

**Saying goodbye**

I thought saying goodbye would have been significantly harder than it was. (I thought that the words would build up like smoke in my lungs and burn my throat on the way out.) But to my surprise I barely felt it when I said them (the words fell from my mouth and you were gone before I was entirely sure I’d said them.) I thought I’d regret it more, too, that the nights following would be void of sleep (with me fighting myself to take it back, half of me saying it could be better) but somehow I’ve never slept better.

- **DAN GREGORY**, **ST. ALBANS**

**Photo of the Week**

![Photo by Shannon MacDonald, Sheldon](image)

**Braided laces**

The laces of her sneakers braid the ideas of members of the United Nations. The contrast between the sole and tongue, slipping controversial words of wisdom, yet engraving a forsaken mark into the fragile earth, compressing the shadows of the past and the decree of the future. Union is simple. It should be easy, right? The bunny ears, made with nimble fingers, tie it tight. **But Peace. Is different, confusing. Incomplete.**

Peace is missing an idea, theory, or theme, a practice, and/or notion. It’s missing. Something. To say the least. The stains of green, black, brown on the lace’s blank canvas blend nationality together in one long, pivoting course, manipulated, twisted, lost, untied dragged... across the ground, coming to two disconnected ends, only to be tied together again in one knot, sometimes two. **Tight.**

Peace doesn’t stay, but lingers here and there in the severed smile of the moon’s mare or in the ribbons of one’s hair. Peace lingers upon the shoulders of chaos, riding its turbulent sails across the vast ocean only to reach land. Peace is there. For peace cannot exist until one is willing to tie another’s shoe. Peace cannot exist until one understands the world’s perplexing nature. Peace cannot exist until one acknowledges when her laces are tied.

- **ABIGAYLE DOMINGUE, ST. ALBANS**

**A royal address**

Forgive me for not kneeling when you passed by. I forgot whose presence I was in. Forgive me, your highness, for not waiting for the scepter to lower for you to grant me permission to speak.

Oh please forgive me! I didn’t see the purple robes. I didn’t know I was in the presence of royalty.

If you can’t forgive me, I understand. Tear me apart with knives. Lay me on a bed of sharp nails. Poison me with toxic venom. Let them see red blood in the streets.

It’s what I deserve isn’t it? How dare I not bow before the queen?

- **SARA YOUNG**, **ST. ALBANS**

**Photo by Shannon MacDonald, Sheldon**

**Alice giggles**

Alice giggles. Her lips reach for her ears, but don’t quite make it. Crows land on the folds of skin beside her eyes and print the marks of their feet on her face. She was hunched over, but now stands straight and tall like a redwood, or at least, that’s how tall she thinks she is.

Now she is looking at the grass with such awe and wonder, you would think it was the appendages of a green anemone, or the crush rings of Saturn.

She bends from her ankles and carefully teeters over her own knees. A small finger reaches out to touch the grass; after frightfully making contact, it recedes back to safety. Eyes as brown as dark chocolate puddling glance back at me. Questions flow out of her eyes. I nod, a sign of approval. She then turns back to the tiny forest before her and carefully selects a blade of grass. Alice stands up once again and stretches her arm up, and up, to grasp my palm. My palm opens like a flower opens to the sun; in it, Alice places a single shard of grass.

“For you,” she says, her blonde curls waving at the wind.

“Thank you, Alice.”

- **SHANNON MACDONALD**, **ST. ALBANS**