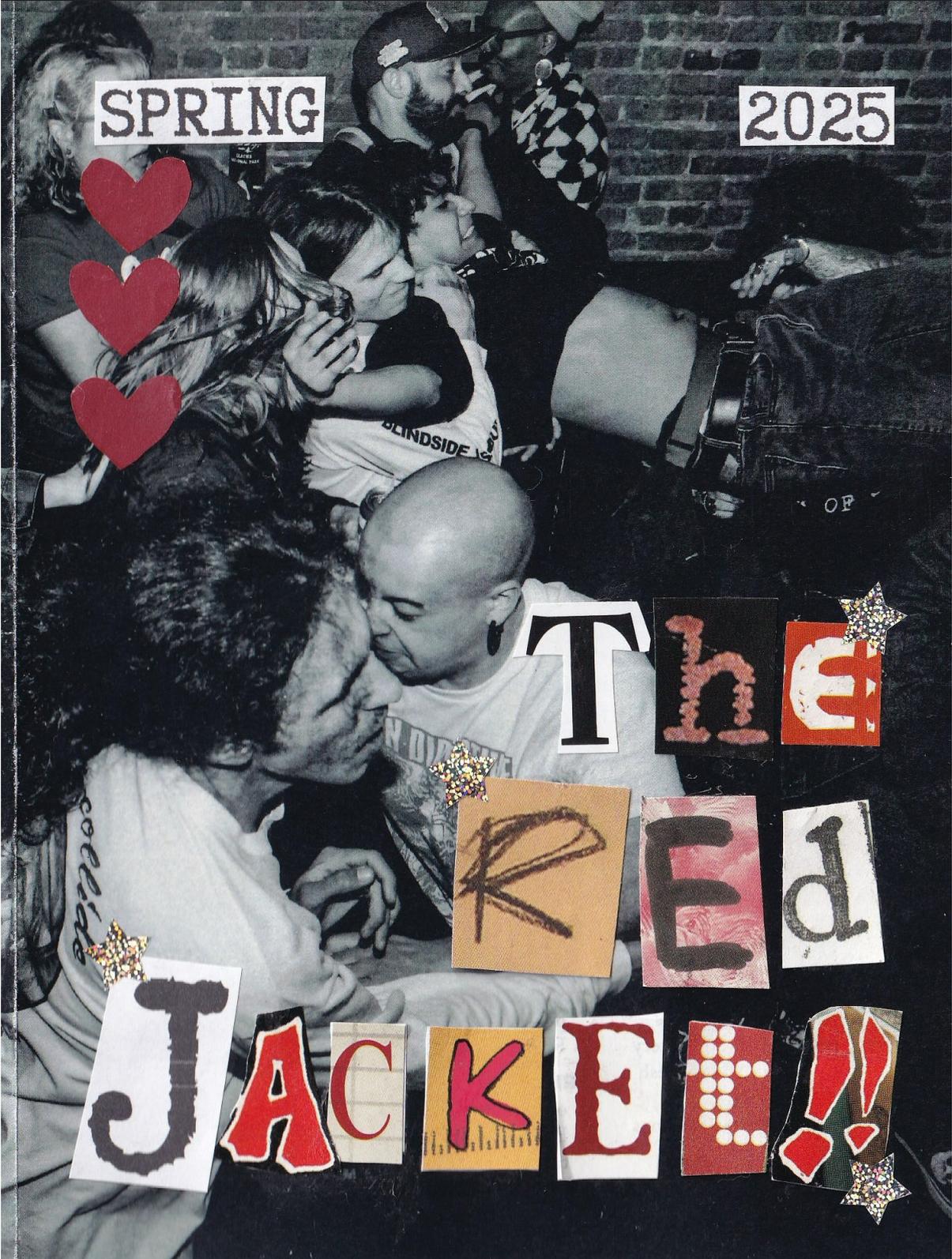


SPRING

2025



THE
RED
JACKETS!



Editors-in-Chief

Jeanne Gnahoua, Ziv Sarig

Art Editor

Emm Cleveland

Poetry Editor

Nadya Al-Arief

Prose Editor

Christine Ekanayake

Layout Editors

Nadya Al-Arief, Jeanne Gnahoua, Ziv Sarig

Faculty Advisor

Shweta Sen

With Support & Contributions From

The Red Jacket Club

Rachel Andries	Nicholas Buhlman	Ellie Orzulak
Zhubin Bashiri	Darion Callery	Sukie Perez
Julian Beckert	Makayla Castillo	Arin Roderick
David Bouley	Sarah Cil	Santana Russel
Leo Brooks	Mori John Ayi	Chelsea Tanner
Eli Brown	VA Mussie	Cecilia Yuengling

Sponsored By

Department of English and Reading
Montgomery College, Rockville Campus

© 2025 Montgomery College

All rights reserved

Images in the table of contents sourced from the DC Public Library

TABLE OF CONTENTS

6 a GIFT FROM MOTHERS

Anonymous - Poetry

8 PYRO

Bilen Tamirat -
Acrylic Paint

12 aLIENS

Ramos - Digital
Illustration

14 NO SUCH THING

Olyad Kitila - Poetry

16 THE LIBRARY OF LOST MEMORIES

Ava Hemphill -
Prose

22 DUST

Johnathan Odbert -
Poetry

7 REFLECTION

Bilen Tamirat -
Acrylic Paint

9 THE WILD THING

Carson Young - Prose

13 UNTITLED

Rachel Crespo -
Magazine Scraps on Paper

15 THE OLD OFFICE

Digital Photography -
Joshua Kim

21 SYZYGY'S IMPACT

Chaim P. Goldstein -
Digital Photography/Poetry

22 BED OF GLASS

Safiya Mowlana - Conte
Crayon on Canson Paper

25 HARRY LYING DOWN

Tiso Salas - Conte Crayon on
Canson Paper

26 HER CARDINAL AND HER CREEK

David Bouley - Poetry

27 THE ARRANGEMENT

Eric Goss -
Oil Paint on Canvas

28 a TREE'S THANK YOU

David Bouley - Prose

31 MY TEETH & UNTITLED WORKS

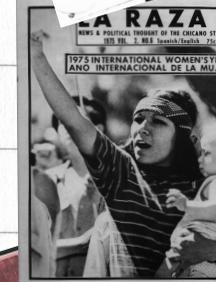
Makayla Castillo -
Colored Pencil

32 UNDER PRESSURE

Chaim P. Goldstein -
Poetry

33 POWER OF THE PIT

Santana Russell -
Digital Photography Series





A GIFT FROM MOTHERS

ANONYMOUS

Your words are daggers

They cut me deep

Your words have powers

They keep from sleep

When you cut no more

I took up the mantle

When used a knife, oh how it tore

Though never could I hold a candle

To all the pain you gave to me,

"When I was young my mother

Too did give to me the pain you see"

When you are hurting you see no other

Pain is yours and not another's

You can not fathom what was given

Pain is shared, passed from mothers

How is this it be forgiven

An indiscretion so apparent

Even the child aware of it

Knew one day when a parent,

Never could she permit

This curse passed down

To harm her daughter's

Never could they be found

To have the scars of their mother's

REFLECTION

BILEN TAMIRAT

acrylic paint

PYRO

BILEN TAMIRAT

acrylic paint



THE WILD THING

CARSON YOUNG

"The monster's coming, the monster's coming!" David laughed as he ran from me. I grinned. What a fun game, I thought. From then on, I chased the other students. Every single day, at recess or lunch or any other time of day, I chased. I followed the other students all around the playgrounds and classrooms, around the cafeteria and gym. I watched, gleefully, as they laughed alongside me. I joined in on their games and ran all about.

I chased them, screaming, "I'll eat you up, kids! I'll eat you up!" I laughed as they ran from me. I'd come home every day with a new story of how David climbed the monkey bars to escape me, or

Alima jumped off a slide.

However, I knew it wouldn't last. Good things never did in those days. I knew I wasn't enough. I never would be. One day, proving me right, my fourth-grade teacher pulled me aside. She seemed different.

"This is not a game," Ms. Vigil said to me, "You need to stop." This teacher was normally sweet and bubbly. She used to give out candy every so often, and she always saved a Milky Way bar just for me. But today, in this instance, she seemed almost sad.

Even recently, I still wondered why it wasn't a game. I wished I could go back and ask Ms. Vigil, *Why was it not a game?* I would

stare at my ceiling at night, trying to think of what separated it from the real games, like Chess or Trouble. I'd lie awake at night, desperately imagining what else it could be. A boredom cure? But that'd make it a game. A race? But then they wouldn't run from me; they'd run with me. I could not imagine what else it could possibly be.

"Okay, Ms. Vigil," My shoulders slumped. "I'll stop chasing them." And, not wanting to break my promise, I did. I stopped chasing them, but they kept running. I didn't understand why at the time; after all, they always laughed, like in any other game. It had roles like when you play "Family" – I was *the Wild Thing*, and they had to run away from me. Sort of like a one-way game of tag. But this wasn't a game. How was it not a game? I didn't understand. I finally started to understand a year later, when my mom explained it to me.

"It wasn't a game," She told me, "it was cruel. They weren't laughing with you, but at you." She went on to explain that this "game" we played was less about having fun and more about them treating me as less than human. I played as *the Wild Thing*, a big, scary monster who ate kids. Thinking back on it, I realize it really was dehumanizing. They

ran from me, calling me *the Wild Thing*, even after I stopped chasing them. Hearing this, I felt like my entire life shattered, broken like glass. I felt like I'd lost the only time I'd ever had of friendship. It wasn't friendship, though. It was bullying. They mistreated me because I was different, because I had autism. I wasn't like the others.

Being autistic in elementary school felt like trying to light a match underwater. Despite my hardest efforts, I was cold. I couldn't see beyond the endless blue. Worse, there was no one to pull me to shore. I was stuck in a vast, empty ocean, void of all hope. Void of love. There are no ways to describe it, the intensity I felt, without making myself sound like one of those teens who wears black lipstick and fingerless gloves, with their "black as night souls." I was me, and "me" was not enough.

So, books became my only home, from *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* to *Wings of Fire*. They were a safe haven from feeling so alone. Feeling like I wasn't enough. Feeling like I would never be enough. I was that kid in the corner of the school playground, dancing in the sun or drawing in the dirt with a stick. I even spoke to myself more accurately, the friends I

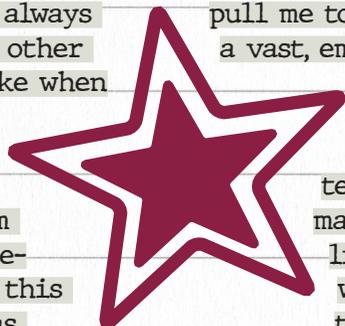
made up to cure my loneliness. I pretended that they were there with me always, and they never left my side. I spoke to them in church, at school, at home – anywhere I felt alone. The group of little fairies who talked to me while they worked and watched me when I did. The old lady with the cookie jar offered sugary treats when I felt left out. The watery-eyed boy who sat with me when I was alone. The tall, flamboyant singer I dreamt of being – the celebrity that everyone knew and loved. But I didn't have what it took to be that – famous, glorious, loved. I wasn't enough for that.

Middle school, I told myself. It'll be a fresh start. I'll make friends, I'll play real games, I'll enjoy life. I will be enough. And it was a fresh start. I finally had friends to talk to – this sweet group of girls who all played volleyball. We sat together at lunch, we laughed and joked about boys or parents.

It didn't last long. Nothing good ever lasts long. Only a few months into sixth grade, I caught them. The same girls that had finally made me feel safe and loved were making fun of me behind my back. They called me "retarded" and "slow." That's when I realized – we were friends because I was alone. Because they knew I wasn't enough. I was no more than a charity to prove their kindness.

Another two years passed; I was alone again. No one to talk to. Only my mom, who taught at my school. Isn't that embarrassing? I hung out with my mom, a teacher, during lunch every day. But finally, in eighth grade, I met them; Leslie and Ayessa. We're still friends to this day, despite us all being in different colleges. The day I met them, I felt like I was seeing for the first time. I felt like everything was new. That day, in PE class, I remember the feeling. I felt my heart swell as Leslie approached me and called Ayessa over. I felt my head tingle the way it does when I'm happy as they invited me into their conversation. It won't last, I warned myself. But it did. Eight years. My struggles were no longer kept to myself; I could share. I got to tell them about the pain I was in. And they told me about their pain. It was more than friendship; it was family. They were family.

In the time that followed, Leslie defended me like a mama bear when others would taunt or tease me. She taught me to protect myself. She gave me advice to help deal with the bullies. She helped me learn to accept myself as I was, rather than forcing myself to be someone else. Meanwhile, Ayessa would encourage me to hold my head high and ignore the bullies. When she saw someone messing with me, she came over and



helped me get away. Ayessa and Leslie taught me more than school ever could. Over the years, I became sad. Really sad. I dealt with deep depression, and nearly committed suicide once. Then, Ayessa was there, even if not physically. She still doesn't know it happened, but I do. Instead of going through with it, I saw her face in my mind, and decided I couldn't bear to be without her. I couldn't do it because I was scared. Ayessa had done so much for me, I couldn't bear to hurt her.

The best part was that they loved me. They really loved me. They knew I was autistic and supported me in times of need. They held me up, just as I did

for them. They encouraged me to keep my head held high, because who cares what anyone else thinks? They taught me self-love. Ayessa once told me, "Don't change yourself so people will like you. Be yourself so the right people will love you." She said it was a quote from some anonymous person online.

The feeling was so new to me it was almost uncomfortable. I felt out of place in a group where I was loved. I felt like the lights were too bright, the fan too loud. Nonetheless, I couldn't keep the smile off my face. Finally, I was enough.



ALIENS

digital illustration

RAMOS

"I'm just a little artist who floats around."



UNTITLED

magazine scraps on paper

RACHEL CRESPO



"When it comes to art, I focus on creating portraits because I enjoy being able to see them come to life and appear to have traits of their own."

NO SUCH THING

OLYAD KITILA

I'm alone in my silence.

Fiddling with life, in my sandbox of a room, Making a mess to clean up later. Piling it high and knocking it down. I can't see anything past my window frame. The panes of my eye. The street glares back at me. I look at the dark wet gravel, speckled blues and browns hiding on the surface. A six year old's hand reaches out to grab it with my mind. I can taste the fog through his teeth. He is unaware of himself but aware of the ground. He feeds me with memories. I gorge myself. Their salty spit drips down my mouth. There's no juice, but it's wet. My face is covered in unnamed memories now.

I wish, with my hands, I could hold all the tears I've cried.

And crush them, squeeze my palms together. My left and right are past and future. And under their pressure the salt would crystalize and grow. Sprawling out before my eyes, snowflake faint and snowflake intricate. The white crystal would grow to the size of my home. Moving and shifting, it dances. And when it stops I look up and see:

All the fragments of myself that I thought I lost. Swallowed or spit out. Strawn or strangled. Bottled up or stained on notebook pages, splattered from face height. Pictures of lumpy throats and arguments never had. Silences that eat away at me. Laughter I thought I forgot.

I look up at my floating self, and breathe for the first time again.

A wash of cool light presses upon my forehead like the back of my mom's hand on a school morning. It settles my mind.

I close my eyes. Really close them. Not waiting for my chance to open them again.

I reach out my hand, open the door, walk inside.

Then I remember.



THE OLD OFFICE

digital photography

JOSHUA KIM

THE

AVA HEMPHILL

LIBRARY OF

LOST MEMORIES

I awoke to the crisp air of peonies and honey, springing out of bed to fluff my brown sun-kissed curls. My morning routine was simple: wake up, get ready for the day, and go to work. Dancing to my gold-accented armoire, I threw every garment onto the chocolatey oak until I found my favorite dress, initially identifying it only by its soft touch, then its pink bodice lined with delicate white bows. Inspiration struck. I rushed for my parchment book and began sketching a gown shaped like the Lilly of the Valley, colored periwinkle with hues of lavenders and creams, like a blueberry par-

fait. I flip through my gown design ideas, fixating on my latest skirt with golden and pink hues inspired by the sunset I laid and watched that evening prior. I gazed out my window to see the sun creeping up behind our clay cottage, stealing a few moments; I imagined becoming a renowned seamstress: working with the finest lustrous silk and fabrics, patrons lined out the door to display my fashions on their bodies. Waking from my trance, I gently put my book in my bag, opening my door to be greeted by my marshmallow and gold-colored Lhasa Apso Kashmir. Papa yelled for me from downstairs as Kashmir raced down the stairs, Kashmir

pounced playfully onto Papa, knocking him down, and sent a plate of avocado toast and sausage crashing down with him.

"Augh! Sol, how many times must I tell you not to have this dog in my kitchen?" he bellowed as he fought to get Kashmir off him, then she seized her opportunity to take the remains of the food from the floor. I ran to shoo her and swore she smiled as she darted off with my breakfast. With haste, I extended my hand to pull him back to his feet.

"Sorry, Papa! Thanks for breakfast, but I have to go. Ida offered me a seamstress position, and I want to make a good first impression by being there on time," I sang as I hugged him before dashing to the door, sliding on my pink flats.

"Make sure to get there safe and sound. Don't wander! Stay in the town square. Be back before sundown!" Papa yelled behind me.

"Sure thing, Pa," I sarcastically shouted back as I shut the door behind me.

Looking up at the sun overhead and hearing the 11th bell chime, I had enough time to take the scenic way to the boutique. Since moving to this quaint town, this route has been my favorite: cobblestone lined with ivy-covered buildings, deer and rabbits running around, the distant hum

of merchants setting up their stalls, and the occasional chime of a bell from the clocktower in the square.

The now afternoon air hummed with the scent of pastries and citrus as I made my way through the winding paths. Ahead, the town unfolded like a faded postcard—weathered brick buildings and cottages lined the wide cobblestone path, their windows reflecting the soft light, and the ivy-rung clock tower stood at the heart. Cozy cottages with moss-covered roofs and trailing vines blooming with daffodils sat between cobblestone paths, chimneys puffing out wisps of smoke that carried the delight of fresh bread and cakes. I continued, admiring the boutique through the windows ahead: mannequins dressed in satin and lace.

From the corner of my eye, I notice a narrow alley. One I hadn't seen before, stretched between two timeworn willow trees. Not only was the alley strange, but heading closer to the path's opening, I could see how the air shimmered and glistened against the beaming sun, heat rising from the dirt road pavement. For a moment, the willow tree leaves sang, faint whispers curling through the breeze, just out of reach. I shook my head, thinking I was

probably just imagining things. I hadn't had anything to eat yet; it had to be that, right? Yet something about all of this pulled me forward. My feet hesitated, then went through the opening like an invisible thread had drawn me in. The deeper I walked, the quieter the world became, and the usual town bustle sounds faded behind me in a hush. At the end of the alley was a large, arched wooden door. An old lantern laced and decorated with cobwebs hung in front of it, the flame still flickering despite the breeze. My eyes darted to the plaque above, reading *The Memory Library*. I frowned. A library? Here? I had walked these streets for weeks yet had never seen this place before. How could I have missed an odd sight like this?

A cool breeze wrapped around my shoulders as I reached for the handle. The door creaked open when my fingers brushed dark oak, inviting me to enter the threshold. Rows of shelves stretched high, but instead of books, they held glass vials — each with a faint glowing substance labeled with neatly handwritten tags. In the middle of the bookcases missing books stood a plaque, reading: *Memories, captured in gas form — once lost, now contained. Handle with care, for what*

is forgotten may not wish to be found. The air smelled of aged parchment and something else. Something familiar yet unplaceable. Stepping forward, I saw it. Among the countless vials, one stood out—a small delicate bottle resting alone on a dark velvet cushion. On its label, in swirling gold ink, was a name. *Sol*.

My breath caught my throat. A memory with my name on it? What could I possibly be missing from my memories? My fingers trembling, I reached for the bottle, and goosebumps washed over me—like I was on the verge of remembering something I had long forgotten. The moment I uncorked the vial, everything shifted. The walls of the library blurred, the shelves bending and twisting, and then —

A flood of images filled my mind. Memories I never knew existed.

Memories that changed everything.

I staggered as the echo unraveled before me, like a tapestry being rewoven thread by thread, a needle connecting a single thread to the vast tapestry that is the mind. The scent of old parchment and lavender filled the air, wrapping around me like a long-lost lullaby. I was no longer in the library but in the memory itself.

A grand estate stretched

before me, bathed in the sun's warm glow. The halls were lined with gold and deep crimson tapestries embroidered with symbols I did not recognize, yet it sent a whisper of familiarity through me. The marble floors beneath my feet gleamed, polished to perfection, as if untouched by time.

It was then that I saw her.

A woman dressed in silk and embroidered lace stood before me, her eyes meeting mine with quiet intensity. The golden embroidery on her sleeves shimmered as she reached out, her fingers trembling slightly. I felt the ghost of her touch graze my cheek. Her eyes — ones that mirrored my own — were filled with sorrow.

"Are you sure?" she asked, her voice hushed, almost desperate. "Once it's gone, there is no getting it back."

I turned my head — no, she turned her head. The little girl I once was stared back at the woman with wide, unknowing eyes. My lips parted. I hesitated. My fingers twitched at my sides, and then my brown eyes shut closed. I nodded.

"Erase it."

The world around me flickered. A different scene emerged.

Laughter rang out from the garden terrace, sunlight spilling over polished silver teapots and porcelain cups. I was there again, smaller, my feet dangling off a velvet-cus-

hioned chair.

Across from me sat a boy with dark, wild curls. This boy's face mirrored mine. His face lit with mischief as he stole a sugar cube from my saucer.

"Solana, Mother will scold you if she catches us," he teased, dropping his voice into a dramatic whisper while plopping the stolen sugar cube into his mouth.

Solana. The name cloaked me like a forgotten melody, foreign yet undeniably mine. Another shutter.

A room filled with hushed voices. The weight of expectation pressed against my chest as I stood before a row of elders, their eyes cold and full of judgment. Words like *duty*, *legacy*, and *obligation* swirled around me like a storm. I wanted to run. I wanted to be free.

Instead, I chose to forget.

The final piece of the memory slammed into me like a tidal wave. I had not always been Sol, the girl with no status who dreamed of being a seamstress with her boutique one day. Once, I had been Solana D'Aubrey — the eldest daughter, the heiress of an aristocratic family whose name carried weight, whose wealth and influence shaped futures. My path had been etched in stone before I was old enough to walk it. A gilded fate laid before me like an inescapab-

The Red Jacket

le script. But I had rejected it. I had come to The Memory Library as a child, my small, ambitious hands clutching the edges of a life that felt too vast, too suffocating. The weight of expectations had pressed me down on me until I could no longer breathe, and so I had made a choice. I let it all go – my name, lineage, the grand estate that once stood as sanctuary and prison. I erased myself from the world I was meant to inherit and stepped into the unknown, unburdened and unnamed.

The library snapped back into focus around me, throwing me out of my memory. My breath came in shallow gasps, and I clutched the now-empty vial, my hands trembling. The glow had faded; its contents had absorbed back into me.

I sat on the ground and clutched my knees to my chest, trying to come to terms with what I had just learned. I wasn't just a seamstress's apprentice. I wasn't just a girl who loved designing gowns. I had abandoned my entire life.

A familiar voice echoed in my mind, sending chills down my spine. "Solana..." the voice sang.

I swallowed hard, pressing a hand to my pounding chest as if I could hold my heart still, but it fluttered wildly beneath my palm.

Who was I now? Was I the

girl I had become or the one I had left behind? A shadow moved at the library's entrance, and the question remained in my mind. Their silhouette framed by the golden light of the afternoon sun.

Someone had been searching for me. And now that I remembered...

They had found me.

SYZYGY'S IMPACT

Blood and Void are they;
Like Taijitu colliding –
They illuminate.

CHAIM P. GOLDSTEIN

haiku & digital photography

DUST

JONATHAN ODBERT

From dust,
To ash,
We breathed as one,
And pushed away the night,

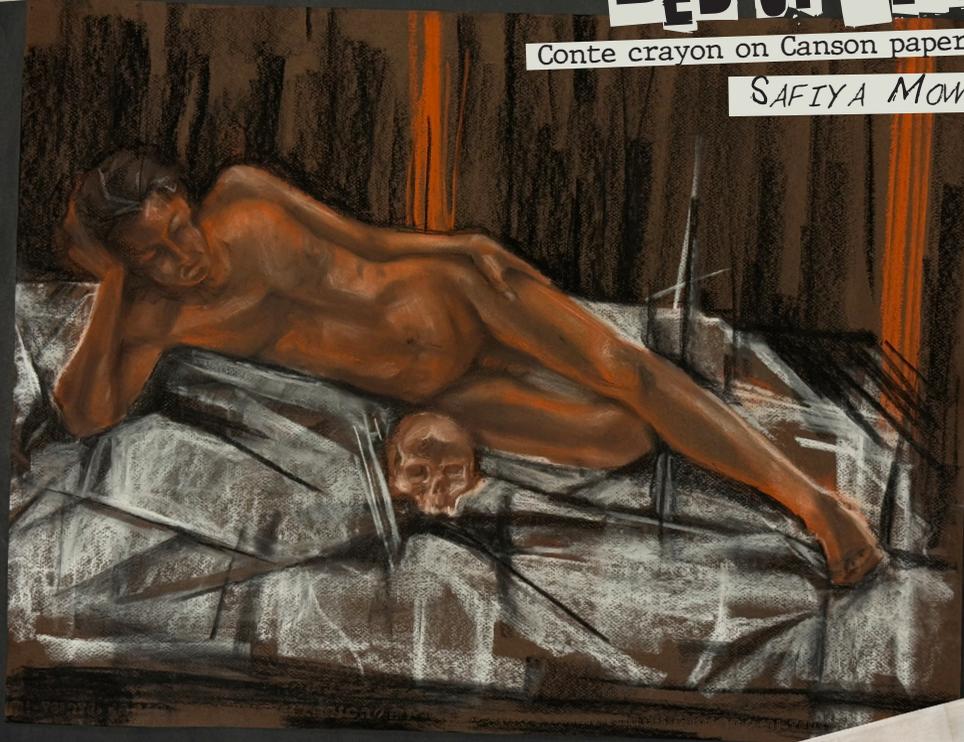
What fools we were to find such beauty,
In foolish things like love and lust,
Now lost,

We burned away,
To coals and cold ash,
Now all we were is dust.

BED OF GLASS

Conte crayon on Canson paper

SAFIYA MOWLANA



CANDLELIGHT

HARLEY VELASCO

It's okay to light the almost-empty candle. You know which one. The white one, with the frosty glass. It reminds you of sea glass. Holding onto it isn't going to help.

Run your finger around the lid; the feeling of the matte glass calms you. When you open the candle take care not to cut your finger, remember about the chip on its near-perfect rim. Light the candle. Breathe in the sickly-sweet imitation of coconut. Watch the candlelight laugh as it dances sporadically – without a worry. Try your best to along laugh with it. If you can, maybe you'll feel as worry-free as the little flame.

You don't laugh. Instead, you choke out a cheap knockoff of what you want to feel. Tears

follow. It's okay. Allow yourself to. Please do not blow out the candle. Take a deep breath. You're able to pick apart the candles' scent more clearly this time. The coconut is far too strong, you think to yourself. A second deep breath reminds you why this candle is your favorite.

What happens next is inevitable. Trying to ignore it will only make it worse. The levee of your mind is overflowing, threatening to break. Thoughts flood your mind. Do not let yourself drown. Stay afloat. Breathe in. Breathe out. The flames dance becomes erratic at your ragged breathing. Slow down. Take care of the candle. Take care of yourself. Close your eyes. Breathe in. Breathe out. You stay like this for as long as you need. You don't know how much time has passed

when you open your eyes again.

You try to open your eyes, but they feel impossibly heavy. It is late now. Do not worry about the time. Try again to open your eyes. You see that the candlelight has become dim. Only I now do you notice how dark the room is. You feel a deep twinge in your chest at this realization. Don't try to ignore it. Don't try to fight it. Feel it. It is okay. Your tears pool around the candle. You are okay.

The candle is almost out now. Try to be okay with this. It isn't going to be easy. The candle is little more than a shallow pool of hot wax. The smell of coconut is acrid — fading. Try to take comfort in the fact that you know this is the end of the candle. This isn't going to be ripped away from you. You know this is coming. You can brace yourself. Anticipate it.

You remember when the candle was brand new. It was a gift. You remember the lime green tissue paper I used to keep the candle hidden in your gift basket. You remember the two of us watching a movie by the candlelight. You remember my worry; is the smell too artificial, too much? Echos of my laughter whisper in your ear. Let yourself remember these things.

The little flame is quickly shrinking. You watch it intensely. You have that look on your face that says you're lost in your thoughts. The flames once lively dance seems more like a struggle as it shrinks.

I strain to see you in the dying light. I watch the space where you sit as it becomes dark and blurred. The candle won't last forever. Nothing does. The little flame gives its final burst of light like a picture flash preserving this moment in my memory. The room is dark, but I can feel you there. I can hear your small, sharp breaths. I know that the tears creeping out of you are of acceptance.

I hear you pick up the lid of the candle.

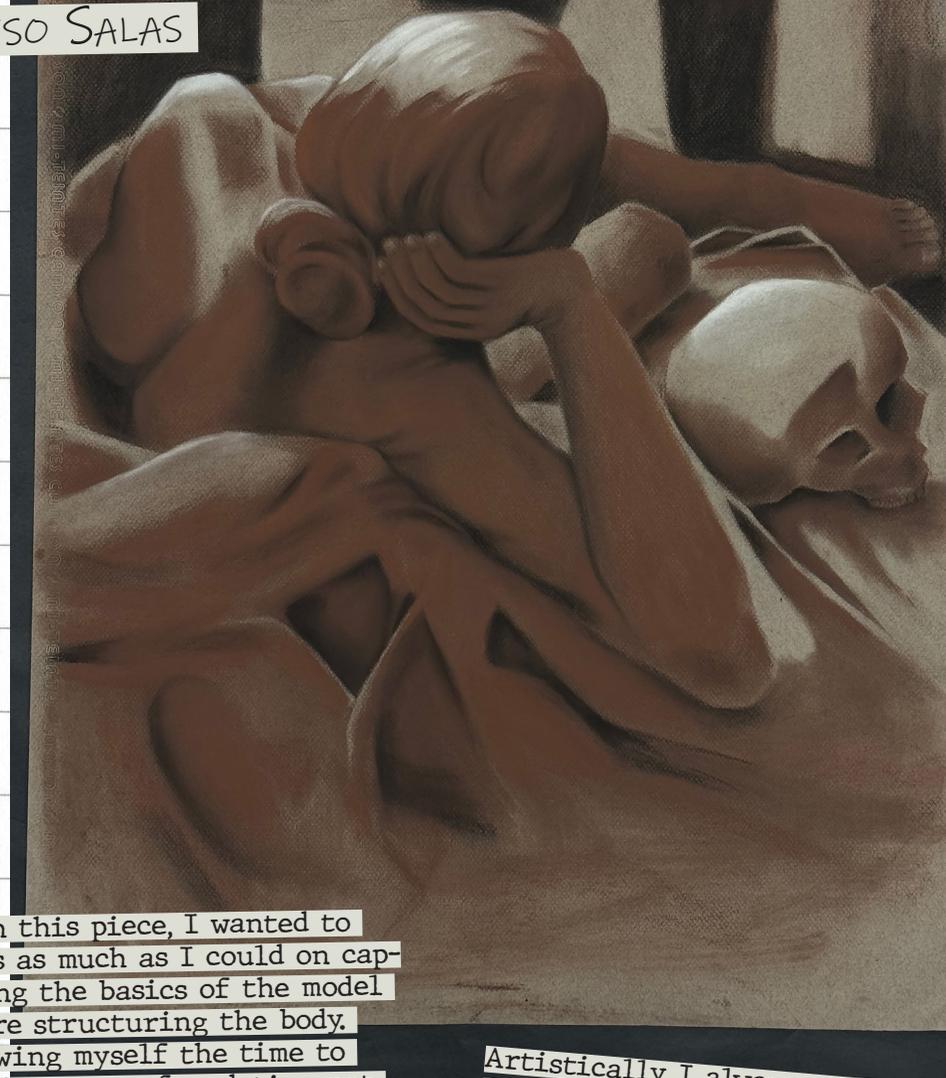
A little smile finds its way onto my face.

I don't have to see you to know your finger is running around the lid once more.

HARRY LYING DOWN

Conte crayon on Canson paper

TISO SALAS



"With this piece, I wanted to focus as much as I could on capturing the basics of the model before structuring the body. Allowing myself the time to build a proper foundation not only allowed me to create a more defined figure, it also made sure that I caught the angles accurately."

Artistically, I always struggle with pacing myself when I work, but with this experience, I realize how important it is to give myself a good launching off point before going through with a piece of work."

HER CARDINAL AND HER CREEK

DAVID BOULEY

When the icy ash meets the dying grass for the first time in a year,
I put on my shoes and travel to the place you will not depart,
Past the wilting brush and humble wood, the waning shadow of a startled deer,
I find your creek, trickling weak in arctic earth, nature's waning art,
The songs of unseen birds, their voice an undying souvenir,
I sink my feet into the blanket of sleet, and wait as nature's melody meets my heart,
Wearing red from tail to head, a divine songbird perches near,
I see you on the tree, awaiting me, your peaceful presence soon imparts.

You ask me if I remember what you look like,
I think real hard, try and swallow the sharp stone in my throat,
and let tears warm my face,
You ask me if I remember what you sound like,
I don't bother to think, the memories have gone with the leaves,
tears part from my chin,
You stay so still and silent on that tree, carefree from the painful world you left me in,
I say that I am sorry, my memory foggy, gave way to a wilting heart
and trickling tears,

You tell me it's not my fault, "all things die, all minds wander, all moments end."
But you are just a bird, and she is still gone. Nevertheless,
I live here a little longer,
Force my mind not to wander,
Cherish this little moment,
And leave when the world calls me home,
I pass the fallen oak and the rotted pine,
The wilting brush and the creatures lost to time,
The sounds of water and songs of birds remain with the forest,
I leave her cardinal and her creek, soon to return, never unwelcome,
always undying.



THE ARRANGEMENT

oil paint on canvas

ERIC GOSS

A TREE'S THANK YOU

DAVID BOULEY

In a vast land, there stood an equally vast forest, a forest whose thick canopy shaded its wild brush full of creatures forever untamed. Just before the vast forest, just outside its shade and on the edge of its wild brush, a sapling nested deep in the ground among wildflowers and weeds late in the changing season. And when the canopy grew thin and the creatures grew hungry, the sapling did not grow at all. For the poor sapling was still surrounded by earth when the first frost cursed the vast land. The surface became tough and the depths cold, the

sky — whom the sapling had yet to meet — shifted from its graceful hue to one of illness; now shrouded, the vast lands went dark, and the world spoke only of death. The wood had shown these same signs of illness too; color had left its cheeks and hope withered from its eyes. Even the brittle roots of weeds spelled out the name of this apocalypse... "*Winter*." The poor sapling had little chance of surviving this, *Winter*. It did nothing to help that the sapling did not want to survive. The sapling did not want to grow in a world with *Winter*. It did not want to grow in a world where icy ash laye-

red the soil. It did not want to exist in a land so riddled with decay and rife with death.

The sapling, however, was lucky to have nested by the most resilient of wildflowers, who told the sapling in no uncertain terms, "Life is for living young tree. Do you think the mountains care of *Winter*? Do you think they crumble at the thought of living in a world with so much death? No, young tree, the mountains simply are, and the mountains have simply been for more millennia than dried leaves in the wild brush of that vast forest. *Winter* is but one season, young tree; do not forget that. Because you have so many more seasons yet to see, and so many more suns yet to grow under." And so, the sapling heeded their words and survived *Winter*; not simply, not briefly, not without pain and doubt, but with much strife and many, many cold days. The sapling gave thanks to the wildflowers, for the sapling would have surely not seen Spring without their help. And so, eventually *Winter* — like all things — came to an end.

The ashen lands wept and nourished the young sapling, the frosted surface dissipated into the now soft earth, and the sapling grew. It met the graceful sky and the beckoning sun, the vast forest recovering from an age of loss, the colorful wildflowers fo-

rever dancing in the songs of the wind. And so, the sapling grew into a small tree, a fragile one, with but a few leaves and a mild trunk of bark still smooth. The sapling's growing roots found quarter with the thick roots of a great oak. The Great Oak stood tall and sturdy, and the sapling thought what many winters it must have survived. And as the days grew long and the soil dry, the sapling turned to the Great Oak for advice. And the Great Oak, without thought, lent the sapling its shade from the unblinking sun; and the Great Oak — in the same moment — lent the morning dew on its leaves to soak the dry roots of the young tree. In the many days that followed, The Great Oak gave its wisdom to the sapling, teaching it of the many wonders the vast land held, inspiring it to grow and blossom. And so, the sapling did grow, it grew into a balanced tree, with the beautiful crown of a content cloud, with branches thin — from taking many paths to touch the sky — and blissful flowers so delicate and young. The tree, now finding its new name, Dogwood, lived in harmony with the land and the forest and the Great Oak and the wildflowers for some time; but this age — like all things — came to an end.

The Dogwood saw

The Red Jacket

the canopy of the forest grow ill and drop to the wild brush, which once again held creatures now few. The Dogwood saw grand pines rot and plummet, the vast forest grew thin of tree, of life. The Dogwood felt it too, its delicate flowers decayed and its crown fell, and the wind – sharp and howling – gave warning to another age of death. The Dogwood felt fear strike it at that moment and asked, to a vast, dying land, "How could life continue? How can anything survive this?" And the land answered with silence, but not all were silent like the vast land; the Great Oak echoed a single word through the land and the forest and the wildflowers and the Dogwood, "Together." Yes, together, as always. The Dogwood turned to the Great Oak and gave the wise tree thanks. Gave thanks for the wisdom its bark is inscribed with, for the shade its canopy had brought, for the stability its roots gave the Dogwood, for the passion its fruit lent to the brush. The Dogwood spoke lightly, now calmed, it gave thanks for the moments of silence it had in the Great Oaks company; because, in that silence, the Dogwood could hear the world sing, in that silence, it is then when the morning dew coated its cheeks with a great emotion. One not of Happiness, nor sadness, nor any single feeling, but rather a cacophony of

life itself whistled through the Dogwood, a whistle which shattered fear with ease. The Dogwood felt naive to put such a magnificent feeling into words, for how could it thank what gave it life? But the Dogwood had to try, for that was all it could do. And in the exact words of the Dogwood to the Great Oak, "You, you which stand with such greatness may not know what gifts you bring, because it is your life and duty to be so powerful and wise; and yet so many other trees fail in your place, they bend or split or rot, but you, Great Oak, stand tall for all the forest, as it is your nature, and how grateful I am for nature to be such a beautiful thing." So, when the first frost befell the land, the Dogwood looked at the iced-over earth and smiled.

With all the love and gratitude of a young tree,

DAVID BOULEY



UNTITLED

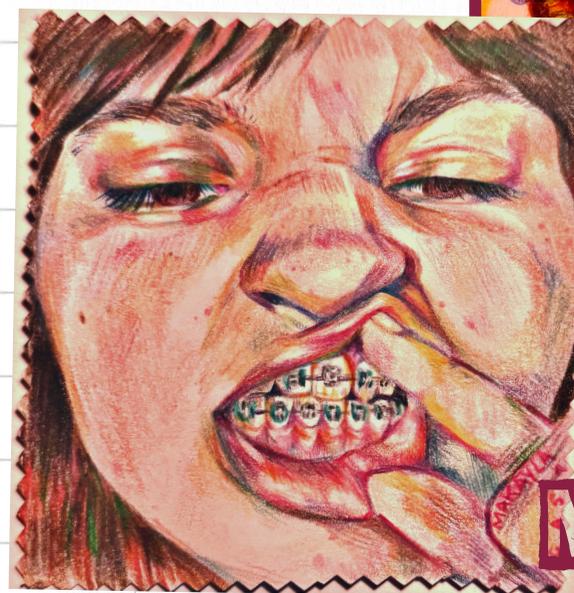
MAKAYLA CASTILLO

colored pencil



UNTITLED

"My work focuses on the small, often unnoticed details, bringing them forward to create something full of life and energy."



My TEETH

"I turned back to art, and it became my way of healing – something that allowed me to express what I couldn't put into words."

UNDER PRESSURE

CHAIM P. GOLDSTEIN

One man worked his way through the world,
And stressed about every moment's hidden gold,
In fright he waded how to act
— Thus fear took his satisfaction out back

The wind was cold and hollow,
The air was mellow and sorrow,
And thus the fear shot the happiness inside,
Now the man has only worry in mind,

He learned this tactic over life,
But little did he recognize how much it caused him strife.
To be on time, to never fail, to worry about the end of his trail.
"One more mistake and I'm pood! Boo-Hoo!"

So every time he slipped and fell,
It was like the greatest tragedy had struck his emotion,
And even when his mind tried to cool him down,
The constant responsibility would feed his commotion,

Until one day the man recognized how much he had,
How he is not very glad — despite all of his great fortunes,
That even the richest man can be miserable with a state of mind like his,
— A hidden plague disguised as pressuring you to do things right; that it affects many within the ranks of life.



POWER OF THE PIT

digital photography series

SANTANA RUSSELL

"Just a photographer that takes pics."



The Red Jacket

accepts student submissions of all kind year-round via email. Send inquiries and submissions to red.jacket@montgomerycollege.edu

Submission Guidelines

Submissions must include:

- The title of your work, or mention if it is untitled
- The full name under which you'd like to be credited, or specify an alias, or if you want your work to be listed anonymously
- Your preferred contact email

For artwork:

- The medium / material used
- Photography and photographs of any artwork should be .jpeg or .raw files of the highest possible quality, with resolution greater than 300 dpi

For written work:

- Essays, short stories, poetry and other written works should be no longer than a few pages.
- Written work should be in .doc or .docx form

The specific issue deadline varies year to year, and guidelines are subject to change.



2025

TEAM CANADA
QUIPE CANADA



RJ

BAND