

Tower

A magazine for the literary and visual arts



Spring 2017 Edition

Tower Staff

Editors

Caroline Masessa
Alison Kaiser

Treasurer

Mikelle Kearnes
Arielle Robinson

Staff

Mackenzie Finocchiaro
Mara Brooks
Liam Humel
Eve Hodgdon

To the lovely readers of *Tower*,

As so eloquently said by William Faulkner, a celebrated poet, playwright, screenwriter and storyteller, “Read, read, read. Read everything - trash, classics, good and bad, and see how they do it. Just like a carpenter who works as an apprentice and studies the master. Read! You’ll absorb it. Then write. If it’s good, you’ll find out. If it’s not, throw it out of the window.”

The importance of reading, especially in today’s society, cannot be stressed enough. There is so much to learn if only the time is taken to understand each other’s thoughts. Educating one’s mind as to retain life lessons is difficult, but finding pathways through personally interesting mediums is the best way to start. See what kind of writing and photography inspires people today and create not only for yourself, but your audience.

This year brought many new advances to our group of talented writers. This was our second year holding a short story and poetry contest, and we were not disappointed with the works we received. We also held our first open mic night for the Pinkerton Tower community in November 2016, and due to the successful nature of its’ fundraising we plan on hosting them for many years to come.

A thank you is in order for everyone who submitted this year - the writers, artists, photographers, poets and storytellers. Without you, we wouldn’t have much of a magazine to show. Thank you to the tower staff that worked tirelessly week after week to edit the magazine into its final form, especially our advisor Mrs. Kneisley for cleaning it up afterwards. And lastly, a big thank you to the readers, the ones who inspire their fellow classmates every day in countless ways. You are the reason why we write. After all, what is a performer without their audience?

This summer, as some of us students are heading off to college or taking a much-needed break between work or school, remember to take a minute to relax. Collect your ideas, brainstorm stories. Take pictures of the important moments in life. Express yourself through art. And when the school year rolls around once more, consider bringing some of that inspiration to Tower to showcase. After all, we are a community dedicated to keeping the arts alive.

Sincerely,

Caroline Masessa
Tower Senior Editor

Yellow
Gabby Peterson

Two colors in one
 It's the color of alertness
 Of vigilance
 The color of hazard signs
 The color of slow down
 lights
 The color of don't go here
 The color of avoidance
 The color of WARNING:
 THIS COLOR ISN'T THE
 ONLY
 THING THAT WILL
 SHOCK YOU
 Yellow is the color of
 Slippery when wet
 Caution,
 Hot to the touch
 Left lane ending
 Radiation
 Dead end
 The color of
 HEY WRONG WAY
 TURN AROUND FOOL
 But yellow is also the color
 of
 A field of sunflowers

As far as the eye can see
 The color of the sun in
 A children's drawing
 Hung proudly on the
 fridge
 You're best pal
 As a child
 Who floated around the
 tub
 The quacks heard only
 in your head
 The center of an egg
 Sunny side up
 Sizzling on a lazy Sun-
 day morning
 That one umbrella
 amidst the sea of Bring-
 ing you a chill
 A relief down your spine
 Yellow is wary
 Yellow is serene
 Yellow is faint
 Yellow is striking
 I am yellow
 You are yellow
 Everyone is yellow

A Mother's Murderer
Alexandria Baker

Every time I close my eyes I see my mother's dead body. She is lying on the floor, numb, as if her soul has been sucked from her, which, isn't far from the truth. The purple handprints around her neck sear into my skull, burning into my brain so that I will never forget them, and along with them is the image of a sole drop of blood, lying on her lip. She's gone. Her pristine hair lies in a clump on the side of her head, and her elegant button down lies askew. As horrified as I am, I can not forget it. I open my eyes, trying to clear away the pain, but every time I blink a new tear forms, carving cassemes along my cheek.

The officer in front of me is talking, I know this because his lips move up and down. But I don't hear him, don't know what he's saying. All I can hear are the sirens in the background, telling the world of the terrible calamity which has struck my family, tearing it apart.

Closing my eyes, I trying to escape the harsh lights and cruelty of the world, but instead of liberation from reality I am once again trapped in a prison where my only view is the one I least want to see.

From behind me, two arms wrap themselves around me, and instinctively I pull back, screaming what I can only imagine is bloody murder. My mother's murder has come for me too. The arms get tighter as I resist, until finally I realize that they belong to my brother Jessie. Sobbing and shaking, I collapse into his arms.

I only remember my mother, lying on the floor, cold and pale. I had rushed to her when I saw her. I grasped her, shook her. I needed to wake her up. But it was pointless. The bruises around her throat and the coldness of her skin confirmed what I was afraid of. Still, I shook her harder, begging her to come back.

"Mom? Mom wake up. Mom, please." I stopped shaking her and picked up her hand. "I need you mommy, please, don't leave me." Tears fell down my cheeks. "Mom. Mom?" I collapsed to her side, crying.

It was my brother who had found me there, holding her in my arms. He took her from me, begged and plead for her to wake up just as I had. He cried, and the tears fell down his cheeks in monsoons.

"No," he muttered. "I can't believe it. This can't have happened." An agonized wail escaped his lips.

In his arms now, I look up at him, only to see him talking to the officer. I can't understand what he's saying. All I can hear is the pounding of my heart in my head, and the thought that repeats over and over again in my mind: Who did this?

The next morning when I wake up, I'm drenched from head to toe. I try to calm my breathing, practicing the technique that my mother taught me years ago. Take deep breaths, I can hear her telling me. In-hale. One. Two. Three. Exhale. The events of last night are fresh in my mind, I my eyes are wide and pupils dilated just thinking about it.

It's so clear in my head: the flashing lights, the caution tape, and the officers, so many officers. They swarmed our apartment, searching

every nook and cranny for anything they could label as evidence.

Thinking about this, I don't want to get up. There's not a single muscle in my body that wants to move. It feels like I'm strapped down to my bed, restrained by my own thoughts. I'm oblivious to time as I lay here, and my brain feels fogged again. My throat hurts, but considering how much I cried, it doesn't surprise me. The desperate sobs which had consumed me last night have faded to noiseless tears falling down my face onto my pillow. Every tear brings another, each possessing more sorrow than the last. The only thing that makes me wake up today is my mother. She's dead, but I hear her voice again, telling me to get up and stop wasting my life; that I can only overcome the challenges laid out before me.

Dragging my sorry self out from under the covers with a lack of disposition, I realize with a sigh that my disposition to depression may affect me now, but as there is nothing I can do about it, I stumble into the bathroom. I open the medicine cabinet, and grab numerous bottles of pills. I swallow them one by one, and after returning the bottles to their home, I close the cabinet. It is then that I happen to catch a glimpse of myself in the mirror, momentarily startled by the stranger in the room. I takes me a moment to realize that the stranger is just me, hardly recognizable but still undoubtedly me. My dark, luscious hair is uncombed, and my wrinkled clothes hang awkwardly around me. I try to turn away, but before I can I see the bags under my eyes, bags which look like they've gone to hell and back.

Afraid of my own reflection, I stumble away from the mirror and into the hall. Slowly I make my way down the hall, but I begin to hear noises coming from the kitchen. My heart races as I round the corner, expecting the worse. Perhaps my mother's murderer is back, making sure my brother and I get taken care of too. They're here to finish up the business that they started, whatever that is, and somehow it involves me. Scared, I round the corner into the kitchen quietly, prepared to fight, but instead of a murderer I find my brother, trying to make breakfast. A laugh escapes my lips, watching him try to cook. I didn't even think he knew how to turn on the stove. Yet he looks oddly nice to be cooking. His hair is combed back, and he's wearing a polo, which is now spotted with flour. Aside from the ingredients on his clothes, he looks pulled together, while I just look like a mess.

"Mary," he says, seeing me, "you're up."

I nod. "Breakfast?"

"Yeah, I thought it might be what we needed after—"

"Yep."

He sighs, "Look Mary, I'm trying here." He looks at me, waiting for an answer. "I don't know what to do either."

I turn away. "What are you making?"

"Pancakes, I know you like them."

"They're my favorite."

"Then why don't you go clean up and in ten minutes we can eat together?" he asks.

I nod, turn around, and leave the kitchen. I find my way back to the bathroom, where I take some time to shower and pull myself together, and it gives me time to collect my thoughts.

I try to think about motives, about who could have killed my mother, about why they killed her. The police hadn't found any sign of break in, but that didn't mean that someone else with a key couldn't have gotten in, right? But who else had a key, the landlord? But why would he have killed my mother?

The search for suspects is hopeless, so instead my mind wanders into thoughts about my mother. I remember her as she was, with the constant smile on her face that would only falter when she was setback. She was never setback in her career though, so the only thing that could make her stop smiling was Jessie and I, with bad grades or poor attitudes. Yet this rarely happened, because she always found ways for us to succeed.

"The food's ready," Jessie hollers at me from the kitchen. I turn off the water which I had a moment ago cherished, and get ready for breakfast.

We eat at the breakfast bar in the kitchen, because going to the dining room would mean having to see the caution tape blocking of my mom's room, and neither of us are ready to see that.

The pancakes are bitter. They have an acidic taste that made its way all the way from my throat to my stomach, threatening to alter my soul. After a few bites, I've had enough, so I push away my plate while Jessie devours his.

"We should talk about what happened last night," Jessie says, in breaks between shoving the food into his mouth.

"I love you," I blurt out with a feeling of importance. "I needed to tell you that."

"What?"

“It’s just, with Mom gone it makes me realize how important everyone is to me. I need you.”

He looks at me with sorrow in eyes, and an expression on his face that I do not recognize. “I love you too,” he says solemnly. I’m in my room later when there’s a knock at the door. Jessie opens the door, and I hear his rough voice welcoming and officer into our home.

“What can I do for you officer,” he asks.

“I need to speak to your sister,” the officer tells him. At “I need to speak to your sister,” the officer tells him. At this, I listen more intently.

“Why,” Jessie asks.

“I need her to give me a statement, as she was disoriented last night. We were hoping to record her statement, if that is alright with you, as her temporary guardian, and have it set up at the station.”

“I understand,” Jessie tells him. “I’ll go get her.”

When we get to the station, the officer escorts me to a dark room. He motions for me to sit in a cold, metal chair, stationed in front of a bland table. There’s a metal bar attached to the side of the table, probably to put handcuffs criminals. Seeing it, sweat starts to pool on my brow, and my heart starts to beat faster. Behind me, I hear the door close shut behind the officer who had brought me in, and with nothing else to do, I do as he had wanted, and sit.

A bright light glares at me. It’s so bright I can barely see past it. Blinking, I try to clear the blindness from my eyes, but the light is too bright.

“Mary,” a voice says, “I’m going to ask some questions, and I need you to answer them truthfully.” I nod. “They might be hard to answer, but they’re essential to finding your mother’s murderer.” I nod again. With this memory, it’s as if something has taken hold of me, and it forces me out of the bathroom and to go down the hall. It forces me through the kitchen, and into the family room, where Jessie is sitting in the chair, where my mother normally sits. He glances up on me.

“Jessie,” I say. He eyes the bottle in my hands, “What is this?”

“It’s just my medicine?”

“But what do you use it for?”

“To sleep,” he tells me, but I know there’s more than that.

“You used it on me,” I tell him.

“Don’t be sil...” he sees the look on my face. “Mary?”

“Tell me the truth Jessie.”

“Okay, I did, but-”

“You killed her.” I had guessed the truth myself, but now the truth sinks in and I fall to the coach in shock.

“Mary.”

“Why Jessie? Why did you kill our mother?!”

“I-I don’t know! I-I was drunk last night. I don’t remember why. I remember coming home, and I was drunk. I was out with my friends,

and I got drunk. I came home, and I thought I could hide it, but Mom saw through it. She knew what I was out doing, Mary. And I-I couldn’t take her knowing.”

“What were you doing Jessie,” I ask, but he doesn’t reply.

“I remember mashing up some of my pills, and then I snuck them into your potatoes when you weren’t looking, so that you would be asleep and not know what happened. Then I didn’t know what was happening until it was too late. She was dead.” “It’s my fault!” Jessie yells, punching the wall. “I killed her!” Tears stream down his face. “Don’t you see? I killed her.” His shrieks turn into cries as he falls back to the couch. “I killed her.”

I look at him him with horror.

“Please, Mary, you have to understand.”

Tears are streaming down my face, and I shake my head.

“Please,” he said. “Mary!”

But I’m already up and walking away.

When I get into the kitchen, there’s a knock at the door. I turn around to look at Jessie, whose eyes are wide with panic. And that’s when I realize there are flashing lights

Nature

Heather Younie

The green grass
with little specks of yellow
The tall trees
that tower over me like skyscrapers
The wild creatures
that live beyond the trees
All so fascinating and beautiful
Nothing could be prettier,
until the sun sets
and you see the twinkling stars in the dark
sky.

In a Distant Moment

A.T.

Eight-thirty at night
Eyes droopy and mind blank from days past and to come
But I stay calm in his therapeutic presence
Hearing strum of his guitar strings
Focusing on each note struck
Until I drift off into an in between state
Of being asleep and awake
His heart playing for me
Through this instrument he shows
How much he'll always care for me
Once the music stops I feel his eyes
Watching me sleep
Watching over me like a guardian angel
Looking at me as if I'm the only one
Sinking deeper into dreaming
But still his arms wrap around me
Bodies couldn't be closer
There's no place we'd rather be
Than this
Twelve-thirty at night
Body jumps awake and my heart sinks as low as it could go
His long breaths could be heard no longer
The guitar notes no longer ring
I'm in my own bed miles away
He is not here to protect me from the night
However I reach over to the side he used to lay
Feeling rejuvenated by his spiritual presence
And drift back to sleep, imagining his arms around me once more
Imagining the sweet hum of his heart
Knowing we don't have to be physically with each other
To know our hearts are still bound

Catching Up with Darkness

A.T.

I ran
Faster than can be imagined
But not fast enough
I ran for years
The darkness chasing me
For years I attempted to escape the darkness
Until I could no longer
My feet ached and my lungs cried
From the years of running
I finally stopped
I stopped my feet from moving
It was an odd feeling
Because they had been moving for so long
I finally let the darkness consume me
It swirled around me
Making my head spin
There was no way out
The darkness had caught up with me
And no exit was in sight
That's when everything changed
All was lost and hopeless
I accepted the darkness
And I started to absorb it
The darkness was swallowed up by my skin and bones
The darkness became a part of me
And that was when the light
Finally shone through
It wasn't the darkness that caught up with me
It was I who caught up with the darkness
And the light of my soul
Devoured it

Aromantic

Julia Denaro

Little girl, full of love, on the play ground
Full of love for her family and friends
Those were the times
When kissing was gross, and cooties ran amuck
When simple love was enough
But then times go by
Kids mature
Love is now important
But not the simple kind
Romance, the need to be with someone
Someone that isn't your family, and whom isn't just friends
Beauty standards, kissing, and much more
Complex, life-controlling
Yet is wanted by all
Except by the girl
More time, more complex
Yet still simplistic girl
"Is it wrong?"
"Should I be feelings those feelings?"
"If so, when? How?"
These thoughts dance through her head
As she looks over her peers that hold hands with each other
Look longing into each other's eyes
Feel complete because of romance
But no concrete answers
Only more questions
No more simplicity, innocence
Complex, dizzying, confusing is life now
Now, almost adults, after complex times are the norm
She stands there, supporting couples
Happy for them
Yet she's still simple
No romance for her
No blushes, butterfly-filled stomachs,
longing for someone else's embrace
or lips
Just family and friends
And full of love

My biggest nightmare

Caeley Curtin

Everyday is lived
in constant worry
That the darkness of night will take over me
No control of when it's coming
Never prepared
I lay asleep
Thinking of all the ways it will catch me
but every morning
I wake up
Just fine
Why?
Why can't this worry
That hangs over my head every day
Like a stormy rain cloud
and stays forever
Be killed?

Always full of fear
When I'm walking
Eating
or sleeping
Because there's a chance of
Tripping
Choking
or suffocating
No one can help me
I'm helpless
The second someone tries
I go back to my normal ways
Why do things that insecure us
Become normalities
With no way to get rid of them

Every night
I go to sleep
But tonight was different
I finally feel peace
But something was different
I am no longer afraid of the darkness getting it
Now I am gone

Become normalities
With no way to get rid of them

Every night
I go to sleep
But tonight was different
I finally feel peace
But something was different
I am no longer afraid of the darkness getting it

Gaea

Simple yet complex beauty
Crystal clear sapphire waters softly churn and babble to form sweet melody
Emerald greens where creatures of all shapes and sizes collect and call home-sweet-home
Sands of time sprinkle and glitter with soft rose quartz and golds
Silver mountains frosted with pearly tops
Rich onyx soil, the sign of Gaea's health
Pure beauty
Pure life
She opens her deep, shimmering orbs
Senses the growth and movement upon her surface
Feeling the pulse of magma below her soft Earth
Lips cut from rock and land crinkling as she smiles
Staring at the endless sky above her
V formations fly above her, soaring to infinite heights
Pillows playing charades as they float here and away
Glamorous fire of passion illuminating her, telling everything to awaken
Silvery glow of the Moon softly glowing, letting everything upon her slumber
Collection of diamonds sparkling about the ebony night sky
Constellations forming a smile, similar to her own
And she falls in love
When the Sun falls away from her view and splashes the sky with a burst of a fiery rainbow
Then turning darker, yet darker, night returning
That handsome face returns, making her smile and enjoy the time of snores and sleep
And, at the same time, distasting the time of being awake
So she sleeps, and dreams of that face during the time of light
Imagining that handsome face of stars



Books
Mikelle Kearnes

Regret

Heather Younie

Everyone has regrets
Everyone wants to go back in time and fix their past
But that can't happen
Everyone has regrets
Told a lie,
Hurt someone,
Did something bad,
Everyone has regrets
But sometime soon those regrets will turn to relief.

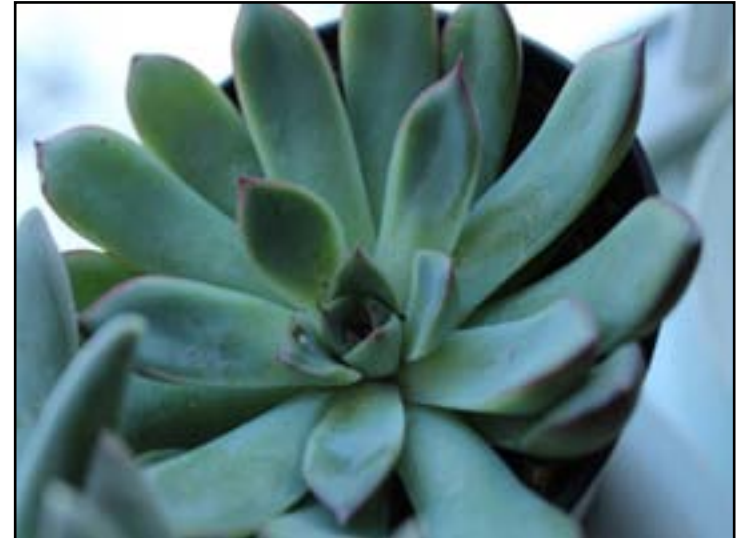
Relief

Heather Younie

The feeling of relief is amazing
Getting something off your chest
Getting something done
Not worrying about anything
Amazing.

Succulent

Caroline Masessa



You make me melt

Julia Mastorakos

you make me melt
not in the eye's-meeting
lip-biting
i love you kind of way
but in the burning-down
changing
dissolving-into-nothing kind of way
when you look into my eyes
ever so innocently
just like you always do
my body turns red
veins turn into fire
and I can feel myself disappearing
and I fade away into melted black ash
that's left on the ground to be stepped on
you don't even see that it's your fault
you don't even see me anymore
and all my edges you burnt away
and all the other parts of me
you ruined
wrecked
now nothing's left

Chapel

Caroline Masessa



How

Mikelle Kearnes

My friend asked me how to write a poem
I told her I don't know
I could give her step by step instruction
Like the recipe to her favorite brownies
Add the flour and the sugar,
Mix the dry together before adding eggs,
But I would rather have her figure it out
Travel through the experience
I want her to visit the sites on the way to poetry
Visit the Colosseum as she attempts a replica
Eat poutine in Quebec like natives do
Take a wrong turn and end up on an island
Stranded from other civilization
I want her to experience trial by fire
To survive on the island alone
Relying on herself to figure out the puzzle
To be set free
Writing based on her emotions
Not what I could tell her to feel
I want her to find the hatchet I couldn't find
Buried in the sand
A mile from where I found another wrecked boat
I want her to develop her style
Meet other influencers
But not copy ideas like a survival guide
Copying gives the result
But it's the journey that makes the best poets
Learning from various experiences
Meeting penguins in the antarctic,
Or climbing Mt. Everest with a Tibetan guide,
Lends stories to the way poetry grows
I want her to become her own writer
Since I don't know how to write her poems.

We are Cinderella
Alexandria Baker

We live Cinderella Dreams
Not because we have worked our way from maid to queen
But because we were born a queen
Already advantaged with an entire kingdom at our backs

We don't see people out there with nothing
Whose bare feet are calloused from a life trodden upon rough terrain
Whose bellies grumble, yet out of necessity they do not hear
There are children who are lying in bed, foreheads hot with the fiery strokes of death

And we squat upon our luxurious sofas
Stuffing our faces with chips
Unable to hear the crunch
Since the new flat screen's volume is vibrating walls

We complain about the arduous tasks
Which leave our backs hurting after eight hours of work
But still we work
Still have an income
We aren't forced to scavenge the street for scraps of moldy bread
Are not waiting for rags to magically become a gown
We are not forced to labor all day with no hope for compensation
yet still don't realized how lucky we are

There are people who would feed a village
With the luxurious feast we eat each day
Who would never dream of taking a shower
The water wasted would be too much

But We are Cinderella
Living out Her dream
With our Glass Slippers and our Fancy Cars
But we forget where we came from,
The Pumpkin that used to be our car

Six Months
A.j.k

It is not that you weren't enough;
you were simply too enough that he could not handle you.
It was the way you were, that changed him.
It was the way a simple hello felt years overdue,
The way your eyes set on him and something inside you broke
It was the way he tasted like stale mint gum and anxiety,
How he curled his lips into a smile when you kissed and you grabbed
His hands to stop them from shaking.
It was the way his eyes were the type of brown you could get lost in
For hours, how they reflected the warmth of a fireplace in a power outage,
The way he had the power to make a dull thing intoxicating
It was the way his arms felt when you collapsed inside them
He was your home, but you were a gypsy
The weight of your love too heavy on his back.
It was the doubt he had in his mind,
The way he was not ready to love you.
It was the way his parents were divorced,
And he feared you'd end up just like them.
It was not his fault your love was too much for him to carry
It was the way your parents fought every night,
Yet when your mother recited the way they met
You swore she looked twenty years old again
It was the way you loved like you had been loved your whole life;
Intensely, beautifully, powerfully.
It was the way you always wrote for the future,
Notebooks full of breakup letters because you had a habit
Of expecting the worst.
It was the way you were raised to take care of yourself;
When your mother worked the late shift and you were hiding scars
Under the sleeves of your favorite jacket
It was the way you disappeared when he got close,
as if you were afraid he wasn't real, as if he'd fade
Into a memory like everyone else
It was the way he woke up and didn't love you anymore,
How when you rested your head on his chest you could feel his heart breaking
It was the way you had to feel
Temporary love,
Before you could love yourself
It is the way he was, that changed you for the better.

Modern Day Romance*Julia Denaro*

TYLER GRANT let out a soft sigh as he found an empty seat on the bus, plopping his backpack down beside him as he took out his phone and stuffed the little earbuds into his ear and pressed the play button. As he sunk into the seat and became comfortable, the other kids started to stare at him. This didn't confuse Tyler, but more confirmed his suspicions of what would happen to him his first day of his new school. He could tell that the other kids had countless questions running through their minds. Some of the girls looked at him, and then to each other as they giggled, then looked back at him with smiles plastered on their lips. He just smiled back and stared out the window, taking in the sights of the New England fall foliage and the people on the sidewalks wearing thick coats, hats, mittens, and anything else to keep the chill out.

After what seemed like eternity, the bus finally screeched to a halt in front of the high school building. Tyler got his stuff together and left promptly with the other kids, and stopped right in front of the stair case down to the front doors. 'NOTREKNIP HIGH' hung above the doors; the bold letters had paint peeling off from age and weather. He then looked forward and saw the other kids, his new classmates, coming in and out of the doors. Most of them looked tired from having to get up in the early morning yet again, but a good number of them seemed happy to be at school, which made Tyler feel relieved. He, at least, hoped that he would enjoy this school as much as they did. DING DONG!

His thoughts were halted as he ran down the stairs, the late bell having rung its terrific little daily jingle. The rows of lockers along the walls whisked by as he raced down the halls to get to his first period class, a frown protruding from his face as he remembered it was his least favorite subject. A few seconds later, he was met with a beige room with fraction and decimal posters tacked to the walls. Most of the kids were already seated; their books and pens out on their written-on and beaten desks. Tyler went over to one of the seats in the front and set his stuff down, then started to take his notebook and pencil out, readying himself for the next hour of math-related torture.

Another girl sat down beside him in the desk to his right. She had mousy brown hair that was pulled up into a ponytail, which showed off her large-framed glasses that were pushed up her nose and in front of soft emerald eyes. With her looks mixed with the designs of her backpack and binder covers, Tyler could tell that she was a geeky girl that most people would find cute. She had put her backpack down, then went over to the teacher and started a discussion about radians as she pointed to her homework from the night before. The teacher nodded to some things she said, and then sees Tyler in the corner of his eye, which makes him stop the girl from what she was saying. "Welcome to Notreknip High! Tyler, right?" asked the teacher, as he walked up to Tyler's desk.

"Yes, sir," he replied, smiling confidently. "So, what are we learning about today?" "Well, Mr. Grant, we're learning about radians and angles in circles. Did your school get to this point yet?"

"No, sir, we didn't."

"That's fine! I'll give you a packet of worksheets and I will help you with them. Sophia can help you too. Right Sophi'?" the teacher asked the girl from before. She gave a thumbs-up towards the teacher as she placed a book on her desk.

"She's the best in the class, so she can help sort-of tutor you while I'm with the rest of the class," the teacher assured Tyler, as he headed back to his desk, picked up one of the many packets of work cluttered on the desk-top, and went back over and handed it to Tyler.

"Start with the first page, then try and get to the fifth by the end of the week, okay?"

"Yes, sir. Thank you," Tyler replied as he took the papers and looked over the confusing problems and the dreaded pi symbol.

As the final bell rang, the teacher talked to the rest of the class and went over the answers to the homework. At that moment, Sophia pushed her glasses up the bridge of her nose and took a pencil and a red-ink pen as she scooted her desk over, right next to Tyler's.

"Hey. So, you're the new kid, huh?" she asked in a hushed-whisper as she flipped back to the first page of her packet.

"Yep, that's me. And you're the math genius, right?" he asked in a joking manor.

"Hehe, yeah, I can tell that Mr. Yacono bragged about me to you," she then cleared her throat. "So, let's get started, shall we?"

For the rest of class, Sophia taught Tyler the basics of what he needed to know, and by the time the bell rang once more, Tyler had made his first new friend.

Time passed, and a month passed since Tyler first came to Notreknip High. In that time, he had tried out for the football team and had gotten in. At this point, everyone knew his name and what he looked like. He became one of the infamous "popular kids" that walked, sat, and talked together all day every day. All this made Tyler happy, as he was accepted by this school with open arms, and he was becoming a successful student. The only thing that kept him back was his math grades, still his least-favorite subject. Though, he hated it a lot less now, because of Sophia Gray.

Ever since that first day, he had been tutored by Sophia both during class, when Mr. Yacono wasn't able to give Tyler his full attention, and after school at the math center. Because of this amount of time spent together, they ended up becoming good friends. One day, the two teens ended up being the last two kids in the math center, as they both waited to be picked up by their parents.

"So," Sophia said, starting off a new conversation topic after finishing one about school, "you've become pretty popular, huh? All the girls I know talk about you all of the time, especially how you and Melanie are now dating."

"What? No, we aren't dating. Where'd you get that idea?" Tyler asked, confused.

“Oh, then it must have been a rumor. Sorry about that,” she apologized.
 “Naw, it’s fine. I’ve noticed that a lot of people are spreading rumors about me. But, to be honest, I’ve never dated anyone before. Kinda weird, right?” he admitted, feeling a little embarrassed about not having dated anyone.
 “No, no, it’s not weird. I mean, I’ve never dated anyone either. Even though I’ve wanted to date at least once before I go off to college after we graduate next year.”
 “I feel ‘ya. I’ve always wanted to know what dating was like.”
 They then become silent.

“Hey, do you think, maybe you and I could, you know...?” Sophia offered, twirling her index fingers in nervousness.
 Tyler smiles at this, thinking it be a good idea to date Sophia and see how dating was; especially since she was a nice girl and one of his good friends.

“Sure, I’d love to. I’d be honored to have you as my first ever girlfriend,” he said. At this moment, their first romantic relationship had begun.
 A few weeks had passed by since the creation of Tyler and Sophia’s relationship. The last bell rang, and everyone ran out of their classes to either board their busses, climb into their cars, or walk to their destination.
 Tyler decided that today would be the perfect day to take Sophia out on their first date. Arriving at Sophia’s last class, they walked hand-in-hand down the halls and outside the school building and headed towards a nearby restaurant for a nice after-school meal. The air was warm and carried the scents of the trees as they rustled in the soft breeze. As the two love birds walked into the restaurant, the smells of the food wafted into their noses, making them form quiet ‘ahhs’. They quickly get to their table and look through the menus. As Sophia was still deciding, Tyler looked around, and his gaze was caught by one of the waiters. Tyler’s cheeks formed a blush as he studies the waiter’s features. Everything about this boy was perfect; his handsomeness comparing to an angel’s. Those soft blue eyes, his black curly locks, his smooth and perfect complexion: it made Tyler’s heart beat stronger than ever. His stomach was now a place for butterflies to take wing; their fluttering being felt, and making Tyler feel warm inside. He sighed happily as he stared at the boy, but was then startled by their waitress that came over to take his and Sophia’s orders.

“Oh, uh, I’ll get the... American Burger, please,” he requests, and then ends up staring at the waiter again. “So...” Sophia starts off, trying to make conversation, “how’s the football coming along?”

“Oh, it’s all good. We’ve got a good shot against the upcoming team next week,” he replies, as he tries to concentrate on Sophia, for it was their date after all. “How’s the tutoring going?”

“It’s going well. Many of the kids are starting to understand their math, and have stopped coming to tutor sessions because of that. Heh, it’s weird to not be coming in as often to help out with tutoring, but I’m glad that it’s because they don’t need me anymore,” Sophia explains, a small smile forming on her face, as if she’s thinking ‘A job well done!’. As they talked about school and what had happened that day, Tyler found himself staring at the waiter again from the corner of his eye. ‘What the heck is happening?’ he thought to himself, ‘Why am I feeling like this, towards a boy no less? Am I just feeling sick?’

After some quick thought, he ended up convincing himself that he was just probably falling ill with something, and that with some rest and some medicine, he’d be fine in time for the game that weekend.

But the more he secretly stared at that boy; he couldn’t help but think it was something else.

“Hey, are you even listening to me?” Sophia asked, annoyance in her voice from him not paying attention to her the whole time they were there at the restaurant.

“What? Oh, sorry, sorry! I’ve just been... distracted a little, that’s all,” he replied.

“Why do you keep staring at the waiter over there?” she asked, noticing that that’s where his gaze has been during the “date”.

“He... just seems familiar. I was trying to remember where I’ve seen him before. Again, I’m sorry about that,” Tyler lied.

“Ah, okay. Well, if I’m boring you, just tell me, okay? We don’t have to talk about school, you know. What do you want to talk about, Tyler?”

Just then, their waitress comes over again and serves them their food.

Tyler noticed that she was about their age, and many of his friends would find her ‘hot’. But, as he glanced at her features, he didn’t feel anything towards her. No attraction what-so-ever.

As the waitress leaves to go to another table, Tyler takes a bite of his meal.

“Mmm! All I want to talk about,” he chews his bite and then swallows it, “is how good this burger is!”

They laughed at that, and soon after they finished their food and small conversations, the whole time Tyler trying his hardest to not stare at the boy and keep his focus on Sophia. He was happy that he did focus on her, because they ended up talking about cool and pretty funny topics that never came up when they were at school. He also saw a new, more entertaining side of Sophia. One where every story she told was interesting and she was much more confident.

“...and then, when she checked her phone again, she found out she had sent it to her mom, not her boyfriend!” she exclaimed, bursting into giggles as she finished her story. Tyler laughed along with her, just like he did with her last hilarious story. Just as she was about to strike up another story, her phone vibrated. As she checked to see who had texted her, a slight frown formed onto her face.

“Hey, that was my mom. She’s outside, so I gotta go. Thank you for the date! I really enjoyed it!” Sophia said as she waved goodbye and walked out of the restaurant. As Tyler waved goodbye, he felt that something was...off. The way that he felt, it was as if he was waving to a good friend, not a girlfriend. But he was dating her. He should have felt more than that towards her by now.

As he left the tip on the table and finished his last sip of his drink, he looked back at the waiter, who was taking a break, since there was barely anyone there. The waiter looks back at him, having noticed that Tyler was staring at him for a while now, and winked back at Tyler. Those weird feelings came back to Tyler, and made him even more confused. But in that instant, he knew. He wasn’t sick. To himself, away from the waiter’s view, he whispered,
 “Is this...love?”

A couple of weeks went by, and the two were still dating. Sophia, though, felt lost. As they dated, she had waited for her romantic feelings to come forth, and to allow her to finally experience what everyone else had talked about and cared so much for. Yet, she still hadn’t felt anything. She and Tyler had held hands, cuddled, even kissed, and yet she still felt nothing romantic towards him.

Today, though, she was smiling the whole day, because she had texted and made plans to have a sleep over with her best friend in the whole world, Natasha. This would give Sophia a break from her dating struggles with Tyler, and at this point she needed a break.

When she got off the bus after school, she raced to her house, and as expected, Natasha was already at her house. When they met each other's eyes, they instantly hugged. "Oh my gosh, long time no see, Sophi!" Natasha greeted, a confident smile on her face as always.

"I know! It has been WAY too long. Oh, it's so good to see you!" they then hugged again, and went inside to put their school stuff away and to hang out. They went up to Sophia's room and started to talk about school and college, which led to Natasha telling Sophia about transferring to Notreknip. This, in turn, made both girls squeal with excitement about being able to see each other every day instead of once every month. Then, after all that, they changed the subject.

"So, how is your BF? What's he like? Give me details, girl!" Natasha demanded, wanting to know about this boy that Sophia texted her about sometimes.

"He's fine. He's nice, and funny, and everyone thinks he's extremely good looking. But... I don't know..." Sophia replied.

"Tell me, tell me, tell me!" Natasha continued to demand.

"Well, it's just; I haven't... felt anything towards him. He's a great boy, don't get me wrong. It's just that I don't know if I really... love him, you know?" Sophia admitted feeling like a weight had been lifted off her shoulders. Maybe her lack of feelings towards him wasn't because she wasn't ready. Maybe it was because she didn't love him after all.

"Woah, that's deep," Natasha said as she sat up, surprised. "But, I get what you mean. Some people you just don't fall in love with. I know there are some people that I feel about that way. You'll find someone, though!"

"Eh, I don't know, probably not anytime soon. I just... haven't ever felt that way about anyone. Like, no one catches my eye in that way, or makes me feel the kinds of feelings everyone talks about." Sophia said, feeling a bit down by wondering if she'd ever really find love.

As Natasha sat beside her and wrapped her arms around Sophia, though, Sophia instantly felt all warm and tingly inside. Her heart raced like she had run a marathon. As she hugged Natasha back, these feelings intensified. These feelings confused Sophia. 'Why am I feeling these feelings... with my best friend?' she thought to herself. 'And how am I even feeling these feelings with a girl? I don't even like girls in that way!' Sophia then remembered that this was how she felt the last few times Natasha and her got together. These feelings that she hadn't ever felt towards anyone else, she felt with Natasha. This confused her even more. But, she shoved her feelings to the side, and just focused on enjoying her time with her best friend.

It was now the weekend and Tyler was at another of his football practices. As he looked around the field at all the other guys stretching and tackling, the thought that most of them were really cute resurfaced from the first practice Tyler went to. This, in turn, made him realize that he needed to focus more than usual to not be distracted by his good-looking teammates. He couldn't let anyone know he was feeling this way; especially not his team mates.

'Oh gosh... if they found out, I can't even imagine...' he thought to himself, knowing about how the others made fun of the other guys in the school that were suspected to being gay. Tyler knew that if he didn't want to get that treatment that he'd have to keep his mouth shut and his thoughts and emotions at bay. It was hard for him sometimes, though, as when he went back to the locker rooms and saw everyone take off their equipment and get dressed, it made him blush a little.

'No, stop it!' He took his helmet off and quickly went into a changing stall, hoping no one saw.

As he got changed back into his regular clothes, he came out of the stall and was about to get his stuff and leave, when one of his teammates came over.

"Hey, Ty! How's it goin' with little-miss geeky?" he asked, smiling in a joking manor. Tyler faked confidence when he smiled back. "Good, good!" he exclaimed. His blush returned when the other boy placed his arm around his shoulders and patted Tyler's back.

"Aww, you must love her a lot! Look at that blush!" the other boy noticed, laughing at the red that protruded from Tyler's face.

Tyler chuckled, a hint of awkwardness mixed in. "Heh, yeah, love her lots."

As the other guys came over, Tyler was practically drowning in his emotions and embarrassment.

"I... I gotta go!" he exclaimed as he ran out, his things in hand. He couldn't handle it anymore. He tried and tried, but he couldn't hide his feelings, and the more time he spent with his team, the worse it was trying to hide everything from them. He ran off of the school campus and drove back home, needing to get away from his feelings, or at least think about it and get things straightened out.

Starting that week, Sophia went to school and walked to her classes with Natasha and Tyler. At first, it was great! She was able to hang out with both her boyfriend and her best friend. But, after a while, she started to feel strange. When she was around them, she felt closer to Natasha. It was like Tyler was the third wheel, or 'just a friend'. She didn't feel the same way about Tyler that she felt with Natasha. When Sophia thought about these feelings, she remembered feeling them between her really good friends, like that boy from elementary school whom was friends with her until he moved away in the fifth grade, and the girl from summer camp four years ago that she bunked with. This confused her even more, as she didn't feel these feelings for anyone else at all. No one else made her blush or made her heart race. It was as if she only felt them with her close friends.

'But, then, isn't this just the feeling of friendship? I mean, it can't be love, right?' she thought to herself as she put her backpack away when she arrived home and into her bedroom. She flopped onto her bed with a huff; staring at the ceiling. 'If that's the case, then have I ever even felt love? What if I never do? Oh, but what if this is love? But that's so weird! I can't fall in love with my friends! And even if I did love them like that, then why don't I love others that way? And how come I love both my girl and guy friends?' these questions kept playing in her mind, burying her in confusion. None of this made sense to her.

As she lay there, she went onto her phone and searched up how she was feeling towards Natasha, to see if anyone out there felt similar to her, as she just couldn't shake these feelings. When she pressed "Search", her eyes widened at how many similar responses and questions there were. She then saw a term that described her feelings perfectly. Demisexual/Demiromantic: The orientation where someone doesn't experience sexual/romantic feelings until they form a strong, emotional bond with someone. A sense of understanding and acceptance washed over Sophia, and she felt that this identity was perfect for her. That's why she only felt those feelings towards her closest friends. This wasn't just friendship: it was true love. Satisfied, she turned her phone off and charged it on her end table, and sighed happily. But then she realized something.

'How should I tell this to Natasha? I know she's bi, but would she even see me the same as I see her? I hope so, I really do...' she then sat up and fished through her backpack, got ahold of her homework, and started on it to give her a break from thinking about this.

Instead of going home first, Tyler headed to the restaurant. He needed a burger to help clear his mind, and fill his stomach. As he arrived and sat down, the waiter he had his eyes on during the date with Sophia came over.

“Mind if I sat down with ‘ya?” the boy asked Tyler after he gave Tyler his burger. Tyler blushed a little, but quickly took a bite and nodded.

“You look kinda down. What’s up?” asked the boy, Tyler now reading on his pad of order paper that the boy’s name was Caleb.

Tyler sighed. “Just thinking about stuff... You know that girl I was with the last time I came?”

Caleb nodded.

“Well, we’ve been dating for a long time now, almost a month, and I realized that I don’t really like her in that way, and because of it, I want to break up with her. It’s not fair that she’s dating someone that doesn’t love her back, you know? But I have no idea how to break up with her...” Tyler admitted, putting his burger back on the plate.

“Ooh, that’s tough. Is there someone else or something?” Caleb asked, a slight suspicion in mind, but wanted to know if it was correct.

Tyler’s blush darkened, Caleb having known. Tyler didn’t even realize it himself, but he did have feelings for Caleb. Even at football practice, when he was surrounded by good-looking guys, he held his feelings for the waiter higher on the love pedestal.

“...maybe...” Tyler muttered, embarrassed about his feelings, as he didn’t know if Caleb would accept his feelings.

Caleb smirked, “Hey, it’s alright, dude. I felt the same way when I broke up with my boyfriend six months ago.”

“Your... boyfriend?” Tyler asked.

Caleb chuckled. “Yep. I don’t roll the straight path, if you know what I mean,” he looked around and saw that no one else was in the area, except an old man that was too busy reading a paper and drinking his coffee, “I’m gay.”

Tyler’s eyes widened in pleasant surprise. Caleb smirk widened as he winked at Tyler.

“Hey, all you gotta do to break up with that girl. All you gotta do is simply share your feelings with her. Let her know that she didn’t do anything wrong, and that you simply just don’t like girls in that way. If she’s nice enough, she’ll understand. And, when you do break up, if you want...” Caleb offered, his eyebrows bent upwards in question. Tyler smiled widely at this. “If I’m thinking what you’re thinking, then yes, yes I accept.”

The next day, the two teens met up with each other before math class started. Tyler, who had texted her to meet up with him that morning, took a deep breath.

“Sophia... I don’t know how to put this in the best way, but I know that I need to tell you this. This whole time, I thought that I’d end up feeling feelings for you, because you’d be the girl that I’d want to have them for. But this whole time, I just couldn’t. Instead, I found out that I’m...” He said, not being able to finish his sentence.

“Hey, I understand completely. I actually never felt those feelings for you, either, even though I wanted to, because you’re such a nice boy. But I’m...”

“...I’m gay”

“...I’m demi”

Both teens looked at each other in surprise, and then smiled.

“No hard feelings?” Tyler asked.

Sophia nodded. “No hard feelings.”

“Friends?”

She nodded again. “Yeah, I’d love to be friends with you!”

That’s when Natasha came around the hallway corner.

“I better get going. See you around, Sophia!” Tyler exclaimed as he waved goodbye and walked towards the stairs.

Natasha walked up to Sophia, having witnessed the break up.

“Hey, is it true? Are you really demi?” she asked, never having known that Sophia felt that way.

Sophia nodded, nervous of how her friend, no-love, would react. Instead of the negative and awkward reaction Sophia expected, Natasha just smirked back.

“So, does that mean that, when I saw you blush at the sleepover, that you...

you know...?” Sophia’s blush came back. She then nodded as she pushed her glasses back up the bridge of her nose.

Natasha cupped her hands over her cheeks and squealed in excitement and happiness. “Aww, that’s so cute!” She then hugged Sophia, almost crushing the poor geeky girl with her strength.

“Hey, whenever you’re ready, I’d be honored to date my favorite geek!” Natasha offered, finally letting Sophia go from her grasp and allowed her to breathe again. At the sound of the offer, a happy grin formed on Sophia’s lips.

“This is it”, she thought to herself, ‘this is love! I’m finally in love with someone, and she wants to date me too!’

The bell then rang, and Sophia offered her hand. Natasha grasped it happily, and they held hands on their way to class.

Winter Wonderland

Caroline Masessa



Arrows

Mikelle Kearnes

Hope drives the mind
Pushing forwards
Even when faith lacks
To be pulled back by the bow
Held down by insecurities
Forced into discouragement

Tension increases in taut strings
When no faith becomes overbearing
Stress emerges into prominence
With no choice made clear
Strands held in rigidity

Building suspense
Small hopes made known
Held between twitching fingertips
Itching to find causes
Worthy of ambition
Optimism making minuscule movements

Sudden release
When purposes made clear
Fighting for principles
Rough metal gliding past smooth wood
Propelled by newfound hope
Pushing forward into new territory

Ivy House

Mikelle Kearnes

Ivy growing along brick,
Inch by inch covering
Memories of other times.
The forgotten house left to nature.

Enveloping scenes of childhood.
Playing in the yard,
Along the creek,
Hitting balls against siding,
All lost to the the ivy.

Yet bringing novelty to the home
With new growth.
Hiding screaming voices,
Broken bones,
Cold basement floors.
Recovering scenes from darkness.

Leaves sprout over cracks in window frames,
Where anger took the form
Of smashing plates.
Objects thrown in fury
For innocent mistakes.
Breaking hearts with every shard,
Leaving marks ivy cannot cover,
Shattered minds that cannot heal,
Reminders left in forms of scars.

Ivy spreading along windows,
Blocking light from entering,
And painful memories from leaving.
Locking childhoods into oblivion,
Left to rot,
Fading into nothing,
Freeing minds of worries,
As ivy grows along bricks.

Cover: Name --Alison Kaiser--Digital Photography
Title page: Name-- Caroline Masessa -- Digital Photography

For next year's edition(s)
Submission Forms are available by emailing Mrs. Kneisley at
dkneisley@pinkertonacademy.org

Note: In the interest of fairness, all *Tower* entries are evaluated anonymously to ensure that no bias is present. All names are removed once the entries are received, and each author's name is replaced with a number.

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Colophon

col·o·phon *n.*

1. An inscription placed usually at the end of a book, giving facts about its publication.

Source: *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition*

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The magazine is printed in process black on 70 lb. white page stock, and the cover and back are printed on white, finish stock paper.

Page layout for *Tower* is done using Adobe InDesign. Individual entries are typed and formatted using Microsoft Word. We also used Adobe Photoshop to resize pictures. The body of the publication utilizes [INSERT FONT]. Rights to all typefaces are owned by Adobe Systems, Inc.

The cover price for *Tower* is \$5. The production cost is more than \$8 per copy. The difference in price is paid for with the assistance of financial support from the Pinkerton Academy administration.

The *Tower* Staff would like to thank the English and Fine Arts Departments, along with the Pinkerton Academy administration and staff for their ongoing and enthusiastic support for this magazine.