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2022 - 2023



THE GRACKLE

CHESTNUT HILL COLLEGE'S ART AND LITERARY MAGAZINE

FALL 2022 - SPRING 2023



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DEAR READER,

When working on *The Grackle* last year, I had no clue what I had gotten myself into. I had no experience in designing or putting together a magazine. My skills in Illustrator and Photoshop were amateur and there was absolutely no way I'd be any good at InDesign. I came in thinking I would simply be on the review board and go on about my day. Next thing I knew I was editor and InDesign seemed much easier than I thought. The 2021 – 2022 issue ended up being a body of work I was very proud to work on. This year's issue was no different.

For the 2022 – 2023 issue we're printing the copies in house, which gave us a lot more creative freedom. We wanted a cover and layout that was a little different from previous issues. Together we designed a cover that was abstract with a blue color palette. We carried this hint of blue throughout the magazine.

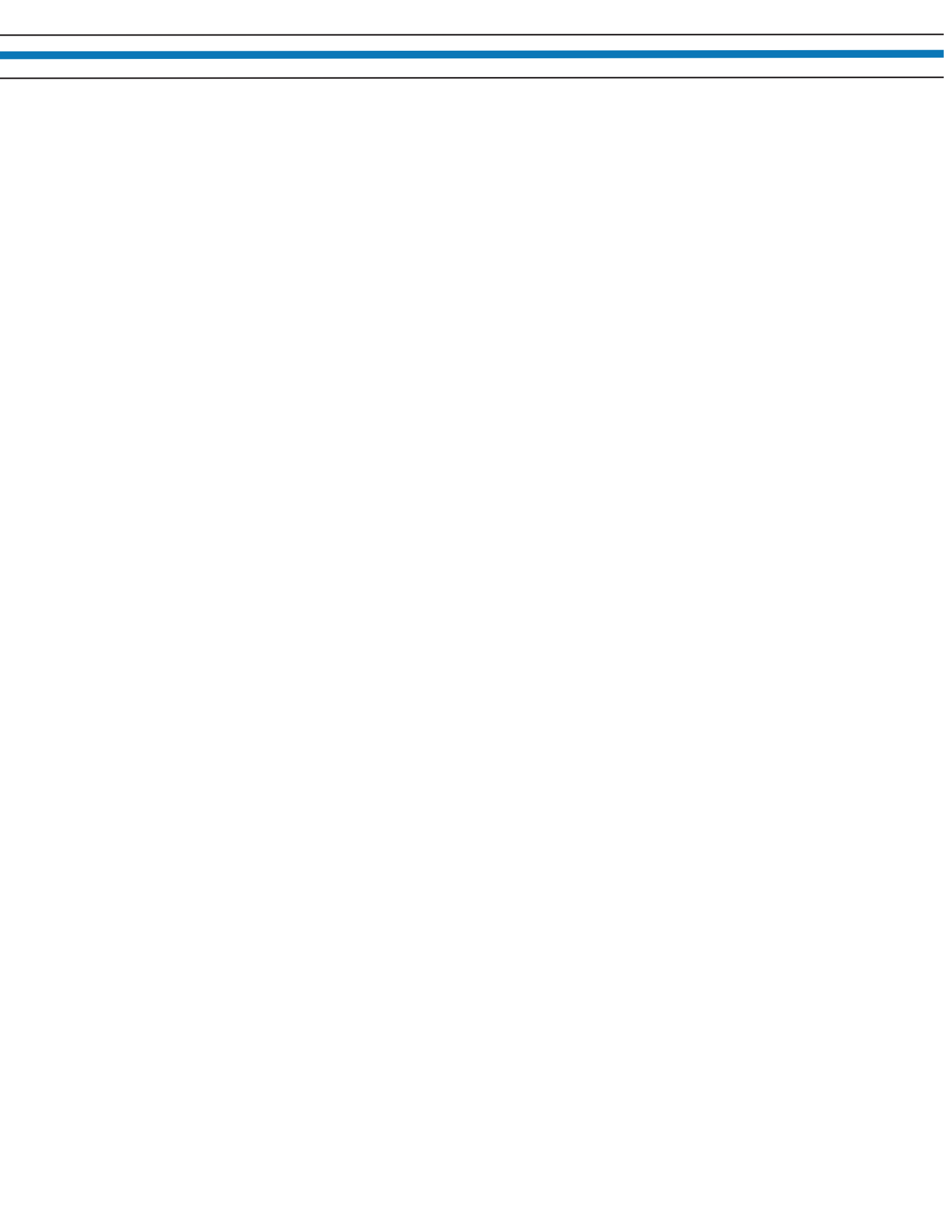
As for the pieces within, all of us on the team seemed to connect with the literature and artwork chosen. Many pieces we knew almost immediately that they must be in this issue. Throughout the magazine you'll see occasional line art accompanying some of the poems. This line art was added by different members of the team, and I believe these elements making it to the final print shows how connected we were to these pieces.

To end, I want to thank the authors, poets, and artists who submitted, it was a joy to review your work. Thank you to the entire *Grackle* team, we are small, but mighty, and it was a pleasure to build this body of work with you. Thank you to Dr. Keely McCarthy for advising *The Grackle* and assisting us in keeping it alive.

And thank you to Professor Andrea Wentzell for also keeping *The Grackle* alive by unapologetically promoting it to anyone that will listen. Thank you also, Andrea, for throwing me into this experience. It is one of my most treasured undergrad experiences and my resume thanks you greatly.

DESTINY BOOKMAN `23





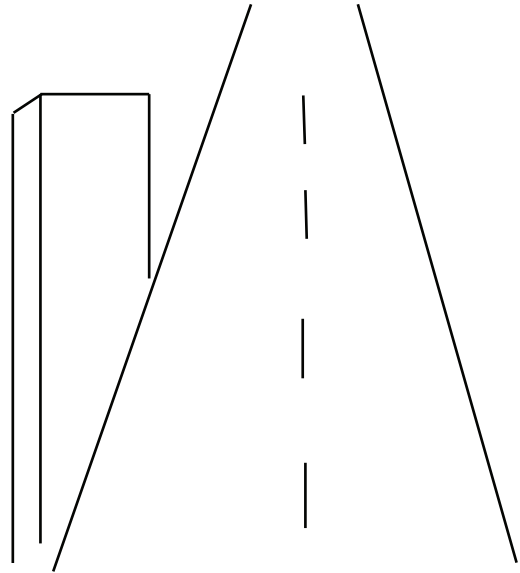


MÖBIUS LIMERICK

THOMAS W. EPP, MATH CENTER

To start a Möbius trip
Run along the infinite strip
On both sides you'll drive
Until you arrive
Until you arrive
On both sides you'll drive
Run along the infinite strip
To start a Möbius trip

To Start a Möbius trip



TEMPORARY INSANITY

MILES JOHNSON-FOREMAN `23

It was an abnormally hot Saturday morning and Eric was sitting in his kitchen eating Corn Flakes to the morning weather report from the radio.

“If you can help it, do not go outside!” The reporter warned. Eric wished he could stay inside where there was air conditioning but he knew he had to be on the move. Today was the day Eric’s girlfriend Beatrice Loretta was to be released from the Psychiatric Pavilion of Louisiana and he wasn’t going to waste any time getting there.

Eric looks himself in the mirror as he dragged a thin toothed comb through his stringy dirty blonde hair. After seeing himself in the mirror again and realizing that the comb had made no difference, he decides to throw on an LA Dodgers baseball cap with aviator sunglasses his father passed down to him from his father. “This is good,” He moves the stray strands of hair from in front of his face.

Eric scoops the keys to his ‘74 BMW 2002 and begins shuffling through different notes of directions he took that will lead him to the Pavilion.

It’s about a 30 minute drive and as Eric pulls into the Pavilion parking lot, he finds the nearest space that’s close to the building. Inside, he approaches the service desk lady who’s chewing 3 hour old tasteless bubble gum extremely loud and looking at herself in the mirror while she combs out her hair. The receptionist sees Eric from the corner of her eye and sucks in her teeth with attitude.

“Can I help you sir?” the lady asks arrogantly.

“Yeah,” Eric raises an eyebrow. “Beatrice Loretta, she’s supposed to be released today and I’m picking her up. Is there someplace I can wait?” He crosses his arms, not about to take anything other than “Right over there sir,” as an answer. The desk lady refuses to make eye contact with Eric “Can you wait a minute please? Sit right over there and I’ll have someone escort her to you”

The receptionist orders a nurse to summon Beatrice over “Yeah, I have someone over here to pick up Beatrice Loretta... is she due to be discharged today?”

The nurse haphazardly shuffles a few pieces of papers around before declaring that Beatrice was in fact being discharged today. She passes Beatrice who is still on a few sedatives over to the receptionist who then moves her over to the waiting room. “Good luck out there,” The woman says without even trying to mask the sarcasm. “And you too,” She finally makes eye contact with Eric. “You’re going to need it with this one,” she tells Eric as she twirls her finger next to her head.

Beatrice is silent as the receptionist wishes Eric luck and pokes fun at Beatrice’s condition. Once she’s pushed over to Eric by the lady, she stumbles the tiny distance over and delicately falls into Eric’s chest.

“Hey,” Eric takes her from the receptionist and pulls Beatrice away to get a good look into her face. “You guys giving me the right one?” He asks and the receptionist doesn’t know if he’s joking or not.

“We double and triple checked,” She assures him.

“Cool,” He throws her arm over her shoulder once he feels her starting to slump over.

“She’s still on a few medications, that’s why she’s looking so frail right now. “Just take her home, keep her in bed, and monitor her for a few days.”

“Yeah. First thing I’ll do is get her some real food. I heard stories...why would you feed these people things that you know you wouldn’t eat yourself?”

The receptionist gives Eric a soulless, corporate grin. "That's not my decision. I wish you luck!" She says, ending the conversation and showing Eric the way back out.

Eric puts his hands on Beatrice's shoulders and pushes her back gently just to get a better look at her. Her face was noticeably gaunt and there was a look of shock in her eyes, the same shell shocked look the guys fighting in Vietnam were coming home with.

The receptionist waves Eric and Beatrice on their way and Eric leads his significant other out to his car and opens the passenger side door for her.

"Get me far away from here," Beatrice finally utters.

"That's the plan," Eric responds as he puts the car into gear.

Eric makes the half hour drive back to his house and as soon as Beatrice crosses over the welcome mat, she raids Eric's refrigerator before Eric has a chance to even show her where the kitchen is. "Help yourself," He says in passing of Beatrice who is making herself the thickest turkey sandwich using all of Eric's lunch meat for the week.

Eric sits down by the phone and spins up Tiffany's number with the old rotary dial. "B, I'm about to call Tiffany! She might want to talk to you, is that okay?"

Beatrice nods as she stuffs her face, smearing mayonnaise and ketchup about the lower half of her face.

After gorging herself on Eric's pantry, the two of them come together in his living room where they catch up on each other's lives and make a loose plan for the future of their relationship.

"Well, do you want me to help you make an appointment with one of these therapists? Y'know, I've seen one of them myself when I was living in Los Angeles. They're not just for crazy people you know."

Beatrice looks up at Eric with a deadpan expression. "I was the one that was in the mental hospital. Of course they're going to think that I am a maniac."

"Just tryin' to relate to you," Eric deflates into the chair.

Beatrice scoffs. "You know what I want to do?" Beatrice stands up and begins making charade like motions with her hands. "I want to go to Bourbon street Eric! Take me to the bar that serves the heaviest stuff in town!"

Eric tilts his head and squints. "You just get out of a mental hospital and the first thing you want to do is something that will potentially put you back?"

Beatrice tilts her head back and blinks her eyes dramatically. "Yeah? Come on, you should be dying to want to do somethin'! What could you have been doing while I was away that you're so turned off at the idea of a night out with your girlfriend?" She begins to trail a finger down his chest as if it were the sharpest kitchen knife. "You got someone who's been keepin' you occupied? Is it Tiffany? I swear to God..."

"Stop it Beatrice," Eric shuts down the sudden accusation. "We've been talking the whole time you were in there, I never forgot about you."

Beatrice's grin manifests into a sadistic yet oh so alluring smile to Eric. "I know you wouldn't ever do anything like that," Her smile maintains but her eyes pierce into Eric's soul.

"Right," Eric emits in a low rumble of a voice and then puts the original topic of discussion back into play.

"I just don't think it should be that. Let's take a walk through a park or something."

"That's boring. I spent the last couple months being boring. It's time to be fun."

Eric caves. "Alright. But I'm not drinking."

"Well, someone's got to be the driver!" Beatrice laughs. "So we leave around 6 this evening? What do ya wanna do until then?" Beatrice asks.

"I had some errands to run. I had to go to the camera store to get some film for my Polaroid. After that, we could probably make our way to the Bourbon."

Beatrice smiles. "I'm glad I sold you on this."

"Yup..." Eric trails off.

At 6:37, Beatrice and Eric are moving through Bourbon Street with Eric making sure Beatrice doesn't stumble over any of the uneven concrete.

"Did you see the look on that guy's face as soon as I walked in? I'm sure he couldn't stand to see a Black person in his establishment!"

"I'm sure it wasn't that. It was probably because you came in so drunk that you couldn't remember your own name," Eric rolls his eyes. "Thank God you had those burgers earlier or I'd be carrying you. Aren't you still on that antipsychotic medication?" It comes to him.

Beatrice looks at him and busts out laughing loud enough to capture the attention of the people nearby. "That's what makes it better!" She play punches Eric. "Lighten the hell up!"

"Jesus Christ. Let's start walking back...We've had enough fun for the night. I don't want you doing something that gets the cops called on us. I hear there's this new detective in town and he's a real-"

Eric's words fall on deaf ears as Beatrice takes off down the street in the direction of Eric's car. Once Eric sees that Beatrice is at least not taking off in an opposite direction, he takes his time catching up to her.

In front of Eric's BMW, Beatrice is waiting for her boyfriend to walk up and unlock the door. While she's waiting, two mid twenties guys appear out of one of the bars looking to start trouble of some kind. Beatrice not being in the right frame of mind happily invites this trouble as being a pretty girl in front of a pretty car gets their attention.

"What is happenin' Ms. Brown Sugar?!" One of the guys swaggers over to Beatrice. "This your car? Mm, look at you! I ain't even know BMW was givin' out cars to people like you!" His words puncture Beatrice's heart.

Beatrice remains silent as Eric finally makes his way over. "What is going on here?" He surveys the situation and notices Beatrice's balled up fists. "Do you know these guys or something?"

"Oh this must be your car!" The same guy projects his voice over Beatrice. "And you've got a real nice girl to go along with it. I wish all nice cars came with girls like thi-"

At that moment, Beatrice blacks out. She lunges forward towards the man gripping a scratch awl she produces from her jean pocket. He's caught completely off guard, feeling a surge of pain once the business end of the awl makes contact with his left chest. The young man emits a harrowing wail of agony as he clutches his chest and his friend comes to his aid.

"You're crazy...!" The other man yelps.

Eric snatches Beatrice out of her dazed pose and literally throws her into the passenger seat before screeching off down the street. While he's driving off, he still hears the moaning and groaning of the stab victim along with the promises from his friend that neither Eric or Beatrice will see the light of day following this attack.

Five minutes down the road, Eric pulls his car up next to a pay phone as the humidity breaks into a light drizzle. Eric darts to the phone and inserts his ten cents into the coin slot to call who but Tiffany.

"Christ..." Eric looks around as the dial tone begins to chirp. He hoped to God that now wasn't the time for the police or even worse- that detective he met earlier decided to make a cameo in Eric's horror home video.

"Hello?" Tiffany asks, lifting her sleep mask from over her eyes.

Mm "Hey Tiffany!" Eric swivels his head around once again. "It's Eric."

"Hey Eric," Tiffany sits up in her bed. "Are you..." She pauses for a second as she looks over at her clock seeing that it's going on midnight. "Are you okay?"

"Course not. Beatrice just stabbed someone on Bourbon street!"

Tiffany cups her mouth with her hand. "What the hell... Where is Beatrice now?"

"She's with me. She's all covered in blood, she's really messed up right now," Eric says as he looks back at Beatrice who is giving him a thousand yard stare.

"You're gonna owe me for this big time. Come over to my place right now."

"Okay," Eric agrees in the absence of any better ideas of his own. "See you in a few minutes."

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

SHANNA HUFF, SCPS '24

Philadelphia Gun Violence Crisis is on the rise
The Philadelphia Center for Gun Violence reports
At the end of 2022, 516 Homicides

Victims non-fatal, 1,667
Father God we need you to reign down from Heaven

Stoneleigh foundation says 472 shooting victims were fatal
Now they live a life that's unstable

More than 200 people under 18 have been shot
How do we handle this, when does it stop?

Hand Guns, AK 47 style rifles
Oh what a struggle, far from delightful

Our teens are dying, moms are crying
No help for our youth, no one is trying

So many families hurting from Gun Violence
So many parents who suffer in silence
Just look at the numbers, I'm sure they're not lying

Every day in our city someone has to die
And we asking the question of why

Where are the guns coming from, who's supplying the heat?
Ghost guns, gun trafficking, illegal sales, corrupt sheriffs working the beat
So many parents in disbelief, resources depleted, everyone feels defeated

It's time to take our streets back, our towns, and our hoods
Come on somebody stand up for our own good

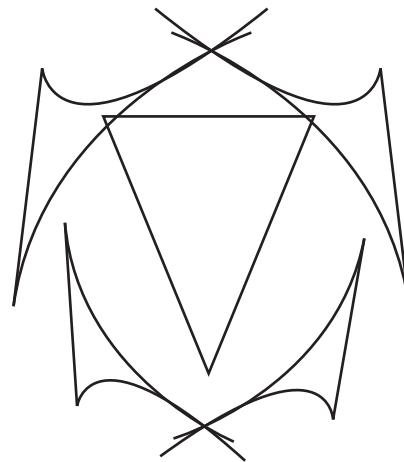
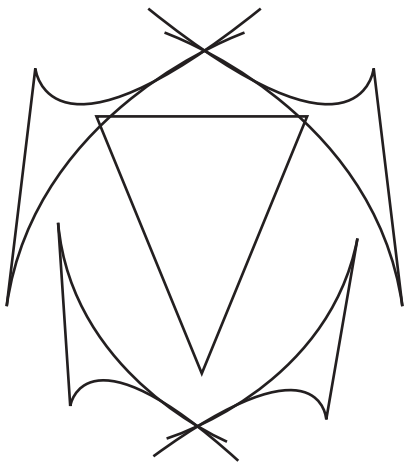
How many more people have to die
Before we understand, gun violence is here and alive

Come on Philly, times are rough and tough
But do you have the courage to a stand
And say ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

GOD'S ARMOR

EDWARD RODGERS '26

I've wrestled with Death...
I've danced with the Devil...
And I've walked through Hell's flames unburnt...
Hell is not my home, yet God has equipped me with the skills to navigate its terrain...
I am not perfect, nor do I claim to be, but I am battle-tested...
And once you've proven yourself, there is no turning back...
Just a steady march in God's faith...
So, I do not fear the flames...
I do not fear Death's challenges...
I enjoy my dance with the Devil...
This shows he has no power over me while I walk with God.



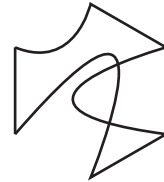
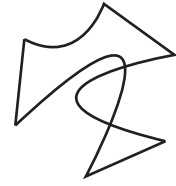
AFTERLIFE

LAURA KUHN, M.F.A., ENGLISH DEPARTMENT ADJUNCT

My mother holds forth at the table,
tracing dirty plates with a moistened finger --
licking the crumbs she swipes from one plate, then another.
Savoring it all;
nobody's watching.

My father, in the next room, watches a game.
He takes no part in the conversation, but interjects
corrections to let her know he's there.
The mighty Giants block
all comers on the field.

My brother is somewhere else.
He misses his kids, but he loves his body.
He runs and runs.
Sweat running down his face
like tears.



THE PIT

JOSEPH AUKWARD, PSY.D. '27

This place is dark. It is cold and lifeless.
I wither at the bottom, wondering how I fell so far.
The Pit claws past me, stretching towards eternity
It was once a ring about my feet,
A barrier my eyes did not see.
It grew as I slipped,
Covering me with its shadows.
It feeds on my strengths, claiming them for its own.
Now, there is nothing left to grasp for.

My pleas go unheeded, my languishing unceasing.
The souls of many fall prey to the Pit.
Whether they collapse from a towering height above,
Or shrivel piece by piece as I did.
We all find ourselves at the bottom,
Abandoned by the pasts we thought secure.
My joy once filled the sky above,
Before it grew dark with storm.
When the clouds break and the Pit floods,
I will be the first to drown.

I have no recourse, no shovel with which to dig myself free.
My errors weigh heavy, dragging my face to the mud.
There is a puddle beneath me
A stranger stares up from it,
His eyes as lifeless as the Pit itself.

I drink from the puddle.
There is no other way.
Above, the sky is gone and the darkness fills all.
Even my own hands lay hidden.
Trembling fingers reach up for the sides,
Digging into the mud and stone.
I haul myself from the ground,
Towards a place I cannot see.
The Pit will not consume me as it consumes many others.
My breath is a promise,
The symbol of rebirth.
My heart yearns for escape, even as the pain squashes it
I climb, even as the dirt fills my lungs.
I climb, even as the rats bite my fingers.
I climb, even as the darkness prevails.
I climb because I must.

No darkness reigns forever
And no Pit is without end.
The world hails from light,
It will not fade so long as the candle still burns
I will see the flame of deliverance again.

LAMENT

LYNN KIM, M.S. '24

Fogelsville, Wednesday
I walk on dappled sunspots
under arched maples
and cloudless dome

watch leaves fall
to woodland floor
hear drops,
feel their spatter
on my shoulders
carry on and know

the tall timber
in its leaved glory
rustling in the wind
weeps for me,
rain I hold locked in.

TO YOU, MY MOTHER

KATE SPRANDIO ELLIS '10

We had 9 months together, just you and me.
It was our time to learn about each other.
You didn't know then, but I would be your only daughter.
We would develop a relationship like no other.

"You got it right!" Your Mother exclaimed,
On that fateful day I was born.
With three boys at home, a baby girl was a marvel,
A rose among the thorns.

"Do you want to be a mommy like me some day?"
You would ask me as I grew.
"No!" I would shout and run away with my brothers.
But deep in my heart, I always knew.

I knew some day I wanted to be exactly what you are.
A source of love and comfort, in the darkness a guiding light.
A constant pillar of support, the foundation of our home.
A voice of calm and reason, in the midst of any fight.

You have given so much of yourself to us for over half your life.
And even though we are all grown, you continue to give more.
You answer every call, every text, and email.
You tell us not to hesitate to show up at your door.

You were by my side when I had my first baby,
I had never been more vulnerable or raw.
I harnessed a strength that you taught me by example.
You may have thought I didn't notice, but I always saw.

I always saw how strong you were, even in times when you wanted to break.
I always saw you put your needs aside, so we could get what we needed first.
I always saw you smile, even though you may have needed to cry.
I always saw you love each one of us, so much so that your heart could burst.

I have three babies of my own now,
I am home with them every day.
Just like you were with us for so many years.
Providing the security we needed and the perfect environment to play.

The days can be hectic and long, but they are filled with joy and love.
So, to you, my Mother, thank you for the inspiration to live a life like this.
To be your daughter, it has been a pleasure,
But to be a Mother alongside you, is nothing short of bliss.



NATURE'S TAPESTRY

KATHY DETRANO '67

DESERT PSALM

LYNN KIM, M.S. '24

A child, she learned silence
Eased tension

God, with hands
Like a mother, dressed
Her heart-wounds
Told her “Don’t fear
the future”, invited
Her to rest, held her
Arm when she, trembling,
Walked the barren dunes

Until desert gave way
To rain’s patter,
Its song enough
To fill
Its touch enough
To heal
Its waters, still.

THE LETTER

MARYANNE J. KANE '78

IT'S TIME FOR THE READING OF THE WILL.

"Ms. Johnson, may I call you Sarah? I am Samuel Lowell, your father's attorney. Please come into my office. You have my deepest condolences with the passing of your father."

"Mr. Lowell, my father and I have been estranged for many years. I haven't seen him since I left for ... well, since I left. This is my husband, Tony Camero. I kept my maiden name, but our baby will have the name Camero."

"Congratulations. I didn't realize you married and are expecting."

"Mr. Lowell, my father and I had a combative relationship. Mom died when I was young. My father either didn't know how to or didn't want to raise a daughter. Tony's mom and dad were more parents to me than my father."

"I am so sorry to hear this, Sarah."

I hated you, Dad. Hated you. You made my life miserable with your stupid rules – clean the house, do the dishes, wash the clothes, mop the floor. I had no life. If it wasn't for Tony's parents, I would have killed myself. Why hate Tony? What did he ever do to you? I couldn't let you keep us apart. He was the only bright spot in my miserable life. That's why we eloped. That's why we told no-one, not even Tony's parents.

"Sarah? Sarah?"

"I'm sorry. My mind is – I'm not myself. Yes?"

"Totally understandable. After you sign the necessary documents, your father's estate will be transferred to your accounts. Also, your father asked me to give this letter to you? Sarah, he requested you read it alone."

"Mr. Lowell, I have no interest in reading anything my father wrote."

"Your father must have anticipated your response and left instructions his estate would not be transferred until you read his letter."

"My father can go to hell. I don't want anything. Let's go, Tony."

For the first time, Tony spoke, "Hun, maybe reading the letter will give you some peace of mind. We don't have to accept any of your father's estate, but still think about reading the letter. Our child will never meet his maternal-grandparents. Read the letter. Please."

"Your husband and I can both leave the room." Sarah nodded her head. Mr. Lowell motioned for Tony to follow him into the adjoining office. Sarah opened the letter:

Dear Sarah,

I know you think I was mean. I was lost when your mom died. I had a baby-girl and was scared. I loved you so, so much but I just didn't know how to show it.

I loved seeing you color at the table. I loved hearing you hum your little silly songs. I loved how you lined up all your dollies and played pretend school. I wanted to tell you so many times I loved you but instead I barked out orders. I didn't care if you washed the dishes. I just wanted to talk to you and didn't know how.

Sarah, I know you resented me for splitting you and Tony up. I never hated him but I was scared what would happen if I didn't break you two up.

You see, Sarah, when your mom died, I was so lonely. I couldn't breathe. I couldn't think. I couldn't feel. I slipped. This is not an excuse, I am wrong and I am deeply sorry. I couldn't tell you my shame. I had a brief affair with Angela Camero. My dear, Sarah, Tony is your brother.

DAD



SWING INTO PARADISE

STACY MCCROSSON, M.D. '97

JUST DESSERTED ISLE

THOMAS W. EPP, MATH CENTER

I wrote my note on a Möbius strip;
Stuffed in a Klein bottle,
I sent it off on an Escher sea.
“Help”, it said, “I’m stuck in an infinite loop!”
I waited and waited until one day
My note washed back to me.
Until you arrive
On both sides you’ll drive
Run along the infinite strip
To Start a Möbius trip

**THANK YOU
FOR READING**



THE GRACKLE

2022 - 2023



CHESTNUT
HILL
COLLEGE