

# GORP



Falmouth High School's  
Literary and Arts Magazine

2021-2022

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# Editorial Board



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where do i go?  
to the left,  
where nothing's right?  
or to the right,  
where nothing's left?  
forward, you need to go forward.

– Jamila Ahmadova, 2024





Grace McNally, 2022

awake

the light holds you gently  
the world passes by  
people talk  
and friends walk on  
but sitting here  
so sweetly beneath  
the dewey light of november  
there's nothing so kind  
i could ask of you  
but to let me stay  
and watch you a little more

– Adelaide Tolley, 2023



Gabrielle Bardwell, 2023

## The One Who Listens

The others talk, while I am merely  
the one who listens.  
I sit with the eyes of a doe  
and the ears of an elephant;  
I warmly embrace others  
without moving an inch.  
And when I publish  
my first ever novel,  
the others that talk  
will recognize their names  
in the pristine white pages  
because I am the one who listens.

– Emily Mellow, 2024



Gabrielle Bardwell, 2023

## The Move

My entire life packed on four wheels  
Winter's colder, I get the chills  
It's different here in so many ways  
But I'll never forget those warmer days  
The price of moving was less than the cost  
You always miss most what you've lost

– Katherine Cahan, 2023



Kani Gutter, 2024

Again I see my mind wander  
Into the invisible  
Into the imaginary  
Nothing I can  
Touch  
Hear  
Say  
Taste  
Or sense  
Yet it consumes every synapse  
I refer to it as  
A black hole  
The general theory being  
A region  
Of time  
Where it is so strong  
Nothing can escape  
  
Not even light

– Kani Gutter, 2024





Kani Gutter, 2024

## A Chill in the Air

you step outside.  
your nose tingles  
with the sudden cold.  
it's like being hit  
with an invisible wall  
of ice.

it smells different.  
you shiver.  
the trees slowly lose a layer,  
but you add another.  
the hat is warm,  
but doesn't quite cover your ears.

you pull your sweater  
over your hands.  
your nose blushes.  
it isn't embarrassed.  
you just need  
a new hat.

– Anna Greene, 2024

## In the Air

A chill in the air  
A lively fall fair  
It looks like September here  
It's that time of year  
Of pretty leaves falling  
The autumn breeze calling  
To us fall is near  
How I wish it could stay  
As I watch the trees sway  
I think to myself  
Fall is here.

– Annika Asbjornsen, 2024



Kani Gutter, 2024



Grace McNally, 2022

Still

Weather weather weather  
The rush of the stream is constant  
My surface: shiny and smooth  
My brothers: tossed aside  
So long i have sat here  
No longer remembering how i arrived  
No longer wondering why  
Run run run  
The push of water is endless  
Warm glow filling my world each morning  
Birds soar over my prison  
The night chasing them home  
My world is plunged into black.  
Once the stars surprised me  
Once i noticed the birds  
But the cycle will continue without care  
Whether i see it or not  
Gurgle gurgle gurgle  
The rush of the stream just smothers  
Filling me up to the brim  
Letting me struggle to breathe  
Slowly breaking me apart  
But i sit here, still.  
No longer questioning why.

– Kat Cahan, 2023

## Ghosts

I would see ghosts in the woods: lost souls wandering in search of their old life. They stared at me through hollow eyes. Perhaps they were jealous—or maybe they just pitied me. For I, too, was alone in these woods. A crumbling rock wall marked the boundary of their small cemetery. The clearing was uneven as mounds of earth preceded each headstone. Each of the miniature knolls was still prominent despite the gentle coating of grass and moss. I noted the wild black raspberries growing atop some of them, dark and tempting.

Food for the dead, I thought.

Perhaps nature's way of continuing to care for them. No one else did, after all. Time had faded our town's memory. These people hadn't been alive for more than two hundred years. There was no thought of them or for them anymore. Regardless, I preferred the company of these quiet graves and their lonely spirits to any of the living persons I returned to each day.

One particular afternoon, I felt as if the souls of the deceased held an invisible, collective breath. A fleeting storm wind rocked the towering trees around the cemetery and created whispers in their branches. A gray sky and light mist made for an eerie setting. I felt that, at any moment, I would see a somber funeral procession coming down the main path, led by a horse-drawn hearse. Fear and curiosity waged war in my mind. The image of my imagination was so vivid that it convinced me the people lying underground would no longer be beneath my feet, but standing in front of me. I would meet them, talk to them about their lives. The very thought was thrilling. My gaze fell on the headstones nearest to me. A girl my age was buried there. Would we have been friends? I felt eyes follow me as I walked down the hill from the cemetery. The spirits were there, watching my return to the dense woods.

– Sophia Lambert, 2022



Kaylee Demers, 2022

scribble

why is there a scribble  
scratched over my brain?

etched without care  
into the grooves, like a stain.

i can only hear a static

buzzing  
buzzing  
buzzing

why can't I escape my own head?

buzz  
buzz  
buzz

i wish i could take a visit  
to someone else's brain

not forever–  
just until my scribble goes away.

– Anna Greene, 2024



## A Letter to the Doctor

Dear Doctor,  
It appears I need your help.  
I've dug myself a hole and I can't get out!  
This hole, you see, it's inside my very own  
brain.  
I've had it for months, it's causing me pain!  
I did not use a shovel or a garden tool.  
I used my own thoughts;  
I know: I'm such a fool!  
Every time I ask myself the question,  
"What if?" the hole gets deeper.  
It's merely the fear of a horrible future.  
Would you please help me assemble a new  
plan?  
I just need a ladder, a stool, or a stand.  
These positive thoughts are not far away,  
I just need your help—  
Would you give me a hand?

– Emily Mellow, 2024

## Earth's Love Poem

Hello, Mother Earth!  
You look radiant today.  
I love the way you smile with the clouds.  
My favorite thing about you would have to be  
your ever-changing seasons,  
or perhaps your mystical oceans.  
And I do adore the songs you write for the birds.  
Oh, but I cannot forget your iridescent snow—  
not to mention the colorful fruit you grow!  
There is more I'd say, but that would take far too long.  
Perhaps I'll come back tomorrow  
with an organized list,  
or a pretty little song!

– Emily Mellow, 2024



Anna Greene, 2024

Bumblebees

Bumblebees  
carry me through my day.  
I constantly hear the buzzing  
in my ears and yet

my thoughts are isolated from the noise.

I know they won't hurt me,  
but I convince myself that  
their stingers are against my skin  
leaving surface scratches  
across my chest.

I escaped the bumblebees once.  
My feet could touch the ground  
and the buzzing had  
departed from my ears.

I went crazy without my bumblebees  
holding me and telling me  
the things I did not want to hear.  
I went mad without the buzzing sound in my ears.

I had become accustomed  
to their stingers against my body  
even though I knew  
they were not real.

– Emily Mellow, 2024



Ruth McDermott, 2022

### Mr. Bumblebee

On August 29th, I woke up with a strange feeling. I was anticipating that something bad would happen. As this feeling grew, so did a peculiar buzzing sound.

At about noon, the doorbell rang. As I opened my front door, the buzzing sound erupted into a crescendo at the sight of a fuzzy bumblebee. He was wearing a very polite looking hat, and he was holding a briefcase.

“Hello, Sir, is there anything I can help you—” Before I could finish speaking, the bumblebee flew into the house and looked around. He handed me his hat and his briefcase. Expecting something heavy, I collapsed on the floor; however, the briefcase was empty. The bumblebee rubbed his tiny hands together as if he were prepared to grapple with a new project.

“What a lovely home you have! I cannot wait to stay here. I’m absolutely positive it will feel like home.” His voice roared over the sound of his own buzzing.

“I haven’t been told you were going to stay here. Did I miss a letter? An email? Is there something I could’ve done to prepare?” “Oh, goodness me! You don’t know!?” the bumblebee cackled. “It would make me very happy if you called me Mr. Bumblebee. It’s a pleasure to meet you. I always show up without a warning; there’s no need to prepare. I’m here to be your cause of worry. I’m your anxiety, your fear, I’m the reason you don’t take risks. I’m the buzzing in your ear telling you that safety scissors are dangerous.”

I nodded in agreement. Not because I wanted this bumblebee to stop talking, but because somehow, a part of this made sense to me.

I nodded in agreement. Not because I wanted this bumblebee to stop talking, but because somehow, a part of this made sense to me. It's no wonder people are concerned for my well-being. If they were being followed by a dapper bumblebee buzzing in their ear, I'm sure they'd be just as concerned. Perhaps they knew I had a bumblebee following me around before I did.

"How long will you be staying?" I said. The bumblebee paused for a moment in order to compose his thoughts.

"I'll stay until you learn to let me go. It could take a few days, months, or years. I've been here all your life, just a few blocks away. This is your first time seeing my face! You'll become very familiar with me as time goes on. Now, as I was saying: which room is mine?"

\*

The bumblebee slept in a sleeping bag on the floor of my room. I was able to easily understand why he wanted his own. He kept me awake at night with the constant buzzing. His presence caused me to hyperventilate; I felt safest when I was rolled over facing away from him. I shoved my head under pillows to shield myself from the noise.

"Oh, I'm sorry. Was I making you nervous?" The bumblebee sat up in one sudden movement. His eyes gleamed with false apologies as I hid myself underneath layers of blankets.

I didn't sleep for the rest of the night. I was too busy thinking about the bumblebee. My body swelled up with regret as I replayed the moment I allowed him to come inside until I gave myself a migraine.

When I woke up, the bumblebee was stuffing his suitcase with something invisible. He was determined to keep it shut. "What are you doing?" I said.

The bumblebee sighed, wiped sweat off of his forehead, and said: "You've worried so much that my suitcase is already full! Typically, I have to stay a few days before my clients are drowning with anxiety. You really need to learn to avoid jumping to conclusions. Now, I have to go home and sell these worries. After all, I do have a family of pollinators I need to support! Do you remember where you put my hat?"

I leapt out of bed and sprinted downstairs to retrieve the tiny hat. I was beaming now that I knew the bumblebee was on his way out.

The bumblebee slowly hobbled down the stairs buzzing a happy tune. I could hear the suitcase dragging behind him, weighing him down. Thump! Thump! Thump!

Before the bumblebee could finish the song, I pushed him out the door and threw him his hat. I let out a big sigh as the buzzing sound slowly softened into nothing. I locked each and every door and window, and although the weather called for ice cream and swimming pools, I put on the fuzziest hat in my house because the future is unpredictable.

\*

Months later, the stains on my hat went from popsicles to hot cocoa. Although I had remained bundled up in the fluffy jackets that I called “armor,” something felt missing. And so, I shakily removed my hat to hear the same buzzing that I had heard in the months before.

Walking outside, I came across a shivering bumblebee down the street. The brim of his hat was filled with snow, and his heavy suitcase left a path in the snow.

“Hello!” I called out. Mr. Bumblebee was too cold to speak. He shakily mumbled out a few buzzes and a wave. I ran towards him and helped him stumble into my house.

“Would you like a blanket?” I asked him. He nodded quietly before plopping himself on my couch as if it were his own. He looked at me with a feeling of guilt.

“Would you like to sit with me?” he said. I hesitantly tucked myself under the blanket with him. The snowflakes that had fallen on us began to melt into a puddle.

Mr. Bumblebee and I watched movies all afternoon as the loud buzzing slowly melted into white noise. His suitcase of worries filled up at a much slower pace than it previously had done. I accepted him as a friend and pen pal, and that is how we remain.

– Emily Mellow, 2024



Gabrielle Bardwell, 2023





Liam Buble, 2025

## Roses of Truth

Mr. Haddox's fingers tapped a quick rhythm against his long coat. A maid opened the door.

"Good-day, sir, may I help you?"

"Yes, hello, I'm here to inquire after Miss Crawford," he said stiffly. The maid stood blinking for a moment, taking in the uncomfortable-looking man holding flowers on the stoop.

"I see," she said. "And who may I say is calling?"

"George Haddox. Sorry, Mr. George Haddox. Of Chesterfield," Mr. Haddox blurted out. The maid raised an eyebrow. "We met at the Spring Soirée last weekend. I'm...the fellow who tripped as I escorted her into the ballroom," he admitted. The maid suppressed a grin.

"Ah, yes. Just a moment, Mr. Haddox," she said, and closed the door. His chest deflated as a stifled breath escaped. He glanced around at the neighboring houses and noticed a gardener staring as he pruned a rose bush. Mr. Haddox gave him a tight-lipped nod and re-faced the door. The gardener shook his head. The returning steps of the maid could be heard. Mr. Haddox cleared his throat and squared his shoulders.

"Please, sir, come in."

Mr. Haddox moved stiffly through the door into a narrow foyer with lavish floral decor and an elegant mahogany staircase against one wall. A small, nearby table was furnished with ornately carved designs. From above, the luminescence of a glass chandelier cast down over intricate paintings on the walls. The maid took his hat from him and led Mr. Haddox to the adjoining room. A young woman, Martha Crawford, was examining some ancient-looking books.

"Miss Crawford, may I present a Mr. George Haddox of Chesterfield Hall?"

"Good-day, sir."

"How do you do, Miss Crawford?"

Martha gestured out of the room. "You may go," she declared.

The maid dropped her gaze. She gave a gentle curtsy and left without another word. Her absence suddenly changed the air of the room. No longer did it feel like an ordinary visit by a potential suitor. Mr. Haddox had been left exposed like an antelope to a hungry lioness. He took in the figure before him; Martha was still flicking through pages of a novel. She certainly gave the appearance of a powerful cat. Her long fingers looked as though they might produce claws at any moment. Her eyes were piercing gray and held an intense gaze. Yes, Martha Crawford was a dangerously beautiful creature, with both the potential to curl up and purr or deliver a killing blow to unsuspecting prey.

“What an unexpected surprise,” she said, snapping the book shut. Her eyes betrayed the analysis she made of him.

“Yes, I’m sorry,” Mr. Haddox explained. “I was hoping you wouldn’t be occupied, seeing as it is Saturday. Martha simply looked at him. Mr. Haddox’s mouth went dry.

“Are those for me, Mr. Haddox?” she said after a moment.

“Well, yes,” he replied, examining the bouquet and holding it out to her. Martha resumed perusing her bookshelf.

“Pity, I received flowers from another gentleman earlier today that certainly put those to shame,” she said. “He’s bringing more this afternoon.”

“I purchased these from the best florist in town,” Mr. Haddox assured. Martha shot a sideways glance towards the flowers before sliding the novel back into its place on the shelf.

“I prefer roses to geraniums.”

Of course. He should have known that. She’d worn a rose flower crown to the Soirée. Then again, he’d been too busy tripping over himself (literally) to notice.

“Miss Crawford, I came to inquire if you might join me for a walk in the garden?” he asked. Martha’s hand paused, reaching for another book. Her lips formed a cruel grin. Mr. Haddox stiffened.

“A walk? Are you quite sure?”

“Yes, Miss Crawford, I—”

“I’m afraid I’ve already braved the garden path today,” she said with feigned concern. “Lots of loose roots and stones. I’m not sure walking would be suitable for you. Seeing as polished wood floors have proven difficult to manage.” The lethal bite had been made. Her poison froze Mr. Haddox where he stood. Martha finally turned to face him. She looked—no, bore—into his eyes.

“Good day, Mr. Haddox.”

Her words broke the spell, and suddenly Mr. Haddox was free from his paralysis. His mind whirled as he mumbled an incoherent farewell and moved to the foyer in a daze. What had he done wrong? Something, certainly. But what? He hardly noticed as petals from his rejected bouquet broke from their shaking stems and left a sad trail out the door.

\*

The day outside was still warm and bright. Mr. Haddox’s shock wore into bitterness as he descended the walkway towards the street. He tossed his flowers aside.

Waste of money, he thought. Waste of money, time, and good intentions.

He kicked at a rock. The toe of his shoe caught in a sidewalk crack and nearly sent him sprawling. Martha’s comment rang in his ears. I’m not sure walking would be suitable for you... Humiliation burned his face red and Mr. Haddox moved to pull his hat down over his eyes. Only air met his hand. Could this day get any worse? Where was his hat?

Still at the Crawford house, he thought, and a sinking feeling was added to his discontent. He reapproached the walkway, vowing never to return after the surely awkward retrieval of his property. To his surprise, Mr. Haddox found his embarrassment interrupted by the most peculiar sight: a disheveled-looking man was already more than halfway up the path. It was the neighbor’s gardener. He held his clippers in one hand, and an assortment of roses in the other.

– Sophia Lambert, 2022



Ruth McDermott, 2022

## Soccerian Sonnet

To a boy like me soccer means the world  
The game is unique and never a bore  
And as I run with my tight muscles curled  
I anticipate my chances to score

But to me soccer is not just a game  
There's spirit and hope, and certainly grit  
Yet although this silly sport can bring fame  
It's a great way to have fun and stay fit

The game's about spirit, not about strength  
And although injuries can take a toll  
All matches are fun, no matter the length  
It is all worth it when you score a goal

Still as I grow, soccer makes my heart sing  
Because it's not a game, it's everything

– Ben Calcagni, 2024

## Sonnet

The feeling of a racket, cutting through the air  
Making contact with the ball ever elusive  
Sometimes this game is simply not fair  
So when I make contact, my excitement is effusive

The difficulty of tennis is immense and inherent  
The sport takes prisoners, smart, dumb, short and tall  
Sometimes my struggle is readily apparent  
I occasionally make my opponents look like Federer or Nadal

Losing a match will make me curse  
Missing a shot is like an open wound mixed with salt  
But if there is one thing that is the worst  
It is when I miss a serve and consequently double fault

Tennis is a sport that makes me question what I'm here for,  
what I'm doing  
But what keeps me going, is the thought that I just may be  
improving.

– Peter Verrill, 2024

Sonnet

To fly or not to fly  
That is not the question  
We explore places  
We cannot go

It's the human stupidity  
Which brings one to cupidity  
So we build a goliath  
To enter upon the flow

Of the beasts, who we fear  
It's the premier of the final frontier  
The answer is obvious  
To the right audience

We must apply  
To fly in the sky

– Felix Zimmerman, 2024



## This Morning I Baked a Pie

If it's decided I die tomorrow,  
I'd like to bake an assortment of treats  
In an attempt to assuage my sorrow.  
Nothing better than a pie with some sweets!

An apple pie or strawberry rhubarb,  
Strawberry rhubarb is my favorite.  
The pie crust filling me up carb by carb.  
In my mind, swimming, the flavor of it.

Anyways, this morning I baked a pie.  
Why worry about not having the time?  
Instead, bake a pie in case you may die.  
Oh my gosh! I forgot about Key lime!

Life is too short, and is perfectly sweet,  
To spend your time without sweet treats to eat.

– Addison Caster, 2024



Grace McNally, 2022



Gabrielle Bardwell, 2023

## Kinoakua

Matthew Lakeman sat at the small wooden kitchen table, the light fixture above giving off a soft warm glow, and shifted uncomfortably. It bugged him that all that stopped him from enjoying the relaxing atmosphere was how the table pushed into his stomach at times, despite his thinner frame. It was even more strange to Matthew that his makuahine never minded.

Turning his attention back to the game, Matthew analyzed his hand of cards. This game of UNO was once again turning Matthew's cogs at a breakneck speed, determined to win the best-of-five tourney they set up earlier that morning, though that hope shone dimly. He was losing four to two and Matthew still had five cards while Makuahine Sadie was down to her last one.

Scrunching his eyebrows, Matthew scanned his hand for trick cards to prolong the game, though he found none. Now desperate, he decided on an alternative strategy to keep the game going, to keep changing the colors. Matthew knew that there was a  $\frac{1}{4}$  chance that the card he played would be the color his makuahine needed to win, allowing him to potentially stall her out. However, there was always the chance that he could play the card that would allow her to win, whether that be by color or number.

His pouting temple abating, Matthew decided to play a blue four, feeling that, somehow, this would give him more time. Upon looking up though, Matthew was met with the playful smirk of his makuahine before she placed down a wild card in an overly exaggerated motion.

"Great game!" exclaimed Makuahine Sadie, doing a little victory jig in her chair and then leaning across the table to hug Matthew. "And what a great way to spend the morning with my Nephew!" she continued, her slim fingers unclasping as she got up and leaned on the kitchen table, contentment radiating off her.

"I mean, there is no way I could've won against your 'master-strategy,'" countered Matthew jokingly as he started picking up the cards, "but I guess that was a relaxing way to spend the morning."

However, he felt otherwise, and was puzzled why. Matthew knew he had every reason to be relaxed, especially since he got up from the restrictive space of the table, yet, he felt as though the wild card was laying there, mocking him until the moment he cramped it into the box.

Suddenly, Makuahine Sadie pulled an inhaler from her pocket and took a quick puff, removing the canister afterwards and inspecting it with worry.

“Sugar,” she muttered as she placed a new canister in, “only have one more canister.”

After sitting there and planning for a minute or two, a now solemn Makuahine Sadie looked up at Matthew, a grim gaze emanating from her brown eyes.

“Matthew, could you run to the store to pick up my next set of inhaler canisters?” she asked, her voice wincing from having to ask him to complete this favor.

His tan hands starting to get slick from sweat, Matthew nodded and went to his room to fetch his wallet. He alone would have to go get the medication. A mundane chore like this was now a potential suicide mission, all because of a creature that Matthew felt like his shadow. It was always with him, one way or another, haunting him, for he always remembered what it had taken from him.

Turning into his bedroom, Matthew was greeted by his room’s undecorated, pale-red walls. The only things he had in here were his bed, a dresser, a small mirror, a table for a bedside lamp, and a desk, where he stood his parents’ photo album like a museum artifact.

Seeing it as he grabbed his wallet from the dresser, Matthew remembered he hadn’t selected his daily page. It was a personal daily ritual of his to select a page of photos that felt like they pertained to what he expected of that day.

Matthew skimmed the pages with a priest’s reverence, selecting the last page with photos his parents had added before they died.

The photo had a six-year-old Matthew lying on a beach towel with his parents and Makuahine Saide, with her and his father's relatively pale skin sticking out next to him and his mother's tan skin.

It had been such a great day at the beach, Matthew recalled, remembering showing his makuahine all his "tidepool friends" that he would collect in his red plastic bucket and trying to surf on a boogie board. It was his makuahine's last day of visiting her brother in Hawaii before she had to go back to Maine, and the last time she would see him alive.

Matthew then remembered how he was spending the night with his babysitter, whom he regarded as his big sister as much as his babysitter. A few weeks later, he played with his two superhero action figures on the smooth living room rug as rain pounded the roof of his small home. Matthew had been ignoring the boring grown-up talk of the Pele City News Network, but his interest was peaked when he heard his parents' name among other words he didn't yet know and a screech that sounded of rubber being strained mixed with nails on a chalkboard.

"Why ah makua and mama on nah news?" he had asked his babysitter curiously, his action figures slipping out of his hands as he focused all his attention on her.

His babysitter had saucers for eyes as she sat up. She then rewinded and paused the news footage, her pupils dashing across the headline. Looking down, she responded by opening her mouth but then pursing it as she furrowed her eyebrows slightly, entering a seeming trance. She only truly responded many minutes later.

"Matthew, your parents have passed away and they are in a better place now," his babysitter soulfully started as tears welled up in both her eyes. "They went together, and they now rest with our lord."

The news had struck him like a truck. Bawling, Matthew climbed onto the couch and hugged her, the room shrinking until it was just him and his babysitter, hugging and crying on the couch. It even felt like they were the only people in Hawaii.

Without family, Matthew was eventually sent to live in Maine with his Makuahine Sadie, whom he started calling his makuahine instead of aunt to respect his mother's lessons in Hawaiian.

It took Matthew two years to finally ask his makuahine what had happened to his parents. She barely told him and didn't show him much of anything. Frustrated, Matthew later snuck onto her computer, deciding to look up the events his makuahine described. His research led Matthew to a news clip from that day by the Pele City News Network. Clicking on it, he was asked if he was over eighteen so he could watch the clip. Not wanting to be deterred again, Matthew answered yes and the video started.

The news anchor described how a new species of arthropod had emerged in a thermal power plant and killed many employees, the name of the specific plant being where Matthew's parents worked as geologists. The news anchor then warned that the following footage might be disturbing, but Matthew refused to even blink.

The news then cut to some grainy, jittery security camera footage that showed concrete in the ground cracking as two big, armored, and pale legs with red joints burst through the floor in front of a group of employees. Matthew recognized the two at the front as his parents. In a flurry of movement, the monster lunged out and barely missed Matthew's parents, only to grab a worker behind them in its mandibles, which was followed by the sickening crack of the man's ribs as they were crushed.

Nearly all the workers sprinted away, save for a group that attempted to beat the bug to save their comrade, his parents among them, whacking it in the back. This positioning gave Matthew's parents seconds more of life, for the creature's tail arched up and sprayed a mist at the other workers, causing them to collapse to the ground, with screams that came across as rasps of agony.

The news footage then cut, as the white arthropod spun around towards his parents and lunged, returning to the view of the news anchor, leaving Matthew to ponder about what he had just seen.

Feelings of fear, hatred, and sadness were welling up in him, but Matthew was soon pulled out of his emotion-fueled trance when he heard the name of this wretched monster: kinoakua, the new demon of Matthew's nightmares.

After seeing the rest of the news clip and learning about more of the horrors a kinoakua was capable of, Matthew felt that he needed to prevent the feelings he had just felt from affecting someone else. That was the day he decided that he wanted to become a doctor.

Matthew started learning about medicine at the age of eight, and he researched the kinoakua specifically out of a loathing vendetta. He learned how it lived in thermal vents around volcanos and of its poisonous spray that shut down the respiratory system, a serious threat to someone like his makuahine. Between traumatized shudders and cries, Matthew heard the stories of traumatized survivors who shuddered or sputtered when describing how it felt like an anvil was on their chests.

This hate was accompanied, though, by equal or greater amounts of fear, and these were all cranked to ten when Matthew heard one night on the news that kinoakuas were being sighted around the mainland US, with reports claiming that a large number of hatchlings had stowed away on research equipment and vehicles that were brought back from volcanic expeditions. Without thermal energy powering their chemosynthesis (the ability to make organic compounds from inorganic chemicals), kinoakuas not displaced near thermal vents into which they could burrow became hyper-carnivorous, devouring any flesh to make up for a lack of other energy sources, forgoing traits from a more passive life in thermal vents for ones better suited to their new lifestyle, such as smaller, less protected eyes or losing their antenna.

Makuahine Sadie had stared at the TV with reasonable concern when the news anchor revealed this, but Matthew was leaning off the couch, not sure if he wanted to punch the screen or scream at the top of his lungs. Instead, he remained crouched there, his blue eyes boring into the information displayed on screen.



Soon after this announcement, Matthew noticed people carrying all sorts of weapons in public. Some wielded mundane items, while some bore firearms, but many people just didn't go outside longer than necessary.

Snapping back to the present, Matthew turned away from his desk and marched towards the garage, only stopping to grab his makuahine's car keys and her two-foot gardening spade, the latter for self-defense. He also made sure to hug his makuahine, letting go after what felt like eternity.

Once Matthew pulled out into the driveway, he was greeted by the autumn atmosphere of Maine, being surrounded by tall, pillar-like trees whose orange-hued leaves created the illusion of being in a sea of fire.

After turning onto the main road and driving for a few minutes, he reached the part of it where skid marks marked the road, forming a shape similar to an open gate. Matthew shuddered when he saw the mound of dirt on the side of the road that the kinoakua had burst out from, his already tight grip on the steering wheel becoming stone-hard. He had heard that the biker was killed before they could even let out a scream.

But Matthew was way past that site by the time he recounted the spine-chilling events that made it stand out on the gray road. Returning his attention to driving, Matthew grimaced as he continued down the fiery-orange road, determined to go there and back in as little time as possible.

Stepping out of the car, spade in hand, Matthew scanned the supermarket parking lot, a static landscape painting chilled by the crisp autumn air, for signs of danger when a flicker of motion in the sky caught his attention.

Snapping his head upwards, he saw it was a bat, drunkenly passing by the sun, the beat of its wings a hiccupy rhythm. Recalling from one of his many books on diseases, Matthew assumed this bat had rabies. As he approached the dull, cement entrance to the store, his reflection grew larger on the glass, allowing Matthew to see the dried flecks of blood that peppered the corners of the shining sliding doors.

He eased his grip on his shovel. As the doors opened, a melodic sound came from the rollers moving on their rails.

Inside felt more lively, but only by a hair's length. Matthew only heard the occasional beeping of cash registers and squeaking of his old sneakers on the pearly tiles in this vast space. The normally populated aisles were husks of their former selves, as few customers crept around. It was a supermarket in name only.

His eyes came to rest on his neighbor, John Kneeler, standing behind a cash register, sneaking peeks at his phone every so often. Looking up, he waved to Matthew, his hand a blur of energy.

"Ay Matt! Do you have a second?" called John, a smile stretching across his freckled face as his muscular hands reached into his pocket and pulled something out. "I just got this today," he continued as Matthew started to approach to inspect the item.

While Matthew didn't want to waste an extra second on his errand, he felt like quickly socializing with his single friend. "Plus," Matthew thought to himself, "this makes up for the meetups I missed last week practicing for the algebra test."

To Matthew's surprise, John was holding a taser gun, though Matthew noticed in seconds how poorly made the taser was, with the plastic showing signs of stress in John's grip.

"The finest the armory has!" John chuckled as he shoved the taser back in his pocket. "The boss made us take a brief course on how to use these to defend against a kinoakua, but personally, I think this is some kind of insurance thing," he remarked while shaking his head. "I would love to unload 50,000 volts into one of those bugs though," John continued, looking up at the ceiling, his day dreaming leaving him with a dopey expression.

Matthew recalled how John had played a shooter game a few months ago. He remembered the hilarity of watching him use a whole magazine of ammo trying to hit a player slowly crawling around on the ground. John's humble reaction was offset by his heavy breathing into his microphone. Being face to face with a John confident in his shooting skills left Matthew feeling that he had just chatted with a stranger.

“That creature had changed so much without trying to” Matthew thought to himself.

After saying goodbye to John, Matthew continued on, although he barely made any progress when he heard a heavy, plastic thump and rattle followed by someone snapping “shoot” behind him.

Turning around, he was greeted to the sight of an edlerly woman lifting a large trash can back up in a small sea of its previous contents.

“Here, let me do this,” Matthew instructed the old lady as he started picking up the few pieces of rubbish, dutifully dropping them in the trash can.

“Oh, you’re too kind,” replied the elderly woman as she stood and watched him toil away.

“I feel there isn’t such a thing,” insisted Matthew as he picked up the last piece of trash, a disinfecting wipe container with the chemicals still sloshing around inside, and placed it on top of the pile like a candle on a birthday cake. He then placed the lid back on the trash can and continued on his way, regretting getting distracted so many times already.

Now trekking past the hardware aisle, Matthew hastily turned left towards the pharmacy, not wanting to have to spend an extra minute in the dangerous world.

“Morning,” greeted Matthew to Dr. Nicole David, one of the pharmacy staff, with all the enthusiasm he could muster.

At first she didn’t notice him. She was glumly staring at a plaque on the wall above a box containing antivenoms for kinoakua toxins that inscribed “In memory of Chris Hartley: 1989-2022.” She still wore the engagement ring. She had said it happened two weeks ago.

“Good morning, Matthew,” replied Dr. David, putting on her usual warmth as she looked away from the plaque, “I presume your aunt needs asthma canisters?”

“Yes, please,” Matthew responded as she rummaged through the prescriptions, moving the box of antivenoms to the side as well.

Disappointment was flooding into him while he leaned on the pharmacy's polished countertop, knowing he could've been a trainee here on the weekends, but a pamphlet on kinoakua survival tips stood as a mocking reminder of why he wasn't.

When Dr. David returned with the canisters, Matthew promptly grabbed them, said thank you, and turned away, eager to get back to his Makuahine Sadie.

"Tell your aunt I say hi," Dr. David called out, only to follow up with, "those were our last in stock. The next batch is arriving sometime next week, so I'll contact her then."

Matthew smiled stiffly back at her before promptly turning his attention to the worries he had for his Makuahine Sadie. Recalling her raspy coughs, he moved a hand into his pocket to shield the canisters.

Matthew now sped-walked for the exit, the aisles a blurry smear, only to suddenly feel all his momentum halted as he collided with someone walking out of the hardware aisle. They both went tumbling to the cold, tile floor, with a clacking sound following their fall.

Turning his sore head, Matthew was surprised to see Claire Smith, a new student at his school, sprawled on the floor next to him, still clutching a new soccer ball and paint can. She was short and normally had well kept, dirty-blond hair, which now covered her face. Matthew recalled seeing her in the distance practicing with a soccer ball many times as he walked on his own back to his home. He also noticed that Claire had no weapons of any sort, unless the soccer ball was a warhead, Matthew mused to himself.

"I am so sorry!" he half-grunted as he picked himself up, offering his hand to her.

"It's only a flesh wound," joked Claire as she rubbed her forehead and took his hand, shoving the soccer ball under her other elbow. "Have you seen my ear buds?" she asked after groping around her ears.

"Um..." droned Matthew, not sure how to react, as he scanned the inconveniently white tiles for any signs of the earbuds.

What eventually caught Matthew's eye was not the pair of AirPods he later noticed, but the small canisters lying between them and a magazine rack. Hastily shuffling through his pockets, Matthew realized those were his makuahine's asthma canisters.

As he shot his hands out for the items, there was a crash at the entrance. He couldn't see much behind the trash can, but Matthew could see the upper half of a tall, lanky man rushing towards them, pulling down the magazine racks along the way.

While Claire stood puzzled for a second, Matthew had come to the chilling realization of what had chased the man into the store, a guess that was confirmed when he heard that god-awful screech. It was an intimidation call, a battle cry that sounded of rubber being strained and nails on a chalkboard, and it had just stripped Matthew of everything but his primal instincts.

His eyes rocketing around the room, Matthew analyzed every way he and the other shoppers could possibly escape. Then he noticed the AirPods on the ground a few feet away from him. Looking up to Claire to give them back, he noticed how she was reacting strangely to the kinoakua's screech. She was pushing on her ears so hard that Matthew swore she'd give herself skull fractures while desperately shaking her head as though she could fight off the sounds with her wild motions.

Green eyes darted from her to the AirPods. Matthew suddenly understood. He thrust his hand out in front of Claire, and she snatched the AirPods from him and shoved them into her ears, gratitude oozing from her Zen-like expression.

This moment of calm was sadly short lived though, as store staff pulled out their tasers and fired upon the unseen arthropod.

Peering around the corner, Claire quickly whipped her head back around, as a pale, armored tail whipped inches from her forehead, the red-rimmed end spasming.

Matthew peered over the conveyor belt himself to see a white, bristly pair of spider-like forearms jerk upwards along with the pulsing tail.

Most workers were still firing their tasers towards the eyes and gaps in the exoskeleton, though their wires bounced off and landed with a pathetic crackle.

Matthew had little time to react before there was a hissing sound that blasted through the air with the force of a gunshot, causing him to recoil in shock back behind the impromptu barricade. A second later, many fleshy thumps signaled that the staff who were fighting the kinoakua had collapsed to the ground, the toxins taking their toll without hesitation.

Claire whipped out her phone and pressed her screen three times, calling the police as Matthew peered over the check-out lane. The staff were on the ground, surrounding the kinoakua like worshippers kneeling to their idol, clutching their chests and heaving in agony, as they didn't have enough air in their lungs to scream. The ghastly arthropod then lunged forward, biting into one of the fallen workers, its mandibles crushing their ribs. The staff's unworldly rasps pierced deep into Matthew's core as the kinoakua's jaws continued to slice through their flesh.

Looking down, Matthew noticed his aunt's asthma canisters lying under a magazine rack. Bending down and grabbing them, he prepared to sprint, canisters in one hand and spade in the other, but he didn't know for what cause. He knew the most logical thing would be to leave and let the police handle this, but how many people would the monster tear through before they arrived? On the other hand, Matthew knew that the kinoakua would easily kill him once it locked onto him.

Paralyzed, he balanced the choice between an impactless death and an impactless escape, but hope started to ramp-up when he noticed Claire starting to crawl away, soccer ball and paint can held under her shoulder; Dr. David peering out from the pharmacy booth, antivenoms in hand; John and the other staff lying on the ground in wait for death; and the kinoakua bumping into the trash can as it went for its next victim. Matthew gripped his spade tighter, feeling the force of an army on its handle.

“Throw what you have!” Matthew blurted to Claire as he sprinted for the trash can, not even sure yet of what he was going to do, or if she were going to do what he asked.

As he reached the trash can and began to rip its lid off, the kinoakua detached its jaws from its second victim, rearing up on its back four legs. It lunged to defend its kill like a lightning bolt, and Matthew felt the keratin of its mandibles whizz through his hair as he twisted behind the trash can.

Before the kinoakua could bear down on him, Claire punted her soccer ball, the impact buckling one of the kinoakua’s hind legs, its abdomen’s impact on the tiled floor sounding like a meteor crashing down on a ceramic Earth.

Matthew wasted no time taking advantage of the bug’s state, tearing off the trash can lip and grabbing the wipe container. Turning to the kinoakua, he opened the canister and dumped the chemicals on its eyes.

Reeling back, the kinoakua hissed while shaking its head wildly to rid itself of the pain, and Matthew found himself relishing in its pain. After freezing in place for a second though, the arthropod became animated again, charging straight through the trash cans in another burst of supernatural speed, ramming into Matthew before he could swing his spade.

He met the ground with a painful crack, his skull becoming a throbbing sphere of energy floating on a warm, sticky sea. He wanted to vomit all his innards out, to give up, though despite having blurred vision, Matthew could still make out the other victims of the kinoakua lying around, one of them producing a river of blood that encircled his head.

His eyes following the river upstream, Matthew noticed a collection of small cylinders sitting in the middle of blood next to his spade. Cold realization coursed through him as he searched his pockets, only to not find the asthma canisters in either.

Turning his head, he saw the kinoakua pivot to face him, tensing up when they came face to face.

Rolling to the side, Matthew heard the clacking of the kinoakua's legs scuttling along the floor inches away from him. He then grabbed the canisters and spade before stumbling to his feet, only to find the kinoakua making a zigzaggy beeline in his direction.

Matthew looked down to see John and the other staff, who were in the enraged kinoakua's path. With a grunt that signaled acceptance, he charged the monster head on. Adrenaline powering his strike, Matthew dug the shovel's blade deep into the joint of the kinoakua's front quarters. It collapsed to the ground, trapping his left leg under its bulk, though it never so much as touched a heaving victim.

Looking into the kinoakua's six reddened eyes, he reached for his spade to fight on, but his fingers couldn't reach the handle. Now the kinoakua's red rimmed tail was spasming again, the opening in the tail trained on his chest. He knew he would be seeing his parents soon, so he closed his eyes and relaxed, prepared for a slow, agonizing demise. When the sound of the spray being released sounded though, Matthew felt nothing, only the loosening of the kinoakua's mandibles on his legs.

Opening his eyes, he saw Claire wrangling the kinoakua's tail away from him, grimacing as she was thrashed around by the tail whipping against fallen magazine racks. Assessing the situation, he saw John reaching his arm out, taser in hand.

Taking the taser from John's shaking hands, Matthew fired it into the kinoakua's leg that already had the shovel in it. To everyone's surprise, the crackling of electricity came stronger than before as the volts outputted by the taser went deeper into the kinoakua's flesh by traveling through the shovel's metallic blade.

Now writhing, the kinoakua rammed into cash registers, attempting to dislodge the shovel that brought it such immense pain. Matthew knew it would only be a matter of time before it achieved that, so he looked at the casualties on the floor.

"Claire, we need to drag these guys to the pharmacy! They keep antivenoms in there." Matthew called out, scanning the group for John.



As he reached for John, Matthew paused, scanning the group once more, and saw the old lady from earlier lying face first on the floor. He knew the elderly were among the especially vulnerable, and without the antivenom, she would die soon. However, the kinoakua stood near her, and it had just gotten the spade out of its leg.

Desperate to help as many people as he could, Matthew raced through every way he could try to save the old lady, but he knew all of them were suicide. With a wince, Matthew put his arms under John's and started pulling him towards the pharmacy entrance as Claire followed suit, siren sounds gradually blaring louder in the distance.

Before they entered the pharmacy, Matthew saw the kinoakua digging into the flesh of one of the fallen, and he could tell that it was ripping into the old lady.

"I am sorry," whispered Matthew, grimacing as he closed the door.

Dr. David was waiting inside, and together, all three of them treated the victims for shock, gently propping their heads onto stacks of papers as they delivered the antivenoms.

Suddenly, a chorus of gunshots erupted outside the supermarket, and they knew it was over. Peeking over the counter, Matthew saw police officers standing in front of the entrance, guns being shoved back into their holsters. In the middle of the hallway, the kinoakua lay lifeless, its pale-yellow blood mixing with the red pools of its victims.

Stepping out of the pharmacy, the trio approached the police officers. Dr. David began administering more antivenoms to other victims while Claire recounted the incident to police officers. Matthew meanwhile just stood there, his many cuts dripping blood. Everything became a foggy haze to him after that, and he felt like a reanimated corpse driving home, not noticing or caring about the marked spot on the road.

Entering the garage, Matthew dropped the spade next to the other gardening tools and entered the house.

His makuahine was standing in the living room, talking on the phone with angst. When she saw him enter the room, tears of both sorrow and joy came sliding down her face.

Plodding over to her, Matthew constricted Makuahine Sadie in a hug fueled by the day's events and emotions, after placing the asthma canisters on the coffee table. In this long embrace, Matthew remembered Claire, John, Dr. David, and the others, and a great weight was lifted from his mind.

He started to smile, feeling that there would be more artifacts to leave in his room soon. Great times were ahead.

Outside, the rabid bat circled the house before flying off towards the town center, its life soon to draw to a close.

– Andrew Nalchajian, 2024



## Vida y Muerte

Para empezar (for starters),  
camina por tu vida muy fuertemente,  
piensa lentamente (slowly) porque vida es,  
muy rapido, rapido, rapido.



Habla con tu corazón,  
no de tu mente,  
juega conmigo para siempre,  
en vida y en muerte,  
por estoy muerte.

Ve al cielo cuando,  
tu respira por el último tiempo,  
cuando más cerca (closer) estás de muerte,  
más cerca (closer) tu está de mí.

Tu corre enfrente de mí,  
junto a mí,  
abajo, arriba, todo alrededor (around) a mí,  
pero no es necesito porque solo observo tu.



Sé feliz con lo que, tu tiene,  
haz bien con lo que, tu puede,  
ve al lugar que te hace contenta.



Ven conmigo, sé conmigo, escúchame,  
cuando el tiempo es correcto,  
adiós, eventualmente nos encontraremos,  
pero esa es para otra día.

- Sofia Pride, 2025

Where did all the children go?

Remember when we were just innocent kids, what happened?

When did Tic Tacs turn into drugs?

When did water turn into vodka,

Bubbles turn into vapes?

Remember when goodbyes didn't mean forever?

Remember when "getting high" meant how high you could go on the swings,

When the highest place you be was on your parents' shoulder or in a tree?

What happened to those little innocent kids, where did all the children go?

Are they still here, are they playing on the playground or out getting ice cream?

Where did all the children go? All I see is a bunch of teens/preteens who seem to be on a thread.

Will these children come back, or enter adulthood too early again?

– Caroline Rozan, 2023



Adelaide Tolley, 2023

## A Malicious Predator, Guilt

With long, thick necks and powerful and muscular jaws,  
guilt can crush bones easily and even digest them.  
It has the strongest bite of any mammal.  
Guilt is a carnivore,  
eating the flesh of its prey.  
Guilt can tear apart its prey in mere seconds,  
becoming one of the most adept hunters.  
A third of guilt's body weight  
is eaten  
at every meal.  
Guilt has non-retractable claws.  
Living in clans of up to 100 individuals large,  
it is one of the most efficient hunting creatures on the planet.  
Guilt can trot for 2 miles,  
at 35 miles per hour.  
Guilt can live anywhere from 12 to 15 years,  
but can make it up to 20 years.  
It only takes 2 years for guilt to develop. Sometimes even shorter.  
Guilt seems small but larger than you would expect.  
Guilt's unique cries and laughs are high-pitched and very loud.  
It is one of the most vocal animals.  
It has been around  
for many millions of years.  
Guilt is nocturnal  
and hunts during the night.  
Guilt has a history of conquering and dominating.  
It steals livestock, children, and other animals' food.  
It attacks humans.  
However,  
humans are shooting,  
poisoning,  
and trapping guilt.  
Or even using guilt as target practice.

– Suyoung Yoo, 2025

In the Distance



Julia Splint, 2022



Allison Dow, 2023





Allison Dow, 2023

## Hugging a Porcupine

where is the porcupine?  
up high in a tree  
or by the stream listening to the breeze  
sitting in its cave,  
waiting to be embraced  
but no one ever comes for the porcupine.  
it's hard to hug a porcupine they say,  
one must be gloved for the occasion  
the porcupine is respected but never embraced  
so it sits alone waiting in its cave listening to the breeze.  
but wait, there is one who feels the porcupine's shame  
where is the cactus?  
extending its spines to a greater height  
or sitting alone in the desert listening to the breeze  
the cactus is embraced but never loved  
the cactus and the porcupine know each other's difficulties  
we must find someone who really understands us.

– Sydney Young, 2024



Madeleine Moser, 2023

## A Dance of Seasons in Maine

### **Bite of Winter**

Clouds like  
Muddied water  
Strewn across the sky  
Clouds like  
Frosted diamonds  
Billow from numb lips  
Exposed to the elements

The prickle of fresh snow  
Sparks life on  
Frozen skin  
Impaled by winter's fangs  
Of ice

### **Revival of Spring**

Bear witness  
To the call and  
Response of the seasons  
The engine of life  
Thrums  
In the chirps of blue jays  
In the musk of petrichor  
In the meadows of lush grass  
Dressed in a verdant cape,  
Mother Nature's soothing touch  
Heals cracked skin of earth  
And man

-Kevin Lu, 2022

## A Dance of Seasons in Maine

### **Sunbaked Summer**

The striking smell of seaweed  
Perfumes the air  
The hushed whisper of sand  
Slithers beneath feet  
The metronome of waves  
Tumbles in chaos  
The burning smile of sun  
Bakes to perfection

As the salty kiss of seawater  
Marks another blissful day  
A warm escape  
From the icy clutches  
Of winter

### **Concert of Fall**

Quiet  
For the orchestra  
Instruments of wind  
Playing a symphony  
Among leaves  
Whispering in  
A final desperate dance  
Before the white curtain falls  
Dressed in  
A final burst of color  
Before the life drains away  
Quivering in  
A final grasp at warmth  
Before winter bites  
Once again

-Kevin Lu, 2022



Gabrielle Bardwell, 2023



Anonymous

