

# THE ALPINE PATH

Volume 6, December 2023

## From the Editor

Living in Florida, we don't ever get a White Christmas but for some reason, snowy scenes seem a natural part of our holiday thoughts. Whether it is snowing outside your window or just raining, you will want to curl up with a blanket and a cup of hot chocolate while you enjoy this edition of The Alpine Path. Many of our authors introduce winter themes appropriate for the season. In addition to the poems and stories, there are exceptional photos, drawings, and paintings that I know you will appreciate.

Thank you to all who took the time to share their creative gifts with this community. We want to wish all of you a wonderful Christmas, and we look forward to receiving more of your work in the coming new year!

## Winter Into Spring

*Teresa Coral Pace, 13*

The winds of winter blow,  
Making the whole house cold.  
All around there's snow,  
A hot cup of coffee is nice to hold.  
Sometimes the sun will shine,  
It will shine brightly over the land.  
Then the sun will warm this heart of mine,  
And twinkle on my hand.  
But now the trees are bare,  
Their branches stripped of leaves.  
There's a frosty coldness in the air,  
And icicles hang in the eaves.  
Soon spring will come around,  
But until then, I'm glad my house is sound. 🏠



*Marjy and Rebecca, Cream Legbar Hens by Joanna Malone, 17*

## Song for Declining Summer

*Joanna Malone, 17*

Now the clamouring skeins of geese are dreaming of their flight,  
Now the moon beams colder as she walks upon the night,  
Now the winding road I tread on seems weary, cold, and strange,  
Soon the trees will start to change.

I have a rose you gave me in this satchel by my side,  
And it still keeps the blush of the laughing Summer-tide.  
Can it last throughout the winter, and the rigours of the frost?  
If I lose this thing you touched, I will be lost.

There's a new song in the brisk air, the year has lost its youth.  
There are hints of coming Winter, and the snow is bitter truth.  
All the smiling bloom of Summer, it will fade in a little while,  
There'll be little left to mind us of her smile.

The trees are green and leafy but their gaiety's a blind,  
For the wailing wind of Autumn comes on ever from behind.  
I stand one moment in their shade now, ere the green is stripped away.  
I hope it will last another day.

You birds who know my heart best, you have your wings to fly,  
But no pinions have I folded, no soaring wings have I.  
You may fly across the meadows, better! fly across the sea,  
It's much I would give to follow ye.

You flowers of the woodlands, you've a warm bed standing by,  
But no bed in all the wide world, no resting place have I.  
You'll sleep warm beneath the wood-loam when frost puts an end to mirth,  
I must lie down upon the frozen earth.

Soon the hoary hands of Winter will change Summer's golden hair,  
And the chilling kiss of Autumn change her rosy lips and fair,  
And change will come to all things, upon meadow, mount, and mere,  
But you can't change the changing of the year.

Now are all the geese a-clamour as they hear the rumour run,  
Now the moon is sad and wistful for remote has grown the sun,  
And the weary road I wander seems weary, cold, and strange.  
Soon the leaves will start to change. 🏔️

## Waiting Winter

*Bethany Loewen, 16*

Oft upon a winter's morn;  
The sky is laced with pink.  
With bubbly clouds connected—  
By a solitary link.  
The frost spread by the fairies,  
In the bright sun glitters.  
Leaves and trees, and all the eaves  
Ice sparkles on the river.  
Not yet is there enough snow,  
Nor are all the leaves gone.  
The fog and frost comes seldom—  
But when it does, it's long.  
'Tis a lovely thing for sure;  
The waiting of winter.  
Yet here it seems much too long,  
It must; as if indifferent.  
The soft silent waiting  
Of winter's beginning.  
Snow, brings all sound to a halt  
And hushed winter, brings peace 🏔️

# The Tree in the Fall

*Penina Adam, 16*

The breeze was a clean breeze, as it always was.

Of course, it always would be. I found pleasure in thinking how everything was clean here. Pure. It helped to balance out my knowledge of the other things.

Balance was everything, after all.

The breeze giggled and laughed as it flew away. Voices sounded nearby. The voices were not talking about me, but I didn't mind. As long as they left me alone, they would not die. That was a good thing, because I didn't want them to.

I want them to live forever, I thought. Wished. Whispered.

They didn't hear me, of course. They didn't understand my language. That was strictly between my Creator, the animals, and I.

Two toucans fondly sat on my branches, careful not to dig their claws into me.

You were created by Him, and he said you are good, I whispered to the toucans. They squawked in reply, bobbing their heads.

"We know, Tree," they said.

I love His creation, for it is good.

"Indeed, we all are," the toucans said.

I just hope that they never eat my wretched fruit.

I didn't say this last part aloud, for these thoughts were only between my Creator and I, but I couldn't help thinking them.

The toucans suddenly gave a loud squawk! They flew over to the two people who had come out of the treeline.

One was a man, the other a woman. Both were smiling. The woman gave out a laugh as her partner told her a story.

They were, both of them, naked. No one minded.

I watched them with pleasure, happy to see that they were not paying attention to me.

The animals around my trunk went to meet the couple, for both the man and the woman were gentle and kind.

A Breeze tickled and swayed my branches, but this time, it wasn't just the breeze.

They are my beloved, Tree, He said, His voice as soft as the tread of an elephant's feet in the grass.

I know, I said. The breeze wrapped around me once more, then flew over to the group of animals, cooling them. With a last gust, it took to the sky, and disappeared.

The freshness of the breeze that had swept through my branches suddenly left. Something with harsh, thick scales ran along my trunk. It wove up into my branches, and hissed, "Hello, Tree."

I shivered. You do not belong here, Serpent!

"You're a tree," Serpent snapped, "You cannot keep me out."

Serpent was unwelcome here, and I knew it.

"Besides," Serpent added, "these humans are fickle and easily tempted."

You're not welcome here! Go back to the ground where you belong!

"No," Serpent growled before half sliding, half crawling towards the

forefront of the branches, stopping right above a branch with especially big, enticing fruit.

I shook my branches in anger, hoping to knock Serpent to the ground, but he just dug his sharp claws down into my bark mercilessly.

The party of animals and people had left the clearing, and all was silent. The woman was the only one who had remained.

"She's the one," Serpent muttered. His tongue slithered out, and he gave a little chuckle of delight. "Oh dear, this is exciting."

I panicked, trying desperately to shake the creature off me. But all attempts were in vain, for Serpent had the sharpest claws I'd ever felt.

The woman walked over to me, staring curiously at my fruit. I noticed how she kept a few feet away from me and held onto the hope the Creator had gifted us.

Serpent suddenly slithered into sight, making the woman start back.

"Do you want to eat this tree's fruit, Eve?" he asked, his claws scraping me. It hurt, though not nearly as much as the pain I felt in my very being at the question posed.

"Creator said that we may eat from any tree in this place aside from this one," the woman said.

"Why not this one?"

"We will die."

Death. I stared at the woman. She didn't even truly realize what death meant. All the better for her, for what horrible thing death is.

Serpent gave a chuckle, and said, "You won't die if you eat  
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this! Why, the only reason He doesn't want you to eat this fruit is because you'd know good and evil, and become like Him. He wouldn't want you to become like Him."

The woman blinked, seemed to think for a moment, then muttered to herself, "I suppose—well—it wouldn't hurt anything, right?"

Oh no! I cried, my heart cracking. Please don't!

But, as I have said before, the woman could not understand me, and took the fruit off the branch nearest her. The fruit was about the size of her palm and appeared lush and beautiful.

She gazed at it for a while; I saw the fruit reflecting in her eyes.

Creator, save her from this! I said. A little voice inside me whispered, I shall not, Tree. Choice is the essence of my beloved.

But they'll die, I groaned, watching in grief as she raised the fruit to her lips and took a small, discerning bite out of it.

The birds suddenly hushed their singing. The mammals stopped romping and glorifying their Creator. Everything was still.

The man suddenly walked into the clearing, and the woman called out to him. Her voice was high with excitement. He came over, looking confused.

"Here, eat this," she told him, offering the fruit.

The man took it from her, and bit into it.

All of a sudden, they both gasped, staring at each other.

Both of their faces flushed as they saw their nakedness.

Serpent gave a hiss of pleasure. "You see, Tree? I won after all."

I ignored him, watching the two humans.

"There they go; they're going to sew clothes for themselves," Serpent hissed, his tongue licking my branch.

"Indeed," he added, hopping off my branch and crawling back down me, "I must get going as well. I hope you enjoy the rest of today, for it will probably be the last happy one."

I felt his body brush once more against my trunk, then Serpent walked away, looking very pleased with himself.

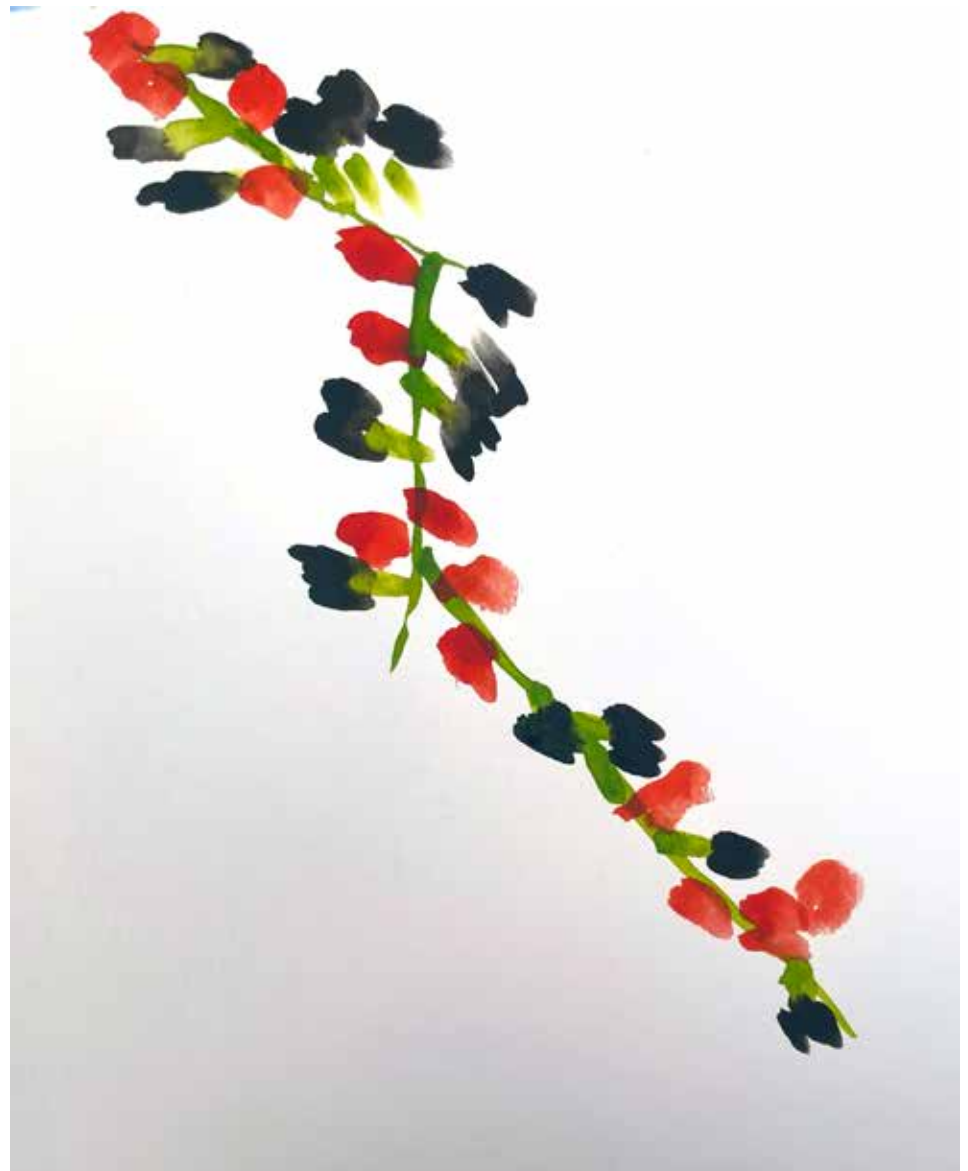
I felt my Creator begin to walk on this garden's ground and realized that He already knew what had happened.

I'm sorry, Creator, I said, letting the words fall soft and carry on the breeze.

I'm truly sorry. I think we've lost them.

I was unaware of what happened next. All I knew was that the people of this garden had been cursed, and that they must leave. The breeze had told me of the first, and the toucans had told me of the other.

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*Blackberry Vine (watercolor) by Luke Choi, 7*

Never, in all of history, has a tree mourned as I did that day.

My Creator left after banishing them. He no longer could be with the humans, since they had eaten the fruit.

The man and the woman passed by me as they walked towards the exit in the garden.

As they both set eyes on me, tears sprang into their dark depths, and they sobbed. The woman threw out her arms to me and fell onto her knees. The man had to help her back onto her feet.

A squirrel crawled into my branches and whispered in a frightened

voice, “They are wearing animal skins. Blood has been shed here.”

An angel with a fiery sword suddenly came over to the exit. Once the man and woman were safely outside the garden, the angel barred their way back in, and said in a voice that sounded as loud as thunder, “You shall never return.”

The angel blocked my view of the two humans. I cried out in anguish as the squirrel repeated what the angel had said.

“You shall never return.”

Why did this have to happen, Creator? I cried, knowing that His heart was just as broken as mine. Why couldn't they just

stay here forever? Why did you put me in here in the first place?

The breeze whistled through my branches.

Humans have the ability to choose, Tree. Without choice, they wouldn't be human.

That doesn't make me feel any better, I said gloomily.

Do not fear, Tree, Creator whispered softly. I will give them Him. Not now, but soon.

Who is Him? I asked curiously.

The breeze grew tense at the question.

The Way, my dear Tree, was His reply. 🏔️

## The Prairie

*Teresa Coral Pace, 13*

The prairie grasses wave and roll,  
Looking beaten where winds take their toll.  
The sun above grows red and dim,  
Slowly moving down the worlds rim.  
Swiftly falls the night,  
Soon, gone will be the light.  
I look at the dirt on which I stand,  
And I'm glad I live on these prairie lands. 🏔️

## seabirds

*Leah Kim, 15*

since the dogs were sent away,  
empty silence fills the seaports.  
any noise that once existed has left now;  
birds don't make much sound.  
in the days that followed, the captains  
reared up complaints about avians and  
deceitful endeavors, but all protest has  
surrendered to silence by now. 🏔️



*Bedroom At Arles—In the Style of Van Gogh  
(watercolor and acrylic) by Luke Choi, 7*

# Eloise's Best Day Ever

Jessie Wu, 10

Today, I am running late for school. I tried to skip breakfast, but my mom insisted on eating a banana. "I'll eat it on the way. And don't forget I am going to the pool with Logan today," I said. My mom nodded. I glanced at the wish list I had put up on the fridge last night. On the wish list said "Bunny." I had wanted a bunny since I was seven! I ran to the porch. "WHERE ARE MY SNEAKERS?" I yelled. "Here they are," my younger brother Evan pointed toward the muddy sneakers on the floor. I heard Evan sigh. I glanced at the clock on the wall. We were going to be late. Again.

I put on my sneakers, and I ran behind Evan as we raced to the bus stop. Fortunately, we arrived exactly 3 seconds before the bus did. I breathed a sigh of relief at the same time Evan did. Evan went and sat with his best friend Tim. I searched the bus for empty seats. My best friend is Logan. He loves sports as much as I do. We were planning to go swimming at the pool after school.

I looked out the window. My stomach growled. I still had the banana in my hand. Maybe I could get away with eating it on the bus. The banana slipped from my hand and then fell to the floor. I stood up to get the banana but accidentally smushed it with my foot when I was standing up. Looking at it made me lose my appetite. That's okay, I guess. I thought. We aren't allowed to eat on the bus anyway.

I looked out the window again. It was Logan's house! The bus jolted to a stop. Alaina ran out the door. Luke was second, then Everest. They were Logan's siblings. But Logan didn't come out. The bus started again. "Hey, Luke!" I called

out. "Where's Logan?" Luke rolled his eyes. "He's sick with the flu." I stared at Logan's twin in surprise. I slumped down in my seat in disappointment. That meant we couldn't go swimming after school. The bus picked up a few more students. Then, the bus stopped in front of Willow Creek Elementary School.

I walked slowly toward the crowd of students waiting for the bell to ring. At least my backpack was lighter than usual. I had packed a PB&J because I was in a hurry. I threw my smushed banana in the trash. Ding! Ding! Ding! The bell rang. I hurried to the line. I hung my backpack on my hook and walked into the classroom to my desk. I saw a white sheet of paper that said Math Test on top of it. My eyes widened. The math test was today? Mrs. Palmer, our teacher, set the timer to 30 minutes. I grabbed a pencil. "Go!" Mrs. Palmer instructed as she started the timer. I struggled with question after question. 30 minutes flew past, and it was time to hand in the tests. Math is not my best subject. I was sure I hadn't gotten a good grade.

I was relieved when it was first recess. It ended quickly though. Then, my other classes started. Luckily, we didn't get any more tests. Time passed slowly. It was finally lunchtime. "You may go get your lunch bags now," Mrs. Palmer said. I was first out the door to the hooks. I scrambled to unzip my backpack. "Oh no, no, no, no, no, no!" I cried. "What's up?" It was Tina. Tina and I sat together in class. "I forgot to put my lunch bag in my backpack!" I said, suddenly remembering the lunch bag I had left on the porch floor when I was putting on my

shoes. So that's why my backpack was so light!

Tina unzipped her backpack and pulled out her lunch bag. "Guess what?" She said smiling. "My mom packed my lunch. She usually packs a lot." Tina opened her lunch bag. Inside were two sandwiches and two juice boxes. "I'm sure there is enough for us both," she said. "Oh! Are you sure?" I asked. "Really," Tina assured me. "You know I can barely even finish one sandwich." I smiled at Tina gratefully. It was true. She had a really small appetite. "Thanks. I owe you one." Sorry, Logan. I thought then said, "Want to go to the pool after school?" Tina smiled but said, "Sorry. I have a sewing class." Sewing? I frowned. I had tried sewing with my grandmother last summer and I had messed up the whole quilt we were working on. "Oh. Okay." I answered, a bit disappointed.

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It was class time again and the subject was music. Another subject I was going to fail. Maybe Evan could tutor me, so I won't fail. I thought unhappily. Evan was the opposite of me. Instead of being bad at every other subject except gym, he was bad at gym and good at every other subject, especially music. Evan was learning piano, recorder, drums, violin, and ukulele. I walked into the classroom. I noticed the teacher was late. I looked toward the doorway to see if the teacher would appear when I tripped over a student's leg and fell. Mrs. Horton walked in just in time to see me tripping. I checked myself. I got a bruise on both of my knees and one on my elbow. "Mrs. Hor-

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ton! May I please go to the nurse's office?" I said weakly. "Of course! Go ahead!" Mrs. Horton said, worried. I limped to the nurse's office. I had once come here when someone had accidentally kicked one of my ankles during soccer practice. I looked inside the nurse's office and saw a nurse. "Come on in," she said so I did. The nurse gave me a few band-aids to stick on my bruises, and I walked back to the classroom again. Music class was practically over when I came back, so Mrs. Horton let me sit for a while when everyone was finishing up their music worksheets.

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I stared at the spider on the wall. The bus was late, and I was bored of waiting. Evan was beside me, and Tim was beside Evan. They both had their noses in books. I wished I had a book even though I didn't particularly like reading. I noticed the book Evan was reading was about rabbits. I remembered my wish list on the fridge. Maybe my parents will consider it, I thought. I wonder if I can get one next week.

The bus finally arrived. I sat next to Evan and Tim this time on the bus since Logan wouldn't be on the bus with me. Evan had just finished his book, so I complained to Evan. "This is the worst day ever! First, I almost did not catch the bus. Then, my banana gets smushed. Then, there is this math test I forgot to study about. Then, I forgot my lunch. Then, I tripped in music class. Then, the bus is late! And Logan isn't

here because he's sick with the flu! This is the worst day ever!" But Evan only grinned. "Maybe!" he said. Now I was annoyed at Evan. Why is he happy that I had the worst day? I thought bitterly.

The bus stopped in front of our house. "Bye, Tim!" Evan called to Tim. "Bye!" Tim said back. I walked inside the house to find the house empty. There was a huge box on the kitchen table with holes in it. My parents ran out of their hiding places. "SURPRISE! We brought you a bunny!" they said in unison. I was stunned. I tore open the gift wrap and saw the best bunny cage a bunny could want. And in the cage was a baby bunny! "Is it really mine?" I asked staring at the cute little bunny. "Yup! If you take care of it yourself." Mom replied. "You won't have to do a thing!" I promised them. "I got a friend whose bunny had babies. She said I could have one for free." My mom told me. "Thank you! I love her!" I said happily looking at the bunny. "It's actually a he. What do you want to name him?" Mom asked. I thought for a while. The bunny was white, so maybe something related to that. "I know! Snow!" I said suddenly. The bunny seemed to like his name too, since he purred softly in his cage. "That is a great name!" Dad said. I smiled. "Thanks! Can I hold him?" I asked. "Go ahead!" said my mom smiling. Snow was so soft. As I was holding him, I saw Evan smiling too. "Not the worst day ever?" He asked me. "Nope! Best day ever." I said grinning at him. 🏔️



*Antoine, young Toulouse Gander by Joanna Malone, 17*

## Hecla Marina

*Hunter Loewen, 14*

The water spread out in front of me, before reaching the far banks of the tall pines. As the waves rippled in the marina, a sailboat caught my attention. It was huge, the massive sail catching the wind drew up to a height of 30 feet. It was not the sailboat that caught my eye, however. All around the vessel I could see a great number of fish. They would come out of the water with tremendous speed, only to splash back in. Beyond the fish, daylight was waning. As the sun reflected on the water, I thought, "What a beautiful view." 🏔️

# ODYSSEUS ALIVE

Odysseus, Believed to be dead, appeared Thursday IX of October here in Ithaca. His wife Penelope quotes: "I was sure he died at sea!" while sobbing into Odysseus' shoulder. After killing all the suitors of his faithful wife, he recounted his story from when he left, XX years ago. "At Troy, all the great heroes save few were slain, for Achilles, Ajax, Hector, and Paris numbered among the dead. And I thought to myself, "if we cannot win Troy by force in X years, let us instead win it by cunning." So I devised the Trojan horse. After sacking Priam's town by the great horse, we all went on our way. Most returned safely, although it would not be so for me. After leaving the Lotus-eaters, I came to the Island of Cyclops. Polyphemus trapped me in his cave, and by stratagem I escaped. However, Polyphemus is the son of Poseidon, who cursed me and my return voyage. I was nearly home when the gods turned me away, and I sailed to the house of Hades, having been told to consult the

Prophet Teiresias by Circe. I saw Achilles, Ajax, Agamemnon, and the great Heracles. Then, being directed by Circe, sailed past the Sirens, Scylla the man-eater, and Charybdis, the whirlpool. Zeus destroyed our ship for eating the Sun god's cattle, and I alone survived. Then I was stranded on Calypso's Island for a long time, for she wanted to marry me. But the gods remembered me, and Calypso set me free, whereupon I drifted to the land of the Phoenicians, who helped me and delivered me to this land, where I learned Athene would help me rid the suitors of my house. I tested the suitors, and upon finding them guilty, killed them with the help of my son Telemachus and Athene." Thus he concluded his tale, and many are rejoicing his return. However, the fathers of the suitors tried to kill him, though Athene made peace. I can only say I am surprised he is back, and hope his dad doesn't die from the shock. If you want to read more about Odysseus,



Picture painted at residence, shortly after the slaughter, November IX.

Homer's book, 'The Odyssey' is scheduled for release in about DV years.

**New Maids!**  
 "I accidentally killed some of mine."  
 -Odysseus  
 Only faithful and trustworthy maids wanted.

Published by  
 the B.C. press.  
 Ithaca Weekly  
 Written by  
 Hunter Loewen





*Starry Night—In the Style of Van Gogh (watercolor)  
by Lily Choi, 9*

## Friends

*Teresa Coral Pace, 13*

Friendship is like a flower,  
It takes time for it to grow.  
It grows a blossom every hour,  
And the pretty petals will start to show.  
The world is like a garden,  
So many friends for you to find.  
Each one you'll find is different,  
But they've all got something special inside.  
So, if the world is like a garden,  
And friends like the flowers inside.  
You should pick your flowers wisely,  
For some have things to hide.  
Prickly thorns to hurt your fingers,  
And sharp roots to stub your toes.  
They don't sound very nice, do they?  
You wouldn't want to be the one who knows.  
Now the moral of the story is,  
Be careful on your way.  
Avoid the ones who'll do you wrong,  
But the good ones they should stay. 🏔️

## denver

*Leah Kim, 15*

so denver, listen to me loud —  
for a prize, i would swing into the blue for you,  
and could you tell me if i'll win?  
like a wild god's lovechild with the silt and the sun,  
he is swift through the mountaintops  
on two feet and the mystery  
that lies between bones, spirit, and skin.  
a virgin song springs, loose and lovely, from  
another's throat,  
and through the open windows of the life we made  
shall her tepid melody blow;  
the only part that is left all but spoken said  
is the part where i call him home.  
so denver, listen to me love —  
the storms will blow through train-tracked colorado,  
coloring the skies tenebrose through the foggy  
window of an elder metro;  
the car rattles on the rails, and that's how you know  
she'll be sent away with the rest, never to see snow-  
capped peaks hiding the sunrise again.  
so denver, listen to me now —  
when i call him home, and frigid people that i don't  
know  
rush to tell me that he is divine,  
let them know — through the great mind which keeps  
all the sentience of the state  
on a gossamer web of rusted metal and nails driven  
into the ground —  
whose hand, forgetting and forgoing all others, was  
once the one in mine. 🏔️

## A Proverb

*Anderson Loewen, 12*

Whoever walks the path of righteousness will be  
blessed and the Lord will light their way, but whoever  
walks the path of evil and sin will be cursed and the  
Lord will cause them to stumble and fall. 🏔️

## Sick with the Flu

Joyce Wu, 8

One morning, Logan woke up feeling tired and sick. “Mo-om! Cough, Cough, Mo-Cough, Cough, I think I’m not able to go to Cough, school Cough, today!” Logan managed to sputter out. He coughed some more. Mom walked in the room and touched his head. “Oh boy! You are really sick. Get in bed, quickly! While I make lunch for your siblings,” Logan nodded and got into bed. He accidentally bumped into her little sister, Everest, on the way, “Hey, you should be getting dressed! You can’t just be in your PJ’s!” Logan ignored her and tried to sleep but he was thinking about his best friend, Eloise. Today they were supposed to be racing at the pool after school. Now he couldn’t go. How was he going to tell Eloise! A rule in the Steven house was no electronics if you were sick. Plus, he didn’t have a phone! Maybe, just maybe, he could be sneaky and use the house phone. This afternoon, Logan thought, when school is done. He got in bed quickly before mom could see him. He waited. And waited. And waited. A few minutes later his mom came up with a bottle of cough medicine. “I had to turn down the job today. Here, drink this. It will make you feel better.” Logan shook his head and drank from the tiny cup. “Ew, and I, cough, don’t feel, cough, better,” Mom nodded and went downstairs.

It was afternoon and time for Logan to achieve his mischievous plan. He put on his actual clothes and sneaked out the front door. His siblings were already home, eating a snack. The plan was to sneak to the pool and walk because it was so close. “BOO!” somebody called. “AHH!” Logan turned around to see his big sister Madeline rubbing her hands. “You scared the pants

off me!” Logan said angrily. Then he coughed, saying, “I was better. So, knock it off!” Madeline raised an eyebrow and said, “I thought you were supposed to be in bed!” Then Mom came to see what the problem was. “What’s going on in here! Logan, you are supposed to be in bed! And Madeline, I don’t want to see you ever scaring anybody. Hear that? You’re 15, you shouldn’t be doing this. Now get

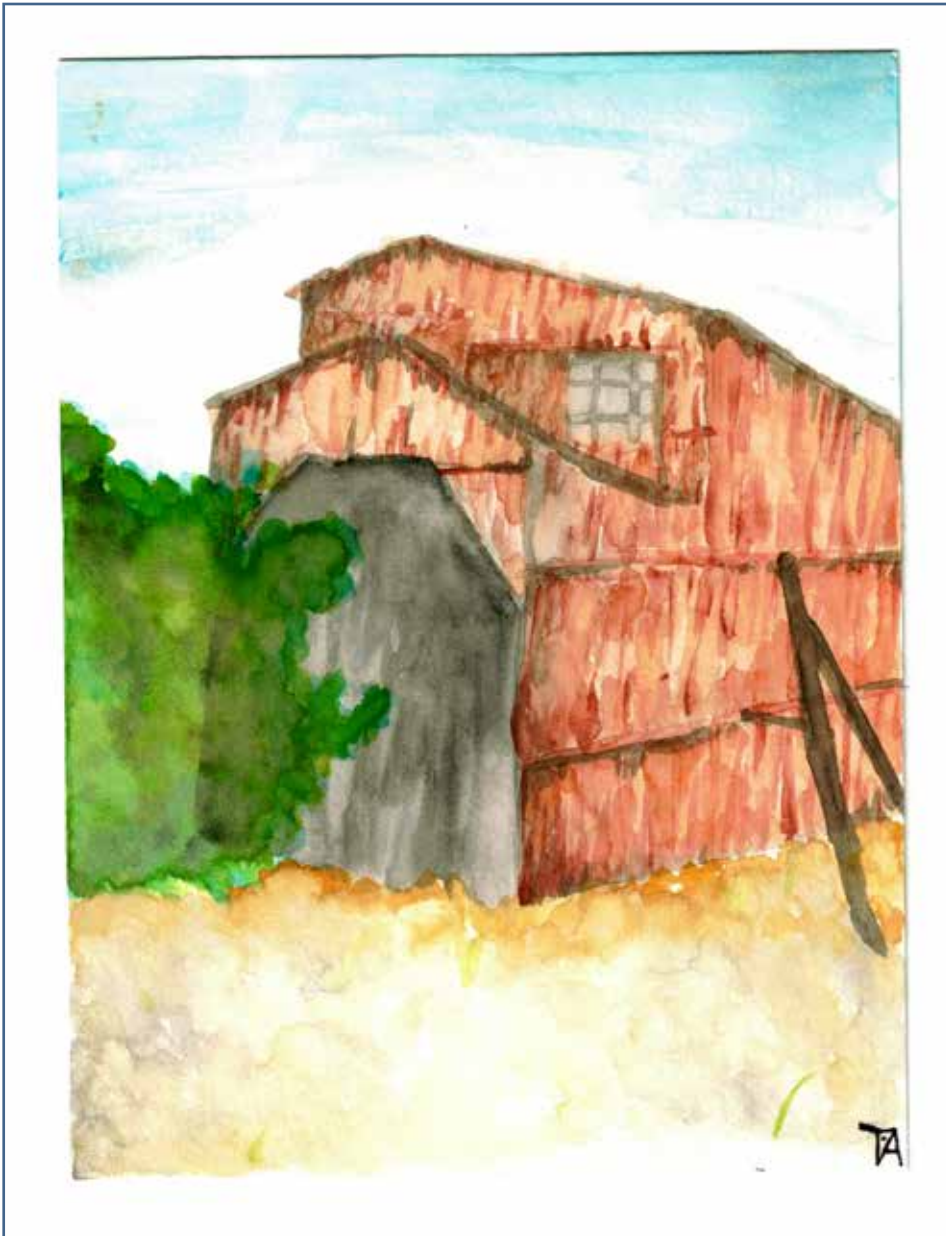
back to where you were.” Madeline grinned at Logan and hurried off. Logan did too, but upstairs snuggled in bed.

“Dinner time!” Logan’s little sister called upstairs. Logan ran downstairs and for the second time he bumped into somebody. This time it was Alaina. “Sorry, Alaina,” he apologized. “It’s okay,” she said. Logan made his way to

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*Vase With Sunflowers—In the Style of Van Gogh by Lily Choi, 9*



*Mine by Teuila Adam, 13*

the dining room followed by six siblings from upstairs. "Feeling better, Logan?" His dad asked as he sat down. Logan nodded, and then he waited for all the people to sit down. "All washed your hands?" Mom asked as they all sat down. "Whoops! I forgot." Alaina hurried to the bathroom to wash her hands. Luke rolled his eyes and a few minutes later, Mom said, "Now, are you ready?" Everybody grinned and nodded. Then they said grace and started eating. It was the usual mess. Alaina dropped her fork. Everest

accidentally dipped her long hair in the chicken soup. Madeline spilled her water. "Who's turn is it to clean up?" Dad asked cheerfully. Everybody groaned. "I think it's the twins' turn!" Logan must have looked shocked because Dad said, "Not you and Luke twins, it's Madeline and Eliana today!" Eliana and Madeline groaned. Logan excused himself from the table and dumped his empty dish in the sink. He wandered upstairs, into the bathroom. There he got ready for bed and brushed his teeth and washed his face and feet. Then he

went to bed. The second his head hit the pillow; he fell asleep. It was a long day.

The next morning, Logan felt better, and he got dressed. In fact, he was well from the flu. I'm so excited to see Eloise today! He thought. He scrambled downstairs to eat breakfast. "Hey Mom!" he said enthusiastically. "Feeling better?" she asked. Logan nodded and sat down for pancakes. After he had finished, he packed his bag and headed out the door with his siblings. "Bye Mom!" They called and made it just in time for the bus. But this time Alaina caught the flu from Logan and had to stay home. Oh well, Logan thought, At least I'm not sick. He hurried on the bus with his siblings and found his usual spot next to Eloise. "Hey Eloise," Logan said. "Hi, are you feeling better?" Logan smiled and replied, "Yup, well, in fact." A few minutes later they pulled up to Willow Creek Elementary. Students hurried off the bus, including Logan and Eloise. They walked together to room 6B and took their seats. Mrs. Palmer wasn't there yet. So, the class started talking. Then the bell rang, DING, DING, DING, students quieted down and took their seats. Then she started taking attendance. After that, she said, "I have a special announcement. We are going on a field trip! We are going to an amusement park. I will email your parents what to bring. The field trip is next week." There was excited chatter as she was done speaking. Logan was excited too! He had once ridden a roller coaster and it was beyond amazing. He'd been wanting to go ever since. The morning flew by and soon it was lunch. Everybody took out their lunches and started eating. "What will you ride first?" Eloise asked. Logan grinned, "The scariest roller

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coaster ever!" Eloise giggled and said, "I'm opting for cotton candy first!" Logan laughed and they discussed what they were going to do at the amusement park. The day flew by and soon it was home time. "Do you want to go to the pool?" Eloise asked. "Sure! I'll go home and tell my mom. Meet me at 4:30." They hopped on the bus and took their seats. At home, Logan asked if he could go to the pool

with Eloise. "Sure! Be careful of the pool scratches, though," she said. At 4:30 on the dot her dad's car pulled up in their driveway. Logan hopped on and they talked while their dad drove. "My sister Alaina said she wanted to go too, but she was sick with the flu," Logan explained, relieved that Ms. Tag-along didn't come. "Just like when you were sick! You couldn't go to the pool either." Finally, they ar-

rived at the pool, and they hopped out. After they changed, Logan reached for the diving board and did a dive. Eloise followed too, and soon they were splashing around having fun. But Logan and Eloise heard a girl say to her dad, "I think I'm sick with the flu." Logan grinned at Eloise, and she grinned back. Sometimes a best friend can read minds. 🏊

## I Miss You Too Much

*Piper Collins, 15*

I couldn't bear looking at myself much longer. Each of my features caused my pain to grow. My mother's deep ocean blue eyes would stare back at me, but she wasn't there. I had a tiny nose, just like my father. My dirty blonde hair reflected both of my parents. Long and curly like my mother, but the color came from my dad. Ever since the accident, I've been unable to look at myself. I couldn't live without them, and it was too hard to forget what I was reminded of every day.

'I wish I was different,' I told myself. 'I wish that didn't happen.'

I turned on the shower and stepped in. The heat was too hot on my skin, I hissed, arched my back, and reached for the silver handle, turning it to the right. I stood in the shower and looked at the floor. The excruciating pain was crippling. My body was tense. The world seemed to be without purpose. I felt alone. I didn't move. I didn't want to move. Then, there was a knock on the bathroom door.

"Gracie?" My body relaxed when I recognized the voice. "It's Audrey."

I turned off the shower, and grabbed my robe—my body still sopping wet. I opened the door, tackled my best friend in a hug,



*Nym by Teuila Adam, 13*

and sobbed into her embrace. Audrey and I had spent every day since kindergarten together. But she had been gone for a month, when I needed her most. I was relieved that she was finally here. We sunk to the floor not letting go of one another.


Audrey pulled away and wiped away my tears, then her own. "We have to go soon; the funeral starts in two hours."

I nodded and walked back into the bathroom. My hands wouldn't stop shaking, so, Audrey zipped up my dress, did my hair, and put on my  
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makeup. I was so blessed to have her in my life. After 11 and a half years, she continued to put up with my drama. From boy troubles to a missing tooth, she had always been beside me.

I sat on my bed in the next room and reminisced not only of Audrey, but of my parents as well. I remem-

bered a time when we were 12. Mom took us to the mall, and we begged her for a matching outfit, she never bought it, but we did get pretzels that were shaped like monkeys. When we were 15, Dad burnt the Thanksgiving turkey and almost burnt the house down. Although, he still made Audrey and I go to the store because he was convinced

that he could cook it right. And during Christmas, only two months ago, Mom, Audrey, and I convinced Dad to go to Hobby Lobby with us. We thought he would hate it, but he found the weirdest stuff and put it in the cart. I smiled at all the good times we had, but it hurt so much more because I missed them so much. 

## Ready or Not, Here He Comes

*Divine, 15*

Sophia, Naomi and Caleb were laying on the grass and watching the clouds, in the park.

“Caleb and Naomi, look at that cloud!” shouted Sophia in excitement, “It looks like a bike!” Caleb and Naomi laughed.

“Look, that’s a big one!” said Naomi pointing to the sky.

“It looks like a bird flying,” Sophia replied.

“This one looks like a plane,” Caleb said pointing to the sky.

They laughed and talked about the shapes and sizes of the clouds as they passed across the big sky.

“Wow, I saw a huge cloud and it disappeared,” Sophia pointed. “It was right there! I turned my head to look at the “plane cloud” and when I looked back, it was gone!” said Sophia.

“It probably dissipated,” Caleb said as he brushed the grass out of his hair.

“Maybe it faded, I have seen a cloud fade before” Naomi said.

“But it was huge, I’m sure I would have noticed if it faded,” Sophia replied.

“By the way, it reminds me of a video that I watched last week, the pastor was talking about what the Bible says will happen when Jesus returns. He said that all of Jesus’ true followers, dead and alive, will be raptured into the clouds and go to be with Him,” Sophia added.

“What a lovely day that will be!” exclaimed Naomi.

“Yes, but do we know when?” asked Caleb.

“No, the Bible says that no one knows the day or the hour when the Son of Man will return,” said Naomi.

“So, we should always be ready,” replied Caleb as they got up from the grass.

“Yes,” Sophia replied.

“Let’s play,” Naomi said.

“Ok, one, two, three...” Caleb counted as he ran.

The girls ran faster.

“Eight, nine, ten... ready or not here I come!” Caleb added.

“Haha, yes,” Sophia replied, “Whether we are ready or not, Jesus comes!”

Later that day, Caleb thought about what it meant to be ready. “How can I always be ready for Jesus’ second coming, Daddy?” Caleb asked his father.

“That’s a good question Caleb,” his father answered. “We can be ready for Jesus’ second coming by believing in Him and genuinely choosing to follow Him, and growing closer in our relationship with Him. Also by reading the Bible— His Holy Word, obeying His commandments and living a life that is glorifying Him.”

“Thank you Daddy! It makes me feel better to know how to be ready,” Caleb replied.

“You’re welcome Caleb,” Caleb’s dad replied. “Remember, God loves and He will help you, that is why He sent His Holy Spirit to live inside of us. We just have to humbly submit ourselves to Him.”

*How About You?*

Do you wonder how you can be ready for Jesus Christ’s second coming?

Are you worried that you might not be ready? God will help you in your walk with Him. Trust Him to help you, and all you have to do is humbly submit to Him. 