel Yun





### Ode to Spring

Oh spring, you are just perfect!  
Not too cold and not too hot, just right.  
Your warmth coaxes people  
off their couches,  
And into parks and recreation houses,  
Oh Spring, what a sight!  
Your flower petals wave in the wind.  
Busy bees and chirping birds greet you.  
Bears and squirrels come to play too.

But spring, why do you make me cry?  
Tissues all around and pollen fills the air.  
Tears stream down,  
Past the red-tipped noses,  
And sneezes come in double doses.  
Spring, I guess you are imperfect.

By Wooreen Choy  
Artwork by Sofia Martinez



### Aftermath

A young man, no more than 25,  
Walks down a trodden path.  
To the front, he sees death.  
To the right, he sees famine.  
To the left, he sees poverty.  
Farther in all directions, he sees war.  
He sees armies besieging each other,  
Strategically flanking, invading, and killing.  
He sees generals training the strongest of soldiers.  
Worst of all, he sees the bombs.  
The spiralling nuclear missiles of destruction,  
Flying upon the land like a blizzard,  
Going up in a blazing fire,  
Destroying cities.  
  
Then, it disappears.

He looks around himself now.  
He no longer sees modern warfare,  
But the wars of years past.  
Men with wooden clubs, scouring lands for food,  
And slowly succumbing to the natural elements.

Lands with so few resources  
Life simply can't be sustained,  
Barren plains of dirt and debris below  
a gray sky of acidic rain.

That, too, disappears.

The man looks around—  
There is no more death, famine, or poverty.  
The man looks around once more,  
In hope of finding survivors— none.  
In this city of ash and rubble,  
No person could be found.  
Slowly, with a heart screaming for peace  
And a world contradicting it,  
The man leaves.

*"I know not with what weapons World War III will  
be fought, but World War IV will be fought with  
sticks and stones." –Albert Einstein*

By Michael Papadopoulos  
Artwork by Camela Pena-Marte



## Home

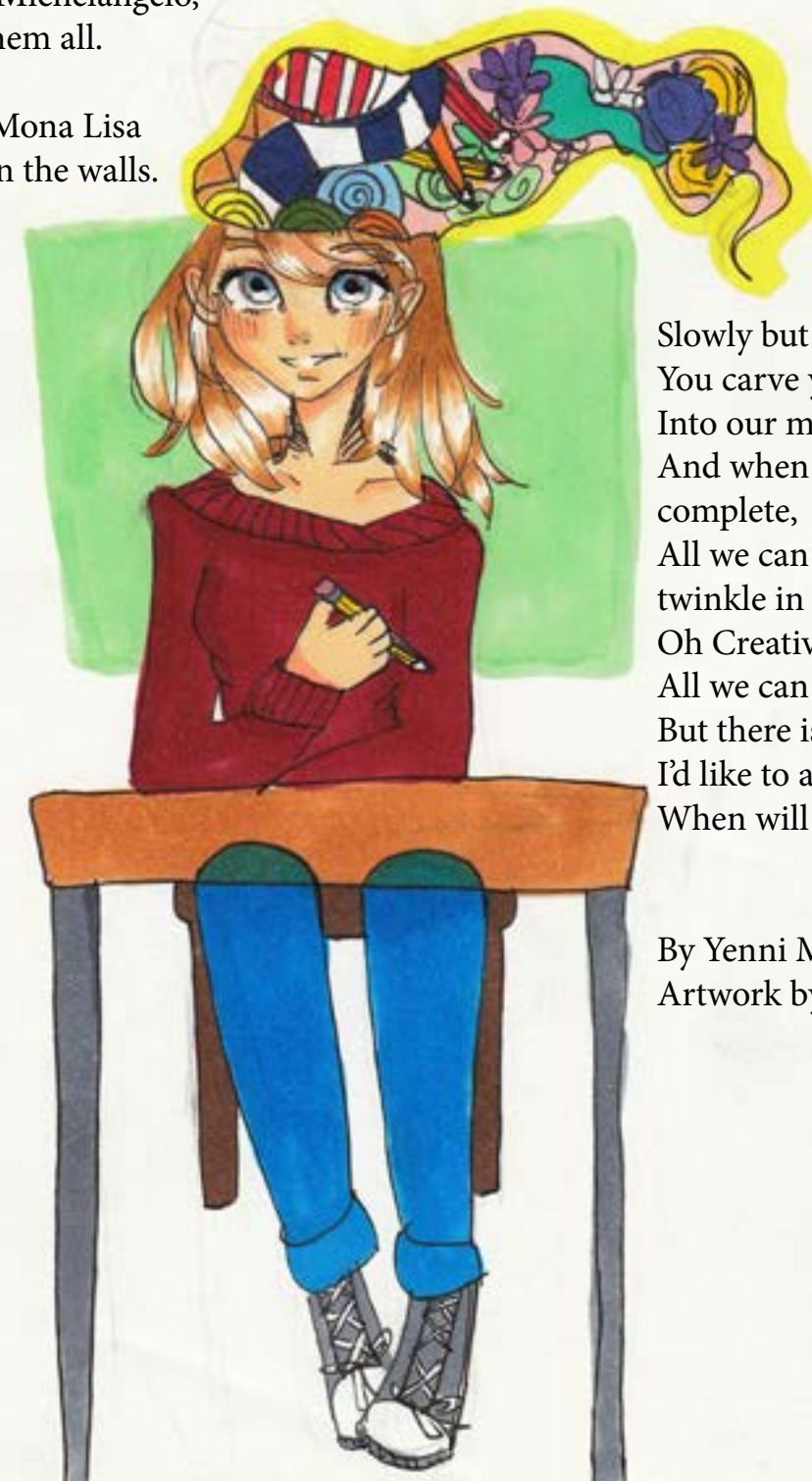
Oh home,  
You are where the heart is.  
I thank you for giving me a place to stay,  
And rest my weary head.  
Thank you for your warmth in the winter–  
And refreshing wind in the summer.  
Oh home,  
You are where the heart is.  
Thank you, for without you I'd be homeless,  
Thank you for your shelter.  
There is no place like you.  
Oh home,  
You are where *my* heart is.

By Ruby Hong  
Artwork by Camela Pena-Marte



## Ode to Creativity

Oh Creativity,  
The amount of praise you get  
Is not sufficient!  
Your wonderful pieces of art,  
If graded–  
Would be called highly proficient.  
Picasso, Van Gogh, Michelangelo,  
You have inspired them all.  
Without you  
There would be no Mona Lisa  
Or pretty pictures on the walls.



Slowly but surely,  
You carve your way  
Into our minds,  
And when the installment is  
complete,  
All we can see is the  
twinkle in the world's eyes.  
Oh Creativity,  
All we can do is praise thee.  
But there is just one last thing  
I'd like to ask–  
When will you come to me?

By Yenni Myung  
Artwork by Yenni Myung



## Aaron's Power

On his 14th birthday, Aaron Walker miraculously survived a head-on collision without even so much as a scratch. A week later when he scrapes his knee playing basketball, it heals within minutes. Later that summer he falls while on a hike and is unscathed while others are not so lucky. Where did this power come from, and what can he do with it? That is something Aaron will have to find out and soon, because someone is after Aaron's power...

\*\*\*\*\*

As a teen, Aaron quickly found that his power would come in handy, especially as he battled bullies in school. The tough kids quickly discovered that Aaron was almost invincible. They could not push him down the stairs or shove him in lockers. He could not be touched. Fortunately for Aaron, he had plenty of friends in school. His best friends were Jennifer, Ethan, Jacob, and Leah. They all knew about the accident that had given Aaron superhuman powers, but they had been sworn to secrecy so no one else knew. They also promised Aaron that they would try to find out the source of his power. That summer they worked hard to try and find the answer to Aaron's problem, but they didn't have any luck.

It was on one of those lazy summer days while Aaron and his friends were at Jacob's

house that the friends encountered a terrifying incident. They were all outside Jacob's house when a car came barreling up the driveway, hitting Aaron and Ethan. Aaron of course was fine, but the surprising thing was that Ethan was also unscathed. However, the most surprising thing was that the car that had barreled up the driveway did not have a driver. It seemed the car had driven itself and had sought Aaron and Ethan as its target.

Before calling the police, they ran to Jacob's house to discuss what had caused the car to move and to try and determine why



Ethan hadn't gotten hurt.

"Maybe Aaron did some healing wave emission thing and put a force shield around Ethan," Leah said, as she was searching through the computer for answers.

"I don't think I did that, but before it crashed into us, I had a weird feeling in my hands," admitted Aaron.

"Yes, that's what I mean," declared Leah. The others didn't agree with this theory and soon they started fighting over the situation. However, what they didn't realize was that one of the members of the trusted group was missing.

"Hey, where did Jennifer go?" Aaron asked.

"She was here a minute ago," Leah replied as she continued staring at the computer screen.

"I thought I saw her go out through the back," said Ethan. "Maybe she needed to get some fresh air. Things are getting crazy here."

At that moment Aaron decided to go find out. He was worried that something bad was happening to his friends and he wanted to make sure Jennifer was not hurt. He stepped outside and spotted the slender figure of Jennifer heading towards the old abandoned house on Wilson Street. He didn't want to startle her so he quietly followed her inside the house.

Once inside the dilapidated, eerie mansion, he decided to call out to her. "Jenn?" he whispered. He didn't get a reply, but he did hear footsteps on the floor above. He slowly walked up the rickety stairs until he was on the third floor. That's when it happened. All of a sudden, Jennifer, the trusted friend and confidante, was hovering over the floor. Aaron was stunned. Had Jennifer been hurt, or had a strange power taken over her body? Aaron had little time to think about that because im-

mediately Jennifer flew towards him.

"Ahh!" screamed Aaron. When he hit the floor, Jennifer flew towards him and began to crush him with a power that was stronger than his. "Why are you trying to hurt me?" Aaron asked his trusted friend.

"Because you are showing everyone the other world's power," answered Jennifer.

"What? There's another world where people have powers?" Aaron replied in shock.

"Yes, and they don't want you going around saving people and exposing your powers to the rest of the world."

"But Jennifer, I only use my power to help my friends. What is wrong with that?"

"I'm sorry Aaron, but I've been sent to stop you."

"By...?"

But that was all Aaron was able to say because Jennifer hit him with her power and knocked him unconscious. First, he saw a blinding light and then there was darkness. He fell to the floor at his *so-called* friend's feet. Then she drained him of all his powers and left him in the abandoned house, all alone.

*To be continued...*

By Kelly Wang  
Artwork by Ashley Sorto



### An Ode to Wolves

Oh wolves,  
 You are such loyal and majestic animals.  
 My favorite, in fact—  
 Your silver fur and sharp blue eyes,  
 What a prize!  
 Oh wolves,  
 Your soft panting and wagging tail,  
 Are so amazing.  
 Oh wolves, you are truly incredible  
 But I wonder—  
 Can I keep you as a pet?

By Samuel Yun  
 Artwork by Samuel Yun



### Ode to Hot Chocolate

Oh hot chocolate,  
 You are a blessing to me on a cold winter night,  
 When the sun goes away leaving little light.  
 Your thick chocolate and plump marshmallows,  
 Make me feel less like a prisoner in the cold gallows.  
 When I sip, your energy flows through my body—  
 And I feel like I have a sweet new hobby.  
 Then there's the evergreen tree adorned with decorations  
 And a log crackling in the fireplace, creating fierce sensations.  
 Without you, winter wouldn't be the same.  
 It would be so, so, SO very lame,  
 Sure, there will be presents, and skating, and all that fun stuff,  
 But your steamy flavor makes me a chocolate buff.  
 Always you taste so thrilling and new  
 Oh hot chocolate, what would I do if not for you?

By Victor Amaritei  
 Artwork by Ashley Gomes

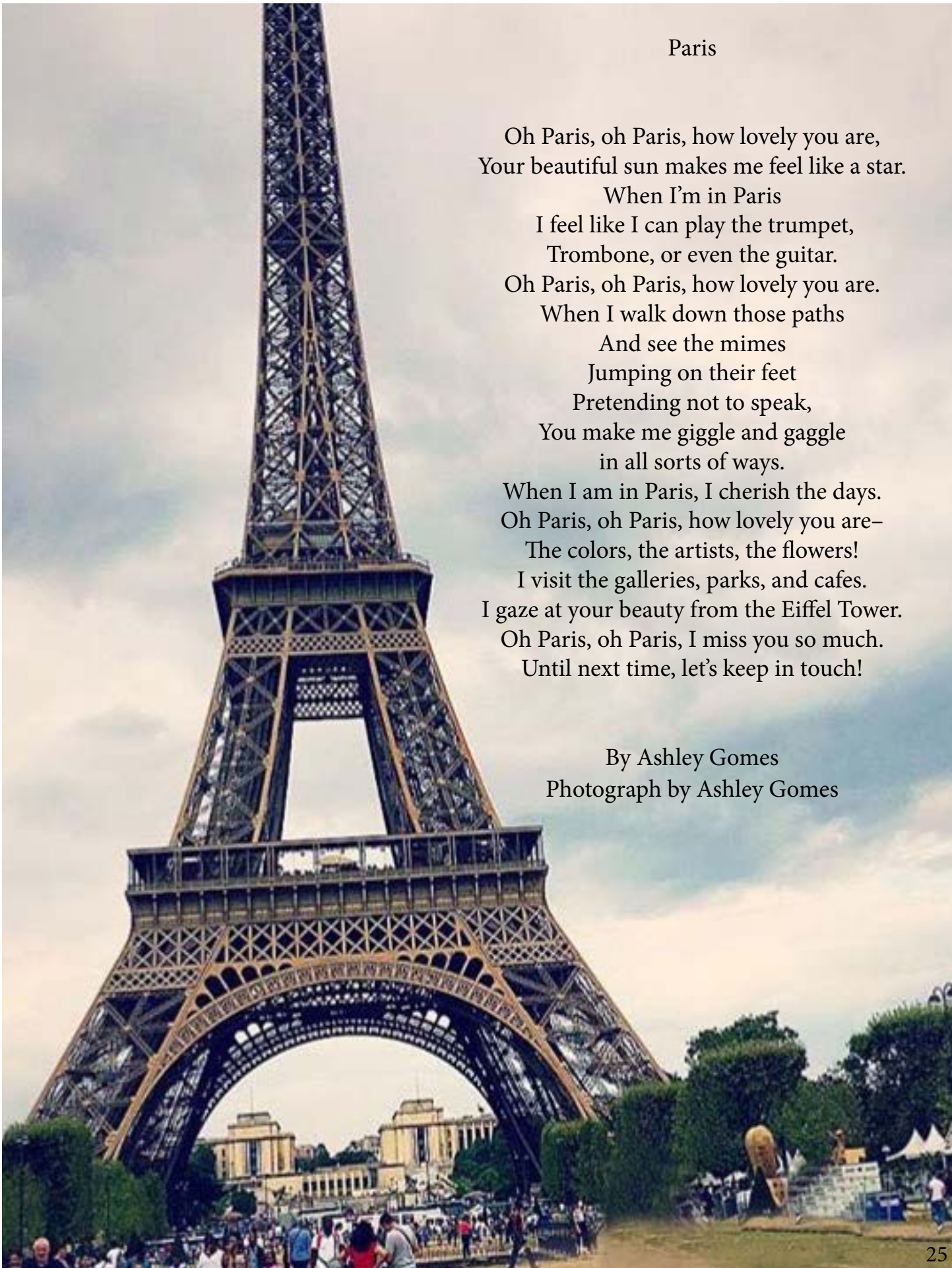




Venice

City of bridges  
Gondolas sailing with grace  
Lights fill up the sky

By Ryan Tiliouine  
Photograph by Ryan Tiliouine



Paris

Oh Paris, oh Paris, how lovely you are,  
Your beautiful sun makes me feel like a star.  
When I'm in Paris  
I feel like I can play the trumpet,  
Trombone, or even the guitar.  
Oh Paris, oh Paris, how lovely you are.  
When I walk down those paths  
And see the mimes  
Jumping on their feet  
Pretending not to speak,  
You make me giggle and gaggle  
in all sorts of ways.  
When I am in Paris, I cherish the days.  
Oh Paris, oh Paris, how lovely you are—  
The colors, the artists, the flowers!  
I visit the galleries, parks, and cafes.  
I gaze at your beauty from the Eiffel Tower.  
Oh Paris, oh Paris, I miss you so much.  
Until next time, let's keep in touch!

By Ashley Gomes  
Photograph by Ashley Gomes



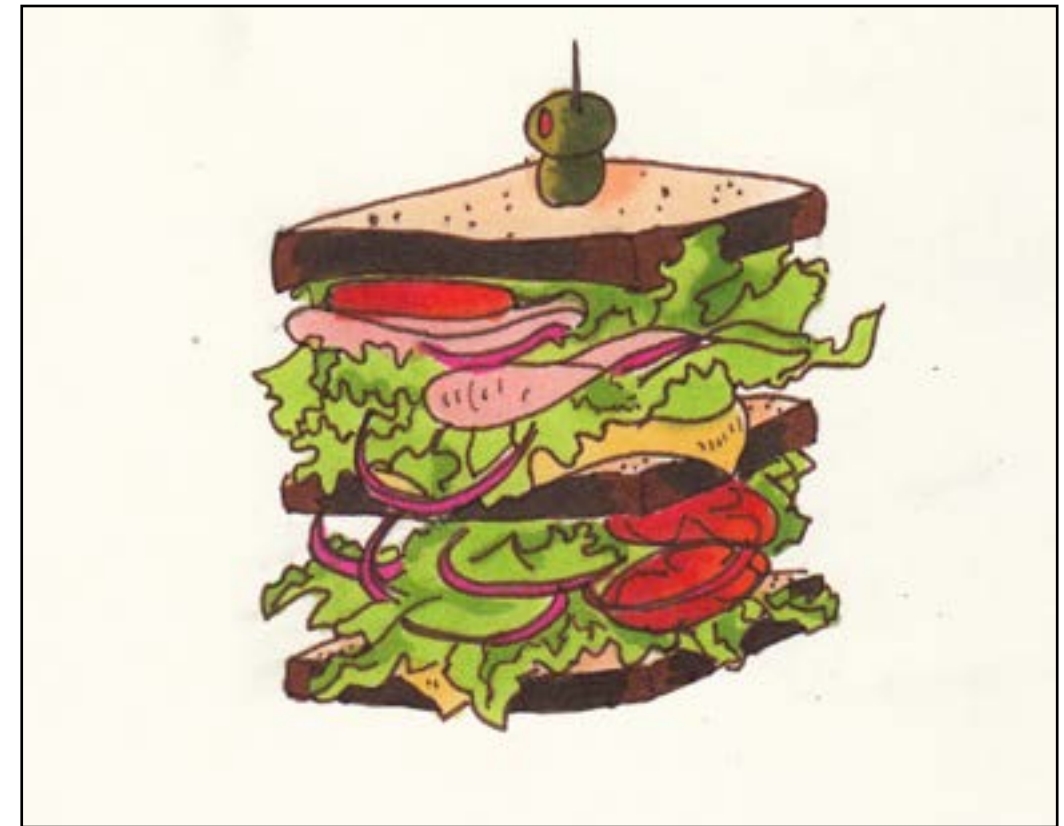
## The Tree

Flowers that bloom, leaves that fall,  
Branches outstretched, reaching high,  
Like a sentinel standing tall.  
It's everpresent as days go by.  
Old and warm-hearted,  
Majestic it lives,  
Maze like branches to shelter all.  
Fruits and flowers it proudly gives  
Until by man or nature it shall fall.

Year after year, memories take hold  
Like the climbing boy  
Who couldn't get down,  
Or the loving couple  
Who together grew old,  
They remember the day  
It was planted by the town.  
Until the day the tree ceases to be,  
It shall remain majestic for all to see.

By Wooreen Choy

Artwork by Camela Pena-Marte



## What's for Lunch?

Sandwiches come in all shapes and sizes,  
So many varieties filled with surprises.  
I've tried a hero and a BLT,  
But my favorite comes  
With turkey and cheese.  
Sandwiches, a simple, glorious delight—  
Eat it delicately bite by bite!  
When I get a chance  
To choose what to munch  
A fully stacked sandwich  
Is what's for lunch.  
I don't want to sound gross,  
But I love them stacked,  
And with all of the flavors  
Filled and packed.  
Sandwiches, Sandwiches,  
Oh how I adore,  
And sometimes I eat them  
Like I'm a hungry boar.

They are filled with the most glorious foods,  
Put one in your mouth  
And it will change your mood!  
Try one with lettuce, onions, tomatoes, cheese,  
Add some turkey, a radish,  
And green little peas.  
Perhaps you prefer some pickles or eggs?  
Don't fret, I won't judge  
If you sprinkle nutmeg.  
Sandwiches, sandwiches,  
A true food lover's delight,  
You tickle my tastebuds with every bite.  
If you want to know the best food for me,  
Just read this rhyme,  
It's clear to see.

By Noor Mohamed

Artwork by Camela Pena-Marte



## Mystery of the Shadow Thief

The darkness of the night started spreading across thousands upon thousands of miles over the seemingly endless jungle. The moon shone softly upon the clearing of the village. The river running adjacent to the village of Clawhawk, sparkled back in return. The frogs croaked and the wind sighed through the quaint village as midnight approached. The residents of the town were asleep, except for Chuck. He just couldn't sleep, thanks to the thrilling *Indiana Jones* series he was in the middle of reading. Chuck decided to take a quick break to gaze at the beauty surrounding his jungle home. As he stared at the of stars through a small clearing of trees over his village, he couldn't help but notice a shadow lurking at the edge of his town. It disappeared into a small abandoned hut before Chuck got a good look at it. He decided to go to bed, ignorant of the events the "shadow" would issue and without knowing what happened to Indie after he entered the sacred temples. Hours later, Chuck and his family awoke to a not so pleasant surprise – they had been robbed.

The items stolen were nothing special, just a few fruits, a small pistol, and a minute bracelet. Though the items stolen were not important, Chuck and his family did not feel safe. They went to their chief's hut to report the robbery. They found out other homes were also broken into, including their chief's. Chief Nakamura told the people that he thought the thief most likely had his share of Clawhawk and would move on because the wealthy city, Ziom, two miles northwest would be a better target. Chuck wasn't so sure though.

The next night, Chuck stayed up until midnight with hopes of spotting the mysterious shadow. He had to go to bed by 12:00 am whether he spotted the thief or not due to the village curfew. It was 11:59 pm and there

was no sign of the intruder. Chuck fell asleep just before the shadow appeared in the dense jungle. In the morning, the villagers realized they had been robbed again. Like the night before, only small items were taken. The citizens were determined not to let the thief slip through their fingers another night. The residents banged on Chief Nakamura's door with fear that they were not safe. The chief decided it was enough.

Everyone got together and discussed how to stop the intruder. They agreed on a plan. Traps were set all over the village, and cameras from Ziom were set up on the huts and in the surrounding trees to help catch the perpetrator. Ziom even provided them with rifles for protection. The residents of Clawhawk were determined that they would put an end to the thief and his dirty work.

The curfew was not enforced that night. No one went to sleep and the lights were put out to imitate a sleeping town. At midnight, the thief appeared. It went into that same little hut and came out again twenty minutes later skipping with glee that the townspeople weren't home. The thief slinked away into the jungle unaware that the entire village was after him. He led the townspeople five miles east into the jungle. Chuck silently pursued the thief over the small brooks and under roaring waterfalls, imagining himself in one of Indiana's adventures. Finally, they reached the entrance to a small cave. The thief disappeared into darkness and so did the people of Clawhawk.

The cave led to a ledge looking over an underground city. Vendors shouted, babies cried, and sweet aromas drifted upwards. The city was illuminated with candlelight as if it were made from the light itself. From the ledge, Chuck could see several other ledges

jutting out from the blackness around the circular cave. A small railed pathway wound its way down to the outskirts of the city. There was also a sign that read "Welcome to Tooba-Tikki." That's where the thief went. Chuck led the procession down the pathway and towards the gates. Tooba-Tikkian guards were everywhere, carrying sharp spears, axes, bows and arrows, shields, and more old-fashioned weaponry. Chuck's group quickly shuffled inside the city gates. The chieftains from both villages met to discuss the thief that was stealing from them. Chief Nakamura of Clawhawk thought that Tooba-Tikki was commanding the thief to pilfer from them. Tooba-Tikki's chief, Wild Wolf, thought the same about Clawhawk. They decided to work together to stop the thief. Unfortunately for both towns, the thief also turned out to be a magician – he could materialize in the shadows anywhere and somehow managed to keep Tooba-Tikki in a time trance. No news about the outside world reached them, which explained the lack of modern weapons. Tooba-Tikki and Clawhawk decided to call the thief Lance.

Lance apparently stole from both villages, so the two villages decided to combine their forces and set the perfect trap. A glittering stone was set in the city square and cameras were set up at every angle. While the

town was "asleep," the magician stepped out from a veil of darkness between the two huts. He walked briskly, but stealthily, towards the center of town. Lance was just about to pick up the beautiful stone when a faint whir could be heard. Seconds later, a net enveloped Lance just before he was to commit the robbery. Smoke gushed in from blowers strategically set around the net area causing Lance to lose his sense of sight. When the smoke cleared, he was

nowhere to be seen. In his place, sat a note. It read, *"Excellent attempt to capture. I have eluded you for now, but for how much longer? Think about that. –Shadow Thief."* People in both towns were puzzled over the note, but they agreed that they had done a good job. The two promised to get together if the thief were to would strike again.

Life's clogs rumbles on and on. Some people pass away and others are born. Both chiefs still have uneasy

dreams of this thief. Why did he steal from them? Why did he not steal more valuable items than fruits? Where did he go? When would he strike again? Well, only time will tell!

By Victor Amaritei

Artwork by Samuel Yun







## The Falls

The flowing water  
Reveals nature's true beauty  
To forever see

By Daniel Casciano  
Photograph by Sofia Martinez

## Triton

On arms like aquatic wings,  
The Merman glides through the sea,  
His tail propelling him through the water  
As graceful as could be.

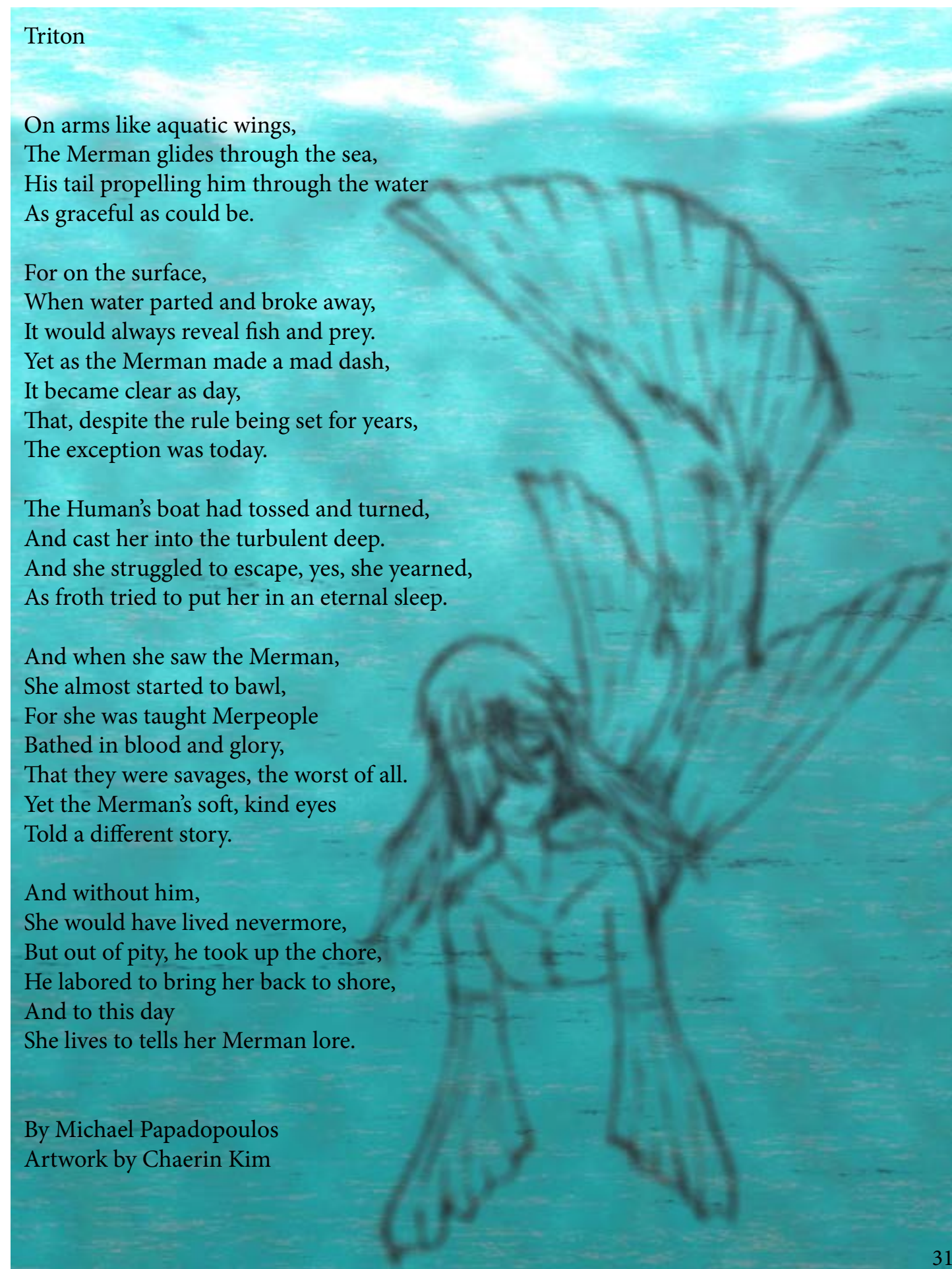
For on the surface,  
When water parted and broke away,  
It would always reveal fish and prey.  
Yet as the Merman made a mad dash,  
It became clear as day,  
That, despite the rule being set for years,  
The exception was today.

The Human's boat had tossed and turned,  
And cast her into the turbulent deep.  
And she struggled to escape, yes, she yearned,  
As froth tried to put her in an eternal sleep.

And when she saw the Merman,  
She almost started to bawl,  
For she was taught Merpeople  
Bathed in blood and glory,  
That they were savages, the worst of all.  
Yet the Merman's soft, kind eyes  
Told a different story.

And without him,  
She would have lived nevermore,  
But out of pity, he took up the chore,  
He labored to bring her back to shore,  
And to this day  
She lives to tell her Merman lore.

By Michael Papadopoulos  
Artwork by Chaerin Kim





## Beyond the Trees

My Dear,  
I simply wish you were here,  
I know you're there-  
Beyond the trees,  
Where I can't reach.  
Yet you still seek me  
Out in the open, you seek my call.  
But the only things you hear  
Are words from those  
Who don't care at all.

Oh my dear,  
I simply wish you were here  
I get lonely each day that passes me,  
Sadly it seems we can not be.  
But if I were to have one wish  
It would be to have you near.

By Chaerin Kim  
Artwork by Ashley Sorto

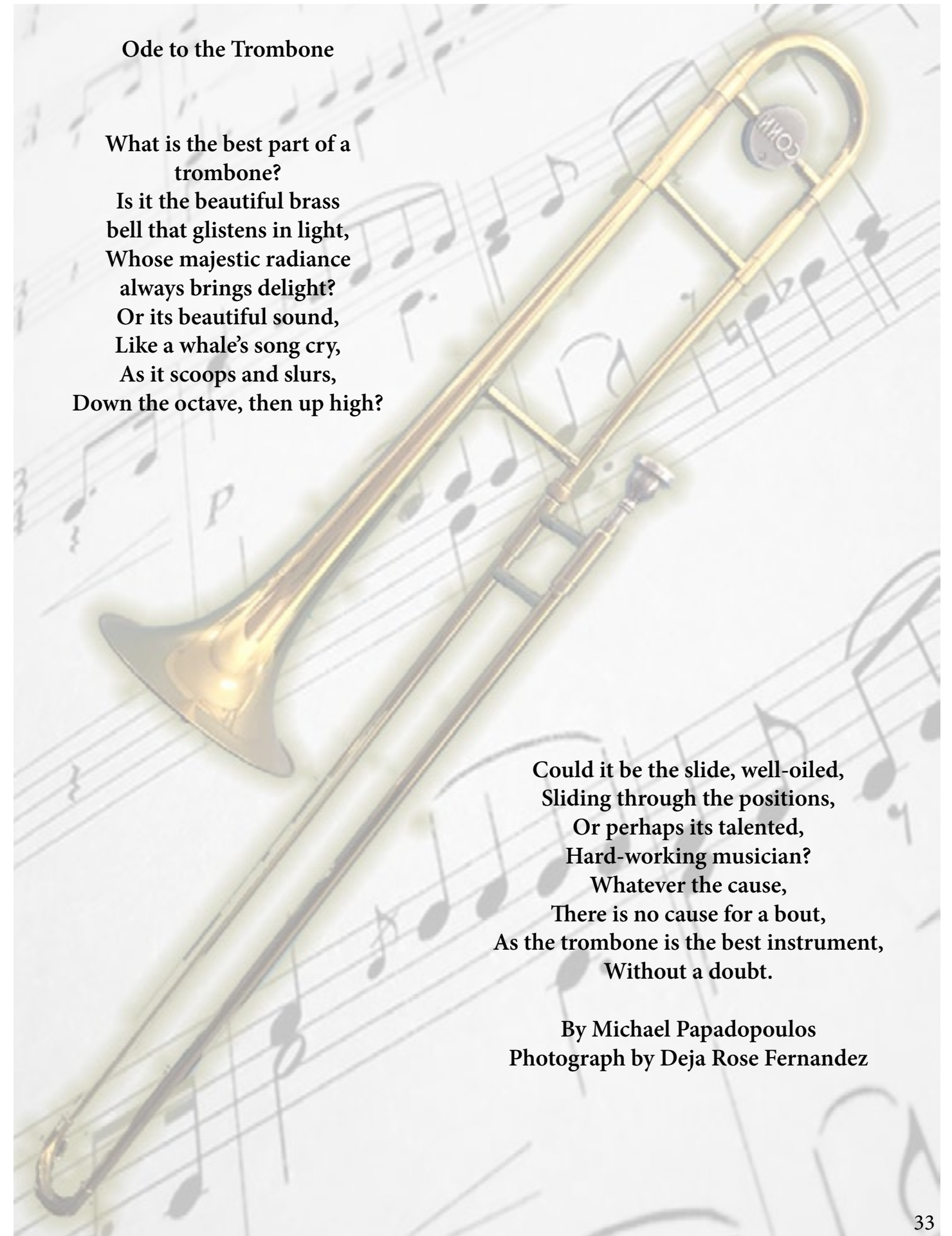


## Ode to the Trombone

What is the best part of a  
trombone?  
Is it the beautiful brass  
bell that glistens in light,  
Whose majestic radiance  
always brings delight?  
Or its beautiful sound,  
Like a whale's song cry,  
As it scoops and slurs,  
Down the octave, then up high?

Could it be the slide, well-oiled,  
Sliding through the positions,  
Or perhaps its talented,  
Hard-working musician?  
Whatever the cause,  
There is no cause for a bout,  
As the trombone is the best instrument,  
Without a doubt.

By Michael Papadopoulos  
Photograph by Deja Rose Fernandez





Spring

Winter takes his bow  
People clap as spring enters  
Flowers are first act

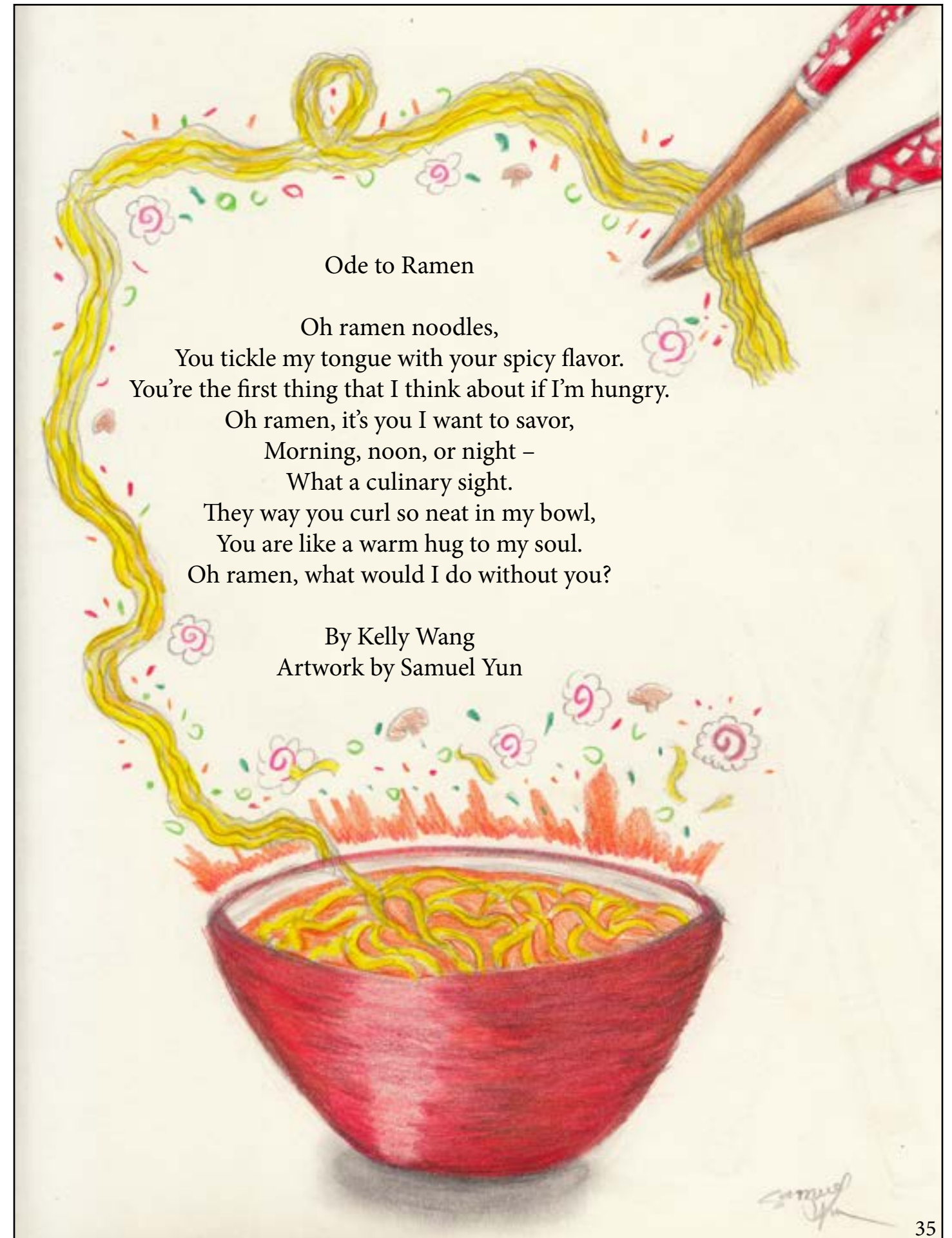
By Ruby Hong  
Artwork by Camela Pena-Marte



Ode to Ramen

Oh ramen noodles,  
You tickle my tongue with your spicy flavor.  
You're the first thing that I think about if I'm hungry.  
Oh ramen, it's you I want to savor,  
Morning, noon, or night –  
What a culinary sight.  
They way you curl so neat in my bowl,  
You are like a warm hug to my soul.  
Oh ramen, what would I do without you?

By Kelly Wang  
Artwork by Samuel Yun





*A Key to Success:  
Kids Need More Sleep*

Thump thump~ You faintly hear your mom’s footsteps climb up the stairs ready to wake you up for school. You turn to your side facing your rusty six-year old clock. It reads 7:55. “Already?” you grunt to yourself. “I’m going to be late again!” The dilemma of not getting enough sleep and being late to school is just one of the struggles that a student has to face every day. Each day students all across our state and even our country are dealing with this very issue. Currently, there is a debate on whether school should start later than usual. This idea is facing some opposition with many claiming that later start times will mean later release time. However, others feel that a few minutes added at the end of the day won’t make much of a difference. Starting school at a later time is a good idea, as students would be able to get much needed sleep, they will be more attentive in class and will be less susceptible to health related issues associated with lack of sleep.

How easy is it to wake up early in the morning to get ready for school? For many students, it is physically and mentally difficult to wake up early for school. That is because many students have extracurricular activi-

ties and homework, and by the time they get home and finish their work, it is already very late. In an article from Scholastic Scope magazine, the centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that 70% of teens lack many precious hours of sleep. That is an astounding statistic and a good reason to change the school schedule. In the same issue an article titled “Should School Start Later?”, the author, Justin O’Neill, says that middle schools and high schools should start later so teens can sleep in because this extra time is important



to a child’s development and well being. In addition, as teens get older, their circadian rhythm shifts during adolescence. As a result, it becomes physically harder to go to sleep early resulting in lack of sleep. Therefore, those critics who say that kids should just go to sleep earlier don’t understand that it is physically impossible. This lack of

sleep affects kids and lead to tardiness and disciplinary consequences at their school. Another benefit of a later start time is that kids will be more attentive in school and get better grades Heather Macintosh, a founder of of Start School Later, an non-profit organization says, “Well-rested kids learn better. They’re happier, they get better grades, and their bodies are healthier.” This quote clearly proves that schools should start later in order for kids to stay attentive during classes. If school started later, kids would

have the opportunity to rest more, resulting in an alert brain and focused mind which could contribute in receiving good grades. Just like energy drinks and coffee are keys for stamina in an adult’s day, sleep is vital for a teen to go through their day. Not being able to acquire the right amount of sleep could cause students to be unfocused and inattentive during classes, resulting in low grades and an unexpected report about behavior during school hours. Finally, allowing students just a few more minutes of sleep will help prevent health issues. In an article titled “Healthy Sleep”, the author states that sleep deprivation can lead to stress and that stress can lead to other serious health issues. These health risks don’t have to be risky anymore if school started later. The many disorders and diseases caused solely by sleep deprivation harm students in many ways. These disorders and diseases can ruin a student’s career and future thereby destroying their many hopes and dreams. However, we can do something about this. If school started



only 10 or at the most 30 minutes later, the few minutes of rest could affect the student’s whole day. I hope we will not crush our children’s hopes and dreams just because of sleep deprivation. In closing, while some may argue that starting school later can cause complications with schedules and school routines, I feel the health and well being of students is more important. Starting later will allow students to get the much needed sleep they need for their age group, help them to stay focused and alert during the day, and keep them happy and healthy. Now, what school district would be opposed to that?

By Esther Kim  
Photographs by Deja Rose Fernandez



## *Don't Sleep Your Day Away*

“Lose an hour in the morning, and you will be up all day hunting for it.” This is a quote by Richard Whately, a 19th century economist. He basically says that every hour of the day is precious, and if students wake up later, they will lose a precious part of their day. The morning is the best time to solve complicated problems that you would’ve had trouble with in the previous day, and is also a good time to write. Recently, school districts are debating the possibility of starting school later to allow students more time to sleep. If schools do start later, this concentration and focus will be lost, and the added snooze time will play havoc with everyone’s daily schedule. Schools should not start later because parents who work may not be able to take their kids to school. Additionally, students will have less time bonding with their family as they will be arriving home later tasked with the burden of homework at a time when their brains are exhausted. Additionally, students may have to give up their extracurricular activities due to scheduling conflicts that may arise as a result of a later start in their day.

First, many students have parents or guardians that work full time and have to get out early for work. If school starts later, parents will not be able to drop their kids off to school, and if students live a far distance away from the school, they may have no means of transportation. This may cause students to walk longer distances. Walking long distances may be dangerous in a way, because

strangers could be lurking anywhere, and you never know what might happen. Getting lost could also be a problem when walking longer distances, and this could cause tardiness at school. While some opponents argue that school districts can simply hire more buses to solve this problem, this solution costs money. This money can be spent on better things at school, such as computers or smartboards or textbooks and programs rather than spending the money on bus drivers or vehicles for transportation.

In addition, if schools start later, students will have less time bonding with their family. A later start at school would mean that students would come home later, and if they have a lot of homework, they will most likely spend the evening working and not bonding with family. Most students, get to bond with their parents at dinner or during the evening. It is important to spend time with your family in order to develop a healthy relationship with them, especially when children are going through puberty, bonding with parents is substantially important. According to an article on Protecting Children and Empowering Parents, children who have parental support are likely to be healthier as adults, and the role of a parent is irreplaceable. Although students could see their parents on the weekends, it is good to keep a healthy relationship with your parents by having them check your schoolwork, and talking to them about your school day.

Furthermore, starting school later would mean that students would not have time for extracurricular activities. It is healthy for a student to be involved in extracurricular

activities, whether it is outside of school or inside. Either way, there will be less time to participate in these activities, and if students do, they would come home later, which can lead to exhaustion or stress. Also, most after school programs, especially those that cater to more than one town, would not push their start time for just one student

that has had a late dismissal at school. For example, if I went to an after school program to study for math, and I got dismissed a half hour later than other students who attend this program, I would not be able to attend this program because I would miss more than half of the class. The same can be said for students who play sports, or take piano lessons after school. If they get out later, all other activities will be pushed to later as well.

In conclusion, starting school later would not benefit anyone, for it will take away the time for parents to take their kids to school, lessen family time, and take away time from extracurricular activities. Instead of starting school later, I think that students should go to bed earlier, which will ensure that they get the necessary amount of sleep they need. Besides there is not enough evidence to support that starting school later



will make students get more sleep. Many critics, myself included, believe that students will just go to bed even later because they have more time in the morning. When you take into consideration all the consequences associated with later start times, such as later dismissal, decline in extra curricular participation and decrease family time, it becomes a much easier decision for school districts to make. If you want your child to become a successful and healthy child, schools should not start later.

By Yenni Myung  
Photograph by Esther Kim



## Books

On the shelves these valuables reside,  
Wonders hidden beneath their pages.  
A turn of the page is like a trip outside—  
A journey enjoyed by all ages.  
It may at first seem cumbersome,  
But reading is a wonderful relief.  
The quest makes many adventuresome.  
Digesting the words is not so much of a peeve.  
The books tell a variety of tales,  
From facts to fiction, to ancient lore.  
Shall it be today that your mind sets sail?  
To ancient places and distant shores?  
Books take you places you've never been,  
Reading a book is where I'll always be seen!

By Dren Sapunxhiu  
Photograph by Esther Kim



## Small Gift

With bended back he  
Crouches toward longing child  
And shares happiness

By Wooreen Choy  
Artwork by Wooreen Choy





### New Day

Hopes and dreams being crushed and broken,  
People screaming for their paths to open.  
Blood soaked the barren ground,  
Spreading sorrow all around.  
Then a new King would be crowned,  
Rewriting history for those who were down.  
As crowds yearned for justice, for the lost who weren't found,  
Who knew this new day was coming around.

By Chaerin Kim  
Artwork by Sofia Martinez  
and Noor Mohamed