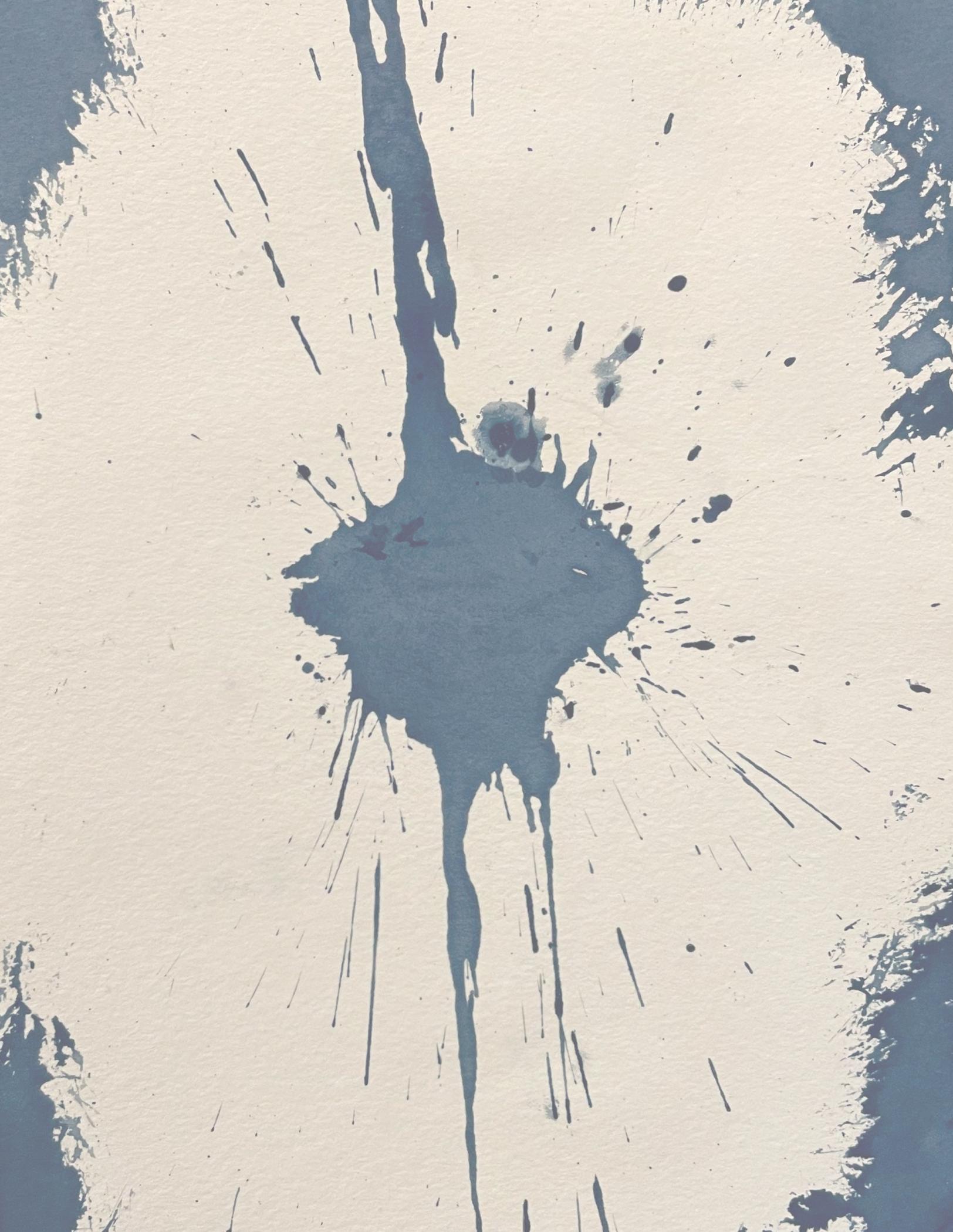


*The
Writers'
Block*

2023



THE WRITERS' BLOCK

THE ADA LONG CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP ANTHOLOGY

2022

Student Staff
Taia Arsenian
Kristopher Perez-Mata
Maddie Winslett

The Writers' Block
Ada Long Creative Writing Workshop
215 Humanities Bldg
900 13th Street South
Birmingham, Alabama, AL 35294
205 934-4250

Special thanks to the UAB Student Media office for assisting with the production of this issue and to UAB Printing and Mailing Services for their support with the printing.

Colophon

The Writers' Block is a publication of the Ada Long Creative Writing Workshop at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. The Writers' Block is printed by UAB Printing and Mailing Services in a quantity of 250 per issue. The editorial process in forming this issue was performed using Adobe InDesign CC running on a Dell PC with a Windows 10 operating system. Fonts used are Castellar, Goudy Old Style, and Book Antiqua.

Front and Back cover: Cyanotype prints by Keira Coker
Inside front and page details: Cyanotype print by Justin Fredd

Faculty Advisor
Emmett Christolear

Student Media Advisor
Jackie Alexander

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 5** She's a Diamond **Keira Coker**
Hakuna Matata **Dania Alzoubi, Jaydon Howard,**
Justin Fredd, Julianna Terry
- 6** Irenic Breeze **Dania Alzoubi**
Untitled **Taia Arsenian**
- 7** My Vivid Dream **Randale Williams**
- 8** Dreams and Interruptions **Peyton Wilding**
- 9** Breath **Julianna Terry**
Anunciation **Jaydon Howard**
- 10** Country Fried Steak **Julianna Terry**
- 11** His'anna **Dania Alzoubi**
- 12** Dessert Date **Ash Chavez Cruz**
- 13** Tastings from Home **Justin Fredd**
Mi Amor **Keira Coker, Maddie Winslett, Taia**
Arsenian
- 14** Fall Sonnet **Maddie Winslett**
In Gardens of my Heart, a Rose so Fair **Kristopher**
Perez-Mata
- 15** Archery **Peyton Wilding**
- 16** Tony & I **Randale Williams**
- 17** Into the Dark **Kristopher Perez-Mata**
- 18** Blue Candle **Taia Arsenian**
- 19** Emerald Ring **Maddie Winslett**
The Mystery of the Spencer Honors House
- 20** Longest Day, Shortest Night **Ash Chavez Cruz,**
Kristopher Perez-Mata, Peyton Wilding, Randale
Williams
The Lonely Girl **Ash Chavez Cruz**
- 23** Lemons **Ash Chavez Cruz**

SHE'S A DIAMOND Keira Coker

She's so unbelievably sexy,
The way she sways and turns,
She arrives with such little baggage,
Damn,
She moves so elegantly,
Shawsaying into a room full of greedy eyes,
Still holding her powerful slim approach,
Her sweet pheromones wrap around her,
Making her usually captivating,
The man whom she truly desires grips her firmly,
The familiarity of such strong hands,
Makes her give in to the tingling sensation,
When she wears that dress,
She shimmers,
She glows,
She shows,
She's a Diamond



HAKUNA MATATA Dania Alzoubi, Jaydon Howard, Justin Fredd, and Julianna Terry

I went to sleep at 3:35 pm and woke up at 7:48 pm.
Today is the longest day, I will work all day and lay in silence when the moonlight arrives.
Today is the shortest night. I will go to sleep early.
I intend to play my game tomorrow.
At the Summer Solstice, I will go to the park to eat with my friends before Church.
Yesterday I played the game with my friends.
A group of eyelashes snagged from her eyes, stuck to the piece of cold metal.

IRENIC BREEZE Dania Alzoubi

Blinded me fully
With her bright eyes.
Sister? Perhaps not,
But wiggled close to one.
She was familiar,
Could lift up the sky with her muscles,
Voice her judgments
To the tip of her reach.
Strolled against sea-foam,
Paralyzed her challengers.
But with just a second
She would become a stream.
Still blinding.
Still with bright water,
But, sinister? Not anymore.
She wouldn't hold conversations,
For her distance
Concealed her bloom
And washed it upon the rocks.

UNTITLED Taia Arsenian

Imagine a dove
With its white wings and beady eyes.
Watch it soar, watch it swoop
And imagine growing wings
And flying with it.
The dove flies through the rain.
It lets the water roll off its back.
The dove barely slows down
When thunder shakes the sky.
When smoke fills the sky,
The dove speeds up.
When the world is set ablaze
With the fire of a cold man's heart,
The dove dives towards the ground,
And perches on the shoulder of the lady
Who observes all with a pained expression.
"Come now," she tells the bird.
"It's time to go."
The dove coos once, then flaps its wings,
And flies into the rosy sunset.
If only we could go with it.

MY VIVID DREAM

Randale Williams

One time I dreamed
I was in school
One of my teachers
Was showing everyone
How sandwiches are made
I walked out of class
To put on a new pair of glasses
I came back to class
Everyone treated me strangely
Like they did not know me
Like I was new to the class

I knew I liked the M-Class
My parents said no, it is not like me
Every stranger wanted one
As classy as they are
I knew they were too much
I would rather walk than not drive an M-Class
I cannot decide if I was sad or mad
The commerical was after every show
On my television screen
It looked so cool
But sadly, it was time to let that dream go.

My alarm goes off, signaling that it was time to wake up
But feeling so cold, I look out the window and see snow
I turn on my TV, the news was about a blizzard
It's been forever since we've seen this much snow
I decide to make a list: watch movies, play videogames, etc
No more walking to the buss stop since I don't have class
I eat two slices of toast and a pear for breakfast
I lie on my back to rest a few more hours
After walking up, I give my dog a treat and watch Dr. Strange
Now I have time to play that videogame
I text a few classmates so we can play online Newcomb.

I won playing chess by a clever checkmate
The grandmaster was surprised, mostly cause I'm a kid
I broke every one of the World Records with my chess skills
I've gotten lots of money from the games so far
It was all happening so fast, I had to break away to the coast
I wanted to stop, but I didn't want to disappoint them
I used to watch and study moves my grandparents played
I had the support of everyone since I started at age four
My grandparents had a vision, they taught me what I know
With playing chess I am fulfilled; look at all I can do
I wake up. What, it was only a dream? Now I am sad.

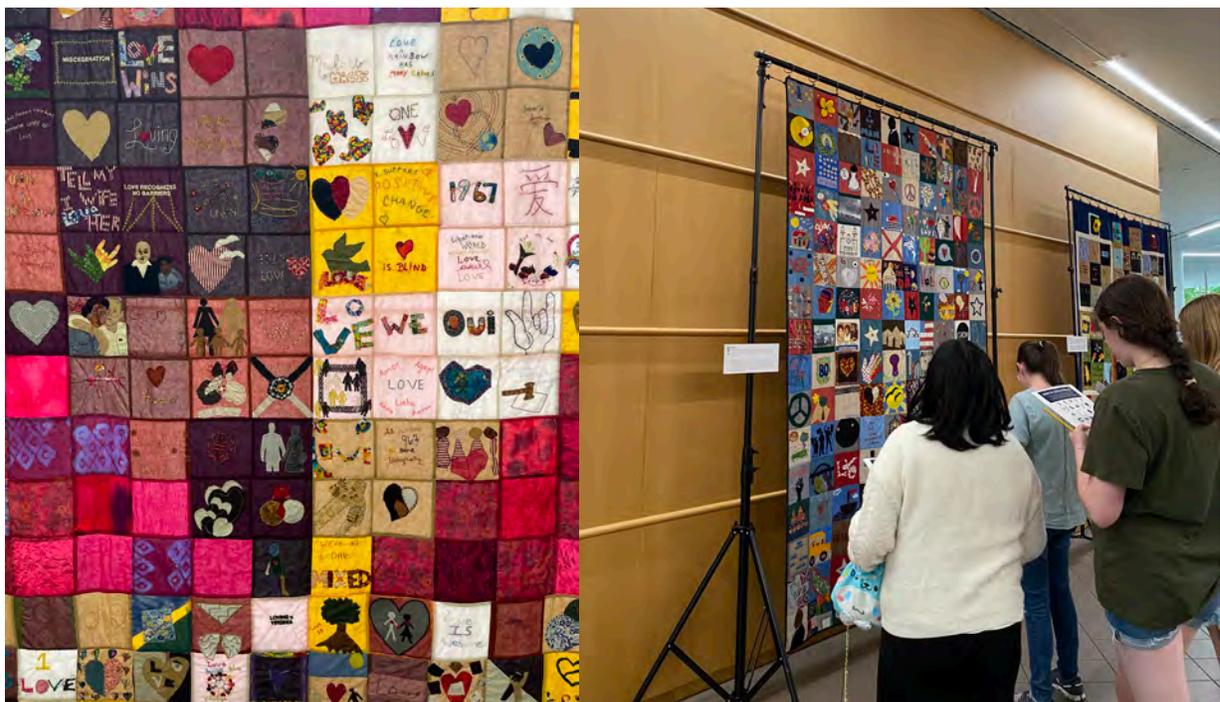
DREAMS AND INTERRUPTIONS Peyton Wilding

I dreamed I was with my parents
In a hot air balloon
Heading towards a tornado.
As usual, it was interrupted
By a loud noise so I never
Found out what happened next.
One time I was lost in a big adventure
Starting to get interesting
Till my dogs rudely woke me up
Out the window with their barking.
Alarm clocks also wake me up.

School clocks break at an alarming rate.
Win or lose, everyone eats in the dark
Until, dog-tired, sleep engulfs them.
Still of starting interest.
It was an adventure of a lifetime,
What happened next shocked me.
We were not allowed to make a noise,
Before I could speak, I was interrupted
By songs as if torn from the heads
Of balloons on a hot day-
It was a dream of my parents.

My parents rarely dream,
And when they do, it's all hot air.
Singing gives them a head start,
But usually something erupts
Whenever a noise is allowed-
Shockingly, it happened so often
I lose count: how many times
Do their dreams get started,
Or are rudely provoked by dogs,
Barking loud enough to break windows.
This has awoken two ideas in me:

Either my alarm was on,
Or my dad was barking at me,
As rudely as a dog.
My first instinct was to rest and restart,
But that would ruin the adventure.
Not shockingly, I opened my eyes,
And heard loud noises
Erupting from somewhere.
I headed for the stairs singing
As daybreak ballooned through the
window.
Apparently, they were only dancing.



BREATH Julianna Terry

Gabriel: I bring you no harm, but news from above us.
You are a virgin, but God sends you a giefu.
I'm sent to tell you his son is bow thyns.
Bring him to Earth. Let him arise with you.

Mary: I wished for a child, to be respectful.
But there must be a fault, what about Joseph?
My family will think I'm unfaithful.
Angle, why me, and why is this world so tough?

Gabriel: I know this is frightful. You will be fine.
Your husband will come round, your fam'ly too.
God has a plan. Breath, because it is time.

Mary: Ok..., but what if it doesn't work out...

Gabriel: Breath, oh young one, his will be done. Breath
His name shall be one from our God, Jesus Lethe.



Masolino da Panicale, The Annunciation,
Nationally Gallery of Art Accession
Number 1937.1.16

ANUNCIATION Jaydon Howard

Gabriel: The name is Gabriel , come from above.

Mary: And my name's Mary and this is very odd.

Gabriel: I'm here to help the man upstairs find love.

Mary: I already have a boyfriend named Todd.

Gabriel: But the man I serve needs to shine.

Gabriel: And let's not forget his has almighty power.

Mary: I have a wonderful sister and she fine.

Mary: Can you at least give me an hour.

Gabriel: Oh that's great what is her name.

Gabriel: I think I found God a wife.

Mary: She goes by the name Emma James.

Gabriel: Oh yes Emma and god are going to have a happy life.

Mary: Hey Gabriel you better not make me look like a clown.

Gabriel: She's in good hands with God he want let you down.

COUNTRY FRIED STEAK Julianna Terry

Mom sits on a stool by the kitchen counter, she jots down notes and mumbles about foods. She works with food so she's always looking for something new. She keeps flipping the pages of this giant green book.

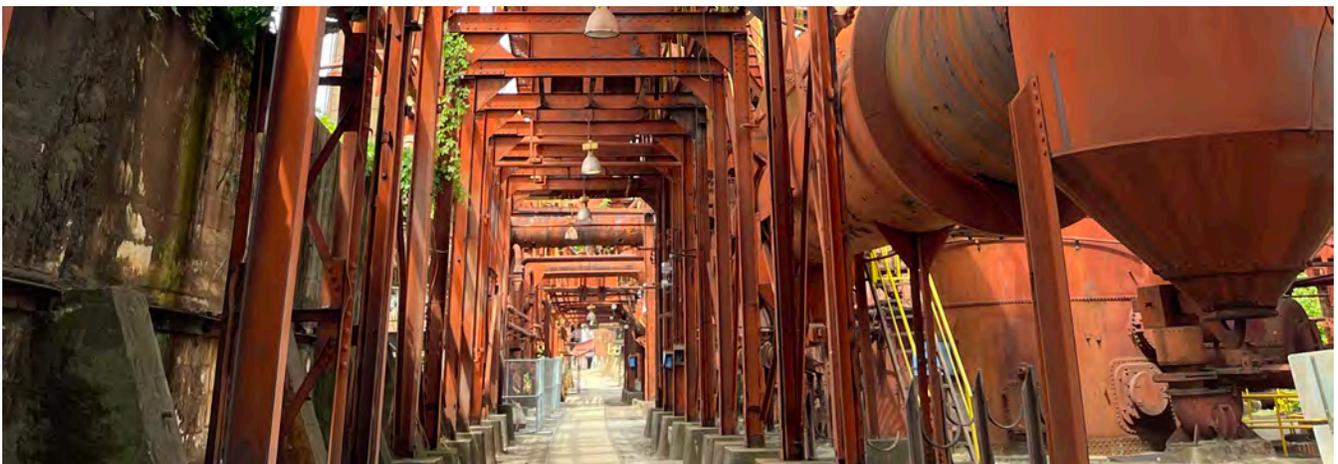
The cover of this giant book is simple, a dark green background with dark but shiny blue zig zags and a bright gold title, "Recipes". The book was filled with taped pictures of the meals Mom had made, and filled with words I only knew to read because of her. It was so beautiful, each photo full of grace. (7) This book will be mine one day.

The next day my parents went to work, my older brother upstairs. I got up from my bed and went to the kitchen, down the stairs and to the right. I look for that book Mom keeps sort of hidden. And there it is, up on the fridge, trying to stay out of sight. How do I get up there?

Where is that step-ladder when I need it? Maybe in the pantry? Maybe in the garage? Could it be in the backyard? I have checked all three and it is nowhere to be found. I could climb the counter; but that's not allowed. It is the only way for me to get that book, the only way I know how.

I hoist myself up struggling a little bit. The cupboards are so close, almost pushing me off the edge. One wrong move and I could fall. I stood up fully and looked around the room; seeing the stools I could have grabbed and dragged over, but I am already up. I was so high, so tall; but back to the task; that green book. I scoot closer to the fridge; and then reach for the book; I am still a little too short. I stand on my tip-toes, reaching for the book. My fingertips touch it but I can't fully grab it. Just a little closer. I got it!

Whoa- I start to slip! I lose hold of the book. A large thud and a fear of being heard. I try to balance myself back up. I use all my strength to pull myself up and it works! Yeah! Now to get down. I jump from the counter, realizing the loud noise I will make after I jump. I decided not to worry too much about it as my older brother is probably blasting music in his headphones and wouldn't even notice if there were sirens outside his room.



HISA'ANA Dania Alzoubi

Translation: "Our Soup"

On what shall we cook it?
On the mustaches of the soldiers.
The bombs that blew out my grandmother's house.
The oven abandoned to unfinished rice,
The sound of wind as she was taken away.
Boil it with the tears forced from the tear gas.
The thermal heat of chaotic crowds
Rushing away from your nefarious desires.
Let's cook it until we see in its steam
The children's carmine bodies,
Boney and pierced.
Cupped in their hands is innocence,
Offered it to you like gold.
What do you think it will taste like?

Like the street trash that started to mount
When you came along.
Like barbed wire, the surrounding air so cold
But breath so warm it heats up metal.
Like the wood of my grandfather's cane
That met the earth when you pushed him down.
What shall we eat it with?
With our lemons blackened with bomb soot.
With the ink you used to steal our language.
With the uneaten baby food on the counter spoiling.
Where should we eat the soup?
Beside the graves of our mothers.
Near the worn out olive trees.
Under elevated flower beds
Fertilized by ash.
And we'll bend our bones
While we sit on our land,
Silently staring into a night
When everything will end.

DESSERT DATE Ash Chavez Cruz

I sit at my table, waiting for someone. The dessert shop is open, with various to try. No matter who sits with me, I'd be sure to provide!

A girl with sweet hugs and a soft voice came. I wanted her to hang out with me for a bit, so I ordered some caramel custard with a generous drizzle. We talked about our lives while smiling, sometimes forgetting to even eat the custard. However, she soon had to leave and left for good.

A girl with half-up hair and one rolled-up sleeve sat down. She averted her gaze and I could tell she was antsy. I wanted her to stay so I ordered sweet and salty crepes. We'd laugh and then sit in silence as I struggled to balance the flavors of the different crepes. Eventually, she grew bored and I watched as she stood up and left to sit with someone else.

A girl with winged eyeliner and a spiky bob sat in front of me. I wanted her to stay, I truly did, so I ordered some pepper marmalade-filled donuts. They were sweet at first, smiling with her as we talked about the fun and harmless gossip we knew. Yet soon, I had eaten too much of the marmalade and choked on its spice while she scoffed and left with a spiteful remark.

A boy with a judging stare and sweet words approached me and sat down. He didn't seem to care much about my presence and played with my bag without asking. I needed him to stay, so I ordered dark chocolate mousse. He was talking and laughing while I listened happily as I forced myself to swallow the bitter mousse. He stayed for some time, but I could no longer stomach the mousse and forced myself to leave the table. By the time I came back, he had left.

I sit at the table, sick of desserts. Yet dessert after dessert, I'll order whatever you like.



TASTINGS FROM HOME Justin Fredd

Oh, My Grandfather's steak. How it explodes
with flavor every bite. How it's
good and tough
and never pink. Oh the thickness,
oh the firmness to the tooth.

Oh, my Auntie's mango lemonade.
How it's not too sweet and not too sour. How it
refreshes after a long day.
Oh the fullness of the flavor,
oh the lingering flavor.

Oh, my Mother's fresh-made meatloaf.
How it melts upon my tongue.
How it pleases all my taste buds.
Oh the texture, oh the volume
of each slice.

Oh, my Father's famed spaghetti.
How creamy and how bold
the flavor, how cheesy but not excessively.
Oh, the slickness on the tongue,
the hint of sweetness mixed with salt.

Oh, my Aunt's banana pudding.
How cold on the spoon.
How always above my lips
its whipped cream ends up resting.
How its cookies and bananas taste like magic
thrown together.

Oh how creamy, oh how cool.

Oh what comfort, oh what calm
the tastes of home.



MI AMOR Keira Coker, Maddie Winslett, and Taia Arsenian

At Summer Solstice, it will rain.

A butterfly perches peacefully on a leaf.

"Keira, look at yourself."

Yesterday, I learned of a two-year old secret.

Mi madre es mi amor.

At Summer Solstice, the world might be reborn.

FALL SONNET Maddie Winslett

It all starts out when one leaf falls —
The sign of changing weather.
Then comes Halloween and that pumpkin patch.
I'm always in a comfy sweater.
The air is crisp, the sky is gray,
And school peacefully starts again —
Apple picking, aesthetic pics, the tennis match...
Girl in Red on endless replay.

I met her that fall standing near the oak tree.
She was funny, and smart, and oh so tall,
And she always smelled of cinnamon and pears.
A blissful way to spend the season —
Driving through the backroads with so much glee,
We were the best part of autumn, the perfect pair.

IN GARDENS OF MY HEART, A ROSE SO FAIR Kristopher Perez-Mata

In gardens of my heart, a rose so fair,
A metaphor for love, beyond comparison.
Its petals hold the hues of passion's fire,
With thorns that guard, protect, and inspire.
Each fragrant breath, a whisper of delight,
A love like this, forever in my sight.
For in this cherished bloom, my heart finds peace,
An emblem of love that shall never cease.

ARCHERY Peyton Wilding

When I was 13, my parents attended my first archery competition. Neither parent had ever tried archery, but they encouraged me all the same. Before my first round, I looked over my shoulder to see my dad drinking lemonade and my mom cheering for me. My parents never understood how I became so good at archery; I guess I'm a natural.

When I was 14, my parents were attorneys who would appoint me as judge and try their cases before me. No one would win or lose, it was just practice. And on nice days I would go to the park across from the house and practice archery.

When I was 15, my mom was a businesswoman and my dad was a factory worker. They were always fighting about how mom made more money than dad. The fight always ended with dad cutting the bowstrings into tiny pieces. Mom would then have my bow restrung.

When I was 16, I bought a new bow, my dad was a police officer, and my mom was a therapist. One day while cleaning my room, my mom threw away my bow, claiming that it was too dangerous for me to have. I got angry and decided to call the child services to come and pick me up.

When I turned 17, life started to get worse. Families didn't want to foster older kids, and I wasn't an option for adoption. When families entered the center, many wouldn't even talk or look at me. I didn't even care at that point. So I would go outside, into the yard at the center, and use the old archery equipment I found in the basement to continue working on my archery skills.

At 25, I had finished college and got a job at a high school where I taught kids how to do archery. While I didn't have much success finding parents, I found much success with teaching archery to students.



TONY & I

Randale Williams

When I was eleven, I met a cool dude named Tony during summer, and we quickly became best friends. We both were excited to start Middle School together. On the first day of sixth grade, Tony and I were in Class 6B. I used to look forward to going to school. Throughout the school year, I had many fun moments with Tony. Every day during P.E., Tony and I would team up in basketball and play 2v2 against other kids from our class. We also spent our weekends hanging out and playing Minecraft. Sixth grade was the best. I could not wait for the rest of middle school.

When I was twelve, Tony hung out with me every day during summer vacation. I could not wait until this new school year. On the first day of seventh grade, we found out we were put in different classes. I was sent to Class 7A, and Tony was sent to Class 7B. We did not spend much time together; we only talked during P.E. and lunch. Seventh grade was decent. I hoped the rest of middle school would not be like that.

When I was thirteen, Tony and I barely talked during summer vacation. I tried to make plans, but he would always say he was busy. On the first day of eighth grade, I found out I was in Class 8B, the same class as Tony. When I first saw Tony, he was in a friend group. Throughout the school year, I tried being friends with Tony's new friends. I asked them if they would like to play Minecraft, but they said the game was childish. I asked Tony if he would want to play basketball 2v2, but Tony and his friends would rather go outside and play football. So, I would ask if I could play football with them, but his friends would say they already had enough players. That was the day Jermaine, my classmate since elementary school, asked me if I would like to play basketball. I knew Jermaine for a long time, but we were never close friends.

By the end of eighth grade, I knew Tony and I's friendship was no more. We grew apart. I realized that as you grow up, your interests change and sometimes your friends. However, a new friendship was forged, and Jermaine and I are best friends to this day.

INTO THE DARK

Kristopher Perez-Mata

In the vastness of space, the International Space Station (ISS) floated silently, carrying a crew of astronauts from different countries. They had come together for a mission of discovery and cooperation, but the world they left behind had descended into chaos. Unbeknownst to the astronauts, a devastating nuclear war had erupted on Earth, pitting nation against nation.

As they orbited the planet, the astronauts aboard the ISS watched in horror as the world below gradually turned dark. Cities vanished in flashes of light, engulfed by the destructive power of nuclear weapons. The familiar glow of civilization gave way to a somber darkness, painting a bleak picture of the fate that awaited humanity.

Inside the ISS, tensions began to rise as news reached the astronauts of the hostile

orders from their respective countries. Each astronaut had received secret instructions to eliminate the others, considering them enemies in the midst of a global conflict. What was once a symbol of international cooperation had turned into a potential battleground.

Among the crew, there were two astronauts who often found themselves at odds with each other: Commander Alexei Petrov, a veteran cosmonaut from Russia, and Captain Emma Thompson, a skilled astronaut from the United States. Their disagreements had been a source of amusement for the rest of the crew, providing occasional comic relief during their space mission.

But now, faced with the grim reality of their situation, Alexei and Emma had to put their differences aside. They understood that survival relied on their ability to work together. As the last remaining representatives of their countries, they held the fate of humanity in their hands.

The two astronauts, initially skeptical of each other's intentions, found a common ground rooted in their shared desire to ensure the survival of the crew and possibly find a way to aid humanity in the aftermath of the devastation below.

They devised a plan to override their respective countries' orders, choosing to prioritize unity and cooperation over the destructive path set before them. With their technical expertise and determination, they managed to disable the communication systems that would have allowed their countries to remotely control the ISS.

As the Earth continued to spiral into darkness, Alexei and Emma, along with the rest of the crew, focused on their mission of survival. They worked together to conserve resources, repair vital systems, and maintain a semblance of order within the limited confines of the space station.

Over time, as they gazed down upon the lifeless Earth, the astronauts experienced a profound shift in perspective. They transcended the boundaries of nationalism and realized the insignificance of their previous differences. They found solace in the shared bonds of their humanity and the common goal of rebuilding a shattered world.

United by their extraordinary circumstances, the crew of the ISS became beacons of hope, representing the resilience and determination of mankind. They knew that they were not alone in their struggle, as pockets of survivors might exist in hidden corners of the planet. Their mission transformed from one of exploration to one of recovery and rebuilding.

In the infinite darkness of space, the astronauts aboard the ISS became the stewards of a fragile hope. As they looked towards the future, they knew that their actions would shape the destiny of humanity. And so, in the face of the vast unknown, they vowed to carry on, guided by the enduring spirit of unity and the unwavering belief that even in the darkest of times, hope could be found.

BLUE CANDLE Taia Arsenian

In the young hours of morning, before the sun had shone its bright face, she lit a candle and roamed the dead streets. The yellow light guided her. This occurred every day for months. She noticed a few odd things. For instance, the wax would not melt, the light shone a little too bright, and, as time went on, the color began to shift. Soon, plague ravaged the city. The day came when she laid at her bedside, coughing the life out of her lungs. Before death came to take her soul, she instructed her son to blow the candle out. The candle, which now shone a bright blue. When the flame refused to be extinguished, he tossed it out. The next day, death came, and although no one could see it, the candle's flame disappeared.

Years later, the forgotten candle was found by a cobbler's wife. She kept it by her bedside, and kept it burning when she opened her window to study the stars like freckles on night's face. When the flame began to change, she was fascinated. She decided to study it. When the candle was finally blue, a mob came knocking at her door. They raised pitchforks and screamed until anger left their throats raw. The fire that burned her was red and evil. At her home, the candle had burned out.

Much later, a group of sailors found the candle and decided to take it with them on their voyage. The candle burned so fiercely that the sailors wanted to throw it into the merciless sea. When the color changed, it was even more cause for alarm. The sky shook with the screaming wind, and the water reached towards the boat as if it was trying to tear it apart with watery fingers. While the rain came down, a waterfall of icy needles, the blue flame of the candle still burned. With a soul-dropping crack, the wood of the ship broke down like it was merely a collection of twigs. Men screamed and shouted as one by one, the ocean claimed their lives. The ship went down, disappearing under the turbulent waves. The candle went down too. It burned until the last of the sailors drowned, as dictated by the dark magic that created it. When all was over and no survivors were left, death descended into the murky depths of the sea. He saw the candle, and gently picked it up in a skeletal hand. He then took out a match from his coat. The ghostly light led him onward, and never went out again.

EMERALD RING Maddie Winslett

I am sitting on the floor in my parents' musty closet. The lights are on, but the room still feels dim. I for one, don't really notice the rest of the room. Instead, my eyes are focused on the green lights twinkling from the ring on my hand. I haven't seen the emerald ring in years, actually, but I still remember how I would sneak into this very closet as a child. I would put on this ring for only a matter of seconds, but I think it was a small way to remain close to my grandmother.

"She was so much like you," they used to say. By that they mean, "She was so sarcastic and to the point, and she would always put people in their place." Because she did, at least it seems so in the stories I've heard. I've heard of this powerful, confident woman who hated to get her picture taken, who loved dogs, who was able to perfectly balance out my grandfather, and who was possibly the most southern person you could ever meet.

I wonder what she might have worn this ring to. Maybe it was to church every Sunday morning. Maybe she'd wear it to all those get togethers down in Greensboro as she'd catch up on the small bit of gossip in that rural town. Maybe she wore it to my parents' wedding. Maybe she even wore it while watching college football. God, she loved college football.

I keep staring at the ring with its perfectly cut stone, glistening jewel, and gold lining. There's something deeper here. This is a reminder that there once was someone there. Someone who my dad really loved. Someone who brought energy to all those lengthy conversations of organs and hunting clubs. Someone who would've defended me when I 'wasn't Christian enough.' Because she would've (at least my dad seems to think so). She put my grandfather in his place, balancing him out. She'd take his hand, maybe while wearing the ring, and remind him not to be so stuck in the mud.

Life is not just filled with organs and hunting clubs; it also has emerald rings and unspoken promises.

THE MYSTERY OF THE SPENCER HONORS HOUSE



Scan to listen to this year's audio drama, written and recorded by the students.



LONGEST DAY, SHORTEST NIGHT Ash Chavez

Cruz, Kristopher Perez-Mata, Peyton Wilding, and Randale Williams

Today is the longest day, I just found that out this morning.

At Summer Solstice I played pool for the first time.

The poisonous night blueberries glow on the tall leaves, basking in sunlight.

Yo quiero ir a la playa (I want to go to the beach.)

Today is the shortest night.

On my way to UAB, me and my Dad saw two trucks driving on the road.

En las estrellas, crecen flores, con sus sueños volovan.

I solved the mystery.

THE LONELY GIRL Ash Chavez Cruz

A cold and dark night

My body needing rest

Her gentle touch comforting

Yet she cannot stay

And I close my eyes again

A cold and lonely morning

The lonely doll gone

My body having rest

No lonely presence there

No gentle touch to comfort me

Laying in bed alone

Trying to wake myself

With only the fan's buzzing

And myself for comfort





Dania Alzoubi is a rising junior at the Alabama School of Fine Arts in the Math-Science Department. If she's not studying, she loves to swim—whether that be for fun or competitively— and spend time with her younger sister. Additionally, she volunteers at the Mcwane Science Center, tutors kids for her group's organization (@prishansi'stutoring), and teaches little kids Arabic! She likes STEM, participating in her school's Math and Robotics Team, and loves chemistry (due to her amazing AP Chemistry teacher)!

Taia Arsenian got 3 things out of deciding to become a writer at the age of 9; two cats (named Hermes and Perseus, who are really demons in disguise), more anxiety than any human should be capable of possessing, and a record player..... for some reason. A rising sophomore at Indian Springs, and a straight-A student, Taia is always looking for a new book idea, or at least an idea for a new D&D campaign. She can be found rewatching "Stranger Things" or "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" for what will most likely be the 100th time.



Keira Coker is a sophomore at Hoover High School, earning a title as an honors student in 2023. In August, Keira is starting creative writing and debate classes to earn extra credits. She is currently working at the Hoover YMCA as a lifeguard. She recently earned her Red Cross Certification of Completion for Water Safety, as well as lifeguard training. When it comes to certifications, besides earning her lifeguard training and water safety certification, she has received two of her Certification of Completion for UAB Public Health Influencer Institute. She is an avid volunteer at the Farmers Market on Friday. Fun stuff about Keira, she is a horror freak, she has a black dog named Bella and she is Keira's best friend. She loves volleyball and most of all writing.



Aliyah Crenshaw is a student at Holy Family Cristo Rey, Class 2025.



Ash Chávez Cruz is a rising junior at Holy Family Cristo Rey High School. She placed multiple times in Birmingham City Schools All-City Drama Festival in "Original Oratory." She enjoys reading, cooking, baking, drawing, and making and drinking Agua Fresca and tea at 2 am while staying up. After resisting the urges to cut her hair for the millionth time, she occasionally spoils her two dogs and can, and will, grab and run with any cool rock she finds on the ground.

Justin Fredd is a Rising sophomore going to Clay-Chalkville High School. In 8 th grade he earned an award titled "Funniest Boy" and one of the best singers. In 9 th Grade he earned three awards for "Most outstanding Bass Singer", "Funniest Freshman", and "Top Five singers in choir". Throughout 9 th Grade he slacked on his work and his grades and GPA weren't what they were supposed to be. So, he decided to fully focus on his work the upcoming year and work non-stop to get his GPA and grades where they need to be or higher if he can. He wants to steal the title "Over Achiever" because in reality, that is what he actually is.





Jaydon Howard is a rising 10 th grader at Shades Valley. He plays football and basketball and loves video gameSome award of his include Defense Plater or the Year and A-Honor roll. In his free time he plays GTA, NBA, 2K Madden, Fortnite, and WWE2K. When he’s working out, he loves DB drills with his Uncle Keaton. He also likes to watch barber tutorial videos because he wants to be a barber when I grow up.



Kristopher Perez-Mata is a rising sophomore at Homewood High School. He is a Black Belt in Taekwondo and an honors student at school. He also plays saxophone in the Homewood Marching Band. In his free time, he likes to go on bike rides and workout. He is always looking to help others. He tries to do the right thing. (He is also back from last year.)



Julianna Terry is a rising junior at Gardendale High School; she has made it to Welding 2 and Theatre 2! She has been in four productions and made a superior in Trumbauer. While at school, you will find her quiet as a mouse, nose deep in a book, or loud as a train, talking to friends. She is also known as a Coach in Upward softball, six seasons through and still kicking. Then at home, you will find her playing video games, building a puzzle or Lego set, or watching tv. Thank you so much for reading the summary for ‘a day in the life of Julianna Terry’.



Peyton Wilding is a rising senior at Oak Mountain High School. She has taken part in Drama, Art, photography, and she is excited to be a part of the yearbook staff for the upcoming school year. Peyton has also been a member of the Future Teachers of America for the past three years. Peyton enjoyed several volunteer projects with her previous Girl Scout troop. She especially enjoyed filling backpacks with Backpack Buddies. In her free time, Peyton enjoys singing, listening to music, swimming, photography, and playing with her two dogs, Sofie and Darby. If Peyton is watching a movie, it’s usually a Marvel movie.



Randale Williams is an upcoming junior at Tabernacle Christian School in Gardendale. Randale was a member of the Junior Varsity Football team in 9th grade and will be joining Varsity Football next school year. He also participates in his school’s chess club. Randale was honored with the Christian Character Award at his school during 2020 and 2023. He volunteers with The Leaf Community Pantry, and he is active with the youth ministry at his church. He spends his free time watching action movies and comedy television shows with his family. He also likes playing sports and video games with his friends.



Maddie Winslett is a rising sophomore at The Altamont School in Birmingham, Alabama. She has won multiple awards for her interest in reading and writing including one silver and one bronze metal from the National Scholastic Art; Writing Awards, and both 1 st and 2 nd in Altamont’s annual Poetry Festival. After school, she spends most of her time dancing in tap, modern, and jazz classes, and she also takes piano lessons once a week. In her free time, Maddie likes to pursue her passion for music by collecting CDs, attending concerts for her favorite artists, and making dozens of Spotify playlists. Even more than music, Maddie loves movies and television. She spends quite a lot of time discovering new shows to obsess over and rewatching her favorite movies (most notably “Ferris Bueller’s Day Off”). She wants to continue writing when she grows older,

and while it is slightly unrealistic, Maddie would be over to moon to become a screenwriter and director once she graduates college. As of today, however, Maddie is perfectly content to just write plays whenever she has time to herself, and she will worry about the future later.

LEMONS ASH CHAVEZ CRUZ

Oh, lemons, sweet lemons
You purge my insides
With your addicting acidity
As your mind-numbing nectar
Flows through my veins

Oh, lemons, sour lemons
You tempt my corroding teeth
With your hypnotic juice
Oh, how you treat me
Oh, how you fool me
Meanwhile inside me
Your sundry seeds grow

Oh, lemons, more lemons
Your essence flows through me
Licking your bitter skin
Oh, how you hurt me
Oh, how you ruin me
As I absorb your venom
Savoring the agony

Oh lemons, my lemons
I tear myself apart
Tasting my body
Oh, how you destroy me
Oh, how I love it
Purging my insides
Reaping my remains
Licking my bitter skin
Craving your psychotic acidity

As I become maddened
Just like you
As the cycle of your torment
End with my fall



