

A watercolor illustration of a pond scene. In the upper left, a small koi fish with yellow and grey markings swims. To its right are two green lily pads with dark green veins. The title 'Inception' is written in a large, bold, yellow, hand-painted font across the middle of the image. Below the title, a large koi fish with orange, yellow, and white markings swims towards the right. To its left, another smaller koi fish with orange and white markings swims. The background is composed of soft, blended washes of light blue, green, and white, suggesting water and reflections. At the bottom left and bottom right, there are pink lotus flowers. The text '2021-22 Edition' is written in a yellow, hand-painted font at the bottom left.

# Inception

2021-22 Edition



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# INCEPTION

Slocum Skewes Literary Magazine  
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Ridgefield Public Schools  
Slocum Skewes School  
650 Prospect Avenue  
Ridgefield, NJ

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Inception Literary Magazine is designed to showcase the amazing talents of Slocum Skewes' young writers and artists in grades 6 through 8. It is 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 would especially like to thank  
Mrs. Michelle Mariani for her assistance,  
as well as the administration for their support.

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## Undersea Operations

I've never liked the beach.  
I've never liked the hot sand that gets everywhere.  
I've never liked the salty taste of the water.  
I've never liked the endless wind.  
But, today was different.  
I went to the beach.  
The sand did not get everywhere.  
The water did not bother me.  
The wind was not howling.  
Today was different.  
Because I picked up a seashell.  
Right at the start.  
We put our chairs and umbrella up.  
My brother and I walked down to the water.  
And I picked up a seashell.  
And my brother said, "If you put it to your ear,  
you will hear the ocean."  
I thought it was a prank.

But I put it to my ear.  
And at first, I heard the sea.  
But maybe four seconds in, it changed.  
"This is Merpatrol Number 1057,  
requesting backup.  
The humans have a radio in their possession."  
I was shocked.  
That was years ago.  
My family is convinced that I imagined it.  
The more I think about it, the more I start to  
believe them.  
But, one good thing about the experience.  
I now like the beach.

By Paul Amaritei  
Illustration by Olivia Kim





## Snowflakes

The first snow of winter falls gracefully  
Dancing together in the air  
Helping each other land carefully  
And I remember exactly where  
We first met—  
The bittersweet cold  
That stings but reminds me of a memory  
Where you said we'd grow old  
We're complementary  
Together like snowflakes  
Unique, but in pairs  
Finally all the heartbreaks  
Are paying off and the tears  
Are healing when you got down on one knee  
Together always  
As you said—  
You and me

By Emma Brongo  
Illustration by Olivia Kim





## Fluttering Stars

"It's lovely isn't it?" He spoke so softly, I could barely hear him.

"Yeah..." I said, looking at him, not the stars  
But then again, he looked just like the lovely shining diamonds that lingered in the raven-black sky.

"You know, my grandpa used to call these moonlight butterflies." I said, looking back up at the sky.  
He gave a small laugh.

"Why?"

"Well, he used to tell me a story he got from my grandma."

I start to tear up a little bit at the fond memory of my grandparents. The moonlight butterflies...

---

"You see those ligh's? Gran'ma calls 'em moonlight butte'flies."

"Why grandpa?"

"Cause they flutte' in the sky."  
"Hm?"

"So, when I were a youngin' like you..."

50 years ago...

"Dear?"

"Yes?"

"How do you feel about them moonlight butterflies?"

"Moonlight butterflies?"

I chuckled

"What are those?" I asked, smiling.

"Them things in the sky."

"You mean the stars?"

"The moonlight butterflies. Them things in the sky!"

"Is that what you call the stars, darling?"

She blushed.

It was quite an adorable sight to see, my love a flustered mess in front of me

"Shush-"

"\*laughing\* okay~ What are they anyway?"

"My momma used to tell me that them moonlight butterflies are life 'em birds in the day."

"What do you mean?"

She laughed and said,

"You silly boy! It's like went they migraine!"

"You mean migrate? When they fly to the South for winter?"

"Yeah, a migraine!"

I laughed at her remark. She was so innocent that it was so adorable. She looked at me with a large smile and shining eyes

"... Tell me more about the moonlight butterflies."

Her eyes lit up again.

"Well, they are lovely glowing butterflies which come in all different colors, mainly yellow and white. They flutter around in the sky while leaving streaks of light as they fly by! They work with the night fairies, who are majestic creatures who have pale white skin, shining violet eyes, glittering and glowing white dresses, and translucent wings that are silent in the dark night sky. They send the butterflies away into the night. Every time it starts to become dawn, the morning fairies, who are lovely fairies with dark and richer skin, honey-like eyes, flower-themed dresses, and butterfly

wings, collect the butterflies in the miniature houses they carry around and send them back to the night fairies in the clouds.”

“Why through the clouds?”

“Well, because then they would disappear!”

“What happens when they disappear?”

“There will be a starless sky...”

“Isn’t that a good thing?”

“Why would that be a good thing?”

“Well... because then we can see the clear night sky...”

“I guess you’re right...”

We chuckled and looked at each other, then went back home holding hands.

That had happened years ago.

My grandpa and I sat on the same bench as he and grandma had.

“Grandpa?”

“Hm?”

“What else is so special about the moonlight butterflies?”

“Well, your grandma used to say, that it was the souls of our loved ones!”

“So one of them could be grandma?”

“Yes, dear, they could...”

I sighed, looking up at the sky again.

“You must really miss them...” I looked over at him.

“I do, yeah.”

He stared at the sky and turned to look at me.

“Your grandpa said that the stars could be the souls of your loved ones, right?”

“The moonlight butterflies... But that’s just a story my grandma and grandpa used to tell me...”

He laughed.

“Look up.”

Then, it happened. Something landed on my hand—a glowing thing. I gasped.

A moonlight butterfly.

By Claire Lee

Illustration by Claire Lee



## Little Girl's Poem

Turning the corner, seeing my house,  
Inside the walls, there's a little mouse.  
Look at the beige roof,  
My dog is acting like a goof.

The trees are swaying in the air,  
And so is my long hair.  
Finally, I'm back home,  
I'm gonna open up Google Chrome.

By Melinda Ozcan

Illustration by Katherine Ryu







## Behind Closed Doors

So silent and sad  
A lonely door in the sun  
Please let it all out

By Claire Lee  
Photograph by Olivia Kim

## The River

The river goes on and on.  
It comes from the mountains.  
It comes from the rain.  
It comes from the ground.  
It creates its own path.  
It does not follow a predetermined course.  
Its meandering course is not the same as its neighbors.  
It provides for those that depend on it.  
It does not let anything stop it.  
If it gets slowed,  
It powers through.  
The river goes on and on.



The river goes on and on.  
Humans should be more like rivers.  
We should take inspiration from many places.  
We should go where we want.  
We should not follow the norm.  
We should be different.  
We should be responsible.  
We should not quit.  
We should not hang our head when there is a setback.  
We should find a way through it.  
Humans should be more like rivers.

By Paul Amaritei  
Photograph by Luka Cooke





## Boredom

A feeling you can't seem to shake  
A feeling that slowly creeps in  
When you're ending a project or video  
When there's absolutely nothing to do  
Or absolutely nothing you can do

Staring into the abyss  
Letting dreams and thoughts run wild  
Making up an ideal world  
A fantasy where there's something to do  
You're the hero  
You're the savior  
Because maybe  
Just maybe  
There's something to do

But then you snap back to your reality  
Where there is absolutely nothing  
To do

By Emma Brongo  
Illustration by Kayla Lee



## Seashells

Seashells prove that life and beauty coexist with each other,  
One far more calloused than the other yet somehow identical to its opposite.  
No matter how far out it is pushed it will always be found,  
Found by one of the ocean's long lost loves,  
Or it will be found by her very own hands  
Holding something as small and fragile so strongly within her grasp,  
Never quite letting it go.  
Whether it leaves the elusive warmth of her embrace or it remains,  
Seashells always carry her essence wherever they travel.  
Somehow they leave traces of her in even the most barren places,  
Following her admirers.  
Somehow the same warmth the ocean embraces every one of her creations.  
Trails after them no matter how far from home they are,  
And somehow they will always find their way back.

By Sophia Aguilar  
Photograph by Olivia Kim





## Embers

The trees, the grass, and the vegetation moving  
slowly back and forth  
complemented by the shining dew in the sunlight.  
The leaves fall slowly guided by the gentle touch  
of the wind. You were my guide...  
The inky blackness, the deep pits of self-pity,  
and the icy grasp of  
those you showed manipulated me.  
You pulled me out of them.  
The misery you took away.  
It felt comforting and freeing.  
For the first time I could breathe  
clearly and my first breath felt like spring evening  
right after it rained.  
You replaced the inky blackness that had  
swallowed me whole with fire.

Raging, burning, passionate, relit fire.  
You could relight the soaking wet logs...  
But like damp logs, after all the smoke cleared  
After all the illusions!  
You—  
You...  
Were gone.  
Left me  
Left me with empty, smoldering, dying, embers  
When the dying embers ran out of the raging fire,  
I felt the inky  
blackness creep back in.  
Tranquil and eerie, the silence fills and echoes  
with embers that once were.

By Emma Brongo  
Illustration by Alanis Avila



## Lemon Tree

My lovely, lovely, lemon tree  
It sits in the distance  
It rustles with the breeze

My lovely, lovely, lemon tree  
The only thing that sets me free

My lovely, lovely, lemon tree  
Please, please, don't leave me

My lovely, lovely, lemon tree  
Has been set on fire by thee

My lovely, lovely, lemon tree  
I scream as he set ablaze on thee

My lovely, lovely, lemon tree  
I yell as you crumble before me

My lovely, lovely, lemon tree  
I want you to be here with me

My lovely, lovely, lemon tree  
I will never forget thee

My lovely, lovely, lemon tree  
Please come back to me.

By Claire Lee  
Illustration by Claire Lee





## Silent Serenity

peaceful scenery  
water like a glass mirror  
tranquil soul and mind

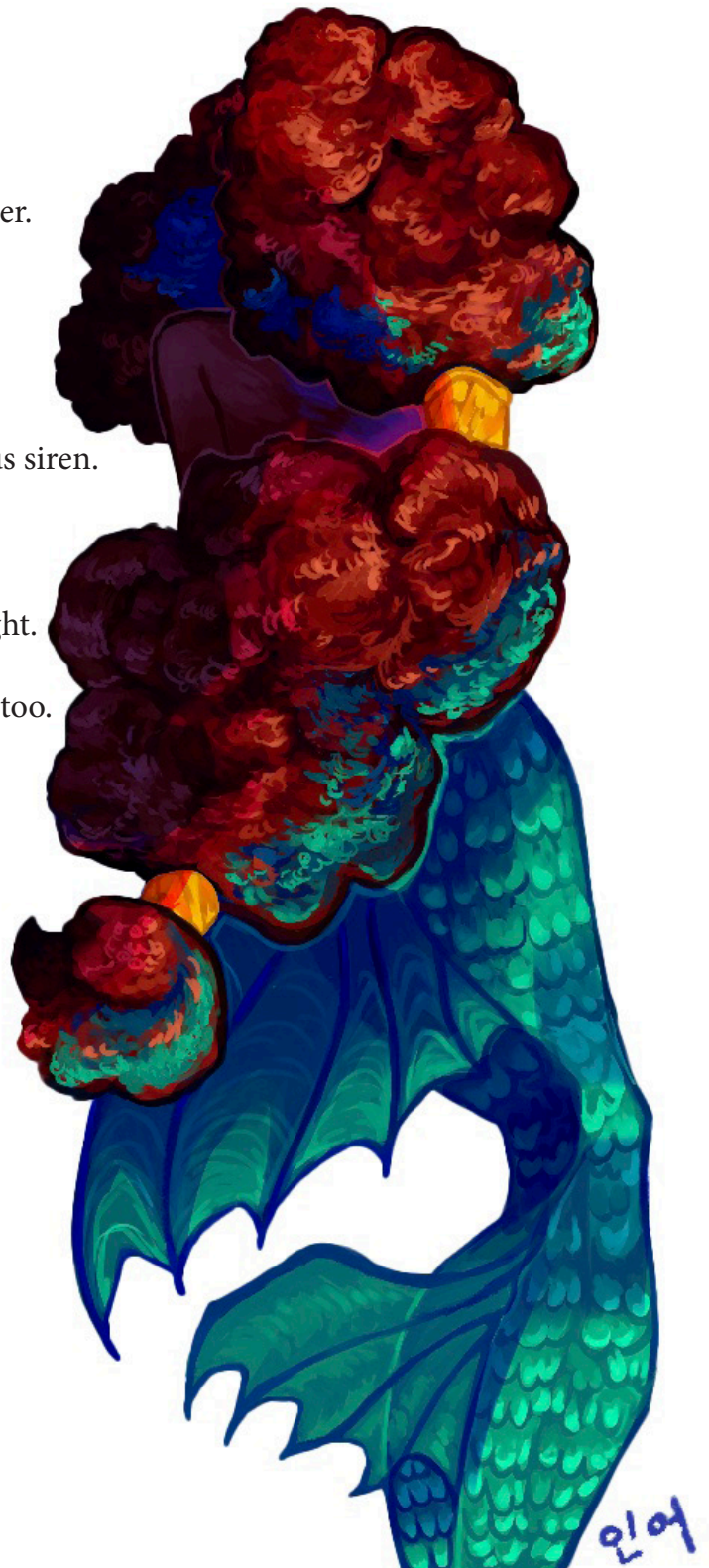
By Amber Worsham  
Photograph by Luka Cooke



## Mermaid

The scales sparkled and shimmered  
But only in the sparse sunlight  
That broke through the barrier of water.  
The fiery hair looked ablaze  
Against the dark murky background.  
The creature's face was turned—  
Was it hiding or was it scared?  
I couldn't tell nor did I care,  
For I was entranced by this mysterious siren.  
Bubbles escaped from my lips  
As I tried to call out to the creature  
The bubbles floated to the surface  
Disappearing into shimmering sunlight.  
And just like that,  
The mermaid had faded into bubbles too.

By Emma Brongo  
Illustration by Kayla Lee





## Flowers

“Cherry Blossoms, such pretty things aren’t they?” I say to them.

“Most definitely my love, but not as pretty as you.” They tell me, looking into my eyes.

Here I am, standing where we once stood.

But feeling happy this time.

Not crying, holding my chest, to keep my wilted heart from spilling out.

This place was dark and gloomy before in my mind.

Associated with heartbreak and sadness.

But now, that memory is replaced with beautiful flowers falling around me.

Someone holding my hand, my heart beaming and filled with color.

It has been overrun with happiness and love.

The flower you had planted in my heart has wilted now.

It has turned monochrome, dried out, and flaking.

However, a new flower has bloomed in its place.

More beautiful, brighter, and vibrant with more colors.

And the new flower will never stop growing.

By Jade Dimas  
Photograph by Sooah Jeon







Snow White

Somewhere gone lost, her sanity had driven. An apple, that's what she had given. It was glossy, red, and perfectly round. It looked like a ruby, a shiny thing with no sound. As large as tree roots, the basket gleamed with more of these precious fruits. But that one apple, which looked so lovely, was covered in a poison so deadly. The slimy green goo lies inside. A pretty face, but something to hide. One bite would cause immeasurable pain. But what the witch didn't know was that the poison was swapped. A purple liquid lay inside. A sleeping spell with a true love's kiss is what hides. Only that shall break the spell. The girl so stunning fell to the ground. The witch cackled and left, safe and sound. At least, that's what she thought, but soon after, the dwarves came home to see the disaster. A delicate girl collapsed on the ground. Nothing else to be seen, but a lonely apple that was found. Lying next to the girl, their heads started to swirl. As they chased the witch away, they said, maybe she'll come back, another day. And she did. She came back, even though she was forbidden. A long road blocked her path, but everyone could hear her wicked laugh. She cackled about the rocks, the mountain, and the blocks. How she survived the falling tragedy, and she is supposed to be their majesty. The woman declared herself to be free, but the words buzzed around like a bee. Everyone in the town heard the noise. A loud, strong, and powerful voice. The witch was chased by the knights of town, she decided to try and take back her crown...

By Claire Lee  
Illustration by Claire Lee

## My World

You are my world.  
You are my galaxy.  
Everything reminds me of you.

The sun gleams rays of joy on me.  
The grass brushes against my fingertips.  
The flowers catch my eye  
With their splashes of color.  
The beautiful stars beam in the night sky.

But,  
You're not here with me.  
All these things bring you to mind.  
Yet, you're not by my side.  
My tears flow like waterfalls—  
Flooding my senses with sadness.

The thoughts crowd my brain.  
I'm unable to think of anything else.  
The old memories ring in my head.  
My chest tightens, and I can't breathe.

I think of how we used to be.  
The happiness, the laughter, the love.  
All of it was gone in an instant.

I can't accept it.  
I don't wanna accept it.

How can I bear it?  
Memories of the past appear quickly.  
My world is crumbling around me...

By Jade Dimas  
Illustration by Emma Brongo





## Lollipops

Lollipops are shiny and sweet  
Oh I'm so thankful for this treat  
A fragile shard of pink and white  
Lets me enjoy it in delight

There isn't a thing I love more  
Than a trip to the candy store  
Sugary lollies make me glad  
But being without you...

By Julia Kim  
Illustration by Melinda Ozcan







## My Icarus

Oh, my Icarus  
What has happened to you?  
I told you that your ambition would be your  
downfall  
And look at you now

Helpless, falling from the sky  
Wings of beauty  
Melted into a mess  
You were too greedy my dear

The sun burning away at you  
Yet  
You kept going  
You continued to hurt yourself

Even as your wings were dripping away  
You kept wanting more  
You put your greediness first  
You put it before yourself

Always wanting more  
Nothing was ever enough  
Now, you must face the consequences  
The consequences of your defiance

Goodbye, my dear Icarus

By Jade Dimas  
Illustration by Emma Brongo

## Coffee

The bitter taste of sweet caffeine  
Popular in every size  
You'll be surprised how much  
Energy this small drink buys

By Julia Kim

Illustration by Melinda Ozcan



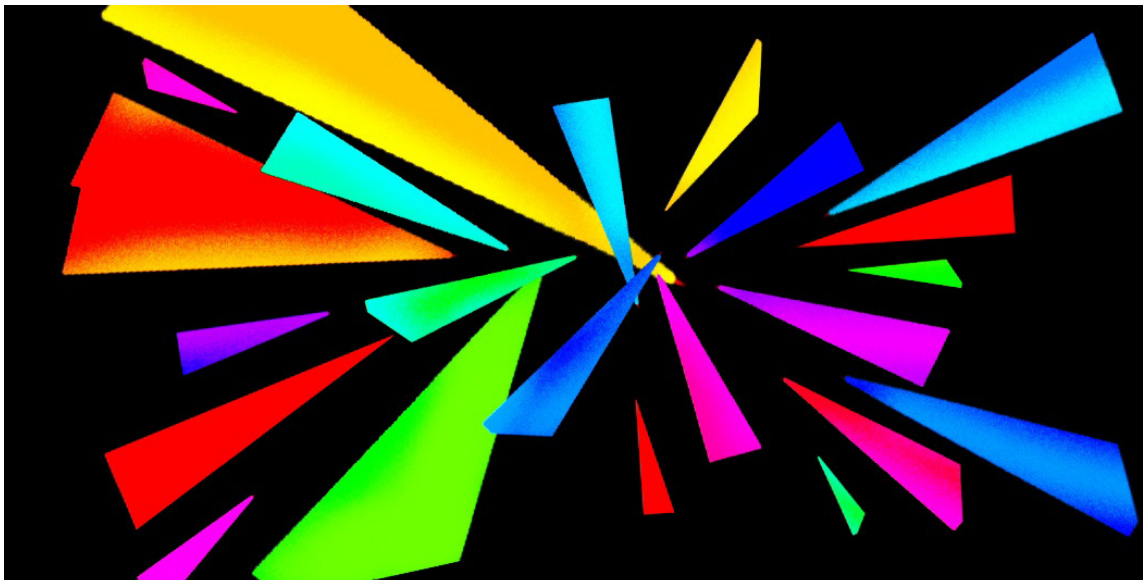


## Shattered Colors

As I looked in the cracked reflective mirror  
I soon realized that  
It was not the only thing that had broken  
Black mascara splattered and streaked  
Red matte lipstick smeared across my face  
Blotchy concealer dotted my face  
Who am I?  
Intrusive thoughts flood my brain as I begin to  
scream  
My breath quickens and my chest tightens  
My eyes cloud with tears  
I pull at my perfectly curled hair and scream  
I hit a container of pink powder and it topples over  
It stains the carpet a soft bright color  
I run my fingers through it  
Getting it on my tear-stained hands  
My eyes water and overflow  
Turning the powder to a pink liquidy mess  
I see my reflection in the water  
This isn't me.  
I wipe off my face and look back in the mirror.  
Even more beautiful than before—  
Better.

By Jade Dimas

Illustration by Claire Lee



## Ballerina

the most beautiful part of art, any art, is the struggle put into it,  
the hands of the artist is the most beautiful part of creation,  
the most rewarding thing for having created something out of nothing  
is the roughness that comes with it,  
perhaps that is why ballet is one of the arts that create the most scars and callouses,  
the ballerina creates beauty with every delicate motion of her legs,  
every leap into the air across the stage as if she weighs the same as the feathers in  
her hair,  
every pirouette and relevé color the stage with passion,  
her body is the brush and the orchestra is her paint,  
in the same way a painters hands are littered with pain so is the ballerina,  
her feet bloodied and scarred all for the sake of excellence,  
the parts that no one sees underneath delicate lace hidden away,  
the parts that have come to be through hours of repetition  
in an attempt to achieve true perfection,  
all for the chance to show the world the passion and work she can express through  
the sound of her feet hitting the wooden stage time and time again,  
through the look in her eyes screaming out to the world that she is there,  
many will see art as simply the result and not the process,  
but one cannot exist without the other,  
just how beauty cannot exist without pain,  
the ballerina cannot exist without callouses.

By Sophia Aguilar

Illustration by Claire Lee



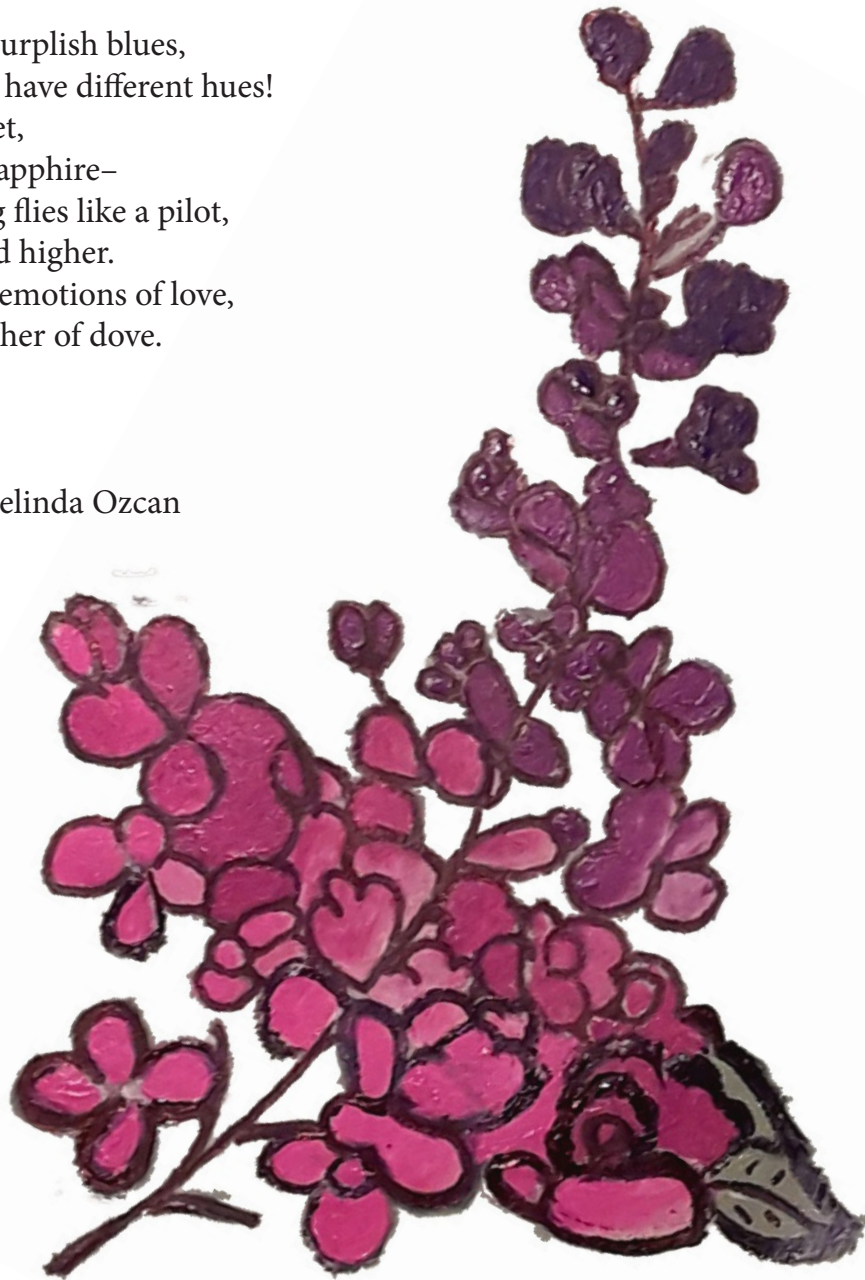


## Lilacs

Blueish purple, purplish blues,  
These two colors have different hues!  
Bright, bold violet,  
Royal, majestic sapphire—  
Each petal falling flies like a pilot,  
Flying higher and higher.  
A lilac petal, the emotions of love,  
Falling like a feather of dove.

By Julia Kim

Illustration by Melinda Ozcan



## Flowers

There existed a flower yearning to bloom  
There was no sunlight, destined for doom.  
It spent all four seasons trying to grow,  
Then winter came and covered it in snow.

By Luka Cooke  
Photograph by Sooah Jeon



EXP. 0209-Log #08

*(POV- a scientist makes a log video thing after years of failed experiments)*

EXP. 0209-Log #08

Perfection

Absolute perfection

All my hard work and research

Finally coming together to creating this

I brought something to life

Life made from scratch

The beautiful creature squeals and cheers

It waves its arms happily, amazing

Now, time for the surpri-

“Father! The party is starting!

Mother told me not to come here

but I just couldn’t wai-!”

“What is that father?”

...Whoops

Happy birthday my wonderful daughter!

I made him just for you darling

“It’s perfect father! Thank you so much!”

(\*girl knocks over camera trying to hug her father  
and log cuts out\*)

The End <3

By Jade Dimas

Illustration by Alanis Avila





## Phoenix Dance Illusion

“... a person worthy of respect,” I said

I looked over at Alfred and he was fuming with rage.

“Sir. Do you really think we should allow this- this-brat of a girl to work in our shop? I mean, look at her. She looks so-”

Alfred continued rambling, and I looked at the girl, who seemed to be getting upset at every comment.

“That’s enough Alfred. Girl, what is your name?”

“Phoenix Dance, sir.”

Alfred was steaming with rage. His face was red, and he was gritting his teeth.

“Alfred, I want you to treat Miss Phoenix with respect.”

Alfred looked as if he would explode.

“NO! I WILL NOT STAND HERE AND-”

“I can leave if you wish...”

“Yes. Leave, you dirty little brat.”

Alfred spat at her.

“You will treat her with respect.”

“Yes, sir...”

“You will not threaten her behind my back.”

“Yes, sir.”

“You will not call the authorities.”

Alfred shook his head yes. I turned to Phoenix.

“Would you like to come inside?”

Her eyes lit up like stars in the night sky, and she started to smile.

“I would love to!”

When we all went inside, Alfred excused himself from the studio and went to his room. I got some fabric, wood, ribbons, accessories, and tools. I handed them to Phoenix.

“Try.”

With that one word, she began to work. Her hands, now warmed up, started working like a machine. She could do anything that her mind wanted to. She shaped the wood into a marvelous heel, which was then covered in velvety fabric, and topped with shining rhinestones and feathers of all sorts. The final shoes were ones of 3-inch heels with red fabric. The heels were covered in pink rhinestones in the shapes of swirls. On the back part of the heel and shoe, white feathers of swans wrapped around the shoe, traveling all around the shoe. Everything was so detailed and beautiful, that I could easily think she had years of experience in shoemaking. As soon as she finished the details of the shoe, I knew she would be my new apprentice.

“You’re hired,” I said.

She looked up, her hands covered in glue, feathers, wood chips, and pieces of fabric. She mouthed thank you and went back to work. I watched in awe as she took the remaining piece of wood and created a shoe fit for a young child. The small shoe had glittering fabric, which was made of ground rhinestones, glue, and fabric, peacock feathers, and it was a beauty. The perfect pink and red fabric was decorated with such perfection, not even the greatest shoemakers could compete with this level of perfection.

Creaaaaak.

Oh boy, Alfred was back.

“I am here to apologize for my irresponsible behavior. I apologize Miss Phoenix.”

“It’s quite alright.”

I felt unsure of Alfred’s behavior. What was he going to do? As soon as he apologized, I knew something was wrong. Alfred was more stubborn than a mule. I could not believe it. Then, I saw it. He had a malicious glint in his eyes. I knew this look well. He would always do something crazy. I would have to keep an eye out for him. After he went back to his room, I told Phoenix,

“Be careful of Alfred, you can never know when he is planning something.”

“What could he possibly do?”

I explained all that he had done every time he had the glint in his eyes. It was always something more horrible than the last. Sometimes animals were destroyed, shoes were messed up, fabric was shredded, and even more. I could not bear to think about what would happen to Phoenix. I went over to Alfred’s room.

“Alfred, what are you-”

Then, there it was. I heard the sirens. The screaming. I ran to the front, but all I heard was his crazy laugh, and then, she was gone. That was the last straw. I called the cops on the only ever assistant I have had. Now, I was alone...

“Wake up, sire!”

I jumped awake.

“Alfred?”

“No, sir, it’s me? Your nurse?”

“Where am I?”

“You’re still at the hospital, sire. The mental hospital. People said that you were having hallucinations.”

I looked at the woman’s name tag.

“Phoenix?”

By Claire Lee

Illustration by Claire Lee



*This story is based on the original story  
“The Phoenix Dance” by Dia Calhoun.*



## Sandy Storms

You can hear the waves crashing against the rocks,  
You can hear the water reaching the shore,  
The wind, howling in the night sky,  
Then, it happens.  
The storm strikes.  
Waves churning as the storm gets more violent,  
The winds getting stronger,  
The night howling, almost as if it's screaming,  
Then...  
It calms.  
The sun pokes its head out,  
The storm begins to calm,  
The winds blow slower,  
The waves slowly lap against the rocks,  
The sand swishing, taken by the water,  
All is calm.

By Claire Lee  
Photograph by Olivia Kim





My Angel, My Darling, My Love

It's been so long since I've felt like this.  
The butterflies fill my body in an instant  
Your beautiful hazel eyes and your fluffy brown  
hair.  
You look like you've come from the heavens,  
oh so fair.

My Angel, My Darling, My Love  
How can you be so perfect?  
Your every word makes me fall harder.  
Every day my love for you gets larger.

You're so breathtaking, so adept in every way  
Every time our fingers touch, my face flushes  
bright pink.  
Making me stutter and my legs become wobbly.  
All of this, because you're just so lovely.  
My Angel, My Darling, My Love

By Jade Dimas  
Illustration by Sooah Jeon



## Life

I'm done being restrained  
Making believe I'm to blame  
That I don't deserve anything

I will break free  
To live life the way I choose  
To experience moments

If I relive moments so be it  
I shall embrace it with open arms  
I'll continue living life

It doesn't matter if I'm not perfect  
I might have a long way to go  
But someday I'll be able to stand and walk on my own

By Sooah Jeon  
Photograph by Olivia Kim





## Telephone

I dust off the yellow-brown cord  
Softly blow on the shiny golden phone  
Waiting until the mind is bored.

I will call my mom  
Under the softly lit night  
Where everyone is calm.

The phone rings softly  
In the pitch-black night.  
“Hello,” I say promptly.

“There are things that people won’t say  
So just calm yourself  
And don’t go away.”

“Goodnight mother, father, and all.  
The sun will come out tomorrow,”  
I said as I hung up the call.

By Claire Lee  
Illustration by Kayla Lee



## I'll Do My Best, In The Next Chapter

To my friends  
To my peers  
To my teachers  
To my advisors  
And to my administrators

I can't promise I won't forget you  
I can't promise that I liked you  
I can't promise that I was kind  
I can't promise that I was what I should have been  
And I can't promise that I was my best

But it's time for me to move on  
It's time for me to find new worlds  
It's time to find new friends  
It's time to embark on new adventures  
It is time for me to write the next chapter

So here is what I can promise  
I promise that I will become a better person  
I promise that I will try to become what you  
hoped for  
I promise to be what I should've been  
And I'll promise to do my best  
In the Next Chapter

Although this is the end of our time  
I am grateful for your teaching  
I am grateful for your support  
I am grateful for your kindness  
And I am grateful for making me who I am today

By Luka Cooke  
Photograph by Emma Brongo



