

THE MIRROR

THE SONDER EDITION - ISSUE 27 - SPRING POETRY CONTEST 2025

Seen and Seeing or The
Window and the Mirror
by Lilly Olsen

SPRING EDITION
&
POETRY CONTEST

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS



Troubies,

Though any semblance of time may have melted through your fingers during Spring Break (like it did mine), I must remind you the 2024–2025 school year is rapidly approaching an end. For Sophia and I, this means our time at St. Francis is limited. Though I'm excited to start my college experience, I must say I'm quite nervous to say goodbye to our school. I am a creature of habit; I hate change. High school has been the most transformative experience of my life. Now, this sounds nice, but see the key word *transformative*: to transform or change. The reward of St. Francis has precisely come from the discomfort of change. I have grown a lot from my time here, but the biggest shift in my worldview happened during Junior Retreat. Learning about other people's struggles and personal lives opened the door for me to not view myself as so different from everyone else, but rather a small piece of a world populated with unique and strange people. The realization that other people have lives as rich and complex as ours is called *sonder* (from the French *sonder* – to plumb the depths), which happens to be the theme of this edition of *The Mirror*. As you browse, we ask you to consider what you think separates you from others, and what commonalities you share. We hope that through this issue, you will get a little bit closer to a shared humanity.

Literarily Yours,

Stella Davenport & Sophia Hendrix
Editors-in-Chief

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COCO BEAN

Ghost Henley



RECALLING THE BALLET

Hanna Wysoczynska

Last night I went to a ballet, and I have never yearned to feel so beautiful in my life.

As I watched from the audience I was not in my seat.

Instead, I was up on the stage, the blinding light on my face

the pointe shoes digging into my toes,

the fabric flowing around my legs.

I could feel the ache in my body from hours of rehearsals:

Arms sore, lungs burning,

my mind tired from counting the beats

to hit each cue with revolting perfection.

I felt the danseur's strong arms around my ribs

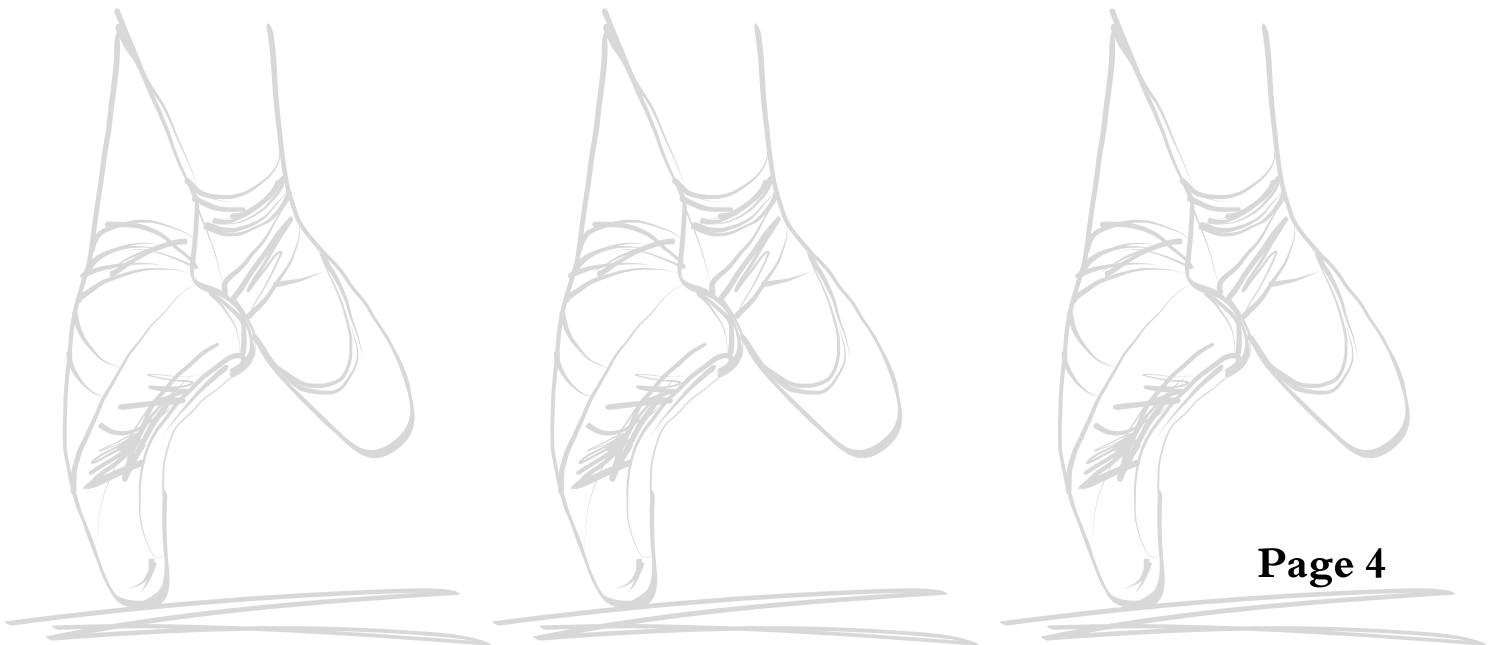
as he lifted me up effortlessly into the air,

exalting me to the heavens. As a feather I floated

down to the ground, silence as my feet touched the floor.

I could feel all this, yet I could not fully grasp how it must feel to be so beautiful.

I yearn to know how it is to feel so beautiful.



EIGHT

R.L.P.



DRIVING THROUGH SONDER

Ariella Alcantar

I remember the first time,
I became aware of the world.
I had just started practicing driving.
As I sat at the red light, I looked into the cars around me,
And it all clicked into place in my head.
I knew nothing of these strangers around me,
They knew nothing of me.
But our lives were in the hands of each other.
We had to trust each other,
to maintain the delicate balance,
that keeps us all alive.
It's scary.
Being capable of having that sort of impact on lives
every single day
without ever being aware of it.



PERSPECTIVE

Lilly Olsen



TO THE GIRL ACROSS THE ROOM

Anonymous

I stand alone in front of a wall, and I see a girl across the room, taking off her clothes. I approach her with judgment and skepticism, as I would any stranger, and I am at once filled with disgust at her contorted figure. My eyes find their way across her features, lingering on the lopsided breasts, patchy skin, and stretch marks like an earthquake's cracks across her inner thigh. My vision starts to blur as I finally notice her face, with bloodshot eyes and blotchy red cheeks, as if a painter misstepped and spilled rose ink across His portrait, ruining the work altogether. She was so ugly, for lack of better words, and I hoped to never see her again. I turned off the light, and the room went dark.

A week later I see her again, and she stares at my waist as she grabs her own, red fingernail marks across her stomach. She tells me she's been running all week and lost seven pounds, but I respond saying that there's no visible difference. My knees feel weak and she sinks to the floor, trying to explain something that I didn't catch because I couldn't stop thinking about how fat she looks sitting down. I turn off the light because I can't look at the pathetic spectacle anymore.

...I hate her so much. I hate her because all she wants is to tell her something nice but why should I lie? And to make matters worse, she cries every time she sees me now, like some sacred ritual, and my eyes will not stop burning and I don't know why. I can't stop thinking about her legs and her stomach and her lopsided breasts and the blotchy skin and the way she begs for a compliment but I know she's not enough. Not even close to it. I turn off the light and let her weep in silence, my breath catching in my throat.

...I wish I could utter the words and just tell her she's enough. I'm tired of punching her down and watching her cry, but when I try to speak, something chokes me down, I get nauseous, and I start reminding myself everything I hate about her. I wish one day I will be able to watch her smile and let her tell me about her day. And maybe it wasn't the painter that messed up, but it was really me that spilled the ink, and I hate myself for messing up God's canvas. Every freckle painted on with immense care, but I took a knife and slashed it through the artwork. I hope she'll forgive me, I'm so sorry.

I reach out to the girl across the room but end up hitting a metal wall with my hand. With blurry eyes, I stare into the mirror and see the girl across the room looking back, crying because she thinks she's not enough. As I look at my reflection, I see only the skin, the excess fat, the stretch marks. But now I try to focus on her beautiful eyes. Maybe my eyes are beautiful.

Today I will leave the light on, and I will look at my reflection, at the girl across the room, hoping one day I will learn to love her and look at her without disgust, and say I am enough for me.

THE DEAR LITTLE PRINCE

Angelyn Gonzales



I'M EIGHTEEN AND I'M GOING TO GET A DRAGONFLY TATTOO ON MY LEFT WRIST

Sophia Hendrix

Time is precious and time is limited. Today a close friend of mine turns twenty, but I met this girl when I was fourteen, experiencing grief and falling through change. Dragonflies are strong, sweet, and sensible. Charlie wrote a poem that changed my life when I was fifteen. I read it and it was sad but it was safe. Sophomore year was hard. Charlie taught me how to write through it. After going on Kairos that year, she came back and attached a silvered dragonfly charm to her cross. Dragonflies make themselves visible in the most critical moments. I turned sixteen; Charlie graduated. I kept writing. After going on Kairos the next year I came home and secured a dragonfly charm to my cross. The beginning of senior year was hard. I was seventeen, sick, and scared. Charlie came home for break that winter and asked if I had been writing. I said I hadn't. At the time I wanted to give up writing. I clipped my own wings. Dragonflies are spontaneous, sufficient, and synchronized. Today a close friend of mine turns twenty, but I'll look up to this girl until I die. I'm eighteen now; I remembered how to write. Time is so precious and time is so limited.

SCENE AT 2 15TH STREET NW, OCT 11 1987

Stella Davenport

The height of the Monument behind the trees is a needle into a vein of clouds. A couple from Hell's Kitchen brought a toy robot and a copy of *Jane Eyre* because Duane wanted his boyfriend to have his favorite things in Heaven, and he died on the drive to Virginia. The drugs did

not work, the hospital was full, but here's Keith and Freddy and hell, Liberace made it, at least their outlines, among the Zidovudine sky, angels above the crowd of mourning. She's never been to a funeral, but now's as good a time as any. The shrouds of the dead stretch hundreds

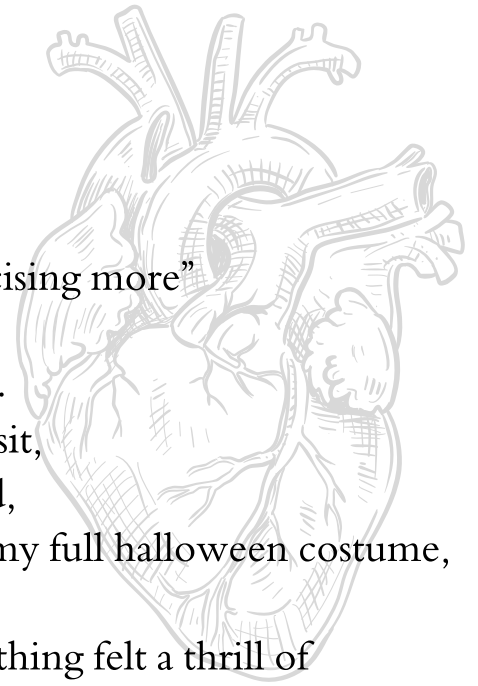
of miles. She wishes the black clothes that drape over the onlookers were not for cathedrals, but for the leather bars, where Duane and Adam had spent nights holding one another. They had stood steadfast among whispers of "Do you know anyone with *the disease*," because that's what they had called

it before the scientists knew, before the government cared, when they had loved one another more than they feared death. She sees a panel in the corner, and if she's not mistaken, it honors a man who had her last name. She has not seen a funeral, but knows what a tombstone is.



THIS HOME

Anonymous



In the way the doctor said, “You may want to consider exercising more”
I only heard, “You’re a fat -----”
Because that’s all I’ve been repeating to myself this past week.
And when she told me I was 3 pounds lighter than my last visit,
only due to not wearing clothes on the scale this time around,
I didn’t bother correcting her to say I was weighed today in my full halloween costume,
and in fact not naked in the middle of the pediatrics lobby.
It didn’t matter because in her words, my hatred and self-loathing felt a thrill of
validation:

“I told you so. I told you that you are fat”

I wish these words led to some greater action
than just my trembling hand holding my lunch above the trash.
I wish I didn’t listen to “you should eat your food”
and “don’t throw that away, there are people starving around the world.”
I know you didn’t say it, but I only heard:
“you ungrateful, selfish girl”

How dare you tell me to go exercise because I won’t fit into “yet another pair of pants”
then act surprised when I struggle to swallow the food on my plate.
And do you seriously have to ask why I prefer to wear long skirts
when I keep hearing that my one thigh is as thick as two of yours?
I never learned the math to measure my body,
but it seems I was born knowing that it is eight sizes too large.

This temple, this home, that I am forced to call my body,
that I must bless and nourish and torture and starve,
feels many rooms too big to clean and take care of alone.
I wanted a small apartment but I kept getting a haunted mansion
that insists on screeching, yelling, and getting bigger over time.
I want to be grateful for this shelter I have.
But still, I want to renovate it, I yearn for a change.
I want to move from this house to another,
but this home is all that I will ever have.

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POETRY CONTEST



A NOTE ABOUT THE POETRY CONTEST

Judging poetry never seems quite right to me, for every time a poet puts pen to paper, she is committing an act of bravery, writing something that is good and beautiful, relevant and meaningful.

The poetry contest this year was particularly hard. *The Mirror* received so many excellent poems that choosing winners was almost impossible. The variety of poems we received was impressive, a testament to the diverse talent and range of our Troubies. The poems varied from free verse to the structured villanelle all the way to the small but powerful haiku.

Honestly, we loved every single poem we read, and thank every poet for writing a poem and submitting it to us.

The most important thing for any writer to remember is to keep writing. To our seniors who will soon be heading off to new adventures, we wish you luck and say, “Keep writing.” To our freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, we say, “Keep writing. Send us your work next year!”

Mrs. Roberts

Faculty Moderator, Poetry Contest Coordinator

(With special thanks to our judges, Editor-In-Chief Sophia Hendrix and Faculty Judge Ms. Kirstien.)

THE WAY HANDS MOVE

Angelyn Gonzales

metacarpals that thread through our dearest's hair
mend, dig, sprinkle seeds
tendons that reach into the trees' deep roots
tend, splash, bloom, and feed
backbones that support the tall timbers' growth
bend, dry, cut the weeds
wash, rinse, and repeat

yet who would know that these very parts
would rip our dearest apart?

metacarpals that knot and split her soot-stained locks
mess, scrap, dump debris
tendons that spear through her rich golden heart
test, burn, tarnish the sea
backbones that ache and break intertwined arms
arrest, sever, disagree
wash, rinse and repeat

treat our dearest like a work of art
and those with beating hearts

SECOND PLACE

THIS LIFE I LIVE

Selah Burnley

I just wanna make it.
Close my eyes and envision a world
Where I see the end and take it,
Where I say I'm happy and don't fake it,
Where I reach the goal and make her proud.
When I see my mama smiling in the crowd,
Going back to a world I'm finna make better,
Where people ain't born to fail,
Where my people can live to see
There's a life outside the streets,
Disregard temporary luxuries—
That there's better things,
There's a life outside the streets,
Success is close, not outta reach.
Even tho that's the furthest from the truth,
Systems set up—we been screwed since youth.
And they don't let up—if we live too long, they'll shoot.
And yes, we get fed up, but who cares? Just a few.
So we give that up and sit back. My point of view
Is a little mixed up 'cus I grew up different—I got to choose
Where I'd whine up—college bound, not skipping school.
But everyday, I realize I'm one in a few.
So this chance I got, I won't blow it—I'll make it count.
And this stance I take—not finna change, I'll stand my ground.
'Cus the privilege I bare—it's unfair, don't make no sense.
'Cus the talent I have don't add
To sum the skills they possess.
Yeah, you can see it in the eyes of people who will never know,
The system so corrupt—that's all they ever show.
The impact they may have, and the brain that'll only grow,
Because the way to get ahead—that system will never show.
But until it's all fixed, Ima see the end and take it.
Ima look back even when I make it.
The future I have is makeshift—
God's greatest gift.
He gave me the ability to see a problem
And make shifts—
Result of the world's hatred.
To make sure this life I live—I don't even deserve.
But this life I live—that I use it to serve.

THIRD PLACE (TIE)

I SWEAR THAT MY BRAIN IS DISEASED

Rouelle Pereira

If I sit too still for too long, I swear I can feel my brain rotting.

Sticky, bubblegum pink piles of goo

Collected in the base of my skull;

Pungent pink chunks slowly turning slime green, purple, black,

Dying in the back of my mind.

I swear I can feel my mind slowly betraying itself

Succumbing to the illness within.

There used to be gentle hands.

Gathering up the gooey masses and molding them

Back into the oh-so-familiar shape of my enemy.

Spray painted pink over the multitude of infections

Hidden from the possibility of dying from its disease.

Now, I sit and allow my consciousness to betray me,

Turning sicker with mold every passing day.

There are no hands coming to piece me back together.

No one to spray paint me with the illusion of health.

As my flesh becomes nothing, I lay there, helpless

There is nothing to do but remember.

THIRD PLACE (TIE)

SAY YES

Stella Davenport

If your answer had been yes I would have
lit myself on fire to keep you warm
(among other ways), I would have
placed dandelions in your hair
and laughed happily when they stayed,
beside you laid, and never known the
thousand and first reason you didn't choose me.

If your answer had been yes I would have
run across the lawn into your lips,
burned with every second of it:
the consummation of my year of worship
at the altar of you.

If you had said yes, I would have
borrowed your shoes,
because I know we're the same size, I would have
lied, and said *how funny, they fit just right.*

I still look back across crowded rooms,
looking for the dandelions,
watching your lips and waiting for the
flex of them into the simple shape of Yes.

HONORABLE MENTION

ALL GOOD THINGS MUST GO

Livi Eichman

I know that you will disappear
And it is for the best that you do
But I want you to stay right here

You crept into my days; i'd always feared
Of losing time, to love and sit beside you
I know that you will disappear

I've told the elms; they've said goodbye my dear
Woman, but where's the place that you'll move on to?
They want you to stay right here

The winding path you're on has become clear
And differs from the one I'll hold myself to
I want to ask you not to disappear

The tree we sat beneath shall bend its ear
My heart a wild branch that grows askew
And-

-could you please just stay right here?

I know you have to leave, time's drawing near
All good things must go, to start anew
I know that you will disappear
We'll revel in this love while it's still here

HONORABLE MENTION

SPRING HAS SPRUNG

Layla Alexander

Spring has sprung—the flowers have bloomed,
Pollen litters the air where my eyes consume.
The soiled air that I breathe
Irritates me until I am seething.

Spring has sprung—the insects wake and revive,
They swarm and bite me while I try to survive.
The mosquitoes suck and suck me dry
Will I get Malaria and die?

Spring has sprung—the Earth heats up,
I sweat so much I could fill a cup.
I am dying and I have the stains to show
Winter felt so long ago.

Spring has sprung—I miss the cold,
When the trees were bare and they looked old.
When the wind howled in the night
And the temperature was always just right.

HONORABLE MENTION

HARD WORK

Lucia Hash



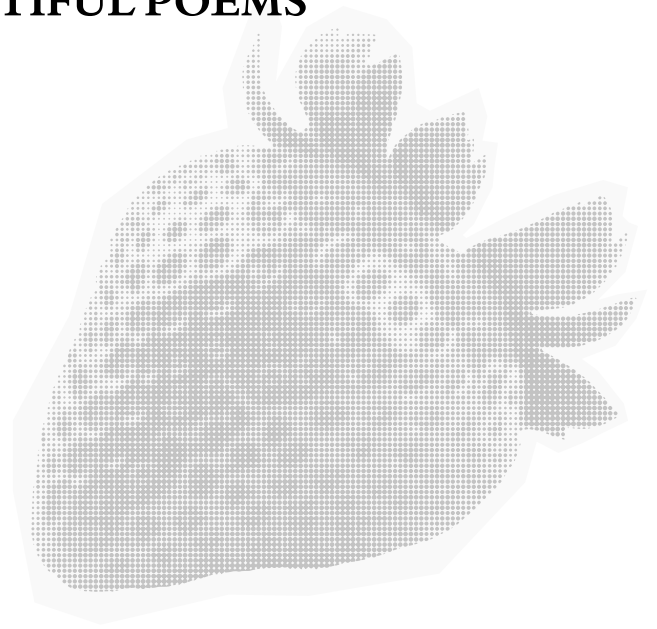
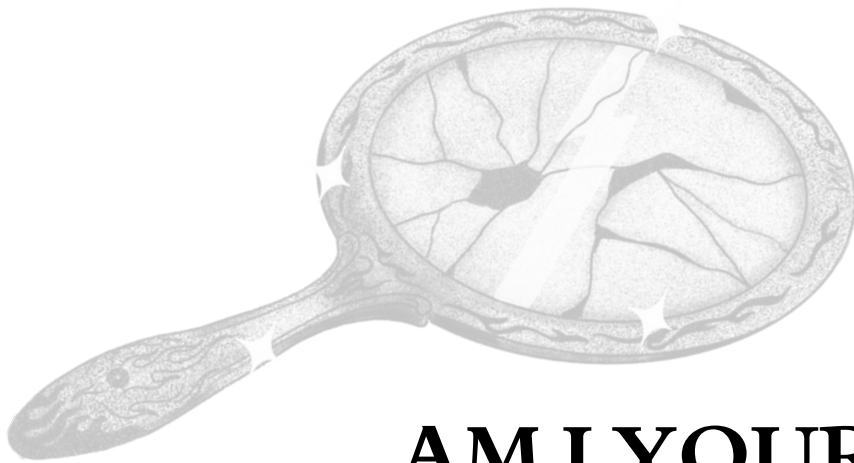
THE COOK BOOK

Chloe Santiago

Sugar and flour, eggs and water mix.
Chili and onions, meals start to bake.
Lettuce and olives, tossed in for a fix,
Chicken and cream, dishes we create

To stir, to bake, to clean, to cook it right
We beat, we crack, we roll, we boil
With meat and dressings, sauces bright
Topped with peppers, spices and oil

Everyone creates their own recipe
No method is truly correct
No matter how sweet or soft or spicy
Everyone here is a chef



SONDER

Kathryn McWilliams

Mirror, mirror on the wall
You've told me who I am.
But those I see, what at all?
I realize now I'm just like them.
Who knows what pain
They've yet to gain;
I wonder how they've lived.
They are a book
If I could look,
I'd read the tales they give.

AM I YOUR SON?

Fernanda Lopez

And if I shed my blood for you, Lord, which is a sin against You, will my sacrifice still be innocent and filled with the purity You once molded me with, so that I may be worthy enough to be welcomed into Your kingdom, of which I am still in doubt i have ever been worthy?

Untold Stories

Colleen Elizabeth Medina

From the individuals on the congested streets to the people back at home,
faces blend, yet I still take the time to comprehend.
One may be so peculiar, life acting as a tapestry,
Woven with concealed dreams, both wild and free.

Strangers walk by with ceaseless flow,
But will I ever truly, fully know?
The weight they carry, the affection they seek,
All these quiet battles remain hidden and unseen.

Pondering around, do they ever pause,
Just to make assumptions about me and determine my flaws.
Do they know the pain behind my smile,
What about the happiness I hide even if it was just for a while?

With every glimpse, a quiet plea,
Their character inside, extensive like the sea.
We all proceed with life, as time goes by,
Yet our stories remain unknown we can't deny.

LIFE DOTH FLEET AWAY

Gabrielle Mahlmann

Life is but a blur, passing by gently.
Thou feel'st as though life doth art about thee;
Yet reality falls differently.
Sometimes thou dost think that thou shalt foresee,
Thou truly drowns in negativity.
Art thou the only one that feels forlorn?
Nay, thou must behold perceptivity;
It was through every mortal who was born
To go depart and pursue their own fate.
Thou harken to God and dost the just deed,
Even when obstacles appear as gates.
They doth obstruct thy way and may mislead.
Thou perceives what lieth beyond person,
Thou will seest that thy life shall not worsen.



Crashing Waves

Kaitlyn Habets

It was dark, cloudy, gloomy
And yet I found fun
That cannot be forgotten,
By me and no one
In the Outer Banks,
With the waves crashing high.
My cousins, Aunt, Uncle, Gramie, Ope
Mother, Father, Great Aunt, Great
Uncle
It might be my mind,
And the memories it holds.
But I swear the waves were towering,
Creating faces like gold
We grabbed the boogie-boards,
And swam out from shore
It was cold, but not gloomy
As we begged for more
The waves towering high,
Twenty feet above
The crashing and slamming
Of body, water, sand
And yet we rode till our eyes burned
And we could not take any more.



NEIGHBORS

Catherine Gustafson

They might throw a smile at you while walking by
You could recognize their house in the blink of an eye
Yet how much do you really know?
How much of their personality do they really show?
Do you know their favorite movie or book?
If they know how to write, clean, and cook?
Do you know what goes on in their head?
If they are on top of the world, or just hanging on by a thread?
It's interesting to think that while you only live two houses down
You have no clue what their world spins around
If they are having the best day, or the worst?
If they feel blessed or cursed
You might not be able to tell if they have a tear in their eye
So next time make sure you throw them a smile as you walk by

ALL THE THINGS I WISH I'D SAID

Gabriella McHugh

To myself, I'll say I'm sorry.

I'm sorry I tormented you and hid you from the world for all these years.

I never meant to break you or tear you apart, I was only protecting us.

But, these are the things I wish I said:

I can't be everything for them

I can't continue to break you for them so that I'll be noticed.

They didn't ask me to, but my doubts and insecurities from when you were young made me this way.

I'm done apologizing for being the way I am.

I'd rather be without them and live the life I want as my true self than mold you to be acceptable in their eyes.

They're everything to me but at the end of the day, which one of them would choose us in a room full of people?

The answer is none of them.

Because none of them know me.

None of them know about the struggles we went through.

About how hard I pushed myself.

How I'll work myself to the ground until I physically can't take it anymore.

How you're my worst enemy because I can't let go of the mistakes you made when we were young.

They don't know but it isn't their fault.

I just can't trust.

That's my problem.

It's *been* my problem.

I will be there for them at any time of the day but I can't allow them to get close to me.

Not until they show me they're worth trusting.

I can't afford the looks and sympathy I'll receive once they find out.

If it meant anything they would've noticed my absence.

They would've vouched for me and made sure I was thought of when I wasn't there.

But we both know they won't, no matter how much we wanted it.

So I'll keep it all and bury it with me.

And all the things I'd wished I said will go six feet under, and remain unsaid.

Not for them.

For us.

For *me*.

Tapestry

Seyvene Kahwaji

An intricate tapestry woven with many strings.
It depicts many things.

Each thread no more important than the rest.
Each thread demonstrating colors of their best.
Like millions of threads in a tapestry.
The people of the world form a community.

Every life equally important with main events.
We each know what the other meant.

Nobody is the center of the spotlight.
Our lives reach the same importance of height.
Each thread in a tapestry holds one note: sonder.
It makes us wonder.

We may be the main characters of our own lives, but not others.
All our lives have equal importance like sisters and brothers.

Strings in this tapestry hold vivid colors in each thread that shines bright.
Deep complexity shining through with all its might.
The strings of our lives paint the tapestry of history.
But to strangers each other's life is a mystery.

An intricate tapestry woven with many strings.
It depicts an abundance of things.



Connection Through the Stars

Hanna Wysoczynska

I yearn for your touch
but you are 5,570 miles too far:
a seventeen hour flight
and three train rides away.

As we speak, you undress my mind,
leave my thoughts bare, and my shame dropped to the floor.
Were I a millimeter from you, I would want to be closer; nothing is ever enough.

Can our love conquer the barrier rulers and maps build?
Did my silent "I love you"s sail though the Atlantic and reach your dreams?
Did the blown kiss fly through the sky to say goodnight?
Did you feel my love then?

How can you be worlds apart,
sending texts across the globe
and be so sure you love someone?

The time zones merging as I am his day,
and he is my night;
neither existing without the other;
like the tide and the moon,
the planets and the sun.

Our fates so entwined that we
become one as we meet in the constellations
that he sees as I count the clouds in the sky.
Dancing through the stars, we fly on Pegasus as we string our bows
and challenge Orion to a fight.
New message on my lockscreen; a supernova of emotions, hoping it was him.

I stare at my screen as it says "online" beneath his name,
knowing we look at the same words shared: reading and re-reading,
searching for greater meaning between the letters we typed.
We hold each other's breaths hoping to see: "typing..."
those dot.dot.dots. conducting the rhythm of my heart.

We speak, not saying a word, we dance, not linking hands,
we cry each other's tears, we share each other's dreams.
Our connection through the stars destroys all barriers
and transports us to an endless universe of possibilities
where you + I could equal