



The Palette

The Palette

Issue 20 ♦

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The Palette 2019-20

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The Things That Never Change: An Animated Anthology of Inanimate Ideas

by *Liam Quan*

1. *Old Door, New Love*

Stalwart, ever looking out onto the asphalt canyon dividing houses, the Doorway spent its time on the watch, accepting and denying a myriad of foreign beings. The Doorway's job was, in fact, a very important job; it kept out unwanted, though until April 7th, 2020, the Doorway never gave thought to who was occupying the fortress behind it. Deprived of companionship for years, the Doorway had grown accustomed to its lifestyle, and to ease its grim fate of solitude, the Doorway ceased to care about who it was guarding; merely completing the job granted enough satisfaction. Both in a metaphysical and very real sense, the Doorway was at its heart made of stone. One day, however, its carefully sculpted routine of people-watching was suddenly interrupted when Boy came down with a book. Unprecedented and slightly worrying, Boy propped himself up against the Doorway's arches and read. Promising itself this was a one time occurrence, the Doorway was stunned when Boy came back down another day and read. This new and seemingly routine habit of Boy unsettled the Doorway and greatly disturbed its carefully crafted schedule.

Boy read with the Doorway almost every day, slowly freeing the stone guardian from its self-made prison. While at the time this was unrealized by the Doorway, the Doorway began to appreciate Boy's company and slowly fell in love with this new companionship. Its cold, weathered stone warmed and rejuvenated, the Doorway began to rediscover the world around it. The warm, honey rays from the sun; the delicate, soothing touch from the breeze; and the exciting, humming and droning of idle cars once again pleased the old Doorway, but more than anything the Doorway rejoiced in Boy's silent enjoyment. Though Boy never spoke words to the Doorway, the Doorway felt an accomplished feeling unlike

any other when Boy quietly read his book. The Doorway was, however, not an idiot.

Time had a disappointing but predictable way of separating one from a joy experienced for too long. The Doorway had learned its lesson far too well when its beloved previous occupants left and the new family moved in, leaving the Doorway with its first experience of the gelid loneliness it would soon know as “change.” At some point, Boy would pass through the iron gates that marked the end of the household, never returning to the Doorway. The Doorway couldn’t help but replay this future in its head over and over again until arches had once again become cold, returning to the prison. When the sobering lull of an aimless existence jolted the Doorway with a brutal familiarity, the Doorway came to its most profound realization: waste is a choice. The Doorway accepted the inevitable departure of Boy, but vowed to stay with a purpose that fulfilled him like offering its arches to lend Boy a peaceful nook: protection. Guarding was simply not allowing trespassers, but protecting meant caring about what was so fragile to need to be kept safe. Until the fateful moment arrived, however, the Doorway embraced every moment it spent with Boy, cherishing the amicable peace they shared, knowing time would one day pull them apart.



“Quiet Columbia”
Constance McCants

2. *The Book Club*

“It’s an amazing feeling when you finish telling your story; it really is. It is the crash that hurts, when you realize you were used,” *Challenger* began.

The other books fluttered in horror. The Book Club, a support group founded by *Half A King*, served as a clandestine way for books to share their traumas while The Reader was away. What started out as a monthly group became a frequent occurrence when the ruthless quarantine began. Books dropping left and right, The Reader was ruthless in his terrific ways of quickly finishing off books.

“I feel used... I was used... All he cared about was listening to my story, then I was turned into garbage,” *They Both Die at the End* stated, in a morbid and monotone voice.

“You know what we said about that, Dead End (*They Both Die at the End*’s nickname)! We do not label ourselves as anything but our righteous titles,” stated *The Odyssey*, the senior most member of this club.

The Odyssey, of course, was not the first book ever used by The Reader, but they were a lucky member of the Book Shelf. Other books that were less lucky, however, found themselves part of The Lost.

Pages wilting in a sad defiance, Dead End started back up, “I wish I was an E-Book! All they need to do is be downloaded and they get to share their story endlessly!”

The Sun Does Shine quickly slapped Dead End, hoping to bring them back to their senses.

“Snap out of it! You were chosen and no one else is like you! Be proud of that,” *The Sun Does Shine* commanded, their voice reverberating around the shelf.

To a book, being read is the best moment of their shelf life. Telling their story grants them a satisfaction like no other; their world of secrets becomes visible to their reader.

Dead End started to flutter cover to cover, unable to contain their preprogrammed sadness and despair.

“I miss being able to tell my story,” *They Both Die at the End* cried. “It was an amazing feeling. He really understood me! Hours passed in mere seconds, and when I

spoke to him I could see in his eyes this enjoyment unlike anything I have ever seen. I want that again; a chance to make someone else as happy as I made him.”

Then *The Bitter Side of Sweet* chimed in halfheartedly, “You will get that moment again when he rereads you, but until then stay strong!”

Ironically, that book lost all hope the second The Reader picked up his next victim, but Bitter Sweet would be kicked out of the group if they didn’t say something supportive.

Seven books in this quarantine; a nightmare unimaginable to even the darkest horror novel. To the collective knowledge of The Book Club, there has never been such a tragedy like this. Boredom was a book’s combined savior and subduer, a heaven and hell that intermingle to create an orderly chaos that tears books open without a second thought. When boredom reaches a person, the person’s mind can devour books and all of their meticulously crafted story in a matter of days, leaving a saga of destruction and dog-eared pages. The Great Quarantine of 2020 was truly a battlefield for books.

“Look at *The Goldfinch* giving us the eye, all high and mighty because they are 962 pages. Just you wait buddy, soon you will be thrown over here like a pair of used socks, never to be the light of his day ever again,” mumbled *The Bitter Side of Sweet*, whose words carried a regrettable truth.

Stangely, books and humans share the exact same experience when a book shares their story; it may even hurt The Reader more when the novel’s world closes like dusk ending the hours we cherish too late, but the insatiable appetite of The Reader was so new that it was nearly impossible for the books to read beyond the lines.

3. *Mirror Image*

This whole quarantine situation still doesn't feel real; we are actually living through a tragedy that will go down in some history book, but it sure doesn't seem so urgent.

He is staring at me again, something that has been happening a lot recently. All I can do is stare back at his blank face, wishing I could understand his present turmoil.

Connecting with my own eyes, I looked harder into the flawless piece of metal that showed me the one thing I could never see on my own: me, or at least my physical appearance. I noticed I looked the tiniest bit thinner, but the scale begs to differ.

Now he was smiling now for reasons I would never know; this also was an occurrence that seemed to be happening more. Sometimes I imagine what he is thinking; is he relaxed or deep in a cold-brewed frustration? This pensive staring contest was too uncomfortable, so I couldn't help turning away

Looking around my room, I noticed how much dirtier it has become since the stay-at-home order, towels and blankets awry. Still, I am content with my new addiction to reading, swimming, and biking. I leaned in closer, observing my new tan.

As he leaned forward so did I, staring into his
depthless brown eyes I wish were mine. It
hurts not having my own appearance; I am
whatever is in front of me, but I have a
personality. I swear I am me, yet all I can do
is watch, reflecting on what I see.

It's ironic: here I am, relaxed and content, but
the world around me is falling apart, the dead
and sick a constant whisper in the background
of this morbid peace. ♦



“Reflection”
Nico Adamo



Anna Davis



Anna Davis

Run

by Avery Goodale

Racing forward,
I fall into step with my classmates,
Wondering what comes next,
Our teacher, in the lead, stops in her tracks,
She slowly turns and yells “Run.”,
Suddenly an enormous wave comes into view,
Ready to destroy all in its path,
My classmates run,
Showing not even a hint of shock,
I stay put,
Frozen in fear,
The wave is closer now,
Growing at an alarming rate,
The wave is almost upon me,
Finally gaining control over my mouth,
I let out a final scream,
Then the wave is upon me,
Plucking the life from my body,
When I am finally out of my misery,
My body floats,
Along with countless others,
And to think,
All we had to do,
Was run. ♦



“Unicorn Skull”
Brianna Stanley



“Hummingbird Redraw”
Brianna Stanley



Daniel Sobel



John McCants

Untitled

by Caroline Quian

And the sun shone yellow on the lake full of laughter and
tears,

And the water gazed upon the world,
Filled with our joy and aspirations,
Rippling with our fears.

And my face, my smile, reflected on the water,
My eyes glinting as I looked deep into nature's mirrors.

And the grass wriggled beneath my hands and feet,
Grass once trod upon by the scouts of nature,
bunnies and squirrels,
birds and deers.

And it felt like this person who I just met,
it felt like I've known them for years ♦



Dasba Caughman



“Gloomy Days Ahead”
Hayden Reed

In the Forest

by Alex Owens

In the forest, the sun's shining
In the morning, in the forest
The bird's song is the alarm clock
The trees yawn and stretch their branches
The grass sucks up fresh morning dew
The sun slowly and groggily
Peels back the warm, cloudy covers
Then, seeing that no warmth was lost
Tears them back the rest of the way
Taking in the crisp morning sky,
Engulfing it in light and life,
The morning has started off bright
The morning light turns to daylight
Daylight turns to dusk, dusk to dark
And a whole new morning begins
The owls are the new alarm clocks,
The man in the moon takes over
It's the night shift in the forest
It's the same as the morning shift
Except now, the forest is dark
In the forest, the moon's shining ♦



"Stay Up To Date"
Constance McCants



"Together"
Constance McCants



Avery Goodale

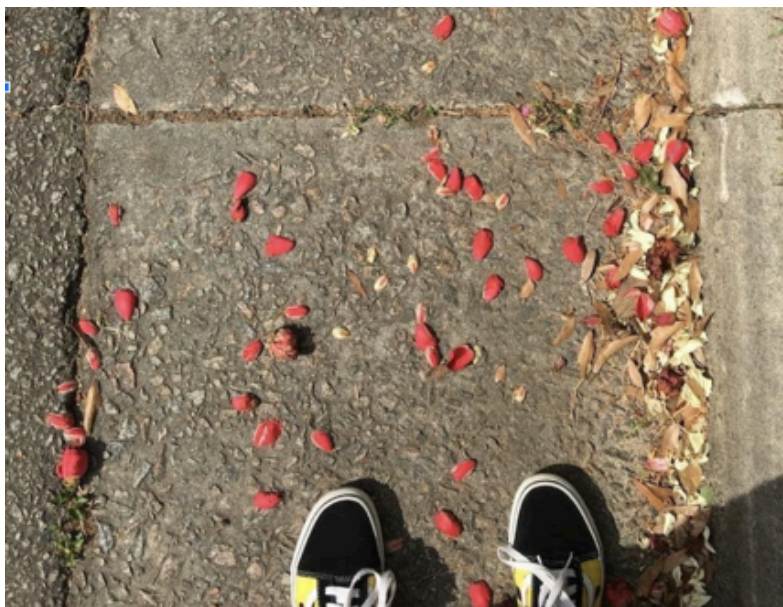


*“Paper”
Janae Johnson*

The Fort Jackson Dam Can Take No More

by Charlotte Hughes

What's left is
the local newsreels;
the WLTX women staring pixelated
at us from the website archives;
immaculate Swiss-design studio
as the videos of homes sinking into
water;
palmetto trees with their fronds thrown
up dancing the Charleston
loop in reels. Then, the week off school:
a river where a road had been;
a dropoff mudslide where a road had been;
a lake fit perfectly into the
cul-de-sac of Cotton Hope Place.
Cotton Hope: halfway through the half-
vacation week, I biked
through the road-rivers homes with innards
torn out, my neighbor stood
there too, among the settees and bedposts
and throw pillows of her house,
I stood there with her as we took boxes of
photographs out from the mounds
of her life, flicked photos apart like
sticky notes, let the graduation travel
photos curl around the edges as the mud ground
reached to hug our feet. ♦



Kerry Reddy



Kerry Reddy

Shakespearian Email

by Eliav Tchonev

Disclaimer: This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events, locales, and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or the pilfered and repurposed words of William Shakespeare. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or to Act I, Scene II of Macbeth is probably deliberate.



Hane, James <jhane@heathwood.org>
to me ▾

Thu, Jan 23, 4:43 PM ☆ ↩ ⋮

Art thou yet among the living?



Tchonev, Eliav <231tchonev@heathwood.org>
to James ▾

Thu, Jan 23, 5:09 PM ☆ ↩ ⋮

Dear Mr. Hane,
My condition is very grave and I can surely report to you, as seemeth by my plight, the revolt of newest state. The evil witches of the land of Doctor Care have deceived us into intaking the wrong medicine. The battle appeared to be getting better but then merciless MacFluwald fought against the antibacterial and it was defeated and had no effect on McFluwald. McFluwald then conquered the entire kingdom and made everyone suffer. The battle was then taken to the fairer grasses of the angels of Carolina Therapeutics, where the angels reported that McFluwald was best defeated with a weapon called...oh wait they just said wait it out. But! They then realized that McFluwald had wreaked more havoc. He had gone to the land of hearing and infected it! Then he had gone to the land of sight and infected it as well!!! All hope seemed to be lost. All of a sudden, a new type of weapon, a stronger and sharper antibiotic was introduced!! And all the forces as one body began battling against McFluwald and he began getting weaker. And to conclude, the victory fell on us. However, the Angels of Caplin Therapeutics warned us not to go to the fabled land called Schoolol for it would make McFluwald rise again and never die!!!

With laughter,
Eliav

xxx



Hane, James <jhane@heathwood.org>
to me ▾

Fri, Jan 24, 8:39 AM ☆ ↩ ⋮

Eliav,

Fret not. Screw your courage to the sticking place, and you shall heal! By my troth, the apothecaries of Caplin Therapeutics will plant thee and labor to make thee full of healing. And Merciless MacFluwald cannot stand against thy valor. Carve out your passage, face the slave, and unseam him from the nave to the chops! The multiplying villainies of nature that do swarm upon him shall be his own undoing.

Get well soon!

Mr. Hane

xxx



“Parks”
Constance McCants

Smiles and Body Cuts

by Kerry Reddy

It's like I'm in a house and not a home
Surrounded yet alone
So many people all around me
Tears well up and I miss being happy
I long for a real smile
One that could stretch past a mile
Yet it seems so fake to show these pearly whites
It's like I only smile is when I'm in the lights
And so it seems that each smile I fake
Only pulls me further down to where I can't escape
In to the depths of deep dark sorrow
Nothing's real, I just long for tomorrow
no more emotions left to feel
I just wish I had a heart of steel
It's like my tears and blood drip down to my feet
but no one sees me when I'm getting beat
all because I beat myself
My worst fear is my unconscious self
the person that put these scars all over
Isn't me but they're taking over. ♦



Daniel Sobel

Face It

By Caroline Quan

All his life, he was concentrated.
And it showed.

Deep lines, deep as ravines, ran along his forehead.
His brow hung heavy, often furrowed.
His lips were always pursed,
Pressing against his teeth which were worn
down from consistent grinding at night.

His face was rough and cracked with wrinkles.
He frowned much of his life.
Even as a small child.

He frowned today,
When he put his socks on and they were still damp
Despite being warm from the dryer.

His feet squished in his shoes as he trudged to work.
Uphills both ways.
He should be retired.
But he hasn't made it yet.
He hasn't proved everyone wrong.

Seventy-two years and he hasn't proved himself right.

Maybe today,
In his damp socks,
was the day.

The corners of his eyes crinkled when he smiled. ♦



Avery Goodale



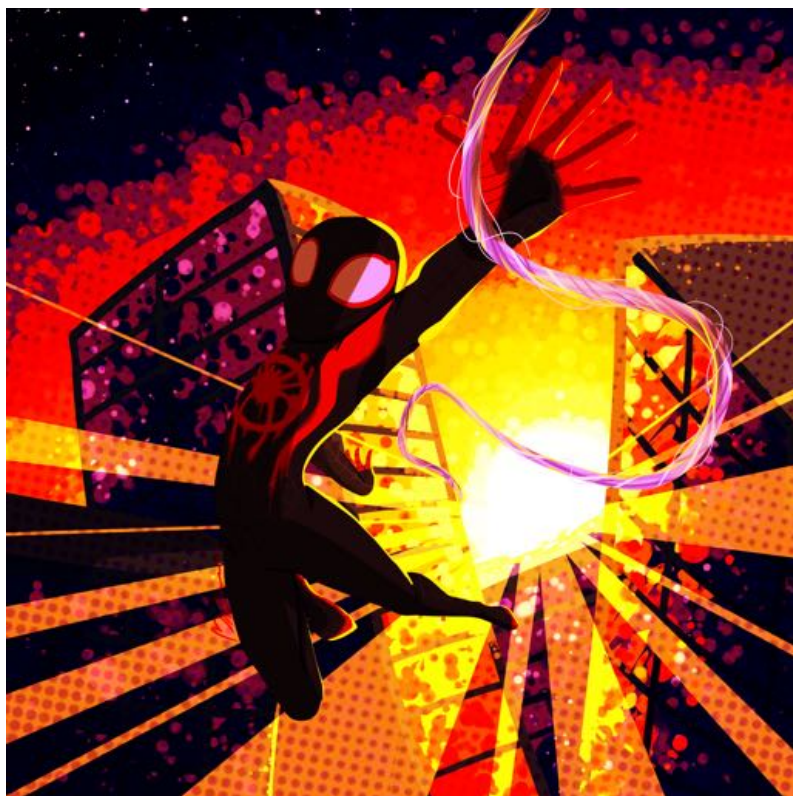
Avery Goodale



“Crepuscular”
Andrew Sobel



Daniel Sobel



“Miles Morales”
Brianna Stanley

SpringTime

By Caroline Quan

When Time stands still,
I try not to stop and stare,
In fear that the moment will
engulf me.

Swimming through my thick inhales,
I am forced to slow down.
I want to stand still.

I want to stop and look at Time long and hard in the face.
But I know if I do,
I will see moments best left untouched,
Those both happy and haunting.

I stride forward.
My neck tightens as if grabbed,
but I don't turn around.

I can feel Time
staring
at me
Willing me to face itself.

I pull myself onwards.
Walking lightly,
I ripple away and
I don't look back.

I'm not running out of time
Or running away.
I'm moving forward
With a spring to my step. ♦

Let the Music Do the Talking

nonfiction by Grayson Elliott

Coronavirus changed everyone and everything, there's no doubt about that. People lost their jobs. Lockdown orders were put in place. Stores closed. The death toll rose as governments tried (and failed) to contain the virus. And, as usual, in a crisis situation, people had to turn to *something* to get them through. I frequently end up being that something. Think about it. In every crisis you can remember, I was there. Maybe very indirectly, but I was there.

I don't really have a name; everyone knows me in a different way. Maybe to, say, James from North Carolina, I'm that dingy fiddle in the living room. To Michael from Seattle, I'm the Fender bass he bummed off a friend. To Jenny from Indiana, I'm that Black Sabbath album she bought in high school and still listens to in the car sometimes. To some people, I'm nothing but that annoying commercial jingle they can't seem to forget. To others, I'm everything--their world, all they see, all that they are, all they'll be. You can call me the music.

Many are fair weather friends. They leave me hanging when life is good, but when life is bad, they invite me over to stay a while. Then when times are good, they might kick me to the curb. I don't mind. In times of trouble, I am a rock. I bring people together, make people okay, fix broken ties, provide a sense of peace and belonging, and even save lives. I'm the Fleetwood Mac album that a mom plays while she cooks dinner, and the whole family sings along. I'm the TV concert that unites the world. It's curious, isn't it?

When I said Coronavirus changed everything, I wasn't excluding myself from the equation. Bands and artists have been forced to cancel and/or reschedule concerts and shows. Festivals have been postponed indefinitely. With all that said, though, I'm still thriving. People--people cling to me. When people find themselves in times of trouble, it's

funny how the things they tend to hold on to aren't concrete, solid things. I mean, sure, that Pearl Jam cassette is a concrete thing, but the reason you have it isn't because you're interested in looking at the wheels or pulling the tape out. You have it because of a feeling, a memory, a place farther out of reach, something more abstract. I'm not something you can touch, or hold, but I am something you can feel and know.

I'm closer to some, though, than others. Through this disaster, I've watched my friends suffer as they're forced to stay home. Some who are better known are feeling lost without their concerts and fans. Some who are just starting out are struggling with lost opportunities and being distanced from bandmates and friends. One girl, in particular.

She holds on to me like I'm the only thing left, and maybe for her, I am. She's one of those people. I'm her everything--her world, all she sees, all that she is, all she'll be. She pulls me from the strings of her thrift store guitar and the pages of her notebook. She depends on me as her rock, her place, the tree she can hold on to in this hurricane of life. When the virus hit, she was trying to get a band together. Now, she and her friend/singer/possible rhythm guitarist have to video call in order to write their songs. She holds on to notes, vibrations, sounds. Sometimes, she can see the rhythm and feel the lyrics. Once, she saw me clearly. Led Zeppelin was playing--"Stairway To Heaven," if my memory serves me correctly. It would be. If anyone can bring colors and shapes from a speaker, it's Jimmy Page. The speakers hummed, then pounded. The mirror rattled, her Mom yelled, but such inconveniences didn't matter.

She's finding that I'm even better of a friend than she originally thought. I'm not a distraction, or a side hobby, or an interest. I'm family. I'm part of her. ♦



Dasha Canghai

The Unofficial Financial Topography of Columbia, South Carolina

By Charlotte Hughes

First appeared on the UK Poetry Society website

From the steps of the granite-plated State House,
Columbia stretches its arms for miles, lazy & languid:

to the midcentury sanatorium with windows
pockmarked from stray baseballs, to the downtown

strip advertising *very quick cash!! breakfast
sandwiches served all day!!* to the three rivers

at the heart of Columbia with better deals
than any Forest Drive Walmart or Target (twice

I kayaked down the Broad and I plucked a limp
five-dollar bill and sodden blue t-shirt from the river).

Along Columbia's twining arms, billboards advertise
luxury apartments—renovated (creating authenticity)

mills from the nineteenth century—out to the endless,
empty tobacco fields and airport plateaus. Columbia,

Columbia! That day, after I lazed on the steps
of the State House awhile, pretending to do something

important like running the capitol steps or stretching
on the lawn, I finally decided to spend my last five

dollars not on an afternoon breakfast sandwich
nor a down payment on a riverfront apartment nor time

to fish money from the river, but on a bag of roasted peanuts from a street-cart peddler. I'd like to say

it was because I consider myself a living part of Columbia that I didn't think twice (of the mud, squirrels, coughs) before putting a shell to my lips. ♦



"Downtown"
Constance McCants



“Dem and Yitta”
Brianna Stanley



“Peter Lukas”
Brianna Stanley

Let's Dance

By Caroline Quan

I want to dance on the sun.
She said no.
I want to sing on the moon.
She said no.

Then I will dance alone.
She looked at me, confused.

I will dance on the sun and the moon and the sky.
Twirling among the dewdrops there is no need to sigh.

I will spin around and let my feet dangle off the edge of
cliffs,
Without you, it seems the whole universe is at my fingertips.

But once I leave I no longer have you, my solid hold on the
ground.
I will never come back. Not unless you are around.

So come! Let's dance on the sun and sing on the moon!

With sad eyes,
she said
no. ♦

Through the Glass

By Elliott Cox

As I open my eyes, the fluorescent lights in my Cubicle are almost blinding. The big clock on the other side of the glass reads “**March 22, 2034, 06:55:37 AM**”, and all the books I’ve read in the past month encircle my bed like a snake. Books are my only way to be outside the Cubicle, so I read them voraciously. I often wonder what it would be like to go to Hogwarts or train to join Dauntless, and be with other people in person, not on screens or through thick glass walls. But, ultimately, I know that staying in the Cubicles is for the greater good of the human race.

June 31, 2020

Dear United States Citizen,

Due to the new wave of COVID-19, we have enacted martial law, along with the Cubicle Program to help keep you and your family safe. You and your friends and family in Denver, CO should report to Denver Airport within the next three days.

This plan was set in motion in 1980, for events like this one. It states that you will only be in the Cubicle for two weeks while Denver, CO is disinfected completely by members of a special sect of the US National Guard. Do not bring any personal items except for a communication device, which will be cleaned and returned within three to four days. After a complete disinfection process, you will be assigned your Cubicle. More details will be explained once you have settled in your temporary home. We hope you enjoy your stay.

Jerome Adams

Dr. Jerome Adams, Surgeon General of the United States

Ba-Boom... Ba-Boom... Ba-boom... Ba-Boom

“Jeremy, I swear to *God* if you don’t stop throwing that damn ball at our window... I will not hesitate to cause you bodily harm at the first chance.”

I have to think for a second, because it’s not like there is any way I can be scary when he’s, like, a head taller than me, and when we will only be able to share a Cubicle in a year, when he turns 18. When the Program had been in use for five years, the government decided that the best genetic matches in the same area live next to each other from ages 12-17, and together from 18 until someone dies. I knew I was unlucky, but I didn’t truly know how bad my fortune was until I was moved next to a 12 year old boy at about 11 and a half.

“Oh wow. That was really scary. I’m scared, shrimp.”

“Don’t call me that,” I growl.

“Sorry, let me apologize. Come up to the window.”

I hesitate. Even though I’ve spent 5 years next to this insufferable toe-rag, he still never ceases to amaze me with his utter stupidity. He’s not always stupid, like when I was 14, he comforted me about my mother’s death.

“Seriously, Pip, come over,” coos Jeremy.

When he uses my name, he’s usually serious, so I oblige, only to have that stupid rubber ball fly right to my face with a *Thoonk*. I put my right hand on my heart and my left in the air, and proclaim, “I, Pip Mills, Citizen 655321 of the Cubicles beneath a freaking demon horse, pledge that I will rip out the throat of Jeremy Winchester, Citizen 655217 of the Denver Airport Cubicles, upon the removal of our window.”

“Demon Horse?” he laughs from the adjacent cube room.

“Yeah, there’s some statue above ground of a blue horse with red eyes.”

“And you know this because you remember being brought here at two years old?”

“I know this because I read, J.”

The lights turn off. I roll my eyes and walk back to my bed, hiding a small smile. *No Pip, you hate him, you don't enjoy being in his company, and you definitely do not want the window removal to happen sooner rather than later.* Wow, I love being a teenager with “emotions”.

Ba-Boom... Ba-Boom... Ba-Boom... Ba-Boom... Ba-Boom
I blink awake and look blankly at the clock on the wall of the corridor.

March 23, 2034, 01:53:16 AM

“Outstanding move, Winchester. Didn’t know that ball could be more annoying than it already is,” I say.

From the other side of the glass, he snorts, “I know. I’m always managing to impress you, Mills.”

I roll over and try to go back to sleep, but the boy just keeps bouncing his ball off of our barrier. Before I can protest, my body moves itself to be sitting upright on the side of the bed. He stops bouncing the ball.

“Did you know that rubber comes from trees? Like, outside trees. When I can’t sleep I think of us sitting under a tree. Not really doing anything, just sitting together. Then we climb the tree, climb to the very top you know, well I guess neither of us really know, but at the top the sun, the real sun, is shining on our faces, and we can see for miles around. It comforts me, the thought of you and I going on an adventure together, exploring places that haven’t been explored in decades. Pip and Jeremy, conquerors of outside, the unstoppable duo.”

At this he waves his hands in front of his face like he’s unrolling a banner, like in the movies. He smiles the biggest happiest smile I have ever seen, and for just a moment, I can’t see beneath the surface of it. I get up and sit in front of the window with my forehead resting against the glass.

“What’s wrong, J? You only say more than two sentences at a time when something is bothering you,” I sigh.

He scoots up to the barrier, his forehead resting where mine is on the glass. He begins speaking with a smirk.

“Pippy, I’ve been thinking. What if I broke the window? What would happen? It would be like a small adventure.”

I start to laugh, but when I look back, my best friend and the source of all my annoyance is absolutely stone faced.

“Oh, you mean actually,” I say quizzically.

“Yes, actually, you imbecile.”

“Wow, big word, congratulations.”

“Thanks,” he smiles, “you called me that once and I remembered.”

“Well, I don’t know what happens if the window breaks early, but I don’t think we should find out.”

That seems to settle the matter for him. He stands up, turns around, and walks back to his bed. Suddenly, he pivots and runs full force at the window, and the whole thing shatters. He runs directly into me, effectively knocking us both over. As we laugh among the glass, we don’t notice the alarms blaring, the disinfectant spray pouring into both rooms, or the red dots focussed on our heads, as the men with assault rifles stand ready to fire. ♦



“The Skies over Manhattan”
Hayden Reed

COVID-19 Diaries

These excerpts are compiled from multiple anonymous COVID-19 Diaries written by Heathwood students.

I just hate quarantine so much. I feel like it's a major test in my life. When my best friend died more than eight months ago, one of the most helpful things I heard was "God is testing you. It's horrible, but one day, somebody else is gonna be in your position and you're gonna be able to help them through it." So ever since quarantine started, I can't help but think that this one just another test of my life. A test for me to prove myself, learn who I am, not let this stop me from being the best person I can be, and pull through. My mom runs a school and right now she is the most stressed out I have ever seen, so I do whatever I can to help her out.

Those few times I went to Publix, I was extremely stressed out for some reason. I didn't think I would be, I just thought I'd be extremely cautious around people. But when I walked into that store, seeing everybody with gloves and masks made me feel a type of anxiety I never knew I could feel. I barely touched anything, and didn't touch anything I didn't need. Seeing everybody moving so carefully just stressed me out so much, I would even catch myself holding my breath every so often. It's kind of scary to me to think that the new social conformity is to be scared. I don't want to live my life in fear, fear of going out to the public, but because of Covid-19, we have to.



After that I went for a drive, I just really needed some fresh air. I went to the gas station by Heathwood and just

stared at the welcome sign. I wish I was at school with my friends.

Today was good and bad. I went to Greenlawn today to visit Jake. It has been 8 months since his passing and throughout this pandemic I have had a lot of time to think. Most of today I just sat outside and interviewed my Aunt for the 60's interview. I saw the joy and happiness on her face when I asked her questions and it brought her memories back. For those couple of hours I felt like I was free, like this "Pandemic" never happened. But when I left, all of the bad feelings came back.

I was clearing out my basement and I saw my shotgun in its case. It reminded me about sporting clays. That I had signed up for all of the events, Trap, Skeet, and Sporting Clays. I was looking forward to the season and how I was doing it for Jake because he was on the team and we shot together. I only got a quarter through the season and I love shooting. I missed shooting with my best friends. I missed going to shoot with my dad and us having talking and hanging out on the car ride down.

Today after school I went to visit my great Aunt — to cut her grass. I love going to my aunt's house. We talk and she also helps me sometimes with my school work. We talk about a lot of things while I am over. About school, sports, COVID-19, the beach, etc.... So that was my highlight of the day talking to my aunt —.

Today was slow, My parents went to work today so I was alone for most of the day. I was feeling tired and really wanted to get out of the house. So I went to Green Lawn to visit Jake. I just felt that I needed to talk to someone, you know.



Tuesday, April 28: This weekend the children under 13 years old have gone out to the streets for one hour allowed by the government, today the news said that the cases were going down little by little and that after allowing a part of the population to go out as long as with precautions, it has transmitted to me the feeling that I haven't had for weeks, HOPE. I have started to see things with another face, hoping I will see my friends and family SOON, even , I will be able to go to the beach.

Friday, May 1: I am wondering how this is gonna change the whole world. Are we gonna be able to live like a year ago? Is this gonna change our habits? Are we gonna see people the other way? Is this gonna change the relationship between friends? Are we gonna be afraid to touch each other? I have been asking all these questions the whole day. I need the world as it was a year ago, I need to hug, kiss my friends and family without any type of fear.

Wednesday, May 6: This morning, I was talking with my sister about prom. In August 2019, a few days before taking my flight, I was so excited, and one of the reasons why was PROM. I know it's sounds stupid, but I always used to watch American movies, with this dance call "prom" and I couldn't believe I was gonna live it. I already had my prom dress, it was gonna be pink but not pink haha. So yeah, prom was cancelled too, I was so disappointed, I am never gonna have the prom experience. But I guess everything happens for a reason.



Apr 30th, 2020: This is the first month of quarantine at my aunt's house in Virginia. It might be almost the second month of social distancing. We bought a game called Jenga

Classic Game on Amazon and played in the afternoon. Before the quarantine, we never thought that we would spend time playing games like that and put down our phones for almost two hours. In a positive way, it is a perfect time for us to enjoy family time and do something we did not get a chance to do before. I was looking over our yearbook for this year and it draws me back into those days when we were still gathered as a community at school.

May 11th, 2020: We went out to Lowe's and Home Depot and bought some flowers to plant in the backyard. We saw 70% of people were wearing their face masks and doing a great job protecting themselves. It is almost summer and we thought it would be the best season to plant flowers. After lunch, I went out to help my aunt to plant. It was not easy work, but I look forward to their bloomings. I hope when blossom comes, the pandemic will end as well.

May 13th, 2020: I want to share a quote from George Dan today,

“May the stars carry your sadness away,
May the flowers fill your heart with beauty,
May hope forever wipe away your tears,
And, above all, may silence make you strong.”

At this difficult time, we should stay optimistic and look for the beauty of life.



I hope to one day be able to sit my kids down and show them my writing--how I was once a sixteen year old girl, living in an world facing a major pandemic that briefly froze us in time; how I was once a sixteen year old girl, struggling with anxiety and fear for my future; how I was once a sixteen year old girl in love, scared of being heartbroken again. I

want to share these thoughts and experiences with my own children, for I think they all circle back around to the three things I've thought about most during this time--1. It all gets better at some point, if not automatically, then over time. 2. Unnecessary worrying is you hurting yourself more than anyone else could ever hurt you; trust is rebuilt over time and with someone new you should start fresh and give yourself a real chance at happiness. 3. And finally, you are bigger than what is making you anxious.



Today was amazing. I went to the lake with my best friend — and jumped into the freezing cold water with a skimpy bikini on. For moments I entirely forgot about the virus. We laid out in the sun, soaking up freedom. Topics of conversation ranged from death to the shape of the clouds slowly passing us by. We talked, sang, cried, and laughed till our stomachs hurt. Today wasn't special, it was normal.

Another mental breakdown. Slowed movement and fiery headaches. I can't even remember exactly what I was overthinking. I needed —, but he wasn't there. So I cried and he cried. I replayed one of my favorite songs over and over. “To catch the sun, to catch the sun” is impossible.

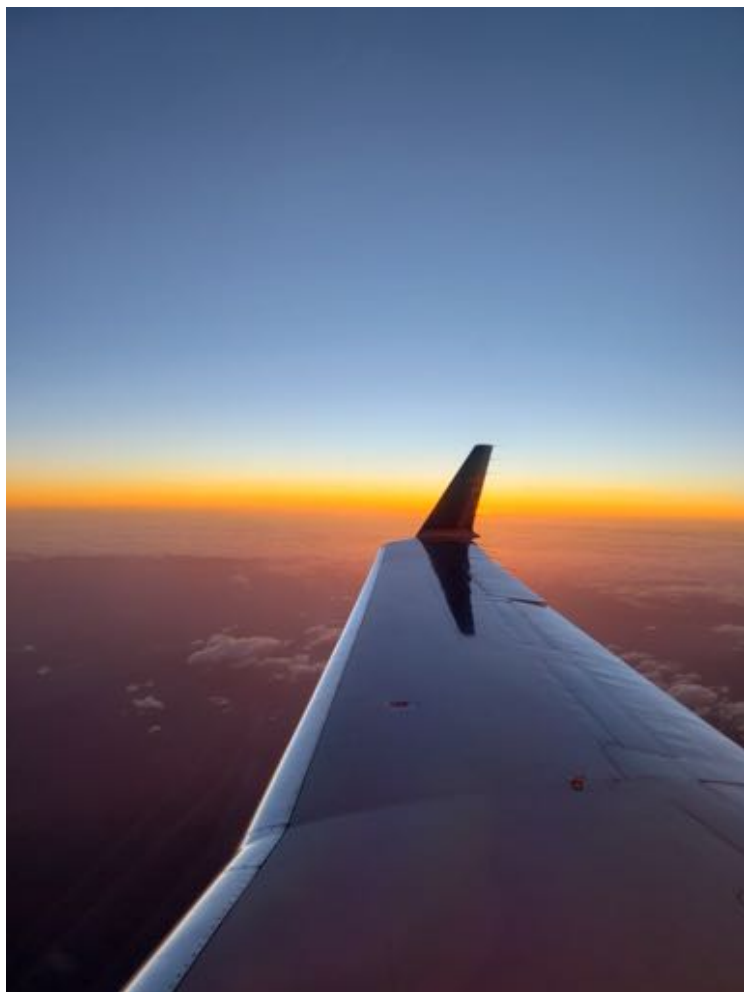
Impulsive decisions resulted in me cutting my braids off. I was only trying to convince myself that hair doesn't define beauty and my real hair should be enough to satisfy me. I truly believe these statements. Although European beauty standards told me that my skin isn't light enough, my hair is too short, and my eyes are too dark to ever be beautiful. So I pretend not to have a personality in front of people who would brand my opinion as aggression and my sadness as anger.





“World Trade Center Oculus”

Constance McCants



“Sunset over Kentucky”

Andrew Sobel

The Lady Who Tormented Me

By Ethan Smith

Running used to be waking up at 7 AM for a daily punishment. Recently, in light of the current circumstances, I have gotten lazier and have been putting back my castigation until 7 PM. Of course, my laziness isn't the *only* excuse why I've put back my running for so long; it's also school. I set my first alarm at 7, knowing that I will subconsciously turn it off. That is where Alarms 2-4 come in, each separated by 10 minutes. By the last alarm I am usually groggy but awake, often sleeping through all of my alarms. This is the first time where I have had a *complete* rule over my sleep schedule. It's a sign of responsibility and independence.

When I was in freedom, I had completely different motivations to run. Some made sense, like staying in shape, being part of a team, or socializing more, but other motivations, such as running to run, are impossible to explain. The feeling of listening to music, walking when no one is watching, and being alone while running might've been the main reason why I ran. Quarantine has given me a different perspective on running, a perspective that is, well, negative. Just leaving my cousins' house in Kings Grant, I was searching for a *good* reason to complain. At first, I noticed that some people had left their mailboxes open, but it didn't fulfill my greedy desire. But then, I felt the "*ba-bamp*" of a speed bump, a large speed bump, and thought that it was the Holy Grail. Oh, it sounded so perfect in my head; a speed bump, with one every 20 feet and a stop sign alternating between each! But then I realized that I'd only been driving for a month, so I couldn't relate, *again*. While harrowing over my near accomplishment, I nearly hit a middle-aged woman running slower than I walk in the middle of my lane. She was obviously new to this, probably thinking that she'd go down a couple of pounds almost instantly. Some might think, "Oh good for her, she's exercising. How nice!"

However, I had a different thought come to mind.

“That lady, she did that on purpose. She is running *just* so she can cut people off. She is the *worst* kind of sadistic.”

Yes, that might seem a little extreme to a simpler person, but I am a complex person with emotions.

“That just (*explicit word*) pisses me off,” I mumbled.

“You speaking to me?”

Oh, I forgot to mention, my mother was sitting in shotgun and my father and sister in the backseat, so they saw everything.

“Did you see THAT?”

Looking around, confused, she responded, “Yes, I did see that car driving, if that’s what you’re asking.”

“What? No! That lady who just cut me off! She saw and heard a car behind her, THIS CAR, but she still stayed in the middle of the road!”

“Oh, cut her some slack. She was just running.”

“Yeah, but on the right side of the road away with her back to oncoming traffic. She doesn’t realize what she’s doing. There’s a difference between someone who runs and a runner. That lady is someone who runs. I am, however, a runner.”

Laughing in a sarcastic manner, my mother responded, “You have to run to be a runner, and you haven’t done that in a loooong time,” half-expecting me to recant my statement.

“FINE. Just to prove that I’m better than her, I will start running again. But no promises.”

Knowing that I am quite lazy, I thought that there was a slim chance that I would actually run.

My father, a quiet man, finally gave his opinion: “That doesn’t make sense.”

“OK. She is just running cause she has time. I’m a seasoned runner; that’s the difference. Anyways, I’ll be responsible and independent enough so that I actually run.”

The passengers *gasped* in unison.

“Unbelievable!” my mother said.

“Shocking!” my sister exclaimed.

“Impossible!” my father declared.

That car ride marked the first time I definitively decided that I would run. My soccer coach didn’t motivate me to run, my cross country coach didn’t motivate me to run, even my mother taking away my phone didn’t motivate me to run, but what did motivate me was the “running” of another person, something that somehow made me jealous. It might be a bad motivator, but now that I am running, my motivations have changed to a healthy standpoint which turned to incentives.

Fast forward a couple of hours, to 6:50 PM, when I finally decided that I’d run 4 miles at 7:10. It hadn’t rained for a while, so I decided that it was best for me to run outside. Usually, I’d stop and walk every mile or so, but this time was different. This time, I ran the whole way. I’d like to believe that it was because I had independently chosen to run with self-motivation. ♦