



*"We don't read and write poetry because it's cute.  
We read and write poetry because we are members of  
the human race." - John Keating, Dead Poets Society*

# PULP

POETRY FESTIVAL AND LITERARY  
MAGAZINE

**Featuring OUTSTANDING  
pieces by  
CHS students!**



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## **The Painter**

By Jules Comprelli

I wish I had never met you,  
yet somehow you're still one of the few  
bright things that ever came to me,  
a truth I never meant to see.

My body felt a canvas torn,  
painted by the storms you'd sworn  
you'd never leave for me to bear,  
brushstrokes heavy, cold, unfair.  
A gallery of days gone wrong,  
moments etched too deep, too long.

Yet somewhere in the shattered art,  
a gentler color touched my heart,=  
a softer hue began to rise,  
like dawn against uncertain skies,  
slipping through each fragile seam,  
waking me from someone else's dream.

Maybe I can paint anew,  
in tones untouched, untouched by you,  
colors bright and unashamed,  
colors only I have claimed.  
And maybe then I'll come to see  
the quiet masterpiece of me,  
still in progress, still unfolding,  
still a work worth softly holding.

## Charzar

By Aubrey McCarthy

**Google definition:** *a fictional, dragon-like, fire-breathing Fire/Flying-type Pokémon.* To Google, it's just the wrong way to spell Charizard, a fire Pokémon.

**1st grade me definition:** *unfamiliarity, joy, nervousness.* To 1st grade me, it was uncharted territory that would later on be very familiar.

**2nd grade me definition:** *joy, excitement, humor.* To 2nd grade me, it was still uncharted territory, but also provided some comfort.

**3rd grade me definition:** *anger, sadness, joy.* To 3rd grade me, it was all the anger and sadness a nine-year-old could feel – so not very much.

**4th grade me definition:** *joy, excitement, happiness.* To 4th grade me, it was a place I could go whenever I needed to laugh.

**5th grade me definition:** *silliness, sister for life, comfort.* To 5th grade me, it was my comfort zone, the one place that felt comfortable.

**6th grade me definition:** *comfort, longing, joy.* To 6th grade me, it was the one thing I could rely on, no matter what was going on.

**7th grade me definition:** *joy, comfort, silliness.* To 7th grade me, it was the one word that could get me to smile instantly; it was home.

**8th grade me definition:** *distrust, anger, sadness, pain.* To 8th-grade me, it was the end of the world.

**Current definition:** *distrust, longing, disbelief.* To current me, it's a word I don't use anymore; it's just what brought me joy in the past. It's also a word that has caused plenty of pain. One simple word: Charzar. You wouldn't think a word like that would have any true meaning to someone. But it did, it does, for me. Sometimes, though, I wish Charzar was just the wrong way to spell a Pokémon, nothing more.

Charzar isn't a Pokemon. Charzar isn't even just a word.  
She was my best friend.

# The Side Character of My Own Story

By Anonymous

I run a hand through my hair as I look in my locker mirror. My reflection stares back... the same as it is every other day. I have perfected my makeup so people can believe that I look “flawless” when getting out of bed. At least, that’s the hope.

But behind the concealer and tinted gloss...a single pestering thought won’t leave... The one that lived rent-free since I was 11.

I am not the main character of any story.

I walk in the shadows of my friends. I’m the punchline of a joke... but never the one telling it. Always the helper because maybe that’s how you get your own story.

I crave the applause – people thanking me, noticing me. But that’s my flaw... The people who get the attention never seem to want it. They do it for their passion. My passion *is* the attention.

I’m good at many things. Too many. I can play the piano, but not well enough to call myself a pianist. I can draw, but not like an artist. I consider myself someone who can cook, but people only eat my food when I ask them to. I’m good - not great. Not good enough.

I’ve surrounded myself with the most talented people. My closest friends have medals and trophies in their respective talents. They have achieved their goals, or they have the best grades, or they have this natural charisma that everyone is attracted to. My parents live through a rags-to-riches story, making me spoiled and sometimes ungrateful as their kid. People talk about earning their way in life and making something of themselves, but I seem to glide through life in the worst way possible.

I scroll behind my phone, burning with the type of jealousy that only comes when you know you can’t be like them. They all started at such a young age. It feels pointless to start now.

I can create a story that makes me the most important person, but it's an exaggeration. I've pulled at a million strands - each one a moment that could be forgotten if it weren't for me spinning them into a story that gives me 5 seconds of attention. I've been given straw to make gold, but all I can deliver is straw covered in gold. I am a storyteller in a way... or a liar. An interesting moment in *my* life is actually a collage of very separate and normal moments coming together to form something that will bring a quick laugh to someone else.

I brush through my hair, reapply my gloss take a final look at myself. I see the reflection of someone else in my mirror. I snap out of my haze as my friend comes up to me.

I flash her a smile.

“ How was your weekend?” she says.

“ Oh, it was amazing! But you'll never believe what happened.”

香港: the serpent at orient's pearl.

Lara Paglinawan

the city first appears as cartilage,  
deep ruby scales tinted by children writhing on top of the ground,  
like twisted marionettes convulsing under a dimmed proscenium.  
its vertebrae glittering with patrol lights;  
flicker,  
flicker,  
phosphorescent pupils that blink  
whenever a chant rises above the pavement.

avenues hinge like a colossal spine,  
curving around the onyx, serpentine chest of the plaza square.  
flesh is liquified into carmine pools, saturated and cold;  
severed limbs undergo metamorphosis into  
municipal banners.  
where crowds once braided their voices, there is only  
a polished palimpsest of stone,  
and written on,  
and scoured,  
and rewritten,  
until the script of struggle thins  
to rumor beneath the municipal gloss.

an unseen serpent moves in policy spirals.  
the sinew loosten, but the tattered memorandum tightens;  
each clause loops back, double-knotted,  
a jurisprudence of suffocation.  
you do not hear it coil. you notice only  
how suddenly your sentences lack air,  
how even a whisper arrives pre-redacted.

vermiculated shield over bleeding knives, arm-of-the-state.  
tighter. tighter. stone articulates around my shoulder,  
its jasper, ragged skin is a sleepless architecture.  
i wrench against the grip, desiring to slaughter that veneer  
so that my pen may finally touch vellum.  
ink trembles at the lip of its reservoir

anxious to become testimony, to ossify into bone-script  
yet the summons arrives: silence, countersigned as order.

my fingertips press into the grand army, unpenetrated latticework,  
a regiment of anonymous ribs beneath the plaza.  
though my hands cry auburn rivers across the marble,  
seeping into each hairline fissure,  
i can, for an instant, feel the city's pulse misstep.  
coils snapping my neck; joints crying out requiems  
their staccato a rumbling of internal bells.  
screams taste metallic on my tongue,  
a bittersweet frequency lodging in the soft palate.

i had wished my throat a knife,  
to sever this hollowbreath noose blooming at my larynx;  
but the only blades that remain  
are the sharp edges of a shattered mausoleum.  
the serpent loops itself along its fractured crown,  
spine over stone, glyph over sarcophagus,  
talons—no, scales—inscribing censored vowels  
into nameless marble. each gouge a redacted consonant,  
each crack a footnote erased before it's written.

archives rise behind it like paper necropolises,  
shelves stacked with meticulously embalmed facts.  
inside, redactions blossom like mold  
black rectangles spreading quiet contagion  
across dates, coordinates, names,  
until history resembles a charred field of omissions.  
outside, the atmosphere tastes of recidivist smoke:  
burned documents, burned lungs,  
indistinguishable on the tongue.

my epitaph is spit onto weeping willows,  
too dead to die again.  
they'll flake my scalp to skin, burn the rest of my decomposing parchment,  
revel in my curling ash thickened by the charcoal air  
ash refusing to remain decorous, to lie inert.  
under the flagstones, something unsettled stirs:  
bone-dust rearranging in clandestine patterns,

a backbone aligning into a new script  
no censor yet knows how to decipher.

when thunder moves across the bruised rooftops,  
the plaza's buried ribs answer in percussion;  
thunder begets echo, echo begets thunder—an anadiplosis of unrest.  
perhaps remembrance survives here not in marble,  
nor in sanctioned textbooks,  
but in the covert choreography of matter:  
stone misremembering its orders,  
flags forgetting which blood they borrowed,  
and one smuggled syllable escaping  
the constriction of a guarded throat

to lodge, indestructible,  
in the city's inner ear,  
so that we remember the square,  
and the square remembers us.

# Strange Dream

By Emma Thomas

The dream starts in my home, but not my current one, in my old home, but I have an actual room that looks like mine now, but emptier. So, my mom is in the kitchen, on the phone with my aunts, I'm in my room, sorting through a pile of clothes to put in my empty closet. I then put one of my pairs of pants, my favorite pair of pants (that I do not own in real life), on a hanger. Then the word **RUN** crosses my vision, and instead of panicking, I stand there in confusion and my confusion quickly changes to perplexity when that said pair of pants jumps off the hanger and starts running around like someone was wearing them. It wasn't attacking or anything, but it was just running around. It then ran out of my room, past the kitchen, where my mom was cooking, and ran into the living room and started running in circles. I tried screaming to get my mom's attention because I didn't want to let it out of my sight. But I had the dream scream, where I couldn't really scream, it was muffled or muted, but I kept screaming until I finally broke through the barrier and she heard, asking "What?" As in, what's going on. The pants then left the living room and started running to and in the kitchen as we both stared at it running back and forth.

## The Story

By Aishani Ghosh

The story will end in heartbreak  
Just so everyone knows  
It began when I wanted to indulge in you  
Until the moment you'd go  
Was I so wrong to fall for you?  
Because I'd never known love the way I knew you  
My heart fluttered and my worries flew  
Every time that it was just us two  
You made me feel stable  
And I hurt less thinking about the past  
You didn't define me with labels  
Which I missed when it ended too fast  
I never let someone have my heart  
Till you waltzed into my life  
One look, and I knew I'd be broken apart  
When it ended, and I'd be left with strife  
I was just a stop along your path  
Nothing too special  
You didn't need it to last  
Because I meant so little

But *you*  
Oh god  
You shined with the light of every star to exist  
Your warmth wrapped around me like gentle ocean mist  
Your laugh made songbirds jealous  
And your smile, I'll always cherish  
Gold dusted your hair  
The finest jade in your eyes  
Devastating beauty like yours was my inevitable demise  
I wish you weren't so kind, or so caring, or so sweet  
Perhaps then, my infatuation would've managed to fleet  
But you were, I admit my defeat  
You were smart and amazing and everything I could need

But what would you have ever seen that'd make you stay with me?

You were there for a chapter

Then were whisked away for the rest of your story

While I stood in ruins

A grave I dug for myself

In my trembling hands, crumpled papers, ink barely dried

Faint black smears in the spots where I cried

Because it was a fantasy, something I could never have or find

But I held the story I wrote, one where I'd get to call you mine

*An Apology to the Color Pink*

*By Amelia Sasaki*

When I was younger

I hated the color pink

I despised anything that had to do with it

I hated the little pink hearts they put up

for Valentine's Day

I would laugh at the bows the other girls

put in their hair

Their hair

always down and moving with the wind

while mine was up in a ponytail

I would always avoid the pink crayon

I only ever used blues or greens

Pink was for princesses

Blue was for superheroes

So I put on my blue sketchers every morning

and stood next to my friend

who wore a pink jacket

I internally judged her

How could she wear a color like that?

After all

I hated the color pink

At recess

the girls would play on the playground  
making crowns from flowers  
I hated flowers too  
I would be playing in the mud  
until dirt was caked  
under my nails  
and my knees were scraped and bruised  
from the rocks and twigs  
and it did hurt  
and I did yearn  
to play on the playground  
with the other girls  
but I didn't  
because I hated the color pink  
I wore baseball caps  
not tiaras  
I quit ballet  
not soccer  
I had sword fights  
not tea parties  
and I hated the color pink  
until I realized  
it was never about the color.

## Palm Trees

By Saanvi Yadav

Palm Trees Tall, lean, magnificent. They dance in the wind and sway in the breeze. These beauties can be found on beaches or boardwalks, near the roads or the houses – the famous palm tree. There used to be a small one next to my home in North Carolina – something that was common in Carolina Beach. It could barely reach the roof of our house – stretching its branches, trying to be taller than its 12-foot self. For the longest time, I thought it was just another tree. Then one day, I looked up. Its huge fan-like branches bloomed through the cerulean sky. There were 2 tiny coconuts at the tippy top. Later, I learned that it wasn't just another ordinary palm tree. It was a Coconut Palm – one of the few species of palm trees that harbored coconuts. A tree like this prefers the more humid air further south. I guess that just made my tree even more special. On days that I was bored, I would climb it. The first time I tried, I couldn't have been more than seven years old. Barely making it 3 feet in the air before I felt dizzy, I hugged the rough trunk of the tree with all my might and squeezed my eyes shut so tightly, I saw stars. I glanced up above and saw the seagulls cawing to each other. I would be up there someday, just not today. Each day after, I started inching higher and higher up. At last, I reached the first of the many branches. It could have only been about 8 feet in the air, but I thought I was at the top of the world. I had never been up this high before. Triumph and awe coursed through my blood as I took in the once towering boulders littering the beach – they looked like pebbles now. I gaped at the ocean made out of midnight. I was up here because of the palm tree, my special tree. It was dark outside, about 7 at night. The tide was strong. Immense waves crashed down on the sand in a frothy white blur. Right after one fell, another would take its place. A distant wind blew slightly, causing the tree to shake – no, dance. It danced in the gale, swaying from side to side with me clinging to its trunk. My legs began to slip on the bark, but I clutched the tree even tighter, my arms hoisting me a bit higher. I would not fall, not tonight. Tonight I will dance with my palm tree. And if I did fall, I would get back up and keep climbing until I reached the point of euphoria again.

## *Nostalgic*

By Aishani Ghosh

Nostalgic's fingers traced over the typewriter's keys, brushing away the fine layer of dust. The wind chimes sang as a gust floated through the window. The waning sunlight illuminated bits of her bookshelf, the nursery rhymes, poetry, and novels preserved for as long as she could remember. Rows of CDs and DVDs lined the cabinet beneath her cable TV, a record player nestled in the shade. Wisps of caramel hair fell in her face as she leaned down to water her potted roses, the flowers just a few shades lighter than her knitted burgundy sweater. Nostalgic had spent many years in this lovely country house, with rolling knolls greeting her every time she stepped outside. On the way to work at the preschool, she would roll down the windows of the rusted sepia Mustang, the breeze playing with her hair and making her lips curl up.

Her eyes fell on the fairy lights stringing up her favorite photographs. One where her head was thrown back as she laughed with Appreciative and Longing; another with her writing in lazy, loopy letters in the sand. Nostalgic had few friends—not many would understand her. Most called her childish, a silly dreamer. But was it wrong to crave red wine as much as fruit punch? Or that even in a blazer, her favorite meal was dessert? She smiled when she glanced at her cherished camera, beautiful and glimmering on the mahogany table. She sank into a cushioned chair, sliding a sheet of paper into the typewriter. A melody of clicking keys graced the room as she began the story.

Nostalgic didn't know what her hands were typing at first, not until she had finished a hefty piece of it. She hadn't meant to think about her childhood, but let the thoughts pour out nonetheless, like snowflakes in a blizzard. A slow start, but *inevitable*. Inevitable.

She had fallen in love with the past at a very young age. When she went to bed with tearstained cheeks or an uneasy heart, she pretended it was the day before, when she was still smiling and at peace. When harsh criticisms felt like bruises and insults were chains, Nostalgic thought about when she was alone, and free. So much had changed in her lifetime; so much had stayed as it was. She still got freshly baked chocolate chip cookies every Saturday. Still bought herself one lily with three baby

breaths on her birthday. At some point, though, new things appeared in her life, too. Nowadays, she came home to a hyper little labrador and the occasional sound of rain. Nowadays, she didn't need to hide in her room in fear of the chaos that could ensue when the screaming began. It was true; she sought to have her old life back quite often, because the warmth and youth and innocence were all too tempting. Yet even Nostalgic was glad to be moving forward.

Because nostalgia was best kept in heart and not in mind. That, above everything else, was the lesson she had painstakingly learned. And with every memory she would bring herself to relive, a new one would be made.

*I suppose, Nostalgic wrote, her keystrokes beginning to slow, eyes still a little starry and lost like they were when she was fifteen. Life goes on.*

We would like to thank everybody  
who submitted to the magazine,  
without all of the amazing poems  
and stories it wouldn't exist.