

# Serendipity

By Comsewogue High School's Literary Magazine Club

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Cover art by Makenna Cordts

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# Words of Encouragement

## WELCOME BACK

By Hayley Villani

Yet again, we are approaching the start of another school year. It feels like just yesterday we were being told that we were going to have two weeks off due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Two weeks of virtual learning at home eventually turned into the rest of the school year. It's hard to believe that we haven't been to the school since March and now we're just about ready to go back. Months of learning at home as well as the summer break went by like a blink of an eye.

Constantly wearing a mask everywhere we go and staying inside as much as possible became a new normal for everyone. It's annoying, but with everyone cooperating we have been able to make so much progress. Getting back into a routine for school will most likely be hard, especially because we won't be able to come in every day like most of us had hoped.

All that we are able to do is make the best out of the situation that we're in at this point in time. With everything that has happened this year, 2020 is definitely going to be a huge chapter in future history textbooks.

No matter if you're coming back every other day or doing everything virtually, this upcoming school year will hopefully be a great one. It's time to get back to work and learn as best as we can.



*Drawing by Makenna Cordts*

## GETTING BACK TO “NORMAL”

By Lucia Simonetti

The busiest time of the year is approaching once again. It's filled with back to school commercials, holiday decorations that are stocked in stores way too early, getting those summer assignments done, and the fading of the tan you worked on all summer. To most students, it's a dreadful time that reminds us that we are close to yet another year of tedious work. However, the upcoming school year is going to be a new experience for everyone. We are going to be introduced to our new “normal”.

Our old normal almost seems foreign at this point. Of course school will not be a riveting experience because at the end of the day school is school. In order to make our journey into the new “normal” easier we can rethink the way we have perceived the school year: think of it as an opportunity to try new things. Whether it's to try a new club, to get better grades in a subject, or just improve something in your life. 2020 has been tough on everyone and getting back to school is exactly what the majority of us need.

Unsurprisingly, the majority of us won't admit that going back to school is what we need. However, there are plenty of people that would disagree with me saying that going back to school is a good concept. In many ways I do understand that, but I do know people are craving to have a bit of normalcy back in their lives. If school is the thing that is going to bring us back to that point then so be it.

In hindsight, high school only lasts four years and the time we spend there is valuable. It may not seem like that now, but one day we will reminisce about our high school years. So why not make these years memorable? Just enjoy the rest of 2020 and the fast approaching year of 2021. It may be a welcoming of a new normal, but it still is a normal that we will get accustomed to. Welcome back to school.

## MISERY LOVES COMPANY

By Lia Puleo

Growing up, I imagined myself facing many difficulties — these included everything from acquiring a decent job to finding someone who truly makes me happy. The typical worries of life once you've learned to do more than scribble with a few crayons. However, never did I imagine that I would experience a global pandemic in my final years of high school. Then again, did any of us really expect it?

Our world has transformed completely compared to the maskless one we once knew. The world where standing within six feet of another human being wasn't scary. Where refusing to follow a protocol wouldn't risk the death of a family member, loved one, or stranger. A cloud settled over us in March, enveloping us into complete darkness. Isolating those who abided by the nationwide quarantine to the confines of their own home. Terrifying those who still had to go to work and provide for their families during a worldwide crisis. There was, of course, one thing keeping us all going (at least in my mind): misery loves company.

We endured this historical tragedy together, suffered through isolation together. We found comfort in the idea that we all felt the same sadness and loss looming over us. Whether it was the loss of our people, our lives, our jobs — everyone felt it. And we may continue to feel it, maybe for years to come.

But if you ever find yourself spiraling down into the hole that the coronavirus has dug us, remember this: you are not feeling this alone. You are understood, you are heard, and your feelings are being mirrored in millions of other beings throughout the world. All of this, because misery truly does love company.

## Poetry

### WELCOME BACK!

*By Sophia Arredondo*

As the warm weather fades away,  
We welcome a new school year.

Covid may have made us a bit astray,  
But there's nothing to fear.

For we can see the good in the bad,  
And overcome anything that comes our way.

If we all try to be optimistic and not sad,  
Then, maybe we'll all be okay.

*By Isabella Janowicz*

Out of the streets  
Back to where we began  
You could have at least told me when  
No sudden move, retreat along with the rest of them  
Are you sure you're okay?  
She looked at the stars and tried to say,  
"More or less but this is a start to the end"  
The future was nothing that we'd be able to apprehend.





## **AUTUMN**

*By Hayley Villani*

The soft breeze chills my skin as the leaves fall from the trees  
Red, yellow, and orange replace what once was green

I gaze up at the autumn sky as the scent of pumpkin reaches my nose  
The sun begins to set earlier in the afternoon  
In the distance, the incandescent moon glows

I grasp onto my sweater as the wind becomes stronger  
This season is always so beautiful- I just wish it could last longer

The best memories are made with family and friends  
I never want this time of year to come to an end

# THE ANGUISH OF SUMMER

*By Grace Jos*

the sun shines all upon us,  
the pungent smell of grass crawls up our noses  
the leaves illuminate their crisp shades of green,  
as we adore the sight of red roses

all is in peace,  
as she overseas what she has created  
but no one would have even suspected,  
that this beauty we once knew will be faded

he comes along,  
her eyes of green were compelled  
as a moth to a light,  
there was a mysterious power he upheld

no one ever doubts his beauty,  
blinded by his spectacle  
never will it be known,  
the gruesome murder that was unforgettable

he obtains all in power,  
he sets her leaves in piles of fires  
the green grass now turns tan,  
she no longer admires

the love might have been obsolete,  
but it was never a fact so real  
due to how much he desired,  
the summer he would soon steal

their phenomenon that set off this shift,  
made the entire world quiver  
now each year,  
our bones begin to shiver

autumn awoke,  
summer has fallen  
he now rules over all,  
summer is still left broken, calling





## LIFE OF A LEAF

*By Lucia Simonetti*

When the world is overtaken by sun  
I dress in green.  
The life of a leaf.

When the air turns crisp  
The green fades and I turn tangerine.  
The life of a leaf.

When the environment is dressed in white  
I'm no longer green or tangerine.  
My time has come to the end in this cycle on repeat  
The life of a Leaf

My favorite time was when the world turned orange  
Not because I was able to be the color of tangerine.

But because I caught a glimpse of the beautiful world I had so desperately wanted to see.  
A world where people would stop to look at me, saying that they are thankful for the life of a leaf.



***By Allison Bechtler***

There was a man who could jump through time.  
Very little was known about the man besides this simple fact. The man did not look out of the ordinary when he appeared, and he left no trace when he went away.

Sometimes the man made me think I was going crazy.

There was a man who could jump through time.  
The man was at my birthday party when I was young.  
I remember that the man watched as I blew out my candles. It had been a princess themed birthday party.

The phone was glued to my mother's ear for weeks before my party. Every time the phone rang she rushed to answer it.

She usually cried when she hung up.

There was a man who could jump through time.  
He had sent me on my first day to a new school.  
Why a new school? My mother never answered. She looked at me with her sad face.

I asked her what the face she was making meant.

It's my sad face. So I knew it meant she was sad.

I went to school anyway, but all day I worried about my mother's sad face. I promised to make it a happy face when I got home from school.

That morning the man had waved me goodbye as I rushed onto the bus.

That night my mother's face stayed sad.

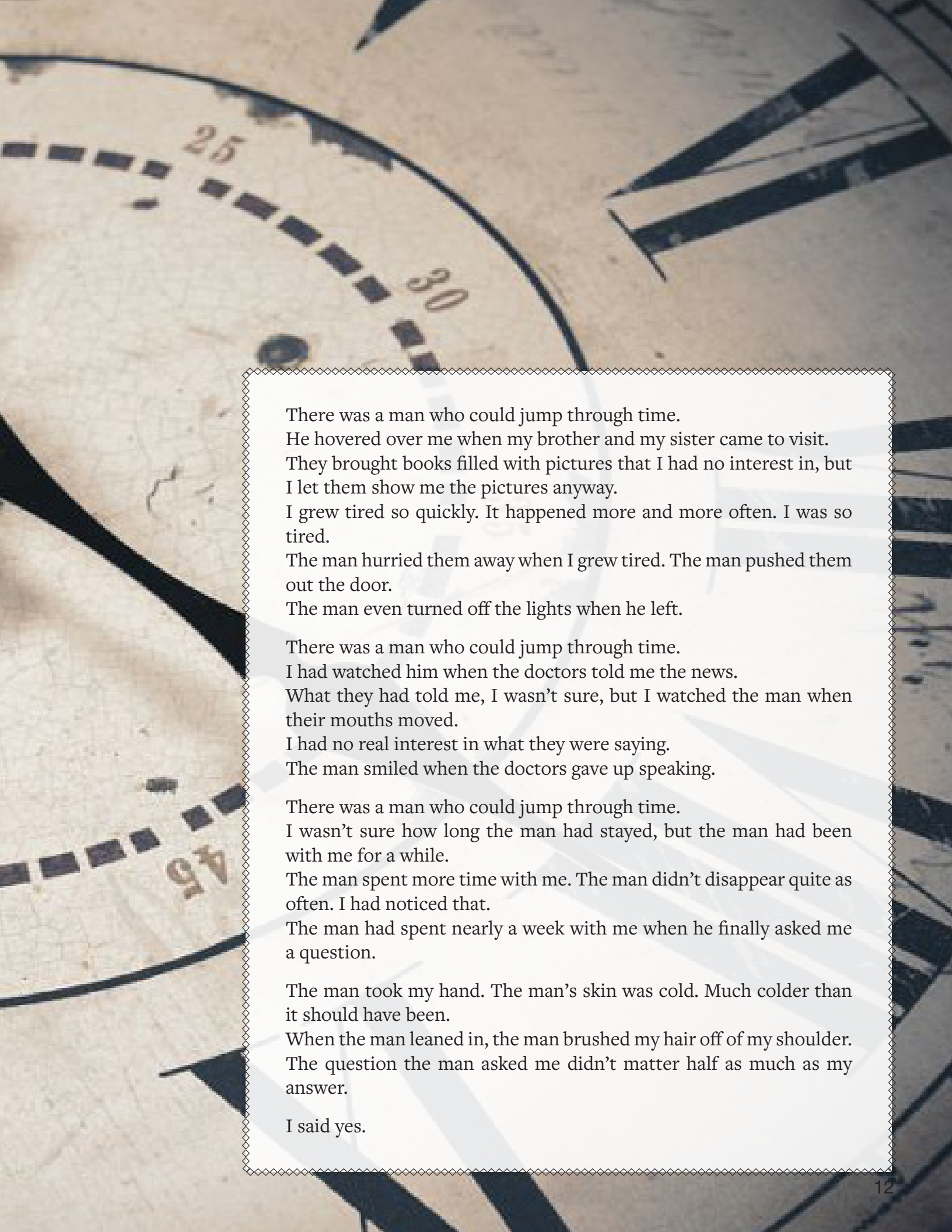
There was a man who could jump through time.  
He wrapped my knee when I fell off my bike.  
My mother was at work. My father was at work. I wanted to learn to ride my bike.  
He had been standing at the corner of the street when I pushed off.  
I tried my hardest to pedal, but the bike was too big and my feet couldn't reach the ground to stop myself.  
I cried for my mommy. I cried for my daddy.  
My knee didn't hurt that bad, I just wanted my parents.  
I hadn't seen the man when I fell. He must have left again, I thought.  
But he was there, and he wrapped my knee even though it was hardly a scrape.  
That had been the closest he ever came to me, so I reached out to touch him.  
Before my fingers could make contact he had disappeared the same way he had appeared, suddenly and with no warning.

There was a man who could jump through time.  
I saw him at my graduation.  
Work is busy, kiddo. My father wasn't there.  
Your brother doesn't feel well. My mother wasn't there.  
But he was there.  
The day had been rushed. I felt woozy the entire time. My hands had spent the whole day accumulating sweat. My hair had been made frizzy and unattractive by the harsh wind.  
I almost stumbled going up the steps, but I didn't.  
My brother never felt well when it benefited my mother. He was always warm. He was always sniffling. He always had a cough that only she could hear.  
Getting down had been easier, and I nearly made it back to my seat, but stopped.  
The man gave me a small wave.  
This time I smiled and waved back.

There was a man who could jump through time.  
He saw me with my brother and my sister when they fell sick.  
My mother was out.  
She was always out.  
She had to get dishes. She had to buy food. She had to help her own mother. She had to watch the kids down the block.  
My father was out.  
He was always out.  
He had to work. He had to get the car repaired. He had to help his friend move. He had to drive into town.  
The man stood in the doorway as I cared for my brother. He had a cough that I couldn't hear. He had a fever I couldn't feel.  
The man stood behind my shoulder as I cared for my sister. She had a rash I couldn't see. She had an ache that she never complained of.  
So I took care of my brother. I took care of my sister.  
When the time came, I took care of my mother and my father.

There was a man who could jump through time.  
He came to the funeral.  
He wore black for the occasion. Stood close. Very close.  
The day was cloudy and gray. The rain that fell was harsh. I hadn't worn a dress. I hadn't cared enough to.  
I took care of my brother and my sister. I took care of them because they had nobody to care for them any longer.  
They had cried that day, but I had not.  
Many people carried bright red roses, gifts, or pictures-anything to remember. My hands were bare.  
But the man was there, and he stood behind me.  
I didn't have to see him to know he was there. I didn't have to turn my head to see him. I could feel his breath on the nape of my neck and I could feel his hand pressed against my back.  
The man wanted to see the burial. I did not.  
So I left.

There was a man who could jump through time.  
He visited me in the hospital.  
"Bad luck." "Bad results." "Bad doctors." "Bad parents."  
Everything seemed to be bad when it left the mouths of the doctors.  
They were crows, picking and poking around me in bed regardless of if I was asleep or not. They kept pecking: more tests, more medicine, more time. They just needed more time.  
Of course they needed more. Crows are greedy birds.  
But the man was there, and he waited with me. The man waited with me when the crows swarmed, when the vultures circled, when they cawed at me for more. Demanding more. I wouldn't give in.  
The man shooed them away.



There was a man who could jump through time.  
He hovered over me when my brother and my sister came to visit.  
They brought books filled with pictures that I had no interest in, but I let them show me the pictures anyway.

I grew tired so quickly. It happened more and more often. I was so tired.

The man hurried them away when I grew tired. The man pushed them out the door.

The man even turned off the lights when he left.

There was a man who could jump through time.

I had watched him when the doctors told me the news.

What they had told me, I wasn't sure, but I watched the man when their mouths moved.

I had no real interest in what they were saying.

The man smiled when the doctors gave up speaking.

There was a man who could jump through time.

I wasn't sure how long the man had stayed, but the man had been with me for a while.

The man spent more time with me. The man didn't disappear quite as often. I had noticed that.

The man had spent nearly a week with me when he finally asked me a question.

The man took my hand. The man's skin was cold. Much colder than it should have been.

When the man leaned in, the man brushed my hair off of my shoulder. The question the man asked me didn't matter half as much as my answer.

I said yes.


# “IT’S ONLY PAINT”

*By Makenna Cordts*

I don't know what time it is  
Only silence and stillness are in the house  
Crickets outside faintly call out for each other  
My brain won't shut up  
I'm sprawled out on my bed  
How long have I been staring at the ceiling?

The minutes pass by  
I look to my left  
Broken, blank, and boring  
The closet stands there  
My brain hasn't stopped  
“It's only paint”  
Shut up  
“It's only paint”  
Mom will kill me  
“It's only paint”  
I guess I could always paint it back to white  
“It's only paint”  
It is a bit dull  
“It's only paint”  
It is only paint, right?





Orange, yellow, green, blue, brown, black, white  
This is a desperate attempt but it's something  
Tiptoe down the stairs and grab a cup of water  
It's definitely not nothing  
Scurry back, don't wake anyone up  
I have to find myself  
One way or another  
I pick up a paintbrush  
Trust the process  
It's only paint

Time ticks by further  
The invasive thoughts calm themselves down  
While the soft bristles glide across the door  
My body aches in uncomfortable positions  
From the top  
All the way to the bottom  
Swirling stars  
The elegant dark tree  
Every color stands out  
I hope Van Gogh is proud  
"It's only paint"  
Yet the vibrancy and creativity come to life

I stop at some point  
Who knows what time  
I continued most nights on my little project  
And couldn't bring myself to work on it other nights  
She's still not done  
There's more left to do  
While it's something small  
Even stupid  
It was a start  
Maybe it's time to be more impulsive  
Perhaps it's time to find yourself  
What's holding you back?  
It's only paint.

## A YEAR OF HAIKUS

*By Giovanni Aliperti*

The New Year is here!  
It is 2021.  
And January.

You're my valentine.  
We love each other so much.  
Here is some chocolate.

I am so lucky now.  
I found a four leaf clover!  
On St. Patrick's Day.

Here's a candy egg.  
The Easter Bunny found it.  
Do rabbits lay eggs?

Memorial Day.  
Remember fallen soldiers.  
Also my birthday.

School is over, yay!  
We can go on vacation.  
Or go to the beach.

It's Fourth of July.  
Light the red firecrackers.  
Thanks, George Washington!

What happens this month?  
There's no special holidays.  
But it is August.

We are back at school.  
Oh no, summer is over!  
But we do learn stuff.

It is Halloween.  
We get candy from houses.  
You can wear costumes.

Thanksgiving is soon.  
Make sure to eat lots of food.  
And pie for dessert.

Christmas is so fun.  
You get presents from Santa.  
Jesus was born, too.



# Reflection

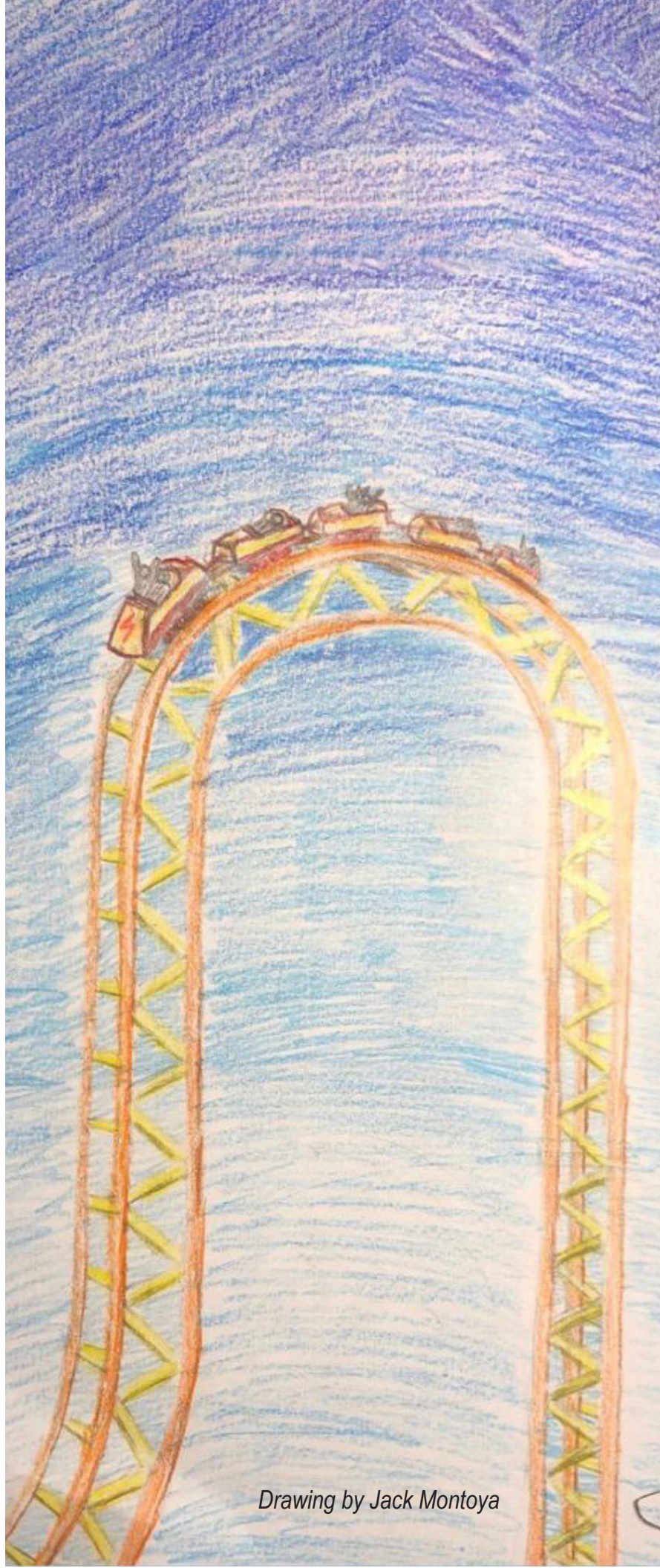
## 146 SECONDS

By Jack Montoya

Over the summer, my family and I went to Hershey Park. It was the first time in months that I escaped the confinement of my own home. To our surprise, Hershey had just released a new ride, their tallest and fastest coaster yet.

After waiting in line for ages, we board the car. The pulley system clanks and clatters as we ascend into space. Below us, we see all the items lost by previous riders: hats, cellphones, and lunches. Once we reach the peak, weightlessness overcomes me. I float above my seat for a millisecond, yet it feels like I'm frozen in time. By the time I process the heavenly view, we begin skyrocketing back down to Earth. I am burdened with thousands of pounds of pressure; the brick wall of air numbs my face and pushes tears out my eyes. We undergo countless twists and turns that bounce my gut up and down. As quickly as this adventure commenced, it ends in a mere 146 seconds.

The anticipation and thrill of a roller coaster may terrify some people, but I find it stress relieving. My worries fly away with my screams for dear life. In under three minutes, I embarked on an exhilarating adventure that I will always remember. Life is short, and we can't waste any of our precious time.



*Drawing by Jack Montoya*



## THE HORRORS OF COMMON APP

*By Annamaria Tizzio*

Ok I exaggerated a little; it wasn't too bad...(hint: the three dots). For the underclassmen, allow me to explain and define what Common App is. Common App is the website where you submit your college applications (scary word I know). You add all of your personal information (high school, extracurriculars, your social, your mother's maiden name, the name of your first pet - all of that good stuff), which acts as your profile that you can send out to multiple schools.

While this doesn't seem too bad, you then have to decide which schools you even want to apply to. Personally, I didn't find this too difficult, as frankly I didn't put too much thought into it. All I thought was, "I'm not smart enough for Ivies, but I certainly have decent grades." In turn I applied to schools such as Fairfield University, UConn, Penn State, University of Rhode Island, and about eight other schools - as you can tell I got worried about my chances of getting accepted. Once you decide, some schools have short essays that you're required to complete also known as supplement essays. Here's the thing though; they didn't take much time for me. I've heard so many people stress over them, so chances are I answered them horribly, but that's ok.

You then have to copy and paste your personal essay to your profile, which took an immense amount of time. Not only was I stuck on an essay topic, but sometimes I felt lost. I didn't know if I had to add more, I didn't know if I had to change a whole paragraph. It didn't feel like an essay that you do in school; it felt more free but at the same time since it wasn't graded by a professional teacher, you weren't sure if you did great or poorly.

I also had to decide when I wanted to submit my application; I ended up doing some early action applications, as well as some regular/rolling applications. Again, I didn't put much thought into this. I just wanted results as early as possible.

So yeah, these are the horrors. At the end of the day as long as you don't procrastinate with it you're good. It ate up a lot of my summer and it's just eye-opening.

# PEPPER'S HEALTH SCARE

*By Jordan Henchey*

I know that this year has been difficult for so many people, including victims of the Coronavirus, those who are unemployed, and the minorities who faced discrimination in America. I normally like to focus on the world and the problems at hand while also discussing ways to talk and solve these problems for the world to become a more accepting place. Unfortunately, the year of 2020 has been testing me more than ever now due to the fact that over the past week, my dog Pepper has not been doing well. During these past three days, my emotions have been all over the place and it's been difficult to focus on any positive things in my life because of the declining health of my dog.

I have had Pepper since I was five years old, so she has been with us for twelve amazing years, and the realization that she is getting older has suddenly hit me. I am not blind to the fact that she may only have a couple more years, if that, left on this Earth. I know she is getting old, and I feel that being self aware of this fact helps me to focus on how to help her more instead of being sad that she is aging. At the end of the day, I know she won't last forever, but there is not a day that I won't try to keep her alive and well. She has been here for almost my entire life, and it will be so hard for me to say goodbye to her when the time comes. It's just so hard to see a loved one's health declining knowing that there is absolutely nothing that you can do about it. It's probably one of the worst feelings to have because you feel so helpless to the point where you just don't want them to suffer anymore.

I was fully expecting to have to put Pepper down this past Saturday. I knew she wasn't doing well, and it looked like her health just kept getting worse as time went on. Also due to the pandemic, vets are only allowing emergency patients and getting appointments for her is extremely difficult. We still don't know exactly what is wrong with her, but we do know that she has pancreatitis and is very dehydrated. She has a buildup of fluid in her abdomen, which is why she will be getting a sonogram to see where the fluid is coming from. This is why we couldn't put her on an IV since we don't want to fill her with even more fluids. It could be coming from her heart, which is obviously not good, or it could be coming from somewhere else. At the end of the day, no matter what the sonogram says, we can't spend thousands of dollars on her, so we kind of just have to accept whatever is wrong with her and make her feel as comfortable as possible until the day comes.

I don't think I'll ever be "ready" for the day that she passes. Just because she is old doesn't change the fact that it will hurt when she dies or that I have not accepted it yet. She has been with me for almost my entire life, and it's so hard to say goodbye to someone that has changed your life for the better, made you smile, or comforted you during rough days. She's beginning to act like her old self again, but I'm afraid that it won't last very long. I'm just trying to savour the days I have left with her because I know they are limited. I won't accept it yet because I'm stubborn and I love her too much. She's been twelve years of my life and I'll make sure I don't forget it because she's been too great of a dog to forget her.

It honestly feels like I'm losing my best friend because I know and love her personality, which is ironically a lot like mine. She loves cheerios, she eats a lot, and she's also very stubborn. She doesn't like to be picked up, but she will let you pet her until she has to eat again. She will never sit facing you, only away from you because she's a diva and is too good for you. But that's okay, because she's my little diva. The little things she does that used to annoy make me love her even more now.

2020 has been a tough year for everyone, but it's made me appreciate the ones I love and to never stop giving up on someone you love. It will always be worth it, even if you can't see it now.

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About four months have passed since Pepper's health scare. I am happy to report that she is back to her old self and has been thriving ever since. I have no idea what changed or what we did to deserve this, but I couldn't be more happy. She still has to wear her diaper, which she somehow always seems to escape from, but that's the least of our worries. I still don't know how she managed to survive June, but she did, and she is my little fighter.

She is still peeing out her proteins, which is obviously not good for her, so her kidneys are the main problem area. Despite the fact that her kidneys are bad and she also has a tumor on her kidneys as well, she is running around and playing like we just got her 12 years ago. She is drinking a lot of water, which is a sign that her kidneys are not working, but again, this is something that we already knew would happen. We don't know if the tumor is cancerous, but



*Photo by Jordan Henchey*

that would be even more money that my parents would have to spend that we simply cannot do. My parents have already had to buy the medicine to help her kidneys, the new diet food, and the many diapers. Doggy diapers are not cheap, might I add.

Despite all the money she is draining from us, she is my baby and I love her so much. I'm hoping that nothing bad happens through Christmas and that I'll be able to spend the holidays with her. Thankfully, ever since June, there have not been any signs that she has been feeling sick, so I am hoping it stays that way for as long as possible. It's crazy how quickly it all happened, from being so sick to running around again wanting food. That's one main indicator that we know Pepper isn't feeling well- she doesn't want food. She normally always wants food, whether it be a crumb of bread or a giant steak. She has been trying to steal a piece of chicken wing out of the trash for the past two days, so I think it's safe to say that she is back to her old self.

She always seems to escape from her diapers though, which have a special hole at the end where her tail goes. Other than that, it looks like a normal diaper, so she looks like an old baby. Yet, it always seems that she finds a way out of them, so she's like the Houdini of diapers. I'll be walking into the kitchen and I just see a fully formed diaper laying on the ground and Pepper sitting cluelessly next to it. Well, I personally think she knows exactly what she's doing, she is only losing her hearing and sight, not her diva attitude. Besides that, she looks like her old self too, which is a relief.

I am spending as much time as I can with her so that she doesn't feel lonely, and I want her to know that I love her so much. She is my strong little girl (even though she is quite meaty) and I am so thankful and proud of her.

## 2020 TEENS

*By Lucia Simonetti*

2020 has not been a good year and does not seem like it is going to get better anytime soon. I know that may be a depressing way to look at things, but what can you do. I know for a fact that I am not the only one who is thinking like that.

Besides all the negative thoughts about 2020, there are other topics that we have yet to discuss. By the title you can already presume that this is about teenagers. Who doesn't love venting about their issues more than teenagers? However, some people might be surprised that some of the issues teenagers are dealing with aren't just because teenagers are complicated. Teens have been facing more serious issues in quarantine.

To start off, quarantine has affected everyone and has been quite the adjustment. On the news you hear about cases rising, the increasing rate of unemployment, and other issues that don't seem to concern a younger audience. But, you don't hear about teenagers.

Here is a perspective of a teenager. Firstly, we attend school and most of the time don't enjoy the purpose of being there. What makes school so much better is being able to see your friends because one of the main aspects of being a teenager is having some sort of social life. Quarantine hits and we still have to do schoolwork, but the enjoyable part of school is taken away. Yes, a popular argument to the issue is that we are fortunate enough to have cell phones and many ways to com-

municate with our friends. But is it really the same? No, it is not the same. Teens are used to having social interaction with their friends.

Another issue is that teens typically yearn to be independent: going somewhere without supervision or just doing simple tasks without having a parent or guardian next to you. Quarantine is making every household cozy up to one another which means the majority of teens are ready to run out of the house the first chance they get. It's not that we don't appreciate our families, it's just that we value our space from them.

The last of many issues that I will address about teens is mental health. I am not going into depth about it, but I will make it known that most teens are struggling right now. At first, quarantine was a stress reliever because we didn't have to worry about any social pressure at school or in public. It felt like a weight off our shoulders. That is until we realized that we would be in the house for however long quarantine would last. Teens have definitely increased their screen time, they can't leave the house, and they just feel lonely. It's not anyone's fault, but it is just the way things are. Don't forget that our lives got flipped upside down as well. No school, no social life, no interaction, and no sports/clubs.

I know things are going to be different when quarantine is over, but I, along with many other teens, can't wait until we get our lives back.

## THE NEW GIRL

By Lucia Simonetti

October 31st is a day where they can pretend to be anyone or anything and being scary means you're in the right spirit. However, this day is just a reminder for me of the events I had tried so desperately to forget. I still get an eerie feeling just thinking about it. What happened is something I can't undo, so I might as well share it and whoever sees this can hopefully learn from my mistakes...

I trudge through the piles of leaves as I make my way through the forest even though I could take the sidewalks and reduce the time it takes to get to school by fifteen minutes. Only, I can't help but feel like I'm in a Hallmark movie every time I walk through my new neighborhood and trust me, life isn't a movie. Unfortunately, my ventures out in the wilderness had come to an abrupt end and I am now standing at the entrance of what appears to be a mansion known as Lincoln High School.

My feet carry me to my first period class and I sheepishly take my seat in the back. There is no way I will take a seat in the front because that means I'm eager to learn, which I am definitely not. My thoughts are interrupted by a voice that is too loud for this early in the morning, "Good morning students, before we jump into today's lesson I would like to introduce a new student, so if you could all welcome to Maya!" The whole class turns and stares blankly at me and I give an awkward wave hoping that would please them enough to turn away. So much for first impressions. They all turn away and my enthusiastic teacher continue, "Let's begin our first project of the year, you will have to visit one of the town's most historic places and do a presentation on it. This is a group

project and I will assign your groups. Any questions?" Silence. "Great!". Then he proceeds to list off names of people I have yet to meet, and he eventually puts me in a group.

After he finished assigning groups, the students started moving desks and before I have time to register what is going on, three desks are placed in front of me and I finally see my group. "Hi, I'm Sofie," a girl with copper red hair and chestnut eyes says to me, "and this is Leo and Caden." she says as she points to a boy with ash brown hair and then to another boy with jet black hair, both of which have a different shade of green eyes. I give them an appreciative smile and introduce myself as well. As if they didn't know me already. They jump into a conversation, offering ideas of which place we should use for the project. While they are describing places that are still unknown to me, I feel my eyes get heavy and as I'm about to doze off, they all turn to me to ask my opinions on the old Westwood's House. Having no idea what they're talking about I instinctively say yes. That was my first mistake...

Since my group and I have claimed that we are "too old" for trick or treating, we figure we would do the project today on Halloween. We meet up after school and start our journey to the old Westwood's House. Why do they call the house old? They call it old because the house looks like it was on the brink of collapsing. The house has a charcoal exterior and by the looks of it, was an abandoned house. This shall be fun. "Let's go in," Caden said. He looked like he could care less about the dangers awaiting inside the house. We carefully make our way up the creaky stairs that lead up to an intimidat-

ing raven door. Sofie delicately knocks on the door twice. "Like anyone lives in this dump," Leo says sarcastically which earned him an eye roll from Sofie. The door creeps open, the boys walk in without hesitation and I share a concerned look with Sofie. Following the boys lead we enter the house. Mistake number two...

Since it was pitch black I tell everyone to turn on their flashlights. Twenty minutes pass and all we find are cobwebs and dust. That is, until Leo calls out to us, "Guys come quick!". Once Leo sees that he had our attention he turns his flashlight to the floor and Sofie lets out a squeal. There is a trail of spiders leading upstairs. Caden decides that he would go up first and the rest of us would follow him. However, Sofie rejects that idea "Why don't we just go? I have a bad feeling about this". "Don't you want to get a good grade Miss Straight A's", Caden fires back which is enough to shut her up. It's what every highschool student fears: failing. The closer we get to the room the colder I feel. Eventually, we make it to the room and that's when the chaos starts.

In the room there was a slender being that had luminous eyes, daggers for teeth, and an overstretched smile. It immediately came charging after Caden who gets flipped over the staircase railing and falls onto the first floor. I look over the railing to see if he was okay but I am distracted before I can examine him. The being went after Sofie next, wrapping its lengthy arms around her and starts squeezing tighter, tighter, and tighter. Leo and I rush to help her, but the being releases Sofie for a second to launch us into a wall. The wind gets knocked out of me and I hear a crack come from Leo.

I rush over to him, but he just lays life-

less on the floor. I know I couldn't help him, but I could still save Sofie. I get up and cradle my side because the impact of the wall has left me with a few broken ribs. As I make my way towards Sofie, I can see her pallid face and her eyes filled with fear. I sprint towards her and try to rip her away from the cold grip of the being. I can see Sofie falling in and out of consciousness and then I hear a symphony of pops. It is at that moment I knew that all that was left was myself and the being.

The being had released Sofie's limp body, and then it locks eyes with me. My feet had started moving on their own and I swiftly descend down the stairs to try and lose the being throughout the house. Deep down I know that it was pointless to try. I could keep running, however, it would eventually catch up with me. I stop in my tracks and it didn't hesitate to grab me, and I lock onto its glowing eyes. My eyes start to get heavy from the being squeezing me. Why don't I feel any pain? The being starts hissing my name "Maya, Maya, Maya." Wait how does it know my name? I fall unconscious.

"Maya, Maya, Maya." My eyes snap open and I see three pairs of confused eyes staring at me. I frantically collected myself and apologized which prompted them to catch me up on what I had missed, "We were asking if you want to go to the old Westwood's house for the project," Sofie says with a sincere smile. I paused briefly, "I was thinking we could do the project on the town hall". "Sounds like a plan, see you guys later," Caden concludes.

The third mistake isn't mine, it was yours for thinking that was real. Life isn't a movie, especially a scary one.



# THE TREES

By Giovanni Aliperti

It all happened seven years ago, but I remembered it like it was yesterday. It was a Friday in 2020, the best day for a wild college party. I was 15 at the time, and supposed to be home that night, studying for another useless test on Monday. Maybe it was good that I went, because after this I actually believed.

When I found out my brother was going to a party, I wasn't surprised. My brother, Brandon, was always a smart student, and a great son, but although he graduated high school as one of the top in his class, and he went to a pretty good college, he had a problem with drinking. He tried to work out his problem, and I have to say he's getting better. I have never been to a wild party before, and Brandon only went to one in 11th grade, when the cops came. So anyway, he was going to a party. On any other day, I would have wanted to stay home and play *Among Us*, but for some reason I just blurted out "Hey Brandon, can I come?" He was surprised, because I'm not the type of kid to go to a party either, but for some reason there was just an irresistible force that made me want to come. I grabbed my new Under Armour sweater and prepared for the party.

We could hear the blaring music of Sicko Mode even before we turned on the street. The house, belonging to someone's clueless parents, was lit up in an aurora of green, purple, and red lights. I gulped, intimidated by the number of cars parked along the street and down the road. When we finally got a parking spot, across the street from some old park, Brandon and I got out and began walking down the street to the house. My ears were now being mutilated by the music, and I cringed as we entered the house. There was a sea of people, of all shapes and sizes, doing a hundred different things. Brandon went to go greet his friends, whom I

had never met before. I tried to tell Brandon to tell me where he was going, but over the loud noise, I would have more success riding a rhinoceros back home. So I just stood there, being pinballed across the room by arms, hips, and whatever you can use to dance. I found shelter in someone's bedroom, where I stayed, sitting against the bed. I took out my phone, and called Brandon. But suddenly, his name icon changed on my phone to some strange number I've never seen before. Before I could hang up, someone actually answered. "...hello?" The voice whispered.

I shuddered. It was the voice of a young girl, somehow turned deathly and weak.

"Hello?" I asked. "Who is this?" The voice breathed hoarsely. I was tempted to both hang up, and keep listening.

"It...is...Summer..." the voice moaned. "Help me..." I stood up.

"Where are you?" I asked, wondering if this was a prank call from one of Brandon's friends. "The...park..." Summer said, and hung up. All the hairs on my body shot up. The nearest park...was where we left the car. I immediately stood up and left the room. The noise didn't even bother me anymore, I just wanted to go home. I finally found Brandon, walking around like a zombie, already hammered by a few cups of alcohol.

"We are leaving." I told Brandon, and dragged him into the night of the front yard. "I'm...not drunk..." He moaned, which is exactly what a drunk person would say. I just thought we could get home easily, when I realized: I had no idea how to drive. When we made it to the car, I glanced at the park, still thinking about what that girl Summer said on the phone. When Brandon got in the car, I prepared myself to drive. I had only practiced once, with Bran-

don at the High School parking lot. But as I sat down, I heard the voice again.

"HELP!!!" the voice of Summer cried, coming from the woods. This time, I knew it wasn't a prank. I ran to the park, where I saw the body of a girl lying on the floor, pinned down under a large tree. I ran to the girl, who was maybe a year younger than me, and tried to lift the tree out of the way. Finally, after barely lifting it off the ground, I freed the girl from the trap. She got up, and brushed herself off. Her clothes were tattered, and blood stained her pants.

"Thanks." she breathed. "I'm Summer." I nodded, but a million questions went through my head. She sounded fine! Not like a person who got crushed by a fallen tree. "How did you get my number?" I asked her. She shook her head.

"Nevermind that." she said. "Can you please...give me a ride home? I came here a few hours ago by myself, and now it's too dark." "Sure." I said, and when I got back to the car, I saw Brandon sitting up in the driver's seat. I did a double take. "Oh, Brandon. You're not... drunk?" He laughed. "No, of course not! Let's go." I hesitated, but sat in the car. Summer sat in the back, told me her address, and we began to drive home.

"I'm cold". About halfway through the ride, Summer finally spoke. It was a cold night for May, but we lived in Minnesota. I gave her the Under Armour sweater I had on. We drove towards her house in silence, in an area just out of town. The night was crazy to begin with, but the moment I will never forget it when I turned around. Summer was gone, vanished into thin air.

We stopped at the house said to be Summer's. Brandon and I both stared, mouths agape. "She's...gone." I said in bewilderment. "Where did she just go?" We got out of the car and searched the street. "Maybe she hopped out of the car and went home." I said, and we stepped up to her stoop and knocked on the front door. After a few moments, an older



woman answered the door. She was close to fifty, but it looked like stress aged her well. "Yes?" the woman asked. "Can I help you?" I looked behind her, hoping to see Summer in the house. She wasn't. "Hi." I said. "Is this Summer's house?" The woman paled, and looked away. "What's wrong?" my brother asked, and

the woman held back a sob. "How do you know Summer?" the woman asked. "Well..." I began. "We saw her trapped under--" "- a tree?" she finished. I gasped. "How do you know?" I exclaimed. The woman cleared her throat, and wiped her eyes. "My daughter Summer..." she began, "was crushed under a fallen tree three years ago...and was killed." I almost fainted. "But.. I saw her! And she...kind of looked like you!" The woman nodded sadly. "Many people claimed to see her over the years. It was said that her death occurred over and over again, and someone nearby would feel like they just got a concussion in the head until she was saved. But now... it is too late." Brandon gasped. "That's what I felt!" He cried. "Like I got hit in the head! I was never drunk!" The woman nodded, and pointed down the street. "Down on Beaver street...there is a cemetery. That is where....Summer is buried." She turned away, sadly, and closed the door without saying goodbye. I sighed. "What just happened?" I said. Curiously, I walked down the street towards the cemetery, which wasn't that big of a place. It wasn't that hard to find the grave of Summer, especially when, draped over her tombstone, was the long-sleeved shirt I gave her.

# THE LIBRARY

By Panika Garg

The evening was cold with the promise of snow. Amy hurried across the street, stopping in the middle briefly when she saw headlights heading toward her, but then running across the rest of the street to the library. Her heart raced, realizing what a close brush with death she had just had. She heard a crash behind her, but ignores it, determined to make it to the library before it closes.

Amy rushed up the library stairs, pushing the library's huge oakwood doors open, hinges creaking ominously. The library was strangely empty with only an eerie whistling ripping through the library. She haltingly spun around looking for someone, but only saw a lowerclassman hurrying past the library.

"Hey. Why's the library so empty?" Amy asked the guy who had suddenly stopped, seeing her.

"You haven't heard about the ghost?" He asked skeptically.

"No, I just moved here. What ghost? Ghosts aren't real."

"Oh, they're real alright. Rumor has it that a guy died in this library. They say that he had snuck into the library and had died of gunshot wounds when he was running away from someone. The administration don't dare to come near this place saying that they hear screaming." He shuddered, and then said "I wouldn't go in there if I were you." The guy rushed off.

Amy looked at the cracked pavement beneath her feet. The allegory rattled her. She stood there thinking for a moment.

A loud ringing sliced through the silence. Amy rustled through her coat searching for the sound and pulled out her phone. She was shocked to see the caller ID, her mom, with whom her relationship had been nonexistent since her mother disowned her.

"Hello?" Amy answers.

"Your brother's been in an accident. I'm going to the hospital." Amy's mother rattles off the name of the hospital and hangs up, not bothering with any pleasantries.

The first thing Amy saw when she got to the hospital was her mom weeping. Amy bolts over kneeling in front of her mother.

"Mom, where is Justin?" Amy pleads. Her mother doesn't answer but starts rocking back and forth, shudders racking her body, tears falling even faster than before. Amy stands up, dashing over to the desk.

"I'm here to see Justin Hoffman." Fear made her voice tremble.

The receptionist looked at Amy with pity in her eyes. "He passed in surgery." She said these words casually, as if her words haven't caused Amy's whole world to tilt.

Amy's eyes blurred, tears coating her eyes. She pulled herself together to ask, "What happened?"

The receptionist told Amy about how Justin had swerved on the road and then his car hit an incoming truck from the other direction. She told Amy about Justin's babbling about a silhouette in the middle of the road that he swerved away from. She then explained how Justin's injuries were too extensive and died on the operation table.

The receptionist led Amy to Justin's body. There were cuts covering his body, which still hadn't scabbed over. A huge cut on the side of his forehead still weeped blood. His arm was twisted at an unnatural angle with bone peeking through. Amy covered her mouth with her hand, horrified at her brother's body and the extent of his wounds.

The crash comes back to her in high definition. Instantaneously, she realizes that Justin

was the driver of the car whose headlights she had seen when she stopped in the middle of the road. She realized that she had killed her own brother.

Amy fled from the hospital, guilt crippling her. She sat in her car, her expression frozen into one of shock.

Amy decided to go to the scene of the accident, wanting to see for herself the place where she had unknowingly caused her own brother's death. Amy saw and heard everything in high definition. Police were chatting in the background, jotting down notes about the scene of the accident. Justin's blood colored the glass on the road, causing the glass to glimmer under the low light of the moon like hundreds of blood red rubies. The car was on its side, the hood's metal crinkled like a ball of paper. Gasoline dripped on the pavement evaporating almost immediately. Leaves skittered over the asphalt. The bare trees swayed unnaturally in the wind. The air was rich with the scent of blood, causing chills to break out on her arm.

In the distance, she saw a horde of rapidly approaching 'people'. Were they even people? They moved perversely and with an otherworldly grace. They glowed with a light and they had a transparent look to them as if they had no substance. Amy looked at the horde who was now only a few feet away from her. Her sense of preservation finally kicked in and she ran from the herd and towards the library.

Amy barricaded herself in the library where she noticed a book on the table. The book was old and dusty, but there was also something curiously captivating about the book. She unwrapped the leather bounding around the book running her fingers lightly over the cover of the book. She opened the book in a trancelike state, as if she was being compelled to do so.

As soon as Amy cracked the book open, whispers assaulted her. Hundred of thousands of whispers. All saying different things. Listen-

ing closely you could tell that each whisper was a story. But it was hard to distinguish one whisper from the rest. The stories were of all the people who felt that they had died horribly, unfairly. Amy only heard words. She realized that they all wanted revenge from the world. The whispers grew louder, crowding her ears. Every whisper wanted her attention, they wanted her to avenge them.

Amy slammed the book shut, blocking out the whispers. She sat down, but as soon as she did, her body started convulsing as if she was having a seizure. The books started flying off the shelves with loud thumps. The lights flickered manically. An eerie laugh ripped through sudden silence. Amy saw two silhouettes stalking toward her. She could make out her brother's face in one of the silhouette's features. The other silhouette she assumed was the library ghost. She reached out to her brother hoping for forgiveness, but abruptly, she felt pain. Her brain felt like it was being torn in half. She briefly saw the horde surrounding her. Their translucent, grotesque faces haunted her mind. Cuts appeared on her arms and legs. They were deep and uneven as if they were gored by fingernails. Her body was burning, her veins exploding. Her lungs were filled with blood. Blood was pouring into her mouth, choking her. It filled up her ears, her eyes, her nose. Blood was everywhere. She heard screaming. Maybe it was her. Maybe it wasn't. She didn't know. She wasn't in control of anything. She wanted it to be over. After one last crack, it was.

A boy was crouched in front of her. The boy's mouth was moving, but she didn't know what he was saying. There was no pain, no screaming, no blood. She felt words spewing out from her own mouth frantically, madly. She didn't know who she was, what she was, why she was here, or what she was doing. She had become no one.

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Together we create the Comsewogue High School Literary Magazine club! We hope our works can brighten someone's day and inspire those interested in writing and art to overcome difficulties and become closer to the writer/artist they've always aspired to be. We wish everlasting safety and wellness to everyone and their families during these hard times. Stay safe and healthy!

Want to be part of the club? Join our Google Classroom using this code:

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