

# THE MEGALODON

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THE MEGALODON  
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Charles J. Colgan Sr. High School  
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within our Creative Writing community.

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# The Megalodon Staff

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# Table of Contents

Careful <i>(Watercolor)</i>	Peaches Javins	Cover
Gravesite <i>(Digital)</i>	Piper Cole	8
Take it to the Grave <i>(Prose)</i>	Bridgette Rudolph	9
A Theater: Screenplay <i>(Script)</i>	Eden Gardner	15
Aching Ears <i>(Poetry)</i>	Gabriella Hawkins	25
Arachnophobia <i>(Photography)</i>	Robyn Mallard	27
Why I, Betty Phan, Could Kill a Coconut Crab <i>(Prose)</i>	Betty Phan	28
Why Betty Phan Is a Liar & Cannot Kill a Coconut Crab <i>(Prose)</i>	Lyric Blevins	30
Monochrome <i>(Digital)</i>	Mo Childs	33

Monochrome <i>(Poetry)</i>	Kaitlyn Lee	34
Under the Bowed Tree <i>(Poetry)</i>	Leila Garcia	35
Hannya <i>(Digital)</i>	Alyssa Balangue	36
Stasis <i>(Script)</i>	Bridgette Rudolph	37
Life of A Dancer <i>(Watercolor)</i>	Keziah Clotey	45
Don't Take Me Stargazing <i>(Poetry)</i>	Alana Beasley	46
Attention <i>(Photography)</i>	Karina Achico	47
Sign <i>(Prose)</i>	Maryam Zalzala	48
Love Sick <i>(Digital)</i>	Dillon Conroy	51
Inflamed Jealousy <i>(Poetry)</i>	Olivia Misero	52
Sorrowing Survivor <i>(Acrylic)</i>	Isabel Kinney	54
Sunken <i>(Poetry)</i>	Emily Lowther	55



Gravesite (*Digital*)  
Piper Cole, '22



Take it to the Grave  
Bridgette Rudolph, '22

Iris's heart dropped as she heard the rhythmic sound of a shovel scooping dirt and tossing it aside. She had been nervous walking through the forest alone at night, but the sound of the shovel as she approached her friend's truck terrified her. It took a moment for the world to come into view once she stepped around the truck, as its headlights bleached the scene before her, but Iris could tell what it was. Her best friend Hannah stood over a hole in the forest floor, with a dead man laying off to the side of it.

“Hannah...”

The girl digging the hole spun around, wild-eyed. Hannah's dark hair had fallen out of her braids and hung loosely around her face. Sweat pasted loose strands of her hair to her face. Panting like a rabid animal, she quickly calmed at the sight of Iris and smiled.

“You're here!” Hannah said like she was greeting Iris at the door rather than over a grave.

Iris didn't greet her friend with her typical response of, ‘Sorry! Lost track of time!’ Sensing her friend's discomfort, Hannah chuckled awkwardly and continued to dig.

“Grab a—Grab another shovel out of the back. Sorry, I— um... made you walk out here instead of picking you up. I um... I had a feeling you'd freak.” Hannah trailed off with a laugh.

Already turning her back on Hannah, Iris

robotically walked around the back of her friend's red pickup truck. She moved aside the bloody tarp and the spare gardening gloves, then picked up the second shovel. Never looking up, Iris dug. She refused to look up at her friend, who continued to smile and chat like nothing was wrong.

"I'm so glad you're here! I was so scared out here by myself. After all— This. happened—," Hannah laughed, the same kind of laugh she used to laugh off an injury playing soccer or when she'd throw her head back at a crack someone made in math class. "I reeeaaally needed someone to talk to. Now that you're here it's all going to be fine now."

The emphasis on 'fine' didn't make Iris feel better. Out of the corner of her eye, Iris saw Hannah still smiling, staring at the hole almost affectionately. The shorter girl cleared her throat.

"How did this...?"

Hannah made an 'oh' motion with her mouth and her smile faded. It bounced back as she started to laugh again. She kept breaking down into fits of laughter as she spoke.

"Well, I— I was driving home past that bar— Jackson's. Just outside of town and, this guy ran in front of my car! I didn't hit him, but he was mad! He ran over to the window and started beating at it. You know my car is old and the door locks don't work too well so, he got them open and— We fought and I— threw him to the ground— hard." Hannah laughed again, "I guess I don't know my own strength! Whatever— We'll just wrap up

here and everything will be fine.”

The wire that had been coiling in Iris as Hannah talked snapped. It let loose sparks that kicked off a fire in her that gave her the courage to snap back. She turned to face Hannah.

“Going to be fine-! Going to be fine!?! We’re burying a body! Y-You— You murdered someone! Nothing about this is going to be okay!”

Hannah spun toward Iris with a fearful look in her eyes but still smiling.

“Listen—! No one knows about me fighting him! He was last seen in town drunk so the police will write his disappearance off as an accident and his fault! No one will find him here and no one will trace it back to us. So. It. Will. Be. Fine!”

Hannah’s grin was so fragmented it almost fell apart on her face. Iris spun on her heel and began to walk away. Hannah’s smile crumbled as her friend turned away.

“Wait—Iris!” Hannah called out, panicked.

Iris kept walking, calling back to her desperate friend over her shoulder.

“No! No! This is crazy! Y-You’re crazy! I’m calling the cops!”

“Iris, please! It was an accident! Self-defense—! I don’t deserve to go to jail for this!”

“An accident?!” Iris spun around to face Hannah, rage, and panic fueling her fire. “Yeah and now you’ve dragged me into it! Now I could go to jail! Why did you call me?”

“Because you’re my friend! You have to help! Everything is fine when you’re around!”

Iris couldn’t believe she was hearing this. Hannah—from the fourth-grade soccer team. Hannah—who had been at every sleepover. Hannah—who she spent every day with. Hannah had always played rough, took jokes a little far, and pushed limits for fun, but Iris could never have imagined her looking as deranged as she did now. Iris sucked in a deep breath.

“I’m calling the cops.” Iris marched off, leaving Hannah staring after her.

“No, you are not.”

The drop in Hannah’s voice made Iris turn to look back. The panic had been replaced by dead calm on Hannah’s face. She shifted the shovel in her hands, holding it in a firm two-hand grip with the blade held up. Iris’s fire flickered as the implication in Hannah’s actions sunk in.

“You are not telling anyone about this.”

Iris’s fire all but burned out, or rather, was stamped out to a wisp of smoke as she realized just how much taller Hannah was than her.

“You can’t—” Iris nearly croaked out.

“Yes. Yes, I can.”

With neither the sounds of their voices nor shovels echoing around the woods, the silence of the surrounding area crept in on Iris. Nothing but crickets and fireflies could witness what was happening between the two friends. Suddenly Hannah grinned. Not as she did before, desperately trying to remain calm, she was

rather smug this time.

“You know— I packed a spare set of gloves for a reason.”

Iris managed to muster her voice with the little smoke from her internal fire that was left. Her voice came out raspy as she asked her question.

“What do you—”

“Fingerprints on the shovel and tarp. To top it off, I’m willing to bet when I called you out here, you snuck out and didn’t tell your parents anything. It isn’t a good look for you.”

Glancing down at the shovel in her hands, Iris dropped it as if it burned. She’d been in such shock when she happened upon the scene, she hadn’t thought about fingerprints.

“Iris.” The smaller girl was almost tricked into thinking her friend was about to comfort her with how soft Hannah’s voice was. “We both said a lot of things we didn’t mean tonight, but we’re friends. It’s— natural to fight a bit— Everything is going to be fine. It will be easier for both of us this way. Nobody has to get in trouble. Just pick up the shovel and help me dig.”

Without argument, Iris dug. Both girls buried the body without another word. They left the unmarked grave as it was and drove off together in Hannah’s truck.

“It is all going to be just fine.”

Several days later, police had a missing person’s report for a man who had not come into work for several days. They traced his steps as far as Jackson’s Bar, but every lead went dead after that. Soon the town moved

on. Meanwhile, Iris and Hannah were closer than ever before. Always glancing at one another from the corners of their eyes when the other wasn't looking. Hannah was always hanging around Iris, checking in on who she was talking to or where she was going. Some people began to speculate that the two may have developed into something more than friends, but they never explained their behavior change. It was just between the two of them. Friends simply have secrets they take to the grave.

A Theater: Screenplay  
Eden Gardner, '23

## SCENE ONE

Ext. Theater-Evening

The scene opens on a narrow city street. Cars speed by every other minute or so, but besides that, the street is empty. The windows of the shops are dark. No other people, no parked cars. The only building with bright windows is a theater standing broad with steps leading up to a set of grand doors.

A well-groomed but average-looking man, MICHAEL, stands in front of the steps, checking his watch. It is 6:54.

MICHAEL

(huffs, visibly frustrated)

After adjusting his suit collar, he looks at his watch again. 6:55. With a frown, he pulls a flip phone out of his pocket and dials.

A WOMAN'S VOICE

(from the phone)

Hi, you've reached Sasha! I'm not available right now, leave me a message, and I'll call you back.

The phone beeps.

MICHAEL

(fuming)

I can't believe you're not showing. You're so selfish, you know that? Just because I—You know, just forget it. You can throw your little tantrum now, but—

(He stops and sighs.)

Look, honey. I told you it won't happen again, okay? I promised. (His voice turns almost threatening) But we're going to have a talk about this.

The phone beeps. The streetlight above MICHAEL flickers to life. He looks at his watch once again and pockets the phone, turning to stroll up the stairs.

## SCENE TWO

Int. Theater Lobby-Dusk

The lobby is the size of a small soccer field. On the far wall, a balcony extends out over the first floor. A pair of doors, the entrance to the auditorium itself, stand tall on the second floor. Two staircases lead up to the balcony on either side with intricate carvings. The furniture spread across the lower floor is a garish orange, and stiff. A grandfather clock with a large face looms against the wall under the balcony. The hands point to 6:45. Above it all, a grand painted ceiling depicts cherubs and beautiful people feasting.

MICHAEL enters the theater, startling when the door slams shut behind him. He quickly recovers and straightens himself, taking a survey of the room.



The grandfather clock begins to ring a resounding note to mark 7:00. MICHAEL jumps at the first gong. He frowns, checking his watch once again. He taps it upon seeing that it has frozen on 6:57. When this does nothing to start the second hand, he grunts in frustration before turning and walking with urgency towards the ticket booth.

### SCENE THREE

Int. Amphitheater

Despite the size of the large foyer, the amphitheater is quite average, even on the small side, with only three sections of seats. The only lights line the floor, lighting the aisle. The aisle leads up to a brightly lit stage, where two actors are performing in silence, dressed in robes of deep purple, embroidered with a subtly loud orange. The audience fills the whole auditorium, save for a few seats.

The doors entering the theater crack open, and MICHAEL makes an attempt to slink in quietly. The doors give a slight creak, and as he turns towards the seats, it becomes clear that every single audience member has turned their head to stare at him. He falters but continues walking towards an empty seat in the very back, eyes on him all the while.

He scoots into the aisle seat and looks up at the stage. The actors are glaring right at him, frozen in their position of laying a sheet over a lump on a table.

MICHAEL blinks, and the performers have started moving again, the audience once again turned toward the stage, as if he has imagined all of the stares.

STAGE PERFORMER 1

(solemn)

It is done.

The performers wheel the table into the wings. As the table moves, the sheet shifts to reveal the tips of hanging fingers. MICHAEL gives a quiet scoff at the cheesy dramatization and glances at the faces of the people sitting around him, only to see them trained on every movement as if their life depends on it. The performers return to under the spotlight.

STAGE PERFORMER 2

A story.

STAGE PERFORMER 1

March eighth, nineteen hundred eighty-nine. An unexpected snowstorm, an unexpected child.

PERFORMER 1 raises their hands, robe sleeves falling down their arms. Sudden puffs of white blow across the stage like snowflakes. MICHAEL's eyes widen in surprise for a moment, but he schools it into an expression of indifference and leans over to the finely dressed woman next to him.

MICHAEL

(whispering)

Such fake effects, right? So unbelievable.

The woman has no reaction besides the slight clenching of her jaw.

STAGE PERFORMER 2

The child grows up wanting for nothing, provided everything. But it seems the cold from the snowstorm the day of his birth has seeped into his heart, for he becomes a cruel boy. Greedy. Careless.

The snow on stage swirls into two figures facing each other in hostile stances. The shorter, rounder figure shakes a finger at the taller figure who waves them off.

MICHAEL squints at the stage.

SCENE FOUR

Int. MICHAEL's MOTHER's kitchen-Night

The kitchen is large, with the modern design look of blinding white cupboards and marble. The inside lights are dimmed. A storm thunders outside the windows, sending flashes of lightning that light up the whole house.

The scene is silent. A young man and an older woman mirror the two figures' stances on stage. The focus grows closer, revealing them to be a slightly younger

MICHAEL and the middle-aged woman as his mother. Both are yelling without sound, standing next to the kitchen island. She stops speaking, both of their faces contorted with fury, but hers making way for fear as MICHAEL's gesturing grows wilder. He stalks forward and she steps back, shaking her head. Seeing that she still won't agree with him, he turns and sweeps a stack of dishes off the counter. Plates and glasses shatter on the floor, and MICHAEL's MOTHER cries out. He stalks out of the house, leaving his mother frozen and shaking.

## SCENE FIVE

Int. Amphitheater

The scene returns to how it was before.

The figures finish playing out the previous scene, ending with the taller one storming off the stage in a flurry of snow. MICHAEL sits in shock. The snow stops and disappears from the stage.

## STAGE PERFORMER 2

You.

The actors in the spotlight are once again staring. This time, STAGE PERFORMER 2 is pointing right at him.

## STAGE PERFORMER 1

(slowly raises their arm to join in pointing)

You're next, Michael Robertson.

The audience turns again in unison in his direction. They slowly stand, looming over him. He jumps up and bolts toward the doors.

## SCENE SIX

Int. Theater Lobby- Night

There is a scream that grows progressively louder, and the doors burst open, breaking the forest scene. The scream has no source and stops abruptly with the opening of the doors.

MICHAEL runs out and rushes down the stairs. He reaches the front doors and yanks on the gold door handles. They don't budge.

When they don't yield to his desperate attempts, he swings around with his back on the door, chest heaving from the effort, fumbling in his pocket to pull out his phone. It rings for a couple of seconds, then stops.

MICHAEL

(rushed)

Finally, Sasha, listen—

PHONE

Hi, you've reached Sasha! I'm not available right now-

MICHAEL

No, no, no, no.

## PHONE

—leave me a message and I'll call you back.

The phone beeps.

## MICHAEL

(desperate)

Sasha, you better answer me. I'm at the theater, they're coming after me and I can't get out and they know things and I think they're going to-

He stops, his expression of panic turning into confusion when he realizes that he hasn't seen anyone follow him from the auditorium. He looks up at the balcony. There stands PERFORMER 2, grinning down at him. MICHAEL slowly lowers the phone from his ear. It beeps- marking the end of the voicemail.

## PERFORMER 2

(with mirth)

Are you done with your little tantrum, Michael?

PERFORMER 2 snaps his fingers lazily. He has done this before. The sound of the snap echoes and becomes almost deafening, leaving MICHAEL doubled over and covering his ears. At once, the reverberating sound stops, and MICHAEL straightens, staring ahead with a blank expression.

## PERFORMER 2 (O.S.)

Now, why don't you come and rejoin us?

MICHAEL steps forward robotically, moving towards the stairs.

## SCENE SEVEN

Int. Amphitheater

The audience members stare straight ahead with an intense focus, sitting back in their seats. One man's knuckles are clenched white on his armrests, but he keeps his eyes trained forward.

As MICHAEL walks onto the stage, the bright lights block out the audience. He sits, twitching, on a medical table, leaving him with the two actors who stare down at him. PERFORMER 1 raises a knife, glinting in the stage lights. Focus on PERFORMER 1's eyes, which change colors rapidly.

PERFORMER 1

Goodbye, Michael.

## SCENE SEVEN

Int. Small Apartment Kitchen-Morning

A kitchen, bright and airy with morning sun rays. Dirty dishes sit in the sink.

SASHA sits on a barstool, eating breakfast. She leans over to the voicemail machine on her counter, pressing a

button.

VOICEMAIL MACHINE

You have two messages.

The machine beeps.

MICHAEL

I can't believe you're not showing. You're so self—

SASHA rolls her eyes and reaches over again. The machine beeps.

VOICEMAIL MACHINE

All messages marked for deletion.

The screen goes black.



Aching Ears  
Gabriella Hawkins, '23

the breath of mother nature was out for blood  
and her gasps were reverberant as she stole from me my  
senses

with every breath she took, she carried the worldly colors  
with her  
leaving my vision a clean slate, a blinding embodiment of  
squeaky clean  
no dust, no faded creams, no translucent tans peaking in  
the corners  
like a spot someone forgot to wipe clean - only a color  
drained of personality

the ominous auburn-green leaves that screamed of poison  
with first glance  
and dusted browns of the peeling bark that together built  
the forest trees  
had begun to mesh together, before it was swung into a  
white by the wind

but even with the land stripped of all its former hues  
the goddess from above wasn't  
satisfied

she screamed and yelled, the air released by her actions  
piercing  
and i thought if i were to put my hands up to my ear, i'd

find currant  
cascading through the cracks of my palms, dried out from  
the gales

currant so rich it's if you pressed  
the crayon so hard it snapped in  
half

and blood flowing so raggedly you'd think someone had  
lost all their inhibitions,  
scribbled and scratched at a paper 'till a hole was ripped  
right through the middle.



Arachnophobia (*Photography*)  
Robyn Mallard, '23

## Why I, Betty Phan, Could Kill a Coconut Crab Betty Phan, '22

The coconut crab, known scientifically as *Birgus latro*, is an absolute freak of nature.

Weighing an average of nine pounds and measuring three feet, three inches lengthwise, *Birgus latro* is found on islands across the Indian Ocean and parts of the Pacific Ocean. They possess enough strength to scale trees and crack the shells of coconuts, a talent that earned them their namesake. Though their typical diet mainly consists of fleshy fruits, nuts, and seeds, they are also known to be opportunistic carnivores and will eat birds and even each other if they can get their claws on them. Notoriously bad-tempered, coconut crabs are infamous for their connection to the disappearance of Amelia Earhart, as some people theorize that they ate her body as she starved to death.

The coconut crab only has one known predator: me.

Menace to society it may be, the average coconut crab has no chance against me, Betty Phan, coconut crab killer extraordinaire.

There are several reasons as to why I would triumph over the *Birgus latro* in a duel, the most prominent among these being my ability to wield a sledgehammer. As the coconut crab is a relative of the considerably less dangerous hermit crab, it is logical to assume that a firm swing of a sledgehammer would be enough to incapacitate a coconut crab, as it would

most definitely destroy a hermit crab. All I must do is remember to keep the hammer firmly in my grasp, for if I dropped it, there would be a chance that the coconut crab would pick it up and use it in retaliation against me. As the coconut crab can lift items that weigh up to sixty pounds, this would be an easy feat for the crustacean.

But even in the event that the crab manages to acquire weaponry, I still maintain the upper hand. See, while a coconut crab would be able to wield, say, a hammer or a knife, it cannot operate a gun. However I, a human, have opposable thumbs, can. In short, if the hammer method were to fail me, I would merely shoot the crab.

In addition to my ability to use various types of weaponry, I am also much smarter than the average coconut crab, which means I could easily maneuver the crab into one of several traps I have concocted in my immensely intelligent mind, where I would then shoot it.

In short, as terrifying as a coconut crab may sound, it is simply no match for me and my incredible skill in both combat and strategy. I could easily defeat a coconut crab, regardless of what others may have to say about this matter.

## Why Betty Phan Is a Liar & Cannot Kill a Coconut Crab Lyric Blevins, '22

Let me set the scene for you. Somewhere, nestled deep into the waves of the glittering Pacific, lies a small island, not even five miles long. Palm trees tower over pale, sun-scorched beaches, dotted with half-buried shells and mangled driftwood, touched only by the gentle swell of the tides. A flock of red-tailed tropicbirds trills overhead, streaking white across the endless azure, and a soft breeze lifts them higher into the salt-stained air. Among this peaceful haven roams a monstrosity—the coconut crab, weighing in at ten pounds and over a meter long, armed with thick plates of armor and pincers powerful enough to rival a lion's bite. These oversized hermit crabs are the rulers of Nikumaroro Island, and nothing dares to upset their spot on the top of the food chain.

But in the shadows lurks a challenger. Enter Betty Phan, 5'2" and just over a hundred pounds, no fighting experience, yet enough sheer determination to make up for it. Over time, her grudge against coconut crabs has only grown, and today, it shall finally be put to rest. This is the fight of the century.

And the coconut crabs are going to win.

You see, Betty has this one key trait I like to call hubris. She possesses a confidence that could rival Narcissus, and usually, it works in her favor. A strong resolve can get you far in life. The problem is, confidence only works when you have the abilities to back it up, and

that's where Betty falls short.

In addition to not being the most physically imposing, Betty Phan is also half-blind. Through years of refusing to wear her glasses, she's only worsened her already terrible vision. She may be able to theoretically wield a sledgehammer and gun, but those tools are worthless if she can't aim. After all, hitting a moving target without your glasses is hard enough, yet coconut crabs manage to up the difficulty by being fast. Moving at 12 mph (about 17.6 fps), coconut crabs make for a quick-footed enemy in a fight. With Betty weighed down by a sledgehammer or wasting precious seconds trying to aim a gun, she would inevitably end up with a pincer around her ankle before she could do any damage.

As well, a coconut crab is not a solitary opponent. At the smell of blood, all nearby coconut crabs come running to help take down their latest meal. One wrong move and Betty would find herself facing dozens of hungry crabs, ready to pinch at any exposed flesh and snap bone between their fearsome claws. Even if she managed to defeat one without getting injured, coconut crabs are known for their cannibalism, so her success would only bring the rest down upon her, eager for a feast.

However, there's one more important factor that Betty's forgetting—coconut crabs are God's favorite. How do I know? While there's no shortage of strange animals scattered across the globe, coconut crabs make up an extremely niche role that could only be hand-picked by some higher being. Think about it. These coconut crabs

occupy mostly uninhabited paradises with ample food and no predators. They live much longer than the average crab, up to sixty years, and spend those decades in blissful solitude, away from human interference. It's clear that coconut crabs were given one of the best draws in life. God has gifted them with crab-heaven on Earth, and they intend to take full advantage of it.

So what if someone, like Betty Phan, was to interrupt the crabs' way of life? Well, just ask Amelia Earhart. Oh, wait.

That's right, coconut crabs are the leading suspects in the disappearance of Amelia Earhart. From what we can tell, Earhart crashed her plane on Nikumaroro Island, disturbing the local wildlife and pissing off the deadliest force in the Pacific: the coconut crabs. She was likely injured in the crash, so the blood coaxed the crabs into stealing pieces of her and her companion, Fred Noonan's, body, hiding them away in their burrows and obscuring the circumstances of her death for years. They got their revenge, in the end.

What kind of retribution will they have in store for our dear Betty, then?

In conclusion, while Betty Phan believes she has the advantage in skill and intelligence, overconfidence in her abilities will only lead to her doom. She's chosen a formidable foe, and she will fall victim to the spite and speed of these deceptive coconut crabs, as many have before. Plus, I don't think pissing off God's beloved pets gets you into heaven. Unless Betty wants to fight him too.





Monochrome (*Digital*)  
Mo Childs, '22

## Monochrome

Kaitlyn Lee, '22

I burnt my biology textbook.  
I don't want to see how fragile people are;  
I don't want to see their bones laid bare  
In colorless imitations

Can't stand to dissect my humanity like this—  
I don't want my feelings to be easily explained  
With hormones and diagrams.  
I don't want reasons for it- I don't want clear,  
Or specific answers to any of my questions.

A part of me doesn't even want to capture  
All this mess in my own words or photographs-  
To dilute any of this colour with a poor mockery  
Of what actual life feels like.  
To let my love and joy and lust be disrespected.  
Even pain; grief that bonds to you, and anger that drives  
you—

I cannot bear the thought of life, dismissed.

I'd much rather fall into that void  
Between the lines of black and white-  
No matter of the formless haze  
And the lack of clarity in it all.  
I would swim in the mud of eternal ambiguity  
Just to avoid becoming so drained, monochromatic.  
And if a life of colour means a lack of certainty—  
I will saturate, and drown out the absolute.

Under the Bowed Tree  
Leila Garcia, '22

3:15

Every year at 3:15 we meet  
20 feet into the woods behind my house,  
Underneath the bowed tree.  
Today is November 20th  
Our three year anniversary.  
And every year we always meet  
Underneath the bowed tree.  
I'm close to you but all i feel is your dispassion  
You aren't here with me.  
You've become more detached  
After our second year.  
But we keep our tradition  
I have my polaroid camera in one hand,  
Squeezing your jaw with my other.  
The recreation of our first picture we took  
Underneath the bowed tree.  
I see the flash and I blink  
I'm left staring back at us.  
Except you,  
Are only there as the date  
marked on the bowed tree.  
I hold it for a moment,  
And I bury it beneath us-  
Beneath me.  
I delve into the dirt to bury another picture,  
Where you are, and will always be.  
Underneath the bowed tree.



Hannya (*Digital*)  
Alyssa Balangue, '22

Stasis

Bridgette Rudolph, '22

## EXT. THE HALLWAY

A young woman walks down long white empty hallways that look like they were abandoned at a moment's notice. This place is a former research space station where the crew disappeared for an unknown reason. Hester walks them alone now. Hester pulls out her AUDIO RECORDER.

HESTER ERIKSON is a young woman who woke up alone on a space station with almost no memory. Hester is smart, witty, and has a habit of talking to her audio recorder and thinking out loud to fill the silence.

### HESTER ERIKSON

This is Hester Erikson. Age 19, female, from Saint Paul, Minnesota. Day. (Pause) I want to say forty-two. Then again there aren't days in space, cause a day is based on the rotation of the earth and we are... far... far away from earth. (Pause) Anyway, I'm on my way to fix the oxygen purifiers for the station. Again. They break twice a week honestly... No weeks in space, but you get the idea. (Sigh) So far, not much has changed. Pollux and Castor make better company than just myself, but

BANGING NOISE from somewhere far behind

Hester. Hester moves away from the noise, faster.

HESTER ERIKSON

(Scared whisper)

I haven't seen the Hodag since—

CASTOR V.O

Why did you name the extraterrestrial  
the Hodag?

HESTER ERIKSON

What! What!?! Castor? Where are you—!?

Hester pulls a **HANDHELD RADIO** from a pocket on her backpack where Castor and Pollux's voices are coming from.

**CASTOR**, a therapy AI built to care for station workers who may feel homesick or afraid. He is upbeat and kind. He now resides in a small spherical drone and has no memory of before the station was abandoned.

CASTOR (V.O.)

Sorry. I got worried and wanted to  
check in on you.

**POLLUX**, a utility AI meant to run the station. He is cold and direct, due to the fact he is a strictly work-related AI. He now resides in a small cube drone and has no memory of before the station was abandoned.

POLLUX (V.O.)

We can not see you since the hallway

monitors are down. However, we can reach you through the radio.

HESTER ERIKSON

How long were you listening!?

CASTOR (V.O.)

We came in on 'In terms of—'. Back to my previous question- Why did you name the extraterrestrial in the station 'the Hodag'?

HESTER ERIKSON

Oh—Well, the Hodag is this old urban legend from Wisconsin and I thought the alien looked like it.

POLLUX (V.O.)

Back to the primary objective—Have you reached the oxygen purifiers yet?

HESTER ERIKSON

Just around the corner.

#### CUT TO DOORWAY EXT. GREENHOUSE

Hester inputs a code to a large doorway and it opens to reveal a beautiful room filled with all different kinds of overgrowing plants. The room is huge and the upper part is half-filled with a loft-like second floor. The second floor has dozens of massive oxygen tanks and purifiers that absorb oxygen made by the plants and send it around the station. Hester seems more at peace in the Greenhouse

than in the empty hallways. She makes her way to the  
SECOND FLOOR.

HESTER ERIKSON

Alright, I'm here, boys.

POLLUX (V.O.)

Why do you refer to us as boys? We are artificial software systems with spherical drone bodies.

HESTER ERIKSON

Well—You both have male voices' and names.

CASTOR (V.O.)

Castor and Pollux! Two heroic Greek brothers united forever in the stars as the constellation, Gemini. Seems sweet to name us that, right?

HESTER ERIKSON

A little ironic, considering you are stuck in a space station.

POLLUX (V.O.)

Have you reached the oxygen purifiers?

CASTOR (V.O.)

Have a little fun will you, Pollux?



POLLUX (V.O.)

Your primary objective is to comfort  
the human, mine is to keep her alive.

Hester walks toward a damaged oxygen purifier.

HESTER ERIKSON

Oh my gosh...

A whole section of oxygen purifiers is damaged.  
They look like they were **RIPPED** from the  
outside. **METAL SCRAPS** are everywhere.

POLLUX (V.O.)

What is the damage to the purifiers?

HESTER ERIKSON

Bad... Really bad... They may be  
beyond repair.

POLLUX (V.O.)

Your description is insufficient.  
Elaborate.

HESTER ERIKSON

They look like they were torn apart  
and—Wait...

Hester walks down the rows of purifiers reading the  
**LABELS**.

HESTER ERIKSON

Only the purifiers feeding Section Alpha-2 deck 3 have been damaged.

CASTOR (V.O.)

That's where we are!

POLLUX (V.O.)

Outside damage to the purifiers suggests sabotage.

The horrifying realization that only the Hodag could have damaged the purifiers hits Hester.

HESTER ERIKSON

The Hodag...

POLLUX (V.O.)

(Cut off by Hester)

Impossible. Specifically damaging the purifiers supplying section Alpha-2 deck 3 would require the extraterrestrial to have advanced intelligence. Involving literacy, understanding of mechanics, clear memory, deduction skills, and—.

HESTER ERIKSON

—What if it is that smart?! I'd assumed from its appearance it would have the intelligence of a bear or lion, but it's in space! Bears and

lions don't just show up out here!  
What if it's a highly intelligent  
creature?

POLLUX (V.O.)

A plausible theory.

CASTOR (V.O.)

Why damage the oxygen purifiers if it  
knows Hester needs them to stay alive?

POLLUX (V.O.)

To kill her. The extraterrestrial is  
most likely a carnivore due to its  
teeth and claws.

Hester is silent for several seconds causing Castor to  
worry.

CASTOR (V.O.)

Are you alright, Hester? I'm sorry if  
Pollux scared you, you'll be okay.

HESTER ERIKSON

To lure me here... I'm in a trap—!

Hester spins around freaking out only to see the  
HODAG on the **BOTTOM FLOOR** staring up at her.  
The HODAG is a quadruped that is three times the size  
of a bull with heavily armored black scaled skin. Having  
pale horns, fangs, and spikes running down its back. Pure  
yellow eyes stare right at Hester. The Hodag **GROWLS**.  
The growl sounds like a **GUTTURAL RUMBLE**.

HESTER ERIKSON

Pollux- Castor. (Pause) Can you access the director's door in the Greenhouse?

POLLUX (V.O.)

(Cut off by Hester)

Those are private to head scientists of the Greenhouse. We might not—

HESTER ERIKSON

(Cuts off Pollux, scared)

There is no other exit on the top floor. You have to get those doors open... Please...

### CUT TO CASTOR AND POLLUX IN THE COMMAND ROOM

Castor and Pollux look at each other and fall silent. Castor and Pollux reveal USB ports and they plug into the computer. Several loading screens flash by and after a second a screen monitor changes and reads 'ACCESS GRANTED'.

### CUT TO HESTER IN THE GREENHOUSE

The administration doors OPEN behind her and Hester dashes for them. The Hodag runs up the stairs to chase her, but Hester is already HITTING the 'CLOSE DOOR' button rapidly. The Hodag CHARGES and LEAPS at the closing doors.

### CUT TO BLACK AS THE DOORS SLAM SHUT



Life of A Dancer (*Watercolor*)  
Keziah Clotney, '22

Don't Take Me Stargazing  
Alana Beasley, '22

Don't you dare patronize me  
with the spirit of the stars.  
Don't ask me to save my soul  
with the beacon of a dying plasma.  
Don't tell me to model my strength  
after unmoving matter,  
massive spheres of light,  
hiding their capacity within the distance of galaxies.  
Don't wake me up to marvel  
over a cluster of indistinguishable specks,  
too dim to shine through city lights.  
Don't make me study  
the accumulation of gas and dust.  
Held together by the same thing  
that should be keeping me grounded.  
Don't compel me to slumber  
with a nursery rhyme that compares  
a cowardly celestial body to diamonds.  
What do you find so special?  
Because they are no better off than I.  
You can not tell me to look up to something  
that only shines when no one's around.



*Attention (Photography)*  
Karina Achico, '23

## Sign

Maryam Zalzal, '22

I never really liked getting my nails done. I didn't want to draw attention to my hands. Panning across, they would be stained in blemishes, from paper cuts to oven burns to the ingrown mole developing on my ring finger. Meanwhile, my Middle Eastern background made hair growth on my knuckles inevitable.

\*Enter the manicure dilemma\*

I would always bite my nails. Even with fake tips, bad habits didn't stop; they fell off—something about saliva weakening the glue. I never got into it long enough to learn the proper terminology.

During the 10th grade, I began to resist the temptation. It was my first year taking American Sign Language; everyone would be looking at my hands. I remember a girl telling me she loved the sight of people with long, thin fingers signing. I looked down; mine were long but wide—my knuckles bony.

Many things, I couldn't change. There's no erasing my genetic background. Any speak of mole removals broke my mom's heart—not because I wanted to change my appearance but cultural superstitions about them representing luck. Besides, finger lunges could not slim down the phalangeal bone.

I completely lost the urge to bite my nails. I replaced it with another habit. Any moment of stress or pondering, I occupy my hands by fingerspelling. As my teachers would lecture, my ears accept the especially long



words that have fun patterns and repetition :

Anything ending with the letters “-ure”—  
measure, literature, legislature—blends together well.

During attendance, my fingers perform a grand  
battement spelling the name “Lily.”

“Monopoly”—my thumb plays hide-and-seek,  
poking out between my fingers to form “M” and “N.”

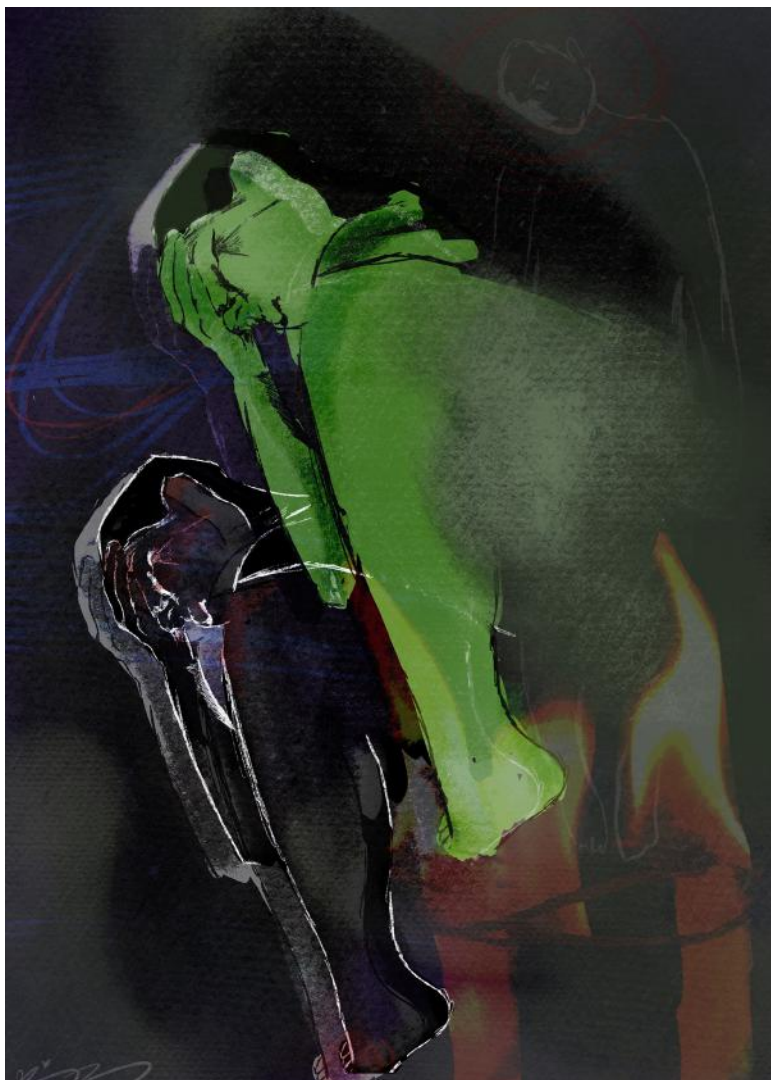
Driving from home to school to work, my hands  
firmly grip the steering wheel. Partially to keep control  
of the car; mostly to avoid the now developed instinct  
to fingerspell street signs. Even if it means being late,  
I appreciate red lights allowing me to memorize street  
names through the rhythm in my hands.

But fingerspelling only let me carry a conversation  
for so long—not far past introductions. I pay close  
attention during class, keeping my eyes up front and less  
on my paper; there’s only so much I can write down. I  
began learning new faces—not of my classmates but of  
the men and women in the videos on [Lifeprint.com](http://Lifeprint.com) and  
[ASL Deafined](http://ASL Deafined).

Conversations with my family go less like “I’m  
gonna go shower” and more like “Me go shower me,”  
with my hands moving on their own. My mother studies  
them, trying to pick out any movements she can replicate,  
then gives up to stare in wonder.

Rehearsing with my reflection, I practice raising  
my eyebrows and scrunching them down. I measure my  
head tilts to ensure they are at a wide enough angle. My  
lips form mouth morphemes like “ooh” and “cha.” Each  
is a key accessory to completing the look.

I still don't really like getting my nails done. Attention—I don't mind, but manicures are a distraction; they tell someone else's story. Bare and unaltered, my hands tell mine. Viewing them in stillness, others may see my genetic makeup and possibly alarming skin condition. In motion, they carry conversations.



Love Sick (*Digital*)  
Dillion Conroy, '22

Inflamed Jealousy  
Olivia Misero, '22

acid reflux.  
burns bubble into bombs,  
searing holes through my skin.  
the wounds, bleeding and full of puss,  
cafeteria cheese pizza;  
I want what you have.

dragging across my skull, sharp knives  
carve out the word:  
envy,  
temple to temple;  
tattoo my brain a rusty color

foul smelling odor emits from there,  
the place I want to be:  
above the cloudy perfection of heaven  
Intertwined with cosmic threads of constellations,  
but it's sticky here;  
caught in webs of lies  
like a wad of gum, still sweet, wasted in my esophagus;  
through space and time,  
flesh and bone,  
violently tearing my way in like a bullet  
gut shot;  
you're un-innocent and unsuspecting

you'll bleed out slower

as I decapitate your name,  
put it on a stick,  
and blame my murders on you

spewing dirty words on your lifeless body.  
I rub my spit into your pain;  
as breath escapes you  
and your lungs turn in on themselves,  
my holes are healed  
chilling relief fills all my imperfections

I will never admit you fixed me.



Sorrowing Survivor (*Acrylic*)  
Isabel Kinney, '23

## Sunken

Emily Lowther, '22

The captain tried to save the ship—

(He — let it sink!)

“He really truly tried to—”

(What would his children think?)

He tried to save our sinking souls five hundred feet below,

But the icy seeping frost could not keep us afloat.

“The iceberg isn’t real!” He yelled.

Defending his demise;

“The iceberg isn’t real!” rang out his desperate, sheepish  
cries.

The press would like to hear that he defended us that day,

But the only sole survivor waited for the band to play.

(There’s no more — icebergs to avenge our sunken souls!)

And when the icy seeping cold begins to hug my shallow  
bones,

I know that he is living life

Comfortably at home.



