

# Dragons' Fire



da Vinci Arts Middle School

Literary Review

2017 - 2018

Pieces for this eighth annual publication were selected based on literary merit; each poem, essay, or story had to be interesting, engaging, and well-written. The advisor edited pieces for grammar, punctuation, word choice, sentence fluency, and sensibility. Some selections were nominated by language arts teachers. Others students wrote as assignments in the Creative Writing elective. A few are inspired by *Echo* by Pam Muñoz Ryan, *Refugee* by Alan Gratz, *Shooting Kabul* by N.H. Senzai, *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* by Chris Van Allsburg, Luci Tapahonso’s “Four Sandwiches,” Martin Espada’s “Raisin Eyes,” Margaret Walker’s “Sorrow Home,” Nikki Giovanni’s “Nikki Rosa,” or Kathie Appelt’s “What He Took with Him.” The visual arts pieces were selected from the Capstone exhibition, based on theme, to illustrate the written work. We thank da Vinci students for sharing their creative work with us.

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# The Unicorn Game

By Leah Abramson-Slater

It was a lazy summer's day, and Alexander was bored. He lay slumped in a tree, half asleep. The sun was his blanket, the branches a mattress, and the droning insects were a lullaby. He usually spent these afternoons eagerly observing the knights' train, but today they were off on some mysterious mission, and Alex was stuck with nothing to do. Apparently, his younger sister was having the same problem.

"Alex, where are you!" she whined.

Alex snapped his eyes open. Looking down, he spied Eleanor's little pink figure cutting a trail through the tall grass. Cutting a trail towards him. Like most siblings, as much as Alex hated being bored, he hated his sister more. He let out a small groan. Unfortunately, this minuscule noise did not escape the unnaturally keen ears of Eleanor, and she immediately spotted her older brother hidden among the limbs of a tall tree.

"Alex, get down, I wanna play princesses!"

Alex did not want to play princesses. He leapt down from his tree and brandished a stick at Eleanor. "Begone, foul witch!" he shouted. He tried to sound intimidating, but it is hard to look imposing when leaves are in your hair and you look like you've woken just up from a nap. Luckily, it does not take much fierceness to frighten a seven-year-old. Unluckily, Eleanor began to tear up, each eye like an overfilled teacup threatening to spill. "Oh, Ellie, don't cry," said Alex. He felt a bit guilty and didn't mean to make her so upset. Also, he didn't want her blabbing to their mother and getting him in trouble. He needed to save the situation, quick. "I wasn't yelling at you! There really was a witch, right behind you! Luckily I scared her off. Don't worry, I saved the day. You can thank me later." Eleanor beamed in adoration. Little kids are so gullible, thought Alex smugly.

After agreeing to keep her company, the pair made their way down to the woods. "So," asked Alex. "What game do you want to play?" He prayed that Eleanor had forgotten about *princesses*.

"Catch the Unicorn!" she replied, staring at Alex like that was the most obvious thing in the world. Her brother rolled his eyes, about to reply how that was the most stupid, girly make-believe game he had ever heard of, when a flash of white sped past him. Soon after came a

thunder of hooves. Alex had just enough time to pull his sister and himself against a tree before a team of men rode past, his father at the lead.

“Catch the unicorn!” his father shouted with gleeful determination as he brandished a lasso. Cheers billowed behind him. The group disappeared into the woods leaving only a cloud of dust trailing and a pair of open mouthed children behind them.

“Eleanor?”

“Yeah?”

“Good game idea! Let’s go catch the unicorn!”

The siblings trotted along, following the hoof prints in the dirt. Finally they reached a small clearing. Knights stood around patting each other on the back and excitedly conversing. Alex pushed his way through the crowd until a big hand grabbed his shoulder. He looked up and saw his father.

“Alexander! What are you doing here? Ah, it doesn’t matter. Son, you need to see this! Eleanor too!” He grasped the children’s hands and dragged them towards where the group had gathered. They stood around a crudely constructed pen made of loose branches and twine, but the real wonder was inside it. Eleanor made a noise in between a squeak and gasp.

It was a unicorn, in flesh and blood. Its coat was the color of fresh snowfall, but brighter. Its mane looked like it was made of cobwebs and spun sugar, and its horn was a deep, lustrous gold.

“Is it real?” asked Eleanor, though she already knew.

Her father nodded proudly. “I’m going to go relax with the others, okay? We’ll be rich once we sell this thing’s hide!” He walked over to a huge stump being used as a table. Maybe it was just Alex’s imagination, but he sounded a bit sad about having to kill such an amazing wild animal. Eleanor slowly inched towards the unicorn.

“Eleanor, get back!” Alex yelled.

She smirked. “Are you afraid of the little unicorn, Alex?”

He furrowed his brow. He was not going to be mocked by his little sister. Alex stepped forward and reached his hand out to the beast. It leaned into his touch. Eleanor quickly ran up to join him, patting the unicorn’s neck. Its eyes were black and deep, filled with wisdom. Eleanor knew what she had to do. She began opening the pen’s gate.

“Eleanor, what are you doing!” whisper-screamed Alex.

She said nothing, just gave him a determined stare. The unicorn swiftly vanished into the woods, making no sound and leaving no hoof prints. Eleanor closed the gate behind it. Just then, their father walked up behind them and saw the unicorn gone.

“What is the meaning of this!” he cried. He turned to the children. “What happened?”

Alex gulped. “The unicorn was here, but it just disappeared! Right in front of us! We were about to tell you, but we were in shock.” It was a terrible lie, they all knew. But miraculously, their father gave a knowing grin and turned away. “I’ll go tell the group the bad news.”

Eleanor squeezed her big brother’s hand. It seemed like they were in on a secret. Alex squeezed back. I wish all of Eleanor’s games were like this, he thought, and they started walking home.



Eve Laurent

# **The Knight**

*By Alder Bailey-Conklin*

I awake to the feeling of anticipation. I look upon the rich, detailed tapestries on my walls. It depicts several strong knights fighting in a crusade which reminded me the tournament is today. My opponent is supposedly very tough, but I am tougher. I've never lost a tournament, and I'm not going to start losing now. I am filled to the brim with confidence. I'm just sure nothing will bring me down, not the strongest knights in the country, even the world. I imagined the arena and the spectators cheering my name. Think of the fame, the glory! Think of the riches...I'm so close to being up with the likes of most splendid knights out there, like William Marshal. When I was but a mere squire, I was listening to the stories of knights like him, and I aspired to be just like them. I bet if I keep this going, I'll be even more marvelous than any knight that ever existed, nay, who ever will exist! My name will be remembered throughout history as Daren Motte the Great. I start to dress in my comfortable underclothes that will go beneath my chainmail. Just imagine wearing chainmail without something soft underneath, as well as any plate armor! If I'm going to be in a competition, I'm going to need to have some energy, so I cook up some porridge in a pot in the fire. Once I finish my breakfast, I say a quick prayer for good luck, and then pack up my gear.

...

I am ready to fight the most difficult challenger I had faced in my years of jousting: Richard Elm. He's supposed to be one of the strongest knights in the country, after me of course, but after I'm done with this tournament, he'll look like the weakest knight in comparison to me! Now, I must prepare. After I put on my chainmail, surcoat bearing my family heraldry, and helmet, I brandish my wooden lance and mount my horse.

"Come forth knights," the herald calls.

On his command, I trot into the arena, hearing the mass of cheering, the majority likely directed towards me.

The herald shushes the audience. "The rules will go as follows," he says. "One: you will ready your position. Two: you will charge at my mark. Three: if you miss each other, you will go around again. Four: if you knock your opponent off their horse, you will be the winner. "On your mark...get set...joust!"

I command my horse forward, and then I charge with my lance at ready, seeing my opponent also charging at me. I had seen his jousting before; I knew his technique. I know what he is going to do: he is going to aim for where I am vulnerable, but I will prevent him from doing so. He charges towards me in a way that seems predictable, but I know what's up his sleeve. He appears to be aiming for my stomach, but I could see what would happen next. Suddenly, he switches trajectory and aims for my head, and foreseeing this, I duck, swiftly avoiding the hit. We both turn down the list, ready to attack once again. We get close once more, and I prepare to strike. As I try to make my move, our lances both knock together. That was a little close, I think, as I turn around on the other side of the list. We must have both been trying to unseat each other at the same moment. We're running forth once more, and I have a feeling this is the time I get him. I point my lance towards his head, determined this will get him, but then he ducks and almost knocks me off. That was probably the closest I've been to being eliminated in my jousting years, but I won't let that stop me. I will win this. This time, I want to give him a taste of his own medicine; I'm going to fake him out. We both charge in unison. I think I can see the look in his eye from within his helmet; he thinks he's gonna win. Not today, Richard, not today! I point my lance at his head, and he begins to duck. I then aim it downwards, and he falls off. My horse gently trots around, and I see Richard lying there on the ground. I have won.

"We have a winner!" the herald shouts. The audience cheers my name in celebration.

...

I have returned victorious from Richard Elm, the most honorable knight known of by the townsfolk. But now that title belongs to me! I celebrate my victory amongst the lords and ladies in the castle grounds. I feel like I deserve something sweet, like candy. At that moment I spot a young boy holding a honey treat. I walk over to him and snatch it from his hand. He begins to cry and runs away. I start to eat it. Merely minutes pass by when I see an angry-looking man walking towards me. He appears to be a duke.

"My son here says that you stole his honey treat! Is this true?" he asks me.

"Yes I did, and I must say, it's quite delicious!" I respond.

"You monster! Guards!"

"Wait, no I can give it ba- oh, I already ate it." The guards escort me into the castle.

"Come on, guys," I plead. "It's just candy! He can get himself a new one!"

"Quiet, Daren."

The guards bring me to the throne room where Queen Rose resides. “I’ve caught word of your actions,” she says with disappointment in her eyes.

“Please! All I did was take candy! From a baby!”

“Not if you count all the other actions you have done leading up to this. You’ve been the most unloyal and unchivalrous knights I’ve had the displeasure of working with. You’ve always had an egotistical and arrogant attitude as well! You haven’t even confessed your sins to the priest!”

“I can change! I can confess right now!”

“I’m sorry, but it might be too late for that.” This is the last thing I wanted to happen. I wanted to impress the Queen with my superior skills, not disappoint her! She spoke once again. “You may have been ‘Daren’ to do a lot of things, but some things you shouldn’t dare to do. Guards! Bring him to the block.”

...

And here I am, on the chopping block, all because I was too self-centered and stole candy from a baby. I lie there, on the block, and the executioner asks, “Any last words?”

“I like candy,” I say. The executioner lifts his ax up in the air and drops it onto my head.



Jett Lascurettes

### **3:00 a.m**

*By Ruby Barrett*

I stretch out my legs,  
feeling as if they could  
break open and  
tree roots would sprout from my toes,  
and branches would grow from my back,  
branches dotted with cherry blossoms  
that, with every breath I take,  
petals would fall and  
kiss my spine.

That feeling leaves,  
so I lay down  
and let my arms  
rest above my head,  
my fingertips brushing against my wall.

Taking a breath I  
feel the curve of my back  
lift up  
from my bedsheets, my  
eyelids flutter closed and  
I feel as if I'm floating,  
and maybe I am, but  
when I open my eyes,  
nothing has changed.

The sound of my breathing  
fills up my room  
before I drift off to sleep.



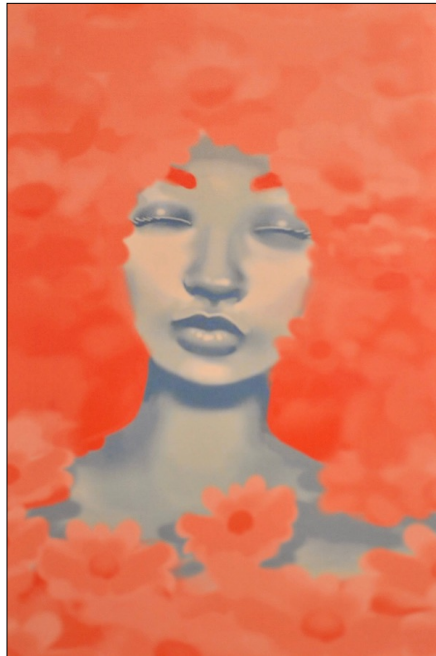
Ruby Bunker



## **Cherry**

*By Alex Barry*

I love the sight and scent of cherry blossoms  
in the spring,  
the light pastel pink petals  
mixed with a dark red middle.  
The large bunches of flowers  
on the long, dark brown tree branches  
shift  
as the wind  
causes some of the petals to fall  
down overhead and become a lovely shower  
of pastel pink and dark red.  
The soft, light smell  
of cherries fills the area.



Melina Jackett

## The Faint Yellow Light

By Eva Berk

It's cold and rainy today. The sky is a dark gray, the color of cold, dark stone. The colossal droplets of water hit the sidewalk and make a small splash in a puddle. Against windows, you hear soft *kerplunks* of water. It smells of wet, brilliantly green moss, damp dirt, rain, and pollution. It is one of those days that makes the whole world feels like a rainforest. Everything is lush and vibrant with color. Beads of water run down rhododendron leaves and fall like teardrops. The rain tickles your face as you walk along the sidewalk on a cold morning walk.

It is the first week of February, and crocuses are starting to bloom. Light and dark violet, white, and golden yellow flowers are popping up everywhere. Along sidewalks, backyards, and forests throughout Oregon these little spots of early spring light are budding and blooming. Daffodils are sprouting their long green stems. You can see their buds starting to form with a light green color. A flower sleeps in the bud awaiting the warm sun of spring and the sound of early morning birds chirping.

You see the sky starting to open up. Spots of blue appear, and the rain suddenly stops. You look around and see the dark gray clouds lighten and start to drift off. The droplets of water on all the plants start to sparkle like miniature diamonds. The tree branches are still barren, but small buds are popping out of a few branches.

The still-wet sidewalk is cracked and gray, with grass and moss growing in the gaps. Puddles are riddled throughout the dips of the streets and sidewalks.

The road turns to gravel and sidewalk becomes more and more broken. The number of houses decreases while the amount of trees increases. It doesn't smell like pollution anymore, but instead like fresh air and pine. The clouds are almost all gone now, and the sun starts to shine. It becomes warmer and more spring like, and the grass appears vibrant with green color. As you walk, the road gradually becomes a dirt path. There are no houses now, and, as you look around, a beautiful forest surrounds you. *Wow*, you think to yourself. There are huge, glorious firs dominating the area as they reach for the sky. The path grows rocky, with roots jutting out of the earth. The rocks, common on the trail, poke their heads out of their solitary home of soil and clay. Ferns cover the forest floor with water running down their huge leaves. Vine maples stretch

slenderly across the forest floor and into the the sky. They branch out, forming huge, delicate vine-like trunks with lime green maple-shaped leaves.

You stop to take a look at the beauty that you are seeing. Moss covers tree branches, and it looks like there is forest for miles and miles. Mushrooms grow at the foot of every tree in sight. Some are even growing on branches and trunks. Up ahead, in the ferns, you see a faint light glowing. *Hmm, this doesn't look natural.* As you walk towards the light, it starts to get brighter. *Maybe someone dropped their flashlight?* It illuminates the surrounding mushrooms and tree trunks and branches. The light is now a few feet away, looking like a very bright natural light. You approach it slowly, not knowing what it could be. The light is covered by ferns, and

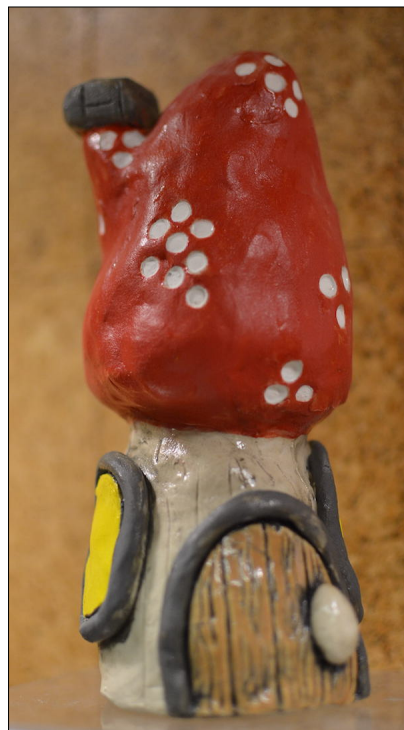


Piper Westhead

mushrooms surround the huge, dinosaur-age plants. The light gives off a bright green glow from the ferns surrounding it. You try to move all the wet ferns, but this seems almost impossible. They feel like almost a hundred pounds as you struggle to break the plants.

When you finally break the last plant surrounding the light, it instantly fades. You look around the surrounding forest, but the light is gone. You start walking again on the trail. Up ahead, you see the light shining behind a thicket of vine maples. You speed up your pace and

realize that it is not just one light, but many tiny lights. The nature surrounding the lights is weirdly lush and springy. There are huge Japanese maples and abnormally large mushrooms. You are now just feet away from the lights, and you realize that the vine maples are growing like a dome, surrounding the lights like a forcefield. You are now standing above the small twinkling lights. You try to move some of the leaves from the structure-like thing. You can't. No matter how hard you try, they seem to be glued onto the branches. On your hands and knees, you search around the base of the structure for *something*. Nothing. Then the walls. You stand on your tippy toes. *At the very top of the structure there could be a door*, you think to yourself. So, you climb a young fir that is nearby. Your hands are sappy from the sap hidden in the bark. *Ew*, you think. They smell of pine and earth. You keep climbing until you arrive at the perfect height to jump onto the roof of the construction. Unsure, you tap your foot against it and it seems solid. So, you jump. The jump is at least three meters, so when you land, it doesn't exactly feel good. The surface scratches your palms and arms, but you are okay. You walk along the roof until you hit a soft spot of just plain leaves. You instantaneously fall. You get up and realize that it's nothing. There's nothing here. All the lights have faded. *Never mind. I think I need some water.* So you turn around and start walking back.



Amelia Thorpe

## Ode to Takis in Sprite

*By Nick Berkson*

The first day  
I tried it  
The red stick  
Dropped into the bubbles  
Of carbon swimming  
To the top of of the  
Long glass bottle.  
The red Takis' dry dust  
Begins to swim  
In unison  
with the dying carbon.  
Oh, the death  
Of the carbon creates  
A flavor I long for  
When I am not  
Letting the the sweet,  
Spicy liquid quench  
My parched dry throat.  
My friends around me  
Begging on their hands and knees  
For a sip of the holy cocktail  
I, with, great pleasure  
Hand the drink-above-all-drinks  
To my great music colleague  
George Zender, the creator  
Of this beverage of the Lord.  
He sipped the fine drink  
With manner and relief.  
As his thirst for the sacred liquid



Anita Sandler

Scorched his parched throat  
Like water dripping  
onto the hot, dry sand  
We were holy  
We were pure  
Our life's journey  
Was complete.



Violette Miller



## What She Borrowed, What She Took

*By Lola Blucher*

She borrowed a life, a tiny life, and her mom's orange tabby cat.

She borrowed her dad's aviator goggles, old leather and scrappy from past flights.

She took her royal blue scarf and jacket so decorated with pins  
you could hardly see the black leather between them.

She borrowed her dad's vintage bi-plane with a shiny crimson finish.

She took brie and crackers she found in the back of the pantry.

She took a water sack and painkillers she dug from her sister's hands.

She borrowed her brother's yellow and grey walkman and the air of confidence  
that floated around her.

She couldn't take her distraught mother, who wept at her departure.

She couldn't take her speckled mutt, who eyed her longingly as she left the house.

She couldn't take her dad's ashes, in a porcelain pot on the mantel,  
or her sister whose picture sat next to her father, framed in gold on the mantel.



Tiffany T. Trinh



# **Little Blue Ball**

*By Esther Calvert*

Little blue ball with your oceans and seas

Rivers and streams

Hills and mountains

Valleys and canyons

What have we done to you?

To your star-grassed skies

Your perfect sunsets

Your crystal-clear waters

We have turned your beautiful forests

Your blissful lakes and your flower-filled meadows

Into huge cities

With skies filled with smog

We have ruined your peaceful grassy fields

and turned them into battlegrounds

Filled with war and death

Sadness and pain

Lost hopes and dreams

We have killed your magnificent beasts

Your towering elephants and hulking rhinos

Mammoth whales and playful dolphins

Patriotic eagles and fierce falcons

We have drilled holes into your surface

Looking for oil

And we think nothing of it when we make a mistake

And that thick black liquid seeps into your oceans and seas

Little blue ball with your beautiful sights

Do not lose hope

For there is still love and happiness

Beautiful forests and oceans left to save

Little blue ball, I'm sorry.



William Grinstead

## Some People

*By Laurel Chandler*

Some people *get*  
that a tiny ripped-off piece  
of paper is a better bookmark  
than a plastic one  
because it gives everyone  
a chance to feel the magic  
of ink on paper.

Some people *know*  
that even the most social people  
feel overwhelmed at times.

Some people *think*  
that a rose's thorns  
give it character.

Some people *understand*  
that it's better to be hated  
than loved for something you aren't.



Caleb Washington

# The Wildflowers

*By Raven Chesser*

We live in a house on the hill  
in the meadow filled with flowers.  
A freshly baked pie rests on the window sill.  
Under the oak tree,  
candlelights flicker, giving us light.  
Inside, the embers heat our cold toes  
on a dark winter night.

Above us, stars flicker.  
Within us, happiness spreads.  
We giggle like happy little children,  
when mother bakes warm bread.  
We feast plentifully.  
We are bold.  
No care in the world,  
until we grow old.

Curiosity follows us.  
The air is fresh while we trek through the trees,  
picking sweet berries that melt in our mouths,  
while kneeling on our knees.  
They are better than the candy we get at Christmas.  
Red sugar drips from our fingers  
and, like forgiveness,  
is licked clean before we return.  
We dream away the worries,  
and look forward to our future.



Amelia Thorpe

But now,  
we live in a tall building  
in the sky.  
It is cold here.  
The far-off is beckoning.  
Silence.  
And we are lonely.  
No siblings to play with.  
No homemade food to eat.  
Instead  
we work.  
We are old  
and grown up,  
distanced from the ones we love,  
in hope of success,  
when all we know,  
is that little house on the hill,  
in the meadow filled with flowers  
that we can barely see from our concrete house,  
in the city filled with cars, smog,  
and no sweet berries except the bitter ones,  
grown far away, only to rot on a shelf  
in a store that no one can afford.  
Just like  
the little dots  
that look like ants that sleep below us,  
worried about their next meal,  
wondering if one day warm food will fill  
their bellies  
and adventure will bring them away  
to the pine tree groves and fields filled with wildflowers.



Piper Westhead

## **UEE Paul Steed CV-023**

*By Jansen Corson*

Date 7/8/2948

Login: Admiral Ernst Bishop

Password: UEE CV-023

Access Granted

Code 12X-276-343Y

23%

40%

70%

100%

Login Complete

### **Log Entry Time 21:34 2948.**

Bishop here. It has been a harsh day. Yesterday we were attacked. We escaped with very minimal damage to the air pipes, nothing that our maintenance technicians can't work on. Anyway, being on a cruiser for nine and a half months gets really boring, sitting in a chair in the bridge doing the same thing every day. But still, at least I'm not in a nail-drop pod with the UEE Marines. Being a UEE Marine takes a lot of work, being in the best physical shape you ever could be in for life. Being the Admiral on this cruiser sounds fun. You don't do much except sit on the bridge and give out orders. But it gets boring...

The pirates have been quiet lately. They haven't been showing themselves much. You might be wondering about the term "space pirates," but you probably forgot something. They weren't always in space; pirates in the 19th century were in ships at sea and not spaceships. They aren't the brightest or most organized people. They mainly stick to themselves, but when they attack merchants' vessels, we go after them, taking them down with our naval fighters, called Gladiuses. We take them to the brig for their offenses against the UEE (United Earth Empires). UEE Navy assignments can be very long, but the pay is decent. UEE Navy officers can earn 12,000 UEC a year. Going around the galaxy is a lot cheaper in the UEE than if I were to fly with

an RSI Constellation or another ship like it. I hope I can lead these UEE ships to greatness. The UEE Navy ship I have been working on is the UEE Paul Steed CV-023. Bishop out.

--- END TRANSMISSION ---

Code: Yellow

Date 7/9/2948

Login: Admiral Ernst Bishop

Password: UEE CV-023

Access Granted

Code 19U-267-221V

1%

10%

Error 145-404X Server not found

Rebooting...

Login: Admiral Ernst Bishop

Password: UEE CV-023

Access Granted

Code 19U-267-221V

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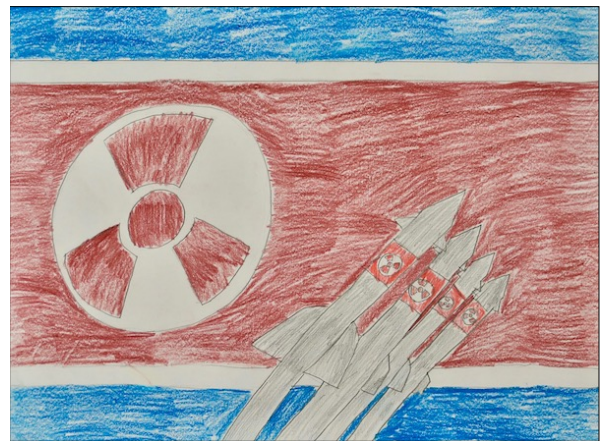
25%

57%

72%

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Login Complete



Henry Boyer

**Log Entry time 08:24 2948.**

Bishop, here. You might be wondering what Code Yellow means. We have three different codes: Green, Yellow, and of course Red. Green means that we have a minor issue, but,



not anything too serious. Yellow means that something is wrong that will cause issues. Red, of course, means something that is life-threatening, like an airlock breach, or an attack from another ship or planet. So when I awoke to the sounds of alarms wailing I didn't have the best feeling, but turns out that the air pipe was broken. It was more severe than we thought it was. Still, that was the only problem today. Otherwise, it was a happy, joyful day for us. At least we are well equipped. Bishop out.

**--- END TRANSMISSION ---**

*Excerpted from a longer piece*



William Grinstead

## **Fe-Male**

*By Josephine Courtney*

There it is  
Rising up from the ground and up into the endless sky above  
Its peak pointing right up at the sun and into the heavens  
So what are you waiting for  
Go ahead  
Go and climb it  
Start your journey to the top  
And at the top?  
Your destiny

She sees it  
There  
In the distance  
She has been waiting her whole life for this moment  
She had some trouble getting there  
But finally she is at the base and looking up  
What she sees isn't pleasing  
But at least there is a *rough* path to the top

He stands there  
Breathless  
Looking up into the heavens  
The path looks long  
But at least it's clear of boulders and sinkholes  
It looks like there might be a few long flights of stairs  
But otherwise it looks easy  
He looks back one last time at the paved cement road behind him  
And then starts up his side

She's made it a quarter of the way up  
Panting and sweating, she climbs over yet another boulder  
When she gets over that one there is another one waiting for her to climb  
She pauses to take a breather  
Then starts again

He pauses to rest his thighs  
He has been climbing this staircase for what seems like forever now  
He looks back and sees that he has only gone a little ways  
The first quarter of the climb was just a paved cement road  
Then he got to a seemingly endless staircase  
But hey, at least there are no boulders to climb or sinkholes to avoid

She's made it halfway  
She can just barely see the top  
Now a new kind of energy starts to flow through her veins  
Determination  
"I can do it; I can make it"  
She chants to herself over and over again  
"I can do it; I can make it"

He's made it to the halfway point  
Now all that's standing in his way is a very long,  
Seemingly endless,  
Escalator  
Yes that's right  
An escalator  
He's done enough work  
So now it's time for the smooth ride to the top

There!  
There it is!

She can see it  
The prize  
The thing she's been looking forward to all this time  
She's almost running now  
Running toward the top  
But then  
BAM!  
She hits it

He is so close to the prize he can almost feel it  
Just a few more minutes riding this endless escalator before he's there  
Before he gets to the top  
He looks down at the road he has taken  
And the hundreds of people that have helped him along the way  
He can't wait to get there  
To the top

She can't go any farther  
It's the only thing that's standing in her way  
The glass ceiling  
But she's so close  
So close  
She can feel it

Finally  
He's there  
He's made it  
Made it to the top  
It wasn't a hard path  
Just a long one  
But an easy one

She struggles  
Pushing  
Pulling  
Doing whatever it takes  
Just to break that ceiling  
But she can't  
She sees him at the top  
And wishes she were there  
But no  
He made it to the top  
But she couldn't

From his seat at the top  
He can see everything  
At one point  
He glances down  
And sees her  
She looks like she's struggling  
Trying to push past an imaginary barrier  
But he just smiles  
And moves on

At one point  
She sees him look at her  
From his seat at the top  
He smiles at her  
But quickly moves on  
She is trying so hard  
So hard to get there  
But whatever she does  
She isn't good enough  
She'll never be good enough

She's been told this her entire life  
She's not good enough and never will be

He on the other hand  
Has been told his entire life that he can do it  
That he can make it  
Only if he tries  
He has had people along the path he took  
Helping him  
Encouraging him  
Telling him he can do it  
Telling him that he can conquer the world  
Only if he tries hard enough



Piper Westhead

## Another Day

*By Indigo Day*

Her eyes are green like the ocean sea.

Her hair is matted, like the crazy and tangled blackberry bush outside her house.

They always knew she was there when she

Came for a lime popsicle,

The door slamming behinds her,

Her hands sweet and sable.

Her freckles are few and barely visible

Like the snow in the flatlands

She is tall and skinny,

Like the pine tree outside her house.

The tree sat on the hill,

Waiting for her to climb it

When the orange sun decided to show up,

Bringing spirited pinks and yellows.

Like her personality.

She is happy on the outside,

Flashing those white teeth to waving neighbors and cute boys,

But on the inside,

She is hollow,

Reminding herself

Of what she had to live for and what has yet to come.

“Another day” she reminds herself.

“Another day, Another day, Another day”



Melina Jacklet



# Isabel

*By Indigo Day*

When I look in the mirror I see a kid, trapped  
I see a blue boat that felt like prison, but was truly the only way to a safe life  
I see a frail, scared child and a family  
Forced afloat, searching for freedom

I look in the mirror and smell the spicy smoke  
We barely left behind  
I see the cat in the old fisherman's hand  
And my old French trumpet rusting in the corner of his house  
I hear the thick gasoline sloshing in the big metal container  
As I strained to hold it above ground

When I look in the mirror I see the bloodied water and the dead body  
Being swallowed up by the lukewarm waters surrounding us  
I see the gray fins and sad tears streaming down lost faces  
The mirror shows me my wish for death that day  
And my constant regret until now

The mirror shows me Lito's brother in Miami  
It shows me our new life and our old life  
It shows me my new beginning and  
The closing end  
The mirror shows me the truth  
Whether I want to see it or not



Zoe Wright

# Goodbye

*By Hazel Derr*

Goodbye to the halls of dreamers  
Covered with years upon years  
Of history  
History shown through the tip of a paintbrush  
Coating these halls in colors  
And patterns  
And light

Goodbye to the halls of sound  
Sounds of music  
Light  
Melodic  
Free  
Sounds of fun and laughter  
Sounds of stress and sadness  
Sounds of us

Goodbye to the halls of movement  
All different types of movement  
Improvised  
Choreographed  
And the movement  
That has become routine  
Through the long year being left behind

Goodbye to the paint-chipped stairwells  
Worn by the soles of a thousand shoes  
Worn by the sounds of a thousand secrets  
Worn by the taste of freed spirits  
Drifting away  
Like a river with thousands of swimming fish

Goodbye to the squeaky chairs  
Always watching us perform  
Our best  
And our worst  
Never changing  
But always squeaking

Goodbye, stage  
Stood on by many  
Understood by few  
The stage does lots for us  
And gets nothing in return  
Just the dust under its feet  
And the weight on its shoulders

Goodbye to these halls of doors  
All types of doors  
Open doors  
Closed doors  
And the doors coated in art  
Like they were dipped in a pool of colors

Adios, dreamer-filled halls  
Farewell, constant sound  
Toodle-oo, moving artists  
Adieu, worn stairs  
So long, squeaky chairs  
Sayonara, wary stage  
Bon voyage, doors  
Goodbye, daVinci halls



Megan Moore

## Sorrow Home

*By Ruby Ecker*

My roots are buried in southern life,  
deep in blues and jazz music,  
hidden by the boom booming--  
a thunderous beat from a storm on the way,  
by porch swings under a palm or a pine, sheltering me from the sun,  
cooled off by a golden lake, a shiver bleeding through your veins.

I'm no gray cloud, crying water kind of girl,  
no busy busy streets type of girl,  
no hot coffee or tea kind of mornings  
or taking it slow at the start.

I'm ready for my sweet tea, want my fried chicken, or some slaw to cool me off.  
Want some wasp chasing me till I get inside.  
and a thin T sticking to my sweat-styled skin.  
I want to come back those tired streets, lifeless--with no bodies walking 'round them,  
thick and humid air filling my lungs with a sweet, flowery kind of smell.



Amelia Thorpe

## **I Love**

*By Walker Ferguson*

I love my dog. I love when I call his name "Clyde!" and he comes racing towards me. I love the feeling of his exulting energy bursting out of him as I walk through the door. I love his wet face brushing up against me, with his fully extended body resting on me. I love that whether he is basking or being bossy, he is always happy. I love his soft reddish-brown coat, and how he just wants to be cared for. I love when he snuggles up against me, how he'll exhale to let me know he is the happiest and content he can possibly be at that moment. If I take Clyde on a walk, he will hold his head high with determination, ready to show off his confidence. I love gazing into his big amber eyes, even if it is mesmerizing, especially when you know he wants you to throw the ball so longingly. I love when he smiles, his snow white teeth sticking out, reminding me that he's not perfect, but to me, it sure seems like it.



Izzy Feldman

## **Lone Tree**

*By Evelyn Fox*

I am a lone tree  
I am not the tallest,  
I am not the oldest,  
My roots do not spread  
down as far

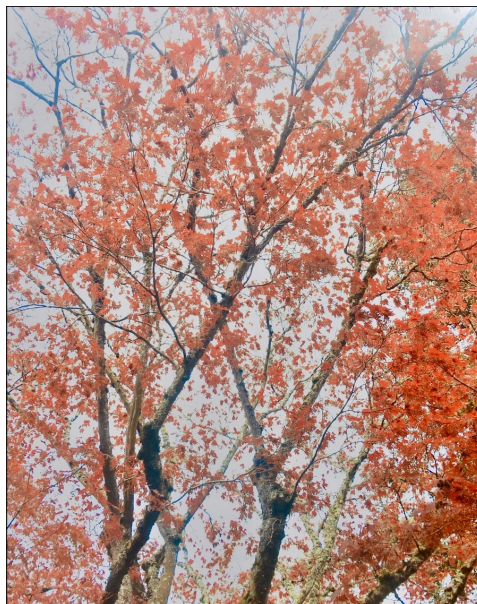
But hey, little human,  
I can see you looking at me  
and since you have taken the time,  
I will kindly pour you  
a cup of my wise words.

No, I am not tall,  
but remember, quality over quantity. Always.  
My roots, may not seem as grand  
but there are connections under the earth,  
your human brain can't comprehend  
I might be a young lad, 75 next March,  
but listen to the stories my crooked,  
intercepting branches offer

Man, I do look lonely  
with pale orange light surrounding me,  
on a quiet night;  
but don't you worry about me  
See,  
there is much you can't possibly understand  
I am much more than what you see  
I hold my stories,

my power,  
in these little, twisting branches.  
You were the one who climbed on me  
when you were much smaller  
you had a goofy smile,  
and a heart that never cared that my trunk is short and stubby.

Ahh, my little one, thank you for your time,  
but, you see, the night gets darker,  
you need to scurry home,  
the pale orange light is growing dimmer,  
so shoo shoo, I need my beauty sleep.  
For tomorrow is another day of being  
my fantasy short, lovely, lonely self, and oh!  
I have one more thing to share... No... never mind.  
Go! I hear the family in the house across the street fighting again,  
and I really can't miss this.  
I think the teenager snuck out with a boy again,  
and their cat just died. So bye!



Caleb Washington



## **Protest**

*By Lucia Gasca*

**P**eople gather, some are angry and loud, the rumble of their footsteps echoing throughout the neighborhood. Others are solemn and quiet, choosing a spot to sit and reflect. We all have different ways of Protesting.

It's **R**ight. No, It's wrong. Different opinions fill the air, causing outbreaks and rage. People clash opinions, spitting out persuasion, begging people to join their side, to believe with them. They are all here to protest what they think is right.

**O**ngoing chants reach deafening levels, bystanders overlook the scene, some drop what they're doing and join. They hear the shouts that spiral through the air. Groups form, cheers get louder. It's all part of the Protest.

Marching as a group: **T**o some it's pointless, but for others, it makes a huge difference. People do what they believe is right, what they believe will help. Hours go by, and the course of the march gets longer and longer, as the Protest continues.

Sooner or later, **E**veryone seems to know, word gets out. Social media buzzes, kids coordinate to meet up. Schools make the decision; will they let the kids protest, or corral them into a classroom, forcing them to stand by. The news explodes, details about the event stream from TVs, radios, computers. It's all about the Protest.

**S**igns get brainstormed, quotes looked up. Colored markers get strewn about as the signs come to life. People run out of ink, their abandoned Sharpies thrown into the trash. The final products get taped up and held high. They contribute to the Protest.

Standing up for a cause. **T**o make a difference, to make things right. People want to change what the world believes, some want to use violence, some want to use peace, others choose to sit in silence. No matter how we do it, it's all part of a Protest.

# Lies Running Out of the TV

*By Ezra Greenhill*

Please G-d don't let me get held hostage  
By a world with  
Break-ins  
Bullets  
Burglary  
Lies running out of the TV  
Taking my opinions and throwing them in jail forever captive  
I want to live among others who care about me  
And don't put me somewhere only for someone else's amusement  
Where I can pick up the world, hold it in my hands and make it  
More safe  
More caring  
Don't let me live an identity where I'm being controlled  
Like a Barbie with arms, legs, and opinions  
somebody can change in a second  
And where I can be kept  
Or flung out the window  
It's all someone else's choice  
I want to make a difference  
And not be silenced  
By gasoline and plastic bags ruining and polluting our earth  
Let me take all the hurtful feelings  
And stuff them in the trash the day before garbage day  
Let me live life to the fullest  
And not be held back from problems worth fixing



Sebastian Holmes

# A Toddler Once Told Me

*By Elliana Hanna*

A toddler once told me that everyone should love dogs  
He said dogs are like trees  
Then he scooped up more blueberry yogurt with his hand  
He told me that rainbows come from heaven and pajamas are gross  
He listened to me explain the point of sleepwear then interrupted  
He told me that the man in the corner wore an ugly hat  
There was no man in the corner  
He jumped off the chair and ran to the bathroom  
I followed and he washed his sticky chubby hands  
The child told me that my sister's pet bird was fat and looked like a watermelon  
I ignored that and asked more about the man in the corner  
He said I'm being silly and to "SHHHHH"  
Then he trotted away into the living room but tripped and fell  
He told me that it was my fault  
Or at least I thought he was talking to me  
The wind outside grew loud  
The toddler told me the man in the corner was a "chicken-head"  
He stated, "The man needs to leave"  
The power went out and the grey snowy outside didn't provide a lot of light  
The toddler screamed and then laughed and crashed a Hotwheel into the dollhouse  
He threw his car and said "the man turned off the lights"  
That was the last time I heard about the man in the corner



Melanie Wiegand

# Daisy

By Delilah J. Hartwell

She closed her door. It slammed shut with a bang that echoed down the long apartment hallway. She held her door closed as she fumbled for her key. The lock clicked, and she exhaled a sigh of relief. She could hear Ethan pleading from the other side of the door, but she knew that his BS couldn't reach her from the outside of her apartment. Ethan broke up with Daisy *last month*, yet he was still trying to win her back. He kept sending her stupid things like flowers, that will just die, chocolate, which she hates, and candles (Daisy is terrified of fire). He really does not know Daisy at all. That was partially the reason he broke up with her, but it was mostly because he "met someone else." Well, it turned out that "Someone Else" was screwing her boss, and now Ethan apparently regrets dumping Daisy. Lately, he has been following her home from work every. Single. Day. Ethan is unemployed. According to Daisy's roommate Ella, Ethan was a lazy bum, and Daisy was better off without him. Ella's interests include, in no particular order:

1. Growling at everyone.
2. Drinking alcoholic beverages.
3. Watching Netflix in Daisy's room.
4. Internet stalking Lady Gaga.
5. Listening to Lady Gaga's music.
6. Watching *American Horror Story*, starring Lady Gaga.
7. Dating many people at one time.

Daisy was the polar opposite of Ella. Daisy was quiet, nervous, and shy. She hated parties and anything else that was social. When she had graduated college last summer, the thing Daisy was most excited for was a simple life. Daisy did not know Ella in college, but she can guess that Ella heavily enjoyed the partying that inevitably went along with it. Ella and Daisy juxtaposed each other perfectly. Their friendship was flawless. When Ethan broke up with Daisy, Ella egged his car. She prank-called him numerous times. She even used her advanced set of internet stalking skills to research "Someone Else."

Her name was Tiffany. She was tall and lean. “She seems like kind of a whore,” Ella said, as the two girls looked over Tiffany’s Instagram. “You shouldn’t say that, El,” replied Daisy, “And besides, it’s not like she did anything to me.”

“Except steal your man!” Ella shot back.

“I never considered Ethan *my* man. I am actually kinda glad he broke up with me.”

“Oh *really?*” Ella said, with sarcasm in her voice, “Because I specifically remember when you came home after he dumped you, you plopped yourself on the couch, and cried your ass off.”

“Well, a lot has changed since then.” For the first time in weeks, Daisy sounded strong and confident.

“I’m listening!” Ella’s condescending demeanor quickly turned to curiosity.

“I have a date tomorrow,” Daisy said proudly with a wide smile across her face. Ella was shocked. Her jaw dropped. Her eyes bulged, and her gasp made her sound like she was drowning.

“I don’t appreciate the sarcasm, but yeah. I’m shocked too. And I am super excited!”

“Who? What? When? Where? Why?” Ella said, her curiosity swelling.

“Slow down, Grasshopper,” laughed Daisy, “Who: His name is Paul. What: Dinner: When: 7:30. Where: St. Achile’s. Why: I haven’t the slightest clue.”

“Well, I’ll be damned! Where did you meet this ‘Paul’?”

“He came to Punctuation yesterday, he bought a book, and then just, asked me. Anyways, I gotta get to work. It’s almost the start of my shift. ”



Lexi Miller

Punctuation was the name of the bookshop where Daisy works. She really wanted to become a reporter, but it was a difficult transition to go from NYU student to journalist. Daisy hated her grueling and tiring job. As you may have guessed, Daisy was normally great at keeping quiet and not complaining. However, you can only stock shelves and stand behind a counter for so long. Even though the job was pretty boring, Daisy loved being around the books, and she had to pay her half of the rent, so she had no other choice. After hours of work, Daisy always walked home. The unfortunate thing about her route was that it passed Ethan's favorite coffee shop, a hipster landmark called Beans. Whenever Daisy would walk by the window of Beans, Ethan would follow her home.

"Leave me alone," Daisy said calmly.

"Whatcha up to?" Ethan said through his sickening grin. Well, it wasn't sickening, it was actually quite adorable. But Daisy felt ill whenever she saw it.

"Leave me the Hell alone."

"Language! I expect more from you Daisy!"

"Who are you, my mom?"

"I am not gonna leave you alone until you tell me what you're doing tonight."

"Nothing that concerns you." Daisy was loving this newfound confidence.

"Ha ha, nice one. But actually, what are you doing?"

"Seriously?" she said, utterly repulsed. Her building was half a block away. She could see the door. She ran to it, buzzed herself in, leaving Ethan on the other side of the glass. She headed to the elevator, with with Ethan more curious than he had ever been in his life.

"No," Ella said firmly. "What's your problem?" Daisy was seconds away from walking out of the door.

"Flats. Really?" Daisy glanced down at her shoes. "When he sees how tall you are he's gonna have a meltdown."

"He's seen me before, at the bookshop. He knows how tall I am," Daisy said defensively.

"Weren't you behind a counter?" Ella argued

"Shut up. I have to go, and you are annoying me."

“Okay fine. Bye. Have a good time, stay out as late as you want, and take an Uber or a cab if you drink more than three glasses of wine. Taking the subway drunk is never fun.”

Daisy rolled her eyes and walked out of the door.

When she reached the parking lot of her apartment, she saw Paul, standing outside of his car with a cheap-looking bouquet of wilted flowers. As you may recall, Daisy failed to see the point of cut flowers, but she could still appreciate the thought.

“Oh, you didn’t have to--”

“Well, I wanted to. They’re daisies. Get it? Like your name. Also, I haven’t been on a date in ages and I heard that flowers are the agreed-upon gift for a beautiful girl.”

Paul was tall, much taller than Daisy. He had a rather large mop of dark brown hair, and he was much skinnier than she remembered.

“*Paul.*” Daisy blushed.

“Actually, it’s *Peter.*”

“Oh my God. I’m so sorry. I thought--”

“Don’t worry about it,” Peter said sadly, “It happens all the time.” Peter let Daisy into his Subaru and they were off. When the two of them reached the Italian restaurant, Peter took a slow wheezy breath.

“Are you okay?” Daisy asked him.

“Yeah. I just,” he paused. “Haven’t been here for a while.” Daisy followed Peter through the creaky red door. They immediately sat at a table and began to converse. “My dad used to take me here. Well, before he went to prison.” Peter looked down as he spoke.

“Oh,” Daisy felt a swarm of awkwardness overcome her.

“He killed my mother.” The sadness in Peter’s voice grew.

“Oh, wow.” Daisy didn’t know what to say.

“I found the body.” Peter’s face looked *super* odd.

“Wow. Oh my God. I’m so sorry.” Daisy fidgeted in her chair as she spoke, unsure of how to react.

“Ha ha! Gotcha! I’m an actor.” Peter’s change of tone scared Daisy half to death.

“Oh. Geez. You’re good.”

“Yeah my dad’s only in jail for selling drugs, not murder.”

Daisy couldn’t tell if he was kidding or not. She decided to let it go.



The food was okay. It tasted fine. Peter really enjoyed talking about himself. By the end of the night, Daisy felt as if she had read Peter's 600-page memoir. She was now an expert on all things Peter. While the two of them were enjoying their desserts, Peter started to lean in for a kiss. Daisy flinched. Peter's elbow knocked over his wine glass, spilling burgundy liquid all over Daisy's dress.

"Oops. Sorry," said Peter, sounding embarrassed. Peter leaned over to help Daisy get cleaned up, but just ended up spilling his chocolate pudding on Daisy's lap.

"Please. Paul--"

"It's Peter."

"Shut up. Please stop. You aren't helping. At all." Daisy's words were slightly slurred. She remembered Ella's three glasses of wine rule. Drinking was the only way she could've survived Peter's ongoing monologue. Daisy stood up from the table, and stomped off to the coat closet. Peter sprung up to follow her. He got up with so much force that he ended up pushing a vase of measly flowers onto the floor, and glass was everywhere. Daisy managed to escape the restaurant before Peter could follow her out the door. Daisy pulled out her phone. She called Ella. No answer. Instead she was greeted with Ella's usual drunken voicemail: "Yo. It's Ella. I'm either at work, occupied, or I just don't want to talk to you. If you're Daisy, grab some cereal on your way home, 'kay? Oh. Here's the beep." Daisy hung up. Ella never checked her voicemail, so leaving a message was out of the picture. "Damn it!"

Daisy screamed. She was alone in New York City in March, she had just had the worst date ever, and, to make matters worse, she was soaked with wine and pudding. She checked her phone to see if she could get an Uber, but then her phone shut off. That's weird. Daisy always left the house with a full charge. Ella! She borrowed Daisy's charger last night, and, being Ella, forgot to return it. What about a cab? The subway. Daisy started rummaging her coat pockets for her wallet. Great. She had left her wallet at home. No money. No phone. No subway pass. Daisy glanced at the street signs on the corner. 25th and Jefferson. Ethan's apartment was two blocks away. No. Stop. Don't even think about it. Daisy began to walk down Jefferson Street. Regret overcame her. What was she thinking? A date? Has she met herself? She's only been in one relationship in her entire life, and that guy dumped her for a stupid, blonde, wannabe Instagram model. Nevertheless, she reached his building, walked up to the desk, and asked to see Ethan Thomas. Suite #14.

As soon as she uttered his name, she regretted her decision. Daisy waited in the lobby for about two minutes and decided to turn back. As she stood up, she saw Ethan walking out of the elevator. He was wearing sweatpants, a T-shirt, and a stupid, goofy grin. Daisy felt sick.

“Miss me, eh?” Ethan is Canadian. He wanted to go to York University so that he could get his degree while living at home, But his parents pushed him and forced him to go to NYU. Ethan hated everything about America, and he had planned to move straight to Toronto after he graduated. And then he met Daisy. He aborted his former plan, and the summer before junior year, he decided to rent a crappy apartment, using his parents’ money.

There he was. Sitting in that crappy apartment. Next to Daisy, the girl that changed everything.

“Want anything to to drink?” he asked her.

“No.” Something to drink meant staying, something Daisy definitely did NOT want to do.

“Okay.” All Ethan had in his fridge to drink was half a bottle of water and an expired V8 juice. He was kind of counting on Daisy to say no anyways.

“I need a ride home.” Daisy said with confidence.

“Couldn’t you take a cab or subway?”

“No wallet.”

“Uber?”

“Phone died.”

“Ella?”

“Phone. Died.” Daisy was beyond aggravated now.

“Can I just have a few bucks? Please.”

“I don’t know, can you?” These few words used to be a joke between the two of them, but Daisy didn’t remember or care.

“Please just let me borrow some cash. I’ll pay you back. I promise!” Daisy was desperate now.

“I will,” Ethan’s face lit up. “if you tell me about your date.” Ethan was feeling crafty. He had an iPhone charger that Daisy could use, but bargaining was much more fun.

“Ugh. That’s my description. Now give me money, Ethan.”

“I need more than that. Then I’ll give you \$50. We got a deal?” Ethan was enjoying this. Daisy was not.

“Fine. I’ll tell you the story.”

She told him everything. The flowers, the name flub, the “my -dad’s-in-prison story,” the boring conversation, the wine spill, everything. Ethan loved the story. He loved any story actually. When they first started dating, Daisy got him to read all of her favorite books. He never complained about a single one. This annoyed Daisy. “Have an opinion,” she would often say, “You don’t have to like a book just because I do.” Then Daisy gave him *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*. “It wasn’t my thing,” He said after he was finished. “What!?” Daisy was bewildered.

“I just kind of hate Harry. He’s basic.”

“He’s the hero of the story!” Daisy protested. “He’s boring,” said Ethan, slamming the book on the bookstore counter.

Daisy longed for that time. When the two of them could joke around and get into petty arguments that weren’t important. But that was then, and this was now. Things had changed for both of them. They had moved on.

But there was something comforting and familiar, being with Ethan. It was like old times, aside from the part where Daisy was pissed at him. His voice startled her. She had settled into the silence.

“Listen. Daisy.” She was listening. “For what it’s worth, I really am, truly, deeply sorry.” His overuse of adjectives slightly annoyed Daisy, but she could tell that Ethan’s heart was in the right place. She considered forgiving him, and then made her decision.

“I forgive you,” she told him. He grinned at her. “But.” His smile faded. “Things won’t ever be the same. I can’t go back, knowing how easily you disposed of me when something new and shiny came along. I can’t forget how you didn’t hesitate to get rid of me when you got bored. I’m not some toy you can just throw away.”

Ethan considered this. “I understand now. I acted irrationally and I see how much that hurt you. I’ll never do it again.” He seemed serious, but Daisy didn’t know if she could ever trust him the same way again.

“I don’t know if I can trust you,” she answered honestly, “I would love to be friends with you, but I can’t be with you, the way you’re telling yourself you want.”

“Well,” he said, “I think it’s time for you to leave.”

Daisy stared blankly at him, disbelieving. Ethan pulled out his wallet from his pocket and handed Daisy \$50 in cash. Daisy took his money, but she couldn’t help but wonder where he got it, being unemployed. Ethan somehow read her inquisitive look.

“I got a job by the way. At Beans. This is about a month in tips. Hipsters aren’t very generous.”

Daisy laughed nervously. The way she did during dinner with Paul/Peter. “Thanks.” That was all she said before ducking out.



Sophia Simpson

## Dear Donald

*By Lauren Hauger*

The way death rolls off of your tongue  
It's as easy as saying life to you.  
It's as easy as prayers for you.  
It's as easy as "giving thoughts" for you.

Thousands of kids  
Screaming  
Scared  
Alone  
Dark

Thoughts and prayers were the last thing on their mind  
Thoughts and prayers never came to their mind.

You get money from the bullets that killed our children.  
You get money from the schools that carry these children.  
You get money from the people who sell weapons.  
You get money from our killers.

Then you tell us that you care about us.

You feed us the fake words of honor  
We tremble at the sight of fear  
You bring us  
a gift with looks of gold  
But at the center  
A stone

Except we aren't trembling anymore  
We aren't screaming  
Scared  
Alone

No  
We have a collection of stones now  
Ready to kill  
Ready to drown

You play with the fire  
You get burned

We come in packs  
Just like your bullets  
We come prepared  
Just like your lawyers

We will join together  
The students  
The teachers  
The loved ones

United We Stand  
Against One  
You.



Lexi Miller

## **Stand Up**

*by Emily Hazzard*

Stand up

For the morning that rises with you,  
as your emotions reflect off of you.

While grogginess vacates your mind,  
recall.

What did it feel like,  
when you stood up at the right time.

Stand up

For the black and the white and the gray.

Stand up

For the dark and the light of the day.

Stand up

For the sun and the moon and the stars.

Stand up

For the sky and the ground and our earth full of hearts.

Stand up

For your classmates, your family and friends.

Stand up

For the people who, when you break down, will build you back up again.

Stand up

For the rich and the poor to stay kind.

Stand up

For the freedom to vocalize your mind.



Stand up

For the trees and the grass and the flowers.

Stand up

For the workers and teachers who dedicate their hours.

Stand up

For the love that shines like the sun.

Stand up

For the life that, at one point or another, fills everyone.

Stand up

For the people, a force strong and mighty.

Stand up

For the magic of a fantastical story.

Stand up

For the soldiers who risk their lives daily.

Stand up

For the peace and compassion that should reside within us, safely.

Stand up

For the broken, the hungry, the crazed.

Stand up

For the mended, the contented, the sane.

Stand up

For the tales of both old and young.

Stand up

For all the wars we finally won.

Stand up

For your dreams, a whirlwind inside your head.

Stand up

For old fears that made you stronger than new dread.

Stand up

For the warmth of a familiar embrace.

Stand up

For the sight of a ballerina, strong like a statue and poised with an angel's grace.

Stand up

For the savory aromas of freshly cooked dinners.

Stand up

For the proud feeling you get when you're part of the winners.

Stand up

For the flaming sands of a heated desert.

Stand up

For all the break-ups and make-ups that, while making you resilient, still hurt.

Stand up

For the blessing of the roof you reside beneath.

Stand up

For the people who are trapped outside—cold—with chattering teeth.

Stand up

For the women who carve their own path.

Stand up

For the right to love yourself without any fear of wrath.

Stand up

For our world, because it is shrinking.

Stand up

For your voice, to use it, start by thinking.

Stand up

For the night that blankets you,  
as your dreams overtake you.

While sleepiness fills up your mind,  
imagine.

What could you do,

if you stood up at the right time?



Megan Moore

## Stranger

*By Anika Kasten*

I saw my dog Jubal  
With a bone in her mouth  
Looking out the window

She barked at me  
Even though  
She knows who I am

Oh stranger, I bet she's saying  
You stay off my property!  
This place is mine only,  
Not yours!

If you come near me,  
I will lick you to death.

Oh, wait  
Never mind  
I know you

You're that thing  
That feeds me dinner.  
And sometimes lunch.

At least that's what I think she's saying



Jillian Skelding

# **The Muncher**

*By Quinci King*

Bob was called the Muncher  
All throughout his life  
Fast food bags  
dangling from his hands.  
Once a small french fry  
fell effortlessly to the ground  
and Bob cried  
But came to realize he had another box full,  
And the man walked away happy,  
shoving greasy fries into his mouth.

All of Bob's money is spent on food  
No fresh clothes or shoes, no new haircut, nothing.  
Nothing is more important than food.  
But today, he makes a promise to cut back from four hot dogs  
for each of us, to only two.

The worker at the food stand, a small, feisty British woman,  
has told Bob he can only buy two hot dogs,  
one for each of us, do to their short supply of meat.  
His face has turned a ketchup shade of red  
and many words are being screamed  
back and forth.  
Some American, many British.

After numerous minutes of harsh words and scared glances  
from bystanders,  
Bob has calmed down and has reluctantly  
agreed to only buy two hot dogs.

He pushes the \$10 bill towards the woman  
who just smirks as Bob angrily snatches  
the dogs and marches away.

“Here,” he grunts,  
“One for you,  
and one for me.”



Sebastian Holmes

## Letter

*By Twylo Landey*

Dear House on Lockwood Road,

Your rooms are filled with the laughter of three sisters playing in the big room, their calls echoing out through the rest of the house. Shaded by towering fir trees, two boys run around just outside your terraced stairs, their smiles as warm and soft as the bright sun trying its best to peer at them through the tops of the trees. Two girls sit basking by the calm pool, lazily chatting, while a small boy splashes around in the shallow waters with a tan young woman. In the old dining room that looks like it once must have been very grand indeed, sits an 80-year-old woman. There is an old dog that sits by her legs, panting hard after chasing a deer in the back field. Contentment fills the the air.

You taught me to enjoy every day, because I know every time I visit you, it might be the last time. So I savor you while I have you. You have taught me that nothing lasts forever, because I always have to leave your faded grandeur too soon. Your once blue and white wallpaper is now yellow and stained from decades of children's sticky fingers. You whisper to me that even school ends, because every summer I come back to you. The sweet smell of old rotting pages and once splendid, moth-eaten gowns intoxicates me, and I know in my heart that those smells will always carry me back to you.

But you are not all good. You are surrounded by other huge houses, also filled with memories, not all of them as sweet as yours. When I visit you, the faces around you are all white and "Make America Great Again" signs adorn the front yards along your street. I wonder what secrets each house holds, who is inside, unappreciated, forgotten. My mom felt that way, growing up in you. When she describes you, she says she felt trapped. She doesn't love you like I do.

Right now, I can close my eyes and hear the creaking of your 200-year-old floorboards under my feet as I quietly creep to the kitchen in the morning, like the sighs of tired people. My eyes move from blue and white china plate to bookshelves brimming with books from the 1800's, and I wonder. Who has lived in you? Who has died in you? My grandmother shuffles through my memory with her walker. Please take care of her. Protect her.

Until we meet again, Twylo



# Forgiveness

*By Anekah Laney*

Forgiveness is something I could never feel for you  
Because you were never there  
You are a stranger to my life and my feelings  
You are a complete stranger, yet somehow I'm supposed to forgive you  
All the birthdays and happy memories you missed  
You weren't even there when I was born  
It's sad that you don't know anything about me  
Not even my face  
But it's crazy that I don't even know your voice  
I have no idea who you are  
Or who you used to be  
I hear stories on who you could have been  
You are just a stranger who's supposed to be here  
But is not  
And I don't see it happening in the future  
I guess I could forgive you  
But it wouldn't make a difference  
'cause you'll never read this  
But one thing is for sure though  
I could never love or hate you.



Ruby Weinger

## Missing in Venice

*By Harry Leboutillier*

Venice: a jungle of brick, metal and glass. Cramped streets are filled with people and small cars. Food stands squat on the cobbled streets, their smells mixing with diesel from the boats. Tourists mill around in gift shops, and couples enjoy romantic ferry rides under small bridges. Canals loop through the city, crisscrossing bright houses. Small dogs weave through crowds, snuffling at the ground. I enjoy the bright view from my window.

“Time for lunch, honey!” my mom calls. I jump up and bounce down our old steep stairs and into our tiny green kitchen. My mother smiles at me.

“I made grilled cheese and apple slices.”

“Thanks, mom.”

I chew on warm bread and cheese as my mom turns on the TV. As the news comes on, my eyes bulge, and I almost choke on my grilled cheese. The TV shows an ocean liner barreling down Canal Grande, the main canal in Venice. Buildings crumble, chunks of cement sink into the depths and cracking pavement. Fear rips a hole in me as I realize the ship is bearing down on our house. Metal groans. I sprint for the door as the dust cloud blows out our windows. Dirty air paints our clean living room brown. Metal groans, and cement crumbles on top of me. My body crumples, and I die. I awake, sweating. I look around my room. It’s a nightmare.



Julian Grappone

# **The Willow Girl**

*By Amelia McKean*

I am a girl from a village named Lyla  
The town is small  
and surrounded by towering trees that block us from the outside world  
You can hear the bells ringing through the forest,  
sounding like the church mixing with of branches creaking and snapping,  
and leaves brushing the sky  
A spirit, they call her, only glimpses out of the corner of your eye  
Her wild blue fox eyes  
And long strands of brown hair  
That look like the drooping branches of a willow tree.  
I had met her before when lost in the woods  
My eyes red and swollen from crying  
I had only been six at the time and wished to get back home,  
the night pitch black, cold, and air as still as death  
A bell rings beside me, the noise calming like the rush of the river I am sitting by  
A girl about my age with long brown hair squats beside me,  
Her hair almost looking as if it were floating or suspended by an invisible string  
Eyes that are as blue as the ocean reflecting the stars  
That hung by the millions in the clear night sky.  
Her skin glowed as if it were made of silver, the moon's light reflecting off of her  
She looked like a ghost as she reached out a thin, pale hand that looked transparent  
And I reached for it, grabbing on tightly, fearing if I let go, she would simply drift away  
Her hands are cold and lifeless, yet somehow comforting  
"I am Lyla," I state quietly  
But she only nods in acknowledgment  
Still walking swiftly and as quietly as a fox along the path  
Soon we break out of the forest  
and return to where I belong  
I look behind me only to see no one's there.

## Siblings, Old and Young

*By Kate McStay*

From the moment I understood what a sister was, I knew I desperately wanted one. Well, technically I already had a sister, but since she tended to ignore me, I wanted a new one. I wanted a younger sister, someone I thought would admire me and treat me as if I were God's gift to Earth. So naturally, I responded to my mom's pregnancy announcement with pure joy. *Finally*, I thought, *there'll be someone around here who'll appreciate me*. My older sister and I awaited our new sibling.

It's safe to say my sister and I had a tense relationship as small kids. The few times I convinced Una to play with me resulted in bite marks on her arms and an American Girl Doll's leg getting ripped off. She mostly kept to herself, preferring to play music instead of playing with me. Her love for rhythm led her to the drums and away from me. I don't blame her, we didn't really have anything in common. I preferred a good book (*Harry Potter* was my favorite) and all things tiny. Little toys and dolls were the objects of my affection, but I wanted someone to share them with.

I spent night after night agonizing over whether my mother would have a boy or a girl. It consumed me. I thought of a world where a little girl followed me around, copying my every move. I imagined our future, an idealized relationship without a single fight between us. We would sit on piles of fluffy stuffed animals for hours, making up our own language, creating jokes only we would understand. It was perfection. This colorful world could do me no wrong. Of course, like all dreams, it had to come to an end.

I remember it vividly, the day my dreams collapsed. My parents were elated to hear that my mom was expecting a baby boy. I, however, was rather emotionally destroyed. I burst into tears on the gray linoleum floor. My sister's responded to my strong reaction by laughing, and, as everyone knows, the worst thing on the planet is people laughing at you as you cry. While I think she thought it would help me, it only made me sob harder. All I could think about was the loss of my imaginary sister. As my temper tantrum slowly subsided, I felt my sadness transform into anger. It boiled in my stomach, twisting and contorting into an arrow. As my blood cooled, I knew where to aim my arrow. It caught in my throat like a shard of glass. My young mind was set on the idea that it was my brother's fault I wouldn't have a sister. I was so stuck on this idea

that I held a grudge for about six years. Six years of bitterness. It was only after I turned ten or so that I accepted he existed.

It's my own fault that I didn't have that dream relationship with my brother. My stubbornness got in the way of us ever playing together. He tried to play with me, oh, how he tried, but the more I rejected him, the less he came to me. I watched as my sister and brother banded together. They were swashbuckling pirates, swinging on ropes and brandishing swords. They were secret agents, using walkie talkies to communicate in a secret code I couldn't be bothered to learn. My pride refused to let me join in the fun with them, and it's something I've always regretted.

My siblings and I still don't have that relationship, and I'm not sure we ever will. Una's heading off to college and I'm starting high school, isolating us. Maybe I've lost that opportunity for a relationship with her. But maybe, just maybe, this is my chance to become that older sister figure for my brother. Maybe this is the time I put away my pride and reach out to him. All the times I wished my sister was there for me, I will be there for him. My brother and I, finally together.



Julian Grappone

## At the Cloud Pool

By Violet Meyers

“DO NOT GET THE BLUE BALLS IN THE PURPLE BALL SECTION! OKAY? DID YOU HEAR ME, SMALL CHILD????” the weird-looking witch yells at me.

“Yes. I heard you. Jeez. Can I go swim now?” I tentatively whisper.

“IF THAT IS WHAT YOU WISH TO DO,” the witch sighs. She points a stick that is taped together with duct tape. “The purple cat will strike again,” the witch mutters. The witch that floats in front of me is quite short and a little full-figured. She has red poofy hair and pig-like features. A stream of glittering purple smoke floats out the tip of her wand and surrounds me.

“DON’T YOU WORRY, CHILD. THIS WILL BE A SMOOTH LANDING,” the witch howls as she flicks her wrist. Hard. I scream as I plummet straight down into the floating pool. I land on a purple yoga ball as Rosemary throws a blue yoga ball at me.

“I SAID LEAVE THE BLUE BALLS IN THE BLUE BALL SECTION! NOT ONE PURPLE BALL SHOULD END UP IN THE BLUE BALL AREA, OR THE OTHER WAY AROUND!” the witch yells at us.

“Sorry, I didn’t know that,” Rosemary says.

“YOU REALLY DIDN’T HEAR ME YELLING AT YOUR FRIEND UP HERE?” the witch screams.

“No, I wasn’t paying attention to your conversation,” says Rosemary.

“JUST DON’T LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN,” the witch yells.

“Jeez. Sorry, I didn’t mean to upset you,” Rosemary apologizes.

“That witch sure is strict about the placement of *yoga balls*! Why did we even come here if we’re gonna have a witch boss us around the whole time?” Maddie questions.

“I don’t know. All I remember is opening my eyes as I swam to the surface and heard the witch yelling at Ava,” Marlee says.

“Why don’t we just leave? I mean, I don’t think the witch can make us stay,” Johanna suggests.

“Did you see what she did to me?” I ask. “She forced me to freefall at least 500 feet!”

“Let’s be super quiet and sneak outta here,” Chloe whispers.

“Have you forgotten that we are in a pool that is resting on a *cloud*? How in the world would we get out of here? Jump, and hope we touch ground?” Sarah questions.

“YA KNOW I CAN HEAR YA, RIGHT?” the witch asks.

“How can you hear us? We’re practically whispering. Oh. Right, you’re a witch, I bet you have superpowers other than flicking a magical stick. Do you have supersonic moth hearing or something?” I yell back.

“UH, NO. I DO NOT HAVE *MOTH* HEARING! MY WAND OR “STICK” AS YOU WOULD CALL IT, CAN REPEAT THINGS THAT I DON’T HEAR. WHEN I DIDN’T HEAR ANYTHING COMING FROM THE POOL, BUT I STILL SAW YOUR MOUTHS MOVING. I KNEW SOMETHING WAS UP,” the witch hollers.

“Just FYI, moths can hear better than anything else, so technically I was giving you a compliment,” I reply.

“WELL, DON’T YOU EVEN THINK ABOUT LEAVING. YOU ARE STAYING HERE!!!”  
The witch exclaims.

“Okay. We won’t leave,” Maddie says.

“GOOD,” the witch smiles to herself.

“Guys, I just realized something,” I say.

“What?” Johanna asks.

“So, when I was up with the witch, it was her *wand* that made me plummet down, and she said her *wand* helped her hear better,” I say.

“Yeah, and?” Rosemary asks.

“Her *wand* is the only thing that is magical about her. So if we get her *wand* then we have her power!” I exclaim.

“Oh!!!” Chloe says.

“I’m gonna go distract her. Rosemary, will you come with me? The rest of you pretend you’re having a great time. Play a game, maybe Marco Polo?” I say.

“Ya, I’ll go with you,” Rosemary replies.

“Hey, Witch! Rosemary and I need to talk to you!” I yell.

“OKAY. I’LL BRING YOU UP.” The witch says a weird phrase and raises her wand.  
Purple glittery smoke surrounds us and we float up.

“WHAT DO YOU NEED?” the witch yells even though we are standing three feet away from each other.



“We want to uh... show you a... magic trick! Yeah we are gonna show you that we can read your mind!” Rosemary stutters.

“Here, hand us your wand and then place your palms on mine,” I say.

“NO. YOU ARE NOT GETTING MY WAND!” the witch says with an upset look on her face.

“Okay, then set it down,” Rosemary suggests.

“FINE. BUT YOUR MAGIC TRICK BETTER BE GOOD,” the witch says, bending over to put the wand down.

Rosemary and I look at each other. I gesture to Rosemary with my eyes to take the wand while the witch isn’t looking. I don’t think she understands.

“Rosemary is going to take your hands, and you must close your eyes,” I say nervously.

“Okay,” the witch replies as she gives Rosemary her hands.

I mouth to Rosemary *just say some weird stuff*. She does, and I bend down and pick up the wand.

Electricity shocks through me as the witch yells, “HA! YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD TRICK ME! NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF THE WITCH!!”

I fall backward, and Rosemary catches me. I hyperventilate.

A new voice that I don’t recognize says, “It’s okay. Just breathe. In and out.”

“Mom?” I squeak.

“Yes, it’s mom. Everything is fine. You just had a dream.”

I sit straight up. “Dream?”



Maya Short



# Seasons' Song

*By Sophia Miller*

## Summer

Swimsuits and shorts

Flip-flops and bare feet

Pool days and sunsets on the beach

Icy-cold lemonade and fresh-out-of-the-freezer cola

Fresh watermelon and juicy strawberries

## Autumn

Jeans and T-shirts

Sneakers and boots

School days and campfires on the porch

Steamers and apple juice

Hot grilled cheese and gooey peanut-butter and jelly sandwiches

## Winter

Warm coats and snow-pants

Ski boots and thick socks

Snow-days and cloudy nights

Hot cocoa and warm tea

Soft marshmallows and toasty gingerbread

## Spring

Leggings and sweatshirts

Birkenstocks and leather boots

Starry nights and sunshine-filled mornings

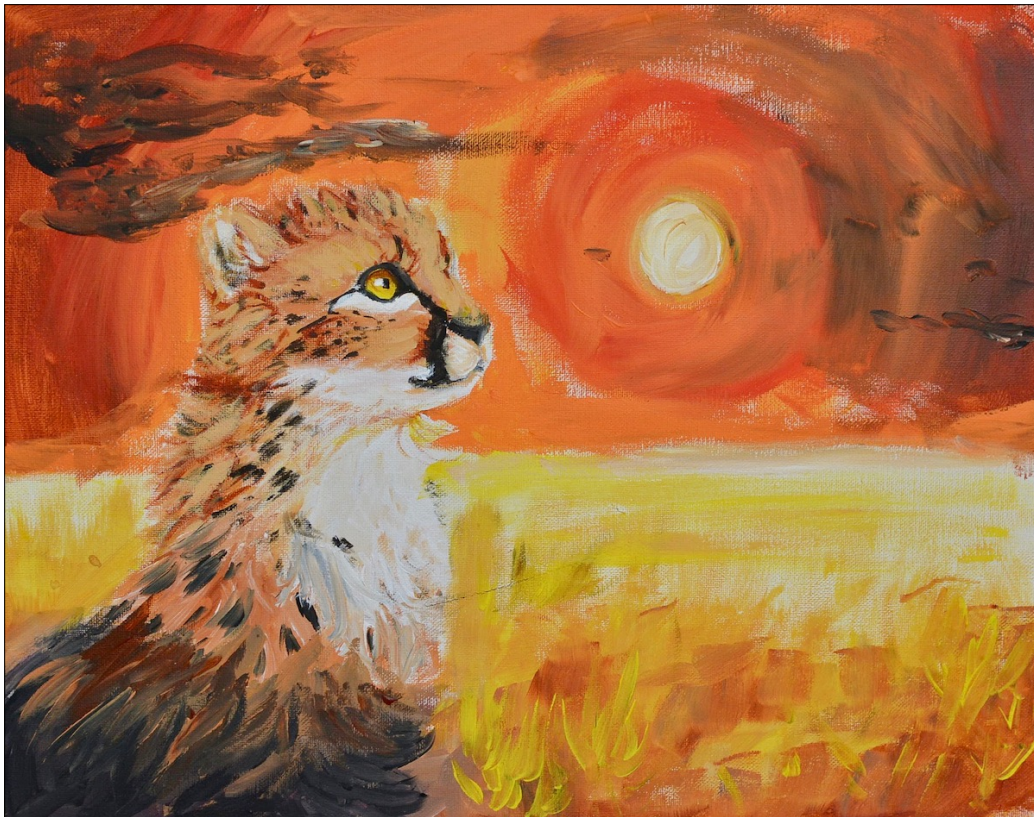
Iced tea and orange juice

Refined caprese salads and spicy bean and cheese tacos

Seasons change  
Seasons evolve  
Seasons grow  
Seasons transform  
Seasons are forever

Summer is feverish  
Autumn is chilling  
Winter is freezing  
Spring is warm

This is my season's song.  
What's yours?



Uma Goksu-Pacioretty

## Mr. Linden's Library

*By Fia Morris*

She knew when she woke up, but it wasn't as if it happened as she opened her eyes either. She had learned it while she slept, and now it was clear to her. It didn't matter whether she wanted to believe it or not, because now she knew it.

Mr. Linden had warned her, "They'll think your deranged, flat out mad, unhinged!" He'd jumped around while he said it, too expressive, and completely hypocritical. When Mr. Linden was thinking, he scratched his slightly-too-long stubble. She was sure she'd never seen him outside of the broken-down library on Fifth, with the shelves so crooked, it was a miracle the books didn't all come tumbling down. And when she read the



Elliot Reid

books, there were always tears in the pages. Sometimes she thought they even looked like bites. Every time someone asked Mr. Linden what had happened to the books, he said, "Fairies," with his face so serious that they couldn't help but laugh. Every table in the library was the same, dark oak, made like a magic kingdom.

Mr. Linden had taken a liking to her, at least she thought so. Honestly, he could just be insane; he might treat everyone like that. He might think she was his long lost sister for all she knew. Nonetheless, he'd spent a great deal of time trying to convince her not to choose this book. It was one of the moth-eaten novels on the top shelf, with uneven pages and the occasional smeared type. They were almost never checked out. She'd never thought about it either, until Mr. Linden went to such pains to warn her about them.

All kids like to break rules. She'd had her eye on that book for some time now; she was curious; she was innocent. Of course she didn't know that she'd fallen into the same trap as Pandora, and now it was too late.

## What She Took

*By Olivia Nally*

She took

The little booklet on her bedside table  
The one she never looked at or touched  
The few memories of her sister buried deep in her heart  
A feeble amount of hope  
A small backpack of clothes, the necessities  
Two red hair ribbons  
Three currant cakes, fresh out of the oven  
Her freedom

She left behind

Her old school uniform that reeked of nostalgic memories  
both good and bad  
Her favorite blanket she had since she was two  
Her prized manga collection  
Her love-hate relationships  
All the guilt weighing on her shoulders  
The sister she loved and hated,  
And her deeply injured pride



Amelia Thorpe

# Spring

*By Sierra Nelson*

Spring is like an endless amount of sprinkles  
scattered all around.

Greens, blues, pinks, purples, yellows, oranges, reds,  
and everything in between  
dispersed as far as the eyes can see.

Spring is like the scent of nature's perfume,  
the sweet smells of roses, gardenias, jasmine, lavender, and sweet alyssum,  
coming together and unifying as one magnificent scent.

Spring is like the sweet taste of warm honey  
spread on freshly toasted bread.

Spring is like being wrapped up  
in your favorite cozy blanket  
on a windy day or laying down  
in the middle of a flowering field  
with the sun glistening down upon you.

Spring is like the sound of animals communicating,  
the sound of buzzing bees, fluttering butterflies,  
and the chirping and pecking of birds.

The arrival of spring is as certain as the sun will rise and set.



Zoe Wright



## Mirror in the Rainstorm

*By Lilith Neuse-Kartmazov*

She needs someone  
Someone to walk to convenience stores in the rain with  
Whose eyes capture and reflect the raindrops  
Like a mirror in a rainstorm  
Someone who has hands that are made of silk  
Hands like sheets fresh out the dryer  
She needs someone who will cradle her in the dark  
And their warm breaths are all the conversation they need  
She needs her head on someone's cozy lap  
As her hair gets pulled out of her face  
And all she can look at is their eyes  
A green forest  
A canyon that she's exploring  
There's no awkward silence  
because their breaths and bodies fill up  
all of the quiet spots  
That's what she needs  
What she deserves.



Lola Blucher

## Details

*By Lilith Neuse-Kartmazov*

You were the cold side of the pillow  
A fan blowing late at night  
A sleepover party  
A cat on my lap  
You were my favorite bag of chips  
Pizza on the beach  
And the feeling of silky sand under my feet.  
You were the sound of raindrops  
Sliding down my window  
As I watch from the warm comfort of my room.  
I think of you when I sit on my roof and watch the sunset  
I think of you when I flip through music at the record store  
You cross my mind when the sun reflects through the window  
And onto the walls  
And the floor  
I get reminded of you when I see fresh paint spread on a canvas  
I see you in the minor, pretty details of life.



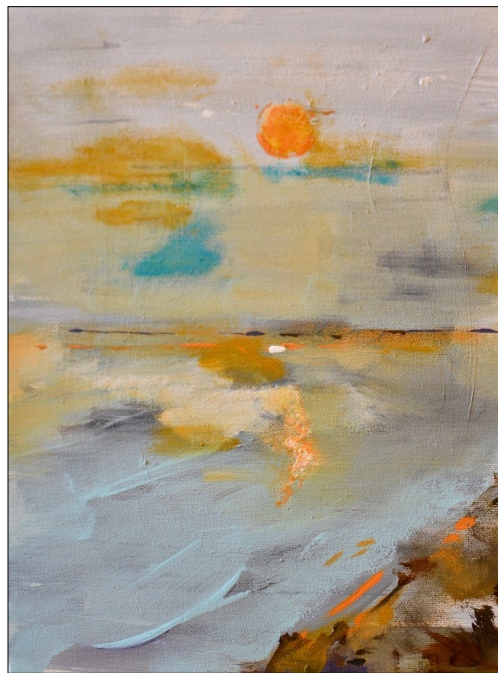
Piper Westhead

## **Pulling**

*By Elias Norwood*

Ashen felt the pull of the ocean, the pull that happened right before the wave smashed her against the rock for the 837th time that day. The first few hours she waited, thinking that someone was going to save her. But now she knew with cold certainty that nobody was coming. She started to crawl up the rock and felt the scrape of barnacles rough against her skin. But she didn't stop; she knew that if she stopped, the next pull of the wave would take her back to where she started or worse, into the ocean.

Desmon felt the pull on his heartstrings. He knew Cynthia could control his emotions. She was famous around campus. As she walked by, he knew that she took advantage of people for no reason other than it gave her satisfaction. But he wouldn't give that to her. He walked toward her and felt her pushing him away, but he just kept walking. Desmon had his emotions behind a wall. He knew she couldn't control him; he had years of practice fending off there attacks. He knew that he would bring down her cruel empire.



Phoebe Wolf



## **The Girl With Glass Eyes**

*By Ida Price*

*Hush child, so I may tell you a story. What? No, child, not about an ordinary princess or a repeating fairytale. I will tell you a story about the Girl With Glass Eyes. No, she does not have a name, she never has, we just call her Glass-Eyed Girl. Now be quiet, and let me tell you the story.*

*Long ago, in a village with people who were as unique as one snowflake is from another, there were identical twins—twins who looked exactly the same, but had completely opposite interests.*

*One of the twins was mischievous and lived for adventure. She'd go as far as she dared, away from her home, and she would chase the sun down to the shining crystal-blue lake. She would race the moon over the hills and past the trees as the sun set, all the way to where her mother called for her from the sun porch.*

*The other twin was timid and quiet. She would follow the sun to a lonely tree in a clearing with grass as soft as feathers. There, she would sit and sing. Her voice was so enthralling that all of the squirrels and birds in the forest would stop to listen. It was quiet like the whispering of wind in the trees, but as powerful as an ox. She would stand up and close her eyes, twirling around and singing of magic. She would sing of the magic held in the sun, warm magic that would make people smile, and the moon, cold magic, yet peaceful. A calming stillness that hushed the entire world. As the moon was rising she'd walk back home, skipping from one rock to another following the slow and peaceful river, laughing a sing-song laugh.*

*Yes, child, you have a laugh as beautiful as a songbird. Now go to sleep, we shall continue the story tomorrow.*

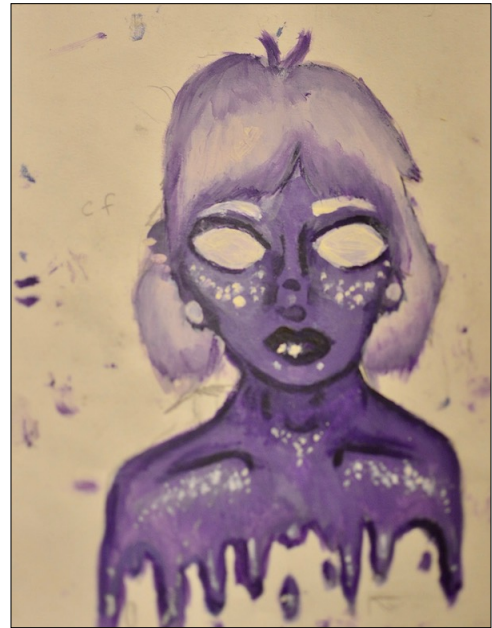
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As the sun rose, it shone its golden light onto the baby-blue house on the corner. The house glittered in the sunlight as if it were made of teardrops. It had simple white curtains and a simple yard, hiding a not-so-simple secret inside. Just by glancing quickly at it on your morning jog, it would look ordinary, like any self-respecting person's house would look. If you were to look closer, you would see the baby-blue color of the seemingly simple house was not paint at

all, but hundreds of thousands of tiny pieces of glass. In fact, if you looked closer still, you would see the grass in the yard was also made of glass: tiny slivers of glass, each cut to look like a blade of grass, but soft and bendable like grass should be. You might ask, why is this simple-looking property made of glass? Why it's because of the not-so-simple secret inside. You see, inside of the glass house lived a solitary girl with glass eyes. But these were not any simple and ordinary glass eyes. Just like the house, they held a secret.

The glass eyes were made of magic. They were, of course, also made of glass, but it was a magical sort of glass that helped her see. She couldn't see normal things, like a regular person. But she could see magic.

Tiny filaments of magic, woven together into a shimmering tapestry. They worked quite a bit like echolocation. Each strand of magic that washed out in waves from her body, would bounce and stick to objects, sending the images to her mind: images photographed by the silky lines still connected to her brain. They enabled her to walk down the street as if she were normal, as if she couldn't see the small waves of magic washing off of people like floating buoys rippling in a lake. No one would ever believe it if they didn't see it, but everyone has a little bit of magic inside of them. This is magic that fuels their curiosity and courage, that tells them to keep trying and never give up. Pure magic, however, does not stay pure, it can be corrupted.



Ash Rinker

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*Yes, child, it's time for more of the story. Now hush and be still; let me talk. One day, when the two girls came home, their mother was not there to greet them with open arms. In fact, the house was dark and empty, like someone had drawn all of the love and energy out of it. The girls ran through the forests, past the rivers, and over the hills calling her name. Over time, their voices become more and more frantic until their calls and shouts turned to sobs. Great, racking sobs, exploded from their mouths as if clawing free from a long-held prison. They cried for their mother and for each other, for with all of the running and shouting they*

*did, they had gotten lost. They had ventured far beyond even the most visible point of their house. When their eyes had been drained of tears, and the sobs had turned to sniffles, the more reserved twin stood up and sang with her quiet voice, more powerfully than ever. She sang away all of her worry and terror, threading the music together to make one breathtaking piece. She stole the last tears from her sister's eyes and made her stand, too. To her sister's surprise, she started singing. It was soft and shaky at first, but gradually her voice grew confident, like a balloon being filled with air. She sang with her sister. Their voices melded together in perfect harmony, one quiet and sweet, like a flute, and the other loud and filled with sorrow. As they sang, their world changed and grew around them. The small rivers and streams seemed to change color and stretch wider. They turned a sparkling purple, glistening in the sun. The plants around them appeared tinted with a lilac glow. The rocks turned into giant flowers, blooming into rainbows stretching as far as the eye could see. The trees started spinning, and they turned into green and brown blurs, turning faster and faster, and then stopped as fast as they had begun. With great ease, the trees stopping spinning and once again stilled to normal, but in the places of three trees closest to them were three women, with their hair woven into thick braids, like twisted trunks, wearing emerald green dresses that flowed and spread out like leaves growing on branches, reaching for the sky.*

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Of course, the girl hadn't had glass eyes since birth, there was a story behind them, just like there's a story connected to everything and everyone else. This story involved glass. Back when she was younger, the girl had lost her mother and sister to the forest. At first, the tree creatures were nice. They led her and her sister to their mother, slumped against a tree trunk. Her muscles worked too hard and made a stretcher out of their skirts. Then, she took them home.

Her family lived comfortably for many years until the women in green came back. Her sister had just returned from the clearing in the forest with wood. At that moment, roots and branches started growing. They grew slowly at first, then picked up speed, knotting themselves together in a sea of wood, stretching from the back of the forest to their door, winding around the house in minutes and trapping them in a prison without light. Her family had run for their door into the house, racing the roots for safety. Reaching out desperately to get to the doorknob,

the girl fell, tripped by a root, and hit her head hard. Before her sight left her, she saw her mother and sister get dragged away by their ankles. Crying out for help, they had reached toward her and failed. She had heard a whisper, from deep inside the earth, hissing out the words that would never leave her mind, branded into her brain every time she closed her eyes: “We helped you, now it’s time for you to help us,” the voice had cackled, leaving a sound that had chilled her to the bone, and everything had spun to black. Years later, she would still wonder what they meant, what had happened to her family, and why their mother had left the house that day, so many years earlier.

When she had woken up after striking her head, she was lying on her porch, the porch that their family had stood on moments before it seemed, but everything was different. The wood was too slick, reflecting the sun in such a way that should not have been possible. She could see the sunlight reflecting, but even that seemed different. There were threads mixed in with the light, and she had the weirdest feeling that this was the only reason she could see her house. She stood up and looked around, seeing more shimmering threads and spotting things that had not been near her house before. People were walking about, with waves of the threads coming off them, like waves of water breaching the shore. There were other houses around hers, but she could only see their windows, reflecting the sunlight and strange threads back. There was no forest, no river, no rocks.

She realized then what had happened. The lady in the earth had taken her mother and sister away from her and left her, for a price. Somehow, they had taken her eyes and replaced them with something else, something that allowed her sight, but no earthly vision. When she reached out to touch them, she realized they were made of glass, but not normal glass. The glass reflected the sunlight and the threads webbed through it and everything with the same sparkling substance was seen by her. That meant her house was no longer wooden, but made of glass. everything from the tables and chairs to the carpets were made of glass. And when she thought back to the women in the flowing dresses and the angry roots dragging her family away, she recognized what was behind it. It was magic, an evil, corrupted magic that had given her glass eyes and a glass house. She knew that the threads and waves that she could see were magic too, but a different type of magic. Both evil and good, the threads and waves were balanced. The peaceful, good threads braided together to make a strong bond nothing could break through, while the poisonous, evil threads spread apart and slowly tried to wear down the thick tendrils protecting people and things. The threads woven tightly into braids, gentle and sweet, would

forever memorialize her sister and mother. They would never letting her forget that torturous day, but they also offered her closure. She would never forget her sister and mother and how she ended up in her simple neighborhood, with simple houses and simple people. She was a unique star with a story to tell about a simple family and a not-so-simple day.



Eden Abbott

# People

*By Emerson Quarles*

I walk down halls  
with jealous people  
selfish people  
broken-down and beaten people  
so I give a hug.

I sit at tables  
with ignorant people  
sheltered people,  
unaffected and fearful people  
so I tell them the truth.

I watch  
the fake people  
perfect people  
above it all unequal people  
and I turn away.

I keep turning  
until I see good people  
honest people  
human people  
the kinda people-I-want-to-be people  
and so I make an effort

knowing that I can't make people  
care about others but I can care  
about them I can't make people  
believe me but I can speak to them

and I can't make people be themselves  
but I can be vulnerable

I will work to be a understanding person  
a resourceful person a  
change-maker person  
a person that you can hug, speak with, and be vulnerable with  
and I hope I can do the same to you.



Yukpa Wright

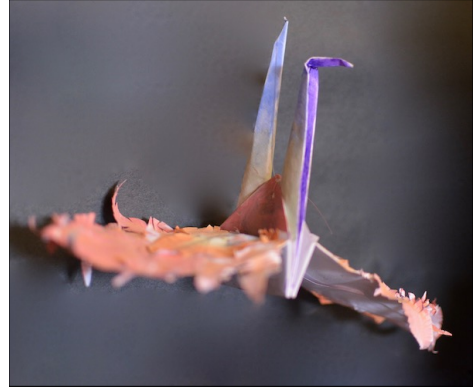
## Tell My Story

*By Lana Rachielug*

When they ask of me  
make sure they know not just  
of the monster boy  
who had no one  
the music in my head  
but of my dreams  
and my family  
but also of the thing that drove it  
to an  
end  
like a man driven to  
insanity

Tell also of my sister  
the once caring and kind  
kiss on the cheek  
her strudel  
our dinner together that changed  
our very lives  
drawn in by  
one merciless man  
and me wondering  
does she love me?  
has she ever?

And of my father  
of brave soul  
and pure heart  
even someone  
of that nature tore down  
by pride



Yukpa Wright



denying friends and family  
A knock at our door  
nothing would be the same  
making one “mistake”  
and imprisoned  
who once stood strong  
is now weak.

When you speak of me,  
make sure that you mention our  
fight and my fear  
and tell them not of my bravery  
because that was not me  
scared  
And lonely  
like a baby bird flicked from his nest  
much too soon  
running through the snow  
to the only place I knew

Through my dark and gloomy tale  
make sure they know of  
the good times  
Elisabeth and Father  
and our music played  
together  
the late night cello concerts  
that even I have trouble remembering  
now when I go home  
I am frightened by my own shadow  
I jump at every creak  
music on the floor  
shelves on the ground  
one untouched room

Then  
when you have got them by their ears  
tell them of my trials  
and how I missed my train that fateful night  
yet again I saw my father  
together  
we escaped  
we rose again  
and here I am now  
once teased for raising my arms  
up to the sky  
I now am praised for doing just  
that

Make sure they know my story  
Make sure they tell my story  
because all  
must know  
my story  
the story of a boy ridiculed  
a monster  
people to blind to see  
who the real monster was  
a sister driven to side  
with a murderer  
whose father was selfless  
a story of a boy who fulfilled his wildest dreams.  
And how?  
Those who fall harder, always rise stronger.

## **Don't Call Me a Hero**

*By Clara Raphael*

When you tell my story,  
don't tell the tales of a young boy who went against all odds to retrieve his sister,  
how me and my family spent what little we had to get her back,  
how we seized up every opportunity we were given,  
how we persisted and didn't give up, until Mariam could be found.  
Don't call me brave,  
call me a survivor.

When you speak of me,  
do not mention the struggles my family went through,  
how I blamed myself for Mariam getting left behind,  
not knowing my entire family was secretly blaming themselves, too.

Speak of my parents' bravery,  
when my sister and I were falling apart,  
they picked up the pieces and put us back together,  
Even when they were struggling themselves.

Tell the story of a kid who worked all day and night,  
Taking photos to win a contest to get Mariam back,  
Blaming myself all day,  
Thinking I needed to win,  
To get Mariam back.

When you talk of me,  
mention my love of photography,  
my unwavering hope for finding Mariam,  
don't call me courageous,  
don't call me brave for leaving my home and my country,  
when that is what I had to do to survive,  
For I am not a hero, but a survivor, a life not silenced by the Taliban.

## **Bored to Death**

*By Gabriel Robinson*

The stories you've most likely heard of the Grim Reaper were fascinating, terrifying tales of a messenger of death, bearing a scythe and reaping the souls of the deceased and taking lives as God's plan demands.

But, the reality is much more boring, and might be seen as disappointing, or even anticlimactic.

Grimothy Death Reapin (though he preferred to go by the name of "Grim") was an office worker in Heavenly Clouds, Incorporated, a company formed by Archangel Gabriel to organize the moving of souls to Heaven and Hell. This may sound exciting, and it was. Just not for the Mortality Department.

The Mortality Department was a typical office. There were cubicles, a lunchroom, vending machines, a conference room, and the boss' office.

Grim Reapin worked in one of these cubicles.

His (un)life was incredibly boring. He would wake up at six o'clock in the morning, get ready for work, drive to the office building, clock in, and organize, with the rest of his co-workers, the times and means of death of average people (exceptional people, like, say, Moses, JFK, and even awful people like Hitler, Stalin, and George, whose sins I will not delve into, had their deaths organized by God or Lucifer themselves).

Grim's uncle, Pestilence Reapin, was the manager of these offices, and he was, to be frank, an utter asshole.

Pestilence Reapin was the type of skeleton (oh, yes, the workers in the Mortality department were skeletons, as they lived forever, who were fast at typing and had many other qualities that provide for a good office drone) who would go around making awful jokes, wasting people's time, and looking at any attractive female skeletons that went by. If you've ever watched Office Space [Grim Reapin's least favorite movie of all time (What's his favorite? *The Matrix*, of course)], Pestilence Reapin was a good amount like Bill Lumbergh.

Anyways, this is a story about Grim Reapin, and how, in the time of the Black Plague here on Earth, or the Middle Realm, he rose to fame and founded Reapin & Co., Offices of Death.

...

When Grim woke up, his room was still dark. There was but a single shaft of dull, grey light coming from his window.

Sitting up, Grim rubbed his skull warily, looking at his alarm clock. *5:45*, it read.

*Damn*, Grim thought to himself, sighing. *Fifteen minutes. I can't fall asleep in fifteen bloody minutes.*

Pulling off his blankets, Grim rose from his bed and slumped off to his washroom.

He quickly washed his face with soap and water, then brushed his teeth quite thoroughly (believe it or not, dental hygiene is incredibly important to skeletal society. Their teeth are constantly up for show, so they prefer to keep them snow-white and minty fresh). He then took a shower, though the water was cold. His landlord, who lived directly upstairs, was probably using all the hot water.

He then walked out on to the small balcony provided with his flat and pulled his shirt, tie, and pants off his clothesline. He put them on quickly, grabbed some socks, and put on his shoes.

Grim then cooked some scrambled eggs and bacon, ate them up, and walked outside.

Outside it was the same old weather that it always was in the city of Purgatory: dim grey skies, a light drizzle, and an overall air of depression.

Grim climbed into his old silver Mercedes sedan and drove off to work.

Now, you may be thinking, "That was actually the most boring thing I have ever read. I hate you, Gabriel Robinson, and I think you should burn in the fires of the seventh ring of Hell for the rest of eternity." Well, that was quite the point, wasn't it? Grimothy had the exact same boring routine every single day. And skeletons live forever. So, to be crude, it really sucked ass to be Grim Reapin.

...

Grim sat in his cubicle, staring blankly at his computer screen. He was filling out some service reports, and that was, of the many excruciatingly boring things in his eternal (un)life, the most boring of all of them. He filled out millions (literally) of pages of reports on the deaths of mortals.

Grim was at his 2,876,195th page of listings when one of his friends, Francesca, called him over to talk to her by the water coolers.

“Did you hear about the Black Plague situation?” she whispered when he was within earshot.

“No, I didn’t. Is there something the matter?” Grim replied.

“The company’s overbooked!” Francesca nearly blurted out loud. “The Mortality Department can’t keep track of all the constant death in Europe! The continent is going extinct!”

“Bloody Hell...” Grim sighed, wiping his skull warily. “That just means more work for us drones.”

“No!” she said. “This is a business opportunity. We’ve always talked about starting our own company! Why not do it now, when business is booming?”

“That is true...” Grim replied.

“So why not?” Francesca said. “We should do it while we have the chance!”

Grim thought about it for a moment, but no longer than one. This would be the most exciting thing for him to do for all of eternity.

“Alright,” Grim said. “Let’s do it!”

...

“The real estate isn’t very great around here, is it?” Grim commented, looking at the grey, depressing office building that lay in front of them. He took another puff of his cigarette.

“Take it or leave it,” the skeletal landowner replied. “It doesn’t matter to me. But be brisk about it. I don’t have all day.”

“Thirty thousand for this crappy office building?” Francesca snapped at the skeleton. “That’s ridiculous! It barely even has a warehouse. There’s literally an infinite amount of other office buildings in Purgatory! We could go anywhere else!”

“I guess I could lower the price a tad...” the landlord muttered.

“A tad? No. Ten thousand for the office building, *furnished*. We won’t take anything else,” Francesca said with no shortage of confidence.

“I-” The seller began to say. “Fine. I’ll lower the price to ten thousand and furnish the building for you. Deal?”

“Deal,” Grim said, shaking the landlord’s boney hand.

...

### THREE MONTHS LATER

Grim silently peered at his desk-toys, his hands folded beneath his chin.

He and Francesca had created a new company, Reapin and Co., to bank off of the success of the mortality industry during the height of the Black Plague. While the Black Plague was past its peak, they were still making copious amounts of Souls (the currency of Heaven, Purgatory, and even Hell) by taking employees from Heavenly Clouds' mortality industry, making said company obsolete.

But, despite all the fun that making ridiculous amounts Souls creates, Grim was still bored. His (un)life had not changed much. The only differences were that now he didn't (un)live in a musty flat, and that he now worked in an office, not a cubicle.

Occasionally, he would float down to Earth and reap some Souls, but those business trips were few and far between.

I know, I know, you may have been expecting something so much more from the (un)life of Grimothy Death Reapin, but no. His (un)life had not changed much. He was still (un)living a boring (un)life, and that will never change. But, perhaps that is best. For a bored God of Death is a controlled one, and an uncontrolled God of Death goes on a rampage and kills everyone in sight.

So, be happy, not sad, that Grimothy Death Reapin will spend eternity bored to death.



Carter Lewis

## **This Soul and That One Too**

*By Milo River Satalich*

He is beautiful, I realize. The warm summer wind has brought a welcome chill to the air that whistles through his hair as the trains to nowhere blow their own whistles across the field. His eyes are the colors of honey and dirt; they shine in the light, and I can see his soul. It is old, but the wrinkles in it allow for more wisdom to cover its surface area. It is a soul that loves what it should not, like laying on a bumpy, pollen-ridden hill of grass staring at the sky, even though the sun makes him sneeze and he is allergic to pollen. It is the soul that turns on the record player only after placing the needle where he wants it, then slowly dragging up the volume, his hips swaying slightly (involuntarily) to the beat his heart knows will shake the windows soon.

I did not always know this soul. Before, I knew her soul. The girl with cotton-candy pink hair and eyes as blue as her feelings or the ocean on an overcast day. Her soul was damaged and sewn together and had grown new, better parts to replace the old ones after it outgrew them. To others, her young soul was ugly, or deformed, or abnormal and weird. And maybe it was. But it was beautiful. And I knew her soul, and how it loved all kinds of animals, and seasons, and types of toast. There was so much love in that soul that her body couldn't hold it all. And her soul broke her mind, and then her body. And when her body broke, I was alone. I don't talk about it much because when I talk about the things that have made me alone or broken or sad, my voice goes poetic so that I will not break. A body broken by the soul inside is something that is so wretchedly horrible that no one should have to put it into words. But I have, and I have survived being alone.

Because then I met him.



## **A Conversation**

*By Jack Schneiger*

**Cat**

Do you see this full glass?

Do you notice the distance  
between your body and this  
aforementioned glass, a  
distance so great it would take  
at least five seconds of  
sprinting to reach?

I am going to knock this glass  
over. It will shatter under the  
weight of gravity and against  
the hardwood floor, and  
there is nothing you can do.

You cannot cease the  
inevitable. I am all powerful  
in this situation. I decide the  
events that unfold here-forth.

I care not about your  
attention, I care only for  
destruction and chaos. Your  
lukewarm attitude towards  
this scenario is all but a  
facade for the true terror you  
hide behind your eyes. You  
are cowardly knowing the

**Me**

I do.

I do.

Please don't.

I will shun you for  
days to come.

thing you have held power  
over now holds the power  
you've kept. That feeling is  
enough to motivate me.

I cannot stop you, and  
I cannot persuade  
you. I have come to  
terms with the events  
soon to unfold.

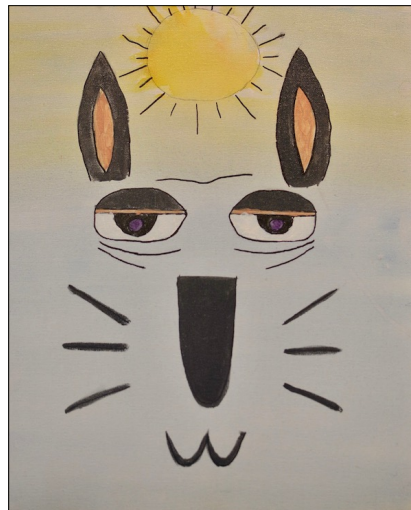
You have kept me from  
pleasure and desire. I, in  
this moment of absolute  
control, will indulge myself  
in absolute hedonism,  
decadence. I feel no  
remorse.

No.

Yes.

CRASH

Oops.



Archie Rohden

# Wendigo

*By Silas Schoenborn*

Hunting season was coming to an end, and for the people of Blackwood, Missouri, things were looking bleak. Not so much as a rabbit was caught by the several parties that had ventured into the wilderness, and it seemed the animals had simply left these parts for good. Some folk said it was only bad luck, but others thought it was something more. After all, that's how things were in tightly knit rural places.

Despite the apprehensive rumors going around, people were determined to get to the bottom of it. A young man named Ralph was one of these people. He proposed that they lead yet another party into the wilderness where they would camp for several nights and return with or without a prize.

A few other men volunteered under the condition that they split the loot equally. Ralph agreed and announced that they would depart the next morning, after spending the evening preparing for the journey. They were each armed with a rifle and brought a pack carrying the essentials for their trip.

When the sun rose next morning, they had already left. They had started the trek into the valley and through the thick forest covering the surrounding hills. They would make for Chickasaw Ridge, about a day's travel away.

Around afternoon, they came across a wide stretch of open field. In it were several boulders sprouting with weeds. They decided it was a good place to take a break.

"Look," said one of the company.

"What is it?" asked Ralph.

"Some kind of mark on this rock."

On the bulk of a large stone was a long, three fingered claw mark.

"Looks like a grizzly," said Ralph.

"No, there ain't no grizzly in these parts."

There was a moment of uncomfortable silence. Then Ralph stood, "I say it's time we get a move on."

His companions nodded in agreement, and, before long, they were back on the move.

They hiked onward for quite a while through the lush and glistening forest around them. No creature nor sound was heard besides the trickle of streams and the occasional gust of wind. There was something eerie was about it.

They reached their objective at dusk, just as the sun was setting behind the hills. They set up two tents, each with two people in them, and Ralph agreed take the first watch. He sat by the campfire with his rifle until the last embers faded into ash.

The next morning a frightful discovery was made. Their bags, which they had left outside the tents, were gone without trace or explanation.

“I can’t believe it,” said Ralph, “This can’t be happening. How could they have simply have vanished?”

“I agree, there’s something more to this that we don’t yet understand,” replied one of the group.

“But no one even lives out here, it’s completely desolate.”

It was true after all, there was definitely something supernatural about it. The nearest settlement was about 20 miles off. It was entirely bizarre in a inexplicable way.

“Over here,” Ralph beckoned and his companions over. On the ground below them, there was a large footprint, about half a foot in diameter, but much longer in length. They led off into the distance, winding around rocks and into the forest. There was another odd-looking track, like something being dragged alongside the other set of footprints. It had to have been their bags.

“Well, here’s our answer,” said Ralph, “We must follow.”

“I don’t know about that,” replied one of the group. “We don’t know what we’re up against.”

“Whatever it is, it had the nerve to steal from us and I don’t plan on letting it go so easily.”

An argument broke out among them, with some in favor of following and some wanting to think of another way.

“Let’s be honest here,” said Ralph, speaking out above the rest, “We don’t know what’s out there, but it’s the only chance we’ve got to continue, and I plan to see things out.”

Somewhat reluctantly, they came to agreement and began the hike through the forest. When afternoon came, they had somehow arrived back at the clearing from the day before.

“That’s odd,” said Ralph, “The tracks don’t seem to go any farther. Let’s take a look around,”

“Over here,” said a voice.

“Who said that?” asked Ralph curiously. They all looked at each other in bewilderment. “Come out or we’ll shoot!” he said.

Then, to their surprise, a dreadful thing arose from out from behind a rock. It was in the shape of a man, but much worse. Its sockets were pressed into a bald skull, and its chest was thin and bony. It had claws on its hands the size of daggers and its feet seemed to match the tracks he had followed.

Ralph fired a shot but the thing didn’t even flinch. Instead it ran at them with lethal speed, letting loose a ghastly roar. Soon after, there wasn’t much left of the hunters who had set out with high hopes of glory, besides the several mangled corpses rotting on the forest floor.

As for the creature, it would certainly pass into legend, its legacy haunting the forest and the ones who believed the tales.



Raven Chesser

# **The Story of a Refugee**

*By Sophia Simpson*

Reaching for light

Hoping to thrive

Trapped in a cage

Living a lie

Being walled in

By forces too strong

Soon to be a shell

Of a man who's now gone

Searching for a place

Where sanctuary awaits

Innocence not threatened

By human hate

These are the people

Who fled out of pain

Abandoning ship

And dying in vain

A journey into the great unknown

Asking for a fate

That's never told

To shine a light

Forever owed

A spun tale of promises

But the thread is shaped of lies

Told as a crutch  
To ease the pain of being denied

Joy replaced with fear  
But people will not hear  
The cries of help,  
These gentle tears

A tale for those  
Who believe what they see  
Of broken spirits  
The story of a refugee

Learning that not every statue  
Standing tall and proud and green  
Can be held to her word,  
The word of liberty

So here are the footprints  
Of those who came before  
Shattered and desperate  
Heartsick forevermore



Zoe Wright

## Treats

*By Callan Soraghan*

BANG! I look over at Daisy and Pippa.

What did you do now, I ask?

They look out of the cage at me.

Blinking, waiting ...

NO! I'm not giving you more food, I say.

Soft cooing now and more sad, big eyes ...

NO! I'm not giving you more food, I say again.

Daisy does her treat trick and Pippa chews on the bars ...

NO, NO, NO! I say.

They stop, look up at me with great anguish, and I know what they're thinking ...

OK, but just one more treat, I say.



Sophia Martin



# **Whiskey**

*By Callan Soraghan*

I saw my friend Emma  
riding a strange horse the other day.  
When I asked her who's that horse anyway,  
she told me an amazing story.

Gabby called us around midnight.  
I was asleep and my mom woke me from a strange dream.  
In it I was being chased by my unmade bed  
so I was glad to wake up.  
She said I needed to be ready to go in fifteen minutes.  
My heart raced,  
Whiskey was finally going to be mine.

Gabby pulled up outside our house  
with her old horse trailer.  
We drank coffee while she loaded  
our destination into the GPS.

You sure you want to do this?  
She asked my mom again.  
Butterflies danced around my insides  
as I shivered in the cold.

Soon we were on the road.  
Gabby and my mom discussed money.  
Do you need to stop by the ATM?  
Gabby asked.  
Whiskey's old owners were nuts  
and we needed to move fast.

I wanted that jumping pony  
from the moment I saw him.  
He was a crazy mix of draft horse and Welsh.  
I was already planning on how high we'd go together  
as the truck pulled onto the freeway heading north.

I dozed a few times on the long drive.  
We better fill up before we get there,  
I don't want to run out of gas, Gabby murmured  
as we pulled off the road.  
My stomach felt a little queasy,  
I wish I hadn't had that coffee.  
Fifteen more miles and Whiskey would be mine.

We weren't technically stealing him,  
but we felt like thieves in the night.  
The new owners were selling him,  
the originals didn't want to see him go.

I choked on the diesel fumes,  
as I ran into the mini mart  
for a pack of Twizzlers and a root beer.  
Weird to be in the middle of nowhere,  
in the middle of the night.



Ruby Bunker

The truck headed down the gravel driveway,  
the barn was dark.  
A flashlight waved us on past a row of paddocks  
and up ahead was Whiskey.

Gabby hopped out.  
She and the owners exchanged envelopes.

My mom shook her head,  
this is the craziest thing I've ever done.

I imagined the old owners swooping down on us,  
waving shotguns,  
but they never appeared.

Soon we were racing back to the main road.

Whiskey settled in the trailer with a bag of fresh hay  
and us with the music blasting.

The sun was just coming up  
as we pulled into our barn.

Gabby hugged me. She said,

So you have a new horse and a great story to tell.

I guess I do.



Tiffany T. Trinh

## **(H)appy R(a)y Ou(t) of Mr. Sunshin(e)**

*By Carman Sparks-Dugas*

The clock was a quarter to six on a winter evening,  
He and I were crying, because of our lack of sleep.  
On the corner of the avenue was a motel sign that said vacant,  
but all of the rooms were taken by strangers who weren't waking.  
Sitting in the passenger's side of my muma's old red pickup truck,  
trying to get a CD unstuck, but it wouldn't budge.  
Holding hands with a loved one is amazing,  
but the moment they let go is one that's unbearable to start facing.  
Everyday in class is another day in Hell,  
so you skip another day to see if suspension's on the table.  
You aren't afraid of getting caught,  
but more or less mad about the outcome,  
and this is where you start to speak seldom.  
Take this Florence girl per-say,  
she's a 5'7" pothead with an eating problem,  
and a family that is in dismay of the way she's been acting (it's just acting).  
And sure the problems we may have are ones that people shouldn't see,  
but I'm still stuck in the past. So where's the real me?



Julian Grappone

## Sisters

*By Lola Trincherro*

Stacking her wild hair  
On top of her head,  
She slurs a goodbye  
As she heads out the door,  
A backpack slung over  
Her right shoulder.

Be back before dark  
Our mother calls,  
Knowing she probably won't

She joins her friends  
A teenage pack  
Strolling down the street  
Always towards the bus stop  
Until one turns 16  
And they all pile into a single car  
Like clowns in a circus.

Off to the mall  
The school  
The corner store  
Bus routes like arteries of the city  
Filled with life and commotion.

Coming home exhausted and  
Exhilarated at the same time.  
Putting just as much thought into  
Her hello as she did her goodbye,  
Before heading up to her room  
Preparing to do it all again the next day.



Jillian Skelding

## **Yellow Avenue**

*By Ella Van Schoick*

On Yellow Avenue  
Anything is a possibility  
You could bump into your first love  
Or even your last  
You could leave footprints in the painted tiles  
That lead you to a surprise  
You could open your eyes so wide  
Not even your neighbor  
Would recognize the sound of your sobbing  
On Yellow Avenue  
Your dreams can come true  
The canary leaves could fall  
And stay in your hair  
Telling everyone  
You were happy for once in a lifetime  
Your stars could be bright enough  
To illuminate your path  
So the streetlights of clear amber  
Show you the way



Sophia Martin



## Sweet Like Lemonade

*By Ella Van Schoick*

I thought you were sweet like lemonade  
I thought your mind ran with ribbons  
And your hands blew the wind like a machine

I thought you were sweet like lemonade  
But you played with my mind like a new Rubik's Cube

I thought we were sweet like lemonade until you drank all of mine  
I thought your eyes sparkled like colored sugar on cookies  
But they dimmed like a light in the attic

I thought you were sweet like lemonade until you sat out too long  
And whoever made you forgot to add the sugar



Lola Blucher

## After A Long Time

By Laila Vickers

“That was fun!” Jazmine, my older sister, said as she closed the exit doors to Town of Fight.

“I mean, I guess. The only really scary part was that doctor’s office thing.”

“Sure, sure says the person who gave me a million bruises on my arms.”

“Whatever.”

Walking out, we finally breathed air that didn’t smell like sweaty bodies and fear. I would say Town Of Fight was fun and all, but it was way, way too expensive for only four haunted houses. Going with Jazmine was enjoyable too, but since she is a senior in high school, I could tell how bored she was. She even said it herself, more than a few times.

I heard sounds of people nearby, but I wasn’t paying enough attention to care about who they were. I was merely looking at my new

Converse, now paint-splattered because some stupid clown decided to spill paint on them. Still, why did he even have paint?

“Hey, it’s not that bad,” Jazmine said, referring to my shoes. “Look, we can fix them up at home.”

I shrugged my shoulders. “I guess, it’s just that Dad will chop of my head if he sees them.” We stopped walking and she just shook her head, knowing he would, her weird way of comforting me.

“Well...did you see anyone from your school or something?”

“No,” I answered.

“What about that kid over there? He looks familiar.”

“Which ...” Oh my, oh my. It was him, in flesh and blood. You’re probably asking ‘Who the Hell is him?’ Well, see, “him” is Noah, a kid from my old school. Not just any kid though...my



Ash Rinker



first crush. Probably the most embarrassing crush of my life. And, no, it wasn't because he was weird, or picked his nose, or anything like that. It was just—I am kinda the worst at hiding a crush... like really bad. And, of course, he figured it out and practically avoided me all of elementary. Now, don't get me wrong, we were always in the same class, and I always found a way to start up a conversation with him. But now that I am looking back to all of those years with him, I finally figured out why he never actually tried at all to talk to me.

“Wait, is that that one boy you liked in elementary?”

I wish it wasn't.

“Maybe, maybe not. I don't know, let's just go and forget about this... Like it never happened!” I said, pushing my sister towards the parking lot.

“Nah, that's not going to happen. Sorry, but I think he just spotted us.”

Sometimes I wished I believed in God so he could help guide me out of this situation, or Hell if I even suddenly had the ability to teleport from here to far, far away... in the middle of a desert or to a different planet.

“Wait up...” Someone tapped my shoulder. “Maria-Grace?”

“Nope, just some girl who looks exactly like some random person who went to school with you. My name is actually Bob.”

“Bob?”

“Yep...Bob.” Oh, how I wish my name was Bob right now and I were some middle-aged weirdo living in his mother's basement.

“Maria-Grace, I could always count on you to make me laugh.”

Okay, cue the weird inhumane sounds, did he just say what I think he said... I made him laugh! Someone pinch me; wait, don't, I bruise easily.

I just heard the sudden chuckle of my sister, who, if it weren't for her, I would not be here. I would be just like before with Noah all the way in the back of my mind. I gave her the death glare that only I inherited from my mother.

“Ha ha.” I was perfectly fine, even a normal human before, now I can barely talk and, if I do, I just say something like my name is Bob. Good going.

“So, I'm guessing you went to Town Of Fight, too? Or did you just magically appear here?”

“I just magically appeared.” From my peripheral vision I could see my sister shaking her head in disgust.

“Yeah, we went to Town Of Fight, did you like it?” Jazmine said, breaking the thick atmosphere of awkwardness.

“Which was your favorite house?”

“The doctor one, XX..something.” I looked around anywhere where his face wasn’t in view. I remember him being tall, but not quite this tall. And his face. Lord Jesus, give me the strength...why, why is he so pretty, not even like cute but like, someone needs to sign him up in modeling or something. His hair had turned a darker blonde, and his face didn’t have the baby fat it used to. It was as if his icy blue eyes got more icy than before.

“Did you hear what I said?”

“Uh, no,” I said looking down.

“He said that *your* favorite haunted house was also *his* favorite,” my sister answered for him. “Oh, cool, i-it was, like, scary?” Just put out one normal sentence, Maria-Grace, please, you do it all the time.

“Yeah...” Oh, awkward silence, my best friend, always there.

“Who are those kids?” I gestured towards a group of kids who looked around our age—thirteen or fourteen—next to this tree where I first spotted Noah.

“Oh, them, they’re my friends from my new school...and my um...girlfriend”

If you ever were under a bridge, and, all of a sudden, it collapsed on you, that's what I felt like. If just the the words ‘*my girlfriend*’ could kill a person, I guess I’m dead then. I looked over to my sister, hoping for some type of look of reassurance, but the only thing I could see was smoke fuming out of her ears. I nudged her and gave her a weak smile saying, ‘I’m fine, I swear,’ but she saw through that BS.

“What’s her name?” At least I could be a good friend, even though that’s all I’ll ever be.

“Who? Oh! Yeah my girlfriend.” Another stab. “Her name is Clair.”

*Clair*. Why did that word roll off his tongue with such ease, as if he’d said it a million times. Then all of the sudden, *Clair* was right in my face, smiling with cute dimples on her cheeks -*I don’t have any dimples*—With long flowy brunette hair—*My hair isn’t close to being flowy*—Her clothes perfect, I bet so is the body under—*My clothes made me look like a hobo, and the body under not even close to perfection*- why is she perfect, why couldn’t I be close to that. Maybe that’s why he would never chose me.

“Hi, I’m Clair, Noah’s girlfriend, what’s your name?” Her voice sounded like plastic rubbing up against pavement. I hated it.

“Hi, I’m Maria-Grace, I used to go to school with Noah.” I have to tell myself that I'm a nice person, she is a nice person, we can be nice people.

“Oh, I hear about his old school a lot, we hang out with some people who still go there, like all the time, right, babe?” Ugh. ‘*Like all the time, right babe?*’ It was like she was clearly trying to get to me by saying *babe*. I knew she wasn’t, that’s probably just the jealous part of me.

“Do you want to meet some of my other friends?” Noah said, oblivious to the awkward tension.

“Nah, we have to go back home...It was good seeing you though.” I had to get out of there, not just because of his girlfriend. But the way that the butterflies in my stomach started to grow as I looked at him. The butterflies I hoped would have migrated after a while. But they never did, and now I wish they had.

“Yeah, yeah I understand, we should hang out soon though.”

*Hang out...you’re kidding me right?* “Totally, I’ll text you about it or something.”

“Yeah, or something...”

Then he hugged me. Yep, hugged me—which by the way he never ever did in the six years of school we knew each other. It took me by surprise. I almost for a moment didn’t hug him back, but then I realized this is never going to happen again. So I hugged him and tried to keep a dash of that in my memory for safe keeping. He was the one to let go first, and when he did I almost missed him, his scent, his warmth, *him*.

I didn’t realize it then, but he was going to totally ruin my life, once more.



Lauren Davis

## **Father**

*By Laila Vickers*

The one man  
a little girl is supposed to love  
the most  
is her father  
not some guy on the screen  
not some cute guy at her school  
but her father  
but this little girl doesn't have a father  
to love the most  
this little girl  
has to get all her love  
from her mom,  
her mom who has the world on her shoulders,  
her mom who would do anything,  
to protect this little girl  
anything  
this little girl  
gets no love from her "father"  
who doesn't deserve that title honor  
this little girl's "father"  
didn't even sign the certificate  
dating a birth  
the one man  
a little girl is supposed to love  
the most  
is her father,  
a father whose  
name only this little girl knows  
is his last,

Jones

and when people ask,

“Is it Jones or Vickers?”

they mean no harm but

all this little girl can say is,

“Nope, just Vickers.”

What she really means is,

“Nope, not Jones. I wouldn’t hold that name to my heart; it’s just Vickers.”

Secretly that girl

would hold that name to her heart

she wishes she could

‘cause if she could,

she would hold it with pride

while the other hand is holding

her father’s

but she doesn’t

‘cause there is no hand to hold

no shoulder to cry on

no one to sneak her ice cream late at night

no one to tell her secrets to

no one to love the most

the one man

a little girl is supposed to love

the most

is her father

the one man

a little girl is supposed to love

the most

is her father

but without a father

what can she do?

what does she do?

well...  
she cries on her own shoulder  
she sneaks ice cream late at night on her own  
she tells secrets to her own self  
and sure as Hell,  
holds her own damn hand  
so maybe this little girl  
doesn't need  
that man she is supposed to love  
the most  
her father  
deep down she does  
but I say she's been  
doing pretty well without  
him.



Melina Jacklet

## High School Hallways

by Raya Vinar

Nadia felt like a replica  
in high school hallways,  
tear-filled textbooks  
suspended from her wrists.  
Once only a hushed rumor  
turned into a tale of nightmarish lies;  
her heart was bruised.  
And Nadia couldn't seem to  
see through them.  
It was like peering  
into cracked glass.

Nadia sits in the back of class,  
always only half listening,  
dreaming of brighter and better things.  
But today she promised,  
not to let these high school hallways  
and backwards drama queens get to her.

Whispers were still quietly hummed,  
floating like bubbles in water,  
unable to pop.  
But Nadia is strong,  
and smart too,  
because  
they are just hallways  
after all.



Ruby Barrett

## **Four Knuckle Sandwiches**

*By Caleb Washington*

Jamie was called the hellraiser  
at the school house,  
Shiny metal chains  
hanging from his pants.  
Once a sudden, wet spitball  
Stuck onto his face. Splat.  
But Jamie only laughed,  
and the kid with the spitball straw  
ran away.

Jamie threatens the kids at the school house,  
snickering with his grades in his back  
pocket,  
shoes cheaper than candy.  
But today he promises  
Four knuckle sandwiches, two for each of us.

The principal, a German woman,  
has nailed his failures on  
the school bulletin.

As the principal walks away with a  
clipboard and the winds slam the window shut,  
Jamie closes his fingers and  
presses the fist against the boy's face,  
then slowly brings it away.

“There,” he almost bellows,  
“Four knuckle sandwiches.”



# Planet Energy

*By Max Weaver*

The ship SS Starfish has had an odd history. Light gray with blue-tinted windows, it had a centralized Captain's quarters jutting out from the middle. It had a star-like shape, with five metal extrusions sticking out of the main hull. It was designed in spite of the main space program from the planet Unere, called the Exploratory Space Program (ESP). It was made by a woman named Kaltrine Malcerny, after she had been rejected by ESP for having too little experience. She was originally a biologist. However, after ESP started to form, she became interested in space and extraterrestrial creatures. She had made the ship, and tried to fly it, but it only got a few miles up. It crashed back down, but that didn't mean people didn't see it. The news blew up that day, reporting counterfeit space crafts, and, on some sketcher news sites, aliens. People started coming to Kaltrine's workshop, trying to buy her craft, destroy it, ride it. She didn't let any of them get through. She kept modifying it and making it better and cheaper and lighter. Eventually, it was able to reach space, but it ran out of fuel and crashed back down to Unere.

While Kaltrine tinkered, Unere was having an energy crisis. ESP was using too much energy, and too many people were working there. Unere's main source of energy, radiation from deep underground, was running out. People started to get desperate; the energy bill was just too high. They started using as little energy as possible; they left lights off at night, walked places, and stopped using technology. This meant a lot of places were usually dark, and people were fit, yet barely informed.

After the SS Starfish's first flight, Kaltrine wanted to gather a crew to solve this energy problem. The SS Starfish used half as much fuel as ESP ships and had to use half the number of crew members. She gathered her best astronaut friends. Smich Wilsh was one of them, a geologist and one of Kaltrine's best friends from high school. Unfortunately, he refused, as he was on a mission in a newly discovered cave with the potential of fossils from early Ubereans. She also invited Daphne Kartegiy, a technician-engineer



Eli Jones

from ESP, who, surprisingly, accepted. Also, of course, Kaltrine Malcerny herself, who would act as their botanist and captain.

On Ocre 18, 4058, the SS Starfish took its first flight, to help solve Unere's energy crisis. The ship was implemented with radiation detectors, so the crew could check to see if any planets had radiation. After many long years, the crew of the Starfish were losing hope. They'd passed many planets with radiation, but none of them had enough to get them through their energy crisis. Their own energy supply was running out. But then, on March 21st, 4069, they found a planet bursting with radiation. The sensor was going wild, the planet was green, and the crew prepared for landing. Just as they were about to land, they went into the planet's orbit, and they ran out of fuel.

The SS Starfish barreled toward the planet, and pieces of it flew off in flaming metal chunks. The five points of the Starfish exploded and hurled apart into five different squadrons on the planet. Its Captain's quarters smashed into a giant tree, and the crew flew out into the ground below. Kaltrine landed in a sand pit, Smich in a snow cavern with an opening, and Daphine in the massive tree.

Daphine awoke in some lichen at the top of the tree. She got up and looked around. The tree was red and had huge leaves, big enough to use as a blanket in a survival situation. The softwood surrounded her, and it climbed high into the clouds. The ground was mostly flat, but there was a hole on the far side of her. As Daphine walked up to it, she saw it was smoking, and there were embers near her feet. As she looked down into the hole, she saw the Captain's quarters, smoking and smashed. She jumped down and landed in another floor. How many floors are in this thing? she thought as she inspected the damage. The windshield was smashed and the bottom was scorched. The part where it used to connect to the rest of the ship was sparking, and big, thick, silver wires were exposed. Daphine looked it over, and decided that she needed more parts than she had to fix it.

She righted it, and saw that the ladder to get in was still intact. She climbed it, and, to her surprise, the machinery and tech inside were mostly unscathed. She tried calling her crew mates. She called Kaltrine, and the chip in Kaltrine's ear vibrated.

Each crew member had a metal implant in their ear. It had a camera, so what the person was seeing could be broadcast back to the ship. It could make calls, which would make it vibrate and hopefully the crew member would sense it, tap it, and start the call. It could make a loud noise, alerting the other crew members when the wearer was hurt.

Daphine called Kaltrine, and all she saw on the broadcast was black, meaning that Kaltrine couldn't see much.

"Kal! So glad you're all right!" Daphine said, exasperated.

"I-" the blackness shifted a bit, as if something moved. "Shhh! There's, um, some sort of creature here," Kaltrine whispered. "I can hear its footsteps."

"Where are you?"

"I don't know, exactly, I landed in a pool next to a big tree. I thought I saw part of the ship fly into it. I went into a nearby cave an-" Her feed cut off. The darkness looked like it had got closer and closer until the broadcast cut off. But it was enough. Daphine knew where Kaltrine was, and she just had to repair the ship to get to her.

She started with the wires, cutting them and making them safer to touch. That way, they could get in the ship without risk of being electrocuted. Daphine needed to find the extra boosters which had apparently broken off. She grabbed a flashlight and and looked around. The first thing she saw was a metallic object. It had big cylindrical base with two metal rods sticking out. There was some sort of electric current moving through it. Daphine inspected it, and saw some very concentrated radiation ore attached! She grabbed it and fed it into the fuel port of the Starfish's Captain's quarters. It accepted it and added the fuel. The planet seemed to be bursting with radiation. Daphine found the boosters two layers down, along with a spring-like thing containing radiation. She attached the boosters and blasted up.

The next day, she landed right next to the tree. She saw a twisting path leading to a cave. She went in and turned on her flashlight. She was met with a large creature. It had yellow spiral-like eyes and big purple ears. Its fur was very black, and it had a pink underbelly. It had giant bat-like wings with spikes on the end of them. Its teeth were bared, and it had a look of hunger in its eyes. It shrieked and lunged for Daphine. She dived barely out of the way and touched her ear piece so it would make a noise to alert Kaltrine she was there. To her surprise, the creature recoiled, its ears ears folded inside themselves. It closed its eyes hard and smashed into the wall. Daphine made the same noise again, and it dove into the ground, uprighted, got on its feet, stumbled, and fell over. Then, Kaltrine emerged from the beast, holding a piece of the Starfish.

"Ugh. I'm ready to get out of this planet as soon as possible. If we gathe-"

Daphine interrupted "I got three pieces of ore! The ship is good on fuel for at least five days."

“Good. I can repair the Starfish when we get back to Unere. Also, maybe we can get Smich. Let’s get outta here!” She shoved the Starfish piece into Daphine’s hands and marched out of the cave, covered in saliva. She attached the piece to the ship that night and they blasted off.

When they got back, they fixed up the Starfish and recruited Smich. They went to the planet again and collected as much radiation as possible. They returned to Unere as heroes. They named the planet “Planet Energy,” and people visited it from time to time. The Explorers never gave up, and their determination paid off.



Jett Lascurettes

## **Snow**

*By Piper Westhead*

My cheeks are rosy as I sit by a window  
full of flowering frost that curls and fractures.  
The jays jabber and jump about  
the gnarled dogwood tree  
where the cream-colored blossoms bloom in melancholy;  
there are only jagged, black branches.

Tiny craters dot the snow  
made by needles and twigs from above,  
delicate fractals that melt on my fingertips,  
so fragile as they balance on my thumb.  
Snow comes in gusty winds;  
and some floats down from the nothingness above.  
How many flakes can I catch on my tongue?  
I stretch my neck from my scarf,  
I only catch one.  
How come rain pounds on your roof like a giant,  
while the snow falls silent?  
It seeps into your walls and into your toes,  
an aching freeze  
that nips and bites down to your very bones;  
yet lays like a velvet carpet welcoming you.

At the touch of winter's soft hands, the trees bow down,  
carrying the burden she has set upon them,  
until the flick of my hand sends cascading feathers  
that creep down my neck.  
And when she starts to melt away,  
the silence is broken by the din of dripping

coming from the boughs of the sleepy trees.  
They wake from her spell.  
New leaves bud from the black branches.  
And the pink fades from my cheeks.



Vincent Revels

# **BLACK** or WHITE

*By Ana Paloma Whiteman*

When you tell my story don't hide  
the fact that I was black  
Don't hide the fact that I was  
Accused  
And don't hide the fact that they were  
Wrong.

When you speak of me say what you want  
but don't sweep my story under the rug.  
I won't rest knowing  
I was shot  
and officer One-Fifteen wakes everyday.  
I counted those shots.  
Each bullet taking more seconds of my life.

- One

shot for being an African American male

- Two

shots for the assumption I had a gun

- Three

shots. But that one didn't count because I was already dead.

When you tell my story tell it as it is.  
Whether I was a  
Thug or not.  
Good or bad.  
Had a gun or no gun.  
It didn't matter. What mattered was whether I was

**Black** or White

## **Memory**

*By Ana Paloma Whiteman*

Remembrances are always a drag...  
if you bottle your feelings.  
People see the  
perfect girl with  
perfect grades, with the  
perfect life.  
It's not like that if you see my true feelings inside.

I have seen the patterns of stars in the sky.

I have seen the tides pull away from the beach,  
only to come back again kissing the sand.

I have almost crashed in a car.

I have almost witnessed murder.

I try to cloak myself in a class  
full of strangers,  
only to get signaled out.

I try, I try, I try...  
But it's still not good enough.  
They say it's easier for you  
because you're a natural.  
Well, news flash... I work ten times  
harder than everyone else,  
only to be knocked down.



I try, but there is a dying flame  
that used to burn like the forest fires,  
destroying everything in its path.

Volcanic soil can blossom the most beautiful flowers,  
so I've heard.

Well, that same volcano that blossomed flowers  
can destroy, causing massive destruction.

I don't want to explode killing  
everything beautiful,  
but there are reasons why the volcano  
exploded in the first place.

I fear the next  
big thing on the news  
is another shooting.

I fear the same guy  
that tried to take  
the six-year-old  
version of me will  
try again.

The perfect girl  
that you see before you may seem perfect,  
but there is nothing perfect about her.



Raven Chesser

## Trucker Terror

*By Vince Wilson*

A young man was driving home after spending all day at the beach. He looked in the mirror and noticed a truck that hadn't been there before tailing him. He sped up a little, but the semi stayed right on his tail. He honked, but the truck ignored it. That's when he noticed that the plow on the front was covered in blood. He decided to put on the gas. He was frightened by the bloody truck. He tried to call 911 but his phone was dead, even though it had 74 percent battery when he left. He was terrified. That's when the truck caught fire and disappeared. Soon after, he arrived at a tunnel. There was a crash blocking the entrance. He told the cops there about the truck he had seen.

They had heard this story before. People were driving this route at night when a truck appeared out of nowhere only to disappear in a fireball a few miles later. The story of the ghost truck was that a woman was crossing the road with her son when a truck came barreling down the road and hit and killed them both. It turned out the driver had suffered a fatal heart attack at the wheel and died with his foot on the gas. The woman's ghost cursed the truck so that it would haunt this route forever. She kept her word. Ever since, the truck has been reported on the road, with the blood of the victims on the grill.



Lucy Devlaeminck

## **Raised by Natives**

*By Yukpa Wright*

I was raised by  
Loud laughing  
Quick to fall in love and even quicker  
to fall out of it  
Rez accents  
Long braids and short tempers  
Kind of natives

Some adopted aunties  
And uncles  
And siblings  
Call out  
“Junior!”  
And 9 people turn around  
Type of natives

Some traveling dancers  
Bright-eyed  
Adrenaline fueled  
“I better place if I want gas money home”  
Laughing and hopping  
Toe-touching  
Sorta natives

Some broke-as-a-joke  
“Hey cousin, what you having for supper?”  
Sharp contour and  
sharper eyes  
Rice-A-Roni and bologna  
Type of natives

Some leaving seems impossible  
Kinda natives  
“Take some applesauce with you!”  
Kinda natives  
Family first and  
Don’t forget where you came from and  
Make sure to get your education  
‘Cause you’re gonna need it  
Type of natives

Some tough-as-nails  
Dance until you can’t anymore  
Pepper sprayed and tear gassed  
But still shouting  
“Mni Wiconi!”  
Because that’s the only time we get heard  
Historical trauma is a cycle  
But  
we’re  
still  
here.

I was raised by Natives.

## **Breaking**

*By Yukpa Wright*

The plaster in this house is cracking  
The top of the building  
The peak  
The summit  
This mountain is a volcano  
This apartment is a bomb  
They came  
Home.

The light from the kitchen was  
Yellow  
Too happy  
As they fight  
She  
Is yelling  
Why don't you love me  
He  
Is yelling  
Why don't you love me  
They are too afraid  
We are afraid

Three is a number of power but  
The three of us are powerless  
Hiding underneath a blanket  
The dust kicks up again  
Why didn't you pay  
for that, she said  
I know they won't believe  
You, she said  
You left her alone,

He said  
You didn't include her,  
He said  
The plaster walls are cracking  
This is the life

Of pretend braces.  
Of tea dumped down the drain.  
Why don't  
You just drink your tea?  
The cat in the bathroom  
Yelled.  
Meows mixing with  
Meows  
I invited her but she's a liar, she  
Said.  
Turns on me  
The fan spins the air around the room  
The fan spins the air around the room  
My two teammates  
Under the blanket  
Turn on me

If you want me to stop telling this story  
Go to the apartment  
Go to the volcano  
Go to the bomb  
Because  
You can't  
It exploded, later that day.  
It was brilliant.



Sophie Vera