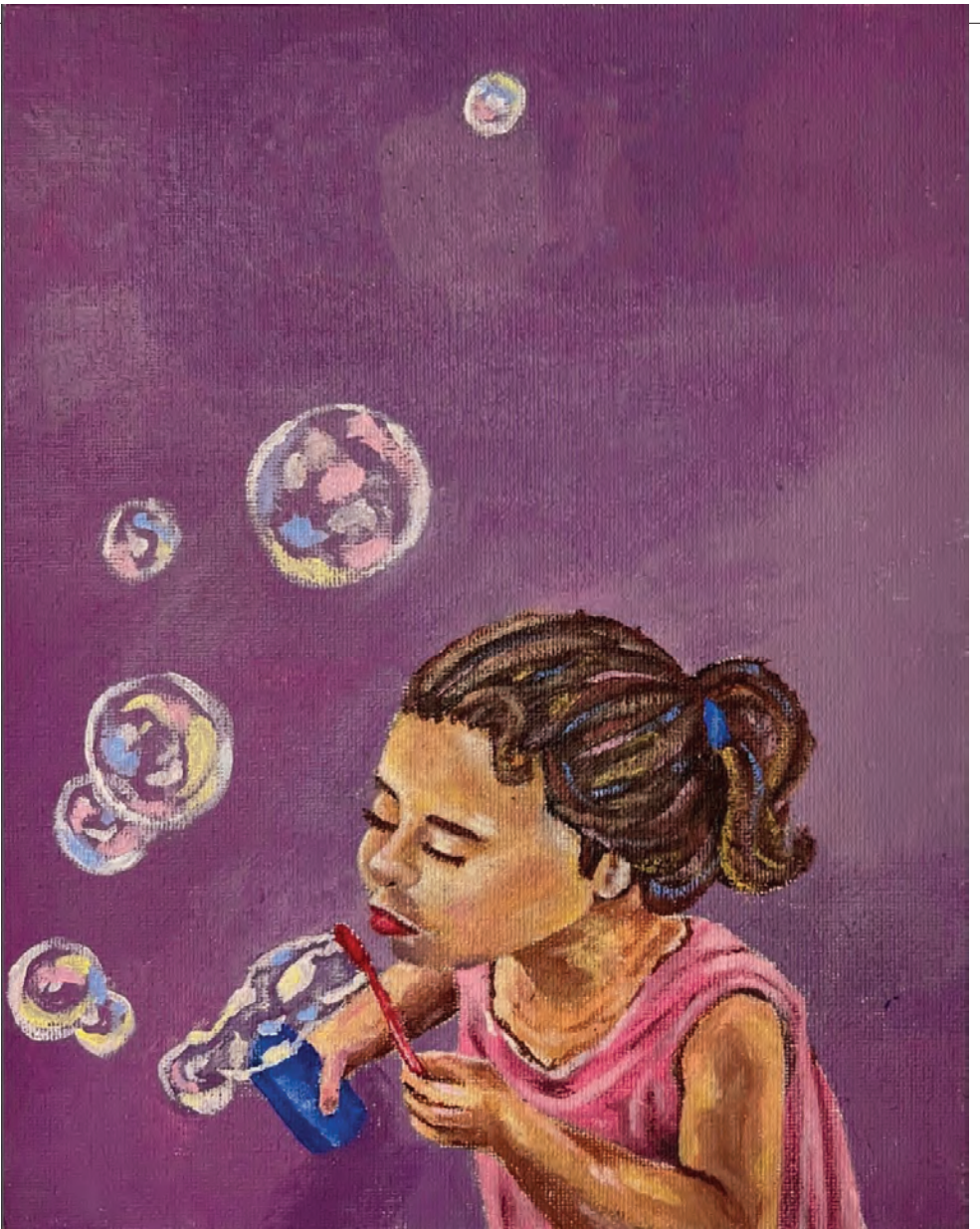


# GERI.



Sofia Huerta '24, Acrylic

# GIRL.

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## DEAR READER,

As girls, we are raised being told that we can do anything, only to realize what that really means. "Anything" as long as we adhere to societal expectations, which attach us to too many strings to count.

We can do anything, as long as we remain classy, proper, and friendly. We are free to voice our opinions, but have to be careful to remain polite and quiet. We can go ahead and work for our goals, but can't show off in the faces of men. We should be confident in our own bodies, but pay attention to the models on social media and try to look more like them. We can dress however we feel comfortable, but keep it neat and not too flashy. We are told to embrace our natural beauty, but still feel the need to hide our insecurities with makeup.

Within a world consumed by ideas of physical perfection, it is deemed normal to fall into the desire of wanting to change oneself. Yet, this is truly all an illusion we have created for each other.

As limiting as this endless list of expectations may seem, it is ultimately up to us, girls, to refuse conformity alongside this narrative, ignore those expectations, and be who we want to be. Aesthetics, influencers, and material items lie in the epicenter of today's overall mentality but, in the words of Billie Eilish, "is that what we are made for?" Do we really want to be tied down by those strings that hinder us from "doing anything?"

*Girl* is a student-run anthology that features the work of all types of girls in an all-girl school, none the same. It is through these pieces that we see that being a girl has no real definition. The various artworks and writings that make up this collection of student work capture the essence of each individual girl, proving the complexity of the true female experience.

Straying away from society are the characteristics of empowerment, self-love, and honestly, the truth. Together, we celebrate the power of girls, embrace our imperfections, and share our unique stories.

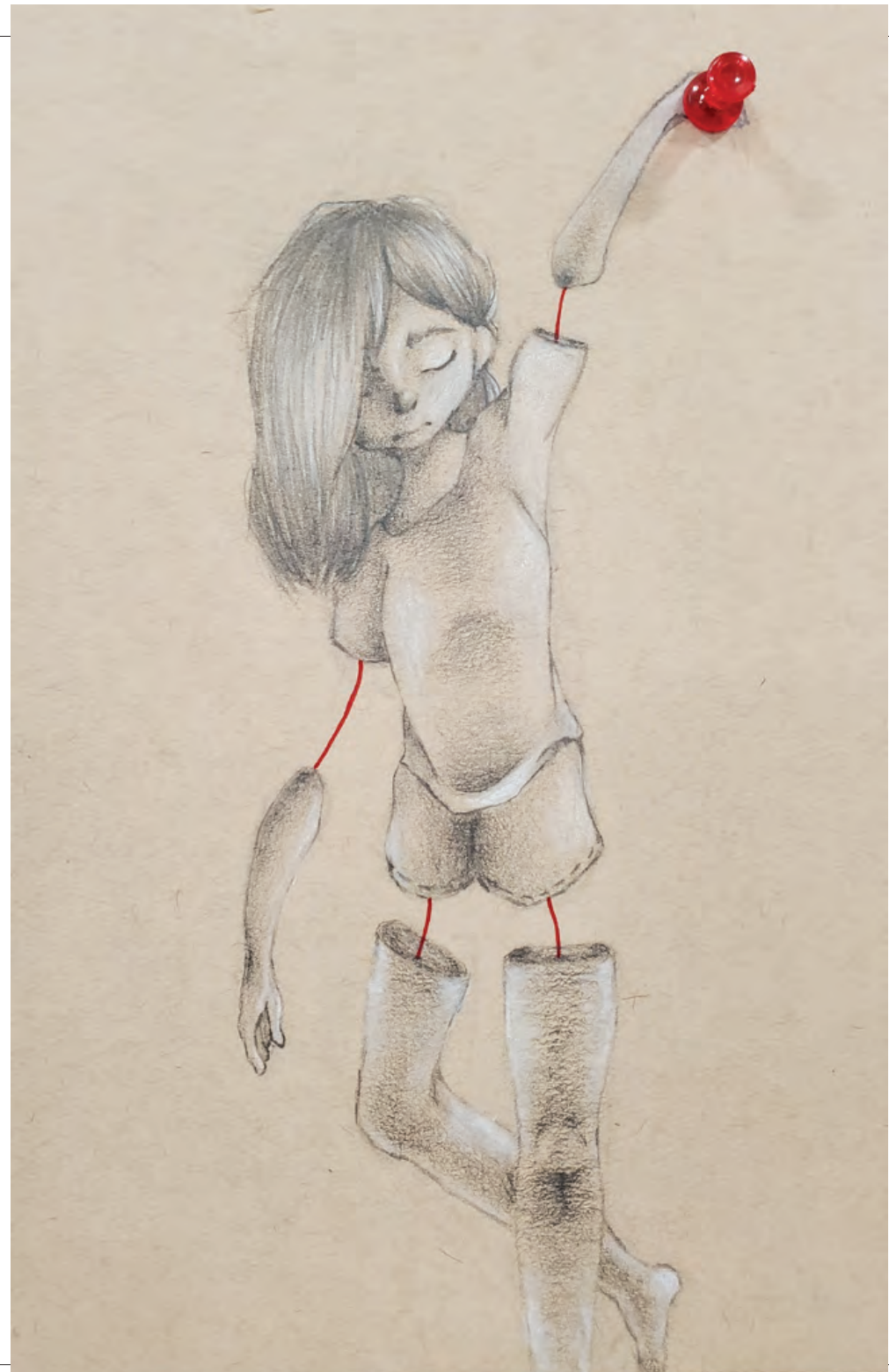
**A girl  
should  
be two  
things:  
who and  
what she  
wants.**

-Coco Chanel

# JUST A GIRL.

Lucia Padron '26

I'm just a girl, they say  
With pretty white ribbons in my hair  
I'm just a girl, they say  
Yet older men tend to stare  
Eat all you want!  
Stop! Don't eat that!  
Take your time, Hurry up, Know your place  
How come you always stay up so late?  
Go out! Have fun! Find love!  
You're too young to date  
I don't know where the line is for being too old or  
for me to act my age  
Study hard, do your best!  
That's not enough  
Start the car, slam the brake  
Of course you can't parallel park  
"She's so outspoken, how annoying" when she speaks her mind  
"She's so quiet, I can't hear her" when she's shy  
"Attention seeker" is what they'll call her when  
she tries to look her best"  
"She needs to stop rolling in the dirt,  
that's how pigs come along"  
"She needs to go out more, instead of playing with dolls"  
"You're just a girl, what can you do?"  
The man said to the hopeful engineer who's dreams  
shattered the moment the words left his mouth  
"You're just a girl! All you do is sit and clean the house!"  
Said the man to his wife, who lets out an exhausted sigh,  
holding an cranky baby while she cries  
Be at work! You need to be a traditional wife!  
Why even bother when all of our attempts give us strife?  
Girls are stronger than you know, they just need time to grow  
Girls can think on their own, stop telling us where to go  
Societal norms have grown to much,  
so now it leaves all of us "just girls" confused  
I'm just a girl, who wants to be a girl  
Not dainty  
Not tough  
Just enough  
I don't want to be "just a girl" anymore  
I want to be "a girl"  
Who loves who she is until the day she dies



**JUST BARELY.** Karen Galego '24, Pencil & Marker



# THE ENEMY - 1, ME - 0.

*Emma Hernandez Moran '26*

You bend and you break  
until you can't anymore  
you snap right in half  
and then fall to the floor  
But no one can see  
and nobody hears  
the yells and the cries fall on deafening ears  
Somehow you end up  
flat on the floor  
in a room that you built  
where The Enemy keeps score

**TRAPPED IN TIME.** *Lynette Fernandez '24, Watercolor*

# BEAUTY SICKNESS.

*Lexie Hernandez '25*

I have always viewed beauty as a combination of what's on the inside, and what's on the outside. In my opinion, you could have flawless skin, luscious hair, a radiant smile, and striking eyes, but if you are a mean person, all of that means nothing.

What makes a person truly beautiful is their heart, their mind, and their soul. Unfortunately, sometimes people just don't care about those things, and with that in mind, I definitely do go down the rabbit hole of comparing myself to the "perfect" girls I see on social media, or even in school. This has caused me to be a little more self-conscious about my appearance, but I've never let it go too far.

Although beauty sickness has never been something I have greatly struggled with, it is present all around me.

I have heard every single one of the women in my family say degrading things about themselves, and even to each other. About their weight, wrinkles, cellulite, or their gray hairs. I have seen the people I look up to the most place an overwhelming amount of stress on how they look, and set unrealistic standards for themselves.

When I am a mother, I will instill in my children that their outward appearance is meaningless if they are not beautiful from within. True beauty is when your heart shines so brightly that it radiates outward to everyone you interact with.

I hope to raise kids who are kind, generous, thoughtful, intuitive, observant, passionate, honest, and clever, because then they will be beautiful.





# WAITING.

*Kara Mencia '25*

Silver, shining spoons sit at the table in a pair,  
Yet one is tainted by fingerprints, something the other does not share.  
The placemat unaware of the dinner prepared.  
I clear the table.

Scrubbing, scratching the remains of the feast,  
Rinse, wipe, rinse, repeat.  
Yet I still don't hear your car come down the street.  
I climb the stairs.

Silky nightgown, the one you used to like when we were young,  
Staring into a wrinkled, worn face, not recognizing who this has become.  
I step back, knowing that we fell victim to time, beast that spares no one.  
I shut off the light.

Shuffling, the soft whispers of slippers on the hardwood floor,  
The weight of age on my shoulders beginning to weigh more and more.  
And this life is beautiful, but I can't wait to see what the after has in store.  
I lay on the bed.

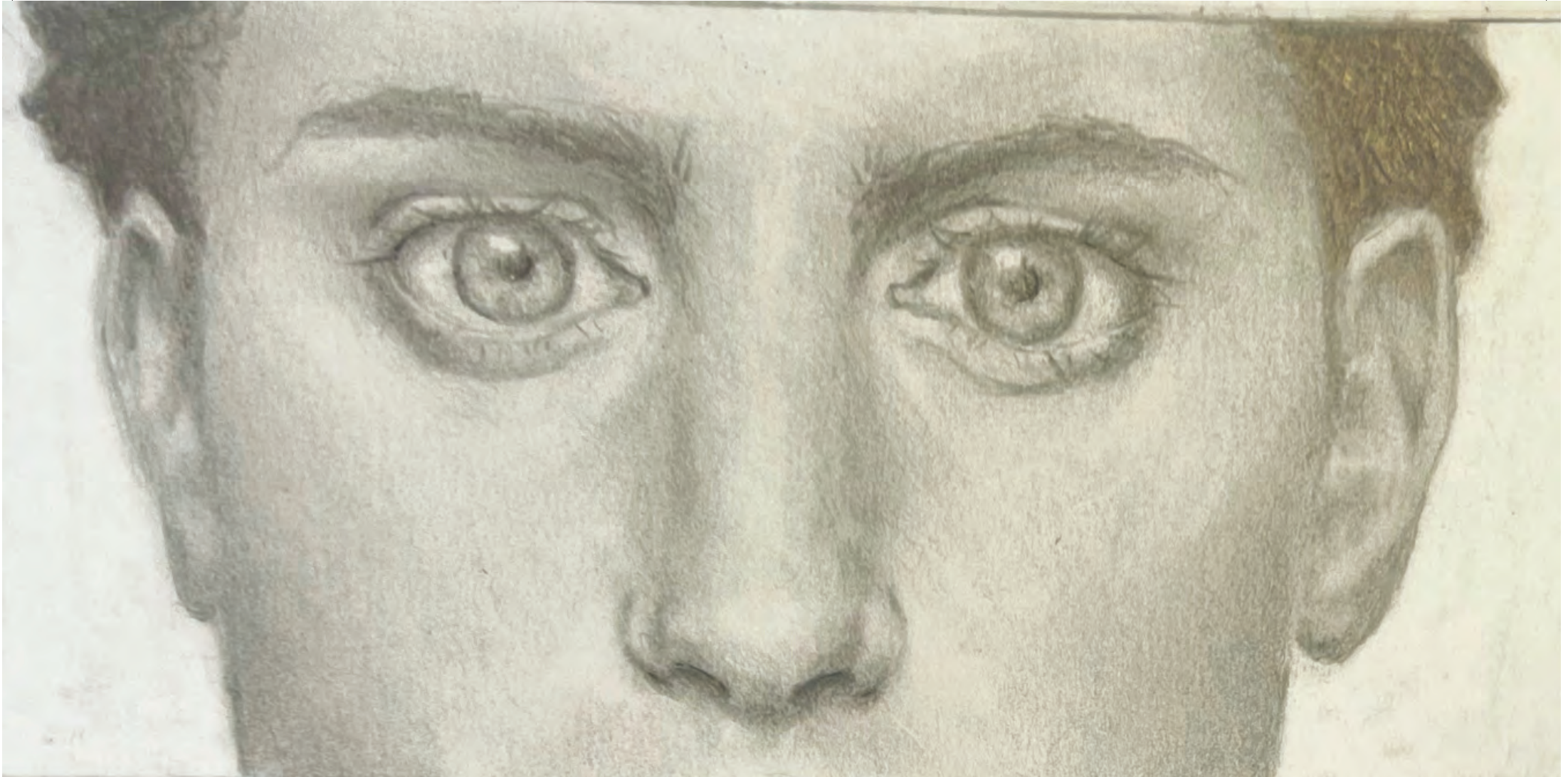
I miss hearing your snoring beside me,  
Or every time you'd carve our initials into the trees.  
I miss when holding you in my arms was a reality.  
I shut my eyes.

All I see is the leaves in your eyes,  
Or when you spent all your money winning me that carnival prize,  
Or that moment where we said our final goodbyes.  
I drift off.

Still, I don't think I was ever prepared,  
For a life without you was a life without love shared.  
Finally, once again you and I are a pair.  
You greet me with open arms.

**PIANO MAN.** *Elena Alvarado '25, Pencil*





**SEE.** *Isabella Pacheco '26, Pencil*

# GIRLHOOD.

*Daniella Quijano '24*

In a world where rules define her place,  
She must realize that she is more than  
just a pretty face.  
She struggles with doubts and fears every day,  
But she lives trying to pave her own way.

With pressure to stay in line,  
She often feels like she's running out of time.  
Society's expectations weigh her down,  
But she persists with a smile that hides her frown.

She's told to be this and to act like that,  
But she's more than just a stat.  
She's expected to fit within a mold,  
But inside, her story has yet to unfold.



**FLOURISHING BEAUTY.** *Amanda Peña '24, Charcoal on canvas*

# TWISTED DREAM.

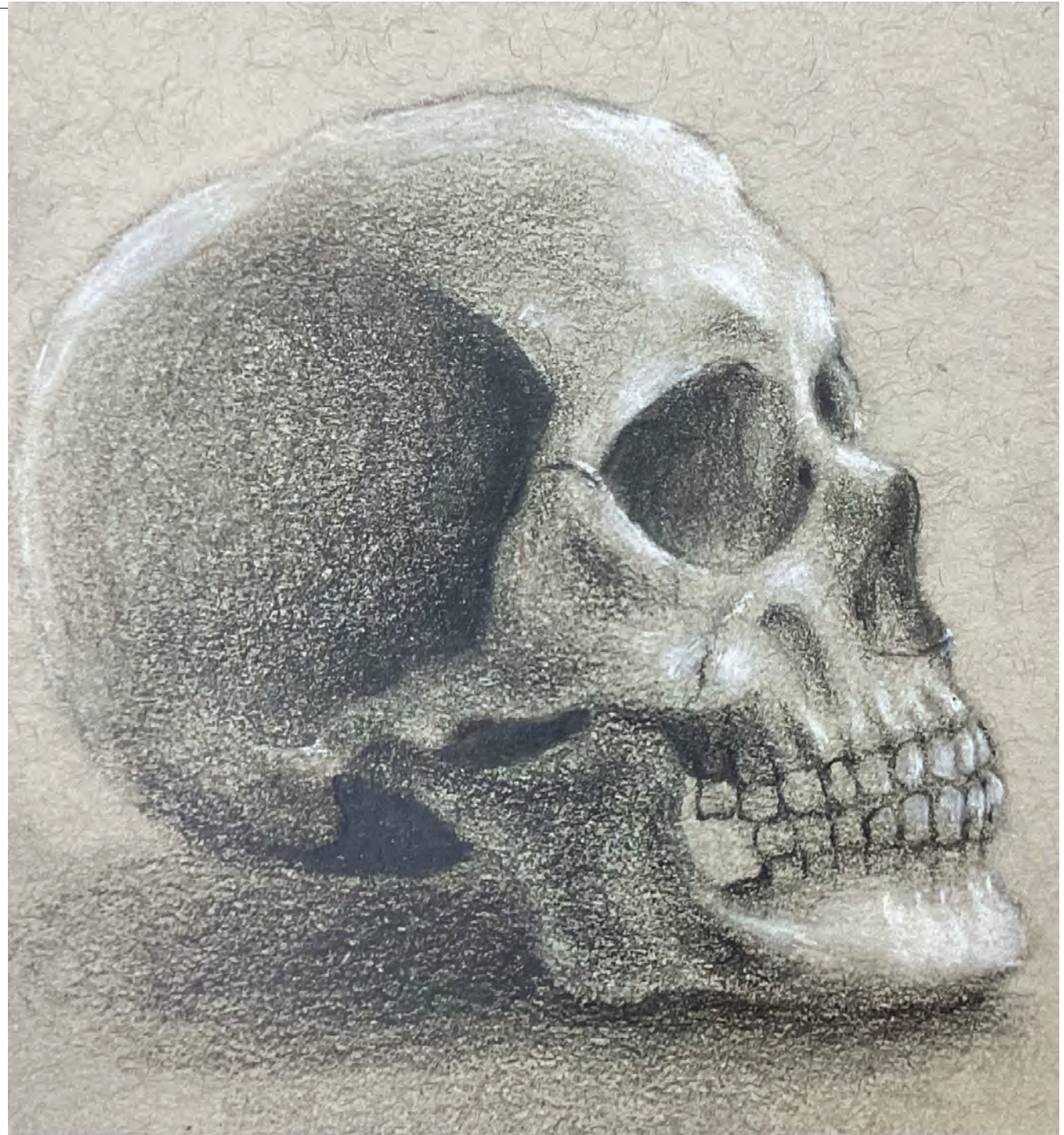
*Priah Cruz-Cruz '26*

In my life you might find  
A dream that's filled with twisted lies.

I dreamed of a partner, kind and true,  
Where laughs were shared and flowers bloomed.

Yet shadows loomed,  
And colors flew,  
And fate's cruel jest had in store  
A tale that's rotten to the core.

A heart broken,  
It's dreams revised,  
As tears streamed down from saddened eyes.



**MORI.** *Karen Galego '24, Charcoal*



**TRANSFORMATION.** Irene Rubero '24, Graphite Pencil

# EVANESCENCE.

*Frances Ryan '25*

wish that i could just  
disappear  
to cool bedrooms with the windows open  
and the hum of a foreign city  
whispering to the stars  
on a sky that seems to glow forever  
constellations staged on navy velvet  
but it never gets too warm

wish that i could just  
disappear  
to a huge sprawling home  
that houses many more things  
than my own  
like wildflowers and buffaloes  
and the wind there is cool and dry  
and the sky that seems to glow forever  
in cerulean blues and cotton balls  
but it never gets too warm

wish that i could just  
disappear  
to some familiar islands  
where the fish is always fresh  
and the music  
makes you want to dance  
and the sky that seems to glow forever  
in pinks and golds and oranges  
but it never gets too warm

let me wish upon a star  
to disappear  
because i've been there before  
only in my dreams

# FLY ON THE WALL.

*Olivia Rose Prieto '25*

I've come to this realization;  
that I'm only a fly on the wall.  
While others don't pay any mind,  
the ones who do stare in disgust,

I'm only a fly on the wall,  
I don't harm or hurt anyone.

While others might feel sympathy,  
the ones who take action swat me away,

I'm only a fly on the wall,

I don't damage or break anything.

While I don't harm or damage anyone and hurt or break anything,  
no matter what I do,

I will be judged, I will be stared at, I will be swatted.

Maybe if I stay still enough I'll become invisible to the naked eye.  
And maybe then, I'll become one with the walls surrounding me,  
just a blur of color in an assortment of decoration.

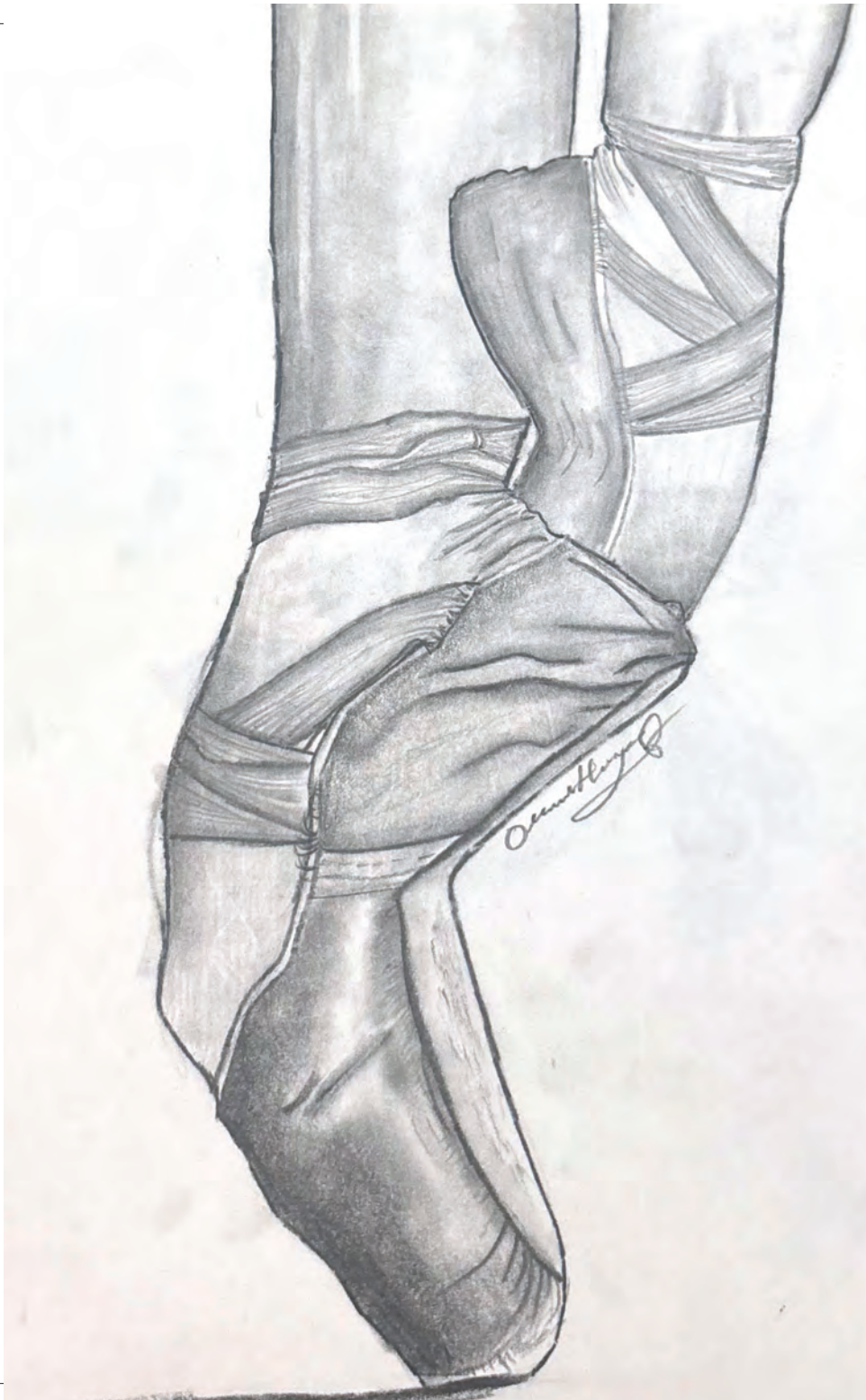
Even though I've found myself in this position,  
I should find peace in where I chose to rest my wings,  
I should find contentment in watching the world go by.

While others stare and swat,

I observe and am still.

I am only a fly on the wall,  
just a speck of dust in the grand scheme of life.





# THIGH GAPS.

*Daniela Roig '26*

I've never had a thigh gap  
Now everyone needing to show their bodies on social media  
apps It's just another trap  
To make little girls snap  
Perhaps, that was the intention all along  
To say we can't be strong  
Always assuming we are what's wrong  
We do not belong  
If we are not skinny or fat then what  
With every measure needing a "cut"  
"I said no butts"  
What am I to do in the world we live in  
If I can't even be comfortable in my own skin  
The voice within  
Tells me to begin  
To become more thin  
Every bite is a sin  
Because I might ruin  
The work that I put in  
I am on a tight end  
Not one friend  
To extend  
A hand even if it is just pretend  
Sorry I don't look like you  
And you don't have imperfections too?  
If only that was true  
"What a two  
That won't do"  
For the girl you pursue  
Must be able to renew  
The "man" inside of you  
How is she so perfect?  
We all know at least one girl who has that effect Incorrect!  
She is not perfect  
The mere idea wrecked  
The girl inside begging for something to protect Those who  
really hide, they neglect  
The feelings a subsided effect  
She fell for that trap  
Even with no thigh gap

# YOUR SONGBIRD.

*Catalina Frias '25*

i hear the ladies say "what a gorgeous creature",  
and the men praise the "melodious song",  
the demand "sing louder for us"

i stepped inside willing  
(willing to do their whim, not so willingly i believe now)  
you chained me in a cage  
given me a script for my song  
i'll entertain on your stage  
i'll sing for you until my notes fall flat

the women complain "it's too much."  
the men protest the "infuriating racket"  
they demand "don't sing so loud, be quiet."  
why don't you just,  
stop.

stop?  
was i born to stop?  
you didn't teach me to stop?

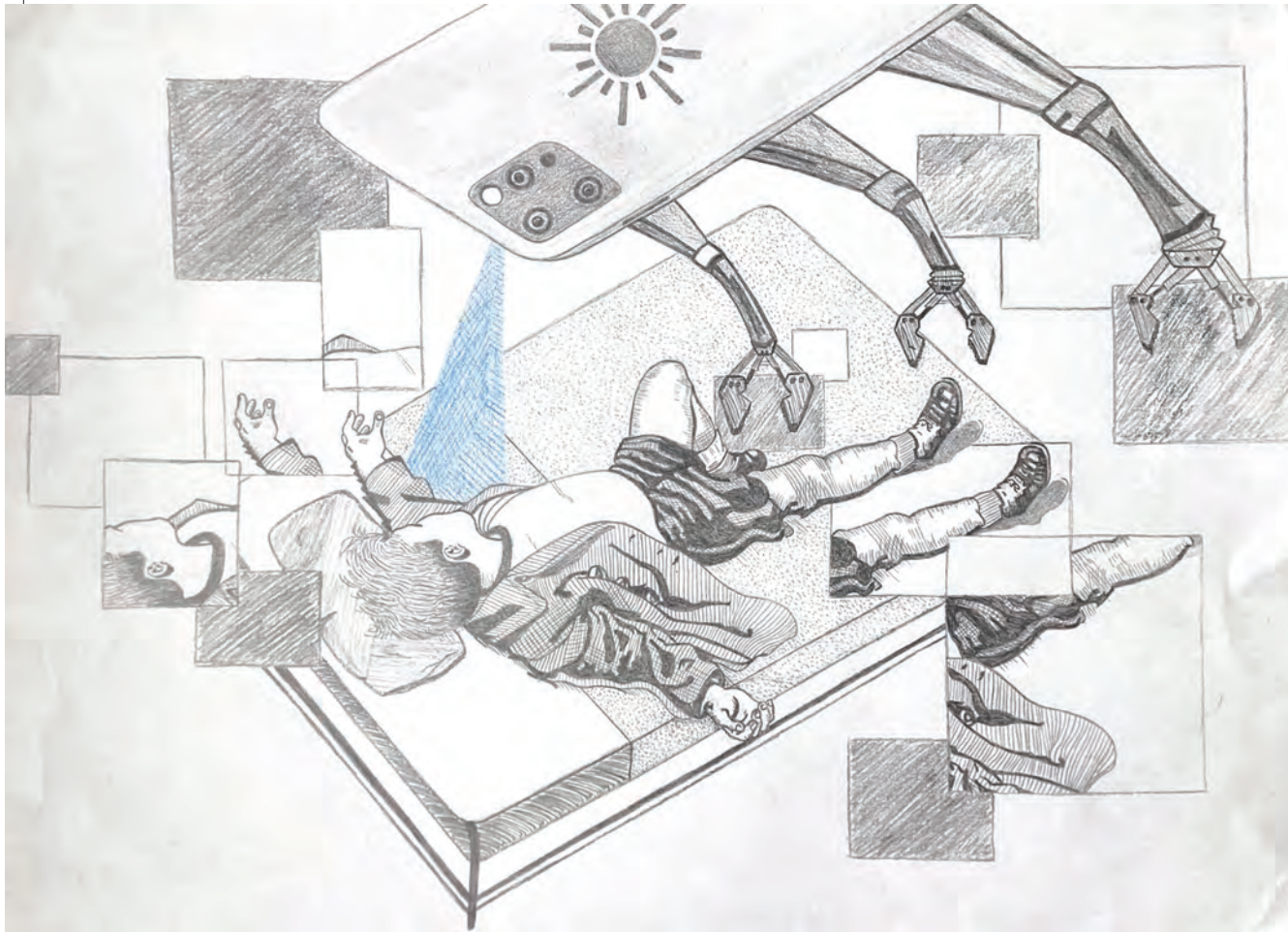
how do i stop?,  
when i was made to sing,  
when it's all i can do  
(or so you made me believe).  
i sung your script,  
but my notes have fallen flat

and now you inquire why  
i've taken the needle to my mouth,  
you've reaped what i now sown,  
my song has been ripped from my throat  
and your song bird once treasured  
has become a mere pests you've censored



**FLIGHT.** Hailey Scott '25, Digital

# IS THIS REALLY EASIER FOR ME?



**BLUE LIGHT AS THE NEW SUNLIGHT.** *Emi Gil '24, Pencil*

*Emma Velasco '24*

Staring at this prompt,  
My brain is blank with no thought.  
Should I type this into Chat GPT?  
Just to make it easier for me?  
Artificial Intelligence. No,  
A mind with endless exigence.  
Rewriting my words with no sense,  
To perfection, teachers I should recompense.  
Nursing, Business, or even a tailor,  
Information on anything,  
AI graduated with every major.  
A "leaked" picture of Madonna,  
A new track by Taylor Swift and Rihanna,  
Fake news  
A false sense of life, impossible to live,  
Masking reality like an eclipse.  
Textbooks and studies quickly irrelevant,  
Lack of stimulation,  
our brains, now something of which we are negligent.  
However, paintings and NFTs,  
All of which are being produced so easily.  
Song, and slogans, and speeches galore,  
None of which anybody has ever thought of or heard before.  
All of this at our fingertips,  
Now, what to do with it?  
Because in the trajectory the world is moving,  
Very quickly we will easily ruin it.  
Like wood to fire,  
Encapsulating knowledge the world desires,  
The burning passion to be all knowing,  
Leading the earth to a path,  
That is unknowing.



# REAL ESTATE.

Reese Spence '26

Go ahead. Say how you really feel. Talk all you want about how you think I'm embarrassing or ugly or annoying or clingy. I can almost picture it—a scroll unraveled, unfurling into infinity, etched with every critique you've crafted about my existence. But as you revel in the symphony of your critiques, know this—I have claimed a corner in the vast landscape of your thoughts.

My presence, my essence, occupies precious square footage in the intricate architecture of your consciousness. You've erected towers of judgment and mansions of disdain, all dedicated to housing the mere mention of my name.

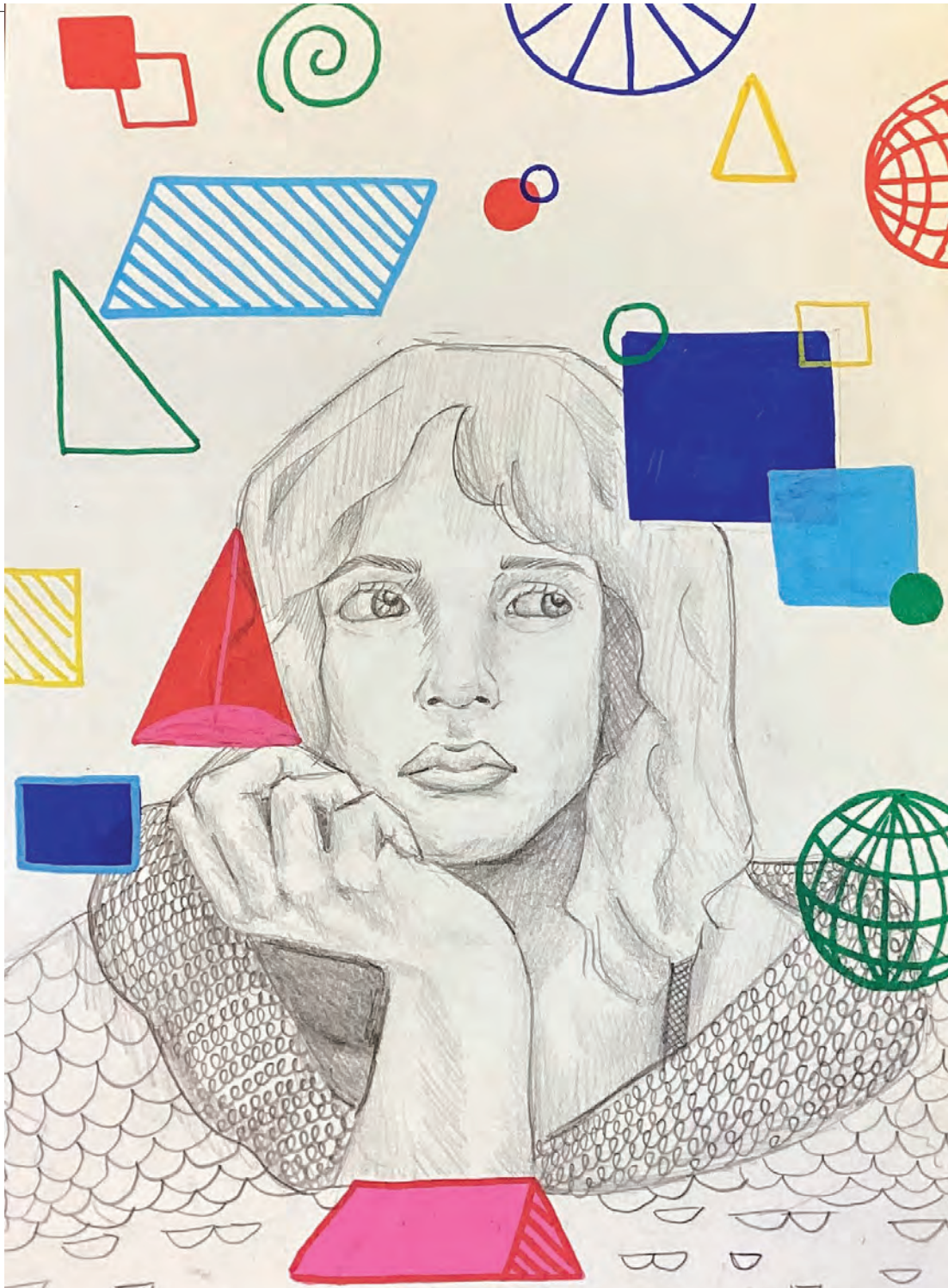
Your words, like relentless tenants, occupy the rooms of your mind, echoing with every syllable of my identity. My name echoes through the hallways of your thoughts, reverberating with a frequency that suggests obsession. While you obsess over me, dissecting every facet of my being, I roam free, unburdened by the weight of your scrutiny.

So, go ahead, allocate more real estate to my existence. Let my name become the cornerstone of your internal monologue, for in doing so, you unwittingly concede that I hold power over the landscape of your mind.

As you dwell on me, I remain unscathed, while you remain ensnared within the walls of your own fixation.



**SPIRALING.** Madeline Jennings '26, Beads & Pen



# OH TO BE A WOMAN.

*Emma Cendros '26*

To be a woman is to hear unwanted names  
while attempting to walk down the street  
To be a woman is to fear leaving the house alone with,  
or without protection  
To be a woman is to be compared  
It is worrying about the fine line between a thin waist or a plump one  
It is the stress of  
"Am I trying too hard with my makeup today?" or  
"Am I wearing enough makeup today?"  
It is to see another body and point out all the ways  
it doesn't look like her own  
To be a woman is to drown in others opinions  
It is the constant need to meet the requirements of others  
that were set in the craters of the moon  
At times, to be a woman is to be excessively emotional  
But oh, to be a woman is to feel emotion like no other  
To have fire and compassion  
To feel every last drop of hurt when it is right,  
but to smile in the mirror when the tears have subsided  
To find pleasure in the simple morning routine  
To find the beauty in all  
To be a woman is to pick another woman up while she is down  
To have a never ending support group  
To be a woman is to succeed and live and laugh  
To be a woman is to feel powerful in whatever she is to wear that day  
To deliberately pair each ring, bracelet, and necklace  
To be a woman is to be tender, intelligent, strong  
To be a woman is to push through the day no matter what it hurdles at her  
To be a woman is to love with every ounce of herself  
Oh, to be a woman

# PATRIA PERDIDA.

*Natalia Caridad Perez- Rodriguez '24*

Mi alma pertenece a tierra que mi cuerpo no ha caminado.  
Mis pies hechos para ser calzados por tacones de rosa.  
Repiqueteando contra calles de adoquín,  
O atravesando playas adornadas por guijarro brillantes bajo  
el sol.  
Mi corazón llora por mi patria, Atlantis perdido al mar.  
Mis hombros destinados a ser permanentemente quemados  
por un sol ardiente, que  
nunca sentirán.

Mi sangre, el mar, chocando contra el malecón,  
Sin refugio bajo la sombra de una palma real.  
Anhele los campos de tabaco, hojas anchas y doradas,  
Y en mis sueños oigo la canción de un guajiro, declarando su  
amor con décima escrita  
Por manos callosas.

Patria mía ¿dónde estás?  
No te encontraré en en choque de fichas de dominó,  
Ni en los tambores, olvidados, sobre la repisa,  
Tampoco en la bandera perdida al viento de un huracán.  
Y aunque te busque en la sombra de montañas escondidas  
detrás del sol,  
O en las arrugas que adornan el rostro del abuelo,  
Con mucho que te busque, no te encontraré.

Mi patria, mi amor, ahora si te he perdido.  
No puedo recordar lo que nunca he tenido.



**SUEÑOS DE LIBERTAD.** *Elena Alvarado '24, Acrylic*

# LOSING.

*Emma Hernandez Moran '26*

The light in which I look through  
the light in which I see  
Oh please let the world  
be someone other than just me

I look into the faces with real thoughts and  
real lives  
And I think to myself they can't be alive  
They can't be experiencing the same world  
design  
the same meaningless passage of time

Because when I close my eyes I see  
Blacklight and blue light  
Like the bruises on my knees  
From apologizing for being right

My skin is burning and I'm blinded  
But they say that's just the sun  
I think its radiation but they don't hear what  
I've said  
They're having to much fun

I need to see what's inside  
I want to x-ray your mind  
I want to know if that's where I reside  
But I'm too scared of what id find

Why does the ugly look fluorescent?  
The problems I want to shun  
Why isn't the beauty luminescent?  
Does that mean there is none?

I want to surf on gamma rays  
I've heard their waves are the longest  
I want to lose track of the days  
I don't want to have to be honest

Because blood is not thicker than water,  
remind us  
But even the water is still blue  
And blue light causes blindness  
Have I ever seen the friends I thought I  
knew?

Once again I find myself alone, only me  
In the light in which I look through  
The light in which I see

Now all that's left to see is the warmer light  
The hope I've clung to every night

I hope they see the light in which I look  
through  
I hope they aren't gone  
I hope you think like I do  
I hope I'm not the only one trying to keep the  
light on



**THE PATH.** *Irene Rubero '24, Digital*



# HEALING ECHOES.

*Ines De Lapuerta '24*

2 months left until departure:

My cheeks are stiff with dried tears as I sit in a garden of tissues. You console me, but I've been here before and know that your flowers of promises will soon wilt away. You've stopped reassuring me, and I've left the garden; we both silently agree not to talk about it anymore. But I'm fine; there is still time.

1 month left until departure:

The ache in my stomach grows with each day, but I push it down. There is still time, but I see the famous printed shirts and pants. I've always hated green on you. Your facial hair has changed; it is short and blunt, and crude against your loving expressions. You are not the only one to change. Soon I will have to change too. But I'm fine; there is still time.

1 day left until departure:

Why must you go? We are brought back to the garden from months ago and see the wilted flowers on the floor. People in the Middle East need you, but so do I. It's complicated, you say, and deep down, I know that. It seems as though you've picked strangers over your own flesh and blood; them over me. I know mothers and fathers need to be relieved from their position, but what about my father? Why must it be you to take their place? I know I'm being selfish, but I don't want to relive three years ago and have to change again. Because deep down, I know there is no more time. Deep down, I knew there was never any time.

# WINDY LIFE.

*Madisyn Taylor Ramirez '26*

In the dance of life, the wind does play,  
A partner unseen, guiding our way.  
It whispers softly, a gentle breeze,  
Or roars with might, through towering trees.

Just like the wind, our lives may sway,  
In moments of calm, or storms at bay.  
It carries us forth, on journeys unknown,  
Through trials and triumphs, we've grown and we've flown.

With each gust and sigh, we learn to adapt,  
To bend, not break, in the face of mishap.  
For in the wind's song, there's wisdom to find,  
A rhythm of resilience, in heart and in mind.

So let us embrace, this wind that we share,  
And trust in its guidance, through joy and despair.  
For in the flow, of life's fleeting dance,  
We find strength, in the wind's gentle trance.



**REMI.** *Annie Valcarcel '26, Acrylic & Mixed Media*



**ALL IN TIME.** *Emi Gil, '24, Marker*



**THE GARDEN.** Madeline Jennings '25, Acrylic on canvas

# THE FIRST WOMAN.

*Nicole Garcia '26*

She is born from rib of man,  
Not from his knees,  
So as not to lay at his feet,  
Nor from his skull,  
So as not to look down on him.

She is made from his side,  
The cage that protects the heart,  
So as to lead with him.

The first woman is created to protect man's heart,  
And he was made to love her's.

When Cain is first formed in the womb of Eve,  
She does not yet know that the sickness that ails her is a sign of life  
and not death,  
When Eve sees the water of her womb burst,  
She does not yet know that it is the water of his first baptism and not  
a flood,  
When the first son leaves the first woman,  
She lets a sigh of relief leave her lips,

She does not yet know that the son she has birthed,  
Will be a harbinger of death for her second.

Woman's first breath brought life to the first son,  
Yet it is her son who takes her last.

A daughter of Eve,  
Unmarked by her sins,  
Gives birth to the cure,  
The redemption he'll bring.

It is through the New Eve,  
Whose son is Lord's Word,  
That water of the womb,  
Who brought life to man,  
Turns to blood of the Lamb.





**PLAYED WITH.** *Sofia Huerta '24, Mixed Media*

# WE ALWAYS DREAM.

*Sara Isabel Gonzalez '24*

I live my life in my room. People say I need to get out more and do something with this life of mine but to be frank, my life has lived far longer in this simple place.

My floor is filled with stains, plastic cups, dirty clothes, and nicknacks that suddenly appear. My room is also filled with memories. What the floor carries now used to be filled with old toys, stuffed animals, freshly spilled nail polish, and mud. It's all covered up now but it still lingers.

These walls, now gray, were once a beautiful baby pink and blue. The wooden dresser and nightstand took the spot of keepsake ones. My bed, now shoved to the corner, became taller without frames. The once-white vanity was replaced with a desk filled with my belongings. And tucked away in my closet, rest the teddy bears and other memoirs of my childhood.

Sometimes when the sun shines through my window I can see a hint of pink underneath the grey. When I look outside I see myself as a kid again. She's playing with the headphones her dad got her, basking in the notes that flow through the iPod into her heart, and she's glowing in the sunlight.

Life seemed so simple back then. I used to praise people who were older than me. Like my brothers, I longed to play and relate to them, but ultimately always left rejected.

"You're too young," they say. Repeatedly hearing "Maybe when you're our age you can play," knowing that age would never change their words.

So, I was always surrounded by the company of my Barbies, bears, and dolls. No matter how full my room looks, no matter how much I put in this space of mine, it feels so empty. Looking back, I miss the fresh stains on the carpet, the carved

words on the walls of my room, I miss the residue of stubborn stickers, but mostly I miss the memories that gave me company.

It's these little things that you realize when you're growing older. Those dumb things you thought you forgot about. See, now I wish I could go back. I wish I had taken more pictures of things I love but yet, little me was always so stubborn when it came to her pictures.

I would say life is like my room. Life changes over time and there's nothing we can truly do about it. Our decisions become our life's purpose. Every small tiny thing we do will tie together our futures. Honestly, that frightens me. But we can't let that defy our purpose.

Life is too short to worry about what we do and change is just a part of our life. Change will eventually become the normality we seek. Small little tiny things are what I love the most. Things that I once thought had no meaning to me finally become this engulfing happiness that surrounds me. It's a lonely feeling though; childhood has already been a part of us. It's finally saying goodbye as we welcome our adulthood. We welcome our new selves into this world.

This is our change. One day, this change will be our routine as we welcome another new thing. I leave my window open in hopes of catching the laughter that my younger self once shared with the birds. The teddy bears in my room dance as I sleep like ghosts from a past long ago. The walls begin to cry, washing away the grey and welcoming back the pink. My stuffed animals drink their tea telling stories of their dreams.

"Shhh," they say. "She's finally asleep!"

We cannot return, but we can always dream.



**-7587,62,4677.** *Veronica Pernas '25, Acrylic on canvas*

# START OF A JOURNEY.

*Emma Cendros '26*

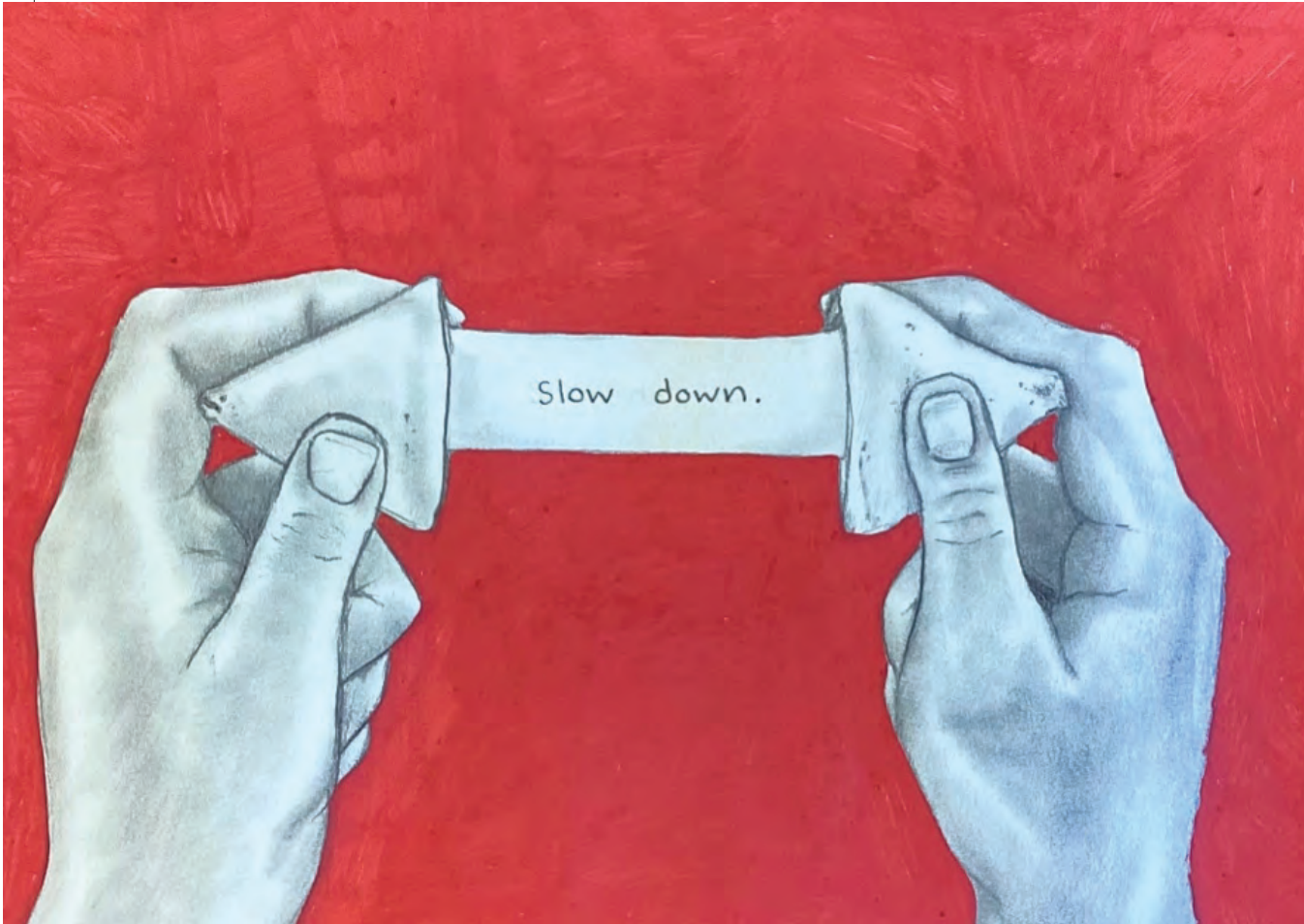
For just a moment, I close my eyes. I take in the scent of what seems like a million spices. I listen to the sound of people chanting, yelling, and laughing. I smile to myself when I hear the man attempting to sell a hand painted quartz vase to my mother, and her making the same effort to understand his amateur English through his prominent Turkish accent.

For a moment, I thought I must have been dreaming; that there was no way I was standing in the heart of the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul, but there I was.

The evening of our returning flight as my mom and I sat at our dinner table and reminisced over a hot plate of Latin America frijoles (Of course that meal could never beat the one we had in Santorini) she asked me a question that I thought to be absurd. "Did you truly have fun?"

I must have been so enchanted by our European trip that I could not show any other emotion than pure amazement. "Of course I did". I began to recount everything that I had loved. From the crystal blue waters in Mykonos to the ancient cisterns underneath the most bustling city in Turkey, I was amazed.

At that moment I knew that I was made to travel. That I had truly lived and that I would continue to live to see more of the world and to create more of those cherished magical memories.



**VIENNA.** *Lynette Fernandez '24, Pencil & Marker*

# MAMI.

*Catalina Garcia '26*

Mami, such a simple word,  
but to me there's meaning, seldom heard

For everything I am today,  
My mother's love showed me the way.

I'll love my mother all my days,  
For enriching my life in so many ways

She set me straight and will set me free,

And that's what the word, mami,  
Means to me



# 8-BIT NOSTAGLIA.

Isabella Cabrera '25

The smell of chlorine lingers on my skin as my best friend, Carolina and I, giggle quietly by the side of her pool. We're in fifth grade, too tiny to imagine a world bigger than her backyard and our small, private elementary school. We spend our summer days going to each other's houses, lounging in the pool, playing games that only we knew how to play, going back home, and doing it all over again the next day. Our play dates would last hours on end, going from the early morning to the cicada-filled hum of the evening.

But by far, the most important part of our days was the time we spent playing on each other's DS'.

After spending most of the day in the pool, we would get changed and scamper into Carolina's room. Quietly, we would switch on both of our DS' and figure out which game we would play together. More often than not, it would be Animal Crossing or one of the various Pokemon games I had introduced her to. We would spend the late afternoon immersed in these games, with her teaching me how to properly care for my town and my villagers while I taught her which Pokemon was the right one to use in a specific battle.

When I think about my childhood, I can remember each stage of my life as a video game.

One of my earliest memories to date is of playing Pokemon: Diamond Version. I remember being in a dark movie theater and having my parents plop a DS right into my hands to keep me entertained. Immediately, I was enthralled.

I had always enjoyed stories and using my imagination, and while I was too young to truly understand what I was doing in these games, I sensed that the narrative was complex and intricate. I knew that there were pieces of the puzzle that I longed to understand, but didn't know how to put them together. All the while, I fell in love with the colorful characters and intense battle scenes that I played through.

As I transitioned into my later elementary school years, my parents became an

integral part of helping me learn to figure out complex narratives. My mother, an elementary school English teacher, instilled in me a love for reading and writing that still follows me around to this day. My father, a movie buff, introduced me to

many different movies and armed with the literacy skills my mom taught me, I soon fell in love with movie analysis and movie literacy.

My dad also fed my video game passion like there was no tomorrow. Pretty soon, I had a DS, 3DS, Wii, Wii-U, and Nintendo Switch in a couple of years. My days were filled with playing more Pokemon titles, diving into the world of Splatoon, and exploring the vibrant and colorful world of Paper Mario. I also even dabbled in Pokemon cards, learning the art of negotiation as I tried to convince the other boys to trade cards with me.

Once I entered middle school, things began to get serious. My mom didn't want me to spend so much time on my devices, and my parents both began to emphasize grades even more. I was never a bad student, but they wanted to make sure I was set to be accepted to the high school of my dreams.

So, my time spent playing video games decreased, but I yearned to enter back into whatever imaginary world Nintendo had in store for me that day. I watched videos on YouTube analyzing the stories of different Nintendo games and enjoyed playthroughs of whatever new games were popular at the time. I listened to the soundtracks of the Pokemon games whenever I studied, and yearned for the day that I could go back and throw myself into my childhood fantasies.

As I'm writing this as a junior in high school, a playlist of songs from Pokemon: Diamond Version blasts through my Laptop speakers. I still long for my 16-bit childhood, and often feel very nostalgic for my childhood. My 3DS sits on my nightstand now, calling out to me, asking me to once again, immerse myself into the games that taught me how to think critically and nursed my passion for storytelling.



**CHILDHOOD.** Addison Lucas '25, Watercolor



# SHE'S JUST A GIRL.

*Siena Mia Fior '26*

A girl, who like the sun, embraces the light  
Like a butterfly, spreads her wings  
Like a mosaic, is a masterpiece

Dancing through the trials and tribulations of life  
Comes laughter so pure and bright

With each breath she takes, she tells a tale  
For she is just a girl who shall prevail

Her journey unfolds with twists and turns her way  
For she is just a girl who shines like a ray

Emotions of the universe, almost impossible to hide  
Lies a mother who cares, and is always by her side

She shall never forget from where she came  
For in the end it is all in her name

# SHATTER THE ICE.

Reese Spence '26

A frost-covered lake lies still and silent between us, a daunting obstacle that neither of us dares to cross. We're both held back by a mix of fear and worry about looking silly if we attempt to tread the fragile ice. The quietness around us adds to the tension, making us acutely aware of the risks involved. It feels like even the tiniest touch could cause the ice to crack beneath our feet, sending us into a flailing mess.

Despite our shared hesitation, there's a part of us that longs to bridge the gap, to overcome the silence that separates us. We stand on opposite sides as strangers, wishing for connection but too scared to make the first move.

But maybe, just maybe, there's a hint of bravery within us, a small spark of determination urging us forward. Even if the ice breaks or we stumble along the way, simply trying is a victory in itself.

With a racing heart and trembling hands, I muster the courage to speak the words that have been weighing heavily on my mind. "I might as well just say it. I love you," I blurt out, the confession hanging in the crisp winter air. There's a moment of stunned silence, broken only by the cracking of the ice beneath us.

In the wake of my declaration, I watch as your eyes widen in surprise, your lips parting slightly as if to respond. But before you can utter a word, I continue, my voice growing stronger with each passing moment.

"There, I said it. I shattered the silence and bridged the gap between us," I declare, feeling the weight of my words lifting off my shoulders. The fractures in the ice spread beneath me, mirroring the cracks in my facade of composure.

"You might consider me a fool, but I'm tired of treading lightly. I am choosing to bear my emotions to you right here, right now," I continue, my voice unwavering despite the vulnerability I feel. "I will no longer hesitate to say how I feel. I want to shatter this ice. I want to see it break into thousands of pieces. I want you to hear how I feel."

As the truth hangs in the air between us, I brace myself for your response, ready to face whatever comes next. For even if we fall into the lake together, I know that it will be with hearts unburdened by the weight of unspoken words, ready to embrace whatever lies ahead, together.



?. Sofia Caballero '26, Mixed Media

# LET IT RAIN.

*Sara Isabel Gonzalez '26*

If I could, I'd make it rain glitter. For when it rains glitter, everyone would be able to shine!

I used to be scared of standing out. I used to hide behind the shadows of small-minded people.

Sometimes, I still do and I think that is perfectly okay.

We were born buried in the dirt and swallowed our way out of it. We are filled with worms and maggots, yet branches sprout out of our hands and flowers bloom out of our eyes. We are our own freaks of nature! But as the fundamental parts of nature, our branches are chopped, and our flowers are picked. Even if they do grow back, they'll never be the same. So as our bodies grow, we lose that resemblance of the child we once were, that tree, and that flower.

Maybe change isn't all that bad? We don't have the answers to all the mysteries of our world but we do have each other. Sometimes, well mostly, I think we feel alone. Covered in shadows and placed in a dark corner. Somewhere in that dark corner, a star begins to appear. Not a flower or a tree, just a simple star. The moon begins to float near so I reach for it and swallow it. The stars become my eyes and the moon my belly. If I could plant flowers on the moon I would. But for now, I have stars for my eyes and the moon makes me awfully full.

Change does not suit me very well. Change feels like not fitting into your favorite pair of pants, change feels like the loss of a mother, change feels like that void, in the pit of my heart, getting ever so large. Change is like an empty house that was once filled with happiness and laughter. Even the moon is dull and the stars, well, the stars have blinded me.

It's a glittery sensation of blindness. I don't dislike it nor do I like it but change

will become our normal one day. Let us not cry but look forward to that familiar feeling.

I watch people go about their everyday lives with different facial expressions. So many people with so many feelings. I think that is something that lifts this loneliness up a bit. The person next to you probably has felt the way you feel now and maybe they still do. Even in deserts, flowers grow and even in meadows, flowers die. So if you ask me about society's standards of beauty and ugliness I would say the simplest of things, "Beauty" and "ugly" does not define a life. Beauty can kill and ugly can grow.

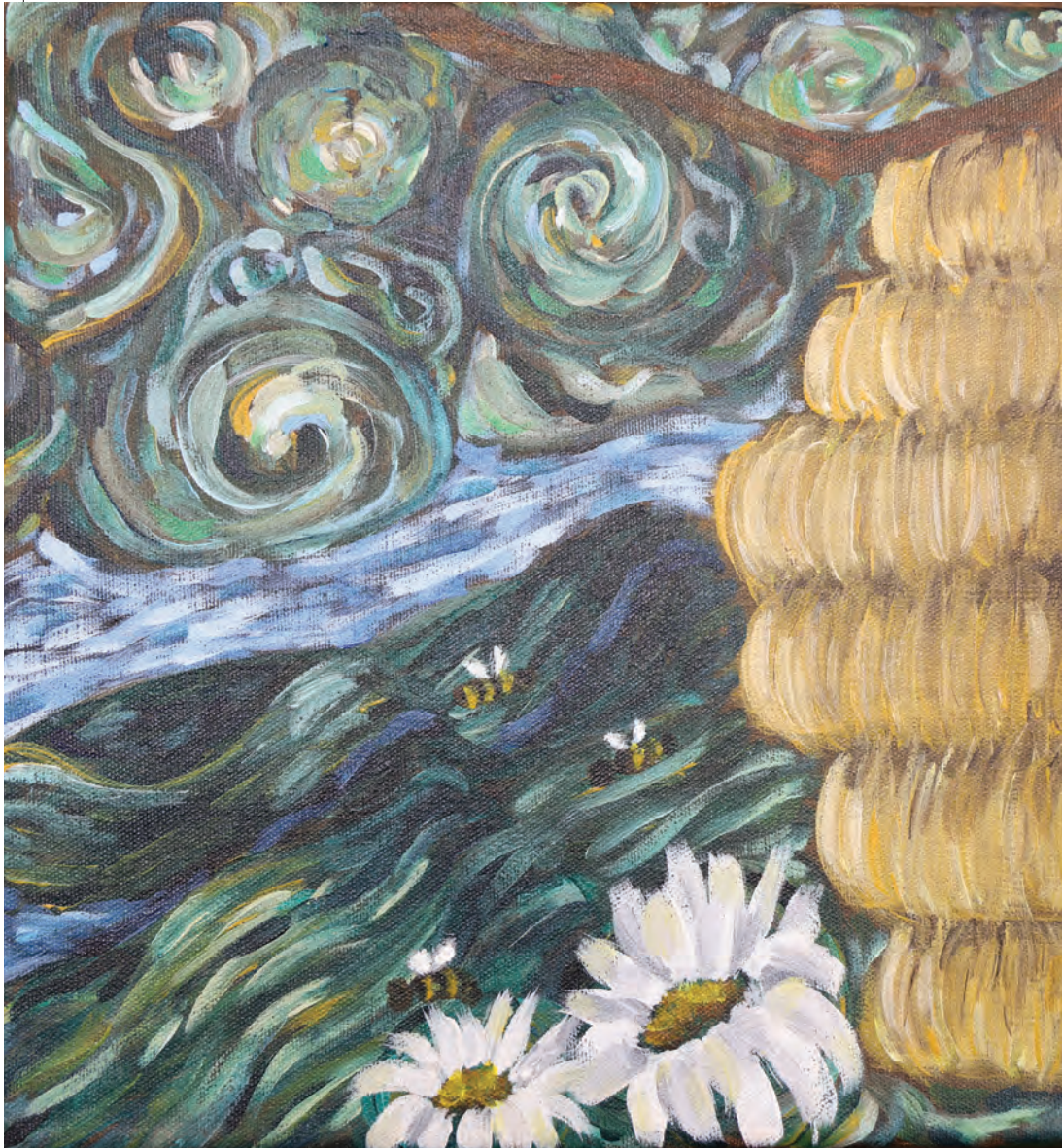
I believe life is quite beautiful!

For instance, I trap myself in my room to hide from this world and when I look out I see beautiful skies and in here, it's rotten. People choose ugly and unlikeable things because we feel that way about ourselves. We are too scared to step into beauty because we are afraid of what people will think. Life is cruel but it's also radiant. Life is bi-polar.

Who knew we could burn and dance at the same time? Who knew we would wish for our branches and flowers back? Who knew change was such a scary thing? We don't have the answers to everything so that's why life is unexpected. That's why we swallow the moon and have stars as eyes.

We want to see what we want and we want what we cannot have. It's unfair but it is our truth. I wish the truth could be a lie but no one likes lies.

So let it rain glitter. Let us all shine for a moment or two. It could be our last but it could also be our first. Life is unexpected so grasp it by your hand and never let go. And maybe, just maybe, we can plant flowers on the moon.



**THE JOURNEY.** *Madeline Jennings '25, Acrylic on canvas*



**JUST LISTEN.** Elena Alvarado '24, Acrylic on paper



# AM I BEAUTIFUL YET?

Reese Spence '26

"To those waiting in love, be patient. Love is a total drama queen, it's just waiting to make an entrance." "This book is for everyone who once loved a boy and felt those butterflies overwhelm them in the best possible way. And, well, if the boy didn't love you back, shame on him! What a jerk."

If you're curious about the preceding quotes, they happen to be book dedications. Often overlooked, book dedications are a subtle yet profound way for authors to bestow high honor upon individuals or a select group they wish to commend or highlight. The numerous volumes adorning my shelves share a common thread in their dedications—they are all tributes to the hopeless romantics. Those who believe that love may forever elude them, who stand on the sidelines while their friends effortlessly find love, perpetually longing. Longing to feel the love that they find only between the pages of books. These are the individuals whose minds are plagued by thoughts of love and its elusive nature, yet they seldom experience it because in this era of "talking stages" they just don't fit the bill. I find myself squarely within this category.

I observe from the sidelines as everyone around me falls in love, or at the very least, dips their toes into the metaphorical ocean of love and dating. It's an all-consuming ocean, appearing liberating and refreshing from a distance, tempting some to take the plunge. Yet, many underestimate the overwhelming waves of heartbreak and the inescapable pull of the current of fleeting feelings. As mentioned earlier, I fall into the category of hopeless romantics, but this classification wasn't a random occurrence. Society predetermined my position in this category from the moment I was born.

Look around, and you'll notice that society has crafted this unattainable beauty standard—an ideal that seems within reach only through surgeries, chemicals, or the magic of filters. For us women, anything that deviates from the so-called 'norm'—curves, hip dips, cellulite, stretch marks, a non-flat stomach, or a nose that's not 'just right'—is unfairly stamped as unattractive and

undesirable. Now, I happen to wear these features proudly—curves, stretch marks, and a nose that's not incredibly skinny. Maybe you share some of these traits as well. According to societal norms, our chances of finding someone who appreciates us for our authentic physical selves are deemed slim, as we are perceived as unappealing. We find ourselves compelled to squeeze into a mold that was never designed for us. With each unsuccessful attempt, we question, "Am I beautiful yet?"

Imagine realizing that the more boxes you check on society's 'unattractiveness' list, the more your desirability supposedly plummets. It hit me like a ton of bricks, that reality sinking my heart right into the pit of my stomach. This truth became crystal clear back in middle school, just as my romantic dreams were starting to take shape. In the blink of an eye, the idea of being the protagonist in my own romance story felt like it was slipping away, slipping through my fingers and out of reach forever.

"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" was a saying coined by Margaret Wolfe Hungerford, an Irish novelist whose light romantic fiction was popular throughout the English-speaking world in the late 19th century. This saying means that beauty is different for everyone. It's often used when talking about someone or something that doesn't look like what most people think is beautiful. The question of whether beauty is a matter of personal judgment has been a topic of discussion since ancient Greece. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, Shakespeare expressed the idea that beauty is determined by the perception of the observer, stating, "Beauty is bought by judgment of the eye..." Benjamin Franklin similarly noted in *Poor Richard's Almanack*, "Beauty, like supreme dominion, is but supported by opinion." Do we no longer agree with Margaret? Do we no longer agree with Shakespeare or Ben Franklin?! Society cannot make blanket statements about what is "beautiful" when not everyone has the same opinion. There are 8 billion people in the world. Do you really think all of them perceive beauty in the same way?

As I've described, society didn't make the search for love or dating particularly smooth for me, so I immersed myself in romance novels. It seemed that being a hopeless romantic was my destined path, and reading turned out to be a positive outlet for my emotions. Through these books, I could envision myself as the female protagonists: feeling butterflies, navigating the complexities of love, and dating in high school. I vicariously relished all the parts of romance through the pages of my books, which served as a lifeline for me. I found myself falling for every love interest I encountered in my books, growing more infatuated with each page turned.

I know that the right guy will eventually and unexpectedly stroll into my life like that elusive sock that always disappears in the laundry—just when I least expect it, he'll pop

up and turn my world upside down. I'm sure you'll experience the same, so let's both brace ourselves for the rollercoaster of butterflies, tears, and inevitable bickering that await us in future relationships. In the meantime, as you wait for that perfect person's grand entrance, take a crash course in self-love. Smile at every so-called "imperfection" on your body – after all, who needs airbrushing in real life? Keep loving yourself because there's someone out there eagerly waiting for that unique brand of affection only you can offer. So, as you adventure into the world of romance, stay authentically you. And to those still wondering, "Am I beautiful yet?" Well, let me assure you, you were beautiful before; you're beautiful now, and you'll always be beautiful. Embrace who you are, display it, and let love find its way to you.



**LOST SELF.** Leandra Esteves '25, Digital

# MY FOREVER BEST FRIEND.

Emma Velasco '24

I have never fought with my brother.

Four years older than me, he takes pride in his work, education, and commitment to scholarship. Looking up to him from the second I was born, admiration and longing to pursue the same goals has been my personal mission.

"What's your favorite class at school?", my brother asked me earnestly the summer before I began my high school journey. I quickly respond with "Lunch?" Although I always had aspirations, the thought had never crossed my mind.

Staring at the same four walls that made up my hospital room for two months straight only added to my lethargy and lack of motivation.

With only a couple weeks before his departure to college, my brother and I decided to binge watch the Netflix show *Bojack Horseman*. Imagine a cartoon world with humans and animals of human-likeness living through the most tragic events imaginable.

The title of the finale: 'The View From Halfway Down'. Its meaning, however, was one about which my brother and I surprisingly disagreed. Having dug a hole for myself, losing to procrastination and bad decisions, I could see myself in Bojack, my hopes and dreams far from reality. Conversely, my brother

interpreted it as: halfway down, with obstacles interfering with your path, to highlight the importance of overcoming them.

Embracing his dark reality, the episode ends with Bojack coming to terms with his fate. Yet, this frightened me.

I did not want to settle for anything less than what I dreamed of when I was little. I wanted to be someone to match my brother's success, in a way he could grasp.

"That episode was insane," he commented as the credits rolled. "I couldn't have imagined a more perfect ending", I swiftly replied.

Yet for myself, I did. And so did he.

During our conversation, we discussed the trials and tribulations that this horse encounters in life, and while we rooted for his success, his own self stood in the way.

Though he may not know it, our conversation triggered my determination to make my actions reflective of my motivation. With a newfound sense of myself, and longing to attain my dreams, my forever best friend, my brother, sparked that light within me.

Viewing him in the image of Horseman's idol, *Secretariat*, reminds me that, "It's a little late for should've beens. You know what you should do now."



**SHINY CROWN MEMORIES.** Veronica Pernas '25, Mixed Media

# WHEN I'M OLDER.

*Isabel Gonzalez '25*

I used to tell myself when I was little,  
"It'll make sense when I'm older."

And I guess I still do that.

The guitar that stands dusty, unused since middle school.

"I'll have time when I'm older," freshman me would say,  
but the guitar is still desolate, waiting for a player.

Every new year, I tell myself I'll read the Bible more often,  
but it sits there on my nightstand, the spine fresh and the pages un-  
frayed. "When I'm older," I promise myself, "I'll have time then."

Confidence rooted in things other than academics,  
maybe in God rather than grades and athletics and looks,  
is something I always thought would come naturally  
when I was older.

But here I am, as old as I've ever been,  
and I still don't know what to do.

I imagine the most perfect version of myself,  
a girl who is unapologetically authentic, unabashedly herself,  
but she's always older.

This perfect me is always older.

When I was young, this perfect girl was in eighth grade.

When I started high school, this girl was a junior.

Now that I am a junior,

this girl is a carefree, vivacious college student.

Will I ever meet her, this perfect me?

Will I ever hold her hand, will I ever become her?

Maybe when I'm older.



## THEME

Girl is the theme of the 35th volume of the *Literati*. Inspired by a year full of woman empowerment, following the premiere of *Barbie*, and the summer of Taylor Swift, this collection contains literary and artistic works that dive into the depths of girlhood.

The simple cover represents the perception that being a girl is an easy task and all there is to do is adhere to societal expectations. The straightforward message disguises the complexity of femininity showcased throughout the pages. The works presented embody the true identities of the girls on campus, who refuse to conform to society's limitations and who are so much more than just the simple cover that is often displayed.

Advised by Mrs. Rebecca Q. Retana, the *Literati* staff developed the theme of *Girl*. The staff sorted through art and writing submissions from students to organize this final collection.

## COLOPHON

The 2024 *Literati* is the 35th volume of the school's art & literary magazine. This year's perfect bound book contains 72-pages of 70-lb silk white text paper with a cover that is 100-lb silk white cover stock using 4/4 color throughout. All pages were submitted to a local printer via PDF uploads.

900 copies of the magazine are distributed to every student and faculty member. The magazine is funded by the school which is included in tuition.

The magazine uses 6" x 8.5" dimensions for the layout. The visual layout and design was created with the Adobe InDesign Creative Suite 2024 on 5 Mac Mini Computers and 2 Macbook Pro laptops.

Headlines are set in Titan One, a google font and body copy is set in Montserrat Thin, an Adobe Font.

Over 400 submissions of writing and art were considered for publication. Each staff member read each submission until all the pieces for the *Literati* were chosen. Fine Arts teacher Mrs. Cristina Zizold supplied the AP Studio Art class' portfolios. The English department also encouraged all classes to submit poems, narratives, and essays.

The cover was designed to fully represent the theme of simplicity with the words speaking for themselves and the complexity of being a girl contained within the pages.

Along with checking for grammatical accuracy and writing fluency, the editorial content at the beginning and end of this book was written by Alexa Sabogal to introduce the concept and explain how the staff has interpreted it in the book.

## STAFF

### Editor in Chief

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Carolina Fernandez '24

Andrea Laluz '24

Emma Velasco '24

### Adviser

Mrs. Rebecca Q. Retana '95

## AWARDS & RECOGNITION

### Columbia Scholastic Press Association (CSPA)

*Gold Crown Award* 2005, 2010, 2021

*Silver Crown Award* 2009, 2013, 2016, & 2017, 2022

### National Scholastic Press Association (NSPA)

*Pacemaker Winner* 2023

*Pacemaker Finalist* 2018, 2020, 2022

*All American Award* 2013

### Florida Scholastic Press Association (FSPA)

*All Florida Ranking* 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2023

### National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE),

*REALM First Class* 2013, 2019, 2020, 2021

*Superior Rating*, 2023

*Excellent Rating*, 2022

## EDITORIAL POLICY

As the official literary and art magazine of Our Lady of Lourdes Academy, *Literati* provides a means of showcasing the broad, creative scope of the student body. Works are mainly solicited through Art and English classes, but all students are invited to submit entries in March of each production year. To be eligible for publication, all submissions must be accompanied by a certificate of originality. To maintain the high standard of excellence for which the magazine strives, submissions are carefully reviewed by Journalism II and III Honors students and advisers, who choose only the most exemplary pieces to be included in the publication. The magazine production is part of the curriculum of Journalism II and III Honors and is completed during the second semester of each school year.

## THANK YOU

The members of the staff extend their appreciation to all who supported the *Literati* from invention to publication. The staff would like to thank the school administration for its support of this yearly publication. The staff also extends its gratitude toward both the Fine Arts and English departments who encourage and inspire students to submit all types of artistic content.

Special thanks are in order for Mr. Michael Herold at R & C Management, Inc. for cooperating with the staff in the printing of this magazine.

