



VOL. 10  
WINTER  
EDITION

# MOORINGS

JESUIT HIGH SCHOOL



2026

# FOREWORD & EDITORS' NOTE

“The namesake of our publication, Moorings, is a nautical term that refers to a structure that anchors a ship in a safe place to rest. Memory, the topic of this edition’s competition, provides us a mooring. A place to rest and reflect upon the journey all of us have undertaken to arrive at where we are today. Many pieces this semester echo the creators’ journeys through cold currents and warm waters. But a mooring is only temporary, a place for us to prepare to continue our journeys. While some of our pieces revel in rest, others anticipate the excitement, and perhaps anxiety, of future travels.

No matter where you, our cherished reader, may find yourself, we hope that this edition of Moorings may provide peace in the past, happiness in the present, and hope for the future.

Thanks for spending time with us,”

*L Darling*



Lucas Darling '26,  
Editor-in-Chief

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Reach us here!  
@ jhsmoorings, (Instagram)



Submissions link  
for spring’s next  
edition here!



# MEMORY MORNING'S COMPETITION



“Fog’s City” | Juan Gonzales ’26

**“The Lamp Across the Street”**  
| MICAH ESPINOZA '28

Bracing the night are three sky-dark  
trees,  
Crowning a sullen window.  
Their boughs may bow, but all I see  
Is a light just off from yellow.  
I can remember,  
Shining in color,  
A blazing light just lower:

A cold sill,  
the biting of sharp vanes,  
Let the eye behold that second light  
Sitting on the sidewalk.  
An orange hue that waved in space,  
and held back the blue and purple.  
Through the glow of verdant leaves—  
The light: a philosopher's stone,  
Silence sat and waited still;  
Its monstrous voice atoned.

But if I sit at the window again—  
I'll know it never happened.  
The lamp is two houses down,  
It's light, a wash more saddened.

With what if's—  
Could be's—  
that dance in the sky, I might,  
sit and wonder,  
Were all my thoughts  
stained with non-existent light?

**“What the Smoke Keeps”**

| PIERCE ANDREWS '28

The orchard breathes in amber dusk—  
a low, resigned exhale through hollowed  
limbs

Pressed Apples simmer in copper pots,  
Perfuming the air with memory,

From the parlor, logs sigh—  
For through the crimson Tongues  
Cedar and oakwood unfurl their  
Histories  
in spirals of grey smoke who Climb the  
rafters;  
as hidden secrets that yearn for  
discernment

Outside, the leaves of trees burn slowly,  
Revealing a shrouded facet  
Soon those originators go bare  
with the grace of old lovers parting,  
Unwilling, yet Certain.

In the seat, palms extend outward  
Reaching for the unknown necessary  
Glazing and tracing its slow generous  
heat,  
A map of life Recrossed the mind,  
murmured Names, a quiet City,  
All while the hush of snow sleeps in its  
wings.

What stirs in the confluence  
of fire and fruit, of silence and smoke,  
is not craving capture—  
But something relinquished in depths,

The gentleness of an ached mind  
scarred from of having love will  
Let the world Move on.



## “The Curb” | Drake Budzinski-Stauffer '27

### “What was It?”

| CIARAN STOUT '27

The young man, aged 72 years, had been in hospice for only 4 days. The nurses only heard him groaning and sobbing in these painful 96 hours. With nobody listed under his family registry, nobody visited to ease his pain. The man drifted in and out of consciousness through the days, and started seeing things he knew before.

A vision appeared before him in his slumber of a girl taking his younger self by the hand down a hill and towards a river; she was, without a doubt, the happiest being he had seen.

They played in the water for hours, until the periphery of the man's vision turned black, creeping into the center of his eyes until he could see nothing. He lost all of it, all of... what? There was something he felt his racing heart telling him; what was it?

A new sight showed itself, with doctors rushing to help the unknown woman that was clutching his hand with surprising force.

“This semester, for the 10th anniversary of Moorings, we are running a competition in the poetry and prose categories only.

In order to be eligible for entry:

- (1) the topic of the piece must in some way involve memory,
- (2) be poetry of any length,
- (3) be short prose (fiction or non-fiction) under 350 words,
- (4) the submission must indicate on the form that you wish to have your piece entered into the competition,

All pieces entered into the competition will be considered for publication in Moorings. However, not all poetry/prose submissions must be submitted to the competition.

— MOORINGS Competition, 2025

It was not long before he understood this was his child's birth, and he felt a familiar elation at seeing the newborn. He could feel the screaming of the child becoming the only thing he could hear, until the beeping of the computer next to the bed crescendoed to drown out the baby's joyous cries, and became all he could hear.

The final picture confronting him was one of a television screen similar to the one in his hospital chamber. The news showed a plane crash with no survivors, and for some reason, tears rolled down his face. He grasped at his head, ripped his hair out, struggled to breathe, until the TV and his sight went white.

He became silent for the first time since his arrival, having nothing to think about or know. What reason was there for him staying? There was no one there for him, was there? What was there for him to think anymore? He tried to find just one thing to save him from complete emptiness, failing even at the end of his time. What will become of him?

“10:71”

| STEPHEN JEONG '28

# It is 5:27 AM.

You wake up without the sound of your usual alarm. The year is 1992. Exactly a week ago, you were commuting to work right now for the last time. Who knew? Aisle 45, row 86 - Hitachi Energy, Financial Office. Three hours later, you would have been sweating and frantically hurrying to get daily paperworks completed and the next report submitted. You remember all the hours you spent trying to impress your boss. You count all the hours working for the next promotion - it's too many to count for your ten fingers.

You wake up from this contraption and realize just then:

The stack of textbooks, notebooks, pencils and erasers that you always kept in your backpack when you went to school.

You dismiss the sleepless nights and constant reprimand from your professors.

You later recount that one day in 1989 when you entered Waseda University with a near-perfect score on the entrance exam.

'My finest hour, that was,' you murmur as you eat leftovers from last night's dinner...

You go out to your front yard. The sky above is, as always, grey and white with constant snow. Ten scattered patches of frozen grass greet you as you wander around.

Right then and there, you observe a series of small dewdrops from a blade of grass fall right onto your shoes.

You curse the grass, and go back home to change your right sock.

Done in exasperation and hate, you trip over the wooden threshold going into your closet, landing painfully onto the cold floor. Under the seamless layers of clothing and blankets, you find a wrinkled photo from your late parents' photo album.

It was a photo taken during your 10th birthday.

Friends and family surround you as you blow ten, blue candles out.

You can see so many emotions on your face. Joy. Thrill. Amusement.

You smile faintly.

Then you laugh. A lot.

You remember...

...before Hitachi and Waseda.

You remember...

...all the fun and truly happy times, where your actions did not matter...

...only you yourself!

“10:71”

Moorings Volume 10

Stephen Jeong

Written on 13 November '25

**“FREE THINKER”**  
| Juan Gonzalez '26



**“BOILING”**

| JOSEPH DAVID '26

The sea began to boil. No soul knows why, but yet it still boils. Those who were out were burned. Skin peeled by the rising steam. Men and women were cooked alive within the hulls of mighty vessels. Many aquatic specimens died in an instant. Large whales, stomachs about to burst, float atop the ocean like fresh dumplings. Within a couple of days the ice had all melted. Raising the boiling sea onto the mainland. What were once beaches are now lakes of boiling glass. What were once cities are sizzling cemeteries filled with those who were left behind. Those who escaped succumbed to the sea all the same. Their bodies are unable to survive the steam.

Within this fog lie the bodies of billions. Their bodies forever stream as they both gain and lose the wretched moisture in the air. Acting as the ever moving bronchi for the lungs once green. Those who survived were the rich. Living in bunkers made from old missile silos. Living off what water is left. With generations of these once powerful men and women will become genetic dead ends. Their bloodlines now end in pitiful creatures who only know diseases of the mind and body. Some blame God, some blame Satan, and others blame man. Yet they will never know who started this hellish blaze. For the Seas began to boil.



**“Growing from Ashes” | Kelekolio Kaihea '26**

## “Moonlight” | Drake Budzinski-Stauffer '27



### “The Alchemist”

| NOAH ANDRADE '26

I've walked down these halls for two thousand moons now  
Each time seems to grow longer. The walls carve out the symbols in my brilliant terrors  
On the left lay open archways that overlook the valley that was once a village  
I stop two hundred feet from my initial step and place my hands on the low stone wall, watching my icy breath stir up into the night air

At the end of the hallway, at the end of my walk, there lies an old rotting door.  
Inside the old rotting door, inside the wooden cabinet at the back of the room, there's a red vial  
I never stop to think about it. It comes out of the cabinet every other moon. It always goes back.  
The red vile floods my dreams.

The wind this night is particularly cold and freezing and hurries my walk to the door and when I enter I shut the door behind me careful not to make a sound

There lies the same towers of books and papers and scratches of notes and shreds of calculations and failed creations  
My hands ache at the thought of returning to that horrid scrutiny  
I remember the townspeople who would wave at me from below every night I used to walk

It was warm then.  
If only. That red vile. Perhaps the reward to all my moons of work. If only.  
The glass feels comforting in my grasp. It soothes my fingers from their blistering aching.  
So tempting. Don't. I'd love to. You'd hate it. It'd warm me. You'll be cold after

That night was a cold night with an icy wind and a long walk to the door  
And in the door in the room in the cabinet there always lay a vile  
A vile without a drop of the Alchemist's work  
A singular vile.



**“Wonderland”  
Cruz Thomson '27 |**



**“Take a Seat”  
Juan Gonzales '26 |**



**“Corruption by Nature” | Michael Mahnke '27**



**“Autumn Glow” | Robert Turpen '26**

## **“Passing”**

ANTHONY GOMEZ-RESTREPO '26 |

Either a hospital room or the calm of a home  
With family and friends present  
No music except piano keys and the viol of a tenor  
In a bed at rest  
Sleeping at a holy hour  
Looking at a sunrise or sunset  
The Priest comes to administer final sacraments,  
Listening to deep and meaningful last words.  
A last breath is taken and you pass on.

A photograph of a stone staircase with a wooden railing leading up a hillside. The path is made of large, irregular stones and is flanked by lush green vegetation and tall evergreen trees. The background is shrouded in a thick mist or fog, creating a serene and somewhat somber atmosphere. The railing is made of dark wood and runs along the right side of the path.

**“Hidden Path” | Peter Fallon '28**

## “Alchemist”

| JEREMIAH CHOI '28

The material gurgled and frothed. It let forth a sickly aroma as it began to turn a burnt brown, and then a dark black. The material turned crisp and rotten in the scalding heat. It began to settle and curl forward in a spastic death. Then the alchemist poured in a thick brown liquid from a cup into the crucible, white hot. Every drop was expended on his concoction. As the foot of the substance passed onto the black material, a fat explosion shook the crucible. The alchemist's eyes watered with pain as sparks showered and singed the floor, turning it into a hot black, cowering under his coat. Thereafter he slipped upwards and beheld what he had done to it. The substance was alive again. It was an exceptionally thin liquid, almost like a gas, milky white. Carefully, the alchemist removed the plug from his bottle, releasing a sweet, smooth odor. The white substance then darkened; it seemed to recoil and fester in the imperfect earthly air, before condensing into a crackly yellow solid. Finally, the alchemist added the last ingredient. He pulled a needle from his drawer and pricked his finger, wincing,

clasp the crease of his finger. Thus he had given life to a bead of crimson blood on his fingerprint he had stolen from the finger, now strangled and pale. As it fell into the bottle, the substance suddenly

*Thus he had given life to a bead of crimson blood on his fingerprint he had stolen from the finger, now strangled and pale.*

contorted and twisted, popping with bursts of browns and grays and purples, into an unnatural bright red. The bottle began to vibrate violently, scalding his hand, burning in its permanent impression. He dropped it to the ground and it exploded forth on the floor. Panicked, he ran to his room and began to run cold water between his throbbing fingers as he restrained his shaking wrist. He remained there, lightheaded, passing between vision and darkness.

The next day, when he returned to his experiment, what was left were bright red crumbs on the floor, now covered in sporadic splotches of brown and black. Carefully, he picked one piece up.

In the following weeks, the alchemist spent entire days visiting various places, each time returning with stacks of metal in his arms. Soon, he had visited all of the junkyards and abandoned buildings on his side of town, leaping over gaping craters and cracks in the road. Soon he had begun to tear apart the houses in his neighborhood during the night.

On one occasion he visited the house of Herman III. He was an old man, confined to little more but his bed and his chair. His family was long dead: his wife, and their child. He was named Herman III because his father had been named Herman II and his grandfather Herman I. Herman I was a simple man famous in the town. He owned a small bar beloved by the town, before it was destroyed in a fire. He was proud, and wished for each successive generation to be named after him so that, in a way, he could live on forever. His son Herman II was a learned man. He had gone to a prestigious university, after which he made a career out of his writing. He chased wisdom like others

chase fame, and he wished that he should share this with as read the scribbles he left on the pages. Eventually he settled down with his wife, building a small house in a suburb. There, he raised a child, who was Herman III. He wished for him to be twice as he had been: twice as smart, twice as humble, twice as kind. Eventually, a storm downed a tree,

destroying the roof. His parents were left injured, but alive. They repaired the roof the best they could, but their condition weakened. His parents left for the hospital, but in a lapse in their care, Herman III was left confined to his house. As he grew up his hermit behavior rendered him little more but an unseen phantom. The house he lived in was little more than a lowly shack in the sun's shadow. The roads of the neighborhood became old and cracked. Splotches of tall grasses and weeds grew in every crevice where the pavement faltered. The houses in the neighborhood were run-down and ancient and all had chainlink fences surrounding their yards. This house, which caught the alchemist's eye, was the only one lacking these defenses, inviting an unfriendly encounter.

When midnight came, the alchemist came, as light as he could, under the darkness the sky had brought. Entering into the yard, he proceeded through a thick jungle of plants of all varieties, saturated with busy noisy insects that crawled upon every surface shut out of the old man's sanctuary. At the end of his yard was a large slab, covered in growth of moss and other green things. Stepping on the slab to prop himself up level to the roof, he laid his fingernails on the top. As quickly as he could, he tore and ripped the metal on the roof from their original locations, thundering with violent commotion throughout the entire region. Each tear emitted a shout from the innermost bellows of the metallic aspect, but by now the alchemist's ears were mute to the sound. With each scrap he procured his eyes gleamed with an eager zealotry. One hour later, his armpits filled with sheets of metal, he took off on the sidewalk, passing growths of grass in each crack. His body bobbed up and down as he ran, the metal clanging horribly with each step.

He considered how he was the lone man on earth who knew the secret, and kept it firmly placed in his pocket; none else were of the intricate sanctity that revealed itself only to him. Suddenly, his foot got caught in a dark something

and his body tumbled onto the dark pavement. As he tried to clamber back bipedal, he frantically lost sense of his foot and he had to drag it behind as he panically limped back into the dark. The old man was staring at him through his barred window as he retreated.

When he returned home, he returned to his pile of gold. He deposited his metal on the floor, and removed his crimson crumb from his pocket, and rubbing on each piece of metal, their surfaces began to glow and shine. A bright light shone through the solid and his eyes became blinded with the glint of purity. It filled his most primal spirit with the greatest satisfaction and ecstasy in his witness. When it had subsided every piece he performed his magic upon had transmuted into a lustrous gold. Every transformation thrilled him with selfish happiness and detachment.

As he stared into his fruit, the light reflected into its yellow surface distorted and surrounded him with a sense of danger. A thin black veil was placed over his eyes that emerged from the heavens and the ground. Yet he was

*The lights around him were magnified and transformed, and he saw his wife, long buried under six feet of dirt. She was as he remembered him while she was alive: tall, with pale white skin under long braids of golden hair.*

invited forth. The lights around him were magnified and transformed, and he saw his wife, long buried under six feet of dirt. She was as he remembered him while she was alive: tall, with pale white skin under long braids of golden hair. She said nothing and did nothing, and in this vision the alchemist presently became uncomfortable, which quickly gave way to terror. He held out his finger and attempted to touch the apparition, and as it collided with her image his hands began to shake. He noticed his feet were firmly planted into two holes in the floor molded precisely to the irregular proportions of his

*He considered how he was the lone man on earth who knew the secret, and kept it firmly placed in his pocket; none else were of the intricate sanctity that revealed itself only to him.*

feet and he began to sink below as he clawed on the shining gold. When he glanced back upwards his wife was gone and he was left with a vision burned into the folds of his brain: an awful image of a rotten corpse, short and shriveled, bones protruding out the thin leathery skin that was filled with holes and spots in strange and unnatural colors, and hair a

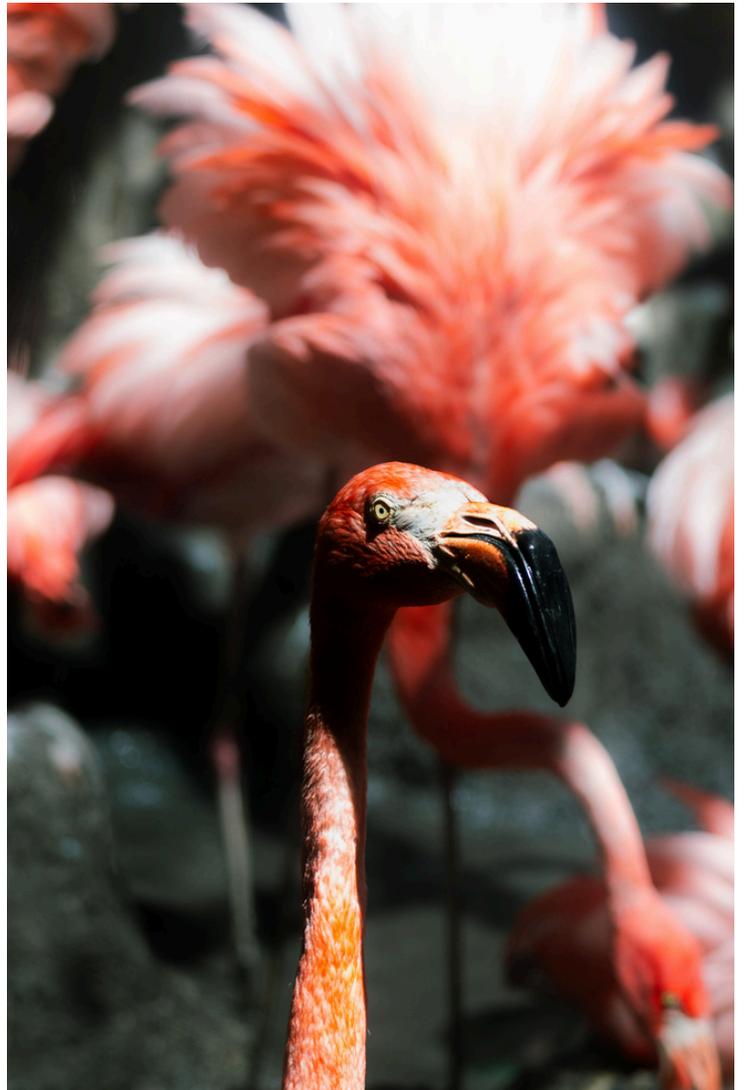
disheveled and nondescript gray and, at a frantic pace, he was descending upon the end of the road, and yet caught in the moment as his foot was caught on an invisible irregularity in the way. It was the dead of night and all of his vision was obscured in utter darkness. He pushed open a pair of great iron gates and sprinted down the small winding path. Here, he visited a tiny tombstone, half obscured in tendrils of greenery. The tombstone read: "REST IN PEACE." In the hole he dug, he removed from his pocket the crimson crumb and buried it under six feet of earth. In his sweat his shadow grew long, covering the vast acres as the sun rose over the horizon. He paused for a moment—gasping and setting his wrist atop the handle of his shovel and beholding the colors that expanded and blotted the sky with beautiful shades of red and purple and yellow, and the sun like its massive eye—



**“Perched”**

**| Drake Budzinski-Stauffer '27**

**“Pink Flamingo”  
| Drake Budzinski-Stauffer '27**



## “Oak”

| NOAH ANDRADE '26

I began life here as a small acorn, dropped by the  
mouth of a fox

On the trail side, I watched giants pass, and pass again  
They never seemed to care

I felt the rain come and go more often than the giants,  
remembering to make sure I was well-watered

I would always make sure to give it a gentle thanks and  
carry on my day

The rain seemed to care

I grew into a seedling on my second birthday and was  
visited by a lovely bird

He sang me a song and in return I gave him a berry  
The bird seemed to care

During my later youth I began to make friends with  
the surrounding tall oaks that were often much wiser  
than I

I would ask for sun and they would part their arms to  
let me grow

The oaks seemed to care

I was now one of the tallest oaks in our forest—and had  
seen countless wild things lay by my base for shelter

I would always keep them warm against the cold, I  
wanted them to know I cared

They thanked me and went on their way

Sometimes, now, my arms ache against the cold wind  
I have stood here for ages now, watching my friends fall

against the powerful forces of the earth

Our long conversations would be missed

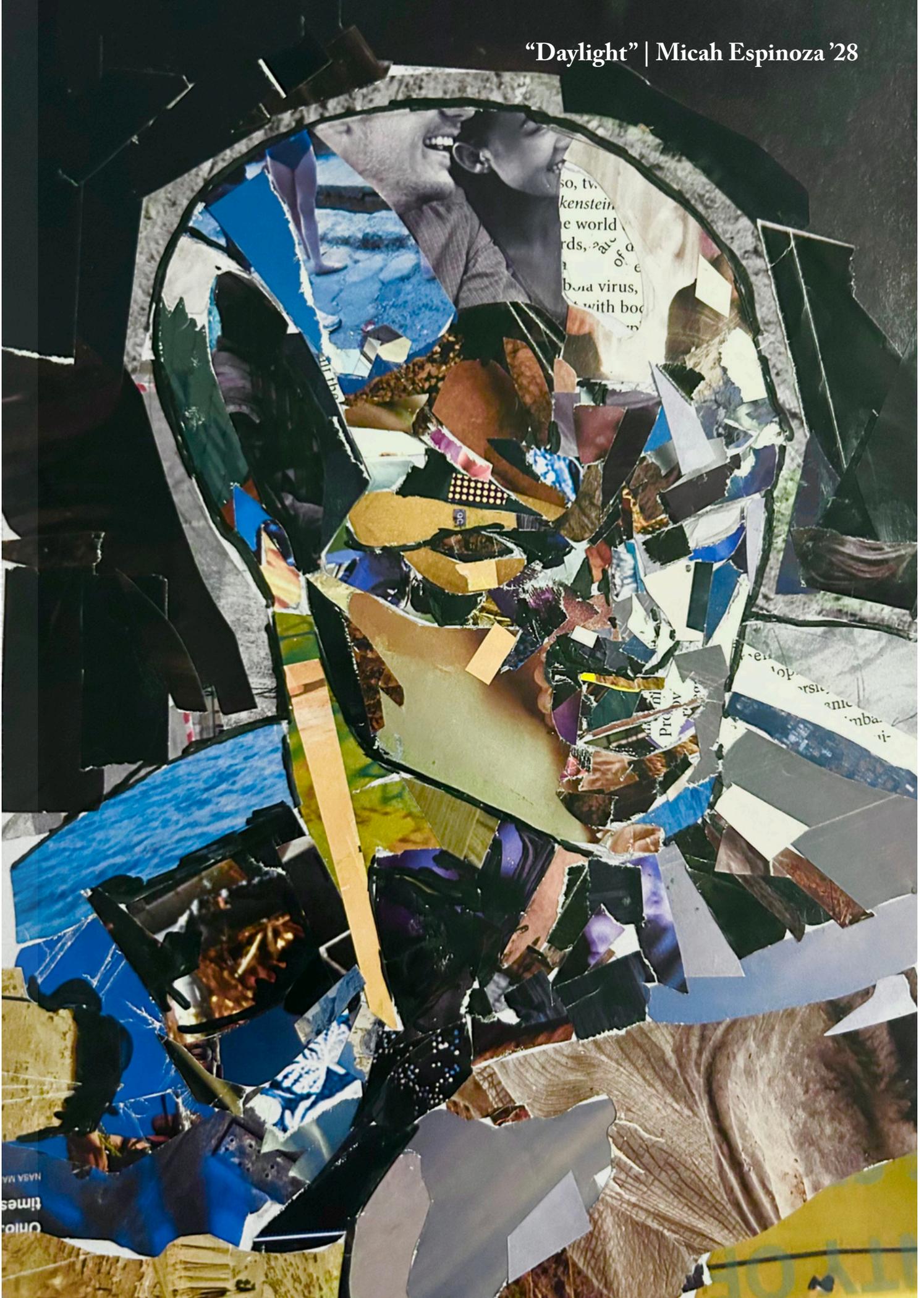
That night, I felt embers of fire float through the sky  
My face lit up in a blaze first. My legs were steady and  
strong, but the blistering heat stung through my dense  
core. My arms were frail and weak, giving way to the  
light that surrounded them.

The wild things of the forest still came to me for help,  
but I could only urge them to run

I lay on the ashen ground surrounded by the black of  
the forest I grew old in

My body had fallen; my soul seemed to rise, higher  
above the ground than I had ever stood before

I took one final breath and glazed at the wild things  
around me. Some gathered and lay beside my base for  
the last time. I knew they cared.



## “Five Butterflies”

| CONNIE ZHU, TEACHER SUBMISSION

Five caterpillars  
then five chrysalides  
then five butterflies  
over three short weeks  
in a habitat net on the shelf  
of a pre-kindergarten classroom

Say goodbye to the butterflies  
Says the teacher  
This is their last day here with us  
After school today I will bring them  
to my neighborhood park  
There are flowers there, red and pink  
and lots of tall trees  
The butterflies will be set free  
in their new home and  
live happily ever after

Yay! The children clap and cheer  
Pursing their lips and holding out  
their palms, they practice blowing  
farewell kisses to their butterflies  
each with a name they chose  
together

They don't know that butterflies  
only live for two weeks  
Even if they have learned that  
it may not make much difference  
Time is forever for five-year-olds  
There is a beginning—  
celebrated with happy birthdays—  
but there is no end.

They say bye to their teachers and  
friends  
when they are picked up from the  
classroom  
and to their butterflies  
The youngest was born, or emerged  
only yesterday

Bye Butter  
Bye Flyfly  
Bye Julio  
Bye Crunchy  
Bye Jay



“Beauty Unveiled” | Tyler Reynolds '27



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