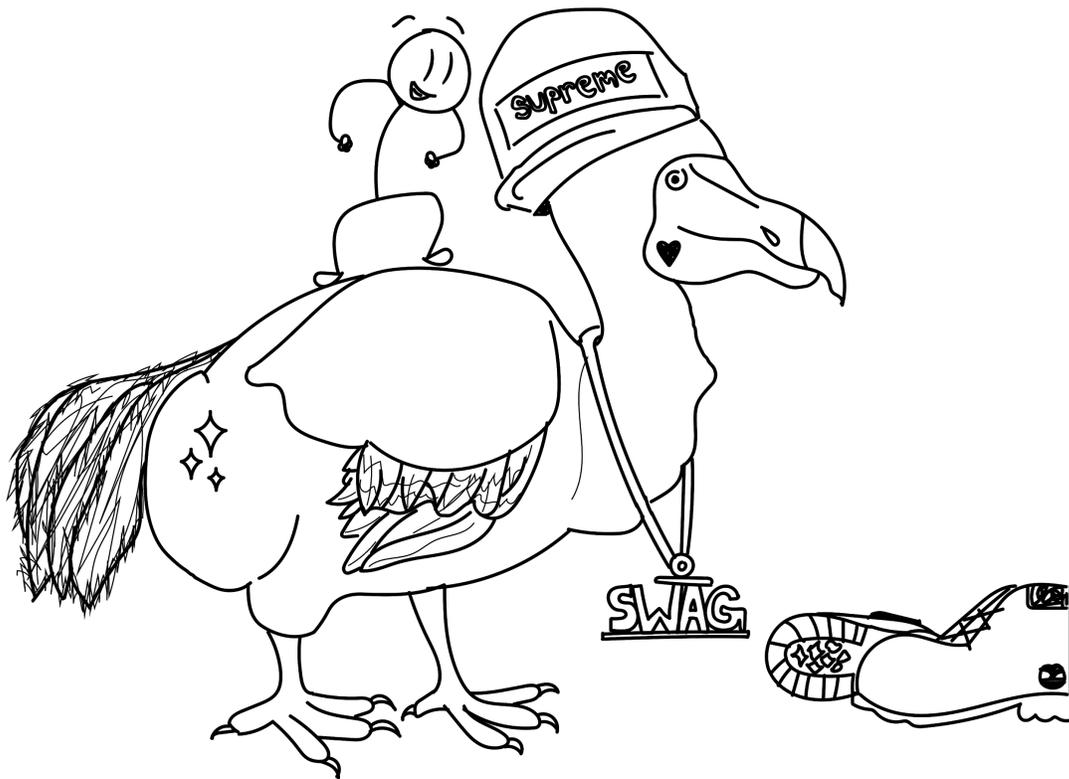


Vol. 2 | Spring 2021

# THE CHENEY JOURNAL



A YEARLY COLLECTION OF  
STUDENT WORKS



# THE CHENEY JOURNAL

A YEARLY COLLECTION OF STUDENT WORKS

VOLUME 2

SPRING 2021

EDITED AND DESIGNED BY:  
NICHOLAS DINNEEN AND LOGAN X. RAMOS

COVER, TITLE PAGE, AND TABLE OF CONTENTS ILLUSTRATIONS BY:  
C.J. ZUNIGA

BACK COVER ILLUSTRATION BY:  
BERNSTEIN PREDELUS



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

5. "MUSIC BY THE LAKE" BY ALLISON SMITH
6. "A GRAVE IN SNOW" BY ASHLEY HASTINGS
7. "THE STORM" BY LOGAN LYSIUK
8. "FLOWERS IN JOY: A HAIKU COLLECTION" BY MALACHI RAMOS
9. "THE LAST ONE" BY MALACHI RAMOS
10. "RELIEF" BY ALIYAH BAH-TRAORE
11. "UNEXPECTED" BY ALIYAH BAH-TRAORE
12. "LOST" BY HADLEY GONZALEZ
13. "BLUE SCREEN OF DEATH" BY ROB REID
14. "HATRED FOR POETRY" BY RILEY THOMAS
15. "THE DINNEEN: A BEDTIME STORY" BY GABE COTTO
16. "FREEDOM" BY ALARIC ERAMI
18. "MINING AWAY" BY ALARIC ERAMI
19. "THE MORAL OF PURNELIUS" BY ANTOINE CHISHOLM
23. "JORDAN 12S" BY DONOVYN WALLACE-HOWE
24. "THE COUNCIL" BY LOGAN X. RAMOS
25. "WINDOW PANE" BY LOGAN X. RAMOS
26. "IONIZING RADIATION" WRITTEN BY ANTOINE CHISHOLM AND ILLUSTRATED BY LOGAN X. RAMOS AND C.J. ZUNIGA
27. "IN MEMORIAM" BY BRADY OLSZEWSKI
28. "RECLAMATION: A SERIES OF HAIKU" BY COLLIN MERRITT
29. "CHARACTER SKETCHES" BY LOGAN X. RAMOS



# MUSIC BY THE LAKE

BY ALLISON SMITH

She sat on a rock watching the flow of the lake and the fish in the glimmering water. She strummed on her guitar. Tapping her foot to the music, she sang: *A sailing I would go . . . I'd sail the Cape and across the seven seas and back home . . . If I had been born 200 years ago.*

As she sang, a large fish rose towards the surface of the lake. When it broke the surface, the musician jumped, realizing the fish was a woman.

The woman, translucent, spirit-like, with long blue hair, floated towards the musician. At the edge of the water she rested her head on her hands.

“Please continue,” she pleaded with a smile, her voice reverberating softly.

The musician hesitated but picked up the song again. The two sat together--one playing, the other listening-- until the sun was hidden behind the trees.

“Come back tomorrow?” the creature asked, beginning to swim away.

The musician nodded.

# A GRAVE IN SNOW

BY ASHLEY HASTINGS

My frostbitten fingers and toes tingle and burn. It is the only feeling throughout my body. I keep my head pointed down at the loose laces of my boots while we trek through the untouched snow. We reach the grave site, one of countless stones, all in neat rows. I look around at all the composed faces and feel tears begin to prick my eyes. I bite my lip.

My grandma places a wicker basket filled with flowers and leaves at the foot of the stone. A red stocking is attached to a small wooden rod, his name written on it. Snow melts and seeps in through the ripped backing of my boots. My knees shake as the water bleeds to the bottom of my socks. The wind picks up, caressing my cheek.

Everyone talks about memories. It's muffled but I can hear his name over and over. I bite my lip harder to keep the tears from blurring my vision, leaving specks of blood to drip onto my tongue. Seven years ago the ground was freshly shoveled dirt. Today it is trampled snow. I watch drops of melting snow hang and fall from the tips of the tree branches that overhang his grave. I can hear Grandma ask me how school was going. How could she ask something so simple, so unimportant? The sun is setting and I finally let my gaze wander to the stone laying in the snow.

# THE STORM

BY LOGAN LYSIUK

BOOM! CRACK! A tree falls to the ground. The floorboards creak.  
Something taps my window.

Is it a ghost or the storm?

I hear whispers in the closet. Something scurries underneath the  
bed. I am petrified.

Is this how I die?

It slithers up my back. I look up, a face stares back. I look again  
and the face is gone.

Am I hallucinating?

It must be in my head. I need to fall asleep. I feel like I'm being  
watched. Something tugs at my sheets.

I scream!

My parents run in. The lights flicker. The storm rages on.

# FLOWERS IN JOY: A HAIKU COLLECTION

BY MALACHI RAMOS

## **Dandelions**

Dandelions shout,  
In joy--twisting, floating,  
fuzz-dancing through wind

## **Tulips**

After the rain stops,  
the crimson tulips brighten,  
Their thirst satisfied

## **A Rose**

In the morning sun  
a rose glistens, drenched in drops  
Of sparkling dew

# THE LAST ONE

BY MALACHI RAMOS

As I kicked him between the legs, he broke the bottle over my head. Half dazed, my blurred vision searched for an object, but he swung his right leg, knocking me off my feet. On the floor I bit his ankle causing him to jerk his foot near my stomach.

After a while of cursing at each other through pain, he spit a tooth out, and surrendered. I won.

The last slice was all mine.

# RELIEF

BY ALIYAH BAH-TRAORE

Ms. Wilson leads me into her office. “Thank you for coming, Jessica.”

I nod.

She points me to a chair. “Take a seat.”

I sit.

The sun blinds me.

A spotlight in an interrogation room.

I hold my breath.

“It’s Alyssa. They’ve called off the search,” she confesses.

My eyes widen.

“I know this is hard for you. You two were so close.” Ms. Wilson’s voice is soft, empathetic. “I’m so sorry.”

“I . . . I don’t know what to say.”

I see Alyssa--blue, cold, half-buried.

“Thank you for telling me,” I mutter, swallowing my relief.

# UNEXPECTED

BY ALIYAH BAH-TRAORE

I've worked too hard to let everything crumble to my feet. Last week I had it all. A stable relationship, a soccer scholarship, amazing friends, solid grades, a happy home life. I had the life that every high schooler wants. Now, it's all gone.

I look at the test. Things weren't supposed to happen this way.

*How do I tell my parents? What are my friends going to say? What about soccer?*

Those two bright pink lines just stare back at me.

# LOST

BY HADLEY GONZALEZ

At that point only tubes were keeping him alive. I held his hand hoping he'd hold mine back. But he didn't. Not even a single movement. Time passed and I could feel the warmth of his body slowly leaving. I just kept looking at him. How could this be happening? A nurse walked in.

“We can't keep him alive any longer. It's time.”

The nurse unhooked the tubes. I felt his hand getting colder and colder. The beeping noise of the monitor replayed in my head over and over. I went over and sat with my brother. I just watched the tears fall from his eyes. His heart slowly breaking at the thought of our grandfather being gone.

A memory came to my head sitting there. My grandfather and I were spray painting the gutters but I kept standing too close. “You're doing it wrong,” he said, gently. He took the can from me and showed me how to do it right, but the heat and the fumes left me dizzy and stomach-sick. He took me inside and put the TV on.

I don't know why that was the memory.

# BLUE SCREEN OF DEATH

BY ROB REID

Windows updating, without permission,  
Corrupting my OS and all my data,  
Leaving me with lots of agitation.  
This is as unstable as a beta.  
Why must you do this to me, Bill Gates, why?  
Why must your updates do this to me?  
This Windows update makes me want to cry.  
Why can't you just let my computer be?  
The crash sad face is tilted sideways ,  
Barely representing the pain I feel.  
Crashing during updates, as always,  
The slowness of the BIOS's POST feels surreal.  
Rapid, loud, angry BIOS beeps fill the air.  
I look at the C drive, but there's nothing there.

# HATRED FOR POETRY

BY RILEY THOMAS

Today I started writing this sonnet--  
This assignment is completely absurd.  
My disdain for poetry is chronic.  
I hate the way it prohibits my words,  
But I sit here in class making this now,  
And the vexation in me only grows,  
So I stare at my screen with a huge frown.  
Writing about my hatred feels nice, though  
I'd rather be doing anything else  
or sitting here doing nothing at all.  
I would rather play checkers by myself.  
I would rather slam my head on a wall.  
I'm writing this now so please go away.  
It's going to be a very long day.

# THE DINNEEN: A BEDTIME STORY

BY GABE COTTO

“One story, then you have to go to bed,” the mother said as they walked to the room. The walls were blue like the sea. There was a bunk bed against one wall and toys were scattered across the floor.

“Yay!” the boy and girl cheered as they climbed into bed.

“I’ll tell you a story that mothers used to warn their children, the story of the Dinneen. No one alive has ever seen the Dinneen but they say it smiles wide before it eats people whole and steals their memories.”

The children shivered in delight at the story. “Once it’s eaten,” the mother continued, “it transforms into a perfect copy of it’s most recent victim, indistinguishable from the original.”

The mother paused for a moment and the children thought about the story. Then the little girl spoke. “If it can be anyone, how do I know you’re not it?” she asked.

The mother’s mouth stretched into a wide smile.



*VENOM* BY  
JAYDEN-AMARE  
STOVER (CREATED IN  
*PROCREATE*)

# FREEDOM

BY ALARIC ERAMI

*Freedom, it is the hope of all people, to be free from the shackles of law and work. Everybody believes that freedom is some sort of blessing. That people should be able to do what they want... but that's not true, shackles are the only thing that keeps monsters and beasts at bay.*

Fires crackle; their orange hues glowing in the streets. Bodies litter the ground. Blood is everywhere. The sounds of gunfire and shattering glass pound in my head like drums. It's been eleven straight hours.

“I-I can't take this, all this chaos. . . It's just, so horrible.”

The sounds are getting closer, louder, next door. Minutes drag and I feel my heart racing towards explosion.

“Just let them pass, just let them pass.”

The sounds pass, I sigh in relief.

Then the crack of a gunshot and a bullet goes through my doorknob, breaking the lock. The door swings open.

A man steps into the room. He has a machete and a handgun. He fires at me, but the gun clicks, empty.

“S-Stop,” I plead. The man charges, machete raised. I block one

hit with a pillow, another with a plate that shatters. I pick up a shard and stab at him, missing.

He keeps coming, slowly. I back away until I'm pressed up against the wall. He inches forward, savoring, putting the blade inches away from my face.

**MINING AWAY**  
**A SONNET**  
**BY ALARIC ERAMI**

A world of blocks generate all around  
The landscape forms with animals and trees  
Nothing nearby resembles something round  
All I can feel is a calming breeze  
All I have in this world is my bare hands  
I'll gather items to build a shelter  
It's survival, so I can't use commands  
Got some some ore, got it in a smelter  
Use the iron ore to make a new pick  
Go down into the mines to find diamonds  
Seeing all this lapis makes me so sick  
Finding lots of' gems I need a lineman  
Got myself full set of diamond armor  
Don't need to mine more, I'll be a farmer

# THE MORAL OF PURNELIUS

BY ANTOINE CHISHOLM

All of the students stood in single file waiting in the sterile, hospital-like hallway for the chip checker to call them forward. The faces of the students all had the same manufactured look. Like products on an assembly line, Purnelius thought. They all wore the same mundane beige and black uniform that he wore, the only points of interest being the aquamarine emblem on the top left corner of the jacket and their student ID number embroidered on the opposite corner.

Purnelius counted exactly seven students in front of him. Student #0519 walked forward to the bleached white table and handed the chip container to the gaunt chip checker.

The chip checker opened the container and dropped the chip in the bright blue and white box. The box rattled, making sounds like rodents scratching, as it processed the chip. Eventually, the chip fell through the bottom of the box and was handed back to the student who walked into the classroom and sat at the desk nearest the door.

Purnelius watched student #0519 insert his chip into the back of the metallic sensory-deprivation helmet on the desk, checked the LED indicators to ensure the helmet was functioning correctly, and placed the helmet on his head. Once on, small metallic tendrils uncoiled from

the helmet and latched to the students head.

Purnelius looked away from #0519, and watched as student #0520 went through the same process, watched her hand her chip to the spindly chip checker dressed in a beige and black blazer with a dark variation of the school logo, and watched the security android resting in standby mode right beside the checker.

The security android had paper white skin and a featureless face. Purnelius wondered why they still had those things. There hasn't been an incident in a school for years. Purnelius saw the android's face turn slightly towards him, as if it had heard his thoughts. Purnelius forced himself to stare back despite the cold grip he felt choking the air out of his lungs. Did the android know? The android kept its head tilted towards him.

Purnelius had allowed a gap to form between himself and student #0523. He jogged forward a few steps to catch back up.

It was almost time for him to approach the chip checker. The guy told him that the chances of this chip being recognized were a trillion to one but deep down he feared he'd be the one. Even with this fear, he still felt he had to learn.

With only one student left in front of him, Purnelius' heart beat like a bullet train. Adrenaline left his muscles tense enough to snap.

He walked forward and handed the chip checker his container, all the while pouring his sight into the sinister android. The man put the chip into the mechanical box; the sound of the scratching box made

Purnelius' hair stand while he continued staring at the droid. He wasn't immediately aware that the chip checker was already done with the chip and held his arm out trying to give Purnelius the container. He tried to grab it quickly but the man pulled away and opened his mouth slightly.

“Is there an issue I should know about?” the checker asked in a calm, unexpectedly deep voice.

Purnelius quickly shook his head no and reached for the chip to continue into the classroom. The checker pulled the chip away and paused for a moment, studying Purnelius. Then, as if coming to a decision, he rose from his seat and, tapping on his ear, initiated communication. “We're sending someone down to you.”

Purnelius stuttered an apology, an attempt at explanation, but before he could finish the android grabbed his arm and dragged him down the quiet hall. As he was being dragged he looked towards his classmates. Nobody looked at him.

Stupid, brilliant fear overwhelmed his mind as he was dragged to what he only could assume was hell. The android pulled him through corridors indistinguishable from where he stood in line, before it suddenly relaxed its grip.

Purnelius found himself standing in front of a black screen on a brown and black table surrounded by the androids he hated. He looked around at the blank grey walls and started to feel suffocated. His overworked brain spiraled, fraying Purnelius's connection to reality.

A man appeared on the screen. His features were strong: a sharp jawline with a beard that seemed to grow right along the edge of his face. His greyish brown hair gave him a look of sinister wisdom and his lifeless, celestial-like eyes only amplified Purnelius' terror. Though he'd only heard the stories, Purnelius knew--this man had to be one of the Judges. All hope was lost.

The judge simply asked him one question, "Do you feel remorse?" Nothing in Purnelius's body seemed to work. His mind was a Pollock painting, scattered. Purnelius thought the android smiled just before it grabbed his hand and unleashed a current of electricity and the world went dark.

The communication feed ended. "So, kids, hopefully you understand now why you don't ever lie about your thoughts," the teacher lectured.

"Yes, Ms. Jacqueline," the students responded in monotonous unity. The metal helmets buzzed and beeped, calling the students back to their work.

# JORDAN 12S

BY DONOVYN WALLACE-HOWE

Oh Jordan 12's, so shiny and so white,  
When you come in stock, bet i'll take my chance,  
Like Michael Jordan, they always take flight,  
Breaking ankles, flying through in a glance,  
But the glory is stolen by scalpers,  
So I leave ebay and go to the store.  
I begin to wait in line for hours,  
I make it inside and spot at least four!  
The others beside me are all racing--  
I'm ahead but I trip on my shoelace,  
I don't make it, but what about trading?  
They all look at me with a silly face.  
Scared and confused, they all leave me behind,  
Oh, Jordan 12's, I wish that you were mine!



# THE COUNCIL

BY LOGAN X. RAMOS

Tyler wakes to a strobing light.

“Where the hell am I?”

The bright glow of pink and blue neon of the gas station strains his eyes. The pumps and the parking lot are lit up by flood lights, but Tyler sees no one. He shuffles forward, towards the gas station’s small convenience store. From a glowing sign on top of the store, Tyler learns its name, Saturday’s.

He tries to peek through the windows but he can see nothing because of the blinding reflection of the lights behind him. Cautiously, he moves to the door and checks the handle.

“Locked, damn.”

He looks around but he only sees a row of lamp posts and the outlines of buildings--stores he assumes--in the darkness beyond the gas station.

All these lamp posts, all these buildings, but no people. He’s able to detect a small orange light at the edge of his vision.

“A fire?” he wonders.

Walking closer he realizes it’s not a fire, but a lit up old phone booth. Picking up the receiver, he sees there is no place to put in money. He tries dialing 911, but it rings until he hears a deep, distorted, almost robotic voice: “Your call has been denied by the council.”

Then there is only dial tone.

# WINDOW PANE

BY LOGAN X. RAMOS

You're trapped between four walls,  
hunched behind a desk covered in papers, books,  
  
and the random things you've given meaning.

You can't recall how long you've been sitting there, staring.

Staring off into space, looking into the outside world, through the  
window pane.

The beauty of green and brown giants swaying in the wind. The  
grey and soft skyline covering the tops of the trees.

If this continues, you'll lose the beauty you hold so close  
  
to the void.

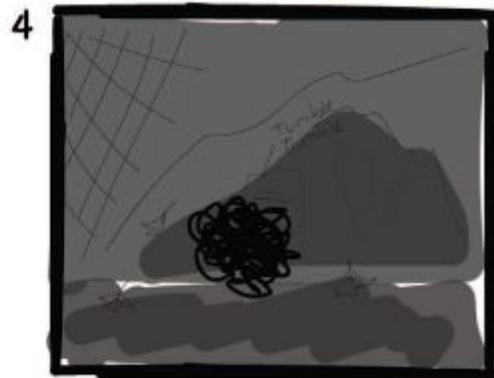
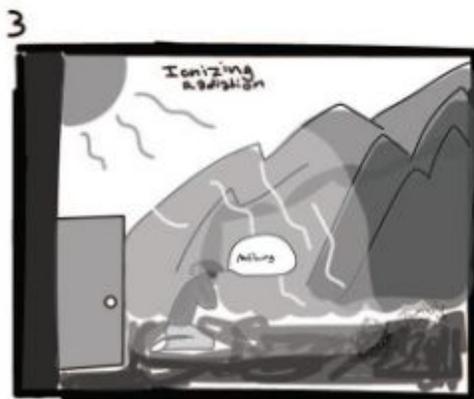
The darkness sets in, slowly, only reflecting the void from inside  
the window.

Pain.

# IONIZING RADIATION

WRITTEN BY: ANTOINE CHISHOLM

ILLUSTRATED BY: LOGAN X. RAMOS AND C.J. ZUNIGA



# IN MEMORIAM

BY BRADY OLSZEWSKI

He was on the bed unmoving. No one talked, so I felt forced to stay quiet too. My mom tapped his shoulder until he opened his eyes and the nurses pulled him up to a sitting position. To me, he seemed to talk perfectly fine, just slow and quiet, but he said the words and I heard them fine.

I didn't really see him much growing up. Really, we were only on a first name basis.

I didn't have any emotions about him being there then, or this being his last day, or that I wasn't going to ever see him again. My mom never told me good stories, not about his parenting.

We'd go over my grandma's since I was old enough to remember, but he'd already been moved to the hospital by then. He was never that old, not even when he died. He wasn't young, but he also wasn't old.

As everyone hugged him and said goodbye, I won't forget this, but it's almost like my grandma wasn't sad to say goodbye. It was kind of like she was pushing us out of the room. I liked to think that they got along well. He was a very strict man. My mom said that he was mean. I think he treated his daughters the same way he treated his wife. My mom started to walk out and that was the end of it. I said goodbye, gave him a hug, and left.

He was huge into guns and hunting. I think that's one of the reasons I am into guns and why, I think, my mom hates guns. She still has to see that part of him that she doesn't like.

# RECLAMATION: A SERIES OF HAIKU

BY COLLIN MERRITT

## **A Lonely Hydrant**

Red hydrant on an  
iron pedestal, swallowed  
by a sea of green.

## **Reclamation**

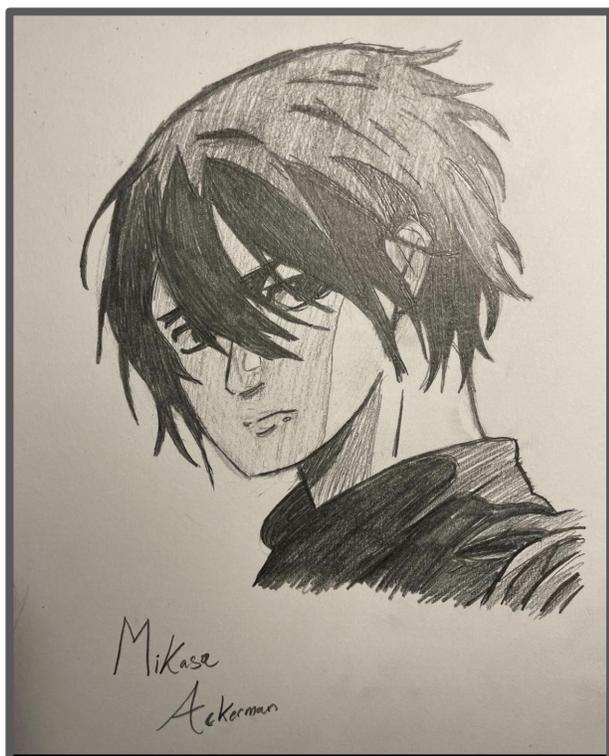
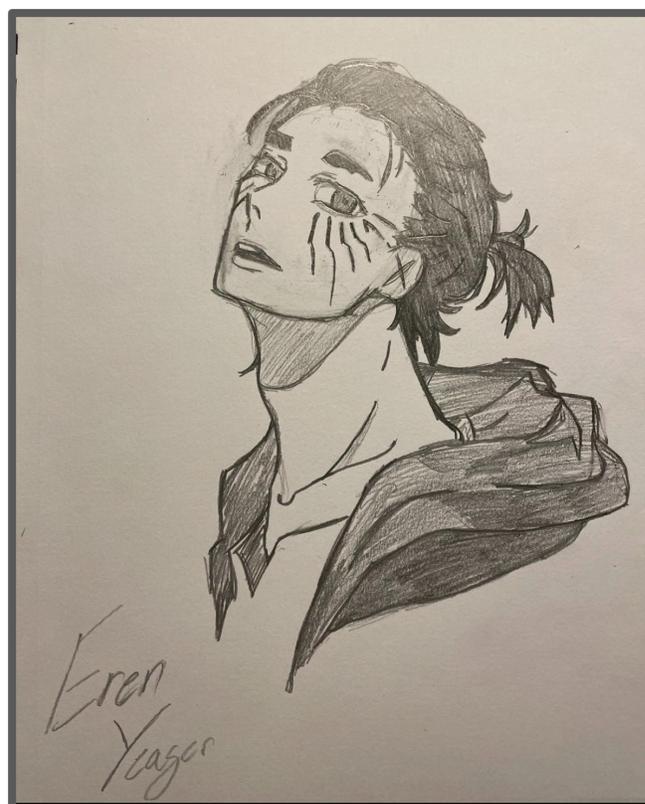
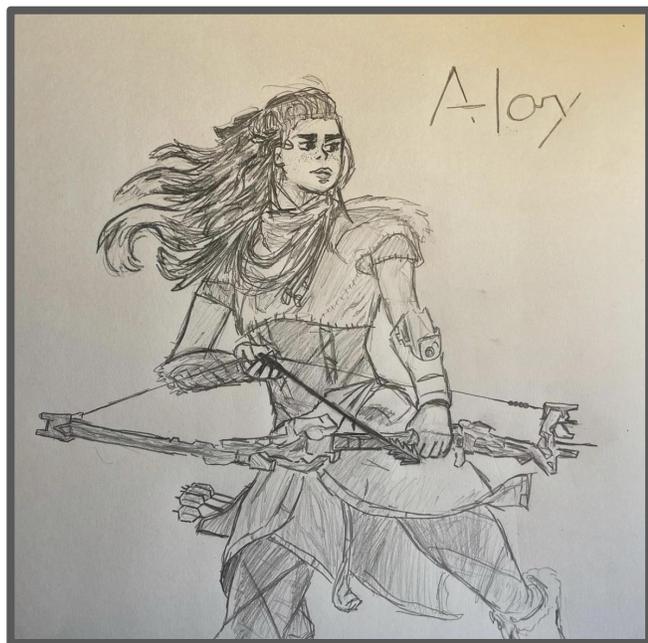
Weeds grow through cracks in  
old stone floors--nature begins  
its reclamation.

## **The Memorial**

The memorial  
to a life--stones all broken,  
yet flowers still bloom.

# “ASSORTED SKETCHES”

BY LOGAN X. RAMOS



# THE CHENEY JOURNAL



A YEARLY COLLECTION OF  
STUDENT WORKS

THE WORKS INCLUDED IN THIS COLLECTION SPAN MANY GENRES AND FORMS. FROM TENSE CRIME DRAMA TO APOCALYPTIC ACTION SEQUENCES. FROM STORIES OF HORROR AND COMEDY, TO POEMS OF PAIN AND ISOLATION, TO QUIET, MOVING, MEDITATIONS ON LOSS. THE DIVERSITY OF CONTENT CONTAINED WITHIN THIS COLLECTION IS VAST, BUT WHAT UNITES ALL OF THE ENTRIES IS THEIR ORIGIN. THESE ARE CHENEY VOICES. THEY COME FROM OUR COMMUNITY. THIS YEAR HAS CERTAINLY BEEN A CHALLENGE, BUT THAT HAS NOT STOPPED THESE CHENEY ARTISTS FROM BEING SEEN AND BEING HEARD.