

Exclamation!

Volume Three

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Oakmont Literary Magazine



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The Exclamation will be publishing another edition in spring of 2023. We would love to include works from students from all of the Oakmont schools. Please keep work to less than 3 pages for each submission and submit work online.

We publish:

- Poems
- Short works of fiction
- Creative nonfiction
- Essays
- Art
- Photography
- Comics

Students may submit work online at <https://forms.gle/FCKRqir91oKLTfjr6> or by using the QR code to the right.





FREEDOM

by Eric Scott

Regent

Freedom is like a dog without a leash
To hold it back from it running through the grass
Or a person with a passport
To wander the whole world

Like a person driving on the highway
With the wind blowing their hair back
Without a care in the world



CLOVERLEAF

by Ash Conway
Cypress





THIS LOVE

by **Jordan Granger**

Old Brook Parma

Girl I've been trying to fight this love addiction.

I tried to fit you in the frame, but you didn't get the picture.

We used to be on the same page, but now you moving different.

Why you been moving different?

Baby girl I thought you loved me, but you went and broke my heart.

You got me wondering if it was really love from the start.

I know I did my wrongs, but are you gonna own up to your part?



LOST ONE

by Rose Freeman
Cypress





HOW DO I MOVE?

by **Yavier Malpica-Anes**

Frederick Douglass Main

How do I move on? The feeling of distrust runs through roughly

How do I move on? The feeling of fear runs through me

How do I move on? The feeling of confusion is clear to see

How do I move on? The image of uncertainty is unlovely

I'm moving on I don't want nothing to do neither do you

Through this hardship we need to just get pass through

Binding and losing is it all worth it?

Grew up working hard never taught to quit

Sitting in my head waiting to see who's next

I'm letting my voice be heard but my feeling get tight

When he pulls on this noose

I wish I could open up and let loose

ut now I'm back to keeping everything bottled up inside

You're not going to hold me back this time

“ so say what needs to be said ”

His words won't keep me trapped like this

I cry myself in bed I was never made to act like this

I'm shoving you back when you whisper disappear in my ear



Ignoring every stare when you're near
I gotta move forward and out of this slump
I took my losses and took my lump
I fell down but got right back up
How do I love without being confused from your
past
No more tears he was my last

SPOOKLY

by Natica Conner

Frederick Douglass Main





CTRL-@LT-D3LETE

Living Two Lives

by AJ Stadelman

Towpath Trail Main

1 The year is 2003, a warm sunny day, another day in the start of the digital age. Alexander Stadelman, a simple man, is with his daughter Zoey. She is at her birthday party with her whole family; she blows her birthday candles out and wishes for a unicorn. She has been asking for a unicorn for three months straight, so Alexander and his wife Jessica take her horseback riding and put a horn on a horse. She loves every second of the ride. She is laughing so much she throws up everywhere. Alexander is laughing. It is the first time in years that everyone is together. They all miss the old times but Alexander can't blame them for being hesitant, after what happened.....

2 File - {CHAOS} A man is running from approaching [REDACTED], he is hiding inside alleyways while getting data from [REDACTED]. The whole city is in mass panic as the area's lights, traffic lights, and sewer systems are breaking left and right. Cars are crashing into each other, exploding. Mass destruction happens everywhere [REDACTED] goes. 5 DAYS TILL EVENT



1 Alexander is running late to his IT job at Microsoft, fixing bugs that are coming in day by day just the same for him. He is getting tired of being stuck in a 9-5 job. Sure, he is being paid well, but he wants something more, something that'll get his blood rushing. It's 5 pm. He is anxious to get off today because he misses his daughter, but he also has a very big project he wants to start. When Alexander gets home he starts looking on Dark Web websites for something, a person. That THING.....

2 **File - {MUST} [Decrypting Text conversation]**

This Blackhat [REDACTED] has been stealing all our information WTF DO WE DO BOSS!?!?!]

[REDACTED] Use any force necessary to find this man and bring him in ALIVE.

As you wish boss we'll bring [REDACTED] in for messing with us 🏴‍☠️ 😊 😊

[REDACTED] Very good WHAT ARE YOU 2 STANDING AROUND FOR [REDACTED] WON'T FIND HIMSELF!!!!!!]

[End Of Conversation] 4 DAYS TILL EVENT

1 Day by day is the same thing: the same 9-5 job, going home, spending time with family, and repeat tomorrow. Alexander grows impatient doing this job, so he buries himself into a computer for days coding something more complex, and useful for him. Soon his boss starts noticing the change and asks what's going on with him. Alexander replies



with “nothing major just wasn't feeling good today.” His boss tells him to “take the day off, come back tomorrow, spend time with your family.” Alexander leaves work and goes home to play with his daughter. At night he continues to work on THE PROJECT. Soon they will know, everyone will.....

2 File - {RISE} [Decrypting file] Successful - The date is January 23, 2004 Time is 6:45 A.M The Creation of [REDACTED] has been very successful. The test of [REDACTED] has shown signs of being effective in a short period of time. There were 4 incidents that happened, 8 people dead, 20 injured. Sewer pipes exploded, and a mass blackout happened. If only I was able to access more of the city. Wait, I could do thi- . . . Recording Stopped. 3 DAYS TILL EVENT

1 BREAKING NEWS - 8 Dead And 20 Injured In City Malfunction. News reporter Jace Miller is here on the scene. “Here in Downtown Chicago car crashes and explosions happened. Sadly eight people have died and more than 20 people have been injured.” Alexander shuts off the TV and goes to grab some whiskey. Jessica is watching the news in another room. Alexander can still hear parts of the news story. *FBI found a clue. A coat with the name Project Chaos.* Jessica yells from the other room. “Hey don't you have that coat?” Alexander replies “It's a popular coat I guess.” Jessica brushes it off but her stomach begins churning. .



2 File - [Secret Document] - Chaos date January 24, 2004 time is 2 pm. The person of interest is named Chaos, a blackhat hacker who has recently caused what people are calling the "City of Glitches" Killed 8, injured and confirmed 34 people who are being hospitalized. This incident happened in person. Evidence found at the crime scene was security footage. Main Suspect is Alexander Stadelman. [End of document] 2 DAYS TILL EVENT

1 The FBI finds a lead suspect for the incident and starts driving to Alexander's house, but Alexander is already one step ahead. He takes all his cash, files, computer, everything he needs, and his daughter, leaving the house trashed. Jessica comes home after a hard day at work and sees FBI agents swarming the house so she screams, "WTF IS GOING ON? WHY ARE YOU IN MY HOUSE?" The FBI agents hand her an [ARREST WARRANT] for her husband; she gets taken for questioning for the recent attacks.

2 Alexander is on the run while his face is plastered all over the news about the terrorist attack. There are still things Alexander must do. Alexander sneaks his way to the pentagon unnoticed. Not even 4 minutes later the whole place is on lockdown and being searched, his name being said all over the intercom. "ALEXANDER STAND DOWN. YOU DON'T HAVE TO



DO THIS" He ignores what they say and makes his way to the server room. He tells his daughter, "I love you Zoey. I'm sorry. I'll always be watching you but you need to stay in here until someone gets you." Zoey is crying. She says, "Don't go, daddy. Daddy! Don't go." Alexander cannot tell her his plan or it will go to waste. He runs as fast as he can while tears fall down his face as he screams, "I'M SORRY ZOEY." **1 DAY TILL EVENT**

1 Jessica is getting questioned about why he would do this, if she ever knew he left the night of the terrorist attack. She does remember him being out for a while and hearing a loud explosion. She remembers thinking to herself, *could he have really done this to so many innocent people?* Jessica then realizes his coat was the key. She told the FBI Agents she has information, but she will only tell if they get her daughter and she gets immunity. They come to an agreement and started heading to the pentagon.

2 Alexander takes his computer out while FBI agents are outside the door. Alexander hooks his computer up and waits for everything to download and load. He is hiding behind the desk with a loaded gun ready at any moment. All Alexander is waiting for is the signal then he will start the attack. **"30 Seconds Left Sir"** the computer says on the intercom. The computer finishes the download. All



Alexander has to do is hit the button and the whole world will be free. Jessica gets on the intercom and tries to reason with him, but he doesn't care. He presses the button. Everything around them starts to malfunction: cars, military weapons, cameras, ATM's, everything electrical goes haywire. Blackouts go on everywhere in the world. "The nukes are on their way to destroy everything. This is the end of the world but the start of a new era," Alexander says. The people who are left will make this world stronger. As the whole world is in mass chaos Alexander comes out of the room and goes to his wife and daughter. They are scared of him but they know this is the end. Alexander says, "This was for the greater good, I'm sorry." He holds them tight as everything they know is getting destroyed. He squeezes Jessica's hand and kisses Zoey's forehead. They hear a loud rumble and see a flash of light as the building beneath their feet crumbles.



REGRET

by Lucas Warner
Towpath Trail East





HOPE

by **Brandon Brown**

Regent

While visiting the cemetery to see my
grandmother's grave
I lost connection to the world

It felt like I would never feel love again until
My crush gave me a hug
Telling me I am not in the world alone

COAT OF ARMS

by **Vris**

Towpath Trail Main





MIXED MEDIA

by Dejanae Powell
Towpath Trail Main





PAPER THIN

by Lee Cook

Cypress

I treat my skin like paper.
It's a beautiful blank canvas for my imagination to
run wild on,
Sometimes I paint it, color it, burn or cut it.
But you're supposed to keep your eyes on your
own paper,
So don't comment on what I do with mine.

TEARS

by Lee Cook

Cypress

None of my friends even realize,
The daily tears in my eyes.
I don't know why I'm so surprised.
It's not like they were ever real.
They removed me from the group,
The day my mental illness,
Started going downhill.
Guess they don't care I'm struggling here.



ALONE FOREVER

by **Josh Curry (The Broken Poet)**

Frederick Douglass Main

I'm tired of waking up in the morning
to see the happy faces of everyone around me
I'm tired of looking on social media
just to stare at the appreciation post for him
because he came into her life
I'm tired of being tired of being tired of envying
people and the relationships they have
am I destined to have no one?
no one to talk to when I'm feeling low?
no one to hug when it gets cold?
no one to make me feel better when I'm scared?
no one to hold me down when my anger flares?
no one to look at and say "I do"?
no one to sing these songs to?
not just a lover but a best friend
it seems my fate is set to be alone forever
I guess this is an elongated way to say that I'm
single
but can't mingle
because all the pringles have been eaten already



more fish in the sea my a**
with all this sass
all this a**
and nobody wants me?
I used to look at people around me and be
genuinely happy, which I still am.
but now I envy them and the relationships they
have with their man
to end this I will leave myself with the thought that
I did good writing this
but this is really only me expressing my emotions
because I really want someone
to love me the way he loves him
the way that they love each other
the way that they stupidly can't see that they love
one another
it's fine though
I'll just be that friend with all the dating advice in
the world
but is so single that even old people feel bad for
me
it's dark here
in the lonely room
with nothing but darkness and a spotlight
not on me
but on the crushing thought that I might be alone
forever.



PRINT

by **Vikki Patterson**
Towpath Trail Main





THE TRUTH HIDDEN IN THE MIST

by LaMarionna Emerson

Towpath Trail Main

Would they have loved me if I were different? I myself was confused... once. Although unlike you, my eyes became clear with the truth. They say darkness always comes to light, but even the light goes out, eventually. Filled with honor and loyalty, only to be shamed and accused of something nobody understands. They can burn in hell and with the same fire I burnt down my OWN village with! I will decapitate the king's head and mount it in the middle of the town FOR ALL THE PEOPLE TO SEE!! The last sound you'll hear is my laughter.



WOMEN (IN A WORLD SUCH AS THIS)

by N.H.

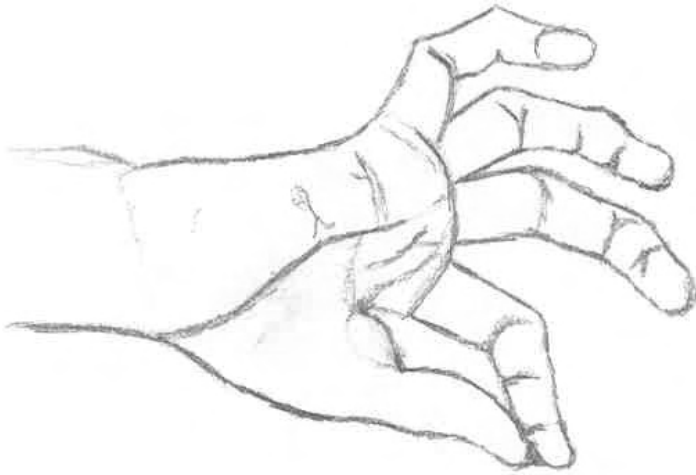
YouthBuild Columbus

In a world such as this,
I no longer look at women and wonder what
wisdom they carry;
I look at them and wonder why they seem to have
been blessed with prettier faces, rounder curves,
and more beautiful faces.
While I am left with such an unnoticeable,
unattractive exterior.
Perhaps, in a world such as this, it is hard to
remember
That our bodies are not storefront windows.
We don't have to present them perfectly to catch
people's eyes.
My body tells stories
Of all the adventures I have taken it on.
Freckles from the days in the sun,
And pimples from the nights where I ate too much
chocolate. My eyes are ordinary but I use them to
see extraordinary things, My legs are lanky but I
use them to explore incredible places.
My body will never gain the approval of this world,
But today I am grateful for it and how it gives me a
chance to be alive.



THREADING THE NEEDLE

by **Maria Martinez**
YouthBuild Columbus





UNEXPECTED

by Geonna Lipsey-Dukes

YouthBuild Columbus

The end of me? feeling and running stands as I can and sphere to see the land
I can't stop the heart and
All leaves
The end of me? feeling and running stands as I can and sphere to see the land
I can't stop the heart and
All leaves
The end of me? feeling and running stands as I can and sphere to see the land
I can't stop the heart and
All leaves
The end of me? feeling and running stands as I can and sphere to see the land
I can't stop the heart and
All leaves
The end of me? feeling and running stands as I can and sphere to see the land
I can't stop the heart and
All leaves



DO NOT

by **Aariona Buhrns**

Franklinton

do not make him a fear because his skin is darker than yours. and do not make her a joke because she weighs more than you. do not get insecure because he is taller than you. and do not make yourself ugly with envy because you think she is prettier than you. you are designed perfectly to so many people.

stop telling victims they are reacting wrong to their trauma. and do not tell her because she froze she wanted it. and do not tell her she made it worse by resisting. do not make it her fault. it is not.

RAWR

by **Rose Freeman**

Cypress





MESSAGE TO THE YOUTH

by Isaac Taylor

Towpath Trail Main

I don't even like to party cause they like to shoot it up
so I don't be out in public, I'm at the house havin' fun.
If you never been a coward goin' throw your hands up.
Better stand on your respect and don't go for nothing.
I don't go out to parties that's how they set my brother up
and it hurt me to da gut
like I got hit by a truck.
They robbed him and shot him, I just seen big cuz,
big bro was tryna fight and they shot him on da bus.
Put the guns down and put them hands up,
say you never been a coward, better man up
and if they knock you down, better get back up.
It don't matter if they win, least you stood for something.
Be glad you live another day cause not too many do,
I'm just tryna survive and tryna see it through.
This is a message to the youth,
remember just be you.
And if you got a vision, can you see it
can you feel it, den grab it.
Don't never say you can't, gotta push until you have it.
Don't never say it's hard if it ain't easy, gotta practice
den once you get it down it's gone turn into a habit.
And when dem times get hard you got to pray.
And don't never lose your faith.
And when you feel afraid,
God gonna keep you safe.



14 & BLESSED

by Curtis Jackson
Old Brook Parma





THE SWITCH

by Danny Williams

Cypress

Daniel

It was the night before the talent show. Greg and I had been up late nights practicing our parts to ensure our sweet and swift victory. We had a big day tomorrow and it was already late from our last rehearsal. I dragged myself upstairs and into my room. I got my clothes ready for tomorrow and packed all of our material that we would need. I threw myself into bed and tried to drift to sleep. I was too anxious, am I missing something? What can or will go wrong? What if I forget what to do? No. It's perfect, we've been practicing for weeks nothing could go wrong.

The alarm clock blared as I woke up and groaned at the realization of how early it was. I had woken up extra early to ensure I had everything I needed, a full breakfast and if I had time maybe go over my part again. I got home late from Greg's house last night. We wanted to go over our lines once more before today so we stayed up late for that. Our act was heavily dependent on teamwork but we both needed to know our parts, we were doing a "glow show". Greg had seen it in a movie about a talent show and had the idea of us entering and replicating the idea. My dad had the material for it and he helped us buy the sticks for it, it was perfect. I grabbed my backpack and extra bag with our stuff in it and headed for the bus now parked outside of the house.



Greg

Where was Daniel? The bus is running late and we were supposed to bring the supplies into the auditorium before classes started and I left everything at his house last night. I heard a voice call Greg and I turned and saw Daniel running through the bus entrance gasping for air. I took the supplies from him and quickly ran them to the auditorium just as the bell rang, it was time to head to class. The first three periods were very slow but as we approached lunch, the day seemed to go by faster. I was getting more and more nervous as we approached the activity period when the talent show would take place. We had spent many weeks perfecting our act and today we would put all that practice to use and get first place. I had a study period for my last class and decided to take a nap to ensure I was refreshed for the show.

“Greg, Greg, the period’s over. We’re going to the auditorium,” Mrs. Wilson said, waking me. I lifted myself out of my desk and started walking towards the back of the stage. I realized it took Mrs. Wilson more than a few minutes to wake me and the show was about to start. It’s ok though. We weren’t first although I still put myself into a rush so we could get everything ready. I turned the corner to the backstage and I saw Daniel turning the corner at the same time and instantly felt a big smack.



Daniel

I fell back and as I got backup I found myself in front of a mirror. I turned away from it to see if Greg was ok and I turned to find out I was at the stairs Greg had just come up and ran into me from. I turned back, and saw myself but I realized I wasn't me? My ears started ringing and everything became so obtuse. Time was slow, the world was spinning. "Daniel, Daniel" I heard as if it were coming from a long tunnel. Greg was pulling me into a back room and I heard the door to the room shut. "What is going on?" Greg asked, but I didn't respond. "Daniel snap out of it."

"What?" I uttered.

"What happened, why do you look like me?" Daniel asked.

"Why do you look like me?" I shot back. Neither of us said anything for what seemed like a lifetime. He went into the bathroom that was inside the office and I followed him. I walked in and Greg was looking at the mirror. I looked in the mirror and once again saw the impossible. I was looking at Greg's body but I was in control of it. Greg was coming to the realization of what happened just as I was. We Switched.

Greg

I scurried past Daniel, or me? I was pacing around the room trying to think of what was happening, what's going to happen, how we're going to do the show. Daniel came out of the bathroom and asked me what I was asking myself, "What are we going to do?"



“Well, we have to do everything the same, you do your original part and I'll do mine,” I replied.

“That's not what I'm saying or care about, how do we get back to normal?” Daniel said.

I didn't know how we were going to fix this, and I don't understand why he thought I would. I stopped pacing. Were we going to live each other's lives forever? We were gonna be up soon; I still wanted to win. “We will have to worry about that later, we're gonna be up soon and we can't just back out from performing. We've been practicing for weeks,” I said. He mumbled an okay.

We opened the door and Mr. Carter, who was the director of the show, was walking past. “What are you two doing in there and where have you been? I have been looking for you, we need to get you ready,” he shouted. I wanted to shrink back into a dark room and just forget about everything. He led us to the supply room and we grabbed the materials I had earlier placed in there. We switched into our neon shirts and moved the obstacles closer to the stage.

Daniel

We heard applause coming from the other side of the wall, the act was ending and we were up now. The curtain closed and we moved our obstacles out onto the stage and scurried back for our glow sticks. The lights cut, silence spread through the audience, music started. I remembered what I needed to do, I only hoped Greg did as well. The curtain opened and we turned the glow sticks on.



Dash left, there's a box flip onto it. My thoughts were racing. Greg seemed to be doing well and we were about to come together. I jumped onto the higher box and hoping Greg was in position I leaped where he was supposed to be. I felt a hand where I landed, clearing my fears. Greg pushed me up and flipped onto the box I just came down from. I spun through the air and landed with the glow sticks touching the ground making me upside down. I flipped onto my feet and I heard the music coming to the end, meaning we needed to wrap it up and finish the final act. Greg came back around and flipped, landing on my left side. We threw out glow sticks in the air and started juggling together. I would throw my right stick over to his left hand and he would throw his right stick up into the air and I would catch it with my left hand. The music faded, we were done and the lights turned on and the curtain closed. Applause was heard, louder than the previous act. The ground started to shake and then it was done. The audience stopped and Greg and I ran out opposite sides of the curtain. I hurried back to Greg's side of the curtain and I finally got over there and he came around the corner.

Greg

I groaned as I sat up, what happened now? My head was throbbing, did I faint? I looked up and saw Daniel, but it was Daniel in his own self! I forgot



about my head and jumped up and ran back into the office with the bathroom despite me hearing Mr. Carter yelling and protesting. I opened the door and shot straight to the mirror. I started jumping with excitement, I was me! I went back out to Daniel and he seemed to realize what happened as well. We jumped with joy. We stopped as people started staring. Mr. Carter hurried over and immediately asked why I just went back into the office. I told him I left something in there. We got a snack and watched the other acts and it was time for the winner to be announced.

We heard over the pa system, "Act one, Diane and Elyssia Judge one scored 10, Judge two scored 7, Judge 3 scored 6, bringing your average score to a rounded 7." "Act two, Daniel and Greg, Judge one scored 10, Judge two scored 10." If the third and final Judge scored a 10, we would win. I felt as if time slowed and as I think back I imagine it being said in slow motion. "Judge 3, scored 10." Daniel and I jumped with joy and heard applause from the audience. We went out to accept our trophies. We went back and headed to our lockers together. Despite the déjà vu that happened more than an hour ago, today was an awesome day. I headed towards the bus pickup after saying goodbye to Daniel. I went home and got my clothes packed. Me and Daniel planned a sleepover for the weekend. After everything was packed I finished my homework and waited for his mom to pick me up. I got to his house and we played video games all night. We fell asleep at some point during the night and as we woke up, everything was different. We would never be the same.



THE NOT-SO-ORDINARY TREE

by Jayden Smith

Cypress





FLORA AND FEAR

by Ash Conway
Cypress



INVISIBLE

by Lee Cook
Cypress

I always stand out in a crowd,
I know I can be seen.
But still, I'm invisible.
Especially to him.
Maybe it's because I'm not very loud.
Maybe it's because I don't know what to talk about.
But neither does she really, and he sees her.
Maybe I'm just cursed to live in the shadow
Of the girl boys want the most,
As an invisible ghost.



THE DEEPER THE BLADE

by **Lee Cook**

Cypress

I'm still not good enough for you.
I try to be what you want and need,
But you would rather be with anyone who isn't
me.
Sometimes I look at the faintly noticeable scars on
my wrist,
And think to myself "how could you ignore this?"
I never wanted to put the weight of my depression
on your shoulders,
But you're neglect is like boulders,
Tied to my ankles drowning me in a sea of sorrow,
Far too weak to hold onto tomorrow.
So as I sit here bleeding on the floor,
All because I gave you my all and you still wanted
more.
I wonder how deep I have to cut,
To finally be enough.



STILL LIFE

by Vris

Towpath Trail Main





MAINTENANCE

by **Ericka Stewart**

Frederick Douglass Main

JEROME!!!! My mother yelled my name unnecessarily loud which made me contemplate my existence. Why am I alive? I thought to myself while I was getting decent. I ran quickly down the stairs to the kitchen where my mom was.

“Where's the fire mommy huh where is it? I shouldn't have to tell you this late in the morning that it's winter break and my sleep is very important to me.”

“Watch your mouth, son, before you get an unpleasant surprise. Your breakfast is getting cold and you wouldn't have been happy if I kept you sleeping and ate your food. A thank you would be greatly appreciated.”

“Thank you mommy.”

“You're welcome my love.”

I sat down and stared at the steaming grits, eggs and bacon in front of me. I opened the vacuum of my mouth and literally inhaled my breakfast.

“So what's on the agenda for my strong strapping young son?” My mom said.

“Ohh nothing much, I'm probably going to Becky's for that FAFSA, you know how it is.”



"Well, before you leave to get that FAFSA can you fix the furnace? It's been acting up lately and I am anemic and you know I be cold."

"No problem Mommy. I'll get right on it."

I left the kitchen to the hallway and descended down a small flight of stairs to my dank, musty basement. I go to the furnace and try to turn the switch off and then on again. That's when I hear something. *squeak squeak* I get closer to the vent of the furnace and I see a small, furry, black, ball of furry fuzz. Bro, what the heck? I think to myself. I reach my hand under the vent and snatch the fuzz ball from the vent.

"Hey little guy." I say to the ball of fuzz, not expecting a response.

"What's gucci my dookie?" the ball of fuzz says back to me.

The ball of fuzz spoke to me?! I could not believe it. I just stood there, at my furnace, too stunned to speak.

"Are you going to say something chungie boi? Or are you just going to stand here with me enveloped in your big warm manly hands. I actually have no problem with this but you're kinda freaking me out."

"Oh my bad bro" I tried to sound as normal as possible but in all seriousness I was questioning my existence once again. Is this real? Am I still Dreaming? I thought to myself.



"This is real my young brothah. I am real," said the black ball of fuzz.

"You can read my mind!?" I asked him.

"No, I have just been through this enough to know what people are thinking when they meet me. Speaking of meeting me: are you going to ask me my name? Huh? I am feeling like a freak of nature right now and even though I am, it's rude to remind ourselves of our insecurities. So if you don't mind, please speak to me as if we are new friends which I hope we can be."

"Wow. I'm sorry bud. What's your name?" I asked. My name is Fuzzball Da Don."

"Woah. You be on that Mafia B.I.?"

"Nah, but my grandad was and the name carried onto me."

Our conversation was interrupted by my mom screaming my name.

"Jerome!!! You forgot to take your meds! Come upstairs real quick please!"

"OK MOM!!!!" I screamed unnecessarily loud. "I gotta go upstairs real quick. I'll be right back so we can



find you a proper home that doesn't disrupt the furnace's functions. Sounds cool?"

"Yes That sounds awesome my friend," said Fuzzball Da Don.

"Ok. Don't go anywhere." I set Fuzzball on top of a pile of freshly dried clothes and ran upstairs. I ran to the kitchen where my mom was. "Mom, might you be able to yell my name a little quieter from now on? Your yell gives me anxiety like a mug." I said to my mom. I take my medicine with a tall glass of orange juice.

"Nah. Thank you for fixing the furnace tho. I'm nice and toasty now. What were you doing down there for so long?"

"Uh... Fixing the furnace mom. What do you think?" I told her. I didn't want her to know about Fuzzball.

"Ooh. Are you going to Becky's now that you're done with the furnace My love?"

"Nah, I think I'm gonna put them clothes away that are in the basement."

"Oh wow. That's a first. Thank you son."

"No prob Ma"

I ran back down to the basement and grabbed the hamper of clothes from the dryer. I then, with the



quickness of a cheetah ran from my basement to my bedroom in the attic. I set the hamper on my floor and grabbed Fuzzball in my hands. He looked very different. Less fuzzy, more gray and a lot more quiet. Matter of fact, I did not hear a single sound from this ball of fuzz I was holding.

“Um... Fuzzball why aren't you talking? Why aren't you answering me?” I asked.

“Maybe because you are talking to dryer lint Jerome.” My mom was standing in my open doorway. I hurry and put Fuzzball behind my back.

“Mom. You are right. I'm gonna put this dryer lint into the trash can. Thank you for letting me know this. Also, thank you for invading my privacy. Thanks Mom. Truly. Please close my door on your way out.”

“You got it Son.” I put that “dryer lint” in my desk drawer. *I know what I saw. I know what I heard. He's probably just sleeping.* I thought to myself. I decided to go back to sleep myself. Maybe when I wake up he will wake up too. zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz



MY LITTLE JOURNEY

by Ezekiel

YouthBuild Columbus

I'm Riding in a Lexus. I got pulled over for
I #1 Black, that's a fact. But if it was
Bread cost more
I'd pay com
I'd pay com
I'd pay com



HOLIDAY GONE NIGHTMARE

by **James Long**

Old Brook Main

The winter was supposed to be really brutal this year. So we packed accordingly. We took everything we would need if it got too cold. We made sure to take extra warm clothes in case we really had to bundle up.

We hit the road and instantly, we were having an amazing time singing songs and playing games in the back seats. My older sister, Carrie, wasn't really too involved, which was kinda worrying because she's been really weird lately. She likes bringing home pets and no one knows where they go after she goes to her bedroom with them. I don't know why she keeps losing them in her room.

Her room also smells really bad. I'm starting to worry about her a lot more than I normally do. The snow was so pretty and I could do karaoke forever. My younger brother, Joey, was having a fun time too! I'm 11 and Joey is 8 and the baby is 6 months. Carrie is 13.

Whenever we go to Michigan, I am so happy. Even though we live really close, I haven't been here lately because when we wanted to go this last summer, mom and Carrie had their big fight. I really didn't see much of it because mom made us go to bed before her. But we were going to go to grandma's house for 4th of July and we couldn't.



I can't wait to see grandma and grandpa. I also really miss their dog, Sadie. I'm so happy we get to go. We made a few stops before getting to Grandma's house, a trip to the bathroom and the occasional snack run. It was a long trip, and a slippery one. We had to make sure to be careful on the interstate because of all of the snow.

The snow looked so pretty as we drove and it was so fun to have a road trip with my family just like we used to do when I was younger. It was a long drive but honestly, as soon as we got to grandma's house, I was wishing to be back on the road. I never knew a road trip could be so fun!

But like I said, we made it to grandma's and instantly I was so happy. I haven't seen my grandparents in too long and I missed them so much. As we all walked through the door, Sadie was jumping around and barking. But not an angry bark, a happy one. I missed her so much. It was obvious that she missed us too.

As we walked through the door, grandma greeted us with the biggest hugs ever. It's sad we don't get to see her as much anymore since she got sick. Mom won't tell me what she has, but Carrie already told me that she has pancreatic cancer. I don't really know what that means, but Carrie said it is really bad. Ever since she found out about it, she's been pretty sad because her and grandma were always close. That's whenever she stopped being Carrie. Now she's not the sister I remember. Mom just blames it on puberty.



When Carrie and Grandma hugged, she looked like she wanted to cry. Her face was red and her voice was tight but she wasn't crying. Joey and grandpa always did stuff together and the first thing he said to grandpa as he got through that door was "Can we go fishing if you visit this summer?" Of course, grandpa said yes. That was always their favorite thing to do together.

After we got there, my grandparents wanted to know if we wanted to go in the backyard to play with Sadie for a little bit while my parents caught up with them. So we did. Sadie loves the snow so much and it's really cute how she runs around in it. She's a chocolate lab but she's still somewhat small.

Everything was so fun. My grandmother and my parents were in the house and grandpa was out in the yard with us for about an hour until we all got too cold to stay outside. Whenever all of the cold hit us, we went inside and we put Sadie in one of my favorite of her sweaters. It was this really cute red and brown reindeer sweater and with it grandma put little jingle bells on her collar, which made the whole outfit so much better. It added this whole new layer of adorable to her!

Grandma started making dinner, which is always something we look forward to. It was getting dark out, but it was winter, so it was only about 6 o'clock. She was making this big dinner with prime rib and



potatoes and yams. It all smelled so good. Right before dinner was finished, Carrie and I took Sadie out to use the bathroom because she was pawing at the back door.

After she came back in, we sat down for dinner, Christmas music in the background. It seemed straight out of a movie and it was so nice. We rarely have times like this since dad is always at work and grandma and grandpa can't visit since she got sick. It was so nice to have everyone together. Carrie seemed a little happier, which was nice. She was laughing and joining the conversation until Sadie came in and Grandma started feeding her. Grandma and Sadie are best friends.

I am so worried about grandma now that Sadie is missing. It doesn't make sense for her to run away, but when we woke up she was gone and there was just no trace of her. We all went out early in the morning to look for her, but we couldn't find her. As we got back to grandma's, she was crying in the living room. We didn't really know why, because we thought Sadie would come back. Grandma was sitting by Carrie's bag holding the sweater. I think grandma was just worried she was going to be cold without her sweater.

We started our trip back after we got our things together. As we were in the car Carrie didn't speak. She just kept fidgeting with Sadie's collar. I don't know how she got it. Mom didn't ask any questions. Turning off of the side streets onto the snow covered interstate was such a beautiful sight.



GARNET

by **Sebby Vazquez**
Frederick Douglass Main





SUNSET

by **Josh Curry, The Broken Poet**

Frederick Douglass Main

the water crashes
I can hear it calling me
calling us
the entirety of my body wants to just fold
and unleash the story untold
my mind washes away with the crashing waves
the clouds look nice tonight
so white
rippled as if it was interrupted
sun and moon intertwine
and switch places with each other
so in love with one another
but kept away by the earth's gravity
it's so sad to see
something so beautiful
something that I long to have
something that I want so bad
the hunger for it consumes me
but I refuse to be
kidnapped by blind love
only because



I've tasted its poison
it's betrayal
it's almost useful amenities
it's capturing remedies
that has the answer to everything
maybe it won't hurt to taste it again
no
I can't
NO
I won't do this again
I won't fall victim to the love of sun and moon
the love of the yin and yang
the revealing light followed by the consuming
darkness
the makeshift love I tried to create with someone
that doesn't even notice me
the waves are silent now
blissful and euphoric
is the water before me
speaking to me with every swish it makes
sunset
one of the most beautiful things
to be seen by the human eye
sunset



SPRING CLEANING

by Ash Conway
Cypress





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Old Brook Parma
High School

Cypress High School

Randall Park High School

Franklinton Prep
High School

Regent High School

Frederick Douglass Main
High School

Towpath Trail High
School

Frederick Douglass
Euclid High School

Towpath Trail Barberton
High School

Liberty High School

Towpath Trail East
High School

Marshall High School

Youthbuild High School

Old Brook Main High
School

