



Whispers from the Wood



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Special thanks for Mrs. Sheehan-Smith and Mrs.
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“Within Reach” by Brooklyn Cooper, junior

I wake up every morning wondering why my mother and father got a divorce. They'd been together since high school. They were inseparable and so in love. My mom never talked about the divorce to me and my siblings. Anytime we'd bring up something even remotely related to the divorce she'd completely shut us out. She had changed. The strongest person I knew didn't know how to be strong anymore.

Tomorrow is the first day of school. My twin brother and I are finally seniors. Man, it doesn't feel real. 12 years of school and I'm really about to experience my last year. I wonder if I'll miss it. My brother, on the other hand, isn't so excited. He's nervous about seeing his former girlfriend, Olivia. They had broken up in the summer; it would've been 3 years in October! Can you believe that? All that time together for absolutely nothing.

“Hey Zana, what're you wearing tomorrow?” My brother asks.

“I don't know Zariah,” I honestly don't why I said this because it was a complete lie, I've been planning my first day outfit since August, “what are you going to wear?”

“I haven't really thought about it,” he says. Ever since he and Olivia broke up, he wasn't the same. They did everything together; she was his best friend.

“Bro, you can't let this get the best of you. You're the smartest and most caring person I know and I'm not just saying that because you're my brother, I mean it,” I continued, “You're captain of the soccer team and you've been receiving D1 college letters since the 10th grade. You don't need to stress about Olivia. It's grind time. Every minor setback is a setup for a major comeback,” I finished. My brother has been through depression before and it was hard to watch. I don't want him going through that again.

“Thanks, Zana. I know that if I don't have anyone, you'll always be here for me. I couldn't ask for a better twin.”

The first day is finally here. I am so excited! I can't wait to see my childhood friends and participate in the school festivities. My brother and I are getting ready when I hear a knock on the door. I look through the peephole but didn't recognize the girl standing on the opposite side. She looks like she's about 16. I open the door to see her crying.

"Are you okay? Who are you?" I ask in an urgent tone.

"Zana, isn't that your name? Wow, you're even prettier in person," she says. *How did she know my name and what I looked like? How did she know where I lived?*

"Thanks, I guess. But who are you? How do you know what I look like and where I live?" I kept asking. My brother hears me asking these questions and came to the door. He starts to say something but when he notices who's at the door, he stops. It's almost like time is frozen. Everyone is so still, so motionless.

After about 30 seconds of silence, she speaks.

"Zariah! I've missed you so much!" The girl shouted. She ran into the house and jumped onto my brother.

What am I missing? Who is she? I'd never seen this girl a day in my 17 years of living, or have I? However, my brother is clearly very familiar with her.

My brother tries to whisper to her, "What are you doing here? Dad told you to never come here alone and unannounced. He told you to wait until the time was right."

"No, Zariah, speak louder so I can hear you too. What's the secret?" I ask very impatiently.

"Zara, please understand when I tell you this. Well, Mom and Dad got divorced because of this girl right here. Her name is Zalana. She's our half-sister," he says.

I'm very quiet. Did that really just come out of his mouth? I am boiling inside. I feel so betrayed. How did Zariah know this and not me?

"What?!" I scream, "Zariah this better be a joke."

“Why would I joke like that, Zara? Look on the bright side; you’ve always wanted a sister.”

He was right. I’ve always wanted a sister, and she was standing right in front of me, within reach.

“Chagrin” by Iyani Banks, junior

“You’re the man!” I repeated to myself over and over again in the boy’s bathroom, as I flexed my 12 years old muscles in the mirror. Next Friday is our spring dance. All week I’ve been trying to work up the guts to ask Darla to come with me. Every time I see her I get nervous. I popped a piece of spearmint gum into my mouth and checked myself out before heading to the cafeteria for lunch.

I knew she’d be sitting alone waiting for her friends to joined her for lunch. I got a glimpse of her perfectly laying curls resting on her shoulders. I just couldn’t take my eyes off her. I watched her as she rolled on her pineapple flavored lip gloss, adding the perfect amount of shine. “Okay man, you got this.” After I grabbed my food tray I began to walk towards her table. I rehearsed the lines I’d prepared in my head like my life dependent on it. My cologne was stronger than I was and I wore a brand new pair if Lebron sneakers for impression. The closer I got the more my anxiety began to rise. I could feel the sweat dripping from my armpits. *Oh no, not already*, I thought to myself. I focused my eyes onto her so I wouldn’t focus on anything else. Thoughts of rejection started circling through my brain. *What if someone already asked her? what if people are watching?* My mind pondered on the future right before me. I was at least 10 steps away. I closed my eyes and took a quick deep breath. Just as I did that, I felt my body come from under me in the middle of my exhale. My life paused and like a slow motion movie the turn of everyone’s grin and laughing faces rose to the surface. I fell to the hardwood floors right next to the yellow caution sign, covered in orange juice and chocolate pudding. I looked right up into the eyes of Darla. Our eyes connected right away as she laughed hysterically. In shame I buried my head into my knees, then got up and darted towards the double doors into the gym to hide from the humiliation. I knew I’d be the talk of the day and possibly the whole week.

“Praying” by Chaniya Golden, *sophomore*

Subdued to the mysteries

Supporting the fantasies

Of what I may encounter in my future

I'm Praying

Praying even though all

My plans were

It ended up in a waste

Astronomically incorrect

Praying that my heart

Is not succumbed by how many times it was broken

Praying for an explosion of peace that surrounds me like a protective sheath

Over the nuclear waste that life implodes on me

In this world I pray for people not only me

Because I train my mind for factual impact

Trying to right or wrong

But, being stuck in this time warp is not good

Where everything wrong replays and looks over the good things

I'm Praying

"Star" by Diante Thurman, *sophomore*

Times when it was dark

We looked up to the stars

It guided our ways

It lit our hearts

The promise we made in secret while apart

Hoping we both will one day reach the stars

But now your gone

So I walk alone

Looking up and praying one day just as you

I

Will

Reach

The

Stars

“Ballad of My Heart” by Keyami Collins, *freshman*

My face twisted into a face that could only be described as fear

The weight of this world finally came crashing down once the realization hit

You left.

I remember the fear of being unloved, unwanted, just a whisper in the back of someone’s mind, never being the center of attention

Until I met you.

You made me feel loved, wanted, finally I was the center of attention

Your sweet words dripped off your tongue like honey,

And your eyes were as warm as the sun on the dewy grass below our feet.

When I saw your face I got butterflies. Those goddamn butterflies. They never went away.

Your skin was like chocolate, and your thick, curly hair was as dark as midnight, but the way they both caught the light of the beaming sun was ethereal.

I couldn’t bring myself to believe you were mine.

And I was right to believe.

As quickly as you came, you were gone like a fox in a chicken coop.

You took my heart and soul with the agility of a jewel thief.

But you weren’t satisfied with the jewel you had, and always will have

My heart.

“Feather” by Mackenzie LaCroix, junior

I am like a feather blowing through the wind. I appear light and soft, but can be easily wilted. I can't seem to relax, but rather continue to stay in motion, letting even the slightest breeze move me. Despite my simple appearance, I have complex and intriguing stories. Where I come from, and where I end up, are decided by a power that is not my own. I once belonged to something bigger, but now have drifted away from that course. At the slightest change of breeze my path is forever altered. There are many different feathers, with many different origins. The feather is just as unique as I am.

The feather has no say in its journey. No matter how hard it tries, it is never strong enough to choose its own destination. I'm still young, and therefore there are very few things that I get to decide myself. The feather and I, we both live a life that has already been decided. One day, we will each be free. We will both catch onto something that shields us from the breeze, and allows us to settle down at last. Until that time, we will continue to go wherever life takes us.

I am like a feather that travels in the breeze. I move through life with a sense of uncertainty, but know that eventually I will find my place. I may not have the perfect life, but by the time I go, I will have truly lived. Seeing many places, and watching other feathers pass by me on a different current. I am like a feather, and life is the breeze.

“Haitian” by Martina Jeudy, freshman

I am Haitian

Both parents born and raised in Haiti

A country people say is poor

Is dirty and worthless

But nobody knows the full story

Haiti was one of the richest countries

We had so much to offer

Haitians were one of the first African Americans to gain independence

Breaking away from the French

Creating their own country

But we robbed

Raided in our own country

Used as a dumping ground

Manipulated and played

Because we were envied by many

School is no longer free

Money has to be paid for kids to get an education

All because of the dropping economy

Which given without a choice

Another restriction added on the list

Our land is even being used for sexual reproduction
Little girls being violated and used
It's as if our we have no value
Just another piece to move
In a sadistic game

Haiti is constantly recognized for the worst
The trash on the ground
The hungry children
The houses we live in
The life we struggle with

But nobody sees the beauty and goodness
Nobody sees the gorgeous island for itself
Nobody sees the uniqueness
Nobody sees the good- hearted people
Nobody sees us
Supposedly all Haitians do voodoo
We all have AIDs
We're all poor and live and live in tents
This is not who we are
Just reappearance of something amazing

We're kind and generous
Grateful and loving
Courageous and brave
Strong-willed
Great attributions to the world

Back then Haitians were afraid of being Haitian
Afraid of being called a "Haitian booty scratcher"
But we are more than that
We're strong willed and relentless
Filled with such passion and drive

And that is why I'm proud to scream
"I am Haitian! SAK PASE, MAP BOULE!"

“Tied” by Chastity Krier, sophomore

Wrapped around tight binding rope
My wrists bleed
Blood falls from my hand to the ground
The knot gets tighter
I get tenser
“Someone cut the rope”
Because I’m tied
Not just to the rope
But to you
Our memories
Our late night phone calls and constant texts
Our little inside jokes
The way you made me laugh
To The touch of you
To what we used to have
“Cut the rope”
Because I’m tied.

“Women” by Fatoumata Diallo, *freshman*

wom ˈan

/'wʊðmən/Submit

noun

plural noun: women

“a female paid to clean someone’s house and carry out general domestic duties”

The definition of a woman.

As derogatory as it sounds, this is how society sees us

As someone they can pay to clean up their mess

It’s crazy how this is really how we used to live in the 20’s

Stay at home and put on a pretty smile and bake cookies

But we have evolved since then

We stood together and fought for our rights

We are no one’s maid

And I refuse to defined as one.

"I did" by Katrina Nguyen, *sophomore*

Who came to save you every time?

I did.

Who became the light

When you were suffocating in darkness?

I did.

Who picked you up on your feet

When you were all alone?

I did.

Who pulled through for you

In your time of need?

I did.

Who spent countless hours awake

Helping you with your worse thoughts?

I did.

Who had to give up plans

To make sure you wouldn't hurt yourself?

I did.

Who pretended to love you

So you wouldn't commit suicide?

I did.

But who went behind my back?

You did.

Who stabbed me in the heart?

You did.

Who left me to bleed out,

Shot with a gun?

You did.

Who forced me to do things

I still regret?

You did.

Who didn't respect the boundary

Between helping others and flirting?

You did.

Who didn't help me

When I needed someone the most?

You did.

Who told me they were busy with friends

When I had a noose around my neck?

You did.

Now,

Who was the one in a bad situation?

I was.

Who put me in that?

You did.

Who was the one who always cared?

I was.

Who used me for their own benefit?

You did.

Who got out to save themselves?

I did.

Who regrets the decision they made?

I did.

Who's happy with their life now?

I am

If I was there for your every need,

For your every problem,

For your every suicidal thought,

Why is it fair to leave when I need saving?

Why is it fair to tell me that you're busy?

When I'm hanging by a thread?

Why is it fair to use me to make yourself happy?

Why is it fair to threaten me?

With ending your life

To force me to stay?

Why is it fair to blame me for your troubles?

I am not here to stay for you

I am not here for you to degrade me

I am not here to be forced to love you

I am not here so you can abuse me
With your empty words
And your empty lies

I am here for me
And myself
I am here to live my life
To be happy
I am here to help others
But not when they abuse me
When they force me to stay
When they cut me down
To make themselves feel higher
In society

I don't help
I won't help
I stand up
To people who force
To people who put
Their life on the line
To people like you

~Message to My Abusive (Ex) Friend

“Love” by Diante Thurman, *sophomore*

The coldness in my veins is due to you

My first love,

How could you betray me?

You left me lost in an emotionless sea

You took my heart and hit it as if it were hockey

You destroyed my mind with ease

Now every time I remember your touch, it feels like I’m being stung by a thousand bee’s.

I give up I submit to your needs

Please don’t leave me.

"Slam Poem" by Jalen King, junior

When I wake up I go outside and look at the sky.

When I look up I just smile and I'm glad to be alive.

I say that

Because not everyone survives

You see people get shot everyday

It's a blessing to say you're alive

Before I go to bed,

I pray because I don't know if I will be alive tomorrow

I say that because not everyone survives

You see people get stabbed for no reason

You look on the news and see rappers shot for dissing gangs.

You look on the news and see celebrity's overdose.

So once again I say I'm glad to be alive because everyone doesn't survive

You only live once so I say be safe and enjoy your life while you can

because

you may not see it tomorrow.

“The Middle Gift” by Amani Hamiel, *freshman*

The middle gift,
Something extraordinarily special.
Something not everyone can experience,
Or acknowledge.

Gifts that are skillful,
Savvy,
Justice-seeking,
Or just simply patient.

Gifts that learn to accept change,
Physical or mentally,
Inside or outside,
Easy or difficult.

Gifts that see all parts before being empathetic,
Compromising an argument,
Putting up a debate,
Or showing judgment.

Gifts that show flexibility,
Team-building,
Independence,

But still being approachable.

Gifts that research shows eighty-five percent of the gifts are willing to try new things,

Are open to experiences,

Take risks,

Compared to only fifty percent of the first gifts.

These gifts focus on fairness,

Practicing what they preach,

Placing themselves as underdogs,

All while attending to others.

All the perks of the gift,

The gift of being in the middle,

The middle child,

The child of middle child syndrome.

“You Knew” by Chastity Krier, sophomore

Did you not know that what you did obliterated her?

That every single person before you played her
and she thought you would be different.

Did you not know that her trust issues were extensive?

and that every time she asked where you were, what you were doing, and
who you were with

was because of them

Did you not know that she would have stayed with you through whatever?

Rain, pour, shine

It didn't matter to her

that every time she seen you

The butterflies in her stomach danced

Did you not know that she loves you?

Maybe is even in love with you

Which is why she won't stop talking to you

Even after what you did

But of course

You knew these things

Because she told you

You just didn't care.

“Street” by Alex Clarke, freshman

The block, where many crooks and thieves stay
Section 8 households where mommas with 8 babies lay.
Where if you snitch the grave is where you’ll pay
Graffiti with slang like an alien wrote it
Gangs the size of armies
Cops constantly on watch
Waiting for the next man with his pants down low
Just to kick his day up a notch
From where I’m from you barely make it to age 16
And if you do before you realize it you’re a fiend
Let’s not forget about the countless drugs
Where the streets are where it’s plentiful
Weed becomes your best friend before you actually have a real one
You want a perfect life so bad you try to steal one
Don’t we all want a good life?
Living in the slums so long you just wanna feel one
And once you get to the top
You’re dragged right back down
By your friends and family that want to be where you are
Their expectations so low for themselves they think that they are too far
A little glimmer of the sunlight is all you ask for on your darkened skin
At the same time, you’re trying to take care of your kids
The street life, a nightmare that never ends

“Reunited” by Ryen Gordon, freshman

“Here’s your coffee, Marta,” the barista said.

“Thank you, do you have any napkins,” the lady said.

By her voice I knew it was Marta. I felt the excitement engulf my airways.

“Marta is that really you?” My voice was shaken with a bit of fear and a lot of excitement.

The lady turned her head slowly as if she didn’t know what she heard. When she was completely turned our jaws dropped. Being separated from each other was very hard on me, Marta had been my best friend since we were kids.

“Adina is it really you?” my best friend asked me.

“Yes, yes it is,” my mind was cluttered with questions. I thought I had lost everyone and everything. I thought that I was the only one from my childhood that survived.

We rushed into a hug leaving no space between us. It felt like we were back in the early days when things were much simpler. I didn’t want to pull away in case this was some sort of dream. After a few moments we finally released from each other’s grasps.

“How have you been? I missed you so much. I tried to find anyone but I couldn’t. Do you know if anyone is alive? Where did they send you? I’m sorry I’m just so excited.” I couldn’t help myself from bombarding her with questions.

“I’ve been good, and I missed you so much too. I thought that I would never see any loved ones again. I have been trying to find my brother and sister but no luck. They sent me to Gross-Rosen in Poland. Where did they send you?” she asked with the same amount of eagerness I had.

“I’ve been good, they sent me to Sachsenhausen in Germany,” I stated.

I invited her to my place for dinner so we could catch up. I got a little uncomfortable standing there talking knowing other people could hear

what we went through, and I could also tell that Marta was getting a little uncomfortable. It's something that I have been dealing with since the massacre and I wasn't ready to tell strangers my story. I wrote down my address and gave it Marta so she could come over later and then we could really talk. We hugged again and went our separate ways.

That night at dinner I had prepared our favorite meals from when we were children. I even found some old photos of us and hung them up on the mantel. The only way I had pictures was from sneaking them into the camp. I heard a knock on the door and opened it.

"I brought our favorite dessert from when we were kids," Martha smiled.

"That's too funny because I made all of our favorite foods," I laughed.

We walked into the kitchen, grabbed a plate, and filled our plates with food. Dinner had consisted of tears, laughs, and smiles. We shared all the stories and gossip as if we were kids again. It was freeing being able to tell someone I love my stories and have them listen and fully understand. I know her pain and she knows mine and that has to be one of the most freeing things ever.

Interview with Ryen Gordon, *freshman*

Interviewer: Why did you pick this topic amongst the other options that were given?

Ryen: I was only allowed two options and Ms. Weyland told us we should choose that one.

Interviewer: What inspires you? Do you have a muse or something?

Ryen: I haven't thought about it. But trying to maintain a good grade. Rupi Kaur is my muse.

Interviewer: Why?

Ryen: Because she's very real with her poetry. She talks about things that other people are scared to talk about.

Interviewer: How did you feel when you found out your piece won?

Ryen: I was excited. I was like wow I did something.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for allowing me to interview you.

“How” by Brylee Ceraul, *freshman*

How can someone be so inconsiderate?
She had her whole life planned
And she still went down the wrong path
How can someone just give themselves out like that
Does she not think of her future?
What about her family she wanted?
Her job she dreamed of
And it all washed away that easily
How can someone leave that all for one little thing?
Did she think the attention was enough?
Did she think the boy was enough?
Did she stop to think maybe just a little?
About how she’s destroying her life
But none of that mattered
She ruined it all
And is in a horrible place
Dying to get out
How can someone expect greatness?
When they’ve only done wrong.

“Letter to a Vet” by Sohila Hassan, senior

I just want to thank you

Thank you for fighting for me

To have the freedom to make a choice

Because of you, I have a voice

But you didn't just fight for me, you fought for my family too

You spent holidays without your family

Because you were out there protecting

Yours

And mine

And theirs

Thank you for being selfless and being so brave

Thank you for seeing for seeing horrific things so our eyes would be protected from the harsh realities of the world

But most of all, I'm sorry

I'm sorry you had to see those gruesome things

I'm sorry you missed family moments that you will never be able to get back

I couldn't imagine doing what you so bravely did

I'm sorry over 50,000 of you go without a home, when all you did was fight for

Yours

And mine

And theirs

So thank you

“Anna” by Brant Rogers, senior

So here I sit, in the chair where many will learn the ways of life, and where some may take a nap instead. My teacher starts writing on the left side of the room, I gaze over to take the notes. However, I can see a distraction, her name is Anna. She turns her head to take the notes on the board, and I can see her platinum blonde curls bounce around. Then she turns her head back, and her red nail polished fingers go to work, then stop and twirl the pencil around. She then raises her hand to ask the teacher a question, and you can see her clothing twist and contort to her desired position. She is wearing a white dress with designer black lines on it. I get lost in my gaze, and I can see her starting to get closer and closer to me, as if my eyes are on magnify. I can see her maroon lips slowly move as she asks the teacher her question, the teacher replies and she nods and continues writing. As if she had a sixth sense, she turned her head toward me. Her movement got me out of the trance, and my mind is going haywire trying to find a solution to a problem. Within a split second, my mind says, “Snap your head down quick! And act like you are taking notes.” Anna gives out a small chuckle; I begin to turn red as I try to figure out, “Could she tell?” “Is she laughing at me?” I try to overcome my thoughts by saying, “She was just laughing at the person behind me, maybe they made some face.” My idiotic and nosey brain believes my lie, and starts to turn around to see the unknown face that was made. The guy behind me shoots a face of death, and my mind doesn’t like the intimidation and whips back around to the front. I begin to turn into a bright apple, as I realize Anna was laughing at me. The teacher calls my name out, and I look at him in pure confusion. My mind is now rushing to find out what I missed, while I was dozing off. Anna lets out another chuckle, she then smiles to reveal her shiny white teeth incased in her maroon lips, and leans over to update me, at this point I’m sure I might faint.

“Filling” by Kiara Nichols, senior

Water dampened the wooden floor

Father cursed under his breath

I stood in the middle of our small living room and watched in fascination

The teapot hissed on the hotplate as if it were a reflection of Father’s mood

Father’s plans to run to the market had been cut short

As water crowded the small street

He opened the door and saw it - flowing freely

Filling our small village with life

It captivated me as I watched from afar

Sloshing and gushing and bubbling as it traveled

I heard it call out to me and whisper my name in a sweet croon

I *had* to become one with it

When Father wasn’t looking I rushed out

I splashed down into the liquid and let it consume my feet and ankles

It kissed each of my toes gently

Father looked furious from inside our small shanty

He scolded from our doorway

But then he came outside

Probably to yank me out of whatever trance I was in

But when he stepped out and water started caressing his feet and kissing his toes - he sighed

He understood

Then we encased ourselves in it

We flung it at each other

We jumped in it just to hear the sweet sound of it slushing

And then I raced down the street in a makeshift boat

My father sending it off with a strong push

Interview with Winners of Contests

Interviewer: Hi, how are you?

Brant: I'm fine.

Kiara: I'm good.

Interviewer: I'm here to talk about your piece you entered to the contest. How did it feel to win the competition?

Brant: Ecstatic. I was surprised that I won actually.

Kiara: It felt pretty good. It's not the first one but it was the highest win I ever received.

Interviewer: What inspired you to write this piece? Was it relatable?

Brant: It wasn't relatable, like I never felt that way. It was something I wrote some time ago.

Kiara: The picture from the museum. I thought it was cute and it made me think of a family.

Interviewer: Do you think that you've improved since you began writing?

Brant: Yeah. My vocabulary has gotten better and story writing skills. I know that sounds weird um like my plot, theme, stuff like that. Basically I've learned to stay on topic and it improved.

Kiara: Absolutely! *laughs* My old writings were trash. You can put that in the interview because they were trash.

Interviewer: Are you going to continue to submit your writings after you graduate?

Brant: Yes.

Kiara: Maybe.

“My people” by Keyami Collins and Larson Efhaymi, freshmen

We are the most victimized people in America.

Black people

Arab people

They call my people terrorists. About 27 percent of respondents said that all Muslim Americans should be required to register their location with the federal government.

White men invade brown countries and set red fires. Draw red blood, their fingerprints blow away in the sand. Everyone just lets this happen. Brown men fly airplanes into buildings and white men blame a whole country, a country none of the 19 hijackers were from... cause all brown men are the same in the eyes of America, all brown people are terrorists.

They call my people thugs. The ethnic stereotype of African Americans in the United States is a criminal stereotype. They say black men are dangerous criminals.

Black men bleed crimson blood, just as white man would. White men can wear hoods as white as their skin, carry tiki torches blazing with the red flames of hatred. They don't get punished, oh no, they're called "very fine people" as they scream "white power" in the state I grew up in, the state I love, MY state. But when black men kneel, kneel for the brothers and sisters we lost in this world due to the men in blue who were supposed to protect us and for this nonviolent offense, our president calls us thugs.

They drop bombs on my people, killing nearly 4,000 civilians without remorse.

And I'm told my people deserve it, that if they didn't wanna be killed then they shouldn't kill. How do white men explain to children who watched their parents get blown apart? How can they tell them that daddy's limbs' falling down around them is their fault? And you wonder why kids grow up to hate America. But it's no wonder blood dries brown because blood knows brown skin best.

They gun my people down. 24 percent of people fatally shot and killed by the police are black despite us being just 13 percent of the U.S. population, meaning black Americans are 2.5 times as likely as white Americans to be shot and killed by police officers.

When I was younger I wanted to grow up and be an actress walking on a brilliant red carpet wearing a ruby red dress. I wanted the world to know my name and scream it until their throats were raw. Now I just want to grow up. I don't want people to scream my name like they had to with Mike Brown. I don't wanna wear the brilliant red Trayvon wore that night. I just want to be alive.

44% of Americans say that Muslims are too extreme in their religious beliefs. They call my peoples' beliefs extreme because they've forgotten the separation between church and state. This is why white men make laws controlling woman's bodies...but when a Muslim woman chooses to cover her hair, she's oppressed...who's really the oppressor here?

"The most disrespected person in America is the black woman. The most unprotected person in America is the black woman. The most neglected person in America is the black woman." They call black women mad, loud, and ratchet. We are the butt of your racist jokes, your laugh in the bar with your rich privileged friends, your target practice, the least loved. You flirt with women who want to be me with their lip injections and butt implants, but you don't want me, you want the white imitation of me.

You hunt us.

You kill us.

You bomb us.

You shoot us.

But y'all are the ones who are afraid.

You use your fear to justify our deaths.

But all lives matter, right?

“Beautiful” by Amanda Howard, *senior*

He’s the wish I think I made

A swan with pretty pearly wings,
A beating heart whose rhythm pangs,

A blissful dream of summer rain.

He’s a red rose in a riptide

And a castle on Chicago’s south side

He’s a bumblebee over a silver stream

A vanilla sky in my daydream

—what a beautiful boy.

And one time,

I read a poem about

Woven flowers and sun-licked rings

And I thought of him

—I thought of you—

And all the happiness you bring

And I can feel the sunshine on my cheek

When you lay your head on mine, and speak

—A Vitruvian boy, Vesuvian born,

Like sanctified honey’s

Volcanic warmth.

The night sky is not completely black,
Because the moon shines,
So you smile back.
Your rosy heart flies
With daffodil lungs,
And those forget-me-not eyes
Over your lace leaf tongue.

How are you so wonderful?
So thunderful and colorful?
And thoughtful and heartfelt,
Like rainfall and caramel

Like chocolate-covered carousels
Like apple pie and silver bells
And happy hearts and
Wishful minds
And sweet hellos and sad goodbyes.
And I love you like
Nectarines with star-shaped kisses
You're a thoughtless moment of a thousand wishes
A piece of peace from the Sistine ceiling,

A whispered greeting for a lovely evening

My Vitruvian boy, Vesuvian born,
My clap of thunder in a lightning storm.
A boy so beautiful, angels would weep
My last thought, as I drift to sleep

And if you think of me one day,
On days past the horizon,
And time and skies have diverged us,
I will always remember those forget-me-not eyes,
And I'll pray you remember this moment.

Interview with Our Performers

Interviewer: How many times have you performed?

Amanda(*senior*): A lot. Too many times to count.

Larson(*freshman*): A lot let me count them. *starts counting performances*. Like 4.

Interviewer: Do you feel more confident the more you perform?

Amanda: Yes. The first time I performed I almost cried. My voice was shaky and you could tell I was nervous.

Larson: I've always had a sense of confidence.

Interviewer: What advice would you give offer new poetry performers?

Amanda: Just enjoy the moment and live in the moment. *smiles brightly*

Larson: You're never as bad as you think. You just have to feel the crowd and live in the moment.

Interviewer: Do you plan to continue performing next year or after high school?

Amanda: Probably not.

Larson: Yeah *chuckles* I love performing.

Thank you for reading this spring edition of our literary magazine,
Whispers from the Wood.

Please come support the Creative Writing students and program for our first creative writing showcase on Friday, April 13th (see more details below).

All Woodside students, regardless of magnet status, are invited to submit creative writing pieces, photographs, and other visual art to our first print edition of our literary magazine, *Shadows from the Wood.*

Please see Ms. Weyland or Kerrion Bowens for any additional information.

Rhapsodic: Creative Writing Showcase

6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Woodside Auditorium

\$3.00 per ticket, additional donations welcome

Hosted by local poet, Nina Brewton