



VOX

ARTS AND LITERARY MAGAZINE

— *free your voice* —





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Snow by the Hudson
Samantha Finch

Snow
Samantha Finch

I am curled close to the cold,
clear window as we race across the tracks

Tiny crystals fall from the sky
and collect along the ground
My hands, they tremble as I
switch the song

Silenced to all, but the words
that now float around my head
This world is moving
Slow
Slower
Slowest

Despite the bodies
I see all around me
Breathing
Moving
Feeling

And yet, I feel alone
As I watch the faceless
commuters all around me

I feel alone
Alone
Alone
Alone

We pull up to a station,
I couldn't tell you which
And there he is

Laughing
Smiling

Playing

As he waits for his train
The snow sticking
to his wavy hair

And time stops completely

And with a burst of thick warm air

The fog gathers on my window
like a barrier, a stone wall
that I am too short to see over

I fight to see him again

Perfect
Beautiful
Something like no other

I fight my way back
to the window and wipe
all my fears away
and he is gone

nothing more
than an illusion after all.



Shadows on a Log
Jessica Alba

Stargazer “Lilly” and the Honey Bee

La Reina Lawrence

It's raining lilies on my face in the
form of tiny kisses everyplace.
The tender touch of fluttering wings,
as I milk her most intimate
and flowery things. With skin as soft
as petals you see and nectar that
flows and nourishes this honey bee.
The raw anticipation as she
watches me fly, awaiting the surge
from her pistil, “sighs...”
It's raining lilies on me, you see,
but this Stargazer Lilly
only rains for me.

For my amazing Nereyda aka Lilly
20130104 0745 Fri



Buzz
Fatuma Hydera

Nature Always Wins

Shawn Murrell

As he leisurely walked through the forest, John wondered faintly what the sun looked like. He had seen pictures and used his imagination, but from time to time he wished he had been alive to see it. Before he died, John's father had told him stories of summer days spent at the beach eating ice cream and hot dogs and of stars lighting up the sky on cool nights. Days and nights that no longer existed. His father had died a few years ago. The days simply passed in a haze of black and grey.

The dry soil and broken limbs crunched heavily beneath John's feet as he continued to walk. He did not have a destination. There was nowhere to go, but he could not stand to be in the bunker for too long. The hours seemed to pass by so much slower if he only sat around and stared at the walls. Reading the books he had read many times before would not ease his restless mind and legs, so that day he had decided to walk through the desolate forest near the bunker.

At least, it was John's version of a forest. Besides the stories his father had told him, it was the only thing he had known in all his seventeen years. Everything was dead and no life had ever bloomed in the place as long as he had been there. The trees had no names, the ones that still stood anyway. They were black, thick with soot from the bombings and fires that had occurred miles away some time ago. The same soot had choked all of the water from the ground, so the trees never grew. Each simply remained poised as if frozen in time. As he passed by one, John pressed his free hand to the tree. Beneath the pressure, it crumbled in on itself and John's palm came away black. He stared at it for a moment and then kept moving.

Walking on, the earth began to incline and soon John found himself at the top of a hill. The trees seemed taller there, the ground less black. He looked down at the ground as he surveyed the hill. He had only been there a few times before, but there was nothing new to be seen. This was true of any place he traveled. Determining that his imagination was playing tricks on him, John sat down on the cold, hard ground to rest. He put down the bow that his father had helped him make and removed the quiver of arrows from his back. John never expected to catch any animals. Instead, the weapons were for protection against any people he might run into. He took off his heavy coat and bundled it up to use as a pillow.

Lying down, John could only see the grey sky. The skinny limbs at the tops of the trees raked across it, leaving black gashes like wounds in the sky. Then the rain would be the blood, he thought to himself. Though John could count on both hands how many times it had rained in his lifetime, he knew that with each passing day the possibility of it happening again became less likely.

He lay there for a while, thinking about nothing. As his thoughts drifted in and out, John almost missed the rustling coming from below. At first, John thought it was the wind. He soon realized that it couldn't be. When it blew, the wind carried soot, dirt, and a mysterious stench for which John had long ago given up attempting to determine the source. John rolled onto his stomach. Staying low to the ground, he grabbed his bow and arrows and made his way over to the edge of the hill. He searched for the source, squinting every now and then to separate the blackness of the ground and trees from the rest of the landscape. When he finally saw it, John had to convince himself that what lay before him was actually real.

His father had shown him pictures, but John had never seen one. He never expected to see one in his entire life. All of the animals were essentially extinct. Yet, here it was. An anomaly. A miracle. A rabbit. It was the most beautiful thing that John had ever seen. His face felt wet. For the first time since his father died, John was crying. He smiled at the sight, but did not take his eyes off the rabbit. The creature was plump and white and hopped gracefully across the forest floor as if the barren surroundings held the secrets of life. It acted as if it wanted for nothing, though there was nothing to be gained from the place. John was mesmerized by it.

After some time, the rabbit began to hop away and John was struck with an unfathomable fear. While he had watched the creature, the thought that he needed the rabbit to survive had occurred to him. John did not want to kill it, but knew that the act would not only be necessary; it would be easy. He pulled out an arrow as the rabbit hopped lazily along. As he loaded the bow and aimed, a heaviness gathered in John's chest. He steadied his shaking hands. Took a deep breath. And fired.

The rabbit died instantly. Red seeped from the wound and engulfed the whiteness of its fur. A bright light that led John quickly to it. He grimaced as he pulled the arrow from its neck and blood poured faster from it. John picked the rabbit up, the warm blood soaking his hand. He gathered his things from the top of the hill and left the forest.



The Advance of Fall on Pace University
Christopher D'Erasmio

A Rare Gift
Jessica VanderWerff

It hangs alone, suspended
on a blank wall.
Its rounded edges wrapped
in coarse black leather
that shelters its fragile frame.

Strings of sinew reach out
to embrace one another,
while its centerpiece, an
arrowhead, struggles to
cut its way out.

The dusty scent of moss
assaults the nose, while
the pebbles decorating
its edges are a smooth
comfort to dry fingertips.

Feathers reach downward,
extending like little beards
from its chin. Beads adorn
them, creating a rare gift
for their doting chief.

I can almost see the horrors,
the nightmares that haunt
our dreams. Kicking and
crying: passing illusions
of lost children and beasts
dancing and laughing.

But I wake with only memories
of pleasant thoughts: dreams
of home, love and, comfort.
The monsters cease their cries;
they are the inmates of the
only impenetrable prison:
The Dream Catcher.



The Red Fire
Samantha Finch

Red Roses
Yokairy Perez

I walk across a vast meadow of red roses,
each thorn ripping through my bare flesh
A stream of blood begins to flow
from where the thorns puncture my skin
Each moment that passes is felt
with excruciating pain
I try to suppress the hurt from my wounds
but every time I glance at the torn flesh, its intensity
engulfs my soul more and more
I place my hand to soothe my pain over
the stream of flowing blood,
but it doesn't seem to stop it
I panic and a different kind of stream
begins to fill my eyes
The salt rivers flow to the edge of my face,
dropping off in small drops and
gently landing on my wounds
I begin to see an unusual thing occur
The wounds begin to heal and the stream
of blood comes to a halt
I wipe the tears from my eyes and continue through
the meadow, avoiding every thorn with precaution
in hopes of not being hurt once more.



Butterfly Kisses
Jacqueline Saviano

Order Chelonii

Daniel Rubado

The Hindus believe that the world is held in place by four elephants balanced on the back of a turtle. (Well, probably not all Hindus, any more than all Christians believe in an evil, talking snake and isn't that its own lovely bit of slander.) That's a lot of pressure for the shy little chelonian to shoulder, literally and metaphorically. I mean, try to look at it from his perspective. He has the good sense to evolve a complex, segmented protective carapace – please take with a grain of salt the eagle's attempt to steal credit for that one – and what does he get for the trouble? He's expected to be a doormat for four overweight behemoths who did nothing but grow until they were too big to be prey. Isn't that always how it works out? You spend millions of years working out a uniquely brilliant answer to the most basic of evolutionary quandaries, and all you get for your trouble is an eternity of four lazy idiots standing on your back telling you not to move around so much.

Don't even get me started on the house-on-his-back thing you're all so glib about. A shell is not a house. You try living in a backpack and see how well it suits you. A turtle's shell is a part of himself, and a rather ingenious one at that, but he can't hide in his shell any more than you can hide under your fingernails. It's not an excuse for you to deny him the comforts of a greater habitat. "Oh, it's okay," you tell yourself as you dump your fetid waste into his river; "he carries his home on his back." You selfish, arrogant vandal. Maybe I'll dump five tons of turtle shit into your brownstone. Will you thank me for not injecting it directly under your skin?

I'm sorry. Look, I get a little heated sometimes. You just don't think. I get it; I really do. There's something about the turtle that is very distant, and it's easy to make decisions for him in his absence. He's shy. You can't get close to a turtle. You can watch from the shore, as he basks on a rock in the middle of a pond. Get too close, though, and SPLISH! He's gone before you can say, "slow as a turtle." So you're never going to be able to ask his permission. He has no interest in engaging you in conversation. You like to say that shy people need to "come out of their shells." Well, he can't. Stop harassing him.

You know what you could do, if you wanted to make amends? Stop being so lazy about his name. He's a turtle. He's not a tortoise. There's a difference, okay? It's not even that hard. Turtles live in the water, tortoises live on land. He's not trying to be self-righteous about this. He understands that everybody makes mistakes. It's your apathy that bothers him. "Oh, turtles, tortoises...what's the difference?" you'll ask dismissively and when he tries to explain it to you, you'll zone out, indifferent to his need for identity. It's really starting to get to him. He's started a support group, you know. Frogs and toads joined last week. Their meetings are quiet, but extremely therapeutic.



The Trees That Line My Soul
Samantha Finch

Mother Nature's Capture

Fatuma Hydera

Freshly grown grass, greener
and brighter than any
I've ever perceived. Tree
trunks thick and brown, with
life within its leaves.

Little red birds gliding
beneath a vivid blue sky, the
clash of color startling. A rabbit
peeps from its burrow, wary
of hidden prey.

With my lens I zoom in
20X and behold the life
closer to the ground. Millions
of ants in search of food
for their all-mighty queen.

My camera clicks and
clicks, as I capture
nature's beauty for myself.



Morning Mist at Opperman's Pond
Jessica Alba

Pompeii
Anna Walters

If so, let me go into the imaginary city.

Let me wander in a trance
between grief and miraculous abandonment,

where decorative walls gleam;
artwork dances opposite marble.

Claw-like branches sprawl.
The yellow bird turns sideways, clinging.

If the city is lifeless, the eye
is deluded by stone.

Let me walk the pathway in darkness
to gaze at the shining cat's eye.

If his plastered hands were praying,

were his hands clasped
the night before?

Poseidon's frozen glare from the wall.

Let me dive into the sea.
Let me dive into the walls.

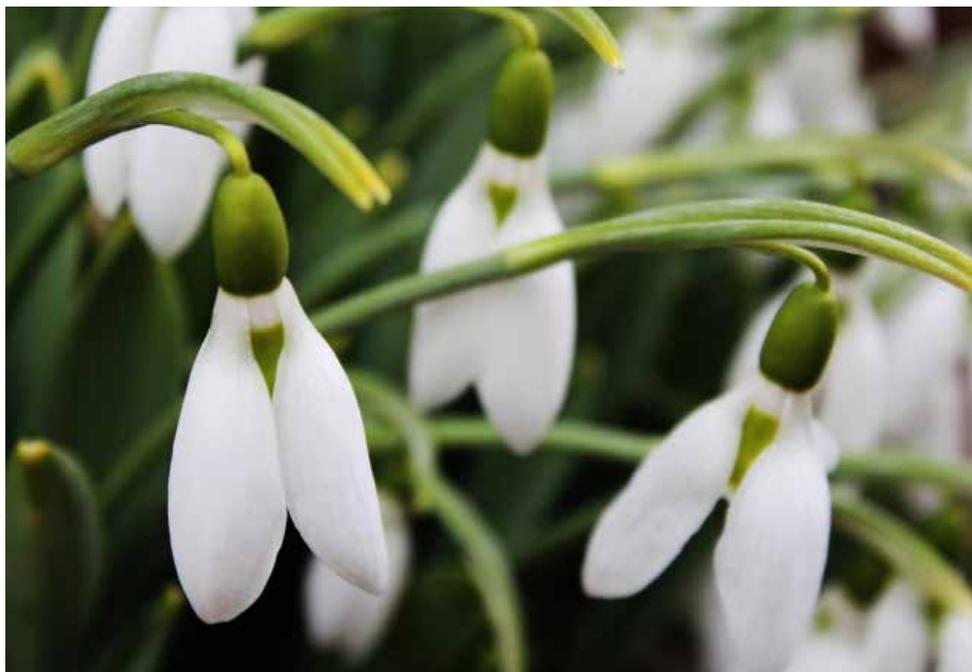
If I stare out the shattered window,
will the sky remain a light blue?

Lead me to the theater, where the
petite men sit to see a staged act.

In the beginning, was the pottery
intact, placed alongside a home?

Observe the symbol of a city:
A baby's innocent face opposite the
sharp horn of a bull.

If I stand in the broken, can I linger
in the pieces to be whole?



Droplets
Samantha Finch

Alice in the Pool by Heather Askildsen
1st Place Winner, Prose Competition

I would run to Alice Milton's house after school every day—my sneakers skidding down the gravelly hill, my lungs filling with the odor of petrol as I'd turn past the old gas station, my mouth twitching with joy, knowing I was almost there. Her little white house with the peeling green trim would come into view, casting a silky mist of shadows across pavement before me.

Zack would never give me a ride. No matter how many times Mom told him it would "only take a minute." He would brush her off with a drag of his cigarette, bits of ash sprinkling his grizzled chin. Each time, I would find myself swearing bitterly that I'd never grow a beard. Perhaps my face would look as ugly and cruel.

I hated his smelly car anyway. The sticky sent of Aurora's perfume had sunk into the foam bulging out of the cheap leather seats, and I could never decide if the vanilla stench made me feel like throwing up or putting my fist through the glass. Running, I could smell nothing but my own sweat and the asphalt beneath my feet. As I got closer to that little white house, the whole-wide-world would buzz in my chest like a sun kissed balloon—ready to burst in the balmy air.

Today, Alice was waiting by the side of the pool. Well, it wasn't really a pool. Not like the spoiled kids had across town. That was just what we liked to call the little moss covered pond in her backyard. Alice sat barefoot, tossing pebbles she had gathered in a withered straw sunhat into the muddy green water.

"It won't fit your head now," I said collapsing on the grass next to her. She smiled in reply, wiping mud on the corner of her dress. Her mother made her lots of frilly sundresses with wavy floral patterns that rippled along her thin little body. Mom had called Mrs. Milton "a stay at home mom," the way girls at school called each other fat.

"Like you." I had said to her. I remember the octave of my voice rising uncomfortably.

"No. Not like me," she had mumbled as though I couldn't hear, chopping an onion for diner, her heavy strokes making grooves on the damp wooden surface.

The dress Alice wore today was purple with twirling magenta roses on it, but one of the roses was now smudged with drying mud. I picked away at it absent-mindedly.

"I thought I saw an orange fish earlier," she said, breath wheezing through the gap in her teeth, "but Dad said it was just a piece of trash." I peered into the water, looking past the patches of dark algae that divided the surface like a green and brown chessboard.

"Of course, the water's dead."

She twisted my pinky finger, giggling with disdain. "Stop. It is not."

I twisted her wrist in response and she gave a cry and started tick-

ling my ribs with her free hand. I shrieked with painful laughter and pushed her off.

Water sprinkled my face.

I opened my eyes to see Alice had become a mess of purple fabric and yellow hair flailing in the muddy pool. I laughed even harder.

“Sorry,” I said, my chest vibrating with the word. She continued to splash about in the water and the longer she did, the more my laughter faded.

“Alice, stop!”

And then she did. Her body went limp in the water, the algae making an outline around her.

Every nerve in my body twitched with fear. I dove head first into the pool, my jeans and sweater weighing me down with soppy moisture. I pulled her slime-covered body onto the grass. She flopped like a wet rag doll, bloated and listless. I cleared her hair away from her face. Her lips were blue, as if she’d eaten a fruit pop, but all of the blood had drained from her russet skin.

I was the fastest kid in school. All I did was run. Yet it seemed an eternity had passed as I ran from the pool’s edge to the back door of the house, screaming for her mother. No matter how hard my legs pumped with effort, the little screen door, with its peeling green paint and rusty gold handle only seemed to inch closer.

My hands rammed against the screen, and I could feel a scream vibrate through my throat, though I had no idea if it made words. The taunting buzz of the television rang in my ears like a siren; no one but me could hear it. The room beyond the screen was empty. Suddenly, I remembered seeing no car in the driveway. We were alone.

I ran back, my wet feet slipping across the grass. I fell on her stomach and pressed my mouth to hers. She tasted of bubblegum flavored toothpaste. The scent permeated the linens in her bedroom. I always teased her for sleeping with her mouth open and letting tiny puddles of drool stain the sheets.

“Let’s run away,” I had said once across her pillow, that same smell filling my lungs.

“Why?” She had asked, her soft voice like brass wind chimes in the autumn air.

“Cause I like the woods better than inside.”

“Will we live in the woods?”

“Well, yeah.” My face had gone pink. I hadn’t really thought of anywhere else. The world beyond the trees that smothered the edge of town was nothing more than a shapeless blur to me.

“What about the circus?”

“I can’t do tricks or anything—and camels spit,” I added so she

would think I had truly analyzed the prospect.

“I think my Dad would be mad.”

“Mine wouldn’t. If he can leave, so can I.”

She had turned to look out her bedroom window. The leaves had been dyed a thousand shades of red and gold in the shimmering autumn sunlight. I watched it dance in her eyes, as she imagined our lives beyond the trees.

“Alright. I’ll go if I can be the fairy queen.”

“There are no fairies.”

“You don’t know that. They could be invisible—like ghosts.”

“There are no ghosts.”

“Maybe they are friends in the forest,” she continued, ignoring me.

“Perhaps there is a ghost king and fairy queen, Peter!” She added excitedly.

No one said my name like Alice. Other people called me Pete to make me feel squat and stupid. But Peter was a name like a knight or an astronaut. Pete was some jerk that I didn’t even like, but Peter could do anything.

“Do you think they are friends?” She persisted, coming to lie back down across from me.

“Maybe...” I had lied.

I watched my tears fall onto her pale face, as I frantically beat her chest, so fragile I feared I might break it. Each time I lifted my head up to breathe, I caught sight of my face, distorted in the muddy pool. There was Peter. He was with Alice in the pool. I should not have lied. She was going to live with the fairies and the ghosts, leaving me behind...just Pete. Still, I pounded her chest.

I kept thinking of Alice’s room upstairs in the house. How it must have looked at that moment. The cold light pouring in across her bed, sunken in the shape of her body...

My fists beat against her chest with new fever. Something inside of me would not stop. A flame that I always had flickered somewhere in the folds of my mind, the grooves of my joints ignited, the pockets of my flesh ignited. They could not have her!

Suddenly my mouth was filled with a gush of saliva, algae, and mud as a cough wisped through her teeth. I let the warm liquid drip down my face as I watched her eyes flutter open. She blinked up at me through my own tears.

“Peter?” she gurgled, bringing her finger up to brush the slime across my chin. “You have a beard.”



Ominous Morning

Carlos Villamayor Ledesma

Distant Sky
Boyan Robak

Across highways of water and wind
lies a mist-coated isle, where
purple mountain peaks sit, perched,
overseeing the rolling green hills
where the cicadas sing her a song.
Towering stone stairwells. The heave
of her breath, air in her lungs
gushing out like whirlwinds
in the rose bushes. Yet still she goes,
still climbing, still. Soon she
reaches the top and feels
the soft soil of the summit,
comforting and soft like the
warmth of a hand over her back.
Ancient shrines lie waiting to renew.



Lake Atitlan
Lisa Fitzpatrick

Dawn
Lesley Donelan

Damp wood beneath my bare feet,
it is quiet, except for the rustling
of leaves from the morning
breeze and the bubbling fountain
beyond the railing. Cool metal makes
contact with my arms, as I sit
and wait for sunrise, watching
birds pass by overhead
as morning breaks.



Mushrooms

Maria Gaguilo

At the Beach

Taylor Vogt

It was an absolutely beautiful day. The sun was reflecting off the windshields of the hover vehicles parked beside the boardwalk. It was quite nearly blinding, making those passing by shield their eyes from the strength of the cosmic light show. The asphalt was boiling, heated all day from the direct sunlight upon it. Those without sandals who had come during the morning light as the sun had created the horizon, much less as extreme as it was now, hobbled and hopped across the lot to their cars. Those who could fly hovered over the heated cement. Those who could not looked on in envy.

Now we return to the story of Adam and his friends.

Ember was standing at the edge of the ocean. She moved forward as the waves washed out and then ran back as the curl of the waves smashed. She covered her mouth with her hands, scuttling back and forth. The freckles on her face were shining just as brightly as the sun. After months of training with Adam, she had finally managed to keep her full body under control from spontaneously burning down everything she touched. Now was her final test. She had never been in water without her plastic suit, nonetheless the ocean. Certainly, she had never worn a bikini in the presence of so many people. She and Adam had gone shopping earlier in the day at one of the surf shops on the strip across the street from the beach. She had picked out a red suit that matched her hair. She finally sat down on the sand, well beyond the lapping of the waves.

“Adam, I can’t do it!” she yelled out. Adam was sitting just within earshot further up the beach. He got up from his seat, and walked over to Ember. He sat down next to her and looked up at the cloudless sky.

“Why not?” he asked.

She rolled back and forth, her palms covering her eyes. “I’m scared.”

“Of what?” he asked.

Ember stopped rolling around and peeped from behind her hands over at Adam. “I don’t want to lose control.”

“Lose control? If you ‘lose control’ just dunk yourself in the ocean. Water puts out fire, you know,” he said.

She leaned forward and rubbed her eyes some more. “I know. I’m a big ba-” She was cut off by someone grabbing her from behind under her armpits. She felt herself being lifted in the air and moving toward the ocean. She screamed out and flailed against her assailant. She could not struggle away from his grip. They got to the edge of the ocean and they stopped.

“Ready for a swim?”

“Patrick?!” Ember said panicked, looking back over her shoulder.

They began to trudge into the water. Ember pulled her legs up as they neared the cresting waves. One smashed down in front of them and the water spread up to their legs. Ember screamed out in anguish and struggled some more. She pulled her legs up and then managed to break free from his grip. She turned and grabbed onto him, keeping her butt from dangling too near the rising water. She screamed out his name once before he walked up to the hip-high water and just grinned before falling into the water. Ember’s scream was muffled as she hit the water. Patrick let her go and they both rose to the surface. Ember’s curly hair had lost its fluff and was dripping wet in long straight strands in her face. She moved them from her eyes and glared at him. The water around her began bubbling and soon, smoking. She raised her hands and flames burst forth. Patrick dunked his head, and swam over to Ember. He exploded from the ocean and grappled onto her, his weight pressed against her made her fall backwards into the sea. He let her go and laughed. She came up to the surface and coughed a few times, her glare never fading.

Adam laughed at their antics. He got to his feet and brushed off some sand from his bathing suit and the little bit that had accumulated on his lower back. He looked around the beach for the spot where he had been sitting. He found it and slowly made his way back. He took in the surroundings for a moment. All of these people gave him hope. They were all so happy. They loved each other and played together. The crowd was peaceful to him. He looked around in a circle and extended his arms in a twirl, the vortex of a soul’s exhale. He opened his eyes and saw it all. The ocean

before him. The people behind him. It was about saving this. He might have been a father helping strap his toddler child into her seat. Maybe he was the woman who was loading her surfboard onto her car. He could have been the son, playing in the water with his father. He could have been that...

But he wasn't, was he? No one here deserved what was coming. He would protect it all, or at least give it a hell of a try. He just needed to see, face-to-face, everything he had sworn to protect.

He smiled. He completed his twirl and turned to walk back to where he had been sitting before. He grinned, taking his seat back. "How are you—"

"How am I faring, you're going to say? I am not faring well, Adam. Not at all," Molly said, staring into her book. There was a large parasol planted in the depths of the sand and it blocked out the sun for the most part. "It is hot, and sand is getting all over me. You have betrayed my trust and I will not forgive you. Ever." She was still not looking over at him.

Adam stared at her for a moment before he broke out laughing. Molly immediately turned to him with a furrowed brow. "Stop laughing." Molly crawled to the edge of the shadow and stared straight at Adam. He just continued laughing to himself. "Stop it!" Molly yelled, splashing sand from her voice alone at Adam. He swiped at the sand and kicked some at her. Molly brought her arms up to shield herself. Then he heard it. The long awaited chuckle. He had heard it before, but it had become but a legend in recent times. She kicked up a little sand with her telekinesis, which splashed all over Adam's lap. He grinned and tossed a handful of sand at Molly. It hit her. Her jaw dropped. She telekinetically rose a dozen foot wall of sand between them, and let it collapse all over him. She nodded in affirmation, and fell back to her seat and her book. Adam struggled to get out of his sand coffin and breached the surface with a gasp for air.

"Wow," he said. He pulled himself out of the sand and crawled under her umbrella, his seat now covered in sand. "That's what I love about you." He stepped over to where she was sitting, and sat down next to her. He put his arm around her shoulder. She laid her head against his shoulder. His eyes widened. She didn't do that. He looked down at her. "Are you

okay, Molly?”

“No.”

“What’s wrong?”

“I can hear them.”

“Who can you hear? The people?”

“Not them.”

“Then who?”

The fish. I can hear all of them. They’re crying and screaming.” Molly looked up at Adam on the verge of tears, sniffing. “You poisoned your waters and they swim in your pollution. They want to die. I can feel it!” She closed her eyes tight, but a few stray tears betrayed her. They sizzled against the sand. Adam leaned over and held onto her head. He rocked her back and forth. She cried into his shoulder, a soft whimper.

“I’m so sorry, Molly.” He kissed the top of her head. She stopped crying and looked up at him. She reached up and pulled him in for a kiss. They shared a moment of passion before Molly broke them apart. She was breathing heavily. She exhaled and lines of electricity bounced on the sand around them. It quivered and quaked, creating bumps that flowed out in a circle around them.

“I know you are. You are the only one I want to say that. I don’t think the others get it,” Molly said, their foreheads pressed against each other. “I just needed a taste of happiness to bring me back to reality.”

Adam grinned. “How did I taste?”

“Like just what I needed,” Molly grinned.



Low Tide at Manor Park
Jessica Alba

Chop...Chop...Chop

Donte Kirby

From dawn to dusk
you could hear the sound
of our Father's axe.
CHOP.. CHOP.. CHOP..
filled the cabin, setting the
rhythm of the day
CHOP..CHOP..CHOP...
wash clothes...
wash clothes...
wash clothes...
CHOP.. CHOP.. CHOP..
clean rooms...
clean rooms...
clean rooms...
CHOP.. CHOP.. CHOP..
scrub dishes...
scrub dishes...
scrub dishes...
Tomorrow is my brother's
eighteenth birthday. Tomorrow
my brother goes off to work
with father. Tomorrow I
set the rhythm of the day.
CHOP.. CHOP.. CHOP..



Bending Down to Look Up
Jessica Alba

Unbeknowst to Us
Darrelle George

The wind, it whispers violently
The leaves, they dwindle beautifully
The tree, it overlooks majestically
The sun, it warms heavily
The clouds, they cover partially
The ocean, it soothes intimidatingly
The grass, it bends lazily
The flowers, they dance purposefully
The moon, it glows dimly
The stars, they lead knowingly
The snow, it benumbs gently
The rain, it nourishes caliginously
The soil, it covets ancestry cherishingly
The people, the people,
they abide unconsciously



Cherry Blossoms
Maria Gagulio

The Beat of the Natural Drum

Shawn Murell

“Are you insane?” Daisy said, looking incredulously at Marty.

Marty laughed and Daisy could not help but think about how her laughter always sounded like bells. Daisy and Marty were sitting in their dorm room on a mild spring day. The frost of winter was recently gone, leaving rainy days in its wake. This day was no different. Spots of sunlight shone through the dark grey clouds. As Marty laughed, Daisy focused on a ray of sunlight that appeared fleetingly on the floor.

“I’m not insane,” Marty replied once she recovered and Daisy turned her attention back to her best friend. “You would love it, too. It’s not what you think, Daisy. We don’t go around worshipping Satan or anything like that.”

Marty’s shining brown eyes held only honesty, but Daisy couldn’t accept her words. When did Marty decide to become a Wiccan? More importantly, why did she decide it? Daisy, like Marty, believed in the supernatural—ghosts, fey, magic. But actually practicing magic? Being a witch?

Waves of uneasiness overwhelmed Daisy when she thought about doing magic. Her palms began to sweat. Marty should have been put in a mental institute for this. Daisy resolved to snap her out of this craziness. She took a deep breath. Jumping up from her desk chair, she straightened her stature and spoke.

“I won’t let you do this to yourself.”

Marty’s blonde-brown eyebrows furrowed. “What are you saying?”

Daisy strode across the room to where Marty sat cross-legged on her bed. “How could you be practicing magic? Why would you do that to yourself?”

The other girl groaned. “Oh, Daisy. This is why I didn’t tell you before. I’ve been a Wiccan for seven months now.”

Daisy could not face her. Instead, she turned and began to pace around the room. Marty's announcement left her speechless. She wracked her brain for something sensible to say, but was at a loss. When she rounded to face Marty again, though, words tumbled from her mouth before she could stop them.

"Are you kidding me? You're crazy, Marty, you know that? You've officially gone off the deep end."

"Daisy—"

"Why didn't you want to tell me?" Daisy stopped pacing and turned sharply to face Marty. She still sat on her bed, and Daisy resented her for being so calm.

Marty scrunched up her face. After a moment, she untightened her muscles and let out a breath.

"Because I knew you'd react like this. I was afraid. I'm sorry. I really am sorry, Daisy. I should've told you," Marty said in a low voice.

Daisy had turned away from the other girl as she spoke, but stopped in her tracks as she heard the speech. Marty was not always quick to apologize. When she did, Daisy knew she was sincere. It's not that big a deal, Daisy reasoned. On the other hand, it was. She thought about all of the secrets and lies that must have accompanied Marty keeping this from her. "It's..." Daisy stumbled. "This isn't okay."

She shifted on her feet to face Marty once more. Noticing the hurt expression on her face, Daisy looked away. Finally, looking up she said, "Your life, your rules. I can't be part of it, though."

"Daisy, wait!" Marty cried, rising from the bed. "Just see what it's like. I know you'll love it. Please. There's a celebration tonight for Ostara. It's the Spring Equinox."

"No," Daisy cut her off.

"Tonight, in the woods by the soccer field. We're just celebrating nature," Marty continued as if Daisy had not spoken.

She could only give Marty a look. With that, Daisy grabbed her jacket and left the room without another word.

The warm spring air swept past Daisy as she walked across campus. She lowered her head against it, but without a hood, her dark hair flew behind her in the gust. Daisy's heartbeat quickened as she considered Marty's proposal. Marty had been practicing magic for so long. Not only that, but now she wanted to take Daisy down the rabbit hole. Too reluctant to jump, though, Daisy preferred keeping her feet on solid ground. Then again, would it be that bad? Marty did not seem worse for being a Wiccan. She actually seemed... Daisy did not want to admit it, but Marty seemed happier, brighter somehow.

That doesn't change the fact that she lied, Daisy thought to herself.

She did not want to think about it. The hurt the revelation caused made her stomach knot. Daisy wanted to confront her again, but the thought of facing Marty made her steps quicken. Instead, she decided to get lost in town.

The hot chocolate felt warm between Daisy's hands. After hours of wandering around town, she finally came back to campus and was sitting in the dining hall. For Daisy, the chilly day and her disheartened mood was cause for a few cups of hot chocolate laden with numerous marshmallows. Sitting in the corner, she looked out at all of the people there. She wished she saw someone she knew because her long hampered feelings were now simmering below the surface. Her face burned red and Daisy longed to throw the hot chocolate at the wall. She forced herself to be still, though. Suddenly, Daisy felt her phone vibrate. The screen was still lit when she pulled it from her pocket, and Daisy saw that she had received a message from Marty. She unlocked her phone and read it:

"I really hope you come tonight. I know you're mad, but if you come you'll see why I enjoy it so much. And I know you'll like it, too. I'm sorry I lied, but I hope you can forgive me."

Daisy groaned. She read the message again, hoping she'd read it

wrong. There it was, though and Daisy knew she could no longer avoid it.

Yes, she was angry. However, that did not mean she could completely reject the girl who had been her best friend for almost a decade. They had survived ordeals much worse than this. Daisy looked down into her hot chocolate. Knowing that Marty would give her a chance, she decided she would do this for her. First, though, she finished her drink.

Daisy was reluctant when she came upon the scene in the woods. Hiding behind a tree, she shrouded herself in darkness and watched the group gathered there. The wind had taken on a slight chill since she had first gone out, and Daisy tightened her jacket around her. However, she could not lie to herself. That night was beautiful.

The clouds had cleared from the day's dreariness and it seemed lighter out despite the time. An innumerable amount of stars dazzled across the sky as far as the eye could see. The moon, round and glowing, seemed so close that Daisy thought she could touch it if she only stretched out her hand. The air was heavy with the scent of grass and pine, oak, and elm trees. The group was well enough into the woods that sounds of the modern world melted away in the distance, becoming little more than a whisper on the wind. Daisy only found the others by the light of the fire someone had made in the middle of a clearing. She heard their light chatter and laughter, along with the sigh of the trees in the wind and the night animals scurrying in the darkness.

Still afraid to approach, Daisy clung to the tree she hid behind for a moment longer. It was now or never. Wondering faintly whether it was too late to turn back, she took a deep breath and walked toward the edge of the clearing. Upon hearing her footsteps, a few people, including Marty, turned to watch her arrival.

“Daisy! You made it!” Marty jumped up from her place on the ground, and ran toward Daisy. She beamed at Daisy before hugging her tightly. “I’m really sorry,” she whispered. “I’m so happy you’re here. You won’t regret it.”

All Daisy could say in response was, “I hope not.”

Marty stepped away. She took the other girl's hand and led her to middle of the clearing, where the group was sitting in a circle. Pulling Daisy down on the blanket she had previously occupied, Marty made introductions.

“Okay. Most of you know Daisy, so just say hello. Make her feel welcome. But before you do that, Daisy, this is Jack, David, Ellie, and Monica.”

Marty pointed to each person as she introduced them. Daisy waved and said a small hello. She noticed that there were about fifteen people in all.

“It's nice to see you here, Daisy,” her friend Tom said from the other side of the circle.

She smiled across the fire at him, relaxing a little as she recognized each friend. Daisy was surprised to see him there, but unsurprised that Tom seemed to be the leader. Her scattered nerves calmed more and more with each passing moment.

Daisy spoke shyly, “I'm glad to be here.”

“I also hope that tonight will give you a reason to return,” Tom replied. He turned to the group at large and spoke.

“I am happy and excited to see you all here. Tonight is the night we celebrate Ostara, the Spring Equinox. The spring represents new life, love, happiness, and eternal brightness. While we are only commemorating the holiday tonight, I hope that you all remember the lessons that this day teaches you.”

Tom looked at each person, his eyes momentarily lingering on Daisy. She smiled at him and he smiled back. The fire crackled happily in the silence.

“All of us, no matter how wrapped up and lost we become in the material world, should never forget to honor the nature and the world that

gave us life. The sun, the plants, the rain: they are all a part of this wonderful, beautiful, basic, complicated world. I hope that you keep that with you always and allow it to guide you through your days. Now I know that life gets in the way sometimes, and we may not see each other at all until the next meeting. So, I want everyone to have as much fun as you can tonight! Let's begin!"

The group erupted into cheers, including Daisy, who could not help but be moved by the power of Tom's speech. Everyone rose from their places around the circle and joined hands. Daisy followed suit.

"So far, so good?" Marty whispered to her as they all joined hands.

"Yeah," Daisy replied happily. "What's happening now?"

"First, Tom is going to send up a prayer to the Goddess, and then we'll say a spell for peace, happiness, and a stronger connection to nature. After that is the best part of the celebration. Dancing!" Marty erupted into a fit of giggles. However, she immediately silenced when Tom cleared his throat and sent her a stern look. Each person in the group bowed their head as Tom said the prayer. His voice seemed to blend in with the sounds that surrounded them. The wind had picked up, and, when it blew, the few leaves rattled like nature-made wind chimes. Daisy heard owls hooting in the distance as Tom's voice rose and fell in a poetic cadence. The occasional popping sound of the fire and the feel of the earth underneath her kept Daisy grounded and secure.

With a deep exhalation of breath, Tom finished the prayer and moved immediately into the spell. One by one, the group members joined in. When Daisy had listened enough and memorized the words, she joined in too. With each recitation, their voices rose higher. Daisy found herself raising her face to the sky, which could be seen distinctly from the clearing. Suddenly, she was moving. The group began to move as one going clockwise, moving increasingly faster with each motion. Daisy looked at the rest as they spun. Each shared a glowing look of happiness and serenity and she began to realize why Marty was so happy to be a part of it all. Daisy felt herself smiling without a clue as to when it happened. Tom caught her eye. He winked at her and the simple gesture sent her over the edge. Laughter bubbled up and spilled out of her mouth in a high-pitched sound. Letting

go of the two hands she had been holding, she spun around alone. The others let go as well, and everyone began to dance around the clearing. Finding her voice again, she resumed the chant the group still carried.

She closed her eyes and let go of her negative emotions, allowing herself to feel the power of the spell and more importantly, connection to the nature flowing through her. Daisy felt hands on hers. Opening her eyes, she was delighted to see Marty with a wide grin on her face. Her eyes were alight, and the fire reflecting off them made them sparkle more. Again, Daisy could not help the laughter that erupted from her, which turned infectious as Marty burst into fits of giggles. Daisy was reminded of silver bells as they spun around together, the night sky blending in with the tops of the trees. She thought she could do this all night and why wouldn't she? She had to admit that she loved nature and celebrating it this way was exquisite.



Wishes
Samantha Finch

Redbreast by Patricia Saviano
1st Place Winner, Poetry Competition

When I was quite small,
my father sang to me
about the red,
red robin
bobbin' along,
teaching me
that no matter how long or dark or cold,
winter ends
Now that I am old
and he is gone
I wait each year for the first robin
who I greet with great joy
A sure sign of spring
and hope
and my father's love

Prelude to a Vigil

Daniel Rubado

Let the Eastern Peaks rise;
Who can grow majestic trampled under countless boots?
Blow westward with the wind on golden paths of sifted sand,
The powdered remains of yellow bricks left forever unattended.

Pay no heed to the buzzing of your tiny guides,
Winged Sherpas made visible in numbers;
They will attend your every move.
Let them bite;
The toll for rich rosemary perfume.

Echo off stone painted in pale green fractals
The vigil of the red-headed watchmaker.
Tock! Tock! Tock! Tock!
Time is alien to you;
Night's marbled sky arrives heedless of your expectations.

See now what you've gained
In the blackness, nothingness, eyelessness.
Rest here. Stay awhile. Take root.
The vigilant pines will watch over you,
your guardians, your brothers.
Welcome home.



End of the Rainbow
Fatuma Hydera

The Black Sea
Heidi Clorofilla

Surrounded by the buzz of rushing cars.
Hurrying along the sparkling grey pathway.
The smell of dirty water, hot dogs, pretzels,
the wild shouts of vendors. Screeches of a
braking bus, continuing along
this journey, swept up in a sea of
black, cold, and unforgiving,
like the icy sparkles, slowly falling down.
The frigid wind, cutting like a razor, the
metallic scent of blood, oozing liquid
from a fresh wound.
Falling like the tiny sparkles
on the silver pathway
kicked around
like a dog in the way.
Stepped on and over
just like the glittering path below.
The black sea continuing to swarm,
Drowning,
Swallowing,
Consuming.
The world fades to a single, still,
black frame.
The journey ending, before it could even begin.

On Being a Groundhog

Catherine Fischberg

I am a groundhog because I burrow. When faced with danger or something that I perceive as dangerous even if it truly is not, I burrow deep into myself to stay safe and I don't come back out until I'm absolutely sure that every bit of the threat is gone. Like the groundhog, I spend most of my time on high alert because I am a prey animal and see danger everywhere. When I have disappeared from the outside world I feel safe as does the groundhog deep under the soil, but we both know that we have to eventually surface to survive. Groundhog burrows are complex as are my burrows and each section serves a different purpose. Groundhogs' have a main entrance, a spy hole, a toilet chamber, and a nest. I have a place for when I am sad, when I am angry, when I am scared, when I am hurt. The groundhog would never confuse its toilet chamber with its nest and I would never retreat to my angry place when I am really scared. Groundhogs tend not to stray far from their burrow complexes. They want to always have the option of safety and I too never stray too far from my safe zone.

Groundhogs have coarse hair on the inside of their ears to prevent dirt from getting in when they burrow and I think I have the equivalent emotional defense mechanism. When my environment gets too loud or unpleasant, my ear filters protect me by preventing unwanted stimuli or information from entering my brain. I am able to be both very cautious when danger is around and also block out almost anything when I want to isolate myself.

Groundhogs may look cute and cuddly, but they are strong and their front claws and sharp teeth make them formidable opponents. I make sure to portray myself as sweet and kind because I usually have no reason to behave any other way, but I most certainly am capable of being extremely aggressive, especially if I think someone I love is in danger. When my brother was little and I was still bigger and stronger, even though we would argue and fight between ourselves, if someone else threatened him, I would go into full attack mode. This is how groundhogs behave if a predator that they are capable of defeating threatens their mate or offspring.

Just as groundhogs instinctually know how to burrow, no one ever taught me. It was something I always knew how to do. I think the only difference between me and the groundhog is that when groundhogs burrow, they stay safe. However, sometimes when I burrow I can end up in more danger. For a groundhog, burrowing is an effective way of dealing with the problem because if the predator cannot get to them, it will just go away. With emotions, when I burrow to avoid them, they don't just go away. I can pretend that I don't see them and that I don't feel them, but they're still there and they come back stronger than ever. Because of this, I wish I were a groundhog.



Untitled
Jessica Alba

Reflections in the Vine

Boyan Robak

That honeysuckle caught his eye, something familiar sitting in its name and its nature. He could see the lines drawn between the plant and himself rather plainly. The bit about how the plant took many forms and how it grew along other plants and tree trunks. These fragmented facts gave him a sense of kinship to the foreign flora.

It was as if the honeysuckle tried to reflect his life in its behavior. That tendency to latch onto others, sometimes so strongly that one became overbearing, was an all too common occurrence in his quest for intimacy. His prying questions, both shameless and penetrating, were like the vines of the honeysuckle constricting around an unfortunate neighbor. It reminded him of the ones who had fallen victim to his inquisitive eyes and the ones who had managed to escape his transfixing gaze. The nostalgia this curious plant evoked in him drove him to examine it closer.

Looking closer, he saw a much stronger message resonating from the honeysuckle, as if the thing was trying to warn or encourage him. The message was cryptic. It was possible that the honeysuckle's impeding tendencies were telling him that he pushed someone too hard, fought too harshly to get their story. His fascination with peoples' stories knew no bounds, and he went to great lengths to learn everything about everyone, reached well beyond his boundaries, like the creeping vine of the honeysuckle.

He wondered if perhaps there was more to the message in the plant and what he found gave him pause. He didn't give the plant's ability to take different forms enough thought at first. Painting, drawing, music, film, astronomy, history. These were but a small fraction of all the hobbies he enjoyed. He was dynamic. He took many shapes. The strange plant wasn't just speaking to him, it was copying him. Or was he copying it?

Branching out opens you to new experiences. Interests you may not know you ever had start to surface. This is often beautiful, but it is not without its struggles. Delving into different fields has made it almost impossible for him to find a group. It has been crushing and inspiring for those around him as they sit in a stew of wonder and anxiety. Much like the honeysuckle, as you flourish something else may be smothered.

Sunset

Andrew Tovar

Chlorophyll fills my veins like
the green grass, brushing my face, as if
nature was petting me. Feeling bright rays
hit my body, blue heaven-like sky strikes my eyes,
creating emotions as my ring changes colors.
Running down the field, a sting
exerts through my nerves. Ragged stones rich
with thick red-wine dripping. Ignoring nature's
might, the sun continues to glow bright. Warm
atmosphere agitates my skin; wild dogs huddle
under a dark shield, basking in the trees.
Salty, fishy, and peaceful scent. Goosebumps
exploding by oceanic winds. A cocoon of sand
infests my feet as an aroma of a million years
becomes stronger and stronger. Fishes jumping
out of the water, capturing rejuvenating rays
from the scorching sun. Finally, a huge shadow
appears as the moon causes an eclipse.
Manabi exerts out of the water, as mist creates
rays of rainbows as a trail of its jump. Mist lands
on my skin, absorbing H₂O as my
chlorophyll begins to go roll.

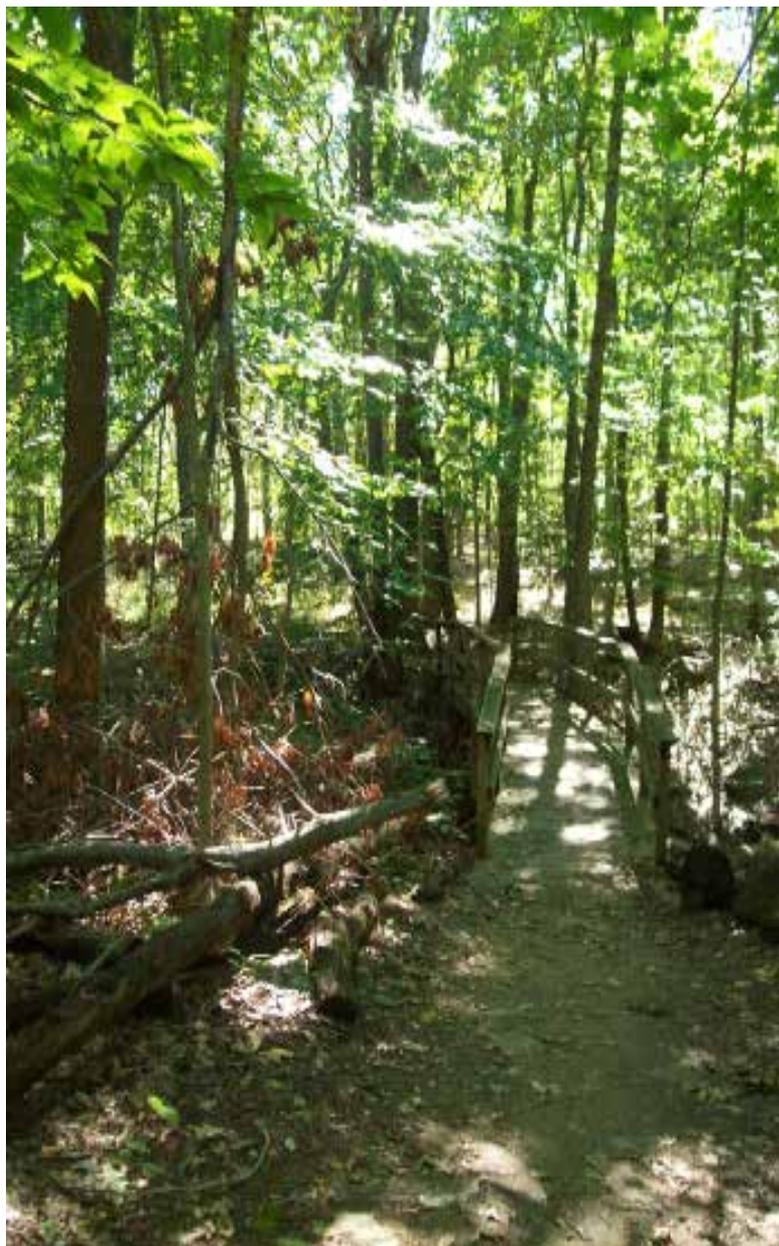
Root to Rise

Olivia Zucker

When I die, I hope to come back as a tree. I am happiest basking in the sun's warmth, stretching my limbs, flourishing. To come back as a tree might have its downsides—there is that pesky risk of ending up as someone's kitchen table—but save for that little caveat, tree life would suit my soul ideally.

I would be a tree whose leaves could be used for healing and treating burns—a Basswood tree. Even in the afterlife, I would be putting out fires, taking what was once red and angry and inflamed and breathing into it a calming sigh of relief. This is what I do best. I heal. I try to make things better. Try to take pain and transform it into something beautiful. Something that makes sense.

When I am a tree, people would admire me quietly. Not everyone, but the kinds of people whose quiet admiration is spent on that which is unassuming and beautiful. These people would plant themselves at my roots and I would hold them up. Support them and their quiet ponderings, shielded by my shade. I would show them we are all connected; we are all trees in our own way. Rooted in what we believe: growing, changing, and opening our branches to take in the light. Some of our leaves heal and some of them sting. But we are all holding each other up, trees and humans, the whole world. This is how we truly flourish.



Road Less Traveled
Jessica Alba

Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

Thank you very much for picking up the latest issue of Vox Arts and Literary Magazine at Pace University's Pleasantville campus and for getting to the end.

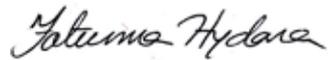
While I may be a tad biased, I believe that this is our best issue yet! It began with the help of Pace Biology Professor Joshua Schwartz who introduced the NaturesPace project, a project dedicated to educating members of the Pace University community about the plant and animal life on the Pleasantville campus. With his support (and that of the N.A.T.U.R.E. club), Vox provided the community with a chance to not only explore their voices as usual, but to also explore nature and what it means to them.

Nature is often taken for granted. There are various sides to nature: the exquisite beauty of the sublime, the majesty of natural phenomenon, and the raw destruction of its power. All three should be viewed with awe and a bit of fear because while nature is stunningly beautiful, it is also extremely powerful.

I hoped you thoroughly enjoyed our Nature themed issue as much as I enjoyed putting it together. Even though I can't believe that it is actually time to say goodbye, this issue is my send off after my last semester with Vox.

I've been a member of Vox since my freshman year. I've moved up from being a member to secretary, poetry editor and eventually Managing Editor. I've watched as not only the magazine, but also the members grew to be what they are today—amazing. I'm proud to have been a part of a one-of-a-kind organization that gives the Pace community an outlet for their creativity. Now, I pass on the mantle to the next generation. Never let yourselves be silenced.
Always free your voice.

With Love,



Fatuma Hydera
Managing Editor

Vox Arts & Literary Magazine exists for the purpose of publishing the original fiction, poetry, prose, artwork, and photography of the students at Pace University's Westchester campus. In Latin, "vox" means voice. Vox Arts & Literary Magazine serves as an outlet for Pace students and faculty in which their voices can not only be heard, but shared and appreciated on the Westchester Pace campus.

Vox Arts & Literary Magazine Submission Guidelines

Vox Arts & Literary Magazine, the Pace University Westchester Campus, student-run literary magazine accepts submissions of quality original fiction, poetry, prose, artwork and photography. Work from any Pace University student, faculty, or staff member and alumni is eligible for consideration.

To Submit:

1. Go to <http://vox.pace.edu> and click "Submissions."
2. Click on "Submit to Vox."
3. Log in, using your Pace username and password.
4. Enter your title and your piece under "QuickPress" (right).
*If you are submitting text, whether prose or poetry, copy and paste your work into the "Content" area.
*If you are submitting an image, then click on the "upload/insert" icon to attach.
5. Enter the genre of your work in the tags (poetry, prose or art) and click "submit."



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ARTS AND LITERARY MAGAZINE

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