

A photograph of a ski resort. In the foreground, a chairlift is visible with several people sitting on it. The background features a range of large, snow-covered mountains under a clear blue sky. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

# The Jag Mag

WHS Literary Magazine

Poetry  
Photography  
Literature  
Art

Winter  
**2024** FEATURED  
CONTRIBUTORS

Art students  
The Jaguar Literary Society

Photography by Chloe Darcy, Junior

# Table of Contents

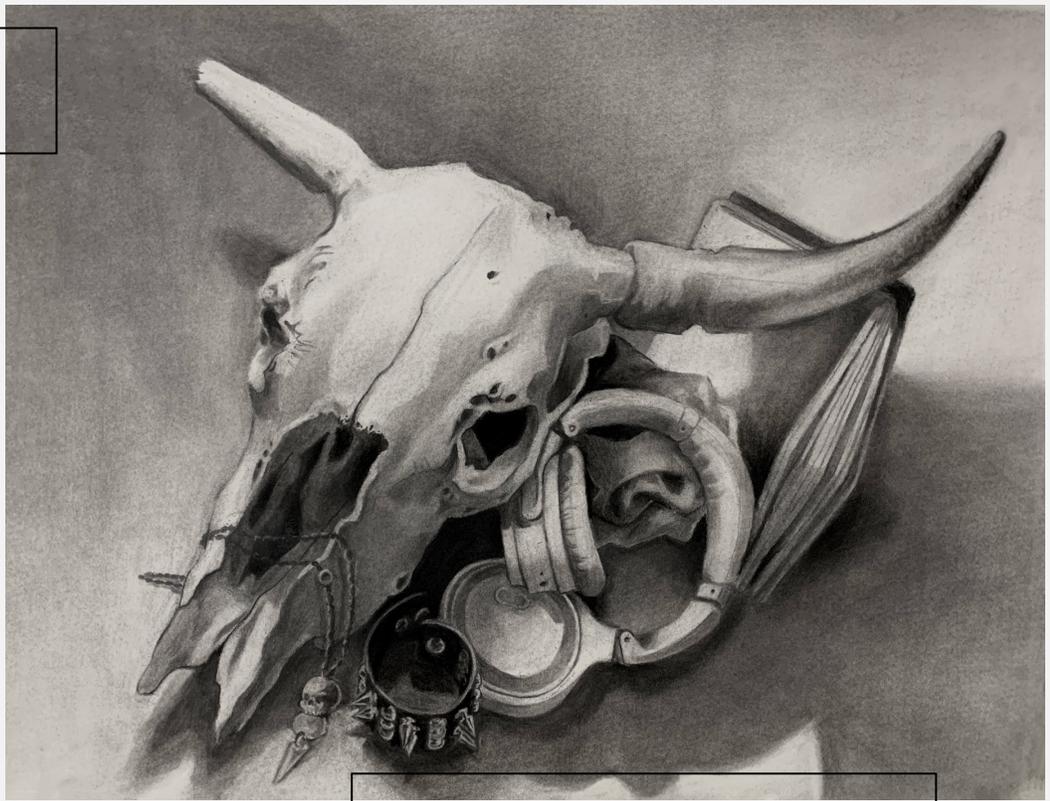
The Mask, Poisonous Love, Crest.....	1
Christmas Escape.....	2
An Orphan With Parents.....	3
Above.....	4-5
What a Travesty to be a Snowman .....	6
The Price of Being Pretty.....	7
Panagiota and Niko.....	8-9
Ventnor, Staying With My Childhood, Brief Love.....	10
Do Aliens Exist? .....	11-12
To Burn.....	13
From Upon The Back of a Great Beast, Times Fool....	14
Blair Page.....	15
It Stays Locked .....	16
Oda al poste telefónico.....	17
Puri and Cherupayar.....	18-19
MecTresFatigue .....	20
Secret.....	21
Walden (Reprise) .....	22-23

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# The Mask

She had a smile  
 And so did he  
 He hid it with a mask  
 And so did she  
 She knew him well  
 And so did he  
 But there was one thing  
 They couldn't see  
 They looked for a smile  
 Their whole life through  
 But when they passed by  
 They never knew  
 She had a mask  
 And so did he  
 The happiness they looked for  
 Could never be seen  
 Sophia Economou, Freshman



# Poisonous Love

We danced in the dark, a crooked pair  
 Little did we realize our shadows were a toxic pair  
 The thorns cut so deep  
 But all I wanted was the roses to keep  
 The sharpness of your words cut right through  
 Yet the only thing I heard was, I love you  
 We fell together like a castle.  
 The debris did not matter, nor did the battle  
 Nothing was true  
 Besides the words I love you  
 In the end, the love was unlit  
 All I could feel was my stomach pit  
 The wounds of this "love" would never be healed  
 Your true side was finally revealed  
 Anonymous, Senior



## Christmas Escape

There is no feeling better than the holiday season. Driving the backroads of New Hampshire at night, witnessing the glowing Christmas lights on every house lighting up the streets. Each house has its unique character, maybe it's plain lights, colorful, has blown up decorations, or projections. This time is one to celebrate, every year this is a time to escape into the childhood nostalgia of Santa, presents, friends, and family. The safety in these memories and creating new traditions. The endless opportunities for Christmas activities. Venturing out to buy a tree, listening to Mariah Carey on the way, indulging in festive Christmas movies, sledding in the snow, sipping hot chocolate, baking cookies, crafting gingerbread houses, and the joy of giving gifts.

Collectively, these activities and celebrations are great ways to escape, to find joy in little things and take time to appreciate life no matter what it throws your way. It's vital to cherish these small pleasures, like lights, trees, and decorations. Looking at them and the happiness they bring to others. Take a moment to breathe it in and stare. Take a moment to enjoy the smell of fresh baked cookies and hot chocolate. Take a moment to admire the white snow, not dwell on cold weather. Spare a moment to witness the joy the season brings to children. Seize an opportunity to share laughter and conversation with family and friends because regardless of any challenges, you will always have Christmas.

Anonymous, Senior



Photography by Hale Karadeniz, Junior

## An Orphan With Parents

My ED took away my parents

My parents couldn't even look at me, when they did, they cried.

All they saw was a girl who was too skinny and too sad

They knew mommy and daddy couldn't save their baby girl this time, so I stopped being their baby girl, rather a girl who was too skinny and too sad

They froze at each breath I took, thinking it could be my last.

Shuddered with each step I took, avoiding me because they no longer knew how to talk to their own daughter

When they gathered up the courage to talk to me, they yelled, screamed.

Screamed at me to eat, begged me to stop purging. Again and again with a voice of anger, words of anger, but a heart of fear and hope.

They do not understand why I am trying to kill my body, they do not understand it is not a choice, they do not understand I am just as afraid.

But they do not offer me hugs or wipe my tears away, instead they pretend there is no problem or there is no me.

My ED took away my parents and I let him because how could I ask them to stay when I was planning on leaving.

I was an orphan who had parents or rather a child who had eating disorder.

Mia Akin, Senior

*If you struggle with an eating disorder or disordered eating, please reach out to one of the following resources to receive the proper support and guidance to begin your recovery journey.*

*Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders Hotline: 1-888-75-7767*

*Download the Recovery Record app*

*If you prefer to reach out to a trusted adult, try a parent or your guidance counselor. You can even reach out to me, [makin24@windhamsd.org](mailto:makin24@windhamsd.org), and I can help you begin your process of reaching out to a trusted adult!*

*Follow the NEDA Instagram to continue educating yourself on eating disorders.*

## ABOVE

There's darkness. Perpetual obscurity became the prevailing norm for this town. The alley lamps that once flickered in these cobblestone alleyways during my youth have long since had their luminescent bulbs removed by those living outside. They now litter the alleys, holding onto the thin filaments of the bulbs, the idea of light surrounding them, only to be ultimately consigned to the darkness by the likes of their perverted selves. Those childhood delusions of mine, of light permeating through the shroud of darkness, have long since been extinguished. The children of those thoughts never to be born, never to create ripples in the depth to challenge the opposition. They stand like the undesirables in the alleys, to be vanquished by the forces of themselves. Their labyrinthine logic was cyclic, their rapaciousness unparalleled. Their internecine strife to advance their ideas merely resulted in their self-extermination, in a bitter irony where they fought for the same cause but were shackled by the conundrum of choice.

Beneath the weight of my steel-toed boots, the cobblestone slabs creaked with a resonance akin to the fading echoes of a bygone era. With each step I ventured deeper into public alley #616. For the past eon, I have walked through this alley. Although, the children argue it was not always so. They say it used to be wider, adorned with a kaleidoscope of shops that lent chromatic vibrancy to the alleyway. Small umbrellas of every colour with smooth wooden beams would sit in the centre of glass tableware encompassed by robust oak benches. People would sit with their brothers and sisters. Would drink coffee with sweetness. Faint memories of the embodiment of one would haunt me. Yet, how they fit all those concepts in such a tight alleyway was unbeknownst to me. The brick buildings that surround me, standing beside me like indomitable giants of mortar, are said to be ancient sentinels - impermeable and unmoveable to the likes of time. They were heralded as the ardent witnesses of time's relentless ballet, tracing their lineage to epochs long past. They are said to have seen everything since the beginning. I don't believe the voices.

As I walked down the alleyway alone, the rain began to form puddles in the beautifully scarred asphalt, creating tear-stained mirrors reflecting the history of the city. The brick buildings on my left and right seemed to constrict with every step I took down the alley. No, this cannot be so. They have always been this tight. It was always this way - they were here since my youth, since the supposed confused days when the sun cast no shadows. Now, they are under the umbrage of billowing smoke and acid-rain-soaked clouds that chip away at the fabric of these repurposed domiciles. I ran my hand through the divots in the brick, small pieces of brick chipping, turning my hands red, removing my hand when I sensed a fresh coat of vomit or urine on the wall. The brick almost feels to embody me, feeling their ancient memories invoke those of my own - bright sunlight casting adrift our hopes of today. Colourful rainbows that would dilapidate progress at their touch. I could taste the contempt of the majority.

To know of the fulfillment of the destruction of the past raised a new hope. I removed my hand from the wall and stopped. Which hand had I originally put on the wall? It could be either at this point. Weren't the buildings two arms-lengths apart? Yes, the children whispered. No, I don't believe the voices. I keep walking down the alley. Faster. Quicker. Was it raining? Was it originally raining? It's sleeting now. It's sleeting. I stop. A noise beckoned through the alley, a wonderful noise. My dream of liquidating the past for the future is cut short by a married couple, two stories above, arguing over who deserves the last slice of bread.

"You ate the first slice, so I should eat the last!" said the second voice.

"I haven't eaten for three days!" said the first.

To live together like that is to live like savages. They once believed that they would wake up every morning with one another, wholly in love for the rest of their lives until one of them perishes. They once believed they could coalesce, and codepend, but bread does not care for love. They create their own peril, A fault of their own. How lovely it was to hear the enlightenment of bondages broken. Their brick wall groans, some slices of brick crumbling to the ground, creating ripples in the potholes of the alleyway. Another thud sends shockwaves throughout their apartment complex. I wondered what their apartment looked like. Perhaps a small white gas stove nestled next to a red dishwasher. A little refrigerator a single pace from the gas stove, littered with small magnets of the places the couple visited. The paint scratched from the once-shiny magnets, dulled by the constant use of the fridge. Dust gathering on the neglected magnets. Smudged by the couple grazing the magnets, pointing at them, attempting to impress people other than themselves. Their relationship fundamentally based on greed and hate, but convinced themselves the other had something special to benefit themselves.

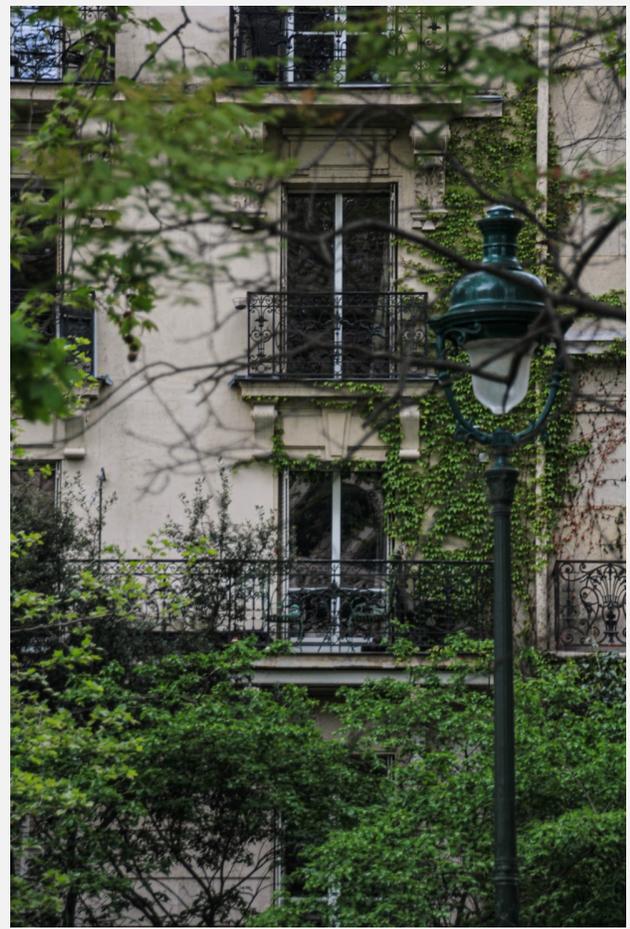
"Now we have nothing to eat!" the second voice shrieked.

The sounds of destruction fill my heart with a monotonous languor. Another thud erupts from the apartment, followed by another one. The sound of glass shattering fills the alleyway with a piercing cry.

"Don't!"

I look up. The sleet turns to glass. I try to run, but the bricks swallow us.

Russell Adler, Senior



Photography by Chloe Darcy, Junior

# What a Travesty to be a Snowman

The lifespan of a snowman is one without reason  
Sitting, frozen within the suburbs of this nation  
Praying for an extension to this finite season  
Their fragile lives only birthed by our desire for creation

What dread must be caused by their imminent doom  
As they witness their frosty skin melt from its frame  
Their defrosted corpses lay the groundwork for spring to bloom  
Their morbid addition to our childhoods is held in much acclaim

Do you think the snowmen are resentful for their pitiful lives  
They may blame us for building them in such short-term locations  
They are unable to be happy, grow old with children and wives  
Soon they will die unceremoniously after only a brief duration

The most pitiful thing, I think, about being a snowman  
Is that they just have to sit there and evaporate unable to truly live

Jack Tomasek, Senior

# The Price of Being Pretty

From a young age I was taught that that ‘pretty is where you want to be’ and that I don’t want to be ‘ugly like those people’. That being said, I find ‘pretty’ to be a cheap word to describe someone due to its superficial meaning. When people describe me as pretty, they typically mean that I have the hair, the face, the clothes, the shoes, and the pearly white smile. And yes, I probably do have all those things; but when it comes to self worth, society should not box me in with these arbitrary features. The reality behind being pretty is that one uses those ‘things’ to hide how they feel on the inside. I myself have hid behind my ‘pretty mask’ to block peers from seeing my exhaustion, depression, anxiety, and insecurities. It is unfortunate that the way in which society is structured, being pretty matters more than how one views themselves. This contradiction of values brings about the question, what if you took away my ‘pretty mask’? If I were left to stand without all those nice things, would I still be worth something?

I will be honest and say that the answer is not concrete. I would love to say that the answer is yes- *why would I not be worth something?* However, when one reflects on the greater perspective of life, you find that there are very few questions with concrete answers. Despite the open-endedness of the question, it is clear that society has created its own rubric to decide someone’s worth. The rubric focuses on outward appearances without diving into the depth of one’s character. Now, I believe that we as people do a much better job at seeing each other beyond the surface layer. This is why I am able to hope that people can see me as being more than a pretty face. I hope that people can see that I am kind, smart, and maybe even ugly if I am lucky.

Now you may be thinking- *Ugly? What kind of loser would want that?* Me; I am that kind of loser.

Ugly is nothing but another word for bravery. People who are deemed ugly by society are the only ones brave enough to see their ‘flaws’ and then proudly wear those ‘flaws’ as if they were wearing the new fad. In reality, we all wear different styles of clothes on different shaped bodies. We also have tangled hair paired with mouths that do not always smile and eyes that cry more than they sparkle at times. We are people, not manikins; and I believe that those ‘ugly people’ are the only ones confident enough to share their human side to the world instead of hiding behind the pretty mask. Now will life take what I say as something worth hearing, most likely not. But I will state that if being ‘ugly’ is another word for brave, free, and confident, then damn it I want to be like ‘those people’.

The Wallflower, Junior

Photography by Chloe Darcy, Junior

## Panagiota and Niko

At a conference of world leaders, renowned demographers Panagiota and Niko, a married couple, presented their arguments regarding population growth and the environment. Panagiota believed that a population crisis was inevitable while Niko invested his trust in the free market to handle births and deaths. Here were some excerpts from the meeting:

Panagiota - "... Food production increases arithmetically while population growth increases exponentially! The land has a carrying capacity that is non-negotiable. Catastrophe looms."

Niko - "... New and more efficient methods of food production and distribution have been catching up with exponential population growth. The land's carrying capacity can be manipulated through determined research and technological development."

Panagiota - "... And that is why responsible family planning is necessary for the long-term survival of life on Earth. The Earth can't hold more! A four or five-person household with two parents is the ideal family structure. If fertility rates stay between 2 and 3, civilization will exist in healthy equilibrium with the environment."

Niko - "... And that is why population growth is not an immediate concern to the survival of life on Earth. There is room for growth, and it is perfectly normal to raise a family of six or more. Fertility rates will naturally decline over time as education becomes a priority over raising children."

Panagiota - "... We should not be using Australia to host the excess population of the world! It is best to keep the population well under the carrying capacity of the Earth, or famine and disease will forcibly restore the balance. Nature only loves balance."

Niko - "... Australia is the perfect place to host the excess population of the world. There are vast expanses of undiscovered land, and it gives plenty of time for a Malthusian catastrophe to be avoided through natural decreases in birth rates and natural increases in GDP per capita."

Panagiota - "Niko is unusually optimistic about the future of population growth. He truly believes that the population can stop growing before poverty steps in to do nature's job. The evidence is against him! While I don't agree with him, I hope that he's right for the sake of our planet. The last thing we need is mass poverty, a reaction of the free market to overpopulation."

Niko - "Panagiota's concerns are valid, but I am confident that the free market will do its job. Capitalism plays a dual role in population growth, both causing it to happen and stopping it when necessary."

A world leader whispered to another, "How are they married? One's a Malthusian, and one's a capitalist." Panagiota was known for her fiery rhetoric and intense fear of a population reaching the breaking point. Niko was known for his relaxed demeanor and trust in the economy to manage mortality and birth rates.

Anonymous, Senior

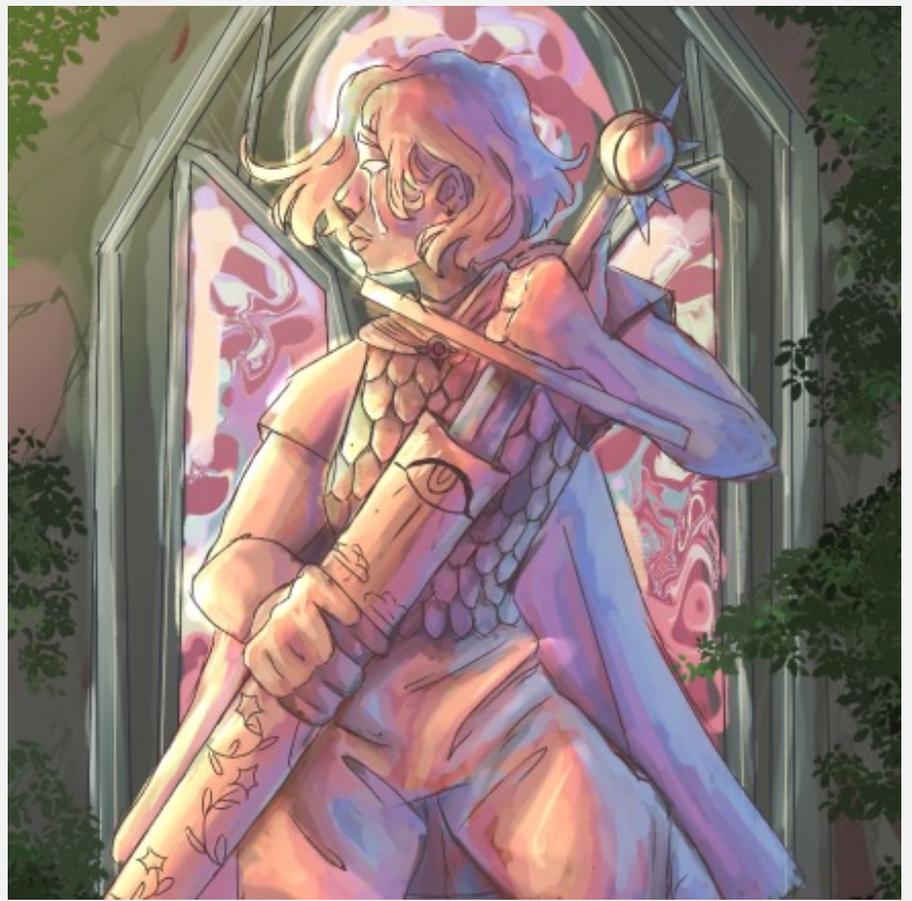
## Brief Love

The day we met I knew it was true  
Your days were my delight  
And I became anew

You departed from my sight  
You entered my thoughts  
Traveled from my eyes, to my  
heart

Now if only you knew  
How much I've cried  
When I talk to Allah about you

Angelina Azzi, Senior



Lyn Mallett, Senior - Ventnor



# Do Aliens Exist?

Clearly, there is excitement around alien life. Sci-fi movies like *Avatar* and *Star Wars* have all spread through modern culture, and our ever-growing reach into space has only fueled the public interest in aliens more. Yet, extraterrestrial life is just a hypothesis. Humans have never observed anything significant that would signal as a sign of definite life. Naturally, one begins to ponder, what are the chances aliens may exist? Unfortunately, the argument is more complex than it may seem. Therefore, this report will only touch on certain topics with the hope of inspiring you to do more research.

According to the European Space Agency, there are estimated to be  $10^{22}$  to  $10^{24}$  stars in the Universe. For perspective, this means there are more planets than grains of sand on Earth. Assuming the average solar system has a few planets and moons, there is a near-endless number of places where life could exist in the Universe. So, there has got to be life.

Not so quick. We currently have no clue how rare life is. Sure, in the near  $10^{22}$  solar systems, you would expect at least one other lifeform. However, maybe life is that rare. Life is extremely complicated. The DNA, processes, and structures that create life must be created spontaneously from non-living matter. So, if life is rarer than there are planets in the sky, maybe only Earth harbors life.

For the past century, people have wondered where all the aliens are. Contemplating the issue, Enrico Fermi proposed the Fermi Paradox, which states that, at humankind's projected rate, humans could colonize the galaxy within a few tens of millions of years. In the lifetime of the Universe, that is not long. Then, Fermi asked, why is the 13.8 billion-year-old Universe not full of alien technologies? This question spurred countless branching theories. To maintain brevity, I will only discuss the main theories: The Great Filter, the Dark Forest Theory, and Drake's Equation.



Photography by Chloe Darcy, Junior

The Great Filter explores the idea that “filters” prevent life from reaching certain levels of intelligence. For example, if there is a Universal filter that made life so unbelievably hard to conceive from nonliving matter, then humankind would be one of the few, if not the only, life in the Universe. We would have already passed this filter, so most likely, humankind will live on forever. In another scenario, no filter stops the creation of life, but instead, a filter prevents intelligent life. If we find that non-intelligent life is teeming throughout the Universe but not intelligent life, humankind may be doomed. The Great Filter may be ahead of us, preventing all species in the Universe from getting too powerful.

The Dark Forest theory takes another approach. It assumes that intelligent life exists, but species are afraid to expand outward because of the thought of annihilation from a superior species. Life hides from other life, so the Universe seems empty.

Drake’s Equation summarizes the probability of life in a mathematical equation. It uses variables for statistics, such as the rate of star formation, which is known by scientists. But, it also uses uncertain statistics, like the fraction of intelligent civilizations that develop communication. Because getting a value for some variables is impossible with our current observations, Drake’s Equation is more of a thought experiment than an actual calculation.

Ultimately, our search for life in the coming decades will be a leap toward our understanding of not just extraterrestrial life but humanity’s future. Manned missions to Mars are expected in the 2030s or 40s, possibly uncovering an ancient lifeform that once lived on Mars when it was habitable. Even sooner, robots will explore the moons of Enceladus and Titan to attempt to detect and find life. We can only hope the best, for humans and aliens alike, is yet to come.

Jake Fricchione, Senior

## To Burn

i could look at you and think i saw love  
i could push down the fire that burns  
under my skin  
love the sinner hate the sin.

i could look at you and pretend you could  
comprehend laugh at your jokes and hold  
your hand,  
let you treat me like one of your pretty little things

one of the good ones  
a 'high quality woman'  
destined to be a wife  
to be a mother  
a trinket to put on a shelf  
in her place.

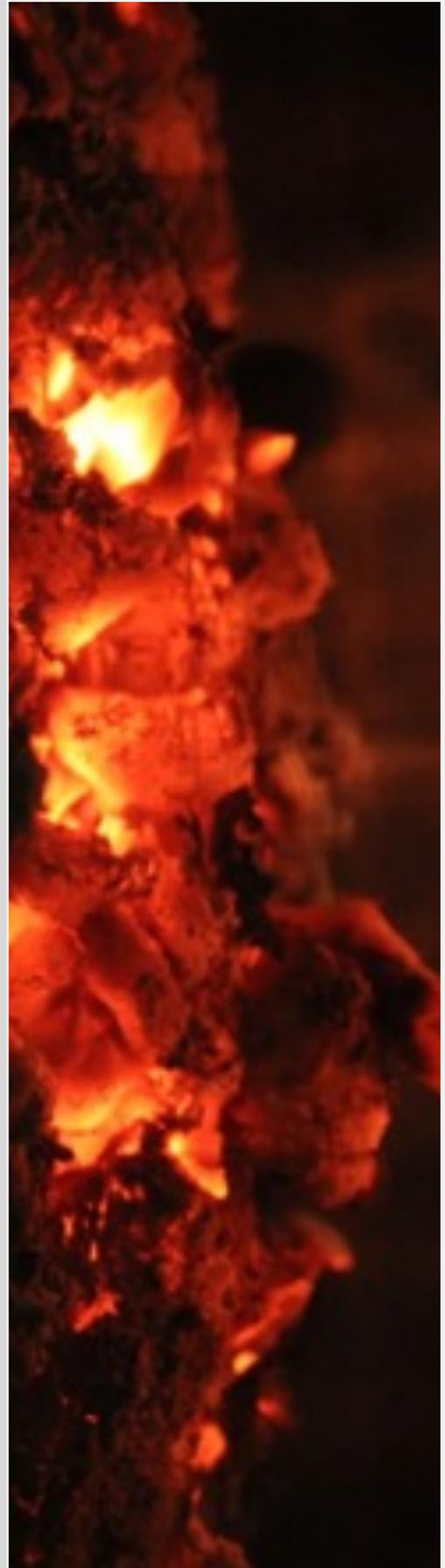
but then i will look in your eyes  
and know if you saw the fire that burned  
within me you would freeze me with that  
stare of condemnation and i will remember  
that you are still a man  
and you could never understand.

that you could not grasp  
the way my blood boils  
maybe the devil himself lives within me.

maybe that fire will be my demise.  
like the heat that melted Icarus' wings.  
maybe i will plunge into the sea,  
to be consumed by the infinite cold of the ocean.

but maybe in my blood is love divine  
the love that God possessed with the creation of  
the cosmos. maybe that fire is the same as the  
stars  
the same as the furnace that boils beneath the surface  
of the planet.

love the sinner hate the sin.



Photography by Chloe Darcy, Junior

## From Upon The Back of a Great Beast

Time skittered, time wept in confused relief. The heart of time skipped a beat, doubled to make up for it. The Beast existed on a scale incomprehensible. It rose like the birth of a continent, it would fall like the death of a god. All I could see from behind me was the length of its body, stretching farther than I've ever moved. In front of me, the forest screamed closer. Each tree came and went in the blink of an eye. In the beat of a heart. The horizon never moved. I felt like an astronaut, gone too far from home and returning decades after everyone had died. I was an epoch. I was a fruit fly. I was a newborn star.

Darby Madden, Junior



Gwendolyn Mallett, Senior "Times Fool"

# Blair Page

Sam Corey, Senior



## It Stays Locked

The wooden floor creaked and the door stayed locked. Pink slippers scuffed the floor just outside.

On the nightstand, the lamp stayed on.

It painted the walls forgotten and in the dark, those once lovely flowers had turned to thorns.

No more did that music box sing, and no more did that mobile strung with doves dance.

Sometimes she stood outside the solid door staring into it. Willing herself to open it. But she never did.

She knew inside a basket of toys lay full, unloved as it had been for eternity. Dust collected on the noses of the bunnies and kittens delicately placed in a pile.

She could still picture those too-clean white sheets clinging softly to the mattress of her useless maple crib.

No baby to grow. No memories to make. No baby to cry. No baby for her.

The singular window framed by lace curtains lays limp, tied back with ribbons. Curtains let in sunlight to reveal spattered tiny hearts. Those curtains are so old the hearts appear broken now.

She doesn't know that. Not yet.

Her fingers were woven on the cool hilt of the iron door handle. Cherrywood stared back at her. This door was always static and always looming.

She remembered the smell of fresh acrylic when she hand-painted the wall of flowers. Each petal from the heart and the beige Persian rug that was as soft as her smile used to be.

Now a spider lives among her doves stringing a lonely web.

Now her crib is coated in dust.

Now her music box that once sang lullabies is broken.

That door stayed locked. The room was how she left it the first time, waiting and more than perfect.

Anonymous, Senior

## Oda al poste telefónico

Yo no creo en ángeles

Ellos son real, pero se llevan  
en una manera diferente

Nos observan con ojos ciegos

¿Son como nosotros?

O son como el poste telefónico

¿Como hizo Dios los cables?

¿Como hicieron humanos las venas?

Al poste telefónico, el angel es un amigo

El cableado es perfecto, el edificio es fuerte

Los dos son el mismo y respiran en unos y otros

No apliquemos nuestras ideas

Nacido de hambre y carne

A los seres divinos

El poste telefónico está parado

Es Alto

Es Inmóvil

Cumple su deber solemne

Tal vez sí creo en ángeles

Ángeles quien de alto y canturreo con Certeza

Darby Madden, Junior

## Puri and Cherupayar

My childhood is a South Indian cultural dish native to the state of Kerala, India. It consists of a flatbread deep fried in oil, paired with a curry made of green gram and split, skinned moong dal. To those who did not grow up with the dish inherent to their childhood, the aroma is recognizably pungent - you know that someone has made it the moment you walk into the room. There is a system for eating it, a masterful art of ripping off pieces of bread and using it as a vessel for the gravy, all done with one hand. It is not my favorite food anymore; it is the foundation upon which I am built.

My mother immigrated to America with her culture packaged in a suitcase. When material possession failed to honor her origins, only food remained. Her nostalgic muscle memory guided her hands in a sort of dance, a performance of *chaya*, *chapati*, *biriyani*. The sound of sizzling chicken and simmering curry became the soundtrack of her diaspora. When her child began attending school in America, it did not occur to her to westernize her cooking. I would not go to an Indian school, I would not speak the Indian language, but I would eat the Indian food. I wouldn't dare complain about the curry sloshing around a tupperware in my Frozen-themed lunchbox; It was a good day when I had puri and cherupayar for lunch. This particular day, I brought it as I always have done, a habit as mindless as waking up in the morning. However, my meal gathered more than just my attention. As I ripped off the red lid of the tupperware, ever so ravenous, the myriad of third graders around me reacted in pure, unadulterated disgust. Children reveled in the freakish nature of my process of scooping the curry with flatbread and devouring it with just my hands, with exclamations of "Ewww, that smells awful" or "Ugh, that looks nasty", and most memorably "That looks like puke!". What bothered them most was the immediate smell, resulting in dramatic exaggerations of hands pinching noses and physical repulsion. The affectionate nickname for the dish was 'Mr. Puke'. The days I would bring it meant I was banished to the end of the table, where the stench of my food could not terrorize anyone else. Soon, I began to conflate the disgust at the meal as disgust at me, at my culture; I was the repulsive thing that no one could bear to be near. Ultimately, I came home and told my mother I could not bring it to school, although it was all I wanted for lunch. Soon, her hands would not dance above the stove to the recipes she had always known, that her mother knew before her.

It was the robotic motion of making a sandwich, or pasta, or some food more “normal” than her own. I was allowed back into the heart of the cafeteria table, and ‘Mr. Puke’ faded out of conversation. I would bring some other thing to eat, and it was never what I wanted: the meal of my desire locked me out of the elementary school cafeteria. I did not expect them to understand my culture. At that age, I did not understand my own. They saw me through the only lens they had ever known, that of their own culture. Because my food was unappetizing to them, they could not fathom a world where I could not only enjoy, but love eating that curry. They did not see the heart put into it, the Malayalam written into every spice and lentil and leaf. This ethnocentrism they were raised in was not their fault, and it was not my job to inform them of it at such a young age, but that was not enough to stop it from happening. As a child, I did not know their intent, only their actions and its consequence. As they grew, they learned of the richness of the world and all it created, and slowly those same people became my closest friends. It is through this that I came to understand the importance of cultural relativism, and the significance of perspective, especially to children. To observe a culture through the standards of that culture rather than your own is a skill that much of the population never learns, even far into adulthood. I have heard it established that children are far too young to understand such a thing. Was I not also too young? Cultural relativism is owed to every immigrant child, and their parents and brothers and sisters and to their country all the same. From the first day they arrive to the last day they spend here, they deserve their culture unhindered, celebrated and raw. Every dish, a unique performance, a cacophony of history and life. Since then I have been acutely aware of my difference, my skin color, my food, even the way I pronounce my words. Do not tell the child with the Frozen lunchbox and tupperware full of curry that they are too young to understand. Tell your children that they too should embrace the symphony of culture, and most importantly, how to listen.

Anonymous, Junior



*Me Tires Fatigue*

Watercolor and gold leaf painting  
Beck Meissner, Senior

## Secret

Over here, Nate!” My heart pounds, and butterflies flutter in my stomach. The door’s bell cheerfully rings after he enters. He saunters over to the corner table I claimed an hour ago with one hand holding a hot matcha with soy milk and whipped cream. The shop is noticeably empty; after all, who would buy hot coffee on a steaming afternoon?

“I forget what your order is,” he admits, “but I’ll head up to the counter with you.”

My smile falters, but I simply nod. I think about his wife, Julie, and her perfect smile, perfect two-and-a-half kids with a white picket fence, and perfect career. The Vogue magazine with her photoshoot is sitting on my bedside table, hidden between stacks of my unfinished writing. My face flushes as I remember the hours I spent pouring over every detail of Julie’s interview and photoshoot, searching for a fault. Something to ease the pain in my heart ever since Nate and Julie’s wedding three years prior. I bet he knows his wife’s order.

While we wait for the barista, he turns his head towards me, and his hazel eyes soften.

“So, how are you and Cole doing?”

I extend my left hand with an empty ring finger and laugh. His eyebrows raise, and his jaw drops—the exact same reaction he had whenever we’d have a pop quiz in chemistry class. Knowing him, he has a million questions, but my voice beats him to it.

“I realized that I couldn’t tie myself down with marriage—or at least, marriage with Cole.”

My arm half-raises as I go to cover my mouth, but then it stops. My impulsivity only confirms my fear: I am undoubtedly still in love with Nate.

Anonymous, Senior

## Walden (Reprise)

Somewhere up north, there lies a forest, thick with trees. Years of logging leave these great green beasts cut shorter than one would expect, many just barely brushing the endless blue of the sky. A few of these trees stand as an exception, framing their smaller children with thick, strong legs, reaching out to stroke the stars with their impossibly long arms and manes of green.

Framed by the flora is a bean-shaped depression carved out of the Earth. Thousands of years ago, a frozen glacier came to rest at this very place, laying her great, icy head down for an eternal rest. And this place was where she melted away, bit by bit, until the ground became concrete-solid silt, and her bed filled with water. With the death of a glacier, a pond was born.

Centuries after the frozen goddess's death, a creature sits at the center of her creation. A lone duck bobs along with the placid roll of the waves. The rest of her flock is not nearly as bold, paddling around near the shore, bills kneading the water like butter knives in search of waterbugs to claim as their next meal.

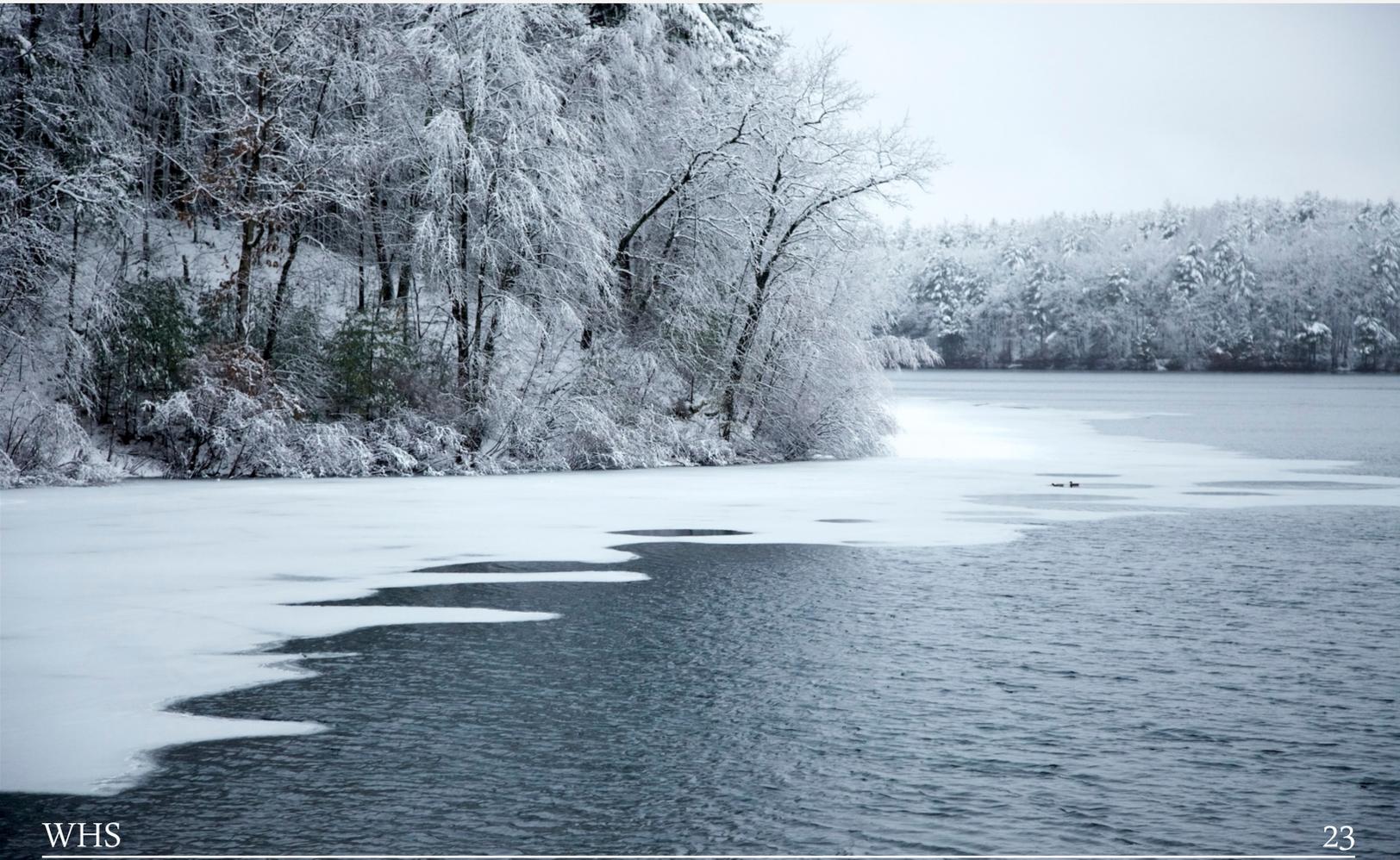
However, this one duck could not be preoccupied with such simple tasks. For, moments ago, the duck had heard a gentle whisper of autumn wind, guiding her gaze towards the forest. There, the sunset-colored October trees were rustling as an unknown being makes its way through their painted lair. One more step, and the sun's golden light exposes the wanderer.

He was tall and curiously shaped, with long, stick limbs rather than wings full of water-proof feathers, and a face flat as a river stone, his beady eyes locking onto the bird drifting in the crystal pond. The duck caught a glimpse of her flock taking to the skies, not wanting to be caught alone with this creature. But, the duck felt, for some reason, that she should stay. The creature's piercing gaze bore into her own, as if he was trying to imprint her image on the inside of his brain. She watched him flip open a pocket-sized book, leafing anxiously through the pages until he came to a blank one. Like a knight drawing his sword, he withdrew a pencil from his pocket and began scratching about the page. In a sudden motion, the pencil slipped out of his hand, and was carried through the air until it was captured by the icy water with a *plop*.

The sounds cut through the unusual connection in an instant, and the duck unfurled her great wings, kicking out of the glass lake with webbed feet, catching the wind beneath her and propelling her towards the heavens. Before she could be enveloped in the warm, welcoming arms of the cerulean sky, she caught a glimpse of the novel the awkward creature had been scribbling in: *Walden*.

Stella Merrill, Senior

Photography by Sam Becht, Junior



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# SUBMIT YOUR ARTWORK OR WRITING TO THE JAG MAG!

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**Submissions are rolling  
until Wednesday, May 1,  
2024**

Please email us with any questions at...

*abourque@windhamsd.org*

*bengel@windhamsd.org*

*apopovici24@windhamsd.org*

***Staff are also encouraged to submit their  
original photographs, short stories, poems, or  
images of their artwork!***

## SUBMIT YOUR WORK!

We are accepting submissions from now until May. There will be two editions printed: one in December/January and one at the end of May.

All works of art are welcome: they can be visual or literary (including essays, photography, poems, images of artwork, and more!)

You can submit anonymously, under your own name, or even a pen name!

We are super excited to include all of you in the 2023-2024 editions of our magazine!

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Alvora by Taylor Bates, Class of 2018

WHS Literary Magazine

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