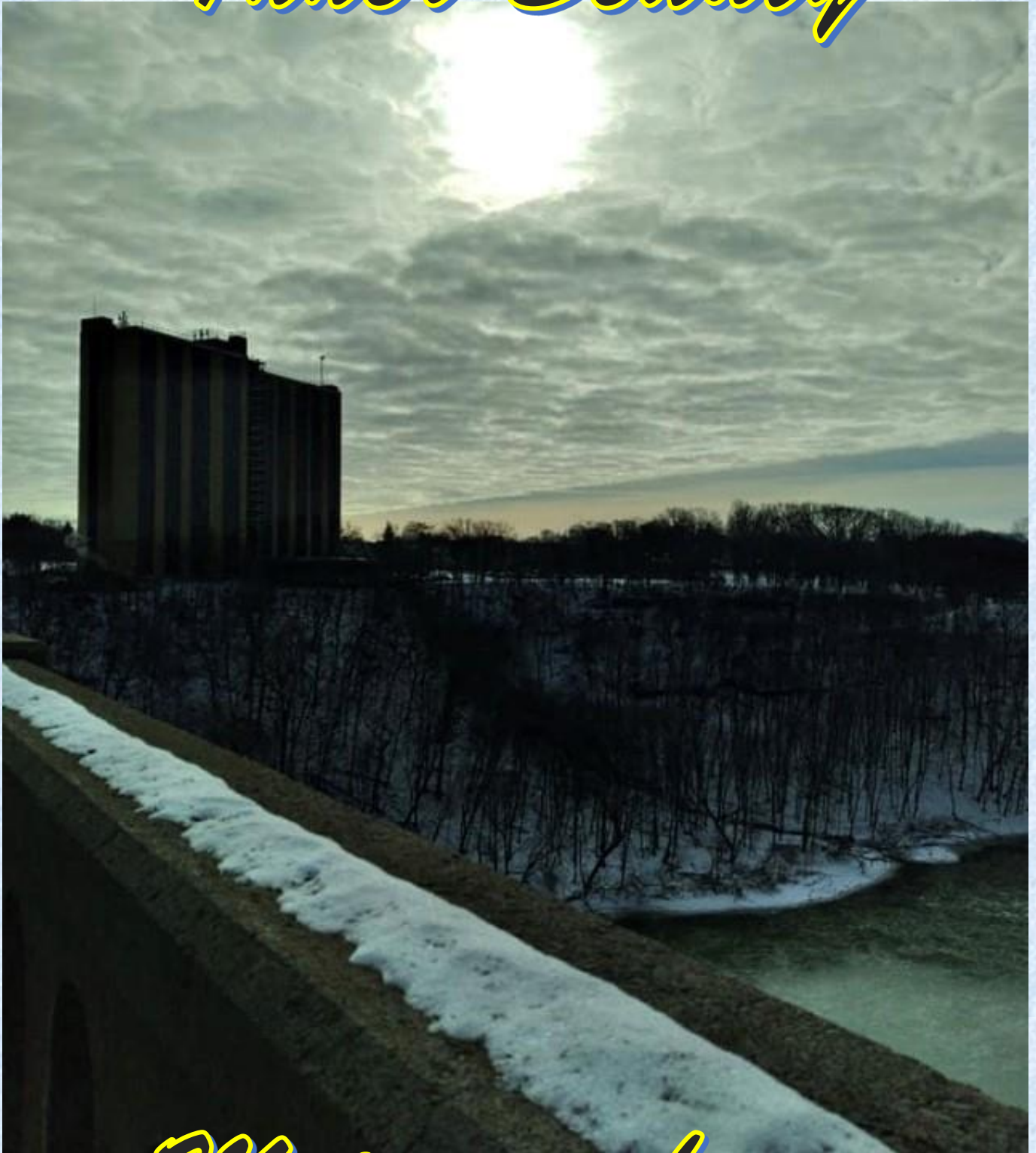


Inner Beauty



Metamorphosis

Wilson High School 2020-2021 Literary Journal “Metamorphosis”

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Back cover: Sama’Ja Scott (Photograph)

“Broken Dreams Pt. 1” Michael Peterkin (Illustration)

Staff Adviser: Mr. Burns

I know I'm just a seed in a garden
But my treasure for you won't go away
I pray that my golds won't be a burden
Weakness I can't manage will seep someday

Do you understand my heart is unwell
I miss how you kissed it without hurry
Bond was rare was it good enough to sell
I beg after all your love is worthy

My heart was medicine to fix your own
How could you torment my genuine soul
Use me like I can be easily sewn
You allowed our memories to be sold

Yet I look past your despicable ways
Feel the urge to give you the rest of me
I loathe my love, I hope it's just a phase
I hope at our ending you still choose me.



MD & Me

On May 10th, 2004, my mother was five months pregnant with me when she fell down seven stairs. My father rushed her to the hospital to make sure me and my mother were in good health. The rest of the four months of her pregnancy went by smoothly.

A year went by and my mother continued to fall more than normal. It wasn't your average clumsiness but was something else. Something was wrong.

My mother and the immediate family started to really worry.

My mother went to several doctors, and had various opinions about what could be wrong with her, but all of the opinions were wrong... until she went to a muscle specialist. She did an exam, got lab work done, and found out that she had MD (also known as Muscular Dystrophy).

Muscular Dystrophy is a genetic disease that causes weakness in muscles and loss of muscle movement. Both parents have to have the gene for an offspring to get it so it's pretty rare.

As the years progressed, I got older and my mom got sicker. I was in elementary school, six-years-old, taking care of my mother by myself.

After my 7th birthday, reality kicked in very quickly.

My mother and I were going to CVS for my grandmother and it was wintertime. It was getting really difficult for her to drive – physically having to pick her leg up from the brake to the gas had become difficult.

All of the sudden, the car swerved on black ice and another car was coming from the driver side direction of the car. My mother got control just in time, before the cars collided, but after that day she vowed to never drive again.

This decision killed her spirit and her sense of independence. My mother became very sad for a long time.

Seven-years-old with the world on my shoulders, days started to feel like months and months started to feel like years. Living the same day over-and-over again felt like a bad dream you could not wake up from. Life was like a time-lapse: one day I was six, dressing up like a princess, and the next I was almost in high school.

I started to miss out on days with friends, school sports and activities because I had bigger responsibilities than myself. I tuned the world out, and made myself become cold and emotionless.

It felt as if I had no one to turn to, no one to call. I was all alone. I felt depressed and angry at the world.

I couldn't show my pain to my mom – she was going through her own battles and shouldn't have to help everyone else with theirs.

After a while she noticed. I guess that's a mother's intuition.

The same person who had raised me on her own and battled her own situations helped pull me out of my depression.

She hugged me, loved me, and told me, “Everything's gonna be alright as long as I'm here.”

I could never repay her for how much she has given me. Stephanie is a queen in every aspect of the word and I am forever grateful to this loving woman I call mother.



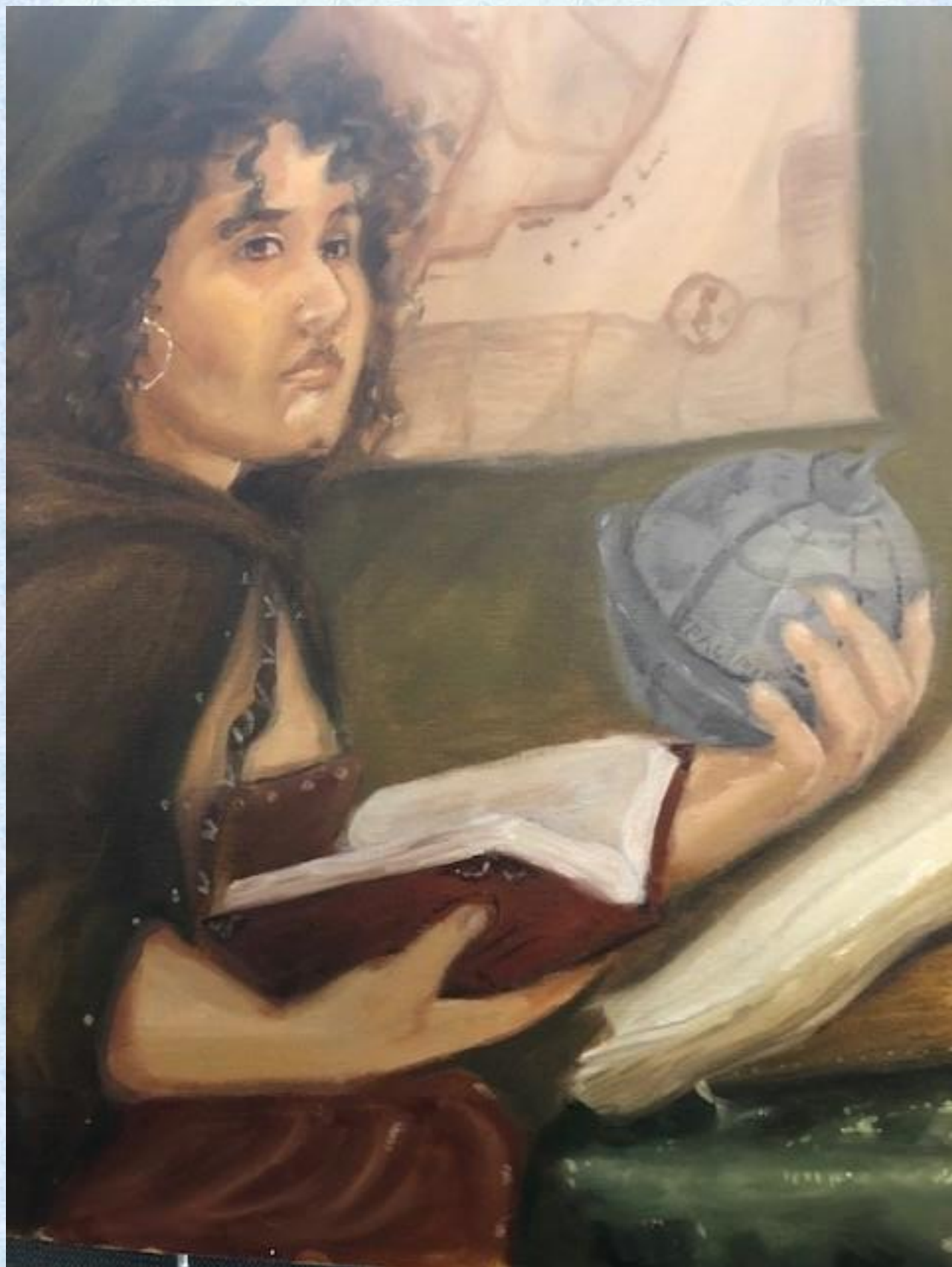
Summer is a time of fun and games
Summer is when kids come out to play
Summer is a time when you can't sit in shame
Just go outside and play all day

Summers a good time, go to the beach
And while you're there you can sit and tan
Or you can have a nice sweet and yummy
peach
You even see the ice cream man

Summers a time to sit in the sun
That's when most people go for a swim
After that people have tons and tons of fun
Then they play til the sky gets dim

Summer does eventually end
But don't worry it will come again





It was November 2011 when I arrived in Rochester. It was cold and windy, the streetlights were really bright and you could barely see the stars. On my way to my grandmother's house I noticed that there were like millions of cars on the street. When I got there the house had a very strong scent and it took me a while to get used to the smell.

After moving to Rochester that day, everyone was asleep except for me and my younger brother. He kept insisting that I help him turn the television on but I didn't know how to or wanted to because what if I accidentally break it? I told him these things were very expensive and we shouldn't touch it recklessly.

The next morning my younger cousin casually turned on the television.

My brother and I immediately turned to the screen and were both amazed.

In Thailand, we couldn't really watch any movies or TV shows. We were only able to do that like once or twice a year.

A little while later, I saw my cousin leaving to his room without turning off the television.

"Mom, is the television not going to run out of battery if he keeps it on like that?" I asked. "The one we usually see back in Thailand doesn't stay on for more than an hour."

The television continued to play as my cousin left the room, obviously not coming back.

I turned to my mother confused, and a little scared, and said, "Mom?"

She said, "They don't use batteries so it never turns off unless you want it to."

So, that's why he doesn't have to care enough to turn it off.

Later that day my grandmother took out some coins for us to play with, there were a lot of them. I thought to myself: why would she let us play with them? It was true that we were excited but it is money.

I picked up about five coins in my hand and said, "Grandma, can we go to the store tomorrow? I want to buy fruit jelly."

She didn't give me an answer but, instead, laughed.

I asked what was wrong.

"If you want to get anything at the store you need more than just five pennies" she answered.

"Pennies?" I asked. "But I can get at least ten fruit jelly back at home," I added.

She smiled and said, "Well it's very different here and you can't get anything with 50 or even 100 of these coins. The value of these coins is not the same as the one in Thailand."

I was shocked. At first I thought she was just joking until my cousin from earlier today showed me his paper money.

“Have you ever been to Thailand?” I asked my cousin.

He shook his head and said he had never been there... which probably explains why he wasn't fazed by Grandma's words.

I looked at the coins that were sitting on the floor and then the television that was on without anyone watching it. It made me realize how the same things can be appreciated differently by people. Some of the things that I now considered worthless could mean so much to another person and vice versa.

So now, whenever I'm feeling ungrateful for certain things, I remember this moment – the one I had that taught me how fortunate I am to even have things.

I learned to appreciate little things.

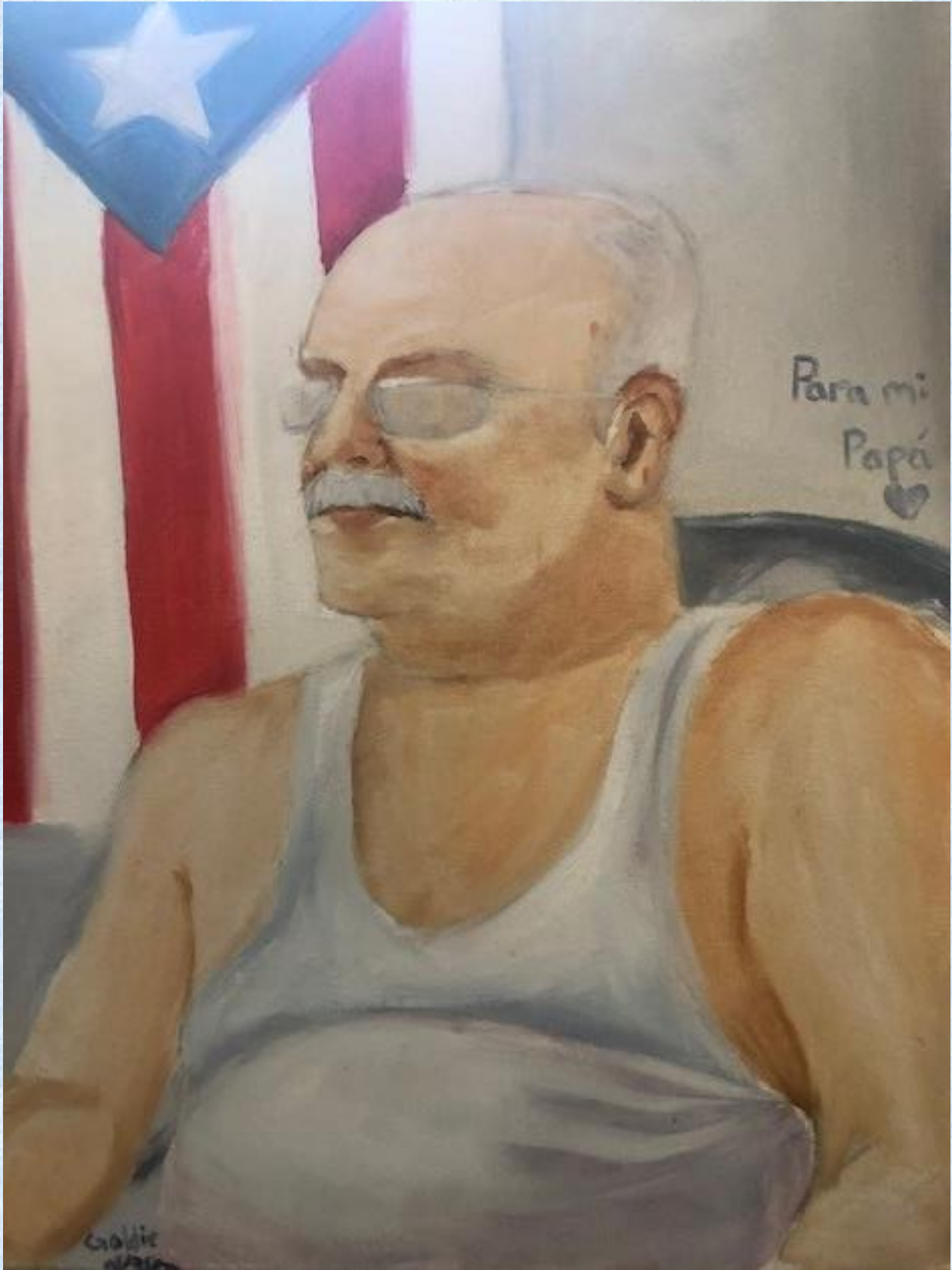
Life

Life gives you happiness thou be grateful
Time gets tough remember to always pray
Counting blessings every day is the way thankful
Remember those who helped don't be strayed.

Every morning wake up do meditation
Relax and stretch to start a healthy day
Cook refreshing food relaxation
Try and do some writing or an essay

Take time to explore it's breathtaking
Try new hobbies to feel brand new refreshed
Remember to stay bless it's very changing
BE genuine and kind with everyone to stay blessed

Live love make sure to be blessed by the high
Relax meditated the limit is the sky



Two Lives, One Fate.

Life is a gift and a blessing; however, despite what we may try and tell ourselves, it isn't ensured.

We're brought into this world with the idea that we'll be given the chance to live it to the fullest and to become someone we can be proud of. For some, that time is cut short and their chance is stolen from them. Jaquayla Young and Jarvis Alexander were victims of this dark reality. Their lives once filled with so much love and joy were suddenly torn away from them in the blink of an eye.

A party meant to be filled with laughter and celebration suddenly turned into a disaster shrouded in devastation and bloodshed. Both young graduates with so much ahead of them, dreams and plans for the future completely gone in an instant.

As you hear their names echoing on the news you can't help but to ask yourself what if?

What if they'd made it out alive that day?

Would they have left Rochester and never looked back?

Would they have explored the world and seen what it had to offer?

Or would they have simply thanked God that they'd lived through such an ordeal?

We'll never know and they'll never be able to tell us. Guns and bullet wounds replaced their hopes and dreams for the future – two beautiful souls who deserved so much better.

We have to make a change and that starts with establishing a culture of gun safety. If the youth or those who are at risk of harming themselves or others hadn't had as much access to firearms, Jaquayla and Jarvis might still be with us.

Gun dealers and owners need to be held responsible for their actions. This starts by ensuring that both have mandatory training and licensing for their weapon. Gun safety also needs to be taught to kids in school. Ignorance may be bliss to some but not exposing children to the dangers and concerns regarding guns may prove to do more harm than good.

No one, especially not those with so much life left to live, should have to question whether or not they'll make it home once they step outside the door. We deserve better and Jaquayla and Jarvis deserved more.

In me

I ask if these thoughts will last forever,
Today I cannot fight; I have no doubt,
Why do I feel this way, weak will fever,
Tortures without mercy, an ugly bout.

Inside my arm lies a scar made by blade,
A mark describing one instant regret,
Why does my heart feel so cold, like a shade?
Feelings become loud like a mighty jet.

I wish you can hear my silent harsh screams,
Happiness is precious but feels so rare,
Can't find my Light, where is my happy beam?
If asked; I say I'm fine...though deep I'm scared.

I'll laugh, have fun but pain is always near.
Pain grows and whispers in my inner ear.

I was always a shy kid. I did not connect well with people except my best friend whom I had since kindergarten. In third grade I joined a step team with my best friend. It was the best decision I made in my life. I met new friends and started opening up. I was happy to be around new people who just made me a better me.

I became more confident about who I was. I started to develop a certain way: I dressed and finally found my style and voice. I let more friends in and started getting to know more people. I wasn't distant anymore to my one friend. I became closer with others. I started going to competitions with my team and the winning step became my sunshine on a hot day. It was my happy place.

A couple months later I went to the Horizon with friends and fell and broke my arm – it was my first time ever breaking a bone. The pain was unbearable for a third grader who didn't know how to keep down medicine. It was a sharp stab of pain that throbbed and throbbed every day and I couldn't go to practice or school. I started turning back into the person I was before and didn't know if I could step again. I never knew when I would be able to go back.

After two weeks at home, my mom found a new way for me to take pain medicine so I was ready to go back to school... but I couldn't. A week of the new way of taking medicine and I was cleared to go back.

I went back to school that Monday and I was shaking like a leaf. It felt like the first day of school.

I stayed after school every day to watch the step team practice. They were all so excited I was back. I wasn't able to step but they still made me feel like I was home. Every day after practice, they would all hang out with me and make sure I was okay and would teach me the words to the new chants until I was ready to learn the steps.

I was enrolled in physical therapy because I wasn't moving my fingers well while I had a cast on. They weren't moving like they should have been. My therapist gave me hand workouts to do so my team would do them with me every day before or after practice. My teammates were a big part of my support system.

A month later I was back practicing. There was a step jam a month away and I needed to be ready for if I wanted to perform. My team and my coach would practice with me every day... even on weekends. They didn't give up and neither did I. They always made sure I was doing well in classes and steps. They were there for me every day – even on the days I was ready to give up because it was hard.

When I got mad, angry like a bull with a cloth in its face, and just ready to give up but my teammates didn't let me.

December 12, 2013 I performed with my team at step jam and yes, I still had a cast on.

I stopped doing step just a couple years ago because people got older and the coach changed but I will never forget the original team that I was on who helped me become a better me and who never gave up on me or let me give up on something I really loved. They helped me every step of the way and I'm so thankful for them.

They made me a better me.

Being around good people can make you become an even better person.



My fast puppy you move me to write
Why I love the way you bounce, run and bark
Invading my mind day and through the night
Always dreaming about the truth remark

Let me compare you to a silly eye
You are so bouncy and adorable
You scamper the bright picnics of July
And summertime has the great coral belle

So tiresome when I'm sleep you're awake
Why must you poop and take a leak
everywhere
You really give me a throbbing headache
Must I warn, "Messy puppy so beware?"

Now I have to leave with a cheerful heart
Remember these words dear while we're apart.



Thank you

I never said thank you for everything.
The way you made my life so bright.
You gave me something pretty, every day felt like spring.
You helped ease all of my worries and strife.
You healed my wounds you didn't make.
You helped piece me back together with some glue.
When I'm with you my mind could finally take a break.
Yet, I never gave you a single thank you.
So as I'm writing this I hope it is not too late
And I hope my heart you'll still take.



The Journey of Becoming an Apsara

An Apsara tells the story about the four stages of birth, disease, old age, and death that every human being has to go through in the life cycles. An Apsara is described as a beautiful woman that is a descendant from heaven to amuse the Gods and Kings with the dance.

The meaning of becoming an Apsara to me is that it symbolizes the female's beauty, elegance and purity. It also symbolizes the goddess of love and dance.

The Apsara dance was mostly danced in the palace and the Angkor Wat Temple in Cambodia but now it is brought to America so they can pass down the Apsara's traditions.

When I was seven or eight-years-old, my sitti would make me wake up at 6:00 am to come practice in the living room or basement every day, "even after school," so I could be able to bend my fingers, wrists, and balance myself in order to perfect the dance.

But I had made many mistakes.

My sitti would make sure I knew that it was okay to make mistakes, it happens. She had observed and watched me keep dancing and dancing and she knew I would perfect it one day.

One day, she had been in a shooting incident. When she was walking home with the Apsara clothing to congratulate me. I received a phone call from Salem Hospital, notifying me that my sitti did not make it and to come to the hospital with my parents to fill out some papers.

I just broke down and screamed. My mom just carried me to the car while I was still crying.

When we arrived at the hospital, my mom held my hand and brought me into the building. I just saw my sitti lying there, covered with her sheets. A police officer came to me, carrying a beautiful outfit, and said, "I believe this belongs to you sweetie." I just cried while holding on the last thing she touched after she passed.

On January 18, 2018, I was walking to an Asian bakery shop to buy some macarons, sesame balls, and a sugar cane drink until I saw the flier – it had caught my attention because it brought me back to when my sitti was alive. She had taught me how to perfect the moves of the Apsara, and made sure I had accomplished my dream, and her goal was to see me one day performing at an event.

I perfected my dance and felt like she was with me but spiritually. As soon I felt that, a butterfly came into my bedroom. I just stared at it, at its beauty, because I remembered when my grandma used to collect butterflies. It had me think that she had reincarnated as a butterfly to reassure me that everything will be okay... even if she was gone.

As I walked to my khalah's (aunt's) place, I was reading the flier while drinking my sugar cane. The flier said, "Come Audition to become Apsara dancer for Khmer New Years. We are short on dancers."

The audition started the next day at 3:30 pm and ended at 10:00 pm. I took this opportunity to audition for the dance because I knew it would mean a lot to me and my sitti.

I had arrived at Freedom Inc. early, around 3:24 pm, and had to fill out a personal form about me and what made me interested in becoming an Apsara. After filling out the form, I was the first to go into the room with the judges. They asked me what song would I like to perform with and I told them I would like to play "Neary Chea Chour."

I was performing confidently. I could just feel the judge's eyes all on me when I bent my fingers and wrist, trying to balance myself by holding the gold cup filled with flowers. It had made me nervous until I felt like my grandma was next to me spiritually, scolding me to make sure the hand movement was correct and that my balance was good, telling me to pretend that there is a book on my head... so I kept performing so beautifully.

When the music ended, I stopped dancing and looked at the judges, trying to read their expressions. It was hard to know but one of the judges said, "you performed the dance so beautiful that it made me tear up and I don't know why but it was just too beautiful."

I replied, "thank you."

I went out and waited for the results while the other contestants performed.

When it ended, there were six winners and I was chosen to be the lead dancer of the Apsara. The focus would be on me and the performers would follow my instructions.

I thanked my sitti for all the hard work she taught me since I was young. Without her I probably would not be able to accomplish my dream of becoming an Apsara. I also wished that she was here with me to see it. To hear her say, "congratulations my hafida," and kiss me on my forehead.

I am living through a dark bright moon
I sat here thinking alone in silence
I can only sit far back, why so soon
Seeking to fight back without violence

The cries, the whimpers and the sorrows
I have no food no bathroom no drink
The cries, whimpers, pain we feel tomorrow
I had lived to survive, what do you think?

The bells are ringing we run to safety
My heart is singing I'm glad of freedom
I felt like a pirate aii matey
We were locked up like dogs, breed them

We are free broke away from slavery
I'm free no more long days of slavery



As a young child I grew up in a toxic environment. Because I was so young, I knew I didn't have any control over the world's decisions. It was so violent at school to the point I didn't feel safe. I started to believe that violence and aggression were the only way to get things you really wanted. I wouldn't listen or change my behavior no matter who told me to do so and gave up all hope in becoming a better person.

Later on, in middle school as I got older, it was basically the same thing. I'd get bad grades and fight all the time and, as time went along, it got worse.

A girl named Eve, that bullied me throughout my whole sixth and seventh grade years, got exposed on social media. Kids at school made fun of her for it and deep down I knew it clearly wasn't her fault. Yet I still engaged in laughing and making her feel worse as revenge.

One morning, during lunch, I walked into the girls restroom to hear a forced quiet cry. I looked under stalls to try and recognize shoes, connect them with a face, but was unable to recognize the pair.

After a few minutes it became silent. I opened the restroom door then closed it to make the person believe I was gone. I stayed quiet as the person came from the stall. It was Eve, her face completely bubbled like she was crying for hours.

She looked at me and immediately covered her face while running back into the stall.

I was lost for words and just stood there.

After a while she started to tell me her situation – the reason she was crying. I honestly felt bad for her and tried to comfort her by telling her that it was okay and that if she needs to talk I'm here. I told her I was sorry for making her feel worse than she already felt.

Eve explained to me she felt unsafe at home and that school was her safe place. Me and Eve's life stories were similar in many ways, in the end, making me understand her. I realized what people were saying about her was false.

When I got home I started to think about what happened at school. When I was going through what she was, I didn't have anyone to lean on and it made it even worse for me. Therefore I came to the conclusion to become a friend instead of an enemy, giving Eve the hope I lost. After this incident I had a change of heart because feeling that kind of struggle is not something I would want others to go through.

People could be going through the worst – it isn't right to make it harder for them no matter who they are. Your actions can change a person's life for the good or bad. I changed my behavior, making me a better student, daughter and person.

When the flowers come out again this year
Let's go to a place where no one is there
When snows are gone and everything is clear
Get ready to go with me everywhere

Whether it's under the sun or the moon
I don't mind spending all my time with you
Wind running through my hair all afternoon
Leaves falling as we enjoy the sweet view

Cars yelling at us to get out their way
Red light screaming at us to be careful
I keep ignoring their words everyday
You breaking down on the street is stressful

Through you I can enjoy things that I like
Thanks to my one true companion: my bike.



