

The background of the cover is a vibrant landscape. The top half is a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds. Below the sky is a flat, green horizon line. The bottom half of the image is a lush green field of tall grasses and small yellow flowers. Two butterflies, one on the left and one on the right, are perched on the flowers. The butterflies have light-colored wings with dark markings. A semi-transparent blue banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the magazine's title in orange text.

# Leaps & Bounds Magazine

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# Leaps & Bounds 2022 Summer Issue

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# Swirls of Color

*By Carolyn*

Swirls of blue, yellow, red, orange, and pink appear on the page. The colors are bright and vivid as they lay down peacefully on the blank white canvas. They appear in separate blotches at first, each taking up their own space on the paper. Slowly and seamlessly, the colors begin to mix together, connecting the land with the sea. My paintbrush glides across the page, the bristles coming into contact with the blotches, smearing them, and transforming it into a dazzling sunset. I scribble my name across the bottom right of the page, and at last, my ideal vacation is at my fingertips.

“Honey, hurry up! We’re going to be late!” my mom shouts up at me.

“I’m coming, give me one sec!” I scramble around my room, desperately trying to find the binder with my notes. I finally find the binder trapped under a pile of homework papers. Grabbing the binder, I sling my backpack over my shoulder and rush downstairs.

We get in the car and drive to the courthouse. It’s my first time competing in-person, at an actual courthouse. Hurriedly, I run over my lines one last time, anxiety and excitement battling within me. When we arrive, I walk into the main room to find my teammates. The courtroom is huge, presided over by the judge’s chair dominating the room. Intimidated, I look away quickly and take a deep breath, reassuring myself that I know what I’m doing as the other team starts to arrive.

*(cont.)*

# Swirls of Color

*By Carolyn*

*(cont.)*

I spent the last two weeks preparing for this, eight hours every day. My cousins had come down from New York to spend the Christmas break with us, and I had been looking forward to showing them around Boston. But because I was so preoccupied, I couldn't spend much time with them. My mock trial team had announced the upcoming state competition a week before, and I wanted to get a role on the team. So I made a plan to memorize my draft and craft responses to every possible objection until I could recite them in my sleep. I locked myself in my room, got a mirror, and began practicing. Eventually, I did find myself repeating the lines over and over again in my sleep and knew that I was ready for the big day.

"Prosecution, please call your next witness." The judge's voice brings me back to reality. It's my turn. I take another deep breath, get up, and walk to the front.

"Yes your Honor, the prosecution calls..."

"How did it go?!" My mom immediately turns to me as I get into the car.

"It went really well! We won!!" I smile from ear-to-ear. I'm so happy that my hard work has paid off. This victory feels different, sweeter than any other ones.

*(cont.)*

# Swirls of Color

By Carolyn

*(cont.)*

We arrive at home, and I'm ready to hit the shower, finish my homework, and go straight to bed. A few hours later, relieved to have finally finished my schoolwork, I check my phone one last time before climbing into bed. My eyes widen in horror at the number of Slack messages that appear. Scanning them, my heart sinks when I realize that I have a robotics team call in 10 minutes. I close my eyes and bang my head against the wall. *Guess I'm not going to bed just yet...* I groan and log on to Zoom.

I always return here—my safe space, the place where I can forget everything else that is going on in my life. I come here at least once a week to clear my head. And this week, it is especially needed.

I sit down and stare at the canvas in front of me. An hour ago, it had been a crisp, white page, pristine. Now, it was as if the circus had come to town, flying elephants and all. In one corner, the demon sat on a throne with his minions around him. In another corner, my friends and I were laughing over a TikTok at school. And in the very middle, was a girl drowning in papers. No one else would understand this drawing. Even I didn't understand all of it. But it was exactly what I had hoped for.

I set my brush down and sigh in relief. Signing the painting at the bottom, I tuck it away into my folder. *(cont.)*



# Swirls of Color

*By Carolyn*

*(cont.)*

## **Step 1: Composition – Realization**

“Mom, I think I’m sick,” I groaned as I rubbed my eyes, allowing them to adjust to my surroundings. My mom was looking down at me, examining my face. My head was spinning and my throat felt as if it were on fire.

“Are you sure? You won’t be able to go to school?” My mom asks me with a worried expression on her face.

“I don’t think so,” I say as my eyes tear up. I had two important AP tests that day that I could not miss. But I had no choice.

I spent the day at home in my bed, crying and wondering how I had gotten here. I had burnt myself out to the point that my body physically couldn’t take it anymore. The stress from the school year was overwhelming: AP courses, extracurriculars, sports, contests, trying to fill up my college application. I thought, if I kept this up for the whole year, my mental health would greatly deteriorate.

So once I felt better the next day, I sat down at my desk and began writing. I wrote down all the things in my life that were causing me stress. It took a while but once it was done, I stood back and looked at my paper. I could see everything laid out, and the visual aid brought me to reality. My life was becoming too cluttered and I needed to find a way to clean it up.

*(cont.)*

# Swirls of Color

By Carolyn

*(cont.)*

This was what brought me to taking the time to draw every weekend. By realizing that my life was, in fact, too stressful, I knew I had to find out how to deal with that. So I immediately turned to what had always worked for me, and implemented it into my weekly routine. Now, I draw every Sunday and it refreshes my mind and prepares me for the hard week ahead.

## **Step 2: Composition - Perspective**

Perspective is as important as finding your “de-stressor”. Drawing has certainly helped me manage my stress a lot better, but if it weren’t for my mindset change, I would still be in the same mental state as I was before. When I’m drawing, I relax into a calm and happy mood, so once I’m done and have to return back to my work, I don’t feel negative about it. Having an effective de-stressor and a positive mindset is my key to not feeling as overwhelmed by the things going on in my life.

A gust of wind blows by. I shiver in my coat as I shift in my seat. Frowning, I look at my painting and contemplate what to do next. The sky looks too dark for my liking, so I dip my brush into blue. Mixing blue and white, I get to work. The paintbrush makes its way around the clouds and over the birds, carefully smoothing out the harsh edges of the sky. I smile and look out the window, the bright light from the sun catching my eyes. There had been a storm a few hours earlier, but now there is a glimpse of a rainbow over the horizon. Bingo. *(cont.)*

# Swirls of Color

*By Carolyn*

*(cont.)*

I smile and dip the paintbrush into red, then yellow, then green, then blue, and purple. I sit back, satisfied. The clouds float calmly over the clear blue sky, the sun's rays slightly peeking through, and the vibrant rainbow shining proudly in contrast to its gloomy surroundings. I am at peace.

*(end)*



# Smoke over the Mountain

*By Harry*

*All was right in Ironhaven. The birds warbled merrily in the trees as the blacksmiths hammered red-hot metal rods onto heavy anvils...*

Harold burst out his front door and ran to the local market to buy fresh vegetables for his mother. The market was bustling with sounds of bargaining and cooking. Harold could feel that today was going to be a great day. He ran to his usual shop to buy fresh tomatoes from Walter Watson. Walter's hair was as white as snow and his smile could make anyone's day better.

"Seven tomatoes please!" grinned Harold.

Walter reached into a cardboard box and picked out the ripest tomatoes he could find. His contorted, yet gentle fingers swiped over several tomatoes to find the best ones.

"Here kiddo," chortled Walter as he tenderly dropped the tomatoes into Harold's well-worn bag.

"Don't call me a kiddo just because I'm short!" shouted Harold.

Being short was Harold's greatest hurdle in life. No one took him seriously because of his size. But he was too good-natured to stay upset. As he ran, he hummed the jingle that was stuck in his head, not immediately noticing when his vision became blurry.

"Ah, I should've slept more yesterday. I really shouldn't have stayed up all night practicing my knife-throwing skills."

He rubbed his eyes to get rid of the blurriness but nothing changed. Slowly realizing that it was smoke, Harold ran to a butcher who was slicing meat for his customers.

*(cont.)*

# Smoke over the Mountain

*By Harry*

*(cont.)*

“Excuse me? I think there’s smoke!” hollered Harold as he shook the man’s arm.

“Get off of me,” barked the man. “You’re old enough to have better manners! I’ve got work to do!”

“Maybe I’m just crazy. I seriously need more sleep,” thought Harold after apologizing to the butcher.

He trotted home again as quickly as possible, struggling not to trip on the cobbled road. Dropping off the tomatoes on the kitchen table, he crashed into bed.

Following a great slumber, Harold woke up to a thick blurriness outside his window. Smoke. He knew it wasn’t his imagination. A faint scent of sulfur hung in the air. Harold ran to his backyard, staring disbelievingly at the hot and humid smoke coming from over the mountain. Hurrying back into the house, he raised the alarm:

“Mom, there’s smoke outside!”

“Harold, you need to get more sleep and throw fewer knives! Can you just go get some onions so I can make breakfast?” his mother replied in an irritated voice.

“Something’s not right,” murmured Harold.

Sprinting back to Walter’s vegetable stand, he hollered, “Walter! Walter! Do you see the smoke?”

“Hmm,” answered Walter.

“Does this mean you see it?”

“Hm... No. But you should... persist with your ideas... if you really... believe in them,” advised Walter sagely.

*(cont.)*

# Smoke over the Mountain

*By Harry*

*(cont.)*

“No, I think I’m just crazy. I’ll just take one onion and let you be,” grumbled Harold as he put a dollar and the rest of his change on the creaky wooden counter.

“Here,” whispered Walter, handing the onion to Harold, “remember what I said.”

Harold took the onion and discarded what Walter had said. He ran home, looking back at the mountain every few seconds.

“I’m going crazy,” thought Harold, staring hard at the smoke coming over the mountain.

Just as he got to his front door, the ground started to rumble and shake. An ear-piercing roar came from the mountain. Harold looked back and saw an ominous, dark shape covered with black and red scales descending over the village. Its nose blew out the smoke that he’d seen for days, and its angular skull gave it a frightening look. Magnificent wings grew out from its shoulders, almost angel-like, but its thick, sword-like tail and fiery, sulfuric breath gave it a malevolent presence.

Dragon.

“Oh no...”

*(cont.)*

# Smoke over the Mountain

*By Harry*

*(cont.)*

Harold looked around his town, horrified to see that everyone was absolutely oblivious to this menace circling their town, ready to pounce. Harold ran back to the market and slammed open the door of the butcher shop. Seeing a large knife on the counter, he grabbed it and raced back out of the shop. Angry, the butcher tried to stop him. Harold zig-zagged down the street, eyes fixed on the circling dragon as it descended over the town square. Running even harder, Harold threw the knife at the dragon's eye. The eyeball popped like a water balloon, and the dragon gave a hideous screech as it plummeted to the ground, writhing and twisting in its death throes.

"Guys, I did it!" shouted Harold proudly as he waited for the applause, but the only thing he got was a punch in the mouth from the butcher as he was tackled to the ground.

*(end)*

# Caged Bird Free

By Emily

#1

Caged bird,  
Chained bird,  
Once the brightest star in the night

Sweet bird,  
Defeated bird  
Coming to heel, agreeing to obey

Lost bird  
Exhausted bird  
Stretch out your wings and learn to fly

Igniting bird,  
Fighting bird  
Against the snow, against the rain

What once was pain is now...

Free bird,  
Free bird  
Out of the cage, into the night

#2

In the night, creatures arise

Neither grand nor small,  
Neither great nor unique

They tear away at the bird,  
Away and away

And when they leave,  
The bird is exposed

To the dangers of the night

Scared bird,  
Lost bird,

Longing for a cage,  
Longing to return

Home

#3

Back to the cage?  
Or into the night?

Back to the nest,  
Where the little ones  
rest?

Or exposed to the creatures,  
Who know no mercy?

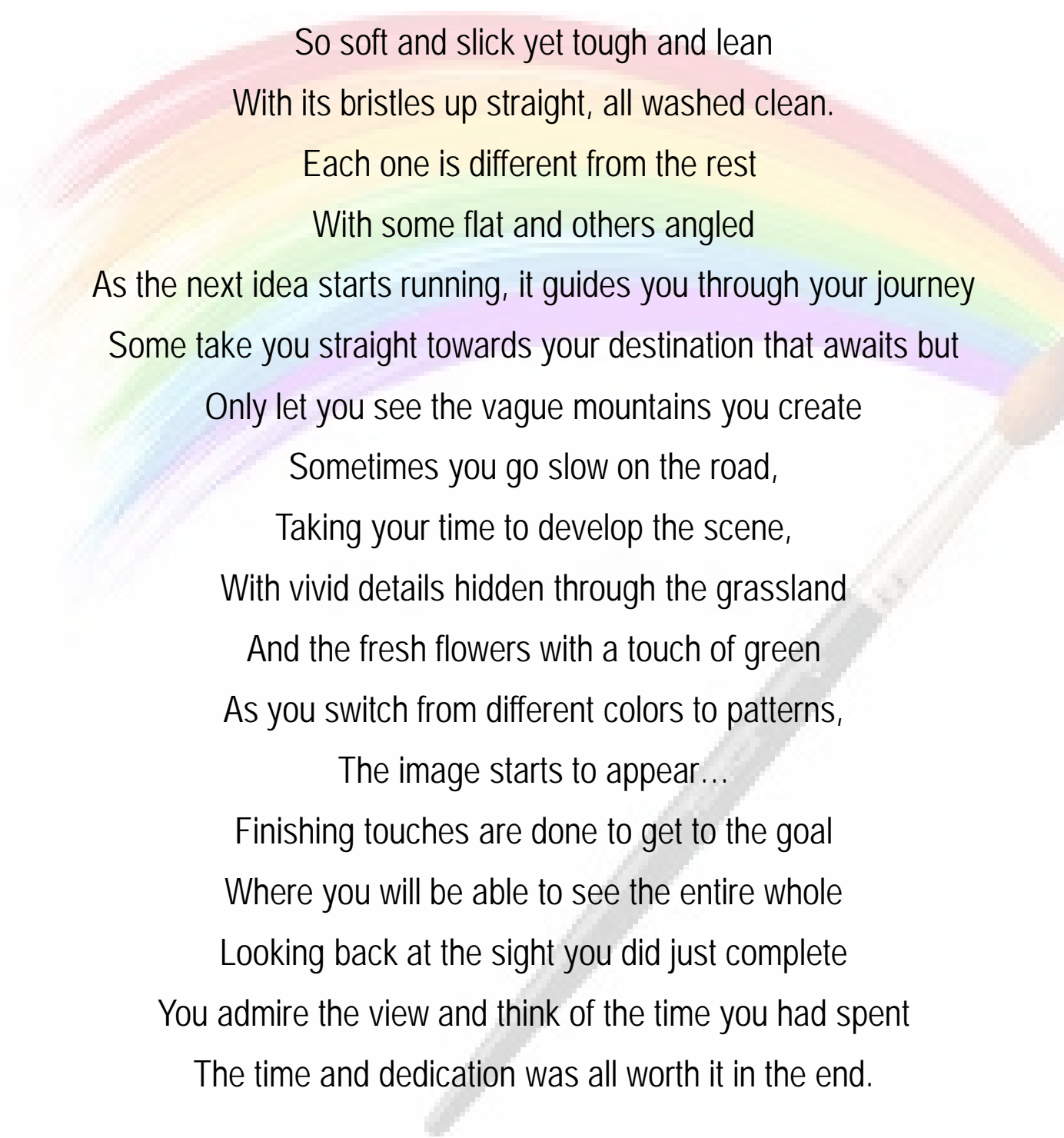
Safety?  
Or freedom?

Comfort?  
Or adventure?

Head ducked, tail tucked,  
The songbird flies out of  
the stars

# Ode to Paintbrushes

*By Emily*



So soft and slick yet tough and lean  
With its bristles up straight, all washed clean.  
Each one is different from the rest  
With some flat and others angled  
As the next idea starts running, it guides you through your journey  
Some take you straight towards your destination that awaits but  
Only let you see the vague mountains you create  
Sometimes you go slow on the road,  
Taking your time to develop the scene,  
With vivid details hidden through the grassland  
And the fresh flowers with a touch of green  
As you switch from different colors to patterns,  
The image starts to appear...  
Finishing touches are done to get to the goal  
Where you will be able to see the entire whole  
Looking back at the sight you did just complete  
You admire the view and think of the time you had spent  
The time and dedication was all worth it in the end.



# "Pain"

By Harry

An ordinary Thursday,  
A gentle breeze,  
And leaves crunching  
Under my feet.  
But I can't keep  
My eyes from  
The telephone pole  
That towers over me.  
Before coming  
To summer camp,  
Mom told me,  
*Don't do anything  
Stupid or daring.*  
But I think,  
*Can't be that hard,*  
And slowly scale  
The pole  
Like an unsteady bear.  
Then I make a  
Horrendous decision.  
I look up.  
My heart drops with fear  
And my legs tremble.  
I wipe my sweaty palms  
One at a time

Against my cargo pants  
As I contemplate  
My decision to climb  
Any further.  
*Should I  
Or shouldn't I...*  
I take a deep breath.  
*In....  
And out....*  
When I get to the top,  
I look down.  
My classmates are  
As small as ants,  
But their yells  
Resound in my ears  
Roaring  
Like fireworks.  
I try to stand up,  
But I slip.  
For the first five seconds,  
It feels like  
The world around me  
Is moving at  
A snail's pace.  
*This is how  
I die.*

*Ugggggggh!*  
Suddenly,  
There is  
A feeling of  
A thousand bees  
Stinging me  
All at once.  
Pain and agony  
Exploding in every nerve.  
But that pain is also  
What saves my life.  
My safety harness  
Catching me.  
This pain is  
Not the worst.  
This pain is necessary,  
In fact, essential,  
To keep me from dying.  
I learn to deal with pain.  
Pain is not the end.  
Pain will not kill me.  
This one ordinary Thursday  
And one ordinary telephone pole  
Gives me a life-lesson  
That I will never forget.  
Pain... will not stop me.