“Someone will remember us
I say
even in another time”

Sappho
of sunrises and the sea

please hold while
i figure ways
where we will not trauma bond
when we’re in the scariest scenes
i want to be an anchor for you
and it’s not the right thing to do
in these times
the only way to get through
is to be vulnerable
you’ve started to text me
i’d be surprised at a call
at this time in the night
but this early in the morning
across states
it’s only you

i don’t want to be the
me that’s terrified and trembling
in a pen with lions she’s taming
you had brought
me a saccharine and soft
glimpse of the sun
and the sea

but then there are
the wildest lions
known there to be
and there is no
way i could have known
and so when i call you
trembling
you are my home
i hope i never
call you trembling
despite you being my home
the sound of your voice
you answer the phone
just weeks ago
i was holding my tongue
and not begging you not to leave

across states
gives us a home

Tasneem Sarjoo
Class of 2022
Is this how it ends?
Strangers born from time.
In the end it was our enemy wasn’t it,
that uncontrollable force I always thought would end us.
I remember telling you I was scared,
but I couldn’t tell you of what,
I don’t think I knew either.
Maybe it was time that scared me,
the way we were only awake when the moon clocked in.
Or the sweet ticking noise that made me flinch to
the sound of the beat.
We could have worked if I were raised differently,
if my time weren’t wilting like the magnolias we picked in the garden.
Maybe I’m wilting.
Could it have been 5:55?
The time when I’d look at you shaking,
trying to hold it all in.
You hated that I had to hold it all in.
I think my time’s up,
the magnolia’s petals begin to fall,
the moon is on break.

Is this how it ends?
I can still smell the flowers.

Courtney Kanyuk
Class of 2021

Leo Valenti
Class of 2022
I want to be a man
I want to go on walks at night
I want to listen to music with *both* headphones in
I want to interrupt without an explanation

I want to be a man
I want my feet to be an altar to kneel
I want no need to shave
To bear masculinity from my armpits and my legs

I don’t want to bury ridges of keys between my fingers
I don’t want to be wary of every passing car
I don’t want to fear parking garages

I don’t want to be a good girl
A quiet girl
Seen and not heard
I want to be a man

Olivia Evangelista
Class of 2022

Madeleine Scalere
Class of 2022
the seasons change but the stories do not
we loiter at market stalls and slurp loudly out of respect
you are summer sweet cherries and clementines off the altar
holding hands and hanging from white sails
there is nothing pale nothing that ails
we hail to you even though sometimes it holds us back
a bit of rot hiding under skin
worshipers cut the pads of their fingers and despair your departure
nothing as sticky sweet as tradition
to hold us to our words, bring us back to a “better time”
memories are tucked under folds that hold the beginning
and the end, a merciful end
with distribution along the way
you’re the old, nothing wrong but that’s all
i love you
i make a mistake
Euphoria

Euphoria is glitter tears
and the color of the sky as the sun rises on the beach

It is cuddling with your friends during a movie and then moving outside with them to catch
the last glimpse of the sunset the night before your freshman year

It’s your first kiss with a girl
as butterflies fill your head and your cheeks instantly flush
‘cause this is it
yep
you definitely like girls

Euphoria is laying down outside
as the rain drenches you
but not caring
because you’re at peace with the world
and bike rides on fall afternoons
wind blowing through your hair as the leaves fall around you

It’s blasting your favorite songs in the car as you drive down the road at 3 a.m.
street lights reflecting on the wet asphalt
and standing in the crowd at your favorite band’s concert
screaming the lyrics ‘til you can’t talk anymore

Euphoria is laughing until your lungs give out
and living your life how you want to

It’s finally finding your place in the world

Euphoria is one of those moments
that you hope will never end
but somehow they always do

Euphoria
Is
Falling in love
With being alive

Cayla Katz
Class of 2024

Keanna Lane
Class of 2022
As the cloudiness devours me, my love for him blurs. I feel the rain drowning me, the droplets hitting heavier this time; like rain, I lose grip, whether it be on a glass shutter or a love interest I was entranced by. The clasp on my heart starts to become loose.

I soon remember the golden sun; it repairs me from the striking rain and the clobbering clouds. As soon as my tears ponder, the rays move swiftly to trace my face. For a moment, I stare at the sunshine beams and remember I’m not alone.

Alexandra Kearns
Class of 2022

Lauren O’Brien
Class of 2023

I’m thankful for the rain
the way it seems to be such a powerful force without trying
how it hydrates the most delicate plants yet still has the power to tear down cities.
the way it can be a tiny brisk shower to a loud booming explosion.
how the drops can calm a child to sleep yet the storm can wake it up just as fast.
how it can be both romantic and depressing.
or terrifying and liberating.
maybe i wish to be rain.
or i already am.

a versatile being with many uses and purposes.
a powerful and demanding but also soft and nurturing force.
an unpredictable explosion of noise and sensation.
a looming cloud or a bright rainbow.
and just like how i enjoy sitting in the rain, maybe it enjoys falling upon my lashes and hair,
dripping down my back as i laugh.
maybe i cherish the rain because i too
am a force of nature who dare not be reckoned with.

Sophia Swain
Class of 2024
Every day we would rush from the beach to catch one of the trolleys. Always hopping on at the last second, having to squeeze in between strangers. Our curls stretched out, drenched in water, our flip flops squeaking with every step we took, and towels wrapped around us. The sun always beating down, its rays leaving us red for days.

The two of us had our routine. Since our arrival, we were drawn to the sweet smell of cocoa beans that floated in the air when you neared the chocolate shop. Not only did they have a variety of delectable desserts but ice pops that quench your thirst in seconds. The coconut flavor was the best. They would start to melt within seconds of stepping outside into the hot, humid air.

It was only a few minutes to the sweet little chocolate shop by the lobby. We would try to dry our hair before walking in so we didn’t leave the tiled floor wet and slippery. Some days we would leave a little trail of water droplets around the store. The employees never really paid any mind to it. They would just say good afternoon to both of us and then we would continue to peruse the store. When talking to anyone that worked there M. would put her work voice on and I would giggle to myself knowing that her voice can sound completely different at times.

I could have stayed there forever; things were so simple and peaceful. This was by far one of the most relaxing vacations we have ever been on. The sun shone brighter there and the days were longer. Our early mornings by the beach and late nights by the pool were serene. Most of all I am going to miss our daily trip to the little chocolate shop. These are the moments I wish I’d cherished more, especially since the world shut down and I haven’t been able to make memories like this since.

Sofia Gonzalez
Class of 2024

Elizabeth Vaupel
Class of 2022
we know the daytime sky is blue
we know it’s usually a light vibrant bright beacon looking down on us
and on good days, it’s scattered with small streaks of cloud
and we are told that the night sky is black
but it really isn’t
it really can’t be described in terms of a color wheel or shade variety
the only way i can describe it is with
the long strings of memories it has provided
my favorite type of night sky is in the summer
when i was with my favorite people and everything felt warm
when we were running around connected to one another with a proverbial rope at the hip
and we were all filled with hope and trust, and we didn’t even question when it would end
but eventually the night sky bleeds into the late hours of afternoon
it becomes selfish, taking away the warmth and the euphoria
it rushes wind in your face and makes you tear up, and eventually the rope blows away too
you don’t recognize your surroundings, you are blinded by paste white coats and invisible ice
that tricks you into feeling that euphoria again as you glide into it
but ripping it away when you crash face first on the concrete
all the days turn into blurs and the white paste melts into gray slush
and the early spring rain comes to wash away the slush, emotional and physical
but the blue dependable sun comes and melts away the mess the rain couldn’t finish
and it all comes back to you, the warmth, the rope, even if it’s connected to another person

Sophia Swain
Class of 2024

Lauren O’Brien
Class of 2024
Comforts my pale skin when I wake up, with light, leaking through splintered blinds. There is a tropical plant in the corner of my room. I don’t water it, but it grows. The sun glares through the window, but no leaves brown. I only ever notice it when I wake up. It isn’t routine to think about random things. Things like plants, or coat racks, or chairs. When I think about things, memories of a time before peer out of shadows, from the mahogany chest in the smallest corner of my mind. Memories pool close to the surface. Too close for comfort. I try not to think about much at all. Mostly I think about things inside of me. Inhales and exhales. The radiator’s warmth against my hands. The smell of the rusty metal doorknobs that live in the room next door.

My ears anticipate the ring of my spoon’s clank against a bowl. My train of thought is a bit scattered, but that’s where I go next. I wrap into a soft white robe and sneak along pale wood into the kitchen. The cat is in here somewhere, we don’t talk much anymore. I rescued her in a previous lifetime. I guess we have both moved on. My hand grasps the handle of the fridge, and I observe the feeling. Little lines are etched into the plastic, the kind of thing you can only see if you look real hard. I didn’t have a fridge before, so this thing doesn’t bother me.

My bicep curls against the magnetism that seals the cool air inside. There isn’t much in the fridge. Eating and drinking are routine and necessary for life, but tasting and trying are not. Tasting and trying are not things, but actions. Some actions bother me as well, but I don’t remember which. In the time before I lived and breathed the excess. I performed actions that free people would. The kinds of actions that are so ridiculous, they make you forget that you aren’t really free at all. I spent a long time being ignorant.

Now I feel white. White is safe. White is simple.
May Poem (Inside)

In this bedroom, there are twenty-six sounds that I thumb into corners—
Something snapping in the walls, moth whispers, lattice, age. Make no mistake: this house of always-heavy steps and always-light voices is ghostless. Thirty years ago, my mother wiped them all out with a bristle broom. My father, with a lead silence. Tonight, we eat what is set before us. My sister dreams of eating the sifting tires of midday purpose, the streams of birdsong along the house’s silhouettes, hinges that stay still. I teach her how to tuck it away, like this: with a happy sign and a swallow, but she was always hungrier for more.

Isabelle Lu
Class of 2022

The water is still cleaner

They say “blood is thicker than water.”

Why does that matter?

If home is where the family’s at, Then family’s where the love is at. For some, the biological bond only strengthens their love; For others, it’s for naught;

It contradicts the thought.

No matter what, the bond will always be stronger than blood. “Blood is thicker than water—” But the water is still cleaner.

Madeleine Scalere
Class of 2022

Ashkay Lakham
Class of 2022
For days falling into weeks, months, and years that passed as if moments, we ate long lunches of lungs, legs, and lemon sipped through mirages of tight teeth ‘cause you, my sister, seethed and sought a reprise from these four walls to take you from saltwater shearing to desert bloom.

On our island, the cicada song spared your ears but speared the heart, I didn’t know that what we shared: lemon grass laughter beneath cerulean blades and light fingertips pressing puckered lips to balm served only to charade the flavor of the air so you—my darling sister, could steal the breadth of my lungs and wingspan of my arms, so departure could be easier as you shaded the sun and stole the light of the moon, so the path to follow was gone when my legs reached the edge of the valley night.

For the past few days, falling into weeks, months and now moments that seem like years, I will eat on this island alone, remembering how lungs, legs, and lemon lasted until you left and I will await your arrival, even when I know you will never come back.

Eryn Peritz
Class of 2021

Keanna Lane
Class of 2022
Heaven

In a world filled with colorful souls of amazing persons, there are two who call your attention the most—she’s red, he’s blue, they are purple, and we love how they bloom. They are small, they are big, they are like a non-existent galaxy that can blow your mind only by trying to reach it, they are like the stars, make you shine so bright that you can make others blind. But dangerous like a Pandora’s box in the wrong hands.

She’s green, he’s pink, they are gray, and we love how they play. She’s black, he’s white, and we love how they talk. She’s orange, he’s yellow, and they taste like Jell-O. She is him, he is her, and both of them can make you feel like you are the heaven on earth.

Elymar Rosario Hernandez
Class of 2022

Cherry Blossom

Dazed drabble
Locked lips
Don’t forget to say good morning!
To the sunny blue skies
Dizzy gaze aligned with the eyes of the sky
And goodnight!

Olivia Evangelista
Class of 2022

Tanya Sanpedro
Class of 2022
Mary Coleman
Faculty

Mary Coleman
Faculty

Kevin Downey
Faculty
Fishing takes time and talent. Baiting your first bait and catching your first fish is the best feeling on earth. Sometimes in life, there are highs and lows. Sometimes you’ll have a really good day and catch a bunch of fish, while other days you’re wading in the water and others hitting lake bottom.

Waiting for something to pick you up so you’re high above the water, flopping in the air. The quiet resembles the quiet times in life where you have a breather from the craziness or chatter and social life. The art of fishing is an individual sport where only you, yourself, and your conscience guide you. No outside thoughts. You are in control. You can choose where you drop down and drop the line and when you pick up and leave the places where it doesn’t feel right. It’s an escape from reality.

Similar to people, each fish is different and unique. Each fish requires different upkeep so they can be healthy and happy. Some fish aren’t the prettiest. The Chilean Sea Bass is a very unappealing and unattractive fish, but once you cut it open, you will find it’s a really tasty fish. Salmon is a very well-known and popular fish. Many people enjoy Salmon but some people don’t. Not everyone has to like you, and not everyone has to enjoy your presence. The Mackerel is a small well-known fish. People normally use this fish to bait their hook. People will use you. It’s bound to happen whether it’s good or not. In the world, people are fake. When fishing you act as if your bait is alive, but it’s dead. Someone will tell you they care and say they’ll never do a thing but within a snap of your finger, they’ll turn around and switch up on you. Fish flock together in groups called schools. Similar fish flow together. This doesn’t mean you don’t belong, it’s just you don’t enjoy and value the same thing. In life, you’ll find that people who have the same interests will flock together and sometimes they’ll leave you out as they build one another up. This doesn’t mean you shouldn’t stop trying or you’ll never reach your goal.

You should remember that you don’t need the newest rod or the newest skiff to be good at fishing. You get whatever makes you comfortable and whatever helps you succeed. The tides don’t change because you want them to change. You have to adapt to your situation. Can’t stop boating from sailing. You have to stay strong and take the wakes as they come, one by one. The wakes won’t be there forever; they are temporary. Sometimes wading around is the only thing you can do, knowing the good stuff is coming, but not knowing when. And sometimes you’ll be led on. Getting unlucky with many fish in the sea. Sometimes you’ll find that the first couple of bites aren’t the ones that’ll stay, and some you’ll hold onto, but once you get closer and closer, suddenly they’ll flop off the hook and swim away. They’ll tell you that you don’t need them and they never needed them. And leave. Or act like they never knew you. So now you guys are strangers again, but with memories. And sometimes you just want a break from fishing and to take a sip of the sweet reality.

Hannah Porter
Class of 2024
some tune, this tune!

and i’ll hold onto you as the world comes to a bittersweet end all around us.

and i look away.

and somewhere, in the back, some tune is playing. a song i feel i used to know.

the walls crumble,
as what once was incandescent light dims slowly.

this has become wasteland.
i have become wasteland.
dispensable, decomposable, meaningless wasteland.

and now i look back to you.
flashes from
a meaningless, decomposable, and dispensable wasteland
to a
meaningful, born, and beautiful world.

i have given you more meaning
than i have given to anything else around me.

i have brought you to be more important than the crumbling walls and the dimming light.

i have brought you to amplify the fading music in the back and float the tune to my ears.

i know this tune well. it’s all coming back to me now!

Sarah Borruso
Class of 2023

Andie Serrao
Class of 2022
Amnesia

Yellow.
Purple?
Green.
No, blue.

It’s red?
Oh, thanks.
I couldn’t tell.

No, I’m not colorblind.
What are you saying?
It’s not that either.

I just forgot the name.
Don’t worry, that doesn’t usually happen.
I can remember lots of things.
Like my daughter’s name.

Anne-Marie.
Or was it Juliet?
Samantha?
Just go away, you’re making me give myself a headache.

Now,
What color was that flower again?
I CAN'T WAIT TO GET HOME AND THAT MUF... SAT ON MY SOFA.

I CANT TELL IF IT'S TRUE, BUT IT HAPPENED...

I'M NOT GOING HOME.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

ME?

ME? I'M NOT GOING HOME!

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

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WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
I'M ALREADY IN THERE.

YOU DON'T THINK THAT'S A BIG GOMM?

ALL I KNOW IS...

I HATE YOU.

WELL, CUT YOURSELF I GUESS.

I STILL THINK YOU SHOULDN'T GO SOMEWHERE.

I'M NOT SURE.

RIGHT.

I'M NOT SURE, I'M ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN.

I HAVE ABSOLUTELY TO BE ABSOLUTELY CER...
what lays in the desires of your darkest reigns what riddles and proverbs what parables and prophecies are buried underneath tough skin
we can’t let them hear what we say your words are cords that sound like a symphony in my tone deaf ears
what lays in the language and culture the tradition and religion that linger in your touch sensations that Solomon cannot replicate
don’t let her hear the quiet giggles
but you adorn me in flowers from Euphrates and butterflies from Eden
you breathe whispers of life and youth into a sorrow-filled mind of mine

we can’t let them hear the words we whisper to one another you think you are a mortal but my dear you are the angel
my angel in your numbing words by your loving words you have given me a feeling that the Lord cannot give to his followers that no woman can ever give me again

am i obsessed? or perhaps i just need to keep quiet lest they hear my thoughts of you

Tasneem Sarjoo
Class of 2022
Heart of an angel, soul of a demon

She was an angel, with a fragile and simple heart; he was a little demon who had a broken soul and a load of disappointments. They were perfect; his hands fit hers and his lips knew perfectly how to quench the thirst that attacked him every time he was far away from her.

The red thread united them, wrapped them. They didn’t complain about that. She was a radiant constellation full of multicolored stars; he was a black hole that destroyed everything in its path. But she was the exception; she was his deliverance and he was her doom.

Totally opposite, but still perfect. Their souls knew how to turn those gray days for them into ones full of life and color. They were intimate, worthy of their own book, worthy of a story written by the hand of a cloud with its subtlety, delicate and unique words only worth being used to describe what they were. They were the angel and the demon. They were the sky and the earth; they were an active volcano in the middle of an overpopulated island; they were a meteorite that destroyed everything without compassion. It was them.

And they did not regret it.
The Emperor’s Clothes Are Gone, And So is the Emperor (?)
(But Don’t Bother Asking About the Empress)

//This/
Confucian state of confusion (?) has crushed lichen-lipped nickels in/ to silver-stuttered psalms/ bodies of cremated palms, and hence forward/ must be referred to as “honorable ancestors.”/ The men — the ancestors — were never stable scholars./ More salivating over pork-pot-belly dinners than slaving over Sun Tzu, /filled with words of so called wisdom — is this the masterdom of middle-aged men (?)/

What happens when in the middle age, when:/ The emperor’s clothes are gone,/ The emperor himself is gone,/ The empire itself is gone/ Ancestors, who is to rule?//
Don’t look to the empress (for she lacks the masterdom of largely-middled men)/ her pith cakes are teeth on brittle bones — a meal gone,/ a ribcage of homes for the hollow to lurk — a plumpness gone/ no child, no heir — a lineage gone /The empress may well not exist.// (The empress is gone.///

Instead,/ look to the middle-aged men — the masterdom of ancestors/ for when we forget, they are waiting with the bones plucked from the meat/ they are all we will remember.// (Alas, at last, the wisdom of age is gone (??))///
God

Where was God when I needed Him?
To take from Psalm 22:1: Elahi, Elahi, lama shabachtani?
That is: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”
Jesus cried out upon the cross to his Father, as he bore the toll of our sins.

But the Father turned away.

And it is this weight upon my shoulders that leads me astray.
The weight of the expectations, the humanness, and the morality of this world.
This is all meaningless.
We are simply drops in an endless, unfathomably infinite ocean.
It is within this ocean that I am drowning
The weight of this existence drags me down, perhaps this existence is the Devil itself?
As I look into the water, I see a distorted reflection of myself
This is the most perfect I will ever be
For any true perfection is an illusion.
Oddly, this disfiguration of my ideals holds beauty in itself.
Because beauty is in the twinkling eye of the beholder.
Because this is exactly what I am.
To take from the Bhagavad Gita: Tat tvam asi.

“That thou art.”

Maybe, finally, the days will brighten from a tone-deaf gray to a pulsating lemon-yellow.

And my water, a bewitching baby blue.

Ashkay Lakharam
Class of 2022

Eryn Peritz
Class of 2021
abscond from affection, only attract attention
because beauty isn’t all it’s cracked up to be, bloated with its bacterial blight
cease the cerulean clownery. cause its crucifixion. here in coca-cola Capitalism
demand deliberation, demand dreams that aren't just not dying
elected is just as infected, effective immediately
Fugg! we’ve all got the bug— the kind that flies furiously while we sleep
graceless in gratuities, the evil lurks just under good graces, gentrifying grottos
hidden in hail marys and hedonistic hells (hedge-funds)
i guess it’s pretty irresistible
Justice awaits, joyful with Hope in Pandora’s box, juggling jurisdiction for jingoists
kongressman please! hear our kries!
lockdown killings need to stop, it comes down to
MORE than just monopolies today. Money, Money, Money. Our favorite song.
Nepotism ain’t coming from Nepal
Opulence is only covering another oil spill with glitter, oh overlord.
please! please! we won’t spill another drop, won’t let another pop, all in the name of Property
quaintly and quietly quacking away about a quarantine that’s barely qualified for queen
remove these radicals from the premises we got Rats to deal with here
sir, are we stupid? are you sending me to my secular sanctioned space?
twilight twinkles at the end of another tyrannical dynastic cycle
unless your uvula has undone the ubiquitous undulation that is Unhappiness?
vigilante, my my! we cannot forget the vehement antithesis to justice, capitalistic violence!
waxing and waning in wasabi coated wage theft.
xenophobes hate this one simple trick! x marks the xquisite xpression of tomfoolery XOXO
your youthful yearbook days are over, you youstering yodeler
z ya later—

Grace Chan
Class of 2022

Kristen Longworth
Class of 2021
Neophyte’s Serendipity

The warm air brushes against my face as I stroll down the road
The low hum of the car slowly lulls me asleep
Attempting to pull me into my own little world
Of lucidity and irony
The dull yellow of the streetlights comfort me
On this endless, dark night
Every little bump and jerk keeps me where I need to be
As I lean my head out the open window
I can feel the serenity wash over me
Like the loving warmth of a calm embrace
This is the first time I’ve taken a night stroll like this
Is this a neophyte’s serendipity?

Ashkay Lakharam
Class of 2022
Birthday Wish

I blew out the candles on my birthday.
You reminded me to make a wish.
I glanced up at you, then down at the cake.
Then I closed my eyes and blew.

You reminded me to make a wish.
I tilted my head, a million thoughts running scared.
Then I closed my eyes and blew another wish away.

I tilted my head, a million thoughts running through it.
What should I even wish for?
Another wish away, just like every other year.

What should I even wish for?
Every year I feel like I waste it.
But just like every other year, I blew out the candles on my birthday.

Lila Naccari
Class of 2021

Dayanara Pineda
Class of 2022

Timothy Reinholdt
Class of 2022
In this town, I am the odd one out. Queer? Jewish? I’m a walking target moving at a turtle’s pace. There are bright flashing arrows hanging over my head, “Hit me! Hit me!” and so they do, with their words and microaggressions and actions, they hit me.

If I had a nickel for every time my rights were debated in class between my peers, I would have a lot of nickels. I would also have a lot of nickels for every time a teacher looked directly to me for an answer regarding Judaism or the Holocaust. And even more nickels for every time I have had to hide who I am to make others more comfortable. Point is, I would have a lot of nickels. Somehow, by just merely existing, and being who I am, I have made a political statement. My existence is inherently political. Therefore, people feel they have every right to decide if I should be allowed to exist. I shouldn’t be fighting for my rights in a classroom, I shouldn’t be fighting for my rights at all, actually. FUN FACT: human rights should not be up for debate!

If I got together with all of my Jewish friends and all of my queer friends, we could write two separate books just filled with all of the hate we’ve faced. Frankly speaking, I could continue this spiel for hours upon hours but that’s a lot of kvetching, even for me. If you are going to take one thing away from this please note, you are personally responsible to become more ethical than the society you grew up in. And that starts with education, specifically, educating yourself first, before looking to people to give you all of the answers, because I promise you, we are exhausted.

As a queer person and a Jewish person, I do not exist to be your encyclopedia. Google is a thing for a reason. I do not exist to be your token gay or token Jew. I am proud of who I am. Some might even say so proud that I begin to sound meshugganah. Let’s get one thing straight, besides the fact that I’m not (sorry, couldn’t resist). I do not exist for you. I do not exist to be fetishized, or a scapegoat, or your source of education, or a stereotype, or a statistic. I exist for me, and I will continue to do so.

I am queer, I am Jewish, and I am full of chutzpah.

Cayla Katz
Class of 2024

Tanya Sanpedro
Class of 2022
what was grown (in the garage)

i.
My father / never nurtured anything / but clay-wrapped things / which (like hands) / only unfurled once a year / In the cavern / among them / I bound my knees / Fixed them / with a wax kiss, then coddled all his / gardens. Every cerebral daughter / I thought I’d give forever / turned and spoiled / Yet / some ashen relic of catalytic iron / bypassed good pastor walls / with a knuckled / shiver / How they trembled, my baby gums / the thunder quivering beneath the lid of my throat / Lop tongue / tinged verdant like / their furtive petals / preening the burn skid on each leaf / Locating the ever-absent flesh: no scarlet-run gold / to suckle and thumb / over my chin as I readied to rupture / at another soothing palm. *I wasn’t made for a caress, I was made to scream.*

ii.
the good moon
ladles the river.
I stagger onto its bank:
but gritting,
dissolved
but cartilaginous.
the ants in my marrow unearth no bone memories
but how to linger.
& I
swaying
want to ask everything
of the water. tonight,
just this: why, like my mother, I forgot how to
bloom.
the river keens back
her only chore
to pass on.
all my elegies close
with my father’s cereus.

Isabelle Lu
Class of 2022
a piece for the cemetery

odors of decaying bodies
inanimate under the dirt
are still like an ornament
frozen and angelic

they sleep on a bed of maggots
digesting them over the years
screams heard only for the
oak trees and the grass to hear

above them lay a saturated sky
unbeknownst to the
suffocating dry air
of a dark and stuffy coffin

Katherine Clancy
Class of 2024

or a face full of dirt
a mouth full of maggots
corpsing coercion onto frantic posts

audience of corpses
that see the rust of trees
the tarnish of a brook
and the death of humanity

Tasneem Sarjoo
Class of 2022
“Do you love her?” Corva asked, as if it were so simple. Her hands were folded in her lap, snow white hair tightly braided and hanging over her shoulders. Solan had his eyes glued to the polished wood floors, but he could feel his sister’s eyes on him. He swallowed hard.

“No,” he replied. “I don’t.” Corva was silent for a minute, seemingly waiting for another response. Or perhaps she was mulling over his answer. Solan mustered all his strength and pulled his eyes away from the floor to meet hers. He flinched when their gazes met.

Corva’s usually kind lavender eyes were now swirling with anger. However, her brow remained soft, her lips pressed into a thin line. Solan chewed his lower lip but held eye contact in a weak attempt at a challenge.

He held his breath, waiting for her to yell, waiting for her to tell him how stupid he was, how he was destroying their family from the inside, and that he should be ashamed of himself. But she didn’t do any of that. Instead, Corva closed her eyes and took a deep inhale, letting it out through parted lips. When her eyes fluttered open again, the spark of masterfully concealed rage was gone.

“You can’t lie to me, Solan,” she said, after what felt like an eternity of silence. Solan blinked.

He opened his mouth to tell her he wasn’t lying, to try to save himself from his sister’s scolding, but Corva was quicker to speak. “You can lie to our parents and siblings all you’d like. You can lie to the people of this nation. You can lie to Nephis. You can even lie to yourself, if that’s what you think will make you feel less guilty. But you can’t lie to me.”

Solan clenched his fists, fingernails digging into sweaty palms. A breathy chuckle rolled out of the back of his throat, pushing down the lump of tears that threatened to spill. How ironic.

He looked away from his sister, eyes lingering on nothing in particular. “I love her more than I’ve loved anyone. But you knew that already.”


Solan looked back at her and raised an eyebrow. She offered a sad smile.

“I saw the way you looked at her at the gala.”

Solan snorted. “How cliché.”

Corva reached over and placed a hand on top of his, her cool palm a comforting contrast against his clammy skin. “You looked at her as if she were the only girl you would ever look at again. It was then I knew that you had fallen, and that it was likely our family would fall with you.” She squeezed his hand slightly, and Solan kept his eyes on hers. The lump in his throat grew rapidly, and he bit back tears.

Corva’s eyes were glassy also, her white eyelashes comparable to snowflakes, glistening with tears not yet fallen. “I can’t tell you what to do, Solan. It’s your choice, I just hope that you think it through. I only ask that you tell me what your decision is before it’s made.”
Corva let go of his hand and stood from her seat on the chaise lounge, walking across the study and standing at the door for a moment, fingers lingering on the knob. “The warfront will be moved to Kuthen five days from now, I suggest you decide before you’re sent along with it.” She pushed the door open, wood creaking as she stepped through the doorway.

“Corva,” Solan started. His sister looked back over her shoulder, their eyes meeting once more. “Thank you.”

Corva’s stern face melted into a warm smile. She nodded, stepped into the hallway, and closed the door behind her.

Molly Price
Class of 2022

Leo Valenti
Class of 2022

Daniella Procaccini
Class of 2022
I glower, but a ripple cannot displace an ocean, rooted by time.
What was the reason again?
All a blur now.
But I can feel the weight.
Individual, we are flesh and bone, but then you speak, and attached to a word is a thread, and over years the threads weave into a cocoon.
Your voice drums a constant beat, but the words are lost as I reminisce.
Once we were strangers, I to you, and to my current self.
Strange, it truly was.

Leo Valenti
Class of 2022

“Nerd!”

is it burrowed in your mother’s mattress does a chipmunk squirrel it away in a tree what does it sound like the high heel clack in the school hallway, the music of the carrier pigeons i feel love in the soil, where the remains of our ancestors live, where they feed us even in death our love is eternal, engraved in entrails and euphemisms how they were lovers, honey-givers because to love is to give and to be given a conversation in the late night and an orange in the afternoon cutting fruit for your brothers in my stomach that i fight so hard to kill the liver grows, but the eagles keep coming seeing a face every time, never gets tired, like seeing a sunset i am running my fingers in your hair, getting you a hot chocolate, talking isn’t it poetic how things always come back to love

Grace Chan
Class of 2022
i love you.
feed me
sweets
man made confection
fuel my egotistical madness
please,
ouch!
that cut deep
bu,m
da?dum&
boo;m
b-b-!
i'll be okay
crash!
hey, you
i’m ready now,
i’m older now,
i’ll stop the games
dig deeper,
i trust you
for real this time, i do
bu!m da! dum!
boom! bo
om
bum?! bump?! dum?!?
badum... pcrash!$
I was born into a world of peace and stability.
The grandmother became my new best friend.
When we found that the brother had autism, my world was turned upside down. You were there through it all.
Academics began to take over my life and introduce me to new people.
The father moves out of the house and parenting now comes from two separate spaces.
The academics become increasingly harder and something I begin to enjoy.
Years of adolescence create a new and more reserved version of myself.
My new interest in robotics brought success as well as downfalls, but you were always there as my biggest supporter.
The world became chaotic after it was hit with a meteor of illness that no one could ever be prepared for. The unrest and disease goes on for months.
Being isolated made the more reserved version of myself become even more closed off.
Slowly returning to normalcy made the reservation start to shed its shell and I begin to find out more about myself.
The mountainous scenery outside the window from my house never fails to calm me.
The more open spaces suit me better than my once suburban life.
I have graduated high school and then went on to graduate from college.
I find myself back in high school, but not as I once was. Instead, on the other side of the desk teaching others.
The once reserved and quiet student has made a career of talking in front of students.

C. G.
Class of 2024

Mary Coleman
Faculty
"Hiya, Rey!" Milo bolted across the street, a ten-dollar bill flailing from his fingers. I looked up from my guitar (I still, however, strummed some chords) and smiled at him.

"Hi, Milo. How was school?"

"It was great! I got a perfect score on my spelling test!" His face beamed with pride—I never got tired of that face. There was something about that look of nine-year-old innocence that never failed to hit me. With what, exactly? I don’t know. Happiness, mostly. And maybe a little bit of jealousy; I wished I could be in fourth grade and only have to worry about spelling tests.

"You want your usual?"

"Yes, please!" I nodded and propped my guitar up against the stool I had just been sitting on. I sanitized my hands before placing a raw, uncooked hot dog onto the little grill in front of me. As it sizzled and darkened, I reached to the side of the stand for a bun and some ketchup and mustard. Milo licked his lips and stood on his tiptoes as he watched me cover the hot dog with the bun, and draw a smiley face with ketchup and mustard, the way he always liked it. I handed him his plate, and he reached the ten-dollar bill out to me.

"Nah, this one's on me." A confused gaze swept across Milo’s face. I laughed a bit. "You don’t have to pay for it, buddy. You can have it for free."

"No way! Take it. And don’t give me any change. You work so hard all day long. You deserve it."

Gosh, why can’t everyone have his kindness, I thought. I slipped the ten-dollar bill into my pocket. "Thank you." I smiled slightly and sat back on the stool.

Milo walked over, too, and handed me my guitar. "Play something, Rey."

I thought for a second, and then began to play the opening chords of "Blackbird". G, A Minor, G, C.

Milo’s eyes lit up, his hand tapping on the back of my guitar. "Blackbird singin' in the dead of night..."

I suddenly stopped playing and stared at Milo, shocked. "You know that song?"

"Of course I do! Did you just learn it?"

"No, I’ve known it for a while."

"Why haven’t you played it for me then?"

"I didn’t think you knew it. It’s much before your time, and mine for that matter. But you sound great. Keep singing." He did so as I kept strumming the chords. And as Milo leaned his head on my shoulder, I looked up at the city skyscrapers and wondered what I did to deserve a miracle like him.

"You were only waiting for this moment to arrive..."

Lila Naccari
Class of 2021
Meeting her was one of the most beautiful moments in life; it was in winter, but with her, everything felt like a non-ending spring. She was so beautiful that even the highest standards of perfection were nothing compared to her. She was unique, brown-skinned with a little touch of strawberry-colored lips.

She was so magnificent that even the roses envied her, she was so marvelous that being the ideal type of someone was her essence. But you could never be hers. She could have been everything that you needed— your friend, your voice, your soul, your never-ending paradise... But she was only part of a daydreaming idea that everyone’s had.
When the small sorrowing things silence
outside the window the night is only black-painted plywood.
The street’s always been this flat
and the neighborhood
has always been a lithograph, some
ferrous white set
where two kids first found the courage to kiss.
After school, I remember
snagging my elbows on your vows
to show me the whole city under your bed
after we’d fooled them
with our vanishing act—
the frightening thought
that they’d let us simmer
under that magic cloth,
before standing up from the mattress,
and going back to the stove, and
tilling clean the driveway, slow, leaving.
Now I’m lying under the frame,
tired because I’m losing so deeply,
and the slats look like a bridge.
The bridge looks like the bone
bending over your heart.
I can’t imagine anything has lived
in this night but one baby love. Its newness
as perfect for a palm
as a cheek, or a grocery mango.
I can’t imagine it isn’t lying there under
the lake where we lay your crayoned paper cuffs and
the blurry photo of our crossing ankles.
Isn’t it sad? I ask, again and again and again
Isn’t it sad to approach escape
with things? With a purple
cigarette-lighter. With thick &
foolish hues.
With relief—in terms of half lives.
With kiss—which is
(just sly, and cunning) breath.
The Doorkeeper

My mother was the doorkeeper usually. On Sunday mornings I heard the usual greetings, with artificial inflections of voice. I knew who would come into the house first, through the kitchen, barefoot, and onto our cheap couch. He was my friend. We were children. Untouched by dense feelings and the pain of “real life.”

Though these things awaited us, like they do all children here. Lurking in our shadows, invisible to the human eye. Observing us. The same way our innocent eyes would cling to figures in snow globes. Longing to know what they felt like. Knowing the only way to actually touch these figures was to destroy the glass surrounding them.

And yet, for children, the things that live in our shadows won’t break the glass. They haven’t figured out how to suppress their conscience entirely yet. How to pry shards of scorching guilt from the space between their ribs.

So they wait.

Wait for the vulnerability of childhood to go away, so that their acts of silent violence would be justified; so that one day those children who once lived inside the glass, could become shadow things too.

Haley Herman
Class of 2022

Natalia Skrodzki
Class of 2024
Interstellar androgyny
Killer with an 80’s head
Bound in sexuality and sleevelessness
I’m an icon, baby!
An exploration to worlds unknown
Of glitter, glitz, and glamour
Dollar bills, bodyguards, boulevards
Strange lover
Stranger love
Closer, closer, closer
Finally

The first time you came to China you expected it to be full of rundown streets with chicken and children running loose; your aunts and uncles expected so too. After you received the notice from the orphanage that they had a healthy June baby waiting for you, they were just so happy for you, but warned: You must raise her without any notion that she is anything but American. No trips back or Cantonese learning, no culturally immersive classes or clubs, but most importantly— make sure no AIDS or hepatitis B. If she’s not healthy give the baby back. You didn’t nod but just said okay.

Right before you left from LaGuardia, they waved tearful goodbyes and hugged you, promising that it would all work out. You boarded the airplane with your certificates of authentication, the social worker’s note of recommendation, and the picture the orphanage had sent to you. That was the last item you checked before boarding.

Back home, your aunts had tried setting you up on dates, none successful. The men were all too much; flashy watches and suits with collars that were so stiff you felt them jab your neck as they leaned in, expecting a goodnight kiss. You preferred women, but the only women you knew who went out with other women were the ones your aunts talked about in hushed whispers when it was late at night; the night lowered their inhibitions though they didn’t mind telling you those things during the daytime.

When the plane landed, you had to wait for the mothers putting their children into strollers and sighing of relief after the sixteen hour flight. You sighed too because motherhood was something you had so desperately wanted. You craved the long nights no longer spent alone, and the feeling of a breathing body that belonged to you, and only you. After waiting months for the letters from your coworkers and boss (all praising your “outstandingly, upbeat character”) and waiting for confirmation from both the American and Chinese officials that you in fact, would become a mother in early October, you found that you were not exhausted. You felt more alive, more awake than you had in years. You brushed aside your family’s race-related comments just as you had done to their homophobic ones. In time you hoped, they would come to love both you and your new Chinese baby. You hoped because that was all you could do.

Eryn Peritz
Class of 2021
Editors’ Notes

Grace Chan: Context 2021 is the best club to date in the entire history of South Side. This is not hyperbolic. My co-editors have made Context a highlight of every week. Eryn and Isabelle, my best friends. I have to flex the talent of Isabelle Lu and Eryn Peritz. They are not only fantastic writers, they run meetings effortlessly, and have been a dream to work with for the last two editions of Context. I am incredibly proud of our team and the beautiful magazine we put together.

When I went to my first meeting as a lowly freshman I could barely talk to the other members, much less read any of my work aloud. Since then, I have run meetings for Context and read out my work for people each week. Seeing all my friends now as they talk and share their powerful voices fills me with pride.

Isabelle Lu: Long before we collected more than a handful of submissions, Grace, Eryn, and I agreed this was going to be the best edition of Context in history.

Maybe I’m biased, but I have a feeling that anyone who’s stuck through with Context over this school year would easily agree. In September, with remote school and the online meeting format, I was apprehensive yet determined to keep the club afloat with my co-editors and our advisor. Yet it turned out not to be a struggle at all, but a revival and pleasure. So many familiar and unexpected members surprised us this year by showing up, deciding to stay, and, most courageously, sharing their voices. At Adelphi Poetry Day, I watched many first-year Context members put forth their thoughts in workshops, volunteer for the poetry slam, and submit work to the poetry contest—all things I would’ve been petrified of doing in my first year (especially online!). It thrills me that I’m now an editor of the club that fostered my writing and personal confidence, and contributing to its nurturing effect on young creatives. Our amazing eight prizes at Adelphi only confirmed what I already knew: our crew this year is insanely talented, passionate, and powerful. Our community extends beyond the weekly get-togethers—I’ve developed connections and been trusted personally with writing, and I feel again and again incredibly honored to have this position. With the friendship and dedication bonding our editing team, there was no possibility we would produce anything short of extraordinary.

I want to thank every single person who attended Context remotely, who kept our meetings flowing with creativity and expression. Thank you to my fellow editors, Eryn and Grace, for both keeping my vision of the road ahead steady and pulling me in new directions over our time working together. I deeply admire you both as artists and people. Thank you to Ms. Ries for being a constant source of encouragement and wisdom over my budding writing and leadership career at South Side. I look ahead with hope and excitement at another year of the dream team (minus one, who will be so missed).
Editors’ Notes

Eryn Peritz: I once used to think that in order to leave a mark on the world, I would need to undergo a complete metamorphosis, becoming something I was not. I thought that if I filled in the spaces where I lacked and thinned out the parts of myself that I disliked, finally, just finally, I could prove myself to the narrow channel of the world I knew and thought to be the entire world— I could finally be enough. Context has shown me otherwise. Context has shown me that I am enough simply by embracing who I am— I never needed to change, I just needed to rid myself of the warped walls of inaccurate self-reflection I had created and the writing I did in Context gave me the tools to escape. Where I saw all that I thought needed to be changed about Eryn Peritz, the past editors and Ms. Ries saw me as the student, the writer, and the woman I am proud to be today— and for that I am eternally grateful. Sophomore year Open Mic Night and Adelphi Poetry Day were truly defining moments that still are a part of my core foundations. Thank you to Rachel, Chidera, Andrea, Emma, Tara, Ms. Ries, and thank you to all of the editors before my four years at South Side. Thank you for creating this tradition that I have had the honor to inherit and from it, return to the essence of me.

During the editorial process, I thought that it would be fitting that my last piece in this magazine be a short prose piece titled, "Finally." It follows a loosely-fictive, somewhat truthful narrative about a soon-to-be mother going to China to adopt her child, and in some sense, while I am that Chinese-adoptee child, I am also that you which the piece refers to, I am also the fictitious mother seeking something to make her feel complete, seeking an identity rooted in purpose and connection. "Finally" is a piece that is an embrace of my identity as a queer, Chinese woman; it is me taking ownership of my story, it is me writing the narrative and ready to go on forward, to face and take on the world.

As a member and editor of Context, I have had the incredible privilege to view astonishing talent and be part of this community so dedicated to the act of creation whether that be poetry, short stories, and even full-on novels (know that one day I will be buying your novels and claiming connection to you as I point to your name on the book cover!) or paintings, drawings, and even music (shoutout to my favorite composer!). I have had the privilege to have insight into brilliant minds through down-to-earth discussions, most notably that one this year about microaggressions (*please insert snapping*).

Lastly, and I saved this for last because as they say, save the last for best, Grace and Isabelle! I think that we are quite possibly the best team ever— besides the representation, our collaborations are unstoppable forces and this magazine is a testament to that. Isabelle, thank you for being so proactive, detail-oriented, and technologically savvy— you saved us all last year with your tech skills and that spreadsheet was beautiful. Grace, you know that I have so much to say and that I will put it all either into a really long text or a handwritten letter, but you have helped me to grow so, so much and your boldness from the first day we met at cross country practice to our friendship over the past years has meant everything to me. As I look onto my college journey and future, I will desperately miss Context and the two of you.

The walls have fallen down and because of that, I have made a mark on the world and will continue to make marks wherever I go.

Thank you.
Context extends its thanks to Mr. Murphy, Mr. Walsh, Ms. LaBarbera, Ms. Palumbo, Ms. Breen, Ms. DiFiglia, Ms. Voltaggio, and all of the teachers who encouraged students to submit work for making our publication and attendance of Adelphi Poetry Day possible.