

Maribel

The sweet voice of Maribel is something to reckon with. I find myself in her embrace, arms wrapped around in safety. She sings to me, her songs like a harp accompanied by the sounds of water. She smells of all the pretty little things, ones that are hard to notice until eyes meet. It’s hard to describe the essence of her grace, maybe because it is filled with too much to point out at once. But must I explain? She is mine, there is no need for me to tell of those I love. But... why can’t I get this feeling out? Why would I want to get it out? I wouldn’t want to at all, yet it’s so painful. As I caress her auburn hair, I can’t help but feel myself slip away. We aren’t moving, I’m still in her arms and can feel her skin against mine. It begins to snow and I feel cold as crystals fall onto my hair. “Don’t leave me,” I whisper to her, my breath turning to ice. “You aren’t like the rest, I know in my heart that you wouldn’t do that, but why do I feel so lost?” I look up at her, but her face is dark. “Say something...” I can feel her grip around me loosen, and I begin to panic. “No! You promised you wouldn’t! You aren’t like the others!” My eyes well with tears, fighting against the cold, and I feel a familiar stabbing in my heart. Like a dagger hidden in a bouquet of roses. My Maribel. I should have known... It’s my fault. Maybe I should stop dreaming of her, when she never existed to begin with.

– ELLA POSTON, 17, ST. ALBANS

How it is


The sky is filled today. Clouds, every shape, size, color, whisking and piling up into a dome of reality. Standing on the beach beside the ocean, unfurling waves. A little girl with sun-dropped skin and red boots. She sees this and wonders how it came to be. Weaving violets into crowns, picking up each shell her foot hits, to examine, touch, and lay back where it’d been. Watching as the sky blooms and the clouds ebb with color. Throw a shell into the sea, it gets washed back onshore. The little girl, she lies down on the rain-dimpled sand, watches as stars try to break through the misty screen. A few succeed. Wind is pulling her long braids as if it’s trying to take her back through the dune grass where her stone cottage sits quietly. One last glance at the sky before she trudges home, the seashell that was returned pressed into the palm of her hand. Maybe the sky will be less cloudy tomorrow.

– SIRI DUNN, 15, MORRISTOWN

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YOUNG WRITERS PROJECT

Young Writers Project’s mission is to inspire, mentor, publish, and promote young writers and artists. We select the best writing from hundreds of submissions to our website, youngwritersproject.org, for publication in this newspaper and with other Vermont media partners, and in our monthly digital magazine and annual anthology. This week, we present responses to the challenges, ***Opposites.** Write about opposing forces within a friendship or within yourself;* and ***General Writing.***

PHOTO OF THE WEEK



QUINN SUNDERLAND, 14, CHARLOTTE

It’s not a cage, it’s a resting place

The box on the shelf: velvet, deep purple, the color of heavy drapes, of crushed blackberries. The thorns are the seeds, semicircles, kneeling stones at a ritual hidden behind dusty frames, behind the cracked orange of the terracotta pot. Thoughts too much like taffy for chewing, so I spit them out. Cleanse my mouth of the memory of fingerprints stained by blackberries, of salt shuddering on the tongue, of letting something ugly bloom, half-fermented, instead. I watch crystals cut sunlight into freckles on the banister, dancing, and daisies open like Pandora’s questions on rosy tissue paper. I would rather think of the ladybug painting her wings in the sunbeams. I would rather taste straight sugar, no tang, patch the pottery, plant different seeds in the garden and let the berries wait.

– AURORA SHARP, 17, MORETOWN

Falling through time

I am falling, trying to catch the hands of the old analog clock. Father Time has not yet forgiven us. It’s all going too fast. No, no, no, I want to go back. Dancing with bare feet, not knowing, not thinking. The clock ticked too fast back then. Now it goes too slowly, and yet so fast. *Tick, tick, tick...* I cannot remember half the things I did yesterday; it’s nothing but a blur of missing pencils. Running until I can’t and wishing I could go back. I am falling, falling, falling past some of the best opportunities. I want to go back. *Tick, tick, tick...*

– RUTH KNOX, 12, ESSEX JCT.

Beaches

The beach, full of seashells and sand, seaweed and crabs. The sand squishing between my toes, the nice ocean breeze. That’s what I love about beaches – you can be *free!*

– HAZEL FASCHING, 11, JERICHO

A wall over

Conversations a wall over are well-wrapped candies I wish to nestle on my tongue and describe to you. Conversations, the kind where you cage your breath in fragile lungs till it bruises into a beast that threatens to burst, just to hear what they are saying. And a word or two vibrating like bees in your ears, honey making you itch with guilt. But the conversation falls too quickly before you can pick it up, lying like shattered jam jars on the floor for you to piece back together. Carefully trying to open sealed envelopes without ripping them in half, and the creatures a wall over seem to be talking about you, their sewn-lip sentences escalating with excitement. They know their words are driving you mad, and the conversation no one can hear curls around your ears like gaudy jewels, and the candies remain twisted. And beasts burst, and bees drip honey with carelessness. And envelopes scream into two sad pieces under your fingers, and jewels hang like unwanted bats. And the conversation remains not yours a wall over.

– AVA ROHRBAUGH, 15, CHARLOTTE

I am made of lies and truth

I am made of lies and truth, of songs and silence, age and youth. I am dumb and I am wise (though more the former, no surprise). My height is tall, my patience short. My smile is soft, not my retort. I am made of days and nights, of wins and losses, wrongs and rights. My face’s a mask of ugly beauty. I am humble, I am snooty. I have lived life, but I’m a child. I am shyly, meekly wild. I hope I’m peaceful, but I’m fighting. And I am reading, and I am writing.

– ZOE BERNSTEIN, 15, JERICHO



SHARING THE VOICES OF YOUNG VERMONTERS ON THE ISSUES THAT SHAPE THEIR LIVES

Melting icecaps

I open my eyes for the very first time as a polar bear cub. I want to go explore but mama says no, she says the ice isn’t safe. Mama tells me we are losing our icy home, all because of *you*.

– MIRAH LUTSKY, 10, WAITSFIELD

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Thank you!

Paper

White, blue, purple. Gray, black, yellow. Green, orange, red. So many colors! You fold the crisp, perfect paper. Creasing with your fingertips. Crimping like pie. Folding like dough. Tuck it. Pleat it. Turn it over. Bend and overlap it. I love that precious, precious paper. My fine paper. Sit on the steps by yourself. At night, in the rain, out in the cold. With a piece of paper and a pen with black ink. It is cold outside. With thick paper in hand, I start to draw. Birds’ heads. (Because I don’t want to draw the rest of the body.) Feathers. Leaves. Vines with white flowers. Trees. All things natural. Drawing brings you sights you can’t see with anything else. All you need is paper.

– LUCY HAAS, 11, SOUTH BURLINGTON

In my mind

I like to think that my imagination is a real place. A place where I can fly with my friends by my side. A place where I can run away from the chaos of life. A place where it is normal to be abnormal. A place where I can go on the internet and not see people hating on other people. A place where nobody is judged for anything. And even if it isn’t real, I can still go there. And I can fly away from the ground and the never-ending tsunami of emotion. And I can be whomever I want to be and not be judged by anybody. If this isn’t nice, I don’t know what is.

– SOPHIE MORTON, 11, HINESBURG