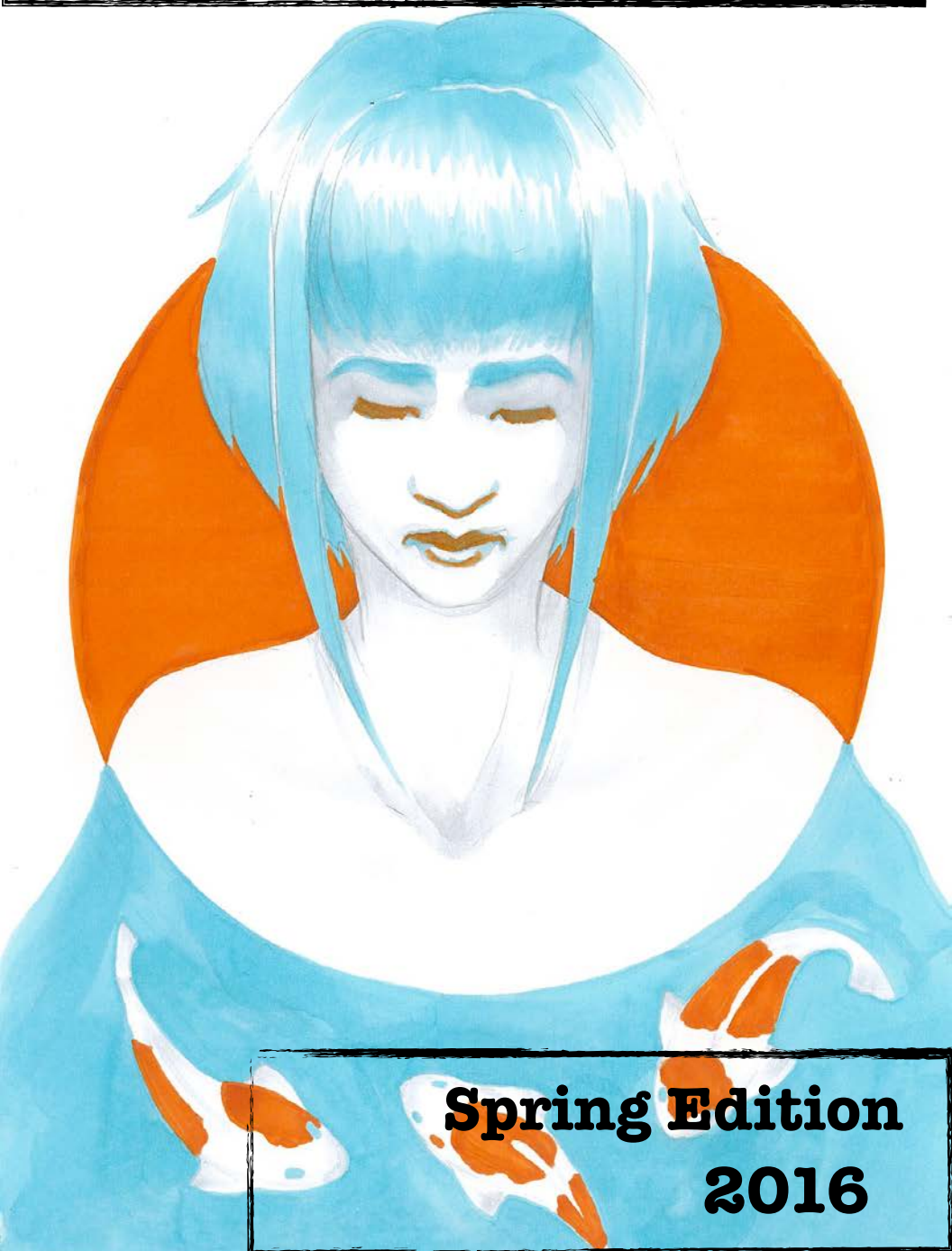


PVHS Literary Magazine **illiterature**



Spring Edition
2016

illiterature

Established in 2000, the Putnam Valley High School Literary Magazine meets weekly to encourage creativity in writing and to organize events that inspire students to pursue writing and the arts.

Members of the PV Lit Mag 2015-16:

Jadyn Marshall, Olivia Schmidt, Kelly Greenwood, Vicki Ponarski, Katie O'Leary, Emi Suzuki, Dimitri Tomais, Lexi MacNeil, Emma Frattarola, Gabe Heady, Jaclyn Pedoty, Matt Schwartz, Olivia Weise, Sarah Boras, Veronica Liszewski, Walter Wacaser
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Check out our website: pvcsd.org/litmag

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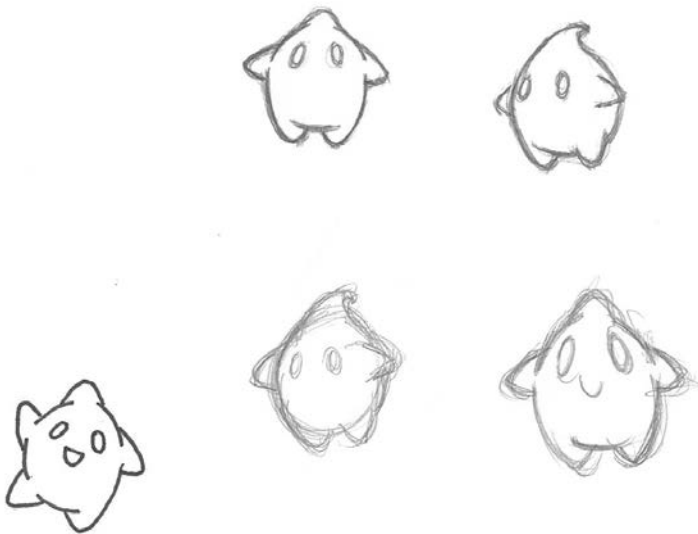


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Art by Emi Suzuki

Nature,

In all honesty
I'd trade all I see,
My whole legacy,
For a dead pine tree.

I'd settle for a land
That can expand, boughs fanned,
In the cup of your hand,
In a wood made of sand.

A tree can be dead in the ground
Yet stand astute, renowned, crown
browned,
Trunk round, roots found, crying
around.

I'd hate a desert,
A small spurt of dirt
On a flirt's hurt skirt

I don't want to move forward
Abandoned and untoward
Clearing a path with a sword.

I'm scared to freeze a breeze
That can tease seas with ease,
And sneeze when bumbling bees
Wheeze on weak insect knees.

I'd like sap
That can trap
Chaps in naps,
Bark that claps
Every rap
On the map.

I want to grow tall
Long before I fall,
Mark wood with my scrawl
Before curtain call.

I hope to live past
The mast of a cast,
Want to be aghast
And held much too fast
At the very last.

I don't want to grow long
With a heavy bird's song,
Too headstrong to belong.

I'm afraid of ambitions:
Those suspicions on missions
Please, please give me
morticians
Don't petition magicians.

You've heard how I've
prayed,
Seen plants laid, manmade,
Smelled first aid gore stayed,
Launched crusades, grenades,
Red brocade cascades.
And now I have bayed
A chance to be made
As a tree, unswayed
Shading in a glade
Eventually grayed.

Sincerely,
A. Leaf

I Don't Pine
Jadyn Marshall

Shape Shifting
Veronica Liszewski

Driving down my road I look
To the left and I see the moon,
To the right I see the sun,
Both half cast,
Waiting for the other to take over.
Now knocking on your door
The moon has risen whilst
The sun has sunk to slumber.
It is a night for the stars.
Together at last, we pay for our wants,
And because we have no beliefs,
Indian rubies set the price for the
Forgiveness of sins to be forgotten.

Onward we walk; there are mistakes to be made,
Names to yell, and stories to tell,
We are just boys frolicking in the woods,
Looking for warmth, and the light to an unavoidable
Ultimatum.

Between the trees of grey, colors swiftly soften,
Whilst the stars show their worth. The sky is a
Sadistic sapphire, and its sparkles
Laugh because they know how beautiful they
Seem, and they know that I will never
Grasp them. The stars know too much.
Shapes shift as well,
Triangles I once knew lose their edge and are only grounded circles Now.
The shapes have a plan.

Alone,
I walk with no path set in mind,
Only following footsteps of those before me,
Hoping they knew more than I do now.
The sun is rising as it has for the last
Four billion years, however;
The world is not the same as it was
Yesterday.
Today,
I look through new eyes.



Art by Emi Suzuki

The Restrictive Nature Behind the Nomenclature of “The Final Frontier”

Brendan Matthews

Why must we set our standards so low,
as to label only what we know,
as the “Final Frontier”

The universe is an immense space,
Consisting, of trees, dogs, and perhaps an intergalactic race.
Yet we label it “Space,”
as if to imply it can be contained.

We know not the boundaries,
but yet we claim,
to my astonishment
it is in fact a “universe.”

Assuming it to be boundless,
we can only assume its roundness,
such as a gas expands,
to fill its container.

But with no container,
and with no retainer,
how can something really exist?

In order for there to be a “space,”
there must be something bigger.

With a container of epic proportions,
who is to say,
that another “Multiverse,”
is not so far away.

Interplanetary,
the term becomes minute,
as interspersary,
becomes the new norm of distance.

Light speed is shattered,
By the speed of dark which appears,
The 3×10^8 meter per second boundary,
Disappears.

Our proportions are shattered,
As we find the true meaning of matter.
We must let go of our restrictions,
Before they turn into our contradictions.



Art by Emi Suzuki



Last Night I Dreamt
Olivia Schmidt

They shine through our eyes
Intertwining
With our corneas, our souls
They penetrate
Deep
Deep
In the dark storm-blue
The granite
The ruby
And the cloudy
They shine through
The stars
In the pitch-black dome
Light up the jewels
Soften the rainstorm
Disperse the clouds
And I can see again

I fix my eyes
On them
As I tumble
Into the sky
Find
Constellations
Consultations
Consolation
Conversation
In them
As grasses
Brush
Against my bare feet
A bare goodbye
As I barely
Keep my eyes
On the stars

Letter From Across the Sea
Olivia Schmidt



Photo by Olivia Weise

*The grass
Is green again here.
The cherry blossoms—
Oh!
You should see i.
How beautiful they look,
I wish you could see them.
Everything here
Is fine.
Work,
Is a breeze.
It seems easy now,
But then again,
It always did.
That's why I—
How is
Dad?
Does he miss
His youngest
Yet?
His oldest,
Now married?
How is
The happy couple?
And the middle child
Does he like
The classes he has?
Is his teaching
Going well?
Is it
Still cold there?
At home?*

*The buildings here
Are so tall.
And there aren't
Many trees.
You have to
Go out into
The countryside
To see them*

*The apartment is small
But
I got some plants
And a new
Cookbook,
Recipes
From home.
The food here
Is good.
Not like yours though,
Mama.*

*I miss you,
Mama.
I can't come home
In the summer though.
I can't come home
Until Christmas.*

*Send
My love
To everyone.*

The dusk soaked the field in gray shadow, as if a damp rag were tented over the horizon. We lounged on the roof of our old elementary school, inhaling tar and disappointment, flicking ashes at the scraggly soccer field below. The grass was dirty with sneaker prints and skinned knee trenches, and the darkness made it difficult to tell where our goals ended and the jungle-gym began.

Even harder to discern was the space between the trees, the thin border of wildlife between the school and private property. We'd wanted to have our party there, but we couldn't remember how to use the flashlights on our phones by the time it was dark enough to light up. The woods were unknowable and therefore suspicious; they were always patrolled by lunch monitors during the day, and were a place where Big Bad Wolves knew how to lurk.

So we were astonished, devastated, when the first girl appeared from the tree line wearing a scarlet felt coat. The coat was cut like a Christening dress, but we didn't need a flashlight to tell us that it had never been worn for such an occasion. Her black curls mushroomed up from her scalp, stoppered only by a plate-like beret.

The second girl was twice as tall as the first, and was reedy in her purple suede. She looked our age and familiar, but we made no sound when we called to her, so she didn't look up beyond the brim of her violet beret.

The last girl trailed behind, lingering like perfume in a locker-room. She was a twin of the first in stature and face, but otherwise demonstrated little resemblance. Her clothing was the color of a contact lens, and her blue beret flattened her hair around her ears. Her footsteps were measured and reluctant, and she inspired jeers within us.

It was initially easy to assume that the tallest girl directed the other two, but in fact the small twins were the ones holding the strange assembly's reins. The red, babyish girl's shoulders strained with the effort of hauling the purple girl, and we expected to hear pops from her joints. The blue, limpid girl pushed subtly, to the point where her movements were almost entirely obscured by her transparent coat.

The girls went first to the swings, as all children did in our town. The swings were long and provided little space for pumping. The smaller girls jumped around the purple girl and pulled and pushed her until she relented. She drew her charges back on the swing set and set them loose, one up and one down, like a polar pendulum.

The red girl forced her body skyward until she was higher than the purple girl.

The blue girl trailed her feet diffidently, stumbled, and fell off. She circled around the swing set to avoid being rammed by patent leather feet, and joined the purple girl at a safe distance behind the red one's swing.

We cheered when the red girl took flight and landed on her ankles from an impossible height, though the other two girls seemed unconcerned. We thought the stunt was marvelous, but perhaps she'd practiced it to the point of ease. Our encouragement died, though bits of laughter stayed wedged between our teeth, caught among the smoky leaves of adolescence.

The red girl leaped over the still-swaying swing and retrieved the other girls, who fell obediently back into the red-purple-blue formation. They made progress around the playground this way, until the red girl hiked up a slide (which was not as tall as we were). The red girl raced ahead and lay in wait on the top platform. She conspicuously plucked the purple beret off the purple girl's head. The purple girl made no motion to retrieve the hat, but the blue girl was outraged. She raced ahead and leaped indignantly for the hat, held above by the relentless red girl. The blue girl grabbed the shoulders of the red felt coat and pulled down, finally sinking her buoyant twin. She retrieved the beret, balled it up in her fists, and threw it down to the ground.

The purple girl, who had been beside herself during the fight, tumbled after it and fell down on her neck.

She did not look up to see the red and blue girls when they came down the slide.

She did not return to the woods when they did.

She did not burrow underground.

She did, however, come up to see us.

We shunned her for coming too soon, and she stayed long after we left.

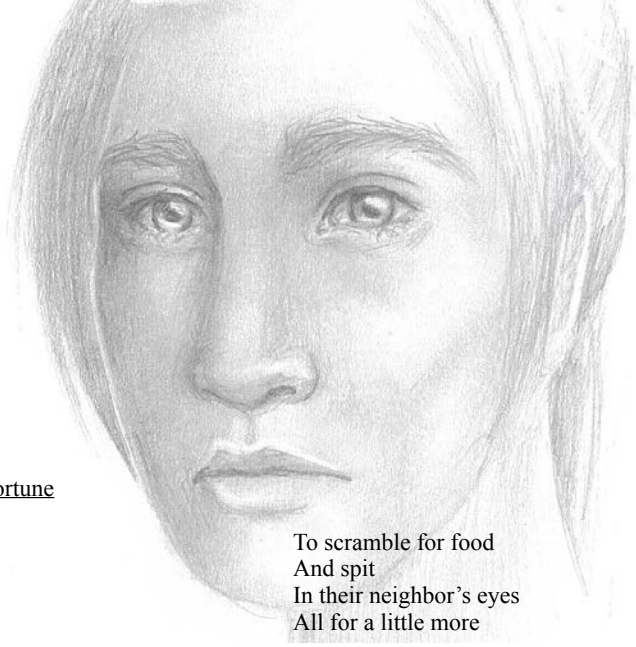
The Assembly, or The Death of an Ego

Jadyn Marshall

Caps Off

Olivia Schmidt

(Inspired by Elie Wiesel's Night
in Mrs. Tarkington's class)



Humanity hangs in the balance of misfortune

They turn away

It swings from the tree

Abandoned

It bores holes through the hearts

Of those

time

Turned to beasts

The blank eyes

Judging

Lowering the gazes

Of the shamed, the damned

Those who hanged him to die

Some cheer his death

They say

“He deserved to die

He is guilty of misfortune”

He starved

And he pleaded

And he chose to hang on to his morality

He is only guilty of not trying hard enough to survive

His eyes tell the people below

“Take off your caps

Do not become beasts

To crawl beneath the whip

Of those less humane

Than yourselves

I died

You survive

You abandoned your ethics

And morals

I kept

Faith

Love

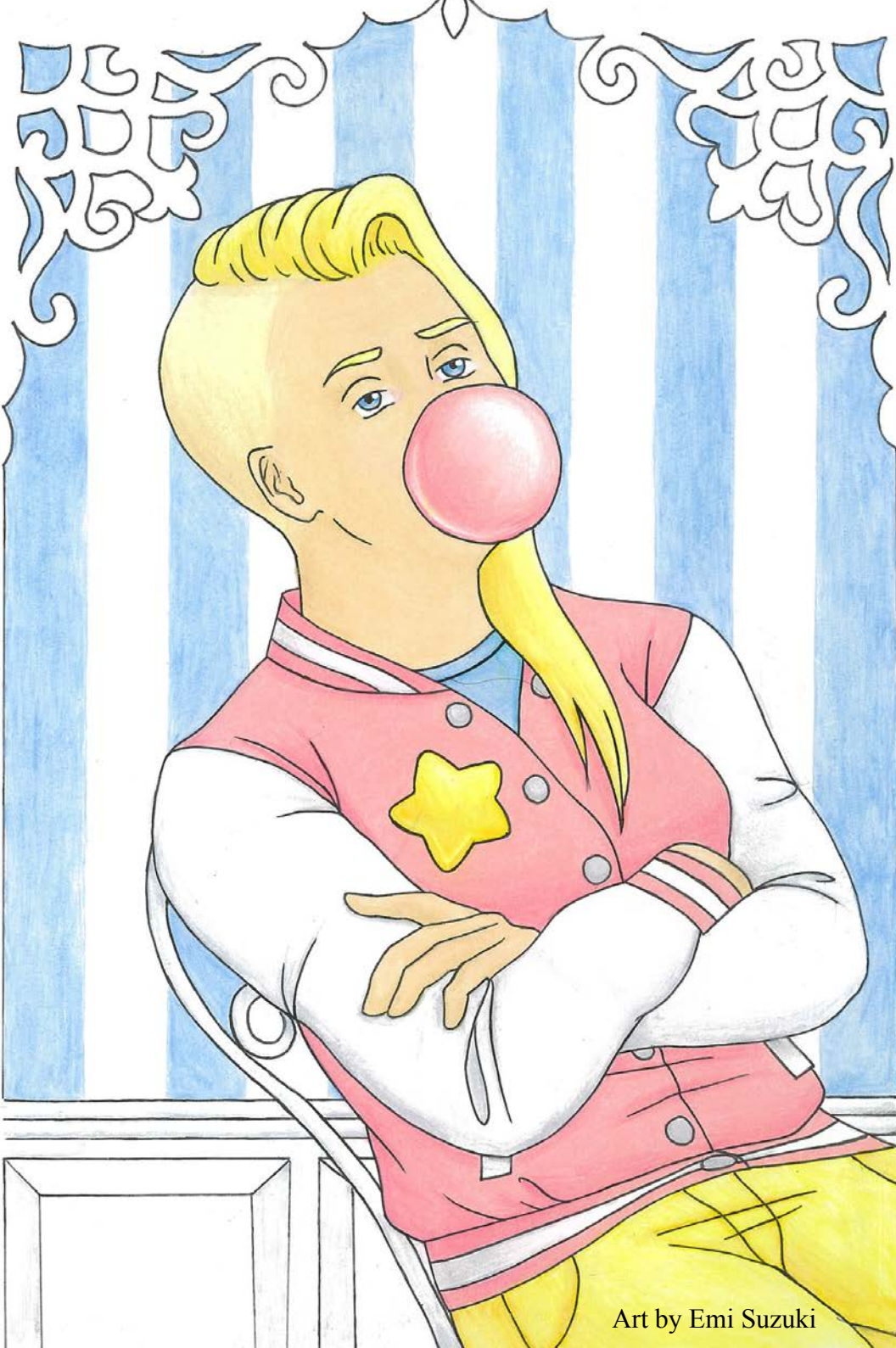
Mercy

And yet I hang”

To scramble for food
And spit
In their neighbor's eyes
All for a little more

In return for a little
Less soul
They say
“What a cheap price
How lucky we are”

Art by Emi Suzuki



Art by Emi Suzuki

So Close! But We Were Fooled
Olivia Schmidt

The angels
All wear fur caps
And heavy shawls
Snowy white and glistening
The forsythia
Have brilliant highlights
Where the cold dew
Blew fairy kisses
Gently, gently
In the wind
The water on the pond
Is wrinkled
And vibrant
A little boy
Trapped in the body
Of a wise
Old man
Just a little tired of living
But the blue breaks through
And the clouds scuttle
Across on cold breezes
Softened
The grey blown out of them

The church
Oh—so quiet and still
On the cold, cold
False winter morning
Bony hands clutched together
And small ones
Tiny ones
Holding the hope of the future
When the sweet cold vanilla drops
Turn warm in mouths
And spring blooms



The Grass Is Always Greener

By Katie O'Leary

What once was a lush green meadow is now a garden,
Sown from the rotting corpses of what remained from the woodland
community,
Which happily called the lea their home until they were
Overthrown by maggots and worms.
A smog of death and decay so thick that you choke
Radiates fiercely from the nursery
Smothering the surrounding pastures and
Tainting the vivid pigmentation,
Driving those which inhabit far away

Photo by Olivia Weise

Dialogue

Walter Wacaser

Ren turned the stone over in his hand.

“Why is it green. I hate green.” He was speaking to god. Or, at least, the voice in his head that claimed to be god.

“No need to speak out loud, I can hear your thoughts when you direct them towards me.” God responded. When god spoke it was an odd experience for Ren, you could tell two things from god’s words. You got the words and the sentences yes, but you also felt the emotion behind the words. He was feeling a sense of amusement from god.

“It helps me think,” Ren responded out loud. What does this stone do anyways?

“It gives you power,” god said. A positive emotion attached to this statement, but also something else.

“Did she have to die? The girl you killed to get me this thing.”

“Naturally,” god said “I made the power of those stones violent, and bloody, to prove my skill and strength. Each one must pass through death. The strongest will is the one who is willing to kill the most.”

Ren began to walk. He was standing on an empty dirt road. His traveling cloak protecting him from the chill day. Winter was coming like a beast from around the corner, gnawing on the heels of any passersby.

“I don’t want to kill.” The ground began to shake and his head was filled with laughter. The sick twisted laughter of a god, a god turned evil.

The Unnoticed Plaza

By Cassandra Link

Green, red, white
It was just like the others
They had the same structure
The same design
The difference
Once was covered in
Spectators
The other put on a show
for an empty plaza.
The sun began to set
A dancer swayed in the warmth
A woman settled on a bench,
dipping her bread in oil
An old man walked his dog
It was theirs,
Those who lived here
Their escape
The breathe granted to them
by tourist ignorance
While they all looked at the Florence Cathedral
Those who knew, basked in the last light
Of the unnoticed plaza

Storm

By Gabriel R. Heady

Booming sounds to make the ears go numb
Thunder crackling like a large kettledrum
Lightning is making burnt spots in the grass
Each one being of a large mass
Every color is worse than the last
Shooting off a painful laser blast
Rain which resembles a tsunami
Smacking the ground like pastrami
High measure of water, skies full reach
Going so high it can cover an entire island beach
Blizzards made of ice and snow that is blowing
Across the ground is a white sheet showing
Hard cold hail made into a circular ice ball
Hitting the ceiling and bouncing off the wall
Putting holes in the windows of expensive sports cars
Sound of broken glass when breaking against metal bars
In Kansas you see a tornado going for a run
Just stand and wait for the air spinning fun
Tearing a barn house so fast you'll wow
If you are lucky you might see a very large cow
A hurricane is coming so you sure better get going
Don't believe me then you'll soon be knowing
Size so wide and spinning like a top
Wind so bad it will make you drop
Dangerous weather that turns a man into a child
Crazy weather that makes stunt devils go wild

My generation slouches

To make ourselves smaller.

Like iPhones.

Our shoulders are mudslides,

Our spines the canes

That our grandfathers stooped on.

Our grandfathers are the problem, actually.

Grandmothers too, and parents and peers.

All the people wearing boots

With deep treads.

It's all their fault.

Well, maybe not all.

Also to blame is gravity.

We are not Flintstone kids,

We are not tigers

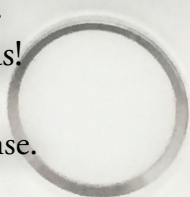
Or charming leprechauns.

Advertisements? We defy ads!

We are too techy,

Too savvy for our own nonsense.

Who needs a TV when you



Carry the world in your pocket?
At the click of a button
For \$4.99 a month
Ads disappear forever!
We obliterate them!
They are banished to the world of the cloud,
Where they will be struck
By lightning and eaten by a fox that sounds
Suspiciously like a telephone.

Pardon, an *old* telephone.

The distinction used to matter,
Though now communication has been solved
So that it has less and less matter.
Can you see it sideways? Too big.

We charge through life,
Splitting apart the atomic barrels of
knowledge.
We master a universe
Which has gone
From infinite to compressible
In picoseconds.
Don't cover the moon with your thumb—
Cover the galaxy with your thumb drive!
Closure vastly improves when frosted with a
“.zip”.

We are the generation of
The internet latchkey kids.
Why leave a note on the fridge
When you can pop open a tab
On the omnipotent Google?
Birds and bees?
Those are for nerds and fleas.
Why seize the day when you
Can seize the data from the cloud?
Clouds always reminded me of trees anyway,
Ever since I got tired of
Drawing individual leaves in kindergarten.

We don't have curiosity anymore,
The full blooming, two-hundred pound,
Weeks on end
Curiosity that drove people to
Discoveries like penicillin,
The printing press.
Big things. Touchable things.
Instead, we have Google.

See how I fit a whole world of information
Into one word?
I slouched
Even though I knew
That smaller isn't better,
Even though I knew
That the secret to life lurks
Under the internet's
Tech-tonicplates
In the metallic core that grounds it here.

I'm waiting for the quest for information
To eat away at meaning
Like a weightless termite in a gray lab coat
Puppeteered by the passive voice
Until even a word on a screen
Is too broad and straight
Like a saw against
The tallest orchard tree
In Eden.

I can't wait for the day
When gravity gives up
Conspicuously,
Like a kid who's too good
At hide and seek.

It'll hide in the grave
With our slumping shoulders.

We have to learn
That we can't just
Make things smaller
Until we don't see their origins.
Or even worse,
Try to press
(command z)

**Postulating Posture, or
Rant from an Internet
Latchkey Kid**
Jadyn Marshall

My Light is Gone

Jaelyn Pedoty

*I remember being in the sun.
It was warm and safe.
Its touch was soothing; I loved living my days in
its arms.
The light held me close, cradled me as a mother
would, to its bosom.
It never failed me, and thanks to the sun I lived
my life in splendor.
You watched me frolic in the warmth of its love,
and I knew you were jealous.
You convinced me your arms were warmer,
your touch softer, and I believed you.
Then suddenly the world became darker as you
held me the Sun became distant.
I begged for you to let go, to let me keep the
small amount of sanity I had.
But tighter still you held me, and eventually it
was dark.
There was nothing left.
I had nothing left.
Then, you left me too.
And I was so cold.
I saw you yesterday though, happy, like I used to
be and I realized.
It was because of you I was in the darkness.
You stole my seat in the sun.*

This is a good time
A useless time
To tell you I'm looking for my cat.
He's called Buddy.

"It's not your fault."
I tell the phone numbly.
Because that's what you say

When you hate someone enough
That you want their pain
To bleed soft rivers
(But not totally or always).
And how pathetic it must be
To be less than human
(Or so some echo of logic
assures the sinners).

A singsong name,
A broken, already too-dead
Dying name,
And damaged oak leaves
Are the only reply.

She's calling for him, too.

The trees are tall and gaunt
In gray-brown coats
Like homeless people,
Homeless trees.
The squirrels are looking too blue,
And I'm wishing too hard
That she'd leave.
I could do better without her,
of course I could
(I actually couldn't,
But don't tell me that, okay?).

The sun is up,
But it hasn't opened its mouth yet.
It's sealed shut
With a line of clouds
That moan like matte lips.
The tree branches look sideways
From where I stand,
Like when I look at
The man in the moon,
Who smiles like
A lawyer who withdrew
An irrelevant question
Like a bloody peace sword.

And there's an ugly rock tongue
Sticking out of the mountain.
The rocks are slow moving,
Especially since
I keep checking under their shadows.
They come in conspiratorial clumps,
And I wonder whose
Bright idea it was
To put them like that.
I can never tell which one is the one
That's loose
(There's always one).

I'm halfway to
The top of the world,
The top of the small world,
When I see the mountain laurels,
Looking for all the world
Like mangled cat paws.

This is a good time,
A useless time,
To remind you I'm looking for my cat.
He's called Buddy.

Rhapsody in Blue is calling.
It's the ringtone that sounds classy
When it screams in class
("I don't understand,
'Coulda sworn it was on vibrate").
Rhapsody in Blue is crying
(because she couldn't see me over the ridge).
I want to hang up
So I can talk to him more,
Though I had already shut up
By then.
I start talking to him again.

And look at me go, singing!
Singing about cats and games
That lost their charm
too many mice ago.
I hear *Rhapsody*, and I ignore it
Until I know it's going away...
Then I scramble to catch the last note.
She wants me to come back down.

"The tree's right here," I tell her.
"I'm going up."
I hang up.

There's a hunting ladder
Kind of wedged against a tree,
Little handles sticking out like ribs.
There isn't much I could see up there
That I couldn't here.
I'm pretty high as it is.
I climb anyway
Until I'm surprised to see
That the seat is as close as it is.
The damned wood is in my way, though,
So I stare at it instead.
The bark near the metal is rubbed raw,
And I wonder which would break first:
The handles,
The straps,
The tree,
Or me?
And I guess that's a lesson
In perspective.
Like how denial makes you think
You could probably fly if you fell.
The world doesn't work the way it should.

The handles are rusty and
I don't wonder if this wasn't a bad idea.
Straps shiny like alien eyes
(The kind we had on the hammock that broke)
Seal the ladder to the tree.

I don't land on my feet.
I am not a cat.
I skidaddle it.
I'm good at that.
The sun opens its mouth in a wail
When I land.
I'm singing again,
Or begging.
It's kind of hard to tell
With the sun
Choking me.

I violently wrap myself
Around an ugly rock.
I scratch my belly on the lichen
When my shirt moves up my abdomen
I draw back and pet the rock.
The lichen breaks off in my hand
And I shudder as the wind brushes my hair
Over my shoulder.

I trip over a chunk of forever.
"His name's Buddy,"

I tell the sun.
"Yeah, I know. Heard you calling."
"Okay."
I thank the sun
As if it's already won.
It hasn't lost
Like I have.

Ten minutes to go down.

She's pacing around
Where I left her,
Pointing at the crows.
I panic at the dead meat birds,
Then relax.
They're a dead end.

Later I'm wondering
Why the hell people
Don't get their mailboxes fixed,
Because it's hard to put in our posters.

I stare at the Republican stars
On the road signs,
And wonder a bit about wishes
And technicalities.
Like, do wishes count
If you screw them up the first time?

I'd ripped out my eyelashes that morning,
Desperate to save him,
But I'd made the wrong wish
Out of habit.
And I'd blamed her—
In habit.

I act out of habit
And I only see the world
In strings of flashbulb memories
When my habits
Drop like coins
I'm too clean to pick up.

This is a good time,
A useless time,
To tell you I'm still looking for my cat.
He's called Buddy.

Buddy in Blue

Jadyn Marshall

I Don't Have Any Words

I don't like this.
By Jaclyn Pedoty

I don't like what you can do to me.

I am an author, a writer, words are the only things I can understand, manipulate and form,

I don't like this: is something about you.

I don't like what you can do to me.

I am an author, a writer, words are the only things I can understand, manipulate and form, but yet... there is something about you.

Something incomprehensible.

Usually I can describe people with the most basic of adjectives, but there is not one I can think of to describe you.

It is scary.

I am made up of words, but yet... somehow you are too

Pure for words.

Good god. . . you are too good for me.

It is horrifying to think as I do now that the true elixir of your beauty can never fall from anyone's lips. . . there is

It would just be impossible to find the words.

So, I guess there is only one thing I can do.

I will have to stay by you, for the rest of my days.

And maybe, when I lay on my deathbed like so many other great poets, I could finally write my masterpiece.

I find that many great writers died that way, stating their most intense thoughts right before their final breath.

Maybe only then will I be able to describe it.

Describe you. . . you are too good for me.

It is horrifying to think as I do now that the true elixir of your beauty can never fall from anyone's lips.

It would just be impossible to find the words.

So, I guess there is only one thing I can do.

I will have to stay by you, for the rest of my days.

And maybe, when I lay on my deathbed like so many other great poets, I could finally write my masterpiece.

I find that many great writers died that way, stating their most intense thoughts right before their final breath.

Maybe only then will I be able to describe it.

Describe you.

Taught to the Test

Jadyn Marshall

Scene One

The "Ditch," a deserted area of a high school campus. Early morning, before classes start. It's cold for the first day of June. Crows call for judgment in the background.

ALLISONE, or "ALL-IS-ONE" enters from stage left, wearing a backpack on one shoulder. She is serious as she takes her place center stage, a chess pawn with bureaucratic ambitions. She knows not what she does. Her voice is a test-taker's stream of consciousness, dominated by scripted regurgitation. She speaks to herself, with many pauses as she struggles to come up with "echoes." This is considered critical thinking. Some sentences come more easily than others. Sentences at the ends of monologues are hardest.

ALLISONE

I bet you don't know what today is. Is...today June first? First...for the first time my AP exams are over—*finis*, kaput, ceased! Ceased: verb, to discontinue an action. Actions...speak louder than words. Words are...I'm sorry, SAT PTSD strikes again. Again, the last tests that count are done! Done...with this, okay? Okay, cool; I'm about to do something illegal. Illegal stuff is wrong, I think. Thinking...is illegal, right? Right, because you aren't allowed to burn something that's copyrighted, even if you bought it with your own money, and I did. Did I just say that? That makes sense, because...besides, I'm on school property here! (*squeals*) Here is the Ditch, named partly for topography and partly for—

A warning bell rings offstage.

For students who D-I-T-C-H class. Classy kids cut class. Class is starting right now.

ALLISONE cues the second bell.

ALLISONE

Now my biological clock is set to Pavlov time, even though I'm a pyromaniac.

ALLISONE's backpack slips off her shoulders, and she kneels behind it. She pulls out an AP review book, with a flourish appropriate for Excalibur. She pulls out three more with much less melodrama. Also extracted are two sets of flash cards and amputated spiral notebook papers, shedding frills. ALLISONE plays with her review materials to find the best arrangement, which she decides is a teepee topped with a single index card, playing card style.

ALLISONE

Pyromaniac: noun, me. Methinks I am, at least. 'Least for another thirty-eight minutes anyway.

ALLISONE pulls out a pack of matches. She is Prometheus for all of two seconds, and then her watch kicks her into action. She is a tester with excellent pacing.

ALLISONE

Anyway, I had a little thought ten seconds ago—just a little one, don't shoot! Shoot me now, please. Please...I'm not done just because you called time on this exam. Examine this: now I get to sit and wonder about all of those questions I made "educated guesses" on. On which planet do guesses go to school? School of Guesses: a place where guesses accumulate student loans. Loan me some closure, please. Please, is that too much to ask? Ask me anything, I'm prepared. Prepare me for dissection, dissertation, denouncement and I'll pounce. Pounce

on this: I really need to get a life. Life...lasts for at least for another thirty-five days, seven hours, and fifteen minutes. Minutes until the scores are released. Release me from first grade; it's when I learned to count that high. (*loses focus, addresses the audience*) Hi. (*sees something on the ground*) High...is that a cigarette butt? But... I have to get out of here. (*she comes back to test-taking mode. She greets her review books and remembers her matches*) Here: Mr. AP review materials, say hello to my little friends. Friends...are matches made in heaven. Heaven...hates this. This...is me. Me...is not equivalent to I. I haven't slept for twenty-eight days.

BURNOUT walks onto the stage from stage left, shrugging off his usual swagger. He doesn't care what AP stands for, even if he knows what it means. He is not going to college in September, but he isn't a dropout. He just doesn't participate in this system. His burnout happened a long time ago, and it enlightened him. BURNOUT stops short, between left and center. The setting hasn't changed, but ALLISONE is now back in school, taking her exams. This is not a flashback. This is not a drill.

BURNOUT

What are you doing here?

ALLISONE gives BURNOUT a glare to wither raisins. There's no interaction allowed in a test.

BURNOUT

What are you doing here? Hello?

ALLISONE refuses to look at him. She can't believe he's talking to her. This is a

national exam. ALLISON replies with difficulty, trying to follow the rule of regurgitation.

ALLISONE

Hellodon'ttalktomewhat'reyoudoing?

BURNOUT

Recovering.

ALLISONE

(despite herself) Recovering...from what?

BURNOUT

Burnout.

ALLISONE

Out...of time, running out of time, please leave me alone.

BURNOUT

What are you doing here?

ALLISONE

Here...is where we take our real test. Test this: you're going to get me in trouble!

ALLISONE fumbles with her matches, trying to get back on task.

BURNOUT

I see.

BURNOUT watches as ALLISONE fails to light the matches. ALLISONE holds up the matches as if they are a pencil with a broken tip.

ALLISONE

See this? This has gotta be kidding me. Me, I haven't even started yet. Yet...okay, never mind.

Mind...over matter: I'm always prepared. Prepare for this: I have backup utensils.

ALLISONE looks in her bag and finds a lighter.

BURNOUT

You're out of juice.

ALLISONE

Juice...isn't important—wait, how can you know that? (*considers*) That wasn't in the review book.

BURNOUT

I don't use a review book to study. I learn.

ALLISONE can't respond. She's trying the lighter. He's right.

BURNOUT

Listen, I have a little piece of flame. Do you want it? I can share it.

ALLISONE

It...of course not. Not unless—you're crazy, we'll get caught cheating!

BURNOUT

It's not an answer. It's a flame. It's actually knowing something. Are you interested?

ALLISONE

Interest...is not an option. Options...are for the weak. Weeks...dedicated to studying for nothing...I guess maybe I could try it?

BURNOUT

But you can't use it for this. (*indicates the "bonfire"*) You have to share it.

I Missed You When You Were Gone

By Jaclyn Pedoty

I remember we danced last night.

I don't remember how we started, or why, but all I know is that your arms were around me.

I heard the record player in the distance, the full voice of Ella Fitzgerald crooning something about a rhapsody, and for once in a long time, I finally felt calm.

It was amazing to hear your laugh as you spun around me that night, see the crinkle of your eyes as you giggled.

You had been hurt for so many months. I remember the rehabilitation, the slow steps.

You were mortified as I had to help you into your wheelchair in the mornings.

I guess it was a thing of pride, you never wanted that kind of help.

It was strange, watching you struggle with the thought of having to depend on another. But, there was one morning I helped you up and to living room... it still resonates with me.

You broke down, crumbling right before my eyes.

It was horrifying, to see you like that.

I felt a tugging on my wrist, and looked over to see you pulling me towards you.

I gathered you to me, and held you as your tears fell, seemingly forever and I heard you whisper "I'm sorry."

I asked why, and you sobbed harder, uncontrollably into me.

I did not understand, until you told me something that made my eyes tear.

"I'm sorry I am not what you had. I am so sorry I am putting you through this."

Look at you, worrying about me when you were the one who could not even do so much as to get out of bed in the morning.

You never thought you would walk again.

And I never thought you would smile again.

But then, there you were last night.

Happy.

Smiling.

And when you pulled me close, I remember brushing the hair out of your eyes and whispering "I missed you."



The Fountain's Curse

Olivia Weise

Forever chained to the floor of Hera's orchard,
Forever able to taste the golden juices of her fruit,
Forever prevented from escaping Eden.

Blood of ghosts staining my conscious,
Blood of fallen kin forever grasping my memories,
Their likeness I will forever regret to remember.

How courteous of Angels to place them in beds of roses,
How fortunate they are to stay in the race to the top of the
Yggdrasil,
When I'm forced to be tethered to its trunk;
When I'm forced to live in a steadily paced world,
With unfamiliar faces surrounding my cursed being.
Those faces I will keep from recognizing,
Those faces I will not care to remember,
For how is it moral to have familiar faces around me,
When I know they will inevitably decay into skulls?

Photo by Olivia Weise



Buildings
By Matthew Scolaro

Lofting, arching over all
Stretches up, but never fall.

Some view them as a foreground
A place of splendor or gracing the ground
Some view them as a backdrop
A sort of footstool on which nature will prop
Its boundless and beautiful gifts
Its sunlight to its ocean rifts

Developed over long periods of time
Erected in a city's prime
We all observe with steadfast eyes
Workers toil
Take the empty ball of clay
And with their hands they shall create

Monstrous, mammoth, massive, tall!
Arched and curved with imposing walls!
Or something scaled down a tiny bit.
That one may tend to deem unfit
Yet with differences thrown away
We can all look up and say

Lofting, arching over all
Stretches up, but never falls.

Aspire
Gabriel Heady

Morning, around the time of 8 o'clock
I saw a sculpture that just plain rocks

The still color of white

Still and motionless as a royal British
knight
It stands straight up but you see it turn
and twist
If you stare long enough you might see
something you missed

But what is the point of this vertical
standing statue that stands and stares
straight at you?

I will tell you the reason for this
marvelous statue
Something that you may have or may
have not known
It determines a life
Don't understand? Let me explain.

From the ground to the sky the
sculpture stands

It grows after years go past
Some will say it grows too fast
The sculpture shows the life of a
person

The firm base that people will start
their destiny upon
Rectangular shape that resembles the
path of a man or woman
The slants and sharp turns mean that
mistakes will be made
The cracks and broken pieces are the
features that are lost as you grow
The white coloring brings the light of
every man, woman, and child

So this is what I believe the sculpture
really means
Materials put together to resemble the
way that a person grows
Throughout their life



*“Aspire” sculpture by Anthony Padovano
Photo by Olivia Weise*

Where I'm From

Lexi MacNeil

I am from the shores of a Connecticut beach,
From Kit-Kat bars and ginger ale

I am from the house with the water-logged tire swing,
The roar of the train tracks, the evening sun,
Reflecting off the walls of the blue room

I am from the dread of three leaf clovers and potted azaleas

I am from the boom of fireworks on a warm summer night,
From fair skin and blue eyes, from sweetness of a
Grandmother's love to the warmth of a grandfather's smile

I am from a father's favorite and a mother's worst nightmare

From card games played on a dusty rug to secret hide outs
Deep in the woods

I am from the angels above the pews, the cold wooden seats,
From Celtic crosses and long nights spent at Sunday school

I am from the islands of Scotland, the poor cooking of an Irish
Grandmother

From world famous grilled cheese and burnt hamburgers

I am from afternoons spent tanning on a hot pavement, and
Blistering skin, from my fish-like swimming skills thanks to a
family

Who spent more time in the water than out

I am from photo albums packed with childhood precious reminiscence
Endless grins plastered across cousin's faces and crystal eyes
Glimmering with pure joy from a family who once shared
Beautiful memories

You Can

Vicki Ponarksi

Inspired by Ron Swanson

You can be

A 16-year-old in the Olympics

Or an obese 42 year old dying of heart disease

You can be

A multi-billionaire working on Wall Street everyday

Or a homeless man collecting free lunches

You can be

A woman in engineering

Or a man in nursing

You can be

Patriotic to the point of mental instability

Or hate this country with a burning passion

You can be

A devout Christian that shoots for sport

Or a carefree atheist that drinks for sport

You can be

Someone who's willing to give their life for this

Country and its values

You can be

That guy that drinks five 2L sodas everyday

Or that vegan that's gluten free,

Carb free, fat free, sugar free, and calorie free

You can be

A Bernie Sanders democratic-socialist

Or a Rand Paul conservative-libertarian

You can be

Black, white, purple, pink

Yellow, blue, or red

The truth is, no one cares

We as Americans are entitled to certain unalienable rights.

The right to be an individual and craft your lifestyle

To be as you want it to be, is your right.

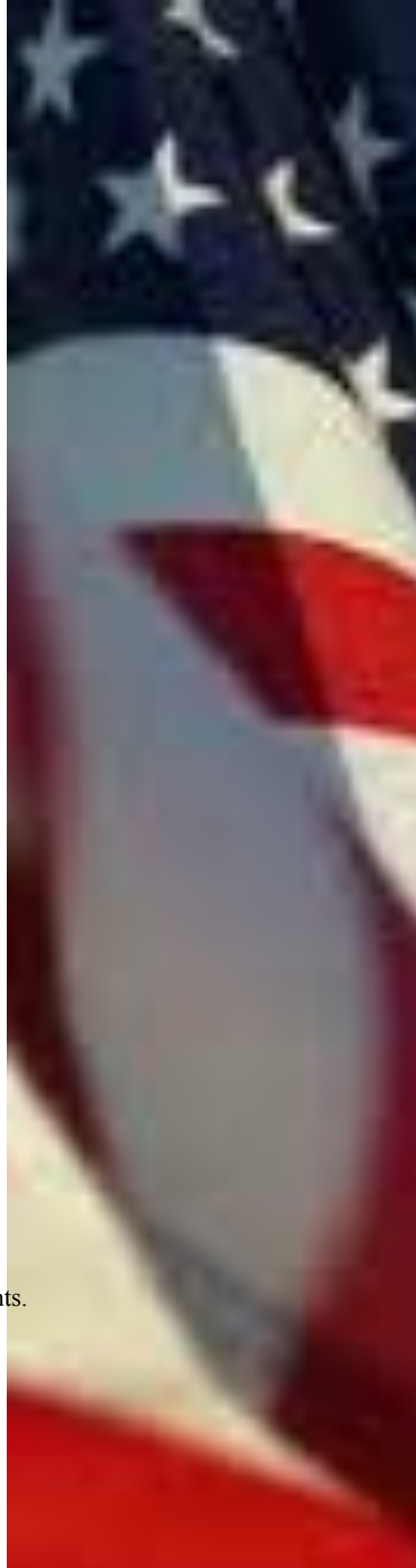
We the people mustn't forget that we are indeed,

Americans, not American'ts.

And that my friend,

Is beautiful.

God bless America.



**Life Is Not The Same Without You
By Stephanie Wagner**

**Life is not the same without you
You left too early, but it wasn't your choice
It was your fate**

**You made Christmas special
Now it's just another day
That was our fate**

**You came to every school event
You always made us feel proud and accomplished
Now they're just silly ceremonies
That was our fate**

**You always got your way wherever you went
But we all have some of that same
hardheadedness as you
That was our fate**

You held our family together

Why did you have to go?

**Life is not the same without you
You left too early, but it wasn't your choice
It was your fate**

illiterature